

THE WILLIAMSBURG FLYER

May 1984

Maybe. Nay, nay---May is. It finally arrived with the waning remnants of Dogwoods and redbuds that bloomed on and on. All of those April showers really seemed to do the trick. Now if we can just get the wind to lay down a bit. Listen my friends and you shall hear that crepuscular chorus as morning draws near. Should you happen to sleep through this time of day, most of the sounds can be heard 'bout evening. A replay.

There are a couple of sounds you will want to tune into next week. One will be the sound of our May 16 speaker, Teta Kain, who will present a marvelous talk on "Backyard Birds". Teta is the current President of the Hampton Roads Bird Club and was just elected to the office of Secretary in the Virginia Society of Ornithology this past weekend. She is a tireless birder and student of every aspect of natural history, as well as being a superb photographer. You will be greatly impressed by Teta's obvious enthusiasm for birds and will come away from her presentation just as exuberant as she is. The meeting will take place in room 117 of Millington Hall on the William and Mary campus at 7:30 p.m. This will be our final monthly meeting until September. So let's have a grand turnout.

The second sound you will find appealing will get you right in the palate. The second annual club picnic will be held on Saturday May 19 beginning at 10:00 a.m. at York River State Park. Please note the time and location. Remember we adopted this park a couple of years ago and our patronage there has been greatly appreciated. Besides, this under-utilized facility is just chock full of fabulous natural wonders waiting to be revealed. Call Betty Williams (229-2767) or Jeanne Armour (229-2363) so they'll know how many hotdogs to put on the fire. The club will furnish all the hotdogs and soft drinks you can stow away and you are asked to bring a "dish to pass" (salad, desert, beans, etc.)

This month's field trip has been advertized as "Passerine Paradise". Field trip leader Bob Cross has arranged this May 26 outing to hit all the local hotspots. The 7:00 a.m. departure from the parking lot to the immediate right of the Colonial Williamsburg Information Center will be early enough to put the group in the best position to hear and see the myriad variety of Spring birds. The hustle and bustle of nesting will be evident in some species while the spice of late migrants will add a flavorful zest to a morning in May.

Our hats are off to the Hampton Roads Bird Club which hosted the 50th annual meeting of the Virginia Society of Ornithology over the weekend of May 4-6. The Chamberlin Hotel on Ft. Monroe provided an elegant setting for this well run, well organized affair. Bird enthusiasts from all corners of the state enjoyed each other, excellent weather, loads of information and informative displays and certainly the birds. As the field trips assembled on Saturday morning four northern orioles sang and cavorted in near-by trees setting the tone for the sounds and sights of the whole weekend. Chip - chip - whoo - ray for a stellar job on the many facets of the annual meeting planning!

Mr. Spike Knuth who spoke to our club in March wrote Cynthia Long a very complimentary letter of thanks to be passed along to our club. He said he could not remember being so warmly received and getting such positive responses from a group as he did from us. He also added that should folks desire to see the "Virginia Wildlife" television shows to please contact local stations and request these to be aired.

How about a special greeting of warblers in song to our newest members Joan and Burt Emerson, Leonard and Betty Wagner and Gary Frazer and Karen McDonald.

The Virginia Society of Ornithology's annual breeding bird foray will take place June 12 through June 17 in Dickenson County on the Kentucky border. The focal point will be the fabulous Breaks Interstate Park. If you would like more information let me know at 229-0098. A breeding bird foray is one of the most enjoyable and informative field experiences you will ever have, and the virtually unbirded areas of Dickenson County offer an array of unknown avian treasures.

The VSO has also taken the lead nationally in being one of the first states to publish a new, up to date field checklist card. The card was done by Teta Kain and incorporates the very latest nomenclature changes and taxonomic revisions. Our club will probably order a batch of them to have them available for 10 cents apiece very soon.

I have received information about a week long trip to the Gaspe Peninsula in Quebec, Canada offered by the Audubon Society of Rhode Island. If interested I'll be happy to pass the details along.

On April 29 Brain Taber pulled together twenty field observers for our seventh annual Spring Bird Count. While many felt we were going to be a little early for many migrant species a change in the weather two days prior to the count blessed us with our second highest total of species ever. Our first count in May of 1978 garnered 161 species. This year we nailed down 160 species (one area in the count circle had 120 species alone!). Twenty-nine species were recorded by all nine field parties and included purple martins and bluebirds reflecting the positive effects our club's committees for those birds is having. There were 19 species recorded by only one group and this reflects the diversity of birding habitats we have available in our area. Some of the species highlights included eighteen owls of three species (screech, barred and great horned) and twenty-five species of warblers. Several birds were with us until literally right up to the count and then disappeared including tundra swan (the one at St. George's), glossy ibis, Bonaparte's gull, horned lark and water pipit. All in all it was a grand day and there were lots of birds for everyone. Even the two Lafayette High School students who stuck it out from 4:00 a.m. on were overwhelmed. Thanks to everyone who supplied the munchies for the tally, especially Ruth Beck and John Hertz.

For the last seven or eight years members of the Williamsburg Bird Club have led a morning bird walk for the Williamsburg Garden Symposium. Horticulturists from every corner of the U.S. come here for the event and many are bird enthusiasts as well. This year Tom Armour, Ruth Beck, Bill Sheehan, Martha Armstrong, Julie Hotchkiss and Brain Taber conducted the walks. Though the woods were somewhat birdless people along the waterways got to see several species of ducks, breeding ospreys and some gulls and terns. A group at Yorktown was entertained by a rather tame otter and then distracted by a killdeer feigning injury near her nest with four eggs. We're glad our club can represent our community in such a special way!

April and May are almost impossible to keep detailed bird information for this publication so I'll trace the highlights as much as they have been brought to my attention. Actually, this is going to sound like the Fenton Day Follies because most of the birds have been brought to our attention by him.

Throughout the last month St. George's Farm has continued to be the place to be. Mornings during the third week of April there were often steeped in the following species; greater and lesser yellowlegs, solitary and spotted sandpipers, blue-winged teal, dozens of tree swallows and many snipe. Nearby there were glossy ibis and cattle egrets. In early May Fenton had found a merlin and a dickcissel there, both of which stayed only a short time.

The first seaside and sharp-tailed sparrows of the season were heard at Queen's Creek Marina on April 17 along with a whip-poor-will and 7-8 clapper rails. An eastern kingbird showed up April 18 at Lafayette High School, the same day as a yellow-throated vireo. Carolyn Lowe had a snowy egret at Camp Peary April 17.

Mitchell Byrd noted black-throated green warblers in early April while Bill Sheehan had them during the last several days of the month.

On April 27 on News Road Leigh Jones observed a Spring hawk flight. During a 30 minute period 15 sharp-shins, one kestrel and one broadwinged hawk drifted by. In the background a blue-winged warbler buzzed and a gnatcatcher could be seen delivering food to its licken nest.

A trip to Dismal Swamp on April 26 netted Fenton Day 5-6 Swainson's warblers and numerous prothonotary and hooded warblers. After leaving Dismal a stop by Craney Island produced white-rumped sandpipers, black skimmer, lots of Caspian terns and some dazzling avocets.

During the first week of May many people have commented on the high number of blue-winged warblers in our area. Blackpoll are beginning to show up as are gray-cheeked and Swainson's thrushes and veery's. Evening grosbeaks are still with us. But the best news of all is that red-headed woodpeckers have been seen near some of their usual haunts after being absent since last Fall. Bill Sheehan had at least one red-breasted nuthatch through late April.

ASK OWL ----- from the Cape Henry Audubon Society newsletter.

??? BIRD RIDDLES ???

1. What bird is a letter?
2. What bird is a conversation?
3. What bird is a corner?
4. What bird is crazy?
5. What bird thinks something is funny?
6. What bird is used in making fences?
7. What bird is a system for identifying doves?
8. What bird is a church official?
9. What bird is a good time?
10. What bird is all tied up?

ANSWERS TO RIDDLES:

1. Jay/Ani
2. Chat
3. Tern
4. Loon or Cuckoo
5. Laughing Gull
6. Rail
7. Dovekie
8. Cardinal
9. Lark
10. Knot