

THE WILLIAMSBURG FLYER

June 1984

March's wind and April's showers persisted through May and one must wonder what effect some of the vicious storms had on nesting and nestlings. The annual least tern banding project done by Bill Akers of Roanoke at Grandview Beach in Hampton came upon a large number of dead young in the colony on June 2. Only about sixty chicks were banded, a low figure compared to past seasons. No doubt the weather has played a major role in the reproductive efforts of the terns thus far, but they'll bounce back.

As a club we won't bounce back to regular monthly meetings until the third Wednesday in September. We will continue to offer monthly field trips though and here's a run down on them. Dave West will lead an excursion to Grandview Beach in Hampton on Saturday, June 16. On July 8, Sunday, Bill Sheehan and Leigh Jones will guide birders around the fascinating environs of Cheatham Annex. Finally, our annual trek to Craney Island in Portsmouth is on tap for August 26. Mark these dates down right now so you won't forget them.

All trips will depart at 7:00 a.m. from the parking lot to the immediate right of the Colonial Williamsburg Information Center on the Colonial Parkway side. For this time of year be prepared for the heat and possibly a bug or two.

Our field trip leader and purple martin parent, Bob Cross, is spending the next two months living on Cobb Island over on the Eastern Shore "hacking" young peregrine falcons. We know he'll have a fascinating time and lots of bird adventures for us. It's with Bob in mind that Dave West will lead the Grandview Beach trip on June 16. As mentioned previously least terns are a sure bet there. Least bitterns are likely as are marsh wrens, seaside sparrows, several species of herons and egrets as well as gulls and terns. There will probably be a few hold-over shorebirds to tickle your fancy too.

A hoot and warbling welcome to our newest member Todd Mathes (one of Leigh Jones' biology students from Lafayette) and Val Helterbran.

The Williamsburg Bird Club is very pleased to announce the recipients of the two \$500 research stipends presented by the club to William and Mary students involved in ornithological research. Since no award was made last year we were able to provide Mr. Chuck Rosenburg funds to pursue his study of the declining barn owls in Virginia and to Mr. Tim Kinkead money was given to assist him with research on ospreys. We look forward to hearing the results of their work at programs in the Fall and are proud to be able to support their endeavors!

Our club received kudos from the Hampton Roads Bird Club and the President of the Virginia Society of Ornithology, Yu Lee Larner, for our assistance (providing finger food and field trip leaders) at the VSO annual meeting last month in Hampton. We done ourselves right fine again, folks!

The second annual club picnic was held on Saturday, May 19 at York River State Park. Over thirty people attended. The food was great with all kinds of salads and desserts and chef Armour did a stellar job manning the grill. Prior to the food festivities several people got to see a gray-cheeked thrush, making the outing a complete success.

During the mid-point in May Bill Sheehan was entertained by the song and sight of several Canada warblers passing through his yard. At one time he figures there may have been as many as three of these beautiful songsters.

Nighthawks are an uncommon to rare sight around here, especially in the Spring. Prior to this year our records chairman, Mr. Sheehan, reports there had only been two documented sightings. This year, however, observations on these crepuscular bull bats have come from several quarters. Leigh Jones had up to five over Queen's Lake in mid-May. One was seen at Lafayette High School by Jack and Annette Gross on May 28 and three were seen by Dick Hines in the Hamlet on June 2. The question is, will some of these fellows stay here to breed?

A bay-breasted warbler was at Queen's Lake on May 19 and was seen and heard by Leigh Jones. Two ruddy turnstones, very unusual this far inland, were at Indian Field

Creek on the Colonial Parkway the same day along with a black-bellied plover. On May 20 an upland sandpiper was seen near Toano and our ole buddy, John Willis, on a brief visit home from Brown University, saw a magnolia warbler and a probable blue-winged warbler in a tree together over in the Coves off Scotland Street.

Brian Taber has been observing a hummingbird building a nest in his yard. What a treat! People have been wondering where the hummers have been since the big storm in early May. More than likely they're just going about their rather personal business of nesting. Keep your feeders out. They'll buzz back soon enough!

Carolyn Lowe has found three green-backed heron nests on Camp Peary and reports there are red-headed woodpeckers around as well. Red-heads can also be seen near the old church on Jamestown Island according to recent reports.

Purple Martins took to our martin house at the Williamsburg Library immediately. We knew they would. Bob Cross and Dave West have the magic touch!

Ruth Beck and Tom Armour still need six more volunteers for the Breeding Bird Atlas coverage. Please let them know if you can help. In this light, everyone is asked to report any nesting activity of any kind you may run across. This information on every species is vitally needed.

Five young bluebirds are occupying a box at New Quarter Park near Queen's Lake.

Rich Goll and Cindy Fletcher spent a week in the Sunshine State in early May. Amongst their best birds they saw masked and brown boobies, brown noddy, Antillean nighthawks, mangrove cuckoo, budgerigar and short-tailed hawk. Drool!

Ken Esler, one of our younger members and a student at Lafayette, took a long weekend (May 18 - 20) to visit the Point Pelee National Park in Ontario, Canada. He was able to see Mississippi kite, Philadelphia vireo, Brewer's blackbird and Cassin's and Henslow's sparrows, not to mention 19 species of warblers! What a weekend!

Fenton Day reported a western kingbird at St. George's farm on June 4, constituting our first Spring record. One June 2 a Willow flycatcher was clearly heard giving its "fitz-bew" call at the Jamestown Yacht Basin and on June 4 an immature sharp-shinned hawk was observed near Mill Creek on the Colonial Parkway.

Ask Owl:

Owl was asked to find out where the prairie warbler got its name. All of Owl's research have drawn a blank. Consulting the experts on warblers and/or nomenclature sheds no light. Everyone agrees the appellation has been applied ineptly. Terres (Audubon Encyclopedia of North American Birds, 1980) simply states that the bird winters on flat, grassy lands in the South called, prairies. Owl says Boo-hoo!