

## THE WILLIAMSBURG FLYER

November 1984

After an unseasonably warm October the gray skies of November 2 seemed a bit out of place. The passage of the first major cold front through our area in weeks brought the autumn leaves to earth in abundance and shocked us into believing that Halloween had come and gone and Thanksgiving was upon us. Numerous people called to report the flights of Tundra swans (formerly whistling swans) passing over, a sight that always quickens the pulse and creates reflections of primitive times and conditions. Our hold on summer must finally be relinquished to Gentleman Fall.

The monthly meeting for November 21 comes on Thanksgiving Eve at 7:30 p.m. in Room 117 of Millington Hall at William and Mary. Start the holiday with a very special event. In addition to the usual festive remarks about local birds, Ty and Julie Hotchkiss will present one of their magnificent films called "From Reefs to Rockies". For those who are new to our area you'll be interested in knowing that Ty and Julie are nationally recognized Audubon speakers, filming and lecturing about the vast wild resources of North America. They make their home here in Williamsburg, fortunately, and as members of the club are always contributing great bird records for us. Their film work has been highly acclaimed and it is indeed a pleasure to have them share one of their features with us. This event also serves as Cynthia Long's grand finale as program chairperson. She has brought the club her own exuberance, as well as quality speakers and it is fitting that individuals the calibre of Ty and Julie Hotchkiss complete Cynthia's tour of duty. Let's all make a special effort to be on hand. If you don't you're the bird of the day on November 22! (If you don't get that you're a Dodo!)

This month's field trip will be a preview of the Nov. 29-Dec. 2 VSO field trip to Back Bay. On Sunday November 25 at 7:00 a.m. we will depart from the Colonial Williamsburg Information Center parking lot (the lot to the immediate right of the Center on the Colonial Parkway side) to head for Back Bay just south of Virginia Beach. The trip will feature waterfowl of both ocean and fresh water bays. Gannets, loons, scoters and grebes should be in the Atlantic surf while geese, swans and all manner of dabbling and diving ducks will be in Back Bay. Snow buntings may be near the beach dunes and one never knows what hawks may fly over head. The marshes should offer sedge wrens, king rails and maybe even a godwit. Bring lunch, lots of warm clothes and be ready for some great birding.

As announced last month the nominating committee (Ruth Beck, Tom Armour and Bill Sheehan) proposed the following slate of officers to maintain law and order within the club for 1985.

President --- Bill Snyder  
Vice President (Programs) --- Anne Beckley  
Vice President (Newsletter) --- Bill Williams  
Secretary --- Alice Springe  
Treasurer --- Fred Blystone  
Board Members at Large --- Gary Fraser and Carol Hall

This slate will be voted on with any nominations from the floor at our November 21 meeting.

The club has donated a video cassette entitled "Watching Birds" by Roger Tory Peterson to the Williamsburg Regional Library. As always we solicit any recommendations from our members for items to be purchased for the library. As it is now the library often calls us and tells of things the public has been inquiring about.

Enclosed with this newsletter you will find instructions for conducting your own Thanksgiving Window Watch Bird Count. The count only takes 1 hour and can be

a great fun for any group of people. Try it this year and send your information in. Just think in what an enjoyable way you have contributed to gathering scientific data.

The 1984 edition of the Christmas Bird Count will take place on Sunday December 16. We choose Sundays for our counts due to the excessive amount of hunting in our area, especially on and around the military installations. The purpose of the Christmas Bird Count, which is sponsored by the National Audubon Society annually, is to assess the winter bird population in a 15 mile diameter circle. The Williamsburg Count circle has its center at the Information Center. It's our goal to count as many individual birds of as many species as we can find in a 24 hour period within the count circle. The circle is divided into eight sections each with a leader and hopefully a crew of eager beaver birders. More details will appear in December and we hope lots of people will help. Feeder watchers are critical to a successful count. So you can easily contribute and not have to go afield. Mark December 16 down now!

On December 4 there will be a meeting in Room A of the Williamsburg Regional Library to discuss the setting aside of the lower portion of the James River as part of the state's Scenic River system. The meeting begins at 7:30 p.m. and will feature Patricia Jackson of the Lower James River Association. Anyone interested in the status of the James River and its protection should attend.

Our hard working treasurer, Fred Blystone, has tunneled his way through the bird seed piled up in his house from people who didn't pick it up on Bird Seed Savings Day in early October. The sale has netted us about \$1,500, but has left poor Fred with a burden no one should have to deal with. It's hard for anyone to fully fathom all the effort Fred puts in to the sale. We surely can't thank him enough.

Ever heard of a haner? If you lived on the upper reaches of the Chesapeake Bay around Crisfield or Deal or Elliott Islands you'd know them well, and probably would have even enjoyed them as a culinary delight. The bayman harvest haners by placing an old broom handle (or similar pole) out a window and wait for the quarry to land. When the haner lands it is promptly dispatched with a gun and readied for eating. Still don't know what they are, huh? Actually haner is probably an obliteration of the word hammer, for yellow hammer, better known to us as the flicker. It's true!

The October 21 field trip to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel Islands and Kiptopeke was met with little in the way of fall migrants in the land bird category. The success of the day was generated by the crafty hawk trapping of Charlie and Stalma Hacker. While the group watched they caught both a sharp-shinned and a cooper's hawk for everyone to see up close and personal. A steady trickle of hawks all day including merlins and a peregrine or two made the journey worthwhile for all in attendance.

Brian Taber had a nighthawk off Jamestown Road October 11 and sora rails were seen and heard by Dick Hines through at least October 26. The Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel yielded the following goodies for Todd Mathes, Leigh Jones, Fenton Day and Brian Taber; peregrine falcon, great cormorant, snow bunting, white-crowned sparrow, sharp-tailed sparrow. Bill Sheehan and Tom Armour observed a red-throated loon off Kingsmill in early November.

While no reports of winter finches have been received there are some winter birds with us. These include sapsuckers, dark-eyed juncos and white-throated sparrows. Slowly but surely they'll make their way to the feeders.

The final tallies for the Kiptopeke hawk watch are not all in yet and hopefully more information can be gathered in November. The picture thus far shows almost 25,000 raptors in over 300 hours of counting during 40-plus days of observation. This is by far the finest showing for an east coast hawk count location outside of Cape May. This year's efforts have had the attention of top flight observers from as far away as New Hampshire and New Jersey. Luke Walter Smith, Kiptopeke's most avid enthusiast says, its only 10 more months till Kiptopeke '85.

Ask Owl:

Virginia's cumulative bird checklist has been increased by two - white-winged dove and sharp-tailed sandpiper. This brings the state's total list to 411.

In order to conserve heat willow ptarmigan, snow buntings and ruffed grouse have been known to bury under the snow in extremely cold weather!



1. Name of observer, and address where the observations were made. (Please be sure your correct mailing address is on the other side of this sheet.)

Zip

10. Miles from post office \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Date: November 25, 1982
17. Exact hour of count: Began \_\_\_\_\_, ended \_\_\_\_\_. (Use 24-hour clock if convenient)
19. Temperature at beginning of count: \_\_\_\_\_°F
21. Weather (Please circle or underline): 1. Sunny 2. Partly cloudy, some sunshine. 3. Partly cloudy, no sunshine. 4. Completely overcast. 5. Overcast, light drizzle. 6. Overcast, occasional showers. 7. Persistent rain. 8. Occasional snow, sleet or freezing rain. 9. Persistent snow, sleet or freezing rain.
22. Wind: 1. None or very gentle. 3. Gentle 5. Moderate 7. Strong 9. Very Strong
23. Habitat: 1. Urban, tiny yard or none. 2. Urban, large yard. 3. Suburban, tiny yard or none. 4. Suburban, large yard or gardens or fields. 5. Rural, mostly croplands nearby. 6. Rural, mostly grassy fields or pastures nearby. 7. Rural, mixed woods and fields. 8. Rural, mostly pine woods nearby. 9. Rural, mostly deciduous woods nearby.
24. Type(s) of feeding situation(s) or baths: 1. Cracked corn, only, on ground. 2. Mixed seed, with or without cracked corn, on ground. 3. Raised feeder, mixed seed with some sunflower. 4. Raised feeder, anything but thistle or sunflower. 5. Raised feeder, sunflower seed only. 6. Thistle seed in separate feeder. 7. Suet, with mixed seeds or peanuts, or other food material. 8. Suet, without mixed seeds or peanuts. 9. Bird bath or pan of water.
25. Total number of feeders, grain stations on ground, and bird baths: \_\_\_\_\_

### BIRDS OBSERVED

SPECIES OF BIRD	NUMBER IN CIRCLE	OUTSIDE OF CIRCLE	SPECIES OF BIRD	NUMBER IN CIRCLE	OUTSIDE OF CIRCLE
27. Rock Dove			56. House Sparrow		
28. Mourning Dove			62. Cardinal		
29. Common Flicker			64. Purple Finch		
31. Red-bellied Woodpecker			65. House Finch		
32. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker			67. American Goldfinch		
33. Downy Woodpecker			69. Dark-eyed Junco		
34. Hairy Woodpecker			74. White-throated Sparrow		
36. Blue Jay			76. Song Sparrow		
37. Common Crow			Additional Species:		
38. Black-capped Chickadee					
39. Carolina Chickadee					
40. Tufted Titmouse					
41. White-breasted Nuthatch					
45. Carolina Wren					
46. Mockingbird					
51. Ruby-crowned Kinglet					
53. Starling					

(Over, please)

## THE THANKSGIVING BIRD COUNT — NOVEMBER 25, 1982

**SWEET BRIAR COLLEGE**

**LYNCHBURG BIRD CLUB**

We invite you to join in the Thanksgiving Bird Count on Thanksgiving Day this year. If you are interested, but have never participated before, here is what the count is "all about". Observers, working individually, gather information on the occurrence of birds around their feeders during one uninterrupted hour on Thanksgiving Day each year. Birds are counted if they come into a pre-designated horizontal circle 15 feet in diameter. Numbers of individuals of each kind are recorded on the special tabulation form provided on the other side of this sheet. Notes are also made on weather conditions, habitat, types of feeders, time of day, etc. We ask you then to mail the completed form to the compiler, Dr. Ernest P. Edwards, Sweet Briar, VA 24595. All of the information in the individual reports is then stored in a computer databank, and analyzed to yield valuable insights into trends in abundance, migration patterns, factors influencing bird distribution, and the like.

**Instructions** — Please use a standard procedure for the count, as follows:

1. Select a circular area 15 feet in diameter, horizontally, in a place which you can watch conveniently. Include as many feeders, bird baths, shrubs, trees, and other attractions as you wish. Now imagine the circle extending upward, as a cylinder, to an indefinite height into the air. This is your magic circle for observation. Count the birds of each species which come into this circle (or cylinder) during the hour of your count, and write the totals for each species in the chart on the front of the sheet. If you see birds which are **not** on the list, write the names under Additional Species, and indicate how many of each you saw. (If you want to count the number of times birds **visit** the feeder, as well as numbers of individuals, you could enter the numbers as, for example: Tufted Titmouse 3/42. This would indicate that you saw 3 individual Tufted Titmice make a total of 42 visits to the feeder during the hour.) If you want to record the birds you see **outside** the circle, write the numbers in the separate column provided. The information about birds outside the circle is not stored in the computer, however. Be sure you count for one hour, of sixty **consecutive** minutes.

2. Record the information about time, weather, habitat, etc., on the tabulation form. Be sure to fill in the name of the person who did the count, and the address where the count was actually done. Usually this will be the same as your mailing address, but whether it is or not, please be sure that the **count** address is on the tabulation form (the other side of this sheet), and that your **correct** mailing address is on this side of this sheet. Please send in your count whether you see many or few birds, or even if you see none at all. This is particularly important when we try to make year-by-year comparisons of the abundance of certain birds.

Each year we publish a Thanksgiving Bird Count News covering the previous year's count. If you would like a copy of the News in late winter or early spring of 1983 please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope with your count.

Please send the report to: Dr. Ernest P. Edwards, Thanksgiving Bird Count, Sweet Briar, VA 24595.

**DR. ERNEST P. EDWARDS**  
**THANKSGIVING BIRD COUNT**  
**SWEET BRIAR COLLEGE**  
**SWEET BRIAR, VIRGINIA 24595**

**24595**

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