

## THE WILLIAMSBURG FLYER

March 1984

When I was a youngster the truest sign of Spring was the sound of the spring peepers and chorus frogs, crigglers I called them. This year the crigglers burst forth along about Valentine's Day. By February 27 Tom Armour had seen the season's first osprey, and folks were beginning to smile about an Indian Spring. If Indian Summer extends that season why can't a similar label be hung around early warmth as winter bitterly gives up its grip? Since March blew in however, the crigglers have been fairly silent, miffed by seasonal trikery, but content their turn will come. You know too!

It will also be your turn to make sure all good bird clubbers are at the March 21 meeting at 7:30 p.m. in room 101 of Millington Hall at William and Mary. Carl "Spike" Knuth of the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries will present a program on waterfowl photography and wildlife art. For anyone who has an interest in Virginia's natural wonders the name "Spike" Knuth should instantly ring a bell. His illustrations of the Old Dominion's plants and animals have graced many covers of Virginia Wildlife magazine and have been featured in many publications throughout the state. You won't want to miss this most talented and entertaining speaker. Mr. Knuth will be in our area filming wildlife and we are very pleased to welcome him as our feature guest. You'll also be whipped to a froth over our bird identification segment of the program and all the interesting bird tidbits the rest of our members have to share.

The field trip for this month will take place on Sunday, March 25, 1984. The destination will be one of the winter's hottest birding areas, Hog Island, just across the James River. Waterfowl will be the attraction and trippers should be able to gaze on thousands of Canada geese (is the barnacle goose still with them?), pintails, mallards, black ducks, green-winged teal, probably some blue-winged teal and many more. Brown-headed nuthatch beep and cavort throughout the pines, and harriers tilt and glide over the marshes. It's possible the goshawk may still be about and certainly ospreys will be available and probably a bald eagle or two. This has always been one of our most popular excursions so make plans to depart at 8:00 a.m. from the parking to the right of the (under reconstruction) Colonial Williamsburg Information Center. Be prepared for some wind and chill near the water and car pooling for the ferry.

The Bluebird Committee got several more worthy publicity mentions in February. Bob Morris was pictured with several "house builders" at the Veterans Hospital as they put the finishing touches on our last batch of bluebird homes, all of which have been sold by the way. Then, Leigh Jones, the Committee chairlady, was given a special tribute in the February 22 Virginia Gazette Limelight section. The well deserved and highly earned feature pointed out the studies Leigh and her committee are making to make our area more attractive and suitable for bluebirds. Our own Bill Snyder penned the article.

The Bluebird Committee is far from a one person operation. Many hands help assemble boxes, put up boxes and poles and check nesting birds when they settle down. Bob Morris has been a key factor in getting our boxes made while Tom Armour, Bill Sheehan and Ben Gilbert have assisted in getting used bird houses cleaned for this years prospective areas to place boxes, and Bob Beckley has spent a great deal of time and effort cutting and threading poles to place the nest boxes on. We salute you one and all for everything you've done for the club and the bluebirds.

Purple martin scouts will be back any day now and Bob Cross the Purple Martin Committee chairman is anxious to hear that first soft warble of a martin

in flight. Bob's efforts were the subject of Bruce Reid's extensive article in the Inner Views section of the Sunday, March 4 Daily Press. Next to bluebirds, and with many people equally as loved, few birds attracted as much attention by the public looking for nesters in their yards as the purple martins. They are clean, quiet and extremely beneficial through their insectivorous feeding habits. Bob Cross would like to see more martins in our area and he is working diligently to that end. He's part P.R. man and full time purple martin studier. Lend him a hand some time and you'll find out why!

Our Audible Audubon gifts have been placed in six local elementary schools. These nifty picture and sound packages of common birds have been warmly received by the schools and they send us their sincerest thanks.

Bill Sheehan recently polished off another edition of his Analysis of the Bird Records of the Williamsburg Area. The latest effort tabulates the pertinent data on almost 300 species of birds we've had documented in our locality over the last several years. Be sure to get one at our next meeting. It's free and the Captain would love for you to add to it. He's always ready to accept bird data and is especially fond of those "meat and potatoes" records most folks think are not unusual enough to mention.

Here's a list of our newest members added during February:

Jeanne Lindholm and Jeff and Cindy Mathews

Jesse Thomas

Sue Ridd

Brice Reid

Richard and Sharon Kiefer

We are proud to have you with us.

Fred Blystone is including a membership renewal form in the newsletter of anyone who has not paid for 1984. This will be the last renewal notice and after this month those who haven't re-upped will no longer be on our mailing list.

The state of Virginia added species 409 to the avifauna list on January 29. However, the event was less than pleasant. The species was the gyrfalcon, North America's largest falcon and a native of the Arctic cliffs. The individual which constituted the record was discovered near Elkton in Rockingham County. The bird was a young male. It had a bullet wound which severely damaged its right wing and adjoining body tissue. Fortunately, knowledgeable people rescued the bird from an agonizing death and took it to the Shenandoah Valley Wildlife Rehabilitation Center (remember its director, Ed Clark, spoke to us last Fall) where it has been patched up, though never to fly again. It will serve as a classroom study animal, alive, but deprived of living free due to the wanton arrogance and ignorance of some human who took advantage of being free with a gun.

Ontario, Canada was the place to be last month for owl enthusiasts. Apparently a real invasion of those northern goodies was quite spectacular. Great gray, boreal, hawks, snowy and saw-whet owls were easily observed and there are stories of the great grays flying in to take mice from people's hands!

The Grandview Beach field trip of February 18 got fogged out. That's right, fogged out. Bob Cross, Dave West and Leight Jones decided to make the most of the situation and went to Bill Sheehan's house and watched his two red-breasted nuthatches. Not a bad ending to a dreary beginning. Meanwhile Bob Anderson, Fenton Day and Bruce Reid peered through the fog at Hog Island and observed the controversial goshawks and were unsuccessful in locating the barnacle goose. Bruce did report seeing several shovelers there on February 19.

During that same weekend the Virginia Society of Ornithology was having its annual Outer Banks field trip. About 70 birders enjoyed fine weather and great birding. Tom Armour located a rare Western grebe and Bill Akers found a Brewer's blackbird. Other highlights included white ibis, merlin, 2-3 peregrine



falcons, brown pelicans, gannets and black crowned night herons. Ruth Beck and Tom Armour were the trip hosts and leaders and in true Williamsburg Bird Club style came through in stellar fashion.

John Dillard and Betsy Roszell of Richmond made a stop at Hog Island on February 19 while returning from the Outer Banks excitement. There they created a little of their own. They discovered a female black-headed grosbeak in one of the cleared pine stands. Whether this was the same bird Fred Blystone's mockingbird had thrashed from his feeder is mere speculation, but it lends more validity to the earlier sightings. You just never know, huh?

A black-headed gull has been at Chincoteague again this winter. Last year there was an immature there, in the parking lot near the beach. This year there is an adult in the same place. Makes you wonder.

Bob Anderson observed a red-necked grebe off Ft. Story in early February. This species normally stays well off shore, so that sighting is an excellent one.

The Bay Bridge Tunnel had a flurry of excitement February 25. Teta Kain and Harry Armistead saw a snow bunting on Island 1, a kittiwake on Island 2, and an Iceland gull on Island 3. Ty and Julie Hotchkiss saw 2 Iceland gulls on the tunnel islands, one first year bird, one second year bird and a lesser black-backed full (a life bird for them -- which is super considering they have over 600 already!) in early March. What a place -- those desolate but avian magnetic piles of rock and cement! When are we going?

The bird alert word rang out March 4 for another rarity south of the James. Teta Kain called to let us know of 2 Eurasian wigeons at Sunken Meadows Pond near Claremont. Bill Sheehan grabbed his list from his closet and he and Tom Armour got to see them as well as two mute swans. Brian Taber was able to find 3 male Eurasian wigeon on March 5 while only 2 could be located the next day by Leigh Jones. Our last record for this rare straggler was in February of 1970 from the York River.

Thom Blair reports seeing mourning warblers in Louisiana. Will Spring get him migrating home? We hope so.

Twelve turkeys and lots of eagle activity have been called in from York River State Park recently.

Florida found Ty and Julie Hotchkiss amongst its visitors last month as well as Brian Taber. Ty and Julie saw limpkin, vermilion flycatcher and a scissor tail flycatcher. Brian was able to squeeze in a day of birding and recorded smooth billed anis, the rare short-tailed hawk, reddish egret, red-whiskered bulbul, spot-breasted oriole and snail kites. Super birds folks. We all scan this with envy!

Ask Owl:

What prominent bird club member recently became a member of the Golden Eagle pass crowd? Hint: He opened Bill Sheehan's closet to check off the Eurasian wigeon.

Normally, Eastern kingbirds are about as pugnacious as any winged creature could be. In winter, in South America, they become very social in large flocks feeding in abundant fruit trees.

One theory about fall warblers becoming so uniformly similar is that many of them aggregate in mixed species flocks. The similarity in their plumage may reduce interspecific competition.

ATTACHED PLEASE FIND A REGISTRATION BLANK FOR THE VIRGINIA SOCIETY OF ORNITHOLOGY'S ANNUAL MEETING IN HAMPTON MAY 4,5,6. REGISTRATION DEADLINE IS APRIL 16. YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS THIS EVENT SO SIGN UP. MANY OF US WILL BE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THE MEETING.

THE CHAMBERLIN  
Fort Monroe,  
Hampton, Virginia 23651

ROOM RESERVATION--VSO

DEADLINE April 16.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE # \_\_\_\_\_

DATE OF ARRIVAL \_\_\_\_\_ TIME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE OF DEPARTURE \_\_\_\_\_ # OF PEOPLE \_\_\_\_\_

CREDIT CARD-TYPE \_\_\_\_\_ card number \_\_\_\_\_ expiration date \_\_\_\_\_

ACCOMMODATIONS REQUIRED

- ☐ Single occupancy ☐ Extra person  
☐ Double occupancy ☐ 1 Bed  
☐ 1-Bedroom Suite ☐ 2 beds

Additional charge for more than two in a room. To guarantee reservations, please enclose one(1) nights deposit. You may also use your favorite credit card.

Send direct to Chamberlin-----REFUNDABLE IF CANCELLED 3 DAYS IN ADVANCE.

REGISTRATION FORM FOR THE VSO MEETING/BANQUET

\_\_\_\_ # of persons, at \$3 each or family \$5 \_\_\_\_\_

Banquet fee

\_\_\_\_ # of persons at \$13 each (includes Tax and gratuity) \_\_\_\_\_

All other meals will be on your own.

TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

NAMES OF ADDITIONAL PERSONS YOU ARE REGISTERING

Make checks payable to Hampton Roads Bird Club and mail with this reservation form to: Stalma Hacker, 300 York-Warwick Drive, Yorktown, Virginia 23692