

# The Williamsburg Flyer

DECEMBER, 1986

The end of the year is upon us. The shorter days are filled with lots of activity, as Christmas bird counts take place in 1500 locations in our hemisphere. Our count will be held on **December 21st**, just as winter begins. We will assemble at **7 a.m.** at the **Colonial Williamsburg Information Center** and organize into our 8 groups of census takers.

Bill Williams is again in charge of our count, and asks for as many participants as possible to help make the day a success. The tally will be held at **5 p.m.** in **Millington Room 102**, just a few doors down from our regular meeting room, 117. Please join this very worthwhile and fun event, especially those of you who never have before. Our **10th Annual Count** is a landmark for the club and the perfect time to share in this experience.

If you would like to keep track of feeder activity, that's fine, too. Just let Bill know so that he can record your observations.

Well, the surprise visit by the bellydancer added an extra bit of tropical flavor to Bill Aker's November program. As we left, Bill quipped, "Thanks for coming by, Mom." The subject turned serious again and we all enjoyed a very informative talk on tropical birds, deforestation, and ecology. Bill pointed out that only 2% of the earth's surface is tropical rain forest, yet it contains over 50% of the plant and animal species. Protection of this resource is essential to the future wealth of the entire world.

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Our new slate of officers was elected at the November meeting and the results are as follows:

President - Bill Williams  
Vice-President, Newsletter - Brian Taber  
Vice-Presidents, Programs - Barbara Moorman and Thom Blair  
Secretary - Joy Archer  
Treasurer - Fred Blystone  
Board Members at Large - Steve Reams and Joanne Braun.

Good luck to officers and members alike in 1987, the year we host the Virginia Society of Ornithology Annual Conference!

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There is no December club program due to our Christmas count and the field trip to **Back Bay** is **December 6th** as announced in the November newsletter. A summary of the Back Bay adventure will be in the January newsletter.

Before I get into bird news, I want to reproduce something that appeared in a recent newsletter of the Miami Tropical Audubon Society. It is the American Birding Association's Code of Ethics, which was included in an article about the potential hazards of birding. I am glad for the example it sets and for the increased attention to human behavior. It reads as follows:

## American Birding Association Code of Ethics

We, the Membership of the American Birding Association, believe that all birders have an obligation at all times to protect wildlife, the natural environment, and the rights of others. We therefore pledge ourselves to provide leadership in meeting this obligation by adhering to the following general guidelines of good birding behavior.

*I. Birders must always act in ways that do not endanger the welfare of birds or other wildlife.*

- In keeping with this principle we will
- Observe and photograph birds without knowingly disturbing them in any significant way.
  - Avoid chasing or repeatedly flushing birds.
  - Only sparingly use recordings and similar methods of attracting birds and not use these methods in heavily birded areas.
  - Keep an appropriate distance from nests and nesting colonies so as not to disturb them or expose them to danger.
  - Refrain from handling birds or eggs unless engaged in recognized research activities.

*II. Birders must always act in ways that do not harm the natural environment.*

- In keeping with this principle we will
- Stay on existing roads, trails, and pathways whenever possible in order to avoid trampling or otherwise disturbing fragile habitat.
  - Leave all habitat as we found it.

III. *Birders must always respect the rights of others.*

In keeping with this principle, we will

- Respect the privacy and property of others by observing "No Trespassing" signs and by asking permission to enter private or posted lands.
- Observe all laws and the rules and regulations which govern public use of birding areas.
- Practice common courtesy in our contacts with others. For example, we will limit our requests for information, and we will make them at reasonable hours of the day.
- Always behave in a manner that will enhance the image of the birding community in the eyes of the public.

IV. *Birders in groups should assume special responsibilities.*

As group members, we will

- Take special care to alleviate the problems and disturbances that are multiplied when more people are present.
- Act in consideration of the group's interest, as well as our own.
- Support by our actions the responsibility of the group leader(s) for the conduct of the group.

As group leaders, we will

- Assume responsibility for the conduct of the group.
- Learn and inform the group of any special rules, regulations, or conduct applicable to the area or habitat being visited.
- Limit groups to a size that does not threaten the environment or the peace and tranquility of others.
- Teach others birding ethics by our words and example.

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As many as 12 Harlequin Ducks have been seen from the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel in November. Eiders and Great Cormorants are also being reported. Two White Pelicans are being seen frequently in Swan Cove at Chincoteague.

It was reported that Walter Smith, of Kiptopeke fame, caught and banded a female Dickcissel at his home near the James River in Hampton. I do not have the date of the capture.

Rich Goll and Cindy Carlson have had Pine Siskins and Purple Finches at their feeder in late November, as well as Evening Grosbeaks overhead. Grosbeaks have been infrequently seen at Charlottesville feeders.

The Alexandria, Virginia area has had 15 species of ducks including all three mergansers recently. This

information as well as other sightings was obtained by calling the "Voice of the Naturalist", an information service in Washington, D.C. Anyone may call and listen to a recorded message that is updated weekly. The number is (202) 652-1088. You may also call to pass along interesting information to be shared. The number to call to report is given when you call the above recording.

Alice Springe reported a Red-breasted Nuthatch at her feeder in November, though it had not returned two weeks later. Fenton Day found a male Yellow-headed Blackbird in a massive flock of blackbirds in Surry County in late November.

In the Longhill Swamp area on November 5th, there was a rather late Solitary Vireo, a Tree Sparrow and seven Pine Siskins. In the area, too, were the usual Red-headed Woodpeckers, White-throated Sparrows, Field Sparrows, Swamp Sparrows, and American Goldfinches.

On the following day, I saw a Snow Bunting at Carter's Grove Plantation in the Wolstenholm Towne section near the river. There were also dozens of Song and Swamp sparrows there. On November 24th a flock of about 75 Siskins was on Diascund Road in the upper county.

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In response to hummingbird feeder questions raised at our September meeting, Julie Hotchkiss gave me a copy of Bird Watcher's Digest which ran an answer to similar queries. It said in part that honey should not be used in place of sugar and a four-to-one mixture of water-to-sugar comes close to imitating many natural nectars. In addition, hummingbirds do not delay their fall migrations due to the abundance of natural nor man-made foods. The writer also felt that well-run feeder stations certainly help to sustain birds during times of drought.

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I would like to thank everyone who contributed information to the newsletter over the past year. I also encourage others to call or write with information to share. It certainly makes my job as editor easier when I have something to edit and not to create. I welcome comments and suggestions on the newsletter's content and format, and will try to be sure that it reflects the club's excellent image. I look forward to an excellent year in 1987.

WELCOME, please, new members Donald and Marian Porter, and Carro and Taylor Seay.

Fred Blyston reports that he still has thistle, peanut bits and sunflower hearts for sale.

## BIRD OF THE SEASON

Instead of a December bird, I would like to give a quiz on the previous 11 birds highlighted throughout the year. All you have to do is match the common name with the scientific name:

1. Pine Siskin \_\_\_\_\_
2. Eurasian Widgeon \_\_\_\_\_
3. Yellow-throated Warbler \_\_\_\_\_
4. Cattle Egret \_\_\_\_\_
5. Ruff \_\_\_\_\_
6. Great Crested Flycatcher \_\_\_\_\_
7. Black Vulture \_\_\_\_\_
8. Peeps \_\_\_\_\_
9. Philadelphia Vireo \_\_\_\_\_
10. Swainson's Thrush \_\_\_\_\_
11. Winter Wren \_\_\_\_\_

- a. *Dendroica dominica*
- b. *Bubulcus ibis*
- c. *Myiarchus crinitus*
- d. *Calidris*
- e. *Catharus ustulatus*
- f. *Philomachus pugnax*
- g. *Carduelis pinus*
- h. *Troglodytes troglodytes*
- i. *Vireo philadelphicus*
- j. *Anas penelope*
- k. *Coragyps atratus*

## DATES TO REMEMBER

## ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

December 21 - 7 a.m. - Information Center

Results will be tallied at 5:00 p.m. in Millington Hall in the Conference Room. Refreshments will be served.



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To submit information for the newsletter,  
contact Brian Taber at 253-1181 or write to  
104 Druid Court, Williamsburg, Virginia.

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*good luck!*