

WILLIAMSBURG FLYER

October 1987

Ten years have passed and our club continues to be very active and strong. Our accomplishments are many, including scholarships to students and books to the library. We have conducted field trips regularly and collected a large body of data about bird life in the Williamsburg area. The Annotated checklist covers 300 species. We have twice hosted the Virginia Society of Ornithology annual meeting and members have studied Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, Raptors, Colonial waterbirds, Purple Martins and Bluebirds. Our programs have been given by experts from both far and near. We have conducted Spring and Christmas counts. We have sold a tremendous amount of birdseed and have shared knowledge and friendship with many. Everyone should congratulate themselves for being part of such a worthwhile and thriving experience.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

The October Club Program will be given on the 21st at 7:30 p.m. at Millington. The speaker is Dr. Gus Hall of the Biology Department at William and Mary. He will tell us about the birds and geography of Guatemala and Costa Rica. Please be on hand for an interesting journey to the tropics, a beautiful though threatened habitat.

Last month's field trip to York River State Park occurred on a beautiful late summer day. The group of six included Joy Archer and Joe and Grace Doyle. They saw Redstarts, Pine Warblers, Pileated Woodpeckers, Osprey, Green-backed Heron and a rather early Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

Teta Kain presented a delightful program in September on "The Nature of Things." She did not discuss the states' new annotated checklist of Virginia's Birdlife, although she did have some copies on hand for sale after the meeting. Her slides were very interesting and included such diverse subjects as Red Bats, mushrooms, flowers, frogs, spiders and birds. York River State Park was the setting.

The upcoming field trip will be on October 24th. Bill Williams will lead the trip across the Bridge-Tunnel to Kiptopeke to watch hawks, warblers, thrushes, flycatchers and more. Departure is at 7:30 sharp from the Information Center.

On its first day of operation for the 1987 season, the Kiptopeke banding station recorded its 150th species. A Yellow-throated warbler, an early migrant, was captured and released on August 29th.

Joe Doyle of the Bluebird Committee would like for those who monitored trails this summer to send him their results as soon as possible so that he can compile his report. Data can be sent to him at 321 Archer's Mead, Williamsburg.

Bob Morris of the Purple Martin Committee reports that a number of houses are in poor shape. The committee will meet and decide what to do about the problem.

Bill Williams reports that 50 Merlins were captured at Wise Point near Fisherman Island on September 18th. On September 24, Bill found a Rose-breasted Grosbeak eating Dogwood berries in his yard. He also recorded over 100 Cliff Swallows, local Bald Eagles and a few Merlins at Kiptopeke on September 5th.

Fall began on September 22 officially, yet few leaves had turned color by then and few Warblers had been seen.

The first few frontal passages in October will undoubtedly bring through a great number of migrants southward. During the last week of September, in my yard, I did see Nighthawks, White-eyed Vireos, Chimney Swifts, Tree Swallows, Cuckoos, Redstarts and Black-throated, Green, Bay-breasted, Black and White, Yellow and Parula Warblers.



The VSO annual Chincoteague event was held September 18-20. Though the weather was less than perfect, some highlights included Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Lesser Golden-Plover, Hudsonian Godwit and White Pelican. On the same weekend, the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel was visited by Lesser Black-backed Gull and Yellow-headed Blackbird. As always, the Chincoteague weekend is exciting.

NEWS ITEMS:

On September 12, I was fortunate to be part of a six-man pelagic trip off of Virginia Beach. The weather was perfect, the seas calm, and the visibility was good. We found Wilson's Petrels, over 100 Cory's Shearwaters, Audubon's Shearwaters, Bridled and Arctic Terns, Red and Red-necked Phalaropes, Pomarine, Parasitic and Long-tailed Jaeger and about 30 Pilot Whales.

Bill Akers, a club member who lives in Charlottesville, and Jerry Via of Blacksburg returned in late August from a safari to Africa. In three weeks they were able to find and identify an incredible 397 species of birds. I look forward to their excellent slides and—new for this trip—video tapes of African wildlife.

NOTE:

The club is in need of a Nominating Committee to find candidates for Club officers for 1988. Anyone who is interested in heading up this fun and rewarding assignment, please call Bill Williams at 565-3491. This Committee generates a list of people willing to fill the executive positions with voting taking place at the November meeting.

REMINDER:

One last reminder about Bird Seed Sale. The last date to order is October 21 and the pick up date is November 7th from 8:00 a.m. until noon. Please be on time to pick up orders and come early if you can help unload the truck. This is a real group effort that goes more smoothly as the help increases. Also, give an order blank to a friend. We hope to have our best sale ever!

Bird of the Season

White-throated Sparrow: *Zonotrichia albicollis*

From about the middle of October to the middle of May, the White-throated Sparrow lives in our area. The adult bird is set apart from other sparrows by a large white throat patch and a yellow area between the eye and bill. There are two basic forms, one with tan head stripes, one with white. The light stripes alternate with black. Young birds are similar with streaking on the sides and breast. They often lack the yellow spot.

Preferring to feed on the ground near dense cover, White-throats are common as they scratch in the dry leaves underneath feeders in many urban areas. They breed in New England and in much of Canada, wintering in the Eastern United States and parts of northern Mexico.

Their often-uttered many-syllabled song is a melodious whistle, variously described as "Old Sam Peabody, Peabody, Peabody", and "Pure sweet Canada, Canada, Canada" and others. The other distinctive notes are a sharp "chink" and a thin "tseep." Look for them in low tangles, forest margins and hedgerows throughout the Williamsburg area.

The following is an excerpt from a report on the 1987 Waterfowl Fall Flight Forecast. The report is produced by the U.S. Department of the Interior:

"This year's fall flight of ducks and geese will be much the same as last year's.

Duck populations are essentially unchanged from 1986 and the fall flight in all four waterfowl flyways is expected to be similar to last year. The project fall flight index for 1987 is 75 million, compared with 73 million for 1986. The index is a relative figure reflecting the trend in fall duck populations rather than the exact number of ducks.

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This year's fall flight index reflects the continued depressed status of important duck species. In 1985, after several years of drought in key nesting areas, duck breeding populations fell to the lowest levels in 30 years. The fall flight index was 62 million, down from 80 million in 1984, and the lowest since such projections were first made in 1969. In July, the two wildlife agencies reported that 1987 breeding populations for most key duck species remained much the same as last year, with 6 of the 10 major duck species—mallard, American wigeon, blue-winged teal, northern pintail, canvasback, and scaup—remaining significantly below their average population sizes from 1985-86.

The fall flight outlook for most goose populations this year is similar to last year's. Nesting conditions for geese were generally good in most of the United States except on Alaska's Copper River Delta, the only nesting area of the Dusky Canada goose. Conditions in much of the Canadian Arctic were poorer than normal, and poor production is expected from north central and northeastern Canada and the western Hudson Bay. Conditions were good in the western Canadian arctic, south Hudson Bay region, and the Canadian prairies."

There is a new bird club in the area—in fact it is in my backyard. I hope they do not compete with our club for selling birdseed. One of the officers handed me a copy of a recent census and it reads as follows:

housefench 11
 Cardanails 13
 rens 6
~~housefench~~
 tanenger 2
 warblers 1
 Doves 8
 co-cos 2

To submit information for the newsletter, contact
 Brian Taber at 253-1181 or write to 104 Druid Court,
 Williamsburg, VA 23185.
