

# WILLIAMSBURG FLYER

September 1987

**T**he first club program of the fall season will be a presentation by Teta Kain on the *Annotated Checklist of Virginia's Birds*. This book was unveiled at the VSO conference in June after much hard work by many people. The meeting will be as usual in Millington, Room 117 at 7:30 on September 16. Plan to be on hand to hear an excellent speaker, and catch up on club news.

The September field trip will be on the 19th. We will travel to York River State Park for a "Warbler Fest". This area provides several different areas for tree-top and low level birding. Come out and enjoy the migration. Assemble as usual at the Information Center Parking lot at 7:30.

Highlights of the July field trip included Stilt Sandpiper, Semi-palmated Plover, Forster's Terns feeding young, two immature Bald Eagles, downy baby Killdeer, Yellow Warblers, and a very cooperative Least Bittern. Five people accompanied Bill Williams on this trip to Hog Island.

In fact, the Hog Island area was so productive, it was also the site for the August trip. This time three people enjoyed the cooler weather and also found the contingent from the Cape Henry Audubon Society as well. The best birds were the Wilson's Phalaropes, one immature Bald Eagle, two Upland Sandpipers, and ten Black Terns.

The unbelievable heat finally broke on August 11, when temperatures only reached the upper seventies. Along with the cooler air there appeared an amazing assortment of birds at Hog Island in early August. Tom Armour, Bill Sheehan, Ty and Julie Hotchkiss, and Fenton Day saw the waterbird migration in full swing. Among the sightings were Western, Semi-palmated, Least, Stilt, Pectoral, Spotted, White-rumped, and Upland Sandpipers. An Avocet in breeding plumage was discovered, as was an immature White Ibis, the fifth record of that species for our area. There were many Killdeer, and Semi-palmated Plovers, along with both species of Yellowlegs. The herons included both Night Herons, Tri-colored, Little Blue, Snowy, and Great Egret. Glossy Ibis was also noted. A Bonaparte's Gull was either an early migrant or perhaps a bird that summered in our area. Short-billed Dowitchers, and a Willet were found, as were Bank Swallows, Caspian, Royal, Least, and Forster's Terns.

I saved the best birds for last. Two Marbled Godwits were at Hog Island, as well, and that represents another area record. The birds towered

above the smaller shorebirds on the mudflats of the large pool at the end of the main road. Hog Island is certainly enjoying one of its best late summer migrations in years.

On August 18, Tom added Sandwich Tern, Black Tern, and Sanderling to the already impressive array. On August 21 Cindy Carlson found a Black-throated Blue Warbler in early migration--singing no less--on one of her early morning walks near First Colony.

Bill Williams took a trip to Oklahoma in August, and while he was fishing, he managed to take time to look at Mississippi Kites and Scissortailed Flycatchers.

Fenton Day, while helping to conduct a biology workshop, turned up a Lark Sparrow at False Cape, south of Back Bay. Lark Sparrows are rare, but regular, visitors along our coast, showing up usually from mid-August to late September.

## Traveling . . .

Ty and Julie Hotchkiss spent an enviable summer traveling to Northwest territories, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia in Canada. They also spent time in Montana, North Dakota and other western areas, stopping at many of the most beautiful parks and refuges in North America. They were gone from late May to mid-July.

Among the many things seen were Whooping Cranes at their summer home at Wood Buffalo National Park. The Wood Buffalo, different from the Plains version of the mammal is very large and prefers a different habitat. They also encountered Hawk Owls and Great Gray Owls, Bohemian Waxwings, White-winged Crossbills, Spragues Pipits, Baird's Sparrows, and Red-necked Grebes. What a great trip!

The Kiptopeke bird banding station on the southern tip of the Eastern Shore will re-open on August 29 and run through mid-October. Since this is the premiere spot, too, for hawk watching, it makes for a great day trip. Come out and get close looks at birds and enjoy the companionship of some great people at the same time.



## ***BIRD SEED, ANYONE?***

The club bird seed sale is being planned by Bill Williams, Fred Blystone and Shirley Raynes. **The seed pick-up will be on November 7. The last day to order will be at the October 21st meeting.** The order blanks should be out in September. We look for an excellent variety this year of high quality seed and feeders.

***Please keep spreading the word that we are the place to buy seed!***

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## **HAPPENINGS . . .**

There is an event called "Holiday for Hawks" sponsored by the Raptorians and several other groups, on September 11, 12 and 13 at Rockfish Gap on Afton Mountain near Waynesboro. It is the first statewide meeting for Virginia Hawkwatchers and a workshop for identification of hawks in the air. The gathering place for people is the Holiday Inn there (P.O. Box 849, Waynesboro, VA 22980 (703)942-5201). A Saturday evening banquet will feature Clay Sutton as guest speaker. He is a hawkwatcher at Cape May, New Jersey and author of *Hawks in the Air*, a book to be published soon. Hawkwatching will be done throughout each day. For information on registration and banquet tickets contact Myriam Moore at P.O. Box 3482, Lynchburg, VA 24503. Reservations for lodging can be made directly with the hotel.

Another always splendid and rewarding event is the **VSO annual trip to Chincoteague on September 18, 19 and 20.** The headquarters is the Refuge Motor Inn, P.O. Box 378 Beach Road, Chincoteague. There will be a Friday night program featuring birds of the area as well as natural history. On Saturday and Sunday there will be field trips. On Sunday there will also be an excursion to Kiptopeke. Chincoteague in September is hard to beat for both numbers and variety of birds.

For all you long-range planners, **two future dates are December 4-6 for the Back Bay field trip and December 20 for the Williamsburg Christmas Bird Count.**

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Mary Dupuis phoned in an interesting story of a female hummingbird falling over as if dead while still clinging to the hummingbird feeder perch! It seemed as if she were trying to avoid an aggressive male. The male poked at her for several minutes, then she raised up and flew away. If anyone wants to share their experiences or thoughts about this behavior, please let me know.

## **Bird of the Season**

**Common Nighthawk:**

***Chordeiles minor***

The Common Nighthawk, like all nightjars or "goatsuckers" has a small bill and an enormous mouth. It also has a slightly forked tail and long, pointed wings. The bold white stripe, across the primaries, seen from below, is the distinctive field mark of this uncommon transient.

The Common Nighthawk passes through our area in Spring and Fall but is rarely seen due to its nocturnal habits. It can be seen at dawn, dusk, or late afternoon, especially in September, on its return southward toward the wintering areas in South America.

Nightjars often roost on the ground by day after snaring flying insects at night. Their brownish plumage provides perfect camouflage. The male Common Nighthawk can produce a "booming" sound when it dives on bowed wings during courtship. It nests on the ground and in flight produces a nasal beeping sound not unlike that of a woodcock. Common Nighthawks can be seen flying over the treetops in our area, but open fields provide the best, unobstructed views.



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