

WILLIAMSBURG FLYER

May 1988

The next meeting of the Williamsburg Bird Club will be on **May 18th, at 7:30 p.m. in Room 117 of Millington Hall.** Our speakers will be John and Scottie Austin who will show slides on **Birds and Wildlife of the Galapagos Islands.**

The Galapagos Islands are a group of volcanic islands in the Pacific Ocean. There are fifteen large and several hundred small islands lying the the equator about 650 miles west of Ecuador. The Galapagos group is noted for its fauna, which include numerous animals found only on specific islands. You will find six species of giant tortoises. Other reptiles on the island include two species of large lizards in the iguana family, and an unusual marine lizard which dives into the ocean for seaweed. The Galapagos contain as many as eighty-five different birds, some confined to specific islands. Sea lions are numerous, as are many different shore birds.

I have seen John and Scottie's slides, and you are in for a real treat!

The May field trip will be on **Sunday, May 22nd.** We will be going to **Hog Island.** Please assemble by **7:30 a.m. at the Colonial Williamsburg Information Center.**

On Sunday, May 1, we held our Spring Bird Count. Many thanks to those of you who participated. Those of you who were not able to join us missed a beautiful day of birding. One hundred sixty-two species of birds were identified. This is the highest number of species that we have had in the eleven years that we have been holding a spring count. There were 11,752 birds counted. There were two

new birds for the count, a least bittern and a winter wren. Sadly, there were no ring-necked pheasant at Cheatham Annex and the game warden there thinks that they have succumbed to natural predators.

There were a couple of items in the May/June issue of **Bird Watcher's Digest** that I thought might be of interest to a number of you. The first item concerned suggestions for controlling bees at hummingbird feeders. George Morrison of King George, Virginia, suggests that the bees will become discouraged if feeding holes are reduced in size. He fills the feeder holes with epoxy, letting it cure, then drills new 1/16th inch holes. Louise Blakes, of Los Altos, California, has successfully discouraged bees by applying fine nylon netting around a "Four Fountains" feeder. The Chapel Hill Bird Club in North Carolina suggests putting "Vicks Vaporub" around feeder holes. Bees and hornets will not land on the feeder, and hummers don't seem to mind the aromatic salve. From the **Question Box** comes; "I read several years ago that suet was to be put out in October and taken down in April. It was not to be left out during the summer because woodpeckers fed it to their young and it killed them." The response said that "nothing of substance could be found to support the statement. Suet was one of the first foods ever offered to wild birds. It is a high-energy food and is used by both insect-eating birds and seed eaters that frequent feeders. In the summer months suet will run and it can mat the breast feathers of woodpeckers. I can think of few summer pleasures keener than seeing parent downies, hairies, and red-bellies bringing their gibbering youngsters around for

their share. If you feed small chunks and replace them often to avoid feeding spoiled food, you will see lots of baby birds who think suet is just great!"

The following article is from the **Outdoor Report** of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

Results from the 1988 bald eagle survey show an increase of active nests seen by Dr. Mitchell Byrd during his annual spring count to determine the number of eagles which have been added to Virginia's population. During the survey, which ran from February 26 through March 27, Dr. Byrd saw 83 nests containing eggs. This number of incubating eagles is ten more than were counted last year and once again reflects the growing eagle population. The 83 nests represents a 13.7% increase in breeding pairs of eagles. The population has been increasing at an annual rate of 8% to 10% since 1978. In addition to the incubating pairs of eagles, four pairs were counted that did not appear to have eggs.

Eagles on the James River have produced 15 nests which have produced young. This 88% success rate, 15 of 17 nests counted on the river, is the highest recorded in the state in 38 years. A listing of the number of nests counted that contained young is below.

James River	17 nests
Potomac River	26 nests
Rappahannock River	24 nests
York, Pamunkey & Mattaponi	10 nests
Eastern Shore	5 nests
Buggs Island Lake	1 nest

Dr. Byrd works with the Department of Game & Inland Fisheries as part of the Nongame & Endangered Species Program. The bald eagle restoration program is but one important part of this overall program which benefits nongame species in Virginia. Funding for this program is made possible entirely through donations from citizens.

Contributions come mainly from the tax check off line on Virginia income tax forms, however, many donations are made directly to the Game Department. Anyone who would like to contribute to the work of restoring bald eagles in Virginia, or to any of the other varied nongame wildlife research, may do so by contacting Mrs. Suzie Gilley, Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, Va. 23230-1104, Attention: Education Division.

I'm sure many of you followed the birth of Molloko, the only California condor chick conceived in captivity. For several days straight the CBS Evening News had a report on the 61-1/2 hour hatching process that began when the chick first pecked cracks in the shell on Wednesday, April 27th and ended when Molloko broke free of its egg, with help from keepers delicately wielding tweezers, at 5:38 p.m. on Friday the 29th. All 28 California condors are in captivity. Molloko is an Indian word for the giant condor species. The name originates from the Sacramento Valley Maidu tribe and was chosen by a council of California tribes.

The poisoning of a golden eagle, now being nursed back to health at a wildlife center at Weyers Cave, shows Virginia needs tougher enforcement of pesticide laws.

Edward Clark, Jr., president and director of the Wildlife Center of Virginia, states that we have got to do something about getting more effective regulation. "We get hundreds of animals that are poisoned. Here's one bird, and if we fix him, great, if we don't fix him, too bad, but the problem is still with us." The eight-pound eagle with a seven-foot span was found in Smyth County on March 24, blinded and so uncoordinated from poison that it could barely move. A veterinarian at the center said the eagle apparently was poisoned by a chemical that attacks animals much the same way nerve

gas attacks humans. Workers at the center believe the bird's nervous system was overcome by a pesticide that got into its system when it ate a smaller animal that had the poison in its body.

I would like to include in its entirety a letter that I received from a club member who now lives in Valdosta, Georgia:

Hello W.B.C.! from the "Deep South". Still wish to receive the newsletter, it's nice to keep up with the "home birds". The area here is great for birding--wish I knew more bird songs! So far (April 18th) we already have hummingbirds, purple martins, & osprey--Have seen yellowthroated warblers and yellow-rumped warbler, American goldfinches, savannah sparrows and yesterday a barred owl and an aninga. There are also numerous red headed woodpeckers in our neighborhood that "call" to each other by "drilling" on the street lamp, or the vents on top of fireplaces. It's really funny & sounds like someone with an air hammer.

Also on our river and lake trips have been many alligators! Big ones!, but very shy, except for the one yesterday which came up right next to the boat!

Well thanks to all & please, if anyone needs or would like to go to the Okefenokee Swamp, our house, humble as it is, is open.

Tabitha Layton

Brian Taber sent a note telling of his nine days spent travelling around the state of Arizona. In his travels, he sighted 150 different species of birds. Some of the birds were; a Harris' Hawk, Lark Buntings, Eared Grebe, Gray Hawk, Calliope Hummingbird, Elegant Trogon, Spotted Owl, Black Shouldered Kite, and a Dipper. Thanks for the note, Brian.

Please, I need your help in putting this newsletter together. To submit information, please contact:

Shirley Raynes at 229-8975
or write to
104 Vaiden Drive, Williamsburg, Va.
23185

A note from Fred-- I am sorry that this newsletter does not look as professional as the ones that you have been receiving lately. I'm even sadder for the reason why. Pat Merriman, who had been setting up the newsletter was killed, along with her husband Richard, in a very tragic fire at their home near the end of April. My dealings with Pat only started at the beginning of this year, but she had been doing our newsletter for awhile and also did a lot of the word processing work for us for the VSO meeting. She was a wonderful person to talk to and to work with and I will miss her.