

WILLIAMSBURG FLYER

September 1988

WELCOME BACK! Hope you had a good and prosperous summer. September is now upon us and it is time for our Bird Club to meet. Our guest speaker this month will be Gustav Hall from the Biology Department of the College of William and Mary. His talk will be "Birding in Easternmost Europe from the the Arctic to the Caucasus" The meeting is on September 21st at 7:30 p.m. in Room 117 of Millington Hall.

BirdWalks— Sunday, September 25th, there will be a Purple Martin house cleanout. Meet at 7:00 am at the Colonial Williamsburg Information Center. This event will only last for about two hours. The walk for October will be on the 22nd and will be for hawk watching, and to visit the bird banding station both at Kiptopeake on the Eastern Shore. In November we will journey to Hog Island on the 19th. The Christmas Bird Count will be held this year on December 18th. More information about these walks will be given at the upcoming bird club meetings. It's well worth noting that the banding station and the hawk watching will be taking place from now thru October for the banding, and thru November for the hawks. More information about these can be had by calling Bill Williams at 565-3491.

Bird Highlights— On the field trip to Hog Island on August 27th, members were treated to, among other birds; 145 Short-billed Dowitchers, Wilson's Phalarope, two eagles, Stilt Sandpiper, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Pectoral Sandpiper, and many Bobolinks. Not long after this trip, Brian Patterson reported spotting a Buff-breasted Sandpiper, a Red-necked Phalarope, and an immature White Ibis, all at Hog Island. In late August, Dickie Hines reported having seen a Sora on the Chickahominy River. Bill Williams had a Canada and a Magnolia Warbler in his yard on September 6th.

Enclosed are two order forms for our Bird Seed Sale. Please pass one on to a friend who has not ordered seed from us in the past. The deadline for orders is October 14th, and the pickup day is November 5th, from 8 am to noon at the Colony Square Shopping Center. If you are able to help with the pickup please call either of the phone numbers on the order form and volunteer. There are Droll Yankee feeders available. Please call Fred Blystone at 229-4346 for information on the feeders.

Members Ty and Julie Hotchkiss spent last Memorial Day weekend at Madera Canyon in Arizona and sent in the following:

Madera Canyon is famous for its hummingbirds. The numerous feeders around Santa Rita Lodge provide "armchair" birding that appeals to both novice and expert alike. In addition to recording some nine species of hummingbirds, over 880 individuals have been banded. Some birds have been recaptured, and one broad-billed hummingbird has been caught 6 different times.

The banding operation is a project that was begun in 1986 and will extend over a five year period. Special banding week ends are held spring and fall plus a two week period the last of July. This coincides with the time when most migrants and "wanders" are likely to show up. This is all part of the Southeast Arizona Hummingbird Project and a similar program is being carried on at Ramsey Canyon in the Juachuca Mountains, under the same auspices. They are finding that hummingbirds move around a great deal despite a mountain range between the two areas.

The Beryline hummingbird is one of the rarest birds banded. It was banded during the third week in August in Ramsey Canyon in 1987, where it stayed for several days. A week later it arrived at Madera Canyon and was captured. It remained there about a week before being observed again at Ramsey Canyon, and it made a final visit over the mountain range to Madera where it was recaptured in September. It appeared in Madera Canyon where Ty photographed it on May

28, 1988. It eluded banders at this time, but they were hopeful it might be caught later.

There are three known nesting hummingbirds in Madera Canyon, which include the broad-billed, black-chinned, and magnificent hummingbirds. Ann's hummingbird is probably a new nester, and Costa's has been found nesting lower in the desert washes. Allen's, rufous, broad-tailed, Lucifer, and beryline hummingbirds are among the other migrants that one can see in Madera Canyon. Ramsey Canyon has even more species, but the banding operation at Madera was of special interest. Jack and Carrol Murray are in charge of the program, and they would be happy to have assistance if anyone wants to spend a vacation with the hummingbirds. This is "hummingbird heaven", so to speak. They need extra help especially in July, and it is quite a thrill to hold a tiny hummingbird after it is banded. They are trusting and quiet—like little gems flashing a myriad of colors as the light reflects on their feathers—until they suddenly take off from your hand like a rainbow escaping.

Other special birds at Madera Canyon include the whiskered screech owl, elf owls, buff-colored nightjars, elegant trogons, painted redstarts, Strickland's woodpeckers, and black phoebes—to name a few. Southwest Arizona is a marvelous place for both birds and scenery.

This would be a good time to let Tom Armour know that the rumor about the Bird Club owing him a trip to Australia, New Zealand, and Fiji because Fred misread the initials J.D. as T.A. on a postcard from Jamie Doyle, is unfortunately not true. Sorry, Jamie—will you still let us see your slides?

ABOUT BIRDS

Mother birds have a strong maternal instinct. If you find a naked baby bird on the ground, it is okay to pick it up, warm it in your hands, and replace it in the nest. Just be sure it matches the others in the nest. A little human scent on the babies will not bother the mother—she has no sense of smell!

Also, do not try to raise a baby bird yourself. Most species, excluding pigeons, house sparrows, and starlings are protected by federal law from human intervention. It is very difficult for a human to give proper care to a young wild animal. No wild baby bird eats bread soaked in milk. Few eat worms or birdseed. Even if you know the correct diet for the species, few people have the time to feed them every twenty minutes from 5:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. It is much better to spend three hours watching for the real mother to return than to let yourself in for literally hundreds of hours of constant care.

There is no substitute for the wild mother animal. After all, she knows the correct diet, stimulates digestive processes, demonstrates proper behavior, and can offer her young a natural environment in which to grow. Please do not interfere with this process.....leave infant wild animals

alone.

Bird Watcher's Digest reports that despite rumors, purple martin populations are increasing, according to an on-going 21-year North American Breeding Bird Survey by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

On a continental basis martin populations have increased at about 1.3 percent each year with significant gains indicated for the U.S. and insignificant gains for Canada. Only four states; South Dakota, Kansas, Ohio and Alabama, have had significant decreases while Oklahoma, seven other states and a Canadian province have experienced significant increases.

Also from the same magazine, comes an article about how birds bathe.

Birds bathe to wet their skin where air is trapped by more than 2,000 overlapping feathers. Fruit trees smudge the birds with juice, making their feathers sticky. Garden-hopping in mud soils their wings; tiny flower and weed seeds are also trapped in disarranged feathers. Fleas and lice lie flat and slip between shafts. The water loosens and removes the insects.

Bird bathing may seem routine. Disciplined watching enables one to observe differences in attitude, approach, mannerisms, and preening performances. Other means of bathing include a walk through the dew, nudging grass so droplets fall on outstretched wings and spread tails. Wet leaves on branches

serve the same purpose. A dog's water bowl is often used and teasel plant holds a cavity full of water suitable for small birds.

Sand puddles offer dust baths for birds. Starlings, sparrows, robins, and grackles use this method if water is not available. Birds scratch the sand and wriggle their bodies into a cavity. Spread wings and a wriggle forces sand to filter through feathers, thereby loosening lice. A bird's body is a warm refuge for insects. Without baths, fleas and lice subsist on the bird's blood and chew up fluffy bird feathers, eventually causing death. The bath is a very vital activity in a bird's life.

It's not bird news, but we are on the mailing list of the Virginia Living Museum, and just this week received this announcement about a program that they are having.

Where else could you climb a mountain the size of Virginia, or gaze up at two moons in a pink sky? In Newport News, that's where—in the Planetarium of the Virginia Living Museum. Boarding passes are now available for "A Trip to Mars," the latest sky show which begins September 8 at 7:30 pm. The show runs through November 27.

"A Trip to Mars" is narrated by Patrick Stewart, the newest captain of the Enterprise in television's "Star Trek, The Next Generation."

The Martian tour gives visitors the feeling of "being there." Some of the highlights include: standing at the edge of the Mariner Valley, a canyon large enough to stretch across our entire continent; and watching fantastic planet-wide dust storms and frigid polar ice caps. All in all, "A Trip to Mars" provides a breathtaking view of

the red planet. (Particularly breathtaking due to the fact that Mars has no appreciable atmosphere!)

The show runs at an appropriate time, for in September Mars comes closer to Earth than it will for the remainder of the century. Visitors can view this amazing planet through the Museum's powerful Observatory telescope every Thursday night (weather permitting).

COMPLETE SHOW SCHEDULE;
Monday-Friday 3:30 pm; Saturday and Sunday 1:30 pm, 2:30 pm, 3:30 pm., and every Thursday evening at 7:30 pm. Cost: \$2.00 adults, \$1.50 children. Another Planetarium show, "What's Up?," a live, guided tour of the current night sky, continues at 11 am. every Saturday. For more information, Call Andrea Deveikis at 595-1900.

It's not too early to be thinking about officers for the club for 1989. If you are interested in serving on the board in any capacity, please let Bill Williams know.

We would like to welcome new members Bill and Jane Holcombe and Richard and Cathleen Weaver. Also, thank you to the members who contributed to this month's Flyer. To submit information, please contact:

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

Enclosed you will find a parking permit to use if you park in posted areas on campus during bird club meetings. Keep this form for use all year.