



THE WILLIAMSBURG FLYER

FEBRUARY ISSUE 1989

NEXT MEETING FEBRUARY 15th
7:30 pm. Millington Hall
Room 117
IT WILL BE A REAL HOOT !!!

FIELD TRIPS

On January 21st several bird club members trekked to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel Islands. The layered look was definitely the most fashionable attire as the strong winds made the already cold temperatures seem even lower. Although the competition was close, Ruth Beck proved that she could wear the greatest number of layers and still be able to lift her binoculars to her eyes. Luckily for the birders, the objects of their polar search were extremely cooperative. All of the species that Craig Turner, our wonderful field trip chairman, predicted were seen! The highlights of the day's list include Lesser Blacked Gull, Purple Sandpipers, Ruddy Turnstones, Common Eider, Gannets, Great Cormorants, and a young male Harlequin Duck. Even with this list the hardy team wasn't satisfied. Stopping at Indian River Park in Hampton on the return trip, they observed a Eurasian Wigeon among American Wigeon, Mallard, Gadwall, Black, and a piggish Pekin Duck.

The February trip will consist on an "Owl Hoot" immediately following the bird club meeting on the 15th. From Millington Hall we will carpool and go to local spots where we will try to call out Barred, Eastern Screech, and Great Horned Owls. We would also like to see less common species such as Barn, Long-eared, or Saw-whet Owls. Craig, however, refuses to unveil any of his predictions this month. If you would like to be part of what promises to be an exciting trip, bring your binoculars and a flashlight to the meeting on Wednesday. If you can't join us for the entire meeting, plan to meet us in Millington 117 at 8:30 pm.

Those people that have received renewal forms with this issue,
Please pay your dues to Fred Blystone as soon as possible.

President's Comments

Has winter finally arrived? Today has convinced most of us that it is only February. As the freezing rain hit the window overlooking the feeders in my backyard, I watched over 300 ± birds at the 5 feeders. The delux mixture of sunflower hearts, peanut chips, millet, black oil sunflower seeds and niger provided a variety to 17 different species. The lack of Purple finches, Evening grosbeaks and Pine siskins was obvious. Have any of you had any of these 3 species at your feeders? The highlight of the birds seen today was the pair of Red-shouldered Hawks, that have been regular visiting to the table scrap feeder. At least one Red-shouldered Hawk has frequented the feeder for 4 years.

Speaking of feeders, the Bird Seed Committee would like to inform you that there is still a good supply of bird seed remaining and it would be beneficial to sell out before May. If you have enough for your feeder needs, ask your friends or neighbors if they would like to purchase quality seeds at a reasonable price. Call Shirley Raynes at 229-8975 - or Fred Blystone at 229-4346.

My thanks to Joe Doyle on a job well done. The fifteen bluebird boxes were completed and are ready for delivery to the Camp Peary Bluebird trail. Joe is doing an outstanding job organizing this effort. Let Joe know if you will, can, would, could, shall, should, help with "bluebird things" this season. Joe can be reached at 220-3498.

A general note to the membership. I hope that you will keep informed of all conservation and perservation efforts occuring within our community and surrounding counties.

The Virginia Society of Ornithology winter field trip to the Outer Banks of North Carolina will be Feb 10, 11, 12. It is an opportunity to see a good variety of wintering waterfowl. It is easy walking and excellent birding. If you are interested make your own reservation directly with the Holiday Inn, P.O. Box 308, Kill Devil Hill, North Carolina 29748. The charge is \$44 per night plus 8% tax. This is a flat rate for up to 4 in a double room. For more information call Ruth Beck at 229-3837.

An announcement just arrived from the Virginia Society of Ornithology about the annual meeting to be held at Mountain Lake on Friday, May 12 through Sunday, May 14. Make plans now and mark your calendars. This is a grand old hotel newly renovated, facing Mountain Lake. More information will follow.

Don't forget the evening field trip Feb 15. See you there.

Ruth Beck



BLUE BIRD UPDATE

The Blue Birds are already looking over nest boxes. It is time for all trail caretakers to clean and prepare boxes. If you can't make needed repairs, would like to adapt a trail of boxes, or have any suggestions about the program please call Joe Doyle at 220-3498. William and Mary students have helped assemble 15 new nestboxes that were donated by Camp Peery. Peninsula Hardware has built some boxes for sale and arrangements are being made with the Clayton-Grimes Biology Club to built additional boxes. The Bio Club plans to use the funds from their project in order to establish Wood Duck nest boxes on Lake Matoaka.

BIRD SIGHTINGS

From Craig Tumer:
January 22nd

near Back Bay-

3 Lark Sparrows
1 Sharp-shinned Hawk

Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge-

about 4000 Snow Geese (one "Blue")
1 King Rail
1 LeConte's Sparrow
2 Orange-crowned Warblers
1 "Ipswich" race of Savannah Sparrow

Pungo, Virginia Beach-

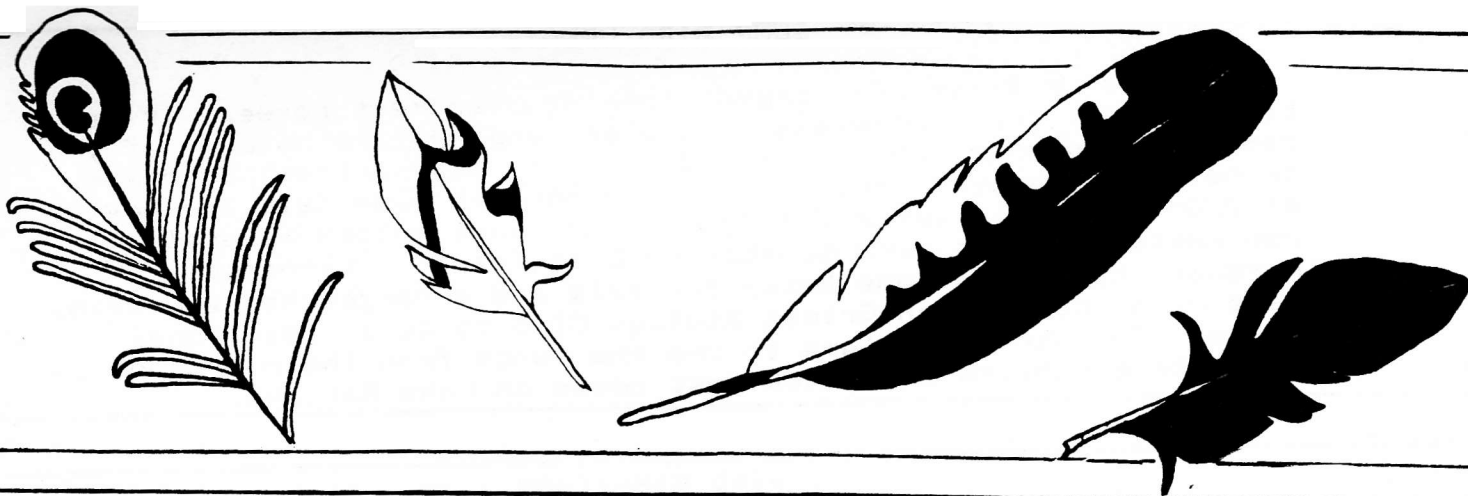
1 male Painted Bunting

February 1st William and Mary Campus-
first Pine Warbles singing

For six days in January, Brian Taber camped and birded in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. This area is unique due to the fact that it is the northernmost point of occurrence for a number of tropical species of plants, birds, and other animals. Depending on the direction of the wind, the weather in winter can be warm or quite cold. While as far south as southern Florida, the temperatures here rarely remain constant (ranging from 39F to 85F during Brian's visit!). The reason for this occurrence is the land-locked positioning of the Valley, as compared to the water-surrounded tip of southern Florida.

Some wildlife areas in the Valley region have managed to preserve native, undisturbed vegetation which attracts a great deal of wildlife. Three of the larger parks that Brian visited are Santa Anna National Wildlife Refuge, Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge, and Bertsch-Rio Grande State Park.

Brian and many birders from across the country were fortunate to see many new and exciting birds. A few of the species included Buff-bellied Hummingbird, Green Jay, Brown Jay, White-collared Seedeater, Audubon's Oriole, Red-billed Pigeon, Green Parakeet, Clay-colored Robin, Tropical Parula, Great Kiskadee, and the Hook-billed Kite.



January/February 1989 issue of Birder's World:

An outbreak of "songbird fever" in the Northeast last spring prompted Cornell University experts to warn people who feed birds to keep feeders clean and keep their cats away from birds. Songbird fever, caused by the bacterium *Salmonella typhimurium*, was found in an unusual number of dead birds and sick cats last spring. Low levels of the infection occur naturally in some birds, particularly in Mourning Doves, but increasing numbers of bird deaths last spring around feeders caused public concern. The species most affected was the Pine Siskin—reports of up to twenty dying around feeders were received from the Boston area. Steven Sibley of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology said that a shortage of pine and hemlock seeds in Canada last winter drove more Siskins than usual to the eastern United States. The infection spread when the birds ate seeds and drank water contaminated by the dropping of other birds.

To control the disease Sibley recommends the following steps: (1) feeders with trays that allow birds to defecate in the seed should be replaced with cylinder or hopper feeders, where birds stand on perches and eat clean seed through openings; (2) seed should not be allowed to accumulate on the ground where it can mix with fecal matter; (3) feeders and birdbaths should be cleaned periodically with bleach and thoroughly rinsed; (4) birdbaths should not be placed adjacent to feeders.

*I'm looking over a piping plover,
That I've overlooked before...*



*B.C. sez, "thanks for the help" to all
at the WBC !*

*Submissions Due!
February 30th !*



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We would like to thank Bob Cross for presenting his findings on the Eastern Shore's Piping Plovers at the January Meeting.