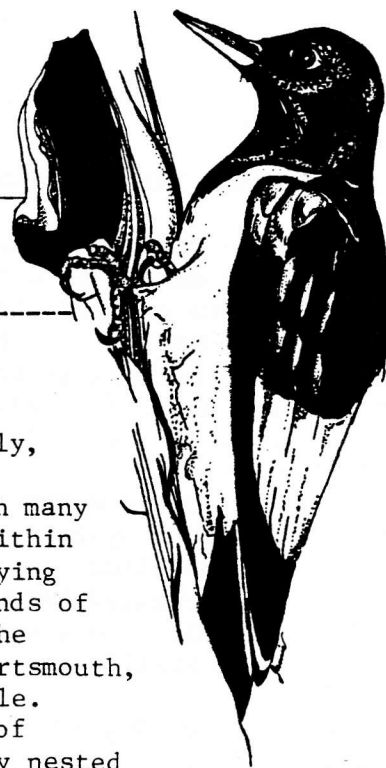


# The Williamsburg Flyer

September 1989

Next Meeting: September 20th, 7:30 PM, Millington 177  
Paul Saunier "Hawk Watching for the Beginner."



## PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS:

September brings cooler days, colorful leaves and most importantly, bird wise, an excellent variety of migrants traveling south. June, July, and August have flown by, but the summer months were filled with many activities for all of you. Just to mention a few of the activities within the area, I'll choose the colonial beach nesting bird project. Surveying and monitoring the tern, gull, and heron colonies on the barrier islands of the Eastern Shore of Virginia and the areas on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay continued. Our bird club travels to Craney Island, Portsmouth, and Grandview Beach, Hampton as part of the regular field trip schedule. These two areas supported large Least Tern colonies. Over 700 pairs of Least Terns nested there. Also, a pair of Piping Plovers successfully nested and three young fledged at Craney Island. This is the first breeding record for Piping Plovers at Craney.

With our meetings beginning in September, we are excited about our speakers and the field trips. I hope you will plan on a day or half day in the field in September, October, November, and December. Brian Taber will help coordinate the field trips in Craig Tumer's absence.

Remember that Bird Seed Saving Day is approaching. Start talking sunflower hearts, millet, suet, etc. with your friends and neighbors. More will follow later as to ordering, deadlines, and pick-up.

Join us each month, the third Wednesday at 7:30 Pm in Millington Hall room 177- William and Mary Campus.

Good Birding,

Ruth Beck

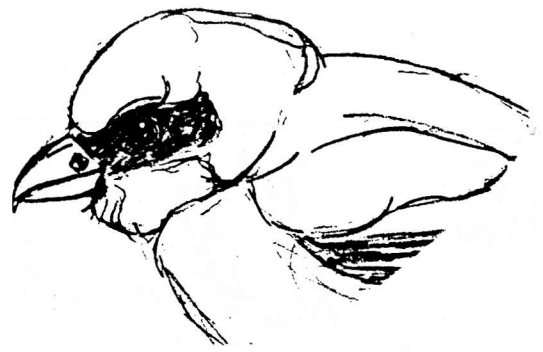
## Editor's Comments:

Welcome back from what I hope was a very exciting and relaxing summer. My summer was indeed fulfilling and I managed to add many western life species to my list. I look forward to sharing many of this summer 's slides with you at a later date.

Craig Tumer, our former Field Trip Chairman, reports that he is the proud father of five Peregrine Falcons. Craig worked in Shenandoah National Park as a hack attendant for the Peregrine Fund. He was rewarded in watching his kids chase an adult Bald Eagle not too long ago.

As usual I am always looking for submissions for the upcoming newsletters. Any information on bird sightings, projects, field trips, conservation, and illustrations are more than welcome. Please send all information to me by the end of the previous month. See you at the meeting.

Jamie Doyle



#### FIELD TRIP REPORTS FOR JUNE AND AUGUST:

On June 10th, with sunny skies and temperatures in the 80s, the club field trip headed to Grandview Beach in Hampton to see shorebirds and assist in the census of Least Terns in the colony there. Brian Taber, his family and another club member met others from Richmond, William and Mary, Blacksburg, and Charlottesville and found just over 300 nests. Several chicks were found, but were too small to band. Two of the participants, Bill Akers and Jerry Via have been regularly visiting the colony for over 15 years.

Other water birds that were seen included the endangered Piping Plover, American Oyster Catcher, Ruddy Turnstone, Semi-palmated Sandpiper, Willet, Brown Pelican, a lingering Bonaparte's Gull, Marsh Wren, Snowy Egret, and Red-breasted Merganser. Nests of Common Tern and Black Skimmer were found as well. Land birds on hand included Prairie Warbler, Boat-tailed Grackle, Tree Swallow, and White-eyed Vireo.

On August 19th, a day after stationary thunderstorms dumped nearly a foot of water on Williamsburg, Brian led the field trip to Craney Island. The water-soaked, man-made landfill was teeming with birds, but many were too far across unstable ground to be seen well or tracked down. There were, however, hundreds of Laughing Gulls, a few Ring-billed Gulls, Herring Gulls, and Great Black-backed Gulls, sitting on the beach with Black Skimmers and Caspian, Common, Least and Royal Terns. Many adult terns were feeding their young.

Shorebirds included 16 American Avocets, lots of Western, Least and Semi-palmated Plover, Killdeer, Black-bellied Plover, Solitary Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Willet, and a Wilson's Phalarope. Horned Lark, Osprey, Northern Harrier, Great and Snowy Egrets, and dozens of Cowbirds were also present.

Also, During the week following Aug 19, Tom Armour, Brian Taber, Bill Sheehan, Bill Williams, Fenton Day, and Brian Patteson found a number of interesting birds at Hog Island including Short-billed Dowitcher, White-rumped Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper, Black-bellied Plover, at least 5 Lesser Golden Plovers, both Yellowlegs species, Spotted Sandpiper, Semi-palmated Plover, Least Sandpiper, Snipe, Pectoral Sandpiper, at least 5 Buff-breasted Sandpipers, Black Terns, and Tri-colored and Little Blue Herons. Bill found a Loggerhead Shrike with a mouse impaled. A Baird's Sandpiper was reported at Hog Island on 8-19, which would constitute a new record for area.



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### FALCON FOOTHOLD

Eleven young peregrine falcons were produced in the wild this year from four nesting pairs which returned to nest in Virginia.

One pair, on the Moth Ball Fleet near Fort Eustis, produced four young. As a protective measure, two of the chicks were transferred to another pair which had laid infertile eggs.

Last year, the same pair had four young which succumbed to an avian virus caused by the over-abundance of wild pigeons in the area, according to Wildlife Biologist Karen Terwilliger. "We took two from the nest at the Moth Ball Fleet and transferred them to the nest of the pair on the Barrier Islands on Eastern Shore whose eggs didn't hatch," said Terwilliger.

Close observation revealed that the foster parents readily accepted the two transfers and they began immediately feeding and caring for them. "This lessened the risk factor for the two young at the Moth Ball Fleet, enabling the natural parent birds to adequately feed and care for them," said Terwilliger, "and the birds are about to fledge."

The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, under the guidance of Dr. Mitchell Byrd of William and Mary, has also made three of a scheduled four releases of young peregrines in the southern Appalachians this year. Three were in the George Washington National Forest and one in the Shenandoah National Park.

Twelve chicks were placed in hacking towers and fed by hand until they fledged. According to Terwilliger they are all now flying. One more release is scheduled for fall.

The young peregrines are taking well to their traditional home. Hopefully, they'll return as adults to nest naturally and get a foothold in their native habitat, so that the mountain ridges of Virginia may again echo the piercing call of this swift, sleek falcon.



## PIPING PLOVER UPS AND DOWNS

Department nongame wildlife biologists have completed the first of three field seasons of a cooperative research/management project with the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge concerning the piping plover. Refuge and Department staff documented and monitored 36 plover nests that fledged 30 young.

During the peak of their nesting season in early June, biologists walked all of the Barrier Islands, searching for breeding piping and Wilsons' plover pairs. A total of 121 pairs of piping plovers and 35 or more Wilson plover pairs were observed.

Unfortunately, July downpours washed out many of the nests with eggs or young. Nest enclosures were used again this year for predator control. The nest enclosures are circular affairs made of turkey wire that are placed around the nests. The open tops are laced with monofilament which serves to protect the nests, eggs and young from predators such as raccoons, skunks, foxes, gulls and fish crows.

Chincoteague Refuge remains an important island in Virginia for this threatened breeding shorebird, producing about a third of the annual young of the year.

This year for the first time, a pair of piping plovers were documented nesting on Craney Island, a dredge disposal site on the south side of the Chesapeake Bay in Portsmouth. Grandview Beach, another Tidewater site, supported five pairs.

All the studies being done on this bird are funded by the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program. Donations were down this past year which has put piping plover studies and other nongame projects in jeopardy.



THE PIPING PLOVER IS PROTECTED BY FEDERAL AND STATE LAWS.



# CORNELL LABORATORY *of* ORNITHOLOGY

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**AUGUST 1989**

If you noticed a big drop in the numbers of birds at your feeder last winter, you weren't alone. Thousands of observers contributing data to Project FeederWatch documented a decline in feeder activity that extended across the entire continent.

Pine Siskins remained in their normal haunts in the 1988-89 winter, after an amazing invasion the previous year to all parts of North America (see maps). Over 85 million siskins were estimated to visit feeders that winter, while the numbers in 1988-89 nose-dived to less than half that figure.

In eastern regions, conspicuous decreases at feeders were also seen for Common Redpoll, Evening Grosbeak, Purple Finch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Northern Cardinal and most blackbirds. Pygmy Nuthatch and White-crowned Sparrow were in short supply west of the Mississippi.

How do we know all this? Over 7,000 people across North America brought their hobby of bird feeding to new heights, by participating in Project FeederWatch. They recorded bird sightings from their feeders for ten 2-day periods between November and April, and sent data to the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology for analysis.

FeederWatchers also determined which bird was most likely to visit your feeder--Dark-eyed Junco (seen at 73% of all feeders continent-wide). House Sparrow was the most abundant species, averaging 10 birds per feeder throughout the winter. Which bird species are most abundant at feeders varied considerably from one region of the continent to another -- only 5 species visited more than half of all feeders. Besides junco and House Sparrow, this list included Black-capped Chickadee, American Goldfinch and Downy Woodpecker.

But Project FeederWatch documents not only the numbers and kinds of birds at feeders, it also looks at the effects of weather, habitat and food supply. Many people in the eastern part of the continent blamed last winter's lackluster feeder attendance on the weather, suggesting that mild temperatures and lack of snow gave birds access to natural foods which reduced their dependence on feeders. Early indications from Christmas Bird Counts, however, are that the birds simply weren't there--even "in the wild."



Where were they? We know that tree-seed eaters such as siskins, redpolls and nuthatches exhibit large annual variations in winter range. And, in some cases, we know where these birds were last season. There was no lack of Pine Siskins in western regions, which also hosted grosbeaks and American Goldfinches in abundance. In addition, generous tree-seed crops in certain parts of Canada may have kept many finches in the northern boreal forest.

Most of the other birds missing from feeders last winter eat weed seeds, grain and insects, and these birds do not appear to have moved elsewhere. It is possible that the severe droughts of the past several years reduced breeding populations by diminishing the abundance of their usual foods. The six-fold increase in avian predators at feeders last winter might support this hypothesis. If prey was lacking away from feeders, Sharp-shinned Hawks and other raptors might have been forced to concentrate on feeders. This coming winter's FeederWatch data may help answer this and other questions.

FeederWatchers are now embarking on a new season, and you are invited to join. You need not be an expert bird watcher to participate, but you must be able to identify birds that commonly visit your feeder. All you have to do is watch the birds at your feeders on one or two days every two weeks throughout the winter, and record the numbers you see on simple computer-readable forms.

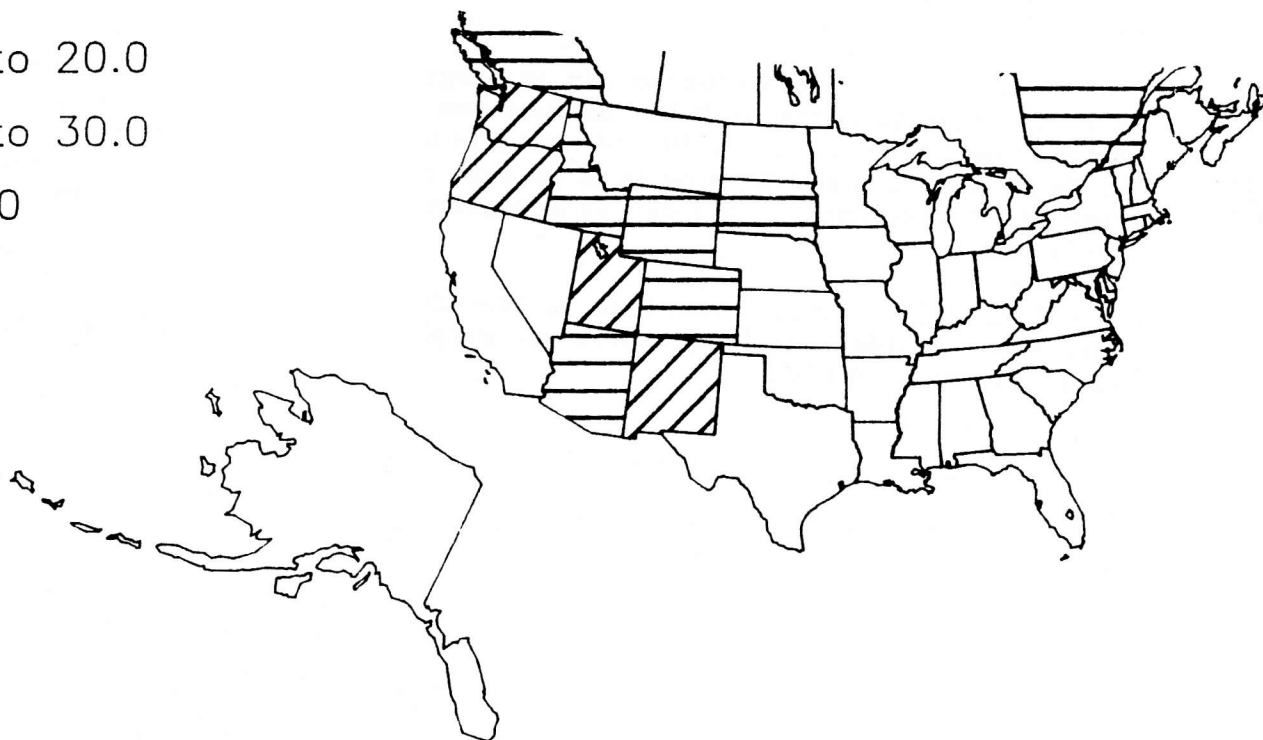
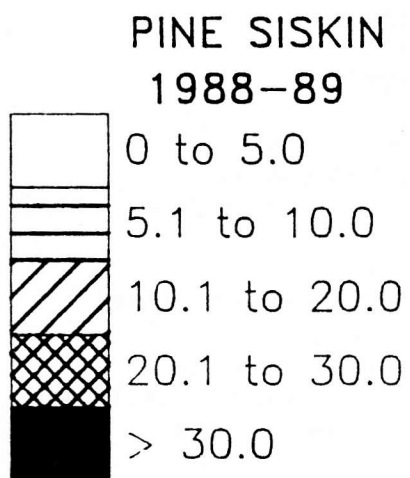
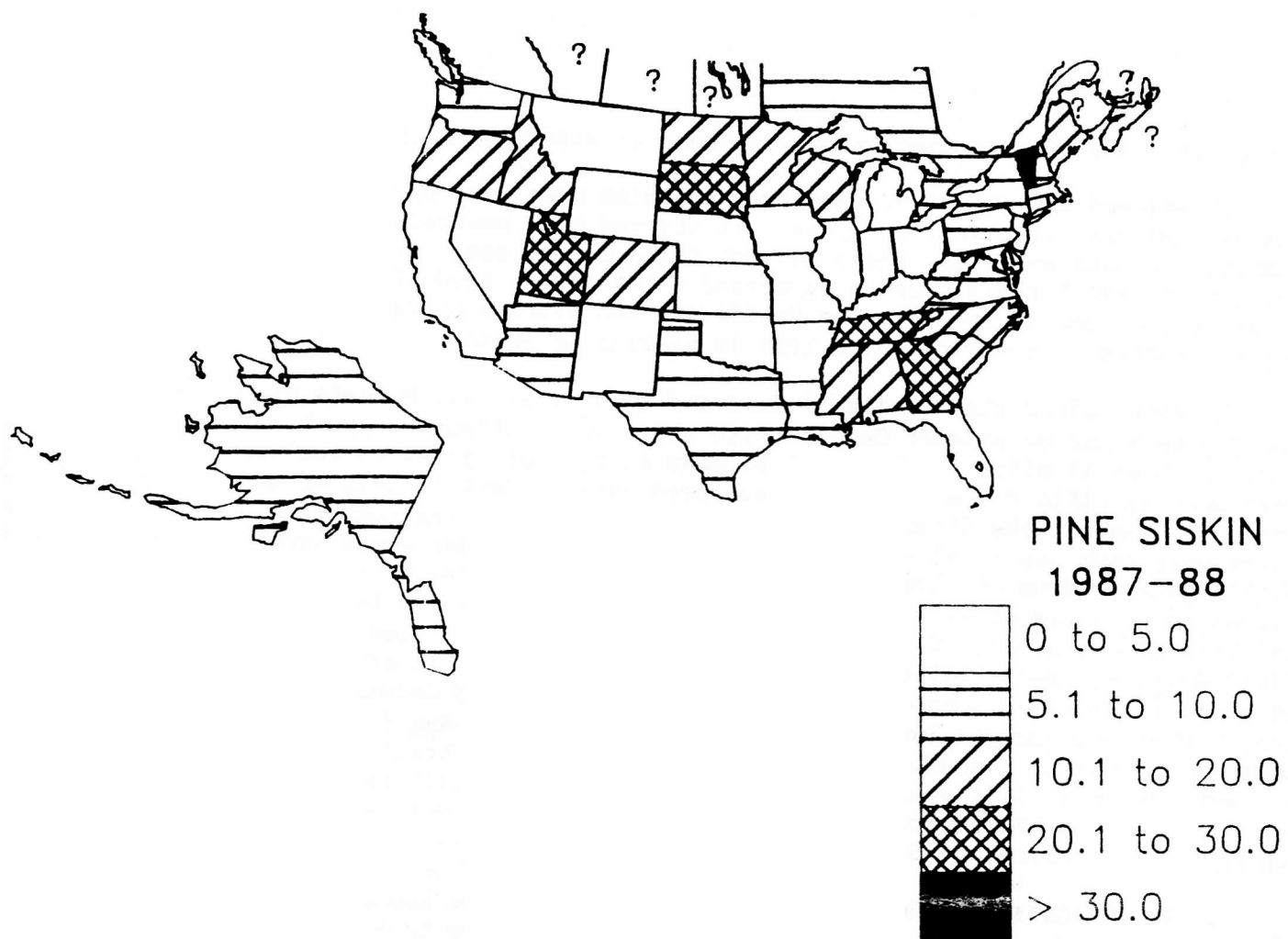
In return for your participation you'll receive 2 issues of 'FeederWatch News', featuring helpful information about feeding birds and analyses of the abundance and distribution of feeder birds in your region and across North America.

Join thousands of observers working together to monitor winter bird distribution across our continent. Simply mail your annual registration fee of \$9 with your name and address to: Project FeederWatch, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, NY 14850 (make checks payable to 'Project FeederWatch').

JOIN FEEDERWATCH TODAY!

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For further information, contact Dr. Erica Dunn, FeederWatch Coordinator, 30 Davidson Road, Aurora, Ontario, L4G 2B1 (416-727-3519), or Colleen Lynch, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, NY 14850 (607-254-2414).





A note from two Western Species of Williamsburg Bird Club members:

We arrived the end of March when everything must have been migrating and we must have been on the flyway. It started with hundreds of Rufous Hummingbirds and every day there was something new to see. We were sorry we were not better birders because we missed a lot. Then suddenly about the first of June there were only the California and Western Gulls, not even any shorebirds, but now the bird life is picking up again.

We have joined the Yaquina Birders and Naturalists which meets at the Hatfield Marine Science Center (with their own resident octopus) in Newport about 17 miles south. We have gone on two outings which really have been terrific for us, as they have been very patient in helping us out. Oh, yes, at the first meeting when we were introducing ourselves there were four new people--all from Virginia and one other woman from Williamsburg. None of them had been in the bird club. One of the interesting places we went was to Yaquina Head lighthouse where there are huge nesting colonies of sea birds. We saw Common Murres, Pelagic and Brandt's Cormorants, Black Oystercatchers, Tufted Puffins, Pigeon Guillemots, In addition we saw lots of shore birds--Red-necked Phalaropes, Whimbrels, Marbled Godwits, as well as Scaup, White-winged and Surf Scoters--it was quite a morning for us. The next outing was to Cascade Head along a beautiful forest trail of the Nature Conservancy to a cliff overlooking the ocean with absolutely spectacular views. That day there were Yellow-headed Kinglets, Western Flycatchers, Winter Wrens, Varied and Swainson's Thrush and Stellar Jay.

We have a California Gull nesting on our roof and we saw the chick for the first time today. We hear it frequently and know that feeding time is 4:30 AM, as they are right over our bedroom. Evidently this is the first roof nesting record in Oregon so it goes in the "official" record after we submit a picture. So much for our five minutes of fame!

We do have a resident Bald Eagle who flies in from the coast range almost daily. We have come across him sitting on driftwood and the other day several gulls forced him to land on the sand, so I don't know what he was up to.

The Spring whale migration was in progress when we arrived and we could see them spouting from the deck but did not see any breach. We also have a local harbour seal herd of about 100 so there is often one in front of the house. In fact, on one early morning walk we came upon a mother and newborn with umbilical cord still attached. Every day is a wondrous discovery--and at our age that ain't bad !

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Dona and Bob Morris now live in Gleneden Beach, Oregon. Bob was a past Vice President of Programming and Purple Martin Chairman for the Williamsburg Bird Club.



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THE WILLIAMSBURG BIRD CLUB

FALL AND WINTER 1989

coming field trips-

September 15-17 "Fall Flight of the Raptors" -

Wintergreen\*

Chincoteague Field Trip- VSO\*

September 23rd- Hogg Island and local birds

October 21st- Eastern Shore Hawk Watch

November 18th- local birds

December 17th- Audubon Christmas Count

all field trips begin at 7:30 AM in the parking lot of the Williamsburg Information Center- right side as you face it.

\* indicates that the event is being organized by a group outside the Williamsburg Bird Club.

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the officers-

Ruth Beck- PRESIDENT- (H) 566-8234 (W) 253-4240

Jamie Doyle- VICE PRESIDENT, NEWSLETTER- (H) 220-6611 (W) as above

Grace and Joe Doyle- VICE PRESIDENTS OF PROGRAMS

Brian Taber- FIELD TRIP COORDINATOR

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send newsletter information to :

Jamie K. Doyle  
Biology Department  
College of William and Mary  
Williamsburg, Virginia  
23185

P.S. I have for sale an  
Umbrella Cockatoo 2 years old.  
male. Speaks (with occasional  
profanity!). With large iron cage  
and travel cage - \$2,500.  
Very sweet tempered bird!

Jamie  
804-220-6611  
• also, two free letters!

