



THE WILLIAMSBURG FLYER
MAY 1989

NEXT MEETING MAY 17TH
7:30 PM MILLINGTON HALL
ROOM 117

FIELD TRIPS

The April field trip was a big success. Five bird club members met and went to Governor's Land in southwestern James City County. Governor's Land consists of 14000 acres of mixed woods, field, swamps, and shoreline where the Chickahominy flows into the James River. In the three hours that we walked around this area, we saw and/or heard about 40 species of birds. Several of these species were ones we hadn't seen since late last summer. Some of the highlights of the morning included Caspian Terns, Indigo Buntings, Orchard Orioles, an Eastern Kingbird, and several species of warblers and vireos, including a flock of singing Palm Warblers.

Since May is such a busy month, with the Spring Count, graduation, and the annual VSO meeting at Mountain Lake all occurring within the first two weeks of the month, there will be no field trip this month. Be sure to keep the dates of the upcoming field trips in June and later in the year open on your calendars. They should be a lot of fun.

Craig Tumer-- Field Trip Chairman

WHAT A BUMMER !!! CRAIG IS GRADUATING !!!

On May 14th our wonderful Field Trip Chairman will graduate as a biology major from the College of William and Mary. Craig has been an extremely valuable member of the Williamsburg Bird Club since coming to The College as a freshman-- he has been a dependable field trip and count participant, meeting attendant, and priceless leader. As Craig plans to return to his home in Port Republic prior to our May meeting, we will not have the opportunity to give him a round of applause from the club. Therefore, if you want to personally thank Craig and wish him the best of luck in whatever he plans to do (have you decided what your going to do with the rest of your life yet Craig ?), give him a call as 220-5763. THANKS CRAIG. WE MISS YOU ALREADY.

PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

Woodthrushes, vireos, and wood warblers are back in full force. We look forward to the annual spring count which will be held Sunday May 7th. The following weekend (MAY 12-14) will be annual VSO meeting at Mountain Lake Hotel, Mountain Lake, Virginia.

Julie Hotchkiss and Martha Armstrong are working with a group of students from Jamestown Academy on monitoring several colonies of purple martins. These include the ouses at the Pines Convalesent Center, Williamsburg Community Hospital, Williamsburg Regional Library, MacDonalds, Governor Spotswood Motel, and Southern States. James Robertson, an interested citizen, has also been assisting the project with the maintance of the houses, replacing rope, pole, and repairing compartments. Our thanks are extend on behalf of the Williamsburg Bird Club board.

Jamie Doyle has been selected to receive the 1989 Williamsburg Bird Club grant for the amount of \$500.00. She will begin the research project in the fall of 1989, working with raptors in order to develop techniques for studying the effects of carbamate and organophosphate pesticides on their populations. Congratulations Jamie.

Summer is fast approaching and we will change the schedule slightly for the summer season. There will be no scheduled meetings in June, July, or August. We will have field trips in June and August, but not in July. The newsletter will continue as usual with the exception of no mainling in July.

We hope all of you have a good summer. Don't forget the field trips. If you have any questions or good bird information please call me at 253-4240.

Good Birding,

RUTH BECK



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Northeast Goes Finchless

ITHACA, NY - This past winter left people all across the eastern United States wondering where the birds were. Feeders went unoccupied and bags of seed bought in anticipation of flocks of winged guests gathered dust in garages and back hallways. But, for the first time ever, North American ornithologists can answer "where are the birds?" even as the winter snows linger on the ground. According to data compiled for Project FeederWatch, a continentwide bird feeder survey run by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and Canada's Long Point Bird Observatory, many birds appear to have stayed north this winter in the boreal forests of Canada. However, bird numbers at feeders across the continent's midsection and in the west were on par with last winter.

The biggest gap in feeder attendance occurred among the aptly named "winter finches." This group includes such popular feeder visitors as the evening grosbeak, pine siskin, and purple finch. Both evening grosbeaks and pine siskins showed decreases of 75-100% at feeders in the northeastern and southeastern United States where last winter flocks of hundreds stretched the bird seed budgets of many families. These decreases, however, were offset by dramatic increases in the numbers of pine siskins in the northwestern U.S. and Canada and of evening grosbeaks in the northern Great Plains.

"Both siskins and grosbeaks are boom or bust species that wander nomadically across the continent, stopping wherever food is plentiful," says Erica Dunn, coordinator of Project FeederWatch. "Last winter was a boom year for them across the entire eastern third of North America. This winter they have definitely stayed north in Canada where there appears to have been an excellent supply of the tree seeds they feed upon. The relatively mild, snowless winter experienced in much of the East also probably contributed to these birds remaining farther north than in other years."

According to Dunn, "Last winter there were enough siskins for an average of seven to be counted at every bird feeder in North America throughout the entire winter. But what a difference a year makes. A few people in the northeast who were entertaining flocks of over 300 siskins every day last winter had none this year."

With some surveys estimating that 80 million people in the United States feed birds, the presence or absence of these winter finches attracts a great deal of attention. And, with annual birdseed sales now topping \$1 billion, winter finches even produce economic repercussions for seed companies and farmers!

Project FeederWatch is already enlisting participants to help monitor feeder birds in the winter of 1989-90. Participants pay a \$9 annual fee to cover the cost of data forms, newsletters, and postage, and must be able to identify the common birds at their feeder. To include the birds at your feeders, write to Project FeederWatch, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, New York 14850; or call 607-254-2414.

Editors: For further details, and for copies of black-and-white photo of pine siskins or evening grosbeaks, call 607-254-2414.

MAY -WE GET SOCIAL (?)

The May meeting of the Williamsburg Bird Club will be held on May 17th. The officers will prepare a wine and cheese social so that the club members have the opportunity to mix and mingle and make new friends. Entertainment will be provided by yourselves. Please bring five of your favorite slides and be prepared to show and talk about them. Come welcome in another exciting summer of birding.

VIRGINIA'S ENDANGERED SPECIES

On April 28th and 29th experts and interested individuals from across the state met in Blacksburg to define the status of Virginia's endangered flora and fauna. Dr. Byrd of The College of William and Mary chaired the taxonomic committee for avifauna. During the Friday workshop, approximately 30 participants ranked the various species of birds in order of concern as endangered, threatened, and special concern. A new category entitled "status undetermined" was utilized for species for which the committee felt we were lacking in sufficient data. The findings were presented before several hundred people on Saturday, and were as follows;

Endangered species: Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Red-cockaded woodpecker, Piping plover, Wilsons plover, Bewicks wren, Loggerhead shrike, Bachman's sparrow, Henslow's sparrow, Upland sandpiper, Northern harrier, Sedge wren.

Threatened species: Yellow-crowned night heron, Gull-billed tern, Least tern, Swainsons warbler.

Special concern: Brown pelican, Barn owl, Caspian tern, Mourning warbler, Sandwich tern, Forester's tern, Glossy ibis, Bank swallow, Cliff swallow, Sharp-tailed sparrow, Great egret, Little blue heron, Tri-colored heron, Great blue heron, Black-crowned night heron, Snowy egret, N. Saw-whet owl.

Status undetermined: Swainson's thrush, Hermit thrush, Least bittern, Black rail, Common moorhen, Spotted sandpiper, Long-eared owl, Short-eared owl, Yellow-bellied flycatcher, Alder flycatcher, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown creeper, Golden-crowned kinglet, Magnolia warbler, Dickcissel, Swamp sparrow, Winter wren, Sharp-shinned hawk, Cooper's hawk, Golden-winged warbler, King rail, Virginia rail.

DEADLINE FOR THE JUNE NEWSLETTER IS MAY 31ST.
SEND MATERIALS TO MISS JAMIE K. DOYLE

BIOLOGY DEPARTMENT
COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY
WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA 23185

OR CALL 220-6611(home) 253-4240 (dept)