



THE FLYER

Volume 14, No. 8

September 1990

W. J. Sheehan, Editor
Williamsburg Bird Club

Bees and Hummers

In prompt response to our plea for help on ways to control bees at the Hummingbird feeder (August FLYER), Bonnie Lou Scott called to share a technique that has been successful with her at Kingsmill.

In her experience with Hummers, Bonnie Lou found that bees seemed more prevalent when the feeders were full of fungus, presumably generated by sun/sugar water reaction. She carefully boils her sugar water, and then lets it cool prior to filling her feeder. While waiting for this she carefully and thoroughly cleans her feeder with a Clorox solution, and then rinses it thoroughly. (Incidentally, she has better luck with glass feeders than with the plastic ones, which are more prone to fungal growth.)

After filling her feeder with the cooled syrup, she rubs the surfaces of the feeder with a vegetable oil such as Crisco. She applies the oil all over—even around the holes through which the birds feed—being careful not to let any drops of oil accumulate in the apertures.

Bonnie Lou is presently (Aug. 20) supporting a circus of six Hummers and has no problems with bees, either bumble-bee or hornet types, which formerly plagued her. To her, sanitation and the oil are the keys! Thanks for sharing, Mrs. Scott. You may be sure that some of us will try your RX!

Betty Williams, and a few others, tell us that they were not able to find any reasonable way of reducing the bee traffic short of acquiring the types of feeders which have the built-in bee-guards.

September Program & Walk

Our meeting this month will be on Wednesday, September 19th, at 7:30 p.m. in Room 117 of Millington Hall.

The program **"The Wonders of South America"** will be presented by Ty and Julie Hotchkiss.

The September Club walk will be on **Saturday, September 22nd** at **York River State Park**—west of Williamsburg. We will meet at the C.W.

Information Center Parking Lot (East side) at 8 a.m. Ty and/or Julie Hotchkiss will be head birders—fresh from the Arctic, Canada and Alaska.

Migration should be underway, and we would hope for some warblers, a few ducks, herons, egrets and raptors. Wild turkeys are not unknown in the park woods and along the edges.

If it's out of your way to meet at the Information Center, you can join us at the Park's parking area shortly after 8:15. To get there (from Williamsburg) go west on I-64; take Exit 54 (Croaker) and

York River State Park

The Park has designated Saturday, September 15th, as ESTUARIES DAY. A variety of activities commence at 10 a.m. and continue through mid-afternoon. Nature hikes; canoe trips; video programs on wetlands; static displays; selected demonstrations on seine netting, fish printing, pollution control and more. Usual \$2.00 per car admittance applies. Telephone 564-9057 for further information.

follow the State Park signs. There is a modest fee, per car, for entry into the Park.

President's

Corner

It's getting about time for our club to make one of its quarterly clean-up trips to our adopted highway.

I'm sure Bill Davies, our Chairman, would appreciate some help. Give him a call at 253-1461 and see if you can get together for a pick-up session.

Hunting Notes

Board members of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries voted on 8/31 to allow limited hunting of Tundra Swans. As in the past two years, the Department will issue 600 special permits, allowing the holders to shoot one bird each during a 90-day season starting November 3.

Here Tundra Swans arrive as early as Sept. 22, and may be seen at Hog Island, Kings Creek (near Cheatham Annex) and along the York River west of the Naval Weapons Station.

On the Federal scene, the Fish and Wildlife Service has established (for States in the Atlantic Flyway, which includes us) that duck hunting seasons can run for a total of 30 days between October 1 and January 6. The Federal service has also decreed a **daily** bag limit of three birds, to include no more than 1 hen Mallard; 1 Black Duck; 2 Wood Ducks; 2 Redheads; and 1 Pintail. Again, the shooting of Canvasbacks is prohibited.

Within the above framework, the States may establish their own specific dates for the start and stop of the season. They may not lengthen the season, nor may there increase the above bag limits. They may, however, establish more restrictive regulations.

The Board of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries announced on 6 September:

General duck hunting season will be split, and will allow 27 shooting days: Oct 10-13; Nov. 22-24; Dec. 14-Jan. 5.

The daily bag limit is 3 birds a day, but may include **no more than 3 Mallards** (Only one hen Mallard); 2 Wood Ducks; 2 Redheads; 1 Pintail and 1 Fulvous Tree Duck.

Canada Goose season is Nov. 19-24; Nov. 26-Dec. 1; and Dec. 3-Jan. 19. Bag limit is 2 per day.

Tundra Swan season is: Nov. 3- Jan. 31, by special permit as per above.

Separate regulations exist for Sea Duck; Mergansers; Snow Geese and Brant.

So, be careful not to make "quack noises" or to honk on certain dates! And let's hope that hunters have better waterfowl recognition skills than many of us birders!

Virginia Life Bird List— 300 Club

The following birders, either club members or well-known to our club, have recorded in-State species as follows.

Tom Armour	325
Dorothy Mitchell	340
Cindy Carlson	332
Steve Rottenborn	320
Fenton Day	351
Brian Taber	355
Rich Goll	336
Bill Williams	357

Primary Source: VSO Newsletter,
August 1990

Brown-headed Cowbird

Many of us tend to cringe a bit when we see a constantly demanding young Cowbird being fed by an obviously overworked adult of another species. So far this season, the following instances have come to the FLYER's attention:

Song Sparrow—Tom McCary—
Richmond Road

Towhee—Lucille Thornley—Mill
Neck Road

Wood Thrush—Bill Sheehan—
Oak Road

All of the above "host" species are frequent targets of the Cowbird's egg-laying habits, but it's even worse when the target is a Vireo, Warbler, or Chipping Sparrow. Actually, the Cowbird is not at all selective, with over 200 species recorded (Audubon Society Encyclopedia)

The ornithologists call the phenomenon obligate parasitism. An obligate parasite (read Brown-headed Cowbird) requires other birds to incubate their eggs and rear their young. Fortunately, the Cowbird is the only local bird to engage in this rather relaxed treatment of the joys of parenthood. We should also be aware that the ornithologists have identified a group which they call nonobligate parasites. Members of this group only occasionally drop any egg of eggs in someone else's nest—but usually perform incubation and feeding themselves. In this group we find Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Pied-billed Grebe, Virginia Rail, Brown Thrasher and House Finch. Hope we didn't ruin your day!

Correction!

In the August FLYER, on page 4, we erroneously wrote:

"Bill Snyder reports watching a Kestrel while playing golf at Cheatham Annex." We should have said;

"Bill Snyder, while playing golf at Cheatham Annex, reports watching a Kestrel."

Let it be noted that Kestrels are not eligible to play golf at Cheatham unless in uniform. The Editor offers apologies and blames the error on his ill-trained, incompetent, and non-existent staff!

Tabers in Arizona

Brian Taber and daughter Amelia visited in Arizona during the last part of June. They returned with a report of some mighty fine birds. How about **eight** species of Hummingbird?

Most of their birding was done in two refuges managed by The Nature Conservancy—Ramsey Canyon and Mile High Ranch by name. Both of these birding spots are southeast of Tucson about 60 or so miles. Anyway, here is a sample of what Brian and Amelia saw:

Hummingbirds: White-eared; Black-chinned; Broad-billed; Violet-crowned; Magnificent; Blue-throated; Anna's; and Broad-tailed. Having run out of Hummers, they also saw these species: Ferruginous Hawk; Tropical Kingbird; Hepatic Tanager; Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher; Dusky-capped Flycatcher; and American Dipper.

Ocean Birds (a.k.a. Pelagic Birds)

On Sunday, August 26, Brian Patteson, Brian Taber, Bill Williams, H. Fenton Day III, and Bob Ake (among others) set sail from Rudee's Inlet for a trip out into the Atlantic. Brian Taber relates that they went out as far as 75 miles or so, seeking those marvelous birds who spend most of their lives—except for breeding season—on or above the oceans of the world.

Highlights of the trip were these five truly pelagic species:

Cory's Shearwater	5
Audubon's Shearwater	5
Bridled Tern	3
Wilson's Storm Petrel	450
Pomarine Jaeger	1

The presence of any of these in the area of our local data base would indeed be accidental, and would probably occur attendant to or in the wake of major storm systems. Having said that, **we do** have two records of Wilson's Storm Petrel: one in June 1973 by Bill Williams near the mouth of the York River; the other in June 1989 in the same vicinity by Dr. Mitchell Byrd.

In addition to the 5 pelagic birds, the group saw a few non-birds: to wit: about 80 Pilot Whales, a number of Portuguese Men-of-War; some unidentified Sea Turtles, and a couple of large and very mean-looking Manta Rays.

WBC Supports Kiptopeake Hawk Watch

The Club Executive Committee at a meeting on September 5th, voted to donate \$180.00 to the Fall Kiptopeake Hawk Watch Program. This was in response to a request by Bill Williams to enable current continuance of the research program Bill has spearheaded for a number of years. Heretofore, outside support has been largely by grant of funds from the Non-Game Division of the State Game Commission. This year, due to a sharp decrease in funds provided by individuals (usually by voluntary check-off on our State tax forms) the Game Commission was unable to provide funds. According to Bill, this is a particularly critical year for his program in that significant development of former wild areas has taken place (and is taking place) in the Kiptopeake area. Bill hopes this year to measure possible affects of such development (read: habitat alteration) on the number of fall migrating hawks observed.

We hope that Bill will be able to attract further assistance from the Virginia Society of Ornithology and/or other Virginia Bird Clubs. Any of our members who wish to support Bill's efforts as individuals should contact him evenings at his home, 565-3491.

August Bird Walk

As advertised, Brian Taber led a stalwart group of 10 club birders to and around Hog Island on August 25th. They were: Joy Archer, Pat and Mike Healy, Tom McCary, Barbara Moorman, John Rockwell, Dorothy Whitfield, Ann Young and Marilyn Zeigler.

Instead of the usual route from the ferry to Hog Island, Brian went the back way, turning left on Rt. 637 at the top of the hill instead of continuing on Rt 31 to Rt 10 in Surry. This brought them just west of and along the western edge of Chippokes State Park. They stopped near a swampy area and found a small gold-mine of warblers and vireos—perhaps getting ready for the trip south. These “Chippokes” birds, as opposed to “Hog Island” birds are marked by the letter C, below. All in all they saw about seventy species, and while the general absence of shorebirds is noted, some highlights of the trip are listed:

Great Egret	12	Pileated Woodpecker	1C
Snowy Egret	5	Acadian Flycatcher	1
Tricolored Heron	1	Blue Gray Gnatcatcher	2
Glossy Ibis	1	White-eyed Vireo	6C
Blue-Winged Teal	15	Red-eyed Vireo	5C
Bald Eagle	6	Yellow Warbler	10
Red-tailed Hawk	1	Black & White Warbler	2C
Semi-palmated Plover	1	American Redstart	1
Greater Yellowlegs	1	Prothonotary Warbler	1C
Lesser Yellowlegs	1	Blue Grosbeak	4
Short-billed Dowitcher	4	Indigo Bunting	1 (1C)
Caspian Tern	4	Bobolink	50+
Royal Tern	40	Common Tern	1 (Ferry)
Forster's Tern	25	Least Tern	5
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	3 (2C)	Barred Owl	1C

But all the above is just hearsay. To give you the “up close and personal” view, let Pat Healy describe the trip as she experienced it.

“After the rain, rain, rain, rain of the third week of August, ten optimists of the WBC who believed the sun would shine, set out for the August Field Trip to Hog Island with Brian Taber as our leader.

Pat Healy had expressed to Brian the pressing need for a P.I. on a cuckoo—her mission for the day's trip. The sun shone, the ferry was on time and Brian's “short cut” through a marsh revealed a Bald Eagle, Green Herons, Pewees, Downy and Pileated Woodpeckers and a collection of vireos. Pat **heard** several cuckoos in the distance but Pat didn't **see** them.

On Hog Island, we identified many Red-winged Blackbirds and the Bobolinks among them—Joy trained the scope for several fine shots. Prothonotary Warblers, Yellow Warblers, a couple of Black and Whites—all showed their stuff. We had a good lesson on the different markings and calls of the terns—Royal, Least, Forster's, Caspian and Common.

The Olive-sided Flycatcher eluded Brian—after chasing a non-descript “flitter” forever he disgustedly announced that it was an Acadian. Mike Healy says Brian only had to look at **him**—quoting Peterson's Field Guide, he said, “the Olive-sided Flycatcher is a rather large, stout, large headed bird.” A flight of five Bald Eagles made the day and put the feeding of the terns “in harm's way”.

The best, however—the highlight of the day—was when Brian stopped the car, jumped out, picked up a wounded bird off the road, handed it through the car window and said, “Here's your cuckoo, Pat!!”—an immature Yellow-billed, we're pretty sure. Brian and Joy nearly ran the car off the road trying to hold the bird and look it up in the book at the same time. Pat did not expect that kind of accommodation from a trip leader, but was certainly grateful—her next expressed desire is for Brian to find an Ivory-billed Woodpecker. The cuckoo may have ended up as hawk food, but, as Brian said, “Hawks have to eat too.”

Thanks Pat; absolutely peach-keen! And Brian Taber, take a big bow!

Local Scene

A single Hummingbird at her feeder has provided Anne Smith with both company and first-class entertainment during the hot, sultry days of July and August. One day Anne was given a nice bouquet of freshly cut Cardinal Flowers. Just to test the waters, Anne placed the vase of Cardinal Flowers near her Hummingbird feeder. She was amply rewarded when her resident Hummer showed a strong preference for the flowers. Anne said that she had not been in the best of health this summer, and we wish her a speedy turnaround in that.

Perhaps part of the answer to the Bee/Hummer problem is to plant some of the perennial flowers to which the birds are naturally attracted. In the March FLYER, we listed the names of some likely candidates.

On August 15th, our Club President noted a concentration of about 200 Great Black-backed Gulls on the York at the Coast Guard Station. This is by far the greatest number we have recorded locally.

Julie & Ty Hotchkiss returned from their Arctic and near-arctic peregrinations on August 16th. After only one day of rest, they reported a Black and White Warbler in their yard on the 18th. The Black & White is known to breed here (though sparsely), but this is the first sighting reported to the FLYER since spring migration. Are you folks holding out on us?

On August 16th—Jamestown Island Outer Loops—Armour and Sheehan saw the following:

Osprey	7	Red-headed Woodpecker	2
Peewee	9	Acadian Flycatcher	2
Great Crested Flycatcher	3	Eastern Kingbird	10
Brown-headed Nuthatch	1	Brown Thrasher	8
White-eyed Vireo	2	Red-eyed Vireo	7
Yellowthroat	9	Summer Tanager	2
Scarlet Tanager	1		

Dick Mahone reported a Yellow-billed Cuckoo in his yard on Capitol Landing Road on August 17th. Tom saw one on August 18th on Route 199 near Kingsmill.

A pair of Summer Tanagers are becoming hooked on my pine cone/peanut butter feeder. This feeder is also popular (mid to late August) with Thrashers, Catbirds, Cardinals, Downy Woodpeckers, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, White-breasted Nuthatches, Titmice, Carolina Wrens and Chickadees. Bluebirds, with young, are still coming to my small uncovered deck feeders on a daily basis for peanut chips.

At and near the Kingsmill Marina, a Spotted Sandpiper, a Green-backed Heron and about two dozen Royal Terns performed for Tom Armour on August 21st.

The Black and White Warblers must have heard us. One showed up in the Armour's back yard on August 22nd! That fancy bird-bath of Tom's must be quite an attraction: a pretty Redstart dropped in on August 26th.

Bill Snyder was about to pick some figs in his yard on Powhatan Creek on August 23rd, when a gorgeous male Hooded Warbler stopped by—right in the fig tree—for a visit. The bird and Bill exchanged greetings for several minutes at a distance of about six feet. On the 24th, Ty Hotchkiss watched another Hooded Warbler at his home in First Colony.

Also on the 24th, Bill Snyder watched a Great Egret wading the shallows in Sandy Bay—the water we see on the left as we cross the isthmus enroute to Jamestown Island.

Bob Kuehling (Kingsmill) reported that Tufted Titmice have been drinking and spilling his Hummingbird nectar. This can be very disconcerting to people as well as to the Hummers. The chore of feeder-filling becomes all too frequent, and the sticky stuff spilled attracts all kinds of bees and other insects. In

my own experience, it is not common—but Downys and Chickadees have been known to “get the habit”. Norma Olson (Kingsmill) and Barbara Ema (Jamestown Farms) both admit to similar problems, but with Chickadees. You have our sympathy, but hang in there! Most of our Hummers will be headed south by our September 19th club meeting date.

A Tri-colored Heron (formerly Louisiana Heron) flew by Ty Hotchkiss along the James at First Colony on August 26th.

Betty and John Williams (Skipwith Farms) have recently been regaled by the activities of a very scruffy male Towee—scruffy to a point far beyond the on-going molt. The bird has found the glories of a Droll Yankee hanging feeder, and dines regularly from the saucer part of the feeder. Obviously this fellow is unaware that Towhees are ground feeders. Hope they don't pull his union card.

Early September finds Redstarts and Pine Warblers relatively abundant among the warblers. The Pines are quite vocal, and Redstarts have been reported by: Sheehan (9/1); Armour (9/2); Doyles (9/03 on Country Road) and several others. Other Warblers should soon be sifting through, presenting the annual and sometimes agonizing challenge of identification.

At Camp Peary on 9/02, the Doyles found half a dozen Red-headed Woodpeckers, two Green-backed Herons, a Great Egret, a Yellow-crowned Night Heron, a Greater Yellowlegs, and a chorus of Pine Warblers.

On Sept. 4th, Bill Snyder saw a hen Wild Turkey just a couple of hundred yards past the gate at Jamestown Island. The Park Rangers told Bill that a hen bird had been seen in that area several times during the preceding two weeks.

On Sept 5th, Armour and Sheehan visited Hog Island. We went via Brian Taber's “back way”, using Routes 637 and 634 to skirt the west side of Chippokes Sate Park. There is a fine variety of habitat enroute, especially a quiet, good-sized Cypress Swamp. We identified Tree Swallow, Bobolink, Red-headed and Pileated Woodpeckers, a Yellow-throated Vireo and a Kingfisher on this leg of the trip.

Hog Island gave us a Tri-colored Heron, two Little Blue Herons, three Snowy and 6 Great Egrets. The terns were represented by six each Caspians and Royals, and one each Forster's and Least. The fields and marshes were full of Bobolinks, perhaps 1,000—with their tinkling music filling the air. Shorebirds and Raptors were almost non-existent—one Eagle the lone exception.

Over 62 years of age?

If you are age 62 or over, be sure to get, at no cost, a lifetime admission permit to National Parks. Locally, the permit is issued by the National Park Headquarters either at Yorktown or Jamestown Island. Apply in person and bring proof of age in the form of a driver's license or other hard evidence of date of birth. The permit is called a **Golden Age Passport** and allows the holder, together with those accompanying him or her free access to any Department of Interior Activity which charges entry fees to the public. Its a matter of five minutes to get the pass, and it is particularly handy for random drives around Jamestown Island.

For those under the age of 62, the **Golden Eagle Pass**, good for a calendar year—with the same benefits as the Golden Age Passport—is available for \$25.00.

Programs Yet to Come

10/17 Dr. Jerry Via

**“Flights Across The Tropics:
Birds of Costa Rica”**

11/21 Scottie & John Austin

**“Inter-National Expedition to
Malaysia, Thailand and Borneo”**

Below are listed Hampton Roads Bird Club Programs (Meetings held at the Garden Center, 8216 Orcutt Avenue, Hampton, Virginia, at 7:30 p.m.)

9/14 Dr. Robert Ake

“Birds of Pakistan”

10/12 Townley Wolfe

“Birds of Australia”

Other Information

Local members will find enclosed in this month's newsletter two copies of an order form for this year's Bird Seed Sale. Please pass the extra copy on to a friend who has not ordered from us in the past. Also, the Bird Seed Sales Committee is still in need of volunteers to assist with this sale. No physical effort is required since William and Mary students provide all the needed muscle.

The Hampton Roads Bird Club has regular bird walks the 1st and 3rd Saturday on every month from 7 to 9 a.m. at the Newport News City Park. You meet at the Ranger Station parking lot.

Please send any news or articles for future issues of the FLYER to me at
104 Oak Road, Williamsburg, Va.

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Breeding Bald Eagles—1989 v. 1990

Dr. Mitchell A. Byrd has provided us with the following comparative analysis of breeding Bald Eagles within the Virginia Chesapeake System between 1989 and 1990. He cautions that while the 1990 figures stand well in the comparison, we must consider that 1989 was a sub-standard year partly because of a series of storms during critical parts of the breeding season. Nevertheless, he is heartened by the average of young Eagles fledged per nest in 1990—**1.43**. To measure the significance of this average, Dr. Byrd explains that an average of 0.7 per nest would be the tenuous "maintenance level" for the area. Eagle population comparative numbers are as below:

<u>Sub-System</u>	<u>1989</u>		<u>1990</u>	
	<u>Nests</u>	<u>Fledged</u>	<u>Nests</u>	<u>Fledged</u>
James/Chickahominy	16	11	18	32
York/Mattaponi/ Pamunkey	12	12	10	19
Rappanhanock/ Piantatant	26	29	32	44
Potamac	29	31	31	37
Eastern Shore	<u>9</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>10</u>
Total System	92	88	99	142
Average fledged per nest	.9		1.43	