



THE FLYER

W. J. Sheehan, Editor

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Williamsburg Bird Club

June Bird Walk and Picnic

The monthly bird walk will be on Saturday, June 23rd at York River State Park and will include a club picnic. We'll meet at the park at 8:00 a.m. for the walk and have lunch about 11:30 a.m.

The club will provide fried chicken and soft drinks. Everyone should bring a dish to pass—vegetable, salad or dessert, and bring your table service.

Call Jeanne Armour at 229-2363 to advise of your attendance and what you will bring, and for any additional information.

May Field Trip

The May 19th club field trip to Grandview produced well over sixty species of birds for our Brian Taber-led group of stalwarts. Of particular note were: Pied-billed Grebe with 3 young, (We have no local breeding record that I am aware of!); Brown Pelicans; Great and Snowy Egrets; a Surf Scoter, Clapper and Virginia Rails; Black-bellied, Wilson's and Piping Plovers—the latter with 2 young; American Oystercatchers (2 nests); Willets, Ruddy Turnstone, Red Knot and Sanderling; Common and Least Terns; Black Skimmer; a Cliff Swallow—along with Banks, Barns, and Trees; March Wrens; Seaside Sparrows, and Boat-tailed Grackles. (Bill Williams again managed to record *Sternus Vulgaris* and *Passer Domesticus*—thereby keeping his record intact!)

So much for the noteworthy birds. The other noteworthy people who participated were: Joy Archer, Jeanne and Tom Armour, Debbie, John, and Amelia Taber, Dorothy Whitmeyer, Julie Hotchkiss, Caddy Meekins, Ruth Beck, Jerry Via, and Bill Akers.

President's

The club outing this month presents a great opportunity to see some good woods, marsh and water birds, and to get updated on other members' bird news & stories. If anyone is in need of transportation to the park, give me a call (229-2363) and I'll arrange for a ride—Hope to see you at the picnic!!!

Corner

Arctic Circle Beckons Ty & Julie Hotchkiss

As of May 23rd, Ty and Julie are off again! That's not necessarily news, but this time they are headed for the Northwest Territories—and I mean way up into the Territories. They (in convoy with two other couples, each in their own vehicles) will drive all the way to the village of Inuvik, in the delta plain of the Mackenzie River and far above the Arctic Circle. To get there, they must go through the Yukon—through places such as Whitehorse, Dawson, and the Klondike—famous in the lore of the gold-rush. Then, they continue in a northeasterly direction through Fort McPherson—and into the great valley of the Mackenzie. It's that thin lonesome red line on your atlas—and there are not many in that part of the world.

But Inuvik is just a place to park while they fly the Bush Pilot route still a bit further north to the some-time port village of Tuktoyaktuk on the Beaufort Sea.

That's as far as I can take you, but Julie promised to be back in late August and we'll get the whole story then.

New Books in the Library

Alice Sprunge reports that your Club has most recently donated two new bird books to the Regional Library.

Where the Birds Are by John Oliver Jones. (William Morrow - 1990) This book lists Bird Clubs of the United States, along with favorite birding sites.

Advanced Birding by Kenn Kaufman (Houghton Mifflin - 1990)

I am not aware of the contents of this book, but Kenn Kaufman is an Associate Editor of American Birds magazine, and is a real authority on field identification of birds. His periodic column entitled "The Practice Eye" is always extremely well done, in your editor's amateur opinion.

Adopt-A-Highway Report

Bill Davies, our chairman of the Club's Adopt-A-Highway program has made his first report to the State Transportation Department, and it is a dandy!

Bill and his troops spent 29 man hours on the initial cleanup of Route 5 from Five Forks to Green Springs Road (Route #614). They picked up **49** bags full of litter—including **14** bags of recyclable glass and aluminum. To really appreciate what has been done, take a drive out Route 5 and check it out! Any trash you see is new, but, as ever, mindless!

We are required to make 4 "passes" a year, and Bill will be putting out the call as we near the time for the next one. He really can use some help. His whole team to date has been his good wife Nancy, and our ubiquitous president, Mr. T.A.! We salute the whole troops for a nifty job.

Club Members on TV

On Memorial Day, Channel 3's 6 o'clock news Ruth Beck and her annual efforts to preserve designated beach nesting areas for Least Terns, Skimmers, Oystercatchers, Piping Plovers, et al. Members Bill Akers and Steven Rottenborn were also featured.

Local Breeding Records—Bank Swallows?

In the May Flyer, we asked for possible evidence of Bank Swallows' nesting locally in past years.

Joy Archer recalls seeing a few go in and out of holes in the banks of Taskinas Creek (York River State Park: during a canoe trip up that creek a few years ago. Joy didn't think much about it at the time, but will take another look if she goes that way again. Anyone having more recent information, clues or even conjecture on the subject, please call me at 220-2122—most evenings. (Thanks, Joy).

Bird Sightings

A Cape May Warbler visited Ty and Julie Hotchkiss in First Colony on May 5. On the 6th, the Doyles located a Black-throated Green Warbler and 4 Red-headed Woodpeckers at Camp Peary. And on the 7th, Bill Williams saw a Chestnut-sided Warbler near his home in Deerwood Hills. This is only the 22nd time we have recorded this species.

Armour and Sheehan visited Hog Island on the 7th and found these, among others

1	Kestrel
3	Black-bellied Plover
5	Semi-palmated Plover
75	Greater Yellowlegs
20	Lesser Yellowlegs
6	Least Sandpipers
5	Bonaparte's Gull
6	Caspian Terns
25	Royal Terns
7	Forster's Terns
2	Least Terns

The Doyles reported a single Northern Oriole at Kingsmill on the 7th, and 2 on the 8th. On the 8th, Bill Williams took a dawn walk around his neighborhood and was greeted by two Veerys and 4 Swainson's Thrushes. And on the same day, our president hit the jackpot at Kingsmill; a Black-throated Blue, two Blackpoll, and three Black and White Warblers. Also, a Redstart, two Prothonotary, some Yellow-rumped and a Yellow Warbler. And then, a Yellow-throated and a few Red-eyed Vireos—and a Hairy Woodpecker. What a day, Tom!

Lucille Thornley in Walnut Hills, had Black and White Warblers fly into one of her windows—on successive days. Consequences were most serious, and the now frozen birds will be given to Ruth Beck for possible use as study skins at the college.

Martha Armstrong reported a beautiful and posed Bay-breasted Warbler in a pine tree in her yard on Newport Avenue on May 8th. That is the 22nd report of this species—just like the Chestnut-sided reported above. Martha also had a Yellow Warbler and a Scarlet Tanager—same day. Not to be out-done, Julie Hotchkiss reported a Yellow Warbler and 3 Scarlet Tanagers at First Colony.

Bill Sheehan thought his last White-throat had departed after May 3rd. Not so, one spent an hour in his garden on the 10th.

On the 12th, Julie & Ty turned their binoculars toward Dismal Swamp. Highlights were 3 Swainson's Warblers, a single Worm-eating Warbler (yummy!) and a small passel of those sleek Black-throated Blue Warblers. On the way home they peeked in at Hog Island, and picked up Brown-headed Nuthatches, a Red-headed Woodpecker and a Pectoral Sandpiper.

One late evening in mid-May, Bill Snyder was patrolling Jamestown Island as part of an on-going count of nocturnal animals. On this particular night Bill came upon a Great Blue Heron feeding in the shallows—well after dark. Bill wondered whether this was common practice, so he checked it out in the Encyclopedia of American Birds (Audubon Society) and with our local heron-lady, Ruth Beck. Both sources agree that night feeding by the Great Blue is not at all uncommon. Ruth calls them “crepuscular feeders” and that term applies

to those which feed at early dawn, at dusk and/or during darkness. What about people who snack late, Ruth? Did you say gluttons?

Yellow-billed Cuckoos were heard and seen in the vicinity of Hollybrook by your Editor on the 14th and 15th of May.

On the 15th, Armour and Sheehan again visited Jamestown Island. The Outer Loop gave up the following:

- 3 Virginia Rail
- 1 Red-tailed Hawk
- 8 Wood Pewee
- 4 Acadian Flycatchers
- 7 Kingbirds
- 5 Rough-winged Swallows
- 6 White-eyed Vireos
- 5 Blackpoll Warblers
- 4 American Redstarts
- 5 Summer Tanagers
- 5 Scarlet Tanagers
- 4 Indigo Bunting

The Loop also gave a goodly number of Deer Flies, and some sort of insect repellant is recommended.

On 5/15, Emily Sharrett heard and saw a Northern Waterthrush near Kingsmill Marina. Tom Armour found one, same place, on the 16th—along with a Solitary Sandpiper.

In mid-May a male Painted Bunting was seen and heard for several days at Kingsmill by Mr. and Mrs. H.H. Bass. Tom Armour did not learn of this until the end of May, but was unable to find the bird in the area where Mr. Bass had found it.

Our records disclose that this is only the 4th sighting in our local area. We should note, however, that just last year one appeared at the feeder of Mr. Lon Fisher on June 10th & 11th—also at Kingsmill. Keep an eye out for this beauty, especially you folks at Kingsmill. The female might fool you at first, but not so the male!

On May 23rd, a Common Loon cavorted on the James off First Colony. Julie believes the bird stopped by to bid her farewell as she and Ty left on their Arctic adventure an hour later.

Lucille Thornley, on Mill Neck Road, has watched a young cowbird in her yard being fed incessantly by a male Towhee. She has not seen either the female Towhee or young Towhees. (May 29-June 4). On June 6th, a Wood Thrush was observed by the editor feeding a very vocal young cowbird.

On June 2, Armour & Sheehan found a singing Grasshopper Sparrow in the field adjacent (East) to the Drummonds Field horse pasture. Also, on the feeder road which parallels Route 31 nearby, they almost ran over a Kestrel which had just picked up a fair-sized vole or mouse. Kestrels have been observed frequently during May perched on the wires along this short road, and Tom & Bill are convinced they are breeding nearby. We have a few recent local breeding records, but use a few more. Any offers?

Dick Peake, a visitor from the Western part of the state and our former quest speaker, saw a Worm-eating Warbler on June 3 in the vicinity of Powhattan Plantation—off Ironbound, west of Five Forks. This is only our 24th area record, and the first since 1986. Thanks, Dick; please visit more often.

Larry Ricketts, on Oak Road, has young Crested Flycatchers in a nest box—first noted on June 5th.

Grace and Joe Doyle returned to town from a couple of weeks in New York State, and quickly picked up a couple good birds to share with us. At Camp Peary on June 10th and 11th, they saw a Common Moorhen

(formerly known as Common Gallinule) and a late Ruddy Duck. The Moorhen sighting is only our 12th for the local area—first one reported since 1985, when Bill Williams had one in Black Stump Creek in late May, and Fenton Day saw one in early October near Williamsburg West.

On June 12th, a Grasshopper Sparrow was singing from atop a clump of pasture grass at Drummonds Fields. Just across Route 614, a Kestrel was perched on a wire. Both species have been observed several times previously in the area, and are presumed to be breeding birds.

Barn Owls Breeding in Local Duck Blind

Even while we were wringing our hands in the April FLYER about the local paucity of Barn Owls, the owls themselves were being contrary.

On April 5th, Mr. Billy Hynes was routinely checking a large duck blind in the James, when he flushed an adult Barn Owl from the blind. And back in a dark corner, on the bare floor were five large white rather pointed eggs. Mr. Hynes mentioned the above to Tom Armour about ten days later. The experts on Barn Owls advised Tom that Ospreys were known to attack adult Barn Owls caught out over the water in daylight—particularly during Osprey breeding season which is now! Since the owls are nocturnal in habit, their chances would be improved if they were not flushed frequently from the nest area in broad daylight. Accordingly, Billy Hynes planned to make infrequent visits to the blind, and late in the day.

His next visit was on May 2nd, and he was rewarded by seeing 4 very young, down-covered birds—plus 1 egg. On May 15th, Billy and Tom again paid a call in the late afternoon. they flushed an adult and found five young—ranging in size according to Tom, “from pigeon to sparrow”. The floor of the nest area was literally covered with bits and pieces of small rodents, and with the regurgitated remains of the rodents which had been ingested for food. The great value of the Barn Owl is that they subsist very largely on rodents: mice, voles and rats. Once in a while, they take a small bird, a large insect, a frog or a snake.

On May 23rd, a further visit was made, and the 5 young seemed to be thriving. Tom took some pictures, and has promised to show them at a Club meeting when we resume in the fall. So far the news had been all good news, but on June 1st, Billy Hynes and Tom found only the 3 largest young birds to be alive. The bodies were there, and there was not outward evidence of predator action. The live birds were active, and appeared healthy. We don't have a clue as to what actually happened to the two deceased birds. It may be nature's tough way of accommodating to a food shortage; it may result from a casualty to one of the adults, which would drastically and quickly reduce the food supply; or it could be that poison was ingested from a rodent which had itself been poisoned. There may be other scenarios, and perhaps those birders who are better acquainted with the species can bring us closer to the probable cause.

In any event, we should be glad we are not Barn Owls! Incubation of eggs by the female takes from 30-32 days; the young don't begin flight until they are 50 days old—and then there's the diet!

We'll keep you posted. Meanwhile, it's nice to know that the birds are again in the area.

Hummers—Trees that Attract

In the March FLYER, we listed a number of shrubs, vines and perennial plants which attract hummingbirds. The article which we quoted from did not address trees, but the April issue of the VPI State Cooperative Extension Notes lists the following as among Hummingbird favorites:

Buckeye, Horse Chestnut, Catalpa, Apple, Crabapple, Hawthorn, Silk Tree, Red Bud, and Tulip Poplar.

Environmental Bulletin Board

Carolyn Lowe, who watches over our environmental interests, read the following statement from President Tom Armour at the James City County Board of Supervisors' meeting on May 7, 1990:

"The Williamsburg Bird Club, whose 120 members include many residents of James City County, would like to express strong support for the goals of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act to protect the water quality of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries through sound land-use management, and therefore urges the Board of Supervisors of James City County to adopt the proposed Chesapeake Bay Preservation ordinance to help achieve those goals."

On April 18th, Carolyn released the following mailgram to the State Secretary of Transportation.

"In concern for protection of environmental and historic values, the 120 members of the Williamsburg Bird Club support improving ferry service and oppose building a bridge across the James River.

Tom Armour, President

The Secretary responded on April 24th.

Dear Mr. Armour and Ms. Lowe:

Thank you for your mailgram of April 18, 1990, concerning the Jamestown - Scotland Ferry.

The Virginia Department of Transportation has developed several possibilities--including continued ferry service--to consider for that crossing. Earlier this month I met with Delegate George Grayson and representatives of the James River Crossing Coalition to discuss their opposition to a bridge. In addition, at a recent Suffolk District hearing representatives from James City, Surry, Sussex and Southhampton Counties testified on the matter (the first two in opposition, the latter two in favor of a bridge). The Commonwealth Transportation Board, which I chair, will take up the issues at its regularly scheduled meeting on May 17.

I will examine very carefully all of the various options, including maintaining and upgrading the existing ferry service. I appreciate having the views of you and the Williamsburg Bird Club.

Again, thank you for your correspondence.

Sincerely,

John G. Milliken

Library Bird Program a Great Success

As advertised, on Sunday, May 13th, at the Williamsburg Regional Library, Bob Long, Bill Williams, and Bill Snyder put on a fine program on Basic Birding. The enthusiastic and unqualified consensus was that a full follow-on would be most appropriate—perhaps tuned to our fall and winter birds, who they are and how to find them.

As a result of the program on the 13th, the following folks have expressed strong interest in the Club. We will provide each of them with the June FLYER, and a copy of our Summary of Local Birds.

Thelma Melfi	Bob & Mauldine Styles
Marilyn & Bob Raither	Ann Fitzpatrick
Dorothy Whitfield	Judy Elam
Cliff & Jan Hart	Barbara Converse
Lynn Sheldon	Frances Hamilton

Would like to take this opportunity to welcome the following new members.

Alfred & Edith Brokaw
208 Sheffield Road
Williamsburg, Virginia 23185

Dale Parsons
P.O. Box 21063
Roanoke, Va. 23018

We will be combining the July and August issue of the FLYER—the next issue will be sent out around the 1st of August.