



# THE FLYER

Volume 15, No. 5

May 1991

Williamsburg Bird Club

Bill Sheehan, Editor (220-2122)

## May Events

**Meeting** Wednesday, May 15th, 7:30 pm in Room 117 Millington Hall, on the campus of William & Mary.

**Program** A double-header; featuring two of the clubs 1990 research grant recipients:

Tim O'Connell will give us the results of his studies on the **Effects of Gull Predation on Reproductive Success of Chesapeake Bay Terns.**

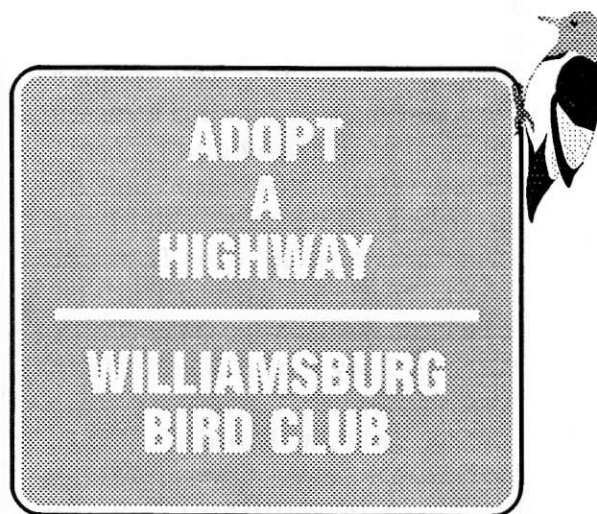
Greg Kellor will report his findings on **Reproductive Success and Substrate Selections by the Common Tern and Black Skimmers.**

**Field Trip** The May field trip will be on **Saturday, the 18th**; the destination—**Newport News City Park.** We'll meet at **7:30 a.m.** at the usual place (Colonial Williamsburg Information Center Parking Lot—right hand side). Tom Armour will be the leader.

## Coming Attractions

In September Bill Williams will present a two part thriller: **Hawk Migration through Kiptopeake**; and **Woodcocks Close Up.**

In October Dr. Jack Brooks of the William & Mary Biology Department will give us a program on **Aspects of Australia.**



See Story on Page 8

## President's

Corner

The May meeting will be our last until September 18th. Our field trips will be held once a month as usual, dates and locations will be indicated in the FLYER. I hope all have a good summer with lots of great birds

*Tom Armour*

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## 14th Annual Spring Bird Count

On Sunday April 28th, Brian Taber spearheaded a very talented group of 28 birders in compiling a total of 157 species. That is a mite above our average of 155 over the previous 13 years. Those who participated in this fine effort, both in the field and from their homes, are: Tom and Jeanne Armour, Cindy Carlson, Rich Goll, Teta Kain, Gary Smith, Mary Pulley, Julie Hotchkiss, Marilyn Zeigler, Carro Seay, Ruth Beck, Bettye Fields, Henry McDaniels, Bob Cross, Eileen Popp, Bill Williams, Brian Patteson, Lew Wilkinson, Dot Silbsy, Donna LeClair, Alice Springe, Joe and Grace Doyle, Emily Sharrett, Carol Talbot, Bob Morris and Bill Sheehan. The strong and most welcome support of members of the Hampton Road Bird Club is noted with thanks.

Considering the early date, the results were better than projected. And, to dream a bit, on the following day Ty Hotchkiss recorded a Black-billed Cuckoo; Bill Williams found a Red-breasted Merganser; and a mature Golden Eagle flew over Brian Taber's yard while he was "raptor-watching"! The complete listing is on pages 6 & 7 of this issue.

## Birds from Outside Our Area

On 4/10 the Hotchkiss pair went to Craney Island. Among the results: Black-headed Gull; Rough-legged Hawk; Avocets, Pintail Ducks; Shovelers; Bonaparte's Gulls and Brown Pelicans. Next day they travelled west to Curle's Neck, where Prothonotary Warblers, a male Redstart and a few Bald Eagles performed for them. On 4/12, they tried the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel Islands. They found Oystercatchers, Purple Sandpipers, Ruddy Turnstones, Oldsquaw, and a rather out-of-place Least Flycatchers.

Steve Rottenborn's project on the Eastern Shore has him inquiring into what plovers and sandpipers use agricultural lands for feeding purposes, and how they use them. On 4/13 he found about 3000 of such birds foraging in the fields: 2,000 Dunlin, 1,300 Black-bellied Plovers, and 50 Short-billed Dowitchers. That is at least a 10-year supply for most of us.

Steve can't avoid Orange-crowned Warblers. On 4/21 he reports 5 at Fort Eustis. But Steve saved his best effort for his adventures in the Great Dismal Swamp on 4/21. The real reason for the trip was to find the rare Swainson's Warbler, which he did in the number of 3. But Steve got just a little lost, and hiked about 11 miles—counting all the way. His numbers must be records of some sort, and it truly appears that he ran into a "fallout" of at least a few species of migrating warblers. Hold on!: Ovenbirds 257; Prothonotary Warblers 187; Prairie Warblers 126; Hooded Warblers 81; Worm-eating Warblers 24. And naturally, a few Orange-crowned Warblers tagged along.

On 4/25, Julie/Ty re-visited Craney Island for Least Terns and Piping Plovers.

Bill Williams started our FLYER month with Whippoorwills and a Prairie Warbler at the JCC landfill on 4/3. Joe & Grace Doyle saw Parulas and Yellow-throated Warblers on Country Road on 4/6. Williams, on the move on 4/7, came up with 2 Yellow-crowned Night Herons at the QL marina; a Winter Wren on Bushneck Road, and Boat-tailed Grackles—4 at Indian Field Creek and 1 at Felgate's Creek, both on the York River side of the Colonial Parkway. Same day the Doyles worked Camp Peary for 2 Palm Warblers, an Ovenbird, a Wild Turkey and a Hermit Thrush. At Kingsmill, Tom Armour reported a Hummingbird, 2 Louisiana Waterthrushes, 4 Rough-winged Swallows and a couple Caspian Terns.

On 4/8 Bill Snyder welcomed his first Gnatcatcher of the year at his home on Powhatan Creek. The Gnatcatchers usually establish residence in Bill's yard. Tom recorded a Hairy Woodpecker at KM, and Ty Hotchkiss watched a Prairie Warbler at First Colony. April 10th brought a Wood Thrush to Steve Rottenborn on the campus, and a Solitary Vireo performed for Armour at KM. April 11th

was busy, too. Julie/Ty saw Rusty Blackbirds on News Road (JCC), and a Red-throated Loon from the Parkway. Bill Snyder chipped in with a Great Egret on Powhatan Creek, and Steve R. picked up a Boat-tailed Grackle at Felgate's Creek, plus 2 Sharp-tailed Sparrows and a Clapper Rail at Ringfield on the Parkway. Next day he got a Scarlet Tanager and a House Wren on campus. On 4/14, Julie/Ty saw 19 Common Loons stream past their home in First Colony. A Yellow-billed Cuckoo showed up in their yard on 4/16, and Bill Sheehan recorded a Black and White Warbler, a White-eyed Vireo and 2 Crested Flycatchers in his yard. Same day, Betty Williams was treated to a Bobwhite in her yard at Skipwith. Steve reported a single Tundra Swan on the James and 6 Nighthawks over the campus. He then checked Treasure Island Road for owls, and heard 2 Screech and 5 Barred. (When do you sleep, Steve?)

On 4/17 Snyder spotted a Coot at Jamestown Marina, and returned home to find a Bald Eagle at rest in a dead tree near his creek.

Sheehan recorded a Summer Tanager at his home on 4/17, and Catbirds and House Wrens on 4/18. Same day at KM marina, Emily Sharrett and Tom A. spotted a **Northern Waterthrush**, and a Gnatcatcher carrying nesting material. On the James, a single Common Loon was fishing. Returning home at First Colony after dark on 4/18, Evelyn Becker was at least startled to find a Hummingbird caught in her screen door. She was able to transfer the bird to a rake and then watch him "buzz-off" into the night. Nicely done, Evelyn!

On 4/19, the Doyles again reported a single Tundra on the York. The bird stayed at least til the 23rd, when it was observed flying locally. On 4/21, Julie H. saw a Northern Yellowthroat in the shrubbery at Kings Arms Tavern. (Another tourist, Julie, or a picket?) And while Julie was lunching, Ty had a Northern Oriole at home. On 4/22, Sheehan hit a small Vireo jackpot within an hour; White-eyed, Red-eyed, and Solitary—all singles. Meanwhile Emily Sharrett and Tom saw a Yellow Warbler at the KM Marina, and Tom had a Prothonotary at home.

On 4/23, Brian Taber continued his noon hour raptor

watch (from his front steps) and identified an immature Goshawk! This is only our **second** record for this bird. Not content with that, Brian really got down to work on 4/29 and brought in an adult **Golden Eagle**, the very first we have ever recorded locally. Brian brushed aside all suggestions that his Raptor-watch lunches include martinis. April 24th brought a Kentucky Warbler to Julie/Ty at Jolly Pond, and on 4/25 Tom observed a Tricolored Heron (formerly Louisiana Heron) and a Common Loon on the James at KM. Meanwhile, the Julie/Ty team saw both Tanagers and a Rose-breasted Grosbeak at Newport News City Park. On 4/26 they saw a Blue Grosbeak at First Colony, and on 4/28 had a Blackpoll Warbler in their birdbath, and a small bunch of Cedar Waxwings. Next day, Ty heard a Black-billed Cuckoo calling in his yard. He and Julie then watched 4 Common Loons drifting upstream on the incoming tide on the James. Almost directly behind them was a loose flotilla of about 30 Double-crested Cormorants—also riding the tide. Also on 4/29 Bill Williams forayed into upper James City County for a Grasshopper Sparrow, 5 Bobolinks and a Red-breasted Merganser. (on Diascund Reservoir)

On 4/29 and 4/30, Bob Spurgeon had a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak taking sunflower seeds at his feeder on Indian Springs Road. Same day, Tom & I (Sheehan) tested the Jamestown end of the Parkway: 1 Virginia Rail; 1 Orchard Oriole (College Creek); 2 Acadian Flycatchers (Halfway Creek); 3 Kingbirds; 1 Snipe; 3 Redstarts. That day—and continuing for several days—I have had a dozen or so Blackpoll Warblers sifting through my oak trees. On 5/1, Dick Mahone and I watched 2 male Rose-breasted Grosbeaks on my feeder. Bill Williams called to say that Black-throated Blue Warblers were “all over” at the JCC County Center, and that he had also picked up a Cape May Warbler. Through most of April, I have been favored by a small almost daily flock of Pine Siskins—from 3 to 15. They have now appeared on 2 May, as I close this portion of the FLYER with the note that they were kind enough to show up on 4/28, our Spring Count date. (Also have 2 White-throated Sparrows as of 5/2.) May 2 brought a Prothonotary Warbler to Bill Snyder's yard. They breed there most years, but ignore his birdhouses. And to close this report on a nice note, Ty Hotchkiss

watched a male White-crowned Sparrow sampling his feeder menu.

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## Williamsburg Garden Symposium

WBC was again asked by Colonial Williamsburg to provide leaders for three “Early-morning Bird Walks” incident to their annual Garden Symposium. These took place on April 9th.

Beck, Armour and Rottenborn led one group through Bassett Woods, and produced Ovenbirds, Palm Warbler, a Solitary Vireo and Black & White and Prairie Warblers. Martha Armstrong and Julie Hotchkiss covered the Golden Horseshoe Golf Course grounds, showing off a Hermit Thrush, some Field Sparrows and some late-staying Juncos. Williams and Taber produced an Eastern Kingbird and a Clapper Rail for the Symposium folks along the parkway towards Yorktown.

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We would like to take this opportunity to welcome the newest member of the WBC,

C. B. Talbot  
P. O. Box 3515  
Williamsburg, Va. 23187



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## Miscellaneous Items

**Homer and Betty Jones** are off to Wisconsin to attend an Elderhostel session dealing with birds of that part of the country. Just about right for the big migration days.

**Julie & Ty Hotchkiss** are off to Point Pelee National Park in southern Ontario. Point Pelee juts down into Lake Erie and serves as a focal peninsula for migrating birds—much as Cape May, New Jersey, and Cape Henry Virginia do closer to home. They, too, should catch the northbound tide of vireos, warblers, thrushes and sparrows as those birds head for their breeding grounds. Good Birding!

**A few issues ago**, FLYER asked for help by anyone with local records of American Bitterns. Evelyn Becker dug into her bird archives and gave us a July 1981 date for First Colony; Homer Jones reported one in April of 1985, in the Mill Creek Marshes along the parkway. Thank you, thank you!

**Suzy Woodall** recently vacationed in Florida, and in the course of her travels visited the Bok Tower Gardens at Lake Wales. At the Gardens, bread and other tidbits are sold to visitors so that they may feed the local birds and the fish which grace their ponds. Suzy tells of a most enterprising Green-backed Heron who has learned to pick up the proffered bread and drop it in the pool. The goldfish (and others) rise for the bread, and POW! A smile on the face of the Heron. Suzy also tells of a Great Blue Heron who doesn't actually deliver the bread to the fish, but who always seems to be fishing where the bread is. If the Green-backed could sell franchises he would be richer than major league baseball players!

**The spring edition of THE RAVEN**, the prestigious journal of the Virginia Society of Ornithology, contains articles by Bill Williams (Ash-throated Flycatcher near Williamsburg); Stephen Rottenborn (Major Fallout of Birds in Augusta County); and a joint report by Bill Williams, Bill Akers, Ruth Beck and Jerry Via (The 1990 Beach-nesting and Colonial Waterbird Survey of the Virginia Barrier Islands).

Editor of THE RAVEN is the many-talented Teta Kain, whom we have been most proud to claim as a WBC member for a number of years. THE RAVEN flies high, Teta! A superb and crisp journal!

## 1991 Spring Count

LOON, Red-throated	1
Common	4
GREBE, Pied-billed	3
CORMORANT, Double-crested	68
HERON, Great Blue	199
EGRET, Great	4
Snowy	1
HERON, Green-backed	21
NIGHT-HERON, Yellow-crowned	7
IBIS, Glossy	14
SWAN, Tundra	1
Mute	1
GOOSE, Canada	111
DUCK, Wood	58
MALLARD	45
WIGEON, American	2
SCAUP, Lesser	10
MERGANSER, Hooded	1
DUCK, Ruddy	51
VULTURE, Black	12
Turkey	94
OSPREY	71
EAGLE, Bald	3
HAWK, Sharp-shinned	2
Red-shouldered	7
Red-tailed	8
KESTREL, American	2
TURKEY, Wild	4
BOBWHITE, Northern	32
RAIL, Clapper	18
King	1
Virginia	1
MOORHEN, Common	1
COOT, American	4
KILLDEER	19
YELLOWLEGS, Greater	12
Lesser	1

SANDPIPER, Solitary	3
Spotted	12
Semipalmated	1
Least	10
White-rumped	1
DUNLIN	4
SNIPE, Common	6
GULL, Laughing	537
Bonaparte's	58
Ring-billed	124
Herring	49
Great-blacked	17
TERN, Caspian	15
Royal	200
Common	16
Forster's	4
DOVE, Rock	31
Mourning	149
CUCKOO, Yellow-billed	5
SCREECH-OWL, Eastern	1
OWL, Great Horned	4
Barred	9
CHUCK-WILL'S-WIDOW	3
WHIP-POOR-WILL	2
SWIFT, Chimney	38
HUMMINGBIRD, Ruby-throated	16
KINGFISHER, Belted	16
WOODPECKER, Red-headed	15
Red-bellied	84
Downy	19
Hairy	4
FLICKER, Northern	57
WOODPECKER, Pileated	38
WOOD-PEWEE, Eastern	8
FLYCATCHER, Acadian	12
PHOEBE, Eastern	30
FLYCATCHER, Great Crested	72

KINGBIRD, Eastern	72
LARK, Horned	2
MARTIN, Purple	246
SWALLOW, Tree	46
Northern Rough-winged	34
Barn	249
JAY, Blue	110
CROW, American	207
Fish	45
CHICKADEE, Carolina	99
TITMOUSE, Tufted	138
NUTHATCH, White-breasted	11
Brown-headed	11
WREN, Carolina	106
House	4
Marsh	2
KINGLET, Ruby-crowned	2
GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray	121
BLUEBIRD, Eastern	90
THRUSH, Wood	74
ROBIN, American	198
CATBIRD, Gray	12
MOCKINGBIRD, Northern	102
THRASHER, Brown	35
WAXWING, Cedar	9
STARLING, European	209
VIREO, White-eyed	89
Solitary	1
Yellow-throated	12
Red-eyed	177
WARBLER, Nashville	1
PARULA, Northern	62
WARBLER, Yellow	23
Chestnut-sided	2
Magnolia	2
Black-throated Blue	1
Yellow-rumped	62
Black-throated Green	1
Yellow-throated	62
Pine	77
Prairie	75

WARBLER, Palm	1
Blackpoll	4
Black-and-white	22
REDSTART, American	16
WARBLER, Prothonotary	21
OVENBIRD	94
WATERTHRUSH, Louisiana	17
WARBLER, Kentucky	17
YELLOWTHROAT, Common	62
WARBLER, Hooded	36
CHAT, Yellow-breasted	13
TANAGER, Summer	64
Scarlet	24
CARDINAL, Northern	211
GROSBEAK, Rose-breasted	2
Blue	22
BUNTING, Indigo	10
TOWHEE, Rufous-sided	103
SPARROW, Chipping	120
Field	35
Savannah	14
Grasshopper	4
Sharp-tailed	1
Seaside	3
Song	40
Swamp	1
White-throated	111
JUNCO, Dark-eyed	3
BLACKBIRD, Red-winged	522
MEADOWLARK, Eastern	81
BLACKBIRD, Rusty	33
GRACKLE, Boat-tailed	2
Common	382
COWBIRD, Brown-headed	122
ORIOLE, Orchard	41
Northern	6
FINCH, House	84
SISKIN, Pine	13
GOLDFINCH, American	269
GROSBEAK, Evening	9
SPARROW, House	71

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## Adopt-a-Highway

The Club's "adopted" highway is a well-travelled two mile section of Route 5 between Five Forks and Green Springs Road (Route 614). Our capable chairman, Bill Davies has just reported the following to the State Highway Department.

Date	Person Hours	Total Bags	Bags Recycled	Pounds Glass	Pounds Aluminum
5/90	29	49	14	338	32
10/90	39	41	17	411	38
2/91	22.5	32.5	10.5	253	24
4/91	<u>17.5</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>116</u>	<u>11</u>
TOTALS	108.0	138.5	46.5	1,118	105

Our thanks to Bill Davies for a job well-done, and to all of those who found time to participate in one or more of the quarterly pickups: Joy Archer, Tom Armour, Martha Briggs, Fred Blystone, Sam and Katherine Hart, Phyllis Johnson, Dick Mahone, Louise Menges, Dorothy Whitfield and Bill Williams. (P.S. Look again at the pounds of glass turned in for recycling—1,118 pounds! Half a ton!

From *Ornithology in Laboratory and Field*, by Olin Sewall Pettingill, Jr.

### Do Birds Play?

Birds perform playful activities, though not to the extent that mammals do. Young birds still in the nest show exploratory pecking—gently pecking one another and the nesting materials. Chicks in a brood, after leaving the nest, similarly peck one another and peck at objects on the ground. Occasionally, they pick up morsels of food and run with them, eating them later. Gull chicks when scarcely half-grown pick up, run about with, and drop sticks, plant stalks, and other objects. All young birds, well in advance of flying, fan their wings from time to time. Such activities constitute what amounts to "practicing" and may be a form of learning to forage, escape, or fly.

Adults of some species perform activities that have all the appearances of play and seem to serve no function other than the release of pent-up energy. At the Falkland Islands in the Scout Atlantic, Pettingill (1964) observed groups of Magellanic Penguins running from a beach into the sea, quickly submerging, torpedoing away from shore in a wide circle, and as quickly emerging and hustling up the beach. Parrots are notoriously playful. The Kea, a large powerful mountain species in New Zealand, pulls windshield wipers off cars and tosses empty tin cans about for no apparent reason than to be doing something.

Please send any news or  
articles for future issues  
of the FLYER to  
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