



Volume 15, No. 3

THE FLYER

March 1991

Williamsburg Bird Club

Bill Sheehan, Editor (220-2122)

March Events

Meeting: Wednesday, March 20th, 7:30 pm in Room 117 Millington Hall, on the Campus of William & Mary.

Main Event: Member Duryea Morton will "show and tell" about the Puffins at the National Audubon Society Camp located at Muscongus Bay—about 60 miles east of Portland, Maine. Formerly with the Society, Dur was once in charge of this Maine Camp which has occupied the 300 acre Todd Wildlife Sanctuary since 1936.

Bonus Event: Following our meeting, and weather permitting, we will embark on our third annual **OWL PROWL**. By car caravan, we will visit some of the known local "hooter haunts". If the Owls cooperate, we may hear all three of our common resident Owls: Screech, Barred, and Great Horned. Details at the meeting!

Field Trip: The March Field Trip will be on Saturday, the 23rd. to **Hog Island**. In order to get a good jump on the day, we want to catch the 7:30 am ferry—so mark your calendars to meet at **7:00 am** at the usual place (Colonial Williamsburg Information Center Parking Lot—right hand side). The leader will be either Brian Taber or Tom Armour.

Important!

It's that time again! Forms are enclosed for those who need to renew their memberships.

Coming Attractions

The April program (17th) will feature Ken Clark on the **Shoreline Feeding Habits of Bald Eagles Along the James River**. Ken, you may recall, was one of 3 recipients of modest WBC grants in 1990.

Our 14th Annual Spring Count is coming up. (More information on page 2)

In May, our program will be a double feature by the other two 1990 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**.

President's

Corner

We have been solicited by the magazine *Birder's Digest* to participate in their bird club fund raising program. This consists of substantial rebates on subscriptions to *Birder's Digest* and on other birding products. If any members would like to undertake this effort as a club project, please give me a call at 229-2363.

Tom Armour

14th Annual WBC Spring Count

Date to be announced in the April FLYER

The Spring Count corresponds to the Christmas Count; wherein the Hampton Road Bird Club members help us take a one-day "inventory" of:

1. **Cheatham Annex**— Camp Peary, Queen's Lake, Cheatham Annex, Felgate's Creek, Indian Field Creek
2. **Kingsmill**— Country Road to Carter's Grove, Kingsmill, Williamsburg Airport, Parkway from Info Center to just before College Creek.
3. **Hog Island**— Ferry ride over and Hog Island Refuge.
4. **Jamestown**— Parkway from College Creek to Jamestown and Jamestown Island.
5. **College Woods**— College Woods and Campus, Lake Matoaka, Lake Powell, College Landing Park on South Henry Street, Population Lab, Hickory Signport Road, Treasure Island Rd.
6. **Middle Plantation**— Mid-County Park, Waller Mill Park (both entrances), Drummonds Field, News Road, First Colony.
7. **Jolly Pond**— Jolly Pond, Landfill, Cranston's Mill Road, Little Creek Reservoir.
8. **Skimino**— Barlow's Pond, Skimino Farms, Mirror Lakes, entrance to York River State Park, Riverview Plantation.
9. **Yard & Feeder Watchers**

Time: 7 a.m. — Colonial Williamsburg Information Center Parking Lot (right hand side)
5 p.m. — Room 108 Millington Hall for Tally

Coordinator: Brian Taber (253-1181) for info or to state area preference.
The April FLYER will carry more details.

February WBC Field Trip

Ruth Beck led a trip to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel islands, and a little bit of the Eastern Shore, on 2/23. Those participating have been positively identified as: Marilyn Zeigler, Bill Williams, Brian Taber, Steve Rottenborn, Tim O'Connell, Mandy Marvin, Ellen McLean, Tom Armour and Sue Al-Salam. Among their avian acquisitions were:

Red-throated and Common Loons, Northern Gannets, Brown Pelicans, Great Cormorant, both Scaup species, Oldsquaw, Black Scoter, Peregrine Falcon, American Oystercatchers, Ruddy Turnstone, Purple Sandpiper, and some early Tree Swallows. •

Unclassified

Don't know the source of this little quote, but thought it worth sharing:

Suburbia is where the developer bulldozes out the trees, and then names the streets after them.

BIRDS FROM Around the Area

Ranger Walt Feurer, at Cheatham Annex, reports a pair of Mute Swans nesting on a small island in Cheatham Pond. They have been successful the last two years, but with only one of two young reaching maturity in each year. Walt also reports a sharp increase in his Wild Turkey counts, and tells us that this trend appears to be State-wide.

Steve Rottenborn stirred up some King and Virginia Rails at Fort Eustis on 2/08—also some Sora—unusual this early. On 2/11, Tom Armour and I found 3 Virginia Rails in a Jamestown marsh, and 3 more at the College Creek turnout on the Parkway. In all cases, they responded to Tom's voice tapes. Are they moving early, or did they winter here?

The February FLYER reported several sightings of Orange-crowned Warblers. Steve R. has added two more, both on 2/12—one in the edge at Felgate's Creek and the other at Indian Field Creek. Steve also picked up about 60 Rusty Blackbirds

and a pair of Bald Eagles in and about that beautiful cypress swamp on Rt. 634 in Surry County—just adjacent to the Chippokes State Park.

Cowbirds have been reported in our area several times starting 2/12—small flocks of 8 or less. They are appearing at our feeders.

Carolyn Lowe has been keeping feeder company with a single Red-breasted Nuthatch for a month or more. They are rarer than rare this winter. Bob & Cynthia Long had a couple until late December, and Bill Williams hears one or two in his Deerfield Hills area.

Bill Snyder, working the big marsh on the Thorofare—east side of Jamestown Island, saw 6 Greater Yellowlegs; 3 Ring-necked Ducks, 15 Black Ducks and 25 Mallards on Valentine's Day. And Tom Armour reports a pair of Wood Duck on Kingsmill Pond, same day.

Ty & Julie Hotchkiss, just back from Florida, found a Hermit Thrush in their yarn on 2/18. Marion Simmons, at Williamsburg Landing, happily reported that 4 Bluebirds took peanut bits from her feeder on the 18th.

On 2/19 Steve R., while leading an ornithology class field trip on Jamestown Island, spotted a female **Cape May Warbler** among a group of Yellow-rumps in bushes near Pitch and Tar Swamp.

This is our first winter record, though VSO checklists rate the bird as a rare winter visitor in the Coastal Plain. Good eye, Steve! The 19th of February also brought 2 Fox Sparrows to Brian Taber, and 2 Golden-crowned Kinglets to the Hotchkiss yard.

Marilyn Zeigler reports a few Evening Grosbeaks on and off since November! Her daily high was 6 in late November. They left her for a while, but 4 appeared on 2/18 and 2/19, with 2 on the 20th. Also on the 20th, Armour and Sheehan saw 6 Eagles over Swan's Point (from the Ferry), and a small flock of Waxwings near Chippokes. At Hog Island, there were 70 Tundra Swans, 15 Pintails, 5 Green-winged Teal, 50 Black Ducks, 250 Mallards and 15 Ring-necked Ducks. We looked and listened real hard for an early Osprey. Maybe next time.

Julie H. had an exciting day on the 21st—birdly speaking. She came upon an obviously injured Barred Owl, one of whose talons was firmly lodged in the birds' own jaw. With lots of help from neighbor Bert White (and a little telephone support from Mitchell Byrd) Julie was able to dislodge the errant talon. After a brief rest period, the owl left the area. As further evidence of the skills of this medical support team, both Julie and Bert

emerged without a scratch. Nothing ever happens around here! Julie also reports 6 Evening Grosbeaks at her feeder, same day.

Tom has been reporting considerable Wood Duck activity on Kingsmill Pond from 2/26 into early March. Kingsmill management (Harry Knight) has placed a number of Wood Duck nesting boxes in many of the Kingsmill ponds. Hope we'll have a good year. At Jamestown Island on 2/26, Tom called up six Virginia Rails. Also, a single Hermit Thrush, 8 Hooded Mergansers (apparently paired) and a couple or three Red-headed Woodpeckers. Next day, Alice Springe watched a beautiful male Hooded Merganser on a pond in her neighborhood. Marion Zeigler called to further report Evening Grosbeaks at her feeder at Queens Lake: 6 on 2/26; 3 on 2/27 and 2 on 2/28.

To close out February, Steve Rottenborn and Dr. Hall's Ornithology class found two Redheads tucked into a flock of about 250 Canvasback Ducks on the York, just off of Felgate's Creek. Then, it got better, Near the Coleman Bridge, Steve saw 8 Gannet—the second record we are aware of. The first was in April, 1949, and was published in the VSO RAVEN at the time.

And, a few Osprey have appeared. David Martin actually "clocked" one at 2:10 p.m. on February 28th over the Kingsmill Marina. Alice Springe spotted another on 3/1 over the James near the Gospel Farm. The Sharretts spotted two at Hog Island on 3/02.

Julie & Ty Hotchkiss heard a singing Northern Oriole at Hog Island on 3/1, but never could fine the bird. They did find two Snow Geese, about 75 Tundra Swans and a few Green-winged Teal. And on 3/2, a large Cooper's Hawk visited our President's yard.

Tom finally found a Laughing Gull—at the Kingsmill Marina on 3/5. He (Tom) and I rode the Jamestown Island Outer Loop on 3/6. Two Osprey (one carrying a fish); a pair each of Hooded Mergansers and Wood Ducks, two Virginia Rails; 2 Hairy Woodpeckers; seven Red-headed Woodpeckers, a few Brown-headed Nuthatches and a single Hermit Thrush. One of the Red-headed Woodpeckers (at Black Point) was an immature bird whose red feathers on the head were just becoming obvious.

Larry Ricketts, in Hollybrook, found a large nest in a tall pine tree a week or so ago. At the time, we thought and hoped it might be a Red-shouldered Hawk

to help us with a local rabbit/squirrel problem. Tom Armour cautiously approached the tree on 3/6 and confirmed a Red-shoulder on the nest. Who says backyard birding isn't exciting!

On 3/3, Grace and Joe Doyle made their weekly pilgrimage to Camp Peary and rept: 100 Tundra Swans; 200 Ring-necked Ducks; 100 American Wigeon (a.k.a. Baldpate) and their first Osprey of the new season. On 3/9, on Kingsmill Pond, Grace saw a pair of Pied-billed Grebes.

On 3/9, Tom A. saw two Winter Wrens cavorting about his back yard. •

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Buen Viaje!

Sources confirm that Marilyn Zeigler and Ruth Beck departed the United States on March 5th for a two-week birding holiday in Costa Rica. While there, Ruth has been invited to address an international group on the subject of WOODPECKERS. Our sources refused to comment when asked whether Woodpeckers will be afforded equal time—or even a rap session.

Summary of Local Bird Data — 1991

Your 1991 update of local bird data is enclosed with this issue of the FLYER.

The only "new" bird added to our local list during 1990 is **Brewster's Warbler**, a hybrid between the Blue-winged and Golden-winged Warbler. This bird was first spotted by Bettye Fields in the vicinity of Barlow's Pond, James City County, in late May.

Quite a number of date changes have also been made, most of which serve to establish new "early dates" or "late dates" for the species involved. In the Summary, you will see that we have tried to condense quite a bit of basic information into one line per species. We do have a very extensive collection of detailed supporting data. If you are curious about any species in such matters as to where birds were seen, how many and by whom, call Bill Sheehan at 220-2122 and he'll try to oblige.

With Spring almost upon us, you may want to take a real close look at each species which migrates—just to see when you may first expect those which will soon arrive from the South, or when you may say bye-bye to those which have spent the winter with us.

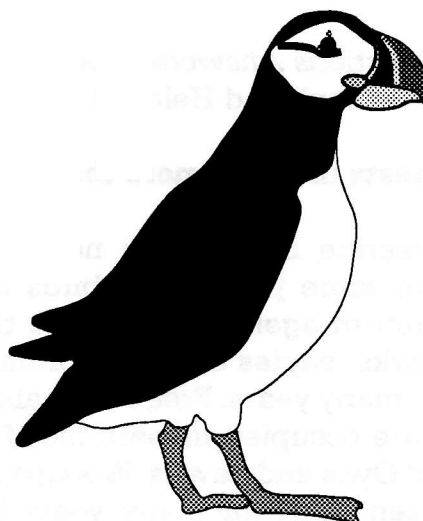
Fred Blystone, who, among other things publishes the FLYER, has all the summary data tucked away in his computer. He has again gone the extra mile in making the many changes necessary to give us the final product. To our knowledge, few local clubs can match it! •

Most Wanted List

A quick screen of our new Summary suggests that a small number of interesting birds have been reported rather thinly through the years. We have listed them below along with the number of sightings the Club records show.

Brown Pelican	23	American Bittern	9
Oldsquaw	23	Least Bittern	24
Broad-winged		Cliff Swallow	9
Hawk	19	Philadelphia	
Peregrine Falcon	12	Vireo	17
Common Moorhen	11	Chestnut-sided	
Avocet	11	Warbler	24
Upland Sandpiper	18	Vesper Sparrow	13
Sanderling	11	Lincoln's Sparrow	12

Please help by reporting any sightings of the above birds which you may not have previously told us about, or which you may experience in the months ahead. Call Bill at 220-2122, or give Tom a note during any Club meeting.



Birds from Afar

Birding in Florida-a la Hotchkiss

Early February found Julie & Ty Hotchkiss in Florida visiting some of the birding hotspots. In summary, results appear like this:

Ding Darling Nat. Wildlife Refuge: White Pelicans, Spoonbills, Reddish Egrets, Wood Storks, White Ibis.

Everglades National Park (Anhinga Trail): Green Herons, Yellow-crowned Night Herons; Snowy and Great Egrets.

Eco Pond at Flamingo: Short-tailed Hawk, Smooth-billed Ani, Caribbean Coot, Great White Heron, and King Rail.

Castellow Hammock (near Homestead): Painted Buntings, Indigo Buntings and Oven birds.

Okefenokee Swamp: Sandhill Cranes, courting!

Ocala National Forest: Limpkins, Bald Eagles, Osprey.

Santee State Park: A pair of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers.

When I asked Julie for the real highlight of the trip, she immediately said it was the **Bobcat** which crossed the road in front of them at Merrill Island NWR. I looked it up. *Lynx rufous* is about 3 feet long, has a 6 inch tail, and stands 15 inches tall. This cat weighs in at up to 40 pounds! Nice kitty! Well, so much for Florida birds, Julie. Thanks.

From *1001 Questions Answered about Birds* by
Allan D. Cruickshank and Helen G. Cruickshank.

Q. Are any nests used for more than one year?

A. Most passerine birds use a nest but once. However, the same pair of bluebirds or house wrens may return again and again to the same bird box. Hawks, eagles and owls often use the same nest for many years. Frequently abandoned eagle nests are occupied in years that follow by Great Horned Owls and hawks. Woodpecker nest holes are often used for many years by other species of hole-nesting birds.

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

Bill Sheehan at

104 Oak Road, Williamsburg, Va.

23185

or call **220-2122**