



THE FLYER

Volume 15, No. 10

November 1991

Williamsburg Bird Club

Bill Sheehan, Editor (220-2122)

November Events

Meeting Wednesday, **November 20th**, at 7:30 p.m. in Room 117, Millington Hall, at the College.

Program Our favorite Hotchkiss duo will share with us (both audio and video) some of their birding adventures in Canada's Northwest Territories and in southern Alaska in the summer of 1990. Ty's photography is always meticulous, and both he and Julie are at least locally famous for the insight and presentation of some pretty superb nature-oriented presentations.

Field Trip Will be on **Saturday, November 23rd**. As a special treat, Ruth Beck has invited us to bird in immediate vicinity of her magnificently sited and beautiful home in the wilds of Barhamsville. A pristine lake, woodlands, and park-like areas around the house provide an exceptional range of bird habitat. Ruth makes no species promises, but undoubtedly will have a few surprises tethered out—figuratively, of course. Meet at 7:30 am at the usual place (Colonial Williamsburg Information Center Lot—right hand side). From there we can car-pool as appropriate, and Tom Armour will lead us to the Beck winter palace.

Bird Seed Available

The bird seed sale was a great success, even though total pounds sold were down from 1990. Limited quantities of some items are still available. See list and related story on page 5.

Coming Attractions

On **December 15th**, we will participate in the 92nd Annual Christmas Bird Count.

(More information on page 2)

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, **January 15th**, 1992.

Constitution and By-Laws of the WBC

With annual Club elections upon us, it is appropriate that we publish our Club's Constitution and By-Laws with this edition of the FLYER.

President's

Corner

December 15th is our Annual Christmas Bird Count and I urge all members to participate. This Count is held throughout the country and produces scientifically valuable data on trends in bird populations. This is an opportunity for all members to contribute to a worthwhile club activity. It is also a great opportunity for beginning birders to get valuable field experience since all the various counting groups will be led by our experts. Give Brian Taber a call (253-1181) and tell him you'd like to join the count—every pair of eyes is an asset to the Count.

Tom Armour

Christmas Bird Count

On Sunday, December 15th, our Club will participate in the 92nd Annual National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count. Since WBC was born, in 1977, we have participated each year, so this will be number 15. Brian Taber will again serve as coordinator.

We concentrate our birding within a 15-mile diameter circle which has the Colonial Williamsburg Information Center as its midpoint. Ideally, we would identify and count every bird within that circle. Since that is not attainable with the present state of the art, we break our circle into eight rather loose areas and try to saturate them.

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 Signpost Road, Treasure Island Rd.
6. Middle Plantation— Mid-County Park, Waller Mill Park (both entrances), Drummonds Field, New's 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

We need you to help find birds even if you are not expert at identifying them. There will be experts in every group to help with identification. Some people spend all day counting, but we also need people for shorter periods of time to help cover the areas within our count circle.

Waterfowl and sparrows are generally abundant by mid-December and visitors such as Pine Siskins, Purple Finches, and Evening Grosbeaks may also be around. Our club usually finds more than 100 species during the day, so it is a great time to learn a bit more.

This year we will again compile the observations of yard and feeder watchers on the 15th. Hopefully, you "at home" birders will record what you see at your feeders and in your yards—then report by phone to a compiler/coordinator who will pass totals to Brian before 4 p.m. This was highly successful in previous years, and lots of fun. If you can participate, and/or wish to serve as the phone coordinator, please call Bill Sheehan at 220-2122.

If anyone has questions about the count, contact Brian (253-1181) or Ruth Beck (566-8234), or Tom Armour (229-2363). The meeting place for the day is the C. W. Information Center parking lot, the same as for our field trips. The time is 7 a.m., except for those who go owling earlier. The final tally will take place at 5 p.m. in Millington Hall, just down the hall from our usual monthly meeting place. There will be warm refreshments for everyone. If you wish to be assigned to a group prior to the count day, please call Brian ahead of time or see him at the November meeting.

The Christmas Count is a great experience and a fun day. Come join over 40,000 counters across North America in this important early winter census of birdlife.

BIRDS FROM Around the Area

The seasonal and raucous flocks of the Common Grackle are again upon us, to forage a bit and then move along! Some years there are Red-winged Blackbirds, Cowbirds and Starlings mixed in with them. This year seems to be an exception—so far. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were seen on Oak Road on 10/4, and on 10/6 the Doyles reported 2 Ruddy Ducks on a pond at Camp Peary. The Doyles moved the show to Newport News City Park on 10/6 to find 3 Pied-billed Grebes on the lake. Bill Snyder had a Coot on Powhatan Creek, just behind his home, on 10/10. Next day, Steve Rottenborn picked up a Winter Wren near Gospel Spreading Farm on the Parkway, then stopped at College Creek turnout for 2 Soras, 3 Marsh Wrens, 400 Tree Swallows, 15 Savannah Sparrows and 10 Palm Warblers. On 10/12, here on Oak Road, the best of the day were a calling Great Horned Owl at 6 a.m., and a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak about 10 a.m. Same day, Bill Williams stumbled into a group of 47 Indigo Bunting feeding in a nearby field, plus: 7 Blue Grosbeaks; 1 Cape May and 1 Palm Warbler; 5 Ruby-Crowned Kinglets; some White-throated Sparrows and a Winter Wren. Also on the 12th, Doyles watched a Red-

tailed Hawk dining on a squirrel at Kingsmill. Later, they discovered that a neighbor had seen the hawk chase the squirrel into a nest and snatch him out. (Some of us would like to rent your hawk, Joel!) Doyles were back at Peary 10/13 where they saw a Great Egret, 30 Bluebirds, "scads" of Yellow-rumped Warblers, some Pine Warblers, 4 Red-headed Woodpeckers, and 8 Ruddy Ducks. Lots of us are seeing "scads" of the Yellow-rumps this season, and of White-throated Sparrows, too. Both Kinglets seem to be in good supply, too. Brown Creepers have been seen in several local areas, and an occasional Catbird and Thrasher show up here and there. Bill Williams watched a Sharp-shinned Hawk over the Parkway at Powhatan Creek on 10/15. Snyder had a Great Horned Owl on his property on 10/16, and Armour watched a Common Loon on the James near Kingsmill that day. (He was busy fishing for his quota of Stripers, which he achieved, but took time to report "many" Forster's and Royal Terns on the KM breakwater. An Osprey performed for Bill Snyder at Jamestown Island on 10/17. On 10/19 Larry Ricketts saw a Bald Eagle over Lake Powell, and your editor chipped in with a House Wren on Oak Road. Same day, Steve Rottenborn saw an albino Mourning Dove with a flock of normal Doves at Drummonds Field. Later that day, Armour saw a Sharpie at KM. Next day, Doyles saw 60 Ruddy Ducks, a Great Egret, Osprey, Kestrel and Spotted Sandpiper at Peary. Brian's hawk-watch—at Druid Court—brought in 9 Sharp-shinned and 4 Coopers Hawks, 1 Merlin and a Bald Eagle. On 10/21 Bill Snyder reported 2 Sora at Jamestown Island—in a marsh early in the Loop—and had an Osprey near his home. Same day, just before dusk, 5 Juncos joined a dozen or so Whitethroats outside my kitchen window. (Oak Road in Hollybrook). Also on 10/21, Tom A. found a convention of Terns and Gulls at the KM Marina: 100 Forsters Terns; 50 Royal Terns; 400 Laughing Gulls; and a dozen or so Herring Gulls and Great Black-backed Gulls. Julie Hotchkiss saw a female Harrier hawk over Drummonds Field on 10/22; then an Osprey at home in First Colony. Fishing again, our Prez. reports a Common Loon and 6 Ruddy Ducks on the James below Kingsmill. Tom and I saw 1 Pectoral Sandpiper in the standing water at Drummond's Field, and an Osprey over the James on 10/24. I recorded 2 Hermit Thrushes, a Red-breasted Nuthatch and a Brown Creeper at Oak Road later in the day. But the best part of 10/24 was Brian Taber's home hawk-watch: Not shabby at all were 2 Cooper's and 1 Sharp-shinned Hawk; but two Anhingas! Rare in Virginia, and our very first local sighting. Somewhat like Cormorants, but a separate Family and if the name doesn't sound Latin enough, it's derivation is an Amazonian area Indian language! 10/28 brought Tom A. an Osprey at KM, and I have had

a Hermit or two plus a single Red-breasted Nuthatch almost daily since 10/24. On 10/21, 10/23 and 10/25, a beautiful adult Red-shouldered Hawk has taken suet from a small open feeder on the railing of my deck—about 12 feet from my window. Spectacular! and massive, too, when you are used to watching midgits like Downy's and Nuthatches. On 10/20, Dave Martin (Harbor-master at KM Marina) saw 5 Snow Geese over the Marina—apparently enroute from Hog Island. On Halloween, Tom and I trick or treated at Hog Island. We were treated: 50 Double-crested Cormorant; 13 Great and 1 Snowy Egret; 70 Snow Geese in flight, low, and just taking off from Hog Island; 1500 Canada Geese; 6 Pintail; 2 Blue-winged Teal; 2 Shovelers; 2 American Wigeon; and 5 Hooded Mergansers. Also saw 2 Harriers, and single Cooper's Hawk and Kestrel. We did not walk to the back impoundments, so our shorebird count was limited to 35 Greater Yellowlegs. A single Royal Tern was resting on a ferry slip piling on the Scotland Neck side.

Pied-billed Grebes continue to be seen on Kingsmill Pond into early November. Williams saw a Rusty Blackbird near the J.C. County complex on Halloween. Armour found another Common Loon on the James (near Mill Creek) on 11/3, and had a Red-tailed Hawk in his yard later in the

day. Cold front moved in on 11/4, and has spurred bird interest in my feeders once again. White-throated Sparrows, Juncos, House Finches, and Towhees are appearing in greater numbers—to the point where a Sharp-shinned Hawk has more than a casual interest. No Bluebirds recently, but the peanut bits are ready and a Thrasher is enjoying them most days. On 11/4, Ty Hotchkiss heard and saw a Common Loon on the James at First Colony. (Raking leaves does have rewards, Ty). Tom A. also observed a Common Loon off KM Marina on 11/4. On 11/3, Doyles had a rather nice fall morning at Camp Peary: 12 Gadwall; 50 American Wigeon; 150 Ring-necked Ducks; a couple hundred Ruddy Ducks and a possible Eurasian Wigeon. Also, both Kinglets, a couple calling Red-headed Woodpeckers, 200 Canada Geese, and 11 of those graceful Tundra Swans. On 11/4, a Sharp-shinned Hawk and a Red-shouldered Hawk visited my backyard—at different times. Each perched and posed for a least 10 minutes. Interesting contrast: no small birds were either visible or audible while the "Sharpie" was here; but when the Red-shouldered was present, small bird activity was normal—squirrel activity was zilch! Ruth Beck, during a recent peek into a Heron concentration, found 9 Red-headed Woodpecker in the Northwest corner of James City County (Ware Creek vicinity)—2 adults and 4 immatures.

A Single Coot has been present at the KM Marina during the 1st week of November. On 11/7 Armour and Sheehan visited Hog Island. Single highlight has to be an Avocet, actively feeding in the shallows of the 1st impoundment on the right. This becomes the 9th local record for the species. Worth mention: 96 Great Blue Herons; 3 Great Egrets; 2 Tundra Swans; 53 Snow Geese (of which 24 were immature, and of which 2 were Blue Phase birds); 5 Green-winged Teal; 12 Northern Shovelers; 5 Bufflehead; 24 Hooded Mergansers; 3 Ruddy Ducks; 1 Bald Eagle; 1 Sharp-shinned Hawk; 1 Red-tailed Hawk; 4 Kestrel; 35 Greater Yellowlegs; 25 Dunlin; 250 Bonaparte's Gulls and 1 Palm Warbler (not bad for a pair of elderly "lame ducks"!) On Kingsmill Pond, late afternoon 11/7, a single Pintail and an American Wigeon dropped in. On 11/10, had a report from Tom Armour and Bob Morris of an American Oystercatcher at the Kingsmill Marina.

Hampton Road Bird Club Christmas Count will be held on Saturday, December 14th. If you would like to participate, call their count chairman, Paul McAllister, at 595-6367.

Out of Town

In the October issue, we commented briefly on an apparent scarcity of Screech Owls. Enroute home from their west coast peregrinations, Julie and Ty Hotchkiss reported that a Screech Owl had indeed perched over their camper one night in early October near Bunker Hill, IL.

On 10/2, at Kiptopeake, Bill Williams watched two Clay-colored Sparrows. (We have never recorded one locally). Also, at the Kiptopeake Hawk station, Bill had a banner day with 20 Peregrine Falcons and 50 Merlins passing over. On 10/20, Steve Rottenborn saw a Golden Eagle at Fisherman's Island on the Eastern Shore. Bill reports that a few Goshawks have been showing up on the Eastern Shore: there were 5 sightings during October, for instance. Then November started in great fashion. At a banding station at Wise Point, Reece Lukei netted, banded and released an adult female on November 2. Not satisfied with that, he did all those things again on November 3—this time to an immature male.

Proposed Club Officer Slate-1992

During October, and in accordance with the Constitution and By-Laws of the WBC, the Executive Board designated three members to serve as a Nominating Committee for Club officers and at-large Board members for 1991. The Nominating Committee was chaired by Ruth Beck, with Marilyn Zeigler and Julie Hotchkiss as members.

The Committee has recommended the following slate to the membership for consideration and voting at our November meeting. Prior to a vote, floor nominations will be invited for any or all offices—with the concurrence of the nominee, of course.

1992 Slate

President	Richard D. Mahone
1st Vice President/Programs	Marilyn Zeigler
2nd Vice President/FLYER Editor	Brian Taber
Treasurer	Fred Blystone*
Secretary	Joy Archer*
Executive Board At-large	Phyllis Johnson
	Emily Sharrett

* Incumbent

Bird Seed Sale Report

On a foggy Saturday morning, 10/26, over six tons of gourmet bird food items were loaded out of the trailer at Farmer's Market into the cars of well over 100 members and friends of WBC. Special thanks to Teresa at Farmer's Market for allowing us to use the facilities. Lets also recognize and thank those good folks who organized this annual event; who kept the records; who inventoried the trailer; and who toted the bags of seed to the cars. To get down to cases: W&M Biology Club (plus Michael Beck & friend) again provided the main muscle; Grace Doyle and Marilyn Zeigler kept the paper flowing; and Bill Davies and Bob Morris kept score along the way. Again, Shirley Raynes took orders, Fred Blystone accounted for the finances, and good old Prez Armour coordinated and worried the whole operation to a very succesful conclusion. We are temporarily out of "Bravos" so you all wil have to settle for "Kudos"!

There is still some seed available: striped sunflower, custom and special mixes, sunflower chips, peanut bits, millet, and niger. Please call Tom Armour at 229-2363.

Important Miscellaneous Items

Ruth Beck has asked that the following thank-you note be published on behalf of the Colonial Waterbird Society:

I would like to thank the following WBC members for their time, materials and assistance in helping to make our recent Colonial Waterbird Society annual meeting a complete success: Joy Archer, Jean and Tom Armour, Julie Hotchkiss, Charley Hacker, and Marilyn Zeigler.

Dorothy Mitchell is synonymous with the Hampton Road Bird Club. She is known to many of us as a superb birder, and as quietly enthusiastic leader of the Sunday bird walks at Newport News City Park. Dorothy and her husband, Mike, banded birds for many years at their home on Harpersville Road in Newport News. Dorothy's new book is based on their local observational and banding experiences over a long period of time. The format will contain four sections under their subtitles: permanent resident birds; winter visitors; spring and summer migrants and residents; the unusual and the rare. Her book will be illustrated with about 200 color pictures, many from slides which the Mitchells took during the banding process.

Dorothy hopes that *All About Birds* will be on the street shortly after Thanksgiving. She has promised to keep us posted, and provide price and local availability data real soon. Sounds like a great Christmas gift item!

According to her agent, Ty, Julie Hotchkiss made print again in the September issue of the magazine, *Runners World*. As part of a sectioned article entitled "Running through History", put together by one Mark Will-Weber, Julie authored a section on Historic Williamsburg. In it, she takes us on an almost 2 mile run from the Wren Building down Duke of Gloucester Street to the Capitol. For variety, she brings us back on Nicholson. Either way, Julie Says, you can savor Colonial history—tavern by tavern; shop by shop.