



# THE FLYER

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Williamsburg Bird Club

Bill Sheehan, Editor (220-2122)

## October Events

**Meeting** Wednesday, **October 16<sup>th</sup>**, at 7:30 p.m. in Room 117, Millington Hall, at the College.

**Program** Dr. Jack Brooks, Professor of Biology at the College, will share with us some of his experiences with selected birds, plants and mammals of Australia. Dr. Brooks has had extensive experience exploring the Australian continent, and it will be an unusual treat to hear of and to see some of the natural wonders of Australia through the eyes of a professional biologist.

**Field Trip** As we go to press, none has been scheduled. Normally, we would have a bird walk on Saturday, October 19<sup>th</sup>. The 19<sup>th</sup> is Homecoming Day at the College, and it is also one of the days during which the Colonial Waterbird Society's Annual Meeting is in session at the Fort Magruder Inn. Your president is trying to work around the above, and will further announce on the subject at our October meeting.

### Bird Seed Pick Up — Don't Forget!

Pickup your bird seed order on Saturday morning, **8 a.m. til noon, October 26<sup>th</sup>**, 1991. Pickup location, same as last year, at the **Farmer's Market** parking lot on Strawberry Plains Road. If you can't pick up your seed, please arrange for someone to pick it up for you. We simply have no place to store it.

## Coming Attractions

On **November 20<sup>th</sup>**, Julie and Ty Hotchkiss will share with us some of their adventures above the Arctic Circle in the Northwest Territories, and in various Alaskan locales.

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

(More information on page 2)

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**Colonial Waterbird Society** annual meeting is being held in Williamsburg October 17<sup>th</sup> through the 20<sup>th</sup>.

(More information on page 4)

## President's

Corner

A little bird told me that member reports to the FLYER of local bird sightings have dropped to a new low level. This is of particular concern since your reports are the real basis for sharing current information on local bird actions among us.

Don't worry about records—we just want to know what's going on.

Lets get on the phone to Bill at 220-2122 and tell him what you're seeing. If he's too grumpy, try me at 229-2363. Thanks.

*Tom Armour*

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## **Expeditions, and Such**

Emily and Alan Sharrett led a group to Hog Island on 8/24 and came up with an interesting mix of avian species. Non all-inclusive, here is the sample which Emily provided: Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, 3 immature Bald Eagles (performing aerial acrobatics), Red-tailed Hawk, Great and Lesser Yellowlegs, Royal Tern, Forster's Tern, Black Tern, Yellow Warblers, and Blue Grosbeak. Participants were: Joy Archer, Sue Gray and guest, Doris and Dick Killion, Carol Talbot and Barbara Rockwell.

### **WBC September Bird Walk**

Steve Rottenborn led an ambitious excursion (9/21) to Kiptopeake's Hawk Watch site, to the nearby National Wildlife Refuge, and to lookouts on the Bay Bridge Tunnel route. Participants were: Sue Gray, Corey and Joyce Williams, David & Lee Schuster, Homer Jones and Bill Davies. At Kiptopeake, Bill Williams produced raptors galore: Black and Turkey Vultures; Osprey; Bald Eagle; Northern Harrier; Sharp-shinned Hawk; Cooper's Hawk; Broad-winged Hawk; Red-tailed Hawk; Kestrel and Merlin. Other notable sightings included Great Cormorants; Double-crested Cormorants; a single Surf Scoter; 6 Ruddy Turnstones; Caspian, Royal and Sandwich Terns; 1 Yellow-billed Flycatcher; 1 Red-eyed Vireo; 1 Nashville Warbler; 1 Parula; one each of Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Black-throated Blue and Prairie Warblers; 3 Black and White Warblers; 5 Common Yellowthroats and about 20 Redstarts. Throw in a Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and we have to give Steve pretty high marks in leadership!

## **92<sup>nd</sup> Annual Christmas Bird Count**

On Sunday, Dec. 15<sup>th</sup>, WBC will participate in this National event for the 15<sup>th</sup> year. In this event, we concentrate our birding within a 15-mile diameter circle which has the CW Information Center as its midpoint. To provide optimum coverage, we divide the circle into 8 areas and establish area teams. Even if you are not expert at bird identification, we need all the eyes and ears we can muster in order to achieve maximum results. There will be true experts in each team to confirm any doubtful identification. Some of the more vigorous among us spend the whole day in the field; but we also need people for shorter periods of time—even a couple of hours. Last year we recorded 111 species, and in prior years our count ranged from 97 to 115.

Brian Taber will again coordinate the whole effort, and the FLYER will publish much more detail in the November issue. Meanwhile, Brian will take questions at 253-1181. Keep the date in mind. **Sunday, December 15<sup>th</sup>.**

### **Cooper's Hawk Comeback?**

Among the usually grim news items relating the decline of one species after another, it is refreshing to reflect that the good guys win one once in a while. Most the predators, for instance, took a whack from the effect of DDT on the food chains. When that was outlawed, and with help from the Mitchell Byrds of the world, we see resurgences locally in Osprey and Bald Eagle, and Peregrine populations. National Geographic (October 1991 in its Geographic notes) reports that since the demise of DDT the state of Wisconsin has been able to take Cooper's Hawk off of its threatened species list. It further adds that the bird "seems adaptable, making nests in backyards as well as in the woods". On Wisconsin!

# BIRDS FROM Around the Area

September saw increasing bird activity as the warblers started migrating through, and as the "attendance" of our summer residents became spotty. White-eyed Vireos were present in the Kingswood/Hollybrook area from 9/9 to at least 9/18. Redstarts and Parula Warblers were reported from various places from early September through month's end. Catbirds and Great-Crested Flycatchers thinned out at mid-month, and so did the Hummers. Some of us who kept our feeders filled were rewarded: Norma Olson reported 2 at Kingsmill on 9/20, and Dick Mahone had a "regular" at least through 10/1. Both Tanagers became scarce after the 15th.

A weather front passed through on the 15th and the next few days saw lots of activity. On the 16th, I put my hose nozzle on a very fine spray and focused it on an 8 foot plum tree in my yard. From my window, starting about 4:30 pm, at least the following showed up for a shower: Redstarts, a Kentucky Warbler, two Parulas, 3 Red-eyed Vireos, 3 Black & White Warblers, 3 Pine Warblers, 2 Black-throated Blue Warblers and 1 each of Magnolia and Bay-breasted Warblers. I also confess to 3 or 4 "confusing fall

warblers" which I could not identify even with Peterson at hand.

On 9/15, Alice Springle awoke about midnight to hear a couple of Great Horned Owls conversing—and again at 5:30 on the 16th. Joy Archer, Brian Taber and I live in the same greater area with Alice, and all of us have heard at least one Great Horned since. For Brian, it was his first record in Druid Hills in about 10 years. It is an exciting bird to hear close by, and the five-hoot call is distinctive.

The seasonal flocks of southbound Grackles are on the move, with a number of flocks in the 2-3 hundred count being reported here and there. Homer Jones had a nifty Rose-breasted Grosbeak in his Queens Lake yard on 9/18. On 9/20, Armour and I ran the Parkway from College Creek to Jamestown Island: saw at least 500 Tree Swallows in loose groups hawking insects low over the marshes and the James. Two Osprey were near the College Creek turnout; 6 Royal Terns and 10 Double-crested Cormorants at the Mill Creek turnout, and a Kestrel near the end of Jamestown Road. A single Catbird reappeared in my yard (Oak Road) on 9/20, and one bird was seen daily through 10/3 as I write this. Also, 1 or 2 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks moved through the treetops almost daily from 9/22 to 10/2. Armour saw 3 in Kingsmill on 9/27. Meanwhile, Tom's dripping birdbath was attracting warblers on a daily basis between 9/17 and 10/2. Black & Whites, Redstarts and Parulas were repeaters, with one-time appearance by a Magnolia (9/17) and a Black-throated Blue (9/28 and 9/30).

On 9/27, Bill Williams reported from his home in Deerwood Hills: 2 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, 3 Cape May Warblers, 1 Black-throated Blue, 1 Yellow-throated Warbler, 1 Red-eyed Vireo and a few Redstarts and Yellow-billed Cuckoos. Bill also reported 6 or more flycatchers which he believes were Willow Flycatchers. The small flycatchers are so difficult to distinguish from each other that the hard-core ornithologists lump them under the genus name, *Empidonax*. On 9/29, Taber had a small wave of migrants in the Kingswood area: Yellow-billed Cuckoos; Cape May, Magnolia, Blackpoll and Parula Warblers. On 9/30, Bill Snyder, on an evening patrol of Jamestown Island, heard a Screech Owl on the Outer Loop. The Screech Owls are either becoming very rare, or you folks are keeping their presence a secret.

To start October, a Pied-billed Grebe made an appearance on Kingsmill Pond (10/1), and Bill Snyder saw an Osprey over Powhatan Creek near Bill's home (10/2).

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## Away from Home

At Chincoteague on 9/7, Steve Rottenborn found a Bar-tailed Godwit; and on the 8th at the Refuge saw an Olive-sided Flycatcher—and, later, a Roseate Tern at the 4th tunnel of the Bay Bridge. Nice weekend, Steve! A bit closer to home, Ruth Beck and a female Cooper's Hawk watched each other in Barhamsville.

Two cards from Julie and Ty Hotchkiss during September: one from California; one from Oregon. Julie claimed 5 new life birds on a pelagic trip, "with very good looks at the south Polar Skua". (Ed. note: thought those went out with Studebakers!). Thence to Crater Lake, where they saw "lots of Red Crossbills, White-crowned Sparrows and Red-breasted Nuthatches-but no White-headed Woodpeckers." Next stop was to be the Grand Tetons.

On 9/25, Steve Rottenborn hit a jackpot at Craney Island: a Curlew Sandpiper; 3 each Wilson's Phalarope and Red-necked Phalarope; and Golden Plovers and Stilt Sandpipers. Taber found the Curlew the next day, but the Phalaropes were not to be seen. Armour gave Craney a shot on 9/9 but had to settle for some Avocets, about 200 Black Skimmers and a striking Peregrine Falcon—whose picture Tom took in flight. (The Peregrine's

flight, not Tom's) On 9/28, transiting the Bay Bridge Tunnel, Tom turned up Palm Warblers, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet and a Marsh Wren.

On 9/22, Steve Rottenborn, Bill Williams, Fenton Day, Brian Patteson (and other dedicated non-locals) braved the Atlantic on what they call a "pelagic" trip. That means if you have any tendency to get seasick, stay home! Anyway, birding highlights were Audubon's Shearwater and Cory's Shearwater. There was also an unidentified Petrel which might have been a Herald's Petrel—unknown in or near the U.S. On the piscatorial side (it's not always birds and bees), Bill Williams hauled in a forty-five pound tuna type, and said his muscles ached for a week. And a late card from Julie reports 2 Whooping Cranes and 100 Sandhill Cranes at Gray's Lake National Wildlife Refuge—way out there somewhere!

## Colonial Waterbird Society Annual Meeting

The above meeting will be held 17-20 October at the Fort Magruder Inn and Conference Center. Ruth Beck is Chair of the Committee on Arrangements, and has provided the following information for interested WBC members:

October 17 (Thursday) Meeting registration from 4 pm at Conference Center, with a reception to follow at 8 pm.

October 18 (Friday) Scientific Papers—Conference Center

October 19 (Saturday) Scientific Papers—Conference Center Banquet, preceded by a social hour.

October 20 (Sunday) Field Trips: All-day land based trips to Fisherman's Island; Craney Island; pelagic trip out of Virginia Beach.

Registration and fees are as below:

Registration: \$30.00; Banquet \$30.00;

Field trips: Fisherman's Island \$20.00; Craney Island \$10.00, Pelagic \$65.00

Ruth has generously invited WBC members to attend, without charge, the sessions devoted to the reading of scientific papers on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>. Participation in other events will require payment of the \$30.00 registration fee. Call Ruth for more information if you need it. 221-2217 at the College or 566-8234 at home.

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## Predation at Feeders

The Cornell University sponsored nation-wide Feeder Watch program, in which at least 4 WBC members participate, has compiled some interesting sample statistics from the 1989-1990 winter. These are presented in *FeederWatch News*, Spring 1991, by Erica H. Dunn. She is Coordinator of Project Feeder Watch. The following are excerpts from her study.

1. Avian predators at feeders in the study sample ranked this way: (1) Sharp-shinned Hawk; (2) American Kestrel; (3) Merlin; (4) Cooper's Hawk; and (5) Red-tailed Hawk.

2. In addition to observed avian predators, of which there was a total of 17 species, cats led the non-avians—but 26 species of mammals and reptiles participated. The avians accounted for 77% of the kills; the non-avians, 23%.

3. Primary victims within the study were Mourning Dove, House Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, House Finch, Starling and American Goldfinch.

The author comments: "A common thread ran through these observations: Feeder Watchers were thrilled to be observing these dramatic, though harsh, events of the natural world."

## Adopt a Highway Report

On September 28<sup>th</sup>, another super effort was made by Bill Davies and his "deputies" in collecting trash from WBC's adopted piece of highway. As you may recall, our stretch of highway is a busy one: the two miles on Route 5 from Five Forks west to Route 614—and both sides. Bill's "deputies" were: Fred Blystone, Sam Hart, Phyllis Johnson, Dick Mahone and Louise Menges. All they did was to pick up 9 bags of trash plus 143 pounds of recyclable glass (298 bottles) and 9 pounds of recyclable aluminum (215 cans)! Kudos and bravos to all!

For the record, and including the above single day effort, Bill reported the following to the Va. Highway Department for the entire quarter.

9/91	22.5 Person Hours
	13.0 Bags of Trash
	180.5 Pounds of Glass Recycled
	13.5 Pounds of Aluminum Recycled

Let's get some more member names on Bill's honor roll next time he calls for help!

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We would like to take this opportunity to welcome the newest members of our club.

Mary West  
3001 Tanglewood Cove  
Williamsburg, Virginia 23185

David & Lee Schuster  
209 Cherwell Court  
Williamsburg, Va. 23188

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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