



THE FLYER

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December 1991

Williamsburg Bird Club

Bill Sheehan, Editor (220-2122)

December Events

Meeting: None in December; next regular meeting will be on Wednesday, January 15th, 7:30 pm in Room 117 Millington Hall, on the Campus of William & Mary.

Field Trip: Participation in the 92nd Annual Christmas Bird Count. Sunday, December 15th. (See November FLYER for complete information, page 2 of this issue for count areas.) Brian Taber will again be the coordinator.

Field Participants

As a departure from previous years, we will not meet at the CW Information Center. Call Brian (253-1181) as soon as you can for assignments to area teams. This will enable everyone to get a jump on the day without the delay of a central meeting.

Brian also asks that anyone reporting Canada Geese look them over carefully for geese wearing black and white neck bands with numbers or letters on them. These birds relate to an on-going research program, and will be the subject of a special report. Try to discern the numbers or letters as best you can—even partially—together with any color coding.

At day's end, all counts will be tallied at 5 pm in Room 108, Millington Hall. Light refreshments will be available. Questions to Brian at 253-1181 or Ruth Beck at 566-2122.

Home Participants —We need you! See Yard Watchers, Unite! item on page 2.

Refreshments—Donations of snacks for the weary bird-counters at the 5 pm tally will be most welcome, as usual. Cookies, brownies, cheese, crackers, popcorn, etc. would be much appreciated. If you can help, call Brian (253-1181) for instructions.

The Armour garage still has a small inventory of birdseed available. Be Santa to your friends. Call Tom at 229-2363 if you can use any of the following. As we go to press, Tom has: Striped Sunflower, Custom & Special Mixes, Sunflower Chips, Millet and Niger.

Coming Attractions

At the January 1992, meeting, Tom Armour will present a slide and commentary program featuring unusual avian visitors to our area—and how you may know them when they come this way. Tom's world class bird photography is always a treat.

President's

Corner

I would like to thank all club members for their great support and cooperation over the past two years. Your support has made that period a very enjoyable time for me. I'm sure our new president, Dick Mahone, can count on receiving the same help and support from all of our members. Best Wishes for a Merry Christmas, and many good birds in the New Year!

Tom Armour

Christmas Bird Count Areas

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, 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

Important!

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

Yard Watchers, Unite!

Some of us like to participate in the Annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count even if we can't go out in the field on one of Brian's teams on Sunday, December 15th.

The last several years, we added the birds which appeared in our yards and neighborhoods. It was very successful, and we'd like to play it again. Here's how you can help:

1. **Count** the numbers of birds you see in or near your yards—by species. Record only the maximum number of each species that you see at any one time. (That's the only rule, and it prevents us from counting the same bird every time he/she comes by for a snack.

2. **Call** Bill Sheehan at 220-2122 between 1:30 pm and 4 pm and tell him what species you saw and how many. Bill will consolidate all "home" observations and report the totals to Brian for inclusion in the grand totals for WBC. **We need you!**

Plea for Help from Fred Blystone!

I need help identifying a gentleman who paid dues for himself and his wife at the club meeting in November. The hard disk on my computer crashed on 12/07, and I do not have a hard copy of a membership list which includes his address. If anyone who receives a copy of this FLYER knows this gentleman, would you please give me a call at 229-4346. Thanks!

Voluntary Limits of Duck Hunting?

According to a recent AP release, the North American Wildlife Foundation is urging hunters to continue voluntary restraint in shooting ducks this year—particularly the Pintails, where the annual fall flight forecast is way down from previous years.

The president of the Foundation, Peter Green, is quoted, in part, on the subject:

While it is clear that hunting alone is not the cause of declining Pintail populations, hunting mortality is the one avenue we can control at this time in an effort to preserve the breeding stock.

The release points out that ducks have been victims of several environmental events: drought in the prairie states during the 80's dried up many of the ponds where ducks formerly bred. Farmers then ploughed and farmed the former pond acreages, severely and suddenly restricting breeding habitat. Pintails have been hit particularly hard. Simultaneously the ducks winter ranges in the Southern tier, Gulf Coast and California wetlands were very sharply restricted by development and pollution.

The Foundation seems encouraged that drought conditions in the prairies are improving, but warns that time is needed for marshes to return and for their vegetation to grow back—both for food and protection cover. Given that and a reasonably sound breeding population, the Foundation believes that the Pintail is capable of fairly rapid resurgence.

1992 Club Officers

It was a landslide victory for the 1992 slate as proposed by Ruth Beck's Nominating Committee at the November WBC meeting. Our officers for 1992 are.

President	Dick Mahone
1st Vice President/Programs	Marilyn Zeigler
2nd Vice President/FLYER Editor	Brian Taber
Treasurer	Fred Blystone
Secretary	Joy Archer
Executive Board At-Large Members	Phyllis Johnson Emily Sharrett

The new officers will take over on January 1st. As we, as members, will rely on their leadership in club matters for at least the next year, they in turn must rely on our individual strong support. That translates to active participation in club events and programs, within our individual capabilities of course. Lets all help when we can. It's a good feeling!

Our new president, Richard D. Mahone, is a rare bird, indeed. He was actually born in Williamsburg and has lived here all of his life. While native birds have been of special interest to Dick Mahone for many years, his real expertise is in plants, and it is impressively extensive. He holds degrees in Forestry and in Ornamental Horticulture for North Carolina State University, with additional and significant training in Agronomy. Dick has worked as a forester and in most levels of horticulture. The major part of his career was spent in Colonial Williamsburg, where for many years until retirement a few years ago he directed landscape maintenance. He also organized the annual Spring birdwalks which CW and the American Horticultural Society have sponsored each year—and in which WBC members have served as group leaders.

Dick also brings to us a wealth of experience in club operations. He was a multi-term president of the American Boxwood Society, and still serves on its national board. He was a national board member of the prestigious American Holly Association for a number of years.

In these days of acute environmental concern, we are indeed fortunate to have as our new president a gentleman with impeccable credentials in matters of the great outdoors. If you don't already know him, be sure to introduce yourself at next opportunity.

Welcome aboard, Dick Mahone!

The Local Scene

November 10 found the Doyles at Camp Peary watching 150 Tundra Swans, 50 American Wigeon, 4 Coots, 1 Hooded Merganser and some Ring-necked Ducks. On 11/11 at Brown Pelican was seen flying up the James River at First Colony—Ty & Julie Hotchkiss, of course. Ty & Julie tried the York River on 11/14, and from the Parkway found Canvasbacks, Horned Grebes and Hooded Mergansers. Same date, Bill Snyder had an Osprey at Jamestown Island. On 11/15 I noted considerable Kinglet activity in my yard, with perhaps 6 or 8 of each species moving through. Also had a flock of over 100 Robins stop by for a brief rest. Same day, and the next, Tom saw Common Loons on the James, and a Pintail on KM Pond. Hermit Thrushes (at least 2) were in my woods most of the morning. On 11/17, Steve Rottenborn worked the York from the Parkway. Picks of the litter were: 1 Red-necked Grebe, 6 Common Loon, 53 Gulls, 35 Horned Grebe, 2 Goldeneye, 1100 Ruddy Ducks, 1 Eagle and a few Bufflehead. Same day, farther up the York at Peary, Grace and Joe Doyle counted 130 Tundra Swans, 400 Ring-necked Ducks, 25 Hooded Merganser, a Goldeneye and a Bufflehead.

Joe Doyle provided us with some great numbers of young Bluebird at Camp Peary. Out of 50 nesting boxes, 340

fledged young emerged! Hats off to the Camp Peary folks! on 11/18, Armour saw 9 Horned Grebe, 45 Bufflehead and 1500 Ruddy Ducks—west of the Weapons Station. At home he saw a Hermit Thrush and about 25 Forster's Terns at the Marina.

On 11/19, Tom went back to the James (fishing!), but between fish was able to see 2 Oldsquaw, 1 Surf Scoter and 3 Common Loons. Oldsquaw were also there on 11/20, as were 200 Forster's Terns. Hermit Thrushes have been "clucking" through my yard about every other day. 11/22 saw 24 Horned Grebes in the James off of Julie's home in First Colony. About 5,000 Grackles stormed through my neighborhood on 11/23.

Neighbors of the Hotchkiss folks, Helen and Bill Hart, spotted a red phase Screech Owl in their yard. The bird seemed to be impaired, but managed to move about. Next day, the Harts caught the bird and delivered it to a local vet who diagnosed a broken wing. He fixed it, but the bird was severely dehydrated and died that night. Seems as though our last two Screech Owls have been casualties. On 11/24, Doyles had 150 Tundra Swans, 2,000 Ruddy Ducks and 100 Canvasbacks at and near Camp Peary. They also saw a Sapsucker and some Kinglets. A red-shouldered Hawk was seen in First Colony on 11/27, as was another Common Loon on the James.

Bill Snyder had an Osprey on Powhatan Creek as late as 11/28. Bill also has a macho male Bluebird who has been banging against the Snyder's window every morning. The bird has probably heard about Mrs. Snyder's delicious berry cobbles! I'm still hearing a Great Horned Owl most mornings just before dawn, mostly from a distance but occasionally a block away. Sapsuckers are being reported fairly frequently. Brian and John Taber made a pass at Hog Island on 12/01—a warm spring-like day. Not much moving, according to Brian, but they did see some Tundra Swans, 8 Tree Swallows, a Marsh Wren, a few Savannah Sparrows, and only a few Greater Yellowlegs to represent shorebirds. Armour watched a Bald Eagle over Kingsmill, plus 3 Hooded Mergansers on KM Pond.

On 12/3, we were on the eastern side of a cold front which was scheduled to end our "mini-spring" and bring in some "high 40" days. Bird activity in my yard increased quite a bit in the hours before the change—both in quantity and in tempo. Small flocks of Bluebirds and Yellow-rumped Warblers appeared; Golden-crowned Kinglets were calling; and Woodpecker activity seemed more urgent! On the ground; White-throats, Juncos, Towhees and Cardinals were in greater numbers than I have previously recorded this season.

Ruth Beck's Winter Wren was still camped out in Ruth's

(contained on Page 5)

Barhamsville backyard. Same day: Doyles noted a Pintail on Kingsmill Pond, and Armour had 7 Hooded Mergansers on Wareham Pond at KM. 12/6 Armour & Sheehan made a fast trip to a breezy Hog Island. Highlights: 8 Tundra Swans; 58 Snow Geese, including 4 blue phase; 2,000 Canada Geese; 3 Pintails; 3 Bufflehead; 100 Hooded Mergansers; 1 Kestrel; 5 Killdeer; 20 Bonaparte's Gulls (working the same stretch of water as the Mergansers) 2 Field Sparrows; and 8 Meadowlarks.

Hampton Roads 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.

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

Brian Taber
104 Druid Court
Williamsburg, Va. 23185

or call

253-1181

Breeding Bald Eagles — 1990 v. 1991

Dr. Mitchell Byrd has again graciously provided FLYER with the following comparative summary of breeding data pertinent to the Bald Eagle within the Chesapeake System.

Sub-System	1990		1991	
	Nests	Fledged	Nests	Fledged
James/Chickahominy	18	32	20	28
York/Mattaponi/ Pamunkey	10	19	12	20
Rappanhanock/ Piankatant	32	44	37	54
Potomac	31	37	32	43
Eastern Shore	<u>8</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>12</u>
Total System	99	142	111	157
Average fledged per nest	1.43		1.41	

While pleased with the increases in both categories, Dr. Byrd commented that the number of nests with only 1 young bird had increased disproportionately. He is temporarily, at least, at a loss to suggest a reason, and points out that the average fledged per nest remained approximately constant.

Dr. Byrd suggests that the future of the Bald Eagle in the Chesapeake System will decline if the present rate of habitat destruction continues. Having said that, he admits to being very cautiously optimistic that recent accelerating evidences of concern and action by local entities throughout the System may be fruitful.