



# THE FLYER

Volume 16, No. 2

February 1992

Williamsburg Bird Club

Brian Taber Editor (253-1181)

## February Events

**Meeting** Wednesday, February 19<sup>th</sup>, at 7:30 p.m. in Room 117, Millington Hall, on the William & Mary campus.

**Program** Biologist Pete Money, in charge of education and interpretation at the Virginia Living Museum, will show and tell us about "Owls of Virginia" in a program including live material.

This will be a super preparation for the fourth annual Owl Prowl, to be held following the March meeting.

### Field Trip

The February field trip will be on Saturday, February 22nd to Hog Island. We will want to catch the 8:30 am ferry—so mark your calendars to meet at 8:00 am at the usual place (Colonial Williamsburg Information Center Parking Lot—right hand side). Steve Rottenborn will be the trip leader.

## Important!

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

## Coming Attractions

### Wednesday, March 18<sup>th</sup>

Steve Rottenborn, a very active William and Mary student will present a look at his work in "Shore Bird Utilization of Agricultural Fields in Northhampton County, on the Eastern Shore". Steve is also leading the Owl Prowl.

### Wednesday, April 15<sup>th</sup>

An eminent British visitor, Trevor Gunton, an officer in the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, will discuss migration of Europe's birds from Africa through Spain, Romania, and Holland to the United Kingdom; his title "Wilderness Europe".

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We would like to take this opportunity to welcome the newest members of the Williamsburg Bird Club.

Dick Fout (565-0904)  
226 Skimino Road  
Williamsburg, Va. 23188

Linda B. Fout (565-2094)  
103 Penn Drive  
Williamsburg, Va. 23188

Phyllis Jennings (220-3665)  
120 The Green  
Williamsburg, Va. 23185

Caroline Williams (229-0279)  
6 Coventry Road  
Williamsburg, Va. 23185

From the VSO Newsletter—January 1992

## **Update: Migratory Songbird Coastal Corridor Study**

by Sarah E. Mabey,  
Migratory Bird Research Coordinator

Division of Natural Heritage,  
Dept. of Conservation and Recreation

The fall migration is behind us now and most of the birds we admired in our forests over the summer have settled into the comfort of their tropical homes. Eastern Kingbirds and White-eyed Vireos are feasting on fruit, Tennessee Warblers are sipping nectar, and Kentucky Warblers and Ovenbirds continue to do business as usual despite their colorful, new neighbors. On Virginia's Eastern Shore and Mathews county to the west this fall, over a hundred volunteer birders said farewell to these familiar friends as they moved south. The birders were giving more than polite wishes for a safe journey. They were giving their time and expertise to the cause of ensuring that the needs of migratory songbirds will continue to be met far into the future.

The Commonwealth of Virginia, through the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Division of Natural Heritage, in partnership with The Nature Conservancy and the Virginia Society of Ornithology, enlisted birders from across the state. This effort was an integral part of a regional project, the Migratory Songbird Coastal Corridor Study, to determine the distribution and abundances of migrants on the Delmarva and Cape May peninsulas. Coastal areas from Cape May, NJ to Kiptopeke, Va. have long been regarded as birding "hot spots", especially during the fall migration period when hundreds of thousands of birds funnel through the two peninsulas on their way to their wintering grounds. But, over the past decade, intuition and science have taken parallel stands: Migratory bird populations are in decline.

A great deal of attention has been directed towards the two possible causes of this decline:

tropical deforestation and North American forest fragmentation. But what of those "hot spots" of migrating birds? What of that vulnerable time when migrants must be able to nearly double their weight in a day or two and require safe places to rest between their strenuous night flights? Our study took an unprecedented step toward defining areas of importance to migrating songbirds. By bringing together the states of New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia, we were able to look within these "hot spots" and along the coast on a scale appropriate for birds that are moving thousands of miles.

Volunteers in each of the four states employed the same methodology for counting migrants. Every Saturday and Sunday from early August to late October, observers visited 158 pre-selected sites in Virginia alone (505 across the region). Each volunteer was rotated to a different set of 8-12 sites each day he/she worked. The sites were located in the interior of woodlots and had a standard diameter of 150 ft. The observer would conduct a ten minute count of all migrants on a site, identifying them to species level (no small accomplishment with those confusing fall warblers and ever-frustrating flycatchers). During the count period a tape of chickadee alarm calls and pssshing was played to attract birds for a closer look. All the information was tallied on computer scannable data forms and returned to us at the end of the weekend.

Our volunteers in Virginia were a fantastic group. They were dedicated, conscientious, curious, and above all, skilled birders. It was a delight for us to see that everyone seemed to have a good time contributing their expertise. It was a successful field season with greater than 90% coverage of our sites.

The data—over 13,000 records for the region—are in the process of being analyzed. Later this winter we will gather the entire project committee together to assess our results and decide whether they will lead us to make policy and land use recommendations for the four states and dozen counties involved.

**BIRDS FROM  
Around the Area**

Bird activity has been brisk, though the weather hasn't been. Bill Williams has the only Purple Finches I have heard of, are there others out there? Bill also found Common Snipe at College Creek on December 31st, 4 Fox Sparrows near Jolly Pond on January 12th, Greater Yellowlegs at Drummonds Field on the 6th, Woodcock at Neck-o-Land on the 5th; and an Iceland Gull along the York River on the 17th, not far from the Yorktown bridge where he found Northern Gannets on the same day.

Alice Springe reports a Water Pipit on the road in the Ferncliff Drive area. A male Painted Bunting that visited a feeder near Yorktown early in the month did not stay long. Tom Armour reports, as usual, a number of interesting birds around Kingsmill, including a flock of 15 Blue Jays, a Hairy Woodpecker at the feeder, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Horned Grebe, Barred Owl, Pied-billed Grebe, Great Egret and 2 Brown Pelicans. Tom also noticed a group of 8 Pied-billed Grebes on Lake Matoaka and encouraged a Virginia Rail to call out at College Creek on the 30th.

Bill Snyder still hosts Canada Geese behind his home near Jamestown and Bill Sheehan hosted a number of yard birds in January including Red-breasted Nuthatch, Hermit Thrush, Sharp-shinned Hawk, 250 American Robins, Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Brown Creeper, to name only a few.

Ruth Beck reports in from Barhamsville with Winter Wren, Ring-necked Ducks and up to 7 Bald Eagles! Bob Morris in Kingsmill has been waking up to an Eastern Screech-Owl lately and has been watching a Red-shouldered Hawk rebuild a nest.

Marilyn Zeigler reports 2 Bald Eagles near the Airport on the 26th and a Red-shouldered Hawk in her yard. Tom Armour and Bill Sheehan visited Jamestown Island twice in January finding Red-headed Woodpeckers as well as American Kestrels, Red-tailed Hawks, Belted Kingfishers, Swamp Sparrows, Hooded Mergansers and Yellow-rumped Warblers.

Ty and Julie Hotchkiss found a Fox Sparrow in First Colony on the 9th and 10th. Betty Williams has had a Brown Thrasher in her birdbath and a Red-tailed Hawk in her neighborhood, which has attracted a lot of attention from the local crows and sent the squirrels into hiding.

The Club field trip to Hog Island on the 18th was successful for Marilyn Zeigler, George Scott, Bill Holcomb and leader Tom Armour. They found a Tree Sparrow, Snow Geese, a Great Cormorant, 25 Tundra Swans and 7 Bald Eagles among the 40 Species.

Tom had visited Hog Island on the 8th with Bill Sheehan, finding 2500 Canada Geese, a Great Egret, hundreds of waterfowl and over 2000 American Robins in the fields in Surry County.

**Save Something on Your Taxes—  
Help Protect our Natural Heritage**

Virginians, you can help preserve portions of our rich natural heritage by contributing to the purchase of natural area preserves. The Virginia income tax return allows you to make a tax-deductible donation for natural area acquisition by designating a portion of your 1992 tax refund to the Open Space Recreation and Conservation Fund. This fund is used by the Department of Conservation and Recreation to buy threatened habitats of rare species, provide ecological management, and develop public access for natural area preserves. Twenty-five percent of the fund is used to provide grants to Virginia localities for open space protection and recreation.

Any individual eligible to receive a Virginia Income Tax refund may designate all or a portion of that refund for the Open Space Recreation and Conservation Fund on line 27 of the state income tax return.

Your contribution not only helps buy some of Virginia's most threatened natural areas, but your gift may be taken as an itemized deduction on next year's Federal Income Tax return.

The Department's Division of Natural

(Please see TAXES on Page 5)

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## Important Miscellaneous Items

**Christmas Count Correction**— Our hardy group of counters actually found 110, not 100 species of birds as reported in the January newsletter.

**The Virginia Society of Ornithology** will sponsor its winter trip to North Carolina's Outer Banks on February 21-23rd. This is always a great trip and a chance to see lots of birds and birders. For more information, call Brian Taber at 253-1181.

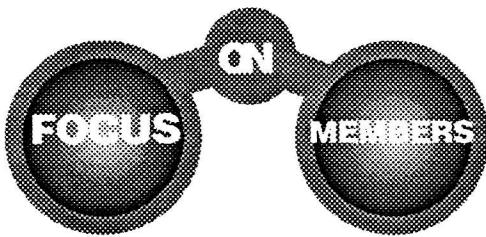
**The January issue** of the Virginia Society of Ornithology newsletter reports that over 2400 birds of 67 species were banded at the southern tip of the Eastern Shore this past fall. The most common species was Yellow-rumped Warbler. A Belted Kingfisher was added to the station list for the first time. This year the station was moved to the Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge after 28 consecutive years at Kiptopeke.

**Bill Davies**, head of our club's Adopt-A-Highway Project reports that a Route 5 clean-up netted 143 pounds of glass and 21 pounds of aluminum in January.

Congradulations Bill !!

**The College of William & Mary**, as part of its continuing education spring program, is offering a birding class on March 26th. The cost is \$42.00 for a trip to Hog Island in Surry County.

**Black Vultures** have recently been in the news as a group of roosting birds has been whitewashing cars in Queens Lake. The birds were referred to rather unflatteringly as "flying garbage disposals". Also, under the heading of "Wood-pecker Control", was the advice to contact game biologist Dana Bradshaw at 253-7072 for advice about stopping wood-peckers from destroying siding on houses.



They have watched Tufted Puffins and other seabirds on the frigid Alaskan coast; they have seen Choughs over the rocky cliffs of Wales; they have passed huge flocks of Yellow-headed Blackbirds on the marshy sloughs of South Dakota; they have studies Harris' Hawks in the southern Rio Grande Valley of Texas; they have seen Fish Eagles capture File Snakes in Australia and in such places as Swaziland, Lesotho and Zimbabwe they have found such birds as Hornbills, Flamingos and Secretary Birds.

I could go on, but I won't. These traveling birders, transplanted from New Jersey, are Adrienne Frank and her husband Gary Driscoll. They began birding in Williamsburg 10 years ago and have been expanding their range ever since. Adrienne is a training consultant for child development workers and Gary teaches high school social studies classes. Together they enjoy getting out and seeing the world.

They participate in Christmas Counts and Spring Counts for the Club and they enjoy feeding the birds that are attracted to their extensive backyard gardens. They are always ready to see new places and identify new birds. Who knows where they're off to next!

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This feature will be a regular addition to this year's newsletter, but your help is needed! Please submit to me information about any of our club's members. Include information about where they are from, how they got started in birding, favorite places, favorite birds.

Information on both experienced and new birders is needed. Please help us share information about the friends, spouses and others who make our club the great organization that is! Be sure to get permission from the person you want to feature.

## **Taxes**

Heritage has identified nearly 700 natural areas across the state that are in need of protection. These sites become more threatened every day. Existing check-off funds are being used to buy natural areas in eastern and southwest Virginia, and to provide for public access to other sites within the Natural Area Preserve System.

This year make a real difference! Donate to the Open Space Recreation and Conservation Fund through your Virginia Income Tax return. Direct donations are possible by sending checks made out to the Open Space Recreation and Conservation Fund, Department of Conservation and Recreation, P.O. Box 721, Richmond, Virginia 23206-0721. Your children's children will thank you.

The newsletter editor will certainly appreciate all manner of calls and submissions of information for the newsletter. Please call Brian weeknights between 6 pm and 10 pm at **253-1181** or send articles, local bird sightings, information about birds seen on vacations and such to **104 Druid Court, Williamsburg, Va. 23185**. This will insure that our newsletter is a reflection of the membership. If you're not sure about what to send, please call. Thank you!