



## April Events

### Meeting

Wednesday, April 15<sup>th</sup>, at 7:30 p.m. in Room 117, Millington Hall, on the William & Mary campus.

### Program

Yorkshireman Trevor Gunton will present us with "Wilderness Europe", which follows migration of Europe's birds from Africa through Spain, Romania and Holland to the United Kingdom. Mr. Gunton, an officer in the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and his wife, will be visiting members Duryea and Peggy Morton.

### Field Trip

Saturday, April 18<sup>th</sup>. Meet at 7:30 am at the usual place (Colonial Williamsburg Information Center Parking Lot—right hand side). Steve Rottenborn will lead the trip to Waller Mill Park. Returning Neotropical migrants will be the main fare.

### VSO Annual Meeting

The Virginia Society of Ornithology will hold its annual meeting on April 24-26 at the Ramada Ocean Tower in Virginia Beach. The event is sponsored by the Cape Henry Audubon Society and is certain to be an exciting weekend of birding and presentations. Field trips are planned to the Dismal Swamp, Back Bay, Craney Island, Seashore State Park and more.

In addition, Brian Patteson will be leading a pelagic trip out of Rudee Inlet on Sunday morning. This trip will be aboard the 75-foot BOBBIE LEE. The cost is a very reasonable \$75.00. For information, write Brian at P.O. Box 125, Amherst, Virginia 24521 or call him at 933-8687.

## Coming Attractions

### Wednesday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>

Our 15th annual Spring Count will be held on Sunday, May 3rd. Leaders are ready to explore the 15-mile diameter count circle and need all the volunteer help they can get! This is always a great event, with over 150 species found on 12 of the past 15 years.

To be assigned to an area, please call me, Brian Taber, at 253-1181 after 6 pm. I look forward to hearing from you.

### Saturday, May 9<sup>th</sup>

The Hampton Roads Spring Count will be held on May 9th. They, too, need as many helpers as possible. For more information, call count chairman Paul McAllister evenings at 595-6367.

### Wednesday, May 20<sup>th</sup>

Sarah Mabey, Migratory Songbird Research Coordinator, will share results of her extensive project with the club.

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

Kathleen Monaghan (565-0296)  
112 Heath Lane  
Williamsburg, Va. 23188

Dr. & Mrs. John Connor (221-0356)  
5707 Williamsburg Landing Drive  
Williamsburg, Va. 23185

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**The Feather Quest:  
A North American Birder's Year**

by Pete Dunne (Photographs by Linda Dunne)  
A Dutton Book 1992

There is a place in Texas where the check-marks grow on trees. There the check-marks have names: Green Jay, Altamira Oriole, Audubon's Oriole, Great Kiskadee, Tropical..Go there; and you can put those check-marks on your "life-list". If you can't go there yet...Let Pete and Linda Dunne take you there! Read *The Feather Quest*.

For a birder, this is the stuff of which dreams are made! Join them on Attu, where the living quarters are Quonset huts, they communicate by walkie-talkie, and they chase the birds down by bicycle. Wood Sandpiper, Brambling, Common Rosefinch..Siberian Fly-catcher! Try the "Land of the Midnight Sun", the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: Musk Ox, breeding waterfowl and shorebirds... American Robin? (They weren't supposed to be there.) Meet the spring warblers at Dauphin Island, Alabama; High Island, Texas; and Point Pelee, Ontario! Journey (as many RASers did) to the Back River Sewage Treatment Plant in Baltimore, MD for Ross' Gull! Pete and Linda made the trip, but missed the bird...That's Birding!

Visit Southeast Arizona's "Hummingbird Belt". Let Father Tom Picelli guide you to the Brownsville, Texas dump...(something called Mexican Crow) Mount the hawk-watch platform at Cape May Point, New Jersey on Oct. 3, 1989, "The day the Peregrines flew". (Mary and I were there!)

Experience all this and more through Pete's delightful, alternately philosophical and humorous writing style.

If you want to wax nostalgic over the places you've been, or get the urge to start making travel arrangements to the places you haven't, read *The Feather Quest*!

Review by Richmond Audubon Society's  
Larry Robinson.

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**Betty Fields sends this report of a trip  
to the tropics.**

On March 6th, I joined Bob Ake and six others for a 10-day birding trip to Guatemala. We flew into Guatemala City (they call it just Guatemala) and then on to Flores. From there we went by minibus to Tikal national Park. Tikal is the site of probably the most spectacular Mayan ruins yet excavated and the government has taken great pains to preserve the entire area by protecting it much as we do our National Parks. Consequently it is a safe mecca for a myriad of native and migratory birds. We birded there for four-and-a-half days and were treated to such sights as the Crested Guan, Great Curassow, Great Tinamou, Ocellated Turkey, Black Hawk-eagle, King Vulture, Plumbeous Kite, Scarlet Macaw, Garnet-throated Hummingbird, Purple-crowned Fairy, Black-headed Trogon, three different Manakins, Tody Motmot, Eye-ringed Flatbill, Tawny-crowned Greenlet—just to name a few. Then we returned to Guatemala City and drove to the Biotopo Del Quetzal for two-and-a-half days. The big attraction there, of course, is the Resplendent Quetzal—we saw and heard several. Almost as big a thrill was a tree full of Emerald Toucanets. The Highland Guan, formerly called Penelopina, was apparently just entering the courting season and we had a lot of fun listening to that. There were White-throated Magpie-jays, Azure-hooded Jays, Black-throated Jays, Unicolored Jays and Bushy-crested Jays. One day when the Steller's Jay showed up we had a five-jay day. My new hummer there was the Green-throated Mountain-gem. Altogether we had 259 species and I racked up 71 life birds. We also saw several old friends such as Gray Catbird, Magnolia Warbler, Chipping Sparrow, Swallow-tailed Kite, White-eyed Vireo, Summer Tanager, Northern Oriole, and (wouldn't you know it?) Yellow-rumped Warbler. Just can't get away from 'em.

The rush of wings is getting louder as winter ends. Many club members were out in March finding birds. Thanks for the many reports. An Eastern Phoebe visited Larry Ricketts on Oak Road March 7th; Tom Armour found Common Loons, Red-breasted Mergansers, Common Goldeneye, Lesser Scaup, Bonaparte's Gulls and Laughing Gulls of the James March 8th; he turned up Pied-billed Grebes on the 11th, saw Wood Ducks in a nest box on the 9th, a King Rail on the 12th and 13th and Royal Terns on the 13th. Tom and Homer Jones found a Great Cormorant on the 14th at the Surry ferry dock. Tom and Bill Sheehan found both species of Yellowlegs at Drummond's Field on the 19th.

Bill Williams reported an incredible 4 White Pelicans at Hog Island on the 13th, which were later seen by Tom Armour, Joy Archer and Marilyn Zeigler. Bill also saw Sora, Common Yellowthroat, Shovelers, a Harrier, Marsh Wrens and Royal Terns on the 15th. Bill continues to host Purple Finches at his feeder.

Grace and Joe Doyle observed a Great Horned Owl that had taken over an Osprey nest at Pea Island on the Outer Banks of North Carolina; at Duck, North Carolina they found Glossy Ibis and amazingly, a Dovekie close to shore; George and Bonnie Scott have hosted Brown-headed Nuthatches at their feeder in Kingsmill throughout the month. Rich Goll and Cindy Carlson send word of an Eurasian Widgeon near Grandview on the 8th. In other action, a Yellow-throated Vireo was very early and singing on the 19th, Rusty Blackbirds were at Hickory Sign Post on the 20th, Barn Swallows were at Kingsmill on the 23rd, a Lesser Black-backed Gull was there on the same date, Yellow-throated Warblers were at Jolly Pond on the 24th, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were at Hollybrook on the 30th, Purple Martins were at Lake Powell on the 23rd.

In early April news there was a Louisiana Waterthrush at Hickory Sign Post on the 2nd, 6 Cattle Egrets near Lake Powell on the 4th, a Black and White Warbler was at Hollybrook on the 3rd and last but certainly not least, a male **Black-headed Grosbeak** was seen at a Chisel Run feeder on the 4th. WOW!

### March Field Trip

On March 21, as Spring was arriving, Martha Armstrong lead Tom Armour and Marilyn Zeigler down the Colonial Parkway to Jamestown Island, where they watched Ospreys and Red-headed Woodpeckers among many other species.

### Bird of the Season

I was at Jolly Pond at the end of March listening for any singing birds. The Yellow-throated Warblers and Louisiana Waterthrushes either weren't performing because of chilly temperatures or perhaps they hadn't yet arrived from down south. The only singing was unfamiliar to me and was coming from a tiny bird up high.

One field guide describes the song as "high thin tsee notes, followed by descending tew notes and concluding with a rich warbling of three note phrases." Huh? Another guide says "surprisingly loud, variable tee tee tee, tew tew tew, teedadee teedadee teedadee." Huh? Another guide says 'zee zee zees and kew kew kews."

Well, it was a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, no matter what the description. The small, olive bird with the white eye ring and wing bars was pouring out the music. I realized that I rarely get to hear the song, even though the bird is quite common in winter. They do most of their singing on breeding grounds west of the great plains, throughout Canada and in Alaska. When I left him, he was still teeing and tewing and tseeing.

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The following is a book review by Bill Snyder. Dorothy Mitchell is a long-time friend of our club..

## **All About Birds**

By Dorothy Mitchell

Dorothy Mitchell's first book, *All About Birds*, is a loving testimonial to her lengthy marriage to Sydney (Mike) Mitchell. For over fifty years, the love of birds and nature brightened their lives as they worked together to band birds at their rural Warwick County home and at Kiptopeake on the Eastern Shore. In later years Mike was to say to me, "Dorothy is now a better birder than I am."

*All About Birds* is a hardbound book of 127 pages with 116 of these pages devoted to photographs of hand held birds in the process of having tiny bands attached to their legs for future identification. In thirty years of their hobby Dorothy and Mike banded a total of 108,000 birds. About half of that number were trapped and banded in their back yard.

The book is divided into four segments; Permanent residents, Summer residents, Winter residents and Accidental, Rare and Migrating. The close-up photographs of birds make this an ideal book for beginner birders. The colors and individual markings help to make identification easy. Dorothy completes her book with a delightful letter from a six year old child and with color photographs of areas in Newport News City Park.

It was a privilege for me to review Dorothy's book. Mike and I go back a long way as school mates who in the very early thirties used two straws to share a rootbeer float that cost us each a nickel. We participated in Boy Scout activities in Hilton Village Troop 31 and were introduced to birding by a courtly gentleman named George Mason who taught at the Newport News Apprentice School. Often during lunch hour he would drive his car with the two of us to Cool Spring, now a part of the Mariner's Museum where we would enjoy and try to identify the many birds that frequented the area. Mike was a good friend and I am glad Dorothy wrote the book. Good Luck with it, Dorothy!

## **No Way Up**

by Mark Di Vincenzo

Daily Press, Monday, March 9th

Last month James River Reserve Fleet workers boarded the Marine Fiddler, a World War II-vintage cargo ship tethered off Fort Eustis, and used torches to remove a 32-rung steel ladder leading to the ship's center mast platform.

Bird lovers in Virginia are thrilled and relieved.

The most productive pair of endangered Peregrine Falcons in Virginia nest in a cubbyhole in the platform. Last May three falcon chicks—a quarter of all the peregrine chicks hatched in Virginia last year—are believed to have been snatched from that cubbyhole.

"Hopefully taking the ladder off will prevent any more birdnapping—if that's what happened," said Anthony Schiavone, reserve fleet superintendent.

Federal wildlife agents have arrested no one and have not found the birds. But they and endangered bird experts say the falcons were probably stolen, as were nestlings in an earlier incident. The chicks missing last May were too young to fly away, and if they fell, vanished from the decks below the nest.

"Now, it would be very difficult for anyone to get up there," Schiavone said. "Very, very difficult."

**Our club has pledged a \$500 reward for information resulting in the arrest and conviction of the person or persons who took these Peregrine chicks.**

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## Bald Eagle National Wildlife Refuge Established

From the magazine of the  
Nature Conservancy-Virginia Chapter

The 2-1/2 year, nail-biting wait is—at long last—over. Federal funding has been approved for the James River Bald Eagle Refuge. The 3,500 acre property located along the James River near Hopewell harbors the largest summer bald eagle roost in the eastern United States.

It all began back in the spring of 1987. Continental Forest Industries, Inc. planned to market this critical roosting site. Unable to act quickly, both the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries urged the Conservancy to acquire the property before it was too late. In fact, our office was flooded with calls from concerned citizens, scientists, academicians, and other state and government officials.

Working against the clock, the Virginia Chapter scrambled to raise the formidable purchase price of \$1.85 million before our option expired. On May 23, 1988, through a combination of loans and cash gifts, we acquired the Powell Creek bald eagle property.

This wasn't the first time the Conservancy had lent a helping hand to protect Virginia's bald eagle population. The Conservancy played a critical toll in establishing the Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge in Fairfax County. In 1987, the Conservancy purchased the last tract needed to complete the refuge for \$1.3 million. Mason Neck is another of the largest bald eagle roosts on the East Coast.

The Powell Creek habitat consists of loblolly pine and mixed hardwood. Bald eagles are attracted to the property because of its access to prime fishing grounds on the James, and because it offers wide, unrestricted views and well-spaced roost sites. Over 150 eagles roost there in late summer.

Many, many people deserve thanks for their assistance in helping the chapter hold onto this property until funding became available. Many individuals, foundations (North Shore, Best Products), corporations (Newport News Shipyard/Tenneco, Mobil), the Bailey Wildlife Trust and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation have all assisted us with this critically important project.

Last but not least our thanks to the citizens of Prince George County, and to Dr. Mitchell Byrd, professor at the College of William and Mary and leader of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Bald Eagle Recovery Team.

### Transaction Summary Report Williamsburg Bird Club - 1/1/91 through 12/31/91

| Income                         |          | Expense           |          |
|--------------------------------|----------|-------------------|----------|
| BB Box Sales                   | 115.30   | Affiliations      | 75.00    |
| Donations                      | 100.00   | Blue Blue Comm.   | 237.36   |
| Interest                       | 538.53   | Community Service | 225.14   |
| Dues                           | 918.00   | Seed Sale Exp.    | 4,160.27 |
| Sale of Patches                | 6.00     | Field Trips       | 25.00    |
| Sale of Seed                   | 5,650.44 | Grant             | 500.00   |
| Sale of Feeders                | 77.00    | Library           | 11.97    |
|                                |          | Misc. Expense     | 103.68   |
| As of 12/31/91 we have a total |          | Newsetter         | 1,056.74 |
| of \$10,771.69 in our bank     |          | Programs          | 250.00   |
| accounts                       |          | Record Committee  | 87.64    |

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The following letter was sent to me recently, as a compiler for Audubon Christmas Counts. Our club will be participating this year. If anyone is interested in organizing such a count, please contact Mr. Stasz

First Annual  
North American Migration Count  
9 May 1992

Have you ever wondered "What is the Shape of migration?" It all depends on your viewpoint. Waterfowlers have benefitted from the extensive studies of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in their role for managing the Nation's game species resource. Hawk watchers may think of it as "River" and space themselves on ridges and prominent peninsulas like the Marin Highlands, Whitefish Point, the Blue Ridge Mountains, and Cape May, to count the flow. Shorebirders look at it as "Island Hopping" and go to the "islands" of Bodega Bay, Mono Lake, Bear River, Galveston, Cheyenne Bottoms, Higbee's Beach, and Pea Island. All of these have led to efforts to preserve and protect critical habitat for migration: we now have the National Wildlife Refuge System, Hawk Mountain, and the Delaware Bay Beaches. But what of Songbirds?

By what paths do neotropical migrants move from Central and South America to their breeding grounds? Do American Redstarts line up in military style and move north in a solid front, leaving occupying forces along the way? Perhaps Wood Thrushes are like blood flowing through major arteries before anastomosing into capillaries. Think of Kingbirds lining up like the runners in the New York Marathon and visualize the spread after the starter's pistol. Maybe Purple Martins move like ducks, geese and swans, with colonies making a series of short hops along a predictable route. It may seem wild, but do Bobolinks move like shorebirds, with a series of widely spaced discrete essential stops?

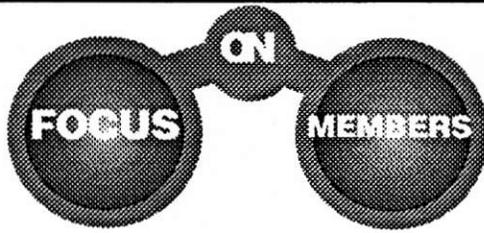
Many of you have participated on the Christmas Bird Counts sponsored by the National Audubon Society. The rules are simple: spend a day in the field counting birds in a specified area, and keep track of hours & miles on foot, car, boat, feeder watching. The North American Migration Count is like the Christmas Bird Count, but with a few twists. The area for any one count is not a 15-mile diameter circle, but an entire County (Parish in Louisiana). The big twist is the timing: unlike Christmas Bird Counts, which are spread over several weeks, this count is done on just a single day across the entire 48 states.

The choice of the Second Saturday in May has been made to try to find the peaks of movement of neotropical species while they are still in the Lower 48 States. It will not be peak everywhere: the Northern States will be getting the first glimmer of Spring and the Deep South will be in early breeding season, but the overall goal is of importance to everyone.

At the moment this is a Grass Roots project which can succeed with your help. Organize a Count for your County or all of the counties in your State.

For more information contact:

Jim Stasz  
NAMC Coordinator  
P. O. Box 71  
North Beach, Maryland 20714



Well, I interviewed people for the first three installments of this new feature, waiting for information to pour in about other members. I haven't received any other information yet and just in case some people think it's unfair to ask others without sharing about me first, I decided to interview myself.

I have always been outdoors-oriented, thanks to playing sports and camping with my family throughout the eastern United States and Canada, so the leap to serious birding was not a huge one. Soon after college, I was quite ill one fall and all I could do for a week was lie around in the bed. Luckily, there was a sliding glass door leading outside, which afforded a great view of the backyard. When I saw Pileated and Downy and Red-bellied woodpeckers, Tufted Titmice, Carolina Chickadees, Carolina Wrens, Cardinals, Blue Jays, White-throated Sparrows and the like, it took my mind off feeling bad.

After recovery, I was talked into participating on a Spring Count and was overwhelmed at the number of birds I had never noticed. I did more counts and more trips just to study birds. One thing lead to another and nearly 20 years later I enjoy it more than ever.

I want to spend more time in the tropics and offshore on pelagic trips, but the backyard is fine, too.

Please share information about yourself or others and this feature will be continued. If not, it will have been a mini-series.

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## **Pelagic Results**

On February 15th, I was lucky to be aboard a pelagic trip from Rudee Inlet. Though the day was overcast, rainy and cold, we found an excellent assortment of birds and whales. We saw Humpback and Fin whales, Bottlenose, Common and White-sided dolphins. The birds included Black-legged Kittiwakes, Atlantic Puffins, Dovekies, Razorbills and a close-up look at a Great Skua, which came in to investigate the appetizing bread, popcorn and catfood chum line.

**Opportunistic House Sparrows**-This article appeared in the *Blue Bird*, the newsletter of the Lynchburg Bird Club

A brief report in the *April Birder's World* about the opportunistic and adaptable behavior of house sparrows comes from Hamilton, New Zealand. House sparrows learned to open sliding glass doors of a bus station by interrupting the light beam that triggers the doors. One bird would fly slowly past as others hovered waiting for the doors to open. Another method was for a bird to perch on top of the sensor and interrupt the light beam by leaning forward and down.

House sparrows were introduced to North America around 1850. The species is a native of Europe but can now be found around the world. House sparrows are city birds so they found their new environment much the same. The reason for bringing them to the United States was to control the dropworm, a pest in cities at that time.

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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!