



# THE FLYER

Volume 17, No. 8

September 1993

Williamsburg Bird Club

## Meeting

Wednesday, September 15th,  
at 7:30 pm in Room 117,  
Millington Hall, at the College  
of William and Mary

## Program

Out guest speaker will be  
**Brian Patteson**, a former  
WBC member and a birder of  
great talent and experience.  
Brian will show and tell us  
some of his many experiences  
with pelagic birds: those birds  
which spend most of their  
lives on and above the  
ocean—such as petrels,  
shearwaters and fulmars.

## Field Trip

### Saturday, September 18th

Amanda Allen will guide us to  
where the birds are at nearby  
Waller Mill Park. Fall migrants  
should be trickling through  
about then on their way south  
to their several wintering  
grounds. Amanda asks that  
we meet her at the **Waller  
Mill parking lot at 7:30 a.m.**  
Meeting at Waller Mill should  
make it a bit easier for all  
concerned. Be there!

## Welcome to New Member

Anne Kelly  
109 Holdsworth Road  
Williamsburg, Va. 23185

229-9308

## Coming Attractions

### October 20th — (Meeting)

Guest Speaker: Ellen Bentley, a gradu-  
ate student at Virginia Institute of Marine  
Science, describes her research on Yellow-  
crowned Night Herons.

### October 23rd— (Field Trip)

Bay Bridge Tunnel Islands, and on to  
Kiptopeke to catch the fall migration of  
raptors. (Brian Taber—leader)

## President's Column

Welcome back to the fall schedule of the  
Williamsburg Bird Club. I trust you have had a  
good summer and are as anxious I am for the  
influx of fall migrants.

Recently I received a phone call from a new  
resident to the Williamsburg area who asked:  
What can I do to help conserve birds at the  
local level? Working at the local level is most  
personally rewarding. You may choose to  
make your back or front yard a haven for birds  
by planting native ground cover, shrubs and  
trees. Providing a variety of seeds at feeding  
stations to attract migrants, winter visitors  
and permanent residents is always an enjoy-  
able and rewarding endeavor. Also providing  
a source of fresh water is as important as  
supplemental feeding.

If you are a gardener, limit the use of  
garden pesticides as much as possible.

Consider involving yourself with local  
level preservation of quality bird habits.

I look forward to seeing you in September.

*Ruth Beck*



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## **Adopt-a-Highway Pickup Report**

Bill Davies and his eight other bag-persons have again excelled in cleaning up the section of Route 5 between Five Forks and Centerville Road (614) on July 31 and August 3. All they did was fill up sixteen large orange litter bags, and also find an additional 244 glass bottles and 501 cans, the latter two for recycling!

Hats off once again to Bill and to Marilyn Zeigler, Marilyn Lewis, Mack Lundy, Dorothy Whitfield, Dick Mahone, Sam Hart and Martha and Bob Burgess. Well done! And all this despite the Route 5 distractions described by Bill elsewhere herein.

## **More Coming Attractions**

### **November 17th**—(Meeting)

Guest Speaker: Dana Bradshaw, former WBC member and now field biologist with Virginia Game and Inland Fisheries Department. Dana will speak on the subject of neotropical birds.

### **November 20th**— (Field Trip)

Ruth Beck's 26 acres in Barhamsville, which include a large fresh water pond and mixed bottomland hardwood habitat. (Ruth, of course)

### **December 19th**—Christmas Bird Count

## **Eastern Shore Birding Festival, Oct 9-10**

Sponsored by the Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce (P. O. Drawer R, Melfa, Va. 23410) the first annual festival will take place during the height of the Fall migration of neotropical songbirds and raptors. The Eastern Shore creates a natural funnel which focuses the migration route to the Kiptopeke area at the southern tip of the Eastern Shore peninsula. Thus, the area provides excellent opportunities for both novice and experienced birders to see unusual congregations of birds preparing for their southward movements.

The Chamber has arranged a wide variety of field trips, workshops, guest speakers and static exhibits. Among the trips are tours of Kiptopeke Bird Banding Station, Fisherman's Island National Wildlife Refuge, Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel Islands, and Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge. Minor fees are imposed and pre-registration is recommended since number of persons per trip will necessarily be limited. You may pre-register by calling 1-787-5622 until October 1st. A full brochure and schedule of events may be requested from the Chamber by phone, or by letter to the Chamber address given in the lead sentence above.

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## **Local Scene**

August started in my yard on 8/01, with 3 Redstarts spending at least an hour de-bugging some large azaleas. A visit to Hog Island on 8/04 found an extremely low water level in the first impoundment on the right. Result was a large dried-out mud flat tapering into a larger mud-flat under about 1 to 4 inches of water. There were perhaps 1,500 birds engaged in foraging, sleeping or preening. Highlights to Tom Armour and me were: Great Egret 50; Snowy Egret 50; Tri-colored Heron 1; White ibis 29; Eagle 2; Cooper's Hawk 1; Semi-palmated Plover 2; Yellowlegs 15 each; Marbled Godwit 1; Pectoral Sandpiper 2, Dowitcher 3; Small Sandpipers (unidentified) 700; Caspian Tern 12; Royal Tern 2; Forsters Tern 2; Least Tern 20; Indigo Bunting 10; Blue Grosbeak 7. (A total of 54 species was recorded)

Brian Taber visited the scene on 8/06 and 8/07, confirmed all of the above except the Godwit, and added 21 Little Blue Herons, a Clapper Rail, 300 Semi-palmated Plovers and a Wilson's Phalarope. By braving the mud-flats on foot, Brian was able to get close enough to identify the majority of the smaller sandpipers: Spotted 2; Semi-palmated 2,500; Western 10; Least 20; Pectoral 30 and Stilt 1. In addition Brian found 2 Yellow Warblers, 3 Prairies, 35 Pine Warblers, and 5 Orchard Orioles. Looks as though the birds are on the move!

On 8/02, Peg Smith saw a Hooded Warbler in Kingswood yard. And on 8/05 Bill Snyder watched a single Nighthawk over James-York Plaza in the late evening. On 8/09, Tom turned up 30 Royal Terns and a Common Tern—all roosting on the breakwater at KM Marina. On 8/13, the count was a record 135 Royals and 3 Forsters.

Dur Morton on Helmsley Road reported a banner season for breeding birds in and around his yard: Bluebirds (2); White-breasted

Nuthatch; Titmouse; Chickadee; Carolina Wren; Catbird; Towhee; Wood Thrush and House Finch—for openers. Best one had to be the Great Crested Flycatchers who nested in the Morton's newspaper delivery box! Dur was able to keep the paper deliverers away and to get the cooperation of neighbors, joggers and dog-walkers. Happy ending: two young Cresties joined the local inventory! Out in New Kent County, a juvenile Red-shouldered Hawk crashed against Keith Kennedy's home on 8/15. The bird first appeared to be badly injured, but while Keith was trying to locate a bird rehab clinic, it composed itself and finally flew away.

A drive around the Outer Loop at Jamestown Island on 8/16 found just a smattering of "local" birds. Most were non-vocal, excepting Red-eyed Vireos, Acadian Flycatchers and Peewees. 40-50 Robins appeared to be "grouping" up—foraging along the roadsides.

Warblers were quietly passing through Kingswood between 8/16 and 8/18. Armour reported Parulas, Redstarts and a Black and White using his public bath during that period. Tom McCary watched a Northern Waterthrush at Jolly Pond on 8/17; and Bill Snyder listened about 6 p.m. to a Screech Owl calling on Jamestown Island between the big parking lot and the James. That was on 8/18. Screech Owls are either not being reported or are declining locally, so I ask your particular help on this one. Reports on the larger owls (Barred & Great Horned) remain at former levels. On 8/22, Marilyn Zeigler checked out a Swainson's Warbler at Quarterpath Park—near Queen's Lake. This is only our 4th record for this bird—and the first since 1975 when Ruth Beck banded one in the spring of that year back of Cedar Grove Cemetery. Nice work, Mrs. Z! Cynthia Long reports that Green-backed Herons nested successfully in a pine tree in her yard in Queen's Lake. There were at least 3 young. Nest is three blocks from Queens Lake, and Cynthia wonders how the birds get to work.

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On 8/19, Ty Hotchkiss had 6 Osprey circling over the James near his home; and on 8/22 a couple of Black & White Warblers appeared in his yard. And on 8/26, Bill Snyder was greeted by an adult Bald Eagle—perched on a Cypress tree at the edge of Powhatan Creek in Bill's backyard.

Bill Williams attacked Hog Island on August 8th and 22nd. On the 8th he found 13 White Ibis and a single immature Common Moorhen. On the 22nd, he added 4 Glossy Ibis, 2 Tri-colored Herons and 2 Solitary Sandpipers.

### **Kiptopeke Bird Banding and Hawk Watch**

The annual bird banding and hawk watch at Kiptopeke State Park on the Eastern Shore will begin Saturday, September 4, 1993 and run daily, weather permitting, through the end of October. Passerine banding commences at daybreak each day and, on days when a bird flight is in progress, is best through midmorning. Hawk flights may begin at daylight and last until dark. Since bird migration movements are weather dependent, it's best to time your Kiptopeke adventures around approaching cold fronts. A daily hawk banding operation at the park will run from mid-September into November.

In addition to a system of newly constructed nature trails, Kiptopeke will have a state-of-the-art hawk watch platform. Bill Williams came up with the platform design, assisted by Brian Taber and rendered to scale by local architect Ed Pease. Brian chairs a VSO Kiptopeke Committee that raised over \$4,000 to help defray the platform's construction costs.

### **Off to Alaska!**

This very summer, Emily and Allan Sharrett got a nifty look at parts of Alaska. Emily was kind enough to give us an all-too-brief overview,—as below:

*If you've been thinking about doing the Inside Passage of Alaska, we think a nature cruise is The Way to Go! The World Discoverer, a small ship with a capacity of about 130 passengers, was able to cruise into remote bays and fjords that other ships could not navigate. We boarded zodiacs and landed on gravel beaches which gave us the chance to bird a variety of habitats. From the rain forest of Misty Fjords, to the alder and spruce islands of Icy Bay and all the way to Prince William Sound each day was a spectacular view of wilderness and a wonderful adventure. Cruising the Chiswell Islands in our zodiacs was highlighted by Tufted and Horned Puffins, Common Murres and Kittiwakes nesting on the rocky ledges. Marbled and Kittlitz's Murrelets flew off if we got too close to them. From the ship we were awed by glaciers calving, great views of finback and hump back whales, sea lions, harbour seals, Sooty Shearwaters, Mew and Glaucous Gulls and so many more. It was, indeed, a birder's dream.*

### **Special Award to Bill Williams**

Earlier this year, the Hawk Migration Association of North America presented its annual service award to Bill for his "impressive and long-term service" in gathering raptor data at the Kiptopeke sites.

To the above, we add our special congratulations, and with no little pride.



## It Should Be Noted

The College Special Programs Office has announced a two-day course in birdwatching on October 7th and 9th—two hours of lecture on the 7th; a morning field trip to Hog Island on the 9th. Our own Bill Snyder will be the instructor/leader. There is a fee. If interested, call Special Programs Office at 221-3777.

Candy Douglas, on Rte 1238 in Gloucester, has been entertaining a beautiful male Painted Bunting at her feeders. She has observed the bird several times (after mid-August) and at two different feeders: one with thistle and millet; the other with cracked corn and sunflower seeds. Candy also said that her father, about 1-1/2 miles away on old Rte 17, has also had visits from an adult male bunting.

Cynthia Long, our resident botanist and bird dietician, tells us that pokeberries are a bird delicacy and can be easily frozen (by the bunch or however) and served at our feeders as a winter snack. Cynthia says the plant's real name is *phytolacea americana*, and that it is the largest North American herbaceous plant. Also, be aware that the berries may be poisonous to people when eaten. So if you are a people, just give them to the birds!

Washington Post Science Notebook recently reported that, in addition to a pair of conventional eyes, some vertebrates have another way of "seeing"—through the tops of their heads. "In birds, the pineal gland, which protrudes above the two brain hemispheres, is sensitive to light and helps govern daily metabolic rhythms—the so-called circadian clock. If the skin above the pineal gland is darkened with dye, the bird loses its ability to adjust to daily cycles of light and dark, and develops a sort of perpetual jet-lag."

Having become completely discouraged with the recent barrage of legalistic (and thus contradictory) definitions of Wetlands, it was refreshing to read John Coe's description in the August Richmond Audubon Society house organ, THE THRASHER.

*Wetlands are those areas where land and water meet. They are ecosystems which guard against flooding, cushion the coastline from storms, provide habitat for . . . . . fisheries and for more than 40% of the nation's endangered and threatened species, filter our water supply, recharge aquifers, offer recreational opportunities, and are places of great natural beauty. Right on, John!*



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## **1992 Personal Lists**

VSO Newsletter of August reports indicate that members Bill Williams and Brian Taber stood very high in two categories among those Virginia birders who sent their numbers in.

In the category of Virginia Life List, Bill led the field with 368, with Brian in hot pursuit at 367. In the 1992 list, Bill saw 266 species and Brian 256. These efforts placed them numbers 9 and 11 respectively.

## **Costa Rica Birds and Botany**

Bill Williams joined Ruth and Michael Beck on an exploration of some of Costa Rica's rich natural history during the month of July. Coral snakes, hook-nosed vipers, agoutis, tamaduas, sloths, three monkey species and iguanas made birding only a part of the feast. The flora alone was worth a lifetime of stories not to mention volcano watching at night and a group of college students anyone would be proud to be associated with. Bill recorded over 260 bird species. 190 were new for him. His list included Green Ibis, 12 species of hawks, 13 dove/pigeon species, 10 parrots/parakeets, 6 swifts, 26 hummingbirds, 6 trogons, 4 toucans, 15 flycatchers, Three-wattled Bell-bird, 12 wrens, 15 tanagers, and 6 euphonias.

## **Terns at Cape Hatteras**

Vacationing in early August at Avon on southern Cape Hatteras, Brian Taber hit the tern jackpot—big! He recorded: Gull-billed; Caspian; Royal; Sandwich; Common; Forster's; Least; Sooty and Black. An obvious case of one good tern deserving another, eh Brian? He also had time for some Whimbrel, Skimmers, and a Common Eider.

## **Never a Dull Moment on Route Five**

Bill Davies was picking up trash on Route 5 on July 31 when he heard the screech of rubber and looked up just in time to see one driver rear-end a pick-up truck on the opposite side of the road.

Both drivers were shaken up but otherwise alright except for the damage to the car and the truck.

Davies offered to take the driver of the car home (to First Colony) since she wasn't sure her car could be driven. He left the two parties exchanging information and went back to the Bird Club crew to let them know what had happened.

Imagine his surprise on returning to the scene of the accident about 8 or 10 minutes later and finding a second accident at the exact same spot on Route 5!

It seems a "good Samaritan" had seen the first driver standing by her car and stopped to see if she was alright. She was reassured and entered Route 5 to continue her trip west.

A Cadillac from Georgia slammed into her car, turned it over on its side in the ditch and caused the second accident of the day, all within about 5 minutes!

Fire trucks, EMS personnel and highway police were all on the scene. Fortunately no one was hurt in either accident. All EMS services were rejected.

After giving her report of having seen the second accident, the first driver decided to try and drive her car home. Davies followed to make sure she made it o.k.

It was a long morning.

Your friendly editor welcomes any news items, short articles for publication, comments on birds (or editors) etc. Thanks.

Bill Sheehan (220-2122)  
104 Oak Road  
Williamsburg, Va. 23185

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