



# THE FLYER

Volume 17, No. 11

December 1993

Williamsburg Bird Club

## Meeting

None in December; next regular meeting will be on **Wednesday, January 19th, 1994**, 7:30 pm in Room 117, Millington Hall, at William & Mary

## Christmas Bird Counts

Count leader Lee Schuster summarizes thus:

Just a reminder that our 17th Christmas Bird Count is December 19th. The groups are still being put together so it is not too late to sign up. Take a break from your Christmas shopping and come relax doing something you enjoy. Anyone who discovers their schedule is open on the 19th, just give me a call anytime after 6:00 pm (Lee Schuster—565-6148). Also don't forget the final tally being held the same day at 5 pm in Millington Hall—Room 108. Come bring some goodies and find out what unusual sightings we had and the totals for the day. If there are any questions, give me a call. **See you on the 19th.**

(See separate Christmas Count article on page 2 of this issue.)

Hampton Road Bird Club Christmas Count will be held on Saturday, December 18th. If you would like to participate, call Bettye Fields, 1-930-0177 for information. (Bettye and a number of her clubmates help us out each year on our count—for which we are most grateful.

## Welcome to our newest members

Mr. & Mrs. Leonard Sargeant, III  
3005 Travis Pond Road  
Williamsburg, Va. 23185-7665

258-3404

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## President's

Corner

As the birding year comes to a close, I want to thank all the Williamsburg Bird Club officers, board members and committee chairs for their contributions toward a successful year for our club. I am especially indebted to Bill Sheehan, our newsletter editor and Fred Blystone, our treasurer. These two gentlemen have willingly served and given to the club and community. Thank you, Bill & Fred!

As you prepare for the Holiday Season, remember our Christmas Bird Count on December 19th and please remember to fill the feeders and "Feed the Birds".

Joy, Peace and Good Birding!

*Ruth Beck*



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## **Christmas Count Areas**

A reminder to everyone—don't forget to sign up for the Christmas Bird Count that occurs on December 19th. Whether you are a beginner or an experienced birder, we need your eyes and ears. Come spend the day or just half the day with fellow birders and find what lives here during this time of year. Or you might just want to come to the final count at 5:00 p.m. on the 19th to see what was found and any oddities that may have shown up. The eight areas that are surveyed are listed below. Pick the area you are interested in or just sign up in general and you will be placed where needed. Call Lee Schuster at 565-6148.

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 CW Information 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 of W&M, Lake Matoaka, Lake Powell, College Landing Park on South Henry Street, Population lab, Hickory Signpost Road and Treasure Island Road.
6. **Middle Plantation**—Mid-county Park, Waller Mill Park (both entrances), Drummond's Field, News Road and First Colony.
7. **Jolly Pond**—Jolly Pond, Cranston's Mill Pond, Little Creek Reservoir.
8. **Skimino**—Barlow's Pond, Skimino Farms, Mirror Lakes, entrance to York River State Park and Riverview Plantation.

## **November Bird Walk**

On Saturday, November 20, a record-breaking number of twenty-eight members and guests converged at the beautiful Beck home in rural Barhamsville. The attendees interviewed by our reporter were unable to come up with a consensus of birds seen, although a few admitted to seeing a Hermit Thrush or two—plus a few other “little brown birds”. They were, however, unanimous in praise of Ruth and Sherwin Beck for their gracious hospitality. Emily Sharrett has provided us with a list of those people present, which is as follows: Helen Vandemark, Pat and Mike Healy, Carol Talbot, Tom McCary, Dale Davis, Cynthia Long, Tess Matteson, Jean and Charles Rend, Keith Kennedy, Marilyn Zeigler, Jean and Tom Armour, Caroline Williams, Dorothy Whitfield, Alice Lee and Leonard Sargeant, Joy Archer, David Schuster, Sue Gray Al-Salam, Grace and Joe Doyle, Mary Maxwell West, Mary Lou Hammersmith, Betsy and Allan Sharret and Emily Sharrett.



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**Local**

On November 7, at Camp Peary, Grace and Joe Doyle recorded 2 Red-tails, 5 Canvas-back Ducks, 5 Bufflehead, 3 Goldeneye, 25 Green-winged Teal, 12 American Wigeon, 500 Ruddy Ducks, 20 Hooded Mergansers, 10 Ringneck Ducks, 12 Tundra Swans and 5 Pied-billed Grebes—all with a varied supporting cast of small passerine birds. And on Kingsmill Pond, they turned up 5 more Ringnecks! Good day! On 11/11 and 11/12, Tom Armour found a Common Loon on the James, off Hog island. Same two days, he counted over 200 Forster's Terns, on or about the seawall at the KM Marina. On the 15th, Tom and your editor made a run to Hog Island. It was good to see the first large impoundment full of water, after 3 months in a bone-dry condition. In it were about 300 mallards, 200 Black Ducks, 2 pair of Green-winged Teal and 2 Pintail. (We did not walk in to the far tower and impoundments). About 1,500 Canada Geese were foraging in the fields, with a lone immature Snow Goose sticking out like a sore thumb. A single Harrier was the only raptor in evidence. On the way there, we did pick up 3 Phobes at Chippokes Swamp. On Oak Road, a Fox Sparrow was seen in my yard on 11/16, and stayed around at least through the 18th. On 11/15, Brian Taber saw an Osprey over the Parkway at Mill Creek. A day later, on Jamestown island, Ruth Beck and some of her students watched a Sharp-shinned Hawk pounce on a White-throated Sparrow. They also spotted 2 immature Bald Eagles.

A Hermit Thrush was in my yard on 11/18 and 11/19. Also on the 18th, Bill Snyder watched 19 Woodcocks flying down Powhatan Creek near his house just before dusk—they straggled by during a half-hour period. Bill speculates that they were headed for the marina further down on the creek, where the owners usually put corn out for waterfowl.

(Hunting season is in full force during daylight hours.) Fishing off Hog Island, Armour saw 2 Bufflehead and a Horned Grebe; and Ruth showed her ornithology class a couple of Red-headed Woodpeckers at Jamestown Island. On 11/22, the College Creek turnout on the Parkway produced a fishing Osprey, 10 Forster's Terns, a Phoebe and 3 or 4 Killdeer. On 11/25, Bill Snyder had a small flock of Cedar Waxwings (about 6-7) in his trees; on the 27th Bill watched "large" flocks of Cormorant on and over the James. (On 11/29, Armour and I saw a large spread-out group of about 250 fishing in the James off Mill Creek.) We also saw a Red-tail—near Gospel Farm—and, at College Creek, 2 Swamp Sparrows. From the marshes, a Clapper Rail answered Tom's hand-clapping. Mutual admiration society, maybe. Bill Williams, at College Creek turnout, recorded an Osprey fishing and a single Siskin flying over. Bill also had an adventure with an immature female Cooper's Hawk at Matthew Whaley School on 11/30. Also on 11/30, Hotchkisses saw a Common Loon and a large flock of Cormorants on the James near their home in First Colony. On 12/01 at Hog Island, about 2000 Canada Geese, 450 Green-winged Teal, 2 Eagles and a Common Egret won the prizes. At Chippokes, an Eagle was perched next to last year's nest, and a pair of Red-tails was calling. Same day, my first "yard" Sharp-shin lurked about but came up empty.

On 12/02, just about dawn, 4 or 5 Hermit Thrushes were clucking and moving about through holly and dogwood trees on Oak Road. Mr. Armour, while seeking Striped Bass on the James, found time to do some productive birding all the same: 12/02; 25-30 Bonaparte's Gulls; 12/03, 2 Common Loons and 12 Bufflehead. And back to land again, he found a Barred Owl on the ground, apparently waiting for an unwary rodent. Tom also reported 3 Hooded Mergansers and a Pied-billed Grebe on Kingsmill Pond.

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**Not so local**

On 11/14, Brian Taber recorded a Golden Eagle at Kiptopeke. On 11/13, at Craney Island, Ruth showed her class 120 Shovelers, 3 Avocets and a couple Harriers. Straying from home, Tom found the earlier reported Northern Shrike near Leesburg. Tabor and Williams, at least, had seen this bird earlier in the month. On 11/27, Brian and Tom checked out Kiptopeke and the Bridge-Tunnel Islands. Highlights at Kiptopeke were 100 Snow Geese, 2 Peregrine Falcons, 2 Bald Eagles, 4 Red-tailed Hawks, 2 Sharp-shins, a Kestrel, Pipits, Horned Larks and Pine Siskins. The Island produced Great Cormorants, Common Loons, Red-necked Loons and very possibly a Pacific Loon—well out of range, if so. (Brian is continuing research before filing for record recognition) Also from the Islands they saw a few Purple Sandpipers and hundreds of Gannets.

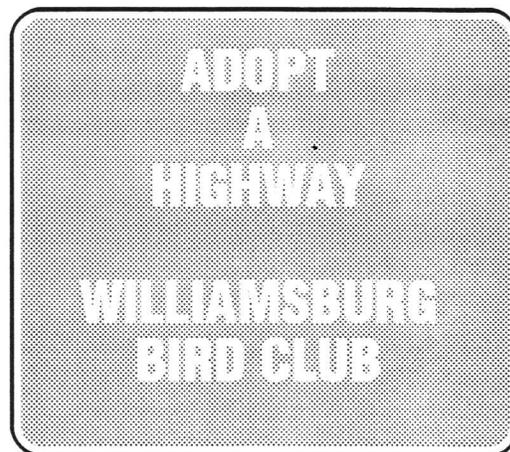
Dr. Byrd reports seeing a great number of several raptor species on his recent birding foray in the Rio Grande valley. He tells of one ten-mile stretch known locally as "Hawk Alley". Among others, the following were of particular note and interest to Mitchell: 62 Loggerhead Shrikes, 2 Ferruginous Hawks, 28 Caracaras, 2 Black-shouldered Kites, 17 Harris' Hawks, and a multitude of Red-tailed Hawk varieties, forms and plumages.

**Adopt-A-Highway Report**

Bill Davies and his talented "pick-up team" did it again! On November 13, they deployed on our Club's assigned highway sector (Rte 5—5 Forks west to 614—and captured 10-1/2 large bags of trash, plus 63.3 pounds of glass (132 bottles) and 414 aluminum cans for recycling. Seven good guys participated for a period of 14 person-hours. Bill summarizes:

*Team members were: Sam Hart, Pat & Mike Healy, Dorothy Whitfield, Bob Burgess, Ellen McLean (and yours truly). With an extra assist from Sam Hart, Ellen McLean and Dorothy Whitfield, we finished the whole 2-mile stretch in 2 hours.*

Bravo to all!





### **Club Officers—1994**

Following are results of the election of new officers at the November Club meeting. All proposals of the Nominating Committee were accepted, and voted upon unanimously:

President	Ruth Beck
1st Vice President (Programs)	Bill Holcombe
2nd Vice President (FLYER Editor)	David & Lee Schuster
Secretary	Dorothy Whitfield
Treasurer	Charles Rend
Board Members at large (2)	Marilyn Lewis
	Keith Kennedy

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 oncoming year, they in turn must rely on our strong individual support. That translates into active participation in Club events and programs, within our individual capabilities of course. Lets all make a New Year's effort to **participate**, and to **volunteer** to help where we can!

### **Cupolas are for Cooper's Hawks**

When Bill Williams was called recently to advise on releasing a "hawk" from a cupola at Matthew Whaley School, he was certain that the problem was probably not a hawk, but a pigeon. Much to his surprise, a female Cooper's Hawk had entered the cupola and couldn't find a way out. (Bill believes the hawk followed the pigeon into the loft through a small aperture while seeking lunch.) Fortunately, Bill found a painter with a ladder nearby and the painter removed a window shaft so the Cooper's could escape. (It is possible that this bird tailed Bill all the way from Bill's hawk-watching station at Kiptopeke. Perhaps there's a contract out on Williams!)



**Bald Eagle Breeding Data Update  
(Chesapeake System)**

Dr. Mitchell Byrd has again shared with us his most recent (1993) Bald Eagle breeding data. His summary figures for numbers of nests and numbers of fledglings are tabulated below for ease of annual comparison.

Subsystem	1990		1991		1992		1993	
	Nests/Fledged		Nests/Fledged		Nests/Fledged		Nests/Fledged	
James/ Chickahominy	18	32	20	28	26	37	28	32
York/Mattaponi/ Pamunky	10	19	12	20	14	18	18	23
Rappahannock/ Piankatank	32	44	37	54	43	42	44	58
Potomac	31	37	32	43	38	37	44	48
Eastern Shore/ Reservoirs & Lakes	8	<u>10</u>	10	<u>12</u>	10	<u>8</u>	17	<u>12</u>
Total Systems	99	142	111	157	131	142	151	173
Fledge/Nest Ratio	1.43		1.41		1.08		1.14	

Dr. Byrd said he was quite pleased with the results, particularly the increasing number of nests in all sub-systems. He opined that the "fledge/nest ratio" might well have been higher were it not for some torrential rains during the hatch season last March. With respect to the values he put on the ratios, Dr. Byrd said that anything over 1.0 was good, and that anything below 0.7 would probably be critical if it persisted.



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**Bluebird Report From New Kent**

Earlier this year I reported on establishing a five-box bluebird trail on Interstate 64 at the west-bound rest stop between Williamsburg and Richmond. The trail was sponsored and financed by the Woodhaven Garden Club in New Kent County, and the boxes were donated by our club. The results were disappointing but offer promise for future success. Two boxes were not used; two others were used by bluebirds, each yielding four fledglings. One box contained a completed bluebird nest but was never used. Perhaps the female died just before laying her eggs. One English Sparrow nest and eggs were destroyed after the box had been used by bluebirds. Since bluebirds remain in their territory as long as food is plentiful, each nesting success should lay a foundation for good fortune the following year.

I also monitor three boxes around my New Kent home and four boxes at a nearby church yard. From these, twenty-five bluebird chicks and eleven chickadees fledged. I experienced only one black snake predation of four bluebird eggs. The most fruitful box was in my backyard, where a bluebird pair nested three times and raised thirteen chicks.

Keith Kennedy  
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**An Editorial**

**FLYER Under New Management!**

Effective with the January issue of FLYER, your new editorial team will be Lee and David Schuster. We know that they will do a super job, and we are confident that the membership will continue to provide the high levels of day-to-day support and encouragement, which you have for us during 1993 and prior.

And Fred Blystone, Louise Menges and your friendly editor sincerely thank you for that. While I had the pleasure of being called Editor, most of the real work was done by Fred and Louise. In effect, Fred was the Producer, and Louise—Staff Artist. Her ideas for layouts were innovative, and her artwork with the various bird shapes was consistently superb.

The three of us join now to wish you all a grand Holiday Season, as well as happy birding in the years ahead.

*Bill Sheehan*

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

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565-6148

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