



THE FLYER

Volume 17, No. 3

March 1993

Williamsburg Bird Club

Bill Sheehan, Editor (220-2122)

Meeting

Wednesday, March 17th, at 7:30 p.m. in Room 117, Millington Hall, at the College.

Program

Our guest speaker will be Stephanie Turner, who is manager of the near-by York River State Park. Stephanie will describe some of the many challenges involved in managing habitat within a State Park; challenges, because the basic life requirements of wildlife often conflict with the recreational preferences of people.

Stephanie holds a bachelor's degree from Virginia Tech in wildlife management, and a master's degree in resource management from Miami University of Ohio. Prior to her present appointment, she garnered significant experience in habitat management with the TVA, and in several Virginia State Parks. She is a native of Ohio.

Field Trip

The regular March field trip will be on Saturday, March 20th. Allan and Emily Sharrett will be our leaders to Hog Island in the James River. Hog Island is always a favorite birding adventure and attracts a wide variety of species. (See further information on Page 2)

We will shoot for the 8:30 ferry, and Allan and Emily ask that we meet (as we did for the Jamestown Island trip) at the Jamestown Settlement Parking Lot at 8:10 a.m. We think in terms of returning, at the very latest, on the 1 p.m. ferry from the Surry side, but the day's weather might influence that one way or another. There is usually a breeze on the Island, so it would be wise to wear an extra layer.

Coming Attractions

April 21st—Program: Thelma Dalmas of the Lynchburg Bird Club will identify and discuss *The Rare Birds of Virginia*.

April 24th—Field Trip: Bill Williams will lead us to the Yorktown Battlefield. We'll drive back to Jamestown via the Parkway, checking the pull-outs along the way for those exciting spring migrants.

May 2nd—Spring Bird Count: Area saturation, as in Christmas Count. This will be our 16th Annual.

President's

Corner

As we move into the March/April part of the year, we are fast approaching the great peak of bird activity, which is Spring! It's time now to do a little homework on colors, field marks, song, and preferred habitats of those species which are already on the way. I urge you to take a long look at the Summary of Local Bird Data which you received with the FLYER. Check the birds whose arrival dates are in March or early April. Then look them up in your Peterson's, Robbins, or other bird-books. The Summary lists our birds in the same order as does your book—piece of cake, and fun too!

Ruth Beck



1993 Schedule of Birding Events

VSO Annual Meeting - May 14-16, Norton, Va. Host club is Cumberland Natural Club. Banquet speaker will be Ted Eubanks, who runs the Piping Plover project on the Texas and Mexican Gulf Coast

May 15th—A "spring migrant special" with a stop at Jolly's Pond on the way to York River State Park with its great variety of habitats.
(Tom Armour—leader)

June 12th—Special Species Foray to S.E. Virginia. We'll drive to Emporia where Allan Sharrett Jr., a local resident (and son of Allan & Emily) will meet and lead us to areas frequented by Mississippi Kite, Bachman's Sparrow, and Red-cockaded Woodpecker.

VSO Field Trip - Mount Rogers - June 25-27

July 24th—Craney Island, Portsmouth. A hotspot for migrating shorebirds.
(Tom Armour—leader)

August—No scheduled trip

September 18th—Waller Mill Pond. Close by, and look, listen and walk to observe fall migrants.
(Amanda Allen—leader)

October 23rd—Bay Bridge Tunnel Island, and on to Kiptopeke to catch the fall migration of raptors.
(Brian Taber—leader)

November 20th—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

Possible Species on the March Field Trip

From the Jamestown Ferry we should encounter 3 or 4 Gull varieties, Cormorant, Osprey, and even an Eagle. Along Routes 10 and 617, both Vultures; Red-tailed Hawks and Kestrel usually show up. At Hog Island, Great Blue Herons and Common Egrets breed, and 4 or 5 species of duck should be packing their little ditty-bags for the trip north. A trickle of shorebirds should be starting—at least both Yellowlegs and Killdeer—and among the raptors Bald Eagles, Cooper's Hawk and Harriers sometimes perform. Small birds abound, and several species each of sparrow and swallows should be there.

**Virginia State Life Lists
as of 12/15/92**

We have selected names of present WBC members (and others well known to us) as below:

David Abbot, Reston, continues as	
	#1 with 376
Brian Patteson	365
Bill Williams	365
Brian Taber	363
Fenton Day	361
Thelma Dalmas	
(April Speaker)	350
Dorothy Mitchell	343
Rich Goll	336
Steve Rottenborn	336
Cindy Carlson	332
Tom Armour	328
Craig Tumer	310
Tom McCary	162



Eastern Shore Bird Observatory

(VSO Newsletter - Jan. 1993)

Brian Taber reports on the progress of the Bird Observatory Study Committee which was first mentioned in the August 1992 VSO Newsletter. He says...

A bird observatory at Kiptopeke State Park is going to be a reality! The VSO's Bird Observatory Study Committee has been working for several months with the staff of the Division of State Parks to make plans for an area of the park to be devoted to bird study.

Phase I is the erection of a state-of-the-art, handicapped-accessible, elevated observation platform to be used year-round. Phase II is the establishment of an office at the park, the securing of weather monitoring equipment, and planning for future activities.

The Committee has been asked to raise \$4,000 toward the cost of the platform. The total cost will be shared by several sources. Construction should be completed by summer 1993!

The observatory will become the focal point for bird study, public education and enjoyment by many. The activities of resident birds can be studied as well as the movements of migrants. Twice each year this important area of the Atlantic coast corridor hosts thousands of migrating warblers, waterfowl, shorebirds, swallows, herons, blackbirds and, of course, raptors.

As an initial step, the Committee is asking VSO members to contribute to the fund-raising effort. Individual Bird Clubs affiliated with the VSO are also being solicited. Donations by individuals desiring to help may be sent to Mary Ann Kellam, VSO Asst. Treasurer, P.O. Box 14, Franktown, Va. 23354. Make check payable to VSO, earmarked "Kiptopeke Observatory".

Further information is available locally from Bill Williams, 565-3491 and Brian Taber, 253-1181. Both Bill and Brian have worked very hard to get this project rolling.

Local Scene

Feb. 3 started with a cold morning—ice on lots of ponds, bird baths, and impoundments at Hog Island. Tom and I counted 56 Great Blue Herons bunched on the thin ice of one impoundment. Also saw 5 Coot, 2 Common Mergansers and good numbers of Ring-necked Ducks and Black Ducks. But the highlight was, under a full sun at 10 a.m., two Great Horned Owls talking to each other from the loblolly pine groves just behind the tower on the main road. As we watched, the bird in the lefthand pine stand broke cover and moved to the other stand. The calls then subsided, and Tom observed that they were probably shaking hands. That afternoon, Tom and Billy Hines were checking a duck blind on the James and flushed a pair of Barn Owls. We'll keep you posted.

On 2/3, 20 Snipe were seen in flight over Powhatan Creek from the Parkway and a Sora was calling from a marsh on Jamestown Island. On the 5th, very few ducks showed on the York east of Cheatham Annex—perhaps 75 Bufflehead, along with a handful of Tundra Swans and Horned Grebes. No Ruddy Ducks and no Canvasbacks! At Kingsmill, a Cooper's Hawk was working a birdfeeder, and Tom had a Lesser Black-backed Gull at the Marina. Lee Schuster in Banbury Cross (near Barlow's Pond) reported 4 Siskins on 2/7, and has had a couple Purple Finches now and then. Nobody has admitted to any Evening Grosbeaks this winter! Joy Archer, Marilyn Zeigler & Edith Edwards saw 10-12 Red-headed Woodpeckers around the Outer Loop at Jamestown Island, along with 2 Eagles and a Sapsucker. And Carol Quiggle called on 2/8 from Powhatan Shores to report from 1 to 5 Northern Orioles at her compost pile from time to time since mid January. Same date, Tom Armour had 4 Forster's Terns at his KM marina.

(continued on Page 4)



And now stand by for an odd one. On the morning of 9 February, Anne Cutler found a Great Horned Owl, near Providence Hall, very dead, but still warm. She first considered the possibility of poisoning, but later came to believe the bird might have self-destructed against a plate glass door. Anne and Marilyn Zeigler did some detective work in matching up feathers from the door and the bird. Mitchell Byrd orchestrated this one, providing personal guidance and a State Game Warden who confirmed the diagnosis.

On 2/10, Red-tailed Hawks were reported: 2 on 199 near College Creek; 1 on the Parkway near Gospel Farm; and one in 4-H woods on Rt. 614. On Oak Road, a Hermit Thrush has been in my yard in the early morning—mostly at a water source, although he (?) did ingest a couple Nandina berries on 2 occasions. 2/11 found 6 Rusty Blackbirds and a Red-headed Woodpecker at the Cypress swamp adjacent to Chippokes on Rt. 634. On to Hog Island, two pleasant surprises were a Glossy Ibis feeding on the mud flats (seen again by TA on 2/13) and a Lesser Black-backed Gull. On 2/12, Joe Doyle observed 40 Ring-necked Ducks on KM Pond—mostly females. Chippokes State Park looks like a place we should visit more often. Habitat is varied: woodland; James River; swamps & marshes; and quite a bit in agriculture. If any of you bird there, please let your editor know what birds you see, common and uncommon. On 2/13, we saw at least 20 Bonaparte's Gulls and 5 Great Black-backed Gulls from the ferry. Wood Ducks have been seen at Kingsmill and at Jamestown Island. The Island also produced Red-headed Woodpeckers, Sapsuckers, a Hermit Thrush and a Brown Creeper on 2/17. And at Williamsburg Landing, Marion Simmons has been

entertained by a Yellow-rumped Warbler who takes an unusually aggressive attitude toward her "regulars"—nine or so species.

Brian Taber had a Red-breasted Nuthatch at a feeder on 2/18—a one-day stand, apparently. Newport News City Park produced Tundra Swans; Ring-necked Ducks; American Wigeon; Gadwall; Hooded Mergansers and 2 Rusty Blackbirds. A few hundred Robins and 60-70 Waxwings were feasting on holly berries in one small area. Armour has an intermittent Phoebe in his yard, along with an intermittent Cooper's Hawk. Hope they don't meet! Martha Armstrong on the 20th heard an Osprey screaming above her home on Newport Avenue. There were 4 of them milling around, and Martha had time to get her binoculars and watch them some more. Anyone else for Osprey?

On 2/20 Joy Archer reported a Song Sparrow at her feeder (Canterbury Hills) and 4 Wood Ducks appeared on Kingsmill Pond. Cooper's Hawks were noted at KM on 2/22 and at Hog Island 2/23. Hog Island also gave up small groups of Green-winged Teal, Wigeon and Ring-necked Ducks—not to forget a pair of Shovelers. Same day (2/23) a single Woodcock was closely observed on the ground, just inside the white fence enclosing the Gospel Spreading Farm property on the Parkway. This is the general area where several members watched their aerial mating displays about a year ago. Cardinals, Towhees and Bluebirds appear to be pairing up and becoming more aggressive. On 2/24' 25 Ring-necked Ducks appeared in the Thorofare at Jamestown Island (That's the water on your left as you enter the main parking lot—also known as Back River). First Ring-necks reported there for 4 or 5 years. They and Scaup used to abound. On Oak Road, I had a Hermit Thrush, 3 Siskins and a single Chipping Sparrow. Then came the snow on 2/26. On the Parkway, from Jamestown Island to College Creek, many birds were feeding alongside the road—both during and after the snow, and on the 27th. Independently, this route was driven by Brian Taber, Bill Snyder, the Sharretts,

(Continued on Page 5)



and by Tom Armour and your editor. Most of us saw Fox Sparrows, Hermit Thrushes, Water Pipits, Rusty Blackbirds, Snipe, Palm Warblers, a Cooper's Hawk and Red-tailed Hawks.

On 2/27, Bob Morris reported his Red-shouldered Hawks to be "on nest" at Kingsmill. Not too far away, the Doyles watched 2 Red-shouldered Hawks sample their suet feeder wares. And 2/28, a few miles away on Oak Road, a pair were perched together in a large White Oak in my yard. Hope they stay! Dick Fout, out on Skimino Road, reported a Gnatcatcher (on 2/16) and a Phoebe on 3/01. He noted also that 9 Tundra Swans were that day feeding on Barlow's Pond. A Thrasher in full song on 3/02 in my yard, and a single Osprey fishing over College Creek at the Parkway on 3/03. In the marshes at the pullout, at least 3 Clapper Rails were "ticking". Carol Quiggle, at Powhattan Shores, still has a single Northern Oriole taking suet from her feeder, and from that of a neighbor. And the oriole at the Copping's Wild Birds Unlimited store has been out of sight for a week or more. Dur & Peggy Morton are again participating in Project FeederWatch (off Jamestown Road near Walsingham). Beyond the "usual" winter feederbirds, they have Field Sparrows at their feeders and have observed a Sharp-shinned Hawk bearing a leg-band. Marion Simmons at The Landing also has a Field Sparrow—and thinks she might have an intermittent Tree Sparrow.

On 3/03 Emily Sharret saw Field Sparrows along the Parkway at College Creek, and on 3/04 watched an Osprey carrying a fish above College Creek at Route 199. Same date, Cynthia Long was with a small group of students near the Public Gaol in the Restored Area when she saw what appeared to be a very strange hawk eating something on the ground. On closer observation—from about 60 feet—it became an almost mature Bald Eagle dining on a small carcass (No Virginia, this was not a Gaol-bird!)

February Bird Walk

On Saturday morning, February 20th, sixteen hardy souls endured chilly weather to join Brian Taber on a foray to Jamestown Island. Brian did an outstanding job of locating and assisting the group in identifying almost fifty species of interesting birds. He is truly an expert in his field and we were privileged to be with him.

Later on, we retired to the warmth and delightful hospitality of Bill Sheehan's home where we observed fifteen species from the comfort of his kitchen while drinking coffee and munching donuts. What a marvelous way to see Pine Warblers, Pine Siskins, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Blue Birds, etc. We are certainly indebted to Bill for his willingness to share his lovely home and vista of the birds with us!

Participating in the walk were: Brian Taber, Lee and David Schuster, Carolyn Lowe, Ruth Beck, Tom Armour, Marilyn Zeigler, Barbara Rockwell, Joy Archer, Jean and Chuck Rend, Bill Davies, Keith Kennedy, Dollie Russell, Maude Banks, Emily Sharrett and Carol Talbot.

The best birds at Jamestown Island were: Hooded Merganser, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Hairy Woodpecker, Sapsucker, Brown Creeper, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, Brown Thrasher, Cedar Waxwing, Pine Warbler, Fox Sparrow and Pine Siskin.

Birds seen at Bill's home were: Pine Warbler, Brown Thrasher, Cedar Waxwing, Blue Bird, Cardinal, Junco, House Finch, American Goldfinch, Pine Siskin, Towhee, Downy Woodpecker, White-throated Sparrow, Carolina Wren, Sharp-shinned Hawk and Ruby-Crowned Kinglet.

Emily Sharrett



Travel Section

From the Southwestern Tier

Julie & Ty Hotchkiss reached Big Bend National Park (TX) in early February in their trusty RV. They have started to feed the locals—just like home, but the names are different. Lets pick up Julie, starting off with a Roadrunner.

We have one that's taken up residence right outside our door. He's hoping we will send some goodies his way. Wonderful for pictures—and we also have Scaled Quail coming for bird seed. A pair of Cardinals are vying with a pair of Pyrrhuloxia for attention while a Cactus Wren and Brown Towhee sneak in for whatever is left over. It's a great show...

Can't say its better than we had at Falcon and the valley though. Our campsite at Falcon had Verdin, Long-billed Thrashers, Green Jays, Green-tailed Towhees, Olive Sparrows, Pyrrhuloxia, etc. The best bird was the Allen's Hummingbird at Saleneño. That's one we searched for in vain in California. It's so far out of its range that none of the experts will make an identification. It resembles the Rufous Hummingbird so closely that they have to measure the width of the tail feathers to give a valid verdict. However, there was a Rufous at the same feeder with it and they were totally different looking. That's good enough for me.

Julie goes on to say that they met one Marty Sykes Hanson who is in charge of the Sharon Audubon Center at Salineño—a long-time friend of WBC members, Dur and Peggy Morton. Then in mid-February, from Patagonia, TX. Julie reports Violet-crowned Hummingbirds but no Magnificent Hummers. Julie had received our January FLYER and concludes with: *Thanks for keeping us posted. Tell everyone at WBC hi, cheers and happy birding. Ty & Julie.*

From Cost Rica

Pat Healy expands our horizons a bit more south, and has this to report, dated 2/16:

Mike and I spent 9 days in Costa Rica on a Nature Expedition—a lovely 174 ft. cruise ship which shuttled us down the Pacific Coast. The ship was where one ate and slept—the rest of the time was spent hiking around the rain forest in several National Parks. Four hours yielded sightings of Scarlet Macaws, Mangrove Swallows, Bare-throated Tiger Herons, Tropical Kingbirds, Groove-billed Anis, Orange-chinned Parakeets, Blue-crowned Mot Mots, Black-hooded Ant Shrikes, Red-capped Manakins and Red-legged Honeycreepers. Our guides were knowledgeable and fun. Largest of the birding groups was 8 or nine. The best was the two days in the cloud forest where our lodge was in “rumbling distance” of the live volcano—Arenal. There were Emerald Toucanets and White-fronted Parrots, Collared Redstarts and Brown Jays in the front yard. The best, of course was the Resplendant Quetzal. Several sat still in the False Avocado tree for long periods of time and we were totally thrilled by this most “beautiful bird in the world”. Our total number of “life list” birds: 54. If anyone wants to call for info about their trips to Costa Rica, we'd love to share info or compare notes.

Pat Healy 220-0638



More Costa Rica Ahead

On March 2nd, Ruth and Michael Beck, Brian Taber, Bill Akers (and others) departed for a two-week birding foray to Costa Rica. We'll give you a report in April's FLYER. Your editor has real problems with some of the bird names these travellers put forth. As local backyard birders, we are completely at their mercy, so if they slip in an Ivory-keyed Piano Fortissimo or a Green-tongued Plethora we will pass them along as gospel truth.

Here Come the Migrants

It's time to check out our Field Guides and dust off our tapes or cassettes which have the bird songs and calls. Just a little bit of review now will greatly enhance our ability to identify the many species which we welcome as the real signs of spring.

From the Summary of Local Bird Data we have excerpted our Club's earliest recorded arrival dates for some of our most common migrants in March and April. These are listed in the order in which they appear in most recently published bird guides:

Species	Earliest	Species	Earliest
Tree Swallow	2/25	Yellow-throated Warbler	3/14
Roughwinged Swallow	3/10	Pine Warbler	3/01
Bank Swallow	3/10	Prairie Warbler	3/30
Barn Swallow	3/11	Palm Warbler	3/04
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	3/21	Blackpoll Warbler	3/26
Veery	3/27	Black & White Warbler	3/26
White-eyed Vireo	4/02	Redstart	4/11
Yellow-throated Vireo	4/07	Ovenbird	3/30
Red-eyed Vireo	4/11	Louisiana Waterthrush	3/10
Parula Warbler	3/31	Common Yellowthroat	3/01
Black-throated Green	4/04	Indigo Bunting	4/03

**Transaction Summary Report
Williamsburg Bird Club - 1/1/92 through 12/31/92**

Income		Expense	
BB Box Sales	80.00	Affiliations	25.00
Interest	355.15	Community Service	265.62
Dues	607.00	Field Trip	50.00
Sale of Seed	233.25	Grant	500.00
Sale of Patches	16.29	Misc.	35.00
		Newsletter	1,042.61
		Programs	284.97
		Records	96.03

As of 12/31/92 the WBC had a total of \$9,686.24 in savings



**Kiptopeke Hawk Watch
1992 vs. 1991**

Bill Williams has provided FLYER with the following comparative sighting data on migratory raptors observed at Kiptopeke. Periods of observations were from very late August to mid-November. Thank you. Bill.

	<u>1992</u>	<u>1991</u>
Sharp-shinned Hawk	4,672	4,674
Kestrel	2,145	2,273
Turkey Vulture	819	1,389
Cooper's Hawk	695	563
Merlin	423	245
Osprey	384	717
Red-tailed Hawk	252	222
Harrier	251	259
Peregrine Falcon	171	285
Broad-winged Hawk	76	57
Black Vulture	49	30
Bald Eagle	27	18
Red-shouldered Hawk	21	5
Goshawk	0	4
Golden Eagle	0	3
Unidentified	<u>111</u>	<u>106</u>
TOTALS	10,116	10,810



Bird Diversity

Member Bob Fritts sent us a short report (from March/April 1993 *Nature Conservancy*) which summarizes a recent study of the breeding distribution of land birds, and speculates on a few implications

Scientists at the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP) found that more than a quarter of 9,672 species of birds have a range of less than 19300 square miles. That is equivalent to the size of Costa Rica, or, about 1/2 the size of Virginia. These species occur in just 221 areas. The researchers then compared these habitats with areas rich in native plants and animals, finding a significant commonality. A conclusion was that saving those biodiversity hotspots would be a leveraged effort.

Nature Conservancy zoologists suggest that with identification of these critical areas, it becomes simpler (and certainly more economical) to protect and aid the more vulnerable ones.

[Thanks to William Stolzenburg of *Nature Conservancy*, and to Bob Fritts for passing the report to us.]

Invitation from Texas

During her current travels, Julie Hotchkiss provided WBC patches to several folks at Sharon Audubon Center in Saleneño, Texas. Recipient Pat DeWind, in a card to the Club, thanks Julie and the Club. Pat assures us that our patch is being worn proudly and hopes they may welcome more of our Club members to their "Birder Colony".

A welcome to the newest members of our club.

Eleanor & Wilbur Mount
5806 College Creek Pl
Williamsburg, Va. 23185
229-0946

Current Magazine Fare

February issue of *Natural History* has an article on how Golden-crowned Kinglets survive -20F temperatures in western Maine.

March *Smithsonian* features Roadrunners and the their dining and hunting habits. Superb photographs. **Beep Beep!**

Cornell University Project FeederWatch

Marion Simmons, Dur Morton and Bill Sheehan are again participating in the above project. If we have other local participants, please call Bill (220-2122)

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

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