



# THE FLYER

Volume 17, No. 10

November 1993

Williamsburg Bird Club

## Meeting

Wednesday, November 17th, at 7:30 pm in **Room 117**, Millington Hall, at the College of William and Mary.

## Program

**Dana Bradshaw**, field biologist with the Virginia Game and Inland Fisheries Department, will speak on the subject **Neotropical Birds**. His outstanding feature story on this subject drew wide acclaim when published last May in *Virginia Wildlife*. A former club member, Dana is a graduate of William and Mary. As a graduate student here, he assisted Dr. Mitchell Byrd in his several endangered species programs.

## Field Trip

**Saturday, November 20th—**  
Our president, Ruth Beck, has graciously offered to lead us in birding around and about the Beck residence in rural Barhamsville. Habitat is varied; large freshwater pond and mixed bottomland hardwood and softwood forest.

Meet at C. W. Information Center Parking lot at 8 a.m. A "guide" car will be designated to lead us to Ruth's home. Those who live west of Williamsburg and who may wish to travel directly should contact Ruth for instructions at 566-8234 (evenings). Additional information, as appropriate, will be provided at the November Club meeting.

## Coming Attractions

### December 19th—Christmas Bird Count

Plan on participating if you possibly can. We usually come in with over one hundred species for the day. Average has been 108, with a high of 115 and a low of 97. Lee Schuster will be our coordinator this year. With a little break from the weather and lots of new observers, maybe we can come in with record numbers!

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

## President's

Corner

Early season reports from Eastern Shore birdwatchers include White-crowned Sparrows, Pine Siskins, Horned Larks, Red-breasted Nuthatches, and even those strikingly beautiful Evening Grosbeaks. The suggestion is—or maybe it's just a wish of this exciting season—that conditions up North are harsh enough to bring down a few more of those species than in recent winters. Anyway, let's check their field marks and look a little more carefully at the birds on our feeders and on the ground below. There just might be an exciting surprise in store.

Good luck, and Happy Thanksgiving.

*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 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. Sign up at the November meeting or 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.

## **Kiptopeke and Enroute**

On October 26th, Brian Taber, Tom Armour and Fenton Day visited the Kiptopeke area and produced a rather impressive short list: Red-throated and Common Loon; Greater White-fronted Goose; Bald Eagle; Harrier; Sharp-shinned, Cooper's and Red-tailed Hawks; Kestrel; Merlin; and Parasitic Jaeger. Also, a Western Kingbird and a host of Sparrow species: Clay-colored, Field, Savannah, Song, Swamp, White-throated and White-crowned.

## **From Cynthia Long**

October 27, 1993

Bob and I have just returned from an Elderhostel program near Portland, Maine. We added Eiders to our bird list, plus a few shorebirds and song birds that we see regularly in Virginia.

The best birding day of our vacation was at 105 Bowstring Drive, after turning on our Bob-made waterfall into our tiny pond. The birds came through in waves, feasting on pokeberries and dogwood fruit. Robins, Flickers, Towhees, Chickadees, Titmice, White-throated Sparrows, English Sparrows, Blue Jays, Cardinals, Mockingbirds, Blackbirds, Wrens, possible Kinglets, unidentified LBJs, and a prize Red-breasted Nuthatch, sharing his space with a Brown Creeper. As my fellow Kansan Dorothy said, "There's no place like home—there's no place like home!"

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## **Local Scene**

On 10/9, at the College Creek Parkway turnout, both Virginia and King Rails responded to Tom Armour's taped Rail calls. Also present were two Ospreys and about 150 Yellow-rumped Warblers. The Yellow-rumps were busy working the myrtle bushes at marsh-edge on the bay side. Remember when we knew those birds as Myrtle Warblers? Same day, Bill Snyder led a college group to Hog Island. Star performer was a Short-eared Owl who posed in the marsh at some length. This is only our third local record for this bird! Bill's group also noted two Osprey and a dozen Common Egret. Also on the 9th, a Sapsucker showed up in my yard, followed by White-throats and a Red-breasted Nuthatch on the 11th. (A cold front had buzzed through the area during that two day period.) On 10/11 a male Black-throated Blue Warbler flew against my greenhouse and expired almost immediately. I'm holding the bird (in frozen condition) for the College's study-skin program. On 10/13, Tom reported "hundreds" of Laughing Gulls at the KM Marina. He also reported a vocal Barred Owl near his home.

About the 13th, David Martin was fishing from a small boat near the KM Marina. In checking out a nearby commotion in the water, David was startled as he identified a couple of porpoise! Not the first time, says David, but not at all common. Same day, Golden-crowned Kinglets were in the Oaks on Oak Road. On 10/14, the following were present enroute to and at

Hog Island: Double-crested Cormorant (300), Great Egret, Green-winged Teal, Pintail, Red-tailed Hawk, Caspian Tern, Royal Tern, Phoebe, Bobolink, Red-winged Blackbird (700), Common Grackle (500), and Cowbird. Most of the Cormorant were in flight in small flocks low over the James. On 10/15 Marilyn Zeigler and Joy Archer identified 3 Caspian Terns over the isthmus at Jamestown Island. On 10/16 the Doyles watched a loose flock of about 20 warbler-like birds foraging through the trees about 20 feet up. Birds had stripes on the sides (but not fronts) wing bars, and stripes over the eyes. Joe did not believe they were Yellow-rumped, but more like the fall Blackpolls in Peterson's Guide??? Doyles also saw an Osprey feeding at Kingspoint (College Creek). On 10/20, College Creek marshes gave up 3 calling King Rails and 2 Clapper Rails. A Catbird and 2 Juncos were in the area. Same day, a Kestrel was on the wires near Drummond's Field.

On 10/21, Brian Taber watched a Western Kingbird pass overhead on the Parkway near Mill Creek (In his hawk-watching in that area, Brian recorded single Merlins on 10/16 and 10/19.) Same date, Sharretts found a Brown Creeper on Jamestown Island. Dur Morton brought us up to date on his yard on Helmsley Road in Williamsburg: Rose-breasted Grosbeak (9/20); Catbird (9/22); Wood Thrush (10/11 & 10/17); Ruby-crowned Kinglet (10/21; last Hummer (9/27). Kingsmill Marina had 10 Forster's Terns and 5 Great Black-backed Gulls on the sea wall on 10/21. Same date, Oak Road was favored with 2 Creepers, 1

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Junco, 2 Red-breasted Nuthatches, and 6 White-throated Sparrows. On 10/22, Ruth Beck and a group watched a Winter Wren perform on the trunk of a fallen tree. On 10/24, the Doyles got a good mix at Camp Peary: 19 Ruddy Ducks; 2 Pied-billed Grebes; 2 Bald Eagles; 1 Kestrel; 2 Black Vultures; 13 Wild Turkey; 1 each of Hermit Thrush, Creeper and Catbird. Nice morning! 10/27, Armour and Sheehan tracked a Common Loon on the James near Mill Creek. On 10/29, while fishing from a boat near Hog Island, Tom spotted 7 Ruddy Ducks and a Harrier. Same day, the Scotts reported that Brown-headed Nuthatches have started to patronize the Scott's second floor windowsill feeder; and Tom Armour reported a Catbird in his backyard. Our scheduled monthly trip (10/30 for Kiptopeke) was scrubbed on account of Halloween rains. Undaunted, Brian, with Zeigler, Archer and Lowe assisting, slogged around College Creek at the Parkway—then to Jamestown Island. They saw a huge flock of blackbirds (mostly Grackles) arise from the marshes. Brian says at least 20,000! Also, they found Swamp Sparrows, Creepers, Ruby-crowns, Clapper Rails and Royal Terns. Brian reported an immature Swamp Sparrow at his feeder.

10/31 was a dark and at time rainy morning—in addition to being Halloween. In mid-morning Alice Springe listened to two Barred Owls discussing things among themselves rather loudly—subject unknown. Same

date, Tom Armour watched a flight of about 150 Tundra Swans over the James at Hog Island. Also on 10/31, Doyles at Camp Peary noted 2 Kestrel, a Harrier, about 50 Bluebirds, 85 Ruddy Ducks, 10 Wood Ducks and a Ring-necked Duck. On 11/01, a Pied-billed Grebe was on KM Pond. On 11/02, Joe Doyle reported 9 Tundra Swans at Camp Peary. Same day, Lee Schuster called to report an early Pine Siskin, mixed in with House Finches and appearing to enjoy Lee's sunflower hearts. On 11/03, Gull were observed dropping small clams on the approach road to Jamestown Island. This breaks or cracks the clam enough for the Gulls to pull out the goodies. Not much stirring on the island, but both Clapper and Virginia Rails were calling the the College Creek marshes, and a late Osprey was busy fishing. Great Egrets were recently seen at College Landing Park (off South Henry Street. Hotchkiss has a Sapsucker, and your editor again is recording a Red-breasted Nuthatch on a day-to-day basis: suet and sunflower hearts, at least. On 11/04, while fishing on Powhatan Creek, Bill Snyder did better with birds: Green-backed Heron, Osprey, Lesser Yellowlegs and a Pied-billed Grebe.

### **Virginia Hotline Phone Change**

New telephone number for the Virginia Hotline is 1-238-2713. Les Willis, a Suffolk birder, will update the tape each Tuesday. If you are not familiar with this VSO service, try it sometime. You will hear a brief tape summary of current unusual Virginia bird sightings. Directions to the site, and/or contact numbers are often provided.



**Club Officers/Proposed 1994 Slate**

During October, and in accordance with our Club By-Laws, the Executive Board designated a Nominating Committee to propose a slate of officers for 1994. The committee consisted of Marilyn Zeigler (Chair), Julie Hotchkiss, Lee Schuster and Fred Blystone. The Committee hereby presents to the membership the following slate for consideration at the November Club meeting on 17 November. Prior to voting, floor nominations will be invited for any office.

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

**Weights of Birds**

Here are a few, just to pique your curiosity:

Wild Turkey	To	16.5 lbs
Bald Eagle		8-14 lbs
Canada Goose	To	8.5 lbs
Great Blue Heron		5-8 lbs
Mallard Duck	To	2-3/4 lbs
Common Crow	To	1 lb
Pileated Woodpecker		10-16 oz.
Sharp-shinned Hawk	To	6 oz.
Robin		2-1/2-3 oz.
Blue Bird		1-1-3/4 oz.
Carolina Wren		1/2-3/4 oz.
Hummingbird (Ruby-throated)		1/10-1/7 oz.



And then there's the African Ostrich, who goes to 345 lbs. Can't fly, though. Be careful who you pick a fight with.



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## **Birding Festival**

Virginia's first annual Birding Festival, held on October 8-10 in the Kiptopeke area of the Eastern Shore, was a great success. There were many hard-working festival partners who created the event, including the Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce, the Virginia Society of Ornithology, the College of William and Mary, the Virginia Department of Conservation, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the Nature Conservancy and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, to name a few.

To open the festival, there was a ribbon-cutting dedication ceremony for a bird observation platform at Kiptopeke State Park. The platform was developed through a VSO committee and funded through grants and donations. Speakers at the ceremony included Dr. Mitchell Byrd of the College of William and Mary and Bill Williams, past WBC president and long-time hawk-watcher at Kiptopeke.

Club members Ruth Beck and Bill Akers helped to present special programs throughout the weekend. There were also canoe trips, children's activities and vendors of bird-related goods.

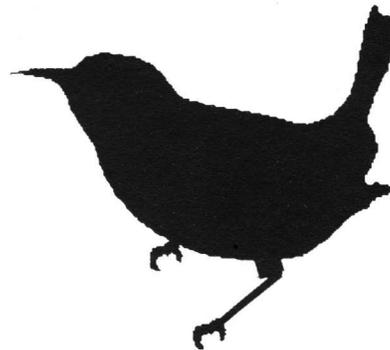
Both the weather and birds cooperated at the festival. People were able to see hundreds of migrating hawks each day at Kiptopeke and take part in field trips to such nearby places as the Eastern Shore National Wildlife Refuge and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-tunnel islands.

More than 600 birders registered for the event and were rewarded with Peregrines, Merlins, Northern Harriers, Cooper's Hawks, Lesser Black-backed Gulls, lots of warblers and even a Clay-colored Sparrow.

There is already talk of the second annual festival.

## **Avian Accident**

One day in late October a Sharp-shinned Hawk crashed against a window of the Doyle residence in Kingsmill. Obviously injured, the bird ended up in Kingsmill Pond. With Grace holding his heels, Joe Doyle was able to retrieve the hawk. Recalling that James City Veterinary Clinic on Brookwood Drive had previously provided casualty assistance, Joe called and was instructed to bring the bird over. Doctor David Bates personally administered to the bird for several days. Sadly, he reported that the whiplash and crash aspects of the collision had damaged motor capabilities beyond repair. A sad ending, indeed, but our thanks to good samaritan Dr. Bates and his staff for their prompt professional response.



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

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