



THE FLYER

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Williamsburg Bird Club

February Meeting

Our next regular meeting will be **Wednesday, February 16th, 1994** at 7:30 PM in Room 117, Millington Hall at William and Mary.

Swans, Geese and Ducks. All these waterfowl are aquatic birds with webs between their three front toes. February's program is designed to present, review, and refresh your waterfowl identification skills. **BRING YOUR BIRD BOOKS** - any of the field identification guides will do. Our format will be informal; a short presentation about ducks, geese and swans with slides and study skins will start the evening. Then you will have an opportunity to identify various species for yourself. Just to practice a little, here are three questions whose answers you can research in your bird books before you come to the meeting on the 16th. What white-headed duck has all dark wings? Which male duck is the only all black duck? Which of the three species of Merganser is the smallest?

Come and join us for an interesting and new approach to sharpen your identification skills.

February Field Trip

Our monthly field trip is scheduled for February 19, and will depart at 8:00am from the Colonial Williamsburg Information Center. The trip will focus on waterfowl along the York River and at Cheatham Annex, and it will be led by Bill Williams. Probable sighting should be Swan, Horned Grebe, Canvasback, Ruddy Duck, Hooded Merganser, Bufflehead, Goldeneye, and Double-crested Cormorant. Join us for what should be a very productive and interesting trip!

President's Corner

Winter, one of the quietest seasons, "bird song wise," is the best time to begin training your ears.

Early February, the end of winter? On this bright Monday morning, the end of winter can be heard, even if it cannot be seen (frost and ice on windows and trees outside). **House Finches, Titmice, Cardinals, Robins, Chickadees, White-throated Sparrows, Carolina Wrens** and other birds begin tuning up for spring with "subsongs;" abbreviated or muted versions of songs they will soon be singing in full. Break in your ears early, and listen to the regulars so that you'll be better prepared for the spring migrants. Good listening leads to better birding, so get in that "preseason" training by taking careful notice of the calls and songs of our winter residents.

Ruth Beck

Congrats to Our Newest Lifetime Member

The Williamsburg Bird Club is happy to announce the presentation of a Life Membership to Bill Sheehan. Bill is a charter member of the Williamsburg Bird Club, and has served in various official capacities since 1977. He continues to be very active as our resource record compiler.

"Captain" Sheehan, as some of us fondly call him, has been in Williamsburg since 1972. He was Officer in Charge of Cheatham Annex, his own "large backyard for birds." After his tour of duty in the Navy, he has been attracting birds to 104 Oak Road. Congratulations to you, Bill, and thank you for your continuing support.



Don't Forget to Pay Your Dues!!

It is that time of year again to pay your dues - to the Williamsburg Bird Club. You can mail them in to Charles Rend, or pay him directly at the next meeting. If mailing, the address is:

Williamsburg Bird Club
P.O. Box 1085
Williamsburg, VA 23187-1085

January's Field Trip

There was a good turnout for the January field trip along the Colonial Parkway and Jamestown. The group ended at Bill Sheehan's home for his wonderful backyard bird show. Brian Taber was our fearless leader and helped us locate some very unusual species. We were standing along the frozen James River when three ducks flew in. Two were obviously **Mallards**, but the third was different. The scope was brought to bear on him and Brian identified it as a **Mandarin Duck** ???! No it wasn't blown in from Asia with the latest Arctic Clipper, but likely gained its freedom from a local private lake. Some of the other birds we spotted were **Bald Eagle**, **Common Goldeneye**, **Red-shouldered Hawk**, a single **Evening Grosbeak** in flight, **Flicker**, **Red-bellied** and **Downy Woodpecker**, **Canvasback Duck**, **Brown-headed Nuthatch** and **Hermit Thrush**, just to name a few. Of course Bill Sheehan had his own display highlighted by a **Hairy Woodpecker** and a **Red-breasted Nuthatch**. Our group included Charles and Jean Rend, Bill Holcombe, Caroline Williams, Bill Williams, Marilyn Zeigler, Dorothy Whitfield, Caroline Lowe, the Sargents, Lee Schuster and Ruth Beck.

Field Notes for February, 1994

Like last month, February has produced some interesting and rare species for this area. **Evening**

Grosbeaks continue to be seen sporadically in the area, including 12 by Barbara Ema at her feeder. **Northern Orioles** have also been visiting a feeder in Croaker. Tom Armour and Bill Sheehan got a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** on Jamestown Island and a **Tree Sparrow** in its normal spot at the river end of the Hog Island access road. Brian Taber, Bill Williams and Tom Armour took a trip to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge/Tunnel and saw quite a few species which we don't see in this area. It's amazing what a relatively short trip out of the area can produce. However, far and away the most exciting sighting of the month was that of a **Common Redpoll** by Keith Kennedy at his feeder in New Kent County. The last recorded sighting of this species was in 1987, so this is indeed a special appearance.

Here's the rest of what was reported last month. We have a great list of contributors, resulting in a long sighting list. Keep up the good work!

Contributors - Tom Armour (TA), Ruth Beck (RB), Joe & Grace Doyle(J&GD), Barbara Ema(BE), Keith Kennedy(KK), Dick Mahone(DM), Norma & Grant Olson(N&GO), Dave & Lee Schuster (D&LS), George & Bonnie-Lou Scott(G&BLS), Bill Sheehan (BS), Bill Snyder(BSn), Alice Sprunge(AS), Brian Taber(BT), Mr. & Mrs. Pettway(MMP), Bill Williams(BW).

Colonial Parkway/James River

Double-crested Cormorant - 1/27(TA/BS); **Northern Pintail** - 1/19(TA/BS); **Ring-necked Duck** - 1/20(TA/BS); **Common Goldeneye** - 1/31(TA/BS); **Hooded Merganser** - 1/19, 20 & 31(TA/BS); **Red-breasted Merganser** - 1/27(TA/BS); **Bald Eagle** - 1/1(RB), 1/2(D&LS), 1/3&27(TA/BS); **Sharp-shinned Hawk** - 1/27(TA/BS); **Cooper's Hawk** - 1/27(TA/BS); **Red-shouldered Hawk** - 1/20(TA/BS); **Red-tailed**



Hawk - 1/20&27(TA/BS); Clapper Rail - 1/6(TA/BS/DM); Forster's Tern - 1/6(TA/BS/DM); Cedar Waxwing - (BT/BS), 1/2(D&LS); Field Sparrow - 1/27(TA/BS).

Jamestown Island

Great Egret - 1/13(BSn); Wood Duck - 1/11(TA/BS); Green-winged Teal - 1/29(D&LS); American Black Duck - 1/11(TA/BS); Bald Eagle - 1/1(RB); Northern Bobwhite - 1/19(TA/BS); Virginia Rail - 1/1(RB), 1/6(TA/BS/DM), 1/15(BT/TA); Killdeer - 1/11(TA/BS); Lesser Black-backed Gull - 1/11(TA/BS); Screech Owl - 1/11(BT); Belted Kingfisher - 1/11(TA/BS); Red-headed Woodpecker - 1/19(TA/BS); Yellow-bellied Sapsucker - 1/11(TA/BS); Hairy Woodpecker - 1/11(TA/BS); Brown Creeper - 1/11(TA/BS); Ruby-crowned Kinglet - 1/11(TA/BS), 1/29(D&LS); Golden-crowned Kinglet - 1/11(TA/BS); Swamp Sparrow - 1/29(D&LS); Fox Sparrow - 1/1(RB); Song Sparrow - 1/29(D&LS); White-throated Sparrow - 1/29(D&LS).

Drummond's Field

Red-tailed Hawk - 1/2(D&LS); American Kestrel - 1/2(D&LS); Killdeer, 1/2(D&LS).

Chippokes Swamp

American Black Duck - 1/3(TA/BS); Hooded Merganser - 1/3(TA/BS); Bald Eagle - on nest 1/3(TA/BS), 1/30(BT/BW); Hairy Woodpecker - 1/26(TA/BS); Brown Creeper - 1/3(TA/BS); Golden-crowned Kinglet - 1/3(TA/BS).

Hog Island/Jamestown Ferry

Double-crested Cormorant - 1/3(TA/BS); Great Egret - 1/3&26(TA/BS); Green-backed Heron - 1/3(TA/BS); Tundra Swan - 1/3, 7&26(TA/BS/DM); Mute Swan - 1/3(TA/BS);

Canada Goose - 3,000+ 1/3&26(TA/BS); Green-winged Teal - 1/7(TA/BS/DM); American Black Duck - 1/3, 1/7(TA/BS/DM); Mallard Duck - 500 on 1/3(TA/BS); Northern Pintail - 1/6(TA/BS); Redhead - James River, Rt. 634(Surry Co.) on 1/26(TA/BS); Ring-necked Duck - 1/7&26(TA/BS/DM); Greater Scaup - James river, Rt. 634(Surry Co.) on 1/26(TA/BS); Hooded Merganser - 1/3, 7&26(TA/BS/DM); Common Merganser - 1/3(TA/BS); Bald Eagle - 1/3, 1/7(TA/BS/DM); Northern Harrier - 1/3&26(TA/BS); Red-tailed Hawk - 1/3(TA/BS); American Kestrel - 1/3(TA/BS); Greater Yellowlegs - 1/3(TA/BS); Bonaparte's Gull - 1/30(BT/BW); Forster's Tern - 1/30(BT/BW); Winter Wren - 1/30(BT/BW); American Tree Sparrow - 1/26(TA/BS); Field Sparrow - 1/30(BT/BW); Swamp Sparrow - 1/3(TA/BS).

Kingsmill

Mute Swan - 1/5(TA); Northern Shoveler - 1/1(TA); Canvasback - 1/14, 18&23(TA); Common Goldeneye - 1/9(TA); Hooded Merganser - 1/5, 1/9(TA); American Coot - 1/18&23(TA); Forster's Tern - 1/5(TA); Rusty Blackbird - 1/5(TA).

Craney Island - 1/10(TA/RB)

Brown Pelican; Gadwall; American Wigeon; Lesser Scaup; Bufflehead; Red-breasted Merganser; Northern Harrier; Red-tailed Hawk; Kestrel; Sanderling; Dunlin

Fort Story Beach and Chesapeake Bay Bridge/Tunnel Islands - 1/17(BT/BW/TA)

Gannett; Brown Pelican; Great Cormorant; Common Eider; Harlequin Duck; Oldsquaw(500); Black Scoter; Surf Scoter; White-winged Scoter; Goldeneye; Bufflehead; Red-breasted Merganser; Coopers Hawk; Ruddy



Turnstone; Purple Sandpiper; Little Gull;
Bonaparte's Gull; Snow Bunting.

Camp Peary 1/30(J&GD)

Tundra Swan, Ring-necked Duck, Bufflehead,
Hooded Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Wild
Turkey(13).

Feeders, Yards and Miscellaneous

American Wigeon - Lake Powell 1/3(TA/BS);
Ring-necked Duck - Lake Powell on
1/6(TA/BS/DM); Hooded Merganser - Lake
Powell on 1/6(TA/BS/DM); Bald Eagle -
1/7(RB); Sharp-shinned Hawk - 1/5(BS); Red-
shouldered Hawk - 1/1-31(BS); Barred Owl -
1/13(AS); Red-bellied Woodpecker - 1/1-
31(D&LS); Downy Woodpecker - 1/1-
31(D&LS); Hairy Woodpecker - 1/1-31(BS);
Red-breasted Nuthatch - 1/1-31(BS); Brown-
headed Nuthatch - 1/1-31(G&BLS); Ruby-
crowned Kinglet - 1/1-31(BS); Pine Warbler - 2
adult, 6 immature at suet 1/29(D&LS); Hermit
Thrush - 1/1-31(BS, D&LS, RB); Cedar
Waxwing - 1/5(BS), 1/29(D&LS); Brown
Thrasher - 1/1-31(BS, D&LS); Purple Finch -
1/1-31(BS, D&LS); Common Redpoll - Quinton,
VA.(New Kent Co.) on 1/15(KK); Pine Siskin -
1/1-31(D&LS, RB, N&GO); Evening Grosbeak -
pair on 1/6(RB), 12 on 1/12(BE); Fox Sparrow -
1/1-31(BS, RB); Northern Oriole - irregular
visitor to feeder last obs. 1/28(MMP/J&GD).

Great Winter Birding Out West

Marilyn Zeigler

Tidal fluctuations in Bodega Bay, on top of the
San Andreas fault north of Point Reyes,
California, provide vast mud-flats where, in mid-
December, hundreds of **Marbled Godwits** and
Willetts work the fringes. They are accompanied
by **Dunlin**, **Black-bellied Plover**, and **Black**

Turnstones. In the bay, **Buffleheads**, **Sea** and
White-winged Scoters and **Scaup** abound.; **Red-
breasted Mergansers** patrolled in small groups. I
saw a flotilla of seven **Common Loons** and many
individuals, plus plenty of **Western** and **Horned
Grebes** (**Eared Grebes** there too, but trickier to
identify). Half a dozen **Snowy Plovers**, an
endangered species, were found on a beach, a
dozen **White Pelicans** sailed the bay, and about
ten **Black Oystercatchers** wheeled up from the
rocky headland while an **Osprey** soared overhead.
From the headland, I watched a **Peregrine Falcon**
swoop down to nail a scoter and carry it off
across the bay. Talk about drama! A half-dozen
Pelagic Cormorants clung to the ocean-side cliff.
Lots of gulls: **Western**, **Ring-billed**, **California**,
Mew, and **Bonaparte's**. Above the inland shore,
six **Black-crowned Night Herons** dozed in a
Cypress, a **Golden-crowned Sparrow** perched,
and a pair of **Anna's Hummingbirds** patrolled the
flower beds (at 500').

In San Francisco Bay, at Alameda, another mud-
flat yielded two **Whimbrels**, **Avocets**, **Lesser
Yellowlegs** and near shore, a cluster of **Northern
Shovelers** with many **Wigeons**. At Morro Beach
further south, two **Long-billed Curlews** probed
the beach, not the least disturbed by surfers and
tourists. New to me were a **Black Phoebe**,
hawking insects from a rocky beach, and a
California Thrasher singing on a volcanic hilltop.

Dead Bird Alert

Anyone that finds a dead bird in good condition
(usually those that fly into a window) can help
give it a second life as a teaching aid. If you find
one, just place it in a baggie and store it in your
freezer until the next bird club meeting (no we're
not kidding). Bring it to the meeting and give it
to Ruth Beck or Lee Schuster and they will



incorporate it into their educational programs as a prop during classes at William and Mary and at the Virginia Living Museum. Thank you ahead of time for your help.

They're Changing It's Name (Again)

The American Ornithologists' Union's (AOU) Committee of Classification and Nomenclature, the nations official regulator of avian names, has decided to bring back the **Baltimore Oriole**. It's publication, the Checklist of North American Birds, will be released later this year introducing several changes to bird names. This will be the 7th Edition. The last checklist was published in 1983, 10 years after an AOU interim report introduced the **Northern Oriole**. Scientists have found that very little breeding occurs between the **Bullock's** and **Baltimore Orioles**, even though the latter has been spreading westward into the former's range. Since there is so little interbreeding, there is little justification for unifying the two species, and as a result, the new checklist will bring back the **Bullock's** and **Baltimore Orioles**.

Another change to the checklist will group **vultures** with **storks**. By analyzing the anatomy, physiology, behavior and cellular biology of **hawks**, **vultures** and **storks**, findings indicate that **New World vultures** are more closely related to **storks** than to **hawks**.

Check the February/March *National Wildlife Magazine* for the complete article. This doesn't make it easy for life-listing and record keeping, does it?

Bird of the Month

Common Redpoll *Carduelis flammea*

The Common Redpoll made its appearance this year all along the peninsula - one in Quinton, two in Suffolk, and two in Portsmouth. The Redpoll nests in Alaska and Canada, and winters from Oregon, Utah, Colorado, across the Ohio Valley, and into Virginia. They build nests in second growth forest, as well as swamps of alder and willow. The female constructs the nest three to six feet above the ground, and it is typically made of twigs, roots, grasses and mosses.

In shape, size and action, the Common Redpoll resembles a Goldfinch and Pine Siskin. The Redpoll is recognized by its red cap and black chin. It is a streaked gray-brown bird with a short conical bill.

At feeders, they enjoy millet and sunflower seeds. Redpolls can also be seen in flocks feeding on weeds or the cones from birches and alders, as well as seeds from willows. In summer they may eat insects and feed them to their young.

In the Williamsburg area, the Common Redpoll has appeared sporadically, with the first locally recorded observation in 1953 on Valentines Day in Norge. 1978 was an active year with a total of 13 recorded at various places around Williamsburg. Two showed up at feeders in March of 1986, and only one during the same month in 1987. It has been seven years since the Common Redpoll made its last appearance. All of our records have them showing up in February and March, so watch your feeders carefully, and don't write off the House and Purple Finches without a little closer look.