



THE FLYER

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April, 1994

Williamsburg Bird Club

April Meeting

Our next regular meeting will be **Wednesday, April 20, 1994**, at 7:30 PM in Room 117, Millington Hall at William and Mary.

At this month's meeting, Mrs. Boleyn Dale, co-chair of the Bethel Beach Natural Area Stewardship Committee, will present a program discussing the Bethel Beach Preserve entitled "Exploring Bethel Beach." Bethel Beach is located in Matthew's County, and is managed by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. The beach preserve is an excellent area to observe shorebirds, as well as other types of birds and wildlife. Please join us for what should be an interesting and informative presentation.

April Field Trip

The April trip will be on Saturday, April 23. Tom Armour will lead us to Hog Island on the James River. It's a birding adventure, beginning with the ferry ride looking for **gulls, Osprey**, and possibly a **Bald Eagle**. At Hog Island, shorebird migration should be well under way, and **Great Blue Heron** rookeries will be forming. There should be some winter residents left, along with the possibility of newly arrived **Caspian and Royal Terns**. Meet at our regular time and place; 8:00 am at the Colonial Williamsburg Visitor's Center.

President's Corner

Gentle breezes are blowing, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers are singing, Phoebes are nesting; Hmm, must be springtime again. The spring is a

very special time in Williamsburg, and an active season for the Williamsburg Bird Club. We have many fun and interesting activities planned for this time of the year and many of them truly provide a service to the community and the club. I hope all of you will take the opportunity to participate in some of these activities, and I would like to express my appreciation in advance to those of you who enable our club to achieve its recreational and community service goals.

Ruth Beck

NEWS FLASH: Help the Bird Club Fund Student Research and Feed Your Birds at the Same Time!

Wild Birds Unlimited has agreed to donate 5% of all purchases made by club members at their 1441 Richmond Road store back to the Williamsburg Bird Club. This much needed revenue will be used to help fund our annual Student Research Grant. Enclosed with this issue of the newsletter is an envelope containing identification cards and a set of instructions describing the program and how to take advantage of it. Any member who does not receive an identification card should contact Charles Rend or Dave Schuster to obtain a materials package. We encourage everyone to patronize Wild Birds Unlimited, and we sincerely thank them for their contribution to this very worthwhile effort.

Welcome to our Newest Members

William and Mary Kafes
315 Burns Lane
Williamsburg, VA 23185



Dale Davis
706 Pollard Park
Williamsburg, VA 23185

March's Field Trip

The March field trip visited Jolly's Pond and the Bush Neck Farm Road area. Eight hardy souls were treated to a relatively good morning of birding, observing some 39 species in the process. Two adult **Bald Eagles** soaring over Jamestown road at Five Forks proved to be a harbinger for the birding to be had on this beautiful March Saturday. It was still a little early for most of the spring migrants, with the exception of **Eastern Phoebes** and a large number of **Pine Warblers** in a group, which were more than likely migrants rather than winter residents. It was a good day for raptors, and in addition to the **Bald Eagles**, we counted **Turkey Vultures**, **Osprey**, **Red-shouldered** and **Red-tailed Hawks** and an **American Kestrel**. Far and away the most exciting find was an **Eurasian Wigeon** mixed in amongst the **American Wigeon** and **Ring-necked Ducks** on Jolly's Pond. As it turned out, this sighting was the first in five years for this species in the Williamsburg area, and thanks to Bill Sheehan getting the word out, quite a few club members got to see it this time. In general, the March trip to Jolly's Pond and Bush Neck Farm Road was a very enjoyable and productive trip. My personal thanks to all that attended for making it an easy and fun trip to lead.

Field Notes for March, 1994

As hoped, the month of March signaled the beginning of the spring migration season with the sighting of a few early migrants. We typically limit our bird sightings in this column to only the previous month, but things really "heated up" (pun intended) toward the end of the month and

in early April. Thus, we let the sightings spill on over into the beginning of the month so that everyone might have a chance to check out the early migrants. As discussed above, the **Eurasian Wigeon** sighting at Jolly's Pond was definitely a highlight, but for your editors, the sight and sound of warblers in the area represent true birding enjoyment. To this end, we have seen **Yellow-throated Warblers** at Jolly's Pond and at York River State Park, and **Louisiana Waterthrush** again at Jolly's Pond. **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** are everywhere. We had an early **White-eyed Vireo** on Bush Neck Farm Road on April 2, and on Easter Sunday we were treated to a **Prairie Warbler** in Mountain Laurel in our front yard. By Easter Monday, we had **Ovenbirds** and **Black & White Warblers** in the woods around our house in Banbury Cross. We still haven't seen any **Palm Warblers**, but we know they have to be out there. Here's our monthly list of contributors and what they are seeing:

Contributors - Tom Armour (TA), Martha Armstrong(MA), Ruth Beck(RB), Fenton Day(FD), Joe & Grace Doyle(J&GD), Julie & Ty Hotchkiss (J&TH), Keith Kennedy(KK), Dave & Lee Schuster (D&LS), Bill Sheehan (BS), Brian Taber(BT), Bill Williams(BW).

Colonial Parkway/James River

Great Egret - 3/24(TA/BS); **Red-breasted Merganser** - 3/26-30(TA/BS); **Bonaparte's Gull** - 3/26(TA); **Forster's Tern** - 3/28(TA/BS); **Tree Swallow** - 3/28(TA/BS); **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** - 3/24(BT); **Marsh Wren** - 3/30(TA/BS); **Yellow-throated Warbler** - 3/30(TA/BS).

Jamestown Island

Red-shouldered Hawk - 3/20(D&LS); **Osprey** - 3/6(D&LS); **Brown-headed Nuthatch** - 3/6(D&LS).

**Drummond's Field**

Blue-winged Teal - 3/21-25(BW/BT); Green-winged Teal - 3/21-25(BW/BT); Greater Yellowlegs - 3/25(BT); Pectoral Sandpiper - 3/25(BT); Common Snipe - 3/24-25(TA/BS/BT).

Kingsmill

Black-crowned Night-heron - 3/29(J&GD); Greater Scaup - 3/9(J&GD); Ring-necked Duck - 3/21(J&GD); Red-breasted Merganser - 3/7-21(J&GD), 3/18(TA); American Coot- 3/18(TA); Northern Harrier - 4/1(J&GD); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher - 4/1(J&GD); Yellow-throated Warbler - 4/1(J&GD); Fox Sparrow - 3/25(TA).

York River State Park

Brown Creeper - 3/26(D&LS); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher - 3/26(D&LS); Yellow-throated Warbler - 3/26(D&LS).

York River/Yorktown

Northern Gannett - 3/18-27(BW); Red-necked Grebe - 3/27(BW); Canvasback - 4/3(J&GD); Lesser Scaup - 3/18(BW); Bufflehead - 4/3(J&GD); Ruddy Duck - 4/3(J&GD); Caspian Tern - 3/17(RB).

Jolly Pond/Bush Neck Farm Road

Wood Duck - 3/12(D&LS); Green-winged Teal - 3/20(D&LS); Eurasian Wigeon - 3/19-24(D&LS/BW/BS/BT/FD); Red-headed Woodpecker - 3/20(BW/BS); Yellow-bellied Sapsucker - 3/21(BS); Hairy Woodpecker - 3/21(BS); Winter Wren - 3/27(BW); White-eyed Vireo - 4/2(D&LS); Yellow-throated Warbler - 3/23-4/2(BW/BT/D&LS); Louisiana Waterthrush - 3/24-4/2(BT/BW/D&LS)

Camp Peary (J&GD)

Pied-billed Grebe; Horned Grebe; Green-backed Heron; Tundra Swan; Blue-winged Teal;

Canvasback; Ring-necked Duck; Bufflehead; Hooded Merganser; Osprey; Red-shouldered Hawk; Red-tailed Hawk; Kestrel; Bobwhite; Belted Kingfisher; Red-headed Woodpecker; Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker; Eastern Phoebe; Tree Swallow; Pine Warbler; Towhee; Chipping Sparrow; Song Sparrow; White-throated Sparrow, Meadowlark.

Feeders, Yards and Miscellaneous

Red-necked Grebe - Little Creek Reservoir 3/24(FD); Common Merganser - Little Creek Reservoir 3/25(BT); Bald Eagle - 3/5(BT); Osprey - 3/5(BT); Sharp-shinned Hawk - 3/5(BT), 3/13(BS); Ruby-throated Hummingbird - 4/6-7(BS), 4/6(KK); Hairy Woodpecker - All Month(BS); Purple Martin - 3/20-31(BW/MA); Red-breasted Nuthatch - All Month(BS); Brown Creeper - All Month(BS); Hermit Thrush - All Month(BS, D&LS); White-eyed Vireo - 4/5(J&TH); Yellow-rumped Warbler - All Month(D&LS); Pine Warbler - All Month(D&LS); Prairie Warbler - 4/3(D&LS); Black & White Warbler - 4/4(D&LS); Ovenbird - 4/4(D&LS); Cedar Waxwing - All month(D&LS); Brown Thrasher - (BS, D&LS); Louisiana Waterthrush - Hickory Signpost Road 3/31(BS); Purple Finch - 3/26(BW); Pine Siskin - 3/18(BW); Evening Grosbeak - All month(D&LS); Chipping Sparrow - Most of month(BS/BW/D&LS); Rusty Blackbird - 3/18(BW).

The Hummingbirds are Coming

It is time to dig out your hummingbird feeders, clean them up (don't use soap), fill them up with sugar water and finally place them outside. The earliest recorded report of hummingbird in this



area is April 4. Since that date has passed, we know it is time to get ready for them.

For those of you who haven't had the opportunity to enjoy hummers in your yard, there is no time like the present to get started. Following are some tips on hummingbird feeding:

- 1) **Choosing a feeder:** Buy one that is easy to take apart and clean. Start with a smaller feeder until you have visitors. This will prevent your solution from sitting too long and spoiling. If you have a large feeder, just don't fill it all of the way. It doesn't matter if your feeder has perches or not. If it does, the hummingbirds will use them and if not, they will hover.
- 2) **Where to place feeders:** To start, place them near flowers that attract hummingbirds. Place feeders out of the wind, and where there is shade. Hang your feeder from a wire, hook, string, or tree branch.
- 3) **How many feeders:** Once you have lots of visitors, put additional feeders out in other parts of your yard. Hummingbirds will act like little fighter jets coming in for attack. They can be aggressive, so extra feeders will help eliminate competition, and may attract more birds.
- 4) **The recipe:** You can either buy commercial mixtures, or make your own.
 - 1 part sugar (no honey)
 - 4 parts waterBoiling the solution helps slow down the fermentation process. Since the solution spoils quickly, don't leave it in the feeders more than 48 hours.

Below are some wildflowers that help to make a good hummingbird garden, and will attract more birds to your yard:

Trumpet Vine	Butterfly Weed
Cardinal Flower	Bleeding Heart
Wild Columbine	Coral Bells
Trumpet Honeysuckle	Geranium
Bee Balm	Impatiens
Verbena	

There are many more plants to choose from, this is just a sampling. A knowledgeable person at your favorite nursery can help you.

Good luck and enjoy the hummers.

A Good-Hearted Story

Tom Armour called the other night to tell us the happy story of a female **Sharp-shinned Hawk** that apparently had a bad encounter somewhere around Kingsmill. A neighbor of Tom's, Joanne Summers, called to ask for assistance about an injured hawk around her feeders. The Sharpy wasn't doing too bad for herself because Joanne watched her take another bird for dinner. Tom captured the Sharpy and took it to Agape' Animal Hospital. There, it was examined and diagnosed with a broken wing. The last report Tom received had the wing healing nicely. The prognosis is for release when the wing has completely recovered from the break, and all of its strength is back.

Adopt-A-Highway Report

Five good women and four good men turned out March 5 for the highway pickup of Route 5, two miles west of Five Forks to State Route 614. The group was hard at work for two hours, picking up 12 bags of trash, and an additional 120 pounds of



glass (250 bottles) and 19.6 pounds of aluminum (471 cans) which, of course, were recycled.

Club members who participated were Sam Hart, Phyllis Johnson, Dorothy Whitfield, Bill Williams, Marilyn Lewis, Mack Lundy, Marilyn Zeigler, and Amanda Allen. Bill Davies and Sam Hart enjoyed it so much they went back Monday to finish the job.

Anyone who is interested in taking part in this worthwhile and rewarding effort should contact Bill Davies at 253-1461. Thanks everyone for all of your hard work!

The Field Is Set ...

And by now participants in the first annual Spring Bird Count Contest have polished their binoculars, prepared their checklists, sharpened their pencils, and hopefully, begun looking for those elusive Virginia bird species. Participants in this inaugural event include: Tom Armour, Ruth Beck, Martha Briggs, Bill Holcombe, Cynthia Lang, Marilyn Lewis, Vicki Long, Mack Lundy, Tess Matteson, John McDowell, Elva Mikula, Alice Sargent, Leonard Sargent, Bill Sheehan, Dave Schuster, Lee Schuster Bill Williams, and Marilyn Zeigler. Good birding to all!

Spring Bird Count

Brian Taber has set May 8 as the date for this year's Spring Bird Count. Unlike the Christmas Count, the Spring Count is not an Audubon sanctioned event, but rather more of a local tradition to survey the species and numbers of migrants moving through the Williamsburg area. Like the Christmas Count, we survey eight areas: Cheatham Annex, Kingsmill, Hog Island, Jamestown, College Woods, Middle Plantation,

Jolly Pond, and Skimino. Volunteers and new faces are always welcome, so if you are interested in participating, contact Brian Taber at 253-1181.

VSO Annual Meeting

The Virginia Society of Ornithology annual meeting is scheduled for May 13-15, 1994, in Harrisburg, Virginia. Anyone who is interested in attending, and would like further information, should contact Ruth Beck at 566-8234.

American Birding Association Membership

The following is information for anyone interested in becoming a member of the ABA. Membership entitles you to six consecutive issues of *Birding* magazine, monthly issues of the *Winging It* newsletter, and member discounts offered by ABA sales. Membership rates are \$30 per year for individuals and \$37/yr. for families. Send dues to:

ABA Membership
P.O. Box 6599
Colorado Springs, CO 80934
Phone 1-800-850-2473

ABA Conference

The 1994 ABA Conference will be held in Minot, North Dakota, June 13-19. Convention Headquarters is the Best Western International Inn. For those of you who have time to take off for a week of birding, this conference may be of interest to you. Included in the week are birding workshops, field trips, guest speakers, dinner programs and an ABA Sales Corner. Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt has been invited to speak.



Possible bird sightings, concentrating on the prairie species, include **Western Grebe, Ferruginous Hawk, Gray Partridge, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Upland Sandpiper, Franklin's Gull, Sprague's Pipit, Baird's Sparrow, and Chestnut-collared Longspur.**

Anyone interested in attending this conference should call Lee Schuster for more information. Maximum cost of lodging is \$45/night.

1994 International Migratory Bird Day

Saturday, May 14 is International Migratory Bird Day, a celebration of the spring arrival of thousands of migratory birds. While migratory birds are a subject of wonder for many of us, some are also cause for concern. Many birders and scientists worry that the numbers of some woodland species are decreasing. Shrinking habitat is a primary concern, and everyone can help. Plant native shrubs to provide food, leave dead trees standing so insects can live in them and cavities can be built for nests, and put up a birdbath as a fresh water source. These simple things, plus getting involved in land use planning, can all help make our springs happier by providing more of an opportunity for songbirds to survive.

Bird of the Month

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*

The participants on our March field trip to Jolly Pond got a nice surprise. At the other end of the pond, amongst a group of **American Wigeons**, was an **Eurasian Wigeon**. What a wonderful sighting, and it remained at Jolly's Pond for most of the following week.

The Eurasian Wigeon, formerly called the European Wigeon, is not known to breed in North America, but visits along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. As our group saw it, the Eurasian Wigeon is usually observed as a lone bird in a flock of American Wigeons.

The gray back and sides, and the russet-red head with a cream-colored crown stripe distinguish Eurasian drakes (males) from the American Wigeon in breeding plumage. Adult female Eurasian Wigeons have two color phases: red-phase with russet-red head, neck, chest, backs, sides and flanks; and gray-phase, which strongly resembles a female American Wigeon. In flight, the large, white upper wing patches are like American Wigeons, but the auxiliaries (armpit feathers) are grayish on the Eurasian species. The bill is pale blue with a dark tip.

The Eurasian Wigeon nests in Iceland, northern Europe, northern Russia, and across Siberia. It winters in southern Scandinavia, and in the southern regions of its nesting territory. It is a regular visitor along both coasts, but more common in the West.

A dabbling duck, the Eurasian Wigeon works its bill into the mud, and tips up in shallow water reaching for grasses along the bottom. It is fond of pond weeds, eelgrass and other aquatic plants.

The nests are grass and down-lined, and built in a depression on the ground, usually hidden in tall grasses or other plants.

The winter of 1994 has turned out to be a banner year for rare bird sightings. It continues to be so with the Eurasian Wigeon. The first record we have for our area is 1959 on Lake Powell. In 1988, the club spotted one at Hog Island. That was the last spotting until this year's. I hope many people had the opportunity to see the Eurasian Wigeon as it visited our area again.