



THE FLYER

Volume 18, Number 11

December, 1994

Williamsburg Bird Club

Happy Holidays

Your Newsletter Editors hope everyone has a special Holiday Season, and a safe and healthy New Year.

Dave & Lee

Next Meeting

We don't have a December meeting, so our next meeting will be on **Wednesday, January 18, 1995** at 7:30 PM in Room 117, Millington Hall at William and Mary. Complete details of the meeting speaker will be published in the January newsletter.

December Field Trip

As is tradition, the December field trip will consist of our annual Christmas Bird Count to be held on Sunday December 18. **IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN THE COUNT, THERE IS STILL TIME TO MAKE LAST MINUTE ARRANGEMENTS.** Each area can always use someone to help count or tally during the day. If you can't come out and participate in the birding, we urge you to come by room 108, Millington Hall at 5:00 p.m. for the final tabulation of the birds seen by the Williamsburg Bird Club Team. We typically enjoy light refreshments provided by those who come to the final tabulation, and discuss the sightings of the day. There is almost always something interesting to discuss, be it unusual or rare species spotted, large numbers of a specific species, or the lack of a particular species showing up for the count. The Christmas Count is often a harbinger of what to expect for the winter bird feeding season. For instance, last

year, for the first time in several years, an Evening Grosbeak was identified on the Christmas Count. Later in the winter, several club members saw, and sometimes were overrun with Evening Grosbeaks at their feeders. The Christmas Count is a fun and interesting activity that everyone can enjoy, and we hope to see many of you at the final tabulation Sunday afternoon.

Special February Field Trip

In February, the club will have another trip in addition to the regular trip on the third Saturday. This trip will be February 25 to Fisherman Island National Wildlife Refuge. We will be the only group on the island exploring the bay side and marshes, as well as the ocean side and hopefully the ponds found on the island. There will be lots of walking on this trip, and some in soft sand. The group will have the opportunity to see waterfowl that has been around all winter, as well as possible early arrivals for the spring. Temperatures this time of year can be very cold or a very pleasant day with mild temperatures. In order for us to go we must have a minimum of 10 people. There will be a guide from the refuge with us. Our time on the island will be 9:00 - 12:30. Check your schedules, and try to plan for this special trip. Look for more details and sign-up information in the January newsletter.

President's Corner

I wish everyone the happiest of holidays, and a prosperous New Year. Hopefully the coming year will bring many happy moments, and of course, birding opportunities. Don't forget the club's big event May 4 - 7, The Wilson



Ornithological Society/VSO meeting. Mark your calendars and plan on participating.

Happy Birding,

Ruth Beck

November Field Trip Summary

Seventeen people decided to venture out on a beautiful November morning to discover the birds of Kingsmill and to celebrate Cynthia Long's birthday. We were not disappointed as Emily Sharrett and Tom Armour lead us to discover 37 species. Then the morning was highlighted by the generosity of Tom and Jeanne Armour as they opened their home to us. We drank coffee and cider, and ate cookies as we socialized and watched for birds in their beautiful backyard.

The avian highlights of the day included 4 Red-tailed Hawks soaring behind the marina. Joe Doyle called in some Ring-necked Ducks for us to view at close range, and Ruddy Ducks made a long-distance appearance on the James.

Those that participated on this trip were Joy Archer, Cynthia Long, Hilda Law, Bill Davies, Marilyn Zeigler, Dorothy Whitfield, Charles Rend, Ron and Bobbie Geiss, Pat and Mike Healey, Lee and Dave Schuster, Tom and Jeanne Armour, Emily Sharrett, and Joe and Grace Doyle.

New Members

A big Williamsburg Bird Club welcome to its newest members:

David R. Harvey
104 McPherson Ct.
Seaford, VA 23696

Anne and Phillip Young
26 The Palisades
Williamsburg, VA 23185

Andrew and Margaret Conklin
513 Main St.
West Point, VA 23181

Field Notes for November, 1994

By the looks of what Joe and Grace Doyle have seen a Camp Peary, it appears that our wintering ducks have arrived (**Tundra Swan, Wood Duck, Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal, American Black Duck, Mallard, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, and Ruddy Duck**). Reports from other areas however, seem to still be a little spotty. **Evening Grosbeaks** have been seen in Skipwith Farms by Mrs. T. B. Jones. Might we be seeing more of these beauties this winter?

I took a quick trip down to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel islands with my folks on 12/6 and saw a lot of the sea ducks normally there during the winter. My one-hour tally included **Common Loon, Oldsquaw, Black Scoter, Surf Scoter, White-winged Scoter, Red-breasted Merganser, Ruddy Turnstone and Purple Sandpiper.**

Thanks to everyone who provided sightings: Joy Archer(JA), Tom Armour(TA), Martha Armstrong(MA), Joe and Grace Doyle(J&GD), Mrs. T. B. Jones(TBJ), Lee Schuster(LS), Bill Sheehan(BS).

Jamestown Island, Colonial Parkway, and Kingsmill

Common Loon - 11/9-19(TA), **Pied-billed Grebe** - 11/18(JA); **Great Egret** - 11/7(JA), 1/18(TA); **Tundra Swan** - 11/12(JA/BS); **American Black Duck** - 11/14-30(BS/JA); **Mallard** - 11/21-30(BS/JA); **Oldsquaw** - 11/11(TA); **Bufflehead** -



11/11(TA); Hooded Merganser - 11/12-30(JA/BS); Red-Breasted Merganser - 11/18(TA); Ruddy Duck - 11/18(JA/BS); Osprey - 11/12-14(JA/BS); Bald Eagle - 11/12-12/5(JA/BS/TA); Northern Harrier - 11/23(BS); Sharp-shinned Hawk - 11/12-22(JA/BS/TA), Cooper's Hawk - 11/7(JA); Red-tailed Hawk - 11/16(JA), 11/21(BS); Rough-legged Hawk - (J&GD); Clapper Rail - 11/7-12/5(JA/TA/BS); Virginia Rail - 12/5(TA/BS); Sora - 11/7(JA), 11/22(BS); American Coot - 11/19-30(TA/BS); Greater Yellowlegs - 11/18(JA/BS); Lesser Yellowlegs - 11/25(BS); Bonaparte's Gull - 11/11(TA); Royal Tern - 11/11(TA); Forster's Tern - 1/11, 300+ on 11/19(TA); Great Horned Owl - 11/7(JA); 11/14(BS); Red-headed Woodpecker - 11/12-16(JA/BS); Hairy Woodpecker - 11/30(JA/BS); Eastern Phoebe - 11/22(LS); Brown-headed Nuthatch - 11/21(BS/LS); Marsh Wren - 11/14(BS); Golden-crowned Kinglet - 11/21(BS), Ruby-crowned Kinglet - 11/21(BS); Hermit Thrush - 11/21(LS), 12/5(TA/BS), Cedar Waxwing - 11/12-18(JA/BS); Swamp Sparrow - 11/16(JA); Purple Finch - 11/16-17(TA).

Hog Island

Great Egret - 11/7(TA/BS); Canada Goose - 1000+ on 11/30(JA/TA/BS); Ruddy Duck - 11/25(TA); Bald Eagle - 11/7-30(TA/BS/JA); Northern Harrier - 11/7-30(TA/BS/JA); Cooper's Hawk - 11/7(TA/BS); Red-tailed Hawk - 11/30(JA/TA/BS); Laughing Gull, Bonaparte's Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, and Greater Black-backed Gull - 11/7 all from ferry(TA/BS); Forster's Tern - 11/7(TA/BS)

Camp Peary (J&GD)

Pied-billed Grebe, Tundra Swan - 60 on 11/27, Mute Swan, Wood Duck, Green-winged Teal, American Black Duck, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Canvasback -

11/20, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Wild Turkey, Northern Bobwhite, American Coot, Killdeer, Laughing Gull, Belted Kingfisher, Red-headed Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker - 11/13, Pileated Woodpecker, Eastern Phoebe, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow-rumped Warbler, White-throated Sparrow.

Feeder's Yards and Miscellaneous

Horned Grebe - 12/5 York River(TA/BS); Bufflehead - 12/5 York River(TA/BS); Bald Eagle - 11/8(MA); Northern Harrier - 11/27(JA); Sharp-shinned Hawk - 11/9(BS); Cooper's Hawk - 11/26(BS); Red-tailed Hawk - 11/27(JA); American Kestrel - 11/5-27(JA); Ruby-crowned Kinglet - 11/9(BS); Hermit Thrush - 11/4-30(BS); Brown Thrasher - 11/13-30(BS); Brown Creeper - 11/30(BS); Evening Grosbeak - 12/3(TBJ).

Another WBC Author in Print

The club is pleased to have another of its members articles published. The Autumn, 1994 issue of *Colonial Williamsburg* contains an article written by WBC member Keith Kennedy. The article, entitled "Quaker John Bartram Journeys to Williamsburg," describes the botanist's visit to Colonial Williamsburg in the early 1700's, before he had an opportunity to make many of his contributions to the field. If you are interested in botany, especially some of its more historical aspects, you should find this article both interesting and informative. Congratulations Keith!



Bird of the Month

Winter Wren

(Troglodytes troglodytes)

I tried to think of a bird that went with the season. Several came to mind - cardinal, chickadee, wrens, etc. I decided on the Winter Wren because its call is so cheerful, melodious and bright. For me, it depicts the joys of the season.

One rarely sees the Winter Wren, but its song will always catch your attention. My best memories of the Winter Wren are in the Smoky Mountains on a cloudy, foggy day. As I walk and listen for birds, the Winter Wren often speaks up to brighten an otherwise dreary day.

This small North American songbird is a dark reddish-brown above and pale, brownish underneath. Its belly, flanks and undertail coverts have dusky barring. Over the eye is a narrow, buffy colored line. It has a very short, cocked tail, and it has a habit of always bobbing its head.

The Winter Wren nests from southern Alaska to Newfoundland, and south to central California, central Idaho, the Great Lakes region and to northern Georgia. They nest in cavities from upturned roots of fallen trees, under rotted stumps, and stream banks. They will also find unoccupied buildings in which to build nests. The nest is composed of twigs, mosses, grasses, and lined with deer hair and bird's feathers.

This mouse-like bird is very deceptive. It creeps along from bush to bush and woodpile to woodpile. During the summer, it is found close to the floor of a coniferous forest hidden among the fallen trees covered with thick moss.

Their voice is so distinctive. Because it is so loud, one can only imagine a much larger bird.

Locating the singing bird is another difficult task. The song, which seems to go on forever, contain 108-113 separate notes. It is a combination of high-pitched warbles and trills.

The Winter Wren winters in the southern part of its breeding range. In the mountains, they move to the lower elevations.

This fascinating little bird is often found on our Christmas Count. I always look forward to the opportunity to meet up with the Winter Wren on any birding adventure.
