



# THE FLYER

Volume 19, Number 5

June, 1995

Williamsburg Bird Club

## Summer Schedule

As most of you know, due to vacations, and the generally busy time of year, we don't formally meet during the summer months. Our next meeting will be in September, but we will continue to have field trips and other activities throughout the summer. The June field trip will be our 2nd annual summer picnic to be held at Ruth and Sherwin Beck's home. Please see below for this much-awaited and popular event. There is no field trip in July, but on August 17, Ruth Beck will lead us to Craney Island for the shorebird migration back south. Last year, this trip was poorly attended, but the birding was very good, so if you'd like to see shorebirds, and you can stand the heat, be sure to check this one out. We'll keep you up-to-date with the newsletter through July, then we take a one month break in August. September finally sees everything get synchronized again, as we get back to newsletters, meetings and field trips. We hope you enjoy your summer.

## Spring Picnic

Our annual Spring Picnic will be held Saturday, June 3 at Sherwin and Ruth Beck's house. It all begins at 4:30 p.m. with bird walks around the Beck's beautiful property followed by a dinner that will knock your socks off. Not only do we have excellent birders in our club, but they can also cook.

Here is how it works: Ham and turkey will be provided as well as burgers. We ask that you please bring a vegetable, salad or dessert to contribute to our meal.

If you did not sign up for the picnic at the May meeting, please call Jeanne Armour (229-2363)

or Emily Sharrett (229-6199) to indicate what type of food item you will bring.

A good time is sure to be had by all - we will exercise before we indulge. Don't forget your binoculars and walking shoes. For directions, call Ruth at 566-8234. We look forward to seeing you there.

## New Members

Lots of new members this month. Welcome one and all:

Bland Freeman  
106 Governor's Dr.  
Williamsburg, VA 23185

Barbara R. Luck  
P.O. Box 129  
Williamsburg, VA 23187

Phillip Fleming  
418-7 Merrimac Tr.  
Williamsburg, VA 23185

Richard H. Marshall  
P.O. Box 458  
Williamsburg, VA 23187

Bill & Beth York  
7758 Yarmouth Dr.  
Richmond, VA 23225

## We Did It!!

The joint meeting of the Wilson's Ornithological Society, and the Virginia Society of Ornithology is adjourned! Thanks to the help of many individuals, the conference has been declared an overwhelming success. If it hadn't been for those that assisted in transportation arrangements, cookie baking, program planning, registration monitors, field trips, banquet decorations - the



list goes on - the conference wouldn't have been the fun, educational weekend that occurred.

As I watched the conference unfold, I began to see the amount of work that goes into making a conference successful. Whereas many people helped with many tasks, it was not until the conference was actually under way that I truly realized the tremendous effort Ruth Beck put into the meeting. No wonder she kept saying "it's almost over." Her hard work and devotion to the VSO, WOS, WBC, and ornithology in general, was the driving force behind the conference. I'm not sure where she finds the hours in a day to get everything done, but she was able to pull off a conference one weekend and exams and graduation the next. Everyone helped to make this meeting memorable, but Ruth accomplished the overall organization, set-up, and recruiting. Through her guidance, we were all able to show the people who "know birds" how the Williamsburg Bird Club can work together and share with them the birds of our area.

As a side note, another special part of this conference was working with our members and getting to know them through other ways besides just birding. Thank you everyone for all your help and thank you Ruth for your hard work and dedication which helped to put Williamsburg on the birding map for all of those Wilson's members

**Lee Schuster**

### **The Birds and Bees**

Spring officially arrived in March, but the real sign is the appearance of young birds and mammals in our yards. This is where they propagated their species. (If only Cowbirds didn't do it so well.) It is often hard to resist the little ones as they learn to survive on their own. But

we must resist the temptation to pick them up and "help" them.

For many, we would actually be doing more harm than good. Usually wild animals don't really need our assistance. It is hard to turn away from what seem to be helpless animals, when, in most instances, they are not. For example, rabbits are ready to leave the nest when they are still quite small. Many people find young rabbits while working in their yards, and assume their mothers have abandoned them. Mom rabbits don't stay at the nest all day, and generally only return twice a day. The mother stays away to protect the young, and not attract attention to the nest.

As far as birds are concerned, the same applies. Many times people see fledglings hopping around and think they need help. Mom is usually close by providing what the little ones need. If it isn't a fledgling, but a nestling that has fallen from the nest, you can put it back, if reachable, or make a little nest below the original, and the mother might come down and take care of her young. Sometimes though, moms kick their young out of the nest for one reason or another. If you were to try to raise the baby, the chances of human imprinting are very high, and the bird's chances of survival are not good, because it really doesn't know it is a bird.

If you find a young animal, try to leave it alone. Watch for mom and try to keep the dogs and cats away. You are really doing more good this way than interfering with nature. Feel fortunate that you have seen the young ones, and learn from your observations.

### **April Field Trip**

On April 22 (Earth Day) our field trip took us to Governor's Land and Jamestown Island. Fifteen



people took advantage of the lovely day to explore one of the islands at Governor's Land.

Some of the highlights of the trip were Orchard Oriole, White-eyed Vireo, Prothonotary Warbler, Northern Parula, Hairy Woodpecker, Blue Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting and Marsh Wren.

Participants included Brian Taber, our leader, Cynthia Long, Joy Archer, Bill Williams, Marilyn Zeigler, Pat & Mike Healy, Bettye Fields, Dorothy Whitfield, Louise Schinfler, Teresa Dunn, Debbie Hammond, Shirley Devan, and Dave & Lee Schuster. Thanks Brian for your leadership.

## May Field Trip

Tom Armour took a small group to Hog Island on May 20. It was one of the best trips I have had to Hog Island. We stopped at the swamp just past Chippokes State Park and picked up lots of "goodies." Louisiana Waterthrush, Northern Parula, Yellow-throated Warbler, Eastern Phoebe, Prothonotary Warbler, Orchard Oriole, and Yellow-throated Vireo.

On to Hog Island, and our luck continued. Prairie Warbler, Indigo Buntings Blue Grosbeak, Osprey, eight Bald Eagles, Least Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper and Plover, Yellow Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, and Bobolinks. All in all we saw some 80 species; a productive morning in anyone's book.

Our group included Barney Barnes, Dale Davis, Ruth Ologge, Ron and Bobbie Giese, Dave and Lee Schuster. Thanks Tom for your guidance!

## Field Notes for April/May, 1995

Since we presented the field notes for March, the spring migration has reached its peak, and is starting to drop back off. It's been a fantastic

spring, and there are still a lot of great birds moving through the area, so if you can get out, do it soon; you never know what you might see. The warblers, vireos, tanagers, orioles, thrushes and cuckoos seem to have made themselves especially accessible this season. Just look at some of the birds for the May Hog Island trip, and you'll see what I mean.

Starting with some of the rarities and generally lesser observed species, we had **Philadelphia Vireos** on this years Spring Count, and several others have seen them this Spring. Add that to the **Warbling Vireo** seen by Bill Williams and Brian Taber at the James City County offices near Kingsmill, and you have two species not often seen in these parts. There have been a few reports of **Solitary Vireos** throughout Williamsburg, and of course, the **Red-eyed, White-eyed** and **Yellow-throated Vireos** are showing up the most often of this group.

Hot warblers include a **Brewster's** hybrid in the Quarterpath Park area during the WOS/VSO Conference, and a **Canada Warbler** in the Kingswood area. **Black-throated Green Warblers** have been spotted sporadically throughout the area as have been **Black-throated Blue Warblers** and **American Redstarts**. Mid-May saw a real surge of **Blackpoll Warblers** through the area; I got up one Monday morning after stormy weather (the 8th?) and all of a sudden I seemed to hear Blackpolls singing everywhere I went. Go to York River State Park and/or Jamestown Island for **Yellow-throated Warblers, Black & White Warblers, Common Yellowthroats, Ovenbirds, Northern Parulas**, and who knows what else. Try Hog Island for **Prairie Warblers** and **Yellow Warblers**. Jolly Pond is usually good for **Prothonotary Warblers** and other migrants.

Orioles and grosbeaks also seem to be popular this year. We've had **Northern Orioles** and



**Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** at our house in Banbury Cross several times already this spring. Hog Island is teeming with **Orchard Orioles** and **Indigo Buntings**. We also had a **Blue Grosbeak** there; sitting on a wire, right next to a bunting for a great comparison.

Lately, thrushes have been moving through. In addition to the **Wood Thrushes** heard all over our wooded areas, there have been reports of **Veerys**, **Gray-cheeked** and **Swainson's Thrushes** too. Most of these reports come from homes and yards throughout Williamsburg so keep your eyes and ears open!

The elusive **Black-billed Cuckoo** has made a few appearances this spring, the most notable being the parking lot of the Fort Magruder Inn right before the WOS/VSO Conference Sunday field trips. One of these days I'm going to figure out how Bill Williams pays these birds off to show up on cue like that. I've heard quite a few **Yellow-billed Cuckoos**, but have yet to be lucky or persistent enough to see one; I know others have been more fortunate.

Other rare sightings include a **White-crowned Sparrow** by Bill Sheehan and Tom Armour, a **Merlin** by Bill Williams at Hog Island, a **Glossy Ibis** on the Colonial Parkway and at Hog Island, and late **Common Loons**, **Red-breasted Mergansers**, and **Ruddy Ducks** at various sites in the area. This is by no means an exhaustive listing, but gives everyone a flavor of what kind of Spring it has been.

In the area of nesting oddities, rarities and general anecdotes, there are families of **Red-headed** and **Pileated Woodpeckers** nesting in the same tree just before the Pitch and Tar Swamp at Jamestown Island. A family of **Great-horned Owls** was also spotted at Jamestown. There is a report that one of the Bluebird boxes along the entrance to York River

State park was stuffed to overflowing with baby **Chickadees** earlier this month. At our house, we have had successful broods of **White-breasted Nuthatches**, and **Bluebirds**. **Carolina Wrens** have now nested in both ends of our overturned canoe hanging under our deck. It's the most expensive nest box I've ever purchased, but boy does it work!

I know Lee and I have enjoyed this spring, and have learned and seen a lot; three personal lifers that I can think of right now. Here's a list of others who have enjoyed the spring and shared their experiences with us: Joy Archer, Tom Armour, Ruth Beck, Joe and Grace Doyle, Lynn Miles, Bill Sheehan, Brian Taber, and Bill Williams.

## Spring Listing Contest Reminder

If you have been keeping a tally for our Spring Listing Contest, this is a reminder that your time is nearly up! Get out there and find those last few birds, mark them down and get your completed tally for March, April, and May to Bill Holcombe or Ruth Beck. The spring picnic is a good time to turn them in. Hopefully everyone saw lots-o'- birds this spring. Its always fun to find out what new and interesting species have been around ..... even if I didn't get a chance to see them.

## Spring Bird Count

This years annual Spring Count was held on April 30, 1995. Even though it was held a week earlier than normal, the species count was exactly the same as last year. There were a few newcomers to the list and a few no-shows as well, but in all, the count was very much typical of a Williamsburg Spring Count. A complete listing of species and numbers is included at the end of this newsletter.

---



A special thanks goes out to Brian Taber for organizing this even in the face of the upcoming conference. Thanks to all that participated: Marilyn Zeigler, Mary Pulley, Christine Burr, Dot Silsby, Ada Van Ness, Carolyn Lowe, Bill Williams, Bettye Fields, Elaine & Paul Mertus, Ruth Beck, Adrienne Frank, Gary Driscoll, Mary Smith, Joe & Grace Doyle, Joy Archer, Amanda Allen, Tom & Jeanne Armour, Bob Morris, Ron & Bobbie Giese, Teta Kain, Mary Watters, and Gary Friedhaber. What a magnificent turnout for this great event!

### **Birding Opportunities**

If anyone is interested in birding with Ruth Beck and assisting her in her nest surveys during the month of June, please call her at 566-8234. She visits three places during the week - Grandview Beach, Craney Island, and the Hampton Roads Tunnel Islands. She goes out several times a week and is always happy to have the company and assistance. If you're interested, give her a call. Happy Birding!!

### **Adopt-A-Highway**

Bill Davies and crew were at it again April 29 cleaning up the WBC's stretch of road on John Tyler Highway. Fifteen people collected 12 plus bags which took 22 1/2 person hours to accomplish.

Besides the trash, 13 1/2 lb. of Aluminum cans (327 count) and 74 1/2 lb. of glass were picked up and recycled.

Thank you Bill for organizing this club project and thank you to those who helped: Tom Armour, Joy Archer, Bobb Fritts, Carolyn Williams, Charles Rend, Marilyn Lewis, Mack Lundy, Pat & Mike Healy, Martha Burgess, Don Nelson, Phyllis Johnson, Dorothy Whitfield, and Pat Bostian.

The next pickup will be towards the end of July. If interested, please contact Bill Davies.

### **Student Grant Winner**

Congratulations to Elaine Mertus. She is a graduate student at William & Mary and the recipient of the Williamsburg Bird Club \$500 grant towards research on a local bird population. Elaine is currently studying the nesting population of Red-headed Woodpeckers on Jamestown Island. Good luck with your research Elaine, and we look forward to hearing about your research at a meeting next year.

### **Best Student Paper**

During the Wilson Ornithological Society Meeting, our own Amanda Allen was given an award for her presentation as a student on "Tidepool Value as Foraging Patches for Breeding and Migratory Birds in Tidal Salt Marshes in the Lower Chesapeake Bay." Amanda, congratulations on your award, and best of luck in the future.

### **Bird of the Month**

#### **Worm-eating Warbler (*Helmitheros vermivorous*)**

As we were birding our way through the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, we heard the faint insect-like trill of a Worm-eating Warbler. We didn't anticipate getting a great look at this neatly groomed warbler, so we were pleasantly surprised by the show he provided. Then to have it within clear viewing distance twice for over 5 minutes each time made our long trip worth it. This was not a life bird for either of us, but the show he provided was very special.

I will never forget the image of the Worm-eating Warbler, with his back to me, and his head

---





pointed upward singing away as his body literally shivered. The long blackish stripes on the buff head were in line with the dull olive-brown back, wings and tail. The throat and upper breast were buff colored, becoming paler around the belly and coverts. There is an eye stripe reaching back to the nape. Not a remarkably beautiful bird, but yet secretive and distinctive in his own way.

The Worm-eating Warbler enjoys wooded ravines and hillsides with dense undergrowth, and sometimes near a stream. We have seen them on dry ridges in a mixed evergreen/deciduous forest as well as a thick underbrush of laurel.

It nests in Southeastern North America north to Northern Indiana, Pennsylvania, and New England. It is found in the piedmont and mountains of the Carolinas, and Virginia. It builds nests hidden on the ground, usually under a bush or a sapling. The nest is a cup of dead leaves, lined with hair, moss, and stems from maple seeds.

During the winter, it spends its time in Central America, from Southern Mexico to Panama, and in the West Indies.

Its diet does not necessarily relate to its name. Like most warblers, the worm-eating enjoys caterpillars, beetles, spiders, etc. Because it enjoys small moth caterpillars, it was named Worm-eating Warbler.

Not always easily seen, it is interesting to observe. This bird won me over this spring as it allowed us to observe it two times during our visit. It is an experience I hope everyone enjoys sometime during their birding days.

Sources: The Audubon Society Master Guide to Birding - Old World Warblers to Sparrows, 1988.  
Warblers of America, 1994.

---



## Summary of Local Bird Data 1995 Spring Count

Williamsburg, James City County, York County & Hog Island (Surry County)

Williamsburg (VA) Bird Club

Ruth Beck, President (566-8234)

Compiled by W. J. Sheehan (220-2122)

Species	No.	Species	No.	Species	No.
Common Loon	2	Rock Dove	47	Northern Parula	35
Pied-billed Grebe	3	Mourning Dove	161	Yellow Warbler	8
Horned Grebe	2	Eastern Screech-Owl	1	Black-thr. Blue Warbler	3
Double-crested Cormorant	98	Great Horned Owl	3	Yellow-rumped Warbler	147
Great Blue Heron	156	Barred Owl	6	Black-thr. Green Warbler	2
Great Egret	25	Chuck-will's-widow	4	Yellow-throated Warbler	33
Snowy Egret	3	Whip-poor-will	4	Pine Warbler	46
Green Heron	17	Chimney Swift	44	Prairie Warbler	34
Black-crowned Night Heron	4	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	8	Blackpoll Warbler	2
Yellow-crowned Night Heron	5	Belted Kingfisher	10	Black-and-white Warbler	19
Mute Swan	10	Red-headed Woodpecker	11	American Redstart	2
Canada Goose	220	Red-bellied Woodpecker	77	Prothonotary Warbler	10
Wood Duck	52	Downy Woodpecker	14	Worm-eating Warbler	1
Mallard	36	Hairy Woodpecker	8	Ovenbird	104
Canvasback	1	Northern Flicker	33	Louisiana Waterthrush	12
Bufflehead	1	Pileated Woodpecker	20	Yellow-breasted Chat	5
Red-breasted Merganser	1	Eastern Wood-Pewee	3	Summer Tanager	49
Black Vulture	11	Acadian Flycatcher	16	Scarlet Tanager	25
Turkey Vulture	50	Eastern Phoebe	16	Northern Cardinal	167
Osprey	96	Great Crested Flycatcher	45	Kentucky Warbler	6
Bald Eagle	6	Eastern Kingbird	45	Common Yellowthroat	36
Northern harrier	1	Purple Martin	105	Hooded Warbler	13
Cooper's Hawk	1	Tree Swallow	701	Blue Grosbeak	32
Red-shouldered Hawk	7	No. Rough-winged Swallow	23	Indigo Bunting	33
Red-tailed Hawk	9	Bank Swallow	2	Rufous-sided Towhee	100
American Kestrel	3	Barn Swallow	170	Chipping Sparrow	102
Wild Turkey	3	Blue Jay	91	Field Sparrow	24
Northern Bobwhite	25	American Crow	193	Savannah Sparrow	10
Clapper Rail	14	Fish Crow	36	Grasshopper Sparrow	1
King Rail	4	Carolina Chickadee	73	Sharp-tailed Sparrow	2
American Coot	5	Tufted Titmouse	102	Seaside Sparrow	7
Black-bellied Plover	1	White-breasted Nuthatch	11	Song Sparrow	39
Lesser Golden Plover	1	Brown-headed Nuthatch	4	Swamp Sparrow	1
Semipalmated Plover	3	Carolina Wren	80	White-throated Sparrow	40
Killdeer	37	House Wren	6	Dark-eyed Junco	2
Greater Yellowlegs	16	Marsh Wren	2	Bobolink	31
Lesser Yellowlegs	8	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	4	Red-winged Blackbird	309
Solitary Sandpiper	1	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	78	Eastern Meadowlark	59
Willet	3	Eastern Bluebird	119	Boat-tailed Grackle	6
Spotted Sandpiper	2	Veery	1	Common Grackle	352
Least Sandpiper	46	Hermit Thrush	1	Brown-headed Cowbird	94
Short-billed Dowitcher	2	Wood Thrush	97	Orchard Oriole	36
Common Snipe	1	American Robin	217	House Finch	218
American Woodcock	5	Gray Catbird	25	American Goldfinch	130
Laughing Gull	294	Northern Mockingbird	79	House Sparrow	63
Bonaparte's Gull	37	Brown Thrasher	56		
Ring-billed Gull	140	American Pipit	2	<b>Total Species: 153</b>	
Herring Gull	70	Cedar Waxwing	46	<b>Last Year: 153</b>	
Great Black-backed Gull	21	European Starling	500		
Caspian Tern	9	White-eyed Vireo	33	<b>Count Firsts:</b>	
Royal Tern	41	Yellow-throated Vireo	6	<b>Lesser Golden Plover</b>	
Common Tern	13	Philadelphia Vireo	1	<b>Philadelphia Vireo</b>	
Forster's Tern	11	Red-eyed Vireo	167		
Least Tern	2	Blue-winged Warbler	2		