



THE FLYER

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July/August, 1995

Williamsburg Bird Club

Next Meeting

Our next meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, September 20, 1995** at 7:30 PM in Room 117, Millington Hall at William and Mary. Gary Costanzo, a Waterfowl Research Biologist with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries will present the September program. He will be talking about the migrating cycle of Williamsburg area waterfowl.

August Field Trip

Well, we've taken our annual break from field trips, and its time for the shore birds to blow back into town, and for us to get out of the A/C and back into the field. On **Saturday, August 19**, Ruth Beck will lead a group down to Craney Island to investigate the progress of the fall shorebird migration. **Meet at the Colonial Williamsburg Visitor Center at 7:30 a.m.** Last year this trip was very poorly attended; I would consider only Ruth's participation as very poor attendance! Despite this, Ruth has agreed to try it again this year only because the birding was so darn good last year she'd probably go anyway, and she doesn't want to be selfish and keep all this fun to herself. There will be at least two other participants in the form of Lee and myself, so bring your sunscreen, bug spray, hat, binoculars, spotting scope, something cold to drink, and any other birding survival gear you can think of, and let's check out some shorebirds!

1995 Club Picnic

We had a good turn out of about 30 people at our June picnic, and we all enjoyed lots of food, friendship, and a few birds. Our club's gourmet

chefs had their specialty dishes out, and it couldn't have been a better evening.

Thank yous go to Sherwin and Ruth Beck for once again sharing their lovely home with us. Also to Emily Sharrett, Jeanne Armour, and Mary Smith for organizing the picnic.

Those of you who missed it should make plans to attend next year. Early June is our usual date. Plan to attend - it is always fun.

Watch Out for Our New Members

We recently received a call from Alice Lee Sargeant letting us know that friends of theirs, the Stones (see below), had joined the club awhile ago, but hadn't received a newsletter. After a little research we found the Stone's application and were able to straighten the problem out.

The moral of the story is that our system, while computerized, is not 100% infallible. It still requires humans to input the information and occasionally, new members can fall into an administrative crack. Obviously this is not good for the club, and we do our best to avoid this situation. So, if you know someone who has joined the club, but isn't receiving the newsletter please let us (Dave & Lee Schuster - 565-6148) or Charles Rend (220-9032) know as soon as possible so we can correct the situation. Thank you Alice Lee.

New Members

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

Rosemary Heth
113 Port Royal
Williamsburg, VA 23188



Marc & Pam Meiring
4744 Bristol Circle
Williamsburg, VA 23185

Nancy & Perry Stone
1937 Miln House Rd.
Williamsburg, VA 23185

Diane Greger & Taylor Pharo
3305 Oxmoor Ct.
Williamsburg, VA 23188

James M. Corliss
136 Wellington Cir.
Williamsburg, VA 23185

Reviewing the Delights of March, April and May

by Bill Holcombe

A lot of grand and glorious things were spotted during the wonderful months of March, April and May, but nothing was quite so grand and glorious as the contribution by Martha Briggs. She found an Ogden Nash poem that was obviously written just for us. At the risk of getting our hands slapped for copyright infringement, here it is:

Bird watchers top my honors list,
I aim to be one, but I missed.
My aim turned out to be erratic
And I bespectacled and Binocular,
Exposed myself to comment jocular.

We don't need too much bird lore, do we,
To tell a Flamingo from a Towhee:
Yet I cannot and never will,
Unless the silly bird stands still.

And there's no enlightenment in a tour
Of ornithological literature.
Is yon strange creature a common chickadee
or a migrant alouette from Picardy?

You rush to consult your nature guide
And inspect the gallery inside,
But a bird in the open never looks
Like the pictures in the birdie books -
Or if it once did, has changed its plumage,
And plunged you back into ignorant gloomage.

That is why I sit here growing older by inches
Watching the clock instead of the finches,
But I sometime visualize in my gin
the audubon that I audubin.

I don't think that Bill Sheehan's Water Pipit, nor Lee Schuster's Wilson Phalarope, nor Bill William's Horned Lark, nor Tom Armour's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, nor Joy Archer's American Coot, nor any of the other wonderful things spotted can top that! We thank you Martha for your quick eye, wonderful judgement, and your generosity in sharing it with us.

Reports received include:

Joy Archer had 145 "finds" and found Hog Island, Jamestown Island, and Hickory Signpost Road her most productive areas. She also got off to a quick start March 1 on the York River and March 3 on Hog Island. Many of Joy's birds were dated and located, and if everyone would do that, Ruth Beck might one day find the information useful in a species/location mapping.

Tom Armour posted 178 species on his list which included all of the ducks but four, four of the six vireos, sixteen warblers, and nine sparrows. And remember he did all of that in Virginia after spending a lot of this spring "everywhere but."

Martha Briggs, along with the Warbling Ogden, listed 47 other birds including both a Whip-poor-will and a Chuck-Will's-Widow at Dory in Southampton County.



Bill Holcombe's 74 birds was a drop off from last year proving that he didn't get out enough. However, he did have one very good day with 41 non-qualifying, out-of-state birds at the Pea Island bird trail, including four all-time first, i.e. Black-crowned Night Heron, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Seaside Sparrow, and a Great White Heron that had wandered up from Florida (confirmed by local "experts").

Alice Lee and Leonard Sargeant's partnership saw 82 birds, just about doubling last year's count and clearly taking the honors for the Group One watchers. All of their sightings were dated, and they obviously did a lot of work in March to get a good start. They credit a visiting birdwatching niece with giving them a nice May boost. She was visiting the WOS/VSO conference.

The Schusters kept individual records, so we'll start with Dave who recorded 143 birds, including 20 vireos/warbblers. Dave also did very well with the shore birds and flycatchers, and amazingly, got another Eurasian Wigeon this year.

Lee Schuster's 155 birds were nosed out by Bill Sheehan's 162 for highest count in Group Two listings. Lee had all of the heron/egrets except for the Black-crowned Night Heron, and it was with the beach birds that her count edged ahead of Dave's. These included a Wilson's Phalarope which was the only report of this bird or any other phalarope.

Bill Williams, as usual, wins the whole enchilada in what he calls "the birding sweepstakes," with 225 birds, and if I could do it, I'd spend next spring bird dogging him all over the peninsula. Obviously, Bill checked off almost everything on the VSO checklist, then added a Black-tailed Gull and a Parasitic Jaeger that are not included on the card.... And, in

keeping with his license plate, his Whimbrel was the only curlew reported.

I know that there were several other members active on this spring listing, but I have not yet received their cards, and I'm running out of time to get this report to the editors of the Flyer ... Sorry about that Ruth (Beck) ... especially after I lost your card in '94!

Field Notes for June/July, 1995

It's been hot, very hot, and I'm surprised anyone has gotten out and looked at birds lately. But lo and behold, there have been a few of us out there looking and a few interesting sightings have been reported. On June 23, Ruth Beck, Bill Akers, and Bill Williams spotted a **Snowy Plover** during the Eastern Shore Breeding Bird Survey along with a nesting **White Pelican**. The plover was the first recorded in Virginia. Tom Armour had a Yellow-crowned Night Heron at Kingsmill on June 11, and **Cliff Swallows** have been sighted and are believed to have been breeding in the Little Creek area. A pair of **Cedar Waxwings** were reported in the Toano area on June 20, and Brian Taber and Bill Sheehan heard a singing **Yellow-throated Vireo** on July 3. A **Barred Owl** also took a bunny in Bill's yard on the 3rd. Joy Archer and Marilyn Zeigler heard singing **Long-billed Marsh Wrens** at Jamestown on the 4th.

Joe and Grace Doyle have been faithfully scouring Camp Peary for summer residents. They have consistently seen 60+ species during the summer and have reported good numbers of **Red-headed Woodpeckers**, and a bumper crop of **Killdeer**. They've also consistently seen **Kestrels**, which are always a good summer find. They have a few question marks on their checklist which, obviously, they aren't sure about, but you might want to keep your eyes peeled just in case. How about a **Forster's**



Tern, Kentucky Warbler, Bobolink and a Painted Bunting?

There have been a lot of young birds around the yards in Williamsburg. We personally brought two families each of **Carolina Wrens** and **Bluebirds** into our area thanks to our bluebird box and canoe. Bill Sheehan reports a **Towhee** feeding a **Cowbird** in his yard, and we're pretty sure we had the same being fed by a **Summer Tanager** in ours. Sometimes nature can be pretty cruel.

Thanks everyone for the input. Hopefully next month we'll have a few more interesting species as we break out of the summer doldrums.

New Officers Needed

The nomination of new officers will be coming up this fall. If you are interested, or know of anyone interested in holding an office in the club, please notify a current officer. A nominating committee will be appointed, and any possible lead is helpful. If you are asked to become an officer, please consider the offer carefully. It is a terrific learning opportunity, and really opens your eyes to birds. Please be an active part of the club and help out.

Wild Birds Unlimited Donation Update

We are very pleased to announce that Wild Birds Unlimited donated \$102 to our Graduate Student Research Grant Fund covering the period between February and June, 1995. Remember that 5% of all Williamsburg Bird Club member's purchases at the Richmond Road Wild Birds Unlimited store go into our grant fund. With the fall and winter bird feeding season rapidly approaching please remember to let the cashier know that you are a bird club member so that the club can receive credit for your purchases.

Williamsburg Bird Club Adopt-A-Highway - 5 Year Report

From September, 1990 to April, 1995, the Williamsburg Bird Club has made a total of 17 visits to their area of pick-up on Route 5 from Five Forks Corner 2 miles west to Route 614.

The club's work force has grown from the first 2-man visit to a cadre of over 30 men and women who are now available for the pick-up 4 times a year. On average, the team comprises workers ranging in age from William & Mary students to (many) older and retired individuals! With pride, we include retired military personnel, college faculty members, and even a former diplomat, a missionary, pastor, and college administrator, just to name a few!

More than 340 person hours have been logged during the (approximate) 5-year span resulting in the following trash picked up:

2,545 lb. (1 1/4 tons)	Glass Bottles
331 lb.	Aluminum Cans
284 bags	Miscellaneous Trash

16-18 club members now respond for each trip to the highway.

A unique feature of the club's effort is the separation of glass and plastic bottles which are recycled through the James City County pick-up program, and aluminum cans which are transported to St. Martin's Church recycling bins to aid in their Food Pantry Program.

The Williamsburg Bird Club is committed to continuing this worthwhile work in Virginia's Adopt-A-Highway Program.



What We Did on Our Summer Vacation!!

In mid-June, Dave and I thought we were escaping Virginia's heat to meet our birding friend from Georgia in Maine. She was taking a group of teachers on a trip to bird coastal Maine, and we tagged along. The teachers were actually getting credit for the "difficult" class!

So off we flew to rendezvous with our group in Portland. We went a day early to relax and explore, but the 100⁰ days slowed us down a little. We were asking if we were really in Maine.

Once together with our companions for the next two weeks, we immediately took care of the top priority heading for Freeport and L. L. Bean. Two hours later we were all poor, and finally ready to get down to some serious birding. That first lobster dinner helped a lot too.

As we headed toward Bar Harbor, we birded along the way and during traffic jams. Our first afternoon in Bar Harbor took us into Acadia National Park and down to Jordan Pond and Indian Point in search of Loons. Our Loon search was faltering, but we quickly picked up Magnolia, Black-throated Blue, and Black-throated Green Warblers, Common Mergansers with chicks riding on its back, and others.

The water was calling us the next day as we set out on a whale watching trip. The whales weren't around, but the birds were. We had a naturalist on board that was very bird oriented, so we got to see a lot. Dave got about 8 lifers that day. Sooty, Greater and Manx Shearwaters, Atlantic Puffins (the most important bird on the trip), Wilson's and Leach's Storm Petrels, Arctic and Common Terns, Northern Gannets, and more.

The afternoon brought us a Nashville Warbler - ho hum, another life bird. The mosquitoes wanted to carry us off, but we managed, and kept looking for birds. We did have a shopping list of birds - some cooperated.

From Bar Harbor, we headed up the coast to Machias, Calais, and eventually Grand Manan Island, New Brunswick. On the way we saw Blackburnian Warblers, Redstarts, both Kinglets, Black-capped Chickadees, Tennessee Warbler, more Nashville Warblers, Purple Finches, and Pine Siskins. No crossbills or Black-backed Woodpeckers made an appearance.

Dave and I had to leave our group for 1 1/2 days, but we met up with them again on Grand Manan Island. While we were gone, the group headed to Jonesport to catch a boat ride with Barna Norton over to Machias Seal Island. There they got to go onto the island, and spent several hours in the blinds watching and photographing nesting Atlantic Puffins, Razorbills, Common Terns and Arctic Terns. It is a very special place where these birds come to nest. Only 13 people are allowed on the island at one time. Dave and I were supposed to get on the island from Grand Manan, but the seas didn't cooperate. The seas were too rough to land on the rocky shore, so our captain canceled. Needless to say, we were very disappointed since that was the main focus of our trip. That just means we'll have to go back. Later we did leave our group again to go with Barna on his boat, but we couldn't go on the island because he already had a full trip. His son took us around the island in a small boat, and we had fairly good views of the birds, although the Puffins were a little skittish on the water. We got excellent views of Razorbills and Common Murres, as well as Harbor Seals.

Grand Manan Island (a 1 1/2 hour ferry ride from Black's Harbor N.B.) is a fabulous place. The scenery, topography, lighthouses and birds were



all outstanding. For me, the highlight was the sighting of White-winged Crossbills. We had been looking for them or their red counterparts since the beginning of the trip. We were driving down a dirt road when we began to see a lot of activity in the tops of the trees, and then a bird suddenly flew across the road. We stopped dead in our tracks, parked the vans (right in the middle of the road no less), got out the scopes, and watched. Everyone got good views even though the sun was on the wrong side for optimal lighting. We also picked up Red-breasted Nuthatches, Alder Flycatchers, several ducks, and Yellow, Blackpoll, Chestnut-sided, and Magnolia Warblers, Redstarts, and Common Yellowthroats. It should be noted that there is no shortage of Common Yellowthroats in Maine and New Brunswick. Everywhere we went, we found them in large numbers, and we also found their song to vary widely from place to place. Once again we missed the Black-backed Woodpeckers.

Back in Maine, we visited Moosehorn National Wildlife refuge in Calais. There, Evening Grosbeaks, Bay-breasted Warblers, and Ruffed Grouse made an appearance. The grouse was a female with young that scared us to death with lots of yelling and a surprise appearance. Later that day we saw a Spruce Grouse with young, and Dave spotted the only Boreal Chickadees seen by anyone in the group.

It was finally back to Bar Harbor, and what seemed like civilization. More exploration in Acadia produced Winter Wrens, Kinglets, Common Loons, Veerys, Solitary Vireos, Palm Warblers, and a Canada Warbler. We got word of a Black-backed Woodpecker nest outside of Bar Harbor, but once again, no birds. The nest was there, but the birds had obviously recently fledged.

We did another whale watching trip - this time the whales were moving, but not the birds. We got to see Harbor Porpoise, Minke Whales and Finback Whales. We got to review some of our pelagic birds and generally had fun.

Heading back to Portland, we stopped and watched Sharp-tailed Sparrows. They have the most bizarre song I've ever heard.

Our group left us with one extra day to play. We visited the Maine Audubon Sanctuary and Greenwood Cemetery. The cemetery was a very interesting place. The books say that in spring and fall, any warbler that comes through Maine will be at the cemetery. That's believable because we picked up a wide variety of birds.

Sadly our trip ended, but it was time to get back to reality. After 14 days of solid birding, we tallied about 130 species and 15 life birds. Many of the birds we saw pass through our area in spring and fall. It was very different seeing them on their breeding ground where they sing a lot and tend to stay in one place a little better.

We ended our trip with lobster dinners on the oceanfront at Two Lights near Portland. It doesn't get much better than endless supplies of lobster, lots of birds and 14 days of terrific weather.
