



THE FLYER

Volume 19, Number 7

September, 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.

September Field Trip

Our Usual monthly field trip will take place Saturday, September 23. Meet at the Colonial Williamsburg Visitor Center at 7:30 am. This time we will stay close to home and visit Newport News Park. Joy Archer and Lee Schuster will lead this trip along the lake, golf course, and back to the swamp. Hopefully we will spot some "Confusing Fall Warblers" passing through the area, as well as possible surprises around the water. As with all trips, anyone interested is welcome. We look forward to seeing you there.

Board Meeting

A meeting of the WBC Board of Directors will be held on Tuesday, September 19 at 7:00 in Millington Hall. All board members are asked to attend or contact Ruth Beck at 566-8234. In addition, any WBC member who is interested in attending is encouraged to do so.

New Members

A Williamsburg Bird Club welcome to our new Members:

Richard & Helen Bywaters
335 Bridgewater Dr.
Newport News, VA 23603

Paul & Cathy Arrowood
2913 Thomas Smith Ln.
Williamsburg, VA 23185

August Field Trip Summary

August 19th turned out to be a beautiful day on Craney Island. Usually during August, the temperature, humidity, and insects can be taxing on the body. This time however, everything was perfect, and all eleven of us enjoyed the day. Ruth Beck guided us over the island, not only demonstrating her expertise of shorebirds, but also maneuvering the roads of Craney.

A total of 51 species made their appearance that day. Most of us got to the point where we quit calling them LBJs (Little Brown Jobs), to actually distinguishing between Least, Semipalmated, and Western Sandpipers. Some of the birds were still in their summer plumage, while others had changed to their winter garb, and others were caught somewhere in the middle.

The highlight of the day was the Hudsonian Godwit that appeared with Black-necked Stilts and American Avocets. That was a great photo opportunity, and something we were all lucky to see. Other highlights included Great and Snowy Egrets, a hovering Kestrel, Black-bellied Plover, American Oystercatcher, Pectoral Sandpipers, and Gull-billed Terns.

It was a great day!! The following took advantage of it: Jane and John Crone, Kay and Ron West, Marilyn Zeigler, Tom Armour, Bill Holcomb, John McDowell, Ruth Beck, and Dave and Lee Schuster.



Field Notes for August, 1995

Fall shorebird migration is well underway, and the songbirds have begun to pass through. Our dedicated birders have been really out beating the bushes, and we have quite a few good species this month. Naturally Hog Island has been the place to be for the shorebirds, and most of the good sightings are there; but don't neglect your backyard as we've seen some pretty good warbler activity recently.

On 8/2 a **Little Blue Heron** was spotted near College Creek and Rt. 199, and on the 7th, there was a **Marsh Wren** at Jamestown Island. On 8/6 the Hotchkiss' had a **Merlin** visit their yard, and on the 9th they had 2 **Hooded Warblers**, a **Prairie Warbler**, 2 **American Redstarts**, and a **Yellow Warbler**. On 8/16, Tom Armour had some 400 **Royal Terns** at the Kingsmill Marina.

Bill Williams and Brian Taber headed to Hog Island on 8/20 and had approximately 240 **Great Egrets** (they said it looked more like South Florida than Eastern Virginia), **Snowy Egret**, **Tricolored Heron**, **Blue-winged Teal**, **American Avocets**, **Upland Sandpiper**, and **Northern Harrier**. On the 21st, Tom Armour had a **White-rumped Sandpiper** there. On the 24th, 25th, and 26th, **White Ibis**, **Greater Yellowlegs**, **Lesser Yellowlegs**, **Spotted Sandpiper**, **Semipalmated Sandpiper**, **Least Sandpiper**, **Pectoral Sandpiper**, **Whimbrel**, **Stilt Sandpiper**, and **Dowitchers** were also identified at Hog. The month closed out on Hog with **Shovelers**, **Black-bellied Plover**, and **Semipalmated Plover**.

On 8/31 Bill Sheehan and Tom Armour saw 10 **Red-headed Woodpeckers** (7 adults) on Jamestown Island. They also had **Brown-headed Nuthatch** and **Virginia Rail**. On 9/1 they had **Cliff Swallows** and **Tree Swallows** at Bushneck Farm while picking peaches (which I

hear were very good this year). On the same day, Joy Archer had a **Yellow-throated Vireo** on Hickory Signpost Road.

King Rails and **Clapper Rails** were identified on the Colonial Parkway at College Creek along with several **Summer Tanagers**. **Baltimore Orioles** have also been reported in the Williamsburg area early this month.

The Doyles have been doing their normal thorough job of canvassing Camp Peary. Through August they have been averaging well over 40 species each time out, and their highlights have been **Great and Snowy Egrets**, **Tricolored Heron**, **Greater Yellowlegs**, **Spotted Sandpiper**, **Wild Turkey** and 10 **Red-headed Woodpeckers**.

Finally on 9/3 Bill Williams and Mitchell Byrd took a trip to Hog Island where they added **Kestrels**, **Buff-breasted Sandpiper**, **Prairie Warbler**, **Yellow Warbler**, and **Bobolinks** to Hog's growing fall list. Lee and I were out there that day too, and Lee was thrilled to find out that she had correctly identified the Buff-breasted Sandpiper. We added an **Orange-crowned Warbler**, and a good view of a **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** to the list. Later that afternoon, we watched a beautiful **Black-throated Blue Warbler** patiently make his way through our back yard.

Thanks for all of the reports. We look forward to more of the same next month!

Watch Out for the Finches

Recently several phone calls have come into Wild Birds Unlimited and to various other people about the disease affecting House Finches. The disease, *Mycoplasma gallisepticum* was first reported in House and Purple Finches at the Wildlife Center of Virginia



in February, 1994. It has been found around Virginia and other mid-Atlantic states.

The major symptom of this disease is swollen, crusty eyelids. Eventually, both eyes will become affected, and the bird will be unable to see. Therefore, they lose the ability to find food.

The disease is not contagious to humans, but is to other passerines and poultry. It can be spread through infected birds, bird feeders, bird baths, and feed spills; in short, wherever birds congregate.

The following are tips to prevent the spread of the disease:

- Clean bird feeders and baths every 7 - 10 days with a 10% solution of liquid bleach. Always rinse thoroughly.
- Clean up seed spills on the ground.
- If the problem is severe, stop feeding the birds for awhile. This will prevent the disease from spreading through the flock which is the main avenue for spreading.

As the birds begin to come back in for the winter, keep these prevention suggestions in mind. House Finches are here all year, and Purple Finches generally make a small showing in the winter. According to Cornell's Feederwatchers, the disease spread rapidly last fall and winter in House Finches. In the states of VA, GA, NC and SC it increased from 5% of the finches in November to 13% in February. The disease is tending to spread more westward than to the north or south.

Anyone who observes a bird with this condition should be cautious in intervening. Leaving the bird alone and following the above advice are the preferred courses of action. If there are questions or concerns, contact someone who can guide you properly. Sometimes intervening can

cause more problems than it can cure if not dealt with properly.

The Wildlife Center of Virginia in Waynesboro can provide advice - (703)942-9403. Locally the Fish and Wildlife Service in Williamsburg is interested in cases that appear. They can be reached at 253-4180. Dr. Jean Eddy, D.V.M., of the Animal Clinic of Williamsburg treats many avian pets and can also offer advice.

It's Hawk Watching Time!

Fall is here, and that means Kiptopeke and hawk watching. The counts have begun for both hawks and songbirds, and visitors are welcomed to watch and learn. Visiting Kiptopeke State Park, the hawk watch station, and the songbird banding station right after a cold front passes through is the best opportunity for viewing birds. Those of us who work must depend on good timing during the weekends, but the birds migrate seven days a week, so anytime can be productive.

The Third Annual Eastern Shore Birding Festival will be October 6 - 8 at the Sunset Inn on the Southern tip of the Eastern Shore. There are special trips, exhibits and programs all weekend long. For more information on the festival, contact the Eastern Shore Wildlife Refuge or Chamber of Commerce. Most trips require pre-registration.

Last year during the hawk watching and banding season (Sept. - early Nov.) there were many big days. Take time to visit this fall. It is a great way to spend a fall day.

The 1st Annual Super Bowl of Birding

KESTREL - Kiptopeke Environmental Station, Research and Education Laboratory is a nonprofit organization. Its mission is to support



research and public education centered on bird and insect migration on Virginia's Eastern Shore.

As a fund-raising activity, they are sponsoring a Super Bowl of Birding. All proceeds of the event will go to KESTREL to be used for funding studies and producing educational materials.

The contest is a team event with each team composed of three members. Registration for the event is \$30 per team, and registration must be accomplished by October 1st. In addition, teams are encouraged to solicit sponsors for their effort. Pledges can be made on a flat-fee or per bird basis.

The contest runs from September 22 through October 1st, and species counts will be performed on the Delmarva Peninsula from the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal on the northern end to the islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-tunnel. Included are the Chesapeake Bay islands and barrier islands.

The rules are fairly simple. Teams may choose one or more dates within the specified period, and they can submit lists for a 24-hour day or a 6-hour day or both. 24-hour days must be from midnight to midnight on the same day; 6-hour days may be any consecutive 6-hour period within a calendar day. 90% of all species listed by a team must be seen or heard by all three of the team members, while the remaining 10% need only be seen or heard by 2 of the 3 members.

Prizes will be awarded for the highest species totals in both the 24-hour and 6-hour categories, for the most unusual species (with documentation) and for the team WHICH RAISES THE MOST MONEY! In addition, door prizes will be awarded to entrants by random drawing. Winners will be announced on the evening of Friday, October 6th, at the Third

Annual Eastern Shore Birding Festival, at the Sunset Inn. Winners are not required to be present to win.

For more information, contact Brian Taber at (804)253-1181, or Ned Brinkley at (804)293-5627. If you'd like to form a team and enter the competition, entry forms can be obtained from the above. Entries must be returned with the \$30 registration by October 1st. Then, just return the team's species list, the general routes taken during the day, and the hours covered to KESTREL, P.O. Box 111, Franktown, VA 23354 by October 5th. Good Birding!!

Kudos to Julie Hotchkiss

Once again, our own Julie Hotchkiss is the author of an article in *Birdwatcher's Digest*. This article, "Birding Scotland," is in the September/October, 1995 issue. The article summarizes her trip to Scotland and the variety of birds she observed. It is a wonderful article, and I encourage anyone who can to obtain a copy and read it.

Congratulations Julie!! Also, congratulations on following Roger Tory Peterson's column!

Any Potential Members Out There?

We are moving into another busy season of birding. The summer breeders are leaving, the fall migrants are passing through, and our winter visitors will soon be here. The club's field trips are beginning to gear up, and our monthly meetings are getting back on track. If you know anyone interested in birds, feeding the birds, or anything else having to do with birds, please invite them to a meeting or field trip. We welcome all visitors and look forward to sharing birds with them.



New Officers Needed

The nomination of new officers is 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.

We are especially looking for volunteers to relieve your newsletter editors of the past two years. Both Lee and I have enjoyed writing and editing the newsletter, but there are several other club activities to which we'd like to devote our copious spare time. With our current work load, we simply cannot pursue these activities. Plus, we think its important to periodically get an injection of fresh material, ideas and insight. So if you have a creative bent, like to write, and want to get more involved with your fellow club members, consider trying the newsletter. It can be fun and rewarding.

Bird of the Month

Black-necked Stilt

(Himantopus mexicanus)

I remember it very well. I had been birding for several years, but my time at the shore was very limited. We were wandering through Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island in southern Florida swatting mosquitoes and no-see-ums on a hot August day. On a back trail of the preserve, we glanced over to a small pool, and saw the oddest looking bird. Here is this very distinctive bird with black upper parts and white underneath. The bill is straight, black, and needle-like. The legs are very long and thin, and are pinkish red in color. I wish all shorebirds were this easy to identify!

A joy to observe as it feeds, the Black-necked Stilt can be found in shallow freshwater and brackish ponds, open marshes, flooded fields and pastures. Stilts saunter along muddy shores sometimes as deep as its belly. They pick up aquatic insects such as beetles, dragonfly nymphs, caddis flies, mayfly nymphs, mosquito larvae, and a few fish. Stilts will also eat seeds from aquatic plants.

Black-necked Stilts nest in small colonies on the ground, and sometimes in a slight depression in open areas or those partly hidden by plants. The nests are usually lined with weed stalks, twigs, grasses, small bits of shells, and fish bones. Flocks of stilts defend their territories by screeching vigorously and buzzing invaders.

They breed on the west coast from Oregon south, as well as on the east coast from Delaware south to Chile and Argentina. Some will nest in scattered locations in the interior of the western states. Winters are spent from the coast of southern Oregon, the Gulf Coast, and southern Florida south.

Our trip to Craney Island last month provided our group with a good look at these birds. They are truly magnificent to watch feed as well as fly. Not only that, but they are also one of the few shorebirds that make identification easy. Take the time to observe them next time you meet up with these distinguished birds.