



# THE FLYER

NEWSLETTER OF THE WILLIAMSBURG BIRD CLUB

Volume 20, Number 9

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## NEXT MEETING

The next Bird Club meeting will be on October 16 at 7:30 PM in Room 117 Millington Hall, College of William & Mary. Carolyn Wells from the Department of Natural Sciences at Longwood College will give us an update on the decline and current prospects of the Loggerhead Shrike, a bird that was once fairly common in Virginia. Her talk is titled, "On the Trail of the Loggerhead Shrike."

## OCTOBER FIELD TRIP

On Saturday, October 19 we will visit Hog Island, an excellent birding location. It is near the south shore of the James River just opposite Kingsmill. Tom Armour, one of our club's premier bird watchers, will lead the expedition. As usual, we will meet in the CW Visitor Center parking lot, the lot on the right hand side of the building as you enter, at 7:15 AM and leave at 7:30 sharp.

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

There is definitely a nip in the air and times are changing. We had a good meeting in September with lots of members attending, new and old. The trip to the Eastern Shore proved to be fun and exciting as always, even though I chose to go later and leave early. It is good to see everyone again. As we begin the new season it's time to look ahead.

Several changes take place in the coming months and once again I turn to the membership for assistance. Our club has many talented people with new and fresh ideas that could be used to

plan programs and field trips. Just because one is not a top birder or doesn't have an extensive corporate memory of how the club operates does not disqualify him or her from being an officer of the club. If you have some novel ideas for programs and/or field trips, please speak up. And if you have any interest in following through on those ideas, please consider becoming an officer and joining our board.

As fall progresses we need to keep our eyes to the sky. Make a point to visit Kiptopeke this season to see the birds, of course, but also to see how many changes have taken place over the years. Watch the waters around us for the ducks that will be appearing and the trees for the warblers that are passing through. Dave and I were lucky to catch a good view of a Swainson's Thrush a few weeks ago as it bathed in the pool and played in the back yard. Remember, in the fall the birds don't necessarily let you know they are around. It takes more effort to see birds that stop by only for a brief visit.

## HIGHWAY PICKUP UPDATE

The highway pickup crew of 15 Bird Club members scored an impressive victory in the battle against highway trash on September 28, 1996.

Eighteen sacks of trash were bagged on Route 5 for pickup by the Highway Department. We gathered the debris on the road between Five Forks and Centerville Road, a distance of two miles. Eighteen pounds of aluminum cans (count 433) were delivered to St. Martin's Church where they sell them and use the money to fund their food pantry. Two hundred seventy six plastic and

glass bottles (132 pounds!) were separated for pickup by the county-wide recycling trucks. Not bad for a hardy group not yet ready to be classified as “over the hill.”

List these persons among the immortals: Sam Hart and Phyllis Johnson together with Marilyn Lewis and Mac Lundy. Then there’s Bill and Mary Kafes, Bob Morris, Alice Sargent, Jim Booth and newcomer, John McDowell. Dick Mahone brings his truck to haul the recyclables back to my house for sorting.

P.S. We now have an official photographer. Nancy Davies took pictures of the intrepid crew before we took off for the highway. Thanks to all for a splendid job. —Bill Davies

## NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to these new members:

Sam Skalak  
P.O. Box 537  
Toano, VA 23168

John-Carl Badila  
College Station Unit 2055  
200 Richmond Road  
Williamsburg, VA 23186

Linda Walker  
154 Allyson Drive  
Williamsburg, VA 23188

## SEPTEMBER FIELD TRIP

September 21st was a perfect day for watching hawks at Kiptopeke. With the help of KESTREL’s Brian Sullivan seventeen Bird Club members observed a variety of species in migration. Numerous Osprey, Kestrels and Sharpshins and a few Harriers, Coopers Hawks, Merlins and Bald Eagles came by. The hawk banders brought several trapped birds to the observation platform for us to see before releasing them to resume their journeys south. Impressive in the air, raptors are awesome up close.

At the Eastern Shore National Wildlife Refuge we had excellent views of Glossy Ibis, Blue-winged Teal, Cattle Egret, Palm Warbler and a Northern

Harrier that appeared to be hunting for a meal. A delightful sight for the end of our trip was a pair of Bald Eagles perched in pine trees across the marsh.

Participants: Cynthia Long, Marilyn Zeigler, Joy Archer, Dale Davis, Tom Ellis, Anne Moore, Richard Stanley, Shirley Devan, Lex Hoffman, Jandy and Randy Strickland, Jack and Terri Johnston, Rosemary and John Eberhardt, Lee and Dave Schuster.

## FIELD NOTES FOR SEPTEMBER

As the effects of Hurricane Fran were felt at the beginning of the month, we included the Sooty Tern, Black Tern and Bridled Tern that got blown up the James by that storm in the August report. However, September brought its own additional bright spots. Bill Williams and Tom Armour saw an American Golden Plover at Hog Island mid-month. Tom and Bell Sheehan saw a Savannah Sparrow, one of our returning residents at Chippokes. This and a Kestrel were the only returning winter resident reports received. And Ruth Beck reports both a Veery and a Swainson’s Thrush out in Barhamsville. The warbler list reads like last May!

September reports from the favored haunts:  
*(Resident and most commonly seen birds are, of course, not included but we would gladly report Bald Eagle sightings from almost everywhere.)*

### Jamestown Island/College Creek

Osprey, Least Flycatcher, Tree Swallow, Brown-breasted Nuthatch, White-eyed Vireo, Yellow-throated Vireo, Blue-winged Warbler, Black and White Warbler, Rose-breasted Grosbeak. College Creek—Osprey, King Rail, Royal Tern, Bobolink, Mute Swan.

### Hog Island/Chippokes

White Pelican, Snowy Egret, Mute Swan, Sharpshinned Hawk, American Golden Plover, Black-bellied Plover, Greater & Lesser Yellowlegs, Pectoral Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, Forster’s Tern, Caspian Tern, Royal Tern, Tree Swallow, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Prairie Warbler, Blue Grosbeak, Bobolink. Chippokes—Screech Owl, Red-headed Woodpecker, White-eyed Vireo, Prothonotary Warbler, Savannah

Sparrow.

### **Kingsmill/Kingswood**

Red-shouldered Hawk, Yellow-throated Vireo, Parula Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Cape May Warbler, Black & White Warbler, Redstart, Hooded Warbler, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Nighthawk. Kingsmill—Red-shouldered Hawk, Forster's Tern, Caspian Tern, Royal Tern, Common Tern, Black & White Warbler.

### **Camp Peary**

Grace and Joe Doyle had a high September count on the 8th of 45 species. Highlights include: Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Tricolored Egret, Mute Swan, Black Vulture, Bald Eagle, Screech Owl, Wild Turkey, Common Tern, Red-headed Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Eastern Wood Peewee, Tree Swallow, White-eyed Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Black & White Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Summer Tanager, Field Sparrow, Bobolink.

### **Miscellaneous**

Kestrel in Surrey County and on Route 5, Forster's Terns at the Chickahominy Route 5 bridge, Red-shouldered Hawk and Great Horned Owl in Graylin Woods, Yellow-throated Vireo and Black & White Warbler at York River State Park, Prothonotary Warbler in Jamestown farms.

## **BIRDS OF THE MONTH**

*By Bill Holcombe*

### **Golden-Crowned and Ruby-Crowned Kinglets**

Two of our returning winter residents, the Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets, are closely related species and, oddly enough, they are also related to the Blue-grey Gnatcatcher, one of our summer residents. All are members of the old world warbler family, which are a distinctly different group of birds from the American warblers. These three are the only members of this family we see in Virginia.

Club records list these delightful birds as arriving September 24 to 25 but no sightings were reported to Bill Sheehan for this past September.

Three and a half to 4-1/2 inches in length, these along with some of the wrens, are some of the

smallest Virginia birds, save for the hummingbirds. When you see a small olive, gray-backed bird with grayish underparts, wing bars and a stubby tail and it is sometime between late September and May, it is likely to be a Kinglet. If it has a black eye stripe with white above and below it and an orangish or yellow cap edged in black, it is a Yellow-crowned Kinglet. The reddish-orange top will be the male and the yellow crowned the female. If it has a rather prominent eye ring but no eye stripes it will be the Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Once in a while you may see this bird when it is excited enough to flash the ruby crown on the top of its head. The bird is not very shy of humans and may flit around branches near you for several minutes. Unless you go to Canada you will not hear these birds sing except, very occasionally, the Ruby-crowned will sing its lovely song during the last week or so of its winter stay here.

These tiny birds that winter in the southern half of the U.S. breed in the coniferous Canadian forests as far north as Newfoundland. Peterson shows a narrow band running across the top of the Appalachians following a northeast line into northern Canada which he identifies as year-round resident area for some Golden-crowned, but he also shows the same summer-winter swing mentioned above.

They build rather similar cup-like nests, sometimes well camouflaged with lichen, into which they lay 5 to 7 eggs that hatch in about twelve days. Twelve to 14 days later they fly out of the nest. Cowbirds almost never leave eggs in their nests. Both are basically insect eaters and both are known to drink the sap of trees and add seeds to their diets. They can be attracted to feeders with suet and seed mixes. Bill Sheehan has a Ruby-crowned that returns every year to feed on a pine cone smeared with peanut butter.

Scanning the last two winter's field notes I find a lot more reports of Ruby-crowned Kinglets than Golden-crowned. Bill Sheehan attributes this to the tendency of the Golden-crowned to stay up in the trees whereas the Ruby-crowned works the bushes. They are most often mentioned at Jamestown Island, Camp Peary, Hog Island and Kingswood. They've also been reported at the Hickory Signpost bridge. I once watched a Golden-crowned there for a good ten minutes. Please do

report your next sighting to Bill Sheehan, our club record keeper, at 220-2122.

## **WINTER RESIDENTS RETURNING IN OCTOBER**

Club records show these arrivals:

Horned Grebe	Oct 10
Gadwall	Oct 15
Canvasback	Oct 23
Redhead	Oct 10
Ring-necked Duck	Oct 15
Greater Scaup	Oct 20
Lesser Scaup	Oct 11
Common Goldeneye	Oct 24
Bufflehead	Oct 15
Hooded Merganser	Oct 24
Common Merganser	Oct 21
Red-breasted Merganser	Oct 25

Please give Bill Sheehan a call when you see any of these birds, noting the date.

## **Baltimore is Back!**

(Excerpted from *Birder's World*)

The Baltimore Oriole and the Bullock's Oriole are back to being separate species. The change reverses a decision made in 1973 to combine the Baltimore and Bullock's into one species, the Northern Oriole. Back to Baltimore everyone!

The Rufous-sided Towhee has been renamed. The bird we have in Virginia, formerly known as the eastern race of the Rufous-sided Towhee, is now officially known as the Eastern Towhee. Darwin was right—things change. But why confuse an innocent birdwatcher?