



THE FLYER

NEWSLETTER OF THE WILLIAMSBURG BIRD CLUB

Volume 28, Number 10

Website: www.wmbgbirdclub.com

November 2004

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Alex Minarik

I have the minutes of the Williamsburg Bird Club from the very beginning, Sept. 21, 1977. It is interesting to read about all of the individuals who have volunteered their time over the years to promote the purpose of the club. Eleven have served as president for one or more years. Many others have filled the other offices and chairmanships. Each one has brought special talents, knowledge and enthusiasm to his duties. We, the members, and the wild birds that we enjoy have benefitted.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the current officers of our bird club for all your hard work during the past year. Each of you should take pride in knowing that you have admirably filled some very big shoes.

CVWO FOCUS OF NOV. MEETING

"Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory" will be the focus of our November 17 meeting. CVWO president Brian Taber will "show and tell" us about the efforts of the CVWO: fall and spring hawk watches on both sides of the Chesapeake Bay, raptor and songbird banding at Kiptopeke, plus butterfly tagging and other conservation programs. Perhaps Brian will have preliminary totals from the fall migration at the Kiptopeke Hawk Watch.

Brian Taber is a member of our own Williamsburg Bird Club and the Virginia Society for Ornithology. He is one of the best birders in Virginia and regularly leads the Christmas Bird Count at Hog Island for the club. He's published articles in state and national birding publications and is active in local conservation efforts.

Plan to join us Wednesday, November 17, at 7:30 p.m. in Room 117 at Millington Hall at William and Mary to learn what the CVWO is up to year round.

NOVEMBER 20 FIELD TRIP

The November 20 field trip will be to York River State Park. This is a great site for woodland migrants (and Eastern Bluebirds!!) and many of our winter residents should be here by then. Perhaps we'll see some winter ducks and Bald Eagles on the river as well.

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Colony Square Shopping Center parking lot on Jamestown Road (close to the Fresh Market) where we'll consolidate in car pools. Note that there is an admission fee of \$4.00 per car at the Park. If you have a VA State Park Annual Pass, you'll enjoy free admission. We should easily be done by late morning.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT, SUNDAY, DEC. 19

By Bill Holcombe

The Williamsburg Bird Club will participate in the 105th Audubon Christmas Bird Count on December 19. Every member of the Bird Club is invited to join that hard core group of about 25 who take to the field for 8 hours of scanning Williamsburg's assigned "circle". (Some will have been checking on owls well before 7 a.m.) All of the thousands of participating groups nationwide are assigned a circle with a 15 mile diameter from a point defined very carefully by latitude and longitude. The hub of our circle is Colonial Williamsburg Reception Center.

There are circles in the snows of Alaska, on the tip of South America and thousands of places in between including some of the Pacific islands. On a recent annual count a polar outpost in Antarctica participated. Participating groups can select any date over about a three week period. Our Club has opted to hold the count on the second Sunday before Christmas except when Christmas falls on a Saturday or a Sunday when we take **the Sunday before**.

The results are fed by the compiler of each group into the Audubon computer system from which researchers can manipulate the data for all 105

counts to find trends and changes in the planet's bird life.

Our circle is divided into nine areas with the field work in each area led by an experienced birder. You do not have to participate in the field for the entire day but it is suggested that you join a group for at least half a day. If you are interested call the leader of the area that appeals to you and arrange a time and place to meet with that group. If you want to hear the entire list for the day, come to the conference room just beyond Ruth Beck's office at 5 p.m. on the 19th when all of the counts are compiled into a master list.

Camp Peary – Tom Armour (no additional birders because of security problems)

Middle Plantation (James River to Waller Mill Reservoir) –Hugh Beard, 221-0499.

College Woods – Ruth Beck, 566-8234

Skimino (York River below YRSP) – Bettye Fields, 930-0177

Kingsmill - Paul McAllister, 229-1323

Jolly Pond – Lee Schuster, 565-6148

Jamestown Island – Dot Silsby, 596-3252

Hog Island – Brian Taber, 253-1181

Cheatham Annex – Bill Williams, 229-1124

Call one of the coordinators above and plan to join in this national and historic event.

CLUB FUND RAISER UNDERWAY

The Bird Club will be selling beautiful, colorful enamel Red-headed Woodpecker lapel pins to raise additional funds. The pins will be available at the November meeting. They will cost \$5 each and are suitable for men or women. They will look great on your jacket or blazer and will make great holiday gifts for your birding friends.

SLATE OF OFFICERS FOR 2005

Lee Schuster is the chairman of the nominating committee this year. She and the other two members, Dorothy Whitfield and Carolyn Lowe, submit the following slate of nominees for voter approval at the November 17 meeting:

President – Alex Minarik

Secretary – David and Carol Goff

Treasurer – Charles Rend

VP & Program Chair – Tom McCary

VP & Co-Editor, *The Flyer* – Phil Young

VP & Co-Editor, *The Flyer* – Shirley Devan

Member-at-large – Bill Williams

Member-at-large – Fred Blystone

THE FLYER WILL NOT BE PUBLISHED IN DECEMBER

Your newsletter editors will take a holiday break

and *The Flyer* will not be published in December. There will not be a meeting in December either and information about the Christmas Bird Count is included in this newsletter. Please continue to send your November and December bird sightings to Shirley Devan, at sedevan52@cox.net, or call 220-6269. The next newsletter will arrive the first week in January.

OCTOBER 23 FIELD TRIP

By Tom Armour

Bill Williams and I car pooled to the Eastern Shore for the club field trip Saturday, October 23. We were joined at the hawk watch platform by Gil & Jeanne Frey. The Eastern Shore was alive with birds. Highlights were: on the CBBT islands – a Peregrine Falcon (perched close enough to see it had been banded), a Red Phalarope (a first for me in Virginia) and a good look at a Marsh Wren. The Wildlife Refuge had tons of birds – Tree Swallows by the hundreds if not thousands feeding at the pool at the Visitor Center. We watched them in great sunlight for about 15 minutes trying to pick up a Cliff Swallow or Cave Swallow without success. A beautiful sight.

Raptors were: Osprey, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Coopers Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel and Peregrine Falcon. Red-breasted Nuthatches were coming to the feeder at the hawk watch platform. We had 4 species of wrens – Carolina, House, Sedge and Marsh. Total Species count was 78 – a great day with great weather.

TABER REPORTS ON KIPTOPEKE CHALLENGE IN SEPTEMBER

(Last month's Flyer included details from the winning team in the Kiptopeke Challenge September 18. This month we're including details of the adventures of Brian Taber's team – "The Wild Birds Unlimited of Williamsburg." Ed.)

By Brian Taber

Well ... last year we had Hurricane Isabel, which delayed the competition for a week. This year, on September 18th, we had the remnants of Hurricane Ivan that also merged with a strong cold front, causing very high winds and driving rain off and on all day. But ... we were out looking for owls anyway at 4 a.m. seeing some distant lightning, after a night in the yurt, the round, cabin/tent-like structure that Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory donated to Kiptopeke State Park several years ago. The Park rents it from January through August and CVWO uses it for volunteers during September, October and November.

Finding no owls, we went to the field where we found the competition's only Chuck-wills-widow last year, but it wasn't out in the windy weather so, after seeing two immature Bald Eagles, well before sunrise, for our first birds, we headed to the reliable Eurasian Collared Dove spot, only a mile away, and found it and then headed on south to Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge. One of the ponds there is usually good for White Ibis around dawn and right on cue, an immature one immediately flew over. After hearing Clapper Rails, Northern Cardinals and some other just-waking species, we searched nearby Sunset Beach, finding a Peregrine and our only Ruby-throated Hummingbird, then went to a wet field a few miles north that had recently been attracting shorebirds. Though there were fewer birds than last weekend, we still managed to see both yellowlegs and Western, Semi-palmated and Least Sandpipers among others. A nearby wood lot yielded a Black & White Warbler, American Redstarts and a Pine Warbler that was cheerfully singing loudly in the cold drizzle.

Going back to Kiptopeke, we walked the trails, watched the feeders and sat on the observation platform there briefly, finding our only Chipping Sparrows of the day. The day usually seems to go very fast and soon it was 11 a.m. and time to drive 60 miles north to Chincoteague. We decided not to do the islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-tunnel, because the high winds would probably keep most birds out of sight. We drove some back roads and we stopped briefly in Oyster, but high tides there were not favorable for finding more shorebirds in the salt marsh. At the Oyster landfill, which looks much nicer, as it is now slowly becoming a county park, we saw lots of Fish Crows, but nothing new for the day.

The rain and wind became even stronger as we drove to Chincoteague, but the causeway into town was full of birds. We immediately added Northern Harrier, Tri-colored Heron, Boat-tailed Grackle, American Oystercatcher, Stilt Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher... and the birds of the day ...!!!! ... two Hudsonian Godwits, at very close range for a few minutes, until a Peregrine dashed through and scattered everything.

The Wildlife Drive around the impoundments and the big pond near the ocean provided Brown-headed Nuthatches, Gadwalls, Black Ducks, Blue-winged Teal, Green-winged Teal and more. Our total was looking more respectable. We hoped to break 100 species as we have every year, but it was going to be close and the weather made this the most challenging Challenge of our 10 years. We had been wet all day long, but our spirits remained high. Sanderlings, as expected, were running along the beach surf and as the light began to fail (even though it had been dark all

day!!!) we walked the Woodland Trail at Chincoteague to see if any warblers might still be moving. They weren't. We did find a Great Crested Flycatcher ... then headed for the yurt. We made a last owl try at 10 p.m. but the winds were still howling. A few other highlights of the day were a flock of Horned Larks near Custis Tomb and a Baltimore Oriole that was with a large flock of American Robins.

Some teams didn't manage 100 species, but the winning team found an amazing 124 species, followed by the runners-up with 123. Our hats are off to them. The best bird of the competition was a Long-tailed Jaeger, obviously displaced by Ivan and found by a team at Craney Island in Portsmouth. We ended feeling satisfied with 102 species. Six warbler species was our lowest total ever. But no birds got away unidentified. The cold front that night brought a flood of birds for the "morning after," including about 30 just at Kiptopeke that we hadn't seen on the Challenge and a very rare Cave Swallow. Thanks again for your generous support of this event and great organization! Brian Taber & Paul Nasca, Wild Birds Unlimited of Williamsburg.

A ROBIN IN MY FREEZER

By Shirley Devan

About every three days my husband asks me how much longer we'll have that American Robin in our freezer. And each time I tell him "Until I give it away."

About three weeks ago, a first year American Robin crashed into my window at work and collapsed on the sidewalk. The tremendous noise brought everyone in my office out of their chairs to see what caused the crash. A robin was trembling on the sidewalk. I waited a few minutes to see if the bird was just stunned and would be able to join the flock in the trees nearby. As I watched the bird, it stopped trembling and died. Its neck was broken.

I scrambled around, found a plastic bag and stored the bird in the refrigerator at the office until I went home. I slipped the bird in the freezer before my husband got home and wondered how long it would take him to discover the treasure. (Only took two days!)

So...I have an American Robin in my freezer that is available to the first teacher who calls me or emails me with his/her request to use it in the classroom.

OCTOBER BIRD SIGHTINGS

Report your backyard birds and local sightings to Shirley Devan at 220-6269 (evening phone) or sedevan52@cox.net (home email). If you encounter interesting birds on your vacation/travels, please share!

Oct. 2: Alex Minarik reports a Summer Tanager bathing in her bird bath.

Oct. 3: Eleanor Young reports from the Newport News Park bird walk: Fifteen species including highlights: Parula Warbler, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Pine Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Palm Warbler.

Oct. 3: Bill Williams reports from the Green Springs Trail: Merlin-1, Solitary Sandpiper-1, Red-breasted Nuthatch-1, Philadelphia Vireo-1.

Oct. 3: Alex Minarik reports American Redstarts, Louisiana Waterthrush and Northern Parula in her backyard.

Oct. 10: Bill Williams reports from the Green Springs Trail: Solitary Sandpiper-1, probably sets a new late date for the area, Scarlet Tanager-5.

Oct. 10: Joe Doyle reports from Camp Peary: 26 species including "about 25 Eastern Bluebirds flocking."

Oct. 16: Alex Minarik reports a Golden-crowned Kinglet in her back yard.

Oct.16: Eleanor Young reports Vesper Sparrows on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel.

Oct.17: Joe Doyle reports from his weekly survey at Camp Peary: 30 species including the first Yellow-rump Warblers and White-throated Sparrows of the year. Also about 200 Ruddy Ducks on Skimino Creek as it moves into the York River. He reports no birds on the York River near the southern end of Camp Peary – a surprise.

Oct. 17: Eleanor Young reports from the Newport News Park bird walk where it was a chilly 49 degrees early in the morning, fifteen species including highlights: Mallards, Pileated Woodpecker, Yellow-rump Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Pine Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Catbirds and Ring-billed Gulls.

Oct. 18: Bill Williams reports from the Green Springs Trail: 3 Chimney Swift and 1 Pine Siskin.

Oct. 19: Alex Minarik reports two Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers in her backyard.

Oct. 26 – Bill Holcombe reports: A horde of Robins swarmed over my Pyracantha berries but left some for the Waxwings that I hope will show.

Oct. 27 - Bill Holcombe reports: Saw the Pied-billed Grebe again in the 100 Rt. 5 Canada Geese pool but haven't seen them in Lake Matoaka yet.

Oct. 28 - Bill Holcombe reports: Saw a Winter Wren in back of Graylin Woods. It popped up in

the same place going and coming on my dog walk and quickly disappeared.

Oct. 31: Tom Armour reports: Just had 4 Pine Siskins at my feeder, first this year.

Oct. 25: Bill Williams reports from the Green Springs Trail: Among the 5 Hermit Thrushes was one in full song.

Oct. 31: Bill Williams reports from the Green Springs Trail: 2 Rusty Blackbirds and one each Purple Finch and Pine Siskin among the 57 species recorded.

Nov.1: Bill Williams reports from College Creek: 2 Royal Terns, 2 Marsh Wrens (one singing), one Wilson's Snipe and 1 Purple Finch.

TOWNSEND'S WARBLER IN WILLIAMSBURG

By Dan Cristol

On Friday, October 8th at 3 p.m. I was sitting in a meeting in the Keck Laboratory on the eastern shore of Lake Matoaka on the William & Mary campus. The conference room is entirely paneled with windows, and as sometimes happens, a bird collided with one of the windows during the meeting. Unable to identify the stunned bird from inside, I ran out to get it, only to find, much to my surprise, a female Kentucky Warbler lying on the sidewalk. It flew to a tree, called, and departed as soon as I tried to grab it. Only then did I notice a small flock of birds descending on the tiny vegetable garden next to the building.

I went back inside, and with the other meeting participants (two Fish and Wildlife Service biologists and a biology graduate student) we watched the action in the garden. I drew everyone's attention to what I said was a nice male Black-throated Green foraging deep in a butterfly bush in the garden. But when the bird climbed to the top of the bush and stood still for 10 seconds in full view 25 feet away from us (no binoculars though), I shouted in great excitement that it had a solid black face mask and yellow below the black throat/chest badge, so looked like a Townsend's Warbler (rarity from the Pacific Northwest.) Oddly, there was a Western Peterson Field Guide in the conference room (along with a pile of other natural history books) so I showed everyone the picture and tried to explain to these non-birders why it was so exciting (with only limited success, as they were unimpressed once I told them a Townsend's Warbler was seen in the state two years ago.)

I was unable to return to look for the bird until Sunday, when, at noon with my kids in tow I was not surprised to fail at relocating any warblers. The bird is in near-breeding plumage and is an adult male, so was easy to distinguish from a Black-throated Green Warbler (which are all in

winter plumage now as well). It was extremely distinctive because of the amount of yellow on the sides of the breast where a Black-throated Green has none, and the black mask completely surrounded by bright yellow, which is only slightly grayed in the middle. The top of the head was dark, but I was unable to see if the green on the back was stippled as it should have been. Keep your eyes out around Lake Matoaka, because a bird as lost as this one might hang around for a long time. Once it molts into winter plumage it will be a lot duller, but the black face mask will always distinguish it from similar species.

NEW MEMBERS

The club welcomes new members Clay and Joyce Holland of Lake Wales, Florida.

ARMOUR'S WEST COAST TRIP

Oct. 19: Tom Armour reports on his week in northern California.

"Able to do some birding and had a total of 76 species. Highlights were 500+ Marbled Godwits in the marsh at the north end of San Francisco Bay. Also, at the same spot were 300+ American Avocets and one Long-billed Curlew. In the city of San Rafael, I had 3 species of hummingbirds: Rufus, Allen's and Black-chinned. At Point Reyes National Seashore, I had a Prairie Falcon and a Swainson Hawk in addition to about a dozen Red-tailed Hawks. Good weather and great trip on Jet Blue airlines."

BIRD CLUB DONATES BOOKS, DVDS TO LIBRARY

Lee Schuster, the club's Library Chair, oversaw the Williamsburg Bird Club's purchase and donation of the following to the local JCC/Williamsburg Library:

- History of Ornithology in Virginia
- Audubon's Birds of America Tiny Folio: The Audubon Society Baby Elephant Folio
- The Big Year: A Tale of Man, Nature, and Fowl Obsession
- Audubon's Elephant: America's Greatest Naturalist and the Making of The Birds of America
- Know Your Bird Sounds: Songs and Calls of Yard, Garden, and City Birds
- National Geographic Reference Atlas to the Birds of North America
- Pale Male (DVD)
- Winged Migration (DVD)

REPORT WINTER BLUEBIRD ACTIVITY

Ruth Beck has requested members send her the following information on winter sightings of Eastern Bluebirds: 1. Number of birds; 2. When they are seen; 3. What they are doing. Send your sightings to Ruth at: rabeck@wm.edu.

HABITAT LOSSES BLAMED AS BIRD POPULATIONS DROP

(The article below appeared in the October 20 edition of the Richmond Times-Dispatch. Ed.)

Almost 30 percent of bird populations on the continent are facing a "significant decline," the National Audubon Society said in its "State of the Birds" report released October 19.

The group studied data from 1966 to 2003 for 654 bird species that live in grasslands, shrub lands, forests, waterways and urban settings, and said habitat losses are to blame.

Most dire was the finding that 70 percent of the species in grasslands – such as the Eastern Meadowlark, the Bobolink, the Short-eared Owl, and the Greater Prairie Chicken – are doing poorly. For those in shrub lands – including the Northern Bobwhite, the Painted Bunting, and the Florida Scrub Jay – 36 percent of species are not doing well. Among forests, a quarter of bird species are declining; for urban areas, 23 percent; wetlands, 13 percent.

The group described the losses as abnormal and said they could be seen as ecological indicators of problems that people also are or will soon be facing. Because of that, the group called for more protections for those habitats and increased conservation efforts by private landowners and homeowners.

NEW BOOK ON VIRGINIA BIRD WATCHING

Bill Thompson III has written "Virginia Bird Watching: A Year-Round Guide" (Cool Springs Press, \$16.99) The book profiles 100 birds and provides a range map that identifies the specific areas the birds inhabit, both year-round and migratory. Its full color seasonal section includes information on migrating birds that can be seen during each season and the foods and plants that attract those birds. The guide is aimed at beginning to intermediate level bird watchers. The book is available through online booksellers.

Thompson is editor of Birdwatcher's Digest and author of "Bird Watching for Dummies." He is also a director of the Ohio Ornithological Society. He lives in Ohio.

(The above review appeared in the October 24 edition of The Daily Press in the "Book Corner" section and was reviewed by Lisa Cherry.)

VIRGINIAN'S BIG YEAR COUNT IS AT 316

(At the September meeting, Bill Williams mentioned that Mike Boatwright of Amherst, VA, was "doing" a Virginia Big Year. Below is one of Mike's recent postings to the VSO ListServe in which he describes getting bird #316. Ed.)

"Mike Boatwright of Amherst is working on the third Big Year of his birding career. Confining himself to sightings within the state of Virginia, he is attempting to see as many species as he can in 2004. The 45-year-old chemist at the North Anna Power Station in Louisa has been a serious birder since he was 10 or 11 years old. In 1979 he saw 300 species and he racked up 315 when he tried it a second time in 1987."

(The preceding is from Seth Williamson's article about Mike in Roanoke Times October 15, 2004. What follows is an "email interview" I conducted with Mike early in November. Ed.)

Current count? I'm currently at 319. State record is 346 (Todd Day 2002). Ned Brinkley had 345 in 1996.

Most surprising bird so far? Hands down the White-tailed Kite I had soaring (briefly) over the Eastern Shore National Wildlife Refuge on the afternoon of September 17 while scouting for the Kiptopeke Challenge.

Any easy birds left? Believe it or not, Tundra Swan. I didn't really look for this bird in the first couple of months of the year. I don't think it will be a problem. Should be some around the Bay anytime now.

Favorite VA area? I have a new found respect for the Gloucester Point area. I made three different trips here and spent some 15 hours searching the area in July in hope of finding a Swallow-tailed Kite based on Joyce Williams observations of this bird in the area over the past several summers. Got the bird finally on July 19. Of course, I've always liked Craney Island and have made numerous trips there throughout the year picking up Eared Grebe, Red-necked Phalarope, Buff-breasted Sandpiper and one of my favorites, American Avocet (still the only really reliable spot in the state for these birds.)

Most wanted bird at this point? Without a doubt, Lark Sparrow. I've spent a lot of time at Back Bay, Eastern Shore NWR/Kiptopeke, Chincoteague and Craney looking specifically for Lark Sparrow. NO luck yet, but I'm hoping to get one on the Eastern Shore this coming weekend.

Cost? Haven't really tallied it (I think it may be

too much of a discouragement if I realized how much I've spent); I have joked, tongue in cheek, that at least if my wife divorces me she will not get much since I've spent all my money on birds this year. Most expensive endeavor was \$300 pelagic trip in August. I've put close to 25,000 miles on my car.

Weather? Unfortunately for my list but fortunately for us humans, there have been no direct landfalling hurricanes this year. The August pelagic trip was the day after Charley passed over us (actually we were supposed to go out the day before but rescheduled due to Charley). We had several Sooty and Bridled Terns at sea...the Sooty most probably brought up by the hurricane.

Any other highlights? I spent the morning of September 27 at the home of Fritz & Ineke Schaller in James City County just outside Williamsburg watching their female Rufous Hummingbird which has returned for the 4th fall/winter. I got the tip from Tom Armour.

(In January, we'll touch base with Mike to get his final results. Here is a link to an article by Seth Williamson published last month in the Roanoke Times. Ed.)

<http://www.roanoke.com/outdoors/12209.html>.

FINAL PHASE OF VA BIRDING AND WILDLIFE TRAIL OPENS

From the DGIF website.

Charlottesville, VA - The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) officially opened the Piedmont phase of the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail in a dedication ceremony today at Kemper Park along Monticello's Thomas Jefferson Parkway. The Coastal phase was opened in October 2002 and the Mountain Phase was opened in September 2003. With the completion of the Piedmont phase, the Commonwealth now offers the first statewide birding and wildlife trail in the United States. Virginia has one of the highest diversities of birds in the eastern United States, boasting nearly 400 resident and migratory bird species and over 2,200 species of fish, reptiles, amphibians, mussels, crayfish, birds, mammals, butterflies and dragonflies statewide.

The Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail is a driving trail that provides opportunities to see a wide variety of wildlife and have a quality recreational experience. Loop trails off the main driving trail link some of Virginia's best wildlife watching areas for visitors to enjoy and observe wildlife; opportunities for walking and biking also exist at many of the sites. The Piedmont phase spans the central portion of Virginia. It includes expansive grasslands, large forested tracts, pineland savannahs, several large reservoirs, and an abundance of rich history and

culture. Sites, which include state parks and forests, city and town parks, wildlife management areas, and privately owned lands, were assessed and selected using a number of criteria.

Community support and local participation have been high throughout the development process. The Department has developed a full color trail guide to facilitate visitor travel throughout the Piedmont region of Virginia. The guide includes regional and loop maps, travel directions, and loop and site descriptions.

Individual copies of the guide may be obtained free by calling toll-free 1-866-VABIRDS (1-866-822-4737) or online through the Department's Web site at www.dgif.virginia.gov. All of the maps and site information are also available directly on the agency's Web site.

CVWO ANNUAL MEETING SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 13

The Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory annual meeting will be Saturday, November 13, 2004 at the Best Western Sunset Beach Resort, near the northern end of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. The meeting starts at 11 a.m. and will conclude at 2 p.m. All CVWO members, donors, and interested public are invited to attend. Ruth Beck will be the MC and introduce yearly summaries of business items important to the Observatory such as the treasurer's report and encapsulations from the various committees on songbird research, hawk research, butterfly research, development, membership, publications and nominating.

At the meeting the CVWO will present special service awards in honor of John and Martha Dillard and Harry Armistead. And, Ms. Elizabeth Long, candidate for M.S. in Biology at the College of William and Mary and the Center of Conservation Biology, and recipient of the First CVWO-awarded Joy Archer Scholarship, will present a seminar on her research, "Prey selection of the Peregrine Falcon during the breeding season in Virginia." Also, CVWO president Brian Taber, will give a brief summary of our organization's 10 year history.

Attendees will have an opportunity to meet with CVWO's Directors and Staff members during lunch, provided at no charge. Please contact Ruth Beck on or before November 7th via email (rabeck@wm.edu) or by telephone at 757-221-2217 and state how many in your party will be attending so that the luncheon can be arranged. Before the annual meeting begins, there will be a Rarities Round-up Field Trip (7:30AM - meet at ESVNWR Visitor Center). Several parties will be formed. This is the best time of year (assuming we ever get a cold front!) to look for rare species like Gray Kingbirds, Cave Swallows, Myiarchus

Flycatchers, Harris's Sparrows and the like. Each party will contact the others with their finds. All interested birders should contact Brian Taber (taberzz@aol.com) or Kurt Gaskill (kurtcapt87@aol.com).

Also, attendees are welcome to bring their donations for their Kiptopeke Challenge team to the meeting, if you have not sent them in yet.

BALD EAGLE POPULATION SOARS OVER CHESAPEAKE BAY

(This article is excerpted from the October 2004 issue of Bay Journal. The author is Kathryn Reshetiloff of the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Chesapeake Bay Field Office in Annapolis, MD. Thanks to Joe Doyle for forwarding it. Ed.)

The Chesapeake Bay now has one of the highest concentrations of Bald Eagles in the lower 48 states. In addition to the breeding population, biologists in Maryland and Virginia have documented approximately 10 key communal roost areas which support hundreds of winter migrants from as far north as Canada and summer migrants from Florida. By 2003, there were 760 active Bald Eagle nests in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. In the last 30 years the DDT ban, the Endangered Species Act, Bald Eagle Protection Act, and protection of habitat through land acquisitions and landowner agreements have all helped the Bald Eagle recover.

Although Chesapeake Bald Eagles have fully recovered, it is believed that the full extent of the carrying capacity for the Bay area has yet to occur. The population is expected to grow for many more years. The maximum size of the breeding population will be predicted by future land and water development projects, especially if these occur in areas near forested shorelines where eagles forage, roost and nest.

In order for Bald Eagles to remain they need access to adequate habitat, including suitable nesting trees near open water, isolation from human activity and a stable food supply that includes mostly fish, other birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians.

If you come upon a Bald Eagle nest, DO NOT DISTURB! Always avoid activities that might disturb eagles, especially during the nesting season (December 15 through June 15). If you should stumble into nesting territory during this period, adult birds will usually sound a high-pitched cry. This is an indication that you are too close to an active nest and your presence is disturbing the pair. The first seven weeks after eggs are laid are the most critical for the survival of the eaglets.