



THE FLYER

NEWSLETTER OF THE WILLIAMSBURG BIRD CLUB

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May 2005

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Alex Minarik

Over the years, my interest in birds has expanded to an interest in wildflowers. So my ears perked up when the "Jamestown Lily" was mentioned in the film about Mark Catesby that was shown at our April meeting. I inquired at the visitor's center on Jamestown Island as to where I might find it. I have been walking the island loop regularly for seven years and did not recall ever seeing it. The two park rangers I talked to also had never seen it, nor heard of it for that matter. A reference book they found said the lily blooms from late April until June and could be found at Black Point and near the pull off that describes growing tobacco. Sure enough, after a little searching along the edges of the marsh, I found the lovely lily at both locations. Go out and see it yourselves, but hurry before the mayflies arrive.

MAY 14 FIELD TRIP TO YORK RIVER STATE PARK

Alex Minarik will lead the club bird field trip to York River State Park Saturday, May 14. Note that this is the *second* Saturday in May. The spring migration should still be on and YRSP always has lots of great warblers. Meet at the parking lot on the right just beyond the front gate at 8:00 AM when the park opens. There is a small parking fee for those who do not have annual passes.

MAY 18 BIRD CLUB PROGRAM

Join us Wednesday, **May 18** at 7:30 p.m. in Room 211 at Millington Hall at William and Mary. Mike Wilson and Bill Williams of the Center for Conservation Biology of the College of William and Mary will lead a discussion of the identification and biology of the Purple Martin, Chuck-wills-widow and Whip-poor-will, and how these species will be surveyed locally.

Once a popular Williamsburg summer resident, the Purple Martin seems to have declined throughout the area, yet we have little factual information to determine that. The nocturnal habits of Chuck-will's-widow and Whip-poor-

will create a situation that affords us little understanding of their local status and distribution. Across North America agencies such as the United States Geological Survey and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service are joining with Partners In Flight and other organizations to develop and implement coordinated bird survey strategies. The Center for Conservation Biology will become the lead organization in that effort, and the Williamsburg Bird Club is being asked to pilot a Chuck-wills-widow/Whip-poor-will survey protocol this spring that will be launched at a state level in 2006.

Note: Meeting location is **Room 211** in Millington Hall until further notice.

JUNE 5 ANNUAL PICNIC AT RUTH BECK'S

This is a favorite annual event and everyone's invited to this culinary and ornithological feast! You can be sure of great food, great birds and great conversation. Ruth and Sherwin Beck will graciously open their Barhamsville home and yard to us for a picnic Sunday, June 5. Time: 4 P.M.

You should call Jean Armour, 229-2363, and let her know that you are coming and discuss what you might contribute to the feast. Jean keeps track of salads, side dishes and desserts and it always works out just great. Dress is casual. Bring your binoculars – there's usually a birding walk-about before dinner. Otherwise you can sit on the deck and pick out birds on the lake.

Directions to the Beck's house: Take I-64 west toward Richmond to exit #227, Route 30 going toward West Point. Follow Route 30 about three miles to Barhamsville. The center of Barhamsville extends along the road for less than a mile. Look for the Post Office on your right. Then immediately look for a secondary paved road, Route 273, also going to the right. Follow it for 1.6 miles. As the forested area to your right suddenly gives way to open fields, look for a road sign on the left that says Farmer's Drive. Directly opposite Farmer's Drive, there will be a gravel road on the right. **Turn right onto the gravel road** and stay on it. It will turn into the Beck's

driveway.

HIGHLIGHTS OF MAY COUNT

By Brian Taber

Despite wind-driven rain and temperatures around 50, colder than many of our Christmas Counts, Club birders managed a very respectable 151 species, including 20 species of warblers and 9 species of shorebirds. To look for birds that had been missed by tally time, Bill Williams went out after the tally and found 2 Green-winged Teal at Green Springs Trail and I went out at dusk to Treasure Island Road and found a Chuck-will's Widow.

There were 22 participants. Some of the many highlights included 2 Yellow-crowned Night Herons at Kingsmill, a Little Blue Heron at Ford's Colony, a Worm-eating Warbler at Cheatham, Rusty Blackbirds at 2 locations, Boat-tailed Grackle at 2 locations, Marsh Wren at 2 locations, Glossy Ibis at Hog Island, Sora at Hog Island and Cattle Egret at Hog Island.

The best bird was the apparent hybrid Junco X White throated Sparrow that Bill Williams found at Cheatham. Thanks to all who participated in less-than-ideal weather!

BIRD SIGHTINGS – APRIL 2005

(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!)

April 3: Grace and Joe Doyle spot 29 species at Camp Peary on a cold and windy day. This was the last week they sighted the Bufflehead and the Mute Swan. Other highlights include Sharp-shinned Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Tree Swallow, Eastern Bluebird, Pine Warbler, Chipping Sparrow, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow and Dark-eyed Junco. Tom Armour reports: "Today at the Vineyard Pond, 2 pair of Ringed-neck Ducks, and at the Treasure Island Road marsh 1 pair of Green-winged Teal."

April 6: Lee Schuster reports: "This morning waiting for the school bus I heard my first Ovenbird and Louisiana Waterthrush. Sunday I heard a Yellow-throated Warbler. Alex Minarik reports: I saw a few new birds on my walk around Jamesown Island, all firsts for the year: Barn Swallows, Chimney Swifts, Palm Warbler, Common Yellowthroat and Parula Warbler. At my house I saw another Parula and a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. The Bluebirds are nesting in the backyard nesting box and the Hermit Thrush was bathing in the birdbath."

April 7: Tom Armour reports: "today at Treasure Island Road: 1 large male Wild Turkey, 1 Ameri-

can Kestrel, 2 Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, 2 Rough-winged Swallows, 1 Yellow-throated Warbler." **April 8:** Marilyn Ziegler reports hearing an Ovenbird on her walk around her neighborhood near Queens Creek. Alex Minarik reports: "the first Ruby-throated Hummingbird of the season at my feeder which I had put up four days earlier."

April 9: Tom Armour reports: "this morning Fred Blystone found 16 Glossy Ibis in the pasture pool at the Gospel Spreading Farm on the Colonial Parkway. Also, there were 3 Lesser Yellowlegs, and 1 Blue-winged Teal, plus 2 large Nutria feeding in the same pool."

April 10: Grace and Joe Doyle find 41 species at Camp Peary. This was the last week they sighted the Ruddy Ducks. Other highlights: Bald Eagle, American Kestrel, Clapper Rail, Killdeer, Belted Kingfisher, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, White-eyed Vireo, Yellow-throated Warbler, Ovenbird, Towhee and American Goldfinch.

April 11: Tom Armour reports: "at the Airport 5 Savannah Sparrows, 1st this spring there." Bill Williams reports from Green Springs Trail: 4 Green Herons, 6 Osprey nests – 5 with incubating females, one Barn Owl seen briefly in flight at Mainland Farm (species 201 for the cumulative list), 3 Chimney Swift, 9 singing Common Yellowthroats, 8 singing Swamp Sparrows, 5 Rusty Blackbirds. Two Blue-winged Teal were at Gospel Spreading Farm Monday afternoon.

April 12: Tom Armour reports: "today at Treasure Island Road, first Gray Catbird."

April 14: Tom Armour reports: "his AM on the field pond on Treasure Island Rd. there were 16 Greater Yellowlegs."

April 15: Herb and Beverly Spannuth report first hummingbirds of the season at their yard feeders.

April 16: Dorothy Whitfield reports 12 species joining her for breakfast – on the other side of the sliding glass door: Carolina Wrens, Downy Woodpeckers (male and female), Hairy Woodpecker (male), Tufted Titmouse, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Mourning Dove, Hawk (unable to determine if Red-tailed or Red-shouldered), White-throated Sparrow, American Goldfinch, Red-bellied Woodpecker (male), White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Chickadee.

Tom Armour reports: "This morning on the pools at Treasure Island Rd. there were 32 Greater Yellowlegs feasting on polliwog and 2 Common Snipe. In the pasture at the end of the road there were a pair of Canada Geese with 7 very young goslings, first I've seen this spring."

Shirley Devan reports from Jamestown Island that the owlet was out of the nest & perched just above while Mom was sunning in a nearby tree. Presently Mom flew off. Herb and Beverly Spannuth arrived. Later in the morning the owlet was back in the nest. "He's starting to get feathers

around his neck and shoulders but his belly is still downy. There is still down on his flight feathers.” Bill Williams reports: “Fred Blystone, Brian Taber and I observed 1 Red-throated Loon, 1 Glossy Ibis, and 1 Caspian Tern at College Creek. There were 11 Blue-winged Teal at Gospel Spreading farm the same day.”

Marilyn Zeigler reports a Yellow-crowned Night Heron at Queens Creek.

April 17: Dorothy Whitfield reports Hairy Woodpecker (male and female), Red-bellied Woodpecker, Cardinals, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Chickadee.

Bill Williams reports: “at the Green Springs Trail there was a singing Wild Turkey and 1 Prairie Warbler. All 6 Osprey nests had incubating females.”

April 18: Tom McCary reports Boat-tailed Grackles and White-eyed Vireos at Indian Fields Creek on the Colonial Parkway. Bill Williams reports there were 9 Bonaparte's Gulls at College Creek.

April 19: Tom Armour reports: “This AM at Treasure Island Road, 3 Wild Turkeys, 2 of them running down the road, 2 Blue-winged Teal, 1 Common Yellowthroat, 1 White-eyed Vireo, 1 Yellow-throated Warbler. No shore birds, the pools are starting to dry up.” Bill Williams reports: “1 Glossy Ibis at Gospel Spreading farm seen by Fred Blystone and myself.”

Alex Minarik saw a Scarlet Tanager at Dismal Swamp and heard the first Wood Thrush of the spring in her neighborhood. She also reports 3 eggs in the Bluebird box in her yard.

April 20: Alex Minarik reports: “today at Jamestown Island, I heard another Wood Thrush and also saw a Hooded Warbler, Green Heron and Red-Eyed Vireos. The owlet was sitting on a branch near its nest on Jamestown Island.” Herb & Bev Spannuth observed a Red-headed Woodpecker four times today at their backyard sunflower seed feeder. Bill Williams reports: “1 Cattle Egret at Gospel Spreading Farm; 1 Eastern Kingbird at College Creek noted by Fred Blystone, Brian Taber and myself.”

Brian Taber reports: “The College Creek Hawk-watch is located on the James River near Williamsburg and is sponsored by Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory. Today, April 20th, only one day after our 1000th bird, we are almost at 1100. Bill Williams, Fred Blystone and I watched for almost 3 hours as an excellent variety of hawks crossed the James. The total of 70 is not in the top 10 days for the total of hawks and vultures we tally, but it is the best total of hawks at 61....only 9 Turkey Vultures today. The previous Northern Harrier daily high of 6 was surpassed at 9. The previous Broad-winged daily high of 4 was surpassed at 7 (we don't see flocks

of Broad-wings here) and the previous Cooper's Hawk daily high of 5 was surpassed at 7. The 21 Sharp-shinned Hawks was the second-best daily total. Bring on the kites!”

April 21: Linda Scherer reports: “I put my hummingbird feeder out on 4/17, and within 2 hours had a visit from the male Red-bellied Woodpecker who apparently thinks it belongs to him. By Tuesday, 4/19, both a male and female hummers had discovered the feeder. I have put the second feeder out now so that everyone has a shot at it. The woodpeckers got very possessive last year.”

Linda Scherer and Herb Spannuth reported (independently) from Jamestown Island that they had seen both the adult Great Horned Owl and the owlet perched in trees near the nest. Bill Williams reports 7 Lesser Yellowlegs at College Creek and 1 Yellow Warbler singing in Settler's Mill. Alex Minarik reports: “At 8:10 this evening we heard a Chuck-will's-widow along Treasure Island Rd.”

April 23: Shirley Devan reports: “Between 2 and 3 p.m. today we got good looks at both adult Great Horned Owl and owlet near the nest on the loop road. Saw the adult as soon as we arrived – very visible in a tree behind the nest. Nest was empty. I was sure owlet was near by so I scanned the trees until I found him – pretty far from the nest – a spot he could only have reached by flying! He was in the same tree as the adult but on the opposite side of the trunk. He was well hidden behind a clump of pine needles but once I found him we got good looks through the scope (but not so good pictures). Mom flew off (back across the creek) for a few minutes but returned shortly to almost the same spot. Did not have food in her mouth or go near owlet.”

Diana Nolan reports “the Red-headed Woodpecker was at the suet about 6:45 p.m. Also have about 5 or 6 hummingbirds. They were heard before they were seen around last Wednesday the 20th.”

Bill Williams reports: “After I left the field trip I joined Fred Blystone and Brian Taber at College Creek. There were few hawks, but at least 41 Common Loons flew past from 9:45 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Leaving there, a Glossy Ibis was seen at Gospel Spreading Farm.”

April 24: Grace and Joe Doyle report 43 species at Camp Peary. New birds for the month: Spotted Sandpiper, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Barn Swallow, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Red-eyed Vireo, Northern Parula, Prairie Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Summer Tanager and Red-winged Blackbird.

Bill Williams reports a Glossy Ibis at the Gospel Spreading Farm. “Earlier that morning on the Green Springs Trail there was a Virginia Rail, 1 Hooded Warbler, a Northern Harrier, 4 Green-

winged Teal and 6 Rusty Blackbirds. Two Red-headed Woodpeckers were seen and heard there just after daybreak.”

April 27: Alex Minarik reports from Jamestown Island: “Marilyn Zeigler, Tom McCary and Louise Burns joined me this morning for a walk around the short loop at Jamestown Island. The weather was nothing short of spectacular! We saw the adult Great Horned Owl in the vicinity of the nest but the owlet wasn't seen. Had good looks at a Great Crested Flycatcher, a Brown-headed Nuthatch, a 1st year Orchard Oriole, a Summer Tanager and several Bald Eagles. Also heard a Wood Thrush and a Wood Pewee. Total species for the morning was 46.”

Tom Armour reports 2 Blue-winged Teal, 1 Green Heron, and 4 Greater Yellowlegs in the pond at the end of Treasure Island Road.

April 29: Marilyn Zeigler reports the return of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks to her backyard feeder. Tom Armour reports: “on Treasure Island Road, 2 Solitary Sandpipers, 1st this year for me, and on the pool at the end of the road were 6 Blue-winged Teal and 1 Greater Yellowlegs.”

April 30: Beth Morgan reports two Rose-breasted Grosbeaks at her safflower seed feeder. Alex Minarik reports: “At Jamestown Island, we saw the owlet this morning in a pine well left of the nest site. Two new species for the season were Acadian Flycatcher and Prairie Warbler. Still no Red-headed Woodpecker.” Marilyn Zeigler reports male and female Rose-breasted Grosbeaks at her feeder.

Tom Armour reports: “at Treasure Island Road this morning, 2 Wild Turkeys, 3 Greater Yellowlegs, 1 Lesser Yellowlegs, 2 Eastern Kingbirds, 1 Yellow Warbler, 1 White-eyed Vireo and 1 Great Crested Flycatcher.”

May 1: Beth Morgan sees two Rose-breasted Grosbeaks at her safflower seed feeder. Marilyn Zeigler reports Rose-breasted Grosbeaks still at her backyard feeder. Shirley Devan stalks Marilyn's feeder in late afternoon and finally sees two male Rose-breasted Grosbeaks at 6:00 p.m., a first time bird for her. “Thanks, Marilyn!” Also, in Marilyn's yard, White-throated Sparrows, Blue Jays, Cardinals, Gray Catbirds, female Red-wing Blackbirds, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds.

May 2: Beth Morgan reports 4 male Rosebreasted Grosbeaks at the safflower and sunflower feeders, 2 Barred Owls in a backyard tree, and a young beaver nibbling on bird seed at the periphery of the yard.

APRIL 23 BIRD CLUB FIELD TRIP

Despite the threat of rain twenty-seven birders turned out for the Saturday, April 23, 2005, bird walk on the Green Springs Trail. The group included Meta Little and Jack Lenihan from

Newark, Delaware, Helen Schultz from Rising Sun, Maryland and Kathy Kitterman and Amiele Barakey of Virginia Beach.

Fifty-three species were recorded for the 2.5 hour adventure. Of special note were a very cooperative male Ruby-throated Hummingbird, an almost cooperative Barred Owl, a very boisterous Prothonotary Warbler and an Eastern Kingbird, at least 2 Rusty Blackbirds and a pair of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers nest building. A male Orchard Oriole informed the trail of his return. Tree Swallows, 6 pairs of nesting Ospreys, a pair of Blue-winged Teal and at least 2 Greater Yellowlegs kept everyone busy on the boardwalk. Thanks to Bill Williams for leading the troop around the trail with his scope.

CVWO BIRDING OPPORTUNITIES

These upcoming events are from the April 2005 issue of the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory's newsletter, “Coastal Flightlines:”

May 14: Northampton County Migratory Bird Count Day sponsored by CVWO to find as many birds and species as possible in this southern county of Delmarva Peninsula. This is a peak migration time for the Eastern Shore. No habitat to be uncounted! Contact Tom Saunders at 804-435-0351 (weekends) or tasaunders@baycreek.net
June 4: Parker's Marsh Adventure. CVWO in partnership with the Natural Heritage Eastern Shore Region is sponsoring the second annual census of birds at this 750-acre bayside saltmarsh in Accomac County. Volunteers needed to census this unique habitat. Skiffs and kayaks will be provided! Counting will take place from before sunrise (for some) to about noon. For more information and to volunteer, contact Kurt Gaskill at 703-768-2172 or kurtcapt87@aol.com.

BIRD OF THE MONTH, THE YEAR, THE 21ST CENTURY (SO FAR)

The Ivory-billed Woodpecker is alive! Certainly every birder, conservationist and naturalist in America was thrilled and heartened to hear the good news that researchers had indeed found a male Ivory-billed Woodpecker in the Arkansas swamp. Maybe America's conservation efforts are paying off after all. The researchers kept the secret for over a year – what a hard secret to keep! A birder happened upon the bird February 11, 2004. A team of over 50 people from seven institutions kept the secret to give researchers time to confirm the sighting and protect the bird's larger habitat. Now let's hope he has a girl friend! (The excerpts below are from Cornell Lab of Ornithology's web site April 28, 2005:)

Long believed to be extinct, a magnificent bird –

the Ivory-billed Woodpecker – has been rediscovered in the Big Woods of eastern Arkansas. More than 60 years after the last confirmed sighting of the species in the United States, a research team announced that at least one male ivory-bill still survives in vast areas of bottom-land swamp forest.

Published in the journal *Science* on its Science Express Web site (April 28, 2005), the findings include multiple sightings of the elusive woodpecker and frame-by-frame analyses of brief video footage. The evidence was gathered during an intensive year-long search in the Cache River and White River national wildlife refuges involving more than 50 experts and field biologists working together as part of the Big Woods Conservation Partnership, led by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology at Cornell University and The Nature Conservancy. "The bird captured on video is clearly an Ivory-billed Woodpecker," said John Fitzpatrick, the *Science* article's lead author and director of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. "Amazingly, America may have another chance to protect the future of this spectacular bird and the awesome forests in which it lives."

"It is a landmark rediscovery," said Scott Simon, director of The Nature Conservancy's Arkansas chapter. "Finding the ivory-bill in Arkansas validates decades of great conservation work and represents an incredible story of hope for the future."

Joining the search team at a press conference in Washington DC, Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton announced a Department of the Interior initiative to identify funds for recovery efforts. Through its cooperative conservation initiative, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has a variety of grant and technical aid programs to support wildlife recovery.

"These programs are the heart and soul of the federal government's commitment to cooperative conservation. They are perfectly tailored to recover this magnificent bird," Secretary Norton said. "Across the Nation, these programs preserve millions of acres of habitat, improve riparian habitat along thousands of miles of streams, and develop conservation plans for endangered species and their habitat."

The largest woodpecker in North America, the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, is known through lore as a bird of beauty and indomitable spirit. The species vanished after extensive clearing destroyed millions of acres of virgin forest throughout the South between the 1880s and mid-1940s. Although the majestic bird has been sought for decades, until now there was no firm evidence that it still existed.

From "Rediscovering the Ivory-billed Wood-

pecker: Historic Encounters" from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's web site:

"Englishman Mark Catesby came to the United States in 1712 to work on a natural history of the plants and animals of the North American colonies. When Catesby came across the ivory-bill he named the bird the "largest White-bill Wood-pecker" and was apparently the first person to describe the species. Much of what we know about the Native Americans' relationship with the bird comes from Catesby's book. He writes: "The bills of these Birds are much valued by the Cannola Indians, who made Coronets of 'em for their Princes and great warriors, by fixing them round a Wreath, with their points outward. The Northern Indians having none of these birds in their cold country, purchase them off the Southern People at the price of two, and sometimes three, Buckskins a bill."

To John James Audubon, the Ivory-billed Woodpecker brought thoughts of the "satin and lace" portraits of the genteel by the seventeenth-century artist Van Dyke. Indeed, this species is an "aristocrat" in appearance among woodpeckers: Its great stature, heavy, ivory-colored, chisel-tipped bill, pale lemon-yellow eyes, crisp black-and-white markings, distinctive crest, and lean, long appearance distinguish it from all others.

EGGS DON'T HATCH FOR RED-TAILED HAWKS

The New York Times reported April 29 that the eggs of Pale Male and Lola did not hatch this year. According to folks who keep an eye on the nest, Lola laid her first egg March 9. Fifty days elapsed with no sign of nestlings – incubation period for Red-tailed Hawks is about 35 days. Some birders believe the newness of the nest and its smaller size may have had something to do with the eggs not hatching. The hawks will have plenty of time to enlarge the nest in time for next year's eggs.