



THE FLYER

NEWSLETTER OF THE WILLIAMSBURG BIRD CLUB

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Website: www.wmbgbirdclub.com

August 2006

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Bob Long

The monthly bird walks at New Quarter Park are attracting many new birders. Although birds are hard to identify in the summer foliage, the camaraderie and information sharing among participants always make for a rewarding experience. I invite our younger birders to consider leading a bird walk. We are certainly fortunate to have the world-class birders like Bill Williams in our midst, but we also need to have other people willing to lead walks around the area. Don't worry if you're not an expert – learning together as a group out on the trail is rewarding and fun. A group of young ears and sharp eyes go a long way in identifying birds. Remember, the more you're outside, the more you learn. Take advantage of the opportunities to learn from our club's expert leaders and then volunteer to lead a walk. Let any bird club board member know if you are interested. Thanks!

FIELD TRIP TO CRANEY ISLAND

Our next field trip will be Saturday, August 19 when William and Mary's Ruth Beck leads us to Crane Island near Portsmouth. Car pooling is a MUST for this trip. Travel time is about an hour one way. Meet by 6:45 a.m. at Colony Square Shopping Center on Jamestown Road so we can sort out car pools to leave by 7:00. Bring bug spray, sun screen, hats, water, snacks and/or lunch. Consider wearing long sleeves and long pants. Crane Island has no shade and the August heat can be oppressive. We will travel around the island by car stopping at the best spots so little walking is required. Given all that, the birding is often wonderful. Ruth reports returning birds include American Avocets, Yellowlegs, and a White Pelican! Black-necked Stilts nested there over the summer. So we can expect to see just about anything. Ruth has been studying Crane Island birds for over 30 years and is THE expert on birds at Crane Island. Don't miss this opportunity!

BIRD WALK AT NEW Q'TER PARK

Our next summer bird walk at New Quarter Park will be Saturday, August 26 at 7:00 a.m. Meet in the parking lot at 7:00 a.m. The scheduled leader is Bill Williams. Wear a hat, bring bug spray and consider wearing long pants. The walk will likely be over by 9:00 a.m. when the heat index starts to rise and the birds head for cover! If you need directions to the park, call the park at 890-3513.

It has become a custom to adjourn to Bob and Cynthia Long's house just outside the park after the walk to enjoy coffee, treats, and bird watching at their kitchen window. After our July 22 walk at the park, about a dozen people enjoyed refreshments and friendship around the kitchen table. We were rewarded with the appearance of a juvenile Pileated Woodpecker on the suet feeder just outside the window, in addition to numerous other feeder birds – parents and adults. Thanks to Cynthia and Bob for their hospitality!

Twice-a-month bird walks at New Quarter Park resume in September. Add these dates to your calendar: September 9 @ 8:00 a.m. and September 23 @ 7:00 a.m. (2nd and 4th Saturdays).

SEPTEMBER MEETING

Our next meeting and program will be the third Wednesday in September – September 20. Details will be in the September newsletter.

JUNE AND JULY 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!

June 1: Bill Williams reports a Common Nighthawk calling as it flew over Settler's Mill.

June 3: Bill Williams reports a second summer Little Blue Heron at Green Springs Trail. This plumage of mottled blue on white is often referred to as "calico."

June 11: Tom McCary, who works at Shirley Plantation in Charles City County, reports a joyful sighting as he was driving off the property in the afternoon. From his car he spotted a male Common Yellowthroat and a male Orchard Oriole taking a bath in a mud puddle next to the road. Tom says that he regularly sees male and female Orchard Orioles flying around the main house there.

June 18: Tom Armour reports: "this morning at the end of Treasure Island Road, an adult male Baltimore Oriole, and in the marsh 2 Green Herons. Two Purple Martins were at the houses at the corner of Lake Powell Rd. and the Road to the Airport – 1st I've seen there this year."

June 24: Bill Williams reports 2 Cliff Swallows at the Felgates Creek Bridge. This species was reported to nest there last summer, a first for York County. I was unable to see any swallow nests on 24 June, though there were Barn Swallows and one Northern Rough-winged Swallow present near the bridge.

June 28: Tom Armour reports a female American Kestrel today at Treasure Island Road, the first this summer.

July 1: Martha Briggs reported from her yard on Jamestown Road across from the Muscarelle Museum. In just 10 minutes – from 7:30 to 7:40 a.m. – she spotted the following at her seed and suet feeders: Brown Thrasher, two Carolina Chickadees, Eastern Towhee, Downy Woodpecker, two Tufted Titmice, a Northern Cardinal, Red-bellied Woodpecker, and two Gray Catbirds. A Ruby-throated Hummingbird was feeding at its own station. The ground level bird bath was occupied by a box turtle.

July 15: Bill Williams spotted a Tricolored Heron on the Green Springs Trail 15. This is the second one he's seen there.

July 22: Tom McCary reports a Prairie Warbler wagging his tail near the formal gardens at Shirley Plantation. Also, near the same mud puddle spot, he again spotted a male Common Yellowthroat and an Indigo Bunting singing nearby.

July 24: Shirley Devan saw a Sharp-shinned Hawk fly across Warhill Trail on a bike trek to the WISC. At the Ellipse Garden at Freedom Park, many American Goldfinches were feeding on the wild flowers.

July 25: Shirley Devan reports from a biking trip around Jamestown Island: a Pileated Woodpecker flying over the Pitch and Tar Swamp and a Red-headed Woodpecker at Black Point, plus an Osprey flying with a fish in his claw along the shore line at Black Point.

July 26: Tom McCary reports that he flushed a Northern Bobwhite as he was walking along a

wooded trail at Shirley Plantation. He also spotted a Blue Grosbeak and an Indigo Bunting.

2006 VA BALD EAGLE SURVEY

By Mike Wilson and Bryan Watts

Bryan Watts and Mitchell Byrd from The Center for Conservation Biology at the College of William and Mary have compiled the results of the 2006 Bald Eagle breeding survey for Virginia's portion of the Chesapeake Bay and major coastal tributaries. The number of known breeding pairs has increased 7.1 percent, from 453 pairs in 2005 to 485 pairs in 2006. This represents the highest number of pairs ever recorded in the state. Known pairs were documented to produce a record 705 chicks. Nearly 3,000 chicks have been produced during the past 5 breeding seasons. The upper reaches of the James and Rappahannock Rivers continue to provide the most significant breeding habitat for bald eagles in the state.

The 2006 survey was funded primarily by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and the Center for Conservation Biology with additional support from the Army Corps of Engineers.

We thank all of those in the community who have contributed information to the 2006 survey. The Center for Conservation Biology is always interested in information on the location of nesting pairs, particularly in the Piedmont and mountain regions of the state. We may be contacted by phone at 757-221-1645 or by the contact information provided on our website, <http://www.ccb-wm.org>

2006 RED-COCKADED WOODPECKER BREEDING RESULTS

By Mike Wilson, Center for Conservation Biology

The 2006 breeding season marked another successful year for the population of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers (RCWs) on the Piney Grove Preserve. On June 29th we observed the successful fledging of the 5th brood produced at Piney Grove this year. This represents the first time in more than a decade that Virginia has supported five breeding pairs. It also represents the second consecutive year that one new pair has attempted and successfully produced young, bringing the total up from 3 broods to 5 broods in the last two years. A total of 4 males and 4 females fledged this season was the product of three 2-chick broods and two one-chick broods. This brings the total number of adult and hatch year birds at Piney Grove to 34 individuals.

The latest observations reported here punctuate a year-round systematic effort by the Center for

Conservation Biology to determine the survivorship and productivity of all individual RCWs in the population. Each season all new chicks are banded with a Fish and Wildlife Service aluminum band and a unique combination of color bands for later identification. Birds were banded this year by Bryan Watts of the Center for Conservation Biology and Don Schwab of the USFWS. We will follow up with a census of the population in the fall and again in the winter to identify the status and location of each individual bird.

The recent success at Piney Grove is a result of the dedication and hard work by the Nature Conservancy to manage the habitat and a skillful strategy by all conservation partners in translocating birds from South Carolina to bolster the Virginia population. The recent gain of two new breeding pairs was a combination of 3 birds brought from South Carolina and one bird that was hatched in Virginia from parents that were originally translocated from South Carolina two years ago. An aggressive prescribed burning program accompanied with the thinning of certain pine stands has opened new areas of habitat to RCWs for foraging and possible population expansion.

Work on this fragile population is supported by the Virginia Chapter of the Nature Conservancy, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, and the Center for Conservation Biology.

DOG I, BIRD 0

By Shirley Devan

Virginia Beach friends asked me to house sit and dog sit while they visited China in July. I ended up spending 16 days with their Basset hounds, Mary Jane and Diesel. Of course, dog "sitting" requires dog "walking" so I bounced (!!!) out of bed each morning about 6:00 to take MJ and Diesel on their early morning stroll around the neighborhood. Admittedly, they were more awake than I was most mornings, but the trips were generally uneventful. I was back with the morning paper and coffee by 6:45. Birds spotted around the neighborhood streets were remarkably unremarkable – Robins, Mourning Doves, Northern Mockingbirds. Occasionally a few Brown Pelicans would fly over.

However, one morning was memorable. Diesel is the speedster and Mary Jane prances slowly behind. Often my arms were stretched wide with Diesel at the end of one tether in front and MJ at the end of the other tether behind. Keeping an eye on both dogs was a challenge, in addition to picking up after them while holding two leashes and three plastic bags. One morning near the end

of my stay, before I could stop him, Diesel grabbed an object from the middle of the street and held fast. It could have been anything – after all, on July 4 the neighbors were in that very spot exploding 2-liter bottles of Coke with Mentos!

When I finally drew near I discovered a Mourning Dove in Diesel's mouth! Yow! Now what? Being a cat person, I'm not about to pry open Diesel's jaw to release that dove. (The world has lots of doves. Thank goodness it was not a bobwhite! I would have faced a heart rending dilemma...) Perhaps he'll lose interest as we walk around and he'll drop it, I thought. Not a chance with this prize. When we returned to the house, I released Diesel, with the bird firmly in his mouth, into the backyard where he seemed perfectly content. While I took MJ inside and prepared her breakfast, Diesel (unbeknownst to me) dashed through the doggy door and scooted upstairs – with the prize. When I found him upstairs, he dashed down to eat MJ's breakfast. Now the bird is on the rug in the master bedroom. Before I could dispose of it, Diesel rushes back. He grabs the bird, bounds downstairs, and sits on the dining room rug and devours the bird. Not a feather left to clean up. He ate the WHOLE BIRD.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to new members Jeanette and Keith Navia, Michael and Heidi Fencik, and Patricia Allred. Thanks for joining and we look forward to seeing you at an upcoming event.

NEW QUARTER PARK BIRD WALK

By Heidi Fencik

Just wanted to say a big "thank you" to you and the Bird Club for a great time this last Saturday morning. We had such a good time on the July 22nd bird walk at New Quarter Park.

My husband, Mike, had the chance to talk with Bill Williams about where to buy binoculars and which ones were the best, etc. After leaving Bob and Cynthia's house we loaded up the kids and went to Wild Birds Unlimited. There, we got a lesson from George Copping in binoculars and bird food. We got ourselves a nice pair of 8x42 binoculars and now we can really see our backyard birds! We loaded up on bird food and bought some new feeders too. We even got a Sibley field guide to NE American birds. We're getting pretty close to having a real "clue" now! The kids – daughter 13 and son 9 – have really gotten into it too.

So far we've been able to see an osprey nest on the cell tower behind our house (off of Penniman road), downy woodpeckers, lots of ruby-

throated humming birds, lots of house finches, chickadees and a whole lot of other birds that we're not experienced enough to identify yet. No pileated woodpeckers though, sigh. We're really enjoying our new "eyes" and information gleaned from you all at the bird club and look forward to seeing you again.

P.S. I put our family membership application for the Williamsburg Bird Club in the mail this morning.

(Editor's Note: The group, led by Bill Williams, heard or saw 33 species on July 22. Highlights included Summer Tanagers, Blue Grosbeaks, and three vireo species – White-eyed Vireo, Yellow-throated Vireo, and Red-eyed Vireo – and many American Goldfinches feeding on the wildflowers near the picnic shelters.)

NEWPORT NEWS PARK BIRD WALKS IN JULY

By Fred Blystone

July 2: Eleanor Young and I joined leader Jane Frigo and four other birders for the Hampton Roads Bird Club walk at Newport News Park. It was a warm day and the humidity was fairly high, which seemed to have the same effect on the birds as it had on the bird watchers – there wasn't a lot of movement. During the nearly three hours of the walk, we saw or identified by call forty-six species of birds. The highlight of the day was a cooperative pair of Red-headed Woodpeckers, one of which flew into a small tree right beside us, while the other bird sat on the railing of the boardwalk we were standing on.

July 16: I joined leader Jane Frigo and one other birder for the walk at Newport News Park. Due to the heat and humidity we did not go to all of our normal stops and thus ended up seeing only 36 species. There was a number of adults feeding young which enabled us to have better than usual looks at some of the birds, including Great Crested Flycatchers, Eastern Kingbirds and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers. One unusual thing we saw was a Great Crested Flycatcher appearing to go after a hummingbird, followed a very short time later by the hummingbird chasing the flycatcher. It seemed much too hot for a game of tag.

Walks are held in the park the 1st and 3rd Sundays of each month starting at 7 am and are open to the public.

RESUSCITATION!

By Lois Leeth

My training in mouth resuscitation paid off again! I heard a familiar "thud" against the glass storm

door. I rushed to open the door and get to the victim – a juvenile woodpecker flat on his back, legs straight up. I picked him up and began blowing a smooth stream of air slowly and gently into his open beak. At the first new air his eyes would open, but to get the air flow going again, I had to get a big deeper breath – and in the absence of air his eyes would close again. The procedure continued for about five minutes. Then his eyes remained open, and he began squirming to free himself of the unfortunate situation! Being sure he was ready for full flight, I held on for a few more seconds and then released him. He flew straight through the dogwood tree not striking any limbs and at a good speed, proving indescribable nature inspired accuracy in flight! I got a good close up view of his head with a touch of red top knot, and of course his beautifully designed black and white feathers. My good deed for the day!

JUNE/ JULY BIRDS AT CAMP PEARY

Joe and Grace Doyle birded Camp Peary three Sundays in June 2006 and found at least 55 species each visit. June 11 highlights include: Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, Clapper Rail, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Red-headed Woodpecker, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Yellow-throated Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat, plus the usual summer residents to total 57 species. June 18 highlights included Great Egret, Mute Swan, Bald Eagle, Red-shouldered Hawk, Clapper Rail, Belted Kingfisher, Northern Flicker, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Scarlet Tanager, Blue Grosbeak – total tally of 55 species. June 25 highlights include (birds not reported in earlier trips): Wood Duck, Black Vulture, American Kestrel, Chimney Swift, Northern Parula – total tally of 55 species.

In July, Joe and Grace visited Camp Peary four Sundays. On July 2 they found 54 species highlighted by a Green Heron (each trip!), Chimney Swift, Pileated Woodpecker, House Wren, Brown Thrasher, Yellow-throated Warbler, Blue Grosbeak, Orchard Oriole, in addition to the usual summer residents. The highlight of the July 9 visit was Northern Bobwhite in two areas, plus the usual summer residents. They found 49 species July 16 highlighted by (birds not reported in earlier July trips): Snowy Egret, Bald Eagle, Clapper Rail, Common Tern, Northern Flicker, and American Goldfinch.

NATURE CAMP, OCTOBER 14 AT NEW QUARTER PARK

(Editor's Note: One of the benefits of membership in the bird club is advance notice of special events

and the opportunity to register early! This is the first notice of our fall session of "Nature Camp for Grownups.")

Our June "Nature Camp for Grownups" was so successful we're going to sponsor another camp this fall – Saturday, October 14 at New Quarter Park. The fall program will feature more time with the naturalists– Bill Williams, Hugh Beard, and geologist Jerre Johnson. The morning will be devoted to exploring the park and learning about the birds, trees and plants in the varied habitats around the park. In the afternoon William and Mary's Professor of Geology Emeritus Jerre Johnson will take you on a "walk and talk" discovery trip around the park to learn about the geology, geography and archeology of this particular slice of the York River shoreline. Each participant will receive a Virginia state fossil!

The fee is \$45 per person and this includes lunch and all materials. Proceeds go to the educational programs of the Williamsburg Bird Club and the Williamsburg Land Conservancy.

Time is 8:00 – 5:00 at New Quarter Park. Participation is limited to 25 people. This is cosponsored with New Quarter Park and the York County Parks and Recreation. To sign up, call Shirley Devan at 813-1322 or 220-6269, or send email to: naturecamp@cox.net.

EASTERN SHORE BIRDING AND WILDLIFE FESTIVAL

The Eastern Shore's 14th year of celebrating birds and bird migration will take place October 6 – 8, 2006 in Cape Charles, VA. Sunset Beach Resort is the headquarters. The Birding and Wildlife Festival is an annual celebration during the fall migration of the Neotropical songbirds and raptors. Virginia's Eastern Shore creates a natural funnel focusing the migration of birds to the southernmost tip of the Peninsula. The area provides an excellent opportunity for novice and experienced birdwatchers to witness incredible numbers of birds congregated in preparation for their flight to the tropics. Participants can choose from numerous field trips – many to areas usually off limits to the public – and boat trips. Pre-registration assures you the best chance of reserving space for these "space is limited" events. The fee is \$20 per adult/day or \$40 per adult for the Festival weekend or \$5 per child for the weekend.

There is no fee to enjoy the many activities on the festival grounds at Sunset Beach Resort. The family activities continue to grow and this year will be bigger and better than ever. The air will be filled with live music and the smell of great food.

Highlights for the weekend include live bird exhibits, wildlife artists (decoys, paintings, sculptures, drawings, and prints will be available), kids' activity tent, science and nature products for sale, a variety of exhibitors, and exciting workshops throughout the weekend. No tours are scheduled Saturday or Sunday between 11 AM and 1 PM so everyone can enjoy the festivities. For more information, contact the Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce: Phone: 757-787-2460; or email:

info@esvachamber.org Or visit the web site at: www.esvachamber.org/festivals/birding/

PELAGIC BIRDING TRIPS FROM VA BEACH

Looking for a day trip birding adventure? Try a Seabirding Pelagic Trip run by Brian Patteson of Cape Hatteras, NC. Almost all of Brian's trips depart from Cape Hatteras, but he has scheduled two trips in late September departing from Virginia Beach – September 23 and September 30. If bad weather occurs on those dates, the alternate dates are September 24 and October 1.

Seabirding is the most successful operator of pelagic bird watching trips in the Eastern U.S. and its trips have a long-standing reputation for experience and excellence. A key to their success is repeat business and their reputation is known worldwide. Each trip is staffed by 2 to 5 leaders, each of whom have extensive offshore experience and the knowledge necessary to locate and identify some of the most cryptic and elusive species.

According to Brian, late September is an excellent time for seeing numbers of birds off the Virginia Capes. One species which is rarely found on our trips off Cape Hatteras, the White-faced Storm-Petrel, is reasonably likely at this time. Other species seen on previous trips here in September include Trindade (Herald) Petrel, Fea's Petrel, Cory's Shearwater, Greater Shearwater, Manx Shearwater, Audubon's Shearwater, Wilson's Storm-Petrel, White-tailed Tropicbird, Red-necked Phalarope, Red Phalarope, South Polar Skua, Pomarine Jaeger, Parasitic Jaeger, Long-tailed Jaeger, Sabine's Gull, Bridled Tern, and Sooty Tern. If you want to add some sea birds to your year or life list, this is a great opportunity. For more information, contact: Brian Patteson, Seabirding Pelagic Trips, Hatteras, NC. Phone: (252) 986-1363. Web site:

<http://www.patteson.com>. Email: brian@patteson.com