



THE FLYER

NEWSLETTER OF THE WILLIAMSBURG BIRD CLUB

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September 2006

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Bob Long

Hope you all had a great summer. I'm looking forward to cooler weather and improved bird watching as the leaves fall. It will be a good time to break in additional bird walk leaders during the fall migration.

We have had several bird family reunions at our backyard feeders this summer, including woodpeckers, thrashers, finches, nuthatches, blue jays, and wrens. The birds come in family groups and drive off non-members.

Williamsburg is such a great place to live – especially with all the excitement of Jamestown 2007 which will also be our club's 30th anniversary. Many of our founders are still a big part of the club. We are incubating plans to celebrate "Thirty birdy years." Stay tuned.

NATURE CAMP, OCTOBER 14 AT NEW QUARTER PARK

If the kayaking part of the June "Nature Camp" gave you trepidations, then put your anxiety aside and join up for the October 14 "Nature Camp."

The fall edition will feature a full day with the naturalists– Bill Williams and Hugh Beard, and geologist Jerre Johnson. The morning will be devoted to exploring the park and learning to identify 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, snacks, and all materials. Proceeds go to the educational programs of the bird club.

Time is 7:30 – 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.

PROGRAMS FOR SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER

Our September 20, 2006 program will feature Ruth Beck talking about "Man-made habitat and Bird Use." Ruth has spent over 30 years studying the birds and the habitats at the south island of the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel and at Craney Island. Her program will describe: the bird species attracted to the islands; competition among species for nesting grounds; and how the operations of the islands impact nesting shore birds. Ruth is a professor of biology at William and Mary and led our August 19 field trip to Craney Island. A June 10, 2006 front page article in The Daily Press featured Ruth and the thousands of birds at the tunnel island.

Our October 18, 2006 program will feature Mitchell Byrd, Director Emeritus of the Center for Conservation Biology at William and Mary. His program will focus on the Recovery of the Bald Eagle population in Virginia. Tim Jones, who wrote an article about Dr. Byrd for the November 17, 2005 edition of The William and Mary News, described Mitchell Byrd this way: "Byrd is the man who, many say, has saved the bald eagle. They also say he is the man who brought the peregrine falcon back to life east of the Mississippi River. In Millington Hall, they say the nationally recognized biology program housed there truly took shape during the 13 years that Byrd chaired the department. ... In 1991, as he retired as Chancellor Professor of Biology at William and Mary, Byrd and one of his former students, Bryan Watts, co-founded the Center for Conservation Biology, a nonprofit organization within the College's biology department to 'provide an opportunity to continue endangered-species research activities at the College, and, at the same time, provide some opportunities for students that they might not otherwise have,' according to Byrd."

Each of these speakers is a recognized national expert on his and her topic, and we are indeed fortunate to have them in our community and as members of our club. Both Ruth Beck and Mitchell Byrd were instrumental in the founding of the Williamsburg Bird Club in 1977 and have made substantial contributions to ornithological research and conservation...as well as to the bird club. Be sure to mark your calendars for these dates.

Both programs will begin at 7:30 p.m. in Room 117 at Millington Hall on William and Mary's Campus.

FIELD TRIPS IN SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER

Saturday, September 16: Hugh Beard will lead our field trip at York River State Park. The park opens at 8:00 a.m. so gather by 8:15 am in the park's parking lot on the right just beyond the contact station. Parking fee is \$3.00 per vehicle unless you have a pass. The park offers visitors an opportunity to experience the environment of a coastal estuary. This park is known for its rare and delicate environment, where freshwater and saltwater meet to create a habitat rich in marine and plant life. The park has more than 25 miles of hiking, biking and equestrian trails that provide access to the park's beautiful and diverse natural areas. Don't worry – Hugh won't take you down EVERY trail, but there will be some hot spots to check for migrating warblers and other species.

Directions to the park: From I-64, take the Croaker Exit 231B. Go north on Route 607 (Croaker Rd.) for one mile, then right on Route 606 (Riverview Rd.) And go about one and a half miles to the park entrance. Take a left turn into the park.

Saturday, October 21: Shirley Devan will lead the group to Kiptopeke State Park to check out the hawkwatch platform and hawk banding activities as well as the songbird banding station. Because of the toll on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and the mileage, car pooling is a must for this trip. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the Colony Square Shopping Center on Jamestown Road where we'll consolidate in car pools. Once we arrive at Kiptopeke, you can check out the hawkwatch platform or head straight to the songbird banding station (where earlier is better). Each location has staff and volunteers from the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory who will describe the activities you see and their purpose. You can also check out the butterfly garden located between the two stations. Plan to bring water/beverages/snacks/lunch. Check the

weather forecast and dress appropriately – layers are usually better. We'll plan to leave the park by noon at the latest.

ERNESTO BLOWS IN SOME NEW BIRDS

On September 1 & 2 while some of us were raking leaf litter and whining about lack of electricity, some club members were out birding! Here are the "notables" found around College Creek and James River along the Colonial Parkway:

Friday, September 1: Between them, Bill Williams and Brian Taber covered the College Creek area from about 3 p.m. to dark. By that time, Ernesto's heavy rains and strong north easterly winds had given way to a southeast breeze and steady drizzle, per Bill. Unusual species blown in by our friend Ernesto include: White-rumped Sandpipers, Black Terns, and Sooty Terns (this is the fourth local record for this species, not unexpectedly all of which have been associated with tropical weather systems.)

Saturday, September 2: Bill Williams reports: "From approximately 6:30-11:30 a.m. today the following were counted at College Creek by Tom Armour, Brian Taber, and myself. What a morning! All the birds we counted were headed inland up the James River into the southwest wind: one Sooty Shearwater (first local record and extremely well-seen by all); one American Oystercatcher (5th local record); three Spotted Sandpipers, 3 Ruddy Turnstones (11th local record), 1 Semipalmated Sandpiper, one Jaeger species (a local first for any jaeger species), 8 Caspian Terns, 32 + Royal Terns, 4 Sandwich Terns (4th local record), 8 Common Terns, 3+ Forster's Terns, one Least Tern, 7 Bridled Terns (second local record), 14 Sooty Terns, 175 Black Terns, 5 Black Skimmers, 12+ Purple Martins, 2 Bank Swallows, 4 – 5 Petrochelidon species, and lots of Barn and Tree Swallows." (*Editor: I'll leave it to the reader to research what "Petrochelidon" means.*)

Later in the day, Bill Williams ventured to Yorktown between 1:30 and 2:30 where he saw 2 Black Terns and 1 Sooty Tern, all three headed east towards the Bay.

The next time a tropical storm comes through, when the wind and rain subside, grab your binoculars and spotting scope and head to College Creek. Save the raking for another day!

BIRD WALKS AT NEW QUARTER PARK

If you have not yet birded New Quarter Park, September and October will be ideal times to catch the fall migration. Here are the upcoming dates and times:

September 9 @ 8:00 a.m.

September 23 @ 7:00 a.m.

October 14 @ 8:00 a.m.

October 28 @ 7:00 a.m.

Check the bird Club's web site for photos and species list from the August 26 walk.

AUGUST 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!

August 2: Lisa Draper, who lives on Jolly Pond Road, reports that she heard Northern Bobwhites in front of her house.

August 4: Shirley Devan reports four Wild Turkeys on Jolly Pond Road on her morning bike ride – an adult and 3 juveniles.

August 8: Bill Snyder reports “non-sightings” of swifts and swallows over Powhatan Creek for several years and wonders what observations other WBC members have had. Please call Bill Snyder at 229-8526.

August 8: Linda Sherer reports a male Orchard Oriole in the birdbath.

August 16: Linda Sherer reports a female Redstart fluttering around in bushes adjacent to her backyard feeders.

August 17: Tom Armour reports 3 Semipalmated Sandpipers in the marsh at the end of Treasure Island Road this evening.

August 22: Shirley Devan reports two Red-headed Woodpeckers at Longhill Swamp along the Warhill Trail to WISC. Also, many Eastern Bluebirds along the road plus Killdeer on the soccer fields.

August 27: Bill Williams reports a HY (hatch-year) Lark Sparrow this morning at 8:30 a.m. on the Mainland Farm portion of the Green Springs Nature Trail. This is the third local record for this species.

August 28: Shirley Devan spotted another Red-headed Woodpecker at the WISC complex while bike riding.

August 29: Bill Holcombe reports: “While I hear Barred Owls with some frequency in my neighborhood, seeing them is a rare

pleasure, one that was repeated when a very large owl flew right past me, sailed up into a nearby tree and stared at me with those big, brown eyes!”

August 30: Driving home from Evelynton Plantation, Tom McCary spotted two adult male Bobwhites crossing the road.

September 1: Ruth Beck reports that they had 17-18 hummingbirds frantically feeding at their yard feeder this morning as tropical storm Ernesto approached.

September 1: Bill Williams observed 1 Semipalmated Plover, 1 Sanderling, 6 Least Sandpipers, and 5 Short-billed Dowitchers along the Colonial Parkway near College Creek.

September 2: Bill Williams finds 2 Blue-winged Teal at Drummonds Field.

September 3: Bill Williams finds 20 Lesser Yellowlegs, 1 Stilt Sandpiper, 1 Pectoral Sandpiper, and 7 Short-billed Dowitchers at Drummonds Field. At Greensprings Trail, Bill observed one Olive-sided Flycatcher (hawking insects over the beaver pond between 7:00 a.m. and 9:45 a.m. This is only the 4th local record, the second for the trail, and third for James City County), 6 Veery and 5 Swainson’s Thrush in a predawn flyover, plus one Baltimore Oriole.

WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED DONATION

THANK YOU, THANK YOU to George and Val Copping at Wild Birds Unlimited in Williamsburg. They have presented the club with a check for \$230 representing 5% of sales to Club members during the January – June 2006. To our new members and long time members – remember to let WBU know that you are a Bird Club member when you shop there so your purchase will be included in the total for the next six months! The Coppings are very supportive of our club and bird conservation and research in our area. Thanks again for your generosity.

FALL MIGRATION IS FOCUS OF LOCAL ELDERHOSTEL

The Elderhostel program at the College of William and Mary is offering an exciting Birding program, October 8-13, 2006, called "Making the Most of Migration: Fall on Virginia's Eastern Shore."

This 6-day, 5-night program in Cape Charles, Va., will be led by William and Mary bird expert Bill Williams. It will include birding excursions to Kiptopeke State Park and the Eastern Shore National Wildlife Refuge, plus lectures and discussions. Participants will be staying at the

Sunset Beach Resort hotel, directly on the Chesapeake Bay at the southern tip of the Eastern Shore. Here's the "official" program description from the Elderhostel catalogue: "Follow the annual autumn migration as millions of songbirds, birds of prey, butterflies, and dragonflies travel along Virginia's Atlantic coast heading to winter climes. Actively observe migration research that has taken place on the lower Delmarva Peninsula since 1963.

Experience songbird and hawk banding, butterfly tagging, and diurnal counting of migrating birds of prey. There is nothing like examining "a bird in hand" that you thought you knew. Wildlife enthusiasts of all experience levels will enjoy this fascinating learning adventure."

Elderhostel is an international, non-profit, lifelong-learning and travel program for adults aged 55+. All programs are overnight, all-inclusive – that is, hotel, meals, tips, and transportation during the program are included in the cost, as well as the educational components – lectures, materials, and expertly guided excursions. Cost is \$778.00 per person (for double occupancy). Participants are responsible for getting themselves to Cape Charles, but after that we handle the rest!

For more information on how to register, please call William and Mary Elderhostel at 757-221-3649, or visit our web site, www.wm.edu/elderhostel. Enrollment is limited to 30 people, so make your plans soon!

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to new members Marsha Mathews and Joanne Andrews. Thanks for joining and we look forward to seeing you at an upcoming event.

REFRESHMENTS

Thanks to Fred Blystone for bringing our program refreshments in May. Carol Goff is providing our September program refreshments. Be sure to give them a "thank you" when you see them at the September 20 meeting.

NEWPORT NEWS PARK BIRD WALK

By Fred Blystone and Eleanor Young

Eleanor Young and Fred Blystone, along with leader Jane Frigo and two other participants, birded Newport News Park on Sunday, August 20th. We saw a total of 41 species. The highlights for Fred were "a very cooperative Yellow-billed Cuckoo and my first sighting this year of a Yellow-throated Warbler. The im-

mature Wood Duck that had been spotted on August 6th seems to have (at least temporarily) made itself at home with a group of Mallards." Eleanor reports the species highlights: Eastern Wood Pewee, Caspian Terns, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Great Blue Herons, Carolina Wren, House Wren, Brown Thrasher, Mute Swan with juvenile, Red-headed Woodpecker, Osprey, and Great Egrets."

Jane Frigo leads these walks at Newport News Park each first and third Sunday morning at 7:00 a.m. Meet in the parking lot adjacent to the Ranger Station. All are welcome.

ARIZONA BIRDING

By Dan Cristol

Professor of Biology, William and Mary

I traveled to the Tucson area for four days in late August in search of the dozen or so Aztec thrushes that had invaded the area for the first time in many years. While none of these Mexican rare vagrants were found, the deserts were in bloom from the intense rains that have been falling in the area, and birdlife abounded. Among the carpet of pink and orange desert flowers, I did manage to find a singing rufous-capped warbler in Sycamore Canyon, several five-striped sparrows in California Gulch, a Berylline hummingbird in Ramsey Canyon, and another on its nest in Madeira Canyon. Best of all, there was a pair of black-capped gnatcatchers, which was the 700th species for my North American (north of Mexico) life list. When I started birding as a little kid, Roger Tory Peterson himself had only seen 714 species, so crossing the 700 barrier meant something...but now some very rich and crazed people see that many in a year, and the really hardcore have life lists of over 800, so I can't quit these life-listing trips yet.

On a separate topic: four new students interested in birds have arrived with the incoming graduate class in William & Mary's Biology Department. Stay tuned for Kelly, Joanna, Mikeala and Ryan to pick projects and give talks to the club. When combined with the students already enrolled from the last two years, that's more than a dozen energetic bird-researchers-in-training in the Williamsburg area. William & Mary continues to be a hotbed of ornithology, and support for graduate students by the club plays an important role in fostering all this bird activity.

KIPTOPEKE CHALLENGE

By Brian Taber

This is our 12th Annual Kiptopeke Challenge team birding competition and our “Wild Birds Unlimited of Williamsburg” team is the only one to have competed every year! Paul Nasca, Aimee Weldon of the Virginia Important Bird Areas Program, and Observatory Board member Tom Saunders and I will search the entire Eastern Shore for birds on Saturday, September 16.

This 24-hour birding competition is one of the primary fund raising events for the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory. There are usually 8 – 10 teams racing around the Eastern Shore to compete for the most number of species. All proceeds go to CVWO research like the Kiptopeke Songbird Banding station which has banded over 300,000 birds since it opened several decades ago. The CVWO also operates a songbird banding station at First Landing State Park and this year installed 80 boxes there to support Prothonotary Warbler nesting activity. They also expanded the butterfly garden at Kiptopeke last year and have plans for a raised addition to the hawkwatch platform at Kiptopeke to increase visibility over the surrounding growing vegetation.

Please send your contribution to Brian at 103 Exeter Court, Williamsburg, VA 23185. We will be grateful for any amount and you will receive a full report of our day’s competition. We have shirts, hats and other thank-you items for donations over \$100.

NATURE CAMP ALUM REPORTS FROM NEW ORLEANS

By Deidre Gibson

Hello All,

I traveled to New Orleans to help my parents clean and I actually hung a few roof shingles. Although I was happy to help my parents, the trip was extremely depressing. The weirdest thing is that in the city and suburbs, there are very few birds. Some trees are coming back, but many of them are dead. However, my parents are building about 60 miles north of the city, so on our long drives there I saw Great Blue Herons, Snowy Egrets, some Pelicans, a few Hawks and I even saw a Cardinal on my parents property. I used a lot of the skills learned from the camp this summer to look for birds, trees and butterflies. Thanks so much.