



THE FLYER

NEWSLETTER OF THE WILLIAMSBURG BIRD CLUB

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November 2006

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

The October 21, 2006 field trip to the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory (CVWO) stations at Kiptopeke State Park on Virginia's Eastern Shore was an outstanding success. Ten WBC members observed birds such as Ruby- and Golden-crowned Kinglets, Yellow-rumped Warblers, a Blue-headed Vireo, and Blackpoll warblers at a range of 2-3 feet. The birds were trapped in mist nets, carefully removed by volunteer researchers, and examined for species, age, sex, weight, fat storage, and muscle tone. They were then banded, registered, released, and sent on their way.

The CVWO also has a butterfly garden which has attracted over 1000 Monarchs. The monarchs were tagged and released to continue their migration. A raptor banding station and observation platform is also a part of CVWO.

WBC members have assisted with these CVWO projects over the years. Brian Taber is currently President of the CVWO. The late Joy Archer was a major contributor to the organization. Bill Williams served as the first president, and Ruth Beck serves on the Board of Directors. Cynthia Long contributed plants to the butterfly garden on Saturday while we were there. A yurt is available at the Park for overnight adventures. A visit to CVWO at Kiptopeke is well worth the drive and tolls.

(Editor's Note to round out Bob's "corner": CVWO's Jethro Runco and his team of volunteers banded 422 birds the day we visited. Of course we did not see all 422 birds. The species count was 24 with 319 birds being Yellow-rumped Warblers! The second highest quantity was 28 Golden-crowned Kinglets followed by 22 Gray Catbirds and 12 Song Sparrows. All other species were in single digits. Participants in WBC trip to Kiptopeke: Bob and Cynthia Long, John and Mary Anne Fennel, Eleanor Young, Joanne Andrews, Alex Minarik, Roger Gosden, Shirley and Steve Devan.)

NOVEMBER 15 PROGRAM

Helen Hamilton, President of the local John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society, will present a colorful slide show and program on "Birds And Native Plants in Tidewater Virginia." She will focus on how our local birds use our native plants as food, shelter, and nesting material.

Helen retired in 1997 after more than 30 years as a secondary school teacher in biology, chemistry, and earth science. Since retirement, she has been a busy volunteer and contract worker. From 2001-2003 she was the lead technician on a project to restore populations of *Amaranthus pumilus* on Assateague Island. She worked there with team members to plant, water, monitor, and evaluate seed sets of 2640 amaranth plants. Since spring of 2005 she has been editing and certifying native plant species and vascular plant databases for national parks in the eastern region of the U.S. Helen is a master gardener and is active in the Williamsburg Botanical Garden and other community organizations.

The program will begin at 7:30 p.m. in Room 117 at Millington Hall on the William and Mary Campus.

NOVEMBER 18 FIELD TRIP

Alex Minarik will lead our field trip through "Bassett Trace Nature Trail" on Saturday, November 18, 2006. This area is known to long time residents as the Bassett Hall Woods. Colonial Williamsburg maintains this undisturbed natural area and trail between Bassett Hall and the Williamsburg Inn, just off of Francis Street in the Restored Area. According to CW Botanist Wes Green, who led a walk there in June for the John Clayton Chapter of the Native Plant Society, this area was last logged in the 1920's and 30's. Evidence of hurricane Isabel still dominates the landscape in these woods. Trees were left where they fell for the most part, and thus the understory trees and brush avoided the trauma of heavy tree removal equipment. We'll find huge, mature

hardwoods, streams, a deep ravine, boardwalks, and a freshwater pond (and a golf course!). This preserve is a perfect home to all the area woodpeckers. We'll look for our winter resident species and ducks on the pond.

Note: Some parts of the trail are narrow, steep, and have tree roots. We'll have to step over fallen trees in a couple of places. Wear sturdy walking shoes or hiking boots. The total walking distance could be two miles round trip – at a leisurely pace! There are no restrooms nearby.

We'll convene at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot on Francis Street behind Shields Tavern – almost at the Capitol. The sign at the entrance to the lot says "Shields & Kings Arms Tavern Parking." We have permission to park there for a few hours that morning. Gather near the lot entrance.

NOVEMBER BIRDING AT NEW QUARTER PARK

Join us at New Quarter Park for three birding activities in November. The Saturday morning bird walks are cosponsored by the Bird Club and New Quarter Park.

November 11: 8:00 – 10:00 am – Bird Walk with Bill Williams, Director of Education for the Center for Conservation Biology.

November 11: 7:30 – 9:30 pm – Owl Prowl with Bill Williams, sponsored by New Quarter Park. At the October 28 Owl Prowl, the group heard Screech Owls and Barred Owls.

November 25: 7:00 am and 8:00 am – Bird Walk with Bill Williams. We know this is Thanksgiving weekend so bring your relatives – children, parents, grandparents, whoever is visiting. This will be a great opportunity to get out of the house and relieve the tension built up by all that "family togetherness." We'll start at 7:00 am then swing back by the parking lot at 8:00 am to pick up the 8 o'clock crowd.

Note that New Quarter Park will be open on weekends this winter!! Our October 28 Bird Walk was rained out. Tom McCary led the walk October 14. He and four other birders found 15 species before the temperatures started to rise.

ANNUAL ELECTION OF WBC OFFICERS

The Board of Directors of the Williamsburg Bird Club met Wednesday, October 18, 2006, before the regular program meeting. The board appointed a nominating committee to present a slate of candidates for consideration and voting at the November 15 meeting. The nominating committee was Shirley Devan, Chair, Fred Blystone, and

John Fennell.

The nominating committee submits the following candidates for the Club's Board of Directors for 2007. At the meeting, President Bob Long will ask for nominations from the floor. The term of office is one year for each position.

President: Bob Long

Secretary: Mary Anne Fennell

Treasurer: Charles Rend

Vice-President and Program Chair: Tom McCary

Vice-President and Co-Editor of The Flyer: Phil Young

Vice-President and Co-Editor of The Flyer: Shirley Devan

Member-at-Large: Bill Williams

Member-at-Large: Sara Lewis

Many thanks to Fred Blystone, who declined to run again for Secretary, for his service and contributions this year.

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!

October 2: Tom Armour reports he had the season's first Ruby-crowned Kinglet in his yard.

October 8: Bill Williams reports from Greensprings Trail. "This morning I had 9 flyover Common Loons, 16 Gray Catbirds, 25 predawn Gray-cheeked Thrushes, 13 Swainson's Thrushes, 7 Palm Warblers, 18 Common Yellowthroats, and 1 superb Lincoln's Sparrow."

October 10: Marjorie Sunflower Sargent reports that "The Ernesto storm brought us some unusual sightings on the pond at Ford's Colony. I was there this weekend to check on the large flock of resident ducks and geese and discovered two birds that came in from Ernesto are still there. It is a pair of large sized White Morph's (Great White Heron). They haven't gone home yet! Is this natural that they would still be hanging around? There is also a new, solitary Snowy Egret that is also sticking around. He has set up camp on the top of a small waterfall. We have a juvenile Little Blue Heron in residence already. The pond looks like white sheets flapping about over the water. There are Canada Geese and many ducks, mostly Mallards. One pair of Mallards produced an all white offspring this summer, or someone stuck a baby domestic duck in the nest. I will try to take a picture."

October 11: Dave Anderton reports "11 Wood Ducks, on College Creek at the Williamsburg

Landing today.”

October 13: Tom Armour reported from Treasure Island Road: 1 American Kestrel and 2 Yellow-rumped Warblers, first this fall for him.

October 16: Dorothy Whitfield reports a Downy Woodpecker and a Hairy Woodpecker on her suet feeder at the same time, a great opportunity to observe the size difference between these two similar species.

October 24: Dorothy Whitfield reports Wild Turkeys in her yard over the past few days. Seven on October 20; eight on the 21st; and 6 on the 24th. They all looked alike and none were “Tom” Turkey.

October 27: Fred Blystone and Shirley Devan birded the Colonial Parkway between Williamsburg and Yorktown from 9:00 am – 11:30 am. They found 24 species. The highlight was the Common Loon just beyond the breakwater at Yorktown Beach. The loon still had much of its breeding plumage and was actively diving in the same area as a Double-crested Cormorant. The only winter ducks were American Black Ducks. Royal Terns and Forster’s Terns were hanging out on one of the sandbars. Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Eastern Meadowlarks were flitting around in the bushes.

October 28: Tom Armour reports the first flock of White-throated Sparrows this fall at his feeders.

October 29: Bill Williams reports these highlights from Greensprings Trail: 1 Merlin (Fred Blystone saw it too), 1 very young American Coot, 1 American Redstart, 1 Vesper Sparrow, 5 hatch-year White-crowned Sparrows.

October 29: Joe and Grace Doyle report from their trip to Camp Peary: Many Ruddy Ducks on the York River from Skimino Creek down to Cheatham Annex.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT – DECEMBER 17

By Bill Holcombe

This will be the 107th Audubon Christmas Bird Count which was originally started as a protest of the Christmas Hunt, during which groups tried to kill the greatest variety and quantity of game. The Bird Club will conduct its Christmas Bird Count on Sunday, December 17. As the club is coming up upon a 30th birthday, this is either the 29th or 30th club count.

Our Christmas Bird Count covers an area within a circle of 15 miles, centered on the Colonial Williamsburg Information Center. It is divided into 9 areas with an experienced birder as leader in each section. At least two of these, Ruth Beck and

Bill Williams, participated in that first count. Several of the others started soon after. Normally all groups are in the field by 7:00 a.m. except for the early birds who search out the hooting owls. By 4:30 you are back home or at William and Mary for the compiling of the nine counts into the one that goes to Audubon. Two areas, Cheatham Annex and Hog Island, are covered mostly on foot. Walking in the other areas is broken up by movement in cars to a variety of key areas within that territory. We have learned the hard way that it is very difficult to call off a count because of bad weather, unless it can be done the day before. All leaders know they are to continue unless the weather becomes not just unpleasant, but threatening.

This count is interesting to birders because there are always some stragglers from the warm weather to mix with our winter and resident birds. Most of us don’t do a lot of birding this time of year. Normally, we will find 108 to 112 species. If you would like to join the diehards who never miss a Christmas count, pick one of the territories listed below and call the leader to establish a meeting place and time. It’s fun and a wonderful learning experience.

Cheatham Annex – Bill Williams, 229-1124

College Woods – Ruth Beck, 566-8234

Hog Island – Brian Taber, 253-1181

Jamestown Island – Dot Silsby, 596-3252

Jolly Pond – Lee Schuster, 565-6148

Kingsmill – Paul McAllister, 229-1323

Middle Plantation – Hugh Beard, 221-0499

(Roughly from Jamestown High School to Governors Land and across to Waller Mill Park.)

Skimino – Bettye Fields, 930-0177 (Above Camp Peary between Rt.64 and the York River)

Camp Peary – Tom Armour, 229-2363 (This area is closed to all except those with a special clearance.)

The weather is unpredictable and can start very cold and warm up, or vice versa, so layering makes sense. Bring your binocs, a guide book, a good lunch, and something to drink.

(Editor’s Note: According to Teta Kain, who wrote the summary text for the Washington, DC/Virginia counts in Audubon Society’s “The 106th Christmas Bird Count,” Volume 60, which arrived in my mailbox just last week, a Red-cockaded Woodpecker was sighted on the Christmas Bird Count in Mathews County in 2005. According to Teta, “This latest sighting is to birders in eastern Virginia nearly what the Ivory-billed Woodpecker is to birders in Arkansas. Several birders, including the original observer, were able to relocate the bird the next day.” As you can see from this report, just about anything is possible on a Christmas Bird Count in our area. – Shirley Devan)

ANSWERS TO AUDUBON IMPRACTICAL EXAM FROM OCTOBER NEWSLETTER:

Did you come up with any answers to the “Audubon Impractical Final Exam” questions in the October newsletter? As you may recall, these five questions came from the “final exam” Maine Audubon’s Hog Island camp administered to the campers in September when I was there. To get the flavor of the exam, here is a sample: What bird is a letter? Answer: Jay! Here are the questions and an answer from last month’s newsletter:

What bird is fast? Swift

What bird is slow? Creeper

What bird is a wizard? Merlin

What bird is acrid? Bittern

What bird is uneven? Ruff

(Some questions have more than one answer!)

NATURE CAMP SUMMARY

The Bird Club’s “Nature Camp” Saturday, October 14 at New Quarter Park was a wonderful success. We had 16 enthusiastic “campers,” three “best on the planet” counselors, the “best” lunch from the Carrot Tree, and spectacular October weather. Many responded with comments like these: “The professional expertise of the guides and fellow participants, the hands-on experience, and beautiful weather were the best.” All participants said they would recommend this event to their friends and encouraged the Bird Club to continue with events like this. We are planning our spring session now!

VISIT OUR WEB SITE

Have you visited our web site recently? Click over to: www.wmbgbirdclub.com The home page usually lists the upcoming events and dates. You’ll find pictures from our October 21 trip to Kiptopeke (people and birds!) as well as information about our meetings, field trips, links to local birding hot spots, a page devoted to “Thirty Birdy Years” and links to sites of interest to birders – like the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the Virginia Society for Ornithology. If you have photos or other items you want to share, please send them to the web master, Shirley Devan, at sedevan52@cox.net

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to new member, Chuck Litterst.

(Editor’s Note: Chuck contacted me by email August 4, a month before he moved to Williamsburg. He found our web site and our

email address and inquired about parking for the September program. Since arriving in Williamsburg, he has attended the September and October meetings and at least one bird walk at New Quarter Park! Glad you are here, Chuck! – Shirley Devan)

CURLES NECK FARM OCTOBER 22

By Shirley Devan

Fred Blystone and I traveled up Route 5 to Curles Neck Farm early Sunday morning, October 22, to meet more than 50 birders from the Richmond Audubon Society and several from the Hampton Roads Bird Club. The RAS had arranged in advance for permission to bird this large farm on the James River, just up from Shirley Plantation. We sipped our coffee and waited for the sun to rise. Then the leader, John Coe, divided the group into thirds so we could drive around the farm in smaller groups – each with several skilled birders. The group as a whole spotted over 60 species (not every group saw every species). Fred and I saw 37 species, the highlights being the Horned Grebe, Horned Larks, and White-crowned Sparrows. As we headed home in the drizzle, we bemoaned the fact that this beautiful farm will soon be developed.

OCTOBER BIRDING AT NEWPORT NEWS PARK

By Fred Blystone

I went on two walks in Newport News Park during the month of October sponsored by the Hampton Roads Bird Club (fellow WBC member Eleanor Young was also at both of the walks.)

The October 1st walk started out with rain but stopped in time for us to get the walk in. In addition to leader, Jane Frigo, eight other birders showed up. Five year-old Nicolas had upgraded his binoculars since the last walk and also brought along a friend. Corey wasn’t as into birding as Nicolas so we actually lost them (and Nicolas’s mother) at the first playground. We ended up with a total of 39 species of birds and 2 otters playing in the lake. The highlights were seven Pied-billed Grebes swimming together and the first Gray Catbirds that we had found in the park this year.

The October 15th walk had a total of six birders. The park had already started to get ready for their Festival of Lights, so the walk covered about 25 per cent less area than normal. By the time we finished, around 10 am, we had seen a total of 33 species. Like almost everyone else in the state, we saw our first Yellow-rumps and White-throated Sparrows of the season.

Jane Frigo leads these walks at Newport News Park each first and third Sundays at 7:00 a.m. Meet in the parking lot adjacent to the Ranger Station. These walks are free and open to everyone.

CLUB DONATES 10 BOOKS AND MEDIA TO LIBRARY

With the advice of Club Member Lee Schuster, the club has purchased and donated nine books and one DVD to the Williamsburg Regional Library. Look for these titles in their ornithology section soon. Thanks, Lee, for coordinating this with our library. Our dues and support of programs like the Nature Camp make these possible.

1. Birds, Birds, Birds! - An Indoor Birdwatching Field Trip DVD
2. National Geographic Guide to Birding Hotspots of the Unites States
3. National Geographic Complete Birds of North America
4. Kingbird Highway: The Story of a Natural Obsession That Got a Little Out of Hand
5. Guide to Hawk Watching in North America
6. Backyard Songbirds: An Illustrated Guide to 100 Familiar Species of North America
7. Big Twitch: One Man, One Continent, a Race Against Time – a True Story about Birdwatching
8. Compact Guide to Virginia Birds
9. 101 Ways to Help Birds
10. Caw of the Wild: Observations from the Secret World of Crows

BIRDING ETHICS

Included in this newsletter is the Code of Birding Ethics developed and promoted by the ABA (American Birding Association). We all should review this document every now and then. Being a responsible birder and modeling the behavior we would like to see in others makes it easier for those that follow in our steps. Per the ABA, “in any conflict of interest between birds and birders, the welfare of the birds and their environment comes first.”

American Birding Association

Principles of Birding Ethics

Everyone who enjoys birds and birding must always respect wildlife, its environment, and the rights of others. In any conflict of interest between birds and birders, the welfare of the birds and their environment comes first.

Code of Birding Ethics

1. Promote the welfare of birds and their environment.

- 1 (a) Support the protection of important bird habitat.
- 1 (b) To avoid stressing birds or exposing them to danger, exercise restraint and caution during observation, photography, sound recording, or filming.
Limit the use of recordings and other methods of attracting birds, and never use such methods in heavily birded areas or for attracting any species that is Threatened, Endangered, or of Special Concern, or is rare in your local area.
Keep well back from nests and nesting colonies, roosts, display areas, and important feeding sites. In such sensitive areas, if there is a need for extended observation, photography, filming, or recording, try to use a blind or hide, and take advantage of natural cover.
Use artificial light sparingly for filming or photography, especially for close-ups.
- 1 (c) Before advertising the presence of a rare bird, evaluate the potential for disturbance to the bird, its surroundings, and other people in the area, and proceed only if access can be controlled, disturbance can be minimized, and permission has been obtained from private land-owners. The sites of rare nesting birds should be divulged only to the proper conservation authorities.
- 1 (d) Stay on roads, trails, and paths where they exist; otherwise keep habitat disturbance to a minimum.

2. Respect the law and the rights of others.

- 2 (a) Do not enter private property without the owner's explicit permission.
- 2 (b) Follow all laws, rules, and regulations governing use of roads and public areas, both at home and abroad.
- 2 (c) Practice common courtesy in contacts with other people. Your exemplary behavior will generate goodwill with birders and non-birders alike.

3. Ensure that feeders, nest structures, and other artificial bird environments are safe.

- 3 (a) Keep dispensers, water, and food clean and free of decay or disease. It is important to feed birds continually during harsh weather.
- 3 (b) Maintain and clean nest structures regularly.

- 3 (c) If you are attracting birds to an area, ensure the birds are not exposed to predation from cats and other domestic animals, or dangers posed by artificial hazards.

4. Group birding, whether organized or impromptu, requires special care.

Each individual in the group, in addition to the obligations spelled out in Items #1 and #2, has responsibilities as a Group Member.

- 4 (a) Respect the interests, rights, and skills of fellow birders, as well as those of people participating in other legitimate outdoor activities. Freely share your knowledge and experience, except where code 1(c) applies. Be especially helpful to beginning birders.
- 4 (b) If you witness unethical birding behavior, assess the situation and intervene if you think it prudent. When interceding, inform the person(s) of the inappropriate action and attempt, within reason, to have it stopped. If the behavior continues, document it and notify appropriate individuals or organizations.
Group Leader Responsibilities [amateur and professional trips and tours].
- 4 (c) Be an exemplary ethical role model for the group. Teach through word and example.
- 4 (d) Keep groups to a size that limits impact on the environment and does not interfere with others using the same area.
- 4 (e) Ensure everyone in the group knows of and practices this code.
- 4 (f) Learn and inform the group of any special circumstances applicable to the areas being visited (eg, no tape recorders allowed).
- 4 (g) Acknowledge that professional tour companies bear a special responsibility to place the welfare of birds and the benefits of public knowledge ahead of the company's commercial interests. Ideally, leaders should keep track of tour sightings, document unusual occurrences, and submit records to appropriate organizations.

Please follow this code—distribute it and teach it to others.

Additional copies of the Code of Birding Ethics can be obtained from ABA. The ABA Code of Birding Ethics may be reprinted, reproduced, and distributed without restriction. Please acknowledge the role of ABA in developing and promoting this code.

