



THE FLYER

NEWSLETTER OF THE WILLIAMSBURG BIRD CLUB

Volume 31, Number 10

Website: www.williamsburgbirdclub.org

November 2007

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Bob Long

I would like to thank the bird club board and members for their support the past two years. I have truly enjoyed working with you and sharing birding adventures. The Nominating Committee will be looking for new board members this month. Please consider these opportunities to serve the WBC, as well as to promote birding and conservation in our community.

Special thanks to our *Flyer* team -- Shirley Devan, Phil Young, and Fred Blystone. WBC won the "outstanding volunteer" award presented by York County for our programs at New Quarter Park in 2006. Many people in our club contribute to the success of our programs at New Quarter Park -- Bill Williams, Tom McCary, Susan Powell, Hugh Beard, Sara Lewis, and of course Molly Nealer at NQP who is wonderful to work with. Add in all the participants who show up early in the mornings to see the birds.

Thanks to Bill Williams and Hugh Beard for leading field trips and teaching birding skills. Tom Armour, Tom McCary, Alex Minarik, Lee Schuster, and Ruth Beck also led bird walks and participated in many ways. Historian Cynthia Long, Barb Streb, and again, Shirley Devan deserve accolades for the wonderful Thirty Birdy Years celebration. Williamsburg Bird Club has a lot to be proud of—thank you all for making it happen.

MEETING NOVEMBER 14

Our November monthly meeting will be Wednesday, November 14 – the second Wednesday instead of the third Wednesday, which is the day before Thanksgiving. Be sure to mark your calendars!

Before the program begins, the club will conduct the annual election of officers for 2008.

The November meeting will be our annual "Bird Club Book Club" session. The featured book is Scott Weidensaul's new book "Of a Feather: A

Brief History of American Birding." This will be an opportunity to explore further the book and its author, who appeared at the Williamsburg Library October 9. Vice President of Programs Tom McCary will present a brief review and then open the floor to discussion about the book. The book is available at the library and local book stores and is an easy, entertaining read. The history and characters are fascinating and his final message will inspire you.

The meeting will begin at 7:30 p.m. in Room 117 in Millington Hall at William and Mary. Parking is available in front of Phi Beta Kappa Hall on Jamestown Road.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE PRESENTS SLATE FOR 2008

At the October 15, 2007 Board meeting, the Board appointed the following people to the nominating committee: Ruth Beck, Jeanette Navia, David Lee. Their charge was to present a slate of officers for consideration at the November club meeting.

The Nominating Committee proposes the following slate of candidates for 2008:

President: Shirley Devan

Secretary: Mary Anne Fennell

Treasurer: Charles Rend

V.P. & Program Chair: Alex Minarik

V.P. & Editor, *The Flyer*: Fred Blystone

Member-at-Large: Sara Lewis

Member-at-Large: Joanne Andrews

At the November 14 club meeting, members will have the opportunity to offer nominations from the floor. Members attending the November 14 club meeting will vote on the nominations and the officers will take office January 1, 2008.

Many thanks to Ruth, Jeanette, and David for their work on the Nominating Committee.

FIELD TRIP TO THE YORK RIVER

Bill Williams will lead our monthly field trip

along the York River Saturday, November 17. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Colony Square Shopping Center and we'll convoy down the Colonial Parkway to check the York River for newly arrived waterfowl. This will be a good trip for your spotting scope.

BIRD WALKS AT NEW QUARTER AND NEWPORT NEWS PARKS

November 10 @ 8:00 a.m., Hugh Beard will lead the walk at New Quarter Park. November 24 @ 7:00 a.m., Bill Williams will lead the walk at NQP.

At Newport News Park, Jane Frigo leads a walk November 4 and 18 (first and third Sunday mornings) at 7:00 a.m. Meet at the parking lot at the Ranger Station.

DECEMBER BIRD CLUB EVENTS

Our club does not present a program in December. We will continue the Bird Walks at New Quarter Park – December 8 (at 8 am) and 22 (at 7 am.)

Our December field trip is the Christmas Bird Count on Sunday, December 16. Please consider joining the effort this year and read the note by Bill Williams elsewhere in this newsletter about the CBC. It's citizen science at its best and you, too, can join in.

WALK AND TALK AT GREENSPRINGS TRAIL

Explore nature along the Greensprings and Virginia Capital Trails on Sunday, November 4, 2007. Sponsored by the Williamsburg Land Conservancy, the tours start at 1:00, 1:30, 2:00, and 2:30 p.m. Meet at the back parking lot behind Jamestown High School on Route 5 and learn from the experts about birds, geology, plants, archeology, ecology, water resources, and more. Be sure to wear bug repellent and comfortable shoes.

There will be a special children's tour (grades K – 5) from 2:00 – 3:00 pm. For more information, call the Williamsburg Land Conservancy at 565-2990.

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to new members, Charlie Ohlinger and Kimberly McHugh. Kim attended our October 13 bird walk at New Quarter Park! We look forward to seeing you both at upcoming events.

NEW WEB SITE ADDRESS

Make sure your bookmarks include the Williamsburg Bird Club's new web site address: www.williamsburgbirdclub.org. Jeanette Navia has upgraded our web site and given it additional capability. You can see more photos and even register your own observations and comments. Thanks, Jeanette, for keeping it fresh and new.

SALE OF ART EXHIBIT PHOTO BENEFITS BIRD CLUB

Many thanks to club member Sally Lewis who contributed the proceeds from the sale of her Osprey photo to the bird club. The sale occurred on the day the exhibit was dismantled. Beth Horres, an employee at the library, purchased the print.

Thanks, Sally, for your generosity and sharing your great photo with the club and the community.

THIRTY BIRDY CAPS STILL AVAILABLE

We have less than 10 caps left with the "30 Birdy Years" logo. When these are gone, we will not have any more produced. You may get one at the Wild Birds Unlimited store near Ukrops. We'll also have a few at the November Bird Club events. We also have a few prints of Spike Knuth's Red-headed Woodpecker available. Contact Shirley Devan at 220-6269 or 813-1322 if you want a hat or print.

DIGITAL NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY SIG

Don Snyder recently taught a Christopher Wren class on digital photography. A couple of bird club members recently took this class and report that Mr. Snyder said that he may be interested in starting a Special Interest Group on digital photography, aimed especially at wildlife/nature photography. If you are interested, please send an email to Don at: donrsnyder@cox.net.

VSO FIELD TRIP TO VA BEACH

The Cape Henry Audubon Society, with support from the Virginia Beach Audubon Society, the Hampton Roads Bird Club, and the Back Bay Bird Club, is pleased to host the VSO annual field trip to Virginia Beach, Friday, December 7 – Sunday, December 9, 2007. An outstanding weekend is planned, with a Friday afternoon field trip to the Whitehurst Tract for those who arrive early.

Featured field trips include a visit to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel Islands (CBBT) on Saturday and nearly a full day at Back Bay NWR/False Cape State Park on Sunday.

The Howard Johnson Hotel at 1601 Atlantic Avenue, Virginia Beach, VA 23451 is the host hotel. Oceanfront rooms with private balconies will be available at \$45 plus tax. Those planning to attend should make reservations at the hotel by November 6, 2007, specifying that they are with the VSO. The hotel phone number is 757-437-9100 or 1-800-258-5878.

Of particular interest will be the Saturday trip to the tunnel islands of the bay bridge tunnel complex. Participation on this trip is limited to the first 45 people who sign up since there is a requirement to pay a security guard to accompany each group of 15. The cost is \$10 per person. A security information form will be mailed to each person who registers for the trip. The completed form must be returned to the trip coordinator no later than Monday, November 26, 2007.

Sunday's trip is to Back Bay NWR and False Cape State Park. This year the trip will be limited to the first 24 participants who register and there will be a charge of \$10 per person for the tram.

The VSO weekend is open to VSO members and non-members alike. There is no charge except for hotel rooms, the CBBT Islands tour, and the Back Bay Tram Ride, if you elect those options. For more info, contact Clark White, Trip Coordinator, at 757-875-7649 in Yorktown, or visit the VSO web site: <http://www.virginiabirds.net>

JOIN THE VSO

If you are reading this newsletter, you should be a member of the Virginia Society of Ornithology. Think it's just for the serious birders? Not so! The VSO is the state's official birding organization and authority. VSO maintains Virginia's official bird records (whether a bird is a "Virginia bird" or not); publishes The Raven, a journal of ornithological research documenting birds in the commonwealth; publishes a quarterly newsletter; sponsors field trips around the state and the region (Virginia Beach and Outer Banks come to mind); launched Virginia eBird in coordination with Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory; and gives financial awards to ornithology students in support of bird research.

If you support any of these efforts, then you belong on the rolls of the VSO. Basic membership level is \$20; family memberships are \$25. To join, visit their web site: <http://www.virginiabirds.net/> or make checks payable to the VSO and mail to: Virginia Society of Ornithology, 1230 Viewmont Drive, Evinston VA 24550.

OCTOBER 2007 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 16: Alex Minarik and Shirley Devan visited Craney Island from about 10 am - 1 pm and counted 31 species, the highlight being 2 Eared Grebes in the North Cell -- the only cell with any water. They were in with Northern Shovelers. Other good birds were Osprey, Dunlin, 5 Black-bellied Plovers (we tried to turn them into Golden Plovers but the white rump convinced us otherwise), House Wren, and a Palm Warbler.

Oct 17: Tom Armour reports: "today at our airport there was an American Kestrel perched on the wires."

October 18: Bill Williams, Fred Blystone, and Shirley Devan were treated to rare views of four Clapper Rails at the Eastern Shore National Wildlife Refuge. About 7:45 am, while standing at the kayak launch spot, they saw one Clapper Rail march out of the marsh at low tide. Then a couple more. Many more were "clapping" all around. They scooted around the mud flats in view for about 30 minutes.

October 21: Joe and Grace Doyle ventured to Camp Peary and observed 33 species. Per Joe, "the usual culprits, but we did see all of the woodpeckers."

October 21: Eleanor Young and Meredith Bell report 48 species observed on the bird walk at Newport News Park this morning. Ten people participated in the Hampton Roads Bird Club semi-monthly bird walk at Newport News Park today. Highlights include: all three nuthatches in a single stand of pine trees, 4 Bald Eagles (two adult and two immature); great views of Red-tailed Hawk and Northern Harrier, sitting on trees close to us (but NOT close to each other), six species of woodpecker, including Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, first-of-the-season Ring-necked Duck (female).

October 24: Lois Leeth reports: "On my way to the UPS store, I noted 30 Canada Geese at a spot on Route 199 and John Tyler Highway. They were there last year, also."

October 26: Lois Leeth reports: "Birding not too bad today—in spite of the rain: One Winter Wren, one Carolina Chickadee, 8 American Robins and a Northern Cardinal."

October 28: Joe and Grace Doyle spent a windy few hours at Camp Peary and observed only 25 species – no woodpeckers this time. The highlight was 10 Wild Turkeys crossing the road in an area

where they've never seen turkeys before. They also saw the first American Kestrel of the season and Brown-headed Nuthatches. The only birds on the York River were Double-crested Cormorants.

OCTOBER 13 BIRD WALK AT NEW QUARTER PARK

Bird Club member and Virginia Master Naturalist, Susan Powell, led our bird walk at New Quarter Park Saturday, October 13. The walk attracted 20 participants who observed 41 species. The highlights were 6 Red-headed Woodpeckers (our club mascot!!) plus 2 Bald Eagles, a Clapper Rail (heard), two Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers (newly arrived migrant), two Red-breasted Nuthatches, two Brown Creepers, one Marsh Wren, a Winter Wren, a Northern Parula, two Pine Warblers, a Dark-eyed Junco (newly arrived migrant), and an unidentified Sparrow species (could they be first year White-throated Sparrows?? hard to tell?)

OCTOBER 20 FIELD TRIP TO YORK RIVER STATE PARK

By Bill Williams

This month's mild and dry conditions prompted 24 birders to assemble at the York River State Park entry gate at the dimly lit hour of 7:00 a.m.(DST) on October 20. As soon as the group gathered in the parking lot day-birds were being checked off. Among these were an accommodating Red-breasted Nuthatch, dozens of Yellow-rumped Warblers, a striking Pine Warbler, and some sassy Eastern Bluebirds. A walk down to the visitor center overlook produced voice-mail from a Clapper Rail, some Belted Kingfisher antics, a couple of Laughing Gulls, and an Eastern Phoebe. Ambling along to Woodstock Pond attentive eyes picked up an adult Bald Eagle, a somewhat secretive Common Yellowthroat, several posing Swamp Sparrows, 4 Royal Terns out over the river, and a fly-by Red-headed Woodpecker. Across the pond a pair of Pileated Woodpeckers played hide and seek with spotting scope views. A short stroll on the forested trail above the pond proved birdless, so the contingent returned to a trail near the birdy parking lot. Here a small flock of Chipping Sparrows chased each other and thanks to Gary Driscoll, Adrienne Frank, and George Roundtree everyone got to see not one but 3 Yellow-billed Cuckoos! Our last species of the morning was a Red-tailed Hawk soaring overhead as folks packed up to leave for home. In all 50 species were recorded, including all of the possible woodpeckers. A complete list was posted on eBird.

THE 2007 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

By Bill Williams

Let's cap 2007's Thirty Birdy Years celebration with a huge turnout for the 31st annual Christmas Bird Count to be held Sunday, December 16.

For those unfamiliar with this international citizen science endeavor, which started in 1900, a Christmas Bird Count attempts to document during a 24-hour period as many birds of as many species as possible within a 15-mile diameter count circle. Christmas bird count data have proven to be quite valuable for tracking bird population trends and species dynamics over time. Therefore, the more comprehensive the counts can be the more valuable these data become.

The Colonial Williamsburg Information Center marks the center of the Williamsburg Bird Count circle which is divided into named count territories as follows: Camp Peary, Cheatham Annex, College Woods, Hog Island, Jolly Pond, Skimino, Kingsmill, Middle Plantation, and Jamestown. Each territory has a leader. Several of the territories are woefully undermanned and need more eyes on the skies. Count participants volunteer to spend as much time in the field as their schedules allow, and we are particularly interested in contributors who can provide counts of the birds coming to their feeders during the count day. At the end of the day, usually around 5:00 p.m., everyone who can gathers for a compilation tally.

More details about the December 16, 2007 count will appear in the December Flyer. In the meantime, if you have an interest in the count please contact Bill Williams at jwwil2@wm.edu or 229-1124 for more information. We are already getting commitments from some folks new to our count area, and we encourage all to help as much as they can.

LOCAL GROUP WINS KIPTOPEKE CHALLENGE

By Brian Taber

The "Wild Birds Unlimited of Williamsburg" team (Paul Nasca and I) began the Kiptopeke Challenge on September 22, 2007, well before dawn, at the Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge, where we whistled up an Eastern Screech-Owl. We then headed to Kiptopeke State Park, where we hoped to find a Chuck-will's-widow that had been seen around the banding station. It appeared right on schedule and we watched as it did its fly-catching act from a high snag in the dim light for several minutes ... then a Great Horned Owl called ... we were off to a great

start! As the sun rose we stood at the pond on Ramp Road back at the nearby Refuge and were amazed to see 204 White Ibis descend and join dozens of herons, egrets and shorebirds, all packed into the tiny, shallow pond.

There were Seaside Sparrows in the saltmarsh by the pond and 4 Whimbrels flew right over. Sharp-shinned Hawks were already up and flying. Just across Route 13, we found a perched Cooper's Hawk, Common Yellowthroats and Forster's Terns. Just east of Kiptopeke, we saw 5 Eurasian Collared Doves, in their usual neighborhood, then headed back to the observation platform at Kiptopeke to check out the feeders and see if songbirds were still flying around after the night's migration. The Ruby-throated Hummingbird that had been reported at the platform feeder didn't appear, so after an hour we decided to drive up Arlington Road and then to Custis Tomb to see what the agricultural fields had to offer. On a side road we found our most unusual bird of the day, a Nashville Warbler, quite lucky for us, as there were very few small birds around all day. We also saw a Red-breasted Nuthatch, a Palm Warbler, a Horned Lark, Eastern Meadowlark and dozens of Semi-palmated Plovers.

At the harbor town of Oyster we found a Belted Kingfisher and at the Oyster landfill, not picturesque but full of birds, we added Fish Crow, Pied-billed Grebe, Blue-winged Teal, Western Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, and Cattle Egret.

Our team had never stopped at Eyre Hall, just north of Cape Charles. It is a sprawling farm with gardens and woods and a large pond. We had some good luck there, adding Red-eyed Vireo (our only one of the day!) and Wood Duck. After a minor car issue and some assistance by the Kiptopeke Challenge team of John Spahr and Alan Larner, who very nicely made a detour, we headed toward Chincoteague. It was already past noon ... the Kiptopeke Challenge mornings go fast. A brief side-stop at Willis Wharf produced the expected Marbled Godwits. Chincoteague's Swan Cove had water and exposed mudflats, but the wildlife loop drive was dry as it could be. Still, we added Short-billed Dowitchers, Least Terns, Sandwich Terns, Sanderlings, Brown-headed Nuthatches, and Black-bellied Plovers, among others. As the sun was setting on a beautiful marsh scene, Black-crowned and Yellow-crowned Night-Herons brought the long day to a close.

Oh ... who won? Well ... we did!! Our 106 species is a rather low total for a winning team, but the long, hot, dry spell really had cleared birds off the Eastern Shore. That's why we call it a challenge! Our team also raised more than \$3,000 thanks to you all! As always, your support is greatly appreciated!