



# The Flyer

## Newsletter of the Williamsburg Bird Club

Vol. 32, No. 8

[www.williamsburgbirdclub.org](http://www.williamsburgbirdclub.org)

September 2008

### President's Corner

By Shirley Devan

Birding around Williamsburg in August is sometimes a challenge. So Louise, a non-birder friend, and I ventured north for a day of bird watching near the water in Maryland. We had heard that we could get great looks at our target bird near the harbor in Baltimore so that's where we headed. We left at 7:00 am and reached our destination earlier than expected—10:30.

We had to wait around—something birders are accustomed to because the birds we wanted to see did not appear until about 1:30. Meanwhile House Sparrows, Rock Pigeons, and gulls entertained us and begged for food. We ate a snack and hydrated ourselves for the long birding session.

Finally we joined the 42,744 other bird watchers eager to see our target birds. We were not disappointed. The 25 birds appeared right on schedule and displayed, ate, drank, perched, and preened for four hours and one minute, about an hour longer than we expected. Twenty-five males in their bright breeding plumage. (They are not ready to molt or migrate yet.) Our observation post was at the back of the group, but our binoculars gave us close up looks at all the birds and the birders. Even some TV stations were on site filming the birds' appearance and antics.

Our afternoon was not without drama. The much-anticipated predators arrived shortly after our birds and harassed them all afternoon – throwing items at them, chasing them from their perches, and sometimes scoring direct hits!

Sad to say, the predators chased our birds from their habitat and declared victory after hours of agitation and aggravation.

My friend Louise, who likes predators and was not cheering for the target birds, was pleased with the day's events. We headed for home – each of us mumbling “wait until next year”. Still we enjoyed a fun day all around – great birds, great birders, but way too many predators!

[Translation: *Louise and I drove to Baltimore last Sunday to see a baseball game between the Baltimore Orioles and the New York Yankees. The Yankees won 8–7 after the Orioles came back from a 7–2 deficit to tie the game at 7 all in the 6th inning. I am the Orioles fan —Louise is the Yankees fan.*]

### September Meeting

By Alex Minarik

William and Mary graduate student, Mikaela G. Howie, will present the findings of her research entitled “The Movement of Aquatic Mercury into a Riparian Ecosystem” at the September meeting. She worked with four species for this study: the eastern bluebird, the Carolina chickadee, and the house and Carolina wrens. Mikaela is one of the recipients of the William Sheehan and Ruth Beck Ornithology Research Scholarships that our club awarded in 2007.

The meeting is on September 17, 2008 at 7:30 p.m. in Room 117 on Millington Hall on the William and Mary campus.

Refreshments will be provided by Jean Rend and Grace Doyle.

### A Big Thanks to George & Valerie Copping of Wild Birds Unlimited

The Williamsburg Bird Club received a donation of \$414.20 from WBU in based on sales to WBC members from January through June of this year. Our club receives a 5% rebate on the pre-tax amount for everything our members spend at Wild Birds Unlimited in Monticello Marketplace. Of course, you do have to let them know that you are a member.

### September Field Trip to the Eastern Shore–9/27

Please note that this field trip is on the fourth Saturday of the month to avoid the crowds at the Eastern Shore Birding and Wildlife Festival which will be held the preceding weekend.

## Officers

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Cynthia Long	

Please meet up with Shirley Devan by 7 AM at the Colony Square Shopping Center to form carpools to save on gas and tolls. The group will be told where to meet Hugh Beard, who will be leading this trip, on the Eastern Shore around 8:30 AM. The group will visit the hawkwatching platform, the songbird banding station and walk through the forest to the beach to do a little birding there. Plan on spending at least 3 hours on the Eastern Shore.

Hugh recommends that you bring your cameras, since you will probably see some hawks and songbirds up close and personal.

## August Bird Sightings

Report your backyard birds and local sightings to Fred Blystone at 229-4346 or [fmb19481@verizon.net](mailto:fmb19481@verizon.net). If you encounter interesting birds on your vacation/travels, please share!

**August 1:** Lois Leeth reports “lots of activity at my ground feeder and the hanging feeders—winter wren flitting about—the Brown Thrasher produced two off spring and they are regulars—a Towhee—and lots of Goldfinches eating shelled sunflower seeds—also chickadees, titmouses and Blue Jays—pretty colors all spread out—a dozen crows—they like the bird bath. August is the month the birds anticipate a change.”

**August 3:** Grace and Joe Doyle bird at Camp Peary and identify 38 species.

**August 5:** Kathi Mestayer reports her husband Mac heard a Northern Bobwhite from the parking lot of the Ft. Eustis gold course. Lois Leeth was delighted to see her **first** Blue Grosbeak flying across Mounts Bay Road in Kingsmill.

**August 6:** Shirley Devan and Susan Powell bird south of the James. At Craney Island there were several thousand shore birds of varying species. The highlights were 13 American Avocets and 2 Marbled Godwits. Stopping at Hog Island, Shirley says she does not think she have ever seen Hog Island so dry. She and Susan could see Great Egrets, Great Blue Herons, Canada Geese and Osprey in the first impoundment. Their last stop of the day was at Sunken Meadows where Canada Geese dominated. They also had 2 Bald Eagles, 1 Belted Kingfisher, 3 Mute Swans and some Osprey.

**August 8:** From Lois Leeth— “Carolina Wrens, doves, goldfinches, towhee and sibling, blue jays, cardinals, chickadees, brown thrasher and two siblings, house finches, mockingbird, crows, tufted titmouse, house sparrows, song sparrows--at the marina at Kingsmill--at least 200 seagulls and 10 skimmers--75 immature mallards waiting for handouts--Fall is in the air-- and one redbellied woodpecker and a downy --the birds love the shelled sun-flower seeds--plus one feeder with all sorts of goodies.”

**August 10:** Joe & Grace Doyle visit Camp Peary and are able to see or hear 29 species of birds.

**August 24:** Kathi Mestayer reports “there’s a baby thrasher in the yard, and the hummingbird is still visiting the bee balm regularly. Mac says there was a barred owl in the backyard, and it didn’t even move when he walked right up underneath it. Might’ve been one of the babies.” Joe & Grace Doyle spend part of their Sunday morning at Camp Peary and are able to identify 37 species of birds.

**August 25:** Alex Minarik reports two Prothonotary Warblers and 1 Hooded Warbler in her back yard. One of the Prothonotaries and the Hooded Warbler briefly lit simultaneously on the deck railing.

### 2008 Kiptopeke Challenge

Please consider supporting either, or both, the Double X Birders of Williamsburg—Alex Minarik, Lee Schuster, Susan Powell and Shirley Devan or Wild Birds Unlimited of Williamsburg—Brian Taber and Paul Nasca who are participating in the Kiptopeke Challenge (the bird-a-thon sponsored by the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory) on September 13, 2008. Both teams (along with others) will scour the Eastern Shore to see which team can find the most species in the 24 hour period. Send a check payable to CVWO to Brian Taber at 103 Exeter Court, Williamsburg, VA 23185 and/or to Shirley Devan at 106 Winter East, Williamsburg, VA 23188. All of the proceeds of this event are used to further field research, educational presentations which are free to the public and conservation efforts, such as habitat restoration. For more information, see the website at [www.cvwo.org](http://www.cvwo.org).

### Christmas Bird Counts

For those of you who really like to plan ahead, dates have been set for some of the coastal Virginia Christmas counts.

Dismal Swamp N.W.R.	Fri., Dec 19
Wachapreague	Sat., Dec 20
Nassawadox	Sun., Dec 21
Chincoteague N.W.R.	Mon., Dec 29
Back Bay N.W.R.	Mon., Dec 29
Cape Charles	Tue., Dec 30
Little Creek	Wed., Dec 31

If you are interested in participating in any of these counts, get in touch with me and I will get you information on how to contact the compiler.

### WBC August New Quarter Park Walks & Craney Island Field Trip

Susan Powell led nine other birders on the August 8th walk. At the boat dock on Queens Creek the group got good looks at the Osprey nestlings in the two nearest nests. Parents were soaring all around and one adult swept down on the construction site across the creek, picked up a stick and took it to the nest. While wandering back up the path, Rosanne Redding spotted what turned out to be an Acadian Flycatcher flying back and forth to a nest near the end of a limb of a beech tree. Shirley got her scope on the nest and the group was able to see one fuzzy headed nestling. A total of 26 species were identified during the walk.



*Lisa Arellano took this picture of the group. Front row: Shirley Devan, Susan Powell, Margaret Ware. Middle row: Seig Kopinitz, Alice Kopinitz, Mike Powell, Sharon Falconer, Beth Fugate. Back row: Joe Piotrowski*

Dan Cristol led the Craney Island field trip on August 16. In addition to Dan there were 21 participants on the trip. They were Indigo Cristol, Lazuli Cristol, Tanya Hoatson, Alex Minarik, Joanne Andrews, Mitchell Byrd, Rosanne Reddin, Linda Scherer, Donnie Goodrich, Shirley Devan, Jeanne & Mike Millin, Bill Holcombe, Tom McCary, Dave Lee, Bill Kay, Gary Driscole, Adrienne Frank, Dave Youker and Lynda & Tom Blair. There were thousands of shore birds at Craney but many were far out in the cells and not easy to identify. There were a total of 51 species seen during the morning. The highlights for the group were Marbled Godwit (1), American Avocets (2), Red-necked Phalaropes (5), Black Tern (1), White-rumped Sandpiper (2), Lesser Black-backed Gull, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Black-bellied Plover and Ruddy Turnstones.



*These two photos were taken at Craney Island by Shirley Devan.*



*I guess Dan Cristol and Bill Kay weren't interested in the non-migratory cranes behind them.*

Susan Powell was the leader for the August 23 walk at New Quarter Park. Eleven other birders joined her and they were able to find 33 species of birds. The highlight for most of them were the two Clapper Rails on the mud-flats down at Queen's Creek. The group was able to put scopes on them and everyone was able to get good looks at the usually very secretive birds. The adult and immature Yellow-crowned Night-herons at the marina were also nice finds.



*Sara Lewis took this photo on the August 23rd walk. Seated: Margaret Ware, Susan Powell, Betty Peterson, Shirley Devan. Standing: Heather & Rick Thompson and Rick & Marian Bennett. Not in this picture are Cathy Bond, Jeanette Navia and Kathie Young.*

### **News from the Hampton Roads Bird Club**

On the regularly scheduled Sunday park walk in Newport News Park on August 3, 17 people (which included WBC members Eleanor Young & Margaret Ware) joined leader Jane Frigo for a day that ended up with 47 species. A pair of Pileated Woodpeckers started off the morning and were followed by a flyover pair of Green Herons. The still air and abundance of bugs provided food for the flycatchers (Eastern Wood-Pewee, Acadian Flycatcher, Great-crested Flycatcher & Eastern Kingbird). Ospreys were also easily seen, but no Bald Eagles.

The Newport News Park walk of August 17 found nine birders joining leader Jane Frigo. The group was able to identify 50 species by sight or song. Notables included 3 Green Herons, a Black-and-White Warbler, an American Redstart and a Pileated Woodpecker.

Walks are conducted the 1st and 3rd Sundays year round in the park by the HRBC. Meet at the parking lot to the left of the Ranger Station around 7 AM.

The speaker for the September 11 meeting at Sandy Bottom Nature Park, 1255 Big Bethel Road in Hampton will be Teta Kain. Her program will be *Butterflies Are Free to Fly and Migrate*. The meeting starts at 7 PM.

The September field trip will be on September 13 and will be held at York River State Park. Meet at the parking lot on the right at 8 AM. Call Jane Frigo at 873-0721 for further information.

## Eastern Shore Birding and Wildlife Festival

The Eastern Shore Birding and Wildlife Festival is changing dates! The 16th annual festival will be held in September the kickoff in Onancock (757-302-0388 or [www.onancockbirding.com](http://www.onancockbirding.com) on the 18th and then the 19th—21st in Cape Charles. The festival continue to offer a variety of trips led by experts. Come see the natural spectacle of migration. Vast numbers of raptors and songbirds pour through the Eastern Shore on their way to southern wintering grounds. Colorful butterflies and dazzling dragonflies add to the natural wonder of the Eastern Shore. Save the date and don't miss this one of a kind experience!. For more information, contact Eastern Shore of VA Chamber of Commerce at 757-787-2460 or [www.esvachamber.org/festivals/birding/](http://www.esvachamber.org/festivals/birding/).

## 2008 College Creek Hawkwatch

By Brian Taber

The 12th consecutive College Creek Hawkwatch, Virginia's only regular late winter/spring hawkwatch, concluded its season on May 31st. Thanks to the other dedicated and reliable volunteers and friends, Tom Armour, Fred Blystone and Bill Williams.

We started on February 9th and were challenged by wet and cool and windy weather almost all season. Coverage was down due to the weather and the total of 1304 compares to 1666, 1525, 145 and 1013 for the past 4 years respectively. We made up quite a bit thanks to the best May ever. Our May total of 379 compares to 251 and 230 for the next best Mays of 2005 and 2000. During our last year's record season, we only managed 144 in May. There were few large flights, but a number of medium-sized flights kept adding up to a decent season total.

On May 30th, we watched as a late flight of 30 birds came low and slow right over the parking lot in just a few minutes—22 Turkey Vultures, 6 Bald Eagles, a Broad-winged Hawk and a Northern Harrier.

Totals

Black Vultures	47
Turkey Vultures	731
Osprey	255 (new season high)
Mississippi Kite	1
Bald Eagle	98
Northern Harrier	41 (ties season high)
Sharp-shinned Hawk	45

Cooper's Hawk	9
Red-shouldered Hawk	3
Broad-winged Hawk	25
Red-tailed Hawk	30
American Kestrel	12 (ouch—again)
Merlin	2
Peregrine Falcon	2
Unidentified	3

Non-hawk highlights included 3 White Pelicans on April 13 and a Sandhill Crane on May 20th.

## Letter to Shirley Devan from Long-time Member Martha Briggs

Dear Shirley,

You wrote in the last Flyer that your birds come to your "computer window" and entertain you when you are working. Even though my house is across the street from Phi Beta Kappa, my birds come to my patio to have breakfast or dinner with me. During the month of June the following birds came to entertain me as I ate, but not all came of the same day, or at the same time.

Northern Cardinals (3 males and two females), Gray Catbird with 2 babies, Towhee (1 male and 1 juvenile female—took me a couple of days to identify her), Red-tailed Hawk (all birds disappear when it comes), American Robins (2 males & 2 females), Mockingbird and a baby, Brown Thrasher (3 adults and a baby with no tail) [story—my bird bath is a large (30 inch diameter) ground level, terracotta saucer. The baby Brown Thrasher had a drink and then decided to bathe. It had all the right moves, but did not get in the water. The next day, however, it hopped on the rim of the bath, got in and had a wet bath], 2 Carolina Wrens who have built their nest in a bird bottle, 15 Goldfinches (8 males & 7 females), 2 Carolina Chickadees that have nested in a Bluebird box, 1 Flicker who drums on the gutter above the suet feeder, 1 Downy, 1 Hairy and 1 Red-bellied Woodpecker after the suet, 2 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, 1 Titmouse, plus a number of ubiquitous grackles, starlings and sparrow. This list sounds like an exaggeration, but it isn't. In the evenings raccoons, possums and even a red fox come for food.

At my farm in Southampton County (near Wakefield), 2 Tree Swallows flirted with a Bluebird house, but did not nest in it, 1 Indigo Bunting, 15+ Ruby-throated Hum-

mingbirds, 8–14 Goldfinches, 3 Purple Martins, 3 Barn Swallows, 1 Eastern Kingbird, 4 Mockingbirds and 6 Eastern Bluebirds.

Have a good “birding” summer., Martha Briggs

### Stamps Used on this Issue of *The Flyer*

From the Fall 2008 issue of *USA Philatelic*

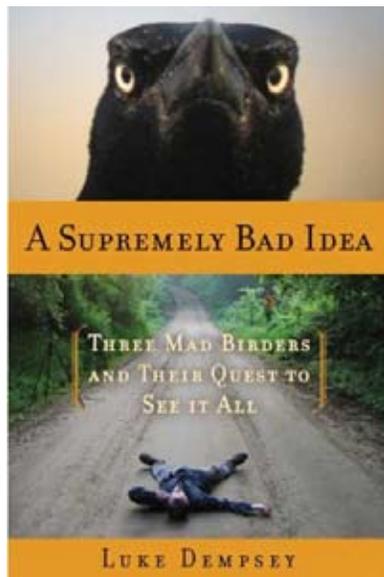
In honor of the trip Louise and Shirley took to see the Orioles and Yankees play in Baltimore, the stamp I'm using this month honors the 100th anniversary of the song “Take Me Out to the Ball Game”. Its lyrics were written by Jack Norworth—a songwriter who had never attended a major league ball game. While riding on a New York City train in the summer of 1908 he saw a sign about an upcoming game at the Polo Grounds. He took out a piece of paper and began writing lines about a fictional fan he called Katie Casey who was mad about baseball. When her boyfriend asked her to a show, she replied, “Take me out to the ball game / Take me out with the crowd...”



Composer Albert Von Tilzer set Norworth's words to music and the York Music Company published the song the same year. Although the song wasn't an instant hit, it soon caught on with baseball fans and became a favorite of ballpark organists across the country.

### August 2008 WBC Book Review

By Jeanette Navia



*A Supremely Bad Idea: Three Mad Birders and Their Quest to See It All*, by Luke Dempsey. Bloomsbury, 2008. 257 p. \$24.99. Library call number : 598.072 DEM, James City Library

Luke Dempsey fell in love with birds when his visiting friends, Don and Donna Graffiti, gave him an old pair of their binoculars and pointed out a male

Common Yellowthroat flitting about on a small bush on his Pennsylvania property. Smitten, he found himself turning into what he spent the first part of Chapter One making fun of, a birder.

Dempsey is a misanthrope – he says so on page 4 -- and although he calls his misanthropy “low grade,” it seems to be one of his most exceptional characteristics. As he chronicles his trips with the Graffitis to different parts of the country, he skewers just about everyone who gets, or threatens to get, between them and the birds they set out to see. When “the family Dunce” (as he has christened a family of park visitors) gets too close to an osprey who is eating a freshly-caught fish on one of the park grills, Dempsey yells at them. “Move back! It’s against the law to harass a wild bird,” he says, and whips out his cell phone. “Move, or I’m calling the cops,” he bluffs, as he knows “no cop anywhere in the world would turn up to move people away from an osprey having lunch.”

The trio take birding trips to Arizona, where they hope to see an Elegant Trogon and Dempsey chastises a local bird group leader who has been shrieking so loud that “the last two Elegant Trogons in North America heard [her] voice and fled for Mexico, never to return.” They go to Florida for Frigatebirds and Roseated Spoonbills, to Michigan in search of Cerulean Warblers, the Pacific Northwest where they see Murrelets and Western Grebes, to Texas where birding isn't quite so safe as birds aren't the only things that move across the border without documentation, and to Colorado where they note the devastation the Pine Bark Beetle has done to the forests in the Rocky Mountains. They see plenty of birds on each of their trips, and encounter quite a few troubles with people along the way.

The book jacket claims this is “a supremely fun comic romp.” The humor mostly takes the form of Dempsey's mean-spirited comments about other people. This bothered me a little at first, but, I admit, I laughed. After a bit, I decided that, although I cringed at times, it was refreshing to hear him voice his frustrations and make light of what could, at times, have turned the birding trips into nightmares.

Throughout the book, and especially in the epilogue, Dempsey includes information about habitat loss and other concerns regarding dwindling bird populations. His love for birds (and for his daughters, whom he keeps wishing were with him) is plain to see.

There is a YouTube video about the book at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-n7BDJZ5gII>

## UPDATES

By Shirley Devan

Ruth Beck continues to improve in rehabilitation at Patriot's Colony here in town. Ruth sends this message to you all: "I cannot come up with the words to express how grateful I am for your cards, calls, visits, prayers, and thoughts during this challenge time in my life. As of August 30, I can walk non-stop with the walker for 35 feet. I am working toward new goals every week. Each step brings me a step closer to going home. I am fortunate to be watching two bird feeders provided by Lee Schuster, George Copping at Wild Birds Unlimited, and Shirley Devan. You have my heartfelt gratitude and keep the cards, letters, and visits coming!"



Photo by Fred Blystone

Tom McCary is recovering very nicely from his foot surgery. He has returned to his home in Williamsburg. You may have seen his letter to the editor in the August 30 edition of The Virginia Gazette about the "bald" cardinals. Tom will be leading the bird walk at New Quarter Park Saturday September 13 at 8:00 a.m. Welcome back to the field, Tom!

Joe Piotrowski is also recovered from his neck surgery. He has been on a couple of walks at New Quarter Park and is back at work as a surgeon at our local hospital. Welcome back, Joe!

If I've missed any updates, it's only because I don't know about them! Please let us know if we can help you out in any way while you're under the weather or recovering from surgery or illness.

## Back Bay Birding Club Field Trip Schedule

Sep 13, 2008 Back Bay NWR – tram ride \*

Oct 11, 2008 Back Bay NWR – meet 8am in Welcome Center parking lot

Apr 18, 2009 Back Bay NWR – meet 8am in Welcome Center parking lot

May 16, 2009 Back Bay NWR – tram ride \*

\*The tram seats 24 and leaves the Welcome Center parking lot at 9am and is available **first come first serve**. When you enter the refuge at the fee booth you will inform the attendant you wish to get a number for the tram ride. It is recommended you arrive between 8-8:30 to better your chances of getting a seat. The tram goes to False Cape State Park. You can hike around the area or relax at the visitor center. The tram returns to BBNWR Welcome Center at 1pm. The tram is an **open** vehicle (no heat/ac) and costs \$8 per person, \$6 children & senior (62+) Exact change is recommended.

Birdwalks leaving from the parking lot may include the following trails: Kuralt, Bay, Seaside & Dune. Birdwalks will last between 3-5 hours depending on weather and cooperation of our feathered friends.

What to bring: insect repellent, binoculars, field guide (optional), water, light snack (optional), comfortable shoes and a desire to have fun and learn more about the birds that live around us.

Please check the refuge website [www.fws.gov/backbay/](http://www.fws.gov/backbay/) for information on entrance fees and trail mileage. Heavy rain will cancel the birdwalk/tram ride. Please use your judgment as the club will not be able to notify you.

November 1st through March 31st the BBBC will be available in the Back Bay NWR "Window" located north of C-Pool on as many Saturdays and Sundays as schedules permit, to aid in identification of the wintering birdlife. If you would like to know when BBBC members will be available please email: [backbaybirdclub@aol.com](mailto:backbaybirdclub@aol.com).

These walks are open to the general public—you do not have to be a member of the Back Bay Birding Club to participate.

## CALENDAR

Sunday, Sept 7	HRBC Bird Walk, Newport News Park, 7 am
Thursday, Sept 11	HRBC Monthly Meeting, Teta Kain, Speaker, See Page 4
Saturday, Sept 13	WBC Bird Walk, New Quarter Park, 8 am, Tom McCary, Leader
Saturday, Sept 13	HRBC Field Trip, York River State Park, See Page 4
Wednesday, Sept 17	WBC Monthly Meeting, Mikaela Howie, Speaker, See Page 1
September 18-21	Eastern Shore Birding & Wildlife Festival, See Page 5
Sunday, Sept 21	HRBC Bird Walk, Newport News Park, 7 am
Saturday, Sept 27	WBC Bird Walk, New Quarter Park, 7 am, Bill Williams, Leader
Saturday, Spet 27	WBC Field Trip, Eastern Shore, Hugh Beard, Leader, See Page 1
Sunday, Oct 5	HRBC Bird Walk, Newport News Park, 7 am

**September 17th Meeting**  
**Mikaela Howie, Speaker**

**September 27th Field Trip**  
**Eastern Shore–Hugh Beard, Leader**