



# The Flyer

## Newsletter of the Williamsburg Bird Club

Vol. 32, No. 11

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

December 2008

### President's Corner

By Shirley Devan

My favorite time of the year is here! I'm not talking about the traditional Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, I'm talking about the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count and the New Year's Day Boardwalk Bird Show! Read more specifics about both elsewhere in the newsletter.

Put aside the frantic holiday busyness for a day and join with like-minded folks who enjoy scouring the countryside for our winter resident birds in the Audubon Christmas Bird Count on Sunday, December 21. Contact Bill Williams if you can spare even a few hours or half a day. You can even tally the birds in your yard for the Audubon count. It's one of my favorite days of the year. Our end-of-day tally will take place at the Carrot Tree restaurant at 5 pm. Count participants can enjoy Brunswick stew and cider as we share the day's adventures and tally the count. We hope you'll join in the day's events.

December means transitions as well. A new Board was elected at the November meeting. Many thanks to Alex Minarik who served last year as Vice President of Programs and to Sara Lewis, Member-at-Large. We welcome to the 2009 Board Joe Piotrowski as Vice President of Programs and Chuck Litterst as Member-at-Large.

A big thank you goes to the Board members who agreed to serve again in 2009: Fred Blystone, Vice President and Editor for our newsletter; Mary Anne Fennel, Secretary; Chuck Rend, Treasurer; and Joanne Andrews, Member-at-Large. I am pleased to serve the Chapter as President for another year.

I'll be contacting our Committee Chairs in January about serving another year: Tom Armour, Field Trips; Barb Streb, Refreshments; Jeanette Navia, Membership; Lee Schuster, Library Liaison; Bill Williams, Records Chair; John Fennel, Adopt-a-Highway; and Cynthia Long, Historian. Many thanks to these folks and the many other volunteers who make things happen throughout the year. The members of the Bird Club are one of the things I am most thankful for at this time of the year.

### The Williamsburg Christmas Bird Count

By Bill Williams

The 32nd annual Williamsburg Christmas Bird Count will unfold Sunday, December 21, 2008. We hope everyone will find some time during that day to be a part of this very valuable endeavor. The Christmas Bird Count was initiated in 1900 as a counter play to a former holiday tradition of seeing how much game could be taken during that season. Rather than removing wildlife, the bird count effort seeks to document the diversity and abundance of birdlife in a defined area. Each count encompasses a 15-mile diameter circle, in our case one that is centered at the Colonial Williamsburg Information Center. The goal for the day is to have as many observers as possible counting every bird of every species within 7.5 miles of the count center. The data are compiled and submitted to the National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count website, where it becomes part of an international database of winter bird populations, not only in North America but Central and South America too. These data have rapidly become one of the standards by which wintering bird population trends and distributions are assessed over time.

Whether you can join us for an hour or so or the whole day on December 21, your contribution will be exceedingly valuable. The success of the count is based on the numbers of species and how many birds can be found. This includes the common yard and feeder birds, even Rock Pigeons, European Starlings, and House Sparrows!! With that in mind we hope you will choose to join one of the field teams and/or participate from or near your home. All we ask is that you keep track of how much time that day you devote and, if applicable, how many miles you travel during your birding excursions that day.

Each participant will be asked to make a \$5.00 contribution to the National Audubon Society to help defray its costs for coordinating and compiling the vast amount of information generated through this effort.

*(continued on page 2)*

## Officers

<b>President</b> Shirley Devan	220-6269 <i>sedevan52@cox.net</i>
<b>Vice-President (Programs)</b> Alex Minarik	220-3382 <i>mrminarik@yahoo.com</i>
<b>Vice-President (The Flyer)</b> Fred Blystone	229-4346 <i>fmb19481@verizon.net</i>
<b>Treasurer</b> Chuck Rend	220-9032 <i>carjean39@msn.com</i>
<b>Secretary</b> Mary Anne Fennell	566-2615 <i>mafjjf07@netzero.net</i>
<b>Member-at-Large</b> Sara Lewis	220-2042 <i>saraelewis@cox.net</i>
<b>Member-at-Large</b> Joanne Andrews	259-0867 <i>kaiviti37@hotmail.com</i>
<b>Past President</b> Bob Long	259-9559

## Committee Chairpersons

<b>Field Trips</b> Tom Armour	229-2363 <i>swiftyarmour@cox.net</i>
<b>Records &amp; Bird Counts</b> Bill Williams	229-1124 <i>juwil2@wm.edu</i>
<b>Library Liaison</b> Lee Schuster	565-6148 <i>dljschuster@cox.net</i>
<b>Refreshments</b> Barb Streb	565-0250 <i>barbarastreb@starpower.net</i>
<b>Membership</b> Jeanette Navia	565-2597 <i>jnavia@gmail.com</i>
<b>Adopt-A-Highway</b> John Fennell	566-2615 <i>mafjjf07@netzero.net</i>
<b>Historian</b> Cynthia Long	259-9559

## A Big Thanks

Would like to extend a big thanks to Refreshments Committee Chairperson Barb Streb and the following people who were kind enough to provide refreshments for the 2008 meetings: Joanne Andrews, Alice Kopinitz, Jennifer Boag, Lucile Kossodo, Jean Rend, Grace Doyle, Bob & Cynthia Long and Mary Ann Fennell.

## Welcome New Members

Ben & Sarah Baldwin and David & Janet Laughlin

The count day will conclude with a 5:00 p.m. compilation to be held this year at Carrot Tree Kitchens on Jamestown Road. This compilation arrangement is a first for our venerable count, one we hope will encourage more participation. Brunswick Stew, mulled cider, and rolls will be warm and ready for consumption by count participants. Carrot Tree will close for business that day at 4:00 p.m. Therefore, count participants are asked to park behind the bakery so that there is no appearance the business is still open.

If you plan to participate in the count, please contact Bill Williams at [juwil2@wm.edu](mailto:juwil2@wm.edu) or call 229-1124. Please let Bill know in advance if you also plan to be at the tally. This will help determine how much food needs to be prepared. Tally HO!!

## November Bird Sightings

Report your backyard birds and local sightings to Fred Blystone at 229-4346 or [fmb19481@verizon.net](mailto:fmb19481@verizon.net).

**Oct 31:** Ron Geise reports a Ring-necked Pheasant in his Woodland Farms yard to Bill Williams. It turned out it was an escapee, but what a bird to see when you look out the window!

**Nov 2:** Joe & Grace Doyle visit Camp Peary. Highlights included Brown-headed Nuthatches, Bald Eagles and Red-headed Woodpeckers.

**Nov 3:** Bill Williams reports 2 Ospreys at College Creek.

**Nov 4:** Tom McCary reports 2 sightings of White-crowned Sparrows in the Shirley Plantation's formal gardens—adult and immature.

**Nov 6:** Bill Williams and Fred Blystone visit Turkey Island Road in Henrico County and Shirley Plantation in Charles City County. The rather windy conditions kept the species total low—the highlight of the day being a flock of 78 American Pipits that flew over them at Shirley Plantation.

**Nov 7:** Bill Williams has a singing Purple Finch in his yard on Lakehead Drive.

**Nov 9:** Bill Williams sends in a report of sightings on the Greensprings Trail—the highlights being 1 Pine Siskin, 2 Purple Finches, 5 American Pipits, 7 Palm Warblers and new local late dates for a Blue-headed Vireo and also for a Nashville Warbler.

**Nov. 11:** Kathy Mestayer sent the following report to Shirley Devan: “Cool sighting along Mill Creek; a big red-shouldered hawk, on the ground about 6’ away, with its wings outspread in a teepee shape, obviously hiding/protecting something. It looked at us, we looked at it, for several seconds, until it took off, carrying a somewhat limp squirrel in its claws.”

**Nov 12:** Ruth Beck reports hearing migrating Tundra Swans flying overhead during the evening. Tom McCary has 4 sightings of adult White-crowned Sparrows at Shirley Plantation.

**Nov 13:** Tom Armour had his 1st White-throated Sparrow of the fall at his feeders. Ruth Beck has her first Hermit Thrush of the season.

**Nov 14:** From Shirley Devan; "I spotted a Ruby-crowned Kinglet at my suet feeder this morning, as well as a Hermit Thrush underneath the feeders. Otherwise, I have the usual suspects—Carolina Chickadees, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren and Northern Cardinals." Tom McCary reports 3 sightings of White-crowned Sparrows at Shirley.

**Nov 16:** Tom Armour reports: "This AM on the York River from Felgates Creek to Yorktown-- 6 Common Loons--4 D.C. Cormorants--6 Buffleheads--15 Ruddy Ducks--10 Laughing Gulls--100+ Bonaparte's Gulls--25 Ring-billed Gulls--"

**Nov 16:** On their visit to Camp Peary, Grace and Joe Doyle sighted a number of birds, including Hooded Mergansers, Ruddy Ducks, Bald Eagles & Wild Turkeys.

**Nov. 16:** During a walk on Jamestown Island, Shirley Devan reports seeing 17 species of birds. Highlight was a good look at a Golden-crowned Kinglet. She also saw a Bald Eagle sitting on a branch near the nest across from the visitor center parking lot.

**Nov 17:** Bill Williams reports from Greensprings Trail. Just before daybreak a Green Heron flew by silently in the twilight. The bird was relocated at the boardwalk, at one point sitting 10 feet away just below my feet. It was seen and heard (clucking) repeatedly as it moved around looking for a feeding spot.....a juvenile by the color of the feather edgings. At Mainland Farm a Vesper Sparrow was encountered at least 3 times. About 9:05 three swallows were observed over the Mainland Farm soybean field. Their reddish-brown rump, pale whitish bellies, grayish underwings and pale grayish/buffy throats clearly identified them as Cave Swallows, a new species for the local area. The birds were in view for at least 20 minutes. (See Williamsburg Adds a New Species on following on this page).

**Nov 18:** Tom McCary is treated to a Hermit Thrush in a hedge near his front porch on Richmond Road.

**Nov 20:** Tom Armour reports the first winter ducks on the pond in the Vineyards, a male Bufflehead and a male Ring-necked Duck.

**Nov 21:** Tom Armour passes on a report of Dave Anderson seeing 6 Bufflehead and 4 American Black Ducks on College Creek at Williamsburg Landing.

**Nov 22:** Bill Williams reports 2 Semipalmated Plovers at

Felgates Creek. This is the first November record since 1949.

**Nov 24:** Alex Minarik & Shirley Devan bird the Colonial Parkway from Williamsburg to Yorktown (and the Yorktown waterfront). They report rafts of Ruddy Ducks but other waterfowl were much less numerous. They ended with 32 species. They then went to Newport News Park and walked the White Oak Trail to Swamp Bridge and back. The most distinctive observation was thousands of Common Grackles moving around the Discovery Center. Their total species count for the park was 43.

**Nov 26:** Shirley Devan and her sister do a combo drive/walk around the loop road on Jamestown Island. They spot 17 species—the best being a Wild Turkey Hen (near the big pullout just past the Pitch & Tar Swamp bridge) and an adult Bald Eagle that flew up to the nest across from the Visitor Center.

**Nov 26:** Three Dunlin are reported at Felgates Creek by Bill Williams.

**Nov 28:** Bill Williams reports a Pine Siskin at College Creek.

**Nov 29:** A Fox Sparrow and 2 Purple Finches are seen on the Greensprings Trail by Bill Williams. Kathy Mestayer reports forty foraging juncos in here front yard (no partridge, no pear tree).

**Nov 18–30:** Bill Williams has a Baltimore Oriole visiting his yard.

## **Williamsburg Adds a New Species**

**By Bill Williams**

Much to the delight of birders, late fall routinely produces exciting and intriguing bird diversity as migrants from every angle of the continent are on the move. This is truly the time of year when one never knows what unexpected species might show up following the passage of one the season's multiple personality weather systems. Virginia's Eastern Shore seems to hold the most promise for a rarity all-call due in large part to its peninsular northeast to south geographic orientation. But hey, there's been a Brown Booby at Claytor Lake, near Pulaski all fall, and just recently an early Iceland Gull showed up near Richmond. So why not something neat here??

Around 9:00 a.m. on Monday, November 17 three swallows were observed foraging over an uncut soybean field at Mainland Farm, adjacent to the Capital Bikeway and the Greensprings Greenway Trail. Tree Swallows over a field this time of year are not that unusual. However, a quick assessment of these birds made it clear they were not Tree Swallows, nor were they very late migrating late Barn Swallows. They had reddish rump patches!!! Their tails were dark above and below. Each was tawny bellied with a pale buffy throat and neck collar. Their wings were

brownish above and below contrasting slightly with their bluish/brown backs. They were either Cave Swallows or Cliff Swallows, the latter a species which occasionally nests locally! The clincher was the combination of the reddish brown rump patch and the pale throat. Cliff Swallows have a dark throat and their rump path is buffy.

Cave Swallows typically breed from central to west Texas with a relatively recent breeding population now in southern Florida. The species has become a regular late fall migrant in Virginia, especially on the Eastern Shore, and has been recorded as far north as New York. Virginia's first confirmed record was 4-18 November 1999 at the Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge. Closer by, six Cave Swallows were photographed at Shirley Plantation in Charles City County on October 30, 2008.

Calendar year 2008 will be remembered historically for many less positive things than new bird species found in a community. But this is precisely why birds become so enticing. There is always the prospect of something excitingly special to look forward to. January 2008 brought the state to our neighbor's front door to see the Townsend's Solitaire, and now we welcome Cave Swallows to join our avian community as species number 342.

### **New Year's Day Boardwalk Bird Show**

**By Shirley Devan**

Join me New Year's Day, (Thursday, January 1, 2009) at the Greensprings Trail Boardwalk for the Fourth Annual "New Year's Day Boardwalk Bird Show."

Weather has been cooperative the past three years and I'm counting on the same support from Mother Nature this time.

We'll meet on the "old" boardwalk over the old beaver pond from 1-3 p.m. (Not the "new" boardwalk on Virginia Capitol Trail.)

Come as you are; bring visiting family, friends and children; come early, stay late or just drop by. Last year we tallied bird species and dog species as they passed by.

Celebrate the New Year with a birding adventure close to home. Remember – every bird is a year bird on New Year's Day. Hope to see you there.

### **WBC November New Quarter Park Walks**

On the Nov 8th walk in New Quarter Park, Margaret Ware, Joe Piotrowski, Dorothy Whitfield, George Rountree, Sara Lewis and Joanne Andrews joined leader Tom McCary on a walk that was cut a little short because of the rain. There were a total of 19 species seen.

The November 15 field trip to the Colonial Parkway was rained out.

The walk in New Quarter Park on November 22 had 12 bundled up birders starting out in a rather cold 23 degrees. The first Bufflehead and Mergansers (Hooded & Red-breasted) of the season were among the 34 species seen.

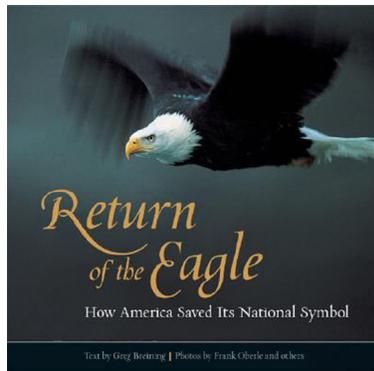


**Photo by Shirley Devan**

Left to right: Marian Bennett, Bill Williams, Rick Bennett, Joanne Andrews, Bob Long. Not pictured are Jeanette Navia, Ron and Bobbie Geise, Peter and Lorena Welsh and Margaret Ware.

### **WBC January 2009 Field Trip**

A field trip to the four tunnel islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel has been planned for 1/17/09. Special arrangements have to be made to visit islands 2, 3 & 4. A security guard is required to accompany each group of 15 people, and because of this, each person needs to pay a fee of \$10. The islands are a great place to find Brant, Harlequin Ducks, Long-tailed Ducks, Great Cormorants as well as other interesting species. Contact Shirley Devan at 757-813-1322 or [Sedevan52@cox.net](mailto:Sedevan52@cox.net) for more information.



### **Williamsburg Bird Club Book Review**

**By Jeanette Navia**

*Return of the Eagle: How America Saved Its National Symbol.* Text by Greg Breining, photos by Frank Oberle and others; The Lyons Press, 2008. ISBN: 9780762747900. \$19.95. pbk. 126 pp.

Williamsburg Library call number 598.916 BRE.

The bald eagle really is a beautiful bird. *Return of the Eagle* is full of stunning photos of eagles soaring, perching, looking regal, zeroing in on prey from high above and playing

in the thermals. Frank Oberle, who “may be the most prolific bald eagle photographer in the country,” took most of the pictures, and they are just spectacular.

I remember my father’s excitement one year, back in the 1970s, when he saw a bald eagle perched near our home in upstate New York. An eagle was a rare sight back then. The bald eagle population, once robust, had dwindled dramatically by the 1960s. DDT, sprayed on crops throughout the country in the 1940s and 1950s, was found to be a leading cause. The synthetic pesticide had gotten into the eagle’s food chain, and interfered with calcium metabolism, rendering the egg shells paper thin. The parents crushed the shells as they nested. In 1963, Alexander Sprunt, then director of research at Audubon, tabulated fewer than five hundred nesting pairs of bald eagles in the lower forty-eight states.

Thanks in large part to the uproar shown by readers of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*, DDT was banned from use in the United States in 1972. Though there were other factors that had led to the eagle’s decline, such as habitat destruction and hunting, the banning of DDT had a profoundly positive effect on the eagle population. Still, it took the efforts of wildlife managers and others to help recolonize sites from which the eagles had vanished.

Breining’s text discusses these recolonization efforts throughout the lower forty-eight states. Hacking attempts—raising eagles in captivity, then acclimating them to natural conditions and releasing them into the wild—have been successful in several places. Veterinary treatment for injured eagles is another tactic used to get the eagles back into the skies. Protecting eagle habitat is also part of the rehabilitation process.

*Return of the Eagle* was first published in 1994, just before the bald eagle’s status was upgraded from ‘endangered’ to ‘threatened.’ On June 28, 2007, the Interior Department took the bald eagle off the federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants.

On last year’s Christmas Bird Count, the Williamsburg group saw a total of 19 adult and 17 immature; our group of birders saw at least a dozen bald eagles on Hog Island. They have made a great comeback. Seeing them through binoculars is thrilling. Seeing them up close in the photos in this book is magnificent. A directory in the back of the book includes some of the best places to see wild bald eagles in the United States. Caledon Natural Area near Fredericksburg, James River National Wildlife Refuge and Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge are listed for Virginia.

## **Wings Over Water, Nov 7–9, 2008 Outer Banks, NC**

**By Shirley Devan**

Fellow Bird Club member Jeanette Navia and I traveled to the Outer Banks of North Carolina for the 12th Annual “Wings Over Water” birding festival, celebrated up and down the barrier islands of NC otherwise known as the OBX. The event started Tuesday, November 4, but Jeanette and I were headed for the Friday afternoon field trip at Bodie Island lighthouse.

I had attended this walk last year and enjoyed the two leaders, Jeff Phippen and Will Cook. They were in charge of the walk this year as well. Both are teachers and researchers at Duke University and are field biologists with wonderful knowledge of botany and zoology. Plus they are skilled birders and teachers in the field.

When we arrived at the parking lot, we were amazed to find over a dozen adult and immature White Ibis in the flooded parking island—feeding in the wet grass and perching in the pines. Leader Will Cook had determined that they were eating earthworms!!

Our group was small—a total of 6—so we wandered along the paths with quiet conversation and alerts. Our first destination was the marsh overlook behind the lighthouse. We spotted the usual suspects—Great Blue Heron, Great Egrets, Gadwall, and Green-wing Teal. Jeff and Will commented that the great numbers of waterfowl had not yet arrived on the Outer Banks. One special find just off the observation tower was a Clouded Skipper, an uncommon butterfly species.

After a restroom break, we wandered off down the canal marsh trail that connected to Albemarle Sound. The best bird was a Tri-colored Heron perched in the top of a low pine tree. As expected, we had to filter out the scads of Yellow-rumped Warblers to find the kinglets, titmice, and chickadees. The best “herpetology” observation was a Black Rat snake intertwined around the top of a Yaupon Holly tree full of berries, only about seven feet off the ground and close to the trail. The black snake with the green leaves and red berries in the bright sunshine was stunning and Jeff and Will snapped lots of photos.

Saturday afternoon we had signed up for “Cape Hatteras Birding” with 4×4 transportation provided. Sounded like fun! After we sorted out with 2–3 people in each of four 4×4 vehicles with an experienced birder/driver and walkie-talkies, our destinations were The Point, the Cape Hatteras campground near the lighthouse, and the sandy beach. The campground was completely flooded. The roads were barely passable with 4×4 vehicles. Our driver,

Taylor Piephoff, told us that the area had received about 12 inches of rain earlier in the week. That explained the flooding at Bodie Island and in the campground. Since the campground was flooded, the American Pipits were in the road! Great looks at a bird I've not seen often. Also many Killdeer were scurrying around in the campground. A Merlin flew over and everything scurried.

Then we headed to the beach where we found hundreds of other 4x4 vehicles to go along with the fishermen and fisherwomen who were competing in a surf fishing tournament, which had also attracted lots of gulls and terns flying and diving around the surf. As soon as we arrived on the beach, our driver called out "there's a jaeger out there." The walkie-talkies hissed and popped as the drivers tried to find a parking spot and locate the jaeger.

After much discussion and consultation with field guides, our leaders determined the bird to be a Parasitic Jaeger rather than a Pomerine Jaeger. One of the guides called jaegers "ocean hawks" because they steal food from gulls and terns. Sure enough, these Parasitic Jaegers were in among the flocks of gulls and terns and chasing them down to steal their food. Finding the jaeger depended on watching the behavior of the flock, according to Taylor, our leader. If you see two birds suddenly shoot straight up in a cloud of gulls and terns, it is likely to be a jaeger chasing a gull or tern to get it to release its food.

At one point, a Parasitic Jaeger sat down on the water and bounced up and down in our scopes as the waves washed in. A life bird for me!

Before the trip was over we saw at least one more Parasitic Jaeger chasing the gulls and terns. Looking at the map of the Outer Banks, we realized that this spot at Cape Hatteras was the most likely spot to see such pelagic species. The Cape juts way out into the Atlantic. The fishing tournament helped too!

Before we left the beach, we spotted several interesting species of shorebirds in the flooded pools back off the beach: American Golden Plover, White-rumped Sandpiper, Semipalmated Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, Dunlin, Black-bellied Plover, Red Knots, Willets, and Sanderlings. Of course, all were in their drab winter plumage so we were grateful we had the experts with us for identification of some of those gray and white birds.

We found three species of terns on the beach: Forster's Tern, Sandwich Tern and Royal Tern. Also Lesser Black backed Gull, Greater Black-backed Gull, and Bonaparte's Gull were highlights among the gulls.

"Wings Over Water" takes place the first weekend in November on the Outer Banks and coincides usually with the OBX Marathon on Sunday. Many of the hotels and motels welcomed the runners on their marquees out front—nary a welcome to the birders. I guarantee we had more fun than the runners did!

### **Wings Over Water, Nov 7 – 9, 2008 Outer Banks, NC by Jeanette Navia**

I had a great time at Wings Over Water with Shirley. From among the dozens of birding walks offered, Shirley and I had chosen well, picking different habitats for each walk.

We birded in a wooded area where Yellow-rumps and catbirds dominated. We walked a boardwalk over a marsh and saw Marsh Wrens and Meadowlarks. There were shore birds on the side of the road on Pea Island – the previous days' flooding had created a temporary feeding area for Gadwalls, yellowlegs, sandpipers and Dunlins.

Saturday, we got up at four a.m. to get to a forested area by 6:00 where Red-cockaded Woodpeckers were known to roost, but alas we were too late. The birds leave their tree cavities at the break of dawn and don't return for most of the day. The woods at dawn were beautiful, though, and there were lots of Red-bellied Woodpeckers, as well as a family of Bobwhite. On the beach at Hatteras, we saw five species of gulls, three species of terns (Royal, Sandwich and Foresters), Dunlins, sandpipers and several different plovers and the jaegers Shirley mentioned.

Sunday morning's walk was at the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge where there were fields and standing water. We saw bears! Two bears! We also saw Bald Eagles, vultures, hawks, titmice, chickadees, a Savannah Sparrow and a couple of Song Sparrows. We looked high and low (mostly low) for a Snow Bunting that had been seen each day earlier in the week, but we didn't see it. Our leader heard an Orange-crowned Warbler, but we just couldn't spot it.

From the excitement of the other birders, I knew that seeing the Parasitic Jaegers was important, but I had so many life birds that weekend (as a relatively new birder) that even if I'd missed it, I would have been delighted with what I'd seen. To me, the most impressive sight was not any of the life birds or even the bears ("life bears," as Shirley called them), but a huge flock of thousands of Red-winged Blackbirds on the field about a hundred feet away, swooshing and cackling as they landed and took off, landed and took off. The sound of all those wings flapping and the bright flashes of red on the wings as the sun hit them was just amazing. A common bird, but in those numbers, it was an uncommon sight.

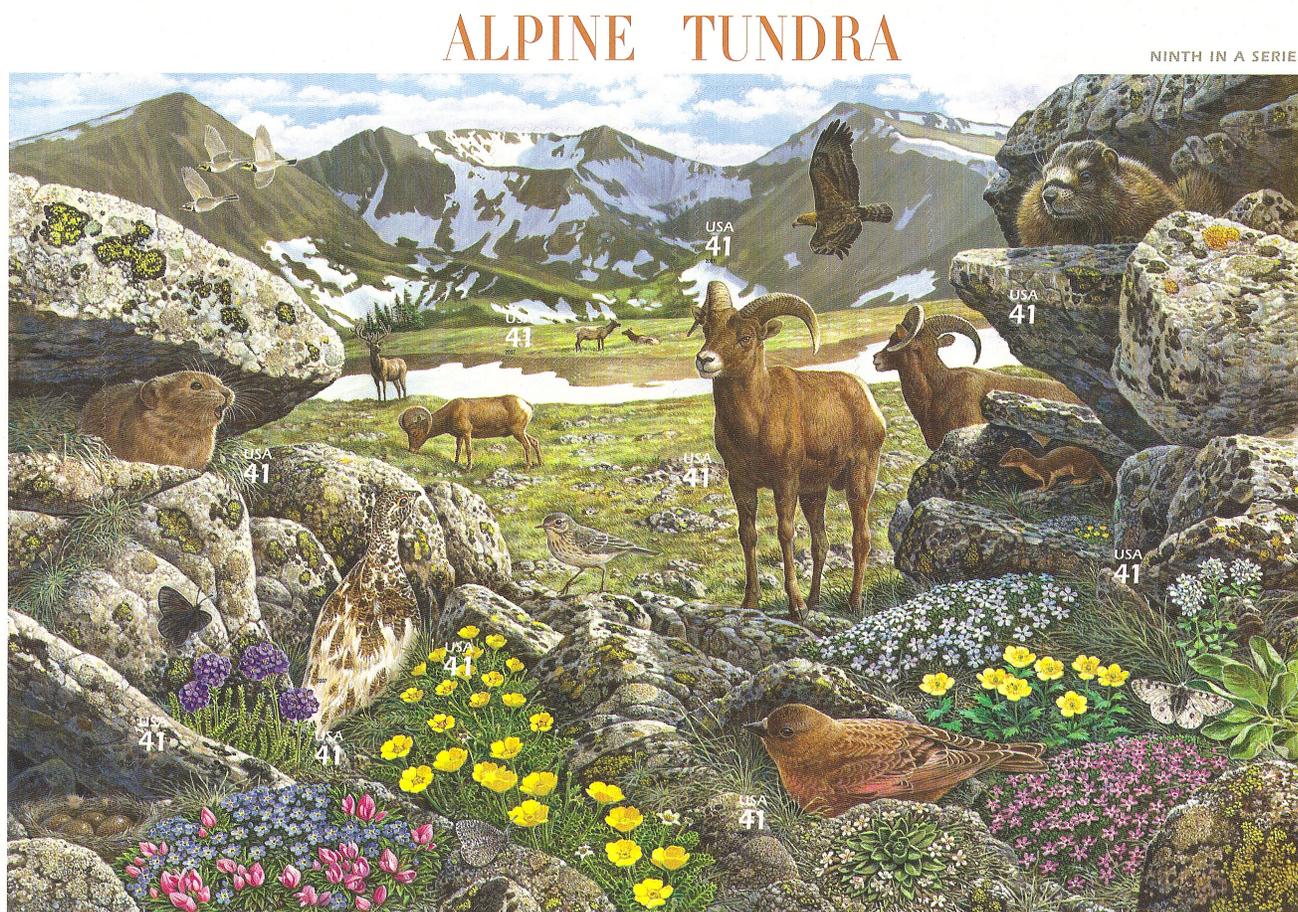
## Stamps Used This Month

On Aug 28, 2007, Post Offices released the Alpine Tundra stamps. These stamps promote the appreciation of our major plant and animal communities in the United States and the ecological relationship between animals and plants. They suggest the biodiversity necessary to ensure the viability of that relationship.

Depicted on the Alpine Tundra pane are more than 24 animal and plant species by stamp artist John D. Dawson. The scene itself is imaginary. Such a dense grouping of plants and animals was necessary to illustrate as many species as possible on the stamp pane. The plant and animal species were recommended by scientists.

The stamp pane depicts a summer tundra scene about 12,000 feet in elevation in Rocky Mountain National Park in northern Colorado. Elk and bighorn sheep graze the open areas while smaller mammals — a pika, yellow-bellied marmot and ermine — stay close to the rocks, ready to take cover if threatened by a predator, such as the soaring golden eagle.

A white-tailed ptarmigan strolls near the rocks, feeding on flowers, leaves and insects. Now mottled grayish-brown, its summer plumage will soon give way to winter's white feathers. A pipit, named for its high-pitched pip-pip call, has built a nest in the shelter of the rocks. This bird will not stay through the winter. Instead, it will migrate to a warmer region. The brown-capped rosy-finch, in the foreground, will linger as long as possible, moving below the tree line when winter snows make seeds and insects impossible to find. In the air are horned larks, recognized by the black hornlike feathers on their heads and the high-pitched, tinkling notes of their songs. Meanwhile, butterflies flit about rockslides, rest on rocks and sip nectar from alpine flowers.



N A T U R E O F A M E R I C A



Dick Turner titled this photo *Thief in the Night*. Dick was wondering if there was a mouse proof feeder. I offered two of my squirrels for the mouse, but he wasn't interested. I used to have a Barred Owl that took care of problems like this.



Sara Lewis took this photo while practicing with George Rountree's digiscope in New Quarter Park. From my experience, thank goodness for digital cameras, I get one decent digiscoped picture for about every 50 that I take. I know I'm doing something wrong.

## CALENDAR

Saturday, Dec 6	WBC Bird Walk, New Quarter Park, 8 am, Tom McCary, Leader
Saturday, Dec 6	Walk and Talk at New Quarter Park, 10 am–Noon
Sunday, Dec 7	HRBC Bird Walk, Newport News Park, 7 am, Jane Frigo, Leader
Saturday, Dec 13	WBC Bird Walk, New Quarter Park, 8 am, Tom McCary, Leader
Saturday, Dec 20	HRBC Christmas Count—Contact Clark White at 875-7649 or <a href="mailto:cwbirds@cox.net">cwbirds@cox.net</a>
Sunday, Dec 21	WBC Christmas Count Bird Count—see article on front page
Sunday, Dec 21	HRBC Bird Walk, Newport News Park, 7 am, Jane Frigo, Leader
Saturday, Dec 27	WBC Bird Walk, New Quarter Park, 7 am, Bill Williams, Leader

**WBC Christmas Bird Count—December 21**

**2009 Membership Renewal Form Will be  
Emailed to you shortly**