



The Flyer

Newsletter of the Williamsburg Bird Club

Vol. 35, No. 3

www.williamsburgbirdclub.org

March 2011



President's Corner

By Shirley Devan

At its February meeting the Board of Directors of the Williamsburg Bird Club authorized financial donations to the following organizations: Coastal Virginia

Wildlife Observatory, Williamsburg Regional Library, Center for Conservation Biology at W&M/VCU, Williamsburg Land Conservancy and the Virginia Important Bird Area (IBA) program. In addition, we agreed to fund two Bill Williams Nature Camp Scholarships in 2011 and three Bill Sheehan and Ruth Beck Ornithological Research Grants to W&M grad students in 2011. We will also continue to provide seed for the bird feeders at the Child Development Resources (CDR) campus. These donations total over \$4,000 to local and state programs and research efforts that make a difference in the lives of students, the community and Virginia's birds and their habitats. Thank you for your membership renewals and additional funds for these projects. Your generosity is impressive and inspiring.

Welcome to New Members

John and Marilyn Adair, Carol O'Neill, Cheryl Jacobson and Robin Buhl.

March Meeting



At the March meeting, Bryan Watts will present a program about raptor conservation in Virginia, focusing on the state's populations of Bald Eagles, Osprey and Peregrine Falcons. He will cover how their populations

are doing, how the Center of Conservation Biology is working with them and what problems they continue to face.

Bryan is the Mitchell A. Byrd Professor of Conservation Biology and Director of the Center for Conservation Biology at the College of William and Mary and Virginia Commonwealth University. He has worked with wild birds for more than 35 years. He received a B.S. from Virginia Tech, M.A. from the College of William and Mary, and a Ph.D. from the University of Georgia. Dr. Watts has conducted more than 500 field studies of birds that have addressed a diversity of questions with many species in many settings. He serves as an advisor to most government agencies on avian ecology and conservation.

Plan to join us on March 16 at 7:30 PM in Room 150, Millington Hall, on the W&M campus. Sue Brandon will be providing the refreshments. **Don't forget to use your parking permit.**

March Field Trip

The March field trip will be to the bird walk that is part of the *A Walk in the Forest* event at the New Kent Forestry Center on Route 60 near Providence Forge. If you want to car pool, please meet at the Colony Square Shopping Center on Jamestown Road at 6 AM. Information about the complete event follows.

A Walk in the Forest on Saturday, March 19



On Saturday, March 19, from 7 AM to 4 PM, the Society of American Foresters is hosting an event at the New Kent Forestry Center near Providence Forge. There will be:

a 7 AM guided birding trip, led by the Williamsburg Bird Club;

Guided nature hikes at 10 AM, Noon and 2 PM;

an 11 AM planting demonstration near the Education Center. Free seedlings of pin oak, baldcypress, persimmon, river birch, and white oak will be available (up to three per family).

Hiking trails open at 7 AM (maps will be provided). Exhibits at the Center open at 11 AM and will include:

Officers

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Committee Chairpersons

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Records & Bird Counts	229-1124
Bill Williams	<i>juwil2@wm.edu</i>
Library Liaison	565-6148
Lee Schuster	<i>dljschuster@cox.net</i>
Refreshments	565-0250
Barb Streb	<i>gandbstreb@verizon.net</i>
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Jeanette Navia	<i>jnavia@gmail.com</i>
Adopt-A-Highway	566-2615
John Fennell	<i>mafjff07@netzero.net</i>
Historian	Open

Summary of Bird Data

The latest version of Bill Williams' *Summary of Local Bird Data through 2009: Williamsburg, James City County, York County, Hog Island WMA, Surry County* can be downloaded from our website.

Wild Birds Unlimited

Don't forget that the WBC receives a 5% rebate on the pre-tax amount our members spend at Wild Birds Unlimited in Monticello Marketplace. You do have to let them know that you are a member.

- "Goods from the Woods"
- Wildlife Identification with the Va. Dept. of Game & Inland Fisheries and Virginia Living Museum
- Firewise Community Information
- Virginia Waterfowlers' Association, with wood duck boxes to give away
- American Tree Farm System Information
- Paper making, leaf rubbing, track stamping and other crafts

There is no cost to participate in this event. The New Kent Forestry Center is located at 11301 Pocahontas Trail (Route 60 in New Kent County), Providence Forge, VA.

Questions? Contact Lisa Deaton at 804/512-2933 or lisa.deaton@dof.virginia.gov

Editor's Note: Louise and I both highly recommend Hog Wild Smokehouse on Route 60 west of Anderson's Corner for either breakfast or lunch.

March Bird Sightings

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

Feb. 1: Tom Armour reports seeing 13 Killdeer and 3 Eastern Meadowlark on Treasure Island Road. In addition, there were 16 Killdeer at the airport. Tom McCary has a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker on a butternut tree in his yard.

Feb. 3: Kathi Mestayer sees an immature Red-shouldered Hawk hunting her "pet" birds at her feeder.

Feb. 6: Jane Frigo led the HRBC Sunday walk at Newport News Park that included WBC members Virginia & George Boyle and Marilyn and John Adair. A total of 50 species were seen, including 5 duck species, 6 species of woodpeckers and a Brown Creeper.

Feb. 9: From Beth Morgan: "Beth Morgan and Rich Scherer watch through binoculars as a Barred Owl holds down a male Hooded Merganser on the edge of Kingsmill Pond, while female and other male Hooded Mergansers and a few Mallards swim in circles nearby, quacking in alarm. After the owl tries to drag the live merganser up the bank, it loses its grip, and the merganser proudly swims away, seemingly unscathed except for a disheveled hairdo. The owl sits on the nearby rotten tall tree stump all day long; it may have done so for quite some time but it is so well-camouflaged against the tree bark that didn't know it was there until two days ago. Now we check on it almost hourly when we are home, and it sits in the same spot on its tree, all day long, surveying its kingdom. I wish I knew what happened at night."

Feb. 9: From Brian Taber: "The 15th consecutive late winter/spring hawk-watch at College Creek began today. Tom Armour, Fred Blystone and I were treated to 11 Turkey Vultures crossing the river on a chilly (28° F) southeast wind. The hawkwatch will operate daily, weather permitting, through May and is generally a mid morning to early afternoon phenom-

enon, as birds tend to cross the river on the warming morning air. We have spent a lot of time over the years earlier and later in the day, but have seen little or no movement then.”

Feb. 9: After the hawkwatch, Brian Taber heads for Lake Anna, where he is able to find the **Western Grebe** that had been reported in the area.

Feb. 11: Bill Williams found a Marsh Wren during a walk on the loop road on Jamestown Island.

Feb. 13: From Tom McCary: “a tame Ruby-crowned Kinglet dances right over my head in trees near old kitchen at Shirley Plantation.”

Feb. 14: Tom Armour reports that he and Jeanne had a Common Merganser at Yorktown; also on the York River were 25 Canvasbacks, 20 Lesser Scaup, 50 Bufflehead, 3 Common Goldeneye, 3 Red-breasted Mergansers, 1500 Ruddy Ducks, 1 Forster's Tern, 1 Great Black-backed Gull, 3 Horned Grebes and 50+ Ring-billed Gulls.

Feb. 17: 1 **Black Scoter** was observed at College Creek hawkwatch site by Andrew McGann.

Feb. 18: From Brian Taber: “The very warm bubble of air brought our first migrant Tree Swallows across the river past the hawkwatch this morning, along with a dozen or so crows, which didn't vocalize, 2 Red-tails, 4 Bald Eagles and 20 Turkey Vultures. Our total of nearly 150 is our best opening week yet at the hawkwatch.”



Photo by Bill Williams

A Great Horned Owl was spotted, as well as adult and juvenile Bald Eagles. All three species of nuthatches were seen and several varieties of ducks.

Feb. 18: Bill Williams, Mitchell Byrd and Gus Hall see a **Glaucous Gull** (left) at Rudee Inlet in Virginia Beach

Feb. 20: WBC members George & Virginia Boyles and Marilyn & John Adair join leader Jane Frigo and 15 other birders on the HRBC bird walk at Newport News Park. The group was able to identify 58 species during the morning.

Feb. 21: Tom McCary reports 5 White-crowned Sparrows (4 adults and 1 juvenile) in hedge near Shirley Plantation polo field. He also sees a flock of Cedar Waxwings in trees by Shirley Plantation Great House.

Feb. 22: Bill Williams spots 3 **White-winged Scoters** in the York River off Redoubts 9 and 10. There are only about a dozen local records for this species.

Feb. 23: Lois Leeth reports from her home in Florida: “30 or more robins flying from the west feeding in the nearby trees with berries, 1 Pileated Woodpecker, 15 Mourning Doves on a telephone wire, grackles everywhere and 2 Snowy Egrets.”

Feb. 24: Shirley Devan birds the Warhill Sports Complex multi-use trail between 2 and 4 PM. She spots 24 species of birds, including 30 Gadwall, 1 Green-winged Teal, 1 Bald Eagle and 1 Red-headed Woodpecker, most observed in the swamp west of the trail.

Feb. 28: Brian Taber reports the reports the first **Glaucous Gull** seen at the College Creek hawkwatch.

Great Backyard Bird Count at YRSP

There were 12 participants in the Great Backyard Bird Count held at York River State Park on February 20th. During the two hour period that started at 1 PM, there were 32 species of birds observed, including 31 Canvasbacks, 1 Lesser Scaup, 1 Common Goldeneye, 5 Horned Grebe, 2 Bald Eagles, 1 Sharp-shinned Hawk and 1 Red-shouldered Hawk.



Russell Johnson, Park Chief, YRSP took this picture of—Back row: Karen Whitehead, Nancy Ward, Jennifer Trevino, Sharon Plocher, Geoff Giles and Al Lovelace. In front: Catherine Short, Thad Hecht and Shirley Devan. Participants missing from the picture are Adrienne Frank, Gary Driscole and Margaret Ware.

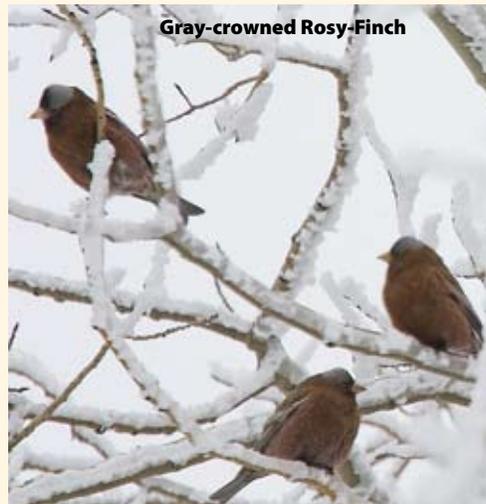
Birding Utah, February 2011

Article by Mike and Jeanne Millin; photos by Mike Millin

As part of our annual winter ski trip to Utah, we will typically take a couple of days off to do something other than enjoy the snow. This year we were traveling with Jeanne's sister and brother-in-law who live in Maryland, and who have birded with us on previous trips. We were lucky to have made a connection with one of Utah's premier birders, Bill Fenimore, who owns the Wild Bird Center in Layton, Utah. Bill also runs tours, has authored a series of backyard birding books, has guided many of the names in the national birding community and is on boards and advisory committees for many of Utah's environmental organizations. Bill asked us what we wanted to see and we told him we wanted to look for western birds that we would not typically see on our own.

Bill picked the four of us up about 8AM and we proceeded to drive to Lamb's Canyon which is about 15 minutes away from Park City; we were looking for a Northern Pigmy Owl. We didn't see the owl, but did get a good look at a couple of Mountain Chickadees. From there we drove about an hour to the elevated areas near Orem, still in search for the owl as well as a couple of other target birds, i.e. Lewis's Woodpecker and the Gray-crowned Rosy Finch. We saw the Grey-crowned Rosy Finch at the Powder Mountain Ski area (7,000 feet) as well as a Black-Rosy Finch. As we drove down the mountain we stopped a number of times and were also able to see the Lewis's Woodpecker, the Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, Magpies, Western Scrub Jays, Pine Siskin and Wild Turkeys. We also saw many of the birds that we often see at home, e.g., robins, European Starling, Kestrels, eagles, Red Tailed Hawks, etc. We returned to Park City about 3 PM having had a happy day filled with good sights and conversation.

Later in the week we stopped at the Red Butte Garden at the University of Utah primarily to see the gardens, but were happy to see California Quail at the feeders. Nice for us to see, but apparently the locals view them in the same way we look at Canada Geese. We also highly recommend the Swaner EcoCenter in Park City. It is only open from Wednesday to Saturday but it has wonderful exhibits. We enjoyed a snowshoe tour of animal tracks in the winter.



Board Meeting February 8

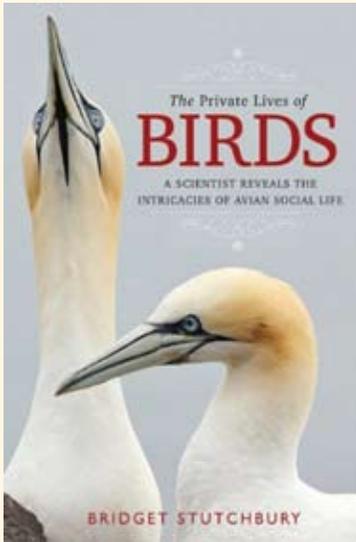
Left to right: Member-at-large Ann Carpenter, Adopt-a-Highway Chair John Fennell, Secretary Jennifer Boag, Field Trip Chair Geoff Giles, President Shirley Devan, Vice-President (Programs) Joe Piotrowski, Treasurer Chuck Rend, Member-at-large/Membership Chair/Webmaster Jeanette Navia.

Photo by Vice-President (Newsletter) Fred Blystone



Williamsburg Bird Club Book Review

By Jeanette Navia



The Private Lives of Birds : a Scientist Reveals the Intricacies of Avian Social Life, by Bridget Stutchbury. Walker & Company, 2010. ISBN 9780802717467. \$25. 249 p. Williamsburg Library call number 598.156 STU.

I sometimes wonder what birds' lives are like beyond the feeders. For the last few years, a male Cardinal spent nights in the tree outside my front door.

Last year, a female joined him for a few nights, but then moved on (or died), leaving him to sleep there alone again. A few days ago, a mockingbird sat placidly in the tree while a male and female cardinal hopped around on the outer branches, chipping angrily at him. The mockingbird apparently won out, and slept comfortably in the tree at night for several nights. Last night the cardinal was back. I wish I knew more about birds' social lives!

A few years ago, I never would have guessed the social lives of birds were so rich. Williamsburg Bird Club programs and books have shown me that birds are more than just pretty things that eat and defecate on my porch, or hide or show off when we're on bird walks.

Bridget Stutchbury, professor of biology at York University in Toronto, has been researching bird behavior for years. Her book, *The Private Lives of Birds*, describes research she, her graduate students, and other researchers have done to find out about birds' "private lives."

She writes about mate choice, monogamy, cheating, divorce, birdsong, parenting, finding a home, defending territory, living in groups (like purple martins or bank swallows), and migration. She concludes with a chapter on climate change and how it affects bird populations around the world.

Almost as interesting as bird behavior is the bird researchers' behavior. The things some grad students have to do to get data makes me cringe. One student had to wait for hours on end until one particular wood thrush flew into his mist net so he could get a blood sample from her wing. And he had to get the blood within three minutes of capture or the stress

hormones might be too high for his results to be valid, as he was testing the stress levels of females who breed and molt at the same time. In another study, the mask sizes on male common yellowthroats were changed with black felt-tip markers and yellow acrylic paint to test whether the size of the mask alters females' attraction to the bird. In other studies, researchers temporarily removed birds' mates to see how the remaining birds would react. I found myself wondering how important it was to gather this data. It is very interesting, but do we really need to mess with these birds' lives to find out why birds make the choices they make?

Each chapter is illustrated with a beautiful line drawing by Julie Zickefoose, and there are eight photos in the middle of the book. Although there is a list of resources in the back, broken down by chapter, references are not made to them in the text, which was somewhat annoying. If you can get around the anthropomorphic terms Stutchbury uses ("cheating," "divorce," etc.), you'll find this book fascinating!

At the end of Jeanette's January Book Review she mentioned that the library did not have a copy of Phoebe Snetsinger's autobiography "Birding on Borrowed Time." Since then the library has purchased a copy—call number B Snetsinger.

Thank You, Wild Birds Unlimited!

A big thank you to George and Val Copping at Wild Birds Unlimited in Monticello Marketplace for a donation of \$480. This is based on sales to WBC members during the period of July–December 2010.



Photo by Shirley Devan

Feeding Birds at Child Development Resources



Child Development Resources playgroup friends gather around the feeder station provided by the Williamsburg Bird Club. The feeder is refilled by Sara Lewis, CDR volunteer, and Carol Allen, CDR staff, as well as their little helpers, with seed provided by the Club. Children and staff have been enjoying watching Cardinals, Goldfinches, White-throated sparrows, Juncos, House Finches, Purple Finches and more during the recent cold weather when throngs of birds have been going through the food quickly! While the Williamsburg Bird Club has budgeted an annual amount to keep the feeders full, your donations of safflower seed, supreme blend, and thistle seed are also welcome (Call Sara at 220-2043 and she'll arrange to get it or you can drop it off at the front desk of the CDR building that has a

playground—it's the one on the left; there are two buildings and the one on the right is just offices. The address is 150 Point O'Woods, which is off of Croaker Road, across from the Mennonite Church, between the JCC Library and I-64). In addition, another small thistle feeder is on the CDR wish list for an older feeder station near a window.

Weekly Walks at Great Dismal Swamp

Robert Ake does a weekly walk in the Great Dismal Swamp. The starting point can change from week to week, and walks normally start at 7:30 and finish up by noon. This is a chance to bird one of the premier local birding stops with one of our area's best birders. Further information can be obtained by e-mailing rake@cox.net.

Photos from Members



Kathi and Mac Mestayer took these photos (over a month ago) in Canaan Valley, W.Va of each other feeding a chickadee.



More Photos from Members



Northern Shoveler, taken by George Boyles during the field trip to Dutch Gap Conservation Area on February 19.



Glaucous Gull, taken by Bill Williams at Rudee Inlet on February 18.



Horned Lark photographed by Fred Blystone on February 18 at Westover Church in Charles City County.



Photo of last year's nest taken by Shirley Devan on February 24 near the WISC multi-use trail.



Wild Turkey, taken by Mike Millin during their Utah vacation.



Bald Eagle, taken by George Boyles during the February 26th walk at New Quarter Park.

Bird Walk at Shirley Plantation



Tom McCary and Randy Carter will lead a bird walk around Shirley Plantation on March 12. This is a wonderful place to bird and includes a number of different habitats. Normally you will find a nice variety of duck species and it's also a good place to look for White-crowned Sparrows. Please call 1-800-232-1613 for reservations for the bird walk (**cost to members of the Williamsburg Bird Club is \$5.00**) and to check on tours of the Great House.

WBC February Walks and Field Trips

Complete lists of species seen on each walk are on the club website www.williamsburgbirdclub.org.

February 12—From walk leader Susan Powell: “Today was one of those quiet days at New Quarter Park when seeing a Turkey Vulture soaring overhead was a treat. The temperature was just above freezing, and the winds were a bit gusty up high in the trees.

We were joined today by members of the *Williamsburg Photography Meet-up* group. They were there with cameras at the ready, waiting for the perfect shots of birds and other wildlife. They are interested in regularly attending the bird walks for purposes of following us around and learning more about the birds they are photographing. They are a delightful group, and we were happy to have them along.

We started the day with an American Goldfinch and Tufted Titmouse gleaning what they could from the crepe myrtles in the parking lot.



Once we got on to the trail that leads to the Canoe Launch, we spotted several American Robins calling to each other and shouting alarms that we were coming.

We caught brief glimpses of a Pileated Woodpecker and Red-bellied Woodpecker on the trail.

At the Canoe Launch, we were able to see three Killdeer, three Laughing Gulls, and one male Bufflehead. A few Turkey Vultures soared overhead, and we got one good look at a Red-tailed Hawk.

On the way back to Loop 4, we saw the same group of American Robins, but no woodpeckers. On Loop 4, we saw a few Yellow-rumped Warblers and heard a Red-bellied Woodpecker, a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and a White-breasted Nuthatch. The only bird seen while at the fire pit was a soaring Turkey Vulture.

Walking back to the parking lot from the fire pit, we were able to see a few more species: Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Downy Woodpecker, American Crow, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Dark-eyed Juncos, and American Goldfinch.”

Members of the photo group were Chris Robinette, Maggie McCain, Zak McCain, Dave Hileman, Niti Parker and Deann Rhinehardt. Other people on the walk included Sara Lewis, Jeanette Navia, Margaret ware, Gayle Langevin and Tory Gussman.

February 19—About the field trip to Dutch Gap Conservation area, Shirley Devan wrote: “We had to hang onto our hats today. With ~25 mph winds and gusts to 40, it was a challenge for the little woodland birds and for us, at times.

We had good success at the swamp at the entrance, with wintering waterfowl giving us good looks in the great morning

light. Our walk down to the multi-use Trail behind the Visitor Center was less productive because of the high winds. In fact, it was so windy we couldn't hear any birds! We spotted some Yellow-rumped Warblers, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Dark-eyed Juncos, Northern Cardinals, Tufted Titmouse.

Geoff Giles and Tom McCary stayed a bit longer and spotted an American Kestrel and a Mute Swan. Other birders on the observation platform told Geoff and Tom they had spotted male Wood Ducks!! Drat! We worked so hard to find them, to no avail."

There were 27 species seen, including 36 Northern Shoveler, 8 Northern Pintail, 1 American Kestrel and 3 Wilson's Snipe.



Left to right: Chuck Litterst, Geoff Giles, Cheryl Jacobson, Cathy Millar, Donnie Goodrich, Virginia Boyles, Chuck Rend, Shirley Devan, Tom McCary, Jan Lockwood, Anne Haupt. Photo by George Boyles.



Back row, left to right: Sara Lewis, Shirley Devan, George Boyles, Virginia Boyles, Laura Copan. Front row: Nelson Ensley, Joe Piotrowski, Lauralyn Copan. Missing from photo are Gail Langevin, Bob Long, Cynthia Long, Jeanette Navia and Margaret Ware. (Joe is enjoying his hand warmers)

On Saturday, February 26, Cynthia Long brought many Bluestem Grass and River Oats plants from her yard to the New Quarter Park Bobwhite Habitat for planting after the Bird Walk. Helpers surrounding Cynthia, second from left, are (l. to r) Sara Lewis, George and Virginia Boyles, and Bob Long.

February 26—The Williamsburg Bird Club regular 4th Saturday bird walk at New Quarter Park welcomed the park's first Osprey of the season, complete with a fish in its talons. It landed on a piling right next to a boat at the Queen's Creek Marina where a pair of Osprey built a nest last year, much to the boat owner's dismay.

The 13 participants also enjoyed outstanding looks at an adult Bald Eagle that landed near the top of a tree on the shoreline directly behind the floating dock at Queen's Creek. Everyone got great looks through binoculars and spotting scopes. The bird was very patient with us.

A total of 25 species of birds were seen during the morning.



Bird ID from Recycle Bin Photos

By Joe Piotrowski

This feature is only on the website and in the electronic version of *The Flyer*. The answer to this month's "puzzle" will be given in the next electronic newsletter, as well as on the website.



March's bird photo

February's bird was a Greater Yellowlegs.



CALENDAR

March 1—March 31	<i>Through the Eye of a Naturalist</i> . Photos by members of the Historic Rivers Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalists. Williamsburg Regional Library, 515 Scotland Street. Reception Sunday, March 6 from 2 to 4 PM. www.historicrivers.org
Saturday, March 5	Walk & Talk, Wildlife Watching , New Quarter Park, 10am to noon. Stephen Living, Watchable Wildlife Biologist, VDG&IF
Sunday, March 6	HRBC Bird Walk, Newport News Park, 7 AM, Jane Frigo, Leader
Saturday, March 12	WBC Bird Walk, New Quarter Park, 8 AM, Geoff Giles, Leader
Saturday, March 12	Bird Walk at Shirley Plantation, See page 8
Wednesday, March 16	WBC Monthly Meeting. See front page.
Saturday, March 16	WBC Field Trip to New Kent Forestry Center. Susan Powell & Shirley Devan, Leaders. See front page.
Sunday, March 20	HRBC Bird Walk, Newport News, Park, 7 AM, Jane Frigo, Leader
Saturday, March 26	WBC Bird Walk, New Quarter Park, 7 AM, Hugh Beard, Leader
May 13–15	VSO Annual Meeting, Harrisonburg, VA. Information at www.viriniabirds.net