



# The Flyer

## Newsletter of the Williamsburg Bird Club

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

April 2013



### President's Corner

By Shirley Devan

Since 1982 the Bird Club has awarded over \$25,000 in Research Grants to more than 50 W&M biology students. These named research grants honor William J. Sheehan, a Charter member of the Club and the keeper of the bird records from Day 1, and Ruth Beck, Professor Emeritus of the W&M Biology Department, who mentored many grant recipients. Over the years, the recipients' advisors and mentors have included Mitchell Byrd, Dan Cristol, John Swaddle, Mathias Leu, and Bryan Watts.

Meanwhile, here's a wonderful story and the reason I am writing about this for the April newsletter. This is where it gets fun! I love these kinds of connections.

In 2011 the Bird Club awarded one of our research grants to Megan Kobiela, and she presented a short session about her research at our Bird Club meeting in May 2012: "The Effect of Mercury on Starvation and Predation Risk Tradeoffs in Zebra Finches."

Megan and I are "friends" on Facebook, and I discovered last week from one of her posts that she has been accepted as a PhD student at the University of Minnesota. In a subsequent post she mentioned that she would be studying under Dr. Emilie Snell-Rood. Mmmmmm. That name sounded familiar...where had I come across that name before?

I scouted around a bit—on my computer and in my hard copy files and discovered to my delight that the Bird Club awarded a Research Grant to Emilie Snell-Rood in 2000!

Whoa! A recent Bird Club grant recipient going on to study with a earlier grant recipient (now an Assistant Professor!) who received a her grant more than a decade ago. What a great story!

Emilie Snell-Rood, after graduating from W&M in 2002, earned a Masters Degree and a PhD in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Arizona. She accepted her current position as Assistant Professor of Ecology, Evolution and Behavior at the University of Minnesota in January 2011.

Per Megan, "Emilie studies phenotypic and behavioral plasticity as applied to insect learning for the most part [butterflies]. I am generally interested in how animals are affected by and respond to anthropogenic change, but I don't have a project worked out yet. Butterflies are a great system, however, because you can get much larger sample sizes and quicker generations so you can look at the evolutionary response to selection. I could see myself looking at how butterflies respond to invasive plants or changing agricultural practices."

Megan says, "While I will miss working on birds, I will definitely get a chance to hit up all the great winter birding hotspots in northern Minnesota!"

You can read more about Emilie's research here:

<http://www.cbs.umn.edu/cbs-highlights/wings-change>

Megan sent Emilie a draft of this note and Emilie replied: "That grant did mean a lot back then. And the opportunity to present my results to the WBC was also a big deal. I'm not sure if they ever saw it, but the paper for the project they funded is [on the Bird Club web site]—WBC is in the acknowledgements. Butterflies are kind of like the birds of the insect world... so I suppose they can't be too upset with the system switch."

I am not pretending that our \$500 research grants are changing the world, but I would argue that our grants help bright, struggling students, in a small way, fund their research and enable them to move on to PhD programs, research jobs, and academic teaching and mentoring positions where they can make a difference in the lives of others studying science. And I would argue that, now more than ever, we need more research into "how animals are affected by and respond to anthropogenic change."

The only way we can provide these research grants is because of your membership dues and contributions to these grant funds **every** year. You can contribute any time of the year! Thank you for your generosity and support.

### Welcome to a New Members

Corky & Ellen Cutright

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<b>Adopt-A-Highway</b>	566-2615
John Fennell	<a href="mailto:maffjf07@netzero.net">maffjf07@netzero.net</a>

## Updated Summary of Bird Data

The latest version of Bill Williams' *Summary of Local Bird Data through 2011: 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.

## April Meeting

At the April meeting, the three recipients of the 2012 Ornithology Research Grants will make a short presentation of their research.

Morgan D. Niccoli: *Is Occupancy Modeling a Feasible Alternative to Collecting Demography Data?*

Jessica Ebers: *The Effect of Methylmercury on Immune Response to a Common Parasite in Songbirds*

Courtney Turrin: *Negative Feedback Effects of Population Saturation in Bald Eagles in the Chesapeake Bay.*

Plan to join us on April 17 at 7:30 PM in Room 150, Millington Hall on the W&M campus. Melinda, Myles, and Spencer Quirion will be providing the refreshments. Don't forget to use your parking permit.



## April Field Trip—April 20

By Geoff Giles

This will be a good one!! We will be led by expert ornithologist Dan Cristol through the pristine habitat of the Dismal Swamp at prime time for the arrival and singing of the spring wave of warblers! In years past we have consistently been treated to sights and sounds of several species of warbler in the swamp that make it much later to our local area or not at all. Will we see the elusive Swainson's warbler this year? This is also an exciting time because of the arrival in the swamp of many other cool bird species as well, plus

assorted denizens of the swamp from butterflies to black bears!

For those wishing to carpool from Williamsburg, we will depart at 6:30 AM from the Colony Square Shopping Center parking lot (just south on Jamestown Road from its intersection with Rte. 199). For those wishing to meet us at the Dismal Swamp, we will meet at the Jericho Ditch entrance road at 7:30 AM. Bug repellent is recommended and of course, be sure to dress for the weather. Amenities in the swamp are limited to a porta-potty, so please bring your own refreshments and/or lunch.

Spring birding in our area would not be complete without a foray into the swamp, it's fun to bird with Dan, and we are hitting the birds at their peak time! No sign-up needed, simply come and enjoy. Hope you'll plan to join us! For any further info please call or email Geoff Giles at [tylerandal2@aol.com](mailto:tylerandal2@aol.com) and 757-645-8716.

## Ornithology Research Grants

Here are the research grant recipients and their projects for 2013. These students will describe their research to our Club in 2014.

**Vitek Jirinec:** *Wood Thrush habitat use at the home range scale: implications for local distribution*

**Margaret Whitney:** *The Impact of Methylmercury on Passerine Migratory Behavior*

**Ghazi Mahjoub:** *Effectiveness of a “Sonic Net” at displacing European Starlings from food patches in an outdoor aviary: implications for reduced aircraft bird strikes*

## March 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!

**March 2.** From Tom McCary: “Adult eagle poses by puddle near road close to Sherwood Forest on Route 5.”

**March 3.** Geoff Giles, Richard Hudgins, Rock Moelsein, George & Virginia Boyles, and Marilyn & John Adair joined several other birders and leader Jane Frigo for the HRBC walk in Newport News Park. Although the walk was shortened because of the cold, they still came up with 59 species. Jane reports that ducks were abundant and included sightings of Wood Duck, wigeon, Lesser Scaup and a single American Coot. The group also viewed the Great Horned Owl at the Arboretum, had a FOS Osprey and spotted a single Tree Sparrow.

**March 10.** Tom McCary sees his FOS Osprey in flight over Shirley Plantation.

**March 11.** Cheryl Jacobson and Shirley Devan birded the short loop at Jamestown Island. The highlights of the 43 species they identified were two Virginia Rail “flying” across the road and three Wilson’s Snipe.

**March 13.** Brian Taber reports the first Royal Terns of the season showed up at the College Creek Hawkwatch site.

**March 14.** Ruth Beck, Dave Youker, Brian Taber, and Bill Williams surveyed Craney Island. There were 58 species identified during the trip, including 1 Eurasian Wigeon and 24 Least Sandpipers.

**March 17.** Barbara & Richard Hudgins, Geoff Giles, Bettye Fields, and John Adair joined leader Jane Frigo and 11 other of other birders for the HRBC bird walk at Newport News Park. A total of 67 species were recorded during the morning.

**March 18.** During four hours of birding on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, Brian Taber had, in addition to 21 expected waterbird species, a Razorbill, 2 Red-necked Grebes, an Eastern Phoebe, and a Harbor Seal. Tom Mc-

Cary sees scores of Ring-billed Gulls and several Laughing Gulls in a field on Shirley Plantation entrance road.

**March 21.** From Martha Briggs: “I have had two myrtle warblers in my backyard that have been hanging around for two weeks.”

**March 22.** From Tom McCary: At long last! My FOS White-crowned Sparrow appears! Excellent views as he does much grooming while perched atop grape arbor at Shirley. This is the second winter at the plantation, where this handsome fellow has been hard to discover.”

**March 23.** During an hour+ walk at the Warhill Sports Complex, Shirley Devan saw 12 species of birds, including two Osprey who were setting up housekeeping on a light tower at one of the ball fields.

**March 28.** Ruth Beck, Virginia & George Boyles, Alex Minarik, Dave Youker, Bill Williams, and Brian Taber surveyed Craney Island. There were 69 species identified during the trip, including 1 Eurasian Wigeon, 1 Eurasian Green-winged Teal, 7 Osprey, 3 Semi-palmated Plovers, 1 American Avocet, and 60 Western Sandpipers.

**March 31.** From Brian Taber: “College Creek Hawkwatch enjoyed its best month in our 17 seasons, the first over 1,000, at 1020. Following our 2nd best February, we are already ahead of last season’s total, with 1309, with 7 or 8 weeks to go.”

## The Williamsburg Spring Bird Count—Sunday, May 5, 2013

By Bill Williams

Put Sunday, May 5, 2013 on your birding piñata for your participation in the Williamsburg Bird Club’s cinco de Mayo celebration, our annual Spring Bird Count. Replace the traditional blindfold and stick with a pair of binoculars and do everything possible to capture the rapture of the peak of bird migration. Structured along the same protocols as the Christmas Bird Count, we will send 10 teams to as many corners of a 15-mile diameter circle centered at the Colonial Williamsburg Information Center as we can. Each team’s goal is to identify and count every bird of as many bird species as they can find within the 24-hour count period. Teams will be divided among sections leaders, just like those for the Christmas Bird Count. Each section leader will work with team members to establish a plan of action for the day, and will be responsible for reporting the section totals for the count’s final tally. Unlike the CBC we will not keep track of the effort data-mileage, hours in the field, etc. Our count compilation event will be at Carrot Tree Kitchens on Jamestown Road, exactly where we held the comparable event for the Christmas Bird Count. We will assemble

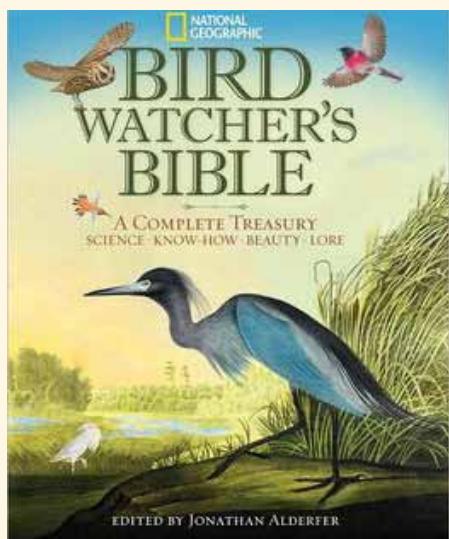
at Carrot Tree at 5:00 PM with the final tally beginning no later than 6:00 PM.

If you have previously been part of one of the count section teams, please contact the team's leader to work out when the team will meet. Otherwise contact Bill Williams at [billwilliams154@gmail.com](mailto:billwilliams154@gmail.com) or 229-1124 to let him know you want to participate. We are really anxious to get as many people involved as possible, **especially feeder watchers!!!** We can never have enough birders, so please join us!

Thanks in advance for being a part of this Williamsburg Bird Club spring event. The data we collect has significant value for the long term understanding of our local bird populations.

## Williamsburg Bird Club Book Review

By Jeanette Navia



*National Geographic Bird Watcher's Bible: A Complete Treasury, Science, Know-how, Beauty, Lore*; edited by Jonathan Alderfer. National Geographic, 2012. ISBN 9781426209642.  
\$40.00. 399 p. Williamsburg Library call number 598.072 BIR

The National Geographic Society knows how to create a beautiful book, and their Bird-Watcher's Bible is a beautiful book. Just about anything a "bird-watcher" wants to know about birds is addressed here, from the history of birds in folk legends and the arts, to the latest in basic bird research addressed in terms an average reader can understand. The illustrations are gorgeous, as you would expect from a National Geographic book, and include reproductions of paintings from Mark Catesby, John Jay Audubon, Louis Agassiz Fuertes, and others. Awe-inspiring photographs of birds and bird-related topics illustrate most pages and keep a reader from speeding through the text.

There are seven chapters: The Anatomy of a Bird; Birds Through the Ages; The Life of a Bird; Science Discovers the Bird; To Be a Birder; Flight & Migration; and Bringing the Birds Back Home. Within each chapter, the general topic is broken down into many fascinating subtopics. In The Life of a Bird, for instance, there are sections on the diversity

habitats, courtship practices and rituals, nests, eggs, parenting the hatchlings (includes very cute pictures), brood parasites (the Brown-headed Cowbirds, Cuckoos, and the like), fledging, and adaptations to extreme environments. In Science Discovers the Bird, the history of the study of birds includes Linnaeus, Darwin, Catesby, Audubon, the early naturalists, the beginning of the National Audubon Society, and covers current research where penguins carry Crittercams on their backs in Antarctica, New Caledonia Crows are found creating tools, and how birds are affected by climate change. Research findings are also discussed in other chapters, as in the chapter on migration where we learn that different isotopes in bird feathers show what habitats birds migrate to or from.

Throughout the book, short sidebars capture the reader's attention. Origins of bird names show up at the bottoms of many pages: 'Duck' derives from the Old English duce, meaning 'to dive.' The Old French word harlequin referred to a troop of demons but later became associated with a stock character that dressed in outrageous multicolored costumes – not unlike the male Harlequin Duck's plumage." Top Ten lists are scattered throughout the book: Top Ten Bird Movies; Top Ten Birds That Live in Birdhouses; Top Ten Amazing Bird Nests, Top Ten Long-Distance Migration Champs; and more. Bird trivia shows up in tan-colored sidebars titled Bird Brain: "...One online source lists more than 350 bottles [of beer] worldwide with bird images..." reads one, and "Woodpeckers have exceptionally long tongues to extract insect larvae from deep within their burrows..." reads another.

I love this book. It took me a long time to get through it because it's so full of interesting facts and pictures. It would be good for just about anyone interested in birds. The last chapter, Bringing the Birds Back Home, is aimed at beginning birders (or bird-watchers), and includes information about feeding birds, gardening for birds, building bird houses, joining bird organizations, and participating in citizen science projects. I guarantee you'll find many interesting things in this book.

## **Adopt-A-Highway**

From John Fennell



The next WBC Adopt-a-Highway Program is scheduled for 9:00 AM on Saturday, May 4. As usual, we will meet at Garrett's Store on Croaker Road. The rain date is Sunday, May 5 at 1:00 PM. All help is appreciated; please contact John Fennell in advance if you plan to be there. Phone 566-2615 or e-mail [mafjf07@netzero.net](mailto:mafjf07@netzero.net).

## **Other Upcoming Events**

### **Great Dismal Swamp Birding Festival**

Will be held April 25–27, 2013. There will be guided bird walks and trips to the interior of the refuge, canoe birding, Birding Basics for beginners, guided bus tours, nature photography workshop. All events are **free** and open to the public. Most activities require a call to reserve your spot, 757-986-3705.

For more information, check out the following links.

<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/greatdismalswamp>

<http://www.visitchesapeake.com/gds-birding-festival>

Facebook: Great Dismal Swamp Birding Festival

### **Williamsburg Bird Club's Picnic**

The WBC Picnic will be held at Ruth & Sherwin Beck's New Kent County home on June 2. More information in May newsletter.

## **Photos from Members**



Eastern Bluebird photographed by Shirley Devan.



Virginia Boyles sent in this photo of a Red-winged Blackbird.

## Costa Rica Trip

By Shirley Devan

Even though our trip to Costa Rica was not supposed to be a “birding” trip, I was determined to see and identify as many birds as our group’s schedule allowed. We traveled around the “Costa Rica Natural Paradise” tour (as billed by the Caravan tour company) in a “coach” with 46 other people, most of whom were not interested in birds when we started out. Some did not even bring binoculars! Can you believe it?

Steve and I traveled with our Williamsburg friends Jack and Terry Johnston, who **were** interested in birds. All four of us wore our binoculars all day every day, even at meals, and I carried my “Birds of Costa Rica Field Guide” with me everywhere.

We landed in San Jose and traveled counter clockwise around the northern half of the country: San Jose to Tortuguero National Park to Fortuna to Guanacaste on the Pacific Coast and back to San Jose—10 days in all.

### Highlights:



By Steve Devan

Tortuguero National Park was certainly a highlight because we took two boat cruises in two days, not including the boat trips required to reach the lodge and return to the bus. In addition to our own tour guide, each boat of 15 had a naturalist guide from Tortuguero who knew where the birds and monkeys hung out. Our familiar herons and egrets were everywhere plus a couple of new herons: Bare-throated Tiger Heron and the Boat-billed Heron. We also thrilled at the Sungrebe (not related to our familiar grebes), the Great Potoo, and a Black-throated Trogon. The only “small” bird the guide identified for us was the White-collared Manakin. In defense of the guides, they could not spend a lot of time trying to get 15 people to see a small bird hidden by leaves with the boat moving around. Consequently, we

saw lots of “big” birds and other fauna: Howler Monkeys, White-faced Capuchin Monkeys, Spider Monkeys plus iguanas, lizards, turtles, and crocodiles.

Arenal Volcano was certainly a highlight. We’ve never spent the night next to an active volcano. Our first floor patio gave us prime viewing for the next eruption. The last one was in 1968. Would we survive the two nights? Obviously we lived through the visit but we couldn’t take our eyes off the perfectly cone-shaped structure. Mid-afternoon turned out to be the best viewing time because the clouds cleared and we could see the very top. Our hotel, Magic Mountain, in Fortuna backed onto a cattle pasture. Our tour guide suggested we walk along the edges of the pasture to look for some birds. So Steve and I wandered the pasture’s edges and turned up some wonderful birds on our own: Red-legged Honeycreeper, Red-wing Blackbird, female Smoky Brown Woodpecker (in cavity in fence post), Hooded Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Black-Cowled Oriole, Black-cheeked Woodpecker, Orange-chinned Parakeet, Tropical Kingbird, and Clay-colored Robin (national bird of Costa Rica). Steve’s OMG bird was the Green Honeycreeper that he spotted first in the same tree with the Red-legged Honeycreeper. That bird made it a worthwhile afternoon for him!

The J. W. Marriott Hotel in Guanacaste on the Pacific Ocean was a surprise in more ways than one! We certainly did not expect to spend two nights at a luxury resort on this package tour but here we were in the lap of luxury with every amenity we could imagine and some we could not! We had moved from lodging that did not provide ice (Laguna Lodge at Tortuguero because they did not have very much ice) to the Marriott where they did not have ice machines because they wanted you to tip the bellman who brought ice to your room after a phone call.

Our room at this spot did not have a scenic view of the ocean. In fact, our balcony looked at the back fence around the hotel property with employee and bus parking on the other side. As it turned out, this was a very birdy spot and we could relax on our balcony and see things like: Rufous-naped Wren, Bullock’s Oriole, Ruddy Ground-Dove, Great Kiskadee, Yellow-headed Caracara, White-throated Magpie Jay, Golden-naped Woodpecker (nest cavity in tree next to fence), West-

ern Kingbird, White-winged Dove (with its constant “who cooks for you” call), Blue Ground Dove, Howler monkeys, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Great Kiskadee, Blue-gray Tanagers, and Melodious Blackbird.

When we walked the beach we encountered some familiar favorites: Royal Terns, a Whimbrel, Brown Pelicans, Great Blue Heron, Osprey, Sanderlings, Ruddy Turnstones, Spotted Sandpipers, Least Sandpipers, plus dozens of Magnificent Frigatebirds soaring overhead.

(to be continued in the May Flyer)

## **WBC March Walks & Field Trip**

Complete lists of species seen on each walk are on the club website at [www.williamsburgbirdclub.org](http://www.williamsburgbirdclub.org).

### **Bird Walk on March 9th at NQP**

Sharon Plocher, Jennifer Trevino, Cheryl Jacobson, Cathy Bond, Tom McCary, Joanne Andrews, Margaret Ware, Susan Nordholm, and Cynthia Long joined Hugh Beard for the walk in New Quarter Park. There were 35 species identified during the morning, including 9 Lesser Scaup, 4 Horned Grebes, 1 Golden-crowned Kinglet and 1 Fox Sparrow.

### **Field Trip to Newport News Park on March 16.**

**By Geoff Giles**



Here a photo taken at the end of the field trip this morning ~ 10 am. Everyone else had headed for dry clothes and warm beverages by 10 am. Left to right: Cathy Millar, Cheryl Jacobson, Lynn Collins, Jane Frigo, Geoff Giles

Photo by Shirley Devan

The forecast was not rosy, but hopes were high as we met Jane Frigo on the morning of 16 March for a foray in the wonderful nature preserve that is Newport News Park. Jane has led bi-monthly Sunday walks there on which she often sees sixty or so species, including some that make people who miss her walks sad that they did. In addition to being a super birder and a patient and skilled trip leader, Jane is just plain fun to be with. Plus she has somehow charmed a great horned owl into making fairly frequent appearances for her walks.

So we all held our breath and hoped that the looming rain clouds would somehow leave us alone. As we walked from the parking lot down to the lakeside we began to hear reluctant, but present, birds and began to tick off some of the birds we expected, wigeons, mallards, pied-billed grebes, in addition to robins, blue jays, juncos, white-throated sparrows, yellow-rumped warblers, red-bellied woodpeckers, flickers and others.

We were also promptly treated to sightings of the mammals of the day, both beavers and river otters. At least one beaver is a frequent fixture on Jane's walks, but the otters were a new twist. At least two otters frolicked on the surface, doing occasional long submerged swims then re-emerging. Their gleeful antics left little doubt that there were ample fish in the water to entertain them. While enjoying the show it was impossible to overlook the fact that the wind blowing off the water was humid and **cold!!**

We moved on to another area of lakeside where there are dead snags usually enjoyed by red-headed woodpeckers. And so they were. There were yellow-bellied sapsuckers as well, plus white-breasted nuthatches foraging as if oblivious to the damp and cold wind. The rest of us were not oblivious, and moved with Jane quickly to the arboretum area where the best chance at meeting Jane's great horned owl waited for us, plus the chance for brown-headed nuthatches and others. There were a gazillion robins and some bluebirds, but the nuthatches had battened down the hatches before an approaching storm.

We just reached owl country and had a fleeting glimpse of the great horned owl gliding noiselessly in the distance when the sky just plain opened up and dumped water in sheets on us and everything in sight. And not much was in sight any more, as we huddled under a park shelter and watched the torrential rain. There are times when birds move about in the rain, but this

was beyond what they could handle and the birds apparently took shelter, too. From this point on those of us brave enough to try to go on were both cold and wet, so we hoped against hope for sunshine which unfortunately was not to be.

When the rain moderated, but did not stop, we went to a couple of other spots, and Jane told us about what birds usually can be found there, but the birds seemed to have decided to sit out the bad weather. After a time, we did too, thanking Jane for bravely leading us for as much as we could manage while fighting the elements. As we all went home to get warm and dry we had no idea that the bird of the day was yet to come.

Two of our number ventured a little farther down the wet chilly lakeside. As they walked along the shoreline, suddenly just in front of their feet a huge set of wings flapped on the ground and a great horned owl became airborne flying low over the lake, carrying the limp body of a squirrel. After getting a few feet off the water, the owl lost altitude under the weight of the squirrel and flopped into the choppy lake. For a time he thrashed in large strokes with both wings, trying to lift off again, with no success. Finally he gave up on his prey and paddled, with the same breaststroke motion, over to a branch and climbed out. He shook himself and stood for a few moments, giving the last two of our group a full view of that awesome bird of prey, and then lifted off on his huge wings and vanished into the forest. Wow!!

This is just an exciting place to go birding. And Jane is an awesome trip leader to go with. We owe her another opportunity to get out with us to enjoy the Newport News Park. It is clearly an incomparable expanse of unspoiled nature right here at our doors. So we'll do it, and in the **not too distant future!**

### **Bird walks at New Kent Forestry Center on 23 March**

**By Geoff Giles**

WBC led two bird walks in support of the NKFC annual "Walk in the Forest" family fun day. Jim Corliss led a walk for early birders at 7:00 AM for which a goodly troop of hardy souls braved temperatures in the high 20s to cover a fair portion of the forest and swamp and compile a respectable list of 45 species. Some of the winter species, including brown creepers, white-throated sparrows and dark-eyed juncos, were still in evidence, plus some other cool sightings were made, including meadowlarks, house wren, both golden-crowned and ruby-crowned kinglets, and a number of beautifully colored and very vocal pine warblers.

A special sighting was afforded to several of Jim's group on returning from an extended walk down to the Chickahominy. They were unexpectedly treated to a close flyover of a great horned owl, which passed low directly overhead and then lit on a branch in front of them. After his rather breathtaking appearance, the large owl afforded views through the scope on his perch at the edge of the field. Red-shouldered hawks gave their unmistakeable calls nearby and a beautiful male kestrel took in the morning sun from a perch overlooking a large plowed field. In short, the morning group was treated to a chilly but beautiful morning with nature coming to life with the warmth of the morning sun!

At 8:00 AM, Geoff Giles led a second bird walk for two troops of boy scouts working on their bird merit badges. The group was made up of the scouts, their troop leaders, several parents and a few younger siblings, numbering about 44 birders in all. Binoculars and field guides were shared, and the scouts and troop leaders had some great questions and observations to liven the walk. There were many sharp eyes and ears and a good deal of enthusiasm at some of our sightings.

There was a steady procession of great blue herons overhead passing from their roost to the east to the swamp to our left to hunt for their breakfast. There were juncos, robins, white-throated sparrows and field sparrows scurrying nearby as we approached a large freshly-plowed field. Towhees, cardinals, blue jays, chickadees and titmice all took their turns showing off for the scouts. Bluebirds sang and perched on wires over bluebird boxes in the field. To our delight a brightly-colored male kestrel did two forays over the field near us, demonstrating his falcon's agility and going into his hover over prey quite close to our group.

Some oohs and aahs were provided by eastern meadowlarks in the field, which moved along near flocks of foraging starlings. The meadowlarks sat on the level plowed ground in the open for prolonged viewing, long enough to pass binoculars around and let many marvel over their yellow and black finery. To our surprise, an osprey appeared from the direction of the Chickahominy and flew low to the middle of the plowed field, dropping down briefly to grasp at something in the dirt before flying off in the direction of the river.

A distant eagle passed overhead, as did one red-tailed hawk, and of course turkey vultures rocked lazily in the blue sky. At one point we spotted several black vultures in a tree. As Geoff pointed out the difference between black and turkey vul-

tures, two of the black vultures became romantically inclined. One of the scouts asked why the one had climbed on the other's back, and another scout said he probably was hitchhiking, so we left it at that. The scouts brought sharp eyes and ears to the outing, as well as a lot of interest, and were constantly relating what we saw to the birds at their family feeders and those they had seen while hiking, camping or fishing.

For both walks, New Kent Forestry Center was a fine example of unspoiled nature in which we could enjoy nature and good company in a delightful setting. We know that it is home to a healthy population of wild turkeys, bobwhite quail and other bird and animal species we no longer encounter as often as we would like, and a trip there always brings the excitement of knowing that we might encounter those. It was a pleasure to share a beautiful morning at that special place!

### **Bird Walk on March 23nd at NQP**

Joanne Andrews, Lindsay & Mike Lowry, Bringier McConnell, and Betty Peterson joined leader Bill Williams for the walk in New Quarter Park . There were 49 species of birds identified during the morning, including 2 Wood Ducks, 9 Osprey, 1 Northern Harrier and a pair of Blue-winged Teal.

### **Photos from Members**



Both of these were taken by Shirley Devan. The Osprey photo was taken March 19th at Chickahominy Riverfront Park. The photo of the Black-tailed Godwit was taken at Chincoteague on March 21st.



## Bird ID 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.



Photo for April



March's photo was of a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher.

## CALENDAR

Thursday, April 11	HRBC Monthly Meeting, <a href="http://www.hamptonroadsbirdclub.org">www.hamptonroadsbirdclub.org</a> for more information
April 12–13	Virginia Living Museum's Birding Cup Challenge. Information at <a href="http://www.thevlm.org/special-events.aspx">http://www.thevlm.org/special-events.aspx</a>
Saturday, April 13	WBC Bird Walk, NQP, 8 AM, Jim Corliss, Leader.
Sunday, April 14	HRBC Field Trip to the Great Dismal Swamp. Contact Tom Charlock by phone (757-599-3418) or e-mail <a href="mailto:TomCharlock@gmail.com">TomCharlock@gmail.com</a> for more information.
Wednesday, April 17	WBC Monthly Meeting. See page 2.
Saturday, April 20	WBC Field Trip to the Great Dismal Swamp. See page 2
Saturday, April 20	Wildlife Baby Shower. Shirley Plantation. For more information go to <a href="http://www.shirleyplantation.com/calendar_newsroom.html">http://www.shirleyplantation.com/calendar_newsroom.html</a>
Sunday, April 21	HRBC Bird Walk at Newport News Park, 7AM, Jane Frigo, Leader.
April 25–27	Great Dismal Swamp Birding Festival. See page 4
April 26–28	VSO Annual Meeting. See <a href="http://www.virginiabirds.net">http://www.virginiabirds.net</a> for more information.
Saturday, April 27	WBC Bird Walk, NQP, 7 AM, Bill Williams, Leader.
Saturday, May 4	WBC Adopt-a-Highway. See page 5
Sunday, May 5	WBC Spring Bird Count. See Page 3 for more information.