



# The Flyer

## Newsletter of the Williamsburg Bird Club

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

January 2014

### President's Corner

By Geoff Giles



A very Happy New Year to all! As we watch winter unfold this year in fits and starts, we can take a moment to pause and reflect on how much Shirley Devan has contributed in her six, yes, six great years as our WBC President. Happily, she will still be the ever-present and ever-cheerful bird-

ing companion she always has been for us, and has promised that although busy with new responsibilities, she will continue to be active among us. She will be there for the prothonotary warblers, the bluebirds, the Virginia Master Naturalists, the Colonial Nature Photographers, visiting birders and students (young and old) and especially for us, our WBC friends and family. Her talents, hard work and enthusiasm have been exceeded only by her many kindnesses. We are most appreciative! Many thanks, Shirley!!!

If you have not been visited by a snowy owl yet, keep looking. This year's irruption of this incomparable species is extraordinary. There have been a number of these beautiful creatures spotted in Virginia, including appearances at the Yorktown battlefield, Dutch Gap, Kiptopeke area, Craney Island, and Dulles and Manassas airports. On a December aerial survey of the Eastern Shore barrier islands, Dr. Mitchell Byrd had the treat of spotting six snowy owls on a single day! Although irruptions of these owls are sometimes traceable to a shortage of lemmings (their standard fare) in their normal northern range, causing them to wander in search of food, it appears that this year's irruption may be due to an exceptionally prolific lemming year last year, and a resultant very high survival rate. In those situations, some owls must go out of their normal northerly range to search for their own hunting territories. They can show up nearly anywhere when that happens, and seem to prefer open fields and meadows. In hopes of attracting one, I am having the squirrels in my yard dress up as lemmings and walk with a limp. I will advise promptly if this method brings results.

This year's Christmas Bird Count in Williamsburg was another great success, both from the numbers of birds and species tallied and from the number of participants, field

birders and feeder watchers alike. The number of participants exceeded our goal of one hundred active counters, and the only birds shot were taken with cameras. As has happily become our custom, participants in the count were invited to a tally meeting at day's end at the Carrot Tree restaurant. Brunswick stew, snacks and dessert were the perfect ending to a perfect day of birding and companionship outdoors. Many thanks to Bill Williams for organizing and conducting this super activity!

A look ahead to our January field trip looks promising. We will take sixty birders on our birding by boat tour of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and mouth of the bay. Dan Cristol will lead us on this trip on 18 January, so hope for good weather. Any day outdoors with Dan is a great day, and we will have the captain and crew who have taken us to some great birds in previous trip. If we get a fair weather day, that's a bonus, but we have seen great birds on gray, rainy day trips on the Bay as well. I took a fishing trip on this boat in late December, caught my limit of striped bass and peeked out over the rod tip to assure myself that the winter birds are in. Speaking of winter birds, I have visited Dutch Gap and confirmed that ducks are already in and should be in good numbers for our upcoming trip there in February!

Before the old year is just a more distant memory, we should say a few words of thanks to the leaders of our bi-weekly year-round bird walks in New Quarter Park. Bill Williams, Jim Corliss, Hugh Beard, Shirley Devan, Tom McCary and others (you know who you are, Rock Moeslein!) have made these walks both enjoyable and a continuing learning experience. Also special thanks to Park managers at New Quarter Park, York River Park and Freedom Park for facilitating and encouraging our enjoyment of the nature they preserve. A very special thanks to Ruth Beck both for her important conservation efforts on several especially significant bird breeding areas, and for facilitating our visits to those areas. Also, a special thanks to Cheryl Jacobson, (the "Osprey Lady"), and to Jan Lockwood and Lois Ullman, for coordination of our bluebird trails. We are also most appreciative of Dan Cristol's assistance and freely shared expertise in making our meetings and local birding more enjoyable.

*(continued on next page)*

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## Updated Summary of Bird Data

The latest version of Bill Williams' *Summary of Local Bird Data through 2013: 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.

Last but not least, thanks to our members and friends for joining us, early and late, by fair weather and foul, in enjoying our birds and nature, and improving their habitat where we can. I wish all a very happy and healthy New Year ahead!! May a snowy owl spot the squirrels under your feeder and come to your yard!!!

## Bird Club needs Refreshments Chairperson

From Shirley Devan

After more than a few years, Barb Streb is stepping down as Refreshments Chair for the Bird Club. Those of us who have come to enjoy the feeder station that Barb and her volunteers provide at every meeting need a Bird Club volunteer to step up to the plate (so to speak) and agree to coordinate the effort for 2014. At each January Bird Club meeting, Barb recruits volunteers for each month's meeting and then follows up with gentle reminders and advice if needed. If you can provide this important service for the Bird Club, we **all** will be most grateful.

Barb will be at the January meeting and will provide the refreshments for January. She'll be asking for someone to be the Coordinator and for volunteers for the 2014 meetings.

Many thanks to Barb for her excellent organizational skills and the cookies and treats she has baked for us over the years. **Thank you Barb!**

## Welcome to a New Member

Joanne Sheffield

## January Meeting



The January meeting will be held at 7:30 PM on Wednesday, the 15th. Barbara Houston, a very talented photographer who lives in New Kent County, will be presenting a program on local birding destinations. If you enjoy beautiful photos of birds, you do not want to miss this program.

**The meetings this year will be in Andrews Hall, Room 101. Please be sure to display your parking permit on the dashboard of your car.**

## January Field Trip

Registration for the Jan. 18 Boat Trip to the islands of the CBBT is full (60 people) with a wait list of 15 people.

## Reported Sightings December

Report your backyard birds and local sightings to Fred Blystone at 229-4346 or [fredblystone@gmail.com](mailto:fredblystone@gmail.com). or Shirley Devan at 813-1322 or [sedevan52@cox.net](mailto:sedevan52@cox.net). If you encounter interesting birds on your vacation/travels, please share!

**December 1.** Sandy Robertson, Geoff Giles, Richard Hudgins, and John & Marilyn Adair joined leader Jane Frigo and other birders for the HRBC walk in Newport News Park. A total of 53 species were identified during the morning, including Gadwall, Red-tailed Hawk, Hairy Woodpecker, Brown-headed Nuthatch, and Brown Creeper.

**December 2.** From Florida Lois Leeth reports seeing 10 American Coot, 15 Anhingas, 20 White Ibis, 15 Snowy Egrets, 12 Wood Storks, 5 Great Egrets, and 8 Mallards.

**December 4.** At Mainland Farm, Mitchell Byrd, Brian Taber and Bill Williams watched a Ross's Goose for about 30 minutes before it flew off with the group of Canada Geese it was associated with. This is the first Colonial Historic Triangle record for this species. Later in the day, Bill Williams finds a Cackling Goose at Jamestown Island.



Ross's Goose

Photo by Bill Williams

**December 9.** Bill Williams finds a Cackling Goose at Drummond's Field/Mainland Farm.



Canada Goose & Cackling Goose Photo by Bill Williams

**December 12.** Ruth Beck, Virginia & George Boyles, Alex Minarik, Bill Williams, Brian Taber, Inge Curtis, and Dave

Youker conducted a survey at Craney Island. They came up with 56 species, including 1 Eurasian Wigeon, 8 Northern Harriers, and 1 Snowy Owl.

**December 17.** Geoff Giles and Dave Youker stopped at Rudee Inlet and saw the King Eider that had been reported earlier.

**December 21.** Bill Williams finds 2 female Harlequin Ducks at the Yorktown waterfront, the first reported sighting of this species in the Colonial Historic Triangle. (These ducks were still being seen at the end of December). George & Rosemarie Harris and John & Marilyn Adair bird Bethel Beach in Mathews County. They identify 30 species, including 10 Tundra Swans, 6 Red-throated Loons, 4 Bald Eagles, and 10 Black-bellied Plovers. In the early afternoon, Shirley Devan goes birding on the Warhill Sports Complex trails. During the 2-1/2 hours she identifies 19 species, including 24 Gadwall, 4 Hooded Mergansers, and 3 Pied-billed Grebes.



Female Harlequin Ducks

Photo by Bill Williams

**December 27.** Cheryl Jacobson and Shirley Devan walk around Greenspring Trails and check out the boardwalk in advance of the January 1st Boardwalk Bird Show. The Highlights were 40 Killdeer in the soybean field at Mainland Farm and 18 Rusty Blackbirds in the trees at the edge of Mainland Farm nearest Greensprings Road.

### Williamsburg Bird Club Book Review

By Jeanette Navia



*Feathers: The Evolution of a Natural Miracle*, by Thor Hanson. Basic Books, 2011. ISBN 9780465028788. \$15.99. 336 p. Williamsburg Library call number 598.147 HAN.

Right away, I noticed that this book about feathers had no color pictures! Feathers, of course, provide colors, and colors are one of the most striking features of the

birds we love. Why would a book about feathers only have black and white photos and illustrations? After reading it, I realize feathers provide so much more for birds, and to us

humans who have found many uses for feathers.

A few weeks ago, on a day when the temperature barely rose above 30, I read the chapter “Keeping Warm” while keeping an eye out for the Ruby-Crowned Kinglet which has been visiting my feeders for the past month or so. There he was, flitting from shrub to feeder and back to shrub, the smallest and cutest of my winter birds. Hanson notes that Golden-Crowned Kinglets maintain a steady body temperature of 111 degrees even in places where the temperature can dip below zero. This is mainly due to the insulating properties of feathers. How else could those tiny little things—and all other birds in cold climes—stay alive in such cold temperatures?

I hadn't thought much about where the down in my coat, or the feathers in my pillows, came from, but Hanson's report on a trip to Pacific Coast Feather Company in Seattle opened my eyes. “Unlike most industries, where the demand for finished products determines the supply, the feather and down business has a supply chain completely unrelated to its market. Demand comes from people buying pillows, comforters, sleeping bags, [etc.]. Supply, on the other hand, is determined almost entirely by the consumption of goose and duck meat, primarily in rural China and Southeast Asia.” If poultry consumption falls, the feather supply also falls.

Interesting facts about feathers fill this book. Did you know there is a Peregrine Falcon feather on the moon? I don't think I ever knew that Apollo 15 astronaut David R. Scott dropped a feather and a hammer at the same time, from shoulder height, to conduct an unauthorized experiment demonstrating Galileo's discovery that falling objects fall at the same rate in a vacuum no matter what their mass. Scott left the feather there, so now there is a bit of bird up on the moon.

One chapter is about Hanson's visit to a show in Las Vegas called “Jubilee!” which features more than 75 dancers in costumes decorated with feathers. “Countless white and yellow plumes rose up in great fanned tails and headdresses, towering five feet above each dancer's head, while boas and trains descended down their backs in golden waves, swaying with every step.” After the show, he went backstage to see boxes of ostrich, rhea, pheasant, Wild Turkey, chicken and goose feathers kept on hand for the constant repairs needed.

Not all of Hanson's research is as pleasant. In a chapter about vultures, where he discusses the practicality of a carrion-eating bird's not having feathers on its head, he talks about the time as a graduate student he had to transport carcasses from a butcher of game animals to the vulture

research site. “[T]he material was a day or two old and had quickly gone to rot in the tropical heat. ... The cecum of a zebra is a big, purplish pouch at the head of the large intestine. This one was bloated, stretched tight like a thick, wet balloon. When it burst, rotten stomach gas exploded in my face, blowing my hair back and coating me with a spray of old blood, strands of ropy goo, and flecks of half-digested bush grass. The smell was indescribable.” His long hair took three showers to wash out. If he'd been bald like the vultures, it wouldn't have been quite as bad.

In this review, I haven't touched many of the topics Hanson discusses, like the millinery feather trade that nearly wiped out Snowy Egrets, or the creative patents filed over the years for uses of feathers, or the controversies surrounding the Archaeopteryx fossil and whether it may hold proof that birds descended from dinosaurs. Hanson was awarded the John Burroughs Medal Award this year for *Feathers*. The award is given annually and honors the best in nature writing. This book will appeal to anyone interested in nature non-fiction. I think it's one of the most interesting books I've ever read.

### **Upcoming Events**

#### **Winter Waterfowl Walks and Winter Tram Tours at Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge and False Cape State Park**

The Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge and Back Bay Restoration Foundation will have Winter Waterfowl Walks every other Friday and every Saturday starting on December 7th. These walks will be led by Bob Ake and David Hughes and will consist of a one-mile hike along Back Bay NWR's Bay Trail. More information can be found at [http://www.fws.gov/refuge/back\\_bay](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/back_bay).

False Cape State Park & Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge will have winter tram tours on January 19th, February 9th & 23rd, and March 9th & 23rd starting at 1:00 PM and lasting until around 4:40 PM. Reservations are required, to make reservations call 757-428-7128. The tours begin at Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge Center and cost \$8 per person. (Trams are unheated, open-aired vehicles, so you would need to dress warmly).

#### **VSO Winter Field Trip, NC, Outer Banks, Feb. 7-9, 2014**

Make plans to join trip leaders Bill Akers, Jerry Via and Lee Adams at the Outer Banks of North Carolina February 7-9 for the VSO's Winter field trip. The trip always has great waterfowl, shorebirds and raptors, along with a wide assortment of land birds. Back by popular demand, the VSO is offering the optional Friday trip to Lake Mattamuskeet, led by VSO field trip co-chair Lee Adams. More information at [http://www.virginiabirds.net/f\\_trips.html#OBX2014](http://www.virginiabirds.net/f_trips.html#OBX2014).

## **A Summary of the 2013 Williamsburg Christmas Bird Count**

**By Bill Williams**

Every December the Williamsburg Bird Club sets a record for itself. This year we completed our 37th Williamsburg Christmas Bird Count (CBC) on December 15, 2013, beating our record of 36 consecutive counts set in 2012 (see how easy that is?) and we did so with no less than 107 participants. The latter is 25 participants more than the previous record of 82 for the 2012 CBC. As recently as 2006 the participant total was a whopping 28!!! This year's species total of 114 was one shy of the count's all-time high of 115 set on December 16, 1984. And we were oh so close to beating that record because we know that American Woodcock and Black-and-white Warbler were detected in the count circle 3 days on either side of 15 December, making them "count-week" species, but not included for the final tally because they were not found on the actual count day.

Highlights for this 37th rendition of an old favorite included a single Brant at Hog Island, a new species for Colonial Historic Triangle CBCs, bringing the cumulative species total for all counts to 188. Greater Scaup are a rare commodity locally, especially in the last 30 years. So teasing one out from a mixed species flock feeding in the James River was a real prize for the Jamestown team. Scouting prior to the count day revealed a Cackling Goose in the Jamestown Island/Mainland Farm area. Sure enough one of these tiny geese was detected there among several hundred Canadas making it only the second since one was detected at Cheatham Annex 18 December 2005. Other "staked out" birds included 4 hummingbirds, all of which had been present since early to mid November. On count day 3 of the 4 privileged our final tally, the fourth thumbing its bill at us after being at the feeder throughout the day on December 14!! Photographs of each of these mighty mites indicate 2 of our 15 December birds were adult male Rufous Hummingbirds. The third appears to be a female, either a Rufous or an Allen's Hummingbird. For the record, this individual will be listed as *Selasphorus* sp. until a qualified expert can capture it to verify its true species identity. Rufous Hummingbirds have been recorded on 3 previous CBCs—2001, 2003, 2011. On the 19 December 2004 CBC we listed a peak count of 3 *Selasphorus* sp. Other noteworthy species for 2013 were 10 Wild Turkeys at Hog Island, 136 Dunlin at Felgate's Creek, a Lesser Black-backed Gull at the Jamestown Ferry, a very reliable Orange-crowned Warbler in Chisel Run, 3 Baltimore Orioles, one a gorgeous adult male nicely photographed at a Ford's Colony feeder, and, for the 3rd consecutive year, a strikingly marvelous male Western Tanager in Settlers' Mill.

New all-time high counts for the cumulative list lined up as follows: 209 Black Vultures eclipsed the 184 on 19 December 1982; 61 Bald Eagles bested 58 on the 20 December 2009 and 16 December 2012 CBCs; 27 Red-shouldered Hawks broke the previous high mark of 23 set 19 December 2010; and 38 Red-tailed Hawks was 4 more than the 34 for the second Williamsburg CBC completed 17 December 1978. Stellar feeder-watch effort contributed to additional new high counts including 210 Red-bellied Woodpeckers (205 on 16 December 2012), 475 American Crows (438 on 21 December 1980), 433 Carolina Chickadees (395 on 16 December 2012), 435 Tufted Titmouses (369 on 16 December 2012), 294 Carolina Wrens (283 on 16 December 2012), and 493 Northern Cardinals (442 on 16 Dec 2012).

It's hard to overstate how immensely grateful the Williamsburg Bird Club is for the contributions 107 people made to the success of the 2013 Christmas Bird Count. This citizen science effort now in its 114th year is one of the most venerable and most valuable efforts of its kind in the world. The count's results locally touch the rim of 5 decades, giving our community one of a growing number of indicators for the quality of life in the greater Williamsburg area. Many thanks to all of the team leaders who rallied their troops for a great day of birding. Many thanks too to Debi Helseth and her staff at Carrot Tree Kitchen for the excellent foods and beverages for our evening tally.

### **List of Participants in the 2013 Williamsburg Bird Club Christmas Count**

Marilyn Adair

Marilyn Adair	Felice Bond	Sharon Candell	Jim Corliss
John Adair	Terry Bond	Ann Carpenter	Inge Curtis
Tom Armour	Tom Bond	Gary Carpenter	Terri Cuthriell
Jack Baer	Michele Bondurant	Jane Carty	Greg Davis
Nancy Barnhart	Jacqueline Booth	Ginny Carey	Shirley Devan
Hugh Beard	Jim Booth	Christina Clarke	Gary Driscole
Ruth Beck	George Boyles	George Copping	Nick Flanders
Fred Blystone	Virginia Boyles	Valerie Copping	Catharine Freda
Cathy Bond	Lou Candell	Dan Cristol	Ron Giese

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Sylvia Giese	Sieg Kopinitz	Alex Minarik	Bill Saunders
Geoff Giles	Lucille Kossodo	Chris Monahan	Lee Schuster
Bruce Glendening	David Laughlin	Duryea Morton	Dot Silsby
Cecile Glendening	Janet Laughlin	Rock Moeslein	Trevor Slight
Patti Godman	Laura Lawrence	Jeanette Navia	Anda South
Dean Gordon	Les Lawrence	Keith Navia	Brian Taber
Ruth Gordon	Dave Ledbetter	Nick Newberry	Greg Tito
Nancy Gore	Jan Ledbetter	Carol O'Neil	Gale Treiber
Roger Gosden	Reid Lehman	Linda Partee	Jennifer Trevino
Ed Hager	Matthias Leu	Larry Perlow	Nancy Gruttman-Tyler
Andy Hawkins	Sarah Lewis	Betty Peterson	Arlene Williams
Cathy Heilman	Jan Lockwood	Sandra Peterson	Bill Williams
Kerry Holmes	John Lockwood	Sharon Plocher	Dave Youker
Glen Izett	Joyce Lowry	Karl Polifka	Rick Zeber
Gretchen Izett	Rick Lowry	Lois Polifka	
Cheryl Jacobson	Patty Maloney	Mike Powell	<b>Total of 107</b>
Vitek Jirinec	Mac Mestayer	Susan Powell	
Judy Jones	Cathy Millar	Patti Ralabate	
Alice Kopinitz	Ian Millar	John Reynolds	

Please go to the Williamsburg Bird Club's website [www.williamsburgbirdclub.org](http://www.williamsburgbirdclub.org) to see the complete list of the species seen during the count.

### The VSO's Annual Field Trip to Virginia Beach

By Shirley Devan

The weather forecast for the December 6–8 VSO Field Trip to Virginia Beach was typical of a Virginia forecast—ranging from highs in the 70s to lows in the 30s with sunshine, driving rains, and bone-chilling winds. All in 48 hours!

For the first time, the Friday afternoon “extra” featured the new park in Virginia Beach near Lynnhaven Inlet—Pleasure House Point. Fellow Bird Club member Cheryl Jacobson and I drove down to meet the group at this wonderful park where we had birded earlier in the year.

Rexanne Bruno, who now lives in Virginia Beach near this new spot, led a group of about 30 birders from all over Virginia as we explored the woodlands and creek adjacent to the Lynnhaven Inlet. The warm temperatures had folks shedding layers! The group spotted 33 species with the highlights being seven Osprey, two Northern Harriers, two Bald Eagles, four Clapper Rails (at least one was seen!), plus the expected shore birds—Dunlin, Sanderlings, and American Oystercatchers. Wading birds included Snowy Egrets, Great Egrets, and Great Blue Herons. With the windy conditions, woodland songbirds were hard to come by. In fact, most were observed as the group returned to their cars to head off for the King Eider hanging out at the oceanfront.

About half the group arrived at the 14th Street fishing pier in Virginia Beach by 3:30 and enjoyed very good looks at the immature King Eider. A life bird for several folks and a year bird for most birders in the group! He was floating around with several Bufflehead. Easy to see with just binoculars but folks were very happy to share their spotting scopes for even better views. Some even took photos!

The predicted rain, wind, and colder temperatures appeared right on schedule for Saturday morning's tour of the islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Rex-



King Eider

Photo by Dixie Summers



Group on CBBT Island 3

Photo by Shirley Devan

anne Bruno and Russell Taylor led two convoys, accompanied by CBBT security guards, on a tour of islands 2, 3, and 4.

I've done this very same trip in worse weather, but it was still uncomfortably cold and wet standing in the middle of the Chesapeake Bay! Observations included Black, Surf and White-winged Scoters, Common and Red-throated Loons, Long-tailed Ducks, Northern Gannets, Purple Sandpipers, Ruddy Turnstones, a Great Cormorant, a Goldfinch, gulls and a Harbor Seal! I bailed out about 10:30 and headed for home, but most of the intrepid birders charged toward the Eastern Shore after the island tour for lunch at Sting Rays!

Per Lee Adams, VSO's coordinator for this field trip: "At 1:30 we gathered at Eastern Shore of

Virginia National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center and drove out to Fisherman Island for our walk [with Tony, our leader]. It is a gorgeous, primordial place...well, at least the beach looks that way! Turkey and Black Vultures, White Ibis, Snowy Egrets, Black-crowned Night-Herons, American Wigeon, Black Ducks, Hooded Mergansers, Flickers, American Kestrel, Red-tailed Hawk, Northern Harrier and more were seen. Clapper Rails were heard. Out on the beach we saw Scoters, Cormorants and Bufflehead with overflying gulls. On the walk back to the cars the wind picked up (?) and the temperature dropped even as the sun was shining. Rexanne Bruno, Mary Foster and I ended our birding day by driving Magotha Road, where we heard 6 Virginia Rails, some Clapper Rails, and saw a Carolina Wren, the ubiquitous Yellow-rumps, a Song Sparrow and Canada Geese. Whew!"

Sunday morning found the group at Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge for a Tram Trip. Lee again: "I've been colder, and I've been wetter but only in the bathtub, so today's tram trip at Back Bay NWR with 13 other VSO birders and our tram driver, Erica, was as wet and freezing as I've ever been while birding. Rain blew horizontally at times and the wind howled **all of the time**. Yet we still had fun. Two Wilson's Snipe posed in the open close to the tram. An American Bittern slowly stalked along the edge of a sheltered island in full view. In a beautiful wintry scene Tundra Swans, Canada Geese, and an assortment of ducks plied the coves and impoundments. Several flocks of Snowy Geese flew over. Northern Harriers hunted and a Bald Eagle watched all. Thanks, yet again, to Rexanne Bruno for leading and to all who participated despite the uncooperative weather."

Many thanks to Lee Adams, Rexanne Bruno, Russell Taylor, and Mary Foster, all VSO member volunteers, for all they did to make this birding weekend successful. Despite the weather, the birding was exceptional.

The Virginia Society of Ornithology sponsors this Field Trip the first weekend every December. Mark your calendar and be on the lookout for details about the 2014 trip.

## **Snowy Owls and other Birding Adventures in Delaware**

**From Gary and Ann Carpenter**

In December, over Christmas week, Ann and I visited family in Lewes, Delaware. While most of the trip was taken up with assisting a sister in moving we did get in one good long day of birding along the Delaware Bay coast.

We had heard, of course, of the great Snowy Owl irruption that was taking place this year and were anxious to get out and try to spot one for ourselves. Before that could happen, however, we had another adventure. I went out early one morning to load some things into our van when I heard a rustling commotion behind me. When it continued I realized it was not just a squirrel in the leaves and I turned to investigate. I thought I saw a hawk on the ground, near my sister's feeders, and then it attempted to fly away. One of its talons was entangled in deer netting that had been put up to protect shrubbery. The Cooper's Hawk was completely trapped and repeated attempts to fly away came to nothing. I informed

my sister of the predicament and we hastily started calling around to try and find someone qualified to assist in its release. Through a Sussex County Bird Club acquaintance we contacted an organization called the Tri-State Bird Rescue Association. Shortly thereafter a young woman arrived armed with nothing more than a large towel and some thick gardening gloves. She covered the tired but still struggling Cooper's in the towel and held it firmly while I cut away the netting from it's talon. Everything seemed to be working on the Cooper's and we let it go. The hawk immediately took to the air and we watched it perch for a moment in a tree across the street before it flew off and out of sight. My sister later reported that not a single bird came to her feeders for the rest of that day.

On Saturday, December 28, Ann and I had the day to ourselves and so we set off to try and find a Snowy Owl. Having heard that a couple of them had been spotted on the road to Port Mahon out of Little Creek, Delaware, we drove there first and did a slow drive up and down the coast. No Snowy Owls but we were delighted to find two lone Ross' Geese in a field just off the road. While in and around Port Mahon we also saw a Northern Harrier, some American Black Ducks, Boat-tailed Grackles, and a Great Blue Heron.

Since we were just south of the Bombay Hook National Wildlife Reserve we decided to take a look there before heading back to Lewes. After grabbing a sandwich in Leipsic we did a slow driving tour around the impoundments at Bombay Hook. Still no Snowy Owls but we were rewarded with seeing Tundra Swan, Black-necked Stilt, Lesser Yellowlegs, Northern Shovelers, Brant, Canadas, Pintails, and both Common and Hooded Mergansers.

We still had some chores to complete so we quit Bombay Hook shortly after two p.m. and returned to Lewes. By the time our chores were completed we still had about an hour of daylight left and we decided to make a quick run to Cape Henlopen State Park. Snowy Owls had been reported on the dunes there a day or two before Christmas. We drove first to the Visitors' Center to see if any Snowy Owls had been reported, but a quick check of their bird sightings list was of no help since it had not been maintained and the last entry was for October. We drove to Pilot's Point, which overlooks the furthest spit of land making up Cape Henlopen at the mouth of the Delaware Bay. I was a little heartened when we saw about a dozen cars in the parking lot and even more encouraged when we saw a group of people all looking intently out to farthest dunes. Sure enough, a birder there quickly pointed out a Snowy Owl sitting high on a dune, just barely visible to the naked eye. Soon we had our field glasses and then our scope trained on a large Snowy Owl that was calmly surveying the world around him. We debated going out onto the point but the day was getting very late and sunset was only 30 minutes away. So we contented ourselves with viewing the owl through our scope. To our surprise and delight I suddenly saw another white blob appear on a dune even closer than the original. Retraining our scopes we picked up another Snowy Owl and we were able to view both of them for several minutes. During that time we were further rewarded by the overflight of thousands of Snow Geese in dozens of V formations as they made their way to their nighttime roost. We shared our scope views of the Snowy Owls with at least a dozen folks before we had to leave. So our day of birding was completely rewarded and we can safely recommend Delaware's Bay coast, even in winter, for some good birding adventures.

### **Photos from a Member**



Andy Hawkins took these photos of a Snowy Owl at Oregon Inlet, North Carolina

## December Walks

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

### Bird Walk on December 14th at NQP

From Shirley Devan: “Three stalwarts birded around New Quarter Park this morning—Jim Corliss, leader, plus Jan Lockwood and Shirley Devan

A very still morning with overcast skies. The birds were still as well, only 25 species and it was a struggle to find them.

The birds are resting up for the Christmas Count tomorrow!! I think that’s where a few of our usual participants were too—plus quite a few were helping with the Newport News CBC today.”

There were a total of 25 species identified during the walk, including 8 Bufflehead, 1 Bald Eagle, 1 Red-tailed Hawk, and 1 Hermit Thrush



Left to right: Jan Lockwood, Shirley Devan and Jim Corliss

Photo by Shirley Devan

### Bird Walk on December 28th at NQP



Left to right: Terry Bond, Cathy Bond, Joyce Lowry, Bill Williams, Cathy Millar, Marilyn Adair, John Adair, and Virginia Boyles.

Photo by George Boyles

Eight birders joined leader Bill Williams for the walk at New Quarter Park. There were 29 species of birds identified during the morning, including 6 Ring-necked Ducks, 6 Hooded Mergansers, 1 Sharp-shinned Hawk, and 4 Bald Eagles.

## 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 January

December's Photo was of a Caspian Tern and a Sanderling



## CALENDAR

Saturday, January 11	WBC Bird Walk, New Quarter Park, 8 AM. jim Corliss, Leader
Wednesday, January 15	WBC Monthly Meeting. See Page 2.
Wednesday, January 15	HRBC Monthly Meeting. <i>Breeding Bird Nesting Results</i> —Presented by Mark Smithson. See <a href="http://www.hamptonroadsbirdclub.org">www.hamptonroadsbirdclub.org</a> for further information
Saturday, January 18	WBC Boat Trip to the CBBT Islands. See Page 2.
Sunday, January 19	HRBC Bird Walk, Newport News Park, 7 AM. Jane Frigo, Leader
Saturday, January 25	WBC Bird Walk, New Quarter Park, 7 AM. Bill Williams, Leader
February 7–9	VSO Winter Field Trip to the Outer Banks, See Page 4