



The Flyer

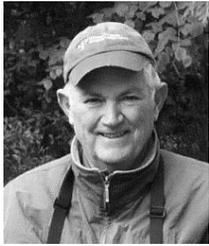
Newsletter of the Williamsburg Bird Club

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November 2015

President's Corner



By Geoff Giles

COWABUNGA! November 1 and I am looking out my window at beautiful fall foliage and a—wait for it—Ruby-throated Hummingbird at my nectar feeder!! Wow, am I ever glad I decided to keep nectar

feeders out and fresh long after the apparent departure date of our seasonal hummers. I don't know why this little guy is not in Mexico, like most of his compadres, but I'm glad I had the chance to give him an opportunity to tank up some energy on a chilly day when nectar sources have become scarce. He was not my only pleasant surprise today. The first hermit thrush I've spotted in my yard this fall came poking through, seemingly just doing reconnaissance at this point. Doubtless I will see him later at my feeder, as I have had those for the last couple of winters. He came with a few yellow-rumped warblers. Those have been around for a few weeks now, as have the white-throated sparrows. They have been drinking and bathing in the bird bath I keep supplied with fresh water on my back deck.

Maybe the biggest birding surprise lately was a call from Richmond from my older son, who is studying at VCU. "Pop, I've got a question for you about a bird." I did a quick reality check. Yes, it was my son, and yes he had actually noticed a bird. He said that a small bird had appeared on the back deck of the apartment he shares in the Fan area, and did not fly off when he and his roommates went out to check on it. He wanted to know what he should do. Should he take it inside, get help? I suggested that the bird might just be stunned from having struck a window or just be resting from an arduous night of migratory flight. My son could relate to resting after a hard night. His description

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November 18th Meeting

Please join us for our next meeting on Wednesday, November 18th in William and Mary's Andrews Hall, Room 101, beginning at 7:30. Patti Reum will talk to us about the American Kestrel population concerns and VSO's new project to install nest boxes to address these concerns. The "Kestrel Nest Box Project" is sponsored by the Virginia Society of Ornithology and headed up by Patti Reum and Dan Bieker of the VSO's Conservation Committee. At our meeting, Patti Reum will describe the plight of the American Kestrel, the project to install nest boxes in appropriate habitat around Virginia, and what individuals and bird clubs need to do to get a kestrel nest box (or two or three...) installed in their areas.



November 21st Field Trip

Our next monthly field trip will be on the third Saturday of November, the 21st, and it will be a great morning of birding! We will work our way down the Atlantic coast of Virginia Beach, with stops at Rudee Inlet, Little Island pier, and finally Back Bay NWR. We'll spend as much or as little time at those spots as the birds of the day merit, and we'll have at least one expert trip leader who can help us spot the birds unique to those coastal habitats. Some gannets, scoters, loons, and winter ducks have already begun to appear and we can expect some good surprises. As time for the trip approaches, look for an email from Jim Corliss with instructions for carpooling and driving directions.

Upcoming WBC Board Elections

It is that time of year again....time for the Williamsburg Bird Club election of 2016 officers and chair positions. Happily, all of our present officers (names are listed in this newsletter on page 2) remain ready and willing to serve for another year. We have not had additional nominations to date, but welcome any from our members. We will formally vote on nominations at our upcoming meeting on November 18th. Please ensure that any additional nominations are made to any of our WBC officers prior to that meeting.

2015 Officers

President Geoff Giles	645-8716 tylerandal2@aol.com
Vice-President (Programs) Cheryl Jacobson	206-1046 jbcherylj@comcast.net
Co-Vice-Presidents (<i>The Flyer</i>) Shirley Devan	813-1322 sedevan52@cox.net
Judy Jones	293-8297 jjones184@cox.net
Treasurer Ann Carpenter	221-6683 carpent66@cox.net
Secretary Cathy Millar	229-1775 millar.cathy@gmail.com
Member-at-Large Jeanette Navia	707-3345 jnavia@gmail.com
Member-at-Large Jan Lockwood	634-4164 nzedr@msn.com
Past President Shirley Devan	813-1322 sedevan52@cox.net

Committee Chairpersons

Field Trips Jim Corliss	565-0536 jcorliss240@cox.net
Records & Bird Counts Bill Williams	229-1124 billwilliams154@gmail.com
Library Liaison Lee Schuster	565-6148 djlschuster@cox.net
Refreshments Jan Lockwood Ruth Gordon	nzedr@msn.com ruthkagordon@gmail.com
Membership/Webmaster Jeanette Navia	707-3345 jnavia@gmail.com
Historian Tom McCary	229-2830

Wild Birds Unlimited

Visit the new Wild Birds Unlimited Store in Settler's Market. The WBC receives a 5% rebate on the pre-tax amount our Club members spend at WBU. Remember to let them know you are a member.

Murphy's (and Carpenter's) Laws of Birding

By Gary Carpenter

Over the years, a number of "Murphy's Laws" of birding have occurred to me. These are not original and I am certain most of these have been seen, encountered, overheard and expressed by all birders. But I thought it might be fun to codify these "Laws" and see if others in the Club could add some of their own or improve upon these. Last month I shared the first five laws...here are the other 5!

6. Beneficial habitats for birds equal noxious habitats for human beings. Garbage dumps. Swamps. Water and Sewage treatment facilities. Birds love these habitats and would compare them to heaven. Human beings hate these habitats and would compare them to hell.....especially on really hot and humid days.

7. The birding is always better someplace else. Or the "... grass is always greener..." birding corollary. No matter where you are, the birding is (was) better where you are not, with the possible exception of when you are in Costa Rica. In which case rules #1 (The target bird was here at some previous time. Or, you needed to have been here X time ago...) and #8 will certainly apply.

8. Descriptions for spotting exotic (or target) birds are generally unhelpful and/or inadequate (and pointing does not help and scares the bird away). This law is best described by illustration:

"Oh, I have a Blue Grosbeak!"

"Where?"

"In that tree." In your field of view stand anywhere from twenty to two hundred trees.

"Which tree?"

"In that big thingee over there". And in your field of view, in those trees, are approximately ten to one hundred "thingees" that are bigger than the others.

"Um...which big thingee?"

"Oh . . . uhm. . .in that. . .uhhh . . .I think it is a pine!" Assumes that both the spotter and you know the difference between a pine, and a spruce, a yew, and a hemlock, and a....

And if the correct tree is finally identified, then begins the routine of determining where in the tree the bird is located. And then.....see law 1.

9. The odds of correctly identifying birds from field guide illustrations approaches 50-50. . . when distinguishing big birds from little birds. The odds of correctly identifying little passerines from one another through field guide illustrations drops to approximately 20-80 Or, as put by that famous American sage, Ogden Nash: ". . .But a bird in the open never looks like the picture in the birdie books . . ."

10. Any day spent birding equals a good day. Time spent birding is good time. No matter if one species is spotted or, if one hundred species are spotted, a bad day of birding is better than a good day in the office. Or (with a nod to a well-known French general) a good day of birding is wonderful, a bad day of birding is still pretty good.

Christmas Bird Count Coming Soon – Mark Your Calendar

Please put a candy cane on your calendar to remind yourself to participate in the 39th annual Williamsburg Christmas Bird Count on Sunday, December 20, 2015. We urge everyone to find some time during that day to be a part of this significantly important citizen science effort. In 2013 we set a target to have at least 100 participants and we made it! We fell a bit short of that in 2014. So let's top that century mark again this year!!! The Christmas Bird Count was initiated in 1900 as a counterplay to a holiday season tradition of seeing how much game could be taken in a single day. Since then this world class endeavor has become one of the standards by which international wintering bird population trends and distributions are assessed over time. Rather than removing wildlife, these counts seek to document the diversity and abundance of birdlife in a defined area. Each count encompasses a 15-mile diameter circle, in our case the center is the Colonial Williamsburg Information Center. The goal for the day is to have as many observers as possible counting every bird of every species within 7.5 miles of the count center. The data are compiled and submitted to the National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count website, where it becomes part of an international database, not only for North America but Central and South America too.

Whether you can join us for an hour or so or the whole day on December 20th your contribution will be exceedingly valuable. The success of the count is based on the numbers of species and how many birds can be found. This includes the common yard and feeder birds, even Rock Pigeons, European Starlings, and House Sparrows!! With that in mind we hope you will choose to join one of the field teams and/or participate from or near your home. All we ask is that you keep track of how much time that day you devote and, if applicable, how many miles you travel during your birding excursions that day. Feeder watchers, please specify the amount of time you spent and the address and/or neighborhood of the location where you did your counting so it can be matched to its appropriate count section. This is also an excellent opportunity to engage children in birding!!

The count day will conclude with a 5:00 p.m. compilation at Jamestown Marina (formerly Eco Discovery Park). If you plan to participate in the count, please contact Bill Williams at billwilliams154@gmail.com or Jim Corliss jcorliss240@cox.net no later than December 13. If you have been part of a field team in the past please consider joining that team again by contacting the team leader. Let Bill or your team leader know in advance if you plan to be at the tally. Tally HO!!

Virginia Beach Pelagic Trips

Brian Patteson will be running several winter pelagic trips out of Lynnhaven Inlet aboard his boat, The Stormy Petrel II. Brian is a nationally recognized pelagic trip leader who has been running these trips for many years. The trips will be on December 5 (FULL), December 12, January 2, January 16, and January 23. All of these trips are on Saturdays, with a mandatory weather date on Sunday. The December trips and first January trip are \$165, the last two January trips are \$195. The cheaper trips last about 10 hours, while the more expensive ones are about 12. Trips meet at Lynnhaven promptly at 6:00 a.m.



Great Skua Photo by Mark Hamblin

Target birds include: Razorbill, Dovekie, Atlantic Puffin, Common Murre, Thick-billed Murre, Black-legged Kittiwake, Little Gull, Northern Fulmar, Manx Shearwater, Red Phalarope, Parasitic Jaeger, Pomarine Jaeger, and Great Skua.

To book a spot on one of the trips, you have to print a registration form from Brian's website and mail that in along with a check. Also, everyone should be advised that the website has a "Terms and Conditions" which participants should read before signing up, as it contains important information about payment and about weather dates/cancellation policies.

Please contact Matt Anthony at mhantony@email.wm.edu if you need any further information. Nick Newberry and he will be along as spotters on the first January trip. For more information or to print out the registration, go to <http://www.patteson.com/schedule/201516-va-beach-winter-trips/>.

President's Corner (continued)

of the bird sounded like a Cape May or Magnolia Warbler and I encouraged him to make a photo on his cell phone and send it to me. He sent me two photos of a beautiful Cape May warbler. I suggested he might put some water in a dish for the bird and ensure that it was out of reach of cats. He called later to say that soon afterwards, when he went out with water, the bird took off and flew into nearby trees. I was pleased that my son had taken an interest in, and showed concern for a beautiful small bird. He invited me to attend one of his academic presentations next week and I told him I would bring him a field guide to keep handy, as he noted he and his roommates had seen other birds they did not know. Cool!



Juvenile Cape May Warbler Photo by Inge Curtis

And speaking of field guides, you might want to sift through your old bird books and magazines and take part in the bird book swap we will hold at our upcoming meeting on the third Wednesday in November. We will encourage a small donation in exchange for the books our members donate, to benefit our research grants and nature camp scholarships. This is a great opportunity to make room on your shelves for new bird reading and reference works, and to pass along the ones you no longer need to others. I always love a book swap, and like Forrest Gump's mom said about the box of chocolates, "Ya never know what yer gonna git!"

We do, on the other hand, have a pretty good idea of what we're going to get on our monthly field trip on the third Saturday of November, and that is a great morning of birding! We will work our way down the Atlantic coast of Virginia Beach, with stops at Rudee Inlet, Little Island pier and finally Back Bay NWR. We'll spend as much or as little time at those spots as the birds of the day merit, and we'll have at least one expert trip leader who can help us spot the birds unique to those coastal habitats. Some gannets, scoters, loons and winter ducks have already begun to appear and we can expect some good surprises. As time for the trip approaches, look for an email from Jim Corliss with instructions for carpooling/driving directions.

Try as I might, I have not been able to lure an Atlantic puffin to my yard. No puffins in Virginia? Not so fast! It seems some do come to Virginia's coastal waters to feed on fish in the Gulf Stream during winter. Conveniently, the Gulf Stream typically shifts to considerably closer to our shores as the weather and water cools. That brings many pelagic seabirds, sometimes including puffins, in reach of a pelagic birding trip out of Virginia Beach. Other pelagic birds include species of shearwater, tern, jaeger, alcid (including dovekeys and razorbills) and maybe even a species or two of albatross. We are fortunate this year to have the premier East Coast pelagic birder, Brian Patteson, offering trips in pursuit of these birds in December and January out of Lynnhaven Inlet in Virginia Beach. Most of the species that can reasonably be expected would be life birds for yours truly. If you are like me and are fired up for this opportunity, pull up Brian's website at "Stormy Petrel Virginia Pelagic Birding Trips", or go to the link elsewhere in this newsletter, to get details and sign up!

If raptors are your thing, you may have visited the hawk watch platform at Kiptopeke to observe the hawk migration this fall. The hawk watch will continue until the end of November, and many of the hawks and falcons flying over typically rest and hunt in the vicinity of the Kiptopeke State Park before continuing their fall migratory flights. Among the most exciting of the raptors for me are the three species of falcons which come through in numbers, peregrines, merlins and kestrels. The kestrel is the smallest, and arguably the prettiest. It is also in need of help, largely due to habitat destruction. Join us for our November meeting at William and Mary to see and hear the kestrel's story from our state's resident expert. We will be hearing about what we can do to help this beautiful little falcon, which feeds primarily on field mice and insects, by creating some kestrel nesting places. Don't miss that one!

Hope you, like I am, are excited about the upcoming Project FeederWatch (wish I could have gotten my hummer today in there!) and about the annual Christmas Bird Count. As I look back year-to-year, getting out with our fellow birders to count and to share our sightings afterwards are a real highlight. We are glad that you share our interest and enthusiasm for our nature and our birds and look forward to enjoying them with you soon!



VSO Annual Meeting – Save the Date!

The Roanoke Valley Bird Club is hosting the 2016 Virginia Society of Ornithology's Annual Meeting April 29-May 1, 2016. You don't have to be a VSO or RVBC member to attend. In addition to lots of field trips around the Roanoke area Saturday and Sunday mornings, you can also enjoy keynote speaker Pete Dunne at Saturday night's banquet. Pete is a renowned author and speaker, longtime director of the Cape May Bird Observatory, New Jersey Audubon's Birding Ambassador, and founder of the World Series of Birding. Home base for the weekend is the Sheraton Roanoke Hotel and Conference Center at 2801 Hershberger Rd. Room reservations can be made at 540-563-9300, 800-325-3535,

or www.sheratonroanoke.com. Rates are \$99 plus tax, but you must use the "Virginia Society of Ornithology Annual Meeting 2016" designation when reserving your room. More details will be forthcoming as they become available, so check our Facebook page or our website at roanokevalleybirdclub.com often. But for now, make plans to attend this fun event! For more information, please contact Alyce Quinn, General Chairman, at twoquinns@yahoo.com.

SAVE THESE DATES FOR UPCOMING VSO FIELD TRIPS:

- Virginia Beach Field Trip, December 4 – 6, 2015
- Outer Banks Field Trip, February 5 – 7, 2016

Check the VSO website for details closer to the date: http://www.virginiabirds.net/f_trips.html

October 10th Bird Walk



Here is the photo taken on the morning of October 10th at New Quarter Park. Geoff Giles was our leader and 12 others joined him for a drizzly meander around the park, dodging high school students all the while.

Left to right: Joyce Lowry, Jennifer Trevino, Jan Lockwood, Carolyn Bowers, Sonny Bowers, Juliet Giblin, Mike Giblin, Lois Shevlin, Geoff Giles, Barbara Neis, Martha Baker. Not pictured are Cheryl Jacobson and Shirley Devan, who took the photo.

Thanks to all who came out on a less than ideal morning. We still had "good" birds!!

November 18th Book Swap

Don't forget to bring your old bird books and magazines to our November 18th meeting and take part in the bird book swap. We will encourage a small donation in exchange for the books our members donate, to benefit our research grants and nature camp scholarships. This is a great opportunity to make room on your shelves for new bird reading and reference works, and to pass along the ones you no longer need to others who can enjoy them.

Reported Bird Sightings for October 2015

We want to know what you're seeing in your yard and travels. Please share with Club members by sending your sightings to Judy Jones jjones184@cox.net or Shirley Devan sedevan52@cox.net.

Members reported these sightings during October:

October 3: Brian Taber spied a Common Tern down by the Jamestown Ferry.

October 4: Bill Williams reported a Bank Swallow on Jamestown Island.

October 5: Master Naturalists at York River State Park observed a Northern Harrier as well as a Yellow-billed Cuckoo, an American Redstart, and a Northern Parula. On the same day, Shirley Devan had a Ruby-throated Hummingbird and two Northern Parulas at her feeders. Down at the Jamestown Causeway, Bill Williams, Geoff Giles, and Matt Anthony reported seeing both a Black Tern and a Common Tern.

October 6: Bill Williams spotted a Common Tern on Jamestown Island.

October 7: Bill Williams saw a Gray-cheeked Thrush and Swanson's Thrush in Settlers' Mill. He got around that day, also reporting a Black-throated Green Warbler at the Chickahominy Riverfront Park, and a Solitary Sandpiper and a Black Tern, both on Jamestown Island. On the same day, George Harris saw an Olive-sided Flycatcher at Beaverdam Park and Master Naturalists reported seeing Yellow-rumped Warblers and Golden-crowned Kinglets at York River State Park.

October 9: Jan Lockwood saw a Northern Harrier flying over the Queen's Lake marsh.

October 10: Sharon Burton and Bryan Barmore reported a Cape May Warbler, a Bay-breasted Warbler, and Black-throated Green Warbler on the Greensprings Nature Trail. Bill Williams was also on the Greensprings Nature Trail and saw a Bay-breasted Warbler and Black-throated Green Warbler, as well as a Swainson's Thrush at the Warhill Sports Complex. That same day, Jan Lockwood spotted two Pied-billed Grebes on Queens Creek.

October 15: Jan Lockwood spied a Common Yellowthroat at the Queen's Lake Dam.

October 20: Megan Massa reported a Wood Thrush on the College of William and Mary campus.

October 21: Sue Mutell spotted a Ruby-throated Hummingbird at her home in James City County.

October 22: Cynthia Long heard a Great Horned Owl calling in the middle of the night in her Queen's Lake yard. On the same day, Jan Lockwood saw an Osprey on Queens Lake. She heard its unmistakable call first and then saw it fly to a tree and perch looking over the water for a few minutes. This is the latest she had ever seen an osprey in this area. Earlier in the day she saw two male Wood Ducks swimming along the shore of the lake.

October 23: Matt Anthony, Nick Newberry, Megan Massa, Erin Eichenberger, and Erin Chapman spotted three Northern Parulas on the College of William and Mary campus. On the same day, Bill Williams saw three Blue Grosbeaks at the Warhill Sports Complex.

October 24: William and Mary Bird Club members Megan Massa, Nick Newberry, and Peter Myer saw a Hooded Merganser at Matoaka Lake and Woods.

October 25: Bill Williams spotted two Sora on Jamestown Island.

Bluebird Society Honors Jan Lockwood and Lois Ullman



Lois Ullman and Jan Lockwood were been notified by the Virginia Bluebird Society (VBS) that they will receive the Barbara Chambers Memorial County Coordinators of the Year Award at the Society's November 14th Biannual Conference in Charlottesville. We have witnessed first-hand their tireless efforts and agree that this award is well-deserved. As much as they claim that the credit and kudos belong to their team members, we know that without their leadership, this project wouldn't have been the success that it is. Congratulations to them both!

Bill Williams Nature Camp Scholarship

The Williamsburg Bird Club will soon be accepting applications from interested candidates for one of two Bill Williams Nature Camp scholarships to the 2016 sessions of Nature Camp, nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Rockbridge County, VA. Students who will have completed fifth through eleventh grade next June are eligible to apply.

These scholarships support students who have an interest in learning about the natural world and who can work and learn both independently and in groups. Nature Camp is unique in its academic focus. Since it began in 1942, Nature Camp has emphasized hands-on, field-based education in natural history and environmental studies. Campers are required to attend daily classes, to take notes, to complete all written assignments, and to participate in outdoor activities in all types of weather. They need to accept academic challenges with enthusiasm, commitment, and hard work. The camp has taught students to love and protect the environment through its hands-on learning approach.

A team of members of the WBC will work together to revise the application and, after receiving completed applications, select the two students to receive the scholarships. If you are interested in serving on this committee, please contact Judy Jones at jjones184@cox.net or 757-293-8297.

Project FeederWatch Begins November 14

Project FeederWatch is a winter-long survey of birds that visit feeders at backyards across North America. As a volunteer, you will periodically count the birds you see at your feeders from November through early April and then enter your count data onto the Project FeederWatch website. To participate, just watch your feeders as much or as little as you want over two consecutive days each week, spending as little or as much time each day as your schedule allows. There is a \$18 annual registration fee (\$15 for Cornell Lab members). The first day to count birds for the 2015-16 FeederWatch season is Saturday, November 14. This year the season runs through April 8. To join or renew: <http://feederwatch.org/join-or-renew/>.

New Member Welcome

A warm welcome is extended to Martha Baker of Williamsburg, our newest member of the WBC.

October 17th Field Trip

Our October 17th field trip to the hotspots of Newport News Park with Janet Frigo was a great success.



Both experienced and novice birders were impressed by the wide array of habitats and the diversity of birds. Yellow Rumps and both Kinglets were everywhere but those elusive owls remained hidden for the entire visit.



*Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Photo by Inge Curtis*

October 24th Bird Walk at New Quarter Park

It was a beautiful morning, but we found few birds. The singing Eastern Screech Owl was a real treat, easily heard from the floating dock.



Members attending in the group picture are... Sue Mutell, David Graft, Ken Paladino, Cheryl Jacobson, Joyce Lowry. Not pictured is group leader, Bill Williams.

Photos from our Members....

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher taken by Andy Hawkins in Back Bay on October 13th.



A Yellow-billed Cuckoo taken by Inge Curtis in her backyard on September 14th.

CALENDAR

Sunday, November 8	HRBC Bird Walk at Newport News Park, 7 am. Jane Frigo, Leader
Saturday, November 14	Virginia Bluebird Society Conference in Charlottesville, VA
Saturday, November 14	Williamsburg Bird Club Bird Walk, New Quarter Park, 8 am. Jim Corliss, Leader
Saturday, November 21	WBC Field Trip to Back Bay Wildlife Refuge (more information on page 1)
Wednesday, November 18	WBC General Meeting, 7:30 pm, Andrews Hall Room 101. Kestrel Box Project with Patty Reum presenting (more information on page 1)
Saturday, November 28	Williamsburg Bird Club Bird Walk, New Quarter Park, 7 am Bill Williams, Leader
Sunday, November 29	HRBC Bird Walk at Newport News Park, 7 am. Jane Frigo, Leader
Saturday, December 12	Virginia Beach Pelagic Trip with Brian Patteson, meet at Lynnhaven at 6:00 a.m. (more information on page 3).
Sunday, December 20	Christmas Bird Count (more information on page 3).
Saturday, January 2/16	Virginia Beach Pelagic Trip with Brian Patteson, meet at Lynnhaven at 6:00 a.m. (more information on page 3).