



The Flyer

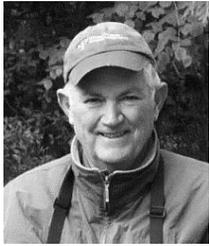
Newsletter of the Williamsburg Bird Club

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www.williamsburgbirdclub.org

November 2016

President's Corner



By Geoff Giles

Each season has its special joys. The ones of this season are easy to love. It starts with the cool fresh air on a fall morning, followed by a day in which the warm kiss of the sun can still be enjoyed at midday. The foliage gradually subsides and gives way to first tinges and then bursts of exuberant colors. They are the past growing season's last gasp. Generations of insects and insectivores are completing their active reproductive phases and preparing to hunker down for the quieter phases of their life cycles. Fruits and berries are reaching the phases where they are ready to be dispersed and lie dormant for the winter. In short, the table is set for the fall migration.

Many of the birds that nested here in summer have already moved out to more tropical winter grounds. The first plaintive whistles of the arriving White-throated Sparrows can be heard as they settle in to winter with us. A few Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers can be heard, the vanguard of the regular winter population headed our way. And clouds of Yellow-rumped Warblers have already descended on us to disperse and settle in to their winter domain. Mixes of other warblers are migrating through to continue farther south, but are around to offer the challenges of identifying fall warblers for those hearty ones of us who chase them. The challenges are multiplied by the high numbers of hatch-year birds in less distinct plumages among the fall migrants.

It appears to be a mast year for our oaks and acorns are plentiful. That can mean that some birds partial to acorns may also be plentiful in our area, including the Red-headed Woodpecker. Yes, that means we can probably look forward to a big year for squirrels, too. That should be good news for

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November 16th Club Meeting – 7 pm – RAPTORS!

Join us Wednesday, November 16, for our regular third Wednesday club meeting. That's when we'll enjoy a program by Kendall Thomas of Busch Gardens, sharing information about raptors. Kendall will talk with us about the natural history, folklore, and diversity of these flying wonders. Best of all, she'll have with her four raptors from Busch Gardens, for us to gaze at with wonder, and maybe even photograph! We'll convene in Andrews Hall, Room 101, at 7. See you there.

November 19th Field Trip – Grandview Nature Preserve

By Jim Corliss

Our November bird club field trip will be to the Grandview Nature Preserve in Hampton. We'll be led by Ernie Miller from the Hampton Roads Bird Club. Ernie lives near the preserve and birds there often, so he will be an excellent guide to walk us through the wooded areas, around the coastal ponds, and along the beach. If you haven't been to the preserve before, this should be an excellent time of year for your first visit. By mid-November some winter waterfowl should have moved in, shorebirds will be in good numbers, and the scrub and wooded areas should still offer a diverse selection of passerines.

Our plan is to assemble November 19 at our usual meeting spot in the Colony Square Shopping Center on Jamestown Road at 7:00 AM. We'll carpool together to the preserve and beginning birding around 8:00 AM. If you would like to drive on your own and meet us there, plan to be at the preserve entrance at the end of State Park Drive in Hampton by 8:00 AM. There is not a dedicated parking lot for the preserve, but parking is allowed along State Park Drive leading up to the park entrance.

Once we're at the preserve, this will be a walking trip. The walk out to the beach and north along the shoreline to Flood's Hole (a tidal inlet) is roughly 2 miles one way. There is excellent birding all along the route. So please join us and walk a little, or walk a lot. You won't be disappointed regardless of how much of the preserve you decide to explore.

Please contact me if you have any questions and I hope to see you on the 19th!

2016 Executive Board

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Past President Shirley Devan	813-1322 sedevan52@cox.net

Committee Chairpersons

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Records Bill Williams	229-1124 billwilliams154@gmail.com
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Refreshments Ruth Gordon	ruthkagordon@gmail.com
Membership/Webmistress Jeanette Navia	707-3345 jnavia@gmail.com
Historian Tom McCary	229-2830

Wild Birds Unlimited and Backyard

Birder support Bird Club and birders

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

At the Backyard Birder store at Quarterpath Crossing (near Harris Teeter), receive a 10% discount on all merchandise. Just let the kind folks there know that you're a member.

Reported Bird Sightings for September 2016

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.

September 26: Eileen Weldon was excited to see a male Summer Tanager eating mealworms on the deck railing in First Colony.

October 2: Shirley Devan reported 22 species in her yard at Colonial Heritage. Highlights include Northern Parula, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Blue-headed Vireo, and Yellow-rumped Warbler.

October 3: Eileen Weldon spotted a male Baltimore Oriole in her birdbath in First Colony.

October 3: Carol O'Neil spied a Worm-eating Warbler in Governor's Land.

October 4: Jan Lockwood and her team of Wildlife Mappers found 33 species at NQP with Red-breasted Nuthatch, Swainson's Thrush, and Black-and-white Warbler being highlights.

October 5: Shirley Devan had Ruby-throated Hummingbird flit through her yard.

October 6: Bill Williams found three White Ibis at Chickahominy Riverfront Park, "the second local October record and new local late date."

October 8: Joyce Lowry spotted a White-eyed Vireo in her Queens Lake neighborhood.

October 10: Bill Williams observed a Bank Swallow at Drummond's Field/Mainland Farm.

October 13: Joyce Lowry saw a Ruby-throated Hummingbird in Queens Lake.

October 15: Carol O'Neil observed a White-eyed Vireo in Governor's Land.

October 18: Shirley Devan saw a Ruby-throated Hummingbird in her front butterfly garden.

October 19: Nicholas Newberry and Matt Anthony spotted a Black-and-white Warbler at the Golden Horseshoe Golf Club Maintenance Center and Offices.

October 20: Shirley Devan again spotted a Ruby-throated Hummingbird in her front butterfly garden on the pineapple sage.

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President's Corner (continued from page 1)

some of our hawks and owls. The local berries seem to ripen at different phases, and just now a flock of robins has descended on the fruits of the Bradford pear in my back yard, having found them to be to their liking. Beautyberries have been popular with a variety of birds, including the cardinals and thrashers, for a couple of weeks now. I have watched my holly, dogwood and viburnum berries grow and ripen and will look forward to seeing which birds enjoy them and when.

For the last several weeks I have been astounded at the number of birds swarming the large trees in the historic Jamestown settlement. The trees are very large and old, and doubtless offer a rich bounty of insect life in the foliage as they begin to die off for the winter ahead. This must be quite an attraction because the flocks of birds there have been prodigious. Yellow-rumps dominate the warbler numbers, but there are others mixed in the melee. The flocks are mixed with high numbers of our resident songbirds. Particularly striking are the numbers of Blue Jays and Eastern Bluebirds. And naturally, there have been a few hawks in evidence.

We hope you are looking forward to the arrival in earnest of the winter resident birds. That includes the waterfowl, beautiful ducks, and geese headed our way to share our Bay and estuaries as winter habitat. They give me the feeling that all is right with the world when I see them feeding and frolicking on our waterways. By all accounts some progress has been made in restoring submerged aquatic vegetation on some parts of the Bay, so natural availability of food for the waterfowl may also be somewhat improved. Let's keep working to restore our Bay!

Images of birds in winter call back scenes from Christmas bird counts past. Some of the most memorable bird sightings every year are enjoyed when we get out with our friends to participate in the annual Christmas Bird Count. It is more than an excuse to get frosty noses and drink hot toddy; it is a memorable day of getting out with friends to see how many and which birds are with us as another good birding year draws to a close. It honors a now long-standing tradition of going out for a day to see and count the birds rather than shooting as many as possible to count them. Long live the count, and please come join us this year on 18 December!! Happy Birding in the meantime!

Bird Sightings (continued from Page 2)

October 20: Matt Anthony observed a Gray-cheeked Thrush and Northern Parula at Cedar Grove Cemetery.

October 20: Bill Williams also found a Northern Parula at Greensprings Interpretive Trail.

October 21: Brian Taber reported a late Ruby-throated Hummingbird at 103 Exeter Court. On the same date, Joyce Lowry saw a Black-and-white Warbler at Berkeley Middle School.

October 22: Jim Corliss, Cheryl Jacobson, and Joyce Lowry found a Gray-cheeked Thrush at Cedar Grove Cemetery.

October 23: Brian Taber observed a Cave Swallow at College Creek Hawkwatch Site along the Colonial Parkway. "Seen with Tree Swallows at less than 10 meters directly overhead; neat dark cap, buffy-pink face, throat and breast and buffy-orange rump."

October 25: Carol O'Neil observed an Eastern Wood-Pewee in Governor's Land. "Smaller than the Eastern Bluebird perched directly beneath it. Clean, buffy wing bars, dusky vest. No tail flicking. Orange-ish lower bill. Fed continuously for over an hour."

Another Unusual Bird Sighting

By Tom McCary

"On Friday, 28 October, I saw a most unusual bird in my back yard. He allowed close observation. He had a completely white head and a long and slender white line down his wing. I watched in amazement. In all other respects he bore the markings of an American robin. He was the size of a robin, had the "look" of a robin, and hopped like a robin. He is the first robin I have ever seen with the characteristics of a partial albino. I shall be watching my yard for any future visits of this bird."



*Photo by
Judy
Jones
(not
Tom's
bird but
another
Leucistic
Robin)*

Naming of Birds: Bird Taxonomy and Identification

By Cheryl Jacobson



Humankind has always tried to name animals. In modern times this process is called taxonomy; it is a formal biological classification. Birds are classified according to estimates of the closeness of their ancestral relationships. These estimates are based on anatomy, biochemistry and even on the species' behavioral traits, such as their vocalizations. Birds within a single species will generally look and act in a similar manner and be genetically similar also. However, in some cases birds that look similar may be genetically different, and this is creating much debate and change in their taxonomy and names. As the technology and tools to assess genetic dissimilarities expands, new views of species taxonomy are defined and this is bringing about a wave of name changes. So today it is important to understand the basics of taxonomy and follow the officially designated and updated checklists.

Taxonomy

Names are important – they are recognizable mental tags we officially give each species. To really know the birds, you must know their names. In a deeper sense, knowledge of the bird names and their relationship within related groups of birds imparts a consciousness of nature's complexity and harmony.

To help you out, I put together this list to help clarify some of your questions.

Pelecaniformes is split into three orders:
Pelecaniformes, Phaethontiformes, and Suliformes.

Only the Pelicans remain in Pelecaniformes; herons and ibises are moved from Ciconiiformes to Pelecaniformes, leaving only storks in Ciconiiformes. The new sequence of orders and families is:

Phaethontiformes Tropicbirds

Phaethontidae Tropicbirds

Ciconiiformes Storks

Ciconiidae Storks

Suliformes

Frigatebirds, Boobies, Cormorants, Darters, Allies

Fregatidae Frigatebirds

Sulidae Boobies and Gannets

Phalacrocoracidae Cormorants

Anhingidae Darters

Pelecaniformes Pelicans, Herons, Ibises, and Allies

Pelecanidae Pelicans

Ardeidae Herons, Bitterns, and Allies

Threskiornithidae Ibises and Spoonbills

Within families there is no change in sequence of species. Osprey is split into its own family. All raptors except falcons are split from order Falconiformes into new order Accipitriformes, leaving only the family Falconidae in order Falconiformes.

The new sequence of orders and families is:
Accipitriformes Hawks, Kites, Eagles, and Allies
Cathartidae New World Vultures
Pandionidae Ospreys
Accipitridae Hawks, Kites, Eagles, and Allies
Falconiformes Caracaras and Falcons
Falconidae Caracaras and Falcons

2017 Nominations for Officers & Committees

(Per our By-Laws, this slate will be announced and voted on at the November 16 meeting)

President:	Bill Williams
Vice-President, Programs:	Cheryl Jacobson
Vice-President, Newsletter:	Judy Jones
Treasurer:	Ann Carpenter
Secretary:	Cathy Millar
Member-at-Large:	Gary Carpenter
Member-at-Large:	Deane Gordon

Committee Chairs

(These below are not elected positions. This list will be announced after the election of the Executive Board)

Past President:	Geoff Giles
Field Trips:	Shirley Devan
Bird Counts:	Jim Corliss
Records:	Bill Williams
Library Liaison:	Lee Schuster
Refreshments:	Ruth Gordon
Membership:	Lisa Nickel
Webmistress:	Jeanette Navia
Historian:	Tom McCary

Williamsburg Bird Club Sponsors Three Bill Williams Nature Camp Scholarships in 2016

By Shirley Devan

For the 10th year, the Williamsburg Bird Club sponsored area youth to attend Nature Camp in Vesuvius, VA. The three recipients for 2016 were: Bridget Wilson, grade 8; Audrey Root, grade 10; and Jesse Nelson, grade 12. At the October 19 meeting, Bird Club members were pleased to meet and greet these fine campers. Each received a full scholarship due to their excellent applications as well as to the generosity of the Williamsburg Bird Club membership. Each winner spent about 10 minutes describing his or her experiences at Nature Camp this past summer. It was so rewarding to listen to these three fine youngsters and to share their excitement in studying nature, and especially gratifying to have Bird Club founder Bill Williams in the audience as our speaker that evening, so the three could meet him in person.



Pictured in the photo, from left to right, are Judy Jones (Nature Camp scholarship coordinator), Geoff Giles (President), Bill Williams (founder and person for whom the scholarship was named), Jesse Nelson (12th grade), Audrey Root (10th grade), and Bridget Wilson (8th grade).

Welcome to Our New WBC Members!

Robert & Alice Byrne
Rudy & Sue Knepper
Cathy Flanagan
Forrest Williamson



WBC members enjoyed a wonderful field trip to the Eastern Shore October 15, led by our own Bill Williams. Those folks in the photo are: Left to right: Patty Maloney, Bruce Glendenning, Ruth Gordon, Deane Gordon, Beatrix Woods, Cathy Millar, Sue Mutell, Jan Lockwood, Joyce Lowry, Cheryl Jacobson, Rudy Knepper, Sue Dorson, Carol Annis, Jeanette Navia, Shirley Devan, John Dorson, Sue Knepper, Judy Jones, Bill Williams. Not pictured: Gary Driscole and Adrienne Frank.



Project Feeder Watch Returns on November 12th!

Sign up – If you have not yet signed up, go online to:

<https://join.birds.cornell.edu> During the season, it takes a few weeks from when you sign up for your kit to arrive with your ID number and for your ID number to be activated in Your Data.

Select your count site – Choose a portion of your yard that is easy to monitor, typically an area with feeders that is visible from one vantage point.

Choose your count days – Select two consecutive days as often as once a week (less often is fine). Leave at least five days when you do not count between each of your two-day counts.

Photo of Savannah Sparrow at the Eastern Shore by Cheryl Jacobson

5. **How to count** – Watch your feeders as much or a little as you want over your selected count days. Record the maximum number of each species visible at any one time during your two-day count. *Keep one tally on each of both days. Do not add your counts together!*

6. **What to count** – Please count

- all of the individuals of each species in view at any one time
- birds attracted to food or water you provided
- birds attracted to fruits or ornamental plantings
- hawks and other predatory birds that are attracted by the birds at your feeders

But do not count

- birds that simply fly over the count site, such as Canada Geese, Turkey Vultures, or Bald Eagles.
- birds seen on non-count days



Photo of a Palm Warbler on a sunflower by Carol Annis

7. **Report your counts** –

- Submit counts through the Your Data section of the FeederWatch website.

All counts are important. FeederWatch participants often stop counting their birds because they believe that their counts are not important. Typically they are seeing the same birds every week, or they are seeing very few or no birds. While some FeederWatchers see amazing birds, a wide variety of species, or large numbers of birds, most FeederWatchers see low numbers of what might be characterized as “predictable” birds. *These counts are the heart of*

FeederWatch. Focusing on the extreme cases would provide a biased view of bird populations, and ignoring the common birds could be a major mistake. While we are all thrilled by unusual sightings and high counts, it’s the everyday observations of common birds that are so important for monitoring bird populations.

Please join Project Feeder Watch and help as Citizen Scientists. Your work does make a difference!



Photo of a White-throated Sparrow by Inge Curtis

The 2016 Audubon Christmas Bird Count – Save the date – December 18!



The Audubon Christmas Bird Count is the longest running citizen science birding project in the United States. This year marks the 117th count, and the 40th time that our Williamsburg Bird Club has participated. If you're unfamiliar with how the Christmas Count works and want to learn more about the count history, how the count is conducted, and even peruse data from previous years' counts., a wealth of information can be found at:

["http://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count"](http://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count)

For us here in Williamsburg our count day this year will be Sunday, December 18. Our count

area is a circle 15 miles in diameter centered at the Colonial Williamsburg Visitor Center. The circle is divided into eleven areas, each with a coordinator who organizes parties (no, not that kind of party) of counters who cover each area and report their sightings back to the coordinator at the end of the day. The coordinators tally the results for their areas, and then we compile them into a singular report that we enter into the Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count database. The Christmas Bird Count is a wonderful opportunity for *everyone* to get involved in valuable citizen science. Anyone can choose to team up with a party in the field for the entire day or part of the day. If you just have a couple of hours to spare in between football games but can get out and provide some much-needed coverage near your home, it is still extremely helpful. Another valuable contribution to the count is feeder watching.



Photo of Belted Kingfisher at Queen's Lake by Jan Lockwood

During last year's count we had 28 feeder watchers, or more than one quarter of our participants, keeping an eye on their feeders throughout the day. During the winter months especially, our feeders are often where we spot unusual birds that aren't found anywhere else in the field all day.



Photo of an Eastern Phoebe hesitating to go to the birdbath at the home of Jan Lockwood

Regardless of how you choose to participate, your help is greatly needed. Our goal is to have over 100 participants - a feat that we have only accomplished twice (last year and in 2013). The more eyes we have in the field, or on our feeders, will make the day more fun for everyone and help us provide the best data we can to this important project. If you want to help but you're not sure what to do, then contact Jim Corliss and he will help connect you with an area coordinator. Phone: 565-0536. Email: jcorliss240@cox.net

Public service announcement to all Atlas volunteers!

By Ashley Peele

(We've received to Atlas updates from Ashley and thought it was important to share them with you. Here's the first:)

Glad to see that folks are still out birding this autumn, but don't forget to set your default eBird portal back to 'normal' eBird for your phone and computer. Same rule still applies, but is even more applicable now: 'If your checklist has no breeding code, submit it to the regular eBird portal.' Check out the attached photos for how to reset the portal on your iPhone (basically the same deal on any smartphone) and remember that you can always switch checklists to other portals once they're submitted.

On the flip-side, I've seen some excellent Fall birding reports coming in. Gray Kingbird in VA Beach! Northern Saw-whets migrating through Mt. Rogers! Fall migration is awesome! Now's the time to work on your species ID skills in preparation for atlas next spring.

(Here's the second:)

We've received this season's dataset from Cornell (over 200,000 observations so far, eek!) and wanted to share some of the preliminary result coming out of it. Obviously in year one, we can't make too many comparisons with the first Atlas yet, but we wanted you to see a snapshot of what your hard work has produced so far. Check out the Season 1 Summary:

http://amjv.org/resources_vabba2/Season2016Summary_Final.pdf.

Truly folks, this first Atlas season has been a real success and I want to thank each of you who contributed your time, effort, and data. In just one summer, a great community of Atlas volunteers has been established. Every time I visit with a VA club, society, or classroom of students, I am reminded how hugely important the HUMAN element of wildlife conservation is. While this makes some folks get a little cynical, I lean the other way. The more of you I meet and talk with, the more hopeful I feel about the future of our natural resources.

Alright, enough rambling from me. Check out the Season 1 Summary and stay tuned for more Atlas project updates and new programs in early 2017! Also, please fill out the volunteer survey that you'll find here:

[2016 AtlasVolunteer Survey](#). We'd really like to hear from you.

Ashley

CALENDAR FOR NOVEMBER

Sunday, November 6 and 20	Hampton Roads Bird Club sponsors Bird Walk at Newport News Park, 7 am. Meet in the parking lot near Ranger Station.
Saturday, November 12	Williamsburg Bird Club (WBC) sponsors Bird Walk at New Quarter Park, 8 am. Meet at the parking lot near the office.
Wednesday, November 16	WBC Monthly Meeting, 7 pm, Andrews Hall, Room 101 on W&M Campus. See page 1 for details.
Saturday, November 19	WBC Field Trip to the Grandview Island. See page 1 for details.
Saturday, November 26	WBC Bird Walk at New Quarter Park, 7 am. Meet at the parking lot near the office.
Sunday, December 18	Williamsburg Area Christmas Bird Count! Save the date!!