

**Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the
Williamsburg Bird Club**
Wednesday, April 17, 2013
Room 150, Millington Hall, W&M, 7:30pm

Attendance: 26

President's Remarks:

- President Shirley opened the meeting and welcomed club members. There was one visitor.
- Shirley reminded everyone about leaving a Parking Permit on their car.
- Shirley enquired about any recent interesting bird observations. Reports included that Bald Eagle eggs have hatched and Osprey are sitting on eggs. There were reports of 3 bluebird boxes, two containing 5 eggs a piece and 1 egg in the third. There is a nest of Great Horned Owlets at Queens Lake.
- Shirley reported that two teams from the Williamsburg Bird Club participated in the Virginia Living Museum's first annual "Birding Cup" Challenge the previous Saturday. The membership teams were "The Bird Dogs" represented by Geoff Giles, Jim Corliss, John and Marilyn Adair and their dogs and the "Wren Wrustlers" represented by Shirley Devan, Jeanette Navia and Jan Lockwood. They were 2 of 5 teams in the competition. Shirley asked Rock Moeslein to report on the results. A total of 123 species were spotted and over \$1900 was raised for the Virginia Living Museum. The "Bird Dogs" spotted 95 species and the "Wren Wrustlers" spotted 75 and won the prize for raising the most money. Shirley announced that the prize which was a pair of Eagle Optics Binoculars will be raffled at the May 15 club meeting to raise funds for the club's scholarships.
- Shirley thanked Melinda, Spencer and Miles Quirion and Barb Streb for providing tonight's refreshments.
- Shirley reminded the membership that Bird Club shirts and hats and Bills books were available for a donation.

Upcoming Events:

- April 18: VIMS After Hours Lecture, "Osprey in Chesapeake Bay: Ecological Shifts in a Changing Estuary" by Dr. Bryan Watts, Director of Center for Conservation Biology , W&M/VCU @ 7pm at VIMS Waterman Hall
- April 20: Field Trip to Great Dismal Swamp NWR. Meet at Colony Square Shopping Center @ 6:30am. Dr. Dan Cristol is the leader.
- April 27: Bird Walk at New Quarter Park @ 7am. Meet at Parking Lot near Visitor Center. Geoff Giles is leader.
- May 4: Highway Cleanup at Croaker Road. John Fennel is in charge. Meet at 9am at Garret's Store. Rain date on May 5 @ 1pm.
- May 5: Spring Bird Count – all day. Same leaders and same protocol as Christmas Bird Count with 10 teams covering a 15 mile diameter circle with Colonial Williamsburg Info Center at the

center. Contact Bill Williams via email or phone if want to participate. Feeder watchers welcome.

- June 2: Annual Bird Club picnic at Ruth Beck's house at 4pm. See May newsletter for details.
- June 8: Geoff Giles reported that there will be another guided tour to Piney Grove, the only location in Virginia of the Red Cockaded Woodpeckers. Entails an early start of 4am. Details to follow.

Program:

Joe Piotrowski announced the 2013 recipients of the Bird Club's research grants:

- ✓ 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 strikes.*

Joe Piotrowski introduced the three graduate students who received the Club's Bill Sheehan and Ruth Beck Ornithological Research Grants in 2012 and who gave us a summary of their research.

- ✓ Morgan D. Nicolli: *Is Occupancy Modeling a feasible Alternative to Collecting Demography Data?* She tracked the occupancy and breeding success of Wood Thrushes and tried to predict the effect of environmental fragmentation, road and stream density, urban development, size of forests, etc. on their success. An ability to predict the effect would help determine better land management.
- ✓ Jessica Ebers: *The Effect of Methylmercury on Immune Response to a Common Parasite in Songbirds.* She stressed how birds are regularly exposed to parasites and other organisms via fecal matter esp. at communal feeding areas such as bird feeders. It was speculated that mercury contamination in wild birds might suppress the immune system and effect survival and reproduction. Using Zebra Finches in the lab, she established a group of finches with mercury contamination and another without contamination. Then introduced both groups to a parasite. The study is not finished yet, but to date results show that those finches contaminated with mercury had a delayed response to clearing the infection.
- ✓ Courtney Turrin: *Negative Feedback Effects of Population Saturation in Bald Eagles in the Chesapeake Bay.* She studied the interaction of floaters (nonbreeding adults, of which there are more because of population saturation) and breeding pairs and the effect of intrusion by floaters on reproductive success of paired eagles. She noted that the first 3 weeks after hatching are the most critical for survival of chicks. Study is ongoing.

At the end of the meeting a free raffle was held.

Shirley adjourned the meeting at 9:10pm and refreshments were served in the lobby outside.

Respectfully submitted,
Cathy Millar, Secretary, Williamsburg Bird Club,
April 22, 2013

