

**Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the
Williamsburg Bird Club**
Wednesday, January 21, 2015
Millington Hall, Room 150, W&M, 7:30 pm

Attendance: 54

President's Remarks:

- President Geoff Giles opened the meeting and greeted the assembly.
- Geoff welcomed 3 new visitors, two of whom were W&M students from the student bird club.
- Geoff enquired about interesting bird observations that members had to report. A pelican at Queen's Lake, 2 Brown Creepers devoted to nut butter, a Common Redpoll, pine warbler on suet feeder, female Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Pine Siskins, Cedar Waxwings, a pair of Bluebirds responding to a whistle indicating mealworms were served, 28 Meadow Larks at Yorktown, Hermit Thrushes and a male Painted Bunting in Chesapeake were reported. Bill Williams said that the Western Tanager that has wintered at his feeder since 2009 is still there indicating that the tanager is at least 8 years old. The tanager is often joined by a Baltimore Oriole. Dan Cristol related a humorous incident of several phone calls from a man who found an injured pelican in his yard that followed him into his house before the rehab team arrived.
- Geoff, after having asked if anyone had any birding hot spots to share, reported that Pleasure House Point near Lynnhaven Inlet was a great place where spotting an American Bittern was one of the highlights.

Announcements:

- Geoff reported that the club is again giving 2 Nature Camp scholarships this year and that Shirley Devan has received the applications and has assembled a panel of bird club members to review them. Our club is also again giving 3 grants to W&M students involved in ornithological research and that Dan Cristol is overlooking the process of selection.
- Geoff announced that James City Parks and Recreation has asked if our club wanted to have an exhibit at Destination Recreation Expo on February 21st. He said that Jeanette Navia has volunteered to co-chair the exhibit but would require another volunteer. Anyone interested was to speak to Jeanette during the refreshment break.
- Geoff asked that members mark February 13-16 on their calendars to participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count.

Upcoming Events:

Field Trips

Jan Lockwood, Field Trip Coordinator, reported on four upcoming trips.

- **January 24:** Fletcher Smith's trip to band Saltmarsh Sparrows on the Eastern Shore this coming Saturday has been cancelled due to foul weather. It is hoped that the trip will be rescheduled.

- **January 25:** Chesapeake Bay Boat Trip led by Bill Williams. Carpooling from Colony Square on Jamestown Rd will be available with departure at 7:30 am. Further details to be emailed to attendees.
- **February 7:** A trip to Craney Island with Bill Williams and Ruth Beck as co-leaders. Bill reported that we could expect to see a lot of water fowl and to be prepared for it to be very cold. Craney Island is closed to the public except for every 2nd Saturday. Carpools will depart from Colony Square on Jamestown Rd at 6:30 am.
- **February 21:** Island hopping on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel with Dan Cristol as leader. Two groups of 15 people each can be accommodated. Security clearance forms must be filled out and \$10 paid at sign-up to pay the security guards as our escorts. Carpools will depart from Colony Square at 6:45 am.

Geoff added that depending on the weather, midweek car trips to Dutch Gap and Beaver Dam Park are being contemplated for which a week's notice to the membership would be given.

Programs

Cheryl Jacobson reported on upcoming programs for WBC meetings.

- **February 18:** This will be a joint meeting with the Master Naturalists. Pearl Beamer of Sacred Friends will speak about her experience of rehabilitating birds for 25 years and will bring some birds and animals to the meeting.
- **March 18:** Fletcher Smith from the W&M Center for Conservation Biology will present his research on Red Knots. Cheryl invited members to look up the article about Red Knots in the recent on-line CCB newsletter.
- **April 15:** The 3 W&M students who received last year's grants from our club will report on their research.
- **May:** To be announced.

Program: Cheryl Jacobson introduced tonight's speaker: Fletcher Smith from the Center for Conservation Biology who reported on his research on *Winter Distribution and Subspecies Identification of the Sharp-tailed Sparrow Complex in Virginia*. The Sharp-tailed Sparrow was thought to be a single species but in the mid 1990's it was recognized that there were two distinct species involved: Saltmarsh Sparrow and Nelson's Sparrow. Fletcher described the difference in appearance as well as range of these 2 birds. There are 3 subspecies of the Saltmarsh Sparrow and 5 subspecies of Nelson's Sparrow. He reported on his surveys conducted on the Eastern Shore starting in 2006 on up to 2014 from which a lot of data was gathered about Saltmarsh and Nelson's Sparrows that were caught and banded. It showed that Virginia supports a much higher percentage than thought and is globally important in the number of Saltmarsh Sparrows. Both species are threatened by loss of habitat from rising ocean levels.

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

Geoff adjourned the meeting at 8:52 pm.

Refreshments were provided by Shirley Devan, Virginia Boyles and Marilyn Adair.

Respectfully Submitted,
Cathy Millar, Secretary Williamsburg Bird Club
January 22, 2015