

**Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the  
Williamsburg Bird Club**

*March 18, 2015*

Andrews Hall, Room 101, W&M, 7:30 pm

**Attendance:** 48

**President's Remarks:**

- President Geoff Giles opened the meeting and greeted the assembly.
- Geoff welcomed 2 visitors from Kingston Ontario. There were no new members.
- Geoff enquired about interesting bird sightings. Members of the W&M Bird Club reported seeing Pine Siskins, Tundra Swans, Blue-winged Teal, and Tree Swallows on or flying above campus. Pine Warblers, Common Yellowthroats, Laughing Gulls, White Pelicans, and Glossy Ibis were among the birds seen locally. Ospreys were also noted to have begun housekeeping.

**Announcements:**

- Rock Moeslein announced that a Birding Cup competition was again being sponsored by the Virginia Living Museum as a fund raising event. It will be held from 6:30 pm April 10 to 6:30 pm April 11. It is a competition of teams of 3-5 people to see which team counts the most species. Last year's winning number was 103 species. Rock invited members to sign-up at a cost of \$20 each. More information can be found at the VLM's web site.
- Geoff announced that as a result of the club's better funding this year, a new project has been started to encourage and help educate young birders. Three back pack kits are being assembled for club members to use when addressing youth groups such as cub scouts and school classes. One kit contains 10 copies of Golden Field Guide of Birds of North America for younger students and a second kit contains 10 copies of Sibley Field Guide to Eastern Birds for older students. Geoff encouraged members to donate old binoculars to add to these kits. He identified Judy Jones as the keeper of these kits as well as the co-editor of our newsletter. Judy announced that she is looking for submissions from the membership for the upcoming newsletter. A third backpack will contain a variety of donated bird books to assist speakers in their presentations.
- Geoff announced the upcoming Spring Bird Count and asked Bill Williams to describe the event. Bill reported that it will be held on Sunday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>. He encouraged the members to join teams or report as feeder watchers. Further info will be on the WBC site and newsletter.

**Reports:**

- Geoff asked Mitchell Byrd to report on his recent aerial survey with Bryan Watts of local Bald Eagle nests. Dr. Byrd stated that his first survey in the 1970's yielded no eagle nests on the James and Rappahannock Rivers. The first pair to reappear and nest on the James River was noted in the early 1980's. This year the survey yielded 220 active nests on the James River and just over 200 on the Rappahannock. In addition there were many other eagles around including

50-75 on the Chickahominy River and 500-700 over the Rappahannock. Of these birds, approximately 70% were below reproductive age. There is speculation as to where all these eagles will nest in the future. Will they nest in marginal sites, disperse or nest closer together? Some nests now are being noted only 100 yards apart. He also reported that there is an Eagle's nest right in the middle of a Great blue Heron rookery on Jamestown Island. There have been 20 such cases noted with even Blue Heron nests built above an Eagle nest. There appears to be no symbiotic relationship as heron remains have been found in eagle nests!

- Geoff asked Jan Lockwood to report on the status of Bluebird trails and boxes. Jan reported that a meeting of this year's volunteer monitors has been held. One new blue bird trail has been added to Berkley Middle School and another is currently going up at Waller Mill Elementary. There are now a total of 14 trails this year. Monitoring of most trails has begun this week. The group is also testing a couple of '2-holed mansion' bird houses at sites where in the past house sparrows have moved in. The second hole allows the bluebird to take the fight with the sparrow outside the nesting box and if the monitor removes the sparrow nests gives the bluebird a better chance.
- Geoff asked Cheryl Jacobson to report on Osprey Watch Project. Cheryl reported that the teams are out and monitoring the pairs of ospreys as they are returning to nest sites and that there will be training sessions for new monitors.

#### Upcoming Events:

##### Field Trips:

Jan Lockwood, Field Trip Coordinator, reported on the following upcoming trips.

- **Sunday, March 22:** Nesting and Banding Marsh Sparrows on the Eastern Shore with Fletcher Smith. This trip was canceled twice before due to bad weather!
- **Saturday, March 28:** Eastern Shore Birding Blitz with Dan Cristol to Chincoteague/Assateague. Target set for seeing 100 species as both early spring migrants and late winter migrants should be present.
- **Saturday, April 18:** Dismal Swamp led by Bob Ake
- **Saturday, June 6:** Red-cockaded Woodpeckers at Piney Grove Preserve in Sussex led by Mike Wilson of Center for Conservation Biology.

Geoff also reminded the assembly that on Saturday, March 21<sup>st</sup> the WBC will lead two bird walks during the New Kent Forestry Center "Walk in the Forest". Geoff will lead a group of Boy Scouts and Nancy Barnhart will lead a walk for the public.

##### Programs:

Cheryl Jacobson reported on following upcoming programs for WBC meetings.

- **April 15:** The three W&M students who have received research scholarships from the WBC will present their research.
- **May 20:** The joint meeting with the Historic Rivers Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalist which was canceled in February due to bad weather has been rescheduled for this meeting. The

speaker will be Pearl Beamer from the nonprofit organization, Sacred Friends, who will speak about their 25 years of rehabilitating birds and animals.

**Program:** Cheryl Jacobson introduced tonight's speaker, Fletcher Smith from the Center for Conservation Biology who gave a presentation titled Red Knot Distribution and Ecology in Virginia. His report reviewed the study of the stopover of Red Knots since the 1990's, the impact of the reintroduction of Peregrine Falcons to the Eastern Shore, and the need for recognition of the importance of the Virginia barrier islands for migrating Red Knots where they feed on blue mussel spat. Increasing sea temperatures has now redefined coastal Virginia as the most southern range of blue mussels. Virginia coastal waters do not support horseshoe crabs as does Delaware Bay. Time of peak stopover is from May 19-28 with an average annual count of 28,000. Average length of stay is 5 to 11 days. Two to ten percent of the birds have been banded. Geolocators attached to legs have shown that they fly the longest annual recorded distance of any bird species: 16,600 miles in total. One Red Knot known as Moon Bird is at least 22 years old and has flown a distance equivalent to the total distance to the moon and is now on a return voyage!

The reintroduction of Peregrine Falcons has been very successful along the same coast with the presence of 20-25 pairs. Where Peregrines nest, there is a 3km buffer of no shorebirds. Since the Red Knot has been declared by USFWS as a threatened species, 3 Peregrine nesting site towers have been removed resulting in a dramatic increase in Red Knots. Any new towers must be built not less than 6 km from the beach or marsh.

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

Geoff adjourned the meeting at 8:55 pm.

Refreshments were provided by Sharon Plocher and Jennifer Trevino.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Cathy Millar, Secretary Williamsburg Bird Club  
March 20, 2015