

## Williamsburg Bird Club

Wednesday, March 15, 2017

Andrews Hall, Room 101, W&M, 7:00 pm.

### **Attendance:** 41

Judy Jones, Vice-President and editor of *The Flyer*, stood in for President Bill Williams who was absent. She greeted the assembly, asked that cell phones be muted and requested that Cheryl Jacobson introduce the speaker.

**Program:** Cheryl Jacobson, VP and Program Chairperson, introduced Nick Newberry, a W&M undergrad student who's received 2 research grants from our club and will be graduating in May. His presentation was about his research titled *Do Birds Affect Property Value* in which he wanted to see if the presence of birds helped explain what houses are predicted to sell for and what they actually do sell for. His research was based on a study published by Farmer, Wallace and Shiroya in 2013 titled *Bird Diversity Indicates Ecological Value in Urban Home Prices*. The urban homes in the study were in Lubbock, TX. Farmer claimed that the presence of just one desirable bird species was correlated with a \$32,000 increase in the house's sale price that was not accounted for by traditional models. Nick's study was to test Farmer's concept in Williamsburg which has a very different geological area than Lubbock. Nick explained what affects bird diversity around a home. His findings came from checking 258 homes (3 per neighborhood) that had been sold in the last 5 years. He monitored each home from the sidewalk via 3 visits of 8 minutes each from late May to early July and from sunrise to 10 am when birds are predictably active. His research is not fully complete but he shared his preliminary findings. He did observe that the degree of presence of birds of high conservation value is related to the higher sale price of the home. The more expensive homes also had fewer species of invasive non-native birds. The landscapes of higher priced homes had a wider variety of habitat and water features. He did not find that adding just one desirable species increased the value by \$32,000 which he had initially considered an unreasonable expectation. However it may be solely due to difference in geography. To begin with, Williamsburg has a much higher variety of bird species than in Lubbock and a richer varied habitat. Also Lubbock has an arid southwestern habitat versus the rich availability of water features in our area. Because this study depends on local factors, Nick would like to see this study researched in different parts of the country and in different cultures. He ended with listing about how to attract more birds to one's yard. He hopes that studies such as his will help developers realize that there is a financial reward for the planning of landscapes that are attractive to desirable birds. He also shared the observation from a recent study that claims that bird watching is linked with better mental health!

### **President's Remark's:**

Judy Jones reported that Bill Williams had given her an agenda of things to be noted as follows.

- Jeanette Navia, Betty Peterson and Nancy Barnhart were recognized and thanked for manning the WBC booth at Destination Recreation on Saturday, February 25<sup>th</sup>.
- Our club will have a booth at the Monarch Butterfly Festival at W&M on Saturday, 22<sup>nd</sup> from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm. Volunteers will be needed to man the booth and tell the people who are

attending the event about our club and invite interested folks to join. Please let Bill know if you can help.

- Judy gave the floor to Geoff Giles who had an announcement. Geoff told the assembly that last year our club was awarded by the Alpha Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa on W&M campus the Lifetime Learning Award for serving tens of thousands in lifetime learning about birds and nature in our region. He'd brought the framed award and a photo was taken to be put in *The Flyer*.
- Mike Millen, absent, was noted for having added a brace to our club mascot, the bird watcher figure that was created for us by Rock Moeslein, so that it now can stand unsupported.
- Shirley Devan was noted and thanked for spearheading the creation of our new WBC publicity rack card and that was produced by our well-known speaker Bob Schamerhorn. They are to arrive any day.

Shirley added that we have new WBC patches available for a \$5 donation. She and Lisa Nickel have them for anyone who is interested.

- The annual VSO meeting is being held in Richmond May 5-7. Speakers will be Ashley Peele, coordinator of the VABBA2, and Jennifer Ackerman, author of *The Genius of Birds*. There will be field trips to Curles Neck, Brown's Island, Eagle Tours on the James by Capt. Mike Ostrander, Ashland Trolley Line and an evening trip to The Diamond to see the Nighthawks. The VSO is also sponsoring a field trip to Piney Grove on May 27<sup>th</sup> to see the Red-cockaded Woodpecker. One must preregister as only 20 folks can go. Meet-up is at 5:15 am at the Wakefield Diner.
- Bill wanted the membership to be aware that club members are in the process of cataloguing 40 years of WBC field trips, 40 years of library donations and the number of Nature Camp Scholarships and William and Mary grants we have awarded since the club's inception.

**Field Trips:** Shirley Devan, Field Trip Coordinator, reported on the following field trips.

- **Saturday, March 18:** Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge in Virginia Beach led by Rob Bielawski. The weather looks questionable and a decision will be made by 5 pm Friday and sent out to the membership.
- **Saturday, April 15:** Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge led by Bill Williams. There is no limit or cost for these field trips and carpooling will be available at Old Colony Square on Jamestown Rd for departure at 7:00 am.

**Bird Counts:** Jim Corliss, Bird Count Chairperson, was absent but asked that Judy remind folks that our Spring Bird Count is April 30<sup>th</sup>. He asked that anyone who has not volunteered before let him know and he will be sure to add them to a team. More info will be coming in an email soon.

**Programs:** Cheryl Jacobson, VP and Program Chairperson, reported on upcoming programs.

- **Wednesday, April 12:** The W&M grad students who have received grants from our club in 2016 will present their research on mercury pollution and the effect on nesting and on cell ageing.

Cheryl quizzed the group about what year our club awarded its' first research grants. The answer was 1982 to Bob Anderson for his study on Oyster Catchers and Fenton Day who was studying Gulls and Terns and their nesting habits.

- **Wednesday, May 17:** Ashley Kennedy will present *What Birds Eat*, a project she is working on with Douglas Tallamy at the University of Delaware. Cheryl noted that many of our members are taking great bird photos and that this project presents a great opportunity to participate in a citizen science project as Kennedy and Tallamy are requesting any and all photos of birds with insects in their beaks to aid them in their research. An article is forthcoming in the next *Flyer* giving specifics of how to share photos with them.

Cheryl also took the opportunity to thank Jim Corliss who has been very busy scanning all our club's old newsletters and putting them on line. She also thanked Jeanette who has been adding the digitized versions on the club's web site.

**The Flyer:** Judy Jones, VP and editor of the Flyer reminded the assembly that she needs sightings, photos and articles submitted by March 28<sup>th</sup>. She will send out a reminder on March 14<sup>th</sup>.

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

Refreshments were provided by Lieve Keeney, Sue Mutell, Mona Overturf and Cathy Flanagan.

Judy adjourned the meeting at 8:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cathy Millar, Secretary Williamsburg Bird Club  
March 19, 2017