

Williamsburg Bird Club

May 17, 2017

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

Attendance: 43

President's Remarks:

President Bill Williams opened the meeting and greeted the assembly.

He then welcomed the 3 recipients of this year's Bill Williams Nature Camp Scholarship and asked Lee Schuster to introduce them and have each of them say a few words about their expectations. They will be attending various sessions at Nature Camp in Vesuvius, VA this summer and will return for our October meeting to tell us about their experiences. They were: Lindsay May, a 7th grader at Toano Middle School who's interested in marine sciences; Franklin West, a 9th grader at Williamsburg Christian Academy who will be attending nature camp for the first time and is interested in forensic entymology; and Ned Rose, a 9th grader at Gloucester High School who will be attending for the second time and is an avid nature photographer and interested in herpetology.

Program: Cheryl Jacobson, Vice-President of programs, introduced tonight's speaker Ashley Kennedy, who is working on her PhD at the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware. She's been working with Doug Tallamy in his lab on the '*What Birds Eat*' long-term research project since 2015. Ashley reported on how they have been examining bird-insect food webs with the ultimate goal of collecting data that can be used to improve avian conservation efforts. About ¼ of North American birds are in danger of extinction and compared to 40 years ago, there are about 50% fewer songbirds today. 96% of North American terrestrial birds eat insects at some point of their lives, esp. during breeding, but we have very little understanding about what insects are the most important to their diet. Most insects are dependent on specific plants so collecting a data base of those insects that a species of bird prefers can be used to encourage landscaping with appropriate plant life that will support that species. She related ongoing research as to whether avian prey choice is influenced by prey nutritional value or by relevant abundance. She also reported that insect groups high in carotenoids, such as caterpillars, seem to be more important to birds than other insects. This is possibly due to higher antioxidant properties. The study of what birds eat has been made largely possible by citizen scientists sending in their photos of birds with insects in their beaks. Among the many beautiful photos that she showed were several by our very own members, Inge Curtis and Shirley Devan.

Announcements:

- Bill Williams announced that Patty Maloney and Judy Jones have provided tonight's refreshments.
- Bill reported that Judy Jones has bird club hats available for \$20.
- Bill noted that there were some free books available at the back of the room as well as printed editions of our latest newsletter.

- Bill thanked the bird club members who represented our bird club at the W&M Monarch Butterfly Festival on Earth Day.
- Bill reminded the assembly that Shirley Devan has been posting about the upcoming Bio Blitz at Newport News Park and surrounding areas on May 20th and 21st. Birders are being encouraged to participate so as to link the Bio Blitz into the VA Breeding Bird Atlas and also to create bird lists for places that are infrequently accessed like Grafton Ponds. This project is a partnership between Hampton Road's Bird Clubs and Virginia Herpetology Society.
- Bill asked Deane Gordon, Member-at-Large, to report on the progress of the Student Art Contest which is a part of our 40th anniversary celebration. Deane said that to date we have over 50 entries from elementary and middle schools. Art work will continue to be collected until the end of this month. Deane had samples displayed on a table at the back of the room. The art work will be displayed at local bird stores and libraries. Deane asked for 4 people to volunteer to help him sometime during the first week in June to mount the art work and to distribute them to the stores and libraries and be responsible for them until they are collected in September to be shown at our September celebratory meeting. The club is providing the materials. The artwork will also need to be categorized and parents will need to be notified by email about where their children's artwork is being displayed.

Bird Counts: Jim Corliss, Bird Count Committee Chairperson, thanked everyone who participated in our recent Spring Bird Count. He is still compiling the data and will have a summary available in another week or two. Bill took the opportunity to note that December 17th will be our 41st Christmas Bird Count.

Field Trips: Shirley Devan, Field Trip Coordinator, reported on upcoming field trips:

- **Saturday, May 20th:** Bassett Trace Nature Trail led by Nancy Barnhart. Participants to meet at the Shield's and King's Arms parking lot off Francis St. at 7:30 am.

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

- No meeting June, July and August
- **September 20th:** Dr. Mitchell Byrd will be the speaker for our 40th anniversary celebratory meeting.
- **November 15th:** Dr. Bryan Watts, director of W&M's Center for Conservation Biology, will be the speaker.

Cheryl asked us to watch our newsletter for more details.

Bill concluded the meeting by announcing to general applause that by the end of this meeting Dan Cristol will have started a year-long sabbatical during which he will be working on his publications and on getting grants to continue his noteworthy work.

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

Bill adjourned the meeting at 8:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Cathy Millar, Secretary Williamsburg Bird Club,
May 20, 2017