

THE WILLIAMSBURG FLYER

MAY 1980

BUSINESS

Hi ho, spring beauties! Tis' the season of mitosis (cell division) you know, so get out there and just tip-toe 'mongst them tulips. Tickle, tickle. Speaking of tip-toein', how about doing just that to our May 21 meeting. Fearless Brian Taber is going to lead us through some of the flora and fauna of north-central Arizona. As mentioned earlier in the newsletter Brian recently had an excellent photographic essay of the winter beach in Virginia Wildlife. He has exhibited his photographic talents at local art shows and has received recognition through photographic contests. In addition to his keen camera you will find him a keen observer of nature. Don't miss an excellent show and talk. You'll come now, hear, to room 117 Millington Hall at 7:30 PM, May 21.

Unless there's a significant hue and cry from the masses the May meeting will conclude our monthly convocations until September. We will continue to have monthly field trips as published earlier, and the newsletter will be posted throughout the summer to keep folks abreast of the birding scene.

Our contribution of a complete set of Bent's Life Histories of North American Birds in the memory of Mr. Everett Raynes has been received by the Williamsburg Regional Library. These classic and yet to be surpassed texts are the finest references one can use to answer many of the puzzling questions that arise about birds. The books detail habits, plummages, songs, behaviors, nesting, and distribution of all of our native avifauna. To use these documents is to learn and appreciate.

Our Purple Martin Chairman, Sam Hart is anxiously anticipating the first arrivals of this year's crop of martin young. Just looking around the community one gets the pleasant feeling that this delightful and useful species really loves the colonial atmosphere. Help Sam make them comfortable. He'll need mucho assistance soon with banding and caring for local houses.

Paula Pence and Jewel Thomas have been hard at work soliciting homes and support for our infant bluebird project. They will be checking the Williamsburg Country Club houses on Mondays, and need to know of any other nesting bluebirds we can monitor. Jewel can be reached during the week at the biology department of William and Mary (253-4458). Please help. It won't occupy much of your time. A few can't do it all!

The field trip for this month will be to Newport News Park. As always we will depart from the Colonial Williamsburg Information Center at 7:00 AM. The date will be May 24. This will be an easy and relaxing excursion. Late warblers should still be looked for and there should be plenty of bluebirds on hand along the Hampton Roads Bird Club trail. Since we'll be close to home the trip can be easily made during the morning to give you the rest of the day for chores. Plan to be there if at all possible.

BIRDS

Picking a place to begin the month's bird happenings is no easy task. April 10 was notable. On this date our second locally recorded occurrence of upland sandpipers became history with three birds seen at St. George's Farm. This species, which prefers open fields and weeds was irregularly noted there through April 26. Also on April 10 prairie warblers, a black-throated green warbler and the season's first hummingbirds were noted. Two vesper sparrows were seen at Lafayette High School April 9 feeding with chipping sparrows and on April 11 a yellow-crowned night heron was observed at Jones Mill Pond near Cheatham Annex feeding on salamanders. Also arriving on the 11th at the pond were red-eyed, white-eyed and yellow-throated vireos as well as an ovenbird.

For the sixth month in a row adult bald eagles have been seen along the Chickahominy River near Wright's Island. Late red-breasted mergansers were discovered on the "chick" April 12. Woodthrushes made their appearance at Queen's Lake April 13 as did a spectacular early scarlet tanager. John Willis found two solitary vireos and two worm-eating warblers in a flock of warblers near his home in the Coves. Both of these birds are rare spring migrants here, and are normally associated with mountain habits where they breed in Virginia. Dick Hines reported the first whip-poor-will of the year off Olde Town Road on April 9 and one was present on the foggy morning of April 14 at Queen's Lake. The season's first solitary sandpiper was found April 18 and on April 20 two prothonotary warblers and the spring's first summer tanager were available in York County. On April 24 at Lafayette the following species were recorded for the first time this year; great-crested flycatcher, Kentucky warbler, orchard oriole and eastern kingbird. Two singing seaside sparrows were a pleasant surprise from the Queen's Creek boat dock on April 26. A blue grosbeak made his presence known April 28 across the road from the Bonanza Steak House and on April 30 a rose-breasted grosbeak was heard "chinking" at Queen's Lake.

Speaking of grosbeaks, Alice Springe enticed her evening grosbeaks to stay around long enough to be picked up for our Spring Count. They haven't returned since the count day!

Our third Spring Count can easily be termed a success. With bare bones coverage on only portions of the count area we were able to tally 145 species. Brian Taber and Joe Garvin found a bald eagle on Hog Island as well as a late marsh hawk. The very helpful Newport News contingent which covered Kingsmill found a brown creeper and a magnolia warbler as well as one house finch. Other count highlights included two seaside sparrows and an almost unbelievable roseate tern at Cheatham Annex. This tern is a rare transient along the coast in spring and very closely resembles common and Forster's terns. It is noted to follow schools of feeding bluefish which may explain its occurrence locally, as these fish are abundant in late April and early May in the bay. How and why it wandered so far up the York is a mystery, but who's complaining? Rich Goll and Cindy Fletcher added a spectacular twenty-nine boat-tailed grackles to the list from St. George's Farm. Several groups had black-throated-blue warblers and Rich and Cindy were able to locate Swainson's and grey-cheeked thrushes. The weather couldn't have been better. Thanks to everyone for their excellent help.

The April field trip to Craney Island was worthwhile for the eight who made the journey. A flock of twelve to fifteen avocets was seen several times and we were able to turn up not only a piping plover, but a very unusual Wilson's plover which is a rare breeding bird only on the barrier islands. Numerous ruddy ducks, horned grebes, shovelers and gadwall were available in Hampton Roads and a horned lark was seen singing merrily along the dredging road. A beautiful day made the birding rewards all the more enjoyable.

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A swallow-tail kite was seen along Jericho Ditch in the Dismal Swamp in early May by numerous birders including some of our Newport News family.

Dr. Mitchell Byrd proudly reports that there are thirty-one nesting bald eagle pairs in the state (that he's found for sure) and that thirty-one young are present including two in one nest on Upper Chippokes Creek in Surry County. Peregrine falcons are going to be "hacked" from three sites in Virginia; Cobb Island, Fisherman Island and Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge. There are apparently four pairs of this species in cities and the hope is that the Norfolk peregrines will follow suit.

ASK OWL

The term plover comes from the old French "pluvier" which means "rain bird". Supposedly they are easier to catch when it's raining.

The name cormorant translates to mean "sea ~~ca~~ow".