

# THE WILLIAMSBURG FLYER

DECEMBER 1980

"Check the boughs for wrens and titmice, FA, LA, LA, LA, LA . . . LA, LA, LA, LA." Ah ha! I caught you peek-a-booming 'neath the wrapping paper when you were supposed to be counting birds. TSK, TSK. There will be no regular monthly meeting or field trip of the bird club per se for December. Instead, we hope everyone will be able to contribute to the success of our fourth annual Christmas Bird Count. The count date is set for Sunday, December 21. There will be eight areas covered in a fifteen mile diameter circle centered at the Colonial Williamsburg Information Center. Groups will assemble by 7:00 a.m. at the Information Center south parking lot and final tally will begin at 5:00 p.m. in the small conference room on the first floor of Millington Hall at William and Mary (down the hall from our regular meeting room). Each participant in the count is asked by the National Audubon Society, which publishes the count results, to contribute \$1.50 to help support the publication costs of the 3000 + counts.

Each of the eight areas in our count circle has a leader assigned to it. The areas include; Kingsmill, Cheatham Annex, Middle Plantation, Hog Island, Jamestown, Jolly Pond, College Woods and Skimino. If you have a preference for one of these areas please let Bill Williams (229-0098) know. Since the area leaders are already set up, Bill can put you in touch with the person in charge of your preferred area. This includes any and everyone who can help by feeder watching. This is an extremely important addition to our count, and one which has not been fully put to use in the past.

Even if you don't feel you know the birds well you can be of invaluable assistance. Being able to point out and help count is a great contribution. Also we will need a few goodies to cheer and warm the participants at the 5:00 p.m. tally. Maybe you can contribute something to drink or some munchies for the hardy crowd.

In each of our three previous counts we have had the help of 35 - 40 participants. That's only 4 - 5 people per area and many areas have only 1 - 2 counters. Nevertheless, we've managed to reach well over one hundred species, and last year due to great feeder counts at two locations we lead the entire nation with 14 Northern Orioles!

Please help. It's quite a learning experience.

Enjoying that bird seed you purchased? The club was able to clear a seven hundred dollar plus profit from the sale. Much of these funds will be put to use purchasing selected books for the Williamsburg Regional Library. If anyone has any suggestions for books they believe would benefit the public, please let us know. One of our prime directives is education about birds. Books are obviously an excellent step toward meeting that objective.

Unfortunately, this writer mistreated the diligence of our Bluebird Committee. It was incorrectly stated that the committee was investigating a bluebird housing project for Kingsmill. In reality, that project is being set up for Carter's Grove. Man I've gotten those poor critters all fluffed up. They don't know where we want them. Next time you see a bluebird, set him straight. The Hampton Roads Bird Club already has some bluebird facilities at Kingsmill. We weren't trying to pull a coup. DUH! The committee is scouting about for handimen to assist with nest-box building.

BIRDS

Mrs. Boldt reports that orioles returned to her feeding stations on Veteran's Day. Pine siskins and evening grosbeaks in small numbers are beginning to show up at feeders along with purple finches and house finches. Brown creepers and sapsuckers have been noted at suet feeders. As the natural foods in the trees begin to dwindle feeder activity should increase. A few early fox sparrows have made local feeders exciting by breaking the white-throated sparrow monotony.

The November field trip was highlighted by two very cooperative winter wrens at Newport News Park. A few waterfowl were on hand for close inspection.

On November 19 Joe Garvin and Fenton Day added two new species to our area list. First, they spotted an immature great cormorant sitting with the double-crested cormorant contingent near the Jamestown Ferry landing. This bird is noticeably larger than double-crested when they are seen together. They have a yellow mouth patch instead of orange, and the white on the breast is broken by a grayish band beneath the neck and then the white extends all the way to the lower rump instead of ending on the belly. This is quite a find considering this species is rare even nearer the coast.

Secondly, they spotted several avocets at Hog Island in Surry County. This species occurs regularly and abundantly at Craney Island in winter. This is quite an inland record for this species.

The following report comes from our Records Chairman, Bill Sheehan.

A primary objective of the Williamsburg Bird Club is to compile data on the wild birds which live in or have occasion to pass through our area. Our Records Program is designed to achieve this objective.

SEE AND TELL!

To make this program really hum and be of value to us all, we need both the interest and the regular input of all members. Whether you are a backyard beginner or an old pro, we desperately need your bird observations in the areas of our Club interest: James City County; York County; Williamsburg; and Hog Island (Surry County).

WHAT is needed is: data of observations; species names; approximate number of birds; locations, including county or city; name of observer.

FORM is less important than content. Your friendly record keeper is grateful for your input in any form, any time--even by phone at 220-2122. However, he prefers it in written form on a monthly or quarterly basis. Several methods are already in use by members and are equally satisfactory:

**\*\*Some** (like Bill Snyder, Fred Blystone, Ruth Beck, Leigh Jones, and Bill Williams) keep notebooks, journals or daily lists and loan them to the records man periodically.

**\*\*Others** (like Chris Glasgow, Alice Springe and John Willis) summarize their monthly observations for me. Alice even resorts to poetry!

**\*\*And a few** (like Tom Armour and the recorder for the college

ornithology class local field trips) loan or give me VSO checklist cards-- which you can buy through the Club. (The recorder like this because the birds are listed in the same order as in his records.)

AND A FEW RANDOM THOUGHTS: If you are curious about what data we have on a certain bird, call Bill Sheehan and ask!

If you have something really unusual, pass the word!

Since the club organized in the fall of 1977 we have recorded 244 species of birds locally. Several of these were significant additions to Virginia ornithology. By researching old bird journals prior to 1977 we have added an additional 36 species bringing our local total to a staggering 280. When one considers that slightly over 400 species have been documented for the entire state with its diverse habitats our locale shines bright with avian attraction. Yet there's still more to learn. We have many gaps in our information on even seemingly "common" species. Any and all information is extremely valuable. We are weak in breeding information, arrival and departure dates and relative abundance.

#### ASK OWL

Owl asks that everyone have a joyous and Merry Christmas and wishes the best of everything for the New Year.