

## THE WILLIAMSBURG

### FLYER

March 1980

#### BUSINESS-

Hey - I bet I know what kind of bird program you'd like to see this month; Florida, tropical jungle, sunny California - Well, guess what? No such luck! We're going to be hied away to sunny Alaska on March 19 (7:30 PM) during our regular monthly meeting. But don't despair. I can assure you it will be worth the price of admission. Our speaker will be Dr. Robert L. Ake, currently the President of the Virginia Society of Ornithology. Bob is one of Virginia's most outstanding birders having seen almost 350 of the 400+ bird species recorded in our state. He's also ticked close to 700 life birds in North America and his enthusiasm for birds and birding seemingly has no bounds. Don't miss this program given by a true expert.

All of us were deeply saddened by the recent passing away of one of our club's charter members, Everett Raynes. The club has decided to purchase the complete set of Arthur Cleveland Bent's "Life Histories of North American Birds" for our public library to donate in Everett's name. A fund has been established to raise supporting monies to purchase these classic bird reference texts. Contributions can be submitted to Alice Springle.

Alice has reported that our membership now stands at 57 paid. We know there are some folks who have not paid for 1980, and we certainly hope they'll come back to the flock soon. Dues can be paid at our monthly meeting on March 19 or can be sent to Alice at 134 Ferncliff Drive, Williamsburg. Also, all current members are encouraged to bring someone new to our club functions. There's more bird lovers out there we are anxious to serve.

This month's bird walk will focus on Waller Mill Park on March 22. As always, the meeting place will be at the Colonial Williamsburg Information Center, and the meeting time will be 7:00 AM. Make a point to be there, even for a little while. Tom Armour is raring to show everyone every bird (or visa versa).

#### BIRDS-

Last month's field trip to Hog Island was a smashing success. Twenty-two people, the most ever for a club trip, made the Surry trip and were well rewarded for their efforts. We were greeted by literally thousands of up-close-and-personal Canada geese and pintails. Altogether the group tallied 45 species highlighted by one male common merganser, and some excellent views of the busy little brown-headed nuthatch. Also available for inspection were mallards, marsh hawks, wigeons, swamp sparrows, golden-crowned kinglets and green-winged teal. The Canada geese flocks were spectacular and often framed by small groups of whistling swans. The mild weather was a blessing that made the birds seem even more impressive. One had the sense that they were as restless with February's vagaries as all of us.

One additional item developed from the Hog Island foray. We have a

new club officer, self-appointed. The new position is Secretary of Defense, and will be ably occupied by Mr. Michael Beck, who very bravely saved the entire contingent from mud puddles and other demons of childhood. He even volunteered himself and his assistant, Sherwin Beck (Daddy) to remain behind the group to assure our safe passage. What a guy!

On February 26 Brain Specht, Dorothy Mitchell and several others discovered an immature male Harlequin duck on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. As far as is known this is the first sighting of the rare Virginia bird this winter.

Tom Armour, always the keen observer, has found an occupied great-horned owl's nest at Kingsmill. Tom reports he would be glad to show the incubating bird to anyone who has not seen this magnificent bird.

On February 13 Mrs. Kay Boldt was greeted at 7:00 AM by a tiny (6 in. tall) brownish owl sitting close by her window. She immediately checked three different field guides and concluded she was seeing a saw-whet owl. Unfortunately the bird left before anyone else could help confirm the sighting of this very rare bird. It just goes to show, you never know what will turn up next and how important it is to be alert to something that appears different.

The second annual mid-winter bald eagle survey results have been posted. Dr. Mitchell Byrd found 166 eagles in Virginia, comprised of 101 adults and 65 immatures. The James River, Chickahominy River and Diascund Reservoir area produced 40 eagles (21 adults, 19 immatures). Already many of the adults are well into this season's nesting and we can only keep our fingers crossed that the recent severe weather won't critically disrupt the efforts of our nation's emblematic bird.

Just prior to the recent snow numerous robins were evident anywhere there was an open area. At Lafayette High School 11 fox sparrows were observed feeding with a large robin flock. Ruth Beck reported up to 5 hermit thrushes coming to their crow feeder after the blizzard departed last weekend.

With spring officially only a few days away, what should be noted birdwise? We must all make notes on the departures of our winter visitors - brown creepers, sapsuckers, purple finches, fox sparrows, hermit thrushes, and waterfowl. Further, we must be on the look out for spring arrivals. Ospreys are already back, as two have been recorded at Cheatham Annex since March 7. Others to look out for include - blue-grey gnatcatchers, waxwings, all swallows, Louisiana waterthrushes, herons (other than great blues) laughing gulls, yellow-throated warblers just to mention a few. This is an exciting season with the transition of winter and summer species occurring almost weekly. It is also a great time for unusual and rare birds to make themselves known. Remember, Bill Sheehan is looking for any and all information on our local birds. Currently he has compiled records for 260 species, but many gaps need to be filled on their local distribution and when they are present in our area. Everyone can and should contribute to completing our knowledge on all species, regardless of their apparent abundance or scarcity.

Don't forget, Sam Hart, our Purple Martin Chairman is looking for volunteers for the upcoming breeding season. Anytime you can spare to help him will not only be greatly appreciated, but will certainly be a learning experience.

Got a hankerin' for bluebirds? The club is still without an official chairman for this intriguing species. Local clubs all over the county have done wonders towards reestablishing this once declining part of rural America. Can't the Colonial Capital lend a hand? Think about it - then volunteer.

The club has voted to contribute fifty dollars towards the Virginia Society of Ornithology's J. J. Murray Fund which will eventually offer an

page 3 (cont'd)

award to support amateur ornithological studies in Virginia.

ASK OWL-

Hey Mac, where'd the term "stool pigeon" come from, huh?

Well, back in the days when passenger pigeons were prolific hunters used to capture wild pigeons and tie them to posts - stools - to lure flocks of pigeons to the waiting gunners.

Did you know the word "gull" refers to "one who is easily deceived"?