

THE WILLIAMSBURG
FLYER

February 1980

BUSINESS

Do you know what an alcid is? Have you ever seen one? Chances are you may recognize such birds as murre, puffins, auklets, dovekie and guillemots as belonging to the Alcidea family, but you have probably only dreamed of seeing any one of them. Well then, make a special effort to be present at our February 20 meeting (7:30 PM) and be properly introduced to these marvelous birds. Ruth Beck will give an overview of the family members and then we will see an excellent film entitled "Puffins, Pirates and Predators". This may be your best chance ever to learn about these underwater flyers. So don't miss this informative evening.

Everyone is asked to spread the word about our locally unique group and its many opportunities to learn about birds and birding. The Executive Committee is asking each member to bring at least one new member to our next meeting. Presently we have about sixty members and it would be great if we could claim a membership of one hundred or more. Come on you can do it!

Speaking of membership. It is that time of year not to let yours slide. Dues for 1980 are presently being graciously accepted by our Secretary-Treasurer, Alice Sprunge. Either bring your dough (\$3.00 students, \$5.00 individual adult, \$7.50 family) to our February 20 Alcid Show or mail it to Alice at 134 Ferncliff Drive - Williamsburg. Checks should be made out to the Williamsburg Bird Club, not to Alice, since she's too interested in going to Florida!

Here's a list of our field trips for the rest of 1980, provided by Tom Armour:

February 23 - Saturday - Hog Island
March 22 - Saturday - Waller Mill Park
April 19 - Saturday - Craney Island
May 4 - Sunday - Spring Bird Count
May 24 - Saturday - Newport News Park
June 21 - Saturday - Grandview
July 19 - Saturday - Lake Matoaka and College Woods
August 23 - Saturday - Craney Island
September 20 - Saturday - Hog Island
October 18 - Saturday - Cheatham Annex
November 22 - Saturday - Newport News Park
December - Christmas Count - to be announced

All field trips will leave from the Colonial Williamsburg Information Center at times to be announced, usually at 7:00 AM. Notice that all field events except the counts are on the first Saturday after our monthly meeting. These are by far everyone's best opportunity to experience birds. Support them and

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Tom by joining the trip each month. There's nothing more discouraging to a leader of the trip than to have no one show up for the trip, but his enthusiasm.

The club is going to contribute an Eastern Field Guide to our Regional Library as well as a years subscription to Bird Watcher's Digest. If you have any personal preferences for books for the library, let us know.

We should all be especially proud of Brian Taber. Brian has had a marvelous photographic essay entitled "The Beach in Winter" published in the January issue of Virginia Wildlife. Not only has Brian again demonstrated his excellent photographic eye in the article, but he shows his versatile literary qualities as well. Congratulations Mr. Taber!

From the Virginia Society of Ornithology Newsletter-

The VSO will hold its annual winter field trip to the Outer Banks of North Carolina on February 15-17. For details contact Ruth Beck or Bill Williams. Usually these are superb trips.

The Society's annual meeting is scheduled for May 16-18 at Marymount College in Arlington. More details will be forthcoming. These meetings are always informative.

The VSO is soliciting contributions for its J. J. Murray Fund. This fund will provide money to support Virginia Ornithological research by students and other amateurs. The goal is to build the fund to \$5,000.00 so that the interest will make it self supporting. Maybe you'd like to join the VSO yourself. Memberships run \$5.00 individual, \$2.00 student, \$7.50 sustaining, \$9.00 family, \$15.00 contributing. Membership dues are now being accepted as well as contributions to the Murray Fund by Mrs. Thelma Dalmas 520 Rainbow Forest Drive, Lynchburg, Virginia 24502.

Interest in birding rarities? If so call (301) 652-1088. This is the Birding Hotline in Virginia. By calling this number anyone can learn of what, where, and when concerning recent rare bird sightings along the East Coast. To contribute to the rare bird alert, one must call (301) 652-9188 during the business day.

The VSO is presently preparing a Virginia Birding Site Guide. Ruth Beck has had this as a personal dream of hers for the state for sometime. Remember, Ruth was single-handedly responsible for producing our own local site guide for the 1978 VSO meeting in Williamsburg. She's one of the chairman for this monumental task and would be pleased if you would let her know of Virginia Birding Hotspots you believe should be in the new guide.

The VSO Executive Board will decide on its annual Conservation Award in March. If anyone has any nominees that have contributed to conserving Virginia's birdlife, please let Bill Williams know soon. Last year's recipient of this prestigious award was our own Mitchell Byrd for this work with endangered species.

BIRDS

The mid-winter Bald Eagle survey was completed on January 20. Although not all of the final information is available Dr. Mitchell Byrd feels certain the Virginia count will run higher than last year's total of 120. Locally, over 30 eagles were counted by air survey along the James and Chickahominy. Dick Hines and myself counted 7 eagles (six immatures, one adult) on the Chickahominy by boat. The young birds are extremely difficult to see when they are perching in trees, even when you see them land. In all likelihood the Chickahominy population is easily twice what was sighted by our boat survey. Elsewhere, an immature eagle is being regularly observed along the James in the vicinity of Jamestown Festival Park and St. George's Farm.

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We've had some local bird celebrities this winter. A second year Glaucous Gull has been regularly seen at low tide at College Creek since January 23rd when it was first noted there by Mitchell Byrd and his ornithology class. This solid white gull is slightly larger than a herring gull and has a large pink bill with a black tip. Its wings do not extend beyond the tail as they would in the smaller Iceland Gull. This bird is our second local record for this Virginia rarity and has been seen by John Willis and Betty Williams.

Our January 20 field trip attracted eight participants. They were treated to a Cheatham Annex welcome. Highlights included pheasants, chipping sparrows, kestrels, many bluebirds, 500 redheads (no blondes or brunettes??), swans, phoebe, and a winter wren.

On January 25, a Peregrine Falcon was carefully observed on Jamestown Island. This is our first local record for this endangered species. The individual was seen casually flying towards Hog Island.

Chris Glasgow has reported seeing Turkeys on the Naval Weapons Station on January 9 and 18. She's also had Evening Grosbeaks at her feeder, and a very bold Sharp-shinned Hawk. Alice Sprunge was elated by the presence of her first yard-list red-headed woodpecker recently. She's regularly had hairy and downy woodpeckers, and now insists that she won't be satisfied until she records a red-cockaded in her yard. We will see if Mitchell Byrd can't arrange something, okay, Alice?

John Willis has reported Fox Sparrows, Phoebe, and Wood Ducks from the coves off South Henry Street. He's also seen a Barred Owl in his neighborhood. Leigh Jones has been sharing Mrs. Kay Bolt's Northern Orioles recently on Tyler Street. The birds can be regularly seen in the late afternoon.

Throughout the area several species are showing early signs of spring. Cardinals have been singing since January 12. Woodcocks are "peenting" and displaying over open fields and mourning doves have been soulfully cooing during mid-day over the past two weeks. What are some of the birds signs you've noticed?

During early winter and late fall a conscious effort was made to elucidate our owl population locally. Not only did we find what we needed, but came up with Tom Armour's Long-eared Owl. Now we need to target in on some other species. The records are particularly lacking for the following most wanted birds: Phoebe, horned lark, cat-bird (in winter), water pipit, winter wren, any owl, pintail, shoveler, and green-winged teal. Please help us out if any of these show up. Note the date and location for our record's chairman.

ASK OWL-

Where did the Evening Grosbeak get its name? The scientific name Hesperiphona vespertina translates into "Evening singer for Hesperus". The Hesperides were the Greek daughters of the Night. It was once believed this species sang only (or mostly) in the evening. In fact this is a misnomer originating from its first description in the early 1800's in which it was the birds being flushed from an evening roost. Morning grosbeaks would be more appropriate.