

THE WILLIAMSBURG FLYER
January 1980

BUSINESS

Happy New Year everyone - Happy New Decade even. New is certainly the order of the time. We've got new officers - Ruth Beck, President, Susan Sturm and Bill Williams, Vice Presidents in charge of programs and newsletters respectively and Alice Springe doing double duty as Secretary-Treasurer. We're also ready for new dues. Really now, give Alice something to do. Regular membership is \$5.00 per person, \$3.00 for students and \$7.50 for family memberships. Renew now and avoid the April rush - and purge - of all those that don't renew. Make your checks payable to the "Williamsburg Bird Club" and either bring them to our next meeting or mail them to Alice at 134 Ferncliff Drive, Williamsburg.

Tom Armour has agreed to be our Field Trip Chairman. After Brian Taber's excellent performance over the last two years Tom's got big shoes to fill. Please let him know where you'd like to go on our monthly field trips.

Our first program for the New Year will be a survey of our local ducks, geese and swans. Identification, where to find them locally and general habits will be discussed through a slide presentation. We will meet January 16 at 7:30 PM in room 117 Millington Hall on the William and Mary Campus (same ole time - same ole place).

How's that bird seed you ordered through the club in November holding out? Do the birds like it, in your opinion? Are you satisfied with what you got? Let us know - for next year, maybe.

We would like to put some more books in our public library. Please let us know of any books or periodicals which you believe our public would benefit from by finding it in a regional library. This is a valuable service we can perform, as well as give us some added publicity.

BIRDS

Why not start off the New Year with a list? Yeah, a list - of birds. It doesn't have to be elaborate or fancy - yard list, county list, city list, living room list, seen-from-my-boat-seat-list, state list, underwater list, whatever. You'll love it. It's a challenge. It's private, and you'll find it very educational. The constant attempt to identify each species with the hopes of adding new ones is a great way to learn our local birds and where they are easily found. Even daily lists are easy and quite effective. Initially it'll be rough, but the rewards will quickly become apparent. Try it. Bill Sheehan will love your results.

Well the bird counts of the Christmas season are over. Our own count totalled 110 species. Here are some of the highlights - 14 turkeys (Camp Peary) 5 bald eagles (4 Camp Peary, one at Jamestown), 7 clapper rails along the Parkway at Felgates and Indian Field Creeks (Yorktown way) one tree swallow at Kingsmill, 18 screech owls, 7 each of barred and great horned owls,

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one house wren, a phoebe, 13 orioles - most at Mrs. Ann Smith's on Virginia Avenue, a tree sparrow at Hog Island.

Last year we tallied 108 species compared to 99 the year before. We continue to improve, and everyone who helped out with the count is due a hardy thanks. Get ready for spring now!

Other counts - Hampton Roads had 124 species including a peregrine falcon, and orange-crowned and black and white warblers. The Hopewell area produced a western kingbird. The state's leading count area, Cape Charles, on the Eastern Shore, had 168 species bolstered by an ash-throated flycatcher, a rare western straggler, and an avocet discovered by the Williamsburg contingent on Fisherman Island. Further afield, a European rarity in North America, a black-tailed godwit was recorded on the Bodie-Pea Island count on North Carolina's Outer Banks. The bird could be found at the Bodie Island Lighthouse Pond and has been seen by numerous birders.

James Vardaman of Jackson, Mississippi made a valiant attempt to record 700 species of birds in North America during 1979. As of December 30 he had reached 698 species by recording a great skua off the Atlantic coast. This was his final bird for the year. An incredibly valiant effort involving 5 trips to Alaska, numerous miles and hours bobbing around in the open ocean, and tens of thousands of dollars and air-miles to see birds fell short by a mere two species. Now that's dedication in extremis, huh!

Our own local bird-man, Tom Armour, of Kingsmill wouldn't rest on his September laurels of finding the state's fourth magnificent frigatebird. Oh, no. He's discovered our own local, first-ever, long-eared owl. Tom has viewed the bird (possibly birds) at very close range. Ruth Beck also got a fairly close look at the bird after discovering it wasn't a bee's nest. Long-eared owls are somewhat crow-sized with long wings and tail. Their back is slaty gray-brown and breast streakings with vertical instead of horizontal as they are on great horned owls. These birds make few sounds and are very reluctant fliers. What can Tommy do for an encore? Let's keep our fingers crossed.

Tom isn't the only one with goodies to report. Judy Pauley recorded our first ever local barn owl at Camp Peary on December 17. Way to go!

A new feature - Ask Owl.

Owl will attempt to answer your bird questions, if you will submit them to his box at club meetings. Here's a couple already received.

From L. Brehne. From where did the redstart get its name, comrade.

Redstart is a corruption of an Old German term "rothstert" meaning red-tail referring to the patch of red on the outer tail feathers.

What is the origin of the name "Baltimore Oriole"? From E. Weaver, J. Palmer, and B. Robinson.

This bird, now properly known as the Northern Oriole, received its name from Mark Catesby due to its black and orange colors of George Calvert, the first Baron of Baltimore.