

THE WILLIAMSBURG FLYER
OCTOBER 1981

Autumn has fledged. You can feel it, sense it at every turn. The early mornings are cool, and where several months ago we rejoiced to the songs of spring we now barely perceive the whispers of leaves meeting their ultimate fate, earth bound. Colors are the most obvious signal that the season prior to winter is nigh. Reds, yellows, orange, and browns are creeping through the shining greens, and they are complimented by the buzz of a chain saw, and the odor of burnt leaves and wood. Turkey and candy canes are only around Time's corner, as Canada geese file overhead conversing esoterically. How pleasant!

Wednesday night, October 21, is just around the corner and promises to be a pleasant evening with the club's monthly meeting. Due to continuing asbestos clean-up in Millington Hall we will meet again in the auditorium of Andrews Hall where we met last month. This is the building immediately behind Phi Beta Kappa Hall. As is the usual course, meeting time is 7:30 P.M. This month's program will feature Mr. Harry Knight of Williamsburg who will speak to us about Ducks Unlimited. Mr. Knight is an excellent choice for the task since he is a former chairman of DU. He is currently a Regional Vice President of the organization's South Atlantic area and also serves as a Director of the DU Canada board. This will be a fine opportunity to learn about the superb work of this international conservation organization. Don't miss it. Bring a friend or three.

This month's field trip will take place, Saturday October 24. We plan to travel to the Eastern Shore of Virginia for an all day trip to the Kiptopeke area. Emphasis for the trip will be placed on hawk counting but we will also stop on the four Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel islands. There's also a chance we may visit Chincoteague should there be a poor hawk flight. Aside from the attraction of 10 species of raptors possible at Kiptopeke the shore offers scoters, great cormorants, migrant sparrows and ducks, herons and various shorebirds. There may even be a few holdover warblers and one never knows what may pop up on the tunnel islands. A lesser black-backed gull is again being regularly seen on the islands making 3 or 4 years in a row for this European rarity.

An active bird club never rests, and thus accomplishes more than its share of business. Bill Synder has agreed to be our Conservation Chairman and we all look forward to hearing from him on local and area issues that influence each of us. His input will also be felt at the state level through the Conservation Committee of the Virginia Society of Ornithology.

The final tally is in our initial season of bluebird husbandry. Thanks to the continuous efforts of Jewel Thomas, twenty bluebirds young were banded at the Williamsburg Country Club. What a super start. Carters Grove had no bluebird activity and plans are being made to relocate some of the houses in order to make them more attractive to these azurine thrushes.

On the purple martin front, efforts have been underway by the pooper-scooper squad to clean and winterize the martin motels. Cleaning is relatively simple for these tidy birds, requiring only the removal of nest material and dusting with a

tad of sulfur. Boxes are then closed to prevent encampment by starlings and English sparrows (Bill Sheehan birds).

Election of next year's club officers will occur at the November meeting. The December meeting has traditionally revolved around the annual Christmas bird count, so our actual final business meeting of any sort occurs in and around turkey month. Alice Springe (229-2661) is chairman of the Nominating Committee which also includes Cindy Fletcher, Fred Blystone and Bill Sheehan. The officers who need to be elected are President, Vice-President for programs, Vice-President for Newsletter, Secretary, and Treasurer. Should you have any suggestions please let Alice know quickly. As it now stands in our By-Laws and Constitution, officers are elected for two year stints. This measure was implemented when the club was hatching out so that we could get our flying wings.

The 1981 Bird Seed Savings Day was a resounding success. A mammoth amount of credit goes to exceptional organization by Fred Blystone, who literally contacted bird feeding folks all over the area personally. When you consider last year with newspaper ads we sold about 13,000 pounds of seed, and then compare that to 18,000 pounds this year with no ads you can see ole Fred did one peachy keen job. Unofficially the organization stands to net around one thousand dollars. Plans are in the mill for another sale in January. Only one flaw developed this year when the seed arrived three days early. Fred and Ruth handled that superbly too.

Bird News

Last month's field trip to York River State Park proved to be a birding bonanza. Ten intrepid avian ogglers made the excursion and none were anywhere disappointed. On their way into the park two of our newest club members, John and Eleanor Hertz got a first hand look at a turkey crossing the road. Considering Brian Taber was over in Gloucester we know the bird was the real thing! The group, led by Ruth and Park manager Mark Lassiter, was able to find the following goodies; 3 black-throated green warblers, boblinks, scarlet tanager, parula and yellow-rumped warbler, red-breasted nuthatch and northern water thrush. An adult bald eagle made an exciting appearance carrying a fish, and was upstaged by a red-tailed hawk that gave a command performance making a kill! See what you miss by not going on a field trip? Tsk-Tsk!

During September a vast array of warblers presented themselves everywhere. Bill Sheehan had black-throated blues and a magnolia in his yard on the ninth. Queens Lake has been graced by at least 16 species including golden-winged, Wilson's, Tennessee, chestnut-sided and hooded. There were times when the trees seemed alive with redstarts and black and whites. Kiptopeke banding station caught its second Brewster's hybrid warbler in its eighteen years of operation.

Nighthawks, colloquially regarded as bull bats, have been observed irregularly throughout the area by several individuals.

Tom Armgur could not handle a Fall without getting at least one goody. So on September 24 he found a Western kingbird at Kingsmill. This is the second year in a row for this rare migrant. The bird even sat in the same tree one did last year.

The VSO field trip to Chincoteague September 19-21 turned up a Philadelphia vireo, buff-breasted sandpipers and golden plovers. The group toured the Bay Bridge tunnel and found the lesser black-backed gull.

Hawk counts at Kiptopeke have had their windy problems, but have generally been great. Several days have produced over 1000 raptors. Ruth, Fred, Alice and Tom counted over 1200 sharp-shins one day and even saw eight golden plovers. Peregrine falcons, merlins and a resident pair of bald eagles make the counts moment by moment thrillers and you never know what will be caught at the banding station.

Eslewhere, a masked bobby has been hanging around a pelican colony near Wilmington N.C. since at least July. Maybe he figures the mask disguise will fool the pelicans and nobody will know who he is. A jabiru has been seen in Texas to the glee of the big listers. Rich Goll and Cindy Fletcher noted a clay-colored sparrow on the Bay Bridge September 27.

The Williamsburg Christmas Count will be Sunday December 20. Mark it down as a must!

Ask Owl:

The parrot has a hinge at the base of its upper mandible that allows it to use the beak for climbing and giving leverage for cracking large nuts.