

THE WILLIAMSBURG FLYER

AUGUST 1981

How are ya? How are ya? How are ya? How are you holding up under high temperatures and relative humidity (no relative of mine!)? Isn't this pleasant? Just think how you would feel with a layer of feathers and down all around your steamy little bod!

We've still got over a month to go before our next meeting so hang in there till September 16. William and Mary is locked slam up anyway. Now that they got the asbestos out, they have to remove what they just put in because it's a fire hazard. And that's a college?

This month's field trip will again try for Craney Island. It is scheduled for Saturday, August 22 at 7:00 a.m. Departure will be from the south parking lot as usual. Last month's effort to go to Craney Island was laid waste by a lack of water and birds at the facility. A call to David Hughes, who lives near this Army Corps of Engineers spoil area, several days prior to the July trip brought a strong recommendation from him not to bother coming over. He said there were few birds and what little water was there was drying up rapidly. So we'll try again this month and hope for better results.

Five folks did show up at the Information Center in hopes of going to Portsmouth on our last field trip. After some debate we settled on heading for Hog Island in Surry County. It turned out to be quite worthwhile. The group encountered literally hundreds of shorebirds at close range. Carefully observed were stilt, pectoral, western, solitary and semipalmated sandpipers. Short-billed dowitchers and numerous lesser yellow-legs were also available. Bank swallows sat on the wire near the gang and a superb indigo bunting gave quite a show. Numerous great egrets and two snowy egrets were good finds. Caspian and royal terns could be seen near the river, and several Canada geese made the summer air ring of cooler times. What was almost a lost trip turned out to be quite a treat. But, isn't that what's so great about birds!

From what I've been able to find out the world has turned to bluebirds and purple martins. Sam Hart and Ruth have banded over 100 martins locally, eight of which were at Dick Hines' -- his first ever. The Williamsburg Country Club golf course continues to produce excellent bluebird crops. Seven more young were banded August 8, and two more nests appear active. Bill Sheehan reports bluebirds fledged in his back yard, and several residents of Elmwood near Croaker have had grand success with their blue darlings this summer. Ah, that's music to our ears, neighbors, and few make music any sweeter than bluebirds and martins.

Having nothing better to do this summer Dot Silsby, Rich Goll and Cindy Fletcher took off with Dr. Bob Ake (VSO President, birder par excellence) to visit the birding mecca of Southeast Arizona. The twelve day whirlwind tour missed only one hot spot (Guadalupe Canyon -- near the Mexican border) due to impassable roads at 3:00 a.m. (that's right a.m.) but didn't really miss any birds. Rich and Cindy each nailed 110 life birds, while Dot gleaned over 90. The total trip list came to 195 species, thirteen better than last year and included several extremely good finds. Bob, who had 691 lifers when he started the trip, added two more with a buff-collared nightjar seen twelve miles out in the desert on an Indian Reservation at the base of one of their religious mountains, and a black-capped gnatcatcher, a bird only recorded in North America two previous times. Except for Montezuma quail all of the other Arizona specialites were seen -- rose throated becard, coppery-tailed trogon (each of these at the

nest), five-striped sparrow, rufous-winged sparrow, white-eared hummingbird. In all 10 species of hummingbirds were recorded and eight species of owls. Of the owls six of them were seen in the daylight and photographed. Among the diurnal raptors the group found prairie falcon, Harris', gray, black and zone-tailed hawks and a golden eagle or three. Two species of rattlesnakes were encountered and heard to send their best wishes to Susan Sturm as was a gila monster and an amazing variety of lizards. Tarantulas were found and handled, and the list of mammals was spectacular. See if you can corner Dot, Cindy or Rich they were last seen with their feet way off the ground and their heads high in the clouds. They just might want to tell you a little about their trip.

A recent trip to Chincoteague produced an unbelievable list of herons and egrets. The birds were available in huge numbers. In addition to the herons, glossy ibis were very abundant. Shorebird-wise there were at least five Hudsonian godwits, one marbled godwit, long and short-billed dowitchers, mute swans, black terns and hundreds of peeps at distances too far to identify them.

Enclosed with the newsletter please note the Bird Seed Savings Day information. We're getting started early this year, so make your plans for filling your fall and early winter seed bins.

Also on the horizon is September which means hawk counts and bird banding at Kiptopeke on the Eastern Shore. This writer is trying to have hawk counts manned on every available day this fall. The potential for Kiptopeke hasn't begun to be realized. Someone from Williamsburg will hopefully be over there every weekend. What we need is counters for week days. If you can help call Bill Williams at 229-0098. Even one day would be excellent and I can guarantee that it's quite an experience.

ASK OWL

The dipper actually walks around on the gravel bottoms of rivers in the west. It has a thick coat of down to keep it warm, and its oil gland for preening is 10 times larger than that of any songbird.