

THE WILLIAMSBURG FLYER

September 1981

Yo, what's happenin'? Aside from lack of rain the recent temperatures during the day would hardly confirm it was August. Remember 1980? The presence of tropical storms and hurricanes certainly confirms that September is in full swing.

With September the Williamsburg Bird Club also gets into full swing. This month will need your patience with the monthly meeting. Due to the prolonged removal of asbestos from Millington Hall we won't be able to meet there. Instead we will meet in Andrews Hall. That's the building immediately in back of Phi Beta Kappa Hall and home of the college's art department. When the club first organized we met there, so this is like a look into our past as we plan for the future. Our program this month is going to be superb as Bill Akers of Roanoke will speak to us on the birds and mammals of Africa. I can assure you his slides are first rate and his ever present wit will give everyone an evening of grand entertainment. Please make every effort to attend on September 16 at 7:30 p.m.

A bit of sadness came our way during August with the passing away of Andrew Landis. Many of us first met him when he warmly hosted eager birders and several quite cooperative redpolls. In his memory a copy of the classic Shorebirds of North America by Robert Clem has been placed in the Williamsburg Regional Library.

September is our bird seed sale month. As of this writing Fred Blystone has reported receiving no orders from club members. We only hope folks are waiting to pay at or just prior to the September 16 meeting. Also we are going to need strong minds and bodies to help unload the seed when it arrives October 2.

This month's field trip will be a trek to nearby York River State Park in Croaker. As is the usual practice we will depart from Colonial Williamsburg Information Center south parking lot at 7:00 a.m. The date for the trip is Saturday, September 19. The state park area is a relatively untouched birding area which provides widely diverse habitats from upland forest to salt water marsh and a fresh water pond. Fall warblers, gulls and terns should be the highlights. This time of year you really never know. The key is being out.

Okay, so it rained last month on the day of our second attempt to cover Craney Island for a field trip. Yeah, some of us went anyway. The more we drove eastward the harder the rain came. But you can't deter relentless birders, not even when cars are spinning off the road ahead of you, and the Craney Island roads are washing so bad they almost disappeared in places. Who cares if our contact to get us in the area had sense enough to stay in his dry abode. We went anyway, having to con a couple of Army Corps of Engineers personnel in the process to get us in and out of the landfill area. But it wasn't totally worthless; a little tense yes, but not worthless. Over 30 avocets were seen at close range, as were stilt sandpipers, 2 horned larks and a peregrine falcon. Also present were yellowlegs, short-bill dowitchers, numerous "Peeps", several duck species and many gulls, terns, and black skimmers. See what you missed!

Since we got the western report on birds from Arizona last month its about time we heard something about the east's birds. Well I mean how much further east can we get? Further. Ty and Julie Hotchkiss took a six man charter fishing boat off the Outer Banks late last month after a pelagic trip was cancelled. Julie reports she and Ty nailed down several new species for their already over 600 list. They were able to see Wilson's petrels, black-capped petrel, Cory's and Audubon's shearwaters and bridled terns. Its only been in the last few years that the bridled tern and black-capped petrel were regularly reported for the east coast. These are excellent pelagics for anyone's list.

Somewhat more northerly pelagics were picked by the journeyman, Tom Armour. Our field trip leader scoured the Gaspé area and northern New England forests and came up with puffins, common murrens, black guillmots, kittiwakes, razorbills and nesting gannets, as well as boreal chickadees. Hey, Tommy! You brought some of home didn't you?

Back home we have a couple places that are real hummingbird hangouts. Barbara Ema has had as many as a dozen hummers at her feeders. Dick and Vickie Hines have been entertaining up to thirteen at their home, and they've also attracted a triplet of redheaded woodpeckers to their apple tree. Ever watchful Alice Springe observed a worm-eating warbler at her bird bath on August 26. The day before, the seasons first nighthawk was seen briefly and heard as it mingled with chimney swifts over Merchant's Square downtown. At Kingsmill Bill Sheehan has seen an early vesper sparrow and on September 7 a veery, prairie warbler and several cedar waxwings were seen there by the Captain and Leigh Jones. Queens Lake has had low water levels which has attracted five short-billed dowitchers, Louisiana herons, snowy egrets and solitary sandpipers.

The upcoming weeks are extremely exciting for every field birder. The fall migration is always full of surprises. For those who have the inclination a trip to Kiptopeke banding station on the tip of the Eastern Shore is a great experience from now through mid-October. On a good flight day the birds come through in hard to describe numbers. The variety is exciting and goody birds are often numerous. Many of us will make the trip there to count hawks and we'd love to have the company. Side-stops on the Bay Bridge tunnel usually prove very profitable.

If a journey over to the eastern shore won't fit your schedule maybe you would like to help Ruth band fall migrants at her operations at the Pop Lab. She can always use helpers, and again the experience is priceless.

From Bill Sheehan's better half, Marge, comes this following bit of interest. Rice is out and bird seed is in for weddings! You figure it out! Peanut hearts, maybe?

The VSO annual field trip to Chincoteague will be held Sept. 18-20. Headquarters will be the Rufuge Motor Inn in Chincoteague. Ruth Beck or Bill Williams can be contacted for further information. Ask Owl

The eyes of the woodcock are located toward the top of its head. While it is feeding with its head down it has a monocular field vision of 180 degrees and is very able to keep a wary lookout for predators.