

THE WILLIAMSBURG FLYER

JUNE 1981

I don't know how it was in your neck of the woods regarding Spring. In my search for it I felt like Bo Peep. "Oh where? Oh where? Did it go?" One day it's cold and the furnace is still roaring and the next it's 90 degrees and rising. At least we've begun to get rain. Now if you'll all go out and plant bird seed, just think how many feathered friends we'll have come Fall!

There will be no bird club meeting during June, July or August. However, there will be monthly field trips following this schedule:

June 20 - Grandview

July 25 - Craney Island

August - to be announced

Remember we will always assemble at 7:00 am at the south parking lot of the Colonial Williamsburg Information Center for each trip. This month's trip to Grandview Beach in Hampton is an excellent one. The least tern colony there has almost 600 breeding adults, and may be the largest colony of its kind on the east coast, certainly for Virginia. Also least bitterns are regularly seen there as are gallinules. Willets, oyster catchers and piping plovers are also breeding nearby. Common, Forster's and royal terns can be easily seen along with many kinds of shorebirds. In the marshes seaside sparrows and marsh wrens are almost guaranteed.

On the business end of the bird club, we voted to donate \$100 to the Peregrine falcon project of the Endangered Species Program. Dr. Mitchell Byrd, one of our members, heads the project in our locality. The money will go towards hacking young peregrines this summer. Alice has purchased the recently published Audubon Handbook for Birdwatchers for the Williamsburg Regional Library.

As of meeting time in May none of our thirty-four bluebird boxes had bluebird residents. Several potential pairs have been seen near the houses, and Jewel Thomas and her committee anticipate it's only a matter of time before we achieve some success.

It took Dick Hines four years, but he finally has nesting purple martins. How did he do it, you say? Simple. He got his wife, Vickie, to quit work to run the English sparrows off. It worked! Previous summers had found his martin motel occupied by crested-flycatchers and bluebirds. Sam Hart and his crew will begin banding purple martins by late June and early July. Please call him to help.

The VSO annual meeting at Mt. Lake May 29-31 was a record breaking success. Over 280 registered for the affair and the Saturday night banquet crowd was a hotel record. The cool and somewhat damp weather did not deter birds or birders. Rose-breasted grosbeaks and least flycatchers were at almost every turn. Ravens were seen regularly as were veerys, Blackburnian warblers and cedar waxwings. Even a late pine siskin was seen by many around the hotel, was was a nesting brown creeper. All of the meetings and displays were grand fun and informative. Ruth's Virginia Birding Site Guide was a huge success (naturally!) and generated much enthusiasm. Next year's meeting will be in May in Virginia Beach, and it isn't too early to make tentative plans to be on hand.

The bird movement for May was understatedly erratic. The cool, dry conditions with generally unfavorable winds made things really tough on the birds

and their watchers. The seaside and sharp-tail sparrows were singing at Queen's Creek through early June, and breeding for the seashores is strongly suspected since the birds appear to be on territories. This would constitute a very inland breeding record. Several late warblers made appearances after our spring count. Betty Williams saw a worm-eating warbler in Skipwith Farms May 13. A male Blackburian warbler was on hand May 17 at Queen's Lake. On May 22 John Willis saw a magnolia warbler in the Coves area of Williamsburg. Bill Sheehan reported magnolia and Canada warblers at this home in Kingswood in late May. A spectacular bay-breasted warbler was seen mingling with blackpolls on May 23 in York County. Leigh Jones had a strange Empidonax flycatcher at the Pop. Lab May 24 that very closely fit the song pattern of a willow flycatcher. May 25 produced a late rose-breasted grosbeak at the Pop. Lab, and an incredible 15 whimbrels casually flying over Yarmouth Creek on the Chickahominy. A very unusual willet was noted on the same date on Queen's Creek. Chuck-wills-widows and whip-poor-wills can be easily heard at the junction of Treasure Island Road and Lake Powell Road if you'll stop there just after dusk. Ruth reports a late pine siskin at her feeder June 6 and a cattle egret was seen near Powhatan Shores June 7. Orchard orioles seem to be everywhere especially around the Jamestown Yacht Basin.

Bill Sheehan urges that anyone who has bird data for the first six months (or any other time) of 1981 please get it to him. Give him a call at 220-2122. Now that summer is arriving he needs something to keep him out of trouble.

Dr. Byrd reports that as of late May eighty-five young bald eagles had been banded in Maryland and Virginia. He expects the total will easily hit 100 soon, and was quite pleased by the large number of nests containing three chicks. Keep it up baldy (eagles!).

On the peregrine scene, how would you like to face this dilemma? You erect peregrine hacking platforms at great expense, both monetary and man-power-wise, on several barrier islands. Just as you are ready to put out fledgling peregrines, adults take the towers over. Now these adults don't cotton to the presence of stranger falcons and try to drive them from the hack sights. What do you do? You want to release young peregrines and you eventually hope the towers will serve as nest sites for adults. Right now the situation seems to be to let the adults stay on. Really what else can be done? The fledglings will simply have to be released at locations away from the territorial adults. Actually the situation is at once exciting and promising and also quite disconcerting!

We've heard unofficial reports of a curlew sandpiper at Chincoteague and a Cassin's kingbird on Cobb Island. The anhingas reported at Stumpy Lake in Virginia Beach have not been seen since May 18. Dry weather in Florida may send more our way so keep on eye out.

ASK OWL

To woo his mate to nest a male red-bellies woodpecker taps out his love code from inside the nest hole. The female will alight outside the nest hole and tap out her answer. Look out Alice! Crazy may be courting too.