

The Williamsburg Flyer

February 1983

Hey! Was that really January that just snuck by? Boy, based on previous years it was hard to recognize. But don't tell anyone, okay. It would be dreadful to encounter a vengeful February, although I hear there wasn't a big run on sunglasses at the Groundhog Grocery. According to Whistle-pig soothery winter will be short. Don't ya' just hope they're right?!

Let's hope you're right....right at the February 16 monthly meeting at 7:30PM in Room 117 of Millington Hall at William and Mary. Chief programmer, Bob Cross, has scheduled two excellent ornithological films for our perusal. One entitled "The Mussel Specialist" is about the oystercatcher. The second celluloid is "Yours for a Song" and concerns Virginia birds, especially those likely to be coming to feeders. This should be another great evening of entertainment and learning of bird lore. Don't miss it.

Upcoming programs will have Dr. Gus Hall of William and Mary's biology faculty speak on his ornithological adventures in South America, and we'll hear Dr. Jerry Via of VPI, Vice-President of the Virginia Society of Ornithology, do a program on bird songs. Super shows don't ya' knows!!

This month's field trip will take place prior to our monthly meeting instead of subsequent to it as normally occurs. Ruth Beck has set up a grand excursion to False Cape State Park for Saturday, February 12. Departure time will be 7:00AM from the parking lot immediately to the right of the Colonial Williamsburg Information Center as you enter from the Colonial Parkway. Plans are to carpool to Bach Bay National Wildlife Refuge which is south of Virginia Beach, and then board a bus which will deliver us to False Cape Park some 10 miles further south. Participants are advised to bring warm clothes (you can't put it on if you don't have it), binoculars/scopes, food and munchies (naturally its a bird trip)! At the park we will be given a tour of the facilities and then do some heavy birding both on the beach and ocean and in the marshes. The focus will be on waterfowl but you never can tell what else will turn up in this pristine, untouched habitat. Interested persons are asked to contact Ruth (229-3837) quickly. Don't be a Mad Hatter!

Now that the holiday spending season is over, be sure to pay your 1983 club dues. Leigh Jones (429 #3 Scotland Street, Williamsburg) will accept them gladly either by mail or in person at the meeting. You may choose to be a Patron for \$25 or more (and get a free club patch) or pay family (\$7.50), regular (\$5.00) or student (\$3.00). When you pay please provide Leigh with your name (duh!), address and phone number. In return you'll get a neat membership card. Club patches are \$1.50.

While you are in the dues mood consider joining the Virginia Society of Ornithology. Dues are \$5.00 active, \$7.50 contributing, \$15.00 sustaining. Nine dollars lands a family membership. In return you'll get a membership card, a subscription to the Raven, the Society's journal, and a fantastic Newsletter that's crammed with news and schedules of upcoming events. It's a great deal. We currently have three members on the VSO Board of Directors (Ruth Beck, Rich Goll, Bill Williams) and several of our folks are active at other levels (Tom Armour, field trips and Mitchell Byrd, Records Committee Chairman.) Write Thelma Dalmas, 520 Rainbow Forest Drive, Lynchburg, VA 24502

In line with the VSO you might consider joining the group on its winter field trip to the Outer Banks of North Carolina. Ruth Beck and Tom Armour are the trip organizers and leaders for this February 18-20 extravaganza. The trip headquarters is the Armada on Oceanfront Highway at Routes 158 and 64. You should make your own reservations (Box 307, Nags Head, N.C. 27959 or phone collect 919/441-5549. Switchboard phone is 919/441-6315.) Reservations should be made, attention Rae Castellow, Reservations Manager. Room rates are \$19/night for one person; \$21 for two persons. In addition to field trips that are always superb, there will be slide presentations and loads of avian discussions and fellowship.

We would very much like to give an approving flutter of feathers to welcome new club members Dan Walker, Norma and Grant Olson, Thomas Rapp, Patricia Casey, Carol Hall, and Sue Gray Al-Salam.

At last report, our first winter Bird Seed Savings Day was running along smoothly. Fred Blystone expects we'll garner about \$500, although he's a bit concerned the truckers' strike may impede the seed delivery.

The Bluebird Committee is off to a flying 1983 start. About 40 boxes have been cut out and are presently being assembled by the many folks who signed up to help out. Bob and Cynthia Long have cleaned out the boxes at Carter's Grove and with jovial Ben Gilbert's help have relocated several boxes, placing some along the Country Road. They've also placed two boxes at New Quarter Park which is situated between Queen's Lake and Cheatham Annex.

The Purple Martin Committee will soon need help opening the boxes for spring arrivals. Bob Williams, at the Chickahominy Campgrounds, is willing to put up Martin Motels with the club's assistance and support. The first arrivals of Martin scouts is little more than a month away!

It looks as if we may have a spring picnic. Jeanne Armour, Doris Phippin and Norma Olson (remember she's a new member!) have agreed to organize the shindig. If you know Jeanne's culinary expertise we should be in for quite a treat. ".... can hold more than his belly can."

If you would like to add your name to our rare bird alert, please contact the closet lister himself, Bill Sheehan (220-2122).

Again last month a number of our members were in the news. Tom Armour has an article on "Laughing Gull Predation on Migrating Birds" in the most recent issue of the VSO's Raven. Mitchell Byrd was given the D.A.R. Conservation Award for his untiring work with endangered species, while Carolyn Lowe was the featured speaker at the January 14 meeting of the Hampton Roads Bird Club presenting a slide show on birds of the Falklands and Antarctica. Ruth Beck and Thom Blair were featured in a Richmond Newsletter article by Guy Fridell on Thom's classy rufous hummingbird. The hummingbird story also made the Virginia Gazette, though the picture showed only Thom and Tom looking like two shady characters right out of Mickey Spillane! The most recent issue of the VSO Newsletter has the state's top fifty bird lists. Rich Goll ranks fifteen (315), Cindy Fletcher eighteenth (310) and Tom Armour, thirty-fifth (276). Several of our other members have yet to open the closet doors on their goodies but we know they would be way up on tally sheet.

Don't forget to check the non-game research box on your Virginia income form and donate part of your refund toward non-game research. If everyone would contribute even a small amount, the effects would be outstanding. Go ahead, it's a few bucks you never had anyway!

The January field trip was almost a washout. The gray skies began to render rain about the time the fourteen participants left Billsburg. Nevertheless, the group made it to Hog Island and was rewarded with lots of pintails, a few ring-necked ducks, two bald eagles, a common merganser and lots of geese and swans. This was a fine showing considering the inclement weather.

Thom Blair's hummingbird was viewed by better than 75 people from all corners of the state, some departing at 3:00AM only to arrive and have a two or three minute glimpse of the bird. As many as 25 viewers were on hand at a time over a three day span. The little visitor, now almost certainly identified as a female rufous hummingbird thanks to Tom Armour's incredible photos, was absent for about eight days and has been irregularly seen since.

The Fisherville snowy owl that wowed everyone for a couple of weeks in early January was found deceased on January 12, dying apparently from starvation. Why the owl left the north can never be determined, though usually owl outbreaks in the lower 48 states can often be attributed to a decline in the lemming population. Many experts surmise that alot of the owls that penetrate this far south meet the same fate as the Fishersville bird. We mourn these passings but are ever mindful of Nature's wisdom in these matters.

Back home Margaret Dunham is finding lots of purple finches and white-throated sparrows at her feeder. Cedar waxwings have been especially active wherever berry laden bushes can be found, and the woodlands have recently become inundated with robins. Mary Archer saw what appeared to be a merlin on Canham Road on January 15, while Brian Taber put out some jello at his Gloucester hom on January 17th and was rewarded quickly with a female oriole. The bird appears to be a Bullock's race of the Northern oriole. If so, it's far from its normal western climes. To top this, Brian had a vist from a female western tanager on January 29-30, constituting the eighth record for this species on our Coastal Plain. Rich Goll and Cindy Fletcher counted over 300 redheads in the York River off Cheatham Annex in late January and Bob Cross noted up to sixty common mergansers at Hog Island January 30. Groups of whistling swans are easily seen from the Kings Creek bridge on the Yorktown end of the Colonial Parkway. Also available on that end of the drive are lots of ruddy ducks, goldeneye, wigeon and canvasbacks. A red-throated loon has been in the neighborhood (January 24 - Indian Field Creek) and a bald eagle was seen at Felgate's Creek January 30th by Betty Williams and Leigh Jones. Also on hand have been a few horned grebes.

Enclosed you will find a handy dandy form for the winter roadside Hawk Count. This easy form provides a great past-time while you are driving any distance, and contributes to useful information regarding our winter raptor populations. Give it a try, it's really fun.

Ask Owl:

Have you ever considered the shape of an owl's head? Many experts believe the facial discs help concentrate sound waves the owl uses to locate prey

Fletch - means to put a feather on (an arrow).



Traveling by auto?
Count the hawks you
see along the way!

WINTER ROADSIDE

Hawk Count

Send us your list
of species sighted
as you travel.

(city/town/county)

Observer's name and address		No. other Observers		Place count began	
Date - mo./day/year		Time, start		Time, end	
A.M. P.M.		A.M. P.M.		A.M. P.M.	
Approx. miles traveled		Approx. Temp. of		Approx. miles traveled	
Weather: at start, underline applicable word(s); at end, circle					
Sky: clear, partly cloudy, cloudy, overcast, rain, snow, fog.					
Wind: calm, gentle, moderate, strong, very strong.					
SPECIES OBSERVED		Perched		Flying	
8 AM 11 AM 2 PM 5 PM 8 AM 11 AM 2 PM 5 PM		8 AM 11 AM 2 PM 5 PM		8 AM 11 AM 2 PM 5 PM	
Turkey Vulture					
Black Vulture					
Unidentified Vulture					
Sharp-shinned Hawk					
Cooper's Hawk					
Red-tailed Hawk					
Red-shouldered Hawk					
Rough-legged Hawk					
Northern Warbler					
Owl					
Am. Kestrel					
Unidentified					
Unidentified					
Unid. Falcon					
Unid. Hawk					
TOTALS					

UNUSUAL sightings: make comments on back of form. Please drive carefully!

If trip is outside Va., please note time you entered another state:

Send completed forms to:
David Holt, compiler
Rt 4, Box 205 Salem, Va. 24153



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