

## THE WILLIAMSBURG FLYER

August 1983

The last couple of weeks have been nothing short of a fauna sauna as crops expired while the animals perspired under the relentless heat. Ruth Beck and Mitchell Byrd were strolling their post-lunch stroll through Merchants Square the other day and were startled to find a young clapper rail frisking about in a sprinkler system near some shrubbery, delighting all the tourists. The poor rail was only looking for relief and found what it figured was perfectly natural for his kind -- air conditioning at its finest.

Don't forget that there will be no monthly meeting in August. Our regular meetings will reconvene the third Wednesday in September.

There will be a field trip this month as previously advertised. Brian Taber will lead us to Craney Island landfill on Saturday August 20. This marvelous stop-over location for thousands of shorebirds is located in Portsmouth and requires about an hour's drive each way. If you plan to attend be prepared for light walking and the heat. Munchies and liquids should be close at hand and possibly even lunch. As usual we will depart from the parking lot to the immediate right of the Colonial Williamsburg Information Center at 7:00 a.m. We should be home by 1:00 p.m. or so. Avocets, dowitchers, yellowlegs and a huge contingent of sandpipers will be our fare. Additionally, one can expect numerous herons, egrets, gulls, terns, some black skimmers and even horned larks. Previous trips have encountered gray foxes! This is a good one.

Next month's September 24 field trip will be to Kiptopeke on the Eastern Shore for hawk watching, bridge tunnel birding and warblers in the woods!

The prospect of plodding a sandy beach in excessive heat must have scared away the birders from July's field trip. However, four people, including leader Bob Cross, made it to Grandview Beach in Hampton and were heartily rewarded. They saw a least bittern as you enter the park trail, and were privy to the efforts of an immature night heron eating a snake. Black skimmers, several species of tern, sanderling, spotted, least and western sandpipers were evident on the beach and the marsh produced a showing by 3 otters. Now you're sorry you didn't go, huh?

In case you had not missed them most of our purple martins have departed or are in the midst of departing. Bob Cross and Ruth Beck banded 414 of them in the Williamsburg area and I ringed 16 more at Dick Hines'. Now, over 400 martins sounds like alot when you begin to count heads but this pales in comparison to the 29,000 occupying a roost off Woodward Drive in Hampton as I write. Can you imagine that many martins all in one woodlot. Ruth describes it as "horrendous" and "incredible". The roost has apparently been used for the last three August's by martins and was reported at 15,000 birds last year to American Birds. In addition to the martins there is a scattering of robins, cowbirds and grackles each relegated to rather specific tree elevations for their roosting perches. Totally awesome!

Most everyone probably saw the feature article in the July 27 "Your Neighbors" section of the Daily Press about the project Leigh Jones and Bob Morris have with the Veterans Hospital residents to build bluebird boxes. The article was accompanied by several fine photographs and resulted in Leigh selling all 100 boxes in less than 2 days! The three dollar price tag did the trick and even the Pottery called wanting 150 boxes to sell. Now that's Uptown, folks. Leigh's phone rang off the hook and West Queen's Drive must have looked like rush hour in the Hampton Roads tunnel. Each purchaser was given box placement instructions and tips and we all hope it results in many more bluebirds around us.

Remember that Fred Blystone will be mailing out Bird Seed Savings Day information this month. The pick-up day for seed orders will be October 8. Please give Fred a call to help him with this huge project (229-4346) and pass on the

information about the sale to friends and neighbors.

Teta Kain, the energetic leader of the Hampton Roads Bird Club, is seeking to establish a bird sighting list on the south island (restaurant island) of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel beginning September 1. This will be similar to what's found at National Parks and gives birders not only a place to record their observations but will offer a frame of reference to birders who venture through the area from other localities. The sheet will be posted somewhere in the restaurant so be sure to look for it and contribute to the growing interest in birding the tunnel. Observations for the sheet are restricted to the first island only, at present, since it is the only one with public access. Plans for posting information about the other 3 islands are in the works.

I have information here on pelagic trips for this late summer and fall season out of Hatteras village, North Carolina. Let me know if you are interested (229-0098).

Tom Armour was featured in the July 11 issue of the Virginia Gazette in Bill Snyder's weekly column. All of us appreciate how much Tom deserves the recognition. Way to go Sky Pilot!

The most recent issue of American Birds, a very prestigious journal published by the National Audubon Society, sported a photograph of the rufous hummingbird taken by Tom Armour and a picture of the western tanager taken by Brian Taber at his feeder at Gloucester Point. Super job, guys!

We should also be proud of our own Bob Cross for being elected Secretary of the newly chartered Colonial Audubon Society here on the peninsula. Bob will also handle field trip responsibilities for the fledgling group. Remember Bob is now our President with Thom Blair's temporary absence.

Jeers: To the local Williamsburg tabloid that showed a picture of the great blue heroin in its July 11 issue. Birders have been considered a bunch of dopes for a long time but that's too much. However, we can all vouch for the addictive qualities of our avocation so we'll let it slide this time. Let's hope their editing takes a turn for the better!

A story has reached me about a Carolina wren at Kingsmill. It seems someone purchased one of those vine wreaths recently and placed it on a door with a small bird's nest in it. Apparently the wren couldn't resist the freebie homesite and actually sat on the nest several days. Strange place that Kingsmill.

Dot Silsby of Newport News discovered a dead white ibis at Kingsmill on or about July 21. Details on the age of the bird or cause of death are not available.

Mitchell Byrd reports that fifty-one young bald eagles were produced in Virginia's fifty-two nests this spring and summer. What great news!

Ruth Beck and I attended a brainstorming session for the Virginia Society of Ornithology in late July at Warm Springs. Among the more important items that received attention were allocation of up to \$3500 to purchase a computer for keeping financial, membership and ornithological data; allocation of up to \$150 to purchase materials for a statewide trial run of a breeding bird atlas (Sue Ridd, formerly of our bird club will head this massive project); and, giving \$200 to the banders at Kiptopeke this fall to cover expenses. Numerous other committee items were discussed and everyone left with a renewed sense of purpose and direction.

Don't forget hawk migration is already upon us. I'll need help and cost splitting riders for the weekends all the way in to November. Let me know, okay!

Bill Sheehan has already had redstarts showing up in his yard. As cold fronts sweep in from the north the bird life will change ever so gradually. Excitement.

Bill helped guide a Saturday morning bird walk at York River State Park on August 6. We had seven very enthusiastic visitors and they had grand looks at a yellow-billed cuckoo, summer tanager and green heron. The park hopes we can make this a monthly event.

While hiking along the Skyline Drive August 8 Leigh Jones got to see a black bear and two cubs. Also present on the trails were several grouse, solitary vireos and quite a few spotted fawns.

And these notes, fresh off the telephone hotline. A Hudsonian godwit was seen at Grandview on Saturday August 13 and on the same day several upland sandpipers were seen at NASA Langley near the main hanger.