

THE WILLIAMSBURG FLYER

December 1983

"Over the river and through the woods to a bird count we will go. Our eyes look away in hopes we can say there's a bluebird, grackle or crow." This little poetic readjustment of a seasonal favorite is a reminder of the Sunday, December 18 Williamsburg Christmas Bird Count. Our count group will assemble at 7:00 a.m. at the parking lot to the immediate right of the Colonial Williamsburg Information Center on the Colonial Parkway side. Participants may choose to go to one of the following areas within the fifteen mile diameter count circle (the center of which is the Information Center): Kingsmill, Cheatham Annex, College Woods, Middle Plantation, Jamestown, Skimino, Jolly Pond, Hog Island. Each area has (or will have) a count leader many of whom will be out well before 7:00 a.m. owling. Everyone in the count is asked to pay a \$2.00 contribution to the National Audubon Society. We will tally the day's results at 5:00 p.m. in room 108 of Millington Hall at the College of William and Mary. For those who are obligated to other tasks during the day, we'll be happy to have you join us for any time you can spare. Feeder watchers are critical to our efforts and are asked to phone in any and all observations made during that day (229-0098). Please lend us a hand. It's a fun and exciting way to get to know birds and their habitats.

The bird count will take the place of this month's meeting and field trip. We'll resume both activities in January 1984 (already!).

There are other counts around the area people may enjoy. Hampton Roads - Dec. 17 (we should all help here), Chincoteague - Dec. 29, Cape Charles - Dec. 30.

Fred Blystone has announced that the winter version of Bird Seed Savings Day will take place on Saturday February 4. So mark that date on your calendar.

Over the Thanksgiving holiday Rich Goll and Cindy Fletcher joined Bob Ake for a whirlwind tour of eastern New England and parts of Canada. Bob is trying to nail down 500 species in North America for his year list, and a trip north at this time of year was mandatory to meet that goal. Birding in New England in winter is very difficult. There are few birds except along the coast and the variety is quite limited. A 3 hour walk through a spruce forest in Maine netted the group only eight birds of 4 species; downy woodpecker, golden-crowned kinglet, black-capped chickadee, boreal chickadee! Other ventures proved more profitable. Taking the ferry from St. John, New Brunswick to Digby, Nova Scotia across the enchanting Bay of Fundy the group had marvelous looks at puffins, razor-bills, common and thick-billed murrelets and dovekies. Also seen on the incredibly smooth 2.5 hour ride were black-legged kittiwakes and 2 black-headed gulls. Elsewhere the following goodies were added; Barrow's goldeneye in Bangor, Maine, nine Bohemian waxwings on the University of Maine campus at Orono, a little gull for Cindy at Seabrooke Beach, New Hampshire, a gray jay near St. John, N.B. (St. John is where they have those astounding 25-30 foot tidal fluctuations), a glaucous gull at Digby and an Iceland gull at Newburyport, Mass. Harbor seals were seen frequently with a high count of 17 lounging on the rocks near Rye Harbor, N. H.

Closer home Bruce Reid saw a small group of snow buntings at Hog Island on November 12. These were subsequently seen by Tom Armour.

On November 19 on the Eastern Shore Bruce found a western kingbird frolicking with a dozen bluebirds near the America House on the southern end of the peninsula. A dead saw-whet owl was found on Route 13 near the America House on that date also. Out on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel the same day our field trip encountered a controversial eider (almost definitely a common), a snow bunting, a palm warbler, gannets, lesser black-backed gull, 2 great cormorants, oldsquaw, purple sandpipers, and Bonaparte's gulls.

The following day Leigh Jones made a jaunt along the Yorktown end of the Colonial Parkway. At Felgate's creek she saw two adult bald eagles and a common goldeneye. Closer to Yorktown 4 common loons, 5 Bonaparte's gulls, several horned grebes and a sharp-shinned hawk were seen. No swans a-swimming were observed, however.

Dick Hines had a couple of fox sparrows at his home on November 25.

Thom Blair took a few days in October to bird some of the Texas coast. He was delighted to see 3 whooping cranes and a cougar at Aransas. His trip produced 171 species including black-bellied whistling duck, kiskadee, least grebe, Harris hawk, white-tailed hawk, Chachalaca, white-fronted dove, paraque, golden fronted and ladder-backed woodpeckers, tropical (Couch's) kingbird, green jay, long-billed thrasher, Altimira oriole and white-tailed kite. Thom says the dawn's on the coast were superlative, but he will be glad to get back "home" to Williamsburg next summer. We'll be glad he's returned, too!

Maynard Michols, formerly of Gloucester, and now living in Hendersonville, N.C. dropped a nice letter off recently. He is enjoying Tar Heel birds and in a little over a year there he has seen 98 species. Maynard still hopes for an exotic like the black-headed grosbeak he had here in Virginia several years ago. Thanks for staying in touch!

Ask Owl: Owl wishes a safe, happy, joyous Christmas and New Year to everyone.

Mark January 14 and 15 down on your calendar for the Third Annual Hampton Roads Waterfowl and Wildlife Festival to be held in the Hellenic Community Center, 60 Traverse Road in Newport News (near the Ramada Inn on Rt. 17 just off I-64).