

## THE WILLIAMSBURG FLYER

April 1985

The winds have howled recently and the marshes have been flooded with Spring tides. The annual cycle of reorganizing, reordering and restructuring has begun. The winds sweep clean the winter debris, the tides remove last Fall's die off. Both clear the way for replacement. It's not unlike the good once over we give our homes. That's why Spring is so satisfying.

You'll get a great deal of satisfaction from our April 17 meeting at 7:30 p.m. in room 117 of Millington Hall at William and Mary because you'll be the show. We want people to bring 5 of their favorite bird slides to share with the group. This affair is always fun as we hear the avian anecdotes or adventures the slides represent. We'll try to concentrate on cavity nesters with Leigh Jones (Bluebird Committee chairperson) and Bob Cross (Purple Martin Committee chairman) leading the way to bring us up to date on their Spring and Summer plans. Then we'll get to all the goodies others have to share. If you don't have cavity nesters don't worry. Bring what you like and get ready for the fun. With our diverse group there's no telling what treasures we'll find. Be sure you mark your slides and come a few minutes early to set up.

Another date you should mark for this month is April 27 (Saturday). We will have our third annual club picnic that day from 10:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. at York River State Park. Jeanne Armour (229-2363) is in charge and I'm sure she can use your help. This event has become a great tradition not only for the fellowship but also the birds. We'll be at the park during prime migrant time and with all those hungry eyes alert who knows what can be discovered. Make plans to attend, okay.

On Saturday, May 4 the Hampton Roads Bird Club will hold their annual Spring Count. Charlie Hacker can give you the scoop on that. On Sunday, May 5 Brian Taber will coordinate the eighth annual Williamsburg Spring Count. The format is exactly like a Christmas Count, with area leaders and their helpers combing every inch of eight sections of our 15 mile diameter count circle centered at the Colonial Williamsburg Information Center. Brian will need leaders for Kingsmill, Hog Island, College Woods, Middle Plantation, Jamestown, Jolly Pond, Skimino and Cheatham Annex. The count groups will assemble at 7:00 a.m. at the Colonial Information Center for final briefings (actually many folks will be out long before 7:00 a.m.) and a tally will take place in room 108 of Millington Hall at William and Mary at 5:00 p.m. This latter gathering will need folks to help with goodies (drinks, finger foods) for the weary birders. If you plan to help in any way on the count call Brian at 252-1181.

Leigh Jone's Bluebird Committee has been really out and about recently. A new batch of houses assembled at the Veterans Hospital, thanks to Bob Morris, are being set out. A new trail is going in at the Gospel Spreading Farm near Jamestown and additions are being made at Queen's Lake and the Spotswood and Kingsmill golf courses. These should bring on a thrush rush!

On April 2 some of our club members led approximately one hundred participants of the Williamsburg Garden Symposium on that event's Early Riser's Birdwalk. This is the eighth year we've provided this service and it is always well received. The groups have their choices of several birding areas including Bassett Hall woods, Jamestown, Yorktown and the Williamsburg Inn golf course. Leaders this year were Tom Armour, Martha Armstrong, Ruth Beck, Julie Hotchkiss, Brian Taber and Bill Sheehan. Goody birds included a green heron at Jamestown and nesting ospreys at Yorktown.

We've purchased another book for the Williamsburg Regional Library. It's called Hérons by James Hancock and James Kushlan. Check it out!

The Virginia Society of Ornithology will hold its annual meeting in Staunton, Virginia May 10-12 at the Ingleside Red Carpet Inn. If you can don't miss this event. There'll be birds and birders like yourself from all over the state. The fun is non-stop and there's so much information to pick up. Ruth Beck or Tom Armour can supply details and a registration form is enclosed herein.

The flurry of Spring arrivals is well in gear, and not without the unexpected. On March 19 Fenton Day found a red-necked grebe at Grandview Beach in Hampton and on March 23 our rare bird guru, Tom Armour, spied a little gull, a new bird for our area, off Kingsmill on the James River. It was seen with a sizeable flock of Bonaparte's gulls. Attempts by several people to locate the gull up river were unsuccessful, Brian Taber and Leigh Jones even took the Jamestown Ferry ride in hopes of seeing this rare bird but to no avail. Little gulls are very much like Bonaparte's gulls in flight and can best be told from them by an almost charcoal black under their wings. Word has it that a number of them were being seen off Fort Story in Virginia Beach in March, so maybe this is a year for them.

Dick Hines had to stop fishing momentarily on Yarmouth Creek off the Chickahominy on March 29 because of a weird heron he saw. The weirdo turned out to be a glossy ibis! On March 31 he observed a flock of great egrets, tree swallows and heard lots of yellow throated warblers.

Ty and Julie Hotchkiss made a winter speaking tour to southern Texas. While there they visited Bensten State Park on the Rio Grande and got to see a hook-billed kite and clay-colored robins. The latter were coming to popcorn the campers would set out. Julie also reports Caspian and royal terns have returned along the James River, as have Forster's terns seen by the Garden Symposium groups.

Being accustomed to having bright yellow pine warblers visit her yard Anne Beckley was astonished to see another yellow colored warbler recently, a palm warbler, in her yard. She commented on the fact the bird was only in view a few minutes and how fortunate she was to be looking. Does that tell us anything?

A white-winged crossbill has been reported from the Northern-neck portion of Virginia. It was seen over the Easter weekend by Teta Kain and is apparently fairly regular at a feeding station.

For those who may be interested there will be trips into Dismal Swamp on Saturdays April 27 and May 4. The trips will begin at 7 a.m. from the Magnolia commuter parking lot at the junction of Rts. 460 and 337. The trip leader is David Hughes (484-7398). This is the best time to see and hear Swainson's warblers. Also available will be hooded, worm-eating and black-throated green warblers amongst many others. Bring bug spray and get ready for an auditory overload.

The VSD foray to Highland County will be June 11-16. Register by June 3 with Fred Scott, 115 Kennondale Lane, Richmond, Va. 23226/

The VSD's Chincoteague trip is set for September 13-15. Mark your calendars now.

#### ASK OWL:

Studies of Florida Scrub Jays have shown that 79% of the pairs that have nest help from unpaired "helper" jays successfully fledged an average of 2.3 young per nest. Pairs of jays with no helpers fledged 61% of their young for an average of 1.5 young per nest.