



THE FLYER

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June 1992

Williamsburg Bird Club

Brian Taber, Editor (253-1181)

June Events

Meeting

There will not be any Bird Club meetings during June, July and August.

Field Trip

Tom Armour will lead a field trip to York River State Park on June 20th. Please meet at the Colonial Information Center Parking Lot at 7:30 a.m.

July Field Trip

Ruth Beck will lead a trip to Craney Island in Portsmouth on July 25th. Shorebirds should be in abundance. Please call Ruth at 221-2217 or 566-8234 to reserve a spot and find out other details.

New Members

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome the newest members of the Williamsburg Bird Club.

Mrs. Logan Bostian 220-2605)
5117 Dorset Mews
Williamsburg, Va. 23188

Dorothy Whitfield (564-8106)
6054 Mooretown Road
Williamsburg, Va. 23185

Spring Count Results

Our 15th annual spring count was a great success, thanks to the many volunteers who hunted birds all day. It was a bit windy, but temperatures from 70-85, made for a most pleasant experience.

The long list of helpers included Bob Cross, Julie and Ty Hotchkiss, Bill Sheehan, Marilyn Lewis, Steve Rottenborn, Bill Williams, Tom Armour, Grace and Joe Doyle, Joy Archer, Carolyn Lowe, Emily Sharrett, Mary and Mac MacDonald, Mary Pulley, Bettye Fields, Christine Burr, Dorothy Silsby, Ruth Beck, Liz Darnell, Angie Wansettler, Dave and Iza West and Amanda Allen. I hope the names are spelled right and I hope I didn't forget anyone. Congratulations to all!

Three birds were found that had not been previously recorded on any of our other Spring Counts: Black-billed Cuckoo, Wilson's Warbler and Common Nighthawk. The total for the day was a most impressive 164, two short of the all-time high set in 1989. We found 24 species of warblers. A White Pelican and a Cliff Swallow were found for the third time on the count. Canada Warbler and Common Mergansers were found for only the second time. A record 91 Ospreys were recorded and twelve species of shorebirds were tallied. A Broad-winged Hawk and a Blackburnian Warbler were in the area two days before the count, but could not be located on the official day. As usual, the main movement of thrushes occurred a few days after the count.

Thanks again to all who contributed to this fun and important event. See you in December!

See the complete Spring Count results on
pages 3 & 4

Ty & Julie Hotchkiss at Point Pelee

We spent from May 9th to May 18th this spring at Point Pelee National Park, which is one of the best places in North America to see warblers in migration. We identified 30 species of warblers and 149 total species, as well as photographing many of them. The Worm-eating, Blue-winged, Cerulean, and Tennessee warblers were the greatest triumphs, but the flashy Magnolia, Blackburnian, Cape May and Canada warblers were all over.

One of the best birds was a Mississippi Kite, which stayed for three or four days, so it was seen a number of times in flight. Oddly enough, one of the "rare" birds for Point Pelee was a Mockingbird. It had apparently overshot a more southern destination, and it put on a good show for the Canadians, as it chased the other birds and flitted around trying to get back across the lake to Ohio. Birds frequently get blown north of their nesting grounds in a storm and many eventually do return across the lake.

The end of the peninsula projects into Lake Erie, and it is the first point of land for birds migrating across the water. Tanagers, grosbeaks, and orioles, as well as warblers and other birds, land exhausted, particularly if

they have had to travel into a storm; and they will rest on the first tree, bush, beach, or empty spot that is handy. A Scarlet Tanager stopped on the tram road, totally oblivious to the crowd that surrounded it. Eventually, it recuperated enough to get off to the side for food. Soon it was hopping around and went on its way, but for fifteen minutes it had been the star of the show.

Point Pelee is in Canada about 40 miles southeast of Detroit, Michigan, near Leamington, Ontario. It is the only national park set aside for migratory birds, and it is an exciting place during the middle of May. Most species of Eastern North American birds migrate through here, but warblers attract the most attention. The water on all sides of the point lowers the temperature so the leaves are slow in coming out on the trees. This enhances the viewing of the warblers and everyone knows how difficult they are to find in the tree tops later.

There is a tram to take visitors from the parking lot at the Visitor Center to the point, where you will see the first new birds of the day. A guided walk each morning helps orient the uninitiated. The park attracts people from all over the world—with a good representation from England, many of who are repeat visitors. Enticements for early risers, in addition to the birds, include coffee, cookies, donuts, and delicious blueberry or carrot muffins. Even those who didn't miss breakfast find it hard to pass up these temptations. There is a "Festival of Birds" sponsored by "Friends of Point Pelee", with special programs, films, brunch, and a chili cook-off. Leamington has a banner that says "Welcome Birders"—and they mean it. There is a great bird show in the park, and it's a big event. This is the third time for us, and we are planning for more to come.

1992 Spring Count

LOON, Common	1
GREBE, Pied-billed	1
PELICAN, White	1
Brown	2
CORMORANT, Double -crested	92
HERON, Great Blue	191
EGRET, Great	10
Cattle	14
HERON, Green-backed	21
NIGHT-HERON, Yellow-crowned	4
SWAN, Mute	6
GOOSE, Canada	151
DUCK, Wood	47
DUCK, American Black	4
MALLARD	48
MERGANSEr. Common	3
Red-breasted	5
DUCK, Ruddy	1
VULTURE, Black	9
Turkey	79
OSPREY	91
EAGLE, Bald	7
HARRIER, Northern	1
HAWK, Sharp-shinned	8
HAWK, Red-shouldered	5
Red-tailed	11
KESTREL, American	2
MERLIN	1
PHEASANT, Ring-necked	1
TURKEY, Wild	2
BOBWHITE, Northern	56
RAIL, Clapper	10
King	1
SORA	3
PLOVER, Black-bellied	8
Semi-Palmated	8
KILLDEER	23
YELLOWLEGS, Greater	28
Lesser	9
SANDPIPER, Solitary	5
Spotted	11
Least	14
DUNLIN	2

DOWITCHER, Short-billed	3
SNIPE, Common	8
WOODCOCK, American	2
GULL, Laughing	552
Bonaparte's	4
Ring-billed	171
Herring	76
Great Black-backed	22
TERN, Caspian	15
Royal	151
Common	8
Forster's	81
Least	7
DOVE, Rock	44
Mourning	132
CUCKOO, Black-billed	1
Yellow-billed	4
SCREECH-OWL, Eastern	1
OWL, Great Horned	1
Barred	3
NIGHTHAWK, Common	1
CHUCK-WILL'S WIDOW	2
WHIP-POOR-WILL	5
SWIFT, Chimney	53
HUMMINGBIRD, Ruby-throated	15
KINGFISHER, Belted	12
WOODPECKER, Red-headed	13
Red-bellied	60
WOODPECKER, Downy	8
Hairy	1
FLICKER, Northern	34
WOODPECKER, Pileated	17
WOOD-PEWEE, Eastern	28
FLYCATChER, Acadian	39
PHOEBE, Eastern	14
FLYCATChER, Great-crested	66
KINGBIRD, EASTERN	99
MARTIN, PURPLE	152
SWALLOW, Tree	102
Rough-winged	31
Bank	1
Barn	168
Cliff	1

1992 Spring Count (continued)

JAY, Blue	125
CROW, American	114
Fish	40
CHICKADEE, Carolina	86
TITMOUSE, Tufted	92
NUTHATCH, White-breasted	16
Brown-headed	11
WREN, Carolina	127
House	10
Marsh	1
KINGLET, Ruby-crowned	3
GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray	109
BLUEBIRD, Eastern	110
VEERY	2
THRUSH, Wood	77
ROBIN, American	176
CATBIRD, Gray	57
MOCKINGBIRD, Northern	177
THRASHER, Brown	52
WAXWING, Cedar	142
STARLING, European	243
VIREO, White-eyed	100
Solitary	2
Yellow-throated	8
Red-eyed	158
WARBLER Blue-winged	3
Parula	51
Yellow	32
Chesnut-sided	2
Cape May	2
Black-throated Blue	15
Yellow-rumped	215
Black-throated Green	2
Yellow-throated	43
Pine	75
Prairie	38
Palm	3
Blackpoll	3
Black and White	16
REDSTART, American	15

WARBLER, Prothonotary	14
OVENBIRD	71
WATERTHRUSH, Northern	1
Louisiana	10
WARBLER, Kentucky	19
YELLOWTHROAT, Common	61
WARBLER, Hooded	19
Wilson's	1
Canada	3
CHAT, Yellow-breasted	27
TANAGER, Summer	68
Scarlet	33
CARDINAL, Northern	148
GROSBEAK, Rose-breasted	6
Blue	42
BUNTING, Indigo	77
TOWHEE, Rufous-sided	107
SPARROW, Chipping	108
Field	17
Savannah	23
Grasshopper	1
Sharp-tailed	2
Seaside	5
Song	31
Swamp	6
White-throated	59
JUNCO, Dark-eyed	1
BOBOLINK	356
BLACKBIRD, Red-winged	307
MEADOWLARK, Eastern	69
GRACKLE, Boat-tailed	1
Common	308
COWBIRD, Brown-headed	203
ORIOLE, Orchard	54
Northern	3
FINCH, House	85
GOLDFINCH, American	254
SPARROW, House	42

Bird of the Season

Acadian Flycatcher

Empidonax virescens

In early June, in the deep shade woods and wooded swamps around Williamsburg, a small bird with a big voice can be heard throughout the day. Its regular and emphatic "peet—seet" song, with the accent on the higher-pitched and longer second note, gives away the identity of this flycatcher, which looks so much like so many other flycatchers.

The six-inch bird is greenish on the head and back, with brownish wings crossed by two very apparent, whitish wing bars. The throat is usually grayish above an olive breast, with a whitish belly and yellowish flanks and lower belly. The eye is encircled with a pale ring, characteristic of the other North American flycatchers in the genus.

The voice is all-important in identifying the empidonax group because there is so much overlap in plumage color. Some have larger or smaller eyerings, but the overall differences are subtle. The Acadian is the only summer empidonax to be expected in our area.

Acadians may be seen sitting very still on an exposed dead twig, 10 to 15 feet above the ground, perhaps only flicking the tail now and then as it sings. In between rests, it makes quick sallies to snap up flying insects, often returning to the perch repeatedly. A quiet observer may be able to study the trusting Acadian for a long time, while it faithfully feeds or defends its territory. It's a summer show worth watching.

Borrowed from *Northern Neck Audubon News* and condensed from *Bay Journal*, May 1992

Saturated Forested Wetlands

Although many people now recognize the functions and value of wetlands, one type of wetland is just now starting to receive the attention and appreciation it deserves: the forest wetland. More than 75 percent of the 1 million acres of wetlands found in the Chesapeake Bay watershed are forested.

Forested wetlands, especially those that have standing surface water only on a temporary or seasonal basis, are frequently overlooked. These "saturated" forested wetlands provide the same functions as other types of wetlands. In addition, the saturated forested wetland is a vibrant and underestimated habitat for many types of wildlife.

To understand why saturated forested wetlands are important, one must know a little about hydrology. Hydrology is nothing more than a term which defines water movement. As with all wetlands, water drives the saturated forested wetland system. The hydrological cycle consists of "wet" and "dry" phases. This cycle is affected by local weather patterns, climatic changes, and human activities.

Generally, from early summer to late fall, precipitation is infrequent in the Chesapeake Bay drainage. Vegetation, particularly trees, use large amounts of water to grow and reproduce. As a result, the groundwater in saturated forested wetlands may drop to a foot or more below the surface. These factors characterize the "dry" phase of the hydrologic cycle. The untrained observer might scarcely recognize the habitat as a wetland.

The "wet" phase begins late in fall, as the autumn foliage gives way to winter snow, and peaks in early spring. Nourished by spring thaws, and increasing precipitation, and dormant vegetation, groundwater levels rise and often cover the wetland surface. The wetland

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Saturated Forested Wetlands (continued)

habitat is now strikingly apparent.

Bird watchers can appreciate the importance of saturated forested wetlands, which provide breeding and nesting habitat for a variety of birds. Common Yellowthroats, Black-and-White Warblers, Kentucky Warblers, Ovenbird, Tufted Titmouse, American Woodcock, Wood Thrush, and Great-crested Flycatcher are a few of the birds whose songs you can enjoy while wandering through the damp woodlands. Dead, hollow trees, known as snags, provide prime nesting sites for cavity-nesting birds like Wood Ducks, Red-headed Woodpeckers, and Eastern Bluebirds.

Saturated forest wetlands literally breathe life into the ecosystem. A multitude of animal species use these areas for mating, spawning, nesting and rearing their young. Protection of forested wetlands is imperative to maintaining many wildlife populations and preserving the biodiversity of our planet.

Pelagic Adventure

On May 30th, Bill Williams and I were lucky to be among 13 others for a pelagic trip out of Rudee Inlet in Virginia Beach. The weather seemed most inhospitable, with east winds and intermittent rain, but the seas were relatively quit and there was a lot of wildlife.

All pelagic trips are exciting, but this one was better than average. We travelled to Norfolk Canyon, about 65 miles offshore, where the water is warmer and deeper. Among the birds seen were a few Cory's Shearwaters, a dozen Pomarine Jaegers, including two dark-phase birds, lots of Wilson's Storm-Petrels, a Leach's Storm-Petrel, two south Polar Skuas and a Black-capped Petrel, which was one of very few Virginia records.

Non-birds included Ocean Sunfish, Sperm Whales, Blue Sharks and a huge Basking Shark, which allowed our boat to come within just a few feet as it swam slowly at the surface. When do we go again?

From Julie Hotchkiss

The month of May marked the loss of two long time members of the Williamsburg Bird Club, who will be greatly missed.

Emily Hobbs died on May 21, at her home. A memorial service was held June 13, at the Williamsburg Presbyterian Church. She had lived in Williamsburg since 1974.

Emily developed a life long interest in natural history when she attended a nature camp near her childhood home in Washington, D. C. She attended Cornell University for her undergraduate work and graduated from George Washington Law School in Washington, D.C., where she began her law practice.

She and her husband lived in Scarsdale, N.Y., for many years, where she was acting mayor. She was instrumental in saving green belt zones and parks that were proposed for parking areas. She was a Girl Scout leader for many years, helped with their camps, and assisted in taking Girl Scouts to Scotland and England.

Emily was a board member of A.P.V.A. in Williamsburg, a hospital volunteer, Sunday School teacher, First Colony Garden Club member and former president and a Pi Beta Phi member.

Kay Baker died on May 24 and services were held on May 27. She had lived in Williamsburg since 1965 and was a volunteer for "Meals on Wheels" and a lector at St. Bede's Catholic Church.

Kay had been an ice skater in New York at the Center Theater at Radio City for eight years. She supported her husband, Paul, in his work with Dr. Mitchell Byrd, in studying and "hacking" Peregrine Falcons at Fisherman's Island.

Excitement was generated by the presence of a Little Egret at Chincoteague in May. This bird, which closely resembles a Snowy Egret, is not commonly found at Chincoteague or in Virginia or in North America or in this hemisphere! A Roseate Tern stayed for several days near the 4th island of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel in mid to late May. Up to 3 Mississippi Kites were seen near the Eastern Shore Wildlife Refuge in mid to late May also.

Closer to home, Lucille Thornby, Joy Archer and Nancy Ward all enjoyed Rose-breasted Grosbeaks at their yards and feeders in May. Julie Hotchkiss reports a pair of Mute Swans with 5 young on the Country Road to Carter's Grove and a single Mute at Lake Powell on May 4th; she found 8 Indigo Buntings at First Colony on May 6th; Bill Snyder reports seeing a House Finch nest on the Governor's Palace grounds on June 2nd; Bill Sheehan found a Blue-winged Warbler at his yard on May 8th; a Yellow-breasted Chat there on May 23rd, Black-throated Blues and American Redstarts there on May 1st, a Black-billed Cuckoo there on May 24th, Acadian Flycatchers there on May 24th, young Brown Thrashers being fed on May 4th and White-throated Sparrows still around on May 24th. Steve Rottenborn reports a Gray-cheeked Thrush on campus on 5/9 (a number of thrushes were migrating during the nights of 5/7 through about the 14th); a Boat-tailed Grackle was reported from Queen's Lake by Homer Jones on 5/20; Tom Armour found a very unusual Philadelphia Vireo at Kingsmill on 5/21; Emily Sharrett went to Jolly Pond and discovered Yellow, Prothonotary and Kentucky Warblers as well as a Yellow-throated

Vireo on 5/1. Tom Armour and Bill Sheehan teamed up for a trip to Jamestown Island on 5/18, finding a Great Egret, a Black-crowned Night-heron, 3 Red-headed Woodpeckers, 2 Eastern Phobes, 5 Wood Thrushes and both tanagers.

Bill Sheehan is interested in hearing from anyone who has seen young Brown-headed Cowbirds and wants to know what the host species was as well. Please give him a call to help with his study.

Migration is about over, time to check out those breeders!

Summer Newsletter

There will be a combined July-August edition of the FLYER, which should be out in early August

The newsletter editor will certainly appreciate all manner of calls and submissions of information for the newsletter. Please call Brian weeknights between 6 pm and 10 pm at **253-1181** or send articles, local bird sightings, information about birds seen on vacations and such to **104 Druid Court, Williamsburg, Va. 23185**. This will insure that our newsletter is a reflection of the membership. If you're not sure about what to send, please call. Thank you!