



THE FLYER

Volume 19, Number 9

November, 1995

Williamsburg Bird Club

Next Meeting

Our next meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, November 15, 1995** at 7:30 PM in Room 117, Millington Hall at William and Mary. This month's program will be led by John Dillard and Mary Argenteanu, and it is entitled "Birdbanding at Kiptopeke." The birdbanding station at Kiptopeke has established itself as an important site for monitoring the fall and spring migration of songbirds along the Eastern Shore of Virginia. Over recent years the station has undergone significant expansion and has seen numerous improvements. Come hear about this valuable information resource, and the important work performed there.

November Field Trip

This month's field trip will be held on Saturday, November 18th leaving from the Colonial Williamsburg Visitor's Center at 7:30 a.m. Emily Sharrett will lead us on a trip that will stay in the local area. At present, we plan to visit the Williamsburg Winery and the Treasure Island Road area looking for late fall migrants and incoming winter residents.

Congratulations Bill Davies and Our Adopt-A-Highway Crew!!

Bill Davies has been selected as a winner in the Virginia Department of Transportation Adopt-A-Highway Dare to Care Competition. His work as the coordinator for our club and the work he and his crew have done year after year to keep our highway clean has finally been recognized and rewarded.

Thanks Bill for all your hard work and your devotion to our club and this program.

Christmas Bird Count

Take a break from that holiday shopping or skip those Sunday football games (you can catch the highlights like we do at 7:00 p.m. on ESPN), and participate in the annual Williamsburg Christmas Count on December 17. It doesn't matter if you don't know a cardinal from a hawk - an interest in birds and the willingness to support and lend a hand is all that's required. It is amazing what you can learn on this day.

See the accompanying article for more information on the count, and if you're interested in participating, contact Lee Schuster at 565-6148.

Coordinator Wanted

We are in need of a new Christmas Bird Count coordinator. Learn the process this year, and take over next year. Contact Lee Schuster if interested.

New Members

A Williamsburg Bird Club welcome to our new Members:

Kevin Mahler & Wendy Newby
153 King Henry Way
Williamsburg, VA 23188

Phoebe Kent
119 Indian Springs Rd.
Williamsburg, VA 23185

Carol Brown
4509 Boxford Rd.
Virginia Beach, VA 23456



1996 Slate of Officers

During the November meeting, the new slate of officers will be voted upon. Thank you to our nominating committee for the time and effort they put into selecting these volunteers. The committee, chaired by Bill Holcombe, included Marilyn Zeigler, Emily Sharrett, and John McDowell.

Following is the new slate of officers.

President	Lee Schuster
Vice President -Programs	Bill Holcombe
Secretary	Dorothy Whitfield
Treasurer	Charles Rend
Editor - Flyer	Phil Young
Member-at-Large	John McDowell
Member-at-Large	Marilyn Zeigler

Field Trip Coordinator

Thank you Joy Archer for a year of wonderful field trips. You have done a terrific job organizing and setting up our regular monthly trips. We all look forward to another year of your terrific trips in 1996.

Field Notes for October, 1995

Field notes this month see us making that transition from peak fall migration to our winter residents. Some of the ducks are starting to come in, and the geese are starting to build up on Hog Island. Keep your eyes peeled for those incoming ducks and geese; they're on their way! Just to keep everyone on their toes, I'm going to try to go through this month's field notes chronologically:

Starting out with October 1st, Joe and Grace Doyle had the first **Ruddy Duck** of the year at Camp Peary, along with **American Wigeon**, and a **Dark-eyed Junco**. Tom Armour's **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** hung around his place at

Kingsmill through the 4th of October, and on that same day Bill Sheehan witnessed nature at work when a **Red-shouldered Hawk** took a rabbit from his yard. On the 6th, there were six **King Rails**, a **Virginia Rail** and about 100 **Tree Swallows** at College Creek on the Colonial Parkway (CC/CP). On the 7th, about 300 **Northern Flickers**, 500 **American Robins** and 500 **Common Grackles** were spotted flocking up at Jamestown Island, and Tom Armour had a **Northern Parula** at his house. The first 10 days of the month are rounded out by the Doyle's report of **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** and a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** at Camp Peary.

Bill Sheehan had his first **White-throated Sparrows** on the 13th, and Pat Sgrinia reported a **Hooded Warbler** near the Little Creek Reservoir on the 14th. Brian Taber and Fenton Day spotted a very rare **Northern Wheatear** (it's not even on the VA checklist; I had to look up the spelling in a field guide) at Kiptopeke on the 15th! On the same day, the Doyle's had their first **Pied-billed Grebe** at Camp Peary. Armour's **American Coots** are back again this year at the Kingsmill Marina (10/19). He had them last year too until the **Great Black-Backed Gulls** started eating them. These must be last year's survivors or their offspring. The 20th had Joy Archer and Bill Sheehan spying a **Cooper's Hawk** at CC/CP, and **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** on Jamestown Island near the Pitch and Tar Bridge.

Rounding out the month, Joy Archer and Marilyn Zeigler heard a pair of **Great Horned Owls** talking to each other across Jamestown Island on the 22nd. The 22nd also brought a female **Scarlet Tanager** to the Doyle's at Camp Peary, and on the 29th they added another 30 **Ruddy Ducks**, 50 **Eastern Bluebirds**, and a **Summer Tanager**. On the 29th, Tom Armour and Bill Sheehan traveled to Hog Island where they saw



400 hundred **Green-winged Teal** on the first large pond on the right as you enter the refuge. (Note: They returned on November 5th, braved the bow and arrow hunters and saw 300 teal in the same place.) On the way to the island, they had quite good hawk watching in that they saw 2 **Bald Eagles**, a **Northern Harrier**, 2 **Sharp-shinned Hawks**, a **Cooper's Hawk**, a **Red-shouldered Hawk**, 2 **Red-tailed Hawks** and an **American Kestrel**.

Finally, slipping into November, Bill Sheehan had 2 **Hermit Thrush**, and **Ruby- and Gold-crowned Kinglets** on the 2nd and Tom Armour had 40 **Royal Terns** and 6 **Forster's Terns** at the Kingsmill Marina on the 4th.

As usual, thanks to all that contributed this month!

Christmas Bird Count

A reminder to everyone - don't forget to sign up for the Christmas Bird Count that occurs on December 17th. Whether you are a beginner or experienced birder, we need your eyes and ears. Come spend the day or just half the day with fellow birders and find out how the birds spend Christmas. Or you might just want to come to the final count a 5:00 p.m. on the 17th to see what was found and any oddities that may have shown up. The eight areas that are surveyed are listed below. Each area has a leader, but we need people to assist our leaders. If you are interested in a specific area or just want to help anywhere, we want you. Sign up at the November meeting or call Lee Schuster at 565-6148.

The eight survey areas are:

Cheatham Annex - Camp Peary, Queen's Lake, Cheatham Annex, Felgate's Creek, Indian Field Creek.

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| Kingsmill - | Country Road to Carter's Grove, Kingsmill, Williamsburg Airport, Parkway from Information Center to just before College Creek. |
| Hog Island - | Ferry ride over and Hog Island Refuge. |
| Jamestown - | Parkway from College Creek to Jamestown and Jamestown Island. |
| College Woods - | College Woods and Campus, Lake Matoaka, Lake Powell, College Landing Park on South Henry Street, Population Lab, Hickory Signpost Road, Treasure Island Road. |
| Middle Plantation - | Mid-County Park, Waller Mill Park, Drummond's Field, Governor's Land, News Road, First Colony. |
| Jolly Pond - | Jolly Pond, Landfill, Cranston's Mill Road, Little Creek Reservoir. |
| Skimino - | Barlow's Pond, Skimino Farms, Mirror Lakes, entrance to York River State Park, Riverview Plantation. |

Adopt-A-Highway Pickup Report

Twelve good souls turned out October 7 to begin the sixth year of the Williamsburg Bird Club's participation in the state's Adopt-A-Highway program, one of the largest such efforts in the country.

It was a beautiful day, and there was a lot of work to do. We divided the stretch of road up



into thirds and worked about 2 1/2 hours. Some club members had to go an "extra mile" because of the amount or nature of the debris.

Pat and Mike Healy had to pick up a large amount of computer paper printouts from a non-profit organization that had been shredded by the highway mowing crew.

Bob and Martha Burgess spent extra time picking up their section that was particularly heavy with trash.

Dorothy Whitfield and Chuck Rend were the last ones off the highway because of their faithfulness and steadfastness to duty!

A special "thanks" to all of these good people for caring about our environment. Also, Dick Mahone left a heavy schedule of family visits and came up with his truck to pick up the cans and bottles that we recycle.

Bob Morris, Phyllis Johnson, Pat Bostian, and Mary Kafes rounded out the crew that picked up 18 bags of trash, 151 pounds of glass and plastic bottles, and 10 pounds of aluminum cans. The bottles and cans were recycled.

A recent call from the Virginia Department of Transportation reports that the Williamsburg Bird Club will receive a special award for our 5 years of participation the Adopt-A-Highway program. More on this when details are available.

Well done to all!

Bill Davies

Wild Bird's Unlimited Donation Update

The Club has received \$58.61 in rebates for July through September sales to WBC members at Wild Bird's Unlimited. As usual, this money is deposited into our account to fund our annual

research grant to a William & Mary biology student. In addition, George Copping also graciously donated the speaker's fee he recently received from the Berkeley Garden Club. Many thanks to the Coppings and Wild Bird's Unlimited.

Bird of the Month

Tufted Titmouse (*Parus bicolor*)

As I thought about what the Bird of the Month should be for November, my mind went blank. For various reasons, I haven't been out birding to get some spark of inspiration, so no bird made a point to be known this month. Finally, one day as I was working in my backyard - filling feeders, and picking up the pieces of plants my dog decided to eat - I kept hearing this nagging call behind me. As I looked up and watched for awhile, a Tufted Titmouse was buzzing in for a treat, then zipping back out. This is a bird that visits every feeder, and a bird that most everyone recognizes. So I decided to go against the norm and write about a bird we all can say - "I've seen one of those." Maybe you will learn something you didn't know about this common backyard bird.

We all recognize the Titmouse as a dark gray bird above, and a pale gray underneath. The flanks are buff color. In the east, the notable crest is gray, and the forehead is black. Those people that visit Southern and Western Texas will find the titmouse has a black crest and buff forehead. When the titmouse is in a feisty mood, it will raise that crest and voice its opinion.

A titmouse is not very picky about diet. They will feed on small insects, caterpillars, and spiders, and in winter they eat seeds, acorns, sumac, cherries, and suet. When they eat, each food item is taken away from the feeder to a



perch. The titmouse places the food between its toes and hammers it with its bill until it breaks apart. When they aren't in the mood for eating, they will hide their food on the ground under leaves, in crevices of rotten logs, and in trees. Maybe this is why your seed disappears so quickly when it seems the number of birds is low.

The titmouse is a cavity nester, taking up residence in old woodpecker holes or tree cavities. They will line their hole with leaves, moss, and hair. They may raise two families in one summer. The young of the first brood help raise the second.

We recognize their song as a whistling "peter-peter-peter." That is when they are in a good mood - when they aren't happy, a titmouse will be sure to scold you.

Now for a little folklore on the titmouse. According to Cherokee Indian legend, the titmouse is regarded as a messenger as well as a liar. The legend is about a witch who put fear into all of the people she met. They devised a plan to catch her by digging a pit and covering it with tree limbs, leaves and moss. The witch did as they hoped and fell in the pit. When they tried to kill her, their arrows would not hurt her.

A titmouse appeared, and called "Un, un, un" (Heart, heart, heart). The Cherokees interpreted the call as meaning they should shoot at her heart. They did, but still couldn't hurt her. Out of anger, they grabbed the bird and cut its tongue out. According to the legend, this is why today the titmouse has a short tongue.

Suddenly a chickadee came and landed on the witch's right hand. They were finally able to kill her - her heart was in her right hand.

Just a little trivia... The titmouse is fun to watch. Whether the bird is eating, hiding away food, or yelling at you, it will always brighten your

coldest winter days and hottest summer afternoons. Happy Birding!!!