



THE FLYER

NEWSLETTER OF THE WILLIAMSBURG BIRD CLUB

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THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Williamsburg Bird Club will be on September 20, as always, the third Wednesday of the month. Details will be in the August *Flyer*, which will follow this issue. The editors get a vacation month.

BIRD CLUB ANNUAL PICNIC

We had some unresolved problems trying to schedule the annual picnic in its usual slot of early June, but we *will* have a picnic this year. It is scheduled for late September at the usual location, the Beck's farm, with all of the good food and good company that have become the hallmark of this annual gathering. The problem with June was the absolute impossibility of finding one date when all the major directors of this event would be available to each do their coordinated parts. Keep late September in mind and you will find that the pleasure of this day was merely delayed, not lost.

SPRING BIRD COUNT 2000

(The complete chart is included in this issue.)

The weather was almost perfect for this year's count on Sunday May 7. We identified 147 species and Brian Taber, organizer and tally-keeper of this event, said that number is two better than last year but clearly lower than the 22 year average of this count, which is 154.

The count of 23 warblers was just one species higher than last year and included an infrequently reported worm-eating warbler. All told, there are about 50 tropical migrant songbirds in this report. There were also two sparrows that are in-

frequently reported here, two grasshopper sparrows and four seaside sparrows. All lovers of the wood thrush will be happy to hear that the 56 sightings were significantly better than last year, despite the dire warnings that we keep getting about this bird. For the second year in a row there were no reports of kestrels or Cooper's hawks.

It seems safe to say that all participants got to see a lot of birds that Sunday. They included Sue Gray Al-Salam, Joy Archer, Jean Armour, Tom Armour, Hugh Beard, Ruth Beck, Grace Doyle, Joe Doyle, Bettye Fields, Bobbie Giese, Ron Giese, Renee Held, Bill Holcombe, Julie Hotchkiss, Carol McAllister, Paul McAllister, Sandy Peterson, Dave Shantz, Lee Schuster, Dave Schuster, Dot Silsby, Kristian Stewart, Brian Taber and Bill Williams.

RESEARCH GRANTS AWARDED

Once again the Bird Club has awarded ornithology research grants; this year \$500 each to two William & Mary graduate students. The recipients were Renae Held (winner) and Emillie Snell-Rood (runner-up.) Congratulations, ladies!

WILD BIRDS REBATE

Club member purchases at Wild Birds Unlimited during the January-March quarter this year amounted to a little over \$2000. Accordingly, we received a check for \$101.00 (5% of sales) from Wild Birds that will be used to finance our club's operations. Club members are encouraged to make their avian purchases at Wild Birds so the club will receive this rebate. Remember to identify yourself as a Williamsburg Bird Club member

when making a purchase. Many thanks to Wild Birds Unlimited, a very fine source of bird-watching supplies and a generous supporter of the Williamsburg Bird Club!

TABOR'S LATE WINTER-SPRING HAWK WATCH

This is the fourth year that Brian Taber has manned a station at College Creek on the Colonial Parkway to provide a count of migrating hawks for the Hawk Migration Association of North America. With help from Tom Armour and Bill Williams the watch was kept for 49 days and totaled 69 hours. The total count of 817 compares nicely to 836 last year, but there were also more hours watching last year.

The result is:

Black Vulture	18
Turkey Vulture	578
Osprey	34
Bald Eagle	66
Northern Harrier	24
Sharp-shinned Hawk	32
Cooper's Hawk	2
Red-shouldered Hawk	7
Broad-winged Hawk	7
Red-tailed Hawk	31
Kestrel	15
Adult Golden Eagle	2 (May 1 & 16)
Mississippi Kite	1 (May 1)

Brian points out that the Hawk Migration Association of North America is part of a world-wide organization collecting data on raptors and that the College Creek station is the only Virginia station collecting those migration data. Their figures would be much better if the watch could be maintained every day between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. Data are collected between February 10 and May 17. If thirty club members could participate, with each taking one day a month, the significance of the College Creek count would be greatly enhanced. The same result would be produced by fifteen participants watching two days a month. The participants would learn a great deal about hawk identification and the movement of these birds. Most days Brian is there from 11 to 12 and he would be happy to conduct training sessions on Saturday and Sunday.

What is being counted here is the flight of raptors coming from the south, crossing the James River and continuing northward. Some judgement is required to leave out the local raptors that are fishing the river or flying at low levels on their own hunting trips. Brian believes that this is quite easy to do and an occasional error of inclusion or exclusion does not destroy the validity of the study.

Brian plans to do some active recruiting and training for next year's hawk watch and is convinced that every club member spending even an hour or two in this activity can make a contribution and enjoy doing it. "There are a lot of good late winter and early spring days that make this a pleasant couple of hours and you get the benefit of seeing migrating song birds that are also crossing the river during this period," he said.

At any rate, keep this in mind and you'll hear more about it early next year.

RUTH BECK WILL TAKE US TO CRANEY ISLAND IN AUGUST

In August Craney Island can offer a wonderful mix of shore birds and a good chance of spotting some unusual ones. There is no one better able to show birders the delights of this place than Ruth, who fought to make this a safe bird haven and nesting area. She's not certain of the date yet but either August 19 or 26 would be likely choices. We've seen Wilson's phalarope on the last couple of trips and a red-necked phalarope was reported there within recent days. Other likely birds include black-necked stilts, avocets, gull-billed terns, a variety of sand-pipers and peeps, and sometimes horned larks. Last year we had a flock of black terns.

STATE-WIDE BIRDING ON THE VSO E-MAIL SITE

Pleasures and some frustrations are encountered in connecting to the E-mail site, <VA-Bird@list.audubon.org>. First, when dialing in you will *always* get the message, "You Have Mail." In fact, you will get ten to twenty pieces of e-mail a day.

And what will you learn? For example, the hottest birding taking place right now in Virginia

involves the scissor-tailed flycatchers nesting near Culpepper, with all kinds of speculation about why they are here. They are far more common in the delta south and in the southwest.

Getting almost as much attention is an explosion of dickcissels. They are reported near the Culpepper scissor-tails, in the area of Orange and near Remington in Fauquier County. However, there was a report of a pair near Chesapeake recently and in May one was seen near the Shirley Plantation. (Maybe it's worth checking your bird book for this one.)

The next most active chatter deals with logger-head shrikes. They were once common enough to regularly appear on our Christmas and Spring bird counts but have not been seen in our area in many years. Nesting shrikes are reported in the Clifton area and in Orange County near Rapidan. Incidentally, Brian Watts did a study last year of a pair of nesting shrikes at Fort Lee. This is much closer for us, but we have no information on how one goes about birding there.

These reports come with very precise directions to the birds. For example, to see the scissor-tails, take route 522 from Culpepper. Four miles from the fork near the ancient stone church where the Rapidan sign is located, turn onto Twin Mountain Road and go 0.2 mile until you see a high power line crossing the road. The scissor-tail nest is on a corner of the power line tower. The birds can be observed flying about the nest and even perching on the barbed-wire fence along the road. Several writers enthusiastically report success when following the directions and several report more dickcissels along the next two miles of road.

Closer to home, grasshopper sparrows are reported nesting near the hawk banding station at Kiptopeke and a male lark bunting was seen on Island Three of the Bay-Bridge Tunnel this past weekend. A week ago a red-necked phalarope was seen on Craney Island.

A frustration at reading some of the wonderful bird reports is that they are not always accompanied by clues as to the location of the activity. Larry Lynch told me that they have tried hard to get participants to start every message at least identifying the county in which the birding activity took place. Some do but most don't.

If you are interested in trying this service you may

request it by contacting Larry Lynch at birder6@juno.com. He watches over this activity.

FIELD NOTES FOR MAY

(In view of the complete Spring Count Report, these will be brief.)

Early in the month Brian Taber had a late-staying fox sparrow in his yard. On May 11 Lee Schuster had a wonderful day at York River State Park. She said that she barely moved from the left side of the front parking lot and saw 43 birds. The twelve warblers included were yellow-throated, black and white, bay-breasted, redstart, parula, magnolia, Cape May, black-throated blue, black-throated green, ovenbird, common yellowthroat and the Wilson warbler. Other migrants were summer tanager, eastern wood-pewee, great crested flycatcher, Acadian flycatcher, blue-gray gnatcatcher, white-eyed vireo and red-eyed vireo. The topping on this great birding day was a group of twenty cedar waxwings.

On roughly the same date Joy Archer reported a very pleasant morning at the Hickory Sign Post Bridge where a morning trip was rewarded with parula warbler, black and white warbler, yellow-rump warbler, white-eyed vireo, blue-gray gnatcatcher, belted kingfisher, wood duck and the ever present phoebe from beneath the bridge.

Mid-month Charlie Drubel reported with some amazement that a yellow-crowned night heron was building a nest in his back yard at Queens Lake. Charlie said that the nest looks like a bunch of sticks that got caught in the tree during a storm and added that it is a miracle that it will hold eggs and young birds.

Bill Holcomb thought that it worth mentioning that the number of snowy egrets at the Pea Island nature refuge on Hatteras Island exceeded by a wide margin anything that he had ever seen there before. In place of the usual five to ten there was one group of 25 and a total of about 50. Numerically they appeared to be the dominant bird. Joy Archer found an unusually large number of snowy egrets at Chincoteague Island on the Memorial Day weekend.

Please see the complete chart of the birds in our area on the May 7 Spring Count chart.

Williamsburg Bird Club Spring Count, May 7, 2000										
	MP	Skim	Cp. P	Cht. A.	Hog.I.	Col.W.	Kingm.	J. Isl.	Jol. P.	Total
Common Loon					1					1
Brown Pelican				8						8
Dble. Crest. Cormor.		1	13	69	51		16	19	1	170
Great Blue Heron	16	12	19	28	48	3	6	19	2	159
Great Egret	1		1	4	8		1			15
Snowy Egret					1		1			1
Little Blue Heron										
Cattle Egret										
Green Heron	5		2	2	1		3		1	14
Yel. Corn. Nite Heron				1						1
Black Vulture	3		1	2					1	7
Turkey Vulture	14	8	8	14	18	5	5	5	5	82
Mute Swan	4			15			6			25
Canada Goose	42	6	38	83	66	9	65	40	10	359
Wood Duck	3	2	12	15	2		2			26
Northern Shoveler					2					2
Green-winged Teal					1	5				6
American Blk. Duck					2					2
Mallard	3	3	16	10	7	2	38	4	2	85
Ring-necked Duck				2						2
Ruddy Duck				1			1			2
Osprey	12	6	14	58	9		8	24		131
Bald Eagle (adult)			2	1	2		2			7
Bald Eagle Im (Immat.)					5					5
Northern Harrier					4					4
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1				1					2
Red-shouldered Hawk		1					1			2
Red-tailed Hawk	1	2	3	1		1	1	2		11
Wild Turkey	1		2							3
Northern Bobwhite	1	1	6		1		2	11		22
Clapper Rail			1	1	1				1	4
American Coot	2				21					23
Black-bellied Plover					7					7
Semipalmated Plover					26	23				59
Killdeer	5	1	6	8	2	4	1	7	1	35
Greater Yellowlegs			10	1	14					25
Lesser Yellowlegs					7		3			10
Solitary Sandpiper					1	5				6
Spotted Sandpiper	2		1		3		1			7
Sanderling					1					1
Semipalmated Sandpiper					1					1
Least Sandpiper					47	74				121
Dunlin					1					1
Shorebird Species										7
Laughing Gull	22	38	2	91	178	20	31	55	2	439
Bonaparte's Gull								2		2
Ring-billed Gull	5			2	144			15		166
Herring Gull				5	12		12			31
Great Black-backed Gull				3	7					10
Caspian Tern					1			12		13
Royal Tern		1		9	62		12	48		132
Common Tern				2						2
Forster's Tern				2						2
Least Tern					1					1
Rock Dove	7			4	11			10		32
Mourning Dove	6	4	8	11	3	7	33	25	8	105
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	2			1				1		4
Eastern Screech Owl				4						4
Great Horned Owl	2			2						4
Barred Owl	2	1		1		4			1	9
Chuck-will-widow						3				3
Whip-poor-will										
	MP	Skim	Cp. P	Cht. A.	Hog.I.	Col.W.	Kingm.	J. Isl.	Jol. P.	Total

Chimney Swift	19	9		31		4	14	1		78
Ruby-throat.Humming B.	2		1	2	1		1		3	10
Belted Kingfisher	1	2	1	2			1			7
Red-headed Woodpecker	7		9		1			1		18
Red-bellied Woodpecker	12	7	9	5	2	7	15	3	5	65
Downy Woodpecker	11	1		1	1		2	1	2	19
Hairy Woodpecker				2						2
Northern Flicker	8	1	3	4			6	3		25
Pileated Woodpecker	5	2	1	4	2	2	1	1	2	20
Eastern Wood-Pee-wee	5	9	10	5	1	8	6	5	9	58
Acadian Flycatcher	9	6	12	8	1	8	1	2	7	54
Eastern Phoebe	2	1	1	1		2		1		8
Great-crested Flycatcher	13	7	12	9	1	14	32	7	7	102
Eastern Kingbird	6	5	23	10	19		2	13		72
Purple Martin	3	6		1	1	12				23
Tree Swallow	5			4	3	27				39
North. Rough-wing Swl	4	3		12	2			4		25
Bank Swallow										
Barn Swallow	2	3	4	28	5	2	10	62	5	121
Blue Jay	8	4	3	5	1	9	20	4	7	61
American Crow	8	11	8	10	2	6	25	17	6	93
Fish Crow	8	1		4	4	1	11	5	1	35
Crow (species)	15				4					19
Carolina Chickadee	9	5	4	7	2	2	12	6	2	50
Tufted Titmouse	14	10	8	18	1	14	18	19	10	112
White-breasted Nuthatch	7	2		3		3	5		1	21
Brown-headed Nuthatch			2		3		1			6
Brown Creeper										
Carolina Wren	12	5	3	12	9	6	34	11	4	96
House Wren		2		1	2	1	3			9
Ruby-crowned Kinglet										
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	14	8	10	6	9	10	5	1	6	69
Eastern Bluebird	2	4	23	12	1	9	11	9	3	74
Veery						2			1	3
Gray-cheeked Thrush										
Swainson's Thrush									2	2
Hermit Thrush		1								1
Wood Thrush	6	4	10	11		8	8	4	5	56
American Robin	7	24	2	22		13	89	27	4	188
Gray Catbird	3	2	3	4	3	1	12	1	3	32
Northern Mockingbird	3	15	8	5	6	8	39	20	4	108
Brown Thrasher	6	5	1	3	1	4	12	7	6	45
American Pipit						1				1
Cedar Waxwing	20	0	0	23		3	8		3	57
Starling	28	40	56	51	2	12	61	71	13	334
White-eyed Vireo	5	4	11	10	1	8	1	2	6	48
Yellow-throated Vireo	3		2	2	1				3	11
Blue-headed Vireo						2				2
Philadelphia Vireo										
Red-eyed Vireo	14	28	38	30	4	14	15	15	16	175
Blue-winged Warbler										
Northern Parula	6	6	1	4	1	4	1	2	10	35
Yellow Warbler		6	2	2	8		3	6		27
Chestnut-sided Warbler					2					2
Magnolia Warbler					1	1				2
Black-throat.Bkue Warb		1	1	1	1		1		2	7
Yellow-rumped Warbler		2		7	31	5	11	3	2	61
Black-throat.Green Warb.							1			1
Yellow-throated Warbler	3	2	13	9	4	3		5	5	44
Pine warbler	3		17	11	3	5	2	7	4	53
Prairie Warbler			4	1	9	2		4	1	31
Blackpoll Warbler		3	1	1	7		4		2	18
Black-and-white Warbler	4				2	2	1		3	12
American Redstart	1	3	2	1	4	2	1	1	2	17
Prothonotary Warbler	7	1	1	4				1	5	19
	MP	Skim	Cp. P	Cht. A.	Hog.I.	Col.W.	Kingm.	J. Isl.	Jol. P.	Total
Worm-eating Warbler					1					1

Ovenbird	11	12	12	12			5	1	15	68
Northern Water-thrush				1						1
Louisiana Waterthrush				2		3				5
Kentucky Warbler				7						7
Common Yellowthroat	10	11	24	6	19	1	2	6	3	89
Hooded Warbler		3						1	2	6
Yellow-breasted Chat	1		6		3			4		14
Summer Tanager	3	3	15	10	1	8	3	1	6	50
Scarlet Tanager		2	3	8		4	2	3	3	25
Northern Cardinal	30	5	14	13	7	12	47	33	12	177
Eastern Towhee	5	3	11	18	2	2	12	13		66
Chipping Sparrow	2	8	11	15		2	6	2	10	66
Field Sparrow			4	1	4			7		16
Grasshopper Sparrow								1	1	2
Seaside Sparrow				4						4
Song Sparrow	3	9	4	1	3	1	9	6	1	37
White-throated Sparrow	5	1	1		2	2	1			12
Rose-breasted Grosbeak		3								3
Blue Grosbeak		3	6	2	5				4	20
Indigo Bunting	10	6	32	14	24	2	5	8	6	107
Bobolink					67					67
Red-winged Blackbird	24	2	12	2	41	6	9	73	9	172
Eastern Meadowlark								7	3	10
Common Grackle	50	74	17	28	12	13	115	36	12	358
Boat-tailed Grackle				5						5
Brown-headed Cowbird	12	2	3	13	25	6	16	4	4	85
Orchard Oriole	8	5	4	13	55		1	4	2	92
Baltimore Oriole							2	1		3
House Finch	4	10	14	24			58	7	1	118
American Goldfinch	8	5	19	14	9	9	37	17	3	121
House Sparrow	3	42	1	12		2	19	16		95