



THE FLYER

NEWSLETTER OF THE WILLIAMSBURG BIRD CLUB

Volume 25, Number 10

November 2001

NEXT BIRD CLUB MEETING IS NOV. 28 – NOT Nov. 21 !

As our regular third Wednesday of the month meeting night would be the day before Thanksgiving, the meeting for this month will move to the fourth Wednesday, November 26 at 7:30 p.m. in Room 117, Millington Hall, William & Mary campus. Program Director Dan Cristol wants us all to come and welcome the latest ornithologist to join the William & Mary Biology Department. John Swaddle is already an internationally recognized expert on the evolution of mating and communication in birds. He comes here from Bristol University in Britain and has agreed to tell us about one of his many research projects, the mating of Australian Fairy Wrens. Come welcome the newest addition to Williamsburg's rich ornithological community.....and to also vote in the club officers for 2002!

OCTOBER FIELD TRIP ON GREENSPRINGS NATURE TRAIL

On a gorgeous Saturday morning, Alex Minarik led a group of 16 along the Green Spring Nature Trail and found 51 species. Returning fall birds included Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, Yellow-rumped Warbler, White-throated Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Rusty Blackbird and, the most notable find of the day, a Pine Siskin, a rarely reported winter visitor. There were three hawks, Sharp-shinned, Red-shouldered and Red-tailed. Some of the warm weather birds spotted were Phoebe, Fish Crow, Tree Swallow, Pine Warbler, Palm Warbler and Brown-headed Cowbird. There were also Northern Bobwhite, Killdeer, Belted Kingfisher and Chipping Sparrow.

Participants included Shirley Devan, Bettye Fields, Bill Holcombe, Marilyn Lewis, Cynthia Long, Carolyn Lowe, Mack Lundy, Charles Rend, Ken and Kathy Sage, Linda Scherer, Jandy and Randy Strickland, Dorothy Whitfield, Bill Williams and Marilyn Zeigler.

TOM ARMOUR WILL LEAD NOVEMBER FIELD TRIP, DEC. 1

Please note that the Field Trip will also move up a week to avoid the Thanksgiving conflict.

Joe Doyle had announced the arrival of some ducks on the York River wintering ground by mid-October so the chances should be quite good of seeing various wintering waterfowl from the Colonial Parkway pull-offs both on the river and on the nearby ponds. Tom will gather the group in front of Wild Birds Unlimited near Ukrops at 7:30 on Saturday morning, December 1 and follow the Colonial Parkway viewing spots down to the Yorktown Beach. This should provide a good opportunity to add some ducks, swans, grebes and loons to your 2001 list.

WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED DELIVERS

Our generous friends at Wild Birds came through with a rebate check for \$301 on our club members' purchases there between November 2000 and September 2001. This is important revenue for the club, most of which we use to fund our annual research grants to William & Mary ornithology students. All you need to keep the funds flowing is to identify yourself as a club member when you purchase seed or other items at the store. Many thanks Wild Birds!

FIELD NOTES FOR OCTOBER

Field Notes is made up of bird sightings reported by members. We have some very active and loyal reporters but urge ALL members to report seasonal arrivals and departures, migrating birds, interesting behavior in our so called "resident" birds, or any bird trip, wherever it was, that you'd like to share. Bill Holcombe, 229-8057, bowljack@aol.com.

Sept. 30 – Tom Armour reports a little late but a real goody, a Rosebreasted Grosbeak that hung around his feeder for a couple of days.

Sept.30 – Bill Williams at Greensprings Nature Trails spots his first fall Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Also sees a Bay-breasted Warbler, two Common Snipe and, on the Mainland Farm, 200 Bobolinks.

Oct. 2 – Bill Snyder finds two Osprey still on Powhatan Creek.

Oct. 6 – Chuck Rend finds a Black-throated Blue Warbler on the Country Road and a Sharp-shinned Hawk on the Green Spring nature Trail.

Oct. 5 – Jandy Strickland sees a Black-crowned Night Heron near Lake Pasbehegh.

Oct. 7 – At Greensprings Nature trail Bill Williams has Black-throated Blue Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, American Redstart, Swamp Sparrow, House Wren, Wood Thrush, two Chimney Swifts and Tree Swallows. At home in Settlers Mill, Bill hears a White-eyed Vireo and sees Swainson Thrush, Scarlet Tanager eating Dogwood berries and a Willow-Alder Flycatcher.

Oct.12 – A Red-breasted Nuthatch is in Brian Taber's yard for two days.

Oct. 14 – At Kingsmill Marina, Tom Armour reports 75 Forster's Terns, 100 Royal Terns, 24 Great Black-backed Gulls, ten Herring Gulls, three Double-crested Cormorants and one Bald Eagle.

Oct. 16 – On the James River Tom Armour sees first Bonaparte Gulls of the fall plus two Coot.

Oct. 17 – Dan Cristol reports Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers on the college campus.

Oct. 21 – Joe Doyle sees his first fall Brown Creeper at Camp Peary. Also first Ruddy Ducks, Ruby-crowned Kinglets and White-throated

Sparrows.

Oct.23 – Dan Cristol says, "Bird nettings on campus reveal a big push of White-throated Sparrows, both kinglets and Hermit Thrushes arriving and the last dregs of warblers, catbirds and other neotropicals still in the area. No Juncos yet. I also note that the Turkey Vultures have started congregating on the rte.199 water tower near Jamestown Road three weeks earlier than usual."

Oct.24 – A Black and White Warbler and two Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers appear in Tom Armour's back yard.

Oct. 26 - Osprey still found near College Landing. Bill Williams.

Oct. 27 – Dan Cristol says large numbers of Juncos come in with the cold front on the college campus. Also finds Wood Thrush still about and Hermit Thrush arriving.

Oct. 27 – Marilyn Zeigler has her first Hermit Thrush in the yard and on the 23rd heard her first White-throated Sparrow song.

Oct.28 – Alex Minarik sees her first Brown Creeper of the fall at the Chickahominy Wildlife Management Area.

Oct. 28 – At Greensprings trail, Bill Williams sees a female Black-throated Blue Warbler and reports the first Purple Finch of the fall. He also found a very scarce adult White-crowned Sparrow there.

Oct.28 – Brian Taber reports, "The lower Eastern Shore was fantastic even by Eastern Shore standards. Birds were visible everywhere all of the time – Robins, huge numbers of sparrows, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Pine Siskins, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Ruby Crowned Kinglets, Hermit Thrushes, etc. Did see one Clay-colored Sparrow at the visitors center."

Oct.28 – Joe Doyle finds American Widgeons and Ring-necked Ducks at Camp Peary. He also has a Ring-necked Duck that he believes has been returning to a nearby Kingsmill Pond for 15 years. The male is always by himself on the pond and responds when Joe whistles to notify him that he is spreading feed!

Oct.30 – First White-throated Sparrows show up in Brian Taber's yard for latest arrival date in

many years.

Oct.- 31 – At Jamestown Island Alex Minarik reports her second Brown Creeper of the year (and then found a third in her back yard when she got home!). Also found lots of Red-headed Woodpeckers, some Brown Nuthatches, Golden-crowned Kinglets and Ruby-crowned Kinglets and a Hermit Thrush.

Health problems limited Grace and Joe Doyle to just two treks around Camp Peary this month. In addition to the back yard regulars they reported for the month: Great Egret, Mute Swan, Wood Duck, American Widgeon, Ring-necked Duck, Ruddy Duck, Bald Eagle, American Kestrel, Wild Turkey, Belted Kingfisher, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Pine Warbler, Rufous-sided Towhee and White-throated Sparrow.

From time to time throughout the month Bill Holcombe heard Barred Owls singing near Graylin Woods. Some were heard at night but mostly in late afternoon and early morning.

Reports from Virginia Bird e-mail indicate that most of our fall birds arrive a couple of weeks earlier in the Washington area. Also had an interesting report of a male Scissor-tailed Flycatcher on the Outer Banks that seemed to be working his way north from Hatteras to Nags Head.

EARLY OCTOBER ON THE OUTER BANKS

by Bill Holcombe

On the beaches were coveys of Sanderlings, groups of Willets (up to seventeen), occasional Ruddy Turnstone and more rarely, Black-bellied Plover. Patrolling the surf were Royal Terns, Caspian Terns, Common Terns, Laughing Gulls, Ring-billed Gulls, Great Black-backed Gulls, and Brown Pelicans making their kamikaze dives.

The Pea Island Nature Preserve was filled with birds. The Snow Geese arrived during the first two weeks to join the thousands of American Widgeon and Northern Pintails mixed with patches of Canada Geese, Black Ducks, Gadwall, Mallards and Northern Shovelers. There were groups of birds scattered all about, 75 Snowy

Egrets, about 100 Marbled Godwits, five White Ibis, lots of Short-billed Dowitchers and three that I identified as Long-billed Dowitchers. Both Yellow-legs, peeps too far away to identify, Great Egrets, Great Blue Herons, Little Blue Herons and Tricolored Egrets were all to be seen.

Despite warnings that length of bill is a questionable way to identify the Long-billed Dowitchers, these three had grotesquely long bills and were feeding with Short-billed Dowitchers and those impoundments are filled with fresh water that is preferred by the Long-billed Dowitcher. For my first time I also saw first year Snowy Egrets with bright green legs and a first year, all-white Little Blue Heron with dull greenish legs, which took some book work to figure out. Also for the first time I found the Lesser Black-backed Gull with the yellow legs. The Godwits were packed densely together on a sand bar some distance away. However, the bills were clearly visible in the scope as were the under-wing patterns when a bird occasionally stretched. While these were almost always mixed shades of dark brown and tans, rarer ones were in blacks and whites leading me to believe that there may have been Hudsonian Godwits mixed in with this group.

Even if I didn't get everything exactly right it was a great time to be on the Outer Banks.

ELECTION OF CLUB OFFICERS

John McDowell, Chairman of the Nominating Committee, will present a new slate to the Bird Club meeting on November 28. These officers have agreed to serve again in 2002:

President, Hugh Beard

Vice-pres. & Program Director, Dan Cristol

Vice-pres. & Co-editor of *The Flyer*, Phil Young

Vice-pres. & Co-editor of *The Flyer*, Bill Holcombe

Treasurer, Charles Rend

At Large – Field Trip Coordinator, Tom Armour

At Large – Board member, Lee Schuster

Alex Minarik has accepted the nomination for Secretary. Marilyn Zeigler, long-time member of the board in various capacities, will take a well

deserved rest this year.

At the meeting additional nominations will be accepted from the floor if the nominee has agreed to serve.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The Christmas Bird count will be on December 16. This will be the Club's 29th Annual Christmas Bird Count and the 102nd anniversary of Audubon's first. The first effort to count species during the Christmas season was done in 1900 as a counter action to the popular pastime of seeing how much game could be killed during a Christmas hunt. Christmas hunts seem to have disappeared whereas the Audubon Christmas Bird Count in 2000 has grown to include 1,880 participating circles with 51,637 individual counters in the United States, Canada, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Pacific Islands. They tallied 54,788,215 individual birds and in North America plus Hawaii those birds were grouped into 689 species. The Mad Island Marsh, Texas circle, listed a record-matching 235 species.

As your mind may start to boggle at these numbers, we'll come home to the Williamsburg Bird Club where last year 22 participants found 103 species during a count amidst probably the worst weather that we've ever encountered. On the average we have found 108 species and our high count is 112. Cape Charles, Virginia recorded the state high of 154 species.

Our 15-mile circle, centered on the Colonial Williamsburg Reception Area, is divided into nine sections. The sections with the leader responsible are as follows: **Cheatham Annex**, Bill Williams, 229-6095; **Camp Peary**, Tom Armour (participation limited); **Skimino**, Bettye Fields, 930-0177; **Jolly Pond**, Lee Schuster, 565-6148; **Middle Plantation**, Hugh Beard, 221-0499; **Jamestown Island**, Dot Silsby, 596-3252; **College Woods**, Ruth Beck, 221-2217; **Hog Island**, Brian Taber, 253-1181.

The hard core of participants who never miss a Christmas Count sometimes wonder why so few members avail themselves of this opportunity to spend a day in the field participating in a very meaningful bird census. All skill levels can

participate and contribute. Teams are usually in the field by 7 a.m., take a lunch with them, and leave by 4-4:30 to combine all of the reports into a final tally at the William & Mary Biology Department. This report is submitted to the record keepers at Cornell University. You can participate for the whole day or whatever part of it works for you. If you are interested call the leader of the area where you would like to search and make arrangements for getting together. All participants must pay a fee of \$5 to defray the Audubon/Cornell cost of setting up and recording this event.

HOG ISLAND LIMITS BIRDING

Threats of terrorist attacks have forced some changes at Hog Island, where the Surry nuclear power generation is located. Except for limited access when hunting dates are scheduled, birders may visit Hog island but must check in at the Virginia Power drive-through check point. Signs will guide you and you must show a photo ID. Hours are 5 a.m. until 7 p.m. until November 24 when closing time drops back to 5 p.m.

Saturdays from Nov. 17 through January 19 birder access is limited to 1 p.m. until sunset.

RESULTS OF KIPTOPEKE CHALLENGE

The Williamsburg Bird Club Team again participated in this fund raising, birding event for the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory, but the airline shut-down after September 11 stranded Bill Williams in Paris. That left Tom Armour, Fenton Day and Brian Taber to carry the flag. And carry the flag they did, although they could not repeat the victories achieved the past two years.

Awards were presented on October 5 at the opening ceremonies of the Eastern Shore Birding Festival. We did have a home town winner when the KDR Peregrine from William & Mary won the six-hour category of bird searching.

The Wandering Siskins from the Northern Virginia Bird Club slipped past our team this year by finding 120 species in 24 hours of birding. This team also won the prize for raising the most money by collecting more than \$2,600.

The third participating team composed of Bob Ake, Don Schwab and Tom Gwynn found 112 species and raised \$1,200.

Two new birds were added to the species list of this seven year old event, Piping Plover and Mongolian Plover, making for a total of 217 species.

The Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory will use the money raised to publish educational materials and to hire researchers who also act as interpreters to the visiting public during the spring and fall months.

If you “meant” to contribute to this event but never quite made it, it’s still not too late to send your check to Brian Taber, 103 Exeter Court, Williamsburg, VA 23188.

AUDUBON’S EFFORT TO PROTECT ARCTIC REFUGE

This article is excerpted from a longer message to Audubon Chapters from John Flicker (President of the Audubon Society)

Because of the importance of the Arctic refuge to Audubon I am sending this message to update you on the approach we have taken to protect the refuge from drilling. At present this is Audubon’s top organization-wide advocacy priority.

Audubon has over the last nine months:

Made an Arctic Refuge video for its grassroots network and the public to show what is at stake;

Produced and aired a television commercial urging citizens to contact their lawmakers to protect the Arctic refuge;

Incorporated Arctic Refuge action measures into advocacy workshops;

Established a special “Protect the Arctic” website that presents current updates and background information on the issue and offers opportunities to communicate with members of Congress instantly;

Through Audubon Alaska, worked with scientific community to bolster the case for protection of the Arctic refuge, document the impacts and “footprints” of the oil industry, and bring scientists’ concerns directly to the White House, Congress and the news media.

The House vote 222-206 on August 1 to open the Arctic Refuge to oil drilling should continue to be a wake up call to the entire conservation community. The fight to save the Arctic Refuge is so important that we must give it everything that we’ve got.

In the light of the horrific events of September 11, the Arctic Refuge debate in Congress was delayed and the next steps remain uncertain.

Depending on what happens in Congress in the next couple of weeks, we may have more time to implement a more deliberate Senate strategy to build awareness of and support for protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. We are actively collaborating with other environmental groups to align our approach in these difficult times and will be asking many of you to help.

I encourage you to call, write or e-mail your own senators to encourage them to oppose opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas development. If you need additional information you can go to our Arctic website, www.protectthearctic.com or contact our D.C. office at audubonaction@audubon.org

Signed John Flicker, (President, The Audubon Society)