



THE FLYER

NEWSLETTER OF THE WILLIAMSBURG BIRD CLUB

Volume 27, Number 5

May 2003

NEXT MEETING

The club next meets at 7:30 in Room 117 Millington Hall, William & Mary on Wednesday, May 21. Tom McCary will narrate a slide presentation on the Eastern Bluebird with information on maintaining Bluebird boxes and Bluebird Trails.

APRIL FIELD TRIP

The weather predictions were bad and at 6 a.m. on April 26 just three birders were ready to head for the Great Dismal Swamp: the leader, Brian Taber, Alex Minarik and Carolyn Lowe. Several other bird clubs had scheduled field trips that day and Don Schwab was banding birds, so that the Swamp was a pretty active place. The Williamsburg three identified 57 species, including 16 warblers. As there are fine birding ears among this group, about half of the birds listed were identified by their songs and calls. The warblers included: Prothonotory, Blue-winged, Northern Parula, Yellow-rumped, Yellow-throated, Black and White, Prairie, Pine, Palm, Hooded, Worm Eating, Swainson's, Ovenbird, Louisiana Waterthrush and Northern Waterthrush. That is a pretty impressive list.

ANNUAL PICNIC FEAST, JUNE 8

You like good food? You like a big choice of wonderful deserts? You like beautiful bucolic settings on the edge of a lake? You like hanging out with birders? Well, then plan to come to the Williamsburg Bird Club Annual picnic at the home of Ruth and Sherwin Beck in Barhamsville on Sunday, June 8 at 4 p.m.

You should call Jean Armour at 229-2363 and let

her know that you are coming and discuss what you might contribute to the feast. Jean keeps track of salads, side dishes and deserts and they always seem to work out in just the right proportions. Dress is very casual. Bring your binocs, as there is usually a birding walk-about, or you can sit on the lawn and pick out birds moving across the lake.

Directions: Take Interstate 64 west toward Richmond to exit #227, Route 30 going toward West Point. Follow Rt.30 about three miles to Barhamsville. The center of Barhamsville extends along the road for less than a mile. Look for the firehouse on your right and then immediately start looking for a secondary paved road also going to the right, Rt 273. Follow it for two miles. As the forested area to your right suddenly gives way to open fields, there will be a gravel road to your right with a sign pointing out a hunt club in that direction. Take that road and stay on it and it will eventually become the Beck's driveway.

FIELD NOTES FOR APRIL

You're invited to make reports to Field Notes by contacting Bill Holcombe at 229-8057, or at owljack@aol.com or at 4705 Lady Slipper Path, Williamsburg, Va. 23188.

April 6 – Tom McCary watches four Northern Gannets fish the York River off Yorktown Beach. Brian Taber sees a Ruby-throated Hummingbird zip past his hawk watch station on the James River.

April 7 – Alex Minarik has a Ruby-throated Hummingbird at her feeder.

April 8 – Bill Holcombe has a Hairy Woodpecker on his suet feeder and it returns next day.

April 10 – Jeanne Fry continues her Surry reports, including the information that her Purple Finches

are gone and to point out that when the terrorist alert goes to orange or higher, Hog Island is closed to all recreational activity.

April 13 – Alex Minarik walks the loop at Jamestown Island and finds Northern Parulas, Pine and Yellow-throated Warblers and hears Ovenbirds. Also sees lots of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers and Hermit Thrushes.

April 14 – Brian Taber and Tom Armour watch a Golden Eagle soar past the James River hawk watch station.

April 16 - Alex Minarik walked the Jamestown Island Loop again and had a fine morning. She saw Prairie Warblers, American Redstarts, Common Yellowthroats, Pine Warblers, Northern Parulas and White-eyed Vireos and heard Ovenbirds.

April 20 – Lee Schuster reports her first Wood Thrush and the next day sees her first hummmer.

April 21 – Shirley Devan and Dorothy Whitfield enjoy a beautiful morning on the boardwalk at Greensprings Nature Trail and report Pied-billed Grebe, Red-headed Woodpeckers, Pileated Woodpeckers, Hairy Woodpeckers, Ospreys and the usual neighborhood birds.

April 21 – Bill Holcombe sees his first Wood Thrush in Graylin Woods but hasn't yet heard them.

April 22 – Brian Taber, Tom Armour and Bill Williams at the James River hawk watch station near College Creek had a very special couple of hours. It started with a Glossy Ibis. Then there were five White Pelicans floating on the James River which seemed to spot the birders watching them. They took off in a group right over the heads of the watchers and circled about for a while. Then three more White Pelicans were seen soaring over the river near Hog Island and they eventually seemed to descend into the Hog Island area. The sightings continued with Least Terns, a Broad-winged Hawk and a Merlin. Nearby were a Yellow-throated Warbler, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Clapper Rail, Royal Terns, Barn, Tree and Northern Rough-winged Swallows, plus Chimney Swifts. Listed in the Club's Annotated List as a rare migrant, a White Pelican is seen only irregularly and frequently with lapses of a year or more between sightings. All of that makes the

appearance of these eight most impressive.

April 23 – Tom McCary watches two Horned Larks walking in the furrows of a plowed field at Shirley Plantation.

April 24 – Bill Williams scans the Colonial Parkway and finds Orchard Orioles at Archer's Hope and Fellsgate, Cattle Egret at the Gospel Farm and several Wood Thrushes and Red-eyed Vireos along the way.

April 26 – Marilyn Zeigler has had the very good fortune to see Rose-breasted Grosbeaks come to her feeder with some frequency since one arrived 5/22/94. In '98 one arrived 4/26 and hung around for four days and then one appeared 5/12 – 5/14. One was there 5/11 to 5/15 in '99 and 4/20 to 5/1 in '02. This year one of those beautiful birds arrived 4/26 and stayed 'til the 30th. They also drop by on the return trip in the fall. Marilyn has seen them 10/5/96, 9/20/00 and 9/27/00. She found a dead bird in the yard 10/12/00. The Zeigler home must sit directly on the Rose-breasted Grosbeak flyway!

April 27 – Tom McCary gets a close-up look at two White-crowned Sparrows at Shirley Plantation and then on the 30th sees five more.

April 28 – Lee Schuster sees her first Red-eyed Vireo.

April 29 – Paul Brown has two Rose-breasted Grosbeaks on his seed feeder for the first time ever. On the same day Brian Taber has three Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and it is the first time that they have been seen on his feeder. They were eating thistle seed that had spilled onto his platform feeder and liked it well enough to stay for three days.

Month of April at Camp Peary – Grace and Joe Doyle birded three Sundays with these highlights: 4/6, 1st Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and Yellow-throated Warbler; 4/13, 1st Ovenbird, White-eyed Vireo and Common Yellowthroat; 4/27, a high count of 59 species with 20 Prairie Warblers and nine Red-headed Woodpeckers. Total list of migrants and notables: Pied-billed Grebe, Wood Duck, American Widgeon, Bufflehead, Ruddy Duck, Osprey, Bald Eagle, American Kestrel, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Wood Thrush, White-eyed Vireo, Yellow-throated Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Yellow-throated

Warbler, Pine Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Ovenbird, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow-breasted Chat, Blue Grosbeak, Chipping Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, Orchard Oriole.

Late Flash May 4: Brian Taber watches two Perigrine Falcons pass over his James River hawk watch station.

SURVEY OF VSO EMAIL BIRDLIST

There were almost 400 listings for the month of April. This selection will hopefully illustrate the unfolding of the arrival of the tropical migrants and the disappearance of the winter birds.

4/3 – First Whippoorwill, Buckingham County

4/9 – Cape Charles reports Red-necked Grebe still there also Black-bellied Plovers, a Spotted Sandpiper and Barn Swallows.

4/11 – Hooded Mergansers and Wood Ducks in nesting boxes at Huntley Meadows.

4/11 – Bonaparte's and Laughing Gulls at Stewart's Draft.

4/12 – 1st Ruby-throated Hummingbird arrives in Cape Charles and the winter-long Rufous is still hanging around.

4/12 – 1st Indigo Bunting at the Eastern Shore National Wildlife Refuge.

4/12 – Dulles Wetlands: Circling bald Eagle scares up hundreds of ducks (Wood Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Ducks.) Also seen, Bonaparte's Gulls, Purple Martins, Louisiana Waterthrush and a Purple Finch.

4/13 – James River Park, Richmond: Yellow-throated Warblers, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Common Yellowthroat.

4/13 – Great Falls; Louisiana Waterthrush, Pine warbler, Palm Warbler, Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets.

4/13 – Fauquier County near Warrenton: Prothonotary Warblers, Palm Warblers, Black and White Warblers, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers in large numbers, Horned Larks, Barn, Tree and Northern Rough-winged Swallows.

4/14 – Chesapeake reports 1st Ruby-throated Hummingbird.

4/14 – 1st Chimney Swifts come to Suffolk.

4/14 – Chimney Swifts arrive at Cape Charles, "always arrive on the 14th."

4/14 – CBBT, Red-throated Loon, Black-crowned Night Heron, Parasitic Jaeger harassing terns and gulls.

4/15 – Charlottesville, Ivy Creek Natural Area: Warblers, Palm, Pine, Yellow-throated, Redstart, Blackburnian, Ovenbird and Red-eyed Vireo.

4/15 – Fairfax and Staunton report return of Chimney Swifts.

4/16 – Leesylvania State Park, Prince Williams County: House Wren, Red-eyed Vireo, Ovenbird, Northern Parula, Yellow-throated Warbler, Black and White Warbler, White-eyed Vireo.

4/16 – Gloucester County reports 1st Ruby-throated Hummingbird, three days of Ovenbirds, Louisiana Waterthrush and Black and White Warbler. Indigo Bunting arrives on the 18th.

4/18 – CBBT: Large numbers of Northern gannets streaming along the sides of the road way. 100's of Cormorants heading north.

4/20 – Madison County, White Oak Canyon: 20 Louisiana Waterthrush, Northern Parula, Ovenbirds, Black-throated Green warblers, Black-throated Blue Warblers, Black and White Warbler, Cerulean Warbler.

4/21 – Chincoteague: Red-throated and Common Loons, Clapper Rail, Black-bellied Plovers, Piping Plovers, Dunlin, Common Terns, American Oyster Catchers, Willet, Snowy Egret, Black-necked Stilts, Snow Goose, Glossy Ibis, Brant, Greater Yellowlegs, Purple Martins, Tree and Barn Swallows and a Marsh Wren.

4/22 – American Bittern at Huntley Meadows.

4/24 – Bobolinks in Halifax County.

4/26 – Orange County has White-crowned Sparrows and Grasshopper Sparrows on Marquis Road.

4/27 – First Baltimore Oriole seen in Berryville.

4/29 – West Indian Whistling Duck is seen and photographed in the great Dismal swamp. This is one of the rarest water fowl species in the Western Hemisphere.

4/30 – Blue Ridge Parkway from Afton Mountain and including Rt. 610: Wild Turkey, Ruffed

Grouse, Redstarts, Ovenbirds, Hooded Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Northern Parula, Black and White Warbler, Chestnut Sided Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Wood-pewee and Wood Thrush.

BLUEBIRD TRAIL REPORT

By Shirley Devan, May 4

The birds have been busy at York River State Park this week. In fact box #14 has a complete nest and six Chickadee eggs in just a week! Whew! I'm tired just thinking about it.

Chris and Tony Dion and their daughter Maeve checked the boxes this morning and report 11 nestings and 44 eggs. More Chickadees this year than last. (See spreadsheet next page.)

We've had our first instance of predation in box #3. Last week the female was sitting on what we assumed were four eggs. This week there is no female and no eggs. However, box #4 right next door, has a complete nest. Hard to know what happened but most likely a snake.

The Bluebirds in boxes #13 and 18 should fledge this week.

Dorothy Whitfield has graciously agreed to help "break in" the park's conservation intern by allowing her to tag along on the May 10 or 17 weekends while she's doing the Bluebird box monitoring work. The intern (Shannon) will be there for the next nine to twelve months. Dorothy can always use an extra pair of hands and eyes. The Park is planning to have a bluebird display in the Visitor Center soon and wonders whether our club has any old boxes that have predator guards on them that could be used as a display.

Meanwhile, enjoy Spring and the birds. I have at least two pairs of Wood Thrushes in my yard and they are singing like crazy. What wonderful sounds! *Shirley*

EXCITING DAY NEAR SANTA BARBARA

By Bill Holcombe

Dropped off in a coastal nature preserve just north of Santa Barbara by the ladies who were going

shopping, I had two hours to do some California birding armed with Peterson's Western Bird book. I immediately listed a Ring-necked Turtle Dove. As I walked along the edge of the University of Southern California – Santa Barbara heading for the beach I also had four Brown-headed Flycatchers, apparently fighting over a nesting site, and a 90% certain Bullock's Oriole. (The bird would not turn around.)

But the real excitement was waiting on the beach. I slithered and slid down a steep path off the cliff and as I hit the sand I could not believe what I was seeing — it was a Long-billed Curlew. The length of that bill is enough to test anyone's credulity. Probing along the edge of the surf with it was an Eskimo Curlew. What made my ID so certain was that there were five Whimbrels a short distance away for comparison. They all continued their feeding while I checked my Peterson's Guide.

I would have been happy to call it a day right then and there but when I looked up the beach I saw a long taped-off area. A woman on the upper path had told me to look for Plovers. Binoculars quickly revealed small balls of fluff skittering about in the dry sand behind the tape. My assumption was that these were Piping Plover chicks. However, I saw another woman sitting farther along the beach with a long pole stuck in the sand beside her. She told me that there are no Piping Plovers in California and that I was seeing Snowy Plover chicks. Before I left I had seen seven adults. She was stationed there to chase crows away from the nesting area with the long pole. She mentioned to me that all of the adults tending the chicks were males, as the females leave shortly after laying the eggs. (I'd always thought that only the Phalaropes behaved that way!).

Anyhow, it was a morning that I will long remember with real pleasure.

(You are invited to share your favorite birding stories in The Flyer. The Editors)

4 May 2003

Weather: overcast, low 60s, dull

| Box # | Bluebirds Seen | Empty Nest | Partial Nest | Complete Nest | # Eggs | # Young | Age of Young | # chickadees F. | # bluebrds Flew | Observations -- Sunday, May 4, 2003 |
|--------------|----------------|------------|--------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | 1 | | X | 4 | | | | | | Complete bbird nest assume 4 eggs, female sits tight |
| 2 | | | X | 4 | | | | | | Complete chickadee nest, 4 eggs, female flew out |
| 3 | | | X | 0 | | | | | | No female on nest; no eggs |
| 4 | | | X | | | | | | | |
| 5 | | | X | 4 | | | | | | Female chickadee sits tight |
| 6 | X | | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | X | | | | | | | | | |
| 8 | X | | | | | | | | | |
| 9 | X | | | | | | | | | |
| 10 | X | | | | | | | | | |
| 11 | X | | | | | | | | | |
| 12 | X | | | | | | | | | |
| 13 | | | X | 0 | 1 | ~9d | | | | One bluebird nestling and no other egg |
| 14 | | | X | 6 | | | | | | Full nest & 6 eggs in one week! Busy chickadee! |
| 15 | X | | | | | | | | | |
| 16 | X | | | | | | | | | |
| 17 | X | | | | | | | | | |
| 18 | | | X | | 5 | ~10d | | | | |
| 19 | X | | | | | | | | | |
| 20 | X | | | | | | | | | |
| 21 | X | | | | | | | | | |
| 22 | X | | | | | | | | | |
| 23 | 2 | X | | | | | | | | |
| 24 | X | | | | | | | | | |
| 25 | | | X | 5 | | | | | | |
| 26 | 1 | | X | 5 | | | | | | Female flew out |
| 27 | X | | | | | | | | | |
| 28 | X | | | | | | | | | |
| 29 | | | X | 2 | 2 | ~7d | | | | |
| 30 | 1 | | X | 2 | 3 | 1d | | | | Female flew out |
| 31 | X | | | | | | | | | |
| 32 | 2 | X | | | | | | | | |
| 33 | X | | | | | | | | | |
| 34 | X | | | | | | | | | |
| 35 | X | | | | | | | | | |
| 36 | | | X | 7 | | | | | | Female chickadee flew out |
| 37 | X | | | | | | | | | |
| 38 | | X | | | | | | | | Partial chickadee nest - almost complete |
| 39 | 1 | X | | | | | | | | Partial chickadee nest -- just moss |
| 40 | 2 | | X | 5 | | | | | | Bluebird nest with 5 eggs |
| 41 | X | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | 10 | 25 | 2 | 14 | 44 | 11 | | 0 | 0 | |

Chris & Maeve Dion did the trail boxes; Tony Dion did the road boxes.