



# THE FLYER

NEWSLETTER OF THE WILLIAMSBURG BIRD CLUB

Volume 29, Number 8

Website: [www.wmbgbirdclub.com](http://www.wmbgbirdclub.com)

September 2005

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Alex Minarik

I am not happy unless I can get outside and do something, but for many weeks this summer I rarely ventured outdoors except to retrieve the newspaper and mail or to get to the car. No hiking, camping, birding, or gardening. I had cabin fever... bad! So I went to the library and checked out Mark Obmascik's, The Big Year. (I was away when Tom McCary reviewed the book last year). I ventured vicariously all over the continent with the three protagonists. Their zeal and stamina amazed me. This was birding like I never imagined. I was even able to escape the heat and humidity for a few hours as I read about Attu. But I am glad this summer is almost over and I look forward to my own real adventures in the fall.

## SEPTEMBER 21 MEETING

Plan to join us Wednesday, September 21, at 7:30 p.m. in Room 117 at Millington Hall at William and Mary for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual "Bird Club Book Club." VP of Programs Tom McCary invites you to join him to discuss the book, The Grail Bird: Hot on the Trail of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, by Tim Gallagher. You're invited to share your ideas about the book, the discovery of the long-thought-extinct woodpecker, and the ensuing controversy (since resolved) after the announcement in April.

Also, at the September meeting Club Member Duryea Morton will present his short video of the nesting Great Horned Owl and her owlet filmed last spring at Jamestown Island. Before retiring, Mr. Morton taught in elementary school and was associated with the Audubon Society at a variety of levels for over 20 years including VP of Education at the National Audubon Society for nine years.

## SEPTEMBER 24 FIELD TRIP

Brian Taber will lead the Club's September 24 field trip to the Eastern Shore. We'll bird the Eastern Shore National Wildlife Refuge and visit the Hawk Watch and bird banding station at Kiptopeke State Park. Carpooling is important for this trip because of the tolls on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the Colony Square Shopping Center on Jamestown Road. Bring beverages and a snack and/or lunch.

Looking ahead, the October 22 trip will be to Jamestown Island via the Colonial Parkway. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Colony Square Shopping Center on Jamestown Road. If you don't have an annual pass to Jamestown Island (through National Park Service or the APVA) be prepared to pay \$8 per person at the entrance.

## OCTOBER & NOVEMBER MEETINGS

Mark your calendars! Aimee Weldon, Program Coordinator, Virginia Important Bird Areas, will present the October 19 meeting. George Copping, owner of the local Wild Birds Unlimited, will present the November 16 meeting on "Winter Bird Feeding." Each meeting will be in room 117 at Millington Hall at 7:30 p.m.

## WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED CONTRIBUTION TO CLUB

George and Val Copping, owners of Wild Birds Unlimited, have contributed \$117.50 to the Williamsburg Bird Club. This represents 5% of the purchases by Bird Club members from January – June this year.

Many thanks to George and Val and the staff at

WBU for their support this year and in the past years. Remember: when you purchase items at the store, remember to identify yourself as a bird club member so that a portion of your purchase will be set aside for the club. Thanks to all!

## **SEPTEMBER 17 HARVEST MOON DINNER DANCE AT YRSP**

The Williamsburg Classic Swing Band and a Gourmet Buffet Dinner under a full moon will highlight the Harvest Moon Dinner Dance at York River State Park Saturday, September 17. Proceeds from this event will benefit Friends of York River State Park, which provides funding for the park's interpretive and educational programs, trails, and exhibits. Call 566-3036 for information or credit card purchase of tickets -- \$55 per person, tax-deductible.

## **BIRDING NEW QUARTER PARK**

York County Parks and the Center for Conservation Biology at W&M are sponsoring three free birding opportunities at New Quarter Park. Bill Williams will lead morning walks Saturday, September 17 and October 15. Meet at 7:00 a.m. near the park office and parking lot for the two hour walk along Queens Creek. Saturday, October 1, Bill will lead an "owl prow" in the park from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. These are free events but registration is required at 890-3500.

## **THE 11TH ANNUAL CVWO KIPTOPEKE CHALLENGE**

By Brian Taber

This increasingly popular bird-a-thon will be held September 17. Paul Nasca, Aimee Weldon and I will have a "Wild Birds Unlimited of Williamsburg" team – thanks to George and Val Copping!

Much of the yearly operating budget for CVWO is gained through this 24 hour birding challenge. Volunteers participate by either raising funds or joining a team which obtains sponsors. All proceeds go toward field research and public education.

All Club members are once again invited to make a pledge to a team or other donation to the event. There's more info on the website at [www.cvwo.org](http://www.cvwo.org) and people can contact me through the web site, or my regular e-mail, [taberzz@aol.com](mailto:taberzz@aol.com) or mail me at 103 Exeter Court, Williamsburg 23185. CVWO greatly appreciates all pledges of support and teams will send each donor a report of the day.

## **AUGUST BIRD SIGHTINGS**

*Report your backyard birds and local sightings to Shirley Devan at 220-6269 (home phone) or [sedevan52@cox.net](mailto:sedevan52@cox.net) (home email). If you encounter interesting birds on your vacation/travels, please share!*

**August 7:** Eleanor Young reports from the Hampton Roads Bird Club's bi-monthly bird walk at Newport News Park: 21 species including Red-headed Woodpeckers, Purple Martins, Gadwalls, Bald Eagles, Black-and-white Warbler.

**August 7:** Joe and Grace Doyle report 49 species on their weekly field trip to Camp Peary. Highlights include: Mallard (only time seen in August!), Red-tailed Hawk, Greater Yellowlegs, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Red-headed Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Eastern Phoebe, Great-crested Flycatcher, Purple Martin, both nuthatches, Wood Thrush, Field Sparrow and Common Grackle.

**August 10:** Tom McCary hears Bobwhite Quail calling and a singing Indigo Bunting at Shirley Plantation in the morning and evening.

**August 14:** Alex Minarik reports two Carolina Wrens fledged from her window box (one egg did not hatch).

**August 14:** Bill Williams reports a single Cooper's Hawk at the Green Springs Trail.

**August 14:** Joe and Grace Doyle report 43 species on their weekly field trip to Camp Peary. Highlights include: Bald Eagle, Clapper Rail, Belted Kingfisher, Northern Flicker, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and Pine Warbler.

**August 16:** Bill Williams reports a single Cooper's Hawk in Settler's Mill.

**August 17:** Alex Minarik reports a Prothonotary Warbler in the back yard.

**August 19:** Alex Minarik saw a male Hooded Warbler on the railing of the deck and then at a feeder in the back yard this evening. "This was the first Hooded-Warbler for my yard!"

**August 20:** Jeanne and Gil Frey in Surry County report: "After a wonderful summer of kayaking on the James watching all the osprey and eagle activity, had a change of pace today. Moments ago, a neighbor called me to report seeing a Prothonotary Warbler at his home today. As we were discussing the field marks, I looked out the kitchen solarium and spotted a pair of them at our backyard feeder and adjacent tree. Beautiful gold!!!!"

**August 20:** Alex Minarik saw a male Hooded Warbler (same bird?) in the back yard for several hours this a.m. Also saw a Yellow-throated Vireo in the back yard, singing off and on during the

morning hours.

**August 21:** Joe and Grace Doyle report 45 species on their weekly field trip to Camp Peary.

Highlights include: Mute Swan, Common Tern, Red-headed Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Eastern Kingbird, both nuthatches and Gray Catbird.

**August 21:** Alex Minarik saw a Red-shouldered Hawk sitting on one of the bird feeders this afternoon.

**August 21:** Eleanor Young reports from the Hampton Roads Bird Club's bi-monthly bird walk at Newport News Park: 17 species White-throated Sparrows, Chipping Sparrows, Mockingbirds, White-breasted Nuthatches (large numbers with a lot of twittering and songs) and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds.

**August 21:** Bill Williams reports an adult White Ibis at the Green Springs Trail during the early morning.

**August 24:** Alex Minarik reports "a Prothonotary Warbler landed 8 feet from me on my back deck rail; also saw an American Redstart, a Wood Thrush and a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher in the yard."

**August 25:** Dave Goff reports female American Redstart working shrubs and trees behind his house.

**August 27:** Tom McCary hears a Great Horned Owl hooting (many hoots!) in his neighborhood near the College at 7:30 p.m.

**August 28:** Bill Williams reports at the Green Springs Trail there were 2 male Hooded Warblers and 2 American Redstarts.

**August 28:** Joe and Grace Doyle report 40 species on their weekly field trip to Camp Peary.

Highlights include: Double-crested Cormorant, Black Vulture, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Pine Warbler and Blue Grosbeak.

## **2005 PURPLE MARTIN NEST BOX SURVEY – A FIRST GLIMPSE**

Bill Williams, Center for Conservation Biology  
At the May bird club meeting information was presented that indicated our local Purple Martin population had declined significantly based on analysis of more than 25 years of annual Spring Bird counts. A request was made to the club to look for Purple Martin houses throughout the summer and to report the findings to me at the Center for Conservation Biology. A summary of the data as of the third week of August appears on page 5 of this newsletter.

Many thanks to Cynthia and Bob Long for their information on the South Henry Street and Queens Lake martins, and to Bill Snyder for reporting the martins on Sandy Bay Road. All other information was garnered by driving through neighborhoods searching for martins and/or martin boxes. Clearly

there are many areas that went unexplored.

The preliminary results produced a total of 38 Purple Martin boxes in 22 community locations with a maximum of 158 birds.

Please let me know at 221-7741 or [jwwil2@wm.edu](mailto:jwwil2@wm.edu) if you have additional data to add to this initial effort.

## **AUGUST 27 FIELD TRIP TO CRANEY ISLAND**

By Bill Williams and Tom Armour

The club's 27 August 2005 Beck Trek to Craney Island proved to be exceptionally productive despite overcast skies and intermittent rain showers. Thirteen participants and guests recorded 56 bird species as well as roadside views of a large pod of Atlantic Porpoise which frolicked and fed less than 100 meters away. Bird highlights included a most cooperative Sora, 22 American Avocets, 4 Black-necked Stilts, a fly-by Buff-breasted Sandpiper, 10 Wilson's and 2 Red-necked Phalaropes, a White-rumped Sandpiper, several Spotted Sandpipers and hundreds of Lesser Yellowlegs. The show of the morning was performed by hatch-year female Peregrine Falcon which made sport of chasing an Osprey which was carrying not one, but two small fish, a sight to behold all on its own! The group also got scope-filled views of Brown Pelicans, Caspian and Royal Terns, Bank Swallows, Black-bellied Plovers, Short-billed Dowitchers, and a single Pectoral Sandpiper. We had a group of 13 birders including Ruth Beck (leader), Mitchell Byrd, Bill Williams, Pat Eaton, Barbara Rockwell, David Lee, Phyllis Lee, Marilyn Zeigler, Eleanor Young, Linda Scherer and our Club President Alex Minarik.

## **THE HUMMINGBIRD ESCAPEDE**

By Herb Spannuth

What started as a morning of painting shelves in my garage ended at 11:45 p.m. that evening with a hummingbird catch and release. What did he say? On one of the many recent hot mornings, I painted several shelves in our garage, turned on a fan to speed up the drying process, and then left both overhead doors open all day. About 8 p.m. I closed the doors and relaxed for the rest of the evening, or so I thought. About 11 p.m. I went into the garage to turn off the fan before going to sleep. As soon as I entered the garage I recognized the chatter and buzzing of a hummingbird above my head. At the ceiling light was a female hummingbird. I immediately called Beverly and told her we had a surprise guest that she might want to meet. Our captive hummer had obviously come into the garage and had perched somewhere

on high, and I had not seen or heard it before I closed the overhead doors.

Then started a comedy of errors that lasted for the next 45 minutes. We opened both overhead doors and waited, thinking the hummer couldn't wait to leave, but she did not. Next we turned off the inside lights and turned on the outside light thinking that would get her to drop down from the ceiling and head toward the outside light, but no such luck. Meanwhile she was buzzing around near the ceiling and had no apparent interest in coming lower to fly out the open doors. The next step was to get the hummingbird feeder out of the back yard and put it in full view to entice her to leave her perch on the garage door supports near the ceiling. She obviously was enjoying her stay and didn't feel the need to feed. Finally after 30 minutes of these unsuccessful attempts to get her away from the ceiling, we thought of another approach – we would hold up a bamboo pole we had in the garage and hopefully she would perch on it, and we could point her toward the open doors. She seemed somewhat interested in the pole and finally moved to it and perched on its tip. Ah, we thought, this will now be easy. We'll lower the pole slowly, hold it close to the open door and off she'll go. Wrong again. For 5 or 6 attempts she perched on the pole – we lowered it very slowly, but she flew off and again headed toward the ceiling. By this time I guess she was getting as tired of this game as we were. She perched on the pole again, we lowered it very slowly, finally getting her near the open door and away she went.

We are again enjoying her visits and those of several other hummers to our feeders without the additional drama, but we now quickly check the garage for hummingbirds after having the doors open for any length of time.

We once had a Carolina Wren spend a night in our home unknown to us until we heard it singing the following morning – however, this is the first hummingbird.

Just another relaxing night at home!

Cristol explained Joy's gift: "Joy was a leader in the local birding community for many years and she wasn't just into it for her own pleasure. She loved birds, but she wanted to give something back. She was always trying to organize conservation projects through the Williamsburg Bird Club. Some people love birds because they're beautiful. Joy loved them because they are bellwethers of the environmental problems we face."

## **JOY ARCHER MEMORIAL ENDOWMENT AT W&M**

In February 2005 the Board of Visitors at William and Mary established the Mary Joy Archer Environmental Science Fund to benefit the College's environmental science programs. Joy Archer, active club member and past President of the Williamsburg Bird Club, provided two very generous gifts to the College in her estate. The interest from the endowment will be used for student awards to fund student/faculty research teams and for other special projects. Donations to the endowment can be added at any time. Dan



## Preliminary Purple Martin Nest Box Survey-2005

Date	Community	Location	Boxes	Status
7 June	City of Williamsburg Queens Lake	South Henry Street	1	16 Martins
		West Queens Drive near dam	1	4 Martins
8 June	Land Fall Jamestown 1607 Cardinal Acres Dr Foxfield Pointe at Jamestown  Drummond's Field  Hubbard Lane Penniman Rd/Rt.143 Rt. 143 James Terrace  Off Penniman Road		0	
		3200 Block	1	House Sparrows
			0	
			0	
		Yeardeley Loop/4663 Sir Gilbert	1	4-8 Martins
		Manion Drive	1	16 Martins
		Mott Lane	1	House Sparrows
			5	10-12 Martins
		BP Gas Station	2	24 Martins
		Short Stop	1	undetermined
		Junc Lee/Jackson Drive	1	undetermined
		Corner Adams/Tyler	2	undetermined
		14 Monument Avenue	1	undetermined
		100 Wickre Street	1	undetermined
16 June	Eastern State Hospital Skipwith Farms	Galt Drive	1	4-8 Martins
		Longhill Road at Rec. Center	3	undetermined
		Longhill Road @ Robert Elife	1	undetermined
		Route 60 @ Longhill Road	1	12-18 Martins
		Route 60	3	24-30 Martins
18 June	Anderson's Corner Toano	Church Lane	3	undetermined
29 June	Middletown Farms		1	undetermined
9 July	Governor Spotswood Inn	Richmond Road	1	8-12 Martins
13 July	Sandy Bay Road	Sandy Bay Road	2-3	15-20
31 July	Near Unitarian church	Ironbound Road	2	undetermined
Total			37-38	~158