



The Flyer

Newsletter of the Williamsburg Bird Club

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www.williamsburgbirdclub.org

February 2014

President's Corner

By Geoff Giles



Wow! What a winter. Each week we seem to go back and forth between shirtsleeves and long underwear, with unusually abrupt changes of temperature. Two lovely snowfalls in one winter is quite a treat, or a tribulation, depending on whether you

need to travel or can stay snugly at home. Our planned boat trip to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel islands and mouth of the Chesapeake was greeted with weather that was wintry cold and too windy to take the boat out. The captain was as sad as the birding crew to be grounded, so we will try for milder seas on 16 February, when we try again to get out to admire the bay and sea waterfowl and mammals. Most of our trusty crew from the first attempt has signed up already!

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February 19 Meeting

Join us Wednesday, February 19, 2014, to learn all about Osprey, one of the most visible raptors in our area from March – August. The program begins at 7:30 pm in Andrews Hall Room 101.

Libby Mojica, a Research Biologist and Operations Manager at the Center for Conservation Biology, at W&M & VCU, will be our speaker. Libby has a B.S. in Biology from Trinity University, and a M.S. in Forestry and Natural Resources from the University of Georgia.



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Libby's research at CCB focuses on the conservation and management of raptor populations in the Chesapeake Bay, Atlantic flyway, and beyond. She's currently conducting research projects on Bald Eagles, Golden Eagles, Peregrine Falcons, Ospreys, and Crowned Solitary Eagles. She also coordinates the OspreyWatch and Richmond Eagle Nest Camera programs. Libby helps plan and implement new tracking programs on raptors, shorebirds, and waterbirds.

Learn how you can be an "Osprey Watcher" and help Libby monitor the many Osprey nests in our area. Remember your parking permit!

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Wild Birds Unlimited

Don't forget that the WBC receives a 5% rebate on the pre-tax amount our Club members spend at Wild Birds Unlimited in Monticello Marketplace. You do have to let them know you are a member.

February 15 Field Trip to Dutch Gap

On Saturday, February 15, the Bird Club is sponsoring a field trip to the Dutch Gap Conservation Area in Chesterfield. The Park is 810 acres of diverse woods, wetlands and wildlife. Bordered by the beautiful and scenic James River, the area includes a blue heron rookery in the marsh.

Winter ducks will be the focus at this county park where we'll have excellent views of waterfowl such as Wood Ducks, Ring-neck Ducks, Gadwalls, American Wigeons, American Coots, Northern Shovelers, and more. We likely will also have great views of Bald Eagles and perhaps a wintering Osprey, plus Wilson's snipe (perhaps) and a variety of winter songbirds.

Bring your spotting scope if you have one so we can enjoy views from the observation platforms adjacent to the marsh. Then we'll walk a portion of the trail behind the Visitor Center that takes us along bottomlands, meadows, a small pond and wetlands and circumnavigates the Tidal Lagoon.

Here is the web site for the park:
<http://www.chesterfield.gov/Parks.aspx?id=6442454866> The address is: 411 Coxendale Road Chester, VA 23836

For those wishing to carpool, we will depart Colony Square Shopping Center (just South of the intersection of Rt. 199 and Jamestown Road) at 8:00 AM, rain or shine. We plan to start birding at Dutch Gap at approximately 9:30 AM. If you wish to drive on your own, the waterfowl viewing platforms are located along Coxendale Road - we will find you there. This trip has no space limitations and there is no need to sign up. Just come join us for what should be a great morning of birding. We hope to see you there! Questions: Call Jim Corliss, 565-0536.

Annual Membership Dues are Due

Many of you have renewed for 2014 and donated extra funds for Nature Camp Scholarships, ornithology grants for the W&M grad students, and birdseed at Child Development Resources. THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

We want to hear from the rest of you! While you're thinking about it, pull out your checkbook and write a check for your 2014 dues:

- \$35 for Patron
- \$25 for Family
- \$15 for Individual
- \$5 for Student

Add a bit more for the Nature Camp scholarships, grad student grants, and CDR bird seed. Then mail to WBC, PO Box 1085, Williamsburg, VA 23187. Your support means a lot. Thanks.

Reported Sightings for January

We want to know what you're seeing in your yard and travels. Please share with Club members by sending your sightings to Fred Blystone, 229-4346, fredblystone@gmail.com or Shirley Devan, 813-1322, sedevan52@cox.net

January 1: New Year's Day Boardwalk Bird Show at Greensprings Trail finally tallied 30 species and 37 birders! A great start to 2014.

January 4: Chris Monahan reports: "A walking tour of college woods, campus and CW on January 4th, picked up 25 species and my first life bird of the year, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet.

January 9: Shaune Reams reports: "I identified several ducks on Queens Lake – ringed-necks, redheads, gadwalls and some pied billed grebes. The majority of the ducks were ringed necked-probably about 30. Total ducks around 40. Mid week we saw two bald eagles sitting next to each other at the tip of a poplar tree across the lake from us. Such majestic birds!"

January 13: Chris Monahan birded the York River, including York River State Park, Yorktown and Grand View Nature Preserve. "I saw 50 species, including 15 species of duck! Duck highlights included amazing views of 4 Bufflehead, 3 Hooded Mergansers and 2 Lesser Scaup, about 10-20 yards away from me and perfectly lit by the winter sun, all on the tiny man-made pond between Middle Street and Treyburn Drive, about a block from my house (just behind High Street in Williamsburg). [Just a note - the Lesser Scaup were gone the next day, that pond is surely too small to support them for long.] Black Scoters and a single White-winged Scoter at Grand View and a female Ring-necked Duck at Queen's Lake were the three life birds of the day for me.

January 14: George and Virginia Boyles report Greater Yellowlegs at Messick Point in Poquoson. "We often go there--since it's close to us and the Bull Island Eats & Treats does good breakfast!" Virginia Boyles's photo of the Greater Yellowlegs is on page 6.

January 21: Dan Cristol reports 200 Rusty Blackbirds gathering to fly to a roost at 5PM in front of Swem library on the W&M campus - a high for the year. The birds are seen in smaller numbers every afternoon between Phi Beta Kappa Hall and William & Mary Hall.

January 21: Shirley Devan reports a Pine Warbler at her feeder station, bulking up before the snowstorm. A first for the year and her feeder station.

January 22: Dan Cristol reports, "Black-and-white warbler today, at the intersection of Jamestown and Richmond Roads on the W&M campus. (Probably the same bird as during CBC week, also on the W&M campus near the same place.)

January 22: Kathi Mestayer reports from College Woods "a pair of bald eagles flying low, through the trees, a tufted titmouse, a great blue heron, a bufflehead, a yellow-bellied sapsucker."

January 23: Mitchell Byrd reports: "January 23, I drove the Colonial Parkway from the entrance road to Jamestown Island to Williamsburg. I counted 127 pipits, 7 fox sparrows, and 4 hermit thrushes. Did not attempt to count the myriads of white throated sparrows, juncos, and cardinals."

January 25: Jim Corliss relays a report from his son at William and Mary: "My son sent me a photo today of five male Redheads he found on Lake Matoaka, viewed from the boat rental dock behind the business school. Since they're not particularly common around here, I just wanted you to know in case anyone needs it for a year list."

January 26: Shirley Devan reports 42 species at Chickahominy Riverfront Park including several Wilson's Snipe and a Greater Yellowlegs in the frozen marsh.

January 27: Lois Leeth reports from Florida: "18 Coots, 4 mallards, 1 great Blue Heron, 5 Great Egrets, 5 Snowy Egrets, 3 Wood Storks, 16 White Ibis, 10 Double-crested Cormorants, a pair of Hooded Mergansers. Why the gulls gather in a very large group in the middle of the pond I will never know.

January 28: Shaune Reams reports: "Today, we watched a red-shouldered hawk perched on a tree branch near the Queens Lake. He stayed there for about 15 minutes, which was good because we weren't completely sure if he was another type of hawk. But the other thing that was interesting was watching a mockingbird perched on a branch next to him to check him out. In the meantime there were all kinds of small birds feeding completely at ease with him seated so close to their feeding area. Only saw one squirrel, which the hawk ignored and flew in the opposite direction from where the squirrel was eating.

President's Corner, continued

In the meantime, in our area intermittent ice has made duck spotting challenging at times. Nevertheless, there have been some beautiful ducks around, including goldeneyes, canvasbacks and redheads. Very large flocks of Canada geese have been in the area, and have been joined by the occasional cackling goose, Ross's goose or greater white-fronted goose, so keep your eyes peeled. If you are headed towards Chincoteague to the east or Mackay Island to the south, better take your abacus along to count the huge flocks of snow geese. And happily, this year's stars, snowy owls, are still a possibility – particularly in coastal dunes, large agricultural fields and around airfields. And while you're near those large fields, look closely at the stubble for movement. Among the sparrows there are a fair number of American pipits and horned larks just now!

On the homefront, our regular winter visitors have settled into routines, minus the pine siskins and red-breasted nuthatches that wintered with us last year. Looking over my laptop at the activity in my yard I am pleased to see that my modest efforts to improve my habitat offerings for the birds are having some positive impact. My resident yellow-bellied sapsucker has been faithfully constructing and feeding from his sapwells in the holly trees on the left and right of my dining room window. When he is away an impatient male ruby-crowned kinglet comes and raids the sapwells, presumably for both the sap and the insects attracted to it at the wells. He is joined by a flitting yellow-rumped warbler and a tufted titmouse, and even a squirrel!

The assortment of native shrubs and small trees I have planted are serving as perches for birds visiting the feeder and water source, and were already a hit with this year's birds as a source of berries and caterpillars to feed nestlings. These include serviceberries, alternate-leaf dogwoods, viburnums, a sour gum, beautyberries and more. I let a small patch in a corner "go wild" and berries sprouted there on their own last year. I have been surprised at the wrens, thrashers, cardinals, sparrows, juncos and hermit thrush that have flocked to that little patch to forage this winter. I have also prepared the ground for a butterfly garden along my back fence next spring, by covering an area of newspaper with mulch for the winter to get the weeds out, sans chemicals. Can't wait for spring!

This week I hosted some neighborhood moms with their children, eight and under (youngest was a precocious two!!) to come to my living room for a home school session on our local birds. Nothing like watching and listening to the birds while learning about them. This was very enjoyable for all, and feedback from the moms was that some trips to Wild Birds Unlimited to buy feeder stations are in plans and some enthusiastic young birders seem to be on the way. Speaking of young birders, I recently read that you truly do something for nature, by planting a tree whose shade you yourself will never get to enjoy. Hmmm. That got me thinking. My premise has been to plant what will bring berries, fruit and shade while I am still able to enjoy their contributions to nature. Come to think of it, what's wrong with passing along the enjoyment of those natural treasures to those who come after us? Nothing, that I can see. So it's more native tree and shrub plantings ahead for me!! No need to wait in Williamsburg. You can plant in the winter here, and have a great chance of enjoying a productive tree or shrub by spring! Enjoy!



Photo by Barbara Rathbun. Brown Thrasher

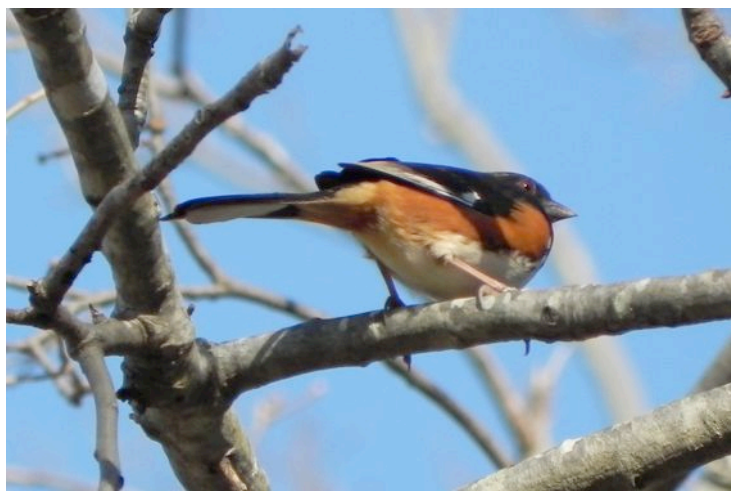


Photo by George Boyles. Eastern Towhee Jan 19

Winners of the Bird Club's Nature Camp Scholarships

The winners of the 2014 Bill Williams Nature Camp Scholarships are Audrey Root and South McDowell. Audrey has received a scholarship from the Bird Club before. She is currently a 7th grader at Hornsby Middle School. South is a 5th grader at Rawls Byrd Elementary School and this will be his first year at Nature Camp.

The Club received 17 applications – the most ever received and each one was impressive and persuasive. The five reviewers were: Mary Anne Fennell, Geoff Giles, Deane Gordon, Sharon Plocher, and Lee Schuster. Each application was “blinded” so reviewers were not aware of the identity of the student or the parents. Reviewers considered each student’s essay and the teacher’s recommendation. As the reviewers noted, all applicants deserve to go to Nature Camp!

Many thanks to the Club’s reviewers and congratulations to the students! We hope to hear from Audrey and Nash in the fall at one of our Club meetings.

Christmas Birding at Kiawah Island, SC

By Patti Ralabate

I wanted to share a recent adventure. While my family enjoyed Christmas week at Kiawah Island, SC, I had the opportunity to go birding twice with the local naturalist and bird expert Matt Arnold. With the aid of his keen eye and ear, we saw 51 species and I added 12 birds to my life list.

Here's what we saw: Hooded Mergansers, Red-breasted Mergansers (life list), Common Loons, a Northern Gannet, flocks of Brown Pelicans, several Great Blue Herons, Little Blue Herons, a Tricolor Heron, a juvenile White Ibis, an Osprey, Bald Eagle, a Cooper's Hawk, American Oystercatchers, a Black-bellied Plover, Semi-palmated Plovers, a Willet, a Red Knot, Dunlin, a Killdeer, numerous Bonaparte's Gulls, Laughing Gulls, and Great Black-backed Gulls, a Caspian Tern, several Forster's Terns (life list), a flock of Black Skimmers (life list), Buffleheads, a Ruddy Duck (life list), Double-crested Cormorants, Great Egrets, a Snowy Egret, a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, a Belted Kingfisher, Tree Swallows, a Red-bellied Woodpecker, a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (life list), a Downy Woodpecker, Eastern Phoebe,

Northern Cardinals, Red-winged Blackbirds, Blue Jays, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet (life list), a flock of CedarWaxwing, numerous Yellow-rumped Warblers, a Nelson's/Saltmarsh Sparrow (life list) and a Seaside Sparrow (life list), Carolina Chickadees and Carolina Wrens.

The biggest treat of all was finding these life list birds: a Loggerhead Shrike (in a tree on the golf course), a flock of Redheads with a Canvasback floating along with them, and a Green Heron (picture below).

It was unforgettable!





Photo by Virginia Boyles. Greater Yellowlegs, January 14 at Messick Point.



Photo by Inge Curtis. Bald Eagle.

Great Backyard Bird Count – February 14 – 17, 2014

New York, N.Y. and Ithaca, N.Y. —From Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, bird watchers from more than 100 countries are expected to participate in the 17th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), February 14–17, 2014.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are.

Everyone is welcome—from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event. It's FREE, fun, and easy—and it helps the birds.

Participants tally the number of individual birds of each species they see during their count period. They enter these numbers on the GBBC website, www.BirdCount.org. The information gathered by tens of thousands of volunteers helps track the health of bird populations at a scale that would not otherwise be possible. The GBBC is a joint project of the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](http://www.CornellLabofOrnithology.org) and the [National Audubon Society](http://www.NationalAudubonSociety.org) with partner [Bird Studies Canada](http://www.BirdStudiesCanada.org).

The Great Backyard Bird Count is a great way for people of all ages and backgrounds to connect with nature and make a difference for birds. To learn more about how to join the count visit www.birdcount.org and view the winning photos from the 2013 GBBC photo contest.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is made possible in part by sponsor [Wild Birds Unlimited](http://www.WildBirdsUnlimited.org).

Locally, the Williamsburg Bird Club will lead a Bird Walk at York River State Park Saturday, February 15, at 1:00 pm. This event is open to all! The park's parking fee of \$3.00 per car applies.

The Virginia Living Museum's Birding Cup – April 11-12, 2014

The annual Birding Cup event encourages people to go outdoors, breathe in fresh air, walk, look and listen throughout the Peninsula's wild and not so wild areas for as many different species of birds as possible within a 24 hour period.

When: April 11, 6:30pm - April 12, 6:30pm. Registration deadline: March 24 at 4:30pm. (Late registrations with no T-shirt accepted through April 10 at 4:30pm).

Categories: The Birding Cup or the Hawkeye Award. The Hawkeye award is for teams where the majority of birders have less than two years of birding experience.

How: Form a team of three to five people and choose your team name, team category and contribution goal. All contributions are tax deductible. Individuals that raise at least \$50 are eligible for raffled prizes. Prizes will be given to the teams that count the most species within their category and the teams with the highest amount of contributions.

Register by March 24 to receive a free, custom designed T-shirt. All registered participants can enjoy a light buffet and awards presentation at the Museum at the event's conclusion.

Where: Teams may count in any or all of the following six areas: Newport News, York County, Hampton, Poquoson, Williamsburg and James City County.

Registration: <http://www.thevlm.org/Birding-Cup-Registration.aspx>

Looking for Snowy Owls at Chincoteague

By Dave Wilcox

January 25: "We headed over to the causeway first thing this morning. It was mighty cold (25 degrees) and windy (25-30 mph) so we didn't venture too far from the car. We scoped the marsh and all the clumps sticking up from the causeway to no avail. Then we headed over to the refuge and caught a female common merganser (sorry for the blurry photo) along the way to the beach. Lots of gadwall, swans, and geese in Swan's Cove Pool, but no snowy owls there either. We parked near the beach turn around and I battled the gale all the way to the Coast Guard station on Tom's Cove, but didn't see any owls there either and the surf was too rough to identify much though my frozen eyes. All the snow didn't make it any easier to find a white owl!



Photo by Fred Blystone. Taken along Colonial Parkway, January 23, 2014

January Bird Walks at New Quarter Park

January 11, 2014

Leader Jim Corliss and four birders enjoyed a warm (62 degrees), overcast morning with intermittent light drizzle, and calm winds. The group observed 25 species and a mysterious flock of “blackbirds” that COULD have been female Red-winged Blackbirds, but no one was willing to commit! Four Clapper Rails were heard from the floating dock. In the photo below, left to right: Jan Lockwood, Shirley Devan, Jim Corliss, Sara Lewis, Joyce Lowry.



January 25, 2014

Leader Bill Williams reports that he and four hearty birders “struggled to find any birds. Excellent looks at the Greater Scaup and the very surprising Savannah Sparrow. The latter flushed from the parking lot edge and landed briefly!” What a difference two weeks makes: 21-23 degrees, overcast, southwest wind at 15-20 mph with higher gusts, snow on the ground, Queen's Creek partially frozen. Outgoing tide. One muskrat seen. Participants: Andy Hawkins; Cheryl Jacobson; Jan Lockwood; Rock Moeslein. No photo taken this day.

February bird walks at New Quarter Park will be February 8 (8 am) and February 22 (7 am). All are welcome.

Member Photos



Photo by Inge Curtis. Yellow-rumped Warbler



Photo by Janet Scoggins. Leucistic Red-tail Hawk,
January 6, 2014. Powhatan State Park



Photo by Judy Jones. Red-tailed Hawk



Photo by Virginia Boyles. Clapper Rail at Messick Point
January 2, 2014

Many thanks to all who responded to the request for photos! Not enough room for all in the newsletter! Look for more on the web site: www.williamsburgbirdclub.org

Bird ID Photos

By Joe Piotrowski

This feature is only on the website and in the electronic version of *The Flyer*. The answer to this month's "puzzle" will be given in the next electronic newsletter, as well as on the website.

Photo for February



January's photo was of a Willet

CALENDAR

Saturday, February 8	Williamsburg Bird Club (WBC) Bird Walk, New Quarter Park, 8 am. Hugh Beard, Leader
Thursday, February 13	HRBC Monthly Meeting. Breeding Bird Surveys in VA. Presented by Sergio Harding, VA Dept of Game and Inland Fisheries. See http://www.hamptonroadsbirdclub.org/index.asp for more details
Saturday, February 15	WBC Field Trip to Dutch Gap. See page 2 for details.
Saturday, February 15	Bird Walk at York River State Park to celebrate Great Backyard Bird Count, 1 pm. See page 5 for details.
Sunday, February 16	HRBC Bird Walk at Newport News Park. 7 am. Jane Frigo, Leader
Wednesday, February 19	WBC Monthly Meeting. See page 1 for details
Saturday, February 22	WBC Bird Walk, New Quarter Park, 8 am. Jim Corliss, Leader
Sunday, March 2	HRBC Bird Walk at Newport News Park. 7 am. Jane Frigo, Leader
Sunday, May 4	Spring Bird Count. Save this date. More info coming in March and April newsletters