



# The Flyer

## Newsletter of the Williamsburg Bird Club

Vol. 38, No. 7

[www.williamsburgbirdclub.org](http://www.williamsburgbirdclub.org)

September 2014

### President's Corner

By Geoff Giles



Hi birding friends! Hope you have enjoyed a great summer and are ready for a change of seasons. A few hot and humid days go a long way towards getting us ready for fall, eh? It has been nice to have a stream of warblers migrating through since about mid August. They have been foraging for moth larva on the deciduous tree leaves behind my yard daily, and have put on quite a show. The ones that have been out in the open enough for me to get a decent look at them include American redstarts, yellow warblers, pine warblers, blackpolls, a chestnut warbler and one blue-winged warbler. The latter came to within five feet of my house, seemingly fixated on pursuit of gnats or aphids among tree leaves. A Labor Day visit to Hog Island turned up migrating warblers there as well. Mixed flocks in low trees and along roadsides included northern parulas, pines, redstarts, blackpolls and at least one mourning warbler. Cool to see these birds coming through, and to know that other birds that winter with us are surely not far behind!

We can look forward to not just new birds coming through, but some new birders joining us as well. Nick Newberry has organized a bird club at William and Mary, and they have already taken to the field to spot migrant warblers on campus. Hopefully the new birders in our midst will find the time to join us for meetings and for some cool field trips this year. You can hear what's in store for upcoming field trips at our first fall meeting, on the evening of Wednesday, 17 September. We will meet as usual in Andrews Hall on the W&M campus (behind Phi Beta Kappa Hall) at 7:30 PM. We will hand out new campus parking passes for this year's meeting nights at that meeting. Dan Cristol will be our guest speaker and will bring us up to date on recent findings from ongoing studies of atmospheric mercury on our birds. This is an unfolding story with implications for our own health, as well as its impact on our natural world. Don't miss this one!!

Our local breeding birds seem to have had a good year, judging by the number of hatch year birds in evidence. In

*(continued on page 4)*

### September Meeting



The September meeting will be held at 7:30 PM on Wednesday the 17th. Dan Cristol will present a program on Birds and Pollution, focusing on his own lab's work with mercury pollution in the Shenandoah Valley. Dan is a Biology Professor at William and Mary and is a member of the Williamsburg Bird Club. His areas of specialization are Animal Behavior, Behavioral Ecology, Ornithology and Ecotoxicology.

If you go to the website <http://www.environmentalhealth-news.org/ehs/news/2014/aug/wingedwarnings4heavy-metal-songs> you will read about some of the research being done by Dan and some of his students.

Refreshments will be provided by Lois Ullman and Jan Lockwood.

**The meeting will be in Andrews Hall, Room 101. Please be sure to display your parking permit on the dashboard of your car.**

**September Field Trip**

### September Field Trip

Our September 20th field trip will be to one of our local hotspots, Newport News Park. This is an



excellent location for both experienced and novice birders. The wide range of habitat, from woodlands to open fields, and wetlands to open water, attracts an impressive diversity of birds, even during the late summer months. We'll plan to meet at the Colony Square Shopping Center on Jamestown Road at 7:30 AM to carpool to the park. For those wishing to drive on their own, please meet us at 8:00 AM in the

## Officers

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## Wild Birds Unlimited

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

parking lot near the Ranger Station (not the Park Headquarters). If you are unsure where the Ranger Station is located, then please contact Jim Corliss at [jcorliss240@cox.net](mailto:jcorliss240@cox.net). This will be a nice trip to kick off our autumn birding adventures. We hope to see you there!

## Welcome to New Members

Daniel Keener and Catherine Dix Allen

## Donation from Wild Birds Unlimited



Photo by Shirley Devan

The Williamsburg Bird Club recently received a check for \$800 from Wild Birds Unlimited at Monticello Marketplace here in Williamsburg! This generous donation from George and Val Copping, owners of WBU, represents a 5% rebate to the Club for all purchases by our members for a 6-month period. George and Val have supported our Bird Club since they opened their first store in 1990. When you purchase items at WBU, please be sure to let the staff know you are a member of the Williamsburg Bird Club.

Many thanks to George and Val for their continued support of our Bird Club and the birds of Williamsburg! They make possible several of our scholarships each year. We appreciate all you do for our Club!

## Reported Sightings For July and August

Report your backyard birds and local sightings to Fred Blystone at 229-4346 or [fredblystone@gmail.com](mailto:fredblystone@gmail.com) or Shirley Devan at 813-1322 or [sedevan52@cox.net](mailto:sedevan52@cox.net). If you encounter interesting birds on your vacation/travels, please share!

**July 6.** Sandy Robertson, Richard Hudgins and Marilyn & John Adair join Jane Frigo and other birders for the Hampton Roads Bird Club's walk in Newport News Park. Jane writes "59 species were identified and one coyote was spotted! Mute Swans with signets were seen. The Great Horned Owl put

in an appearance before flying off. Brown Thrashers were busy with young. The most outstanding sighting for the morning was a Yellow-throated Warbler across from the Discovery Center. What a treat to see it working for breakfast.

**July 17.** Ruth Beck, Virginia & George Boyles, Inge Curtis, Brian Taber, Dave Youker, and Bill Williams do the bird survey at Craney Island. There were 84 species identified, including 1 Least Bittern, 50 Black-necked Stilt, 365 Lesser Yellowlegs, 12 Stilt Sandpipers, 3 Common Nighthawks and 1 Willow Flycatcher

**July 19.** Brian Taber reports a Wilson's Storm-Petrel flying through the channel at the south island of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel.

**July 20.** Virginia Boyles, John Adair, and Barbara & Richard Hudgins joined Jane Frigo and other birders for the Hampton Roads Bird Club's walk in Newport News Park. Jane wrote "60 species were identified plus on unidentified accipiter. A Royal Tern was working the reservoir. The Wood Ducks and ducklings were spotted again along with Mute Swans and cygnets. A Great Horned Owl was spotted, but not the usual adult seen at the Arboretum. Instead, a juvenile, perched on a dead tree near the pipeline, was seen. He appeared to still have some of the downy, light colored feathers on his head. The Red-headed Woodpeckers have returned. Blue Grosbeak and Indigo Bunting were spotted at the Swamp Bridge. There was also an excellent sighting of a Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Also, a Red-shouldered Hawk soaring lazily gave the group an opportunity to review field guides for identification." A Total of sixty species were identified during the walk.

**July 24.** Ruth Beck, Virginia & George Boyles, Inge Curtis, Dave Youker, and Bill Williams do the bird survey at Craney Island. There were 86 species identified, including 1 Lesser Scaup, 1 Horned Grebe, 54 American Avocets, 933 Semipalmated Sandpipers and 658 Short-billed Dowitchers.

**July 31.** Ruth Beck, Virginia Boyles, Inge Curtis, Brian Taber and Bill Williams do the bird survey at Craney Island. There were 89 species identified, including 20 Stilt Sandpipers, approximately 6,500 Semipalmated Sandpipers, 3 Red-necked Phalaropes, and 1 Black Tern.

**August 3.** John & Marilyn Adair and Virginia Boyles & George Boyles joined Jane Frigo and other birders for the Hampton Roads Bird Club's walk in Newport News Park. Jane wrote "For the most part the birds were quiet as would be expected during the "dog days of summer." The five birds "heard only" were Wood Duck, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Hairy Woodpecker, Gray Catbird and Indigo Bunting. Osprey were

everywhere, with at least five seen at one time. A young Red-shouldered Hawk gave quite a show at the stable meadow. He appeared to be hunting—dipping into the grass and coming up with something in his talons, then dropping down into the grass again, then up to the fence railing, then down to the ground again and so on. A pair of Belted Kingfishers also were entertaining doing their helicopter hover." A total of 56 species were identified.

**August 6.** Bill Williams passes on a report from Adam D'Onofrio that there were 5 Black-bellied Whistling Ducks at Hog Island (the first record of this species in our local area). Hayes Williams reports seeing a Kentucky Warbler at his Gloucester County home.

**August 7.** Shirley Devan reports that she and Jan Lockwood observed a Black-and-White Warbler at Freedom Park.

**August 11.** An e-mail from Shirley Devan reports that a group of Master Naturalists observed a female Scarlet Tanager in the parking lot near the Contact Station at York River State Park.

**August 14** Ruth Beck, Virginia & George Boyles, Shirley Devan, Brian Taber, Dave Youker and Bill Williams do the bird survey at Craney Island. There were 81 species identified, including 7 Black-bellied Plovers, 1 Piping Plover, 5 Marbled Godwits, and 8 Wilson's Phalaropes.

**August 17.** Richard Hudgins, John Adair and Virginia Boyles joined Jane Frigo and other birders for the Hampton Roads Bird Club's walk in Newport News Park. Jane wrote "Three Red-headed Woodpeckers were very interested in the power poles at the Discovery Center. Warbler sightings included Black-and-white, Prothonotary, Pine, Yellow-throated, and a surprise Yellow-breasted Chat. The Chat was spotted at the Swamp Bridge near the golf course. The Great Horned Owl could not be found, but on the return walk from the Swamp Bridge a Barred Owl was spotted between the path and the golf course. What a treat!" A total of 52 species were identified.

**August 24.** Mac Mestayer reported Hooded Warbler and Parula Warbler in the woods behind Bassett Hall.

**August 25.** Shirley Devan birded around Taskinas Trail at York River State Park. During the 3+ hours and 3 mile walk she found 27 species, the highlights being 2 American Redstarts and 9 Red-eyed Vireos.

**August 28.** Ruth Beck, Inge Curtis, Dave Youker and Bill Williams do the bird survey at Craney Island. There were 89 species identified, including 139 Northern Shovelers, 196 American Avocets, 1 Upland Sandpiper, and 1 Peregrine Falcon.

**August 31.** Shirley Devan reports observing a Mourning Dove, on a nest, along a walking path at Colonial Heritage. Bill Williams says that before this sighting the latest nesting Mourning Dove reported in our area was early July.



Mourning Dove on Nest

Photo by Shirley Devan

### **President's Corner** *(continued)*

my yard there have been immature cardinals, chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, downy, hairy, red-bellied woodpeckers, flickers, chippies, blue-grey gnatcatchers, towhees, house finches, robins, Carolina wrens, grackles, bluejays, mourning doves, chimney swifts, goldfinches—even a clumsy and hungry red-shouldered hawk. To judge by the nocturnal hooting, the barred owls have also had a good year. And, oh yes, the bluebirds have done very well in our neighborhood—giving much enjoyment to the neighbors who put out and monitored nesting boxes for them. I can't help but think that my ongoing effort to add native plants to my yard has helped bird diversity in my little patch by providing some of the insect larvae the birds need to feed their young, as well as some nourishing seeds and berries. I must say that my feeders have also not been neglected by the birds this summer, with adults and young of all of the above species making fairly regular up-close appearances to chow down on my suet and seed offerings!

And the hummingbirds just keep on humming. As of now there are still hummers zipping around my yard and stocking up on the nectar I put out for them. Over the last several weeks their feeding has seemed almost frantic at times, doubtless because they are packing in reserves of energy and body fat to fuel their upcoming long migratory flights. Nectar is only part of the story for the hummers, and they have been very visibly shagging small insects on the wing and in foliage for a doubtless tasty and nourishing dietary supplement. Once the male hummer who had monopolized the feeder on

my back deck this summer moved south activity really picked up. Females and young hummers promptly moved in, visibly less territorial and more hungry as migration time approaches. It's been funny at times to see the little hummers occasionally chase much bigger birds, like bluejays, away from their feeding locations!

Don't know if there is more molting going on than usual this year, or if I am just noticing it more. Whichever the case, most of my resident birds are taking advantage of having the job of nesting and fledging their young behind them, and not yet facing the diminished rations of the upcoming winter, to get some serious molting accomplished. Of course, some will morph into their duller basic plumage, but some are simply undergoing the periodic renewal of the worn parts of their feather coating, which they need to keep tip-top for optimum flight and protection from the elements—not to mention attraction of members of their species and camouflage from predators. Many a bird at the feeder has a “bad hair day” this time of the year.

To date we just have to imagine a nip in the air or shorter day length, but they are surely coming. With the upcoming change in the seasons we can look forward to our favorite ducks, loons, sapsuckers, kinglets, yellow-rumps, juncos and much, much more. With the arrival of those birds we will have some cool field trips this year, including a winter seabird cruise on the bay. We will hit some of the tried and true hotspots in the area, but will also have some new birding adventures in store. Our first field trip will be to Newport News Park on Saturday, 20 September, and should be a good one. Hope you'll join us for that one, and our meeting on 17 September. See you then!!

### **The Kiptopeke Challenge**

The Kiptopeke Challenge (KC), which takes place on Saturday, September 20th, is a fun and friendly team birding competition, whereby teams compete to identify the greatest number of bird species in a single day. The primary goals of the KC are to raise funds for the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory (CVWO) and to raise awareness of fall bird migration on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. CVWO has provided financial, volunteer and logistical support for songbird, diurnal raptor, and Monarch Butterfly research and education on the lower Delmarva Peninsula for the past 20 years. As autumn approaches, CVWO is sponsoring these legacy programs:

- Research-based songbird studies directed by Dr. Eric Walters of Old Dominion University

- 38th annual Kiptopeke Hawk Watch. Katie Rittenhouse will be on the platform again this year.
- CVWO's Monarch Butterfly migration studies will continue providing crucial data for understanding the migration needs and patterns of this beleaguered species.
- The second annual Bay Watch Program, conducted from Pickett's Harbor Natural Area Preserve just north of Kiptopeke State Park

There are two teams participating in this year's challenge that have ties to the Williamsburg Bird Club.

The **Wild Birds Unlimited of Williamsburg Team** (the only team to have competed every year) will consist of Brian Taber, Paul Nasca and Dave Youker. This year the team is dedicating their KC efforts to Bev Leeuwenburg, a friend and great Kiptopeke Challenge supporter, who passed away in February. You can support this team by sending a check made out to CVWO to Brian Taber, 103 Exeter Court, Williamsburg, VA 23185. If you have any questions, please e-mail Brian at [taberzz@aol.com](mailto:taberzz@aol.com) or call 757-253-1181.

The other local team is **The Wren Wrustlers**, consisting of Susan Powell, Jan Lockwood, Cheryl Jacobson, and Shirley Devan. Shirley writes "**The Wren Wrustlers** plan to be at Kiptopeke State Park by midnight September 20! Shirley says their target is to find and tally over 100 species of birds in a 24-hour period. If you would like to support this team make your check payable to CVWO and mail it to Shirley Devan, 6227 Tucker Landing, Williamsburg, VA 23188."

The Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory (CVWO) is a non-profit organization whose mission is the protection of wildlife and habitats in coastal Virginia through field research, education, and land conservation. The CVWO is a 501(c)(3) organization; donations are tax deductible. The CVWO's web site has additional information about its organization, programs, and research: [www.cvwo.org](http://www.cvwo.org).

**Note that your check will not be cashed until late September.**

## **Birdfeeding in Summer**

**By Kathy Mestayer**

The summer 2014 issue of *Living Bird Quarterly*, from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, hit our doorstep last week. Aside from some great shots of birds at Mono Lake, CA, there was an article called "Safe Summer Bird Feeding," by Pat Leonard, with tips from the Lab's assistant director of citizen science, David Bonter.

There were a couple of points that caught my attention:

1. Don't put too many seeds out at once. They might get moldy, and become toxic to birds (and humans, but hopefully that's a moot point).
2. Replace hummingbird nectar frequently. If it gets cloudy, it is fermenting and needs to be changed. He says, "Change the nectar every three to five days—more often if it's really hot." And my guess is that, around here, "really hot" applies.

Just wanted to share this....I have seen my nectar cloud up, but didn't know about the fermentation. I'm watching it much more closely now.

The whole article is here: [http://digital.livingbird.org/livingbird/summer\\_2014#pg6](http://digital.livingbird.org/livingbird/summer_2014#pg6)

## **Photo**



A Ruby-throated Hummingbird photographed by Fred Blystone in Colonial Williamsburg.

## July and August Walks and Field Trips

Complete lists of species seen on each walk are on the club website at [www.williamsburgbirdclub.org](http://www.williamsburgbirdclub.org).



### Bird Walk on July 12th at NQP

The Geoff Giles led bird walk at New Quarter Park came up with 34 species, including 7 Great Egrets, 1 Green Heron and 3 Yellow-billed Cuckoos.

### Wilna Tract Field Trip

Article By Jim Corliss

Photos by George Boyles

Our July 19 field trip to the Rappahannock Wildlife Refuge's Wilna Tract was a great success. A large group of bird club members plus some visitors were treated to a relatively cool and overcast day on the Northern Neck. The first birds of the morning were seven Wild Turkeys spotted in an open field along Sandy Lane on the way into the Wilna Tract area. After entering the tract we stopped first at the wooded area just prior to the open fields and enjoyed the last morning songs of two Wood Thrushes. The next stop was a hike along the Wild Turkey Trail where we found Summer Tanagers, Yellow-breasted Chats, and the morning's first Blue Grosbeaks. This was also the first spotting of insect repellent as the mosquitoes made their presence known.

Moving next into the open fields along Refuge Road the Grasshopper Sparrows were plentiful and we counted a whopping 24 Indigo Buntings and 15 Common Yellowthroats. Field Sparrows were continually singing in the distance as well as Northern Bobwhites that preferred to be heard rather than seen by our group. The Dickcissels were another constant frustration for many of us. They teased us with their "dick dick ciss ciss ciss" songs, but rarely perched in the open for a clear view. We then worked our way around to Wilna Pond where two Prairie Warblers foraged closely in the undergrowth and an Orchard Oriole was spotted as we walked along the causeway foot trail. One area of the Wilna Creek Trail in particular was very active with a befuddling array of tanagers, vireos,



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warblers, and goldfinches intermixing behind the foliage high in the trees. As the morning came to a close, we slowly straggled our way out of the refuge, hoping to catch a Dickcissel off guard in the open. But as was the case all morning, they simply wouldn't cooperate.

This was my first trip to the Wilna Tract, and I understand now why it is a favorite destination for our club. I hope to see everyone there again next year!

### Bird Walk on July 26th at NQP

From Shirley Devan: "Thanks to Bill Williams and "children of all ages" who joined us at NQP for the Bird Walk Saturday, July 26. Bill and the group tallied 43 species plus two other taxa during the early morning hours." Among the birds identified were 6 Great Egrets, 2 Clapper Rails, 26 Barn Swallows, and 1 singing Common Yellowthroat.



Front row: Jacob Hinton, George Boyles, Betty Peterson, Joanne Andrews, Virginia Boyles, Leah Duckworth, Shirley Devan. Back row: Julie Hinton, Ned Rose, Becky Rose, Nancy Pledger, Bob Brett, Marilyn Adair, Jan Lockwood, Bill Williams, John Adair. Not pictured: Bob and Cynthia Long

Photo by Shirley Devan



Photo by Gary Carpenter

### Craney Island Field Trip

By Gary Carpenter

[Please note that the Craney Island (Dredged Material Management Area) is a **restricted area** under the operation of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and is an active deposition site for dredged material from the Hampton Roads navigation channels. It is not **open to the general public** without special permission.]

On Saturday, August 2, the Club sponsored a field trip to Craney Island in Portsmouth, Virginia. While the day was completely

overcast and threatened rain all morning it turned out that our timing was exceptionally good in that the rain held off until our field trip was, for all intents and purposes, complete. After assembling carpools at the Colony Square Shopping Center and meeting some others at a McDonald's in Portsmouth, Ruth Beck, the trip's leader led a 6-car birding "safari" onto the island shortly before 8 AM. We quartered the island by traveling up the west, north and east perimeter roads with many stops for both viewing from the vehicles or piling out of the cars and lining up a dozen scopes to inspect productive viewing areas.



Photo by Shirley Devan



Photo by Cathy Millar

Bird species sighted on the field trip were: Mallard, Red-breasted Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Double-crested Cormorant, Brown Pelican, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Green Heron, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Osprey, Bald Eagle (both mature and immature), Red-tailed Hawk, Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, American Oystercatcher, Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer, Spotted Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, Willet (Eastern), Lesser Yellowlegs, Ruddy Turnstone, Stilt Sandpiper, Sanderling, Least Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Semipal-

mated Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, Wilson's Phalarope, Red-necked Phalarope, Laughing Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Least Tern, Caspian Tern, Royal Tern, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Common Nighthawk, Chimney Swift, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Blue Jay, American Crow, Purple Martin, Tree Swallow, Bank Swallow, Barn Swallow, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, Song Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Red-wing Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Common Grackle, House Finch, and American Goldfinch.

Aside from birds the group also saw numerous dolphins and a groundhog. Participating in the outing were: Ruth Beck, Bill Williams, Mitchell Byrd, Brian Tabor, Geoff Giles, Shirley Devan, Hugh Beard, Jan Lockwood, Tory Gussman, George and Virginia Boyles, John and Marilyn Adair, Bruce Glendening, Cathy Millar, Tom McCary, Chris Monahan, Gary and Ann Carpenter, Cheryl Jacobson, Mike Millin, George and Rosemarie Harris, Susie Engle, Andy Hawkins, Jerry Uhlman, and Randy Suhl. Joining our group as an "orphan" was Mr. Jon Nafziger of Charlottesville who had arrived at the entrance gate unaware that his own group's tour had been cancelled. And, in the closing words of many copywriters ". . . a good time was had by all".



From left: Tom McCary, Barry Barmore, Becky & Ned Rose and Jim Corliss.

Photo by Jim Corliss

**Bird Walk on August 9th at NQP**

Bryan Barmore, Becky & Ned Rose and Tom McCary joined leader Jim Corliss for the walk in New Quarter Park. There were 32 species identified during the morning, including 1 Red-shouldered Hawk, 4 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds and 1 Hooded Warbler.

**Bird Walk on August 23rd at NQP**

Fourteen birders joined leader Bill Williams for the walk at NQP. There were 40 species identified during the walk, including 1 Bald Eagle, 5 Clapper Rails, 3 Spotted Sandpipers and 2 American Redstarts.



Standing left to right: Cheryl Jacobson, Jan Lockwood, Geoff Giles, Jeanette Weinberg, Lynda Sharrett, Bill Williams, David Lunt, Allison Bradshaw. Seated: Shirley Devan, Becky Rose, Ned Rose, Bob Long, Cynthia Long, Sara Lewis, Virginia Boyles.

Photo by Shirley Devan

## 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 September

The summer photo was of a young Wood Stork and a White Ibis



## CALENDAR

Thursday, September 11	Hampton Roads Bird Club's Monthly Meeting. Teta Kain will present a program on feeding wild birds. For more information go to <a href="http://hamptonroadsbirdclub.org">http://hamptonroadsbirdclub.org</a>
Saturday, September 13	WBC Bird Walk, New Quarter Park, 8 AM. Jim Corliss, Leader
Wednesday September 17	WBC Monthly Meeting, See Front Page
Saturday, September 20	WBC Field Trip to Newport News Park. See Front Page
Sunday, September 21	HRBC Bird Walk, Newport News Park, 7 AM. Jane Frigo, Leader
Saturday, September 27	WBC Bird Walk, New Quarter Park, 7 AM. Bill Williams, Leader
Saturday, October 4	Hampton Roads Bird Club's Field Trip to Kiptopeke. For more information go to <a href="http://hamptonroadsbirdclub.org">http://hamptonroadsbirdclub.org</a>
Sunday, October 5	HRBC Bird Walk, Newport News Park, 7 AM. Jane Frigo, Leader