



The Flyer

Newsletter of the Williamsburg Bird Club

Vol. 38, No. 9

www.williamsburgbirdclub.org

November 2014

President's Corner

By Geoff Giles



Wow! And so the beautiful weather continues as we march on to the fall season. It is Williamsburg at its finest, with sunlight highlighting the colors of the fall foliage that are just now starting to dazzle us with the array of beautiful colors to come. While some of the red maples, yellow poplars, black gums and sourwoods are already showing how beautiful they can be, most of the foliage is still verdant, and looks blissfully unaware that its days are numbered this year. The birds seem to know better though, as the backbone species of the winter visitors, the yellow-rumped warblers and white-throated sparrows, are already in and showing up in steadily increasing numbers. Last weekend, a dark-eyed junco was even seen policing up forage on the ground under a tree adorned with yellow-rumps.

The jury still seems to be out on what lies in store for us weather-wise this winter. I'm told the Farmer's Almanac is calling for another long, cold winter. Then there's NOAA, giving our best shot at applying scientific principles and observation to the risky business of weather forecasting, which is telling us to expect continued mild weather for the next several months. The Woolly Bear caterpillars don't seem to be helping to break the deadlock, although the ones spotted lately have lengthy brown sections in the middle with fairly short black sections at front and back, which should tell us something. While it was once thought that meant a mild winter is in store, conventional wisdom now is that the Woolly Bears are just telling us what we had last winter. And we could hardly call that one mild. o what's a migrating bird to do? Will the snowy owls overflow down to our latitudes again? Will the pine siskins and red-breasted nuthatches that were scarce last year come in great numbers? How about the waterfowl? Stay tuned and find out!

We're planning our November field trip to Beaverdam Park in Gloucester, which is a great bet for some cool birds up fairly close just about any time of year. **We will go on Sunday, 16 November**, and will be led by veteran birder, George Harris. George's backyard is within shouting

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November Meeting

By Cheryl Jacobson



The November meeting will be held at 7:30 PM on Wednesday the 19th. Dr. Dan Cristol will show parts of a video highlighting research done with the Junco. He knows first hand what an exciting project it was and will present his views and first hand information. Due to the length of the documentary film, Dr. Cristol will show selected portions and will

summarize and discuss other portions.

I previewed the video and loved it. The *Ordinary Extraordinary Junco* is a documentary film project designed to engage, entertain, and inspire student and adult audiences of all backgrounds. It highlights past and present biological research on one of the most common and abundant—yet amazing and diverse—groups of songbirds in North America, the Juncos. Dr. Ignacio Moore, Professor of Biology from Virginia Tech University stated about the video: “As a researcher, I have followed the junco story for years and always eagerly read each publication. As a teacher, I find these videos to be an extraordinary tool. They demonstrate how science and researchers work. They also cross disciplinary lines and show what we can learn as ornithologists, physiologists, evolutionary biologists, ecologists, and animal behaviorists. For the average viewer, these videos do a remarkable job showing why such studies are important and how much we can learn from an ‘ordinary’ bird. These videos are entertaining and educational for anyone from the professional researcher to the educator, student, and bird enthusiast.”

The meeting will be in Andrews Hall, Room 101. Patty Maloney and Judy Jones will be providing the refreshments for this meeting. Please be sure to display your parking permit on the dashboard of your car.

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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.

November Trip

Our November Field Trip will be to Beaverdam Park in Gloucester County on **Sunday**, November 16. Beaverdam Park is located on a 635 acre freshwater lake and we hope to see several species of ducks who are arriving to winter in the area, as well as such winter bird species as Hermit Thrush, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and Winter Wren.

For those who wish to carpool, we will depart at 7:00 a.m. from the Colony Square Shopping Center, Jamestown Road. If you prefer to drive independently, it's about a 50 minute drive to the park. The address is 8687 Roaring Springs Drive/State Rte. 616. George Harris has graciously agreed to lead our trip and will meet us there. We will be birding on foot on well marked trails.

Please join us for a great morning of birding. There are no space limitations for this trip and you do not need to sign up. Water and snacks for your personal use are suggested. Questions: Call Jan Lockwood, 634-4164.

Proposed Slate for 2015 Officers

The slate of officers for the Bird Club for 2013 is complete. This slate will be presented at the November 19 meeting for a vote.

President—Geoff Giles

Vice-President (Programs)—Cheryl Jacobson

Co-Vice-Presidents (The Flyer)—Shirley Devan and Judy Jones

Treasurer—Ann Carpenter

Secretary—Cathy Millar

Member-at-Large—Jan Lockwood

Member-at-Large—Jeanette Navia

Welcome to New Members

Sue Mutell and Beatrix Woods

From the Co-Editor—Fred Blystone

This will be the last issue of The Flyer that I will edit. I became the editor January, 2008. I really appreciate all the sightings, articles and photographs that members have provided over this time. I would especially like to thank two people, Jeanette Navia for all of the book reviews she has done and Mary Anne Fennell for her rather behind-the-scenes work of providing a monthly index of the newsletter that can be seen on our club website. This index has been of immense help to me over the years. Thanks again to all of you who have contributed to the newsletter over the years.

Reported Sightings For October

Report your backyard birds and local sightings to Shirley Devan at 813-1322 or sedevan52@cox.net. If you encounter interesting birds on your vacation/travels, please share!

Oct 3. Bill Williams sees a Sora on Jamestown Island.

Oct 4. Birding at Jamestown Island, Bill Williams sees a Magnolia Warbler.

Oct 5. Bill Williams sees a Veery at Jamestown Island.

Oct 16. Bill William finds a Magnolia Warbler at the Warhill Sports Complex.

Later in the morning he sees a Gray-cheeked Thrush and a Bay-breasted Warbler at Chickamominy Riverfront Park.

Oct 17. Back at Chickahominy Riverfront Park, Bill Williams sees a Wilson's Warbler.

Oct 17. Steve Reams sends in this report; "Yesterday my wife and I saw a male + female Ruddy Duck on Queens Lake near the dam. Of course we've been watching the Tree Swallows swooping all over Queens Lake for about a week, a sure sign that fall is near. Heard a Screech Owl for several nights and our Hairy Woodpecker is still around."

Oct 26. Bill Williams reports that James City County's first Greater-White-fronted Goose was seen at Mainland Farm (located off Greesprings Road, Route 614). It continued to be seen by a number of people over the next several days. This photo was taken by Shirley Devan on October 28th.



Oct 28. Jan Lockwood reports seeing a male and female Rusty Blackbird at New Quarter Park.

Oct 31. Birding at Beaverdam Park in Gloucester County (where our November Field Trip will be held), George and Rosemarie Harris find 40 species, including 3 Northern Shovelers, 2 Ring-necked Ducks, 250 Ruddy Ducks, 4 Bald Eagles, and 1500 American Coot.

The 2014 Williamsburg Christmas Bird Count

By Bill Williams

Please send yourself a holiday greetings card to remind yourself to participate in the 38th annual Williamsburg Christmas Bird Count on Sunday, December 14, 2014. We urge everyone to find some time during that day to be a part of this significantly important citizen science effort. Last year we set a target to have at least 100 participants and we made it! Let's do it again!!! The Christmas Bird Count was initiated in 1900 as a counterplay to a holiday season tradition of seeing how much game could be

taken in a single day. Since then this world class endeavor has become one of the standards by which international wintering bird population trends and distributions are assessed over time. Rather than removing wildlife, these counts seek to document the diversity and abundance of birdlife in a defined area. Each count encompasses a 15-mile diameter circle; in our case the center is the Colonial Williamsburg Information Center. The goal for the day is to have as many observers as possible counting every bird of every species within 7.5 miles of the count center. The data are compiled and submitted to the National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count website, where it becomes part of an international database, not only for North America but Central and South America too.

Whether you can join us for an hour or so or the whole day on December 14th, your contribution will be exceedingly valuable. The success of the count is based on the numbers of species and how many birds can be found. This includes the common yard and feeder birds, even Rock Pigeons, European Starlings, and House Sparrows!! With that in mind we hope you will choose to join one of the field teams and/or participate from in or near your home. All we ask is that you keep track of how much time that day you devote and, if applicable, how many miles you travel during your birding excursions that day. Feeder watchers, please specify the amount of time you spent and the address and/or neighborhood of the location where you did your counting so it can be matched to its appropriate count section. This is also an excellent opportunity to engage children in birding!!

The count day will conclude with a 5:00 p.m. compilation at Carrot Tree Kitchens on Jamestown Road. This final arrangement is the seventh for our venerable count, a tradition we have come to thoroughly enjoy. Brunswick Stew, mulled cider, and rolls will be warm and ready for consumption by field-team participants. Carrot Tree will close for business that day at 4:00 p.m. Therefore, count participants are asked to **park behind** the bakery so that there is no appearance the business is still open.

If you plan to participate in the count please contact Bill Williams at billwilliams154@gmail.com or call 229-1124, no later than December 7.

If you have been part of a field team in the past please consider joining that team again by contacting the team leader. Let Bill or your team leader know in advance if you plan to be at the tally. This will help determine how much food needs to be prepared. Tally HO!!

President's Corner *(continued)*

distance of Beaverdam and he follows birding treats there with a trained eye and ear. Not too many years ago I went to Beaverdam for the first time for me and had my first good look at pied-billed grebes and other birds. Will the bald eagles put on their regular show and snag coots out of the massive flocks passing through this year? They put on quite a spectacle when they do. Will the waterfowl that grace the lake in winter be in like last year, with common mergansers among them? Join us and see!

At our recent field trip to the Eastern Shore we were pleased to have some talented young eyes and ears from the William and Mary bird club join our group. The stiff westerly winds blew lots of migrating passerines over into the Eastern Shore National Wildlife Reserve, and was not conducive to them (or the raptors that pursue them!) for migrating further towards their southern destination. Consequently we found dense flocks of yellow-rumps and tree swallows hunkered down in the thickets, and a raptor array overhead like none of us had ever witnessed. Peregrines, merlins, kestrels, harriers, red-tailed and red-shouldered hawks, Cooper's and sharp-shinned hawks were everywhere! Often we would look up to see six to ten raptors above us at once—an awesome sight. And as hoped, there were many, many black-crowned night herons to be counted at the Dump and an obliging flock of shorebirds at Oyster. Cool trip with an Irish pub to recharge our batteries at mid-day!

Bill Williams' bird walks at New Quarter Park continue to provide some nice surprises. The most recent one was a vocal screech owl, who tuned up after eight in the morning for all to hear. Great stuff, as these small raptors are known to be around but are only rarely seen or heard. Is he one of the ones from Jan Lockwood's nesting cavity that she discovered behind her house this year? They fledged two beautiful young owls that should now be out on their own. Bill's next bird walk is at 7 AM on the fourth Saturday, 22 November. For those who want to do one sooner, Hugh Beard will lead a bird walk at 8 in the morning on 8 November. Both are in beautiful New Quarter Park, and the park office offers loaner binoculars and field guides for new birders. Visitors of all ages are welcomed to join us!

Speaking of joining us, we hope you are planning to help us count birds in December's annual Christmas Bird Count, whether it's teaming up with other birders of all experience levels for a fun day in nature, or simply counting the birds at your yard or feeder and calling to add them to our count.

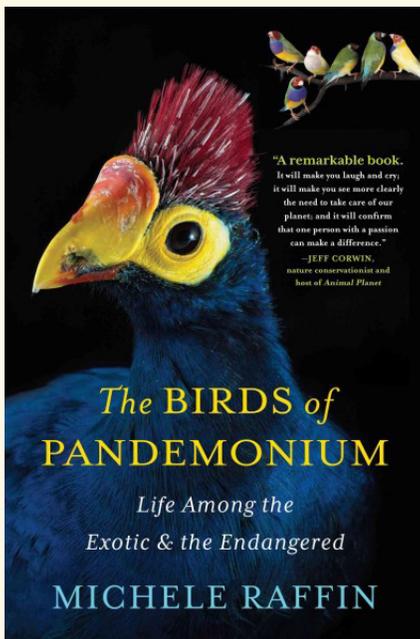
This year the count is on 12 December. The count has a long and illustrious history, as it was originally conceived as an alternative to counting stacks of dead birds, blasted by "birders" who wanted to prove their sightings by producing a carcass. Had this continued, there would be little to count today! Over the years, the count numbers have helped to track populations of birds and trends as our activity has dramatically changed their habitats, and allowed us to take some timely conservation measures for the sake of the birds, and even for our own well-being. This is a great chance to both contribute, at no cost but your time, and to have great fun doing so. Hope you'll join us.

And to warm up for that count, you will be surprised how interesting participation in Project Feederwatch can be. That begins the first weekend in November, and you can sign up and participate online. You really don't even need a feeder to participate, as you can count the birds attracted to water, natural feed, plants or feeders in your yard, and enter them on line into a national database. When you look, you'll be amazed at how much is going on just outside your window. Participation will get you some free on-line video assistance on how to attract and identify many species of birds. Just log on to Feederwatch.org to get details and participate. You'll love it, and will find that it is a super activity for young birders of all ages.

Among the birds soon to be on the ground outside your window this year is one known commonly as the "snow-bird", and it's here even in years when we don't see any snow here. It is a perky little bird the size of a sparrow and with the coloration of a penguin, and is known as the dark-eyed junco. Professor Dan Cristol of William and Mary has studied this species extensively, and will give us a fascinating presentation on things we didn't know about the junco at our November 12 meeting on the W&M campus. Dan is a super scientist, birder and speaker and I, for one, can't wait. Attendance, parking and refreshments are free and the public is cordially invited. Hope to see you at our meeting and to see you soon out birding!!

Williamsburg Bird Club Book Review

By Jeanette Navia



The Birds of Pandemonium: Life Among the Exotic & the Endangered, by Michele Raffin. Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2014. ISBN: 9781616201364. \$24.95. 218 pages. Williamsburg Library call number 639.978 RAF.

Pandemonium Aviaries, in Los Altos, California, is a non-profit breeding facility for bird species facing extinc-

tion, housing over 300 birds of 32 target species. It did not start out that way. It began as a sanctuary for injured, disabled or abandoned birds in a family's backyard in 1996.

A white dove, probably released at a wedding ceremony, was easy prey for a hawk. Badly injured by the side of a California freeway, the dove flapped its wings and drew the attention of a passing motorist, Michele Raffin's new personal trainer, Matt. Matt moved the dove out of harm's way. When he got to the gym and explained why he was late, Michele insisted they go back to check on the dove. Michele took the bird to a vet, and it seemed to do well for several days, but died on the fifth. Distraught over the losing the dove, she happened to notice an ad in the paper the next day: "Desperately need a home for a white dove. Will provide a month's worth of food." Thinking it may be fate, Michele went to the woman's house prepared to bring home one dove. She came home with six. The woman who had placed the ad had bought two dozen of the wrong species for wedding releases and wanted someone to take them all, but Michele would only take six.

That was the beginning of Michele Raffin's quest to save abandoned birds and then later, to try to save species that are facing extinction. In her book, she introduces readers to several of the varied avian personalities that have been in her care over the years: Oscar, a Lady Gouldian finch, who could not fly but who helped Michele figure out a

way he could get to the higher perches of the aviary; Wing and Coffee, brother and sister Victoria crowned pigeons, who were separated when Michele bought Wing and paid for surgery to fix her broken wing, then very happily reunited when Michele later bought Coffee to join her; Sweetie, a very vocal Coturnix quail born to be a meal but who was saved when a grocery clerk took him to a humane society and the humane society called Michele; Amigo, a red-headed Amazon parrot who chose Michele's son as his owner; and other very vibrant personalities. These stories clearly show that birds have feelings, including fear, grief, loneliness, joy and contentment. They can be shy, gregarious, depressed, obnoxious, loving, and loyal. Many will win your heart.

The story of how Michele began Pandemonium Aviaries and turned it into one of the world's premiere breeding aviaries for birds likely to become extinct, and the birds and people who helped her get there, is fascinating and fun. I recommend this for anyone, young or old.

October Bird Walks

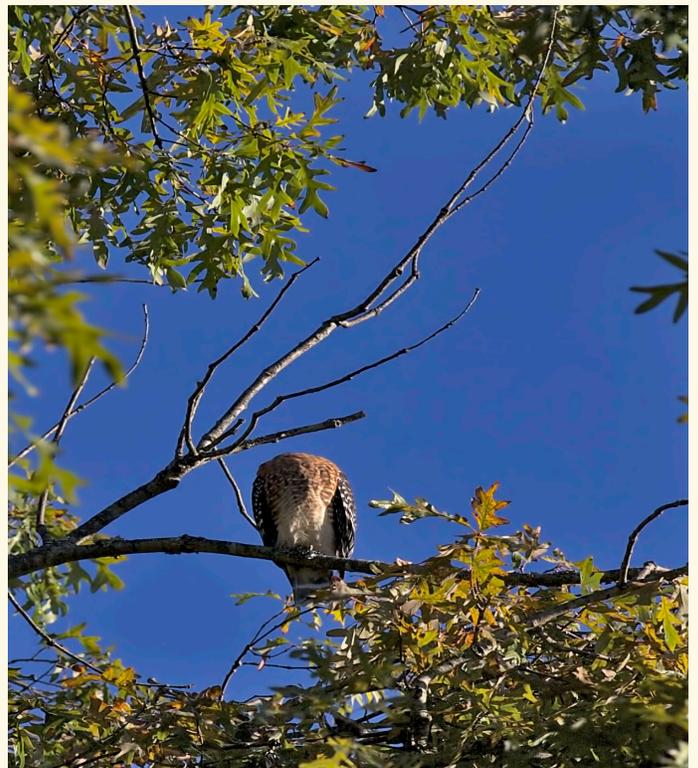
Complete lists of species seen on each walk are on the club website at www.williamsburgbirdclub.org.

Bird Walk on October 11th at NQP

From Leader Tom McCary: There were scores of young runners all over the park for a track meet. Thus we were restricted in our itinerary. Much of the time was passed at the dock; we dared not visit the fire pit area. Even the wooded trails felt the runners' feet. Respectable birds flew elsewhere. Joining Tom were Geoff Giles, Jan Lockwood, Sue Mutell, Ginny Broome, and Bob and Cynthia Long. Twenty-one species of birds were identified, including 4 Great Egrets, 3 Clapper Rails, 30 Chimney Swifts and 1 Merlin.

Bird Walk on October 25th at NQP

Eileen Alces, Christina Clark Andy Hawkins, Joyce Lowry, Cheryl Jacobson, Mike Lowry, Sue Mutell, and Darla, Dennis, Janet and James Anderson joined Leader Bill Williams for the walk in New Quarter Park. There were 38 species identified, including 5 Common Loons (fly-over), 1 Sharp-shinned Hawk, 6 Clapper Rails, 1 Eastern Screech-Owl, 1 Marsh Wren and 1 Swamp Sparrow.



Now you see it, now you don't. A Red-shouldered Hawk photographed by Fred Blystone on October 25th in Colonial Williamsburg.



Red-tailed Hawk photographed by Shirley Devan



Great Blue Heron photographed by Shirley Devan

Bird ID Photos

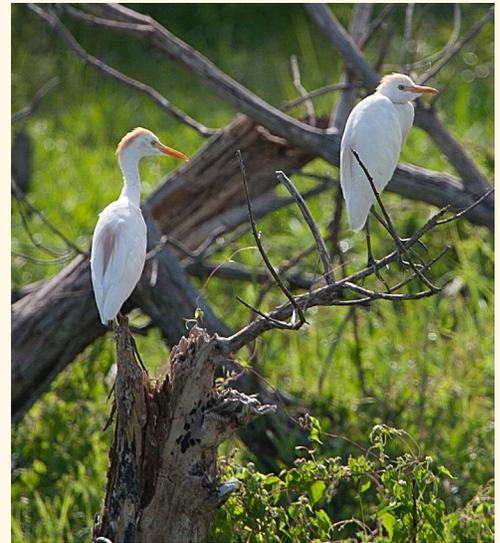
By Joe Piotrowski

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 November

The October photo was of Cattle Egrets.



CALENDAR

Saturday, November 8	WBC Bird Walk, New Quarter Park, 8 AM. Hugh Beard, Leader
Thursday, November 13	Hampton Roads Bird Club's Monthly Meeting. Mary Elfnerwill present a program titled "Project Wood Thrush". For more information go to http://hamptonroadsbirdclub.org
Saturday, November 15	Hampton Roads Bird Club's Field Trip to Grand View Nature Preserve. For more information to to http://hamptonroadsbirdclub.org
Sunday, November 16	WBC Field Trip to Beaverdam Park. See Page 2
Sunday, November 16	HRBC Bird Walk, Newport News Park, 7 AM. Jane Frigo, Leader
Wednesday, November 19	WBC Monthly Meeting. See Front Page
Saturday, November 22	WBC Bird Walk, New Quarter Park, 7 AM. Bill Williams, Leader
Sunday, December 14	Williamsburg Bird Club's Christmas Bird Count. See Page 3