



# The Flyer

## Newsletter of the Williamsburg Bird Club

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November 2017

### PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Bill Williams



With all of our celebratory pats on the back during the month of September, it's worth noting the Williamsburg Bird Club's educational outreach extended beyond our monthly meetings and field trips. Indeed, we were part of several efforts to interest young people in birds, and more importantly, why birds matter.

It seems almost certain that at least 66 area students, those who contributed art work for the bird club's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration, became invested, if only for a short time, in at least one local bird—the Red-headed Woodpecker. Our iconic symbol was a required element for each piece of art the students submitted. To what extent those aspiring artists attempted to learn about our strikingly beautiful logo is unknown, but we would love to believe that some of them will actually want to see one at some point and, in so doing, learn something about the habitat that this species prefers. Even better, we would hope they might ask if there are other kinds of woodpeckers in our area. Are any just as colorful and where might we find one? Bottom line is that even if only one of those students makes that intellectual stride, the Williamsburg Bird Club has made a difference.

During that persistently damp spell in mid-October I had the privilege of interacting with a group of home school youngsters on a bird/nature walk at the Greensprings Greenway. Unfortunately, the birds were scarce. Those that were active were very quiet. That meant that we had to depend on Nature, with her wealth of resources, to take its course. And so it did. Eager young eyes were oh so quick to detect the trail-side daddy long-legs, the board walk's painted turtles, and the holes in logs

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### NOVEMBER 15<sup>th</sup> WBC MEETING – 7 pm –

#### DR. BRYAN WATTS

By Cheryl Jacobson

We are so lucky to have outstanding ornithology talent in our community and available to our club. This is reflected by our November speaker, Dr. Bryan Watts. His presentation, held at 7:00 pm on Wednesday, November 15<sup>th</sup>, in Andrews Hall Room 101 at William and Mary is: "Hitting the Waterbird Lottery".

Dr. Watts is the Director of the Center for Conservation Biology. He will be talking about the recovery of waterbirds in the Chesapeake Bay and some of the unexpected chapters that have developed over the past decade or so. He will focus on population growth/recovery of the Bald Eagle, the Osprey, the Great Blue Heron, the Brown Pelican, and the Double-crested Cormorant (the five big fish eating breeders in the Bay) for the first half of the talk and then focus on some of the unexpected chapters that are unfolding now for the second half.

In case you are not familiar with Dr. Watts and the CCB, here is information taken from their website:

"The Center for Conservation Biology (CCB) is a group of professionals, students, and citizens who are dedicated to the vision that our natural environment is an important part of our quality of life. CCB is a research group within The College of William and Mary and the Virginia Commonwealth University. The Center conducts research regarding the management of land and bird species of conservation concern. The Center is dedicated to discovering innovative solutions to environmental problems that are both scientifically sound and practical within today's social context. The Center serves as one of the principal advisors to government and non-governmental agencies responsible for the management and recovery of avian species at risk. The Center provides opportunities for students, professionals, and the general public to learn about species and ecosystems."

Please join us Wednesday night, November 15<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 for this enlightening and instructive presentation.

## WBC EXECUTIVE BOARD

2017



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## REPORTED SIGHTINGS FOR OCTOBER, 2017

(Send your sightings to Judy Jones at [jjones184@cox.net](mailto:jjones184@cox.net))



**August 5:** My apologies to Barry Trott, who submitted this photo of a sighting at his house on August 5<sup>th</sup> and I didn't get it into the newsletter until now. But finally, we share with you his two photos of a leucistic Eastern Bluebird –just an amazing sighting.



**September 4:** Nancy Barnhart sighted these beautiful Buff-breasted Sandpipers at the Charles City Turf Farm.



**October 1:** Lynda Sharrett saw a great number of birds at her finch feeder: Brown-headed Nuthatch, Downy Woodpecker, Chipping Sparrows, American Goldfinches as well as the other usual suspects of Carolina Chickadees, Carolina Wrens, House Finches, and Northern Cardinals. There were also Eastern Towhees in the bushes and leaves below, along with Mourning Doves. All in all, a great morning at the feeder.

**October 4:** Bill Williams identified a Bonaparte's Gull at Jamestown Island. "It has been in the area for some time now; small gull relative to LAGUS; small black bill; small round, white head with a single black spot behind the eye; when in flight, white primaries obvious".

**October 7:** Jan Lockwood tells us, "I've attached photos of an Eagle at Queens Creek. The first shows his/her majesty and the second is a puzzle. He abruptly left his perch and dove to retrieve something from the Creek. He sat and examined it for a few minutes. No idea what it is...some folks suggested a snake and others a turtle. Perhaps it might even be trash. Perhaps our WBC members could make their own guesses."



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## PRESIDENT'S CORNER (continued from page 1)

and tree trunks that maybe a woodpecker made! They were very excited to learn the simple plant structure clue they could use to identify a Christmas fern and what walking downhill on the trail told them about the area's ancient geology. Now what they will recall about the historical importance of the land around the trail or how invasive plants such as stilt grass or *Phragmites* influence our local birds remains to be seen. Nevertheless, if any, or only one, of these learners stitches together these elements as parts of the habitat diversity equals bird diversity equation, then our Williamsburg Bird Club's educational mission gets a check mark.

I also had occasion to meet with a Laurel Lane Elementary School teacher who had recently received a grant to initiate bird studies projects on and around the school's campus. Her goal is to have students generate questions about birds, suggest ways to explore answers to those questions during the school year, and then implement strategies to investigate those answers. As we walked around the building's grounds, we looked at potential feeder sites, the diversity of plantings near the classroom pods, and noted the locations of previously installed Eastern Bluebird boxes. The teacher is strongly committed to this project. Her request for assistance from WBC gives us an opportunity to be partner in the implementation of a series of long-term learning experiences for which birds become symbols of much broader meanings. If any, or only one, of the learners grasps the learning skills necessary to explore the world through birds, then our Williamsburg Bird Club's educational mission gets a check mark.

The Williamsburg Bird Club was proud to be a part of the Wild Birds Unlimited October 22 Owl-oween learning event. What a thrill it was to see the faces of the young, and the, ....well...., young-at-heart, as a Virginia Living Museum staff member brought out, one at a time, a live Barred Owl, a live Great Horned Owl and a live Eastern Screech Owl for a show-and-tell about each species. The ooos, ahhhs and WOWs stirred the heart. Better still, each of these seldom seen birds prompted so many great questions. What do owls eat? Where do they live in the wild? How old are they? How far can they turn their heads? Will they bite you? Are those his ears on top of his head? If any, or only one, of the folks present that afternoon views birds of prey as an integral part of the natural scheme of Nature, then Wild Birds Unlimited, the Virginia Living Museum, and the Williamsburg Bird Club earn check marks.

Members in attendance at our October meeting heard first-hand the impact Nature Camp had on the three young people we helped send there last summer. With youthful, nervous eloquence, each related their genuine love of their camp experiences and their strong desire to return. True, the pronunciation of "ornithology" was fumbled, but that will change through exposure to that and other study disciplines as they mature. Without question, the bird club's influence on these young people has already proved profound. If any of them goes on to pursue natural history-based studies or avocations, we can be confident the Williamsburg Bird Club earned big bold check mark!

## OUR SLATE OF OFFICERS FOR 2018

The slate for the 2018 Williamsburg Bird Club Board of Directors is:

- President - Cheryl Jacobson
- Vice-President, Programs - Judy Jones
- Vice-President, Editor of *The Flyer* - Melinda Cousins
- Past President - Bill Williams
- Secretary - Cathy Millar
- Treasurer - Ann Carpenter
- Members-at-Large - Gary Carpenter, Shirley Devan

Membership will vote to accept this slate at the November meeting. Many thanks go to Nancy Barnhart and Sue Mutell, for their hard work as our WBC nominating committee.



Photo of the homeschool gang with Bill Williams on Greensprings Greenway on October 11<sup>th</sup>



## THE CDR BIRD FEEDERS PROJECT – SPONSORED BY WILLIAMSBURG BIRD CLUB

The CDR (Child Development Resources) Seed Donation Project is one of the special categories to which our club members generously donate each January when they renew their memberships. Before Gary Carpenter took the lead in this project, Deb Woodward did the delivery of seed. This spring, Gary replaced one feeder and repaired another and set up a feeder stand in April and then began the seed deliveries. He filled the feeders at that time and since then Amy Michaels (CDR Volunteer) has been filling the feeders and letting him know when seed was needed. Ms. Hurst (CDR director) was very enthusiastic and grateful for our donations and said the kids have really enjoyed looking at the birds through their large playroom window. Amy also reports that the kids seem to enjoy watching the birds. Thanks to the club's donations, Gary has made three deliveries of seed so far this year.



### SIGHTINGS *(continued from page 2)*

**October 16:** Jim Corliss reported, "Thought you all might be interested to hear that there has been a sizable group of Palm Warblers hanging around Mainland Farm the last few days. Today I counted 26 that were moving back and forth between the soybeans and the tree line near the tractor crossing sign on the paved trail that traverses the farm. I don't think I've ever seen that many Palm Warblers in one spot."

**October 16:** Matt Anthony found two Blue Grosbeaks at the Maynard Drive Power Line Cut, Williamsburg, Virginia.

**October 21:** Judy Kroeger writes: "I was so lucky to finally see a Great Horned Owl in broad daylight! This fellow was spotted in Ford's Colony October 21st around 10am."



**October 22:** Matt Anthony and Nick Newberry spotted a Nashville Warbler at the Maynard Drive Power Line Cut, Williamsburg, Virginia.

**October 22:** Nick Newberry reported a Northern Parula at Waltz Farm Drive Power Line Cut, Williamsburg, Virginia.

**October 26:** Cheryl Jacobson and Nancy Barnhart were surprised to discover three Blue-winged Teal at Greensprings Interpretive Trail, James City; "larger than green-winged, flattish head, pale around eyes and near base of bill...lighter brown than green-winged".

**October 28:** Cheryl Jacobson and Jim Corliss, Sue Mutell and Joyce Lowry found a Yellow-throated Warbler on the Bird Walk at New Quarter Park. "Observed by two experienced birders at roughly 50 feet. Bright yellow throat that did not extend underneath as with a Magnolia Warbler. Prominent black streaks on sides contrasted against white underparts. Black face and light eyebrow."



**October 28:** Nancy Barnhart and Les Lawrence spotted a Blue-headed Vireo amongst the many Yellow-rumped Warblers near Menzel's Road on the Chickahominy River.



## SUMMARY OF OUR OCTOBER PROGRAM

By Cathy Millar

The program at our October meeting featured our very own president, Bill Williams. Most of our members are probably not aware of Bill's noteworthy background and were interested to hear the introductory comments by our VP of Programs, Cheryl Jacobson. Bill is retired from the Williamsburg-James City County Schools where he served as a teacher and K-12 Science and Mathematics Curriculum Coordinator for 31 years. He was involved in the founding of the Williamsburg Bird Club and the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory. Bill is a past president of the Virginia Society of Ornithology and is currently a member of the VSO's Board of Directors. He was Chairman of the Virginia Avian Records Committee and is currently the Editor of the Virginia Society of Ornithology's quarterly journal, *Virginia Birds*, and is the Tidewater Region Reviewer for the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's citizen science eBird program. Bill was the Director of the Virginia Barrier Islands Colonial Waterbirds Survey for the Virginia Coast Reserve of The Nature Conservancy from 1975-2005 and was the Director of the Kiptopeke Hawk Watch from 1977-2005. Bill was a founding member of the Historic Virginia Land Conservancy, serving 3 terms as its president. Bill edited ***The Birds of Virginia's Colonial Historic Triangle***, published by the Williamsburg Bird Club in 2012. He was a 1965 graduate of James Blair High School, then graduated from Emory and Henry College in 1969. Bill holds a Master's Degree in Biology from the College of William and Mary. Bill and his wife, Arlene, own *Morrison's Flowers and Gifts* in Williamsburg, Virginia.

Bill gave an illustrated presentation on the birds of two of the Greater Antilles Islands, gathered from his experiences conducting a research study in the Dominican Republic last December and birding in Puerto Rico this last March. He began by noting the difference between the terminology *endemic* and *indigenous*. Endemic means a native species exclusively unique to a place/island versus indigenous referring to a native species that may occur elsewhere. Birders love endemic species and Bill took care to identify in his presentation those that were endemic.

Bill was engaged in a project organized by the Virginia Society of Ornithology and Earth Sangha, a non-profit public charity based in Fairfax Virginia whose mission is ecological restoration in the spirit of Buddhist practice. They operate Tree Bank Hispaniola which works with local land owners to propagate native trees to conserve tropical forests, promote sustainable agroforestry, provide financial resources for conservation activities on farms, and then provide a market for shade grown coffee and cacao. Much of the landscape in the Dominican Republic and especially in Haiti has been denuded by such activities as sugar cane plantations or charcoal production, creating a habitat that is in desperate need of restoration. Restoration would lead to soil stabilization, a diversified source of income for the local people, and improved air and water quality with reduced chemical input. The loss of habitat has led to a steady decline in the bird population. Earth Sangha was interested in the quality and quantity of bird life in the reforestation project areas since the birds are great environmental indicators as to how effective the project is.

Bill was part of a team with other folks familiar to the bird club including Bill Akers, Dave Youker, Bob Ake, and the current VSO president Lenny Bankester. They were in the Dominican Republic in December 2016 when it was providing critical winter habitat to sustain overwintering neotropical migrants. The hope of the project is to get the local folks to understand and appreciate what is happening to their bird populations, hoping that such interest will increase their awareness of agroforestry. Bill reported that research has shown that females and males segregate during migration and go to the same places on the Caribbean Islands year after year. The males will faithfully return to the same little spot in the same forest and defend it throughout their lifetimes. He showed us the rugged primitive conditions that their host families lived in and how, despite this, they made the five visitors feel very welcome. As part of the team's awareness and educational objectives, they also brought binoculars and field guides for the local schools.

The group's daily protocol entailed teams of two rotating through three different sites over a three day period during which they tallied every bird by species and abundance. Site 1 was a hectare of recently planted legumes where, over a three day period, they counted a total of 157 birds of 27 species, of which 8 were neotropical migrants. Another site was a forest remnant that yielded 142 birds with 30 species, of which 9 were neotropical migrants. The third site was a coffee plantation that yielded 210 birds and 27 species, of which 7 were neotropical migrants. He showed us

pictures of some of the neotropical migrants they saw, many of which were familiar to us here at home: American Redstart, Northern Parula, Ovenbird, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, Cape May Warbler, and the Common Yellowthroat. He showed us striking photos of endemic birds including the Hispaniolan Woodpecker, Hispaniolan Lizard Cuckoo, Hispaniolan Emerald Hummingbird, Narrow-billed Tody, Thick-billed Tody, Black-crowned Palm Tanager and Hispaniolan Spindalis. Bill was surprised to see Northern Mockingbirds (who are indigenous) and other familiar species such as American Kestrel and Cattle Egrets. He noted that all the birds were very quiet which made locating them all the more difficult.

Bill finished his presentation with lovely photos of the birds he and his wife, Arlene, saw on a birding tour trip they took in March in 2017 in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Again he differentiated the endemic from indigenous species. He was thrilled to see a wild Puerto Rican Parrot whose population had been reduced to 13 in 1975 -- nearly all that are extant now are banded. After the devastation that recent Hurricane Maria has wrought, he has been very concerned about what these parrots and many other birds will have left to eat. He noted that on another island where several thousand Magnificent Frigatebirds nest, reports are coming in that all the vegetation has been totally blasted away! There is great concern about what effect this particularly vicious hurricane season will have on many species.

Bill showed us a Sharp-shinned Hawk subspecies that will probably soon become its own species due to reproductive isolation. Another species of interest was the Yellow-shouldered Blackbird which is critically endangered due to loss of mangrove habitat and parasitism by Shiny Blackbirds. We saw great photos of endemic species such as the Puerto Rican Nightjar, Puerto Rican Lizard Cuckoo, Puerto Rican Tody, Puerto Rican Spindalis (national bird), Puerto Rican Emerald Hummingbird, and Green-breasted Mango. Puerto Rico also has endemic flycatchers, woodpeckers, orioles, and pewees. Puerto Rico also has the African Collared-Dove that is so similar to the Eurasian Collared-Dove that they interbreed creating hybrids.

Bill concluded by announcing that he and the team will be returning to the Dominican Republic to conduct a second year survey in January 2018. The VSO has provided a grant for a graduate student from ODU who will meet them to help sustain this project.

## SUPPORT OUR LOCAL BIRD STORES!

Visit the **Wild Birds Unlimited Store** in Settler's Market in New Town. The WBC receives a 5% rebate on the pre-tax amount spent by our Club members. Be sure to tell those generous owners that you are a member!



## Backyard Birder



**The Backyard Birder** at Quarterpath Crossing (near the Kingsmill Harris Teeter) gives each of us at the WBC a 10% discount on all merchandise. Just let the kind folks there know that you're a member to get your percentage off.



## NEW QUARTER BIRD WALK ON SEPTEMBER 9<sup>TH</sup>

On a gorgeous fall morning, September 9<sup>th</sup>, the cooler temperatures and the blue skies brought out 25 folks to walk the woods and fields of New Quarter Park with bird walk leader, Jim Corliss. Joining him were Lynda Sharrett, Sara Lewis, Portia Belden, Nancy Barnhart, David Lunt, Cheryl Jacobson, Sue Mutell, Lieve Keeney, Joyce Lowry, Bob and Emory Wojtal, Jan Merry, Pam Schnabel, Kate Laroue, Barbara Neis, Lisa Nickel, Jan Lockwood, Rick Brown, Shirley Devan (photographer), Ruth Gordon (not shown), Virginia Boyles (not shown), and three other fine folks whose names were not recorded.

## NEW QUARTER PARK BIRD WALK ON SEPTEMBER 23<sup>RD</sup>

Led by Bill Williams, the 15 birders at New Quarter Park had a nice bird walk on Saturday morning, September 23<sup>rd</sup>. The Bobolinks were itty-bitty and very hard to see. Also not seen but clearly heard was the Rose-breasted Grosbeak. The metallic sound was memorable! Folks were able to get good looks at the Black and White Warbler and Northern Parula, though, and the birders were all happy for that.

From left to right: Tori Gussman, Bob Wojtal, Sue Mutell, Andy Hawkins, Bill Williams, Patty Maloney, Susan Wolfe, Tom McCary, Frances Hayslett, Annmarie Wojtal, Linda Cole. Not pictured: Peter, Leah, and Christopher Schweitzer. Photo by Sara Lewis.



## NEW QUARTER PARK BIRD WALK ON OCTOBER 28<sup>TH</sup>



Six bird lovers gathered in New Quarter Park on Saturday, October 28<sup>th</sup>, to search for local and migratory birds. After spotting 34 species, including 2 Clapper Rail and 2 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, the team was thrilled to report that they identified a Yellow-throated Warbler. The bird was observed by two experienced birders at roughly 50 feet. Both said, "Bright yellow throat that did not extend underneath as with a Magnolia Warbler. Prominent black streaks on sides contrasted against white underparts. Black face and light eyebrow." With that good news, the happy birders posed for a photo. From left to right, back row: Wayne Moyer, Jim Corliss (leader), an unknown volunteer, and front row: Sue Mutell, Cheryl Jacobson, Glenda White. The photo was taken by Joyce Lowry.

Welcome to our newest member,  
Jean Petkofsky.  
We're glad to have you join us!!!

## OUR WBC DONATIONS TO THE WILLIAMSBURG REGIONAL LIBRARY

By Lee Schuster

Listed below are the books donated to the library this year by Williamsburg Bird Club. They made the suggestions on what they would like (and then we added a couple to their list).

*Birding for the Curious* by Nick Swick

*The Complete Guide to Bird Photography* by Jeffrey Rich

*Identifying Birds of Prey* by Laura Erickson

*Pete Dunne on Bird Watching* by Pete Dunne

*Project Puffin* by Stephen W. Kress

*Where Song Began* by Tim Low

*Lapwings, Loons and Lousy Jacks* by Ray Reedham

*The Red Canary* by Tim Birkhead

*Their Fate is Our Fate* by Peter Doherty

*One More Warbler: A Life with Birds* by Victor Emanuel

*The Most Perfect Thing: Inside (and Outside) A Bird's Egg* by Tim Birkhead

Speaking of great things to read, check out November's edition of our local magazine, *Next Door Neighbors*. Our very own Melinda Cousins is highlighted in there.

Congratulations, Melinda! You make us proud!!!

## **SAVE THE DATE – OUR CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT IS SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17<sup>TH</sup>**

*By Jim Corliss*

Please join us this year for the National Audubon Society's 118<sup>th</sup> Christmas Bird Count (CBC). Our count day will be Sunday, December 17<sup>th</sup>, during which our field teams will survey all of the birds seen or heard across eleven sectors in our 15-mile diameter count circle centered around Williamsburg. In addition to the field teams, we rely on a small army of feeder watchers who count the birds at their feeders, back yards, and neighborhoods to help us form a complete picture of how our bird populations have been changing over time.

*Yellow-throated Warbler Observed by Sue Mutell during the 2016 CBC*



The Christmas Bird Count is a wonderful opportunity for everyone to get involved in the longest-running citizen science project in the United States. Anyone can choose to team up with a party in the field or volunteer to be a feeder watcher right at home. Whatever you can contribute, even if it's just for a few hours, is valuable to the success of our count. The more eyes we have in the field, or on our feeders, will make the day more fun for everyone and help us provide the best data we can to this important project.

More information about the CBC can be found on the Audubon Society's web site <http://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count>. If you want to get involved but you're not sure what to do, then contact Jim Corliss and he will help connect you with an area coordinator. Phone: 757-755-1544. Email: [jcorliss240@cox.net](mailto:jcorliss240@cox.net).

## **HOG ISLAND FIELD TRIP**

*By Shirley Devan, Field Trip Coordinator*

Please join us for our Bird Club field trip to Hog Island Wildlife Management Area in Surry County **Sunday, November 19<sup>th</sup>**. Our leader will be new Bird Club member and former VSO President Rexanne Bruno, who has recently moved to Williamsburg. Because of hunting season, our trip will be Sunday instead of Saturday.

**MEET** the group at Colony Square Shopping Center, 1301 Jamestown Road, Williamsburg.

**TIME:** We'll plan to catch the 7:30 am ferry across the James River. Arrive at Colony Square in time to form carpools for a 7:15 am departure for the ferry. If you can carry 4-5 people, consider offering to carpool.

**NOTE** that we will have to go through security at the Surry Nuclear Power Station before proceeding to Hog Island. **EACH PASSENGER IN EACH CAR SHOULD BRING THEIR DRIVER'S LICENSE.** The driver should be prepared for security to check your trunk and under the hood as well as under your car. They will also swab your steering wheel and door handles for suspicious materials.

**WHAT TO BRING:** If you have a spotting scope, you might want to bring it along with your binoculars and camera. Check the weather forecast the night before and dress for the predicted weather. Wear closed toe shoes and be prepared for sun protection and mosquitoes. There are no restroom facilities at Hog Island.

We'll bird primarily along the 1.5 mile main road that ends at the James River. Hog Island is noted for its many Bald Eagles and wintering waterfowl. We'll have an Access Permit for each car. We'll plan to leave the area by noon to head back across the ferry to Williamsburg. To see a map of the area, go to this web site for Hog Island: <https://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wma/hog-island/>.

## VSO ANNUAL FIELD TRIP TO VIRGINIA BEACH, DECEMBER 1-3

The VA Society of Ornithology's annual field trip to Virginia Beach will be Friday, December 1 through Sunday, December 3, 2017. Field Trips for the weekend include:

- Friday morning: trip to Craney Island
- Saturday morning: Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel (CBBT) Islands 3 & 4.
- Saturday afternoon: Birders can take their choice of additional Eastern Shore hot spots or check out Pleasure House Point in Virginia Beach.
- Sunday morning: Back Bay NWR and False Cape State Park via BBNWR tram

Trips are limited in participation so it's important to register in advance.



**LODGING:** There will be a block of rooms available at Comfort Suites Beachfront (VA563). To register for the group rate, you must mention the Virginia Society of Ornithology. Reserve rooms by Nov 16 for the group rate.

**REGISTRATION:** It is important to register for the field trips as participation is limited. Register with the trip coordinator, Lee Adams, by email by November 15 at [leeloudenslageradams@gmail.com](mailto:leeloudenslageradams@gmail.com). Please put VSO VIRGINIA BEACH TRIP in the subject line of the email, and include your name, e-mail address & cell phone number, and the field trips you are requesting.

**VERY Important!** All VSO field trips have a registration fee of \$20 for NON-VSO members only. This fee will be applied to an individual membership that will be active until the end of 2018. If 2 or more people from the same family register, the registration fee will be \$25, which covers a family membership. Groups of students accompanied by their instructor are exempt from this fee. Non-members can join in advance at <http://www.virginiabirds.org/membership-and-donate/> or pay the registration fee on the first evening of the event. Web site with additional info: <http://www.virginiabirds.org>

### GRANDVIEW BEACH FIELD TRIP

By Shirley Devan, Field Trip Coordinator

Thanks to all who came out for the field trip to Grandview Beach on October 21<sup>st</sup>! And we certainly appreciate Nancy Barnhart for calling in the great weather and finding the birds for us! She was able to help us identify 43 species! The Yellow Rumps are back in town and were well represented. After filtering them out, we had some great birds and good looks at Golden-crowned Kinglets, a Marsh Wren, Hermit Thrush, Swamp Sparrow, and Savannah Sparrow.



Participants were: Nancy Barnhart, Leader; John and Marilyn Adair; Lou Amato; Lisa Billow; Shirley Devan; Deane and Ruth Gordon; Jan Lockwood; Letitia Lussier; Patty Maloney; Cathy Millar; Sue Mutell; and Betty Peterson.



We didn't get a group photo, but I snapped a few photos of folks enjoying the beach, the weather, and the birds. (We bumped into the VA Beach Audubon Bird club as they headed down the trail ahead of us. We were not the only club who thought this was the place to be Saturday morning!)

## A KIPTOKE CHALLENGE THANK YOU NOTE

By Brian Taber

NOTE: The 23nd Annual Kiptopeke Challenge team birding competition and fund-raiser for CVWO was held on September 23, 2017! Brian Taber and Dave Youker, one of the teams representing the Williamsburg Bird Club, participated in this exciting yet exhausting 24-hour challenge. They competed as the Wild Birds Unlimited of Williamsburg team, the only one to have competed every year. The two of them (and, as you'll read, a new team member) explored the Eastern Shore from before sunup to after sunset! Our second team, Gulls Gone Wild, is composed of Shirley Devan, Nancy Barnhart, Joyce Lowry, and Barbara Neis. They also had a long, exciting, exhausting experience.

### Here's a note from Brian Taber—

About a week before the Challenge began, Dave heard from someone wanting to be placed on a team, so we added Larry Johnson, birder and photographer from Virginia Beach. On the Thursday before the Challenge, a birder recorded an astonishing 10,000+ songbirds moving near the tip of the Eastern Shore! Usually a big flight occurs following a cold front, but this may have been due to offshore tropical storm winds instead...and usually the birds disperse over the next day or two...however...on Saturday, there was another decent songbird flight there, at Sunset Beach and...luckily for us and we found more songbird variety than we have over the past few years.



Merlin at Kiptopeke. Photo by Nancy Barnhart

Dave, Larry and I stayed in the yurt at Kiptopeke and were up before 5, walking around Kiptopeke, quickly hearing an Eastern Screech-Owl and Great Horned Owl in very nice, calm, weather conditions. Birds were passing overhead in the dark and we managed to hear several well, including Swainson's Thrush, Veery and Killdeer. Then...just before sunup, a Chuck-will's-widow flew up very close...a bird we very seldom see! The bird-of-the-day already?!

Hearing how good Sunset Beach had been, we went there next and saw several other teams. There was a great flow of hundreds of low birds zooming through a gap in the trees, many passing unidentified. Highlights included Rose-breasted Grosbeak, an early Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and 14 species of warblers, highlighted by Wilson's, Blackburnian, Cape May and Chestnut-sided.

We went to Ramp Lane at the Eastern Shore National Wildlife Refuge, Magothy Bay Natural Area and Pickett's Harbor Preserve, a mile north of Kiptopeke where we also conduct our Baywatch Waterbird Program. These sites yielded Marsh Wren, House Wren, Seaside Sparrow, Eurasian Collared-Dove and more in the 3 hours after sunup. The Oyster landfill pond gave us a great array of herons and egrets and our only duck of the day...surprisingly, a Ring-necked. We birded Savage Neck Preserve, near Eastville for the first time during a Challenge and were rewarded with a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher. Willis Wharf had a very high storm tide, so it was not the shorebird bonanza area it is at low tide.

Chincoteague last year was very poor weather and few birds, but this year it was calm and produced lots of birds....Brown-headed Nuthatch, American Oystercatcher, Red Knot, which is very seldom found, Greater Yellowlegs, White-rumped Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Black-bellied Plover, American Golden-Plover, Piping Plover, Marbled Godwit and Lesser Black-backed Gull...wow!

We again dedicated our day to friends who have passed away in this year and we thought about our long-time friend, Tom Armour, who had been on previous Kiptopeke Challenge teams with Brian and was a regular at the College Creek Hawkwatch. Last year the winning team had 132 species and this year, the winning total was also 132. In our 17-hour day, we managed a respectable 123 species, good enough for 2nd place!

Last year our team won the bronze Piping Plover trophy for most funds raised at over \$3,000 and we hope to do as well this year, too. Thanks to our great supporters! We had a fine day, as always, supporting CVWO...

## SOME PHOTOS BY OUR MEMBERS:

Here's a photo Cathy Millar took on our field trip to Grandview Nature Preserve. This Marsh Wren treated the birders to excellent views and an almost perpetual bubbling song as it bounced about on a yucca plant on the edge of the marsh.



Inge Curtis took this photo of a young Blue-gray Gnatcatcher on August 23<sup>rd</sup>.



## CALENDAR

Sunday, November 5	Hampton Roads Bird Club sponsors a Bird Walk at Newport News Park, 7 am. Meet in the parking lot near Ranger Station.
Saturday, November 11	Project Feeder Watch begins. For more information, go to <a href="http://feederwatch.org/">feederwatch.org/</a>
Saturday, November 11	Williamsburg Bird Club (WBC) sponsors a Bird Walk at New Quarter Park, 8 am. Meet at the parking lot near the office.
Wednesday, November 15	WBC Monthly Meeting, 7 pm, Andrews Hall, Room 101 on W&M Campus—parking pass needed. See page 1 for details.
Sunday, November 19	WBC Field Trip – Hog Island — Details on page 6. Please note that this field trip is on SUNDAY due to hunting restrictions.
Sunday, November 19	Hampton Roads Bird Club sponsors a Bird Walk at Newport News Park, 7 am. Meet in the parking lot near the Ranger Station.
Saturday, November 25	Williamsburg Bird Club (WBC) sponsors a Bird Walk at New Quarter Park, 7 am. Meet at the parking lot near the office.
Monday, January 1	Greensprings Boardwalk Bird Show, 1:00-3:00 at the boardwalk by the Old Beaver Pond—come join in on the first bird walk of 2018!