



The Flyer

Newsletter of the Williamsburg Bird Club

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September 2018

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Cheryl Jacobson



Welcome back after our summer break! I hope you had opportunities to spend time with family and friends, travel to some great locations, and scope out some wonderful birds. I look forward to seeing your photos, so be sure to send them to Melinda for our next newsletter.

This summer I took my oldest grandson to Wisconsin to camp, then on to Lake Superior, and because I felt a strong calling, back to Minnesota and Sax-Zim Bog. The Bog did not disappoint and provided me the opportunity to see LeConte's Sparrow, Ruffed Grouse, and Sharp-tailed Grouse (my 600th Continental United States bird species). For the second time in my life, I saw the Great Gray Owl.



If you have been using eBird, you have probably noticed that the yearly update is under way. They do this update once each year, considering the past 12 months' worth of recent taxonomic knowledge on splits, lumps, name changes, and changes in the sequence of the species lists. This year I realized the importance of recording subspecies with the split of Mallard and the previous subspecies of Mexican Duck.

(Continued Page 2)

PROGRAMS

W&M Integrated Science Center, Room 1127

By Judy Jones

Virginia Society of Ornithology (VSO) Birding in Guatemala by Dave Youker
September 19th @ 7pm

Please note the change of meeting location to the Integrated Science Center. Dave will be telling us about the many wonderful birds seen throughout the various habitats of Guatemala. He'll also be covering the great work being done by Community Cloud Forest Conservation (CCFC) in the areas of conservation and education that is leading to improved societal changes within the country. Please come join us for a fascinating and interesting evening.

Future Williamsburg Bird Club (WBC) Programs

October 17th, Dr. John Swaddle of William and Mary will be our speaker, talking about his grant to develop technology to reduce the toll wind turbines take on birds. Entitled "Developing an 'Acoustic Lighthouse' to Reduce Birds' Risk of Collision in Flight," this will be a fascinating evening.

November 14th, we will join forces with the Historic Rivers Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists to hear research biologist Fletcher Smith. His talk, "Birding and Research Above the Arctic Circle," will share information about the birds and animals encountered during each summer over the three years he lived in a field camp on the tundra on Bathurst Island in the Arctic Circle.

And, on January 16th, Bob Schamerhorn returns to share his wonderful photographs in a talk entitled 'Atlantic Coastal Birds,' discussing our favorite shorebirds, and examining their habitats, migration patterns, and the challenges each species faces.

WBC EXECUTIVE BOARD 2018



President

303-519-0989

Cheryl Jacobson jcheryljoy@aol.com

Vice-President (Programs) 757-293-8297

Judy Jones jjones184@cox.net

Vice-President (The Flyer) 252-259-2809

Melinda Cousins lbackyardbirder@gmail.com

Treasurer 757-221-6683

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Secretary 757-229-1775

Cathy Millar millar.cathy@gmail.com

Member-at-Large 757-221-6683

Gary Carpenter carpent66@cox.net

Member-at-Large 757-813-1322

Shirley Devan sdevan52@cox.net

Past President 757-229-1124

Bill Williams billwilliams154@gmail.com

Committee Chairpersons

Membership 757-707-3345

Jeanette Navia jnavia@gmail.com

Field Trips 757-645-8716

Geoff Giles tylerandal2@aol.com

Bird Counts/Bird Walks 757-565-0536

Jim Corliss jcorliss240@cox.net

Records 757-229-1124

Bill Williams billwilliams154@gmail.com

Library Liaison 757-565-6148

Lee Schuster dljschuster@cox.net

Refreshments 347-742-3273

Barbara Neiss b.neis15@gmail.com

Webmistress 757-707-3345

Jeanette Navia jnavia@gmail.com

Historian 757-229-2830

Tom McCary tom.b.mccary@gmail.com

Liaison to CVWO 540-454-3014

Nancy Barnhart barnhartnt@gmail.com

In August of 2013, I was birding at Pena Blanca Lake and met a group from the Tucson Bird Festival. The leader was pointing out the Mexican Ducks. I learned then that it was a subspecies of the Mallard called *Anas platyrhynchos diazi*, which occurs in parts of Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Mexico. Both males and females closely resemble female Mallards, although the body color is somewhat darker than a typical female Mallard. I recorded them on my eBird list as a subspecies. With this update, they are now split into a separate species. eBird automatically updates old lists to now show the additional species on my life list.

This is the ninth month in the Year of the Bird. I will continue to provide you with things you can do that will have a positive impact on our ecosystem and birds.

Here is a little quiz.

Globally, how much food do we waste or lose every year?

- a. 3.1 billion tons
- b. 2.4 billion tons
- c. 1.3 billion tons
- d. 800 million tons

The correct answer is: c. 1.3 billion tons.

One-third of the world's food—1.3 billion tons—is lost or wasted, at a cost of \$750 billion, annually. When we throw away food, we waste the resources and labor used to get it to our markets and kitchens. Additionally, lost and wasted food is behind more than a quarter of all deforestation and nearly a quarter of global water consumption. It generates as much as 10% of all greenhouse-gas emissions. You can check out what you can do by going to:

https://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/fight-climate-change-by-preventing-food-waste?utm_campaign=wild-classroom&utm_medium=web&utm_source=partner-site&utm_content=food-waste-resources

Some of their suggestions are:

- Plan and buy only what you need.
- Use your freezer.
- Be creative with leftovers.
- Blend, bake, or boil. Fruits and vegetables that are beyond ripe might not look pretty, but that doesn't mean they can't still taste delicious in recipes. Try using your wilting, browning, or imperfect produce to make sweet smoothies, breads, jams, sauces, or soup stocks.
- Talk it up. Preventing food waste is the most effective way to shrink its impact on the planet. If we avoid producing food we don't eat, we can save the land, water, and energy that would have been used to make it. And awareness is a good first step: According to ReFED (<https://www.refed.com/analysis?sort=economic-value-per-ton>), educating consumers about food waste could prevent 2.3 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions.

I look forward to seeing you and leave you with one more photo I took when I visited my son in Florida, a Purple Gallinule (see next page).



PARKING PASS INFORMATION

Our Fall parking pass will be issued in early September, and we will be sending it out to all of you by email. Please remember to have it in your car, visible on your dashboard, when you attend our meetings. We will also have hard copies available at each meeting.

BIRD WALK AT LAKE MATOAKA – SEPTEMBER 8TH

By Jim Corliss

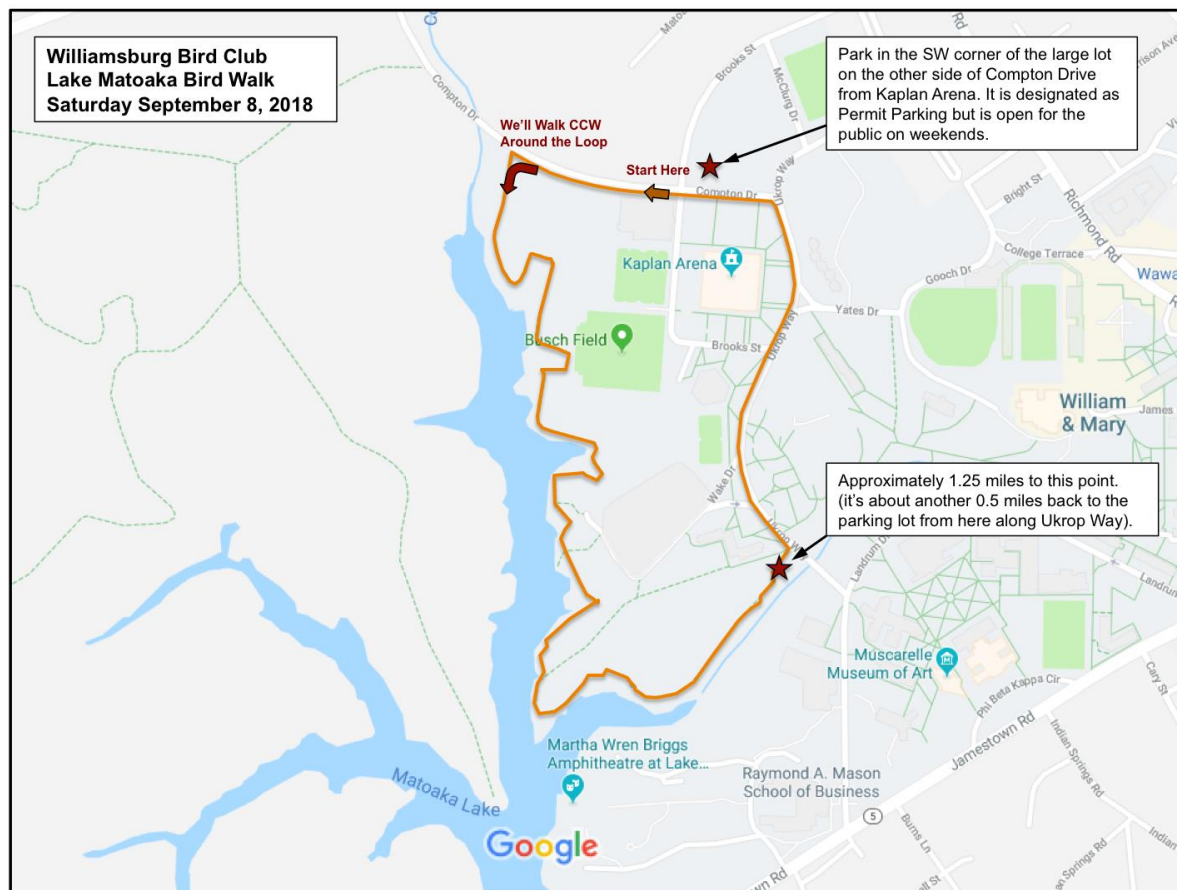
Our next bird walk will be next Saturday, September 8, at Lake Matoaka. Our leader will be Nancy Barnhart who led the same walk for us back in March. We'll have a different set of birds around the lake now in September compared to the winter residents in March, so come on out and help us see what we can find in late summer. The logistics for the walk will be the same as they were in March and are

described below.

The starting point for the walk is the corner of Compton Drive and Brooks Street near Kaplan Arena (formerly William & Mary Hall). Park in the Southwest corner of the large lot on the other side of Compton Drive from the arena. The lot is designated as Permit Parking, but it is open for the public to use on weekends (this was confirmed with the William & Mary Parking Services Office).

We will walk counter-clockwise around the loop shown on the attached map. This trail winds along the edge of Lake Matoaka with consistent views onto the lake. Note that the trail is narrow at places and the terrain is uneven with a lot of protruding tree roots and leaf-covered areas that need to be navigated carefully. **Wear good walking shoes.**

We'll exit the wooded area after about 1.25 miles. From here (see map), folks will have the option of either: a) walking along Ukrop Way about a 1/2 mile back to the Kaplan Arena parking lot; or b) backtracking along the lake the way we came to get back to the parking lot.



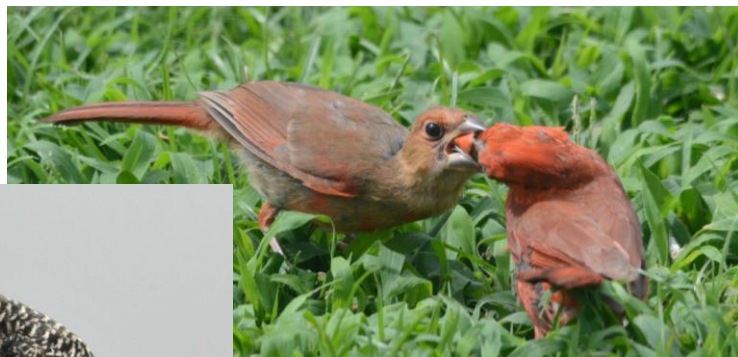
REPORTED SIGHTINGS AND ACTIVITY FROM SUMMER 2018

(Photo credit is attributed to authors of the sightings, unless otherwise noted)

May:

Rose Ryan shares some Northern Cardinal and Red-bellied Woodpecker fledgling activity (photos right and below) with us. See more fledgling fun by joining the WBC's efforts with the VABBA2!

Jeanette Navia spotted this beautiful Red-headed Woodpecker (photo below) snacking on her suet.



July: Cathy Millar was pleased to announce the last of her Purple Martins (photo below) fledged on July 2nd. This year, there were three successful broods compared to only one last year.

August:

Bringier McConnell shares on recent travel to South

Florida, he managed a quick trip to the Everglades to do a little birding. "Experiencing the park was wonderful, and the birding so enjoyable. Highlights included watching several dozen White Ibis mothers conducting a flight school in the treetops of a rookery, and two life birds: A magnificent, soaring Swallow-tailed Kite, and a remarkably friendly family of Limpkins (photo below far right)."

Judy Jones reports her wonderful travels to Florida in search of the Swallow-tailed Kite (photo below and article on page 9).

Shirley Devan submits a photo (next page) of the scope line during the Craney Island Field Trip led by Bill Williams.





HELLO KIPTOPEKE CHALLENGE SUPPORTERS!

By Shirley Devan and Brian Taber

On September 22, 2018, the Kiptopeke Challenge will kick off its 24th year! Two teams from the WBC, the Gulls Gone Wild (Jan Lockwood, Nancy Barnhart, Barbara Neis, Joyce Lowry, Sue Mutell, and Shirley Devan) and Wild Birds Unlimited (with Brian Taber and Dave Youker – Brian has done all 24 Challenges!), will be flying around the highways and byways of the Eastern

Shore to raise much-needed funds for the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory (CVWO). This team birding competition is the Observatory's main fund-raising event and is a good early migration survey of Virginia's coastal plain.

The CVWO has provided financial, volunteer and logistical support for research and education of Observatory programs, to include songbird research, a Northern Saw-whet Owl study, the Prothonotary Warbler nest box project, water bird surveys, educational presentations and many others. As autumn approaches, CVWO is sponsoring these programs:

- 42nd annual Kiptopeke Hawkwatch. Anna Stunkel will be on the platform again this year. She'll be counting hawks September 1 – November 30. Be sure to visit!
- CVWO's Monarch Butterfly migration studies will continue, providing crucial data for understanding the migration needs and patterns of this beleaguered species.

The value of these long-term studies cannot be overstated in view of climate change predictions, implementation of off-shore wind-energy technology, and potential changes in land use practices, to name only a few. CVWO needs your help to sustain these research efforts this fall and beyond. Through the Kiptopeke Challenge, you can support CVWO and make a difference right away!



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.

We greatly appreciate your support over the years and hope you can sponsor us again. ALL donations go to the CVWO. Please send your donation check, payable to CVWO, to either:

- Shirley Devan for the Gulls Gone Wild, 6227 Tucker Landing, Williamsburg, VA 23188
- Brian Taber for Wild Birds of Williamsburg, 103 Exeter Court, Williamsburg, VA 23185

This event is lots of fun, and we and the CVWO will be grateful for whatever pledge you make. If you would like a target for making a flat donation, we suggest \$25. All who donate at the \$25 level or higher will become CVWO members and enjoy updates and news about our projects.

After the Challenge, each team will let you know the results and send you an account of the birds and adventures. Last year, highlights included the American Golden Plover, Chuck-will's Widow, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, and Blackburnian Warbler. The CVWO greatly values your support!

THE JOY OF BIRDING

By Cathy Millar

Our May program was delivered by Williamsburg-born WBC member, Susan Powell. She attended ODU for undergraduate and graduate degrees in biology and has been a birder since 1982. Her graduate work focused on below-ground dynamics. Susan's career took her many places and included working in wetlands biology and as an environmental consultant.

Susan delivered an illustrated lecture about the joys of birding and ways to improve our identification skills. She described birding as the gift that keeps on giving. Birding offers the opportunity of meeting like-minded people and making lifelong friends; a reason to get out and enjoy the outdoors; having something always available to do; and an excuse for travel.

Susan began with some interesting statistics noting that there are about 90,000 species of birds worldwide, which is almost twice the number of mammal species. The continental US and Canada have approximately 800 species. East of the Mississippi River, there are 600 species; in Virginia about 472 and locally about 342. Statistics reveal that 88% of birders are backyard birders and that the average birder is 53 years old and female. In 2011, there were 47 million birders in the US (about 20% of the population) who spent 14.9 billion dollars in equipment, bird food, and trips, which in turn supported 666,000 jobs.

Another interesting fact was that 80% of North American birds are migratory at some phase of their annual cycle. Some are temperate, short range migrating birds that stay within North America (NA). The long-range, Neotropical migrants comprise about 70% of breeding birds in NA.

She reported that a lot of a bird's brain power is devoted to eyesight, which may be the most important sense in birds, and that their color vision surpasses that of humans. The second most important sense is probably hearing with birds hearing ten times more detail in sounds than humans. Birds are the greatest sound producers of all vertebrates and are divided into two groups based on vocal ability: song birds and non-songbirds. Field guides are often organized by presenting non-songbirds first (e.g., waterfowl, raptors, woodpeckers) with songbirds filling the second half of the book.

Susan discussed, in detail, and gave examples of how to identify birds by noting general size and shape, color patterns, field marks, posture, style of walking, flight pattern, behavior, distribution and song. She ended her presentation reviewing what to look for in breeding bird behavior, which was very timely as several of our club members are engaged in gathering data for the second Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas and are eager to have more volunteers participate.

THANK YOU, DR. DAN CRISTOL

By Cheryl Jacobson

At the May 2018 WBC meeting, tribute was paid to Dr. Dan Cristol. He was presented with a framed artist print of Virginia birds. We appreciate all that Dan does for our club. He has presented programs at least nine times, including programs about bluebirds and golf courses, window collisions, 35 species of concern, birds/clams/walnuts, research overviews (2), prep for owl search, Mercury pollution, juncos, and the Migratory Bird Act.

He has not only presented programs often, but I learned from reading the past old newsletters posted on our website, that he was also Vice President of Programs. We can thank Dan for not only completing the tedious paperwork in securing the room for our meetings but also dealing with the issue of justifying why we should be allowed to use the space. It is also because of him that we have been able to park on campus without expense - something that is not easy for him to procure. Of course, he also attends all our meetings and provides us access to the audio-visual equipment.



Dan's connection with the students has been critical in providing us with candidates for our grants and other programs. The students' enthusiasm adds greatly to our organization. Dan has always stood ready to lead field trips and assist us as needed. Please thank him next time you see him!

BASSETT HALL NATURE TRAIL - MAY 12TH

By Nancy Barnhart

Nancy reported a fabulous walk on the nature trail and confirmed breeding accounts for the Wood Duck and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. Photo shows a female Wood Duck with her ducklings. View the group's birding checklist online at <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S45603119>.



NEW QUARTER PARK (NQP) BIRD WALK – MAY 26TH

By Ruth Gordon

Ruth Gordon led this great group during May. Highlights included the Acadian Flycatcher, Red-eyed Vireo, Barn Swallows, and Yellow-throated Vireo among many others!



POWHATAN CREEK PARK BIRD WALK - JUNE 9TH

By Shirley Devan

Twenty-three birders enjoyed a walk in the woods and an enjoyable time on the boardwalk looking at hummingbirds, woodpeckers, owls, and Prothonotary Warblers. View the checklist online at <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S46422118>.



NEW QUARTER PARK (NQP) BIRD WALK – JULY 28TH

By Jan Lockwood



The fourteen birders attending this Bird Walk lingered at the dock on Queens Creek to watch the stars of the day in addition to the nine Great Egrets and two Great Blue Herons that stretched along the Creek, an adult and three juvenile Yellow-crowned Night Herons disturbed by the incoming tide, perched in the trees above the boats, which gave us exceptional scope views. We also enjoyed seeing a mature Bald Eagle and the three recently fledged juvenile Osprey, which are growing stronger and flying further although they were still dependent on the adult for food. They may well have begun their first migration south before our next bird walk. View the checklist online at <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S47501800>.

NEW QUARTER PARK BIRD WALK AND DOLPHINS! – AUGUST 25TH

By Jim Corliss and Dolphin Photo by Sue Mutell



We had an unusual and exciting bird walk. Not only did we have a great group of people (22), incredible weather, and a nice selection of birds, but as we were out on the floating dock in Queens Creek, a pod of five dolphins came up the creek with two or three of them passing right by us. Several of the dolphins went upstream as far as the corner near the marina, and then they all turned around and headed back out towards the York River. The challenge for all the photographers in the group was to predict when and where the next dolphin would emerge from the water to get a snap shot. What a memorable morning!



BARN OWL BOX DONATION

By Cheryl Jacobson

Thank you, Melinda Cousins and Backyard Birder, for caring about Barn Owls! This summer, Backyard Birder Seed & Supply donated two Barn Owl boxes to our club, and we are erecting them in appropriate locations.

Last year, after Busch Gardens brought a Barn Owl for part of the program, I shared this information about the stability of the Barn Owl population. In Virginia the population stability is good. However, in many areas of the United States the Barn Owl population is in trouble. The map below shows you that in 16 states the Barn Owl is either endangered or considered a species of concern. As lovers of Barn Owls, it is important for us to maintain our population by erecting nest boxes, as we know that more and more barns and silos are being destroyed.



- Pink: Endangered; these states may have already suffered such losses of barn owls that habitat restoration combined with nest box programs may be necessary to bring back any numbers.
- Yellow: Species of Special Concern; these states have seen declining populations. They are excellent states for conservation-oriented nest box erection programs in areas of good barn owl habitat.
- Light Blue: Fair populations; these states offer excellent opportunities to establish robust populations of barn owls for natural rodent control and integrated pest management.
- Dark Blue: Good populations; these states have such high populations of barn owls that nest boxes are inhabited relatively quickly and occupied at relatively high rates. In such states, barn owls will tend to have more than one brood per year. Excellent states to use barn owls in sophisticated rodent control programs.



relatively quickly and occupied at relatively high rates. In such states, barn owls will tend to have more than one brood per year. Excellent states to use barn owls in sophisticated rodent control programs.

Virginia Barn Owls – Common on the coastal plain and very robust populations along the coast and Chesapeake Bay. Rare in the mountainous western edge of the state. Good concentrations in the Shenandoah Valley. Researchers report that old silos are a frequent nesting site and that barn owls burrow hollows in the old silage to lay their eggs and raise their chicks.

AN ADVENTURE WITH SWALLOW-TAILED KITES

By Judy Jones

At the end of July, Barbara Houston and I were lucky enough to travel down to Florida to see and photograph a gathering of Swallow-tailed Kites, roosting on a small creek outside of Orlando. It was a memorable experience and just so overwhelmingly impressive that I sat in the boat with my mouth open, holding my camera, not even remembering to try to get a shot. On the banks of the creek, high in the cedars, nearly 2,500 Swallow-tailed Kites rested in the trees, waiting for the sun to rise high enough to dry their wings and let them fly.



These kites are about the size of a Red-tailed Hawk. Can you imagine seeing five to ten trees in front of you with over 2,000 hawks sitting atop them? That's how incredible the sight of the kites was! These birds are creatures of the air, spending most of their day aloft and rarely flapping their wings. They tend to circle low over trees as they hunt for small animals in the branches. At times, they soar very high in the sky almost at the limits of vision.

The kites are a study in black and white, with bright-white heads and underparts and gleaming black wings, back, and tail. From below, the wing linings are white, and the flight feathers are black. Kites have long, narrow, pointed wings, slim bodies, and 16-inch long, deeply forked tails. Their bills are small and sharply hooked. Like most raptors, juveniles look slightly different from adults. For one thing, like Osprey, their eyes are red. Another difference is that the juveniles' wing tips are white, changing to all black as they mature, and their forked tails are considerably shorter than the mature adult's.

Roosting atop the trees in a very communal way, the kites wait for sunshine. And when it comes, they stretch, flap, and then leave the tree branches and float out over the creek, sometimes one or two but often by the hundreds. They pass above the cove several times, and then each fly down to skim across the top of the creek, getting a great gulp of water. Each one may drink once or perhaps, several times, but then together they rise on the thermals and soar away to hunt for food.



It was amazing to witness this daily exodus of such beautiful birds. Soon the exodus will not be daily but rather seasonal as they start their fall migration. At the end of the summer, the Swallow-tailed Kites will begin their 5,000 mile trip from Florida to spend winter in South America. They first travel to Cuba, then across Mexico, and slowly work their way through Central America and farther south. The journey can take as long as three months. Then, come spring, they must travel another 5,000 miles back to Florida to prepare for the nesting season.

It was a joy to witness firsthand the beauty and grace of these birds. It was indeed a memory-making experience.

SHOW YOUR WBC PRIDE!

The following items will be for sale at the monthly meeting:

Red Headed Woodpecker pins - \$5

Patches - \$5

Notecards: \$10

WELCOME NEW WBC MEMBERS – WE LOOK FORWARD TO BIRDING WITH YOU! AND ONE FAREWELL.

Welcome Elizabeth C. Doak, William & Sherry Hancock, Paul Olsen, and Susan Summers. Rebecca Jansen says goodbye to everyone as she is moving back to Florida to retire near family, “I so enjoyed the outings I was able to participate in and shall miss everyone and beautiful Virginia.” Farewell and Happy Retirement, Rebecca!

SUPPORT OUR LOCALLY OWNED BIRD STORES & FELLOW WBC MEMBERS

Backyard Birder



Backyard Birder Seed & Supply located in Williamsburg at the Quarterpath Shopping Center (near the Kingsmill Harris Teeter) supports the WBC through donations and a 10% discount on purchases for WBC members. For your discount in-store, please inform them you are a WBC member during checkout. <https://www.backyardbirder.org>



Wild Birds Unlimited located in Williamsburg at Settler’s Market in New Town supports the WBC through donations and a 5% rebate on the pre-tax amount spent in store by WBC members. Please inform them you are a WBC member during checkout. <https://williamsburg.wbu.com/>

CALENDAR

September 8 - 8 am	WBC Bird Walk, Lake Matoaka (See details on page 3).
September 17	WBC Board Meeting.
September 19 – 7 pm	WBC Monthly Meeting, W&M Integrated Science Center, Room 1127.
September 22	The Kiptopeke Challenge, Eastern Shore (See article on page 4 for more details). <hr/> 8 am: WBC Bird Walk, New Quarter Park.
September 23	The Flyer submissions are due for October; please submit all sightings, articles, and activity to 1backyardbirder@gmail.com. Thank you!
October 13 – 8 am	WBC Bird Walk, Bassett Trace.
October 17 – 7 pm	WBC Monthly Meeting.
October 27 - 8 am	WBC Bird Walk, New Quarter Park.
November 10	8 am: WBC Bird Walk, Powhatan Creek Trail. <hr/> Project FeederWatch Season Starts.
November 14 – 7 pm	WBC Monthly Meeting.
November 24 – 8 am	WBC Bird Walk, New Quarter Park.
December 8 – 8 am	WBC Bird Walk, Chickahominy Park.
December 22 – 8 am	WBC Bird Walk, New Quarter Park.
January 16 – 7 pm	WBC Monthly Meeting.