



The Flyer

Newsletter of the Williamsburg Bird Club

Vol. 42 No. 9

williamsburgbirdclub.org

December 2018

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Cheryl Jacobson



It has been an honor to serve as your President during this Year of the Bird. I hope you have been able to find some helpful tips on supporting birds in my President's Corner.

I want to thank all the Board and Committee Chairs who have worked hard this year. All your Executive Board have committed to another year. A special thanks to the members at the November meeting, who voted to accept the slate of Executive Board for next year.

We have several new Committee Chairs, which are updated on page 2 for you for the New Year. If you need help from any of us, we're here. The new committee chairs are Historian, Rose Ryan; Refreshments, Catherine Flanagan; Field Trips, George Martin & Deane Gordon (Geoff Giles will continue in order to help the new committee members become oriented). If any of our members are interested in serving on the Field Trip committee, please let me know. We could use one more!

A special Thank You to Tom McCary and Barbara Neis for your work as past Historian and Refreshments committee chairs. You make our Club successful! Also, thanks to Wild Birds Unlimited, Backyard Birder, Geoff Giles, and Gwen and Walt Harris who provided door prizes this year. I always welcome these generous contribution of items for door prizes.

Please pay your 2019 dues (see membership form enclosed).

So, let's talk turkey! First, what does that mean? According to the Urban dictionary, it means to speak frankly about the basic facts of a matter or to speak plainly or get to the point, as in don't call me until you're ready to talk turkey. This expression allegedly comes from a tale about an Indian and a white man who hunted together and divided the game. When the white man said, "I'll take the turkey and you the buzzard, or you take the buzzard and I the turkey," the Indian replied, "Talk turkey to me." Whether or not this tale has a true basis, the term was recorded in its present meaning by about 1840.

(Continued Page 2)

PROGRAMS

**W&M Integrated Science Center, Room 1127
7 pm**

By Judy Jones

Reminder: There is no December meeting or program. Happy Holidays!

Future Williamsburg Bird Club (WBC) Programs

Atlantic Coastal Birds - January 16th

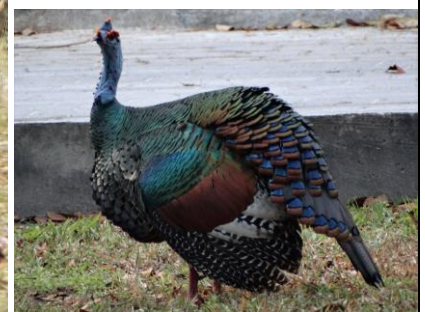
Join us in the New Year for our first meeting! We are thrilled to have Bob Schamerhorn return in January as our speaker. His topic will be Atlantic Coastal Birds, and he will share information about our favorite shorebirds, discussing with us their habitats, migration patterns, and challenges they face. This presentation will include Bob's award-winning photography, HD video clips, and bird songs.

Bird Conservation in the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) - February 20th

Sergio Harding from DGIF will be our guest speaking, sharing with us bird conservation programs sponsored by DGIF.

Fascinating Feathers - March 20th

In March, we will be hosting wildlife rehabilitator, Maureen Eiger, who will be speaking about the biology of feathers. Her talk, Fascinating Feathers, is an in-depth study of bird feathers, answering many of the questions birders have about this important aspect of bird biology.



WBC EXECUTIVE BOARD 2019



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
Ann Carpenter carpent66@cox.net

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 571-535-7444
George Martin grm0803@gmail.com
Deane Gordan deanegordan@gmail.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 347-879-1997
Catherine Flanagan flanagan.catherine@gmail.com

Webmistress 757-707-3345
Jeanette Navia jnavia@gmail.com

Historian 757-771-2791
Rose Ryan whisperingwind10875@gmail.com

Liaison to CVWO 540-454-3014
Nancy Barnhart barnhartnt@gmail.com

The Wild Turkey (see photo near Hog Island on page 1, left) is the largest of the order Galliformes, which otherwise includes quail like the Bobwhite, grouse, ptarmigan and a few others. The group is largely ground-dwelling birds with simple bills that pickup seeds, fruit and other morsels off the substrate.

Turkeys have a raised hallux, meaning their hind toe is situated up the tarsi, so it doesn't get damaged when they scratch. Turkeys also have bare heads, with the males having quite colorful skin. The color is for courtship and is featherless for thermoregulation.

Members of the Galliformes have dark leg and white breast meat because they fly so little and scratch so much. This is because the excess exercise leads to more myoglobin in the muscle cells, the power-producing part of the cell's organelles. This also explains why most birds like ducks have dark breast meat, as long flights are necessary.

Our barnyard turkeys are descended from the Wild Turkey, as most gamebirds become tame in captivity. These domesticated birds become quite large, and escaped birds are easily identified by their white tail tips.

As we learned from Dave Youker two months ago, there is another species of turkey in the Americas found from southern Mexico through Guatemala. It is the Ocellated Turkey, a favorite of the Mayans when they arrived from Asia to colonize the New World (see Dave's photo of the Ocellated Turkey, page 1, right).

Turkey Talk and Your Club President

Growing up on the South Dakota prairie, we always had a great Christmas, even when crop and livestock prices were low because of turkeys. My mother, with the help of whatever eight of us children who were at home, raised several hundred turkeys to dress and sell at Thanksgiving (see old black and white photo below). Being the youngest, I always got the worse job...cleaning the gizzards. We would fill the back of our large truck with the dressed turkeys and go to a town 25 miles away and in several hours, sell all of them.



Talk Turkey and Work to Be Done/New Year's Resolutions

In a report issued by The World Wildlife Fund entitled, "The Living Planet Report," the state of the planet is documented. The report can be found at: <https://www.worldwildlife.org/pages/living-planet-report-2018>.

(Continued Page 3)

Published by WWF every two years, the report brings together a variety of research to provide a comprehensive view of the health of the Earth. On average, they indicate there has been an astonishing 60% decline in the size of the populations of mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, and amphibians in just over 40 years. The top threats to species identified in the report link directly to human activities, including habitat loss and degradation and the excessive use of wildlife such as overfishing and overhunting.

So even though the Year of the Bird is ending, I will continue to include suggestions of what we as Club Members can do to protect birds and wildlife.

I am sorry if you missed our November meeting and Fletcher Smith's presentation of his research at the Arctic Circle in Canada. Please be sure to read Cathy Millar's article this month, as it does an excellent job of summarizing the conclusion that the warming climate in the Arctic is also contributing to the decline of shore birds. Lemmings are an important part of the life cycle in the Arctic. Some areas have not had a spike in lemming population for decades.

Due to warming, snow packs in those areas are not as deep, and lemmings can't burrow deep enough to keep from freezing. A decrease in the number of lemmings has a domino effect on the rest of the wildlife, including the birds. I learned things I did not know about the Red-necked Phalarope. (see my photo, bottom left, of one at the Alaska Arctic Circle). Also, I include one of mine of the Spectacled Eider (bottom right) just because I love this species!

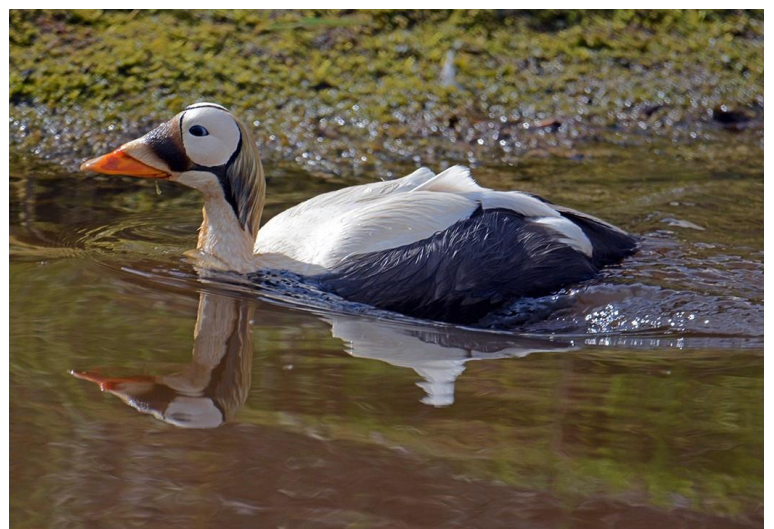
Oh, and by the way, we found Fletcher Smith's qiviut! Now, some fun facts:

Qiviut is a fine undercoat of the muskox, and is called qiviut (kiv-ee-ute) in the Eskimo language, which is translated as down or under-wool. Qiviut is naturally a soft grayish-brown color and is one of the warmest and most luxurious fibers in the world. Eight times warmer than wool and finer than cashmere, qiviut is hypoallergenic and will not shrink. Extremely rare, it is one of the most luxurious fibers you can choose for a garment.

Qiviut is soft, non-irritating to the skin, and is very durable. Qiviut garments are worn for years and can be hand washed in mild detergent. It does not shed, is odorless and retains warmth even when wet. It is an extremely warm, yet lightweight fiber that preserves heat in the winter, while also providing cool, breathable comfort in warmer weather.

It is produced by the muskox's secondary hair follicles, which are not associated with sebaceous glands, and therefore is a much drier fiber than wool, having only roughly 7% oils. The hair follicle density is very high (approximately 42 per square millimeter), and qiviut is shed in a tightly synchronized spring molting period.

Hope to see you before the New Year but if not, have a wonderful Holiday Season!
Best Year of the Bird,
Cheryl Jacobson





DECEMBER 8TH - BIRD WALK THIS SATURDAY AT CHICKAHOMINY RIVERFRONT PARK

By Jim Corliss

Our December 8th "Second Saturday" bird walk will take place at the Chickahominy Riverfront Park beginning at 8:00 am. The park provides nice views over the Chickahominy River and its tributaries around Gordon's Island. There are also some wooded areas and open fields, and it will be interesting to see which of our winter birds have taken up residence in and around the park.

Nancy Barnhart will be our leader. Please arrive by 8:00 am at the parking lot just past the park's swimming pool and playground. When heading west on Route 5 (John Tyler Highway), the park is located on the right side of the road

just prior to crossing the bridge over the Chickahominy River. After turning onto the park road, drive a short distance around the swimming pool and playground area and park in the lot on the left marked by a sign for "Trailhead Parking."

We hope to see you this Saturday!

JANUARY 1ST - GREENSPRINGS BOARDWALK BIRD SHOW

By Shirley Devan

Join me New Year's Day at the Greensprings Trail Boardwalk for the 14th Annual "New Year's Day Boardwalk Bird Show."

We'll meet on the boardwalk on the "Main Loop" over the "Beaver Pond and Wetlands" from 1–3 pm (not the Virginia Capitol Trail boardwalk.) See the map (right).

Park in the lot at the end of Eagle Way, beyond Jamestown High School on John Tyler Highway.

Come as you are; bring visiting family, friends and children; come early, stay late or just drop by.



Celebrate the New Year with a birding adventure close to home with birding friends. Remember, every bird is a year bird on

New Year's Day! Hope to see you there.

Check out this link if you want to know more about the Greensprings Interpretive Trail:
<http://jamestowncitycountyva.gov/DocumentCenter/View/9065>

The street address for your GPS is: 3751 John Tyler Highway, Williamsburg, VA 23185

JANUARY 20TH - WBC BOAT TRIP TO THE CBBT TUNNEL ISLANDS

By Cheryl Jacobson

The Williamsburg Bird Club is sponsoring a boat trip to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel Islands Sunday, January 20th, 2019. Geoff Giles has chartered a large, comfortable boat for this eye-level look at the Bay ducks and other wonderful species around the islands. Birding and photo opportunities should be very good from the boat. The boat will stay around the CBBT tunnel islands and pilings and will likely go as far as Fisherman Island near the Eastern Shore and then out to the Capes near the mouth of the Bay if the birds are there. The CBBT area tends to have smoother water than ocean trips with many of the same exciting views of birds. It will be possible to do some birding from the warm, dry cabin, but the best views and photos will be from outside on deck, so clothing that protects against wind and dampness is highly recommended.



We will have a good opportunity to observe sea ducks, shorebirds, raptors and more from a large, comfortable boat with ample heated cabin space, rest rooms, tables, and indoor seating. The last few years, this trip has given us some views and photo ops with Humpbacked Whales and Harbor Seals! We will gather at 8:30 am to board the Bay Princess, which will leave at 9 am from Lynnhaven Inlet at 3311 Shore Drive, Virginia Beach, VA 23451, and return to the dock at about 1 pm. There is a very good seafood restaurant dockside for those inclined to have lunch on return. If the trip gets weathered out, we'll return your check, or give you the option of a rain date about two weeks later.

Watch your emails and check our Bird Club's website for details: <http://williamsburgbirdclub.org/>.

REPORTED SIGHTINGS AND ACTIVITY FROM NOVEMBER 2018

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

November 6

Tom McCary enjoyed Pileated Woodpeckers, which are infrequent visitors to his yard. Tom reports, "I was thrilled indeed to observe one quite intent on exploring the bark of one of my backyard trees. He paid no attention to me and thus rewarded me with a magnificent performance. What a delight!"

November 9

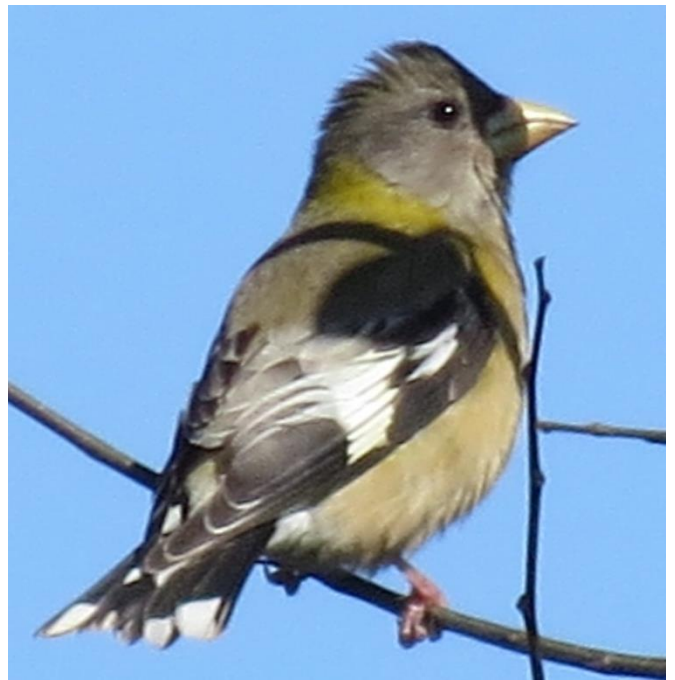
Mary Anne & John Fennell report Red-breasted Nuthatches visiting their feeders.

November 11

Bill Williams spies a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (photo right) at Jamestown Beach.



Nancy Barnhart reports that along with about 20 other folks, who were birding the Eastern Shore Virginia National Wildlife Refuge, she and Ken saw this Evening Grosbeak (photo right), “While I was photographing, I also made a short recording of this female’s chip notes. I sent the recording to Matt Young at Cornell, who is studying these birds and identifying the type by chip note. This bird is a type 3, which would be the most likely to be found in this area in a year like this one. Fun to see this species!”



November 19

A Hooded Merganser pair (photo below) is spotted by Bill Williams at the Williamsburg Indoor Sports Complex (WISC)



November 21

Catherine Flanagan reports a wonderful month of backyard birding (photos below from top right clockwise: Eastern Bluebirds, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Finch, and Northern Mockingbird)!



NOVEMBER PROGRAM REPORT - RESEARCH AND LIFE ABOVE THE ARCTIC CIRCLE

By Cathy Millar

Imagine having to pack everything you will need to eat, drink and use for seven weeks in an inhospitable land with no roads or stores, just endless tundra marsh where lakes freeze to the bottom. Have you ever tried fermented whale blubber? Fletcher Smith, research biologist at the Center for Conservation Biology, gave us all a feeling of what it would be like to live on the Mackenzie Delta, Canada along the Beaufort Sea at the 68th latitude doing field research in 2012 through 2014 and Bathurst Island at Polar Bear Pass NWA, Canada at the 75th latitude in 2015. For four summers where the sun never sets, he lived in primitive field camps. Each expedition required having 10,000 pounds of gear flown in via de Havilland-Canada Twin Otters onto a runway in the middle of nowhere and then brought to the camp via helicopter, with the supplies carried on slings hanging beneath the aircraft. Each research team had four to five scientists with Fletcher being the only American and the rest being Canadians. Average daytime temp was mid 50's for a high. Tents were ringed by a bear fence for tripping bears to give warning if one took an interest in them during the night. We saw what a seven week food shopping list looks like. They estimated that each person required three pounds of food daily to fuel walking about 10 miles per day with 30-40 pound backpacks full of equipment to be able to cope with the constant cold. A shotgun was always at hand in case of a bear encounter. Their diet was supplemented by raw whale blubber, caribou ribs and stomach, smoked fish, and geese given to them by local hunters. Fletcher was impressed that folks in such a harsh environment are quick to share when supplies are plentiful.

The purpose of their field studies was to determine the productivity and success of nesting birds. Their data fed into models to determine whether the Arctic was productive enough to support an increase in population with enough eggs hatching each year, or whether the Arctic is part of the problem involving 80% of long distance shore birds, which are in decline. Examples given were that Red Knots have declined 90% since the 1980's, and Whimbrels have declined at least 50% since the mid 1990's. He shared photos showing how very challenging it was to find the perfectly camouflaged nests and the birds on them. He said that one could stand six inches from the occupied nest of a Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Hudsonian Godwit, Stilt Sandpiper or Pectoral Sandpiper without the bird flushing or making a noise. Whereas camouflaged nests of the Black-bellied Plover and Parasitic Jaeger were easier to find because they put on the broken wing display when he got close. We learned that all female phalaropes have bright plumage because they lay up to four nests, and it is the dull colored males that incubate them. Part of their field work also included trapping to Nano-tag birds or to attach satellite transmitters for tracking. The nest predators noted were Ravens, Jaegers, Peregrine Falcons, Snowy Owls, Sandhill Cranes, Bears, Arctic and Red Fox. Fletcher observed a high count of 27 Snowy Owl nests on just one day. He reported that a lot of the birds didn't seem to have any fear of humans, allowing them to get quite close. We saw great photos of Musk Ox, Caribou, Bearded Seal, Peary Caribou and clouds of mosquitoes. These Arctic mosquitoes can reproduce by feeding on the nectar of flowers but produce fewer young as a result. They prefer blood meals and swarmed the biologists, which required the biologists to wear bug nets all the time.

Fletcher noted that based on the work they did there, they have been able to create programs that have reduced the hunting pressure on these migratory birds in the Caribbean and northern South America, and to track a number of these species and discover their activity between wintering and breeding grounds.

To date, research is indicating that the warming climate in the Arctic is also contributing to the decline of shore birds. Lemmings are an important part of the life cycle in the Arctic. Some areas have not had a spike in lemming population for decades. Due to warming, snow packs in those areas are not as deep and lemmings can't burrow deep enough to keep from freezing. A decrease in the number of lemmings has a domino effect on the rest of the wildlife, including the birds.

Our fascinating tour concluded with an invitation to feel Musk Ox hair and wool that Fletcher had gathered on these trips.

BE AN EARLY BIRD - RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP NOW!

Please see the attached form and renew your Williamsburg Bird Club membership today!

OCTOBER 27TH - NEW QUARTER PARK (NQP) BIRD WALK

By Jim Corliss

Catching up from all the bird walks since last issue, Jim Corliss reports a productive birding venture, including sightings of a Ruddy Duck, Clapper Rail, and Northern Harrier among many others. A great crew showed for the NQP Bird Walk, and check out their complete ebird checklist here:



<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S49508928>

NOVEMBER 10TH- BIRD WALK AT POWHATAN CREEK TRAIL

By Jim Corliss

Jim reported a delightful walk at Powhatan. View the group's birding checklist online at

<https://nam03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Febird.org%2Fview%2Fchecklist%2FS49840356&am;data=02%7C01%7C%7Cb66c66fb7cb145e996c908d647ea4812%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C636775468879638469&am;sdata=POKWYixTTV25IIhqyI4tVWp4LPStoQgosdey3tC0X0%3D&am;reserved=0>

NOVEMBER 24TH - NEW QUARTER PARK (NQP) BIRD WALK



By Jan Lockwood & Shirley Devan

13 people attended in all and besides a great day of birding, they found two pumpkins containing prizes that were missed during a Halloween event earlier! Lucky birders! One of the highlights was the Osprey flying over Queen's Creek. And of course, Andy's granddaughter, Harper, who is holding the prized pumpkins!

View the checklist here:

<https://nam01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fbird.org%2Fview%2Fchecklist%2FS50183088&data=02%7C01%7C%7C11cd5ef9d699499a71cc08d65245ef03%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C636786857641185148&sdata=L%2Fes6syYdd21VbsZ1GsLNQu2qfu05NGp7Mka0qG%2BiAs%3D&reserved=0>

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

December 8 - 8 am	WBC Bird Walk, Chickahominy Riverfront Park
December 16	Audubon Christmas Bird Count
December 22 - 8 am	WBC Bird Walk, New Quarter Park
January 1st	Happy New Year! <hr/> 1 pm: New's Year Day Boardwalk Bird Show, Greensprings Trail.
January 16 - 7pm	WBC Monthly Meeting
January 20 - 8:30 am	Boat Tour of the CBBT Tunnel Islands
January 28	The Flyer submissions are due for January's newsletter; please submit all sightings, articles, and activity to 1backyardbirder@gmail.com . Thank you!
March 21 - 7pm	WBC Monthly Meeting



Williamsburg Bird Club
PO Box 1085
Williamsburg, VA 23187