

The Flyer

Newsletter of the Williamsburg Bird Club

Vol. 43 No. 2

williamsburgbirdclub.org

February 2019

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Cheryl Jacobson



Happy Valentine's Day!

Virginia 
is for Lovers

Bird Lovers that is!



Speaking of Love, Valentine's Day is for the Birds! There was a popular notion in England and France during the Middle Ages that birds started to look for their mates on February 14. The reason for this assumption is not clear but might be related to the fact that the warbling of the first songbirds after a long winter started sometime in mid-February. Hence St. Valentine's day's association with birds, especially lovebirds and doves.



Lovebirds. Valentine's Day has long been associated with love and fertility and lovebirds symbolize this as it's the day that they traditionally choose their mates. Lovebirds tend to form very close bonds with their mates, usually lasting a lifetime. Once mated, lovebirds become inseparable.



Doves. Doves symbolize peace, loyalty, and love. Dove birds select a partner and remain loyal throughout their life, mating only with each other.

If Virginia is for Bird Lovers, how many species of birds can be seen in Virginia?

As of November 2017, 473 species are credibly documented in Virginia by the Virginia Avian Records Committee of the Virginia Society of Ornithology (VARCOM). See "[The Birds of Virginia and its Offshore Waters: The Official List](#)" (Virginia Society of Ornithology, 28 November 2017).

Last year according to the "Top 100" in eBird, 305 species were recorded by the number one eBird lister. Number two was Jason Strickland with 304. Congratulations Jason!

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PROGRAMS

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

By Judy Jones

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

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

Future Williamsburg Bird Club (WBC) Programs

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.



Scholarship Recipients from
William & Mary - April 17th

Please mark your calendars and come join us! These programs will be both educational and enjoyable!

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I imagine many “listers” are off to a running start this year. I have decided to approach birding differently this year and instead focus on “Mindful Birdwatching, i.e., the conscious act of redirecting my attention to the bird, the bird’s personality, nature around me, my own breathing and broadening my awareness. Instead of “chasing” birds, I will go often to my favorite places to see my favorite birds and spend more time just being. I have been writing about how to have a positive impact on the environment for the sake of the birds we love. By birding this way (mindful birding), I hope to drive much less and thus have a positive impact on the environment. In early January, I went to College Creek to the Hawk Watch site to see and hang out with my favorite Merlin. I have seen him at this location now for three years in a row and was thrilled that after a 30-minute interval, he appeared. Please see my photo. His personality centers on his extreme speed and diminutive size. He is a very agile bird, flying low to the ground at great speed as he twists and turns after his prey. After observing him for some time, I saw that he was hunting and was utilizing his usual tree snag as an elevated perch from which to spot prey. He would then launch a high-speed surprise attack, flying low from the perch hoping to take his food source unawares.



Board Meeting/January 14, 2019

Your Board meets four times a year as required by the bi-laws. I want to invite you to our next meeting, which will be March 18, 2019 at 1:30 at Freedom Park. At the January 14, 2019 meeting, your Board voted to contribute \$500.00 each to two VSO (Virginia Society of Ornithology) efforts. Those efforts are the Community Cloud Forest Conservation (CCFC) project and the Breeding Bird Atlas.

If you missed the September 2018 meeting when Dave Youker presented about CCFC, you can read about it on line at <http://cloudforestconservation.org/> or in the October 2018 Flyer. We support the effort as we acknowledge that we must work globally in order to save the birds we see here every year. Their effort is directed at alleviating poverty and protecting forests in the highlands of Guatemala by education, reforestation, sustainable development, leadership scholarships, and ecological improvements to agriculture.

I have been keeping you updated on the importance of the Breeding Bird Atlas 2, the progress, and the need for our involvement in order to assure success. Because many of the unfinished blocks are in southwest and central southern parts of the state that are outside population areas, the plan is to hire paid “block busters,” experienced birders, who will expend three field days (5-6 hours per day) of survey work per block. The estimated cost of each priority block is \$570. Our \$500.00 contribution will nearly complete one block. It is important to understand that our Club will still be responsible for assigned blocks not covered by the block busters.

Other financial business included increasing the donation to VLC, CVWO and CCB to \$250 each and leaving the WRL donation at \$200.

Virginia Society of Ornithology (VSO) 2020 Annual Meeting Update

The 2020 VSO Annual Meeting sponsored by our Club will be located here in

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Williamsburg. Rexanne Bruno is serving as the General Chairperson. The following people volunteered to serve as committee chairs: Ann Carpenter as Finance & Registration Committee Chair, Nancy Barnhart as Field Trip Committee Chair, Shirley Devan as Publicity Chair, Cheryl Jacobson as Program Chair, and Judy Jones as Exhibits & Raffle Chair. Cheryl came up with a list of potential speakers and contacted them about their availability and fees. The committee's top choice, Bryan Watt, has agreed to be the banquet speaker.

This committee decided that the dates for the meetings are May 1 to 3, 2020. After touring and getting prices from three area hotels, we selected the Fort Magruder Hotel and Conference Center as the meeting location. This was based on its central location for field trips and for arriving guests, extensive grounds conducive to birding, remodeling of the entire hotel in progress and overall meeting prices were better.

Meet Your Board

Last month, I began a series to introduce you to the WBC Board and Committee Chairs. This month, I provide you the opportunity to learn more about Cathy Millar, our Treasurer. Here's her story below:

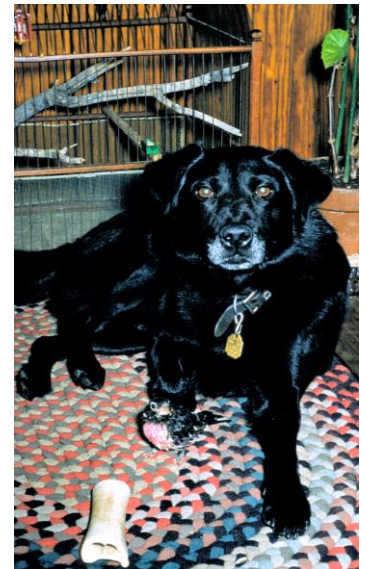
Cheryl's request for me to write a profile has sent me down memory lane trying to identify what might be of interest to my fellow birders. I grew up just north of Boston where family fun was a walk in the woods or skating frozen waterways in marshes. A love of nature came naturally, and my parents nurtured a desire to understand it. I remember the pride I felt as a young child by my parent's surprised approval when I recognized the silhouette of a Northern Flicker in the distance. With no availability of wildlife rehab centers in those days, our home often hosted critters in need. Most notable was a Rose-breasted Grosbeak that our dog found on the ground with a sprained wing preventing it from completing its first migration south. By the time it was able to fly, a cold New England winter had set in and the bird became a spirited member of our family until spring when we released him in an area where other grosbeaks were returning. We'd named him Prince, and he got on famously with our dog, King, who shared his carpet and allowed Prince to peck his bone and ride on his back when the freshly-waxed tile floors were too slippery. Prince sang lustily with Saturday afternoon operas that my dad put on; loved sipping from wine glasses; and scolded my mom when she used the noisy vacuum cleaner.



A very young fledgling Blue Jay earned a briefer stay when he repeatedly hopped out of the nest into a feral cat infested neighborhood with no ability to fly. We tucked it into a long cage through which we stuck a yard ruler as a perch for the parents and balanced it on a window sill. The parents faithfully fed it through the bars of the cage as well as the siblings still in the nest. The cage was brought in every evening since it was early spring, and the night air was cold. Every dawn, we were awakened by the clamor of screaming parents on a lilac branch outside the closed window and their hungry baby within. It was a happy day when we released a fully flighted youngster to its parents, and we could get more sleep!

As an adult I became a registered nurse. I started my career in Boston where I worked with the team who did the first total hips in the U.S. Then, I got married and moved to the 1704 home in Newport, RI that my husband had restored. We moved to Williamsburg in 1980 for John to pursue graduate studies in history at W&M and where I became the community's first ostomy and wound specialist. I recall a brief period after arrival of noticing the different accent of the local robins. We fell in love with Williamsburg and Virginia and set down roots establishing Newport House B&B in 1988, which we have operated since, began beekeeping in 1982, and we had a son in 1991, after which I retired from nursing to raise him. We host English and Scottish Country Dancing every week and welcome new folks, so please contact me if interested.

I joined the Williamsburg Bird Club in 2006 when I'd felt a serious need for me-time while being stretched thin juggling the needs of an invalid mother, family, and B&B. Observing birds and other wild life with like-minded folks provided the spiritual refreshment I needed. Six years ago, I decided to give back by being the Club's Secretary, and it has been my honor to serve this incredibly productive Club since. Running a B&B keeps me home most of the time, which has made my herb, vegetable and flower gardens my favorite place to bird. Our junipers are often full of one of my favorite



birds, Cedar Waxwings, whose subtle elegant beauty and social nature are so appealing - my choice were I to become a bird. For several winters, a male Red-shouldered Hawk would eagerly await leftover apples, Belgian waffles, and fruit pancakes from our B&B table, with great anticipation in a Tulip Poplar tree from which he would launch whenever I stepped out the kitchen door. He'd snatch the offering just as it was hitting the ground. If I had nothing to give, I held up empty palms and he'd continue his flight. He had standards, too, as he didn't like food made of gluten free flour! Up to nine wild box turtles are also fans of our B&B. For years they've been coming to the back patio for left

over fruit from the breakfast table and have such individual markings and personalities that I know them as individuals. I've continued keeping bees and although I don't know them individually, they are an endless source of fascination and good companions in my garden.

I'd like to finish by sharing a magical moment experienced when hiking at Grayson Highland State Park that I mentally return to manage stress. I had followed a mountain stream into a ravine set in deep cool shade. Only one shaft of sunlight penetrated the dense foliage and illuminated a spot on a rock face over which a spring created a fine spray. In the middle of that spotlight, a Ruby-throated Hummingbird hovered in the mist lending a glorious intensity to its iridescence. I wish my fellow birders many such moments of bliss and perfection in the new year.

I second Cathy's wish for all of you and hope to see you soon!
Best Beyond the Year of the Bird,
Cheryl Jacobson

FEBRUARY 9TH - WINTER DUCKS ON THE YORK RIVER

By Jim Corliss, Photo of Common Loon by Nancy Barnhart

Join us for the 2nd Saturday Bird Walk - actually a drive - as Shirley Devan leads us down the Colonial Parkway from Williamsburg to Yorktown to check out the York River and the wintering ducks and swans. Recent local reports include Redhead ducks, Bufflehead, swans, Ruddy Ducks, loons, Horned Grebes, and Common Goldeneye. NOTE: The York River hosts different ducks than those on the Boat Trip in the Chesapeake Bay (Feb 3rd), or what we expect to see at Dutch Gap on February 16th. With these three expeditions, you can add quite a few ducks to your year list!



If you have a spotting scope, please bring it.

Meet the group at the Marquis Shopping Center just off Route 199 and I-64 (not our usual Colony Square parking lot). We'll park in the side parking lot beside Target. Dress warmly and bring water and snacks.

TIME: 8 am - 12 pm, depending on how good the birds are! We'll end up at Yorktown and we'll check out the beach as well to see what's hanging around the fishing pier and under the bridge.

Walking will be minimal until we get to Yorktown. Then we'll probably park and walk along the Riverwalk to check for birds between the Coleman Bridge and the Fishing Pier (about 1/4 mile).

Carpooling is recommended because of limited parking in a few of the pullouts. You can peel off whenever you wish but keep this in mind when forming carpools.

Hope to see you there.

FEBRUARY 16TH – DUTCH GAP FIELD TRIP

By George Martin

The Club's February field trip will be on Saturday, February 16, to Dutch Gap Conservation Area in Chester, VA. Rose Ryan will lead us in search of winter ducks and sparrows. Sightings recorded in eBird since Sunday, January 27 include shovelers, wigeons, pintails, Savannah Sparrows, and a Fox Sparrow.

For those who want to carpool, let's meet at the Colony Square Shopping Center on Jamestown Road at 7:45 am for a departure time of 8 am sharp. For those who wish to drive themselves, the destination address is: 341 Henricus Park Road, Chester, VA

23836. There, we will meet in the free public parking lot. There are restrooms available. We plan to bird until around noon.

Spotting scopes are quite useful at Dutch Gap. If you have one, please bring it!

REPORTED SIGHTINGS AND ACTIVITY FROM DECEMBER 2018 & JANUARY 2019

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



December 14

Jan Lockwood finds a Swamp Sparrow at New Quarter Park.

January 8

Sherry Hancock shares that she and her husband, Bill, have been observing a resident Great Blue Heron at York River State Park, "It sits in the brush overlooking a pond for a good part of the day, then crosses over to the York River in the late afternoon to go fishing. Its a real treat to see it regularly."

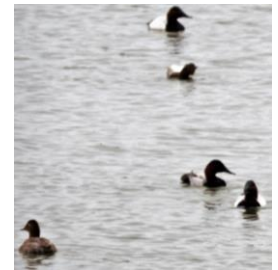


January 17

Jan Lockwood sights a Red-shouldered Hawks at the Williamsburg Shopping Center. Jan reports, "They were also searching for breakfast - outside Victoria's Restaurant!"



Jan also identifies Canvasbacks at the Queens Lake Marina, "We had spotted a group of 98 (more or less) at the New Quarter Park dock two days earlier. It was fun to find 77 Canvasbacks swimming past the Marina, today."



JANUARY 26TH - NEW QUARTER PARK (NQP) BIRD WALK

By Jim Corliss, Photo of Ruby-crowned Kinglet by Keith Kennedy

Jim reported 32 species with clear skies, and a calm, low tide for the traditional NQP Walk. A good-looking group of birders was present, as well as a new sign!

View the walk's checklist online at

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52063424>.





JANUARY 12TH - COLLEGE CREEK BIRD WALK

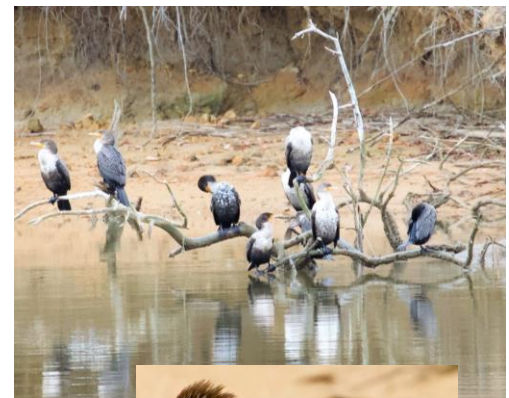
By Jim Corliss; Photos by Inge Curtis



Eight birders braved the chilly weather on Saturday for our bird walk along the James River at College Creek Beach. The tide was low enough



that we could safely walk the 1-1/4 mile loop up to the hawk watch pull-out without getting mired in wet sand. The bird of the morning was a Merlin that posed for us at the beginning of the walk and then reappeared again about an hour later. Other highlights included five Bald Eagles, 21 Great Blue Herons, and a large flock of Yellow-rumped Warblers that seemed to follow us everywhere we went. For a brief second, we thought we had found a couple of Tundra Swans, but they turned out to be the brethren of a larger group of decoy waterfowl stationed around the hunting blind 1/2 mile upriver from College Creek. The raft of decoys contained a nicely diverse selection of duck species, so we were all quite disappointed when we confirmed that they weren't real. In total, 31 real species (+2 other taxa) were positively identified. View the checklist online at <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S51597041>



2018 WILLIAMSBURG CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT – BY THE NUMBERS

By Jim Corliss; Photos by Patty Maloney & Mary Ellen Hodges

Our Christmas Bird Count (CBC) conducted on December 16, 2018 was another great success. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this important citizen science project. Here are some of the highlights, along with a summary table with all our results.

- 26,346: The total number of birds counted in the Williamsburg circle on the count day. This is approximately the median number of birds observed each count day across the 42-year history of the Williamsburg CBC.
- 622: The total number of vultures tallied on the count day (Black Vulture=326, Turkey Vulture=296). This is a record number of vultures for our count circle, the previous high being 533 in 2016. It looks like our road-kill clean-up crew is continuing to grow in the area.
- 120: The number of different bird species observed in the Williamsburg circle on the count day. This ties our record, which is now shared between three years (2014, 2016, and 2018).
- 112: The number of CBC participants between people in the field (63) and feeder-watchers (49). This is the second-highest number of participants we've ever had, with the most being 133 in both 2016 and 2017.
- 53: Supposedly the high temperature in Williamsburg on the count day. I'm not sure I believe it because it sure felt a lot colder!
- 42: The number of consecutive years that the Williamsburg Bird Club has contributed to the Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count.
- 10: The number of bird species for which we tallied more individuals than any other year in our 42-year CBC history (see summary table for the species).
- 6: The number of Baltimore Orioles that Mary Ellen Hodges (see her photo) observed in her yard on the count day. If anyone else has had orioles in your yard this winter, then you need to get those birds to show up on CBC day this coming year!
- 1: The number of species observed this year that we had never seen in our count circle on the count day. The bird was a lone Yellow-throated Warbler that visited Jim Booth's feeder in Kingsmill (see photo in the January Flyer newsletter).



See the summary table here: <https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/tracker?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:083ed8b7-c9bc-4621-b26d-51d5b736aee7>.

OPEN HOUSE TEA

By Catherine Flanagan; Art & Photos by Cathy Flanagan

To help recruit participants for the Audubon Christmas Bird Count, this is the second year in a row I have hosted an open house tea for feeder-watchers. I invite people to come, even if just for tea and conversation, to see the large variety of birds that regularly visit the feeders near my kitchen window. This year for four hours, people came and went, and we kept count of the birds while enjoying tea and cake served on china plates and teacups. Each person had a field tally list to familiarize themselves with the winter birds that can be seen in our area and to help narrow down choices for identification purposes. As birds came to the feeders, we discussed identifying characteristics, and compared information found in the stack of guidebooks on the table.



Despite the rainy, unfavorable weather, birds were still the stars of the show. Guests were delighted when they saw eight Eastern Bluebirds come to a feeder just seconds after it was filled with dried mealworms. We saw Brown-headed, White-breasted, and Red-breasted Nuthatches, male and female Downy Woodpeckers, Red-bellied Woodpeckers (two at the same time!), the Yellow-rumped Warbler, abundant male and female House Finches, goldfinches, cardinals, and more for a total of 17 species and 38 individuals. The total count from my feeder watch participants was 34 specimens and 242 individuals.

Participants either counted before or after the Tea, and some did not come to the tea but turned in their count online. It being the Christmas season, it was a nice time to give out a few of the charming hand-made bird ornaments from the Backyard Birder, as well as some of Bob Schamerhorn's, *Common Birds of Virginia* ID cards. Melinda Cousins, proprietor of the Backyard Birder, let us post a photo-flyer I made with a card with my contact information, incase customers wanted to participate.

I do think the Tea generates enthusiasm, and I hope it will help increase the number of feeder watchers for future bird counts. I know I'll volunteer to do it again, as it is lots of fun for all!

Thanks to all that participated in the Tea and the Count!



WELCOME NEW WBC MEMBERS – WE LOOK FORWARD TO BIRDING WITH YOU!

Diane Howerton, Judy Zwelling

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®
Nature Shop

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/>

OUR CLUB NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT - RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP & PAY YOUR DUES FOR 2019!

Thanks, birders!

CALENDAR

February 9 - 8 am Leader: Shirley Devan	WBC Bird Walk-Drive, Colonial Parkway/York River (details on page 4).
February 15-18	Participate in The Great Backyard Bird Count! Find detailed info here: http://gbbc.birdcount.org .
February 16	Field Trip to Dutch Gap (details on page 4).
February 20 – 7 pm	WBC Monthly Meeting (details on page 1).
February 23 - 8 am Leader: Jim Corliss	WBC Bird Walk, New Quarter Park.
February 24	All Flyer submissions are due for inclusion in the monthly edition of The Flyer newsletter; please submit all sightings, articles, and activity to the Editor via email: 1backyardbirder@gmail.com .
March 9 - 8 am Leader: Nancy Barnhart	WBC Bird Walk, York River State Park.
March 20 – 7 pm	WBC Monthly Meeting (details on page 1).
March 23 - 8:00 am Leader: Scott Hemler	WBC Bird Walk, New Quarter Park.
April 13 - 8:00 am Leader: Nancy Barnhart	WBC Bird Walk, Freedom Park.
April 27 - 8am Leader: Jim Corliss	WBC Bird Walk, New Quarter Park.

If you wish to advertise in The Flyer, please contact the Editor, Melinda Cousins, via email at 1backyardbirder@gmail.com for further information.



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