



The Flyer

Newsletter of the Williamsburg Bird Club

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April 2019

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Cheryl Jacobson



Thank you everyone who has helped while I have been recovering from surgery! Your good wishes mean a great deal!

Purple Martins

Purple Martins need our help! Purple Martins are common birds (especially in the Southeast), but their numbers declined by almost 1% per year between 1966 and 2015, resulting in a cumulative decline of 37%, according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey. Humans have helped counteract declines somewhat by putting up nest boxes, and people now provide virtually all nest sites for Purple Martins in the East. However, introduced species such as European Starlings and House Sparrows often take over martin houses and injure or kill eggs and nestlings.

Supplemental Feeding: Purple Martins are also sensitive to cold snaps; bad weather kills more birds than all other sources of mortality combined. When unseasonably cold temperatures last more than three or four days, the birds starve for lack of insects. In very cold weather, martins will begin communal roosting, with a dozen or more birds crowded into one compartment or gourd. Clustering together conserves body heat, allowing martins to save energy. While this is a beneficial adaptation, it is a sign that martins are in survival mode and would benefit from supplemental food.

What/How to Feed

Crickets—Because they closely resemble grasshoppers, a natural food item, crickets make a good choice for first time supplemental feeding efforts. But of the three options, they are the costliest. Store crickets in the freezer and thaw in warm water before use.

Mealworms—Mealworms are a good source of protein for martins and other insect-eating birds. They can be purchased live or dried and are often less expensive than crickets.

Scrambled Eggs—Perhaps best accepted after martins have first learned to accept crickets or mealworms. Eggs require preparation time but are the least expensive of the three foods and are readily available. Cook eggs in a microwave or nonstick pan without any added fat. Break into small, raisin-sized pieces before feeding.

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PROGRAMS

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

By Judy Jones

Future of Bird Research - April 17th

Our speakers in April are our three Ornithology research grant recipients working with Dr. Cristol and Dr. Swaddle at our own William and Mary. The speakers are:

- Rachel Davis, researching “The Impacts of Mercury Exposure on Cell Aging, as Measured by Telomere Length, in Zebra Finches;
- Jasmine Parham, speaking about “The Dietary Transfer of Methylmercury in the South River Floodplain;
- And Robert Galvin, talking with us about his research which “Compares Wading Bird Use between ‘Living Shoreline’ Restoration Projects and Natural Marshes”.

This will be an informational and dynamic evening as we learn about the future of bird research.

Future Williamsburg Bird Club (WBC) Programs

Journey to Guyana – May 15th

In May, we welcome a very familiar face, our own Bill Williams, speaking about his recent journey to Guyana.

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

A Special Thanks...

At our March meeting, Matt Anthony presented a talk on birding, the history and the future of this activity. He is doing his PhD research at W&M, including about 34 primary interviews with talented and renowned birders across the state. The history of birding includes the question – is it a sport, a recreational activity, a citizen science, or an environmental focus? Matt was willing to step-in to do this presentation with only 36 hours of notice, and we are all very grateful for the information and for his willingness to present to the WBC.

Thanks, Matt!

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Platform Feeding—Offering food on a platform is ideal. This self-serve method requires minimal energy and allows martins to eat multiple items at one sitting. Since most landlords report that supplemental food is recognized as food more quickly when tossed, many transition their birds to platform feeding after they have first eaten tossed food. Tossing food right above the feeder encourages martins to land on the feeder.

Purple Martin Project

Last year, Backyard Birder Seed & Supply donated to the WBC one, large Purple Martin House, which Deane Gordon meticulously built and installed at York River State Park, and Bill Vanzetta recently reconfigured the arrangement of the compartments on this house. That house now has three Purple Martins checking it out; please see Ginny Broome's wonderful photos below! Additionally, this February, Backyard Birder Seed & Supply gave the WBC a generous discount on another Purple Martin House, and the Board approved the expenditure of \$300.00 to purchase the house and to restore several other houses. Bill Vanzetta also donated much of his time and money to support our fledgling Purple Martin Project. Please see the pictures on page 3 of the new house. What a wonderful start to the Purple Martin Project!

The 25th Annual Purple Martin Field Trip is coming to VA!

I encourage you to attend the 25th Annual Purple Martin Day in Louisa County (about 40 miles west of Richmond) that will be on Saturday, June 22, 2019 from 11:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m. **It's Free!** See www.purplemartinfieldday.org for details. This Field Day will be held at the farm of Mrs. Merle Wood and her son, Mr. Lance Wood. Establishing and maintaining a healthy Purple Martin colony can be difficult; see the most effective techniques and equipment available for successful martin attraction and management and learn how to increase the size of an existing colony. The Wood family has expanded their colony from four pairs of Purple Martins in 1992 to more than 140 nesting pairs! The 11:00am program by Mr. Lance Wood and other speakers will cover these topics:

- How to establish and increase a colony of Purple Martins.
- Advantages and disadvantages of different types of martin housing.
- Protecting martins from snakes, owls, raccoons, House Sparrows, starlings, wind damage, lightning, etc.
- Adding starling-resistant entrance holes to martin gourds and houses.
- After the main presentations, you can buy gourds/seeds and hear a presentation on how to grow and process natural gourds for Purple Martin nesting.



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Recycling and Consuming Less

The unfortunate thing in the United States is that when people recycle, they think it's taken care of, when it was largely taken care of by China. When that stopped, it became clear we just can't deal with it. If you read the recent New York Times article you are aware that: China had been processing at least half of the world's exports of waste paper, metals and used plastic — 7.3 million tons in 2016, according to recent industry data. Last July, China notified the World Trade Organization that it intended to ban most imports of trash.

In communities that haven't found alternative markets in which to offload plastic, recyclable waste is staying put and being disposed of by other means, including being dumped in landfills or hauled to waste-to-energy incineration facilities. Although it generates more energy when incinerated, burning petroleum-based plastic can be more polluting regarding the release of highly toxic dioxins.

The short of it: landfilling plastic is bad, and the stopgap alternative of incineration isn't a whole lot better. In the long run, it's clear we all need to simply consume less. The U.S. and other nations have focused too much on collecting plastic waste and shipping it out, and not enough on encouraging manufacturers to use it in new products. As cited in the article, "We've got to start producing less, and we've got to produce better-quality recyclable goods."

Be Part of the Solution

To support this concept, I want to introduce you to a company that makes laundry detergents, etc. First off, there's no plastic used in the packaging, and the box it's shipped in is made from recycled materials and recyclable. The pods are made of plant based, chemical free, no-animal-tested goodness: <https://www.dropps.com/>. The pod membrane is a biodegradable, water soluble film made of polyvinyl alcohol. When the film dissolves in your washer and enters the water stream in microparticles, micro-organisms that commonly exist in nature break down the PVA (polyvinyl alcohol) to water and carbon dioxide. As many as 55 species of micro-organisms (including bacteria, yeasts and fungi) that are naturally present in water and soils can break down PVA. Research has shown that in river water, PVAs take no more than one month to break down into their component parts. The innovative recyclable, compostable, and re-pulpable product packaging doubles as the shipping container. Way less space and waste. Join us in the fight to eliminate single use plastic!

Why do birds fly into windows?

You may wonder how it's possible that birds cannot see windows, when to us it is obvious there is something in the way. It's not because they have bad eyesight – quite the opposite. Birds' eyes are on the sides of their heads, giving them extremely wide-angle vision – sometimes a completely 360 ° view, which is extremely useful in spotting approaching predators, rivals, or potential mates. However, this means that a comparatively small area of their vision is covered by both eyes, making it hard to focus on the scene directly in front of them.

Because of this, they may see the view on the opposite side of the window and think they can fly right through. Or, they may see nearby trees reflected in the glass and mistake it for a completely new area to explore. Another issue is that until relatively recently, birds never needed to be able to see glass. They evolved for millennia in a world without glass, and it's

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only in the past few centuries, with the growth of human technology and the expansion of towns and cities, that it has become a serious problem.

Another, less well-known issue, is unnatural light. This is especially hazardous for birds that migrate at night and use the light from the moon and stars to help them navigate. These birds may become disorientated by artificial light and lose their way or fly towards the light and collide with the glass. This effect is even worse in poor weather such as fog, when visibility is low.

Fortunately, preventing bird collisions is very simple. One easy way to help is to put stickers, transfers or decals on the glass to show birds that there is something in the way. These stickers can come in many shapes, styles, colors or sizes. Please go to: <https://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/news/how-can-we-really-prevent-birds-flying-our-windows>. There you can learn some of the common myths to avoid. Also, please see the article in this edition of The Flyer written by Kathi Mestayer with photos of how she arrived at a solution that is effective for her.

Meet Your Board. I'd like to introduce Jeannette Navia, who serves both as our Membership and Webmistress Committee Chairperson. Please enjoy her synopsis below:

I grew up loving nature and exploring the backyard in my LaGrangeville, NY, home, which was wooded and had a stream running through it. I liked birds but was never able to see them well until I was 48 years old and had the off-center lenses in my eyes replaced and lined up correctly with my pupils. I was still wearing dark, wrap-around sunglasses from my eye surgery when I joined, as a guest, my first Williamsburg Bird Club bird field trip led by Bill Williams. I remember complete awe as I watched an Osprey fly directly over us on the Greensprings Trail. That was 12 years ago, and I joined the club that same week. A friend who had worked at the public library with me, Bob Long, was then president, and he immediately recruited me to become the Membership Chair. Except for a short break, I have been the Membership Chair ever since. As chair, I keep track of the roster, update the online email list, create membership information packets for people who join, make name tags, and hand out raffle tickets at the meetings. Although not part of my board duties, I also keep the club's website up-to-date and post club events and interesting bird-related posts to our Facebook page.

Getting to know people in the club whose interests are nature-related has been one of the best benefits of joining the club. I have joined friends, especially Shirley Devan, on bird walks and trips to other places in Virginia, especially since I have a non-birding spouse (Keith doesn't like getting up early in the morning or shuffling slowly on walks, staring up into trees). I love the club's field trips and walks, though lately life has gotten in the way, and I've had to scale back temporarily. I feed birds and am almost as excited watching familiar birds at my feeders as seeing rare birds in other locations, though I did enjoy seeing a Snowy Owl a few years ago in Portsmouth! The Carolina Wren is my favorite bird; I have a container that only they will go in where I feed them live worms. I also love the 2-4 crows that come to my house for breakfast every morning.

Being part of the board has kept me going to all the meetings, even if I'm tired. I'm always glad I do because the speakers have always been very interesting and informative, and the social interaction after the meetings -- with great snacks -- is so rewarding.

As a sign off from your Club President, I want to salute two of the great women who had a positive impact on birds:

Harriet Lawrence Hemenway, 1858-1960

Minna Hall, 1864-1944

These two women were responsible for taking down the 19th-century plume trade and establishing the National Audubon Society. Appalled by the number of birds being killed in the name of fashion, Hemenway, an impassioned amateur naturalist, and her cousin Hall, persuaded their socialite friends to boycott the trade and protect the wildlife behind it. Ultimately, they recruited 900 women to join the fight, and gave rise to an establishment that, a century later, has grown to one million members and supporters strong.

APRIL 20TH – GREAT DISMAL SWAMP FIELD TRIP

By George Martin

The Williamsburg Bird Club's April field trip will be Saturday, April 20, at Great Dismal Swamp. Bob Ake will lead the group on a walk around Jericho Ditch at the refuge with a side trip to Lake Drummond. We'll start early, so set your alarm clocks! We're meeting Bob at the Jericho Lane parking area at 7:30 am. Interested birders should plan to be at the Colony Square Shopping Center in time for a 6:15 am departure for the refuge. No sign-up required!

MAY 3-5 - THE VIRGINIA SOCIETY OF ORNITHOLOGY'S ANNUAL MEETING AT MOUNTAIN LAKE LODGE

By Shirley Devan

We hope you'll register for a wonderful weekend of high elevation birding at Mountain Lake Lodge in Pembroke, VA. Here's the web site with details:

<http://www.virginiabirds.org/events/annual-meeting/2019/2/26/new-river-valley-bird-club-to-host-2019-vso-annual-meeting>.

The New River Valley Bird Club is hosting the meeting at this mountain location well known for breeding warblers not found in the coastal plain. Because of the elevation, the cooler temperatures nurture plant communities which are much like those of northern Pennsylvania and southern New York. As a result, several unique breeding species are found here. These include the Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Least Flycatcher, Veery, Brown Creeper, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, a breeding population of Dark-eyed Junco which has been studied for over 30 years, and many species of warblers. There are many other species of migrants and breeding birds on the mountain and surrounding areas. Birding for this weekend should be excellent, because of the elevation, the migrants will be passing through, but most of the leaves will not have emerged. See you there!

REPORTED SIGHTINGS AND ACTIVITY

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

March 4

Keith Kennedy reports sighting an American Coot at Dutch Gap.



March 9

Shirley Devan reports the sighting of this Red-breasted Nuthatch on the York River State Park Bird Walk led by Nancy Barnhart.



March 17

Nancy Barnhart enjoys the view this morning in the trees- what a turkey!



March 30

Kathi Mestayer reports a Yellow-throated Warbler and a Black and White Warbler at the Chickahominy Wildlife Management area.

MARCH 16TH – VIRGINIA BEACH FIELD TRIP

By George Martin; Photos by Shirley Devan (group); Rose Ryan and Catherine Millar (Iceland Gull), respectively

Ten birders from the WBC joined up with Dan Cristol on a field trip he was leading for his students of William & Mary. The group started at Little Island Park, moved to Back Bay, then to a nearby community lake, and finally to the 85th Street beach entrance at the north end of the city. Conditions were quite windy, so passerine counts were low. Nevertheless, the group identified 47 species, with several good photos. Highlights included an Iceland Gull and an American Bittern seen by some of the group at Back Bay. Many thanks to Dan for agreeing to combine the groups on short notice, and to Andrew Rapp for reporting the day's sightings on eBird.



MARCH 23RD – NEW QUARTER PARK BIRD WALK

By Scott Hemler

Scott led his first official bird walk, where nine people, including a couple from Canada (not pictured), enjoyed the morning of birding. 33 species (+1 other taxa) were identified. The Ospreys and Great Egrets are back! The birders also saw four Red-breasted Mergansers. View the walk's checklist online at <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S54138706>

BIRDS HITTING WINDOWS - HELPFUL TIPS

by Kathi Mestayer

There's nothing worse than hearing that sickening thud. You know what it is- even from the next room. We've tried the stickers and tape for years, and they do work. But occasionally, you may still hear another sickening thud, so you may add a few more stickers...and soon, the view is a little obscured. If this is your predicament, I encourage you to visit the American Bird Conservancy Website: <https://abcbirds.org/get-involved/bird-smart-glass/>. A few years ago, I stumbled upon a list of bird-crash prevention strategies to include the "Bird Crash Preventer." The bird crash preventer can be found here: <http://stores.santarosanational.com/>. They are very simple frames that hold vertical fishing line at intervals of about 3 inches, within a few inches away from the window. So, I ordered a few for our big picture windows, where thuds continued to happen.





Here's the back-yard window, from the outside in. You can see the way it's put together (look at the bottom-right corner). Just one screw per (four) holding-hooks, and then the horizontal bar pops into place, holding the fishing lines taught. Also, the preventer is easy to remove or reposition to wash the windows.

The best part is that most of the time, you can't even see the lines (except in direct sunlight), but the birds always can. Eventually, we got them for all our big



windows. Taking the stickers off was easy and getting the views back has been great! Below is a photo of the view from the inside. So, we're happy with the approach, and the cost is reasonable for a long-term solution. They have a few widths, and the length is adjustable. The ones we purchased were approximately \$30 each. So, if you're interested, check it out. If you want to look at it from the interior of our home, email me at: kwren@widomaker.com.

NEST CAM SEASON

By Shirley Devan

Shirley is glued to her computer screen watching live nest cams. Barred Owl (female) is incubating 2 eggs in a nest box in Indiana. There's a camera inside the nest with high quality color streaming video plus another camera on the exterior and entrance, where the male is sometime seen (mostly at night) bringing food for the female. Here's the link to all the bird cams operating under the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's All About Birds sponsorship: <http://cams.allaboutbirds.org/all-cams/> Scroll down to find the Barred Owls in Indiana. The eggs should hatch around mid-April. Until then, viewers can enjoy wonderful photos of the female preening and stretching. Once the eggs hatch, the activity inside the box will ramp up considerably.

Two of Virginia's Peregrine Falcons are beginning to nest in Richmond on the Riverfront Plaza parapet. This Falcon Cam is sponsored by the VA Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries. The male is banded, and biologists have determined that he was banded as a chick on May 4, 2015 just north of Quantico, VA at the Dominion Possum Point Power Station. This is the first sighting of this male since he fledged. The female is not banded. Here's the link to this camera: <https://www.dgif.virginia.gov/falcon-cam/>. The male has been working on a scrape in the nest box full of pebbles, hoping to impress the female. Here's a screen grab from March 15 when both adults were visible.



Shirley cautions, "Beware! Tuning into these nest cams can result in markedly decreased time spent on other important tasks, like family, friends, work, sleep, etc."

THE 2020 VIRGINIA SOCIETY OF ORNITHOLOGY (VSO) ANNUAL MEETING

By Rexanne Bruno, VSO Annual Meeting Chair

The VSO exists to encourage the systematic study of birds in Virginia, to stimulate interest in birds, and to assist the conservation of wildlife and other natural resources. VSO members' interests in birds ranges from those who watch birds at their feeders to some professional ornithologists. Most members enjoy getting out to see birds and supporting the mission of the VSO. VSO membership is open to anyone. Among other things, the VSO organizes several field trips for members every

year to places like Chincoteague, the Outer Banks, Virginia Beach and the Eastern Shore, etc., and it holds an annual meeting somewhere in the state every spring.

The 2020 VSO Annual Meeting will be May 1-3, 2020 in Williamsburg at the Ft. Magruder Inn and Conference Center, hosted by our Williamsburg Bird Club. Williamsburg has hosted this meeting several times in the past. W&M hosted the meeting three times before the WBC was even founded. After the Club's founding in 1977, we hosted the meeting in 1978, 1987, and 1995.

May 2020 VSO Annual Meeting will be an exciting birding event in Williamsburg, and we expect eager birders from across Virginia and the mid-Atlantic to join us. You should plan now to join us, as we hope you will participate to not only enjoy meeting other birders but also share the great birding hot spots in our area. The VSO Annual Meeting includes a business meeting on Friday evening; a paper session on Saturday afternoon, which is an opportunity for undergraduate and graduate students to share their ornithological research findings; a banquet on Saturday evening with a keynote speaker; and several organized field trips on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

Once the WBC volunteered to host the 2020 VSO Annual Meeting, the bird club board met in May 2018 to begin planning. The early decisions to be made were possible dates in May 2020, potential keynote speakers, and hotel locations. After considering the dates for local college graduation, Mother's Day, and the best spring migration period in 2020, the WBC Board chose the weekend of May 1-3, 2020.

Several local hotels were considered as the location for this meeting. After researching hotel rates and food and beverage prices plus the convenience of hotel locations, the Fort Magruder Hotel and Conference Center was selected. We considered several possible speakers for the banquet. We are very fortunate that Bryan Watts, Director of the Center for Conservation Biology at the College of William & Mary, and the Virginia Commonwealth University, has agreed to be the banquet keynote speaker Saturday evening, May 2, 2020.

An Annual Meeting Committee is in place – almost. Many thanks to these people who have volunteered to serve as Committee Chairs: Rexanne Bruno as Annual Meeting Chair, Ann Carpenter as Finance & Registration Chair, Nancy Barnhart as Field Trip Chair, Shirley Devan as Publicity Chair, Cheryl Jacobson as Program Chair, and Judy Jones as Exhibits & Raffle Chair. We still need a chair for the Hospitality & Arrangements Committee. Among other things, this committee would be responsible for coordinating with other committee chairs, ensuring that hotel meeting room arrangements are sufficient for each event, providing centerpieces for banquet tables, writing thank-you notes to all individuals and organizations who donated goods, door prizes, floral arrangements, corporate or academic sponsors, etc. Two people could even share this role.

Although many key committee chairmanships have been filled, we still need more people from the Williamsburg Bird Club to help make this meeting a success between now and May 2020, and on the weekend of the event. We will need volunteers to help at the registration desk during the meeting; lead or assist with field trips; solicit raffle prizes from local businesses, etc. If you are willing to volunteer your talents to help in any way, to serve as the Hospitality and Arrangements Committee Chair, or if you have questions, please contact me at rexannebruno@gmail.com. Many thanks in advance.

PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF BIRDERS AND BIRDING

by Cathy Millar; Photo by Judy Jones

Dan Cristol and Matt Anthony are our club's latest heroes. Our scheduled March speaker was forced to cancel due to emergency surgery two days prior to her presentation on Feathers, and Dan came to the rescue by recommending Matt, who put together a fascinating presentation about birding and us birders!

Matt started birding as a boy scout at age 11. He earned his B.A. in Maryland and an M.A. studying Rock & Roll at Penn State. He came to W&M four and a half years ago to pursue a PhD in music in American Studies. The strong birding culture at W&M, and birding opportunities in VA renewed his interest in birding, and he switched his PhD topic to studying birders and birding history. The current working title of his thesis is "We Were Not Birdwatching, We Were Birding: Science, Sports, and Institutional Culture in Late 20th Century Recreational Birding."

Matt started by reviewing the historical circumstances and events that shaped birding as we know it today. He pointed out the importance of documenting and understanding the activities and mindset of the past, because it has a legacy on the present and future. And yet to date, there has been very little study of the birding community.

He noted birding as worthy of study, because it has become an important part of our culture, as reported in a 2011 study by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This study estimated 47 million birdwatchers and 18 million active birdwatchers. Furthermore,

bird watching is contributing to environmental awareness and is uniquely at the intersection of science and recreation with a substantial involvement of amateurs in citizen science. Much of Matt's research is based on old issues of birding magazines as well as oral histories he collected across the country.

In the 18th and 19th century, most of the scientists interested in birds were wealthy amateurs who had the time to pursue natural history. But by the late 1800's, the discipline of ornithology was working to acquire professional status. At the same time, more people began to pursue bird watching as a form of recreation partly in response to industrialization and urbanization having distanced folks from nature while creating a desire to reconnect. Birding was also promoted by leaders of the Audubon movement in the late 1800's to protest the hunting of birds to supply feathers for the millinery trade. At this time, the Audubon movement and bird watching involved mostly women. Bird watching was consequently viewed as a respectable, middle class, feminine activity. Also, birds had been historically studied and identified by shooting a specimen in order to document it. But in the 1920-30s, the New England ornithologist, Ludlow Griscom, pioneered the concept that birds could be reliably identified 'in the field' by their plumage, behavior, etc. Griscom also pioneered the idea that the sight record of birds from amateurs provided valuable scientific data. He popularized the idea that bird watching could be a competitive activity, as he was one of the first to conduct a Big Day, wherein folks competed to see how many birds could be identified in one day. His style of birding appealed to a younger, male audience. One of Griscom's followers was Roger Tory Peterson, and in 1934, Peterson's "A Field Guide to the Birds" was published and became a runaway best seller amid the Great Depression. Also, better optics became available, and the access to cars allowed people to travel to see birds.

By the 1950's, individuals and groups began emphasizing birding as either a sport or a science. While Stuart Keith did a Big Year in 1956, Howard Axtell of the Buffalo Ornithological Society was espousing scientific data and developing standards of verification and documentation as the most important aspect of birding. One of the communities of birders that Matt has studied was in California during the 1960s, where their style of birding placed emphasis on science and technical knowledge of bird identification as well as being highly competitive and social. The term, "birding," was becoming more common, as "bird watching" was considered too passive to describe folks, who were arriving at the crack of dawn and sometimes driving great distances in all kinds of weather to see birds. One of the birders, Guy McCaskie, developed a method of predicting where rare species could be found, and for the first time ever led field trips in pursuit of rare species. In 1970, the first successful bird records committee in the U.S. was founded, and their findings on identification, distribution and status were published in the journal, *California Birds*. Competitively, their emphasis was not on the highest count lists but on how much one knew about birds and how many rarities one found. In contrast, the American Birding Association founded in 1969 in Texas by Jim Tucker promoted the view that birding was a sport, and the goal was to see who could build the biggest list, publishing the scores. There was criticism in the 1970s by folks that this focus did not promote the study of birds, and the ABA responded by evolving to include info about identification, habitat, etc. In 1979, the owner of a Mississippi forestry company, Jim Vardaman, decided to do a Big Year and be the first person to see 700 species. He admitted that birds really weren't his interest but viewed it as a challenge and promotion for his business. He hired top birders to plan the year and take him to see the necessary birds and eventually scored 699 species. The stunt generated more media attention on birding than ever before, and was covered by Sports Illustrated, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, and CBS. A lot of folks were critical that Vardaman essentially purchased the record, and that the resulting media coverage was presenting birding as a frivolous sport rather than as a serious pursuit. However, he was one of the first people to build a national network to report rare birds and he published a newsletter that he sent to over 1,000 people and bird clubs across the country.

In 1951, the first guide of where to find birds east of the Mississippi was published by Olin Pettingill, Jr. and was followed by a western component in 1953. A much more portable and accessible guide to birds in SE Arizona was published by Jim Lane in 1965. Eventually the ABA took over publishing guides to birding hotspots. In the 1980-90s, a variety of advanced guides in bird identification were published in response to birders' growing interest in demonstrating skill in identification.

Digital communication technology is now revolutionizing how we bird. For the first time, LISTSERV made equal access to finding the location of rare birds available for free to everyone in a timely manner. The internet facilitated the rise of citizen science, where observations can be submitted from the field, as on eBird. It has also raised birding ethical issues, because now the sighting of a rare species can attract the attention of hundreds of people. There is some concern whether birding with digital devices in-hand, verges on being somewhat like Pokémon Go and separating us from nature.

Matt noted that another development in the interest in birding is the bird tour industry that started in the 1970s and became a booming industry in the 1980s. Tour leaders could now have a career based on their skill as birders. Ecotourism has exposed more people to more birds and in recent years has also partnered with local people to engage their interest in birds and

conservation. But cynics are concerned that the pressure to produce birds can lead to excessive use of bird call tapes or disturbing sensitive, conservation areas.

Matt ended his presentation by exploring the relationship between birding and environmentalism. The initial rise of bird watching was a direct outgrowth of the conservation movement through Audubon. But in the 1960-70s, birders wanted their own space, which resulted in the ABA that was more about the sport of birding. Even as the ABA shifted toward emphasizing field identification and knowledge, it brought birding closer to ornithology, but didn't embrace conservation until a major leadership change in the 1980s. In 1984, the New Jersey Audubon Society initiated the World Series of Birding, wherein birders were sponsored to raise money per bird identified, and the funds were donated to environmental causes. During this time, birders also began focusing on outreach and inclusion of beginning birders and underrepresented communities via sponsoring a variety of bird festivals. There is recent concern that birding itself should promote more sustainable practices like the Green Big Year, wherein the competition is to see the most species of birds in a year without the use of fossil fuels.



Matt concluded by noting that many birders are moving from a narrow focus on birds to a broader interest in natural history. Birders are also becoming more politically active to protect habitat or support legislation like the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. He noted that climate change, rapid species decline, and attacks on the natural world from all sides will be one of the central issues of birding in the 21st century.

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

Casey McLaughlin; Heather Kenny; David Starcher; Laura Walter; David & Cathy Boyd; Dianne Snyder; Dot Finnegan; and Ken Goldsmith & Ashley Overman-Goldsmith

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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

April 13 – 8 am Leader: Nancy Barnhart	WBC Bird Walk, Freedom Park.
April 16 – 7 pm	WBC Monthly Meeting (details on page 1).
April 20 - 7:30 am	Great Dismal Swamp Field Trip (details on page 5).
April 27 – 8 am Leader: Jim Corliss	WBC Bird Walk, New Quarter Park.
April 28	Spring Bird Count.
Last Sunday of Each Month	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 .

May 3-5	VSO Annual Meeting, Mountain Lake Lodge (details on page 5).
May 11 – 8 am Leader: TBD	WBC Bird Walk, Bassett Trace.
May 15 – 7 pm	WBC Monthly Meeting (details on page 1).
May 25 – 8 am Leader: Scott Hemler	WBC Bird Walk, New Quarter Park.
June 8 - 8 am Leader: TBD	WBC Bird Walk, Powhatan Creek Trail.
June 22 - 8 am 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.



**Williamsburg Bird Club
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