



THE FLYER

NEWSLETTER OF THE WILLIAMSBURG BIRD CLUB

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President's Corner

Story by Cheryl Jacobson

IN ALL THINGS OF NATURE THERE IS SOMETHING OF THE MARVELOUS. Aristotle

Election of Officers/Bylaws/Dues: The Board has appointed a Nominating Committee composed of Jan Lockwood (Lead), Patty Maloney, and Jeanette Navia. By November, they will nominate members for the Board positions of Vice-President (Programs) and Vice- President (The Flyer). At the November meeting, members will vote on all Board Members and a Bylaws change which would increase dues by \$5.00 from \$15.00 to \$20.00 for Individual Memberships.

The Virginia Society of Ornithology 2020 Annual Meeting: Under Rexanne Bruno's great guidance, the Planning Committee has been making significant progress in completing tasks to assure that the 2020 meeting is successful. Dr. Bryan Watts, Director of the Center for Conservatopn Biology at William & Mary and Virginia Commonwealth University, has indicated that his topic will be "Whimbrel Migration and What We Have Learned Over the Past Decade." I am currently seeking Exhibitors/ Vendors, especially some who are not non-profit. If you know a photographer, carver, or clothing representative in Virginia please let me know.

Conservation: The Jackson M. Abbott Conservation Award is usually given out by VSO during the annual meeting. VSO established a conservation award in 1973 to be given to an individual or an organization that has demonstrated outstanding conservation work in Virginia. Special consideration is given to the nomination made by the host club. The Board decided to nominate CVWO (Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory). The President, Brian Taber, will be our November Program Speaker so this will be a great opportunity for all to learn more about their programs and their positive impact through conservation. See photo of Brian Taber, Ann Carpenter, and me at a recent celebration of their 25th Anniversary. This nomination is made, in part, due to our concern that we face a historic conservation crisis for birds with widespread species decline. The National Audubon Society has pointed out that more than 12,000 species, including the Golden Eagle, are in desperate need of



Cheryl Jacobson

Continued on next page

UPCOMING BIRD WALKS

Oct. 12	8:00 AM Greensprings Trail	TBA
Oct. 26	8:00 AM New Quarter Park	Jim Corliss
Nov. 9	8:00 AM Powhatan Creek Trail	Jan Lockwood

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

October 16
Guest speaker will be John Swaddle who will update us on his research on the 'Acoustic Lighthouse'. The Nature Camp Scholarship recipients will tell us about their experiences.

November 20
Brian Taber and the CVWO 25th Anniversary Overview

BOTH PROGRAMS
ANDREWS HALL 101 AT 7PM

OCTOBER 19 FIELD TRIP

We'll head to the Eastern Shore for a day of birding. Matt Anthony will lead us at several sites, including the Eastern Shore NWR, Kiptopeke State Park, and the Northampton landfill. The plan is to have the trip be similar to what the Club did last October—if you liked that trip, this one should be good as well. Those interested in carpooling should meet at the Colony Square Shopping Center at 7:15 AM for a 7:30 AM departure.

conservation action today and [according to a new study, within one human lifetime, North America lost more than one-quarter of its birds—3 billion in total.](http://www.audubon.org/news/north-america-has-lost-more-1-4-birds-last-50) The declines are due to varying causes, all of which are results of human activity. Read the study at: www.audubon.org/news/north-america-has-lost-more-1-4-birds-last-50

Importance of Our Data Collection Efforts/Christmas Bird Count/eBird Submissions:

The research team that completed the above study included collaborators at the American Bird Conservancy, Cornell, Lab of Ornithology, Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute, U.S. Geological Survey, the Canadian Wildlife Service, and other institutions. They analyzed the breeding population of 529 species by pooling data from the North American Breeding Bird Survey, Audubon's Christmas Bird Count, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service waterfowl surveys, and 10 other datasets. If you haven't participated in the Christmas Bird Count, consider doing so this December. You will hear more about it soon from Jim Corliss, our Committee Chair for Walks and Counts.

We Can Have An Impact:

But while the results are troubling, there is some good news. Not all birds declined and some species even showed steady gains over time. Waterfowl as a group, for example, saw a population increase of 34 million individuals since 1970, thanks largely to wetland conservation efforts. Raptors, such as the Bald Eagle, also fared better with a gain of 15 million individuals thanks largely to a ban on DDT in 1972. The numbers show that taking steps like wildlife management, habitat restoration, and political action can be effective to save species in steep decline. More than ever before it is important for us to remember the words of William Wordsworth.

**COME FORTH INTO THE LIGHT OF THINGS,
LET NATURE BE YOUR TEACHER.**

**COME FORTH, AND BRING WITH YOU A HEART
THAT WATCHES AND RECEIVES.**

by William Wordsworth



Left to right: Ann Carpenter Cheryl Jacobson, Brian Taber

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The Child Development Resources Feeder Seed Project

Story by Ann and Gary Carpenter

In responding to a suggestion from club member Sara Lewis, the Williamsburg Bird Club adopted the bird feeder seed project of Child Development Resources (CDR) in Toano in 2010. As an ongoing effort the Club provides bird feeders, seed, suet, and maintenance of all their bird feeding equipment. CDR is a critical provider of programs for babies and toddlers with disabilities or developmental delays, or those at risk for delay. The feeding station is located just outside the large picture window of the Developmental Playgroup Room and brings birds to the attention and delight of children, staff and parents every day. Sometimes the sight of the birds at the feeders provides a wonderful opportunity to expand a child's view of nature, widens their knowledge base and assists in building their language skills.

The CDR seed donation project is one of the special categories to which our club members generously donate each year when they renew their memberships. Besides Sara, other Club members who have been directly involved in the CDR effort in the past are Adrienne Frank, Gary Driscoll, and Deb Woodward. Gary Carpenter has been delivering seed and providing maintenance of the feeding station since 2016. Seed is purchased from the Club's partners at both Wild Birds Unlimited, and The Backyard Birder.

This past summer the need arose for a new feeding station. Gary brought this to the attention of the Club's board and Melinda Cousins of Backyard Birder generously donated a new pole and crook station as a replacement. On Friday, August 16 2019, Gary and Ann Carpenter replaced the old (and rather jury rigged) feeder holder with the new pole provided by Melinda. On completion of the installation, Marilyn Canaday (the CDR staff member who keeps the feeders filled) and another CDR staffer, Erica Marcinek, expressed their extreme gratitude to the Club. They remarked that the children of the CDR really enjoyed watching the birds and they went on to relate that the feeders were one of the best "tear stoppers" they had. When Gary asked what they meant, they explained that when they encountered a very sad child, they would bring them to the window of the playroom and point out the birds at the feeders. The "up close and personal" sight of the wild birds almost always enchanted the distraught children and the tears quickly stopped.

Such stories are, of course, very gratifying and make the Club's efforts on this seed project well worthwhile.



The new feeder station at CDR is put in place by Erica Marcinek, Marilyn Canaday (both CDR staff members) and Gary Carpenter.



Photo by Bill Williams

Foraging Habits of Fall Migrating Songbirds on the Eastern Shore

Story by Cathy Millar

Our October field trip will take us to the Eastern Shore so the subject Foraging Habits of Fall Songbirds and the Eastern Shore of Virginia by our September guest speaker, Chance Hines, was very appropriate. Chance is a research biologist for W&M's Center for Conservation Biology whose projects have included monitoring the Red-cockaded Woodpecker population at Piney Grove Preserve and the Great Dismal Swamp National Refuge and researching wintering Ipswich Sparrows along the Atlantic Coast.

After reviewing the challenges migratory birds face and showing us photos of the different species that he's observed on the Eastern Shore, he focused on what plant species

the birds use for refueling. Flowering plant favorites in the salt shrub habitat which lies just above high tide were Salt Bush which attracts Swamp and Song Sparrows and American Gold Finches, Baccharis shrub (aka groundsel shrub) and goldenrod which attracts warblers, especially the Palm Warbler. Also, another favorite is the Wax Myrtle bush whose fat-rich berries especially attract Yellow-rumped Warblers and Tree Swallows, who can better handle the difficult-to-digest compound encasing the berries. Chance noted that plants have evolved to bear fruit in the fall along with the food requirements of migratory songbirds, with resulting mutual benefit. The birds receive much needed nutrition to stay airborne over long flights while servicing the plant by dispersing its seeds over a wide area. Some of the plants sport bright red leaves or colorful berries or dense clusters of fruit to attract the notice of birds. He reported that the berries of poison ivy, Virginia creeper (esp. high in fat), American pokeweed (esp. high in protein), Devil's walking stick, wild grapes, black cherry trees and sassafras are among the favorites of song birds. He noted that non-native plants like the Chinese privet bear very nutritional fruit but that our birds have not evolved with it and



Song Sparrow

Photo by Cheryl Jacobson

don't seem to recognize it as a food source.

The common Hackberry tree (whose leaves are pictured under the article) was of particular interest to Chance because of its nutritional value to a wide variety of songbirds. The hackberry's purple-red fruit contains a large seed surrounded by a small amount of sweet pulp, and encased with a hard shell, and it has very little nutritious value, but he observed the Northern Cardinal, American Robin and Gray Catbird eating it. The hackberry tree is also the host to Hackberry Psyllids which are small (3-4 mm) aphid-like insects that cause galls on the underside of the leaves. There are three species of psyllids often found on the same leaf. Causing no harm to the tree, the insect-rich galls are a favorite of insectivores like the American Redstart, Northern Parula, Black-and-white Warblers and Ruby-crowned Kinglet, as well as omnivores like the Red-eyed Vireo, Yellow-rumped Warbler and White-throated Sparrow. Chance observed that insect-foraging flocks of birds in a tree like the hackberry probably attracts the notice of other birds like fruit eaters who will take advantage of the tree's berries. The Hackberry is also the host plant for several butterflies including the Hackberry Emperor, Tawny Emperor, American Snout, Eastern Comma, Question Mark and Mourning Cloak.

Chance concluded by recommending including gall-bearing plants like the hackberry, oaks, black cherry, black locust and goldenrod in our landscapes as a valuable source of food for songbirds.

Bird Tracks

Story by **Kathi Mestayer**

We always have our hummingbird feeder well-stocked, hanging from the kitchen window with suction cups. It's fun to watch them fly up, and then stand absolutely still, while they take their (many) sips of the nectar. (And the nectar works really well as a sweetener for iced coffee, too.)

This year, it seemed like there were way more-frequent visits to the feeder, like every couple of minutes, at times. And they were all females. So, I wrote to the person at Cornell Lab of Ornithology, who answers questions for the Feederwatch people. Here's her reply:

Hi Kathi,

*The most likely explanation is that some of the birds you are seeing are probably young birds, which all look like females. At this time of year, populations explode as young birds fledge and start foraging on their own. Demand could also increase if natural nectar sources have decreased or if hummingbirds in other areas are moving to your area in search of food. Some hummingbirds further north that have finished breeding or that have failed to breed successfully could be moving south early as well. Good birding,
Anne Marie Johnson
Cornell Lab of Ornithology*

So....the ones who all looked like females could be.... either. Within a few days, I was out watering the flowers, and a hummingbird came right up to the the cardinal flower. It had a small, red dot at the top of its breast. "Aha! He's getting his guy colors!" I thought, feeling a little more informed....

A Wedding in Iceland Brings the Birds

Story and photos by **Bringier McConnell**

I attended a wedding in Iceland this summer and added some bird watching to the trip. I was delighted to find many new life birds such as Eurasian Oystercatchers, Common Redshanks and European Golden Plovers, but only managed a decent photo of the Black-tailed Godwit. I am not sure the bride planned her wedding specifically for breeding season for seabirds, but I thanked her even so. I reveled in sea cliffs full of Black Legged Kittiwakes and Northern Fulmars and meadows teeming with Arctic Terns and their chicks. And the crowning glory was a wild ocean crossing to reach the island of Grimsey on the Arctic Circle, where I stopped counting Atlantic Puffins at 50,000. A true joy to be in elemental nature and see and be among these beautiful birds in such vast numbers!



Black-tailed Godwit



Atlantic Puffin



Photo of Northern Parula by **Inge Curtis**

An Osprey Story Story and photos by **Sherry C. Hancock**



We enjoyed keeping an eye on the Osprey couple at York River State Park this spring and summer. We got to see everything from nest building and courting, to the successful rearing of their youngster. Last year there was no successful mating.

Once during nest building a Heron was fishing too close by and got dive bombed by the Osprey.

The female and baby would wait on the nest and call for the male to provide dinner. In the last photo you can see that he was a good provider of fish, and now the youngster looks big and healthy and has finally fledged.

We've also enjoyed the smaller birds that come to our yard and feeders. This year it seems like there were a lot of families with little ones twittering for food. So demanding and fun to watch.

A Rare Bird

*Story and photo by **Nancy Barnhart***

The Northern Wheatear (right) should be on it's way to Europe and then to it's wintering ground in Africa. So it was definitely off course when it was spotted during the 2019 Kiptopeke Challenge! Quite a few folks got to see it Thursday and then it disappeared Friday. Luckily it was refound on Saturday by one of the Kiptopeke Challenge teams near Machipongo, north of Kiptopeke State Park.

Many Virginia birders travelled to see it and weren't disappointed. It put on a great show hawking insects and provided lots of photo ops.



Seven WBC Members Participate in 2019 Kiptopeke Challenge

Story by **Shirley Devan**

Seven Williamsburg Bird Club members participated in the 2019 Kiptopeke Challenge, the annual fundraising bird-a-thon for Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory.

Bird Club members and their teams: Brian Taber on the Wandering Whimbrels, Andy Hawkins on the Hampton Roads Bird Club Team (Andy is also a WBC member!) and Shirley Devan, Nancy Barnhart, Jan Lockwood, Sue Mutell and Barbara Neis on the Gulls Gone Wild team.

Ten teams joined in the fun September 28—eight groups spent the day on the Eastern Shore; one team participated in the 3-hour category at Hog Island (Andy Hawkins and team) and one team of birders from the Northern VA Bird Club birded Dyke Marsh in Northern Virginia.

Three teams had only teens from the Charlottesville area (perhaps they were competing against each other?):

C'ville Ceruleans (Max Nootbaar, Baxter Beamer, Tucker Beamer)

Team Turnstone (Ezra Staengl, Conor Farrell, and Theo Staengl)

Scattered Scoters (Ira Lianez and Seth Kellogg)

The Scattered Scoters even had a driver—a Dad!

The Eastern Shore is big place, but teams kept bumping into each other at the renowned hot spots. The “hottest” spot turned out to be on Seaside Road near Machipongo where a mega-rare Northern Wheatear reappeared Saturday after its initial discovery Thursday at Kiptopeke

State Park. Thanks to bird alerts, texts, and phone calls, all teams eventually added this bird to their KC tally. After the alerts went out, MANY birders from across the state turned up to get a life bird, a Virginia bird, or a county bird (yes, some birders keep county lists).

The totals (bird species and funds raised) are still coming in so we don't yet know how many total species were observed for the day. Our team, the Gulls Gone Wild, had 98 species. What a crazy list we had for the day - no Cattle Egret despite ponies easily observed all afternoon at Chincoteague. A Ruddy Duck and Blue-winged Teal but no Red-shouldered Hawk or Eastern Towhee. That's why it's called a “Challenge.” Nothing is a given - except perhaps a Great Black-backed Gull (or two). And KC teams will be talking about the 2019 Challenge for decades - the year the Northern Wheatear appeared and was added to the cumulative species list. What a bird!

Elsewhere in this newsletter readers can see the Northern Wheatear in photos by Nancy Barnhart who saw the bird at Kiptopeke State Park September 26 and again September 28 for the Challenge. Just how far off base was the wheatear? It should have been migrating through Europe to its wintering grounds in Africa after breeding in Alaska and northern Canada. There are only four previous records of this species in the Coastal Plain—all on the Eastern Shore. The last observation was 1995 at Kiptopeke State Park.



Hampton Roads Bird Club

Stuart Sweetman, Andy Hawkins, and James Abbott,



Gulls Gone Wild, Jan Lockwood, Barbara Neis, Nancy Barnhart, Sue Mutell, Shirley Devan,



Wandering Whimbrels,

Dave Youker and Brian Taber



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