

Williamsburg Bird Club
Wednesday, May 16, 2018
Andrew's Hall, Room 101, W&M, 7:00pm

Attendance: 55

President's Remarks: President Cheryl Jacobson welcomed the assembly and because the computer and projector system in Rm 101 had crashed, she started the meeting with the raffle while Dan Cristol looked for a suitable room. Five items were raffled. No new members were present. Cheryl noted that this was the last meeting before summer break. The next meeting will be in September.

Field Trips: Geoff Giles, Field Trip Coordinator, reported on the upcoming field trip.

- **Saturday, May 19:** Hugh Beard will lead a bird walk at Newport News Park. Those who wish to car pool can meet at Old Colony Square on Jamestown Road for departure at 7:00 am.
- Geoff reported there are no field trips planned for the summer but is open to suggestions and requests.

The Flyer: Cheryl reported that there would be no newsletters during the summer. She requested that photos taken of birds during the summer be submitted to Melinda Cousins by mid-August so she can put them in the September issue of The Flyer.

Refreshments: Barbara Neiss reported that our snacks were provided this evening by Shirley Devan and Mary Ellen Hodges. Another person is needed to help with snacks for September. Otherwise, enough folks have volunteered to bring goodies for the rest of the meetings this year.

Dan Cristol returned to report that he'd gained access for us in the new auditorium at the Integrated Science Center. The membership moved from Andrew's Hall to ISC where the meeting was resumed.

Special presentation recognizing Dan Cristol's many contributions to our club: Cheryl reported that Dan in the past had been VP of Programs. He has been our guest speaker over a dozen times. Most critical of all, every year Dan has submitted the tedious paper work and followed up to procure a free place for our club to meet as well as free parking passes. He facilitates getting information to W&M students about applications for grant money and supervises their annual presentations about their research to our club. Dan has always been ready to lead a field trip when asked. In gratitude from our club, Cheryl presented Dan with a lovely limited edition print of a watercolor painting by Luke Seitz of Virginia birds arranged in the shape of the state.

Dan reported that he will be continuing to teach ornithology and doing his research but that he also has a new job as Faculty Director of Undergraduate Research. Indicating the painting, he said he now has a third office to decorate. He added that he appreciates having the opportunity to help W&M have a connection with the community via our club.

Program: Cheryl introduced our speaker, Susan Powell. Susan attended ODU for undergraduate and graduate degrees in biology. She's been a birder since 1982. Her graduate work focused on below ground dynamics. Her job history includes working in wetlands biology and as an environmental consultant. Susan delivered an illustrated lecture about the joys of birding and of ways to improve our identification skills. She began with some interesting statistics noting that there are about 90,000 species of birds worldwide which is almost twice the number of mammal species. The continental US and Canada have approximately 800 species. East of the Mississippi River, there are 600 species; in Virginia about 472 and locally about 342. Statistics show that 88% of birders are backyard birders and that the average birder is a 53 year old and female. In 2011, there were forty seven million birders in the US (about 20% of the population) who spent 14.9 billion dollars in equipment, bird food and trips which in turn supported 666,000 jobs. Another interesting fact was that 80% of North American birds are migratory at some phase of their annual cycle. A lot of a bird's brain power is devoted to eyesight which is the most important sense in birds. The second most important sense is hearing with birds hearing ten times more detail in sounds than humans. Birds are the greatest sound producers of all vertebrates and are divided into two group based on vocal ability: song birds and non- songbirds. Bird field guides are often organized by presenting non-songbirds first (ex. waterfowl, raptors, woodpeckers). The songbirds fill the second half of the book. She discussed in detail how to identify birds by noting general size and shape, color patterns and field marks, behavior and movement, distribution and song. She also reviewed breeding bird behavior.

Bird Counts/Bird Walks: Jim Corliss, Bird Count Chairperson, reported on the results of the Spring Bird Count. There were just over 100 participants. 149 species were counted with the average count being 152. There were 5 species with the highest count ever reported.

Upcoming bird walks are:

- **Saturday, May 26th:** A fourth May Saturday bird walk will be held at New Quarter Park led by Ruth Gordon.
- **Saturday, June 9th:** Our second Saturday bird walk will be held at Powhatan Creek Trail led by Shirley Devan. Parking will be at Clara Byrd Baker Elementary.

Programs: Judy Jones, VP (programs), was absent. Cheryl reported on the upcoming programs.

- **September 19:** Dave Youker will give us an update on the Breeding Bird Atlas. He will also present his experiences of birding in Guatemala.
- **October 17:** John Swaddle from W&M has not established a topic.
- **November (? Date):** Fletcher Smith will give a presentation about his research in the Arctic.
- **January 15, 2019:** Bob Schamerhorn will give a presentation on birds of the Atlantic Coastline from Maine to Florida.

Cheryl added that she continues to work on the availability of author Katie Fallon as a speaker. She recommended her two books, *Cerulean Blues* and *Vulture, The Private Life of an Unloved Bird*, as summer reading.

Breeding Bird Atlas: Cheryl reported that there has been good progress in atlasing our priority blocks. She had Shirley Devan describe the fun of eating homemade strawberry ice cream at College Run Farms in Surry while documenting breeding behavior of Barn Swallows, a Grasshopper Sparrow, Bluebirds and European Starlings. Cheryl had Geoff Giles describe his creative plan of documenting nocturnal birds (nightjars and owls) by launching a boat with Andy Hawkins in their priority block to go catfishing.

Cheryl adjourned the meeting at 8:45 pm.

Refreshments were enjoyed at the back of the auditorium.

Respectfully submitted,
Cathy Millar, Secretary Williamsburg Bird Club
June 5, 2018