

Williamsburg Bird Club
Wednesday, September 18, 2019
W&M Andrews Hall, Room 101, 7:00 pm

Attendance: 45

President's Remarks: President Cheryl Jacobson opened the meeting and welcomed the assembly.

Bird Counts/Bird Walks: Jim Corliss, Chairperson, was absent. Cheryl reported on the upcoming bird walks:

- Saturday, October 12th at Greensprings
- Saturday, October 26th at New Quarter Park; leader Jim Corliss
- November 9th at Powhatan Creek; leader Jan Lockwood

Field Trips: George Martin, field trip coordinator reported the following:

- Saturday, September 21st: Jason Strickland will lead a bird walk at Newport News Park. Interested birders should meet Jason at the parking lot near the ranger station at 7 am. Jan Lockwood will be our club's contact person with Jason.
- Saturday, October 19th: Matt Anthony will lead a trip to the Eastern Shore which will include the Eastern Shore NWR, Kiptopeke State Park and the Northumberland landfill. Those interested in carpooling should meet at the Colony Square Shopping Center for a 7:30 am departure.
- Sunday, January 19th 2020: Geoff Giles has reserved the boat for our annual Chesapeake Bay boat trip. George advised us to be alert for a request to sign-up during the holiday season and if interested to commit as soon as possible so unfilled seats can be made available to folks outside our club.

The Flyer: Cheryl complimented Lucinda Baker on the September edition. The deadline for submitting articles and photos for the next newsletter is September 25th.

Annual Election of Board Members: Cheryl announced that our club's bylaws state that in October three members are to be appointed to the Nominating Committee to find candidates to fill vacant positions on the Executive Board. There are two positions that will need to be filled for 2020. Jan Lockwood and Patty Maloney have volunteered. Cheryl asked for a third volunteer from the assembly. None was forthcoming. The bylaws dictate that the names of the nominees for the Board will be announced in the November Flyer and that the election be held at the November WBC meeting. Cheryl's goal is to announce the nominees a lot earlier. She asked that folks interested in serving on the Board please let her know and she will inform the nominating committee.

WBC Dues Increase: Cheryl announced that at the last Board of Directors meeting it was decided that it was time to raise the club's dues by \$5. It has been a very long time since there has been a proposal for an increase in dues. The membership will vote on this proposal at the November meeting.

Refreshments: Chairperson Catherine Flanagan brought the refreshments. She sent around a sign-up sheet for members to commit to bringing goodies for future meetings. She reinforced the club's goal to

limit single-use plastic and that drinks are being served from a cooler and members are to bring their own reusable cups. Cheryl brought compostable cups for those who've forgotten their own cup.

Program: Judy Jones, VP and Programs Chairperson, was absent. Dan Cristol introduced the speaker, Chance Hines, research biologist for W&M's Center for Conservation Biology. His 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. Chance reported on research he'd done for his Master's thesis at Old Dominion University in his presentation: *Foraging Habits of Fall Songbirds and the Eastern Shore of Virginia*. 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 is 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 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 don't seem to recognize it as a food source. The common hackberry tree 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 in a tree like the hackberry probably attracts 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, Comma, Question Mark and Mourning Cloak. Chance concluded by recommending planting gall-bearing plants like the hackberry, oaks, black cherry, black locust and goldenrod on our landscapes as a valuable source of food for songbirds.

Wild Birds Unlimited Feeder Swap: Cheryl announced that in September if you bring in a broken feeder, they will give you credit for a new one. The broken feeder will be refurbished and donated to non- profit organizations.

Programs: Judy Jones, VP (Programs) was absent. Cheryl reported the following:

- 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

Bird Club Hats: Cheryl observed that she's received enquiries about purchasing hats with the WBC logo. There was a sizable show of hands of folks interested in purchasing one. Hats will be ordered.

The Jackson M. Abbott Conservation Award: Cheryl reported that one aspect of our 2020 VSO Annual Meeting is that a person or organization will be recognized by this award. Our Board has nominated CVWO to receive this award. The VSO will review the application.

Contributions in Honor of Bob Long: Cheryl thanked everyone who has made a donation in honor of past WBC President, Bob Long.

At the end of the meeting a free raffle was held.

Cheryl adjourned the meeting at 8:00 pm and refreshments were served.

Respectfully submitted,
Cathy Millar, Secretary Williamsburg Bird Club
September 19, 2019