

Williamsburg Bird Club
Wednesday, January 15, 2020
W&M Andrew's Hall, Room 101, 7:30

Attendance: 62

President's Remarks: President Cheryl Jacobson opened the meeting and welcomed the gathering to the first meeting of 2020. There were 4 visitors and 1 new member, all of whom were Master Naturalists. She noted activities to look forward to in 2020: the last year of the VABBA2; the purple martin project taking off; our club hosting the VSO annual conference as well as the usual monthly bird walks and field trips. Cheryl noted that one of the birders at the January 11th bird walk had brought a large garbage bag along and the group picked up litter as they birded. The bag was quickly filled and Scott Hemler took it to a dumpster. Cheryl suggested we make a New Years' resolution to help clean-up the environment and that future bird walk leaders bring a garbage bag. Cheryl reminded the attendees that it is time to renew membership for 2020. The membership form was emailed and is also on the club's website. The form needs to be included with the money. Cheryl also asked us to please remember to wear our name tags. Cheryl noted that the Great Backyard Bird Count will be February 14 -17th and urged everyone to participate.

Bird Counts/Walks: Chairperson Jim Corliss announced preliminary results of the Christmas Bird Count which he is still tabulating. There may have been as many as 133 participants which historically would make for the greatest participation. There were 113 species which is above average with a Horned Lark reported as a new species and some unusual ones like a Yellow-throated Warbler, Blue-gray gnatcatcher and two Lesser Yellowlegs. He plans to have a full report in the February issue of The Flyer. Jim reported that there were 20 plus folks at the College Creek Beach bird walk on January 11th and reported on the following upcoming bird walks:

- **Saturday, January 25:** New Quarter Park
- **Saturday, February 8:** Colonial Parkway/York River led by Shirley Devan

Refreshments: Chairperson Catherine Flanagan reported that she and Kathy Klausner provided tonight's refreshments.

Field Trips: Chairperson George Martin reported the following:

- **Sunday, January 19:** The Chesapeake Bay Boat Trip will have Dan Cristol as leader. With 60 participants, the boat is at full capacity with one on the wait list. Car pooling will be available at Colony Square Shopping Center with departure at 7:30 am.
- **Saturday, February 15:** Dutch Gap Conservation Area with Rose Ryan as leader.

The Flyer: Cheryl noted that the January issue of The Flyer had been produced by acting editor, Mary Ellen Hodges and commended her on her work. Cheryl asked for a motion from the floor to nominate Mary Ellen Hodges for the position of Vice-President, Editor (The Flyer). Ann Carpenter made the motion which was seconded by Geoff Giles and approved unanimously. Mary Ellen announced that the deadline for submitting articles/photos for the February issue is January 24th.

Purple Martin Project: Cheryl reported that the old broken purple martin set-up at York River State Park had been removed and donated to the folks at the Sunoco Gas Station on Pocahontas Trail who will fix it and add it to their 60-year-old colony of about a couple hundred martins. With club funds and donations, a new pole has been purchased and installed. As recommended at the Purple Martin Festival, gourds will be used and five gourds have been purchased to date. Cheryl showed us one of them that featured a clean-out port, Starling-proof entrance and a porch for the youngsters. She announced that Michael Bishop who started the Northern Virginia Purple Martin Initiative and monitors 30 different colonies will be our March speaker. We look forward to learning more about being good Purple Martin landlords. She noted that Michael believes that bird trails should feature a variety of species bird houses. His trails often include houses for Blue Birds, Purple Martins and Chimney Swifts. Cheryl proposed that we might make that a club goal and suggested starting at York River State Park where there are already Blue Bird and Martin houses.

2020 VSO Meeting Update: Cheryl noted that May 1st, 2nd and 3rd are fast approaching. She reported a need for about six volunteers to stuff registration packets about 2 weeks before and to hand them out at the registration table. Another six are needed to sell raffle tickets at the Friday social and all day on Saturday. The raffle tickets are a major source of income to fund the event. Volunteers will also be needed to help attendees find where to go for field trips, etc. She passed a clip board around for folks to sign-up.

Programs: Chairperson Dean Shostak announced the following programs:

- **February:** The annual joint meeting with the Historic Rivers Chapter of Master Naturalists will feature AWARE, an animal rehab program in Richmond with Deb Woodward as speaker. There will be a number of ambassador birds and animals including Blossom -the -Possum who was reared from infancy. Cheryl reported that AWARE will also have a program at Wild Birds Unlimited on this Saturday 18th from 1-3 pm.

Program: Dean Shostak introduced the speaker, Bob Schamerhorn, a professional photographer who credits his love of nature as nurtured in his youth by generous members of the Lynchburg Bird Club. He studied art and design at Virginia Tech and his photos have won many awards. Bob's presentation was titled *Alaska, Our Epic Adventure* in which he shared Alaska's splendors via gorgeous photos and videos frequently accompanied by sound track. He and his wife were part of a small group of photographers who traveled via van, small boat and float planes to remote areas at the end of July and the first week of August. Photographers like to make use of all available daylight and they had to pace themselves to prevent exhaustion because night time lasted only 3 ½ -4 hours. Bob admitted that Alaska is not the birdiest place but had wonderful photos of his target birds including Horned and Tufted Puffins, Common Murres, Rhinoceros Auklets, Pigeon Guillemots and Varied Thrush. He reported how thrilling it was to see birds that we only see here in winter that were in their full breeding plumage and often accompanied by chicks such as Red-necked Grebes, White-crowned Sparrows and the Common Loon. His presentation also featured dramatic landscapes, glaciers, utterly adorable sea otters, humpback whales, Steller sea lions and harbor seals. His coverage of a mother brown bear nursing her cubs; teaching them how to dig for giant clams; and cubs at play was unforgettable. Throughout the program, Bob's passion for nature and photography was evident. This was one of several programs that Bob Schamerhorn has delivered over the years and our club is most grateful for his generosity.

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

Cheryl adjourned the meeting at 8:50 pm and refreshments were served.

Respectfully submitted,
Cathy Millar, Secretary Williamsburg Bird Club,
January 16, 2020