

Williamsburg Bird Club  
Wednesday, March 17, 2021  
Conducted via Zoom, Invited by Dean Shostak and presided by Cheryl Jacobson, 7pm

**Attendance:** 66

**Program – Birds of Ghana by Bob Ake:** Bob Ake's presentation on the exotic birds of West Africa in Ghana, known as the Gold Coast when under British rule 1821 – 1957, was a welcome diversion at our March meeting from Covid fatigue and winter blahs. Bob, who has a background in Chemistry at ODU and has for many years led birding tours throughout the US and abroad, was happy to leave the organizing of this adventure to Rockjumper Tours. Our Bill Williams and Bob joined 12 other participants for this countrywide birding trip that included many African animals in November 2019. Bob began by describing the geography and history of Ghana and the social history of its people. In Bob's pursuit of seeing a member from each family of the world's birds, he added three new family species: (1) White-necked Rockfowl, a bird that has a nearly featherless bright yellow and black head that is a forest floor dweller and requires overhanging rock ledges to raise young; (2) Western Nicator, noted for the conspicuous yellow spotting on its wings; and (3) Egyptian Plover, a striking looking wader that is no longer found in Egypt and is not a plover, that legend claims cleans the teeth of crocodiles. Their adventure also helped support Ghana's ecotourism, as native guides from villages were at times engaged to help them find specific species. Ghana has seven national parks and one of them features a canopy walk that connects seven tree tops in the tropical forest which afforded Bob and Bill an eye-level view of birds. It was really interesting to see Old World versions of our New World birds and Bob included interesting tidbits of their life histories. Mere words do not do justice to the stunning birds in Bob's presentation so please see them for yourself if you missed the meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/64811234567> Passcode: 879123 (available until April 21, 2021).

**President's Remarks:** President Cheryl Jacobson announced that the WBC Board had met and decided to resume bird walks and field trips following current Covid 19 protocol for group gatherings.

**Field Trips:** George Martin, Field Trip Coordinator, reported the following:

- **Saturday, April 17<sup>th</sup>:** Newport News Park led by Jason Strickland. There will be no organized carpooling. We are to meet at the Ranger Station. The group is limited to 25 people, and a reservation is required in order to keep the size within COVID-19 restrictions. If you'd like to attend, please email George Martin.
- **May possibility, date to be determined:** George is waiting to hear from the Nature Conservancy whether the observation dock at Box Tree Creek near Machipongo on the Eastern Shore will be open this year to the public to watch Whimbrels leaving in large numbers for their arctic breeding grounds. They are hoping to welcome the public but need to work-out how to do so safely.
- **Friday, May 14<sup>th</sup>:** Warbler Road led by Andy Hawkins. Cheryl Jacobson has been working with Andy to work out the details. She advised that folks drive up on Thursday. There isn't much room for parking along Warbler Road, so the trip has been limited to 5 cars. Five drivers (all fully

vaccinated) have volunteered. They have requested that anyone who wants to ride with them also be vaccinated. If you'd like to go, please email Cheryl.

**Bird Walks:** Jim Corliss, Chairperson Bird Counts/ Walks, was absent. Scott Hemler reported that he would be leading the first bird walk of 2021 at New Quarter Park on March 27<sup>th</sup> at 8am . The group is limited to 10 people and Covid protocols of mask, spacing, no sharing of equipment will be observed. There will be no liability release form to fill out as there had been last autumn. Cathy Flanagan is keeping the list and noted that it filled up the first day with 3 currently on the wait list. Only club members are invited but there is hope that, soon, it can be open to the community. Cheryl announced that since Cathy Flanagan's service as chairperson of refreshments is not needed while we meet via Zoom, she has assumed the role of taking reservations for the bird walks.

**Bird Counts:** Cheryl filled in for Jim Corliss who was absent. She announced that the WBC Spring Bird Count will be May 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**WBC Meeting Schedule:** Cheryl Jacobson reported that since we'd missed membership meetings in the spring of 2020 due to Covid, we had held meetings during the summer. The Board decided that this year, there will be no meeting or newsletter in June and July. We will resume meetings in August. There will be a newsletter prior the August meeting.

**Newsletter, The Flyer:** Cheryl noted that the deadline for submissions of bird photos and sightings to Mary Ellen Hodges is March 27. She suggested that since migration season is beginning, that folks consider sending photos of migrants that they have enjoyed in the past.

**Purple Martins:** Cheryl noted that Purple Martins are being spotted as far north as Philadelphia and there have been at least 12 sightings in our area. She reported that the four WBC-sponsored purple martin colony housing sites are ready to receive them.

**Programs – Co-Vice President Tory Gussman:**

- **April 21, 7:00 pm:** Student Research Update. Cheryl noted that this annual presentation of reports given by W&M students, who are recipients of our club's Bill Sheehan/Ruth Beck Ornithology Research Grants, are often the least attended meetings. She asked us to support them with our time and interest and attend the meeting. Cheryl read an email that Casey McLaughlin, a 2020 grant recipient, had sent her. Casey noted that ultimately the aim of a lot of science research is to bring findings to the public and into practice in things like conservation. She said our club meeting offers them a valuable opportunity to practice science communication and presentation skills. She added that she has valued the questions, ideas and feedback from our club members. This April meeting will feature Jasmine Whelan on the effects of sublethal dietary mercury on levels of the stress hormone corticosterone in birds and on feather quality; and Robin Thady and Lauren Emerson on their research aimed to reduce bird collisions with man-made structures.
- **May 19, 7:00 pm:** Tory Gussman reported that Dr Amanda Gallinat, an ecologist, will present her findings on *Climate Change and its Effect on Food for Migrating Birds*

**Announcement:**

- Cheryl announced that Audubon Society reported that in March they submitted 50,000 letters written by members to the USFW Service in support of reinstating the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The Interior Dept announced that it will be working on making the MBTA even stronger than it was before. The Audubon Society thanked birders for their support.  
Cheryl concluded that things are beginning to look more hopeful with our club resuming bird walks and field trips and with the BBTA being reinstated.
- Cheryl reminded members to pay their dues. She noted that the next newsletter will feature an article written by our Board and Committee Chairs about the important projects that the dues support.

Cheryl adjourned the meeting at 8:28 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Cathy Millar, Secretary Williamsburg Bird Club,  
April 1, 2021