

Williamsburg Bird Club

November 15, 2023

Hybrid meeting conducted in person at Quarterpath Rec Center, Room 2, 202 Quarterpath Road, Williamsburg and via Zoom hosted by Ann Carpenter, at 6pm

Attendance: 19 in person, 26 via Zoom

President's Remarks: President Nancy Barnhart greeted everyone present and on Zoom on this last meeting of 2023. She announced there would be a brief business meeting including the election of club officers following the presentation as well as refreshments.

Program: Patty Maloney, Vice President, Programs, introduced the evenings speaker, Rexanne Bruno. Birding for 40 years and long-time member of our bird club, Rexanne was the perfect person to energize and prepare us for our 2023 WBC Christmas Bird Count. Her impressive profile includes being the past president of the VSO; a member of the steering and final product committee of the Second Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas; current regional editor for all the Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) of Virginia/DC; and she's been participating in CBCs in VA since she moved here 25 years ago.

Rexanne reported that the first Christmas Bird Count was organized by Frank Chapman, editor of *Bird-Lore* magazine, on Christmas Day 1900 as an alternative to the tradition of a competitive Christmas Day hunt to see how many birds and animals could be shot. Twenty-seven birders participating at 25 locations from Toronto, Canada to Pacific Grove, CA., counted 90 species. Chapman published the results of that count and subsequent annual ones in *Bird-Lore*. The magazine was purchased by National Audubon Society in 1934 and began overseeing CBC and eventually mechanizing the data base as it is maintained today.

Last year, the 123rd season of CBC, 2,600 CBCs were conducted and over 40 million birds were counted! Christmas Bird Counts are conducted each year between December 14 and January 5 by birders from around the world but still mostly in the US. Each local CBC is a 24-hour long census conducted on a designated day within a set 15-mile circle. Participants document all the birds observed and share their checklists with the local CBC compiler who then submits the data to the on-line National Audubon CBC data base. The CBC data is the longest-running database in ornithology and is a totally citizen scientist project.

The first CBC in Virginia was conducted in 1904 by Dr. William Caton who, braving hail and 29 degrees, counted 6 species in a total of 45 minutes. Last year in Virginia, there were 56 CBCs; over 1,800 participants; and over 800,000 birds were counted totaling 206 species.

The first CBC in Williamsburg was in 1946 by Ray Beasley who, for nine hours, walked 13 miles from W&M to Jamestown and back and counted 36 species and a total of 607 individuals.

The next Williamsburg CBC wasn't until Dec. 18, 1977 and reported in our bird club newsletter. Thirty birders counted 100 species on that very rainy day. It has been an annual event since. Two Williamsburg CBC high counts that are Virginia records were 114 American White Pelicans in 2021 and, first and only time in VA, a Western Meadowlark in 2020.

Virginia CBC high counts that made national records were 152,688 Ruddy Ducks in Williamsburg in 1996; 14 Ring-necked Pheasants at Cape Charles in 1981; 20,000 Red-throated Loons on Back Bay NWR in 2015; 759 American Woodcocks on Cape Charles in 2010; 774 Red-bellied Woodpeckers at Fort Belvoir in 2015; and 1,219 Carolina Wrens at Fort Belvoir in 2021.

This year's Williamsburg CBC will be held on Sunday, December 17th. Our count area is defined by a circle 15 miles in diameter and centered at Colonial Williamsburg visitor center. The circle encompasses a wide variety of habitats and birding hotspots. Participants in the field are divided into teams. If you are interested in joining a team, email our local compiler, Jim Corliss, jcorliss240@cox.net. Feeder Watchers who count the birds that come to their feeder and/or yard on that day are needed to cover neighborhoods that are in the count circle but not covered by field teams. The first feeder watcher helped the Williamsburg CBC in 1979 and now an average of 50 locals participate. Feeder watchers spotted the first Williamsburg CBC of a Ruby-throated Hummingbird in 2017, the first and only Black-chinned Hummingbird in 2019, the first Rufous Hummingbird in 2002, and the only Allen's Hummingbird in 2016. For a Feeder Watch special tally sheet and/or copy of Feeder Watch instructions that informs one, among other things, how not to double count birds, keep track of time birding, and how to use eBird to submit data email rexannebruno@gmail.com. This is a separate count from Cornell's Project FeederWatch.

For more details and photos of rare and unusual birds seen over the years at Williamsburg CBCs, watch this video of the presentation <https://youtu.be/laTvNArK6lw>

Announcements:

Christmas Bird Count: Nancy encouraged the members to not only join in our local CBC on December 17th but to also join other CBCs in the state, of which, there are many. She described her own experiences of wonderful birding in doing so.

The Flyer: Nancy reported that there will be no newsletter in December. The editor, Mary Ellen Hodges, has set a deadline of December 28th for submissions to the next issue in January. She has asked that folks consider sending in comments/pictures about their experiences in this year's CBC.

Programs: Nancy announced that the presentation at our January membership meeting will be *Exploring the Birds and Islands of New Zealand* by VSO member, Dixie Sommers. It will be presented by Zoom only.

Field Trips:

November 18: Nancy reported that our next field trip will be at Grandview Nature Preserve and lead by Michelle Gianvecchi. Meet at the preserve entrance at 8am. Anyone interested in carpooling should contact George Martin.

January 20, 2024: Rose Ryan will lead our first 2024 field trip at Dutch Gap. More info to come.

Bird Walks:

November 25: Barbara Giffin will be leading the monthly bird walk at New Quarter Park at 8 am.

December 23: There will also be a bird walk at NQP. Nancy encouraged folks to bring holiday visitors.

New Year's Day Bird and Birder Show: January 1st: Nancy reported that Shirley Devan will once again host the 18th "almost annual" event at New Quarter Park. It is a social gathering with casual birding held at 1 pm around the fire pit.

Purple Martin Project: Nancy reported that Cheryl Jacobson wanted the membership to be aware that there was going to be an unknown amount of land fill moved to the area at Chickahominy Riverfront Park where our club-sponsored purple martin gourds are mounted. The earth moving started on Nov 20th and should be done by springtime. She and her committee of purple martin landlords are monitoring the impact this will have on the site.

Election of 2024 Board Members: Shirley Devan read our club's bylaws pertaining to elections being held every November with elected officers serving 1 year. The following slate, which had been printed in the November issue of *The Flyer* was again presented to the membership. She thanked the other members of the nominating committee: Cheryl Jacobson and Jeanette Navia.

- President – Nancy Barnhart
- Vice President – Programs: Patty Maloney
- Vice President – Newsletter: Mary Ellen Hodges
- Treasurer: Ann Carpenter
- Secretary: Cathy Millar
- Member at Large: Donna Benson
- Member at Large: Deborah Humphries

There were no nominations from the floor. Rexanne Bruno moved that the slate be accepted. Lois Bridges seconded it. Shirley asked for a show of hands in the room and on the Zoom screen. The motion was accepted with no objections.

Shirley thanked Gary Carpenter for having served as Member at Large but announced that he will continue on the Board as assistant editor to *The Flyer* and as monitor of keeping the feeder stations supplied at Child Development Resources. Shirley announced that she will also be stepping down as Member at Large but will continue on the Board as VSO Liaison. The new Members at Large were welcomed. Nancy also thanked everyone on the Board for their service to the club.

The Twelve Days of Feeder Watch: Cathy Flanagan distributed the lyrics of *The Twelve Days of Feeder Watch* that she'd written as a festive offering. She asked for 12 volunteers who each took a little cute placard she'd designed that represented the birds in the song. Each volunteer held up their bird on cue as the song progressed. Much merriment ensued.

Refreshments: Cathy Flanagan, chairperson, organized a lovely spread of goodies.

Nancy Barnhart adjourned the meeting at 7:02 pm

Respectfully Submitted,
Cathy Millar, Secretary Williamsburg Bird Club
November 19, 2023