

912 N. Wayne Street
Arlington 1, Virginia
September 26, 1956

Dear Fred,

I owe you and Betty an apology for failing to express my appreciation for your hospitality on my weekend trip to Waverly back in August. I dealyed because I wanted to send you a copy of the writeup of the Northern Virginia Chapter which you indicated a desire for. This, in turn, was delayed when I had some eye trouble - the aftermath, it seems, of the trouble I had when I was down there last winter - which threw me way behind in all my activities.

Anyhow, I have now gotten around to writing up a short account of the chapter, which I hope will serve your purposes. In the long delay since I last saw you, I have partly forgotten what you said you wanted. However, it was clear that you wanted something more informative than the short, one-paragraph account I gave you last year. The enclosed is designed to be what I remember your asking for. There is probably a lot of superfluous stuff in it, but I thought it better to be too detailed than otherwise. I tried to avoid being garden-clubby, but looking back over it, I fear I may have fallen into the error of being chamber of commerce-y, and trying to put in too much of a plug for the group. Anyhow, you are welcome to do what you want with it - cut it down as ruthlessly as a member of the Three Chopt Road Garden Club pruning her prize potted geraniums (or Pelargonium, as we scientific botanists prefer to call it).

I gathered that you wanted this for the purpose of putting something in the Raven. I believe it is important that we conform to our original plan of publishing some sort of local chapter news in the Raven, lest the chapters start asking what they are getting for the \$10 they contribute to the VSO's treasury. Not that I have heard any complaints so far; I'm just thinking of the future.

Thanks again for the pleasant Sunday visit with you all. Will be looking forward to seeing you at the Executive Committee meeting.

Sincerely,

THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA CHAPTER OF THE VSO

The establishment of a chapter of the Virginia Society of Ornithology in Northern Virginia stemmed largely from the meeting of the VSO held in Arlington in 1953. This meeting indicated the existence in this area of a surprisingly large number of VSO members who had not previously been able to attend meetings held in other parts of the state. Some of these members, brought together for the first time, felt that contacts thus established should be maintained, and that the best way of accomplishing this objective was to organize a local group of some sort.

Consequently, during late 1953 and early 1954, VSO members in this area started a program of informal meetings and field trips. The group was led by Mr. and Mrs. James W. Eike, who threw open their home for meetings and led most of the field trips. The response to these activities, and the discussions resulting therefrom, confirmed members in the conclusion that establishment of an organized group was practicable and desirable. The final enactment by the VSO (at the 1954 meeting) of bylaws providing for affiliation of local chapters, *furnished* an additional incentive.

On November 26, 1954, a meeting was held at the Eike residence, at which the Northern Virginia Chapter of the VSO was officially activated (subject to later confirmation by the VSO Executive Committee). The meeting was attended by eleven persons. Mr. Eike was elected president, and R. J. Watson secretary-treasurer. Dues were set at 50¢ per person (later

raised to 75% for adults, the 50% figure being retained for junior members). Formal approval as a chapter of the VSO was received from the Executive Committee several months later.

The establishment of a chapter in this part of Virginia presented a special problem not likely to be encountered in most other regions of the state. This was the proximity of the District of Columbia Audubon Society, one of the outstanding local ornithological societies of the country, which draws members from all over the Washington area. Members of the newly formed chapter at once recognized that they could not, and should not attempt, to compete with this group, but should rather seek to complement it, by operating in a different sphere and by meeting a somewhat different group of needs and objectives. They decided, therefore, to emphasize the status of the new chapter as a small, closely knit, informal group, keeping the organization as simple as possible (with no written constitution and a minimum of officers); to hold meetings in members' homes, drawing on members to present programs of an informal nature, instead of seeking speakers from outside for formal talks; to emphasize personal contact as a means of obtaining new members; and to encourage members to cooperate with the field projects sponsored by the D. C. Audubon Society, i.e. the Christmas Bird Count and the spring count in the Washington area.

The success of the Chapter has shown the wisdom of this policy, and has confirmed the belief that a group organized on these lines could meet a real need. The thriving condition of the chapter is shown by the membership figures, which, in less than two years, have climbed from the original 11 to a

total of 59 (as of September, 1956). A large part of this success may be ascribed to the good fortune of the chapter in having among its membership a number of excellent speakers who have provided outstanding programs. In keeping with the informal nature of the chapter, the same officers have continued to serve since their election.

Meetings of the chapter are held about once a month from autumn to spring. Evening meetings, held in members' homes, usually feature a short talk by one of the members on some aspect of his experience in the field of ornithology. In addition, frequent outdoor meetings are held, generally in connection with field trips, and usually accompanied by some particular feature of interest, such as a display of banding by one of the active bird banders of the region. Activities of the parent VSO are given full publicity at meetings of the chapter, and members of the latter are urged to join the VSO. The object of these meetings is to bring together those who share an interest in bird study, and to seek to stimulate their interest as much as possible.

One of the objectives of the VSO, in adopting its program of local chapter affiliation, was to increase the knowledge of Virginia bird life through systematic field studies which, it was hoped, would be undertaken by the local chapters. In this field of activity, it must be admitted, the Northern Virginia Chapter has faced the same difficulties encountered by any similar group. These difficulties spring from the inability of most members of the group - because of lack of time, training, or inclination - to attempt the serious (and

time-consuming) studies necessary for this purpose. However, we have hopes that some such studies may be undertaken in the near future. In the meantime, the chapter is conducting field trips to nearby areas; is cooperating, as already described, with the D. C. Audubon Society in the projects undertaken by the latter; and is encouraging members to increase their field work and to contribute their results to journals such as the Atlantic Naturalist or the Raven.