



Virginia Birds

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Editors' Notes

Welcome to the inaugural edition of *Virginia Birds*. The purpose of this publication is to highlight interesting seasonal bird sightings, particularly those that help form a picture of the changing status and distribution of species throughout the Commonwealth. The eight reports that follow are the work of some of Virginia's most talented birders, who agreed to act as Regional Editors. We asked them to describe what was most significant in their region during the report period. As you will see the reports vary in approach; some present the summarized results of multiple breeding bird surveys and cover a large number of species, others focus more on unusual occurrences. We have not attempted to force standardization, but rather to let each region tell its own story. We hope you will like this approach. This publication was more than a year in planning and preparation and it will continue to be a work in progress as all of us learn and, hopefully, the publication grows. Our first struggle was with how to divide the state into reporting regions. We looked at a number of different options, sought the advice of experienced birders throughout the state, and finally settled on the current division which was supported by many, though not all, of the people that we consulted.

Many people had a hand in developing *Virginia Birds*. While it would be impossible to thank all of them, we would particularly like to mention: The VSO Board of Directors for believing in the project and giving us the green light to begin; Paul Lehman, editor of *New Jersey Birds*, and Rick Radis, a regional editor, for advice; Sheila Lego and Marleen Murgatroyde at the Cape May Bird Observatory for sending multiple copies of *New Jersey Birds* (over and over again); Manny Levine, editor of New York's journal, *The Kingbird*, and Bob Spahn, former regional editor and records committee member; Barbara Butler for putting us in touch with people, and Brenda Best for sending us back issues of *The Kingbird*; Ned Brinkley, VARCOM Chair and editor of *North American Birds* for giving us technical guidance and generously sharing his writing guidelines; Todd Day, Susan Heath, Gene Sattler, Teta Kain, and Yulee Larner for their input and advice, especially on dividing the state into regions. And of course thanks to our Regional Editors for agreeing to take this on nearly a year before we could make it a reality. Without their volunteer support we could not have proceeded. We are fortunate to have such knowledgeable birders who are willing to work hard, for no reward, on an effort likely to interfere with their birding time.

We hope you enjoy *Virginia Birds*, and will help support it by submitting your noteworthy sightings to the appropriate Regional Editors. We also welcome your comments and suggestions for improving the publication.

—Alan Schreck and Linda Fields

Cover Photo: This territorial, singing male Dickcissel was digiscoped by John Drummond on 13 Jun 2004 on the Hutchinson Tract of the Eastern Virginia Rivers NWR (Essex County) where there were four singing males. John used a Swarovski ATS 65 HD with the eyepiece set at 20X and an Olympus C-5000 (5 MP) digital camera with the optical zoom set at 3X, hand held to the telescope eyepiece. Dickcissels were also recorded in Richmond County with up to five males and two females on the Wilna Tract, and four singing males at the Laurel Farm Tract; in Fauquier, six were observed; in Loudoun, breeding was confirmed; in Campbell, two females and one male; in Orange, two; in Southampton a singing male; and in Henrico, up to three singing males.

The Bigger Picture

Todd M. Day

Middle Atlantic Coast Regional Editor, *North American Birds*

Those of us that carry pen and notebook into the field often hope that keeping track of the birds we find will in some way lead to a better understanding of them. We imagine that if the information we log makes it to the right people, it will benefit the birds. To be sure, many of us participate in coordinated events — such as Christmas Bird Counts, Breeding Bird Surveys, or Hawk Watches — and we know the birds we encounter on those outings will find their way into a respectable database. But what about our daily sightings, when we bird our favorite haunts and check those out-of-the-way spots that we discovered, or even just watch at our own bird feeders? For many years, records of rare and extralimital birds have had a home in *North American Birds*, or as it was variously known, *Bird Lore*, *Audubon Field Notes*, *American Birds* and *Field Notes*. As the “journal of record,” *North American Birds* has as its mission “to provide a complete overview of the changing panorama of North America’s birdlife, including outstanding records, range extensions and contractions, population dynamics, and changes in migrations patterns or seasonal occurrence.” In short, every season it chronicles bird distribution throughout the continent with its thirty-four regional reports. But where does that leave the bird observations that aren’t appropriate for *North American Birds*, but are still interesting at a more local level?

Virginia also has a changing panorama of birdlife. Cliff Swallow nests can be found these days under bridges on the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula. Carolina Chickadees are slowly marching north, and into higher elevations. Former Golden-winged Warbler territories are now being occupied by Blue-wingeds and hybrids. Northern Bobwhites and Cattle Egrets are seemingly disappearing before our eyes. A few Mississippi Kites are breeding in northern Virginia, while many more are doing so southside. Scissor-tailed Flycatchers have nested at least three times in the state. White Ibis seems to be inching north along our coast. Perhaps more importantly, several species are at the brink of extirpation in Virginia. Red-cockaded Woodpeckers are surviving in only one preserve, their numbers augmented by trans-located birds from the south. Loggerhead Shrike territories are discovered with less frequency than before. Years pass between reports of Bachman’s Sparrows from the southern pines. Henslow’s Sparrows are confined to only a few breeding sites, and reports of sightings during migration are scarce. While the causes may be varied, what is certain is the need to record these events.

There are many questions to be asked about the birds in

Virginia. Several species breed and are common in parts of the state and not in others, yet aren’t easily sorted by physiographic province. Chuck-will’s Widows cut a swath from the foothills to the Coastal Plain, but where the demarcation falls is unclear. Brown-headed Nuthatches can be found from the coast to a few locations in the mountains, but not everywhere in between. Baltimore Orioles are common breeders in the northern portion of the state, but how far south do they build nests? Red-headed Woodpeckers have a patchy distribution, and are quite uncommon in some places. Summer Tanagers cannot be found in many suitable habitats in the most northerly counties. The answers to these questions will come from the notes and reports of the state’s dedicated birders.

Many of us have dusty notebooks with countless entries in them, or for the more technologically savvy, we have them in databases that we haven’t moved our mouses over in many moons, except to add more sightings. We often share these entries, but largely they remain disconnected and don’t bring together a clear portrait of bird distribution in the Commonwealth.

Understanding bird distribution is vital in protecting them and their habitats. Long acknowledged as an effective aid to research projects, birdwatchers have demonstrated their capability to provide important information to those that can use it. Birders can have an impact on land use decisions and conservation issues. We can provide important data to researchers, and influence areas of study.

Virginia Birds has arrived as a tool to paint the avian landscape of our state in a way the broad brush-strokes of *North American Birds* and the range maps in various field guides cannot. The Virginia Society of Ornithology has tapped eight knowledgeable birders to compile sightings from all regions in the state, and edit these into seasonal reports. These editors will become custodians for records from within the respective regions; this journal will become the vault. Over time, blurry details of Virginia’s avifauna will become clearer. Benchmarks of populations will be established, allowing comparisons in future generations. Ranges will be more clearly understood; potential changes in those ranges will become more obvious. These pages will record expansions into the region, and possibly the last sighting of a species.

It is with this in mind that we should find the motivation to take the time and note our findings, and as importantly, to compile reports and pass them along. Whether you’re birding your local patch, or all reaches of the state, your sightings and reports will bring this journal to life, and make it more complete. With this journal, and those of other states, as well as *North American Birds*, we will all benefit from a clearer view of the bigger picture.

Next issue: An update on activities from the Virginia Avian Records Committee by Ned Brinkley and Susan Heath

Terms and Abbreviations

Species name in bold (MAJOR RARITIES bold and all caps)

Significance:

high – high count for season

low – unusually low total

early – somewhat or unusually early

late – somewhat or unusually late

dep. – last record from that season, not

unusually late, listed only if significant

arr. – first record from that season, not

unusually early, listed only if significant

County names are in italics

Other abbreviations:

ad. (ads.) – adult(s)

BBS – breeding bird survey

Cr. – Creek

imm. (imms.) – immature(s)

et al. – and others

fide – vouched by

Ft. – Fort

Hwy. – Highway

I. – Island(s), Isle(s)

Jct. – Junction

juv. (juvs.) – juvenile(s)

m.obs – many observers

v.obs – various observers

L. – Lake

MAPS – Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship Program

Mt. – Mountain, Mount

NWR – National Wildlife Refuge

p.a. – pending acceptance

ph. – photographed (by + initials)

Pt. – Point

R. – River

Res. – Reservoir

Rte. – Route

SF – State Forest

SP – State Park

TWP – Township

VARCOM – Virginia Avian Records Committee

v.r. – voice recording (by + initials)

VSO – Virginia Society of Ornithology

v.t. – video taped (by + initials)

WMA – Wildlife Management Area

+ – Birds seen through end of period

† – written details submitted

* – specimen collected

Summer Reporting Period June 2004 – July 2004

North Region

Arlington, Clarke, Culpeper, Fairfax, Fauquier, Frederick, Loudoun, Madison, Page, Prince William, Rappahannock, Shenandoah, Stafford and Warren Counties; and the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, Manassas, Manassas Park, and Winchester

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The summer season produced a species total of 158, with several interesting breeding records. Common Merganser was confirmed breeding along the Potomac River above Great Falls and, if in Virginia, would provide only the fifth such record in the state. However, since a nest was not found, breeding in Maryland cannot be ruled out. The confirmation of Sora breeding at Blandy represents one of the few documented Ridge and Valley breeding records for this species, which is not a common breeder anywhere in Virginia. Mississippi Kite was confirmed to be breeding in southern *Fairfax* (Waynewood subdivision) representing the third or fourth breeding record in the region. A nest site was also found in *Prince William* near the Bull Run and Occoquan Rivers, but was later abandoned.

Several breeding bird surveys, counts, and banding projects were performed in the region. The Dyke Marsh Breeding Bird Survey confirmed 39 species, including expected numbers of Least Bittern and slightly increased numbers of Marsh Wren, both confirmed breeding. Most of the Breeding Bird Survey routes reported approximately the typical species mix and numbers, except as noted. The multi-year breeding survey data for Carolina

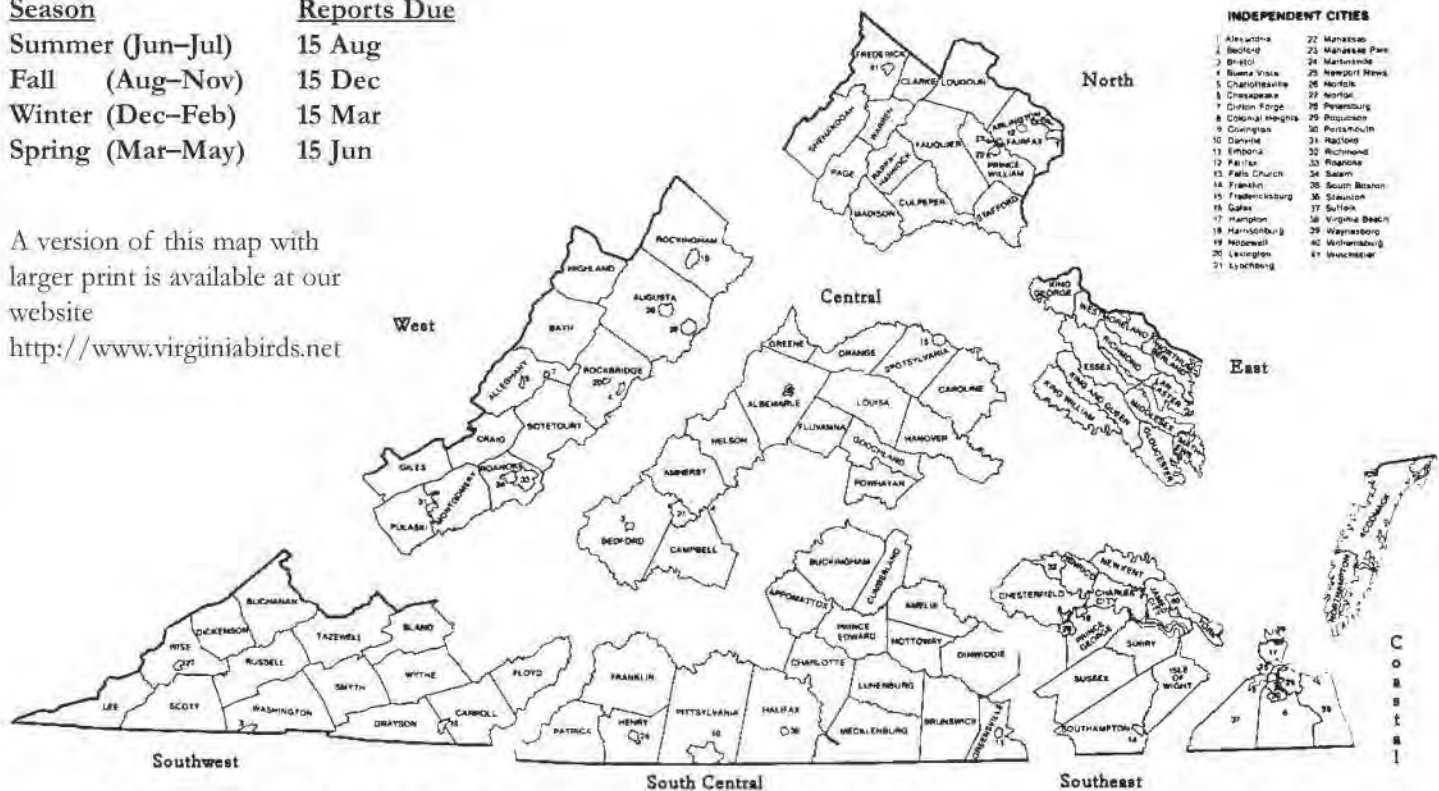
Chickadee in the northern portion of Virginia continues to show a slight downward trend (approximately 1% per year). The Mason Neck Peninsula Survey noted 83 species, one species more than in 2003, including 22 confirmed breeders demonstrating the importance of the area for Neotropical migrants. These positive findings were somewhat offset by the Mason Neck Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship Program (MAPS) station results. While similar diversity and numbers as last year were reported, these were still down by about a third from prior years (*fide* SM). On a positive note, Eastern Bluebird nest box fledglings appear to be up not only regionally, but across the state with preliminary analysis of success rates indicating a 25% increase over last year (*fide* BC). Also the US Fish and Wildlife Service Bald Eagle river survey from Leesylvania State Park, *Prince William* to Aquia Creek, *Stafford* noted no increase in breeding pairs but found an average of 162 individuals, about a 2.4 times increase over the last five years (JW).

Abbreviations: Locations Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Science, *Loudoun* (BRC); Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, *Fairfax* (Dyke); Huntley Meadows *Fairfax* (Huntley); Mason Neck NWR, *Fairfax* (Mason Neck.); North Fork Wetlands Mitigation Bank, *Prince William* (North Fork); Shenandoah NP (SNP); Sky Meadows SP, *Fauquier* (Sky M.); Virginia State Arboretum – Blandy Experimental Farm, *Clarke* (Blandy)

Breeding Bird Surveys Banshee-Reeks (BRBBS); Big Meadows (BMBBS); Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve (DMBBS); Front Royal (FRBBS); Mason Neck Peninsula Survey, *Fairfax* (MNPS, DKG compiler); Prince William Forest Park (PWBBS); Taylorstown, *Loudoun* (TBBS)

Season	Reports Due
Summer (Jun–Jul)	15 Aug
Fall (Aug–Nov)	15 Dec
Winter (Dec–Feb)	15 Mar
Spring (Mar–May)	15 Jun

A version of this map with larger print is available at our website
<http://www.virginiabirds.net>



WATERFOWL — IBISES

Six **American Black Ducks** arr. Dyke 3 Jul (DKG). Lingering waterfowl included **Ring-necked Ducks** with 4 males at Airlie Reservoir 5 Jun to 31 Jul (SH, DT, TD), and a single bird in *Fauquier* 17 Jul (TD). **Lesser Scaup** were late with reports of 3 males and 2 females at Dyke 12 Jun with lesser numbers present throughout Jun & Jul, and 3 males and 1 female at Belmont Bay during the MNPS 12 Jun (both DKG). A late male **Bufflehead** was still present at Dyke 8 Jun (DKG). A **Hooded Merganser** was at Huntley, where this species has successfully bred in recent years, 12 Jun and a single bird was still present 27 Jun (FB, DKG). A male **Common Merganser** was observed at Dyke 1 Jun (DKG, v.obs). The possibility that **Common Merganser** may be breeding on the Piedmont was indicated by observation of an ad. female with juv. on the Potomac R. above Great Falls near Violette's Lock, Maryland 30 May (DC) and an ad. female with 6 juvs. upstream of Riverbend Park, *Fairfax* VA 10 Jun (CH). This represents a "Virginia-Maryland regional record" since the nest was not found and the

Potomac is the border between the two states. There are only five records of this species breeding in Virginia and none in Maryland (TD). Four **Wild Turkeys** were in Lucketts 24 Jul (RW). There were scattered reports of **Northern Bobwhite** in the Piedmont, including observations of single birds in Arlington 11 Jun (PP), and SNP 11 Jul (DKG), both unusual locations. **Double-crested Cormorants** were present Jun-Jul at various Potomac R. locations with 37 (high) at Dyke 7 Jun. Six **Least Bitterns** were noted on the DMBBS (LC), one at Airlie, *Fauquier* (TD), and two were late at Neabsco Creek, *Prince William* 31 Jul (MR). During the MNPS 586 **Great Blue Heron** and 12 **Great Egret** were counted on 12 Jun (about 800 nests counted here Feb 2004); a **Great Blue Heron** rookery was reported in s. *Loudoun* 13 Jul (CTu). **Great Egret** arr. Ridge & Valley region at Calmes Neck, *Clarke* 2 Jul (MW); also observed 10 Jul *Clarke* (DKG, LM, RR and separately CV) and 18 Jul *Frederick* (JL). Eight **Green Herons** were at Huntley 20 Jul (MF, FB). **Black-crowned Night-Heron** observations included 2 at Dyke in Jun

(DKG, CJ) and 2 near the Vienna Metro station, *Fairfax* 24 Jun (EO). Three **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** nests were found in Herndon, *Fairfax* in Jun (AH), and a bird was observed flying over Accotink Cr. *Fairfax* 4 Jul (SE). A **Glossy Ibis** was at Huntley 16–31 Jul (FB, v.obs).

RAPTORS — RAILS

The observation of 22 **Ospreys** at MNPS 12 Jun is consistent with the steady increase in the species here in the last decade. The expansion of **Mississippi Kite** in the Region was significant this year. Nest building was noted near Bull Run R., *Prince William*. Though the nest was abandoned in mid-June the number of other **Mississippi Kite** sightings in the area strongly argues for other potential breeding locations. In *Fairfax* there were observations late Jun through Jul and 2 juvs. were noted and photographed on a nest 31 July at the Waywood Subdivision (DS, RA). **Mississippi Kites** were also reported in Alexandria City near Landmark, up to 2 birds 14 Jun (KP); at Huntley 27 Jun (DKG); at Dyke 22 Jul (LC); at Mason Neck 31 Jul (BC, JT); and at

Guinea & Braeburn Rds., sw. *Fairfax* 30 Jul (BC). An August observation of a juv. with an ad. at this location suggests possible breeding. There were 27 **Bald Eagles** during the MNPS 12 Jun and a new nest was noted on the Shenandoah R. (south fork) at Rileyville, *Page* (AH). A very late **Northern Harrier** was seen at Mason Neck 27 Jun (SB). A **Sharp-shinned Hawk** at Burke L. 10 Jul may have been a case of post-breeding dispersal (FA). There were scattered reports of this species at SNP, and in *Frederick*, *Warren*, *Shenandoah*, and *Page* (RS). **Cooper's Hawks** were reported throughout the region. Five **Red-shouldered Hawks** were found during the MNPS 12 Jun. Reports of **Broad-winged Hawk** came from SNP, Thompson W.M.A. *Fauquier*, BRC, *Shenandoah*, Jeffersonson, *Culpeper*, and Sky M. There were scattered reports of **American Kestrel** throughout the region. A **Peregrine Falcon**, observed at Dyke 18 Jul, may be related to breeding noted in the District of Columbia this season (DKG). A **Peregrine Falcon** that was hacked at Hawksbill Mt., SNP last year returned, joining 6 birds hacked this season and a bird released after rehabilitation. Their presence throughout Jun and Jul suggests the possibility that a breeding population may be re-established (AW, DKG). Three **King Rails** were at the Great Marsh of Mason Neck 12 Jun (MAK, GK) indicating the possibility of breeding. A significant **Virginia Rail** and **Sora** presence was noted mainly across the Piedmont and the Ridge and Valley areas. At Blandy, a **Sora** was seen in late May, (DKG) and again 18 Jun (DC). Breeding was confirmed with the observation and photograph of a juv. 18 Jul (JL, BJW, PW). Three birds were also noted on 25 Jul (JL, SH). This represents one of the few documented Ridge and Valley or Virginia breeding records. Of historical note, a **Sora** was observed laying eggs during banding operations at Blandy about 25 years ago (*vide* RS). Two **Soras** observed at North Fork 28 Jul (TD and SH) may have been present as early as 20 May

(DKG). Observations of **Virginia Rail** included 5 birds in early Jun on the BRBBS (JD and MAK); one at Sky M. 26 Jun (SB); one Huntley 16 Jul (FB); and one North Fork 28 Jul (TD, SH).

SANDIPIPERS — NIGHTJARS

Diligent surveys (DKG) at the Hunting Creek mudflats noted **Spotted Sandpiper** 8 Jun, probably a late northbound migrant, and the following fall arrivals: **Greater Yellowlegs** 4 Jul, with 6 present on 24 Jul; **Lesser Yellowlegs** 12 Jul, with 17 present 25 Jul; **Solitary Sandpiper** 26 Jul; **Semipalmated Sandpiper** 25 Jul; **Least Sandpiper** 12 Jul, with high of 55 on 24 Jul; and 2 **Short-billed Dowitcher** 27 Jul (with PS). **Pectoral Sandpiper** were noted at Remington, *Fauquier* 24 Jul (DKG, LM) and 4 at Hunting Cr. 26 Jul (DKG). **American Woodcock** were found at Meadowood mid-Jun (BP); 2 at Quantico, *Prince William* 28 Jun (BP); at Manassass Battlefield NP mid-Jun (JT), and on the Jun BRBBS (JD, MAK). **Laughing Gull**: arr. Dyke 7 Jun (DKG), high 50 Dyke 28 Jul (DKG). **Ring-billed Gull**: arr. *Frederick* 18 Jul (JL); high 500 Dyke 28 Jul (DKG); **Herring Gull**: arr. Dyke 21 Jun (DKG). **Great Black-backed Gull**: 6 Dyke 28 Jul (DKG). A **Caspian Tern** was late at Dyke 7 Jun and the first returning bird was noted at Dyke 1 Jul (both DKG). **Forster's**



This juvenile Sora was photographed by Jon Little at Blandy Experimental Tree Farm Clarke County Sunday, July 18, 2004. The Sora was first reported at that location 30 May by Kim Peacock and Kurt Gaskill. This is one of the few records of Sora breeding in the Ridge and Valley province of Virginia in the last 100 yrs.

Tern: arr. Dyke 28 Jun (DKG), high 12 Neabsco Cr. Jul 31 (MR). Two **Black-billed Cuckoos** were found on the FRBBS 20 Jun (MAK, GK) and there were several reports of single birds in *Shenandoah* and *Frederick*. The large numbers of **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** observed on the coastal plain, including 82 on the MNPS 12 Jun, were apparently unrelated to this year's 17-year Cicada emergence which did not affect that area. **Barn Owl** was confirmed breeding on the BRBBS with 3 juv. seen 10 Jul (JD, MAK, JC). Four **Common Nighthawks** arr. *Fauquier* 24 Jul (TD) and the species was noted as a probable breeder in downtown Culpeper 27 Jun with a bird seen and heard (TD, SH). **Whip-poor-will** was noted in the Cedar Creek area *Shenandoah*, during the period (DD, JS).

SWIFTS — VIREOS

Chimney Swift: 91 Dyke 7 Jun (DKG). Four **Belted Kingfishers**, uncommon breeders in this area, were noted on the MNPS 12 Jun. **Red-headed Woodpecker**: 5 Sky M. 12 Jun (SB), 4 *Clarke* 24 Jul (DKG, LM, RR), also reported without details from *Page* and on the BRBBS (JD, MAK). There were 101 **Red Bellied Woodpeckers** noted on the MNPS. **Eastern Wood Pewee**: high 91 MNPS 12 Jun. **Acadian Flycatcher**: high 148 MNPS 12 Jun. **Willow Flycatcher**: 4 BSTF 18 Jul (JL, BJW, PW). **Alder Flycatcher**: MNPS 12 Jun (RR). A **Least Flycatcher** was singing near Middleburg, *Loudoun* 29 Jul, possibly an early fall migrant but breeding locally cannot be ruled out. (CT). There were 15 **Eastern Phoebes** in *Frederick* 26 Jun (DKG, RR). **Great Crested Flycatcher**: high 47 MNPS 12 Jun (DKG, RR). **Eastern Kingbird**: late nest at Dyke 23 Jul and 35 seemed a good count in *Clarke* 17 Jul (DKG, LM, RR). Thirty **Horned Larks** again bred in the Remington area where an ad. carrying food was seen 13 Jun (TD); 30 were along Summerduck and Grassdale Rd., Remington, *Fauquier* 10 Jun (PS, SL), also noted w. *Frederick* 28 Jun

(DKG, RR). Small numbers of breeding **Purple Martin** were reported; arr. *Arlington* 7 Jul (VK), about 200 were over Warrenton *Fauquier* 24 Jul (TD). **Tree Swallow** and **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** had high counts on the same day in *Clarke* with 512 and 120 respectively 17 Jul (DKG, LM, RR). Two **Bank Swallows** were notable on the MNPS 12 Jun, possibly breeding in the ample habitat around the peninsula; arr. Lucketts, *Loudoun* 20 Jul (VK, PB) and 30 were there 24 Jul (RW). A large colony of **Cliff Swallows** was under Bixler Bridge, s. fork Shenandoah R., *Page* mid-Jun (WB *fide* CM); 40 in *Page* 2 Jul (DKG), nesting in an old barn (DKG) and under the Rte. 522 bridge between *Spotsylvania* and *Orange* 4 Jul (GH); and 43 in *Clarke* 17 Jul (DKG, LM, RR). **Black-capped Chickadee** reports were confined to higher elevations: 10 North Mt. *Frederick* 5 Jul (JL, BJW), 6 Devil's Mt. *Frederick* 3 Jul (DKG, MO). **Tufted Titmouse**: high 142 MNPS 12 Jun. **White-breasted Nuthatch**: high 80 MNPS 12 Jun. There was a single singing **Brown Creeper** during the BMBBS 19 Jun (MAK, GK) and another was seen and heard in Jeffersonton, *Culpeper* 1 Jul (TD), which may indicate possible regional breeders in the mountains and foothills. Eighty-three **Carolina Wrens** were found on the 12 Jun MNPS. Ten **Marsh Wrens** were counted on the DMBBS in Jun (LC). **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher**: high 113 MNPS 12 Jun. **Eastern Bluebird**: 20 BRC 24 Jul (JD). Sampling of 2004 **Eastern Bluebird** nest box data in Virginia points to a fledgling success rate increase of about 25% over last year (BC). **Veery**: 20 BMBBS 19 Jun (MAK, GK). **Wood Thrush**: high 90 MNPS 12 Jun. **Cedar Waxwing**: 17 SNP s. of Front Royal 2 Jul (DKG). A single **Loggerhead Shrike** was in central *Clarke* 24 Jul (JL, BJW). **White-eyed Vireo**: 12 BRC 24 Jul (JD), 10 BRBBS June (JD, MAK). At SNP s. of Rte. 211 near Hawksbill Mt., 14 **Blue-headed Vireos** were noted 11 Jul (DKG), and also observed at the s. end

of Fort Valley near Rt 211 & Shenandoah by the WV border (DKG, MO). **Yellow-throated Vireo**: 10 MNPS 12 Jun. Four **Warbling Vireos** observed on the DMBBS Jun–Jul appears to be the only breeding population in coastal Virginia. Corvid observations on the Jun 12 MNPS included 43 **Blue Jays**, 52 **American Crows** and 8 **Fish Crows**. Crow populations in Northern Virginia have generally declined in recent years as a result of official poisoning and West Nile Virus. Six **Common Ravens** were at SNP s. of Rte. 211 on 11 Jul. (DKG).

WARBLERS — ORIOLES

There were a reduced number of **Blue-winged Warblers** reported this year with none at the Thompson L. area and only 2 at BRC 26 Jun (TB, et al.), though it is possible the species was under-reported. **Northern Parula**, 80 MNPS 12 Jun; **Yellow Warbler**, 6 DMBBS 1 Jun (LC); **Chestnut-sided Warbler**, 6 BMBBS 19 Jun (MAK, GK); **Yellow-rumped Warbler**, pair at Byrd Visitor Center SNP the first half of Jun (RS). A late **Black-throated Green Warbler** was found on the PWBBS 9 Jun (DKG). **Yellow-throated Warbler**, 10 MNPS 12 Jun; **Pine Warbler**, 30 PWBBS 9 Jun (DKG); **Prairie Warbler**, 11 BRBBS June (JD, MAK); 10 North Mt., *Frederick* 5 Jul (JL, BJW). Eleven **Cerulean Warbler** were at SNP s. of Front Royal 2 Jul (DKG); a single was singing Marine Base Quantico's piedmont forest area 28 Jun (BP) – rare Piedmont population. **Black and White Warbler**, 5 SNP s. of Rt 211 11 Jul (DKG), post-breeding dispersal in Ridge & Valley area noted 6 Jul (DD). A single **American Redstart** was late on the DMBBS 8 Jun (LC), 26 were at SNP s. of Rt 211 11 Jul (DKG), one arr. at Fort Smith Park, *Arlington* 30 Jul (VK, BC). **Prothonotary Warbler**, high 33 MNPS 12 Jun. **Worm-eating Warbler**, 13 SNP s. of Front Royal 2 Jul (DKG), coastal populations noted at Leesylvania SP and Cockpit Rd., *Prince William*; post-breeding dispersal in

Ridge & Valley area noted 6 Jul (DD). **Louisiana Waterthrush**, 6 BRC 26 Jun (TB), late 3 BRC 24 Jul (JD). **Kentucky Warbler**: 4 BRC 26 Jun (TB). An adult male **Mourning Warbler** was singing on territory at Wakefield Park, *Fairfax* for most of May and was observed through 27 Jun (ph. MC, LM, m.obs.); a single female remained at Marine Base Quantico's piedmont area until 10 Jul (FA). Twenty **Hooded Warblers** on the PWBBS 9 Jun was a good count as were 17 at SNP s. of Front Royal 2 Jul (both DKG). A single male **Canada Warbler** was at SNP near Hawksbill Mt 11 Jul (DKG). **Yellow-breasted Chat**, 13 BRBBS Jun (JD, MAK). There were scattered reports of **Summer Tanager** from Mason Neck, Leesylvania SP, Cockpit Pt., *Prince William*. Twenty-six **Scarlet Tanagers** were noted at SNP south of Front Royal 2 Jul (DKG) and 45 were noted on the MNPS 12 Jun. There were several scattered reports of **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** with 2 at Sky M. 12 Jun (SB) representing first probable breeding record, though there have been Jun reports in nearby Thompson WMA in previous years (TD); 2 in *Shenandoah* 27 Jun (JL, BJW); at Devil's Mt. 3 Jul (DKG); and in *Frederick* 4 Jul (JL, BJW). **Blue Grosbeak**: 7 BRBBS June (JD, MAK), 3 BBS route *Page* June (WB *fide* CM), 3 *Clarke* 24 Jul (JL, BJW). A typical count of 75 **Indigo Buntings** was at SNP s. of Front Royal 2 Jul (DKG). At least 6 **Dickcissels** were observed in the Remington area near Grassdale and Summerduck Rds. *Fauquier* 10 Jun (PS, SL); 3 present there 24 Jul (DKG, LM). **Grasshopper Sparrow**: 18 TBBS 19 Jun (FA). Twenty-nine **Dark-eyed Juncos** were seen at SNP s. of Rt 211, 11 Jul (DKG), and summer records of single birds found at elevations under 1500 ft. included: BRC 4 Jun (*fide* DKG); Boyce Calmes Neck *Clarke* 30 Jun (CV), *Fairfax* 3 Jul (RG). **Bobolink**, 3 TBBS 19 Jun (FA), single observed near Bluemont – Ebenezer Rd. area, *Loudoun* 1 Jul (JC) led to breeding confirmation 4 Aug (JC), single *Frederick* 26

Jul (DKG, RR). **Eastern Meadowlark**, 26 *Clarke* 17 Jul (DKG, LM, RR). **Common Grackle**, evening flocks 530 *Shenandoah* 2 Jul (DKG) and 750 *Fauquier* 24 Jul (TD). **Brown-headed Cowbird**, 47 MNPS 12 Jun. **Orchard Oriole**, 20 Dyke 19 Jul (DKG, et al.). **Baltimore Oriole**, 14 *Clarke* 17 Jul (DKG, LM, RR).

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West Region

Alleghany, Augusta, Bath, Botetourt, Craig, Giles, Highland, Montgomery, Roanoke, Rockbridge, Rockingham and Pulaski Counties; and the cities of Staunton and Waynesboro.

This region includes the southern part of the Shenandoah Valley south to the New River Valley. The Blue Ridge Mountain range forms much of the eastern boundary and the western boundary is the West Virginia Border

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June and July in this part of the state were slightly cooler and wetter than

average. Rivers and streams were flowing full and most ponds and impoundments had recovered from precipitation shortfalls of recent years. Vegetation was generally lush.

Some of the summer's most notable birds were a Hooded Merganser in *Highland*, Northern Harriers in the Swoope area western *Augusta*, Sedge Wrens in *Augusta*, and a female Scissor-tailed Flycatcher attempting to nest in the city of Roanoke. A Ring-billed Gull provided the first summer record for *Augusta*.

Some observers made special efforts to explore the high elevation western mountains for evidence of species whose northerly breeding ranges border or barely extend into Virginia. Historically this region has had summer records of species such as Long-eared Owl, Saw-whet Owl, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Alder Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher and Pine Siskin, none of which were observed this year. However, many species unique to this alpine region were present. In addition to the specific observations listed below, Least Flycatcher and at least twenty wood-warbler species were observed including Blue-winged, Golden-winged, Magnolia, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, Cerulean, Mourning and Canada Warblers.

WATERFOWL — HERONS

A single drake **Bufflehead** was noted on Elkhorn L. *Augusta* from 30 May to 13 Jul. The single female **Hooded Merganser** seen on a farm pond near Monterey, *Highland* 20 Jun is a rare summer resident in this region. The first breeding record of the species in this part of the state was in neighboring *Bath* in Jun 2003. At least six observations of **Northern Bobwhite** were recorded in *Augusta* in Jun, indicating that this species is still hanging on in parts of the state. During the 5 Jun BBS, 13 birds were found, providing a new county high count for this species. Two ads. with six chicks were seen on 29 Jul in the agricultural areas near

Swoope, w. *Augusta*. Two **Common Loons** were present on L. Moomaw, *Bath* on 14 Jul. Summering loons are rare in this part of the state and when found are almost always single birds. Thirty-five **Great Blue Herons** furnished a new peak record for *Augusta* 29 Jul. Twenty-nine of the birds (ads. and juvs.) were present at one site along Glebe School Rd. There may be a rookery at this site, with the nests obscured by trees and vegetation. If so, this would be the first in *Augusta* and this part of the Shenandoah Valley. Two imms. and one ad. **Great Blue Heron** were observed along Straight Cr. in w. *Highland* on 9 Jul, raising the possibility of a nearby heronry. Glebe School Rd. yielded 5 **Great Egrets** 22 Jul. **Great Egrets** were seen in *Botetourt* 8–9 Jul; *Montgomery* 3 Jul; and *Rockingham* 4 Jul. The *Rockingham* sighting of 8 represented the peak count for the region. There are no nest records of this species in the mountains and valleys of Virginia.

RAPTORS — SANDPIPERS

There were repetitive sightings of a female **Northern Harrier** in the Swoope area w. *Augusta* beginning 13 Jun. On 31 Jul a male and juv. were seen along with the female indicating probable breeding in a region where this species has been seen only rarely in summer. Two **Sharp-shinned Hawks** were seen in a mixed forest habitat in the far w. region of *Highland* along Mullenax Run (elevation above 3500 ft.) 27 Jun. One bird was seen “dashing” into a spruce grove, possibly to a nest. Three ad. **Sandhill Cranes** appeared near Mt. Solon, *Augusta* around 14 Jul and stayed into Aug. This is only the third record for *Augusta* and the first extended stay. A single **Solitary Sandpiper** 19 Jul in *Augusta* was presumably an early fall migrant.

GULLS — WOODPECKERS

A single **Ring-billed Gull** 24 Jul provided the first summer record for *Augusta*. Two nesting **Barn Owl** sites were identified in *Augusta*, with at least

two young fledging at one site and at least five at the other. Seven birds were seen at the latter site 26 Jul, the high count for the period. **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**, a known breeder in the counties that border West Virginia, was reported at least three times in various parts of w. *Highland*, including an active nest cavity discovered 7 Jun at Bear Mt. Farm, SR 601, from which the young later fledged. A peak count of 18 was recorded nearby along Mullenax Run 27 Jun. One bird was observed 22 Jun at Glen Alton, *Giles* (elevation 2650 ft.). There is some evidence that this species may be on the increase.

FLYCATCHERS — SHRIKES

A single female **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** was first seen and photographed 5 Jun in the city of Roanoke. By early Jul the bird was observed on a nest that contained five eggs. Weeks later, after the normal incubation period, only two eggs remained and the nest was later abandoned. Since no male was ever seen, the eggs may have been infertile or the female may have been unable to simultaneously feed and adequately incubate the eggs. Four **Loggerhead Shrikes**, most likely a family group, were seen on the campus of Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, *Montgomery* 5 Jul. Two shrikes were repeatedly seen along Glebe School Rd., *Augusta* for most of Jul.

CHICKADEES — KINGLETS

In this region, **Black-capped Chickadees** are present mostly w. of the Shenandoah Mountains, in the counties that directly border West



Virginia, while east of this mountain ridge the species has a more restricted and insular distribution, limited to scattered peaks at or above 4000 ft. Breeding evidence was observed on two such peaks when multiple family groups were seen on Elliott Knob, *Augusta* 26 Jun and on Reddish Knob, which straddles *Augusta* and *Rockingham* 30 Jun. A high count of 31 was noted at the latter site. There were several scattered reports of a few **Red-breasted Nuthatches** in the higher elevation conifer groves at Glen Alton, *Giles*, Flagpole Knob, *Rockingham* 3 Jul, in *Highland* at Sapling Ridge 19 Jun, and Mullenax Run 27 Jun, where this species is a presumed breeder. A **Brown Creeper** was observed at a nest in Glen Alton, *Giles* 22 Jun. A single singing **Winter Wren** was heard in the higher elevation forests w. *Highland* 27 Jul near the same site where the first county breeding record for this species was confirmed in Jun 2003. Two **Sedge Wrens** were first heard 22 Jul in a wet pasture along Glebe School Rd., *Augusta*. Subsequently, a third singing male was identified. These birds remained into Aug. One wren was briefly seen carrying either nest material or food. Although breeding was not confirmed, the territorial singing and display activity suggests probable breeding. The sighting provided the first summer record in *Augusta* for this wren, which is uncommon in summer throughout Virginia. The few breeding Virginia records have been late summer to early fall, primarily from the coastal plain, with one record in this region in 2003, (R. Mays). Several **Golden-**



This female Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (left) was first seen 5 Jun in the city of Roanoke and later seen on a nest (right) that contained five eggs. The nest was later abandoned. Photographs by Kevin Bingham using a Palm Zire 71 handheld computer.

crowned Kinglets singing on territory were identified at two *Highland* locations 9 & 27 Jun suggesting continued breeding activity in these high elevation coniferous forests. At least two singing males were present on Elliott Knob 26 Jun providing only the second summer record for *Augusta*.

THRUSHES — CROSSBILLS

Several species of *Catharis* thrush are known or suspected breeders in this part of the state with **Veery** being the most common and widespread. **Hermit Thrush** is much less common and restricted to the western-most highlands. This species was seen and heard throughout Jun and Jul in Glen Alton, *Giles* (elevation 2650 ft.), where on 22 Jun five birds were identified, including one carrying food. There were also several reports of this species from *Highland* with eight singing males reported on 27 Jun near Mullenax Run. A single singing **Swainson's Thrush** was heard here on the same day. This was the only summer record of **Swainson's Thrush**, a very rare find after the spring migration. There were multiple reports of singing **Yellow-rumped Warblers** on some of the higher peaks of several counties. Five singing males with fledged young were noted on Elliott Knob 26 Jun, providing the first breeding record for *Augusta*. On 27 Jun six singing males were reported along Mullenax Run *Highland* and seven birds were reported on Flagpole Knob *Rockingham* 3 July. A single **White-throated Sparrow** was heard in the Laurel Fork region w. *Highland* 22 Jul. This species has a very rare summer presence in this part of the state, where a few may be breeding. One singing **Purple Finch** was identified and photographed in a conifer grove w. *Highland* 27 Jun. This is a probable breeder in the western highlands where a small but stable population remains. One **Red Crossbill** was seen at Kelly Flats 11 Jun. Eight (high count) were observed in nearby Glen Alton on 17 Jul, several of which were also photographed. The birds were for-

aging on white pine seeds and eating gravel from the road side. One was heard singing and one was observed carrying a small cone.

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Central Region

Albemarle, Amherst, Bedford, Campbell, Caroline, Fluvanna, Goochland, Greene, Hanover, Louisa, Nelson, Orange, Powhatan, Spotsylvania and Counties; and the cities of Charlottesville, Fredericksburg, and Lynchburg

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The Central Region saw lower than average temperatures and higher than normal precipitation for the period. These weather conditions were likely responsible for a few late lingering migrants found in June including a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher along the James River in *Amherst* and a Double-crested Cormorant near Forest, *Bedford* seen on the annual Lynchburg Breeding Bird Count. Other highlights included a Common Loon at Lake Anna, Mississippi Kite in *Campbell* in early July, Ruddy Duck in eastern *Goochland*, Red-breasted Nuthatch in Lynchburg in mid-July, and a smattering of Dickcissels in several areas of the Region. Of questionable origin (likely an escapee), but interesting nonetheless, was a California Quail frequenting a residential *Spotsylvania* neighborhood near Fredericksburg in late July.

Abbreviations: LBBC (Lynchburg Breeding Bird Count).



This immature Red Crossbill was one of several that were part of a probable family group in Glen Alton 17 Jul. Photo by Bruce Grimes

WATERFOWL — HERONS

Not surprisingly, **Canada Geese** continue to steadily increase throughout the Region as demonstrated by a record high count of 381 (with some evidence of nesting) noted on the LBBC 4–8 Jun (GS et al.) and a high count of 450 at L. Anna in mid-Jun (MB). Reports of unusual summering waterfowl came from e. *Goochland* where a male **Ruddy Duck** was observed on a pond 15 Jul (AB), and from *Louisa* where a first year **Common Loon** with a broken wing summered on L. Anna (MB). An ad. male **California Quail** shocked E. Holzhausen when he observed it walking along the sidewalk at his home in *Spotsylvania* near Fredericksburg 22 Jul. The bird was found again and photographed perched and calling atop a woodpile in an adjacent yard 23 Jul. Although certainly an escapee from one of the area hunting preserves, this bird provided a bit of entertainment for the observers and produced some nice photos (EH, MB). **Northern Bobwhite**, the only native quail in the Region, continued to decline with a total of only 13 (second lowest total on record) found by four parties during the LBBC, which also produced a single **Double-crested Cormorant** in *Campbell* 5 Jun (C&MH), and up to ten individuals of this species were noted at L. Anna, *Louisa*, *Spotsylvania*, and *Orange* during the period (MB). **Great Blue Heron** numbers in the Region continue to increase with a record high

13 tallied (including a pair nesting for the fifth consecutive year in *Amherst*) on the LBBC 4–8 Jun (GS, DR, et al.), with 30 noted at L. Anna 25 Jun (MB), and 46 active nests at a rookery in *Albemarle* (BT).

RAPTORS— GULLS

Two adult **Ospreys**, seen off and on throughout the season, at L. Anna, *Louisa*, were joined by a juv. in mid-Jul leaving one to speculate about possible breeding there (MB). An ad.

Mississippi Kite surprised the observers and provided the first summer record for the Lynchburg area 4 Jul as it flew over the Saint Peter's Episcopal Church near Altavista, *Campbell* (J&TD). This site is not far from the Staunton R. where this species was observed during the VSO annual meeting in May 2004. Two imm. **Bald Eagles** were found during the LBBC. These birds were observed on opposite sides of the James R. (*Lynchburg* and *Amherst*) in an area where this species has been known to breed recently (DS, MB). Two ad. **Bald Eagles** along the Rapidan R. on the *Madison* and *Greene* line 18–20 Jun were a good summer find for this area (RR). On the LBBC, a **Spotted Sandpiper** was a good (although not unprecedented) find in *Amherst* 5 Jun (MB) and an **American Woodcock**, flushed from a ravine at the Harris Farm along the James R., *Amherst* the same day, provided only the third sighting in the fourteen years this count has been conducted (GS, RF). Finally, 3 first-year **Ring-billed Gulls** and one second-year **Herring Gull** summered at L. Anna, *Louisa* (MB).

FLYCATCHERS — FINCHES

A **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** seen and heard both calling and singing along the James R., *Amherst* Jun 5, during the LBBC, provided the first record for this count and only the sixth record for the Lynchburg area (MB). Interestingly, fully half of these records are from *Amherst*. This bird was assumed to be a late migrant and subsequent attempts

to relocate it were unsuccessful.

Seven **Cliff Swallows** seen in Lynchburg, below Reusen's Dam on the James R., during the LBBC 8 Jun furnished the first record of this species for the count since 1997 (RB). **Cliff Swallows** continued to nest in good numbers, with as many as 35 nests observed, underneath the bridge at the James R. Visitor's Center along the Blue Ridge Parkway, *Amberst*, up river from Reusen's Dam during the period (MB et al.). A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** found in Lynchburg 15 Jul by Sattler, during a morning neighborhood walk with his dog, was totally unexpected. There are only a few previous summer records for this species in the Region and one can only assume all of these were very early fall migrants. The lone report of **Loggerhead Shrike** was of 2 adults in *Bedford* in mid-Jun in the same location where adults were seen carrying food during the VSO annual meeting in May 2004 (RB et al.). A BBS route near Gladys, *Campbell* produced one female and 2 singing male **Dickcissels** 8 Jun (GS). Blaylock could not locate these birds 13 Jun at the original location (where the field had been recently mowed) but did locate a pair of **Dickcissels** a few miles farther east. Two **Dickcissels** were also observed in *Orange* 4 Jul (G&RH). In contrast to a recent increase in the number of summering and breeding **Dickcissels**, a continued declining trend in other traditional grassland nesting species was indicated by record low numbers on the LBBC, including **Grasshopper Sparrow** and **Eastern Meadowlark**.

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East Region

Northern Neck: King George, Lancaster, Northumberland, Richmond and Westmoreland Counties

Middle Peninsula: Essex, Gloucester, King and Queen, King William, Mathews and Middlesex Counties

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Both the Middle Peninsula and the Northern Neck are largely rural. Most of the land is either farmland (soybeans, corn, wheat, cotton, hay), pine-timber woodland in various stages of regrowth, swamp forest, or old growth hardwoods. Both areas are peninsulas that border the main body of the Chesapeake Bay in their southeastern extremities. The rivers in the region are mostly tidal and edged with significant freshwater, brackish, and salt marshes as well as swamp forest. In general, the Northern Neck has less timberland and forest than the Middle Peninsula. Most of the land is privately owned but the Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge, The Nature Conservancy, and Virginia State Park and State Forest systems all own, or protect through easements, significant large parcels of conservation land and are working to conserve habitat as more land is subdivided and development creeps into the area.

During the breeding season in the Northern Neck and the Middle Peninsula, 143 species were recorded by 23 observers. This report is based on information from a fifty-stop US Geological Survey Breeding Bird Survey in southern *King and Queen*; the Truhart BBS in the Middle Peninsula (FA); ten breeding bird transects at four tracts of the Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge in the Northern Neck and the Middle Peninsula (JD, SS); the Virginia Society

of Ornithology's Northern Neck Foray, organized and compiled by Sandy Spencer and Andrew Dolby; and scattered reports from six observers who birded the region at times other than the Foray. The Northern Neck Foray was conducted from 5 June to 13 June. Fifteen birders surveyed 27 sites including the Wilna, Wright, Tayloe, Island Farm, Mothershead, Toby's Point, Peters, and Laurel Grove tracts of Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge; George Washington's Birthplace National Monument, Voorhees Nature Preserve/ Westmoreland Berry Farm, Hull Springs Farm (Longwood College), and Westmoreland State Park, *Westmoreland*; Hickory Hollow, Dameron Marsh, Bushmill Stream Preserve, Cherry Point Neck, and Hughlett Point, *Northumberland*; Caledon State Park, *King George*; Totuskey Creek, *Richmond*; Windmill Point and Belle Isle State Park, *Lancaster*; and miscellaneous private properties, several of which are managed for wildlife diversity or as hunting reserves.

Abbreviations: Dameron (Dameron Marsh); Foray (Virginia Society of Ornithology's Northern Neck Foray); Rapp. R. NWR (Rappahannock R. Valley NWR); Rapp. R. BBS (Rappahannock R. Valley NWR Breeding Bird Survey); TBBS (Truhart Breeding Bird Survey), Tayloe (Tayloe tract of Rapp. R. NWR); Wilna (Wilna tract of Rapp. R. NWR) Birds marked with a double cross (‡) were confirmed breeders this year (by observation of nest-building, incubating, feeding young, recently-fledged young, or carrying food in beak for young).

WATERFOWL — IBISES

Fortunately we still have very few **Mute Swans** breeding in the area. Only 2 pairs were found on the Foray, one pair at Westmoreland State Park, the other at Hull Springs. Other Foray waterfowl included 125 **Canada Geese**‡ in eight sites, 29 **Wood Ducks**‡ in nine sites, and 105 **Mallards**‡ in 13 sites. The

most unusual waterfowl of the summer were a female **Bufflehead**, who could not fly, at Dameron (AB) and a **Ruddy Duck**, at the Tayloe. (SS). **Wild Turkey**† and **Northern Bobwhite**† seem to be doing well. Foray observations were 38 turkeys in 10 sites and 49 Bobwhites in 15 sites, including young of both species. Turkeys were also in Laurel Grove (JD) and Wilna (SS). The TBBS tallied 21 Bobwhites in 15 stops. One **Pied-billed Grebe** was seen three times during the breeding season at Wilna (SS) but there were no signs of breeding. Other interesting Foray findings were 36 **Brown Pelicans** in 5 locations in the s.e. half of the Northern Neck, 71 **Double-crested Cormorants** in 10 locations mostly in the se., 86 **Great Blue Herons** in 16 locations, 4 **Great Egrets**, 3 **Least Bitterns** at Tayloe (SS), 6 **Snowy Egrets**, 23 **Green Herons** in 13 sites, and a **Black-crowned Night-Heron** in ne. *Northumberland*. A **Great Blue Heron**† rookery of only 4 nests containing 8 young near fledging age was found near Dragonville, *King and Queen* 18 Jun (FA). Thirty-four **Great Egrets** were seen flying from the Pocket (Pamunkey R., *King William*) to an unknown roost location in the east at dusk 19 Jul (FA). That same evening a **Little Blue Heron** and three **Tri-colored Herons** were seen flying in to roost among the yellow pond lily in the Pocket (FA). A **Glossy Ibis** was noted near Tappahannock, *Essex* in the first week of Jun (MS, BW).

VULTURES — SANDPIPERS

Both species of vultures are common here in the summer, with **Turkey Vulture** occurring more frequently. Foray observations were 150 **Turkey Vultures** in 18 sites, and only 41 **Black Vultures**† in nine sites. On the TBBS 24 **Turkey Vultures** were found in nine stops while only 2 **Black Vultures** were seen in two stops (FA). **Osprey** is the most common raptor in the region in the summer. On the Foray 210 **Ospreys**† were observed in 21 different locations, but rarely noted away

from the edges of the rivers and bay, and not seen on the more inland TBBS. **Bald Eagle**†, the second most common raptor in the region during breeding season, was reported on several Rapp. R. NWR transects, and in 19 Foray sites (83 birds). Also discovered on the Foray were 2 eagle chicks almost ready to leave the nest at Dameron (TS) and several nests in new locations (last year's storms toppled many of the historical sites). The most exciting raptor of the season was definitely the **Swallow-tailed Kite** found by M.B. behind the Gloucester Crossing shopping center near Gloucester Point se. Middle Peninsula. This is the same area where kites were seen in previous years (Joyce Williams). A **Broad-winged Hawk** was noted for the first time on the TBBS (FA), while one **Sharp-shinned Hawk** was found at Hull Springs (Foray). **Cooper's Hawks** were seen on the Foray, one in Leedstown (FA), and one at Dameron Marsh. **Red-tailed Hawk**†, seemingly the most common summer *Buteo* here, was observed on three of the Rapp. R. NWR transects (JD), and on the Foray, with 30 birds in 15 sites. **Red-shouldered Hawks**† were also common, 14 birds were seen in seven Foray sites. The only **American Kestrel** reported was at Wilna (SS). Foray observers found 4 **Clapper Rails** at Dameron (TS) and 7 **Virginia Rails**: (Mulberry, FA), Tayloe (SS), and Dameron. The only shorebirds seen during the summer months were 17 **Killdeer**† in seven Foray locations, 2 **Greater Yellowlegs** at Windmill Point during the Foray (AB), a **Lesser Yellowlegs** at the Pocket *King William* July 19 (FA), and **Willetts** at Dameron at least 12 on 5 Jun (TS), and 9 on the Foray.

TERNS — VIREOS

Gulls and terns do not occur in large numbers here in summer. The Foray tallied 5 **Ring-billed Gulls**, 12 **Great Black-backed Gulls**, 36 **Herring Gulls**, and 182 **Laughing Gulls**, 5 **Caspian Terns** at Dameron, 32 **Royal Terns** in six sites, 22 **Common Terns**

at Cherry Point Neck, one **Common Tern** at Windmill Point (AB), 51 **Forster's Terns** in three sites (46 in n.e. *Northumberland*), one **Least Tern** in Fleeton (AB), and a surprising **Black Tern** at Caledon State Park. The only **Black Skimmers** were four birds seen several times at Dameron during the Foray. Because of the rural nature of this region, **Rock Pigeon** is a hard bird to find. Only 3 were found in two locations on the Foray. While the much more common **Mourning Dove**† was seen on 70% of the Rapp. R. NWR transects and on both the Foray, 171 birds, and the TBBS route, 34 birds. T.D.'s report of a **Eurasian Collared-Dove** in Montross at the intersection of Route 3 and Lyells Road 26 Jul is only the second record of this bird in the Northern Neck. This species is being reported more frequently in the US and it will be interesting to see how it fits into the avian ecology of the area as its population increases over the years. The **Black-billed Cuckoo** found 18 Jun at the Hutchinson Tract of Rapp. R. NWR was a surprise (JD). There were more than the usual numbers of **Yellow-billed Cuckoos**† in the area this year. The TBBS average is 3.7 birds; but this year, 22 birds were found at 18 stops. The species was also noted this year in 100% of the Rapp. R. BBS transects and 77 birds were found in 24 sites on the Foray. There were no 17 year cicadas in this part of the state so that could not be the reason for their increase. D.H. observed the 3 pairs nesting in his yard at Gloucester Point eating hairy gypsy moth caterpillars and wondered if there was a correlation between the large hatch of gypsy moths and the large number of **Yellow-billed Cuckoos**. A pair of **Barn Owls**† nested at Mothershead Rapp. R. NWR (SS). On the Foray, owl observations included 3 **Eastern Screech-Owls** at Wright (SS) and in Leedstown (FA), and 3 **Barred Owls**† at Wilna (SS) and Leedstown (FA). Though **Great Horned Owl** is a common bird in this area, the only record for this summer was in Leedstown in

mid-Jul (FA). Four **Chuck-will's-widows** were found at Hull Springs (Foray), one in Singerly (FA). Two **Whip-poor-wills** were noted on the TBBS 18 Jun. Seventy-one **Chimney Swifts** were seen in 17 Foray locations but only 3 showed up in two TBBS stops. The Foray also turned up 40 **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds**‡ in 16 sites, and 21 **Belted Kingfishers** in 12 sites. **Red-bellied Woodpecker**‡, the most abundant woodpecker in summer, was recorded in 60% of the Rapp. R. NWR transects, and 87 were seen in 21 Foray locations. **Red-headed Woodpecker**‡ was the least abundant with only 13 seen in six Foray locations. Other woodpeckers noted were **Downy**‡, 34 in 16 Foray sites; **Hairy**, 22 in 13 Foray sites; **Pileated**‡, the second most common, 35 in 18 sites; and **Northern Flicker**‡, 24 in 16 Foray sites. **Acadian Flycatcher** was the most abundant flycatcher being noted in 100% of the Rapp. R. NWR transects, with 159 observed in 22 Foray locations, and 23 in 16 TBBS stops; but no nests were found. Only 5 **Willow Flycatchers** were found in two locations on the Foray: at Wilna (SS), and the Mulberry Hunting Reserve (FA). Other flycatchers noted in order of abundance were: **Eastern Wood Pewee** in 80% of Rapp. R. BBS transects, 20% of TBBS stops, 85 birds in 18 Foray sites; **Great Crested Flycatcher** ‡ in 70% of Rapp. R. BBS transects, 55 birds in 20 Foray locations, and a pair nesting in a clothesline pole in Gloucester Point (DH); **Eastern Kingbird**‡ 20% of Rapp. R. NWR transects, 41 in 12 Foray sites; and **Eastern Phoebe**‡ in 40% of Rapp. R. NWR transects, 19 birds in 10 Foray sites. **Horned Larks** (12) were noted in 7 Foray locations, but no nests were found. The Foray also found the following swallows in order of abundance: **Barn Swallow**‡ 176 in 18 sites; **Purple Martin**‡ 85 in nine sites; **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** 20 in eight sites; **Bank Swallow** 12 at Dameron; and **Tree Swallow** 8 in five sites. **Cliff Swallows** were noted flying

under the Route 17 bridge over Mount Landing Ck. near Tappahannock *Essex* on 15 Jun (TD) but there was no accessible viewpoint to check for nesting. It is not known if **Cliff Swallows** nested on the Mattaponi R. Walkerton Bridge this year. On 18 Jul, 216 post-breeding **Bank Swallows** gathered on the utility lines at Cottage Farm near Leedstown *Westmoreland* (FA). The Foray found no **Bank Swallow** nesting locations near Leedstown, but the species had nested in the cliffs upriver from George Washington's Birthplace National Monument several years before (S. Young). There certainly are many cliffs and sand quarries in the area that could be suitable nesting locations to check next year. **Tufted Titmouse**‡ counts were consistently higher than **Carolina Chickadee**‡ counts. The Foray noted 122 titmice in 19 sites and 61 chickadees in 18 sites. Titmice were found in 90% of Rapp. R. NWR transects, Chickadees in 30%. The TBBS had 24 titmice in 20 stops, but only 6 chickadees in three stops. **Brown-headed Nuthatches** were found in ne. *Northumberland*, Hughlett Point, and Belle Isle State Park all in s. Northern Neck (Foray). None were reported from the Middle Peninsula, possibly due to lack of observers. The Foray recorded 27 **White-breasted Nuthatches** in 11 locations, 81 **Blue Jays** in 19 locations, and 14 **Fish Crows** in seven locations. **American Crow**‡, 292 in 25 locations, was the fifth most abundant bird. **House Wrens**‡ are remarkably uncommon in the breeding season in this part of the state. Only 2 were found Tayloe and ne. *Northumberland* (Foray). Marshy areas along the Rappahannock R. had surprising numbers of **Marsh Wrens**, with a total of 58 seen at Tayloe, Island Farm and Mulberry (FA). **Carolina Wren**‡ was common with 16 birds in 12 TBBS stops, 134 birds in 23 Foray sites and observations in 80% of the Rapp. R. NWR transects. **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers**‡ were found in 80% of the Rapp. R. NWR transects, 112 in 18 Foray sites, and 24 in 16 TBBS stops. A

late **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** was found during the Foray at Wilna. **Eastern Bluebird**‡ numbers seemed low, with 52 birds at 13 Foray sites, and the species reported on only three TBBS stops and one Rapp. R. BBS transect. **Wood Thrush**, a common woodland bird here, was found in 90% of the Rapp. R. NWR transects, 17 birds were on 13 TBBS stops, and 109 were in 20 Foray sites. **American Robin**‡, was less common than **Wood Thrush** with 81 in 13 Foray sites. Of the mimic thrushes, **Gray Catbird** is the least common in the region during the summer. The Foray had 29 in seven sites; none were noted on the Rapp. R. NWR transects and only eight were in 6 TBBS stops (FA). Though **Northern Mockingbird**‡ is the most common *Mimidae* only 2 were in two TBBS stops, while 73 were in 16 Foray sites. The Foray also turned up 50 **Brown Thrashers**‡ in 18 sites. The Foray observers also found 34 Cedar Waxwings‡ in 12 sites. **European Starling**‡ was patchily distributed, 220 in 14 Foray sites, but none were on Rapp. R. NWR transects, and only 2 at one TBBS stop. Among the vireos, the **Red-eyed Vireo** was the most common. It was the third most abundant Foray bird with 387 in 24 locations, also found in 100% of the Rapp. R. NWR transects, and 87 birds were in 41 stops on the TBBS, making it the most abundant and widely distributed count species. No **Warbling Vireos** were found anywhere, but **Yellow-throated Vireos** and **White-eyed Vireos** were common in the right habitats; yellow-throateds in hardwood forests and white-eyeds in scrubby regrowth. There were 34 **Yellow-throated Vireos** in 16 Foray sites and 102 **White-eyed Vireos** in 19 sites. White-eyeds were in 80% of the Rapp. R. NWR transects and the TBBS noted 25 in 19 stops, while Yellow-throateds were in only 60% of the Rapp. R. NWR transects and 7 were in seven TBBS stops.

WARBLERS — FINCHES

In order of abundance, the most common resident warblers present this seasons were: **Common Yellowthroat**‡ in fields, thickets, marshes and woods, 278 in 22 Foray sites, the sixth most abundant bird, 53 in 23 TBBS sites, in 90% of Rapp. R. NWR transects; **Ovenbird**‡ in dry woods of all types 202 in 22 Foray sites, 52 in 33 TBBS stops, in 90% of Rapp. R. NWR transects; **Pine Warbler**‡ in pine woods 109 in 21 Foray locations, 38 in 25 TBBS stops, in 80% of Rapp. R. NWR transects; **Prairie Warbler**‡ especially in timber regrowth areas, 71 in 13 Foray locations, 34 in 21 TBBS stops, in 70% of Rapp. R. NWR transects; **Northern Parula** in hardwood forests especially along streams and swamps, 68 in 18 Foray locations, 3 in three TBBS stops, in 80% of the Rapp. R. NWR transects; **Hooded Warbler** in pine and hardwood forests, 58 in 16 Foray sites, 37 in 26 TBBS stops, in 60% of Rapp. R. NWR transects; **Yellow-breasted Chat** in thickets and timber regrowth areas, 54 in 14 Foray sites, 37 in 26 TBBS stops, in 70% of Rapp. R. NWR transects; and **Yellow-throated Warbler** primarily in pine forests, 29 in 11 Foray sites, on one TBBS stop and in 60% of Rapp. R. NWR transects. Less common resident warblers were **Louisiana Waterthrush** in swamps and stream forests, 19 on the Foray, none on the TBBS, in 40% of Rapp. R. NWR transects; **Prothonotary Warbler** in swamps, 17 in five Foray sites, 6 in four TBBS stops, in 20% of Rapp. R. NWR transects; **Worm-eating Warbler** in pine and hardwood forests, 15 in 6 Foray sites, one on the TBBS, in 40% of the Rapp. R. NWR transects; **Black-and-White Warbler** in pine and hardwood forests, 14 in five Foray sites, 4 in four TBBS stops, in 50% of Rapp. R. NWR transects; **Kentucky Warbler** in hardwood forests and swamps, 10 in six Foray locations, none on TBBS, in 30% of Rapp. R. NWR transects; **Yellow Warbler** especially in open willow thickets near marshes, 17 in six Foray

sites, none on TBBS, and on only one transect in the Rapp. R. NWR; and **American Redstart** only one at Hickory Hollow, possibly a late migrant. The 2 **Black-throated Green Warblers** seen at Dameron were probably late migrants. Common birds for the area and season included: **Scarlet Tanager**, 56 birds were in 15 Foray locations, 6 in five TBBS stops, in 100% of the Rapp. R. NWR transects; **Summer Tanagers**, 61 in 18 Foray locations, 11 in 10 TBBS stops, on 90% of the Rapp. R. NWR transects; **Northern Cardinal**‡ seventh most abundant Foray bird, 248 in 23 locations, in 90% of Rapp. R. NWR transects; **Indigo Bunting**, fourth most abundant Foray bird, 384 birds in 25 locations, and found in 100% of the Rapp. R. NWR transects and 50% of the TBBS stops; **Blue Grosbeak**, 142 in 19 Foray sites, 9 in seven TBBS stops, in 80% of Rapp. R. NWR transects; **Eastern Towhees**‡, 30 in 11 Foray sites, 37 in 17 TBBS stops, and in 40% of Rapp. R. NWR transects had at least one. Sparrows observed in order of abundance were: **Chipping Sparrow**‡, especially in the pine woods, 155 in 20 Foray locations, in 30% of Rapp. R. NWR transects, 39 in 22 TBBS stops; **Field Sparrow**‡, especially in weedy fields and young regrowth, 94 in 15 Foray sites, in 80% of the Rapp. R. NWR transects, 13 in seven TBBS stops; **Grasshopper Sparrow**‡, especially in grassy fields or weedy farm fields that are lying fallow, 85 in 10 Foray sites, in 60% of Rapp. R. NWR transects, none on TBBS; **Song Sparrow**, surprisingly few in this area, 25 in 6 Foray locations, 20% of Rapp. R. NWR transects, none on the TBBS. The **Seaside Sparrow** found at Dameron Marsh was the only report of this species. The breeding population of **Swamp Sparrows**, 14 singing birds in an extensive marsh along the Rappahannock R., (Mulberry Private Hunting Reserve adjacent to Wilna, *Richmond*) is at about the southern limit of this species' range and it may be the only known Virginia breeding popula-

tion. More work should be done next summer to determine the range of this bird in Virginia as range maps suggest that it nests in both Maryland and West Virginia at this latitude. Nice surprises this year were a **Bobolink** at Wilna on the Foray (SS), and **Dickcissels**‡ nesting at three different Rapp. R. NWR sites, 7 at Wilna, 4 at Laurel Grove and 3 at Hutchinson as well as 11 seen on the Foray. **Red-winged Blackbird**‡ was the most abundant bird on the Foray, 501 in 21 sites, but they were not common on the TBBS, which has little marshy habitat, and produced only 6 birds on three stops, nor on the Rapp. R. NWR surveys (40%). **Eastern Meadowlarks** were only found on one Rapp. R. NWR transect but 21 were found in 7 Foray locations. The second most common bird on the Foray was the **Common Grackle**‡, 428 in 22 sites. A **Boat-tailed Grackle** was another nice Foray surprise at Cherry Point Neck. **Brown-headed Cowbirds**‡ were seen at 15 Foray locations (74 birds), in 50% of the Rapp. R. NWR transects, and five TBBS stops (5 birds). **Orchard Orioles**‡ far outnumbered **Baltimore Orioles** as expected. The Foray had a total of 5 **Baltimore Orioles** at Wright, Voorhees, and Cherry Point Neck, but 56 **Orchard Orioles** were found in 18 locations. No **Baltimore Orioles** were found in any Rapp. R. NWR transects or the TBBS, and **Orchard Oriole** was also scarce there with one on the TBBS and observations in 20% of the Rapp. R. NWR transects. Unlike in the suburbs, **House Finch** is relatively uncommon here, with only 31 seen in 9 Foray sites and none occurring on the TBBS. There were 148 **American Goldfinches** in 19 Foray sites, 14 in 9 TBBS stops and observation in 90% of Rapp. R. NWR transects. On the Foray 37 **House Sparrows** were seen at seven sites.

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Southwest Region

Bland, Buchanan, Carroll, Dickenson, Floyd, Grayson, Lee, Russell, Scott, Smyth, Tazewell, Washington, Wise and Wythe Counties

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The southwestern part of the state experienced a rather wet breeding season with twelve days of rain in June, and ten days of rain during July, with a number of cloudy days that threatened rain. The temperatures were a bit below normal with an average temperature of 78°F in June and 80.4°F in July.

RAPTORS — CUCKOOS

A **Sharp-shinned Hawk** nest was found near Whitetop Mt. Rd., *Smyth* in mid-Jul by a group of U.S. Forest Service biologists. The nest was located on a slope at an elevation of about 4800 feet in a mature Red Spruce. One nestling was observed. While this species is fairly common in the



This Cliff Swallow nest, built on top of an old Barn Swallow nest, represents the first nesting attempt of this species in Buchanan. The nest was later abandoned. Photo by Roger Mayhorn.

Alleghenies and the Virginia Cumberlands, there are very few nesting records in the s. Blue Ridge (CH). There was an increase in the number of **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** sightings this year, even though in *Russell* and *Buchanan*, there were actually fewer tent caterpillars on which these birds feed. The absence of the caterpillars was probably due to the increased rainfall.

SWALLOWS — CROSSBILLS

The first recorded nesting attempt by **Cliff Swallows** in *Buchanan* took place in Jun (DR). The nest was found among a group of Barn Swallow nests on a barn in the Breaks community (RR). The mud, jug-like nest had been built on top of a Barn Swallow nest. At least one parent bird was observed. The parent birds later abandoned the nest for unknown reasons. There were fewer **American Crows** in *Russell* this year. The decrease may be due to the West Nile Virus, which has drastically decreased bird populations in other areas (RR). An unusual observation of a common species was the **Carolina Wren** nestlings found in a trailer hitch in a campground in Wytheville, *Wythe* on 11 Aug. Dr. C. Hardy, a Forest Service Wildlife Biologist, received a call for help from a couple who had unknowingly transported the nest from another area where they had been camping for a month. Hardy was able to help them with feeding instructions until a wildlife rehabilitator could be located. A female **Blackburnian Warbler** was observed in a yard on the bank of the Levisa R. *Buchanan* on 31 Jul (ET). The bird was part of a feeder flock that came through the observer's yard at about 7:30 am. While Blackburnians are commonly seen in the area during spring and fall migration, and are known to breed in the higher elevations of the Appalachian Mountains, they are not usually observed at lower elevations during the breeding season. This sighting at 900 feet is only the second recorded observation of this species within the county during breeding season. **Yellow-breast-**

ed Chats were absent this breeding season from the Breaks community in *Buchanan* near the Breaks Interstate Park. The semi-open farm land is usually host to several breeding pairs. The reason for the absence is not known and does not appear to be attributable to lack of food sources. A flock of 8–10 **Red Crossbills** was spotted on Whitetop Mt. 10 Jun (GE). The birds were feeding with two **Pine Siskins** on the heavy cone crop. This species is sporadically observed on Whitetop.

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South Central Region

Amelia, Appomattox, Brunswick, Buckingham, Charlotte, Cumberland, Dinwiddie, Franklin, Greensville, Halifax, Henry, Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, Nottoway, Patrick, Pittsylvania and Prince Edward Counties; and the cities of Danville, Emporia, and Martinsville

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Few bird sightings and almost no nesting reports were submitted from South Central Region observers for this inaugural report. Perhaps birders were kept indoors by the unusually rainy weather during the summer of 2004, when some central Virginia locales endured the highest rainfall totals they had ever recorded. Many of the sightings included here were taken from posts to the VA-Birds internet mailing list. An adult male Rufous Hummingbird in Pamplin, *Appomattox* on 23 July, provided the first July record of this species in the state.

WATERFOWL — TERNS

A **Ring-necked Duck** was found 26 Jun on a small pond at an industrial park in *Henry*, apparently providing a



An ad. (left) and imm. Mississippi Kite photographed by Adam D'Onofrio 31 Jul when they showed up in his yard. Digiscoped using a Swarovski ATS 65 HD spotting scope and a Canon Powershot G5 digital camera.

first summer record for the county (J.Be et al.). Although a **Pied-billed Grebe** lingered at Briery Creek Lk. *Prince Edward* until 7 Jun, there was no evidence of breeding in the region this year, unlike last year when the species bred at Dick Cross WMA, *Mecklenburg*. (CMS). Another individual was found in *Patrick* 20 Jul, providing a first summer record for that county (CK et al.). **Mississippi Kites** typically found in *Greensville* and *Brunswick*, especially around Little Texas, near the Meherrin R., and along Low Ground Rd., were seen in those areas on several occasions this summer, at least 3 birds 12 Jun (JL), and 3 on 16 Jun (B.W, M.Byrd); up to 14 on 2-3 Jul (MB, AD, MI), and as many as 16 birds on 10 Jul (TD, SH). More unusual, were five birds seen together 31 Jul along Smith Grove Rd., *Dimwiddie*, an area where the species is less expected (ph. by AD). A **Least Tern** was observed at the same small pond where the **Ring-necked Duck** was found in *Henry*, also on 26 Jun (JBe, et al.) and a **Black Tern** seen flying over a pond on the Powell farm, Wolf Trap Rd. *Halifax* 31 Jul, probably established a new earliest 'fall' date for the county (JBl).

CUCKOOS — SISKINS

Several observers commented on the apparent abundance of **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** in this region as well as adja-

cent areas. It will be interesting to see if data from quantitative breeding bird surveys support this impression. As noted above, an adult male **Rufous Hummingbird** provided this summer's most unusual record in south central Virginia. While Virginia birders now expect a few *Selasphorus* sp. hummingbirds every fall and winter, this bird was at a feeder in Pamplin, *Appomattox* on 23-24 Jul, providing the earliest date and first Jul record for the state. The bird was photographed and so could be identified as an adult male Rufous. (FH, *fide* J & TDI). Four newly hatched **Eastern Phoebes** were found on nest at a house in s. *Buckingham* 13 Jun. These birds were hatched in the same nest from which five young had fledged on 14 May. It was unclear whether the same parents were responsible for both broods. Unfortunately the nest was destroyed before the second brood



This Rufous Hummingbird was photographed by Florence Hix at a feeder in Pamplin, *Appomattox* on 23-24 Jul, providing the earliest date and first July record for the state.

could fledge (CMS). Experienced observers searched for **Bachman's Sparrows** in areas of *Brunswick* and *Greensville* where they had been seen in previous years, but searches conducted 2-3 Jul and 9-10 Jul were unsuccessful in locating the species this year. (MB, TD, et al.). A singing male **Dickcissel** was observed at SR 653 about 3 miles ne. of Little Texas 12 Jun (JL). A single **Pine Siskin** was reported 29 Jun in Stuart, *Patrick*, not a known breeding area for this species (EJ).

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Southeast Region

Chesterfield, Henrico, Isle of Wight, New Kent, Prince George, Southampton, Surrey, Sussex and York Counties; and the cities of Charles City, Colonial Heights, Hopewell, James City, Petersburg, and Richmond

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Above average rainfall occurred during the period. The region received 8.5 inches of rain during the months of June and July. Bird activity was normal for this time of year with all of the common breeders present in good numbers. No outstanding rarities were noted. Of significance, however, were the Dickcissels and Grasshopper Sparrows found singing in *Henrico*. For the second year in a row, a pair of Peregrine Falcons nested on the 17th-floor balcony of the First National Bank Building in downtown Richmond. The pair fledged four young in early June. Biologists released two of the young falcons in Shenandoah National

Park. The other two were released from the roof of the bank building. Unfortunately, one of the birds was killed when it flew into a window shortly after release. The second bird was released without mishap and was seen flying strongly through the city. Red-cockaded Woodpeckers continue to hang on in *Sussex*, thanks to the Nature Conservancy's efforts. Conservationists at the Piney Grove Preserve, a 2700-acre forest, are trying to keep the woodpecker from extirpation in Virginia. Controlled burning and the construction of artificial nest cavities are helping this very specialized species survive. As of 20 June, Virginia's population of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers totaled thirty birds including twenty-one adults and nine nestlings. Only three of these birds are breeding females.

Abbreviations: Crewes (Crewes Channel, *Henrico*); Dutch Gap (Dutch Gap Conservation Area, *Chesterfield*); Henricus (Henricus Park, *Chesterfield*).

BITTERN — SANDPIPERS

The only **Least Bittern** reported in the region was spotted flying into the marsh near the second platform at Henricus 5 Jun (R.A.S.). On 5 Jul Crewes had a **Great Blue Heron** high count of 33 and a **Great Egret** high count of 38 (AB). A single **Osprey** was seen frequently throughout the period from the James R. bridge on I-95 in Richmond City (AD).

Mississippi Kites continue to show up every year to breed near the border of *Southampton* and *Greensville*. This year, three kites were noted at the county line near the Meherrin R. on Low Ground Rd. Three birds of unknown age were seen 12 Jun (JL, BJW), while 2 ads. and one imm. were observed on 16 Jun (BW, MBy). An imm. **Cooper's Hawk** was noted at Harrison L. Fish Hatchery 11 Jul (AB). **Bald Eagles** continue to increase in population throughout Virginia with a modern record of 428 pairs and 612 chicks for 2004. Reported sightings in



This male Dickcissel, perched left and, singing, right, was one of 3 found in Henrico. Digiscoped by Adam D'Onofrio using a Swarovski ATS 65 HD spotting scope and a Canon Powershot G5 digital camera

the region included one first year bird at Crewes 5 Jul (AB), 2 ads. at Crewes 24 Jul (AB), and one ad. at the I-95 James R. bridge in Richmond City 29 Jul (AD). Single **American Kestrels** of unknown sex were seen from a car in Richmond City 7 & 30 Jul (AB). All 3 remaining **Peregrine Falcons**, 2 ads. and one fledgling, were seen flying around downtown Richmond 8 Jun (MD). At Crewes shorebird high counts were: **Killdeer** 40 on 18 Jul, one **Greater Yellowlegs** 5 Jul, **Solitary Sandpipers** 3 on 24 Jul, **Spotted Sandpiper** one 24 Jul, **Least Sandpipers** 12 on 24 Jul, **Short-billed Dowitcher** 1 on 11 Jul (AB).

TERN — VIREOS

Six **Black Terns** made a rare appearance at Dutch Gap on their south-bound migration 31 Jul (RAS). All six birds were mostly in alternate plumage although the molt into basic plumage had begun. Three **Red-cockaded Woodpeckers** at Piney Grove Preserve, *Sussex* were observed returning to their nest cavities on the evening of 17 Jun (MB, AD, DS). One **Brown-headed Nuthatch** was also observed there that day (MB, AD, DS).

A single **Willow Flycatcher** was at Pocahontas SP, *Chesterfield* 20 Jun (WE). On Turkey Island Rd., *Henrico* 10 or more **Cliff Swallows** and 5 **Bank Swallows** were present on 1 Jul (AB).

Three **Bank Swallows** were also observed at this location on 6 Jun (AB). There has been an annual presence of **Warbling Vireo** since 1997 at Henricus. Three were heard singing there 20 Jun (PB). No other breeding behavior was observed this season.

WARBLERS — FINCHES

The **Prothonotary Warbler** banding project at Dutch Gap had a successful season. As of 19 Jul, 446 new **Prothonotary Warblers** had been banded. That total was 149 more birds than were banded the entire previous season (BR). A **Louisiana Waterthrush** was seen at "The Wetlands", James R. Park System, Richmond City 20 Jun (AB). Singing **Dickcissels** were found on Turkey Island Rd., *Henrico*. There was one singing male 1 Jun, 2 birds on 6 Jun, one on 1 Jul (AB) and 3 males singing 25 Jun (AD). The birds are probable breeders although no confirmed breeding activity was witnessed. The only **Grasshopper Sparrows** reported for the region were found on Turkey Island Rd., *Henrico*. High count was 6 that included 2 males singing and 4 juvs. 5 Jul (AB).

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Coastal Region

Accomack and Northampton Counties; Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel; Pelagic area; and the cities of Chesapeake, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Poquoson, Portsmouth, Suffolk and Virginia Beach

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The Region experienced above average rainfall, 1.09 inches above normal in June, with the largest 24-hour rainfall of 1.69 inches occurring on 4 June, and a whopping 5.72 inches above normal in July when the heaviest rainfall came on 24 July with 3.55 inches recorded. Temperatures were in the normal range. In June the average temperature recorded at Norfolk was 75° F and there were three days with temperatures above 90° F. July's average temperature was 79° F and there were six days with temperature above 90° F. The peak wind for June was 24 mph, and for July 26 mph.

Birds lingering into June included a Common Loon and several species of duck, the most unusual being the two Common Eiders at the jetties in Cape Charles, where a Purple Sandpiper was also observed. The 2260 Brown Pelicans banded at South Point Marsh on Smith Island in *Accomack* eclipsed the previous high by several hundred birds. Likewise the 222 Sandwich Tern chicks banded at Wreck Island in *Northampton* were about two hundred birds more than the previous high. The number of Lesser Black-backed Gulls at Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge continues to be impressive. No other coastal Virginia location records numbers even close to those seen at Back Bay. This species can now be observed there in all seasons and in the summer these may be the most common gull on

the beach.

Abbreviations: Back Bay (Back Bay NWR, Virginia Beach); CBBT (Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel, s. of *Northampton*); Clubhouse (Clubhouse Point, *Accomack*); Craney (Craney Island landfill, Portsmouth); Chinc. (Chincoteague N.W.R., *Accomack*); ESVNWR (Eastern Shore of Virginia NWR); FINWR (Fisherman's Island NWR, *Northampton*); Parker's (Parker's Marsh, *Northampton*); Saxis (Saxis WMA, *Accomack*); SPM, (South Point Marsh, Smith I., *Accomack*).

WATERFOWL — PELICANS

Mute Swan nests were noted at Smith I., *Accomack* 15 Jun (HA); individuals were seen at Back Bay throughout the reporting period (DS). A blue phase **Snow Goose** that oversummered at Cape Charles, *Northampton*, was first noted 13 Jul (TS, EB). Thirty-five **Wood Ducks** were at Back Bay 25 Jun (DS). A **Green-winged Teal** was at ESVNWR 20 Jun (KG, KP). The only report of **Blue-winged Teal** was at Back Bay 15 Jul (DS). A single **Redhead** was at Virginia Beach 6 Jun (BK). **Lesser Scaup** was reported throughout the period at Back Bay (DS). Two **Common Eider** hens, at least one in heavy molt, were seen near the jetty at Cape Charles, *Northampton* 25–27 Jun (EB, SH, TD). Summer Scoter reports included 5 **Black Scoters** at Smith I., *Northampton* 21 Jun (MBe); **Surf Scoters** were reported 12 Jun (a single) at Virginia Beach (JP, BH); from the CBBT 20 Jun and 3 Jul (KG, KP, RR); and 6 at Cedar I., *Accomack* 22 Jun (BW). A **Bufflehead** was at Oyster, *Northampton* 3 Jun (EB). **Red-breasted Merganser** were reported at Back Bay 6 Jun (KK), and at Cedar I., *Accomack* 22 Jun (BIST). Two **Common Loons** were at Chinc. 6 Jun (GK, MAK). There were good numbers of **Pied-billed Grebes** at Back Bay 7 Jul, with 28 reported (DS). A **Sooty Shearwater** was noted from the CBBT 2 Jun, seen with 6 **Wilson's**

Storm-Petrels (MBo). **Wilson's Storm-Petrels** were also noted at Cobb I., *Northampton*, with 2 reported 21 Jun (BA, JV, BTr); and one at Machipongo Inlet, *Northampton* on 23 Jun (BW). An **American White Pelican** first noted about 20 May was seen 1 & 6 Jun (RA, KK). The Barrier I. Survey Team noted 476 **Brown Pelicans** at FINWR 20 Jun; 1716 were banded at SPM as of 6 Jul (*vide* HA); eventually a total of 2260 were banded at this northernmost colony in the U.S. (DB).

BITTERNS — PHALAROPES

Back Bay continues to host fair numbers of **Least Bitterns**, with a high count of 10 noted during Ake's routine surveys of the area (RA, KK). The species was also noted from Saxis, with two seen there 3 Jun (MBo). Seventeen **Great Egrets** were at Parker's 19 Jun (KG, BTA, DF); 300 were seen at Wreck I., *Northampton* 21 Jun (BIST). Twenty-nine **Cattle Egrets** were at Clubhouse, *Accomack* 22 Jun (BIST). Wreck I. had 235 **Black-crowned Night-Herons** present 21 Jun (BIST). **White Ibis** continue to expand into Virginia with sightings from Back Bay 1 Jun (RA); 60 at Cobb I., *Accomack* 21 Jun (BIST); 6 at Chinc. 26 Jun and 3 there 3 Jul (RH, EB, TD, DR). A dozen **Glossy Ibis** were at Back Bay 4 Jun, and were 8 there 26 Jul (DS); 10 at Parker's 19 Jun (KG, BTA, DF); 220 at Chinc. 26 Jun (RH, EB, TD); 16 at Craney 7 Jul (EE). **White-faced Ibis** was found at Chinc. for the fourth consecutive year, with sightings beginning 22 May, and observations 3 Jun (MBo), 24 Jun (JV, BA), and 26 Jun (RH, EB, TD); all sightings likely pertaining to the same individual. Several **Northern Harriers** were reported, but only one came with confirmation of breeding: a nest with eggs on Wreck I., *Northampton* in mid-Jun, located by researchers studying barrier island nesting species (AW, Deniz Aygen). Other reports were: 1 Jun at Back Bay (RA); 15 Jun at S. Parker's (HA); 2 at Parker's 19 Jun

(KG, BTa, DF); and at Metompkin I., *Accomack* 22 Jun (BIST). Saxix produced the only reports of **Black Rail** for summer: 4 there 3 Jun, and a single bird 6 Jun (MBo, GK, MAK). A good count of 31 **Clapper Rails** was at Parker's 19 Jun (KG, BTa, DF); an ad. plus 4 imm. were at Chinc. 4 Jul (DR). **King Rails** have few known breeding areas in the state, however Back Bay might be the most reliable location to find them. Six were there 1 Jun (RA); 3 on 6 Jun (KK); 8 noted 14 Jun, and 2 there 16 Jun (both RA). Twenty **Virginia Rails** were heard at Saxix 3 Jun (MBo); 15 there 6 Jun (GK, MAK). A **Common Moorhen** was at Back Bay 6 Jun (KK). Ship Shoal I. produced 34 **Black-bellied Plovers** 21 Jun (JV, BW). A **Wilson's Plover** was reported at Chinc. 3 Jun (MBo); 20 were on Metompkin I., *Accomack* 22 Jun, and the combined total from three barrier islands in *Northampton* and *Accomack* was 43 from 20–23 Jun (BIST). Two ad. and 4 imm. **Piping Plovers** were seen with one second year bird at Chinc. 3 Jun (EB, MBo); a total of 156 were seen by the Barrier I. Survey Team on seven islands between the two E. Shore counties 20–23 Jun, the high being 69 on Metompkin I., *Accomack*. **American Oystercatchers** were found on 14 barrier islands in both E. Shore counties 20–23 Jun, totaling 710 birds including 56 juv., 208 of these birds on Cedar I., *Accomack* 22 Jun (BIST); other reports were: 5 at Parker's 19 Jun (KG, BTa, DF); from the CBBT 20 Jun (KG, KP). Four locations produced reports of **Black-necked Stilts**: 2 at Back Bay 1 Jun (RA); 2 at Craney 3 Jun (EE); 5 at Chinc. causeway 3 Jun (MBo); and Assawoman I. 22 Jun (BW). There were 26 **Willetts** at Parker's 19 Jun (KG, BTa, DF), and 64 at Back Bay 15 Jul (DS). Three **Spotted Sandpipers** at Back Bay 15 Jul (DS); 2 at Oyster and one at Saxix 25 Jul (both GK, MAK). Craney hosted 3 **Whimbrel** 21 Jul (EE). **Marbled Godwits** were at Cedar I., *Accomack*, 4 there 22 Jun and one on 24 Jun (JV, BA); 8 at Chinc. 3 Jul (DR). Fifty-five **White-rumped Sandpipers**

were with 500 dowitchers at Chinc. 3 Jun (EB). An injured **Purple Sandpiper** was at the Cape Charles jetty 17 Jun (AW). A single **Wilson's Phalarope** was at Chinc. 24 Jun (JV, BA).

GULLS — SPARROWS

The lone **Laughing Gull** colony on the barrier island survey was on Wreck I., and hosted 1541 birds 21 Jun (BIST). The most common gull at Back Bay this summer was **Lesser Black-backed**, with 76 there 24 Jun (DS). Enders' frequent visits to Craney produced 4 **Gull-billed Terns** 21 Jun, as well as 37 **Caspian Terns** 3 Jun, and 16 on 21 Jun. Wreck I. had a good count of 121 **Gull-billed Terns** 21 Jun (BIST). Some 2260 **Royal Terns** were counted at FINWR 20 Jun; 2560 on Wreck I. 21 Jun (both BIST); while 529 chicks were banded at Little Fox I., *Accomack* 6 Jul (HA), and 1660 chicks were banded at Wreck I. in late Jul (DF). Also banded in late Jul at Wreck I. were 222 **Sandwich Tern** chicks (DF). A new colony of **Common Terns** was found on the concrete ships at Kiptopeke SP, with 25 noted there 20 Jun (KG, KP). **Least Terns** totaled 247 at Metompkin I. 22 Jun (BIST). Wreck I. was good for 591 **Black Skimmers** 21 Jun, and Cedar I. hosted 585 on 22 Jun (both BIST); 60 were at Chinc. 3 Jul (RR). The usual location of Cedar Grove, *Northampton* was home to 2 **Eurasian Collared-Doves** 3 Jun (MBo). Four **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** were noted on a BBS route in *Northampton* 3 Jun (EB). Two **Red-headed Woodpeckers** were at Chinc. 6 Jun (GK, MAK); one at FINWR 20 Jun (BA, MBe, JV, BW). Two **Brown-headed Nuthatches** were found at Parker's 19 Jun (KG, BTa, DF). Several dozen **Marsh Wrens** were at Saxix 3 Jun (MBo). A **Warbling Vireo** was singing from cottonwood trees at Pungo, Virginia Beach 1 Jun (RA). A **Kentucky Warbler** was found on a *Northampton* BBS route 3 Jun (EB); the same route yielded 6 **Summer Tanagers** and 14 **Grasshopper**

Sparrows. A "handful" of **Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows** were at Saxix along with several dozen **Seaside Sparrows** 3 Jun (MBo). Other **Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows** were: one at Parker's 19 Jun (KG, BTa, DF), and Saxix (with "many" Seasides) 25 Jul (GK, MAK). Eight **Seaside Sparrows** were also at Smith I., *Accomack* 15 Jun (HA); and an impressive 164 at Parker's 19 Jun (KG, BTa, DF).

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Send all bird sighting records to the appropriate regional editor.

Photographs should be the highest quality electronic copies whenever possible. Send photographs to the appropriate regional editor along with information regarding the bird and the equipment used to take the picture. Please send all photographs separately; do not embed photographs in text or email (attachments are fine). We request photographs be accompanied with a release form which can be found on the VSO Web Site (virginiabirds.net) under VSO Resources.

Articles for consideration may be sent to the editors.