



Virginia Birds

*A quarterly journal of ornithological sightings in the Commonwealth
published by the Virginia Society of Ornithology*



**Volume 1, Number 3
Winter Records Dec 2004 – Feb 2005**

**Listserve in Virginia
Winter 2004 – 2005 Regional Reports
CBC Highlights**

**Page 3
Page 4
Page 21**



Published by the Virginia Society of Ornithology

Editors

Alan Schreck
Linda Fields

Editorial Consultants

Ned Brinkley
Todd Day

Regional Editors

Bob Ake
Frederick D. Atwood
Michael Boatwright
Adam D'Onofrio
D. Kurt Gaskill
Lynda Mayhorn
Roger Mayhorn
John Spahr
C. Michael Stinson

Virginia Birds, Winter Records Dec 2004 – Feb 2005, Volume 1, Number 3
Published quarterly

General Address: Thelma Dalmas, 1230 Viewmont Dr.
Evington, VA 24550-2006

Editorial Address: VSO Editors, 1573 21st Ct N,
Arlington, VA 22209.
vsoeditors@comcast.net.

VSO Website:
www.virginiabirds.net

The views and opinions expressed in this journal are those of each contributor and do not represent the views and opinions of the VSO.

Birds reported in this journal have not necessarily been reviewed or accepted by the Virginia Avian Records Committee (VARCOM). Inclusion in the regional reports does not imply VARCOM acceptance.

No parts of this publication may be reproduced by any means without the written consent of the Virginia Society of Ornithology.

Editors' Notes

The winter reporting period was uneventful in some regions of the state, but quite lively in others. The highlights of Virginia's 2004 Christmas Bird Counts, provided by state coordinator—Teta Kain, can be found on page 22, and information from local counts is also included in most of the Region Reports. Many CBCs produced a new high count, added a new species, or had an unusual record. Don't miss the Southwest Region account of a pair of barn owls with three young, found 2 January during the Glade Springs CBC, which established a new early nesting record for the state.

A potential first state record of a Northern Lapwing, observed briefly from Dameron Marsh Rd. in the East Region, is being reviewed by VARCOM. Also reported from that region were a LeConte's Sparrow at Wilna and a Pacific Loon at Dameron. Two Long-tailed Ducks and a Ruddy Duck were unusual finds in the Southwest Region, as was the brief appearance of a Brown-headed Nuthatch, only the second observation of the species that far west. A Mew Gull, observed during a Coastal Region CBC, could provide the third record for Virginia if accepted. That Region also had a possible Calliope Hummingbird, which could furnish the second state record. An adult male Painted Bunting visiting a feeder there was observed by many, photographed, and banded. Observers in the Central Region enjoyed an unprecedented Summer Tanager visiting a Charlottesville feeder for nine days in January, and a Glaucous and Lesser Black-backed Gull both at Lake Anna, though not at the same time. Other interesting finds during the period included: a Greater White-fronted Goose in the East Region; two Barnacle Geese (origin unknown) in the South Central Region; Common Ravens away from the mountains well inside the Piedmont, including two observed about a mile from Belmont Bay on the Fort Belvoir CBC; Rufous Hummingbirds reported in the East, West and Central Regions; and Cackling Geese noted in the North, West, East, and Southeast Regions.

Some of our readers may be familiar with the various birding listserves in Virginia, but for those who are not, we offer a list of them on page 3. Listserves provide a way to share bird sightings and to communicate information of interest to birders. Whether you want statewide or local information there is probably a listserv for you.

In our last issue we mentioned that funds raised by the VSO Roving Ravens in the World Series of Birding would be used to help underwrite the cost of *Virginia Birds*. We are happy to report that the team, yours truly and Regional Editors - Bob Ake and Kurt Gaskill, shattered our previous performance with a total of 194 species in 24 hours. Even better, thanks to our generous readers, we collected almost \$4000 in donations. We want to take this opportunity to thank all of you who contributed, as well as thank our sponsor, Leupold and Stevens Optics, for paying the entry fee and team expenses so that all donations could be used for *Virginia Birds*.

Good birding,

Linda Fields and Alan Schreck

Cover Photo: This female Western Tanager was digiscoped by Adam D'Onofrio using a Swarovski ATS 65 HD spotting scope and a Canon Powershot G5 digital camera.. The bird was visiting a feeder in Virginia Beach.

Terms and Abbreviations

Species name in bold first time mentioned (**RARITIES** bold and all caps)
County names are in italics

Abbreviations:

ad. (ads.) – adult(s)
arr. – first record from that season, not unusually early, listed only if significant
BBS – breeding bird survey
CBC – Christmas Bird Count
Cr. – Creek
dep. – last record from that season, not unusually late, listed only if significant
early – somewhat or unusually early
et al. – and others
fide – vouched by
Ft. – Fort
high – high count for season
Hwy. – Highway
I. – Island(s), Isle(s)
imm. (imms.) – immature(s)
Jct. – Junction
juv. (juvs.) – juvenile(s)
m.ob. – many/multiple observers
L. – Lake
late – somewhat or unusually late
low – unusually low total
MAPS – Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship
Mt. – Mountain, Mount
NWR – National Wildlife Refuge
p.a. – pending VARCOM acceptance
ph. – photographed (by + initials)
Pt. – Point
R. – River
Res. – Reservoir
Rte. – Route
SF – State Forest
SP – State Park
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
🦅 – Review List Bird
† – written details submitted
* – specimen collected

Listserve in Virginia

Virginia Statewide – VA-bird

To subscribe: Send an email to va-bird-request@freelists.org with 'Subscribe' in the subject field

Archives:

[http://www.freelists.org/archives/va-bird/Questions/more info contact Paul Mocko](http://www.freelists.org/archives/va-bird/Questions/more%20info%20contact%20Paul%20Mocko) at paulbirds19@hotmail.com

Bristol Birds

SW Virginia and NE Tennessee (covers Virginia counties of Washington, Buchanan, Dickenson, Smyth, Wythe, Wise, Grayson, Scott, Russell, Tazewell and Lee, in addition to an adjacent 10-county area in Tennessee). To subscribe contact Moderator (Wallace Coffey) at wallace@bristolbirdclub.org

Archives: <http://www.freelists.org/archives/bristol-birds/>

Shenandoah Valley Birds (ShenValBirds)

Covers all of Virginia west of the Blue Ridge from Roanoke to the northern VA border and part of the panhandle of WV. To subscribe contact Moderators John Spahr jspahr@augustamed.com) or Clair Mellinger (mellinac@emu.edu)

Archives: Accessible to the listserv's members through the Yahoo Groups website for ShenValBirds.

VA-Richmond-General

Covers Richmond area. Moderator Robin Ruth (audubon@richmondaudubon.org)
To subscribe send an email to va-richmond-general-request@freelists.org with 'subscribe' in the Subject field

Archives:

<http://www.freelists.org/archives/va-richmond-general/>

New River Valley Birds

Covers the New River Valley area of VA, NC and WV. Moderator: Seth Williamson (Orthodox@ntelos.net)
To subscribe: Go to the Google Groups web site for New River Valley Birds (<http://groups-beta.google.com/group/NRVBirds/>) and follow the directions.

Archives: Accessible to the public through the Google Groups website for New River Valley Birds by going to the link "About this group" (<http://groups-beta.google.com/group/NRVBirds/>)

beta.google.com/group/NRVBirds/about).

FHP Birds

Covers Franklin, Henry and Patrick Counties of VA with additional info on adjacent areas of VA & NC. To subscribe send an email to the Moderator Clyde Kessler (ckessler@vt.edu)

Archives: Accessible to the listserv's members through the Yahoo Groups website for FHP Birds.

Blue Ridge Birders

Covers NW NC and SW VA. To subscribe go to the web site for Blue Ridge Birders (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/blueridgebirders/>) and follow the directions. Moderator/Contact: Glen Eller (geller@ls.net).

Archives: Accessible to listserv members through the Yahoo Groups website for Blue Ridge Birders (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/blueridgebirders/>)

Roanoke Birds

Covers Roanoke, Virginia area in SW Virginia. To subscribe go to the Google Groups web site for Roanoke Birds (<http://groups-beta.google.com/group/roanokebirds/>) and follow the directions. Moderator/Contact: Seth Williamson (Orthodox@ntelos.net).

Archives: Accessible to the public through the Google Groups website for Roanoke Birds by going to the link "About this group" (<http://groups-beta.google.com/group/roanokebirds/about>).

Virginia County Birding List

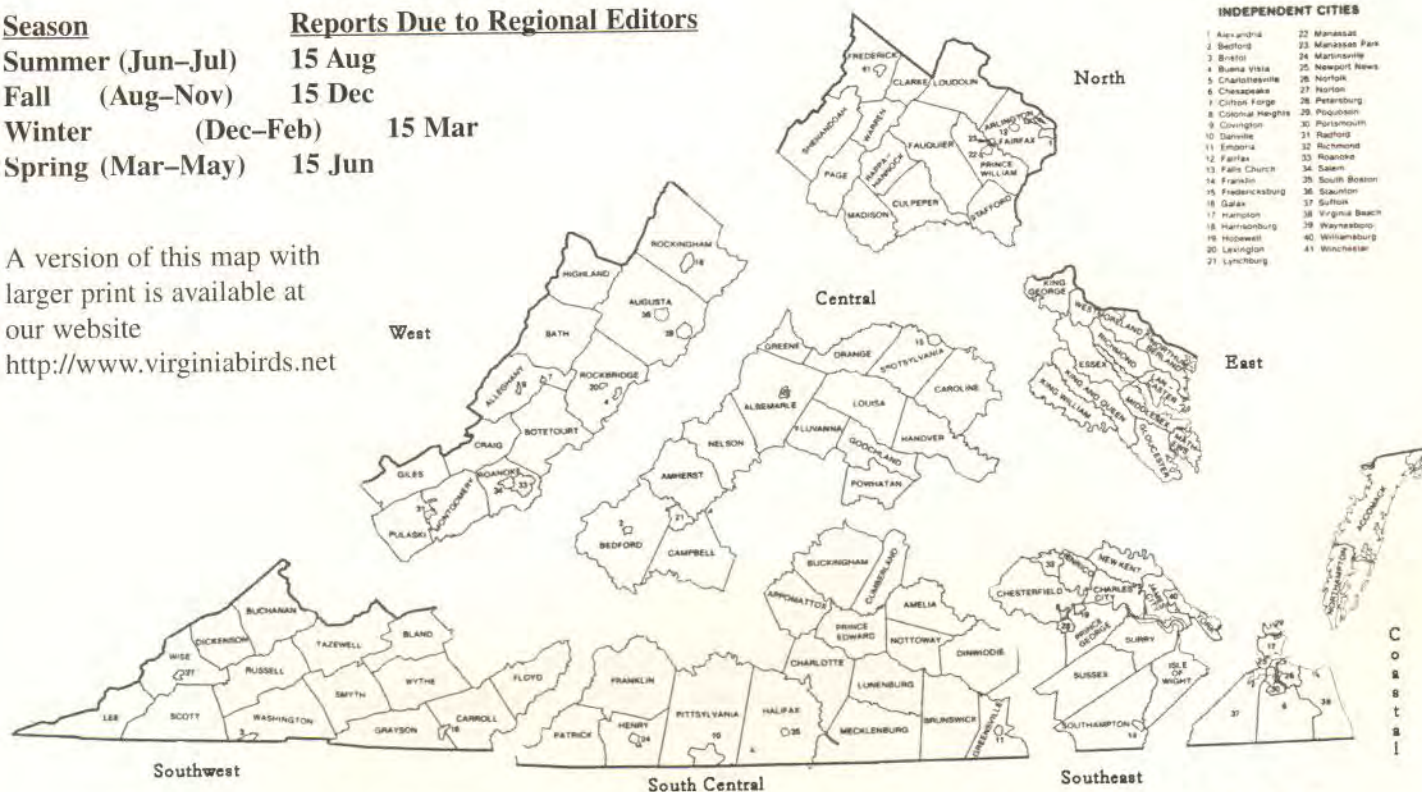
Birding/Bird distribution in VA counties & independent cities including exact locations of boundaries between cities and counties (for assigning bird sightings to the correct jurisdiction), technology (GPS, advances in cartography, bird database software). To subscribe go to http://www.freelists.org/list/va_co_birding and follow the directions. Moderator/Contact: C. Michael Stinson (cms@hovac.com).

Archives:

http://www.freelists.org/archives/va_co_birding/

Season	Reports Due to Regional Editors
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>



Winter Reporting Period Dec 2004 – Feb 2005

North

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.

EDITOR — D. Kurt Gaskill,
4101 Komes Court, Alexandria, VA 22306
KurtCapt87@verizon.net

The winter reporting period started off with mild weather, but typical freezing conditions set in near the end of January causing portions of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers, all of the Belmont/Occoquan Bays, and large portions of Gunston Cove to freeze. Warm streams in Pohick Bay, Hunting Creek near Dyke, and local sections of the Shenandoah River kept open water available for many dabbling ducks. The freeze concentrated some divers and brought many from the north to the reporting region.

Among the highlights for the period were Black Scoter, Long-tailed Duck, Red-throated Loon, Red-necked Grebes, American Bittern, Northern Goshawk, Rough-legged Hawks, Golden Eagle, an excellent Short-eared Owl showing at Rectortown, King Rails present throughout the period, Thayer's Gulls, Rufous Hummingbird, Loggerhead Shrikes, Cave Swallow, Orange-crowned Warbler, Lapland Longspurs, Dickcissel, and Common Redpoll. A total of 154 species were reported.

Abbreviations: Accotink (Accotink Wildlife Refuge, *Fairfax*); Battlefield (Manassas Battlefield NP, *Prince William*); Beaverdam (Beaverdam Reservoir, *Loudoun*); Blandly (Virginia State Arboreteum – Blandly Experimental Farm, *Clarke*); BRCES (Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Science, *Loudoun*); Dyke (Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, *Fairfax*); Huntley (Huntley Meadows, *Fairfax*); OBNWR (Occoquan Bay NWR, *Prince William*); UOSA (Upper Occoquan Sewage Authority); Pohick

(Pohick Bay Northern Virginia Regional Park, *Fairfax*); Riverbend (Riverbend County Park, *Fairfax*); Sky Meadows (Sky Meadows SP, *Fauquier*).

Christmas Bird Count data is collected over a period of three weeks and is used to assess the relative abundance and long term trends of species during that period. Although an in-depth analysis of CBC data is beyond the scope of this report, the data can be used to identify species that are relatively rare during the count period as well as to recognize some regional trends. The Region has 10 CBC circles, three of which are shared with Maryland; in the latter case, two circles have less than 50% and one circle about 85% of its area in Virginia. The circles are Brooke (14 Dec, DS), District of Columbia (18 Dec, LC), Northern Shenandoah Valley (18 Dec, AS, RS), Seneca (19 Dec, SP), Shenandoah NP – Luray (19 Dec, MM), The Plains (19 Dec, TD, SH), Central Loudoun (26 Dec, JC), Manassas-Bull Run (26 Dec, BA),

Calmes Neck (2 Jan, MW), and Ft. Belvoir (2 Jan, DKG).

CBC SUMMARY

A total of 139 CBC species were reported with two additional count week species; **Ruffed Grouse** Shenandoah NP-Luray and **Eurasian Wigeon** The Plains. Over 70% of the rare species reported (found in only one or two counts) were found in circles near a major river such as the Potomac or the Shenandoah. The species found in only one circle were: **Greater White-fronted Goose** ♀ The Plains; **Richardson's Canada Goose** Calmes Neck; **American Bittern** Ft. Belvoir; **Great Egret** DC; **Blue-winged Teal** and **Northern Goshawk** Northern Shenandoah Valley; **Rough-legged Hawk** Ft. Belvoir; **Golden Eagle** Northern Shenandoah Valley; **Peregrine Falcon** DC; **Virginia Rail** Ft. Belvoir; **Greater Yellowlegs** Ft. Belvoir; **Lesser Yellowlegs** Ft. Belvoir; **Forster's Tern** Brooke; **Long-eared Owl** Central Loudoun; **Short-eared Owl** Shenandoah NP – Luray; **Rufous Hummingbird** Ft. Belvoir; this species may be more widespread than is reported and more feeders and reporting are encouraged; **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** DC, at least 3 tallied; **Pine Warbler** The Plains; **Common Yellowthroat** Ft. Belvoir; **Lapland Longspur** Shenandoah NP – Luray; and **Dickcissel** DC. Species found in two circles were: **Cackling Goose** ♀ Northern Shenandoah Valley and Shenandoah NP – Luray, no details on the latter; **Canvasback** Brooke and Ft. Belvoir; **Greater Scaup** Ft. Belvoir and Northern Shenandoah Valley; **Northern Bobwhite** Central Loudoun and Ft. Belvoir; **Horned Grebe** Brooke and DC; **King Rail** Brooke and Ft. Belvoir; **American Woodcock** Ft. Belvoir and Seneca; **Lesser Black-backed Gull** DC and The Plains; **Thayer's Gull** Ft. Belvoir and The Plains; **Northern Saw-whet Owl** Central Loudoun and Shenandoah NP – Luray; **Loggerhead Shrike**

Northern Shenandoah and Calmes Neck; **House Wren** Brooke and Ft. Belvoir; **Brown Thrasher** Central Loudoun and Ft. Belvoir; **Orange-crowned Warbler** Northern Shenandoah Valley and Seneca; **Palm Warbler** Ft. Belvoir and Manassas; **Brewer's Blackbird** Northern Shenandoah Valley and Shenandoah NP – Luray; and **Pine Siskin** Ft. Belvoir and Northern Shenandoah Valley. There were other interesting observations and trends in the CBC data for this season. **Snow Goose** reports were all in the Piedmont. **Wood Duck**, **Gadwall**, **American Wigeon** and **Green-winged Teal** were found in six of ten counts. **American Black Duck**, **Mallard** and **Hooded Merganser** were found in all circles. **Wild Turkey** was found in seven circles indicating that it is becoming widespread. Unusual reports of **Black-crowned Night-Heron** were in Manassas and Shenandoah NP – Luray. **Wilson's Snipe** was found in seven circles. **Ring-billed Gull** was found in all circles and **Herring Gull** in nine. **Eastern Phoebe** and **Common Raven** were found in seven circles encompassing the whole region and remarkably including 2 ravens about a mile from Belmont Bay next to the Potomac, a first for the Ft. Belvoir count. **Horned Lark** was found only in the Piedmont or Valley Areas in five circles. **Red-breasted Nuthatch** data from five circles throughout the region suggests this irruptive species was not evenly distributed and was regionally present in only limited numbers. Interestingly, **Winter Wren** was found in all circles. **Gray Catbird** was found in five circles, four of which were along the Potomac. **Chipping Sparrow** was found in four circles none of which were in the Valley Area. Of the sparrows, only **American Tree**, **Song** and **White-throated Sparrows** and **Dark-eyed Junco** were found in all circles. All **Rusty Blackbirds** were found near rivers. **Purple Finch** was found in

seven circles, nearly all of which were in the Piedmont or Valley.

WATERFOWL – COOT

A **Greater White-fronted Goose** ♀, present since October, was observed at the Warrenton Reservoir, *Fauquier* 9 Jan (JK, LM) and last observed in *Fauquier* 19 Feb (TD). **Snow Goose** was reported in several Piedmont locations with seven separate records of 1-4 individuals after the CBC season; the last report was 17 Feb at Airlie, *Fauquier* (BS). A **Eurasian Wigeon** ♀ was seen on and off at Airlie 21 Dec-21 Feb (TD). The **Blue-winged Teal** recorded in *Frederick* on the CBC continued there until 23 Feb (BJL, JL); the first migratory report was 5 Feb at OBNWR (JK, DKG, RR, MR, LM). **Redhead**, not reported in any CBC, was observed 19 Jan at Airlie (TD) continuing there with at least nine more reports through the period. Only 3 **Greater Scaup** reports were noted after the CBC period, all along the Potomac or Belmont Bay, *Fairfax/Prince William*. Four **Black Scoters** were observed in Gunston Bay, *Fairfax* during the Northern Virginia Audubon Society's Waterfowl Count 4 Dec (DKG, LM). A **Long-tailed Duck** was reported at L. Braddock, *Fairfax* 21 Dec (SE). There were ten reports of one to several **Common Goldeneyes** after the CBCs to the end of the period. A **Northern Bobwhite** found on Montessor Rd, *Loudoun* 6 Feb (JC) was an unusual report for that area and date. A **Red-throated Loon** was noted at Beaverdam 20 Jan (JD). **Red-necked Grebes** were reported in Little Hunting Creek, *Fairfax* 21 Jan (SW) and Germantown Reservoir, *Fauquier* Feb 16 (TD, MD). Although **Double-crested Cormorant** was present all season in the Potomac, the report from Sleeter Lake (Piedmont), *Loudoun* on 2 Jan was unusual for location and date (GJ). **American Bittern** was reported from Neabsco Creek, *Prince William*

1 & 4 Dec (*vide* LK). A late **Great Egret** was at the UOSA, Centreville, *Fairfax* 12 Jan (SH). The last **Osprey** of fall migration was reported at Accotink 12 Dec (BM) and the first arrival was at Belmont Bay 20 Feb (JK). Migration of 70 **Red-tailed Hawks** on 13 Feb in *Frederick* was double the previous high for the route (BJL, JL). About 6 individual **Rough-legged Hawks**, two in *Frederick*, three in *Loudoun*, and one in *Fairfax*, could be discerned from at least 10 reports, the last 21 Feb at Dulles Airport, *Loudoun* (RJ). Six **Merlins** were recorded during the period with the last noted near Cameron Station, City of Alexandria 12 Dec-26 Jan (RY, m.ob.). Three **Peregrine Falcons** were recorded during the period with the last at Huntley 13 Feb (ARo, m.ob.). Up to 3 **King Rails** were present throughout the period at OBNWR (*vide* DKG). **American Coot** was in short supply during the season with the highest count of 100 noted at the mouth of Aquia Cr., *Stafford* 27 Feb (DKG).

SANDPIPERS – FINCHES

Three Lesser Yellowlegs were reported at Huntley 5 Dec (AR) and again 1 Jan (*vide* FB and CF). The last **Least** and **Pectoral Sandpipers** were at Huntley 7 Dec (*vide* FB) and Dec 5 (AR), respectively. A late winter Valley record of **Ring-billed Gull** in *Frederick* was noted Jan 1 (BJL, JL) and the first obvious migrants in the Piedmont were noted at BRCES, *Loudoun* Feb 26 (JC). An adult **California Gull** was photographed at the *Fauquier* landfill 26 Feb (TD, EH, BF, SH). A first winter **Iceland Gull** was at *Prince William* landfill 5 Feb (DKG, JK, RR, MR, LM) and this location hosted a first winter **Glaucous Gull** 29 Jan (DKG). **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was reported throughout the period with eight records and a high count of up to 8 noted at the *Fauquier* landfill 26 Feb (TD, EH, BF, SH). Before the single CBC record, the last **Forster's**

Tern was at Pohick 4 Dec (DKG). **Short-eared Owl** reports increased after the CBC season with the hot spots being outside of Winchester, *Frederick* up to 6 on 6 Jan (BJL, JL) and Rectortown, *Fauquier* up to 30 on 25 Feb (TD). The *Fairfax* **Rufous Hummingbird** was last seen 22 Jan (JF). The last **Eastern Phoebe** report was at UOSA 20 Jan which marked the onset of the coldest weather of the reporting period (DKG, SS). Two **Loggerhead Shrikes** were noted in the region, one at Blandy reported from 2 Jan on the the Calmes Neck CBC until 29 Jan (SH) and the other at Montessor Rd 15 Jan-6 Feb (MAK, GK, m.ob.). **Common Ravens** stretched their wings with unusual reports from Great Falls, *Fairfax* 1 Jan (*vide* RW), 4 near Broad Run, *Prince William* 3 Feb (SH), 2 at Montessor Rd and one at Battlefield 6 Feb (MAK, GK). The first **Tree Swallow** was noted at Riverbend 27 Feb (DT). The fantastic regional push of **Cave Swallows** ended with a 3 Dec sighting along the Potomac River, *Loudoun*, near the *Fairfax* line (DC). The latest **House Wren**, other than the CBC reports, was at Dyke 12 Dec (JK). The last **Gray Catbird** report was at Dyke 9 Jan (DKG). An **Orange-crowned Warbler** at Riverside Park, *Loudoun*, probably the one found on the Seneca CBC (AR), was noted 20 & 21 Jan (JD, DKG). Before the single CBC records, the last **Pine Warbler** was at Dyke 12 Dec (JK, LC) and **Common Yellowthroat** was at Reston 7 Dec (CT). **American Tree Sparrow** was reported throughout the season with the last noted at Huntley 28 Feb (JP, m.ob.). The latest Piedmont **Chipping Sparrow** was at Sky Meadows 9 Jan (JK, LM). **Lapland Longspur** was reported at Nokesville, *Prince William* 13 Jan (MI), *Page* 26 Jan (MS, DCr) and near Remington, *Fauquier* 25 Feb (SH). The last **Rusty Blackbird** was reported from Huntley 22 Jan (BJ). **Brewer's Blackbird** was infrequently

reported from the traditional Nokesville dairy farm site: 17 Jan (SH) and 18 Feb (AD). **Purple Finch** and **Pine Siskins** became very sparse, with no field reports after the CBC season. A single feeder station reported Purple Finch as "regular" through February and Pine Siskins "probably ten times or so ... in Jan or Feb" (TD). A **Common Redpoll** was noted in the Falls Church area of *Fairfax* 25 Jan (CFa *vide* SS).

Bob Abrams, Fred Bogar, Larry Cartwright, Joe Coleman, Dan Cristol (DCr), Dave Czaplak, Mike Day, Todd Day, Adam D'Onofrio, John Drummond, Stephen Eccles, C.Faanes (CFa), Jeff Field, Bart Frazier, Charlotte Friend, D.Kurt Gaskill (DKG), Sue Heath, Eric Hynes, Mike Iwanik, Ben Jessup, Roger Jones, Greg Justice, Jay Keller, Larry Klein, Mary Alice Koeneke (MAK), Glenn Koppel, BJ Little (BJL), Jon Little, Bill McGovern, Larry Meade, Mara Meisel, John Perry, Steve Pretl, Andy Rabin, Marc Ribaud, Rich Rieger, A.Robbins (ARo), Ann Simpson, Rob Simpson, Bill Sladen, M.Smith, David Stewart, Sherman Suter, Dorothy Tella, Craig Tufts, Ralph Wall, Margaret Wester, Steve Williams, and Rob Young

West

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 with West Virginia defining the western boundary. The region is represented by the counties of (from north to south) Rockingham, Augusta, Highland, Bath, Rockbridge, Botetourt, Alleghany, Craig, Giles, Roanoke, Montgomery and Pulaski.

EDITOR — John Spahr, 613 Locust Avenue, Waynesboro, VA 22980
jspahr@augustamed.com

The winter months in this part of Virginia were relatively uneventful for unusual avian occurrences. Weather conditions were slightly warmer than average.

DUCKS – HAWKS

Diligent efforts to search for **Cackling Geese** among the flocks of wintering Canada Geese yielded a small group along Bell's Lane in Staunton, *Augusta* throughout Jan and Feb (AL). On 8 Jan a new high count of eight was reported (AL). Five were reported in neighboring *Rockingham* 17 Dec (TP). **Tundra Swans** are unusual winter visitors in this region, usually in small numbers. A total of 51 reported from *Rockingham* on 23 Feb (CM) represented a high peak count for the county. Three **Mute Swans** were reported from *Pulaski* on 7 Feb (CK) and 12 Feb (GE), their origin unknown. Two, seen in a pond in *Rockingham* 16 Dec (AL), were apparently intentionally released birds. Whether this species is becoming established in the wild in this region is to be determined. To date, there is no documentation of breeding in the region. **Red-tailed Hawks**, which set a record high during the fall hawk watch at Rockfish Gap, *Augusta*, were reported in above average numbers in all six region Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs), with new high counts of 97 *Augusta* CBC 18 Dec, 46 *Lexington* CBC 26 Dec, and 48 *Waynesboro* CBC 2 Jan. All six CBCs combined for a total of 309 Red-taileds or 0.89 birds per hour of observation, almost twice the average observation rate of 0.45 per hour, recorded in the six CBCs during the prior 14 years.

HUMMINGBIRDS – FINCHES

The male **Rufous Hummingbird** that first appeared at a feeder in Blue Ridge, *Roanoke*, 17 Oct remained at this site through mid January (V & MT). Eleven **Eurasian Collared Doves** spotted in three locations in

Pulaski 6 Feb (CK) represent a high count for the region. This is only the fourth record for the region, with previous records coming from either *Pulaski* or neighboring *Montgomery*, all since 2003. This species, having expanded its range westward and northward from its entry portal of Florida, is still rare in Virginia with most records coming from the coastal region. This was not a year for winter finches. There were no reports of **Evening Grosbeaks** in the entire region. Data from the six CBCs revealed low counts for **Purple Finches** (10 or less in five of six counts), **Pine Siskins** (absent in five of six counts) and **Red Crossbills** (absent in all counts).

Reference for CBC data:

<http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/index.html>

Contributors: Ken Hinkle, Clyde Kessler, Allen Larner, Clair Mellinger, Tom Pendleton, Vikki & Mike Tomlinson.

Central

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

EDITOR — Mike Boatwright, 177 Sugar Mill Drive, Amherst, VA 24521
mboater@att.net

The average temperature for the period was 38.4 degrees, which was slightly above average. Total precipitation for the period was below average with 8.2 inches recorded. Overall, snowfall was light with areas along the eastern edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains and those in the northeastern parts of the region receiving the most snow. As is normal

for the region, the heaviest snowstorms occurred during the month of February. Birds of note included Western/Clark's type Grebe at Lake Anna in January, Glaucous Gull at Lake Anna in December, Rufous Hummingbird near Lynchburg, and the return of now regular Short-eared Owls and Snow Buntings in *Louisa*. Bald Eagle and Common Raven both continue to increase in number and range. A Yellow-headed Blackbird was a very nice find among a large flock of mixed blackbirds in *Orange* in late February. The female Summer Tanager at a Charlottesville feeder in January was unprecedented for the region.

Abbreviations:

CBC (Audubon Christmas Bird Count)

WATERFOWL – GULLS

Mark Johnson continued his routine checks for waterfowl on lakes in the northern portions of *Amherst*. Good birds found included 30 **Ruddy Ducks**, 2 **Buffleheads**, and 10 **Pied-billed Grebes** on 10 December; 175 **Canada Geese**, 8 **American Wigeons**, 35 **Ruddy Ducks**, 12 **Hooded Mergansers**, and 6 **Buffleheads** on 22 December. One female **Common Goldeneye**, one female **Lesser Scaup**, **Hooded Mergansers**, **Ruddy Ducks**, and **Buffleheads** 30 Jan. Other notable waterfowl seen in the Region during the period were an adult **Snow Goose** with 50 **Canada Geese** near Zion Crossroads, *Louisa* 7 Jan (DW); a **Red-breasted Merganser** seen on the L. Anna CBC 4 Jan (MB, MJ); one **Green-winged Teal** on the Gordonsville CBC, *Orange* 19 Dec (fide DO); and a record count high of 85 **Common Mergansers** on the Chancellorville CBC 2 Jan (fide JK). The Lynchburg CBC produced one **Green-winged Teal** and one **Common Goldeneye** 18 Dec (fide J&TD). Perhaps the best bird of the season in the region was the

Aechmophorus grebe ♀ seen at L. Anna, *Louisa* 15-16 Jan. Chris Elliot and John Strong first observed this bird at relatively close range shortly before dusk on 15 Jan. These observers initially identified the bird as a **WESTERN GREBE** based on the amount of black on the face, which extended through and below the eye. On 16 Jan, Brenda Tekin, George and Rosemarie Harris, and John Fox had several distant scope views of an *Aechmophorus grebe* in the same area. The observers noted the bill appeared very yellow, unlike the orangish-yellow bill of Clarke's, but they could not see the bird well enough to determine the extent of black on the face. Several observers searched for, but could not relocate, this bird 17 and 18 Jan. A **Red-necked Grebe** was also seen 16 Jan while searching for the *Aechmophorus grebe* (BT). Another **Red-necked Grebe** was observed on L. Anna at the *Louisa/Spotsylvania* line 29 Jan (LL). The Lynchburg Bird Club's annual visit to northern *Amherst* lakes 22 Jan produced few waterfowl but did record 2 **Double-crested Cormorants**, also present there 10 Dec. **Merlins** were noted near Charlottesville at least twice during the period with one seen harassing pigeons over the downtown mall 9 December (BT) and one nearby on the *Albemarle* side of the Rivanna River being harassed by ravens 2 Jan (AM). **Bald Eagle** continues to do well in the region as evidenced by sightings on the following CBCs: Lynchburg (3), L. Anna (5), Gordonsville (3), and Chancellorville (6). There were also two birds in *Amherst* 22 Jan (MJ et al.), one in *Orange* 25 Jan, and one at Smith Mountain L., *Bedford*, 10 Jan (CK et al.). The winter period is the best time to find gulls in the region and the 2004-2005 season was no exception. An imm. **GLAUCOUS GULL** ♀ was found amongst about 1300 gulls at L. Anna, *Louisa* 18 Dec (MB). A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** ♀ was present at L. Anna,



Jim Nix photographed the Summer Tanager in Charlottesville using an HP-850 with an 8X optical zoom.

Louisa 2 Jan (MB, MJ) and 29 Jan (LL). Another was seen at L. Orange, *Orange* 25 Jan (G&RH). **Ring-billed Gulls** appeared on several CBCs without large lakes including 110 on the Lynchburg count 18 Dec (*fide* J&TD), 382 on the Chancellorville count 2 Jan (*fide* JK), and 2 on the Gordonsville count 19 Dec (*fide* DO). **Great Black-backed Gulls** continue to regularly frequent the L. Anna area with 232 on the CBC, *Louisa* 2 Jan (MB et al.) and in *Orange*, one was at L. Orange and 2 were at the landfill 25 Jan (G&RH). Five **Bonaparte's Gulls** were about average for L. Anna CBC 2 Jan (MB, MJ).

OWLS – RAVEN

Two **Barn Owls** were recorded on the Gordonsville CBC, *Orange* 19 Dec (DO). As many as 5 **Short-eared Owls** returned to the Zion Crossroads area, *Louisa* in Feb where they have been seen for the last several winters (m.ob.). A **RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD** was recorded on the Lynchburg CBC 18 Dec. This bird was present since late Nov and was believed to be the same individual, which frequented the same feeder in Dec 2003 (*fide* J&TD). The 2 ad. **loggerhead Shrikes** reported during the summer in *Bedford* persisted through the winter season (RB, et al.). **Common Ravens** continue to make a good showing in traditional Piedmont areas such as the greater Lynchburg area where 9 were reported on the CBC 18 Dec (*fide* J&TD) as well as on the

eastern edge, Coastal Plain, of the region including a single bird observed off I-95, *Caroline* 12 Feb (SH).

THRASHERS – FINCHES

Single **Brown Thrashers** were recorded on the 2 Jan L. Anna (G&RH) and 18 Dec Lynchburg CBC (*fide* J&TD). A **Gray Catbird** was also found on the Lynchburg count 18 Dec (GS). An unprecedented report of a female **SUMMER TANAGER** visiting a feeder in Charlottesville 17-25 Jan was received (JN et al., ph.). **American Tree Sparrows** were reported only from the Gordonsville CBC, *Orange* 19 Dec where 16 were found (*fide* DO). The Harris' observed an adult male **YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD** ♀ among a large flock of mixed blackbirds numbering around 5000 in *Orange* 20 Feb for the only report of this occasional winter visitor. Four **Snow Buntings** put in an appearance on the L. Anna CBC, *Louisa* 2 Jan where they have been rare but regular over the past twenty years (MB, MJ).

Contributors: Mike Boatwright, Rexanne Bruno, John & Thelma Dalmas, Adam D'Onofrio, Chris Elliott, John Fox, George & Rosemarie Harris, Sue Heath, Mark Johnson, Clyde Kessler, Joella Killian, Larry Lynch, Alex Merritt, Jim Nix, Don Ober, Gene Sattler, John Strong, Brenda Tekin, David White.

East

King George, Westmoreland, Northumberland, Richmond, Lancaster, Essex, Middlesex, Mathews, King and Queen, King William, and Gloucester Counties

The Northern Neck, composed of King George, Westmoreland, Richmond, Northumberland, and Lancaster Counties, is bordered by the

Rappahannock and Potomac Rivers. The Middle Peninsula includes King William, King and Queen, Essex, Middlesex, Gloucester, and Mathews Counties and is bordered by the Rappahannock and Pamunkey/York Rivers. The Mattaponi R. is the boundary between King William and King and Queen and it joins with the Pamunkey R. to form the York R. in West Point.

**EDITOR—Fred Atwood, Flint Hill School, 10409 Academic Drive, Oakton, VA 22124
fredatwood@yahoo.com**

During the winter season in the Northern Neck and the Middle Peninsula 143 species were recorded, the most interesting finds being Ross's Goose, Pacific Loon, Northern Lapwing, LeConte's Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, and Clay-colored Sparrow. Many lakes and marshes froze in January, which may have been a factor in the decreased observations of waterfowl, such as ring-necked ducks. This report is based on scattered observations from 30 birders in addition to three Christmas Bird Counts: George Washington's Birthplace, 18 Dec, Bill Portlock compiler; Mathews, 2 Jan, John Bazuin and Mary Pulley compilers; and Walkerton, 2 Jan, Fred Atwood compiler. This Region continues to have spotty coverage, so birders are strongly encouraged to explore new areas and report their sightings to help provide an accurate picture of the seasonal distribution and status of birds in this part of the state.

Abbreviations: Dameron (Dameron Marsh); EG (Elsing Green, a private reserve in *King William* near The Pocket), GWB (George Washington's Birthplace National Monument), KG ponds (Route 3 ponds in *King George*), KQ landfill (*King and Queen* landfill near Little Plymouth), Mothershead (Mothershead tract of Rapp. R. NWR.), Pocket (Pamunkey

R., Pamunkey Indian Reservation, *King William*), Rapp. R. NWR. (Rappahannock R. Valley National Wildlife Refuge); WSP (Westmoreland State Park in *Westmoreland*), Wilna (Wilna tract of Rapp. R. NWR.)

WATERFOWL – GREBES

High counts for **Tundra Swans** this winter were 640 at Dameron 6 Feb (TS), 455 on the Mathews CBC, and over 200 at GWB 7 Jan (JFi). Only 12 **Mute Swans** were tallied on the Mathews CBC, but 14 were seen in the Bethel Beach area 9 Feb (JC) and 13 at Dameron 28 Jan (JC). A **Greater White-fronted Goose** was found at KG ponds on 15 Dec (FA) and spotted again on 25 Dec (CZ). There were scattered reports of only 11 **Snow Geese** in the region in Mathews, Walkerton, GWB, and KG ponds. A white morph **Ross's Goose** turned up again at KG ponds on 18 Dec with about 15,000 Canada Geese and 3 **Cackling Geese** ♀ (MB). Other high counts of **Canada Geese** were 7690 Walkerton CBC, and 13,465 Birthplace CBC. Three Cackling Geese were also seen at GWB 3 Feb (FA) and one at KG ponds Jan 29 (AR, TR, CV). The only **Brant** in the region were three on the Mathews CBC. **Wood Duck** numbers dropped off rapidly in late November; the maximum was 12 in Leedstown *Westmoreland* 27 Feb (FA); nine were seen on both the Walkerton and Birthplace CBCs; and two were on the Mathews CBC. **American Wigeon** numbers diminished as winter progressed with the high of 60 (40% male) reported 2 Dec at KG ponds (FA), 24 there 23 Jan (FA) and only 13 reported from three locations in the whole month of Feb. **Gadwalls** were widely distributed with 668 reported on 16 dates, and a record high of 182 on the Birthplace CBC. **Green-winged Teal** numbers were low in Dec with only 4 on the Birthplace CBC, but by Feb 27, there were 75 in Leedstown, which is one

small part of that CBC area (FA). The counts for **Mallards** were 862 on the Birthplace CBC; 310 flying into Dameron at dusk 27 Jan (FA); 262 on the Mathews CBC; 125 in Drake's Marsh, Leedstown 27 Feb (FA); and only 73 on the Walkerton CBC. Counts for **American Black Ducks** were 311 Birthplace CBC, only 8 Mathews CBC, 29 Walkerton CBC, and 60 flying into Dameron at dusk 27 Jan (FA). **Northern Pintails** were more common early in the winter, with 615 at EG 16 Dec (FA), but only 158 in the whole Walkerton count circle 2 Jan, and 4 at EG 13 Feb (FA). The only **Blue-winged Teal** were 2 on the Walkerton CBC (BB). **Northern Shovelers** were only reported from Leedstown, the Pocket, and KG ponds, with a high of 25 in Leedstown 27 Feb (FA). **Canvasbacks** were most common off the shore of GWB with a maximum of 600 m. and 235 f. on 3 Feb (FA) and at Dameron with a maximum of 260 on 6 Feb (TS). The highest number at KG ponds was 201 (75% m.) 23 Jan (FA). A total of 2558 were reported on 15 dates but none were seen on the two Middle Peninsula CBCs (Walkerton and Mathews). **Redhead** reports included: 60 Mathews CBC, 52 GWB 3 Feb (FA), 18 KG Ponds 29 Jan (AR, TR, CV), and a high of 135 at Dameron 27 Jan (FA). As in all other *Aythya* ducks here, the wintering male Redheads far out-numbered the females (about 75% to 25%). The high for **Ring-necked Ducks** was 3560 (12% f.) at KG ponds 2 Dec (FA). As winter progressed, the numbers of Ring-neckeds dwindled; 22 were at EG 13 Feb (FA) and 265 at KG ponds 29 Jan (AR, TR, CV), with the sex ratio remaining about the same. The majority of the reports of this species are from large lakes. The high count for **Lesser Scaup** was 4656 on the Birthplace CBC and the high for **Greater Scaup** was 80 at GWB on 14 Feb (VK, et al.). Scaup numbers were much lower in the Middle Peninsula with only 88 noted

on Mathews CBC and 19 on Walkerton CBC. A total of 161 **Long-tailed Ducks** were noted on ten dates in the larger rivers and Bay with a high of 59 on Mathews CBC and 45 in the Potomac near WSP, 2 Dec (FA). A new high of 237 **Black Scoters** was noted on the Mathews CBC, though only 9 were seen on three other dates in the region. The most common scoter in the region is **Surf Scoter**, with 1569 seen on the Mathews CBC and as many as 150 at the northern end of the region in the Potomac near WSP 27 Feb (FA). **White-winged Scoters** were reported in two locations, 2 on the Mathews CBC, and one at Gloucester Bridge 25 Jan (JW, HW) and until 28 Jan (DH, TA, DA). **Common Goldeneyes** are fairly common all winter in the larger rivers and Bay where the males can often be seen and heard displaying. The high counts were 125 Mathews CBC, 157 Birthplace CBC, and 177 (114 m.) between GWB and WSP 3 Feb (FA). Only 15 birds were reported from more inland locations on five dates. **Buffleheads** have a similar distribution pattern, though they are more common than goldeneyes, with high counts of 150+ at Hughlett Point, *Northumberland* 8 Jan (TS); 210 GWB to WSP 2 Dec (FA); and 1436 Mathews CBC. In Decin Caffee Creek, *Gloucester* there were more Buffleheads than usual this year, up to 20 daily (TK). **Hooded Merganser** numbers and locations fluctuated widely from week to week, but they were usually found in lakes and ponds. Generally females outnumbered males (30-35% m.). The peak counts were 122 at KG ponds 23 Jan (FA) and 102 on the Birthplace CBC. **Red-breasted Mergansers** were occasionally found in ponds, but they were usually in larger rivers and bays. In the Rappahannock River, *Westmoreland* and *Richmond* over 90% were males in January and February (FA). The high count for the region was 400 on the Mathews CBC. Only 177 **Common Mergansers** were

seen on 10 dates with a peak of 96 on the Birthplace CBC. **Ruddy Ducks** are one of the most common and widely-distributed winter ducks in the region occurring in lakes, ponds, rivers, and bays. The high counts were 240 in the Mill Creek area, *Northumberland* (JC); 445 (46% m.) at KG Ponds, 2 Dec (FA); 405 GWB to WSP 2 Dec (FA); and 1768 Mathews CBC. **Wild Turkeys** were more evident this season, with 111 spotted on 9 dates; 32 on the Walkerton CBC being the high. **Northern Bobwhite** was also less elusive with two coveys regularly seen at Wilna (SS), but only 48 others reported on five dates; high of 15 on the Mathews CBC. **Common Loons** were widely distributed in all the larger bays and rivers 238 reported on 14 dates, high of 145 Mathews CBC. **Red-throated Loons** reappeared in late February; 11 seen off the *Westmoreland* shore between GWB and WSP 27 Feb (FA). A **PACIFIC LOON** ♀ was scoped for over a half hour as it dove, preened, and bathed at Dameron, 27 Jan (p.a.†FA). The 21 **Pied-billed Grebes** at KG Ponds 2 Dec were the high (FA), as were 22 **Horned Grebes** Mathews CBC; five were also found on the Birthplace CBC, and five at Dameron 1 Feb (AD'0). Wintering **Brown Pelicans** included one at Gloucester Point (DH, HG, GB) and 7 on the Mathews CBC. **Double-crested Cormorant** numbers dropped to only 15 Birthplace CBC, 9 Mathews CBC and 13 Walkerton CBC, but started rising again in late Feb with a peak of 45 along the Rappahannock River in the Upper Northern Neck 27 Feb (FA).

HERONS – SANDPIPERS

Great Blue Herons observations were 48 on the Birthplace CBC, 47 on the Mathews CBC, and 28 on the Walkerton CBC. A **Great Egret** and **Black-crowned Night-Heron** on the Mathews CBC were unusually late. The Walkerton CBC had 205 **Black Vultures** and the Birthplace CBC 211

Turkey Vultures, though 25-30 of either species is the average winter day count here. The first **Ospreys** arrived 27 Feb in Walkerton (BD) and Gloucester Point (DH). **Bald Eagles** continue to demonstrate their amazing comeback with 156 Birthplace CBC, 11 on the Mathews CBC, and 47 Walkerton CBC. The winter eagle surveys conducted along 37.5 miles of the Rappahannock R. between Tappahannock and Mount Creek tallied 138 birds in mid-Dec and 395 birds (219 ad., 168 imm., 8 unk.) on 7 Feb (BP, JC, SS). The survey was conducted during a run of Yellow Perch and tallied mostly eagles from Canada and New England that winter here and wander from place to place. The previous high count for this stretch of river had been 280 (BP). **Northern Harrier** reports included seventeen on the Birthplace CBC, three Mathews CBC, and ten Walkerton CBC. Eight **Sharp-shinned Hawks** were observed on both the Birthplace and Mathews CBCs; 9 others were seen on five dates. Three **Cooper's Hawks** were reported on the Mathews and Walkerton CBCs; 6 others were reported on five dates. A count-high of 31 **Red-shouldered Hawks** were seen on the Walkerton CBC; 28 others were seen on nine dates, with courtship displays starting in mid-February (FA). A count-high 37 **Red-tailed Hawks** were tallied on the Walkerton CBC; while 33 were on the Birthplace CBC, 17 on the Mathews CBC and 49 were noted on 20 dates, including a leucistic form at King's Quarter golf course outside Kilmarnock, *Lancaster*; which has been present all winter (TT). **American Kestrels** reports were of 29 on seventeen dates in addition to the birds seen on the CBCs: 9 Walkerton; 8 Birthplace; and 2 Mathews. Single **Merlins** were seen on each CBC. Four **Clapper Rails** were seen on the Mathews CBC and another was at Dameron on 6 Feb (TS). Five **King Rails** were calling at

dusk in Leedstown 27 Feb (FA). A high of 125 **American Coots** were found at KG Ponds 2 Dec (FA). Certainly the most unusual bird to be reported was a **NORTHERN LAPWING** ♀ observed and sketched by R. Hynch in a farm field with killdeer along the entrance road to Dameron Marsh, near Kilmarnock, *Northumberland*, 24 Dec. This unmistakable bird with its distinctive crest was not found again. Details have been submitted to VARCOM for review. Three **Black-bellied Plovers** were found on the Mathews CBC. Small numbers of **Killdeer** were reported throughout the area with a high of 173 on the Walkerton CBC. Eleven of the 14 **American Woodcocks** on the Walkerton CBC were heard peenting at Sandy Point, *King William* (DB). That count also had a new high of 137 **Wilson's Snipe**. Two **Short-billed Dowitchers** along the Pamunkey R. added a new species to the Walkerton CBC. The only **Greater Yellowlegs** reported were 50 on the Walkerton CBC and 2 on the Mathews CBC; the only **Lesser Yellowlegs** were 2 Mathews CBC and 1 along the Pamunkey R., *King William* 16 Dec and 13 Feb (FA). There were 4 **Ruddy Turnstones** on Mathews CBC and one near Bethel Beach with 17 **Sanderlings** (JC). The high count for **Sanderlings** was 178 Mathews CBC. Previously only one **Least Sandpiper** had been seen on the Walkerton CBC, but this year 38 were along the Pamunkey R. (BB). Mathews CBC had 554 **Dunlin** and 200 was a new high for the Walkerton CBC, again along the Pamunkey.

GULLS — VIREOS

The Mathews CBC had the highs for all the common gulls: 1637 **Ring-billed**, 38 **Great Black-backed** (unusually low), 306 **Herring** (unusually low), and 116 **Bonaparte's**. Another **Bonaparte's** was seen slightly inland at KG Ponds 2 Dec (FA). The 2500 **Laughing Gulls** at KG Ponds

on 2 Dec dropped to 20 by 15 Dec, and Birthplace was the only CBC to count one, a single bird. Though **Forster's Terns** were scarce everywhere else, the Mathews CBC had 195. Birthplace CBC tallied one **Barn Owl** and 12 **Eastern Screech Owls**. The high count for **Great Horned Owl** was 14 on the Mathews CBC. Fewer **Barred Owls** were found than expected with a high of only 4 on the Walkerton CBC. A **Short-eared Owl** was seen at Mothershead 18 Dec (FA) and again 16 Jan (LC, PS, LL). **Belted Kingfisher** highs were 48 on Mathews CBC and 43 on Walkerton CBC. Only 7 **Red-headed Woodpeckers** were reported in three locations on the Walkerton and Birthplace CBCs. Regional highs of thirty **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers**, 131 **Northern Flickers**, and 41 **Pileated Woodpeckers** were on the Walkerton CBC. Both the Birthplace and Walkerton CBCs reported new high counts of **Hairy Woodpeckers**, 14 and 34 respectively. Aside from the 24 **Eastern Phoebes** on the Walkerton CBC and 10 on the Mathews CBC, only 7 phoebes were reported throughout the region and only 2 were reported after the January freeze. The high counts for **Horned Larks** were 104 on the Walkerton CBC and 103 on the Birthplace CBC. For the most part **American Pipits** seemed scarce this year, though 72 were found on the Birthplace CBC and 60 were near Naylor's, *Richmond* 23 Jan (FA). **Golden-crowned Kinglets** had a peak of 98 on the Walkerton CBC, though most individual daily totals ranged from 2-8. **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** were less abundant with a maximum of only 32 on the Walkerton CBC. **Cedar Waxwings** were scarce throughout the region probably due to the lack of berries. Birthplace CBC counted 168, unusually low; none found on Mathews CBC; only 28 Walkerton CBC; 55 Gloucester Point 20 Feb (DH, HG GB). **Carolina Wren** highs were 160 Mathews CBC, 118

Birthplace CBC, and 100 Walkerton CBC. **Winter Wren** highs were 27 Walkerton CBC, 15 Mathews CBC, and 13 Birthplace CBC. There were two reports of **House Wrens** two Walkerton CBC, and one Birthplace CBC. A single **Marsh Wren** was found at Mulberry 15 Jan (FA). **Gray Catbirds** were regularly seen at Dameron (TS), another was at Mulberry 15 Jan (FA), and 9 were on the Mathews CBC. Mathews CBC had 144 **Northern Mockingbirds**, 12 **Brown Thrashers** and 663 **Eastern Bluebirds** whose numbers still seemed low elsewhere, except for the Balls Neck area where 217 were seen in one morning 7 Feb (JC, SC). The highs for **Hermit Thrush** were 24 Mathews CBC, 23 Walkerton CBC, and 19 Birthplace CBC. With the scarcity of fruit, hundreds of **American Robins** were seen searching for worms on farm fields throughout the area all winter long; 500 in a morning was common; the high count was 2351 Mathews CBC. Five to ten chickadees and titmice in a morning is typical, but the Mathews CBC had 183 **Carolina Chickadees** and 119 **Tufted Titmice**. This was also the hot spot for **Brown-headed Nuthatch** with 27 reported; the only others reported were 3 at Hughlett Point 8 Jan (TS). **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were scarce with only 3 Mathews CBC, 2 Caffee Creek, *Gloucester* 18 Feb (TK) and scattered reports all winter at Mosquito Point, *Lancaster* (BN). The Walkerton CBC had new highs of 58 **White-breasted Nuthatches** and 20 **Brown Creepers**. Ten **Fish Crows** were at KQ landfill 13 Feb (FA) and one was found on the Mathews CBC.

WARBLERS — FINCHES

Two **Orange-crowned Warblers** were seen, one at Mothershead 15 Dec (FA); one near Naylor's Beach, *Richmond* 27 Feb (FA). **Yellow-rumped Warblers** were most common in the se. with 1427 on Mathews CBC, and 300+ at Dameron 8 Jan

(TS), though 245 were in a Wax-Myrtle thicket in Mulberry, upper *Richmond* 15 Jan (FA). **Pine Warblers** were scarce this year, not showing up at all at the Caffee Creek suet feeders in Gloucester (TK) or on the Birthplace CBC; only 13 seen all season. **Common Yellowthroats** reports were of single birds at Wilna off and on all winter (SS), and on the Birthplace CBC in Leedstown (SS), and the Walkerton CBC. **Eastern Towhees** were less numerous this year with a high of 31 Mathews CBC. One **American Tree Sparrow** was at KG Ponds 29 Jan (AR, TR, CV). **Chipping Sparrows** were more prevalent in the south with 81 seen on the Mathews CBC. Two **Clay-colored Sparrows** were in *Richmond*, one at Wilna 9 Jan (ABr) and 12 Jan (JFo), and one in Newland 27 Feb (FA). A new count-high of 104 **Field Sparrow** was noted Birthplace CBC. **Savannah Sparrows** also reached new count-highs: 169 Birthplace CBC and 76 Walkerton. A very remarkable find was the **LECONTE'S SPARROW** at Wilna 18 Dec (SS). This bird was photographed (JFo) and seen by several observers until 16 Jan. **Fox Sparrows** were not found in some of their usual haunts but a total of 31 were seen throughout the region with a high of 10 Walkerton CBC. New CBC high-counts for **Song Sparrow** were 472 Walkerton, and 399 Birthplace. A **Lincoln's Sparrow** was in Leedstown next to Mothershead 18 Dec (FA). Walkerton CBC had a new high of 93 **Swamp Sparrows**. **White-crowned Sparrows** reached a count-high of 24 on the Birthplace CBC and were also seen in some of their usual haunts in King George and Leedstown. **White-throated Sparrows** and **Dark-eyed Juncos** are the most common sparrows here in the winter; Walkerton CBC had 1283 White-throateds, Birthplace CBC had a new high of 673 and Mathews CBC had 1351 Juncos. This year **Northern Cardinals** seemed to everywhere. At

Caffee Creek it was not uncommon to see 30 at one time at the feeders (TK). The Birthplace CBC had a new high 293, Walkerton CBC new high of 493, and Mathews CBC had 398. Blackbird numbers were normal; 10,000 **Red-winged Blackbirds** Walkerton CBC, and 30-35,00 blackbirds (60% **Common Grackle**) near The Pocket 13 Feb (FA). A few reports of small numbers of **Rusty Blackbirds** were scattered through the region. Unusual winter finches included **Purple Finches** — 12 Walkerton CBC, 3 Birthplace CBC, and one White Marsh, *Gloucester* 18 Dec (JW, HW) and **Pine Siskins** — 40 Mathews CBC, 2 Birthplace CBC and one Gloucester 18 Feb (DH). **American Goldfinches** were also quite numerous reaching a new CBC high of 269 in Walkerton where **House Sparrow** also reached a new CBC and regional high of 78.

Contributors: Tom Armour, Dave Atherton, Fred Atwood, Bruce Beehler, Arun Bose, Allen Bryan, Dana Bradshaw, Gene Bureson, Jack Carroll, Sue Carroll, Larry Cartwright, Brad Davis, Adam D'Onofrio, Jim Fitzgerald, John Fox, Heidi Geisz, Sue Heath, Dave Hewitt, Teta Kain, Val Kitchens, Larry Lynch, BJ Norris, Bill Portlock, Alex Robbins, Tommy Roth, Tom Saunders, Sandy Spencer, Paula Sullivan, Tom Teeples, Cody Vaughan, Joyce Williams and Hayes Williams, Charles Ziegenfus.

SOUTHWEST

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

EDITORS—Roger and Lynda Mayhorn, HC67 Box 44A, Pilgrims Knob, VA 24634
mayhorn@netscope.net

The counties of southwestern Virginia had 28 days of precipitation during the period with an average temperature of 37.9 F. Fourteen days of rain and 14 of snow, with an average snow depth of three inches, made it more difficult for birds searching for food. Still, the period was marked by some unusual species as well as some species in unusually high numbers. In the latter category Redhead Ducks were observed in *Russell, Washington* and *Wythe* in greater numbers than usual, as were Ring-necked Ducks in *Washington* and *Wythe*. Two female Long-tailed Ducks, an unexpected find on a pond in *Smyth*, stayed for several days and were observed and photographed by many birders. Likewise Ruddy Ducks made unusual appearances on ponds in *Washington* and *Tazewell*. The two Eared Grebes found on 31 August 2004 at Musick's Campground, *Washington* continue to be observed there along with Horned Grebes. As in past winters Burkes Garden, *Tazewell* produced reports of Golden Eagles, Rough-legged Hawks, Northern Harriers and Loggerhead Shrikes. A Northern Goshawk was found there during the *Tazewell* CBC in December. A pair of winter nesting Barn Owls with three young, discovered in January on a farm in *Washington*, provided a new early date for the region and the state. A Brown-headed Nuthatch, a species not previously found in the area, was observed at a feeder near Bluefield, *Tazewell* in December. A first winter record was established for *Buchanan* when a Gray Catbird was found at a feeder there in December. Red-breasted Nuthatches were seen frequently in the region after arriving in September. Pine Siskin and Purple Finch numbers were normal throughout the period, while Tree Sparrows and Fox Sparrows were observed in greater numbers than in previous years in *Buchanan* and *Russell*.

Abbreviations: Christmas Bird Count

(CBC), Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF), Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), Hungry Mother State Park (HMSP), Musick's Campground (MC), Rural Retreat Lake (RRL).

Waterfowl – Herons

A male **Canvasback** was found at Nicewonder Pond, Exit 10 of I-81 near Abingdon, 23 Feb (WC, RH). The first **Redhead Ducks** reported were 6 found at MC in *Washington* (JM); 4 were in Abingdon 2 Feb at Crabtree Pond, intersection of Rte. 19 and Rte. 11, *Washington* (TH); 3 were at Nicewonder Pond, *Washington* 14 Feb (WC, RH). A flock of 24 Redheads (males and females) was observed on RRL, *Wythe* 13 Feb (AB), and 30-35 there 15 Feb was an unusually high concentration (GE). **Ring-necked Ducks** were out in force on Nicewonder Pond in *Washington* with 132 counted 7 Jan and 103 there the week of 9 Feb (RH). Two female **LONG-TAILED DUCKS** were discovered by DGIF employees on a pond in the center of Saltville, *Smyth* 16 Feb (JB, MR). These rare visitors were observed and photographed on subsequent days by several birders from the area. This is only the third report of this species for *Smyth* with the two previous reports being of a male bird at HMSP Lake 18 Jan 1971 and another male there 4 Apr 1984. Three female **Common Goldeneyes**, a species not common to the area, were discovered near RRL, *Wythe* 8 Feb. Rather than being in a large body of water or swift flowing river as might be expected, these birds were on a small farm pond in the company of a single female Bufflehead (AB). Local birders were surprised to find a female **Ruddy Duck** on Lincolnshire L. near the town of Tazewell, *Tazewell* on 12 Feb (RM, DR). Another Ruddy Duck was observed on Nicewonder Pond, *Washington* (WC, RH). Only one **Common Loon** was reported on RRL, *Wythe* (E&HM, PM). This single sighting on 29 Dec

is unusual, as the species is often seen on the lake during the fall. Four **Eared Grebes** were at Washington County Park, *Washington* 26 Dec, near Musick's Campground where Eared, Horned and Pied-billed Grebes are often seen during winter months. Seven Eared Grebes and 4 **Horned Grebes** were sighted on S. Holston L. at MC, *Washington* 22 Feb (JM). Also on the lake were 10 **Pied-billed Grebes**. Seven **Great Blue Herons** were observed 20 Feb on nests at the rookery on the North Fork of the Holston R. n. of Saltville, *Smyth* (J&JT). Nine Great Blues were sitting on nests in the same rookery 28 Feb (JP). This ten nest rookery, discovered in 2001, is one of only three known rookeries in sw. Virginia. The others are located in *Wise* on the s. fork of the Powell R. and along Government Road at Damascus, *Washington*.

Raptors – Owls

An imm. **Bald Eagle** was observed at MC, *Washington* 22 Feb (JM). A **Northern Harrier** and a **Rough-legged Hawk** were at Burkes Garden, *Tazewell* 30 Dec (GE, EH). Burkes Garden also produced a **Golden Eagle** 30 Dec (GE, EH), and three others on 9 Jan (GE, JK, SJR, W&J R, PZ). An imm. Golden Eagle was observed 27 Feb flying below the ridge at Raven Ridge Campground, *Russell* (RR, CK). The campground, near Hayter's Gap, is at an elevation of about 3700 feet. A **Merlin** made an



This female Long-tailed Duck was one of two found on 16 Feb on the salt ponds of Saltville in Smyth Count. Photographed by Roger Mayhorn.

appearance at Stuart's Pond, *Russell* 5 Feb (DW) and a second was observed at MC, *Washington* 22 Feb (JM). A male **American Kestrel** was observed chasing birds at a feeder near Grundy, *Buchanan* 15 Feb (JR). The species is found only occasionally within that county. The first **American Woodcock** of the season for *Buchanan* was heard 17 Feb in the Breaks community (DR). Two **Bonaparte's Gulls** were found among a flock of **Ring-billed Gulls** at MC, *Washington* 26 Dec (BG, C&WK). A **Northern Saw Whet Owl** was observed at close range 27 Feb near Rte. 80 at the entrance to Raven Ridge Campground, *Russell* (CK).

Winter Nesting Barn Owls

On 2 Jan a Barn Owl's winter nest containing three young was found on a dairy farm near DeBusk Mill, *Washington*. The nest was in a 30 foot feed storage hopper investigated during the Glade Springs CBC, after observers were directed by the farmer to an extensive amount of whitewash on equipment and owl pellets on the floor under a shed. After the calls of young owls were heard, a ladder was put in place and from its top two adult Barn Owls and three young could be seen. One adult immediately flew from the bin leaving the second adult and two brown-feathered juveniles perched on a crossbeam. The two young dropped to the bottom of the bin, where a smaller, down covered nestling rested. The adult then flew down attempted to cover and protect the young. This winter nesting is an early record for both the area and the state.

Shrikes – Blackbirds

Loggerhead Shrike seems to be on the decline in the western end of the state, the species proving harder to find than in years past. One was sighted in Burkes Garden, *Tazewell* 27 Dec (J&JP). A second bird was found s. of RRL, *Wythe* 15 Feb (GE). **Red-breasted Nuthatches** remained in the

region throughout the winter with one reported coming to a feeder at Raven Ridge Campground 10 Feb (CK), one sighted on a reclaimed strip mine site in *Buchanan* 13 Jan (RM), also found in Burkes Garden, *Tazewell* 16 Jan (A&MW), and one regularly at a suet feeder on Compton Mt., *Buchanan* from 23 Jan to 3 Mar (RM). By comparison there was only one observation of the species in *Buchanan* during the same period in 2003.

BROWN-HEADED NUTHATCH made a brief appearance at a feeder in Bluefield, *Tazewell* 4 Dec (J&HP). This could be an indication of the continued westward expansion of the species within the state as there are no previous recorded observations farther west than *Pulaski*, except for one bird reported from Big Stone Gap, *Wise* during the 2000 Audubon GBBC. A **Gray Catbird** established a first winter record for *Buchanan* by appearing briefly at a feeder in the Breaks community 30 Dec (DR). A **Brown Thrasher** coming regularly to the same feeder starting 28 Oct was also unusual as there are only a few records of this species remaining within the county during winter (DR). An **American Tree Sparrow** visited a feeder in the Breaks community, *Buchanan* 23 Jan (DR), while another was found at a feeder on the other side of the county at Compton Mt., *Buchanan* the next day (RM), and a bird bearing slightly different markings appeared at that feeder 27 Jan (RM). This is the first time the species had been observed in *Buchanan* since 25 Jan 2001. An **Tree Sparrow** was also observed at a feeder at Raven Ridge Campground, *Russell* at an elevation of 3700 feet near Hayter's Gap (CK). *Russell* and *Buchanan* had an influx of **Fox Sparrows**. *Buchanan* sightings included one at a feeder in Grundy 9 Feb and two there 1 Mar (JR); one coming often to a Compton Mt. feeder beginning 25 Feb, two there 3 Mar and three during a snowstorm 1 March (RM); and single birds at two different feeders in the Breaks

area 2 and 10 Mar (DR). In *Russell* Fox Sparrow were observed in groups of five or six on several occasions during the winter and on 26 Feb as many as 12 were seen foraging together in a cattle feed field (RR). The only **Evening Grosbeak** report was of two females on 2 Jan at a feeder in Raven Ridge Campground, *Russell* (CK). One **Brewer's Blackbird** and 5 **Rusty Blackbirds** were found at a Breaks feeder on 29 Dec (DR). Neither species is commonly found in the area.

Christmas Bird Counts – 2004

The Blackford CBC in *Russell* 26 Dec recorded a new high total of 66 species with nine birders participating. Three **Bald Eagles**, 5 **Golden Eagles** and 1 **Great Horned Owl** were some of the interesting species observed. High counts of 11 **Golden-crowned Kinglets**, 51 **Northern Mockingbirds** and 113 **Northern Cardinals** were recorded. Fourteen birders took part in the Breaks CBC on 18 Dec, which takes place in parts of *Buchanan* and *Dickenson* and a small section of KY. Great weather may have helped with a record high count of 62 species. One surprise was a **Merlin** found in Grundy, *Buchanan* during the count week. Other unusual species were 3 **Black Vultures** and a female **Ring-necked Duck**, both in *Dickenson*.

The Bristol CBC, covering parts of *Washington* in VA and TN with 22 participants set a new record of 91 species on 26 Dec. The previous record was 89 species. In the Virginia



This *Tree Sparrow* was photographed by Roger Mayhorn at his home feeder on *Compton Mountain*.

section of the count in *Washington* a new high of 8 **Eared Grebes** was recorded, only the eighth time since 1996 that this species has been reported. **Black-crowned Night Herons** were found in *Washington* for the third consecutive year. The Glade Spring CBC covering parts of *Smyth* and *Wythe* with 16 birders participating was conducted on 2 Jan. The count of sixty-nine species, a total of 10,406 birds, was higher than the 2003 count of 66 species, 6,369 birds. The unusual species of the count was **Black-crowned Night Heron** with two found on Rte. 792 n. of Chilhowie, *Smyth* on the Middle Fork of the Holston R. One ad. and two imms. were observed when the area was visited again on 9 Feb (RH). The Mount Rogers – Whitetop Mountain CBC, covering the highlands of *Grayson*, *Smyth*, and *Wythe* and a small part of NC was conducted 2 Jan. Ten participants logged 50 species including **Ring-billed Gull**, **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**, and **Wilson's Snipe** listed by Audubon as unusual for the count. The *Tazewell* County CBC, *Tazewell* on 29 Dec had 11 participants who logged 58 species with a **Northern Goshawk** at Burkes Garden being the most unusual. A **Rough-legged Hawk** and a **Red-breasted Nuthatch** were also interesting. The *Wise* County CBC, *Wise* on 18 Dec, with 22 participants, tallied 55 species, including **Black-capped Chickadee** for the first time and had 27 **Golden-crowned Kinglets**, 9 **Red-breasted Nuthatches**, 2 **Northern Harriers** and a **Loggerhead Shrike**.

Contributors Jason Blevins, Allen Boynton, Wallace Coffey, Glen Eller, Bruce Grimes, Ron Harrington, Eric Harrold, Tom Hunter, Andy Jones, Jim Keighton, Charles Kennedy, Clyde and Alan Kessler, Roger Mayhorn, Ed and Helen Morgan, Peter Morgan, John Moyle, Chris O'Bryan, Jack and Helen Parris, Jim and Judy Phillips, Jane Poore, David

Raines, Johnnie Ratliff, Scott-Jackson Ricketts, Robert Riggs, William and Joyce Roberts, Mark Robinett, Jerry and Jane Thornhill, Allen and Mindy Waldron, Dave Worley, Peter Zwadyk.

South Central

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

EDITOR—C. Michael Stinson, 437 Wildflower Lane, Dillwyn, VA 23936
cms@hovac.com

The first half of the season was rather mild in the region, with more than one observer calling the warmth “unusual.” This changed abruptly after the middle of January when the first of several winter storms passed across the region followed by colder temperatures. The season’s end was marked by a storm that left several inches of snow on 28 Feb. Despite the inconvenience to humans, these storms appeared to have little impact on reported bird activity other than short-term increases in feeder visitation by a few species.

Abbreviations: Dick Cross (Dick Cross WMA, *Mecklenburg*); Syon (Syon Abbey, *Franklin*).

WATERFOWL

Waterfowl numbers generally continued to be weak through the season, though there were a few interesting sightings. Most reports were for the more commonly encountered species such as **Mallards**, **Hooded Mergansers**, and **Ring-necked**

Ducks. Two **Barnacle Geese** were seen with **Canada Geese** on the Bull Run arm of Smith Mountain Lk., eastern *Franklin* 25-26 Jan (GW). As is often the case with this species, a captive origin cannot be ruled out. Six **Mute Swans** appeared in *Prince Edward* in Dec (first reported by duck hunters, exact date not recorded), splitting their time between Sandy River Res. and Briery Creek L., and remaining through at least 16 Feb (CMS). Some **Wood Ducks** can normally be found in the region during the winter; the largest group reported this season was about 15 seen at Staunton R. Battlefield SP, *Halifax* on 18 Dec (JB); four were at a higher elevation, where the species is less common, at Syon, 17-28 Feb (JS). Eighteen **Buffleheads** were on a pond near Callaway, *Franklin* 3 Dec (CK).

LOONS – WOODPECKERS

Away from the larger lakes where the species is expected in winter, a **Common Loon** was at the Martinsville Res., *Henry* 3 Dec (CK). Single **Ruffed Grouse** were seen near Syon on 2 Jan and 26 Feb (JS). Two **Golden Eagle** reports were received for the region: a subadult was reported at Dick Cross during the Kerr Lk. CBC 4 Jan (WC), and an immature was seen 13 Feb over Five Mile Mountain, *Franklin* (CK). A **Merlin** was at Staunton R. SP, *Halifax* 26 Dec during the Banister R. CBC (AD). **American Woodcocks** were heard calling on several occasions during the reporting period, including 12 Dec and 2 Jan at Staunton R. Battlefield SP (JB) and repeatedly from mid-Dec through 9 Feb at Curdsville, *Buckingham* (CMS). **Bonaparte’s Gulls** were “numerous” around lower Kerr Res. on 15 Jan, along with expected numbers of **Ring-billed Gulls** and two **Herring Gulls**, the latter below the dam at Tailrace Park (AD). A **Red-headed Woodpecker** seen about one mile from Callaway on 25 Dec was Kessler’s first winter

record in Franklin in his 30 years of birding there.

CROWS – NUTHATCHES

Fish Crow movements are not well understood in this region, though the species is seen in some locations here each year. One was at North Bend Park, along lower Kerr Res. in *Mecklenburg* 15 Jan (AD). Again **Common Raven** was reported from a county well inside the Piedmont and away from the mountains this season, this one at a feeding station in the n. edge of *Lunenburg*, near Keysville 24 Jan (SD). While reported numbers of **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were not especially high, the species was seen in several locations across the region; from the Kerr Res. area 4 Jan during the Kerr Lake CBC to Syon in the Blue Ridge of *Franklin* (JS); to Curdsville, *Buckingham*, one or two present throughout the period (CMS).

WRENS – SISKINS

There were some interesting wren reports this season. Two **Sedge Wrens** and one **Marsh Wren** were found at Dick Cross 4 Jan (WC), and a **House Wren** was at Dick Cross 15 Jan (AD). Another **House Wren** was reported from Laurel Hill, the Jeb Stuart birthplace property in *Patrick*, also 15 Jan (CK). A **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was also at Dick Cross 4 Jan (WC). Thirty-two **American Pipits** were reported along state Rte. 608, *Halifax* during the Banister River CBC, 26 Dec (GM, JB) and four were near Ferrum, *Franklin* 11 Dec (CK). Warblers, other than the commonly encountered **Yellow-rumped**, included a **Palm** and two **Common Yellowthroats** at Dick Cross on 4 Jan (WC). Good numbers of **Fox Sparrow** reports were received. In addition to several reports of birds at feeders, especially during snow storms, at least 20 were in the Virginia portion of the Kerr Lk. CBC circle in *Mecklenburg* (WC, et al.). The maximum number of **White-crowned Sparrows** reported was five (two ads.,

three imms.) at Dick Cross on 15 Jan (AD); this has been a reliable location for the species for 30 years or more. "A flock" of **Rusty Blackbirds** was seen in a "brushy wet area beside a cornfield" near Meadows of Dan, *Patrick* 15 Jan (CK, et al.). A male **Baltimore Oriole** visited a feeder in *Emporia* on 22 Jan, the same yard where a bird of this species was seen last winter (AS). **Purple Finches** remained through the period at feeders in *Buckingham* (CMS) and northern *Lunenburg* (SD). Large numbers of this species were not reported, however; the maximum noted was 9 on 30 Dec, *Syon* (JS). **Pine Siskins** were reported from South Boston, *Halifax* two at feeders 7 Jan (JB), and from n. *Lunenburg* also at feeders one on 5 Dec and two on 19 Dec (SD).

Contributors: Jeff Blalock, Will Cook, Adam D'Onofrio, Sue D'Onofrio, Clyde Kessler, Grace McCrowell, John Sebastian, Allan Sharrett, C. Michael Stinson, George Wheaton

Southeast

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

EDITOR — Adam D'Onofrio,
25118 Smith Grove Road,
Petersburg, VA 23803
bigadfromlb@vcu.org

The cycle of above average precipitation was finally broken during the winter reporting period with total precipitation for the three months 7.18 inches, 2.47 inches below normal. Temperatures for the period averaged 41.4 degrees, 2.7 degrees above normal. According to the National Weather Service, January had the largest number of days above freezing of any January in Richmond's climate

record. As expected, snowfall was minimal and not a factor. Most rivers, lakes, and ponds remained open and waterfowl was found in traditional spots. Sunken Meadow Pond, *Surry* was especially active and even hosted a Eurasian Wigeon in January. The only notable Christmas Bird Count was the Hopewell CBC on 19 Dec, which recorded 106 species. The most interesting count bird was a Ross's Goose, seen among a large flock of Snow Geese at Curles Neck Farm, *Henrico*, probably the same bird found in late November on nearby Turkey Island Road.

Abbreviations: Crewes (Crewes Channel, *Henrico*); Curles Neck (Curles Neck Farm, *Henrico*); Dutch Gap (Dutch Gap Conservation Area, *Chesterfield*); Henricus (Henricus Park, *Chesterfield*); HoCBC (Hopewell Christmas Bird Count), Hog Island (Hog Island WMA).

LOONS – MERGANSERS

Two **Common Loons** were seen in a pond on Turkey Island Road, *Henrico* 13 Feb (B&LC). A total of 11 **Pied-billed Grebes** were recorded on the HoCBC 19 Dec. Over at Crewes, 2 **Horned Grebes** were observed in the marsh (A&LW). Greater than 20 **Horned Grebes** were counted in the James R. along the Colonial National Historical Parkway, *James City* 15 Feb (AW). **Brown Pelican** numbers are increasing and at least 6 were seen fishing in the James R. at Hog Island 9 Jan (AD). Large numbers of **Double-crested Cormorants** remained in the region all winter with a high of 290 recorded on the HoCBC 19 Dec. Ninety-two **Great Blue Herons** were also recorded on that count. Three Great Blue Herons were seen standing on nests at Henricus 23 Feb (JK). Eight **Great Egrets** were present in the Hog Island marshes 9 Jan (AD). Four **Mute Swans** were mixed in with the many **Tundra Swans** at Sunken Meadow Pond, *Surry* 9 & 10 Jan (AD, GW). A large

group of **Tundra Swans** was also noted at Hog Island 9 Jan (AD). A single **Ross's Goose** was seen among the **Snow Geese** at Curles Neck during the HoCBC. Over 1,700 **Snow Geese** were tallied on the count with 1,200 of them being the blue morph form and one **Cackling Goose** ♀ was counted among the thousands of **Canada Geese**. High count for **Wood Ducks** was 130 at Henricus 20 Feb (PB). Over 200 **Gadwalls** and **American Wigeons** were present at Sunken Meadow Pond, *Surry* 9 & 10 Jan (AD, GW). Among them was an imm. male **Eurasian Wigeon** 9 Jan (AD), 10 Jan (GW, TA). A **Northern Pintail** was seen in the marsh at Henricus 27 Dec (A&LW). **Northern Pintails** were observed in good numbers at Hog Island 9 Jan (AD). A **Canvasback** was seen at Byrd Park, Richmond City 5 Jan (A&LW) and a single female, was recorded at the Shirley Plantation, *Henrico* 27 Feb (AB). Greater than 25 **Canvasbacks** were counted in the James R. along the Colonial National Historic Parkway, *James City* 15 Feb (AW). Also seen along the parkway that day were high counts of 500 **Ruddy Ducks**, 50 **Red-breasted Mergansers**, 25 **Redheads**, a pair of **Common Goldeneyes** and one **White-winged Scoter** (AW). At the Vineyards Pond in Williamsburg, 3 **Greater Scaup** were joined by 5 **Lesser Scaup** 5 Feb (TA). The high count for **Ring-necked Ducks** was 270 on the HoCBC which also tallied 113 **Buffleheads**. **Common Mergansers** were found in a few locations with the high counts being 20 at Turkey Island Road, *Henrico* 27 Feb (AB) and 19 during the HoCBC with additional observations on the James R., Richmond City 13 Feb (AB) and at Swift Creek Res. *Chesterfield* 13 Feb (AD).

RAPTORS – OWLS

Osprey were seen in Dec on two separate occasions with one in *New Kent* 10 Dec (RB) and another at Dutch

Gap 27 Dec (A&LW). Another, probably an early returning migrant, was seen on the James R., Richmond City 20 Feb (AD). **Cooper's Hawks** seem to be making a living in Richmond City with one outside of the Emergency Room at MCV Hospital tearing apart a **Rock Pigeon** 24 Dec (JK) and another observed on Carey Street chasing a flock of Rock Pigeons in Richmond City 14 Jan (AD). Forty-eight ad. and 13 imm. **Bald Eagles** and 12 **American Kestrels** were counted on the HoCBC. Two **Peregrine Falcons** were seen flying around and perching on the BB&T building at Ninth and Main Street in downtown Richmond 23 Feb the same location where the birds have successfully nested each of the last two years (BT). Two Peregrines were also noted in downtown Richmond 13 Feb (AB) and 2 were counted on the HoCBC. Overall, shorebirds were pretty scarce during the period with only one **American Woodcock** and 30 **Wilson's Snipe** reported on the HoCBC. In February, however, woodcocks were heard and seen routinely as they performed their mating displays in preparation for nesting. Two **Bonaparte's Gulls** and 2,003 **Laughing Gulls** were reported on the HoCBC. A high count of 10,138 **Ring-billed Gulls** was recorded on the HoCBC 19 Dec and a north-bound exodus of 1,145 was observed in a 45 minute period from the Green Springs Trail in *James City* 7 Feb (BW). On 16 Feb 150 **Herring Gulls** and 75 **Great Black-backed Gulls** were counted in the James R., Richmond City (AB). A probable **Glaucous Gull** was seen on the same day. The bird was well described, but the observer could not rule out a possible hybrid (AB). **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** are becoming more common and were regular all winter in the James R., Richmond City, with a high of four on 19 Feb (AB). Three **Forster's Terns** were recorded on the HoCBC. Six **Eurasian Collared-Doves** were seen at the intersection

of Longview Dr. and Woodland Dr. in *Isle of Wight* 7 Feb, the same location where they were discovered in August 2004 (AD). One **Short-eared Owl** was seen on Turkey Island Rd., *Chesterfield* 18 Feb (AB). A **Great Horned Owl** was observed using an old Osprey nest at Hog Island, *Surry* 19 Feb (MI, VG).

WOODPECKERS – FINCHES

Red-headed Woodpeckers were reported on several occasions including 10 on the HoCBC, a pair at Pocahontas S.P. 2 Jan (IR), single imms. there 5 Dec (WE) and on Saltwood Ct., *Henrico* 12 Jan (TT). Twelve **Eastern Phoebes** were counted on the HoCBC. **Tree Swallows** returned in late February and 46 were at Henricus 20 Feb (PB). A **Marsh Wren** was found during the HoCBC. A **House Wren** was seen near the James R., Richmond City 13 Feb (AB). An unusually late **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was seen on the HoCBC 19 Dec. An **Orange-crowned Warbler** was found along the entrance road to Henricus 15 Feb (LL). Presumably, the same bird was relocated in the same area 20 Feb (B&BS), while a second **Orange-crowned Warbler** was seen at Dutch Gap 20 Feb (PB). Ten **Fox Sparrows** were counted on the HoCBC. **Fox Sparrows** were also reported at Dutch Gap 27 Dec (A&LW) and one in Mechanicsville 24 Jan (MO). The HoCBC had 4 **White-crowned Sparrows** and some were also at Dutch Gap 27 Dec (A&LW). An ad. male **Baltimore Oriole** was present on the William & Mary campus in Williamsburg 3 Dec (DC). Another, an imm. male, was at a residence in *Chesterfield* 30 Dec & 4 Jan (PB). The HoCBC recorded 6 **Rusty Blackbirds** and 11 **Purple Finches**. A female **Purple Finch** was seen in a yard in Chester 11 Dec (JK).

Contributors: Tom Armour, Ruth Beck, Paul Bedell, Arun Bose, Bob & Linda Coles, Dan Cristol, Adam

D'Onofrio, Wendy Ealding, Vickie Gullet, Mike Iwanik, Julie Kacmarcik, Larry Lynch, Margaret O'Bryan, Irene Ries, Ben & Betsy Saunders, Brent Tarter, Tina Trice, Al & Linda Warfield, Gerry Weinberger, Ariel White, Bill Williams.

Coastal

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

EDITOR — Bob Ake, 6603 Catherine Street, Norfolk VA 23505 rake@cox.net

During the winter, three measurable snowfalls occurred in coastal Virginia, the most significant being the storm that put five inches on the ground in Norfolk the day after Christmas. Total precipitation was a significant 3.09 inches below normal on the heels of the 2.67 inch deficit for the last three months of the previous reporting period. Temperatures averaged 0.3 degree above normal for December, 1.6 degrees above normal for January, and 0.6 degree below normal for February. The north wind of 33 mph gusting to 49 mph on 19 Dec was the highest for the period with high winds also noted on 1 Dec, 13 and 14 Jan, and 16, 24, and 28 Feb. Although there was not a repeat of the large numbers of scoters witnessed last year, there was a nice sprinkling of Red-necked Grebes and Razorbills along the coast and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel (CBBT) throughout the period. There were crowd-pleasers like Cave Swallows on the Eastern Shore; Wilson's, Nashville, and Orange-crowned Warblers; the Western Tanager in Virginia Beach; and the Painted Bunting in Chesapeake. There were also rarities including a Mew

Gull in Virginia Beach, Common Murre along the CBBT, and a Northern Shrike on Fisherman's Island. It was nice to see so many Long-tailed Ducks on the CBBT, but disappointing and worrisome to see continuing lower numbers for American Kestrel and Northern Bobwhite.

Abbreviations: Back Bay (Back Bay NWR, Virginia Beach); BBCBC (Back Bay CBC); Cape Charles (Town of Cape Charles, *Northampton*); CBBT (Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel, s. of *Northampton*); CBCBC (Chesapeake Bay CBC); CCCBC (Cape Charles CBC); ChCBC (Chinc.CBC); Chinc. (Chincoteague N.W.R., *Accomack*), Craney (Craney Island landfill, Portsmouth); ESVNWR (Eastern Shore of Virginia N.W.R., *Northampton*); Kiptopeke (Kiptopeke State Park, *Northampton*); LCCBC (Little Creek CBC); NaCBC (Nansemond Riv.CBC); NNCBC (Newport News CBC); WaCBC (Wachapreague CBC).

WATERFOWL – CORMORANTS

A flight of 1550 **Snow Geese** was seen coming in from the ocean at Back Bay 7 Dec (DS). The high count of Snow Geese during the CBCs was 42,700 at WaCBC 18 Dec. Other counts included 11,000 Snow Geese with 65 blue morphs 30 Dec CCCBC; 6335 with 5 blue morphs 29 Dec ChCBC; 3250 with 2 blue morphs 29 Dec BBCBC. Three **Ross's Geese** were seen 30 Dec CCCBC and the 18 Dec WaCBC had one blue morph ♀. A count of 1183 **Brant** was recorded 29 Dec ChCBC. The newly recognized species, **Cackling Goose** ♀, was seen at Crystal Lake in Cape Charles during the CCCBC 30 Dec and was still present 9 Jan (KK). Very few **Mute Swans** have been present recently, but one was seen through the period at Eyre Hall, *Northampton*. On 18 Dec WaCBC had an unusually low count of two **Wood Ducks**, while on 30 Dec

CCCBC recorded a high count of 33. A drake **Eurasian Wigeon** dropped into a backyard marsh in Norfolk 25 Dec (DC). Another, discovered at ESVNWR during the CCCBC 30 Dec (BC, LC), remained through the period (m.ob.). A third appeared at Ridgeway Park in Hampton about 15 Jan and also remained through the period (BC). Single **Blue-winged Teal** were reported 29 Dec BBCBC and at Chinc. 21 Jan (CT), and two were seen 22 Feb at ESVNWR (AD). The 1625 **Canvasbacks** recorded on the 2 Jan NaCBC represents a concentration of a species scarce elsewhere in the region. A young male **Common Eider** was seen on CBBT 7 Dec (DCr). A **King Eider** and 6 Common Eiders were seen at the site of the former Smith Island lighthouse CCCBC 30 Dec (DCr). A imm. male **King Eider** was at Kiptopeke 26 Feb (BP, BPe). **Harlequin Ducks**, first recorded on the CBBT last period, continued with the pair seen 5 Dec (BTe, GAd, VK). Three were seen 26 Dec CBCBC and five birds first observed 2 Jan (BT) were seen through the end of the period (m.ob.). Total **scoter sp.** numbers were well below the record count of last year. High counts this year included 3087 CBCBC 26 Dec, 6900 CCCBC 30 Dec, 5500 CBBT 21 Jan (RA), and 558 there 19 Feb (HA). **Long-tailed Ducks** were reported in higher than average numbers with 250 on 21 Jan (RA) and 300 on 29 Jan (RS). A high count of 4449 **Buffleheads** was recorded at Chincoteague 29 Dec during the ChCBC. On 20 Feb 1100 were tallied near Mockhorn Island, *Northampton* (HA). **Northern Bobwhite** was reported in low numbers at Wachapreague, Chincoteague, and Cape Charles during their CBCs. A count of 4231 **Red-throated Loons**, including a three-minute flight of 710 recorded on the CCCBC 30 Dec, was the second highest in that count's history. A **Pacific Loon** was reported 31 Dec LCCBC. **Red-necked Grebes** were seen at Kiptopeke 1 Jan (SH, RD, FD, CF,

NB), along the CBBT 9 Jan (BL), 6 Feb (DC), 9 Feb (BW, MBy), two on 13 Feb (DH, NBa), 20 Feb (JC), three on 22 Feb (AD), in the surf at Back Bay 9 Jan (DC), and at Chinc. 19 Feb (GK, MK). For the third year in a row a **CLARK'S GREBE** ♀ was seen at Fort Story, Virginia Beach, 1 Jan, one day too late to be included in the LCCBC, (BA, TT). During a pelagic trip off Virginia Beach 26 Feb, 136 **Northern Fulmars** were seen (BP). An **American White Pelican** was seen by several parties during the CCCBC 30 Dec (WR, GA, SS, ph. BT). The winter's high count of Northern **Gannets** occurred during the BBCBC 29 Dec when 2045 were seen, while the high count of **Great Cormorants** was 77 on the CCCBC 30 Dec. Many observers remarked on the beautiful, hoary plumage of many individuals toward the end of the period including the 22 that remained on the CBBT 19 Feb (HA).

RAPTORS - ALCIDS

A count of 160 **Black Vultures** represented a new high for the CCCBC 30 Dec. Ospreys were reported in small numbers on the Newport News, Nansemond, and Little Creek CBCs, while none were reported on the Eastern Shore counts and at Back Bay. A **Northern Goshawk** was reported from Portsmouth 10 Dec (DM), and another was seen 1 Jan at Kiptopeke (NB, SH, RD, FD) with a reappearance at ESVNWR 9 Jan (KK). The numbers of **American Kestrel** recorded during the CCCBC continue to decline. A **Common Moorhen** was reported 30 Dec CCCBC (NB). The 157 **American Oystercatchers** tallied on CCCBC 30 Dec represents a low count, continuing a decline from counts of over 700. An **American Avocet** was observed at Craney 11 Dec (EE). A **Spotted Sandpiper** was seen during the CCCBC 30 Dec (SS). A group of 21 **Red Knots** were near Mockhorn Island, *Northampton*, 20 Feb (HA). The 17,354 **Dunlin** seen 30 Dec was



This Juvenile Iceland Gull on island 4 of the CBBT was digiscoped by Adam D'Onofrio using a Swarovski ATS 65 HD spotting scope and a Canon Powershot G5 digital camera. on 12/04/04.

the third highest count in the 40 years of the CCCBC. At Willis Wharf, Northampton 150+ **Marbled Godwits** were counted on 13 Feb (VK), with 197 there on 21 Feb along with 325 **Willetts** (HA). A **Long-billed Dowitcher** was reported 29 Dec during the ChCBC. A **Pomarine Jaeger** was recorded 26 Dec CBCBC. The last reports of **Laughing Gulls** were of 6 NNCBC 18 Dec and at least 4 in a large gull flock on the Nansemond R. Suffolk 21 Dec (LW). A **Black-headed Gull** was discovered at Lynnhaven Inlet, Virginia Beach 25 Feb (RF) and found again 27 Feb (ph. JF). Thousands of **Bonaparte's Gulls** appeared along the CBBT 12 Dec (*vide* NB) and hundreds were still being seen there 2 Jan (SH, RD, BT) and 21 Jan (RA). A **MEW GULL** ♀ was identified during the BBCBC 29 Dec (PS). If submitted and verified, it would become the third accepted record for Virginia. **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** continue to occur in large numbers at Back Bay with 65 on 7 Dec (DS), 76 on 29 Dec during the BBCBC, and 45 on 17 Feb (RA, DS). Away from the coast 16 Lesser Black-backed Gulls were recorded 2 Jan NaCBC. Two **Glaucous Gulls** were observed; one a second-winter bird was on pilings in

the James R., Suffolk NaCBC 2 Jan (RA) and the other was a first-winter bird on the CBBT (BT). A second-winter Glaucous Gull was reported from Ft. Story, Virginia Beach 6 Jan (DC). A first winter **Iceland Gull** was found on CBBT 5 Dec (M&SB, AD) and located again 10 Dec (DL). A second winter Iceland Gull was reported along the Nansemond R., Suffolk, 21 Dec (LW); an immature was seen 30 Dec at Oyster, Northampton, during the CCCBC (GA,WR); and one was present 20 Feb at Rudee Inlet, Virginia Beach along with 10 Lesser Black-backed Gulls (DC). A bird initially identified as an adult Iceland Gull 13 Feb was later felt to be a hybrid after a careful study of photographs (DH, ph. NBa, BA, NB). The Virginia Beach pelagic trip 26 Feb had an adult Iceland Gull and 281 flying **Dovekies** but only two **Black-legged Kittiwakes** (BP). The only **Royal Terns** reported on the CBCs were two 18 Dec NNCBC. A high count of 234 **Forster's Terns** was recorded 18 Dec WaCBC. A **COMMON MURRE** ♀ was seen from the CBBT 17 Jan (CZ). If submitted and accepted this sighting would represent the second record for this species for Virginia. What may have been the same bird popped up

along the second island of CBBT 2 Feb (DC). **Razorbills** were reported throughout the period with the first seen flying south over the ocean at Back Bay 5 Dec (SB), another in the surf there 9 Jan (DC), and still another 17 Feb (RA, DS). Others appeared along the CBBT with singles seen 31 Dec (SH, RD), 9 Jan (BL), 21 Jan (RA) and 22 Jan (DC, CT). Three Razorbills flew along the CBBT 6 Feb (DC), and a Razorbill was seen at Kiptopeke 20 Feb (RA, HA, BA, JS). Only 5 Razorbills were seen during the Virginia Beach pelagic 26 Feb, but 14 **Atlantic Puffins** were recorded (BP).

DOVES – WARBLERS

Four **Eurasian Collared Doves** were observed 18 Dec at the location in Sandbridge, Virginia Beach, where they were discovered last year (DC). A **Snowy Owl** was on the beach at Chinc. during the ChCBC 29 Dec (KT, TK, ph.DR), and a bird thought to be a different individual was seen 30 Dec on Ship Shoal Island CCCBC (JS, JC, KG, HA) and relocated 31 Dec (FS). A **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** appeared at a Cape Charles feeder in time for CCCBC 30 Dec (DF, RAY, TS) and stayed through 19 Jan. The **Black-chinned Hummingbird**, first reported during the last period, continued in Cape Charles, Northampton, until 19 Dec absenting itself for five days at one point (NB, m.ob.). A possible **CALLIOPE HUMMINGBIRD** ♀ visited a feeder in Suffolk 17 Dec (ph. LW), the same location visited in Dec 2002 by the state's only official record for this species. An adult **Northern Shrike** was discovered during the CCCBC 30 Dec (MS, v.t. BA). A winter **White-eyed Vireo** seen on BBCBC 29 Dec was more unusual than the **Blue-headed Vireos** seen 5 Dec at False Cape (EE, SB) and 31 Dec on LCCBC. Counts of **Horned Larks** on CBCs were considered low. **CAVE SWALLOWS** ♀ reported in November continued to be seen at Latimer Siding n. of ESNWR with

at least two dozen reported 2 Dec (KK), and 25 there 3 Dec (BA) and 5 Dec, with a single **Barn Swallow** and a few **Tree Swallows** (M&SB, AD, BT, GA). The 6 Cave Swallows seen at ESVNWR 3 Dec (BA) suggested possible roosting inside the bunkers. A group of 10-12 observed at Latimer Siding 12 Dec was the last observed at this location (DCr). A swallow of the genus *Petrochelidon* was seen on the Nansemond R. in Suffolk 1 Dec (LW). On 11 Dec at Craney two of seven *Petrochelidon* swallows were carefully identified as Cave Swallows (EE). **Brown-headed Nuthatch** appears to be declining on the Eastern Shore with only 11 recorded 29 Dec ChCBC and 9 recorded 30 Dec CCCBC. **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were well below their average numbers 30 Dec CCCBC. A **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was sighted in Suffolk 17 Dec (LW). The 35 **American Pipits** recorded 30 Dec CCCBC were significantly below their average numbers. An **Orange-crowned Warbler** visited a yard in Norfolk from 5-25 Dec (DC). It joined a **Nashville Warbler**, which appeared 27 Nov and remained until 13 Feb. Five Orange-crowned Warblers on CCCBC was high among the coastal CBCs. **Yellow-rumped Warblers** remain below their numbers of a few years ago. A **Black-throated Green Warbler** studied 2 Jan Suffolk (RA), is the first reported winter observation of this species for Virginia. Eight **Palm Warblers** 30 Dec was the second lowest count recorded in 40 years of CCCBCs. On 29 Dec only one Palm Warbler was recorded during the ChCBC, but 15 were counted the same day at BBCBC. Several **Black-and-white Warblers** were seen, one on 18 Dec NNCBC, two on 29 Dec BCBC and one in a mixed flock in Norfolk 15 Jan (RA). A male **Wilson's Warbler** appeared 31 Dec (NB, SH) at Cape Charles, a day late for the CCCBC, and was present through 21 Feb.



This is one of 3 Snow Buntings seen at First Landing State Park during the Little Creek CBC 12/31/04. Digiscoped by Adam D'Onofrio

TANAGERS - FINCHES

A male **WESTERN TANAGER** ♀ made a brief appearance at a feeder in Virginia Beach 22 Jan (KB), but a female Western Tanager came to another Virginia Beach feeder 9 Jan and stayed well past the end of the period (LP, ph. LW, m.ob.). The 44 **Field Sparrows** and the single **Vesper Sparrow** seen on CCCBC 30 Dec represent low counts. A **Lark Sparrow** visited backyard feeders in Chesapeake during the snow storm 26 Dec and perhaps the same bird again 30 Jan (KK). The 13 **Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows** identified 29 Dec ChCBC was a high count. The **LeConte's Sparrow** at BBCBC 29 Dec is nearly an annual occurrence. One or two **Snow Buntings** were seen on CBBT 5 Dec (GA, BT). Snow Buntings were recorded on three CBCs; 22 ChCBC 29 Dec; 3 LCCBC 31 Dec; and 6 NaCBC 2 Jan. A very early male **Indigo Bunting** came to a feeder in Hampton 24 Feb (BC). A male **PAINTED BUNTING** began coming to a feeder in Chesapeake around 1 Feb (SHu, ph. JF, banded PS, m.ob.) and remained through the end of the period. A very large mixed flock of blackbirds CCCBC 30 Dec contained an estimated 800,000 **Red-winged Blackbirds** and a million and a half **Common Grackles**. On 1 Jan a male and female **Yellow-headed Blackbird** were found with a huge blackbird flock w. of Cheriton, *Northampton* (NB). A flock of about 200 squeaking, mostly male, **Rusty Blackbirds** was observed 23 Feb in Great Dismal Swamp NWR (RA). A **Baltimore Oriole** was seen 18 Dec

NNCBC, and another appeared at a feeder in Chesapeake in mid Jan (ph. JSc, *fide* KB). During the CCCBC 6 **Red Crossbills** were recorded 30 Dec (GA). A **Common Redpoll** was briefly on the rocks of CBBT before it headed south 7 Dec (DCr). Twenty **Pine Siskins** visiting a Virginia Beach feeder 22 Feb is the region's high count this winter (AD). **House Sparrows** continue to decline with 52 recorded 30 Dec CCCBC.

Contributors: Gordy Adamski (GAd), Robert Ake, Bob Anderson, George Armistead, Harry Armistead, Richard Ayers (RAY), Nate Bacheler (NBa), Scott Baron, Karen Beatty, Mike & Sandra Boatwright, Ned Brinkley, Mitchell Byrd (MBy), Jack Carroll, David Clark, Bob & Linda Cole, Ben Copeland, Dan Cristol (DCr), Adam D'Onofrio, Fenton Day, Robin Diaz, Elisa Enders, Robert Ferrell, Dot Field, Chris Foster, John Fox, Kevin Graff, Steve Hairfield, Sue Heath, Dave Hewitt, Susan Hubbard (SHu), Teta Kain, Karen Kearney, Val Kitchens, Mary Alice Koeneke, Glen Koppel, Dan Lader, Bev Leeuwenberg, David Matson, Brian Patteson, Butch Pearce (BPe), Nylia Proescher, Dick Roberts, Will Russell, Tom Saunders, Janet Schmitt (JSc), Matt Sharp, Fletcher Smith, Ray Smith, Jared Sparks, Dorie Stolley, Sam Stuart, Brian Taber, Brenda Tekin (BTe), Karen Terwilliger, Thuy Tran, Craig Tufts, Bill Williams, Les Willis, Charles Ziegenfus



This adult male Painted Bunting was on Lambert Trail in Chesapeake, Va.. Digiscoped by Adam D'Onofrio on 2/22/05.

Virginia CBC Highlights

From Teta Kain, Coordinator for Virginia

Abbreviations:

CW = Count week only.
HC = Record high for that count.
NC = New to count.
ND = No details.
PH = Previous all-time high for that count.
UR = Under review by VARCOM.
US = Unusual record.

BB - Back Bay

Mew Gull - NC, UR.
HC - Lesser Black-backed Gull - 76 (PH = 34 in 2001).
US - White-eyed Vireo. First in 8 years.

BD - Blackford

HC - American Crow - 1657 (PH = 696 in 2003).
US, NC - Horned Lark.
HC - Northern Mockingbird - 51 (PH = 36 in 2001).

BI - Breaks Interstate Park

NC - Ring-necked Duck - 1.
NC - Black Vulture - 3.
HC - Turkey Vulture - 61 (PH = 20 in 2003).
US - Northern Mockingbird - 2. First since 1985.
US - Cedar Waxwing - 2. First since 1990.

BK - Brooke

US - King Rail - 1. First since 1973.
HC - Laughing Gull - 700 (PH = 475 in 2003).
US - Forster's Tern - 1. First since 16 in 1998. Second sighting.

BL - Blacksburg

US - Snow Goose (white morph). First since 1 in 1993.
Third time seen.
US, HC - Snow Goose (blue morph) - 3 (PH=2 in 1996).
Fourth time seen.
US, HC - Black-crowned Night-heron - 2. Species being found in the mountains more frequently in the winter.
US - Golden Eagle - 1. Second sighting.
US, NC - Bonaparte's Gull - 2.

BR - Banister River WMAs

US - Merlin - 1.
CW - Bonaparte's Gull.
US - Herring Gull - 3.
HC - Red-breasted Nuthatch - 18 (PH = 8 in 2001).
HC - Chipping Sparrow - 115 (PH = 70 in 2003)

CB - Chesapeake Bay

HC - Killdeer - 42 (PH = 1 in 1999).
HC = Pomarine Jaeger - 1.

CC - Cape Charles

HC - Snow Goose - 11,000 (PH = 943 in 1987).
US - Ross' Goose - 1. Third time seen.
HC - Common Eider - 6 (PH = 3 in 1985).
Red-throated Loon - 4231. Second highest; last year's 8076 = HC.
US - White Pelican. Second sighting; one in 1997.
US - Spot Sandpiper - 1. Eighth sighting.
US - jaeger, sp. Third sighting.
US - Iceland Gull. Fourth sighting.
US - Eurasian Collared-dove. Not noted as US; observed fairly frequently in the area past several years.
US, NC - Snowy Owl - 1. Different bird from one at Chincoteague.
US - Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Same feeder for second year in row.
US, NC - Northern Shrike. Still on Bridge-tunnel as late as 25 April.
HC - Redwing Blackbird - 800,000 (PH = 53,404 in 1993).
HC - Common Grackle - 1,500,000 (PH = 265,406 in 1998).

CH - Chancellorsville

HC - Mute Swan - 15 (PH = 10 in 2003).
HC - Lesser Scaup - 58 (PH = 13 in 1996).
HC - Common Merganser - 85 (PH = 43 in 2002).
HC - Brown Creeper - 37 (PH = 22 in 1979).
HC - Gold-crowned Kinglet - 168 (PH = 46 in 1997).
HC - American Goldfinch - 165 (PH = 76 in 1999).

CI - Chincoteague

HC - Bufflehead - 4,449 (PH = 3671 in 1989).
NC - Snowy Owl - 1. Different bird from Cape Charles.

CL - Central Loudoun

HC - Common Merganser - 127 (PH = 63 in 2003).
NC - Common Loon - 3.
HC - Mourning Dove - 931 (PH = 534 in 2002).
US - Long-eared Owl - 2.
US - Northern Saw-whet Owl - 1.
HC - Northern Cardinal - 1247 (PH = 693 in 2003).

CN - Calmes Neck

US, NC - Double-crested Cormorant - 1.

FB - Fort Belvoir

HC - Northern Pintail - 411 (PH = 299 in 2003).
US - American Bittern - 1. First since 1995. Fourth sighting.
LC - Bald Eagle - 79. Way down - has been in triple digits since 1995.
HC - Cooper's Hawk - 27 (PH = 13 in 2003).
US - Virginia Rail - 2. Six previous sightings.
US - Thayer's Gull - 1.
HC - Rock Pigeon - 2420 (PH = 727 in 1996).
US, NC - Rufous Hummingbird - 1.
US, NC - Common Raven - 2.

Continued on page 22

FI - Fincastle

US - Snow Goose - 1. Second sighting.
US - Barnacle Goose - 1. Good description; questionable origin.

GS - Glade Spring

US - Northern Pintail - 1. First since 1996.
US, NC - Black-crowned Night-heron - 2.
HC - Barn Owl - 5.
US, NC - Northern Saw-whet Owl. Only other was CW in 1992.

GO - Gordonsville

Huge roost of Black & Turkey Vultures. Probably well over 1000, but compiler went conservative with: Black - 272 (PH = 133 in 1994) and Turkey - 483 (PH = 170 in 1983).
HC - Bald eagle - 3 (PH = 1 in 2001).
HC - Fish Crow - 7 (PH = 2 in 2003).

HO - Hopewell

US - Ross' Goose - 1.
US, ND - Cackling Goose - 1.
HC - Bufflehead - 113 (PH = 68 in 1997).
US - Marsh Wren - 1.

LA - Lake Anna

No details on any of the rarities for this count.
US - Red-breast Merganser - 1.
HC - Herring Gull - 1659 (PH = 1200 in 2003).
US, ND - Lesser Black-backed Gull - 1. Second sighting.
HC - Great Black-backed Gull - 232 (PH = 90 in 2000).
US, ND - Black-capped Chickadee - 3. Second sighting.
US, ND - Brown Thrasher - 1.
US, ND - Common Yellowthroat. Second sighting.

LC - Little Creek

None significant.

LE - Lexington

US - Tundra Swan - 1.
US - Golden Eagle - 1. Second in 79 year count history.

MA - Mathews County

HC - Mute Swan - 12 (PH = 6 in 2001).
US - Black-crowned Night-heron - 1. Last seen 1997.

MB - Manassas-Bull Run

HC - Common Merganser - 94 (PH = 53 in 2003).
US - Black-crowned Night-heron - 1 (PH = 1 in 2003).
Second sighting.
HC - Horned lark - 62 (PH = 23 in 1981).
US, NC, ND - Palm Warbler - 1.
HC - Savannah Sparrow - 23 (PH = 12 in 1989).

MW - Mount Rogers-Whitetop

HC - Mallard - 57 (PH = 17 in 2002).
US, NC - Wilson's Snipe - 1.
US, NC - Ring-billed Gull - 7.
US, NC - Ruby-crowned Kinglet - 2.

NN - Newport News

HC - Turkey - 48 (PH = 25 in 2002).
US, ND - Osprey - 2. Fifth sighting.
US, HC - American Oystercatcher - 2. Second sighting; last was 1 in 1961.
US - Lesser Black-backed Gull - 1. Second sighting.
US - Royal Tern - 2. Second sighting since 1991.
US - Black -and-white Warbler - 1.
Baltimore Oriole - 1. First since 1984.

NR - Nansemond River

HC - Black Vulture - 139 (PH = 85 in 1995).
US, NC - Glaucous Gull - 1.
HC - Gold-crowned Kinglet - 90 (PH = 68 in 1997).
US - Black-throated Green Warbler. Limited details.

NS - Northern Shenandoah Valley

USNC - Cackling Goose - 2.
US, NC - Blue-winged Teal - 1.
HC - Common Goldeneye - 31 (PH = 10 in 1997).
US - Northern Goshawk - 1. Fourth sighting.
HC - Red-shouldered Hawk - 29 (PH = 15 in 2003).
US - Golden Eagle - 1. Second sighting.
US, NC - Orange-crowned Warbler - 1.
US - Brewer's Blackbird - 1. Fifth sighting.

RC - Rockingham County

HC - Mallard - 774 (PH = 401 in 1993).
US, NC - Merlin - 2.
US, NC - Peregrine Falcon - 1.
US, CW - Common Redpoll.

SL - Shenandoah NP - Luray

US, ND - Cackling Goose - 3.
HC - Northern Pintail - 16 (PH = 6 in 2000).
Low count: Turkey Vulture - 94; usually around 300.
US - Merlin - 1. Third sighting.
US - Short-eared Owl - 1. Second sighting; 1 in 1987.
US - Red-Head Woodpecker. Seventh sighting.
HC - Fish Crow - 56 (PH = 38 in 2001).
US - Lapland Longspur - 2. third sighting.
US - Brewer's Blackbird - 3. Fourth sighting.
US, NC - Northern Saw-whet Owl - 1.

TA- Tazewell

HC - Canada Goose - 331 (PH = 163 in 2002).
US, HC - Northern Pintail - 3 (PH = 1 in 2002) Second

Continued from page 22

sighting.

- HC - Wild Turkey - 43 (PH = 19 in 1995).
- HC - Pied-billed Grebe - 13 (PH = 6 in 2001).
- HC - Black Vulture - 36 (PH = 14 in 1998).
- US, NC, ND - Northern Goshawk - 1.

TP - The Plains

- HC - Great Blue Heron- 29 (PH=25 in 2003).
- US - Thayer's Gull - 1.
- HC - White-crowned Sparrow - 374 (PH = 134 in 2000).

WA - Walkerton

- HC - Canada Goose - 7690 (PH = 6032 in 2002).
- HC - Lesser Scaup - 19 (PH = 9 in 2003).
- HC - Bufflehead - 98 (PH = 54 in 2002).
- HC - Black Vulture - 205 (PH = 151 in 2003).
- HC - Bald Eagle - 47 (PH = 35 in 2003).
- HC - American Coot - 21 (PH = 12 in 2002).
- HC - Greater Yellowleg - 50 (PH = 33 in 2003).
- HC - Least Sandpiper - 38 (PH = 1 in 1998).
- US, NC - Dunlin - 200.
- US, NC - Short-billed Dowitch - 1.
- HC - Wilson's Snipe - 137 - (PH = 81 in 2002).
- HC - American Woodcock - 14 (PH = 6 in 2003).
- US, NC - Greater Back-backed Gull- 1.
- HC - Winter Wren - 27 (PH = 16 in 2003).
- US, NC - Common Yellthroat - 1.
- HC - Savannah Sparrow - 72 (PH = 55 in 2003).
- HC - Northern Cardinal- 493 - (PH = 295 in 2002).
- HC - Purple Finch - 12 (PH = 1 in 2003).
- HC - House Sparrow - 78 (PH = 32 in 2001).

WB - Washington's Birthplace

- HC - Eastern Screech-owl - 12 (PH = 5 in 2002)
- HC - Belted Kingfish - 25 (PH = 16 in 1999).
- HC - Savannah Sparrow - 169 (PH = 46 in 2002).
- US, NC - LeConte's Sparrow - 1.
- HC - Song Sparrow - 399 (PH = 217 in 2002).
- US, NC - Lincoln's Sparrow - 1.
- HC - Northern Cardinal - 293 (PH = 196 in 1995).
- US, NC - Pine Siskin - 2.

WC - Wise County

- HC - Turkey Vulture - 38 (PH = 3 in 1984).

WI - Williamsburg

- HC - Mute Swan - 56 (PH = 27 in 2003).
- US, NC - Ruddy Turnstone - 1.
- US - Selasphorus, sp. - 2, (1 in 2001).
- HC - Chipping Sparrow - 162 (PH = in 2003).
- US, NC - Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow - 2.

WP - Wachapreague

- HC - Snow Goose - 42700 (PH = 17,868 in 1998).
- US, NC, ND - Ross' Goose - 1.
- HC - Red-throated Loon - 240 (PH = 165 in 1997).
- US - Whimbrel - 2.
- HC - Foster's Tern - 234 (PH = 157 in 1998).
- HC - Brown-headed Cowbird - 713 (PH = 431 in 1988).

WY - Waynesboro

Nothing significant.

Submissions

Send all bird sighting reports to the appropriate regional editor.

Photographs should be the highest quality electronic copies whenever possible (tiff or eps preferred). 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: www.virginiabirds.net

Articles for consideration can be sent to vsoeditors@comcast.net.