



# Virginia Birds

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**Volume 1, Number 4  
Spring Records Mar – May 2005**

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by Teta Kain**

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## Editors' Notes

Spring made a somewhat delayed entrance in many parts of the state, with cooler than normal weather, a late migrant push, and few new early arrival dates noted by most of our Regional Editors. In the southwest, a late April storm even brought three inches of snow with unfortunate effects on eggs and nestlings. Following a winter marked by a number of rarities and records, this period was characterized more by the expected; returning migrants and departing wintering birds. There were, however, some unusual reports including a "micro-Invasion" of Clay-colored Sparrows in the Central Region which provided the first and second spring records of this species for the Piedmont. Cattle Egret and Blue Grosbeak were both unusual species for the Southwest Region, as were Pacific Loon, Mississippi Kite, Sandhill Crane and Lark Sparrow in the South Central Region. In the North, Common Merganser was again confirmed breeding along the Potomac River, furnishing a Maryland-Virginia record for the second consecutive year. Observers there also enjoyed Olive-sided Flycatcher, Alder Flycatcher, a late Brown Creeper, an early Lincoln's Sparrow, and a late Pine Siskin. Red-throated Loon and Eared Grebe were interesting finds in the West Region as was Common Eider in the East.

Bob Ake recently advised us that he will not be able to continue as the Coastal Region Editor due to his intense travel schedule. We will miss him greatly Bob was a tremendous help when we were grappling with the whole concept of *Virginia Birds* and particularly provided insightful suggestions regarding how to divide the state. His coverage of the coastal area has been thorough and masterful. We cannot thank him enough for his contributions to this publication. Fortunately, Bill Williams, has agreed to take on the Coastal Region. Bill is the founder of the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory and a founding member of the Williamsburg Bird Club. He established the Kiptopeke Hawk Watch, served as its director from 1977 to 2002, and has been the Director of the Virginia Barrier Islands Colonial Waterbirds Survey since 1975. He is a past president of the Virginia Society of Ornithology, currently chairs its Education Committee, and is serving his fifth term on the Virginia Avian Records Committee (VARCOM). Bill holds a Masters Degree in Biology from the College of William and Mary. We are very lucky to have a birder with his experience join our publication.

Christmas Bird Counts may seem an odd topic for our spring issue, but by the time you receive this the winter season will not be far off. So it seems like a good time to remind our readers that Christmas Bird Counts provide invaluable information on avian status and distribution that can only be gained by having many volunteers in the field counting. You will find contact information for almost all the Virginia Christmas Bird Counts on the VSO website at [www.virginiabirds.net](http://www.virginiabirds.net). Please consider volunteering for one or more. And whether you are a count veteran or novice check out Teta Kain's article on page 3. As the Regional Editor for Audubon Christmas Counts in Virginia and DC, Teta is faced ever year with count reports which include "rare" species without sufficient documentation to become official records. In her article she explains when documentation is needed (more often than you might think) and offers helpful suggestion on how to document sightings so that your important finds become part of Virginia's avian record.

Good birding

Linda Fields and Alan Schreck

**Cover Photo:** These Tundra Swans, part of a group of eleven on Silver Lake 6 March, provided a new high count for Rockingham County. Photo by Brenda Tekin.



# CHRISTMAS COUNT DOCUMENTATION DEMYSTIFIED

Christmas Bird count compilers and observers alike seem to be uncertain about the proper procedure for submitting documentation on rarities seen during counts. Often a rare bird is included in the count data with little or no detail. Such reports cannot be accepted by the Virginia Avian Records Committee (VARCOM) and may not even get beyond the compiler or the regional editor. Thus a great find does not become part of the record. It is not fun to write documentation on rarities, but it does become easier with practice and by having an idea of what is expected. Here are some guidelines to keep in mind.

## WHEN to Document

- The species has never been observed Virginia.
- The species has never been observed in your area.
- The species has occurred in Virginia less than 10 times.
- The species is new to the count (no matter how common it is at other times).
- The species was common on the count in the past but has not been found for many years.
- The species appears on the count sporadically but has not been recorded for the last five to seven years.
- The species is out of season.
- The species is out of range (for example a Forster's Tern on a mountain count).
- There are an unusual number of individuals of a species.
- If you are thinking, "Wow, this is a great bird to find!"

It's better to write documentation and find out that it is not needed, than to not document and discover that you should have. Don't wait. Write the documentation in the field. If possible, write it while you are looking at the bird, or immediately afterwards, while your memory of the details is fresh.

## HOW to Document

- If possible, use one of the rarities report forms furnished by either Audubon or VARCOM. Audubon usually sends a form to each compiler to copy and provide to count participants. The VARCOM form is available on the Web at [www.virginiabird.org](http://www.virginiabird.org).
- If you do not have a form, take field notes on anything and transcribe them to the form or letter-size paper later.
- If you find it easier to write a narrative than to fill in

blanks, simply flip the form over and write the details on the back.

## Give a thorough description of the bird:

- Describe the field marks that make you believe it is the species you've named.
- Try sketching the bird, pointing out different field marks with arrows and notes. The quality of the artwork is not important.
- Compare the bird with any similar species and explain how the field marks differ.
- Describe the bird's behavior.
- If applicable, compare the behavior with that of nearby birds.
- Describe viewing conditions (good/bad light, back-lighting, fog, glare, etc.).
- Describe the habitat in which the bird is observed.
- Briefly describe optics used, just the type of instrument (binoculars, scope, etc.) and the magnification.
- Include the opinions of other observers.
- Make every effort to get a photograph.
- Even if you do photograph the bird, a field sketch can also be helpful and enhance your written description.
- Give the documentation to the compiler at the conclusion of the count. DO NOT send your report to Audubon or the regional editor.

## More Tips for Count Participants

- Write legibly, using a waterproof pen or sharp pencil and press down firmly so the report can be photocopied.
- Use field guides to determine what field marks are diagnostic. Compare field guides; often pictures and descriptions vary greatly from one guide to another.
- Do not write, "It looked just like the picture in the book!" Instead, make note of the features that do and do not match those in the books. There are often variances and these could be important in your process of identification.
- Be honest. We seldom see every single field mark on a bird. Simply say you didn't note certain features or you couldn't see them for whatever reason.
- Be nice. Sarcasm doesn't sit well with reviewers and is not going to help to get your report accepted.

*Continued on Page 4*



## Some Suggestions for Count Compilers

You can help participants immeasurably by providing them with forms and information about documentation. There are several things compilers might do to help observers with this process:

- Inform participants before the count that documentation of rarities is required and that records are subject to review.
- Make copies of the rarities forms provided by Audubon and see that each field party has one or more copies.
- Highlight the species that require documentation on field lists by underlining or boldfacing the species or placing an asterisk beside it.
- Instruct participants to turn in any rarity reports to you at the conclusion of the count.
- Review rarity reports and coordinate with observers to ensure all details needed are on the forms.

• Send all count documentation, photos, sketches, and any other materials to the regional compiler: Teta Kain, VA-DC Regional Count Editor, 7083 Caffee Creek Lane, Gloucester, VA 23061. Electronic rarities reports and photographs should be sent to [teta@vims.edu](mailto:teta@vims.edu).

• DO NOT send any documentation to the National Audubon office.

If needed, a compiler may obtain complete data of his or her count either as an electronic spreadsheet or a hard copy by contacting the Regional Count Editor at the address or e-mail above.

In reality writing documentation is not much fun for most of us. But having a great find become an accepted record is.

—Teta Kain, Regional Count Editor, Virginia, DC  
*Audubon Christmas Counts*

## Spring Reporting Period Mar – May 2005

**Editor's Note:** Some reports in this issue make reference to Virginia's physiographic provinces or zones. Within the North Region the boundaries of these zones are roughly as follows: The Mountains and Valleys Zone includes Shenandoah, Frederick, Page, Warren, and Clarke Counties and small portions of western Madison, Rappahannock, Fauquier, and Loudoun counties. The Piedmont Zone includes the remainder of Madison, Rappahannock, Fauquier, and Loudoun, all of Culpeper, the western portions of Stafford, Prince William and Fairfax and most of Arlington. The Coastal Zone includes the eastern portions of Stafford, Prince William, and Fairfax and a small part of Arlington County. The boundary between the Piedmont and Coastal zones is the fall line, which is, where the water is no longer tidal. Interstate 95 follows this line, probably because cities popped up where rivers could turn mills, and boats could still reach them from the ocean. A map of physiographic provinces for the entire state can be found on the VARCOM website at [www.virginiabirds.org](http://www.virginiabirds.org). Select Review List and click on the physiographic provinces link.

### 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.

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Weather conditions for this season were typical except for May, which was cooler and wetter than nor-

mal; with some evidence that migration was drawn out and perhaps slightly delayed because of this. Normal conditions returned near the end of May. Unusual reports for this season were, Black-necked Stilt, Long-billed Dowitcher, Bicknell's Thrush and regional confirmation of breeding Common Merganser. Some other interesting sightings were Long-tailed Duck, Red-necked Grebe, Cattle Egret, Northern Goshawk, Common Moorhen, California Gull, Iceland Gull, continued Short-eared Owl spectacle, Chuck-wills-widow, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Alder Flycatcher, late Brown Creeper, Lawrence's Warbler, an excellent Mourning Warbler flight, an early Lincoln's Sparrow, Brewer's

Blackbird, and a late Pine Siskin. A total of 232 species were reported.

**Abbreviations:** Battlefield (Manassas National Battlefield Park, *Prince William*); Beaverdam (Beaverdam Reservoir, *Loudoun*); Blandy (Virginia State Arboreteum – Blandy Experimental Farm, *Clarke*); BRCS (Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Science, *Loudoun*); Dyke (Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, *Fairfax*); Dulles Wetlands (Dulles Greenway Wetlands Mitigation Bank, *Loudoun*); Great Falls (Great Falls NP, *Fairfax*); Harrison (Harrison Rd, *Fauquier*); HCM (Hunting Creek Mudflats, *Fairfax*); Huntley (Huntley Meadows, *Fairfax*); Lee (Leesylvania SP, *Prince William*); Metz (Julie Metz Mitigation



Bank, *Prince William*); MNNWR (Mason Neck NWR, *Fairfax*); MNSP (Mason Neck SP, *Fairfax*); Monticello (Monticello Park, Alexandria); OBNWR (Ocoquan Bay NWR, *Prince William*); Overlook (Potomac Overlook Park, *Arlington*); Phelps (Phelps WMA, *Fauquier*); Prince (Prince William Forest Park, *Prince William*); Pohick (Pohick Bay Northern Virginia Regional Park, *Fairfax*); Riverbend (Riverbend County Park, *Fairfax*); Sky Meadows (Sky Meadows State Park, *Fauquier*); Smith (Fort CF Smith Park, *Arlington*); SNP (Shenandoah National Park, *Rappahannock*); The Point (along Possum Point and Cockpit Roads, *Prince William*); Thompson (Thompson WMA, *Fauquier* unless noted); White Oaks (White Oak Park, *Fairfax*)

### Ducks – Hawks

Two **Snow Geese** were spotted at Gravelly Point, *Arlington* on 29 Mar (SL). **Canada Goose** migration was still strong through the first half of March with about 2000 noted on Harrison 17 Mar (TD). **Mute Swan** movements were noted at Pohick 10 Apr (DKG, JK) and *Fauquier* 10 May (TD). The last **Tundra Swan** was on Quantico Cr., *Prince William* 9 Apr (JK). Unusual were 2 **Long-tailed Ducks** on Beaverdam 26 Mar (GK, MAK). **Hooded Merganser** breeding was confirmed at three locations: Phelps 8 Apr (TD), Huntley 26 Apr (CF), and Quantico Cr. 22 May (DKG). Once again, **Common Merganser** bred on the Potomac near Riverbend given the observation of a female with 17 ducklings in the water near the park on 12 May (DT). This implies a second, consecutive regional Virginia-Maryland breeding record and probably two nests. The dates and places for the last observations of non-breeding ducks were: **Gadwall** Airlie and Harrison 23 Apr (TD, SH); **American Wigeon** Belmont Bay, *Fairfax* 26 Mar (DKG); **American Black Duck** Quantico Cr. 14 May

(JK); **Blue-winged Teal** Bluemont, *Loudoun* 4 May (JC); **Northern Shoveler** Metz 2 Apr (DKG, JK); **Northern Pintail** Huntley 21 Mar (CF); **Green-winged Teal** Quantico Cr. and Metz 16 Apr (DKG, JK, RR); **Canvasback** Belmont Bay 6 Apr (DKG); **Redhead** Belmont Bay 26 Mar (DKG); **Ring-necked Duck** Airlie 14 May (SH, TD, IT); **Greater Scaup** Dyke 4 Apr (EE); **Lesser Scaup** Quantico Cr. and Belmont Bay 28 May (DKG), and 1400 were counted on Belmont Bay 13 Mar (DKG); **Bufflehead** Belmont Bay 15 May (GK, MAK); **Common Merganser** male on Belmont Bay 7 May (DKG, JK, MR, RR); **Red-breasted Merganser** Beaverdam 14 May (GK, MAK), and 160 were on Belmont Bay 26 Mar (DKG); **Ruddy Duck** Lee 7 May (DKG, JK, MR, RR). The start of **Common Loon** migration was noted at OBNMR and Beaverdam 26 Mar (GK, MAK) and the last report was at Huntley 10 May (*fide* CF). Thirty were counted on Belmont Bay 30 Apr (DKG). **Pied-billed Grebe** was last noted at Dyke 2 May (RM). **Horned Grebe** migration spanned Lee, 12 Mar (MR), to Belmont Bay, 6 Apr (DKG) with five reports. A single **Red-necked Grebe** was at Belmont Bay 6 Apr (DKG). A high count of 600 **Double-crested Cormorants** was noted on Belmont Bay 22 Apr (SB). There were five reports of **American Bittern** that stretched from Sunrise Valley Park, *Fairfax* 26 Mar (WB) to Riverside Park, *Loudoun* 6 Apr (AR). **Least Bittern** was first reported at Metz 7 May (DKG) and the next report was at Neabsco Cr., *Prince William* 30 May (MR). The 2004 **Great Blue Heron** nests at MNNWR, surveyed in early 2005, yielded about 1050 (*fide* JW). Two **Great Egrets** appeared at Huntley 26 Mar (VK) and nesting was noted at MNNWR (JW). A single **Snowy Egret** and a **Little Blue Heron** were reported from Huntley 7 Apr (GW). A **Cattle Egret** was noted on Loudoun County Parkway, *Loudoun* 7 May

### 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)

BBS – breeding bird survey

CBC – Christmas Bird Count

Cr. – Creek

et al. – and others

*fide* – vouched by

Ft. – Fort

Hwy. – Highway

I. – Island(s), Isle(s)

imm. (imms.) – immature(s)

Jct. – Junction

juv. (juvs.) – juvenile(s)

L. – Lake

MAPS – Monitoring Avian

Productivity and Survivorship

m.ob. – many/multiple observers

Mt. – Mountain, Mount

NWR – National Wildlife Refuge

p.a. – pending acceptance

ph. – photographed (by + initials)

Pt. – Point

R. – River

Res. – Reservoir

Rte. – Route

SF – State Forest

SP – State Park

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

♣ – VARCOM Review List Bird

† – written details submitted

\* – specimen collected

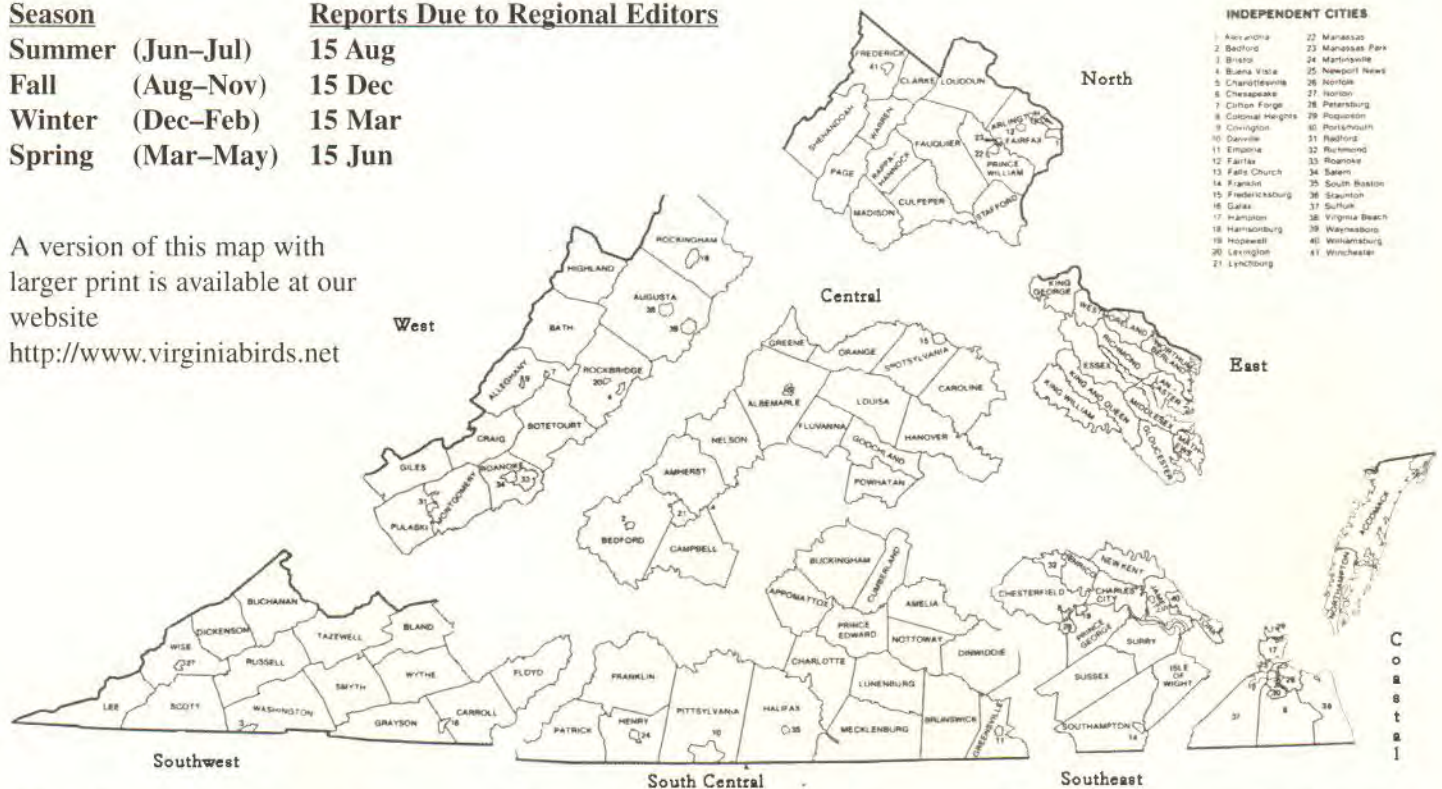
#### Submissions

Send reports and photographs to the Regional Editors. Photographs should be the highest electronic quality possible. Do not imbed photos in email or text (attachments are fine). Send with release form, which can be found on the VSO web site: [www.virginiabirds.net](http://www.virginiabirds.net) Articles for consideration can be sent to [vsoditors@comcast.net](mailto:vsoditors@comcast.net)



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>



(AR). **Green Heron** arrival was marked at Sunrise Valley Park 8 May (JK). **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** returned to Folly Lick Park, *Fairfax* 28 Mar and one nest was occupied and another under construction 15 Apr (AH). This species was also observed at Metz 30 Apr (DKG, MR). **Glossy Ibis** was at Huntley 26 Apr (SM) and two birds were reported from the unusual location of Riverside Park 14 May (JD), with three there 16 May (RW). **Mississippi Kite** entered the region at Waynewood, *Fairfax* 3 May (RA). Spring **Bald Eagle** boat surveys on the Potomac found no appreciable change in population from last year (JW). The last **Northern Harrier** and **Sharp-shinned Hawk** were reported from Huntley (GK, MAK) and Lee (MR), respectively, 15 May. A **Northern Goshawk** was carefully noted at Battlefield 17 Apr (CT). **Broad-winged Hawk** was first reported at *Fauquier* and Vienna 15 Apr (SH, LM) and the last migrant was near MNSP 7 May (DKG, JK, MR, RR). **Merlin** was observed in *Arlington* on 20 Mar (PP), present for some time; Marshall, *Fauquier* 23 Apr (SH, TD); and Phelps 1 May (BD,

SH, PS). **Peregrine Falcon** was reported in *Arlington* near the Potomac 15 Apr (BJ) and at Smith 26 May (PB, VK).

### Rails – Flycatchers

Eight **King Rails** were noted at OBNWR 9 Apr (DKG, JK). Both **Virginia Rail** and **Sora** were first noted 10 Apr at OBNWR (JK) and Cedar Run Wetlands, *Prince William* (SH). Virginia Rail was last reported at Sky Meadows 14 May (SH, TD, IT) and **Sora** was last heard at Blandly 15 May (SB). The single **Common Moorhen** observation was of a road-killed individual in the Piedmont *Stafford* 24 Apr (*vide* LK). The latest report of **American Coot** was at Dyke 24 Apr (RR). A **Sandhill Crane** was found in s. *Stafford*, about 3 miles e. of Fredericksburg near Rtes. 3 & 601 22 May (PN) and noted through 25 May (JF). A flock of 20 **Semipalmated Plovers** was at Dyke 22 May (DKG) and the species was reported to the end of the month. **Black-necked Stilt** was an amazing find at OBNWR 28 Apr (CH, JH). A regional peak count of 50 **Greater Yellowlegs** was noted at Metz 10 Apr

(DKG) and last reported at Huntley 21 May (LM, m.ob.). Reports of **Lesser Yellowlegs** spanned from Quantico Cr. 6 Apr (DKG, JK, RR) to Centreville, *Fairfax* (GK, MAK) and Blandly 15 May (SB) with a peak count of 40 in Harrison 1 May (SH). The arrival dates for shorebirds that were present to the end of the reporting period were: **Solitary Sandpiper** North Fork Wetlands, *Prince William* 9 Apr (DKG, LM); **Spotted Sandpiper** Dyke 10 Apr (LC); **Semipalmated Sandpiper** Huntley 1 May (CF); and **Least Sandpiper** Harrison Rd 1 May (SH). **Pectoral Sandpiper** arrived in *Frederick* 2 Apr (SH, B JL, JL) and the last report was of six individuals in Dulles Wetlands 14 May (*vide* JC). The International Migratory Bird Count in *Loudoun* tallied 35 Solitary Sandpipers and 20 Semipalmated Sandpipers 14 May (*vide* JC). A **Long-billed Dowitcher** was reported from Blandly 3 May (B JL, JL). **Wilson's Snipe** was last spotted at Dulles Wetlands 8 May (GK, MAK). **Laughing Gulls** arrived at HCM 27 Mar (DKG) and were present throughout the period. **Bonaparte's Gull** was first noted at



Dyke 20 Mar (RR) and was last noted over Belmont Bay 27 Apr (DKG). **California Gull**, possibly the same individual from the previous reporting period, was noted at the HCM 13 Mar (DKG), 14 Mar (JK) and 20 Mar (RR). Migrating **Herring Gulls** were noted at Airlie 23 Apr (TD, SH) and the species was likely present along the Potomac throughout this reporting season. Two **Iceland Gulls** were noted at widely separated locations on 16 Apr: one at Prince William County Sanitary Landfill, *Prince William* and the other at HCM (both DKG, RR). **Caspian Tern** arrived at Dyke 1 Apr (*fide* DKG) and was present throughout the reporting period. **Royal Terns** were noted at Lee 31 Mar (RW) and the last report was over Neabsco Cr. 24 Apr (DK). One or two individuals were typically noted in each of the five reports. Northbound **Forster's Terns** were spotted over Quantico Cr. 2 Apr (DKG, JK) and were last reported at Dyke 21 May (*fide* DKG). An interesting pair of Piedmont migrants were noted at Phelps 1 May (BD, SH, PS). **Black-billed Cuckoo** was first reported at The Point 1 May (DKG, JK, RR) and the last of the seven reports was from Monticello 29 May (PK). **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** was noted at Phelps (TD) and at Monticello (SJ) on 28 Apr, and 17 were counted at Huntley 10 May (*fide* CF). The **Short-eared Owl** spectacle continued at Rectorstown, *Fauquier* with 24 noted on 4 Mar and 15 on 17 Mar (TD). **Common Nighthawk** arrived at the Tyson's Corner site 1 May (PW) and was last reported in *Loudoun* 27 May (CH, JH). An unusual **Chuck-will's-widow** was found at Prince (Liming Rd.) 1 May (MM) and was last reported 28 May (DKG). **Whip-poor-will** reports began 17 Apr with 2 at Prince. **Chimney Swift** arrived at Fredericksburg 7 Apr (JG) and about 580 were noted in Oakton, *Fairfax* 30 Apr (FA). The first **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** was reported in Woodbridge, *Prince William* 20 Apr

(MR). The last Coastal Zone report of **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was at Monticello 23 Apr (RG) and the last Mountain Zone report was in SNP 28 Apr (DKG). The only **Olive-sided Flycatcher** report was from Riverbend 26 May (JK). **Eastern Wood Pewee** was first noted at Battlefield (LM, m.ob.). **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** was reported at Ashburn, *Loudoun* 21 May (JD) and Lee 27 May (DKG, MR). **Acadian Flycatcher** arrived at MNSP 23 Apr (DKG). Two **Alder Flycatchers** were confirmed by vocalization; one noted at Metz 22 May (MR) and the other at The Point 28 May (DKG). Given the large Alder Flycatcher population in North America it is very likely that many more silent individuals passed through the area over a wider date range. **Willow Flycatcher** arrived at Metz 14 May (JK). **Least Flycatcher** reports began with Thompson, *Warren* (SH, TD, IT) and Banshee-Reeks Park, *Loudoun* (VON) 14 May and ended with The Point 28 May (DKG); nine reports. Returning **Eastern Phoebe**s were noted in Warrenton, *Fauquier* 10 Mar (TD) and soon followed in the Ridge-Valley Zone *Shenandoah* 16 Mar (DD). **Great Crested Flycatcher** arrived in *Loudoun* 20 Apr (MAG) and in *Shenandoah* 1 May (DD). **Eastern Kingbird** was at OBNWR 9 Apr (GH).

### Vireos – Finches

**White-eyed Vireo** arrived at Metz 2 Apr (DKG, JK). **Yellow-throated Vireo** arrived at MNSP 15 Apr (DKG). The last Piedmont **Blue-headed Vireo** was in Ashburn 11 May (JD); four May Coastal/Piedmont Zone records. **Warbling Vireo** was first noted at Smith 19 Apr (JK). The two **Philadelphia Vireo** sightings were at Smith 16 May (JK) and Monticello 27 May (DKG, m.ob.). **Red-eyed Vireo** was found at The Point 16 Apr (DKG, JK, RR), and 82 were at Huntley 10 May (*fide* CF). **Blue Jay** migration

appears to have peaked with 80 birds at Dyke 23 Apr (RR) and 120 birds at BRCES 21 May (DKG, JK, RR), and evidence of continued migration at Lee 27 May with 12 northbound birds noted (DKG, MR). At least 5 **Common Ravens** were observed away from the mountains during the season: Western *Fairfax* 10 Mar (DB), nw *Prince William* 13 Mar (DKG), near Warrenton 30 Mar (BA, TD), Dulles 16 Apr (JC), and Battlefield 7 May (LM). **Horned Larks** were in several locations: near Remington, *Fauquier* 5 Mar (JK); Nokesville, *Prince William* 27 Mar (DKG); OBNWR 22 Apr (JF); *Loudoun* 14 May (GK, MAK); and *Stafford* 27 May (DKG). Some of these reports may refer to migrants. **Purple Martin** arrived in Hamilton, *Loudoun* 24 Mar (IT). **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** arrived at The Point and Metz 26 Mar (DKG). **Bank Swallow** arrived at MNSP 27 Apr (DKG) and was last at Dyke 29 May (MR). **Cliff Swallows** arrived at their traditional Rte. 7 nesting site in *Clarke* 21 Apr (VK, PB, BK) and were last seen in migration from Lee, Great Falls, and Dyke 1 May (SB, DKG, JK, KP, MR, VON). **Barn Swallow** arrived at Neabsco Cr. 26 Mar (DKG, MR). There were three **Red-breasted Nuthatch** reports: *Fairfax* 10 Apr (BH), Alexandria 11 Apr (VON), and The Point 7 May (DKG, JK, MR, RR). Three **Brown Creepers** were reported at Riverbend 10 Apr (SB) and a single bird was noted at White Oaks 23 May (BJ, MM). The latter may be evidence of a vestigial population along the upper Potomac. **House Wren** was first reported from MNSP 6 Apr (JB). Coastal and Piedmont Zone **Winter Wren** reports ended with a Great Falls NP sighting 25 Apr (JK) and the species was also noted in SNP 28 Apr (DKG). **Marsh Wren** arrival was recorded at Dyke 17 Apr (JK). The last **Golden-crowned Kinglet** reported was at Dyke (LC). A late-ish **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** was noted in Ashburn,



Loudoun 11 May (JD). **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was first reported at Phelps 30 Mar (TD, SH); 90 were at Huntley 10 May (*vide* CF). **Veery** arrived at The Point 17 Apr (DKG) and the last migrant was also tallied there 7 May (DKG, JK, MR, RR). Possible Piedmont breeding of this species is indicated by the sighting of one in Prince 28 May (DKG). **Bicknell's Thrush** was identified by song at Ashburn 21 May (JD). **Gray-checked Thrush** migration dates were bracketed by Overlook (JK) 4 May and White Oaks (JF) 31 May, with a high count of 40 overhead migrants heard at Warrenton, *Fauquier* the evening of 26 May (TD). **Swainson's Thrush** migration stretched from Monticello 8 May (*vide* SH) to White Oaks 31 May (JF); a high count of 10 was noted at Huntley 17 May (BJ). The last **Hermit Thrush** was noted at Lee (MR) and White Oaks (BJ) 3 May. **Wood Thrush** arrived at MNSP 15 Apr (DKG). **Gray Catbird** was noted at Dyke 6 Mar (LC), 13 & 30 Mar (JK), which could be either over-wintering birds or early migrants. Regular migration of this species became obvious at White Oaks (BJ) and MNSP 23 Apr (DKG); 36 were counted at Huntley 10 May (*vide* CF). **Brown Thrasher** migration began at Sky Meadows 22 Mar (JB). The only **American Pipit** report was from Nokesville 27 Mar (DKG). **Cedar Waxwings** were sporadic in the early portion of the period with sightings at *Arlington* 19 Mar (JB) and Dyke 3 Apr (EE); the migration wave appeared to begin at Smith 27 Apr (VK). **Blue-winged Warblers** arrived at The Point 24 Apr (BL, JFo) and migrants were last reported at Huntley (*vide* FB) and Monticello (HB) 9 May. The BRCES breeding area had 8 singing 21 May (DKG, JK, KP). A **Lawrence's Warbler** was reported at Horsepen, *Loudoun* 28 Apr (VON). **Tennessee Warbler** reports started with Huntley 9 May (*vide* FB) and ended with Monticello 26 May (*vide*

SH); six reports in all. A single **Orange-crowned Warbler** was noted at Dangerfield Island, Alexandria 24 Apr (JK). **Nashville Warbler** arrived at The Point 1 May (DKG, JK, KP) and departed Thompson 26 May (TD). **Northern Parula** entered the area at The Point 9 Apr (JK). **Yellow Warbler** was first reported at Lee 21 Apr (BL, JFo). **Chestnut-sided Warbler** was first reported at The Point 1 May (MR) and the last Coastal Plain migrant was seen at Monticello 30 May (*vide* PK). **Magnolia Warbler** arrived at Roach's Run, *Arlington* 24 Apr (JK) and departed the region at Dyke 29 May (MR); 16 were counted at The Point and Lee 22 May (DKG). There were only three reports of **Cape May Warblers** this season: the initial report was Overlook 9 May (JK) and final was *Arlington* 26 May (LF, AS). **Black-throated Blue Warbler** was first noted at Phelps 28 Apr (TD) and last noted at Monticello 30 May (*vide* PK); 18 were counted at Huntley 10 May (*vide* CF). **Yellow-rumped Warblers** peaked near the first week of May with 100 observed at The Point (DKG, JK, KP), and 80 at Great Falls 1 May (SB), and another 100 at The Point 7 May (DKG, JK, MR, RR); the last sighting was at Smith 25 May (VK). **Black-throated Green Warbler** arrived Battlefield 8 Apr (SH) and departed Monticello 29 May (*vide* PK). **Blackburnian Warbler** was first noted in *Fauquier* 23 Apr (SH) and last noted at Monticello 27 May (*vide* PK). **Yellow-throated Warblers** arrived on breeding grounds at The Point 30 Mar (JK). **Prairie Warbler** was initially observed at The Point and Nokesville 16 Apr (DKG, JK, RR). **Palm Warbler** sightings spanned from OBNWR 1 Apr (JT) to The Point 7 May (DKG, JK, MR, RR). **Bay-breasted Warbler** reports began at Monticello 8 May (*vide* SH) and ended 27 May (*vide* PK). **Blackpoll Warbler** arrived at Phelps 28 Apr (TD) and was last found at Monticello

30 May (*vide* PK); 26 were counted at Dyke 22 May (RR). First reports of **Cerulean Warbler** were from BRCES (JD, m.ob.) and The Point (MR) on 23 Apr and the last Coastal Zone migrant was at Metz 15 May (MR). **Black & White Warbler** arrived in breeding habitat at The Point 2 Apr (DKG, JK). **American Redstart** entered the region at BRCES 23 Apr (JD, m.ob.); nest building was observed at Huntley 10 May (LC). **Prothonotary Warbler** was first reported at OBNWR 10 Apr (RC, KS, PG), with a considerable lag before the next report from MNSP 23 Apr (DKG). **Worm-eating Warbler** arrived at The Point 21 Apr (BL, JFo). **Ovenbird** was first tallied at MNSP 15 Apr (DKG). **Northern Waterthrush** reports spanned from Great Falls (SJ) and MNSP (DKG) 23 Apr to Lee 27 May (DKG, MR), with the first Ridge and Valley Zone sighting in *Shenandoah* 1 May (DD). **Louisiana Waterthrush** arrived at The Point 26 May (DKG). **Kentucky Warbler** was first noted at Thompson 8 May (GK, MAK). There was a significant **Mourning Warbler** flight this season in all zones with 10 reports beginning in Monticello 8 May (RH, m.ob.) and ending there 27 May (PK, m.ob.). **Common Yellowthroat** arrived at OBNWR 9 Apr (DKG), and 85 were at Huntley 10 May (*vide* CF). **Hooded Warbler** was first reported at MNSP 23 Apr (DKG). **Wilson's Warbler** reports started with The Point 7 May (DKG, JK, MR, RR) and ended with Monticello 27 May (*vide* PK); six birds were noted at Lee 22 May (MR). **Canada Warblers** were first reported at White Oaks 9 May (BJ) and last noted at Monticello 30 May (*vide* PK); eight were counted from The Point, Lee, and Metz 22 May (DKG). **Yellow-breasted Chat** arrived at Phelps 26 Apr (TD); 15 were counted at BRCES 21 May (DKG, JK, KP). **Summer Tanager** was first reported at Lee 23 Apr (MR). **Scarlet Tanager** was first



reported at Jones's Point, Alexandria 16 Apr (DW) and the next reports were The Point and MNSP 23 Apr (RR, LM, DKG). **Chipping Sparrow** was first noted at Sky Meadows 12 Mar (DKG). **Vesper Sparrow** reports were from *Fauquier* 30 Mar (TD) to OBNWR 22 Apr (JF); nine reports in all. A **Savannah Sparrow** at Smith 9 May was a late migrant (VK).

**Grasshopper Sparrow** arrived in *Loudoun* 19 Apr (MAG). The last **Fox Sparrows** were reported at feeders in *Fairfax* (BL) and *Bluemont* (JC) 13 Apr. An early **Lincoln's Sparrow** was at *Huntley* 7 Apr (CF). The next (more expected) report was at *Phelps* 28 Apr (TD), and the last of seven reports was at *Metz* and *Lee* 22 May (MR). The last **Swamp Sparrow** sighting was at *Huntley* 9 May (*vide* FB). A late **White-throated Sparrow** was singing at *Dyke* 28 May (DKG, m.ob.). *Herndon*, *Fairfax* hosted the last **White-crowned Sparrow** observation 13 May (CH, JH). **Dark-eyed Junco** migration appeared to end at MNSP 27 Apr (DKG) but a late bird was found at *Hemlock Overlook Park*, *Fairfax* 29 May (BA) – the latter continuing a trend reported in this region last summer. The first **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was noted at a feeder in *Burke*, *Fairfax* 18 Apr (LB) and the last Coastal Plain migrants were reported at *Monticello* (DKG) and *White Oaks* (BJ) 27 May. **Blue Grosbeak** arrived at OBNWR 28 Apr (CH, JH). **Indigo Bunting** arrived somewhat early at OBNWR 10 Apr and the next was in *Burke*, *Fairfax* 21 Apr (BM); *Ridge and Valley Zone* sightings began in *Shenandoah* 1 May (DD). **Dickcissels** once again were noted at the traditional location near *Remington* 14 May (SH, TD, IT). **Bobolinks** were first noted over *Lee* 30 Apr (DKG) and last noted near *Lucketts*, *Loudoun* (GK, MAK). An interesting **Eastern Meadowlark** migrant was spotted at *Huntley* 7 Mar (*vide* FB). The last **Rusty Blackbird** was reported from *Huntley* 2 May (CF). **Brewer's Blackbird** was last

sighted in *Nokesville*, *Prince William* 5 Mar (JK). **Orchard Oriole** arrived at *Smith* 19 Apr (VK). **Baltimore Oriole** arrived at MNSP 23 Apr (DKG). **Purple Finch** reports started at *The Point* 10 Apr (MR) and the last was noted at *Monticello* 7 May (TA, SL). The six reports of **Pine Siskins** started with *Bluemont* 30 Apr (JC), included reports of birds at various feeders and apparently ended with *Arlington* 9 May (VK) until a late bird was noted at an *Arlington* feeder 25 May (VK).

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## 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 includes the counties of (from

north to south) *Rockingham*, *Augusta*, *Highland*, *Bath*, *Rockbridge*, *Botetourt*, *Alleghany*, *Craig*, *Giles*, *Roanoke*, *Montgomery*, *Pulaski*.

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Spring migration in the west region was comparatively uneventful. The cooler weather patterns seemed to delay arrivals with very few new early dates recorded.

## DUCKS – HAWKS

The **Cackling Geese** that wintered along *Bell's Lane* in *Staunton*, *Augusta* remained until 8 Mar when 6 were counted (AL), representing a high spring count of this recent taxonomic split. A new high count of 11 **Tundra Swans** in *Rockingham* was recorded 3 Mar (CL, ph. BT). There were record high counts of several other waterfowl: 75 **Wood Ducks** and 29 **Hooded Mergansers** in *Augusta* 27 Mar (AL), and 8 **Long-tailed Ducks** in *Rockingham* 29 Mar (JI). **Red-throated Loon** is a rare transient in this part of the state and the bird observed on a pond in *Staunton* 30 Apr is only the second spring record in *Augusta* (AL). **Eared Grebes**, also uncommon spring migrants, were identified in *Roanoke* 13 Mar (MP), *Rockingham* 28 Mar (CZ) and *Rockbridge* 1 Apr (DR), all single birds.

Several **Red-tailed Hawk** nests were discovered, including one early nest record on 2 Mar in *Augusta* (VR). On 20 Mar, a **Northern Goshawk** was observed on *Flagpole Knob* along the western most ridge of *Rockingham* – elevation above 4000 ft (GH), representing only the second county spring record of this accipiter.

## SANDPIPERS – WOODPECKERS

Of the few new early records, two were shorebirds: **Solitary Sandpiper** 9Apr (JK) and **Dunlin** 27 Mar (AL),



both single birds in *Augusta*. The first spring observation of **White-rumped Sandpiper** in *Rockingham* was reported 2 May (AR, ph. BT). This species was also seen in Greenfield, *Botetourt*, 29 May (TF). *Rockingham* also had its third county record of **Red-necked Phalarope**, a single bird on Silver Lake 22 May (ph. CL). In the course of a research study on the fitness of birds along the South R. in *Augusta* and *Rockingham*, Dr. Dan Cristol, Dept. of Biology College of William & Mary (CW & M) and a team of graduate students (RB, RJ, SK, AWh) recorded 26 **Eastern Screech Owls**, 10 of which were banded, at various sites between 9 and 26 May. This provides new information and suggests a high breeding density in this riparian habitat. The same CW&M team also recorded 14 **Belted Kingfisher** nests, banding 26 adults and 96 chicks along this two county stretch of river, establishing a new high count for the season and providing first-time nesting density data for the region. In *Giles*, four **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** with two active nest cavities were identified at Mountain Lake resort (elevation 3700 ft) 20 May (AWe, CH, PS). These were reported to be smaller and slightly darker, consistent with the *Appalachian Yellow-bellied Sapsucker*, a recognized subspecies that breeds in the higher elevations of the Blue Ridge from sw. VA to n. GA, and may be a disjunct population from the main northern population. Distribution and breeding habitat requirements of this subspecies are being actively studied.

### VIREOS – FINCHES

On 30 Apr an *Augusta* county-wide survey yielded high seasonal counts for a number of passerines, including **Blue-headed Vireo** (20), **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** (77), **Black-capped Chickadee** (6), **Tufted Titmouse** (121), **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** (65), **Northern Parula** (20), **Magnolia Warbler** (4), **Black-**

**throated Green Warbler** (30), **Blackburnian Warbler** (8), **Pine Warbler** (19), **Worm-eating Warbler** (19), **Louisiana Waterthrush** (10), and **Swamp Sparrow** (11) (AL, et al.). A single **Lark Sparrow** seen 2 May (KB) represented *Rockingham's* fifth county record of this vagrant. Included in the five records is Virginia's first documented breeding record for this sparrow in 1937 (*Raven* 9:13-15, 1938). A single male **Yellow-headed Blackbird**, identified in *Rockingham*, 31 May (DD), represented only the third county record of this vagrant, sighted much less frequently in this part of the state than in coastal Virginia. There were repeated (from 20 Apr–15 May) sightings of **Red Crossbills** in w. *Rockingham* with a high spring count of 19 on 20 Apr (GH). All were along Briery Branch Road on the upper eastern slope of Shenandoah Mt. n. of the Allegheny ridge in patches of coniferous forest. Sightings of this species are irregular and episodic with a few documented nest records, suggesting permanent residence. Six Red Crossbills were also recorded in Glen Alton, *Giles*, a more southerly location along the same mountain ridge with similar habitat (TW, BO). A single bird found in the city of Radford, *Montgomery* 30 May (CK) is intriguing and of uncertain significance at this time. A single **Evening Grosbeak** 19 Mar in Monterey, *Highland* (BT) was the only spring report of this finch in the entire state. The species was not reported at all in the Region during the winter, even in *Highland*, which has a statewide reputation for holding at least a few wintering birds at one or more feeders.

### Undocumented Rarities

A possible White-winged Crossbill (KF) *Rockingham* was briefly viewed 7 May along with the same group of Red Crossbills on Briery Branch Road.

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## 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.

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Relatively normal weather during the period resulted in fairly predictable avian population movements in the Central Region. Hands down the highlight of the season was a micro-invasion of Clay-colored Sparrows providing the first and second spring records of this species for the Piedmont Physiographic Zone.

**Abbreviations:** L.B.C. (Lynchburg Bird Club); UVA (University of Virginia)

### DUCKS— GREBES

Frequent checks of lakes in northern *Amherst* by Mark Johnson continued through the period. As usual, the most productive of these was Mill Creek L. which produced the following noteworthy sightings: 11 **Green-winged Teal** 10 Mar (MJ); **EARED GREBE** 11–13 Mar (MJ et al.); 3+ **Red-breasted Mergansers** 11–14 Mar (MB, RF, MJ, et al.); 2 to 3 **Horned**



**Grebes** and 5 **Pied-billed Grebes** 11–15 Mar; 15 **Wood Ducks** and 3 **Common Goldeneyes** 14 Mar (RF, MJ); single **Green-winged Teal** and **Blue-winged Teal** along with a few **Ruddy Ducks** 23 Mar (RF, MJ). A check of other lakes in the area 13 Mar produced an adult male **Common Merganser** on Stone House L. and 20 **Wood Ducks** on Thrashers L. Neither the merganser nor **Wood Ducks** could be relocated 45 minutes later (RF). This sighting combined with Johnson's at Mill Creek the same day represented high numbers for this locally uncommon species and indicated a substantial migrational push. Further support of a significant push of waterfowl across the region were the sightings by Boatwright at the North Anna Power Station on L. Anna, *Louisa* on the afternoon of 15 Mar where he witnessed what can only be describe as a "waterfowl extravaganza". In all there were over 1200 birds on the lake near the power station. Most exciting was a single **Red-necked Grebe** along with 20 **Pied-billed** and 26 **Horned Grebes**. Loons were well represented with 45 **Common Loons** and 2 **Red-throated Loons**. Ducks seen were 700 **Lesser Scaup**, 4 **Greater Scaup**, 45 **American Widgeon**, 10 **Gadwall**, 300 **Ring-necked Ducks**, 45 **Redheads**, 2 **Canvasbacks**, 6 **Common Goldeneyes**, 3 **Pintails**, 70 **Buffleheads**, 15 **Hooded Mergansers**, 2 **Red-breasted Mergansers**, 35 **Ruddy Ducks**, 2 **Long-tailed Ducks**, 4 **Canvasbacks**, 16 **Black Ducks**, 6 **Green-winged Teal**, and 30 **Mallards** (MB). Several hundred **Canada Geese** were also present. This was by far the most waterfowl the observer has seen on the lake at one time in nearly 20 years of birding there. The L.B.C. field trip to Poplar Forest, *Campbell* 19 Mar produced a pair of **Blue-winged Teal**, which are uncommon this time of year in the area, and a **Common Merganser** at Ivy L. the same day was also a nice find for that area (RB,

et al.). Woody's L. in Madison Heights, *Amherst* produced 3 **Blue-winged Teal** and 3 **Ring-necked Ducks**, which were unusual for a lake that seldom produces any waterfowl sightings (MJ). Twenty-one **Double-crested Cormorants** at Mill Creek L., *Amherst* was a high count for this species in the area (MJ). A very late **Ring-necked Duck** was in *Bedford* 30 Apr (RB, et al.). Albemarle does not have many wintering waterfowl, so the following observations are noteworthy: **Hooded Mergansers**, **Ring-necked Ducks**, and **Pied-billed Grebes** were fairly widespread during Mar; a female **Red-breasted Merganser** and a small group of **Green-winged Teal** were at Chris Greene L. 26 Mar; 5 **Horned Grebes** were at Sugar Hollow Res. 15 Mar; and a single **Horned Grebe** was at Beaver Creek Res. 23 March. **Wood Ducks** arrived in *Albemarle* in late Feb and were paired up throughout the county in numbers by late Mar. Single **Blue-winged Teal** and **Red-breasted Merganser** were on Chris Greene L. 11 Ap (AM). **Double-crested Cormorant** was seen 27 Mar along the James R. and soaring over Ivy Creek 28 Mar with a total count of 14 seen at various locations 7 Apr (AM). Two **Great Egrets** were at L. Albemarle, *Albemarle* on 24 Apr (MA).

## HAWKS—TERNS

**Bald Eagles** continued to make a good showing in the region. At Ivy L., *Campbell*, four members of the L.B.C. observed an ad. **Bald Eagle** being harassed by crows 19 Mar (RB et al.). Along the James R., *Amherst*, one **Bald Eagle** nest had two young in it near fledging size 28 May (JP *fide* GS). Sattler found one of the young out of the nest in the nest tree 13 Jun, and the other still in the nest. A second nest just upstream on the James R. had two young in it for the first time since the nest was discovered in 2003. The nest blew down in late May, after which only one of the young was found. This orphan was

taken to the Wildlife Center of Virginia in Waynesboro. On 15 Apr at Graves Mountain Lodge, *Madison* an ad. **Bald Eagle** was seen heading north (BT). An imm. **Bald Eagle** was noted at Mill Creek L., *Amherst* 1 May along with an **Osprey**. A somewhat late **Northern Harrier** was in *Bedford* 30 Apr (RB, et al.).

## OWLS—SHRIKES

Two **Barn Owls** were a nice find in *Orange* 5 Mar (TF, DS). **Whip-poor-wills** were first heard in a usual location in *Amherst* 16 Apr (MJ). A **Black-billed Cuckoo** was seen well at Observatory Hill, Charlottesville 2 May (MA, MI). An unusual late night (between 10:00 and 10:30 PM) sighting of a hummingbird, presumed to be a **Ruby-throated Hummingbird**, was made in Charlottesville 8 Apr (BT). The observer speculated that the bird was catching insects attracted to the street lights. A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** lingered in *Bedford* 30 Apr (RB, et al.). The **Loggerhead Shrikes** in *Bedford* fledged earlier in May than expected. An ad. shrike was observed feeding a begging juv. there 19 May. Another juv. was heard begging and was located in the same tree. Careful scanning of that tree revealed 6 loggerhead shrikes, presumably two ads. and four juvs. (RB). On 23 May the same observer was only able to locate one ad. shrike. That same day the landowner's daughter advised that within the past few days one juv. died when it was run over by a lawnmower and another was found dead in their yard.

## THRUSHES—WARBLERS

**Swainson's Thrush** was in typical low numbers but **Veery** put in a good showing throughout the region as did all four of the "common" vireos (**Red-eyed**, **White-eyed**, **Blue-headed**, and **Yellow-throated**). **Philadelphia Vireo**, an uncommon spring migrant in the region, was only reported once, a single singing individual at L. Anna, *Louisa* 29 Apr



(MB). A single **Barn Swallow** seen at Thrasher's L., *Amherst* 20 Mar was about a week early for this species (J & BJL). **Tree Swallows** first arrived at L. Albemarle, *Albemarle* 15 Mar and over a dozen birds were investigating nest boxes there in late Mar (AM). **Cliff Swallows** returned to the L. Anna area where nest building was noted under the bridge on Rt. 522 at the *Orange - Spotsylvania* line 29 Apr (G&RH). The first **Blue Gray Gnatcatcher** of the season was heard and seen in *Orange* 29 Mar (G&RH). Slightly above average warbler reports were received. The first **Louisiana Waterthrush** report for the season was of 2 in *Albemarle* 28 Mar (AM). A singing **Yellow Warbler** in Charlottesville 9 Apr was early and **Palm Warblers** were noted to be widespread in the Charlottesville/*Albemarle* area in early Apr (AM). The first report of **Yellow-throated Warbler** for the season was also 9 Apr in Fredericksburg (JG). **Black-and-white Warbler** was noted at Fort AP Hill on 6 Apr (JF). Observatory Hill on the UVA campus in Charlottesville produced the lion's share of migrant waves. Warbler sightings from this site included: **American Redstart, Nashville, Black-and-White, Black-Throated Green** 25 Apr (MA, MI, AM, et al.); **Blue-winged, Northern Parula, Chestnut-sided, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Black-and-White, American Redstart, Kentucky, Worm-eating, Blackburnian, and Ovenbird** 28 Apr (MA, MI, et al.); **Black-And-White, Black-Throated Green, Worm-Eating, American Redstart, Black-Throated Blue, Ovenbird** 4 May and **Black-Throated Blue, Chestnut-Sided, Prairie, American Redstart, Ovenbird, and Northern Parula** 8 May (RM). **Cape May, Blackpoll, Black-Throated Blue, Northern Parula, American Redstart, Black-And-White, Black-Throated Green, Yellow, Worm-Eating, and Ovenbird** 10 May (RM). Elsewhere, **Cape May Warbler, Black-**



*This Clay-colored Sparrow was one of two reported in the Central Region. Photo by Randy Thrasher.*

throated Blue Warbler, **Hooded Warblers, Ovenbird, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Common Yellowthroat**, were noted in *Hanover* 1 May (GW). Six Yellow Warblers, one Yellow-throated Warbler, 3 **Blue-winged Warblers**, 1 Black-throated Green Warbler, 5 Northern Parulas, 2 American Redstarts, and 10 Common Yellowthroats made a nice list for a morning walk along the Fredericksburg Canal Path 2 May (JG); fifteen warbler species, **Yellow, Chestnut-sided, Black-throated Blue, Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, Pine, Palm, Black-and-White, Redstart, Worm-eating, Ovenbird, Louisiana Waterthrush, Common Yellowthroat, and Hooded** were found in *Bedford* 30 Apr (RB, et al.). The regular First Saturday of the Month Bird Walk at the Ivy Creek Natural Area, *Albemarle* 7 May recorded 12 species of warblers: 2 Blue-winged, 2 Golden-winged, 2 Nashville, 3 Northern Parula, 3 Chestnut-Sided, 1 **Magnolia**, 1 Black-throated Blue, 40 Yellow-rumped, 3 Black-throated Green, 3 Prairie, 2 American Redstarts, and a Common Yellowthroat (CB et al., *vide* JZ). Blackpoll Warblers (still plentiful) and a Magnolia Warbler were sighted at the Fredericksburg-Spotsylvania National Military Park, Fredericksburg, 15 May (JG). On 13 May a singing **Wilson's Warbler, Blackpoll, Black-throated Green Warbler, and Yellow Warbler** were

noted by Sattler in his yard in Lynchburg and a **Canada Warbler** was singing there 15 May (GS).

## BLACKBIRDS—FINCHES

**Bobolink** reports received were 26 in *Bedford* 30 Apr (RB, et al.) and 100+ in *Orange* 5 May (G&RH). Four **Rusty Blackbirds** put in a late appearance, but 4 **Blue Grosbeaks** had a normal arrival date in *Bedford* 30 Apr (RB, et al.). **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** put in appearances at several feeders in *Madison* and *Greene* 30 Apr and one was considered on the late side 19 May at low elevation in *Campbell* (AD, GS, et al.). **Fox Sparrows** made a good showing in early to mid-Mar through Central Virginia. Sattler had his first two Fox Sparrows in his yard in Lynchburg on 5 Mar. At least 10 were noted in *Orange* 5–6 March (TF, DS). Seventeen were beneath the Dalmas' bird feeders near Evington, *Campbell* 19 Mar, and 13 were still there on 23 Mar. In the Charlottesville area, the biggest push of Fox Sparrows was noted in the first two weeks of Mar (AM). A **Vesper Sparrow** "kicked up" by Alex Merritt at Ivy Creek, *Albemarle* was a pleasant surprise 5 Apr but could not be relocated. Unprecedented in spring in the region was the presence of 2 different

**CLAY-COLORED SPARROWS** near Lynchburg. The first was found by Sattler when he went in search of



the source of an unrecognized song emanating from the wooded ravine behind his house in Lynchburg on 2 May. The bird was likely present at this location since 29 Apr, when Sattler first heard the unusual song, through 3 May when last seen. Several local birders were able to witness the region's first spring record of this species; one of them, Robert Ferrell, was listening to a taped song of the species on his way to see the bird when he realized the song was very similar to the unrecognized song coming from his yard. In an odd twist of affairs, Ferrell missed the bird at Sattler's home on 2 May but returned to his own home in time to get good looks at a **CLAY-COLORED**

**SPARROW** ♀ singing in his yard a considerable distance from Sattler's home! Several of the same observers, including Sattler, were also able to observe the second bird. This bird was also last observed 3 May. (GS, RF, m.ob.). These observations represent the first and second spring records for this species in the Piedmont Physiographic Zone.

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## 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 River is the boundary between King William and King and Queen and it joins with the Pamunkey River to form the York River in West Point.

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During the spring season 203 species were recorded by 34 birders in about 60 reports. Interesting birds can turn up anywhere, and because of the spotty coverage in the Region, birders are strongly encouraged to explore new areas and report the numbers of even the most common birds to help provide an accurate picture of the seasonal distribution and status of the avifauna of this part of the state. Perhaps the most interesting finds this season were Common Eider, four species of rails, Glossy Ibis, Cattle Egret, Common Moorhen, Black-necked Stilt, Piping Plover, Mourning Warbler, nesting Swamp Sparrow, and Red Crossbill.

**Abbreviations:** Beaverdam (Beaverdam Park, *Gloucester*), Dameron (Dameron Marsh *Northumberland*); GWB (George Washington's Birthplace National Monument, *Westmoreland*), Hughlett (Hughlett Point NAP, *Northumberland*), Hutchinson (tract of RRVNWR, *Essex*), Island Farm (tract of RRVNWR *Richmond*), KG ponds (Route 3 ponds in *King George*), Mothershead (tract of RRVNWR *Westmoreland*), Mulberry (Mulberry Hunting Preserve, near Newland, *Richmond*), RRVNWR (Rappahannock R. Valley National

Wildlife Refuge); Tayloe (tract of RRVNWR *Richmond*), Wilna (Wilna tract of RRVNWR, *Richmond*), Wright (Wright tract of RRVNWR, *Richmond*), WSP (Westmoreland State Park, *Westmoreland*).

## WATERFOWL – GREBES

The **Cackling Geese** ♀ that wintered along Bell's Lane in Staunton, *Augusta* remained until 8 Mar when 6 were counted (AL), representing a high spring count of this recent taxonomic split. The high count for **Tundra Swans** this spring was 800 flying over Wilna 18 Mar (SS). By the end of Mar most Tundra Swans had left the region, though single birds lingered at KG ponds 10 Apr (FA) and Dameron 6 Apr (JC). Only 49 **Mute Swans** were reported from six sites, with 28 of these at GWB 23 May (DK). The high count of **Canada Geese** was 275 at KG ponds 18 Mar (FA); after that date only 102 were reported from eight locations. The largest flock of **Wood Ducks** (11) was reported in Leedstown, *Westmoreland* 26 Mar (FA). Thirty-two birds were reported from eight locations, beginning 10 Mar in *Gloucester* when the resident pair was seen checking out nest holes (JW, HW). In Apr and May, most of the Wood Ducks seen were males, as females incubated eggs. Only three pairs of **American Wigeons** were reported in the region on 18 and 26 Mar (FA). The only **Gadwalls** reported were 10 to 15 in Leedstown 18 Mar (FA). Thirty **Green-winged Teal** were reported in four locations; the latest report was of seven males and three females with the only reported **American Black Duck** of the season at Mill Pond, *Northumberland* 6 Apr (JC). **Mallard** ducklings were first noted 5 May in Leedstown (FA), and 60 ad. birds were found scattered at nine locations, mostly in pairs. In Leedstown there were two pairs of **Northern Pintails** and 28 **Northern Shovelers** (22 male) on 18 Mar, and 8 **Blue-winged Teal**



on 26 Mar (FA). **Canvasbacks** were only reported at Belle Isle SP, Lancaster 13 Mar (RR, LM) and KG Ponds 18 Mar (18 male, 28 female), where there were also 5 male and 5 female **Redheads**. A season high of 68 male and 28 female **Ring-necked Ducks** at KG ponds 18 Mar, dwindled to two male and three female 10 Apr (FA). The Rappahannock R. near Urbanna, *Middlesex* hosted the seasonal high of 220 **Lesser Scaup** (BP). Lingering **Lesser Scaup** included 5 at KG ponds 4 Apr and one male in Singerly, *Richmond* 5 May (FA). Three **Common Eiders** were found 21 Mar off North Haven Beach, *Mathews* (SL, RL). A few **Long-tailed Ducks** were found at Vir-Mar Beach, *Northumberland* 12 Mar and Windmill Pt., Lancaster 13 Mar (RR, LM). Scanning the calm waters between GWB and WSP from Muse Rd. 18 Mar revealed 4 male **Black Scoters** as well as 140 male and 85 female **Surf Scoters**. This same location had 41 male and 34 female Surf Scoters as late as 10 Apr with the last reported **Common Goldeneyes** and **Buffleheads** (FA). Black Scoters were also seen at Vir-Mar Beach 12 Mar (RR, LM). KG ponds hosted the high of 21 **Hooded Merganser** (11 male) 18 Mar; the latest report for this species was of 2 on 11 Apr at Caffee Cr., *Gloucester* (TK). Of the 61 **Red-breasted Mergansers** reported in three locations on 18 and 26 Mar, 58 were males (FA). On 7 Mar, at Ross Rock, four miles downriver from Tappahannock in the Rappahannock R., 565 of this species, 75% of them male, were seen staging before their migration north (BP). The late date for **Red-breasted Merganser** this year was 4 on Caffee Cr., *Gloucester* 24 Apr (TK). On 18 Mar, 118 **Common Mergansers** were seen in two locations, and 88 of these were female (FA). **Ruddy Duck** high counts were 3000 at WSP 12 Mar (RR, LM), 4500-5000 (80-90% male) from GWB to WSP 10 Apr (FA), and 56 (10% male) at KG Ponds 28 Mar

(FA). **Ruddy Ducks** continued to be seen until 29 Apr when two females were seen at Beaverdam (GB, DH). A male **Wild Turkey** displayed for seven hens in a farm field along Rte. 3 in *King George* 17 Mar (JT et al.) and a flock of more than 60 was seen in a farm near Dameron 12 Mar (RR, LM). The Wild Turkey flock of up to 30 birds at Tayloe was seen several times Mar-Apr (SS). The high count for **Northern Bobwhite** this season was 9 at Dameron 3 Apr (TS). TK in *Gloucester* commented that this is the first spring she has not heard a single Bobwhite in her neighborhood. Two to three coveys of Northern Bobwhite at Wilna, one (at least) on Tayloe, and one (at least) on Hutchinson were heard or seen at various times in May (SS). Viewing the calm Potomac R. from the end of Muse Road between GWB and WSP on 18 Mar, 19 **Common Loons**, 416 **Red-throated Loons**, 30 unidentified loons, and 28 **Horned Grebes** were seen (FA). The late records for these species were 98 Red-throated Loons here and another 27 around the point at WSP on 10 Apr (FA), 2 Common Loons on the York R. 21 Apr (TK), and 2 Horned Grebes Apr 26 at Beaverdam (GB, DH). Other "latish" Common Loons included individuals at Mill Cr., *Northumberland* (JC) and Gloucester Pt. (DK) 6 Apr. The maximum number for Horned Grebe was 56 in the Rappahannock R. at Urbanna, *Middlesex* 11 Mar (BP), and for **Pied-billed Grebe** was 8 at KG Ponds 18 Mar (FA). A few **Brown Pelicans** were noted at Gloucester Pt. 6 Apr (DK) and only one was seen at Gwynn's I. in the Rappahannock R. 29 May, a low number for this site (BP). One thousand to 1500 **Northern Gannets** were seen off Gloucester Pt. 20 Mar (JW, HW) and 2 were seen as far up the Potomac R. as GWB 26 Mar (AD, BK). **Double-crested Cormorants** increased dramatically on rivers, large ponds, and even occasionally on small ponds; over 500 were noted around the pound nets in

the Great Wicomico R., *Northumberland* 3 Apr (TS).

## HERONS – SANDPIPERS

The first **Great Egret** for the season appeared at Caffee Cr., *Gloucester*, and up to a dozen were in the marsh every day throughout the season (TK). Two **Great Blue Heron** rookeries were found along the Rappahannock R. upriver from Port Royal 18 Apr, one containing 16 occupied nests, the other with 22 occupied nests surrounding an active bald eagle nest (BP). One **Little Blue Heron** was at Beaverdam, *Gloucester* 24 Apr (DH), and a **Snowy Egret** was at Dameron 19 Apr (TS). A **Cattle Egret** flew over *King and Queen* near Walkerton 31 Mar (BD) and the first to be seen at Caffee Cr., *Gloucester* in several years was in a field 10 Apr. The first **Green Heron** of the season was at Caffee Cr., *Gloucester* 21 Apr (TK). Two **Least Bitterns** were noted at Hughlett 29 May (AB) and a **Glossy Ibis** was at Singerly 10 Apr (FA). Presumably fewer vultures are reported than were actually present; only 8 **Black Vultures** were reported from four birding trips and a total of 38 **Turkey Vultures** were noted from six birding trips. **Ospreys** and **Bald Eagles** were breeding throughout the region. Single **Northern Harriers** were reported in Leedstown 18 Mar and KG ponds 12 & 18 Mar (RR, LM, FA). No **Sharp-shinned Hawks** were reported. Single **Cooper's Hawks** were reported in three locations. Eggs in a backyard nest of **Red-shouldered Hawks** in *Gloucester* began hatching 17 Apr (JW, HW). Nine other adults were seen in six locations. A total of 9 **Red-tailed Hawks** were reported on five dates. A high count of 17 **American Kestrels** was tallied in lower *Northumberland* 3 Apr (TS). Only 3 others were reported in two locations. The first 3 **Clapper Rails** of the season were clattering away in the marshes of



Coffee Cr., *Gloucester* 19 Apr (TK) and another was at Hughlett 29 May (AB). A **King Rail** was at Goat I. in the Rappahannock R. 29 Apr (BP), and a **Sora** was whinnying at Tayloe on Cat Point Cr. 10 May where **King Rail**, **Virginia Rail**, and **Least Bittern** were also noted during marsh bird surveys in May and Jun (SS). A **Common Moorhen** was observed at Beaverdam 23 May (DH), the first report received for this bird in the region. Sixty-one **American Coots** was the high count at KG Ponds 18 Mar where 5 still remained 10 Apr (FA). A **Black-necked Stilt** found along Rte. 669 in lower *Northumberland* 7 May (TS) was a very exciting find; probably the same bird was seen in a farm field near Dameron on 11 May (MJ). These same fields hosted **Black-bellied Plovers**, **Semipalmated Plovers**, **Killdeer**, **Wilson's Snipe**, **Ruddy Turnstone**, **Greater Yellowlegs**, **Lesser Yellowlegs**, **Semipalmated Sandpipers**, and **Least Sandpipers** at various times in May (JC, AB, MJ, RR, LM, TS). Another exciting find was 3 **Piping Plovers** at Bethel Beach, *Mathews* 30 Mar with **Sanderlings** and **Dunlin** nearby (MP). Another good spot for shorebirds was Gwynn's I. in the Rappahannock R. where 2 Ruddy Turnstones, 5 pairs of **Willetts**, 4 pairs of **American Oystercatchers**, 6 Semipalmated Plovers, 3 **Black-bellied Plovers**, 12 **Sanderlings**, and 4 **Western Sandpipers** were found 29 May (BP). At Wilna, **American Woodcocks** continued their courtship displays until at least 11 Mar (SS). A high of 26 **Wilson's Snipe** were in Leedstown (Drake's Marsh) 12 Mar (FA). Thirteen **Spotted Sandpipers** were in five scattered locations with a high of 6 at Hughlett, where 40 Semipalmated Sandpipers was also noted 29 May (AB). Other shorebirds included a **Solitary Sandpiper** in Beulahville *King William* 5 May (FA), and a **Willet** at Dameron 11 May (MJ).

## GULLS – VIREOS

There were a few reports of **Ring-billed**, **Great Black-backed**, **Herring**, and **Laughing Gulls**. **Bonaparte's Gulls** were noted in several locations in lower *Northumberland* with a high of 60 birds flying and floating around JC as he paddled quietly through Mill Cr. 6 Apr. **Forster's Terns** were the most widely-distributed tern in the region. **Royal Terns** were seen at the Rte. 360 bridge in Tappahannock where 6 of the 10 birds sported Fish and Wildlife Service bands on their legs 10 Apr (FA). Three were also seen at Hull Neck, *Northumberland* 29 May along with 3 **Common Terns** (AB). About 20 **Least Terns** were seen at Bethel Beach 5 May, 2 of which appeared to be sitting on nests (JF). **Least Terns** were also found nesting at Gwynn's I. in the Rappahannock R. where 38 adults and nine nests were found 29 May, and where there were also 6 **Black Skimmers** (BP). The only **Caspian Terns** reported were 4 along the Rappahannock upriver from Port Royal (BP). **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** first appeared in *Gloucester* 3 May (TK). **Barred Owls** were noted in Beulahville (FA), Leedstown (FA), *Gloucester* (JW,HW) and Wilna (SS) where there are at least two breeding pairs. At least one **Barn Owl** continued to use an old house at Mothershead in Leedstown and another was observed at Wilna (SS). A **Common Nighthawk** was in Beulahville, *King William* 5 May (FA) and 28 were at Hull Neck, *Northumberland* 29 May (AB). The first of 4 **Chuck-will's-widows** reported this season was heard in *Gloucester* 27 Apr (TK). **Whip-poor-wills** were heard in Beulahville, *King William*, 5 May (FA), Wilna on 28 May (SS), and at Heritage Park on Cat Point Cr. May–Jun on several dates (SS). The first **Chimney Swift** reported was 19 Apr in *Gloucester* (DH) and the first **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** was also reported

from there 8 Apr (JW, HW). A pair of adult **Red-headed Woodpeckers** was found at Hughlett 29 May, but no nest site could be found (AB); 3 to 4 were also feeding in a mulberry tree at Wilna, as they do every spring (SS). The last report of **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** was 10 Apr at WSP (FA). **Hairy**, **Downy**, **Red-bellied**, and **Pileated Woodpeckers** and **Northern Flicker**, were also noted throughout the region. The first **Eastern Wood-Pewee** of the season 19 Apr (DH) and the first **Acadian Flycatcher** 17 Apr (TK) were both in *Gloucester*. Single **Willow Flycatchers** were heard singing 29 May at Hughlett and Dameron (AB). The first report of **Eastern Kingbird** was of 4 on Goat I. in the Rappahannock R. 29 Apr (BP) and a high of 32 **Eastern Kingbirds** was found at GWB on 23 May (DK). The first **Great Crested Flycatcher** was 27 Apr in *Gloucester* (TK). Eleven **Eastern Phoebes** were noted in five locations and they began singing 30 Mar at Wilna where they also winter (SS). **Horned Larks** were doing their flight and song display at KG ponds 10 Apr (FA). First seasonal sightings for swallows included: **Purple Martin** 30 Mar at Wilna (SS), 16 **Tree Swallows** 10 Mar in Beulahville (FA), **Barn Swallow** Gloucester Pt. 5 May (DH), and a **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** with a large flock of Tree Swallows which passed the Tappahannock bridge at the rate of 150 in fifteen minutes on 14 Mar (TD). No **Bank** or **Cliff Swallows** were reported. The only report of **American Pipit** was a single fly-over bird in Leedstown 26 Mar (FA). **Golden-crowned Kinglets**, **Ruby-crowned Kinglets**, **Carolina Wrens**, **Gray Catbirds**, **Northern Mockingbirds**, **Brown Thrashers**, **Eastern Bluebirds**, **Carolina Chickadees**, **Tufted Titmice**, and **White-breasted Nuthatches**, were commonly reported throughout the region, always in numbers less than ten. Fifty **Cedar Waxwings** were again found eating holly berries at



Gloucester Pt. 11 Mar (DH). The last reports of **Winter Wren** and **Hermit Thrush** were 10 Apr in Beulahville (FA). The only **House Wren** was reported from Beaverdam 24 Apr (DH) and a large population of **Marsh Wrens** was reported from Mulberry in late May (BW et al.). Approximately 10 pairs of Marsh Wrens were found breeding at Tayloe in the Cat Point Cr. marshes during surveys conducted in late Apr, May, and Jun (SS). The 2 **Gray Catbirds** wintering at Caffee Cr., *Gloucester* disappeared after 18 Mar and the **Brown Thrashers** there were building their nests on 26 Apr (TK). A **Veery** was heard singing at Wright 19 May (SS) and a **Gray-cheeked Thrush** was heard and seen 29 May at Hughlett (AB). Several **Swainson's Thrushes** were found at Wright and Wilna 23 and 27 May (JD, SS). The first **Wood Thrush** of the season was heard in *Gloucester* 17 Apr where the first **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was also noted on 29 Mar and Tufted Titmice were seen building their nests on 27 Mar (JW, HW). **Brown-headed Nuthatches** were spotted at Hughlett 26 Mar (JC) and building a nest at Gloucester Pt. 4 Apr (DH). The last reported **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was in a pine forest in Beulahville 5 May (FA). Two **Brown Creepers** were in Beulahville 22 Mar, and one was at Bush Mill Stream, *Northumberland* 12 Mar (RR, LM). Mid-Apr saw the arrival of the vireos with both **Red-eyed** (22 Apr) and **White-eyed** (17 Apr) appearing at Wilna and **Yellow-throated** appearing 23 Apr at RRNWR in *Essex* (SS)

## WARBLERS – FINCHES

**Blue-winged Warblers** first appeared at Beaverdam 4 May (DH, GB) but by 8 May they were "everywhere" along with **Black-throated Blue Warblers**, which first appeared at Wilna on 1 May (SS). **Nashville Warbler**, **Chestnut-sided Warbler**, and **American Redstart** (single birds) were at GWB 23 May (DK); a female

**Canada Warbler**, and a female **Magnolia Warbler** were at Hughlett 29 May (DH). Other migrants included: **Blackpoll Warblers** in several locations May 8–23 (SS, DH, DK, TK), **Magnolia Warblers** Wright 21 May (SS), **Canada Warbler** Wilna 23 May (JD) and a **Mourning Warbler** seen at Hutchinson 5/27 (JD) and again 5/28 (SS). **Yellow-rumped Warblers** were last noted in Beulahville 5 May (FA). First sighting dates for resident warbler species included **American Redstarts** Dragon Run 23 Apr (TK), **Yellow Warbler** Wilna (SS) and Beaverdam 4 May (DH, GB), **Northern Parula Warbler** Wilna 8 Apr (SS), **Yellow-throated Warbler** 5 Apr Wilna (SS), **Pine Warbler** Beulahville 10 Mar (FA), **Prairie Warbler** Wilna 17 Apr (SS), **Black-and-White Warbler** *Gloucester* 5 Apr (DH), **Prothonotary Warbler** Wilna 17 Apr (SS), **Worm-eating Warbler** Beaverdam 26 Apr (GB), **Ovenbird** *Gloucester* 9 Apr (DH), **Louisiana Waterthrush** *Gloucester* 27 Mar (JW, HW), **Kentucky Warbler** Wright on 21 May (SS), **Common Yellowthroat** Dameron 19 Apr (TS), **Hooded Warbler** Wright 21 Apr (SS), and **Yellow-breasted Chat** 5 May Beulahville (FA). First reports of other migrants included: **Scarlet Tanager** *Gloucester* 23 Apr (JW, HW), **Summer Tanager** *Gloucester* 3 May (TK), **Chipping Sparrow** *Gloucester*, 2 Apr (DH), **Blue Grosbeak** Wilna 28 Apr (SS), **Indigo Bunting** *Northumberland* 19 Apr (TS), and **Orchard Oriole** Beaverdam 24 Apr (DH). The high count for Chipping Sparrow was 20 at GWB 23 May (DK). **Field Sparrows** started singing at Wilna on 11 Mar (SS). The last **Savannah Sparrows** of the season were reported 10 Apr at KG Ponds (FA). Six **Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows** were at Hughlett 29 May (AB). The first **Grasshopper Sparrows** of the season appeared at Wilna 28 Apr (SS). **Fox Sparrows** passed through from 18–30

Mar and were reported from Beulahville (FA), *Gloucester* (JW, HW), GWB (RR, LM), and Leedstown (FA) with a high count of 8 in Upper *King William* 22 Mar (FA). A **Lincoln's Sparrow** was reported from GWB 23 May (DK). Non-resident **Swamp Sparrows** were found at Leedstown (FA) and Beaverdam (DH, GB) until 5 May, though the winter residents at Wilna were last observed on 5 Apr (SS). The **Coastal Plain Swamp Sparrow** population at Mulberry was surveyed by William and Mary's Center for Conservation Biology ornithologists (BWa, MW, FS, BW, BPa) late in the month and again in Jun. More details will be in the Summer Regional Report. The last **White-crowned Sparrows** of the season were reported from Leedstown 26 Mar and the last **White-throated Sparrows** were also reported from there 5 May (FA). **Dickcissels** were reported for the second year in a row from Wilna 13 May along with a flock of about 20 **Bobolinks** (SS). Dickcissels were also found in Lanesville, *King William* with a Bobolink 22 May (AB). A Bobolink was at GWB 23 May (DK). Two **Rusty Blackbirds** were in Beulahville 22 Mar (FA) and many migrated along Dragon Run with **Red-winged Blackbirds** 19 Apr (TK). A **Boat-tailed Grackle** was at Dameron 29 May (AB) and a **Baltimore Oriole** was at GWB 23 May (DK). **Purple Finches** stayed at a feeder in *Gloucester* until 7 Apr (JW, HW), and perhaps the most unusual find of the season was 2 male **Red Crossbills** on a thistle feeder 1 May (MH), also in *Gloucester*.

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*Pacific Loon photographed by Adam D'Onofrio at Kerr Reservoir 27 Mar.*

Bill Portlock (BP), Mary Pulley, Rich Rieger, Tom Saunders, Fletcher Smith, Sandy Spencer, John Sutton, Bryan Watts (BWA), Bill Williams (BW), Joyce and Hayes Williams, Mike Wilson

## 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.

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Some trends mentioned in the fall and winter Region Reports continued into the spring, including low numbers of waterfowl and shorebird observations. But several rarities livened the season for observers, including a **Pacific Loon** ♀ at Kerr Res., a **Mississippi Kite** ♀ and a



*Red-necked Grebe photographed by Adam D'Onofrio at Sandy River Reservoir 11 Mar*

**Sandhill Crane** ♀ in *Buckingham*, and a **Lark Sparrow** ♀ in northern *Lunenburg*. Unfortunately for most birders, all of these rarities were one-day wonders.

**Abbreviations:** Kerr (Kerr Reservoir); Syon (Syon Abbey, just off the Blue Ridge Parkway, Franklin).

### DUCKS – HAWKS

Waterfowl in general seemed scarce, as in the winter season, though respectable numbers of mergansers were reported and **Canada Geese** seemed to be on nearly every pond in the Region. Thirty **Gadwall** (high) at Clover power plant on 6 Mar (JB) was the only report of sizeable numbers of that species. **Green-winged Teal** were reported only from Clyde's Pond, Dick Cross WMA, *Mecklenburg*, on 27 Mar (AD). **Lesser Scaup** were reported above Kerr Dam, ten on 12 Mar and a large flock on 27 Mar (both AD). Aside from **Hooded Mergansers** seen in multiple locations, merganser reports included a female **Common Merganser** that appeared at Syon on 8 May but only remained for a couple of hours (JS). Eight male **Red-breasted Mergansers** were at the cooling pond at the Clover power plant, *Halifax* 6 Mar (JB); four females were on a pond at Syon, 16 Mar (JS); and five females were at Kerr 27 Mar (AD).

Three species of loons were at Kerr, *Mecklenburg*, during the spring. Aside from the expected **Common Loons** (also reported elsewhere), a **Red-throated Loon** was found 12 Mar at Palmer Point Day Use Area, *Mecklenburg*, and was observed again on 26 Mar (AD). But the real treat was a **Pacific Loon** ♀ found 10 Apr. It was observed much of that day, with best views of the bird from North Bend Park, *Mecklenburg* in the afternoon. (p.a., ph. AD et al.). Only one **Red-necked Grebe** was reported, 11 Mar at Sandy R. Res., *Prince Edward* (CMS). The only **American**



*Buckingham County's first Sandhill Crane was photographed by Mike Stinson.*

**Bittern** reported was one heard calling at Banister R. WMA the morning of 10 Apr. A **Great Blue Heron** was carrying nesting material at the same site and date (both JB).

An **Osprey** at Tailrace Park, Kerr, on 12 Mar was the first report for the spring (AD). *Buckingham's* second record for **Mississippi Kite** ♀ came on the evening of 27 May when Spears saw a sub-adult flying low over SR 617, 0.6 mile west of VA 20. The first county record, also a sub-adult bird seen by Spears, was found on 3 June 2002. Elsewhere, about eight kites were reported from near Little Texas, *Southampton*, for years the most reliable place in the state to see the species (TD). Also, a sub-adult



*Loggerhead Shrike, photographed by Adam D'Onofrio in Mecklenburg*



was at Dick Cross WMA on 29 May, where the species is less frequently found (TD, et al.). The only **Bald Eagle** reports were of four birds (one ad.) 12 Mar at Tailrace Park below Kerr Res. dam, *Mecklenburg*, a traditional spot (AD), and one bird (ad.) at the Runt Powell farm, *Halifax* (JB). This seems unusually low for recent years, perhaps this species is being ignored in reports. While fall migrant **Broad-winged Hawks** get more attention, the species can also be detected heading north in spring. This was the case at Syon Abbey, *Franklin*, where two migrating birds were seen on the afternoon of 10 Apr, three on 15 Apr, and 28 on 16 Apr (JS). Our only **Merlin** report for the spring was from Syon on 6 May (JS).

## CRANES – HUMMINGBIRDS

A **Sandhill Crane** ♀, *Buckingham's* first, was a pleasant surprise. The bird was foraging in a field by VA Rte. 56 about one mile from US Rte. 60 on the morning of 7 May (p.a., ph. CMS). **Solitary** and **Spotted Sandpipers** were reported from several locations but other shorebird species were seldom mentioned. **Lesser Yellowlegs** were reported from two locations: one at Syon ponds, 2 Apr (JS), and two at the water treatment facility in Farmville, *Prince Edward*, 2 May (CMS); on that date at least one **Greater Yellowlegs** and one **Least Sandpiper** were also present in Farmville, the only ones reported (CMS). Three **Wilson's Snipe** were at Clyde's Pond in the Dick Cross WMA 27 Mar and six were there 10 Apr (both AD). Gull reports mostly concerned **Ring-billed Gulls**, which are regular migrants across the area, most commonly seen at larger lakes. Reports of other species included "numerous" **Bonaparte's Gulls** and three **Herring Gulls** (1 ad. and 2 imm.), 12 Mar at Tailrace Park, Kerr (AD). Five **Caspian Terns** were seen 6 May over the *Franklin* portion of Smith Mountain L. (GW). **Forster's**

**Terns** were seen at Smith Mountain L. twice, a flock of 16 on 7 May was over the *Franklin* portion, and a group of 14 was there the following day, both sightings between 5:30 p.m. and 7:00 PM. (GW). **Black-billed Cuckoo** is seldom reported anywhere in the region, so one seen and heard singing in Curdsville, *Buckingham*, on the morning of 26 Apr was a pleasant surprise (CMS). The earliest **Common Nighthawk**, one of only two reported, was seen 12 May at Burnt Chimney, *Franklin* (AQ). **Chuck-will's-widows** were reported only from the back roads of *Greensville*, *Brunswick*, and *Southampton* on 28 May (TD), though the species breeds throughout most of the region. The two earliest observations of **Whip-poor-will** for the season occurred the morning of 1 Apr; one bird calling at 5:00 AM in Chase City (GM), and the other heard at 5:15 AM near Dillwyn, *Buckingham* (DS). The season's first **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** was reported at a feeder on Smith Grove Rd., *Dinwiddie*, 4 Apr (AD).

## FLYCATCHERS – THRUSHES

Two **Olive-sided Flycatchers** were reported, both in *Franklin* and on consecutive days. On the evening of 15 May one was spotted at Syon where it was seen again the following morning (JS), and on the morning of 16 May one was at Burnt Chimney (ph. AQ). The first report of **Eastern Kingbird** was 10 Apr at Palmer Point, Kerr Res., *Mecklenburg* (AD). **Loggerhead Shrikes** were reported at two locations, both in *Mecklenburg*. One individual was singing along Redlawn Road on 12 Mar, and a pair was at the same site on 26 Mar, 10 Apr (all AD), and again on 29 May (TD et al.), raising hopes that they bred there. Also, one shrike was in Chase City on 1 Apr but was not relocated later in the month (GM). **White-eyed Vireo** was first reported 10 Apr at Dick Cross WMA, *Mecklenburg* (AD); **Yellow-throated Vireo** was



This Lark Sparrow showed up at Sue D'Onofrio's feeder in Keysville 26 Apr. Photo by Adam D'Onofrio.

first noted 20 Apr at Syon (JS), and a **Blue-headed Vireo** had returned to Syon Abbey on 26 Mar (JS). Continuing the trend of Piedmont reports for this species, two **Common Ravens** were at Staunton R. Battlefield State Park, *Halifax*, 6 Mar, where Blalock saw them playing aerial tag for a few minutes, doing rolls and making odd noises as he watched. A raven was also seen 12 Mar flying over US Rte. 60 in *Appomattox*, slightly east of Davids' Cr. (CMS). The first **Tree Swallow** reported was one seen 6 Mar at Staunton R. Battlefield SP (JB); the species occasionally returns to the area in late Feb but none were reported that early this year. On 11 Mar, 71 (high) were counted at Sandy R. Res., *Prince Edward* (CMS). **Cliff Swallows** were first reported on 10 Apr at Kerr dam, where they breed (AD). On 30 May three were at the boat ramp on the Dan R. in South Boston, not a known colony site, but near potential breeding sites (JB). **Red-breasted Nuthatches** lingered at least as late as 15 May, when two were at Syon Abbey, *Franklin* (JS). Five **Winter Wrens** (high) were at Syon on 6 Mar (JS). **Hermit Thrushes** lingered until at least 29 Apr, when there were two at Syon, and the first **Wood Thrush** was reported from there on 19 Apr (JS). While **Brown Thrashers** occasionally winter in the southern part of



our area, but one at Syon on 20 Mar was considered a spring returnee (JS).

## WARBLERS – SISKINS

Wood warbler reports mostly concerned the timely arrivals and continued presence of breeding species such as **Northern Parula**, **American Redstarts**, **Yellow-throated** and **Black-throated Green Warblers**, and **Ovenbirds**, all of which were frequently encountered, but there were some warbler sightings of particular interest. The latest **Palm Warbler** reported was one at Syon on 2 May (JS). Increasingly scarce, **Cerulean Warblers** were reported only at Syon, in the Blue Ridge portion of our area, beginning with three birds on 20 Apr, and with a maximum of at least 11 there on 15 May (JS). An early **Prothonotary Warbler** was at Banister R. WMA on 10 Apr (JB). **Swainson's Warbler** appears to be barely maintaining a presence in the southeast corner of this Region; on 29 May there was one at a location where they've been found occasionally in recent years, Low Ground Road at the Meherrin R., on the *Greensville/Southampton* line (TD, et al.). A **Northern Waterthrush** at Tailrace Park, Kerr, *Mecklenburg*, on 10 Apr seemed early (AD) and the first **Louisiana Waterthrush** was reported 26 Mar, a singing bird near Syon (JS). The first **Scarlet Tanagers** reported were two males seen 22 Apr on the south side of Spears Mountain, *Buckingham* (CMS). A **Lark Sparrow** appeared at Sue D'Onofrio's feeder in northern *Lunenburg* on 26 Apr. It was fairly cooperative for observers that day but did not reappear the next day or afterwards (p.a., ph. AD, SD, CMS). Ten **Fox Sparrows** at Syon on 20 Mar was a good count (JS). A **White-throated Sparrow** lingered until 15 May at Syon Abbey, *Franklin* (JS), and a **Dark-eyed Junco** on 12 May in

a yard in Chase City, *Mecklenburg*, (GM) seemed a bit late. A male **Bobolink** was seen and heard singing regularly in a hayfield at Syon from 8 May until at least 23 May; on 21-23 May a female was seen there as well. **Purple Finches** remained in a few places into late Apr. The high was almost two dozen on 12 Apr at Syon Abbey, *Franklin*, and the latest report was of a single male there on 29 Apr (both JS). Single **Pine Siskins** were at the abbey on 21 Apr, 10 May, and 16 May (JS).

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## 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.

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The weather was somewhat erratic during the three month reporting period with temperatures in March and May an average of 2.3 degrees below normal, while April enjoyed an average temperature 1.3 degrees above normal. Precipitation was below normal in March and April but May saw an increase in precipitation, ending up 0.26 inches above normal. The spring passerine migration got underway in late March with the appearance of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Yellow-throated Warblers and Louisiana Waterthrushes and continued into late May with a good variety of birds observed throughout the month. The cool, wet

May weather may account for the many species of warblers seen late in the month at a time when the migration of most warbler species usually would be over. Peak migration occurred in late April to early May with 26 species of warblers seen or heard at James River Park in Richmond along with a variety of vireos, flycatchers, both orioles, both grosbeaks, Scarlet Tanagers and Indigo Buntings.

Ruby-throated Hummingbirds pulled a disappearing act during the month of May. Although hummingbird activity lessens at feeders during this time due to nesting, the birds became extremely scarce this year. Many residents noted long periods of time between sightings and remarked that they had never seen such slow hummingbird activity. Once again, the cool, wet weather may have played a part in this phenomena. The College Creek Hawkwatch wrapped up a successful season counting raptors on the James River near Williamsburg. The station operated from 5 February to 30 May. Brian Taber, Tom Armour, Bill Williams and Fred Blystone set a new record for most birds counted this year with a total of 1445.

Highlights of the count are noted in appropriate sections of this report..

**Abbreviations:** Crewes (Crewes Channel, *Henrico*); Curles Neck (Curles Neck Farm, *Henrico*); Dutch Gap (Dutch Gap Conservation Area, *Chesterfield*); Henricus (Henricus Park, *Chesterfield*); Hog I. (Hog I. W.M.A., *Surry*); J.R.P. (James River Park, Richmond).

## LOONS — FALCONS

Forty-one **Common Loons** were counted heading east and northeast along the James R. near Williamsburg 23 Apr (BW). Sixty **Double-crested Cormorants** were seen flying northerly in small groups near I-64, *Henrico* 11 Apr (AB). Two **Least Bitterns** were a nice find in the marsh



at Henricus 27 May (WE, JK, LL). **Cattle Egret**, a species becoming increasingly scarce, was noted on 22 Apr, *James City* (BW). The first **Green Heron** of the year was spotted at J.R.P. 4 Apr (PB). The only **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** reported in the region was found at Crewes 11 Apr (TT). Fifteen **Glossy Ibis** were in a pond along the Colonial National Historic Parkway, *James City* 10 Apr (CB). A **Mute Swan** was found along Turkey I. Road, *Henrico* 5 May (AB). Hundreds of **Snow Geese**, approximately ninety percent blue morph, were encountered at Curles Neck 13 Mar (RAS). Four **Blue-winged Teal** were at the Shirley Plantation, *Charles City* 13 Mar (AD, MI). A lingering female **Ring-necked Duck** was observed at Crewes 13 & 14 May (AB). **Hooded, Red-breasted, and Common Mergansers** were seen together in the same pond at Curles Neck 13 Mar (RAS). The College Creek Hawkwatch, *James City* had a

new highcount for **Osprey with 155** recorded. Other new high counts for that hawkwatch were 41 **Cooper's Hawks**, 34 **Broad-winged Hawks** and 5 **Merlins**, a rare spring migrant. Unfortunately, the 15 **American Kestrels** counted tied for the lowest count ever and reflects the downward trend of this species that has been noted during autumn hawkwatches (BT). Three **Mississippi Kites** were seen along routes 615 and 622, *Southampton*, and 4 or 5 more were counted over a field in Little Texas 28 May (MD, TD, SH, BL). A pair of ad. **Bald Eagles** were continuously seen in a swamp near the corner of Laburnum and Darbeytown Road in e. *Henrico* during the first half of March (SM). On 14 Mar, an eagle's nest was discovered in that same area (B & LC). For the third year in a row, a pair of **Peregrine Falcons** nested on the BB&T building at Ninth and Main Street in downtown Richmond. The pair laid four eggs and all four

hatched by 29 Apr. Two of the chicks were taken by biologists and released in the mountains to better ensure survival and the other two were banded and remained in Richmond. To date, all four falcon chicks have survived.

## QUAIL – OWLS

A **Northern Bobwhite** was heard calling in the city of Richmond near J.R.P. 12 May (AB). Three more were noted at the Cumberland Marsh Nature Conservancy, *New Kent* 22 May (AB). A **Common Moorhen** was found at Henricus 23 Apr (BR, JR). An alternate plumaged **American Avocet** was a great find at a pond in w. *Charles City* (ABr). Two **Greater Yellowlegs** were seen at the Shirley Plantation, *Charles City* 13 Mar (AD, MI). A **Lesser Yellowlegs** was noted at Hog I. 19 Apr (BC). Three **Solitary Sandpipers** were found at J.R.P. 4 May (AB). Nine **Spotted Sandpipers** were at Sunken Meadow Pond, *Surry* 29 Apr (TTu). A single **Upland Sandpiper** was seen at Hog I. 19 Apr (BC). An early **Pectoral Sandpiper** was found at Curles Neck 13 Mar (RAS). Three Pectoral Sandpipers were discovered at the Shirley Plantation, *Charles City* 19 Mar (LL). Three **White-rumped Sandpipers**, much rarer in the spring than in the fall, were found at Hog I. 15 May (EE). Fifteen **Least Sandpipers** were seen at the Shirley Plantation, *Charles City* 13 Mar (AD, MI). **Least Sandpipers** were seen on the same day at Curles Neck (RAS). Two **Stilt Sandpipers** and an unspecified number of **Short-billed Dowitchers** were noted at Hog I. 15 May (EE). Two or 3 **American Woodcocks** were calling and displaying east of Turkey I. Road, *Henrico* 6 Mar (AB). A few **Bonaparte's Gulls** were seen at Curles Neck 13 Mar (RAS). Two more were noted in Richmond at J.R.P. 20 Apr (AB). The best gull of the season was a juv. **Glaucous Gull** photographed at the Dominion Power ash ponds near Henricus 19 Mar (ph. LL), with an ad. **Lesser Black-**



This Glaucous Gull was at the Dominion Power Plant ash ponds near Henricus. Photographed 19 Mar by Larry Lynch



**backed Gull** there at the same time (LL). The following day, 2 ad. Lesser Black-backed Gulls joined the first in the same area (WE), and a third was seen briefly at Curles Neck 13 Mar (AD). Two **Black Terns** in spectacular breeding plumage were found over a pond near Rte. 156 in *Charles City* 5 May (AB). A lone **Caspian Tern** was discovered at the Dominion Power ash ponds near Henricus 25 Mar (PB). **Royal Terns** were at Hog I. 3 Apr (BT, GA), along with a **Gull-billed Tern** and 2 **Common Terns** (BC). **Least Terns** were reported from Hog I. 15 May (EE). A **Black-billed Cuckoo** was found at J.R.P. 9 May (PB). One, possibly 2, nestling **Great Horned Owls** were observed in an old Osprey nest on Hog I. 3 Apr (BT, GA). Two other nestling Great Horned Owls were seen at J.R.P. 3 Apr (AB).

## GOATSUCKERS – FINCHES

**Common Nighthawks** were observed in Richmond the week of 6 May (AB) with up to 3 being seen most evenings. Four **Chuck-will's-widows** were heard singing along Rte. 662, *Southampton* 28 May (MD, TD, SH, BL). One **Whip-poor-will** was heard on Rte. 613, *Charles City* 31 May (AB). A **Red-headed Woodpecker** was seen at Piney Grove Preserve, *Sussex* during a planned field trip 28 May (RAS). Also seen that day was one of the endangered **Red-cockaded Woodpeckers**. A **Willow Flycatcher** was singing in J.R.P. 27 May (AB). **Warbling** and **Blue-headed Vireos** were reported from J.R.P. in Apr and May (AB, LL). A **Common Raven**, a species that's being sighted more frequently east of its traditional range, was seen on East Commerce Street in Richmond 9 Mar (p.a. B&JT). **Cliff Swallow** nests were discovered under the Lee Bridge in Richmond 15 May (RAS). On 17 May, 42 Cliff Swallow nests were counted under the bridge (AB). **Brown-headed Nuthatches** were noted in the Short Pump area of

Richmond 8 Mar (BG). **Swainson's Thrushes** were reported from J.R.P. on 9 May (PB) and 25 May (AB). A **Veery** was seen there 9 May (PB). A **Gray-cheeked Thrush** was noted at J.R.P. 24 May (AB). Two Swainson's Thrushes, a Veery and a Gray-cheeked Thrush graced a yard in *Chesterfield* 7 May (PB). **Hermit Thrush** numbers were down along the Green Springs Trail in *James City* during the most recent winter, which carried on into spring. Since 1997, 5 to 7 Hermit Thrushes were encountered per visit on average, but this winter only 1 to 2 were found per visit. The observer thinks the lack of berries on species like American Holly was one possible reason for the decrease noticed this spring and during the winter 2005 reporting period. (BW). A **Brown Thrasher** was found sitting on a clutch of three eggs in Chester, *Chesterfield* on 6 Apr (JK). This represents the earliest egg date for this species in the Piedmont; the previous early egg date was 20 Apr. The spring warbler migration kicked off with sightings of **Yellow-throated Warblers** in Barhamsville, *New Kent* (RB) and also Pocahontas S.P., *Chesterfield* (AD) 29 Mar. A **Blue-winged Warbler** was observed singing at J.R.P. on 20 Apr (AB), and another was there 23 Apr with a **Lawrence's Warbler** singing a Blue-winged song (LL). A singing **Cape May Warbler** was seen on Stonewall Avenue in Richmond 17 May (AB). A **Palm Warbler** was found at Dutch Gap 13 Mar (AD, MI). A male **Mourning Warbler** was heard singing and then subsequently seen at J.R.P. on 27 May (AB), and Bedell encountered what was most likely the same bird the following day. One or 2 **Wilson's Warblers** were seen at J.R.P. on 9 May (PB). A **Grasshopper Sparrow** was found on Turkey I. Road, *Henrico* 5 May (AB). **Fox Sparrows** were noted at feeders in *Chesterfield* 17 Mar (WE) and 18 Mar (CC). An ad. **White-crowned Sparrow** was at J.R.P. on 4 May

(AB). A few **Pine Siskins** were seen at Pocahontas S.P., *Chesterfield* 19 Apr (PB).

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## 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

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This report was compiled by Alan Schreck and reviewed by Bill Williams.

**Abbreviations:** Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge (BBNWR, Virginia Beach); Cape Charles (Town of Cape Charles, Northampton); CBBT (Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel, s. of Northampton); Chine. (Chincoteague N.W.R., Accomack), Craney (Craney Island landfill, Portsmouth); ESVNWR (Eastern Shore of Virginia N.W.R., Northampton); Kiptopeke (Kiptopeke State Park, Northampton).

## DUCKS – HAWKS

Spring arrived at Cape Charles with

*Continued on page 22*



the bugling of 22 **Tundra Swans** at dusk 5 Mar, that continued through much of the night as hundreds more passed overhead (NB). Kearney found a pair of **Wood Ducks** among a flock of all three scoters in very choppy water at CBBT 2 Mar, where she also noted six **Harlequin Ducks** (one drake). The **Eurasian Wigeon** continued at ESVNWR through most of Mar (TD, KK). A **MOTTLED DUCK** was reported near the banding station at First Landing State Park 25 Mar (JR *fide* TD). A **Lesser Scaup** was at Island One CBBT 2 May. The immature drake **King Eider** continued at the fishing pier at Kiptopeke 5–6 Mar (KK, GW, BL). **Surf Scoters** were on Islands Three and Four, and a **Black Scoter** was on Island Three CBBT on 2 May (TD). Surf Scoters were also at the jetty in Cape Charles 2 May (TD). Large numbers of **Red-throated Loons** at CBBT 11 Mar outnumbered **Common Loons** 5 to 1 (BT). An **American White Pelican** was seen soaring above ESVNWR 2 May before disappearing to the north (TD). Copeland found a female **Anhinga** at Stumpy L. golf course, Virginia Beach 5 Apr. A **Least Bittern** was observed during a Marsh Wren callback survey at BBNWR 4 May, along with vocally responsive **King Rails** (3) and many **Soras** (RA). **Reddish Egrets** were at the Whitehurst Tract in Virginia Beach 5 Apr (BC). Two **Mississippi Kites** were at Dismal Swamp 8 Apr (CM, DM, EM) and between six and eight were observed feeding on dragonflies at ESVNWR 22 May (GA, NB). A **Swallow-tailed Kite** was observed along Rt. 13 between Parksley and Nassowadox 9 May (WB *fide* SH). Clark added **Northern Goshawk** to his yard list when an immature bird cruised by his home in Norfolk 12 Mar.

## SHOREBIRDS – BLACKBIRDS

Three **American Avocets** were at Craney Island 20–21 Apr (AD). A nominate race **Whimbrel** was observed at Willis Wharf 21 May (RA). An ariel survey of the barrier islands for **Red Knots**, conducted at the request of the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife, the Center for Conservation Biology at the College of William and Mary, and Barry Truitt of the Virginia Coast Reserve (TNC), produced an estimate of 9,150, consistent with levels in the mid-1990s. On 2 May, ESVNWR hosted two **White-rumped Sandpipers**, **Dunlin**, **Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs**, and **Semipalmated and Least Sandpipers** (TD). A **Black-necked Stilt** was on the causeway to Chin. 14 May, and another was found at Ramp Rd. ESVNWR 15 May (MB, AD). Four more were at Craney I. 17 May (EE). The Ramp Rd. bird was still present 21 May (VK). The jetty at Cape Charles held about two dozen **Purple Sandpipers** 2 May (TD). A Brian Patteson pelagic trip out of Virginia Beach had 2 **Little Gulls** one Iceland Gull, 2–3 **Black-legged Kittiwakes** 136 **Northern Fulmars**, 5 **Razorbills**, 281+ **Dovekies**, 14 **Atlantic Puffins** 5 Mar (TD, et. al). Another sign of spring, the first fully “black headed” **Laughing Gull** was observed in Chesapeake 12 Mar (RA). **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds** started appearing at the First Landing SP Banding Station 19 Apr (JR) along with **Great-crested Flycatcher**, which also showed up in Suffolk the same day (LW). **Acadian Flycatcher** arrived at Dismal Swamp 27 Apr (RA). Dismal Swamp’s first **Eastern Wood-pewee** of the season showed up for the 20 Apr walk (RA). **Winter Wrens** were at Dismal Swamp 19 Mar (DH). A **Sedge Wren** was at Back Bay 4 May (RA). **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** was at Dismal Swamp 19 Mar (DH). JR caught and banded a **Gray-cheeked Thrush** at First Landing 29 Apr. **Swainson’s**

**Thrush** was at Dismal Swamp 5 May (RA). JR banded a **Bicknell’s Thrush** at First Landing SP 15 May, and another at the same location 22 May. A **Northern Shrike** perched along Rt. 13 on Fisherman’s Island 5 Mar (NB) was found again 13 Mar (MD, TD). DH noted a **Blue-headed Vireo** at Dismal Swamp 19 Mar, along with an **Orange-crowned Warbler**. **Hooded and Yellow-throated Warblers** arrived at Dismal Swamp 20 Apr (RA). A **Nashville Warbler** was singing near the banding station at First Landing SP 2 May (JR). The first **Swainson’s Warbler** for the season was reported from Dismal Swamp 4 Apr (DS *fide* RA). The **Western Tanager**, first reported 22 Jan during the previous reporting period, continued at a backyard feeder in Virginia Beach through Mar (BL, GW) and reappeared 20 Apr after a four day absence (NP). **Summer Tanager** was at First Landing SP 21 Apr (JR). A **Painted Bunting**, first reported last period on 1 Feb, continued at a feeder in Chesapeake 6 Mar (m.obs.) Three singing **Dickcissels** were at Arlington Rd. near KSP 14 May (MB, AD), and another sang from the big field at Kiptopeke 22 May (GA, NB). A **Grasshopper Sparrow** surprised Ake’s group at Dismal Swamp 27 Apr (RA, m.obs.). A **White-throated Sparrow** was lingering on Island Four of the CBBT 2 May (TD). **Rusty Blackbirds** were in the woods at Dismal Swamp 19 Mar (DH). **Orchard Oriole** showed up right on time in Suffolk 19 Apr (LW).

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**ENDNOTE - The Reports We Don't Like to Receive** In preparing each issue of Virginia Birds we review hundreds of reports from across the Commonwealth. Most show birders in a very positive light; a little crazy, perhaps, when they are in pursuit, but also quick to share their passion with others and encourage an interest in birds and in conservation. Occasionally, however, and more often than we would like, we hear about incidents in which birders are rude to people, or disrespectful of private property; or, amazingly enough, unconcerned about the welfare of the birds they are pursuing. Since two such incidents recently came to our attention, we thought we would end this issue with a reminder of the ABA's Principles of Birding Ethics.

**American Birding Association's  
PRINCIPLES OF BIRDING ETHICS**

Everyone who enjoys birds and birding must always respect wildlife, its environment, and the rights of others. In any conflict of interest between birds and birders, the welfare of the birds and their environment comes first.

**CODE OF BIRDING ETHICS**

**1. Promote the welfare of birds and their environment.**

**1(a)** Support the protection of important bird habitat.

**1(b)** To avoid stressing birds or exposing them to danger, exercise restraint and caution during observation, photography, sound recording, or filming.

Limit the use of recordings and other methods of attracting birds, and never use such methods in heavily birded areas, or for attracting any species that is Threatened, Endangered, or of Special Concern, or is rare in your local area;

Keep well back from nests and nesting colonies, roosts, display areas, and important feeding sites. In such sensitive areas, if there is a need for extended observation, photography, filming, or recording, try to use a blind or hide, and take advantage of natural cover.

Use artificial light sparingly for filming or photography, especially for close-ups.

**1(c)** Before advertising the presence of a rare bird, evaluate the potential for disturbance to the bird, its surroundings, and other people in the area, and proceed only if access can be controlled, disturbance minimized, and permission has been obtained from private land-owners. The sites of rare nesting birds should be divulged only to the proper conservation authorities.

**1(d)** Stay on roads, trails, and paths where they exist; otherwise keep habitat disturbance to a minimum.

**2. Respect the law, and the rights of others.**

**2(a)** Do not enter private property without the owner's explicit permission.

**2(b)** Follow all laws, rules, and regulations governing use of roads and public areas, both at home and abroad.

**2(c)** Practise common courtesy in contacts with other people. Your exemplary behavior will generate goodwill with birders and non-birders alike.

**3. Ensure that feeders, nest structures, and other artificial bird environments are safe.**

**3(a)** Keep dispensers, water, and food clean, and free of decay or disease. It is important to feed birds continually during harsh weather.

**3(b)** Maintain and clean nest structures regularly.

**3(c)** If you are attracting birds to an area, ensure the birds are not exposed to predation from cats and other domestic animals, or dangers posed by artificial hazards.

**4. Group birding, whether organized or impromptu, requires special care.**

Each individual in the group, in addition to the obligations spelled out in Items #1 and #2, has responsibilities as a Group Member.

**4(a)** Respect the interests, rights, and skills of fellow birders, as well as people participating in other legitimate outdoor activities. Freely share your knowledge and experience, except where code 1(c) applies. Be especially helpful to beginning birders.

**4(b)** If you witness unethical birding behavior, assess the situation, and intervene if you think it prudent. When intervening, inform the person(s) of the inappropriate action, and attempt, within reason, to have it stopped. If the behavior continues, document it, and notify appropriate individuals or organizations.

**Group Leader Responsibilities** [amateur and professional trips and tours].

**4(c)** Be an exemplary ethical role model for the group. Teach through word and example.

**4(d)** Keep groups to a size that limits impact on the environment, and does not interfere with others using the same area.

**4(e)** Ensure everyone in the group knows of and practises this code.

**4(f)** Learn and inform the group of any special circumstances applicable to the areas being visited (e.g. no tape recorders allowed).

**4(g)** Acknowledge that professional tour companies bear a special responsibility to place the welfare of birds and the benefits of public knowledge ahead of the company's commercial interests. Ideally, leaders should keep track of tour sightings, document unusual occurrences, and submit records to appropriate organizations.

**PLEASE FOLLOW THIS CODE AND DISTRIBUTE AND TEACH IT TO OTHERS**

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