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**Virginia's Forests and Virginia's Birds: a Call for Bird-Friendly Forest Management
by Sandy Spencer**

Page 3

Spring 2006 Regional Reports

Page 5



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Editors' Notes

In most regions migrants were reported arriving at the expected times and in normal numbers, two exceptions being the North and Southwest Regions where somewhat unseasonable weather had a noted impact. In the North, where temperatures were above normal with very dry conditions, returning birds were observed to be early while the waterfowl and sparrows seemed late to depart. Birds of interest included Mississippi Kite, nesting Yellow-crowned Night-heron and Loggerhead Shrike and a strong warbler migration with some of the more uncommon species including Nashville, Cape May, Bay-breasted, and Kentucky, reported widely.

In the Southwest the season began normally with Neotropical migrants arriving on schedule. However, a two-week period of cold and wet weather in mid-May caused the deaths of many nestlings. Fortunately the cold weather was not a factor at the VSO annual meeting at the Breaks Interstate Park in early May where a Sora and an American Bittern, provided respectively a first and second sighting for those species in that location. Other interesting reports from the south-west included Greater Yellowlegs, Hooded Merganser, Common Moorhen, Lark Sparrow and Oregon Junco. On the other side of the state reports from the Southeast Region included a new season high count of 1525 birds at the College Creek Hawk Watch, peregrines successfully nesting in downtown Richmond for the fourth straight year, the continuing presence of an Ash-throated Flycatcher and a Rufous Hummingbird as well as observations of Sandhill Crane, American White Pelican, Baird's Sandpiper, Anhinga and Loggerhead Shrike.

We are fortunate that in several regions our editors were able to include in their reports information derived from formal research and regularly conducted surveys. The Coastal Region report features observations from numerous ground and aerial surveys, a banding station, systematic colonial waterbird monitoring, and coordinated barrier island beach-nesting surveys. In the West the 2006 VSO breeding bird foray focused on Northern Saw-whet Owls and yielded a new spring high count in that Region, and first spring records for three counties.

You might be surprised to learn that in Virginia 14.1 million acres of forestland are owned by hundreds of thousands of private landowners. In our featured article Sandy Spencer, VSO Conservation Committee member, describes the essential role private forest landowners could play in preserving Virginia's forest avifauna.

Our special thanks to Paula Sullivan for acting as the North Region guest editor for this issue. We are please to announce that Ian Topolski has agreed to become the new North Re-
gion editor.

If you enjoy *Virginia Birds*, we hope you will help us keep the publication going. Again this year all of the funds raised by the VSO Roving Ravens in the World Series of Birding will be used to help underwrite the cost of producing *Virginia Birds*. So please consider making a pledge. More information and a pledge form can also be found at www.virginiabirds.net, or you may e-mail your pledge to us at VSOeditors@comcast.net.

Good birding,

Linda and Alan

Cover Photo: This Ash-throated Flycatcher, discovered in a train yard in Richmond City 7 Jan, was photographed by Larry Lynch using a Canon 30D camera with a Canon 100-400mm IS L lense. Copyright 2006 Larry Lynch, used by permission.

Virginia's Forests and Virginia's Birds: a Call for Bird-Friendly Forest Management

By Sandy Spencer, VSO Conservation Committee Member

Only eleven percent of Virginia's forests are on public land under some sort of permanent protection. The remaining 14.1 million acres of forestland is owned by hundreds of thousands of private landowners, most in tracts of less than 50 acres (Va. Dept of Forestry 2014: Shaping Virginia's Forests). The future of Virginia's forest birds will largely depend on how these private landowners choose to manage their forests. If landowners with the proper acreage and flexibility to implement different management regimes better understood the needs of interior forest birds, then collectively private forest landowners could play an essential role in the life cycles of Virginia's forest avifauna.

Birds that breed in the forest interior need deep forest (away from the edge), diversity in forest structure and species composition, and a landscape context that is largely forested (about 1.5 miles radius). However, among the biggest threats to Virginia's forest birds is the disappearance and fragmentation of large, intact blocks of natural forest (250 acres or more containing a diversity of structure, age classes, and native species). Fragmentation increases negative edge effects such as nest parasitism by cowbirds, nest predation by crows, jays, reptiles and mammals, invasion by non-native plant species, and disruption of migration corridors. Fragmentation is a buzz word in the forestry world, however most do not realize that it only takes a 30-foot opening to cause fragmentation.

The size, dimensions, and surroundings of a forest patch dictate the quantity of *effective interior* a forest patch contains. Effective interior means those inner acres that are beyond the influence of the forest edge (generally accepted as approximately 300 feet). Nests within 300 feet from the edge are less successful because of these edge effects, while nests beyond this distance and deeper into the interior tend to have higher success rates. See Figure 1. A related concept is the *perimeter-to-area ratio* (or *edge-to-interior ratio*), which refers to the geometric shape of the patch and which has direct bearing on the amount of effective interior it possesses. Round or approximately square tracts have more "interior" acreage relative to their edge while narrow, linear tracts contain more edge acreage.

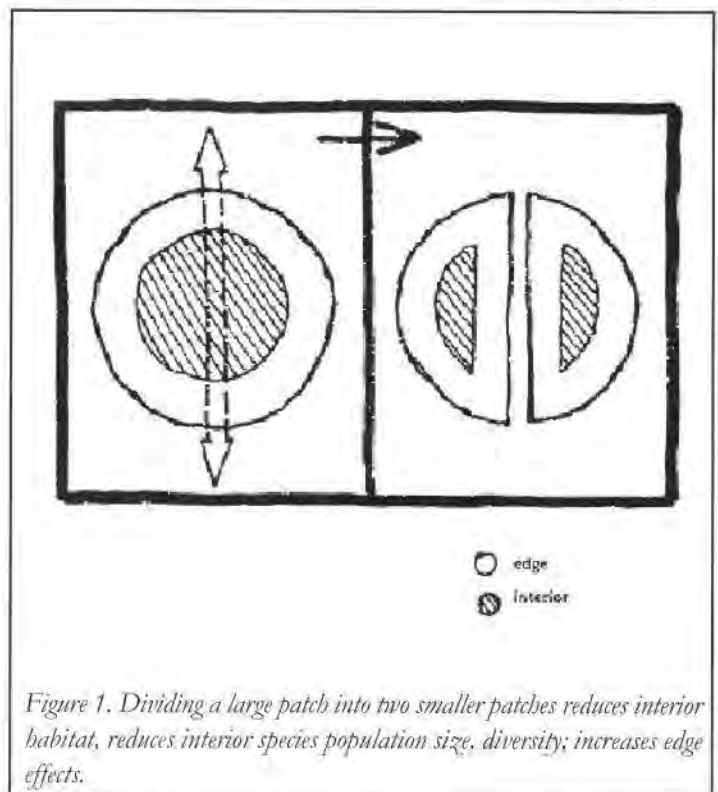
Most forest birds also require a diversity of structure, age classes, and native tree and shrub species that provide a constant supply and variety of food, nest sites, and cover. In such forests, naturally formed gaps, wet areas, and stream courses contain early successional growth, which if near nest areas, aid in the survival of fledglings by providing abundant food and cover. Except for bird species dependent on old growth forests, recent research suggests that selective logging may actually improve habitats for forest-dependent bird species, by creating pockets of uneven-aged growth, releasing stagnating trees from competition, and increasing structural and species diversity, and food resources.

The amount of fragmentation and edge resulting from management activities (i.e., number or location of roads and right of ways) should be considered in the management plan. Wide openings and travel lanes throughout an intact forest are disastrous for the nesting success of interior-breeding species that faithfully return to their traditional yet compromised breeding sites. From a forest bird standpoint, if a hardwood tract has the potential to contribute a large block of effective interior, it would be more beneficial to conduct selective thinning in the interior of no more than 30% of the canopy, to confine clear-cutting and pine conversions, and to plan roads carefully. Greater flexibility on the amount of thinning and clear cutting can be afforded to the landowner if the surrounding landscape is also forested.

Another requirement for forest birds concerns the timing of management activities. Market conditions, lining up crews and equipment, and weather must often drive the timing of timber operations, but whenever possible, if disturbance activities could be avoided during the breeding season (May-July), this would prevent nest destruction and failure.

Traditional wildlife management options prescribed for forest landowners generally favor game species such as deer, turkey, or quail. However, because these management regimes focus on creating and managing edge, they are not, per se, forest bird friendly. The impact to forest interior birds can be minimized by confining openings for the benefit of game species to the perimeter or to small, isolated woodlots of insufficient size or shape for forest birds.

Continued on page 4



Virginia's Forests and Virginia's Birds

Continued from page 3

The requirements of forest birds need to be recognized by forest management planners and landowners so that landowners may have the opportunity to choose. Some of these suggestions will not be economical for most landowners, but a modest increase in bird-friendly management practices among those with more flexibility might bend a few trends without necessarily conflicting with the bottom line of income-driven forest management plans. It is hoped that these few ideas could form the basis for a much needed, state-wide education program to reach both professionals and landowners. Urgent attention is needed to preserve what little interior forest habitat Virginia has left.

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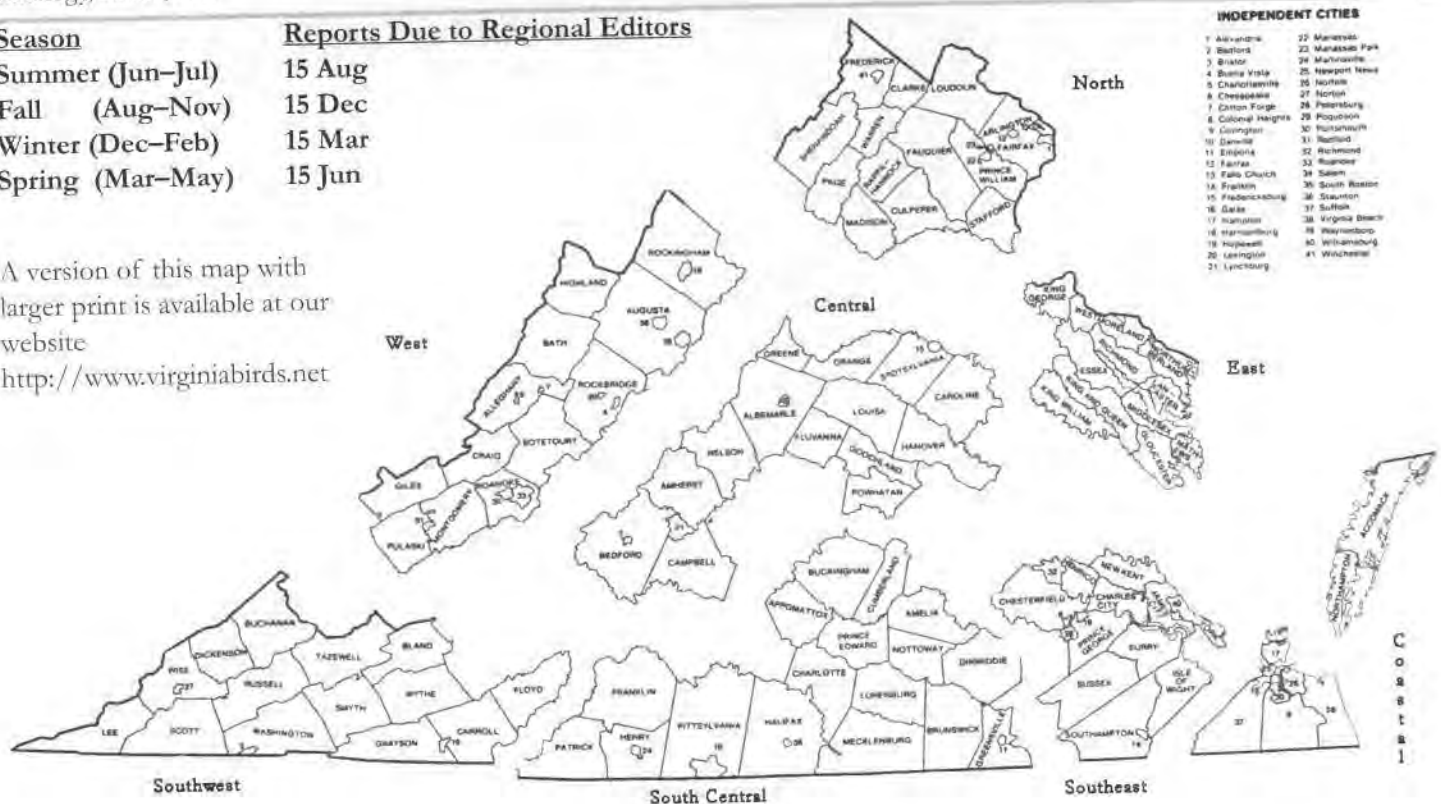
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Many thanks to Karen Cox (Va Cooperative Extension Service) and Sergio Harding (Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries) for their advice and helpful comments.

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>



Spring Reporting Period Mar – May 2006

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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Migrants arriving in the north part of the state this spring encountered near record-setting dry conditions. Temperatures were above normal too, so much so that many trees and flowers blossomed several weeks ahead of schedule. Some returning summer residents and passage migrants were also early, including swallows, thrushes, and warblers, while the waterfowl and sparrows were late to depart. Birders were delighted to see a Great Blue Heron rookery expanding, Mississippi Kites returning and likely to maintain their range expansion into Northern Virginia, and Yellow-crowned Night-herons and Loggerhead Shrikes nesting. King Rails are becoming almost easy to find at Occoquan Bay NWR, *Prince William* and a good diversity of shorebirds were again attracted to more favorable conditions at Huntley Meadows Park *Fairfax*. Warbler migration was strong and some of the more uncommon species including Nashville, Cape May, Bay-breasted, and Kentucky, were reported widely.

A Snowy Owl that found Dulles Airport, *Fairfax* a hospitable winter home, finally left in March. Huntley Meadows, *Fairfax* hosted a small group of White-faced Ibis in April, a first for this species away from coastal Virginia. Birders reported a couple of other rarities: Swallow-tailed Kite, and Clay-colored Sparrow. These will need to be reviewed by the Virginia

Avian Records Committee to be accepted and are appropriately noted as such.

Abbreviations: Airlie (Airlie Center, *Fauquier*); Aquia (Aquia Cr., *Stafford*); Belvoir (Belvoir Rd [Rte. 709] near The Plains, *Fauquier*); Blandy (Virginia State Arboretum—Blandy Experimental Farm, *Clarke*); BRCES (Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship, *Loudoun*); (Chopawamsic (Chopawamsic Creek, Quantico Marine Base, *Prince William*); Dyke (Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, *Fairfax*); Dulles Wetlands (Dulles Greenway Wetlands Mitigation Project, *Loudoun*); Great Falls (Great Falls NP, *Fairfax*); Harrison (Harrison Rd [Rte. 750] near The Plains, *Fauquier*); Hunting (Hunting Creek mudflats, *Fairfax*); Huntley (Huntley Meadows Park, *Fairfax*); Lee (Leesylvania State Park, *Prince William*); Metz (Julie J. Metz Mitigation Bank, *Prince William*); Monticello (Monticello Park, *Alexandria*); OBNWR (Occoquan Bay NWR, *Prince William*); Phelps (Chester F. Phelps WMA, *Fauquier*); Riverbend (Riverbend Park, *Fairfax*); Sky (Sky Meadows State Park, *Fauquier*); Smith (Fort CF Smith Park, *Arlington*); The Point (Possum Point and Cockpit Point Roads, *Prince William*); Van Buren (upper valley of Cedar Cr., *Shenandoah*); Veterans (Veteran's Park, *Prince William*)

DUCKS—HAWKS

A juv. blue morph **Snow Goose** associating with Canada Geese was spotted at Dulles Wetlands 29 Mar (MAG). Three **Richardson's Geese** were among 2500 **Canada Geese** at Belvoir on 5 Mar; two were relocated there 10 Mar (TD), and at least one was spotted at nearby Harrison 11 Mar (GK&MAK). Fourteen **Mute Swans** may have been the high number for the season, observed at Aquia 5 Mar (KDG). A neck-collared **Trumpeter Swan**, banded in Ohio as part of a reintroduction program and first noticed at Airlie Nov 2005, was seen again near Warrenton, *Fauquier* 8 Mar (TD). **Tundra Swans** numbered as high as 450 on 9 Mar at Chopawamsic (PS, JT, NVBC) while The Point held a last lingering bird

3 May (SP). Nearly 200 **Gadwalls** were observed at Aquia 5 Mar (DKG). A possible Gadwall/Wigeon hybrid was spotted among Gadwalls at Veterans 9 Apr where it remained until 12 Apr (KP). **American Wigeons** were found in small numbers in Mar and Apr, except for a good count of 120 near Warrenton, *Fauquier* 8 Mar the last day they were reported (TD). Late to depart were singles of **American Black Duck** 29 May (HG, et al.), **Northern Pintail** 27 May (JB), and **Blue-winged Teal** 22 May (HG, et al.), as well as 6 **Green-winged Teal** 29 Apr (BJ), all seen at Huntley. An unusual **Common Teal**, the Eurasian form of Green-winged Teal, not currently considered a separate species, was often found within a small flock of Green-winged Teal at Huntley from 14 Jan (RH) to 25 Mar (BK, LM, NVBC, m.obs.). **Canvasbacks** were reported from only four locations 4–11 Mar with a high number of just 26 at Aquia 5 Mar (DKG). **Redheads** were typically few as well, but an unusually high number joined rafts of scaup at OBNWR over a few days, peaking at 38 on 3 Mar (PS). Other late lingering ducks were two drake **Ring-necked Ducks** at Airlie 24 May (TD), and **Lesser Scaup**, **Bufflehead** and **Ruddy Ducks** still on the bay at OBNWR May 29 (SP). **Common Goldeneyes** were found only at Riverbend 9 Mar (DT), Belvoir 11 Mar (GK&MAK), and OBNWR 11 Mar (MRi). Egg-dumping by a **Hooded Merganser** may have taken place at Huntley 21 May (RY) where a female **Wood Duck** was caring for nine chicks, including two mergansers. Eighty-one **Common Mergansers** and 202 migrating **Red-breasted Merganser** were counted at Potomac R. locations in *Fairfax*, *Prince William*, and *Stafford* Counties 19 Mar (DKG, RR) and a late Red-breasted Merganser was spotted in the Potomac R. at Dyke 23 May (RR). **Wild Turkeys** were reported frequently from Sky (SB) and Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve, *Loudoun* (JCo, et al.) 11 Mar to Huntley 7 May (BJ). After an absence of almost 10 years,

the return of **Pied-billed Grebes** was noted at Huntley 6 Mar (HG, et al.). Water levels there were again rising as beavers have to maintain the dam after a two-year hiatus. All waterfowl were benefiting. Typically low numbers of **Horned Grebes** moved through the area mid-Mar to mid-Apr with a high number of six on 2 Apr Dyke (DKG, et al.). **American Bitterns** showed up at five locations, highlighted by a rare appearance in the Piedmont at Phelps 20 Apr (TD), and **Least Bitterns** were in three locations: OBNWR 30 Apr (DKG, RR, PR), Metz 18 May (MRi), and Dyke 21 May (LC, et al.). The long established **Great Blue Heron** rookery at Mason Neck NWR, *Fairfax* was found to have 839 nests, down from 1200 before 2004 Hurricane Isabel, 18 Feb (DJ). In contrast, the rookery at Chopawamsic increased in size. There were now at least 100 nests, the number having almost doubled from last season (TS). An imm. **Little Blue Heron** made an appearance at Huntley 7 Apr (SL, PS) and an ad. was spotted there 29 May (LC, JB). Veterans hosted another ad. 7 May (KP). A **Tricolored Heron** made an unusual appearance at Dyke 18 May (SP). **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** returned to Twin Branches Trail, Reston *Loudoun* 27 Apr (MB) to nest in the same tree as in 2005, and also to Folly Lick Park *Fairfax* 2 May (AH). Others were seen often (m.obs.) at Huntley 9 Apr (VK, BK, JG) to 13 May (JC). One **Glossy Ibis** flew over OBNWR 9 Apr (MR, JK, LM) and at least one arrived at Huntley 17 Apr (EE) and stayed probably until 27 Apr (SB, JBu). Never before reported in Virginia away from the Eastern Shore were **WHITE-FACED IBIS** ♀ discovered at Huntley 17 Apr (EE†). Four ads. were seen associating with one Glossy Ibis and one ibis whose identity was undetermined over the period until the last report of ibis sp. 27 Apr (SB, JBu). Also requiring acceptance by VARCOM was a **SWALLOW-TAILED KITE** ♀ spotted from a car on Braddock Rd. *Fairfax* 17 Apr (SH†). **Mississippi Kites** returned in mid-Apr with the first report coming from Metz 18 Apr (MRi). Other kites

were seen in the Waynewood *Fairfax* neighborhood beginning 12 May (VON) where they have nested for five previous years. Late in departing were **Northern Harriers** seen at BRCES 27 May (DKG *vide JCo*) and a **Sharp-shinned Hawk** at Bull Run PO Rd., *Prince William* 6 May (DKG, RR, GH). A **Merlin**, seen daily (m.ob.) since 16 Jan (DD), finally left the Fairlington Community Center *Arlington* 7 Mar (DD, JH, PK). A **Peregrine Falcon** pair on the Woodrow Wilson Bridge just over the Maryland line, soared daily over the Virginia shore *Alexandria*, but by 27 Apr their nesting attempt failed for the second year in a row (SS).

RAILS—SHRIKES

King Rails were almost certain to be heard or seen on any visit to OBNWR after 12 Mar (MRi) when four were first heard. A pair, probably two pairs, of **Virginia Rails** was present at Dulles Wetlands 28 & 29 May (JCo, et al.) They were also seen there 13 May (JCo, MAG, LW). **Soras** were found at Dulles Wetlands 13 May (JCo, MAG, LW). **American Coots** were seen in very small numbers in most areas but *Aquila* had a very high number of 1460 on 5 Mar (DKG). While Hunting has hosted fewer and fewer shorebirds since construction of the new Woodrow Wilson Bridge began five years ago, Huntley may now be the best viewing location as higher water levels again provide a hospitable stopover spot for migrating birds. **Semipalmated Plovers, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpipers, Spotted Sandpipers, Semipalmated Sandpipers, Least Sandpipers, Pectoral Sandpipers, and Dunlin** were all reported during the expected time period (m.obs). Highlights were a **Sanderling** reported Huntley 29 May (JB) as well as 2 **White-rumped Sandpipers** Huntley 27 May (VK, BW, CW, NVBC). **Wilson's Snipe** migration was strong beginning 11 Mar at Dulles Wetlands (JCo, et al.) and OBNWR (MRi) and last noted at Huntley 7 May (JCa, SBa). A late **American Woodcock** was spotted at Bull Run PO Rd., *Fairfax* 6 May (BJ). **Bonaparte's Gulls** passed through Dyke 7 Mar (JK) to Lee 22 May (RW). The last **Lesser Black-backed**

Gull was spotted at Hunting 9 Apr (JK). An early **Caspian Tern** was noted at Hunting 31 Mar (KG). Unusual at OBNWR were **Royal Terns** 17 Apr (J&CH). There were few reports of **Forster's Terns** and none after a single was seen at Dyke 6 May (EE). Flying over the bay at OBNWR was 1 **Black Tern** 27 May (SB, JBu). Six locations had **Black-billed Cuckoos** beginning at Phelps 30 Apr (DW) and ending at Great Falls 28 May (MR). A **SNOWY OWL** ♀ enjoyed the tundra-like environs of Dulles Airport beginning in Jan (m.obs) and probably returned north about 16 Mar (JE). As many as 10 **Short-eared Owls** put on shows at dusk for birders near Rectortown, *Fauquier* as late as 18 Mar (J&BJL). As last year, reliable spots for **Chuck-will's-widows** and **Whip-poor-wills** were Joplin and Breckenridge Rds. *Prince William* 30 Apr (MRi) and 28 May (SP). The earliest Whip-poor-will noted was at a backyard in Ruth *Madison* 15 Apr (IT), as was a rather early **Ruby-throated Hummingbird**. **Red-headed Woodpeckers** were seen at seven different locations, perhaps establishing new territories, from Lincoln in northwest *Loudoun* 13 Mar (MAG) to the GW Memorial Pkwy in southeast *Fairfax* 18 Mar (BMc) where they still were found 6 May (SL, PS). A very late **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** surprised many at Monticello 20



White-faced Ibis at Hunley Meadows, photographed by Adam D'Onofrio

May (BY, BH, m.obs). Tyrant Flycatchers made a fine showing with **Olive-sided Flycatcher** reports rising to five locations from just one last year, the first from a Clifton yard 14 May (VON) and last from Blandly 29 May (JFu). **Alder Flycatchers** were singing at Leeds Manor Rd. *Fauquier* 13 May (JK) and Dyke 26 May (EE). **Least Flycatchers** were spotted at Northern Virginia Regional Park *Fairfax* 6 May (JK) and The Point 20 & 21 May (DKG), and a **Great-crested Flycatcher** was early at White Oaks Park, *Fairfax* 13 Apr (MM). Although there were a few reports of **Loggerhead Shrikes** at Sky last fall, there were none last spring, so it was notable that shrikes were found again 2 Apr (SB). An ad. was flushed from a nest there 16 Apr (SB). Another was found at nearby Leeds Manor Rd. *Fauquier* 13 May (JK).

VIREOS—OLD WORLD SPARROWS

Blue-headed Vireos arrived early 2 Apr (GH, RR) and left late 22 May (PK) at Monticello. **Philadelphia Vireos** were reported only from Monticello 12 May (BH) and 20 May (PS, DKG). **Red-eyed Vireos** found during a two day *Fairfax* Spring Count 6 & 7 May totaled 542 (DKG). Crows have declined in much of the area and so a flight of 10,000 over Tysons Corner, *Fairfax* 20 Mar (MAG) was an encouraging sight. **Common Ravens** continue to be seen more often on the Piedmont and even the Coastal Plain with reports from Smith 3 Mar (VK, JG), Great Falls (ASc) and Beaverdam Cr. Reservoir, *Loudoun* 4 Mar (IT), Rte. 28 near Sterling, *Loudoun* 14 Apr (BW) and I-66 *Prince William* 16 Apr (SB). **Tree Swallows** made an early appearance at Harrison 10 Mar (TD) and **Northern Rough-winged Swallows**, too, were early at OBNWR 18 Mar (SP). **Cave Swallows** returned to their breeding spot at the Rte. 7 bridge over the Shenandoah R. *Clarke* by 13 Apr (TD, EH). **Red-breasted Nuthatch** reports were up a bit from last year, with the last from a Great Falls yard 2 May (RW). A very late **Winter Wren** was banded at OBNWR 12 May (JT, et al.). **Sedge Wrens** were noted at OBNWR 26 Mar

(DKG, JK) and also at Dyke 5 May (DKG) and 6 May (EE). **Marsh Wrens** were found only at Dyke, first seen 21 May (LC, et al.). **Gray-cheeked**

Thrushes were seen in the area beginning at Long Branch 13 May (PK, PS) and ending at Dyke 28 May (DKG, et al.). The only reports of **Bicknell's Thrush** were from Dyke 28 May (DKG), as well as a nearby yard *Fairfax* 26–28 May (MCP). Early were a **Swainson's Thrush** at Huntley 3 Apr (HG, et al.) and a **Wood Thrush** 9 Apr Huntley (SH, et al.) Perhaps early migrants and not overwintering birds were a **Gray Catbird** at Long Branch 1 Mar (VK, NVBC) and a **Brown Thrasher** OBNWR 4 Mar (SB). **American Pipits** were noted only at Lee 24 Apr (RW) and 6 May (BJ). Hundreds of **Cedar Waxwings** were at Lee 30 Apr (MRi). The first **Blue-winged Warblers** seen were at Monticello 21 Apr (PK, PS) and nine late singers and probable breeders were at BRCES 27 May (JCo, et al.). One **Golden-winged Warbler** was reported at Monticello 3 & 4 May (*fide* TA). **Tennessee Warblers** were well represented at five locations beginning at Huntley 6 May (LC) and ending at Lee 22 May (RW). **Nashville Warblers** made a nice showing at eight venues but were found first and last at Monticello 24 Apr (HG, DS) and 24 May (SL, HG). A **Northern Parula** heard at The Point 26 Mar (JK) was early. Monticello hosted a late **Chestnut-sided Warbler** 26 May a late **Magnolia Warbler** 31 May and as many as 4 lingering **Black-throated Green Warblers** 25 May (all *fide* TA). **Cape May Warblers** were outstanding this season stopping off at six locations, the first being Monticello 3 May (BH) and the last, there as well, 24 May (*fide* TA). A **Black-throated Blue Warbler** that spent most of the winter at a feeder in *Arlington* was last seen 29 Mar (AS&LF), but the first spring migrant appeared at Monticello 15 Apr (*fide* TA), and the last departed there 25 May (*fide* TA). The last **Yellow-rumped Warbler** seemed to have departed the area by 26 May, last seen at Monticello (*fide* TA). **Blackburnian Warblers** were notable at Monticello for their high numbers. As

many as eight were seen there 20 May (*fide* TA). The first **Palm Warbler** noted stopped early at Riverbend 30 Mar (RW) and the last was seen at Sky (JK) and Dulles wetlands 13 May (JCo, MAG, LW). **Bay-breasted Warblers** were reported widely, from nine locations, the first on 3 May and last 25 May at Monticello (*fide* TA). A **Cerulean Warbler** seen at Huntley 25 Apr (SL, PS) was early. Thompson WMA, *Fauquier*, a regionally important breeding area, had as many as 25–30 Ceruleans 5 May (J&BJL) and again 13 May (MD & JD). **Kentucky Warblers** were seen at seven locations, beginning at Monticello 24 Apr (PS, DS). **Mourning Warbler** reports were down from last year, coming only from Monticello 20–25 May (PK, m.ob.) and The Point 20 & 21 May (DKG). A **Common Yellowthroat** was early at Huntley 1 Apr (BJ). **Wilson's Warblers** was seen at six locations, spanning almost the exact time period as last year. The first reports were from Dyke (JK, et al.) and Huntley (BJ) 7 May, and the last at Monticello 25 May (*fide* TA). **Canada Warblers** were also well represented at Monticello where as many as 8–10 were seen on a single day 24 May (*fide* TA) and stayed until 29 May (*fide* TA). Two late **American Tree Sparrows** were spotted at OBNWR 26 Mar (DKG, JK). Very rare even in fall migration, a **CLAY-COLORED SPARROW** ♀ was reported to have been at Sky 6 May (SB†). There are only two previous records of this species in the Piedmont. **Vesper Sparrows** were noted in many areas, the last a bit late at Blandly 13 May (SB). A singing **Savannah Sparrow** was spotted at Harrison 24 May (TD). **Lincoln's Sparrow** reports were down from last year, seen only at Sully Woodlands, *Fairfax* (BJ), Difficult Run, *Fairfax* (FA) 6 May, Riverbend 10 May (DT), and Van Buren 24 May (DD). A late **Swamp Sparrow** stopped at Monticello 23 May (*fide* TA), as did a **White-crowned Sparrow** at Harrison 24 May (TD). Although a **Dark-eyed Junco** with an eye problem lingered at Monticello until 25 May (PK), 30 Apr may have been the late date for a healthy bird at OBNWR (DKG, RR, PR). Three female **Rose-breasted Gros-**

beaks appeared at a feeder in Reston 31 Mar (MB). Rare either in place or time were **Bobolinks** at Harrison 24 May (TD) where they would be rare breeders, and one at Smith 27 May (VK). **Rusty Blackbirds** were noted last at Huntley 7 May by separate observers (GA, BJ). **Orchard Oriole** arrived a bit early at Lee 16 Apr (GK&MAK). **Purple Finches** were reported widely. One late bird was seen at Difficult Run, *Fairfax* 6 May (FA) and a late one for the Mountains and Valley area was at a feeder at Van Buren 27 May (DD). Clearly not an irruptive year, **Pine Siskins** were seen only at feeders in Ruth, *Madison* 26 Mar (TT) and St. Louis, *Loudoun*, 8 Apr (CT). A **House Sparrow** in Van Buren 13 Mar was unusual for that area (DD).

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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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Abbreviations: Mountains and Valley physiographic region (M&V).

Spring migrants and summer residents arrived mostly on schedule. Neotropical passerines were reported from the expected locations with no major variations, unusual distributions, or numbers. Many of this spring's records relate to breeding evidence and nesting. The 2006 VSO breeding bird foray, orchestrated by Clair Mellinger and Andrew Dolby, focused on Northern Saw-whet Owls and yielded some interesting preliminary findings.

WATERFOWL—HERONS

Waterfowl were distributed in good numbers throughout the spring. There was a record high count of 17 **Northern Shovelers**, 9 Mar, *Augusta* (AL) and counts of 21 **Redheads** and at least 50 **Ring-necked Ducks** on the New R. (*Pulaski/Montgomery*), 2 Mar, (FD) provided the second highest totals for these species in the Mountain and Valley Region. A late lingering **Common Loon** was seen in the New R., *Giles* 20 May (BO). Thirteen **American White Pelicans** ♀ were reported on Carvin's Cove Res., *Botetourt*, 30 Mar (KJ & BJ, *fide* MP). This pelican which breed in the western United States is a regular transient and winter visitor along the Virginia coast but a very rare transient in the Region with only four previous records, all of single birds. This is the first spring report.

Three active **Great Blue Heron** nests

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

discovered west of Staunton, *Augusta* 28 Apr provided that county's first, and the Region's third, breeding record for the species (SS, MH, ph BT). A single **Tricolored Heron** 8 May Rockingham provided the first record for that county and the eighth for the Region (ph CL). A 10 Mar sighting of a **Green Heron** along the South R. *Augusta*, represents a new early date for the region (AL). An active nest on 3 May is a new early nest record for *Augusta* (AL).

EAGLES—SHOREBIRDS

Bald Eagles have significantly increased in the Region over the last two decades, including spring and summer residents. Nest records, however, have been limited to a few in *Rockbridge* and *Bath*. This spring, three nests were documented in other locations suggesting an expansion of breeding territory. One nest was along the south branch of the Shenandoah R. near Elkton, *Rockingham* 9 Mar (JL) and two were in *Highland* along the Jackson R. and Cowpasture R. 9 Apr (SH, SB, BT). Local residents say the Cowpasture nest has been active and productive for several years (*vide* BT).

There were two separate sightings of single **Sandhill Cranes** ♀ 5 Apr *Augusta*, (PC) and 17-19 Apr Blacksburg, *Montgomery* (NM, MJ, ph NM). An increase in reports throughout Virginia over the past two decades, including six previous records in this region, of which only two were in the spring, seems to indicate a range expansion for this species,

A single **Lesser Yellowlegs**, Waynesboro, *Augusta* 8 Mar, established a new early date for the county and region (AL); the species typically does not arrive in the area until 10 April.

An **Upland Sandpiper** in *Montgomery*, 28 Mar (CK) was noteworthy. Though there are breeding records prior to 1986, the species is now a rare transient with few Mountain and Valley records in the last two decades.

OWLS

A report of a single calling **Long-eared Owl**, 10 May, came from the Allegheny ridge, *Highland* in a mixed forest of

conifers and deciduous hardwoods (JS). Another report of a calling owl came from approximately four miles south of this site on the West Virginia side of the ridge, 14 May (KG). Documented breeding was recorded in the region in 1939. Since then there have been only rare spring/summer records; none since 1975. Information on the status of this inconspicuous owl in the Region remains limited.

The **Northern Saw-whet Owl** foray covered 14 counties across the state, four in the Region. A well-established protocol that included playing recorded owl calls was used.

Preliminary results yielded 12 owl responses summarized in the table below (CM). This provides a new spring high count in the Region, and first spring records for *Giles*, *Montgomery*, and *Augusta*. (An additional three owls were recorded north of the Region in *Frederick*.)

Although there are only four historical regional breeding records, saw-whets probably have a widespread breeding range in the higher elevations of the region. Mellinger hopes to continue the study for one or two more springs to better assess the breeding status and range of these owls.

DATE	COUNTY	# OWL RESPONSES
28 Apr	Giles	1 (MR)
6 May	Montgomery	5 (CK,BG)
9 May	Augusta/ Albemarle	3 (MA, DH)
9 May	Highland	2 (JS)
13 May	Highland	1 (JS)

KINGFISHERS—FLYCATCHERS

Researchers studying the effect of mercury contamination in the South R. discovered 16 **Belted Kingfisher** active nest cavities along the river, 14-16 Apr, *Augusta*, *Rockingham* (AW, DC). Hatched young were observed 27 Apr a new earliest hatch date (AW). A total of 27 nest cavities were found during the entire

spring and summer study period in 2005. A new early arr. date for **Acadian Flycatcher** was recorded, 29 Apr, *Augusta* (AL).

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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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Abbreviations:

Highlights of the period included White-winged Crossbill in *Spotsylvania*, the continued presence of Rufous Hummingbird in *Greene*, and a singing Alder Flycatcher in Lynchburg.

WATERFOWL—WADERS

A Monticello Bird Club outing to Lake Anna led by Mark Adams, Mar 18, observed a nice variety of waterfowl including 12 **Horned Grebes**, 8 **Pied-billed Grebes**, 8 **Common Loons**, 8 **Wood Ducks**, 4 **Mallards**, 2 **Northern Shovelers**, 3 **Lesser Scaup**, 3 **Buffleheads**, 17 **Common Mergansers**, 9 **Red-breasted Mergansers**, and 10 **Ruddy Ducks**. One Common Loon was in alternate plumage and several Horned Grebes were molting into alternate plumage. A single **Double-crested Cormorant**, perched atop a buoy at Dike 3, was also a nice find. (MA, et al.). Fitzgerald kept periodic checks on birds at Chris Green Lake, *Albemarle* throughout much of the period. Birds of note included Pied-billed Grebe (with up to three pres-

ent on several occasions), a single female Common Merganser 14 Apr, Red-breasted Merganser (single female) 24 Apr. A single Horned Grebe and 4 Ruddy Ducks were nice finds on 22 Apr. Forty Double-crested Cormorants furnished a very good count here 24 Apr.

Johnson visited several lakes in northern *Amherst*, 17 Apr observing an incredible 55 Common Loons with only four still in basic plumage. Other notable sightings included 1 **Mute Swan** (very unusual here), 15 Red-breasted Mergansers, 1 Lesser Scaup, 5 **Blue-Wing Teal**, and 35 Double-crested Cormorants, a high count for the area. Uncommon in the region, **Wood Ducks** made a nice showing this spring with reports coming from several locations: six males courting a single female on a small pond near the observers' yard, *Orange* 14 Mar (G& RH); a female with seven ducklings 18 May along the canal path in Fredericksburg (JG); a single male 15 Apr Lake Albemarle, *Albemarle* (MA); and two separate pairs flying overhead near the James River, *Bedford* 24 Apr (RB et al.) A female Red-breasted Merganser at Lake of the Woods, *Orange* 29 May was late as was an **AMERICAN COOT** seen there the previous day (PK). A Blue-winged Teal was observed for three days during the first week of Apr at the Summit Retirement Community in Lynchburg. A **Great Egret** at College Lake, Lynchburg 18 Apr (MJ) was the only report received though more sighted would be usual for the season and may have gone unreported. A **Little Blue Heron** Chris Greene Lake, *Albemarle* 3 Apr was extremely unusual for the area and the season (JF).

RAPTORS—GULLS

Bald Eagle reports were of two imm. (one chasing a gull) at Lake Anna 18 Mar (MA et al.), and an adult perched along Rt 231 in *Madison* south of the turnoff to the Old Rag Mountain trailhead, an unusual location, 28 Apr (PM). The usual reports of **Osprey** passing through the area included *Amherst* 17 Apr (MJ); Chris Green Lake, *Albemarle* 4-24 Apr (JF); Lynchburg Mar 24-Apr 9; Lake Albe-

marle, *Albemarle* 15 Apr (MA); James River *Bedford* 24 Apr (RB et al.); and Fredericksburg 18 May (JG). A **Cooper's Hawk** was a nice sighting in Bedford 24 Apr (RB, et al.) and **Broad-Winged Hawks** were report 24 Apr in *Bedford* (RB et al.) and *Albemarle* (JF). Five **American Coot** was a low number for recent times at Lake Anna 18 Mar (MA, et al.) and the presence of one was unusual for the area at the Summit Retirement community in Lynchburg 1-9 Apr. Shorebird reports included: single **Solitary Sandpipers** in *Amherst* 17 Apr (MJ), *Bedford* 24 Apr (RB, et al.), and *Orange* 5 May (GH, JN); **Pectoral Sandpiper** near Lynchburg first week in Apr; **Spotted Sandpiper** in *Albemarle*, 24 Apr (JF) and Fredericksburg 18 May (JG). Thirty **Bonaparte's Gulls**, at Lake Anna 18 Mar was about normal for early spring there (MA, et al.).

NIGHTJARS—FINCHES

A pre-dawn search for nightjars *Orange* 30 Apr netted a **Chuck-wills-widow** as well as several **Whip-poor-wills** near Locust Grove (PK). Chuck-wills-Widow is a very good find this far north in the Piedmont. The female **RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD** first observed in Ruckersville, *Greene* October 2005 and banded in January 2006 was last reported on Mar 31 (fide BT). The first **Ruby-Throated Hummingbird** report came from Charlottesville, described as a nicely marked adult male 12 Apr (MA). At Lake Anna, 8 **Tree Swallows** were early Mar 18 (MA, et al.) The species was seen regularly at Chris Greene Lake, *Albemarle*, 28 Mar-24 Apr and **Barn Swallow** first appeared there 3 Apr (JF). **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** were flying back and forth over the Rivanna R. in Charlottesville 16 Apr (JG). **Cliff Swallows** seen at the colony under the Blue Ridge Parkway Bridge, *Amherst/Bedford* 24 Apr were slightly earlier than usual (RB, et al.) **Eastern Kingbirds** hawking along the bank at Chris Greene were a bit early 14 Apr (JF). Early in the morning 28 May, Sattler heard an **ALDER FLYCATCHER** singing its "Fee Bee Ohh" at the edge of a shopping center parking lot in Lynchburg. The bird was

on a steep bank with a shrubby growth of tree-of-heaven, wild black cherry, and box elder. Bruno, Johnson, and Ferrell also briefly saw at the bird flycatching and perched, although it did not vocalize for them. It was lost from view, and not relocated again that morning or late that afternoon, or the following morning. This observation provides the second spring report for Lynchburg (there is also a spring *Amherst* record). A **LEAST FLYCATCHER** was singing in the Harris' yard but disappeared into the woods before they could see it 5 May. A morning spent driving around *Orange* did not produce any Bobolinks 29 May. However **Warbling Vireo**, and **Willow Flycatcher** were observed along Route 627 (Clark Mountain Road) at the bridge near the junction of Route 636/River Road (GH, PK). In *Orange* for the second year bumblebees were noted usurping the nests of **Carolina Chickadees**. Last year the bees formed a gelatinous mass on top of the Chickadee eggs and the carcass of a chickadee was found lying on top of the mass (GH). A nice assortment of warblers were at Montpelier Plantation, *Orange*, May 5 including 3 **Blue-winged Warblers** (singing an unfamiliar song), 5 **Northern Parulas**, 6 **Ovenbirds**, 3 **Louisiana Waterthrush**, one **Common Yellowthroat**, 2 **Black-throated Greens**, 2 **Black-throated Blues**, 15 **Yellow-rumped**, one **Black-and-white**, 2 **Cerulean**, one **Yellow**, and one **Kentucky Warbler** (GH, JN). Eight birders enjoyed outstanding spring birding at Observatory Hill in Charlottesville on the morning of 5 May. Warblers included **Cape May**, **Bay-breasted**, **Blackburnian**, **Magnolia**, **Nashville**, **Chestnut-sided**, **Black-and-white**, **Black-throated Blue**, **Black-throated Green**, **Northern Parula**, **Worm-eating**, **Hooded**, **Yellow-rumped**, **Ovenbird**, **American Redstart**, and **Common Yellowthroat** (MA, et al.). A walk along the canal path in Fredericksburg 18 May produced **Blackpoll Warblers** passing through in numbers with 36 seen along with 5 Northern Parulas, 3 Yellow Warblers, 1 Chestnut-sided Warbler, 1 **Canada Warbler**, and 3 Common

Yellowthroats (JH). A **Yellow-throated Warbler** was a nice find in Fredericksburg 25 Apr (LA) Rare anytime in Virginia a report of a **WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL** ♀ feasting on niger seed along with a dozen **American Goldfinch** in *Spotsylvania* 5 May was unprecedented this late in the year (PH) **Purple Finches** were still present at Chris Greene Lake, *Albemarle* 8 Apr (JF) and **Pine Siskins** were still feasting on Gaden's thistle seed, *Albemarle* 9 Mar.

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East

The Northern Neck, composed of King George, Westmoreland, Richmond, Northumberland, and Lancaster Counties, is bordered by the Rappahannock and Potomac Rivers. The Middle Peninsula includes King William, King and Queen, Essex, Middlesex, Gloucester, and Mathews Counties and is bordered by the Rappahannock and Pamunkey/York Rivers. The Mattaponi R. is the boundary between King William and King and Queen and it joins with the Pamunkey R. to form the York R. in West Point. Even though the northern and eastern shoreline of the Northern Neck overlooks the Maryland waters of the Potomac River those Maryland birds are reported here since they are not reported anywhere else.

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During the spring season 190 species were recorded in 41 reports by 18 observers, fewer reports and observers than usual. A Swallow-tailed Kite, seen again near Gloucester Point, was probably the most exciting find of the season. Other high-

lights included Peregrine Falcon, Black Tern, Swainson's Warbler, Mourning Warbler, a large flock of migrating Bobolinks, and a large nesting colony of Least Terns.

Abbreviations: Beaverdam (Beaverdam Park, *Gloucester*); Caffee (Caffee Creek area, *Gloucester*); Caledon (Caledon State Park, *King George*); EG (Elsing Green, a private farm in *King William*); GWB (George Washington's Birthplace National Monument, *Westmoreland*); Hutchinson (tract of Rapp. R. NWR, *Essex*); Island Farm (tract of Rapp. R. NWR *Richmond*); K. G. Ponds (Route 3 ponds in *King George*); Mothershead (tract of Rapp. R. NWR *Westmoreland*); The Pocket (in Pamunkey Indian Reservation along Pamunkey River, *King William*); Rapp. R. NWR. (Rappahannock R. Valley National Wildlife Refuge); White Marsh, *Gloucester*; Wilna (Wilna tract of Rapp. R. NWR. *Richmond*); Wright (Wright tract of Rapp. R. NWR. *Richmond*).

WATERFOWL—GREBES

Fewer waterfowl were noted this year compared to last year but a large mixed group of ducks was seen in the Rappahannock R. and Drake's Marsh, Leedstown 12 Mar including 20 **American Wigeons**, 39 **Gadwalls**, 15 **Green-winged Teal**, 9 **Wood Ducks**, 70 **Mal-lards**, 15 **Northern Pintails**, 82 **Ring-necked Ducks**, 8 **Red-breasted Mergansers**, 47 **Common Mergansers**, and 12 **Ruddy Ducks** (FA). The wintering population of **Northern Pintail** at EG remained high until at least 5 Mar when 390 were noted (FA). Other waterfowl of note included 95 **American Black Ducks** at Little Carter Creek, *Richmond*, 11 Mar (BP); two pairs of **Blue-winged Teal** 5 Apr in Leedstown (FA); two pairs of **Redheads** and one pair of **Northern Shovelers** at EG 5 Mar (FA); a late **Red-breasted Merganser** 28 May at Rigby Island (BP); and 42 **Common Mergansers** in Hoskins Creek, *Essex*, 11 Mar (BP). Eighty of the 180 **Ring-necked Ducks** noted in March were females, a much

higher percentage than earlier in the season, and on 31 Mar, the few remaining birds (20) seemed to be in pairs (FA). In contrast with last year, when more than 90% of the March Red-breasted Mergansers were males, this year less than a third of the birds seen in March or April were males. No **American Goldeneyes** or **Long-tailed Ducks** were noted this season, and other bay ducks did not linger long, with the following late dates: **Canvasback**, **Lesser Scaup**, **Surf Scoter** and **Ruddy Ducks** at GWB 10 Apr (AD, BD), ten **Black Scoters** at GWB 31 Mar (FA), and one **Bufflehead** 7 May at K. G. Ponds (FA). A female **Hooded Merganser** exited a wood duck box that had warm eggs inside it in Beulahville, *King William* 31 Mar, but neither she nor any hooded merganser chicks were noted on repeated visits to this site later in the season. Compared to last March, the numbers of loons visible in the Maryland waters of the Potomac R. from the Upper Northern Neck were much fewer this year, with only 3 **Common Loons** and 2 **Red-throated Loons** being reported from Muse Road and GWB, *Westmoreland* (FA, AD, BD). In the last week of March and first week of April there were plenty of **Northern Gannets** around; hundreds were noted in the York R. near Gloucester Point (DH), one was seen upriver on the Rappahannock R. at Belle Isle State Park, *Richmond* (VK), and 15 were fishing on the Potomac R. at GWB and Muse Rd. (FA).

HERONS—SANDPIPERS

The first **Great Egret** of the season was reported from Caffee 12 Mar, where 1-4 were seen all spring (TK). The only other report was a single bird at The Pocket on 18 May (SH). No other herons except **Great Blue Herons** were reported this season. Thirty **Ospreys** were found 28 May at the Barrier Islands (Rigby and Gwynn) in the Potomac R. including one nest containing chicks that were one week old (BP). A **Swallow-tailed Kite**

was seen again this year 28 Apr near Gloucester Point (DHu, fide BT) and a **Peregrine Falcon** was at Beaverdam on 29 Apr (MB, et al.). No **Northern Harriers** were noted after 9 Apr when five were seen at K. G. Ponds and Upper *Westmoreland* (FA). On 28 Apr a **Red-shouldered Hawk** was observed feeding a crayfish to its mate on their nest in White Marsh (J&HW). The leucistic **Red-tailed Hawk** was still present at King's Crossing near Kilmarnock (TT). On his way to and from work in *King and Queen*, a biology teacher counted 5 **American Kestrels** in one mile of road 5 Apr (BD), the high count for the region this season. A **Sora** was found on a marsh bird survey at Island Farm 21 Apr (SS) and another eight were noted at the Pamunkey Indian Reservation while setting up Prothonotary Warbler nest boxes 22 Apr (BD). Forty-two **American Coot** were still present at K. G. Ponds 9 Apr (FA). Shorebird numbers are never very impressive in this Region but highlights included 61 **Killdeer** and 19 **Wilson's Snipe** at The Pocket and nearby farms and marshes 5 Mar (FA); 14 **Wilson's Snipe** along the Mattaponi R. in Walkerton 14 Apr (BB); and a large group of shorebirds at a private farm in Leedstown 7 May including five **Greater Yellowlegs**, 23 **Lesser Yellowlegs**, 13 **Solitary Sandpipers**, one **Spotted Sandpiper**, 52 **Least Sandpipers**, 3 **Pectoral Sandpipers**, and one **Dunlin** (FA). Other interesting shorebirds were 30 **Spotted Sandpipers** near Fones Cliffs along the Rappahannock R., *Richmond* 22 May (BP); and a good mix at Rigby and Gwynn Islands in the Potomac R. on 28 May including 6 **American Oystercatchers**, 2 **Black-bellied Plovers**, 3 **Semipalmated Plovers**, 2 **Willetts** (low for this locale), 4 **Sanderlings**, 4 **Semipalmated Sandpipers**, 4 **Least Sandpipers**, and 26 **Dunlin** (BP).

GULLS—VIREOS

The first flock of **Laughing Gulls** on the York R. near Gloucester Point this season was noted on 24 Mar (TK). A **Bonaparte's Gull** and a **Black Tern** were seen near the pound nets near Fones Cliffs, *Richmond*, on the Rappahan-

nock R. 22 May (BP). Two **Caspian Terns** were at GWB 10 Apr (A&BD). On 28 May, Rigby and Gwynn's Islands had two populations of **Least Terns** (120 and 200) including 60 in incubation posture, significantly more than had been observed here before (BP). Spring arrivals included **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** Laurel Grove 8 May (SS); **Chuck-will's-widow** Caffee 26 Apr (TK); **Whip-poor-will** Cat Point Creek, *Richmond*, 8 Apr (SS); **Chimney Swift** Walkerton, *King and Queen*, 15 Apr (FA); **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** 8 Apr near Kilmarnock, *Lancaster* (TT); **Eastern Wood-Pewee** White Marsh, *Gloucester*, 17 Apr (J&HW); **Acadian Flycatcher** and **Eastern Kingbird** The Pocket 18 May (SH); **Least Flycatcher** 12 May Mosquito Point, *Lancaster* (BN); **Great Crested Flycatcher** 25 Apr GWB (VK); **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** and male **Purple Martin** K. G. Ponds 31 Mar (FA); and **Barn Swallow** and **Tree Swallow** *Richmond* 18 Mar (FA). Eighty **Bank Swallows** were entering nest cavities in the banks of the sand quarry along LaGrange La. at K. G. Ponds on 7 May, but none were seen at the Trigger La. sand quarry in *Westmoreland* where there were many last year (FA). Fifteen **Cliff Swallows** were again present at their nests on the Mattaponi R. Bridge in Walkerton 15 Apr (FA). A **Chuck-will's-widow** sitting on two eggs near Jones Creek *Gloucester* gave great opportunities for close views and photography in the last week of May (GB). Last sightings for some winter residents include **Golden-crowned Kinglet** and **Winter Wren** 31 Mar and **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** and **Hermit Thrush** 15 Apr, all in Beulahville *King William* (FA). Twelve **Marsh Wrens** were observed in surveys at Island Farm 21 Apr (SS) and another 20 were noted in the marshes across the river from Fones Cliffs 22 May (BP), both sites along the Rappahannock R., *Richmond*. Large numbers of **Cedar Waxwings** were present in May this year with a high of 350-400 eating holly berries at Troy Creek near Leedstown 7 May (FA). Three pairs were found, including two nests, *Essex* on 22 May (BP). The first **Wood Thrush** ap-

peared about three weeks early at White Marsh, *Gloucester*, 19 Mar (J&HW) and a high of 19 was at Caledon where both **Swainson's** and **Gray-cheeked/Bicknell's Thrush** were also noted 28 May (SB). **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** were first noted in Leedstown 31 Mar (FA). The pair of **Brown-headed Nuthatches** at Mosquito Point *Lancaster* 12 May were the first reported there since Hurricane Isabel (BN). Another four birds were seen at Rigby and Gwynn's Islands 28 May (BP). The **Red-breasted Nuthatch** present at a feeder in White Marsh all winter was last reported on 17 Mar (J&HW). First spring sightings of vireos include **White-eyed Vireo** 9 Apr Mothershead (FA), **Yellow-throated** 15 Apr Beulahville *King William* (FA), and **Red-eyed King and Queen** 14 Apr (BB). A high of 44 **Red-eyed Vireos** was at Caledon on 28 May (SB).

WARBLERS—FINCHES

Interesting warbler sightings this season include **Blue-winged Warbler** Wilna 9 May (SS); first **Northern Parulas** at Wilna 11 Apr (SS); an early **Yellow Hutchinson** 29 Mar (SS); **Cape May** 9 May Laurel Grove (SS); first **Black-throated Blue** 9 May *Lancaster* (BN); first **Black-throated Green** 29 Apr Beaverdam (MB, et al.); first **Yellow-throated Tappahannock**, *Essex* 28 Mar (BP); first **Prairie** and 15 **Palms** on 9 Apr Leedstown (FA); **Bay-breasted** Laurel Grove 8 May (SS); first **Blackpoll** The Pocket 18 May (SH); first **Black-and-White** Gloucester 1 Apr (DH); first **American Redstart** Wilna 9 May (SS); first **Prothonotary** Walkerton, *King and Queen* 14 Apr (BB); **Swainson's** Crosshills, *Northumberland* 13 May - a rare sighting for the region (BN); first **Ovenbird** Wilna 11 Apr (SS); first **Louisiana Waterthrush** Hutchinson 29 Mar (SS); **Mourning** 27 May Wright (SS, RA); first **Hooded King and Queen** 14 Apr (BB); **Canada** 25 May, Laurel Grove (SS, RA); and first **Yellow-breasted Chat** 7 May Leedstown (FA). **Scarlet Tanager** arrived in *King and Queen* 14 Apr (BB) and the first **Summer Tanager** was at Wilna 23 Apr (SS). A season-high of 11 **Scarlet Tanagers** was noted at Caledon 28 May

(SB). **Chipping Sparrows** became ubiquitous at the end of March and the first week of April (m.obs). The last **Savannah Sparrows** reported were at K. G. Ponds 7 May (FA). Thirteen **Seaside Sparrows** were found during a marsh-bird survey at Island Farm 21 Apr (SS) and two more were noted from Rigby and Gwynn's Islands 28 May (BP). **Grasshopper Sparrows** arrived at Wilna 29 Apr (SS) and the last **Fox Sparrow** of the season was seen at Beaverdam 5 Mar (DH). Beaverdam was also the locale for the last sighting of **White-throated Sparrow** and the first sighting of **Blue Grosbeak** and **Orchard Oriole** on 29 Apr (MB, et al.). The last report of **Dark-eyed Junco** was Apr 9 in Leedstown (FA). The first **Indigo Bunting** was reported from White Marsh 23 Apr (J&HW). A large flock of at least 460 **Bobolinks** feeding and calling all day in a wheat field in Leedstown was an exciting find 7 May (FA). Fifteen **Rusty Blackbirds** were seen with **Red-winged Blackbirds** in a swampy pond Leedstown 12 Mar and again on 9 Apr (FA). Twenty-six male **Boat-tailed Grackles** were seen on territories at Rigby and Gwynn's Islands 28 May (BP). A **Baltimore Oriole** appeared at Caffee 3 May and stayed for two days (TK). The last of seven **Purple Finches** which wintered at the feeders in White Marsh was seen on 26 Apr (J&HW).

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SOUTHWEST

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

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March weather was clear at the beginning of the month but turned snowy near the end, with an average temperature of 48.5 F. April started out cool, then warmed up later in the month with warm weather extending into early May. Mid-May was much cooler and wetter than normal with temperatures dropping as low as 39 F with scattered frost. The cold and wet conditions persisted for nearly two weeks causing the deaths of nestlings both because the parent birds could not find the necessary insects to feed their young, and the young birds became chilled from the cold, damp conditions. In Buchanan as many as nine young Eastern Bluebirds and five Carolina Chickadees were found dead in their nest boxes. One can only speculate on the effects the cold, wet conditions had on non-cavity nesters with less protection from the elements. Highlights of the period included a Sora and an American Bittern at the Breaks Instate Park, a Greater Yellowlegs in *Buchanan*, Common Loons and a Northern Bobwhite in *Carroll*, a Hooded Merganser in *Dickenson*, Ring-billed Gulls in *Grayson*, a Common Moorhen in *Smyth*, a Lark Sparrow in *Washington* and an Oregon Junco in *Russell*. The six Greater White-fronted Geese that had been present in *Washington* since December were still there in March. Great Blue Herons were already occupying nests in late February. Cliff Swallows returned to last year's nesting location in *Grayson*. Neotropical migrants arrived in the area on schedule. Five warbler species were found in *Dickenson* as early as 2 Apr. A greater number of Swainson's and Cerulean Warblers were observed in *Buchanan* and *Dickenson* this year than in recent years. Several Blackpoll Warblers

as well as a singing Mourning Warbler were observed in *Grayson* in late May.

Abbreviations: BP (Breaks Interstate Park); CCWMA (Crooked Creek Wildlife Management Area); LL (Lake Laurel in Breaks Interstate Park), *Dickenson*; MC (Musick's Campground); RRL (Rural Retreat Lake).

GEESE—GULLS

Six **Greater White-fronted Geese** that were present for the Christmas Bird Count at Clear Creek Lake in *Washington* were still present 4 Mar (RC). Eight **Ruddy Ducks** were found on RRL 26 Mar (JK). A **Hooded Merganser**, unusual for the area, was observed on LL, *Dickenson* 12 Apr (ET III). A **Northern Bobwhite** was heard at Olde Mill Golf Club, Rt 645 *Carroll* 17 May (HFDIII). Two **Common Loons** and a **Double-crested Cormorant** were found on the golf course lake that same day (HFDIII). Two Double-crested Cormorants were observed on the upper North Fork of Holston R. near Yuma, *Scott* 4 Mar (RP). Forty-Four Double-crested Cormorants were observed near MC on South Holston L, *Washington* 14 Apr (RC). An **American Bittern** was flushed on Laurel Lake at the BP during the annual VSO meeting on 6 May (RK). This was an extremely rare sighting, possibly only the second for the area. **Great Blue Herons** were found on nests on Butcher's Fork near Big Stone Gap in *Wise* 25 Feb (BC) and 14 were on nests in the Saltville colony in *Smyth* 16 Apr (J&J T). The first **Osprey** of the season in *Buchanan* was at the Levisa R. at Weller Yard 7 Apr (E&M T). The **Sora** observed by several VSO members at LL 6 May provided the first report for this species there (EC, et al.). A **Common Moorhen** in brilliant breeding plumage was discovered at RRL in *Smyth* 23 May (GE, JM), only the fourth sighting of the species at that location since the early 1970's (TD). A **Greater Yellowlegs** was observed on Guesses Fork of Hurley, *Buchanan* 16 Apr (E&M T), providing only the second report of this species in *Buchanan*. The first was May 1985. Two **Solitary Sandpipers** were found in a pasture along Rt. 713 *Carroll*

17 May (HFDIII). A **Least Sandpiper** was in the same location on the same date (HFDIII). Two **Ring-billed Gulls**, an unusual species here, were observed in Cox's Chapel area of *Grayson* 24 Apr (SJR).

FLYCATCHERS—BUNTINGS

Spring arrivals reports included **Eastern Kingbird** Elk Garden, *Russell* 23 Apr (RK), **Blue-headed Vireos** the BP, *Dickenson* 19 Mar (E&M T), and on Clinch Mt. near Hayter's Gap, *Washington* on the same date (CK), **White-eyed Vireo** at Weller Yard, *Buchanan* 8 Apr (E&M T), and 2 **Warbling Vireos** Elk Garden 23 Apr (RK). A pair of **Common Ravens** with a fledgling was observed at Natural Tunnel State Park 8 Apr (BC). A small colony of **Cliff Swallows** returned to their nesting site near Galax in *Grayson* where the birds were found nesting last year (GE). **Tree Swallows** arrived in *Russell* Big Cedar Creek Rd., 2 Mar (TH), *Floyd* 12 Mar (JG), and *Buchanan* at the Levisa R. in Grundy, 15 Mar (RM). The Levisa R. also had arriving **Barn Swallows** 7 Apr (RM). Two male **Golden-winged Warblers** and 4 **Blue-winged Warblers** were found at Enoch's Branch Park, *Buchanan* 4 Apr (RK, RM) and seven were at Guesses Fork, *Buchanan* 16 Apr (E&M T). Both Golden-winged and Blue-winged Warblers were observed on the *Russell* side of Clinch Mt. 9 May (RK). Blue-wingeds were at CCWMA, *Carroll* 5 May (MD). A second generation male **Brewster's Warbler** was also discovered at CCWMA, *Carroll* 17 May (HFDIII). The bird had no yellow wash on back or underparts. It had a weak double wingbar, vivid yellow forehead and a heavy black eyeline. The first **Northern Parula** was reported BP 11 Apr (R&L M). Two **Yellow Warblers** appeared in *Buchanan* 15 Apr; one at Weller Yard along the Levisa R. (E&M T), the other on Compton Mt. (RM). Twelve Yellow Warblers were reported in Elk Garden of *Russell* 23 Apr (RK). The first reported warblers of the season in *Dickenson* were 2 **Pine Warblers** at the BP 12 Mar (E& MT). A **Bay-breasted Warbler** was observed two miles south of Troutdale on Mill Crk. *Grayson* 16 May (WC, RH). In *Carroll* 10

to 15 **Blackpolls** were near the town of Fries on New River 24 May (MD). The first **Cerulean Warbler** was reported BP 15 Apr (E&M T). Ceruleans seemed more numerous than usual in *Buchanan* this spring with singing males found in several areas including three on Compton Mt. (RM) and at Guesses Fork of Hurley (E&M T). Other arrivals were **Swainson's Warbler** heard in a hollow near Compton Mt. *Buchanan* 25 Apr (R& L M), **Kentucky Warbler** Guesses Fork of Hurley *Buchanan* 30 Apr (MT, SJ), and **Prairie Warbler** there 16 Apr (E&M T). A **Mourning Warbler** was reported near Galax in *Grayson* 23 May (MD). A singing **Canada Warbler** was found at 1400 ft elevation in *Washington* 15 May (WC, RH). **Yellow-breasted Chat** returned to Compton Mt. 22 Apr (R&L M). A **LARK SPARROW** ♀ was observed for 10 minutes 8 Apr in a parking lot near Exit 7 in Bristol (J&J T). Field marks observed were black malar stripe, white tipped tail, white outer rectrices and grayish white, plain breast with a black spot in the center. The bird appeared to be in first winter plumage.

A female **OREGON JUNCO** ♀ showed up at a home in Elk Garden of *Russell* 30 Mar (ph RK). The bird had a dark hood, reddish-brown back and pinkish sides. The first reported **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks**, 1 m. and 1f., appeared at a feeder in *Floyd* 8 Apr (CKes). The first male **Indigo Bunting** of the season came to a yard on Compton Mt. 19 Apr (RM).

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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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Abbreviations: Kerr (John H. Kerr Res., *Mecklenburg*); Staunton R. Battlefield (Staunton R. Battlefield SP, *Halifax*).

GEESE-FALCONS

A **ROSS'S GOOSE** ♀ was found 18 Mar at Edmunds Park, South Boston (JB). Consorting with **Canada Geese**, it remained only until 20 Mar. Duck reports were generally low aside from a few common species. Eight **Blue-winged Teal** had appeared at Dick Cross WMA, *Mecklenburg*, by 25 Mar (AD), and **Northern Shovelers** were there on 18 Mar (AD) and 27 Mar (WE). A lone female Canvasback was near the dam at Kerr on 18 Mar (AD). **Hooded Mergansers** bred at Staunton R. Battlefield, where a female with six young was seen 24 Apr (JB). Several **Red-breasted Mergansers** were at Kerr, 7 and 18 Mar (AD); one female was at Sandy R. Res., *Prince Edward* 21 Apr (CMS). One or 2 **Red-throated Loons** were reported at Kerr on several occasions in the winter and spring (AD, et al.), and an adult in alternate plumage was still present on Kerr near Eagle Point, 27 May (DS). The **Pacific Loon** ♀ that wintered near Palmer Point on Kerr was seen several times in Mar and remained until at least 27 Mar (AD, WE). Single **Common Loons** remained in Prince Edward until at least 2 May, with single birds at Briery Cr. Lk. WMA and Sandy R. Res. (CMS). Several **Horned Grebes** were at Kerr through at least 25 Mar (AD, et al.), but were not reported elsewhere. The number of **Double-crested Cormorants** at Sandy R. Res., *Prince Edward*, peaked at 156 on 21 Apr (CMS). Three **Great Egrets** were at Kerr on 8 Apr (AD). A

Mississippi Kite was reported near Stonewall, *Appomattox* 9 Apr (PL, et al.), and an ad. **Mississippi Kite** and ad. **Bald Eagle** were seen a few minutes apart on 6 May at the Powell farm, Wolf Trap Rd., *Halifax* (JB). One **Merlin** was reported at Kerr on 7 Mar (AD), and another was at Staunton R. Battlefield on 24 Apr (JB).

RAILS-GOATSUCKERS

Prince Edward's first **King Rail** was seen and heard on 1–2 May at Briery Crk Lk WMA (CMS). A single **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was at Sandy R. Res., *Prince Edward*, on 11 May (CMS). **Greater Yellowlegs** were well represented with reports of single birds at Banister R. WMA, *Halifax*, 26 Mar (JB); in Farmville, *Prince Edward*, on 21 Apr and 3 May (CMS); and at Staunton R. Battlefield, 13 May (JB). A **Lesser Yellowlegs** was at Farmville, *Prince Edward*, on 3 May, and another was at a pond along US 360 in se. *Prince Edward* 12 May (CMS). A **Least Sandpiper** was at a lake by US 360 near Green Bay, *Prince Edward* 12 May (CMS). **Bonaparte's Gulls** were reported only from Kerr, where several were reported on various dates from 7 Mar to 8 Apr (AD, WE); a few **Herring Gulls** were there in early Mar as well. *Prince Edward's* first **Least Tern** was at a pond by US 360 in the se. corner of the county on 22 Apr (FD). Five **Caspian Terns** were over Kerr near Staunton R. SP, *Halifax* and *Charlotte*, 24 Apr (CMS). The first **Whippoorwill** was heard near Chase City, *Mecklenburg* 5 April (GM).

CROWS - FINCHES

Two **Fish Crows** were seen in Farmville, *Prince Edward*, on 12 and 26 Mar, (CMS); this species appears here each spring but apparently never lingers into the summer. **Blue-headed Vireos** were seen near Curdsville, *Buckingham*, on 11, 13, and 26 Apr (CMS). A **Tree Swallow** was first reported 5 Mar at Edmond's Park, South Boston (JB), and 2 **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** were at Kerr on 18 Mar (AD). Single **Loggerhead Shrikes** were reported near Curdsville, *Buckingham*, on 5 Mar (CMS), and near Chase City, *Mecklenburg*, on 8 Mar (GM). The

latest **Red-breasted Nuthatch** seen was one near Curdsville, *Buckingham*, 29 Apr (CMS). A canoe trip on the Roanoke (Staunton) R. from US 360 downstream to Kerr (along the *Halifax/Charlotte* line) yielded at least 15 singing **Prothonotary Warblers** on 24 Apr (CMS); in *Prince Edward*, where they are less expected, one was singing along the Bush R. near Worsham, 2 May (CMS). A **Louisiana Waterthrush** was feeding young on 12 May near the upper end of Sandy R. Res., *Prince Edward* (CMS). Multiple **Bobolink** reports were encouraging. In addition to smaller numbers on other dates, 30 were at Staunton R. Battlefield SP, *Halifax* 24 Apr (JB), and several were in fields near US 360 in se *Prince Edward* on 12 May (CMS). **Purple Finch** reports were sporadic; in Mar and Apr small numbers were at feeders in n. *Lunenburg* (SD), near Curdsville, *Buckingham*, until 26 Apr (CMS), and, most numerous, a group of over 20 at a South Boston feeder daily, 9–18 Mar (JB).

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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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Slightly above average temperatures and below normal precipitation marked the period. Other than frequent windy days, the weather did not seem to have a great effect on spring migration. However, some observers felt the migration was protracted and the bird numbers limited. Once again, the hot spot for observing passerine migrants

was the James River Park system in Richmond with peak activity occurring in the first half of May. For shorebirds, the place to go was the Shirley Plantation in *Charles City*. The College Creek Hawk Watch, located on the James River near Williamsburg, completed its tenth consecutive season by setting a new high count of 1525 birds tallied between February 8 and May 27. The old record of 1445 birds was set last year. Thanks to regular hawk watch volunteers Brian Taber, Tom Armour, Bill Williams and Fred Blystone both raptor and non raptor highlights of the year are included throughout this report

For the fourth straight year, a pair of Peregrine Falcons has nested in downtown Richmond. In previous years the falcons nested on the south side of the First National Bank building but this year they decided to nest on the north side of one of the Riverfront Plaza's twin towers. Four young were hatched with two of them being released by biologists in Shenandoah National Park, while the other two take their chances in the big city.

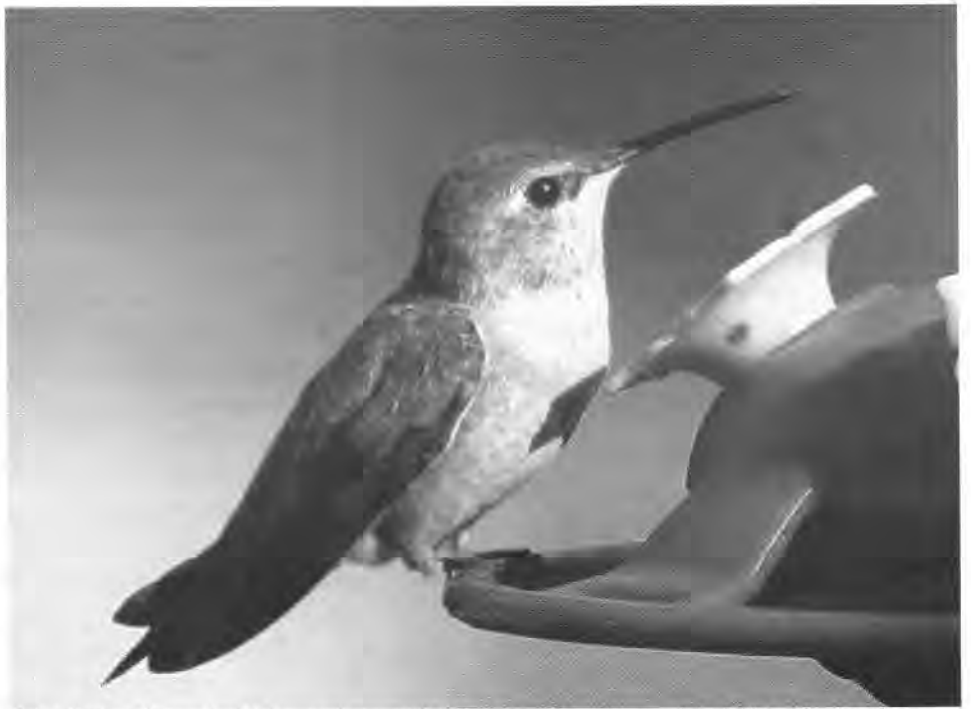
Outstanding rarities this season included the continuing presence of an Ashthroated Flycatcher and Rufous Hummingbird as well as Sandhill Crane, American White Pelican, Baird's Sandpiper, Anhinga and Loggerhead Shrike.

Abbreviations: Bandy (Bandy Field, Richmond); Curles Neck (Curles Neck Farm, *Henrico*); Dutch Gap (Dutch Gap Conservation Area, *Chesterfield*); Henricus (Henricus Park, *Chesterfield*); Hog (Hog I.WMA, *Surry*); JRP (James River Park, Richmond); CCHW (College Creek Hawk Watch, *James City*); Shirley (Shirley Plantation, *Charles City*).

LOONS—CRANES

A lingering **Common Loon** was encountered on the James R. near Presquile NWR 5 May (LP). An **AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN** was seen from the CCHW circling over Hog on two occasions 19 & 23 Apr (TA, FB, BT, BW). A **Brown Pelican** was in the James R. at Hog 18 Mar (FD). An ad. male **AN-**

HINGA was discovered at the Bellyache Swamp, *Southampton* 27 May (BK) and then subsequently seen performing a courting display for over three hours (ph. BTe). A **Least Bittern** was seen in the marsh at Henricus 14 May (JK) & 20 May (WE, TTu). Unusual were three **Snowy Egrets** near Jamestown, *James City* 18 May (BW). A **Little Blue Heron** was seen at the Henricus marsh 14 May (RS). Two **Cattle Egrets** were at Shirley 13 May (ABr). A single **Glossy Ibis** was seen flying over the James R. near Presquile NWR 14 May (A&LW). Two other ibis, most likely Glossy Ibis, were seen from the CCHW 20 May (BT, BW). There were 346 **Tundra Swans** counted in *James City* 17 Mar (TA, FB, BT, BW). Three **Blue-winged Teal** were at Sunken Meadow Pond, *Surry* 18 Mar (FD). A lone male **Redhead** was at Curles Neck 2 May (FD). A lingering **Ring-necked Duck** was observed at Shirley 21 May (AB). A late female **Hooded Merganser** was seen along the Green Springs Trail, *James City* 30 May (BW). A single **Ruddy Duck** was at Curles Neck 2 May (FD). A record 117 **Black Vultures** were tallied at the CCHW this season. 183 **Osprey** was also a new season high for the CCHW. A pair of **Mississippi Kites** appeared to be using the same nest that was discovered last year near Branchville, *Southampton* 27 May (BK). Only ten **American Kestrels** were counted from the CCHW, an all time low number. One **Merlin** flew by the CCHW 9 May, the same day there was a new season high of four **Peregrine Falcons** (TA, FB, BT, BW). A **Common Moorhen** was discovered in the marsh at Henricus 3 May (MB). On 9 May, a pair was seen in the same location (MB, JJ). Late **American Coot** sightings included three at Shirley 27 May (FD) and a single at the Harrison Lake Fish Hatchery, *Charles City* 30 May (CMS). Two **SANDHILL CRANES** ♂ were a nice surprise as they were seen from the CCHW flying over the James R. from Hog towards Williamsburg 10 May (p.a., FB, BT, BW). This sighting if accepted will represent the first local record for this species.



This Rufous hummingbird was photographed by Larry Lynch, copyright 2006. Used with permission.

SHOREBIRDS—RAVENS

Six **Black-bellied Plovers** were seen at Shirley 13 May (ABr) and were still there 27 May (AB, FD). Shirley also had a **Black-necked Stilt** 22 Apr (ph. ABr). A slightly late **Solitary Sandpiper** was seen at the Gospel Spreading Farm, *James City* 22 May (BW). Nineteen **Whimbrel** were counted from the CCHW heading toward Hog 21 May (FB, BT, BW). Three **Dunlin** were noted at Shirley 13 May (ABr). A **Pectoral Sandpiper** was seen in a field near Shirley 11 Mar (AB). **White-rumped Sandpipers** were numerous this spring at Shirley with a high count of 33 on 27 May (FD). A **BAIRD'S SANDPIPER**, very rare in spring in the east, was documented at Shirley 27 May (p.a., ph. by AB). A **Bonaparte's Gull** was noted from the CCHW as late as 21 May (FB, BT, BW). Three **Caspian Terns** were seen heading east along the James R. from JRP 16 Apr (AD, TT). The first **Royal Tern** for the Williamsburg area, *James City* was seen 16 Mar (TA, BT, BW). Three **Least Terns**, somewhat unusual inland, were seen and heard at Shirley 21 May (AB, ABr). A **Black-billed Cuckoo** was encountered at Bandy 3 May (AB). Another Black-billed Cuckoo was found at JRP 13 May

(ph. LL, LB, AD, B&JT). Close to 50 **Common Nighthawks** were seen flying over a residence in Richmond 24 May (AB). The female **RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD**, discovered in *Chesterfield* in November 2006 and banded in late December, was last reported at a feeder 9 Apr (NR). Seven **Red-headed Woodpeckers** were at New Quarter Park, *York* 25 Mar (WBC). A **Willow Flycatcher** was calling frequently from a Richmond residence 7 May (AB). Another Willow Flycatcher and an **Alder Flycatcher** were seen and heard at Pocahontas SP 16 May (WE). The **ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER** ♂, discovered in a train yard south of the Floodwall on the James R., Richmond City 7 Jan was last reported 3 Mar (AB).

A **LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE** ♂, rare anywhere on the coastal plain, was seen on a wire near Waverly, *Sussex* 19 May (SL). Two or three **Warbling Vireos** were present at JRP 29 Apr (FD). Another was at Dutch Gap 12 May (SR, A&LW, BWy). For the second year in a row, a **Common Raven** was seen in south Richmond 2 Mar, one week earlier and one kilometer south of last year's sighting (B&JT).

SWALLOWS—ORIOLES

An early **Barn Swallow** was noted in Williamsburg 13 Mar (BT). One or two **Cliff Swallows** were seen on the Colonial Parkway under the bridge at Felgate's Creek, *York* 27 May (FD). Over 2700 swallows, mostly Barn Swallows seen at Hog, were counted on the Williamsburg Bird Club's spring count 30 Apr. A wintering **Red-breasted Nuthatch**, coming to a feeder in *York*, was last observed 30 Apr (BW). A pair of **Brown-headed Nuthatches** was at Bandy 5 May (AB, GW). Another Brown-headed Nuthatch was heard at Pocahontas SP 16 Apr (WE). Several **Gray-cheeked Thrushes** were reported this spring with singles at JRP 18 May (A&LW, GW) and Bandy 24 May (AB) and two at Pocahontas SP 14 May (WE). A **Tennessee Warbler** was at JRP 12 May (LL). **Blue-winged Warblers** were reported from JRP 29 Apr (FD) and 6 May (LB, AD, GW). Another Blue-winged and a **Golden-winged Warbler** were seen at Pocahontas SP 4 May (PB). A male **Cape May Warbler** was at Bandy during the second week of May (AB). Another male was seen at JRP 13 May (LB, AD, B&JT, GW). Several **Blackburnian Warblers** were reported in May. A **Cerulean Warbler**, rarely seen

in migration, was spotted at Dutch Gap 12 May (SR, A&LW, BWy). A **Bay-breasted Warbler** was at JRP 15 May (AB). The earliest report of a returning **Yellow-throated Warbler** came on 16 Mar at Henricus (WE). **Worm-eating Warblers** were reported from a yard in Chester 28 Apr (JK). Another Worm-eating Warbler was in *New Kent* 2 May (FD). A **Mourning Warbler** was seen at JRP 12 May (ph. LL). Another Mourning Warbler, or the same one, was singing there 16 May (LL). **Kentucky Warblers** were reported from Pocahontas SP 4 May (PB) and 16 May (WE). Another one was seen on Carter's Mill Rd., *Henrico* 21 May (AB). **Canada Warblers** were encountered regularly at JRP in May. Two **Wilson's Warblers** were at JRP 6 May (VG, MI). Single Wilson's Warblers were at JRP 13 May (LL), 15 May (AB) and at Shirley 21 May (AB, ABr). A pair of territorial **Dickcissels** was observed at Shirley 13 May (ABr). The number of Dickcissels increased to at least three and possibly five at Shirley 21 May (AB, ABr). There were many reports of **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** during Apr and May. A **Vesper Sparrow** was observed at Bandy 29&30 Mar (AB). One or two **Grasshopper Sparrows** were at Turkey Island Road, *Henrico* 2 May (FD). A

Sharp-tailed Sparrow sp., probably a **Nelson's**, was at Queens Lake, *York* 30 Apr (BW). A **Lincoln's Sparrow** seen at JRP 16 Mar was unusual for that time of year (AB). More in season was a Lincoln's Sparrow at Bandy 22 May (AB) and another at the Green Springs Trail, *James City* 29 Apr (BW). A female **Baltimore Oriole** at a residence on Saltwood Court, *Henrico* 11 Mar was also unusual at that time of year (TT).

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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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The report period was relatively cool, and more importantly dry, ending with a year-to-date rainfall deficit of approximately seven inches. Strong sustained winds in late May disrupted beach nesting species. Although regional reports are heavily dependent on anecdotal observations, when these are paired with information derived from formal protocol-driven research and regularly conducted ground and aerial surveys a more complete understanding of the dynamics of bird



Another look at the Ash-throated Flycatcher photographed by Larry Lynch. Used with permission.

populations can be elucidated over time. This region was particularly well endowed with such information for the season. Embedded within this report are data from comprehensive aerial surveys for Bald Eagles and Red Knots conducted by the Center for Conservation Biology, shorebird, marsh bird, and waterfowl surveys conducted at Back Bay and False Cape State Park by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, spring banding results at First Landing State Park from the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory, systematic colonial waterbird monitoring done on the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel, Craney Island, and Grandview Beach through the William and Mary Biology Department, coordinated barrier island beach-nesting surveys done by The Virginia Coast Reserve of the Nature Conservancy, the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, and the Natural Heritage Division of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, and regularly conducted counts from Dismal Swamp. Among the stellar reports were Mottled Duck, Eurasian Wigeon, Sooty Shearwater, a Frigatebird sp., White-faced Ibis, Long-billed Curlew, White-winged Dove, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Bicknell's Thrush, Painted Bunting, and some quite compelling early nesters and early season nest counts.

Abbreviations: Back Bay (Back Bay NWR, Virginia Beach); Cape Charles (Town of Cape Charles, *Northampton*); CBBT Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel, s. of *Northampton*); Chinc. (Chincoteague NWR, *Accomack*); Craney (Craney Island landfill, Portsmouth); Dismal Swamp NWR, Suffolk; ESVNWR (Eastern Shore of Virginia NWR, *Northampton*); False Cape (False Cape State Park, Virginia Beach); First Landing (First Landing State Park, Virginia Beach); Fisherman (Fisherman Island NWR, *Northampton*); Grandview (Grandview Beach, Hampton); HRBT (Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel, Hampton/Norfolk).

WATERFOWL—COOT

One each **Tundra Swan** and **Snow**

Goose were at Back Bay through 24 May (DS). Two **Brant** were on Chincoteague causeway 12 May (KG). Of great interest was a **MOTTLED DUCK** report from Chinc. 27 May (SS, TJ, BO, RO). The count of 40 **Northern Shovelers** at Craney 16 Mar was the highest report for that species (BA). The male **Eurasian Wigeon** at Ridgeway Park, Hampton remained through 11 Mar (BC). The period's highest **Canvasback** count was 270 at Craney 1 Mar (AD). CBBT #2 had 4 **Harlequin Ducks** 11 Mar (DH). Observations of tardy scoters included 3 **Black Scoters** and 5 **White-winged Scoters** off Back Bay 24 May (DS), and 1 female **Surf Scoter** off Back Bay 19 May (AD, MI). A female **Hooded Merganser** was in Chincoteague, *Accomack* 11 May (KG). A tally of 210 **Red-breasted Mergansers** at Craney 1 Mar (AD, SD, FB, AM) was notable, as were 20 **Common Mergansers** at Oyster, *Northampton* 9 Apr (KG). The highest **Ruddy Duck** count report was 225 at Craney 16 Mar (BA) with 2 remaining there through 24 May (BW, RB, SD, AM). A **Common Loon** was off Back Bay 24 May (DS). A fly-by **Sooty Shearwater** was off Chinc. 13 May (LM, VK). The highest reported **Northern Gannet** total was 1851 off Back Bay 4 Apr (DS). A sub-adult was off Tangier Island, *Accomack* 20 May (HA). There were 22 **Great Cormorants** on CBBT 11 Mar (DH). The power line towers along the James River Bridge from Newport News to Portsmouth had at least 79 **Double-crested Cormorant** nests 19 May (RB). **Anhinga** reports included one 13 May at Stumpy Lake, Virginia Beach (NB), one at Nanney's Creek Road, Virginia Beach 29 May (BA), and two at Stumpy Lake 28 May (BL *fide* SH). Quite the surprise was a **FRIGATE-BIRD** likely a **MAGNIFICENT**, on Fisherman 26 May (NB *fide* TS). A colony of 21 **Great Blue Heron** pairs was on ESVNWR through 31 May (SR, PD). With bird observations from Chesapeake Bay islands seldom reported, the following long-legged wader counts from Tangier Island, *Accomack* for 20 May were noteworthy; one **Great Blue Heron**, 8 **Great Egrets**, 7 **Snowy Egrets**, 7 **Little**

Blue Herons, 7 **Tricolored Herons**, 2 **Green Herons**, one **Black-crowned Night-Heron**, 5 **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons**, 20 **Glossy Ibis** (HA). The most **White Ibis** reported were 40 at First Landing 23 Apr (JR). An early **Glossy Ibis** was in Cape Charles 15 Mar (TS). **WHITE-FACED IBIS** reports have become annual for this season. An individual of this species noted 11 May at Chinc. (KG) was possibly the same bird as a probable one photographed there 30 April (GK). A **Mississippi Kite** was seen 14 May near ESVNWR (KG, BT). Comprehensive aerial surveys revealed 50 **Bald Eagle** pairs within the region; 38 Eastern Shore pairs and 12 lower tidewater pairs (BWa, MB). A count of 8 **Red-shouldered Hawks** was posted from Dismal 12 Mar (DH). A **Broad-winged Hawk** was noted 14 May near ESVNWR (KG, BT). A **Black Rail** was heard at Saxis Marsh, *Accomack* 6 May (JM). A dead **Purple Gallinule** was found on Pitch Kettle Road near Suffolk 22 April (SS). At least 20 **American Coots** were at Back Bay 24 May (DS)

SHOREBIRDS—BLACKBIRDS

A report of 344 **Seiimpalmated Plovers** at Chinc. 24 May (NB) was the highest received. A **Wilson's Plover** off the ESVNWR Ramp Road 27 May (SS, TJ, BO, RO) was unusual away from its typical barrier island beach haunts. The earliest reported **Piping Plover** was one at False Cape 4 April (DS) with another at Craney 26 Apr (BW, RB, FB, SD, AM). Both Wilson's and Piping Plovers were on the Atlantic barrier islands by 11 April (AW). At least two **American Oystercatcher** nests with two young each were found on Grandview 27 May (RB). **Black-necked Stilt** reports included two at Craney 26 Apr (BW, RB, FB, SD, AM), 4 at ESVNWR 14 May (VK, MF), four along the Chincoteague causeway 24 May (NB), and two territorial pairs at Craney 30 May (RB). Craney hosted 3 **American Avocets** 12 Apr (SD, FB, AM). A late **Solitary Sandpiper** was in Cape Charles 22 May (NB). Of 52 **Willetts** observed at Chinc. 24 May six were the paler Western *inornatus* (NB). Two Willet nests were located on Grandview 27 May (RB). An

Upland Sandpiper was heard at Cape Charles 5 May (NB). There were 2 **Whimbrels** at Willis Wharf, *Northampton* 15 Mar (TS) and 15 at Chinc. 24 May (NB). A **Long-billed Curlew** was in Chimney Pole Marsh, *Northampton* 2 April (AW). The highest reported **Marbled Godwit** total was 18 from Willis Wharf, *Northampton* 15 Mar (TS). Barrier island **Red Knot** survey flights from Assateague Island, *Accomack* through Fisherman's produced a 16 May total of 2,726. Of those, 1921 were on Hog Island, *Northampton*. A 23 May flight found 5,783 including 969 on Cedar Island, *Accomack*, 1821 on Hog Island, *Northampton*, and 1080 on Cobb Island, *Northampton* (BWA, BT). Two *Calidris* near Oyster, *Northampton* 9 Apr were identified as **Western Sandpipers** (KG). The highest reported **White-rumped Sandpiper** count was 34 at Chinc. 24 May (NB). Cape Charles had 61 **Purple Sandpipers** 30 Mar (TS). On 13 May there were 60 on CBBT #1 (NB). Three **Stilt Sandpipers** were at Chinc. 24 May (NB) as were 215 **Short-billed Dowitchers**. **Long-billed Dowitcher** reports included one at Chinc. 24 May (NB) and two the same day at Back Bay (DS). Particularly noteworthy were counts of 6144 **Laughing Gull** nests and 119 **Herring Gull** nests on HRBT 26 May (RB). Back Bay continues to be the **Lesser Black-backed Gull** stronghold as evidenced by 88 there 15 Mar and 44 counted 24 May (DS). The 25 April discovery of four **Great Black-backed Gull** nests (three with one egg, one with three eggs) on HRBT significantly resets previous early nesting dates for that species (RB, MB). The earliest **Gull-billed Tern** report was one on Cedar Island, *Accomack* 18 Apr (AW). Nest counts for this species found six at HRBT 26 May and one at Grandview 27 May (RB). The first **Royal Tern** noted was one at Back Bay 15 Mar (BA, DS). Unprecedented were two nests for this species on HRBT 26 May (RB). A **Roseate Tern** was carefully observed at Grandview Beach, Hampton 27 May (RB, BF). **Common Tern** nest counts found 386 at HRBT 26 May and over 250 at Grandview 27 May. Nesting **Least**

Terns at Lynnhaven, Virginia Beach had one two-egg nest 15 May. There were three nests with two eggs each 22 May (KL). At Craney 41 nests with eggs were found 24 May (RB, BW, SD, AM, KL) and 41 nests were on Grandview 27 May (RB). Quite early were 2 **Black Skimmers** at Buckroe Beach, Hampton 17 Mar (BC). Three **Eurasian Collared-Doves** were off Magotha Road, *Northampton* 14 May (BT, KG). A **White-winged Dove** in Cape Charles 10-13 May (NB) represented the state's fourth spring record and the Region's fourteenth overall. A **Black-billed Cuckoo** was in Suffolk 25 April (LW). A high count of 10 **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** came from Dismal 5 May (BA). A **Barn Owl** was seen on ESVNWR 14 May (KG). A fly-over **Common Nighthawk** was at First Landing 19 May (JR). Often seen though seldom numerically reported were 8 **Pileated Woodpeckers** at Dismal 19 Apr (DH). An **Alder/Willow (Trail's) Flycatcher** was banded at First Landing 21 May (JR). Typically ephemeral was a **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** observed 25 Apr near the junc. of Arlington and Townsend Roads, *Northampton* (TS, NB). A **Horned Lark** nest with four eggs was found 6 May on Cedar Island, *Accomack* (RBt). A **White-eyed Vireo** at Dismal 10 Mar (BA, RH, JH) and 2 **Blue-headed Vireos** 12 Mar also at Dismal (DH) probably over-wintered there. Unexpected was a **Warbling Vireo** at ESVNWR 14 May (KG, BT). A singing **Sedge Wren** was at First Landing 4 May and a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** was banded there 5 May (JR). A count of 10 **Hermit Thrushes** was reported from First Landing 1 Apr (JR). The best thrush banding day at First Landing was 18 birds including 11 **Veeries**, one **Gray Cheeked**, one **Bicknell's**, 5 **Swainson's** (JR). Single Bicknell's were also banded there 20 and 22 May (JR). A **Blue-winged Warbler** was found in Suffolk 25 Apr (LW). An **Orange-crowned Warbler** at Dismal 12 Mar (DH) likely wintered there. A late **Magnolia Warbler** was banded at First Landing 31 May (JR). An interesting find was a **Blackburnian Warbler** on Tangier, *Accomack* 20 May

(HA). Peak counts of 22 **American Redstarts**, 42 **Prothonotary Warblers**, and 22 **Ovenbirds** were posted from Dismal 5 May (BA). The earliest Ovenbird report was one 12 Mar from Dismal (DH). The highest **Swainson's Warbler** count was four from Dismal 15 May (BA, RH, JN). A **Northern Waterthrush** at Dismal 9 Apr (DH) and a **Louisiana Waterthrush** at Dismal 12 Mar were early (DH). A **Lincoln's Sparrow** was banded at First Landing 25 May (JR). Hundreds of **White-throated Sparrows** frequented First Landing 3 May (JR). A tardy **Dark-eyed Junco** was seen at First Landing 28 Apr (JR). Quite notable was a second year female **Painted Bunting** banded at First Landing 11 May (JR). A female **Purple Finch** was observed at Dismal 14 Mar (BA, RH).

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