



Virginia Birds

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



**Volume 3, Number 1
Summer Records June 2006 – July 2006**

Editors' Notes

Yes we are very much behind our publication schedule for *Virginias Birds* but for a reason we hope our readers will find worthwhile. For the first part of this year all our efforts went to doing the design, layout, and production of *Virginia Birdlife: an Annotated Checklist*. It was exciting to receive the manuscript from editors, Steve Rottenborn and Ned Brinkley, and realize how much information it was going to provide to birders in Virginia. The book covers 459 species on the "regular list," covering the status and distribution of each in the three physiographic regions of the state as well as migrations dates and other interesting historical information. Available from the VSO for \$20 (including shipping) and also stocked by our sponsor One Good Tern (see back cover), this really is a "must have" for any Virginia birder.

Back to this journal's publication schedule, we are working hard to catch up. We hope to have the fall 2006, winter 2006-07 and Spring 2007 issues out this fall and stay on track from there.

Across most of the Regions the summer period seemed to be characterized by fewer reports than other seasons but with none-the-less noteworthy sightings such as a Black-crowned Night-heron near Charlottesville, a Lesser Scaup and Ruddy Duck reported from the West, Great Egret in the southwest and a first summer observation of Cooper's Hawk during the Truhart Breeding Bird Survey. Breeding successes included the first ever *Augusta* Great Blue Heron heronry, a new breeding pair of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers at Piney Grove, 455 Prothonotary Warbler nestlings banded at Dutch Gap, and strong evidence of a small breeding population of Willow Flycatchers in northeastern *Accomack*.

We regret that this issue does not include reports for the North Region. Our new editor for the North Region will begin reporting in the next issue.

CLARIFICATION In the *Virginia Birds* Volume 2, Number 2, Fall 2005, Southeast Region Report, it was stated that a White Pelican sighting at Hog Island was accepted by VARCOM as the second Coastal Plain record west of the Chesapeake Bay, perhaps implying that the species is more rare than is actually the case. Sue Heath, VARCOM Secretary offered the following points of clarification. The species has been recorded in the Coastal Plain every year since 1978. However that species wasn't reviewable on the Coastal Plain before the new review list (and it is still only reviewable on the Coastal Plain, west of the Chesapeake Bay). It would be more accurate to state that the referenced White Pelican sighting provided the second accepted record since the new review list was promulgated in January 2004.

Good Birding,

Linda and Alan

PS: Beginning with this issue, *Virginia Birds* will be printed on recycled paper.

Cover photo: Adam D'Onofrio photographed this Mississippi Kite on Route 701 in Southampton County on 11 June 2006.

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 vsoeditors@comcast.net

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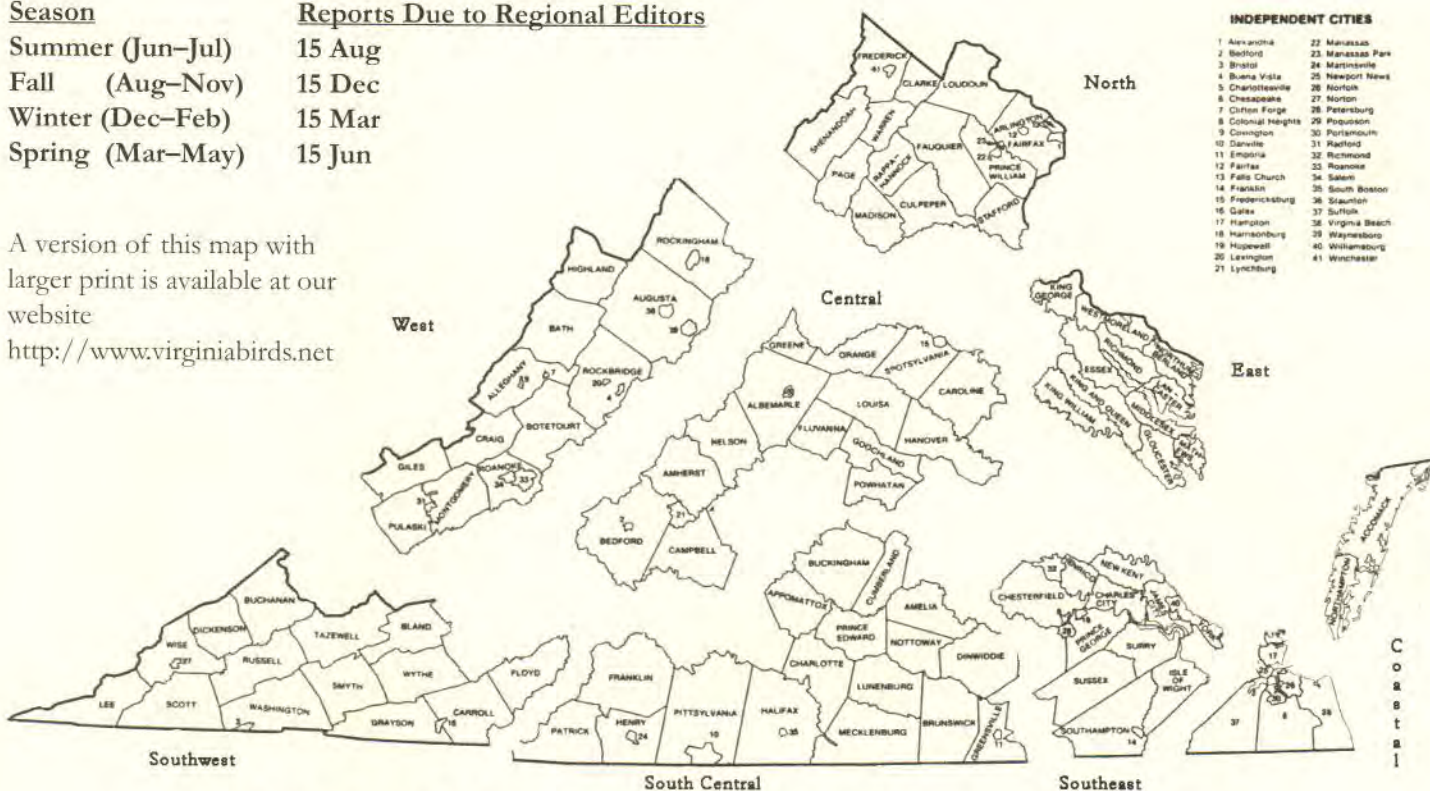
Season

Summer (Jun–Jul)
 Fall (Aug–Nov)
 Winter (Dec–Feb)
 Spring (Mar–May)

Reports Due to Regional Editors

15 Aug
 15 Dec
 15 Mar
 15 Jun

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



Summer Reporting Period Jun – Jul 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.

Please send future reports to:

Ian Topolsky, 4197 Ruth Rd, Madison, VA 22727
 ict_earth@yahoo.com

Since there was no editor for the North Region for this issue, the following highlights were gleaned from the VA-BIRD listserv:

A drake **American Wigeon** was at Manassas National Battlefield Park 3 Jun (SB). On 3 Jun, a **Wilson's Phalarope** was noted at Huntley Meadows (BK, JK, ph, CO). A **Virginia Rail** and a family of **King Rails** was observed at Occoquan Bay NWR 1 Jul (JK). A **Chuck-wills-widow** was heard calling five miles west of Warrenton 1 Jun (DS). A **Swallow-tailed Kite** was spotted near Fairfax 8

Jun (BL). Scott Baron confirmed the **Loggerhead Shrike** at Sky Meadows with the observation of two young birds with the adults 26 Jun. Another shrike was found near Remington 27 Jul (TD). A **Dickcissel** was observed from Savannah Branch Rd in Remington 11 Jul (GK, MAK).

Contributors: Scott Baron, Todd Day, Jay Keller, Bill Knight, Julie Knight, Mary Alice Koeneke, Glenn Koppel, Bev Leeuwenburg, Cliff Otto, Don Schupp,

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.

EDITOR — John Spahr, 234 West Frederick St., Staunton, VA 24401
 jspahr@augustamed.co

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

WATERFOWL – HERONS

There were only two summer waterfowl records, both in *Augusta*. A single **Lesser Scaup** on a pond in the Swoope area, 15-48 Jun (AL) represented the third ever M&V summer record of this diving duck. The fifth summer report of **Ruddy Duck** was of a single duck that lingered on a pond on Bell's Lane, Staunton, 1 Jun - 31 Jul, and into Aug (AL). An **Anhinga** ♀ in flight was well seen from the dam breast of Lake Robertson near Lexington, *Rockbridge*, 1 Jul (TF). There have been only two previous M&V records for this species, neither of which was in summer. The first ever *Augusta* **Great Blue Heron** heronry, discovered in April, was a breeding success. Two to four nestlings were reported in each of the three nests throughout the two summer months (BL, HL), with the last to fledge on 31 Jul (AL). The fifth Roanoke Valley record of **Snowy Egret**, a rare post-breeding visitor, was recorded 22 Jul, *Botetourt* (BH). A single **Glossy Ibis**, 26 Jul, showed up at a farm pond in *Rocking-*

Central

ham and stayed into early Aug (KG, TP). This ibis is a rare post-breeding visitor to the M&V region, with about 16 summer records of 1-2 birds. This sighting furnished the first summer record for *Rockingham*.

EAGLES – SHOREBIRDS

Multiple sightings of **Bald Eagles** in the area suggest a continued expansion of this species in the state. Of the three documented nests in the region that were reported in *Virginia Birds*, Spring 2006, one of the *Highland* nests had a visible young bird, (ph. BK) and represented the county's first documented successful hatch.

The first breeding record of **Sharp-shinned Hawk** in this region, Apple Orchard Mt., *Botetourt*, is only one of four breeding documentation in the M&V for this secretive nester. A nest with two young was observed throughout Jun & Jul; both fledged 2 Aug (JH, AB). A lone **Northern Goshawk** was spotted 2 Jun on Paddy Knob, *Bath/Highland*, (BK). There are only three previous summer records of this accipiter in the M&V, all from the higher peaks. Breeding has been documented in the adjacent West Virginia county and could well be occurring in this part of Virginia. A late date of 13 Jun was recorded for **White-rumped Sandpipers**; three birds at a farm pond, *Rockingham* (CM).

GULLS – FLYCATCHERS

A **Forster's Tern**, 23 Jul, Staunton represented *Augusta's* third summer record of this rare transient, for which the region has few summer records (AL).

A **Eurasian Collared Dove** ♀ was seen near Harrisonburg, *Rockingham* 19 Jun. Later two doves were repeatedly seen and heard in the same area and remained into Aug (KS, ES). This is the first record of this recent North American invader this far north in the M&V region. It has been recorded farther south in *Montgomery* and *Pulaski* since 2003 (*Virginia Birds*, Winter 2005-06). **Barred Owls** are uncommon permanent residents in the Region, but breeding evidence is scarce. The observance of a recently fledged bird during a

BBS on Great North Mt. 20 Jun (LH, AL) represented a rare breeding record for the area and only the second for *Augusta*. Although a common summer resident, breeding documentation of **Acadian Flycatcher** is uncommon. An adult bird with two recently fledged young on Great North Mt. 18 Jun (AL) provided an early nest record for *Augusta*. A count of 21 **Eastern Kingbirds**, 21 Jun *Augusta* (AL) is a new peak count for the county and the second highest summer count for the M&V.

SHRIKES – CROSSBILLS

Loggerhead Shrike, a formerly common and widespread breeder in the M&V, has had a dramatic population decline the last three decades to a point where breeding records are now rare. The finding of recently fledged young at a nest site in Swoope, *Augusta* 1 Jun (AL, ph. BT) is therefore noteworthy.

A **Winter Wren** 30 Jul in Swoope, *Augusta* (AL) provided a first summer record at this low elevation (below 1500 ft.) and probably represents early vertical migration. This wren is a known local breeder above 3000 ft. A **White-crowned Sparrow** 9 Jun in Fishersville, *Augusta* (AL) provided only the second summer record for the M&V; the first also occurred in this county 12 Jun 1976. **Red Crossbills** are rare and local breeders at higher elevations, but with few confirmed breeding records. At Bear Mt. Lodge, atop the western-most ridge of *Highland*, a group of adult crossbills that had been visiting feeders throughout the winter and spring appeared with two fledged young at the end of May. The fledglings were regularly seen throughout Jun (PR). One adult window casualty was sent to the Smithsonian Institute for subspecies typing; the results of which were inconclusive (RC).

Contributors:

Andy Biggs, Roger Clapp, Tad Finnell, Kay Gibson, Lisa Hamilton, Joyce Holt, Bill Hunley, Allen Larner, Beth Lumadue, Harry Lumadue, Clair Mellinger, Tom Pendleton, Patti Reum, Everett Shank, Karen Shank, and Brenda Tekin.

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

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

The Central Region saw average temperatures and precipitation for the period. Highlights included Blue-winged Teal in Bedford, Black-crowned Night-heron near Charlottesville, Black-throated Blue Warbler near Lynchburg, and White-throated Sparrow in Charlottesville.

Abbreviations: L.B.B.C (Lynchburg Breeding Bird Count).

HERONS—SHOREBIRDS

A **Black-crowned Night-Heron** at Oakencroft Winery near Charlottesville July 23-30 was a very unusual summer find for this area, as was a **Solitary Sandpiper** in southern Albemarle July 22 (BC). The best bird by far recorded on the L.B.B.C. 3 Jun was a male **BLUE-WINGED TEAL** found by Charles and Melva Hansrote and Dick and Ruthann Miller on a private pond in *Bedford*. This was the first occurrence on the count of this rare summer visitor (*vide* GS). A record 564 **Canada Geese** were also recorded on the count. For the third summer in a row, one or two Ospreys were seen off and on throughout the season at L. Anna, Louisa (MB). This species is probably nesting somewhere near the lake but no nest has yet been located. Single Ospreys were found on 2, 3, and 5 Jun on three separate territories during the L.B.B.C. This was the ninth occurrence of this raptor on the count. Another Osprey was seen 13 Jun in Campbell just west of Concord (RF, GS). An active Bald Eagle nest on the James River near Lynchburg had three young in it on 2 Jun, although judging from their size they were ready to leave the nest anytime (*vide* GS). The L.B.B.C recorded 4 Bald Eagles

down from the six seen on this count in 2005 (GS et al.). Northern Bobwhite put in an encouraging showing during the L.B.B.C. with a total of 11. Fourteen Wild Turkeys were also recorded for the count. (GS et al.) and 16 were recorded by Sattler and Ferrell on the Gladys, Campbell, BBS route 13 Jun. Five Spotted Sandpipers were recorded on the L.B.B.C. (GS et al.).

SWALLOWS—FINCHES

During the L.B.B.C., REXANNE BRUNO found eight **CLIFF SWALLOWS** 5 Jun at Reusen's Dam on the James River in Lynchburg near the *Bedford* line, only the seventh time the species has been found on this count. A record high of 115 Tree Swallows were also recorded (GS et al.). On the L.B.B.C., DOUG SHEDD again observed Common Ravens nesting on a railroad trestle crossing the James River from Lynchburg into *Amberst*. A record high 11 birds of this species was totaled for the count (*vide* GS). Two Willow Flycatchers were a nice find on the L.B.B.C. (*vide* GS). A lingering **BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER** found 4 Jun in *Amberst* during the L.B.B.C. furnished only the fourth occurrence of this species on this count (MB). During some post count scouting on 7 Jun Sattler found another individual of this species along Route 501 just south of Eagle Eyrie Baptist Conference Center in *Bedford*. Brenda Tekin observed a summing **WHITE-THROATED SPARROW** 11–21 Jun in her Charlottesville backyard feeding on white millet and peanut pieces scattered on the ground. The bird was also heard singing on 11 Jun.

Contributors: Mike Boatwright, Rob Capon, Robert Ferrell, Gene Sattler, Brenda Tekin.

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 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. 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.

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

During this fairly typical season in the Northern Neck and the Middle Peninsula 110 species were recorded by 19 birders who provided 25 location reports. The Gloucester Breeding Bird Survey and the White Stone Breeding Bird Survey were conducted on 4 Jun (RA), and the Truhart Breeding Bird Survey was on 20 Jun (FA). Two other Breeding Bird Surveys were conducted at Port Royal and Sharps but these results were unavailable to the editor before the submission deadline. Perhaps the most interesting finds this season were Mississippi Kite, Dickcissels, and a continued increase in nesting Bald Eagles.

Abbreviations: Beaverdam (Beaverdam Park, *Gloucester*); Dameron (Dameron Marsh *Northumberland*); Hughlett (Hughlett Point NAP, *Northumberland*); Hutchinson (tract of Rapp. R. NWR, *Essex*); Mulberry (Mulberry Hunting Preserve, near Newland, *Richmond*); The Pocket (in Pamunkey Indian Reservation along Pamunkey River, *King William*), Rapp. R. NWR. (Rappahannock R. Valley National Wildlife Refuge); USGS (United States

Geological Survey), Wilna (Wilna tract of Rapp. R. NWR. *Richmond*), Wright (Wright tract of Rapp. R. NWR. *Richmond*).

QUAIL—RAILS

Northern Bobwhite continues to maintain a fairly strong population in rural *King and Queen* with 24 birds heard at 19 stops of the Truhart BBS. The ten year average for this species on this route is 18.9 with a range of 6 to 33. The Balls Neck area of *Northumberland* also has a decent population, with 14 adults noted in different locations in June (JC) and an average of 21 found on point counts at Hutchinson (SS). However these numbers are just a fraction of what could be found back in the 1960s and 1970s when it was not uncommon to find 60-90 Bobwhites on a single survey route. The Sharps and White Stone BBS routes have documented the depressing decline over the last 40 years as illustrated in **Figure 1** (next page). Two kayakers in Mount Landing Creek, *Essex*, had remarkable views of a **Least Bittern** as it crept down a reed stalk and struck at a passing minnow 1 Jul (LA). The midsummer **Bald Eagle** survey (by boat) along the Rappahannock River from Tappahannock to Rappahannock Academy, including Cat Point Creek, 28 Jul sighted 198 bald eagles, including 66 adults, along its 35 mile route, the same route surveyed in the winter (BP, SS, JC). This region hosts many eagles from South Carolina and Florida in the summer after the breeding season. Eighteen immatures and 8 adults roosted for the night in one small pine copse at Mulberry 19 Jul, each adult being greeted by the agitated warnings of the resident pair (FA). The Center for Conservation Biology annual aerial survey of breeding **Bald Eagles** found that the breeding population in the Region continues to climb. Surveyors found 224 resident pairs which produced 325 chicks in 214 nests. This is 46% of the known territories in the state. (BWa, MB, MW, FS, BW, BPa). **Figure 2** summarizes their findings in each county. *Westmoreland* and *Essex* had more nests than any other county in the state and *Mathews* and *Richmond* produced the greatest number of

chicks per nest in this region. Though five counties had fewer nests than last year, only three counties had lower chick counts, and the overall chick count was up 8.7%, with chicks per nest up 3.8%,

and total nests up 3.8% over last year. The first **Cooper's hawk** for the Truhart BBS was found 20 Jun (FA). The 5 **Red-shouldered Hawks** found on the Gloucester BBS 4 Jun was significantly

above the 1.8 average for that route for the second year in a row (SS). A **Mississippi Kite** found near Walkerton, *King and Queen*, 13 Jun (BD) provided the first regional record known to the editor. **Clapper Rails** were noted at Dameron and Bethel Point, *Mathews*, 8 Jul (FD, SH, TS) and on Rigby/Gwynn's Islands 26 Jul (BP).

SHOREBIRDS—WOODPECKERS

The only shorebirds reported were 5 **American Oystercatchers** at Dameron 17 Jun (TS), and one at Bethel Beach, *Mathews*, 8 Jul (FD, SH, TS); 3 **Killdeer** on the Gloucester BBS 4 Jun (SS); 1 **Spotted Sandpiper** at Rigby/Gwynn's Islands 26 Jul (BP); 1-4 **Willetts** at Dameron Marsh (m.ob.); and 2 **Dunlin** at Rigby/Gwynn's Islands 26 Jul (BP). **Least Terns** were reported from only two locales this season: 18 breeding at Rigby/Gwynn's Islands 26 Jul (BP), and two at Bethel Beach 8 Jul (FD, SH) where there were also 12 **Black Skimmers**. A night bird survey along four miles of the Truhart BBS route near Ino, *King and Queen* yielded one **Chuck-will's-widow** and five **Whip-poor-wills** 20 Jun (FA). Six more Whip-poor-wills were found along five miles of Rte. 628 in similar habitat near Mattaponi R. in upper *King and Queen* 6 Jun (FA). For the first time since Hurricane Isabel, **Belted Kingfishers** and **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** returned to nest in the cliff at Mosquito Point, *Lancaster* (BN). An adult **Red-headed Woodpecker** was seen fly catching at Hughlett 8 Jul (FD, SH); two were found on the Truhart BBS near Dragonville, 20 Jun (FA). In early Jun single birds were noted at Hutchinson (SS) and Beaverdam (DH).

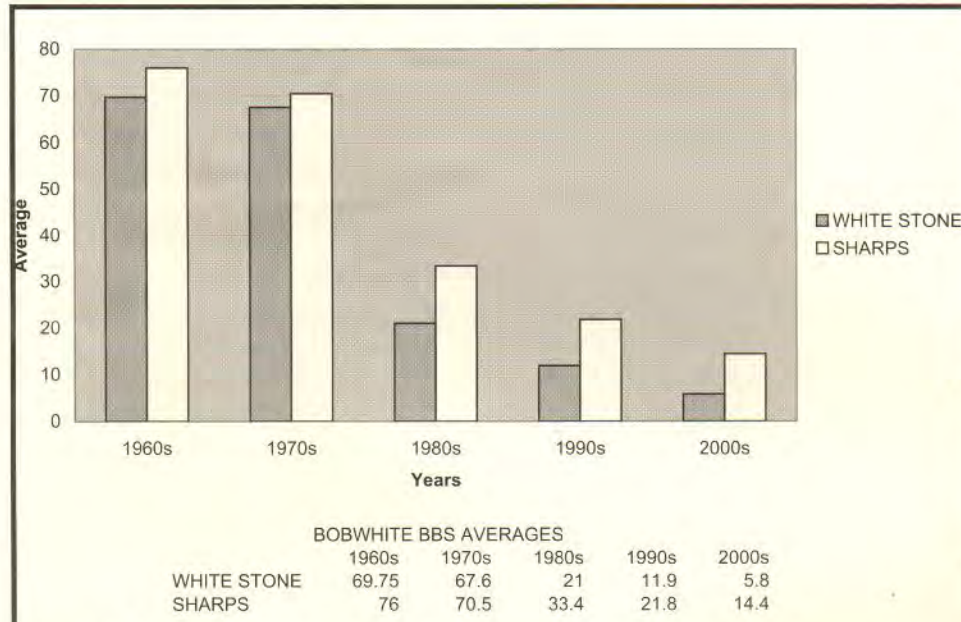


Figure 1. Northern Bobwhites at White Stone and Sharps BBS

2006 Eagles	Resident Pairs	Nests	Chicks	Chicks per active nests
Westmoreland	46	46	70	1.52
Essex	36	35	42	1.2
King George	32	32	45	1.54
Richmond	30	27	49	1.81
Middlesex	16	16	28	1.75
King William	16	12	20	1.67
Northumberland	15	15	25	1.67
Lancaster	13	12	21	1.75
Gloucester	9	8	10	1.25
King and Queen	6	6	5	0.83
Mathews	5	5	10	2
TOTAL	224	214	325	1.54
since 2005	up 2.7%	up 3.8%	up 8.7%	up 3.8%

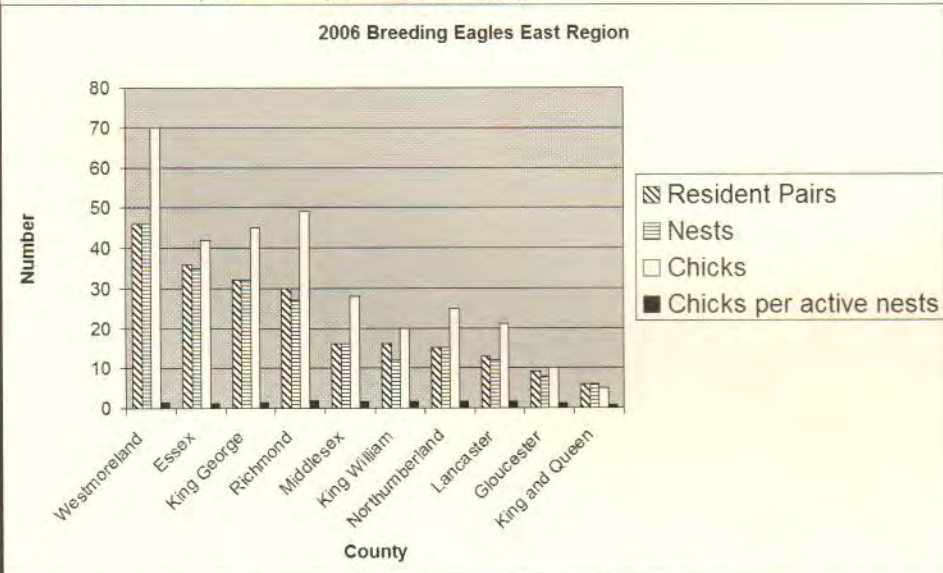


Figure 2. Information from Watts, B. D. and M. A Byrd 2006. Virginia bald eagle nest and productivity survey: Year 2006 report, Center for Conservation Biology, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA 23187-8795

FLYCATCHERS—FINCHES

The count of 16 **Acadian Flycatchers** on the Gloucester BBS was significantly higher than this route's average of 5.9 and its previous high of 9. That route's 10 **Great Crested Flycatchers** also surpassed the previous high of 9 and average of 4. Single **Willow Flycatchers** were heard singing at Mulberry 19 Jun (FA) and on Wilna and Hutchinson point counts (SS). **Bank Swallows** peaked at

450 at Wilna in late Jul (SS). The 32 **Carolina Wrens** heard 20 Jun along the Truhart BBS furnished a much higher count than the average of 11.7 and the previous high of 21. **Marsh Wrens** were again found in large numbers, 45 singing on territory in the Mulberry marshes, 19 Jun (FA) and also in the marshes along Mount Landing Creek *Essex* (LA). The Truhart BBS had 11 **Brown Thrashers** at ten stops, a new high. The new high of 17 **Eastern Bluebirds** on the White Stone BBS continues the trend of an increasing population over the last 40 years (Figure 3). This increase coincides with a dramatic decrease in the population of **House Sparrows** which declined from

an average of 117 in the 1960's to a recent average of 69 on the Sharps BBS. Gloucester BBS also recorded new highs of 18 **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** (previous average 8.7, previous high 16), and 22 **Carolina Chickadee** (previous average 5, previous high 12), and a new low of 45 **American Crow** (previous average 75). Five **Yellow Warblers** were singing on territory at Mulberry 19 Jun (FA) and others were noted along Mount Landing Creek *Essex* 1 Jul (LA). The first ever sightings of **Yellow-throated Warbler** and **Louisiana Waterthrush** were reported for the Gloucester BBS where there was also a new high of 41 **Pine Warbler**, the second most numerous bird

(previous average 11.6, previous high 25). Gloucester BBS also had a new high of 26 **Ovenbirds** (previous average 14, previous high 22) and 14 **Hooded Warblers** (previous average 6, previous high 12). The only **Kentucky Warbler** reported was one bird singing during a point count at Wright (SS). Though **Eastern Towhees** continue to be common on the Truhart BBS (30 in 20 stops) year to year comparisons show a disturbing decline similar to that of the Bobwhite in most of the region (Figure 4). A count of 22 **Chipping Sparrows** on the White Stone BBS was the highest since 1972. Fifteen **Grasshopper Sparrows** were noted at Wilna, the sixth most numerous bird on that point count (SS). **Seaside Sparrows** were noted near Bethel Beach, *Mathews*, and at Dameron 8 Jul (FD, SH, TS) as well as at Rigby/Gwynn Islands 26 Jul (BP). A quick visit to Mulberry 19 Jun produced 7 **Coastal Plain Swamp Sparrows** singing on territory (FA) but this was not a thorough survey and no efforts were made to further document their range in the region this year. A **Dickcissel** was singing during a breeding point count survey at Hutchinson (SS) and another was singing at Mulberry 19 Jun (FA), perhaps an extension of the neighboring Wilna population where five were noted on point counts.

Contributors: Lee Adams, Robert Ake, Fred Atwood, Mitchell Byrd, Arun Bose, Jack Carroll, Jeff Cooper (JCo), Fenton Day, Dave Hewitt, Teta Kain, BJ Norris, Bart Paxton (BPa), Bill Portlock (BP), Fletcher Smith, Sandy Spencer, Bryan Watts (BWa), Bill Williams (BW), Mike Wilson

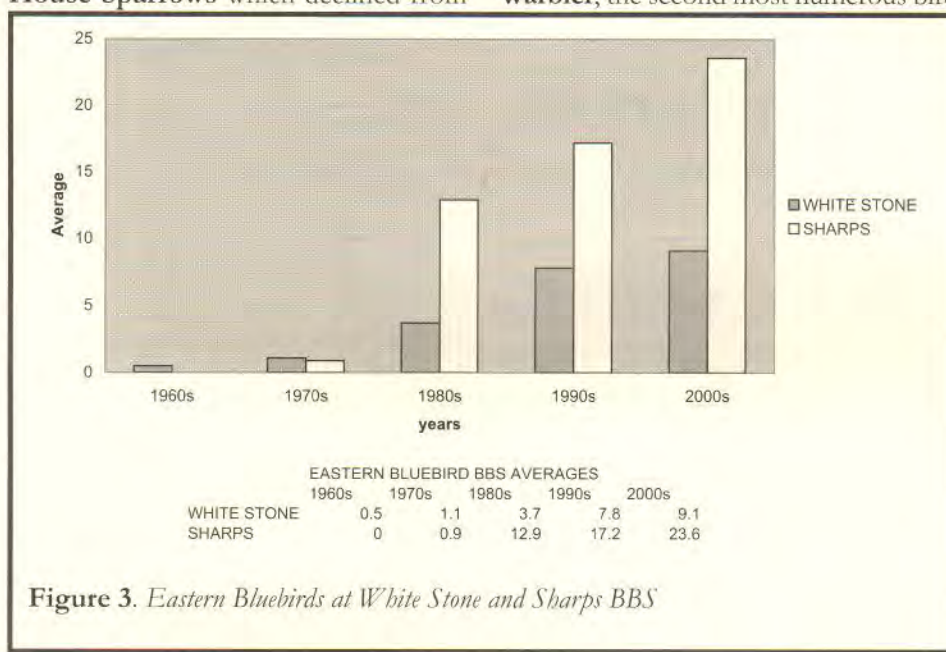


Figure 3. Eastern Bluebirds at White Stone and Sharps BBS

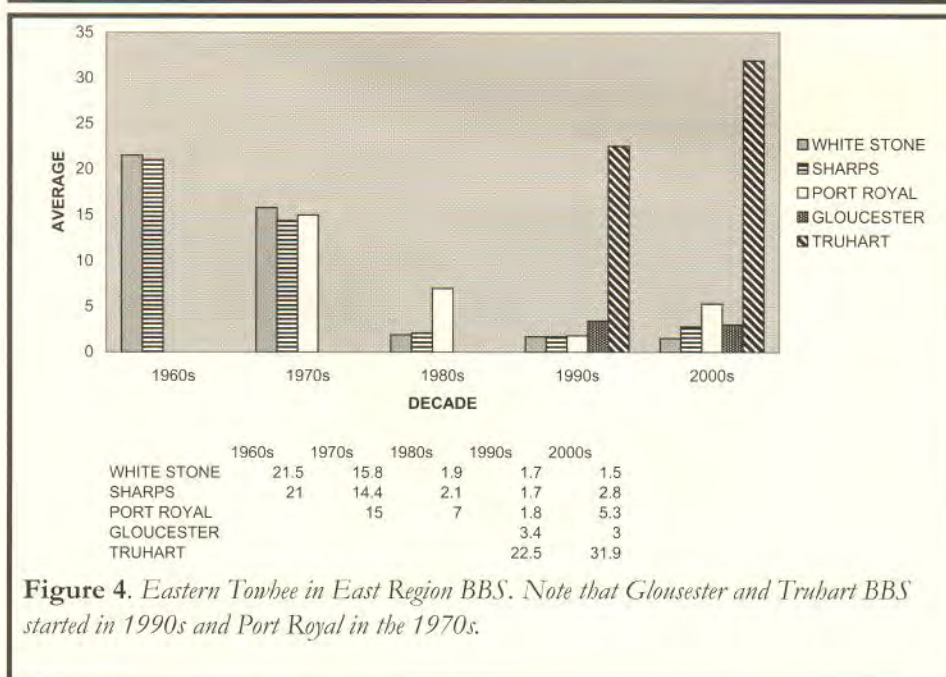


Figure 4. Eastern Towhee in East Region BBS. Note that Gloucester and Truhart BBS started in 1990s and Port Royal in the 1970s.

SOUTHWEST

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

**EDITORS – Roger and Lynda Mayhorn, HC 67 Box 44A, Pilgrims Knob, VA 24634
mayhorn@netscope.net**

The Southwest Region in June had an average temperature of 78.4 F with a few rainy days, while in July the area had an average temperature of 84.5 F with 17 days of rain.

Reports during this two month period were few. However some notable sightings were of Northern Bobwhite, a species, which has become scarce in many areas of the state, and American Bittern, a rare summer visitor in the Mountains and Valley physiographic region. Great Egrets were seen in several locations during the period. An immature Little Blue Heron, and a Bald Eagle, both fairly rare here in summer, were also reported. Alder Flycatchers, a Brewster's Warbler and a Blue Grosbeak were also interesting finds.

QUAIL—GROSBEAK

A **Northern Bobwhite** was heard in a field southeast of Kings Store, *Floyd* 24 Jun (HFDIII). An **American Bittern** was observed flying near Rt. 61 between Tazewell and Burkes Garden, *Tazewell* 6 Jul (J&JP). A **Great Egret**, an uncommon bird for *Floyd*, was sighted there 30 Jul (JG). One, sometimes 2 Great Egrets were observed along the west fork of Meadow Cr. west of Galax, *Grayson* 10-17 Jun (GE); one was also found at a farm pond outside Wytheville 15 Jul (J&JP) and another was reported about a half mile upstream from Byllesby Dam, *Grayson* 22 Jul (MD). An immature white morph **Little Blue Heron** was seen seven miles west of Galax along the New R., *Grayson* 1 Jul (GE). An immature **Bald Eagle** was observed at Fries Junction, *Grayson* 22 Jul (MD). A pair of **Alder Flycatchers** was found at the Highlands Dairy Farm, *Washington* at an

elevation of 2000 ft. 2 Jun (WC, RH) and a single bird was heard and seen in an Alder swamp near the Blue Ridge Parkway, *Floyd* 24 Jun (HFDIII). A singing, male **Brewster's Warbler** was discovered near the Settler's Museum, *Smyth* 26 Jun (AB). A pair of **Summer Tanagers**, a species rarely observed in the county, was found on Caney Island Branch, *Buchanan* (ETIII&MT). A pair of **Blue Grosbeaks**, an uncommon species for *Floyd*, was observed on Rt. 639 24 Jun (HFDIII).

Contributors: Allen Boynton, Wallace Coffey, H. Fenton Day III, Margaret Dunson, Glen Eller, John Getgood, Ron Harrington, Jim and Judy Phillips, Ed Talbott III and Michelle Talbott.

South Central

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

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

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

The season's high count of **Great Egrets** was 10 at Staunton R. SP, Halifax, on 30 Jul, but more interesting were two imm. **Little Blue Herons** there that day (JB). There were two reports of **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons**, a species that is sometimes unreported for a year or more in the Region. Blalock saw one at Bannister R. WMA, Halifax 4 Jun, and AD saw an adult at Clyde's Pond, Dick Cross WMA, Mecklenburg 25 Jun.

Mississippi Kite, is a rare but regular transient in the southern part of the region. This season's only report was a single bird on 12 Jun over Wolf Trap Road, Halifax, a location where the species has been seen several times in recent years

(JB). **Bald Eagles** summered and perhaps bred at Kerr Res., where adults could be seen throughout the season near the dam (AD, CMS). An adult Bald Eagle was also seen over Wolf Trap Road, Halifax, 4 Jun (JB). As usual, shorebird migration started by late Jul. Probably the most interesting shorebird report was of 2 **Semipalmated Plovers** at Staunton R. SP, Halifax, 30 Jul (JB). The only caprimulgids reported were **Whip-poor-wills**, with a high count of nine (total) at three sites in Halifax during the pre-dawn hours of 4 Jun (JB).

Contributors: Jeff Blalock, Adam D'Onofrio, C. Michael Stinson.

Southeast

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

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

Though fewer reports were received than in other seasons, some exciting discoveries marked the period including two Wood Storks in *New Kent* and a frigatebird near Jamestown. Also good news was the continued success of the breeding population of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers at Piney Grove Preserve in *Sussex*. Mike Wilson of the Center for Conservation Biology at the College of William and Mary reported that on June 29 the fifth brood of the year successfully fledged. This is the first time in more than a decade that Virginia has supported five breeding pairs. It is also the second consecutive year that a new pair has attempted to breed and successfully produced young. The success of this breeding season brings the total number of adult and hatch year birds at Piney Grove to 34 individuals. Congratulations to the Virginia chapter of the Nature Conservancy, the Virginia Department

of Game and Inland Fisheries and the Center for Conservation Biology for their continued dedication and effort to restore this fragile species to Virginia. The Dutch Gap Conservation Area Prothonotary Warbler Project in *Chesterfield* also had a successful season. Bob Reilly reported that, as of 9 July, 455 Prothonotary Warbler nestlings were banded at Dutch Gap. The Dutch Gap project has 131 nest boxes in all, 85% of which had Prothonotary clutches or nest activity. Eleven boxes were used exclusively by Tree Swallows and four used exclusively by Carolina Chickadees. Only two boxes were completely unused.

Abbreviations: Green Springs (Green Springs Trail, *James City*); Shirley (Shirley Plantation, *Charles City*).

FRIGATEBIRDS – SPARROWS

Following up on the report of an ad. male **ANHINGA** seen at the Bellyache Swamp off route 661, *Southampton* in late May, six Anhingas were discovered in the same location. Five males and one female were present there the evening of 6 Jun (MA, LL). A single male Anhinga was observed there 11 Jun (AB, AD, VG, MI, TT) and again 17 Jun (FD). A juv. **Tricolored Heron** was discovered at Green Springs 15 Jul (BW). Two **WOOD STORKS** ♀ were found on the Luck Stone property, *New Kent* 8 Jul and remained there until 24 Jul (p.a., ph. VT). A lingering ad. male **Ring-necked Duck** was still present at Shirley 11 Jun (AB, AD, VG, MI, TT). An ad. **Mississippi Kite** was seen perched along Rte. 701, *Southampton* 11 Jun (AB, AD, VG, MI, TT). A **Broad-winged Hawk** was found

soaring near route 703, *Southampton* 11 Jun (AB, AD, VG, MI, TT). Two **Wild Turkeys** were seen on Rte. 661, *Southampton* 17 Jun (FD). **Semipalmated Plovers**, several **White-rumped Sandpipers** and **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were present at Shirley 11 Jun (AB, AD, VG, MI, TT). A **Common Nighthawk** was seen and heard flying southwest near Jamestown, *James City* 1 Jun (BW). Two **Cliff Swallows** were seen at the Felgate's Creek Bridge, *York* 24 Jun. This is the same location where the species was reported nesting last summer. Two **Brown-headed Nuthatches** were noted on Rte. 661, *Southampton* 17 Jun (FD). A **Northern Waterthrush** was observed at Green Springs 1 Jul (BW). The observer couldn't decide if it was a late spring or an early fall migrant. A **Swainson's Warbler** was heard singing just east of the Meherrin R. on Rte. 730, *Southampton* 17 Jun (FD). This same location has hosted a Swainson's Warbler in previous years. A male **Dickcissel** was singing and a nearby female was seen catching and carrying food into cover at Shirley 11 Jun (AB, AD, VG, MI, TT). Both Dickcissels were seen there again 18 Jun (AB). A late **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was in a residential yard in Chester, *Chesterfield* 8 Jun (JK). At least two **Grasshopper Sparrows** were noted on Turkey Island Rd., *Henrico* 18 Jun (AB).

Undocumented Rarity

An imm. **FRIGATEBIRD** ♀ sp., likely a Magnificent, was observed following the Jamestown to Surry ferry near the Jamestown Settlement, *James City* 27 Jun (TM).

Contributors: Mark Adams, Arun Bose, Fenton Day, Adam D'Onofrio, Vickie Gullet, Mike Iwanik, Julie Kacmarcik, Laura Long, Terry Moeslein, Vins Thornhill, Tina Trice, Bill Williams.

Coastal

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

EDITOR — Bill Williams, Center for Conservation Biology, College of William and Mary, P.O. Box 8795, Williamsburg, VA 23187
jwwil2@wm.edu

Though June was relatively normal meteorologically, rainfall for July was almost four inches below the monthly average at Norfolk. A High Marsh Breeding Bird Survey conducted by the Center for Conservation Biology at William and Mary in *Accomack* and *Northampton* produced significant insights into the seaside population distribution of Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows, and revealed strong evidence for a small breeding population of Willow Flycatchers in northeastern *Accomack*. Intensive field work at the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel, Grandview Beach, and Craney Island presented dramatic evidence of the expanded colonial breeding bird populations' use of lower tidewater portions of the Chesapeake Bay western shore for nesting. Eastern Shore barrier islands and associated lagoon system colonial and beach nesting waterbird surveys coordinated among the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the Natural Heritage Division of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Virginia Coast Reserve of the Nature Conservancy, and Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge revealed continued negative effects of predators, especially red foxes, on breeding bird populations. It has long been speculated that Least Terns would



Though the distance and heat shimmer provided less than ideal conditions for photography, these Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks at Back Bay NWR on July 23, 2006 were still an amazing sight. Photographed by Adam D'Onofrio.

exploit Tidewater rooftop sites for nesting. Astute observations from Newport News provided strong, compelling evidence that this occurred in late June and early July. The regularly conducted waterfowl, shorebird and marsh bird surveys at Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge offered important insights into the seasonal abundance of often hard to detect and seldom documented species. Among the season's highlights were Black-bellied Whistling Duck, a reported Band-rumped Storm-Petrel, Long-billed Curlew, and White-winged Dove.

Abbreviations: Back Bay (Back Bay NWR, Virginia Beach); CCBBS (Cape Charles Breeding Bird Survey); CBBT (Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel, s. of *Northampton*); CCB (Center for Conservation Biology at William and Mary); Chinc. (Chincoteague NWR, *Accomack*); Craney (Craney Island landfill, Portsmouth); ESVNWR (Eastern Shore of Virginia NWR, *Northampton*); False Cape (False Cape State Park, Virginia Beach); First Landing (First Landing State Park, Virginia Beach); Fishermans (Fishermans Island NWR, *Northampton*); Grandview (Grandview Beach, Hampton); HRBT (Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel, Hampton/Norfolk); South Point (South Point Marsh, *Accomack*); Wallops (Wallops Island, *Accomack*).

WATERFOWL—MOORHEN

A broad mid-Atlantic/southeast US movement of **BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING DUCKS** ♀ echoed through the region with 15 found off Lake Cahoon Road, Suffolk 9 Jun (DC) and 12 remaining there 10 Jun (DC). Another seven were at C-Storage Pool, Back Bay 21-27 Jul (DS, AD, MI, VG, BA). As many as 16 **Mute Swans** were at South Point 20 Jul (HA). A **Brant** was at Chinc. 21 Jul (NB, BAn, TT). Among 220 **Mallards** at Chinc. 21 Jul were 5 **Mallard x American Black Duck** hybrids (NB, BAn, TT). A **Redhead** was on Wallops 6 Jun (FS, JN). A **Black Scoter** was noted at Back Bay 13 Jun (DS), and 6 **Black Scoters** were off False Cape 6 Jul (DS). **Common Loon** reports included two off Virginia Beach 24 Jun (RBr) and one

off Metompkin Island, *Accomack* 30 Jun (FS). Off the Delmarva tip 9 Jul were 1 **Greater Shearwater**, 2 **Cory's Shearwaters**, and 1 **Audubon's Shearwater** (TB). Two **Wilson's Storm-Petrels** were off CBBT near Fishermans 17 Jun (BP, FS). Other Chesapeake Bay reports included one east of the James River 8 Jul (TB). Offshore, 4 were off the Delmarva tip and 10 were 58 miles east of Sandbridge, Virginia Beach at NOAA weather buoy 44014 along with one **BAND-RUMPED STORM-PETREL** ♀ 9 Jul (TB). A **White Pelican** reported at Craney 3 Jul (KL, RP, RB) remained through 31 Jul (RB, MB, BF, JA). Aerial photograph documentation revealed 406 **Brown Pelican** nests on Fishermans during the period (PD). An additional 50 nests were found on Sandy Island, *Northampton* 10 Jul (AW), and 27 nests with eggs were observed at South Point 20 Jul (HA). Sixteen **Double-crested Cormorant** nests were on Chimney Pole Marsh, *Northampton* 20 Jun (BW, MB, RB, ADi, AW) and 47 nests with eggs remained at South Point 20 Jul (HA). An **American Bittern** at ESVNWR 23 Jul (BT) raised the possibility of local breeding. The highest reported **Least Bittern** tally was four at Back Bay 26 Jul (BA, DS). A survey of four barrier island heronries 20 Jun recorded total ads. as follows: 687 **Great Egrets**, 155 **Snowy Egrets**, 26 **Little Blue Herons**, 134 **Tricolored Herons**, 14 **Cattle Egrets**, 288 **Black-crowned Night-Herons**, 2 **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons**, 78 **White Ibis**, 132 **Glossy Ibis** (BW, MB, RB, ADi, AW). The maximum reported Cattle Egret count was 150 on Wallops 29 Jul (FS, JN). There were 80 **Black Vultures** at ESVNWR 23 Jul (HA). The highest number of **King Rails** reported was 4 at Back Bay 5 Jul (DS), and 4 **Common Moorhens** were at Back Bay 26 Jul (BA, DS).

SHOREBIRDS—SPARROWS

The 2006 VDGIF coordinated plover survey located 370 **Piping Plovers**, including 175 pairs, and 46 **Wilson's Plovers**, including 22 pairs (RBt). **American Oystercatcher** nest reports included four at Grandview 8 June (RB,

MB, BF, JA) and 81 during the season on Cedar Island, *Accomack* (AW), the latter part of 754 adults tallied during Eastern Shore barrier islands and lagoon system surveys (AW, RBt). Of two nesting **Black-necked Stilt** pairs at Craney, one was successful with three fledged young seen 27 July (RB, MB, BF, JA). Wallops had 2 **American Avocets** 6 Jun (FS, JN) and 14 were noted at Craney 27 Jul (NB). High counts of 110 **Lesser Yellowlegs** at Chinc and 20 **Marbled Godwits** near Oyster, *Northampton* were posted 22 Jul (HA). A **LONG-BILLED CURLEW** ♀ observed at Outlet Bay near Elkins Marsh, *Northampton* 16 Jul (BTr) appears to be only the second recorded for summer, and the state's 17th overall. A **Whimbrel** was at Chinc. 21 Jul (NB, BAn, TT). Two **Willet** nests were on Grandview 8 Jun (RB, MB, BF, JA). Of 65 **Willet**s at Chinc. 21 Jul eight were *Western inornatus* (NB, BAn, TT). Reported high counts for several shorebird species included 16 **Red Knots** at Chinc. 21 July (NB, BAn, TT), 7000 **Semi-palmated Sandpipers**, 1000 **Western Sandpipers**, 700 **Least Sandpipers** at Craney 27 Jul (NB), 85 **Stilt Sandpipers** at Chinc 22 Jul (HA), 230 **Short-billed Dowitchers** at Chinc 21 Jul (NB, BAn, TT), and 41 **Long-billed Dowitchers** at Back Bay 18 Jul (DS). A **Red-necked Phalarope** was at Craney 27 Jul (NB). **Wilson's Phalarope** reports included one each at Chinc. 1 Jun (WE) and 21 Jul (NB, BAn, TT). Of interest was an **American Woodcock** at Back Bay 1 Jun (BA, DS). Unprecedented for Grandview were 8 **Laughing Gull** nests found 8 Jun (RB, MB, BF, JA). A 5-7 Jun HRBT gull species nest count recorded 7129 **Laughing Gull** nests, 119 **Herring Gull** nests, and 4 **Great Black-backed Gull** nests (RB, MB, BF, JA). The **Lesser Black-backed Gull** count at Back Bay peaked 26 Jul at 93 (DS). Only 100 **Gull-billed Tern** pairs were found during Eastern Shore barrier islands and lagoon system surveys (RBt, AW). Elsewhere 22 nests were recorded 5-7 June on HRBT and 3 nests were on Grandview 8 Jun (RB, MB, BF, JA). There were a combined 4021 **Royal Tern** and 158 **Sandwich Tern**

nesting pairs distributed between two Wreck Island, *Northampton* colonies 8 and 18 Jun (DF et al.). The state's nesting stronghold for **Common Terns** was clearly in Hampton Roads with 702 nests on HRBT 5-7 Jun and 760 nests on Grandview 8 June (RB, MB, BF, JA). The highest barrier islands nest count was 203 on Dawson Shoals in Wachapreague Inlet, *Accomack* 21 June (RBt, CJ). June barrier island surveys found 150 **Least Tern** nests (RBt). Grandview had the highest western shore population with 99 nests 8 Jun (RB, MB, BF, JA). First noted 23 Jun (TS) and then 1 Jul (CT), up to 28 ad. Least Terns carrying food and feeding over a nearby Kiln Creek pond strongly suggested rooftop nesting at Patrick Henry Mall, Newport News 2 Jul (MAB, BWa). If in fact nesting occurred it would constitute a first for the state for this habitat/substrate type. A **Black Tern** was at Craney 27 Jul (RB). **Black Skimmer** nest counts included 17 on Grandview 5-7 Jun and 10 on HRBT 8 Jun (RB, MB, BF, JA). Of the 1176 nesting pairs recorded on the barrier islands, 330 were found on Dawson Shoals, *Accomack* 21 June (RBt, CJ) and 393 were on Wreck Island, *Northampton* 22 June (AW). The region's 15th **White-winged Dove** sighting was in Norfolk 26-28 Jun (JS). **Eurasian**

Collared-Dove reports included one at Townsend, *Northampton* 7 Jun (NB, TS) and two at Sandbridge, Virginia Beach 5 Jul (SB). An **Eastern Screech Owl** was heard at ESVNWR 22 Jul (HA). A **Common Nighthawk** nest with two young was discovered on Craney 13 Jun (RB). Highly significant were five territorial **Willow Flycatchers** (including one pair) on Wallops 6-30 Jun (FS). A high count of 60 **Fish Crows** was recorded at Ewell, *Accomack* 20 Jul (HA). Notable were two **Bank Swallows** on the 7 Jun CCBBS (NB, TS). A tardy **Magnolia Warbler** was banded at First Landing 4 June (JR). A **Common Yellowthroat** nest with four eggs was found on Cobb Island, *Northampton* 20 Jun (BW). The highest reported number of **Boat-tailed Grackles** was 85 at Willis Wharf, *Northampton* 22 Jul (HA). A singing **Dickcissel** was n. of Rte. 600/Latimer Siding Road jct., *Northampton* 7 Jun (NB, TS). Another was heard along Hedgerow Lane near Craney 30 Jul (AD, VG, MI). Of great interest was a singing **Henslow's Sparrow** at the same Wallops location 22 and 23 Jun (FS, JN). The CCB high marsh breeding bird surveys located 45 **Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows** 20 Jun on Wallops, 6 at Bell's Neck, *Accomack*, 28 Jun, and 7 on Parramore Island, *Accomack* 12

Jul (FS, JN). Reports of **Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow** included single birds on Wallops 3 Jun and Assawoman Island, *Accomack* 4 Jun (FS, JN).

Contributors: Jamie Afeld, Bob Ake, Bob Anderson (BAAn), Harry Armistead, Richard Ayers, Scott Baron, Michael Beck, Ruth Beck, Tyler Bell, Ruth Boettcher (RBt), Ned Brinkley, Rexanne Bruno (RBr), Mitchell A. Byrd (MAB), David Clark, Pam Denmon, Adam DiNuovo ADi), Adam D'Onofrio, Wendy Ealding, Dot Field, Bobby Fithian, Vicky Gullet, Cora Johnston, Keith Lockwood, Josh Nemeth, Bart Paxton, Rob Prus, Jethro Runco, Tom Saunders, Fletcher Smith, Judy Sweetland, Brian Taber, Thuy Tran, Barry Truitt (BTr), Craig Turner, Bryan Watts (BWA), Alex Wilke, Bill Williams.

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