



VIRGINIA BIRDS

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



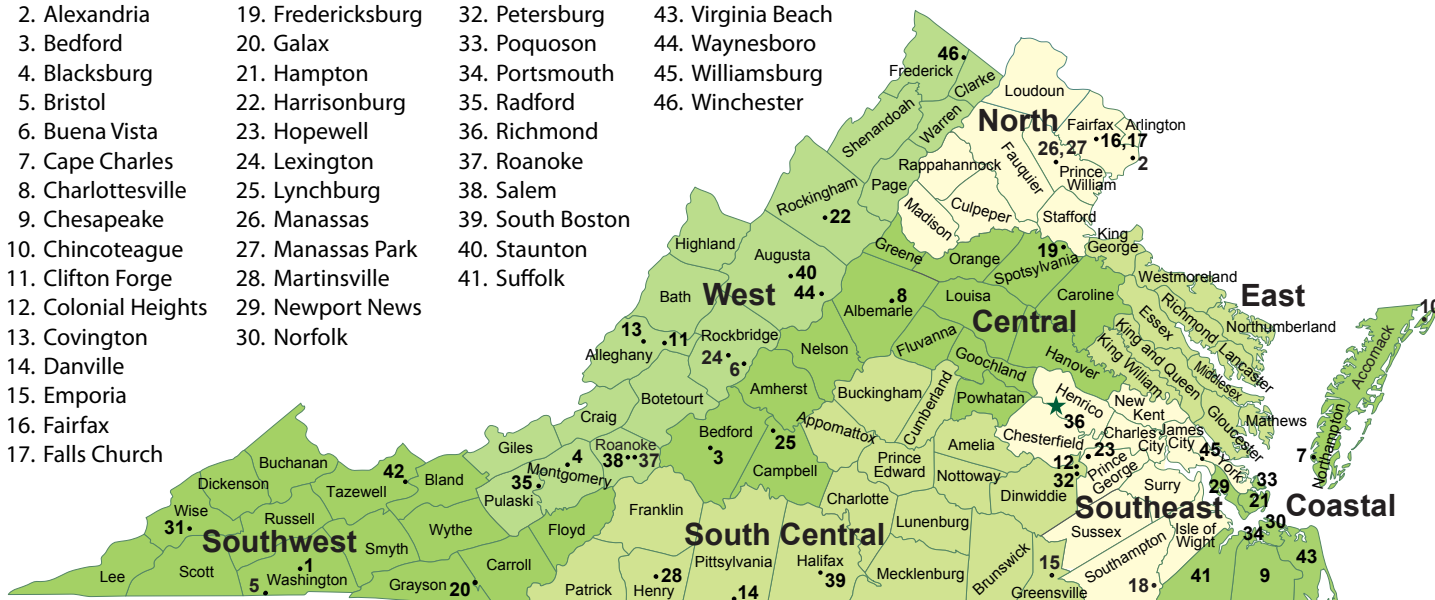
Volume 14 • Number 3

Winter Records • Dec 2017–Feb 2018

Virginia Birds Regions

Cities/towns numbered on map

- | | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Abingdon | 18. Franklin | 31. Norton | 42. Tazewell |
| 2. Alexandria | 19. Fredericksburg | 32. Petersburg | 43. Virginia Beach |
| 3. Bedford | 20. Galax | 33. Poquoson | 44. Waynesboro |
| 4. Blacksburg | 21. Hampton | 34. Portsmouth | 45. Williamsburg |
| 5. Bristol | 22. Harrisonburg | 35. Radford | 46. Winchester |
| 6. Buena Vista | 23. Hopewell | 36. Richmond | |
| 7. Cape Charles | 24. Lexington | 37. Roanoke | |
| 8. Charlottesville | 25. Lynchburg | 38. Salem | |
| 9. Chesapeake | 26. Manassas | 39. South Boston | |
| 10. Chincoteague | 27. Manassas Park | 40. Staunton | |
| 11. Clifton Forge | 28. Martinsville | 41. Suffolk | |
| 12. Colonial Heights | 29. Newport News | | |
| 13. Covington | 30. Norfolk | | |
| 14. Danville | | | |
| 15. Emporia | | | |
| 16. Fairfax | | | |
| 17. Falls Church | | | |



Virginia Birds

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Send reports and photographs to the Regional Editors. Photographs should be the highest electronic quality possible. Send with release form, which can be found on the VSO web site: www.virginiabirds.net. Articles for consideration can be sent to billwilliams154@gmail.com.

Season

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

Reports due to Regional Editors

15 Dec
 15 Mar
 15 Jun
 15 Aug

Terms and Abbreviations

Species name in **bold** first time mentioned (VARCOM Review Birds **BOLD CAPS**); county names are in *italics*.

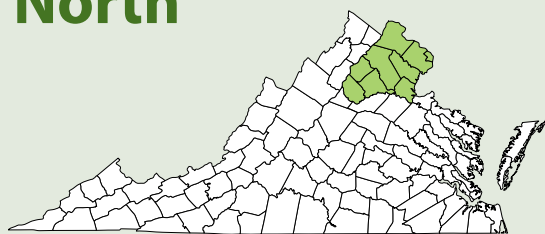
Abbreviations

ad. (ads.)	adult(s)
BBS	Breeding Bird Survey
CBC	Christmas Bird Count
Cr.	Creek
et al.	and others
f.	female
<i>fide</i>	vouched by
FOS	First of Season
Ft.	Fort
Gold Book	<i>Virginia's Birdlife, An Annotated Checklist</i> . Virginia Avifauna No. 7, Fourth Edition, 2007.
Hwy.	Highway
Is.	Island(s), Isle(s)
imm. (imms.)	immature(s)
junc.	junction
juv. (juvs.)	juvenile(s)
L.	Lake
Ln.	Lane
MAPS	Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship
m.	male
m. obs.	many/multiple observers
Mt.	Mountain, Mount
NAP	Natural Area Preserve
NP	National Park
NWR	National Wildlife Refuge
ph.	photographed by (initials)
Pk.	Park
Pt.	Point
R.	River
Rd.	Road
Res.	Reservoir
RP	Regional Park
Rte.	Route
SF	State Forest
SP	State Park
VARCOM	Virginia Avian Records Committee
VDGIF	Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
v. r.	voice recording
VSO	Virginia Society of Ornithology
WMA	Wildlife Management Area
*	specimen collected

On the cover: Rob Bielawski photographed this Least Bittern at Little Island, Virginia Beach 6 Jan.

Regional Reports

North



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Arlington, Culpeper, Fairfax, Fauquier, Loudoun, Madison, Prince William, Rappahannock, and Stafford counties; the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, Manassas, and Manassas Park

This winter season will be remembered for a very cold spell in late December and early January, followed by temperatures, especially in February, warmer than usual. Precipitation was below average through January. Highlights this season included Eared Grebe, Glaucous Gull, Loggerhead Shrike, Northern Shrike, Clay-colored Sparrow, LeConte's Sparrow, Wilson's Warbler, and Painted Bunting.

Abbreviations: Algonkian RP (Algonkian RP, *Loudoun*); Belmont Bay (Belmont Bay, *Prince William*); Burke L. Pk. (Burke L. Pk., *Fairfax*); C.M. Crockett Pk. (C.M. Crockett Pk., *Fauquier*); Daingerfield Is. (Daingerfield Is., *Alexandria*); Dulles (Dulles Int. Airport, *Loudoun*); Dyke Marsh (Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, *Fairfax*); Hunting Cr. Bridge (Hunting Cr. Bridge, *Fairfax*); Laurel Hill (Laurel Hill Equestrian Center, *Fairfax*); Mountain Run (Mountain Run L. Pk., *Culpeper*); Occoquan Bay (Occoquan Bay NWR, *Prince William*); Pohick Bay (Pohick Bay RP, *Fairfax*); Silver L. (Silver L. RP, *Prince William*)

Christmas Bird Counts: CLCBC (Central *Loudoun*, 28 Dec); DCCBC (Washington DC, 16 Dec); FBCBC (Ft. Belvoir, 2 Jan); NCBC (Nokesville, 26 Dec); SCBC (Seneca, 17 Dec)

WATERFOWL—HERONS

Single **Ross's Geese**, a rare bird in the Piedmont, were observed at Woodmar Farm., *Loudoun* 2–3 Dec (DC), where it or another was seen 31 Dec (LMc); C.M. Crockett Pk. 2–7 Dec (KK); Sky Meadows SP, *Fauquier* 27 Jan (ph. TK); and a pond in Lucketts, *Loudoun* 28 Jan (BHe, AG, GH). Reports of **Greater White-fronted Geese**, formerly rare in the Piedmont, have become more frequent; a high of 10 were found at the Beaugard Farm Pd., *Culpeper* 25

Jan (IT, TD). **Cackling Geese** similarly have become more frequent winter visitors in the Region; reports included highs of 5 at New Bristow Village Pond., *Prince William* both 23 Dec (DLe) and 22 Jan (MRi). A **Blue-winged Teal**, a rare winter visitor in the Piedmont, was seen on a pond near Aldie, *Loudoun* (CLCBC). Single **Eurasian Wigeons**, a bird with very few records in the Piedmont and rare in the Coastal Plain, were observed at Mason Neck SP, *Fairfax* 3 Dec (LCh) and again 21 Jan (MRa); George Mason University Conference Center, *Fairfax* 9 Dec (KG); Pohick Bay 29 Dec–15 Jan (KG); and Clifton Institute, *Fauquier* 27 Feb (SG). **Redheads**, a rare winter visitor in the Piedmont, were seen in numbers as large as 45 at Silver L. 11–21 Jan (FA); unspecified numbers at Airlie, *Fauquier* 22 Jan (JA); and 12 along Spinks Ferry Rd., *Loudoun* 13 Feb (J&BJL). A probable ad. m. **TUFTED DUCK** × **scaup**, a frequent hybridization per Sibley but very rare nevertheless, was seen at Pohick Bay 5 Jan (GM, m. obs.). A **White-winged Scoter** observed at Pohick Bay 25 Feb (KG) was a rare inland visitor. Reports of **Long-tailed Ducks** not in DC or MD waters included 3 at Dyke Marsh 16 Dec (LMe), with 1–2 there through 27 Jan; one at Occoquan Bay 31 Dec (RT); and one at Pohick Bay 16 Jan (WY). Quite rare winter visitors in the Piedmont, 14 **Red-breasted Mergansers** were seen at Beaverdam Res., *Loudoun* (CLCBC). A **Horned Grebe**, rare in the Piedmont in winter, was seen at Burke L. Pk. 14 Feb (TN). Single **Red-necked Grebes**, a rare winter visitor in the Region, were reported at L. Mooney Pk., *Stafford* 31 Jan (JP); Occoquan Bay 3–6 Feb (DLe); Belvoir Pond, *Fauquier* 18 Feb (KK); Burke L. Pk. 18–27 Feb (RR, ph.); and Dyke Marsh 25–27 Feb (TN). An **EARED GREBE**, very rare inland, was observed at Pohick Bay 1–3 Jan (ph. EM, LCh). A rare occurrence inland in winter, a **King Rail** was at

Occoquan Bay 21 Jan–20 Feb (MRi), with 2 seen together there 18 Feb (ph. & vid. BHo). Two **Sandhill Cranes** spent most of the winter in *Loudoun*, seen frequently at Algonkian RP and Algonkian NP and occasionally in the Lucketts area (m. obs., ph.)—very similar to last winter. A first-cycle **Iceland Gull**, a rare winter visitor in the Region, especially inland, was reported at Occoquan RP, *Fairfax* 2–19 Jan (ph. BHo); 2 were at the *Loudoun* County Landfill (CLCBC). There were also singles at Belmont Bay Marina 27 Jan (KG) and Neabsco Cr. Inlet, *Prince William* 17 Feb (EM). A first-cycle **Glaucous Gull**, very rare inland, was at Occoquan RP, *Fairfax* 31 Dec–21 Jan (SP, ph. WY), and one was at Pohick Bay 21 Jan (Voice). Two **Forster's Terns**, rare inland in winter, were observed at Pohick Bay 25 Feb (KG). Reports of **Red-throated Loons**, quite rare inland, included 2 at Aquia Landing Pk., *Stafford* 24 Feb (DLe) and 2–3 at Occoquan Bay 24–28 Feb (JSh, TS). A **Double-crested Cormorant**, rare in the Piedmont in winter, was seen at Great Falls NP, *Fairfax* 21 Jan (KL). An **American Bittern**, a rare winter visitor inland, was reported on White's Mill Trail, *Fauquier* 24 Feb (GS). Reports of **Great Egrets**, also rare winter visitors inland, included a total of 5 in the area of Dyke Marsh and Hunting Cr. Bridge 13 Dec (LCa) (Coastal Plain late date 15 Nov) and a single at Occoquan Bay 17–21 Dec (KV), seen again on the FBCBC. A **Green Heron**, a very rare early winter visitor in the Piedmont, was observed at Sycamore L., *Fairfax* 7–10 Dec (IT, ph. AN).

RAPTORS—CATBIRD

An **Osprey** was seen along the Goose Cr., *Loudoun* on the CLCBC, one of few winter records in the Piedmont. On 3 Feb there was a report of 35 **Bald Eagles** sitting on the ice at Belmont Bay (LCa). A typical ad. "**Northern**" **Red-tailed Hawk** (*Buteo jamaicensis abieticola*), a distinctive subspecies that is not uniformly recognized as separate from the Eastern subspecies, was reported at Dulles 28 Dec (MN). Another was reported along Twymans Mill Rd., *Madison* 21 Jan (Voice). A **Rough-legged Hawk**, a rare winter visitor throughout the Region, observed at Dulles 11 Dec (DLA), lingered through 21 Jan. Single **Golden Eagles** were reported at Silver L. 10 Dec (TH); Center for Environmental Studies, *Fauquier* 13 Dec (GS); Sky Meadows SP, *Fauquier* 6 Jan (ph., m. obs.); and International Conservation House, *Fauquier* 3 Feb (PSa). A **Snowy Owl** first observed at Dulles 5 Dec (JE) lingered through 6 Feb; 2 were seen interacting there 7 Jan (RT). Good numbers of **Short-eared Owls** were seen in *Loudoun* this winter, with as many as 10 on St. Louis Rd. 28

Jan (JC) and 5 Feb (SM) and 7 on Lucketts Rd. 28 Jan (JC). A m. **American Kestrel** captured 6 Feb near Stevensburg, *Culpeper* had been banded 8 Sep 2017 near Cambridge, Lamoille, VT, almost exactly 500 mi. as a falcon flies from the spot it was recaptured in Virginia (TD et al.). Single **Merlins**, a fairly rare winter visitor in the inland Coastal Plain and rare in the Piedmont, were seen near Hunting Cr. Bridge 16 Dec (MRi); at Burke L. Pk. 10 Jan (MRi); at Silver L. 11 Jan (MRi); and at Sully Woodlands, *Fairfax* 15 Jan (KG). Reports of **Peregrine Falcons**, a rare winter visitor inland, included singles along Emmett Rd., *Madison* 15 Dec (ph. IT); Belmont Bay Marina, *Prince William* (FBCBC); Daingerfield Is. 4 Jan (MG); Bealeton, *Fauquier* 27 Jan (JF); Alanthus, *Culpeper* 5 Feb (KK); and a residence in Taylorstown, *Loudoun* 18 Feb (GH). A **Loggerhead Shrike**, a species that has declined dramatically in Virginia in recent decades and is now very rare in the Coastal Plain, was observed along Aaron Mountain Rd., *Rappahannock* 16–26 Dec (FA). The **NORTHERN SHRIKE**, a very rare winter visitor to the Piedmont, that was first observed at Sully Woodlands, *Fairfax* 1 Nov continued through at least 25 Feb (ph., m. obs.)—probably the same bird that overwintered here the previous year. A **Blue-headed Vireo**, a rare winter visitor in the Region, was seen at Dyke Marsh 22 Dec (WC). Early reports of **Tree Swallows** in the Coastal Plain, where the species is less apt to return in late winter than in the rest of the Region, included 2–3 at Huntley Meadows Pk., *Fairfax* 24–26 Feb (QE) and 5 at Occoquan Bay 27 Feb (TN) (typical early date is 20 Mar). A **Brown-headed Nuthatch**, a rare winter visitor this far north and west, was first seen at Mountain Run 3 Dec (KK) and remained throughout the period. Another was seen at C.M. Crockett Pk. 11 Dec (KK). Two **House Wrens**, a rare winter visitor in the Piedmont, were seen at the Fairfax County Landfill cap 10 Dec (KG); one was seen again 30 Dec. Two **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers**, a rare winter visitor in the Region, were seen at Hunting Cr. Bridge 2 Dec (KG); one was seen again 14–18 Dec (m. obs.). Another was at Jones Point Pk., Alexandria 18 Dec (BS). A **Gray Catbird**, a rare winter visitor in the Piedmont, was reported at Algonkian RP 26 Feb (LH).

SPARROWS—BUNTINGS

A **Clay-colored Sparrow**, very rare in the Piedmont any time, was first observed at Laurel Hill 5 Dec (WK) where it continued through 27 Feb. Another was reported at Mountain Run 15 Jan (Voice). Very rare away from the extreme se. of the Region, a **LeConte's Sparrow** was observed on private property in Lowe's Island, *Loudoun* 17

Dec (ph. BHe, AG) during the SCBC, at almost the exact spot and date (18 Dec) it was found on last year's count (see Errata at end of this report); it was refound and ph. 9 Feb (ph. BHe, AG).



Bryan Henson's 17 Dec photo of the LeConte's Sparrow at Lowe's Island, Loudoun

Single **Lincoln's Sparrows**, a rare winter visitor in the Region, were observed at L. Manassas, *Prince William* 17 Dec (BJ) and Veteran's Pk., *Prince William* (FBCBC). For the first time, no **Eastern Meadowlarks** were found on the CLCBC, a testament to the decline of grassland birds in the Piedmont. A few **Baltimore Orioles** braved the early winter: 1–2 at Belle Haven Pk., *Fairfax* and nearby Dyke Marsh 2–28 Dec (KG) and an ad. m. at feeders in Lincoln, *Loudoun* the last several days of December through the end of January (*vide* PD). A **Brewer's Blackbird**, rare throughout the Region, was reported at the Cedar Run Wetlands, *Fauquier* (NCBC). **Orange-crowned Warblers**, still rare in the Region in winter but becoming less so, were observed at several locations: multiples along the G.W. Pkwy., Alexandria (DCCBC) and singles at Laurel Hill 16–21 Dec (SP); Daingerfield Is. 21 Jan (Voice); Hunting Cr. Bridge 21 Jan (Voice); C.M. Crockett Pk. 25 Dec (Voice); a private residence in Rixeyville, *Culpeper* 11 Jan (CH); and Mountain Run 15–17 Jan (JF). A **Nashville Warbler**, a rare winter visitor, was seen at Daingerfield Is. 7–14 Jan (ph. WM). A **Common Yellowthroat**, a fairly rare winter resident in the Piedmont, was seen and heard along Elk Run Rd., *Fauquier* 17 Dec (KK). A rare winter visitor, a **Yellow Warbler** was reported at Leesylvania RP, *Prince William* (ph. MRi) during the FBCBC. Reports of **Palm Warblers**, rare early winter visitors in the Piedmont, included singles at Laurel Hill 7 Dec (m. obs.); Manassas Nat. Battlefield Pk., *Prince William* 17 Dec (JSt, JT); and Lenn Pk., *Culpeper* 6 Feb (IT, TD); the latter is even rarer

for being in mid-winter and also because it was the rarer "Yellow" (*hypochrysea*) subspecies. Rare in the northern Piedmont in winter, **Pine Warbler** reports included 1–2 at Mountain Run 3 Dec–8 Jan (KK) and singles along Thoms Rd., *Culpeper* 13 Jan (IT, JF); Leeds Manor Rd., *Fauquier* 23 Feb (BH_a); and Tenerife Rd., *Fauquier* 25 Feb (KG). A **Wilson's Warbler**, very rare in winter, was well seen at the Loudoun Water Authority, *Loudoun* 20–21 Jan (ph. BHe).



Diane Natase took this photo of the Wilson's Warbler at the Loudoun Water Authority, Loudoun 20 Jan.

Reports of **Painted Buntings**, always rare in the Region, included singles at a private residence, *Prince William* 5–21 Jan (JK) and Laurel Hill 22 Feb (BM).

Contributors: Janet Anderson, Fred Atwood, Daniel Carrier, Larry Cartwright (LC_a), Linda Chittum (LCh), Wendell Clough, Joe Coleman, Phil Daley, Todd Day, Jim Emery, Quinn Emmering, James Fox, Allison Gallo, Sue Garvin, Kurt Gaskill, Menachem Goldstein, Tobin Hardwick, Bert Harris (BH_a), Caroline Heald, Bryan Henson (BHe), Bill Hohenstein (BH_o), Linda Hollinger, Gerco Hoogeweg, Ben Jesup, Will Kennerly, Julie Kensky, Todd Kiraly, Kelly Krechmer, Kristine Lansing, Dave Larsen (DL_a), David Ledwith (DL_e), Jon & BJ Little, Gabriel Mapel, Laura McGranaghan (LMc), Will McPhail, Larry Meade (LMe), Stuart Merrell, Elton Morel, Brenton Mundt, Adit N., Tom Nardone, Max Nootbaar, Jeffrey Pozner, Scott Priebe, Matthew Ratcliffe (MR_a), Marc Ribauda (MR_i), Rich Rieger, Paul Salaman, James Shelton (JSh), Thomas Showalter, Greg Slader, Janis Stone (JSt), Byron Swift, Jean Tatalias, Russell Taylor, Ian Topolsky, Kent Vidrine, Voice of the Naturalist, William Young

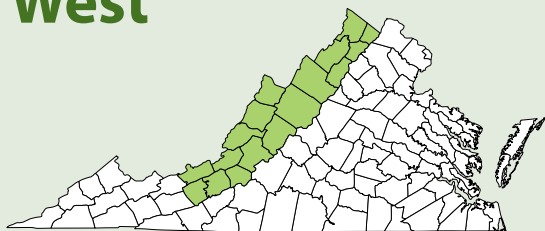
Errata

The LeConte's Sparrow noted on page 7 of the Winter 2016–2017 (Vol. 13 no. 3) North Region report was incorrectly listed as being on the Central Loudoun CBC (28 Dec 2017). It should have been reported as being on the Seneca CBC (18 Dec 2017).

The juv. **SABINE'S GULL** documented on page 7 of the Fall 2017 (Vol. 14 no. 2) North Region report was technically in

the District of Columbia. Although all known reports and documentation of this bird were from Daingerfield Island, Alexandria, the bird itself remained over water, therefore, in the District of Columbia. To be considered as a Virginia record, this gull would have to have been recorded on or over land on the Virginia side of the Potomac River. Many thanks to one of our readers who brought this technicality to our attention.

West



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Alleghany, Augusta, Bath, Botetourt, Clarke, Craig, Frederick, Giles, Highland, Montgomery, Page, Pulaski, Roanoke, Rockbridge, Rockingham, Shenandoah, and Warren counties; the cities/towns of Blacksburg, Buena Vista, Clifton Forge, Covington, Harrisonburg, Lexington, Radford, Roanoke, Salem, Staunton, Waynesboro, and Winchester

Weather in the area included extreme cold in January; smaller ponds and lakes were frozen, and this concentrated waterfowl on rivers and larger lakes in the Region. February wrapped up unusually warm.

Abbreviations: Blandy (Blandy Experimental Farm, *Clarke*); RGHW (Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch, *Augusta/Nelson*)

CBC's: ACBC (*Augusta*, 16 Dec); BCBC (Blacksburg, 16 Dec); WCBC (Waynesboro, 30 Dec)

WATERFOWL–RAPTORS

Greater White-fronted Goose sightings included 13 in Staunton 1 Jan (GM), 37 in Bridgewater, *Rockingham* 6 Jan (GM), 32 in *Augusta* 13 Jan (AL, PW), 14 at L. Frederick, *Frederick* 15 Jan (RK), and 50 near Boyce, *Clarke* 27 Feb (SA). **Snow Goose** records included 3–8 at ponds near Riner, *Montgomery* 1 Dec to 8 Feb (m. obs.), 46 at L. Holiday, *Frederick* 18 Dec (GR), 5 near Dublin, *Pulaski* 28 Dec (CK), 3 near Lexington 14 Feb (DT), and 3 at Silver L., *Rockingham* 15 Feb (RB). There were one to 2 **Ross's Geese** near Riner, *Montgomery* 1–9 Dec (m. obs.), one at the Broadway Wastewater Treatment Facility, *Rockingham* 8 Dec (BE, MJ), one in *Augusta* 11–18 Dec (m. obs.), one in *Alleghany* 12 Jan (BW), one in Blacksburg 14 Jan (m. obs.), one at L. Frederick, *Frederick* 15–31 Jan (m. obs.), one

near Elkton, *Rockingham* 27–28 Jan (m. obs.), 3 at Silver L., *Rockingham* 15 Feb (m. obs.), one in Staunton 16 Feb (NN), and 3 in *Rockbridge* 28 Feb (KK). **Cackling Goose** sightings included 10 in *Rockingham* 22 Dec (GM et al.), 6 at L. Campbell, *Rockingham* 27 Dec (MG), 9 in Staunton 1 Jan (GM), 6 in Harrisonburg 5 Jan (MG), 3 at Parrott, *Pulaski* 6 Jan (JK, SK), 3 at L. Frederick, *Frederick* 11 (DC) & 16 Jan (GR), 8 near Riner, *Montgomery* 21 Jan (BK, GR), 4 in Waynesboro 25 Jan (EC), 6 at L. Shenandoah, *Rockingham* 25 Jan (MG), and 6 at Fishersville, *Augusta* 31 Jan (DH, AP). **Trumpeter Swans** were found in several locations: 2 on the New R. near Eggleston, *Giles* 30 Dec–14 Jan (m. obs.); one with wing tags P61 in Waynesboro 29 Dec–28 Feb (m. obs.); one at Front Royal, *Warren* 3 Jan (JF); 3 near Timberville, *Rockingham* 13–16 Jan (m. obs.); 6 in Blacksburg 21 Jan (DP, SP); 6 at Parrott, *Pulaski* 27 Jan (SK, AP); 4 at Daleville, *Botetourt* 3 Feb (WF, SS) with one present there from 8–26 Feb (m. obs.); and, one with wing tags R24 at L. Frederick, *Frederick* 7 (DB) & 8 Feb (DC), then found again at Lakeside L., *Frederick* 10–16 Feb (m. obs.). **Tundra Swans** were noted throughout the Region. Some of the higher counts included 22 in *Augusta* 9 Dec (GM), 7 near Singers Glen, *Rockingham* (MG), 48 at L. Holiday, *Frederick* 30 Dec (GR), 7 on the New R. at McCoy, *Montgomery* 27 Jan (JS), 6 at Greenfield L., *Botetourt* 27–28 Jan (m. obs.), and 6 at Daleville, *Botetourt*

31 Jan & 1 Feb (m. obs.). One hundred and ten **Northern Shovelers** were seen in and near the Timberville area of *Rockingham* 8 Dec (BE, MJ), 120 on 17 Dec (DL), and 104 on Jan (MG). **Gadwall** records included the following high counts for local lakes and ponds: 73 at Daleville, *Botetourt* 20 Dec (AD); 85 in Fishersville, *Augusta* 1 Jan (GM); 18 at L. Campbell, *Rockingham* 2 Jan (HH); 28 at Borden's Spring, *Clarke* 3 Jan (DC), 43 at Rainbow Forest L., *Botetourt* 21 Jan (BE), 25 near Riner, *Montgomery* 27 Jan (JS); 18 at Willow L., *Rockbridge* 6 Feb (JP); 25 at L. Shenandoah, *Rockingham* 6 Feb (GMo); 49 at Murray's Pond, *Roanoke* 14 Feb (AD); 65 in *Rockingham* 18 Feb (DH); and, 23 at Swoope, *Augusta* 26 Feb (BE). One hundred and ten **Ring-necked Ducks** were seen 20 Dec in *Bath* (PR), 95 at Bath County Pump Storage Station 21 Dec (HH, GM), 120 at Mill Run Pond, *Bath* 14 Jan (JP), 62 at Greenfield L., *Botetourt* 9 Feb (PL), 40 at Abram Creek Wetlands, *Frederick* 10 Feb (RK), and 32 at Willow L., *Rockbridge* 24 Feb (LA). A **Surf Scoter** was seen at L. Arrowhead, *Page* 15 Dec (JF); 2 were at L. Frederick, *Frederick* 15 Dec (m. obs.) and 2 were at Switzer L., *Rockingham* 25 Feb (WL). Three **White-winged Scoters** were seen at Claytor L., *Pulaski* 7 Jan (SK, PL, AP), one at Willow L., *Rockbridge* 16–19 Jan (m. obs.), one at Silver L., *Rockingham* 13–21 Feb (m. obs.), and one at L. Holiday, *Frederick* 28 Feb (GR). **Long-tailed Duck** reports included 2 near Mint Springs, *Augusta* 23 Dec (AL), one on the New R., *Montgomery* 5–7 Jan (BL), one at Claytor L., *Pulaski* 25 Jan (MM), and 4 at L. Frederick, *Frederick* 7 Feb (DB) followed by 6 there 25 Feb (AB). Fifty-four **Common Goldeneyes** were found at Parrott, *Pulaski* 18 Feb (LA). Forty **Hooded Mergansers** were seen in *Bath* 29 Dec (PR). Sixty-three **Common Mergansers** were found at L. Moomaw, *Bath* 29 Dec (PR), 85 on Luray Res., *Page* 1 Jan (JF), 60 at Christendom College, *Warren* 3 Jan (JF), 86 on the Shenandoah R., *Clarke* 6 Jan (JF), 60 in *Shenandoah* 6 Jan (ET), 40 at Claytor L., *Pulaski* 7 Jan (SK), 34 at L. Moomaw, *Bath* 20 Jan (LA), and 70 at L. Merriweather, *Rockbridge* 6 Feb (JP). Thirty-one **Ruddy Ducks** were at L. Arrowhead, *Page* 3 Dec (JF), and 60 at Timberville, *Rockingham* 17 Dec (DL). A **Red-necked Grebe** was photographed on the Roanoke R., Roanoke 21–29 Jan (m. obs.) and one was at Carvins Cove, *Botetourt* 19–24 Feb (BE, AD, LA). Twelve **Sandhill Cranes** were seen at Swoope, *Augusta* 25 Feb (BWh, PW). A **Dunlin** was noted in Staunton 10 & 17 Feb (AL), for the fourth and fifth winter records in *Augusta*, respectively. A **Great Egret** was seen near Riner, *Montgomery* 1–10 Dec (m. obs.). One was also found at L. Shenandoah, *Rockingham* 22 Jan (WC).

A **Green Heron** was photographed in Salem 3 Jan (KD, BWt). **Black-crowned Night-Heron** sightings included one in Waynesboro 1 Jan (GM), one in *Rockingham* 7 Jan (WL), and one at Silver L., *Rockingham* 17 Jan (GM). A **Northern Goshawk** was seen at the RGHW 1 Dec (GM) and one was in Blacksburg 22 Dec (DM). A **Rough-legged Hawk** was seen in Staunton 28 Dec (VL, GM). Singles were noted near Boyce, *Clarke* 6 (ph. m. obs.) & 7 Jan (ph. LF), in *Roanoke* 8 Jan (CB, EB), and in *Botetourt* 10 Feb (JC).

OWLS–WARBLERS

A **Snowy Owl** was observed in *Rockingham* 1 Dec to 8 Jan (m. obs.). **Short-eared Owls** were found throughout the season in Staunton with a peak of 11 (AL). Other reports included 2 at Stone Bridge, *Warren* 15 Jan (CD) with 5 in the same area 20 Jan (ML), and 3 at White Post, *Clarke* 20 Jan (SBd, SK). A **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was found in Shenandoah NP, *Augusta* 20 Jan (AL, GM), and one was heard calling in arbor vitae at Blandy 27 Jan (RM et al.). Single **Peregrine Falcons** were noted as follows: in *Shenandoah* 9, (FA, JF, NN); 11 (KA) & 17 Dec (ET); in *Page* (m. obs.) and at Mt. Crawford, *Rockingham* 10 Dec (m. obs.); in *Frederick* 27 Dec (BR); in Winchester 29 Dec (JF); in *Page* 7 Jan (JF); in *Rockingham* 13 Jan (MG); in Blacksburg 24 Jan (GR); near Swoope, *Augusta* 16 Feb (GM); in *Bath* 19 Feb (NN); and, in Harrisonburg 5 Jan–22 Feb (m. obs.). Two **Loggerhead Shrikes** were observed near Dublin, *Pulaski* 4 Dec (AK, CK) with one there 8 Dec (MB, SB). Other reports had one in *Clarke* 13 (FA, RK) & 20 Dec (DTu), and one at Blandy 2–22 Dec and 20–27 Jan (m. obs.). **Blue-headed Vireos** were found in December only, with 2 in Shenandoah NP, *Rockingham* 3 Dec (DL), one at Hillendale Pk., Harrisonburg 6 Dec (MAn, ABa), one near Union Springs Dam, *Rockingham* 16 Dec (SSH), and one in Bridgewater, *Rockingham* 17 & 23 Dec (WB). A **Brown-headed Nuthatch** was seen in Roanoke 5 Dec (PL), one on the BCBC, one in Salem 17 Feb (KC), 2 at Longwood Pk., Salem 18 Feb (NM), 2 at Blue Ridge, *Botetourt* 19 Feb (JW), and one in Salem 26 Feb (RP). A **House Wren** was photographed near Dublin, *Pulaski* 8 Dec (MB, SB). A **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was photographed in *Page* 10 Dec (RBi, JF, JS). Thirty-five **American Pipits** were observed in *Shenandoah* 9 Dec (FA, JF, NN), 21 in Riner, *Montgomery* 10 Dec (KD, BE), 20 at Greenfield, *Botetourt* 17 Dec (KD, BE), 70 at L. Campbell, *Rockingham* 19 Dec (ADy et al.), 90 in *Augusta* 19 Dec (NN), 90 near Weyers Cave, *Augusta* 1 Jan (AL, GM), 190 at Blandy 18 Jan (DC), 50 near New Market, *Rockingham* 29 Jan (MG), and 40 near Singers Glen,

Rockingham 28 Feb. **Red Crossbill** reports were mainly from Switzer L. and Briery Branch Gap, both in *Rockingham*. The peak tally at Switzer was fifteen 24 Dec (DL, GMo) and 4 at Briery Branch Gap 22 Jan (MG). Higher numbers were noted just across the state line in West Virginia. One was on Reddish Knob, *Augusta* 24 Jan (BB, GM). A **Lapland Longspur** was seen near Christiansburg, *Montgomery* 9 Dec (PL), one in *Augusta* 11 Jan (AL), and 2 near Elkton, *Rockingham* 31 Jan (MS). A **Snow Bunting** was seen on the ACBC; one was in *Botetourt* 29 Dec (KD), and one was at L. Holiday, *Frederick* 21 Jan (JF). Three **American Tree Sparrows** were found at Christiansburg, *Montgomery* 5 Dec (AD), 12 in *Clarke* 9 Dec (BL, JL), one in *Augusta* 10 Dec (GM), 3 in Blue Grass Valley, *Highland* 30 Dec (MA, DS, ES), 10 at Blandy 24 Dec (CC, MM) and 6 Jan (m. obs.), one in Monterey, *Highland* 14 Jan (SH, EL, NL), one near Elkton, *Rockingham* 17 Jan (VL, GM), one in Walrond Pk., *Roanoke* 19 Jan (AD), one in *Roanoke* 6 Feb (AD), and one in Swoope, *Augusta* 16 Feb (GM). A **Lark Sparrow**, likely the one found in November, was observed near Riner, *Montgomery* 21 Jan (BK, GR). A **Lincolns' Sparrow** was noted on the WCBC. Another was found in *Rockingham* 25 Jan (DH). A **HARRIS'S SPARROW** found in *Page* 3 Dec (ph. JF) was observed through 22 Dec (ph. m. obs.) then 14 Feb (KD, BE).

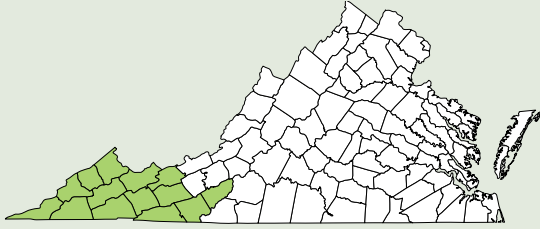


Dixie Sommers' 5 Dec photo of the *Page* Harris's Sparrow found 3 Dec by James Fox

A **Baltimore Oriole** visited feeders in Waynesboro 8 Jan–28 Feb (SL). An ad. m. was photographed in *Rockbridge* 9 Feb (BE). Sightings of **Rusty Blackbirds** included 23 in *Rockingham* 5 Jan (MG), 35 at Fairlawn, *Pulaski* 18 Feb (LA, GR), and 75 in *Montgomery* 25 Feb (GR). A **Brewer's Blackbird** was found near Raphine, *Augusta* 14 Feb (AL), 2 in Middlebrook, *Augusta* 16 Feb (GM), and one there 17 Feb (NN). A **Common Yellowthroat** was observed on the BCBC.

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Southwest



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Bland, Buchanan, Carroll, Dickenson, Floyd, Grayson, Lee, Russell, Scott, Smyth, Tazewell, Washington, Wise, and Wythe counties; the cities/towns of Abingdon, Bristol, Galax, Norton, and Tazewell

Clear Cr. L., Bristol hosted 6 **Snow Geese** 31 Dec (ph. RC). **Ross's Goose** reports included: one at Historic Crab Orchard Museum, *Tazewell* Dec 17 (J&MA, ph. CD) followed by 2 there 18 & 25 Dec (CD); one at Falls Mills L., *Tazewell* 20–25 Dec (ph. CD); a peak count of 6 at Clear Cr. L., Bristol 31 Dec (RB, ph. RC) and 1 Jan (ph. RL, BF, ph. SQ); and one at Pepper's Ferry Rd., *Wythe* 22 Feb (ph. JL). A **TRUMPETER SWAN** was in a Hansonville, *Russell* flooded field 17 Feb into Mar (ph. J&MA, ph. CD, ph. DO, ph. AS). Three **Red-breasted Mergansers** were at Falls Mills L., *Tazewell* 20 Dec (CD) and 3 were at Cavitt's Cr. Pk., *Tazewell* 27 Dec (ph. MS). A trio of **Common Mergansers** was at Cavitt's Cr. Pk., *Tazewell* 27 Dec (ph. MS) and one was near Hungry Mother SP, *Smyth* 15 Feb (TH). Quite the coincidence, the highest **Wild Turkey** total reported for the Region this winter was 23 at Clear Cr. L., *Bristol* 31 Dec (RB) and 23 at Rocky Gap, *Bland* 26 Jan (JP). A **Double-crested Cormorant** was at Falls Mills L., *Tazewell* through 14 Dec (CD) and 2 were at Cavitt's Cr. Pk., *Tazewell* 15 Dec (CD). The season's **American Coot** high count was 104 at Falls Mills L., *Tazewell* 8 Dec (CD). There were 6 **American Woodcocks** at Poplar Gap/Southern Gap Pk., *Buchanan* 20 Feb (ET). A **Rough-legged Hawk** was at Burke's Garden, *Tazewell* 28 Dec (DS) and 9 Jan (PE). The Region's peak **Golden Eagle** count was 3 at Burke's Garden, *Tazewell* 18 Feb (DS). A **Short-eared Owl** was at Spring Cr., Burke's Garden, *Tazewell* 12 Feb (J&MA). Three **Loggerhead Shrike** reports included one at Ceres, *Bland* 4 Dec (BK), one at Clifton Farm Rd., *Russell* 5 Feb (CD), and one at Elk Garden, *Russell* 24 Feb (DS). A **Brown-headed Nuthatch** at Lovill's Cr. Boat Ramp, *Carroll* 18 Feb (MA, JF) may have established a first record for that county. There were 17 **Rusty Blackbirds** on Compton Mt., *Buchanan* 13 Jan (RM).

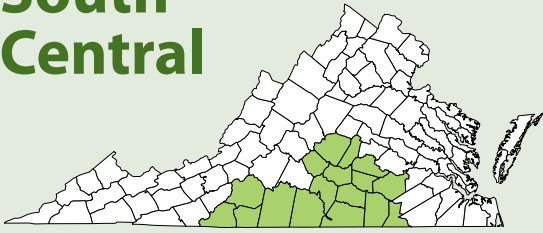
Contributors: Judy and Michael Altizer, Matt Anthony, Rick Blanton, Rack Cross, Clancey Deel, Patty Elton, Bambi Fincher, James Fox, Tanya Hall, Becky Keller, Roger Lemaster, Jeff Lemons, Roger Mayhorn, Daryl Owens, Jim Phillips, Sherrie Quillen, David Schlabach, Michael Shroyer, Allen Street, Ed Talbott



Clancey Deel's photos of a Trumpeter Swan at Hansonville, *Russell* 18 Feb, above, and a Golden Eagle at Burke's Garden, *Tazewell* 6 Feb, below



South Central



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Amelia, Appomattox, Brunswick, Buckingham, Charlotte, Cumberland, Dinwiddie, Franklin, Greenville, Halifax, Henry, Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, Nottoway, Patrick, Pittsylvania, and Prince Edward counties; the cities/towns of Colonial Heights, Danville, Emporia, Martinsville, Petersburg, and South Boston

Given the season's weather, the numbers and diversity of waterfowl reported appeared reasonable. In particular, it was a good winter to find geese, with several first county records in the Region. Landbirds, on the other hand, produced few notable reports, with total numbers of winter irruptives particularly anemic.

Abbreviations: Kerr (John H. Kerr Reservoir, *Charlotte, Halifax, and Mecklenburg*); SRR (Sandy River Reservoir, *Prince Edward*)

SNOW GOOSE–TUNDRA SWAN

Four **Snow Geese** on Anderson Mill Rd., *Pittsylvania* 27 Dec (MF), were unusual for that area, while a single **Ross's Goose** photographed at Bear Cr. Lk. SP 27 Dec (JB) was a first for *Cumberland*. Five **Greater White-fronted Geese** appeared at SRR 4 Jan for a *Prince Edward* first (AD, JD), and remained there until 9 Jan (ES); 3 Greater White-fronted Geese were found on Anderson Mill Rd., *Pittsylvania* 27 Dec (MF), in the same flock as the Snow Geese mentioned above; and 7 more of this species were found 13 Jan at Edmunds Pk., South Boston, *Halifax* (JB). This represents an exceptional series of Regional records for this goose in a single season, complemented by many other reports of the species in adjacent regions. A **BRANT** that appeared 14 Jan at the Piedmont Geriatric Hospital property, *Nottoway* (ph. ES) and remained through the end of the period (m.obs.) was a Regional first and only the second or third record for Virginia's Piedmont. Fifteen **Tundra Swans** were at Dick Cross WMA 31 Dec (PG); otherwise, only a few single individuals were noted elsewhere.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL–RED-THROATED LOON

Blue-winged Teal are not expected Regionally in the winter, so the 2 at SRR 13 Dec (ES, TS) and again 4 Jan (JD, ES) were of interest. A single **Northern Pintail** was at Windsor Crest L., Danville 30 Jan (MF), and modest numbers were

reported at SRR from 2 (WR, ES) through 5 Jan (CMS) and at several spots around lower Kerr, *Mecklenburg*, from 4 (CW) through 8 Jan (JB), but not elsewhere, and only within this fairly narrow range of dates. **Canvasback** were present at several sites, with a maximum of 15 on lower Kerr, *Mecklenburg* 7 Jan (AD), as were **Redheads**, with a maximum of 31 at the same location 8 Jan (JB, CW). The high count for **Common Goldeneye** was 3 at SRR 6 Jan (AD, JD, ES), and the latest was one on lower Kerr, *Mecklenburg* 27 Feb (BE). **Common Mergansers** were reported from several locations, with perhaps the most noteworthy a group of 8 that appeared at the Piedmont Geriatric Hospital near Crewe, *Nottoway* 11 Jan (TS) and remained through 19 Jan (m.obs.). **Red-breasted Mergansers** were also reported at multiple locations, with the largest total by far the combined 404 counted at four locations around lower Kerr, *Mecklenburg* 18 Feb (AD, PG). **Red-necked Grebes** were reported only from the lake above Kerr dam, *Mecklenburg*, with 2 there 18 Feb (AD, PG) and also 27 Feb (BE). **Eurasian Collared-Dove** was reported from two known locations: Crewe, *Nottoway* 4 Dec (TS), and South Boston, *Halifax* 28 Jan (JB), both reports of 3 birds. A single **Spotted Sandpiper** spent the season below the dam at Kerr, *Mecklenburg* (m.obs.), where the species has occasionally wintered previously. The only **Red-throated Loon** reported was a single bird above the dam at Kerr, *Mecklenburg* from 7 Jan (AD) until 27 Feb (BE).

BLUE-HEADED VIREO–PALM WARBLER

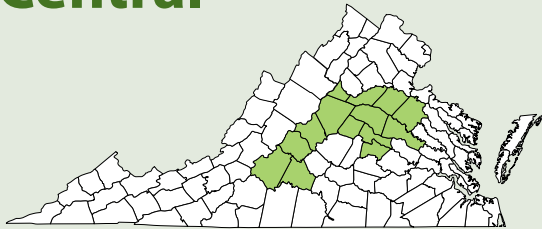
A **Blue-headed Vireo** well seen and heard singing at Pine Ridge Farm, *Prince Edward* 1 Dec (ph. ES), was apparently a first winter Regional record, though there are previous November and March reports from the area. **Common Ravens** were widely reported in the Region and were seen preparing a nest at High Bridge Trail SP, *Prince Edward* 16 Feb (CMS), where the species nested successfully in 2016 and 2017. **Red-breasted Nuthatches**

were scarce again this winter, with only a handful of reports across the Region, and none reported as regular feeder visitors. The maximum count for **Pine Siskins** was 14 at Staunton R. SP, *Halifax* 24 Dec (PG); otherwise there was only a scattering of reports of less than 10 individuals elsewhere. A **Baltimore Oriole** was seen near Farmville, *Prince Edward* 5 Dec (DF) at the same location where one spent the winter of 2016–2017, but it was unclear whether this season's bird lingered any later. A **Palm Warbler** at

Palmer Pt., Kerr, *Mecklenburg* 31 Dec, and another at Camp Paradise, High Bridge Trail SP, *Prince Edward* 6 (AD, JD) and 7 (CMS) Jan, were the only notable winter warbler reports.

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Central



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

The unusually cold weather in early January of this year made for excellent waterfowl observation throughout the Region, with waterfowl numbers well above average on many species. Rare northern raptors such as Snowy Owl, Rough-legged Hawk, and Golden Eagle also made appearances in the bitter cold. While songbird observation was not augmented by the presence of winter finches or Red-breasted Nuthatches, overwintering neotropical passerines kept birders busy for the early part of the period.

Abbreviations: SNP (Shenandoah NP); SMLSP (Smith Mt. L. SP)

Christmas Bird Counts: BFMCBC (Big Flat Mountain, 31 Dec); CHCBC (Chancellorsville, 30 Dec); CCBC (Charlottesville, 17 Dec); GoCBC (Gordonsville, 17 Dec); LACBC (Lake Anna, 30 Dec); LyCBC (Lynchburg, 16 Dec); WaCBC (*Warren*, 1 Jan).

GEESE–SWANS

Snow Geese were reported from *Albemarle*, *Bedford*, *Louisa*, *Lynchburg*, and *Orange*, with high counts of 6 at Jack Jouett Rd., *Louisa* 8 Dec (SK), 5 at James R. Rd., *Albemarle* 14 Dec (ph. TB, AB, PB, DC, MC), and 6 at Mansion Rd., *Orange* 31 Jan (DSt). A **Ross's Goose** was found in Golansville, *Caroline* 8 Jan (TD); 2 were at London Downs,

Bedford 23 Jan (ph. BE, MS) and a lone bird was there 28 Jan (ph. LA, BE, JSt). **Greater White-fronted Geese** were found at several locations: singles were at L. Monticello, *Fluvanna* 10 thru 30 Dec (ph. KK, ST); Thrashers L. Pk., *Amherst* 14 & 15 Dec (ph. BE, KD, BK); Trump Winery, *Albemarle* 2–5 Jan (ph. DS, m. obs.); and, in the Forest area, *Bedford* 23–27 Jan. Two were at Bridlewood L., *Bedford* 13 Jan, and a high count of 5 was at Old Elkton L., *Bedford* (ph. MB, BE, KD). **Cackling Geese** were reported from *Albemarle*, *Bedford*, *Campbell*, and *Nelson*, with a high count of 7 from Trump Vineyard, *Albemarle* 28 Dec (ph. DSh). More than 100 **Tundra Swans** were heard migrating over Wallers Quarters Rd., *Spotsylvania* 27 Feb (DF). Fifteen were found at Hawkwood L., *Louisa* 6 Dec (AB, MA) and another 15 were at Lickinghole Cr., *Albemarle* 19 Feb (ph. AC, m. obs.).

DUCKS

Notable duck counts for the period included 55 **Wood Ducks** at Gilbert Station Rd., *Albemarle* 25 Feb (SM), 22 **Northern Shovelers** at West Cr. L., *Goochland* 13 Jan (JD), 32 **American Wigeons** at West Cr. L., *Goochland* 29 Dec (EO), 318 **Mallards** at West Cr. L., *Goochland* 29 Dec (EO), 40 **American Black Ducks** at Gilbert Station Rd., *Albemarle* 25 Feb (SM), 54 **Northern Pintails** at Stillfred's Pond, *Albemarle* 27 Jan (ph. LA, TB, BB, AB MN, CF,

ES, TS), 306 **Ring-necked Ducks** on the CHCBC, 16 **Redheads** at Strawberry Hill Farm, *Albemarle* 26 Feb (DSh), a **White-winged Scoter** at L. Anna, *Spotsylvania* 24 Jan (EC), single **Long-tailed Ducks** at Chris Greene L., *Albemarle* 29 Dec (ph GB, SBa, DSh), Rappahannock Heritage Tr., Fredericksburg 15 & 17 Feb (ph. JP, JSo), and 2 at L. Monticello, *Fluvanna* 7 Jan (ph. KK.), 120 **Buffleheads** on the CHCBC, 10 **Common Goldeneyes** at Timber L., *Campbell* 28 Jan (LA), 28 **Common Mergansers** on the James R., *Amherst* 30 Dec (BE), 72 **Red-breasted Mergansers** L. Anna, *Spotsylvania* 15 Jan (JF), 130 **Hooded Mergansers** on the GCBC, and 153 **Ruddy Ducks** on the CHCBC.

GAMEBIRDS–CORMORANTS

A covey of 12 **Northern Bobwhites** was flushed from Green Springs Rd., *Louisa* 21 Dec (TSM, ESp). The only **Ruffed Grouse** came from the BFCBC. Seven **Horned Grebes** were on the LACBC. A **Red-necked Grebe** was found at SMLSP 4 Feb (ph. MJ, BE). Forty-two **American Coots** was a high count at L. Monticello, *Fluvanna* 8 Jan (ph. SK, DSm). Two **Sandhill Cranes** were found at Green Springs on the GCBC for a third consecutive winter at that location. Extremely rare in the winter for the Region, a **Spotted Sandpiper** was at Reusen's Dam, Lynchburg 7 Feb (LA). Unsurprisingly, all gull high counts came from L. Anna, with 8 **Bonaparte's Gulls** at Groome's Pt., *Orange* 22 Dec (ph. RW, CL) and 2210 **Ring-billed Gulls**, 53 **Herring Gulls**, and 120 **Great Black-backed Gulls** on the LaCBC. The **Common Loon** high count was 21 at L. Monticello, *Fluvanna* 9 Dec (ph. KK). Up to 23 **Double-crested Cormorants** were at Ruffin's Pd., *Spotsylvania* 16–18 Feb (ph. LS).

HAWKS–WOODPECKERS

A "Northern" **Red-tailed Hawk** (*Buteo jamaicensis abieticola*) at Green Springs, *Louisa* 24 Feb (LA) was the only one reported this period. A **Golden Eagle** was a rare find on Plum Branch Rd., *Campbell* 14 Jan (BE, ML, MJ), representing a first county record. A species that very rarely makes it to the Region, a **Rough-legged Hawk** was found on the WACBC. An **Osprey** was late at Panorama Rd., *Albemarle* 10 Dec (ph. GB, m. obs.). A **Snowy Owl** delighted birders in the Lynchburg area when one was found at Liberty University 22–26 Dec (ph. GS, m. obs.). Up to 6 **Short-eared Owls** were at their usual location at Jack Jouett Rd., *Louisa* 6 Dec thru 24 Feb (ph. m. obs.). A **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was heard at a known location

at Beagle Gap, *Albemarle* in SNP 22 Jan (AC). Thirteen **Red-headed Woodpeckers** was a very high winter count on the WaCBC.

SHRIKES–CHICKADEES

A **Loggerhead Shrike** returned for its fifth consecutive winter at Langhorne Rd., *Albemarle* 31 Dec thru 9 Feb (ph. MS, m. obs.). Two **Blue-headed Vireos** were an unusual sighting at the Colonnades, *Albemarle* 9 Feb (PK). Due to the extremely early date, it seems more likely these were wintering birds rather than early spring arrivals. Twenty-one **Common Ravens** on the LyCBC was the season's single-day high count. **Tree Swallows** arrived in the Region as early as 10 Feb at the Georgia-Pacific Settling Ponds, *Bedford* (LA, GB, BE, MJ) and at Chamberlayne Swamp, *Hanover* 10 Feb (LB). Seventy **Horned Larks** were on Langhorne Rd., *Albemarle* 25 Feb (ESp, DSp). A **Black-capped Chickadee** visited a feeder at Wilson Ct, Charlottesville during a snowstorm 9 Dec (ph. DC). **Brown-headed Nuthatches** continued at Happy's Farm Pond, *Campbell* 19 Feb (MA), SMLSP 20 Dec thru 8 Feb (m. obs.), and at Magnolia Circle, *Louisa* 9 Feb (TC). A **Wood Thrush** was found at Old Rustburg Rd, *Campbell* 18 Dec (ph. BE, GS), representing the first winter record for the Piedmont. A flock of more than 100,000 **American Robins** frequented a farm in Barbourville, *Orange* 18 Jan (v.r. SBi).

MIMIDS–BUNTINGS

Three **Gray Catbirds** were reported from the CCBC as were 3 **Brown Thrashers**. One-hundred and twenty-five **American Pipits** were at Buckner Rd., *Caroline* 26 Jan (TD). An **American Tree Sparrow** continued at Greenbriar Pk., Charlottesville 11 Dec and remained there until 29 Dec (ph. DC, m. obs.). There were several reports of overwintering **Baltimore Orioles**: an ad. f. visiting feeders at Sunset and Jefferson Park Av., Charlottesville 4 Dec (ph. BM, TB, AB, PB, BB), which lingered through the period, and a juv. at Red Fox Ln., *Albemarle* 28 Dec thru 6 Jan (ph. AR). Remarkably, 2 **Orange-crowned Warblers** spent the winter in the Region: one returned to the Georgia-Pacific Settling Ponds, *Bedford* 2 Jan thru 10 Feb; another was at a feeder at Cove Ln., *Albemarle* 1 Jan (ph. TH, m. obs.) thru the end of the period. A **Northern Parula** visited Jefferson Pk. Av., Charlottesville 20 thru 29 Dec, marking the first Regional winter record (ph. TB, AB, P B, BB). A **Common Yellowthroat** lingered from the fall period at Azalea Pk., Charlottesville until 25 Dec (TB, PB, ES, BB). An **Indigo**

Bunting was found at Galts Mills Rd., *Amherst* 11 Jan (ph. LA), representing one of extremely few winter records for the Piedmont.

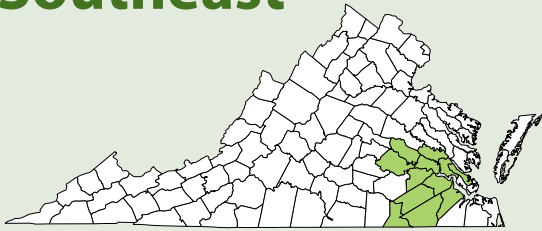
Contributors: Logan Anderson, Matt Anthony, Guy Babineau, Susan Babineau (SBa), Andrew Baldelli, Lewis Barnett, Baxter Beamer, Tucker Beamer, Stephen Biley (SBi), Mike Boatwright, Ander Buckley, Paul Buckley, George Burrus, Elaine Carwile, Drew Chaney, Monica Chaney, Albert Connette, Tiffany Corsello, Kent Davis, Todd Day, Julian Dymacek, Bob Epperson, Conor Farrell, Donna Finnegan, James Fox, Mark Johnson, Tom Hurley, Patricia Kalbfleisch, Stephanie Kelly, Barry Kinzie, Kim Kozella, Carson Lambert, Margaret Lyons, Stauffer Miller, Betty Mooney, Max Nootbaar, Ellison Orcutt, Jeffery Pozner, Andrew Rapp, Gene Sattler, Dave Shoch (DSh), Ty Smith

(TSm), David Small (DSm), Jason Sosebee (JSo), David Spears (DSp), Evan Spears (ESp), Ezra Staengl (ESt), Theo Staengl (TSt), Mike Stinson, Jason Strickland (JSt), Debi Stubbs (DSt), Larry Svensgaard, Shea Tiller, Robert Wood

Fall of 2017 Candler Mountain Northern Saw-whet Owl Banding Project Report

The Candler Mountain, *Campbell* Northern Saw-whet Owl banding project operated 24 Oct–2 Dec 2017. Sixteen owls were netted, including one foreign recapture (origin of banding currently unknown). This total was below average, consistent with other eastern U.S. banding sites this fall. The first bird of the season was captured 24 Oct, the last 17 Nov. The sex and age ratios of captured birds, 6% male, 81% female, 13% unknown, 31% hatch year birds, 69% after hatch year birds, were typical for a non-invasion year.

Southeast



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Charles City, Chesterfield, Henrico, Isle of Wight, James City, New Kent, Prince George, Southampton, Surry, Sussex, and York counties; the cities of Franklin, Hopewell, Richmond, and Williamsburg

The weather in the Region this winter proved to be shockingly variable and unpredictable. December was fairly unremarkable, with temperatures near average and precipitation slightly below average. January proved to be a month for the history books, with temperatures well below average and precipitation above average throughout the Region. Williamsburg and Richmond both experienced record-breaking low temperatures of 1°F and -3°F, respectively. Surprisingly, but perhaps emblematic of our era of climate disruption, the record-setting cold in January was followed by notably above average temperatures in February. Precipitation, however, was near average.

A number of interesting patterns in bird records was recorded this year. White-winged Scoters and Long-tailed Ducks, both often associated with coastal areas in winter, were recorded from multiple inland locations, mostly on the York and James rivers. Wintering hummingbirds, often present in the Williamsburg area, were in short supply this year, with only a single report of a Ruby-throated and no *Selasphorus*.

Although Virginia experienced a minor incursion of Snowy Owls, the Region was largely left out of this phenomenon, with the only report being a single record from *New Kent* that likely pertained to a long-staying bird which spent most of its time outside the Region. An impressive diversity of wintering passerines was recorded in the Region, though most of the records were clustered in the early part of the winter and some of these birds may have been adversely affected by extreme cold in January. These records included Blue-headed Vireo from 5 locations, Western Tanager from 4, and Painted Bunting from 3, as well as no fewer than 8 species of atypical wintering warblers alongside more expected species like Yellow-rumped, Pine, Palm, Orange-crowned, and Common Yellowthroat. The undoubted highlight of the winter was a f. Black-throated Gray Warbler which put in sporadic appearances at a *James City* backyard in late December and early January. Also significant was a Trumpeter Swan from *New Kent* which narrowly met the VARCOM geographic criteria as reviewable for this species.

Abbreviations: City Point (Petersburg National Battlefield, City Point Unit, Hopewell); Dutch Gap (Dutch Gap Conservation Area/Henricus Historical Park, *Chesterfield*); Hog (Hog Island WMA, *Surry*); Jamestown (Jamestown Island, *James City*); Shirley (Shirley Plantation, *Charles City*).

Christmas Bird Counts: WCBC (Williamsburg, 17 Dec); WaCBC (Walkerton, 31 Dec).

GEESE-DUCKS

Snow Geese, an uncommon species locally, were photographed at two separate locations on 16 Jan. Two were at Mainland Farm, *James City* (ph. JE) while an additional 2, one of which may have been a **Snow Goose** × **Ross's Goose** hybrid, were at Governor's Land, *James City* (ph. CO). The latter birds were also photographed 15 Jan (ph. CO). Surprisingly, the only **Ross's Geese** reported in the Region this winter were 4 at Curles Neck Farm, *Henrico* 17 Dec (EO). Another Regionally uncommon species, 14 **Brant** were at the seldom-visited Goodwin Is., *York* 21 Feb (ph. JS), one of the only places locally where this species is semi-regular. A single Brant at the Walmart ponds, Colonial Heights that was first seen in Nov continued 2 (ph. m. obs.) to 6 Dec (ph. BK). This winter also saw several records of **Cackling Goose**, a species that is frequently present but typically in low densities. Perhaps the most notable record was 7 birds at Swan L./Shields L., Richmond 15 Dec (EO). These birds continued at this location through at least 1 Jan, when a count of 8 was reported (EO). A record of 11 from nearby Fountain/Boat L., Richmond 26 Jan (EO) may have included some of the same individuals. Cackling Geese were also recorded at several other locations this winter, including 3 at Shirley 24 Feb (AR, JS) and 2 at Westover Plantation, *Charles City* 15 Jan (AR). A **TRUMPETER SWAN** was carefully studied and photographed at Diascund Reservoir, *New Kent* 24 Feb (ph. AR, JS). This species is rare in the state, but records have been increasing in recent years. A single **Blue-winged Teal**, a species that is only rarely found in the Region in winter, was at Dutch Gap 7 Dec (TS, ES), and 4 f. were there 27 Jan (ph. m. obs.). A careful estimate of 272 **Redheads**, spread out among three flocks on the James R. between Archer's Hope and College Creek, *James City* 26 Feb (BW) surpassed the previous high count of 250 from 2016. A f. or imm. **Surf Scoter** was at Hog 6 Feb (ph. AD) and again 10 Feb (AR, FR). Nine **White-winged Scoters**, also at Hog 6 Feb (ph. AD) provided a notable count locally. At least 2 of these birds were still present

10 Feb (AR, FR). Elsewhere in the Region, 3 **White-winged Scoters** were seen on the York R. off Fusiliers Redoubt Overlook, *York* 22 Jan (BW). A single bird was at Yorktown, *York* 6 Feb (ph. AR, ph. EW) and again 7 Feb (ph. JS). Two were on the river at City Point, placing the birds in *Prince George* waters, 31 Dec (JD). A single bird continued there on 1 Jan (ph. AB) and 3 Jan (LS). A single bird was also on Swift Creek Reservoir at The Gardens at Sunday Pk., *Chesterfield* 3 (ph. JFr) through 8 Jan (PB). **Long-tailed Ducks** were also reported from several areas in the Region this winter including one at Ancarrow's Landing, Richmond 1 Jan (ph. JS, m. obs.), 2 at James River Pk.—Belle Isle, Richmond 26 Jan (ph. PB), and one at Hog 19 Feb (ph. NB, JL, JLo). **Common Mergansers**, an infrequent winter visitor in the Region, were reported from Cheatham Annex, *York* 17 Dec (DY), and 2 at the Castle Farm, *New Kent* on the WaCBC.

GREBES-OWLS

A **Red-necked Grebe** was at Swift Creek Reservoir, *Chesterfield* 3 Feb (ph. LB) and stayed through at least 20 Feb (ph. LT). As has been the case for many of the past winters, the Region hosted at least one overwintering hummingbird, an imm. m. **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** at Governor's Land, *James City* which apparently remained through the snowstorm on 3 Jan (L&CS *fide* BW). This bird was photographed 11 (ph. BW) & 17 Dec (ph. CO), with the species identification confirmed from photos (BP *fide* BW). The only report of **Virginia Rail** in the Region this winter was 2 on the WCBC. A large group of **Dunlin** was at the Jamestown Is. Causeway, *James City* with 20 reported 14 Dec (MA, EC) and at least 16 still present 18 Dec (ph. NB). Four **Least Sandpipers**, a species only rarely recorded in winter, were at Carlton Farm, *James City* 17 Jan (ph. BW). An imm. **Iceland Gull** was at the T. Tyler Potterfield Memorial Bridge, Richmond 2 Dec (m. obs.) and stayed through 7 Dec (ph. TS, ES, AD).



Adam D'Onofrio's 7 Dec photo of the Iceland Gull in downtown Richmond

Another, or possibly the same bird, was seen further down the James R. at Ancarrow's Landing, Richmond 20 Jan (m. obs.). One was also present at the Walmart ponds, Colonial Heights 1 Jan (AB) and continued until 2 Feb (JLe). A **Great Cormorant** off Felgates Cr., York 6 Feb (ph. AR) was the first record for York in many years, although there are previous records from the 1990s. The pattern of late winter/spring records of **American White Pelicans** at Hog continued this year, with 7 there 7 Feb (ph. AD). Reports continued sporadically through 24 Feb (ph. TB), and the number of birds began steadily increasing after the end of the report period. A **Snowy Owl** was seen perched on a dock post off Brickhouse Ln., New Kent 30 Dec (DS, BO). This may have been the same bird which spent much of the winter at nearby West Point, King William. A single **Short-eared Owl** was at Curles Neck Farm, Henrico 17 Dec (EO).

SHRIKES—ORIOLES

The long-staying **Loggerhead Shrike** at the intersection of Burwells Bay Rd. and Purvis Ln., Isle of Wight, where it has been reported since 2015, was seen again 12 Dec (AH), 8 Feb (ph. JS), and 18 Feb (ph. NB). Unusual overwintering passerines were reported from a number of locations in the Region this winter. **Blue-headed Vireo**, often a scarce winter species, was reported from multiple locations including: Piney Grove Preserve, Sussex 3 Dec (ph. PL); Bryan Park, Richmond 11 Dec (RB); Kingsmill, James City 17 Dec (ph. JJ, CJ); York River SP, James City 18 Dec (NB, LL); Fort Boykin Historic Park, Isle of Wight 24 Dec (ph. TC); and the Darden Trail, Sussex 18 Feb (ph. PR). City Point, always a magnet for unusual wintering species, hosted a **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** 2 Dec (AB, MA, JF). A **Clay-colored Sparrow** was photographed on private property at Winter Wheat Ln., New Kent during the WaCBC. A **Yellow-breasted Chat** was at Treasure Island Rd., James City 10 Dec (BT). While **Baltimore Orioles** occasionally overwinter locally, a surprising count of 9 identifiable individuals visited a feeder in Williamsburg throughout the winter and into Mar (MEH).

WARBLERS—BUNTINGS

Warblers were present in striking numbers and diversity this winter. A **Black-and-White Warbler** was at Fort Boykin Historic Pk., Isle of Wight 8 Dec (TC). Another was found at Ancarrow's Landing, Richmond 16 Dec (AB) and continued there until at least 21 Dec (ph. ZB). Also present at Ancarrow's Landing 16 Dec (AB) was a **Nashville Warbler**, though this bird was not seen

subsequently. An **American Redstart** was at City Point 24 Dec (ph. ABr). A **Northern Parula** visited a yard on Fox Lake Terrace, Chesterfield 28 Dec (ph. AS). A very late **Blackpoll Warbler** was at City Point 3 Dec (ph. AB). A **Yellow-throated Warbler** was seen in Kingsmill, James City 13 Dec (ph. SM). A second bird was at City Point 2 Dec (ph. JF, m. obs.) and continued to be sighted there throughout the winter, with the last report on 7 Jan (ph. AB). Undoubtedly the most notable record of the winter was a f. **BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER** that visited a backyard on Exeter Ct., James City 25 Dec (ph. BT) and 26 Dec (ph. m. obs.). The bird did not return consistently, but was last seen 2 Jan (BT). This represents the first local record, as well as only the eighth for the state.



The Black-throated Gray Warbler at Brian Taber's home in James City; picture taken 26 Dec by Bill Williams

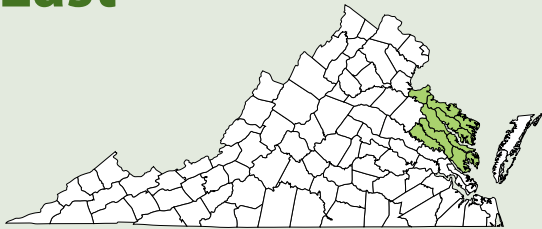
A **Wilson's Warbler** was at Tormentor Lake, Isle of Wight 2–10 Dec (ph. TC). **Western Tanager**, a species that has occurred in winter with increasing frequency the past few years, was again reported from multiple locations. A long-staying m. at Settler's Mill, James City was again present and stayed through 27 Feb (BW). Another bird visited a yard on Linden Ln., James City 20 Nov and continued to be seen occasionally into Apr (DC), while a f. was at City Point 28 (ph. AB) & 29 Dec (KL). Yet another bird was on Beecham Dr., York 3–15 Jan (ph. AH). **Painted Bunting**, another rare but somewhat regular winter visitor, was also recorded from multiple locations. A f. or imm. m. was at Commons Way, York 10 (GW) to 13 Dec (ph. NB et al.). Thereafter, it was seen sporadically until 18 Dec, when it was reported for the WCBC. A m. Painted Bunting visited a feeder in Toano, James City 2 Jan (ph. AD), while a

second m. visited a yard on Penniman Rd., York 10 Feb into the spring season (M&EW *vide* DC).

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

The Northern Neck, composed of King George, Westmoreland, Richmond, Northumberland, and Lancaster Counties, is bordered by the Rappahannock and Potomac Rivers. The Middle Peninsula includes King William, King and Queen, Essex, Middlesex, Gloucester, and Mathews Counties and is bordered by the Rappahannock and Pamunkey/York Rivers. The Mattaponi R. is the boundary between King William and King and Queen Counties and it joins with the Pamunkey R. to form the York R. in West Point. Even though the Potomac River shoreline of the Northern Neck overlooks Maryland waters, those Maryland birds are reported here.

During the '17–18 winter season in the Northern Neck and the Middle Peninsula, 149 species were reported. The most exciting finds of the winter were Say's Phoebe, Northern Shrike, Trumpeter Swan, Snowy Owl, Golden Eagle, Lapland Longspur, Sora, Blue-headed Vireo, American Bittern, Ross's Goose and Greater White-fronted Goose.

The data for this season's report were primarily gleaned from eBird, e-mail postings on VSO's VA-Bird and Northern Neck Audubon Society's NNASnet, and four Christmas Bird Counts: Washington's Birthplace, Walkerton, *Mathews*, and *Northumberland*. Many thanks to Teta Kain for her historical perspective on the noteworthy Christmas Bird Count sightings.

Abbreviations: Beaverdam (Beaverdam Park, *Gloucester*); Belle Isle (Belle Isle SP, *Lancaster*); Bethel (Bethel Beach NAP, *Mathews*); Birthplace (George Washington's Birthplace National Monument, *Westmoreland*); Cole's Pt. (Cole's Pt., *Westmoreland*); Dameron (Dameron Marsh NAP, *Northumberland*); Hughlett (Hughlett Pt. NAP, *Northumberland*); Guinea (Guinea marshes and Guinea/Maryus Rds. area, *Mathews*); Hughlett (Hughlett Pt. NAP, *Northumberland*); Leedstown (*Westmoreland*); New Pt. Comfort (New Pt. Comfort Preserve, *Mathews*); The Pocket (in Pamunkey Indian Reservation along the Pamunkey R., *King William*); West Point (town of West Point, *King William*).

Christmas Bird Counts: MCBC (*Mathews*, 31 Dec); NCBC (*Northumberland* 20 Dec), WBCBC (Washington's Birthplace, 18 Dec); and WCBC (Walkerton, 31 Dec)

GEESE–GREBES

This was a great year for geese in the Region. Observers found six species. **Snow Geese** were reported from ten locations including three flocks totaling 160 that were flying north over Fickle Fen Rd., *Mathews* 25 Feb (MS). This was the Region's second highest count for this species in eBird. A new Regional high of 6 **Ross's Geese** was counted in *Lancaster* near Alfonso 19 Dec (EO), and one was at Belle Isle 30 Dec (SP). Thirteen

Greater White-fronted Geese were at LaGrange La., *King George* 20 Jan (FA), perhaps including the 9 birds seen nearby at Hopyard Landing 30 Dec (JF). Similarly, the 8 birds seen near The Pocket 18 Jan (m. obs.) may have been remnants of the flock present there in November. Eighteen **Brant** were at Hughlett 27 Jan (E&SD) and 3 were in Irvington, *Lancaster* 25 Feb. Nineteen **Cackling Geese** were noted in eight locations, including an all-time MCBC high of 5. A **TRUMPETER SWAN** on the MCBC was the first known record for the Region, though this species probably wintered here regularly along the Potomac R. up until sometime in the 19th century (Gold Book). Thirty-five **Mute Swans** were found in eight locations with a high of 11 in Colonial Beach 7 Jan (LM). Though the high for **Tundra Swans** was only 200 this winter at the Pocket 27 Dec (SD) and Birthplace 24 Jan (JW), numbers were back up to normal on the CBCs and 1524 were reported from 38 locations. WCBC's all-time high count of 1372 **Mallards** was the second highest CBC count in the state this year. Most other waterfowl occurred in fairly average numbers this winter. The two best locations for seeing **Gadwalls** in the Region continued to be LaGrange La., *King George*, where 300 were seen 30 Dec (JF), and The Pocket, which hosted 195 on 3 Dec (FA). Though there may have been some overlap of birds moving from one area to another, 6000 **Canvasbacks** were tallied from two locations in West Point: 3350 on the Mattaponi R. and 2650 on the Pamunkey R. and York R. 6 Jan (FA). This total is the highest count in the Region in recent years. The 38 **Northern Shovelers** 31 Dec found at a private farm near The Pocket (FA, NN) were the second highest eBird winter count for the Region. **Northern Pintails** were again present in low numbers. The high single-location count of 135 at The Pocket 3 Dec (FA) was a tenth of the winter high, and only 288 were found on the WCBC, 3 on the WBCBC, and 2 on the NCBC. Scoter numbers continued to drop this year from their unusually high numbers two winters ago. The most common scoter this year was **Surf Scoter** with a high of 325 at Stratford Hall, *Westmoreland* 17 Dec (JW, KL). The high count for **Black Scoter** was only 100 in *Northumberland* 30 Dec (SF) and none could be found at Cole's Pt., where this species has been common in recent winters. On the other hand, it was unusual for 1–5 of our least common scoter, the **White-winged Scoter**, to be reported in five locations in *King William*, *Mathews*, *Middlesex*, and *Westmoreland*. Though scoter and scaup numbers were lower than usual at Cole's Pt., 235 **Long-tailed Ducks** were there at two sites 20 Jan (FA), many of which were displaying and calling. An average of 3.9 **Common Goldeneyes** were reported from 39

eBird locations this winter, including a high of 30 at Robert O. Norris Bridge, *Middlesex* 2 Feb (AR, NN, MA). Though WCBC had its new high count of 117 **Hooded Mergansers**, the highest single-location count was only 50 this year in Walkerton, *King and Queen* 30 Dec (JF, JS RS), far below the species' winter high of 350. **Common Mergansers** were less common again this year. An average of 7 was reported from 20 locations with a high count of 25 at Birthplace 3 Feb (ML). This year there was only one triple-digit count of **Red-breasted Mergansers**: 145 at Beaverdam 8 Feb (KC). **Northern Bobwhites** were found on only two of the CBCs: 15 for the WBCBC and 21 on the WCBC. Thirty were seen in three other locations, with two coveys totaling 22 birds in Leedstown 20 Jan (FA). An average of 6.7 **Wild Turkeys** was found at 40 eBird sites with a high of 22 at White Stone, *Lancaster* 17 Jan (JC). The high for **Pied-billed Grebe** was only 12 at Beaverdam 8 Feb (KC). **Horned Grebes** were only slightly more common, with four double-digit counts and a high of only 20 at Robert O. Norris Bridge, *Lancaster* 4 Feb (AR, NN, MA).

RAILS—OWLS

The marshes in the easternmost portions of the peninsulas are the best locations for **Clapper Rails**. The high counts of 5 and 6 respectively were, as usual, at Bethel 4 Feb (TS, ES) and Guinea 21 Jan (JS). A **Sora** in Leedstown on WBCBC was the second Regional winter record in eBird, the other record being in the same location for the 2010 WBCBC. No **Virginia Rails** were found in the Region this winter. **American Coots** were sparse this winter. Winter tallies have sometimes been over a thousand at Beaverdam, but the high there was only 5 this winter 17 Feb (EO), and the highest count in the Region was only 65 at Twig's Ferry, *Middlesex* 4 Feb (AR, NN, MA). Only 25 others were reported from three locations. A **Semipalmated Plover** at Crab Neck, *Mathews* was a nice surprise 31 Dec (MS, H&RC) and was only the fourth winter report for the Region in eBird. The high count for **Killdeer** was only 55 in the Walkerton sector of WCBC and there were only three eBird reports of more than 10 birds. The 700 **Dunlin** at Guinea 21 Feb (JS) was a new Regional eBird high for all seasons and WBCBC had a new high count of 19. Three **Western Sandpipers** at Bethel 26 Dec were one of the few winter records for this species and the first reported in eBird (LC). The WCBC usually has a high count of **American Woodcocks** (average 21, high 187), but this year only 3 could be found despite conscientious searching at dawn and dusk by several parties. In eBird, 20 **Wilson's Snipe** were reported from 7 locations. Five **Laughing Gulls** lingered in

Irvington, *Lancaster* 31 Dec (FAn). Three were present on the NCBC. Ten others seen from three locations in *Gloucester* and *Northumberland* during the last week of Feb were probably early spring arrivals a couple weeks earlier than usual. Two **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were found: one at the VIMS library, *Gloucester* 11 Jan and 2 Feb (RI), and one in West Point 7 Jan (M&TC). What is happening to the loons? **Red-throated Loons** were unusually scarce this winter. WBCBC reported one, MCBC reported 2, the high was only 6 at Bethel 11 Jan (KL), and single birds were reported from only four locations in *Gloucester*, *Northumberland*, and *Westmoreland*. The average Regional winter high count for this species is 42 on eBird. **Common Loons**, reported from 42 locations, were more widely distributed than Red-throateds, but the high of 12 at Gloucester Pt., *Gloucester* 7 Feb (KC) was far below the average winter eBird high of 21. **Northern Gannets** were also scarce this winter, reported from only 8 locations with the only double-digit count being 53 at Bethel 17 Feb (EO). **Great Cormorants** were reported twice from Gloucester Pt., *Gloucester*: 4 on 2 Feb (JS), and 2 on 8 Feb (KC), but could not be found at their usual location on Cole's Pt., *Westmoreland*. The high count for **Double-crested Cormorant** was 150 in Tappahannock at the Downing Bridge, *Essex* 30 Dec (JF), a far cry from the winter high of 730, and the average winter high of 282. Counts of 1–5 **Brown Pelicans** were reported from 13 locations in *Gloucester*, *King William*, *Lancaster*, *Mathews*, *Middlesex*, and *Northumberland*. Sharp eyes found an **American Bittern** in West Point 8 Jan (TD), the Region's sixth winter eBird record. Single **Great Egrets** were found at each end of the winter season: 1 Dec at Stratford Hall, *Westmoreland* (KB) and 28 Feb in Adner, *Gloucester* (EB). The first **Osprey** of the year was on schedule at Caledon SP, *King George* 25 Feb (NC). **Northern Harrier** eBird records totaled 38 birds at 26 locations. The area's CBCs tallied 22 **Bald Eagles**, on par with recent years. **Cooper's Hawks** were slightly more common than **Sharp-shinned Hawks** with 22 Cooper's reported from 21 locations, versus 17 Sharp-shinned in 17 locations. A **Golden Eagle** in Leedstown 6 Jan (FA) was the first winter record in eBird for the Northern Neck. A **Barn Owl** was near Warsaw, *Richmond* 17 Jan (LA). At least 41 observers were thrilled by a **Snowy Owl** in West Point 22 Dec–27 Jan.

WOODPECKERS–LONGSPUR

In eBird, 60 **Red-headed Woodpeckers** were reported from 18 locations with a high of 22 at a private farm near The Pocket 3 Dec (FA). WCBC had its all-time high count of 43 **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** and WBCBC had a new



The West Point Snowy posed for Betty Sue Cohen 23 Dec.



The West Point Snowy Owl photographed by Lewis Barnett 18 Jan

high of 113 **Northern Flickers (Yellow-shafted)**. Twenty-eight **American Kestrels** were found on the Region's CBCs (MCBC–4, WBCBC–11, NCBC–8, and WCBC–5). In eBird, 39 kestrels wintered in 36 locations. Six **Merlins** were reported from six locations in eBird. The Merlin in Leedstown was reported three times 17 Dec–11 Feb. Three **Peregrine Falcons** were reported from some of the species' usual locations in *Essex*, *Gloucester*, and *King George*. The WCBC tally of a whopping 87 **Eastern Phoebes**



Todd Day took this picture of the Say's Phoebe near Lanesville, *King William* 2 Jan.

was the highest CBC total north of South Carolina and smashed last year's previous high of 56. Perhaps the most exciting bird this winter was the Region's first **SAY'S PHOEBE** 31 Dec at a private farm near Lanesville, *King William* (ph. NF). Thanks to the generosity of the landowners, several other observers

were able to observe the bird thru 3 Jan, after which several attempts were unsuccessful. Another remarkable sighting was the Region's first **NORTHERN SHRIKE** 17 Dec in Leedstown (ph. m. obs.). Three attempts to find this bird in Jan and Feb were unsuccessful.



Fred Atwood's 17 Dec photo of the Leedstown, Westmoreland Northern Shrike

While observing the Say's Phoebe in *King William* 3 Jan (AB) one astute birder found the Region's second eBird winter record of **Blue-headed Vireo**. No **Common Ravens** were found in the Region this winter. Occasionally a few **Tree Swallows** are found here in the winter, especially in late Feb, but a surprisingly large flock of 400 was at Bethel at the early date of 4 Feb (TS, ES) and another 300 were in West Point 23 Feb (CW). In contrast to last year's abundance, only 9 **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were found this winter, all in December, including 6 on the MCBC. Eleven **House Wrens** were reported, all in Dec, 9 from the CBCs. Six **Marsh Wrens** were reported from three locations, but none after 11 Jan. Two **Sedge Wrens** were found: New Pt. Comfort 23 Dec (LC) and Crab Neck, *Mathews* 31 Dec (R&HC, MS). **American Robins** were much more common than last year. A flock of 6100 was foraging in the farm fields near St. Stephen's Church, *King and Queen* 25 Feb (FA). WCBC's count of 77 **Hermit Thrushes** was three times higher than last year's count, and it was the second highest count in the state this year. **Purple Finches** were scarce this year; 11 were reported from 5 locations in eBird, and another 10 on the MCBC and WBCBC. The high count was 5 in *Gloucester* 5 Feb (RI). Out of over 400 reports in eBird, only two flocks of **House Finches** numbered as high as 25 or 26. In eBird, 47 **Pine Siskins** were reported at 10 locations with a high of 18 at a feeder in *Northumberland* 16 Feb (E&SD).

A group of **Lapland Longspurs** was in Leedstown with a flock of up to 100 **Horned Larks** at least from 17 Dec–31 Jan (m. obs.). Due to the species' camouflage and their ability to disappear in the furrows of farm fields, the longspur counts varied from 2–7 and they could not be found on several visits during that time span. This species has been reported three previous winters from Leedstown (2002, 2008, 2010) and once from Bethel (2014).



Linda Chittum documented these 2 Lapland Longspurs near Leedstown, Westmoreland 22 Dec.

SPARROWS–CARDINAL

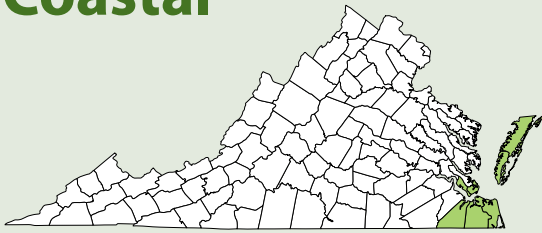
Two seasonally high counts of **Chipping Sparrows** were reported: 55–60 at the Say's Phoebe stakeout site, *King William* 31 Dec–28 Jan (m. obs.) and 87 at Clay Bank, *Gloucester* 13 Feb (DY). Eighty **Savannah Sparrows** at the Say's Phoebe site tied the second highest count for the Region in eBird 2 Jan (TD). **Fox Sparrows** were widespread this winter: in eBird, 98 were reported from 37 locations with a high of 14 at a farm near The Pocket 31 Dec (FA); and the WCBC total of 46 was its second highest count. Only 11 **White-crowned Sparrows** were reported from 6 locations. Good numbers of **Eastern Meadowlarks** were

discovered; 336 from 27 locations. The 139 on the WCBC was its highest tally in 14 years. A **Baltimore Oriole** was a fun find at Jones Cr., *Gloucester* 18,19 Jan (EBu). A high of 25 **Rusty Blackbirds** was in *Gloucester* 4 Feb (EB). Rather than hanging out with the nearby flock of redwings, cowbirds and grackles, a **Brewer's Blackbird** was foraging in farm fields with the flock of American Robins at St. Stephen's Church, *King and Queen* 25 Feb (FA). **Orange-crowned Warblers** are not seen in the Region every year, so finding 2 this year was special: at Beaverdam 18 Dec (LN) and the Say's Phoebe stakeout 3 Jan (AB). **Palm Warblers** were more common than usual; 12 were reported from four locations with a high of 8 near Bruington, *King and Queen* 31 Dec (NK). The high count of 12 **Pine Warblers** singing away mightily at Hickory Hollow NAP, *Lancaster* 24 Feb (CN) probably included some new arrivals from the south. **Yellow-rumped Warblers** seemed to be everywhere this winter; 1400 were tallied on the NCBC and there were ten

single-location counts of 50 or more. The highest single-location count was an amazing 1200 at Dameron 4 Feb (AR, NN, MA). The partially leucistic **Northern Cardinal** photographed last year returned for the eighth year to a feeder in *Gloucester* (TK). MCBC had a new high count of 492 cardinals.

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Coastal



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Accomack and Northampton counties; Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel; Pelagic area; the cities/towns of Cape Charles, Chesapeake, Chincoteague, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Poquoson, Portsmouth, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach

Abbreviations: Beasley (Beasley Tract, Princess Anne WMA, Virginia Beach); Cape Charles (town of Cape Charles, *Northampton*); CBBT (Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel s. of *Northampton*); Chinc. (Chincoteague NWR, *Accomack*); Craney (Craney Island Dredged Material Management Area, Portsmouth); Dismal (Dismal Swamp NWR, Chesapeake/Suffolk); ESVNWR (Eastern Shore of Virginia NWR, *Northampton*); FINWR (Fishermans Island NWR, *Northampton*); First Landing (First Landing SP, Virginia Beach); Grandview (Grandview Nature Preserve, Hampton); KSP (Kiptopeke SP, *Northampton*); Mutton Hunk (Mutton Hunk Fen NAP, *Accomack*); PHP (Pleasure House Point, Virginia Beach); Rudee (Rudee Inlet, Virginia Beach); Whitehurst (Whitehurst Tract, Princess Anne WMA, Virginia Beach)

Christmas Bird Counts: BBCBC (Back Bay, 29 Dec); CBBTCBC (Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, 26 Dec); CCCBC (Cape Charles, 30 Dec); ChCBC (Chinc. 29 Dec); DSCBC (Dismal Swamp, 15 Dec); LCCBC (Little Creek, 31 Dec); NaCBC (Nassawadox, 17 Dec); NNCBC (Newport News, 16 Dec); NRCBC (Nansemond River, 3 Jan); WaCBC (Wachapreague, 16 Dec)

An early 2018 snow storm followed by extreme cold forced species rarely detected at close range, if at all, into the open for birders to document. Participants on the two chartered boat trips to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel in January were rewarded with a wonderful array of waterfowl at that long-cherished, now restricted access, facility. February concluded as the fourth warmest on record, almost 9°F above normal. Unfortunately, the surfeit of alcid experienced the previous two winters was not repeated this year. Among this season's

finest were Eared Grebe, Black-legged Kittiwake, Least Bittern, Snowy Owl, Cave Swallow, Bullock's Oriole and Scarlet Tanager.

WATERFOWL–RAPTORS

Ross's Goose reports revealed one at Sentara Independence, Virginia Beach 3 Dec (ph. KS), 2 at Mutton Hunk 16 Dec (ph. RBi, EO), 3 at Sherwood L., Virginia Beach 21 Dec (ph. K&TB, ph. MCM), one off the CBBT north overlook, *Northampton* 3 Jan (AL, JL, MM), and 2 near the Oyster/Cheriton Landfill, *Northampton* 7 Jan (CO). Up to 9 **Greater White-fronted Geese** were at Chinc. 2–19 Dec (m. obs.). This species was also in/near the Princess Anne section of Virginia Beach 3 Jan–18 Feb with a high count of 3 off Firefall Dr. 13 Jan (AB, LC, TT). A total of 4 **Cackling Geese** was recorded 29 Dec with 2 on the ChCBC and 2 on the BBCBC, the latter likely among subsequent reports from the Sherwood L. area, Virginia Beach through late Jan (m. obs.); one was at Onancock, *Accomack* 7 Feb (JLa, ph. GMa). A **Mute Swan** was at Sherwood L., Virginia Beach 7 Jan (ph. Anonymous). One to 2 m. **Eurasian Wigeons** were at Chinc. 2 Dec through February (ph. m. obs.). Singles were found at Bay Cr. for the CCCBC and at Craney for the NRCBC. The early January freeze likely caused the latter to relocate 6.25 km across the James R. to King-Lincoln/Anderson Pks., Newport News 7 (AC, EM, ph. JS) & 8 Jan (ph. M&RF), after which it was noted weekly at Craney 1–15 Feb (AH, AM, LS, BW, DY). Yet another m. was at L. Joyce/PHP 11 Feb (JSc) into March (ph. m. obs.). An intergrade **American × Eurasian Green-winged Teal** was at Craney 7 Dec (ph. BT, DY). Three **King Eider** detections had one on the NaCBC, one off the CBBT 13 Jan (m. obs., ph. MB), and one off KSP 15 (ph. PH, DLe) through 19 Jan (ph. TBu, VB). Sixteen **Common Eiders** accounted for 2 Dec included 14 off Back Bay (AB, ph. RBi), an ad. m. off the CBBT (ph. m. obs.), and a f. at KSP (ph. CW, JM). Reports thereafter were: one in Cape Charles 9 Dec (BH); a first-winter m. off the CBBT to 24 Feb (ph. m. obs.); a f. off the CBBT 15 Jan (ph. AVS); one at Rudee 14 Dec (ph. K&TB) and 6 Jan (CO); one at Chinc. 26 Dec (MH, SH); and one off Little Is./Back Bay 8 (KL) & 27 Jan (MA, RBi, TD). Two **Harlequin Ducks** were on the CCCBC and one was on the CBBTCCBC. The peak count was 5 off the CBBT 13 Jan (m. obs.). Only one **Northern Bobwhite** was encountered during a Regional CBC, that on the NaCBC. **Red-necked Grebes** were chronicled 25 Dec (one at Ft. Monroe, Hampton, ph. EM) through 21 Feb (one off Little Is., CW) with a single day total of 4 on 20 Jan that included one at Rudee, 2 in Lynnhaven Inlet, Virginia Beach, and one off the CBBT (m.

obs.). An **Eared Grebe** had folks exploring the King-Lincoln Pk., Newport News waterfront 10 (ph. AC) through 27 Jan (ph. m. obs.). A **WESTERN GREBE** flew south past Little Is. 11 Feb (AB). Single **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds** were near Jamesville, *Northampton* to 12 Dec (ph. RT), in the Alanton neighborhood, Virginia Beach 10 Dec through 23 Jan (MP), at Cypress Pt., Virginia Beach to 3 Jan (DS), and in the Churchland/Western branch section of Portsmouth for the NRCBC. Two, possibly 3, were foraging in shrubs at Camp Pendleton, Virginia Beach 14 Dec (ph. K&TB) and one passed by the CBBT north overlook during the CCCBC. A **Common Gallinule** was at Whitehurst 26 Dec (K&TB). Two **Sandhill Cranes** highlighted the NaCBC final tally. The season's highest reported **American Avocet** count was 227 at Craney 7 Dec (LS et al.). One was at Chinc. 16 Dec (RR). One at Grandview 24 Feb (BBa, SB) was probably the one at Messick, Poquoson the same day (ph. DP). Participants on the CCCBC found a **Piping Plover** on FINWR. A **Red Knot** at Messick, Poquoson 26 Feb (ph. JS) was apparently a first for that jurisdiction. Single **Spotted Sandpipers** were listed for both the WaCBC and the LCCBC and one was at Elizabeth R. Pk., Chesapeake 10 Jan (DG). A **Red Phalarope** was at Chinc. 12 Jan (ph. PG). There was a **Parasitic Jaeger** off NAS Oceana-Dam Neck Annex (restricted access), Virginia Beach 13 Jan (K&TB). After the extraordinary **Razorbill** abundance last winter the most reported this winter was 13 off Little Is. 11 Feb (AB). A most accommodating **Black-legged Kittiwake** found at Stumpy L., Virginia Beach 4 Dec (ph. JSn) became quite an attraction through 1 Jan, the last day it was observed (ph. m. obs.).



Jonathan Snyder's up close 26 Dec photo of the Black-legged Kittiwake at Stumpy Lake, Virginia Beach

A **Black-headed Gull** was at Rudee 31 Jan (ph. AB) into the spring season (m. obs.). What may have been the same ad. **Iceland Gull** was reported at 31st St., Virginia Beach 20 Dec (AB et al.), then at 61st and 57th Sts., Virginia Beach 30 Dec (ph. LRo, JS, DSo) and 5 Jan (AB), respectively. Single first-cycle Iceland Gulls were at Rudee 4 (AB) & 15 Jan (ph. LC), the Lynnhaven Fishing pier 8 Jan (ph. AB, ph. KL, TT) and off the CBBT 20 & 27 Jan (ph. m. obs.). A first-cycle **Glaucous Gull** was at Rudee 4 Jan (AB). An ad. was at 57th St., Virginia Beach 5 Jan (AB) and a first-cycle was at Chinc. 11 Jan (ph. VK, JLa). A **Royal Tern** found injured near Indian Shores, *Pinellas*, FL 27 Dec had been banded “at Kiptopeke” 9 Jul 1998; the nearest known colony (3380 birds) that year was on FINWR. Fifteen **American White Pelicans** passed over Chesconessex Schooner Bay, *Accomack* 24 Dec (ph. LG). Subsequent reports included: one at Sherwood L., Virginia Beach 12 (ph. m. obs.) & 13 Jan (ph. DC, ph. AH, ph. SMY); 8 over PHP 26 Jan (ph. JM); one over the James R. Bridge, Newport News/Suffolk 1 Feb (JH); and, 17 over First Landing 5 Feb (ph. CH) followed by 3 there 7 Feb (MCM). Birders braving early 2018 bitter cold and iced roadways were astonished to find 2 **Least Bitterns** at Little Is. 6 Jan (AB, ph. RBi, ph. MC, ph. MCM, M&RF). One was last observed 18 Jan (ph. LSi). The fate of the second became apparent when it was found deceased 14 Jan (ph. EA, TC, LM, RN). Including one documented at Little Is. 15 Jan 2017, these 2 “are perhaps the 6th record of live Least Bitterns in Virginia during the winter season, represented by 7 individuals” (RBi). An ad. **Little Blue Heron** was at Whitehurst 25 Feb (ph. AB). **Cattle Egret** reports, all clustered in southern Virginia Beach through 3 Jan, had a peak of 20 off Princess Anne Rd. 10 (ph. DC, LSi) & 12 Dec (K&TB). **White Ibis** high counts were 52 at North Landing Beach Campground, Virginia Beach 22 Dec (EA, TC) and 62 at Whitehurst 25 Feb (AB, TT). A **Rough-legged Hawk** was observed on FINWR 25 (SG, WR) & 28 Dec (SGr). There were three **Golden Eagle** reports, each of one bird: at KSP 2 Dec (ph. KR); a count-week species for the NaCBC; and, at Willis Wharf, *Northampton* 2 Jan (AL, JL, MM).

OWLS-BUNTINGS

The Region’s lone **Snowy Owl** was encountered sporadically at Chinc. 13 Dec (ph. SD) through 12 Feb (ph. DB). A **Short-eared Owl** was seen at Saxis, *Accomack* 14 Jan (SD). This species garnered a great deal of attention at Messick, Poquoson where one was spotted 18 Jan (ph. AH). Through 26 Feb (HC) multiple owls were observed there with a high count of 5 on 18 Feb (m. obs.). One was at Grandview, ~3 km from Messick, 22 Jan (CJ) and one flew in from the

ocean at Little Is. 25 Feb (AB, TT). A **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was heard off Wagner Ln., Chincoteague, *Accomack* 16 Dec (SD) and one was at Wellington Neck, *Northampton* 27 Jan (ph. RK). A **RED-COCKADED WOODPECKER**, part of the species’ relocation effort, was documented in Dismal for the DSCBC. A **Cave Swallow** was on FINWR 21 Dec (ESB). A **Swainson’s Thrush** at KSP was a CCCBC final tally all-star! The peak **Snow Bunting** count was 6 at Craney for the NRCBC; 2 remained there to least 15 Feb (ph. AH, LS, DY). Two were reliable at KSP the entire season (ph. m. obs.) and a duo at Grandview for the NNCBC was last reported 22 Jan (CJ). A **Clay-colored Sparrow** was at Pocahontas Club Rd., Virginia Beach 18 Jan (AB) and a **Grasshopper Sparrow** was at Kinder Morgan Elizabeth River Terminals wetland (restricted access), Chesapeake 10 Dec (DG). A **LeConte’s Sparrow** at Beasley 7 Jan (ph. RBi) was suspected to be the one documented there 3–17 Dec (ph. m. obs.). Two **Lincoln’s Sparrows** were at the Oyster/Cheriton Landfill, *Northampton* 1 Dec (ESB, PK) and one was at Ashville Pk., Virginia Beach 9 Jan (ph. MCM). A **Yellow-breasted Chat** was on the ChCBC; another was at a private residence in Virginia Beach 17 Feb (ph. AMi). An ad. m. **BULLOCK’S ORIOLE** in the Bethel section of Hampton 20 Jan (ph. EM, ph. KM, ph. JS) had been present there “for at least a couple of weeks”.



This Bullock’s Oriole was beautifully documented in Hampton by Ernie Miller 20 Jan.

Brewer’s Blackbirds were noted at Breeze Farms, Virginia Beach 9 (3–AB, TT) through 21 Jan (2–DL, GM) with a high count of 10 on 14 Jan (BB, TB, AB, PB). Single **Black-and-white Warblers** were on the NNCBC, at Hoffer Cr. Pk., Portsmouth 19 Dec (ph. CB) and at Laurel Cove Dr., Virginia Beach 3 Feb (ph. LSi). Both the CCCBC and the LCCBC posted new all-time **Orange-crowned Warbler** high counts

with 11 and 10, respectively. All-time **Palm Warbler** high counts were set during the WaCBC (102), the NACBC (40) and the BBCBC (77). Single **Nashville Warblers** were at Craney 21 Dec (BW, AM), at Bull's Farm, *Northampton* for the CCCBC, the ESVNWR 31 Dec (HP), and in Briarwood, Portsmouth 2 Feb (NF). A **Northern Parula** was at a Virginia Beach feeder 19 Dec (ph. CP). A **Yellow-throated Warbler** was at a feeder off Tory Rd., Virginia Beach 22 Dec–26 Jan (ph. MS). Another at a residence near Stumpy L., Virginia Beach 2 Jan to at least 3 Feb (ph. SM) may have been the same bird that was there 12 Jan–17 Feb 2017 (SM). A **Scarlet Tanager** at L. Taylor, Norfolk 23 Dec (ph. EA, TC) was a remarkable winter season find. Among 6 documented **Western Tanagers** were: a f. in the Alanton neighborhood, Virginia Beach 1–10 Dec (MP) then 2 there 21 & 23 Jan (MP, ph. AB, TT); a f. at the ESVNWR 30 & 31 Dec (ph. m. obs.); a m. in the Chic's Beach, Virginia Beach area 16 Jan (ph. KS) to at least 18 Feb (ph. KR); and, a f. at a Western Branch, Chesapeake feeder 3–27 Feb (ph. EMa).



Ellis Maxey recorded this **Western Tanager** and **Baltimore Oriole** on his Chesapeake feeder 3 Feb.

The **Panted Bunting** peak count was 4 (2 m., 2 f.) at a private residence in Virginia Beach 22 Jan (ph. PM). Single birds noted from the “PABU neighborhood” near the junc. of Laskin Rd./First Colonial Rd., Virginia Beach 20 Dec (ph. AB) through 19 Feb (ph. K&TB) may have involved these same birds. Additional reports had: a f. in Hampton 3 Dec (ph. EM) that was initially detected 30 Oct 2107 and was believed to be the same f. that had wintered in

the neighborhood since 2014 (*vide* EM); a m. in the South Norfolk section of Chesapeake 3–17 Dec (ph. DG); a m. off Muddy Cr. Rd., Virginia Beach for BBCBC; a m. at a feeder in Pungo, Virginia Beach 28 & 30 Jan (ph. LH); and, a m. at a home on Princess Ann Ct., Virginia Beach 18 Feb (ph. KR).



One of 4 **Painted Buntings** Pam Monahan saw at a Virginia Beach private residence 22 Jan

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