



VIRGINIA BIRDS

A quarterly journal of ornithological sightings in the Commonwealth
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Volume 15 • Number 3

Winter Records • Dec 2018–Feb 2019

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 | | |
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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:

<http://www.virginiabirds.org/publications/photography-release-forms/>

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
vid. r.	video recording
VSO	Virginia Society of Ornithology
WMA	Wildlife Management Area
*	specimen collected

On the cover: Virginia's first Mottled Duck identified from this photo taken at Craney Island, Portsmouth by Brian Taber 14 Jun 2018.

Virginia's First Mottled Duck

Identification and conclusive documentation of an extra-limital Mottled Duck is far from a straight forward exercise. This species is less than eye-catching, and even in its native range, although not difficult to find, is cryptic. As Brian Taber's photograph featured on the front cover of this *Virginia Birds* edition illustrates, Mottled Ducks present an enigmatic and challenging-to-observe suite of subtleties that includes: bill color, gape, facial color and patterning, extent of crown and eyeline colors, neck color and streaking, color and distribution of color of the flight feathers, especially the speculum and tertials, wing length proportion, color and shape of the rectrices, and color of the undertail. To add to these complexities one must also differentiate individuals in question from Mallard \times Mottled Duck hybrids, Mallard \times American Black Duck hybrids, and the highly unlikely, nevertheless possible, "Mexican" Mallard and/or "Mexican" Mallard \times Mottled Duck hybrids.

Announcement of the Craney Island Mottled Duck was postponed at the specific request of the United States Army Corps of Engineers, the federal agency that owns and manages this restricted access facility. Because this was a potential state record species the documentation also needed to be formally vetted by the Virginia Avian Records Committee.

A detailed account of this Mottled Duck, Virginia's 473rd species, has been submitted for publication in a forthcoming edition of *The Raven*.

The article below is highly recommended as a starting point for all birders interested in exploring the intricacies of Mottled Duck identification and documentation.

Leukering, T. and B. Pranty. 2015. Mottled Duck hybridization. eBird, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York. Available: <http://www.ebird.org>.

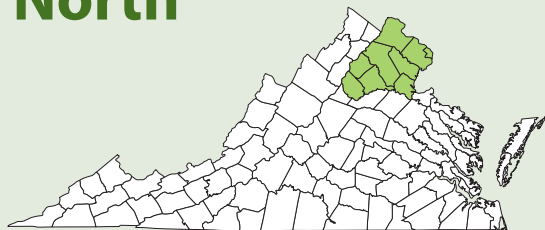
Bill Williams



Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas 2

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

Above normal rainfall continued through the winter season. Temperatures were at or above average for the period, with a frigid spell in late January, which drove winter waterfowl south into the Region. Highlights this season included the Northern Shrike that spent the third consecutive winter and the rare irruption of Evening Grosbeaks into the Region.

Abbreviations: Burke L. Pk. (Burke L. Pk., *Fairfax*); Dulles Int'l Airport (Dulles Int'l Airport, *Loudoun*); Dyke Marsh (Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, *Fairfax*); Huntley Meadows (Huntley Meadows Pk., *Fairfax*); Laurel Hill Equestrian Center (Laurel Hill Equestrian Center, *Fairfax*); Occoquan Bay (Occoquan Bay NWR, *Prince William*); Prince William Landfill (Prince William Landfill, *Prince William*); UOSA (Upper Occoquan Service Authority sewage treatment plant, *Fairfax*)

Christmas Bird Counts: CLCBC (Central Loudoun, 28 Dec); DCCBC (Washington DC, 15 Dec); FBCBC (Ft. Belvoir, 30 Dec); PCBC (The Plains, 16 Dec)

WATERFOWL—HERONS

Single **Ross's Geese**, a rare bird in the Piedmont, were observed at Northern Virginia Community College, *Loudoun* 8–13 Dec (ph. DLed, m. obs.), along Willisville Rd., *Loudoun* 1 Jan (ph. SPr), a couple mi. w. near Upperville, *Fauquier* 2 Jan (ph. AR, EK), and near Myer's Mill Rd., *Culpeper* 16 Feb (TD). Reports of **Greater White-fronted Geese**, formerly a rare winter visitor in the Region, included likely the same individual found at nearby ponds along John S. Mosby Hwy., *Fauquier* 30 Dec (LA) and 2 Jan (ph. AR, EK), 2 at the

Clifton Institute, *Fauquier* 30 Jan & 21 Feb (ph. BHa, BS), and one at Belvoir Pond, *Fauquier* 27 Feb (TD). **Cackling Geese** similarly have become more frequent winter visitors in the Region; reports included highs of 5 along Willisville Rd., *Loudoun* and 6 likely different individuals shortly afterwards about 2 mi. n. along Piney Swamp Rd., *Loudoun* 2 Jan (both ph. AR), 6 at the UOSA 5–26 Jan (DM), and 7 at Ben Lomond RP, *Prince William* 26 Jan (ph. RT). A **Blue-winged Teal**, rare in winter in the Region, was seen at the UOSA 3–5 Feb (ph. RT). Reports of **Redheads**, a rare winter visitor in the Piedmont, included 6 at ponds in Ashburn, *Loudoun* 21 Jan (SPa), an undetermined number at the UOSA 2 Feb (DM), and a raft of 70+ at the New Bristow Village pond, *Prince William* 10 Feb (MR). There were numerous reports of **Greater Scaup**, a rare winter visitor inland, including singles at the Verizon pond, *Loudoun* 24 Dec (AG, ph. BHe) and 10 Feb (JE), L. Brittle, *Fauquier* 10 Jan & 6 Feb (GS), C.M. Crockett Pk., *Fauquier* 23 Jan (TD), Elizabeth Mills Waterfront Pk., *Loudoun* 31 Jan (PN), Algonkian RP, *Loudoun* 13 Feb (ph.



Scott Priebe's 1 Jan photo of the Ross's Goose in Upperville, *Fauquier*

DB), Aquia Landing Pk., *Stafford* 16 Feb (EM), and Belvoir Pond, *Fauquier* 27 Feb (GS). A **White-winged Scoter** was observed at Burke L. Pk. 30 Jan (FA). Lone **Long-tailed Ducks** were found at Burke L. Pk. 2 Feb (DLeb) and Silver L. RP, *Prince William* 4–16 Feb (TH, ph. KK). Three **Red-breasted Mergansers** were found near L. Manassas during the PCBC. A **Red-necked Grebe** was observed at Int'l Conservation House, *Fauquier* 9–10 Dec (ph. PSa); this species is rare, especially in the Piedmont, where most reports are in late winter and early spring. A **Sora**, fairly rare in winter, was observed at Huntley Meadows 18 & 22 Jan (BM). Two **Sandhill Cranes** again spent most of the winter in *Loudoun*, seen at Algonkian Nature Preserve 24 Dec (BHe) and 17 Feb (EM) and in the Lucketts area 25 Jan (ph. RP). An **American Woodcock**, fairly rare in winter in the Piedmont, was seen in courtship display along Leeds Manor Rd., *Fauquier* 5 Jan (BH_a). A **Greater Yellowlegs** at Julie J. Metz Wetlands Bank, *Prince William* 10 Dec (MR) was later than the 20 Nov Coastal Plain late date. Lone **Laughing Gulls**, a rare visitor to the Piedmont in winter, were observed at the Prince William Landfill 5 Jan (EP) and 2 Feb (ph. SJ). A first-cycle **Iceland Gull** was observed at the Prince William Landfill, where the species is a rare but regular winter visitor, 22–23 Dec (ph. MR) and 12 Jan (PP); another first-cycle was at the Loudoun Co. landfill, *Loudoun* (CLCBC). Fairly rare in the Piedmont was a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** reported at the Lowes Island ponds, *Loudoun* 26 Feb (DC). An ad. **Glaucous Gull** was at the Prince William Landfill, where this species also is a rare but regular winter visitor, 9 Dec–3 Jan (ph. LC, m. obs.), joined on 3 Jan by a first-cycle. A first-cycle was seen there again 26 Jan (KG). Nine **Red-throated Loons**, quite rare inland, were reported at Belle Haven Pk., *Fairfax* 28 Feb (RC, TC). An **American Bittern**, a species with few records in *Stafford*, was seen at Crow's Nest NAP 2 Feb (ph. EP). Reports of **Great Egrets**, also a rare winter visitor inland, included singles in the n. Alexandria sector of the DCCBC; at Alder L., *Loudoun* 12 Jan (ph. JE); and along Zachary Taylor Hwy., *Culpeper* 28 Feb (CH) (24 Mar is the spring early date). An imm. **Little Blue Heron**, a rare winter visitor inland and



This American Bittern was photographed by Evan Pannkuk at Crow's Nest NAP 2 Feb.

the first record in *Stafford*, was observed at Government Is. Pk. 8–11 Jan (JSc, ph. DLed). A **Green Heron**, a rare early winter visitor in the Piedmont, first observed 22 Oct at Ashby Pond Conservancy Site, Fairfax City, continued through 19 Dec (m. obs.). Singles were also observed at L. Mooney Pk., *Stafford* 6 Dec (ph. JeP) and Royal L. Pk., *Fairfax* 27 Dec (ph. P&JW). Three **Black-crowned Night-Herons** were seen at Ben Brenman Pk., Alexandria, a traditional winter hang-out for multiples of this fairly rare wintering species for the past five winters, 31 Dec–1 Jan (DLed).

RAPTORS–MIMIDS

Single **Golden Eagles** were reported at L. Brittle, *Fauquier* 12 Jan (GS) and Mountain Run L. Pk., *Culpeper* 3 Feb (DH). There were a couple of apparent sightings of **Northern Goshawk**: at Int'l Conservation House, *Fauquier* 6 Jan (PSa) and along Cemetery Rd., *Fauquier* 16 Jan (GS). A typ. 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 Int'l Airport 2 Jan (m. obs., ph. CF); interestingly, one was reported there 28 Dec the previous winter. A dark morph **Rough-legged Hawk** was reported at Dulles Int'l Airport 14 Dec (GR); a light morph was there 12 Jan (FA). A probable Rough-legged was seen perched at Mason Neck NWR, *Fairfax* 30 Dec (RR). Kurt Gaskill, in summing up the FBCBC, noted the long-term trend in the switch of buteo abundance from Red-tailed to Red-shouldered Hawks beginning about 14 years ago, positing that it is likely due to the increase in the suburban landscape

footprint. There was a single report of an imm. **Snowy Owl** distantly seen at Dulles Int'l Airport 14 Dec (GR). Said to be rare winter visitors in the Piedmont, there were numerous reports of **Merlins**, including 3 perched in the same tree, chased away by 3 Red-tailed Hawks, at National Memorial Park Cemetery in Falls Church, *Fairfax* 17 Dec (DLed), and singles on the PCBC; along Rt. 66 in Centreville, *Fairfax* 23 Dec (SM); in Vienna, *Fairfax* 23 Dec

(DLeb); in the Lucketts area, *Loudoun* 30 Dec (ph. LM); Ellick Woodlands NAP, *Fairfax* 26 Jan (SJ); Cub Run Recreation Center, *Fairfax* 8 Feb (SJ); and Burke L. Pk. 13 Feb (JT). Reports of **Peregrine Falcons**, a rare winter visitor inland, included a first-year bird near the McRaes Rd. pond, *Fauquier* 21 Dec (ph. DLa); an ad. near the Luck Stone quarry, *Loudoun* 14 Jan (ph. GL), with reports through 18 Feb, including a pair seen there 30 Jan (PN); an ad. on Hebron Church Rd., *Madison* 14 Jan (IT); an ad. at Maples Field Airport, *Fauquier* 14 Jan (KG, DLed); and an ad. at Occoquan Bay 3 Feb (ph. AM). The **NORTHERN SHRIKE** returning for the third winter to Sully Woodlands, *Fairfax* 3 Nov continued throughout the season (ph. m. obs.); it also spent some time at nearby Rock Hill District Pk., *Fairfax* and disappeared to an unknown location for long stretches. A **Blue-headed Vireo**, a rare winter visitor in the Region, was well-ph. at Claude Moore Pk., *Loudoun* 3 Dec (SR) (Piedmont late date 30 Oct). Late or wintering **Tree Swallows** included singles at C.M. Crockett Pk., *Fauquier* 6–8 Dec (GS) and along Piney Swamp Rd., *Loudoun* 2 Jan (AR). There was also a rare winter report of a well-described **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** at the UOSA 5 Jan (DM). **Carolina Chickadees** were in record low numbers on the CLCBC at 126, coming after last year's 10-year low of 321. Similarly, **Tufted Titmice**, at 57, were just over half of the previous 20-year low. By contrast, **Red-breasted Nuthatches** saw a record high of 98 on the FBCBC. A **Brown-headed Nuthatch** (first reported 19 Sep, 2017) spent the second winter at Mountain Run L. Pk., *Culpeper*, first seen 2 Dec (KK). A **Marsh Wren**, fairly rare this far inland in winter, was observed at Aquia Landing Pk., *Stafford* 13 Feb (JeP, JoP). Also a rare winter visitor in the Region was a **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher**, well-ph. at Occoquan Bay 4 Dec (JA) (Coastal Plain late date 20 Sep). Fairly rare in the Piedmont in winter was a **Brown Thrasher** seen at a residence near Madison Mills, *Madison* 17 Feb (anon. eBirder). **Gray Catbirds**, rare inland in winter, made several appearances: at Occoquan Bay 9 & 26 Dec (MR) and again 2 & 10 Feb, Huntley Meadows 18 Dec (HG), and Daingerfield Island, Alexandria 26 Jan (EW). There were a record high 10 Gray Catbirds found on the FBCBC.

GROSBEAKS–BUNTINGS

There were numerous reports this season, all in December, of **Evening Grosbeaks**, a rare irruptive species in the Region. They included singles at residences near Ruth, *Madison* 6 Dec (ph. IT) and Fairfax Station, *Fairfax* 9 Dec (ph. TA), 2 at a residence near Brentsville, *Prince William* 11 & 29

Dec (ph. DG), and 3 at a residence near Buckhall, *Prince William* 25 Dec (ph. CC).



This Evening Grosbeak was documented by Tony Admana 9 Dec at Fairfax Station, *Fairfax*.

Not often found this far south was a **Common Redpoll** seen at Dyke Marsh 24 Dec (ph. EE). A **Lapland Longspur**, rare in the Region, was observed at Woodward Turf Farm, *Fauquier* 15–17 Jan (TD, ph. IT). Reports of **Chipping Sparrows**, rare in winter, included 3 at Sky Meadows SP, *Fauquier* 17 Feb (S&TW) and singles at Powers Farm and Brewery near Casanova, *Fauquier* 17 Feb (JSo) and at a residence on Summerfield Hills Dr., *Fauquier* 21 Feb (GW). A **Clay-colored Sparrow**, first observed 9 Nov, spent the second winter at Laurel Hill Equestrian Center, continuing at least through 17 Feb (ph., m. obs.).

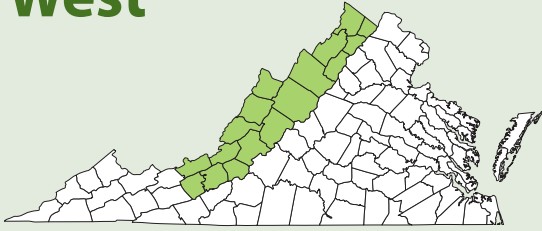


Gene Bailey's Clay-colored Sparrow photo taken at the Laurel Equestrian Center, *Fairfax* 21 Jan

Single **Lincoln's Sparrows**, a rare winter visitor in the Region and usually not past early winter in the Piedmont, were observed at Muddy Hole Farm Pk., *Fairfax* 4 Jan (KG), Occoquan Bay 15 Jan (ph. BC), Elklick Woodlands NAP, *Fairfax* 26 Jan (SJ), and Silver L. RP, *Prince William* 26 Jan (RT). A very rare inland visitor in winter, a **Yellow-breasted Chat** was well-ph. at Accotink Bay Wildlife Refuge, *Fairfax* 3–9 Feb (MM). Several **Baltimore Orioles** braved the early winter: an imm. m. at a residence in Reston, *Fairfax* 7–8 Dec (ph. OL), one at a residence in Lake Ridge, *Prince William* 8 Dec (KB), an imm. m. and imm. f. together at Laurel Hill Equestrian Center 12 Dec (NVBC, ph. MR), and one that spent much of late Dec at a residence in Lincoln, *Loudoun* (CLCBC). A lingering hatch-year **Tennessee Warbler** was seen at Dyke Marsh 12 & 16 Dec (ph. EE) (Regional extreme late date 21 Nov). Rare in winter inland was an **Orange-crowned Warbler** seen at Dyke Marsh 9–26 Dec (DS, m. obs., ph. EW). Single imm. **Common Yellowthroats**, a fairly rare winter resident in the Region, were observed at Occoquan Bay 1 & 9 Dec (MR) and again 3 Feb (AM) and Huntley Meadows 5 Dec–12 Jan (BJ, ph. MM). Two Common Yellowthroats were observed at L. Mooney Pk., *Stafford* 6 Feb (JeP) and a single at Jones Pt. Pk., Alexandria 12 Feb (SF). A **Cape May Warbler**, a species with few winter records in the Region, was seen at Raspberry Falls Golf & Hunt Club, *Loudoun* (CLCBC, ph. RT). Reports of **Palm Warblers**, most of whose rare winter sightings in the Piedmont occur in early winter, included singles at the Culpeper Sports Complex, *Culpeper* 3 Dec (KK), Meadowood Recreation Area, *Fairfax* 5 Dec (PSi), and Laurel Hill Equestrian Center 9 Dec (ph. BHo); the latter lingered through 8 Feb (m. obs.). A **Pine Warbler**, rare in the northern Piedmont in winter, was seen at Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve, *Loudoun* 8 Dec (JC). A lingering **Wilson's Warbler**, whose extreme late date in the Coastal Plain is 27 Nov, was seen at Four Mile Run Pk., Alexandria 2 Dec (ph. TK). An **Indigo Bunting**, a species with few winter records in the Region, was seen at Algonkian RP, *Loudoun* 21 Dec (ph. BHe).

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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

Abbreviations: Blandy (Blandy Experimental Farm and State Arboretum of Virginia, *Clarke*)

Christmas Bird Counts: ACCBC (Augusta County, 15 Dec); BCBC (Blacksburg, 15 Dec)

WATERFOWL-GULLS

Snow Goose reports included one in Luray, *Page* 16 Dec (MA, JF) and 6 Jan (ST), 4 at Stuarts Draft, *Augusta* 21 Dec (AL), one in *Rockbridge* 29 Dec (LN), 22 (m. obs.) & 24 Jan (KK), 2 at Smith L., *Augusta* 24 Jan (AL), 2 at White's L., *Frederick* 9 Feb (DB, WP), and one at Abrams Cr. Wetland Preserve, *Frederick* 10 Feb (GR). Single **Ross's Geese** were at Stuarts Draft, *Augusta* 21 Dec (ph. AL) and at Greenfield L., *Botetourt* 21 Jan (BE, DG, MJ). Two **Greater White-fronted Geese** were at L. Shenandoah and later at L. Campbell, *Rockingham* 17 Jan (MG, DL), 3 in *Augusta* 24 Jan (EC et al.), and 23 in Dublin, *Pulaski* 24–28 Feb (m. obs.). **Cackling Goose** sightings included 5 at L. Shenandoah, *Rockingham* 2 Dec (m. obs.), one in *Clarke* 21 Dec (MA, DC), one near Mt. Crawford, *Rockingham* 26 Dec (CZ), 2 in *Clarke* 2 Jan (m. obs.), 2 at Lakeside L., *Frederick* 5 Jan (GR, DY), one in Harrisonburg 14 Jan (MG), one at L. Holiday, *Frederick* 14 Jan (GR), 8 near Waynesboro 2 Feb (AL), 2 in *Rockbridge* 9 Feb (MA, EC, JF), and 6 at Smith L., *Augusta* 22 Feb (AL). Seven **Tundra Swans** were at Willow L., *Rockbridge* 13 (AP) & 15 Dec (JP), 16 there 31 Dec (LN) and 1 Jan (BE, MJ), one at L. Frederick, *Frederick* 19 Dec (DHu), and 26 flying over Claytor L., *Pulaski* 26 Feb (MM). Many **Northern Shovelers** were observed from early Dec thru Jan at Broadway Wastewater Treatment Facility, *Rockingham*, with a high count of 301 on 12 Jan (DH). The only **Surf Scoter** report was of one to 3 at L. Frederick, *Frederick* 1–29 Dec (m. obs.). A **White-winged Scoter** was photographed at Claytor L., *Pulaski* 24 Feb (m. obs.), and one was at Willow L., *Rockbridge* 27 Feb (EC, LR). One to 2 **Black Scoters** were seen on

the Maury R., *Rockbridge* 14 (MH) & 15 Feb (m. obs.). **Long-tailed Duck** reports included one seen frequently at L. Frederick, *Frederick* 1 Dec–16 Jan (m. obs.) and 10 Feb (DB), one at L. Arrowhead, *Page* 16 Dec (MA, JF), one at Broadway Wastewater Treatment Facility, *Rockingham* 3 & 11 Jan (MG), one in Radford 2 Feb (ph. KD), and one in Verona, *Augusta* 2–16 Feb (m. obs.). One hundred twenty-nine **Common Mergansers** were observed in *Rockingham* 27 Jan (MG). The only **Northern Bobwhite** report was 8 found at Third Winchester Battlefield, *Frederick* 9 Dec (DGM). Twelve **Horned Grebes** were found at Claytor L., *Pulaski* 7 Dec (m. obs.), and 17 at L. Moomaw, *Alleghany* 29 Dec (AD, KD). A **WHITE-WINGED DOVE** visited feeders at Claytor L., *Pulaski* 1–22 Dec (MM et al.). An ad. m. **Rufous Hummingbird** was present 1–18 Dec in *Augusta* (BH). It had been banded in November by Bruce Peterjohn. A **Sandhill Crane** was at Whitethorne, *Montgomery* 8 Dec (ph. PL); 4 were in Fishersville, *Augusta* 22 Dec (TF), 2 in Verona, *Augusta* 14 Feb (m. obs.), and one was photographed 23–25 Feb in Rockingham (m. obs.). A **Spotted Sandpiper** was at the Broadway Wastewater Treatment Facility, *Rockingham* 18 Jan (DH). Large flocks of **Ring-billed Gulls** were present all winter at Claytor L., *Pulaski*, with a peak count of about 10,000 observed 5 Feb (TW). A **GLAUCOUS GULL** was photographed at Claytor L., *Pulaski* 16 Feb (m. obs.), for a second county record.

HERONS-WARBLERS

A **Great Egret** was at Willow L., *Rockbridge* 2 Dec (PW). Single **Black-crowned Night-Herons** were noted at Dayton, *Rockingham* 13 Dec and 17 Jan (GMO), in Waynesboro 23 Dec (HH) and 6 Jan (EC), and at Silver L., *Rockingham* 2 Feb (DH). An **Osprey** was found at Goldbond, *Giles* 4 Dec (RM) and one was in Stuarts Draft, *Augusta* 15 Feb (BT). **Rough-legged Hawk** sightings included one in *Rockingham* 21 Jan (DH), one in *Augusta* 25 Jan (DH), one in Blue Grass Valley, *Highland* 5 Feb (VL, GM), and one

near Greenville, *Augusta* 13 Feb (DH). Single **Short-eared Owls** were found near Stone Bridge, *Warren* 11 (DC) & 26 Dec (ER), and 2 Jan (CC, ER), along the Shenandoah R., *Warren* 17 Dec (GJ), and in Staunton 1 (BB, TB, MN), & 8 Jan (CH). Two **Monk Parakeets** were documented near Lexington, *Rockbridge* 8 Jan (ph. DR); they had been present there for a couple of weeks before that. A **SAY'S PHOEBE** was in *Rockbridge* 10 (KK) through 13 Feb (AL). A **Loggerhead Shrike** was seen frequently in *Clarke* 5 Dec to 28 Feb (m. obs.). Elsewhere, singles were in Staunton 23 Dec (VL) to 16 Feb (PW), Harrisonburg 28 Dec (DE), *Highland* 4 Jan (JS), and near Stone Bridge, *Warren* 12 Jan (SK). **Horned Lark** reports included 127 at Swoope, *Augusta* 11 Dec (AL) and 142 there 23 Dec (VL), 120 on the BCBC, 80 at Mt. Crawford, *Rockingham* 12 Dec (WB), 74 in *Rockingham* 8 Jan (MG), 45 at Blacksburg 9 (GRh) & 13 Jan (ALi, GRh), 70 at Whitethorne, *Montgomery* 12 Jan (RM), 75 at Timberville, *Rockingham* 12 Jan (DH), and 41 near Weyers Cave, *Augusta* 19 Jan (DH). Up to 6 **Brown-headed Nuthatches** were seen in Dublin, *Pulaski* 6 (GRh) & 8 Dec (ph. XG). There were 2 photographed at Blue Ridge, *Botetourt* 11 Jan (BE), 2 seen in Roanoke City 23 Jan (KC), and 2 near Hollins, *Roanoke* 16 Feb (KP). A **Marsh Wren** wintered at Blandly (m. obs.); 2 were listed there 26 Dec (DCs) and 4 Jan (DS et al.). Eighty **American Pipits** were found in *Rockingham* 8 Dec (MG), 25 at New Market, *Rockingham* 2 Feb (DH), 20 at Blandly 4 Feb (DC), and 35 in Fairlawn, *Pulaski* 24 Feb (DP, SP). Four **Evening Grosbeaks** visited feeders at Falls Ridge Preserve, *Montgomery* 11 Dec (CCy). Subsequent reports included 2 at feeders in *Pulaski* 21 & 22 Dec (MM), up to 6 seen frequently in the Union Springs L. area, *Rockingham* 18 Dec through Feb (m. obs.), 2 in Shenandoah NP, *Page* 10 Feb (GM), one in Blacksburg 13 Feb (LA, CK), and 2 near Warm Springs, *Bath* 26 Feb (LD). High counts of **Purple Finches** were 23 at L. Frederick, *Frederick* 16 Jan (WP) and 15 at Union Springs, *Rockingham* 18 Feb (CF). A **Common Redpoll** noted in *Bath* 27 Jan (PR) remained through at least 11 Mar (TP, ph. MS). A **Red Crossbill** was found on Johns Cr. Mt., *Craig* 18 Feb (TWi), the only report outside of the Briery Branch/Rawley Springs/Switzer L. area of *Rockingham*. Sightings from there included 9 at Rawley Springs (MG) and 18 at Briery Branch 8 Dec (EP), then 13 on 30 Dec (DBu). **Pine Siskin** peak counts were 25 in Staunton 15 Dec (SH), 56 at L. Holiday, *Frederick* 28 Jan (GR), 45 at Union Springs, *Rockingham*

15 Feb (BB, MN), and 22 in Bridgewater, *Rockingham* 28 Feb (WB, RP). A **Lapland Longspur** was observed in *Rockingham* 15 Jan (MG) and 3 were at the Weyers Cave Airport, *Augusta* 19 Jan (DL, GMo). An **American Tree Sparrow** was seen near Front Royal, *Warren* 21 Dec (KF); one was near Stone Bridge, *Warren* 29 Dec (DCh, MC, TC), and 8 were at Blandly 2 Jan (m. obs.). A **Baltimore Oriole** visited a feeder near Springwood, *Botetourt* 18 Feb (ph. BBo). Higher tallies of **Rusty Blackbirds** included 50 near Winchester 6 Jan (DT) and 175 at Fishersville, *Augusta* 29 Jan (AL). Two **Brewer's Blackbirds** were seen at Fishersville, *Augusta* 29 Jan (AL). An **Ovenbird** with an apparent growth on its bill was photographed in Rockbridge 3 Dec (WR). This bird had also been seen in November. An **Orange-crowned Warbler** was at Blandly 5 Dec (DB, GH, MR) and 6 Dec (DC). A **Common Yellowthroat** was seen at Grand Caverns Regional Pk., *Augusta* 14 Dec (HH). A **Black-throated Blue Warbler** was found in Staunton during the ACCBC.

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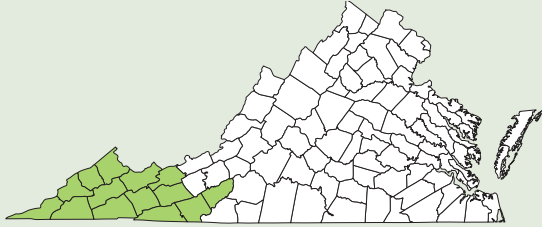


The *Bath* Common Redpoll documented here by Glen Criser 6 Mar

Hutchens, Mark Johnson, Greg Justice, Seth Kellogg, Clyde Kessler, Kieran Kilday, Allen Larner, Victor Laubach, Phil Lehmann, Diane Lepkowski, Aylett Lipford, BJ Little, Jon Little, Gabriel Mapel, Ryan Mays, Greg Moyers (GMO), Mark Mullins, Laura Neale, Martina Norstrand, John Pancake, Evan Pannkuk, William Parkin, Kristin Peckman, Tom Pendleton, Doug Pfeiffer, Sally Pfeiffer, Andrea

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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

With the exception of a few cold snaps, this winter averaged warmer than usual with an above average amount of precipitation. These storms caused several small fallouts of waterfowl in the Region. The warmer weather allowed a few species to linger much later than normal as well.

WATERFOWL—HERONS

The only report of **Snow Goose** was 3 birds off Peppers Ferry Rd., *Wythe* on 15 Feb (JL). A **Ross's Goose** seen throughout *Tazewell* this winter was first observed 15 Jan at the Historic Crab Orchard Museum (CD); it later moved to Taylor's Mill Pond where it was seen until the end of the period (m. obs.). Three **Tundra Swans** spent the entire winter in Burke's Garden, *Tazewell*; first seen 4 Dec, they continued through the end of the period (m. obs.). The snowstorm on 10 Dec caused a nice fallout of ducks at Falls Mills L., *Tazewell*. Highlights included 9 **Redheads**, one **Lesser Scaup**, 3 **Ruddy Ducks**, 12 **Red-breasted Mergansers**, and one **Horned Grebe** (CD). The day before this, 9 Dec, 3 Lesser Scaup, 3 **Buffleheads**, and a Horned Grebe were on a pond in Lebanon, *Russell* (JT), probably grounded by the same storm. This was a fairly good winter for **Canvasbacks**, with single birds reported at Falls Mills L., *Tazewell* 12–26 Jan (CD) and at Saltville, *Smyth* 19 Feb (ph. R&MF). More notable was a flock of 13 at the Seven Springs Trout Pond, *Tazewell* 31 Jan–2 Feb, with a single bird lingering there until 6 Feb (CD). There were two **Greater Scaup** reports: 3 at Britt's Pk., *Tazewell* 11 Feb (ph.

CD) and a single bird at Breaks Interstate Pk., *Dickenson* 18 Feb (ph. R&MF). In addition to the birds seen in the fallout in early December there were three other Lesser Scaup reports: one at Peppers Ferry Rd., *Wythe* 15 Feb (JL), 2 at Burke's Garden, *Tazewell* 18 Feb (DS), and another at Falls Mills L., *Tazewell* 26 Feb (CD). The only reports of **Common Goldeneye** came from *Tazewell*, where 2 were seen at Cavitt's Creek Pk. 21 Jan (CD) and up to 3 were seen at William Willis Peery Mill Pond 22 Jan–4 Feb (ph. CD). Three **Horned Grebes** at Cavitt's Creek Pk., *Tazewell* 7 Dec (GR, LA, m. obs.), was a good count for the Region. The only sighting of **Eurasian Collared-Dove** came from the known population at Meadowview, *Washington* where 4 were seen 27 Dec (ph. AN). The only **Common Loon** was at Lincolnshire Pk., *Tazewell* 3–16 Feb (m. obs., ph. C&VR). A single **Double-crested Cormorant**, fairly unusual in the Region in the winter, was found at Falls Mills L., *Tazewell* 14 Dec (CD). A **Black-crowned Night-Heron** was seen at the Clear Creek Golf Club, Bristol, a traditional wintering location for this species, 30 Dec (MS).

RAPTORS—GROSBEAKS

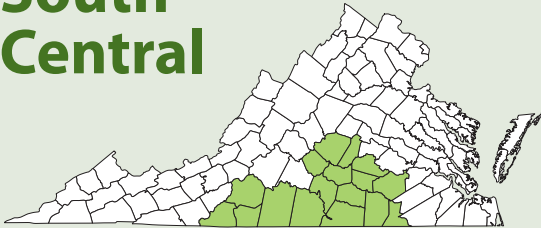
There were several reports of **Golden Eagles**, all from *Tazewell* and *Russell* as usual. As many as 6 were reported in Burke's Garden, *Tazewell* from 7 Dec until the end of the period, along with records of single birds from Elk Garden, *Russell* 26 Jan (DO), Clifton Farm Rd., *Russell* 26 Jan (M&JA), The Cove, *Tazewell* 15 Feb (ph. CD)

and 19 Feb near Thompson Valley, *Tazewell* (ph. R&MF). Two **Rough-legged Hawks** were seen in Burke's Garden, *Tazewell* 9 Feb (MG). A **Merlin** was in Elk Garden, *Russell* 26 Feb (DS). A **Peregrine Falcon** was in Burke's Garden, *Tazewell* 3 Feb (JS). Two **Loggerhead Shrikes** were reported at Burke's Garden, *Tazewell* 3 Dec (JP); single birds were also reported at the same location 7 Dec (ph. LA, GR, m. obs.) and at Indian Run Rd., *Washington* 27 Dec (ph. AN). **Brown-headed Nuthatches** continued to be seen at Washington County Pk., *Washington*, the species' one foothold in the Region, with reports of up to five 18–22 Jan (m. obs.). **Purple Finches** were seen throughout the Region in good numbers; the high count was 11 at Compton Mt., *Buchanan* (RM) 20 & 29 Jan.

There were several reports of **Pine Siskins** as well but no reports of more than 3 birds. A **Baltimore Oriole** visiting a feeder in Clintwood, *Dickenson* 6–21 Jan (ph. SW) provided the first eBird winter record in the Region for this increasing winter visitor. A young m. **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** found on private property in *Lee* 7–25 Dec (ph. DW) was another first winter eBird record for this Region.

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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

Wetter-than-average weather continued from the fall. Observers mentioned seeing few ducks and geese during much of the season, but as the end of winter approached some interesting waterfowl did appear. Species that seemed scarce included American Coots, Northern Bobwhite, and Rusty Blackbirds, while some irruptive northern species were found in good numbers.

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

TRUMPETER SWAN–NORTHERN BOBWHITE

Charlotte's first **Trumpeter Swan** was found at Greenfield 27 Feb (ph. KD) and was still present the next morning (ES, TS) but apparently departed later that day. A single **Long-tailed Duck** appeared at Holliday L. SP, *Appomattox/Buckingham* 6 Dec (ES) and remained until 2 Feb (MA), and another was found at Staunton R. SP, *Halifax* 16 Dec (AD, PG). **Common Goldeneye** were reported from five counties in the Region, though the high count was only 4 at SRR 1 Feb (TS,

ES). **Common Mergansers** were reported only from SRR, with one there on 20 (TS, ES) and 2 on 30 Jan (TS); this seemed a bit low after the good number of reports here and in other Regions in recent years. The only reports of **Northern Bobwhite** were 8 at James R. SP, *Buckingham* 21 Dec (LA, AR) and 3 in Cumberland SF, *Cumberland* 9 Feb (SW).

AMERICAN COOT–PEREGRINE FALCON

American Coot was unreported in the Region this winter, which is unusual. As in some previous winters, a **Spotted Sandpiper** was seen below Kerr Dam on several occasions from 3 Feb (PG, who reported 2 on that date, and TS) through 17 Feb (PG) but nowhere else in the Region. A single ad. **Lesser Black-backed Gull** on lower Kerr 27 Jan (PG) was the only one reported. A **Red-throated Loon** found at Briery Cr. L. 28 Feb (ph BE, m. obs.) was the first seen in *Prince Edward* since 2014. The only other report of the species was one seen on lower Kerr 22 Dec (PG) through 9 Feb (m. obs.). Quite surprising this far inland, a **GREAT CORMORANT** was found at Tailrace Pk., Kerr 9 Feb (AD ph., PG, m. obs.) and remained until at least 16 Feb (m. obs.).



This Great Cormorant (left) was photographed by Bob Epperson at Kerr Reservoir, *Mecklenburg* 9 Feb.

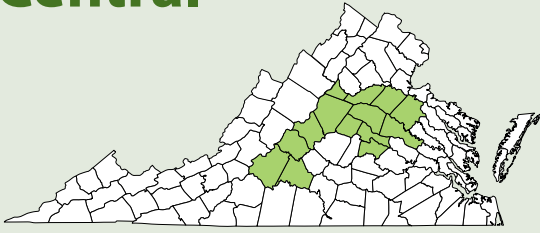
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The year’s first **Osprey** was reported at Wilkes L., *Prince Edward* 26 Feb (ph. HK). A **Peregrine Falcon** made a flock of diving ducks nervous during a brief appearance at Staunton R. SP, *Halifax* 22 Feb (ph. CMS); this was the only Regional report.

BLUE-HEADED VIREO– COMMON YELLOWTHROAT

A **Blue-headed Vireo** was at Wolftrap WMA, *Halifax* 16 Dec (JB, MH); this species is unexpected anywhere in the Region in winter, though small numbers winter routinely not far south and east. The first **Tree Swallow** was reported 14 Feb barely n. of the state line in Danville (MN); by the end of the period this swallow species had appeared at several lakes scattered across the Region (m. obs.). **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were relatively common this winter across the Region, with numerous reports (m. obs.), and both **Purple Finches** and **Pine Siskins** were also found in the Region through the period at several locations (m. obs.), a change from some recent winters. A **Vesper Sparrow** on Green Bay Rd., *Prince Edward* 22 Dec (DS, ph. ES) was the only one reported. **Rusty Blackbird** reports were limited to 2 at Piedmont Geriatric Hospital, *Nottoway* 8 Dec (TS, ES); one at Dick Cross WMA, *Mecklenburg* 3 Jan (AD, PG); and 2 in Farmville, *Prince Edward* 24 Feb (HK). The only **Common Yellowthroat** report was one found 9 Feb at Dick Cross WMA, *Mecklenburg* (TS, ph. ES).

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

This period was highlighted by a diverse array of rarities and unusual occurrences. Birders were treated to impressive waterfowl influxes and fallouts due to weather patterns such as the extreme polar vortex, overwintering neotropical migrants, and an Evening Grosbeak irruption. Highlight species included Black Scoter, Long-tailed Duck, Red-necked Grebe, Rufous Hummingbird, Sandhill Crane, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Rough-legged Hawk, Say's Phoebe, Evening Grosbeak, Lapland Longspur, and Painted Bunting.

Christmas Bird Counts: BFMCBC (Big Flat Mountain, 31 Dec); CHCBC (Chancellorsville, 30 Dec)

GEESE-DUCKS

A **Ross's Goose** was at Mill Cr. L. Pk., *Amherst* 9 Jan (JE). **Cackling Goose** reports included 2 at Pouncey Tract Rd., *Hanover* 10 Dec (EO), 4 at the Lowe's Retention Pond, *Louisa* 26 Dec (ph. AR), one at Green Springs, *Louisa* 1 Jan (MN), and one at L. Monticello, *Fluvanna* 21, 22, & 30 Jan (ph. KKO, DC, ST). The polar vortex weather event in late January that brought arctic temperatures into the continental northern mid-west displaced many waterfowl from that area, and likely accounted for the following extreme high counts of deepwater diving ducks: 61 **Canvasbacks** at Briery Cr. Rd. Pond, *Fluvanna* 15 Feb (ph. ST), 47 **Redheads** at Thrashers L. Pk., *Amherst* 23 Feb (MJ), 72 **Greater Scaup** at Ivy L., *Bedford* 23 Feb (BE), 224 **Lesser Scaup** at Thrashers L.Pk., *Amherst* 23 Feb (MJ), and 41 **Common Goldeneyes** at L. Monticello, *Fluvanna* 31 Jan (ph. ST). There were several **Long-tailed Duck** sightings, including one at Liberty Corner Farm, *Albemarle* 22 & 30 Dec (ph. m. obs.), 4 at the Georgia-Pacific Settling Ponds, *Bedford* 28 Jan through 10 Feb (ph. BE, JS), and one at L. Monticello, *Fluvanna* 21 & 22 Jan (ph. ST, KKO). Especially rare in midwinter, an imm. m. **Surf Scoter** was at Snowden Dam, *Amherst* 2 Feb (ph. BE). A **White-winged Scoter** was at Snowden Dam, *Amherst* 14 to 21 Feb, when it was joined by 2 others (ph. BE). Remarkably,

there were 2 **Black Scoters**, an ad. m. at Everett L., *Bedford* 20 through 29 Dec (ph. BE, m. obs.) and another at Hope of Glory Farm, *Fluvanna* 2 Feb (ph. ES, TS, ST). Fifty-eight **Common Mergansers** was a notable count at Snowden Dam, *Amherst* (BE, MJ).

GREBES-FLYCATCHERS

About annual in the Region, the lone **Red-necked Grebe** report came from Ivy L., *Bedford* 28 Jan (MB, BE). A **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** dropped into a feeder in Lynchburg 10 Jan (ph. v.r. LA). A **Rufous Hummingbird** continued from the fall period at a feeder on Fosters Branch Rd., *Albemarle* until 5 Jan (CC, SB).



The Fosters Branch Rd., *Albemarle* Rufous Hummingbird, photographed 28 Oct by Charlotte Clements

An overwintering **Spotted Sandpiper** was at Reusen's Dam, Lynchburg 8 through 11 Feb (ph. LA). The returning pair of **Sandhill Cranes** was detected at Green Springs, *Louisa* 29 Dec through 15 Feb (a.r. GG). Still very rare in the Region, 2 **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were picked out of the large gull flocks at L. Anna, *Spotsylvania* 17 Feb (ph. TD). Three **Golden Eagle** reports was well above average for this scarce northern raptor; one was at Puppy Cr. Rd., *Amherst* 26 Jan (MB, JP, WT), another at Montpelier, *Orange* 3 Feb (ph.

GG), and possibly the same individual at Old Rapidan Rd., *Orange* 24 Feb (ph. FA). A **Rough-legged Hawk** was an unexpected and very rare find at Peavine Hollow Rd., *Albemarle* 9 Feb (PM). A **Short-eared Owl** was detected at Carysbrook Plantation, *Fluvanna* 27 Jan (ST, TG). This species is rare in the Region away from wintering areas in Green Springs, *Louisa*. An exceedingly rare visitor to the state, a **SAY'S PHOEBE** at Sandidge's Rd., *Amherst* 24 Dec (ph. MB, m. obs.) represented the first Regional record; it continued in the nearby vicinity until 25 Jan (m. obs.).



Mike Boatwright documented this Say's Phoebe in *Amherst* 8 Jan.

VIREOS-BUNTINGS

A late **Blue-headed Vireo** was observed in Mechanicsville, *Hanover* 4 Dec (JM). A rare winter wanderer in the Region, a **Black-capped Chickadee** was noted almost daily at a feeder at Wilson Ct., Charlottesville 14 Dec through 25 Feb (ph. DC). Up to 3 **Brown-headed Nuthatches** were newly discovered at L. Monticello, *Fluvanna* 17 Dec (ph. DC, m. obs.) and continued through the end of the period; 2 continued at Willow Ridge Rd., *Louisa* 26 Dec (ph. AR). A **House Wren** was very late or wintering at Carysbrook Plantation, *Fluvanna* 29 Dec (ph. AR). A **Wood Thrush** at L. Monocan, *Nelson* 11 Dec (ph. DC, ES, TS) was extremely late, coming close to the Regional late date set the previous winter. Eastern North America experienced a large scale **Evening Grosbeak** irruption, and several made it all the way to the Central Region. Four were in Keene, *Albemarle* 9 Dec (JF), another in *Amherst* the same date (ph. MB). Both of these reports came after heavy snowfall the previous night. Singles were reported on the CHCBC,

from Ivy Farms, *Albemarle* 5 through 12 Jan (ph. RK), at Gentry Ln., *Albemarle* 20 Jan (ph. JP), and up to 4 at Quiggle Farm, *Caroline* 30 Jan through 6 Feb (ph. CQ). Very difficult to pin down as the species' range barely enters the Region, 11 **Red Crossbills** were photographed on the BFMCBC. A rare winter visitor not recorded annually in the Region, a **Lapland Longspur** was found at Carysbrook Plantation, *Fluvanna* 11 Dec (ph. ST, TT). Locally, this species is almost always associated with snowfall that drives the birds to the edges of crop fields. There were three reports of wintering **Baltimore Orioles**: a returning bird on Sunset Ave, Charlottesville 3 Dec through the end of the period (ph. BM), another at Woodbine Dr., Lynchburg 11 Dec through 4 Jan (BT), and 9 & 13 Jan in Mechanicsville, *Hanover* (KKr, ph. DH). A very rare wintering **American Redstart** was found at James R. Heritage Trail, *Amherst* 2 Feb (ph. JS). Another rare wintering **Cape May Warbler** visited a feeder at Entwood, *Hanover* 22 Dec through 20 Jan (ph. NC). A m. **PAINTED BUNTING** visiting a feeder in Mechanicsville, *Hanover* 27 Dec (ph. DH, m. obs.) delighted visiting birders through the end of the period.



Painted Bunting photographed by David Hawkins 16 Feb in Mechanicsville, *Hanover*

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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

Temperatures and precipitation averaged near normal in December and January but jumped above normal in February with the temperature averaging two degrees above normal and precipitation nearly an inch above normal. One noteworthy weather event was the second largest snowfall ever recorded in December in Richmond when 11.5 inches of snow fell on December 9. The record is 15 inches recorded on December 22 way back in 1908. Two long running Christmas Bird Counts were completed on December 16, the 79th annual Hopewell CBC and the 42nd annual Williamsburg CBC. Hopewell recorded 118 species and Williamsburg recorded 120. High counts, low counts, and general highlights of both counts can be found in the text. This season was noteworthy for the number of unseasonal species that remained in the area, continuing an ongoing trend. Rarities included Eurasian Wigeon, Black-headed Gull, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Western Tanager, and Painted Bunting.

Abbreviations: Ancarrow's (Ancarrow's Landing, Richmond); City Point (Petersburg National Battlefield-City Point Unit, Hopewell); Curles Neck (Curles Neck Farm, *Henrico*); Dutch Gap (Dutch Gap Conservation Area, *Chesterfield*); Hog (Hog Island WMA, *Surry*); Shirley (Shirley Plantation, *Charles City*)

Christmas Bird Counts: HoCBC (Hopewell, 16 Dec); WiCBC (Williamsburg, 16 Dec)

GEESE-GULLS

Seven **Ross's Geese** were counted on the HoCBC at Curles Neck, a new high count. The only other location where Ross's Geese were noted was on nearby Turkey Island Rd., *Henrico*. One was there 18 Jan (ph. NB), 4 were present 7&11 Feb (ph. ABr), and 3 were there 13 Feb (ph. ABr). **Cackling Goose** reports included a count of 20 on the HoCBC at Curles Neck, 8 at Shirley 14 Feb (AR, KW,

TM, JW), 2 at Crewes Channel, *Henrico* 15 Jan (ph. JF), singles at the James River Park Pipeline Walk, Richmond 2 Dec (WF), Shirley 1 Jan (WF) and Turkey Island Rd., *Henrico* 11&13 Feb (ph. ABr). A new high count of 47 **Wood Ducks** was established on the WiCBC. An excellent count of 600 Wood Ducks was made on 18 Feb in the marsh at Henricus Historical Pk., *Chesterfield* (SR). A count of 44 **Northern Shovelers** was a new high count on the WiCBC. A m. **EURASIAN WIGEON** was an excellent find among a flock of **American Wigeon**, **Gadwall**, and **Ring-necked Ducks** at a roadside pond on Turkey Island Rd., *Henrico* 9 Feb (ph. ABr). A single **Northern Pintail** on the HoCBC was a new low count. Likewise, a single **Green-winged Teal** was a new low count on the WiCBC. Two hundred and four **Greater Scaup** and 848 **Lesser Scaup** were both new high counts for the WiCBC. Four **Surf Scoters** were at Yorktown, *York* 26 Dec & 3 Jan (BW). A **White-winged Scoter** was photographed at Jamestown Is., *James City* 12 Feb (BW). Two **Black Scoters** were at Yorktown, *York* 26 Dec & 3 Jan (BW). An ad. m. **Long-tailed Duck** was spotted at Swift Creek Res., *Chesterfield* 2 Feb (SR). A **Red-necked Grebe** was noted off Yorktown, *York* 23 Dec (MB). A single **Clapper Rail** was a low count on the WiCBC. A **Sora** was seen briefly and then heard calling at the Swamp Bridge section of Newport News Park, *York* 19 Jan (AR). An out of season **Spotted Sandpiper** was seen well at Dutch Gap 6 Jan (JE). A **BLACK-HEADED GULL** photographed at Curles Neck during the HoCBC represented one of only a handful of Virginia records away from the immediate coast. New high counts for the HoCBC included 5091 **Laughing Gulls** and 22,532 **Ring-billed Gulls**. A color banded first-cycle **Herring Gull** at the Jamestown Ferry, *James City/Surry* 18 Feb (ph. BT) had been banded before it was able to fly near Manhattan, New York, NY 26 Jun 2018. The only **Iceland Gull** reported in the Region was a first-cycle Kumlien's found in the James R. section near the T. Tyler Potterfield Memorial Bridge,

Richmond 8 Feb (ph. EO). The bird was seen off and on in the same general area until at least 19 Feb (m.obs.).

PELICANS-SPARROWS

Three **American White Pelicans** was a new high count for the WiCBC. American White Pelicans were observed at Hog throughout the period with the peak count an estimated 40 on 17 Feb (NN, JS, m.obs.). An imm. **Little Blue Heron** was near Jamestown, *James City* 1 Jan, establishing a first local winter record (ph. BB). Likely the same bird was seen at Hog 9 Feb (ph. SU). More new high counts for the WiCBC included 326 **Black Vultures**, 32 **Red-shouldered Hawks**, and 2 **Merlins**. An **ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER** appeared briefly at Ancarrow's on 29 Dec (ph. PB). Despite subsequent searching, the bird was not relocated again until 6 Jan (AB et al.) after which the bird became more reliable and was seen by many until 28 Jan (m.obs.).



Paul Bedell's 29 Dec photo of the Ash-throated Flycatcher at Ancarrow's Landing, Richmond

A **White-eyed Vireo** was a good find at Westover Plantation, *Charles City* during the HoCBC. Two **Blue-headed Vireos** was a new high count for the WiCBC. Other Blue-headed Vireo reports included a continuing bird at Ancarrow's 1 Dec–6 Jan (m. obs.), one at Bassett Hall Nature Trail, Williamsburg 2 Jan (ph. BB), one at Kiwanis Park, Williamsburg 20 Jan (ph. AR, NN), and one on Carter's Mill Rd., *Henrico* 14 Feb (ph. AR, KW, TM, JW). Three **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** on

Turkey Island Rd., *Henrico* 2 Dec were noteworthy (ph. ABr). It seems **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** have become an expected species in the Region during winter, especially in December. There were several reports this winter including up to 3 seen at Ancarrow's throughout the period. Other sightings included 4 tallied on the HoCBC, one on Smokehouse Ln., *James City* 2 Dec (HB), one at City Point 2&5 Dec (ph. AB, ph. ABr), one on Jamestown Is., *James City* 5 Dec (NB et al.), one at Dutch Gap 8 Dec–1 Jan (m.obs.), one at Windsor Castle Pk., *Isle of Wight* 25 Dec (LS), one at Freedom Pk., *James City* (ph. BB) and, finally, one at Belle Isle, Richmond 19 Feb (ph. ABr). In what was an irruption year for this species, a lucky few in the state were able to lay eyes on an **Evening Grosbeak**. The only report from the Region this season was a single bird that visited a residential yard in the Tuckahoe neighborhood of *Henrico* 9 Dec (KL). Two **Clay-colored Sparrows** were tallied on the HoCBC, one at Curles Neck and the other at Shirley. A **Seaside Sparrow** was at Bay Tree Beach Rd., Seaford, *York* 15 Dec (JS). A **Lincoln's Sparrow**, rare in winter, was photographed at Shirley 26 Feb (ABr).

BLACKBIRDS-BUNTINGS

An ad. m. **YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD** was spotted in Ford's Colony among a large group of **Red-winged Blackbirds** 18 Feb (PR). Another presumed m. Yellow-headed Blackbird of unknown age was reported among a massive flock of mixed blackbirds in the Elberon area of *Surry* 5 Jan (JF). Four **Boat-tailed Grackles** were at Seaford, *York* 14 Jan (JS). An **Ovenbird** continued from the fall season, foraging in a small wooded section along east Broad St., Richmond. The bird was seen 5 Dec, 11, 17, & 23 Jan (ph. MEH). Two **Black-and-white Warblers** were recorded on the HoCBC. Two Black-and-white Warblers were noted at City Point 23 Dec (ph. ABr, JG). Up to 2 Black-and-white Warblers continued from the fall season at Ancarrow's throughout the period (m.obs.). Two **Orange-crowned Warblers** were at Hog 17 Feb (NN, JS). Orange-crowned Warblers were routinely reported throughout the Hopewell/Richmond area during the entire period. A **Nashville Warbler** continued from the fall season at Ancarrow's and was seen sporadically until 2 Feb (m.obs.). Another Nashville Warbler was spotted at the James River Park Pipeline Walk, Richmond 2 Dec (WF). A **Northern Parula** was photographed at Ancarrow's 27 Jan (B&TB). Presumably, the same bird was seen there again 16 Feb (SK). An ad. m. **Black-throated Blue Warbler** was well described at a backyard suet feeder in western *Henrico*

30 Jan (HW). Two **Palm Warblers** were at Ancarrow's 2 Dec (PB). A single Palm Warbler continued there through 2 Feb (m.obs.). A **Yellow-throated Warbler** was recorded on the WiCBC. Two other Yellow-throated Warblers were reported in the Region this winter, both in residential yards in *Chesterfield*. The first was seen 4 Dec (AM) and the second 7 & 21 Jan (ph. MM). A m. **Wilson's Warbler** was seen in Settler's Mill, *James City* 25 Dec, 1 & 5–11 Jan, 28 Jan and 1–4 Feb, representing a first local winter record (ph. BW, ph. JEa).

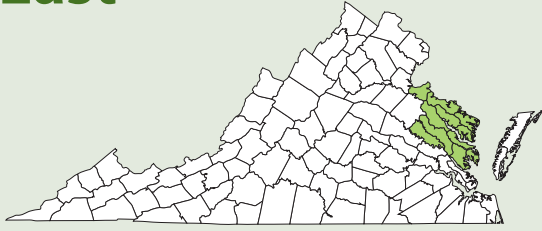


A Wilson's Warbler photographed 27 Jan by Bill Williams in Settlers' Mill, *James City*

A f. **Western Tanager** was at a feeder in Mathews Grant, *James City* 22 Jan, 13 & 20 Feb (ph. C&SP). A new high count of 500 **Northern Cardinals** was made for the WiCBC. A m. **PAINTED BUNTING** attended a feeder in Union Fort, Hopewell 14 Dec (ph. HC). This same bird was then recorded on the HoCBC. Not to be outdone, the WiCBC also recorded a Painted Bunting.

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East



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

During the '18–19 winter season in the Northern Neck and the Middle Peninsula, 154 species were recorded. Part of a trend noted across the state, many waterfowl were sparse across the Region. It was a poor year for winter berries, leading to low densities of highly frugivorous birds such as American Robins, Cedar Waxwings, and Yellow-rumped Warblers. It was also a poor year for the cone crop up north, giving way to an irruption of Red-breasted Nuthatches and northern finches such as Evening Grosbeak, Pine Siskin, Purple Finch, and even a Common Redpoll. Contrastingly, it was a great year for acorns which fueled a banner year for Red-headed Woodpeckers in some locations. Other highlights of the season included American White Pelican, Trumpeter Swan, Common Gallinule, Spotted Sandpiper, Green Heron, Common Raven, and Western Tanager. Eight all-time high counts and one unusual species were seen on WBCBC. There were four all-time highs and four unusual species recorded on WCBC. The MCBC recorded five high counts and four unusual species. There were numerous high counts and new species on the NLCBC as this was only the 3rd year of the count. Data for this report were sourced from eBird, Virginia Birds listserv, NNASnet (Northern Neck Audubon Society), the Gold Book, the USFWS, and four Christmas Bird Counts. Waterfowl bag limits and population declines from <https://www.ducks.org/hunting/atlantic-flyway-mallard-canada-goose-limits-approved-for-20192020>.

Abbreviations: Beaverdam (Beaverdam Pk., *Gloucester*); 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*); Hutchinson (Rappahannock River Valley NWR—Hutchinson Unit), *Essex*; K.G. Ponds (sand quarry ponds near the Rappahannock R., mostly along Rt. 3, *King George*); LaGrange (LaGrange La. near Sealston, *King George*); Leedstown (*Westmoreland*); New Pt. Comfort (New

Pt. Comfort Preserve, *Mathews*); The Pocket (in Pamunkey Indian Reservation along the Pamunkey R., *King William*); USFWS (US Fish and Wildlife Service)

Christmas Bird Counts: MCBC (*Mathews*, 30 Dec); NLCBC (*Northumberland–Lancaster*, 28 Dec); WBCBC (Washington's Birthplace, 16 Dec); WCBC (Walkerton, 5 Jan)

WATERFOWL

The 5 **Snow Geese** observed at Hughlett as part of the NLCBC were the only ones reported in the Region this year. No **Greater White-fronted Geese** or **Ross's Geese** were reported in the Region this winter. Twelve **Cackling Geese** in four locations across three counties were present in Dec and early Jan (m. obs.). Numbers of **Canada Geese** were low compared to past years, with an average of 285 noted from 314 sightings in 154 locations. The season's high count was only 5000 in Leedstown during the WBCBC. This decline is consistent with the trend noted by USFWS in wintering Atlantic populations of this species. In 2018 gosling production of this population in its northern breeding grounds was virtually nonexistent because of cold temperatures and a late spring thaw. As a result, USFWS reduced the bag limit to one and shortened the hunting season to one month in the coming 2019–2020 season. Nineteen **Mute Swans** were seen in six locations. Two birds at NLCBC were the only ones reported on the four Regional CBCs. The **Tundra Swan** high count was 510 in a field off US 17 in *Essex* 25 Jan (m. obs.). An uncontested highlight of this season, one **TRUMPETER SWAN** was found as part of the MCBC, only reported once before in the Region—on the same count last year. At dusk, 90 **Wood Ducks** were seen flying into a marsh to roost in *King William* during the WCBC. Quite low for a high count, this year's **Northern Shoveler** maximum was a mere 15 at K.G. Ponds 10 Feb (FA). Continuing the trend from fall, it

was a great year for **Gadwall**. An all-time high of 570 was counted on private property in *King William* 8 Dec (FA). The highest count of **American Wigeon** reported in the Region was 45 in Leedstown 10 Feb (FA), far lower than many past seasons. **Mallard** numbers were down greatly this winter, with a high of 280 in Leedstown 19 Jan (FA). This is apparently part of the decline noted by USFWS which prompted them to lower next year's bag limit to two birds. The cause of this 41% decline since 2004 is unclear. Our wintering birds breed in Eastern Canada and Northeastern US. In Canada the breeding population has been stable, but apparently the Northeastern US populations have been struggling, especially in New York and Pennsylvania. This winter's maximum single-location count of 50 **American Black Ducks** was in Leedstown for the WBCBC, extremely low for a high count which in past years has been as high as 350. **Canvasback** numbers dropped immensely from last year's high of 6000 in West Point, *King William*, where none were reported this year. This year's high was 383, seen from a residence in *Gloucester* 14 Jan (BB). However, the species was found in more locations than many previous years including last. Yet another duck with a low high count, 350 **Ring-necked Ducks** at LaGrange 1 Dec (BH), was dwarfed by previous highs exceeding 6000. A new all-time eBird high count of 1200 **Greater Scaup** at Cole's Pt. 10 Feb (FA) vastly outnumbered the high of 400 **Lesser Scaup** at the same location on the same date. A new eBird seasonal high, 1000 **Surf Scoters** was reported at Hughlett 18 Dec (HC, JW). Less than a quarter of the past high, 450 **Black Scoters** were at Cole's Pt. 19 Jan (FA). Not recorded every year, 3 **White-winged Scoters** were reported at three locations this winter. The respectable high count of 350 **Buffleheads** in Montross, *Westmoreland* 1 Jan (AL) was significantly lower than the all-time Regional eBird high of over 2700. Less than half that of some previous winters, the high count of **Common Goldeneyes** was 58 at Bowlers Wharf, *Essex* 18 Dec (MC, JC). The MCBC recorded a new all-time high count of **Ruddy Ducks**, an impressive 4561.

QUAIL-OWLS

A healthy count of 20 **Northern Bobwhite** was reported at Hutchinson 29 Dec (NN). Another covey of 12 flushed across US 17 in *Middlesex* 23 Dec (MC, JC). Despite efforts to find them in suitable habitat where this species has been found in the past, only 4 were recorded on the WCBC. The 101 **Wild Turkeys** found on the WCBC was that count's second highest count. Fifty-two of those were at a farm in *King William*. **Pied-billed Grebes** were fairly scarce this

year with a maximum of 10 seen at Beaverdam in *Gloucester* 15 Jan (HC, RC), low for a high count. Tough to detect and not recorded every year, the season's sole **Virginia Rail** was briefly spotted in Leedstown as part of the WBCBC. A well-described imm. **Common Gallinule** was an exciting discovery in Walkerton, *King and Queen* 3 Feb (FA). This was a county first and the second winter record for the Region in eBird. For the first time since the 31 Dec 2000 count, no **American Coots** were recorded on WCBC. This count averages 59 per year with a high of 628. A late **Semipalmated Plover** was spotted at Bethel 26 Dec, the only one of the season and only the 5th winter record in eBird (ph. NN). With past eBird highs up to 230, this year's maximum of 20 **Killdeer** was very low for a high count. In eBird, a total of only 157 was reported at 33 locations. A **Spotted Sandpiper** was a count-week bird for the MCBC, only the third record for this CBC. There are no winter eBird records for this species in the Region. A flock of 23 **Short-billed Dowitchers** in Robins Neck, *Gloucester* (HC, RC) was a new winter eBird high count for the Region. In a trend seen throughout the Region, **Wilson's Snipe** were scarce this winter. Across six locations only 9 individuals were documented, 4 of which were seen on CBCs. The WCBC hit its all-time low count of just one this year. To put things in perspective, the WCBC averages 50 per year, and the highest count recorded on this CBC was on 31 Dec 2006. An all-time high for the count, 18 **Lesser Yellowlegs** were seen on the MCBC. A lingering **Laughing Gull** made an appearance at a residence in *Gloucester* 27 Dec (HC). Six thousand eighty-one **Ring-billed Gulls** marked the new all-time high for the WBCBC. A **Lesser Black-backed Gull**, uncommon but increasing in the Region, was found at K.G. Ponds 14 Jan (FA). Denoting a new seasonal high in eBird, 190 **Red-throated Loons** were counted at Bethel 26 Dec (NN). Two short of a winter eBird high count, 45 **Common Loons** were spotted off the Robert O. Norris Bridge in *Middlesex* 29 Dec (NN). Continuing a trend from fall of 2018, **Northern Gannets** were once again hard to come by. There were only six sightings of 21 individuals across the Region. A remarkable find, **American White Pelicans** were found in the Region for the first time in winter since 2016. On 15 Jan, a flock of 10 was seen on the beach at Bethel (CM-F) and later 9 (probably the same birds) were spotted in flight at New Pt. Wharf in *Mathews* (m. obs.). **Great Blue Herons** were less common than usual this winter. The WCBC total of 22 was far below its average of 36 and its high of 69. Only two eBird locations tallied this species in double digits. The high count of 18 at The Pocket 3 Feb (FA)

was unusual for a Region where counts over 25 are common. A lingering **Great Egret** at Gloucester Pt. Beach, *Gloucester* 19 Jan (RI) was the only one sighted this winter. Marking a new late date, a **Green Heron** was found in Leedstown 1 Dec (FA). This was the only one ever recorded in eBird in the Region in winter. No Night-Herons were reported this winter. Four short of a new high, 285 **Black Vultures** were counted on WCBC. Two **Ospreys** were found on MCBC, only the second sighting in the long history of this CBC. Usually an Osprey or 2 returns from the south in very late February or lingers into December, but none were reported this year. An astounding 77 **Bald Eagles** were counted on the WCBC, an all-time high for the count. On average 38 eagles are seen on the count per year, the previous high being 68 on 3 Jan 2010. This data supports the success story of this once-endangered species. **Eastern Screech-Owls** were once again uncommon. Only one bird was seen on the WCBC, which typically tallies 4 and has a high of 12. Yet again no **Barn Owls** or **Short-eared Owls** were reported this year, further evidence of the declining trend these grassland-dependent species are facing.

WOODPECKER-MIMIDS

This was a great winter for **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers**. Three short of a new Regional high, 11 were seen at a residence in *Gloucester* 13 Jan (HC). Additionally, a new all-time high of 27 was set on the MCBC. It was also a banner year for **Red-headed Woodpeckers**, a seasonally irruptive and acorn-dependent species. It has been three years since the last major population boom in the winter of '15–16. Denoting a new all-time Regional high, an amazing 24 individuals were found in Leedstown, contributing to the new WBCBC high of 37. Twenty-two were recorded on the WCBC, 7 higher than the species' average of 15. The WBCBC also set a new high of 78 **Red-bellied Woodpeckers**. Keeping up with the woodpecker trend, a new high of 11 **Hairy Woodpeckers** was attained on the MCBC. **American Kestrel** numbers were about average this winter with 45 individuals reported to eBird from 39 locations. Tying the previous all-time high set in 2016, three **Merlins** were spotted during the WBCBC. This count circle has become a fairly reliable area for these falcons in the wintertime over the years. Single **Peregrine Falcons** were documented at five locations in the area, 3 of which were at or around major river bridges. Although as a general trend the species is growing more numerous in winter, this year's high of a mere 3 **Eastern Phoebes** was down compared to those of past years. A total of 17 seen on

WCBC was quite a drop from last year's 87, and the previous year's 56. Although one count-week bird was seen in 2017, a first count-day **Blue-headed Vireo** was observed on the WCBC. An all-time high of 136 **Blue Jays** was achieved on the WBCBC, during which this winter's three highest counts of 26, 25, and 19 birds were tallied at separate farms in the Leedstown area. Two **Common Ravens** found on the WCBC were not only new for that CBC, but also the first eBird record for *King William*, further documenting the expansion of this species into the Coastal Plain. **Horned Larks** were oddly uncommon this winter in stark contrast to the past two years. Only 49 were seen at seven locations, 35 on the WBCBC alone. Ten individuals were recorded on the WCBC, the only other CBC able to find them. This was the species' lowest total on the WCBC since the 3 Jan 1999 count. Past single-location highs over 100 are not uncommon and have ranged up to 330. Not surprising during this irruption year, there were widespread reports of **Red-breasted Nuthatches** across the area. Sometimes all but absent from the Region, 110 were reported at 59 locations in eBird. The season's single-location high was 10 at a home in Warsaw, *Richmond* 14 Jan (RL). Tying this species' previous high in 2017, 11 were seen on the WCBC; and MCBC's whopping 54 was very close to the previous high of 58 on the 30 Dec 2012 count. Excluding the winters of 2017 and 2019, the count of this species has never exceeded 5 on any WCBC or 15 on any MCBC. The high of 33 **Brown-headed Nuthatches** at Cross Rd., *Gloucester* 8 Jan (HC, RC) set a new eBird all-time high count by one. Tying the previous seasonal high, 5 **House Wrens** were sighted at West Pt. Rail Yard, *King William* 19 Dec (AB). It was a good winter for these wrens, with 15 present in nine locations, far more than most winters. Up 2 from the previous high of three, 5 were counted on the WCBC. Not observed every year, the winter's only **Marsh Wren** was found at Hutchinson 29 Dec (NN). Two out-of-season **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** were seen this winter. One in *King William* was the first record for the WCBC. A second lingered in *Lancaster* until 8 Jan (JCoo). Less than half the past high of 14, the winter's largest **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** count was 6 at LaGrange 1 Dec (FA). The season's high of 42 **Eastern Bluebirds** was counted along a four-mile stretch of road in *Lancaster* 22 Dec (FAn). Another species with unusually low numbers was the **American Robin**. The high count was only 250 at Birthplace 23 Feb (MG). The WCBC tallied 835 robins, just over half the average of 1512 and eclipsed by that CBC's high of 4480 on 1 Jan 2006. **Gray Catbirds** showed well in the Region

this year. Twenty-seven were recorded at 18 locations with a high of 4 in Leedstown 19 Jan (FA).

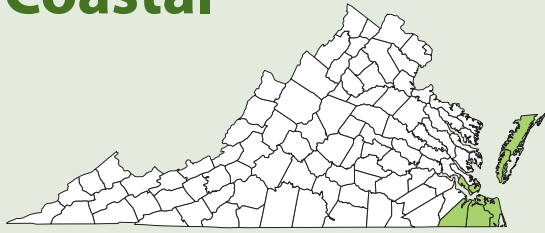
AMERICAN PIPIT-TANAGER

Remarkably, the one **American Pipit** on the MCBC was the only one reported in the entire Region. The WCBC, which averages 136, missed this species for the second time in count history. Pipit numbers have been very low during the past few years. No flocks of **Cedar Waxwings** numbering over 100 and only four over 50 were reported. The low numbers of waxwings and robins, both highly frugivorous, can be attributed to a poor season for winter berries such as holly and cedar. This winter's **Evening Grosbeak** irruption was well-represented here. A single bird was at The Pocket 19 Dec (ph. AB). Additionally, a flock of 5 was found on the MCBC. Evening Grosbeaks have not been seen on MCBC since 1988. Prior to that date, they were reported in two thirds of the years since the CBC began in 1969. Those count tallies averaged 31, with a whopping high of 204 in 1987. A **Common Redpoll**, only seen on two previous counts, was also reported on the MCBC. Doubling last year's total, 40 **Purple Finches** were noted at 17 locations in addition to the 6 found on the MCBC. A total of 14 **Pine Siskins** was found in eight locations. An all-time high 114 **Field Sparrows** were on the WBCBC, half of which were at Westmoreland Berry Farm, *Westmoreland*. The WBCBC also hit a new all-time high of 942 **White-throated Sparrows**. The season's only **Lincoln's Sparrow** was the first record for the WCBC and the first winter eBird record for the upper Middle Peninsula. A new seasonal eBird high count for the Region, 28 **Eastern Towhees** were seen in the Leedstown part of the WBCBC's new high count of 72. A **Baltimore Oriole** overwintered at a residence in *Gloucester* where it was sighted three times 9 Jan–20 Feb (DD). It was a poor winter for most blackbirds. A single-location high of 1200 **Red-winged Blackbirds** was dwarfed by past highs over 61,000. Just 595 were on the WCBC, which averages 37,171 with a high of 250,987 on the 31 Dec 2006 count. This was the WCBC's lowest tally since the 2 Jan 2002 count. Far below the average of 282 and especially the high of 4562, a mere 11 **Brown-headed Cowbirds** were spotted on the WCBC. Twenty **Rusty Blackbirds** were reported from four locations, with a high of 15 in Leedstown 10 Feb (FA). However, roughly 500,000 **Common Grackles** were seen near Tappahannock, *Essex* 4 Feb (EO). The observer noted that this astonishing "river of birds" was the largest flock of birds he had ever seen. Strangely, no other grackle flocks in the area numbered above 2500 and the WCBC

hit a new low of just 2. The season's sole **Orange-crowned Warbler** was documented at New Pt. Comfort 26 Dec (ph. NN). Five **Common Yellowthroats** were present in the Region this winter. A single bird was at Mill Stone Landing Rd., *Middlesex* 29 Dec (NN), and 2 were sighted at both West Pt. Rail Yard, *King William* 19 Dec (AB) and Gloucester Pt. Beach, *Gloucester* 19 Jan (RI). Six **Palm Warblers** were seen at five locations in the Region. The one spotted on the WBCBC was that count's third record. It was a banner year for **Pine Warblers**, with a total of 73 in 38 locations throughout all 11 counties. All-time Pine Warbler highs were achieved on two CBCs. An impressive 36 were totaled on the MCBC, while the WCBC tallied 16. The WCBC records an average of 3 per year, with a previous high of 14 on 31 Dec 2017. After last year's spectacular season for **Yellow-rumped Warblers**, it was fascinating to see how dramatically numbers fluctuate from year to year. Last year the high count was 1200 with ten single-location counts over 50. This year there were only 14 counts in the double-digits with a high of 35. Extremely dependent on fruits such as wax myrtle and cedar, this decline can most likely be attributed to the poor year for these winter berries. Finally, an ad. m. **Western Tanager** which arrived as an imm. in 2017 was seen daily during the winter and sporadically during the rest of the year at a residence in *Middlesex* (CN). The observer's eBird comments state "He showed up as a juvenile in 2017 and never left. I see him daily in the winter, the rest of the year it's sporadically." This is only the third Regional report in eBird for this species, all of which of which have been in the lower Middle Peninsula.

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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

The season was relatively mild and meteorologically uneventful. February in fact concluded ~5° F above normal for the month with rainfall totaling 1.6 inches above that month's historical mean. Such conditions certainly contributed to an unexpected number of over-wintering and/or late departing Parulidae. Among the most exceptional species documented were Tufted Duck, a long-staying Bar-tailed Godwit, Common Murre, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Townsend's Solitaire, Harris's Sparrow, and Bullock's Oriole.

Abbreviations: Back Bay (Back Bay NWR, Virginia Beach); CBBT (Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel s. of *Northampton*); Chinc. (Chincoteague NWR, *Accomack*); Craney (Craney Island Dredged Materials Management Area, Portsmouth); DOVES (Database for Ornithological Verification and Submission); Grandview (Grandview Nature Preserve, Hampton); FINWR (Fishermans Island NWR, *Northampton*); KSP (Kiptopeke SP, *Northampton*); Little Is. (Little Is. Pk., Virginia Beach); Rudee (Rudee Inlet, Virginia Beach); Sandy Bottom (Sandy Bottom Pk., Hampton); Whitehurst (Whitehurst Tract, Princes Anne WMA, Virginia Beach)

Christmas Bird Counts: BBBCBC (Back Bay, 29 Dec); CCCBC (Cape Charles, 30 Dec); CBBTCBC (Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, 26 Dec); ChCBC (Chincoteague, 29 Dec); DSCBC (Dismal Swamp, 17 Dec); LCCBC Little Creek, 31 Dec); NaCBC (Nassawadox, 16 Dec); NNCBC (Newport News, 15 Dec); NRCBC (Nansemond River, 2 Jan); WaCBC (Wachapreague, 15 Dec)

WATERFOWL-JAEGERS

A **Ross's Goose** made the WaCBC final tally. The Region's only reported **Greater White-fronted Goose** was at the Cheriton/Oyster landfill, *Northampton* 29 Jan (K&TB). **Cackling Geese** were tracked by m. obs. at several se. Virginia Beach sites 8 Dec (2 at Sherwood Lks. ph. RBi)

through 24 Feb (2 at Gum Bridge Rd./Charity Neck Rd. ph. RBi, JSc); one was at the Cheriton/Oyster, *Northampton* landfill for the CCCBC then subsequently 29 Jan (K&TB). The **Mute Swan** reported at the Cheriton/Oyster landfill, *Northampton* during the fall season was last noted there 1 Dec (PK, CO, RT); the season's peak count for this species was 3 at Chinc. 13–29 Dec (m. obs.). One to 3 m. **Eurasian Wigeons** were at Chinc. 4 Dec–17 Feb (m. obs.). These overlapped in time with one at Lynnhaven, Virginia Beach 27 Jan (ph. MP) and as many as 4 at Hoffer Cr., Portsmouth 13 Feb (ph. SM). A m. **EURASIAN GREEN-WINGED TEAL** was encountered at Craney 13 Dec (RBt, LS, AM, ph. BT) and 28 Feb (ph. ARa, m. obs.). The latter date marked the 7th consecutive year this subspecies has been found at that facility. An ad. f. **TUFTED DUCK** found 19 Feb (ph. AB, TT, m. obs.) behind the Cleveland St. Chartway Credit Union, Virginia Beach was last observed there 26 Feb (ph. m. obs.). This was the second state and Virginia Coastal Plain record. The Gold Book mentions two Piedmont records, although neither appears in VARCOM's DOVES database.



Marie Furnish's 20 Feb photo of the Tufted Duck that was off Cleveland St., Virginia Beach
A **King Eider** was off Back Bay for the BBBCBC. A **Common Eider** was at Messick, Poquoson 10 Dec (ph. AH). Two days later, an imm. m. was at Phoebus Waterfront Pk., Hampton

(ph. ABr) then a f. was noted nearby at Ft. Monroe 22 Dec (ph. JS). Thereafter, one or both were listed by m. obs. into the spring season. Elsewhere, one was spotted during the CBBTCBC and 2 were part of the BBCBC. The CBBTCBC also had 2 **Harlequin Ducks**; singles were at Lynnhaven, Virginia Beach 31 Dec (AB, ph. AD, LR, m. obs.) through 25 Feb (ph. BB) and at Ft. Monroe, Hampton 8 Feb (MH). One **Northern Bobwhite** recorded during the NaCBC was the only evidence of this species among the Region's ten CBCs. **Red-necked Grebes** were reported from the CBBT to Little Is. 26 Dec through 19 Feb with 2 being the most for any date. An **Eared Grebe** was at Chinc. 27 (JMa) & 30 Dec (TFe) and one was at Craney 14 Feb (AH, LS, ph. BT, DY). A **WESTERN GREBE** that appeared off Back Bay 3 Dec (ph. MS, ph. CB) was likely the same one reported intermittently between there and Little Is. to 5 Feb (ph. DS). Three **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds** were at Camp Pendleton, Virginia Beach 6 Dec and 2 Jan (K&TB). A f. was on FINWR for the CCCBC. Subsequently, one each were at Camp Pendleton, Virginia Beach (ph. SM) and at a Laurel Manor, Virginia Beach feeder 6 Jan (TM). The season's **American Avocet** high count was 112 at Craney for the NRCBC. A **BAR-TAILED GODWIT** discovered at Chinc. 1 Dec (SD) bolstered 2018/2019 birder lists into March. This was the state's fourth record for this species, all from Chinc.



This Bar-tailed Godwit, photographed here 29 Jan by Tom Beatty, was at Chinc. throughout the winter.

A **Spotted Sandpiper** was at Elizabeth R. Pk., Chesapeake 6 Jan & 3 Feb (ph. DG) and one was at Church Pt., Virginia Beach 21 Jan (TT). Four **Red Phalaropes** were off *Northampton* at (36.979, -74.586) 26 Jan (ph. RBi, m. obs.). Three **Parasitic Jaegers** were recorded for the BBCBC. On subsequent dates, 2 passed Little Is. 29 Dec (AB, ph. LC), followed by singles there 5 Jan (LA, GR, m. obs.), off

Virginia Beach 19 (ph. JSo) & 22 Jan (anonymous) and, again, off Little Is. 9 Feb (BA).

ALCIDS-WOODPECKERS

There were 8 **Dovekies** reported including one each off Little Is. 16 Jan (AB), off Chinc. (ph. FMr, JMr) 19 Jan, off Little Is. 25 Jan (K&TB) and 15 Feb (AB), and 4 off Little Is. 19 Feb (AB). Solid documentation of 3 different **COMMON MURREs** established Virginia's fourth and fifth state records, respectively; one was 2 mi. off Virginia Beach 3 Jan (ph. AR) and 2 were off *Northampton* at (37.024, -75.089) 26 Jan (ph. RBi, m. obs.).



Alexis Rabon of the Virginia Marine Aquarium and Science Center documented this Common Murre off Virginia Beach 3 Jan.



Rob Bielawski took this 26 Jan photo of two Common Murres off *Northampton*.

Razorbills were listed by m. obs. 26 Dec into spring with these notable high counts, all from Little Is.: 1456 between 0700-0900 on 9 Feb (AB, ph. RBi), 2293 on 15 Feb (AB), 1800 on 16 Feb (RBi, m. obs.), and an extraordinary new state record 7107 in 3 hours on 19 Feb (AB, TT). An eBird perusal revealed Razorbills were chronicled throughout the season from the Canadian Maritimes to North Carolina with only one total, 1230 from Cape May, NJ 9 Jan (MO), remotely approaching those from Virginia's near-shore

waters. There were 12 off Grandview 2 Feb (TT) and up to 6 at Ft. Monroe 8 Feb through late March (ph. m. obs.). The total of 98 **Atlantic Puffins** tallied off *Northampton* 26 Jan (ph. RBi, m. obs.) was this species' highest single-day count ever recorded in Virginia.



One of the record-setting number of Atlantic Puffins off *Northampton* 26 Jan, photographed by Rob Bielawski

One **Black-legged Kittiwake** was off Little Is. for the BBCBC and 7 were off *Northampton* 26 Jan (ph. RBi, ph. JF et al.). A **Black-headed Gull** was at Chinc. 19 Dec (CC, ph. NN); another was at Rudee 28 Dec & 4 Feb (K&TB), and an ad. was at PHP 12 Jan (AB) and 2 Feb (ph. RBi, ph. SM). A **Herring** × **Lesser Black-backed Gull** hybrid and a **"Thayer's" Iceland Gull** were documented for the CBBTCBC (ph. ESB). **"Kumlien's" Iceland Gull** reports included an ad. at 39th/40th Sts., Virginia Beach 4 Jan (ph. AB, ph. RBi, KL); separate first-cycle birds at Back Bay 5 Jan (ph. LA, ph. GR) and 88th St., Virginia Beach 6 Jan (ph. LA, m. obs.); an ad. (ph. K&TB) and a first-cycle (ph. RBi, AB) at Rudee 17 Jan; and, an ad. at 85th St., Virginia Beach 26 Jan (ph. KRi). A first-cycle **Glaucous Gull** was at KSP 25 Feb (ph. BB). A **Sandwich Tern** definitively photographed at Back Bay 17 Feb (ph. JM) was an unprecedented winter season record for the state. An imm. **Wood Stork** was near Caton Pk./Suburban Acres, Norfolk 14 (ph. APC) & 15 Jan (ph. RBi, TC). A f. **Anhinga** frequented L. Maury, Newport News 8 (JA) through 14 Dec (RS). Sixteen **American White Pelicans** passed over KSP 18 Jan (ph. SRo, m. obs.). A sequence of 20 Jan reports accounted for 15 along the s. Virginia Beach waterfront (ph. KR, TT) and 14 at Oyster, *Northampton* (MeP, ph. MiP). Subsequently, 4 were at KSP 26 Jan (MeP, MiP), 2 passed Rudee 2 Feb (DB, GM, PS, MW), 2 sailed from Grandview, Hampton to Poquoson 10

Feb (ph. NN, CC), and 4 were viewed from the Virginia Beach Fishing Pier 11 Feb (JK). A **Barn Owl** was at PHP 27 Feb (SKu, ESl, TS). **Short-eared Owl** detections included one at Ft. Monroe, Hampton 15 Dec (ph. ARa, FR), one to 2 at Messick, Poquoson 3 Jan (AH) through 20 Feb (SSw), one intermittently at Saxis, *Accomack* 18 Jan (SD) to 17 Feb (m. obs.) and one at Craney 14 Feb (ph. BT, DY). There were 2 **RED-COCKADED WOODPECKERS** on the DSCBC.

FLYCATCHERS-BUNTINGS

An **ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER** at Craggs Causeway, Virginia Beach during the BBCBC was still there 30 Dec (K&TB, ph. RBi, JS, RW). A **White-eyed Vireo** was near Little Is., for the BBCBC and one was at Naval Auxiliary Landing Field Fentress (Restricted), Chesapeake 31 Jan (ph. KS). A **GREAT TIT** made a "second sighting on [a] backyard feeder" in Norfolk 20 Dec (ph. JH). The proximity of this bird to the Norfolk Naval Station pier complex suggested ship-assisted provenance. A **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was at Back Bay 23 Dec (ph. JM) then 11 Jan (DP) and one was on the CCCBC. Virginia's sixth **TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE** was an exceptional addition to the BBCBC's final tally.



Will Russell took this cell phone shot of a **Townsend's Solitaire** at Back Bay during the BBCBC.

Single **Evening Grosbeaks** were in Chincoteague, *Accomack* 2 Dec (ph. JMa) and at Church Neck, *Northampton* 1 (RBi) & 2 Jan (BS). Twelve **Snow Buntings** were at Back Bay 2 Dec (PK, RT) then 2 were there 1 Jan (ph. RW). This species was also found from 82nd to 88th Sts., Virginia Beach 12 Dec (SK, ph. SM, TT, ph. RBi) through 5 Feb (CW) with a peak count of 16 on 26 Dec (ph. SR); 3 were at Grandview for the NNCBC and 4 were on the CBBTCBC. Noteworthy sparrow finds included a **Clay-colored Sparrow** at a Hobbs Rd., Virginia Beach feeder 31 Jan (GH), a **Lark Sparrow** at Nanney's Creek Rd., Virginia Beach 24 Feb (ph. AB, ph. RBi, ph. SM), 12 **"Ipswich" Savannah Sparrows** at Grandview 10 Feb (CC, NN), a **LeConte's Sparrow** at Whitehurst 23 Dec (AB), single **Lincoln's Sparrows** at Taste/Bayville farms, Virginia Beach 3 (AB, TT) to 14 Dec (KL) and at Whitehurst 10 Feb (ph. RBi), and a **HARRIS'S SPARROW** at Church Neck, *Northampton* 31 Dec (GA, TD, TF, ph. RK) ticked by m. obs. through 4 Jan. A m. **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was at Whitehurst 23 Dec (AB). For

a second consecutive winter a m. **BULLOCK'S ORIOLE** was in the Northampton neighborhood of Hampton, this season reported 5 Dec (ph. KE). **Brewer's Blackbirds** were chronicled at Breeze Farm, Virginia Beach 2 Jan (one-ph. SM) through 27 Feb (6-CH) with a high count of 13 on 5 Jan (ph. GR, m. obs.). At least a dozen different **Black-and-white Warblers** were found by m. obs. over the course of the season including 2 on the CCCBC, one on the LCCBC, and one on the NaCBC. There were 2 **Nashville Warblers** in Chincoteague, *Accomack* 29 Dec ChCBC, one at Sandy Bottom, Hampton 16 Jan (JS), and one at Windsor Pt., Norfolk 20 Jan into the spring season (ph. DC). Also of note were 2 **Cape May Warblers** in Hampton 28 Jan (ph. CK), a **Northern Parula** on the CCCBC, and a **Blackpoll Warbler** at Little Is. for the BBCBC. An "**Audubon's**" **Yellow-rumped Warbler** was documented off Deep Creek Rd., *Accomack* 7 & 22 Dec (ph. SS, VS). A **Yellow-throated Warbler** visited a feeder in the Pembroke section of Virginia Beach for a third consecutive winter; it was first noted this season 6 Dec (ph. MS) "the same day LAST (sic) December!". Additional confirmations of this species were one at a feeder near Larkwood Dr., Virginia Beach 28 Dec to at least 22 Jan (ph. RR), one at Back Bay 31 Dec (ph. DC), one at Chinc. 1 Jan (ph. CD), and one in Kempsville, Virginia Beach 20 Jan (ph. UD). Single **Prairie Warblers** were reported at Whitehurst 16 Dec (ph. RBi) and near Townsend, *Northampton* 26 Feb (MAB). A f.-type **Summer Tanager** was at a feeder in the Greenbrier East section of Chesapeake 9–20 Dec (ph. JP). A f. **Western Tanager** was at L. Windsor, Virginia Beach 13 Dec to 22 Jan (ph. LR) and a m. was at Butler's Bluff, *Northampton* for the CCCBC. A **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** at a Kempsville, Virginia Beach feeder 5 Dec (ph. UD) was a day ahead of an **Indigo Bunting** at Back Bay 6 Dec (ph. JM). Among at least 13 **Painted Buntings** reported in the Region was a f. at Sandy Bottom, Hampton 11 Dec (ph. MN) and a high count of 4 "on private property" in Virginia Beach 7 Jan (ph. PM).

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