



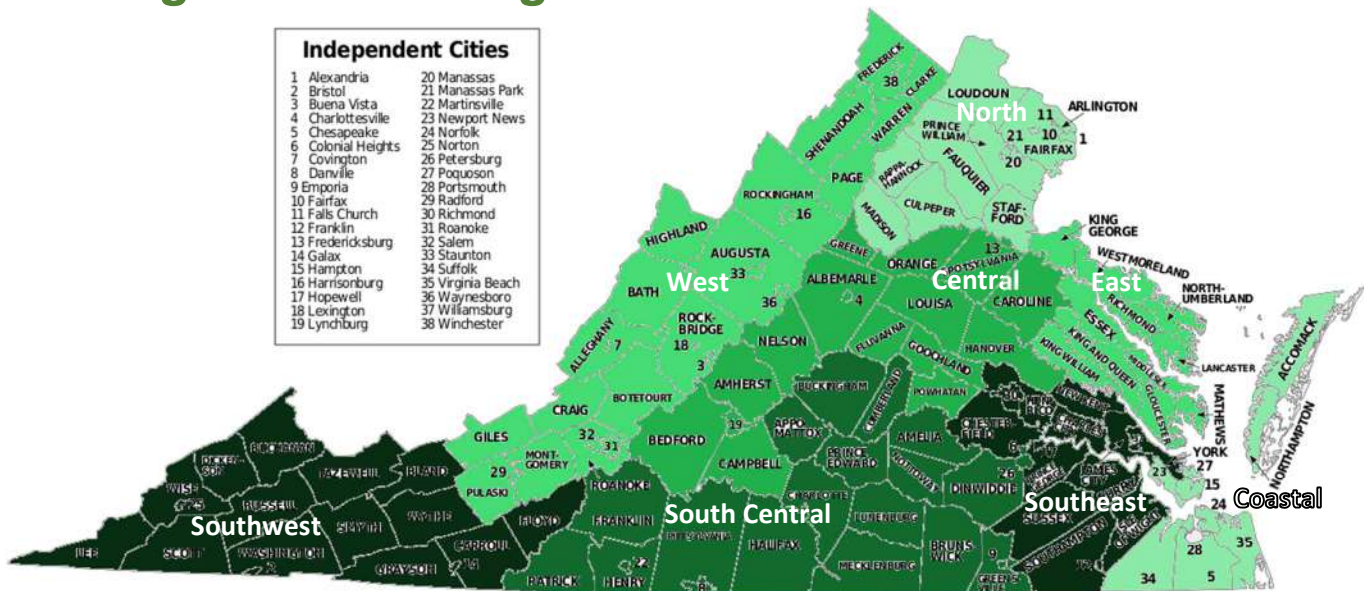
# VIRGINIA BIRDS

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# Virginia Birds Regions



## Virginia Birds

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Send reports to the appropriate Regional Editor. Photographs should be the highest resolution possible and sent to [max92701@gmail.com](mailto:max92701@gmail.com). Articles for consideration can be sent to [mhanthony2@gmail.com](mailto:mhanthony2@gmail.com).

### Season reports due to Regional Editors:

Winter (Dec – Feb): 15 Mar      Spring (Mar – May): 15 Jun  
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# Terms and Abbreviations

Species names appear in **bold** the first time mentioned, species on the Virginia Avian Records Committee (VARCOM) review list in **BOLD CAPS**, and county/independent city names in *italics*.

## Abbreviations

ad. (ads.)	adult(s)
a. r.	audio recording
BBS	Breeding Bird Survey
CBC	Christmas Bird Count
Cr.	Creek
Dr.	Drive
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, 4 <sup>th</sup> Ed. (2007).
Hwy.	Highway
Is.	Island(s), Isle(s)
imm. (imms.)	immature(s)
juv. (juvs.)	juvenile(s)
L.	Lake
Ln.	Lane
m.	male
m. obs.	multiple observers
Mt./Mtn.	Mount/Mountain
NAP	Natural Area Preserve
NF	National Forest
NFC	Nocturnal Flight Call
NHP	National Historical Park
NP	National Park
NWR	National Wildlife Refuge
ph.	photograph
Pk.	Park
Pkwy.	Parkway
Pt.	Point
R.	River
Rd.	Road
Res.	Reservoir
RP	Regional Park
Rt.	Route
SF	State Forest
SP	State Park
SR	State Road, State Route
VARCOM	Virginia Avian Records Committee
VDWR	Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources
v. r.	video recording
VSO	Virginia Society of Ornithology
WMA	Wildlife Management Area
*	specimen collected

*On the cover:* Phil Lehman's photo of Virginia's third Mountain Bluebird in *Botetourt* 8 May 2023.

## Regional Reports

### NORTH



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

### WINTER 2022–2023

After a cool, damp start to winter in December, the remainder of the season was drier and much warmer than average across the region. Highlights were many this season and included Ross's Goose in *Fairfax* and *Madison*; Black Scoter in *Stafford*; Iceland Gull in *Loudoun*; Northern Saw-whet Owl in *Fairfax*, *Prince William*, and *Rappahannock*; American White Pelican in *Stafford*; Ash-throated Flycatcher in *Fauquier*; Black-capped Chickadee in *Prince William*; the return of a Brown-headed Nuthatch to *Culpeper*; and birds very rarely encountered in winter, including Nashville Warbler in *Arlington* and *Fairfax*, Northern Parula in *Fairfax*, Yellow Warbler in *Alexandria*, *Arlington*, and *Fairfax*, Wilson's Warbler in *Loudoun*, and Indigo Bunting in *Fairfax*.

**Abbreviations:** Algonkian RP (Algonkian RP, *Loudoun*); Aquia Landing (Aquia Landing Pk., *Stafford*); Belle Haven (Belle Haven Pk., *Fairfax*); Crow's Nest NAP (Crow's Nest NAP, *Stafford*); Dyke Marsh (Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, *Fairfax*); Huntley Meadows (Huntley Meadows Pk., *Fairfax*); Mason Neck NWR (Mason Neck NWR, *Fairfax*); Mason Neck SP (Mason Neck SP, *Fairfax*); Pohick Bay RP (Pohick Bay RP, *Fairfax*).

**Christmas Bird Counts:** BCBC (Brooke, 16 Dec), CLCBC (Central Loudoun, 28 Dec); FBCBC (Fort Belvoir, 31 Dec).

### WATERFOWL—SHOREBIRDS

Observations of **Ross's Goose**, a rare but increasing winter visitor in the Region, included singles at Kingstowne L. in Franconia, *Fairfax* 12 Dec (ph. DLed) and along Oak Park Rd. near Madison, *Madison* 17–20 Dec (SC, AR, RW, ph. IT). Sightings of **Greater White-fronted Goose**, also a rare winter visitor in the Region, included one at a pond along McRaes Rd. n. of Airlie, *Fauquier* 20 Dec (NN); 2 at Cedar Run L. near Airlie, *Fauquier* 27 Dec (TMD); and singles at the New Bristow Village pond, *Prince William* 30 Dec (MZ), with 2 seen that afternoon; Woodbridge Veterans Memorial Pk., *Prince William* 6 Feb (JP), ph. by m. obs. through 12 Feb; and a pond along Tranquility Rd. in Purcellville, *Loudoun* 11 Feb (AG, ph. BHe, JY). **Cackling Geese** have become more frequent winter visitors and were observed throughout the Region this season. Four **Blue-winged Teal**, rare in winter in the Region, were seen at Huntley Meadows 23 Feb (RS) where they were ph. by m. obs. through the end of the period; the usual early date is 15 Mar. There were numerous reports of **Greater Scaup**, typically a rare winter visitor in the Piedmont, including 4 at L. Mooney Pk., *Stafford* 1 Jan (DLed); 2 at L. Ashby near Warrenton, *Fauquier* 8–13 Jan, with 4–6 there 8–

25 Feb (GSI, SSI); one at the New Bristow Village pond, *Prince William* 9 Jan (ph. VC) and again 7 Feb (THk); 5 at Edgar Tillett Memorial Pk., *Loudoun* 20–21 Feb (ph. JM, SM); 2 at Beaverdam Res., *Loudoun* 20 Feb (WP); one at L. Audubon in Reston, *Fairfax* 21 Feb (ph. JoB); 2 at Belvoir Pond, *Fauquier* 22–23 Feb (TMD); and 2 at the Verizon ponds in Ashburn, *Loudoun* 28 Feb (BHi). Reports of **Surf Scoter**, a rare winter visitor in the Region, included 2 at Aquia Landing 4 Dec (ph. AD), with a single seen 17–18 Jan (KG, SSu), and one ~8 mi. n. at the U.S. Marine Corps Base Quantico, *Stafford* 24 Feb (ph. AD). A **Black Scoter**, very rare in the Region, was also seen at Aquia Landing 1 & 8 Dec (ph. TSt). A **Long-tailed Duck**, a rare winter visitor inland, was seen at Roaches Run Waterfowl Sanctuary, *Arlington* 22 Dec (ph. DLed). There were two occurrences of **Rufous Hummingbird**, a rare but increasing early winter visitor in the Region. A banded HY f., said to be continuing, was seen along Emmett Rd. in Etlan, *Madison* 10 Dec (ph. IT). An ad. f. and a HY m., both banded, spent the winter at a residence on Thornton Gap Church Rd. near Sperryville, *Rappahannock*, seen through 3 Feb (m.) and 21 Feb (f.) (ph. DK). The f., which first appeared in Oct, has been wintering at this location since 2020. A **Sora**, fairly rare in winter in the Coastal Plain, was encountered at Huntley Meadows 26 Dec (GG) and subsequently seen occasionally and ph. by m. obs. through 11 Feb. Three Sora were heard from different sections of the marsh at Pohick Bay RP (FBCBC). The perennially wintering pair of **Sandhill Cranes** returned to the area of Algonkian RP around 13 Dec (ph. JeB, JM) and continued through the season, with 3 observed flying over on 10 Jan (MV). Additional reports included one over Hume Rd., *Fauquier* 29 Dec (EL); 5 over Huntley Meadows 1 Jan (WM); one on the ground at Beaverdam Res., *Loudoun* 8 Jan (ph. SBl); and 4 over Hebron Church Rd. near Madison, *Madison* 28 Feb (TMD, IT). A late **Least Sandpiper** seen at Dyke Marsh 26 Dec (ph. JS) was well past the 15 Nov Coastal Plain late date. There were increasing reports of **American Woodcock** from mid-Dec through

Jan, the period when the species is typically rare in our part of the Piedmont. High counts were 5 on 12 Jan (EA) and 3 on 13 Jan (PLy) at two close locations just w. of Dulles Int'l Airport, *Loudoun* and 2–3 throughout Jan at a location on Hume Rd., *Fauquier* (EL).

## GULLS—MIMIDS

There were few reports of **Bonaparte's Gull** in the Piedmont, where the species is a fairly rare winter visitor. They included one at the Warrenton Res., *Fauquier* 11 Dec (PS); 4 along Gideon Dr. in Woodbridge, *Prince William* 23 Feb (CB); and 4 at Mountain Run L. Pk., *Culpeper* 28 Feb (TMD). Two imm. **ICELAND GULLS**, a species very rare in the Piedmont other than at the Prince William County Landfill, were seen at the Loudoun County Landfill, *Loudoun* (CLCBC, ph. m. obs.). Reports of **Forster's Tern**, rare in the inland Coastal Plain



Howard Wu's photograph of two **American Tree Sparrows** from Sully Woodlands in *Fairfax* on 8 Jan.

in winter, included one at Aquia Landing 10 Dec (KG, DLed) and 2 there on the BCBC; 4 over Accokeek Cr. from the Crow's Nest Research Center, *Stafford* 11 Dec (FBC); one at Pohick Bay RP 14 & 27 Feb (ph. SSu); and 3 at Crow's Nest NAP (BCBC, ph. JG). Three reports of **American White Pelican**, rare away from the coast in winter, came from Crow's Nest NAP: 7 along Potomac Cr. on the BCBC (ph. AH), 14 on 8 Feb (ph. JG, ML), and 6 on 25 Feb (TSm). Reports of **American Bittern**, a rare winter visitor in the Piedmont, included singles at the

Flat Run wetland along Thoms Rd. near Remington, *Culpeper* 7 Dec (TMD) and Burke L. Pk., *Fairfax* (FBCBC). Winter sightings of **Great Egret**, rare in the Coastal Plain and few in the Piedmont, included singles at the New Bristow Village pond, *Prince William* 6 Dec (JP); along Accokeek Cr. from the Crow's Nest Research Center, *Stafford* 11 Dec (FBC); Crow's Nest NAP (BCBC) (probably the same individual) and 16 Feb (TSt); and Aquia Harbor, *Stafford* 1 Feb (EG). Reports of **Golden Eagle**, a rare winter visitor in the Region, included a possible bird over the Warrenton Res., *Fauquier* 24 Dec (PS) and a well-ph. bird over Eldon Farms near Woodville, *Rappahannock* 7 Jan (VH, SK, ph. PLa, ph. SP1), seen again 15 Jan. Four teams on the FBCBC heard the predawn calls of **Northern Saw-whet Owl** from spots ranging from 2 to 10 mi. apart at Huntley Meadows; Occoquan Bay NWR, *Prince William*; Mason Neck SP; and Mason Neck NWR. Additional reports included 2 heard along Piney Branch Tr. in Shenandoah NP, *Rappahannock* 25 Feb (anon.) and one heard from Lower Keyser Run Rd. in Shenandoah NP, *Rappahannock* 26 Feb (DA, JJ) during daylight hours; these two locations are ~3 mi. apart. A decent flight of Northern Saw-whet Owls was experienced in the East this past fall (SW, *vide* SSu), perhaps explaining the numerous reports this period. There were also many reports this period of **Peregrine Falcon**, previously a rare transient and winter visitor inland. An **ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER**, only the 3rd record in the Region, continued from fall at Sky Meadows SP, *Fauquier*, seen by m. obs. through 5 Dec (ph. SSu). A **BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE**, a rare and irregular visitor in the n. Piedmont, was seen at Leopold's Preserve, *Prince William* 23 Feb (ph. AR), only the 2nd record in eBird in the county. **Tree Swallows** arriving well before the Coastal Plain early date of 20 Mar included 3 at Aquia Landing 11 Feb (THn, RM, WM); one at Leesylvania SP, *Prince William* 13 Feb (THk); 7 at Mason Neck SP 23 Feb (MS); and 6 at Dyke Marsh 24 Feb (JE, SSm). After its first 2022 appearance at Mountain Run L. Pk., *Culpeper* 25 Nov, a **Brown-headed**

**Nuthatch** was next found 21 Dec (BC) then occasionally by m. obs. through the end of the period. This species has a storied history at this location, the only site in the Region supporting the species in the last 8 years. Seen almost monthly year-round from Sep 2017 to Feb 2020, it had been found just once in the interval (in Jul 2021) until now. Observations of **House Wren**, a rare winter visitor in the Piedmont, included singles at the Laurel Hill Equestrian Center, *Fairfax* 27 Dec (JK) and again 31 Dec (JK, JM, GSh) and the Fairfax County Landfill, *Fairfax* 31 Dec (RB, SPr). There were many reports of **Gray Catbird** and **Brown Thrasher** throughout the Region, both typically rare but increasing winter visitors.

## GROSBEAKS—DICKCISSEL

Reports of **Evening Grosbeak**, in most winters a rare visitor to the Region, included singles at a residence in Chantilly, *Loudoun* 5 Dec (M&BC) and again 8 Dec (a. r. AC); a residence in Ashburn, *Loudoun* 17 & 20 Dec (HS); and near the Ashburn Metro stop, *Loudoun* 13 Jan (BHi). A **Lapland Longspur**, a species whose rare winter visits to the Piedmont are mainly in the extreme n., was seen further s. along Grassdale Rd., *Fauquier* 26 Dec (SBo, AC); 2 were seen there 1 Jan. A **Grasshopper Sparrow** (Piedmont extreme late date 5 Nov) was seen at Algonkian RP 11 Dec (ph. JM); there are only five previous winter records in the Region. Reports of **Lincoln Sparrow**, a rare early winter visitor in the Region and even rarer in mid-winter, included at Huntley Meadows 10 Dec (ph. SR); the Flat Run wetland along Thoms Rd. near Remington, *Culpeper* 28 Dec (TMD); and Sully Woodlands, *Fairfax* 22 Jan (ph. anon). Single **Baltimore Orioles**, fairly rare in the inland Coastal Plain in winter, made appearances at Belle Haven 7 Dec (ph. AR); Mount Vernon Tr. in *Alexandria* 18 Dec (ph. M&TG/T); a residence e. of Fredericksburg, *Stafford* 4 Jan (ph. JH); and a residence in the Westridge subdivision of Woodbridge, *Prince William* 9 Feb (CB). An impressive 200 **Rusty**

**Blackbirds**, a declining species in the East, were seen at the Flat Run wetland along Thoms Rd. near Remington, *Culpeper* 26 Feb (TMD). A late **Tennessee Warbler** was seen at Four Mile Run Pk., *Alexandria* 29 Dec (ph. TK), well past the Coastal Plain extreme late date of 21 Nov. Single **Nashville Warblers**, a rare winter visitor in the Region with only four previous records, were seen at Belle Haven 7 Dec (ph. AR) and the Pentagon parking lot, *Arlington* 23 Dec (SSt). There were several sightings of **Common Yellowthroat**, typically a rare winter visitor in our part of the Coastal Plain, including singles at Dyke Marsh 27 Dec (JX), seen by m. obs. through 11 Jan; at Mason Neck NWR 31 Dec (CC, HL, MM), seen again 12 Jan; at Hallowing Point Association Pk., *Fairfax* 31 Dec (KG, AW); from the Four Mile Run observation deck, *Arlington* 4 Jan (EW); and at Jackson Miles Abbott Wetlands Refuge, *Fairfax* 16 Jan (SPz). A **Northern Parula**, a species with a just a handful of previous winter records in the Region, continued at Dyke Marsh from late fall through 5 Dec (ph. SBi). Reports of **Yellow Warbler**, another species with few winter records in the Region, included at a residence in Vienna, *Fairfax* 5 Dec (DLeb); at Jones Point Pk., *Alexandria* 8 Dec (BW), seen here and nearby by m. obs. through 9 Jan (ph. LB); and from the Four Mile Run observation deck, *Arlington* 5 Feb (ph. KW). Single **Palm Warblers**, a rare early winter visitor inland, were found at the Historic Port of Falmouth, *Stafford* 11 Dec (ph. AD); near Belle Haven 17 Dec (BHo, BJ, SSu); and along Poor House Ln. n. of Unison, *Loudoun* 31 Dec (ph. LM). There were numerous reports of **Pine Warbler**, no longer overly rare in the Piedmont in winter, including one that lingered from fall through the end of the period at a residence near Purcellville, *Loudoun* (ph. MG). A **Wilson's Warbler**, a species with just three previous winter records in our part of the Piedmont and rare throughout the Region, was seen along Kincora Heron Tr. in Dulles, *Loudoun* 18 Dec (ph. NH). An **Indigo Bunting** seen at Waples Mill Meadow Pk., *Fairfax* 4 Dec (ph. WB) and again 21 Dec was only the 3rd winter sighting in the Region and the 5th in the entire

Piedmont. A **Dickcissel**, a rare winter visitor in the Region, was seen at a feeder on Benson Dr. in *Alexandria* 16 Jan (ph. GG).

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## SPRING 2023

Temperatures were slightly above average in March and April before turning cooler in May, while rainfall was generally below average for the season. Highlights this season included the

second Clapper Rail in the Region and a rare spring White Ibis in Fairfax.

**Abbreviations:** Algonkian RP (Algonkian RP, *Loudoun*); Bles Pk. (Bles Pk., *Loudoun*); Dyke Marsh (Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, *Fairfax*); Frying Pan Farm Pk. (Frying Pan Farm Pk., *Fairfax*); George Mason Conference Center (George Mason Conference Center, *Fairfax*); Huntley Meadows (Huntley Meadows Pk., *Fairfax*); Occoquan Bay NWR (Occoquan Bay NWR, *Prince William*); Warrenton Res. (Warrenton Res., *Fauquier*).

## **WATERFOWL—CRANES**

A **Tundra Swan** seen at Huntley Meadows 18 May (ph. EP) lingered past the Coastal Plain late date of 10 Apr. A late **Green-winged Teal** was seen at Four Mile Run Pk., *Alexandria* 30 May (FB-J), well past the 15 Apr Coastal Plain late date. Four late **Canvasbacks** were seen at Meadowood Recreation Area, *Fairfax* 5 May (JHu, LMc, RuM) and 4 again nearby at the George Mason Conference Center 12–13 May (KG); 10 Apr is the Coastal Plain late date. A **Redhead** lingered at Mason Neck SP, *Fairfax* 2 May (KG, SSu) and possibly the same individual nearby at the George Mason Conference Center 12–13 May (KG); the Coastal Plain late date is 15 Apr. A **Ring-necked Duck**, a species whose usual Piedmont late date is 15 Apr, was seen at the Warrenton Res. and nearby Airlie Res., *Fauquier* 21 & 27 May, respectively (PSa); small numbers occasionally linger in the Region into early June. There were numerous reports of **Greater Scaup**, typically a rare transient in the Piedmont, including high counts of 5 at the Nokesville Rd. interchange ponds, *Manassas* 5 Mar (AB, JuM) and 4 at L. Ashby near Vint Hill, *Fauquier* 12 Mar (GS, SSl). **Lesser Scaup** lingering in the Piedmont past the extreme late date of 23 Apr included 2 at Huntsman L. near Burke, *Fairfax* 4 May (ph. BR); 3 at Bles Pk. 5 May (BE); and one at L. Audubon in Reston, *Fairfax* 21 May (ph. JR). Multiples remained at the George Mason Conference Center past the

usual Coastal Plain late date of 20 Apr until at least 20 May, when 9 were seen (GF), as did one at Occoquan Bay NWR until 21 May (LC, GF, EK). Lingered past the Piedmont extreme late date of 27 Apr were single **Buffleheads** at the Warrenton Res. 1 May (PSa) and the private Seven Islands Refuge near Woodville, *Rappahannock* 7 May (ph. IT), seen again 12 May; and 2 at Occoquan RP, *Fairfax* 15 May (KG, ph. SSu). Seen and ph. by m. obs. throughout the period were 2–3 Buffleheads at Occoquan Bay NWR; the Coastal Plain usual late date is 10 Apr. A pair of **Northern Bobwhites** were observed in apparent courtship atop a stone wall on a farm near Middleburg, *Loudoun* 20 Apr (*vide* LMi). A **Black-billed Cuckoo** was seen at Waples Mill Meadow Pk., *Fairfax* 21 Apr (JB), prior to the Piedmont extreme early date of 27 Apr. A **Chuck-will's-widow**, now rare throughout the Region, was heard at Marine Corps Base Quantico, *Prince William* 18 Apr (AD). There were more than a dozen reports of **Eastern Whip-poor-will** in the Region this season, all in the Piedmont. A **CLAPPER RAIL**, only the second recorded in the Region, was seen at Woodmill Hill Pk., *Alexandria* 13 May (ph. BM). There were just 2 reports of **Virginia Rail** in the Piedmont, where the species is a fairly rare and possibly declining transient; they included 2–3 at Leopold's Preserve, *Prince William* throughout Mar (ph. TH), where one continued through 16 Apr, and 4 at the Woods at Warrenton Trail, *Fauquier* 31 Mar (TMD, NN), with 3 there 10 Apr and one 14 Apr. Single **Soras** made early appearances at Occoquan Bay NWR 10 Mar (BR, CR) and Huntley Meadows 19 Mar (ph. JF); the Coastal Plain early date is 15 Apr. A **Common Gallinule**, rare across the Region, was seen at Bles Pk. 16 Apr (ph. JiM) where it lingered through 13 May. The pair of **Sandhill Cranes** that spent most of the winter at Algonkian RP and nearby areas were seen and ph. by m. obs. through 9 Mar. Additional reports of Sandhill Crane included 3 flying overhead at Warrenton Res. 5 Mar (ph. PSa); 7 circling over a residence in Herndon, *Fairfax* 6 Mar (HW); and one that



flew into the Trump Nat. Golf Course, *Loudoun* 16 Apr (ph. DCz).

## SHOREBIRDS—HERONS

A **WHIMBREL**, rare w. of the Chesapeake Bay, was observed at Dyke Marsh 17 May (KG). An early **Spotted Sandpiper** was seen at Julie J. Metz Wetlands Bank, *Prince William* 13 Mar (BG) and possibly the same one again ~1 mi. away at Neabsco Cr. Inlet, *Prince William* 24 Mar (MS); 15 Apr is the Regional early date. A **Bonaparte's Gull** was seen well past the Regional late date of 30 Apr at Leesylvania SP, *Prince William* 21 May (LC, GF, EK). There were numerous reports of **Caspian Tern**, formerly a rare transient in the Piedmont. Up to 10 and as many as 20 (15 Mar) **Forster's Terns** returned early to areas around Mason Neck in



Howard Wu's photo of a **Clay-colored Sparrow** at Frying Pan Farm Pk. in *Fairfax* on 6 May.

*Fairfax* and *Prince William*, seen by m. obs., the first appearing 4 Mar (BG); the Coastal Plain early date is 10 Apr. Possibly one and the same **Anhinga**, a species with only a handful of records in the Region, made appearances flying over Highland School in Warrenton, *Fauquier* 4 Apr (v. r. NN) and, less than a mi. away, perched at Warrenton Res. 6 May (MCa, PSa). **American White Pelicans**, a rare but increasing inland visitor, which were seen in small numbers since mid-Dec at Crow's Nest NAP, *Stafford* including the morning of 8 Mar, suddenly increased to ~60 that afternoon along adjacent Potomac Cr. (LH). Possibly the same flock (numbering ~50) was

seen the morning of 6 Apr (LH), and likely that same flock of 50 was seen that afternoon ~20 mi. n., flying over the Neabsco Cr. boardwalk, *Prince William* (CB). There were multiple reports of **American Bittern**, a fairly rare transient in the Piedmont, including singles seen at Bles Pk. 23 Apr (BH, et al.), where it was seen and ph. by m. obs. through 8 May (2 seen on 24–25 Apr); Warrenton Res. 29 Apr (MCa, RC, PSa); L. Barton in Fairfax Station, *Fairfax* 30 Apr (P&JW); the Warrenton Aquatic and Recreation Center, *Fauquier* 3 May (TMD) (~2 mi. from the 29 Apr sighting); and South County High School in Lorton, *Fairfax* 6 May (CLu). Single **Least Bitterns**, also a rare visitor in the Piedmont and seen well before the species' 8 May extreme early date, were observed at Bles Pk. 23 Apr (ph. BH), where it was seen by m. obs. through 23 May, and the Fairview Dr. stormwater pond in Leesburg, *Loudoun* 27 Apr (GC). Rare spring visitors to the Piedmont were single **Little Blue Herons** seen at L. Fairfax Pk., *Fairfax* 14 Apr (ph. GH) and Royal L. Pk., *Fairfax* 7 May (CLa). A **Cattle Egret**, an apparently declining and now rare spring visitor in the Piedmont, was seen following a tractor along St. Louis Rd. n. of Middleburg, *Loudoun* 2 May (ph. KC); none were reported in the Coastal Plain – in fact, there was only one other report in the state away from the Hampton Roads area this season. A **White Ibis**, a very rare visitor to the Region in spring and with only two previous spring records in the entire Piedmont (and in the entire state w. of the Chesapeake in recent years, i.e., in eBird), was seen at Cub Run Stream Valley Pk. (South), *Fairfax* 27 Mar (ph. RoM, ES). A **Glossy Ibis**, a fairly rare inland transient, was present at Huntley Meadows 10 May (NVBC, ph. m. obs.).

## FALCONS—WRENS

**Merlins**, typically a rare transient in the Piedmont, had over 20 reports this period. A **SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER**, a rare visitor in the Region, was observed perched along Carpenters Mill Rd. near Madison, *Madison* 23

May (JS). A **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher**, a rare transient in the Region, was seen at Mason Neck NWR, *Fairfax* 20 May (KG). Reports of **ALDER FLYCATCHER**, rarer in spring than fall, included singles at Occoquan Bay NWR 14 May (DCa, JD) and again 15 & 21 May (ph. SSt, a. r. AP); Bristoe Station Battlefield, *Prince William* 15 May (a. r. TH), seen again 20 May; the Auburn Middle School wetland, *Fauquier* 17 May (TMD); Dyke Marsh 17 May (a. r. EE), seen and ph. by m. obs. though 22 May; Laurel Hill Equestrian Center, *Fairfax* 18–23 May (KG); Sweet Run SP (formerly Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship), *Loudoun* 19 May (a. r. SB); and Prince William Forest Pk., *Prince William* 21 May (LC, GF, EK); 2 were present at Huntley Meadows 21 May (KG, RB). A late **Blue-headed Vireo** was seen along the Trillium Trail at G.R. Thompson WMA, *Fauquier* 28 May (GB, LF); the Piedmont late date is 10 May. **Philadelphia Vireos** made rare spring appearances at Folly Lick Stream Valley Pk., *Fairfax* 7 May (GC), with 2 seen 21 May; along Sterling Grove Dr. in Springfield, *Fairfax* 15 May (GF); Huntley Meadows 16 May (KG, SSu); Meadowood Recreation Area, *Fairfax* 20 May (a. r. KL); Leesylvania SP, *Prince William* 21 May (LC, GF, EK); and the banding station at Occoquan Bay NWR 21 May (BR) and again in the reserve 24 May. An early **Barn Swallow** was seen at Windmill Hill Pk., *Alexandria* 13 Mar (TK); the Piedmont extreme early date is 17 Mar. A late **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** was seen at the Sparrow Pond in Glencarlyn Pk., *Arlington* 18 May (EW); the Piedmont extreme late date is 16 May. **Golden-crowned Kinglets** present well past the Regional late date of 20 Apr included individuals at Bon Air Pk., *Arlington* 3 May (WS); a pond in the Westridge subdivision of Woodbridge, *Prince William* 4 May (CB); along Stave Ct. in *Manassas* 7 May (VC); and Frying Pan Farm Pk. 8 May (PSc). The **Brown-headed Nuthatch** that spent the 3-plus months preceding the period at Mountain Run L. Pk., *Culpeper* was possibly encountered on 31 Mar (CS). Seen well before the 10 Apr Regional early date were single **House Wrens** at Folly Lick Stream Valley Pk.,

*Fairfax* 5 Mar (GC) and Leopold's Preserve, *Prince William* 12 Mar (ph. TH); and 2 at Aquia Harbor, *Stafford* 22 Mar (EG). A **Sedge Wren**, rare w. of the Chesapeake Bay, was seen at Huntley Meadows 29 Apr (ph. TK), where it continued through 3 May. An early **Marsh Wren** was seen at Crow's Nest NAP, *Stafford* 9 Mar (JHa) (Coastal Plain early date not given; Piedmont early date is 10 Apr).

## SPARROWS—DICKCISSEL

Reports of **Clay-colored Sparrow**, a species rare in the Region, especially in spring when there are only seven previous records, included at a backyard in Ashburn, *Loudoun* 24 Apr (ph., a. r. JE); along Bond Ct., *Alexandria* 1–2 May (ph. DF); and Frying Pan Farm Pk. 6 May (ph. HW). An impressive 50+ **Bobolinks** were seen along the Bridle Trail at Sky Meadows SP, *Fauquier* 5 May (LMi). Seen well before the species' Piedmont early date of 25 Apr was a **Baltimore Oriole** at a residence in *Manassas* 6 Apr (ph. SK). An impressive 88 **Rusty Blackbirds** were seen at Algonkian RP 18 Mar (CC, NH), and 54 were found in the Flat Run wetland area along Thoms Rd. in Remington, *Culpeper* 15 Apr (TMD). Early and late **Northern Waterthrushes** were seen at Huntley Meadows 9 Apr (GF) (Coastal Plain extreme early date 19 Apr) and along Kincheloe Rd. s. of Clifton, *Fairfax* 30 May (P&JW) (Piedmont extreme late date 10 May). Reports of **Golden-winged Warbler**, rare away from the Blue Ridge, included at Upton Hill RP, *Arlington* 24 Apr (MG); Lubber Run Pk., *Arlington* 27 Apr (AT, CT); and bathing in a Fairfax City backyard, *Fairfax* 5 May (ph., v. r. SH). A **Lawrence's Warbler** was seen at Huntley Meadows 23 Apr (ph. AA), seen again 24 Apr. Seen well before the 5 Apr Coastal Plain early date was a **Black-and-white Warbler** at Huntley Meadows 20 Mar (NV). A **Prothonotary Warbler**, rare in the nw. Piedmont, was seen at the Cedar Run Wetland

Bank near Catlett, *Fauquier* 14 May (GS, SSI). There were numerous reports of **Mourning Warbler**, a rare transient in the Region, including singles (unless otherwise specified) at Huntley Meadows 7 May (KG); in the Berryland neighborhood of Oakton, *Fairfax* 11 May (a. r. JB); Monticello Pk., *Alexandria* 17–20 May (ph. ML, TA); Holmes Run Stream Valley Pk., *Fairfax* 20 May (LU); Dyke Marsh 21 May (ph. EE); 2 along the Turquoise Trail in Reston, *Fairfax* 22 May (MCo, a. r. PH); and White Oaks Pk., *Fairfax* 26 May (a. r. BJ). An **American Redstart** got a jump on the Piedmont extreme early date of 19 Apr, seen along Annagreen Ct., *Manassas* 15 Apr (CLO). Also early was a **Black-throated Blue Warbler** seen at Huntley Meadows 14 Apr (KG), one day before the Coastal Plain extreme early date of 15 Apr. Early **Palm Warblers** seen before the 15 Apr Piedmont early date included at the Warrenton Aquatic and Recreation Center, *Fauquier* 4 Mar (TMD) and Algonkian RP 26 Mar (BH), seen again 31 Mar. Though sometimes maligned by birders for incorrect identifications, the Merlin app hit a homerun by correctly identifying and recording a **BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER** sing on Spring Village Dr. in Springfield, *Fairfax* 25 Apr (a. r. BL). Though the bird was never seen, Merlin's audio recording was sufficient to document the 10<sup>th</sup> state record – and first for *Fairfax* since 1949 – of this western species. Late **Black-throated Green Warblers** were seen near Bluemont, *Loudoun* 31 May (JC) and at the Oak Springs Garden Foundation in Upperville, *Fauquier* 31 May (PU); the Piedmont late date is 15 May. There were a few reports of **Dickcissel**, still fairly rare in the Region: one at Frying Pan Farm Pk. 11 May (ph. HW); 3 at the Fairfax County Landfill near Lorton, *Fairfax* 19 May (ph. GF), where up to 6 were seen through the end of the period; and one at the Fairfax County Landfill near Chantilly, *Fairfax* (~15 mi. from the preceding) 26 May (ph. anon.), with 3 seen 27 & 31 May.

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Howard Wu's picture of a **Dickcissel** seen at Frying Pan Farm Pk. in *Fairfax*, 11 May.

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## WEST



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

### WINTER 2022–2023

Aside from a brief cold spell in late December, this winter averaged warmer than normal. Most unusually there were no snowstorms with any accumulation over most of the Region aside from higher elevations. This led to low numbers of ducks and no detections of species such as Lapland Longspur and Snow Bunting that are usually found after snows. The mild weather allowed for some late vagrants, most notably the state's third record of MacGillivray's Warbler which lingered well into December, along with at least one, and most likely two, Say's Phoebes. The long staying drake Eurasian Wigeons in *Augusta* were another highlight, providing a first record for that well-birded county and the first record in the Region since 2015. It was a decent winter for finches, although a far cry from the winter of 2020-21. Most notable in this department were a number of Evening Grosbeak reports throughout the Region.

**Abbreviations:** Blandy (Blandy Experimental Farm, *Clarke*); Broadway WTP (Broadway Wastewater Treatment Plant, *Rockingham*); Roanoke STP (Roanoke Sewage Treatment Plant, *Roanoke City*); Stuarts Draft WTP (Stuarts Draft Wastewater Treatment Plant, *Augusta*); NRV Fairgrounds (New River Valley Fairgrounds, *Pulaski*).

### WATERFOWL—GREBES

A single **Ross's Goose** was seen at several locations in *Rockingham* and *Harrisonburg* from 16 Dec–19 Feb (m. obs.). Other singles were at Bells Ln., *Staunton* 11–26 Dec (PW, AL); Guthrie Ln., *Augusta* 4–7 Jan (ph. MK); Claytor L. SP, *Pulaski* 8 Dec (ph. EO); and one at the NRV Fairgrounds 9 Jan–28 Feb that was later joined by a second bird (MM, m. obs.). Several large flocks of **Greater White-fronted Geese** were present this winter. Up to 36 were at the Millburn Rd. Pond, *Frederick* 5 Jan–20 Feb (JB,



Geoff Malosh's photo of a **Eurasian Wigeon** at McCormick's Mills in *Augusta*, 28 Dec.

BW). Smaller concentrations included 3 at Abrams Cr., *Frederick* 1–25 Feb (ph. GRi); 4 near Forestville, *Shenandoah* 5 Feb (ph. KA); 2 at Cool Spring, *Rockingham* 25 Dec–3 Jan (GM, CT) and probably the same 2 at the Broadway WTP 1 Jan (ph. MG); a single bird at Willow L., *Rockbridge* 15–23 Feb (ph. MK); up to 31 were in the vicinity of the Botetourt Center, *Botetourt* 4 Jan–11 Feb (m. obs.); 23 at Glen Lyn Town Pk.,

*Giles* 1 Jan (ph. PL); and 2 near Christiansburg, *Montgomery* 14 Feb (KG); 2 on the New R. at Parrot R. Rd. in both *Pulaski* and *Montgomery* 24 Dec (PL, DW). Most astoundingly, up to 73 were at the NRV Fairgrounds 1 Dec–19 Feb (ph. DHu, m. obs.), an exceptional count not just for the Region but for the entire state. For the fourth straight winter a **Trumpeter Swan** spent the winter at the Ivy St. Ponds, *Waynesboro* Dec 16–Feb 28 (m. obs.). Two m. **EURASIAN WIGEONS** were found at McCormick’s Mills, *Augusta* 19 Dec–28 Feb (AL, m. obs.); these birds also made a brief appearance at nearby Willow



Josh Ward’s photograph of a **Harlequin Duck** from Big Falls in *Montgomery* on 17 Dec.

L., *Rockbridge* 25–26 Dec (ph. VB) following a freeze, before ultimately returning to McCormick’s Mills. This was the first county record of this species for both *Augusta* and *Rockingham* and only the third eBird record for the Region. A m. **HARLEQUIN DUCK** put on quite a show for birds in the New R. Valley following its discovery along Big Falls Rd., n. of Parrott, *Montgomery* 17 Dec (ph. JW, m. obs.). Over the intervening ten days it put on quite a show for birders, with dozens of sightings through 27 Dec (ph. ER). On two occasions, it even made its way further up the river to *Giles*, with sightings there 19–22 Dec (RB, m. obs.). This species is surprisingly semi-regular along the New R., with past reports from 1992/93, 2000, and 2001. A few **Long-tailed Ducks** were seen this winter. One was at L. Holiday, *Frederick* 21 Dec (GRi); one was at L. Frederick, *Frederick* 1 Feb (DB); 11 were at the Broadway WTP 1 Feb (ph. MK); and one was at Willow L.,

*Rockbridge* 1 Feb (ph. BE, JP). The only **Surf Scoters** were a flock of 6 at Big Falls Rd., *Montgomery* 11 Dec (ph. PL, MN). The **EARED GREBE** that was at the Broadway WTP this fall lingered through 3 Dec (JP, DHo). A **Red-necked Grebe** was at Claytor Lake SP, *Pulaski* 25 Dec (MM, ph. PL).

## HUMMINGBIRDS—CRANES

A male **Rufous Hummingbird** lingered in Blacksburg, *Montgomery* through 16 Dec (ph. BG). A single **Virginia Rail** was at Abrams Cr., *Frederick* and *Winchester* 18–28 Feb (m. obs.), while another was at L. Shenandoah 3 Dec–18 Feb (AR, m. obs.). A **Common Gallinule** was heard vocalizing at L. Shenandoah, *Rockingham* 3 Dec (MA, NN). Far and away the most bizarre sighting of the season, both based on time of year and habitat, was a **LIMPKIN** photographed walking along the shoulder of Skyline Dr. in *Warren* 3 Dec (ph. DR). This was the first record for *Warren* and only the second record for the Region. A flock of 7 **Sandhill Cranes** were at Wenger’s Mill, *Rockingham* 28 Dec–11 Feb (ph. MG); 3 were in the Swoope Area, *Augusta* 6 Jan (ph. JB); a flock of 30 was at the Cowbane Prairie NAP, *Augusta* 14 Dec (JD); and 12 were at the Carvins Cove Recreation Area, *Botetourt* 30 Dec (LR).

## OWLS—WARBLERS

A **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was at Beagle Gap, *Augusta* 30 Jan (AL, VL), while 2 were at the Jefferson NF—Poverty Creek Trailhead, *Montgomery* 12 Dec (GRh, m. obs.). A **SAY’S PHOEBE** was photographed near Luray, *Page* 3 Dec and was seen again 5 Feb (ph. AS). Another was at the Broadway WTP 16 Dec (DHo, ph. MG). **Evening Grosbeaks** made a return this winter, with records coming from *Clarke*, *Shenandoah*, *Rockingham*, *Augusta*, *Bath*, *Rockbridge*, *Botetourt*, and *Giles*. The high count was a flock of 38 at Deerfield Valley Rd., *Rockingham* 13 Jan (ph. VL). There were a

number of **Red Crossbills** away from traditional locations; reports came from *Shenandoah*, *Rockingham*, *Augusta*, *Rockbridge*, *Craig*, *Giles*, *Radford*, and *Pulaski*. The complete lack of snow cover this winter made the absence of **Lapland Longspur** and **Snow Bunting** less surprising. A **Lark Sparrow** was at the Botetourt Center, *Botetourt* 4–20 Dec (ph. LR). A **Clay-colored Sparrow** was at Blandy 6 Feb (ph. DCa), while another was at the Botetourt Center, *Botetourt* 4 Dec (ph. LR). An **Orange-crowned Warbler** was at L. Frederick, *Frederick* 14 Dec (ph. DB) and another was in Daleville, *Botetourt* 26 Dec (ph. DGr). The **MACGILLIVRAY'S WARBLER** that was found at the end of the fall at L. Shenandoah, *Rockingham* was relocated on 3 Dec (ph. MA, ph. NN) and seen through 20 Dec (m. obs.). This is just the third accepted state record and the first for the Mountains and Valleys.

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## SPRING 2023

Rainfall was below average in the spring season. Both March and May had well under the average rainfall, although April was close to average thanks to a storm system that came through at the end of the month. Temperatures averaged warmer than typical throughout the season. Waterbirds were mostly underwhelming thanks to the combination of the warm winter and less rain than normal; the lingering Eurasian Wigeons in *Augusta* were the main exceptions, along with a Red-necked Grebe in *Botetourt*. There were a decent variety of shorebirds in the south and central portions of the Region, though the northern Valley mostly missed out as is often the case. A spring Swallow-tailed Kite on the *Shenandoah/Warren* line was an excellent record; this species is much more likely to show up in the Region in the fall. Passerine migration was hit or miss but the clear highlight of the season was a Mountain Bluebird in *Botetourt*, a first record for the Region, only the third for the state, and the first in the state since 2011. It proved to be very cooperative for many happy birders.

**Abbreviations:** Blandy (Blandy Experimental Farm, *Clarke*); Broadway WTP (Broadway Wastewater Treatment Plant, *Rockingham*); Roanoke STP (Roanoke Sewage Treatment Plant, Roanoke City); Stuarts Draft WTP (Stuarts Draft Wastewater Treatment Plant, *Augusta*); NRV Fairgrounds (New River Valley Fairgrounds, *Pulaski*); VT Vet School Pond (Virginia Tech Vet School Pond, *Montgomery*).

## WATERFOWL—CRANES

Two **Ross's Geese** lingered from the winter period at the NRV Fairgrounds until 2 Mar (ph. DGu, m. obs.). Two **Snow Geese** were near Decatur, *Rockbridge* 27 Mar (SH), while a single bird was at the Virginia Tech Duck Pond, *Montgomery* 21 Apr (HB). A **Greater White-fronted Goose** was at the NRV Fairgrounds 13

Mar (MM). The **Trumpeter Swan** that has spent the last few winters near Waynesboro continued at the Ivy St. Pond, *Waynesboro* through 18 April (m. obs.); it was also seen a bit upriver n. of Crimora, *Augusta* 24 April (VL). Another bird was seen at L. Frederick, *Frederick* 3 May (ph. DL). The two m. **EURASIAN WIGEONS** from the winter lingered at McCormick's Mills, *Augusta* until 5 Mar (m. obs.). A **Red-necked Grebe** was at Carvins Cove, *Botetourt* 26 Mar (BK, BE). A flock of 6 **Sandhill Cranes** were at Summit Farm, *Augusta* 1 Mar (JG), while another was photographed at the Daleville Ponds, *Botetourt* 12 Apr (ph. DG).

### SHOREBIRDS—OWLS

A rare spring **American Golden Plover** was at the NRV Fairgrounds 24 Mar–1 Apr (MM, m. obs.). A flock of 6 **Black-bellied Plovers** were at the NRV Fairgrounds 17 May (ph. WC), while another was at the Broadway WTP 21 May (ph. GM). There were only a few **White-rumped Sandpipers** recorded this year, with 2 at the NRV Fairgrounds 7 May (MM) and up to 3 at the Foggy Branch Farm Ponds, *Montgomery* 7–10 May (DW, ph. PLe, WC, BB). A **Ruddy Turnstone** was at the Roanoke STP 29 Apr–3 May (ph. KD, m. obs.). A flock of 5 **Short-billed Dowitchers** were at the NRV Fairgrounds 14 May (MM). Two f. **Wilson's Phalaropes** in breeding plumage were at the Oakwood Dr. Pond, *Rockingham* 7–9 May (ph. WL). Single **Red-necked Phalaropes** were at the Mt. Horeb Pond, *Augusta* 15–16 May (ph. VL) and at Leonard's Pond, *Rockingham* 16–17 May (ph. MD, m. obs.) and 26–28 May (NC, ph. m. obs.). Surprisingly no **Forster's Terns** were reported in the Region this spring. Single **Caspian Terns** were at Carvins Cove, *Botetourt* 22 Apr (BK) and at Claytor L. SP, *Pulaski* 22 Apr (ph. PLe). The only **American Bittern** in the Region this spring was at Bealer's Ferry Pond, *Page* 2 May (ph. PLa). An ad. **Little Blue Heron** was at the Shenandoah Wetlands Bank, *Augusta* 14 May (ph. VL, AL). A **SWALLOW-TAILED KITE**

was seen at the Rte. 55 Bridge on the *Shenandoah/Warren* county line 29 Apr (ph. JF). This was only the third spring record for the Region, and was the first record for *Warren* and second for *Shenandoah*. **Golden Eagle** reports came from *Augusta*, *Highland*, *Pulaski*, and *Rockingham*. Single **Mississippi Kites** were observed at Limestone Rd., *Augusta* 21 May (AM) and L. Frederick, *Frederick* 31 May (ph. LC). The only **Short-eared Owl** report was two seen off Acker Ln. near Edom, *Rockingham* 23 Mar (IA).

### FLYCATCHERS—WARBLERS

Single **Olive-sided Flycatchers** were seen at Forks of Water, *Highland* 16 May (RM); Second Mt. Farm near Rawley Springs, *Rockingham* 18 May (ph. TE); and at the Arcadia Boat Ramp, *Botetourt* (ph. BE). **Alder Flycatchers** returned to their traditional breeding location at Straight Fork, *Highland* 7 May (ES, TS) and were reported there through the end of the period. There were two additional reports: a presumed migrant at the VT Vet School Pond 14 May (ph. BB) and another possible breeder on Middlebrook Rd. in Newport, *Augusta* first seen



Diane Lepkowski's photograph of a **MacGillivray's Warbler** from L. Shenandoah in *Rockingham*, 20 Dec.

21 May (ph. VL) and continuing through the end of the period. Up to 2 **Loggerhead Shrikes** were reported from a number of locations north of Dublin, *Pulaski* throughout the period. The only other report was one on Cattleman Rd., *Augusta* 6 Mar (LP). A **Sedge Wren** was at the Botetourt

Center, *Botetourt* 5 May (ph. KG). A f. **MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD** at the Botetourt Center at Greenfield, *Botetourt* was first found 4 May (ph. DG) and seen by many through 8 May (m. obs.). This was a first record for the Region and only the third for the state, with both previous records from *Northampton*. It was an excellent spring for **Red Crossbills** with records coming from *Augusta*, *Alleghany*, *Bath*, *Craig*, *Giles*, *Highland*, *Montgomery*, and *Rockingham*. There was also a late push of **Evening Grosbeaks** with records coming from *Augusta*, *Bath*, *Giles*, *Page*, *Rockingham*, *Shenandoah*, and *Warren*. The high count was a flock of 30 at Deerfield Valley Rd., *Augusta* (MG). A f. in Luray, *Page* 27 May (ph. NL) was exceptionally late. A singing **Clay-colored Sparrow** was seen at Lake Laura, *Shenandoah* 29 Apr (ph. JF) and remained until 2 May (DH). **Golden-winged Warblers** were found in their expected breeding areas in *Highland*, *Bath*, and *Giles*, with no reports of migrants elsewhere in the Region. An **Orange-crowned Warbler** was photographed at the Botetourt Center at Greenfield, *Botetourt* 14 Apr (ph. DB), an unusual spring record for the Region. Migrant **Mourning Warblers** were at

Cooks Cr. Arboretum, *Rockingham* 10 May (ph. MD); Third Winchester Battlefield, *Frederick* 11 May (GR); and Edith Carrier Arboretum, *Harrisonburg* 15 May (MD). In addition to the usual breeding birds in *Bath* and *Highland*, an ad. m. was on territory in the Reddish Knob area, *Augusta* starting 27 May (ph. DR, m. obs.).

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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 of Bristol, Galax, and Norton.

### WINTER 2022–2023

Temperatures in December started normal–average high around 50°F and average low around 30°F, but temperatures quickly increased in January and February. Several heat waves crossed the Region, pushing average highs into the upper 50s and maximum temperatures into the mid-70s. Several reliably snowy spots went without snow cover this season. This winter was a warm winter throughout the East Coast. No large avian trends were observed in sw. Virginia this season, though it was notable that there were more Snow Goose reports than typical, and there was a small flock of Sandhill Cranes traversing the area. The Region did get a bit of Evening Grosbeak action this winter. Grosbeak eruptions are occurring with more frequency in recent years and this year's movement was significant but notably smaller than some of the large eruptions in the last half-decade.

### GEESE—CRANES

**Snow Geese** had an above average year in Southwest Virginia. One bird was seen with a **Ross's Goose** along the Ivanhoe Birding Trail, *Wythe* 29–30 Dec (ph. PE). Other birds were found at Pine Hill Pk., *Tazewell* 29 Dec (ph. JW); Lincolnshire Pk., *Tazewell* 27–28 Jan (ph. CD); and Lebanon, *Russell* 4 Feb (ph. AR). Two **Cackling Geese** were seen off the Virginia Creeper Trail, *Washington* 4 Feb (CM). One **Tundra Swan** was found outside of Grundy,

*Buchanan* 28 Dec (CSC). One **Redhead** was seen on the Clinch R. at the Sugar Hill Unit of Clinch R. SP, *Wise*, 2 Jan (SM), only the second record for the county per eBird. Likewise, a raft of 7 **Lesser Scaup** on the lake at Camp Jacob, *Dickenson* 19 Feb (MA, NN) was notable as only the 4<sup>th</sup> eBird record for the county. A pair of **Surf Scoters** was found on Rural Retreat L., *Wythe* 16 Jan (ph. ER, ph. KZ). Scoters are notable anywhere in sw. Virginia, but Rural Retreat is typically one of the more reliable spots to find them. A **Red-breasted Merganser** stayed part of the winter on South Holston L., *Washington* 22



Kirk Gardner's picture of three **Sandhill Cranes** spotted along the N. Scenic Highway near Hicksville in *Bland* on 9 Feb.

Jan–5 Feb (CC, m. obs.). A **Red-necked Grebe** was seen around the same time on South Holston L., *Washington* 22 Jan–5 Feb (ph. CC, m. obs.). This is the first record of the species in the Region and the county since 2014 when an irruption of Red-necked grebes occurred across the e. United States. **Virginia Rails** continued to be found at the Saltville Ponds, *Smyth* 4 Dec–18 Feb (m. obs.) and at the Rocky Ford wetlands, *Wise* 26

Feb (SC, AR). Twelve **American Coots** were found at a mine pond in Keokee, *Lee* 18 Feb (MA, NN) and remained there through 26 Feb (m. obs.). This report represents the first eBird record of the species for the county. Four **Sandhill Cranes** were found at various locations in sw. Virginia across the winter. These reports likely represent one overwintering flock that moved between several locations. Reports came from Meadowview, *Washington* 27 Dec (ph. MH, AN); County Pk. Rd., *Washington* 6 Jan (KS); Burkes Garden, *Tazewell* 23–27 Jan (ph. DS); and Hicksville, *Bland* 7–11 Feb (DF, m. obs.). Sandhill Cranes are uncommon to rare in sw. Virginia but the Region is likely the closest part of the state to their primary migration routes, so it is not unheard of for wandering birds to show up for a day or two at a time.

## GULLS—FINCHES

Gulls, other than **Ring-billed Gulls**, are typically uncommon in the winter, and few reports come from the Region outside of South Holston L., *Washington*. This winter, the lake had reports of up to 14 **Bonaparte's Gulls** 16 Jan–14 Feb (m. obs.) and one **Herring Gull** 6 Jan (CC). A Bonaparte's Gull was also seen at Rural Retreat L., *Wythe* 11–12 Jan (ph. PE, AB) & 22 Feb (AB).



Allen Boynton's photo of three **Evening Grosbeaks** at a private residence in *Grayson*, 13 Feb.

An immature **RED-THROATED LOON** was found at Burkes Garden, *Tazewell* 12 Dec (ph. ACa). This is the first record of the species in the

Region. Two **Black-crowned Night-Herons** overwintered at Clear Cr. L., *Bristol* 1 Jan–18 Feb (ph. RC, m. obs.). This is the only known overwintering location for this species in sw. Virginia. A first county record per eBird was also spotted at the Gate City Quarry, *Scott* 26 Feb (CC, AR). Only one **Rough-legged Hawk** was seen at Burkes Garden, *Tazewell* 4 Feb (ph. CC) this year. Burkes Garden is the most reliable spot in sw. Virginia to find this species as there are usually a few reports each winter. A **Barn Owl** was seen around Burkes Garden, *Tazewell* 29 Dec–28 Jan (CD, DS). This species has become more common in the valley over the past several years and at least one individual is known to frequent the fields surrounding Gose Mill Pond. **Loggerhead Shrikes** had a great winter in sw. Virginia. Individuals were found in *Grayson*, *Tazewell*, *Russell*, *Smyth*, and *Washington*. One shrike seen near Mouth of Wilson, *Grayson* 26 Dec (PS) was particularly noteworthy as this mountainous county has fewer records. Up to 4 **Brown-headed Nuthatches** were noted continuing at Washington County Pk., *Washington* 2–24 Jan (m. obs.). This is the only known location to reliably encounter this species in the Region. A **House Wren** was found at Leeman Pk., *Lee* 27 Feb (ph. CC, AR). Between 50 and 75 **Evening Grosbeaks** were found in the high-elevation spruce forests of the Beartown Wildernesses, *Tazewell* 4 Feb (DS). Up to 12 grosbeaks were seen along Rugby Rd., *Grayson* 13–23 Feb (ph. CS, m. obs.). Observations continued along the road into the Spring.

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## SPRING 2023

Temperatures in March were 6°F above normal, 5°F above normal in April, and 1.5°F above normal in May. Precipitation was about 0.5 inches below average in March, an inch below average in April, and 0.5 inches below average in May. Overall, the period was warmer and drier than usual. Rarities were few and far between, but a handful of unusual waterfowl, shorebirds, and warblers were found.

## GEESE—TERNS

A juv. white morph **Snow Goose** was found and photographed at Elk Garden, *Russell* 15–25 Mar (ph. RR). This individual was different from the juv. blue morph that was found earlier in the winter near the same location. A male **American Wigeon** was seen on the Big Sandy R. at Breaks Interstate Pk., *Dickenson* 26 May (DR). Most uncommon dabblers, like wigeon, are notable in the Cumberland Plateau due to the lack of accessible water bodies. A **Sora** was found at



Daryl Owens's photograph of a **Golden Eagle** on Clifton Farm Rd. in *Russell* on 18 Feb.

Sugar Hollow Pk., *Washington* 30 Apr (AR). This is the first record of the species for the county per eBird and the second record for the park after one was found in *Bristol* last spring. Shorebirds were

few and far between, but birders in *Lee* are keying on a few reliable shorebird spots. A **Semipalmated Plover** was found along Giles Hollow Rd., *Lee* 16 May (ph. DK, ph. JK). The plover was found along with a mixed assortment of other common shorebirds, which included a count of 15 **Semipalmated Sandpipers**. An **Upland Sandpiper** was a very welcome find at Virginia Highlands Airport, *Washington* 22 Apr (AR), the same location where 3 were seen the previous spring; once a fairly common migrant, this species has dwindled in recent decades and is now quite scarce anywhere in Virginia. An early **Pectoral Sandpiper** was observed at Elk Garden, *Russell* 11 Mar (RR, ES). Potentially the biggest find of the period was a **WESTERN WILLET** that was photographed along with a **Forster's Tern** at the Saltville Ponds, *Smyth* 22 Apr (ph. RC, RR, ES). Another Forster's Tern was found and photographed at Clear Cr. L., *Bristol* (ph. AR).

## WADERS—GROSBEAKS

An early **Great Egret** was found at Burkes Garden, *Tazewell* 25 Mar (DS). Egrets are regular throughout the Region but are not typically found in March. A late ad. **Golden Eagle** was found at The Cove, *Tazewell* 3 May (anonymous eBirder). Any Golden Eagle found in May is late, but when they are found they are typically immatures; thus an adult found in May is very unusual. A **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was recorded calling on Clinch Mt., *Russell* 22 Apr (a. r. AR). An early **Eastern Kingbird** was found in Abingdon, *Washington* 5 Apr (MS). **Brown-headed Nuthatches** were continuing at Washington County Pk., *Washington* 19 Mar–30 Apr (SC, AR). An early **House Wren** was observed in Emory, *Washington* 6 Apr (MH). Two late **American Pipits** were found at Turner Farm, *Lee* 13 May (ph. PG). These were the first records for the county per eBird. An incredible flock of 12 **Evening Grosbeaks** continued from the winter into the spring in Rugby, *Grayson* 4 Apr (CS). This flock was the last remnant of the above-

average grosbeak winter this past year. A **Lark Sparrow** at Poplar Gap Pk. 16 Apr (ph. DO) was a 2<sup>nd</sup> record for *Buchanan*, and one of relatively few for the Region. An **American Tree Sparrow** was photographed along Flatwoods Rd., *Lee* 8 Apr (OC, SC, ph. AR). This species is becoming increasingly hard to find throughout the state, especially this far south at this date. A **Yellow-breasted Chat** and a **Prothonotary Warbler** were found at Clear Cr. L., *Bristol* 22 Apr (AR). A Prothonotary Warbler was also found along the Virginia Creeper Trail, *Washington* 19 May (ML). Several early **Prairie Warblers** were found throughout the Region including at Rose Hill, *Lee* 6 Apr (LG); Clear Cr. L., *Bristol* 6 Apr (AR); and Hoover Hill Beaver Pond, *Lee* 9 Apr (ph. PG). An early female **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was observed coming to a feeder near Mouth of Wilson, *Grayson* 11 Apr (GH).



Daryl Owens's photo of a **Lark Sparrow** at Southern Gap in *Buchanan*, 16 Apr.

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## SOUTH CENTRAL



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

### WINTER 2022–2023

A large number of this season's reports featured waterfowl. While no unusual geese were reported and most dabbling ducks appeared in more or less expected numbers, some notable diving duck reports were received. As usual in winter, reports of unexpected non-passerines outnumbered those of passerines, though the second *Prince Edward* (and *Piedmont*) record of Cave Swallow was certainly a seasonal highlight.

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

### WATERFOWL

In *Mecklenburg*, 4 **Tundra Swans** were noted at Kerr Dam 1 Jan (PG) and 29 Jan (ADo, PG), and 2 were just downstream at Dick Cross WMA 8 Jan (CW); away from that area, the only report was of a flock estimated at 300 individuals headed north over Piney Green Rd., *Nottoway* 25 Feb (JL). **Redheads** were noted in five counties and the city of *Danville* with a high count of 11 at Piedmont Geriatric Hospital, *Nottoway* 6 Jan (ES); one at a small pond just e. of Keysville (ph. KD, MS) was the first reported for *Charlotte* in several years. **Canvasbacks** were reported from four counties (*Franklin*, *Halifax*, *Mecklenburg*, and *Prince Edward*), a reasonably good showing, although the high count was only 3 at Clover, *Halifax* 24 Dec (JB). As usual there were several

reports of **Lesser Scaup** but only a few of **Greater Scaup**, with 2 at Sandy River Res 24 (LH, TS) and 25 (MS) Dec the only reports of multiple individuals. Two **Surf Scoters** seen from Palmer Pt., Kerr, *Mecklenburg* 11 Dec



Dan Robillard's photograph of three **American White Pelicans** at John H. Kerr Reservoir – Tailrace Pk. in *Mecklenburg* on 23 Feb.

(ADo, PG) were the only scoters reported, and two **Long-tailed Ducks** at SRR 1 Feb (ph. MS) were the only individuals of that species reported. **Common Goldeneyes** were found only in *Prince Edward*, with 1 at Briery Cr. L. 21 Dec (ES), 3 at SRR 26 Dec (LH, TS), and 1 at SRR 29 Dec (ES) and 4 Feb (MS). **Red-breasted Mergansers** were reported only at lower Kerr and at SRR, with a maximum of 15 at SRR 1 Feb (ph. MS).

### QUAIL—FALCONS

**Northern Bobwhite** were reported from only two locations, in *Mecklenburg* and *Nottoway*, as

the species remains scarce in the Region. The only **Red-necked Grebe** reports were from lower Kerr, *Mecklenburg*; one was there 1 Jan (ph. PG, m. obs.) and 2 on 3 Jan (ph. ES, m. obs.) and 8 Jan (ph. PG). One **Dunlin** on upper Kerr, seen from Staunton R. SP, *Halifax* 18 Dec (ADo, LF), was the only one reported. **Least Sandpipers** were noted only along upper Kerr mudflats, *Halifax/Mecklenburg*, with 21 there on 11 Dec (ADo, PG, CW) and 11 on 18 Dec (ADo, LF). A **Spotted Sandpiper** was seen 8 Feb at Mountain Cr. L., *Prince Edward* (TS), and one or 2 were below the dam at Kerr, *Mecklenburg*, on several dates from 6 Dec (CW) to 11 Feb (CW); they



Clyde Wilson's photo of an **Anhinga** at Brunswick L. Boat Ramp in *Brunswick*, 16 Dec.

have wintered at the previous location in several recent winters. A **Greater Yellowlegs** was heard 1 Dec at Staunton R. SP, *Halifax* (JB); the species is an expected migrant in low numbers Regionally but scarce in winter. Two **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** with other gulls on lower Kerr, *Mecklenburg* 26 Feb (PG, CW) were the only members of that species reported, while a single **Forster's Tern** 11 Dec at the mudflats of upper Kerr, *Halifax* 11 Dec (ph. PG, ADo) was the only tern noted. **Red-throated Loons** were seen only from Palmer Pt., Kerr, *Mecklenburg*; they were first noted 3 Jan (BB), with 2 there 19 Feb (ADo, PG), and one last seen 26 Feb (PG). An **Anhinga** at Brunswick L. boat ramp, *Brunswick*, 14 (ph. TM) and 16 Dec (ph. CW), was out of season for the Region as well as away from some of the more expected sites for the

species. Three **American White Pelicans** were seen circling over Tailrace Pk., Kerr, *Mecklenburg* 23 Feb (ph. DR) but not reported again there or elsewhere in the Region. A **Northern Saw-whet Owl** heard and recorded 29 Jan (SC, ADy) was the first confirmed report of the species for *Prince Edward*. A **Peregrine Falcon** seen briefly in flight over fields along River Rd. near High Bridge SP, *Cumberland* 10 Jan (MS) was the only one reported.

## PASSERINES

The only **Blue-headed Vireo** was one at Difficult Cr. NAP, *Halifax* 18 Dec (ph. CW, JB, TM); the species is more likely in winter along the coast to our east as well as in states to the south. The only **Loggerhead Shrike** was one seen along Drunkard Rd., *Amelia* 2 Dec (ES), where it had originally been spotted in late Nov. A **CAVE SWALLOW** over the SRR dam area 3 Dec (ph., v. r. MS; ADy, JD) was seen again on 4 Dec (ADy, JD, MH) but not later. This was the 2<sup>nd</sup> record for *Prince Edward*, both at this location, with the previous report from Nov 2016; these two sightings represent the only Piedmont Virginia records. **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were widespread, unlike some winters. Single **Baltimore Orioles** were reported at three locations: Elizabeth Ct., South Boston, *Halifax* 22 Dec (JB); near SRR off Gates-Bass Rd., *Prince Edward* on several dates 16 Dec–25 Feb (ph. NV); and Staunton View Public Use Area, *Mecklenburg*, 11 Dec (ADo, PG). A **Black-and-White Warbler** was seen 3 Jan along the Riverwalk Tr., *Danville* (MF); this report was somewhat out of season, though there are several winter reports from elsewhere in central and e. Virginia. Finally, a single **Dickcissel** was seen daily from 25–28 Feb (ph. ADo) at a residential feeding area along Smith Grove Rd., *Dinwiddie*. Regionally the species is more expected, but never predictable, during breeding season.

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## SPRING 2023

Waterfowl seemed more scarce than normal as the season began, with most perhaps having already moved north. Shorebird habitat was generally scarce, as were the shorebirds themselves, but a few exceptions are noted. Winter finches produced some notable reports, with multiple reports of Evening Grosbeaks detailed below and a flock of Red Crossbills that lingered for several days in *Halifax*. Meanwhile, few unusual sparrows or warblers were noted.

**Abbreviations:** Kerr (John H. Kerr Reservoir, a.k.a. Buggs Island Lake, *Halifax*, *Charlotte*, and *Mecklenburg*; lower Kerr refers to *Mecklenburg* only); SRR (Sandy River Reservoir, *Prince Edward*).

## WATERFOWL—GREBES

Two **Trumpeter Swans** were on Briery Cr. L., *Prince Edward* 11 (ph. WR, m. obs.) through 23 (JBa, KB) Apr. This is still not an expected species here, though there have been several records in recent years. **American Black Ducks** were notably scarce, with the only reports from the US Rt. 1 “Steel Bridge” over the Roanoke R. in *Mecklenburg*, where 5 were noted 5 Mar and 4 on 11 Mar (both CW, DW). Also at the Steel Bridge was a single **Northern Pintail** 3 Mar and 2 there 11 Mar (both CW, DW); other than those, the only pintail reported was one at Amelia WMA, *Amelia* (MSu). Only single **Canvasbacks** were reported, with one at SRR 2 Mar (ph. KD, MSt) remaining until 4 Mar (ES), and one on lower Kerr 7 Mar (CW). A single **Greater Scaup** at SRR 4 (AR) and 14 (ES) Mar was the only one reported. A single **Surf Scoter** found at SRR 1 Mar (MSt) remained until 17 Mar (ES); this was the only scoter reported. **Pied-billed Grebes** are

common Regionally in winter and as migrants, but not as breeders, so two active nests at Dick Cross WMA, *Mecklenburg* 21 May (ph. CW) through the end of the period (m. obs.) were noteworthy; the species has bred at this site before.

## CUCKOOS—OWLS

The earliest returning **Black-billed Cuckoo** was at High Bridge Tr. SP near River Rd., *Cumberland* 20 Apr (ph. MSt); the handful of other reports were all from May. No **Common Nighthawks** were reported, which seems a dire



Clyde Wilson's picture of a **King Rail** from Dick Cross WMA in *Mecklenburg*, 24 May.

indicator of their status, while **Chuck-will's-widows** and **Eastern Whip-poor-wills** were both widely reported. At least two **King Rails** were at Dick Cross WMA, *Mecklenburg* 23 (ph. CW, m. obs.) – 29 (AD) May, with 4 counted there 24 May (CW). A **Sora** was heard 12 May off Douglas Church Rd., *Prince Edward* (TS), the only report. Among the few notable shorebirds this spring, 2 **Lesser Yellowlegs** were in a wet field along Pleasant Valley Rd., *Cumberland* 29 Apr (MSt), and a flock of 20 **Willetts** were seen repeatedly in flight over lower SRR 30 Apr (ph. WR, TS, MSt), providing a second record for *Prince Edward*. Away from Kerr, where there were several reports, the only **Caspian Terns** were 2 at Wilcks L., *Prince Edward* 21 Apr (TS) and 3 at SRR 24 May (ph. HN), and the only **Black Tern** reported was one over lower Kerr 5 May (BB) with 10 **Forster's Terns**, also the only

individuals of that species reported. A single **Red-throated Loon** was on lower Kerr 5 (AD, PG) and 7 (CW) Mar. Single **Anhingas** were at lower Kerr, 5 May (BB) and just downstream at Dick Cross WMA, *Mecklenburg* 23 May (ph. CW), the only reports. The only **American Bittern** was one at Dick Cross 15 Apr (ph. CW, DW). **Great Egrets** are more typical Regionally in summer and fall, but one appeared early at SRR 28 Mar (ph. WR), and a **Snowy Egret** at Dick Cross WMA, *Mecklenburg* 5 May (AD, PG) was unusually far inland. Also unusual for spring was an imm. **Little Blue Heron** at Abreu Grogan Park, *Danville* 26 May (ph. BW). Although they breed in the s. portion of the Region, the only **Mississippi Kite** report this season was of a group of 3 along Wolf Trap Rd., *Halifax* 12 May (ph. JBI). Following up on a report from a non-birder, a **Barn Owl** was heard calling along Old Evergreen Rd., *Appomattox* 5 Mar (DB, KG, AL); the species is seldom reported anywhere in the Region.

#### **SHRIKES—DICKCISSEL**

A **Loggerhead Shrike** seen along Drunkard Rd., *Amelia* 11 Mar (ES), a location where one had been noted several times since the previous Nov, was the only one reported. Single **Marsh Wrens** were found along upper SRR 17 Apr (NV) and at Dick Cross WMA, *Mecklenburg* 5 May (AD, PG). **Evening Grosbeaks** were surprisingly noted at five locations: 2 at Holliday L. SP, *Appomattox* 25 Mar (LH, ES, TS); one at a feeder

off Gates-Bass Rd., *Prince Edward* 31 Mar (Ph. NV), with 2 there 4 Apr (NV); a flock of 32 on 6 Apr at Staunton R. SP, *Halifax* (ph. JBI, PG), decreasing to 20 there 9 Apr (JBI, PG); 2 off Bell Rd. e. of Dillwyn, *Buckingham* 8 Apr (ph. ES, DS); and a group at a feeder in Cartersville, *Cumberland*, ranging from 6 individuals 1 Mar (DW) to 19 on 23 Mar (DW), and 15 when last reported 23 Apr (DW). A flock of **Red Crossbills** appeared at Staunton R. SP, *Halifax* in early Apr, with 3 there 2 Apr (LB), 5 the next day (LB), and 20 on 5 Apr (JBI); the species is rare and unpredictable across the Region. **Vesper Sparrows** are generally scarce migrants Regionally; this season 2 were found along Loman Rd., *Prince Edward* 12 Apr, and one there 18 Apr (both ES), and one was along High Bridge Tr. SP near River Rd., *Cumberland* 13 Apr (MSt). The only **Canada Warbler** reported away from the Blue Ridge was a singing male at Wilcks L., *Prince Edward* 18 May (MSt). The **Dickcissel** first reported in late winter at a feeder on Smith Grove Rd., *Dinwiddie*, continued there until 25 Apr (AD).

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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 Charlottesville, Fredericksburg, and Lynchburg.

### WINTER 2022–2023

This winter boasted a slate of bird records that was highly diverse and varied. While the species total of 142 species was average for the past 5 winters (based on eBird data), a good variety of unusual species was detected. Birds and birders alike made the most of an unusually warm and snowless winter, and a strong showing of overwintering passerines brightened a season that, for waterfowl, was unremarkable. Highlight species included Ross's Goose, Surf Scoter, Long-tailed Duck, Rufous Hummingbird, Spotted Sandpiper, Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Loggerhead Shrike, Evening Grosbeak, Lapland Longspur, American Tree Sparrow, Black-and-white Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, and Dickcissel.

**Abbreviations:** Mill Cr. (Mill Creek Lake Park, *Amherst*).

**Christmas Bird Counts:** BFMCBC (Big Flat Mountain, 30 Dec); CCBC (Chancellorsville, 1 Jan); ChCBC (Charlottesville, 18 Dec); LCBC (Lynchburg, 17 Dec); WCBC (Warren, 2 Jan).

### GEESE—GULLS

Several **Snow Geese** showed up in the Region this winter: one was at L. Monacan, *Nelson* 19 Dec (ph. JG, MG); 2 were at Boaz Rd., *Albemarle* 1 Jan (SD); and another was in the vicinity of Ivy L., *Bedford* 12–22 Feb (BE). Two **Ross's Geese** were also found; one at Genito Rd., *Powhatan* 11

& 12 Dec (ph. AD, JD) and another at Spotsylvania Sportsplex, *Spotsylvania* 8–15 Feb (ph. TW). No **Greater White-fronted Geese** were reported in the Region this winter. Two good-sized flocks of **Cackling Geese** were encountered, including 13 at Trump Winery, *Albemarle* 25 Dec (ph. BB) and 6 at Spotsylvania Sportsplex, *Spotsylvania* 8 Jan (MA). Typically a rarity in the Region in winter, two **Blue-winged Teal** sightings came as a surprise: one f. at Pen Pk., *Charlottesville* 26–29 Dec (TB, ph. m. obs.) and another f. at Mt Athos Rd., *Campbell* 12 Jan (ph. MB). An imm. m. **Surf Scoter** was at St. Mary's Quarry Pond, *Amherst* 2–28 Feb (MJ), providing an unusual midwinter record of this



Daniel Bailey's photograph of a **Long-tailed Duck** from Mill Cr. L. Pk. in *Amherst*, 3 Feb.

rare inland visitor. The only **Long-tailed Ducks** were 4 f. at Mill Cr. (ph. MB) and 2 continued there into the spring. The high count of 8 **Common Goldeneyes** came from Mill Cr. 1 Feb (ph. JC, VE). There were four **Red-breasted Merganser** reports. A f. survived a predation attempt by a **Bald Eagle** at Mill Cr. 1 Jan (MJ, DM). Elsewhere, reports included another at

Bremo Bluff, *Fluvanna* 2 Feb (ST); one at Ragged Mt. Natural Area, *Albemarle* 4–8 Feb (WJ, DC); and 8 at Mill Cr. 1 & 2 Feb (MJ). A **Rufous Hummingbird** was at Forest, *Bedford* 2–12 Dec (ph. BE, BP), while an ad. f. continued at Holly Rd., *Charlottesville* and was banded there 3 Dec (ph. DS, BP). **Spotted Sandpipers** wintered in numbers at Reusens Dam, *Lynchburg* 9 Jan–19 Feb (DB, BE, MJ) with a high count of 4 on 11 Feb (GS). Not typically found away from the largest reservoirs in winter, **Bonaparte’s Gulls** were found at several smaller bodies this year, including one at Bremo Bluff, *Fluvanna* 26 Dec (ph. ST), 2 at Mill Cr. 8 Jan (MJ), and one there 1 Feb (JC, VE).

## HERONS—FINCHES

A **Green Heron** wintered again at L. Vista, *Bedford* 12 Dec–7 Feb (ph. ML). An **Osprey** was notably late at L. Anna SP, *Louisa* 3 Dec (ph. EA). On the other end of the season, one was early at L. Hanover Nature Trail, *Hanover* 26 Feb (ph. NC). Always rare and almost always at the western edge of the Region, an imm. **Golden Eagle** was scoped over the Blue Ridge at Warbler Cr. Farm, *Bedford* 18 Jan (BE). The only **Short-**



Daniel Bailey’s photo of a **Common Gallinule** at Reusens Dam in *Bedford*, 2 May.

**eared Owls** this winter were found once again at Green Springs, *Louisa* but counts remained low with a maximum of 2 on 20 Dec (RW). Scarce in the Region in winter, there were 3 **Peregrine Falcon** reports: one at the Rappahannock Canal

Path, *Fredericksburg* 17 Dec (LB); another at Mountain Run Farm, *Bedford* 28 Dec (ph. LA, GB); and one at Slaughter Pen Historic Site, *Spotsylvania* 21 Jan (ph. SC). A **Loggerhead Shrike** was found on the ChCBC for the third consecutive winter at Stinson Vineyards, *Albemarle*, where it lingered through 19 Feb (ph. SK). This bird was banded 14 Feb (SH), so subsequent visits will be able to be confirmed as the same individual. Four **Tree Swallows** arrived very early at Reusens Dam, *Lynchburg* 10 Feb (DB). A **House Wren** wintered again at Ragged Mountain Natural Area, *Albemarle* 2–15 Feb (BB). Though there were not widespread reports, several **Evening Grosbeak** flocks popped up in the Region: 7 on the LCBC; one at Lakeview Farms, *Hanover* 21 Dec (MK); another at Garret Rd., *Powhatan* 25 Dec (JH); 3 at Cedar Gate Rd., *Amherst* 14 Jan (MH); 9 at Rosecrans Ln., *Spotsylvania* (JB); 3 at Glenmore, *Albemarle* 18 Feb (ph., a.r. SK); and 6 at Randolph Square, *Goochland* 25 Feb (a.r. CE). Twelve **Red Crossbills** were found on the BFMCBC, a noteworthy record for a species which is typically rare at all seasons even at higher elevations on the western edge of the Region.

## LONGSPURS—DICKCISSEL

A **Lapland Longspur** continued at Greenfield Farm, *Albemarle* 16 Dec (BB, AR). Following the previous winter’s record at the same site, a **Grasshopper Sparrow** was unseasonal at Liberty Corner Farm, *Albemarle* 20 Dec (ph. WC). Formerly abundant but now less than annual in the Region, an **American Tree Sparrow** was found at the Vulcan Materials Pond, *Spotsylvania* 7 Jan (EK). Four overwintering **Baltimore Orioles** were reported: a returning m. at Boxwood, *Lynchburg* 1 Dec–28 Feb (ph. AL, CT); another that returned for its seventh winter at a feeder at Willow L., *Albemarle* (1 Dec–19 Feb, ph. anonymous eBirder); another f. at Tucker Pk., *Goochland* 16 Dec–15 Jan (ph. JD, ph. ZZ); and a f. at Ponder Hill, *Greene* 20 Feb (GM). Twenty-eight **Rusty**

**Blackbirds** were found on the WCBC, a good count of this rare and declining winter resident. Rare in winter, a **Vesper Sparrow** was at Greenfield Farm, *Albemarle* 16 Dec (BB, AR). Surprisingly, 2 **Black-and-white Warblers** were encountered this winter, the first at Percival's Island Natural Area, *Amherst* 16 Dec (ph. GR) and the second on the CCBC. Proving this neotropical migrant's hardiness, a **Tennessee Warbler** at Twin Lakes, *Fredericksburg* 22 Jan (MA) was certainly unseasonable. Rarely detected in winter in the Region, an **Orange-crowned Warbler** frequented a backyard feeder near L. of the Woods, *Orange* 14 Jan–25 Feb (ph. MC). A scarce wintering species, 2 **Palm Warblers** were found: one at Joshua Falls Impoundments, *Campbell* 29 Dec (LA, GB, AL) and another at Cross Rd., *Hanover* 16 Jan (SM). Two overwintering **Dickcissels** visited backyard feeders; one in Mechanicsville, *Hanover* continued from the Fall period and was seen through 19 Feb (ph. AS), while another near College L., *Lynchburg* was present 20 Jan–23 Feb (ph. MM).

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## SPRING 2023

This spring was fairly diverse taxonomically, with 233 species reported to eBird versus the five-year 228 average. Waterbirds made a strong showing with several rarer shorebird species found, as well as Common Gallinule, Sandhill Crane, and Glossy Ibis. Herons also showed well, with such highlights as American Bittern, Little Blue Heron, the recently renamed Western Cattle Egret, and Yellow-crowned Night-Heron. There were several standout passerines, namely Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Brewer's Blackbird, Henslow's Sparrow, and Western Tanager. Despite the overall diversity, several regular species were not detected at all including Willow Flycatcher and Golden-winged Warbler.

**Abbreviations:** Reusens (Reusens Dam, *Lynchburg/Bedford*).

## GEESE—SHOREBIRDS

Notably late was a **Snow Goose** at Tilmans Farm Pond, *Powhatan* 14 & 20 May (ph. AC, ES). The only **Ross's Goose** reported was a continuing individual in *Spotsylvania* at Slaughter Pen Farm Historic Site 1 Mar (ph. JG). An injured **Redhead** lingered at L. Vista, *Bedford* through 26 Apr (ML). A f. **Greater Scaup** was distinctly late at Chris Greene L., *Albemarle* 19–21 May (ph. PJ, TH). The months-long lingering **Surf Scoter** at St. Mary's Quarry, *Amherst* was last noted 22 Apr (MJ). Two **Long-tailed Ducks** persisted at Mill Creek L. Pk., *Amherst* through 19 Mar (MJ, DM). An early **Eastern Whip-poor-will** arrived at Burnley Rd., *Albemarle* 26 Mar (ES, TS). The only one of its species reported, a vocalizing **Virginia Rail** was at Gold Mine Marsh, *Louisa* 6 May (AR). Likewise, the only **Sora** was at Reusens 19 Apr (AL, ph. DB) and continued there through 5 May (ph. AR, MA). Rare in the Region, a **Common Gallinule** joined the aforementioned Sora at Reusens, on the *Bedford* side, 2 May (MS, KD) through 8 May (BK). Single **Sandhill Cranes** were noted at two locations: flying over

at Buck Ridge Rd., *Albemarle* 25 Mar (CB) and at L. Hanover Nature Trail, *Hanover* 10 May (a. r. JM). Nine **Semipalmated Plovers** at Reusens, *Bedford* 14 May (ph. MB) provided a high count for the season. Several **Dunlin** were found: one at Groomes Pt., *Orange* 15 Apr (AR); another at Peaks Rd., *Bedford* 28 Apr (ph. BE, MJ); one at Central Plains Pond, *Fluvanna* 28 Apr (ST); and one at Chris Greene L., *Albemarle* 30 Apr (ph. GB, SB) through 2 May (CB). Another rare shorebird migrant, three **White-rumped Sandpipers** were found: one at Spotsylvania Sportsplex, *Spotsylvania* 8 May (ph. MA); at Reusens, *Bedford* 14 May (BE, MJ); and at Carysbrook Plantation, *Fluvanna* 29 May (ST). A rare inland migrant, 4 **Short-billed Dowitchers** that dropped into Spotsylvania Sportsplex, *Spotsylvania* 29 May (ph. GF) furnished the only report.

#### ANHINGA—FLYCATCHERS

Several **Anhinga** were reported from traditional sites: up to 2 at Chamberlayne Swamp, *Hanover* 8 Apr through 8 May (ph. WG, m. obs.), and another at last year's nesting site on the Richmond Turnpike, *Caroline* 20 May (PS). Both **American Bitterns** reported were from *Albemarle*: at Old Trail 1 Apr (ph. AC) and another at Lickinghole Cr. 17 Apr (HB, PR). A **Snowy Egret** was at Chamberlayne Swamp, *Hanover* 25 Apr through 3 May (ph. WB, m. obs.). Rare in spring, an ad. **Little Blue Heron** was at Walnut Cr. Pk.; *Albemarle* 21 through 26 Apr (ph. JH) and another ad. was at Chamberlayne Swamp, *Hanover* 9 May (KL, PS). A first for the greater Lynchburg area and rare Regionwide, a **Western Cattle Egret** flew over the Joshua Falls Impoundments, *Campbell* 7 May (MS). Continuing from winter, a **Green Heron** was noted at L. Vista, *Bedford* 6 Mar (ML). Notable for the Piedmont, a **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** was observed over the Roanoke R. at the Hardy Ford Boat Ramp, *Bedford* 11 May (KG). Two **Glossy Ibis**, always a rare visitor to the Region, were found: one at

Reusens 15 & 16 May (ph. DB) and another at Spotsylvania Sportsplex, *Spotsylvania* 30 May (BG). Two **Mississippi Kites** were observed in *Hanover* on the eastern edge of the Region where they have become regular: one 12 May (ph. AC) and another 22 May (NC). A **Merlin** was late at Galts Mill Rd., *Amherst* 13 May (BE, MJ, DM). Two **Olive-sided Flycatchers** were found in *Albemarle*: one at Foxhaven Farm 6 May (ph. JP, GG, JR) and another at Ivy Cr. Natural Area 17 May (ph. TW). Formerly a rare but now increasingly regular spring migrant, several **Alder Flycatchers** voiced their appearance in the Region: one at Hidden Swamp, *Albemarle* 15 May (BB, DC, CF, PM, DS, CS); 2 at Still Meadow Trail, *Albemarle* 15 May (BB, DC, CF); one at Powatan SP, *Powhatan* 17 May (a. r. MC); and one at Greenbrier Pk., *Charlottesville* 19 May



Bob Epperson's photograph of a **Glossy Ibis**, taken at Reusens Dam in *Bedford* on 15 May.

(ST). By contrast, the normally expected **Willow Flycatcher** was completely undetected in the Region this spring. A **SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER** was a one-day wonder at Secretarys Road, *Albemarle* 27 May (ph. AJ), providing one of very few records in the Region.

#### VIREOS—TANAGERS

Rare in Spring, two **Philadelphia Vireos** were found: one at Mint Springs Valley Pk., *Albemarle* 8 May (JP) and another at Greenbrier Pk., *Charlottesville* 20 May (ph. CE). The returning

**Loggerhead Shrike** at Stinson Vineyards, *Albemarle* continued 2 Mar (TH). Slightly late, a **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was detected vocalizing at the Rockfish Gap Overlook, *Nelson* 11 May (a. r. LC). The lone **Marsh Wren** encountered was at Still Meadow Trail, *Albemarle* 3 through 5 May (ph. BM, m. obs.). **Evening Grosbeaks** were present in small numbers including a flock of 12 at Senator House, *Fluvanna* through 18 Apr (GH); a lone bird in *Caroline* 16 Apr (ph. AC); 3 at Greenbrier Pk., *Charlottesville* 5 May (ph., a. r. DC, TC); and one at Stribling Ave., *Charlottesville* 5 May (ph. HH). A **HENSLow'S SPARROW** at Greenbrier Pk., *Charlottesville* 16 Apr (ph. CE) provided evidence this nearly-extirpated grassland species



Ben King's picture of a **Mourning Warbler** at Secluded Farm in *Albemarle* on 15 May.

still occasionally passes through the Region. Possibly a lingering wintering individual, a **Lincoln's Sparrow** was on the very early side at Gold Mine Marsh, *Louisa* 3 Mar (AR). A **BREWER'S BLACKBIRD** at Timbrook Library Pond, *Campbell* 12 & 13 Apr (ph. MB, JD) was a great find for the Central Region, and

the first record for the Greater Lynchburg Area. Though typically a rare but regular migrant through the Region, no **Golden-winged Warblers** were detected this spring. An **Orange-crowned Warbler** at Peaks of Otter, *Bedford* 16 Apr (ph. BE, MJ) was the only one found. A scarce migrant through the Region, two **Mourning Warblers** were found in *Albemarle*: one at Mint Springs Valley Pk. 8 May (ph. AL) and another at Secluded Farm 15 May (ph. BK). Very rare anywhere in the Region, a **WESTERN TANAGER** was a welcome visitor at a feeder on Persimmon Ln., *Spotsylvania* 13 Apr (ph. EK, m. obs.).

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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.

### WINTER 2022–2023

Temperatures averaged near normal in December but were well above average in January and February. Precipitation for all three months was about average with no measurable snowfall in the region. The two major Christmas Bird Counts were held again this year; the 84<sup>th</sup> annual Hopewell CBC tallied 120 species, tying the all-time high count, and the 46<sup>th</sup> annual Williamsburg CBC had 112 species. Highlights of both counts are noted in the text.

**Abbreviation:** City Point (Petersburg National Battlefield–City Point Unit, *Hopewell*); Curles Neck (Curles Neck Farm, *Henrico*); Dutch Gap/Henricus (Dutch Gap Conservation Area/Henricus Historical Park, *Chesterfield*); Hog (Hog Island WMA, *Surry*); Shirley (Shirley Plantation, *Charles City*).

**Christmas Bird Counts:** HoCBC (Hopewell, 18 Dec); WiCBC (Williamsburg, 18 Dec).

### GEESE—WRENS

Always a good find in the Region, a **Greater White-fronted Goose** at Curles Neck was the waterfowl highlight on the HoCBC. Likewise, a **White-winged Scoter** at Hog highlighted the WiCBC waterfowl list. An apparent **Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird** was photographed at a feeder in *Chesterfield* 2 Dec. It was reported to have been present since 28 Nov (ME). A **King Rail** responded to playback on Carters Mill Rd., *Henrico* 29 Dec (ST). Up to 2

King Rails have been known to winter at this location in recent years. Four **Virginia Rails** and 10 **Soras** represented high counts for both species on the HoCBC. Three **Sandhill Cranes** graced the fields on Turkey Is. Rd., *Henrico* 31 Dec–5 Jan (ph. BH, m. obs.). Sixty-eight **Wilson's Snipes** recorded on the HoCBC was a new high count. An out of season **Spotted Sandpiper** was photographed at Yorktown Beach, *York* 6 Jan (ph. CJ). The gull congregations in downtown *Richmond City* aren't what they used to be, so an **Iceland Gull** seen flying upriver from the T. Tyler Potterfield Memorial Bridge was a nice find (ph. AB, SD). Three **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** tallied on the WiCBC was a new high count. Any **American White Pelican** sighting away from Hog is noteworthy in the Region; 3 were seen at Cumberland Marsh NAP, *New Kent* 26 Feb (ML, AC). A **Green Heron**, rare in winter, was spotted at Dutch Gap/Henricus 10 Dec (CS). Eight **Northern Harriers** and 37 **Red-shouldered Hawks** were new high counts on the WiCBC. More high counts on the WiCBC included 239 **Red-bellied Woodpeckers** and 141 **Downy Woodpeckers**. **Blue-headed Vireos** have become less rare inland in winter but still noteworthy. The only two reported this season were both encountered on Treasure Is. Rd., *James City* 10 Dec (ph. IM). **Tree Swallows** seem to be arriving earlier to the Region than they have in the past. The earliest arrivals this year were 4 at Dutch Gap 14 Jan (JSh). Two **Sedge Wrens**, rare west of Chesapeake Bay, were reported this season. The first one was photographed at Jamestown Beach Event Pk., *James City* 2 Jan (ph. by BT). Another, most likely the same bird, was seen there again 8 Feb (ph. BT). The second

bird was spied at Ragged Is. WMA, *Isle of Wight* 3 Jan (NB, et al.).

## THRASHERS—DICKCISSEL

A new high count of 36 **Brown Thrashers** was set on the HoCBC. Likewise, a new high count of 566 **Eastern Bluebirds** was set on the WiCBC. After last winter's major invasion of **Evening Grosbeaks** to the Region, there was hope for a repeat event this year that never materialized. However, there were several sightings including multiple birds heard at James River NWR 28 Dec (WG); a flock of 10 at Shirley during the HoCBC; one at a Cracker Barrel in w. *Henrico* 16 Dec (RG); one at a feeder in e. *Henrico* 24 Dec (ph. M&DC); and one at Governor's Land, *James City*



Deborah Humphries' photo of a **Lincoln's Sparrow** at Jamestown Beach Event Pk. in *James City*, 30 Dec.

5 Jan (CO). A new high count of 1368 **Dark-eyed Juncos** was recorded on the WiCBC. Other sparrow high counts included 3 **Vesper Sparrows** and 373 **Savannah Sparrows**, both on the HoCBC. A **Lincoln's Sparrow** was a good find at Jamestown Beach Event Pk., *James City* 30 Dec (ph. DH, et al.). The bird was seen again 1 Jan (NB) and 6 Feb (ph. CG). A **YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD** visited a feeding station in Carrollton, *Isle of Wight* 24 Dec (PO). A new high count of 14 **Baltimore Orioles** was tallied on the HoCBC. A **Black-and-white Warbler** was at Ancarrow's Landing, *Richmond*

*City* throughout the season 4 Dec–19 Feb (ph. AB, m. obs.). Another **Black-and-white Warbler** was seen at City Point during the HoCBC. Potentially the same bird was seen there again 21 Dec (SR). A new high count of 12 **Orange-crowned Warblers** was set on the HoCBC. A **Nashville Warbler** was discovered at Hopewell City Pk., *Hopewell* 11 Dec (ph. AB). Presumably the same bird was encountered there again on the HoCBC. Two **Cape May Warblers** were noted visiting suet feeders in the Region. One was probably a repeat visitor from last year in the Tuckahoe section of *Henrico* that, once again, stayed throughout the season with sightings 24 Dec–25 Feb (ph. KL). The other was seen on Tuxford Rd., *Chesterfield* 1 Feb (ph. LL). A **Northern Parula** was at City Point 11 Dec (ph. AB). Two **Western Tanagers** were reported in the Region this season. One was in *Isle of Wight* 8 Feb (TC) and the other came to a residential feeder in Toano, *James City* 27 Jan–13 Feb (ph. JSm). A **Dickcissel** was spotted in a residential yard in *Henrico* 28 Jan (ph. TJB).

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## SPRING 2023

Continuing the trend from the winter season, temperatures in March and April were above average in the Region but took a dip in May, averaging 1.9 degrees below normal for the month. March was very dry but precipitation rebounded to more normal levels in April and May. Spring migration got off to an early start, with the unseasonable temperatures and associated southerly winds bringing some of the earlier migrants to the Region ahead of schedule.

However, during the first week of May strong northerly winds and cool temperatures stopped migration dead in its tracks, keeping some of our winter birds here longer and delaying the arrival of a number of our migrant warblers.

**Abbreviations:** Hog (Hog Island WMA, *Surry*); JRP (James River Park System, *Richmond City*).

## DUCKS—ANHINGA

A pair of **Blue-winged Teal** at Greensprings Interpretive Trail, *James City* 5–10 May were getting late (m. obs.). A lingering **Canvasback** was noted at York R. SP, *York* 22 Apr (ph. NB). Two late drake **Ring-necked Ducks** were at Hog 13 May (AD, TT). At least one lingered until 20 May (m. obs.) Also late, a f. **Hooded Merganser** was at Hog until at least 24 May (m. obs.). This bird potentially had an injured wing, though this was never confirmed. Generally a scarce species in the Region, the only **Black-billed Cuckoo** reported this spring was heard from a residential yard in *Chesterfield* 4 May (a. r. AC). Two **King Rails** were reported at Hog 20 May (ph. RB). **Sandhill Crane** reports seem to be increasing these days. This season there were three sightings in the Region. The first was a single bird seen soaring over Hog 16 April (BW); the second was seen on a lawn on Colonial Trail, *Surry* 3 May (ph. TC); rounding things out, a flock of 8 was spotted flying over Green Springs West, *James City* 7 May (ph. DH). Just about annual in spring at Hog, **Black-necked Stilts** were represented by 2 there 7 May (TC, et al.). A rare spring transient west of Chesapeake Bay, a **Ruddy Turnstone** was seen on the Colonial Parkway at College Cr., *James City* 18 May (ph. DH, ph. BT). Also rare inland, a **Sanderling** was spotted on the river rocks at John J. Radcliffe Conservation Area, *Chesterfield* 22 Apr (ph. AD, TT). An excellent record for *Richmond City*, a **Western Willet** was discovered at the Pony Pasture section of JRP 27 Apr (TD, m. obs.). A **Black Tern**, much rarer in spring than fall, was spotted at College Cr., *James City* 19 May (NB). A **Black Skimmer** at Ragged

## Virginia Birds

Is. WMA, *Isle of Wight* 25 May was noteworthy (ph. RD), as few wander that far up the James R. **Anhingas** have become expected in the Region in recent years, and this was no exception. This spring's high count was 4 at Matoaka L. and Woods, *Williamsburg* 18 May (ph. IM).

## FLYCATCHERS—GROSBEAKS

A rare migrant for the Region, an **Olive-sided**



Todd Dixon's photograph of a **Willet** at James River Pk.—Pony Pasture in *Richmond City* on 27 Apr.

**Flycatcher** was at Maymont Pk., *Richmond City* 21 May (ph. WT, AT). Rare in spring, a well-described **Philadelphia Vireo** was encountered at Park Terrace Rd. Pond, *Henrico* 14 May (GA). A late **American Pipit** was at Mainland Farm/Drummond's Field 2 & 8 May (ph CG). Always rare in the region, a **Clay-colored Sparrow** was found at College Landing Pk., *Williamsburg* 1 May (ph. IM). The bird remained there through 5 May (m. obs.). A late **White-throated Sparrow** made a pit stop at a residential yard in *Henrico* 21 May (RM). Rarer in spring than in fall, the only **Lincoln's Sparrow** reported in the Region was one on the Green Springs Interpretive Trail, *James City* 2–21 Apr (ph. BW, m. obs.). A **Tennessee Warbler** at a residential water feature in *Henrico* 21 May was running late (DM). A late **Cape May Warbler** was singing in a residential yard in *James City* 27 May (PB). A late **Magnolia Warbler** was at York R. SP, *York* 25 May (PP). Conversely, a **Blackburnian**





Deborah Humphries' picture of a Clay-colored Sparrow at College Landing Pk. in *Williamsburg*, 1 May.

**Warbler** at New Quarter Pk., *York* 16 Apr was early (CV). Returning to the late theme, 2 **Chestnut-sided Warblers** at Powhatan Cr. Trail, *James City* 21 May were just that (ph. DH). Also

late, a **Palm Warbler** was spotted at Bryan Pk., *Richmond City* 13 May (SM). Back on the early side, 2 **Yellow-throated Warblers** were heard singing loud and clear at Waller Mill Pk., *York* 5 Mar (a. r. CV) – quite an early date, even for this species. A late **Black-throated Green Warbler** was singing at the main section of JRP 22 May (KC). A **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** at a residential feeder in *Richmond City* 16 Apr was early (ph. BR).

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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.

### WINTER 2022–2023

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., which forms the boundary between *King William* and *King and Queen*, joins with the Pamunkey R. to form the York R. in West Point.

This winter, observers found 162 species. This was the highest winter species count, two more than the previous winter high in 2020-21, and 12 more than the average of the previous ten years. The most exciting finds were Purple Sandpiper, Snow Bunting, Evening Grosbeak, Vesper Sparrow, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Dickcissel, and the Region's first Northern Saw-whet Owls. It was a good year for some irruptive species such as Red-breasted Nuthatch and Purple Finch, but a poor year for several species that rely on cedar berries such as waxwings, robins, and Hermit Thrushes. The data for this season's report were primarily gleaned from eBird and five National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Counts: Mathews, Walkerton, Washington's Birthplace, Northumberland-Lancaster, and Middle Peninsula.

**Abbreviations:** Bay (Chesapeake Bay); Beaverdam (Beaverdam Pk., *Gloucester*); Bethel (Bethel Beach NAP, *Mathews*); Birthplace

(George Washington's Birthplace National Monument, *Westmoreland*); Caledon (Caledon SP, *King George*); Dameron ( Dameron Marsh NAP, *Northumberland*); K. G. Ponds (King George Ponds, partially private, near Sealston, *King George*); Leedstown (*Westmoreland*); Machicomoco (Machicomoco SP, *Gloucester*); New Pt. Comfort (New Pt. Comfort Preserve, *Mathews*); The Pocket (a portion of the Pamunkey R. primarily viewed from Powhatan's gravesite in the Pamunkey Reservation, *King William*).

**Christmas Bird Counts:** MCBC (Mathews, 1 Jan); MPCBC (Middle Peninsula, 27 Dec); NLCBC (Northumberland-Lancaster, 20 Dec); WBCBC (Washington's Birthplace, 18 Dec); and WCBC (Walkerton, 2 Jan).

### GEESE—DUCKS

A **Greater White-fronted Goose** on WCBC was a first record for *King and Queen* (NN, MC, JoC, m. obs.). A total of 46 **Snow Geese** was reported from nine locations with a high of 28 flying over Bryant Bay, *Gloucester* 10 Dec (DY). **Brant** are not commonly found in the Region, and when they do occur, it is usually along the Chesapeake Bay shore in *Mathews* and *Gloucester*. Thus, it was a nice surprise to find 2 among the Canada Geese in Pope's Cr. at Birthplace 19 Feb (EK). Sixteen **Cackling Geese** were reported from eight locations. The total of 21,879 **Canada Geese** reported on the CBCs was 26% lower than last year's total. In eBird, observers reported 34

sightings of 1000 or more at 15 locations, a significant decline from last year's 45 reports of 1000 or more. A count of 17 **Mute Swans** at Colonial Beach, *Westmoreland* 26 Dec (HT) was the highest count since 32 were reported 2 Jan 2009 at Beaverdam (NF). None have been reported since 2019 at Beaverdam, probably due to population control practices targeting this destructive invasive species. Unlike most previous years, the numbers of **Tundra Swans** remained low throughout the winter. Typically, numbers increase to the 300-600 range, but this winter there were only two reports of over 100 swans: 140 at Caledon 4 Feb (JW), and 114 at Bethel 27 Dec (RB), compared to last year's 11 reports of over 100, and a high count of 570 at Birthplace 27 Feb. The high at Birthplace, which in the past has been a very good place to see hundreds of birds throughout the winter, was only 60 on 26 Feb (m. obs.). Counts of 94 **American Wigeon** and 410 **Gadwalls** at K. G. Ponds 3 Dec (FA) were the 2nd highest Regional winter tallies in eBird. After last year's encouraging increase of **Northern Pintails** to a more typical high count of 910 at The Pocket, this year's Regional high of 280 at The Pocket 2 Jan (m. obs.) was the lowest count since the winter of 2005-06. An average of 4.1 **Common Goldeneyes** was reported from 28 locations and a high of only 12 at Birthplace 26 Feb (m. obs.), all of which were lower than last winter's tallies (average of 6.1, from 33 locations, with a high of 50). The season high count of 700 **Buffleheads** in the Ware R., *Gloucester* 5 Feb (m. obs.) is one of the highest counts on record, surpassed only by previous tallies of 775 and 1009.

## BOBWHITE—OWLS

No **Northern Bobwhites** could be found on the Region's CBCs this year, and only 10 were reported in four locations in *Northumberland*, *King George*, *King William*, and *Westmoreland*. A **Ring-necked Pheasant** near Lanessville, *King William* 22 Jan (KB, NB) was undoubtedly a bird released for hunting purposes. This was the 9th

Regional record and was only about 3 miles from where one was reported 20 Feb 2022 (SP). **Wild Turkeys** continue to flourish. The average of the high counts from 65 eBird locations was 10.5. The single location high of 52 at Balls Neck/Cloverdale Rd., *Northumberland* 20 Dec (m. obs.) is the 4th highest for the Region. An estimate of 300 **Rock Pigeons** at Machicomoco 10 Feb (SW) ties the Region's all time high count in eBird. A very low seasonal high count of 65 **Mourning Doves** at Naylor's Beach, *Richmond* 21 Dec (JT) was lower than the lowest weekly winter eBird high of 75 and is far surpassed by the all-time winter high of 225. An unprecedented 5 **Virginia Rails** were reported: 2 in *King William* on WCBC, 2 in *Westmoreland* on WCBC, and one in *Essex* 5 Jan (JoC, MC). A **Sora** heard at South Haven Beach 1 Jan (RG) was the first winter record and 2nd all-time record in eBird for *Mathews*, as well as the 4th winter Regional record. It was discovered the day before by an unnamed photographer. The 32 **Black-bellied Plovers** at Machicomoco 17 Jan (JSt) tied last year's previous all-time Regional winter high at that same location. **Semipalmated Plovers** are rare sightings in the winter here, all occurring in the lower Middle Peninsula in *Mathews* and *Gloucester* especially along the Bay shore. This winter none were found on the CBCs, but 2 were found at Bethel 24 Jan (MF, VB) – the 7th Regional winter record in eBird. On 9 Feb, only one could be found there (MF). The estimate of 200 **Sanderlings** at Bethel (JSh) ties the Region's eBird all-time high which was reported by the same observer 13 Feb 2011, also at Bethel. A rare **Purple Sandpiper** was a treat for five birders at Bethel 16 Jan (BD). This is only the 4th Regional record, all from the Bay shore in *Mathews*. WCBC often tallies the highest count of **American Woodcocks** in the country, but this year's total of 48 was surpassed by Cape Charles CBC's 68. A **Willet** at Bethel 1 Jan (FA, RG) was the 7th eBird Regional winter record. An estimate of 400 **Herring Gulls** at Beaverdam 9 Jan (WB, MN) has only been surpassed in previous years by estimates up to 1000 near the *King and Queen* landfill and 450 near the *King George* landfill. No

**Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were reported this winter. Loons were relatively scarce this year with underwhelming high counts of 17 **Red-throated Loons** in the New Pt. Comfort sector of MCBC (DY, AE) and 23 **Common Loons** seen from a boat traveling for 16 miles in the Rappahannock R. off Urbanna, *Middlesex* 4 Dec (JeC). A conservative scope-count by tens noted 230 **Northern Gannets** in the Bay off Bethel 11 Feb (MS), which was very close to the highest eBird Regional winter count of 250 at Gloucester Pt., *Gloucester* 30 Jan 2012 (JoS). Huge numbers of **Double-crested Cormorants** gathered in the water and on pilings along the waterfront and near the casino area of Colonial Beach, *Westmoreland* 26 Dec (BH). About 1500 were present at 12:50, but when the observer went back at about 1:30, most were gone. Though this was a rough estimate by hundreds, this is one of the highest all-time counts in the Region. Eighteen **American White Pelicans** were noted in three locations: 7 swimming near Clay Bank, *Gloucester* 29 Jan (HC, RC); 6 flying over the Chesapeake Bay at Dameron 18 Feb (BG); and 5 flying over Birthplace 7 Jan (m. obs.). Not seen every year, two single **American Bitterns** were noted in the easternmost parts of the Middle Peninsula: New Pt Comfort 4 Feb (JeC, AE) and Guinea marshes, *Gloucester* 23 Feb (JaS, DY). Five **Great Egrets** were found in four locations, all in *Gloucester*. A **Black-crowned Night Heron** was at Beaverdam 15 Feb (SW). Before this year there were only two eBird records of **Ospreys** before 22 Feb and none before 15 Feb. This year there were six arrivals before 22 Feb, with the earliest arrival checking out the nest on the Warner Hall grain silo, *Gloucester* 13 Feb (DY). The area's four CBCs tallied 311 **Bald Eagles**, up from last year's 282. In addition, 158 were counted in the *King George* landfill during the Brooke CBC 17 Dec (JW). This was the high count again this year, but it was down from last year's 217. A total of 60 **Northern Harriers** was reported from 90 eBird lists in 42 locations. It is interesting that with all this good habitat for harriers, no **Short-eared Owls** have been reported in the area since 2014. Certainly, the

most exciting find of the season was the Region's first **NORTHERN SAW WHET OWLS**, which were discovered by two groups in *King William* during the WCBC. One was behind the *King William* courthouse (DB, BW). While one observer was "whistling for a Screech Owl [sic], the Saw-Whet popped out of the olive right beside him, took a look at him, and disappeared back into it." There were also 2 in pine regrowth along East River Rd. (AR, SC), where one was found again 29 Jan (SC).

## WOODPECKERS—BUNTING

Twelve **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** at a private farm in *King William* 2 Jan (EO, AB, GH, SB) represented a new county all-time high, surpassed only by the Region's all-time high of 14. It also contributed to WCBC's all-time high of 55. In eBird, 66 reports noted 118 **Red-headed Woodpeckers** in 41 locations with a high of 17 at Caledon 21 Feb (GF), a substantial increase from last year's 82 birds at 13 locations. Only 19 **American Kestrels** were found on the Region's CBCs as compared with last year's 26. But in eBird, there were 126 reports of 79 birds wintering in 73 locations, which was up significantly from last year's 96 reports in 61 locations. **Merlin** and **Peregrine Falcon** numbers were similar to last year. A tally of 55 **Eastern Phoebes** on WCBC was the highest total among Virginia CBCs this year. A **Blue-headed Vireo** at Cedar Pt. 15 Dec (JoC, MC) was the first *Essex* winter record in eBird. A **Common Raven** in Leedstown was the first record for WCBC (WBr) and only the 2nd all-time record for *Westmoreland*. There continue to be regular sightings in western *King George*, especially near K. G. Ponds and Caledon SP, but so far, they have not been reported from anywhere else in the Northern Neck. Four **Tree Swallows** at Marl Bank Rd. 11 Feb (AD, JoC, MC) constituted the 3rd winter record for *Essex*. Unlike last year when 1–3 **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were reported at 10 locations, this year was an irruption year, with the high counts from 71 locations tallying to 107

birds. Tying the previous winter high, 3 **Sedge Wrens** were found at a foggy Bethel 31 Dec (JoC, MC). Guinea Marshes, *Gloucester* 9 Jan (MN, WBU) and Bethel 27 Dec (RB) each hosted 5 **Marsh Wrens**, just shy of the winter high of 6. The poor production of cedar fruits this winter appeared to influence the numbers of several species. The high count of **Hermit Thrushes** is often over 20, and the all-time winter high is 39. But this year the high count was only 7 at a private tree farm near Oak Grove, *Westmoreland* (WBCBC). Counts of over 1000 **American Robins** are common some winters and the all-time winter high is 23,500. This winter, there were only nine reports of over 100, and the high was a mere 397 near Nomini Cr., *Westmoreland* 8 Feb (MG). Along with those robins was the season's high of only 43 **Cedar Waxwings**. This was the lowest winter high since the winter of 2016-17 when the high was only 25. The all-time winter high is 410, and normally, counts of over 100 are common, but this year there were only



Larry D. Tipton's photo of a **Snow Bunting** at Bethel Beach NAP in *Mathews*, taken on 24 Jan.

five reports over 25. Two **Lapland Longspurs**, first found in a farm field in Leedstown 3 Dec (FA), were joined by 18 others to produce the Region's new high count of 20 among a flock of 120 **Horned Larks**, in time to be seen by multiple observers during the WBCBC. Later in Jan and Feb none could be found during scope searches of this and nearby farms (FA). First found at Bethel 21 Dec (JD), and staying until 30 Jan, 1-7 **Snow Buntings** were an exciting treat for 60 observers. Three species of winter finches

were having a mild irruption year. A total of 8 **Evening Grosbeaks** was reported in four locations: 5 in Hayes, *Gloucester* 26 Feb (AW, AE), and single birds at Shiloh School, *Northumberland* 20 Dec (m. obs.); near Lanesville, *King William* 3 Feb (MD); and in the Cohoke sector of WBCB (SC, AR). There were 101 reports of 1-7 **Purple Finches** at 50 locations, and 14 **Pine Siskins** were reported from 11 locations.

### SPARROWS—DICKCISSEL

A **Vesper Sparrow** was a new species for the WBCB (EO, AB, SB, GH). From 1-5 **Ipswich Savannah Sparrows** were seen throughout the season and into the spring at Bethel starting 27 (m. obs.). **White-crowned Sparrows** continue their decline. Only 7 were reported from five locations in *King William*, *King George*, *Northumberland*, and *Westmoreland*. Two **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** were wonderful surprises this winter. These were the 3rd and 4th eBird records for the Region and the first since 2011. A female was at a private farm in *Essex* 18 Dec (JoC, MC) on WBCBC, and a male was near Ashley Cove, *Lancaster* 12 Feb (AE). **Eastern Meadowlarks** still seem to be doing fairly well here: this season's high counts from 51 locations totaled 370. However, this is a decline from last year's 502 in 46 locations; and this winter's high of 35 at Warner Hall Rd., *Gloucester* 18 Dec (DY) is below the previous 15-year average of 50. In addition, the accompanying graph (Fig. 1) of the winter high counts from 2007 to 2023 suggests a slowly declining population. A

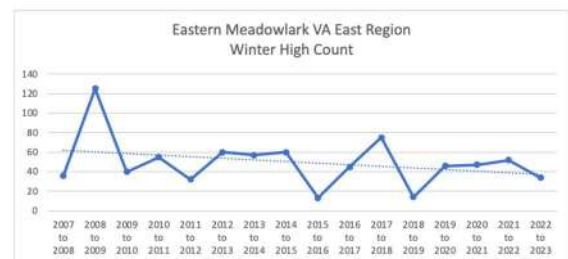


Figure 1

**Baltimore Oriole** was seen almost daily near White Marsh, *Gloucester* from 7 Jan through the

end of the season (HC, RC) and two single birds appeared briefly near Gloucester Pt., *Gloucester* 21 Dec, and 1 & 18 Feb (MB). Sixty-four **Rusty Blackbirds** were reported from 11 locations with a high of 35 in Tappahannock, *Essex* 12 Feb (FA). A **Black-and-White Warbler** 19 Feb near Central Garage, *King William* (KR) was the first winter record for the Middle Peninsula and the 3rd for the Region. Seven **Orange-crowned Warblers** were reported in six locations; 4 **Common Yellowthroats** were reported in three locations; and 8 **Palm Warblers** were reported in six locations. Nineteen **Pine Warblers** 28 Jan at Lanesville, *King William* (FA) represent a new Regional winter high count. **Painted Buntings** are no longer unexpected winter visitors in *Middlesex* and *Gloucester*. This year individual males were reported sporadically from five locations (AE, HF, MF, MG). Since some of those locations were near each other, this probably represents 3 or 4 birds. A male **Dickcissel** along Sweet Hall Rd., West Pt., *King William* 28 Jan (FA) was the first winter record for the Region in eBird.

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## SPRING 2023

An impressive total of 235 species was recorded this spring, one of the highest ever recorded during a single spring. While five below last spring's total, this count is still twelve above the ten-year average, and features 82% of all the species ever recorded in the East Region during the spring. It was a very rainy spring, leading to widespread flooding across the many agricultural fields in this area. This may explain the 21 shorebird species reported this spring, along with the abundance of Sandhill Crane and Glossy Ibis sightings. Slightly above average, 29 warbler species were reported this spring. Notable rarities include Red-necked Phalarope and Evening Grosbeak. It should also be mentioned that this spring, one of the highest ever contributor totals in the history of this report is cited at the end of this page. Many thanks to these 40 birders and all the others who contributed valuable data on this notoriously under-visited part of the state. Data was sourced from the Virginia Birds listserv, eBird, Gold Book (Virginia's Birdlife: An Annotated Checklist 4th edition, Rottenborn and Brinkley 2007), Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas 2 (VABBA2), and Birds of the World by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology (BOTW).

**Abbreviations:** Beaverdam (Beaverdam Pk., *Gloucester*); Bethel (Bethel Beach NAP, *Mathews*); Guinea (Guinea Marsh, *Gloucester*); Hughlett (Hughlett Pt. NAP, *Northumberland/Essex*); K.G. Ponds (private 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*); Wilna (Rappahannock River Valley NWR--Wilna/Wright Unit *Richmond*).

## DUCKS—SHOREBIRDS

An unseasonable **American Black Duck** was reported from Belle Isle SP, *Lancaster* 18 May (JoC, MC). Over the years, scattered reports from

May through Jul suggest that they may be breeding in the Region but as of now this has not been confirmed. A **Lesser Scaup** with damaged wing lingered around the mouth of Aberdeen Cr., *Gloucester* from 5–13 May (HC, RC). Three **Surf Scoters** at Leedstown 1 Apr (FA) were the furthest up the Rappahannock R. the species has ever been recorded on eBird. Two late **Ruddy Ducks** were observed at Beaverdam 19 May (HC, RC). **Common Nighthawks** have never been common during spring migration in the East Region, and this year was no exception. Only two individuals were recorded, one from China Hill Rd., *Richmond* 23 May (BK) and the other at Essex St., *Essex* 1 May (BC). This is likely tied to the species' preference for the Piedmont and



Susan Nishio's picture of a **Philadelphia Vireo** from Belle Isle SP in *Lancaster*, 10 May.

Appalachian regions during spring migration, as these areas exhibit much higher frequencies of spring reports than Virginia's coastal regions (BOTW). Although expected in the large freshwater Drake's Marsh, the season's only two **King Rails** heard near Leedstown 30 Apr (FA) still warrant a note. One **Virginia Rail** was reported this spring, at Machicomoco SP, *Gloucester* 13 May (KH). This is statistically expected, considering an average of 1.3 birds are recorded in this Region during the spring, but logically bizarre considering the amount of suitable habitat in the Region. Since these rails also show a much stronger spring presence in

neighboring regions, an explanation is in order. Virginia Rail is noted in the Gold Book as a "common to uncommon transient and summer resident, mainly in fresh and brackish marshes" of Virginia's Coastal Plain. There is no mention of breeding besides a timeline of the early life cycle. VABBA2 failed to produce any "Probable" breeding codes in the East Region, but several summertime reports in appropriate habitat over the past decade indicate that an inherent difficulty in detection of this cryptic rail may be behind the dearth of spring (and summer) records. A pair of **Sandhill Cranes** was reported along Warner Hall Rd., *Gloucester* throughout the day on 5 May (m. obs.). A single, possibly related, bird was seen from the nearby Prospect Rd., *Gloucester* 10 & 11 May (SC, TC). Another 2 in Heathsville, *Northumberland* 14 Apr (HH) reportedly spent weeks at the location prior to this singular report. A pair was also found along Gayles Rd., *Middlesex* 2 May (JeC) and reported several times later on in the day. Presumed to be the same birds, a pair was reported a week later on 9 May (JoC, MC) along Dragon Rd. about a mile away. Yet another individual was photographed in Leedstown 30 Apr (FA). The final pair of the spring was spotted at a different Leedstown location 25 May (CT). The first *Essex* **Black-bellied Plover** in eBird was photographed along Tidewater Tr. 10 May (JoC, MC). The species has now been reported from every county in the East Region except *King and Queen*. Not recorded every year, a single report of **Piping Plover** from Bethel 16 Mar (ph. DY, ph. HC, RC) also marked a new *Mathews* early date in the East Region by a week. A beautiful female **Red-necked Phalarope** was photographed at New Pt. Comfort 27 May (EW). This was the first Regional spring record, and second all-time Regional record in eBird. The second spring *Northumberland* record of **Ruddy Turnstone** was found near Reedville 12 May (ph. WJ). A scarce transient, the spring's only **White-rumped Sandpiper** was photographed at Machicomoco SP, *Gloucester* 1 May (DY). This species is now reported almost annually in this Region during the spring.

## GULLS—HAWKS

The first *Essex Lesser Black-backed Gull* was found at Downing Bridge 1 Mar (BC). This species has now been documented from every county in the East Region. Although technically in *Charles*, Maryland, a report of 6 **Least Terns** near Colonial Beach 11 May (HS) should be mentioned as had the location pin been a mere eight feet to the west it would have marked a *Westmoreland* first. The spring's only report of **Sandwich Tern** came as 4 at Bethel 8 Apr (AB). This species is more frequent in this Region during the late summer and fall. All but one spring report hail from the eastern shore of Middle Peninsula. Certainly present in the Region, but difficult to detect and thus very underreported, the season's only **Least Bittern** at Guinea 21 May (AC) enjoyed an ultimately victorious game of cat and mouse with the observer. Night-Herons have always been unusually scarce in the East Region, and this spring was no exception. Both species were reported just twice, all four sightings from *Gloucester*. A **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** was found at Sarah Creek 5 May (RC, DD). It was reported again by the same observers on 29 May. A pair was also seen at Winter Harbor 14 May (JeC). A **Black-crowned Night-Heron** was found at Bryant Bay 21 May (DY). An immature was photographed at Beaverdam 27 May (GB). Interestingly, all four of these reports took place within ten miles of each other. The spring's only **Little Blue Heron** was seen from John Clayton Memorial Hwy, *Mathews* 17 Apr (JeC). This species is also unusually scarce in the East Region during the spring, especially compared to neighboring regions in the coastal plain. All but two springtime reports are from the eastern Middle Peninsula. Both of the spring's **Tricolored Heron** reports hailed from *Gloucester*. The first bird was spotted in flight over Machicomoco SP 18 Apr (GB). A pair was seen the next day at nearby Kings Cr. Pt. (DY). Seven **Snowy Egrets** in Leedstown 30 Apr (FA) were not only a new *Westmoreland* high but only

the third county record, the other two by the same observer also during the spring. There were two reports of the recently split **Western Cattle Egret** this spring, 5 in the Warner Hall area, *Gloucester* 1 May (DY, HC, RC) and one at Mumford View Dr., *Gloucester* 2 Apr (KS). As noted in previous reports, this species has been slowly increasing and is now annual in the eastern Middle Peninsula. Next spring, reports from this area may no longer be noteworthy. A **Glossy Ibis** was reported along Schoolhouse Rd., *Gloucester* 1 May (HC, RC, DY). An intriguing coincidence, 2 more were seen by the same observers just an hour later in Warner Hall, *Gloucester*, barely a mile from the Schoolhouse Rd. bird. Two more ibis were found in a flooded field along the Rappahannock R. in *Essex* 10 May (JoC, MC). Another single bird was foraging off Balls Neck Rd., *Northumberland* 15 May (BF, DF). A pair was seen twice on 30 Apr in Leedstown (FA). An additional 2 to 3 continued at a private farm near Leedstown between 21–25 May (CT). A **Sharp-shinned Hawk** seen in flight over Machicomoco SP, *Gloucester* 17 May (MGi) marked a new *Gloucester* late date by ten days.

## FLYCATCHERS—DICKCISSEL

The first *King and Queen Willow Flycatcher* was recorded singing at the Dragon Run Big Is. Property 16 May (JoC, MC). A **Philadelphia Vireo** photographed at Belle Isle SP, *Lancaster* 10 May (SN) was not only the first *Lancaster* record but the third eBird record on the entire Northern Neck. **Warbling Vireos** have always been uncommon spring migrants in this Region and the Virginia coastal plain as a whole, but they are annual in the East Region because the Lower Potomac breeding population creeps into northwest *Westmoreland*. Expectedly, both of this spring's records hail from the period when territorial males in this area are most vocal. One was heard at Westmoreland SP, *Westmoreland* 31 May (EE) while another bird was at nearby Independence Dr., *Westmoreland* 28 May (ST). A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** continuing to visit a



residential feeder until 5 May (HW) set a new *King George* late date by two weeks. An overwintering **House Wren** was spotted again at LaGrange 1 Apr (FA). A **Marsh Wren** at Shiloh Park, *King George* 8 Apr (GF) was the second *King George* record in eBird away from K. G. Ponds. A **Gray-cheeked Thrush** at Dragon Run Big Is. Property 13 May (m. obs.) was only the second all-time *King and Queen* eBird record of this scarce transient. Another individual at Barefords Mill Rd., *Essex* 10 May (JoC, MC) was the fourth all-time eBird *Essex* record. All records from both these counties were during the spring. The previous spring *Essex* high of 45 **American Pipit** was nearly tripled by a report of 110 birds on a private farm along the Rappahannock R. 17 Mar (JoC, MC). There were two reports of **Evening Grosbeaks** in the East Region this spring. A whopping 15 birds were photographed at Walkerton Millpond, *King and Queen* 16 Mar (EB, SR), followed by a lone female at a *Lancaster* residential feeder 4 May (BR). Although the latter observation provided the second *Lancaster* spring record, it was surprisingly not a Regional late date, as one was observed 8 May 2021 at an *Essex* feeder (AE). Over 60 **Purple Finches** were reported from 20 locations this spring, a significant increase from the ten at four locations last spring. In contrast, fairly low but not atypical, there were just three reports of **Pine Siskin** this spring from Hughlett 27 Mar (JD); Burkes Pond Rd., *Gloucester* 21 Apr (KH); and Rosewell Dr., *Gloucester* 3 Mar (HC, RC). A **White-crowned Sparrow** photographed at Machicomoco SP, *Gloucester* 13 May (ph. MF) provided a new Regional late date by over a week. The spring's only **Vesper Sparrow** was photographed at a private *Middlesex* property 31 Mar (ph. NC) just one day off the Gold Book peak migration date of 1 Apr. This year's **Seaside Sparrow** high of 8 at Guinea 21 May (AC) is less than a third of past spring highs up to 25. Spring highs have not exceeded 15 in over a decade. This worrying trend may be a symptom of habitat shifts in the Region, especially dangerous to niche specialists such as these sparrows (BOTW). **Swamp Sparrows**

were reported ten times well into May, the latest being from a *Westmoreland* residence 20 May (ML). While this is not a late date, the number of May records is of note since the species' breeding status within this Region has been in doubt for several years. For the second consecutive spring, **Bobolinks** were very scarce with only six reports from *Essex* and *Middlesex*. The high of 16 at Magnolia Marsh Nursery, *Essex* 17 May (JoC, MC) was less than half last spring's 35, and a mere three percent of past highs up to 450. The global population of this native grassland-dependent species has declined by 20% in the last decade (BOTW). This spring's 29 warbler species fell slightly short of the 31 observed the previous spring. Despite the high species total, individual birds were rather few and far between. **Blue-winged Warbler** at Land's End WMA, *King George* 25 Apr (GF); **Tennessee Warbler**



Jo Ann Parks's picture of a **Painted Bunting** from Rappahannock R. Valley NWR in *Richmond*, 16 May.

at Barefords Mill Rd., *Essex* 17 May (JoC, MC); and **Canada Warbler** at Cat Pt. Cr., *Richmond* 9 May (JoC, MC) were all represented by just a single sighting. **Chestnut-sided Warblers** were also scarce, with just five birds between a private *King George* property 5 May (GF); Barefords Mill Rd., *Essex* 8 May (JoC, MC); and *Westmoreland* SP, *Westmoreland* 11 May (BK). **Cape May Warblers** were represented by a mere two birds between Barefords Mill Rd., *Essex* 8–

10 May (JoC, MC) and a *Westmoreland* residence 7 May (ML). A **Cerulean Warbler** at Wilna 19 Apr (BK) marked the first Richmond record and third eBird record on the entire Northern Neck. This was also a Regional early date by over a week. Another *Richmond* first was etched into history by a m. **Painted Bunting** at Wilna 16 May (ph. JP). Another bunting overwintered at a *Gloucester* feeder until 13 Mar (MGo). Up to 6 **Dickcissels** were reported for the second year along Leveltown Rd., *Essex* 10–18 May (m. obs.). This species has recently become annual in the Region during the spring and summer, although for now and the foreseeable future, it still warrants special attention.

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## COASTAL



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Accomack and Northampton counties; the cities of Chesapeake, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Poquoson, Portsmouth, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach.

### WINTER 2022–2023

Though temperatures fluctuated a fair bit, this winter started off fairly cold (by recent standards, anyhow), with a December where few days reached temps above the mid-50s. Christmas Eve registered the lowest temperatures of the month, plummeting to 10°. Precipitation was minimal, with just one day barely over an inch. By January things had warmed up further, with some days downright balmy and a high of 69° while lows still dipped into the 20s. Precipitation was again unremarkable. With a low of 18° early in the month, February seemed as though it might bring more cold weather – yet astoundingly, temperature reached a peak of 81° by the end! Precipitation remained vanishingly scarce. Waterfowl seemed in relatively short supply this winter, with few records of note; some species that are usually recorded (such as Greater White-fronted Goose) were absent, while others like Eurasian Wigeon were less widespread than in years past. Overwintering passerines also seemed to be in relatively short supply, with a few noteworthy records but nothing particularly shocking. The Varied Thrush in *Virginia Beach* lingered from the fall; together with a Bar-tailed Godwit at Chincoteague this constituted the pair of most notable records.

**Abbreviations:** Back Bay (Back Bay NWR, *Virginia Beach*); Chincoteague (Chincoteague NWR, *Accomack*); Craney (Craney Is. Dredged Material Management Area, *Portsmouth*);

ESVNWR (Eastern Shore of Virginia NWR, *Northampton*); Ft. Story (Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story, *Virginia Beach*); Grandview (Grandview Nature Preserve, *Hampton*); Little Is. (Little Is. Pk., *Virginia Beach*); ESB Nature Preserve (Edward S. Brinkley Nature Preserve [formerly Cheriton Landfill], *Northampton*).

**Christmas Bird Counts:** BBCBC (Back Bay, 29 Dec); CCCBC (Cape Charles, 30 Dec).

### WATERFOWL—GALLINULE

Fewer **Ross's Geese** were reported in the Region than usual, with only three records pertaining to 2 birds, all from the Eastern Shore: one at Chincoteague 16 Dec (ph. BH) and one in the fields at Wilsonia Neck Dr., *Northampton* 24 and 28 Feb (ph. MBa, TSe). **Cackling Geese** were likewise scarce, with the only reports coming from two locations in *Virginia Beach*: a single at Back Bay 29 Dec (ph. CF, ph. DC, SC) and a group at Sherwood L., where 5 were first found 17 Dec (ph. RB), a high count of 8 was reported 19 Dec (ph. JM, ABa), and a single lingered until 3 Feb (SBn). **Greater White-fronted Goose** went unreported in the Coastal Region this winter. **Blue-winged Teal** wintered at a handful of locations, with scattered reports from *Accomack*, *Northampton*, and *Virginia Beach*. **Eurasian Wigeons** were again reported from known locations at Chincoteague as well as Craney and adjacent Hoffer Cr. Wildlife

Preserve; each of these locations, which has hosted multiple individuals in years past, reported only a single. The only other report was a drake at Bay Creek Nature Preserve in Cape Charles, *Northampton* 30 Dec (JF) that remained through 22 Jan (ph. MBa). A drake **Green-winged Teal** that appeared to be an intergrade of the American and Eurasian subspecies was observed at Craney 5 Jan (ph. BT, DY, LSc). The only **Common Merganser** in the Region this winter was a hen at the lake on N. Witchduck Rd., *Virginia Beach* found 31 Dec (ph. PK) and remaining through 9 Jan (ph. SK). Present but inconspicuous in winter, **Northern Bobwhites** were only reported from four locations: 2 at a private residence in *Chesapeake* 28 Dec (GP); one at the ESB Nature Preserve 30 Dec (ABo); 3 at ESVNWR 31 Dec



Pamela Scrima's photo of a **Black-headed Gull** on Chincoteague Rd. in *Accomack* on 27 Jan.

(SC); and a high count of 9 at Mutton Hunk Fen NAP, *Accomack* 9 Jan (RT, ML). **Red-necked Grebes** made a fairly strong showing in the Region this winter, with three records: a single at Craney 5 Jan (ph. BT, ph. DY, LSc) and 19 Jan (ph. BW, DY, LSc); 2 at the Beaufort Ave. Public Beach, *Virginia Beach* 17 Dec (ph. ABa, m. obs.) with a single remaining through 21 Jan (ph. RB); and 2 at Chincoteague 29 Jan (MH), increasing to 3 on 25 Feb (BH). The only **Eared Grebe** of the winter was a long-staying bird at Queen Sound, *Accomack* first found 12 Jan (ph. CH) and remaining through 25 Feb (ph. ES, TSA). The only **Western Grebe** this winter was spotted floating in the Atlantic off Little Is. 25 Feb (ph. RB); this location has hosted the species annually

## Virginia Birds

every winter going back to 29 Dec 2016 (ESB). **White-winged Doves** at Sandpiper Rd., *Virginia Beach* 29 Dec (ph. CH) and ESVNWR 8 Jan (ph. AMa, MBi) were one-day wonders. A long-staying bird visited a private yard in the Hilton neighborhood of *Newport News*, first appearing 18 Feb (ph. PVV) and remaining beyond the report period. Often present in winter in small numbers, particularly in s. *Virginia Beach*, **Common Gallinules** were notably scarce this winter – the only report was a single at Bay Cr. Nature Preserve in Cape Charles, *Northampton* 18 Jan (JF).

## SHOREBIRDS—ALCIDS

Craney remained a reliable stronghold for impressive concentrations of wintering **American Avocets**; varying numbers were present all season, with a peak count of 184 on 12 Jan (BW, DY). Away from Craney, the only report was a single at the Old Field impoundments on the Wash Flats at Chincoteague found 13 Jan (ph. JL) and remaining until 20 Jan (ph. JL, ML, SD). **Piping Plovers** are quite rare in winter in Virginia, but especially so on the w. Bayshore, making one at Grandview 1 Dec (ph. KG, ph. DB) very noteworthy. This hardy bird continued there until 19 Feb (ph. JS). A single **Long-billed Curlew** again spent the winter at the traditional location at Gull Marsh, *Northampton* with observations 30 Dec (ph. CH, ph. TB, ph. SBg, m. obs.) and 26 Feb (ph. ES, m. obs.). A **BAR-TAILED GODWIT** was an exciting find at the S. Wash Flats at Chincoteague 6 Dec (ph. JL). This represents approximately the 5<sup>th</sup> record for Virginia, though this is muddied somewhat by continuing and returning birds; all previous records have also been from either Chincoteague NWR or the causeway at Queen Sound. Wintering **Spotted Sandpipers**, rare but increasing in recent years, were spotted at a private residence at Windsor Pt., *Norfolk* 1 Dec (ph. DC) and at Ft. Monroe, *Hampton* 17 Dec (BB, SBu, SG). **Parasitic Jaeger** was the only

jaeger species recorded this winter, but it was well-represented by numerous reports along the Atlantic coast of *Virginia Beach*. **Dovekie** were quite scarce this winter, with only two reports (both from shore): 4 at Sandalwood Rd. Beach Access, *Virginia Beach* 26 Jan (ABa, JM) and one apparently viewed n. of Ft. Story 8 Feb (ABa, JM).

## GULLS—OWLS

The only **Black-legged Kittiwake** detected this winter was a tarrock seen in *Virginia Beach* waters on an offshore outing 7 Dec (ph. RuT). A **Black-headed Gull** first found 24 Jan (ph. DC, RLA) was spotted from multiple locations along the Rt. 175 causeway into Chincoteague Is., with a final report from Queen Sound Landing 21 Feb (ph. ML, JL, SD). It or another bird was also seen at Swan Cove on Chincoteague NWR 11 Feb (ph. GH), 15 Feb (SD), and 19 Feb (ph. DW). The only **Little Gull** this winter was picked out by diligent seawatchers keeping watch at Little Is. 28 Feb (ABa, JM). Gull ID challenges notwithstanding, an odd bird on the beach at Ft. Story 16 Feb (ph. JM) was identified as an apparent **Herring x Glaucous Gull** hybrid. Many **Royal Terns** lingered into Dec in Hampton Roads, but there were no reports for Jan or Feb. **PACIFIC LOONS**, possibly the same individual, were spotted in the Atlantic off *Virginia Beach*, the first from 77<sup>th</sup> St. 16 Dec (ABa, JM) and the second from Little Is. 28 Feb (ABa, JM). The only record of **Great Shearwater** this winter was a report of 3 in *Virginia Beach* waters on an offshore outing 11 Dec (RuT), though notes from the observation indicated the species had been present in the same vicinity “the past several days.” **Manx Shearwaters** were observed from shore in *Virginia Beach* on a few occasions: 3 off 57<sup>th</sup> St. 13 Jan (ABa, JM) and a single off Little Is. 12 Jan (SH, ABa) with 2 reported there the following day (K&TB). The highest count was 10 seen during a boat cruise in *Virginia Beach* nearshore waters 10 Jan (ph. RuT). An impressive flock of

**American White Pelicans**, totaling 20 birds, was at Back Bay 7 Jan (RLA, m. obs.); a single bird remained there until 6 Feb (ph. CH, RLA, LM). Other reports in the Region this winter included 5 at Craney 5 Jan (ph. BT, DY, LSc) and 4 off Tangier Is., *Accomack* 20 Jan (ph. BI). A real treat was a **Barn Owl** seen flying across a field in the early morning at Big Sky Farm in s. *Virginia Beach* (ABa) – this species is rare and difficult to detect anywhere in the Coastal Region. Though they doubtlessly occur more frequently than reports indicate, the only **Northern Saw-whet Owl** of the winter was at Kiptopeke 30 Dec (SC, LA, JB).

## FLYCATCHERS—THRUSHES

A carefully-described **Ash-throated Flycatcher** at Sandy Bottom Nature Pk., *Hampton* 10 Dec (SS) was the only report in the Region this winter. A **White-eyed Vireo** at Jericho Ditch in Great Dismal Swamp NWR, *Suffolk* 18 Dec (PS, RK, AP) was quite late, while another at First Landing SP, *Virginia Beach* 26 Feb (ph. JM) was likely a successful overwintering bird. Repeating a by-now familiar refrain, birders in Virginia’s Coastal Plain have noted that **COMMON RAVENS** continue their eastward march. The area around Newport News Pk., *Newport News* has of late become a semi-regular location; this winter there were reports in that vicinity on 5 Feb (DC), 6 Feb (MR, BR), and 11 Feb (RS). More noteworthy for the location was a bird recorded vocalizing at Hoffler Cr. Wildlife Preserve, *Portsmouth* 4 Jan (a. r. RD). Two **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** over the lake at Hoffler Cr. 8 Dec (ph. AR, SC, CG) provided a notably late record, though early winter records of this species are not unheard of. Likewise with **Barn Swallows**, of which there were two early winter reports this season: 4 at Back Bay 10 Dec (PS) and a single at Norfolk Botanical Gardens, *Norfolk* 17 Dec (ph. RB). At one time recorded annually, often with multiple records, reports of **Cave Swallows** have dwindled markedly in recent years. Thus, a well-photographed bird at Pleasure House Pt. 1 Dec

(ph. MC) was certainly a welcome surprise! Milder winters have boded well for lingering passerines such as a **Blue-grey Gnatcatcher** at First Landing SP, *Virginia Beach* 25 Feb (JM) that seems likely to have successfully overwintered locally. The **VARIED THRUSH** that delighted birders in the last weeks of the fall remained one day into the winter, with the last reports from 1 Dec at the stakeout on Funnell St., *Virginia Beach* (ph. CM, m. obs.).

### SPARROWS—DICKCISSEL

A long-staying, cooperative **Clay-colored Sparrow** at the retention pond behind the Harris Teeter on Princess Anne Rd., *Virginia Beach* was seen throughout the season, bookended by reports on 10 Dec (ABa, ph. RB, m. obs.) and 20 Feb (ph. RR). A **Lark Sparrow** near the trailhead for the Kuralt Trail at Back Bay was found 21 Dec (ph. K&TB) and seen by multiple observers until a final sighting 2 Jan (K&TB). Elsewhere in *Virginia Beach*, one was at a private residence in the Oak Springs neighborhood 29 Dec (ph. SBg, AC). Lower *Northampton* again proved a good location for wintering **Vesper Sparrows** with reports from 5 locations, though a high count of 4 at Arlington Rd. 30 Dec (EO) was dwarfed by previous years' double-digit winter counts from this location. A **LeConte's Sparrow** at Back Bay was first spotted 3 Dec (TT, RLA) and remained well into the spring with reports until late Apr, and dozens of observations in the interim. Fairly rare in winter, a **Lincoln's Sparrow** was a nice find behind the visitors center at Back Bay 3 Jan (EK), where it remained until 8 Feb (EB). This may have been a different bird than one seen on the False Cape sector of the BBCBC (NF). Elsewhere, one was recorded chipping from the Washington Ditch at Great Dismal Swamp NWR, *Suffolk* 25 Jan (a. r. RD). Once again, the only reports of **BREWER'S BLACKBIRDS** were from Breeze Farms in s. *Virginia Beach*, where small groups were reported throughout the season with a peak count of 9 on 31 Jan (ABa, JM). There were three reports of late **Nashville**

**Warblers** this winter: one at a residence in the Laurel Manor neighborhood of *Virginia Beach* 11 Dec (ph. TMa); another at Pickett's Harbor NAP during the CCCBC (EO); and one at the end of 25<sup>th</sup> St., *Virginia Beach* 16 Jan (ph. SH). A **Northern Parula** at Back Bay 2 Dec (SM, AMy) was notably late, but one at First Landing SP, *Virginia Beach* 21 Feb (BS) was even more notable given the likelihood that it overwintered. **Western Tanagers** were well-represented in *Virginia Beach* this winter, with reports from four separate locations: the retention pond behind the



Mike Collins's picture of a **Cave Swallow** at Pleasure House Pt. Natural Area in *Virginia Beach*, 1 Dec.

Harris Teeter on Princess Anne Rd. 9 Dec (ph. SM, AMy); a private residence on Laurel Cove Rd., 6–30 Dec (ph. LSi, m. obs.); a private residence on Guthrie St. in the Acredale neighborhood, 8–21 Jan (ph. TC); and a private residence on Glenmore Hunt Ln., 2–28 Feb (ph. K&TB). Reports of **Painted Buntings** were widespread in s. Hampton Roads, but one on the Peninsula visiting a private yard near City Center, *Newport News* 24 Jan (ph. TMo) was somewhat more notable. The only **Dickcissel** of the winter was one that visited a yard on the corner of Pennington Ave. and Center St., *Newport News* 3 Jan (ph. JR).

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## SPRING 2023

March could hardly be said to have come in like a lion this year, with mild temps in the 60s at the beginning of the month, but it certainly went out like a lamb – temperatures later in the month reached the upper 70s! Precipitation was nearly nonexistent. By April the weather was clearly taking a warm turn, with several days above 80° and a peak temperature of 87°. Again, precipitation was nearly bupkis. As we headed into May, nary a ghost of winter remained; temperatures never dropped below 40° and were consistently in the 70s or higher. Yet again, precipitation was almost nil. Birding on the Coast this spring was full of rewards, both big and small. A putative Mottled Duck in *Poquoson* was a fun highlight, while pelagic outings did well on aegreids and tubenoses. Migration seemed to be good, with some low-density highlights including American Golden-Plover (rare in spring), all three phalaropes, and Olive-sided Flycatcher. The celebrity East Coast Heermann's Gull put in

another Virginia appearance, but the runaway star of the show this spring was a White-tailed Kite that was a one-day wonder in *Northampton*.

**Abbreviations:** Back Bay (Back Bay NWR, *Virginia Beach*); Chincoteague (Chincoteague NWR, *Accomack*); Craney (Craney Is. Dredged Material Management Area, *Portsmouth*); Dismal (Great Dismal Swamp NWR, *Suffolk/Chesapeake*); ESVNWR (Eastern Shore of Virginia NWR, *Northampton*); Little Is. (Little Is. Pk., *Virginia Beach*); Rudee (Rudee Inlet, *Virginia Beach*).

## WATERFOWL—CRANE

A single **Black-bellied Whistling Duck** was obliging for many birds at Lakeside Pk. in downtown *Chesapeake*; it was discovered 29 May (ph. LMa) and remained into the summer. Two **Snow Geese**, one of which was known to be injured, lingered at Magothy Bay NAP, *Northampton* until the late date of 16 May (ph. MB). The only **Cackling Goose** of the spring was one spotted with a flyover flock of **Canada Geese** at Little Is. 4 Mar (ph. RB). A drake **Eurasian Wigeon** that spent the winter at Craney remained through 16 Mar (BW, DY, LS). A duck photographed at Thomas Jefferson Rollins Natural Area, *Poquoson* 12 May (ph. PVV) seemed to be a good candidate for **MOTTLED DUCK**. The identification issues surrounding this species make any putative records a challenge, but many of the features on this bird including pale unstreaked cheeks, narrow white edges to the speculum, and a black gape spot were suggestive of Mottled. Other photos of *Anas* ducks from this location at different dates in the spring may be of the same bird. The only **Red-necked Grebe** of the spring was one off Ft. Monroe, *Hampton* 11 Mar (SS) that was reported through 19 Mar (MB, TS, m. obs.). Generally less common, **Eared Grebes** outnumbered Red-necked this spring with two reports. The first, a continuing bird from the winter, remained at

Queen Sound Landing, *Accomack* until 28 Mar (ph. DCh, ph. DW), while a second was a one-day wonder at 11<sup>th</sup> St. Beach Access, *Norfolk* 13 Apr (ph. VC, ph. DCI). Rounding out the grebes, the rarest of the spring was a **Western Grebe** off Back Bay 6 Mar (RLA, DCI, SK, LMo). Presumably the same individual was seen again at the same location 17 Apr (ph. SMy, AM). A long-staying **White-winged Dove** at a private yard on River Rd., *Newport News* remained from the winter through 5 Apr (ph. PVV). Typically one of our rarer migrants, **Black-billed Cuckoos** had a good showing this year with four reports. Two came from the *Suffolk* side of Dismal, where one was recorded at Railroad Ditch 27 Apr (a. r. anonymous eBirder) and another was seen at



Timothy Burnett's photograph of a **Long-billed Curlew** at Gull Marsh in *Northampton*, 30 Dec.

Jericho Ditch 29 Apr (ph. EA, ph. MLe, m. obs.). Elsewhere, one was in a yard off Hobbs Rd. in w. *Virginia Beach* 12 May (GH), while the peak count of 2 came from Back Bay 9 May (ph. RB). **Eastern Whip-poor-will** is typically a very scarce migrant, but some on the far w. edge of the Region in late May could have been local breeders. Two at Washington Ditch Rd., *Suffolk* 15 May (SC, OC) were more likely migrants, but reports from nearby Clay Hill Rd., *Suffolk* 20 May (TT) and 21 May (a. r. RD) seem more compelling for breeders. Two **Sandhill Cranes** briefly dropped into the fields at Muddy Cr. and Shipp's Cabin Rds., *Virginia Beach* 2 May (ph. MG, ph. K&TB); this location has hosted sandhills in past years.

## GALLINULE—ALCIDS

Somewhat surprisingly, the Coastal Region's only **Common Gallinule** of the spring put in a very brief appearance at Back Bay 5 May (AC). A flyover **American Golden-Plover** at ESVNWR 29 Apr (ph. MB) made for a nice find, as this species is typically quite rare as a spring migrant. A **Wilson's Plover** foraging at Toms Cove on Chincoteague 8 & 9 May (KW, ph. TM) was a nice find away from barrier island breeding locations. A subsequent report of a pair from Chincoteague 12 May (CM) suggested the possibility of breeding. The only **Long-billed Curlew** of the spring was a single bird at the traditional location at Gull Marsh, *Northampton* 26 Mar (ph. PS, ph. NW, ph. RK, KL). A smart-looking m. **Ruff** was a nice find at Craney 11 May (ph. BW, DY, LS); this location has been a reliable spot for the species in recent years. A **Wilson's Phalarope** at Messick Pt., *Poquoson* 29 Mar (ph. GB) was seen by many birders until a final observation 12 Apr (ph. BW). By contrast, one at Back Bay 15 May (ph. CH, RLA, m. obs.) was only present a single day. It was a good spring for **Red-necked Phalaropes**, with records from Chincoteague and Wallops Is. in *Accomack*; Grandview Nature Preserve in *Hampton*; several locations in *Virginia Beach*; and a peak count of 8 at Craney 25 May (BW, DCI, DY, LS). The only **Red Phalarope** was a single bird seen well offshore in *Northampton* waters on a Rudee Tours pelagic outing 26 Mar (AR, ABo, m. obs.). Two **Parasitic Jaegers** were observed at different spots, one in *Virginia Beach* waters and one in *Northampton*, on a Rudee Tours pelagic 16 Apr (ph. ARa, m. obs.), while the only sighting from shore was one at Chincoteague 26 Apr (TM). Several species of alcids were found on a Rudee Tours pelagic in *Northampton* waters 26 Mar: 16 **Dovekie**, 79 **Atlantic Puffins**, and the highlight – a **COMMON MURRE** (ph. ARa, ph. MB, m. obs.).



## GULLS—KITES

An ad. **Black-headed Gull** flying over the marsh at Lynnhaven flats, *Virginia Beach* 5 Apr (ABa, JMc) was a nice find. Certainly the standout Larid was a (the?) **HEERMANN'S GULL** – now sporting ad. plumage – seen at Rudee 24 Mar (ph. RR, m. obs.) and again further n. at 61<sup>st</sup> St. 28 Mar (ph. KH). An imm. **Glaucous Gull** was first spotted at Ft. Monroe, *Hampton* 5 Mar (AC) and remained a month, with the last report there 5 Apr (ph. MG). Possibly the same bird was later seen flying by at nearby Sarah Constant Beach Pk., *Norfolk* 20 Apr (DCI). Another was seen on the beach at Chincoteague 2 May (ph. MLo, JL, SD). In addition to its roster of alcids, the 26 Mar pelagic run by Rudee Tours turned up several species of tubenoses in *Northampton* waters: 5 **Northern Fulmars**, 3 **Manx Shearwaters**, and a very exciting **BLACK-CAPPED PETREL** (ph. MB, m. obs.). A **Wood Stork** at the marsh on the back edge of Redwing Pk., *Virginia Beach* 27 Mar (ph. RD, m. obs.) remained until 31 Mar (ph. PVV, m. obs.). **White-faced Ibises** were reported only from the regular location at Chincoteague, with sightings on the Wildlife Loop 29 Apr (AL) and 3 May (ph. MP) as well as further north at C Dike 12 May (ph. BH). Perhaps the most exciting record of the spring was a **WHITE-TAILED KITE** at ESVNWR on Ramp Rd., found by a group of visiting birders from the Lancaster County (PA) Bird Club 13 May (ph. TN, ph MEp) and regrettably not relocated despite diligent searching in subsequent days. Though only the 4<sup>th</sup> record for the state and first since 2015, remarkably this was the 2<sup>nd</sup> record for *Northampton* following a sighting near Cheriton 26 Apr 1998 (BW). A **Swallow-tailed Kite** at Back Bay 4 Mar (ph. BE, ph. RLA, JP, JMa) and picked up at Little Is. as it drifted n. (ph. RB) was shockingly early; Virginia has a handful of previous Mar records, but all on or after 20 Mar. Other reports included singles at Kiptopeke 7 May (ARi) and Magothy Bay NAP, *Northampton* 16 May (ph. NB), as well as a high count of 3 at Naval Air Station Oceana, *Virginia Beach* 6 Apr (KS).

## FLYCATCHERS—DICKCISSEL

Always a sought-after migrant in the Coastal Region, an **Olive-sided Flycatcher** was a welcome find at Back Bay 21 May (ph. RB); this species is detected less than annually in *Virginia Beach* despite heavy birder coverage. The only **COMMON RAVEN** report from the Region was one at what is now a regular location along Interstate 64 near Newport News Pk., *Newport News* 8 Mar (JB). A single **Red Crossbill** spotted atop a pine at the Chincoteague Is. Nature Trail, *Accomack* 28 Apr (TM) was a good find, particularly given the lack of any movement by this species into the Coastal Region in the



Mike Epler's photograph of a **White-tailed Kite**, spotted at Eastern Shore of Virginia NWR in *Northampton* on 13 May.

preceding winter. An overwintering **Clay-colored Sparrow** continued at the retention pond behind the Harris Teeter on Princess Anne Rd., *Virginia Beach* until 22 Mar (EB, ph. m. obs.). Another paid a visit to the Chesapeake Arboretum, *Chesapeake* 11 Mar (ph. RB), remaining until 14 Mar (PK). A **LeConte's Sparrow** that spent the winter at Back Bay remained there until 5 Apr (ph. SMc). The only **BREWER'S BLACKBIRDS** were at Breeze Farms in s. *Virginia Beach*, a regular location for

this species. Reports this spring were few, however: 7 on 4 Mar (ph. RB) and 12 on 12 Mar (ph. RB). Two **Western Tanagers** visited the Region this spring: a continuing m. at a feeder on Guthrie St. in w. *Virginia Beach* remained until 29 Apr (ph. TC), while another m. put in an appearance at a residence on Kingsgrove Circle in the Kings Grant neighborhood of *Virginia Beach* 1 Mar (CW). Though **Painted Buntings** are regular in Hampton Roads in winter and early spring, a f. near the entrance to the Woodland Trail at Chincoteague 7 May (ph. MEg) was an exceptional find for *Accomack*. Virginia birders in the Coastal Region completed a hat trick of **Dickcissel** records this spring: singles at Mutton Hunk Fen NAP, *Accomack* 13 May (TM, CM); Magothy Bay NAP, *Northampton* 13 May (TW) and 19 May (RLA); and an apparent territorial bird on Whedbee Corell Ln., *Chesapeake* 6 May (ph. DCI) that continued through 21 May (ph. RD, m. obs.).

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