Editors’ Notes

It is an ongoing challenge to find people who are both qualified and willing to take on the time consuming work of being regional editors for this publication. So we are very grateful that three highly experienced Virginia birders are stepping in to fill the gaps in our regional coverage. David Spears, outgoing VSO president, is our new South Central Region editor. His first report appears in this issue. We look forward to many more. After struggling for some time with a lack of coverage in the north we are modifying how we divide that area. John Spahr, whose highly informative West Region report has appeared in Virginia Birds since its inception, has volunteered to additionally cover Shenandoah, Warren, Page and Frederick Counties (formerly covered in the North Region Report) as part of his region. To edit the still very large North Region we were lucky to get Todd Day, formerly the Mid Atlantic regional editor for North America Birds. His reports will start in a future issue.

Please send your sightings to David, John and Todd. Their contact information appears at the beginning of their report for their region.

Good birding,

Linda and Alan

Spring Reporting Period March – May 2008

North

Arlington, Clarke, Culpeper, Fairfax, Fauquier, Frederick, Loudoun, Madison, Page, Prince William, Rappahannock, Shenandoah, Stafford and Warren Counties and the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, Manassas, Manassas Park, and Winchester.

No report for this period

Todd Day will be the new North Region editor beginning with Spring 2009 reports. Also, beginning with that report, Frederick, Page, Shenendoah, and Warren Counties will be covered in the West Region report. Todd’s contact information is:

EDITOR — Todd Day, 5118 Beaver Dam Rd., Jeffersonton, VA 22724 blkvulture@aol.com

West

This region includes the southern part of the Shenandoah Valley south to the New River Valley. The Blue Ridge Mountain range forms much of the eastern boundary with West Virginia defining the western boundary. The Region includes the counties of (from north to south) Rockingham, Augusta, Highland, Bath, Rockbridge, Botetourt, Alleghany, Craig, Giles, Roanoke, Montgomery, and Pulaski. Future reports will include Shenandoah, Warren, Page, and Frederick Counties.

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

Abbreviations: M&V (Mountains and Valley physiographic region); CCB (Center for Conservation Biology, College of William and Mary)

Abbreviations:

Terms and Abbreviations

Species name in bold first time mentioned (RARITIES bold and all caps)

County names are in italics

Abbreviations:

ad. (ads.) – adult(s)

BBS – breeding bird survey

CBC – Christmas Bird Count

Cr. – Creek

et al. – and others

fide – vouched by

Fr. – Fort

Hwy. – Highway

I. – Island(s), Isle(s)

imm. (imms.) – immature(s)

Jct. – Junction

juven. (juvs.) – juvenile(s)

L. – Lake

MAPS – Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship

m.o.b. – many/multiple observers

Mt. – Mountain, Mount

NWR – National Wildlife Refuge

p.a. – pending acceptance

ph. – photographed (by + initials)

Pt. – Point

R. – River

Res. – Reservoir

Rte. – Route

SF – State Forest

SP – State Park

VARCOM – Virginia Avian Records Committee

v.r. – voice recording (by + initials)

VSO – Virginia Society of Ornithology

v.t. – video taped (by + initials)

WMA – Wildlife Management Area

VARCOM Review List Bird

† – written details submitted

* – specimen collected

Submissions

Send reports and photographs to the Regional Editors. Photographs should be the highest electronic quality possible. Do not imbed photos in email or text (attachments are fine). Send with release form, which can be found on the VSO web site: www.virginiabirds.net

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

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airly typical temperatures and precipitation characterized this spring. A few unusual birds showed up including Barnacle Goose and Common Redpoll, and there were some interesting local developments with both eagle species.

WATERFOWL—LOONS

A Barnacle Goose in Raphine, Rockbridge, became a popular attraction for regional birders. First seen and photographed on 9 Mar (DR), the goose remained on the same pond until 26 Mar. This species, which breeds on Artic islands in the North Atlantic and winters in parts of the United Kingdom and Western Europe, will occasionally stray to the east coast of North America. Since Barnacle Geese are also kept in captivity, distinguishing an escaped from a wild goose can be a challenge. The Raphine goose will represent the fourth M&V record if accepted. Twelve Tundra Swans were reported from Botetourt, 7 Mar (MP). This swan is a rare transient winter visitor to the region, as is Surf Scoter, one of which was seen 8 Mar in Roodingham (GM). A single female Bufflehead was observed in Lake Moomaw, Bath, (AL, JS), 10 May, eclipsing the extreme late date of 5 May. A 10 May sighting of 7 Red-breasted Mergansers in Lake Moomaw, Bath (JS, AL) is of note because this rare transient typically vacates the Region by the end of April. Yet another late lingering duck was a single Ruddy Duck in a small pond in High

land, first reported 27 May (ph BT) and again 30 May (KH). Forty Common Loons were reported from Carvin’s Cove, Botetourt, (MP) 6 Apr; and 15 from Lake Moomaw, Bath (AL, JS) 10 May. High numbers of these transient loons are common during the fall migration, with spring sightings commonly limited to a few birds.

HERONS—HAWKS

Four nesting pairs of Yellow-crowned Night-Herons were reported in two...
municipal parks in Roanoke 22 Apr (KD), and another active nest was reported in Salem 11 Apr (JH). The first reported Osprey was 14 Mar, Hollins, Roanoke (BJ) – in this region most do not arrive until April. Bald Eagles have increased over the past few decades with recent confirmed breeding (active nests) recorded in the counties of Bath, Highland, Rockbridge, Rockingham. Augusta and Craig can now be added to this county list. Active nests were documented in Deerfield, Augusta 4 May (JS, TS) and by Craig’s Creek, Craig 2 Apr (MP). A Northern Goshawk was observed on the Virginia Tech campus, Blacksburg 13 Mar (PO). This large accipiter is a rare transient during fall migration and is even rarer in the spring. Golden Eagles are regular winter visitors to Highland and are seen less frequently and sporadically elsewhere in the Region. Most depart by early April. This spring at least two late eagles were reported, one in Highland 26 Apr (NL) and one in Hollins, Roanoke 1 May (BH). In an attempt to further study where Highland’s wintering Golden Eagles go in the spring and if regional nesting might possibly occur as has been suggested, but never confirmed (by reports from the 1950s and earlier), a third year female was trapped, banded and fitted with a radio telemetry collar on 13 Mar by biologists from the CCB. This eagle was tracked as it traversed various parts of Highland and neighboring Augusta over the next few weeks. It departed Virginia 7 Apr and migrated north to the remote regions of the Maine – Canada border. Local birders and biologists are anxious to see if this eagle will return this fall.

SHOREBIRDS—SHRIKES
Unusual shorebirds this spring include one White-rumped Sandpiper, Radford 23 May, the first report for that city (CK), and one Red-necked Phalarope, Augusta 12 May (AL). In addition to the numerous Ring-billed Gulls that migrate though the Region each spring, there were a few other interesting gull observations, namely single counts of the rare but increasing Laughing Gull, Carvin’s Cove, Botetourt 13 & 19 Mar (MP), and multiple reports of Bonaparte’s Gull, including a count of over 40 birds at Carvin’s Cove 28 Mar (MP). Unusual terns for the Region included 3 Caspian Terns and 2 Common Terns on Lake Moomaw, Bath 10 May (AL, JS). Forster’s Tern Augusta 6 Apr represented a new early date (AL). Active Great Horned Owl nests with chicks were found in Ottobre, Rockingham 14 Apr (TM, TG) and in Sherando, Augusta 26 Apr (AL). An Olive-sided Flycatcher in the Mountain Lake area, Giles, was seen on a field trip during the VSO annual meeting, 17 May (m.ob). As elsewhere in Virginia, populations of Loggerhead Shrike have declined significantly in this Region. There were only two reports of shrikes – two on 1 Mar, Augusta (AL) and a one 28 Mar, Pulaski (MDu).

WARBLERS—ORIOLES
The spring warbler season seemed about average, with most species arriving on schedule. Golden-winged Warblers arrived on breeding territories in early May. At one historic breeding site in Highland, four singing males plus one Brewster’s Warbler were reported, 5 May (MP, JM). Another Brewster’s was observed (m.obs) at Mountain Lake, Giles, 17 May during the VSO annual meeting. During the course of a Big Day in Highland and Bath, 40 Black-throated Green Warblers (new high count) were reported 10 May (AL, JS). An imm. LARK SPARROW seen in Highland 28 Apr (JS) provided the third county and the eighth M&V spring observation for this sparrow. A Henslow’s Sparrow was well seen by an entire field trip group (VSO annual meeting) at the Radford Arsenal near Dublin, Pulaski 16 May, and at least one additional bird was heard. This may be the only remnant breeding population in the M&V of this formerly common sparrow. The male Painted Bunting that was reported in Verona, Augusta throughout the winter continued to faithfully visit the same back-yard feeder well into spring and was last reported 26 Apr (AL). A report of a single Dickcissel came from Fincastle, Botetourt 7 May (ZT). The winter irruption of winter finches spilled over into spring with multiple reports of Purple Finch including 50 at Claytor Lake, Pulaski 8 Apr (MM). A pair present throughout the spring at Bear Mountain Farm Highland (PR) were likely breeding. Red Crossbills were reported from several locations – two birds at Claytor Lake, Pulaski, 6 Apr (MM), up to 15 birds at a backyard feeder in Rockingham (KS), 9–19 May, and 4 birds on Reddish Knob, Augusta (MDo). A single COMMON REDPOL was seen at a feeder in southwest Roanoke (elevation 2000 ft.) 15 Apr (LC). This is a rare and irregular winter visitor to the Region with a previous late date of 21 Mar and most historic reports are from north of this location. Rusty Blackbirds have suffered a precipitous decline since the 1960s, so much so that any report of this species is now noteworthy – four were seen at Pandapas Pond, Montgomery, 29 Mar (PO). An early arriving Baltimore Oriole 23 Mar, Botetourt is also of note since this species typically does not arrive in the M&V until late April (NY).

Contributors: Linda Cory, Kent Davis, Mike Donahue, Matt Duncan (MDu) Tommy Glendye, Ken Hinkle, Joyce Holt, Bill James, Clyde Kessler, Allen Larner, Nelson Lewis, Jeremy McEntire, Tom Mizzell, Mark Mullins, Peggy Opengari, Mike Purdy, Patti Reum, Dick Rowe, Kevin Shank, Tim Snyder, John Spahr, Brenda Tekin, Zack Thompson, Nancy Young.

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

EDITOR — Mike Boatwright, 177 Sugar Mill Drive, Amherst, VA 24521 mboater@att.net
Relatively normal weather during the period resulted in fairly predictable avian population movements in the Region. Highlights included Upland Sandpiper in Amherst and Black Rail in Fluvanna.

**WATERFOWL—TERNS**

Frequent checks of lakes in northern Amherst by Mark Johnson continued through the period. As usual, the most productive of these lakes was Mill Creek L. that produced the following noteworthy sightings: On 20 March one Common Loon in breeding plumage, 2 Horned Grebes, 4 Lesser Scaup, one Red-breasted Merganser (female), 8 Buffleheads, 63 Ruddy Ducks; on 30 March one Horned Grebe in transition plumage, one Mute Swan, 4 Blue-winged Teals, 2 Green-winged Teals, 21 Ruddy Ducks; on 3 April 2 Common Loons in breeding plumage, 5 Blue-winged Teals, 4 Green winged Teals, 12 Ruddy Ducks; on 7 Apr 6 Common Loons, 3 Horned Grebes, 20 Blue-winged Teals, 10 Green-winged Teals; on 9 April 5 Common Loons in breeding plumage, 2 Horned Grebes in transitional plumage, 5 Blue-winged Teals; on 15 April Green-winged Teals; and on 20 April one Horned Grebe, 3 Blue-winged Teals, 2 Hooded Mergansers, 2 Ring-necked Ducks, 7 Ruddy Ducks. Other sightings there included 73 American Coot on 20 Mar and 10 Double-crested Cormorant on 20 Apr (MJ). On 2 Mar, an early (expected date is 15 Mar) female Blue-winged Teal was found in a pond across from London Downs golf course and a male Northern Shoveler was seen at a pond off Elkton Farm Road Lynchburg (RB, et al.). On 20 Mar two Blue-winged Teal were seen in the southern part of Albemarle (SM). On 6 May a late Great Egret (last expected date in spring is 30 Apr) was in Bedford (RB). The distinctive and rapid cu-cu-cu of a Least Bittern was heard at a small wooded marsh in northeast Albemarle 23 May. The species was last recorded at this marsh in 1978. Possibly the species has been nesting there since, but has gone unobserved (SM, JG). An adult Black-crowned Night Heron was seen at a privately owned pond in southern Albemarle 3 Apr. There have been no recent Apr sightings of this species there but a few immatures have been observed in Jul in recent years (SM). An adult Black-crowned Night Heron was near Mill Creek Lake, Amherst 20 May (MJ). A Sora, windmilled and then flew in front of the observer 25 Apr at a privately owned wetland in Albemarle. This same wetland produced an American Bittern the week before (SM). The distinct kiki-kerr call of a BLACK RAIL was heard in Fluvanna 25 May. The habitat while containing juncus was not overly extensive. It is possible that the bird was on territory given the time of year, habitat, and the fact that it was calling (AB).

Certainly the most surprising sighting of the season was 2 UPLAND SANDPIPERS in Amherst 22 Apr (MJ). Although this species was recorded with some regularity in the past, there are no recent reports from the Lynchburg area. At Mill Creek Lake, Amherst 70 Spotted Sandpipers provided a record high count for the area 11 May (MJ). Four Bonaparte’s Gulls were there 9 Apr (MJ). A Herring Gull in Albemarle 4 May was a great find as this species is very uncommon in the area at any time of the year (SM, et al.). The presence of 4 CASPIAN TERNS calling, and flying over and diving into Mill Creek Lake 9 Apr was exciting (MJ). The species was last recorded there in May 1994.

**HAWKS—NIGHTJARS**

A pair of Red-shouldered Hawks was seen feeding three nearly fledged young in Johnson’s Amherst backyard 7 May. A Big Day in Albemarle May 4 recorded 110 species including Barn, Barred, and Eastern Screech Owls (SM et al.). The Northern Saw-whet Owl banding station in Campbell netted and banded 12 owls between 10 Mar and 12 Apr. No previously banded birds were captured. The ratios were 75% hatch year and 25% after hatch year birds. A preponderance of hatch year birds is typical of an invasion year, which this was. In the previous five falls, hatch year birds have ranged from 0 to 28% of the birds netted. All twelve birds were sexed as females. Females usually predominate at banding stations, perhaps due to males staying closer to the breeding grounds in winter plus a possible female bias in birds responding to the audio lure (GS). Chuck-will’s-widow was recorded for the second year in a row at the same location in Bedford 3 May (GS). The first Whip-poor-will report of the season came from western Albemarle 10 Apr (MC).

**HUMMINGBIRDS—WARBLERS**

The RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD in Lynchburg, originally banded 2 Dec 2006 and recaptured on 8 Dec 2007, departed 9 Mar. Another Rufous Hummingbird in Amherst, originally banded 2 Dec 2006 and recaptured 3 Nov 2007, was still at the feeder until at least 20 Mar (jide TD). Loggerhead Shrikes continue at their strong hold in Bedford with sightings 9 Mar (RB, et al.) and May 1–3 (GS). Fifty Tree Swallows seen hawking insects over the settling ponds in Big Island Bedford 9 Mar established a new early arrival date (previous local record was Mar 22) in the Lynchburg area (RB, et al.) and two at L. Anna, Louisa Feb 28 were extremely early (MB). Uncommon *empidonax* flycatchers made good showings. A Big Day in Albemarle 4 May produced a Willow Flycatcher (SM, et al.). A Least Flycatcher was found 10 May near Fredericksburg (PN) and an Alder Flycatcher heard and seen in northeast Albemarle 23 May was a very good find for that area (SM, JG). Three Bank Swallows observed flying low and feeding over a lake in Powhatan 20 Apr was a first at that location (WE). A Northern Waterthrush was observed 11 May in Amherst (MJ).

**BLACKBIRDS—FINCHES**

At least four Rusty Blackbirds were in Lynchburg 2 Mar (RB, et al.). A Bobolink in southern Albemarle on 23 Apr was one of the earlier observations in the Region (SM). A late lingering Pine Siskin was observed drinking at a water pan on a house deck in western Albemarle 18 May (MC). Lingering White-throated Sparrows were present 14 May in Powhatan (WE) and 19 May in Freder-

East

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

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

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During the period 208 species were recorded. This report is based primarily on reports found in eBird, VA-Bird, and the Northern Neck Audubon Society email list. The most exciting sightings for the region this season were of two Anhingas and 14 Redheads. Other notable sightings included Snowy Egret, Cattle Egret, Black-crowned Night Heron, Glossy Ibis, Merlin, Peregrine, White-rumped Sandpiper, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Alder Flycatcher, Vesper Sparrow, Dickcissel, and a large flock of Snow Geese.

Abbreviations: Ball’s Neck (Ball’s Neck area, Northumberland); Beaverdam (Beaverdam Park, Gloucester); Bethel (Bethel Beach area, Mathews); Beulahville (King William); Birthplace (George Washington’s Birthplace National Monument, Westmoreland); Dameron (Dameron National Area Preserve, Northumberland); Dragon Run (border of Middlesex and King and Queen); EG (Elsing Green, a private farm in King William); John’s Point (John’s Point Landing, Gloucester); K. G. Ponds (Route 3 ponds in King George); Leedstown (Westmoreland); Mothershead (tract of Rapp. R. NWR Westmoreland); Mulberry (Mulberry Private Hunting Preserve, Mulberry Pt, Richmond); New Point (New Point Natural Area Preserve Northumberland); The Pocket (in Pamunkey Indian Reservation along Pamunkey River, King William); Rapp. R. NWR. (Rappahannock R. Valley National Wildlife Refuge); Toby’s Pt. (Toby’s Point tract of Rapp. R. NWR, King George); Wilma (Wilma tract of Rapp. R. NWR, Richmond); Wright (Wright tract of Rapp. R. NWR, Richmond); WSP (Westmoreland State Park, Westmoreland)

WATERFOWL—GREBES

Though most Tundra Swans left the region by mid-March two lingered at Bethel until 17 Apr (G&RH). The maximum was 500 at Birthplace 10 Mar (FE). Normally Snowy Geese occur in this region in groups of less than a dozen, such as the four seen 1 Mar at Balls Neck (TS), so an observation of 150 at Bethel was noteworthy 10 Mar (G&RH). Fifty Wood Ducks were seen in a three mile section of Dragon Run between Big Island and Mascot 6 Mar (TK). A large flock of 1600 Northern Pintails was in the Pamunkey R. marshes at EG 2 Mar (FA). The 35 Blue-winged Teal seen this season included three at Totuskey Cr., Richmond, 30 Mar (LA) and a high of 14 at Leedstown 25 Mar (FA). Twenty Northern Shovelers were in Leedstown 25 Mar and again 5 Apr (FA). About half of the 330 Canvasbacks and 80% of the Ruddy Ducks found at Currioman Bay, Westmoreland, 27 Mar were male (FA). Only 5 Redheads were noted this season: four in Gloucester 17 Mar (G&RH), and one at K. G. Ponds 5 Apr (FA). Two Hooded Mergansers were seen at a nest box at Totuskey Cr., Richmond, 30 Mar (LA). The last Red-breasted Mergansers noted this season were two in Leedstown 27 Apr (FA). A late Red-throated Loon was at Bethel 30 Apr (G&RH). Grebe season highs included 15 Pied-billed at Beaverdam 7 Mar (G&RH) and 23 Horned in the Maryland waters of the Potomac R near Birthplace 26 Mar (FA). Thirty-five Brown Pelicans were seen by multiple observers in several locations in far eastern portions of the Region’s peninsulas, but one was seen far up the Rappahannock R. in Tappahannock, Essex; 23-30 Mar (LA). One of the most exciting sightings this season was a flock of 14 WHITE PELICANS in the Rappahannock River between the mouth of Peedee Creek and Leedstown 3 Apr (RR). They were observed from the Essex Co side of the river. As they typically do while feeding, the flock swam up and down the river in a tight side-by-side formation, before taking off downriver just before dark. Two ANHINGAS were photographed at Bett’s Bottom Rd near Heathsville, Northumberland, 1 May (RD).

HERONS—GULLS

Twenty Great Egrets were reported this season, the earliest being two at The Pocket 2 Mar (FA). Single Green Herons were at Beaverdam 13 Apr (MB et al), New Point 17 Apr (G&RH), Johns Pt. 8 May (G&RH) and WSP 17 May (FA). Other wading birds included a Snowy Egret at Bethel 30 Apr (G&RH), 2 Cattle Egrets in Lotsburg, Northumberland, 10 May (M&PK), 3 Cattle Egrets at Dividing Cr., Northumberland, 12 May (ED), a Black-crowned Night Heron at Beaverdam 29 Apr (MB et al), an American Bittern in Leedstown 25 Mar
(FA), and single Glossy Ibis at Ball’s Neck 6 Apr (TS) and Leedstown 27 Apr (FA). The last report for Northern Harrier was one on 17 May in Leedstown (FA). The leucistic Red-tailed Hawk of King’s Crossing near Kilmarnock was not seen this season (TT). Six Red-shouldered Hawks were found along a three mile stretch of Dragon Run, an unusually high number for this stretch of the river 6 Mar (TK). The high count for American Kestrels this season was eight at Dameron 12 Apr (TS). Other falcons included a Merlin in Leedstown 5 Apr (FA) and a Peregrine, which was eating a flicker in the Common Green area of John’s Point, 6 Mar (G&RH). Single Virginia Rails were noted at Mulberry 27 Mar (FA) and Dameron 12 Apr (TS). A high of 750 American Coot was recorded at Beaverdam 29 Mar (G&RH). The last coot of the season was a single bird in Leedstown 27 Apr (FA). Single adult Lesser Black-backed Gulls were seen at K. G. Ponds 24 Mar and in Leedstown 25 Mar with 89 Bonaparte’s Gulls (FA). Twenty-four Caspian Terns roosted in a farm field in Leedstown 27 Apr (FA). Two Common Terns at Bethel 27 Apr were the only ones reported in the Region this season (G&RH).

**CUCKOOS—VIREOS**

A Black-billed Cuckoo was at Mosquito Pt., Lancaster, 11 May (BN). First spring sightings for the Region included Yellow-billed Cuckoo Beaverdam 22 Apr (G&RH), Chimney Swift Gloucester 14 Apr (DH), Ruby-throated Hummingbird Gloucester 13 Apr (G&RH), Eastern Wood-Pewee Wilna 26 Apr (SS), Acadian Flycatcher Beaverdam 3 May (G&RH), Eastern Kingbirds Toby’s Pt. and Leedstown 27 Apr (FA), Great Crested Flycatcher Beaverdam 13 Apr (MB et al.), Purple Martins Reedville, Northumberland Apr 11 (MJ), Tree Swallow Beulahville 2 Mar (FA), Northern Rough-winged Swallow investigating holes in a quarry wall in Walkerton 28 Mar (FA), Bank Swallow Beaverdam 17 Apr (G&RH), Cliff Swallow Leedstown and K. G. Ponds 11 May (FA), and Barn Swallow K. G. Ponds 24 Mar (FA). An Alder Flycatcher was singing in an alder swamp in Leedstown 17 May (FA). Last sightings for some winter residents included Yellow-bellied Sapsucker Leedstown 5 Apr (FA), Golden-crowned Kinglet Beulahville 28 Mar (FA), Ruby-crowned Kinglet Beaverdam 29 Apr (MB), Winter Wren Beaverdam 23 Mar (MB et al.), and Hermit Thrush Gloucester 14 Apr (DH). A Marsh Wren was found at John’s Pt. 8 May (G&RH). Cedar Waxwings were uncommon this spring. Less than 150 were reported with a high of 58 at Beaverdam 13 Apr (MB et al.). Single Veeries were seen at Beaverdam 3 and 10 May (G&RH). Thousands of American Robins were at Ball’s Neck 8 Mar (TS). Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were first noted in Beulahville and EG 28 Mar (FA). Two Brown-headed Nuthatches were again found farther up the peninsula than usual at Mulberry and Wilna 27 Mar (FA); high counts were 22 at New Pt. 17 Apr and 10 that same day at Bethel (G&RH). A Red-breasted Nuthatch was still present at Toby’s Pt. 27 Apr (FA). Fish Crows seemed more widespread this season, noted 31 times from 12 different locations, though generally only one or 2 each time. First spring sightings of vireos included White-eyed Wilna 12 Apr (SS), Yellow-throated Beaverdam 19 Apr (G&RH) and Red-eyed Beaverdam 13 Apr (MB et al.). A

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*Two Anhingas photographed at Bett’s Bottom Road near Heathsville by Richard Davis.*
Blue-headed Vireo was at Beaverdam 6 May (G&RH).

**WARBLERS—FINCHES**

Warbler sightings this season included Blue-winged Wilna 27 Apr (SS) and Gloucester 29 Apr (DH), Magnolia Beaverdam 10 May (G&RH), Black-throated Green Beaverdam 20 Apr (FA), Blackburnian Toby’s Pt. 17 May (FA), Canada Beaverdam 25 May (FA), and the usual numbers of Pine and Yellow-rumped. Hundreds of the latter were at Dameron on 8 Mar (TS). First-of-year sightings for warblers were of Northern Parula Wilna 10 Apr (SS), Yellow K. G. Ponds and Leedstown 27 Apr (FA); Black-throated Blue, Prothonotary and Kentucky Beaverdam 19 Apr (G&RH), Yellow-throated Beaverdam 23 Mar (MB), Prairie and Common Yellowthroat John’s Pt. 11 Apr (G&RH), Palm 26 Mar New Pt. (G&RH) and Birthplace (FA), Blackpoll Beaverdam 6 May (G&RH), Black-and-White Gloucester 7 Apr (DH), American Redstart Beaverdam 20 Apr (FA), Worm-eating New Pt. 17 Apr (G&RH), Ovenbird Gloucester 3 Apr (DH), Northern Waterthrush Leedstown 27 Apr (FA), Louisiana Waterthrush Beaverdam 1 Apr (G&RH), Hooded 20 Apr Beaverdam (FA) and Ball’s Neck (TS), and Yellow-breasted Chat Ball’s Neck 20 Apr (TS). Thirteen Yellow-throated Warblers were singing along Pochahontas and Pocket Roads in the vicinity of The Pocket 28 Mar (FA). Only 25 species of warblers were reported this spring, as compared to 33 species last year when the VSO held its manual meet-

March and April brought precipitation to the Region with a total of twenty days of rain and five days of snow helping to alleviate the drought conditions that plagued the area in 2007. May was drier with only five days of rain. Even though the area had freezing temperatures on April 15, the cold did not destroy fruits and seeds that provide food for the birds, as it did in April of 2007.

Birds of particular interest were a White-winged Scoter at South Holston Lake, the first Snowy Egret ever recorded in Buchanan, the first Bald Eagle in the Breaks community in 30 years, and the first documented Common Raven’s nest in Buchanan. Russell had a Peregrine Falcon and a flock of hundreds of Purple Finches. A Blue-headed Vireo in Buchanan in mid-March was early and a new spring count of three Blackpolls was recorded there during migration. Fox Sparrows continued in record numbers at feeders throughout the area in March.

The first Blue Grosbeak recorded in Buchanan was found on Compton Mt. in April. Red Crossbills were found in Wythe in April.

**Contributors:** Lee Adams, Fred Atwood, Meredith Bell, Ellie Davis, Richard Davis, Frank Ender, George and Rosemarie Harris, Dave Hewitt, Mary Alyce Johnson, Teta Kain, Mary and Porter Keir, BJ Norris, Tom Saunders, Rodger Rowe, Sandy Spencer, Tom Teeples, Fred Witschey.

**Abbreviations:**
- BP (Breaks Interstate Park, Dickenson)
- BC (The Breaks community, Buchanan)
- CMWA (Clinch Mountain Wildlife Area)
- Compton (Compton Mountain, Buchanan)
- RRL (Rural Retreat Lake)
- SHL (South Holston Lake, Washington)

**Southwest**


**DUCKS—RAPTORS**

The 5 American Wigeons found on the Beaver Pond in BP 22 Mar were an uncommon species there (DC, RM, DR). Three Northern Shovelers, a species also not common to the park, were found on Laurel Lake in BP, 4 Apr (DR). A first for the area a female Ring-necked Duck was observed on a farm pond on Compton 16 Mar (DR). A White-winged Scoter was on SHL at Musick’s Campground 2 Mar (AB) and 21 Mar
Six **Ruddy Ducks** were seen at RRL 26 Mar (JM), and two were observed there 8 Apr (JM). A **Ruffed Grouse** regularly attacked a farmer’s all terrain vehicle during early April each time the farmer drove by to feed his cattle on Guesses Fork, Buchanan (Mi T). Eight **Horned Grebes** were together at Musick’s 21 Mar (RB). The first **SNOWY EGRET** ever reported in Buchanan was observed on the Levisa R. near the mouth of Buckeye Branch not far from the Virginia-Kentucky state line 27 May (ET II, Ma T). An **Osprey** was sighted at RRL 8 Apr (JM) and the first of the season in Buchanan was reported on the Levisa R. 26 Mar (CT). An immature **Bald Eagle** in the BC was the first to be reported in more than 30 years 4 Mar (DR, JB). An adult Bald Eagle was found in Burkes Garden, Tazewell 6 Mar (S & MB) and another adult was seen soaring over the eastern section of Buchanan near the Virginia-Kentucky state line 12 Apr (DC, RM, DR). Two Bald Eagles were discovered at Hidden Valley Lake, Washington 29 May (MH, RH) and an adult was in Burkes Garden on 28 Mar. **Golden Eagle** sightings included an immature near Rt. 61 in Tazewell (J & J P) and an immature on Clifton Farms Rd., Russell 6 Mar (TH, DW), four birds on Beartown Mt. Russell 21 Mar (TH, LH, RK, DW), a single bird in flight near House and Barn Mt., Russell 3 Mar (TH). Two **Golden Eagles** were observed near Rt. 19 in Russell 25 Mar, one gliding towards Beartown Mt. (DW), and the other just south of Lebanon (F & JM). A **Peregrine Falcon** was at the CMWA in Russell 4 May (JPM et al.).

**GULLS – PIPITS**

Five **Bonaparte’s Gulls** were spotted at RRL 27 Mar (JM). Two **Ring-billed Gulls** came down to Rt. 639 on Compton Buchanan 15 Mar (DC, RM) providing only the third recorded sighting of the species in that area in 40 years (RM). An unusual bird for the area, a **Black-billed Cuckoo** was heard on Compton 9 May (RM). Another Black-billed Cuckoo, also in Buchanan, was found on Guesses Fork of Hurley 17 May (ET III, Mi T).

The first **Chimney Swift** reported in Buchanan was observed in the BC 19 Mar (DR). First seasonal reports of **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds** were from the Mouth of Little Prater, Buchanan 5 Apr (JR) and from Elk Garden, Russell 9 Apr (RK). A **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** was heard 4 May at Lebanon, Russell (I.H, TH). The first seasonal **Great Crested Flycatcher** reported in Russell was at Lebanon 27 Apr (I.H, TH) and one was reported in the BC 1 May (DR). **Eastern Kingbird** arrived in Rosedale, Russell 4 May (JT). Two **Loggerhead Shrikes** were observed in Russell 2 Mar (RCBC). A Loggerhead Shrike was spotted at “The Mudhole” in Elk Garden, Russell 20 Mar (JT). One was reported at the same site 10 Apr (AB). A new early date was established for **Blue-headed Vireo** in Buchanan when one was found on the Dismal R. 16 Mar (DC, RM). The previous early date was 20 Mar (RM). An early **Red-eyed Vireo** was reported near Speedwell, Wythe 26 Mar (JM). The first documented **Common Raven** nest in Buchanan was discovered 18 Apr on the Dismal R. near the intersection of Rt. 638 and Rt. 635 near the town of Whitewood. The nest was located several hundred feet up the mountain on a rocky ledge about 25 feet from the ground. It contained two Common Raven nestlings. Ravens have been observed in the eastern section of the county for several years, but previously a nest had not been located (DC, ph RM, DR). Seasonal arrivals included two **Tree Swallows** Beartown, Russell 21 Mar (I.H, TH, RK, DW) and a **Barn Swallow** in the eastern part of Buchanan on Horse Ridge at an elevation of 2900 ft. 7 Apr (RM, DR). On 26 Mar a **Red-breasted Nuthatch** came to a feeder near the New River in Grayson.
One Red-breasted Nuthatch continued to come to a feeder in Buchanan as late as 1 May (DR). A late migrating Brown Creeper was found near the Mountaintop Golf Course on Compton 10 May (DC, MM, RM, DR). A Carolina Wren had a nest two-thirds complete 1 Mar Compton - elevation 2400 ft (RM). Only a few records for House Wrens nesting in Buchanan exist. For the first time in at least 36 years a singing male appeared on Compton Mt. 23 Apr. On 8 May a second male began singing not far from the first. Both males built nests in nest boxes. But after a few weeks of singing they failed to find a mate, abandoned their nests, and left the area (RM). A singing Winter Wren was discovered on Harry’s Branch near Compton 10 May (DC, MM, RM, DR). Attempts to locate the wren on a later date were not successful (RM). Seasonal arrivals were noted for Blue-gray Gnatcatcher near Speedwell, Wythe 5 Apr (JM) and on Compton 6 Apr (RM, DR); Wood Thrush at Woodlawn, Carroll 22 Apr (RP) and in BC 2 May (DR); Gray Catbird in Washington 3 Apr (LH, TH, RK); and Brown Thrasher in BC 15 Mar (DR). An American Pipit, rare for Buchanan, was found at Willowbrook Country Club in BC 9 Mar (ET III & MT).

**WARBLERS—CROSSBILLS**

First seasonal observations of warblers returning to the area included: Yellow Warbler at Big Rock near the Levisa R., Buchanan 13 Apr (ET III); Cape May Warbler in the BC 4 May (DR); Black-throated Green Warbler at Speedwell, Wythe 7 Apr (JM); Black-throated Green Warbler in the BP 6 Apr (ET III, Mi T) and on Compton 6 Apr (RM, DR); Yellow-throated Warbler at Conaway on the Levisa R., Buchanan 5 Apr (CT) and in the BP 6 Apr (ET III, Mi T). A Pine Warbler was at a suet feeder on Compton 3 Mar (LM, RM) and in the BP 6 Apr (ET III, Mi T). This is the only the second year for the species to be found nesting in the area. Singing males were found in the park during and throughout the breeding seasons of 2007 and 2008. The first seasonal report of Pine Warbler in Russell was from a feeder at Lebanon 8 Mar (LH, TH). A male Prairie Warbler was found singing at Enoch’s Branch Park near Grundy, Buchanan 7 May (RK). The species has not been known to nest in that area. Palm Warbler was first observed 7 Apr in Speedwell, Wythe (JM). Three observations of male Blackpoll Warblers — Mountaintop Golf Course Compton Mt. 7 May (RM), Weller Yard on Levisa R. 8 May (ET III), and Compton Rt. 639 20 May (RM) — were unusual. There are only six spring records of the species in the county and it was not recorded in Buchanan during spring migration before 2003. A Blackpoll Warbler was heard singing at Richlands in Tazewell 18 May (DR). Four Cerulean Warblers were observed in the Guesse Fork section of Buchanan 24 Apr (SJ), two...
were heard singing at Enoch’s Branch Park 4 May (MM), and six were found 25 May on Compton and Harry’s Branch of Buchanan (Da C, DC, LM, RM). Other seasonal arrivals included Black-and-white Warblers Speedwell, Wrythe 5 Apr (JM); American Redstart Big Rock, Buchanan 11 Apr (Ma T); Ovenbird Guesses Fork of Hurley, Buchanan 9 Apr (SJ); Waterthrush (not identified to species) Roaring Fork, Tazewell 23 Mar (A & MW); and Louisiana Waterthrush Battlefield Rd, Grayson 2 Apr (SJR). Kentucky Warblers and Yellow-breasted Chats returned to a farm in Grayson 26 Apr (MD). A pair of Kentucky Warblers was found on Caney Island Branch of Buchanan 27 Apr (Mi T). A returning Eastern Towhee was on Compton 14 Mar (LM, RM). Normally the species overwinters in the area, but due to the late freeze of April 2007 and the subsequent drought conditions all summer and fall, the birds left the area. Chipping Sparrow arrived at Compton 14 Mar (RM). On 23 Apr a Grasshopper Sparrow began singing on a farm near Galax, Grayson (MD). Record numbers of Fox Sparrows were reported coming to feeders during the spring migration including 14 on Compton 9 Mar (RM), seven in the Breaks community 9 Mar (DR), and four in Russell 18 Mar (JT). A male Rose-breasted Grosbeak at a feeder in Rosedale, Russell 26 Apr was the first of the season (Ja T, JT) and one at a feeder on Compton 27 Apr (LM) was the first to arrive there. A couple of hours later the first BLUE GROSBEAK ever recorded in Buchanan appeared at the same feeder (LM, ph. RM). This male bird stayed until the following day. A male Blue Grosbeak was found on Clifton Farms Rd. Russell 20 Apr (TH). The first seasonal report of Indigo Bunting was from Honaker Russell 20 Apr (RCBC). Six male Bobolinks returned to a farm near Galax, Grayson 1 May (BD, MD). A single male Bobolink was found in the “Cove” section of Tazewell 11 May (Ja T, JT). Two Rusty Blackbirds were observed in the BC 3 Mar (LM, RM). Seven Rusty Blackbirds came to a feeder on Compton 9 Mar (RM). Another appeared at the same location 16 Mar (RM). This is the first year that Orchard Orioles are believed to have nested on Compton (elev. 2400 ft). A pair was observed regularly there from early May throughout the breeding season (RM). Large numbers of Purple Finches invaded Russell 9 Apr. More than 100 of them came to feeders at Lebanon (LH, TH). Five miles away at Elk Garden more than 200 were observed at feeders (RK) and 18 came to feeders on Compton 9 Apr with 3 Pine Siskins (RM). A male and female Purple Finch were observed feeding at a sunflower seed feeder in Lebanon 18 May with a male Pine Siskin (LH, TH) and a female Purple Finch fed at a feeder in Carroll 25 May (RP). On 11 Apr a pair of Red Crossbills was observed on the ground beside Rt. 717 in Wrythe (AB).


South Central

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

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L arge water bodies, including Kerr and Sandy Reservoirs, continue to attract birders and produce interesting reports. Nesting Osprey and Bald Eagle are encouraging signs of the recovery of these species in the Region. Several new early arrival dates perhaps resulted from the mild winter, but may also be part of a long-term climate-driven trend toward earlier spring migration.

Abbreviations: Kerr (Kerr Reservoir, Mecklenburg); Palmer (Palmer Pt., Kerr Res., Mecklenburg)

DUCKS—BALD EAGLE

The only report of Canvasback for the period was of a male and two females 16 Mar on Hatcher Creek Lake, Buckingham (DS). Four Greater Scaup were at Palmer through 15 Mar (AD, TT). A period high count of 80+ Lesser Scaup 11 Mar came from Kerr (DS). Three Surf Scoter and 3 White-winged Scoter, both good finds for inland water bodies, were at Palmer 11&15 Mar (DS, AD, TT). Eight Red-breasted Merganser at Kerr 12 Apr represented a high count for the period (AD, TT). The only report of Ruddy Duck for the period was of three individuals on Sandy R. Res., Prince Edward 13 Apr (DF). The Pacific Loon present at Palmer through the winter stayed until at least 15 Mar (AD) and may be the same bird reported from this location each winter since 2004. Also reported from Palmer were 2 Red-throated Loon and many Common Loon 11&15 Mar (DS, AD, TT). An American Bittern, generally difficult to find in the Piedmont, was at Banister R. WMA, Halifax, 7 Apr (JB). A single Glossy Ibis flew over the Smith Grove Rd. area, Dinwiddie 2 May (AD). Two Mississippi Kites were at the Powell farm, Halifax 10&25 May (JB); another report of this species (no count) came from Staunton R. Battlefield SP, Halifax 24 May (LBC). This is the tenth consecutive year for spring reports of this species in Halifax. Bald Eagle reports continue to increase in the Region, with individuals reported from Dick Cross
Southeast

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

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Average temperatures remained above normal for the period. However, some much-needed rain fell in April and May, averaging slightly over three inches above normal for both months. Observers did not note any unusual trends during spring migration. There was a fairly even spread of both early and late migrants reported. The pair of Peregrine Falcons that have routinely nested in downtown Richmond for the past five years attempted to nest again this year but did not have success as of this writing. Four eggs were laid at the nest site used in previous years but none of the four hatched successfully. It is unknown whether the birds have tried to nest again. On a brighter note, a Great Blue Heron rookery was discovered in downtown Richmond, believed to be a first for the city. More than sixty herons were found nesting on the James River just south of Shockoe Slip. The twelfth consecutive College Creek Hawk Watch finished their season on 31 May with a tally of 1,304 raptors counted. Wet weather kept coverage at a minimum but observers still managed to have their best May count ever with a total of 379 birds. Rarities this season included American White Pelican, Anhinga, Wood Stork, Cormorant, and Caspian Tern. The only report of this species in Virginia has been on the James River during the past five years attempted to nest again this year but did not have success as of this writing. Four eggs were laid at the nest site used in previous years but none of the four hatched successfully. It is unknown whether the birds have tried to nest again. On a brighter note, a Great Blue Heron rookery was discovered in downtown Richmond, believed to be a first for the city. More than sixty herons were found nesting on the James River just south of Shockoe Slip. The twelfth consecutive College Creek Hawk Watch finished their season on 31 May with a tally of 1,304 raptors counted. 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Channel, Lane, wire before flying off on Brickhouse C6

SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER found at Green Springs 18 May (BW) and land Rd. 4 May (RB, AC); the second was City Willow Flycatchers tion of JRP 2 May (JF). Three different was seen and heard at the Wetlands sec-

field an appearance in a Chester yard, Chester-

field of Richmond 9 Mar (LB). An early-arrival Marsh 3 May (MI, VG) and remained until the end of the period (m.o.h.). A SANDHILL CRANE passed the CCHW and circled for a few minutes before heading north 20 May (BT). An early Solitary Sandpiper was encountered at Green Springs 2 Apr (BW), eclipsing the previous local early date by 12 days. A good count of 45 Least Sandpipers was made at Shirley 19 Mar (FB, BW), Seven Pectoral Sandpipers were at Crewe's Channel, Henrico 15 Mar (AB). A count of 565 Bonaparte's Gulls was made at Hog and the Scotland Wharf Ferry Landing, Surry 12 Mar (FB, SD, AM, BW). At least 14 Lesser Black-backed Gulls were counted on the James R. in Rich-

mond 26 Mar (AB). A very early male Ruby-throated Hummingbird made an appearance in a Chester yard, Chesterfield 19 Mar (CV). An Alder Flycatcher was seen and heard at the Wetlands section of JRP 2 May (JF). Three different Willow Flycatchers were found in James City this season, the first off Treasure Island Rd. 4 May (RB, AC); the second was found at Green Springs 18 May (BW) and the third at CCHW 23-24 May (BW). A SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER was observed briefly on a telephone wire before flying off on Brickhouse Lane, New Kent 25 May (FD). There were three reports of Warbling Vireo, one singing at Dutch Gap 24 Apr (BR), another at JRP 26 Apr (FD, LI, LS) and a third at Henricus 28 May (RE). Two Common Ravens were seen flying over and vocalizing in the Stony Point neighbor-

hood of Richmond 9 Mar (LB). Cliff Swallow nests were noted under the Belle Isle footbridge, Richmond 4 May (JF, SS) under the Manchester Bridge, Richmond 5 May (AB). A lingering Red-breasted Nuthatch was seen in a yard in Chesterfield 21 May (PB).

THRUNES—FINCHES

The Williamsburg TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE that entertained birders for most of January, returned to the same yard in Apr (K&MM, SD) and was last reported 6 Apr (DC). Several Gray-cheeked Thrushes were reported from JRP this season. Another Gray-cheeked Thrush was seen in a yard in Chesterfield along with a very late Hermit Thrush 12 May (PB). A somewhat late Blue-winged Warbler was noted at JRP 14 May (DS). A Golden-winged Warbler was at JRP 1 May (RE). A Nashville Warbler was at JRP 26 Apr (FD, LL, LS). An early Northern Parula was seen in a Chester yard, Chesterfield 30 Mar (JK). A Cape May Warbler was singing at JRP 3 May (JF). A Blackburnian Warbler was reported at JRP 14 May (AB). Several Bay-breasted Warblers were reported this season with most of them at JRP. A Cerulean Warbler, rarely seen in migra-

tion, was encountered at York River S.P., York 27 Apr (GK, MAK). A fairly early Black-and-white Warbler was at a swamp in Chester, Chesterfield 1 Apr (RE). A Worm-eating Warbler was noted in a Chester yard, Chesterfield 27 Apr (JK). A Swainson's Warbler was observed on Low Ground Rd. where it crosses the Meherrin R. at the Greensville/Southampton county line 19 Apr (TD). The same observer has seen this species at the same location annually since 2002. The Yellow-breasted Chat that had been visiting a suet feeder in James City in February was last seen 16 Mar (B&CS). Lingering winter residents included a White-crowned Sparrow at a feeder in James City 17 May (DM), a Dark-eyed Junco at Hog 4 May (BT), and a Rose-breasted Grosbeak at a feeder in Chester, Chesterfield 29 May (RE). A Blue Grosbeak at Green Springs 13 Apr set a new local early date by one day (BW). Not to be outdone, an Orchard Oriole at Settler's Mill, James City 13 Apr established a new local early date by three days (BW). Breeding evidence of Baltimore Orioles at JRP was gathered on 3 May when a pair was seen copulating (PB, AB, LB, AD, TT) and then later in the day, a female was seen gathering nesting material and flying out of sight (PB). A House Finch egg was discovered in a nest 20 Mar in the Piedmont section of Chesterfield. The prior early egg date for this species in the Piedmont was 31 Mar (PB).

In what has been a good year for winter finches, 3 Pine Siskins were noted at a feeder in Chester, Chesterfield 26 Apr (RE).


ders, Janice Frye, Vickie Gullet, Mike Iwanik, Julie Kacmarciik, Mary Alice Koeneke, Glenn Koppel, Sara Lewis, Larry Lynch, Kathi & Mac Mestayer, Alex Minarik, Duryea Morton, Lauren Scott, Bart & Chandi Singer, David Sonn-

enborn, Sandy Spencer, Brian Taber, Brenda Tekin, Tina Trice, Cindy Van Den Boom, Charlie Watson, Bill Williams.

Coastal

Accomack and Northampton Counties; Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel; Pelagic area; and the cities of Chesapeake, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Po-

quoson, Portsmouth, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach.

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

The season was relatively cool and dry. Through the third week of April the an-

nual rainfall deficit had reached four inches, deepening the drought from 2007. Then a spate of unsettled weather during the closing days of the month de-

levered a record 1.79 inches of rain to
Norfolk on 21 April, and a devastating tornado to Suffolk on 28 April. Quite noteworthy throughout the report period were the number and diversity of early arrivals and/or probable overwintering species. As always, the breadth of the Region’s numerous ongoing avian monitoring projects continued to provide critical details about species’ populations. These included Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge’s regular waterfowl, shorebird, and marsh bird surveys, Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory’s spring migration banding at First Landing State Park, Whimbrel and Red Knot studies conducted jointly by the Center for Conservation Biology and the Virginia Coast Reserve of the Nature Conservancy, and the Center for Conservation Biology’s annual Bald Eagle nesting surveys. Species sharing the limelight for the season were Black-bellied Whistling Duck, and Bicknell’s Thrush and the remarkable journey of a transient Whimbrel.

**Abbreviations:** Back Bay (Back Bay NWR, Virginia Beach); CBBT (Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, s. of *Northampton*); CCB (Center for Conservation Biology, College of William and Mary); Chinc. (Chincoteague NWR, Accomack); Craney (Craney Island, Portsmouth); Dismal (Dismal Swamp NWR, Suffolk); ESVNWR (Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge, *Northampton*); First Landing (First Landing State Park, Virginia Beach); FINWR (Fisherman’s Island National Wildlife Refuge, *Northampton*); HRBT (Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel, Hampton/Norfolk); MMBT (Monitor Merrimac Bridge Tunnel, Newport News/Portsmouth); VCR (Virginia Coast Reserve of the Nature Conservancy).

**WATERFOWL-AMERICAN COOT**

A somewhat wary group of 7 Black-bellied Whistling Ducks made a one-day stop at Blue Bird Gap Farm, Hampton (JS, MN, RR, ph. RS) 18 May. As many as 80 Brant tarried at Chinc. through at least 19 Apr (AL). An impressive 41 Wood Ducks were at Newport News Park, Newport News 3 May (MB). The Ridgeway Park, Newport News Eurasian Wigeon was last seen 17 Mar (BC) and one at Surrey Crescent, Norfolk remained through at least 22 Mar (DC). There were 2 American Wigeon at Craney 30 Apr (BW, SD). The peak Blue-winged Teal tally was 109 at Back Bay 14 Apr (JG). The highest reported Green-winged Teal count was 260 at Back Bay 3 Apr (JG). Three Harlequin Ducks (2 males and one female were on CBBT Island 1 through 21 Mar (TS). Noteworthy were 14 Black Scoters off FINWR 30 Apr and 3 May (SH). A fly-by Red-throated Loon was seen off Back Bay 15 May (AD, TT). The peak Pied-billed Grebe tally was 26 at Back Bay 14 Mar (JG). A Red-necked Grebe was seen from Burton’s Shore, Accomack 16 Mar (MAK, GKG). Another was off CBBT 13 Apr Island 1 (AL). Uncharacteristically far inland was an adult Northern Gannet off Craney and the MMBT 26 Mar (FB, SD, AM, BW). An American White Pelican was at Craney 7 March (BL, JF, GW). An impressive 270 Brown Pelicans were off the north end of the CBBT 26 Mar (RB). At least 2 Yellow-crowned Night-herons were in Virginia Beach 11 Mar (RH). The first Glossy Ibis report was a group of 10 at ESVNWR 22 Mar (SH). A Swallow-tailed Kite was at ESVNWR 29 Apr (SH) and a Mississippi Kite was there 17 May (S & MP). The 2008 CCB Bald Eagle nest survey documented 74 active nests within the Region, 48 of which were on the Eastern Shore (29 in Accomack, 19 in *Northampton*). Nest totals from other Regional jurisdictions included: Chesapeake 3; Virginia Beach 6; Suffolk 7; Norfolk 1; Hampton 3; Newport News 6; Accomack 46; Northampton 30; Chesapeake 5; Virginia Beach 10; Suffolk 9; Norfolk 1; Hampton 7; Newport News 7. A nesting Cooper’s Hawk at Mariner’s Museum Park, Newport News 26 Apr was interesting (NF). A Black Rail was heard 26 May at Saxis, Accomack (SB). Back Bay marsh bird surveys recorded 5 King Rails, one Virginia Rail, and 3 Sora 25 Apr (JG). A Sora was noted at Back Bay 3 Apr (JG). A Common Moorhen was at Back Bay 30 Apr and 14 May (JG, DH) and an American Coot was present there 30 May (JG).

**SHOREBIRDS-FINCHES**

The season’s first Piping Plover was reported at Cape Charles 10 Mar (TS) followed by six at Back Bay 3 Apr (JG). Black-necked Stilt reports included nine along the Chincoteague causeway, Accomack 19 Apr (AL), 10 there 26 May (SB), and 3 at Craney by 15 May. The highest reported Lesser Yellowlegs count was 805 at Craney 30 Apr (BW, SD) and the peak Willet count was 295 at Willis Wharf, *Northampton* 26 Mar (RB). A Spotted Sandpiper at Willis Wharf, *Northampton* 31 Mar (SH) was possibly an early migrant. Collaborative research by CCB and VCR has shown that the Region’s coastal barrier island lagoon system is an essential Whimbrel spring migration stopover. An individual captured 20 May off Boxtree Creek, *Northampton* and outfitted with a solar-powered satellite transmitter left the area 23 May, flew northwest to the MacKenzie River, Northwest Territories, Canada covering more than 5,000 kilometers (3,200 miles) in a maximum of 146 hours, sustaining an average flight speed of 22 mph for 6 days. It weighed 640 grams at capture, 180 grams (40%) more than the heaviest individual reported in the literature. According to CCB’s Bryan Watts This event documents an unknown and wholly unexpected migration route between the mid-Atlantic coast and the northwestern arctic. A remarkable 270 Marbled Godwits at Willis Wharf, *Northampton* 26 Mar set a new Coastal Plain and state high count (RB), eclipsing the former high of 214 established 24 Feb 2004 also at Willis Wharf. A joint CCB/VCR aerial Red Knot survey of the Region’s Atlantic coastal islands 21 May recorded 7802 birds including 1230 on Wallops Island, Accomack, 1220 on Cedar Island, Accomack, 1626 on Hog Island, Northampton, and 1065 on Wreck Island, Northampton (BWa, BT). The peak reported Semi-
palmated Sandpiper count was 2885 at Craney 22 May (BW). There were 10–12 Western Sandpipers and a minimum 29 Least Sandpipers at Craney 26 Mar (SD, AM, BW). Notable Purple Sandpiper counts included 60 in Cape Charles 12 Mar (SH, PT), 72 on #1 CBBT 13 Apr (H & LA), and 10 there 27 May (SB). Slightly ahead of the species’ 30 Mar expected date were 50 Short-billed Dowitchers at Willis Wharf, Northampton 26 Mar (RB). A “bleached” first cycle Iceland Gull, likely kumlieni by geographic distribution, was at Back Bay 15 Apr (JG, ph. DH). The Back Bay Lesser Black-backed Gull tally peaked 15 Apr at 78 (JG, DH). A one-egg Least Tern nest was found at Craney 14 May (SD, S & MP, AM). By 27 May Craney supported 50 Least Tern nests (SD). Eurasian Collared-Doves continued off Magotha Road, Northampton with up to three reported throughout the season (VK, m. ob.). A Common Nighthawk was at Dismal 24 May (NF, MM). An intergrade “yellow-shafted/red-shafted” Northern Flicker was banded at First Landing 18 Mar (PD). Single Empidonax banded at First Landing 18 & 19 May were identified as Alder Flycatchers (PD). An Eastern Kingbird near Exmore, Northampton 13 Apr (H & LA) was a week ahead of the typical 20 Apr arrival. A singing White-eyed Vireo was in Dismal 20 Mar (BA, RH). Single Blue-headed Vireos were in Cape Charles 12 Mar (SH) and at the GATR Tract, Northampton 17 Mar (SH). A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was at ESVNWR 25 Mar (G & DF). The season’s first reported Barn Swallow was at Craney 26 Mar (SD, AM). A Red-breasted Nuthatch was at Grandview Park, Hampton 27 Apr (GK, MAK) and one was at Mariner’s Museum Park, Newport News 1 May (NF). A Golden-crowned Kinglet was off Magotha Road, Northampton 2 Apr (FB, SD, AM, BW). A singing Bicknell’s Thrush was carefully studied at Weyanoke Sanctuary, Norfolk 19 May (JF, BK). An Orange-crowned Warbler was at ESVNWR 11 Mar (SH) and one reported for the winter season in Norfolk remained through at least 22 Mar (DC). A Nashville Warbler was in Weyanoke Sanctuary, Norfolk 28 Mar (NF). Singing Yellow-throated Warblers and Louisiana Waterthrushes were heard in Dismal 20 Mar (BA, RH). A Prairie Warbler banded 3 Apr at First Landing (PD) may have been one that over-wintered since normal arrival is 15 April. A lingering Fox Sparrow was in Dismal 26 Mar (SD, AM). The high count of 320 Rusty Blackbirds in Dismal 20 Mar (BA, RH) punctuates the significance of protected bottomland forests for this highly threatened species. Reports of late departing northern finches included 5 Purple Finches in Dismal 20 Mar (BA, RH) and single Pine Siskins in Newport News 25 Apr (NF) and Cape Charles 27 Apr (NB).

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