Virginia Birds

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Summer Records June 2011–July 2011
Editors’ Notes

Spring migration was generally characterized as normal across the Commonwealth though a lack of passerine flights was noted from coastal areas.

Interesting observations included a Eurasian Green-winged Teal in the Southeast, Virginia’s first Violet-green Swallow seen in the Central Region, a Clay-Colored Sparrow in the South Central Region, a Cinnamon Teal on the Coast, a Harris’s Sparrow in the West and a Common Redpoll in the East.

Breeding reports of particular note were of a Bald Eagle four-chick brood—an extremely rare occurrence, egg laying by Prothonotary Warblers at the Dutch Gap being both early and prolific, breeding Dickcissels in the Central Region, and a three-egg American Oystercatcher nest in a new Coastal location. Unfortunately, the news was less good for two well-known breeding pairs. The Richmond Peregrines had no surviving chicks, and the Bald Eagle nest on South Holston Lake was destroyed by an April storm.

In the pretty amazing category the retrieval of the band from a dead Royal Tern in Accomack revealed the bird was about 6 months younger than the all-time known Royal Tern longevity record of 27.39 years.

Good birding,

Linda and Alan

On the Cover: Swallow-tailed Kites soared in Campbell County 13 August – 16 August. Photograph by Cole Poindexeter.
Summer Reporting Period Jun 2011–Jul 2011

North


Editor — Lenny Bankester
5165 Chase Court
Alexandria, VA 22312
vsonorthvirginia@yahoo.com

Summer was quiet as migration drew to a close and an exceptionally warm June and July appeared to reduce activity in both birds and birders. Shenandoah National Park continued to contribute greatly towards the diversity of species sightings, with the Limberlost Trail and Big Meadows serving as birding hot spots in the park. A total of 122 species were reported throughout the Region.

Abbreviations:
- Dulles (Dulles Greenway Wetlands Mitigation Project, Loudoun); Dyke Marsh (Dyke Marsh, Fairfax); HC Bridge (Hunting Creek Bridge, Alexandria); Huntley (Huntley Meadows Park, Fairfax); Limberlost Trail (Limberlost Trail in Shenandoah NP, Madison); Mason Neck (Mason Neck SP, Fairfax); Occoquan (Occoquan Bay NWR, Prince William); Shenandoah (Shenandoah National Park, Madison); Sky Meadows (Sky Meadows SP, Fauquier); Thompson WMA (G. R. Thompson WMA, Fauquier).

Seven BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCKS were seen at the Gateway Shopping Center, Prince William 29 Jun (TD). The species is being recorded with increasing frequency within the Commonwealth and, though this is the only report for the season, it may represent a continuation of the trend that began in the late-1980s. A Mute Swan was found in Fauquier 4 Jun (JS). Five Wood Ducks were sighted at the Ashby Pond Conservation site in the City of Fairfax 13 Jun (SH). Mount Marshall in Shenandoah was the site of an observation of 6 Wild Turkeys 16 Jul (AD). Ruffed Grouse were also seen in Shenandoah; four were spotted on Stony Man mountain 10 Jul (SB). Northern Bobwhite reports were of two on Grassdale Road, Remington, Fauquier 13 Jun (GK) and two at Big Meadows, Shenandoah NP, Madison 31 Jul (DL). The high count for Great Blue Herons was 12 at HC Bridge, Alexandria 30 Jul (SH). Eight Great Egrets were at Dulles 15 Jun (PWB), Occoquan was the location of the single Snowy Egret reported this summer 3 Jun (LC). Green Herons were quite common, with the species seen in Prince William, Fairfax City, Stafford, Fairfax, and Arlington 5 Jun-31 Jul (MM, SH, MW, MV). A White Ibis was found at Huntley 11 Jul (LM). The Black Vulture high count was 10 at Old Rag Mountain in Shenandoah 18 Jun (JH). The high count for Ospreys was 16 at Dyke Marsh 17 Jul (LM).

MISSISSIPPI KITE was seen on Vint Hill Rd., Fauquier 21 Jun (CL). A Sharp-shinned Hawk was observed in the Parkfairfax neighborhood of Alexandria 26 Jul (JS). A single American Kestrel was found in Rappahannock 16 Jul (SB). A COMMON MOORHEN was seen by multiple observers at Huntley 3 Jun (VK, LM, EE). The Killdeer high count was seven found at Dulles 15 Jun (PWB). There was an American Avocet and two White-rumped Sandpipers near the HC Bridge 21 Jul and four Lesser Yellowlegs in the same location 30 Jul (SH). A Spotted Sandpiper was located at Bowman’s Pond, Fauquier 25 Jul (DLa). A single American Woodcock turned up in Manassas 7 Jul (KG). There were few reports of Laughing Gulls, three were reported (along with seven Forster’s Terns) at Aquia Landing, Stafford 30 Jul (JB) and 130 at HC Bridge 27 Jul (SH). A single Black-billed Cuckoo was seen at

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
- Ft. – Fort
- Hwy. – Highway
- L. – Island(s), Isle(s)
- m.ob. – many/multiple observers
- Mt. – Mountain
- NWR – National Wildlife Refuge
- ph. – photographed (by + initials)
- Pt. – Point
- R. – River
- Res. – Reservoir
- Route
- SF – State Forest
- SP – State Park
- VARCOM – Virginia Avian Records Committee
- VDGIF – Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
- VSO – Virginia Society of Ornithology
- Vt. – video taped (by + initials)
- WMA – Wildlife Management Area

Submissions

Send reports and photographs to the Regional Editors. Photographs should be the highest electronic quality possible. Send with release form, which can be found on the VSO web site: www.virginiabirds.net

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

VIRGINIA BIRDS

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Huntley 30 Jul (LW). The Yellow-billed Cuckoo high count came from Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve, Loudoun 30 Jul (RP). Four Eastern Screech-owls at Dyke Marsh was the seasonal high count 6 Jun (SS). Barred Owls were found in both Arlington 14 Jun and Big Meadows Park, Madison 11 Jul (SB, MAK). Big Meadows was also the site of the Eastern Whip-poor-will high count of two 12 Jun (GK). Eight Chimney Swifts were seen at Baldwin Park, Manassas 13 Jul (ES). Five Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were observed in Woodberry Forest, Madison 6 Jun (C&JR). Woodpecker reports included: one Red-bellied Falls Church 14 Jul (LM), 6 Downy Madison 12 Jun (GK), 2 Hairy Shenandoah 21 Jun (CK), 5 Northern Flickers Stony Man, Madison 10 Jul (SB), and 4 Pileated Prince William 22 Jun (LM). Eastern Wood-Peewees and Acadian Flycatchers were abundant, with multiple sightings throughout the Region and a high count of 18 pewees and 21 Acadian at the Meadowood Recreation Area, Fairfax 15 Jun (RM). Scattered reports found Willow Flycatchers in multiple counties 9-16 Jun (SB, JC, DL). Four Eastern Phoebes were spotted along the Limberlost Trail 2 Jul (DL). The Great Crested Flycatcher high count was four seen at Big Meadows, Madison 12 Jun (GK). Nine Eastern Kingbirds were at Occoquan Bay, Prince William 29 Jun (RM). Notably, a juvenile SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER was reported in Loudoun 26 Jun (GH). The sighting has been sent to VARCOM for review. An estimated 200 Purple Martins were seen in Loudoun 4 Jul (RP). A couple of Tree Swallows were spotted at Versailles Pond, Fairfax City 15 Jul (RT). Reports of Bank Swallows came from Loudoun and Prince William, the latter with the high count of 34 (KC, RM). Barn Swallows were typically abundant and with a high of 40 reported from both Arlington and Fairfax (TB, MV). Common Raven continued to appear outside its traditional mountain range with one seen in the city of Fairfax 2 Jun (S R-S) – one was reported in nearby Arlington in the spring. Seventeen White-breasted Nuthatches were in Fairfax 15 Jun (RM). Occoquan Bay provided the high count of Carolina Wrens with 25 seen 29 Jun (RM). House Wrens were reported from the coastal plain up into Rappahannock with a high of 10 at Waiverly Park, Fairfax 27 Jun (PK).

Marsh Wrens were regionally infrequent, but eight were at Dyke Marsh 26 Jun (SF). A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher was at Falls Church Park 14 Jul (LM). Fifteen Eastern Bluebirds were seen at Big Meadows, Shenandoah NP, Madison 9 Jul (TG). The Veery peak count was 28 observed at Big Meadows, Madison 12 Jun (GK). The Wood Thrush high count was 19 at Meadowood Recreation Area in Fairfax 15 Jun (RM). Gray Catbirds were both frequently-seen and abundant, with numerous accounts of multiple birds seen in one day and a high of 20 on the Limberlost Trail 5 Jun (CS). Farther south in the park, 2 Brown Thrashers were seen at Big Meadows 12 Jun (TG). Seven Blue-headed Vireos were found on Stony Man, Madison 10 Jul (SB). Throughout June, Yellow-throated Vireos were most common in the Piedmont and mountains, but one was also observed in Arlington 21 Jun (CB). Four Warbling Vireos were observed at Great Falls National Park, Fairfax 11 Jun (RT). Red-eyed Vireos were frequent and fairly common, with 26 observed at Big Meadows 12 Jun (GK). Warbler reports included: Northern Parula Limberlost Trail, Madison 2 Jul (DL); Yellow Warblers common with a peak count of seven at Dyke Marsh 12 Jun (FV); 7 Chestnut-sided Warblers Big Meadows, Madison 12 Jun (GK); 3 Blackburnian Warblers the Limberlost Trail 26 Jun (DB); yellow-throated Warblers in Fairfax, Loudoun, and Stafford (SB, SBA, MW); Pine Warbler Hawksbill Mountain, Madison 5 Jun (CS); Cerulean Warbler Madison 12 Jun (GK); American Redstarts abundant in Shenandoah NP with a high count of 39 at Big Meadows 12 Jun (GK); Worn-eating Warbler Rappahannock 23 Jul (MWi); Ovenbird with a high count of 25 throughout Big Meadows, Madison 12 Jun (GK); 5 Kentucky Warblers Sky Meadows 25 Jun (SB); and 5 Canada Warblers Stony Man Mountain, Madison 10 Jul (SB). Eleven Scarlet Tanagers provided the seasonal high count at Sky Meadows 18 Jun (SB). As usual, Summer Tanagers were less common, with two seen in Fairfax and Manassas (SB, KG). Five Blue Grosbeaks were at Sky Meadows 4 Jul (SB), Four Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were observed on the Limberlost Trail, Madison 2 Jul (DL). Dickcissel sightings continue to be infrequent, but four were seen 18 Jun Loudoun (GH).

Four Field Sparrows were spotted in Rappahannock 16 Jul (SB). Grasshopper Sparrows are typically uncommon so 15 was a good count 17 Jul Loudoun (KC). Five Orchard Orioles were encountered along the Bridle Trail at Sky Meadows 17 Jul (TH). The high count for Common Grackles was 226 Loudoun 17 Jul (KC).


West

This Region includes the Shenandoah Valley, south to the New River Valley, and is part of Virginia’s Mountains and Valleys physiographic region. It is comprised of the counties of (from North to South) Frederick, Clarke, Warren, Shenandoah, Page, Rockingham, Au-
gusta, Highland, Bath, Rockbridge, Botetourt, Alleghany, Craig, Giles, Roanoke, Montgomery and Pulaski.

Editor — Clyde Kessler, P.O. Box 3612, Radford, VA 24141 ckessler@vt.edu

Twenty Wood Ducks (all adults) were observed 5 Jun at Gala Wetlands, Botetourt (BK). Two Hooded Mergansers were on a pond in Waynesboro, Augusta 2 Jun (AL). A hen Ruffed Grouse with two young was seen along Big Stony Creek, Giles; the young were photographed (MB, SB). An immature Yellow-crowned Night-Heron was observed at Swoope, Augusta 2 Jun (AL). Two immature White Ibises were seen flying over Staunton, Augusta 16 Jul (AL). A Sharp-shinned Hawk was observed carrying a small bird on Potts Mountain, Craig 12 Jun (CK & JO) and an immature observed at Stuart’s Draft, Augusta furnished a third summer record for Augusta (BT). Two Cooper’s Hawks were found in Greenfield Lake area, Botetourt 25 Jun (BK). A male American Kestrel was observed near Riner, Montgomery 2 Jul (CK). A Golden Eagle flying north at Swoope on 2 Jun furnished a first summer record for Augusta (AL). An American Woodcock visited a backyard far from marshy woodland habitat in Christiansburg, Montgomery 27 Jul (BU & FU). Two Eurasian Collared Doves were found in McCoy, Montgomery 3 & 7 Jun (CK). Five Yellow-billed Cuckoos were tallied 8 Jun on a BBS Route, New Market area, Page (JS), and on the same day four were heard on the Appalachian Trail in the Lee Hollow area, Craig (CK & JO). A Black-billed Cuckoo was found at Shenandoah National Park, Page 4 Jun (CS). Another was at Mountain Lake, Giles 19 Jun (BR). A Great Horned Owl was perched atop an electric pole 21 Jun in Blacksburg, Montgomery (CK). One Barred Owl was heard from the Appalachian Trail, Craig 8 Jun (CK & JO). Five Eastern Whip-poor-wills were heard 25 Jun near Buchanan, Botetourt (WT). Twelve Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were counted at Glen Alton, Giles 16 Jul (RC & CK). A pair of Northern Flickers were feeding young at nest cavity in a dead pine in Glen Alton, Giles 16 Jul (RC & CK). Twenty Acadian Flycatchers were tallied 8 Jun on a BBS Route, Page (JS). Seven Willow Flycatchers were counted at Heritage Community Park and Natural Area, Blacksburg, Montgomery 8 Jun (RD). Twelve Warbling Vireos were along the New River in Radford, 27 Jun (CK) and 58 Red-eyed Vireos were tallied along the Appalachian Trail, Craig 8 Jun (CK & JO). Swallow observations included 34 Purple Martins (adults and immatures) perched on electric wires at Riverview Park, Radford 17 Jul (CK) and 31 at Blue Ridge, Rainbow Forest area, Botetourt 21 Jul (BK); 10 Bank Swallows were seen near the James River from Buchanan to Arcadia 3 Jul (BK); 8 Cliff Swallows reported from the Luray-Hawksbill Greenway, Page 11 Jun (GK) and 73 counted at nests on Memorial Bridge, Radford 19 Jun (CK). Two Sedge Wrens were seen 10 Jul at New Hope Augusta (AL) and three were found there on 12 Jul (EC). Thirteen Ovenbirds and 12 Worm-eating Warblers were heard singing in Craig 8 Jun (CK & JO). One Cerulean Warbler and 15 Chestnut-sided Warblers were found on Potts Mountain, Craig 12 Jun (CK & JO). Two Prairie Warblers were heard singing near Dublin, Pulaski 6 Jul (RC, LD & CK). Two Yellow-rumped Warblers, mostly singing males, were observed on Judge Rye Road, Shenandoah 18 Jun (GK). Dozens of Grasshopper Sparrows were in Frederick 12 Jun (JL). Nineteen Scarlet Tanagers were found along the Appalachian Trail, Craig 8 Jun (CK & JO). Forty Field Sparrows, mostly singing males, were tallied near Dublin, Pulaski 6 Jul (RC, LD & CK). Twelve Blue Grosbeaks provided a new county summer peak count on a BBS Route plus Swoope, Weyers Cave and New Hope, Augusta 9 Jun (AL).

Central

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

Editor — C. Michael Stinson, 437 Wildflower Lane, Dillwyn, VA 23936, myrmecocichla@gmail.com

CENTRAL

C. Michael Stinson, 437 Wildflower Lane, Dillwyn, VA 23936, myrmecocichla@gmail.com

Major excitement this fall was provided by the passage of Hurricane Irene to our east and the presence of two species of kites, Swallow-tailed and Mississippi, that were enjoyed by many observers in Campbell. Aside from these highlights,
an assortment of fall migrants was reported across the Region, but passerine reports were relatively few and the total number of observations reported was, as for the summer season, still fairly low.

**DUCKS—KITES**

An early **Green-winged teal** was at Lickinghole Cr. Pond, *Albermarle*, 2 Sept (SM). On 17 Nov at Mill Cr. L., *Amherst*, a group of approximately 300 ducks included several **Redhead**, 5 Surf Scoters ♀, and one **Common Goldeneye**, all uncommon to rare in the Region, along with more numerous **Lesser Scaup**, **Bufflehead**, and **American Wigeon** (MJ). A group of “about two dozen” **Horned Grebes**, also at Mill Cr. L. *Amherst*, 17 Nov, was the most significant report of this species (MJ). Though the species has become more common coastally in Virginia, **White Ibis** are still rare inland, so two reports of this species present at the same time are of note. On 13 Aug, an imm. was seen at Collins Pond in *Caroline* (NR, BP), while two imms. were seen on the S. Rivanna Res., *Albermarle*, on several dates from early Aug-15 Aug (Leigh Surkdowski et al., fide SM). At Harvey’s Knob, on the Blue Ridge Parkway along the Bedford/Botetourt border, 10,226 **Broad-winged Hawks** were counted beginning 16 Aug, with a peak count of 3840 on 28 Sept and final, single stragglers on 17 and 26 Oct. At Candlers Mountain, near the Lynchburg/Campbell border, three days of counts 16-18 Sept yielded 222 Broad-wings, an average of 18.5 per hour of observation. And in downtown Charlottesville, 844 Broad-wings were observed passing overhead during a single day count 17 Sept (DS). On 13 Aug a **SWALLOW-TAILED KITE** was reported at a farm near Gladys, *Campbell* (Dave Dawson, fide TD), and on 15 Aug two individuals were found there, with two seen repeatedly until 24 Aug (m.ob.) and a single bird remaining until at least 4 Sept (DS, ES). Observers soon noticed that one of the kites was wearing an antenna, leading to its identification as one of several that had been tagged as nestlings by researchers in South Carolina in June 2009. As if the **Swallow-tailed Kites** were not exciting enough, they were often joined by one, two, or even three **Mississippi Kites** from 18 Aug until 4 Sept (m.ob.). Both species were repeatedly photographed. No satisfactory explanation for the attractiveness of this spot to multiple kites has been offered.

**RAILS—HUMMINGBIRD**

Reports of rails were scarce as usual; a **Virginia Rail** calling 9 Oct at King Family Vineyard, *Albermarle*, (PM), and two **Soras** calling 4 Oct at Bentivar Marsh, *Albermarle* (SM) were thus noteworthy. A rare Piedmont migrant, the **Red-necked Phalarope** near Bentivar, *Albermarle*, 7 Sept provided only the second county record (SM, ph. PM). A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** found 27 Aug at N. Anna Power Station on L. Anna, *Louisa*, was the most notable gull report (MB). This bird along with several other species was apparently displaced by *Hurricane Irene*, though Lesser Black-backed Gulls have been seen at L. Anna on previous occasions. Other birds found at the same location as Irene’s center passed to the southeast were, most notably, 2 ad. **SOOTY TERN** ♀ as well 5 **Caspian Terns**, 35 **Common Terns**, and 1 **Royal Tern** ♀ (all MB). Also, 6 **Forster’s Terns** were seen the afternoon of 27 Aug over downtown Charlottesville as Irene passed (DS). The latest **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds** were reported 9 Oct in both n. **Bedford** (RB) and **Poohtan** (WE).

**FLYCATCHERS—DICKCISSEL**

An **Olive-sided Flycatcher**, a scarce migrant, was photographed at Mint Springs Park, *Albermarle*, 2 Sept (ph. SM). Seldom reported in the Region, though presumably a regular migrant, a **Marsh Wren** was at Bentivar Marsh, *Albermarle*, 4 Oct (SM). Notable reports of migrant warblers were few, though several species were reported within expected migration dates; more interesting reports included **Golden-winged Warblers** at Ivy Cr. Natural Area, *Charlottesville*, 2 Sept (P. Brask, fide SM), and Stoney Point Pass, ne. *Albermarle*, 4 Sept (SM), and a **Chestnut-sided Warbler** in **Poohtan**, where seldom reported, 5 Sept (WE). Two **Dickcissels** were found 19 Aug in s. *Albermarle* near the area where they apparently nested in the spring (SM).

**Contributors:** Michael Boatwright, Rexanne Bruno, Thelma Dalmas, Wendy Ealding, Mark Johnson, Stauffer Miller, Bill Portlock, Nancy Raybin, David Shoch, David Spears, Evan Spears.

**East**

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

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

**GUEST EDITOR—Nick Flanders,**
Abbreviations: Bethel Beach (Bethel Beach area, Mathews); Dameron (Dameron Marsh Natural Area Preserve, Northumberland); Hughlett (Hughlett Point Natural Area Preserve, Northumberland); Hutchinson (Hutchinson Tract of the Rappahannock River Valley NWR, Essex); Leedstown (Leedstown area, Westmoreland); Mothershead (Mothershead Tract of the Rappahannock River Valley NWR, Westmoreland); Mulberry (Mulberry Island Private Hunting Reserve, Richmond); Wright (Wright Tract of the Rappahannock River Valley NWR, Richmond).

Waterfowl—Rails
Notable summer waterfowl included one TUNDRA SWAN and one RING-NECKED DUCK at a quarry pond in King and Queen 15 Jun (FA). The same pond held three AMERICAN BLACK DUCKS 9 Jul (FA), furnishing the only summer report of this species. Hutchinson provided the highest reported counts of NORTHERN BOBWHITES, with surveys totals from mid-June—late-July averaging around 10 individuals (NF). One PIED-BILLED GREBE at a farm pond in King William was a great find 9 Jul (FA). Four observations of a HORNED GREBE at Hughlett 3–24 Jul (T&SS) marked the second consecutive summer with a report of this species in Northumberland. LEAST BITTERNs were found in the tidal freshwater marshes of the Rappahannock R., with one at Leedstown 6 Jul (FA) and three at Mulberry 9 Jul (NF). There were 2 SNOWY EGRETS at Cow Creek Pond, Gloucester 1 Jun (DB) and one at Bethel Beach 15 Jul (SD, BH). An imm. LITTLE BLUE HERON was a surprising find at Walkerton, King and Queen 9 Jul (FA). The only TRICOLORED HERON report came from Dameron, with a single bird 24 Jul (NF, TS). Four imm. WHITE IBIS were at Caledon Natural Area, King George mid-Jul (MC) amidst a flurry of reports from elsewhere in the state. Six more imm., were found near Lively, Lancaster in late Jul (WR). All reports of CLAPPER RAILS came from Mathews, with a high count of eight present 8 Jun (AB). An AMERICAN COOT off Largrane Lane, King George 6 Jul was a notable summer occurrence (FA).

Shorebirds—Terns
A WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER, presumably a late northbound migrant, was at Singerly Pond, Richmond 14 Jun (FA). SEMIPALMATED PLOVERS were reported twice, with 23 in Mathews 5 Jun (AB) and six at Bethel Beach 31 Jul G&RH). The only AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER reports came from Mathews, with totals of two present at both Bethel Beach and New Point Wharf 15 Jul (SD, BH) and three at Bethel Beach 4 Jun (DW). The earliest southbound SPOTTED SANDPIPER observation came on 3 Jul from Hughlett (T&SS) with a high count of four at Windmill Point, Lancaster 24 Jul (NF, TS). The only SOLITARY SANDPIPER reported was at Leedstown 6 Jul (FA, NF). Six RUDY TURNSTONES were found in Mathews 5 Jun and the only report of SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER was from that location and date (AB). The earliest report of LEAST SANDPIPER was of one at Leedstown 6 Jul (FA, NF); the high count was four at a turf farm off Woodbury Road, King William 9 Jul (FA). Fourteen SHORT-BILLED Dowitchers found in Mathews 5 Jun (AB) was the highest reported count of this species. LEAST TERN nesting activity was confirmed at Hughlett this season (IJ, TS) with two active nests present 21 Jul (T&SS). The highest count of adults at this site was 27 on 21 Jul (T&SS). A CASPIAN TERN at Bethel Beach 31 Jul (G&RH) provided the only report this season. An observation of 90 COMMON TERNs at Hughlett 24 Jul (NF, TS) was the highest total reported. An impressive 56 FORSTER’S TERNs were present on the Rappahannock R. at Fones Cliffs, Richmond 31 Jul (EE, DF, NF, TW). The presence of SANDWICH TERNs was noteworthy. Two juvs. were at New Point Wharf, Mathews 15 Jul (SD, BH) and one was at Hughlett 24 Jul (NF, TS).

Nightjars—Swallows
A Common Nighthawk observed near Kilmarnock, Lancaster 4 Jun (SS) provided the only report of this species. CHUCK-WILLS-WIDOWS were reported in low numbers from Gloucester, Mathews, and Richmond with higher counts from Westmoreland where 13 were heard along Rte. 639 and seven were tallied along Rte. 635 on 15 Jun (NF). Another impressive count came from King and Queen, with 12 heard during a nightjar survey along the Truhaft BBS route 15 Jun (FA). A notable count of EASTERN WHIP-POOR-WillS was also reported from this nightjar survey, with 20 calling 15 Jun (FA). Other reports of the species included 14 in the Newtown area, King and Queen 13 Jun (FA), two in Richmond 15 Jun, and four along Rte. 639, Westmoreland 15 Jun (NF). A LEAST FLYCATCHER was a surprise on the Port Royal BBS 14 Jun (FA). A pair of SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHERS was a very exciting find at Bethel Beach 4 Jun (DW). HORNED LARKS were reported in low numbers across the Region. The two highest counts of BANK SWALLOWS both came from King George with nine at the Styer-Bishop Tract of the Rappahannock River Valley NWR 21 Jul (NF) and 60 along Rte. 627 on 30 Jul (JBr, JS). Bank Swallows were at Wilna from 18–31 Jul, with a peak count of five present 20 Jul (NF). Among few CLIFF SWALLOW reports were 12 observed at the Mattaponi R. bridge near Aylett, King and Queen 11 Jun (FA), three at the same site.
9 Jul (NF), and several near Tappahannock, Essex 11 Jun (FA). Three Cliff Swallows were also counted on the Port Royal BBS 14 Jun (FA).

**Wrens—Warblers**

Mulberry produced the highest Marsh Wren counts, with 18 present 14 Jun (FA, NF) and a potentially record-breaking total of 135 there 9 Jul (NF). Marshes near the mouth of Cat Point Creek, Richmond held 12 Marsh Wrens 25 Jun (NF). Four were reported from Rte. 652, Richmond 30 Jul (JBr, JS); the Fones Cliffs area, Richmond had one individual 24 Jun (NF) and two on 31 Jul (EE, DF, NF, TW). Reports of this species from Essex included one at Hutchinson 6 Jul (NF) and one near the Rappahannock R. on 30 Jul (JBr, JS). There were few American Redstarts reported from surveys conducted in early Jul ranged from 10 to 14 (NF). Kentucky Warbler reports included two birds along Rte. 603 near Mascot, King and Queen 15 Jun and one on the Port Royal BBS 14 Jun (FA). There were few American Redstarts reported with three on the Truhart BBS 15 Jun serving as the high count (FA). A Yellow Warbler was at Belle Isle SP, Lancaster 30 Jul (JBr, JS) and one was at Mulberry 14 Jun (FA).

**Sparrows—Blackbirds**

An adult LARK BUNTING was a striking visitor to Colonial Beach, Westmoreland 23–24 Jun (EB, ph.). Grasshopper Sparrows were reported in low numbers throughout the Region, with a survey at Wilna producing the high count of 48 on 21 Jun (NF). A handful of Seaside Sparrow reports came from Bethel Beach, with a high of 11 on 23 Jun (G&RH). The highest counts of Coastal Plain Swamp Sparrows came from Mulberry, with eight on 14 Jun (FA, NF) and seven on 9 Jul (NF). The only other report came from Wilna with three on 10 Jul (AM). Reports of Dickcissels were frequent and widespread, mirroring a pattern observed across the state. Two Dickcissels were at Hutchinson throughout Jun and early Jul (FA, JB, ABr, NF). A total of seven individuals were observed in King George 6 Jul with behavior suggestive of breeding activity (FA). Such behavior was also observed among the Dickcissels present at Wilna throughout the breeding season, with a high count of 16 on 6 Jul (NF). Leedstown had two Dickcissels on 14 Jun, Mothershead one on 14 Jun (FA) and two on 21 Jul (NF), and three were present at the Westmoreland Berry Farm, Westmoreland 26 Jun (RM). The frequency of Bobolink reports was surprising. The early reports came from both Wilna with two on 4 Jun (NF) and one on 19 Jun (AM) and from Hutchinson with one on 24 Jun (NF). Peak counts were nine at Hutchinson 20 Jul and 18 at Wilna 18 Jul (NF). In addition, three were at Langrange Lane, King George 6 Jul (FA). Blackbird flocks were beginning to form by the end of the period, with 221 Brown-headed Cowbirds at Naylor’s Beach, Richmond 30 Jul (JBr, JS). Boat-tailed Grackles were reported in low numbers from Gloucester, Mathews, and Northumberland. The only Baltimore Oriole report was of one in King George 6 Jul (FA).

**Contributors:** Frederick Atwood, Elwood Barden, Jacob Barkett, Dianne Bell, Arun Bose, Alec Brenner (ABr), Jim Brighton (JBr), Mike Callahan, Shirley Devan, Elisa Enders, Darol Flahart, Nick Flanders, George and Rosemarie Harris, Barbara Houston, Lance Johnston, Annie McEntee, Robert Mains, Wendy Richards, Jared Satchell, Tom and Sylvia Saunders, Sandy Spencer, David Wilcox, and Tony Wood.

**Southwest**


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

The average temperature for the 14 county area was 73°F for June and 77°F for July. There were 10 days of rain in June and 13 in July. The highlights for the period were Peregrine Falcon sightings in the Breaks Interstate Park, the first occurrence of Blackburnian Warbler breeding within the Breaks Park, a Northern Bobwhite in Washington, a Black-crowned Night-Heron and nestling Loggerhead Shrikes, both in Russell, and the first Veery found during breeding season in Buchanan.

**Abbreviations:** BP (Breaks Interstate Park), Dickenson; Compton (Compton Mt. Buchanan).

**Bobwhites—Bobolinks**

A Northern Bobwhite, rare for the area, was found on Rte. 42, in Washington 15 Jun during the Saltville BBS (T&L H). A Black-crowned Night-Heron, unusual for Russell, was observed feeding at Stuart’s Pond 8 Jul (T&L H). Two juv. Caspian Terns and an imm. Bald Eagle were reported at Spring Creek of South Holston Lake, Washington 21 Jul (WC). An ad. Bald Eagle was observed in Burkes Garden, Tazewell 28 Jul (J& P). Three Peregrine Falcons were observed over the gorge in the BP 28 May (R&L M) and two ads. and one juv. were flying there 22 Jun (DR). The VDGIF has been working for several years to reestablish Peregrine Falcons within the BP, which was their last nesting site in this part of Virginia in the early 1960’s. A Red-headed Woodpecker came to a bird feeder in Carroll 1 Jun (RP). Six Loggerhead Shrikes were found on Clifton Farm Rd. 19 Jun. There were two groups of two ads. and a juv. at two different locations within two miles of each other.
(PH). The first Veery ever reported in the eastern part of Buchanan during breeding season was discovered on Keen Mt. 18 Jun (J&J T). A male BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER was seen and heard singing on territory near the visitor’s center of the BP (elevation about 1800 ft.) 5 Jun. (DR, ER). The bird was heard singing in the same location 10 Jun and 16 Jun (DR) and was seen and photographed there on 24 Jun (R&L M), furnishing the first record of the species breeding in the park. A male Cerulean Warbler was singing at a home on Compton 12 Jun (RM); a pair came to a yard stream there 2 Jul and a female was observed at the same location 30 Jul (RM). Six singing male Cerulean Warblers were found within a two mile area on Compton 18 Jun (RM, MS). On the same date 3 male Swainson’s Warblers were singing on territory along a small stream a mile north of Compton (RM, MS). A Swainson’s Warbler was heard singing beside the Virginia Creeper Trail, Smyth 7 Jul (RH).

A Rose-breasted Grosbeak in a yard in Russell 17 Jun was unusual; the species is not normally observed at low elevations during breeding season (JT). A Blue Grosbeak was found on Keen Mt., Buchanan 18 Jun (J&J T). The species is a very rare visitor to the county and none have been previously reported during the breeding season (RM). A Blue Grosbeak was observed singing on a farm near Galax in Grayson 17 Jul (MD). Thirteen Bobolinks were found at an elevation of 3100 ft in Burkes Garden, Tazewell 27 Jul (J&J P).

Contributors: Wallace Coffey, Margaret Dunson, Ron Harrington, Peggy Herbert, Tom & Laverne Hunter, Roger Mayhorn, Roger & Lynda Mayhorn, Robert Perkins, Jim & Judy Phillips, David Raines, Ernest Raines, Mike Sanders, Jerry Thornhill, Jerry & Jane Thornhill,

A flyover of 15 Blue-winged Teal at Staunton 24 Jul furnished a rare summer record for the Piedmont (PG, MF, TA). Northern Bobwhite, a declining species statewide, was reported at several locations – one at Amelia 8 Jun (WE); two at White Oak Mountain WMA, Pittsylvania 29 Jun and four there 14 Jul (MF); and one on Scruggs Road, Franklin 7 Jul (MH). As a result of the prolonged drought in July, a significant area of low water and then mudflats developed at Staunton attracting a good diversity of wading birds. These included 2 juv. Yellow-crowned Night-Herons 31 Jul (PG); 3 juv. Little Blue Herons 24 Jul (PG, MF, TA) and 31 Jul (PG); at least 30 Great Egrets 11 Jul (JB) and 24 Jul (PG, MF, TA); and 2 juv. WHITE IBIS 31 Jul (PG). Broad-winged Hawk is a fairly rare summer resident in the southern Piedmont; one was seen near Keeling, Pittsylvania 11 Jul (MF). Mississippi Kite has been breeding near Wolf Trap, Halifax in recent years and one adult bird was noted soaring and harassing a Red-tailed Hawk 24 Jul (PG, MF, TA). By the end of July, the mudflats at Staunton had doubled in size, resulting in significant numbers of wading birds and shore birds.
Temperatures averaged 4.3 degrees above normal for the period. Precipitation was below normal - another hot, dry summer which seems to be the new normal. The short two month reporting period featured common breeding bird activity but not many unusual reports.

Tragedy struck the Richmond Peregrine Falcons when the only surviving chick fledged on June 20 only to fly head first into a glass sided building, dying on impact. Hopefully, next year’s nesting season for this dynamic pair of birds will end on a happier note. There was better news at the Piney Grove Preserve in Sussex where the recovering Red-cockaded Woodpecker population set a 30 year high for population size and reproductive output. The current population consists of 43 adult birds distributed among nine potential breeding clusters. All nine breeding pairs produced eggs this season and although one pair failed to hatch eggs, the other eight produced 25 fledglings. The Nature Conservancy and the Center for Conservation Biology continue in their successful efforts to bring Red-cockaded Woodpeckers back from the brink of extinction in Virginia.

**Contributors:** Tony Adcock, Lewis Barnett, Jeff Blalock, Adam D’Onofrio, Wendy Ealding, Mary Foster, Paul Glass, Michael Hartley, Tina Trice

**Editors**

Adam D’Onofrio, 25118 Smith Grove Road, Petersburg, VA 23803 bigadfromlb@comcast.net
Waxwings were noted on the Newville BBS. Four more were counted on the Branchville BBS and four were at Lawnes Creek, Sarry 2 Jul (NF). A Prothonotary Warbler, caught in a net run at the Dutch Gap banding station 18 Jun, turned out to be a nine year old male previously banded in 2004, a new longevity record for this species here. Apparently, another nine year old Prothonotary Warbler was recovered from a nest box earlier in the season (JK, BR). Two Grasshopper Sparrows were counted on the Branchville BBS.


Coastal

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

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

The report period concluded with the average annual rainfall at Norfolk essentially normal for the year, a glistening scenario by contrast to that of the 40% of the country that continued to be stifled by extreme heat and drought. We must wonder what impacts such conditions had on the 2011 nesting season and to what extent their effects on post-breeding dispersal and subsequent migrations will echo across the east. It is rare to receive comprehensive seabird observations from the Commonwealth’s off-shore waters during any season. Fortunately, two separate ocean-going research teams operating off Virginia’s coast were populated with skilled birders who recorded some exceptional avian diversity well to the east of our conventional birding confines. Those observations resoundingly confirmed how much more there is to learn about the status of the state’s pelagic avifauna.

Devoe’s of the Region’s colonial and beach-nesting waterbird populations will find little solace in the summaries of this season’s nesting surveys, particularly among the tern species. And finally, more than a few enthusiasts commented anecdotally about this summer’s relatively low diversity and abundance of butterflies. Whether this reflected reality and what it means for our insectivorous birds remains to be determined. Among the summer 2011 avian sizzlers we note Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Trinidad, Fea’s, and H alterations petrels, White-tailed Tropicbird, Glaucous Gull, Red Phalarope, South Polar Skua, and Fork-tailed Flycatcher.

Abbreviations: Back Bay (Back Bay NWR, Virginia Beach); CCB (Center for Conservation Biology, College of William and Mary/Virginia Commonwealth University); Chinc. (Chincoteague NWR, Accomack); Craney (Craney Island disposal site, Portsmouth); ESVNWR (Eastern Shore of Virginia NWR, Northampton); HRBT (Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel, Hampton/Norfolk); KSP (Kiptopeke SP, Northampton); VDGIF (Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries)

Waterfowl—Gallinule

An ad. BLACK-BELLED WHISTLING-DUCK was at Chin. 16 – 26 Jul (ph. EEd, JE, MR). Other noteworthy waterfowl, all from Craney, included an ad. male GREEN-WINGED TEAL 30 June (BW, SD, MS), an ad. male RED-BREASTED Merganser 26 May – 7 Jul (RB et al.), and a RUDDY DUCK 23 Jun (BW et al.). Up to 5 Northern Bobwhite were at the junction of Peach Road and Hertz Road, Chesapeake 1 Jul (DY). Two PIED-BILLED GREBES were in Taylor Pond, KSP 27 Jun (BT). A molting HORNED Grebe was at Craney 3 Jun (ph. BW, JJ, MS). A cetacean survey team operating roughly 190 miles due east of the town of Cape Charles, Northampton encountered at least 7 TRINIDADE PETRELS (4 dark, 2-3 intermediate, one pale [ph.]), one FEATHERED PETREL (ph.), one Black-capped Petrels, 40-50 Cory’s Shearwaters, 20-30 Great Shearwaters, and one Audubon’s Shearwater feeding over a school of yellow fin tuna 19 Jun (MF, TP, CV [ph]). Another research team documented one HERALD PETREL (ph.), one Black-capped Petrel, 6 Cory’s Shearwaters, 2 Great Shearwaters, one Audubon’s Shearwater, one Wilson’s Storm-Petrel, one Leach’s Storm-Petrel, and a WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD (ph.) ~138 miles east of Virginia Beach 7 Jul (TJ). Additional Wilson’s Storm-Petrel reports included one off the Hook at Chic. 23 Jun (JB, CM); two in Thimble Shoals channel off #1 CBBT 27 Jun (BT); one off the Lynnhaven Fishing Pier, Virginia Beach 10 & 11 Jul (RB); and two from the CBBT north overlook, Northampton 19 Jul (RB). Brown Pelicans nested once again in the upper Chesapeake Bay and on a coastal barrier island; 264 young were banded at the South Point Marsh/Peach Orchard Point complex, Accomack late Jun/early Jul (HA, JW et al.). Sandy Island, Northampton attracted 494 nesting pairs (BT, AW). Double-crested Cormorants nested on the power transmission towers adjacent to the James River Bridge, Newport News/Ile of Wight, although no formal count was made this year. Elsewhere, 104 chicks were banded at Peach Orchard Point, Accomack 26 Jun (HA, JW), Least Bittern reports included two at Back Bay 6 Jun (BA, CB), one there 27 Jun (DH, LT), and an ad. male on the Lynnhaven River, Virginia Beach 25 Jul (DS). The CCB’s annual Bald Eagle nest and productivity survey documented 92 active nest sites in the Region as follows: Accomack...
This Fork-Tailed Flycatcher in Chesapeake did not stay long. Photograph by Adam D’Onofrio.

mack 35; Northampton 19; Poquoson 1; Newport News 6; Hampton 5; Norfolk 2; Virginia Beach 13; Chesapeake 4; Suffolk 7; Portsmouth 0. A Mississippi Kite was at the ESVNWR 23 Jul (C&BF fide HA). The CCB’s ongoing Peregrine Falcon research revealed that the Region supported 17 of the state’s 24 known occupied territories. A Common Gallinule was observed at Back Bay 3 & 6 Jun (BA).

Shorebirds—Finches
The annual VDGIF-coordinated Virginia plover survey documented 22 Wilson’s Plover pairs and an estimated 188 Piping Plover pairs in the Region. Nesting Wilson’s Plovers were detected only on Assawoman, Metompkin, and Cedar islands, all in Accomack. Piping Plovers were detected on all of the coastal barrier islands except Dawson Shoals, Accomack and Hog Island, Northampton. The highest concentrations for that species were on the northern Accomack barrier islands: Assateague, Assawoman, Metompkin, and Cedar. A Black-necked Stilt was at Back Bay 6 Jun (BA, CB). There were eight confirmed Black-necked Stilt nests at Craney with downy young present by 16 Jun (BW et al.) Young of this species were observed at Black Duck Marsh, near Chincoteague, Accomack 26 Jun (CH). The season’s peak count was 28 (17 ads., 11 juvs.) from Craney 7 Jul (RB, SD, AM). Four Black-necked Stilts remained at Black Duck Marsh, Accomack 25 Jul (BA). American Avocets were reported only from Craney with counts of 14 on 9 Jul (AB, FD) and 29 on 28 Jul (RB et al.). A multi-partner collaborative monitored an estimated 402 American Oystercatcher pairs in the Region, including 284 on the coastal barrier islands, 51 in the Accomack/Northampton seaside marshes, and 67 on Chesapeake Bay islands (fide RBt). At least 2 “Eastern” Willet pairs nested at Craney evidenced by broods of two and three downy chicks respectively 16 Jun (BW et al.). A “Western” Willet was at Craney 28 Jul (BW et al.). Three Whimbrels were at Craney 9 Jul (AB, FD) and 2 Red Knots were at that facility 9 Jun (BW, AM). An American Woodcock was a season surprise at the junction of Peach Road and Homestead Road, Chesapeake 29 Jun (EE). Four Wilson’s Phalaropes were at Craney 9 (AB, FD) & 14 Jul (AM et al.) with 3 there 28 Jul (BW et al.). A male RED PHALAROPE in pre-basic molt was at Craney 28 Jul (BT, ph. BH, et al.) providing the fourth summer record for the Region and state, and second summer record for Craney. An apparent second cycle Iceland Gull was at Chinc. 18 & 19 Jun (P), 26 & 27 Jun (ph. CH) 28 Jun (WL). A second cycle Glaucous Gull on HRBT 6 Jun (ph. BT, ph. BW et al.) was believed to be the same individual that frequented Craney 12-26 May (BT, MS, RB, JJ, ph. BW) then intermittently 9 Jun through the end of the report period (RB et al.). That gull became a novelty among Craney dredge workers who named it Oscar-the Mean One. A Sooty Tern was roughly 190 miles due east of the town of Cape Charles, Northampton 19 Jun (MF, TP, CV fide NB) Roof-top nesting Least Terns likely go undetected in the Region each summer. Thus it was of great interest to learn that an estimated 20 Least Tern pairs nested on a roof at the Veterans Hospital, Hampton in 2005. During the 2011 nesting season 45 pairs were recorded at Lynnhaven Mall 13 Jun and 36 pairs were found at Patrick Henry Mall 16 Jun (RBt). On Craney 193 Least Tern pairs were documented among four colonies 9 Jun (RB et al.). An additional 309 pairs were found during Jun Accomack/Northampton coastal barrier islands surveys (RBt, ND et al.). There were 15 Gull-billed Tern pairs nesting on HRBT 6 Jun (RB et al.). Another 41 nests were detected on the Eastern Shore, 23 on coastal barrier islands and 18 near Wachapreague, Accomack (RBt, ND et al.). Single Black Terns were at Craney 9 Jul (AB, FD) and at Chinc. 17 Jul (EEd). The largest concentration of nesting Common Terns was on HRBT where 1,229 pairs were recorded in early Jun (RB et al.). Elsewhere, the Accomack/Northampton barrier islands/lagoonal marshes system supported 257 nests (RBt, ND et al.). The HRBT Royal Tern colony peaked
at 2,664 pairs by 6 Jun (RB et al.) and 64 nests were recorded on Ship Shoal Island, *Northampton* 10 Jun (ND, CC *fide* RBt). A total of 1190 Royal Tern chicks were banded on Clump Island, *Accomack* 14 Jul (JW *fide* HA). For a second consecutive year *Sandwich Terns* nested successfully on HRBT with 12 pairs recorded 6 Jun, one of which had a downy chick. At least five fledgling Sandwich Terns were on HRBT at the end of the report period (RB et al.). The aforementioned early Jun colonial waterbirds surveys documented 956 *Black Skimmer* nests in the Region, 840 on the *Accomack/Northampton* coastal barrier islands (RBt, ND et al.) and 116 on HRBT (RB et al). The two largest colonies consisted of 329 nests on Wreck Island, *Northampton* and 326 nests on Metompkin Island, *Accomack*. 

A *SOUTH POLAR SKUA* ♀ was roughly 190 miles due east of the town of Cape Charles, *Northampton* 19 Jun (MF, TP, CV *fide* NB) and a *Parasitic Jaeger* was off Chinc. 3 Jun (KG, TH). The fate of a two-egg *Common Nighthawk* nest observed at Craney 2 & 9 Jun (BW et al.) was unknown. Other Common Nighthawk reports included one in downtown Portsmouth 29 Jun (EE), one at Craney 30 Jun (MS, SD, BW) then two there 14 Jul (AM et al.). An imm. *FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHER* ♂ found at the junction of Peach Road and Hertz Road, Chesapeake (EE, ph. KK) was enjoyed by
many observers during its ephemeral 18 Jun visit. One **Cedar Waxwing** was at Taylor Pond, KSP 27 Jun (BT). A singing male **Dickcissel** was at the junction of Peach Road and Hertz Road, Chesapeake 16 Jun (BK). Subsequently, three males were at that site 25 Jun (KC) with at least one remaining 1 (ph. KK, DY) & 2 Jul (D&KS).

**Contributors:** Bob Ake, Harry Armistead, Andrew Baldelli, Ruth Beck, Ruth Boettcher (RBt), Calvin Brennan, Rexanne Bruno (RBr), Joelle Buffa, Connor Coleman, Katherine Cummings, Fenton Day, Shirley Devan, Nicole Dewberry, Peter Doherty, Elisa Enders, Mike Force, Chris and Betsy Foster, Kurt Gaskill, Clive Harris, Tim Hodge, Barbara Houston, David Hughes, Jenevieve Jackson, Tom Johnson, Bill Keith, William Lee, Melanie McCormack, Alex Minarik, Clyde Morris, John Pangborn, Todd Pusser, Marv Rubin, Debbie and Kurt Schroeder, Mark Smithson, Brian Taber, Barry Truitt (BTr), Lisa Trapp, Chris Vogel, John Weske, Alex Wilke, Bill Williams, Dave Youker