Volume 3, Numbers 2 & 3
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Editors’ Notes

Yes we are very far behind on our publication schedule for Virginia Birds but working to catch up. This double issue covers fall and winter 2006. The fall reports feature some interesting sightings the result of Tropical Storm Ernesto pushing coastal species well inland and bringing pelagic birds to coastal areas and beyond. Readers should pay particular attention to the volume and diversity of bird species distributed throughout the Region over the 31 August-4 September time interval. Christmas bird counts feature prominently in the winter reports with some interesting birds found, perhaps most notably a Green-tailed Towhee in Galax.

Mike Stinson, who has been the South Central Region editor since Virginia Birds was launched, has advised us that he cannot continue. He made a great contribution to this publication and we will miss him. Ian Topolsky likewise is leaving after a short stint as North Region editor. Our sincere thanks to both editors for their time and efforts.

Good Birding,
Linda and Alan

DOCUMENTING RARE BIRDS
ARE YOU UP FOR THE CHALLENGE?

As VARCOM secretary for over four years now, I enjoy the job for the most part. However, I really dislike it when I have to send someone a letter telling them their submission was not accepted. There are many reasons for submissions not to be accepted but by far the most common is that the write-up did not include enough details. Too often the members of VARCOM vote down a submission with comments like “I know this person is a careful observer and I don’t doubt her ability to identify this species. However, the documentation doesn’t have enough detail to rule out the other possibilities so I can’t accept this sighting.” It is disheartening to the observer when this happens and often results in our not receiving any more submissions from that person. There is both science and art involved in documenting a rare bird sighting. I have learned a lot from reviewing the comments on several hundred VARCOM submissions. Last year I was able to apply this knowledge to a chance, and less than ideal, encounter with a rare species.

In April 2006 I saw a Swallow-tailed Kite (Elanoides forficatus) in Fairfax County while driving a van full of ecology students back from a field trip. The sighting was quick, naked eye, and through the van windshield. We were moving when I first spotted the bird cruising south along the Fairfax County Parkway. Luckily a red light allowed me to stop, get a good look at the bird, and to point it out to a couple of the students before the light turned green. This was not exactly your dream rare bird sighting to write up. However, there are only a few records of Swallow-tailed Kite for Northern Virginia so I felt it was important to make an attempt to document it. If this had happened before my VARCOM experience, my submission, if I submitted it at all, would have included a paragraph or so about the incident with one or two sentences describing the bird, pretty much saying a Swallow-tailed Kite is very distinctive, what else could it be after all? My submission would no doubt have been turned down and I would have shrugged it off thinking that there was no way it could have been accepted because of the quirky circumstances of the sighting. With the benefit of my VARCOM experience, I took a different approach.

I obviously wasn't able to take notes at the time of the sighting but as soon as I got home about an hour later, before I looked at any field guides, I typed up everything I could remember about the sighting – the time, the location, the weather conditions, what about the bird caught my eye, my first impressions of what I thought it was and why, the distinctive characteristics that I saw, the fact that several of the students with me also saw the bird and agreed to the characteristics that I pointed out, and anything else that I could remember. If I had seen the bird with optics, I would have included information describing what optics I used. I wrote all this out before I looked in a field guide because I’ve found that once I look in a reference, my

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Sue’s sketch

Cover photo: Harris’ Sparrow at Kiptopeke State Park, photographed by Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory (CVWO) Hawkwatcher Scott McConnell.
memory of exactly what I saw becomes tainted. This has been a hard lesson for me to learn. I have had several experiences where I wasn’t sure which species I was looking at and instead of writing down what I saw, I waited to look in a field guide and then realized that I didn’t have or couldn’t remember the details I needed. There is nothing more important in reporting a rare bird than detailed field notes taken as near to the time of the sighting as possible and without consulting a field guide. It really strengthens a record if you provide your field notes along with your typed up submission. Sketches can also help provide supporting details so the next thing I did was to sketch what I saw. I am a very unskilled artist but I knew that did not matter. Even a crude sketch can convey some good points about a sighting.

Once the sketch was done, I looked in a field guide to see if what I described really matched a Swallow-tailed Kite. I have a lot of experience with this species so I wasn’t too worried that I’d identified the bird incorrectly. I wanted to see what field marks I’d missed. As soon as I looked in Sibley, it was clear to me that I never saw the underside of the bird. The image burned in my brain was of a gray bird with dark upper wing coverts and scapulars and a long split tail. I had no image of the distinctive white and black under-wing pattern of a Swallow-tailed Kite; nor did I remember noticing that the head was white. At first this confused me. How was it that I didn’t see the underside of the bird? I pondered over that question for the rest of the day. The next day passing the same intersection where I had seen the bird; I stopped and relived the sighting. In my mind I saw the bird gliding south along the parkway, passing the van, and then… Ah ha! I remembered that the bird passed the van and then banked right toward us giving us a perfect dorsal view, which is what I remembered. The light must have turned green before the bird made enough of its circle for me to see its underside. I felt much better about my sighting with that mystery cleared up. While I was there, I made some mental notes about landmarks and probable altitude of the bird when I saw it. When I returned home, I brushed up the details of my report with what I had learned from my “research” but did not change any of the identifying characteristics I had written originally. I also spent some time sorting through the other species with which I might have confused my kite, documenting in my report why what I saw didn’t match any of those species. Even though the split tail really eliminated everything else, rejecting other possible species based on a single field mark, even a distinctive one, doesn’t make for a strong report. So I made comparisons to all the other potential candidates based on the color and size of the bird. Because the bird appeared gray rather than brown or black, I ruled out most common raptors (Red-tailed Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk) and both vultures and did not address them further. I included comparisons to Ring-billed and Herring Gull, adult male Northern Harrier, Mississippi and White-tailed Kite in my report, documenting the field marks I would have seen on each of them in a dorsal view. In each case, it was easy to eliminate the species on something more than the lack of a split tail. This is good times to point out that, when you are considering species for comparison, remember to include other rare species. In this case, it was obvious I needed to compare my bird to Mississippi Kite, but a White-tailed Kite was almost as likely to show up as a Swallow-tailed Kite. I needed to eliminate that as a possibility too.

Though I knew acceptance of my submission was iffy because of the circumstances of the sighting, I reminded myself of what I put in all of the letters to people whose sightings are not accepted. A VARCOM non-acceptance does not necessarily mean that the members of the committee think you misidentified the bird. It just means what you wrote didn’t support the sighting. That Swallow-tailed Kite was going on my Fairfax County list regardless!

There are a couple of things that I didn’t have to deal with in my kite sighting that are important in cases where they apply. Photographs always strengthen a record. However, even with a photo, a description of the bird should be included since photographs do not always show all the field marks necessary to eliminate other species, nor do they provide the committee all the information about the circumstances of the sighting. Also, if the bird vocalizes, it important to describe the vocalization. For certain species, such as Empidonax flycatcher, describing what you heard can be as important as describing what you saw. Also different families of birds require different kinds of details. There was no need for me to describe the kite’s facial pattern, but this could be very important in documenting a sparrow. Likewise the primary projection, eye rings, and wing bars, might be the keys to identifying a flycatchers.

I submitted my Swallow-tailed Kite sighting to the VARCOM secretary (no e-mail necessary) and crossed my fingers. It is an interesting watching your own record go through review. The maximum number of rounds for review is three. One non-acceptance vote on the first round causes the submission to go around again and the same is true for the second round. On the third round, a submission must receive a minimum of six acceptance votes to be accepted. Four non-acceptance votes on any round causes a submission not to be accepted. My submission went a full three rounds but was ultimately accepted by the committee.

Anyone who submits a sighting to VARCOM can obtain information to improve their write-ups by simply sending the VARCOM secretary an e-mail requesting a non-attributed copy of the comments from the review of their submission. Though the judgments about a sighting may be painful, there is a lot of opportunity to learn from the process if one chooses to take it. The VARCOM Website, www.virginiabirds.org, contains a lot of information about reporting rare bird sightings.

Susan A. Heath
Secretary, Virginia Avian Records Committee

Editor’s Note: Sue Heath recently relocated to Texas. We want to take this opportunity to thank her for her many contributions to Virginia Birds and to birding in Virginia.
Despite a few short-lived cold snaps, temperatures held consistently above average throughout the reporting period, with strings of days in the 60's and 70's persisting well into the month of Nov, and beyond. There were relatively low waterfowl numbers and an utter dearth of northern finches and Red-breasted Nuthatch, the latter probably due to a bumper cone-crop in their summering range.

Ernesto, our only notable tropical storm of the season, made landfall 1 Sep and coaxed a decent number of coastal species inland for our viewing pleasure.

Abbreviations: Accotink (Accotink Wildlife Refuge, Fairfax); Airlie (Airlie Reservoir, Fauquier); Banshee (Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve, Loudoun); BRCES (Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship, Loudoun); Dulles Wetlands (Dulles Greenway Wetland Mitigation Project, Loudoun); Dyke Marsh (Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, Fairfax); Fort Smith (Fort CF Smith Park, Arlington); Hunting Creek (Hunting Creek Mudflats, Fairfax); Huntley (Huntley Meadows, Fairfax); Leesylvania (Leesylvania SP, Prince William); Mason Neck (Mason Neck SP, Fairfax); Metz (Julie Metz Wetlands, Fairfax); Monticello (Monticello Park, Alexandria); Occoquan (Occoquan Bay NWR, Prince William); Riverbend (Riverbend County Park, Fairfax); Shenandoah (Shenandoah NP); Sky Meadows (Sky Meadows SP, Fauquier); Snickers (Snickers Gap Hawkwatch, Loudoun/Clarke).

WATERFOWL – RAPTORS

Waterfowl were somewhat lacking throughout much of the period, most notably in the Piedmont. This may be due to the markedly above average temperatures experienced not only here but in regions to the north, resulting in a greater availability of open water and delaying movement south. The region’s sole report of Snow Goose came from Snickers Gap Hawkwatch, Loudoun/Clarke, with two birds seen 26 Oct (YG). Also observed at Snickers, was a flight of 112 Tundra Swans 18 Nov (Jesse Fulton, JB, BA). A Long-tailed Duck was a nice find at Beavertam, Loudoun 19 Nov (SF). A Common Goldeneye was seen at Occoquan 5 Nov (RR); a relatively early date for this species. A Ruffed Grouse was heard drumming on Old Rag Mt. in Shenandoah N. P., Madison 21 Oct (SB). There were only three reports of Northern Bobwhite for the period; all in n. VA with one quite unexpected observation from a suburban residence in Falls Church, Fairfax 9 Aug (Donald Schweig). Usual at Snickers in late Nov were, 246 Common Loons 19 Nov (JB, BA). The highest concentration of Pied-billed Grebes was seen from Aqua Landing, Stafford with an estimated 60 seen there 11 Nov (HFD, SAH). Another report of 44 came from Pohick Bay, Fairfax the same day (FA). The Region’s first sea-
sonal report of Horned Grebe came from Dyke Marsh 15 Oct (L.C., et al.). An exceptional find was a WESTERN GREBE found at Accotink 25 Nov (BM). The bird continued to be seen in the area through the end of the reporting period. Another of the season’s most notable sightings was a GREAT WHITE HERON at Fishers Hill, Shenandoah. The bird was first discovered by birders 5 Nov (Edna Aaron), but nearby residents reported that the bird had been present since around 1 Sep, and speculated that it may have been aided by tropical storm Ernesto. While possible, the presence of the species in other nearby states, with some arriving prior to the storm, suggests otherwise. The bird was seen regularly through late Nov (m.ob.), but was struck and killed by a vehicle sometime in early Dec (SAH). There were seven reports of Little Blue Herons from Aug through Oct; one from Dyke Marsh, all other reports from Huntley. Slightly later than expected, a lingering Green Heron was observed at Dyke Marsh 29 Oct (MR). There were three separate reports of Black-crowned Night Heron for the season. Three individuals off Mill Creek Parkway in Luray, Page 26 Aug (IL & BL); a single bird at Dyke Marsh, Fairfax 3 Sep (LC); and an imm. at Spring Lake, Fairfax 21 Sep (ICT). A possible first for Culpeper, an imm. White Ibis was observed at the newly constructed Blackjack Wetlands 2-3 Aug (ICT). There were two observations of Glossy Ibis over the course of the season; an imm. at Air- lie 23 Aug (Joyce Palmer, Anne Pelletier, et al.); and another at Occoquan 21 Oct (MR, et al.). There was an additional report of Plegadis sp., most likely glossy, from the Nokesville area, Prince William 25 Sep (CT). Osprey made its last appearance of the count period at Burke Lake, Fairfax 11 Nov (Nolan Britt). There was a nice showing of Mississippi Kites this season. A pair discovered just west of Broad Run at Buckland, Prince William and Fauquier may indicate a previously overlooked breeding location 6 Aug (JB & BA). Further observations found four birds there on 8 Aug (ICT); the last report was 22 Aug (TMD, Matt Hafner). Expected reports of Mississippi Kite came from Waynewood, Fairfax 19 Aug (KG) and Annandale, Fairfax 12 Aug (Stephen Eccles). Despite having only 410 hours of coverage for the season, the second lowest on the books since 1990, Snickers Gap Hawkwatch still limped along and managed to break a couple of site records. Bald Eagles surpassed previous totals with 267 for the season, some 74 more birds than in 2005. Their numbers have steadily risen for three consecutive years. Merlins also set a new site record, closing out the season with a total of 54 birds; 47 was previous record, set back in 2001. An ad. dark morph RED-TAILED HAWK of the caurinus subspecies was the highlight of a particularly blustery day on Short Hill Mt. in Neersville, Loudoun 18 Nov (ICT, TMD). The Region’s only report of Rough-legged Hawk came from Snickers; a dark individual 17 Nov (YG). In addition to the 23 Golden Eagles tallied for the season at Snickers (roughly 120% of the average), there were a handful of other reports of the species throughout the Region. Four of the six reports came from the Prince William Landfill, presumably of the same imm. bird, seen 1-18 Nov. The last report of Golden Eagle for the period came from Sky Meadows 25 Nov (Joanna Taylor).

RAILS – FLYCATCHERS

King Rail was noted numerous times at Occoquan from late Aug through early...
Nov (Clive Harris); an ad. and another first-winter were seen there 4 Nov (ph. TMD, ICT). A first- or second- year THAYER'S GULL, was noted at this same location 24 Nov († KG, SS). There were two reports of Iceland Gull; one seen at Metz 18 Nov (MR, et al.) and a first- year bird also seen at the Prince William Landfill 24 Nov (KG, SS). Tropical storm Ernesto passed through the Region on the 1 Sep, leaving in its wake some exciting, but not wholly unexpected, sightings that seem to accompany a storm of this strength and path. A Willow was observed at Occoquan 2 Sep (JK). There were two reports of Red-necked Phalarope, with 2 birds being noted at Huntley 2 Sep (JK); and another bird discovered in a small cattle pond as far west as Clarke, also 2 Sep (JL & BL). A total of 4 Caspian Terns, 1 Royal Tern, 5 Forster's Terns and 2 Least Terns were viewed at Dyke Marsh 1 Sep (JK). A Bridled Tern, (This would be a second record for Piedmont) was seen near the intersection of Wilson Blvd. and George Mason Dr., Arlington 1 Sep (Craig Faanes); and another 3 were noted at Occoquan 2 Sep (JK). There were two reports of Sooty Tern, both of which were singles; one from an Arlington residence 1 Sep (John Fox), and another from Dyke Marsh that same day (JK). Black Tern was also noted at two locations; 5 birds were seen from Dyke Marsh 1 Sep (JK) and 2 birds were seen at Occoquan 2 Sep (JK). The last report of Yellow-billed Cuckoo was Mason Neck 10 Sep (KG). A Short-eared Owl at Penniville Ave., Fairfax 4 Nov furnished the first report of the season (KG, JK). Another observed on Crenshaw Rd. in Rectorstown, Fauquier, a typical winter spot for this species.10 Nov (TMD). A Northern Saw-whet Owl, heard at Sandy Run Regional Park, Fairfax 4 Nov was a good find considering the somewhat dismal reports from banding stations within the state, and furnished the Region's sole report of this species (KG, JK). Common Nighthawks put on their annual show at the Cable & Wireless building in Tyson's Corner, Fairfax, with numbers reaching their peak at 75+ birds

seen 26 Aug (RR, Gerry Hawkins). The last report from this location, and for the Region, was of 12 birds 2 Oct (Paul Woodward). Known to breed in the area, a lingering Whip-poor-will was observed hunting a warm pocket of air just before dawn on Gaar Mountain Rd., Madison 20 Sep (ICT). A Chuck-wills-widow heard at Mason Neck was the only known report of this species in the Region 10 Sep (KG). A flock of 20 Chimney Swifts put in a late appearance at Great Falls NP 22 Oct (Marshall Rawson). A hatching-year female RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD was banded at the Latimer's home Vienna, Fairfax 25 Nov (SAH, DH). Olive-sided Flycatchers put in a couple of appearances the first week of Sep; one was observed along the Shenandoah R. on Swift Shoals Rd., Clarke 2 Sep (JL & BL); another at Eakin Park, Fairfax 3 Sep (Larry Meade). There were a number of reports of YELLOW-bellied Flycatcher in the first week of Sep, the majority of which came from regularly banded spots in Prince William, namely Possum Point and Leesylvania...

An Acadian Flycatcher frequenting a nest with unfledged young, discovered on the regular walk at Banshee, Loudoun, provided a new late breeding date for the Piedmont, 12 Aug (JC, et al.). There was handful of reports of Least Flycatcher, all falling within the expected dates, though one was noted fairly early at Banshee 12 Aug (JC).

**SHRIKES—BLACKBIRDS**

The bulk of the season's Northern Shrike reports were remnants of a breeding pair at Sky Meadows, observed during summer and regularly through fall (SB, m.obs.); the latest of these was 25 Nov (JT). Other reports included an unexpected flyover at Snickers 9 Sep (Robert Hilton) and another individual spotted near Opequon Cr., Clarke (JL & BL). A late Blue-headed Vireo was observed at Metz 4 Nov (KG, JK). There were a total of four reports of Philadelphia Vireo, three from Prince William 9 Sep (m. obs) and one from Cedar Creek Valley, Shenandoah 8 Oct (DD, et al.). Common Raven, a species being seen with increasing frequency away from the mountains to the

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was noted a number of times in eastern Loudoun, Fairfax and Prince William. First season reports of Winter Wren were a bit later than usual on 15 Oct with one bird at Metz (MR), two at Long Branch Nature Preserve (Steve Young), and one at White Oaks Park, Fairfax (BJ). The first reported Ruby-crowned Kinglet was at Occoquan 4 Sep (SP). Two noteworthy thrush flights occurred in Sep, an early morning flight at Hughes River Gap yielding 22 Veery, 6 Gray-cheeked Thrush and 25 Swainson's Thrush 10 Sep (TMD, ICT) and a predawn flight with 3 Veery, 42 Gray-cheeked, 1 Bicknell's Thrush, 92 Swainson's and 4 Wood Thrush at Mason Neck 30 Sep (KG, et al.). Golden-winged Warblers were noted on several occasions, with the bulk of the sightings coming from Cedar Creek Valley and the George Washington National Forest, Shenandoah (DD, et al.). A first-fall female Lawrence’s Warbler was also discovered in Cedar Creek Valley 19 Aug (DD). Two days outside the extreme fall dates, a Nashville Warbler was observed at Metz 4 Nov (KG, JK). A report of Chestnut-sided Warbler was somewhat early; seen at Riverbend, Fairfax 14 Aug (Ralph Wall). A sizable number of Cape May Warblers, 40 in all, were seen at Occoquan 30 Sep (Steve Williams, MR). Well outside the expected dates, a Black-throated Blue Warbler was observed in Ruth, Madison 20 Nov (ICT). The first report of the season of Yellow-rumped Warbler came unexpectedly early, Mason Neck 2 Sep (Jodi Bucknam, et al.). Connecticut Warblers were reported on two occasions: an individual was observed at the Flint Hill School in Oakton, Fairfax 4 Oct (FA); another was seen at Long Branch Nature Area, Arlington 22 Sep (Val Kitchens). The first American Tree Sparrow of the season was noted at Huntley 18 Nov (Larry Meade, et al.). Building in number for a few days before departing, some 150 Chipping Sparrows were observed coming to a feeder outside Winchester, Fredericksburg 28 Oct (JJ & BLi). First season reports of Fox Sparrow were 21 Oct from Ruth, Madison (ICT) and Huntley (JL). Lincoln’s Sparrows made their brief passage through the Region; first reported at Blue Ridge Center 23 Sep (KG, et al.) and last seen at Sky Meadows 30 Oct (HG et al.). During this period there were multiple reports from the two locations and Huntley, and single reports from Riverbend and Metz. Rusty Blackbirds were noted on multiple occasions in Oct and Nov, with four out of the seven reports from Occoquan. The high count for the location, and the Region, was a flock consisting of 36 birds observed 8 Oct (SP). The last report of the season was of three birds at Dulles Wetlands 19 Nov (JC et al.). A single Brewer’s Blackbird was at Huntley 25 Sep (HG, et al.) and two were at Dulles Wetlands 10 Nov (Mary Ann Good).


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, Pulaski.

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Average temperatures and precipitation characterized fall in the Region. The remnants of hurricane Ernesto in early September had minimal impact with no records of displaced coastal or oceanic birds. The two regional hawk watch sites recorded a number of new high counts of migrating raptors.

**Abbreviations:** M&V (Mountains and Valleys physiographic Region); RGHP (Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch); HKHW (Harvey’s Knob Hawk Watch).

**WATERFOWL—HERONS**

A single female Long-tailed Duck was observed 23 Nov at Walron Park, Roanoke (CH, SH, fide MP). This is a rare transient and winter visitor in the M&V. An EARED GREBE was reported 1 Oct in Staunton (AL, ph. BT), providing Augusta’s second record and only the eighth for the M&V. The Glossy Ibis...
that arrived in July (*Virginia Birds, Summer 2006*) near Lynwood, Rockingham, stayed until 12 Aug.

**HAWKS—SHOREBIRDS**
The two regional fall hawk watch sites produced new seasonal peak counts that represent the highest counts since official record keeping began at these locations, which was 1966 for RGHW, *Augusta*, and 1977 for HKHW, *Botetourt*. See Figure 1. A total of 25 **AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVERS** were seen 2 Oct in a Rockingham farm field (MS, ES) providing the highest fall count for that county and the second highest for the M&V. An **American Avocet** in Highland, 2 Oct (ph. ST) was a first for the county and furnished one of about 11 fall records for this shorebird in the M&V. A **BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER**, reported at a small farm pond in Rockingham, 29 & 30 Aug, (AL, ph. BT), was the first for the county and provided the first M&V record outside the Roanoke area.

**DOVES—OWLS**
Eurasian Collared Doves, regularly recorded in Montgomery since 2003, were again reported in that county 2 Oct in Prices Fork and 21 Oct in Radford (CK). Mellinger conducted the sixth annual **Northern Saw-whet Owl** banding project in western Rockingham (with assistance by CZ), 29 Oct to 4 Dec. A declining trend since 2004, was noted (Figure 2) probably part of this migrating owl’s normal fluctuation due to food supply, temperatures, and other variables. A total of 657 saw-whets have been banded since the start of the study.

**SWIFTS—HUMMINGBIRDS**
**CHIMNEY SWIFTS** swarm into roost sites in large numbers during fall migration with previous reports of up to 10,000 birds (Staunton, 29 Aug, 1985). This year in Staunton, *Augusta*, there were counts of 23,000 on 8 Sep and 34,000 on 9 Sep (YL, JK, *et al*), two successive new high counts for the M&V. These impressive swarms were followed by subsequent respectable counts of 15,000 10 Sep; 13,000 12 Sep; 9,750 13 Sep; and 20,000 18 Sep.

One observer (YL) wrote, “In all the years we have watched the Chimney Swift migration, and counted thousands in downtown Staunton, these were by far the most remarkable numbers we have ever seen. For about twenty-five minutes, the birds poured into the chimney – it looked like tornado after tornado, as they dropped in. The chimney has been a favored place for many years, and produced many high counts, but this was the greatest number, and our very best conservative estimate.”

There were two reports of **Selasphorus** hummingbirds, both in Rockingham. One, first seen 14 Oct (MS, ph. BT) at a backyard feeder, was never trapped and identified to species. The other, first sighted in early Oct, Bridgewater (RaM, RoM), was trapped, banded and identified as a female **Rufous Hummingbird** 18 Oct (SH); it remained into Dec. This species is a rare but increasing fall visitor that usually does not persist through the winter in this Region.

**SWALLOWS—SPARRIOS**
There were several interesting reports of swallows from Radford, *Montgomery*, (CK): 3526 **Tree Swallows**, 14 Oct (new high fall M&V count); **Northern Rough-winged Swallow**, 11 Oct (new late date); and **Tree Swallow**, 31 Oct (near late date).

Two well-described **Brown-headed Nuthatches** were reported from a feeder in Blue Ridge, *Botetourt*, 19 Sep (NY). This species is a very local permanent resident in *Pulaski*. Reports away from this site are very rare.

Two **Orange-crowned Warblers** were reported from HKHW (Botetourt), 8 Oct (MP, TF). **A BAY-BREASTED WARBLER** 29 Oct in Radford, *Montgomery*, (CK) extended the previous M&V late date by nine days.

A **CLAY-COLORED SPARROW** 23 Oct in *Highland* (KG) provided the first record of this rare fall transient in the county, one of approximately six during fall records for the Region.

**Contributors:** Tad Finnell, Kurt Gaskill, Sue Heath, Clark Hill, Stephanie Hill, Clyde Kessler, Josephine King, Allen Larner, YuLee Larner, Ray Martin, Rosemary Martin, Clair Mellinger, Mike Purdy, Evelyn Shank, Mike Shank, Brenda Tekin, Steve Thornhill, Nancy Young, Charles Ziegenfus

**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.

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**Highlights for the fall season included Rufous Hummingbirds in Amherst, Bedford, and Lynchburg and Long-tailed Duck in Amherst.**

**Abbreviations:** AHY (After Hatch Year); HY (Hatch Year)

**WATERFOWL—WADERS**
On 28 Oct following a heavy rainstorm reports of waterfowl at Mill Creek Lake, *Amherst* included one **Common Loon** (calling), 35–40 **Ruddy Ducks**, 8 **Wood Ducks**, one **Hooded Merganser**, 4 **Black Ducks**, and 5 **Green-winged Teal** and on 23 Nov there were 23 **Common Loons**, 5 **Horned Grebes**, 5 **Northern Shovelers**, 11 **Buffleheads**, 3 **American Wigeons**, 75 **Ruddy Duck**, **6 Lesser Scaup**, 65 **Red-breasted Mergansers**, 21 **American Coots**, and one male **Long-tailed Duck** – a very good find for this location (MJ). Ninety **Tundra Swans** flying over the town of Amherst established a record high count for the area 21 Nov (MH). A single **Mute Swan** was at Winton Country Club, *Amherst* for about two weeks from mid to late November (*fide* TD). During sediment monitoring at Lake of the Woods, *Orange* 9 Nov 394 **American Coots** were tallied, a good count for this recently recovering species (IT). Other species noted there the same day were 23
Buffleheads, 16 Ruddy Ducks, 7 Lesser Scaup, and 3 Pied-billed Grebes. A summering Ring-necked Duck, was seen consistently from Jul through early Sep at this same location (IT). A flock of Canada Geese at Scogo Lake (Rte 696 east of Batesville, Albemarle) included a possible Barnacle X Canada hybrid (MA). An adult Great Egret was observed at L. Albemarle (near Charlottesville) on 5 Aug feeding in the shallow water 40–60 yards east of the boat launch. Also there were 4 Green Herons, one Great Blue Heron and 3 Wood Ducks (MA). On 4 Nov, Adams tallied one Pied-billed Grebe, 3 Wood Duck, 2 American Black Duck, 3 Mallard, 9 Ring-necked Duck, 2 Hooded Merganser, and 3 Ruddy Duck in Albemarle where waterfowl are surprisingly scarce. A Green Heron was observed at a small private lake in Powhatan 8 Nov nearly a month later than usual late date for the Piedmont (WE).

**HAWKS—SWALLOWS**

Two adult Bald Eagles were seen during the period at Mill Creek Lake, Amherst, where they have become regular and a flock of 25 Bonaparte’s Gulls was a good count there 23 Nov (MJ).

For the fifth year in a row, Sattler operated a Saw-Whet Owl banding station at Camp Hydaway, Campbell 24 Oct through 8 Dec. This was the second consecutive year in which numbers were low, apparently in response to good availability of prey to the north causing fewer birds to move south. After netting 39, 38, 52, and 7 owls in the past four falls, this season Sattler netted 12, nine of those during Thanksgiving week, possibly indicating a slightly later migration than seems typical. The first bird netted was on 26 Oct and the last one was on 4 Dec. One of the 12 netted birds had been banded the previous fall in Wisconsin, and represents a less common movement of a saw-whet across the Appalachians. The previous six banded birds that were recaptured came from VA, PA, MA, VT, and Ontario (fide GS).

On 2 August, Thelma Dalmas coordinated the annual hummingbird count in central Virginia, now in its fifth year. For the first time, people living outside of the area were invited to submit their results; there were 42 such participants. In the Central Region, the count produced 1053 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds at 325 feeders, monitored by 167 participants. Some participants noted observing fewer birds this year and the number of birds per feeder was slightly down from last year. Over the past three years there has been a slight decrease per feeder (from 3.6 down to 3.4). People reporting from outside the Central Region generally reported fewer birds per feeder than those in the Region. A male Rufous Hummingbird was observed visiting a feeder in Bedford 13-15 Sep and another HY female was present in the same area through late Nov (fide TD). A rufous HY female visited a feeder in Amherst 22 Oct through the end of the period. On 20 Nov an AHY female showed up at the same Lynchburg feeder where one visited 6 Dec 2001 through 3 April 2002. This bird was still present at the end of the period. All birds were captured, sexed, aged, banded, and released by Sue Heath. A Tree Swallow seen at Mill Creek Lake, Amherst, 28 Oct provided a record late date for the area (MJ).

**WARBLERS—BLACKBIRDS**

On 6 Sep, Tekin observed a Northern Waterthrush in her overgrown backyard in downtown Charlottesville. A leucistic (nearly all white) Chipping Sparrow at George Washington’s Ferry Farm, Fredericksburg late Oct through early Nov was interesting (PN). Five Rusty Blackbird were a nice find in Albemarle 4 Nov (MA).

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**East**

King George, Westmoreland, 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. Birds sighted in the Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay from Smith Point northwest through King George along the northeastern shoreline of the region are actually in Maryland waters but they are still noted here.

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During the report period 201 species, including 27 species of warblers, were recorded by about 28 birders. Interesting finds included: Wood Stork, White Ibis, American Bittern, American Golden Plover, Stilt Sandpiper, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Clay-colored Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Nelson’s Sharp-tailed Sparrow.

**Abbreviations:** Dameron (Dameron Marsh Northumberland); Elsing Green (private farm near Lanesville, King William), Birthplace (George Washington’s Birthplace National Monument, Westmoreland), Hughlett (Hughlett Point NAP, Northumberland), Island Farm, (tract of Rapp. R. NWR. Richmond), K. G. Ponds (Route 3 ponds in King George), Laurel Grove (tract of Rapp. R. NWR. Richmond), Mothershead (tract of Rapp. R. NWR Westmoreland), Muse (end of Muse Rd near Pope’s Creek, Westmoreland, overlooking the Potomac River), The Pocket (a bend in the Pamunkey River in...
the Pamunkey Reservation, King William), Rapp. R. NWR. (Rappahannock R. Valley National Wildlife Refuge); Sandy Point, (Sandy Point State Forest, King William), Wilna (tract of Rapp. R. NWR. Richmond), Wright (tract of Rapp. R. NWR. Richmond), WSP (Westmoreland State Park, Westmoreland), Zoor (Zoor State Forest, King William).

**WATERFOWL—GREBES**
The first fall report of Tundra Swans was four at The Pocket 10 Nov (FB). Unlike last year, numbers remained low throughout November, with a maximum of 20-25 at The Pocket 26 Nov (FB). An immature Snow Goose was at The Pocket 5 Nov with 3350 Canada Geese, the largest flock of the season (FA). Nineteen Wood Ducks were reported this season with 31 of these in Leedstown 29 Oct (FA). The first observation of American Wigeon was of five at The Pocket 1 Oct (FA). The peak for this species was lower than last year with 53 feeding among the Hydrilla at K. G. Ponds on 29 Oct (FA). Only 2 Gadwall were seen at The Pocket 1 Oct, but by 5 Nov their numbers had climbed to 190 in The Pocket and 20 more at nearby Elsing Green (FA). Again this year the best place to see Green-winged Teal was the marshes between Elsing Green and The Pocket with 2200 there on 25 Nov establishing, a new high for the region (FA).

Northern Pintail numbers increased to a high of 1100 in these same marshes 5 Nov. (FA). This Pamunkey River hosted a new regional high of 67 Northern Shovelers, 25 Nov (FA). A high of 19 Blue-winged Teal were at K. G. Ponds 26 Aug (FA). Canvasbacks arrived in mid-November with six at K. G. Ponds 19 Nov and 19 at The Pocket with 16 Redheads 25 Nov (FA). Ring-necked Ducks at K. G. Ponds peaked at about 1115 (85% male) 19 Nov (FA). The high for Ring-necked Duck on the Middle Peninsula was in The Pocket where there were more than 250 birds 26 Nov (FB).

In general, their numbers were slightly down in the region this autumn. The only Greater Scaup observation of the season was a small flock of 15 in the Potomac River at the end of Muse Rd, Westmoreland, 19 Nov (FA). The high for Lesser Scaup was 85 at the Pocket, 25 Nov (FA). Two Long-tailed Duck were seen by NVBC at Vir-Mar Beach, Northumberland, 18 Nov (VK). K. G. Ponds was an unexpected spot for a lone female Black Scoter 29 Oct (FA). Seven females were in a more typical location, the Pamunkey River at Vir-Mar Beach 18 Nov (VK, NVBC). Hundreds of scoters were too far from shore to be identified to species at Hughlett 12 Nov (AB) and 160 Surf Scoters (75% male) were in their usual locations in the Potomac River near Birthplace and Muse 19 Nov (FA), where the first 125 of the season were noted 29 Oct (FA). The only Common Goldeneye reported this season was a single female at The Pocket 25 Nov (FA). The first Buffleheads, seven at Peaceful Harbor near Hague, Westmoreland, 2 Oct were earlier than usual (LM); the high was more than 250 birds at the Pocket, 26 Nov (FB). Twelve pairs of Hooded Merganser were eating fish and displaying at the pond along route 624 Singerly, Richmond, 24 Nov (FA). The first Ruddy Ducks were 13 at K. G. Ponds, 8 Oct (FA) and the high counts were 915 at K. G. Ponds 19 Nov, and 365 at The Pocket 25 Nov, mostly among the Hydrilla (FA). Forty-one Wild Turkeys were seen in six locations (FA, LA) and 16 Northern Bobwhites were reported from four locations this season, with a maximum of 12 at Sandy Point (one covey), 1 Oct (FA).

The only Red-throated Loon reported this season was at Muse, 19 Nov (FA). The first report of Common Loons was 12 at Birthplace and Muse, 29 Oct (FA). The next day an impressive flotilla of 77 was enjoyed at Mosquito Point, Lancaster (BN), but the high count was more than 250 at Hughlett 12 Nov (AB) including a raft of more than 100 birds in Dividing Creek. That same day the high of 20 Horned Grebe was also reported here (AB). The high for Pied-billed Grebes included 14 at The Pocket 25 Nov, and 20 at K. G. Ponds 19 Nov (FA). The only Brown Pelicans reported were 60 at Hughlett 12 Nov where several Northern Gannets were also seen (AB). Double-crested Cormorants were very common in the lower parts of the peninsula with 600 at Hughlett 12 Nov (AB), and hundreds at the pound nets offshore from Dameron 18 Sep (TS).

**HERONS—SANDPIPERS**
There were more reports of Great Egret than usual with 5 at K. G. Ponds 26 Aug (FA) and scattered individuals in Leedstown (FA), Kilmarnock (JG, m.obs.), and Dameron (TS), and a high of 85 flying over The Pocket at dusk 20 Aug (FA). A Cattle Egret was in Leedstown 8 Oct (FA). One American Bittern was noted at Dameron 11 Oct (IJ) and three late birds lingered at Hughlett 12 Nov (AB). Certainly the most exciting bird of the season was the WOOD STORK, a juvenile photographed at the Gloucester Family Campground, Hayes, Gloucester, 14 Aug (SH, LH). Earlier in the summer, but not reported in time for the last edition of Virginia Birds, an adult and juve-juv-
nile Wood Stork were also noted for about two weeks in Middlesex at Wake where they were last seen 29 Jul (LC). Another unusual find for the region was the immature White Ibis found at Dameron 18 Sep (TS).

The large roost of Black Vultures along the Pamunkey River at The Pocket has disbanded so only 15–25 birds were seen on a typical trip. The last report of Ospreys this season was two at Birthplace, 17 Nov (VK, NVBC). The first Northern Harriers of the season were noted at Leedstown and K. G. Ponds 8 Oct (FA). Only 3 Sharp-shinned Hawks and 6 Cooper’s Hawks were reported. There are now two leucistic Red-tailed Hawks in the region, one at its usual spot at King’s Crossing near Kilmarnock, Lancaster (TT, m.obs.), and the other in the Cohoke area of King William, where it was spotted and photographed from the air during a waterfowl survey 19 Nov (TB). A high of 5 American Kestrels were at K. G. Ponds 8 Oct (FA). A Merlin was at Hughlett 12 Nov (AB).

Clapper Rails were at Dameron 18 Sep (TS) and 11 Oct (LJ), and three were at New Point, 4 Sep (AB). Two King Rail were calling in a tidal fresh-water marsh in Leedstown, Westmoreland, 19 Nov (FA). A late Sora was seen at dusk at Island Farm 24 Nov (FA) and two others were noted in Leedstown 8 Oct (FA) and Dameron 11 Oct (LJ).

American Coots were even more abundant this autumn than last year, feeding among the masses of submerged Hydrilla plants, with 620 found at K.G. Ponds (595 in the La Grange Road pond) 19 Nov, and 2500 in The Pocket 25 Nov, almost three times as many as were there that same weekend in 2005, and more than twelve times as many as were there in 2004 (FA). A high count of 133 Killdeer was reported from roadside farm fields in the vicinity of Leedstown, Westmoreland, 17 Sep (FA). The most exciting shore birding this season was at the Woodbury Turf Farm off of Walkerton Rd, King William. On 9 Sep, 14 American Golden Plovers (ph.), 4 Buff-breasted Sandpipers, and one Baird’s Sandpiper were found (ABr). Other shorebirds noted there 9-12 Sep were one Black-bellied Plover, one Semiplamated Plover, 10-12 Pectoral Sandpiper, 10 Least Sandpiper, 2 Semiplamated Sandpiper, 1 Solitary Sandpiper, 4 Lesser Yellowlegs, and 2 dowitcher sp. (ABr, AB, FA, FD). A seasonal high of 39 Wilson’s Snipe were at the Pamunkey River boat ramp near Moscow Creek, King William, 25 Nov (FA). At a private farm managed for wildlife in Leedstown 8 Oct, the first 4 Stilt Sandpipers on record for the Region were with a Pectoral Sandpiper, both yellowlegs, a Solitary Sandpiper, and a Wilson’s Snipe (FA). Single Semiplamated Plovers were seen on a farm field in Leedstown 17 Sep (FA), and at Dameron 11 Oct (LJ). A single Dunlin was at Hughlett 12 Nov (AB).

TERNS—VIREOS

After Hurricane Ernesto, 4 Black Terns were seen at Dameron Sep 3 (TS). Single Black Terns were also noted at The Pocket 10 Sep and at K. G. Ponds 26 Aug (FA).

A Common Nighthawk flew over The Pocket at dusk 1 Oct (FA). Whip-poor-wills were singing at a tree farm at Sabine Hall, near Warsaw, Richmond, 10 Sep, where about 50 Chimney Swifts circled the chimney (SS). There were only 2 Red-headed Woodpeckers were re-
Wilna (SS). American Robins were low this season, with a maximum of 40 eating hackberries at Zoar 5 Nov (FA). A late Blue-gray Gnatcatcher was at K. G. Ponds 24 Nov (FA). The late dates for vibres this year were Sep 17 for White-eyed and Red-eyed Vireos (17 birds, also the high) and 10 Sep for Yellow-throated Vireos the season high of 6 birds was at Beulahville (FA).

**WARBLERS—FINCHES**

Twenty-seven species of warblers were observed in the region this fall including Blue-winged Warblers at Wilna 4 Sep (SS), White Marsh, Gloucester, 10 Sep (HW,JW), and Beulahville 10 Sep (FA); single Tennessee Warblers at K. G. Ponds 17 Sep and in Leedstown 17 Sep and 8 Oct (FA); 4 Nashville Warblers seen between 10 Sep and 8 Oct at K. G. Ponds, Beulahville, and Leedstown (FA); 20 Northern Parula, the latest 8 Oct at Birthplace (SS, FA); a very late Yellow Warbler at K. G. Ponds, 24 Nov (FA) with five others reported from three locations between 26 Aug and 17 Sep (FA), Chestnut-sided Warblers at Beulahville, three on 10 Sep and one on 1 Oct (FA); 5 Magnolia Warblers in four locations, 17 Sep - 8 Oct (FA); 3 Cape May Warblers at Troy Creek Farm near Leedstown 17 Sep (FA) and another at Wilna (SS); and 4 Black-throated Blue Warblers observed between 10 Sep and 8 Oct in White Marsh, Beulahville, and Leedstown (HW, JW, FA). The first Yellow-rumped Warblers appeared in numerous locations 8 Oct (FA). In most of the Region their numbers remained relatively low, averaging less than ten, but at the lower tip of the Northern Neck at Dameron (LJ) and Hughlett, there were the usual high concentrations, with a high of 200, including a partially leucistic bird, at Hughlett, 12 Nov (AB). This leucistic bird’s plumage was progressively whiter from head to tail, with the tail all white. Eleven Black-throated Green Warblers were seen at five locations between 10 Sep and 8 Oct (HW,JW, FA). One Blackburnian Warbler and one Yellow-throated Warbler were in Leedstown 17 Sep (FA). A Pine Warbler was still present at The Pocket 26 Nov (FB), and the seasonal high was 18 at Beulahville 10 Sep (FA). Six Prairie Warblers were reported from four locations, 26 Aug-17 Sep (FA). Palm Warblers were particularly evident this year with 20-25 observed in six locations 10 Sep-14 Oct (LA, FA). Blackpoll Warblers were reported from White Marsh 10 Sep (JW, HW) and Leedstown 17 Sep (FA). Dozens of Black-and-White Warblers were noted in ten locations between 2 Sep and 8 Oct (JW, HW, SS, FA) with a high of 10 at Troy Creek Farm, Leedstown 17 Sep (FA). Only 14 American Redstarts were noted in seven reports from 4 Sep to 8 Oct (SS, FA). The late record for Prothonotary Warbler was 2 Sep at Wilna (SS). On Sep 10, Worm-eating Warblers were observed in White Marsh (HW,JW) and Beulahville (FA). Only one Ovenbird was reported Leedstown, 17 Sep and the only Waterthrush was a Northern Waterthrush in a red maple swamp in Beulahville 10 Sep (FA). Also present there in other habitats was a Mourning Warbler and the last Hooded Warblers (3) and Yellow-breasted Chat of the season (FA).

The last Scarlet Tanager report was 17 Sep when 5-6 were seen at Wilna (SS) and 3 were in Leedstown (FA). The last Summer Tanager was noted at Sandy Point 1 Oct (FA). A CLAY-COLORED SPARROW was observed in a flock of Song Sparrows at a private farm managed for wildlife in Leedstown 17 Sep (PA, FA). A Vesper Sparrow was at Dameron 12 Nov (AB). Sixteen Savannah Sparrows at K. G. Ponds, 8 Oct were the first of the season (FA). Seaside and Nelson’s Sharp-tailed Sparrows were seen at Dameron 19 Oct (LJ). Song Sparrows were scarce until 29 Oct when 70 were in Westmoreland (FA). The last report of Grasshopper Sparrow was at K. G. Ponds 26 Aug (FA). One Fox Sparrow was at Zoar 5 Nov (FA) and two were at Belle Isle State Park, Richmond, 18 Nov (VK, NVBC). A Lincoln’s Sparrow was in Leedstown 8 Oct (FA) the same day that the first Swamp, White-crowned, and White-throated Sparrows appeared (FA). The first Dark-eyed Juncos were reported from Wilna, 14 Oct (LA). One Rose-breasted Grosbeak was seen in White Marsh 10 Sep (HW,JW) and two more were observed in Leedstown 17 Sep (FA). The last report of Blue Grosbeak was 5-6 at Laurel Grove (SS) and the last report of Indigo Bunting was 20 at Mothershead 8 Oct (FA). Thirty-five Bobolinks were seen at five locations from 26 Aug to 1 Oct (SS, FA). The high count for Eastern Meadowlarks was 30 at Dameron 12 Nov (AB). About 220 Rusty Blackbirds were in Leedstown 29 Oct (FA). Two Baltimore Orioles were at Beulahville 17 Sep (FA) and the only Orchard Oriole reported was in Leedstown, 26 Aug (FA). The daily high count for American Goldfinches was 50 on 17 Sep in Westmoreland (FA).

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**Southwest**


**EDITORS – Roger and Lynda Mayhorn, HC 67 Box 44A, Pilgrims Knob, VA 24634 mayhorn@netscope.net**
The weather for August was dry with only six days of rain and an average temperature of 84°F. September was much wetter than normal with 14 rainy days and an average temperature of 69°F. October was dry and warmer than normal with only six days of rain and an average temperature of 63°F. November had 11 days of precipitation and an average temperature of 51°F.

Interesting reports for the period included Long-tailed Duck, Red-throated Loon, Swallow-tailed Kite, Bald Eagle, Loggerhead Shrike, Philadelphia Vireo and Sora. Selasphorus hummingbirds put in appearances in Grayson and Russell. Late breeding House Wrens were observed in September. In late October there were single observations of late migrating Nashville Warbler and Tennessee Warbler. Even later was a Hooded Warbler in November. Two Henslow’s Sparrows were found in Buchanan in November. Flocks of Rusty Blackbirds were in Buchanan and Russell in November.

Abbreviations: BP (Breaks Interstate Park); MC (Musick’s Campground); RRL (Rural Retreat Lake); WCP (Washington County Park).

WATERFOWL—RAPTORS

Three Long-tailed Ducks were observed at MC and WCP, Washington 23 Nov. (RC, SC, DH, DD). A Pied-billed Grebe was rescued from the roof of Grundy High School 12 Oct (DeR). The bird apparently mistook standing water on the roof of the building for a pond. A Red-throated Loon was observed at WCP South Holston Lake, Washington 24 Nov (RK). The bird was first found on the TN side of the lake. An Osprey made an appearance on the Levisa River several miles west of Grundy, Buchanan 9 Nov (DR). Another Osprey was observed on the Levisa in Grundy 6 Sep (RM). Two Swallow-tailed Kites were reported on the North Fork of the Clinch River, (Rt 638 near Duffield) Scott 15 Aug (DA). Members of the Bristol Bird Club manned the Mendota Hawk Watch on Clinch Mt, Russell from 9 Sep to 26 Sep, with the exception of two days. They tallied 3558 Broad-winged Hawks, 33 Sharp-shinned Hawks, 22 Cooper’s Hawks, 15 Osprey, 6 Bald Eagles, 17 American Kestrels, 2 Northern Harriers, 1 Merlin, 4 Peregrine Falcons for a total of 3658 raptors. There were no observations of Golden Eagle, Swallow-tailed Kite or Red-shouldered Hawk (RH). A Bald Eagle was found near RRL 12 Nov, a location which has held eagles for the past five years. Three imm. and one ad. Bald Eagles were observed at Laurel Bed Lake, Russell 4 Nov by members of the Russell County Bird Club (T&L H, F&J M, B&J M, JT, D&DW). One imm. Golden Eagle was located at Burkes Garden, Tazewell 23 Nov (J&J P). On 21 Oct a Northern Harrier was seen flying over a field in Grayson where one was observed on the same date in 2005. (M&B D)

RAILS—WRENS

A Sora was flushed near a home in Grayson 24 Oct (M&B D). One was found in the same area on 17 Sep 2005. A single Great Horned Owl was heard at Powell Valley High School in Scott 2 Oct (BC). This area is just a few hundred meters from the Jefferson National Forest. A female Rufous Hummingbird (caught and measured for identification) was observed at a feeder in Lebanon, Russell 19 Oct and remained in the area through the end of the report period. Another selasphorous hummingbird made an appearance at a feeder in Galax, Grayson 29 Sep at the same home where a Rufous Hummingbird appeared 1 Oct 2005 and remained for a few weeks (GE). An adult Rufous Hummingbird banded in Independence, Grayson 9 Nov 2005 (SJ) was captured 14 Nov in Alexander, NC. (DM). A Loggerhead Shrike was reported near the Powell Valley Middle School in Big Stone Gap, Wise 29 Oct (BC). Another was found in the Blue Springs community of Smyth 11 Nov (GE, et. al) and a third was reported in Burkes Garden, Tazewell 23 Nov (J&J P). A Philadelphia Vireo showed up in Compton Mt, Buchanan 13 Sep (RM). Five Common Ravens were found there near Rt. 639 on 24 Oct (RM). A pair of House Wrens with young nestlings was discovered 1 Sep in Russell (RK). A Marsh Wren found at RRL 11 Nov (GE, et. al) set a new late date for that species in the area by one day. The previous late date was 10 Nov 1985 (TD).

BLUEBIRDS—BLACKBIRDS

The Buchanan County Bird Club has four Bluebird Trails with a total of 78 nest boxes. By the end of Aug this year the boxes had fledged 305 birds - 238 Eastern Bluebirds, 25 Carolina Chickadees, 38 Tree Swallows and 4 Tufted Titmice. Only 272 of the 300 Eastern Bluebird eggs hatched probably due to several consecutive, cold, damp days at the peak of the breeding season (RM). The first migrant warbler noted in Buchanan was a Tennessee Warbler that arrived on Compton Mt 26 Aug (RM) and the last two reported fall sightings for that species were 5 Oct (ETIII) and 9 Oct (RM). During 31 days of observation on Compton Mt., 25 warbler species were recorded with 841 individuals. The top five species during that period, and listed by numbers of individual birds were: Tennessee Warblers (105), Black-throated Green Warblers (27), Yellow-throated Warblers (27), Magnolia Warblers (24) and Worm-eating Warblers (24) (RM). A late migrating Nashville Warbler was at Poplar Gap Park, Buchanan 30 Oct (DC, RM). A juvenile Mourning Warbler appeared on Caney Island Branch west of Grundy, Buchanan 27 Sep (ETIII & MT). This species is not commonly found in the area, even during fall migration. A late, male Hooded Warbler was discovered 1 Nov on a farm near Galax, Grayson (MD). Two Henslow’s Sparrows were located on a reclaimed strip site at Guesses Fork, Buchanan 1 Nov (SJ, MT). The first county reports of Fox Sparrow were 1 Nov Compton Mt, Buchanan (RM), 10 Nov near Lebanon, Russell (RK) and 21 Nov Bristol, Washington (RH). Rusty Blackbirds were more prevalent in the area than in recent years; 18 were observed in Russell 4 Nov (RK) and 6 were
there 12 Nov (RK). Two Rusty Blackbirds were seen on Compton Mt, Buchanan 5 Nov. There were 19 there 20 Nov and a single bird 4 Dec (RM).

Contributors: Debra Artrip, Don Cawood, Rack Cross, Sam Cross, Tony Decker, Diane Draper, Margaret Dunson, Margaret and Bill Dunson, Glen Eller, Ron Harrington, Don Holt, Tom & Laverne Hunter, Shirley Justus, Richard Kretz, Dwayne Martin, Fred and Janice Martin, Roger Mayhorn, Roger and Lynda Mayhorn, Bob and Jean Montgomery, Jim and Judy Phillips, David Raines, Deborah Raines (DeR), Scott Jackson Ricketts, Robert Riggs, Ed Talbott III, Michelle Talbott, Jerry Thornhill, Dave and Diana Worley

Update to Previous Report Period
The first Mississippi Kite sighting ever recorded in Southwest Virginia has been accepted by VARCOM as a category two sighting. Category two is the highest level of acceptance without some physical evidence of the sighting. The Kite was observed 30 Sep 2005 on a ridge road near John Flannagan Reservoir, Dickenson north of the town of Haysi (R&LM).

South Central

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Abbreviations: Kerr (John H. Kerr Res., Mecklenburg); Staunton R. Battlefield (Staunton R. Battlefield SP, Halifax).

No report was received for this period.

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

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Above average temperatures were recorded throughout the period with August and November having average temperatures 4.2 degrees above normal. Precipitation was also high with an overall average of 3.37 inches above normal. The extra precipitation probably helped the conditions at Shirley Plantation, Charles City, where a variety of shorebirds were found in August and September. The most significant event in the Region occurred when Tropical Storm Ernesto made landfall in Virginia on 1 September. Reports of numerous tropical terns, Red-necked Phalaropes, a Sooty Shearwater, a jaeger sp., various other shorebird species and a probable Wilson’s Storm-Petrel were the highlights of the event. Numbers and species seen during Ernesto are included in this report. According to Bob Reilly, it was a fantastic year for Prothonotary Warblers at the Dutch Gap Conservation Area, Chesterfield, nest box project where 620 new prothonotaries, including 514 nestlings, were banded this year, eclipsing the previous record of 421 set in 2005. Of these, 95 were returning adult breeders banded there in previous years. Overall, passerine migration was lackluster this season, with no reports of any significant numbers of migrants. Rarer species seen during the period included Greater White-fronted Goose, Eared Grebe, American White Pelican, Baird’s Sandpiper, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Wilson’s Phalarope, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Lark Sparrow, Henslow’s Sparrow and Dickcissel.

Abbreviations: Bandy (Bandy Field, Richmond); College Creek (College Creek, James City); Curles Neck (Curles Neck Farm, Henrico); Dutch Gap (Dutch Gap Conservation Area, Chesterfield); Green Springs (Green Springs Trail, James River).
the species 2 Sep (p.a. TA, BT, BW). A white-rumped storm-petrel, thought to be a **WILSON’S STORM-PETREL** was noted from the Jamestown ferry, *James City* 2 Sep (fide DM). For the second year in a row, an **AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN** was observed at Hog, this time by a William & Mary ornithology class 28 Nov (DC). More than 60 **Great Egrets** were assembled at Crewe’s Channel, *Henrico* 3 Sep, an extraordinary number for that location. They were seen two days after the passage of *Ernesto* and may have been forced further inland by that storm (PB, WE, AB). A **Cattle Egret** was found in a field at Curles Neck 22 Oct (RAS). Eight **Glossy Ibis** were at Shirley after *Ernesto* 2 Sep (AB, ABr, AD). An **Osprey** was seen flying over I-95, Chesterfield 25 Oct (AD). **Merlins** were seen several times during the season with one on Turkey Island Rd., *Henrico*, eating a prey item 8 Oct (AB, ABr), one at Shirley 29 Oct (AB), another in Richmond 30 Oct (AB) and a fourth in *Charles City* 19 Nov (AB). A **Peregrine Falcon** was perched atop the main hospital at MCV in downtown Richmond 11Aug (JK). At College Creek, 6 **Clapper Rails**, 5-6 **King Rails** and 2 **Virginia Rails** were calling at sunset 10 Nov (BW).

**SHOREBIRDS—TERNS**

Shorebird diversity and numbers peaked at Shirley after the passage of *Ernesto*. On 2 Sep, 20 species of shorebirds were present. One ad. **Black-bellied Plover**, uncommon inland, was at Shirley 2 Sep (AB, ABr); two were also there 6 Nov (AB). An **American Golden-Plover** was detected in a field at Curles Neck 22 Oct (RAS). An **American Oystercatcher**, seen at College Creek 2 Sep, furnished the fifth local record for that species (TA, BT, BW). Over 200 **Lesser Yellowlegs** were at Shirley 2-3 Sep (m.obs). A Willet, rare inland, was at Shirley 2 Sep (AB, ABr). Another Willet was seen at College Creek 1 Sep (BT). Three **Ruddy Turnstones** were seen at College Creek 2 Sep (TA, BT, BW). Uncommon away from the beach front, 2-3 **Sanderling**, were at Shirley 2 Sep (AB, ABr). At least 7 **White-rumped Sandpipers** were present at Shirley 2-6 Sep (m.obs). Two White-rumped Sandpipers were noted at College Creek 1 Sep (BW). A juv. **BAIRD’S SANDPIPER** was discovered at Shirley 27 Aug (PB) and remained until 4 Sep (AB, ABr, SR, JU, ph. AD). At Shirley observations included 40-50 **Pectoral Sandpipers** 6 Aug (AB), 6 **Stilt Sandpipers** 2-3 Sep (m.obs), 2 juv. **BUFF-BREAStED SANDPIPERS** 2 Sep (AB, ABr, AD), 3 **Long-billed Dowitchers** detected 6 Nov (AB) and an ad. **WILSON’S PHALAROPE** found 27 Aug (PB) and remaining until 3 Sep (m.obs). Directly related to *Ernesto*, 16 **RED-NECKED PHALAROPES** were discovered at Shirley 2 Sep (p.a. AB, ABr, ph. AD) where at least 5 remained until 4 Sep (m.obs). A **JAEGER** sp., seen from College Creek heading inland up the James R., was a first local observation of any jaeger sp. 2 Sep (p.a. TA, BT, BW). A **Bonaparte’s Gull** was noted at Dutch Gap 26 Nov (AD). **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** are becoming more common with a high count of four seen from the floodwall on the south side of the James R., Richmond 30 Nov (AB). Other reports of single birds came from Browns Island, Richmond 22 & 30 Oct (AB), *Charles City* 19 Nov (AB) and from the Jamestown ferry, *James City* 28 & 30 Nov (DC). Numbers and species of terns also peaked after the passage of *Ernesto*. Twelve **Caspian Terns** were at Shirley 2 Sep (AB, ABr, AD). Two **Royal Terns**, rare inland, were seen at a marina near the Benjamin Harrison bridge, *Prince George* 2 Sep (ABr, AD). Four **Sandwich Terns** were counted at College Creek 2 Sep, providing a fourth local record (TA, BT, BW). Eight **Common Terns** were seen at College Creek 2 Sep (TA, BT, BW), while 20 **Forster’s Terns** were tallied at Shirley the same day (AB, ABr). One **Least Tern** was seen at College Creek 2 Sep (TA, BT, BW), another was noted at Shirley 2 Sep (AB, ABr). Tropical tern species that were deposited inland due to *Ernesto* included 7 **BRIDLED TERNs** counted at College Creek 2 Sep, providing the second local record for that species (p.a. TA, BT, BW). Not to be outdone, 14 **SOOTY TERNs** were seen there on the same day, a fourth local record (p.a. TA, BT, BW). Sooty Terns were also present at College Creek shortly after *Ernesto* made landfall 1 Sep with one ad. seen in the afternoon (BW) and six ads. and one juv. seen from early evening until nighttime (BT). Further inland, a juv. Sooty Tern was found at Shirley at day break 2 Sep (p.a. AB, ABr). A few hours later, the same bird or a different juv. was discovered along route 10, *Prince George* (AB). Finally, a Sooty Tern was noted from Yorktown, *York* on the afternoon of 2 Sep heading east (BW). Up to 5 **Black Terns** were at Shirley 2 Sep (AB, ABr, AD) while an amazing 175 were counted at College Creek the same day and over 100 were counted at College Creek 1 Sep (BT). Five **Black Skimmers** were seen at College Creek 2 Sep (TA, BT, BW).

**NIGHTHAWKS—BLACKBIRDS**

Four **Common Nighthawks** were observed over a residence in Richmond 8
Oct (AB). An Olive-sided Flycatcher was seen hawking insects over the beaver pond at Green Springs 3 Sep (BW). This represented a fourth or fifth local record. Over 100 Eastern Kingbirds were counted at College Creek 1 Sep (BT). A possible Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was spotted briefly at Chippokes S.P., Surry 3 Sep (JB, BK). Unfortunately, the bird was disturbed by park employees and disappeared before the observers could get confirmatory looks. The bird was never seen again despite diligent searching. Hundreds of Bank Swallows were at Shirley 27 Aug (PB). A predawn flyover count of 33 Veeries was made at Green Springs 8 Sep (BW). Also, 25 Gray-checked Thrushes and 13 Swainson’s Thrushes were counted as predawn flyovers at Green Springs 8 Oct (BW). A Nashville Warbler was noted at Dutch Gap 26 Oct (AD). Single Cape May Warblers were seen at Bandy 27 & 30 Oct (AB). Single Common Yellowthroats were noted at Curles Neck 23 Oct (AD, TT) and at Bandy 27 Oct (AB). A Vesper Sparrow was at Green Springs 29 Oct (BW). An imm. Lark Sparrow was encountered at Green Springs 27 Aug (BW), furnishing a third local record for that species. A Henslow’s Sparrow at Bandy was an amazing find 27 Oct (p.a. AB). It was seen again the following day at the same location (PB). If accepted, this would become a first city record for this declining and secretive species. A Lincoln’s Sparrow was seen at Green Springs 8 & 15 Oct (BW), furnishing a first fall record for the trail. Five imm. White-crowned Sparrows were noted at Green Springs 29 Oct (BW). White-crowned Sparrows were also seen at Curles Neck 22 Oct (RAS) and at Dutch Gap 26 Oct (AD). A flyover Dickcissel at Green Springs 8 Sep was noted as a first local September record (BW). A flock of 20 Rusty Blackbirds were seen near Williamsburg 22 Nov (DC). Six Rusty Blackbirds were also at Sunken Meadow Pond, Surry 30 Nov (DC).

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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

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T he defining feature of this season was the series of coastal cyclonic events that battered the Region throughout the period. The season began with two record setting 102˚ days at Norfolk, followed by periods of milder air that brought overnight lows into the 50’s by 13 August. By 20 August the yearly rainfall total at Norfolk was 6.9 inches below normal. That deficit was violently corrected 1 September by the collision of Tropical Storm Ernesto with a front stalled over Hampton Roads that created winds exceeding 75 mph at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay and rain totals of 8-10 inches. The storm significantly impacted the volume and diversity of bird species distributed throughout the Region between August 31 and September 4 and was responsible for two probable new state species, large shorebird and passerine concentrations, and numerous reports of tropical terns. Subsequent coastal low pressure systems 7-8 October, 12 November, and 21-23 November, the latter with sustained 40+ mph winds and gusts in excess of 60 mph along the coast, contributed to the season ending 4.3 inches of rainfall above normal. Not surprisingly, the Kiptopeke Bird Banding Station and Hawk Watch provided significant data for this report. At least four species – Cooper’s Hawk, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Eastern Kingbird, and Barn Swallow – had state peak counts established within the Region this season. Marquis species for the period included Ross’s Goose, Eurasian Wigeon, Pacific Loon, Eared Grebe, Bulwer’s Petrel, Brown Booby, White-faced Ibis, Swain-son’s Hawk, Sabine’s Gull, Brown Noddy, White-winged Dove, and Harris’s Sparrow.

Abbreviations: Back Bay (Back NWR, Virginia Beach); Cape Charles (town of Cape Charles, Northampton); CBBT (Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel, s. of Northampton); Chinc. (Chincoteague NWR, Accomack); Craney (Craney Island, Portsmouth); ESVNWR (Eastern Shore of Virginia NWR, Northampton); FINWR (Fisherman’s Island National Wildlife Refuge, Northampton); KHW (Kiptopeke Hawk Watch); KSP (Kiptopeke State Park, Northampton)

WATERFOWL–RAILS

Ross’s Goose reports included 3 (1 dark form) at Chinc. 11 Nov (RY) and one at Back Bay 27 Nov (DS, BA, PW). The highest reported Tundra Swan count was 528 over KSP 2 Nov (SM). A drake Eurasian Wigeon was at Ridgeway Park, Hampton 7-30 Nov (BC). The largest reported Blue-winged Teal tally was 130 at Back Bay 27 t (DS). An early arrival Northern Pintail was at Craney 19 Aug (BW). A PACIFIC LOON put in a one-day appearance on the Lafayette River, Norfolk 22 Nov (BA). Two Eared Grebes were at Craney 26 Sep (DC).

Red-necked Grebe reports included one in Chesapeake 10-18 Nov (DaC, JK, SL, BK), and one at KSP 30 Nov (SM). A BLACK-CAPPED PETREL courtesy of Ernesto was seen from CBBT 2 Sep as was the state’s first BULVER’S PETREL (NB). The 30 Sep Patteson Pelagic to Norfolk Canyon off Virginia Beach found 150+ Cory’s Shearwaters and 7+ Audubon’s Shearwaters (GH, BP). Ernesto delivered 15+ Wilson’s Storm-Petrels to Nansemond River, Suffolk 2 Sep with 14 remaining below the Godwin Bridge, Suffolk 4 Sep (IW).
The storm also brought 50+ along CBBT 2 Sep as well as 3 BAND-RUMPED STORM-PETRELS*, 71 Leach's Storm-Petrels (ph. NB) and 4 unidentified Oceanodroma (NB). American White Pelicans were reported widely throughout the season including one at Craney 6 Aug (AD, MI, VG), through 20 Sep (DC, MI, DH, VG), 2 off Mockhorn Island, Northampton 29 Oct (FS), one at KSP 10 Nov (SM, BAn), one at Sandy Bottom Park, Hampton 13 Nov (AM), 12 at KSP 19 Nov (TT, BAn), and 6 at KSP 24 Nov (SM). An Anhinga enlivened KHW 20 Nov (ph. SM, JR). The state’s sixth BROWN BOOBY* this one a second-year bird at Ft. Story/First Landing State Park, Virginia Beach 5–9 Aug (K&MH file TD, m. obs. ph.), created significant media attention as far away as the nation’s capital. Back Bay had 2 Least Bitterns 4 Aug (DS). A Cattle Egret was noted at Bull Farm, Northampton 10 Nov (KG). The season’s highest reported White Ibis count was 178 from Bull’s Drive, Northampton 4 Nov (BAn). KHW’s season high Osprey count of 374 occurred 27 tember (SM). In the wake of the 7-8 Oct coastal northeaster KHW had season single-day high counts 9 Oct of 60 Northern Harriers, 2845 Sharp-shinned Hawks, 396 Cooper’s Hawks (a new KHW and state peak count) and 246 Broad-winged Hawks (BAn). A SWAINSON’S HAWK was at the Dixon tract, Northampton 11-12 Nov (JK, KG). Commensurate with an annual average of 7 KHW had 6 Golden Eagles for the season, with 2 recorded 2 Nov (SM). KHW’s best falcon flight at was 5 Oct with 494 American Kestrels and 184 Merlins (SM). An American Coot was at Back Bay 4 Aug (DS). The highest reported Clapper Rail count was 20 from ESVPNWR Ramp Road 12 Nov (HA). Single Black Rails were reported at Ramp Road 16 Sep (GK, MAK), and 11 Nov (fide KG).

SHOREBIRDS—TERNS
American Golden Plover reports commenced with one at Chinc. 19 Aug (JK). Others included one at Capeville, Northampton 21 and 31 Aug (NB, TS), then peaked with 34 off Seaside Rd., Northampton 4 Sep (JR) and 32 near Onley, Accomack 7 Sep (NB). A single was at Back Bay 24 Oct (DS, BA). The maximum reported number of Semipalmated Plovers was 178 near Capeville, Northampton 30 Aug (NB, TS). There were 30 American Avocets at Craney 1 Oct (DC). Black-necked Stilt reports included one off Arlington Road, Northampton 3 Sep (HA, ST) and one at Back Bay 16 Oct (DS). An Upland Sandpiper was at Craney 19 August (BW) and 3 were at Capeville, Northampton 1 Sep (NB, TS). Up to 14 Hudsonian Godwits were just n. of Bull’s Rd., Northampton 2 Sep (HA) and one was at Chinc. 1 Oct (SE). A Marbled Godwit was at Back Bay 4 Aug (DS, BA) and 25-30 were at Willis Wharf, Northampton 26 Oct (SL). Back Bay’s shorebird survey recorded 14 Red Knots 27 Nov (DS, BA, PW). A shorebird concentration at Capeville, Northampton had 51 White-rumped Sandpipers 31 Aug (NB, TS). Post-Ernesto 60-80 were in “bayside” fields south of Cape Charles 4 Sep (NB). Baird’s Sandpiper reports included single juvs. at Chinc. 19 Aug (JK) and at Capeville, Northampton 31 Aug (NB, TS). Other sightings included one at Craney 20 Sep (DC). A Long-billed Dowitcher was at Capeville, Northampton 1 Sep (NB) and 10 were at Back Bay 27 Nov (DS, BA, PW). A season high 16 Buff-breasted Sandpipers were at Capeville, Northampton 31 Aug (NB, TS). Two were at Craney 26 Sep (DC) and one was at Craney 19 Oct (RBr, BC, JF). A Wilson’s Phalarope was at Capeville, Northampton 31 Aug (NB) and 3 were at Back Bay 16 Oct (DS). An Ernesto related Red Phalarope came past Cape Charles 1 Sep (NB). Another was off Virginia Beach 30 Sep (GH, BP). Red-necked Phalarope reports included one at Craney 7 Aug (EE), 3 at Craney 19 August (BW, RB, MAB), 5 at Craney 22 Aug (AD, TT), 3 off CBBT 2 Sep (ph. NB), 12 at Craney 20 Sep (DC), and 40-50 off Virginia Beach 30 Sep (GH, BP). Ernesto brought a dark juv. Long-tailed Jaeger* and 2 Parasitic Jaegers to CBBT 2 Sep (NB). Additional Parasitic Jaeger sightings included 8 off Chinc. 16 Oct (GA), and total of 3 off Chinc. 11 (2) and 12 Nov (1) (RY). Also packaged by Ernesto to CBBT were 2 Pomarine Jaegers and 5 unidentified jaegers 2 Sep (NB). The Back Bay Lesser Black-backed Gull count peaked 6 Sep at 184, an all-time state high count (DS). There were two SABINE’S GULL* reports for the season; a post-Ernesto juv. 2 Sep on CBBT (ph. NB) and one at Craney 20 Sep (DC, MI, VG, DH). Ernesto played itself out dramatically among normally pelagic tern species. Distributed throughout the Region over its two-day presence were 2 ad. Arctic Terns in Cape Charles (NB, JR, AO) and 4 Bridled Terns*, 3 over Seaside Road Northampton (NB file TD) and one on Townsend Road, Northampton (JR, AO) 1 Sep. The Bridled Tern count reached a high of 83 on CBBT 2 Sep along with 21 ad. Sooty Terns (ph. NB). Additional Sooty Terns 2 Sep included 9 at KHW (BAn, TT, file HA) and 17 near KSP (JR, AO, MO, RH, JY). At least 57 Black Terns were off CBBT (NB) with an additional 22 passing by KHW (BAn, TT file HA) 2 Sep. Subsequently 15+ Black Terns were at Craney 20 Sep (DC). Ernesto’s second contribution to the Virginia list was BROWN NODDY* 2 of which were well seen at Sunset Beach, Northampton (HA) and 2 were carefully studied off CBBT (NB), all 2 Sep. In total 9 “noddies” were tallied that day including an additional 5 unidentified off CBBT (NB). The season’s peak Black Skimmer count was 408 on Fisherman’s 12 Oct (BW).

DOVES—ORIOLES
A WHITE-WINGED DOVE* the Region’s sixteenth, was at a Norfolk feeder 24-29 Nov (BA). There were 6 Eurasian Collared-Doves at Magotho and Seaside Roads, Northampton 15 Sep (GK, MAK). A flyover Monk Parakeet at KSP 13 Oct was most intriguing (HA). A flight of 15-20 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds was noted at ESVNWR 30 Aug (JR). Chuck-will’s-widow reports included 2 at Kiptopeke 19 Aug (JR) and one at Chinc. 16 Sep (KG, JK, MR, RR). An estimated 50 Chimney Swifts were
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.

We are still searching for a North Region editor.

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, Pulaski.

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Winter Reporting Period Dec 2006 – Feb 2007

The Region hosted six Christmas bird counts this December (Figure 1) and data from those counts contribute to this report. The daily temperature ranges for the CBCs (Figure 1) reflected the above-normal weather for all of December and much of January. The milder temperatures were probably partly responsible for the increased presence of a few species that are normally less common in winter. For example, a total of 51 Eastern Phoebes was reported in the six CBCs, including a record 26 on the Blacksburg count. Other unexpected wintering or late departing birds included House and Marsh Wrens, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, and Baltimore Oriole. Unexpected winter warblers included Black-throated Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, and Common Yellowthroat. Winter finches were scarce, with only a few reports of Red Crossbills and Purple Finches and none of Evening Grosbeaks or Pine Siskins. February, by contrast, was exceptionally cold with all but the deeper ponds and rivers freezing over.

Abbreviations: M&V (Mountains and Valleys physiographic region); CBC (Christmas Bird Count) Four letter codes used to reference the various counts are shown in Figure 1.

WATERFOWL – HERONS

One or two GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GEESE were reported from three different locations in Augusta.

<table>
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<th>Temp (°F)</th>
<th># Species</th>
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<td>76</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Montgomery</td>
<td>16 Dec</td>
<td>30-63</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>BG &amp; TP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Botetourt</td>
<td>17 Dec</td>
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<td>72</td>
<td>BK</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Rockbridge</td>
<td>26 Dec</td>
<td>32-50</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>DR &amp; GT</td>
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<td>Rockingham County (VARC)</td>
<td>Rockingham</td>
<td>16 Dec</td>
<td>31-67</td>
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<td>Washington</td>
<td>06 Dec</td>
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3–12 Dec, 9–28 Feb and 25 Feb (AL) representing the sixth, seventh, and eight county records. Only one ROSS’S GOOSE was reported VAWY furnishing Augusta’s fifth record. The first Cackling Goose of the season in Lynnhurst, Augusta 13 Dec (AL) provided a new early date for this recent split. A total of nine were present at various locales in Augusta from 21 Dec - 2 Feb (AL). Other reports of Cackling Goose came from Radford, Pulaski four birds 2 Jan (CK) and Amsterdam, Botetourt one bird 18 Feb (MP). Scoters are rare transients and winter residents in this region, so a White-winged Scoter in Parrot, Pulaski 17 Feb (BG, CK) was noteworthy. The Long-tailed Duck, present at Walron Park, Roanoke since 23 Nov was found dead 6 Dec (MP). A second winter report of this rare transient visitor in the M&V came from Lake Campbell, Rockingham 16 Dec (GM). A small population of Northern Bobwhite is apparently holding on in Botetourt, with 14 birds reported on the VAFI (second highest count of the seven statewide CBCs that reported the species). Presumably the same covey was again spotted at the Greenfield Ponds near Daleville, 28 Jan and 17 Feb (CH, fide MP). A single Red-necked Grebe report came from Carvin’s Cove, Botetourt 13 Feb (MP). This species is rarely reported from the M&V, usually as transients in late winter and early spring. The count of 32 Great Blue Herons on the VABL, the highest count ever for that count circle, equals the previous high count for this Region (Bath 17 Jan 1989) and is the second highest winter count in the M&V. The other five CBCs all reported this species as well, with totals ranging from five for VARC to 18 for VAAC.

OSPREY - FALCONS
A rare sighting of an OSPREY in Waynesboro, Augusta 19 Feb (RP), represented only the second winter county record and one of less than 10 for the M&V. Rough-legged Hawks have been annual winter visitors to Highland and this year was no exception with multiple reports of probably the same few birds. Four was the highest number reported on any one day, 6 Jan (AB); three were reported 10 Feb (BT). Highland is also a perennial locale for wintering Golden Eagles and this winter there were high tallies of nine birds 17 Feb (JC) and eight on 6 Jan (JS). Also, single Golden Eagles were reported from neighboring counties of Augusta 7 Dec (JP) and Rockbridge 23 Feb (PC); and two from the New River Valley Airport, Pulaski 23 Feb (CK). A countywide water bird and raptor count in Rockingham, 20 Jan yielded 68 American Kestrels (JI), a new high winter count for the county and probably for the M&V. Kestrels were present in good numbers in all six CBCs, which reported a combined total of 135. Other falcon species reported included one Merlin VAFI and single Peregrine Falcons from Blacksburg, Montgomery 6 Dec (DM) and Rockbridge, 6 Feb (PC).

DOVES – OWLS
Five Eurasian Collared-Doves were reported on the VABL. This is the second successive year that this introduced species has been recorded on this count. It has been recorded at various locations in Montgomery and Pulaski since 2003. The few reports of Short-eared Owls included an early winter record of one bird, 1 Dec in Staunton (AL), and three on the VACC. The Northern Saw-whet Owl, thanks to banding projects in western Rockingham (see Fall 2006 report), is now established as a regular and locally common fall transient. Additional winter banding efforts from the same area now suggests that the species is a winter resident as well. CZ trapped and banded two owls on 31 Jan, one on 8 Feb, and three on 11 Feb (CM). A single SNOWY OWL was reported in Elkton, Rockingham 15 Feb (SF, fide MS). A photograph was attempted through a window but the result was of no value for documentation. Less than 10 records of this boreal visitor are listed for the M&V.

HUMMINGBIRDS– FLYCATCHERS
There were two RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRDS in the area, both in Rockingham. One female from Bridgewater (notes in the Fall 2006 report) remained into Dec but no details as to how long were available. The second bird, from Timberville (RH & SHa, fide TL), was present since at least 16 Dec (VARC) and remained as late as 27 Jan (a new late date for the county and M&V) when it was banded and identified as an adult female (She). This bird had been banded the previous year in Alabama as a second year bird, which suggests that this is a habitual east-wintering bird. Red-headed Woodpeckers were present in moderate numbers on several CBCs, with reports of 10 from VABL and eight each from VARC and VAAC (new high count for VAAC). Eastern Phoebes were present in higher than usual numbers, at least throughout December, as reflected by the area CBCs. The 26 reported on the VABL is a new winter high count for both that CBC and the M&V region.

WRENS – FINCHES
There were reports of one House Wren, VAFI and one MARSH WREN, Springhill, Augusta 16 Dec (JS) and VAAC. Both wrens are rare winter finds. Other rare but somewhat more regular winter birds included single counts of Gray Catbird, Radford, Montgomery 2 Dec (CK) and on the VABL; also, Brown Thrasher, Radford, Montgomery 3 Dec (CK) and VALE, with two thrashers reported on the VABL. Several uncommon to unexpected winter warblers were reported, all single birds. A male BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER was found injured in Harrisonburg, 2 Feb (EG, fide CM). Although rescued and warmed up, the bird died before it could be transferred to the Wildlife Center of Virginia. A YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER was a regular visitor at a suet feeder in Hightown, Highland the second and third weeks in Jan (ph KC). Both events represent new winter records for the respective counties and only the second winter records for this Region. Other reports of rare, although more regular, winter warblers included single counts of Pine Warbler, VAFI; Palm Warbler, VARC and VABL; and Common Yellowthroat, VAAC. A single LINCOLN’S SPARROW was reported on the...
VARY was one of only four recorded statewide on CBCs this year. This rare winter sparrow has been recorded in two of the three previous years in the VAWY count circle. Rusty Blackbird reports were few and included five on the VABL, four on VARC, one on VAWY; also, two in Augusta 2 Feb (AL), one Claytor Lake, Pulaski 17 Feb (CK, BG) and three Whittethorn Farm, Montgomery 25 Feb (MH). An adult male BALTIMORE ORIOLE spent much of the winter (16 Dec – 28 Feb) in a residential neighborhood in Waynesboro, Augusta (AS, ph FS, KF, SL) and represents the county’s sixth winter record. The location is the very same neighborhood that had an oriole in Jan 2006 (ph FS; but not reported until this year) and, interestingly, also in 1969, 1971 and 1972 (YL). One was also reported on count week for the VARC. Unlike last winter when the area’s six CBCs reported a combined total of 469 Purple Finches, this year this species was scarce, recorded on only four counts: VALE: - six, VAWY: - two, VABL and VAFI: - one each. There were only two reports of Red Crossbills, six birds in Headwaters, HIGHLAND 1 Jan (PR) and one from Bottom’s Creek, ROANOKE 17 Feb (SW).

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**References:**

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**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.

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The Central Region highlights included American Bittern in *Amherst* and Loggerhead Shrike in Albemarle.

**Abbreviations:**
CBC (Christmas bird count)

**WATERFOWL—WADERS**
Johnson made regular visits to the watershed lakes in northern *Amherst* to look for waterfowl again this winter. Highlights on 17 Feb included one female Common Merganser, one female Common Goldeneye, Ruddy Ducks, Ring-necked Ducks, 2 male and 4 female Redheads, 2 male Canvasbacks, one female American Widgeon, one male Northern Pintail, *American Black Ducks*, and *Mallards* Feb and on 25 Feb there were 100 Wood Ducks (mostly males-two different locations), 24 American Widgeons, 58 Northern Pintails (two different locations), 33 Lesser Scaup, 1 male Canvasback, and 13 Redheads (4 male, 9 female). The Canvasback and Redheads were still present 26 Feb.

The 36 Common Loons recorded on the Lake Anna CBC 31 December set a new record high for this count (idge JG).

**HAWKS—SHOREBIRDS**
A total of 9 Bald Eagles recorded on the Lake Anna CBC 31 December set a new record high for this count (MB, et al). Other regional CBC Bald Eagle totals included five on the Chancellorsville count (PK, et al), two on the Charlottesville count (JG et al), and one on the Gordonsville count (DO, et al). An adult Bald Eagle was seen at Beaver Creek Reservoir, *Albemarle*, soaring and then perched in a tall tree near the dam 24 Feb (MA).

An adult female Merlin presumed to be the same one that has wintered in the downtown Charlottesville area for more than six years was first observed this year on 20 December (BT). A Merlin was also recorded on the Chancellorsville CBC 30 December (*idge PK*).

On 18 Feb, Wendy Ealding and her husband saw an adult Bald Eagle, an Osprey, and a Red-Tailed Hawk all within 10 minutes from their deck in Powhatan. A flock of 350 Ring-billed Gull was seen in the Food Lion parking lot in Madison Heights, *Amherst*, 18 Feb (MJ, 20 VIRGINIA BIRDS VOLUME 3 • NUMBERS 2 & 3
Bird Club observed a Loggerhead Shrike on Blenheim Rd. north of Scottsville, Albemarle, 17 Feb. The bird was originally found on the Warren CBC on 19 Feb beside the road and also perched for a while on a power line about 200 yards on the west side of the road (JG, AB). Single Gray Catbirds were found on both the Charlottesville and Gordonsville CBC (fide JG, DO). A Lincoln’s Sparrow found on the Lake Anna CBC 31 Dec was new to the count and 15 Chipping Sparrow provided a new high for this count. A male Baltimore Oriole was a nice treat for several members of the Lynchburg Bird Club at the Old City Cemetery in Lynchburg 24 Jan and 22 Feb. The bird was feeding on the sap from a sugar maple at old sapsucker holes. (SW, et al.)

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**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 joins with the Pamunkey R. to form the York R. in West Point. Birds sighted in the Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay from Smith Point northwest through King George along the northeastern shoreline of the region are actually in Maryland waters but they are still noted here.

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During the winter period 147 species were recorded. This summary is primarily based on birding reports posted on VA-Bird and from the summaries sent out by members of the Northern Neck Audubon Society in addition to the region’s three Christmas bird counts: Washington’s Birthplace CBC (16 Dec, Bill Portlock, compiler), Mathews CBC (31 Dec, John Bazuin and Mary Pulley, compilers) and Walkerton CBC (31 Dec, Fred Atwood, compiler). The Western Kingbird found on the Mathews CBC was certainly the most exciting and unusual find of the season. Other highlights included American Bittern, Black-crowned Night Heron, Greater White-fronted Goose, Eurasian Wigeon, King Rail, California Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Royal Tern, Long-eared Owl, Orange-crowned Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Clay-colored Sparrow, and Pine Siskin. Some of these birds may have persisted into the winter months because of the relatively warm weather in December. This weather pattern may also have caused underwater vegetation to survive longer than usual possibly contributing to the large numbers of coot and waterfowl reported from the Pamunkey River (The Pocket), Mattaponi River (Walkerton), and Pope’s Creek (GWB). At the same time species such as kinglets, robins, and bay ducks such as Canvasbacks and goldenteyes were observed in relatively low numbers on the CBCs, perhaps remaining further north until the more typically cold February. In the following summary, all high and low counts refer only to the history of that particular count, and state high counts refer only to this year’s CBCs as posted at the Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count site.

**Abbreviations:** Beaverdam (Beaverdam...
Chericoke, K. G. Ponds 3 Dec and 17 Feb (FA); (SSa, fide TS). Eight others were noted at Jan by an experienced waterfowl carver Muse Road, (JG), 28 Jan (FA) and 17 Feb (FA); and drake Brant servers on the Mathews CBC tallied 49 Walkerton CBC, four on Mathews CBC were observed at Chericoke, GEESE

Two Snow Geese King William 21 or 22 seen at Tabbs Cr., winged Teal 22 VIRGINIA BIRDS VOLUME 3 • NUMBERs 2 & 3

that was the second highest count, in the state; both totals more than double what was found there last year. Count highs for Red-breasted Mergansers were noted at Mathews (540) third highest in the state, and Walkerton (45). Walkerton CBC also recorded its highest count of Ruddy Ducks (320).

Wild Turkey and Northern Bobwhite were again hard to find this winter but the Walkerton CBC had the state high for both species: 69 turkeys and 22 bobwhites. Pied-billed Grebes reached an all-time high of 53 for the Walkerton CBC. There were several reports of Brown Pelican this winter including an unusually high count of 57 on the Mathews CBC, 8–12 at the Tappahannock bridge 28 Dec–2 Jan (PR, MD), and one at Dameron 31 Dec (TS). Mathews CBC reported a high count of 971 Northern Gannets; another observer was treated to a spectacular show of 190 plunge-diving gannets 6 Jan at Dameron, quite a change from the mere three he saw there one week before (TS).

HERONS—SANDPIPERS

Walkerton CBC topped its last year’s high count of Great Blue Herons this winter, totaling 63. The Birthplace CBC noted its first 2 Great Egrets in Leedstown, Westmoreland, where they were last seen 7 Jan (AD, FA). Another Great Egret was on the Mathews CBC. American Bitterns lingered late this season with one at EG on the Walkerton CBC and one at Mulberry 7 Jan (AD, FA). The Walkerton CBC noted its first Black-crowned Night Heron ever, and Mathews CBC its second record of one in more than 20 years. The Walkerton CBC tallied the second highest CBC total for Turkey Vultures (378) in the state this year but the Black Vultures count dropped to 108, less than half last year’s high count; the chief roost along the Pamunkey R. for this species has disbanded. The first spring Ospreys showed up at Gloucester Point 27 Feb (DH). The February Rappahannock River Bald Eagle Survey from Tappahannock to Mount Creek (37. 5 river miles) tallied 207 Bald Eagles including 146 in the lower six miles of Cat Point Cr. (SH, JC, GH). Surveys along the King George shore of the Potomac R. upriver from the route 301 bridge recorded 48 Bald Eagles in Dec and Jan and 105 in Feb (SH, JF). The Birthplace CBC reported the highest CBC total (136) for Bald Eagle on the U.S. eastern seaboard. The Walkerton CBC had its all time high count of 6 Cooper’s Hawks. Mathews CBC recorded low counts for both Northern Harrier (3) and Sharp-shinned Hawk (2). The leucistic Red-tailed Hawk was again present at King’s Crossing near Kilmarnock starting 4 Feb (TT, m.ob.). It is not clear if this is the same individual as the leucistic bird last reported from the Cohoke area of King William 6 Dec (FB, SD, BW). Three Merlins were seen this season, one on the Mathews CBC, one on the Walkerton CBC and one at K. G. Ponds 17 Feb (FA). Two King Rail were reported in Leedstown during the Birthplace CBC. Large numbers of American Coot were reported this season with 1000 at Beaverdam 17 Feb (DH, TR) and a new high count of 270 for the Walkerton CBC. Shorebird highlights included 341 Killdeer on the Walkerton CBC, the highest count in the state and mid-Atlantic region. Walkerton CBC also found a whopping 202 Wilson’s Snipe, the
state high and the seventh highest CBC count in the nation; 22 Lesser Yellowlegs, highest in the state; and 18 American Woodcock, second highest in the state. Birthplace CBC had its high count of 4 American Woodcocks.

GULLS—WAXWING

Mathews CBC found a high count of 180 Bonaparte’s Gulls. A CALIFORNIA GULL was roosting with Ring-billed and Herring Gulls on the frozen K. G. ponds 17 Feb (FA). Single adult Lesser Black-backed Gulls were found at K. G. Ponds 3 Dec and 21 Jan (FA) and at Currioman Bay Westmoreland 17 Feb (FA). The five ROYAL TERNs found on the Mathews CBC furnished the only report of this species from eastern seaboard CBCs north of North Carolina. Six others were at Dameron 6 Jan (TS). The 263 Forster’s Terns on the Mathews CBC furnished the second highest count total in the state this year. The new high count of 3 Barn Owls for the Birthplace CBC furnished the second highest count in the state. Three LONG-EARED OWLS were heard calling in Walkerton King and Queen after midnight 12 Jan (BD) but they could not be located by daylight. A few days later this observer’s “backyard-birder” neighbor who is only familiar with Great Horned, Barred, and Screech Owls, saw an owl at dusk which he described as crow-sized and shaped like a Screech Owl. This was probably one of the long-eareds (RS, fide BD). Only 3 Red-headed Woodpeckers were reported all season, these on the Walkerton CBC. Walkerton CBC observers found 175 Northern Flickers, the second highest tally in the state, and 28 Eastern Phoebes, the highest in the state for the second year in a row. Mathews CBC observers were treated to a WESTERN KINGBIRD, perhaps the most exciting find of the season. The 87 Horned Larks seen on the Walkerton CBC provided the second highest count in the state. For the second year in a row, Birthplace had a new high count for Carolina Wren (147). The only House Wren report was one on the Birthplace CBC. Numbers for both Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets were quite low. Surprisingly Gray Catbirds were less common than usual with a total of only seven reported including two on Mathews CBC, four at Birthplace CBC and one in Leedstown 17 Feb (FA). Mathews CBC had 714 Eastern Bluebirds, the second highest total for this species in the state and the third highest in the nation this year. American Robins were a little scarcer this winter; the 1523 on the Mathews CBC provided the second highest count in the state. It is not uncommon to find over a thousand in a single field some years. Mathews CBC had 516 Cedar Waxwing, the highest CBC tally in the state.

WARBLERS—FINCHES

One Common Yellowthroat was found on Birthplace CBC and 5 Palm Warblers on the Mathews CBC. ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER was a new species for the Walkerton CBC (J&HW). A YELLOW-BREAST CHAT was in White Marsh Gloucester for at least a week around 27 Dec (J&HW). One CLAY-COLORED SPARROW was found on the Birthplace CBC (SS) and 131 Chipping Sparrows were on the Mathews CBC. The Birthplace CBC recorded an all time high of 72 Savannah Sparrows and also had high counts of 519 Song Sparrows (second in the state), 716 White-throated Sparrows, and 65 White-crowned Sparrows. Eighty White-crowned Sparrows were in Leedstown 17 Feb (FA). The 1419 Dark-eyed Juncos seen on the Mathews CBC provided the third highest count in the state. A huge flock of 220 Dark-eyed Juncos was feeding on fallen sweet gum seeds at GWA 28 Jan (FA). Again this year, enormous numbers of blackbirds wintered in the region. On 19 Dec a flock of mixed blackbirds streamed over The Pocket at dusk for 32 minutes, probably totaling 200 to 300 thousand. They were still present on the Walkerton CBC when a state high of 250,987 Red-winged Blackbirds and 95,013 Common Grackles (second highest in nation) were observed. Twenty-nine Rusty Blackbirds were found on the Walkerton CBC, the second highest count in the state, along with 704 Brown-headed Cowbirds (highest in state). The 83 Eastern Meadowlarks tallied on the Birthplace CBC was the third highest in the state. Only 5 Purple Finches were reported this season, 2 at White Marsh Gloucester 3 Dec (J&HW), 2 on Mathews CBC, and one on Birthplace CBC. The 4 Pine Siskins seen on Mathews CBC were the only ones reported on CBCs in the state, and the only ones noted in this region this winter.

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Southwest


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Rainfall during the period was been less than normal with only four days of precipitation in December, eight days in January and seven days in February. The average temperatures for the three months were 49° F in December, 38° F in January and 31° F in February. The Rufous Hummingbird that appeared in Russell in October remained throughout the period. Snow Geese were observed in Washington in December and February. During the area CBCs a few unusual birds were found. A Broad-winged Hawk and an American Coot were observed during the Blackford CBC. A Gray Catbird was found during the Breaks Park CBC. A Common Snipe
was logged on the Tazewell CBC and Ring-necked Ducks were found on the Wise CBC. A Green Heron was found in Russell during December. Rough-legged Hawks was seen there in December and January. Other January highlights included Greater White-fronted Geese in Russell, Golden Eagle in Grayson and at Burkes Garden, and a Pine Warbler at a feeder in Buchanan. A Green-tailed Towhee discovered in Carroll in February, was the highlight of the period.

**Abbreviations:** Breaks Interstate Park (BP); Christmas Bird Count (CBC); Rural Retreat Lake (RRL); Virginia Avian Records Committee (VARCOM).

### WATERFOWL – RAPTORS

Six Greater White-fronted Geese were observed 25 Jan in Russell in an area near Lebanon known as "The Mudhole" (RR) and were see again the following day (TH). Two Snow Geese, one a blue morph, were seen flying with a flock of Canada Geese 17 Dec near Chilhowie, Washington (WC, DW). Another Snow Goose was observed at Clear Creek Lake, Washington 7 Feb (WC). A single Ring-necked Duck, an unusual species for the area during winter, was found during the Wise CBC 29 Dec. One Greater Scap and a Northern Shoveler were observed at Burkes Garden, Tazewell 13 Jan (GE, SJR, et al.). The Great Blue Heron rookery near Big Stone Gap, Wise has been declining in recent years, from a high count of nineteen active nests to the six observed in Feb (BC). The cause for the decline is not known. On 3 Dec, a Green Heron was observed on Rt 770 in Russell (TH). An American Coot was logged on the Blackford CBC, Russell 30 Dec. A Northern Harrier flew past Burkes Garden 13 Jan (GE, SJR, et al.). A Broad-winged Hawk was found on the Blackford CBC in Russell 30 Dec (DC, R&LM, DR). Not often seen in s. Russell, a single Red-shouldered Hawk was present 20 Jan (RCBC, BCBC). A pair of Red-tailed Hawks was observed carrying nesting material and repairing a nest near the Middle Fork of the Holston R., Washington 17 Dec (WC, DW). On 8 Dec, a Rough-legged Hawk was found in Elk Garden, Russell (TH) and an immature bird was observed soaring in the area of Stuart’s Pond at Rosedale, Russell 25 Jan (RR). Two more Rough-legged Hawks were found in Burkes Garden 10 Feb (B & PO). A Golden Eagle was discovered on Clifton Farm Rd., Russell 3 Dec (TH) and another was found between the towns of Independence and Speedwell on Buck Mt., Grayson 4 Jan (WR). Two Golden Eagles, one ad. and one imm., were observed in Burkes Garden 13 Jan (EB, AF, GE, SJR et al.). Two more eagles were in s. Russell 20 Jan (RCBC, BCBC); one bird was an adult, the other was in sub-adult plumage. On 24 Jan a Merlin was sighted at Stuart’s Pond, Russell (RR).

### SNIPES – SPARROWS

Two Wilson’s Snipe were found during the Tazewell CBC, Tazewell 29 Dec. The female Rufous Hummingbird that appeared at a feeder 19 Oct 2006 in Lebanon, Russell remained there throughout the winter months and was still present at the end of Feb (RR). Red-headed Woodpeckers were in Burkes Garden 13 Jan (GE, SJR, et al.). The first two reported Tree Swallows were found near Galax, Grayson 27 Feb (GE). Loggerhead Shrikes were present in southwest Virginia during the winter: three were in the Elk Garden area 3 Dec (TH); one was sighted in Elk Garden, Russell 8 Dec (TH); another was in Burkes Garden, Tazewell 13 Jan (GE, SJR, et al.); and two were discovered in Russell 20 Jan (RCBC, BCBC). A Gray Catbird was observed at Poplar Gap Park, Buchanan during the Breaks Park CBC 30 Dec (LM). The bird had been sighted a few weeks previously and was rediscovered for the CBC. A Pine Warbler appeared at a feeder in The Breaks community in Buchanan 1 Jan (DR) and was observed for nearly a week. This is only the second report of this species during winter within the county. The first was 27 Feb 2002 on Compton Mt. A bird of the western U.S., a Green-tailed Towhee, appeared at a feeder in Galax, Carroll 13 Feb (R&RP). The bird was observed and photographed by many birders and was still present at the end of Feb. The sighting reports with photos were submitted to VARCOM. This is only the fourth reported sighting of the species within Virginia. Previous records were 26 Jan 1908 in Bower’s Hill, about 7 miles sw. of Portsmouth (JBL); 26 Feb 1953 Newport News; and 7 Apr 1953 in Amelia, 30 miles sw. of Richmond (The Raven VOL. 24:61).

### Contributors:

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Watch started its eleventh consecutive season on 10 February and got off to a great start. On 28 February, the best February day in the count's history, 88 birds were recorded. The February monthly total of 199 birds was second only to a count of 204 in 1998. Rarities during the period included Greater White-fronted Goose, Ross's Goose, Cackling Goose and Rufous Hummingbird.

Abbreviations: Dutch Gap (Dutch Gap Conservation Area, Chesterfield); Henricus (Henricus Park, Chesterfield); HoCBC (Hopewell Christmas Bird Count, 17 Dec); Shirley (Shirley Plantation, Charles City); Sunken Meadow (Sunken Meadow Pond, Surry); WiCBC (Williamsburg Christmas Bird Count, 17 Dec).

WATERFOWL—FALCONS

A GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE was observed in a large flock of Canada Geese near Chippokes S.P., Surry 3 Feb (CT). A new high count of four ROSS'S GEESE was recorded on the HoCBC (p.a.). Two CACKLING GEESE, seen on the HoCBC, were also a new high for the count (p.a.). A couple of hundred Tundra Swans were noted in Prince George 3 Feb (AB). An estimated 1200 Gadwall were at Sunken Meadow 18 Jan (SL). A pair of BLUE-WINGED TEAL were observed at Henricus 13 Feb (LL). Seven CANVASBACKS were seen in Charles City 16 Feb (AB). Twelve or more REDHEADS were located off Temple Avenue, Prince George 13 Feb (LL). Two male and one female Common Goldeneye were reported from Yorktown Beach, York 28 Dec (FB, SD). Both Common Goldeneye and Canvasbacks were also noted in Charles City 10 Feb (ABr). Over 100 Common MERGANSERS were observed in Charles City 16 Feb (AB). Thirty-three RED-THROATED LOONS were counted off Yorktown Beach, York 28 Dec (BW), a new high for that location. A Horned Grebe was at Robious Landing Park, Chesterfield 11 Feb (PB) and a RED-NECKED GREBE was sighted in the York R., York 26 Feb (BW). Also on the York R. were 18 BROWN PELICANS at Felgates Cr., York 3 Jan (FB, BW). An American BITTERN was discovered on the HoCBC at Henricus and remained in the marsh there until at least 21 Jan (m. obs). An unusual find, the bittern was only the second recorded on the HoCBC over the years. Strangely enough, an American Bittern was also found on the WiCBC and was also considered an unusual species for that location. A GREAT EGRET was a count week bird for the HoCBC. A GREEN HERON, seen on the HoCBC, was the third recorded for the count. An OSPREY, hanging around Henricus, apparently overwintered in the area. It was first seen during count week of the HoCBC and then subsequently on 6 Jan (LB), 10 Jan (FB, SD) and 13 Feb (LL). A MERLIN, recorded on the HoCBC, provided a fourth record for the count. Peregrine Falcons were seen routinely in Richmond City during the winter. A pair was seen several times in the downtown area in late Feb (AB, AD, BT).

RAILS—FINCHES

A King Rail was a count week bird for the WiCBC. A GREATER YELLOWLEGS represented the second record of that species for the HoCBC. Fifty-six DUNLINS were at Felgates Cr., York 1 Jan (FB, BW). LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS have become regular visitors during winter on the James R. in downtown Richmond with two to three birds and sometimes more seen routinely (AB). Two Lesser Black-backed Gulls were recorded on the WiCBC. The Lesser Black-backed Gull, noted in the fall report following the Jamestown ferry, continued that practice throughout much of the winter. A female RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD, visiting a feeder in Henrico since late Oct, was banded 14 Jan (SH). A BROWN-HEADED NUTHATCH was found on the HoCBC along with 4 HOUSE WRENS, 36 WINTER WRENS (equaling the previous high for that species on the count), a BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER, GRAY CATBIRD, BROWN THRASHER, and 7 PALM WARBLERS (equaling the previous high count for that species as well). Another Palm Warbler was seen in Sussex 3 Feb (CT). A COMMON YELLOWthroat was found during the WiCBC. An IPSWICH SAVANNAH SPAR...
row was an unusual species on the WiCBC. A Lapland Longspur was a good find for the HoCBC. A flock of 60–70 Rusty Blackbirds were seen at Robious Landing Park, Chesterfield 11 Feb (PB). Rusty Blackbird was also a count week bird for the WiCBC. There were a few Baltimore Oriole sightings this winter with three counted on the HoCBC. Other reports of Baltimore Oriole included singles in Williamsburg 7 Dec (DC) and in Richmond 22 Feb (AB) and a pair at Shirley seen on 2 & 26 Feb (TM). One Purple Finch was recorded on the WiCBC.


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

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What began as “the winter that wasn’t” quickly became “the winter that was” 16 January when a series of lows paralyzed the middle of the continent with freezing rain and ice. During the ensuing month as comparable fronts moved east along a south-sagging jet stream, daytime high temperatures seldom reached the season’s normal daytime low. By the close of the report period total rainfall at Norfolk was two inches below normal. The Region's ten Christmas bird counts spanned the entire 16 December-1 January window, logging 2044 miles of coverage among a combined 666 count hours. The season's mild beginnings were reflected in the average start time low temperature for the counts of 49˚ F, with a range of 34˚ F on 29 December to 60˚ F on both 18 December and 1 January. Count high temperatures ranged from 45˚–70˚ F with a 59˚ F mean. Quite welcomed was the inauguration of the Nassawadox CBC on 16 December which helped close an Eastern Shore peninsula coverage gap. The geographic scope of the Region's counts coupled with the quality of their participants combined to render a comprehensive view of the Region's early winter avian diversity as a total of 178 species were recorded. The Center for Conservation Biology at William and Mary conducted comprehensive surveys of 56 “high” marshes (essentially non-Spartina alterniflora marshes) from Wallops Island, Accomack through the GATR Tract, Northampton 2 Dec–4 Mar to investigate the influence of Common Reed Phragmites australis expansion on the diversity, density, and distribution of wintering marsh-dependent birds. Among other findings, that field work suggested a southward incursion of Ammodramus sp. following the significant freezing of northeastern states’ marshes immediately after mid-January. Avian tinsel on the seasonal tree included Eurasian Wigeon, Pacific Loon, Eared Grebe, Manx Shearwater, Wood Stork, Yellow Rail, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Ash-throated Flycatcher, and Western Tanager.

Abbreviations: Back Bay (Back Bay NWR, Virginia Beach); BBCBC (Back Bay CBC); Cape Charles (town of Cape Charles, Northampton); CCCBC (Cape Charles CBC); CCBHMST (Center for Conservation Biology High Marsh Survey); CBBT (Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, s. of Northampton); CBBC (Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel CBC); Chinc. (Chincoteague NWR, Accomack); ChCBC (Chincoteague CBC); DSCBC (Dismal Swamp CBC); ESVNWR (Eastern Shore of Virginia NWR, Northampton); First Landing State Park, Virginia Beach); LCCBC (Little Creek CBC); NRCBC (Nansemond River CBC); NCBC (Nassawadox CBC); NNCBC (Newport News CBC); WCBC (Wachapreague CBC)

WATERFOWL—RAILS
Animm. blue morph ROSS'S GOOSE  was at Chinc. 15 Dec (HA). A white morph was near Oakland Park, Accomack 18 Dec (HA, GA, JS), and two were seen during the 30 Dec CCCBC. A Cackling Goose was noted at Chinc.15 Dec. (HA). The Snow Goose high count was 15035 (225 blue morph) WCBC 16 Dec. The 1748 Brant for the WCBC were the highest number reported. Quite noteworthy were 2535 Gadwall NRCBC 1 Jan. The Ridgeway Park, Hampton Eurasian Wigeon was present there 2 Dec (fide MAB) through at least 17 Feb (CT). Another was in Norfolk 4 Dec (BA). A third was at ESVNWR 6 Dec (BA, NB) through at least 11 Feb (LM, m. obs.) and a fourth was seen near the Hermitage in Norfolk 2 Jan (BN, SS). The only Bluewing Teal report was one on the 16 Dec NNCBC. The highest reported Northern Shoveler count was 2500 NRCBC 1 Jan. A Common Eider was observed off Sunset Beach, Northampton CCCBC 30 Dec. Single Harlequin Ducks were seen on the CBBT 2 Dec (SM) and 12 Dec (BW, FB, SD). Two were reported there 31 Dec LCCBC with continued reports of these birds through at least 17 Feb (CT). This winter's sea duck scarcity was evident in a high count of only 1419 Surf Scoters CCCBC 30 Dec. The highest Bufflehead count was 2900 CCCBC 30 Dec Lake Smith. Virginia Beach hosted up to 6 Common Mergansers 3–19 Feb (D & KS). Northern Bobwhites were reported on only four CBCs with a high of 19 for the 16 Dec WCBC. Red-throated Loon high counts included 1050 on the 26 Dec CBBT CBC, 3632 for the 29 Dec BBCBC, and 4649 on the 30 Dec CCCBC. A flyby PACIFIC LOON passed Cape Charles beach 13 Dec (NB). A Red-necked Grebe was found during the 29 Dec BBCBC and two were off Back Bay 27 Jan (AB, ABr). An Eared Grebe in striking alternate plumage was discovered 30 Dec CCCBC. Northern Gannet high
counts included 4000 on 26 Dec CBBCCCBC, 5253 on 29 Dec BBCBC, and 3351 on 30 Dec CCCBCBC. There were 74 Little Blue Herons and 1 Glossy Ibis at Back Bay 5 Dec (DS). A HY WOOD STORK first reported at First Landing 19 Jan (ph. K & TB) was last seen there quite emaciated 23 Jan (BW, SD, FB, JT). A Manx Shearwater was seen 14 Jan off CBBC #1 (BT, FB). An American White Pelican was observed at Chinc. 11 Jan (R & BG). The Great Cormorant high count of 45 was posted on 26 Dec CBBCBC. An Osprey was at Newport News Park, Newport News 3 Dec (FB) and one was at Lynnhaven Inlet, Virginia Beach 1 Jan (RBr). A total of 13 were found during CBCs including five on the 16 Dec NNCBC, one during the 29 Dec BBCBC, six on the 31 Dec LLCCBC, and one for the 1 Jan NRCBC. The Norfolk Botanical Garden Bald Eagle pair produced their first egg 31 Jan (RL). A Yellow Rail was mist-netted near Magotha Road, Northampton 30 Jan CCBHMST.

SHOREBIRDS—FINCHES
An impressive 445 American Oystercatchers and 246 Marbled Godwits were found during the 17 Dec NCBC. Unusual were a Spotted Sandpiper found along Folly Creek, Accomack on the 16 Dec WCB; and one on 17 Dec NCBC. The WCB had 173 Red Knots on 16 Dec. High counts of Long-billed Dowitchers (30) and Wilson’s Snipe (64) were found on the 29 Dec BBCBC. A Parasitic Jaeger added spice to the 31 Dec LLCCBC. The high count for Laughing Gulls was 2122 on 1 Jan NRCBC. A first winter Little Gull was seen briefly from CBBC #1 on 17 Jan (BW, FB, SD, AM). Large concentrations of Bonaparte’s Gulls included 3100 on 26 Dec CBBCBC and 2984 on 31 Dec LLCCBC. The Back Bay Lesser Back-backed Gull count peaked 16 Feb at 136 (DS). There were 3 Black-legged Kittiwakes reported 31 Dec LLCCBC. The Cedar Island, Accomack section of the WCB yielded 454 Forster’s Terns in Dec (HA). There were 4 Black Skimmers on the 31 Dec LLCCBC.

Dove reports included 9 on 30 Dec CCCBC and 3 on 29 Dec BBCBC. Owl observations included a Barn Owl BBCBC and a Short-eared Owl ChCBC both 29 Dec. A Ruby-throated Hummingbird was in Virginia Beach 12 Dec through at least 20 Jan when it was captured and banded (A & FT, fide SH, BP). A BLACK-CHINNED HUMMING-BIRD was in Cape Charles 9–11 Dec (NB). An ASH-THROATED FLY-CATCHER was found on 16 Dec WACBC (ph. NB, GT, TS). Two Western Kingbirds were detected on Smith Island, Northampton CCBHMST 27 Feb. A White-eyed Vireo was found on the BBCBC 29 Dec. Blue-headed Vireos were reported on four CBCs including 4 on the 18 Dec DSCBC; 3 on the 29 Dec BBCBC; 4 on the 30 Dec CCCBC, the highest in that count’s 42 year history; and one on the 1 Jan NRCBC. The CCBHMS detected 45 Sedge Wrens and 13 Marsh Wrens 2 Dec–4 Mar. A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher was found during the 29 Dec ChCBC. The Eastern Bluebird high count was 266 on the 17 Dec NCBC. Nashville Warbler reports included one on ESVNWR 4 Dec (SM), one on the Whitehurst Track, Virginia Beach 23 Dec (BK), and another in Virginia Beach 4 Feb (D & KS). A total of 1084 Yellow-rumped Warblers on the CCCBC 30 Dec was the lowest ever for that count. For the second consecutive winter a Yellow-throated Warbler visited a Virginia Beach feeder, this season from 8 Dec through at least 21 Feb (D & KS). A Black-and-white Warbler made the 17 Dec NCBC list. A notable highlight was a WESTERN TANAGER photographed during the 29 Dec CBCBC. Chipping Sparrow high counts included 141 on the 17 Dec NCBC and 139 for the 30 Dec CCCBC. The CCBHMS detected a total of 166 Sharp-tailed Sparrows. Among 84 banded were 37 Nelson’s, 46 Saltmarsh and one Sharp-tailed Sparrows sp. The CCBHMS Seaside Sparrow peak count was 12 on 22 Jan. Lincoln’s Sparrow finds included one each on the 29 Dec ChCBC and 29 Dec BBCBC. Three Snow Buntings were found on the 29

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