***Virginia Birds Regions***

**Cities/towns numbered on map**

1. Abingdon       18. Fredericksburg
5. Buena Vista     22. Hopewell
6. Cape Charles    23. Lexington
7. Charlottesville 24. Lynchburg
8. Chesapeake      25. Manassas
10. Clifton Forge   27. Martinsville
12. Covington      29. Norfolk
14. Emporia        31. Petersburg
15. Fairfax        32. Poquoson
16. Falls Church   33. Portsmouth
17. Franklin       34. Radford
18. Fredericksburg 35. Richmond
19. Galax          36. Roanoke
20. Hampton        37. Salem
21. Harrisonburg   38. South Boston
23. Lexington      40. Suffolk
24. Lynchburg      41. Tazewell
25. Martinsville   42. Virginia Beach
26. Manassas Park  43. Waynesboro
27. Newport News   44. Williamsburg
28. Newport News   45. Winchester

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**On the cover:** Marshall Faintich photographed this Smith’s Longspur at the Shenandoah Valley Regional Airport 23 Feb.
Submissions

Send reports and photographs to the Regional Editors. Photographs should be the highest electronic quality possible. Send with release form, which can be found on the VSO web site: www.virginiabirds.net. Articles for consideration can be sent to billwilliams154@gmail.com.

Season Reports due to Regional Editors

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Terms and Abbreviations

Species name in **bold** first time mentioned (VARCOM Review Birds **BOLD CAPS**); county names are in *italics*.

Abbreviations

- ad. (ads.) adult(s)
- BBS breeding bird survey
- CBC Christmas Bird Count
- Cr. Creek
- et al. and others
- f. female
- *fide* vouched by
- FOS First of Season
- Ft. Fort
- Hwy. Highway
- Is. Island(s), Isle(s)
- imm. (imms.) immature(s)
- junc. junction
- juv. (juvs.) juvenile(s)
- L. Lake
- Ln. Lane
- MAPS Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship
- m. male
- m. obs. many/multiple observers
- Mt. Mountain, Mount
- NAP Natural Area Preserve
- NP National Park
- NWR National Wildlife Refuge
- ph. photographed by (initials)
- Pk. Park
- Pt. Point
- R. River
- Rd. Road
- Res. Reservoir
- RP Regional Park
- Rte. Route
- SF State Forest
- SP State Park
- VARCOM Virginia Avian Records Committee
- VDGIF Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
- VSO Virginia Society of Ornithology
- WMA Wildlife Management Area
- * specimen collected
Editor’s Notes

Serendipity DO-DA

Winter storms billowed and blustered their way across New England and the mid-Atlantic with relentless regularity from January into meteorological spring. In their drifts “the second coldest February of all-time in Pennsylvania, 6th coldest in Maryland and New Jersey, and 7th coldest in Delaware and Virginia” entered the record books. During the week of February 15 more than 500 daily record lows were broken as 27 states registered sub-zero temperatures. On February 20 the thermometer in Lynchburg plummeted to –11 °F. Ice-bound waters and frozen and/or snow-covered ground clustered birds in pockets of open water and at partially exposed margins along normally routine thoroughfares. So birders took to the roads in search of known and, better yet, seldom detected species forced into the open by necessity. As a result many local rarities were discovered as evidenced by the accounts in this edition. In particular, we have to wonder whether the Commonwealth’s first-ever Smith’s Longspur would have been detected had it not been for those conditions.

When Marshall Faintich’s post “Eight Lapland Longspurs, or perhaps more, at the Shenandoah Valley Regional Airport, 2/23/15. Report and photos:” appeared on the listserv the “…perhaps more” was every ounce of that, although far from its original intent. Within hours folks who carefully scrutinized that photo-rich alert were convinced one of the longspurs was not a Lapland. Basic plumaged longspurs are notorious for being quintessential LBJs (little brown jobs). Cryptic by plumage and foraging behavior, they test observer skills even where they are known to occur. To conclusively tick this particular bird, one had to carefully probe it for every subtle clue, several of which, including the species’ distinctive call-note, were apparent only when it was in flight. Let’s face it, those who saw that exceptional visitor were fortunate it was as wedded to that less than unique roadside margin as it was and that it was as tolerant as it was of observers who pressed just one more step, one more easing of the gas pedal, to get one measure closer for the OMG definitive look and/or treasured picture.

Without hesitation, then, Marshall Faintich’s Smith’s Longspur, as visually unexciting as it is, easily qualified as this issue’s cover photo. For the scores of folks who ventured to see it, it was supremely beautiful—a life bird, state bird, county bird, year bird, month bird, trip bird, photographed bird, side-view mirror bird—the lists went on and on. And, “oh yeah, while we’re out here,” just a few miles over in Dayton there’s that by-the-by-way Trumpeter Swan; didn’t hardly have to get out of the car for either of ’em!!

Competing for marquis status with the Smith’s Longspur photo was one of a Thick-billed Murre snapped by naturalist/jet-ski entrepreneur Brian Lockwood. While whale watching on his jet-ski off Fort Story, Virginia Beach February 12 he encountered “a bird that looked different” among Northern Gannets foraging near several Humpback Whales. After going through pictures taken during the outing Brian posted images of the bird on social media. By way of the Virginia Marine Science Museum, Ned Brinkley confirmed it was a Thick-billed Murre.

The documentation for both of these incredible birds has been forwarded to the Virginia Avian Records Committee to become part of Virginia’s permanent ornithological record.

So as June 2015 is posting its own temperature extremes, cool it, to the degree you can, with this winter edition’s reprise of your Virginia Birds.

Bill Williams
Editor, Virginia Birds
The winter got off to a warm start with temperatures averaging slightly above normal for the month of December; however, the remainder of the winter was much colder than average. For example, the average temperature at Dulles Int. Airport was 10.8 degrees below average for the month of February. Rainfall was near average for the 3-month period. Highlights this season included high numbers of waterfowl as well as the visit of several Snowy Owls to the Region.

**Abbreviations:** Aquia Landing (Aquia Landing Pk., Stafford); Belle Haven (Belle Haven Pk., Fairfax); Belmont Bay (Belmont Bay Marina, Prince William); Burke L. (Burke L. Pk., Fairfax); C.M. Crockett (C.M. Crockett Pk., Fauquier); Dyke Marsh (Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, Fairfax); Gravelly Pt. (Gravelly Pt. Pk., Arlington); Huntley Meadows (Huntley Meadows Pk., Fairfax); Jones Pt. Pk. (Jones Pt. Pk., Alexandria), Mason Neck (Mason Neck NWR, Fairfax); Mason Neck SP (Mason Neck SP, Fairfax); Occoquan Bay (Occoquan Bay NWR, Prince William); Pohick Bay (Pohick Bay RP, Fairfax); Reagan Nat. Airport (Reagan Nat. Airport, Arlington); Riverbend (Riverbend Pk., Fairfax); Roaches Run (Roaches Run Waterfowl Sanctuary, Arlington)

**Christmas Bird Counts:** CLCBC (Central Loudon, 27 Dec)

**WATERFOWL–RAPTORS**

A Greater White-fronted Goose was observed at Belle Haven 21 Dec (RR) and was seen in the area by m. obs. through 20 Feb. Additional sightings included one at Harrison Rd., Fauquier 15 Jan (TD) and 2 at nearby Belvoir Pond, Fauquier 19 Jan (DLe, EM), 2 at Huntley Meadows 19 Jan (BP), up to 3 at C.M. Crockett 17–25 Jan (DL), and 2 at Shirlington Dog Pk., Arlington 13 Feb (MG). Single Snow Geese were found at Huntley Meadows 1 Jan (KG), Dyke Marsh 12 Jan (EE), C.M. Crockett 15 Jan (TD) and 3 Feb (GS), and Ft. Belvoir parade grounds, Fairfax 24 Jan (KG). Cackling Geese reports were scattered throughout the Region, including singles at Dyke Marsh 3 Dec (SS) through 26 Feb, Woodmar Farm subdivision, Loudoun 13 Dec (DC), Burke L. 9–18 Jan (FA), Huntley Meadows 19 Jan (BP), Harrison Rd., Fauquier 25 Jan (KG), and the Occoquan Sewage Treatment Plant, Prince William 21 Feb (PK). Six were seen at C.M. Crockett 15 Jan (TD) with one there 22 Feb (KG); 2 were at Riverbend 16 Jan (BP). Season high counts for waterfowl in the Region reported in eBird included 300 Tundra Swans at Aquia Landing 14 Feb (EM), 500 American Wigeons at Pohick Bay 11 Jan (SW), 600 American Black Ducks and 400 Northern Pintails at Mason Neck 1 Jan (PS), 1200 Canvasbacks at Aquia Landing 14 Feb (EM), 1410 Redheads at Pohick Bay 11 Jan (FA), 1220 Ring-necked Ducks at Riverbend 23 Jan (SB), and 2000 Lesser Scaup at Mason Neck SP 27 Dec (SC). A Wood Duck, rare in the Piedmont in winter, turned up on a private farm pond in western Loudoun 27 Dec (KG). Single Eurasian Wigeons were at Pohick Bay 10–14 Jan (DLe), Occoquan Bay 1–14 Feb (RY), and at Belmont Bay 1 Feb (LCh, EM). A single Blue-winged Teal was reported from Dyke Marsh 27 Dec (KB), considerably outside its 20 Oct Coastal Plain late date. Single Canvasbacks, also rare in the Piedmont in winter, were found at Silver L., Prince William 19 Jan (JT)
and at Riverbend 20–25 Jan (WH); 9 were found at C.M. Crockett 22 Feb (KG). Redheads seem to be becoming more common in the Piedmont, turning up in various places; 6 were at Harrison Rd., Faucquier 26 Dec (BW); 3 were at Silver L., Prince William 2 Jan (SG) with 50 or more there 19 Jan (JT). Nine were at Riverbend 2 Jan (DSw), followed by sightings of up to 400 through month's end. On 20 Feb, there were 2 in Haymarket, Prince William and 18 on Sudley Manor Rd., Fataguay (DL). Thirty were reported at Great Falls NP, Fairfax 26 Feb (SMe). A f. Greater Scaup, a rare winter visitor in the Region, was observed at C.M. Crockett 1 Feb (TD, PR). Single Surf Scoters were reported at Dyke Marsh 20 Dec (EE) and 26 Feb (SS), as well as at Mason Neck 4 Jan (KG). Two were seen at C.M. Crockett 22 Dec (TD) and one was there on 15 Jan (JT). White-winged Scoters were reported from several locations, including 9 at Burke L. 4 Dec (FA) then a single there 15 Jan (NVBC); one was at C.M. Crockett 30 Jan (JT), and 2 were at Jones Pt. PK. 25 Feb (DB, BP). Three were observed at Dyke Marsh 23 Feb (RR, SS), at least one of which continued through 28 Feb. A Black Scoter was reported at Pohick Bay 4 Feb (GH). Long-tailed Ducks were observed at several locations, including 2 at Burke L. 15 Jan (NVBC), one (f.) at Occoquan Bay 18 Jan (KG), one at Dyke Marsh 3–5 Feb (EE), and 2 at Elizabeth Mills Riverfront Pk., Loudoun 22 Feb (DC). A single Red-throated Loon was reported from Burke L. 3–5 Dec (FA). A Red-necked Grebe was reported at Pohick Bay 13 Feb (DL). An American Bittern, rare in the Region in winter, was observed at Dyke Marsh 18 Dec (EE). Single Great Egrets spent time at Roaches Run and nearby Gravelly Pk. 13 Dec–14 Jan (EM), at Neabsco Cr./Blackburn Rd., Prince William 28 Dec–2 Jan (LCh), at Four Mile Run, Alexandria 16 Jan (anon.), and in the vicinity of Dyke Marsh 3–11 Feb (SS). Two were seen at Bristow Rd., Prince William 28 Dec (TH). An imm. Black-crowned Night-Heron, fairly rare in the Region in winter, was observed at Roaches Run 13 Dec (EM) and 20 Feb (DL). On the latter date an ad. was at Gravelly Pt. (DL). Two were near Reagan Nat. Airport 22 Dec (KG). An ad. and 2 imm. were at Bob Brennan Pk., Alexandria 11 Jan (KG) and 2 ad. and 2 imm. were there 18 Jan (WB). Single Ospreys were reported at Ft. Hunt, Fairfax 4 Jan (KG), Ft. Washington, Fairfax 4 Jan (SW), Pohick Bay 16 Jan (AS), and at Roaches Run 5 Feb (PK). Bald Eagles presented spectacles on frozen rivers, gathering in groups as large as 71 at Occoquan Bay 1 Feb (RY) and 35 at Pohick Bay 14 Feb (BW), to prey on waterfowl “stuck” in small patches of open water. A Rough-legged Hawk was found at Edgecliff Farm, Fairfax 28 Jan (LM) where it was observed by many through 28 Feb.

**AMERICAN COOT–FALCONS**

A high count of 9500 American Coots was observed at Mason Neck SP 4 Jan (DL). Seven Greater Yellowlegs were spotted at Mason Neck 21 Dec (DLe), with as many as 11 seen through mid-February; a single was at Belle Haven and vicinity 10–16 Jan (ADu). Two Lesser Yellowlegs were at Mason Neck 30 Dec (KG). Three Dunlin were observed at Hunting Cr. Bridge, Fairfax 18 Dec–19 Jan (DLe). An American Woodcock, fairly rare in the Piedmont in winter, was found near Tail Race Rd., Loudoun 27 Dec (KG) and one was near H.M. Pearson Elementary School, Fairfax 28 Dec (TD, PR). Single Bonaparte’s Gulls were observed at Burke L. 5 Dec (SH), Aquia Landing 26 Dec (KG), and Mason Neck 4 Jan (KG). A Glaucous Gull was seen at Belmont Bay 21 Dec (KG) and at the Prince William landfill 25 Jan (LCh). There were scattered reports of Iceland Gulls during the period, including singles at Belmont Bay 21 Dec (KG) and 11 Jan (Ri), at Riverbend 25 Dec (IG), at Neabsco Cr., Prince William 27 Dec (TD, PR), at the Prince William landfill 28 Dec (LCh) and 31 Jan (KG). Snowy Owls made numerous appearances in the Region again this winter. One was spotted at a private residence near Dulles Int. Airport, Loudoun 12 Dec (The Voice). A second was seen by m. obs. at a private residence in Woodbridge, Prince William 13 Dec (ES) through the end of the period. Another, initially found at Gravely Pt. 20 Dec (DLe), was seen there and at adjacent Reagan Nat. Airport through 1 Feb and was joined by a second individual 14 Jan. Summing up the miserable weather for birds this winter, a Belted Kingfisher was seen at Belmont Bay 18 Feb with a fat icicle hanging off the center of its chest (PK)! Merlins, rare in the Piedmont in winter, made scattered appearances. Singles were at Bull Run RP, Fairfax 14 Dec (PK), Rectortown Rd., Fairfax 26 Dec (BW), and Manassas Nat. Battlefield Pk., Prince William 14 (HW) & 25 Feb. Peregrine Falcons, once considered rare throughout the Region in winter, were reported by m. obs., especially in the Coastal Plain.

**WHITE-EYED VIREO–WARBLERS**

A White-eyed Vireo was seen at Occoquan Bay 7 Dec–2 Jan (SM, WHi). There were scattered reports of Red-breasted Nuthatches, including 3 at Airlie South, Fairfax 14 Dec (PR), 2 at C.M. Crockett 15 Jan (TD), 4 near Oak Marr Pk., Fairfax 8 Feb (NN), and 2 from Sperryville, Rappahannock 13 Feb (MS). Single Marsh
Wrens were detected at Huntley Meadows 17 Dec (BWi) through at least 14 Feb (m.obs.), and at Occoquan Bay 23 Jan (PB). A Sedge Wren was observed at Occoquan Bay 2–11 Jan (LCh et al.). A few Gray Catbirds braved the winter, including one at Huntley Meadows 26 Dec and 17 Feb (KG), one at Occoquan Bay 2 Jan (PK) with 2 there on 11 Jan (KG), one at Dyke Marsh 3 Feb (EE), and one at nearby Belle Haven 25 Feb (DB). A Brown Thrasher was seen at Rust Sanctuary, Loudoun 12–20 Jan (SB); 2 were seen at Merrimac Farm WMA, Prince William 22 Feb (KG). A season high 150 American Pipits were seen off Harrison Rd., Fauquier 22 Dec (TD), with half that many at Woodward Turf Farm, Culpeper 13 Dec (SP). The first of many Lapland Longspurs was reported from Woodward Turf Farm, Culpeper 4 Dec (DL); as many as 30 were seen at this location through 20 Feb. Three Snow Buntings were found in Nokesville, Prince William 19 Feb (TB). A Nashville Warbler was observed at Roaches Run 13 Dec (EM) and at nearby Belle Haven 14–22 Jan (MD, ph. SS). Scattered reports of Common Yellowthroats included singles detected at Huntley Meadows 28 Nov (RR) through 2 Feb (WHO), at Gum Springs Rd., Loudoun 14 Dec (SF), at Dyke Marsh 19 Dec (DLc), and at Jones Pt. Pk. 22 Dec (KG). An Orange-crowned Warbler was reported from L. Royal, Fairfax 7 Dec (AD).

SPARROWS–BLACKBIRDS
A Clay-colored Sparrow was observed along Blackburn Rd., Prince William 28 Dec–14 Feb (MRI). While Savannah Sparrows are fairly rare in the Piedmont in winter, a day of birding in western Prince William and eastern Fauquier turned up more Savannahs (121) than White-throated Sparrows (KG)! A Le Conte’s Sparrow was again reported at Occoquan Bay 4 Dec (RV). Single Lincoln’s Sparrows were found at several locations including NW Prince William 14 Dec (The Voice), Magnolia Rd., Loudoun 22 Dec (JS), Sky Meadows, Fauquier 25 Dec (THo), Blackburn Rd., Prince William 29 Dec (NN) and 14 Feb (KG, PP). A Blue Grosbeak was found at Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve, Loudoun during the CLCBC. Three Brewer’s Blackbirds were reported from Nokesville, Prince William 20 Feb (LCh). A Baltimore Oriole was observed at Crow’s Nest NAP, Stafford 15 Dec (JG, ML). Single Common Redpolls were reported at Woodmar Farm subdivision, Loudoun 27 Jan–1 Feb (DC) and at a private residence in Centreville, Fairfax 27 Feb (JH).

Contributors: Fred Atwood, Scott Baron, Walter Barrows, Kelly Berger, Dave Boltz, P.W. Boyd, Della Brown (DBr), Tony Bulmer, Daniel Carrier, Larry Cartwright, Linda Chittum (LCh), Steven Courtney, Matthew Daw, Todd Day, Ann Driscoll, Amelia Dungan (ADu), Edward Eder, Sandra Farkas, Sue Garvin, Kurt Gaskill, Ian Godwin, Jim Goehring, Michael Grosso, Walter Hadlock, Tobin Hardwick, Mike Hensley, Steve Hersey, William Higgins (WHi), Teri Holland (THo), Jared Hollick, Gerco Hoogeweg, Phil Kenny, David Larsen, David Ledwith (DLc), Michael Lott, Stacey Maggard, Stuart Merrell (SMe), Linda Millington, Elton Morel, Kevin Munroe, Nick Newberry, Northern Virginia Bird Club (NVBC), Bryan Peters, Paul Pisano, Scott Pribe, Marshall Rawson, Marc Ribaudo (MRI), Richard Rieger, Perri Rothemich, Jeff Schaffer, Elton Schwemmer, Andreas Seiter, Phil Silas, Greg Slader, Janis Stone (JS), Sherman Suter, Donald Sweig (DSw), Milton Switzer, Jean Tatalias, Ron Vogel, The Voice of the Naturalist (The Voice), Bill Walsh, Bobby Wilcox (BWi), Stephen Williams, Howard Wu, Rob Young
Early in December, a major fallout of waterbirds occurred in the Region, leading to local high counts for several species of geese, ducks, Horned Grebes, and Bonaparte’s Gulls. The rather intense cold spells, particularly in February, froze most ponds and portions of lakes and forced many water birds onto rivers. The find of the season was the Smith’s Longspur at Weyers Cave, seen by many observers, and well documented with photos and video.

**Christmas Bird Counts:** ACBC (Augusta, 14 Dec); BCBC (Blacksburg, 20 Dec); CNCBC (Calmes Neck, 4 Jan); RCBC (Rockbridge, 20 Dec); RkCBC (Rockingham, 20 Dec)

**WATERFOWL–NIGHT-HERON**

Two **GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GEESE** were observed in Waynesboro 1 Dec (PN). Additional observations were one at Willow L., Rockbridge 3 Dec (EC, FD, AL) with 3 there 6 Dec (RR), 2 near Stuarts Draft, Augusta 25 Dec, 3 at Willow L., Rockbridge 1 Jan (GM), 2 near Fishersville, Augusta 8 (AL)& 10 Jan (GM), one at Willow L., Rockbridge 9 Jan (RR), 4 in Waynesboro 18 Jan (EC), 5 at Willow L., Rockbridge 31 Jan (RR), and 3 in Shenandoah, Page also 31 Jan (ES). One **Snow Goose** was found in Fairlawn, Pulaski 2 Dec (BG). Other reports included 11 on the New R. at Whitethorne, Montgomery 3 Dec (RM), 8 at Ashley Plantation pond, Botetourt 4 Dec (BKi), 3 near Woodstock, Shenandoah 19 Dec (KA), 6 near Fishersville, Augusta 8 Jan (AL), 11 there 10–11 Jan (WL, GM), one on L. Campbell near Harrisonburg 10 Jan (WL, GM), and 3 in Shenandoah, Page 31 Jan (ES). Six **Ross’s Geese** were seen at the pond at Ashley Plantation, Botetourt 4 Dec (MS, WT). One was photographed at Elliston, Montgomery 4–5 Dec (fide JV). Eight were found near Fishersville, Augusta 8 Jan (AL). Elsewhere, one was photographed at Barger Quarry Pond, Rockbridge 10 Jan for the third record in the county (RR), 12 were at Fishersville, Augusta 10–11 Jan (WL, GM) with 8 there 28 Jan (AL, JP), one was at Murray’s Pond, Roanoke 13 Jan (EB), and one was at L. Campbell, Rockingham 15 Feb (DL, GMo). Three **CACKLING GEESE** were found during the ACBC. These were followed by one near Stuarts Draft, Augusta 24 Dec (AL), 6 there 25 Dec (GM), one at Borden’s Spring, Clarke 6 Jan (DC), 12 near Fishersville, Augusta 8 Jan (AL), 9 near Fishersville, Augusta 10 Jan (GM), 10 to 15 at Willow L., Rockbridge 31 Jan (RR), and one near Crimora, Augusta 19 Feb (AW). A **Mute Swan** was seen on Silver L. during the RkCBC; 2 were at Riverview Pk. in Radford 6–14 Dec (CK); 2 were at Allisonia, Pulaski 29 Dec (MM); one was near Dayton, Rockingham 28 Jan (DL); 2 were on Silver L., Rockingham 4 Feb (WC, MF), and 3 were there 22 Feb (DL). A **TRUMPETER SWAN** was seen near Dayton, Rockingham 27–29 Jan (DL, CZ et al.). Another was photographed on Silver L., Rockingham 4 Feb (WC, MF), and 2 were near New Market, Shenandoah 27 Feb (DH). Fifteen **Tundra Swans** were observed flying over the hospital in Augusta 1 Dec (AL). Two were found at Willow L., Rockbridge 2 Dec (RR). Subsequently, two photographed on L. Campbell, Rockingham 13 Jan (WC, MF) were seen again 18 Jan (DL) and one was on Silver L., Rockingham 23 Jan (JS) and 4 Feb (WC, MF). One hundred nine **Gadwall** were found throughout Augusta 2 Dec (AL, JS). Forty were tallied during the ACBC. Twenty-six were at Murray’s Pond, Roanoke 20 Dec (BKi). Further notable counts were 101 throughout Augusta 8 Jan (AL), about 50 at Big Spring, Rockbridge 9 Jan (RR), 36 at Borden’s Spring, Clarke 15 Jan (DC), 78 at Murray’s Pond, Roanoke 25 Jan (EB), and 123 at Silver L., Rockingham 18 Feb (GM). Two **Northern Shovelers** were found near Forestville, Shenandoah 4 Dec (ET). There were 2 at L. Frederick, Frederick 6 Dec (ET), one at Murray’s Pond, Roanoke 20 Dec (BKi), one in Mt. Solon, Augusta 27 Dec (TA), one in Radford 1 Jan (CK), and 14 near Timberville, Rockingham 31 Jan (WL). Forty-nine **Northern Pintails** were found throughout Augusta 2 Dec
Dec (GM). Four L., Shenandoah, Three hundred thirteen Feb (SS), and 90 at Borden’s Spring, 27 Feb (RRi). Clarke L., (BL, JL), 12 in Winchester 20 Feb (WL), 19 on Claysor L., Pulaski 22 Feb (MM), 45 at Silver L., Rockingham 27 Feb (SS), and 90 at Borden’s Spring, Clarke 27 Feb (RRi). Three hundred thirteen Redheads were tallied in Augusta 2 Dec (AL, JSp) and 25 were on L. Shenandoah, Rockingham 2 Dec (GMo). The next day 10 were at Murray’s Pond, Roanoke (KD) and 165 were at Willow L., Rockbridge (EC, FD, AL). Subsequently, 32 were at Fishersville, Augusta 15 Feb (AL), 21 were in southern Clarke 19 Feb (BL, JL), and twelve were in Winchester 20 Feb (WL). One hundred forty-six Ring-necked Ducks were seen in Augusta 2 Dec (AL, JSp). Additional totals of note were 18 on L. Shenandoah, Rockingham 2 Dec (GMo), 50 on White’s L., Frederick 4 Dec (DC), 50 near Timberville, Rockingham 4 Jan (GMo), 127 near Monterey, Highland 10 Jan (EC), 127 at a pond on Rte. 220 in Bath 11 Jan (LA), 50 at Greenfield L., Botetourt 28 Jan (DF), 26 on Claysor L., Pulaski 22 Feb (MM), and 60 on White’s L., Frederick 26 Feb (DC). Fifty Greater Scaup were found throughout Augusta 2 Dec (AL, JSp), and 27 were at Riverview Pk. in Radford 28 Feb (CK). One hundred sixty-one Lesser Scaup were found in Augusta 2 Dec (AL, JSp), and 37 were at Claysor L., Pulaski 22 Feb (MM). One imm. Surf Scoter was seen in Fishersville, Augusta 3 Dec (AL). One was photographed at DeHaven Pk., Claysor L., Pulaski 14 Jan (SB, MM). On 2 Dec 8 Long-tailed Ducks were seen in Augusta (AL, JSp); 3 were at L. Shenandoah, Rockingham (GMo) and one was at Willow L., Rockbridge (RR). A f. was near Fishersville, Augusta 5 Dec (GM). Four Common Goldeneyes were found at Morgan’s Ford on the Shenandoah R., Warren 13 Jan (DC): one was in Edinburg, Shenandoah 20 Feb (ET) and 2 were in Winchester 20 Feb (WL). Forty-seven Hooded Mergansers were seen on Willow L., Rockbridge 3 Dec (EC, FD, AL), and 150 were on L. Merriweather during the RCBC, a new high count. About 50 were seen at Big Spring, Rockbridge 9 Jan (RR), 54 were in Bath 17 Jan (KD), and 62 were at Riverview Pk., Radford 28 Feb (CK). Fifty-one Common Mergansers were found in Bath 17 Jan (KD). There were 20 at Christendom College, Warren 20 Jan (JFx), 20+ on the Maury R., Rockbridge 21 Feb (SD), 29 on Claysor L., Pulaski 22 Feb (MM), and 22 at Watermelon Pk., Clarke 24 Feb (JFx). Thirty-one Ruddy Ducks were seen at L. Shenandoah, Rockingham 2 Dec (GMo). Also reported that date were 23 on the New R. in Radford (CK) and 313 throughout Augusta (AL, JSp). Forty-three were at Whitethorne, Montgomery 3 Dec (RM), 302 were at Willow L., Rockbridge 3 Dec (EC, FD, AL), and 28 were at L. Arrowhead Pk., Page 14 Dec (DH). Thirty-four Horned Grebes were seen throughout Augusta 2 Dec (AL, JSp); 10 were on Willow L., Rockbridge (EC, FD, AL) and 13 were on the New R. in Radford 3 Dec (JK). Two Red-necked Grebes were found at L. Frederick, Frederick 3 Dec (DC). Two Black-crowned Night-Herons were observed at a pond in Waynesboro 4 (AL, PW) & 28 Jan (AL, JP); one was in Staunton 1 Feb (DP) and one was in Dayton, Rockingham 17 Feb (GMo).

RAPTORS–FALCONS

Golden Eagle reports included one seen in Blacksburg, Montgomery 4 Dec (JF), 2 in Highland 21 Dec (WL, DW), one in Highland 27 Dec (AL, GMo), 3 near Swoope, Augusta 1 Jan (GM), 2 imm. found in Highland 31 Jan during the Rockbridge Bird Club field trip, one seen in Warren 24 Feb (BL, JL), and one observed near a deer carcass in Warren by the county line with Clarke 25 Feb (FB). Among Northern Harrier reports were one observed at Greenfield L., Botetourt 1 Dec (KK), one near Elkton, Rockingham 21 Dec (DL), one near White Post, Clarke 22 Dec (DC), one near Dublin, Pulaski 27 Dec (KD), 2 near Elkton, Rockingham 1 Jan (DW), one near Fairfield, Rockbridge 24 Jan (JP), one near Crozet, Augusta 28 Jan (AW), one near Monterey, Highland 31 Jan (JP), one in Blacksburg, Montgomery 11 Feb (WK), one at Third Battle of Winchester, Frederick (BL, JL) 14 Feb, and 3 at Weyers Cave, Augusta 28 Feb (SK). One Northern Goshawk was seen in Staunton 1 Dec (PW). Two ad. Bald Eagles were seen perched in a tree at Tardy Flats, Rockbridge 22 Dec (WRi). One was seen near Swoope, Augusta 1 Jan (GM). One was photographed near Poplar Hill, Giles 1 Jan (MB, SB). Two were seen in Maggie, Craig 5 Jan (MT). Two were found at Greenfield L., Botetourt 11 Jan (DB). One was seen in Staunton’s Draft, Augusta 12 Jan (LA, EC). One ad. and one imm. were found in Highland 31 Jan during the Rockbridge Bird Club trip, and 2 were in

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Swoope, Augusta 4 Feb (WC, MF). One was seen flying over Tardy Flats, Rockbridge 9 &11 Feb (WRi), and one was at DeHaven Pk., Pulaski 22 Feb (MM). Fourteen Red-shouldered Hawks were tallied during the ACBC, a new high count. Two were found near Stanley, Page 21 Dec (DH). Three were near Raphine, Augusta 10 Jan (GM), and 3 were near Christiansburg, Montgomery 13 Feb (KJ). A Rough-legged Hawk was seen in Rockbridge 17 Jan (RR). A Great Grey Owl was found near Berryville, Clarke 22 Feb (BL, JL). Thirty-six

Red-headed Woodpeckers were tallied during the ACBC, a new high count. Two were found near Stanley, Page 21 Dec (DH). Three were near Raphine, Augusta 10 Jan (GM), and 3 were near Christiansburg, Montgomery 13 Feb (KJ). A Rough-legged Hawk was seen in Rockbridge 17 Jan (RR). There were 2 at Linville, Rockingham 30 Jan (MG), one in northern Rockingham 1 Feb (KR), one near Fincastle, Botetourt 6 Feb (WT), one near Berryville, Clarke 10 Feb (TH), one at Swoope, Augusta 27 Feb (PS), and one on Bullpasture Mt., Highland 28 Feb (GM et al.).

A Least Sandpiper was found in Augusta 1 Dec (AL), a first documented winter record for the county. Forty-two American Kestrel species, one of two such locations in the county over the past few years. A Red Catbird was found in Woodstock, Shenandoah 14 Feb (JB). About 80 American Pipits were found at Whitethorne, Montgomery 17 Jan (RM) and 20 were in Rockbridge 1 Feb (JP). There were 30 in Frederick (BL, JL) and 100+ near Bridgewater, Rockingham 17 Feb (JS). Three Snow Buntings were found at L. Moomaw, Bath 17 Dec (BK). A Lapland Longspur was observed near Grottoes, Augusta 26 Jan (GM), and one was at New Hope, Augusta 22 Feb (GM). The reported peak count was 5 at Shenandoah Valley Regional Airport, Weyer’s Cave, Augusta 24 Feb (GM et al.). A SMITH’S LONGSPUR was photographed at Shenandoah Valley Regional Airport, Weyer’s Cave, Augusta 23–28 Feb (m. obs.). This was the first record of the species in Virginia.

Loggerhead Shrike reports included one found in Clarke 6 Dec (JL), one near Mt. Solon, Augusta 20 Dec (DP), one in Highland 27 Dec (DL, GMo), one on the CENBC, two near Dublin, Pulaski 19 Jan (AK, CK), and one west of Staunton 1 Feb (KD). Two hundred Horned Larks were found at Whitethorne, Montgomery 17 Jan (RM); 35 were in Frederick 17 Feb (BL, JL) and 30 were northwest of Berryville, Clarke 22 Feb (BL, JL). A House Wren was present all winter in Rockbridge (WRi). Two Brown-headed Nuthatches were found at Whispering Pines Pk., Roanoke 10 Dec (EB). One was seen in Pulaski on the BCBC (MA, CK). The location in Pulaski regularly has this species, one of two such locations in the county over the past few years. A Gray Catbird was found in Woodstock, Shenandoah 14 Feb (JB). About 80 American Pipits were found at Whitethorne, Montgomery 17 Jan (RM) and 20 were in Rockbridge 1 Feb (JP). There were 30 in Frederick (BL, JL) and 100+ near Bridgewater, Rockingham 17 Feb (JS). Three Snow Buntings were found at L. Moomaw, Bath 17 Dec (BK). A Lapland Longspur was observed near Grottoes, Augusta 26 Jan (GM), and one was at New Hope, Augusta 22 Feb (GM). The reported peak count was 5 at Shenandoah Valley Regional Airport, Weyer’s Cave, Augusta 24 Feb (GM et al.). A SMITH’S LONGSPUR was photographed at Shenandoah Valley Regional Airport, Weyer’s Cave, Augusta 23–28 Feb (m. obs.). This was the first record of the species in Virginia.

A Smith’s Longspur in flight at Shenandoah Valley National Airport 23 Feb (photo: Marshall Faintich)
near Timberville, Shenandoah 27 Jan (DH), 2 were near Mt. Solon, Augusta 29 Jan (EG, GM), 3 were near Monterey, Highland 31 Jan (JP), 2 were at Camp Lupton, Shenandoah 11 Feb (ET), 8 were in southern Clarke 19 Feb (BL, JL), and one was in Highland 28 Feb (GM et al.). A Vesper Sparrow was found in Staunton 1 Dec (PW). A Savannah Sparrow was found at Camp Lupton, Shenandoah 1 Jan (ET); 12 were in Staunton 18 Feb (JS), 2 were in Warren 23 Feb (DC), and 4 were near Brownburg, Rockbridge 28 Feb (RR). Six Fox Sparrows were found in Blacksburg, Montgomery 13 Jan (TD), and 2 were near Lexington, Rockbridge 15 Feb (GT). A Lincoln’s Sparrow was seen near Timberville, Shenandoah 27 Jan (DH). One hundred forty-five or more White-crowned Sparrows were seen near Mt. Solon, Augusta 29 Jan (EG, GM). Twenty-six Eastern Meadowlarks were found in Maggie, Craig 5 Jan (MT) and 22 were in Warren 27 Feb (SS). Forty-five Rusty Blackbirds were observed in Rockingham 21 Dec (DL, GMo), and an amazing 550 were seen of Harrisonburg, Rockingham 4 Jan (DL). One hundred Brown-headed Cowbirds were observed at New Hope, Augusta 26 Feb (GM). Eleven Purple Finches were found at Claytor L. SP, Pulaski 8 Feb (DF), 6 in Radford 16 Feb (LA), 6 in Blacksburg, Montgomery 19 Feb (TD), and 8 near Monterey, Highland 28 Feb (EM). Twenty Pine Siskins were seen near Crozet, Augusta 4 Jan (AW). Additional reports included 12 in Roanoke 24 Jan (EB), 64 in Shenandoah 24 Jan (DD), 32 in Rockingham 30 Jan (DW), 11 in Blacksburg, Montgomery 9 Feb (RC), 17 near New Castle, Craig 14 Feb (DF), 30 near Lexington, Rockbridge 14 Feb (BB), 25 in Covington, Alleghany 16 Feb (EH), 20 in Salem 16 Feb (JH), and 55 near Monterey, Highland 28 Feb (EG). Four Red Crossbills were found at Bother Knob, Rockingham 28 Dec (WL, DW) and one was in Blacksburg, Montgomery 5 Jan (BK).


Central

The average temperature was about one degree warmer than normal in December and four degrees colder than average in January. February was an entirely different story, when the mean temperature hovered for most of the month six degrees colder than normal, with daily average lows ten degrees below normal. This had a profound effect on pond freezing and waterfowl movement. There was no snow cover in December. Most of Central Virginia received a dusting in January, and then almost 15 inches in February. This was more
snow than the normal 5.75 inches and lasted longer than usual due to the persistent below freezing temperatures. Some of this winter’s highlights included Greater White-fronted Goose, many Cackling Geese, a Long-tailed Duck, Nashville Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Painted Bunting and Common Redpoll.

**Abbreviations:** ICNA (Ivy Creek Natural Area, Albemarle); RVT (Rockfish Valley Trail, Nelson).

**Christmas Bird Counts:** BRCBC (Banister River, 14 Dec); CCBC (Charlottesville, 14 Dec); ChCBC (Chancellorsville, 4 Jan); GCBC (Gordonsville, 28 Dec); LACBC (Lake Anna, 4 Jan); LCBC (Lynchburg, 20 Dec); WCBC (Warren, 4 Jan)

**GEESE–GREBES**

A **GREATER WHITE–FRONTED GOOSE** was found at Trump Winery, Albemarle 10 Jan (PB et al.). Several **Snow Geese** sightings included one at Elkton Farm, Bedford 4 Dec (MB); one at Mill Creek L., Amherst 21 Dec (L&NM); a “Blue Goose” was found during the GCBC; two (of which one was a “Blue Goose”) at Ivy L., Amherst 10 Jan (MB, MJ). A **Ross’s Goose** was found on Gristmill Dr., Lynchburg 15 Dec (MB). Many **CACKLING GEES** were reported, with the high count being four on the CCBC; two were reported from Thrasher’s L., Amherst 2 Dec (MB); two were at Trump Winery, Albemarle 10 Jan (JP, PM, CM); and two were at Greene Mountain L., Greene 25 Feb (TD). A high count of 15 **Mute Swans** came from ChCBC. Three **Tundra Swans** were seen flying over the Rivanna Trail, Charlottesville 13 Dec (GM, CF, WC, ES). High counts of ducks included: 34 **Gadwall** during the LCBC; one **Northern Shoveler** at Moore’s Cr., Albemarle 19 Jan (AR, EG); eight **Northern Pintails** spotted on the GCBBC; 5 **Canvasbacks** on L. Anna, Louisa 19 Feb (AD, BS); 35 **Redheads** on the Rappahanock R., Fredericksburg 25 Feb (JS); 88 **Ring-necked Ducks** on the ChCBC; 3 **White-winged Scoters** on Mill Creek L., Amherst 2 Dec (MB); a **Long-tailed Duck** on Thrasher’s L., Amherst 14 Jan (MB); two **Common Goldeneyes** on the LACBC, another pair at Chris Greene L., Albemarle 15 Jan (G&SB); and a pair at Old Trail, Albemarle 27 Jan (CM); 78 **Buffleheads**, also on the ChCBC; 104 **Hooded Mergansers** on the GCBC, nine **Common Mergansers** at Mill Creek L., Amherst 15 Feb (DMS); three **Red-breasted Mergansers** on Mill Creek L., Amherst 2 Dec (MB); and a huge count of 305 **Ruddy Ducks** on the ChCBC. A high count of 18 **Common Loons** was posted for the LACBC. Also from the LACBC was a high count of 41 **Pied-billed Grebes**. Seventeen **Horned Grebes** were on Mill Creek L., Amherst 2 Dec (MB). A **Red-necked Grebe** was found on Greene Mountain L., Greene 25 Feb (TD).

**DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT–GULLS**

A high count of 21 **Double-crested Cormorants** came from the BRCBC. Twelve **Bald Eagles** were found on the GCBC. High counts of hawks included: 3 **Northern Harriers** on the GCBC and BRCBC, respectively; 6 **Sharp-shinned Hawks** on the CCBC; 5 **Cooper’s Hawks** on the LCBC; 28 **Red-shouldered Hawks** on the CCBC; 27 **Red-tailed Hawks** also on the CCBC. A high count of 410 **American Coots** came from the BRCBC. High counts of gulls, all coming from the LACBC, included 364 **Bonaparte’s Gulls**, 2762 **Ring-billed Gulls**, 402 **Herring Gulls**, and 254 **Great Black-backed Gulls**.

**OWLS–SISKINS**

A **Barn Owl** was found at a private farm in Albemarle 1 Jan (PM). Eleven **Eastern Screech-Owls** were found on the LCBBC. Four **Great Horned Owls** were found on both the BR- and the LCBC. Three **Barred Owls** were tallied on the BRCBC. A **Short-eared Owl** was found at Green Springs, Louisa 14 Feb (EC). Sixteen **Red-headed Woodpeckers** were spotted on the BRCBC. Seven **American Kestrels** were found on both the WCBC and the GCBC. There were four reports of **Merlins**, all single birds. One, most likely the same bird, was reported from several different spots in east Charlottesville 7 Dec–25 Jan (JP, DS, WC); another was in the Scottsville area, Albemarle 17 Jan– 23 Feb (WC, JP); one was around the Charlottesville Airport, Albemarle 10–31 Jan (CM, SB, GB); and finally one was at Old Trail, Albemarle 17 Dec (CM). One **Peregrine Falcon** was spotted at Belvedere, Albemarle 11 Dec (ES). There were two reports of **Loggerhead Shrikes**, one on Parker Rd., Bedford 4 Dec (MB) and another on Langhorne Rd., Albemarle 6–27 Feb (SM). Three **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were found at Keswick Club, Albemarle 17 Feb (AR). A **Marsh Wren** was reported from a private location in Bedford 4 Dec (MB). An impressive high count of 123 **Hermit Thrushes** came from the CCBC. A **Gray Catbird**, a rare but regular winter visitor, was found at Lickinghole Cr., Albemarle 19 Jan (EG, AR). One hundred and fifty **American Pipits** were found at Horseshoe Farms, Hanover 4 Jan (NN). A **Nashville Warbler** hung around Belmont, Charlottesville 8 Dec–15 Feb (ph. DS). A **Palm Warbler** was found at L. Anna, Louisa 27 Feb (AD, BS). A **Yellow-breasted Chat** also hung around Belmont,
Charlottesville 2 Dec–25 Jan (ph. DS). An American Tree Sparrow was reported from the GCBC. High counts for sparrows included: 60 Chipping Sparrows on the LCBC; 13 Fox Sparrows from the BRCBC; 418 Song Sparrows from the CCBC; 27 Swamp Sparrows on the BRCBC; a Lincoln’s Sparrow, a rare winter resident, from Lickinghole Cr., Albemarle Jan 1 (PM); 989 White-throated Sparrows from the CCBC; 87 White-crowned Sparrows on the WCBC; and 768 Dark-eyed Juncos on the LCBC. A PAINTED BUNTING was reported in late Dec/early Jan from a private location in Charlottesville (ph. RL). One hundred and fifty Rusty Blackbirds were reported on the BRCBC. A Baltimore Oriole was found at two different feeders a few miles apart from each other in Charlottesville 8–15 Feb and probably were the same bird (ph. BM, JP).

High counts of finches included: 14 Purple Finches on the CCBC; 181 House Finches on the LCBC; a Common Redpoll at private feeders in L. Monticello, Fluvanna 7–14 Jan (ph. KK et al.); and 30 Pine Siskins also at the private feeders at L. Monticello, Fluvanna (GM, EG).

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During the ’14–15 winter season in the Northern Neck and the Middle Peninsula, 146 species were recorded. The data for this season’s report were primarily gleaned from eBird, e-mail postings on VSO’s VA-Bird and Northern Neck Audubon Society’s NNASnet, and three Christmas Bird Counts: Washington’s Birthplace 14 Dec, Walkerton 4 Jan; and Mathews, 4 Jan. In addition, this year the Point Lookout Maryland CBC had one sector in the Northern Neck around Sandy Pt, Westmoreland and Lewisetta, Northumberland, 21 Dec. Many thanks to Teta Kain for her input on the noteworthy Christmas Bird Count sightings.

Despite the cold and snowy weather that froze the lakes and turned the rivers into what looked like Arctic pack ice, there were no distinctive patterns to report this winter. It was not a big irruption year for any of the passerines, and waterfowl numbers were not particularly unusual. The most exciting finds of the winter were Greater White-fronted Goose, Ross’s Goose, Snowy Owl, Willet, Red Knot, California Gull, Painted Bunting, Evening Grosbeak, and Vesper Sparrow.

Abbreviations: Beaverdam (Beaverdam Park, Gloucester); Bethel (Bethel Beach, Mathews); Birthplace (George Washington’s Birthplace National Monument, Westmoreland); Cole’s Pt. (Cole’s Pt., Westmoreland); Dameron (Dameron Marsh NAP, Northumberland); Hughlett (Hughlett Pt. NAP, Northumberland); K. G. Ponds (sand quarry ponds near the Rappahannock R., mostly along Rte. 3, King George); Leedstown (Westmoreland); New Pt. Comfort (New Pt. Comfort Preserve, Mathews); NNAS (Northern Neck Audubon Society); The Pocket (in Pamunkey Indian Reservation along the Pamunkey River, King William); Tayloe (Tayloe Tract of Rappahannock River Valley NWR, Richmond); Wilna (Wilna Tract of Rappahannock River Valley NWR, Richmond); Windmill (Windmill Pt. area, Lancaster)

Christmas Bird Counts: MCBC (Mathews, 4 Jan); PLCBC (Point Lookout, 21 Dec), WBCBC (Washington’s Birthplace, 14 Dec); WCBC (Walkerton, 4 Jan)
WATERFOWL–HERONS

From 2–4 Greater White-fronted Geese were found at K. G. Ponds 20 Dec, 10 Jan, and 14 Feb (m.obs.). Snow Geese were only reported once, a group of four in Aylett, King William 4 Jan (LF et al.). Two Ross’s Geese were a nice surprise near The Pocket 6 Dec (MB, GG); it was only the fourth known sighting of this species in the Region. An all time high of 6 Cackling Geese were tallied on the WCBC and 12 others were found in six locations. An average of 550 Canada Geese were reported to eBird from 67 locations, and a tally of this species in several sites in Leedstown 22 Feb (FA) was 15,250. The CBC totals were: 1147 for the MCBC; 16,200 for the WCBC, and 22,965 for the WBCBC, that count’s all-time high. A surprising 47 Mute Swans were noted 17 Jan at Hughlett (LA) and an additional 36 were found in eight locations, up from last year, with 12 in the Colonial Beach area, Westmoreland 10 Jan (FA). None were reported from Beaverdam and only one at Birthplace 17 Dec (RM).

Though Tundra Swans appeared to rebound a little last winter, and were about the same this year, they were still below normal levels. Previous highs have ranged from over 500 to over 2000, but this year the high was only 177 in a farm field at Corbin Hall Dr., Middlesex 10 Feb (M&JC), and only three eBird reports were above 100 birds. On eBird there were 71 reports at 32 locations with an average of 26 birds, about half the normal winter average here. Some fresh-water ducks were found in lower-than-normal numbers this winter. The following species had high counts that were less than a third of their previous highs: Wood Duck, 9 at Leedstown 14 Feb (FA); Northern Pintail, 355 at The Pocket 4 Jan (m. obs.); and Green-winged Teal, 55 at The Pocket 4 Jan (m. obs.). On the other hand, Gadwalls were present in good numbers including 570 in the K.G.ponds complex 14 Feb (FA), an all-time eBird high for the Region. Other nearby ponds on private locations held an additional 180 Gadwalls. That same day K. G. Ponds also hosted eBird’s Regional winter high of 88 American Wigeon. Mallards were also present in good numbers this winter: WBCBC had its all-time high count of 1568 mostly in the marshes along the Rappahannock R. The only report of Blue-winged Teal was 2 on the WCBC at The Pocket 4 Jan, only the sixth Regional winter record in eBird (a correction from last year’s report). A total of 68 Northern Shovelers were found in six locations, with a high of 28 at K. G. Ponds 20 Dec (FA). American Black Ducks were present in fairly average numbers this winter, with 220 on the WCBC and 425 on the WBCBC. In eBird an average of 17 birds were reported from 19 locations. Canvasbacks were again rare on the Region’s CBCs (WCBC, one; WBCBC, 2). An average of 45 were reported from 19 eBird locations with a high of only 251 at K. G. Ponds 14 Dec (FA). In comparison, the eBird all time winter average is 71 with a high of 2300. An average of only 5 Redheads was reported from 13 locations this season, with a high of 15 at K. G. Ponds 10 Jan (FA). Only one could be found during the CBC’s WCBC.

Ring-necked Ducks continued to abound at K. G. Ponds, where 3415 were found 20 Dec in a m./f. ratio of about 6:1 (FA). (This is a combined total of all of the quarry ponds in this area). Both species of Scaup were much less common this winter. The high counts of 287 Greater at Cole’s Pt. 25 Jan (FA) and 70 Lesser on the PLCBC were far less than the thousands that were regularly seen in the Potomac R. in the 1980s and 1990s and the 2300 Scaup sp. reported last year. Buffleheads were present in average numbers this winter. An average of 27 were reported from 53 eBird locations with a high count of 300 at Bethel 27 Dec (LC). An average of 12 Common Goldeneyes were reported from 16 locations this winter, including a new Regional eBird high of 135 at Cole’s Pt. 25 Jan (FA). An average of 23 Long-tailed Ducks were found in 13 locations. All were in the usual bay and big river locations, with a maximum of 125 at Windmill 26 Dec (MG, DS). Scoter numbers were down from their unusually high counts last winter. The only sighting of White-winged Scoter was 2 at Birthplace 17 Dec (RM). A total of 216 Black Scoters were reported from nine locations between Birthplace and New Pt. Comfort. Gwynn’s Is., Mathews 10 Jan (EO, BO) had this winter’s high counts of 80 Black Scoters and 350 Surf Scoters. WBCBC had 859 Surf Scoters, one of its highest recent counts. The high count for Common Mergansers this year was 100 at the Rappahannock R. at K. G. Ponds 10 Jan (FA). In this flock, the females outnumbered the males 85 to 15. Though widespread in 16 locations, Red-breasted Mergansers were reported in lower than average numbers this year, with an eBird average of 8, and a high of 24 at Beaverdam 9 Feb (G&RH). Previous eBird average is around 14, with a high of 420. Though always an exciting bird to watch as they growl and display, Hooded Mergansers were present in unexciting numbers, with an average of 12 and a high of 146 at K. G Ponds 3 Jan (FA). Ruddy Duck numbers in the Potomac R. were up this winter, with high counts of 3710 at Colonial Beach, Westmoreland and 2800 at Wayside Park, King George on 10 Jan (FA). These birds were 75–80% males. Observers on the WBCBC...
tallied 6037 Ruddies, one of that count's highest totals. **Northern Bobwhites** were hard to find again this winter. Other than only one on the WCBC and 11 on the WBCBC, only 14 others were reported: 8 on the PLCBC and 6 at Naxera, *Gloucester* 14 Jan (JS). A **Ring-necked Pheasant** erupted from the ground, startling the observer in Leedstown, on the WBCBC (FA). This bird was most likely released by a hunting club for a local hunt. **Wild Turkeys** were much more scarce this year than last year; a total of 132 were seen in 12 locations, with a high count of 39 in *Westmoreland* 29 Jan (RB). **Red-throated Loons** were less common than usual again this year; an average of 5.2 birds were noted at six locations in eBird with a high of 29 at New Pt. Comfort 4 Jan (MCBC). **Common Loons** were even sparser than last year, being found at 21 sites, averaging 2.3 birds per sighting, and with the highest single-location count being only 8 at Glen Roy, *Gloucester* 11 Dec (G&RH). Beaverdam again had the highest regional count of 25 **Pied-billed Grebes** 31 Dec (LC). This species was a surprising miss on the MCBC. The high count of 61 **Horned Grebes** was at Windmill 26 Dec (MG, DS), and the 6.9 average of 17 sightings at 12 locations was below average. Though expected because of the extensive freezing of lakes up north, no **Red-necked Grebes** were reported in this Region. After last winter’s decline, **Brown Pelicans** increased a little this year. Ninety-six were seen in 10 locations with a high of 30 at Vir-Mar Beach, *Northumberland* 1 Dec (LA).

**Northern Gannets** were relatively scarce again this winter with only two reports in the double digits, a high of 36 at New Pt. Comfort 4 Jan (MCBC), and an average of 7 at 11 locations from Cole’s Pt. east. Two **Great Cormorants** were again seen perched on a structure off of Cole’s Pt. 25 Jan (FA). The season high count of 230 **Double-crested Cormorants** was in Tappahannock, *Essex* 3 Jan, but when the river was choked with ice 22 Feb, this same location harbored only 6 (FA). This high count was less than half of last year’s high. There were five eBird reports tallying at least 100 birds from five locations this winter. Both WCBC (91) and WBCBC (459) reported their all time highs, documenting the increase of this species in the Region. The highest single-location count for **Great Blue Herons** was a mere 7 in Leedstown 25 Jan (FA). The only other significant heron sightings this winter were single **Great Egrets** at Hughlett 1 Dec (LA), K. G. Ponds 25 Jan (FA), and Teal Circle, *Gloucester* 11 Jan (BB).

**RAPTORS—OWLS**

After the MCBC’s low count of 10 **Black Vultures** last year, their all time high of 140 this year was a remarkable change. However, the single location high count this winter was only 35 at K. G. Ponds 14 Feb (FA). The highest count for **Turkey Vultures** was 77 at Wilna 5 Jan (LA). Usually the first **Ospreys** arrive in the area in the last few days of February, but this winter none showed up until early March, no doubt delayed by ice and cold weather. **Northern Harriers** were less widespread than last year. eBird records totaled 24 birds at 18 locations as compared with last year’s 43 at 30 locations. However, the CBCs reported fair numbers: MCBC, 8; WCBC, 12; WBCBC, 9. A total of 31 **Sharp-shinned Hawks** and 22 **Cooper’s Hawks** were reported in the Region. The MCBC reported its all-time high of 11 Cooper’s Hawks. The area’s CBCs tallied 229 **Bald Eagles**: MCBC, 49; WCBC, 58; WBCBC, 122. A 35-mi. survey conducted 15 Jan by boat along the Rappahannock R. from Tappahannock, *Essex* to Mount Swamp, *Caroline*, including Cat Pt. Cr, *Richmond*, tallied 183 Bald Eagles, including 88 ad., 88 imm., and 7 unk. (BP), up from last year’s 161, which was its lowest in years. Only one **Virginia Rail** was reported this year in Leedstown on the WBCBC. Seven **Clapper Rails** were found on the MCBC. Usually they are reported from several marshes in *Mathews* and *Gloucester* but this winter the only eBird reports were from Bethel, where the high count was 3 on 10 Jan (EO, BO). The winter high of 300 **American Coots** was again at Beaverdam 8 Dec (G&RH), but this is far below this site’s frequent winter high of 1000+ birds. The WCBC tallied 131 coots, and 49 were observed at nine other locations. Shorebirds were relatively scarce this year. All six **Black-bellied Plover** reports came from three locations in *Mathews*, with the high count of 6 at Bethel 7 Feb (RAS). **Killdeer** were remarkably less common this winter than usual; the total of 24 on the WCBC was its lowest count since 1995. The past ten years have averaged 267 on the WCBC and its high was 625 in 2009. Even though the species was reported from 34 locations, there were only seven reports greater than 10 birds, the average was 6.3, and the total was 270. The highest single location count was 50 near Tabb’s Cr. *Lancaster* 11 Feb (SS). Seven **Greater Yellowlegs** were found on the MCBC and one on the WCBC. The only other yellowlegs reported this year was one Greater Yellowlegs at Bethel 14 Dec (GT) and single Greater and **Lesser Yellowlegs** at Dameron 1 Dec (LA). The single “Western” **Willet** found at Diggs, *Mathews* 10 Jan was only the third eBird winter record for
the Region (EO, BO). This was an exciting find, but even more exciting were 3 Red Knots, the first eBird record in this Region and a very nice Christmas present, at Hughlett 25 Dec (MG, DS). No Ruddy Turnstones were found on the MCBC and only 4 were reported all season: 2 at Bethel 8 Feb (G&RH) and 2 at Diggs, Mathews 10 Jan (EO, BO). The high count for Sanderling was 76 in the New Pt. Comfort sector of MCBC, which had a total of only 108. Despite good tides for shorebirding, Dunlin was surprisingly missing on WCBC (seen eight of the previous 10 years) and 884 were found on the MCBC. No peeps or Dowitcher sp. were found this year. The WCBC had the high counts for American Woodcock (25) and Wilson’s Snipe (46). The most interesting gull this season was a carefully studied, but not photographed, California Gull at K. G. Ponds 14 Feb (FA). This bird has not yet been reviewed by VARCOM. Two Lesser Black-backed Gulls were found at Bethel 14 Dec (GT). A large flock of 85 Bonaparte’s Gulls was at Bethel 8 Feb (MS, G&RH). Only 8 others were noted at four locations. Five Laughing Gulls lingered until 3 Jan at K. G. Ponds (FA), where the Ring-billed Gull high count of 5000 was recorded 10 Jan (NVBC). An average of 8 Forster’s Terns were found at 14 locations, with a high of 36 at Hughlett 25 Dec (MG, DS). The only high count of Mourning Doves this winter was 100 in an agricultural field in Gloucester 17 & 18 Jan (TK). Certainly one of the most exciting finds this winter was the SNOWY OWL found on private property in Essex along the Rappahannock R. during the WBCBC. This is only the third record known for this species in the Region, but it is not a surprise considering the large southward movement documented throughout the country again this year. This is only a short distance from where the Snowy Owl was found last year, so one wonders if it was the same bird. No Short-eared Owls or Barn Owls could be found this year. The three CBCs tallied 35 Great Horned Owls, 16 Barred Owls, and 10 Eastern Screech-Owls. The MCBC found 4 Barred Owls, an unusually high number for this CBC.

WOODPECKERS–WARBLERS

Red-headed Woodpecker numbers bounced back a little from last year’s low. Nine and 6 birds were found on the WCBC and WBCBC, respectively, and an additional 16 were reported from 12 locations. American Kestrels continue to have trouble. The 4 found on WCBC was the third lowest count in that count’s 20-year history; the average is 9. The MCBC totaled four and the WBCBC observed 10. Only 10 additional kestrels were reported from 10 locations during the season, less than half of last year’s sightings. Two Merlins were found on the MCBC. Perhaps the Merlin seen in Mathews 7 Feb (RAS) was one of those. No Peregrine Falcons were seen on the CBCs, but during the Bald Eagle survey on the Rappahannock R. pairs were noted on both the Rte. 301 bridge and the Rte. 360 bridge (MB). Perhaps they will nest there; if they do, it will be interesting to see if they impact the Cliff Swallow colony on the Rte. 301 bridge. Certainly the Peregrine noted again at Gloucester Pt. 23 Jan (MS) was a different bird, but probably those in Tappahannock 7 Feb (AB) and Hopyard Farms, King George 17 Dec (RM) were those bridge birds. The 13 Eastern Phoebes on the WCBC was that count’s lowest count since 2008. The harsh winter seems to have had an impact on the phoebes. Other than the CBCs there were only 13 reported from 10 locations. Only three of these reports were in February, one of which was of 4 birds in a yard in Gloucester where the residents maintained open water for the birds (CS). The high single location count of 200 American Crows was again at John’s Pt. Landing, Gloucester 3 Jan (G&RH). A high of 80 Fish Crows was at K. G. Ponds 14 Feb (FA). Horned Larks were not as common as usual this winter. In eBird there were 16 sightings totaling 241 birds at 15 locations, with only four flocks exceeding 20 birds. The high single location count was 50 in Elsing Green, King William 4 Jan (FA). No Tree Swallows were reported this winter. Only 4 Red-breasted Nuthatches were seen this winter. Single birds were noted on the MCBC, the WCBC, at Beaverdam 31 Dec (LC), and at Cole’s Pt. 25 Jan (FA). The high count of only 9 Brown-headed Nuthatches was in the New Pt. Comfort sector of the MCBC. One Brown-headed Nuthatch heard at K. G. Ponds 10 Jan (NVBC) was unusually far up the Northern Neck. The 20 Brown creepers on the WCBC tied that CBC’s previous high set in 2005. Single Marsh Wrens were noted in four locations and 2 were at Hughlett 25 Dec (MG, DS). No Sedge Wrens were found. Two House Wrens on the WCBC was only the fourth record for that count. Two others were seen: one at Dogue, King George 20 Dec (FA), one at Glen Roy, Gloucester 11 Dec (G&RH). The 14 Winter Wrens found at a private reserve in the Pampatike sector of WCBC was a new winter eBird high for the Region (EO, ABr). Thirty-three others were reported from 19 locations. The high of 19 Golden-crowned Kinglets at Beaverdam 31 Dec (LC) tied the previous eBird winter high for the Region. The MCBC again harbored the greatest number of Eastern Bluebirds in the Region with...
a total of 671, outnumbering American Robins there. Some winters there are flocks of thousands of American Robins in the Region, but this year only five locations hosted 100–400 birds; the one higher count was 1070 at Layton Landing Rd., Leedstown 10 Jan (FA). Eight Gray Catbirds were reported from six locations. Cedar Waxwing counts this winter were average, the high count being 150 in the Glebe-Matthews sector of the MCBC (MS). The average for this species was 21.6 birds at 25 sites. This year American Pipits showed up often. The high count of 120 was at K. G. Ponds 14 Feb (FA). This species was seen on all three CBCs: MCBC, 1; WCBC, 284; WBCBC, 11. Sixty-two others were reported in eBird from six locations. No Lapland Longspurs were reported this year. The high count for Yellow-rumped Warbler was 135 at New Pt. Comfort (m. obs.). Before the mid-Feb cold snap, the average for this species was 12 per list. In the last two weeks of Feb this average dropped to 3.4. Fifteen Pine Warblers were reported from 12 locations in addition to the seven on the MCBC and one each on the WCBC and the WBCBC. After last year’s banner year for Palm Warbler, none were found this year. One Orange-crowned Warbler was seen at Wilna 3 Feb (M&JC). This is the fourth winter eBird record of this species in this Region.

**SPARRROWS–FINCHES**

The 20 Eastern Towhees found at a private farm in Leedstown 14 Dec (FA) was the highest winter count in eBird for the Region. The American Tree Sparrow is not found in this Region every year, but 3 were reported this winter; single birds were at Fickle Fen Rd., Mathews 21 Feb (MS), at Tayloe 3 Feb (M&JC), and at Hop Yard Landing, King George 17 Dec (RM). One Vesper Sparrow was found at New Pt. Comfort 21 Dec (MS). CBCers in the Pamontskee sector of the WCBC found this year’s high count of 45 Savannah Sparrows (EO, ABr) on a private farm. A high of 17 White-crowned Sparrows at K. G. Ponds (4 ads., 13 imms.) was less than half the eBird Regional winter high; forty-six others were seen at eight locations. After last year’s record-breaking numbers, Fox Sparrows dropped to more typical numbers this winter, with a total of 30 on the three CBCs and 26 additional birds noted from 11 locations. The high count was 9 at Wilna 14 Dec (LA). A total of 139 Eastern Meadowlarks were counted on the CBCs, down from last year’s 193, and 130 were reported from 10 other locations, with a high of 60 at Corbin Hall Dr., Middlesex 10 Feb (M&JC). Rusty Blackbirds were less common this year. Other then the 30 seen on the MCBC, the species was only reported from 3 locations: two at Beaverdam 13 Dec (G&RH), two in Leedstown 25 Jan (FA), and a flock at a private home in Gloucester 31 Jan–22 Feb, which maxed out at 25 birds 10 Feb (G&RH). The MCBC tallied 40 Boat-tailed Grackles, and a gigantic flock of 100,000 Common Grackles was seen near The Pocket 6 Dec (MB, GG). Baltimore Orioles are not found in this region every winter, so finding four here was remarkable: single birds were at Hawk Pt., Mathews 20 Dec (ph. JM), at Lottsburg, Northumberland 27 Jan–18 Mar (M&PK), in Gloucester 16 Feb (BB) and at Cedar Pt., Middlesex 7 Jan (ph. M&JC). For the sixth year in a row, a m. Painted Bunting wintered at a feeder in Wicomico Church, Northumberland. It arrived 16 Dec and was seen sporadically throughout the winter and into March (JC). A f. Evening Grosbeak was an exciting visitor to a feeder at Merry Pt., Lancaster, appearing 15 & 16 Jan and sporadically 10–28 Feb and on into March (FS). Though it was not a major irruption year, Pine Siskins and Purple Finches made several appearances this winter. Four Pine Siskins were found on the WBCBC and one on the WBCBC. Starting in mid-Dec, small numbers of Pine Siskins were also reported from six different feeders in the area, with the maximum being 8–10 in White Marsh, Gloucester 24 Jan (H&JW). Five Purple Finches were reported on the CBCs (1–2 each). Starting 8 Dec, the species also made appearances at eight feeders throughout the season, with the maximum being 8–10 in Gloucester 21 Feb (TK).

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During the three month period there were twenty-five days of snow and twenty days of rain, with an average temperature of 34 °F. A two week period in February of heavy snow and subzero temperatures left birds desperate for food. Eastern Bluebirds and Carolina Wrens were found dead in the snow. Sightings of note during the period were Snow Geese in Russell, Smyth, Tazewell, and Washington, Ross’s Geese and Common Goldeneyes on area CBC’s, and Redheads were plentiful throughout the area. Both Bald and Golden Eagles were found at several locations during the period. Eurasian Collared-Doves were counted on the Glade Spring CBC. The first recorded Short-eared Owl was found in Buchanan. Also in Buchanan was a first record for Lapland Longspurs.

**Abbreviations:**
- BP (Breaks Interstate Park, Dickenson)
- RRL (Rural Retreat L., Wythe)
- SWF (Saltville Well Fields, Smyth)

**Christmas Bird Counts:**
- BlCBC (Blackford, 27 Dec)
- BCCBC (Buchanan County, 20 Dec)
- GSCBC (Glade Spring, 4 Jan)
- NRCBC (New River, 20 Dec)

**GESE–GREBES**

A Snow Goose was found in Richlands, Tazewell 18 Dec (DO, CD). The first Snow Goose ever recorded on the BlCBC was discovered in Tazewell 27 Dec near the Clinch R. Also on 27 Dec two Snow Geese were discovered at the SWF (ME). Two Ross’s Geese were found at that same location 4 Jan (PM). A dark morph Snow Goose was observed on Russell Rd., Abingdon 31 Jan (DO), and a Ross’s Goose was found there at the same time (DC). A Snow Goose was observed in the area known as The Mudhole, Russell 23 Feb (J&JT).

The GSCBC had 2 Ross’s Geese on that count in the SWF. Two Ross’ Geese, probably the same birds, were observed at that location 2 Feb (PM). A Cackling Goose was reported at the SWF 2 Feb (PM). An American Black Duck, a species not common in Russell, made use of the Mudhole area 12 Jan (J&JT). A Northern Pintail was at that same location on the same date (J&JT).

On 2 Dec a Canvasback was sighted at Lincolnshire Pk. L., Tazewell (CD) as well as 10 Redheads (CD). Redheads were abundant throughout the area during the three month period, with 7 found at Falls Mills L., Tazewell 2 Dec (JP), 6 at that same location 25 Jan (DO), 5 at that location 9 Feb (JP), and 1 observed on the Clinch R. in Russell 29 Jan (J&JT).

Buffleheads appeared in high numbers for the area, with 48 being observed at Lincolnshire Pk. L., Tazewell 2 Dec (CD) and 32 on the same date at Falls Mills L., Tazewell (JP). Two Common Goldeneyes were discovered on RRL 20 Dec (ME, BH). A Common Goldeneye at the SWF was counted on the GSCBC. A Common Goldeneye was once again observed 29 Jan at the SWF (CD).

Ruddy Ducks were unusually abundant for the period. Eight were observed 2 Dec at Lincolnshire Pk. L., Tazewell (CD), 25 were found at Falls Mills L., Tazewell 2 Dec (JP) with 15 at the same location 5 Dec (CD). Fifteen Ruddy Ducks were counted 3 Dec in Burkes Garden, Tazewell (RB). One Ruddy Duck was discovered at RRL 20 Dec (ME, BH). One was observed 27 Dec at the SWF (ME). Six Ruddy Ducks were counted on the GSCBC (RH). On 10 Jan nine Ruddy Ducks were found at Falls Mills L., Tazewell (CD). Four more were found at that same location 25 Jan (DO) and 6 were at that location 9 Feb (JP). Ten Common Mergansers appeared at Lincolnshire Pk. L., Tazewell 2 Dec (CD).

The New R. above Fields Dam, Grayson was the location of 8 Common Mergansers 10 Feb (CS). Two Common Mergansers were discovered on the Clinch R. in Russell between St. Paul and Castlewood 17 Feb (JE). Three Horned Grebes were using the Falls Mills L., Tazewell 2 Dec (JP). A Christmas Eve Horned Grebe showed up at BP on Laurel L. (DR).
HAWKS–RAILS
A Rough-legged Hawk was seen circling above Burkes Garden, Tazewell 10 Jan (EO). Also in Burkes Garden, 2 Rough-legged Hawks 18 Jan (J&JP). A single Rough-legged Hawk was discovered near Pounding Mill, Tazewell 8 Feb (MA). A Bald Eagle was observed at Falls Mills L., Tazewell 5 Dec (CD). Another Bald Eagle was spotted 22 Dec perched along Rte. 72/65 between Fort Blackmore and Dungannon, Scott (JM). An ad. Bald Eagle was found along the Clinch R. in Russell in the proximity of Blackford 29 Jan (J&JT). A Bald Eagle was counted on the NRCBC (GM). An ad. Bald Eagle was observed perched in the Clifton Farm area of Russell 9 Jan (PH). The community of Big Rock in Buchanan was the location of a Bald Eagle sighting on the Levisa R. 21 Jan (ph. KH, TH, BHo). Two ad. Bald Eagles were observed at a nest in Burkes Garden, Tazewell 7 Feb (HCAS). An ad. Bald Eagle was spotted in the Brnks community of Buchanan 3 Feb (DR). Three Bald Eagles were found in the Corn Valley, Clifton Farm area of Russell 17 Jan (RCBC). An ad. Bald Eagle was discovered near the fairgrounds exit of Rte. 460 in Tazewell 25 Feb (DO). An imm. Golden Eagle was spotted along Clifton Farm Rd., Russell 7 Dec (PH). A Golden Eagle was found between Bland and Burkes Garden, Tazewell 1 Jan (SH, JK). An ad. Golden Eagle and an imm. Golden Eagle were observed in Burkes Garden, Tazewell 10 Jan (EO). Also in Burkes Garden, a sub-ad. Golden Eagle was spotted 18 Jan (J&JP) and another Golden Eagle was sighted there 7 Feb (HCAS). Two Golden Eagles were found in the Corn Valley and Clifton Area of Russell 17 Jan (RCBC). An ad. Golden Eagle was observed along River Mountain Rd. near Blackford, Russell 25 Jan (J&JT). Two Golden Eagles were spotted in Burkes Garden, Tazewell 12 Feb (CD). Five Virginia Rails were counted on the GSCBC (RH).

GULLS–FINCHES
Fifteen Bonaparte’s Gulls were found at Lincolnshire Pk. L., Tazewell 2 Dec (CD). On the same date 2 Bonaparte’s Gulls were at Falls Mills L., Tazewell (JP). Nine EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVES were found on the GSCBC (RH). A Short-eared Owl, a first for Buchanan, was found on the BCCBC at Southern Gap (ph. DC, CM, RM). The bird flushed from low vegetation and flew a short distance, but was soon located again (RM). An Eastern Screech-Owl was observed in Russell 17 Jan (RCBC). A red morph Eastern Screech-Owl was spotted beside Rte. 638 in Buchanan on the morning of 15 Jan (DO). A Great Horned Owl was heard in the Breaks community, Buchanan 8 Feb (DR). A pair of Red-headed Woodpeckers was reported in the Spring Lakes subdivision of Bristol 13 Feb (CR). A pair of American Kestrels, a species not common to Buchanan, was found at a surface mine in Hurley 9 Dec (DO). Another American Kestrel was discovered just west of the BP entrance on Rte. 80 in Dickenson 31 Jan (DR). Five Loggerhead Shrikes were logged on the GSCBC (RH). A Loggerhead Shrike was found on Clifton Farm, Russell 17 Jan (RCBC). The species is known to nest in that area (RM). A Loggerhead Shrike was found in Burkes Garden, Tazewell 10 Jan (EO) with one also there on 7 (HCAS) & 12 Feb (CD). On the NRCBC 11 Common Ravens were counted. Five Black-capped Chickadees were found at Hidden Valley WMA, Washington 12 Dec (JS) and 2 were at High Knob Recreation Area, Wise 13 Dec (JS). A Brown-headed Nuthatch was reported at a feeder in Bristol 17 Feb (KG). The Garden Hole Rd. in BP was the site of a Brown Creeper sighting 15 Jan (DR). A Brown Creeper was also spotted on Hokie Hill Dr. in Lebanon, Russell 20 Feb (LH). Two Gray Catbirds were reported in the Region during Feb, one in the Covington Rd. area of Tazewell 13 Feb (TL) along with a Brown Thrasher, and the other in Marion, Smyth 14 Feb (CSt). A Brown Thrasher was found at a home in Breaks, Buchanan 13 Feb (DR). The bird has spent most of the winter there (DR). A FOS Brown Thrasher was spotted near Corn Valley Rd., Russell 23 Feb (J&JT). A lone Brown Thrasher was discovered on Hearlds Valley Rd. in Castlewood, Russell 16 Feb (KHa). Also on 16 Feb a Brown Thrasher was observed at a home in Lebanon, Russell (TH). A Brown Thrasher came to a feeder in Bristol 20 Feb (RH). Another Brown Thrasher was found in Blackwater, Lee 21 Feb (CMo). A Brown Thrasher appeared at a home feeder in the Breaks community, Buchanan 18 Feb (DR). It joined one that had spent the winter there (DR). A FOS Pine Warbler was a welcome visitor to a yard feeder in Abingdon 1 Feb (JK, SH). A second Pine Warbler was reported in Tannersville, Tazewell 16 Feb (TG). Ten Eastern Towhees were observed at feeders in Lebanon, Russell 15 Feb (TH). Fox Sparrows appeared at several locations throughout the Region. One visited a feeder in Rugby, Grayson 8 Jan (AH). On 16 Feb a Fox Sparrow came to a yard in Elk Garden, Russell (J&JT). Also in Russell on 16 Feb a Fox Sparrow was found underneath feeders in Lebanon (TH, LH), with 2 showing up at that location 20 Feb (LH). Two Fox Sparrows came to feeders during
A significant movement of ducks into the area was detected on 3–4 Dec, followed by higher than average counts for many waterbirds through the winter. Some rarities reappeared at locations where they have been seen in previous years, including a Pacific Loon and a Lesser Black-backed Gull at Kerr Reservoir, while a few
reports represent first or second county records. Perching birds did not account for as many unusual reports this season as did other groups, but there were some locally significant records and a decent showing by some winter finches.

**Abbreviations:** Kerr (John H. Kerr Res.), Charlotte [upper lake only], Halifax [upper lake only], and Mecklenburg [lower lake]; SRR (Sandy R. Res., Prince Edward)

**Christmas Bird Counts:** KLCBC (Kerr Lake, 2 Jan)

**Cackling Goose–Ruddy Duck**

A Cackling Goose found 27 Dec at Wilck's L., Farmville, was the second Prince Edward record (ph. ES) and the only Regional report this season. Prince Edward birders also had an unexpected opportunity to practice immature swan identification this season. On 24 Jan an ad. Mute Swan appeared at Wilck's Lk., Farmville, with two imm. TRUMPETER SWANS, a first county record (ph. ES; video CMS). The three swans flew away from the lake that evening, reappeared there the following day, but were not seen later. A flock of 46 swans at SRR 15 Jan all appeared to be Tundras, though they were seen at some distance. This is a Prince Edward high count for Tundra Swan (or swan species). The season's high count of Canvasbacks was 13, seen from Staunton R. SP, Halifax, on 14 Dec (AD, PG); the six seen at SRR 18 Feb (ES) was the largest group away from Kerr, with several reports of smaller counts from other sites. Redheads moved into the area in unusually large numbers on 2 Dec, with 16 that day at Holliday Lk. SP, Appomattox/Buckingham (ES), and 44 at SRR the next day (ES). A Surf Scoter at Briery Cr. Lk., Prince Edward 3 Dec (ph. ES; CMS) was the fourth county record for the species; one was also seen briefly over lower Kerr 6 Dec (AD, JB) for the only other Regional report. Two White-winged Scoters were photographed at SRR 13 Jan (ES); until several were seen in Prince Edward last winter this scoter had not been reported in that county; one on lower Kerr 25 Jan (AB) and two near the dam at Kerr 1 Feb (PG) were the only other reports. Three Long-tailed Ducks were at SRR on 10 Jan (ES), a high count for Prince Edward, and a single male was there on 28 Jan (ph. ES); the only other report was two seen from Palmer Point, Kerr 21 Feb (AD, PG). Common Mergansers appeared in better numbers than in many recent winters; three were at SRR on 15 Jan (ES) and up to six were there on several subsequent dates (ES, CMS) through the end of the period. One was also found on upper Kerr, seen from Staunton R. SP, Halifax 14 Dec (AD, PG). A flock of 16 Red-breasted Mergansers at Holliday Lk. SP, Appomattox/Buckingham 2 Dec (ES) was unusually large for those counties and was the largest single group reported in the Region this season. Seasonal high counts of Ruddy Ducks included 193 at SRR 3 Dec (ES) and 220 on upper Kerr (Halifax/Mecklenburg) 27 Jan (JB).

**RED-THROATED LOON–LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL**

The only Red-throated Loon reports were from lower Kerr, with several reports of 1 or 2 individuals from Palmer Point on dates ranging from 10 Jan (JB, AD, PG) though 9 Feb (ph. ES). A PACIFIC LOON appeared, or reappeared, on lower Kerr, where one has been seen most winters since the Region’s first record on 6 Dec 2003. It was found 6 Dec (AD, JB) and relocated several times at least as late as 9 Feb (ph. ES). Hundreds of Horned Grebes also spent the winter on lower Kerr, peaking at an estimated 600 on 9 Feb (ES). For comparison, the maximum count reported elsewhere regionally was 13 at Briery Cr. Lk., Prince Edward 3 Dec (CMS). A single Red-necked Grebe was also reported from the KCBC and 11 Feb (AD), but none from elsewhere in the Region. By the end of Feb a pair of Bald Eagles had returned to their nest at Briery Cr. Lk., Prince Edward, a site where they first nested last year (CMS), and the species was reported regularly elsewhere in the Region, hinting at its ongoing recovery across eastern Virginia. One or two Spotted Sandpipers could again be found for much of the season below the dam at Tailrace Pk., Kerr, but were not reported elsewhere in the Region; first reported 6 Dec (JB, AD), they remained through the end of the season. As in recent winters, a single ad. Lesser Black-backed Gull also spent the winter at Tailrace Pk., first noted 27 Dec (JB, AD, PG) and remaining through the end of the period (m.obs.).

**EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE–PINE SISKIN**

Eurasian Collared-Doves maintained their tenuous presence in the Region, with reports of single birds from South Boston, Halifax 21 Jan (PG) and Blackstone, Nottoway 13 Feb (KH). Loggerhead Shrikes were reported from two locations: on various dates through the winter at Palmer Springs, Mecklenburg (m.obs.), the most dependable area for the species in recent years, and just north of Keysville, Charlotte 22 & 27 Jan (ph. CMS). By the end of the period, Common Raven nesting was
Southeast

Temperatures in December averaged 2.9 degrees above normal but this trend would not continue. As January rolled around, temperatures dipped to an average just below normal for the month and then bottomed out in February when temperatures averaged 9.5 degrees below normal. Overall, precipitation averaged 0.5 inches above normal for the three months with two February snowstorms impacting the Region. In fact, in Richmond, February 2015 went down as the sixth coldest and ninth snowiest on record.

The two long running Christmas Bird Counts in the region, the 75th Hopewell CBC and the 38th Williamsburg CBC, were both run on December 14. Hopewell recorded 117 species, which is the second highest species total ever recorded. Williamsburg set a new record with 120 species recorded. Highlights of both counts are in the text.

Mike Wilson of The Center for Conservation Biology puts it this way: “This past year of 2014 was one of the most memorable and successful conservation leaps for the Virginia Red-cockaded Woodpecker population in recent history.” In a nutshell, 4 new breeding pairs were established at Piney Grove Preserve in 2014, surpassing the original conservation goal of 10 breeding pairs made in 2001 when the preserve was established in order to help this imperiled species recover. This year's winter population survey detected 67 birds within 14 groups, exceeding the previous modern day high count of 57 birds in 2013. We hope for continued success as this iconic species makes its comeback and we thank CCB and the Nature Conservancy for all their hard work in facilitating this process.

Noteworthy rarities this season included Eurasian Wigeon, White-winged Dove, Ash-throated Flycatcher, and a Western Tanager that just keeps coming back.

**Abbreviations**: City Point (Petersburg National Battlefield, City Point Unit, Hopewell); College Creek (College Creek Hawkwatch, Colonial Parkway, James City); Dutch Gap (Dutch Gap Conservation Area, Chesterfield); Hog (Hog Island W.M.A., Surry); Jamestown (Jamestown Island, James City); Mainland Farm (Mainland Farm/Drummond’s Field, James City); Swift Creek (Swift Creek Res., Chesterfield)

**Christmas Bird Counts**: HOCBC (Hopewell, 14 Dec); WICBC (Williamsburg, 14 Dec).

**GEES–GREBES**

Greater White-fronted Geese were present in the Region this winter in greater than expected numbers. The
HOCBC recorded nine birds, which established a new high count; there had never been more than one recorded on any of the previous counts. The high count for the entire Region came from two locations. Seventeen birds were photographed at a Prince George impoundment 21 Dec (ABr) and another 17 were found on Turkey Is. Rd., Henrico 6 Feb (MB, GG, SR). At least one bird lingered on this road until 14 Feb (m.obs.). Elsewhere, one Greater White-fronted Goose was at Mainland Farm 15–16 Jan (BW, BT), 20 Jan (MA) and 1–2 Feb (BW). This individual was most likely the same one that had been present in late Oct and Nov at this location. A Snow Goose was noted at Mainland Farm 1–3 Dec (BW). Three Ross’s Geese were recorded on the HOCBC, a typical number for that count. Two Ross’s Geese found at Little Creek Dam, James City 21 Feb established a second record for the county (ph. by BW). These two geese remained in the area throughout the end of the period (m.obs.). Nine Cackling Geese on the HOCBC set a new high count. One Cackling Goose was also recorded on the WICBC, found at Hog. Another Cackling Goose was at Mainland Farm 14 Jan (BW) and was seen sporadically at this location through 2 Feb (m.obs.). 4,671 Canada Geese recorded on the WICBC was a new high for that count. Numbers of Gadwall set new high counts on both CBCs, with 397 tallied on Williamsburg and 365 on Hopewell. 169 Gadwall counted at College Creek 15 Feb was a new local peak count (BW). An ad. m. EURASIAN WIGEON was discovered at Diascund Res., New Kent 26 Dec (ph. by EO). The same bird was seen again the following day (WE) and then finally on 1 Jan (WF). Four Blue-winged Teal made an appearance on the HOCBC, the first ones since the 2000 count. A nice count of 66 Redheads was made on Turkey Island Rd., Henrico 1 Feb (EO). 3,077 Ring-necked Ducks counted on the HOCBC shattered the old high count of 894 made in 1994. Sixty-one Surf Scoters were counted off Seaford, York 6 Dec (DY), establishing a new local peak count. A few White-winged Scoters were found in the Region this winter. One was seen off Jamestown 12 Dec (MA, NN) and one m. was at the same location 1 & 3 Feb (BW). Others reported included one at Swift Creek 20–22 Feb (EO, JE), one ad. m. at Half Moon Beach, Richmond 28 Feb (B'Tu, VB), and one at Jordan Point Marina, Prince George 28 Feb (ph. by EO, LB). An ad. m. Black Scoter was seen off Jamestown 2–3 Dec (ph. NN, MA, NB, BW). Another Black Scoter was seen from Fort Boykin Historical Park, Isle of Wight 20 Jan (TC). Long-tailed Duck sightings included two off Seaford, York 6 Dec (DY) and one off Jamestown 15 Jan (BT), 25–26 Jan (N&EE, BW), 1, 3 & 4 Feb (BW), 7 Feb (FD) and 22 Feb (BT). Finally, a Long-tailed Duck was spotted off the Dockside Restaurant, Prince George 28 Feb (ph. EO, LB). Unusual for the city of Richmond, up to four Northern Bobwhite were foraging in a residential yard at Stratford Hills 6–28 Dec (ph. by AS). A Red-throated Loon, rare inland, was seen at Swift Creek 16 Feb (EO, JE). The only Red-necked Grebe reported in the Region was one photographed at Swift Creek 16 Jan (EO).

**CORMORANTS—WRENS**

3,605 Double-crested Cormorants on the HOCBC was a new high count. As has been the case in previous years, at least one Osprey spent the winter at Dutch Gap, detected on 13 (JF) & 25 Jan (WE). Eight Cooper’s Hawks tallied on the WICBC was a new high for that count. A Northern Goshawk, encountered in Charles City 17 Jan, was an excellent sighting (ABr). Twenty-seven Red-shouldered Hawks was a new high count for the WICBC. A King Rail was recorded on the HOCBC for the fourth consecutive year. The WICBC recorded three Virginia Rails and one Sora. An estimated count of 630 American Coots at Little Creek Res., James City 22 Feb provided a new local peak count (BT). Twenty-four Black-bellied Plovers were mixed in with a flock of Dunlin on a large sandbar off Seaford, York 6 Dec (DY, JH). Four Semipalmated Plovers off Beecham Dr., York 13 Feb provided a second local winter record (ph. AH). 107 Killdeer counted at Mainland Farm 10 Feb was a new local peak count (BW). A Spotted Sandpiper, rare in winter, was seen at Yorktown, York 17 Jan (NBo). An estimated 1000 Dunlin off Seaford, York 6 Dec set a new local high count for any season (DY). A good count of 55 Wilson’s Snipe was made at Canterbury Farm, New Kent 6 Dec (MB, GG). An imm. Iceland Gull, the only one reported in the Region this winter, was photographed in Hopewell 6 Dec (ABr). A first-cycle Glacous Gull was found on the frozen James R. off Chapel Is. in downtown Richmond 21 Feb (ph. AB). A WHITE-WINGED DOVE appeared at a feeder on Silverleaf Terr., Chesterfield 10 Feb (ph. PB), representing only the third record for the Virginia Piedmont. The bird was present sporadically through 22 Feb, delighting the many birders who went to go see it. An unidentified Archilochus hummingbird was present at a residence at Lake Powell Point, James City 12 Nov–8 Dec (ph. CL). An imm. f. Rufous Hummingbird appeared at a residence at Ford’s Colony, James City 30 Nov (GT) and was subsequently banded and identified to species 10 Dec.
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It is unclear how long the bird remained in the area. A second *Selasphorus* hummingbird appeared at the same residence in mid-Dec, but this bird was never banded and it is also unknown how long this bird remained. **American Kestrel** numbers on the HOCBC continued on a downward trend with only five birds recorded on this year’s count. An **ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER** was discovered at City Point 11 Jan (ph. AB). Interestingly, this bird was found at the exact same location that an Ash-throated Flycatcher frequented in December 2012. Unlike the 2012 bird, this one was a one day wonder and seen only by the few birders that made it down there that day (EO, BC, JF, WE, MA). A **White-eyed Vireo** at Sunday Pk., Chesterfield 4 & 10 Jan was an excellent find and only the fifth winter Piedmont record (ph. JE). A **Blue-headed Vireo** was found in Bassett Hall Woods, Williamsburg 23 Jan, providing a second local January record (ph. NN, MA). Scarce this winter, a single **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was a good find on the HOCBC. Six **Marsh Wrens** recorded on the WICBC was a new high count. A Marsh Wren on the HOCBC was only the sixth record for the count.

**GNATCATCHERS–ORIOLES**
A lingering or wintering **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was encountered in Hopewell 6 Dec and then again 1 Jan (ph. ABr). New thrush high counts for the WICBC included 436 **Eastern Bluebirds** and 62 **Hermit Thrushes**. A **Gray Catbird**, scarce in winter, was found during the James River Winter Bird Count held on 25 Jan (fide LB). Three **Black-and-white Warblers** found on the WICBC was impressive and was also a new high count. A **Nashville Warbler**, first discovered at City Point 7 Nov, remained at that location until at least 22 Jan (JG, AR, BRYBC, ph. AD). A late **Common Yellowthroat** was encountered in a clearing on Route 5, Charles City 28 Dec (ph. ABr). Hopewell continued to be a hot spot for lingering warblers, evidenced by a **Cape May Warbler** that was beautifully photographed there 21 Dec (ABr). Other warblers photographed in Hopewell this season included a **Chestnut-sided Warbler 13, 21, & 29 Dec (ABr)** and a **Yellow-throated Warbler**, continuing from the fall season, 7 Dec (ABr). A **Northern Parula** at Harwood’s Mill Res., York 13 Feb provided a first local Feb record and, as far as could be determined, a first Feb record for the entire state (AHan). Not unexpectedly, **Palm Warblers** were recorded in the Region this season, but a count of thirteen birds, 9 “eastern” and 4 “western,” at Shirley 3 Jan was an impressive number (ph. AB). The latest Palm Warbler reported was a “western” at City Point 17 & 20 Jan (ph. AR, BRYBC, by AD). An **American Tree Sparrow**, rare this far south, was near Ringfield Plantation, York 14 Feb (GH). An estimated 100+ **Chipping Sparrows** in Colonial Williamsburg 27 Jan was a new local single site high count for any season (MA, NN). Due to frigid February temperatures and snow cover that pushed hundreds of sparrows out to the road sides, a trio of rare sparrows were documented in James City, including two **Vesper Sparrows** at Gospel Spreading Farm/Treasure Island Rd. 18 Feb (ph. BT), 19 Feb (BW) and 20 Feb (AH). A **Lark Sparrow** at College Creek 19 Feb provided a sixth local, second winter and first Feb record (ph. BW). Finally, a **Lincoln’s Sparrow** on the Colonial Parkway near...
Jamestown 20 Feb established a first local winter record (ph. BT). A new high count of 473 Swamp Sparrows was tallied on the HOCBC. For the seventh winter in a row, a m. **Western Tanager** was at Settler’s Mill, *James City*, arriving in the previous season on 10 Nov and remaining throughout the period (B&AW, m. obs.). Another Western Tanager, a f., was at Rolling Woods, *James City* for the second winter in a row, although the exact dates of arrival and/or departure were unknown (*fide* DC). A m. **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**, very rare in winter, was photographed at a feeder at Windsor Forest, *James City* 16 Dec (GG).

Five **Baltimore Orioles** were noted on the HOCBC. Elsewhere, one m. was at Greensprings West, *James City* 15–22 Dec (JT) and one imm. m. was at Settler’s Mill, *James City* 14 Dec–22 Jan and then again 11 & 13 Feb (B&AW).

**Observers:** Mary Ames (MAm), Matt Anthony, Lewis Barnett, Nancy Barnhart, Paul Bedell, Vickie Bell, Blue Ridge Young Birder’s Club, Nick Bolgiano (NBo), Arun Bose, Allen Bryan (ABr), Mitchell Byrd, Beth Christian, Dan Cristol, Terri Cuthriell, Fenton Day, Adam D’Onofrio, Wendy Ealding, Jack Esworthy IV, Nick & Elisa Flanders, William Foster, Janice Frye, Geoff Giles, James Gould, Adrian Hanline (AHan), Andy Hawkins, Jordan Hogge, Cathy Lohwater, Nick Newberry, Ellison Orcutt, Bruce Peterjohn, Andrew Rapp, Sandy Robertson, Anita Storino, Brian Taber, Gale Treiber, Jennifer Trevino, Brian Turner (Btu), Arlene Williams, Bill Williams, Dave Youker

Frigid weather permeated the Region with unrelenting regularity from late January through the end of the report period. Mid-February found winds in excess of 70 mph off the immediate coast as named storms broke snowfall and temperature records across much of the country. Parts of the upper Chesapeake Bay froze as did virtually all non-tidal waters. The toll these extended events exerted on frugivores and ground-foraging species may never be fully known. Among the birds that shook the season’s wicked chills were Eurasian Green-winged Teal, Common Eider, Harlequin Duck, three alcid species, Thayer’s Gull, Western Tanager, Painted Bunting, and Common Redpoll.

**Abbreviations:** Back Bay (Back Bay NWR, Virginia Beach); Beasley (Beasley Tract, Princess Anne WMA, Virginia Beach); Cape Charles (town of Cape Charles, *Northampton*); CBBT (Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel)
s. of Northampton); CCB (Center for Conservation Biology, College of William and Mary/Virginia Commonwealth University); Craney (Craney Island, Portsmouth); Chinc. (Chincoteague NWR, Accomack); First Landing (First Landing SP, Virginia Beach); Grandview (Grandview Nature Preserve, Hampton); HRBT (Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel, Hampton/Norfolk); KSP (Kiptopeke SP, Northampton); Little Is. (Little Island Park, Virginia Beach); Lynnhaven (Lynnhaven Inlet, Virginia Beach); Magothy Bay (Magothy Bay NAP, Northampton); MMBT (Monitor Merrimac Bridge Tunnel, Newport News/Portsmouth); PHP (Pleasure House Point, Virginia Beach); Picketts (Picketts Harbor NAP, Northampton); Rudee (Rudee Inlet, Virginia Beach)

Christmas Bird Counts: BBCBC (Back Bay, 29 Dec); CCCBC (Cape Charles, 30 Dec); CBBTCBC (Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, 26 Dec ); ChCBC (Chincoteague, 29 Dec); LCCBC (Little Creek, 31 Dec); NaCBC (Nassawadox, 21 Dec); NNCBC (Newport News, 21 Dec); NRCBC (Nansemond River, 2 Jan)

**WATERFOWL–IBIS**

A Greater White-fronted Goose was at the Oyster Landfill, Northampton 2 Jan (ph. LR). Ross's Goose reports included one in Cape Charles 7–14 Dec (ESB), one at Chinc. 16 Dec (GM) through 7 Feb (EM et al.), 2–3 in Cheriton, Northampton 2 (AL) & 3 Jan (ESB, TD), 2 at Indiantown Rd., Northampton 7 Jan (ESB, TD), and 2 near Gargatha Landing, Accomack 7 Feb (ESB fide HA). Nine neck-collared f. Snow Geese at Chinc. late Nov/early Dec had each been marked on Bylot Is., Nunavut, Canada as follows: one 7 May 2009 (hatched in 2008 or earlier), 2 on 11 Aug 2010 (hatched 2009 or earlier), 2 on 7 & 9 Aug 2011, respectively (hatched in 2010 or earlier), one on 13 Aug 2012 (hatched in 2011 or earlier) and 3 on 8, 9, & 11 Aug 2013, respectively (hatched in 2012 or earlier)(fide RBr). Cackling Goose observations included one at the Oyster Landfill, Northampton 3 Jan (RBr), 3 in Cape Charles 6 Jan (ESB, TD), one near Sherwood L., Virginia Beach 15 Jan (JM) with 2 at that site 28 Feb (AB), and a peak count of 6 at Eyre Hall, Northampton 25 & 26 Jan (ESB). Eurasian Wigeon detections were widespread with complex distributions throughout the season, certainly a function of open water availability. Two were at Craney 4 Dec (RB et al.) through 7 Feb (m. obs.) with one remaining into spring. Simultaneously, at least one was at Magothy Bay 6 Dec (RT) through 6 Jan (TD). The season’s one day peak count was 4 during the ChCBC. Those four, plus one for the LCCBC, 2 at Magothy Bay 1 Jan (ESB), and one for the NRCBC accounted for 8 different individuals over the 5-day 29 Dec–2 Jan period. Was a Magothy Bay bird the one in Cape Charles, ~7 km away, 25 Feb (SG) into March? Proximity (~10 km) suggests one in L. Smith Terrace, Virginia Beach 19 & 21 Feb (ph. TT) was the one at HP 9 Jan (BA, m. obs.) through 8 Feb (TD, PR); singles were at Chinc. 20 Jan (RM, LS) and at Back Bay 8 Feb (AA). A m. EURASIAN GREEN-WINGED TEAL was at Craney 11 Dec (DY et al.) and 24 Jan (ph. JS, LA et al.). The m. King Eider at Queen Anne's Landing, Accomack as the fall season ended was last noted 1 Dec (JH). A Common Eider off CBBT’s third island 6 Dec (m. obs.) was one of many reported from that complex through 28 Feb, the day the season’s peak count of 12 was recorded (FF et al.). Elsewhere, 2–3 were at Rudee 11 Dec (ph. K&TB) through 10 Jan (m. obs.), one was at Chinc. 17 Dec (GM), 11 were tallied for the NaCBC, 2 were off Smith Is., Northampton during the CCCBC, 2 were at Little Cr., Norfolk 27 Dec (NB), one was off First Landing 13 (TT) & 15 (BA) Jan, and 4 were near Metompkin Is., Accomack 8 Feb (EO fide HA). Two Harlequin Ducks were off Queen Anne's Landing, Accomack 31 Dec (GS). Subsequent reports, mostly from the CBBT beginning 20 Jan (5) (BPa, FS), concluded with a peak count of 8 off island three 28 Feb (FF et al.); a m. was on the western side of the Bay at Grandview 13 Feb (FF). Red-necked Grebes were present throughout the season, although in lower numbers than in 2014. The highest single-day total was 7 (2 at KSP/5 off the CBBT) on 18 Feb (ESB). An Eared Grebe was at Chinc. 27 Dec (FH). An American White Pelican was at the ESVNWR 27 Dec (Anonymous). A flock of 30+ over Owls Creek, Virginia Beach 1 Jan (ph. MM fide KB) was one of the highest Virginia totals ever recorded for this species. Subsequently, 2 were at Back Bay 15 Jan (BA, GMi) with 4 at nearby Sandbridge, Virginia Beach 16 Jan (ph. DL et al.). Cattle Egrets are rare Coastal Plain winter visitors. Thus 3 off Princess Anne Rd., Virginia Beach 16 Jan (GT) and one near the junc. of Muddy Cr. and Drum Pt. Rds., Virginia Beach 13 Feb (ph. PM) were noteworthy. A Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, also rare in winter, was at PHP 17 Dec (SD, BH). White Ibis were encountered in lower Virginia Beach throughout the report period with a high count of 88 at Beasley 19 Jan (CO).
RAPTORS–BLACK SKIMMER

A **Golden Eagle** was a welcomed addition to the NaCBC’s cumulative species list. A **Northern Goshawk** was at Devil’s Ditch, *Northampton* 1 Feb (ESB). **American Avocets** were at Craney 6 Dec (2) (JS, SDa) through 24 Jan (2) (m. obs.) with a high count of 5 there for the NRCBC. That facility also hosted a **Spotted Sandpiper** 29 Jan & 5 Feb (RB et al.). A 20 Jan CCB survey of the CBBT, HRBT, and MMBT “rocky islands” documented 86 **Purple Sandpipers**, 64 **Sanderlings**, 38 **Ruddy Turnstones**, 21 **Least Sandpipers** and 1 **Western Sandpiper** (*fide* MW). A **WILSON’S PHALAROPE** at Craney 4 (ph. VB et al.) & 11 Dec (BW et al.) was “one of the latest records for North America north of FL/TX, where [the species] is still a great rarity in December” (*fide* ESB).

A **Parasitic Jaeger** was off CBBT island four during the CBBTCBC. An on-land **Dovekie** thrilled Winter Waterfowl Walk participants at Back Bay 17 Jan (BA et al.). Subsequent reports documented one northbound off Cape Charles 26 Jan, another from Cape Charles 30 Jan (ESB), one off Chinc. 31 Jan (GM), one off 85th St., Virginia Beach 1 Feb (AB, TT), one off Pickett’s 3 Feb (BT), 2 off Little Is. 4 Feb (AB, TT), and one off Little Is. 7 Feb (KG). A whale watching excursion by jet-ski resulted in the striking documentation of a **THICK-BILLED MURRE** off Ft. Story, Virginia Beach 12 Feb (ph. BL); a second was at Rudee 17 Feb (AB, TT). These were the first recorded since one was photographed offshore 11 Feb 2006 (BP). **Razorbills** reported 26 Dec (CBBTCBC) through 8 Feb (5 off Little Is.) (DCa) included one off Pickett’s 3 Feb (BT) and a high count of 70 off Little Is. 4 Feb (AB, TT). An ad. **Black-headed Gull** at Lynnhaven 27 Dec (AB) was likely the one counted for the LCCBC. A color-banded (C3E) **Herring Gull** at Messick, Poquoson 8 Feb (ph. DP) had been tagged on Mt. Desert Rock, ME 24 Jul 2013 (*fide* JA). An ad. **THAYER’S GULL** recorded during the CBBTCBC was present 27 Dec (ph. YK, ESB) and 9 Jan (ESB).

The CBBTCBC also had a first-cycle **Iceland Gull**. Additional reports included an ad. at First Landing 31 Dec (ph. AB, AD) and 5 Jan (EG, GM), a third-cycle bird off the CBBT 3 Jan (RM, RJ), a first-cycle at Rudee 7 Jan (CJ, GG), a second-cycle off CBBT island one 8 Jan (AB, TT), 2 off the CBBT 9 Jan (ESB), and one “imm.”

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off CBBT island two 28 Feb (FF et al., ph. PM). Single **Glaucous Gulls** were noted from the CBBT first island 3 Jan (KF, RM), at Bull’s Landing, **Northampton** 6 Jan (ESB, TD), off the CBBT 21 Jan (ESB), off Cape Henry, Virginia Beach 25 Jan (m. obs.), and at Chinc. 11 Feb (JB, CM). Late-staying **Royal Terns** included 2 at Craney 4 Dec (RB et al.), one at Lynnhaven (AB, TT, ABo), and one at PHP 4 Jan (AB, ABo, TT), then 6 at PHP 7 Jan (PS). **Black Skimmers** also lingered, primarily in the PHP/Lynnhaven area, with a peak of 30 at the latter 2 Jan (RM); the last reported was one at Rudee 31 Jan (BA).

**WHITE-WINGED DOVE–FINCHES**

A **White-winged Dove** was off Cove Point Rd., Virginia Beach 16 Feb (LK). A **Barn Owl** was heard in Chincoteague, **Accomack** 15 Dec (GM). A **Short-eared Owl** was at Mariner’s Pt., **Accomack** 27 Dec (FH); 2–3 were at Saxis, **Accomack** 19 Jan through 7 Feb (SDi) and one was at Craney 7 Feb (ph. KR). The **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** in Hampton at the end of the autumn period remained until at least 7 Dec (SB, BB). A **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was off Burroughs Rd., Virginia Beach 7 Dec (TT) and one was on the NaCBC. Two **Lapland Longspurs** detected at Grandview during the NNCBC were seen by m. obs. through 9 Feb (BW); another was at Devil’s Ditch, **Northampton** 1 Jan (ESB) and one was at Craney 7 Feb (ph. AH). The 4 **Snow Buntings** at Craney 4 Dec (BT et al.) were not nearly as exciting as the 14–18 at the tip of Grandview that m. obs. trekked ~6 mi. round trip to find 20 Dec (NNCBC) through 25 Feb (FF); one was at Craney 22 & 29 Jan (RB et al.) and 2 were at Ann’s Cove, **Accomack** 29 Jan (LG). A f. **WESTERN TANAGER** had birders flocking to PHP 22 Jan (ph. EMi) through 7 Feb (DCa), the last date it was reported. Another f. Western Tanager in Chesapeake 28 Feb (ph. KK) “stayed for almost 2 weeks.” **Painted Buntings** dazzled the Region 4 Jan (BM) through 28 Feb with a one-day peak count of 3 (2m., 1 f.) in Great Bridge, Chesapeake 26 Feb (BM). A Lindale Ln., Chesapeake feeder hosted a f. 14 Jan (ph. TW) until at least 1 Feb (ph. RF, MM); a m. was at that site 22 Jan (ph. TW). Single males were also at the Chesapeake Golf Course, Chesapeake 20 Jan (ph. AH), at L. Pam, Portsmouth 3–26 Feb (K&JS), off Seaboard Rd., Virginia Beach 17 Feb (CG), and at KSP 25–28 Feb (ph. AP). A **Dickcissel** was near Taylor Cr., **Northampton** 3 Jan (ESB). Single **Black-and-white Warblers** were at Weyanoke Sanctuary, Norfolk (DF), off Whitehouse Lane, Virginia Beach (TT), and at Cape Charles NAP (KF fide HA), all on 27 Dec; one was on the Old Dominion University campus, Norfolk 3 Feb (AA). A **Nashville Warbler** was in Norfolk 2 Dec (BA). A **Prairie Warbler** was at Back Bay 8 & 17 Dec (JE) and 3 Jan (BA); another was near Locustville, **Accomack** 31 Dec (ph. GA). A **Clay-colored Sparrow** was at Princess Anne WMA, Virginia Beach 28 Dec (ph. AB) and a **Lincoln’s Sparrow** was on the CCCBC. A thoroughly described **Scarlet Tanager** for the LCCBC appears to be Virginia’s second winter record; the Gold Book cites “1, Williamsburg, the first week in Dec 1984.” One to 2 **Brewer’s Blackbirds** were in Onancock, **Accomack** 17 & 18 Feb (DM). **Baltimore Orioles** are “rare to locally uncommon but regular” in winter. So 10 at Inland Colony Development, Chesapeake 21 Dec (EF) and up to 21 (“average 13–14/day”) throughout the season (ph. KK) also in Chesapeake ~10 km from the aforementioned site were more than exceptional!! Two **Common Redpolls** at PHP 15 Jan (ph. AH) were the vanguard of widely scattered reports through 20 Feb (J&TM fide ESB). A one-day total of 12 on 17 Feb included 10 at Rudee (AB, TT), one at Hunt Club Forest, Virginia Beach (ph. K&TB) and one at Wardtown, **Northampton** (RT). Others noted were singles in Parksley, **Accomack** 2 & 4 Feb (ph. VK), in the Willoughby section of Norfolk 14–16 Feb (CL), and in L. Smith Terrace, Virginia Beach 16 Feb (TT).