



VIRGINIA BIRDS

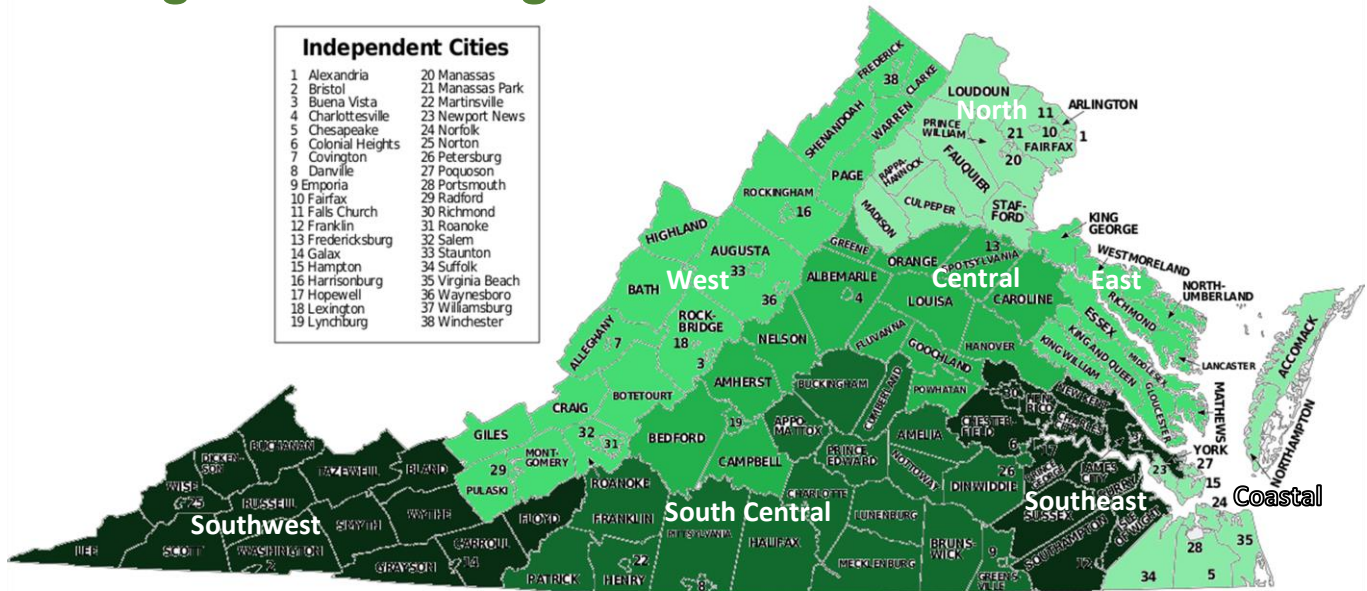
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Virginia Birds Regions



Virginia Birds

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

Season reports due to Regional Editors:

Winter (Dec – Feb): 15 Mar Spring (Mar – May): 15 Jun
 Summer (Jun – Jul): 15 Aug Fall (Aug – Nov): 15 Dec

Terms and Abbreviations

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

Abbreviations

ad. (ads.)	adult(s)
a. r.	audio recording
BBS	Breeding Bird Survey
CBC	Christmas Bird Count
Cr.	Creek
Dr.	Drive
et al.	and others
f.	female
<i>fide</i>	vouched by
FOS	First of Season
Ft.	Fort
Gold Book	<i>Virginia's Birdlife: An Annotated Checklist</i> . Virginia Avifauna No. 7, 4 th Ed. (2007).
Hwy.	Highway
Is.	Island(s), Isle(s)
imm. (imms.)	immature(s)
juv. (juvs.)	juvenile(s)
L.	Lake
Ln.	Lane
m.	male
m. obs.	multiple observers
Mt./Mtn.	Mount/Mountain
NAP	Natural Area Preserve
NF	National Forest
NFC	Nocturnal Flight Call
NHP	National Historical Park
NP	National Park
NWR	National Wildlife Refuge
ph.	photograph
Pk.	Park
Pkwy.	Parkway
Pt.	Point
R.	River
Rd.	Road
Res.	Reservoir
RP	Regional Park
Rt.	Route
SF	State Forest
SP	State Park
SR	State Road, State Route
VARCOM	Virginia Avian Records Committee
VDWR	Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources
v. r.	video recording
VSO	Virginia Society of Ornithology
WMA	Wildlife Management Area
*	specimen collected

On the cover: Ashley Lohr's photo of an American Flamingo in *Accomack* 12 October 2023.

Editor's Corner

Cheers to a momentous occasion for *Virginia Birds*! With this issue, which combines reports from Summer and Fall 2023, the journal has now been caught up to its real-time publication schedule. We anticipate this will be the last double-issue for the foreseeable future, with the Winter 2023-2024 season returning to a single-issue format published on a quarterly schedule. This project has been a long time coming; when I took over as Editor nearly two years ago, no issue of *Virginia Birds* had been published since Summer 2020. The task ahead of myself and my editorial team was immense – we were already two years behind publication schedule, and only stood to get further behind as the seasons continued their inexorable march. We were also faced with a difficult choice: backfill the missing issues to avoid a gap in the ornithological record, or leave them unpublished to save the journal from getting to far off schedule. We opted for the former, and while it was no small challenge, we are confident we made the right decision by preserving the continuity of the *Virginia Birds* ornithological record. Immense thanks for this project are due to the editorial team, who all rolled up their sleeves, committed to getting us back on track, and made it happen. They have all worked tirelessly to save the journal, and they deserve every commendation. We hope that you, our readers, have appreciated the efforts this team made and enjoyed following along with us these past two years. Likewise, we hope you will enjoy the normalcy that will return to *Virginia Birds* beginning with our next issue.

In another moment of change for *Virginia Birds*, we are also faced with bittersweet prospect of bidding farewell to one of our Regional Editors. Logan Anderson, who has done a commendable job editing the Southwest Region since the Fall 2020 issue, will be concluding his tenure. I say bittersweet because, though we are sad to lose Logan and thankful for his dedicated service, he is looking ahead to a very bright future. Hailing from Lynchburg, Logan is a longtime Virginia birder and an alumnus of Virginia Tech's Wildlife Conservation program. He is now pursuing graduate education at Kansas State

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University in Lawrence, KS; given both the time commitment of his studies and his departure from Virginia, Logan felt it was time to pass the reins to someone else. We wish him all the best, and know he will find much success. Our new editor for the Southwest Region will be announced in the next issue.

Now, onwards to the issue before us. As you are about to find out, there was no shortage of noteworthy records across the Commonwealth in the Summer and Fall of 2023. Two avian events of particular note are discussed in more depth in the following text. — *MHA*

Status of American Flamingo in Virginia

Our cover species for this issue is surely one of the most widely-recognized, charismatic species on the Virginia list. The influx of American Flamingos this fall, as detailed in the Coastal column, was but a small part of an unprecedented movement of this species in the wake of Hurricane Idalia that spanned much of the eastern United States. While the three reports (accounting for at least four individuals) of flamingos in coastal Virginia this fall are impressive in their own right, they become even more astounding when taken in the context with the full movement. Furthermore, the circumstances of these sightings have important ramifications for the status of American Flamingo on the Official State List of Virginia. What follows is a brief summary of the Idalia flamingo invasion, as well as an overview of the historical and updated status of American Flamingo in Virginia.

Hurricane Idalia was a Category 4 hurricane that originated in the eastern Pacific off Central America before tracking east across the Yucatán Peninsula, western Caribbean, and ultimately the southeastern United States. The ninth named storm and third hurricane of the 2023 season, it brought high winds and flooding that left significant damage in its wake. Idalia originated as a low-pressure system in the Pacific off Central America on 24 Aug, continuing to intensify as it crossed into the Atlantic and moved northward.

Growth quickened over the Yucatán Peninsula, leading to an upgrade in its tropical depression status and ultimately, a name as Tropical Storm Idalia on 27 Aug. By 30 Aug, when it made landfall in the Big Bend region of western Florida, Idalia had strengthened to a Category 4 hurricane. As it moved inland across Florida, it quickly weakened and was blown further offshore, passing about 65 miles offshore from Cape Hatteras, North Carolina on the evening of 31 Aug.

Though flamingos occurred in south Florida fairly regularly in the 19th and into the early 20th centuries, this species has been a fairly rare vagrant in the United States in the past several decades. The status of American Flamingos is complicated somewhat by the preponderance of free-flying exotic birds in Florida, though some banded individuals from populations in the Yucatán have been documented in Florida.

Reports of American Flamingos began popping up in Florida relatively quickly following Idalia's passage. An initial report of one in *Alachua* on 30 Aug was followed closely by a flock of 16 that same in *Pinellas*. As more reports rolled in that day and subsequently, it quickly became clear that there was a major and likely hurricane-related movement of American Flamingos happening. The records in Florida already accounted for far more individual birds and a greater geographic area than typical. Ultimately, Idalia-related records in Florida alone accounted for over a hundred individual birds at dozens of locations in nearly all coastal and some inland parts of the state.

For Virginia birders, watching the early days of the flamingo invasion unfold certainly brought the question of whether these movements would be more widespread. The first reports outside of Florida arrived on 1 Sep, with 2 birds reported in (astoundingly!) western Ohio followed by 2 near Charleston, South Carolina. The first Virginia report, 2 at Plum Tree Is., *Poquoson* also occurred on 1 Sep, though news did not reach birders until the following day. Over the coming weeks, records of flamingos continued to filter in. Reports in Florida became nearly pedestrian,

while a flock of 11 at Pea Is. NWR in *Dare*, North Carolina was tantalizingly close. Reports in Sep ultimately grew to include 14 states; in the east, displaced flamingos reached as far north as Maryland and Pennsylvania. More amazing were inland reports from locations as incongruous as Wisconsin, Kansas, Indiana, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Virginia got a bigger piece of the action in Oct, but extralimital flamingo reports extended well past this, with displaced birds still turning up or lingering in Nov, Dec, and into 2024.

Hurricane Idalia's period of intensification over the Yucatán Peninsula, site of a large breeding colony at Ría Lagartos, likely contributed to this unprecedented event. It is unclear whether these birds were entrained in the storm while it passed over the Yucatán or had dispersed into Cuba ahead of the hurricane and were pushed north from there. Regardless, three banded birds with band colors matching those used for the Ría Lagartos birds were found in the wake of Idalia: two in FL and one in NC.

Prior to the 2023 records, American Flamingo was classified as a Category 2 species in Virginia, meaning it had been accepted to the Official State List on the basis of a sight record without definitive documentation. In the case of this species, archival photos existed but were not accepted by the Virginia Avian Records Committee (VARCOM) as definitive evidence that would move its status to Category 1. Further complicating the status of flamingos in Virginia is the fact that at least some of the historical records could pertain to free-flying escapees or even other species. A flamingo photographed at Craney Is. in Sep 1986 was a Chilean Flamingo, certainly an escapee, and photographs of a 1996 flamingo in *Rockingham* were deemed likely to also be a Chilean.

Determining the historical status of American Flamingo in Virginia is thus difficult given the inherent difficulty of assigning provenance to any individual record. The Gold Book (2007) noted at least five, possibly as many as nine, record of single birds, with a cluster of records from 1985 possibly pertaining to a single roving individual.

Among these were records from Chincoteague (Nov 1969; Nov 1971; late Jun–15 Aug 1972; 17 Oct–28 Dec 1978; and Nov 1985); Grandview, *Hampton* (28 Aug 1985); Fisherman Is., *Northampton* Aug–Sep 1985); and Craney Is., *Portsmouth* (15 Oct–12 Dec 1985). Additionally, there are three or four historical records from the Mountains & Valleys: *Rockbridge* 7 Aug 1969; *Waynesboro* 10–12 Aug 1969; *Rockingham* 10–11 Oct 1986; and *Rockingham* Oct 1996 (possibly Chilean).

In particular, the 1972 Chincoteague bird, which occurred following the passage of Hurricane Agnes, has long been treated as valid on the basis of its association with the storm. One that occurred on Assateague Is. in Maryland during the same timeframe, possibly the same bird, has also long been treated as valid and was the basis for this bird appearing on the Maryland list.

Based on the 2023 records, VARCOM has accepted American Flamingo to the Official State List as a Category 1 species. In addition to upgrading the species' category, the acceptance of these records so closely identified with a major storm-related influx of American Flamingos across the eastern half of the continent certainly goes a long way to clearing up any lingering uncertainty about the status of American Flamingo in Virginia. Furthermore, this movement adds to our overall understanding of storm-driven bird movements and offers yet another tantalizing possibility to be on the lookout for when birding in the wake of a hurricane. — *MHA*

Works Cited

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Ash-throated Flycatcher Invasion

While the American Flamingos of fall 2023 were certainly the flashiest vagrants of the season, they were not the only species that seemed to be undergoing an historic influx into Virginia. At the time of the Gold Book's publication in 2007, Ash-throated Flycatcher was considered a very rare visitor to the state, with about 14 Coastal Plain records and two Piedmont records. Birders of a more recent vintage will certainly know that the status of this species has changed considerably, such that it is typically an annual or nearly annual species in the state, usually on the Eastern Shore or Tidewater, but will a number of records in the Greater Richmond area as well. Records outside of the Coastal Plain, however, are still quite rare. Whether this increase in records corresponds with an actual increase in the number of Ash-throated Flycatchers reaching Virginia or simply an increase in the number of birders seeking them and/or a greater knowledge of how to find them is difficult to say.

Nonetheless, the events of fall and winter 2023 certainly point to an unusual influx of this species. From Aug–Dec, Virginia had as many as 20 records of Ash-throated Flycatcher. Even more remarkably, at least four of these records were of 2 birds. While many of the records were concentrated in the Eastern Shore, Tidewater, and Greater Richmond where this species has occurred in the past, there were some notable departures from that trend. In the Coastal Plain, there were records from *Hampton*, *Isle of Wight*, and *James City*, none of which typically see records of this species on the scale of the more coastal counties, as well as a northern Coastal Plain outlier from *Prince William*. Even more notably, there were four records from the Piedmont (two in *Albemarle* and one each in *Charlottesville* and *Fauquier*). The *Charlottesville* record was of 2 birds, making for no fewer than five Ash-throateds in the Piedmont. — *MHA*

Regional Reports

NORTH



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SUMMER 2023

The Region saw summer temperatures well above average, and the dry conditions of the first half of the year continued through the summer. The highlights this season were a summer Gadwall in *Loudoun*, Least Terns in *Fairfax*, Roseate Spoonbills across the Region, and a Swainson's Warbler in *Stafford*.

Abbreviations: Algonkian RP (Algonkian RP, *Loudoun*); Belle Haven (Belle Haven Pk., *Fairfax*); Dyke Marsh (Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, *Fairfax*); Gravelly Point Pk. (Gravelly Point Pk., *Arlington*); Hunting Cr. Bridge (Hunting Cr. Bridge, *Fairfax/Alexandria*); Huntley Meadows (Huntley Meadows Pk., *Fairfax*); Occoquan Bay NWR (Occoquan Bay NWR, *Prince William*).

WATERFOWL—SHOREBIRDS

A **Blue-winged Teal**, rare inland in summer, was seen at Huntley Meadows 4 Jun (DF, GH); 30 Apr is the Coastal Plain late date. A **Gadwall**, a very rare summer visitor with only three previous records in the entire Piedmont, was seen at the Avonlea community lake in Chantilly, *Loudoun* 3 Jun (ph. EA) and possibly again 2 Jul (MS). An **American Wigeon**, a rare summer visitor in the state, was seen at Ben Brenman Pk., *Alexandria* 6 Jun (ph. anon.); 10 May is the typical Coastal

Plain late date. An **American Black Duck**, rare inland in summer with a Coastal Plain late date of 20 Apr, was seen at Huntley Meadows 18 Jun (DLeb), with up to 3 seen through 20 Jun. Another rare summer visitor statewide, **Northern Pintail**, was seen at Huntley Meadows 18 Jun (DLeb); the Coastal Plain late date is 15 Apr. Also a rare summer visitor inland, with an extreme late occurrence of late May, was a **Green-winged Teal** seen at Four Mile Run Pk., *Alexandria* 22 Jun (ph. SA), where it continued through 25 Jun at locations along Four Mile Run (m. obs.). One to 2 **Canvasbacks** continued from spring at the George Mason Conference Center on Mason Neck and the nearby Meadowood Recreation Area, *Fairfax*, where a single was ph. by m. obs. through 9 Jul. The species is a rare summer visitor, with a usual Coastal Plain late date of 10 Apr. Also lingering near the George Mason Conference Center since late May were 7 **Lesser Scaup** seen 5 Jun (KG, SS); 23 Apr is the Coastal Plain late date. A similarly rare summer holdover, a **Bufflehead** was ph. by m. obs. at Occoquan Bay NWR through 19 Jun; 10 Apr is the Coastal Plain late date. Reports of **Hooded Merganser**, in recent years a rare breeder in the Piedmont, included a f. and juv. seen at L. Accotink Pk., *Fairfax* 2 Jun (P&JW), with 3 seen 15 Jun; a family of 3–5 seen at Algonkian RP where Sugarland Run empties into the Potomac R. 16 Jun, continuing through 3 Jul (ph. m. obs.); and 5 seen on a stagnant water body near Bealeton, *Fauquier* 23 Jun (HA, MAb). Reports

of **Common Merganser**, a species that has traditionally bred along the Potomac R. but in recent years has been observed breeding along other waterways in the Piedmont, included 2 at Turkey Run Pk., *Fairfax* 10 Jun (JPu); a f. and 11 juvs. at Scotts Run Nature Preserve, *Fairfax* 12 Jun (CP); and a family of 13 on Thompson L. at G.R. Thompson WMA, *Fauquier* 1 Jul (ph. MCi). Single **Pied-billed Grebes**, a rare summer resident in the Piedmont and fairly rare and local in the Coastal Plain, were seen at Huntley Meadows 18 Jul (PP) and Bles Pk., *Loudoun* 23 Jul (ph. JMc) and again 27 Jul; the Regional late date is 30 Apr. A **Common Gallinule**, a rare summer resident inland, was seen at Dyke Marsh 13 Jun (ph. CLu). Three **American Coots**, a rare summer resident statewide, were seen at Woodbridge Veterans Memorial Pk., *Prince William* 5 Jul (ph. JA); 2 were also seen ~2 mi. away at Featherstone NWR, *Prince William* 31 Jul (ph. JA). An **American Avocet** made a rare summer appearance in the inland Coastal Plain, seen at Roaches Run Waterfowl Sanctuary, *Arlington* from Gravelly Point Pk. 22 Jul (ph. EW). One to 2 **Sanderlings** were observed in the Hunting Cr. Bridge/Belle Haven/Dyke Marsh area 16–22 Jul (ph. TK, m. obs.). There are only five prior summer records in the Region, 4 of which were at these same locations. A rare summer visitor inland, 2 **White-rumped Sandpipers** were seen at Hunting Cr. Bridge 30 Jul (ph. TK). A **Lesser Yellowlegs**, rare in the Piedmont between the dates of 25 May and 10 Jul, was seen at Algonkian RP 18 Jun (CLi, SL). A **Willet**, rare inland, especially in summer, was seen at Dyke Marsh 11 Jun (MFM, ph. LM, DS). A **Greater Yellowlegs**, very rare in the Piedmont between 5 Jun and 10 Jul, was seen at the Middlesex Dr. pond, *Loudoun* 23 Jun (GG).

TERNs—FALCONS

Single **LEAST TERNS**, rare in the inland Coastal Plain, were seen at Dyke Marsh 2 Jun (ph. EW) and nearby Belle Haven 27 Jun (KG). Single **Common Loons**, rare in the Region in summer,

were observed on Belmont Bay from the George Mason Conference Center, *Fairfax* 14 Jun (JHu, PSi) and Sleeter L., *Loudoun* 24 Jun (ph. TM). A **Least Bittern**, a rare summer resident in the Piedmont, continued from spring at Bles Pk., *Loudoun*, seen and ph. by m. obs. through 24 Jun. A **Western Cattle Egret**, a rare summer visitor in the inland Coastal Plain, was seen near a Reagan Nat. Airport runway from Gravelly Point Pk. 2–3 Jul (ph. EW, m. obs.). **ROSEATE SPOONBILLS** returned this season to delight birders and others with appearances at several locations—interestingly, mostly the same areas where the species made rare appearances in summer and fall of 2021. One was at a pond on the private Kinross Farm s. of Atoka, *Fauquier* 1 Jul (ph. MI, EM), where the observers were informed it was present two days earlier and where it was seen and ph. by m. obs. through 8 Jul. A single was seen by kayak from 15 ft. away calmly feeding in L. Culpeper (formerly L. Pelham), *Culpeper* 9 Jul (ph. LA). A bird first



Nick Newberry's photograph of a **Franklin's Gull** at Hunting Creek Bridge in *Fairfax*, taken on 24 Aug.

seen 9 Jul near Hunting Cr. Bridge (ph. LM, DS) remained through the season and was seen and ph. by m. obs. on the 1.5-mi. stretch encompassing Belle Haven and Dyke Marsh; 2 were seen on 12 Jul (m. obs.), when JMa ph. courtship/copulation, and 2 on 24 Jul (ph. AB, ph. SB, ph. SS). Lastly, a single bird was found 12 Jul at Algonkian RP, seen by m. obs. in MD waters and later that morning in VA waters in the mouth of Sugarland Run (JBo). A **Swallow-tailed Kite**, only the 7th summer sighting in the

Region, was seen soaring over a residential area in Manassas, *Prince William* 14 Jul (CLO). Sightings of **Northern Harrier**, a rare summer visitor in the Region, included at Huntley Meadows 5 Jun (AB, JBi, SB, SHo) and at Eldon Farms near Woodville, *Rappahannock* 9 Jun (PL). Sightings of **Merlin**, uncommon in the Region anytime and with only 6 known prior summer occurrences statewide e. of the Blue Ridge, occurred at the junc. of Shelburne Glebe Rd. and Forest Mill Rd., Purcellville, *Loudoun* 25 Jun (MG) and over Reagan Nat. Airport from Gravelly Point Pk. 16 Jul (EW); the Coastal Plain extreme early date is 30 Aug. Reports of **Peregrine Falcon** in the Piedmont, where fairly rare in summer, included along Springwoods Dr. in Woodbridge, *Prince William* 1 Jun (CB); along

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FLYCATCHERS—DICKCISSEL

An **Alder Flycatcher**, a rare summer visitor e. of the Blue Ridge, was found at the Clifton Institute, *Fauquier* 14 Jun (a. r. BHa), where it was observed by m. obs. through 16 Jun. There are only four known prior records in our Region past the Piedmont extreme late date of 6 Jun. A rare summer **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was seen past the 24 May Piedmont extreme late date along Old Stillhouse Rd. near Boston, *Culpeper* 5 Jun (JPe); there are only a dozen-odd prior summer records in the state e. of the Blue Ridge. Reports of **Brown-headed Nuthatch** continued at Mountain Run L. Pk., *Culpeper*, with 2 found 23 Jun (a. r. KK) and 3 on 30 Jul (a. r. MAn, MM)—a pair and a potential “scruffy” juv. A **Veery** was heard daily at the Sue Kane Nature Preserve in Purcellville, *Loudoun* 13–17 Jun (a. r. SHa); the Piedmont late date is 25 May. **Dark-eyed Juncos** seen past the Piedmont extreme late date of 4 Jun included singles on Montmorency Dr. in Vienna, *Fairfax* 8 Jun (PHe) and at Great Falls Pk., *Fairfax* 23 Jun (ph. SB); there are only nine prior summer sightings statewide e. of the Blue Ridge.

Beaverdam Bridge Rd. near Philomont, *Loudoun* 4 Jun (MB, ID); a recording of what sounded like the begging of a juv. and calls of an ad. heard from the rooftop of a parking garage in Tysons Corner, *Fairfax* 18 Jul (a. r. AK), heard from the same spot over a period of time; at Great Falls Pk., *Fairfax* 23 Jul (RD, KL, et al.); and along Live Oak Dr. in McLean, *Fairfax* 30 Jul (KA). Also, beginning with WG’s report of one around the Reston Town Center in Reston, *Fairfax* on 17 Jun, m. obs. noted the now annual presence of at least one Peregrine Falcon through 7 Jul. According to an online article in FFXNow, a webcam has been installed to track their nesting, which is known to date at least to 2015 and which this year resulted in 3 hatchlings.

Reports of **White-throated Sparrow**, rare in the Region in summer past early Jun and before Sep, included singles at Four Mile Run Pk., *Alexandria* 25 Jun (ph. ES) and Occoquan Bay NWR 20 Jul (ph. TN). A **Vesper Sparrow**, a species that has become a rare summer visitor throughout the Region, was observed along Carr Ln. near Upperville, *Fauquier* 8 Jul (KG, DLed). Similarly, **Savannah Sparrow** is a rare summer visitor e. of the Blue Ridge; one was seen in a rural area near Bluemont, *Loudoun* 10 Jul (JC). Reports of **Bobolink**, a species that rarely summers in the Region past mid-Jun, included scattered sightings in late Jun into early Jul centered around Rectortown and Upperville, *Fauquier*, with a high count of 12 at Oak Spring Garden Foundation 28 Jun (PU). Four were seen as late as 8 Jul at Upperville Battlefield Overlook, just into *Loudoun* 8 Jul (ph. KG, DLed), including one carrying food. Reports of **Prothonotary Warbler**, a species with few summer records past early Jun in the Region away from the Potomac R., included singles at a residence near Canova, *Prince William* 24 Jun (DV); along Kincheloe Rd. s. of Clifton, *Fairfax* 5 Jul (PHu); and near Catlett, *Fauquier* 9 Jul (GS). A **Swainson’s Warbler**, the first recorded

¹ Fatimah Waseem, “Reston Town Center’s falcons have their own live webcam now,” *FFX Now*, May 19, 2023. <https://www.ffxnow.com/2023/05/19/reston-town-centers-falcons-have-their-own-live-webcam-now/>

in *Stafford* and very rare in the Region, was seen and heard singing in a remote portion of Prince William Forest Pk. 9 Jun (JHe); likely the same bird was heard again in the same area (described as “dense mountain laurel slope...perfect habitat”) 18 Jul (a. r. AD). An early **Magnolia Warbler** showed up at a residence near Brentsville, *Prince William* 30 Jul (DG); 8 Aug is the Piedmont extreme early date. Errant **Black-throated Blue Warblers** seen between the Piedmont extreme dates of 2 Jun and late Aug included 2 heard counter-singing at Long Branch Stream Valley Pk., *Fairfax* 4 Jun (LT); one heard at Algonkian RP 17 Jun (BHe); and a m. seen along Rolling Rd. in Sperryville, *Rappahannock* 30 Jul (DH). A late **Yellow-rumped Warbler** was seen at Dyke Marsh 10 Jun (ph. ES); 28 May is the Coastal Plain extreme late date. There were a handful of reports of **Yellow-throated Warbler** in the Piedmont, where the species is rare in summer away from the Potomac R. They included singles on Skipjack Ct. in Lake Ridge, *Prince William* 4 Jun (JA); along Rock Mills Rd. near Castleton, *Rappahannock* 10 Jun (DC); at Riverside Preserve, *Fauquier* 15 Jun (EL); at the Kelly’s Ford boat ramp near C.F. Phelps WMA, *Culpeper* 17 Jun (MCa, RC, PSa); and 2 along Blackberry Ln. in Fredericksburg, *Stafford* 22 Jul (AG). There were two late sightings of **Black-throated Green Warbler**, a species with only five previous summer records in the Region e. of the Blue Ridge: at the Walker Nature Center in Reston, *Fairfax* 1 Jun (a. r. PHu) and along the Trillium Trail in G.R. Thompson WMA, *Fauquier* 19 Jun (MCR, ph. DW), seen again 24 Jun; the usual Piedmont late date is 15 May. **Dickcissel**, historically a rare summer visitor in the Piedmont, registered observations at numerous locations. Up to 9 continued from spring at the Fairfax County Landfill at Lorton, *Fairfax* through 8 Jul (ph. & a. r. by m. obs.). Two were seen along Bel Pre Rd. e. of Culpeper, *Culpeper* 13 Jun (a. r. KK) and 2 along Grassdale Rd. se. of Remington, *Culpeper* 17 Jun (MCa, RC, PSa). Four were observed at the Fairfax County Landfill e. of Centreville, *Fairfax* 20 Jun (ph. anon.). One to 2 were seen at the Loudoun

Water Authority, *Loudoun* 27 Jun–3 Jul (KF, ph. m. obs.) and singles at Claude Moore Pk., *Loudoun* 4 Jul (CC) and Warrenton Res., *Fauquier* 23 Jul (PSa).

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FALL 2023

Temperatures were above normal in September and October before cooling in November. Precipitation was below normal for the period. There was an unusually high number of VARCOT-reviewable sightings this season (see

in all caps); particular highlights included a Swainson's Hawk in *Fairfax* and a Black-throated Gray Warbler in *Prince William*. (Note: Dates of usual or extreme occurrence given in this report are per the 2007 Gold Book.)

Abbreviations: Algonkian RP (Algonkian RP, *Loudoun*); Belle Haven (Belle Haven Pk., *Fairfax*); Burke L. Pk. (Burke L. Pk., *Fairfax*); Dyke Marsh (Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, *Fairfax*); Four Mile Run Pk. (Four Mile Run Pk., *Alexandria*); Hunting Cr. Bridge (Hunting Cr. Bridge, *Fairfax*); Huntley Meadows (Huntley Meadows Pk., *Fairfax*); Leopold's Preserve (Leopold's Preserve, *Prince William*); Occoquan Bay NWR (Occoquan Bay NWR, *Prince William*); Shenandoah NP (Shenandoah NP, *Madison*); Waples Mill (Waples Mill Meadow Pk., *Fairfax*); Warrenton Res. (Warrenton Res., *Fauquier*).

WATERFOWL—CUCKOOS

Just the 6th fall record in Virginia's Piedmont was a **Ross's Goose** seen at Frying Pan Farm Pk., *Fairfax* 24 Nov (DZ) and a mi. away at the lake on Lake Shore Dr. in Herndon, *Fairfax* through the end of the period (ph. m. obs.). Single late **Blue-winged Teal** were observed at Bles Pk., *Loudoun* 2–18 Nov (ph. m. obs.); Woodbridge Veterans Memorial Pk., *Prince William* 18 Nov (ph. MK); and adjacent Occoquan Bay NWR 28 Nov (ph. JAl), all considerably later than the 20 Oct Regional late date. **Gadwall** seen prior to the 1 Oct Piedmont extreme early date included singles at Warrenton Res. 21–22 Sep (PSa) and nearby Airlie Res., *Fauquier* 26 Sep (PSa). Seen well before the 10 Sep Regional early date were 2 **American Black Ducks** at Great Falls Pk., *Fairfax* 6 & 27 Aug (ph. m. obs.) and a single along Hume Rd. near Huntly, *Fauquier* 22–31 Aug (ph. EL). Reports of early **Green-winged**

Teal included singles at Four Mile Run Pk. 27 Aug (ph. ES); Claude Moore Pk., *Loudoun* 28–29 Aug (CC); and Bles Pk., *Loudoun* 31 Aug (ph. JE); 4 were seen at Leopold's Preserve 29 Aug (JP) and 3 on 12 Sep (ph. TH), with numbers increasing through the end of the month (m. obs.). The Coastal Plain and Piedmont early dates are 15 Sep and 30 Sep, respectively. A **Redhead** was observed at Warrenton Res. 3 Aug (ph. MP, RT), getting a big jump on the 30 Oct Piedmont early date. The species has just one summer record in the Piedmont, but is known to rarely summer on larger tidal rivers in the Coastal Plain. A **Ring-necked Duck** continued from late summer at Warrenton Res. 5–6 Aug (ph. PSa); one was seen again 14 Sep, with numbers increasing to 11 on 24 Sep; the Regional early date is 15 Oct. There were numerous reports of **Greater Scaup** in the Piedmont, where the species is a rare visitor. They included 2 at Flint Hill and Oak Marr in Oakton, *Fairfax* 24 Oct (FA); one at Beaverdam Res., *Loudoun* 27 Oct (ph. JDe), with 2 seen 3 Nov (the preceding were in advance of the Piedmont extreme early date of 3 Nov); 10 at L. Fairfax Pk., *Fairfax* 3 Nov (GHar), with 2 remaining through 11 Nov; 4 at the Airlie Conference Center, *Fauquier* 12 Nov (PSa); 20 at Burke L. Pk. 12 Nov (AIC); and 4 at the New Bristow Village pond in Bristow, *Prince William* 29 Nov (DL). A **Surf Scoter**, also a rare visitor in the Piedmont, was observed at Burke L. Pk. 18 Nov (KG, DL), where it remained, seen and ph. by m. obs., through 29 Nov. Similarly rare in the Piedmont was a **Long-tailed Duck** seen at the Winery and Brewery at Sunshine Ridge near Gainesville, *Prince William* 25 Nov (ph. MA). Rare in fall in the Piedmont, 2 **Red-breasted Mergansers** were seen along Sanctuary Trail at Algonkian RP 25 Nov (ph. CSw). A **Black-billed Cuckoo**, a rare transient in the Coastal Plain, was encountered at Occoquan Bay NWR 9 Sep (JHa).

HUMMINGBIRDS—SHOREBIRDS

A late **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** lingered on Rebecca Dr. in *Alexandria* 13–20 Oct (DS), well past the 25 Sep Coastal Plain late date. Four **Sandhill Cranes** made their seasonal appearance at Algonkian RP 25–30 Nov (ph. CSw), where members of the species have been regular late fall and winter visitors since 2016. An **American Avocet**, rare this far inland, appeared at Hunting Cr. Bridge 1 Aug (ph. SAd), with as many as 3 seen by m. obs. through 13 Aug here and at nearby Belle Haven and Dyke Marsh. Reports of **American Golden-Plover**, rare inland, included one at Hunting Cr. Bridge 4 Sep (ph. SAr) and up to 3 at nearby Belle Haven and Dyke Marsh through 18 Sep (m. obs.), and one at Huntley Meadows 21 Sep (ph. EE), seen through 23 Sep by m. obs. A **PIPING PLOVER**, very rare statewide away from the outer coast and lower Chesapeake Bay, was seen along the Mount Vernon Trail north of Belle Haven 29 Aug (KG, SS). An **Upland Sandpiper** was seen at the Bristow Rd. sod farm, *Prince William* 14 Aug (KG, SS), seen by m. obs. 15 Aug. Inland rarities seen near Hunting Cr. Bridge included a **MARbled GODWIT** 7 Sept (SAr) and a **Ruddy Turnstone** 28 Aug (SAr, EE), seen again 29 Aug. Reports of **Stilt Sandpiper**, a rare inland transient in fall, included singles at the Meadowbrook Farm ponds in Leesburg, *Loudoun* 26 Aug (ph. BHe), seen by m. obs. through 7 Sep; Algonkian RP 27 Aug (ph. BHe), continuing through 1 Sep; and Airlie Res., *Fauquier* 26 Sep (PSa) and nearby Warrenton Res. 27 Sep (ph. PSa) (the Piedmont late date is 12 Sep). The two (apparently different) birds, found a day apart and spending several days ~13 mi. apart in *Loudoun*, comprise just the 3rd and 4th records for *Loudoun*. A **Sanderling**, a rare transient w. of the Chesapeake Bay, was seen at Hunting Cr. Bridge 11 Aug (SB, KL), found again 31 Aug, with 1–3 seen in mid-Sep there and at nearby Belle Haven

and Dyke Marsh (ph. m. obs.). Singles were also seen on the beach at Gravelly Pt. Pk., *Arlington* 22 Aug (ph. EW) and again 23 Aug and at Occoquan Bay NWR 28 Oct (BHi). Reports of **Dunlin**, a rare transient in the Piedmont, included one at Burke L. Pk. 3 Nov (DL, ph. RM); 2 at Algonkian RP 4 Nov (ph. BHe), with up to 9 present through 8 Nov and dwindling to 3 on 14 Nov (ph. m. obs.); 2 at Warrenton Res. 4 & 11 Nov (ph. PSa) and 7 at the nearby Airlie Conference Center, *Fauquier* 11–12 Nov (m. obs.); one at the North Fork Wetlands near Haymarket, *Prince William* 7 Nov (ph. TH), with 2 there 17 Nov and one less than 1 mi. away at Leopold's Preserve 9 Nov (TH); and one at the Discovery Blvd. pond, *Prince William* 8 Nov (ph. TH). There were 3 reports of **Baird's Sandpiper**, a rare fall transient statewide, all likely the same individual as they were within ½ mi. of each other: Hunting Cr. Bridge 19 Aug (ph. TK); the George Washington Pkwy. pedestrian bridge, *Alexandria* 23 Aug (ph. EP); and between Belle Haven and Hunting Cr. Bridge 5 Sep (SS). A rare transient in the Piedmont, especially in the fall, a **WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER** was seen at Warrenton Res. 24 Sep (PSa). A **Short-billed Dowitcher** seen at Algonkian RP 11 Aug (AG, ph. BHe) was just the 3rd record in *Loudoun*. A **Long-billed Dowitcher**, rare inland, was seen at Huntley Meadows 20 Aug (RC), seen and ph. by m. obs. through 23 Aug. A **Spotted Sandpiper** was seen well after the species' 15 Oct Piedmont late date at Warrenton Res. 4 Nov (PSa). A late **Lesser Yellowlegs** showed up at Leopold's Preserve 16 Nov (JP); the Piedmont late date is 25 Oct. **WILSON'S PHALAROPE**, rare in the Region, made an appearance at Huntley Meadows 23 Sep (ph. AuC, ph. HR).

GULLS—RAPTORS

A **FRANKLIN'S GULL** seen at Hunting Cr. Bridge 24 Aug (NN) was one of just two fall reports statewide this year. And although considered just fairly rare along the upper Potomac R. (Gold Book), the sighting of a



Will Brooks's photo of a **Swainson's Hawk** flying over Waples Mill Meadow Pk., *Fairfax* on 17 Oct.

LEAST TERN at Belle Haven 18 Aug (KG) was the only report this fall statewide away from the Eastern Shore and Hampton Roads. A **Black Tern**, a rare transient in the Piedmont, flew over Trump Nat. Golf Club, *Loudoun* 7 Aug (JF). An **American Bittern** found at a pond near the Dulles South Rec Center in South Riding, *Loudoun* 14 Oct (ph. MS) remained through 22 Oct. Although this species is considered only a fairly rare transient in the Piedmont (Gold Book), this was the only report this fall in the Piedmont statewide. Although not particularly rare as a post-breeding visitor in the Piedmont, an imm. **Little Blue Heron** lingered for 6 weeks at Algonkian RP (ph. m. obs.). A **Western Cattle Egret**, a rare transient in the fall and typically not occurring past 10 Oct, was seen and ph. by m. obs. at Gravelly Pt. Pk., *Arlington* 10–12 Nov, with likely the same bird seen at nearby Four Mile Run Pk. 15 Nov (ph. GHay). A late **Green Heron** was present at Huntley Meadows through 17 Nov (ph. KR); the Coastal Plain late date is 20 Oct. A

rare post-breeding visitor in the Piedmont, an imm. **White Ibis** was seen at Algonkian RP 7 Sep (ph. EA, JBo); this was perhaps the same bird that a month earlier hung out several days at a **Great Blue Heron** rookery on an island in the Potomac R. (Maryland). An impressive 47 White Ibises were seen trailing over Huntley Meadows 6 Nov (NV, m. obs.). This is especially notable because of the date. Although no dates are given for the Coastal Plain in the Gold Book, it gives the late date for the Piedmont as 9 Oct. This report is the only sighting in eBird in Nov statewide w. of the Eastern Shore other than a single bird n. of Lynchburg in 2017; in fact, there was only ever one in Oct well away from the Eastern Shore (*Henrico* on 10 Oct 2007). Single **ROSEATE SPOONBILLS** continued from the summer at ponds along Sanctuary Trail at Algonkian RP through 10 Oct (ph. m. obs.) and at Hunting Cr. Bridge, Belle Haven, Dyke Marsh, and nearby Jones Pt. Pk., *Alexandria* through 13 Aug (ph. m. obs.). A **Golden Eagle** soared low over a Taylorstown, *Loudoun* yard 1 Nov (GHo). An early **Northern Harrier** was seen at Big Meadows in Shenandoah NP 11 Aug (JDa), prior to the Mountains & Valleys 30 Aug early date. Early **Sharp-shinned Hawks** were seen at Woodgrove Pk., *Loudoun* 5 Aug (JL) (the species is known to be a rare summer resident in the n. Piedmont); a residence in Annandale, *Fairfax* 26 Aug (JK); and a residence in Taylorstown, *Loudoun* 29 Aug (GHo); the Piedmont early date is 10 Sep. A **SWAINSON'S HAWK** was seen circling not too high over the pond at Waples Mill 17 Oct (ph. WB). This is just the second Piedmont record statewide per eBird and the Gold Book, and likewise the second state record away from the Eastern Shore and hawkwatches (2 at Snicker's Gap, one at College Creek, and several at Rockfish Gap). A summary of the fall count at Snicker's Gap Hawkwatch, *Loudoun* included: 10 **Ospreys**, 93 **Bald Eagles**, 9 Northern Harriers, 108 Sharp-shinned Hawks, 17 **Cooper's Hawks**, 31 **Red-shouldered Hawks**,

1,513 **Broad-winged Hawks**, 160 **Red-tailed Hawks**, 4 Golden Eagles, 14 **American Kestrels**, 8 **Merlins**, and 4 **Peregrine Falcons**.

FLYCATCHERS—ORIOLES

There were numerous reports of **Olive-sided Flycatchers**, until recent years a rare transient, across the Region. A late **Eastern Wood-Pewee** was observed at L. Mooney Pk., *Stafford* 28 Oct (AD, JW); the Piedmont extreme late date is 23 Oct. There were also numerous reports of **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher**, typically a rare transient in the Region, with individuals that seemingly spent time at Riverbend Pk., *Fairfax* 27 Oct–13 Sep (ph. m. obs.) and Waples Mill 1, 5, & 16–17 Sep (ph. m. obs.); an early bird at Leesylvania SP, *Prince William* 9 Aug (RV) preceded the Coastal Plain extreme early date of 13 Aug. Late **Yellow-throated Vireos** were seen in the Bluemont area, *Loudoun* 16 Oct (JCo) (Piedmont extreme late date is 12 Oct) and Belle Haven 24 Oct (CP) (Coastal Plain extreme late date is 20 Oct). Two early **Blue-headed Vireos** were seen at L. Accotink Pk., *Fairfax* 2 Sep (NH); the Piedmont early date is 25 Sep. An early **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was observed near the Big Meadows visitor center in Shenandoah NP 23 Aug (KA), prior to the 15 Sep Mountains & Valleys early date. Three **Brown-headed Nuthatches** were observed at Mountain Run L. Pk., *Culpeper* 26 Oct (TD, HM) and again 22 Nov (BBE), where they have been seen since 2017. Single **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** lingered considerably past the 20 Sep late date for the Region, where the species is known to be a rare winter visitor, at Occoquan Bay NWR 4 Nov (ph. DHat, BN) and Dyke Marsh 26 Nov (JS). Reports of **Sedge Wren**, rare w. of the Chesapeake Bay, included singles at Huntley Meadows 24 Sep (EE), seen again 14 Oct; Waples Mill 24 Sep (a. r. PK), seen again 12–14 Oct (m. obs., ph. WB); and Frying Pan Farm Pk., *Fairfax* 2 Oct (ph.

HW). A late **Veery** was seen in a s. Reston neighborhood, *Fairfax* 12 Oct (RD); the Piedmont extreme late date is 8 Oct. A single **Evening Grosbeak**, rare in a non-irruption year, was seen at Algonkian RP 26 Nov (JDe). Sightings of **Lark Sparrow**, a rare visitor in the Piedmont, included at Vienna Res., *Fairfax* 19 Aug (ph. JAs) and Sully Woodlands, *Fairfax* 4 Nov (JHa). Another rare visitor to the Region, **Clay-colored Sparrows** were encountered at George Mason University, *Fairfax* 27 Sep (ph. WB) through 4 Oct (m. obs.) and Clifton Elementary School, *Fairfax* 15 Oct (JR). An early **White-crowned Sparrow** was seen at Manassas Nat. Battlefield Pk., *Prince William* 1 Oct (TH, PSi), just beating the Piedmont extreme early date of 2 Oct. A **Baltimore Oriole** seen at Dyke Marsh 17 Nov (KG) was seen several times through 26 Nov (m. obs.); the Regional late date is 30 Sep, although individuals occasionally overwinter.

WARBLERS—DICKCISSEL

A **Golden-winged Warbler**, rare away from the Blue Ridge, was observed in a Reston neighborhood, *Fairfax* 25 Aug (RD). A **Blue-winged x Golden-winged Warbler** hybrid (appearing like a Blue-winged Warbler that hybridized with a Blue-winged x Golden-winged hybrid) was seen at Waples Mill 17 Aug (ph. WB). A **Black-and-white Warbler** lingered at Jones Pt. Pk., *Alexandria* 28 Nov, well past the 15 Oct Coastal Plain late date. A rare transient in the Mountains & Valleys sector, an **Orange-crowned Warbler** was spotted at Thoroughfare Overlook in Shenandoah NP 12 Oct (ph. GHAr). A late **Nashville Warbler** was spotted at Waples Mill 9 Nov (ph. WB); the Piedmont extreme late date for this species is 2 Nov. There were uncommonly numerous reports of **Connecticut Warbler**, a rare transient in the Region; individuals were encountered at Waples Mill 15

Sep (FA), seen by m. obs. through 19 Sep when 2 were seen (ph. WB); Jones Nature Preserve s. of Washington, *Rappahannock* 20 Sep (IT); Huntley Meadows 28 Sep (a. r. EP, ph. m. obs.); Fauquier Education Farm near Warrenton, *Fauquier* 29 Sep (TD); Winkler Botanical Preserve, *Alexandria* 30 Sep (GF, DHah); and Four Mile Run Pk. 4 Oct (SAr). Likewise, reports of **Mourning Warbler**, also a rare transient in the Region, were unusually numerous and included birds seen at a residence in Oakton, *Fairfax* 21 Aug (ph. NN); ~1 mi. away at Waples Mill 25 Aug (WB); Algonkian RP 4 Oct (WP); an ad. m. beautifully (and discreetly) ph. bathing in a backyard water feature at a residence in Taylorstown, *Loudoun* (ph. GHO); Waples Mill 13 Oct (ph. JBe), seen by m. obs. through 21 Oct; and Sully Woodlands, *Fairfax* 26 Oct (ph. JDe). **Common Yellowthroats** lingered past the Piedmont late date of 20 Oct along Deep Cut Trail at Manassas Nat. Battlefield Pk., *Prince William* 6 Nov (MP) and George Mason University, *Fairfax* 8 Nov (WB) and past the Coastal Plain late date of 28 Oct at Four Mile Run Pk. 15 Nov (ES). A late **Cape May Warbler** was present at Leopold's Preserve 11 Nov (CN, et al.), well past the Piedmont late date of 20 Oct. **Cerulean Warblers**, a rare transient in the Coastal Plain, especially in fall, and in the Piedmont away from the n. and the Blue Ridge, were seen at Pohick Bay RP, *Fairfax* 1 Sep (MF) and in Prince William Forest Pk., *Prince William* 9 Sep (JCe). Early **Magnolia Warblers** were seen at Huntley Meadows 1 Aug (BJ) and Monticello Pk., *Alexandria* 16 Aug (TA), prior to the Coastal Plain extreme early date of 18 Aug. And a late Magnolia Warbler was seen past the 18 Oct Piedmont extreme late date at Ellanor C. Lawrence Pk., *Fairfax* 21 Oct (EF-C, RS). There were late sightings of a **Yellow Warbler** at Aquia Landing Pk., *Stafford* 2 Nov (ph. AR) and 27 Nov (ph. JG); the species' Coastal Plain extreme late date is 31 Oct. A **Chestnut-sided Warbler** was seen prior to the Piedmont extreme early date of

mid-August at Warrenton Res. 12 Aug (PSa). Reports of early **Palm Warblers** in the Coastal Plain, where the extreme early date is 1 Sep, included one at Huntley Meadows 28 Aug (RB, NV) and 4 at Occoquan Bay NWR 30 Aug (JHu). There were several reports of very early **Yellow-rumped Warblers**. In the Mountains & Valleys sector, where the usual early date is 25 Sep, these included (in Shenandoah NP) 2 at the Big Meadows visitor center 23 Aug (KA); 2 along



Vicki Chatel's picture of a **Black-throated Gray Warbler** found at her home in *Prince William*, 24 Sep.

Dark Hollow Falls Trail 1 Sep (KH); and 3 in the Big Meadows campground 11 Sep (BBa). In the Piedmont, where the *extreme* early date is 28 Sep, these included singles at Algonkian RP 27 Aug (BHe, CL, PL) and Riverbend Pk., *Fairfax* 27 Aug (RD, et al., ph. m. obs.). In the Coastal Plain, where the extreme early date is 2 Sep, they included singles at Occoquan Bay NWR 30 Aug (JHu) and Huntley Meadows 1 Sep (CSa). A **BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER**, just the third record in the Region and the second in the Piedmont statewide, was seen in a residential neighborhood in *Manassas* 24 Sep (ph. VC). **Black-throated Green Warblers** seen outside the species' Piedmont usual early date of 30 Aug and extreme late date of 26 Oct included birds along Hamilton Dr. in Mantua, *Fairfax* 10 Aug (SH) and at Great Falls Pk., *Fairfax* 29 Oct (CG, et al.). A late **Wilson's Warbler**, a fairly rare transient in the Coastal Plain where the extreme late date is 27 Nov, was seen at Four

Mile Run Pk. 28 Nov (ph. TK). Single **Dickcissels**, a rare and irregular transient in the Region, were observed at Fort C.F. Smith Pk., Arlington 8 Sep (EW), seen again 12 Sep, and at Occoquan Bay NWR 8 Oct (ph. TK).

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WEST



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

SUMMER 2023

This period was largely defined by a lack of rain as the drought conditions began to set in throughout much of the Region. This probably explains the lack of any notable early shorebirds or terns. In general, it was a quiet summer for rarities with an unchaseable Limpkin in *Radford* and a much more cooperative Swainson's Warbler in *Montgomery* being the highlights. Aside from the Limpkin it was also a quiet summer for waders, perhaps also due to the drought.

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

WATERFOWL—GREBES

A late **Ring-necked Duck** was at Lakewood Pk., *Roanoke City* 13 Jun–27 Jul (SM, m. obs) and another was at Parrott R. Rd., *Pulaski* 14 Jul (ph. GK, KS). Up to 6 **Ruddy Ducks** were at the Broadway WTP 1 Jun–23 Jul (DH, m. obs.). A **Hooded Merganser** was at Riverview Pk., *Radford* 8 Jun (CK); another was at the Gala Riverfront Campground, *Botetourt* 19 Jun (RK); a f. with 4 young was at the Horseshoe Bend Boat

Ramp, *Botetourt* 20 Jun (RK); and single birds were also at the Glen Alton Day Use Area, *Giles* 24 Jun (ph. DP) and the pond on Milburn Rd., *Frederick* 24 Jun (ph. DG). **Common Mergansers** are now regular breeders throughout the Region; the high count for the summer was 38 at both the Arcadia Boat Ramp, *Botetourt* 21 Jun (RK) and the Berrys Boat Ramp, *Clarke* 11 Jul (PW). A **Pied-billed Grebe** was at the Botetourt Center, *Botetourt* 13 Jun (SD); another was at the Horseshoe Bend Boat Ramp, *Botetourt* 20 Jun (RK); and 2 were at the Gala Riverfront Campground, *Botetourt* 19 Jun (RK).

NIGHTJARS—DICKCISSEL

A single **Chuck-wills-widow** was at Union Springs Hollow L., *Rockingham* 18 and 29 Jun (CS) and up to 2 were near Fincastle, *Botetourt* 2–3 Jul (KD, m. obs.). Another was at Briar Hill



Phil Lehman's picture of a **Merlin** feeding her young on College Street in *Montgomery* on 9 Jul.

Ct., *Roanoke City* 29 Jul (Anon). A **Sora** was at the Glen Alton Day Use Area, *Giles* 2 Jun (PL). A **Common Gallinule** was at the Ottobine Rd. Dry R. bridge, *Rockingham* 10–13 Jun (ph. DL, GM). A **Common Loon** lingered at L. Moomaw, *Bath* 27 Jun (RR). Aside from the usual reports of **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** from the breeding population in *Salem* and *Roanoke City* there was a single report of a juv. at Lakeside L., *Frederick* on 17 Jul (ph. DG, JF). A **LIMPKIN** was photographed at Bisset Pk., *Radford* 8 Jul (*fide* PL), but unfortunately it was not relocated. Though there are a handful of summer records scattered across the state and the species has long



Garland Kitts's photograph of a **Swainson's Warbler** at Poverty Hollow in *Montgomery*, 14 Jul.

been suspected as a potential breeder, an active nest of **Merlins** in Christiansburg, *Montgomery* that was closely monitored all summer (ph. m. obs.) was a new breeding confirmation for the state. In addition to the ad. m. and f., three fledged juvs. were observed 9 Jul (ph. PL). **Red Crossbills** were widely reported in *Highland*, *Augusta*, *Rockingham*, and *Giles*. The only **Golden-winged Warbler** reports this summer were from the traditional breeding locations in *Highland*. In addition to their usual breeding spot at Paddy Knob, *Highland/Bath* up to 3 **Mourning Warblers** were on territory in the Briery Branch Gap, *Augusta* area through 28 Jun (m. obs.). A **Swainson's Warbler** was singing on territory at Poverty Hollow, *Montgomery* from 13 Jul through the end of the period (RB, m. obs.). This was the second record for *Montgomery* in the last five years, perhaps an indication that their range

in the sw. part of the state is expanding. The only **Summer Tanager** report was a single bird at ThunderCroft, *Montgomery* 11 Jul (LB). **Dickcissels** were completely absent from the Region this summer for the first time in several years.

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FALL 2023

This fall was largely defined by increasing drought conditions throughout the period. Records of wandering waders were noticeably reduced in comparison with past years. Shorebird sightings also took a hit, and although most of the uncommon species were recorded somewhere in the Region, both number of records and counts were lower than normal. Stilt Sandpiper was one exception, with reports coming from five different locations, a decent showing for this species. The remnants of a few tropical storms did help with some shorebirds but nothing truly exceptional was found. Passerine migration was decent, although more rain would have certainly helped in this department as well. All of the eastern warbler species except for Kirtland's were recorded in the Region during this period.

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

WATERFOWL—GALLINULES

A **Ross's Goose** was seen at a few locations in the Waynesboro area. It was first seen 4 Nov at the Eagle's Nest Pond, *Augusta* (ph. JS), and was then relocated on 10 and 11 Nov at McCune's Pond, *Augusta* (ph. AL, VL, HH). Later on 11 Nov it was seen at the Ivy St. Ponds, *Waynesboro* (ph. HH). It was another poor fall for **Surf Scoters** in the Region. The only report was 2 at L. Arrowhead 8 Nov (ph. KA). A **White-winged Scoter** was at Bells Ln., *Staunton* 6 Nov (PW, AL, ph. VL, MKo). Up to 2 **Virginia Rails** were at the Locust Grove Farm, *Rockbridge* 26–27 Aug and 24 Sep (GB), while single birds were at the Botetourt Center, *Botetourt* 1 (BF, SF) and 24 Sept (RM); near Pulaski, *Pulaski* 10 (PL, DW, MM, XG) and 24 Sept (XG); at the Augusta Springs Wetlands Trail, *Augusta* 27 Oct (CGe); at the Duck Run Rd. Natural Cemetery, *Rockingham* 17 Nov (DH); and at Old Quarry Rd., *Augusta* 19 Nov (TF). Single **Soras** were at the Virginia Tech Vet School Pond, *Montgomery* 10 Sept (BB); Hillandale Pk., *Harrisonburg* 12 Sept (ph. MDo, m. obs.); and near Pulaski, *Pulaski* 24 Sept (a. r. XG). Up to 2 were at the Locust Grove Farm, *Rockbridge* 23–24 Sep (GB). Two **Sandhill Cranes** flew over the Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch, *Augusta* 22 Nov (ph. VL, DL).

SHOREBIRDS—OWLS

There were two reports of **Upland Sandpiper** for the period, a welcome change from last fall. One was at a baseball field on Odgen Rd., *Roanoke* 4 Sep (BF), a first eBird record for the county, and one was near Dublin, *Pulaski* 10 Sep (ph. PL, XG). Up to 37 **American Golden-Plovers** were seen in the vicinity of the Shenandoah Valley Produce Auction, *Rockingham* 9–24 Oct (ph. BE, MJ, m. obs.); one was at the Broadway WTP 17 Sep (ph. MGi); and 3 were at the NRV Fairgrounds, 27 Sep (MM). It was a good fall for **Stilt Sandpiper**, with one at George Wine Rd., *Rockingham* 5 Aug (DH); one at the Roanoke STP 18–19 Aug (ph. KG, m. obs.) and 1 Sep (BE, MJ); 7 at the NRV Fairgrounds 22 Aug (MM, BB,

MN); and one at the Old Forge Rd. Pond, *Page* 25–28 Aug (ph. JF, m. obs.). There were multiple reports at the Broadway WTP this fall, including 2 on 8 Sep (DH, ph. MGi, m. obs.) with one remaining until 17 Sep (m. obs.), and one 9 Oct (FA) that remained until 27 Oct (JC). A single **Sanderling** was at the Broadway WTP 26 Aug–11 Sep (ph. MGi, m. obs.). Single **Baird's Sandpipers** were at the Broadway STP 17 Aug–3 Oct (DH, ph. MGi, m. obs.); at Leonard's Pond, *Rockingham* 20–24 Aug (ph. DL, m. obs.); and at Blacksburg High School, *Montgomery* 9 Sep (ph. DW, PL, m. obs.). There were only a few **White-rumped Sandpipers** around this fall: one was at the Broadway WTP 17 Sep–11 Oct (ST, m. obs.); 2 were at Longs Rd., *Page* 23 Sep (JF); and one was at the NRV Fairgrounds 29 Sep (MM). The only **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** of the fall was one at the Roanoke STP 21–30 Aug (ph. AR, ph. BB, JR m. obs.). A **Western Sandpiper** was at the Roanoke STP 17 Aug–2 Sep (KD, m. obs.) and another was at the Broadway WTP 26–27 Aug (ph. GM, MGi). A **Short-billed Dowitcher** was at the Botetourt Center, *Botetourt* 17 Oct



Baxter Beamer's photo of an **Anhinga** taken at Whitethorne Boat Ramp in *Montgomery* on 21 Aug.

(MB), while 3 flew over the Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch, *Augusta* 17 Sep (VL, DL). A **Red-necked Phalarope** was at the Broadway WTP 19 Aug (ph. GM). A **Wilson's Phalarope** was at the Broadway WTP 6–8 Aug (DH, HH) and another was at the Roanoke STP 28–31 Aug (ph. KD, AR, m. obs.). The only **Caspian Terns** reported in the Region this fall were 2 at L. Frederick, *Frederick* 29 Aug (LC). Single **Black Terns** were at the Whitethorne Boat Ramp, *Montgomery* 18 Aug

(RB); at Carvins Cove Recreation Area, *Botetourt* 20 Aug (KG); at the Broadway WTP 28 Aug (WL, GM, et al.) and 2 Sep (GM); and another was at Silver L., *Rockingham* 2 Sep (DR). An **ANHINGA** at the Whitethorne Boat Ramp, *Montgomery* 19 Aug (ph. BB, AR, AN) was an excellent find and one of few for the Mountains & Valleys. It remained until 21 Aug (ph. BB, m. obs.), during which time it was seen on both the *Montgomery* and *Pulaski* sides of the New R. There were three reports of **American Bittern**: singles were seen at Lewis Pond, *Augusta* 25 Sep (TF); Coyner Springs Pk., *Waynesboro* 13 Oct (Ann Cline); and off Whiskey Cr. Rd., *Augusta* 13 Nov (ph. VL). Aside from the usual population of **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** in the Roanoke area, a single immature was seen at the



Phil Lehman's photograph of an **Upland Sandpiper** from a private farm in *Pulaski*, 10 Sep. 2023.

River Rd. Bridge, *Shenandoah* 3–18 Aug (ph. HH, m. obs.). Two imms. were at the Whitethorne Boat Ramp, *Montgomery* 16 Aug–3 Sep (RB, ph. BB, m. obs.); they also wandered to the *Pulaski* side of the river on occasion. A flock of 10 **Western Cattle Egrets** were seen off Mike Longs Woods Rd., *Page* 13 October (ph. JF, AS, TM, KA, DH). This represents a new high count for the Region in eBird, although the Gold Book lists several higher counts from the 1980's or earlier. A **Little Blue Heron** was at the Historic Duck Pond, *Giles* 29 Aug (ph. MN, BB). An ad. **White Ibis** was seen flying past the Harveys Knob Overlook, *Botetourt* 8 Sep (BE). It was a very poor fall for kites; no **Swallow-tailed Kites** were reported. The only **Mississippi Kites** were 2 at the Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch 22 Aug (ph.

VL) and one at Cattleman Rd., *Augusta* 29 Aug (ph. MKo). The only **Short-eared Owls** reported were single birds at Bells Ln., *Staunton* 26 Nov (AL) and at the NRV Commerce Park, *Pulaski* 28 Nov (MM). Reports of **Northern Saw-whet Owls** came from *Rockingham*, *Augusta*, *Rockbridge*, and *Montgomery*; the high count was 7 recorded at the Highland retreat banding site, *Rockingham* 6 Nov (CT).

FLYCATCHERS—DICKCISSEL

As usual for the fall there were several reports of **Olive-sided Flycatcher** from *Frederick*, *Clarke*, *Page*, *Rockingham*, *Harrisonburg*, *Rockbridge*, and *Giles*. Single **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers** were seen at Hillandale Pk., *Harrisonburg* 29–30 Aug (ph. MGi, et al.); 19 Sep (GM); and 24 Sep (RC). Singles were also at Paul SF, *Rockingham* 21 Sep (CT) and at Pandapas Pond, *Montgomery* 24–27 Aug (RB, ph. BB, m. obs.). Single **Loggerhead Shrikes** were found Black Hollow Rd., *Pulaski* 9 Oct (DCo) and at Kent Farm Rd., *Pulaski* 5 (MGr, m. obs.) and 26 Nov (MM). A shrike at Seven Fountains Pond, *Shenandoah* 24 Oct (ph. DGe) had some features that were suggestive of **Northern Shrike**, but the photographs were inconclusive. The only **Brown-headed Nuthatch** reports came from the small population in the Roanoke area. A **Sedge Wren** was at the Virginia Tech Vet School Pond, *Montgomery* 28 Sep (ph. ES, BB). An **Evening Grosbeak** was at Tenth Legion, *Rockingham* 16 Oct (DH). **Red Crossbills** mostly stuck to their usual haunts in the mountains, with records coming from *Rockingham*, *Rockbridge*, *Botetourt*, *Craig*, and *Giles*. A **Clay-colored Sparrow** was near Singers Glen, *Rockingham* 3 Oct (CT) and another was at the Roanoke STP 2 Oct (ph. KD, JD). Single **Golden-winged Warblers** were seen at the Ft. Lewis Lodge, *Bath* 21 Aug (CGu) and at Pandapas Pond, *Montgomery* 15 Sep (RB, ph. BB, m. obs.). The **Swainson's Warbler** present at Poverty Hollow, *Montgomery* this summer continued until 9 Aug (RB, MDa). There were several reports of

Orange-crowned Warbler this fall from *Clarke*, *Harrisonburg*, *Salem*, and *Montgomery*. A somewhat early **Connecticut Warbler** was at Hillandale Pk., *Harrisonburg* 3 Sep (RC, AC); one was at Blandy 15 Sep (ph. MKe); another was there 4 Oct (DCa); one was at the Beahms Gap Overlook, *Page* 15–16 Sep (TM, JF). Two at Switzer L., *Rockingham* 21 Sep (TSE) rounded out the sightings of this skulky warbler. **Mourning Warblers** were reported from Pandapas Pond, *Montgomery* 19–20 Aug (AR, a. r. BB, m. obs.); Hone Quarry Recreation Area, *Rockingham* 10 Sep (GM, DL); Blandy 13 Sep (ph. DCa); Paul SF, *Rockingham* (ph. JS); and near Dublin, *Pulaski* 30 Sep (ph. XG). A **PAINTED BUNTING** visited a feeder at Harris Cove Ln., *Page* 12 Nov (SAC); this was a first record for *Page*. A few **Dickcissels** were around with records from *Rockingham*, *Augusta*, *Montgomery*, and *Pulaski*.

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SOUTHWEST



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SUMMER 2023

Editor's Note – The Summer 2023 column for the Southwest Region was penned by the journal editor. MHA.

June temperatures averaged mostly in the mid-60s to low-70s, though with a few days throughout the month where peaks exceeded 80°. Rainfall was sporadic, and seldom more than an inch. In July the temperatures were, in a word, hot. Thought daily averages were in the 70s, most days had high temperatures in the 80s and a few even reached the low-90s. Rainfall was nearly nonexistent, save for a few days in the middle of the month that saw precipitation under an inch. Summer highlights included the Region's 3rd Swallow-tailed Kite, reports of Yellow-crowned Night-Heron and Alder Flycatcher that were noteworthy away from known sites, and a summer Ring-necked Duck.

Abbreviations: Burkes (Burkes Garden, *Tazewell*); Breaks (Breaks Interstate Pk., *Dickenson/Buchanan*); Hungry Mother (Hungry Mother SP, *Smyth*).

WATERFOWL—FALCONS

A hen **Ring-necked Duck** at Gose Mill Pond in Burkes 13 Jun (ph. AB) was an exceptional find – only the 3rd summer eBird record for the Region, but the second for *Tazewell* following a drake in Jun 2019. **Black-billed Cuckoos**, an

expected but low-density summer resident, were reported from three locations (all reports of single birds): Hidden Valley WMA, *Washington* 4 Jun (AL); Chilhowie Town Pk., *Smyth* 18 Jun (KD, JD); and Burtons Pond, *Bland* 28 Jul (MN). Burkes again hosted breeding **Virginia Rails**, with a peak count of 5 at Gose Mill Pond 26 Jun that included 2 ads. and 3 downy young (ph. DS). Away from Burkes, the only report was one at a wetland on Mt. Zion Rd., *Grayson* 8 Jul (ph. AR). **Spotted Sandpipers**, an uncommon to rare



Baxter Beamer's picture of a **Great White Heron** from Buck Dam in *Carroll* on 4 Sep.

breeder in the Region, were recorded at seven locations spread across *Carroll*, *Tazewell*, *Smyth*, *Washington*, and *Scott*. The only **Least Sandpiper** reported was from a pond on Russell Rd., *Washington* 23 Jul (AR). A single **Black Tern** at the MBC Pond at Burkes 17 Jul (DS) was not just the only report for the Region this summer, but the only one in the state outside the Coastal Plain. Two late **Common Loons** were at Lincolnshire Pk., *Tazewell* 3 Jun (LS), with one

remaining 29 Jun (ph. KS, GK). A juv. **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** was an excellent find at the Sugar Hill Unit of Clinch River SP, *Wise* 25 Jun (ph. JB). This was a first eBird record for *Wise*, and one of very few records in the Region away from the known population in *Bristol*. A **Swallow-tailed Kite** soaring over Interstate 81 at mile marker 85 in extreme e. *Wythe* 30 Jul (CR) was an exceptional find, and only the 3rd eBird record for the Region. The only report of **Barn Owl**, a species that has declined significantly across much of the state, was 2 from a known breeding location at *Burkes* 4 Jun (DS). There were two reports of **Northern Saw-whet Owls**, both from private property in e. *Grayson*: a juv. ph. 28 Jun (ph. DD) and one recorded calling 25 Jul (a. r. TH). There were three summer reports of **Peregrine Falcon**: a pair at Breaks on the *Dickenson* side 6 Jun (ST); one at a pond on Cox Rd. near Jonesville, *Lee* 25 Jun (D&JK); and one at Scales Campground near Mt. Rogers, *Grayson* 27 Jul (CC).

FLYCATCHERS—TANAGERS

Somewhat surprisingly, the only **Alder Flycatcher** record was one singing at Cabbage House Rd., *Carroll* 1 Jul (ph. & a. r. AR). This was a first summer record for *Carroll*, and one of very few in the Region away from known breeding locations in the vicinity of Mt. Rogers. **Loggerhead Shrikes** were again well-represented from *Burkes*, where a peak count of 4 was reported 4 Jun (DS). The only other report for this species-of-concern was at a private farm on Arrowhead Ln., e. of Nickelsville, *Scott* 19 Jun (ph. DP). Continuing a trend of westward expansion in Virginia, **Fish Crows** were reported fairly widely in the Region this summer, with a cluster of reports around *Bristol* as well as scattered records in *Washington*, *Smyth*, *Lee*, and *Grayson*. Not surprisingly, the only reports of **Swainson's Thrush** were from Mt. Rogers, where a peak count of 2 was recorded on the Elk Garden Trail, *Grayson* 4 Jun (ES, MS). Though **Red Crossbill** is a known breeder in the Region,

reports can be somewhat erratic; a count of 12 from the Massie Gap area of Grayson Highlands SP, *Grayson* 17 Jun (ph. DW) was a noteworthy count. The only **Pine Siskin** was reported at Mt. Rogers, *Grayson* 27 Jul (CC); this species has been recorded here semi-regularly in the summer and may be a rare, local breeder. There were a handful of **Summer Tanager** records, all singles: Cedars NAP, *Lee* 5 Jun (SR); Breaks on the *Dickenson* side 6 Jun (ST); Hungry Mother 22 Jun (MK); and the Wilderness Rd. Campground area at Cumberland Gap NHP, *Lee* 16 Jul (ME). The species is an uncommon to rare summer resident in the Region.

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FALL 2023

Editor's Note – The Fall 2023 column for the Southwest Region was penned by the journal editor. MHA.

Temperatures in August maintained a remarkably consistent average in the low-70s, with little fluctuation. The fall got off to a bit of a rainy start, with several days in the first half of August receiving 1-2 inches of rainfall before a steady lack of precipitation after 16 August. September was similar, with a gradual cooling as average temperatures dropped from the low-70s into the mid-60s by the end of the month. There was essentially zero precipitation. October saw far more fluctuation, with some highs in the mid-80s early in the month but dropping to lows in the low-40s by the end. Precipitation continued to be nil. Rounding out the season, November ushered in some true cold, with lows in the 20s at the

beginning of the month followed quickly by a few days in the upper 70s. Cooler temperatures prevailed by the second half of November, with sub-freezing temperatures becoming regular. There remained little precipitation to speak of. Avian highlights were Virginia's first Mexican Violetear and roughly 10th Great White Heron. Other species of note included Wilson's Phalarope, Western Cattle Egret, and Sedge Wren.

Abbreviations: Burkes (Burkes Garden, *Tazewell*); Falls Mills (Falls Mills L., *Tazewell*); Laurel Bed L. (Laurel Bed L. at Clinch Mt. WMA, *Russell*); Poplar Gap (Poplar Gap Pk., *Buchanan*); Saltville (Saltville Well Fields, *Smyth*).

GEESE—CRANE

The lone **Snow Goose** in the Region this fall was an ad. white morph at Saltville 27 Nov (ph. MH) that remained through the end of the season. **Northern Pintail**, a fairly uncommon to rare



Harrol Blevin's photograph of a **Mexican Violetear** from a private residence in *Carroll*, 1 Nov.

transient in the Region, was recorded from three locations: one at the MBC Pond at Burkes 13 Oct (DS) and 2 at Gose Mill Pond at Burkes 17 Oct (DS); a seasonal peak count of 5 at Falls Mills 10 Nov (CD); and one at Saltville 25 Nov (MH) that remained through the end of the season. A

likewise rare transient, **Canvasback** was reported twice: one at Falls Mills 10 Nov (CD) and 4 at Rural Retreat L., *Wythe* 30 Nov (CS). Three **Greater Scaup** were at Falls Mills 31 Oct (CD), with 4 reported 10 Nov (CD). The only **Common Goldeneyes** were reported from Saltville, where 2 hens were first found 2 Nov (ph. MH) with a single remaining until 4 Nov (ph. MH). Rural Retreat L., *Wythe* hosted the only **Red-breasted Merganser**, a heavily-worn individual seen 9 Sep (ph. MH). Undoubtedly the highlight of the fall for the Region, if not the entire Commonwealth, was Virginia's first record of **MEXICAN VIOLETEAR** visiting a private feeder on Retreat Rd., just off the Blue Ridge Pkwy. in e. *Carroll*. First observed by the homeowners 30 Oct (*fide* HB), it remained only until 1 Nov (ph. HB). Unsurprisingly, the only report of **Virginia Rail** was from Saltville, where at least one was present all season and a peak count of 3 was recorded 22 Sep (MN, WB, et al.). Saltville also furnished the only report of **Sora**, a single bird detected 22 (MN, WB, et al.) and 24 Sep (RC, RR, ES). A **Sandhill Crane** was heard bugling as it flew overhead at Burkes 23 Oct (DS); this location has hosted them in years past.

SHOREBIRDS—FALCONS

An **American Golden-Plover** at Poplar Gap 24 Sep (ph. DO) was an excellent find, providing a first eBird record for *Buchanan* and only the 3rd eBird record for the Region following records from 2015 and 2021 at Burkes. Though there is a paucity of modern records in eBird, Richard H. Peake's *Birds of the Virginia Cumberlands* (2001) notes that this species is an "occasional spring and fall migrant." Laurel Bed L. offered the only **Semipalmated Plover** reports; 4 were found 9 Sep (ph. RG, JK) with 3 remaining until 14 Sep (ph. RR). A **Wilson's Phalarope** at a warehouse pond in Abingdon, *Washington* 27 Aug (ph. RR, ES) was an excellent find and a first eBird record for the Region. **Pectoral Sandpiper**, an uncommon transient in the Region, was represented by only a single report

from Laurel Bed L. 14 Sep (ph. RR). There were three reports of single **Semipalmated Sandpipers**, also an uncommon transient: a warehouse pond in Abingdon, *Washington* 27 Aug (ph. RR, ES); Laurel Bed L. 9 Sep (ph. RG, JK) and remaining until 13 Sep (ph. RR); and Poplar Gap 24 Sep (ph. DO). A **GREAT WHITE HERON** was a phenomenal find below Buck Dam, *Carroll* 4 Sep (ph. BBe, ph. WB, MN). This was roughly the 10th record for the state, but possibly the 6th record for the Region following a 2022 report from Saltville and records from South Holston L., *Washington* in 1990, 1991, 1994, and 2002 that may have pertained to a returning bird (Gold Book). The only report of **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** was from the known population in *Bristol*, where one was spotted in the creek near Cumberland Square Pk. 21 Aug (MC). A **Western Cattle Egret**, rare anywhere in the Mountains & Valleys, was an excellent find at Burkes 31 Oct (ph. DS, CD) and a first eBird record for the Region. The only arriving **Golden Eagle** of the fall was an imm. soaring over Issac Ln. in e. *Grayson* 25 Nov (GP). A single **Barn Owl** was twice reported from a known location at Burkes: 31 Oct (DS) and 19 Nov (DS). The only location reporting **Northern Saw-whet Owls** was Whitetop Mt., where the species is known to breed. There were two reports here of singles: from the *Washington* side 24 Sep (MN) and from the *Grayson* side 9 Nov (JW). Migrant **Peregrine Falcons**, fairly uncommon in the Region, were reported from multiple locations in *Lee*, *Russell*, and *Grayson* as well as single spots in *Tazewell*, *Wythe*, and *Smyth*.

FLYCATCHERS—DICKCISSEL

A single **Olive-sided Flycatcher**, a fairly uncommon low-density migrant, was reported from the Abingdon Muster Grounds on the Overmountain Victory Trail, *Washington* 23 Sep (JK, CH). A non-vocal but well-described and ph. **Alder Flycatcher** at Byllesby and Buck Dams, *Carroll* 4 Sep (ph. BBe, ph. WB, MN) was a nice

report for this scarcely-detected migrant. **Loggerhead Shrikes** were reported all season from the stronghold at Burkes, with a peak count of 4 at the MBC Pond 6 Oct (DS). Away from here, the only report was one on Southern Gap Rd., *Buchanan* 23 Sep (DO). **Fish Crows** were reported from multiple locations on the Interstate 81 corridor around *Bristol* and Abingdon, as well as the Interstate 77 corridor in *Wythe*, *Carroll*, and *Galax*. A **Sedge Wren** at Southern Gap Business Pk., *Buchanan* 8 Oct (ph. BBe, et al.)



Clancey Deel's photo of a **Western Cattle Egret** from Burke's Garden in *Tazewell*, 31 Oct.

was an excellent find. Though this rare migrant only has five eBird records in the Region, all but one of them are from various locations in *Buchanan*. Also a rare migrant, though perhaps slightly less-so than Sedge, **Marsh Wrens** were reported twice: one at Laurel Bed L. 24 Sep (ph. RR, RC) and one at Forest Service McGhee Cr., w. of Dungannon, *Scott* 4 Oct (EO, SR). The only fall report of **Red Crossbills** was 3 from the Massie Gap area of Grayson Highlands SP, *Grayson* 31 Aug (BBo). A fairly scarce migrant, no doubt more so as its overall population continues to decline, **Golden-winged Warbler** was recorded twice: one at Grubmore Rd., *Smyth* 29 Aug (RR) and a late m. at Hoot Owl Rd., *Buchanan* 1 Oct (RD). An **Orange-crowned Warbler**, a very scarce species in the Region, was a nice find at Southern Gap Business Pk., *Buchanan* 3 Nov (ph. DO). Uncommon in the Region, **Summer Tanagers** were reported from a number of spots this fall, with records from *Lee*, *Dickenson*, *Buchanan*, *Washington*, *Smyth*, and

Carroll. The only **Dickcissel** this fall was an undocumented report from the Max Meadows section of New R. Trail SP, *Wythe* 29 Sep (RF).

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SOUTH CENTRAL



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SUMMER 2023

Editor's Note – The Summer 2023 column for the South-Central Region was penned by the journal editor. MHA.

Temperatures in June fluctuated considerably, but mostly remained in the 70s with peaks in the upper-80s and some troughs where the high only reached into the 60s. It got even hotter in July, with temperatures averaging in the upper-70s and a few days at the end of the month that reached into the 90s. Precipitation was minimal this summer. The two highlights, both waders, were Yellow-crowned Night-Heron and Roseate Spoonbill.

Abbreviations: Dick Cross (Dick Cross WMA, Mecklenburg); Kerr (Kerr Reservoir, Mecklenburg [some portions of the reservoir are in Halifax and Charlotte, but are typically birded from parks that will be identified by name]); Sandy R. (Sandy R. Res., Prince Edward).

WATERFOWL—LOONS

The only reports of **Mute Swans** were from known locations: L. Lanier, Martinsville and a pond in an industrial park on Houghton Ave. in South Boston, Halifax. Two drake **Ring-necked Ducks** from the spring continued into the summer near the dam at Sandy R., with a final report of only one on 16 Jul (ES). **Eurasian Collared-Doves** were reported only twice, both times from known locations. Two in Crewe, Nottoway 25 Jul

(ph. BE, JP) are part of a long-standing but sporadically reported population. Two just outside Burnt Chimney, Franklin 23 Jul (LM) pertain to a population with more uncertain status; after semi-regular reports in Burnt Chimney from 2014–2016, there was only one report (2019) between 2016 and 2022. Unsurprisingly, the only reports of **Black-billed Cuckoo** this summer were on the far w. edge of the Region, as this species is a very rare and sporadic breeder in the Piedmont. There were three reports, though none were photo or audio documented: Bethany Rd., Franklin 6 Jun (AD); Ferrum Mt. Rd., s. of Callaway, Franklin 6 Jun (AD); and Spoon Mt. Dr., Patrick 2 Jul (EW).



Paul Glass's picture of a **Long-billed Dowitcher** taken at Staunton River Mudflats in Halifax on 24 Sep.

Common Nighthawk is another species with tenuous breeding status in the Region and few summer records; one over a private residence on Smith Grove Rd., Dinwiddie 2 Jun (AD) could have simply been a late migrant. A **Killdeer** with significant melanin reduction, making it appear

nearly entirely white save for the black breast bands and flecks of brown in the wings, made for an interesting find among a group of over 90 typically-plumaged birds at Farmville Regional Airport, *Cumberland* 10 Jul (ph. ES). The only report of **Semipalmated Plover** was one at Clyde Pond at Dick Cross 23 Jul (ph. PG), certainly a southbound migrant. Dick Cross likewise furnished the only report of **Pectoral Sandpiper**, with 5 reported also 23 Jul (ph. PG, CW, DW). **Semipalmated Sandpipers**, typically uncommon in the Region, were only reported at two locations: one foraging on a lawn at the Farmville Regional Airport, *Cumberland* 10 Jul (ph. ES) and another at Tailrace Pk. below the dam at Kerr 23 Jul (PG). Generally uncommon to rare inland, and often associated with reservoirs and other large bodies of water, a **Caspian Tern** at the relatively small L. Lanier, *Martinsville* 3 Jul (ph. JK, CH) was an excellent find and may have been associated with storms the preceding day. Five **Forster's Terns** seen at Smith Mt. L. from Bernard's Landing, *Franklin* 30 Jul (ph. MK) were the only ones reported in the Region. **Common Loons** sometimes overwinter at Smith Mt. L., so a report of one from Scruggs #8 Boat Ramp, *Franklin* 17 Jun (WS) was notable but not terribly surprising.

ANHINGA—DICKCISSEL

The only **Anhinga** report was from the far e. edge at a known breeding location: one at Taylors Millpond, *Greensville* 8 Jul (MA, TMD). **Black-crowned Night-Heron** is a fairly uncommon and sporadically-encountered species in the Region, so an imm. at the Staunton R. mudflats, *Halifax* 9 Jul (ph. PG) was a nice find. Rarer still in the Region, an imm. **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** along the Danville Riverwalk at Main St. Bridge, *Danville* 22 Jun (ph. BW) was an exceptional find and the furthest w. eBird record for the Region. Presumably the same bird was seen a month later at Dan Daniel Memorial Pk., *Danville* 22 Jul (ph. PW). **Little Blue Heron** is an uncommon to rare, but expected, post-breeding wanderer to the Region. With ample habitat for waders, it was not

surprising that Dick Cross hosted multiple. Beginning with a single bird 11 Jun (ph. CW, DW), the congregation grew to a peak count of 5 on 13 Jul (ph. CW) with 2 remaining until 23 Jul (ph. CW, DW). The only other report was a juv. at L. Lanier, *Martinsville* 29 Jul (ph. JK), noteworthy as one of relatively few records in the w. part of the Region. Though this species has become substantially more regular in Virginia in the past few years, a juv. **ROSEATE SPOONBILL** at Dick Cross 23 Jun (ph. CW) was nonetheless a first record for the Region and a highlight of the season. **Loggerhead Shrikes** cling to a very tenuous status in the Region, and may be extirpated as breeders from many areas; this summer brought only one record, a continuing bird at a pond on Drunkard Rd., *Amelia* that was seen 30 Jun (ES) and 18 Jul (ES). **Swainson's Warblers** can potentially be found at either extreme end of the Region, but this summer the only reports were from the w. edge. A bird was singing at Rock Castle Gorge, *Patrick* 1 Jul (AR), with 2 viewed there 12 Jul (XG) and a final report of one 13 Jul (ph. TD). Though breeding was not confirmed, observers noted that the habitat looked excellent and breeding seemed highly likely. Two locations in the n. part of the Region reported **Dickcissels** this summer: one along Richmond Hwy. w. of the town of Appomattox, *Appomattox* 6 Jun (MH) and another at the Geographic Center of Virginia, *Buckingham* 24 Jun (ph. ES, ph. TS) that remained until 30 Jun (ph. JCL).

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FALL 2023

Editor's Note – The Fall 2023 column for the South-Central Region was penned by the journal editor. MHA.

August kicked off the fall season with hot temperatures, averaging in the mid- to upper-70s and peaking at times in the high 80s or low 90s. Sweltering temperatures, including a few days in the 90s, continued into early September, but things cooled off considerably later in the month. By October, though things were still warm, average temperatures had dropped to the low- to mid-60s, portending colder weather to come in November, where average temperatures dropped into the 40s and a few days at the tail end of the month were below freezing. Precipitation throughout the season was minimal, with the exception of a few days in mid-September with substantial rainfall. An excellent fall of birding in the South-Central Region was highlighted by impressive numbers and species diversity of shorebirds on the flats at the upper end of Kerr Reservoir. Dick Cross WMA in *Mecklenburg* played host to a good assortment of waders, including Wood Stork and Roseate Spoonbill. Other highlights were two different Brown Pelicans and a LeConte's Sparrow.

Abbreviations: Dick Cross (Dick Cross WMA, *Mecklenburg*); Kerr (Kerr Reservoir, *Mecklenburg* [some portions of the reservoir are in *Halifax* and *Charlotte*, but are typically birded from parks that will be identified by name]); Sandy R. (Sandy R. Res., *Prince Edward*); Staunton R. Mudflats (Staunton R. Mudflats, *Halifax*); Staunton View (Staunton View Public Use Area, *Mecklenburg*).

WATERFOWL—SANDPIPERS

The earliest arriving **Redheads** in the Region, and the only ones of the fall, were 10 at a pond on Wade Rd., near Turbeville, *Halifax* 4 Nov (DP). A hen **White-winged Scoter** was a nice find at Sandy R. 26 Nov (ES), a location that has hosted

them in past years. This ended up being a long-staying bird, remaining into the winter. **Eurasian Collared-Doves** were not reported away from known locations in *Nottoway* and *Amelia*. Always a fairly scarce migrant, **Black-billed Cuckoos** were reported at two locations: Rock Castle Gorge on the Blue Ridge Pkwy., *Patrick* 11 Aug (TBe) and Angler's Park, *Danville* 16 Sep (BW). The only **Chuck-will's-widow** reported in the fall was one on Mt. Carmel Rd., *Halifax* 8 Aug (DP). A **Sora**, uncommon to rare as an inland migrant, was an excellent find on the Staunton R. Mudflats 17 Sep (AD, PG). **Black-bellied Plovers** were reported for much of the fall from the upper end of Kerr around the Staunton R. Mudflats and Staunton View. The first report was 18 Aug (BE, JP), with fairly consistent reports through 5 Nov (ph. PG, AD). The peak count was 6 on the Staunton R. Mudflats 17 Sep (ph. AD, ph. PG). Elsewhere, one was spotted at lower Kerr when it flew over Liberty Hill WMA, *Mecklenburg* 26 Sep (CM). **American Golden-Plovers** were also reported from upper Kerr through much of the season, with observations spanning 17 Sep–29 Oct (m. obs.). The peak count was 10 at the Staunton R. Mudflats 1 & 22 Oct (ph. AD, ph. PG). A handful of **Semipalmated Plovers** were reported from both the upper and lower ends of Kerr, but a count of 24 at the Staunton R. Mudflats 26 Aug (ph. PG, AD) was notably high. The only locations reporting **Short-billed Dowitchers** were likewise Staunton R. Mudflats and Staunton View; the latter location simultaneously provided the first report and high count, 30 on 18 Aug (BE, JP). Reports of multiple individuals continued through Aug, until a final report of a single bird 1 Sep (AB). Much rarer inland, 3 **LONG-BILLED DOWITCHERS** at the Staunton R. Mudflats 24 Sep (ph. AD, ph. PG) were an excellent find and only the 2nd record for the Region after one at the same location 25 Sep 2022 (ph. PG). **Dunlin** were widely reported from upper Kerr, with a peak count of 52 at Staunton R. Mudflats 29 Oct (ph. PG, AD). Away from here the only location hosting any was Sandy R., where 2 were found 2 Nov (WR). Reports continued until 5 on 7 Nov (MH), with a peak count of 10 6 Nov (CMS).

Another excellent inland record, a **RUDDY TURNSTONE** was at the Staunton R. Mudflats 26 Aug (ph. AD, ph. PG), joined by a second 2 Sep (ph. AB), with a final report of one 3 Sep (AD, PG). The Staunton R. Mudflats accounted for the only reports of **Stilt Sandpipers**, with records spanning 20 Aug to 1 Oct and an impressive peak count of 18 on 17 Sep (ph. AD, ph. PG). Echoing a now-familiar theme, the Staunton R. Mudflats hosted the only **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** 3 Sep (ph. AD, ph. PG). Multiple **Baird's Sandpipers** were at the Staunton R. Mudflats through much of the fall, with records from 20 Aug–22 Oct and a noteworthy peak count of 3 on 26 Aug (ph. AD, ph. PG). Rounding things out for shorebirds, the Staunton R. Mudflats had a truly impressive fall for **WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPERS**, a very rare transient in the Piedmont. Starting with an already-substantial count of 11 on 2 Sep (ph. AB), numbers fluctuated over the course of the season but reached a remarkable peak of 34 on 24 Sep (ph. AD, ph. PG) before dwindling to one at the Staunton R. Mudflats 1 Oct (ph. AD, PG) and 2 the same day slightly upriver at Hogan Cr. WMA, *Charlotte* (ph. PG, AD).

GULLS—SPOONBILL

Though uncommon inland, **Herring Gulls** sometimes visit larger bodies of water, so two records from upper Kerr were not entirely unexpected: one from Staunton View 8 Oct (JK, CH) and 2 from Staunton R. Mudflats 27 Nov (RH). Somewhat expected but still fairly rare inland, **Caspian Terns** were present at upper Kerr for much of early fall, with reports from 4 Aug–19 Sep and a peak count of 6 on 16 Sep (DP). Away from here, there were two reports from *Prince Edward*: one at Sandy R., viewed from Gates Bass Rd. 18 Aug (NV) and 2 at Briery Cr. WMA viewed from the Rt. 701 boat ramp (ph. KW). **Black Terns** are often recorded annually at Kerr and this year was no exception, with one in non-breeding plumage at the Staunton R. Mudflats 20 Aug (ph. PG, ph. HG, AD) that continued until 21 Aug (SC). There was also a

report from *Prince Edward*, where the species is less-than-annual, of 3 from Briery Cr. WMA at the Rt. 701 boat ramp (ES). **Forster's Terns** were reported sporadically from the Staunton R. Mudflats all fall, with a high count of 5 on 22 Oct (ph. PG, AD). There were also reports from the dam area at Sandy R. of one on 27 Aug (ES) and 2 on 1 Sep (CMS). **Common Tern** is typically rare but regular inland, but a fallout of 45 at the Staunton R. Mudflats 9 Sep (ph. PG, AD, ST) was a truly noteworthy event. Similar counts have been recorded on quite a few occasions at Kerr, but no other locations in the Region have any counts approaching these numbers. Four, perhaps remnants from this group, were still present 24 Sep (ph. AD, ph. PG). Though this species is prone to occasional northward wanderings, a **WOOD STORK** was an excellent find at Dick Cross WMA, *Mecklenburg* 6 Aug (ph. CW, PD).



Paul Glass's photograph of a **Golden Eagle** from Staunton River Mudflats in *Halifax*, 22 Oct.

It remained until 1 Sep (ph. anonymous eBirder), during which time it was seen by many observers. This marked the 3rd record for *Mecklenburg*, following one near Kerr Dam in 1977 (Gold Book) and one at Dick Cross the preceding summer, as well as the 5th for the Region. With only a handful of records in the state away from the e. Coastal Plain, any inland **BROWN PELICAN** is quite notable, which only makes it

more remarkable that the Region hosted a minimum of 2 and possibly 3 this fall. An ad. at Sandy R. 1 Aug (RS, *fide* AD) remained until 3 Aug (KW, m. obs.). This was the 2nd record for *Prince Edward* following one at the same location in 2018. A few weeks later, an ad. that may have been the same bird was seen a short distance away at Briery Cr. WMA 22 Aug (ph. ES, ph. WR), with sporadic reports continuing until 7 Oct (ES). A juv. at the Lower L. Overlook at Kerr 16 Sep (ph. TM) was certainly a different bird; it was also the 2nd record for *Mecklenburg* following one at the same location in 2012. An uncommon and sporadically-encountered species



Ty Smith's picture of a **LeConte's Sparrow** found at Clover Boat Landing in *Halifax*, 5 Nov.

across the Region, a juv. **Black-crowned Night-Heron** was a nice find at the Staunton R. Mudflats 3 Sep (ph. PG, AD). It was a good fall for **Little Blue Herons**, usually fairly uncommon in the Region, with reports from *Halifax*, *Mecklenburg*, *Charlotte*, *Prince Edward*, and *Buckingham*. Among the many waders at Dick Cross this fall, a one-day juv. **White Ibis** 2 Aug (ph. CW) was a standout. Far more notable, however, was a **ROSEATE SPOONBILL** there that continued from the late summer until 22 Aug (ph. CW). Giving Virginia birders a taste of Florida, the spoonbill and Wood Stork overlapped at Dick Cross and were even photographed in the same frame!

EAGLES—DICKCISSEL

While **Golden Eagles** are fairly regular in the Mountains & Valleys and Coastal Plain, they are quite scarce in the Piedmont and almost unheard-of away from the n. part. Thus, one at the Staunton R. Mudflats 22 Oct (ph. PG, AD) was a phenomenal find. In addition to being a first record for *Halifax*, it was only the 2nd for the Region following one in *Patrick* 4 Nov 1997 (CK)! **Mississippi Kites**, though not particularly rare in the Region, were in short supply this fall with only two reports, both from the Farmville area of *Prince Edward*: one over the athletic fields at Longwood University 16 Aug (ph. JD) and 3 over US 460 just s. of town 22 Aug (CMS). With only about five previous reports in the Region, a **Short-eared Owl** flushed from the Staunton R. Mudflats 18 Nov (ph. PG, AD) was a great find and a *Halifax* first. There were two reports, from opposite ends of the Region, of **Peregrine Falcons**: one at the Staunton R. Mudflats 2 (AB) & 3 Sep (AD, PG) and another at the Cartersville Boat Ramp, *Cumberland* 26 Oct (TS). Always a scarce migrant, but especially so in the s. Piedmont and with very few previous records in the Region, an **Olive-sided Flycatcher** was a wonderful find at a private farm in *Buckingham* 15 Sep (ph. DS). Though they are common along the s. edge of the Region, **Brown-headed Nuthatches** are rare or absent from the n. part; 2 at the Farmville Regional Airport, *Cumberland* 18 Nov (a. r. ES) constituted a county-first. A rare migrant with only four prior eBird records, a **Sedge Wren** made for a good find and county-first at James R. SP, *Buckingham* 8 Oct (ph. TBu). **Marsh Wrens**, a more frequently occurring but still rare migrant, were encountered twice: one at the Gates Bass Rd. area of Sandy R. 28 Sep (NV) and another at the Staunton R. Mudflats 22 Oct (AD, PG). Unpredictable and nomadic, **Red Crossbills** are rare in the Region but possible just about anywhere; the only report of the fall was a calling flyover at Mayberry Mt. Meadows, *Patrick* 23 Nov (MS). A **Clay-colored Sparrow** at James R. SP 14 Oct (ES, DS, TS) was an excellent find and 3rd eBird record for the Region. Expected but

uncommon, **Vesper Sparrows** were encountered at multiple locations in *Prince Edward* and *Buckingham*, as well as a single spot in *Cumberland*. The passerine highlight of the fall was a **LeCONTE'S SPARROW** in a wetland impoundment at Clover Boat Landing, *Halifax*. Following a frustratingly-brief initial encounter 3 Nov (ES), the bird was more obliging on 5 Nov (ph. ES, ph. TS). Subsequent attempts to relocate it were not successful. This was the 4th record for the Region, but first since 1995 following previous records in *Nottoway* (1983) and *Mecklenburg* (1987 & 1995) (Gold Book). A rare transient in the Piedmont, an **Orange-crowned Warbler** at the causeway area of Briery Cr. WMA 7 Nov (ph. HN, et al.) was a good find and

an apparent first for *Prince Edward*. The only **Dickcissel** of the fall was at a private farm in w. *Prince Edward* 7 Oct (ES).

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CENTRAL



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SUMMER 2023

This summer had several highlights. Most notable was a wide diversity of southern wading birds including Western Cattle Egret, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, and Roseate Spoonbill. Other highlight species included Anhinga, Swallow-tailed Kite, Loggerhead Shrike, and Red Crossbill.

DUCKS—HERONS

There were two sightings of **Hooded Mergansers**, a scarce breeding species in the Region: an ad. and 3 juvs. at Reusens Dam, *Lynchburg* 2 Jun (ph. AE) and another at Jerusalem Church, *Nelson* 2 Jul (ph. JCL). All **Ruffed Grouse** sightings came from high elevations in w. *Amherst*, with a high count of 8 at Mt. Pleasant (ph. JA). An **American Coot** spent the summer at Beaver Cr. L., *Albemarle* 9 Jun–26 Jul (ph. NT). Unusual for midsummer, 6 **Caspian Terns** were at L. Louisa, *Louisa* 18 Jun (ph. RiPe, RePe) and another was at L. Anna, *Spotsylvania* 11 Jul (ph. CJ). A high count of 7 **Anhinga** were at Chamberlayne Swamp, *Hanover* 17 Jun (PD) with at least one continuing there through the end of the Period (m. obs.). Two **Least Bitterns** were detected by song at White Marsh along the Rappahannock R., *Caroline* 8 Jul (a. r. JG), suggesting a breeding population at the e. edge of the Region. Several juv. **Little Blue Herons** popped up across the Region: one at Chamberlayne Swamp, *Hanover* 12–17 Jul (EG, ph. m. obs.); up to 2 at their regular site at Reusens Dam, *Lynchburg* 16–20 Jul (ph. AL,

CT); another at a Walmart retention pond in *Lynchburg* 23 Jul (ph. KW, PW); and another at Fluvanna Ruritan L., *Fluvanna*, 31 Jul (ph. NT). A rare and often brief visitor, a **Western Cattle Egret** made a ten-minute stop at a horse pasture near Olive in *Spotsylvania* 8 Jun (ph. DF). Two **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** were found: one on the James R. at the Hunting Cr. Boat Ramp, *Amherst* 17 Jun (SB, ph. MK), and another at L. Albemarle, *Albemarle* 24 Jun (KG).

IBIS—DICKCISSEL

Several **White Ibises** also wandered up to the Region: 2 juvs. at Brookneal Campbell Airport,



Drew Chaney's picture of a **Roseate Spoonbill** at Ivy Cr. Natural Area in *Albemarle* from 12 Jun.

Campbell 24–26 Jun; an ad. at Chamberlayne Swamp, *Hanover* 15 Jul (ph. JF); and a juv. at Hardware R. State WMA, *Fluvanna* 18 Jul (ph. GH). A species that has become increasingly regular in the Region, a **ROSEATE SPOONBILL** was found at Ivy Cr. Natural Area, *Albemarle* 18 Jun (ph. GB, SB, JP, m. obs.).

Possibly the same individual appeared several miles west at Clover L., *Albemarle* 22–27 Jun (ph. BC, m. obs.). A **Swallow-tailed Kite** was an exciting visitor to Reas Ford Rd., *Albemarle* 26–30 Jul (ph. AB, m. obs.). One **Mississippi Kite** off Judes Ferry Rd., *Powhatan* 13 Jun (ph. SA) provided the sole report for the Region this summer despite increasing numbers on the e. side near Richmond. A **Loggerhead Shrike** at Rocky Ford Rd., *Hanover* 14 Jun (ph. SJ, LR) marked a remarkable summer record for recent history in the Region and suggests that the species may yet persist as a potential breeder despite a lack of confirmations. Up to 2 **Red Crossbills** were noted along Wiggins Spring Rd., *Amherst* 15 & 16 Jun (BE, MJ), close to last summer’s sightings in the *Amherst* Blue Ridge. A **Dark-eyed Junco** in the Piedmont in *Albemarle* at Viriditas 1 Jul (ph. TH) was notable outside of the species’



Mike Boatwright’s photograph of an **Eared Grebe** found at Reusens Dam in *Bedford*, 15 Oct.

breeding range in the Blue Ridge. More than a week late, a **Northern Waterthrush** was recorded singing at Still Meadow Trail, *Albemarle* 7 Jun (a. r. BM). As numbers typically fluctuate widely from year to year, the absence of **Dickcissels** this summer was not a total surprise.

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FALL 2023

This fall was punctuated by a high diversity of migrants and rarities across taxonomic groups including an astonishing 11 species of tyrant flycatchers. A total of 225 species was reported, slightly above the five-year average of 222. Highlight species included White-winged Scoter, Eared Grebe, Limpkin, American Avocet, Stilt Sandpiper, Red-throated Loon, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, the Region’s first Western Flycatcher and multiple Ash-throated Flycatchers, Golden-winged Warbler, and Connecticut Warbler.

GEESE—LIMPKIN

A **Snow Goose** was notably early at Boyer Rd., *Powhatan* 28 Sep (ph. KCo); seasonable sightings included one at Riverfront Pk., *Fredericksburg* 5 Nov (ER), and one at Dick Woods Rd., *Albemarle* 27 Nov (a. r. LA). The only **Ross’s Goose** was at Old Trail, *Albemarle* 28 Nov (ph. MF). The high count of **Tundra Swans** was 43 migrating over Totier Cr. Pk., *Albemarle* 31 Oct (BC). A **Northern Pintail** was early at Reusens Dam, *Lynchburg* 28 Sep (ph. PW). Rare but annual during migration in the Region, 4 **Surf Scoters** were found at Walnut Cr. Pk., *Albemarle* 29 Oct (ph. GA). Even rarer were 2 **White-winged Scoters** at Snowden Dam, *Amherst* 17 Nov (ph. CMS). A **Common Goldeneye** was on the early side 18 Nov at Peaks of Otter, *Bedford* (ph. BE). Providing one of the only Regional records and the second for the site, an **EARED GREBE** was found at Reusens Dam, *Lynchburg* 12–16 Oct (ph. PW, m. obs), drawing many eager birders to this ever-productive site. A **Sora** in a garden at Warbler Cr. Farm, *Bedford* 5 Sep (ph. BE) was an unusual setting for the only report of this wetland migrant. Appearing at the

same site as the 2nd Regional record in 2019 and amongst a slew of other extralimital reports this fall from across the eastern states, a **LIMPKIN** was at Totier Cr. Res. Pk., *Albemarle* 27 Oct (ph. BM) where it remained through 31 Oct (MH). This exponentially increasing vagrant to far-flung reaches of the Midwest, Northeast, and mid-Atlantic could become a regular visitor to the Region if current trends continue.

SHOREBIRDS—IBIS

Six **AMERICAN AVOCETS** wading at the Millpond section of L. Anna, *Louisa* 3 Oct (ph. THa) was a very notable occurrence and count for this rare visitor in the Region with fewer than ten total records. L. Anna also hosted an **American Golden-Plover** at Groome's Pt., *Orange* 20–25 Oct (EK, ph. TB), further solidifying this site as a go-to for rare shorebirds in the Region. Less than annual in the Region, a **Stilt Sandpiper** brought a taste of shorebird rarity to Reusens Dam, *Bedford* 1–4 Sep (ph. MB, m. obs.). Uncommon and always notable, there were four reports of **Dunlin**: one at L. Louisa, *Louisa*, 28 Oct (ph. SW); one at Reusens Dam, *Bedford* 9 & 10 Nov (ph. BE, MJ, m. obs.); 2 at Totier Cr. Res. Pk., *Albemarle* 13–17 Nov (ph. NT, m. obs.); and one at L. Gordonsville, *Louisa* 16 Nov (ph. NT). Two **Black Terns** were noted at Stubbs Bridge, L. Anna, *Spotsylvania* (SJ, LR) 14 Aug, a good site for this rare migrant. Very rare in the Region, a **Red-throated Loon** was at Snowden Dam, *Amherst* 17 Nov (CMS) where it continued through 22 Nov (ph. m. obs.). An **Anhinga** continued at Chamberlayne Swamp, *Hanover* through 19 Aug (KH, KO). Always rare in the Region, a **Black-crowned Night-Heron** was spotted at Richfood Rd., *Hanover* 26 Aug (ph. FK, NK). Multiple **Little Blue Herons** continued from summer with high counts at Mill Cr. L. Pk., *Amherst* 20 Aug (ph. DB) and at Chamberlayne Swamp, *Hanover* 18 Aug including an ad. (ph. EG). Two **Western Cattle Egrets** were a surprise appearance at a pasture near Warren, *Albemarle* 13–20 Nov (PB). The only **White Ibis** was a

bizarre ad. in apparent migration over Harvey's Knob, *Bedford* 8 Sep (KN, AN, BE).

KITES—FLYCATCHERS

The lone report of this increasing visitor and transient, a **Mississippi Kite** was spotted circling over Rivanna Trail Dunlora, *Albemarle* 31 Aug (ph. TW). A **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was auditorily detected on the Blue Ridge Pkwy. in *Bedford* 11 Nov (BE). Four **Olive-sided Flycatchers** were reported, all on dead snags in *Albemarle*: at Observatory Mountain 27 Aug (ph. THo); at Pantops 28 Aug (PK); at Liberty Corner Farm 10 Sep (ph. WC); and at Glenmore 12 Sep (SK). Four reports marked a good fall for **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers**: singles each at Rivanna Trail Dunlora, *Albemarle* 2 Sep (ph. TW); Three



Baxter Beamer's picture of a **Western Flycatcher** taken at Stillfred's Pond in *Albemarle* on 23 Nov.

Ridges Overlook, *Nelson* 6 Sep (ST); Peaks of Otter, *Bedford* 22 Sep (KG); and Thrashers L. Pk., *Amherst* 24 & 26 Sep (CMS, MB). Similarly scarce and frequently overlooked, an **Alder Flycatcher** was well-photographed at Thrashers L. Pk., *Amherst* 26 Sep (ph. JC). A remarkably well-photographed **WESTERN FLYCATCHER** became the Region's first and Virginia's 2nd record of the recently lumped taxon at Stillfreds Pond, *Albemarle* 11 Nov (ph. TK). This confiding individual continued near-daily through 24 Nov (ph. NC), delighting scores of patient birders over the duration of its stay and providing a rare opportunity to study this hard-to-identify rarity. Audio recordings obtained 12 Nov (a. r. MB, m.

obs.) supported the identification of the *dificilis* group (formerly Pacific-slope Flycatcher), consistent with the vast majority of other eastern US records. Providing the first Regional record and the third for the Piedmont, an **ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER** was discovered at McIntire Pk., *Charlottesville* 7 Nov (LS). Sometimes where there's one, there really are more and a second individual was found alongside the first at McIntire for a statewide high count of 2 (ph. DC, TC); one bird continued there sporadically through 11 Nov (ph. GB, SB). Another Ash-throated Flycatcher was icing on the cake for Western Flycatcher hopefuls at Stillfreds Pond 13 Nov (ph. NB), but was a one-minute wonder never to be relocated; this marked the third individual of an unprecedented movement of this species in the Region.



Drew Chaney's photo of an **Ash-throated Flycatcher** from McIntire Pk. in *Charlottesville*, 7 Nov.

SWALLOWS—DICKCISSEL

More than a month late, a **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** was photographed at Stillfreds Pond 22 Nov (ph. TK). A **Yellow-breasted Chat** was very late at Liberty University, *Lynchburg* 10 Nov (CB). One of two reports of late **Baltimore Orioles** came from *Campbell* 24 Nov (MM); the other was a long-returning individual back for its 7th winter at Boxwood, *Lynchburg* 25 Nov (CT). The lone **Golden-winged Warbler** report came from *Powhatan* at Powhatan SP 5 Sep (KCa). Comparably rare to a pure Golden-winged, a **Golden-winged x Blue-winged Warbler** was at Preddy Cr. Trail Pk., *Albemarle* 11 Sep (ph. TS).

Two **Orange-crowned Warblers** were reported, both from *Charlottesville*: one at Greenbrier Pk. 22 Oct (ph. CE) and another at McIntire Marsh 12 Nov (ph. BB, m. obs.). Always a prized find for birders in fall, several **Connecticut Warblers** were discovered: one at Boar's Head, *Albemarle* 5 Sep (ph. AA); one at Pleasant Grove Pk., *Fluvanna* 21 & 26 Sep (ST); 2 at Ivy Cr. Natural Area, *Albemarle* 24 Sep (ph. AA); and another at Sandiges Rd., *Amherst* 10 Oct (ph. MB). The lone **Mourning Warbler** report came from Jarman Gap, *Albemarle* 10 Sep (RK). There were a handful of lingering **Common Yellowthroats** detected from the Nellysford area of *Nelson*: one at Rockfish Valley Trail 8 Nov (ph. GH); 2 at Spruce Cr. Pk., 9 Nov (GH); and one at L. Monacan (JG, MG). Elsewhere, there were up to 3 at Powhatan SP, *Powhatan* 9 & 14 Nov (ph. MS). Also late was a **Yellow-throated Warbler** at Sugar Mill, *Amherst* 6 Oct (MB). A very rare visitor to the Region, a f. **Painted Bunting** visited a backyard in *Charlottesville* 24 Nov (ph. JR), typical habitat for this species in Virginia. An uncommon fall migrant, the only **Dickcissel** was found at Slaughter Pen Farm Historic Site, *Spotsylvania* 30 Oct (ph. JH, KR, RS).

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SOUTHEAST



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SUMMER 2023

June was slightly cooler and drier than normal while July was slightly warmer and wetter. Most summers are relatively quiet for unusual sightings as birds go about their business feeding and raising young. This summer had its share of noteworthy sightings led by an influx of Roseate Spoonbills into the Region.

Abbreviations: Dutch Gap/Henricus (Dutch Gap Conservation Area/Henricus Historical Park, *Chesterfield*); Hog (Hog Is. WMA, *Surry*); JRP (James R. Park System, *Richmond City*); Shirley (Shirley Plantation, *Charles City*).

SWANS—WARBLERS

Rarely spotted in summer and well past its normal departure date, a **Tundra Swan** was found in a field along Stallings Cr. Dr., *Isle of Wight* 1 Jun (ph. JS). It is unknown whether this bird was injured, as is typical for many of these extremely late sightings. Still considered rare in summer, **Hooded Merganser** sightings included one f. at Hog 17 Jun–25 Jul (ph. AC, ph. RB, PVV). This bird may have been injured, possibly accounting for its presence. The other sighting was another f. at Dutch Gap/Henricus 18 Jul (ph. KG, JMc, KC, LS). For the second summer in a row, a **Common Merganser** was spotted in the James R. in *Richmond City*. A m. in eclipse plumage, similar in plumage to last year's bird, it was first seen from the Pony Pasture section of JRP 28 Jul

(AW). The following day, the bird was photographed from the nearby Wetlands section of JRP (ph. PB). Out-of-season **Ruddy Duck** reports this summer included one at Ford's Colony, *James City* 8 Jun (GM) and 3 at a pond on Stewart Rd., *New Kent* 15 Jul (ph. SY). Uncommon in the Region but most likely to be found at Hog, a **King Rail** was seen there 17–21 Jul (TC, TT, CJ, NB). Rare w. of Chesapeake Bay, a **Willet** was at Hog 22 Jul (AC, ML). A **Greater Yellowlegs** seen at Hog 13–14 Jun was more likely a late northbound migrant rather than an early southbound migrant (ph. CH, ph. JM). Rare in summer in the Region, an apparent third cycle **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was present on



Rob Bielawski's photo of a **Limpkin** from Three Lakes Pk. & Nature Center in *Henrico*, 26 Aug.

the Jamestown-Scotland Ferry pier on the *James City* side 13–30 Jun (ph. BT, ph. DH, ph. NB). Rare in the Region in Jun, a subadult **Black Tern** was spotted on the water from the Jamestown-Scotland Ferry, *James City* 22 Jun (ph. BT). Also at the ferry pier on the *James City* side were 2 **Common Terns**, uncommon to rare that far upriver, on 23 Jun (ph. DH, ph. NB, BT). Rare in

summer, a non-breeding **Common Loon** lingered at Brandermill, *Chesterfield* 8 Jun (ph. TV). Another Common Loon, an ad. in breeding plumage, spotted at Yorktown, *York* 9 Jun (EK) was running late. As is typical in Jul, a few juv. **White Ibis** wandered into the Region. This year's sightings included one at Dutch Gap/Henricus 15 Jul (ph. PB, RAS), and 2 at Queens L., *York* 23 Jul (CJ). Much rarer was the sighting of an ad. White Ibis as it flew by a private residence on Sandy Bay Rd., *James City* 29 Jul (KGo). It is remarkable how quickly **Roseate Spoonbills** have become almost expected in the state in summer. Not long ago, this was an extremely rare species but now they are not even reviewable on the Coastal Plain. There were four sightings of this elegant wader in the Region this summer. The first was found at Hog 12 Jun and continued there until at least 23 Jul (ph. NB, m. obs.). Other sightings included 2 at Dutch Gap/Henricus 17 Jul (ph. KC, ph. MS, KK); one at Shirley 15 Jul (KH, KO); and one at Ragged Is. WMA, *Isle of Wight* 25 Jul (AM). Extremely unusual in summer, a **Brown Creeper** was at the Pony Pasture section of JRP 20 Jul (ph. HH). Rare in summer, a **Swamp Sparrow** was singing along New Market Rd., *Henrico* 17 Jun (AB). Early **Bobolinks** included one at Hog 18 Jul (NB, DH) and one at Diascund Res., *James City* 15 Jul (SJ). A noteworthy late breeding record, a **Prothonotary Warbler** pair was feeding young in the nest at the Greensprings Interpretive Trail, *James City* 29 Jul (BW). The young fledged that day. A **Magnolia Warbler** singing in *Isle of Wight* 2–3 Jun was running late (a. r. TC).

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FALL 2023

Temperatures were above average in the Region for the first three months of the period and then dropped to normal for the month of November. Precipitation was three inches below average in August, slightly above average in September and then one to two inches below normal for October and November. Despite the hot, dry August it was a disappointing shorebird season at Hog Island WMA in *Surry*. In stark contrast to last August, water levels at Hog were kept high throughout the season, frustrating local birders. Only one significant shorebird sighting came from Hog this season. Elsewhere, passerine and water bird migration was unremarkable in the Region with a smattering of early and late dates highlighted throughout the text. It was a good season for rarities led by multiple Limpkin sightings. Other rarities included Eared Grebe, Rufous Hummingbird, Hudsonian Godwit, Ash-throated Flycatcher, and Painted Bunting.

Abbreviations: Ancarrow's (Ancarrow's Landing, *Richmond City*); City Point (Petersburg National Battlefield – City Point Unit, *Hopewell*); Curles Neck (Curles Neck Farm, *Henrico*); Dutch Gap/Henricus (Dutch Gap Conservation Area/Henricus Historical Pk., *Chesterfield*); Hog (Hog Is. WMA, *Surry*); JRP (James R. Pk. System, *Richmond City*); Riverside (Riverside Turf Farm, *Charles City*).

GEESE—SHOREBIRDS

Two **Ross's Geese** were gleaned from a horde of **Snow Geese** at Curles Neck during a special bird club field trip 12 Nov (ph. RAS). A well described **Greater White-fronted Goose** flew right overhead in a flock of **Canada Geese** at Dutch Gap/Henricus 8 Nov (SB). Up to 10 **Cackling Geese** were counted at Curles Neck 12

Nov (ph. RAS). The only other Cackling Goose sighting in the Region was a flyover at Ancarrow's 23 Nov (ph. AB). Two **Northern Shovelers** at Hog 18 Aug were early (ph. NB). A **Surf Scoter**, rare inland, was spotted from the Jamestown-Scotland Ferry, *Surry* 17 Nov (ph. H&RC). An early f. **Hooded Merganser** was at Hog 8–22 Aug (ph. NB, m. obs.). Potentially the same bird that was seen in Jul, a **Common Merganser** was spotted off and on in the James R. around the Wetlands/Pony Pasture section of JRP beginning 7 Sep (ph. KC) and continuing through 12 Oct (ph. AB). Extremely rare, early and virtually unprecedented in the Region, a group of 4 **EARED GREBES** was photographed from Jordan Pt. Marina, *Prince George* 13 Sep (ph. KC). The only other record of Eared Grebe in the Region was 2 birds that showed up after a tropical disturbance in nearby *Charles City* in Sep 2006. Late **Common Nighthawks** included one at Heron's Pass, *Chesterfield* 2 Oct (W&AT) and one at Montague Circle, *York* 7 Oct (JL). A noteworthy breeding record for its tardiness, a **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** was feeding young in the nest 30 Aug in the Stonehouse community, *James City* (m. obs., *fide* BW). An imm. m. **Rufous Hummingbird** appeared at a residential feeder on Laburnum Ave., *Richmond City* 27 Aug (v. r. EO, ph. AB, m. obs.). Photos taken of the spread tail and shared with hummingbird bander Bruce Peterjohn confirmed the identification. The bird remained through 29 Aug. A **Sora** on Lower Chippokes Cr., *Surry* 26 Nov was late (a. r. PVV). **LIMPKINS** have exploded as vagrants in the e. part of the country in recent years. This season the Region recorded its second, third, and possibly fourth records of this species following the first record in 2017. On 24 Aug, a Limpkin was found and photographed at Three Lakes Pk. & Nature Center, *Henrico* (ph. JJ, ph. BH, CS). The bird remained there through 30 Aug (m. obs.). Simultaneously, a second bird was discovered at the Birkdale Golf Club, *Chesterfield* 26 Aug (ph. CT). This bird was only seen that day by the finder. Complicating the record keeping, a potential third bird or possibly the same bird from earlier in the season was (re)discovered at Three Lakes Pk. & Nature

Virginia Birds

Center, *Henrico* 28 Oct (NJ) and remained there throughout the period and into winter (m. obs.). Always noteworthy for the Region, a single **American Avocet** was seen on the Jamestown Is. Causeway, *James City* 6 Aug (ph. BT). A single bird was noted there again the next day (CJ) but by 8 Aug, there were 7 present (ph. NB, CG). **American Golden-Plover** sightings included up to 10 at Riverside 20 Sep (MG)–23 Sep (MG, ph. AB, EO); a single bird at the Sandybottom Turf Farm, *Charles City* 4 (MA)–6 Sep (MG); and a single at Chickahominy Farm, *Charles City* 23 Sep (EO). Increasingly rare in the Region, an **Upland Sandpiper** was at Riverside 16–20 Aug (ph. NB, m. obs.). Also rare and a review species for the Region, a **HUDSONIAN GODWIT** was spotted at Curles Neck 12 Nov (ph. RAS). A **Ruddy Turnstone** at Riverside 23 Sep was a good find (AB). There were two **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** reports this season. One was at Riverside 20 Sep (SC, MG) and the other was at Sandybottom Turf Farm, *Charles City* on the same day (SJ). Always rare in the Region, a juv. **Long-billed Dowitcher** was definitively identified at Riverside 23 Sep (ph. AB, MG). The only noteworthy shorebird sighting from Hog this season came in the form of a **Willet**, seen there 23 Aug (ph. DH).

GULLS—DICKCISSEL

Two extremely early **Bonaparte's Gulls** were noted in the Region. The first was at City Point 13 Aug (ph. AB) and the second was at Riverside 28 Aug (ph. NB). Also early, up to 3 **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were seen from the Jamestown-Scotland Ferry, *James City* 1–14 Aug (ph. BT). Another Lesser Black-backed Gull was seen from the Jamestown Island Causeway, *James City* 26 Aug (ph. MG). **Common Terns** are uncommon in the Region and often mistaken for the more expected **Forster's Tern**. This season, however, there were two Common Tern reports in the Region. The first sighting included 2 seen from the Jamestown-Scotland Ferry, *James City* 1 Aug (ph. BT). The second was much further inland, a single bird seen flying around L.

Rooty, *Henrico* 24 Sep (ph. RS). It is amazing how quickly **Anhingas** have become expected in the Region. This season, there were at least five sightings. This column probably will not mention them anymore unless there are unusual



Arun Bose's picture of a **Painted Bunting** taken on Belle Isle in *Richmond City* on 24 Nov.

circumstances attached to a particular sighting. Becoming more uncommon further inland, a **Snowy Egret** at Riverside 11 Sep was noteworthy (MG). A rare fall transient, a **Western Cattle Egret** was found at Dutch Gap/Henricus 1 Nov (ph. WB, ph. JF, WE). Always a rare sighting but becoming more regular, there were 2 **Ash-throated Flycatchers** noted in the Region. The first was found at Hopewell City Park, *Hopewell* 5 Nov (ph. AB, et al.). The second was at Chapel Is., *Richmond City* 30 Nov (ph. PB). An **Olive-sided Flycatcher**, a rare transient, was spotted at the John J. Radcliffe Conservation Area, *Chesterfield* 25 Aug (ph. MSu). Surprisingly, the bird remained in the area until 3 Sep (m. obs.). A **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** at Chapel Is., *Richmond City* 30 Nov was exceptionally late (ph. PB). Always a good find in the Region, a **Sedge Wren** was at Hog 24 Sep (DH, MG, BT, TC). An **American**

Pipit at the Williamsburg-Jamestown Airport, *James City* 26 Sep established a new local early fall arrival date (ph. DH, ph. BT). A late **Grasshopper Sparrow** was beautifully photographed at a private location in *Isle of Wight* 4 Nov (ph. CA). For the third year in a row, a **Cape May Warbler** returned to a suet feeder in the Tuckahoe section of *Henrico*. The bird was first spotted 4 Nov and remained throughout the period (ph. KL). A very late **Northern Parula** lingered at Ancarrow's 23 Nov (ph. AB). Also extremely late was a m. **Black-throated Blue Warbler** at Chapel Hill, *Richmond City* 30 Nov (ph. PB). Always a rarity in the Region, a gorgeous ad. m. **Painted Bunting** was found at the Belle Is. Section of JRP 24 Nov (ph. AB). The bird remained throughout the period (m. obs.). The only report of **Dickcissel**, a rare and irregular transient, was recorded as a flyover at Heron's Pass, *Chesterfield* 14 Sep (W&AT).

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EAST



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SUMMER 2023

A total of 166 species was reported in the East Region over the course of this summer, which was defined by heat waves and higher temperatures than in the past, punctuated by a few instances of severe weather. This was the Region's highest summer species count on record. The previous high was 160 in 2022, and the previous ten-year average was 149. This high species count is most likely an indication of more people getting out and submitting eBird lists. The accompanying graph (Fig. 1) shows the steady increase in the species count over the last 20 years. (The count of 126 species in 2004 was higher than the following several years because there was lots of effort put in by birders that year in Virginia Society of Ornithology's Northern Neck Breeding Bird Foray from 5–13 Jun, organized by Andrew Dolby and Sandy Spencer, during which 22 observers spent roughly 230 hours and found 118 species.). This summer there were a few summer firsts for the Region such as Sandhill Crane and Wood Stork, and other summer firsts for individual counties. There were also exciting breeding moments including fledglings of American Black Ducks and Clapper Rails, and nesting colonies of Great Egrets and Great Blue Herons. Sadly, Least Tern colonies were wiped out by a June storm. Some high counts broke records, such as the high count for the American Goldfinch, Wood Duck, and Caspian Tern, while other species counts like Laughing Gull and Black Vulture were unusually low compared to past records. Marsh birds such as Marsh Wren, rails, and the Coastal Plain subspecies of Swamp Sparrow were

disappointingly scarce or undetected in expected locations such as Mulberry Island. Data was sourced from eBird, Virginia Birds listserv, and the Gold Book (Virginia's Birdlife: An Annotated Checklist 4th edition, Rottenborn and Brinkley 2007). Birds of the World also provided some background information.

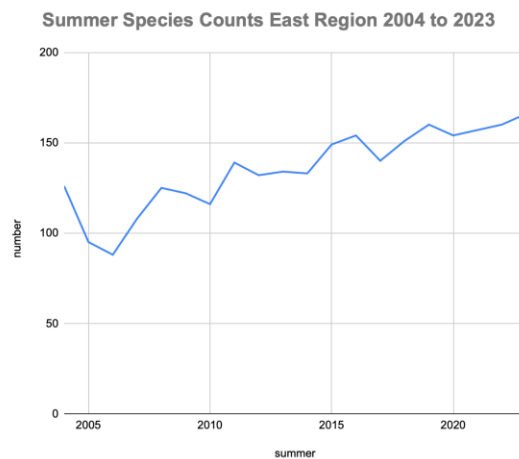


Fig. 1: Summer Species Counts, East Region, 2004 to 2023.

Abbreviations: Beaverdam (Beaverdam Pk., Gloucester); Bethel (Bethel Beach NAP, Mathews); Bryant (Bryant Bay, Gloucester); Dameron (Dameron Marsh NAP, Northumberland); Guinea (Guinea Marsh, Gloucester); Hughlett (Hughlett Pt. NAP, Northumberland); Hutchinson (Hutchinson Tract of RRVNWR Essex); K. G. Ponds (mostly private sand/gravel quarry ponds near Sealston, King George); Lagrange, (Lagrange Ln., one of the K. G. Ponds, view from road only, King George); Leedstown (Leedstown, Westmoreland); Machicomoco (Machicomoco

SP, *Gloucester*); New Pt. (New Point Comfort NAP, *Mathews*); Pocket (a marshy bay of the Pamunkey R. adjacent to the Pamunkey tribal land, *King William*); RRVNWR (Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge); USGS (United States Geological Survey); Wilna (Wilna/Wright Tract of RRVNWR, *Richmond*).

WATERFOWL—SWIFT

This year, **Mute Swans** were only found near Colonial Beach, *Westmoreland*, with a high single-location count of 6 on 15 Jun (SL). A high count of 88 **Wood Ducks** was found at K. G. Ponds 11 Jul (FA). Though this is a Regional summer high count in eBird, it is not surprising as post-breeding birds accumulate in suitable

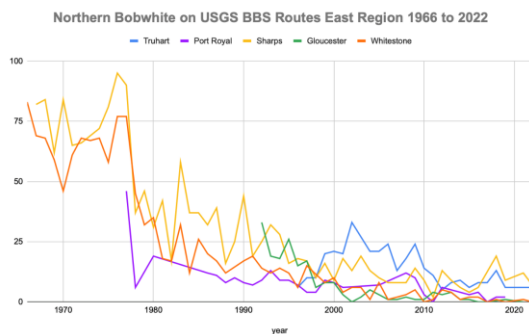


Fig. 2: Northern Bobwhite on USGS BBS Routes, East Region, 1966 to 2022.

habitats. For the declining **American Black Duck**, there was a high count of 8 at the Island Cr. unit of RRVNWR *Richmond* 17 Jun (BC). This included 3 fledglings, with 2 ads. performing distraction displays. This is the first confirmed breeding of American Black Ducks in the Region, although scattered summer reports gave suspicion of its breeding in the past. Rare but not unexpected, a **Ring-necked Duck** was spotted twice this summer at K. G. Ponds, first on 3 Jun and then again on 11 Jul (FA). There have only been seven other previous summer sightings of this species reported in eBird. A **Greater Scaup** at Bryant 5 Jun (DY) is the second summer

sighting of this species in the Region, with the only other instance being 3–7 Jun 2018 in *Northumberland* (LCh). Two **Black Scoters** were spotted, one at New Pt. 23 Jun (MF) and the other three days later at Hughlett 26 Jun (RH). These two records are the first in recent years, with the only two other summer records in the Region: 1 Jun 2017 at South Haven Beach, *Mathews* (EO) and 6 at Hughlett 3 Jun 2016 (TB). A total of 10 **Ruddy Ducks** were found at three locations. **Northern Bobwhite**, populations of which are known to be dwindling, were found at 70 locations with the high counts at each totaling to 140 and an individual high count of 7 at Machicomoco 3 Jun (MB). The accompanying graph (Fig. 2) documents the Bobwhite’s remarkable decline on the Region’s five USGS Breeding Bird Survey routes from 1966 to 2022. A single **Pied-billed Grebe** was spotted at Lagrange 18 Jun (TB). Though there are seven previous summer sightings of this species here and at the nearby K. G. Ponds, there are no eBird breeding confirmations yet. **Chuck-will’s-widows** was found at 21 locations, with the high counts at each totaling 29 birds. In contrast, only 5 **Eastern Whip-poor-wills** were found at four locations. Though more research is needed on the habitat preferences of these two goatsuckers, Chuck-will’s-widows tend to be more common in open habitat while Whip-poor-wills prefer heavy forest.² A high count of 28 **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds** was found at Bryant 1 Jun (DY) and was only slightly below the all-time Regional high count of 30. It should be noted that the hummingbirds were found at feeders, which certainly explains their high concentration. The observer noted that “during the day 17 hummingbirds were seen at one time on/around the feeders. 12 of these were females/juveniles and 5 males. At dusk, a swarm of 16 males arrived and fed for 15 minutes before dispersing.” **Chimney Swifts** were found at 107 locations with the high counts at each tallying to 291.

² Birds of the World (Carrie A. Straight and Robert J. Cooper, Version: 1.0 — Published March 4, 2020, Text last updated July 2, 2012).

RAILS—TERNS

This summer's high count of 7 **Clapper Rails** was recorded at Bethel by two observers on two separate dates: 8 Jun (DW) and 16 Jun (KL). The rails recorded on the 8 Jun included "three black fuzzy fledglings." A single **Virginia Rail** was found at K.G. Ponds (FA), the first summer record in the county and the fourth Regional summer record. A rare **Sandhill Crane** in Urbanna, *Middlesex* 17 Jun (JP, JC, MC) was the first summer record in the Region. An unusual **Black-necked Stilt** at Hughlett 1 Jun (AE) was the first *Northumberland* summer record and the fourth Regional summer record. An equally scarce **American Avocet** spotted at Bethel 30 Jul (MSo) was the first summer record for the county and the second summer record in the Region, the only other summer record being at Hughlett 6 Jul 2018 (TSa). From 1–5 **American Oystercatchers** were found at six expected locations on the e. edge of the Region, with the high counts at each totaling to 20 birds. The high count for **Killdeer** was 38, which is unusually low compared to past summer high counts, which often exceeded 100 birds. **Whimbrels** were recorded at Bethel on two occasions: 2 on 5 Jun (MF) and one on 27 Jul (FA). All prior records of this species in the Region have been between Jul and Sep, so the Jun record is particularly notable. A high count of 37 **Laughing Gulls** was found at Bowlers Wharf, *Essex* 30 Jul (JC, MC). This is an unusually low high count compared to previous high counts of more than 100 birds. The lowest high count recorded in the Region in previous years was 43. **Least Terns** had another poor breeding season this year. In the recent past, the Region's only known breeding colonies were in *Mathews* at Gwynns I., Rigby I., and Bethel. It is likely that some have also nested on other barrier beaches in this area such as those along the Chesapeake Bay shore s. of Bethel. Despite signs urging people to stay away, beach-goers and their dogs have often disrupted their breeding success at places accessible by car or boat. But this year, a Nor'easter accompanied by high winds and high tides in late Jun had a huge impact. Before the

storm, at least 40 birds were observed on the sandy spit at Bethel with at least twelve nests on 5, 6, & 18 Jun (MF, MSo). After the storm on 23 Jun, only 5 birds were observed flying around, none on nests, and the nesting colony had been washed over (MF). It is likely that the 81 birds resting on the beach at Hughlett 22 Jun (KK) were the displaced breeders from Bethel and other locations. No Least Terns were noted by the same observer at Hughlett 18 Jun, so these birds were not nesting there. A high count of 25 **Caspian Terns** at Little Bay *Lancaster* 27 Jun (MSc) was a new Regional summer high count in eBird.

LOON—IBIS

A single **Common Loon** was reported at the Warehouse Boat Ramp, *Gloucester* 1 Jun (AD). This was only the 6th Regional summer record in eBird. Despite being one of the most ubiquitous birds in the world, **Wilson's Storm-Petrels** are not seen regularly in this Region due to their pelagic lifestyle. Therefore, the sighting of one in the Chesapeake Bay off *Lancaster* 23 Jul (TH) was a nice treat. The much less ubiquitous **WOOD STORK**, which is no longer listed as Threatened by the Federal Endangered Species Act, was spotted at Stingray Pt., *Middlesex* 2–6 Jul (ph. BP, et al.). The only previous sighting in the Region was 12–13 Sep 2003 in *Mathews* (Gold Book). Elusive **Least Bitterns** were recorded on two separate instances: one on private lands on Mulberry I., *Richmond* 12 Jul (FA) and the other in Drake's Marsh at Leedstown 3 Jun (FA). One **Black-crowned Night Heron** was recorded in *Mathews* near the East R. 22 Jul (LCa), marking the first summer record in several years. Individual **Little Blue Herons** were found at three locations this summer. The season's only **Tricolored Heron** was spotted at New Pt. Comfort 20 Jun (GB). **Snowy Egrets** were found in seven locations with the high counts at each totaling 13 birds. A **Western Cattle Egret**, spotted in a large horse paddock at Fickle Fen Rd., *Mathews* 31 Jul (MSo) was the 2nd summer record for *Mathews*.

A high count of 42 **Great Egrets** was seen at Timberneck Cr. Ramp, *Gloucester* 10 Jun (RC), with some birds attending nests with young. This is the 2nd highest summer count recorded in the Region, but still short of the all-time high of 61. Overall, the species was found at 54 locations with the high counts at each tallying to 237. A small nesting colony of **Great Blue Herons** found in Apr 2020 at Leedstown was still active this year. The observer noted 4 recently-fledged juveniles standing in a nearby swamp, and at least one nest in the mostly quiet heronry still contained vocal young 16 Jun (FA). **White Ibises** were found at two locations this summer: 2–3 imm. at Guinea 15–16 Jul (JS, DY, MG), and 2 ad. at Bethel 10 Jul (MF).

VULTURES—FALCONS

The high count for **Black Vultures** was 20 birds near the *King George* landfill 11 Jul (FA), which is the lowest high count the Region has seen compared to summer high counts typically in the 35–45 range. **Ospreys** were reported to eBird from 203 locations with the high counts at each totaling to 698 birds. Though Ospreys in many parts of the Region are doing well, this large number does not reflect the poor breeding success of the birds nesting in the lower portions of the Chesapeake Bay where the main prey is menhaden. According to studies by the Center for Conservation Biology, in 2021 Ospreys fledged only .33 birds per nest in areas where they rely on menhaden, in contrast with those further up the rivers where the Osprey's main prey is other fish species and their nesting success was 1.46 birds per nest.³ **Red-headed Woodpeckers** continue to do well in the Region; there were eBird reports from 49 locations with the location high counts totaling 88 birds. Single **American Kestrels** were found at three locations: Machicomoco; Rt. 360 in Aylett, King *William*; and New Pt. Kestrels are still fairly common birds here during the winter and migration seasons, but despite

many reports of birds present during the breeding season there are still no breeding confirmations in eBird. Since these were late Jul sightings, it is unclear if these birds were rare summer residents or wandering post breeders. Five widely-dispersed **Peregrine Falcons** were reported from four locations: 2 that appeared to be hunting together at Machicomoco 10 Jun (MB) not far from where they have been known to breed in the past at the Coleman bridge, and single birds at the Robert O. Norris bridge, *Lancaster* 17 Jun (JP); Berry Farm Ln., *Westmoreland* 11 Jul (FA); and Beach Pt. Peninsula, *Mathews* 21 Jul (LCa).

PASSERINES

An uncommon and local summer resident, **Bank Swallows** were found in two locations, with a high of 148 post-breeding birds gathering on utility wires at Cottage Farm Rd., *Westmoreland* 11 Jul (FA). Interestingly, this same location had 216 birds on wires on nearly the same date 12 Jul 2004 (FA). But these numbers are tiny compared to the 1550 at this same location 30 Jul 2008 (FA). This dramatic variation could be due to timing of migration of this species out of the area, or disruptions in their breeding habitat affecting their breeding success. There are fewer banks in sand quarries in the Region in recent years. However, a single bird at K. G. Ponds 3 Jun (FA) carrying nesting material confirmed that there was at least some breeding in the area. From 1–9 **Marsh Wrens** were reported from four locations with a high count of 9 at Island Cr. unit of RRVNWR, *Richmond* 17 Jun (BC) and only 3 at Mulberry I *Richmond* 12 Jul (FA) where numbers have been as high as 25–46, and once even 135, in past breeding seasons. **Cedar Waxwings** were found at 37 locations with the high counts at each totaling 92.

A high count of 50 **American Goldfinches** at Blenheim Organic Gardens, *Westmoreland* 29 Jul (RL) was the highest breeding season tally in the

³ Bryan Watts, "A Tale of Two Bays: Osprey Fortunes Diverge," *The Center for Conservation Biology*, July 5, 2023. <https://ccbbirds.org/2023/07/08/a-tale-of-two-bays-osprey-fortunes-diverge/>

Region so far. **Grasshopper Sparrows** are still doing fairly well here; they were found at 24 locations with the high counts at each totaling 72, but that is down from last year's 98 birds at 32 locations. **Seaside Sparrows** were found at 13 expected locations, the high counts for each location tallying 42. More sparsely distributed than in the Virginia suburbs, **Song Sparrows** were found at 30 locations with the high counts tallying 49. No Coastal Plain subspecies **Swamp Sparrows** were found at Mulberry Is., *Richmond*. An amazing tally of 22 **Yellow-breasted Chats** at the Tayloe Unit of RRVNWR, *Richmond* 28 Jun (JC, MC) was a new high single-location Regional count in eBird. The observers said that this was likely an undercount in the abundant ideal habitat. The only higher count in eBird was 41 on the entire 24.5-mile USGS Truhart Breeding Bird Survey route 16 Jun 2009 (FA). Post-breeding **Bobolinks** were found in two RRVNWR locations: one at Hutchinson Tract, *Essex* 16 Jul (JC, MC) and 5 at Wilna/Wright, *Richmond* 20 Jul (JC, MC). **Eastern Meadowlarks** were found at 41 locations with the high counts at each tallying to 80, down from last year's 96 at 50 locations, and 93 from 52 locations in 2020. **Baltimore Orioles**, an uncommon and unpredictable summer bird in this Region, are only rarely seen in the same location from year to year. This summer, single birds were observed at three locations: 3 & 17 Jun at Lagrange (FA, PW); 3 Jun K. G. Ponds (FA); and near Mt. Holly, *Westmoreland* 30 Jun (ML). In

contrast, **Orchard Orioles** were reported 125 times from 61 locations. The only unusual warbler sighting was a late **Blackpoll Warbler** at Machicomoco 2 Jun (TSt, SW). The least common breeding warbler in the Region is the **Kentucky Warbler**. This year only 4 were reported from four locations in *Gloucester*, *Westmoreland*, and *King George*. The ratio of Summer Tanager to Scarlet Tanager locations was 3.4:1. Seven **Dickcissels** at Hunter's Hill/Leveltown Rd., *Essex* 20 Jun (JC, MC) were all singing males, one of which chased away a kingbird.

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COASTAL



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SUMMER 2023

Temperatures in June fluctuated quite a bit, though with a general trend towards warming as the month went on. In the beginning of the month there were still some lows in the 50s, while the second half saw a few highs in the upper 80s. Averages were largely in the mid-70s. Precipitation was nearly nonexistent in the beginning of the month, but there was a rainfall event of nearly 2 inches on 17 June and the second half of the month saw steady rain (though low to medium overall rainfall) over several days. Temperatures in July were very high, with averages in the low 80s throughout the month and few peaks in the 90s. Precipitation was somewhat steady, with rain on about a third of days though only two with rainfall over 1.5 inches. A good roster of waterfowl lingered into the summer. Species highlights for the season included Virginia's 2nd Tropical Kingbird, as well as Mottled Duck, Wood Stork, White-faced Ibis, Western Kingbird, and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher.

Abbreviations: Back Bay (Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge, *Virginia Beach*); Chincoteague (Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, *Accomack*); Craney (Craney Island Dredged Material Management Area, *Portsmouth*); Grandview (Grandview Nature Preserve, *Hampton*); Rudee (Rudee Inlet, *Virginia Beach*); Stumpy (Stumpy L. Natural Area, *Virginia Beach*).

WATERFOWL

An obliging **Black-bellied Whistling Duck** at Lakeside Pk., *Chesapeake* continued from the spring, remaining until 17 Jun (ph. DG, ph. LM, m. obs.). The only other report in the Coastal Region this summer was one on Winterville Rd. at Muddy Cr., *Accomack* 29 Jun (WB). An injured **Snow Goose** frequenting the area around Bulls Pond near Magothy Bay NAP, *Northampton* was last spotted 12 Jun (ph. MB). **Mute Swans** continue to decline in the Coastal Region, with only two reports this summer: one at Wattsville, *Accomack* 7 Jun (TM) and 4 at South Pt. Marsh on Smith Is., *Accomack* 21 Jul (EM). Typically fairly infrequent summer visitors, though with previous breeding records, **Blue-winged Teal** remained until 10 Jun at Back Bay (ph. MR, m. obs.) and the Wildlife Loop at Chincoteague until 2 Jun (CS). Another semi-regular summer duck, **Gadwall** were recorded at three locations: 4 at Chincoteague 5 Jun (TM) with 2 remaining on 22 Jun (TM); a single drake at Stumpy 24 Jun–1 Jul (ph. RB); and a heavily worn drake at Deep Cr. Lock Pk., *Chesapeake* 23 Jul (ph. RB). An exceptionally late drake **American Wigeon** was encountered at Back Bay 4 Jun (ph. RB), where none had been reported since late Mar, and where it remained through 10 Jun (ph. AB, m. obs.). A **MOTTLED DUCK** was again encountered at Craney, where the species has been recorded every summer but two since 2018, with a single report on 15 Jun (ph. BT, ph. DH, RLA). Craney also hosted the only **Green-winged Teal** of the summer, a hen spotted 13 Jul (BW, DY, LS). A few **Ring-necked Ducks**

lingered into the summer in s. Hampton Roads: a hen at Mt. Trashmore Pk. 5 Jun (ph. K&TB, ph. RB) that remained through at least 2 Jul (ph. RB); a drake at Back Bay that remained through 15 Jun (DC, LM, CH); and a drake at Craney 6 Jul (ph. BW, ph. DY, BT, LS). All three species of scoter were recorded in the Coastal Region this summer. A f. **Surf Scoter** in heavy molt was seen from the beach at Back Bay 8 Jul (ph. AB), while another f. was at Rudee 18 Jul (ph. anonymous eBirder). The only **White-winged Scoter** was a molting m. at Wire Narrows Marsh, *Accomack* 22 Jun (ph. SC). As is typically the case, **Black Scoters** were far and away the most numerous, with dozens of reports from all three coastal counties. A smattering of **Red-breasted Mergansers** lingered at locations in *Accomack*, *Virginia Beach*, and *Hampton*, with the latest report a f. at Ft. Monroe, *Hampton* 18 Jul (ph. GB). A few **Ruddy Ducks** remained at Craney through the summer, with a peak of 5 on 8 Jun (BW, DY, SC) and 3 remaining on 27 Jul (RLA, BW, DY). The only other place to host one was a borrow pit on Whedbee Corell Ln., *Chesapeake*, where a drake continued from the spring until 20 Jul (ph. DG).

GREBES—SHOREBIRDS

Pied-billed Grebes were reported lingering at several locations in *Virginia Beach* and *Chesapeake*, but most significant was a group of 5 at Back Bay 5 Jul (ph. CH, RLA, RR) that comprised 2 ads. and 3 young. **Common Nighthawks** managed to cling to their tenuous breeding status in the Region, with reports coming from the stronghold at Craney; a peak count of 3 was present 8 Jun (DY, LS). There were three reports of **Virginia Rails** this summer: one at Messick Pt., *Poquoson* 21 Jun (PVV); one on the *Suffolk* side of Great Dismal Swamp NWR 27 Jun (TC); and 2 at the bridge on Bullbeggar Creek in n. *Accomack* 9 Jul (DC). An **American Coot** that continued from the spring at Mt. Trashmore Pk., *Virginia Beach* was last reported 3 Jul (ph. RR), while another at Back Bay was a one-day wonder on 5 Jul (ph. CH, RLA, LM,

RR). **American Avocets** again concentrated in impressive numbers at Craney, with the count growing from 55 on 1 Jun (ph. DC, BW, DY) to an end-of-summer peak of 363 on 27 Jul (BW, RLA, DY). The only report away from Craney was a single at the Old Wallops Is. Ferry Dock, *Accomack* 30 Jun (ph. AP). An **American Golden-Plover** at an unspecified part of Chincoteague during a waterbird survey 22 Jun (ph. TM) was the only record for this rare spring migrant. Reports of **Wilson's Plovers** were confined to known breeding locations on the *Accomack* barrier islands of Cedar and Parramore. A **Hudsonian Godwit** at Toms Cove on Chincoteague 13 Jul (EN) persisted through 30 Jul (ph. TM), providing the only summer report of this species. Craney hosted the only **Wilson's Phalaropes** of the summer; at least one was present the whole month of Jul, with a peak count of 2 on 13 Jul (BW, DY, LS). Early Jun saw a bit of a **Red-necked Phalarope** fallout along the coast, with several locations reporting multiple. Notable counts of 9 and 8 were reported from Craney (ph. BW, ph. DC, ph. DY) and Chincoteague (G&HS), respectively, on 1 Jun. Three were also reported on that date from Ship Shoal Is., *Northampton* (v. r. MB, KR, KW), while another 3 were at Back Bay a few days later on 4 Jun (ph. RB). Craney hosted the only **Ruff**, a handsome m. present both 29 Jun (ph. BW, ph. DY, LS) and 6 Jul (ph. BT, BW, DY, LS).

GULLS—OWLS

A very worn **Iceland Gull** was quite a surprise at Sarah Constant Beach Pk., *Norfolk* 5 Jun (ph. JF), remaining until the following day (ph. LM). This was the first summer record for Virginia since one at Hog Is., *Northampton* 18 Jun 1997, cited in the Gold Book. A group of 3 **Roseate Terns** was a nice find at Chincoteague 23 Jun (ph. TM, CM). Two were also spotted on the beach at False Cape SP, *Virginia Beach* 5 Jul (ph. CH, RLA) and again from the beach at Back Bay 15 Jul (RLA, LM). An imm. **Wood Stork** continued from the spring at Redwing Pk., *Virginia Beach* until 16

Jun (DM). A few **Northern Gannets** lingered along the immediate coast, with reports from Back Bay 10 Jun (EO); Chincoteague on the same day (BB, WB, m. obs.); and the nearshore Atlantic waters off *Virginia Beach* 5 Jul (RT). Both Jun reports were imms., while the Jul bird was an ad. A **White-faced Ibis** was a very striking find at the pond behind the Food Lion in Exmore, *Northampton* 27 Jun (v. r. MB). **Barn Owls** have become incredibly scarce in the Coastal Region, so two reports this summer was an encouraging sign: one flushed during a colonial waterbird survey at Wreck Is., *Northampton* 16 Jun (ph. MB, KR, KW) and another at Chincoteague 15 Jul (CT, AT).

FLYCATCHERS—DICKCISSEL

Virginia's second **TROPICAL KINGBIRD** was spotted on a wire along the entrance road to Back Bay 5 Jun (ph. EB). Initially non-vocal and not identifiable to species-level, it was relocated at the same place four days later and extensively documented with photo and audio that confirmed the species (ph. & a. r. SM, m. obs.). At Grandview, a **Western Kingbird** zipping north along the beach on strong sw. winds was an excellent summer find on 29 Jul (ph. RB). Rounding out the rare flycatchers for the summer, a **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** seen briefly along the entrance road to Back Bay 9 Jun (ABa, ph. SM, m. obs.) was a welcome bonus for birders seeking the Tropical Kingbird. Rare in summer anywhere in the Coastal Plain away from the Potomac R. in *Fairfax* and *Prince William*, a singing **Warbling Vireo** at a neighborhood park on Jameson Dr., *Virginia Beach* 21 Jun (RB) was an exceptional surprise. This bird remained at this location, possibly on territory, through 11 Jul (a. r. CH) and was seen in the company of a second bird on at least one occasion, 24 Jun (ABa, ph. JM). **Bank Swallows** began staging for their southbound migration a bit early, with several mid- to late-Jul reports, but one at Whedbee Corell Ln., *Chesapeake* 4 Jul (RB) was notably early. Similarly, two Jul reports of **Cliff**

Swallows were notably early especially given the lack of any breeding locations e. of the James R. around *Hopewell*. An imm. was with a concentration of swallows at Whedbee Corell Ln., *Chesapeake* 3 Jul (ph. DC) and again 4 Jul (ph. RB). One at Craney 27 Jul (BW, RLA, DY) was late enough that it may have been an early migrant. There were two reports of summer **Savannah Sparrows** from the Eastern Shore:



Betty Sue Cohen's picture of a **Tropical Kingbird** at Back Bay NWR in *Virginia Beach*, 9 Jun.

one singing at Gargatha Landing, *Accomack* 2 Jun (TM) and another at Hog Is., *Northampton* 5 Jun (MB). The Gold Book notes that this species occasionally occurs in summer along the coast, but there is no known evidence of breeding. There were three reports of **Magnolia Warblers** that lingered into early Jun in the Coastal Region: one at a private residence in the Hilton neighborhood of *Newport News* 1 Jun (a. r. PVV); another, well-described individual with a mixed flock at the Hermitage Garden Foundation, *Norfolk* 2 Jun (anonymous eBirder); and a third at Back Bay 4 Jun (a. r. RB). Late **Blackpoll Warblers** were reported at over a half-dozen locations in the Tidewater area during the first week of Jun, including *Newport News*, *Norfolk*, *Chesapeake*, and *Virginia Beach*. One at a private residence in the Hilton neighborhood of *Newport News* remained until the late date of 17 Jun (a. r. PVV). Two **Dickcissels** were singing along the entrance

road to Magothy Bay NAP, *Northampton* 12 Jun (a. r. DC), with reports of at least one continuing through 21 Jul (JM). Another detected by flight call at Willis Wharf, *Northampton* 31 Jul (MB) could have been a very early migrant.

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FALL 2023

Temperatures in August were, in a word, hot with averages in the upper 70s to mid-80s all month and peaks as high as 96°. Precipitation during the early summer was minimal but punctuated by a few rainfall events of around 1-2 inches. Things began cooling considerably after mid-September, with average temperatures dipping to the mid-60s by the end of the month; precipitation remained low, with only one significant rainfall event. In October, average temperatures remained in the mid-60s with declines into the 50s by the end of the month, and minimal rainfall. Substantial drops in temperature did not occur until November, with the last days of the month witnessing the first lows below freezing. Precipitation in November remained minimal. Avian highlights this fall were legion. Most spectacular were several records of American Flamingos tied to Hurricane Idalia, as well as an unusually large number of Ash-throated Flycatcher reports. Other highlights included

Limpkin, Roseate Spoonbill, Swainsons' Hawk, American Goshawk, Tropical/Couch's Kingbird, and Townsend's Warbler.

Abbreviations: Back Bay (Back Bay NWR, *Virginia Beach*); Chincoteague (Chincoteague NWR, *Accomack*); Craney (Craney Is. Dredged Material Management Area, *Portsmouth*); ESB Nature Preserve (Edward S. Brinkley Nature Preserve [formerly Cheriton Landfill], *Northampton*); ESVNWR (Eastern Shore of Virginia NWR, *Northampton*); Grandview (Grandview Nature Preserve, *Hampton*); Kiptopeke (Kiptopeke SP [including Kiptopeke Hawkwatch], *Northampton*); Little Is. (Little Is. Pk., *Virginia Beach*).

WATERFOWL

Ross's Geese began arriving in the Region by the second half of Nov, with three reports: 3 in a field near Hallwood, *Accomack* 19 Nov (AL, EC); 2 at Bay Cr. Nature Preserve, *Northampton* 29 Nov (ph. MB, SC, AR); and a single at Sherwood Lakes, *Virginia Beach* 29 Nov (ph. RR, m. obs.) that continued into the winter. A group of 9 **Greater White-fronted Geese** that included 5 juvs. and 4 ads. frequented the ESB Nature Preserve and surrounding vicinity beginning 24 Oct (ph. MB, ZP) and continuing through the winter. The first arriving **Cackling Geese** in the Region just barely squeaked in ahead of the winter season, with two reports of singles on 29 Nov: one at Bay Cr. Nature Preserve, *Northampton* (ph. AR, MB, SC) and another at Sherwood Lakes, *Virginia Beach* (ABa, JMc) that continued into the winter. A **Snow x Canada Goose** hybrid was an interesting find at ESB Nature Preserve 24 Nov (AR). A carefully-studied hen **Eurasian Wigeon** was a nice pick from a private residence on a cove of the Lafayette R., *Norfolk* 5 Nov (ph. RLA), with subsequent appearances 7 and 9 Nov (RLA). Elsewhere, a drake turned up at Back Bay 27 Nov (LH). **Common Eiders** on the vanguard of their

arrival included a hen at Lynnhaven Boat Ramp, *Virginia Beach* 3 Nov (ph. EBe, TCa) and a flyby f. or imm. at Fisherman's Pt. on Chincoteague NWR 10 Nov (JF). The first **Harlequin Duck** of the season was a f. at Grandview 11 Nov (DM, ph. MS, m. obs.), followed by an imm. m. at Oyster Boat Ramp, *Northampton* 29 Nov (ph. AR, ph. MP, SC).

FLAMINGO—LIMPKIN

Certainly the most exciting avian event of the fall was the unprecedented fallout of **AMERICAN FLAMINGOS** in the wake of Hurricane Idalia in late Aug. This movement impacted much of the eastern United States, with over 100 flamingos spotted across Florida and records in places as far flung as Wisconsin, Michigan, and Kansas.



Kirk Gardner's photograph of an **American Flamingo** found at Mariners Pt. in *Accomack*, 12 Oct.

Virginia's first report was 2 spotted by a kayaker on the beach at Plum Tree Is. NWR, *Poquoson* 1 Sep (*fide* JMa); access restrictions at Plum Tree made it difficult for birders to attempt to relocate them, though some tried unsuccessfully by kayak. Surprisingly, it later came to light that 2, possibly the same individuals, were spotted in flight by the Bayview Community Center at Langley Air Force Base, *Hampton* also on 1 Sep (v. r. CPh).

A few lucky birders were able to join the flamingo excitement when one was found at Toms Cove on Chincoteague NWR 1 Oct (ph. SS, m. obs.), but the afternoon discovery meant that only a relative few were able to make it to Chincoteague in time. This bird was not at Toms Cove the following morning, but fortunately for Virginia birders was discovered by a boat tour group in the channel on the back side of Wallops Is. (ph. SH, m. obs.). In the following weeks, dozens of birders were able to catch a glimpse of this bird from Mariners Pt. or by boat with one of Chincoteague Is.'s several ecotour companies. The last report on this part of the island was 13 Oct (BT). Adding to the excitement, a second flamingo was discovered at the n. Wash Flats a mere stone's throw from the Maryland line. First spotted 5 Oct (ph. SS), this bird was also seen by many observers (primarily on boat tours) through 20 Oct (SF). While **Black-billed Cuckoo** is always a low-density migrant in the Region, it was unusual for the fall to pass with only a single report – one at Back Bay 12 Sep (ABa, JMc). Back Bay also played host to the only **Common Gallinules** reported in the Region this fall; 2 were discovered 25 Oct (ph. DC, RLA) and remained until 29 Oct (ph. SM, AMy, m. obs.). A **LIMPKIN** spent an extended period on private property adjacent to Heron Ridge Golf Club, *Virginia Beach*. First spotted by property owners 5 Sep (D&HL, *fide* RB), it remained until at least 24 Oct (ph. EBl).

SHOREBIRDS

American Avocets were reported by the hundreds at their regular congregation site at Craney, as well as in smaller numbers at Chincoteague where the species is also a regular migrant. More noteworthy were a pair of reports from the Peninsula, where this species is less common: 2 at Plum Tree Is. NWR, *Poquoson* 5 Nov (ph. JN) and again 16 Nov (ph. M&JC) and 2 at Grandview 27 Nov (ph. HH) with one remaining 29 Nov (ph. CMar). **American Golden-Plovers** were widely reported from

Chincoteague, lower *Northampton*, and Craney, but the only report w. of the Bay was a single at Plum Tree Is. NWR, *Poquoson* 2 Sep (NN, AR, MM, WB). **Upland Sandpiper** showed no sign of reversing its precipitous decline this fall, with only a single report of a single individual from Naval Air Station Oceana, *Virginia Beach* 8 Sep (ph. KS). By contrast, reports of **Long-billed Curlews** in *Northampton* were more widespread than in the recent past. In the barrier marsh system, one was at Myrtle Is. 26 Oct (ph. MB, ZP) while another was at the s. end of Mockhorn Is. 6 (ph. MB, ZP) and 8 Nov (ph. MB, ph. AR, SC). More remarkably, there were two reports of individuals viewable without stepping aboard a



Rob Bielawski's picture of a **Brown Booby** at Little Is. Pk. in *Virginia Beach*, 23 Sep.

boat – first, one viewed from the back side of Indiantown Pk. 16 Nov (AR, SC, m. obs.) followed by a report of one earlier the same day at Box Tree Marsh (ph. RK) that was discovered in later review of photos. The latter bird, though not reported again in the fall, was subsequently relocated in the winter and proved to be long-staying. **Hudsonian Godwits** were detected at multiple locations this fall. One at Chincoteague 4 Aug (WH) remained through at least 18 Aug (NT, STe), but subsequent reports on 24 Sep (JS) and 28 Sep (CMan) could have been this or a different individual. A report of 2 from n. of the main refuge in Assateague Bay 3 Oct (ph. CPo) certainly accounted for at least one additional individual. Later in the fall, a bird survey at Back Bay turned up a noteworthy count of 4 on 5 Oct (ph. DC, ph. RR, JK) with 2 remaining until 28

Oct (ABa, JMc). The only locations reporting **Wilson's Phalaropes** this fall were regular spots: Chincoteague and Craney; the latter turned in a remarkable high count of 26 on 24 Aug (BW, RLA, DC, DY). These two locations also accounted for the only **Red-necked Phalaropes** in the Region this season. Chincoteague had a relative paucity, with only two reports of singles: one from the Wash Flats 31 Aug (ph. G&HS) and one from the beach on the bay side of Toms Cove 17 Sep (ph. TE). At Craney there were regular reports between 24 Aug and 21 Sep, with a high count of 4 on 14 Sep (ph. BW, BT, DY, LS). Craney also hosted the only **Ruff** of the fall on 10 Aug (ph. BT, RLA, AMi, LS). It was a good fall for **Buff-breasted Sandpipers**, with a half-dozen reports from across the Region. The high count was 8 at Craney 10 Sep (ph. BT, BW, DY, LS).

JAEGERS—SPOONBILL

Parasitic Jaegers were in fairly short supply this fall, with only a few reports all from *Virginia Beach*. The first of these was 2 at Little Is. 12 Nov (ph. RB), followed by singles viewed from the Hilton Vacation Club on 24th St. on both 24 and 25 Nov (ph. WB). An unidentified jaeger off Kiptopeke SP 13 Sep (AR) may have been a **Pomarine Jaeger**, but the views were inconclusive. Other reports of unidentified jaegers this fall included at Sunset Beach, *Northampton* 13 Sep (AR, SC); in the Atlantic Ocean on a boat excursion off *Virginia Beach* 30 Oct (RT); and from Sandbridge Beach at Kabler Rd., *Virginia Beach* 17 Nov (ABa). There was only a single report of **Iceland Gull** this fall, a distant imm. viewed from the Hilton Vacation Club at 34th St., *Virginia Beach* 24 Nov (WB). Chincoteague had the only **Arctic Terns** of the fall, a group of 9 that joined an evening tern roost in Toms Cove 23 Sep (SC, OC) along with 6 additional possible Arctics and an assortment of other species. A **Roseate Tern** at Swan Cove on Chincoteague NWR 9 Sep (ph. AR, m. obs.) was the only report of the fall and delighted a large group of birders on a VSO outing. There were

two reports of **Pacific Loons** this fall, both from the Atlantic off *Virginia Beach*: at Little Is. 21 (ABa) and 24 Nov (CH) and from the Hilton Vacation Club at 34th St. 24 Nov (ph. WB). The only **Leach's Storm-Petrel** of the season was one seen from shore at Chincoteague 23 Sep (SC, OC). There were three reports of **Brown Boobies** this fall, continuing this species' trend towards more regular occurrence in Virginia. The first report was an imm. at Cape Charles Beach, *Northampton* 7 Sep (AR, SC), followed by another imm. at Little Is. in the wake of Tropical Storm Ophelia 23 Sep (ph. RB) and rounded out by a final imm. at Sunset Beach, *Northampton* 31 Oct (AR, AN). Reports of **American White Pelicans** were scattered in s. *Northampton* and *Virginia Beach*, with a high count of 39 from Kiptopeke SP 7 Nov (SC). **Roseate Spoonbills** made a nice showing in the Coastal Region this fall, continuing the trend towards regular appearances by a species that was once a major statewide rarity. The first report was 2 at Craney 7 Sep (ph. BW, ph. BT, DY, LS); these birds remained until 5 Oct (ph. BW, ph. DY, HB). Other reports included one at a private residence on Sleepy L., *Suffolk* 16 Sep (*vide* LM); 2 at Plum Tree Is. NWR, *Poquoson* 19 Sep (ph. M&JC, AH); and a flyover at Kiptopeke SP 15 Oct (ph. AR, SC, STi).

EAGLES—OWLS

It was an excellent fall for **Golden Eagles** in *Northampton*, with over a dozen reports in Nov from across the county, including multiple birds on the 11 Nov Rarity Roundup. There were no reports of this species elsewhere in the Region. One **AMERICAN GOSHAWK** was detected at the Kiptopeke Hawkwatch this fall: an imm. on 3 Nov (SC, AR). Kiptopeke likewise had a single **Swainson's Hawk**, a light morph imm. on the evening of 23 Oct (AR, SC, m. obs.). It was a good fall for **Rough-legged Hawk**, a species that is sometimes absent from the Region entirely, with three reports: an imm. light morph at the Kiptopeke Hawkwatch 18 Oct (SC, AR) that was

also detected further s. at Sunset Beach (ph. AR); another at the Kiptopeke Hawkwatch 1 Nov (SC, AR), this one a dark morph imm.; and a dark morph at Craney 9 Nov (ph. BW, ph. BT, DY, LS). A daytime roosting **Barn Owl** was an exciting find at Craney 12 Oct (ph. DC, ph. BT, ph. DY, BW). The only other report was one calling from the Raptor Trail at Kiptopeke SP 11 Nov (AR, MM, SC, WB, CMO). A handful of **Short-eared Owl** reports came from expected locations at various marshes in n. *Accomack*, but a report from Indiantown Pk., *Northampton* 11 Nov (ph. ESt, m. obs.) was more notable. There were only two reports of **Northern Saw-whet Owls** this fall: 2 at Kiptopeke SP 31 Oct (AR, SC, MB, AN) and one at Mutton Hunk Fen NAP, *Accomack* 20 Nov (AR).

FLYCATCHERS

It was a fairly good fall for **Olive-sided Flycatcher**, quite rare in the Region, with reports from Kiptopeke SP 3 Sep (AR) and Chincoteague 9 Sep (BA, m. obs.). Likewise scarce and complicated by identification challenges, a vocalizing **Alder Flycatcher** was a nice find at ESVNWR 4 Sep (a. r. AR). A **Say's Phoebe** put in a brief appearance at the Back Bay NWR boardwalk 25 Sep (ph. ESc); this species is a sporadic visitor to the Region and is sometimes prone to being a one-day wonder – as was the case with this individual, which was not relocated despite diligent searching. The fall of 2023 was a banner season for **Ash-throated Flycatchers** in Virginia. Usually a rare but annual visitor to the Region, this season there were an astonishing six reports accounting for 6 or 7 individuals; this was part of a larger influx that also included multiple records in the Piedmont, where this species is quite scarce. Records were as follows (all in Nov): one at Kiptopeke SP 2 Nov (ph. SC, m. obs.) with another, likely a different individual, at the same location 30 Nov (SC, ph. AR); one in the dunes near the beach at First Landing SP, *Virginia Beach* 3 Nov (ph. JMc); one at ESVNWR 12 Nov (ph. WB, MM) and again 16

Nov (ph. AR); 2 at Whedbee Corell Ln., *Chesapeake* 15 Nov (ph. DG), with one remaining until 28 Nov (ph. GB); and one at the retention pond behind the Harris Teeter on Princess Anne Rd., *Virginia Beach* 19 Nov (ph. RR, m. obs.) that remained into the winter, with 2 present 29 Nov (ph. TM). A kingbird briefly observed heading n. at Sunset Beach, *Northampton* 30 Oct (AR) was not identified to species-level but was narrowed down to **TROPICAL/COUCH'S KINGBIRD**. Two locations in *Northampton* hosted multiple **Western Kingbirds** this fall. One was at Kiptopeke 17 Sep (ph. SC), while another there two months later on 18 Nov (ph. BT) was most likely a different bird. Latimer Siding Rd. briefly hosted one 26 Sep (ph. AR), but later had 2 that were first found 12 Nov (LA, WE, m. obs.) and remained until 19 Nov, during which time they were seen by dozens of observers. There was also one at Back Bay 19 (ph. EB, m. obs.) and 20 Sep (ph. RB, m. obs.), as well as another at Naval Air Station Oceana, *Virginia Beach* 24 Sep (ph. DC, RLA). A **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** put in a very brief appearance near the visitors' center at Back Bay 4 Sep (ph. DM).

RAVEN—TANAGERS

While **Common Ravens** have become semi-regular on the w. edge of the Coastal Region, this fall was a truly exceptional one with multiple reports from the Eastern Shore – the first in over 20 years! One flying over at Sunset Beach, *Northampton* 14 Sep (ph. MB, AR, KR) was identified later from photos. Presumably the same bird was seen from the hawkwatch at Kiptopeke SP 19 Sep (AR) and remained in the vicinity through 11 Oct (AR, SC). Remarkably, 2 were also seen on the n. end of Main St. on Chincoteague Is., *Accomack* 10 Oct (ph. CM, ph. AR)! One was also reported from a semi-regular location along Interstate 64 near Newport News Pk., *Newport News* 12 Nov (TS, LHS). A *Catharus* thrush flying over in the morning flight at Sunset Beach, *Northampton* 13 Oct (ph., a. r.

AR) was not conclusively identified to species but may have been a **BICKNELL'S THRUSH**. The only **Evening Grosbeak** of the fall was one calling near the Marsh Overlook at ESVNWR 11 Nov (a. r. DL, a. r. PK, RT). **Snow Buntings** were reported from a handful of locations across the Region, with notable counts of 15 at Craney 30 Nov (BW, RLA, BT, DY) and 10 at Cape Charles Beach, *Northampton* 26 Nov (ph. AR). Reflecting perhaps an increase in the species in our Region, or maybe birders' increased ability to detect them, **Clay-colored Sparrows** were reported too frequently for individual mention, with records from *Accomack*, *Northampton*, *Virginia Beach*, *Norfolk*, *Chesapeake*, and *Portsmouth*. Reports of **Lark Sparrows** were less frequent, and all single birds: at Chincoteague NWR 15 Aug (ph. JMc, ABa) and again 7 Sep (ph. ABo, AD); Back Bay NWR 28 Aug (MC) and again 7 Oct (ph. RB) through 16 Nov (ph. EBe); Sunset Beach, *Northampton* 26 Sep (ph. MB, AR, OC) and 22 Oct (ph. AR); and Craney 12 Oct (ph. DC, BW, DY). There were two reports of **Yellow-headed Blackbird** this fall: one at Craney 12 Oct (ph. BT, BW, DY) and a m. seen briefly at Back Bay 28 Oct (ABa). The only **BREWER'S BLACKBIRD** report was a f. along the Dismal Swamp Canal Trail at the Cornland Rd. Access, *Chesapeake* 26 Nov (DC). It was a good fall for **Golden-winged Warbler**, typically a very scarce migrant in the Region, with three reports: one glimpsed briefly at ESVNWR 2 Sep (MB); another at Indian R. Pk., *Chesapeake* 16 Sep (ph. DG); and a late-ish report from Sandy Bottom Nature Pk., *Hampton* 9 Oct (MN). By contrast, it was a fairly poor showing for **Connecticut Warbler** this fall with only two reports: one in morning flight at Sunset Beach, *Northampton* 5 Sep (AR) and another at the retention pond behind the Harris Teeter on Princess Anne Rd., *Virginia Beach* 15 Oct (ph. AR, SC, m. obs.). The highlight of the fall warblers this year was a m. **TOWNSEND'S WARBLER** at the campground at First Landing SP, *Virginia Beach* 25 Sep (ABa, JMc, ph. AR). **Western Tanagers**, typically rare but regular in the Region, were represented by only a single

report: 2 visited a backyard on Guthrie St., w. *Virginia Beach* 19 Nov (ph. TCo); though this was the first time two showed up, this marks the third year in a row that a single bird has been visiting this yard in the late fall and winter.

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