



THE SISKIN

Newsletter of the Northern Virginia Bird Club

Vol. 59, No. 1

February 2014

www.nvabc.org

Saturday, February 15

X-trip to Point Lookout MD

See calendar inside for time and directions

HIGHLAND COUNTY WINTER WEEKEND

The Winter Highland weekend club trip is scheduled for February 28 to March 2 (Friday to Sunday). Late winter is an excellent time to visit Highland County, especially for its wintering Golden Eagles, Rough-legged Hawks, winter finches and wonderful winter scenery. On last year's trip, we saw a total of 52 species. Highlight sightings besides the previously mentioned raptors included Eastern Screech Owl, Northern Harrier, Black-capped Chickadee, Purple Finch, Pine Siskin and American Tree Sparrow.

Plans for the weekend include birding the Augusta area Friday afternoon starting at 1 PM (optional) with an overnight stay at the Staunton Best Western. On Saturday morning we will drive to and bird northern Highland County with an overnight stay in Monterey at the Highland Inn. After birding southern Highland County Sunday morning, the trip will conclude at noon.

NVBC membership is required for this trip. To sign up, call or email Elton Morel at 703-553-4860 or eltonmorel@verizon.net. The trip is limited to 16 people and usually fills up, so please contact Elton first to ensure that space is available and for information to place hotel reservations. If the trip is full, your name can be put on a waiting list.

—Elton Morel

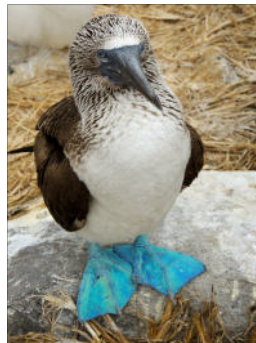
NVBC GENERAL MEETING—WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 8 PM

Singing and Dancing through Ecuador and the Galapagos

Speaker

BILL YOUNG

William Young is a birder and author from Arlington, Virginia. His presentation, based on his 2013 trip to Ecuador and the Galapagos, will include video footage, photographs, and audio recordings. Bill has traveled extensively throughout the United States and the world to study birds, and he is especially interested in bird behavior and bird conservation. His book *The Fascination of Birds: From the Albatross to the Yellowthroat* will be released by Dover Publications this spring. Written for both experienced birders and novices, the book looks at the connections between birds and a broad variety of subject areas, including biology, ecology, literature, music, history, politics, economics, religion, geography, physics, chemistry, linguistics, the visual arts, the performing arts, sports, and comedy.



*Blue-footed Booby
photographed by Bill
Young on his Ecuador-
Galapagos trip*

Early bird refreshments start at 7:30 PM. There will be a drawing for door prizes. (If you have any bird-related items you would like to contribute as door prizes, please bring them along.) Northern Virginia Bird Club pins will be available for members who would like to buy them (\$5 each).

MEETING PLACE: Church of the Covenant, 2666 Military Road, Arlington, 22207. Directions are on page 5.

Inside

- Calendar of NVBC trips and events, February 12–May 10, 2014
- Cape May 2013—report and photos from NVBC's fall weekend trip
- 2014 Great Dismal Swamp Birding Festival/VSO Annual Meeting
- Report on the Seneca MD/VA Christmas Bird Count

Remember...

to pay your 2014 dues if you haven't already. You can always find a membership form on the Club website, nvabc.org, under the "join" tab. Not sure if you've paid for this year? The mailing label on your copy of *The Siskin* shows the year through which your dues are current. Thanks!

Presidential Peentings

The big birding news this winter has been the invasion of Snowy Owls into our area. These amazing visitors venture south every year to escape the frozen Arctic conditions and to find easier access to prey. This year, however, the numbers of Snowy Owls this far south are phenomenal. They have been scattered along the East Coast as far south as Hatteras and have also been spotted at various locations inland. One has been hanging out on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge for several weeks. Every airport in the area seems to have had a Snowy Owl visit at one time or another this winter. These birds are used to hunting on tundra so the open spaces at airports provide an ideal habitat for them. Unfortunately these owls are low flying heavy birds and can pose a danger to airplanes taking off or landing. Until public outcry put a stop to the practice, officials in New York were actually shooting the owls. Now the birds are being captured and released instead. Contrary to popular belief, most of these Snowy Owls are not starving when they come south and the majority make it back north when the weather gets warmer. I hope that you have been able to get out and see at least one of these magnificent birds this season. You can check VA Bird or eBird to find the latest sightings. You do not need to have an account with eBird to search their database. Just go to www.ebird.org and click on "Explore Data" then click on "Range and Point Maps." Type in species name (Snowy Owl), then set the date range (current year) and location (Virginia). All of the recent sightings of Snowy Owls (or at least those reported to eBird) will pop up along with checklists and maps. Happy chasing!

—Larry Meade

Snowy Owl

photographed in Delaware by Sharon Brumbaugh Lynn



Great Dismal Swamp Birding Festival/VSO Annual Meeting

The 2014 Great Dismal Swamp Birding Festival will be Thursday, April 24, through Saturday, April 26. The festival is an annual event at Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, located on the border of Virginia and North Carolina near Chesapeake, VA. The refuge is one of the premier birding locations on the east coast and is known particularly as a place to see the Swainson's Warbler and Wayne's Warbler (a subspecies of the Black-throated Green Warbler).

Festival events will include guided walks, bus tours, canoe trips, nature photography workshops, owl prowls, and visits to the refuge's banding station. All are free of charge; however, most require reservations, which can be made by calling the Refuge Headquarters at (757) 986-3705. A color brochure with the full schedule of events can be found at www.fws.gov/refuge/great_dismal_swamp/.

In conjunction with the festival, the Virginia Society of Ornithology will be holding its 2014 annual meeting in Chesapeake on April 24–27. Meeting events include a Saturday night banquet with a keynote speech by Alicia King, the Communication Coordinator and Urban Bird Treaty Program Coordinator for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Migratory Bird Program. For information about the VSO meeting, visit www.virginiabirds.net.

Report on the Seneca, MD/ VA, Christmas Bird Count, December 15, 2013

The Seneca count circle is about 40 percent in Fairfax and Loudoun counties and 60 percent in Montgomery County, Maryland. Count day started cloudy and foggy, with sun and wind later, temperatures 30s to mid-40s. Our 100 counters (including 22 in Virginia) found 101 species with two additional count week species. This 103 is the highest count since 105 in 2004, and well above 2012's 98 and the 96.7 previous ten-year average. We tallied 32,095 individual birds (including 9,591 in our Virginia sectors), our highest since 2007.

Reports of Snowy Owl, Snow Bunting, and Lapland Longspur tantalizingly close to our circle before count day had us salivating, but none of them ventured into our circle. We did not have 2012's influx of northern land birds

Continued on p. 7



Swainson's Hawk, newly banded and about to be released. Photograph by Gerco Hoogeweg

Fall bird watching in Cape May is extremely dependent on the weather and especially the wind. Rain may be an issue but it is not as much of a challenge as shifting winds. Our 2013 fall trip was characterized by winds coming from many different directions and occasionally the correct one. It made for some interesting bird watching and searching for birds.

Friday we started our trip with a visit to Cox Hall Wildlife Management Area at the Villa's. This area was a golf course that is being transformed from golf greens to forested areas. It has the potential for some really interesting birding. Our first exploration in this area resulted in some stellar looks of a Bald Eagle perched in a tree, many Eastern Bluebirds, countless Yellow-rumped Warblers, and a nice assortment of raptors, including Sharp-shinned Hawk, Coopers Hawk, and Merlin. For a brief moment there was excitement about a possible hummingbird but we never were able to confirm it. A Black-throated Green Warbler was probably our best bird during the walk.

The traditional Saturday morning walk at the Beach Pavilion required us to cross the road in front of the hotel. A group of 400-plus skimmers was once again present and showing off their aerial acrobatics. In the distance we saw several scoters but could

not identify them. A few Black Scoters and Northern Gannet we did see. A Peregrine Falcon flew over and it was surprisingly one of the few we saw during the trip. Our next stop was Hereford Lighthouse and Garden followed by a beach walk along the Inlet. The gardens were a tad quiet but a Brown Creeper and Eastern Towhee were found. The real show was at the beach. Countless Black and Surf Scoters flew by as we walked along the surf. Included in these groups were several Wood Ducks and Green-winged Teal. Although we tried hard, we could not find a White-winged Scoter. In the distance we saw more and more scoters and a few Northern Gannets. Along the surf we found several Black-bellied Plovers, many Sanderlings and a few Red Knots. A lone Caspian Tern kept patrolling the shore as we walked by.

A quick stop at Nummy Island resulted in a slew of sparrows but not the hoped for Swainson's Hawk. It had been chased away by a Red-tailed Hawk we were told. Stony Point Harbor beach was a great spot to bird for a while. The beach was full of Sanderlings, Black-bellied Plovers, Semipalmated Plover and Semipalmated Sandpiper. Great to see both semipalmated birds in a one scope view. Semipalmated means having a little webbing between their toes. Whilst watching all these shorebirds several hundreds if not thousands of scoters

flew by. At long last we did see three White-winged Scoters in a group. Later we learned that this was one big day for scoter migration. The winds were coming from the right direction—for once.

The afternoon was spent in a slightly wet Cape May State Park. Due to the rain, not much hawk migration was going on, but the pond in front of the hawk watch was filled with ducks. A walk through the marshes and the forests of the park produced a wide variety of birds including many Brown Creepers, Kinglets, and Phoebes. The highlight was a Clay-colored Sparrow seen in the open near the ever growing brush pile. We ended the day with a walk in The Meadows. The gravel paths are always a good place to find several sparrows. A few Savannah Sparrows kept leading the way and Song and Swamp Sparrow joined in. A Glossy Ibis was by far the best bird we found. Thinking that we had a so-so day with the shifting wind and rain, we still tallied 99 species on Saturday.

Morning flight on Sunday was very weak. Only a few species were seen and in very low numbers. After only 30 minutes we gave up and started exploring Higbee Beach Wildlife Management Area. The funniest sighting during morning flight was undoubtedly a Dutchman in his shorts (it was rather chilly and very windy). No, it was not the trip leader, but a couple of hardcore twitchers. They briefly joined us during our walk but left after it was quiet with birds. After their departure, bird life, funny

Continued on p. 7

Black-and-white Warbler at Higbee Beach. Photograph by Gerco Hoogeweg



UPCOMING TRIPS AND EVENTS

Compiled by Elton Morel

Note:

- Beginning birders are welcome on all trips.
- To make reservations when they are required, please call one of the trip leaders. Phone numbers are on p. 6.
- If in doubt about a trip because of weather, please call one of the leaders.
- Check the NVBC website for any updated information about trips: <http://www.nvabc.org/trips.htm>. To receive email notices, add your name to the NVBC eMail Exchange; for sign-up directions see the back page of the newsletter.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<u>February</u>			12 8:30 AM Eakin Park Elizabeth Fenton			15 8:30 AM Point Lookout X-trip Mike Bowen Larry Meade
			19 8:30 AM Fort C F Smith Elizabeth Fenton 8 PM NVBC Meeting Church of the Covenant, Arlington			22 8 AM Leesylvania SP Phil Silas
			26 8:30 AM Ben Brenman Park Elizabeth Fenton Phil Silas		February 28–March 2 Highland County Winter Weekend <i>Members only/reservations required</i> Larry Meade Elton Morel	
<u>March</u>						
2 8 AM Dyke Marsh Friends of Dyke Marsh			5 8:30 AM Long Branch Jean Tatalias 7:30 PM NVBC Board meeting			8 8 AM Mason Neck SP Steve Bruck Larry Cartwright
9 6:30 PM Woodcock Display at Dusk—Huntley Meadows Hike/Bike Trail Larry Cartwright			12 8:30 AM Eakin Park Elizabeth Fenton Jean Tatalias			15 8 AM Aquia Landing Beach Park Elton Morel Phil Silas
			19 8:30 AM Jones Point Park Dave Boltz			22 8 AM Riverbend Park—Visitor Center David Ledwith Larry Meade
			26 8:30 AM Burke Lake Catherine Kubo Ruth Schrott			29 8 AM Occoquan Bay NWR Marc Ribaudo Phil Silas

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		<u>April</u>	2 8:30 AM Long Branch Larry Cartwright Barbara Murphy			5 7:30 AM Huntley Meadows Park Larry Cartwright Larry Meade
6 8 AM Dyke Marsh Friends of Dyke Marsh			9 8:30 AM Eakin Park Elizabeth Fenton Catherine Kubo			12 7:30 AM Silver Lake RP Phil Silas Jean Tatalias
			16 8:30 AM Ben Brenman Park Dave Boltz			19 7:30 AM Algonkian RP David Ledwith Elton Morel
			23 8:30 AM Fort C F Smith Elizabeth Fenton Jean Tatalias 8 PM NVBC Meeting Church of the Covenant, Arlington			26 7:30 AM Thompson WMA— Trillium Trail Elton Morel
			30 8:30 AM Daniels Run Catherine Kubo Carolyn Williams	<u>May</u>		3 7:30 AM Huntley Meadows— Hike/Bike Trail Dave Boltz Elton Morel
4 8 AM Dyke Marsh Friends of Dyke Marsh			7 8:30 AM Long Branch Elizabeth Fenton			10 7:30 AM Leesylvania SP Steve Bruck

DIRECTIONS

NVBC Meeting (2/19, 4/23) Church of the Covenant, 2666 Military Rd, Arlington. From intersection of Spout Run Pkwy and Lorcum Lane, go about a half mile on Lorcum, turn right onto Nellie Custis Dr at the bottom of the hill, and continue on Nellie Custis as it bears right and becomes Military Rd. Stay on Military and turn left into church drive just after traffic light at Marcey Rd. After entering church drive, turn right and go to lower lot. The door to Fellowship Hall, where meeting is held, is at the west end of the lot.

Algonkian Regional Park (4/19) From I-495, take Rt 7 west 11 miles to Cascades Parkway north, and drive 3 miles to the park entrance, proceed on Fairway Drive turning left onto Volcano Island Drive, then turn right into parking lot. Meet at the parking lot beside restrooms and Park Shelter 1.

Aquia Landing Beach Park, Stafford VA (3/15). From southbound I-95 towards Stafford, take exit 140 to Stafford, then left (east) on Courthouse Road (County Road 630), go 3.5 miles and turn right on Andrew Chapel Road (CR 629), go 0.9 miles and under the railroad bridge to a slight left onto Brooke Road (CR 608), go 4.4 miles to the park entrance, continue past park entrance gate to the parking lot at the end of the road. Meet in the parking lot

Ben Brenman Park (2/26, 4/16) From I-395 take Duke St east about 1.5 miles to the park entrance on the right. Follow entrance road to the parking lot. Meet at the pond.

Burke Lake Park (3/26) From I-495, take exit 54 west (Braddock Road). Stay in right lane if you are coming from the North. On Braddock Road, go 1.5 miles and turn left onto Burke Lake Road. Go 4.7 miles and turn left onto Rt 123 (Ox Road). Turn left at

second traffic light (big parking signs) and then turn left immediately after the entrance booth. Park in the first lot on the right (by the mini-golf course).

Daniels Run Park (4/30) From the Capital Beltway, take US 50 W 2.7 mi to Fairfax Circle. Exit the circle SW on Old Lee Highway. In 1.2 mi, turn left on Old Post Rd (just past Historic Blenheim on the right). Drive 1 ½ blocks to the end of the street. We have walk-day permission to park in the Country Club Hills pool parking lot.

Dyke Marsh (3/2, 4/6, 5/4) From Alexandria, take Mount Vernon Pkwy south. Cross I-495; continue 1.2 miles to Belle Haven Park entrance on left. Meet at south parking lot.

Eakin Park (2/12, 3/12, 4/9) From I-495, take Rt 50 west one mile to Prosperity Ave;

Continued on next page

turn left onto Prosperity and go one mile to parking lot on left.

Fort C F Smith (2/19, 4/23) From I-66 east, take Exit 72 (Spout Run Pkwy). At traffic light, turn right on Lee Hwy. At successive traffic lights, turn left onto Spout Run Pkwy, left onto Lorcom Lane, then right onto Fillmore St. Go one block on Fillmore, turn right onto N 24th St. and continue to park on left at 2411 N 24th St. Meet in parking lot at east end of park. From Alexandria, take G W Pkwy north, take left exit onto Spout Run, then right exit onto Lorcom Lane, and follow remaining directions above.

Huntley Meadows Park (4/5) From Beltway, take Rt 1 south 3 mi. to Lockheed Blvd. Right on Lockheed; go 0.5 mi. to Harrison Lane, park entrance on left. Meet in parking lot.

Huntley Meadows Hike/Bike Trail (3/9, 5/3) From I-495, take Rte. 1 south 0.5 mi to Rte. 633 (S. Kings Hwy.). Turn right (west); go 2.5 mi. to park entrance and lot on left (just before Telegraph Rd.).

Jones Point Park (3/19) From either US 1 or Washington Blvd (George Washington Memorial Parkway) in Alexandria, turn east on Franklin St (one-way eastbound), then turn right on South Royal St, then turn left on Jones Point Drive and continue to parking lot next to the playground. Meet in parking lot.

Leesylvania State Park (2/22, 5/10) From I-495, take I-95 south about 14 mi. to Exit 156 (Dale City/Rippon Landing/Rte. 784). Following the posted highway signs for Leesylvania State Park, exit east on Rte. 784. Proceed eastward 1.1 mi. to US Rte. 1. Turn right (south) on Rte. 1 and go 0.9 miles to Neabsco Road. Immediately past the Wawa service station, turn left (east) on Neabsco Rd. and proceed 2 mi. to park entrance on right. After passing through the park entrance gate, go 2.2 miles to end of paved road and park in "Picnic Area" parking lot, immediately before turn-around circle at fishing pier.

Long Branch Nature Area (3/5, 4/2, 5/7) From Rt 50, take Carlin Springs exit and go south on Carlin Spgs. 0.5 mile to Nature Center on left, just south of No. Va. Community Hospital. Meet in Nature Center parking lot.

Mason Neck State Park (3/8) From I-495, take I-95 south 7 mi. to Lorton exit. Left on Rt 642 to Rt. 1. Right on Rte. 1 to Rt 242 (Gunston Rd.). Left on Rt. 242; go 4 mi. to Mason Neck Mgmt. Area. Turn right; follow paved road to end at State Park Visitor Center; meet there. State fee area.

Ocoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge



Red-tailed Hawk photographed by Reid Williamson at Hollywood Cemetery near Richmond

(3/29) From I-495, take I-95 south 9 miles to (left) Exit 161 (Woodbridge). South on Rt 1 about 2 miles to Dawson Beach Rd. Go left on Dawson Beach 0.7 mile to entrance gate. Meet in parking lot. Bring scope. US fee area.

Point Lookout, Maryland, X-trip (2/15) From Alexandria, VA: Get on Washington Beltway, I-95/495, Eastbound over Woodrow Wilson Bridge. Continue on Beltway about 8 miles to Exit 7A, Branch Avenue, MD-5 South, towards Waldorf. Drive South on MD-5 for about 12-1/2 miles and turn left at a traffic light signposted MD-5 S, Mattawoman Beantown Rd. This light is about 2 miles South of the point where US-301 joins MD-5 from the North. In about 3 miles turn left again at a traffic light signposted MD-5 S, Leonardtown Rd. Continue South about 17 miles on MD-5, bypassing Hughesville, until you see a sign for MD-5 going to the right. DO NOT TURN—instead continue straight on; the road number becomes MD-235. The road at this point is called Three Notch Rd. Continue another 30 miles South on MD-235 through Hollywood and Lexington Park and past several gates on the left to the Patuxent Naval Air Station. MD-235 ends when it runs into MD-5. Turn left onto MD-5, Point Lookout Rd. After about 4 miles turn right again (there's a sign for the State Park). After a bit, you will see the park headquarters building on the right—there may be a barrier partially blocking the road; this is to encourage you to pay the park entrance fee and to get a sticker to display on your vehicle. Our meeting place will be in the parking area by the park headquarters. Distance from Alexandria is about 80 miles. Allow 2 hours minimum for the drive. Participants who live closer to the American Legion bridge on the Beltway can use that and drive clockwise round I-495 to the exit for MD-5 South and proceed as described above. Driving distance is longer this way, though.

Riverbend Park—Visitor Center (3/22)

From intersection of Georgetown Pk (Rt 193) and Old Dominion Dr (Rt 738) take Georgetown Pk west about 0.25 mi. to traffic light at Riverbend Rd. Turn right onto Riverbend; go 2 mi. to Jeffery Rd. Turn right and go 0.8 mi. to main park entrance sign on right. Turn right and continue 0.5 mi. to Visitor Center parking lot. Meet in front of Visitor Center.

Silver Lake Regional Park (4/12) From I-495, take I-66 west 24 mi. to exit 40 (Rt 15). Turn south onto Rt 15 (toward Haymarket) and go 0.3 mi. to Rt 55. Turn right onto Rt 55 and go 0.9 mi. to Antioch Rd. Turn right onto Antioch and go 1.3 mi. to Silver Lake Rd. Turn right and proceed to park entrance at 16198 Silver Lake Rd.

G. Richard Thompson Wildlife Management Area—Trillium Trail (4/26)

From I-495, take I-66 west 51 mi. to Linden exit (Rt 79). Go left (south) from exit ramp on Rt 79 approx. 1000 ft. to Rt 55. Turn left (east) onto Rt 55; go 1.2 mi. to Rt 638 (Freezeland Rd). Turn left (north) onto Rt 638. Follow Rt 638, as it bears right, 5.3 mi. to Trillium Trail Parking Area on right—look for sign on kiosk. (Parking Area is just before radio towers.) Note: each participant must have an Access Permit issued by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. You can purchase a permit online at www.dgif.virginia.gov, by telephone at 1-866-721-6911, or from a license agent—a list of license agents is on the DGIF website. You cannot get a permit at Thompson WMA.

TRIP LEADERS

Dave Boltz	703-768-7499
Mike Bowen	301-530-5764
Steve Bruck	703-425-8584
Larry Cartwright	703-941-3142
Elizabeth Fenton	703-533-0851
Catherine Kubo	703-352-1238
David Ledwith	703-933-9477
Larry Meade	703-206-9030
Elton Morel	703-553-4860
Barbara Murphy	703-536-6393
Marc Ribaud	703-680-1134
Ruth Schrott	703-860-1643
Phil Silas	703-590-7286
Jean Tatalias	703-281-6099
Carolyn Williams	703-273-1961

(e.g., one Red-breasted Nuthatch compared to 17 in 2012). Nonetheless, we beat our 2012 total even while missing ten species tallied last year, and we set new record high counts for nine species!

Showing the importance of many sets of eyes in the field in a variety of habitats, 12 species were represented by sightings of only a single bird, and six more species were seen only in one count sector. The value of geographic diversity in this interstate count is shown by the six species found only in our five Virginia sectors and 18 species found only in Maryland sectors.

Birds not seen every year included 20 Northern Shovelers (highest since 2002), one Canvasback (the third sighting in 12 years), five Redheads, three Long-tailed Ducks (highest since 1991), two Common Loons, two Horned Grebes, nine Double-crested Cormorants (highest since 2001), nine Northern Harriers (highest since 1995), two Sandhill Cranes (first since 2007), 21 Killdeer (highest since 2004), one Wilson's Snipe, one Great Black-backed Gull (first since 2006), one Eastern Screech Owl, one Merlin, one Peregrine Falcon (first since 2001), and five Eastern Meadowlarks (highest since 2004). New all-time highs for the count -- 58 Gadwalls, 75 American Wigeons, 293 Buffleheads, 131 Hooded Mergansers (swamping 2012's record high of 55!), 52 Common Mergansers, 30 Wild Turkeys (previous high 28 in 1999), 387 Black Vultures, 698 Fish Crows (previous high 590 in 1993!), and 372 Golden-crowned Kinglets (just edging out the previous record 371 from 1989!).

Woodpeckers came in below our 2012 numbers—Red-headed only 38 percent of 2012 and Red-bellied 54 percent. Blue Jays were only 38 percent of 2012 and below all but two of the previous 10 years. Carolina Wren was higher than 2012, the highest since 2006. Eastern Bluebird, Hermit Thrush, and American Robin made strong showings above 2012. Our 249 American Pipits stood out compared to one bird in 2012 (highest since 2006). Northern Cardinal at 820 was the highest since 2007, and 27 Chipping Sparrow was the highest since 1994. Blackbirds were interesting with Red-winged at its highest since 2007, Rusty falling from 2012's 190 to only ten this year, Common Grackle surging to 116 from 2012's eight, and Brown-headed Cowbird jumping to 604 from 2012's 21 (highest since 2007). In the finches, House Finch at 332 beat 2012's 100, Purple Finch was down from 2012's 24 to nine, and American Goldfinch fell from 2012's 310 to 265.

My thanks to everyone who helped count this year and especially to the sector leaders for their hard work on the count. I look forward to recruiting additional folks to help in the VA sectors for the 2014 count.

—*Jim Nelson, Seneca CBC compiler*

enough, picked up quickly. Several warbler species were found, including Black-and-white, Yellow-rumped, Blackpoll, Common Yellowthroat, and Northern Parula. Plenty of Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks were seen as well as a Merlin and Peregrine Falcon. A late Blue-headed Vireo and Indigo Bunting were found along the forest edge foraging. Northern Flickers, Ruby- and Golden-crowned Kinglets were abundant and provided for continuous action during our walk.

Our Sunday morning stop at the Cape May hawk watch platform was full of surprises. The biggest surprise was that the platform was empty. Oh yes, there were close to a hundred birders around but they were all watching the release of the banded hawks. What was going on? Haven't these folks seen a Sharp-shinned Hawk before or was it something else? A trusted source by the name of Richard Crossley told us that the much sought after Swainson's Hawk was banded that morning at the Meadows. The banders were going to release it last. Indeed it was the last bird that was shown to the many excited birders. Unlike the Sharp-shinned Hawk, the Swainson's Hawk was relaxed and did not attack the handler. We all got some great looks at this western rarity when it was paraded around. Although it was cool to see this bird close up, I was more

excited when it came flying over a few minutes later at low altitude.

The semi-pelagic trip back was very quiet. The winds had died down and it was pleasant weather. A few scoters, terns, and gannets were seen but not much more.

As a group we saw 124 species during our weekend and explored a few new places in Cape May County. Great sightings during the weekend included massive scoter migration, a Swainson's Hawk, Red Knots, several warblers species, and a Clay-colored Sparrow. More exciting was that many of the participants saw one or more lifers.

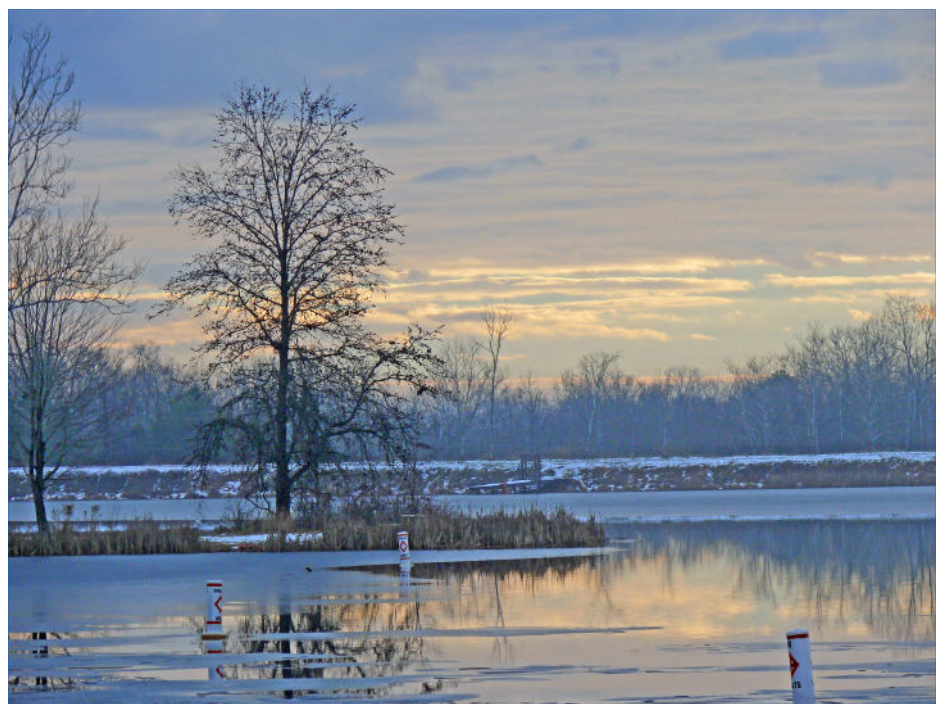
—*Gerco Hoogeweg*

Northern Gannet photographed by Larry Meade from the Cape May Ferry



Silver Lake at dawn

Photograph by Larry Meade taken on December 15, 2013, during The Plains/Airlie Christmas Bird Count



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Join the Northern Virginia Bird Club

Northern Virginia Bird Club dues for 2014 are \$8 for Individual and \$12 for Family Membership. Members receive our quarterly newsletter, *The Siskin*. Checks for dues should be sent to: Northern Virginia Bird Club, Attn: Membership, P.O. Box 5812, Arlington, VA 22205-0812.

If you miss an issue of *The Siskin* or need to report an address or ZIP Code change, please send an email message to nvabc@verizon.net or leave a message for Charlotte Friend at 703-532-0207.

Please note: NVBC does not exchange, give away, or sell its membership list.

NVBC on the Web

Current information and special notices about NVBC meetings, field trips, and other activities, along with a printable membership form, are posted on the club's website, www.nvabc.org. If you have information or pictures you would like to see on the website, please email the webmaster, Len Alfredson, at nvabc@verizon.net.

NVBC eMail Exchange

By participating in the club's email exchange, you can get email notices of late updates to *The Siskin* and the field trip schedule. To join the exchange and receive a list of email addresses for other participating NVBC mem-

bers, send an email to nvabc@verizon.net. Put "EXCHANGE" in the subject field and your full name in the message area. You must place your name on the list in order to receive information about other members. The list is for NVBC members' use only.

General Meeting Dates: February 19 and April 23, 2014.

Next Board Meeting: Wednesday, March 5, 2014, 7:30 PM, at Diane Marton's home. All club members are welcome at board meetings. For directions and information, or to have items put on the agenda, please call or email Diane Marton.

Juvenile Red-shouldered Hawk photographed by Larry Meade at North Fork Wetlands during The Plains/Airlie CBC



Deadline for next issue of *The Siskin*: The April–May issue will include activities through June 2014. Please send items for publication by **March 15, 2014** to the editor at dtella@cox.net.

CLUB CONTACTS

President: Larry Meade, 703-206-9030

Vice President, Programs: Joanna Taylor 703-243-5989

Vice President, Field Activities: Elton Morel, 703-553-4860

Secretary: Diane Marton, 703-527-7360

Treasurer: Jean Tatalias, 703-281-6099

Immediate Past President: Paul Mocko, 703-243-4987

Directors: Steve Bruck, 703-425-8584; Catherine Kubo, 703-352-1238

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