



THE SISKIN

Newsletter of the Northern Virginia Bird Club

Vol. 59, No. 2

May 2014

www.nvabc.org

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To see the newsletter photographs in color, go to www.nvabc.org and click on the Siskin icon.

UPCOMING WEEKEND TRIPS

Spring Chincoteague Weekend

The Northern Virginia Bird Club’s Chincoteague Spring Weekend trip is scheduled for May 16–18 (Friday-Sunday). Mid-May is an excellent time to visit the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge (NWR); spring shorebird migration is in full swing with most birds in breeding plumage. Last year’s trip tallied 112 species including such Eastern Shore specialties as Black-necked Stilts, American Oystercatchers, Piping Plovers, Whimbrels, Marbled Godwits, Red Knots, Little Blue and Tricolored Herons, Cattle Egrets, Glossy Ibis, Gull-billed, Least, Royal and Common Terns, Black Skimmers, Clapper Rails, Seaside Sparrows, Chuck-will’s-widows, Brown-headed Nuthatches and Boat-tailed Grackles.

Plans for the weekend include birding the Chincoteague NWR on Friday afternoon starting at 3:15 PM (optional) or on Saturday starting at 7:30 AM. Activities on Saturday morning include birding along Beach Road, Swan Cove and Tom’s Cove and a walk around the Woodland Trail looking for

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NVBC General Meeting—Wednesday, April 23, 8 PM

Attracting Birds With Native Plants

Speakers

HARRY GLASGOW and NANCY VEHRs

With gardening season just ahead, come to our spring meeting and learn how you can use native plants to provide year-round food and shelter for birds. Teaming up to present this program are two of Northern Virginia’s outstanding naturalists: Harry Glasgow, who leads the weekly Monday Morning Birdwalk at Huntley Meadows Park, and Nancy Vehrs, the president of the Virginia Native Plant Society. Read more about our speakers at www.nvabc.org/meetings.

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 prizes, please bring them along. Northern Virginia Bird Club pins will be available for members who wish to buy them (\$5 each).

MEETING PLACE: Church of the Covenant, 2666 Military Road, Arlington 22207. The church is just north of the traffic light at Military and Marcey Roads, approximately 1.1 miles north of Lorcum Lane. You can find detailed directions and a map link at www.nvabc.org/meetings.

Leaving Winter Behind

Tundra Swans in March at Mason Neck Park. Photograph by Larry Meade



Presidential Peentings

The winter of 2013–2014 was memorable. Most people will remember it as the winter of the infamous polar vortex and the snowstorms that never seemed to stop coming. Most birders, however, will remember this past winter for the amazing birds that we were privileged to see in our area. The Snowy Owl invasion has deservedly gotten the most attention from birders and the media. The bird at Springfield Mall was especially cooperative and usually easy to see. As great as the owls were, though, we will also remember the remarkable influx of waterfowl. White-winged Scoters seemed to be everywhere and birders encountered huge rafts of Redheads and Canvasbacks. Long-tailed Ducks and Common Goldeneyes were seen in new and unexpected places. An Eared Grebe spent some time at Dyke Marsh and then Red-necked Grebes became the star attraction as they appeared in lakes and rivers all over Virginia. As much as I enjoyed the winter, at least from a birding perspective, I am definitely ready for spring. Migration is always a magical time as warblers and other birds that we have not seen since last fall come to town to set up housekeeping or to take a break from the long journey north. When you encounter these birds returning from their winter homes, I hope you take a moment to really watch their behavior. Are they building nests? What are they eating? How are they interacting with other birds? I think taking a little extra time with the birds not only helps us to learn about them, it also helps us to enjoy them more. Let's hope this spring proves to be as memorable as the winter was!

—Larry Meade

Eared Grebe at Dyke Marsh.
Photograph by Larry Meade



UPCOMING WEEKEND TRIPS *from p. 1*

land bird migrants. We have reserved the Chincoteague Natural History Association's bus for a 90 minute trip to the Washflats on Saturday at 1 PM, providing a look at territory otherwise inaccessible by vehicle. Time and tides permitting, we will also visit the Queens Sound Flats and the Chincoteague City mudflats. On Sunday morning, we will visit Saxis Marsh. The trip concludes at noon on Sunday.

NVBC membership is required for this trip. To sign up, call or email Elton Morel (703-553-4860 or eltonmorel@verizon.net). The trip is limited to 28 people and usually fills up, so please contact Elton first to ensure that space is available before making hotel reservations. When signing up, please indicate whether you are interested in the Washflats bus trip (fee) on Saturday afternoon and a Saturday evening group dinner. If the trip is full, your name can be put on a waiting list.

We have obtained a special rate of \$94 per night on 20 rooms for Friday and Saturday nights at the Best Western Chincoteague Island Hotel on Maddox Boulevard. A two-night stay is usually required. Hotel reservations must be made by April 3 to get this special group rate. Participants should make their own reservations by calling 800-553-6117; be sure to say you are with the Northern Virginia Bird Club. Check-in time is 3 PM on Friday, May 16, and a 72-hour can-

cellation notice is required. Chincoteague NWR is a U.S. fee area, and Saxis Marsh is a Wildlife Management Area requiring a permit; the trip leader can provide participants with more information on obtaining a permit.

—Elton Morel

Summer Highland County Weekend

Our summer trip to Highland County in the mountains of western Virginia, led by Marv Rubin and Beth Moore, is scheduled for the weekend of June 6–8 (Friday-Sunday). The trip limit is 16. Headquarters will be at the Highland Inn in Monterey (call 888-466-4682 for reservations, and say you are with NVBC); room prices vary. We will have optional trips to the Blue Grass Valley or another area to the south on Friday afternoon—meet at the inn at 3:15 PM. Saturday morning we will go to Paddy's Knob; Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning we will bird other areas of the county. We will arrange group dinners in the Highland Inn's dining room both evenings. The trip will end in Monterey about noon on Sunday. Call or email Marvin Rubin (703-915-7545 or mbrubin@verizon.net) to sign up. Club membership is required.

—Marv Rubin

Changes to the Exchange

For many years, NVBC has maintained an email list which members may request to be added to. This list is used to announce last minute changes to the field trip schedule (for example, cancellations due to inclement weather), for reminders about quarterly meetings, and for other occasional club business. The volume of mail is quite low, usually less than one per month.

As Internet Service providers have added more filters to try to prevent unwanted mailings, it has become difficult to send emails to lists with large numbers of addresses. To respond to this problem we have recently rehosted the Exchange as a Google Group. The group is configured as a private email list—neither the group nor its membership is visible to the general public.

All members who were on the old Exchange should have received invitations to join the new group, and most have now signed up. We officially cut over to use of the new list in early March. Please do not send emails to the old list, as it is no longer being maintained.

Members may request to be added to the Exchange by sending an email to nvabc@verizon.net. Put "EXCHANGE" in the subject field and your full name in the message area.

—Catherine Kubo

Space Coast Festival

Attending a birding festival is a great way to get introduced to the birds of a new area, take field trips with excellent national and local guides, and see a bunch of birds. The Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival is one of the biggest to take place on the east coast and this January we traveled to Florida to check it out.

We met up in the Orlando airport, rented a car, and drove over to Titusville (just north of Cape Canaveral) where the festival is headquartered. With over 50 field trips to choose from, signing up is a bit bewildering. But we had gotten some good advice from other NVBC members and made our choices. We started out with a Shorebird Workshop with Kevin Karlson at Merritt Island NWR. Great birds, and lots of good pointers for sorting them out. We wish we had a video of Kevin demonstrating the flapping speeds of the various herons—very evocative.

Other field trips covered a variety of habitat. We enjoyed an early morning in the pine

scrub, watching red-cockaded woodpeckers emerge from their roosting cavities. We had several great looks at the endemic Florida scrub jay (a lifer for both of us). A day-long trip to the lakes south of Orlando turned up purple gallinule, wonderful views of a Snail kite, both hunting over the marsh and perched, lots of kestrels, and a look at a caracara among many other sightings. Another day we visited Lake Apopka northwest of Orlando which is reclaimed farmland on its way to being restored to a mixed habitat of marsh and scrub. That trip turned up Ash throated and Least flycatchers, Fulvous whistling ducks, and scads of other waterfowl, among 90-some other species.

The festival offers classroom presentations, photography and digiscoping workshops, and opportunities to socialize. A couple of visits to the Exhibit Hall gave us a chance to catch up with old birding acquaintances and meet some new ones. And of course to check out the latest in optics, publications, and other cool stuff.

The trip leaders we had were all excellent. One of the nice things about a festival is the opportunity to hear local guides and envi-

ronmental managers talk about the projects they have been involved in to preserve and restore native habitat. Samantha McGee of the St. Sebastian River Preserve State Park and Gian Basili of the St. Johns River Water Management District were both excellent in this regard.

A few logistical notes if you are considering going: Registration typically opens in the fall—watch the website. Although there are numerous trips, the popular ones fill up, so it pays to register early. Having a car is almost a necessity. The motels are not collocated with the festival HQ and the field trips leave early. Plus with the car we were able to get in some afternoon birding on our own. There are numerous options for this. Pick up a copy of the Great Florida Birding Trail East Section brochure for details. We found that the locals were very welcoming and supportive of the festival. At the Quality Inn where we stayed they set out the breakfast buffet each morning at 3 AM for those of us with early departures—and they did it with a smile! We were both smiling too as we returned to Virginia after a fun five days.

—Pat Blyer and Catherine Kubo

Off to See Whooping Cranes

I'd wanted to do it for years. Finally, in late December my husband and I booked online for the Whooping Crane Festival in Port Aransas, Texas, always held the last weekend in February. Sponsored by the local Chamber of Commerce since 1996, and attracting some 600 participants, the weekend offers boat tours, bird walks, workshops, photography sessions, speakers, and a small trade show. Some events are free, others require payment.

We flew to Corpus Christi and rented a car for the half hour drive to Port Aransas on the northern end of Mustang Island. A basic nature and birding boat tour introduced us to the watery environment. On the eastern side of the island is the Gulf of Mexico; on the western side, the major shipping channel into Corpus Christi.

Highlights included the early morning boat trip on the *Wharf Cat* with Dr. George Archibald, co-founder 40 years ago of the International Crane Foundation. A short, unassuming, and very personable man, Dr. Archibald made sure he got around to all 70 of us on the boat. When he discovered we



Whooping Cranes aloft. Photograph by Warren Marton

had been members of ICF almost since its inception and had visited both the old and new headquarters outside Baraboo, WI, his eyes sparkled with boyish delight. It is hard to overestimate the impact this mild-mannered individual has had on attempting to save all species of cranes worldwide.

Smaller boats from nearby Rockport and Fulton take “craniacs” up close to the birds on the Aransas NWR, the wintering home of the whoopers. Our large boat took the space vacated by one of them, and we had outstanding views of couples, a few singles,

Continued on p.6

Upcoming Trips and Events

Compiled by Elton Morel

Note:

- Beginning birders are welcome on all trips.
- When reservations are required, please make them by calling one of the trip leaders. Phone numbers are on page 5.
- If in doubt about a trip because of weather, please call one of the leaders.
- Check the NVBC website for updated information about trips. To receive email notices, add your name to the NVBC eMail Exchange. For sign-up directions see p. 2.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
May			14 8:30 AM Fort C F Smith Elizabeth Fenton Dixie Sommers		16-18 Chincoteague Spring Weekend <i>Members only/Reservations required</i> Elton Morel Phil Silas	
			21 8:30 AM Eakin Park Catherine Kubo			24 7:30 AM Blue Ridge Center (with Loudoun Wild- life Conservancy) Joe Coleman Elton Morel
			28 8:30 AM Huntley Meadows Catherine Kubo Jean Tatalias			31 7:30 AM Occoquan Bay NWR Marc Ribaud Phil Silas
June			4 8:30 AM Long Branch Elizabeth Fenton Jean Tatalias		6-8 Highland County Spring Weekend <i>Members only/Reservations required</i> Beth Moore Marv Rubin	
1 8 AM Dyke Marsh Friends of Dyke Marsh						7 8 AM Bluebird Trail Larry Meade
			11 8 AM Dyke Marsh Larry Cartwright			14 10 AM Huntley Meadows Butterflies and Dragonflies Larry Meade
			18 Remington Sod Farms <i>Call leader for details</i> Catherine Kubo Joanna Taylor			
July						12 9 AM X-trip Limberlost Trail Shenandoah NP <i>Call leader for details</i> Larry Meade Elton Morel

Directions

Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship (5/24) 11661 Harpers Ferry Road, Purcellville. From Leesburg: Go west on Rt 7, right on Rt 9, then right on Rt 671/Harpers Ferry Rd. Go 6 miles to the Blue Ridge Center entrance on the left, just past the Neersville Fire Station. Meet at visitor center.

Bluebird Trail (6/7) From I-495, exit onto Chain Bridge Rd (VA-123) toward Vienna. Continue on Maple Ave (still 123) in Vienna, turn onto Beulah Road. Continue for about one mile until a left turn onto Clark's Crossing Road. Continue to the end of Clark's Crossing and park at the parking lot overlooking the W&OD Trail.

Dyke Marsh (6/1, 6/11) From Alexandria, take Mount Vernon Parkway south. Cross Beltway, continue 1.2 mi. to Belle Haven Park entrance on left. Meet at south parking lot.

Eakin Park (5/21) From I-95, take Rt 50 west one mile to Prosperity Avenue. Left onto Prosperity, go one mile to parking lot on left

Fort CF Smith (5/14) From I-495 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., then left onto Lorcom Lane, then right onto Fillmore St. Go one block on Fillmore, turn right onto N. 24th St. (watch for speed humps), 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 (5/28, 6/14) From I-495, take Rt 1 south 3 mi. to Lockheed Blvd. Turn right on Lockheed Blvd. and go 0.5 mi. to Harrison Lane and park entrance on left. Meet in parking lot.

Long Branch Nature Area (6/4) Take Rt 50, east from Fairfax or west from Rosslyn, to Carlin Springs exit. Go south on Carlin Spgs. 0.5 mi. to Nature Center on left, just south of No. Va. Community Hospital on left. Meet at Nature Ctr. parking lot.

Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge (5/31) From I-495, take I-95 south 9 mi. to (left) Exit 161 (Woodbridge). South on Rte. 1 about 2 mi. to Dawson Beach Rd. Go left on Dawson Beach 0.7 mi. to entrance gate. Trip will meet in parking lot.



BUTTERFLIES

After spending several years birding, I noticed that there were other colorful creatures flying around in the places where I was looking for birds. Of course, I am referring to butterflies. When the weather gets warmer and summer sets in, birds stop singing and settle in to breed. They are quieter and harder to find. Fortunately this is the season when butterflies are the most active. They are busy feeding, breeding and laying eggs. Males are looking for females and females are looking for particular host plants on which to lay their eggs.

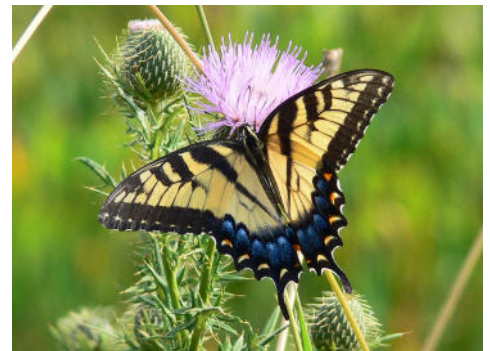
You usually will not find as many butterfly species on a walk as you will bird species. A count of 25 to 30 is considered a very good day. However, you can often walk right up next to butterflies in order to study and photograph them. Identifying them is usually fairly straightforward for the larger butterflies, but can be a real challenge when it comes to the smaller skippers. Many of the skippers look annoyingly similar and there are some photos I have for which I am still not entirely certain that I have gotten the ID correct.

In many ways, butterflying is similar to birding. There are field guides like my favorite, *The Kaufman Field Guide to Butterflies of North America*. There are listserves like washbutterflies@yahoo.com. There are even butterfly counts patterned after the Christmas Bird Counts that birders are familiar with. The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy has their count on the first Saturday of August. For those interested, I will be leading a NVBC walk on June 14 at Huntley Meadows which will focus on butterflies and dragonflies.

—Larry Meade

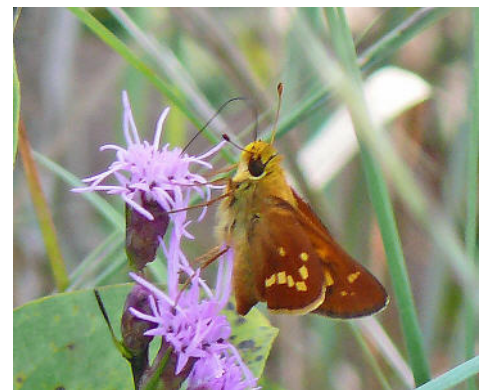
Butterfly photos by Larry Meade

Clockwise from top left: Viceroy, Eastern Tailed-Blue, Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, and Leonard's Skipper.



Trip Leaders

Larry Cartwright	703-941-3142
Joe Coleman	540-554-2542
Elizabeth Fenton	703-533-0851
Catherine Kubo	703-352-1238
Larry Meade	703-206-9030
Beth Moore	703-807-2646
Elton Morel	703-553-4860
Marc Ribaudou	703-680-1134
Marv Rubin	703-915-7545
Phil Silas	703-590-7286
Dixie Sommers	703-969-7931
Jean Tatalias	703-281-6099
Joanna Taylor	703-243-5989



and families, the “teens” still sporting some of their rusty coloring.

All is not well, however, in this idyllic landscape. A threat to the birds is the increasing salinity of the water, as municipalities demand more fresh water from the rivers flowing into the wetlands and bay. Blue crabs, the major food of the whooping cranes here, then decline. The case over water usage is currently working its way through the courts, the situation for now in the cranes’ favor.

Dr. Archibald was an afternoon speaker, giving an overview of ICF’s work in Ethiopia, Mongolia, and North Korea. A real plus—having at the festival for the first time Rob Kent, manager of Wood Buffalo NP, which sprawls over Canada’s Northwest Territories and Alberta. His witty and informative evening talk included numerous pictures of the whoopers’ breeding grounds.

We quickly discovered the island’s best birding spot—the Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center, a boardwalk extending into a marsh associated with an adjoining waste water treatment plant. A cinnamon teal, a sora, and a green heron were always present amidst green and blue-winged teal, Ameri-

can widgeon, pintails, ruddy ducks, stilts, roseate spoonbills—and unfortunately the invasive rodent nutria, giving off their infant-like cries “maa maa.”

Warren, on a foggy morning there with his photography field trip, took great shots of an American and a least bittern. At the same time I was on a walk at the Port Aransas Nature Preserve, viewing stilts, spoonbills, little blue herons, a long-billed curlew, and a reddish egret in its white morph.

On a hayride inland at the Fennessey Ranch, among the birds we spotted were vermilion flycatchers, Couch’s kingbird, loggerhead shrikes, white-eyed vireos—and alligators. But not the hoped-for green jay that morning.

We closed our trip with a car ride to Goose Island State Park, where we were told we would have close-up views of the cranes in nearby fields. We saw a few with some sandhills, but incessant gunshots from a nearby hunt club seemingly caused them to fly off. Continuing on to the land side of Aransas NWR, we walked up the spectacular handicapped-accessible observation tower for our last view of whooping cranes, a pair far out in the marshes. And our last



Whooping Cranes and (below) American Bittern. Photographs by Warren Marton



bird on the trip—appropriately, at the very entrance to the rail trail, a Virginia rail.

—Diane Marton

WINTER WEEKENDS HIGHLIGHTS

Red-necked Grebes Everywhere

The Northern Virginia Bird Club visited the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel (CBBT) Complex on the weekend of February 7–9. The trip was led by Gerco Hoogeweg and me. We tallied nearly 100 species for the trip.

On Friday afternoon, we took the group straight to Swan Cove to find the Red-necked Grebe that Gerco and I had spotted on an early afternoon pre-trip scout. Not only did we find the original bird, we found a second Red-necked Grebe in Swan Cove. Shorebirds were scarce except for many Dunlins, but we did manage to find one Marbled Godwit—it ended up being the only one of the trip. Six Snow Geese flew over us while we were at Swan Cove and except for a single bird found twice on the Wildlife Loop these were the only Snow Geese for the entire trip. There were no large flocks of Snow Geese to be found.

On Saturday morning, we again went straight out on Beach Road to Swan Cove and the beach. There were lots of ducks, no geese, some shorebirds but not much variety. The two Red-necked Grebes were seen again in Swan Cove. A stop at the Bateman Visitor’s Center produced a Fox Sparrow behind the building.

Late Saturday morning, we went to the Chincoteague City mudflats at low tide and found many Black-bellied Plovers and Dunlin. The boat launch at Queensound Flats held the usual flock of noisy American Oystercatchers, a nice flock of Long-tailed Ducks and a surprising flock of Greater Scaups. I was really getting worried about missing Brants for the weekend when a flock of about 240 Brants flew in and settled into the water at Queensound Flats—an abundance of this species.

We started Saturday afternoon’s activities at the feeders at Marv Rubin’s vacation home. There were several Brown-headed Nuthatches and a Pine Warbler visiting the suet feeders. A Brown Creeper flew into the pine tree and gave us excellent views. A trip south of the town of Chincoteague to Mariner’s Point Marina resulted in Gerco

finding another Red-necked Grebe and we spent some time practicing aging the many Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls.

Sunday morning began with a drive to Kiptopeke State Park where Gerco scoped a Peregrine Falcon sitting in a porthole on one of the cement ships and we found the first White-winged Scoter of the trip. Later, while walking part of the Bean Field Trail, we added an American Kestrel and a Merlin. We also had flyovers of several flocks of Cedar Waxwings.

The main show for Sunday was the escorted visit to the CBBT. Island #4 was a rousing success: one Red-necked Grebe, ten Great Cormorants, all three scoter species, 160 Long-tailed Ducks, 20+ Red-breasted Mergansers, two Redheads, two Northern Gannets and six Purple Sandpipers. At Island #3, we found at least ten Harbor Seals. We finished the tour at Island #1 where we added our final Red-necked Grebe and spotted the only Bonaparte’s Gulls of the trip.

Search for Golden Eagles

The Northern Virginia Bird Club visited Highland and Augusta Counties on the

weekend of February 28–March 2. The trip was led by Larry Meade and me with special assistance from local birder Allen Larner. We tallied a total of 62 species for the trip including 42 in Highland county, 37 in Augusta county, and 31 in the independent city of Staunton.

On Friday afternoon, Allen Larner led us around Staunton and Augusta to show us several local rarities. The first stop was Bell's Lane in Staunton. We fleetingly glimpsed a very skittish Clay-colored Sparrow amongst a flock of Field Sparrows near Bell's Lane. This bird had been hanging around this location since February 8.

A quick drive over to the corner of Cattle Scales Road and Baynes Road netted an immature Snow Goose at a small pond. At another small pond near the Waynesboro Airport, we saw a male White-winged Scoter that had been at this location since early February. We discussed what this bird found to eat here and if the pond would be big enough for him to eventually take flight. At Fishersville Quarry, we saw the Red-necked Grebe present since early February as well. Other notable waterfowl at this lake were a nice flock of Redheads and a few Canvasbacks.

We completed the circle around Augusta and Staunton by returning to Bell's Lane at dusk in an attempt to see a Short-eared Owl. Luck was not with us, but we did enjoy nice scope views of several Eastern Meadowlarks.

On Saturday morning we drove to Highland County. Along the way we stopped in McDowell to check out the feeders. One of our target birds—the Black-capped Chickadee—eventually visited, but we had no success with winter finches such as Purple Finches and Pine Siskins. These finches would be a continuing miss for the entire weekend.

After a nice lunch at Evelyn's Pantry in Monterey, we carpooled for a turn around the Blue Grass Valley. We started with more satisfying looks at Black-capped Chickadees at a feeder along Rich Hills Road (Route 631) and then proceeded to the trout farm along Route 220. None of the hoped-for ducks were present, but a nice male Belted Kingfisher made the stop here worthwhile.

As we entered the Blue Grass Valley, the quest for the Golden Eagle really began. Up Hardscrabble Road (Route 644) we went all the way to the big bend in the road before descending to West Virginia. No Golden Eagle to be found; not much in the way of any raptors aloft. As we descended back down Hardscrabble Road we spotted a large

possum in a field out for an afternoon stroll.

Turning onto Hevener Road (Route 643), we found a very cooperative and photogenic Red-headed Woodpecker. Excellent scope views of the snazzy-looking woodpecker were had by all. At the feed lot along Laurel Fork Road (Route 642), we searched for snipe with no luck but we did find a Horned Lark that gave decent views to some of us before it flew away. Suddenly two large eagles flew over us—they were adult Bald Eagles.

Still no Golden Eagles though. We hoped one more turn around Blue Grass Valley might do the trick. While driving along Hardscrabble Road between Hevener and Blue Grass Roads, a distant but large raptor was spotted circling to the north. Immature Golden Eagle—what a relief! The eagle continued to circle to the north of us for quite a few minutes allowing us to get fairly good scope views. On to the next specialty bird—Rough-legged Hawk. We didn't find it; for some reason this bird was scarce in Highland County this year.

At sunset on Saturday, I led a small party up to the cemetery in Monterey for the expansive views of the valley from this location. While Tom Blackburn was searching for where Brenda Frank had gone, he alerted me to a trilling sound coming from the woods to the northeast of the cemetery. We heard it again several more times and zeroed in on a group of trees in the corner of the cemetery. Try as we might, we were unable to actually seeing the trilling Eastern Screech-Owl. It must have been in a hole on the back side of a tree from our vantage point.

On Sunday, we had very long-distance scope views of another immature Golden Eagle soaring over the ridge to the east of Route 640 south of Hightown. A second try at feeders at the corner of Snyder Lane (Route 639) and Blue Grass Valley Road netted us the hoped-for American Tree Sparrow. We finished the trip with another turn around Blue Grass Valley ending with prolonged scope views of a Horned Lark on Laurel Fork Road as he was singing his heart out while standing on top of a cow patty.

An excellent weekend was had by all, what with satisfying views of most of the target birds in Highland County and several Augusta County rarities, good fun, delicious food at the Highland Inn, and stops to take photos of barn quilts and inspiring scenery.

—Elton Morel



Photographs by
Reid Williamson
from Chincoteague Weekend

Above: Long-tailed Ducks, in the water, taking off, and in flight, at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel

Below: Savannah Sparrow at Kiptopeke State Park.



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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.



Golden-crowned Kinglet, photographed by Larry Meade in his yard

Next Board Meeting: Wednesday, June 4, 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.

Thanks to the February mail-out crew: Sally Carson, Elizabeth Fenton, Charlotte Friend, Barbara Murphy, Maxine Sorenson, Joanna Taylor, and Helen Williams.

Deadline for next issue of *The Siskin*: The August issue will include activities through October 2014. Please send items for publication by July 1 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

Directors Emeritus: Len Alfredson, Don Wiesnet

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