



THE SISKIN

Newsletter of the Northern Virginia Bird Club

Vol. 58, No. 1

February 2013

www.nvabc.org

YOUTH BIRDING SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY

The Northern Virginia Bird Club Board has voted to offer financial support to a youth under 18 years of age to attend a VSO activity, a birding camp, or a similar activity. We are seeking applicants for a scholarship of up to \$500. Applicants are expected to submit information on the activity they intend to join and a letter of application to the Board expressing why they would value this opportunity.

Deadline for application is April 1. For questions, call Joanna Taylor at 703-243-5989, or another board member on the Club Contacts list. Club members, please spread the word and help a young birder learn about this scholarship!

—Jean Tatalias

Inside—

- Calendar of field trips and events for February 6–May 11, 2013
- Join the Great Backyard Bird Count, February 15–18
- VSO Annual Meeting upcoming in Loudoun County
- Report and photos from NVBC's 2012 fall Cape May Weekend

Reminder—

A 2013 dues notice appeared in the November newsletter. If you have not yet paid, please do so now; otherwise this will be the last issue you receive. The number on your mailing label is the year through which you have paid; labels for current members show "13" or later, or "CO" (complimentary).

Siskin photos—

The *Siskin* is published on the Northern Virginia Bird Club's website, www.nvabc.org. Go there to see the photos in color.

NVBC Meeting—Wednesday, February 20, 8 PM

HUMMINGBIRDS OF THE MID-ATLANTIC REGION

Speaker

Bruce Peterjohn

Chief, USGS Bird Banding Laboratory

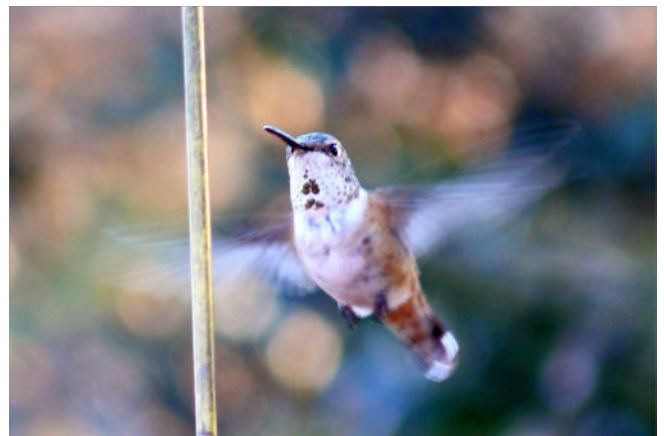
Thought you saw a hummingbird this winter? You may have and it probably wasn't a Ruby-throated. Gone are the days when the Ruby-throated Hummingbird was the only species of hummingbird east of the Mississippi River, or when hummingbirds were thought of only as summer residents. The mid-Atlantic region supports a surprisingly diverse hummingbird community, especially during winter when species from western North America regularly appear in the east. Bruce Peterjohn's presentation will summarize our knowledge of the status and distribution of hummingbirds in the Virginia-Maryland-Delaware region, providing insights into their identification, life histories, and how these marvelous little birds are adapting to become regular winter residents in this region.

Our speaker, who is based at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, administers a program that coordinates bird banding activities across the United States and its Territories. It supports the activities of approximately 1,750 Master bird banders and more than 5,000 subpermittees. In addition to issuing bird banding permits and bird bands, the Bird Banding Laboratory maintains databases for all birds banded in the US and Canada. These databases currently house approximately 65 million banding records and 4.5 million records of banded birds that have been reported by the public.

Early bird refreshments start at 7:30 PM. There will be an exchange table for books, CDs and other bird-related items and a drawing for door prizes. Northern Virginia Bird Club pins will be available to purchase for \$5 each.

Meeting place: Church of the Covenant, 2666 Military Road, Arlington, 22207. Directions are on p. 5.

The young female Rufous Hummingbird who has been residing this winter at Green Spring Gardens Park in Annandale. Photograph by Larry Meade.



Presidential Peentings

This has been a fine year for winter birding. Although cold weather limits the diversity of birds, it can also bring rare and unusual birds to our region. This year we have had a finch irruption unlike any seen for many years. Evening Grosbeaks, Common Redpolls, White-winged and Red Crossbills, Purple Finches and Pine Siskins have all been spotted this year in Northern Virginia. A pair of rare Western Grebes have been seen regularly at Lake Anna and a Rufous Hummingbird (Rachel) is still hanging around Green Spring Gardens Park in Annandale. Warm weather up north has somewhat limited waterfowl numbers, but there is still a nice variety of ducks in our lakes and ponds. The Northern Virginia Bird Club will be heading out to explore several parks and refuges this winter. Who knows what rarity we will find next? So bundle up and come join us for some winter avian action!



Photo: Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

—Larry Meade

To help you find those rare and unusual birds:

The *Reports/Alerts* page of NVBC's website has a Google Gadget that shows up-to-the-moment information on notable bird sightings in Virginia that have been reported to eBird. You can see when, where, and by whom the bird was observed and whether the sighting has been confirmed by an eBird reviewer. And if you're planning a trip outside Virginia, you can, with the click of a mouse, get the same information for any other state, D.C., Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Virgin Islands.

And be sure to join **VA-Bird**, the statewide listserv for Virginia birders. Sign up at <http://mailman.listserve.com/listmanager/listinfo/va-bird>.

Black Skimmers on the beach at sunrise at Cape May

Photo by Larry Meade, taken on the Northern Virginia Bird Club's 2012 Cape May Weekend



JOIN the Great Backyard Bird Count

February 15–18, 2013

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event led by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, with sponsorship from Wild Birds Unlimited. Anyone can participate, from beginning bird watchers to experts. It's a great way to involve kids in watching and enjoying birds. To join in, follow the steps below.

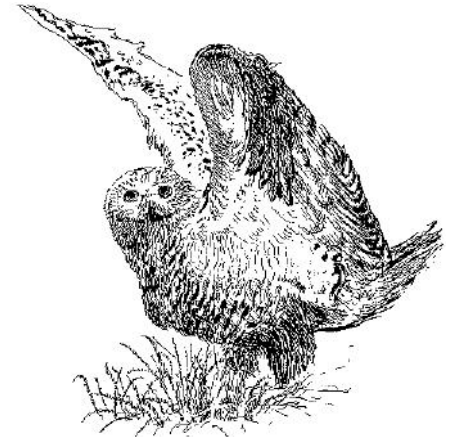
1. Plan to count birds for at least 15 minutes during February 15–18, 2013. Count birds at as many places and on as many days as you like—just keep a separate list of counts for each day and/or location. Watching feeders is something almost all of us can do, or visit a park or favorite birding site.

2. Count the greatest number of individuals of each species that you see together at any one time, and write it down. You can get regional bird checklists at the online site.

3. Enter your results at the GBBC website (<http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/howto.html>). If you already use eBird, you can continue using eBird to submit your sightings, but be sure to enter at least one checklist during the GBBC weekend!

In 2012 over 100,000 checklists were submitted. Last year Snowy Owl records were set throughout the Great Plains south to Kansas and in the Pacific Northwest. With the irruptions of winter finches this year as well as other birds we don't always see, who knows what variety your watching will yield.

—Jean Tatalias



Snowy Owl. Drawing by Robert Savannah, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

APRIL NVBC MEETING, ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Mark **April 17** on your calendar for the Northern Virginia Bird Club's spring meeting. Naturalist and educator Fred Atwood will be the guest speaker. The program will appear in the next issue of *The Siskin*.

Also on the agenda is the election of club officers and directors for two-year terms that begin July 1. If you are interested in serving on the NVBC Board or have suggestions to make to the Nominating Committee, please get in touch with the committee chairman, Steve Williams. The Nominating Committee will present a slate of candidates and there will be an opportunity for club members to make nominations from the floor.

VSO ANNUAL MEETING IN LOUDOUN COUNTY—WEEKEND OF APRIL 26–28

The Virginia Society of Ornithology's Annual Meeting will be hosted this year by the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy. The planned events include a program Friday evening on *Identifying Warblers*, a banquet Saturday night with natural history writer and artist Julie Zickefoose as guest

speaker, and field trips Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. You can register now at www.loudounwildlife.org.

SPRING CHINCOTEAGUE TRIP

The 2013 Northern Virginia Bird Club spring weekend at Chincoteague is scheduled for **May 17–19**. The trip is for club members only and registration is required. Plans for the weekend will appear in the next issue of *The Siskin*. If you would like to register now, please call or email Elton Morel.

WILSON ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY TO MEET THIS MAY IN WILLIAMSBURG

The Wilson Ornithological Society will hold its 125th annual meeting in Williamsburg from Thursday, May 7, to Sunday, May 10, at the College of William and Mary. This year is the 200th anniversary of the death of Alexander Wilson, Father of American Ornithology, and to mark the occasion there will be a special session Saturday morning on the *History of American Ornithology*. Registration for the meeting is open to non-members of the society. You can find more information at www.wilsonsociety.org.

FIELD TRIP LEADERS

David Boltz	703-768-7499
Steve Bruck	703-425-8584
Charlotte Friend	703-532-0207
Val Kitchens	703-536-9310
Catherine Kubo	703-352-1238
Larry Meade	703-206-9030
Elton Morel	703-553-4860
Frances Raskin	202-330-1742
Marc Ribaud	703-680-1134
Peter Ross	703-528-2731
Jean Tatalias	703-281-6099
Joanna Taylor	703-243-5989
Carolyn Williams	703-273-1961
Steve Williams	703-619-0381

White-crowned Sparrow at Rectortown, Virginia. Photograph by Larry Meade



UPCOMING TRIPS AND EVENTS

Compiled by Steve Williams

Note:

- Beginning birders are welcome on all trips.
- To make reservations when they are required, call one of the trip leaders. (Phone numbers are listed on p. 3.)
- If in doubt about a trip because of weather, 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>			6 9:30 AM Long Branch Charlotte Friend Val Kitchens			9 8 AM Occoquan Bay NWR Steve Bruck Marc Ribaldo
				14 8:30 AM Eakin Park Charlotte Friend Catherine Kubo		16 8 AM Bristoe Station Battlefield Park Elton Morel
						23 8 AM Blue Ridge Center Larry Meade <i>with Loudoun Wild- life Conservancy</i>
				<u>March</u>	1-3 Highland County Winter Weekend <i>Members only/registration required</i> Val Kitchens Elton Morel	
3 8 AM Dyke Marsh Friends of Dyke Marsh			6 9 AM Long Branch Charlotte Friend Val Kitchens			9 8 AM Mason Neck SP Larry Meade Frances Raskin
10 Daylight Saving Time begins				14 8:30 AM Eakin Park Charlotte Friend Catherine Kubo		16 8 AM Silver Lake RP Larry Meade Steve Williams
				21 8:30 AM Ben Brenman Park Charlotte Friend Catherine Kubo		23 8:30 AM Fort C F Smith Val Kitchens Elton Morel
			27 8:30 AM Burke Lake Catherine Kubo Carolyn Williams			30 8 AM Occoquan Bay NWR Frances Raskin Marc Ribaldo
<u>April</u>			3 8:30 AM Long Branch Charlotte Friend Val Kitchens			6 8 AM Riverbend Steve Bruck Peter Ross

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<i>April (cont.)</i>				11 8:30 AM Eakin Park Charlotte Friend Catherine Kubo		13 8 AM Fort C F Smith Val Kitchens Joanna Taylor
7 8 AM Dyke Marsh Friends of Dyke Marsh			17 8 PM NVBC Meeting Church of the Cov- enant, Arlington			20 8 AM Leesylvania SP Steve Bruck
			24 8 AM Huntley Meadows Hike/bike trail Dave Boltz		26-28 VSO Annual Meeting Loudoun County See p. 3.	
		<i>May</i>	1 8:30 AM Long Branch Val Kitchens Catherine Kubo Jean Tatalias			4 7:30 AM Thompson WMA Trillium Trail Elton Morel Marc Ribaud
5 8 AM Dyke Marsh Friends of Dyke Marsh			8 8:30 AM Daniels Run Catherine Kubo Carolyn Williams			11 7:30 AM Meadowood Peter Ross Steve Williams

Directions

NVBC Meeting (2/20, 4/17) Church of the Covenant, 2666 Military Rd, Arlington, 22207. 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 passing 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.

Ben Brenman Park (3/21) 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.

Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship (2/23) 11661 Harpers Ferry Road, Purcellville. From Leesburg, take Rt 7 west 3 mi. to VA-9 exit toward Hillsboro/Charles Town, WV. Take VA-9 (Charles Town Pk) west 9.8 mi. to Harpers Ferry Rd (Rt 671). Take slight right onto Harpers Ferry Rd. and continue 5.6 mi. to 11661. Meet at visitor center.

Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park (2/16) 10708 Bristow Rd, Bristow, VA 20136. From Interstate 95: Take Rt. 234 North (Exit 152B); travel 7.5 miles and make a left onto

Independent Hill Drive. Then make immediate right onto Rt 619 (Bristow Road). Travel 7 miles and turn left onto Iron Brigade Unit Avenue. The parking lot is located on your left at the traffic circle. From Interstate 66: Take Rt. 234 South (Exit 44). Travel 4.5 miles and turn right onto Rt. 28 (Nokesville Road). Travel 1.5 miles and turn left onto Rt. 619 (Bristow Road). Travel 0.25 miles, turn right onto Iron Brigade Unit Avenue and continue to parking lot

Burke Lake Park (3/27) From I-495, take exit 54 west (Braddock Rd). Stay in right lane if you are coming from the North. Go 1.5 miles on Braddock and turn left onto Burke Lake Rd. Go 4.7 miles and turn left onto Route 123 (Ox Rd). 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 (5/8) 3721 Tedrich Blvd, Fairfax, VA 22031. 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/Belle Haven (3/3, 4/7, 5/5) 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 (2/14, 3/14, 4/11) From I-495, take Rt 50 west one mile to Prosperity Ave; turn left onto Prosperity and go one mile to parking lot on left.

Fort C.F. Smith (3/23, 4/13) From I-66 east, take Exit 72 (Spout Run Pkwy). At traffic light, turn right onto Lee Hwy. At successive traffic lights, turn left onto Spout Run Pkwy, left onto Lorcom Lane, and 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. Meet in parking lot at east end of park.

Huntley Meadows Park—Hike/bike trail 4/24 From I-495, take Rt 1 south 0.5 mile to Rt 633 (S. Kings Hwy). Turn right (west); go 2.5 miles to park entrance and lot on left (just before Telegraph Rd.).

Leesylvania State Park (4/20) From I-495, take I-95 south about 14 mi. to Exit 156 (Dale City/Rippon Landing/Rt 784). Following the posted highway signs for Leesylvania State Park, exit east on Rt 784. Proceed eastward 1.1 mi. to US Rt 1. Turn right (south) on Rt. 1 and go 0.9 miles to Neabsco Rd. Immediately past the Wawa service station, turn left (east) on Neabsco Rd. and proceed 2 miles to park entrance on right. After passing through the

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2012 CAPE MAY WEEKEND—

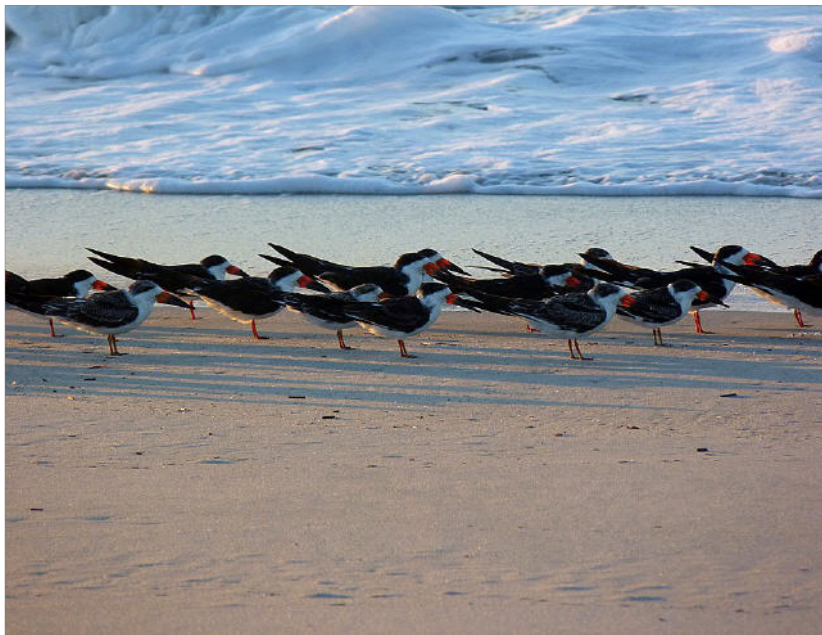


Clear skies, sunny, and a little wind were the forecast for the third NVBC Cape May fall weekend. It was under these nice conditions that we started birding. Oh, how little did we know that the weather would change rapidly. At Cape May Harbor, our first stop on Friday afternoon, we found a group of Brant basking in the sun, and 30 minutes later visibility was next to nothing at Cape May NWR two-miles away due to dense fog. So much for the weather predictions. Undaunted by the fog we continued to scout for birds in the area. We found a large contingent of 18 Ospreys hunting in the ponds along Ocean Drive and a

Clapper Rail calling along the dirt road to the marina. About an hour later the fog lifted and we hiked towards the beach where it was very birdy. We saw Surf Scoters, more Ospreys, Peregrine Falcon and Merlin. Various waders were present too, including Semipalmated Plovers, Sanderlings and Dunlins. In the distance a few Northern Gannets were seen roaming the ocean.



Saturday was a busy and diverse day with many birding stops including the beach pavilion at 2nd Avenue, Hereford Light House and Gardens, Nummy Island, Stone Point Harbor, Cape May State Park, and a late stroll at The Meadows. Our morning beach walk was a bust, but we did get to see a large flock of Black Skimmers performing some nice aerial acrobatics and landing right in front of the group while the sun was rising. Hereford Light House and Gardens was quiet but the beach was



spectacular. Shorebirds were present in nice numbers including Black-bellied Plovers, Semipalmated Plover, Sanderlings, Dunlin, and a single Red Knot. Stone Point Harbor was lively too. Our best bird there was without a doubt a Lesser Black-backed Gull. For several of the participants this was a life bird. Many of us got some nice photos too. In the afternoon we birded at Cape May State Park and the Hawk Watch. Once again we had fantastic birds. Peregrine Falcon, Sharpies, Coopers, Red-shouldered, and Red-tailed Hawks were on the move. As always it is very enjoyable seeing the birds fly over. A moment of excitement came when one of the local expert birders suddenly called "Red Crossbill!!!" Indeed, flying over was a male Red Crossbill. Way cool, but we got too short a look at this bird. Late afternoon we left the state park and for a stroll at dusk at The Meadows. Rumor was that Sora were present. Indeed a little later we found two Soras, a Virginia Rail, and a few

Directions, continued

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. State fee area.

Long Branch Nature Area (2/6, 3/6, 4/3, 5/1)

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 (3/9) From I-495, take I-95 south 7 mi. to Lorton exit. Left on Rt 642 to Rt 1. Right on Rt 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..

Meadowood (5/11) From I-495, take I-95 south 7 mi. to Lorton exit. Left on Rte. 642. Immediately after passing under RR tracks (1/4 mi.) turn right on Lorton Market Rd., which

soon becomes Gunston Cove Rd. After crossing Rte. 1, road becomes Gunston Rd. Go 1.8 mi. to 10406 Gunston Rd. (BLM, Lower Potomac Station Office). Park on right next to horse barns just before field station building.

Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge

(2/9, 3/30) 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 en-

Massive migration when you have wind

Pectoral Sandpipers. Sweet. It is so enjoyable seeing all the fantastic birds in a short time frame.

Sunday morning was time for morning flight at Higbee Beach NWR. The expectations were high because the winds had shifted west. Last year the wind came from the east and Higbee Beach was a quiet affair. Oh, what a bit of wind out of the west can do. The bird experts from Cape May described the morning flight of October 21 as huge. They were not joking. In a little over two hours an estimated 24,000 Yellow-rumped Warblers and over 5,000 American Robins were counted. It felt like you were standing in a cloud of birds. In addition, Red-breasted Nuthatches and Eastern Phoebes were flying by like crazy. The occasional warbler such as Palm Warbler, Blackpoll, and Common Yellowthroat could be found in the mix if you paid attention. It is hard to describe the fun and excitement when birds fly between your legs or nearly crash into you. It is unique to experience these massive flights of countless birds. This is something to look forward to during a fall visit at the Cape.

As a group we found 126 species of bird during the weekend. Great sightings included Brown Pelican, Clapper Rail, Sora, Virginia Rail, Peregrine Falcon, Merlin, Broad-winged Hawk, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Pectoral Sandpiper, Prairie Warbler, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Purple Finch, and many more. Surprisingly we only recorded one Morning Dove.

Guess we were paying too much attention to other birds and ignored the commoners.

—Gerco

Photographs of Cape May birds

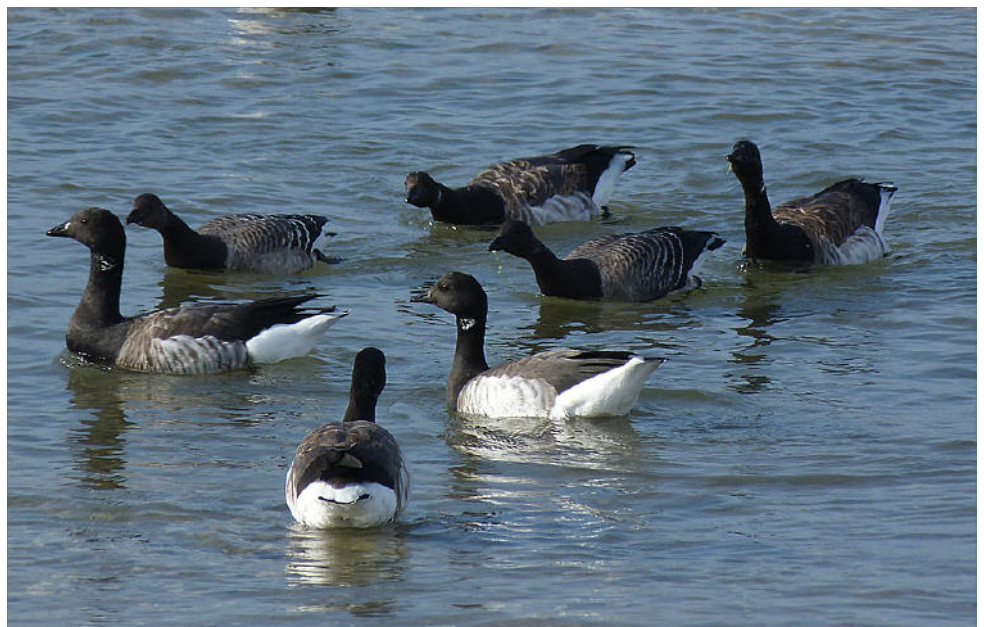
Opposite page—

Cooper's Hawk, Lesser Black-backed Gull, and Black Skimmers by Gerco Hoogeweg.

This page—

Broad-winged Hawk and a Field Sparrow at Higbee Beach by Larry Meade

Brant by Gerco Hoogeweg.



trance gate. Meet in parking lot. Bring scope. US fee area.

Riverbend Park (4/6) Meet at Visitor Center. From intersection of Georgetown Pk (Rt 193) and Old Dominion Dr (Rt 738) take Georgetown Pk west about ¼ mile 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 (3/16)

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 mile. to Rt 55. Turn right onto Rt 55 and go 0.9 mile to Antioch Rd. Turn right onto Antioch and go 1.3 miles. to Silver Lake Rd. Turn right and proceed to park entrance at 16198 Silver Lake Rd.

Thompson Wildlife Management Area—

Trillium Trail (5/4) 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 Freezeland Rd (Rt 638). Turn left (north) and follow Freezeland, 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.)



THE SISKIN
NORTHERN VIRGINIA BIRD CLUB
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JOIN THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA BIRD CLUB

Northern Virginia Bird Club dues for 2013 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



Snow Geese.
Drawing by
Alex Merritt

schedule. To join the exchange and receive a list of email addresses for other participating NVBC members, 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 20 and April 17, 2013.

Next Board Meeting: Wednesday, March 6, 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.

Deadline for next issue of *The Siskin*: The April–May 2013 issue will include activities through June. Please send items for publication by **March 15** to the editor, Dorothy Tella, at dtella@cox.net.

CLUB CONTACTS

President: Larry Meade, 703-206-9030

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

Vice President, Field Activities: Steve Williams, 703-619-0381

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; Elton Morel, 703-553-4860

Directors Emeritus: Len Alfredson, Val Kitchens, Don Wiesnet

Membership: Charlotte Friend, 703-532-0207

Webmaster, www.nvabc.org: Len Alfredson, 703-416-2718

Editor, *The Siskin*: Dorothy Tella, 703-356-0309

NVBC e-mail: nvabc@verizon.net.