



THE SISKIN

Newsletter of the Northern Virginia Bird Club

Vol. 58, No. 4

November 2013

www.nvabc.org

Winter Chincoteague Trip

The club's 2014 Winter Chincoteague Weekend is scheduled for February 7–9 (Friday to Sunday). February is an excellent time to visit Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel Islands (CBBT). The Refuge is loaded with wintering waterfowl and shorebirds while the CBBT is famous for sea ducks. On last year's trip, we saw a total of 105 species including 23 species of waterfowl and 15 species of shorebirds. Highlight sightings were Eurasian Wigeon and American Avocet at Chincoteague NWR and Common Eiders at the CBBT Islands.

Plans for the weekend include birding the Chincoteague area Friday afternoon starting at 3:15 PM (optional) and Saturday starting at 7:30 AM. Activities on Friday and Saturday include birding along Beach Road, Swan Cove, and Tom's Cove and around the Wildlife Loop. Time and tides permitting, we will also visit the Queen Sound Flats and the Chincoteague City mudflats.

We will arrange a trip to the CBBT Islands on Sunday, weather permitting. The CBBT trip requires security forms in advance and an extra fee (about \$10 per person) and has a limit of 15 people per group. 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 24 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 Sunday morning's CBBT Island trip 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 \$73 per night on 15 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 January 24 to get this

NVBC GENERAL MEETING
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 8 PM

Birding Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan

Speakers

Diane Marton and Joanna Taylor

Join us for a presentation on birding in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan by two of our club members, Diane Marton and Joanna Taylor, who visited both countries in late spring of this year. To whet your appetite, read Diane's fascinating article on the trip in this issue of *The Siskin*. To whet your appetite another way, we hope to be able to have some ethnic finger foods from Uzbekistan thanks to a new restaurant that has opened near our meeting place. Special thanks go to Machiel Valkenburg of Rubythroat Tours, who was the local guide on the trip, for the use of his excellent bird photos.

Early bird refreshments start at 7:30 PM. There will be a drawing for door prizes. 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 4..

special group rate. Participants should make your own reservations by calling 800-553-6117 and be sure to say you are with the Northern Virginia Bird Club. Check-in time is 3 PM on Friday, February 7, with 24-hour notice required for cancellation. Chincoteague NWR is a U.S. fee area.

— *Elton Morel*



Belted Kingfisher photographed by Larry Meade on NVBC's October 5 walk at Silver Lake Regional Park

Inside—

- *Calendar of NVBC trips and events, November 13, 2013–February 9, 2014*
- *Upcoming Christmas Bird Counts in Northern Virginia*
- *2014 ASNV Winter Waterfowl Survey*
- *Birding Central Asia*
- *What the Northern Virginia Bird Club did on its summer vacation*
- *Report from Camp Avocet*

Insert—2014 membership renewal notice

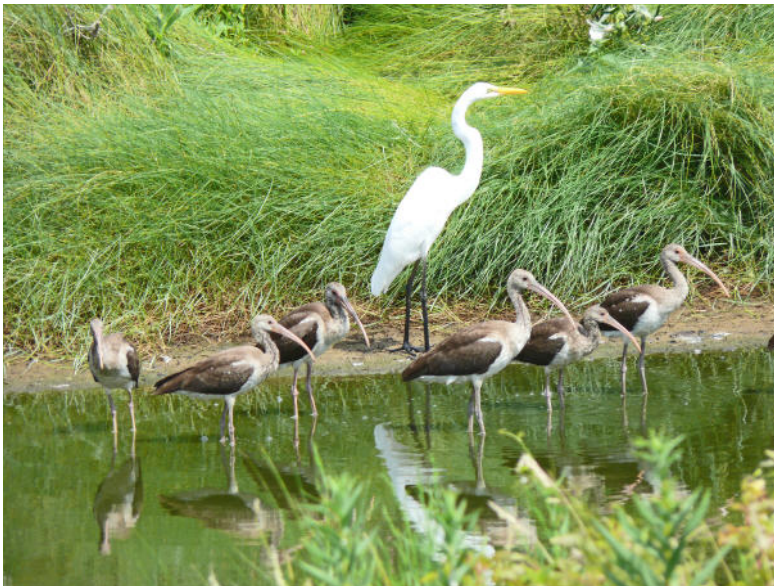
To see the newsletter photographs in color, go to www.nvabc.org and click on the Siskin icon.

Presidential Peentings

As the weather starts to turn more chilly, migration is beginning to slow to a trickle for neotropical birds which are passing through our area. Soon though, winter birds such as Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Brown Creepers, various sparrows, hawks, and waterfowl will begin to arrive in numbers. During NVBC trips in late September and October, some of our winter friends have already been spotted. This does not look like a great year for finch irruptions from the north because of a plentiful food supply up there, but that does not mean we are not likely to get other rarities in our region this winter. You never know what might show up at someone's feeder. There are many opportunities for you to get out and find cold weather birds. In addition to our regular NVBC field trips, there are Christmas Bird Counts throughout our area which can give you valuable experience and also contribute to citizen science in a tangible way. As always, we welcome birders of all skill levels to participate in these adventures. The birds are out there. We just need to get out there and find them. Let's go birding!

—Larry Meade
NVBC President

White Ibis and
Great Egret at
Chincoteague.
Photograph by
Larry Meade



Virginia birders wanted for Seneca CBC

The Seneca MD/VA Christmas Bird Count covers a large area of Montgomery County, Maryland, and, equally important, a sizeable area in Loudoun and Fairfax Counties in Virginia. The Virginia portion is about 40 percent of the total count circle, and the folks who count in the five Virginia sectors contribute significantly to the species diversity and numbers of birds for this CBC. Last year, nearly one-third of the total birds for the CBC were counted in the Virginia sectors, and four of the 95 total species for the CBC were found only in Virginia. We are looking for more folks to help count in Virginia. If you are interested in

volunteering or have questions, contact me at kingfishers2@verizon.net or 301-530-6574.

—Jim Nelson, Seneca CBC compiler

Audubon Society of Northern Virginia Winter Waterfowl Survey

On **Saturday, January 25** and **Sunday, January 26**, birders of all skill levels will join up to count waterfowl in Fairfax, Arlington, and Prince William counties, including the Potomac and Occoquan watersheds. Novice birders will be paired with expert bird enthusiasts. Larry Cartwright continues as the volunteer compiler for this year's count. For more information and to join the team, email info@audubonva.org or call 703-438-6008.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA

Saturday, December 14, 2013

WASHINGTON D.C.

Includes areas of Virginia inside the Beltway along with Dyke Marsh. To participate, email compiler, Larry Cartwright: prowarbler@verizon.net.

Sunday, December 15, 2013

MANASSAS–BULL RUN

To participate, contact Audubon Society of Northern Virginia at info@audubonva.org or 703-256-6895.

SENECA MD/VA

Count has five Virginia sectors, ranging from Great Falls Park to the eastern corner of Loudoun County. Contact compiler Jim Nelson at kingfishers2@verizon.net.

THE PLAINS/AIRLIE

To participate, email compiler, Todd Day: blkvulture@aol.com.

Sunday, December 29, 2013

CENTRAL LOUDOUN

Sign up at www.loudounwildlife.org or contact compiler, Joe Coleman: 540-554-2542 or jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org.

NOKESVILLE

To register, contact Prince William Conservation Alliance: alliance@pwconserve.org or 703-499-4954.

SUGARLOAF MOUNTAIN

Lucketts Sector is in northern Loudoun County. To participate, contact sector leader, Joanna Taylor: 703-243-5989 or jandrtaylor@verizon.net.

Sunday, January 5, 2014

CALMES NECK

Parts of western Loudoun and eastern Clarke counties. Email compiler, Margaret Wester: margaretwester@hotmail.com.

FORT BELVOIR

Email or call compiler, Kurt Gaskill: kurtcapt87@verizon.net; 703-768-2172.

WALKERTON

Count area is primarily in Middle Peninsula. Email compiler, Fred Atwood: fredatwood@yahoo.com.

BIRDING CENTRAL ASIA

Away, for we are ready to a man!
Our camels sniff the evening and are glad.

...
We take the Golden Road to Samarkand.

James Elroy Flecker
The Golden Journey to Samarkand

And thus Joanna Taylor and I set off in Amid-May, not on flying camel or carpet, but on the usual plane, through Istanbul to Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan, for three weeks of birding there and in Uzbekistan...Joanna dreaming of rosy starlings and azure tits and I of demoiselle cranes and the northernmost flock of breeding flamingos.

Once a small riverside settlement Akmola and then a Russian fortress Akmolinsk, Astana became the capital in 1998 of a newly independent Kazakhstan (1991) and now boasts a population of over one million. We had two days to sightsee in this quick-rising, carefully planned city of shimmering blue and gold buildings (one nicknamed “banana” and others “beer cans”), zooming to the top of the landmark 300-foot-tall Baiterek or Tree of Life observation tower, taking in the exclusive shops on the ground floor of the yurt-like, climate-controlled Khan Shatyr, a recreation center boasting swimming pools surrounded by sand from Bali on its uppermost level.

Obviously this was to be a trip like no other, especially after we learned our guide found, despite a written assurance to the contrary, that he could not get a visa at the Astana airport. Stranded in Istanbul, he first met us May 29 instead of May 21; fortunately the local provider Machiel Valkenburg and his team from Rubythroat Birding Tours carried on seamlessly.

Around Astana and the Korgalzhin Lakes system we saw such standouts as red-footed falcons, short-eared owls, pallid harriers, demoiselle cranes (with chicks!), bluethroats, ruffs in breeding finery, black-winged pratincoles, black and white-winged larks, and—finally—at day’s end, some sociable lapwings. But no flamingos: no reason given. We wondered whether it was an uncooperative refuge manager, who needed his palm greased....

Green carpets rolled across these flat steppes, as far as the eye could see, only to turn brown in another month. Infrequently a river with its attendant trees and shrubs cut through the carpet, and one of the low-lying lakes produced a first for the region—a long-tailed duck.



Pander's Ground Jay. Photo by Diane Marton

“The wind might blow,” we came to say, and here it was non-stop, easily 40 mph, blowing either dust or a cold rain. Our refuge was a guesthouse, where we ate such traditional fare as “plov” (pilaf) and the highly prized boiled horsemeat.

From Astana we flew to the former capital Almaty in the southeastern part of this huge country, four times the size of Texas, and then continued to an old, rustic Russian hunting lodge (and its nighttime European scops owl) near the spectacular red sandstone cliffs of the Sharyn River Gorge, not quite the Grand Canyon, but then.... The day brought blue rock-thrushes and several species of wheatears, but the highlight was hillside colonies of chattering pink-and-black rosy starlings and above, the prize, a saker falcon, its numbers sorely diminished due to the Arab preference for using wild falcons in their hunting.

We headed back to Almaty, having checked off, among others, Pallas’s sandgrouse, the gray-hooded and the chestnut-breasted bunting, the Mongolian and the crimson-winged finch.

Working our way the next morning to a private yurt camp in the Taukum Desert, we picked up such niceties as white-headed and ferruginous ducks, and gazed awestruck at fields ablaze with crimson poppies (no opium in these) and at the majestic snow-covered peaks of the Tien Shan range.

Machiel sets up his desert yurt camp on a piece of leased land each May, to coincide with the birding season. Our pleasant yurt had two cots—and barn swallows swooping in and

out and perching along the opening at the top. We dined like Central Asian nomadic royalty, sitting amidst cushions on the floor of the dining tent and eating from low tables.

Desert memories: LOTS of larks (calandra, bimaculated, greater and lesser short-toed, crested, and of course sky lark); Turkestan, azure, and black-headed penduline tits at a riverside; a Saxaul sparrow nesting in a bus stop shelter; a white-winged woodpecker in a unique woodland area; a disappointedly distant Macqueen’s bustard viewed through the scope. And then of course herds of camels on these dusty plains, tended by men on horseback, cell phone at their ear. No Silk Road caravans today; the camels are kept for their milk.

Back through Almaty, picking up eastern rock nuthatches at Tamgaly, known more for its ancient petroglyphs and now designated a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site; and on to a former Russian Astronomical Observatory in the Tien Shan mountains. Led to expect the worst, we were surprised to find freshly painted rooms, new double-pane windows and delicious food awaiting the birders who flock here. The weather was sunny and mild; and the spectacular alpine peaks and meadows, the bubbling fast-flowing streams, and Big Almaty Lake yielded up a number of gems: perky white-tailed rubythroats; fire-fronted serins; blue whistling thrushes; Eversmann’s, blue-capped, and Guldenstadt’s redstarts; an ibisbill pair; the white-browed tit-warbler; and Himalayan snowcocks.

continued on p. 6

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. 5.
- 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>November</u>			13 8:30 AM Eakin Park Elizabeth Fenton Charlotte Friend			16 8:30 AM Blandy Farm Elton Morel Joanna Taylor
			20 8:30 AM Burke Lake Catherine Kubo Joanna Taylor 8 PM NVBC Meeting Church of the Covenant, Arlington			23 8 AM Huntley Meadows David Ledwith Larry Meade
						30 8 AM Algonkian RP Elton Morel Jean Tatalias
<u>December</u>						
1 8 AM Dyke Marsh Friends of Dyke Marsh			4 8:30 AM Long Branch Charlotte Friend Joanna Taylor			7 8 AM Mason Neck SP Steve Bruck David Ledwith
				12 8:30 AM Ft C F Smith Barbara Murphy Joanna Taylor		
December 14, 2103—January 5, 2014—Christmas Bird Counts (See p. 2)						

DIRECTIONS

NVBC Meeting (11/20) 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.

Algonkian Regional Park (11/30) 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.

Blandy Experimental Farm/State Arboretum of Virginia (11/16) Take I-66 West to Rt 17 North (Exit 23, sign says Delaplane/Paris). Follow Rt 17 North to its junction with Rt 50 West at a traffic light. Turn left onto Rt 50/17, the Arboretum is approximately 7 miles on the left, about 3 miles past the Shenandoah River.

Burke Lake Park (11/20) 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).

Dyke Marsh (12/1, 2/2) 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 (11/13, 1/22) 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 (12/12) From I-66 east, take Exit 72 (Spout Run Pkwy). At traffic light,

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
January			8 8:30 AM Long Branch Elizabeth Fenton Charlotte Friend			11 8 AM Northern Neck X-trip <i>Members only/</i> <i>Reservations required</i> Larry Meade
			15 8:30 AM Jones Point Park Dave Boltz			18 8 AM Riverbend—Visitor Center David Ledwith Elton Morel
			22 8:30 AM Eakin Park Elizabeth Fenton Charlotte Friend			25 8:30 AM Silver Lake RP Larry Meade Joanna Taylor
			29 8:30 AM Lake Accotink Dave Boltz		February	
						1 8 AM Occoquan Bay NWR David Ledwith Mark Ribaldo
2 8 AM Dyke Marsh Friends of Dyke Marsh			5 8:30 AM Long Branch Charlotte Friend Joanna Taylor			7–9 Chincoteague Weekend <i>Members only/ Reservations required</i> Elton Morel

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 (11/23) 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.

Jones Point Park (1/15) 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.

Lake Accotink Park (1/29) From I-95, take Rt 644 (Old Keene Mill Rd) west to Backlick Rd. Take Backlick north approx. 1 mile to Highland St. (look for brown park sign). Turn left onto Highland St. Follow signs to Lake Accotink; take Accotink Park Rd past visitor center to parking lot near railroad trestle. Walk will start from the carousel near the lakeside parking lot.

Long Branch Nature Area (12/4, 1/8, 2/5) 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 (12/7) 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.

Northern Neck X-trip (1/11) Meet at the Silver Diner, 6592 Springfield Mall. From the Beltway, take I-95 south to the Springfield/Franconia exit, #169A (Rt 644E). From exit ramp, turn right (east) onto Franconia Rd E. Stay in the right lane. Go about 0.3 mi. on Franconia Rd E, past Loisdale Rd, and turn right into Springfield Mall. Go about 325 ft; turn left and go about 150 ft; then turn left again and go another 200 ft. to the Silver Diner on left.

Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge (2/1) 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.

Riverbend Park—Visitor Center (1/18)

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 (1/25) 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.

TRIP LEADERS

Dave Boltz	703-768-7499
Steve Bruck	703-425-8584
Elizabeth Fenton	703-533-0851
Charlotte Friend	703-532-0207
Kurt Gaskill	703-768-2172
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 Ribaldo	703-680-1134
Jean Tatalias	703-281-6099
Joanna Taylor	703-243-5989

Five of our original nine birders continued on to Uzbekistan, once again without our beleaguered guide. His Uzbek visa had been incorrectly dated for 2012. We reached Tashkent Sunday noon and next encountered him in Samarkand on Tuesday evening. The local guide, an ascetic-looking Uzbek of Russian origin, was a highly capable birder but became completely flummoxed when trying to figure out where we would next eat. Fortunately early-start mornings always meant breakfast packed by the hotel and always included a cucumber, tomato, hard-boiled egg, and pastry.

Uzbekistan is the garden state for the region, and mealtime offered more variety and flavor than in Kazakhstan. We passed many a field with women working under the sun's strong rays, babushkas tied back to keep their hair in check. Donkey carts brought farm implements or took away produce.

Bird species recorded here are fewer than in Kazakhstan; and interestingly, there are no endemics for either of the countries. But Uzbekistan gave us lasting memories: a nesting female Asian paradise-flycatcher; soaring transmission towers turned into nesting white stork apartment houses; the white-throated robin in the Zarafshan Hills; Pander's ground jays that we assumed would be difficult to find in the Kyzylkum Desert, yet there they were running about, crossing the road, one even perching above eye-level, singing and displaying and allowing for ample photo shots; a lone namaqua dove, a first for the country; and at trip's end, a rufous-naped tit.

What really shine in the country are the cultural treasures. In Samarkand it is the Registan, commercial center of the medieval city, three sides hemmed in by medressas (seats of higher education in earlier times), their azure mosaics, tiles and majolica bringing on a visual overload, only to be outdone at the Avenue of the Mausoleums, with some of Islam's most ornate tile work. Timur, national hero of the country, lies elsewhere in the city in a surprisingly modest mausoleum. Bukhara, perhaps Central Asia's holiest city, has a more subtle beauty. Leisurely stroll the historic center to gaze at and visit mosques, medressas, the Ark or fortress that housed the rulers, and, not least, the famous Kalon Minaret from 1127 that was spared by Genghis Khan when he passed through.

Truly an extraordinary trip, and a surprise a week after arriving home when the owner of the tour company called to say a substantial refund was being mailed to tour participants due to the unprecedented circumstances we had encountered.

—Diane Marton

WHAT THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA BIRD CLUB DID ON ITS SUMMER VACATION



Scene of the Shenandoah Valley during the Skyline Drive summer trip. Photo by Larry Meade. The bird atop the snag is an Indigo Bunting.

The Northern Virginia Bird Club had two excellent out of town trips this summer. They were what we call "X-trips" where we leave early and drive to a relatively far-flung location and bird into the late afternoon. In early July, we ventured up to Skyline Drive and birded the Limberlost Trail which is located near Skyland. The trip was led by Elton Morel and me. The highlight of the morning was a spectacular look at a cooperative male Blackburnian Warbler actively feeding above our heads. He even reappeared a bit later to put on a show for people in the group who had missed him when he was first sighted. We later found a female Blackburnian a little further up the trail. We also enjoyed Chestnut-sided, Black-and-white, and Hooded Warblers. American Redstarts were ubiquitous. Veery and Wood Thrushes entertained us with their singing. Scarlet Tanagers and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks grudgingly let us glimpse them as they sang in the tree tops. Canada Warblers had been reported in the area, but we dipped on them. We found some more birds in other locations along Skyline Drive such as Dark-eyed Juncos, a Broad-winged Hawk and a Ruby-throated Hummingbird. As usual, there were many Indigo Buntings and Eastern Towhees.

In mid-August we ventured to entirely different habitat as we visited Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge in Delaware. This time we were in search of shorebirds and we were not disappointed. Even the weather cooperated as we enjoyed a mild, mostly sunny day. We had what amounts to a dream team of birders on hand with Kurt Gaskill, Marc Ribaldo, Elton Morel, and Gerco spotting birds left and right. Kevin Karlson, the well-known birder and photographer, was also at the refuge doing a workshop. We found most of our target birds including a Hudsonian Godwit, Western Sandpipers, White-rumped Sandpipers, and a Long-billed Dowitcher. At the DuPont Nature Center we found the immature King Eider that had been hanging out in the area. There were also Clapper Rails running around. At Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge, we saw Saltmarsh Sparrows and a Peregrine Falcon. Another highlight of the day was lunch at Sambo's in Leipsic.

—Larry Meade



Juvenile Purple Martins at Bombay Hook. Photo by Larry Meade

A WEEK AT CAMP AVOCET

Elizabeth Bevins is the first recipient of the Northern Virginia Bird Club's youth birding scholarship. She used it last summer to attend Camp Avocet, a week-long American Birding Association camp for young birders at Cape Henlopen State Park in Lewes, Delaware.

I want to start out with saying that Camp Avocet was one the best camps that I have ever been to. There were lots of things that made Avocet great. First of all were the other campers. Second were the birds, of course, no surprise there. Last of all were the adults.

One of the things that surprised me about Avocet was how many different places that people came from. There was someone from California, at least one from Texas, and another from Canada! It was great to make friends that are my age who bird. Most of the time, the people that I hang out with, unfortunately, aren't birders. It was just amazing to be with 21 teenage bird nerds. A few of them even started a band which created parodies of other songs. However, they didn't just create your regular old, run of the mill parodies. They create parodies about birding! How cool is that! They called themselves Pish And Twitch. If you go onto the ABA blog and search them up, you can hear several of their songs.

On Tuesday, August 13, we took a previously unplanned trip to Assateague because there was a Bar-tailed Godwit there. I had a hard time picking out the Bar-tailed Godwit because it was in with quite a few Marbled Godwits. To make it even more difficult, before Avocet I had no experience with shorebirds. That was the day I saw 14 lifers. However, we weren't just looking at shorebirds. One morning, we had the option to get up early to listen for migrating birds. When we started birding that morning, it was still dark and I was feeling like I wasn't really awake. As it started to get lighter, and we could see what was going on a little better, someone called out, "owl!" We all immediately looked at the pine trees where the owl had been spotted. No one could see it. Then one of the people who had called it out looked for it with a scope. That was when they realized that what they had thought was an owl was in reality a pinecone owl. We had been hearing an owl earlier so it was an easy mistake to make.

Not only was I with lots of birders my age, but I also got to meet Richard Crossley, the author of the Crossley identification guides, and Jonathon Alderfer, who does some of the drawings for the National Geographic field guides! We did some drawing with Mr. Alderfer and I realized just how much I enjoy drawing birds. I'm not able to do much feather detailing currently, but I am able to get the



Scene on the Delaware coast near Camp Avocet. Photo by Elizabeth Bevins

outline of the bird, and general markings. Bill Stuart, who was in charge of Camp Avocet, was absolutely amazing and so were the rest of the leaders. When I got back from camp, one of the first things I said to my parents was, "So, can I go to Camp Colorado next year?"

I also found Camp Avocet great because I just learned so much from so many amazing people. How many people have Jonathon Alderfer critique their drawings? How many get to play Frisbee with Mrs. Gordon, the First Lady of the ABA? Camp Avocet has helped me become a better birder all around, and I now can, sort of, find a Western Sandpiper in a flock of Semipalmated Sandpipers just by looking at the length and shape of their bills. I would like to say a big thank you to the Northern Virginia Bird Club for helping me go to Camp Avocet, and I hope that the NVBC continues to support young birders in the future.

—Elizabeth Bevins

Pages from Elizabeth Bevins's sketchbook



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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: November 20, 2013; February 19 and April 23, 2014.

Next Board Meeting: Wednesday, December 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 our mailing crew: Many thanks to the August Siskin mail out crew: Sally Carson, Elizabeth Fenton, Charlotte Friend, Jane Grawe, Maxine Sorenson, and Joanna Taylor.

Deadline for next issue of *The Siskin*: The February issue will include activities through January 2014. Please send items for publication by **January 1, 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

Directors Emeritus: Len Alfredson, 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.

Juvenile Indigo Bunting, photographed in Vienna, Virginia, by Larry Meade



Watch ~ Enjoy ~ Study ~ Understand ~ Conserve
NORTHERN VIRGINIA BIRD CLUB

www.nvabc.org



2014 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL NOTICE

This is your 2014 dues notice. It is the only notice you will receive. Please fill out the form below, check the appropriate boxes, note if any changes are needed on your mailing label, and send your dues with the form. Club dues for the 2014 calendar year are \$8.00 for Individual and \$12.00 for Family Membership. **Dues should be paid by December 31.** Club dues do not include state VSO membership. If you have any questions about your membership, if you move, or if any corrections need to be made to your mailing label, please call Charlotte Friend, 703-532-0207.

Because of bulk mail requirements, this notice is being sent to everyone on the mailing list. Please check your mailing label. You **do not owe** dues if your label shows "14" or a later year, or "CO" (complimentary).

Bird Watcher's Digest

You may purchase a **new** subscription to *Bird Watcher's Digest (BWD)*. A magazine for birders at all levels of interest, *BWD* gives NVBC \$10 of the \$19.99 price of every new subscription we sell. To subscribe, please write a separate check payable to *Bird Watcher's Digest*, and write "**subshare code SSNVBD**" on the memo line. Send that check to us along with your check for NVBC dues. We can only accept new subscriptions; please do not send renewals to us.

Northern Virginia Bird Club Membership Form

Please check: **Renewal** **New Membership**

Enclosed are 2014 dues for: Individual Membership (\$8) Family Membership (\$12)

Please check if you are paying dues for 2 or more years:

Amount enclosed, payable to Northern Virginia Bird Club: \$ _____

A separate check for \$19.99 is enclosed for a **new** one-year subscription to *Bird Watcher's Digest*.

Please take me/us off your mailing list.

Name(s) _____ Phone _____

Street address _____ Apt. _____

City or Post Office _____ State _____ ZIP _____

E-mail address: _____

Please check if you are willing to have your name(s) on the club's list of volunteer field trip leaders.

Please mail form and check(s) to:

Membership, Northern Virginia Bird Club, P.O. Box 5812, Arlington, VA 22205-0812