

# The SISKIN

Newsletter of the Northern Virginia Bird Club

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[www.nvabc.org](http://www.nvabc.org)

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To see the newsletter photographs in color, go to [www.nvabc.org](http://www.nvabc.org) and click on *The Siskin* icon

## A reminder to pay your 2016 dues

If not paid, this will be the last issue you receive. *The Siskin* mailing label shows the year through which your dues are current or "CO" for complimentary.

## Volunteers Needed for Website Redesign

The Club needs volunteers to help redesign our website on a more current software platform for easier maintenance in the future. If you want to help on the redesign team or can contribute by being a future maintainer, please volunteer. The website is vital to our member communications! Tutoring in use of the software (most likely WordPress) can be included. Contact Len Alfredson, 703-416-2718, Jean Tatalias, 703-281-6099, or send an email to the club account at [nvabc@verizon.net](mailto:nvabc@verizon.net).

## Winter Highland County Trip

Our winter trip to Highland County will be held on the weekend of March 4 to 6 (Friday to Sunday). The trip will be led this year by Marv Rubin.

*continued on p. 2*

NVBC GENERAL MEETING—WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 8 PM

## Birding in Cuba

*Speaker Dixie Sommers*

Cuba hosts a diverse range of birds, including the world's smallest bird - the Bee Hummingbird - and about two dozen endemics. Join the Northern Virginia Bird Club meeting for Dixie Sommers' presentation on her February 2015 birding visit to Cuba. She spent two weeks on the island, traveling about two-thirds of the island's 777 mile length to see the tiny hummingbird as well as the Cuban Trogon, Cuban Emerald, Cuban Tody, Giant Kingbird, Stygian Owl, and 150 more species. The trip was with the Caribbean Conservation Trust, [www.cubirds.org](http://www.cubirds.org), which has been conducting birding trips in Cuba for about 20 years. In addition to sharing her photographs of birds, Dixie will give you a taste of Cuban sights and how Cubans live today. Yes, there are lots of old cars! But there is lots more, including vibrant street life in Havana, beautiful beaches, historic old towns, and struggling rural areas.



*Mangrove Cuckoo photographed by Dixie Sommers*

Dixie Sommers became a serious birder after moving back to the Washington area from Ohio in 2006, adding to her long interest in nature photography and travel. She is a regular eBird user and enjoys using photography to help learn about the birds, and sharing her photos on [www.ddpix.smugmug.com](http://www.ddpix.smugmug.com). In addition to favorite places in Virginia, her recent birding travels include Alaska, Cuba, Ecuador, Ohio, South Florida, the Rio Grande Valley, Antarctica, and Argentina. Dixie is a member of the Northern Virginia Bird Club and serves on the board of the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia. After a long career of counting jobs and workers for the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, she is retired and now counts birds!

Early bird refreshments start at 7:30 pm. Any contributions of food or beverage will be most gratefully received. 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:** St. Andrews Episcopal Church, 4000 Lorcom Lane, Arlington, 22207. Directions are on page 5.

## Presidential Peentings

This winter has been a bit of a strange one. The record warmth has made birding conditions more pleasant. It has been nice to get outside without having to worry about facing bone-chilling cold. During one Christmas Bird Count morning we were serenaded by at least three species of frogs that had been woken up from their winter torpor by warm temperatures. The balmy weather has also had an effect on bird sightings. Waterfowl have been notably low in terms of both numbers and diversity. It has just not been cold enough yet in the north to force south significant flocks seeking to escape frozen ponds and lakes. Cold water loving birds such as Atlantic Puffins have not been seen offshore during recent pelagic trips out of Virginia Beach. Other birds normally found more south of us in the winter seem to have lingered. For example, there have been more reports of Gray Catbirds and Brown Thrashers on Christmas Bird Counts than usual. A flock of over 5,000 American Robins that I observed flying overhead in Loudoun County also seemed unusual. Weather and climate matter and it's interesting to see their effect on birds and other wildlife.

—Larry Meade



Red-headed Woodpecker at Silver Lake Park photographed by Larry Meade

## Winter Highland County Trip from p. 1

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 57 species. Highlight sightings in the Augusta and Rockingham counties and around Staunton, were Trumpeter Swans, Horned Larks, American Pipits, Eastern Screech-Owls and the amazing occurrence of a Smith's Longspur at the Shenandoah Valley Regional Airport. In Highland County, we found Golden Eagles, Black-capped Chickadees, Purple Finches and Pine Siskins. Unfortunately, we missed Rough-legged Hawks as we had to leave Highland County early Sunday morning because of an impending snow storm. This year we will make a determined effort to find Rough-legged Hawks.

Plans for the weekend include birding in Augusta County Friday afternoon starting at 1:00 pm (optional). We will spend the night at the Staunton Best Western. On Saturday morning we will drive to and bird northern Highland County. We will spend Saturday night at the re-opened Highland Inn in Monterey. After birding southern Highland County Sunday morning, the trip will conclude at noon.

NVBC membership is required for this trip. To sign up for this trip, call or email Elton Morel (703-553-4860 or [eltonlmorel@verizon.net](mailto:eltonlmorel@verizon.net)). The trip is limited to 16 people and usually fills up, so please contact Elton Morel 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

Highland County landscape photographed by Neal Gause



## Christmas Bird Count Adventures

This year I decided to go "all in" on Christmas Bird Counts, so I agreed to bird in five different circles on five different days. The various counts were all enjoyable, educational and well worth the necessary time and effort. I especially appreciate the efforts of the many birders who joined me on my CBC teams. No matter what their experience levels, they all contributed to what turned out to be a fun and productive two weeks of winter birding. I will not give an overly detailed description of each of my CBC birding experiences, but I will discuss some highlights and general trends that I noticed.

I kicked off the season with the DC count. My sector of this CBC circle is all in Virginia and my team birded Dyke Marsh and sections of the Mount Vernon Trail. One of the first birds I recorded was a Great-horned Owl that could be heard hooting in the distance just before dawn. The dearth of waterfowl has been a theme this winter and we only saw a few species of ducks. However, there were Bald Eagles and Red-shouldered Hawks in the area. Winter Wrens entertained us with their antics and Yellow-rumped Warblers were out in full force.

The next day I drove out to Haymarket to participate in The Plains count. I was joined by a new team of birders at Silver Lake. We found all seven woodpeckers normally seen in the region. Red-headed Woodpeckers have been reliable at Silver Lake for several months now. We also found a Purple Finch and a Gray Catbird. Later we birded the North Fork Wetland which is also known as Camp Snyder. We completed our sweep of normally occurring sparrow species by tallying White-crowned, American Tree, and Chipping Sparrows. A highlight was a group of seven Common Ravens flying together over the wetland. Two of the pairs were flying in tandem.

My next adventure was a week later at the Nokesville count in Prince William County. My team on this day birded the Foggy Bottom Wetland which is behind a farm property. A pair of Snow Geese flying over provided an early surprise. Soon after this, we observed thousands of Ring-billed Gulls streaming over. A Northern Harrier and Hooded Mergansers also were nice sightings. We also had an interesting wildlife encounter that did not involve birds. A very angry raccoon was in full battle mode as it attempted to remove another animal from a choice hollow tree. The screaming could be heard from quite a distance away. After lunch at Merrimac Farm, some of us headed over to the

*continued on p. 3*



## Great Backyard Bird Count February 12-15, 2016

Wind or weather keeping you close to home? Having fun watching the feeders with the kids or grandkids? Why not join the Great Backyard Bird Count on February 12-15! Maybe you can fledge a new birder in the family. The GBBC is led by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, with Bird Studies Canada and many international partners. Register and learn how to submit your sightings at: <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/>

—Jean Tatalias



*House Finches photographed by Neal Gause in a Kilmarnock backyard.*

## How Does Noise Affect Birds' Communication?

Join the Friends of Dyke Marsh (FODM) on Sunday, February 28, at 2 pm at Sherwood Regional Library to hear a presentation by Dr. David Luther on the effects of noise, both from animals and human causes, on birds' communication. Dr. Luther, a biology professor at George Mason University, researches animal behavior with an emphasis on animal communication. A major focus of his research is on the influence of background noise on avian behavior and evolution. Dr. Luther has conducted studies in the Washington, DC areas, including Rock Creek Park and Fairfax County. His talk will cover some bird species commonly seen at Dyke Marsh. This program is sponsored by the Friends of Dyke Marsh, the Virginia Society of Ornithology, the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia, the Raptor Conservancy of Virginia, the Audubon Society of the District of Columbia, and the Northern Virginia Bird Club. The meeting will be held at Sherwood Regional Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane, Alexandria 22306 (<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/sh/direct.htm>). In case of heavy snow or other inclement weather, please check the Fairfax County library calendar at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library), the FODM website at [www.fodm.org](http://www.fodm.org) and the FODM Facebook page.

### Youth Birding Scholarship Opportunity Deadline: March 13, 2016

Don't forget about the Val Kitchens Memorial Young Birder Scholarship. The Club is seeking applicants from 13 to 17 years of age who want support of up to \$500 to attend a birding activity. See all the information for applying on the website at: <http://www.nvabc.org/Scholarship.pdf>.

### Christmas Bird Count Adventures *from p. 2*

Prince William County landfill to look for unusual gulls. The presence of dozens of Laughing Gulls was the only thing really notable here.

Two days later it was time for the Central Loudoun CBC. My team covered the Dulles Wetlands, Oatlands and the Little River Farm. We found many blackbirds and robins. We also saw all seven woodpeckers, a Palm Warbler, Bald Eagles, a Brown Thrasher and Fox Sparrows. The bird of the day had to be a juvenile Black-crowned Night-Heron at Little River Farm. This was only the second sighting of this bird in the history of the Central Loudoun count.

My last count was the Fort Belvoir CBC where I birded Pohick Bay Park. Here we found a Red-headed Woodpecker, many Great Blue Herons and Pied-billed Grebes and a Horned Grebe. Bald Eagles were flying around and a few ducks were swimming around in the bay. The bird of the day was one of the last birds I saw. I briefly saw a shorebird fly into a small beach along the shoreline of the bay. Unfortunately, I was above the bird and fairly far away with an obstructed view. I saw it walk a bit and give a definite bob before it disappeared. Based on my views of the bird in flight, its behavior and its size, I am confident that it was a Solitary Sandpiper, which would be a new bird for the count if approved.

I noticed a few trends after doing these counts. Most of the usual winter birds seem to be present in our area, though some seem to be either more numerous or less numerous than usual. The paucity of waterfowl is something that stands out the most. The warm weather is almost certainly the main reason that ducks have not arrived in our region in their usual numbers. I have also noticed the expanded numbers of Red-headed

Woodpeckers around our area. The generous acorn crop has likely kept these birds well fed and more willing to stick around.

I enjoyed every minute of my Christmas Bird Count even when the going occasionally got a bit arduous. I was able to bird with old friends and make some new ones. I saw many different species of birds in a variety of habitats. I also appreciate that I was able to contribute as a citizen scientist to the longest running bird study that there is.

—Larry Meade

*Juvenile Black-crowned Night-Heron Photo by Larry Meade*



## Upcoming Trips and Events

Compiled by Elton Morel

Note:

- Beginning birders are welcome on all trips.
- When reservations are required, please call one of the trip leaders. Phone numbers are on page 6.
- If in doubt about a trip because of weather, please call one of the leaders.
- Check the NVBC website for updated information about trips: <http://www.nvabc.org/trips.htm>.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>February 7</b>						
9 AM Riverbend - Visitors Ctr (Boat ramp area) (with ASNV) Jean Tatalias						13 8 AM Aquia Landing Beach Park David Ledwith Elton Morel
			17 8:30 AM Silver Lake SP Phil Silas Jean Tatalias 8 PM NVBC Meeting			20 8 AM Mason Neck SP Larry Cartwright David Ledwith
			24 8:30 AM Dyke Marsh Rich Rieger Phil Silas			27 8 AM Riverbend - Visitors Ctr Larry Meade
		<b>March</b>	2 8:30 AM Long Branch Elizabeth Fenton			March 4 - 6 Highland County Winter Weekend <i>Members only/reservations required</i> Marv Rubin
6 8 AM Dyke Marsh (FODM) 6:30 PM Woodcock Display at Dusk - Huntley Meadows Hike/BikeTrail Larry Cartwright			9 8:30 AM Burke Lake Catherine Kubo Phil Silas			12 8 AM Aquia Landing Beach Park David Ledwith Elton Morel
			16 8:30 AM Dyke Marsh Larry Cartwright Rich Rieger			19 8 AM Leesylvania SP David Ledwith Marc Ribaud
			23 8:30 AM Eakin Park Catherine Kubo			26 8 AM Occoquan Bay NWR Marc Ribaud Phil Silas
			30 8:30 AM Bles Park Jean Tatalias		<b>April</b>	2 7:30 AM Huntley Meadows Larry Meade

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>April 3</b> 8 AM Dyke Marsh (FODM)			<b>6</b> 8:30 AM Long Branch Elizabeth Fenton			<b>9</b> 7:30 AM Silver Lake SP Elton Morel
			<b>13</b> 8:30 AM Bristoe Station Battlefield Pk Phil Silas			<b>16</b> 7:30 AM Algonkian RP Elton Morel
			<b>20</b> 8:30 AM Fort C.F. Smith David Farner  8 PM NVBC Meeting			<b>23</b> 7:30 AM Leesylvania SP Marc Ribauda
			<b>27</b> 8:30 AM Daniels Run Catherine Kubo			<b>30</b> 7:30 AM Huntley Meadows- Hike/Bike Trail Larry Cartwright
<b>May 1</b> 8 AM Dyke Marsh (FODM)			<b>4</b> 8:30 AM Long Branch Elizabeth Fenton			<b>7</b> 7:30 AM Trillium Trail Elton Morel Marc Ribauda

## DIRECTIONS

**NVBC Meeting (2/17, 4/20) St. Andrews Episcopal Church**, 4000 Lorcom Ln, Arlington 22207, at the intersection of Lorcom Ln and Military Rd. From the intersection of Spout Run Pkwy and Lorcom Ln, go about a half mile on Lorcom to the second traffic light. Turn left onto Military and enter the first driveway on the right. There is some parking near the Church's back entrance and a bigger lot up the driveway. There is on-street parking. Enter at the back door facing Military Rd which leads to the Undercroft where the meeting is held.

**Algonkian Regional Park (4/16)** 47001 Fairway Dr, Sterling 20165 From I-495, take Rt 7 west 11 miles (mi.) to Cascades Pkwy north and drive 3 mi. to the park entrance. Proceed on Fairway Dr turning left onto Volcano Island Dr, then turn right into parking lot. Meet at the parking lot beside restrooms and Park Shelter 1.

**Aquia Landing Beach Park (2/13, 3/12)** 2846 Brooke Rd, Stafford 22554 From southbound I-95 towards Stafford, take exit 140 to Stafford, then left (east) on Courthouse Rd (Rt 630), go 3.5 mi. and turn right on Andrew Chapel Rd (Rt 629), go 0.9 mi. and under the railroad bridge to a slight left onto Brooke Rd (Rt 608), go 4.4 mi. to the park entrance, continue past park entrance gate to the parking lot

at the end of the road. Meet in the parking lot.

**Bles Park (3/30)** 44830 Riverside Pkwy., Ashburn 20147 Take Rt 7 west to Loudoun County Pkwy. Turn right onto Loudoun County Pkwy and proceed 0.2 mi. Turn right onto George Washington Blvd and go 0.8 mi. to Riverside Pkwy. Turn left and proceed 1.1 mi. to park entrance. Meet at parking lot.

**Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park (10/31)** 10708 Bristow Rd, Bristow, VA 20136. From I-95: Take Rt 234 north (exit 152B), travel 7.5 mi. and make a left onto Independent Hill Dr. Then make immediate right onto Rt 619 (Bristow Rd). Travel 7 mi. and turn left onto Iron Brigade Unit Ave. The parking lot is located on the left at the traffic circle. From I-66: Take Rt 234 south (Exit 44). Travel 4.5 miles and turn right onto Rt 28 (Nokesville Rd). Travel 1.5 mi. and turn left onto Rt 619 (Bristow Rd). Travel 0.25 mi., turn right onto Iron Brigade Unit Ave and continue to parking lot. Meet in parking lot.

**Burke Lake Park (3/9)** 7315 Ox Rd, Fairfax Station 22039 From I-495, take exit 54 west (Braddock Rd). Stay in right lane of exit if you are coming from the north. On Braddock Rd, go 1.5 mi. and turn left onto Burke Lake Rd. Go 4.7 mi. and turn left onto Rt 123 (Ox Rd). Turn left at second traffic light (big park

signs), and turn left immediately after the entrance booth. Park in the first lot on the right (by the mini-golf course).

**Daniels Run Park (4/27)** 3622 Old Post Rd, Fairfax 22031 From I-495, take US 50 west 2.7 mi. to Fairfax Circle. Exit the circle southwest on Old Lee Hwy. In 1.2 mi. turn left on Old Post Rd (just past Historic Blenheim on the right). Drive 1 1/2 blocks to the end of the street. We have walk-day permission to park in the Country Club Hills pool parking lot.

**Dyke Marsh (2/24, 3/6, 3/16, 4/3, 5/1)** 6401 George Washington Memorial Pkwy, Alexandria 22307 (Belle Haven Park and Marina) From Alexandria, take George Washington Pkwy south. Cross I-495, continue 1.2 mi. to Belle Haven Park entrance on the left. Meet at south parking lot.

**Eakin Park (3/23)** 3401 Prosperity Ave, Fairfax 22031 From I-495, take Rt 50 west one mi. to Prosperity Ave. Turn left onto Prosperity and go one mi. to parking lot on left.

**Fort C F Smith (4/20)** 2411 24th St N, Arlington 22207 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, then left onto Lorcom Ln, then right onto Fillmore St. Go one block on Fillmore, turn right onto N. 24th St



## Directions

(watch for speed humps), and continue to park on left. Meet in parking lot at east end of park. From Alexandria: take GW Pkwy north, take left exit onto Spout Run, then right exit onto Lorcom Ln, and follow remaining directions above.

**Huntley Meadows Hike and Bike Trail (3/6, 4/30)** From I-495, take Rt 1 south 0.5 mi to Rt 633 (S. King Hwy). Turn right (west); go 2.5 miles to park entrance and lot on left (just before Telegraph Rd).

**Huntley Meadows Park (4/2)** 3701 Lockheed Blvd, Alexandria 22306 From I-495, take Rt 1 south 3 mi. to Lockheed Blvd. Turn right on Lockheed and go 0.5 mi. to Harrison Ln to park entrance on left. Meet in parking lot.

**Leesylvania State Park (3/19, 4/23)** 2001 Daniel K Ludwig Dr, Woodbridge 22191 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 R784. Proceed eastward 1.1 mi. to Rt 1. Turn right (south) on Rt 1 and go 0.9 mi. to Neabsco Rd. 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 mi. 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 (3/2, 4/6, 5/4)** 625 S Carlin Springs Rd, Arlington 22204 Take Rt 50, east from Fairfax or west from Rosslyn to Carlin Springs exit. Go south on Carlin Springs 0.5 mi. to



*David Ledwith used his phone and spotting scope to photograph this Barred Owl and its captured Garter Snake at Huntley Meadows Park.*



*Lark Sparrow photographed by Dixie Sommers at Bristoe Station Battlefield Park*

Nature Center on left, just south of N. Va Community Hospital on left. Meet at Nature Center parking lot.

**Mason Neck State Park (2/20)** 7301 High Point Rd, Lorton 22079 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 Management Area. Turn right, follow paved road to end at Visitor Center. State fee area.

**Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge (3/26)** 13950 Dawson Beach Rd, Woodbridge 22192 From I-495, take I-95 south 9 mi. to (left) exit 161 (Woodbridge). Go south on Rt 1 about 2 mi. to left turn onto Dawson Beach Rd. Continue on Dawson Beach 0.7 mi. to entrance gate. Meet in parking lot. US fee area.

**Riverbend Park (Visitor Center) (2/27)** 8700 Potomac Hills St, Great Falls 22066 From I-495, take Rt 193 west 5 mi. to Rt 603 (Riverbend Rd). Turn right onto Rt 603, go 2 mi. to Jeffery Rd. Turn right onto Jeffery 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 Park (2/17, 4/9)** 16198 Silver Lake Rd, Haymarket 20169 From I-495, take I-66 west 24 miles to exit 40 (Rt 15). Turn south onto Rt 15 (toward Haymarket) and go 0.3 miles to Rt 55. Turn right onto Rt 55 and go 0.9 miles to Antioch Rd. Turn right onto Antioch and go 1.3 miles to Silver Lake Rd. Turn right and proceed to park entrance and continue to parking lot next to the lake. Meet in parking lot.

**Trillium Trail - G. Richard Thompson Wildlife Management Area (5/7)** (Fauquier Co) 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:** participants must have **access permit** issued by VA Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, [www.dgif.virginia.gov](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov), 1-866-721-6911.

## Trip Leaders

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
Marc Ribaud	703-680-1134
Rich Rieger	703-969-0451
Phil Silas	703-590-7286
Jean Tatalias	571-447-7977

## Bird Walks at Local Parks

- **Dyke Marsh Sundays, 8 am** See directions. Visit the Friends of Dyke Marsh web site, [www.fodm.org](http://www.fodm.org)
- **Eakin Park Mondays, 7 am (March-Nov), 7:30 am (Dec-Feb)** Meet at parking lot. Leader: Carolyn Williams
- **Great Falls National Park Sundays, 8 am** Meet at the Park Visitor Center parking lot.
- **Huntley Meadows Park Mondays, 7 am (Mar-Oct) 8 am (Nov-Feb)** Meet in parking lot. Leader: Harry Glasgow



## Book Notes

Bernd Heinrich's forthcoming, *One Wild Bird At a Time: Portraits of Individual Lives*, is another winner. This time his theme is how puzzling over the idiosyncratic behavior of birds who visit his Maine cabin, has led him to major discoveries. Among them how male woodpeckers will vigorously peck on a tree to woo a prospective mate. He infers that the bird is advertising his nest-building skills. He also observes vireos nesting near his cabin that allowed him to observe how they deliberately reduced the number of eggs they hatched, after an unseasonal freeze, to accommodate a reduced food supply. Especially interesting is his notes on the function of chickadees in leading other birds to food sources. Sharply observed and enhanced by many appealing anecdotes.

—Carol and Chris White

Winter wind and weather keeping you homebound? Undoubtedly you're dreaming of spring migration, perhaps a trip to the Delaware Bay shores when horseshoe crabs spawn and their eggs attract the *rufa* Red Knot subspecies. Then pick up *Moonbird: A Year On The Wind With The Great Survivor B95* (c 2012) by award-winning author Phillip Hoose.



Red Knot photos: B95 at Dupont Nature Center by Neal Gause on Delaware shore by Larry Meade

Meet *rufa* Red Knot B95 and follow him from lift-off in Tierra del Fuego to his breeding grounds 9,000 miles away in the Canadian Arctic and then on his return back to Argentina. Hoose documents this journey and the perils these birds face every step of the way. He describes the physiological changes the birds undergo before migration. The lucid and informative text is lavishly illustrated with clear maps and well-selected photographs. (Check out the chubby Knot almost ready for departure!) After each chapter is a profile of an individual working to save this rapidly declining subspecies, notably in our area Mike Hudson, who as a teen from Baltimore founded the influential advocacy group Friends of the Red Knot.

The star here is B95, first banded in 1995 in Argentina and estimated at that time to be a two-year-old adult. He was last seen this past March 13, 2015, in Tierra del Fuego, making him the longest surviving Red Knot and a bird who has logged enough miles to get to the moon and back. The black band from the original banding has been shed, and only the top part of the laser inscription B95 is still visible on his orange band. As author Hoose says: "Think about this: The great survivor may outlast our ability to recognize him. There's something about that I love."

—Diane Marton

## Virginia Beach Pelagic Trip

On Saturday, December 5, I went on a pelagic trip out of Virginia Beach on Brian Patteson's Stormy Petrel II. I have been on many pelagic trips in the past, especially in California, but this was my first pelagic trip from Virginia waters with the expectation to fill a few glaring holes in my Virginia State List. I was not disappointed.

A pelagic trip from Virginia Beach is a long trip – many miles to travel to get to the continental shelf where there are the more interesting birds. We lucked out with decent weather with 3 to 4 foot swells but the wind was so strong that I spent the majority of the trip in the back of the boat on the side sheltered from the wind and salt spray.

Our highlights started with many Northern Gannets in the inshore waters followed by thousands of Bonaparte's Gulls in multiple, swirling feeding flocks. Constant chumming off the back of the boat kept the gulls nearby and eventually brought in our first pelagic species – beautiful Black-legged Kittiwakes. We also saw a distant jaeger that attacked a Herring Gull – the ID of this jaeger was uncertain – either a Parasitic or a Pomarine. We also had some unsatisfying quick looks into the sun of a flock of Red Phalaropes. When we got far enough offshore, we saw up to twenty Northern Fulmars and surprisingly, two or more Great Shearwaters. Late in the afternoon, we glimpsed from the back of the boat two Razorbills quickly flying by. Probably the most interesting sighting of the trip was a Great Blue Heron flying over the open ocean!

—Elton Morel



Bonaparte Gulls photographed by Larry Meade



**10% Birder Discount to NVBC members at Birdwatchers Seed and Supply Company.**  
Mention you are in the club at checkout.  
Address: 396 Maple Avenue East (corner of Beulah Rd) in Vienna

NORTHERN VIRGINIA BIRD CLUB  
P.O. BOX 5812  
ARLINGTON, VA 22205-0812

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### **JOIN THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA BIRD CLUB**

Northern Virginia Bird Club dues for 2016 are \$10 for Individual and \$15 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. Or join or renew online at the club's web site.

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](mailto:nvabc@verizon.net) or leave a message for Elizabeth Fenton at 703-533-0851.

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

### **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](http://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](mailto: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, send an email to [nvabc@verizon.net](mailto:nvabc@verizon.net). Put "EXCHANGE" in the subject field and

your full name in the message area. You will receive a response from [nvbc-exchange@googlegroups.com](mailto:nvbc-exchange@googlegroups.com). The list is for NVBC members' use only.

**General Meeting Dates:** February 17, April 20, September 21, and November 16, 2016.

**Next Board Meeting:** Wednesday, March 2, 2016, 7:30 pm, at Diane Marton's home. All club members are welcome at board meetings. For directions or to have items put on the agenda, please call or email Diane Marton.

**Thanks to the mailing crew: Many thanks to the November mail out crew:** Jane Crowe, Elizabeth Fenton, Maxine Sorenson, Jean Tatalias and Joanna Taylor.

**Deadline for next issue of *The Siskin*:** The April issue will include activities through June 2016. Please send items for

publication by **March 15, 2016** to the editors at [siskineditor@verizon.net](mailto:siskineditor@verizon.net).

### **CLUB CONTACTS**

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**Vice President, Programs:** David Farner, 443-643-6141

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

**Secretary:** Diane Marton, 703-527-7360

**Treasurer:** Jean Tatalias, 703-281-6099

**Directors:** Emily Caven, 703-592-6522;

Catherine Kubo, 703-352-1238; Joanna Taylor, 703-243-5989

**Directors Emeritus:** Len Alfredson, Don Wiesnet

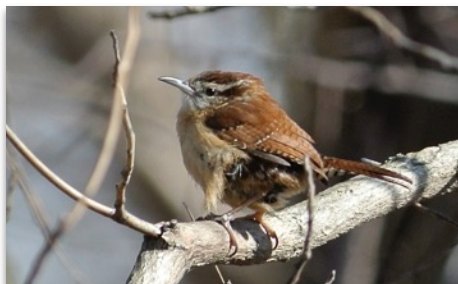
**Membership:** Elizabeth Fenton, 703-533-0851

**Webmaster, [www.nvabc.org](http://www.nvabc.org):** Len Alfredson, 703-416-2718

**Editors, *The Siskin*:** Pat and Neal Gause, 703-476-3903

**Administrator, NVBC Facebook Group:** Allie Guidry (please contact through Facebook page)

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*Photo by Neal Gause of Carolina Wren in Leesylvania State Park*