

The SISKIN

Newsletter of the Northern Virginia Bird Club

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August 2016

www.nvabc.org

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

Cape May Fall Weekend

After a hiatus of several years we are returning to Cape May. From October 28 to 30, we will be hanging out at the world famous Cape May Hawk Watch, Morning Flight and visiting other local hotspots such as the Meadows, Higbee Beach and the Cape May Bird Observatory. Although the trip is 2 weeks later than previous trips, hawk migration is in full swing, winter ducks are beginning to arrive and late passerines are still present. So this should be interesting. We will start at 3 pm on Friday and finish up Sunday afternoon with a semi-pelagic on the Cape May Ferry.

Space is limited to 24 people. NVBC membership and registration are required. Our hotel, a.k.a. headquarters for the weekend, will be the Sea Crest Motor Inn. Weekend rates range from \$79 to \$134 per night depending on the room type. You will be required to mail a deposit within 7 days of making the reservation.

SEA CREST MOTOR INN

101 Beach Avenue

Cape May, NJ 08024

Phone: 609-884-4561 or 866-733-1405

Please drop me an email at drgerco@hotmail.com if you would like to participate.

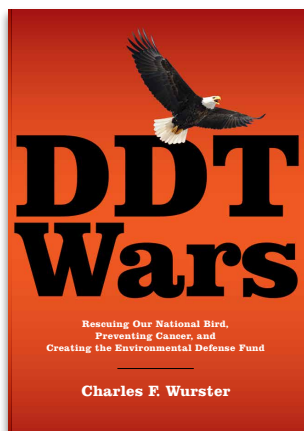
—Gerco Hoogeweg

NVBC GENERAL MEETING—WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 8 PM

Why and How DDT was Banned, 1972: The Role of Patuxent and the Benefits that Followed

Speaker: Dr. Charles Wurster

Everybody knows that DDT was banned long ago, but few know the long-term results. In some ways the ban was just the beginning. DDT contamination had become worldwide, concentrating up food chains and causing birds to lay thin-shelled eggs that broke in the nests. Critically important experiments proved the direct connection between DDT and eggshell thinning. There are now 25 times as many Bald Eagles in the Lower 48 as there were in 1970, and the data are similar for Ospreys, Peregrine Falcons, Brown Pelicans, Cooper's Hawks and others. There is no greater victory for birds in the past half century, but it is not generally recognized because it came about so gradually over the past 40 years. There were few headlines, and often the credit for the eagle recovery has been attributed in the media to Rachel Carson, "Congress," legislation, and the Endangered Species Act. All false. The ban made it possible. It's a great story that Dr. Wurster only came to appreciate as he researched his book *DDT Wars: Rescuing our National Bird, Preventing Cancer and Creating the Environmental Defense Fund*, written because it seemed to be getting lost to history. There are also many other benefits that came from the DDT ban, which he will outline in his presentation.



Dr. Charles Wurster was born and raised in Philadelphia, went to Haverford College, University of Delaware, and received a PhD in chemistry from Stanford University (1957). He is a lifelong birder, which got him interested in DDT. Beginning in 1963 he helped organize the scientific case against DDT, and in 1967 became one of the founders of the Environmental Defense Fund, EDF. He remains on the Board of Trustees today.

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.

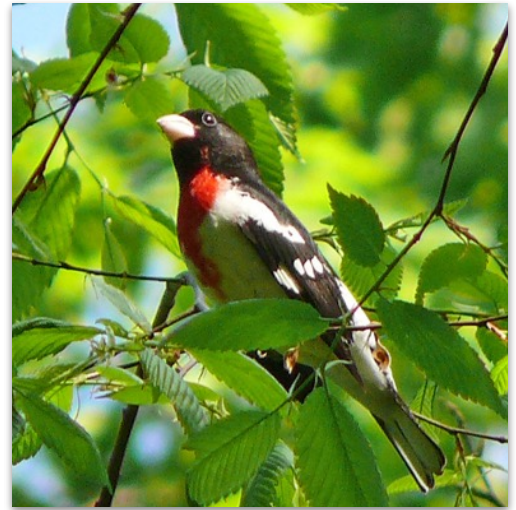
Club Announcements:

- New redesigned website launched at the same URL, <http://www.nvabc.org>. Please refresh your browser and clear your cache when you visit the site.
- Thanks to Ghazali Raheem and Kosmo Tatalias for implementing the changes. We're happy that Ghazali and Ann Leggio form our new web team.
- A "bravo" to Len Alfredson who is stepping down from the webmaster duties. He has provided an enormous service to the club over the years in a number of roles. Thanks, Len, for such a great contribution to NVBC!

Presidential Peentings

Northern Virginia has a vibrant birding scene. We are fortunate to have many excellent birders living here. Also, there are several organizations in this area that birders can join to enhance their birding experience and also to connect with other birders. On a state level, the Virginia Society of Ornithology serves a similar function, albeit with somewhat more emphasis on the scientific aspects of birding. Don't let the name intimidate you, though. All birders no matter their experience level, are welcome in the VSO. On a national level, the American Birding Association does great work bringing the US birding community together. Jeff Gordon, the president of the ABA, is an excellent ambassador for birding and has worked hard to move his organization forward. The ABA updates the checklist used by most birders in North America. Usually if a birder says that a particular bird is "countable" they are referring to the bird's status on the most recent ABA checklist. An important benefit that ABA members gain is a subscription to the bimonthly magazine *Birding*, which, in my opinion, is the gold standard for birding periodicals. In every issue I learn something new. It is well worth your time to check out the ABA and maybe consider joining

—Larry Meade



Rose-breasted Grosbeak at Monticello Park, Alexandria. Photographed by Larry Meade

Spring Weekend Trips

Chincoteague

Twenty-one members of the Northern Virginia Bird Club visited the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge on the weekend of May 20-22. The group was led by me and collectively tallied 95 species during the trip, while luckily dodging most of the rain.

On Friday afternoon, the only sunny part of the weekend, the group drove up the Beach Road to the North Parking area and beach, where Piping Plovers were seen feeding on the Swan Cove shore and a female was sitting on a nest on the beach at the end of the parking lot behind a dune. Other birds seen on Friday afternoon included Dunlins, Willets, Black Skimmers and Forester's, Royal and Least Terns. After dinner, the group reconvened at the parking lot at the entrance to the Wildlife Loop and heard, but did not see, several Chuck-Will's-Widows.

On Saturday morning, after a number of the group heard and saw Clapper Rails at the boardwalk outside the hotel, we drove to the Woodland Trail on the Refuge. The highlights of the trail walk were close-up views of Indigo Buntings (male, female and two young), Blue Grosbeak and especially close, lengthy and entertaining views (and sounds) of a Yellow-breasted Chat on a branch just above our heads. On Saturday afternoon, the group took the Refuge's bus up the North Wash Flats Service Road, and although it was raining, managed to get out of the bus twice, to see a Black-necked Stilt, Wild Turkey, Semipalmated Plovers and Sandpipers, Least Sandpipers and several breeding plumage Black-bellied Plovers.



Photographs by Reid Williamson taken during the Chincoteague trip: from top: Indigo Bunting, Yellow-breasted Chat, American Oystercatchers

On Sunday morning, the group took a boat trip out of the Curtis Merritt Marina at the south end of Main Street, and cruised the Chincoteague Bay Channel and Assateague Channel Areas. The highlights of the cruise were closeup views of several Red Knots and Marbled Godwits, an Oystercatcher feeding young, Ospreys, Bald Eagles (including one attempting to pirate a fish from an Osprey), Whimbrels, Brown Pelicans, Common Loon and Red-breasted Merganser.

—Marv Rubin

Highland County

Twelve Northern Virginia Bird Club members, led by me, went on the annual spring trip to Highland County, May 27-29. Our weekend's tally of bird species was 78; highlights were Golden-winged, Mourning, Black-and-White and Chestnut-sided Warblers, Baltimore Orioles, Bobolinks, Eastern Meadowlarks, Indigo Buntings and a female Wood Duck with ducklings.

The trip started on Friday afternoon at 3:15 pm from the Highland Inn, Monterey, VA, and proceeded north on Rt 220 to the Forks of Waters. At this stop the group was frustrated by only hearing a Warbling Vireo. Then the group drove the roads around Bluegrass Valley. Birds seen on this part of the trip were Bobolinks, Eastern Meadowlarks, and a Least Sandpiper and Wood Duck with young in the grass along a stream off of Rt 642.

On Saturday morning, we drove to the Paddy's Knob area, where there were

a number of warblers seen and heard, including good looks at Mourning, Black and White and Chestnut-sided Warblers, several Least Flycatchers and Red-eyed and Blue-headed Vireos, while hearing a Ruffed Grouse and several Veeries and Ovenbirds.

Following lunch back in Monterey, we drove through the Bluegrass Area listening to and seeing more Eastern Meadowlarks and Bobolinks. Due to a forecast of rain for Sunday morning, the group decided to go to the traditional location to look for Golden-winged Warblers along the roadside. As fortune (and good spotting by members) was with us, we had looks at two Golden-winged Warblers, one in the scope. Other birds seen in that general area included House Wren, Indigo Bunting, Yellow Warbler, Raven, Kestrel and a pair of Red-tailed Hawks. At the end of the afternoon trip, at the Bog Area on Rt 250 west of Hightown, a calling Alder Flycatcher was heard.

On Sunday morning, the group went to the Forks of Water and Ginseng Mountain Lane, and finally some folks had good looks at the Warbling Vireo. Other highlights of the morning included, a pair of Baltimore Orioles at a nest, Eastern Bluebirds, Cedar Waxwings and Eastern Phoebe.

—*Marv Rubin*

Photographs by Reid Williamson of the Black and White and Golden-winged Warblers at Highland County



Spring Spectaculars – Birding Nebraska

It was pitch black and seven degrees – seven – under a very starry sky as I peeked through a dark, mesh curtain across the prairie in central Nebraska at 5:30 am. on March 20. Clad in multiple layers and heated with hand and foot warmers, we were waiting for Greater Prairie Chickens (*Tympanuchus cupido*) to emerge from the frosty grasses and come onto their lek, a bare rise, about 20 yards by 60 yards in size, in front of our horse-trailer-turned-blind.

As the sun rose, 13 males emerged one by one, ambled around seemingly aimlessly and went “woo woo woo” and “clack clack clack,” followed by a constant jabbering. (Experts term their mating call “booming” and say it sounds like blowing across an empty bottle. That happened later.) They jumped, they stamped, they strutted, they scratched the dirt. With no obvious provocation, some charged at each other, jumped three feet into the air with their horn-like, head feathers erect and their bright orange throat sacs inflated, bulging like two balloons. “Their whole reason for doing this is one word – sex,” Angus Garey, a local, had explained. This “show” continued for about two chilly hours, with nary a female in sight until around 8 am a seemingly nonchalant female meandered across the lek and vanished. “The females

don’t give a darn what the guys are doing,” Garey said. Around 9 am, when the birds disappeared into the grasses, we left, toes tingling. Even though we did not witness mating, we were treated to a spectacular show.

March is prime Prairie Chicken viewing time, when they engage in courtship behavior. Their numbers are rising in Nebraska, but threats include habitat destruction, hunting, conversion of prairie to cropland, overgrazing, tree encroachment, wind turbines and climate change.



Central Nebraska, part of the North American Central Flyway, is a birder’s

bonanza in the spring as millions of ducks and geese arrive, Prairie Chickens perform and American White Pelicans (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*), Whooping Cranes (*Grus americana*) and many other birds migrate through to points north. The most famous phenomenon is the stopover of half a million Sandhill Cranes (*Grus canadensis*) that fatten up and dance in the cornfields by day and roost on the Platte River’s sandbars at night. Most of the cranes passing through the central flyway are Lesser Sandhill Cranes (*Grus canadensis canadensis*), experts say.

Watching the cranes wake up is another early morning adventure as observers must be in riverside blinds before sunup. In the morning stillness as the moon drops, the first audible sound is a steady gurgling-murmuring. At first light, hundreds of gray humps become visible on the sandbars. As the sun rises, some of the Sandhills are sleeping, some standing and preening, some poking at others. Gregarious birds, they



feed, rest and roost in large flocks. They probably feel protected in large groups on the treeless sandbars and expansive fields. “Bird concentrations as high as 10,000 birds per half mile of river are not uncommon,” reports the Crane Trust.

Famous for their graceful dance, at times, Sandhill Cranes pump their heads and bow and jump. During courtship, they kick with their feet and leap into the air with wings outstretched.

continued on p. 6

Photograph above: Prairie Chickens with air sacs inflated by Glenda Booth and Sandhill Cranes by Don Brockmeier

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 below.
- 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/field trips and trip reports](http://www.nvabc.org/field%20trips%20and%20trip%20reports).
- To receive email notices, join the NVBC eMail Exchange. For sign-up directions see back page of the newsletter.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<u>August</u>						
Trip Leaders Larry Cartwright 703-941-3142 David Farner 443-643-6141 Elizabeth Fenton 703-533-0851 Catherine Kubo 703-352-1238 David Ledwith 703-933-9477 Larry Meade 703-206-9030 Elton Morel 703-907-9951 Tom Nardone 703-394-7738 Marc Ribauda 703-680-1134 Phil Silas 703-590-7286 Ray Smith 571-286-7856 Dixie Sommers 703-969-7931 Jean Tatalias 571-447-7977 Joanna Taylor 703-243-5989						13 Bombay Hook X-Trip Members only/ Registration Required Larry Meade Marc Ribauda
						20 7:30 AM Huntley Meadows Larry Meade Tom Nardone
			24 8:30 AM Dyke Marsh Larry Cartwright			27 7:30 AM Riverbend Park - Nature Center Elton Morel
28 8 AM Dyke Marsh Friends of Dyke Marsh (FODM)			31 8:30 AM Lake Accotink Ray Smith Jean Tatalias	<u>September</u>		3 7:30 AM Huntley Meadows - Hike & Bike Trail Larry Meade Jean Tatalias
4 7 PM Swift/Nighthawk Watch Joanna Taylor <u>Call leader for meeting place and</u> <u>directions</u>			7 8:30 AM Long Branch Tom Nardone Dixie Sommers NVBC Meeting 8 PM			10 7:30 AM Leesylvania SP Marc Ribauda
			14 8:30 AM Eakin Park Elizabeth Fenton Catherine Kubo		16-18 VSO Chincoteague Weekend	17 7:30 AM Algonkian RP David Ledwith Elton Morel
			21 8:30 AM Huntley Meadows - Hike & Bike Trail Larry Cartwright			24 7:30 AM Occoquan Bay NWR Marc Ribauda Phil Silas
			28 8:30 AM Fort CF Smith David Farner			<u>October 1</u> 8 AM Aquia Landing David Ledwith Elton Morel

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<u>October</u> 2 8 AM Dyke Marsh FODM			5 8:30 AM Long Branch Elizabeth Fenton Tom Nardone		6 - 9 Eastern Shore Birding and Wildlife Festival	8 8 AM Silver Lake SP Larry Meade
			12 8:30 AM Dyke Marsh Larry Cartwright			15 8 AM Sky Meadows SP David Ledwith Marc Ribauda
			19 8:30 AM Bles Park Jean Tatalias			22 8 AM Bristoe Station Battlefield Park David Ledwith Elton Morel
			26 8:30 AM Burke Lake Park Catherine Kubo Phil Silas		28 - 30 NVBC Cape May Weekend <i>Reservations required/Members only</i> <i>Gerco Hoogeweg</i>	29 8 AM Leopold's Preserve Ray Smith
30 8 AM Dyke Marsh FODM	<i>November</i>		2 8:30 AM Long Branch Tom Nardone Dixie Sommers			5 8 AM Occoquan Bay NWR David Ledwith Marc Ribauda

DIRECTIONS

NVBC Meeting (9/7) 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 Rd 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 (9/17) 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 (10/1) 2846 Brooke Rd, Stafford 22554 From south-bound 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 (10/19) 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.

Bombay Hook X-trip (8/13) Take Rt 50 across the Chesapeake Bay Bridge. Go north 34 mi. on Rt 301. Turn right at Rt 300. Go 15 mi. to Kenton, Delaware. At the traffic light, turn right on Rt 42 to Leipsic. From there go left on Rt 9 for 1.5 mi. to the entrance of the refuge. Meet at the Visitor Center parking lot.

Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park (10/22) 10708 Bristow Rd, Bristow 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 (10/26) 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).

Dyke Marsh (8/24, 10/12) 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 (9/14) 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 (9/28) 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, left onto Lorcom Ln, then right onto Fillmore

Eighty percent of the world's Sandhill Crane population converges on the Platte's braided channels for four to six weeks starting in mid-February, a migratory pattern that's been going on for thousands of years. During the day, the cranes feed in wet meadows near the river on invertebrates and plant tubers and on waste corn left from the previous year's harvest. They gain 15 to 20 percent of their body weight before departing.

Today's challenges? Historically, the river had spring floods that washed away tree saplings and added sand to the sandbars, but with dams and other human-imposed diversions, the river's flow is 25 percent of what it once was. Stewards have to manage habitat, like removing young trees from the sand bars. Sandhills can be hunted in every state except Nebraska.

Less known but full of birding rewards, the Harlan County reservoir in the spring attracts thousands of American White Pelicans when breeding males sport a bump on their orange-yellow beaks. Glaucous Gulls (*Larus hyperboreus*), Mew Gulls (*Larus canus*) and Snow Geese (*Chen caerulescens*) pass through too.

Many say that from late February to mid-April, something magical happens in Nebraska. Jane Goodall put it best: "I've traveled far and wide, and coming to Nebraska, and seeing and hearing the cranes always restores my soul."

How to see the birds:

Prairie Chickens, McCook,

www.PrairieChickenDanceTours.com

Sandhill Cranes: Gibbon, Audubon Rowe Sanctuary,

www.rowe.audubon.org; Kearney, www.visitkearney.org; Grand

Island, Crane Trust, www.cranetrust.org

White Pelican Watch, Harlan County Tourism,

www.harlantourism.org

Multiple species: www.chickendancetrail.com; Audubon

Nebraska, <http://ne.audubon.org/>;

www.nebraskacraneFestival.org

Tip: Make your plans and reservations far ahead. Blinds fill up quickly and early.

—Glenda Booth

Directions continued

St. Go one block on Fillmore, turn right onto N. 24th St (watch for speed humps), and continue to park on left. Meet in parking lot at east end of park

Huntley Meadows Hike and Bike Trail (9/3, 9/21) From I-495, take Rt 1 south 0.5 mi to Rt 633 (S. Kings Hwy). Turn right (west), go 2.5 miles to park entrance and lot on left (just before Telegraph Rd).

Huntley Meadows Park (8/20) 3701 Lockheed Blvd, Alexandria 22306 From I-495, take Rt 1 south 3 mi. to Lockheed Blvd. Turn right on Lockheed, go 0.5 mi. to Harrison Ln, park entrance on left. Meet in parking lot.

Lake Accotink (8/31) 6599 Accotink Park Rd, Springfield 22150 From I-95, take Rt 644 (Old Keene Mill Rd) west to Backlick Rd. Take Backlick north approx. 1 mi. 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. The walk will start from the carousel near the lakeside parking lot.

Leesylvania State Park (9/10) 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 Rt 784. 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.

Leopold's Preserve (10/29) 16283 Thoroughfare Rd, Haymarket 20169 From I-66 west, take exit 40 to Rt 15 toward

Haymarket/Leesburg. Turn left onto Rt 15 south. Turn right onto Rt 55 and go 1.7 mi. to Thoroughfare Rd. Turn left onto Thoroughfare and go 0.3 mi. There are parking lots on both sides of the road. Meet in the right hand (west) parking lot. The left hand (east) parking lot can be used for overflow parking.

Long Branch Nature Area (9/7, 10/5, 11/2) 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 Nature Center on left, just south of N. Va Community Hospital on left. Meet at Nature Center parking lot.

Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge (9/24, 11/5) 13950 Dawson Beach Rd, Woodbridge 22191 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 (Nature Center) (8/27) 8814 Jeffery Rd, Great Falls 22066 From I-495, take Rt 193 west 5 mi. to Rt 603 (Riverbend Rd). Right onto Rt 603, go 2 mi. to Jeffery Rd. Right onto Jeffery; go 1.5 mi. to Nature Center parking area. (Don't turn right at Main Park entrance sign)

Silver Lake Park (10/8) 16198 Silver Lake Rd, Haymarket 20169 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 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 mi. to Silver Lake Rd. Turn right and proceed to park entrance and continue to parking lot next to the lake. Meet in parking lot.

Sky Meadows State Park (10/15) 11012 Edmonds Ln, Delaplane 20144 From I-495, take I-66 west 42 mi. to exit for Rt 17 north (Delaplane/Paris). North on Rt 17 6.5 mi. to Rt 710. Turn left into park

and proceed 1 mi. to Visitor Center parking lot. State fee area

Virginia Society of Ornithology Chincoteague Weekend (9/16-18) For information, visit www.virginiabirds.net

Eastern Shore Birding and Wildlife Festival (10/6-9) For information visit esvbirdingfestival.com.



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

Bird Walks at Local Parks

- **Dyke Marsh Sundays, 8 am** See directions. Visit the Friends of Dyke Marsh web site, www.fodm.org
- **Eakin Park Mondays, 7:30 am** Meet at Prosperity Avenue 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

Hog Island Report

In 1936, ornithologist Roger Tory Peterson was one of the first instructors to land on Hog Island. Less than 30 years later, environmentalist and conservationist Rachel Carson visited Hog Island, mentioning it in her book *Silent Spring*. I feel honored to have received the Northern Virginia Bird Club Val Kitchens Memorial Scholarship to help attend the Audubon Coastal Maine Bird Studies for Teens birding camp on Hog Island and follow my interests in ornithology, the environment, and conservation in the legacy of such admirable figures. I was fortunate to have enjoyed conversations with the current leader of Hog Island, Dr. Scott Weidensaul, about his work on Project SNOWstorm, studying the recent irruption of Snowy Owls, as well as helping him band Swainson's and Hermit Thrushes with geolocators to track their migrations. I enjoyed hearing about Sandy Lockerman's unique experience banding a rare Bahama Woodstar in Pennsylvania. More relevant to Hog Island, I enjoyed an inspirational presentation by conservationist Dr. Steven Kress about his work on Project Puffin, restoring the Atlantic Puffin back to Eastern Egg Rock and designing a method of seabird reintroduction that is used internationally today.

One of the highlights of the trip was landing on Eastern Egg Rock to experience the puffin and tern colonies. From Hog Island, we took a boat out to the area around Eastern Egg Rock where we boarded a smaller, oar-powered skiff in small groups to land on the island. Stepping off the skiff and onto the rocks, terns swarmed around my head, jabbing, snapping, and screaming at the intruders to their nests. Sure enough, Arctic, Roseate, and Common Tern eggs seemed to cover the exposed rock, causing us to take great caution walking around the seven-acre island. Each camper took up position in a blind which was, in my case, just feet from a puffin burrow. A group of striking Black Guillemots, one of the most under-appreciated birds in Maine, also took up residence nearby. The loud and vivacious tern calls constantly filled the air. The experience of birding on Eastern Egg Rock is unforgettable and I, along with many other campers, am hopeful for the opportunity to intern on the island in the future. It was wonderful sharing this moment with other young birders who have the same passion for nature and birds that I do and I look forward to keeping in touch with the friends I met at Hog Island from across the country.

While we made some trips off Hog Island, such as to Eastern Egg Rock, we were fortunate in that the island itself has substantial biodiversity. Many birds that migrate through Northern Virginia breed on Hog Island. For example, Black-throated Green Warblers, Blackburnian Warblers, and Blue-headed Vireos can be found on the island without too much

difficulty, as can rarer northern birds such as Red Crossbills that would be quite surprising in Northern Virginia. My experience on Hog Island included much birding, but I also learned more about scientific techniques that relate to birds. For example, a few other campers and I chose to learn how to skin and preserve naturally-killed birds for museum collections. I preserved an Eastern Screech-Owl wing, also studying and dissecting the body. Some may wonder about bird-lover's fascination with dead birds, though I enjoyed the opportunity to learn more about birds and their anatomy than is possible in the field, of course only using birds that had died naturally.

Memorable in a non-avian way was meeting Christian Hagenlocher, a former high school teacher who is now doing an ABA area big year. Christian put a twist on his big year, though. In addition to trying to find as many species of birds as possible as many birders do, his goal is to interview as many birders as possible during the 365-day period. When I asked Christian what his favorite moment or memory of his big year so far was, he answered that it was not seeing any specific bird or talking to any specific person, but knowing that he was doing what he loved and that he would never have any regrets about how he lived his life.

From Christian, and all the inspirational people I have met at Hog Island, I have come away with something more important than seeing any one bird. I now have the inspiration, and have seen the opportunities, to follow what I love to do and become an ornithologist. For this I am immensely grateful to all NVBC members. I look forward to pursuing my interests in ornithology and conservation further this summer as I intern at American Bird Conservancy and attend the North American Ornithological Conference, and I plan to pursue those same interests throughout the rest of my life. One of the things that moved me most about my time on Hog Island was meeting people who have dedicated their lives to bird conservation and seeing the results of their hard work, such as Steven Kress's work on Project Puffin. I hope that birds such as the Arctic Terns we saw will be able to continue making their remarkable migrations in the future. I hope that these birds will be able to continue to live their lives on the wing, free from restraints that we so often feel. I hope that the spirit of these birds and their incredible migrations will continue to inspire people to care about nature as they continue to inspire me to dedicate myself to conservation.

Thank you to the Northern Virginia Bird Club for making my phenomenal experience on Hog Island possible.

—Patrick Newcombe
2016 Co-Recipient of the NVBC's Val Kitchens Memorial
Young Birder Scholarship

Photographs taken on Eastern Egg Rock by Patrick Newcomb



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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 lgmeade@gmail.com 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.

If you have information or pictures you would like to see on the website, please email the webmaster, Ghazali Raheem at rgcomm19@gmail.com.

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 lgmeade@gmail.com. Put "EXCHANGE" in the subject field and

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

General Meeting Dates: September 7 and November 16, 2016 and February 15 and April 19, 2017.

Next Board Meeting: Wednesday, August 31, 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 April mail out crew: Elizabeth Fenton, Catherine Kubo, Diane Marton, Maxine Sorenson, Jean Tatalias and Joanna Taylor.

Deadline for next issue of *The Siskin*: The November issue will include activities

through January 2017. Please send items for publication by **October 1, 2016** to the editors at siskineditor@verizon.net.

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Photo by Seth Honig of Common Merganser Mom and brood at Great Falls Park, Virginia