



# The SISKIN

Newsletter of the Northern Virginia Bird Club

Vol. 63, No. 2a

April 2018

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

## Highland County Weekend

Our summer trip to Highland County in the mountains of western Virginia, led by Marv Rubin, is scheduled for the weekend of June 1-3 (Friday-Sunday). The trip limit is 16 people. Headquarters will be at the Highland Inn in Monterey.

We will start the trip at 3:15 pm on Friday afternoon, at the Highland Inn, with a drive around the Blue Grass Valley to look for Bobolinks and Vesper Sparrows. On Saturday morning, we will go to Paddy's Knob to look for Mourning Warblers and Least Flycatchers.

On Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning, we will bird other areas of the county. We will arrange a group dinner at the Highland Inn's dining room on both evenings. The trip will end in Monterey at about noon on Sunday.

NVBC GENERAL MEETING—WEDNESDAY, APRIL 18, 8 PM

## Costa Rica Through Multiple Lenses

*Speakers: Gerry Hawkins, William Young, Joanne Hutton and David Farner*

Costa Rica is an easy-to-reach and easy-to-travel destination for any birder wanting to expand their horizons beyond North America. More than 900 bird species can be found in Costa Rica which is about as large as West Virginia. Our April program will highlight the great birds and other wildlife found in several areas of Costa Rica. The program will include three presentations. Gerry Hawkins traveled to Costa Rica in 2014 and 2015 and his talk will focus on southwest Costa Rica and the Oso Peninsula. Bill Young has made several trips, most recently in 2017 and 2018 and he will discuss Rancho Naturalista and the highlands. Joanne Hutton and David Farner traveled to several locations in 2017 and using photographs taken by Powell Hutton will cover the Cano Negro wetlands and northern Costa Rica.



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.

Rufous Motmot photographed by William Young

Starting on April 16, contact Marv Rubin via email (preferred) at [mrubin@verizon.net](mailto:mrubin@verizon.net) or call 703-915-7545 to sign up and get

information to make your reservations. NVBC membership is required for this trip.

—*Marv Rubin*

## Presidential Peentings

I am excited about a couple of projects that the Northern Virginia Bird Club will be more involved with this year. The Second Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas is in its third year. VABBA2, as it's known for short, is a five-year project cosponsored by the VDGIF and the VSO, which is endeavoring to document as many breeding birds in as many places in Virginia as possible. It is all done through eBird and hundreds of birders throughout the state have been getting out in the field and recording their observations. Up to this point, many birders from the NVBC have been assiduously atlasing and have contributed a significant amount of valuable data. Now we want to take our efforts to the next level. Last summer there was a successful impromptu "block busting" event where several birders covered a

priority atlas block near Merrimac Farm in Prince William County. This year we have scheduled some more block busting trips to parts of Virginia that also need help.



*Blue-gray Gnatcatcher making a nest at Occoquan Bay NWR photographed by Larry Meade*

Some will be local and some will be farther afield. Everyone is welcome to join us in what should prove to be a meaningful contribution to the atlas and to citizen science. I also want to mention that we as a club have decided to help students in Guatemala attend a Kids and Birds camp. We will be awarding Community Cloud Forest Conservation (CCFC) a \$500 "Val Kitchens Educational Grant" which will fund an entire class for a week. Thanks to all of the Northern Virginia birders who are helping to make these worthwhile undertakings possible.

—Larry Meade

## Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas Block Busting Field Trips

Two Saturday and two Wednesday trips are planned for June (and a potential follow up in early July) to contribute to the Virginia's Second Breeding Bird Atlas (the first took place over 30 years ago). Although the locations will not be determined until May (and will be communicated via the NVBC web site, email exchange and Facebook page), we are tentatively scheduling the trips on June 20, 23, 27 and 30, with potential follow up (for interested parties) on July 7. On a trip day, our group will meet at a pre-arranged site at the priority block location and Atlas the whole block by splitting into two or three groups, starting at 7 am. Our efforts should net at least 10 new confirmations for each of the blocks. Participants may consider joining NVBC field trips in April and May as these will also present some of the ways we identify breeders and potential breeders for the Atlas. Join in and help this state-wide effort that is now in its third year (out of five)! Thank you! POC is Kurt Gaskill, kurtcapt87@verizon.net and 703-768-2172.

## The Val Kitchens Education Grant for 2018 —Community Cloud Forest Conservation

The NVBC Board is proud to announce that this year the annual Val Kitchens Educational Grant, renamed from the Val Kitchens Memorial Scholarship, has been awarded to Community Cloud Forest Conservation (CCFC) in Guatemala to support their "Kids and Birds" program. Our \$500 grant is being matched by another donor so NVBC's grant will provide double the impact. Since 2012, CCFC in partnership with Cornell Lab of Ornithology has been teaching kids

about birds. This program focuses on schools within two Important Bird Areas in the cloud forest region of the Guatemalan central highlands. Kids & Birds uses Cornell's BirdSleuth curriculum, "Aves en mi Mundo," a ten-lesson unit in Spanish which introduces kids to conservation biology, citizen science and ecology through birds. CCFC plans to provide the program to 1,200 students between January and September 2018. NVBC's \$500 provides the funding needed for a class of sixth graders from a local school to participate in the program and spend 4 days on site including meals.

*continued on p.3*

*CCFC Kids & Birds participants photographed by David Farner*





The Northern Virginia Bird Club visited the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel (CBBT) Complex on the weekend of February 2 to 4. The trip was led by Marc Ribaud and me. We collectively tallied 91 species for the weekend. That is a bit on the low side -- usually we get about 100 species. I think the combination of cold temperatures and frozen water really limited the variety of birds in the Chincoteague area, especially our ability to find many shorebirds and passerines. Nevertheless, we found some good birds.

On Friday afternoon, we were confronted with brisk winds gusting over 20 miles per hour. Our drive around the Wildlife Loop was fairly uneventful except for a quick flyby of a Merlin and a Northern Harrier. A quick drive out to the beach resulted in a nice look at an adult Lesser Black-backed Gull amongst the other loafing gulls.

Overnight, the wind died down enough such that Saturday turned out to be a much more bearable day of

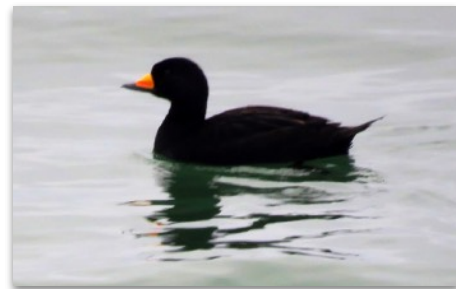
birding. Our best bird was a male Eurasian Wigeon in Swan Cove. It was really difficult to get a good look at the bird since it was sleeping amongst a flock of other ducks hunkered down from the wind. Other highlights were a large flock of Snow Geese that flew over our heads, and White-winged Scoters and Long-tailed Ducks in Tom's Cove. A visit to feeders at Marv Rubin's home resulted in nice looks at Brown-headed Nuthatches and a Pine Warbler.

Much better weather greeted us on Sunday morning. At Kiptopeke State Park, two Snow Buntings showed very well for us in the grass and also perched on top of the gazebo



at the fishing pier. We also had outstandingly close looks at two Red-throated Loons just off the pier.

The new construction project at the CBBT has shut down islands number one, two and three, so we were limited to visiting only island number four. We were originally scheduled to start our tour at noon, however, an impending rainstorm encouraged us to change our plans



and start earlier at 11am. Our highlight find was an immature male Common Eider amongst the Black and Surf Scoters, flybys of many Northern Gannets, Great Cormorants perched on the abutments of the bridge and a small flock of Purple Sandpipers on the rocks joined by a Ruddy Turnstone. Just as our one hour at the island was ending, the rain began in earnest thus ending our birding weekend.

--Elton Morel

Header photograph of NVBC birders at CBBT island 4 by Toby Hardwick. Red-throated Loon (left) and Black Scoter (above) photographed by Elton Morel

Bill Young will lead us in four two-hour sessions examining a variety of bird behaviors, including avian feeding, reproduction, migration, visual and auditory displays, and more. Classes will draw

### Bird Behavior with Bill Young

A class sponsored by  
Audubon Society of Northern Virginia  
May 1, 8, 15 and 22  
Edison High School  
Field Trip: Occoquan Bay NWR May 5

on the knowledge Bill has gained from birding locally and on all seven continents. The class includes one field trip. Check [audubonva.org/](http://audubonva.org/) classes for more details about this and other classes.

### 2018 Education Grant - Community Cloud Forest Conservation *from p.2*

The communities around CCFC's site in the Alta Verapaz department are primarily Q'eqchi' Mayan and live in or adjacent to cloud forest. Unfortunately, Guatemalan cloud forest, as with cloud forest in most parts of the world, is rapidly disappearing as populations grow and more land is cleared for pasture or corn. These Guatemalan cloud forests are home to regional endemic species such as Highland Guan, Black-throated Jay,

and Slate-colored Solitaire. But cloud forest also provides important wintering grounds for neotropical migrants like Wood Thrush, Black-throated Green and Golden-cheeked Warblers. Raising awareness about the importance of the cloud forest ecology especially among young people in the communities in the area is a critical part of conservation effort.

I was introduced to CCFC in January as part of a trip organized by Pennsylvania's Conococheague Audubon Society. The trip was intended to be a combination of birding in Guatemala and conducting

reforestation plantings on previously cleared cloud forest lands. Our group managed to get in quite a bit of birding and did some planting but we ended up spending two days birding with local fifth and sixth graders. The students spent time learning the basics of birding such as bird behavior, topography and plumage using Cornell's curriculum. Then each birder went out in the field to bird with three kids. We overcame language barriers by using field guides and picking up a little of each other's language as we went along.

*continued on p.6*

## Upcoming Trips and Events

Compiled by Elton Morel

**Note:**

- Beginning birders are welcome on all trips.
- When reservations are required, please 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/trips.htm>.
- To receive email notices, join the NVBC eMail Exchange. For sign-up directions see back page of *The Siskin*.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>April</b>						
<b>Trip Leaders</b> Dave Boltz      703-599-8305 Larry Cartwright    703-941-3142 David Farner      443-643-6141 Elizabeth Fenton    703-533-0851 Toby Hardwick      703-201-1517 David Ledwith      703-933-9477 Larry Meade        703-206-9030 Elton Morel        703-553-4860 Tom Nardone        703-394-7738 Stacia Novy        618-960-2945 Marc Ribaudó      703-680-1134 Phil Silas          703-590-7286 Dixie Sommers     703-969-7931 Jean Tatalias      571-447-7977		<b>11</b> <b>8:30 AM</b> <b>Occoquan Bay NWR</b> Marc Ribaudó			<b>14</b> <b>7:30 AM</b> <b>Conway Robinson State Forest</b> Elton Morel David Ledwith	
		<b>18</b> <b>8:30 AM</b> <b>Cub Run Stream Valley Park</b> Phil Silas <b>NVBC Meeting</b> <b>8 PM</b>			<b>21</b> <b>7:30 AM</b> <b>Huntley Meadows Hike/Bike Trail</b> Stacia Novy Larry Cartwright	
		<b>25</b> <b>8:30 AM</b> <b>Bles Park</b> Jean Tatalias			<b>28</b> <b>7:30 AM</b> <b>Leesylvania SP</b> Marc Ribaudó	
<b>May</b>						
		<b>2</b> <b>8:30 AM</b> <b>Long Branch</b> Tom Nardone			<b>5</b> <b>7:30 AM</b> <b>Trillium Trail</b> Marc Ribaudó	
<b>6</b> <b>8 AM</b> <b>Dyke Marsh (FODM)</b>		<b>9</b> <b>8:30 AM</b> <b>Dyke Marsh</b> Marc Ribaudó Dixie Sommers			<b>12</b> <b>8 AM</b> <b>Aquia Landing BP</b> Elton Morel David Ledwith	
<b>Bird Walks at Local Parks</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dyke Marsh, Sundays, 8 am</b> See directions. Visit the Friends of Dyke Marsh web site, <a href="http://www.fodm.org">www.fodm.org</a></li> <li>• <b>Eakin Park, Mondays, 7:30 am</b> Meet at Prosperity Ave parking lot. Leader: Carolyn Williams</li> <li>• <b>Great Falls National Park, Sundays, 8 am</b> Meet in front of snack/concession stand at the Park Visitor Center.</li> <li>• <b>Huntley Meadows Park, Mondays, 7 am (Apr-Oct) 8 am (Nov-Mar)</b> Meet in parking lot. Leader: Harry Glasgow</li> </ul>		<b>16</b> <b>8:30 AM</b> <b>Laurel Hill Equestrian Center</b> Marc Ribaudó Phil Silas			<b>May 18 - 20</b> <b>Chincoteague Spring Weekend</b> <i>Members only/reservations required</i> <i>Sign up begins March 28</i> Elton Morel Marc Ribaudó	
		<b>23</b> <b>8:30 AM</b> <b>Fort CF Smith</b> David Farner			<b>19</b> <b>7:30 AM</b> <b>Occoquan Bay NWR</b> Larry Meade & Stacia Novy	
		<b>30</b> <b>8:30 AM</b> <b>Huntley Meadows</b> Dixie Sommers			<b>26</b> <b>8 AM</b> <b>Conway Robinson State Forest</b> Elton Morel Toby Hardwick	
					<b>June 1 - 3</b> <b>Highland County Spring Weekend</b> <i>Members only/reservations required</i> <i>Sign up begins April 16</i> Marv Rubin	
					<b>2</b> <b>7:30 AM</b> <b>Huntley Meadows Butterflies and Dragonflies</b> Larry Meade & Stacia Novy	

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>June 3</b> 8 AM Dyke Marsh (FODM)			<b>6</b> 8:30 AM Long Branch Tom Nardone Elizabeth Fenton			<b>9</b> 10 AM Bluebird Trail Larry Meade
						<b>16</b> 9 AM Lumberlost Trail Shenandoah NP X-trip <i>Email leader for details</i> Elton Morel (eltonlmorel@verizon.net) David Boltz
<b>VA Breeding Bird Atlas Block Busting Trip Leaders</b>  Kurt Gaskill 703-768-2172 kurtcapt87@verizon.net Larry Meade 703-206-9030 lgmeade@gmail.com Marc Ribaudo 703-680-1134 moribaudo@verizon.net				<b>21</b> 7 AM VA Breeding Bird Atlas Block Busting field trip <i>location TBD</i> Contact leader for details Marc Ribaudo		<b>23</b> 7 AM VA Breeding Bird Atlas Block Busting field trip <i>location TBD</i> Contact leader for details Kurt Gaskill
			<b>27</b> 7 AM VA Breeding Bird Atlas Block Busting field trip <i>location TBD</i> Contact leader for details Larry Meade			<b>30</b> 7 AM VA Breeding Bird Atlas Block Busting field trip <i>location TBD</i> Contact leader for details Kurt Gaskill
<b>July</b>					<b>if needed: July 7</b> VA Breeding Bird Atlas Block Busting field trip Contact Kurt Gaskill for details	

### DIRECTIONS

**NVBC Meeting (4/18) 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.

**Aquia Landing Beach Park (5/12)** 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 (4/25)** 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.

**Bluebird Trail (6/9)** From I-495, exit onto Chain Bridge Rd (Rt 123) toward Vienna. Continue on Maple Avenue (still Rt 123) in Vienna, turn onto Beulah Rd. Continue for about 1 mile until left turn onto Clark's Crossing Road. Continue to the end of Clark's Crossing and park at the parking lot overlooking the W&OD Trail.

**Conway Robinson State Forest (4/14, 5/26)** 12816 Lee Hwy, Gainesville 20155 From I-495, take I-66 west 27.6 mi. to exit 43B, US-29 North in Gainesville. Continue on

US-29 for .4 mi, turn left into access road to parking area. There is a small parking area adjacent Route 29-S which can accommodate approximately 10 cars. Additional parking is permitted along the entrance/exit road unless it restricts through traffic.

**Cub Run Stream Valley Park (4/18)** Between 15075 and 15077 Stillfield Pl, Centreville 20120 Take I-66 west to exit 52, (Rte 29 to Centreville), right onto Rt 29. Drive 1.25 mi. and turn right on Pleasant Valley Rd. Proceed north on Pleasant Valley for about 0.75 mi. and turn right on Stillfield Pl. Proceed about 0.7 mi. to meeting place on right.

**Dyke Marsh (5/6, 5/9, 6/3)** 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.

## 2018 Education Grant - Community Cloud Forest Conservation *from p.3*

My group managed to find some nice local birds like Blue-and-white Mockingbird and Lesson's Motmot, but the girls' favorite seemed to be a Squirrel Cuckoo we saw well. The girls would laugh each time someone said "squirrel cuckoo." After all whether you speak Q'eqchi' or English it is a fun combination of words!

On our second day with the kids we went into a local town for some lakeside birding at Laguna Chichoj in San Cristóbal Verapaz. We saw lots of "our" birds such as Ospreys,

Spotted Sandpipers, and Yellow and Wilson's Warblers but the highlight was a Spotted Rail. Unlike most rail sightings, this bird stayed in one spot on a little island long enough for 12 Americans and 18 kids, plus a few parents to all get excellent scope views. Laguna Chichoj is one of only two places in Guatemala where Spotted Rail has been found.

The following day at CCFC 36 local school teachers came out to learn about birds and in the afternoon, we again divided into groups. Some of the teachers I birded

with knew a bit about birds but few had used binoculars to look at them, so seeing colorful birds such as Crimson-collared Tanager and Slate-throated Redstarts elicited several "oohs" and "ahhs."

Community Cloud Forest Conservation has a great program underway to educate young people and preserve cloud forest. I'm lucky to have visited and proud that the Northern Virginia Bird Club will be providing assistance to their program.

—David Farner

### Trip Directions *from page 5*

**Fort C F Smith (5/23)** 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 (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 (4/21)** 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 (5/30, 6/2)** 3701 Lockheed Blvd, Alexandria 22306 From I-495, take Rt 1 south 3 mi. to Lockheed Blvd. Right on Lockheed; go 0.5 mi. to Harrison Ln, park entrance on left. Meet in parking lot.

**Laurel Hill Equestrian Center (5/16)** Lorton From I-495, take I-95 south about 13 mi. to exit 163 (Lorton Rd). Continue 1.4 mi. west on Rt 642/Lorton Rd, then turn left on Rt 611/Furnace Rd then an immediate right onto Dairy Rd. Proceed to and meet in the parking lot.

**Leesylvania State Park (4/28)** 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.

**Long Branch Nature Area (5/2, 6/6)** 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 (4/11, 5/19)** 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.

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



*Red morph Eastern Screech-Owl (Megascops asio) discovered during a Great Falls Sunday bird walk in January 2018. Photograph ©2018 Donald M. Sweig*

**From Jim Nelson and other Christmas Bird Count (CBC) compilers: Thanks to everyone who came out to count this year—new folks and veteran counters—and especially to the sector leaders for their hard work before, during, and after the count. Hope everyone will join again for the 2018 count.**

## **Seneca, Maryland/Virginia Christmas Bird Count, December 17, 2017**

We had seasonable weather on count day for this 59th Seneca CBC. Each year, the count is done in a 15-mile diameter count circle, centered at Violette's Lock on the C&O Canal, and includes areas of Montgomery, Fairfax, and Loudoun counties. The count circle is divided into 16 sectors (5 in Virginia comprising about 40 percent of the circle, and 11 in Maryland covering the other 60 percent).

Our 135 intrepid counters (highest number of participants since 1995) found 98 species on count day, above the 96 average for the previous 10 years. Ten additional species were only found during "count week" (the period starting 3 days before and ending 3 days after the count day) for a grand total of 108 species, just shy of the record 110 in 1995 and well above the 10-year average of 99. The 34,015 individual birds counted are the highest total since 2007.

In spite of the warm fall and early winter we had good waterfowl diversity. We had fewer of the other expected winter visitors. As with last year, the fall weather may have helped give us some unusual species. Most notable were a Eurasian Wigeon and a LeConte's Sparrow that may well be the same two birds that were the first ever for our count last year (each was found in the same location as last year – the Wigeon in Montgomery County and the Sparrow at the edge of the Trump golf course in Loudoun County). In addition, counters found 2 Sandhill Cranes (8th ever and possibly the same two birds as last year), a Ring-necked Pheasant (1st since 2004 but of questionable origin), a Rough-legged Hawk, and an American Woodcock (1st since 2011). Other notable results include new all-time highs with 55 Tundra Swan, 178 Pileated Woodpecker, and 4 Merlin; highest count for Canada Goose since 2002 (almost double the 10-year average); highest count for Barred Owl since 1986, much better than average counts for all the other

woodpeckers, and better than average counts for all sparrow species except Dark-eyed Junco. On the other end of the spectrum are the low counts -- Red-tailed Hawk (lowest since 1969!), Rock Pigeon (lowest since 2009), no Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper (lowest since 2000), no American Pipit, and only one Pine Siskin.

I hope everyone will join us again for the 2018 count on Sunday, December 16

**—Jim Nelson,  
Compiler**



*Yellow Warbler photographed by Toby Hardwick at Leesylvania State Park CBC*

## **Fort Belvoir Christmas Bird Count, December 31, 2017**

Despite temperatures just above 20°F and an occasional breeze the count did well with a total of 112 species. This is in line with the long-term average of 112 to 113 species. We tallied 86,675 individual birds. Unusual and/or notable species were: Cackling Goose off Mason Neck, Eurasian Wigeon in Pohick Bay, Long-tailed Duck off Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge (NWR)

### **Bird Banding at Occoquan Bay NWR**

The bird banding station at Occoquan Bay NWR will open to visitors starting March 25. The station will be open Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 7 am to 11:30 am. The season lasts until the end of May. The station is located on Deephole Point Road overlooking Marumscro Creek.

near the Potomac, Great Egret at Occoquan Bay NWR, Merlin at many locations, Lesser Yellowlegs at the Cole Treatment Plant in Lorton, Glaucous Gull in the Occoquan River, Common Raven in several places, American Pipits at Mason Neck NWR and the Lorton landfill, Yellow Warbler at Leesylvania State Park, Clay-colored Sparrow at Laurel Hill Equine Center, Lincoln's Sparrow in Veteran's Park (north side) and 2 Pine Siskin in a big goldfinch flock near Huntley Meadows.

Other interesting and more common species found were: Wood Duck, Common Goldeneye, Common Loon, Horned Grebe, Wilson's Snipe, American Woodcock, Wild Turkey, the three typical owls, and Eastern Meadowlark. High counts were Merlin (4), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (100), Common Raven (8), and White-throated Sparrow (4,911). Low Counts were Carolina Chickadee (692) and Tufted Titmouse (579) – probably due to cold conditions

Count week species were: Eared Grebe in Pohick Bay, Iceland Gull in the Occoquan River, Peregrine Falcon at Belmont Marina, House Wren at Lorton landfill, and Pine Warbler at a feeder in the Woodbridge area.

See you on the next count Sunday, Dec 30, 2018!

**—Kurt Gaskill,  
Compiler and  
Circle clean up technician**



**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  
703-242-4365

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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Permit No. 490



**DATED  
MATERIAL**

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

Northern Virginia Bird Club dues for 2018 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](http://www.nvabc.org). If you have information or pictures you would like to see on the website, please email the webmaster, Ghazali Raheem, at [WebmasterNVBC@gmail.com](mailto:WebmasterNVBC@gmail.com)

.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](mailto: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](mailto:nvbc-exchange@googlegroups.com). The list is for NVBC members' use only.

**General Meeting Date:** April 18, September 19, and November 28, 2018.

**Next Board Meeting:** Wednesday, June 13, 2018, 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 at [dsdm42@gmail.com](mailto:dsdm42@gmail.com).

**Thanks to the mailing crew: Many thanks to the February mail out crew:** Elizabeth Fenton, Diane Marton, Dixie Sommers, Jean Tatalias and Joanna Taylor.

**Deadline for next issue of *The Siskin*:** The August issue will include activities through October 2018. Please send items for publication by **July 1, 2018** to the editors at [siskineditor@verizon.net](mailto:siskineditor@verizon.net).

### **CLUB CONTACTS**

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**Vice President, Field Activities:** Elton Morel, 703-553-4860  
**Secretary:** Diane Marton, 703-527-7360  
**Treasurer:** Jean Tatalias, 703-281-6099  
**Directors:** Tom Nardone, 703-946-7738, Ghazali Raheem, 703-563-3810, Phil Silas, 703-590-7286, Joanna Taylor, 703-243-5989  
**Directors Emeritus:** Len Alfredson, Charlotte Friend, Don Wiesnet  
**Membership:** Elizabeth Fenton, 703-533-0851  
**Webmaster, [www.nvabc.org](http://www.nvabc.org):** Ghazali Raheem, [WebmasterNVBC@gmail.com](mailto:WebmasterNVBC@gmail.com)  
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