

The SISKIN

Newsletter of the Northern Virginia Bird Club

Vol. 61, No. 2

April 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

Upcoming Weekend Trips

Spring Chincoteague Weekend

The Chincoteague Spring Weekend club trip is scheduled for May 20-22 (Friday-Sunday). Mid-May is an excellent time to visit the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge (NWR); spring shorebird migration is in full swing with most birds in breeding plumage. Last year's trip tallied nearly 100 species including such Eastern Shore specialties as Black-necked Stilts, American Oystercatchers, Piping Plovers, Whimbrels, Marbled Godwits, Little Blue and Tricolored Herons, Cattle Egrets, Glossy Ibis, Least, Royal and Common Terns, Black Skimmers, Clapper Rails, Seaside Sparrows, Chuck-will's-widow, Brown-headed Nuthatches and Boat-tailed Grackles. Our best sightings were an American Golden Plover and a White-faced Ibis. We will also be searching for Gull-billed Terns - a bird we missed last year.

Plans for the weekend include birding the Chincoteague NWR on Friday afternoon starting at 3:15 pm (optional) and on Saturday starting at 7:30 am. Activities on Saturday morning include birding along Beach Road, Swan Cove and Tom's Cove

NVBC GENERAL MEETING—WEDNESDAY, APRIL 20, 8 PM

American Kestrel Nest Box Project

...If We Build Them, They will Come!!

Speakers Patti Reum and Dan Bieker

The American Kestrel's population has declined because of loss of grassland habitat, loss of nesting cavities and use of insecticides and pesticides on agricultural fields. The Virginia Society of Ornithology (VSO) is sponsoring the American Kestrel Nest Box Project to provide nesting boxes in suitable habitat throughout Virginia. Patti Reum and Dan Bieker are members of the VSO Conservation Committee that is carrying out the project. Their presentation will include project photographs, information on the habitat and biology of this fascinating and valuable species and the monitoring program initiated to track the kestrel nesting success using the boxes.



Photographs by Patti Reum

Patti Reum has been involved in many bird projects in Virginia, including working with Center for Conservation Biology biologists on the Golden Chase Project where a Golden Eagle was trapped and fitted with a telemetry device and its migration was followed for four years. She worked as a wildlife biologist in Canada, Maryland and Virginia and also taught math and science for 18 years. Now retired, she spends much of her time working on the kestrel project and helping out with other bird projects. She is the Vice President of the Bath Highland Bird Club.

Dan Bieker is a farm owner and adjunct professor at Piedmont Virginia Community College in Charlottesville, where he teaches Field Ornithology and Appalachian Ecology. He has been involved with kestrel research and nest boxes for over 30 years and builds the boxes for the VSO project in his workshop.

Note: Patti and Dan are willing to bring nest boxes to the program for volunteer hosts. Best nest box location is an open area, preferably 4 or more acres with short ground cover and scattered trees. Contact Dave Farner at 443-643-6141 to coordinate in advance

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

For me, spring is like the Superbowl for birders. As the weather warms, everything outside starts to wake up. Birds that we have not seen since last fall start to arrive. Some stay to breed, but some are just passing through. Many birds, especially warblers can be seen in their full spring regalia. Some can only be seen for just a couple of weeks, however. This is your only chance this year to see a male Blackburnian Warbler in his full glory unless you travel to his breeding grounds. I like to predict which species of migrating bird will be my next FOY (First of the Year). The birds usually show up on schedule. For example, Ospreys generally first arrive at the very beginning of March. Sure enough, my first Osprey of 2016 was at Occoquan Bay NWR on March 1. The spring is also the perfect time to study bird songs since the avian chorus can fill the sonic landscape, especially in the early morning. Breeding birds are fun to watch as they engage in courtship and then set up housekeeping by building nests in preparation for the arrival of their offspring. Because of all of this action in the spring, we birders hold a variety of events to take advantage and celebrate the birds. There are birdathons such as the one organized by the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, bird festivals such as the Biggest Week in Birding, International Migratory Bird Day, the National Park Bioblitz, and of course the many NVBC bird walks

—Larry Meade



*Tufted Titmouse at feeder during Snowzilla
photographed by Larry Meade
...Wishing for Springtime!*

Upcoming Weekend Trips: Spring Chincoteague from p.1

and a walk along the Woodland Trail looking for land bird migrants. On Saturday afternoon, we may reserve the Chincoteague Natural History Association's bus for a 90 minute trip to the Wash Flats which provides a look at territory otherwise inaccessible by vehicle. Time permitting, we will also visit the Queen Sound Flats, the Chincoteague City mudflats and Mariner's Point. On Sunday morning, we will board a boat and travel around Queen Sound looking for shorebirds along the mudflats and sparrows along the marsh edges. The cost of this trip will be \$33 per person. If the boat trip is not possible, we will visit Saxis Wildlife Management Area. The trip concludes at noon on Sunday.

NVBC membership is required for this trip. To sign up for this trip, call or email Marv Rubin (703-915-7545 or mbrubin@verizon.net). The trip is limited to 28 people and usually fills up, so please contact Marv Rubin first to ensure that space is available before making hotel reservations. When signing up, please indicate whether you are interested in the Wash Flats bus trip (fee) on Saturday afternoon, the boat trip (fee) on Sunday morning and a Saturday evening group dinner. If the trip is full, your name can be put on a waiting list.

We have obtained a special rate of \$94.99 per night on twenty rooms for Friday and Saturday nights at the Best Western Chincoteague Island Hotel on Maddox Boulevard. A two-night stay is usually required. Hotel reservations must be made by April 21 to get this special group rate. Participants should make your own reservations by calling 800-553-6117 and be sure to say you are

with the Northern Virginia Bird Club. Check-in time is 3 pm on Friday, May 20, and a 72-hour cancellation notice is required. Chincoteague NWR is a US fee area.

—Marv Rubin

Highland County Weekend

Our summer trip to Highland County in the mountains of western Virginia, led by Marv Rubin, is scheduled for the week-end of May 27-29 (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 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 either Highland Inn's dining room or Hap's High's Restaurant on both evenings. The trip will end in Monterey at about noon on Sunday. Call or email Marv Rubin (703-915-7545 or mbrubin@verizon.net) to sign up and get information to make your reservations. NVBC membership is required for this trip.

—Marv Rubin

Virginia Society of Ornithology Annual Meeting April 29-May 1, 2016 Roanoke, Virginia

Detailed information is available at <http://www.virginiabirds.net/VSO-Annual-Meeting.html>.

The Second Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas Project (VABBA2)

The VSO is partnering with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to prepare the second breeding bird atlas. It will be carried out over the 2016-2020 breeding seasons. Go to <http://www.virginiabirds.net/Virginia-Breeding-Bird-Atlas.html> to learn about the project and its importance. It has been over 25 years since the first atlas was completed. Volunteers and donations are welcome.

Birding Madness: The Birdathon

Each year thousands of people participate in birdathons across the US. The term "Birdathon" was coined by Bird Studies Canada in 1976 to describe a fundraising event in which participants solicited pledges for the number of bird species they count during a 24-hour period. Birdathons combine competitive birding and fundraising. The most famous is undoubtedly the World Series of Birding organized by the New Jersey Audubon Society. Achieving 220 species in a day may make you the winner. Lately, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology set a Big Day record of nearly 300 species (they got 296).

Locally various teams are active with birdathons. The NVBC's Wandering Siskins participated in irruption years and out in Loudoun County, the Shrike Force and Raven Loonatics have been battling it out for supremacy, bragging rights, and raising funds for bird conservation efforts.

Having participated in six birdathons in Loudoun County, I was curious about the number of species seen. My team, the

Continued on p. 7

Chincoteague Winter Trip:

American White Pelican and Harlequin Ducks

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 5 to 7. The trip was led by Marc Ribaud and me. We collectively tallied 110 species for the trip.

Like last year, Friday afternoon was cold and windy. The group drove around Snow Goose Pond noting hundreds of dabbling ducks and Tundra Swans. At dusk, we went to the boardwalk just outside the hotel scouting for Clapper Rails. We heard about a half dozen of them and managed to briefly see one swimming across the estuary.

Saturday featured perfect weather—clear skies and virtually no wind. Marc and I returned to the boardwalk early to scout, finding a mixed species flock of sparrows along the edge of the salt marsh, picking out Nelson's, Saltmarsh and Seaside Sparrows. Unfortunately, when the full group joined us, we managed to see only the Saltmarsh Sparrow.

Recent storms had washed out the beach parking lots, so we set out on a walk from the Tom's Cove Visitor Center towards the mudflats off the southern beach arm. We spotted a Snow Geese flock roosting along the shore but no other interesting geese. We did find a small flock of sharp-looking Long-tailed Ducks as well as Bonaparte's Gulls and Forster's Terns in Tom's Cove. While sifting through the Dunlins and Willets, we found several Semipalmated Plovers and Western Sandpipers. We were also delighted to find a pair of Horned Larks on the dunes.



We timed our afternoon activities with the low tides. At Queen Sound Flats, we spotted a distant flock of Brants and then at the Chincoteague City mudflats we sifted through hundreds of Dunlins and Black-bellied Plovers to find our first Marbled Godwit and both species of yellowlegs. At Mariners Point,

we had a quick flyover of a Tricolored Heron. A visit to central Chincoteague Island yielded six Eurasian Collared-Doves hanging out with the grackles and starlings near a house with feeders.

Sunday morning's birding started at Kiptopeke State Park. As we were enjoying excellent looks at Common and Red-throated Loons, a Common Goldeneye and many Red-breasted Mergansers, someone yelled out "pelican!" I was surprised to see an American White Pelican above our heads. The pelican continued riding the wind south towards a tall cell phone tower, circled the tower a few times, then disappeared.



Sunday's escorted visit to the CBBT was very successful. At island #4, we found Surf and Black Scoters, Long-tailed Ducks, Great Cormorants, Purple Sandpipers and plenty of Northern Gannets. On island #3, we found two male Harlequin Ducks accompanying a female very close to the rocks. At one point, one of the males hauled himself up upon the rocks to pose for us. At island



#2, a Cooper's Hawk with a full crop was flushed from the rocks — presumably the bird had just dined on a sandpiper or a pigeon. Just before a large container ship sailed by, we briefly spotted a distant Razorbill in the rough waters between island #1 and #2. By the time we got to island #1, the wind was howling and not much was found here, but we departed knowing that we had had a very successful trip.

—Elton Morel

Highland Winter Trip

Fourteen members of the Bird Club participated in the 2016 Highland County winter bird trip, seeing a total of 54 species across four counties. The trip started in Staunton, VA Friday, March 4 at 1 pm with a local birder, Allan Lerner, leading the group to several spots in the Staunton and Harrisonburg areas (Staunton and Rockingham Counties) with spectacular birds. Highlight species of the afternoon were Greater White-fronted Goose, immature Trumpeter Swan, Mute Swan, Greater and Lesser Scaup and Horned Larks.

On Saturday morning the group drove to Monterey, VA, by way of McDowell, where a large flock (50) of Pine Siskins were at the feeder stop. After arriving at Monterey, the rest of the day was spent driving to and around the Bluegrass Valley Area. Highlight species were a pair of Wood Ducks at the Trout Hatchery on Rte 220, a mature Golden Eagle at Snowy Mountain and two Red-headed Woodpeckers on Rte 644, along with Black-capped Chickadee and Raven.

On Sunday morning, the group drove south on Rte 220 along the Jackson River to Bolar, where White-breasted Nuthatch and Belted Kingfisher were seen at the bridge stop over the River. At that location, a local land owner told us about a large pond 2 miles south (in Bath County) with a large amount of waterfowl. At this pond, the highlight species seen were groups of Ring-necked Duck, American Wigeon and Gadwall, a Common Merganser and a Hooded Merganser. A Bald Eagle was seen flying over Highland County on the way back to Monterey prior to the end of the trip at noon.

—Marv Rubin



Semipalmated Plover at Tom's Cove (left) and Red-throated Loon (above) by Jan Kool White Pelican at Kiptopeke State Park and Harlequin Ducks at CBBT island #3 by Neal Gause

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 newsletter.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<u>April</u>						
Trip Leaders Larry Cartwright 703-941-3142 David Farner 443-643-6141 Elizabeth Fenton 703-533-0851 Gerco Hoogeweg 540-822-5857 Catherine Kubo 703-352-1238 Larry Meade 703-206-9030 Elton Morel 703-553-4860 Phil Silas 703-590-7286 Marc Ribaudó 703-680-1134 Rich Rieger 703-969-0451 Marv Rubin 703-915-7545 Dixie Sommers 703-969-7931 Joanna Taylor 703-243-5989			13 8:30 AM Bristoe Station Battlefield Park Phil Silas			16 7:30 AM Algonkian RP Elton Morel
			20 8:30 AM Fort C.F. Smith David Farner			23 7:30 AM Leesylvania SP Marc Ribaudó
			8 PM NVBC Meeting			
			27 8:30 AM Daniels Run Catherine Kubo			30 7:30 AM Huntley Meadows-Hike/Bike Trail Larry Cartwright
<u>May 1</u> 8 AM Dyke Marsh (FODM)			4 8:30 AM Long Branch Elizabeth Fenton			7 7:30 AM Trillium Trail Elton Morel Marc Ribaudó
			11 8:30 PM Dyke Marsh Rich Rieger Dixie Sommers			14 8 AM Aquia Landing BP Elton Morel
			18 8:30 PM Eakin Park Elizabeth Fenton		May 20 - 22 Chincoteague Spring Weekend <i>Members only/reservations required</i> Marv Rubin	21 7:30 AM Occoquan Bay NWR Gerco Hoogeweg Phil Silas
			25 8:30 AM Huntley Meadows Dixie Sommers		May 27 - 29 Highland County Spring Weekend <i>Members only/reservations required</i> Marv Rubin	28 8 AM Blue Ridge Center (w/Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy) Larry Meade, Marc Ribaudó Joe Coleman
			<u>June 1</u> 8:30 AM Long Branch Elizabeth Fenton			4 7:30 AM Leopold's Preserve Elton Morel

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
June				9 Dickcissel Trip <i>Call leader for details</i> Joanna Taylor		11 10 AM Huntley Meadows Butterflies and Dragonflies Larry Meade
			15 8:30 AM Dyke Marsh Larry Cartwright			18 8 AM Bluebird Trail Larry Meade
						25 9 AM X-trip Lumberlost Trail Shenandoah NP <i>Call leader for details</i> Larry Meade Elton Morel

DIRECTIONS

NVBC Meeting (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 (5/14) 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.

Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship (5/28) 11661 Harpers Ferry Road, Purcellville 20132. From Leesburg: Go west on Rt 7, right on Rt 9, then right on Rt 671/Harpers Ferry Rd. Go 6 miles to the Blue Ridge Center entrance on the left, just past the Neersville Fire Station. Meet at Visitor Center.

Bluebird Trail (6/18) 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.

Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park (4/13) 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. Travel 0.25 mi., turn right onto Iron Brigade Unit Ave and continue to parking lot. Meet in parking lot.

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 (5/1, 5/11, 6/15) 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 (5/18) 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 (watch for speed humps), and con-

tinue to park on left. Meet in parking lot at east end of park.

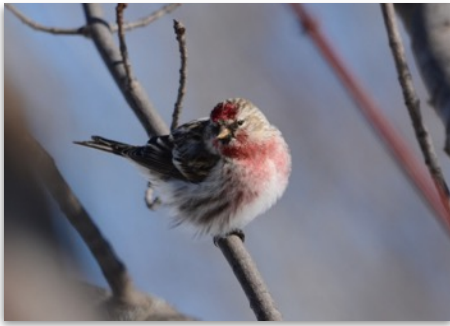
Huntley Meadows Hike and Bike Trail (4/30) From I-495, take Rt 1 south 0.5 mi to Rt 633 (S. King Hwy). Turn right (west), go 2.5 miles to park entrance and lot on left (just before Telegraph Rd).

Huntley Meadows Park (5/25, 6/11) 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.

Leesylvania State Park (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 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 (6/4) 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 (5/4, 6/1) 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.



Birding in Minnesota

-24 °F, windy, bogs and a few birds would best describe the 2016 Sax-Zim Bog Winter Birding Festival. Yes, it was very cold. In February I had the opportunity to attend the 9th annual festival of what is probably the coldest birding festival around. About 9 or 10 years ago Sax-Zim Bog gained notoriety during an invasion of over 450 Great Gray Owls. It struck and ever since folks have been coming back for more. The festival gets its name from two old towns Sax and Zim located in the bogs about 30 miles northwest of Duluth, Minnesota.

Winter birding in the northern US is a different game. Scouting the many reports and checklist, I figured that seeing 40 species would be great and with hopes for a few lifers. The Great Gray Owl topped my wish list. For many festival attendees the Great Gray Owl is the main target bird. Unfortunately this year the bird did not cooperate and many people did not get to see one. That was a big disappointment.

Friday's pre-conference trip in the bog was cold and very windy. Once seated in the bus, ice scrapers were handed out. What the heck, I thought, why do we need these? That was clear 5 minutes later as the windows started to freeze and visibility was reduced to zero. Scrape all around—and that is what we did. The best places to see birds were the various feeder stations. Our first stop just north of the town of Meadowlands was at a lek for Sharp-tailed Grouse. None were seen. Clearly they were smarter than the birders and stayed out of the wind. It was fun to see a large number of Common Redpolls and Pine Grosbeaks. One of the best stops was at the visitor center of the Friends of the Sax-Zim Bog. The place had lots of feeders and deer carcasses for the birds. I was amazed to see White-breasted and Red-breasted Nuthatches and Downy Woodpeckers eating from the frozen carcasses. Redpolls were very tame and at times they came within a few feet of me. A pair of Pine Grosbeaks was showing off and a lone Hoary Redpoll was found among the hundreds of Common Redpolls. That was a lifer, well until it'll be lumped this summer by AOU. Another feeder yielded a few Evening Grosbeaks, the only ones we saw during the festival. Along the railroad tracks a few Northern Shrikes were found. Skittish as they are we could not approach them within 50 yards. Guess trying to sneak up to these birds using a bright yellow school bus is a bit of a challenge. Next up were a pair of Black-billed Magpies. They were found just along the road chewing down on a dead deer. Very popular dead deer are in the bog. One of the funniest stops was a makeshift feeder with some peanut butter on it. It was strategically placed there to attract the elusive Boreal Chickadee. We got two of them and the few Gray Jays happily posed in a nearby tree.

Saturday's Lake country trip was, well, a long drive for only a few birds. Leaving at 5:30 am and returning by 3 pm while driving 300 miles and only seeing a few birds was rough. Our target birds were Black-backed Woodpecker (not seen) and the Spruce Grouse (seen). A big surprise bird, the bird of the festival, was the American Three-toed Woodpecker. A single Spruce Grouse was found by one of participants. Midday we had a little excitement when we were trying to find Bohemian Waxwings. A few of us back in the bus saw a very brief glimpse of one, but no further luck. In the town of Virginia some of the local birders were happy to see a Canada Goose.

Sunday's Duluth trip was a lot of fun. Our guide that day was the local Sax-Zim Bog naturalist. It showed. He knew where to find the birds. Our target bird in the morning was the Bohemian Waxwing. Loaded in two school buses we drove the local county roads. At one point we saw several flocks flying by and we got out. Even with temperatures in the single digits, it was rather nice outside. A small flock of waxwings landed in a tree not far from us. Armed with our binocs and cameras we slowly walked up, eventually getting great views of them. Gray and overcast skies did not make for the most impressive photos, but still many photos were taken. The afternoon was spent chasing a Gyrfalcon and some gulls. None were found. A lone Peregrine Falcon was seen flying by chasing Rock Pigeons. The star of the afternoon was undoubtedly "28," a first year female Snowy Owl. Her camouflage was pretty awesome. It took over 50 birders to find this grayish Snowy on a dirty snow pile. For a while we watched her getting comfortable and happily ignoring us. She never opened her eyes fully, giving her this sly, coy look. It was a highlight when she yawned. Lucky the camera was ready and nice photos were taken.

I ended the trip with 35 species, three of them were lifers and one was new for the US. The cold and wind certainly did not help, but it was a fun thing to do—if you can stand the cold.

—Gerco Hoogeweg

Photographs (left from top) of the Pine Grosbeak, Common Redpoll and Snowy Owl by Gerco Hoogeweg

Trip Directions *from page 5*

Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge (5/21) 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 (5/7) (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: Each participant must have an access permit issued by VA Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.**

Birdathon from page 2

Raven Loonatics, averages about 115 species a year. Not bad for running around just over 16 hours in a single day. A tally across all years showed an amazing 160 species. That number was a big surprise. Twenty-seven species were recorded only once (Black Duck, Woodcock, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Dickcissel) whereas 77 species were seen each year. The best bird varies by year.

Reviewing these records give you a nice perspective on the variety of birds that pass through that are changing. What the numbers do not reveal is that it is hard work to get over a 100 species. Gloom and doom reigns at midday when the tally hasn't reached 100—but then its time for Cheetos!

—Gerco Hoogeweg

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 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

- *The Living Bird: 100 Years of Listening to Nature* contains a collection of essays from nine contributors, including birders like Scott Weidensaul and novelist Barbara Kingsolver commemorating the centennial of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Gerrit Vyn provides the photos, and wonderful they are, especially the collection of owls between pages 74 and 81, and the Ruddy Duck caught in flagrante in its bubbling display on page 51. Citizen science and human bird interactions are prominently discussed, and birds' wonderful power to connect us with nature in ways no other organism can. But birds also tell us how well or poorly we are managing the world in which we live, like the Spoon-billed Sandpiper, featured as the most imperiled bird in the world. How individual birders can help conservation efforts brings the volume to an effective close.
- Dominic Couzens' *Tales of Remarkable Birds* provides thumbnail id's of about forty of the world's birds, organized by continent, and lavishly illustrated. The profiles feature key characteristics of the birds and provides answers for some puzzling features. Among the five North American species, for example, the question of why it took so long to discover where the Marbled Murrelet (a relatively common sea bird on the Pacific Coast, and relative of the Auk) builds its nest, is addressed. Feeding habits of the Albatross group, and their diving and underwater swimming abilities are found grouped with Antarctic species. European Oystercatchers are subdivided into four types based on bill tips which are specialized for different kinds of food and feeding habitat. And the tantalizing factoid that a European Crossbill starts off its life with a straight bill. Size and behavior, nesting habits and food preferences highlight the amazing diversity of the world's birds. Beautifully illustrated.

—Carol and Chris White



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Seth Honig photographed the mating Barred Owls February 27, 2016, off the Accotink Trail in Fairfax, Virginia (near Mantua). He observed them around 6 pm: the male owl (upper right photo) was around 50 feet away but approached within seconds after she called.

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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 or leave a message for Elizabeth Fenton at 703-533-0851.

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

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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. 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 Date: April 20, 2016, September 21, and November 16, 2016.

Next Board Meeting: Wednesday, June 8, 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 February mail out crew: Sally Carson, Elizabeth Fenton, Maxine Sorenson, Jean Tatalias and Joanna Taylor.

Deadline for next issue of *The Siskin*: The August issue will include activities through October 2016. Please send items for publication by **July 1, 2016** to the editors at siskineditor@verizon.net.



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*Photo by Jan Kool of Dunlins and Willet at
Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge*