



The SISKIN

Newsletter of the Northern Virginia Bird Club

Vol. 63, No. 4

November 2018

www.nvabc.org

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Insert - 2019 membership renewal notice

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

Winter Chincoteague Trip

The Winter Chincoteague Weekend club trip is scheduled for February 1-3 (Friday to Sunday) co-led by Larry Cartwright and me. February is an excellent time to visit Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel (CBBT) Islands. The Refuge is loaded with wintering waterfowl while the CBBT is famous for wintering sea ducks. On last year's trip, we tallied 91 species despite the bitterly cold weather and extensive frozen water. Our highlight sightings at Chincoteague were a male Eurasian Wigeon, Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Common Goldeneyes and, once again, a spectacular flyover of Snow Geese while we were at the beach. At Kiptopeke State Park, we enjoyed an obliging pair of Snow

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NVBC GENERAL MEETING—WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 8 PM

Native Plants and Bird Conservation, Home and Abroad

Speaker: Matt Bright

Join Matt Bright, the Earth Sangha's Conservation Manager, as he discusses how native plants are important to bird conservation, and how the Earth Sangha is working both in the DC area and in the Dominican Republic to protect migratory birds through the propagation and conservation of native plant species. Matt will explain how native plants play a critical role in supporting birds and what practical steps homeowners can take to protect and promote birds in their gardens.



Birders at the Tree Bank project in the Dominican Republic photographed by Matt Bright

In partnership with the Virginia Society of Ornithology, the Earth Sangha has begun conducting bird counts in conservation sites in the western Dominican Republic. Matt will share some of the initial data and discuss some of the considerations and challenges they have encountered thus far.

Matt Bright has worked full-time at Earth Sangha since 2011. Matt works on plant propagation, conservation, and restoration here in Northern Virginia and in the rural Dominican Republic. He is a Certified Horticulturist with the Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association, a member of the Virginia Native Plant Society and the Arlington Regional Master Naturalists.

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 4.

Presidential Peentings

As autumn and winter approach, birders start thinking about colder weather birding. Migration is causing more activity in our local parks and hawks and other raptors are on the move. Winter birds are gradually starting to show up in our region. We expect to see birds such as wintering sparrows and waterfowl every winter. However, there are other birds that don't always show up here in the cold season. These are the irruptive birds which in some years will leave their normal winter ranges and move south. In other years, though, they will stay put and we won't see them here. As with most birds that migrate in the fall, these birds are looking for food. If food sources such as pine cones and other seed bearing plants are depleted in areas to the north such as the Boreal Forest, the birds which depend on this food will move out. Birds that can irrupt and move into our area for the winter include Red-breasted Nuthatches, Pine Siskins, Purple Finches, White-winged Crossbills, and Common Redpolls. Probably the most charismatic irruptive birds are Snowy Owls. They also move south for food, but since they don't eat seeds, their irruption patterns are different than those of the finches. This year may turn out

to be a good one for irruptive seed-eating species. Already, there have been several Red-breasted Nuthatch sightings in September. Hopefully, there is more to come, so keep an eye out for these special visitors. It's another reason to get outside and enjoy the cold weather.

—Larry Meade



Red-breasted Nuthatch photographed by Larry Meade at M. Rubin's yard in Chincoteague in 2008.

Winter Chincoteague Trip from p.1

Buntings at the fishing pier and super close looks at Red-throated Loons just off the pier. At the CBBT Islands, we found Long-tailed Ducks, Great Cormorants, Northern Gannets, Purple Sandpipers, Black and Surf Scoters and best of all, an immature male Common Eider.

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

On Sunday, we will bird Kiptopeke State Park before our trip to the CBBT Islands. We will be limited to a one-hour visit to island #4 due to the construction of a new tunnel between islands #1 and #2 and the storage of construction equipment on island #3. The CBBT trip requires security forms in advance and an extra fee for the security escort. The trip concludes at noon on Sunday.

NVBC membership is required for this trip. **Registration will open on November 14 at 6 am.** To sign up for this trip, please email Elton Morel at eltonmorel@verizon.net. The trip is limited to 24 people and usually

fills up quickly. Please do not make your hotel reservations until your trip registration has been confirmed. When signing up, please indicate whether you are interested in Sunday morning's CBBT Island trip and a Saturday evening group dinner. If the trip is full, your name can be put on a waiting list.

We have obtained a special rate of \$78 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 January 18 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, February 1, with 24-hour notice required for cancellation. Chincoteague NWR is a US fee area.

—Elton Morel

Treasurer's Report for Fiscal Year 2018

The following is the Club 2018 Financial Report. At the end of the year, the Club had 368 family and individual memberships and nearly 500 members. Memberships were down 15 from the end of 2017,

reducing dues accordingly. Meeting expenses were less than anticipated due to members who waived speaker honorariums, for which we express our deep appreciation.

Income received

Dues for 2018	3,989
Bird Watcher's Digest & pin sales	5
Donations, including Amazon Smile	206
Total Income	\$4,200

Expenses

Organizational costs (includes fees for PO box, VA, Paypal, etc)	\$439
Meeting expenses (includes hall rental, speaker honorariums, prizes, refreshments)	829
Printing and postage (includes bulk mail permit)	2,265
Val Kitchens Youth Educational Grant	500
Val Kitchens Memorial Plaque for Fort CF Smith	500

Total expenses \$4,533

Net for 2018 -\$333

At the end of August 2018, the Club had total assets of \$9,657, which included \$2,128 in dues received for

Continued on p.3

Audubon Society of Northern Virginia Winter Waterfowl Survey

On **Saturday, February 9** and **Sunday, February 10, 2019**, birders of all skill levels will join up to count waterfowl in Fairfax, Arlington, and Prince William counties, including the Potomac and Occoquan watersheds. Novice birders will be paired with expert bird enthusiasts. Larry Cartwright continues as the volunteer compiler for this year's count. For more information and to join the team, email info@audubonva.org or call 703-438-6008.

2018 Treasurer's Report *from p. 2*

future years beyond 2019. \$100 in the Reserve for Educational Grants (donations in 2019 will go to this reserve). \$7,429 in Operational Assets.

—Jean Tatalias, Treasurer

Val Kitchens Memorial Plaque at Fort C.F. Smith Park

Last spring, long-time club member Peter Ross thought it would be a great idea if there could be a plaque commemorating Val Kitchens installed on one of the benches near the bird stream at Fort C.F. Smith Park in Arlington. As many club members know, Val was a major force in having this water feature added to the park. It's been a great place for a wide variety of birds to drink and bathe, and thus is a great place to view warblers, sparrows and other passerines coming down to the rocks in the tumbling stream. Val was instrumental in making C.F. Smith one of the best birding spots in the County and also ensuring the park was preserved as great bird habitat.

While the idea for the plaque may have been a quick thought, Peter put the work in to find out the feasibility, the cost, and the county paperwork process. This summer Peter generously offered to pay half of the \$1,000 cost if the Bird Club could contribute the other half. The Board agreed to this donation and Peter completed the application. The

Friday, December 14, 2018

- **BROOKE, VA** (Stafford area, lower Potomac)

Contact coordinators and compiler, Laurel Bybell at lbybell@gmail.com or David Govoni at david.govoni@gmail.com.

Saturday, December 15, 2018

- **WASHINGTON D.C.**

Includes area of Virginia inside the Beltway and parts of Fairfax County south of Alexandria to include Dyke Marsh. To participate, email compiler, Larry Cartwright: prowarbler@verizon.net or contact the Audubon Naturalist Society through Carol Hayes at carol.hayes@anshome.org or call 301-652-9188 extension 10.

Sunday, December 16, 2018

- **MANASSAS-BULL RUN**

To participate, contact Phil Silas at epsdcva@aol.com; or register online at www.audubonva.org/christmas-bird-count/.

- **SENECA MD/VA**

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

- **THE PLAINS/AIRLIE**

To participate, email compiler, Bert Harris at bharris@cliftoninstitute.org or 615-440-0666.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA

Sunday, December 23, 2018

- **NOKESVILLE**

For more information or to register, contact Kim Hosen at 703-499-4954 or kim@pwconserve.org.

Friday, December 28, 2018

- **CENTRAL LOUDOUN**

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

Sunday, December 30, 2018

- **FORT BELVOIR**

Contact compiler, Kurt Gaskill at kurtcapt87@verizon.net or 703-768-2172.

- **SUGARLOAF MOUNTAIN**

Lucketts Sector is in northern Loudoun County. To participate contact sector leader, Gerco Hoogeweg at drgerco@hotmail.com

Saturday, January 5, 2019

- **CALMES NECK**

Parts of western Loudoun and eastern Clarke counties. The cutoff date to join up to participate is December 18. Contact compiler, Margaret Wester at margaretwester@hotmail.com.

- **WALKERTON**

Count area is primarily in Middle Peninsula. Contact by December 16. Contact compiler, Fred Atwood at fredatwood@yahoo.com.



Mockingbird on bench at Fort C. F. Smith Park
Photographed by Ken Rosenthal

plaque is in the works! The citation will read: "Dedicated to Valerie Kitchens 1937-2013 who championed the creation of this water feature."

This will be a visible reminder of all that Val did for the Club, for birds, and for birding. Our Club youth educational grant is also named for her. And finally, thanks to Elton Morel who "inherited" Val's historical collection of boxes of bird walk lists and worked to put these records into eBird, the nation has a permanent record of her contributions. If you check the top 100 all-time Arlington eBirders, Val is second with 213 species, first in the number of checklists at 648, and still in the top 10 all-time Virginia eBirders at 366 species.

—Jean Tatalias

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>November</u>			7 8:30 AM Long Branch Tom Nardone			10 8 AM Leesylvania SP Marc Ribaud																								
<table border="1"><tr><td colspan="2">Trip Leaders</td></tr><tr><td>Larry Cartwright</td><td>703-941-3142</td></tr><tr><td>David Farner</td><td>443-643-6141</td></tr><tr><td>Toby Hardwick</td><td>703-201-1517</td></tr><tr><td>Bert Harris</td><td>615-440-0666</td></tr><tr><td>Ken Hunt</td><td>319-354-1079</td></tr><tr><td>David Ledwith</td><td>703-933-9477</td></tr><tr><td>Larry Meade</td><td>703-206-9030</td></tr><tr><td>Elton Morel</td><td>703-907-9951</td></tr><tr><td>Tom Nardone</td><td>703-946-7738</td></tr><tr><td>Marc Ribaud</td><td>703-498-8962</td></tr><tr><td>Phil Silas</td><td>703-987-0817</td></tr></table>			Trip Leaders		Larry Cartwright	703-941-3142	David Farner	443-643-6141	Toby Hardwick	703-201-1517	Bert Harris	615-440-0666	Ken Hunt	319-354-1079	David Ledwith	703-933-9477	Larry Meade	703-206-9030	Elton Morel	703-907-9951	Tom Nardone	703-946-7738	Marc Ribaud	703-498-8962	Phil Silas	703-987-0817	14 8:30 AM Occoquan NWR Marc Ribaud			17 8 AM Aquia Landing Park Elton Morel David Ledwith
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						24 8:30 AM Blandy Farm Elton Morel Toby Hardwick																								
			28 8:30 AM Dyke Marsh Marc Ribaud Tom Nardone NVBC Meeting 8 PM	<u>December</u>		1 8 AM Clifton Institute Bert Harris Elton Morel																								
			5 8:30 AM Long Branch David Farner			8 8 AM Mason Neck SP Larry Cartwright David Ledwith																								
			12 8:30 AM Laurel Hill Equestrian Ctr Marc Ribaud																											
December 14, 2018 - January 5, 2019— CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA (See p. 3)																														

DIRECTIONS

NVBC Meeting (11/28) 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 (11/17) 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.

Blandy Experimental Farm/State Arboretum of Virginia (11/24) 400 Blandy Farm Ln, Boyce, 22620 Take I-66 west to Rt 17 north (Exit 23, Delaplane/Paris). Follow Rt 17 north to junction with Rt 50 west. Turn left at traffic light onto Rt 50/17; go 7.8 mi., turn left onto Rt 750 to the Arboretum.

Burke Lake Park (1/9) 7315 Ox Rd, Fairfax Station 22039 From I-495, take exit 54 west (Braddock Rd). If coming from the North, stay in right lane of

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<u>January</u>			2 8:30 AM Long Branch Tom Nardone			5 8 AM Northern Neck X-trip <i>Members only/</i> <i>Reservations required</i> email leader Larry Meade
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> Bird Walks at Local Parks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 Ave parking lot. Leader: Carolyn Williams • Great Falls National Park, Sundays, 8 am Meet in front of the snack bar/concession stand at the Park Visitor Center. • Huntley Meadows Park, Mondays, 7 am (Mar-Oct) 8 am (Nov-Feb) Meet in parking lot. Leader: Harry Glasgow </div>			9 8:30 AM Burke Lake Phil Silas			12 8 AM Silver Lake SP Larry Meade Toby Hardwick
			16 8:30 AM Huntley Meadows Tom Nardone			19 8 AM Leesylvania SP Marc Ribaud Phil Silas
			23 8:30 AM Dyke Marsh Larry Cartwright Tom Nardone			26 8 AM Occoquan Bay NWR Elton Morel Ken Hunt
				31 8:30 AM Royal Lake - Lakeside Park Phil Silas	<u>February 1-3</u> Chincoteague Weekend <i>Members only/Reservations required</i> Elton Morel Marc Ribaud	

exit. Go 1.5 mi. on Braddock Rd then 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).

Clifton Institute (12/1) 6712 Blantyre Rd, Warrenton 20187 Take 1-66 West to exit 40, to merge onto US-15 south towards Haymarket (0.4 mi), then turn right onto VA-55 West. Drive 5 mi. and turn left onto Blantyre Rd. Proceed 5.6 mi. and then turn right on to a dirt road. Drive northwest for about 0.5 mi. between two lakes and park in the parking lot below the main house. Meet outside the house.

Dyke Marsh (11/28, 1/23) 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.

Huntley Meadows Park (1/16) 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 (12/12) 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 (11/10, 1/19) 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 turnaround circle at fishing pier. State fee area.

Long Branch Nature Area (11/7, 12/5, 1/2) 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.

Mason Neck State Park (12/8) 7301 High Point Rd, Lorton 22079 From I-495, take I-95 south 7 mi. to Lorton exit. Left on Rt 642 to Rt 1. Right on Rt 1 to Rt 242 (Gunston Rd). Left on Rt 242, go 4 mi. to Mason Neck Management Area. Turn right, follow paved road to end at Visitor Center. State fee area.

Northern Neck X-trip (1/5) Meet at the Silver Diner, 6592 Springfield Mall. From the Beltway, take I-95 south to exit 169A (Springfield/ Franconia) (Rt 644E). From exit ramp, turn right onto Franconia Rd E. Stay in the right lane. Go about 0.3 mi. on Franconia Rd E, past Loisdale Rd, and turn right into Springfield Mall. Go about 325 ft; turn left and go about 150 ft; then turn left again and go another 200 ft to the Silver Diner on the left.

Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge (11/14, 1/26) 13950 Dawson Beach Rd, Woodbridge 22192 From I-495, take I-95 south 9 mi. to (left) exit 161 (Woodbridge). Go south on Rt 1 about 2 mi. to left turn onto Dawson Beach Rd. Continue on Dawson Beach 0.7 mi. to entrance gate. Meet in parking lot. US fee area.

Delightful Kites in Northern Virginia



All photographs © 2018, Donald W. Sweig **Above left:** Mating Mississippi Kites near Green Spring Park, May 15, 2018. Note the red eyes of both adult birds and the rufous color of the outer primary flight feathers of the male. **Middle:** Mississippi Kite chick in nest, July 20, 2018. **Right:** Mississippi Kite chick exercising its wings in nest, July 29, 2018. The chick fledged two days later.

The Summer of 2018 offered Northern Virginia birders the opportunity to see and enjoy two species of elegant and beautiful kites. The pair of Mississippi Kites, *Ictinia mississippiensis*, that nested in 2017 near the Green Spring Gardens Park in Fairfax County returned to nest in mid-May; at about the same time another pair nested in a residential area not far from Monticello Park, in Alexandria. Both of these pairs reportedly successfully fledged one chick. Other pairs were also reported to have successfully nested in Fairfax and in Prince William County.

Then on August 10-11, a rare Swallow-tailed Kite, *Elanoides forficatus*, was seen, reported and photographed hunting over a field near Purcellville in Loudoun

County. It continued to be seen there until August 14 or 15. Swallow-tailed Kites are stunningly beautiful birds, and significantly larger than a Mississippi kite. (Swallow-tailed Kite: length 20-25 inches, wing-spread 47-54 inches, compared with Mississippi Kite: 12-15 inches long, wingspread. 29-33 inches)

Both kites, as their names imply, are often seen just floating through the air, steering with their tails, usually hunting for prey, at which point they can make stupendous, swooping dives, with amazing aerial agility.

The summer of 2018 offered Northern Virginia birders the opportunity to see both of these charismatic birds in action on the wing. A rare treat indeed!

—Donald Sweig



Photographs **above left:** Swallow-tailed Kite, Loudoun County, August 14, 2018. This may not be a full adult bird as it does not have the two, very long, outer tail feathers (rectrix 6) that distinguishes a fully adult kite and gives the bird its swallow-tailed appearance. Otherwise the plumage is similar. **Middle:** Iconic view of the Swallow-tailed Kite, with its long, forked tail, Loudoun County, August 14, 2018 **Right:** Adult Mississippi Kite near Green Spring Park, May 20, 2018.

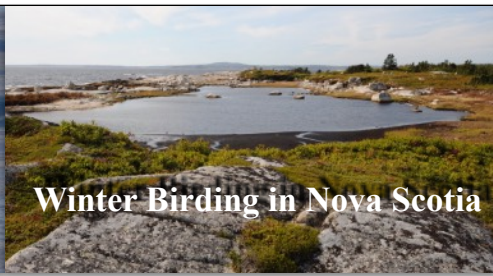
Trip Directions from page 5

Royal Lake - Lakeside Park (1/31)
5216 Pommeroy Dr, Fairfax 22032
From I-495, take exit to VA-620 (Braddock Rd) and continue on Braddock Rd for 2.36 mi. Turn left onto Rt 651, Guinea Rd continue .64 mi. and stay straight at intersection onto Commonwealth Blvd (do not

turn left to follow Guinea Rd) for .4 mi. Turn left on Pommeroy Dr and then turn right at the intersection with Bronte Dr to the entrance leading to the parking lot.

Silver Lake Park (1/12) 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 mi. to Rt 55. Turn right onto Rt 55 and go 0.9 mi. to Antioch Rd. Turn right onto Antioch and go 1.3 mi. to Silver Lake Rd. Turn right and proceed to park entrance and continue to parking lot next to the lake. Meet in parking lot.



Winter Birding in Nova Scotia

Winter birding in the north isn't for the faint of heart. The birding can be slow, tracking down foraging flocks in snowy woods, and frigid staring into the wind on a beach to identify whether that little thing bobbing out in the ocean is a bird or lobster buoy. You never get a huge bird list but you can get some impressive species.

One of my favorite places to go birding is Nova Scotia, and my favorite time of year to do that is in winter. When I tell folks that my wife, Katherine, and I love to go to Canada around Christmas, they usually think we are a little off...but it's quiet, beautiful (often with a white Christmas), and the birding can be really interesting.

Winter birding in places like Duluth, Minnesota or Algonquin Park in Ontario will have more finches and winter raptors. But if you are looking for winter finches, waterfowl, alcids and especially gulls Nova Scotia is worth visiting. Nova Scotia is pretty easy to get to and to bird in the winter.

Take a look at a map and you'll see that Nova Scotia extends much farther east than Maine. Because of this it is close to the Gulf Stream and is warmer in the winter than Maine and New Brunswick. It gets cold but especially along the coast it's usually around 32 degrees. Nova Scotia gets snow and the occasional nor'easter can dump feet of snow, but particularly in the Halifax area and the South Shore (the area extending from Halifax down the coast to Yarmouth), roads generally remain clear and the ocean and large bays don't freeze.

St. John's, Newfoundland has a reputation as the place to look for rare gulls. But Nova Scotia's Halifax Harbour isn't far behind. Glaucous, Iceland and Black-headed Gulls are regulars. Occasional rarities include Ivory and Mew Gulls. Tufted Duck and Barrow's Goldeneye are around most winters.

My favorite place around Halifax is Point Pleasant Park. I wasn't aware that some of the locals have been hand-feeding birds until on a quiet December day I realized birds were following me. I held my hand up and immediately a Red-breasted Nuthatch landed on it. Several other birds landed before I felt guilty for tricking the birds since I had no food. Later I impressed some unsuspecting friends with the hand trick: immediately a nuthatch came in, to be followed by of all things, a Cape May warbler.

Katherine and I have property in Lunenburg County, about an hour and half south of Halifax. Lunenburg and Queen's Counties are my usual haunts for winter birding, and I know them both pretty well. Whenever I'm there and the timing works, I join a Christmas Bird Count (CBC) or two. My best Count birds have all been in Nova Scotia, both crossbills, Razorbills, Dovekies, Spruce Grouse, Boreal Chickadees, Common Redpolls, and a few warbler species. The rarities I find are birds like Great Blue Heron, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Belted Kingfisher, Red-shouldered Hawk – tough birds up there but practically gimmes in Virginia.

For a good day's winter birding I'll pop into a few beachfront provincial parks that are closed in the

winter, but you can walk in. I usually walk through woods to get to the beach and watch for Boreal Chickadees, Canada Jays, Spruce Grouse and crossbills. I check the grasses on the beach for Common Redpolls, which show up in big numbers every other year. And then I start scanning the ocean. The real prizes are the alcids, particularly Dovekie. Dovekies are usually hard to find until the first big nor'easter blows them close to the shore. A lobsterman participates in one of the Counts and usually calls in at the end of the day to report anywhere from a handful to dozens he has seen offshore while working his pots. (Nova Scotia has a winter lobster season – another good reason to visit in the winter.)

Winter inland birding can be tough. At Kejimikujik National Park a friend and I went for a nice two-hour walk in light snow and saw five birds (Black-capped Chickadees, Blue Jays, and a Raven). As we were leaving the park we found a huge flock of over 200 birds working the conifers in the parking lot; Pine Siskins, Goldfinches, both chickadees (Boreal and Black-capped), Red Crossbills and others. A perfect example of how winter birding can be hit or miss!

Nova Scotia is easy to get around, if it does snow the roads get cleared quickly. And after a snow watch the road edges for Snow Buntings. If it's too snowy to bird, there are great pubs and restaurants in Mahone Bay, Lunenburg and Liverpool.

For more information check out the Nova Scotia Bird Society webpage: <https://www.nsbirdsociety.ca/>.

—David Farner

Photographs:

Upper left: Razorbill in the Bay of Fundy photographed by Dixie Sommers

Middle: Nova Scotia landscape photographed by Neal Gause

Upper right: Canada Jay in Utah photographed by Larry Meade



10% Birder Discount to NVBC members at Birdwatchers Seed and Supply Company.

Mention you are in the club at checkout.

Address: 396 Maple Avenue East
(corner of Beulah Rd) in Vienna
703-242-4565

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 2019 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, <http://www.nvabc.org/join/>.

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, Jeremy Beck at jghyll+nvabc@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: November 28, 2018, February 20, and April 17, 2019.

Next Board Meeting: Thursday, December 6, 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.

Thanks to the mailing crew: Many thanks to the August mail out crew: Elizabeth Fenton, Jane Grawe, Diane Marton, Jean Tatalias and Joanna Taylor

Deadline for next issue of *The Siskin*: The February issue will include activities through April 2019.

Please send items for publication by January 1, 2019 to the editors at siskineditor@verizon.net.

CLUB CONTACTS

President: Larry Meade, 703-206-9030

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

Vice President, Field Activities: Elton Morel, 703-907-9951

Secretary: Diane Marton, 703-527-7360

Treasurer: Jean Tatalias, 703-281-6099

Directors: Jeremy Beck, 703-517-1816
Tom Nardone 703-946-7738,
Phil Silas, 703-987-0817,

Joanna Taylor, 703-243-5989

Directors Emeritus: Len Alfredson,
Charlotte Friend, Don Wiesnet

Membership: Elizabeth Fenton, 703-533-0851

Webmaster, www.nvabc.org: Jeremy Beck, jghyll+nvabc@gmail.com

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

Administrator, NVBC Facebook

Group: Allie Guidry (please contact through Facebook page)

NVBC email: lgmeade@gmail.com