



The SISKIN

Newsletter of the Northern Virginia Bird Club

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August 2019

www.nvabc.org

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

Cape May Fall Weekend

Our fall trip to Cape May will be held from October 25 to 27, 2019. We will be hanging out at the world-famous Cape May Hawk Watch, Morning Flight and visiting other local hotspots such as the Meadows, Higbee Beach and the Cape May Bird Observatory. We will start at 3 pm on Friday and finish up Sunday afternoon with a semi-pelagic on the Cape May Ferry (2:30 pm).

Space is limited to 20 people. NVBC membership and registration is required. **Registration will open up on Monday, September 9 at 12 noon.** If you would like to participate, please email me at drgerco@hotmail.com no sooner than that date and time.

Our hotel for the weekend will be the Sea Crest Inn. A group rate will be negotiated later in July or August. The rate information will be provided to people who sign up for the trip. You will be required to mail a deposit within 7 days of making the reservation. This hotel does not serve breakfast but many of the rooms have a kitchenette. The hotel is in walking distance of the beach pavilion that is our typical Saturday morning destination:

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NVBC GENERAL MEETING—WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 8 PM

Ghana: West Africa's great new birding destination

Speaker: Joanna Taylor

This past spring Mary Scala and Joanna Taylor visited Ghana, West Africa, a friendly, stable country, on a three-week birding tour managed by Field Guides. West Africa has lagged behind east and south Africa as a birding and tourist destination, but Ghana is one of the first countries in the area to embrace the idea of eco-tourism and the infrastructure necessary to support it. The country has a lot to offer the birder. Ghana has both rain forest with a wonderful canopy walk and savannah and national parks and has over 750 species of birds, many of them endemic to west Africa. The star of the show is the White-necked Rockfowl, *Picathartes gymnecephalus*. *Picathartes* is a two species genus and very difficult to locate. A nesting colony is being carefully guarded by a nearby village and the birds are easy to see. There are also many species of Hornbills, Bee-eaters, Kingfishers and others to delight the eye.

White-necked Rock fowl photographed by Phil Gregory



Joanna Taylor is a longtime member of the NVBC and has been a member of the Board of the club for about 25 years. She is retired from the Department of State and lived next door to Ghana in Togo for two years where she birded extensively. Both she and Mary Scala volunteer at the bird banding station at Occoquan NWR. Mary Scala was a Peace Corps volunteer in Ghana for three years and enjoyed seeing her old stomping ground.

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

Migration is perhaps the most awesome thing that birds do. They undergo extraordinary journeys as they move north in the spring in search of territory and breeding partners, and back south in the fall for available food. These trips are extremely dangerous and a significant number of birds do not survive them. About 40% of the world's birds migrate, some traveling thousands of miles. Arctic Terns, for example, can fly as much as 49,700 miles round trip in a year as they travel between the far northern latitudes and the far southern latitudes. They essentially experience an endless summer. In another amazing migration feat, a Bar-tailed Godwit flew for eight days without stopping and traveled almost 7,000 miles in the process. Because of their smaller size,

Blackpoll Warblers almost double their weight in order to have enough fuel to fly 2,300 miles non-stop. As fall approaches, birders await the annual southern migration with great anticipation. Shorebirds are among the first birds to start moving and in August, NVBC will have a trip to Bombay Hook, Delaware, to see them at one of their stopover sites. Songbirds and raptors migrate a bit later and we will look for them at Cape May in October. Of course, we will always be looking for migrating birds on all of our other trips this fall too. I hope you can join us!

—Larry Meade



*Migrating Broad-winged Hawk at Cape May Hawk Watch
Photo by Larry Meade*



World Series of Birding - Guatemalan Tyrannulets

On May 11, I was part of the Guatemalan Tyrannulets birding team competing in New Jersey Audubon's World Series of Birding. The other three members of the team, John and Rob Cahill and Josué De Leon Lux all live in Guatemala. This was my third attempt at the World Series, this time raising funds for Community Cloud Forest Conservation in Guatemala.

We competed in the Carbon Footprint Challenge meaning we could not use motorized vehicles for transportation during the event – only foot or bike. Going into the event we had hopes of doing well but felt the local teams would have the edge on us. We were able to spend four days scouting Cape May giving us a chance to make a plan, learn some songs and find a few good birds along the way and for Josué the chance to add several lifers.

We were fortunate to receive assistance in planning from several folks, including New Jersey Audubon and Cape May Bird Observatory staff prior to the event. All week we talked to other competitors and birders who

were happy to see a foreign-based team competing, especially a Guatemalan team.

A normal World Series big day begins at midnight; however, we made a tactical decision to wait until 4 am to start. Knowing we'd spend the day biking and hiking we decided that more sleep would leave us in better shape for birding in the afternoon and evening. Early morning scouting during the week hadn't been all that productive. So we hopped on the bikes and began our day to – silence...our expected Chuck-will's-widows were silent and so was pretty much everything else. But soon we heard our hoped for Eastern Screech-owl, then headed to Cape May Meadows where the chucks started calling, woodcock began peenting and a Virginia Rail responded to my clapping. We began a seawatch at sunrise and found flyover loons, a distant Parasitic Jaeger and our big prize two distant Brown Boobies. The boobies were found by a competing team, NJ Audubon has changed their rules and encourages sharing of information, so the other team lead by

David La Puma found the birds and pointed them out to us.

As the day continued we found things we didn't expect to see and missed some birds we should have found. We made three attempts to find a Barred Owl at the beanery, but no luck (other teams found it). A late-afternoon stop at the Meadows again for Red Knot and another miss. But Josué came through finding a well-hidden Barred Owl at the Meadows. And fortunately, we did get a Great Horned Owl later at Pond Creek Marsh at dusk.

Our last birds of the day were at Pond Creek where we added a Seaside Sparrow (lifer for everyone but me), common nighthawk, and a real surprise a late-flyby pintail. After dinner we did one last walk around Cape May Point hoping to hear a call from one of our big misses either a towhee or a thrasher but no luck. We decided to call it a day around 10. During the day we had walked about 10 miles and biked about 40 and finished with 140 species.

The Brown Boobies turned out to be the difference. We beat David La Puma's Cape May Bird Observatory team by one bird. If they hadn't pointed out the boobies we would have tied at 139.

—David Farner

Photos by Kathy Burger of: Dave La Puma with Guatemalan Tyrannulets (Rob Cahill, Josué De Leon Lux, David Farner and John Cahill) with trophy and the Team at seawatch

Spring Weekend Trip: Chincoteague, May 17 - 19, 2019

After a bit of a trudge down the beach in soft sand, 28 birders set up scopes and lifted binoculars to survey the birds along the shore of Tom's Cove. Hoping to find the Black Terns found on the previous day's scouting, we continued our Saturday morning of birding by sifting through the shorebirds at the water's edge and the large flock of loafing Royal Terns. We quickly found several of our target birds -- Marbled Godwits probing the wet sand and Least Terns flying overhead giving their sharp, shrill calls. Soon we spotted a Red Knot in breeding plumage. It took a little while for everybody to get on the bird before it was realized that part of the confusion was that we were looking at two different Red Knots running around amongst the debris along the shoreline separated by some distance.

As we were enjoying the Red Knots, we noticed a pair of Royal Terns in the midst of their synchronized courtship display -- facing each other but slightly offset, dancing together with wings held out and head and bills bobbing up-and-down, then side-to-side. It was a highly entertaining and amusing scene for us observers.

This was just one of the many highlights that members of the Northern Virginia Bird Club experienced on our annual spring trip to Chincoteague over the weekend of May 17 to 19. With the coordinated efforts of my co-leader Larry Cartwright and many sharp-eyed observers, we collectively found 96 species over a weekend of very pleasant weather.

Friday afternoon started with a drive around the Wildlife Loop at the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, where we introduced ourselves to the standard fare of shorebirds such as Dunlins and Black-bellied Plovers in breeding plumage, Semipalmated Plovers, Semipalmated Sandpipers, Short-billed Dowitchers, Yellowlegs of both species and a few Least Sandpipers. Long-legged waders were also well represented by Snowy Egrets, Tricolored and Little Blue Herons. Our highlight bird was a lingering male Green-winged Teal.

Our evening outing to find the Chuck-will's-widow at sunset on Friday night was somewhat successful. We heard a couple of "Chucks" around the Wildlife Loop parking lot and we decided to walk across the entrance road in pursuit of one singing closest to the road. After a long and frustrating search, David Ledwith spotted a "Chuck"

perched on a low snag deep in the darkening forest. Only a few observers were able to see the bird before it decided to take flight deeper into the woods

Our activities Saturday morning began well with a singing male Blue Grosbeak in the top of a tree as we started our walk along the boardwalk near the hotel. We enjoyed excellent views of Clapper Rails from the boardwalk, but surely our highlight was a singing Nelson's Sparrow found in the marsh at the end of the boardwalk. After viewing the tern colony and Red Knots to the south of the south beach parking lot, we headed to the north beach parking lot where we found a couple of Piping Plovers running around in the dry, white sands.

A large merganser sleeping along the shoreline of Swan Cove provided a bit of an identification challenge causing much discussion. We eventually settled on the ID as an eclipse-plumage male Red-breasted Merganser.

In the afternoon, our walk around the Chincoteague Island Nature Trail was rather quiet, netting us heard-only Brown-headed Nuthatches and a nice flyover of a Peregrine Falcon. Queen Sound Flats produced the usual breeding colonies of Black-necked Stilts, American Oystercatchers and Common Terns, plus close views of a Clapper Rail furtively running amongst the long grasses along the shoreline. One last drive out to Chincoteague NWR netted us the addition to our list of a single Cattle Egret feeding in amongst a herd of the famous Chincoteague ponies.

Our Sunday morning boat trip with Daisey's Island Cruises on the Chincoteague Inlet started with rather difficult weather conditions. A low, heavy fog on the water had built up overnight making navigation and viewing conditions difficult. The fog was so bad that our binoculars and eyeglasses fogged up making it almost impossible to see any birds either on the water or along the shoreline. Eventually the fog burned off, however, and a good change in plans by the captain got us over to the marshes along the channel to Black Point Landing where we found the species we were hoping for -- a flock of about eighty Whimbrels feeding along the shoreline amongst many other shorebirds.

--Elton Morel

*American Oystercatcher (top) and Clapper Rail (below)
photographed by Reid Williamson*



Cape May from p.1

SEA CREST MOTOR INN
101 Beach Avenue
Cape May, NJ 08024
Phone: 609-884-4561 or
866-733-1405
Website: www.seacrestinn.com

To make a reservation, **after I have confirmed you can participate**, please call the Sea Crest Inn and provide your name and phone number and let them know you are with the Northern Virginia Bird Club. You will be asked to mail a personal check or money order within 7 days

of calling. On the check enter the dates you will be staying and NVBC. You will be mailed a reservation confirmation.

—Gerco Hoogeweg

Upcoming Trips and Events

Compiled by Elton Morel

Note:

- Beginning birders are welcome on all trips.
- When reservations are required, please call one of the trip leaders. Phone numbers are on 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/updated-field-trips/>.
- 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
August						
Trip Leaders Jeremy Beck 703-517-1816 Larry Cartwright 703-941-3142 Bert Harris 615-440-0666 Toby Hardwick 703-201-1517 Gerco Hoogeweg 540-822-5857 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 Phil Silas 703-987-0817 Dixie Sommers 703-969-7931 Jean Tatalias 571-447-7977 Joanna Taylor 703-243-5989						17 Bombay Hook X-Trip Members only/ Registration Required Larry Meade Gerco Hoogeweg
						24 7:30 AM Huntley Meadows Ken Hunt Elton Morel
						31 8 AM Shenandoah River Campus at Cool Springs Battlefield Elton Morel
September 1						
7 PM Swift/Nighthawk Watch Joanna Taylor <u>Call leader for meeting</u> <u>place and directions</u>			4 8:30 AM Long Branch Tom Nardone			7 7:30 AM Conway Robinson State Forest Phil Silas Elton Morel
			11 8:30 AM Dyke March Dixie Sommers			14 7:30 AM Leesylvania SP Phil Silas Ken Hunt
			18 8:30 AM Fort C F Smith Jeremy Beck NVBC Meeting 8 PM			21 7:30 AM Occoquan Bay NWR Larry Cartwright Dixie Sommers
			25 8:30 AM Huntley Meadows - Hike & Bike Trail Dixie Sommers			28 7:30 AM Clifton Institute Bert Harris Elton Morel
October						
			2 8:30 AM Long Branch Tom Nardone			5 8 AM Aquia Landing Beach Park Elton Morel Phil Silas

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<u>October</u>			9 8:30 AM Bles Park Jean Tatalias			12 8 AM Leopold's Preserve Elton Morel Toby Hardwick
			16 8:30 AM Dyke Marsh Dixie Sommers			19 8 AM Bristoe Station Battlefield Park Toby Hardwick Larry Meade
			24 8:30 AM Laurel Hill Equestrian Center Phil Silas		25 - 27 NVBC Cape May Weekend <i>Reservations required/Members only</i> Gerco Hoogeweg Larry Meade	26 8 AM Sky Meadows SP Elton Morel David Ledwith
			30 8:30 AM Meadowood Recreation Area Larry Cartwright	<u>November</u>		2 8 AM Silver Lake RP Toby Hardwick Larry Meade
			6 8:30 AM Long Branch Tom Nardone			

DIRECTIONS

NVBC Meeting (9/18) 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 (10/5) 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 (10/9) 44830 Riverside Pkwy., Ashburn 20147 Take Rt 7 west to Loudoun County Pkwy. Turn right onto Loudoun County Pkwy and proceed 0.2 mi. Turn right onto George Washington Blvd and go 0.8 mi. to Riverside Pkwy. Turn left and proceed 1.1 mi. to park entrance. Meet at parking lot.

Bombay Hook X-trip (8/17) Take Rt 50 across the Chesapeake Bay Bridge. Go north 34 mi. on Rt 301. Turn right at Rt 300. Go 15 mi. to Kenton, Delaware. At the traffic light, turn right on Rt 42 to Leipsic. From there go left on Rt 9 for 1.5 mi. to the entrance of the refuge. Meet at the Visitor Center parking lot.

Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park (10/19) 10708 Bristow Rd, Bristow, VA 20136. From I-95: Take Rt 234 north (exit 152B), travel 7.5 mi. and make a left onto Independent Hill Dr. Then make immediate right onto Rt 619 (Bristow Rd). Travel 7 mi. and turn left onto Iron Brigade Unit Ave. The parking lot is located on the left at the traffic circle. From I-66: Take Rt 234 south (Exit 44). Travel 4.5 miles and turn right onto Rt 28

(Nokesville Rd). Travel 1.5 mi. and turn left onto Rt 619 (Bristow Rd). Travel 0.25 mi., turn right onto Iron Brigade Unit Ave and continue to parking lot. Meet in parking lot.

Clifton Institute (9/28) 6712 Blantyre Rd, Warrenton 20187 Take I-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.

Conway Robinson State Forest (9/7) 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.

Trip Directions *from page 5*

Dyke Marsh (9/11, 10/16) 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.

Fort C F Smith (9/18) 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 (9/25) 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 (8/24) 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 (10/24) 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 (9/14) 2001 Daniel K Ludwig Dr, Woodbridge 22191 From I-495, take I-95 south about 14 mi. to exit 156 (Dale City/Rippon Landing/Rt 784). Following the posted highway signs for Leesylvania State Park, exit east on Rt 784. Proceed eastward 1.1 mi. to Rt 1. Turn right (south) on Rt 1 and go 0.9 mi. to Neabsco Rd. Immediately past the Wawa service station, turn left (east) on Neabsco Rd and proceed 2 mi. to park entrance on right. After passing through the park entrance gate, go 2.2 mi. to end of paved road and park in "Picnic Area" parking lot, immediately before turn-around circle at fishing pier. State fee area.

Leopold's Preserve (10/12) 16283 Thoroughfare Rd, Haymarket 20169 From I-66 west, take exit 40 to Rt 15 toward Haymarket/Leesburg. Turn left onto Rt 15 south. Turn right onto Rt 55 and go 1.7 mi. to Thoroughfare Rd.

Turn left onto Thoroughfare and go 0.3 mi. There are parking lots on both sides of the road. Meet in the right hand (west) parking lot. The left hand (east) parking lot can be used for overflow parking.

Long Branch Nature Area (9/4, 10/2, 11/6) 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.

Meadowood Recreation Area (10/30) 10406 Gunston Rd, Lorton, VA 22079 From I-495, take I-95 south 7 mi. to Lorton exit. Left on Rt 642. Immediately after passing under railroad tracks (0.25 mi.) turn right on Lorton Market Rd, which soon becomes Gunston Cove Rd. After crossing Rt 1, road becomes Gunston Rd. Go 1.8 miles to Meadowood on right. (BLM, Lower Potomac Station Office). Park on right next to horse barns just before field station building.

Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge (9/21) 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.

Shenandoah River Campus at Cool Springs Battlefield (8/31) From I-495, take VA-267 West (Dulles Toll Road) to Leesburg for 36.8 mi. Take exit 1A and merge onto US-15 South/VA-7 West/Leesburg Bypass for 3.3 mi. Continue straight to stay on VA7 West for 17.1 mi. After passing Snicker's Gap but just before the Shenandoah River Bridge, turn right at Parker Lane (F709) then go 1.4 mi. to the parking lot. To avoid the toll, from I-495 take VA-7 West (Leesburg Pike) to Leesburg for 47.2 mi. After passing Snicker's Gap but just before the Shenandoah River Bridge, turn right at Parker Lane, then go 1.4 mi. to the parking lot.

Silver Lake Park (11/2) 16198 Silver Lake Rd, Haymarket 20169 From I-495, take I-66 west 24 miles to exit 40 (Rt 15). Turn south onto Rt 15 (toward Haymarket) and go 0.3 mi. to Rt 55. Turn right onto Rt 55 and go 0.9 miles to Antioch Rd. Turn right onto Antioch and go 1.3 mi. to Silver Lake Rd. Turn right and proceed to park

entrance and continue to parking lot next to the lake. Meet in parking lot.

Sky Meadows State Park (10/26) 11012 Edmonds Ln, Delaplane 20144 From I-495, take I-66 west 42 mi. to exit for Rt 17 north (Delaplane/Paris). North on Rt 17 6.5 mi. to Rt 710. Turn left into park and proceed 1 mi. to Visitor Center parking lot. State fee area.

Bird Walks at Local Parks

- **Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve, second Saturdays, 8 am.** Meet at the parking lot. Visit the Loudoun Wildlife web site, www.loudounwildlife.org/events/
- **Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship, fourth Saturday, 8 am** Meet at Education Center. www.loudounwildlife.org/events/
- **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 snack/concession stand at the Park Visitor Center.
- **Huntley Meadows Park, Mondays, 7 am (Apr-Oct) 8 am (Nov-Mar)** Meet in parking lot. Leader: Harry Glasgow
- **Merrimac Farm, last Sunday, 8 am** Meet at Merrimac Farm Stone House. www.pwconserve.org/eventsindex.html#birds

Birdwatchers Store Closing

Message from owner, Cindy DeMeglio:

After six wonderful years we've made the difficult decision to close our store. We're very thankful to the many members of NVBC for supporting our small business in Vienna! We'll continue to be open until August 15 with sales on our regular seed supply and other remaining inventory so please stop by. After that date, I can be contacted at 703-819-2349 or 2cindydimeglio@gmail.com. Thanks again and happy birding!

Birding South Florida

Birders who visit South Florida in late April can experience a fascinating mix of bird species. There are charismatic resident birds like Limpkins, Roseate Spoonbills and Snail Kites which are always fun to encounter. Some of these are established and ABA countable exotics such as Spot-breasted Oriole and Nanday Parakeet. You can also find a variety of birds that are migrating through the area such as warblers, shorebirds and hawks. Finally, South Florida is a hotspot for vagrant birds that wander into the area from their island homes in the Caribbean.

I joined a WINGS tour of South Florida in late April this past spring. WINGS is a well-known birding tour company which has tours just about everywhere that there are birds to be found. This trip was led by Gavin Bieber and Evan Obercian, two experienced and skillful birders. Gavin had the logistics of the trip well in control and was willing to change our route on the fly in order for us to chase down some recently found rare birds. This week-long trip started in Fort Myers and ended in Miami. Our tour group also visited the Everglades, Key West and the Dry Tortugas. In addition to the many birds and other wildlife that we encountered, we also enjoyed the local culture and cuisine. The seafood and Cuban food were special highlights for me.

As a lister, an important incentive for me to take a trip like this is to find life birds, birds that I have not seen before in my life. I set a target for myself of twelve life birds in South Florida, which would get me to an even 650 ABA life birds. When I perused bird lists from previous tours, I realized that this goal was attainable, but not a sure thing. Listing is only one aspect of birding that gets me traveling to far-flung locales. I enjoy seeing and studying all of the birds, even ones I have seen before. Some of them I have seen, but not photographed, while others are rarely, if ever, seen in Virginia. I am also thrilled to encounter other wildlife that is new to me such as the manatees in the Everglades and the five lifer butterfly species that I found. I don't want to just give an blow-by-blow recount of what we found each day, so I will just mention a few highlights.

One of the vagrants that we found was a Bahama Mockingbird. There have only been a few dozen records of them ever in the United States. It had been hanging out for a few days in the Lantana Nature Preserve, a small park in Palm Beach County. We had high levels of anticipation that we would find this rarity, so it was actually somewhat of an anti-climax when we heard and saw it within seconds of exiting our vans. Fortunately the bird was very cooperative and posed for some nice photos.

We had a similar experience with a Mangrove Cuckoo that we found in Old Settlers Park, a small park in Monroe

County. Birders often spend hours looking for this usually elusive native bird, so I was bracing myself for possible disappointment. Gavin had seen a report that the bird had been seen here recently, so we figured it was worth a shot. We walked into the park and Gavin started to say that this was a bit of a "Hail Mary". However, before he could finish his sentence, Evan pointed to a low hanging branch just over the group's heads where the Mangrove Cuckoo was actively feeding in plain sight. I was very happy to get this bird.

Probably the bird of the trip for many of us was the Key West Quail-Dove. This is a mega rarity and was likely the only one in the United States. These birds are actually not normally found in Key West. When one was collected somewhere in the Caribbean, it was sent to Key West and then transported to England to be studied by naturalist there. The English experts mistakenly thought that the bird was collected in Key West, so they gave the bird what turned out to be a confusing name. This bird had been seen in a park in Broward County for months. The problem was that the bird

liked to stay out of sight in dense vegetation. People sometimes waited for hours hoping that it would walk out into a clearing and show itself. Once again, the birding gods were smiling. A photographer had seen the bird fifteen minutes before we arrived at the park. I stood next to him and watched the bird walk out into the open within a few minutes. Success!

I did manage to get life bird number 650 on the final day of the tour. It was a Spot-breasted Oriole, an established exotic species, in Miami. Other notable birds included Smooth-billed Ani, Red-whiskered Bulbuls and Antillean Nighthawks. In the Dry Tortugas, we missed out on the Black Noddy, but we did find many warblers hanging out at Fort Jefferson. One thing interesting about South Florida is the plethora of non-native species of all kinds. Some of these are invasive and doing great harm to the ecosystem. I saw a native Roseate Spoonbill going after a non-native Green Iguana. Even the birds are sick of them!

Overall, this was a rewarding and educational experience for me. Not only did I reach my listing goal, I also learned a great deal about the living things and culture of the area. I am already thinking about where I want to go next!

—Larry Meade



Photographs by Larry Meade:
Bahama Mockingbird (top)
Roseate Spoonbill and Iguana (bottom)

NORTHERN VIRGINIA BIRD CLUB
P.O. BOX 5812
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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 website at <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: September 18, and November 20, 2019, February 19 and April 15, 2020.

Next Board Meeting: Thursday, September 5, 2019, 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 d.

Thanks to the mailing crew: Many thanks to the April mail out crew: Elizabeth Fenton, Pat Gause, Dixie Sommers, and Jean Tatalias

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

2020. Please send items for publication by **October 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, Phil Silas, 703-987-0817, Joanna Taylor, 703-243-5989*

*Officers and Directors elected to 2019-2021 term at the April meeting

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, siskineditor@verizon.net, 703-476-3903

Administrator, NVBC Facebook

Group: Allie Guidry (please contact through Facebook page)

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