



The SISKIN

Newsletter of the Northern Virginia Bird Club

Vol. 65, No. 2

April 2020

www.nvabc.org

Crow's Nest Natural Area Preserve

*Explore the parks and natural areas in Northern Virginia ...
new NVBC trip location*

Crow's Nest Natural Area Preserve (CNNAP), located in Stafford County, became the Commonwealth's fifty-fourth Natural Area Preserve in 2008. Prior to becoming a preserve, the property was a colonial area plantation belonging to the Travers-Daniel Family (1662-1865). Crow's Nest is named for the schooner owned by the family named the "Crow." Following the Civil War, the property changed hands numerous times before Alabama Senator Frank Boykin purchased the peninsula in 1950. Senator Boykin used Crow's Nest as an escape from Washington, DC and had portions of the property logged in the 1950s. The owners of the property in the early 1970s, proposed an ambitious development project for 20,000 residents that included a large marina, golf course, horse racing track and a convention center. While this project never proceeded, it did kick start local advocacy to save and protect the Crow's Nest peninsula. K&M Properties purchased the property in 1989. In the late 1990s, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service considered purchasing land including the Crow's Nest Peninsula for a National Wildlife Refuge. In 2004, K&M Properties submitted a plan to construct 688 homes on the peninsula. In 2007, the Stafford County Board of Supervisors voted to provide funding necessary for the purchase of Crow's Nest. With funding provided by Stafford County, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and numerous grants, 2,872 acres were

protected in 2008 and 2009. Today, CNNAP is 3,055 acres and co-owned by DCR, Stafford County and the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust.

The uplands of the Crow's Nest peninsula are entirely forested and support perhaps the finest example of mature hardwood forest remaining in the Virginia Coastal Plain. Large, unfragmented old-age coastal plain hardwood forests in the mid-Atlantic region are unusual and rapidly

disappearing. The preserve is comprised of ten plant communities, including the globally-rare Coastal Plain Dry Calcareous Forest. In addition to the mature upland forest, the preserve also protects nearly 900 acres of wetlands, including extensive freshwater tidal marshes, tidal hardwood swamps and bottomland stream forests.

The diverse plant communities protected within the preserve provide habitat for a variety of bird species, including approximately 70 species thought to breed on the property and numerous over-wintering waterfowl.

Some of the notable birds observed during the breeding season include King Rail, Least Bittern, Red-headed Woodpecker, Yellow-throated Vireo, Worm-eating Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Kentucky Warbler and American Redstarts. Ovenbirds and Wood Thrushes are very common during the breeding season as are Scarlet Tanagers.

Recreational opportunities at CNNAP include a 300-foot boardwalk and associated canoe launch and approximately eight-miles of hiking trails.

—Michael Lott



*Freshwater tidal marsh at CNNAP photographed
by Gary Fleming*

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

NVBC General Meeting

April 15, 2020

**Cancelled to support efforts to
contain spread of Covid-19**

Presidential Peentings

Robert Watson, a founding member of the Northern Virginia Bird Club passed away a few years ago. He was the secretary for our club beginning in 1954, the year NVBC was founded. I was contacted by Mr. Watson's son who wanted to know if I wanted his father's books. I did, so I went over to retrieve a few boxes of his books, but also some old papers that he had saved over the years. I looked casually through the documents and was somewhat shocked to find among them the very first edition of the Siskin from 1955. Almost 65 years later, we have republished Vol. 1 No. 1 in this edition of the Siskin, Vol. 65 No. 2.

The first Siskin explains how our newsletter got its name. It says that "Like that bird, our publication appears irregularly from autumn to spring in the Northern Virginia area". I had always heard that story, but now we know its origin. Of course, we now publish the Siskin consistently four times a year. I truly appreciate the efforts that everyone puts in to make this happen. It's also nice that we don't have to type out the entire Siskin on a manual typewriter as was necessary in 1955.

The first members of the Northern Virginia Bird club apparently birded in some of the same locations that we go to this very day. One of the places they went to was Glen Carlyn Park where NVBC still often goes. There was no W&OD trail yet, but there is a reference to the Washington and Old Dominion railroad tracks. These birders also visited Belle Haven and its nearby marshes. This is what we know as Dyke Marsh today. Jackson Abbott, for whom a refuge in Mount Vernon is now named, conducted breeding bird surveys there during that time. We are fortunate to have the tireless Larry Cartwright walking in Jackson Abbott's footsteps as he has surveyed the breeding birds at Dyke Marsh for many years and is still out there doing it this year.

A document like this sort of puts things in perspective and helps us to appreciate our history and the efforts of the birders that have come before us. They left a legacy and I like to think that we are also leaving a legacy for future birders. Maybe 65 years from now, someone will come across this issue of the Siskin and see what we were doing back in 2020.

—Larry Meade

September 13, 1955

THE SISKIN

Bulletin of the Northern Virginia Chapter, Virginia Society of Ornithology
Vol. 1 No. 1

TO MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA CHAPTER:

On the eve of our chapter's first birthday as an officially constituted organization, we find our group in a flourishing condition, considerably bigger and healthier than we had dared to hope at first. Of course, every bird study group, as soon as it is successful, needs its own journal, duly and properly named, and so we have bestowed the above appellation on the heretofore unnamed circular letters sent out to inform the members and friends of forthcoming activities. We selected the name "Siskin" because, like that bird, our publication appears irregularly from autumn to spring in the Northern Virginia Area. As yet there are no plans afoot to make it into a serious rival of the Auk or the Wilson Bulletin.

The first activity of the new season will be a field trip through the Pine Ridge vicinity on Saturday, September 24, 1955, at 7:30 A.M. To get to Pine Ridge, travel west on Route 50 about 5 miles beyond Seven Corners; turn left at the Pine Ridge sign; then turn left again on Overbrook, and again on Highland, and park off the street near the homes of the Rules and Peacocks, at the end of the macadam.

A business meeting in the near future is advisable, and it may be necessary to hold a short business session after the walk. One important question to be settled is that of dues for the forthcoming year. You will recall that last year, when we fixed the dues at 50¢ per person, we did so with the understanding that this was an interim figure, which would be subject to review in the light of a year's experience. We foresaw the possibility that this sum might prove inadequate. It now appears that dues of 50¢ are not sufficient to cover all of our expenses, (of which the largest items are: dues to the V.S.O. and postage, stationery, etc.) It has been suggested that we raise our dues to 75¢ for adults, retaining the 50¢ for junior members. This can be settled at the Pine Ridge meeting.

Our second formal, planned activity will also be a field trip, this one to be held in the Belle Haven section of Alexandria on Saturday, October 15, at 8:00 A.M. The trip will be led by Jack Abbott, of Alexandria, who has led trips for the D.C. Audubon Society for a number of years.

Meet at the Belle Haven picnic area, just off Mount Vernon Highway, a short distance south of the city limits of Alexandria. You can find this spot without difficulty; a sign along the Mount Vernon Highway will tell you

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where to turn left when traveling south from Alexandria. (Caution: Do not confuse with the "North Belle Haven" area, which is also marked; pass by the latter, and you will see the "Belle Haven" sign almost immediately). The Potomac River and the nearby marshes, fields, and woods in this area should give us an opportunity for coverage of a number of different habitats on this trip. Jack Abbott recently completed a breeding-bird census in this area, according to the standard method prescribed by the National Audubon Society and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and he has agreed to give an explanation of the techniques used in conducting a study of this type. After the trip we will repair to the Abbott residence nearby where Jack has promised to show us some of his superb water-color bird portraits, as well as those of his father, the late Jacob Bates Abbott. Best

Those who may be interested in additional trips during the fall migrating season are invited to join us on informal walks through Glen Carlyn Park, Arlington, on September 17 and October 1 while warblers are still migrating. These walks will start at 7:00 A.M. from the junction of South Lexington St. and Arlington Blvd. Drive west on Arlington Blvd. until you cross the bridge over the Washington and Old Dominion railroad tracks at bottom of hill; South Lexington St. will then be the first side street (it turns off to the left at the top of the hill at the Glen Carlyn sign.) Cars will assemble on South Lexington St.

We have a number of ideas tentatively lined up for future programs, and hope to have as many of these as possible during the coming year. Present ideas include talks on the birds of Africa and the Arctic by Dr. Charles Handley, Jr.; a talk on falconry by a local practitioner of the art, Mr. Nye of Oakton; and (we hope) another visit to the home of the Mangum Weeks' to see the remainder of his choice collection of ornithological literature. Needless to say, any additional suggestions for meetings, field trips, or other activities will be most welcome.

Remember the dates: September 24 Pine Ridge*
October 15, Belle Haven*

Robert J. Watson
Robert J. Watson
Secretary

*Bring picnic lunch



Chincoteague Winter Trip: *Construction Everywhere*

This year's winter Chincoteague trip was characterized by balmy, un-winter-like weather and construction projects limiting access to the 'birdiest' sections of the refuge. Twenty-six members of the Northern Virginia Bird Club visited the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel (CBBT) on the weekend of January 31 to February 2. The trip was led by Larry Cartwright and me. The group collectively tallied 92 species for the weekend.

Construction started limiting activities from the start as our usual Wildlife Loop itinerary on Friday afternoon was not possible due to a construction project that closed down vehicle access to the loop. Instead, we went straight to Tom's Cove and the beach parking lots. However, access at the beach was restricted to just the north parking lot and a short section of the south parking lot due to construction that was regrading the sand. Nevertheless, we managed to find several good birds. Our stop at Swan Cove produced close looks at three Marbled Godwits, a couple of Bonaparte's Gulls amongst a swirling flock of Forster's Terns, and many species of waterfowl including large numbers of Northern Shovelers and Tundra Swans. A female Common Merganser was on the water in Tom's Cove – an uncommon species at Chincoteague – and a few American Oystercatchers were on the exposed oyster beds. At the beach, we found Common Loons offshore, Sanderlings running along the beach and a nice flyover of a flock of Brants, but no sign of any Snow Geese.

Saturday morning's activities started on the board walk near the hotel. Our efforts to find the rarer 'marsh' sparrows were not successful but we did have nice looks at Savannah Sparrows and a flyover Tricolored Heron. A

flock of four Palm Warblers at the hotel along the fence line near the swimming pool was a nice, unexpected treat. On the refuge we added a Red-throated Loon seen offshore, a Ruddy Turnstone and a couple of Dunlins along the inner shore line of Tom's Cove and a Northern Harrier coursing over the salt marsh. But still no Snow Geese. Given the limited area we could cover out at the beach, we decided to walk the Marsh Trail from the Wildlife Loop parking lot where we picked up Brown-headed Nuthatches along the trail.

Saturday afternoon activities included finding a flock of juvenile White Ibis along North Main Street, Common Goldeneyes and Horned Grebes at the Queen Sound Flat boat launch, and Long-tailed Ducks and Black-bellied Plovers at the Chincoteague City mud flats.

At Kiptopeke State Park on Sunday morning, Surf Scoters and Common Loons were seen close off the pier, and two Peregrine Falcons gave us quite an aerial show as they were hunting the pigeons over the

concrete ship breakwater while Northern Gannets streamed by further out.

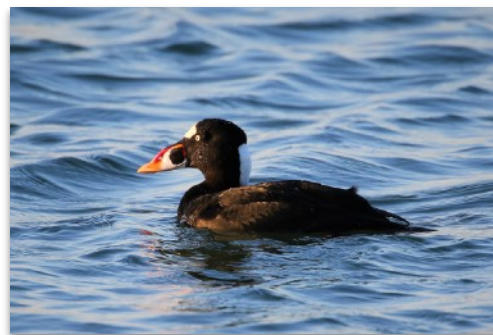
CBBT Island #4 produced the usual gathering of Great Cormorants on the bridge abutments and many Long-tailed Ducks in the waters surrounding the island. Our most notable find off the island were two White-winged Scoters which took some effort to find amongst all the flocks of Black and Surf Scoters. Surprisingly, we were not able to find any Purple Sandpipers. Island #4 was the only island we were able to visit due to, of course, ongoing construction.

--Elton Morel



Header photograph of NVBC birders at Chincoteague NWR by Alyssa Morel

Juvenile White Ibis(above), American Oystercatcher (left) and Surf Scoter (right) photographed by Evan Pannkuk during Chincoteague winter trip



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/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
<u>April</u>			8 8:30 AM Bles Park Jean Tatalias Larry Meade			11 7:30 AM Leopold's Preserve Elton Morel Toby Hardwick
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> Trip Leaders Jeremy Beck 703-517-1816 Larry Cartwright 703-941-3142 Toby Hardwick 703-201-1517 Ken Hunt 319-354-1079 David Ledwith 703-933-9477 Larry Meade 571-275-2523 Elton Morel 703-907-9951 Phil Silas 703-987-0817 Dixie Sommers 703-969-7931 Jean Tatalias 571-447-7977 </div>			15 Laurel Hill Equestrian Center - Cancelled NVBC Meeting- Cancelled			18 7:30 AM Silver Lake RP Toby Hardwick Larry Meade
			22 8:30 AM Meadowood Recreation Area Larry Cartwright Phil Silas			25 7:30 AM Huntley Meadows Hike/Bike Trail Ken Hunt Larry Meade
			29 8:30 AM Fort C.F. Smith Jeremy Beck		<u>May</u>	2 7:30 AM Leesylvania SP Ken Hunt Elton Morel
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> NVBC walks will be held at the discretion of the leader. Until Covid-19 spread prevention guidance changes, birders should maintain separation and not share spotting scopes. </div>			6 8:30 AM Long Branch Elton Morel			9 7:30 AM Trillium Trail Elton Morel David Ledwith
			13 8:30 AM Fort C. F. Smith Jeremy Beck			May 15 - 17 Chincoteague Spring Weekend <i>Members only/reservations required</i> <i>Sign up begins March 25, @6 am</i> Elton Morel Larry Meade
			20 8:30 AM Laurel Hill Equestrian Center Phil Silas			16 7:30 AM Occoquan Bay NWR David Ledwith Ken Hunt
				28 8:30 AM Neabsco RP - Boardwalk Phil Silas		23 8 AM Aquia Landing Elton Morel David Ledwith
						30 7:30 AM Conway-Robinson State Forest Toby Hardwick Larry Meade

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<u>June</u>			3 8:30 AM Long Branch Dixie Sommers			6 7:30 AM Bristoe Station Battlefield Park Toby Hardwick Elton Morel
						13 8 AM Crow's Nest NAP - Raven Road entrance Michael Lott Elton Morel
						13 9 AM Limberlost Trail Shenandoah NP X-trip <i>Email leader for details</i> Elton Morel (eltonlmorel@verizon.net)
						26 8 AM Bluebird Trail Larry Meade

DIRECTIONS

Aquia Landing Beach Park (5/23)

2846 Brooke Rd, Stafford 22554 From southbound I-95 towards Stafford, take exit 140 to Stafford, then left (east) on Courthouse Rd (Rt 630), go 3.5 mi. and turn right on Andrew Chapel Rd (Rt 629), go 0.9 mi. and under the railroad bridge to a slight left onto Brooke Rd (Rt 608) go 4.4 mi. to the park entrance, continue past park entrance gate to the parking lot at the end of the road. Meet in the parking lot.

Bles Park (4/8) 4830 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 44830 Riverside Pkwy. Meet at parking lot

Bluebird Trail (6/26) 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 (6/6) 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 mi. 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.

Conway Robinson State Forest (5/30) 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



*Basic Mesic Forest scene at
Crow's Nest Natural Area
Preserve photographed by Gary
Fleming, DCR*

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

Crow's Nest NAP-Raven Road entrance (6/13) From I-95 take the Stafford Exit (exit 140). Take Rt 630 (Courthouse Road) one mi. east to Stafford (intersection of 630 and US 1). Cross US 1 and continue east on Rt 630 for about 2.5 mi. Turn right onto Rt 629 (Andrew Chapel Road) and continue for 0.9 mi. Go under the railroad overpass at the community of Brooke and turn left onto Rt 608 (Brooke Road). Continue for 1.4 mi., then turn right onto gravel Rt 609 (Raven Road). Cross the 1-lane bridge over Accokeek Creek and continue for 0.2 mi. The Raven Road Access gate for Crow's Nest Natural Area Preserve will be on the left. Then travel 1.5 mi. on the gravel road until reaching the 18-space parking lot.

Trip Directions

Fort C. F. Smith (4/29, 5/13) 2411 24th St N, Arlington 22207 From I-66 east, take exit 72 (Spout Run Pkwy). At traffic light, turn right on Lee Hwy. At successive traffic lights, turn left onto Spout Run Pkwy, then left onto Lorcom Ln, then right onto Fillmore St. Go one block on Fillmore, turn right onto N. 24th St (watch for speed humps), and continue to park on left. Meet in parking lot at east end of park.

Huntley Meadows Hike and Bike Trail (4/25) 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).

Laurel Hill Equestrian Center (5/20) Lorton From I-495, take I-95 south about 7 mi. to exit 163 (Lorton Rd). Continue 1.4 mi. west on Rt 642/ Lorton Rd, then make a left on Rt 611/ Furnace Rd then an immediate right on to Dairy Rd. Proceed to and meet in the parking lot.

Leesylvania State Park (5/2) 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 (4/11) 6283 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 (5/6, 6/3) 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 (4/22) From I-495, take I-95 south 7 mi. to exit 163 (Lorton Rd). Turn left on Route 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 mi. to Meadowood on right (BLM, Lower Potomac Station Office). Park on right next to horse barns just before field station building.

Neabsco Regional Park - Boardwalk (5/28) 15125 Blackburn Rd, Woodbridge 22191 From I-495, take I-95 south about 14 mi. to exit 156 (Dale City/Rippon Landing/Rt. 784). Take exit 156A for Rt 784 east toward Rippon Landing. Continue 0.7 mi. cross Rt 1 where Dale Blvd becomes Rippon Blvd and continue down the hill another 0.4 mi. to a stop sign and turn right on Blackburn Rd. The park parking lot is then 0.2 mi. away on the left.

Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge (5/16) 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.

Silver Lake Park (4/18) 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 miles to Rt 55. Turn right onto Rt 55 and go 0.9 miles to Antioch Rd. Turn right onto Antioch and go 1.3 miles to Silver Lake Rd. Turn right and proceed to park entrance and continue to parking lot next to the lake. Meet in parking lot.

Trillium Trail-G. Richard Thompson Wildlife Management Area (5/9) (Fauquier Co) From I-495, take I-66 west 51 mi. to Linden exit (Rt 79). Go left (south) from exit ramp on Rt 79 approx. 1000 ft. to Rt 55. Turn left (east) onto Rt 55; go 1.2 mi. to Rt 638 (Freezeland Rd). Turn left (north) onto Rt 638. Follow Rt 638, as it bears right, 5.3 mi. to Trillium Trail Parking Area on right—look for sign on kiosk. (Parking Area is just before radio towers.) **Note:** participant must have an **access permit** issued by VA Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, www.dgif.virginia.gov, 1-866-721-6911.

Bird Banding at Occoquan Bay NWR - Suspended due to Covid-19 concerns



Ruddy Turnstone photographed by Evan Pannkuk

Note: Some of the following walks have been suspended temporarily due to the Covid-19 concerns.

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** 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 the main parking lot, closest to the Park Visitor Center.
- **Huntley Meadows Park, Mondays, 7 am (Apr-Sep) 8 am (Oct-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
- **Riverbend Park, first and third Fridays, 8 am, March 6-October 2.** Meet at Nature Center parking lot. No charge but call Riverbend Park to register at 703-759-9018.

Butterfly Counts

Birders are out looking for birds throughout the year. Every season has something that makes it special to us. In autumn there can be epic hawk migrations. Winter treats us to a wide variety of waterfowl. Warbler migration in the spring is always something for birders to look forward to. In the summer, the birds settle down to breed and this is the best time to do breeding bird atlases such as the VABBA2 which is in its fifth and final year. For many of us, summer also brings us the added bonus of the emergence of a wide variety of butterflies.

In addition to simply enjoying photographing the butterflies, we can be a part of citizen science by participating in organized butterfly counts. These counts are similar to Christmas Bird Counts in that they also have count circles, teams of counters and compilers. All results are reported to the National Butterfly Association (NABA). For those who are not early birds, butterfly counts start later than bird counts because butterflies are not usually up and flying until around 9:00 am at the earliest. After a butterfly count, there is often a tally rally at a local restaurant where everyone can exchange their sightings and often their photographs of the butterflies that they saw.

According to NABA, there are 439 butterfly counts happening around the country this year. In our area, there

are several counts to choose from. On the last Saturday of June, there is a count at Occoquan Bay NWR sponsored by the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia (ASNV). On the third Saturday of July, there will be a count centered at Merrimac Farm and administered by the Prince William Conservation Alliance. For this count, I cover areas in and around the Manassas Battlefield Park. For the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's count on the first Saturday of August, I have been at the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship for several years. There is an area there that is actually called "Butterfly Alley" and most years it has lived up to its name with excellent numbers and diversity of butterflies. I should also mention that ASNV is inaugurating a new butterfly count in Northern Virginia this year early September. It will be interesting to see what we find at that time of year.

Butterflies are beautiful and fun to study. Since most of them are so colorful, it's usually not too difficult to spot them. Also, you don't have to worry about listening for their vocalizations as you do for birds. They don't have any! You never know what you might find out in the field when you are doing a count. Perhaps you will find a new butterfly for a count circle like I did when I spotted an Ocola Skipper last year in

Loudoun County. I am looking forward to seeing lots of butterflies this summer and I hope you are too!

—Larry Meade



Zebra Swallowtail in Loudoun County photographed by Larry Meade

2019 MANASSAS-BULL RUN CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT SUMMARY

The 38th Annual Manassas-Bull Run Christmas Bird Count on December 15, 2019 had the highest total of participants yet at 137 and counted over 20,000 birds of 86 avian species. This particular count is sponsored by the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia (ASNV) and many of the participants are also Northern Virginia Bird Club members. The conditions were favorable, so there were many more walking miles than during the saturated conditions on last year's count. There were also several birders twelve years old and under getting a chance to participate in the oldest and biggest citizen-science project in the world. About half of the counters stopped for a great lunch at Cabell's Mill in Ellanor C. Lawrence Park. The overall species count is only 3 short of our all-time high of 89 set in 2014.

A first ever observation for the circle was a Wilson's Warbler! Other highlights included all-time highs of Tundra Swans (28), Bufflehead (37), and a Great Egret

was observed for only the second time. American Robin was the most abundant species with 3,673 counted. Also, all 7 of our potential wintering woodpecker species were tallied with abundant Red-headed Woodpeckers being recorded at Bull Run Regional Park.



Hybrid goose photographed by Gary Myers

There were other all-time highs for this count recorded for: Barred Owl (10); Common Raven (14); Merlin (3); Ruby-crowned Kinglet (32); and Pine Warbler (5). It was nice to see the Yellow-rumped Warbler count rebound from last year's all-time low of just 3 to a more expected 153. Bald Eagle sightings were also back up to a little above average at 22.

Another interesting observation was of a hybrid goose determined to be a wild bird that is a cross of Canada Goose and domestic Graylag Goose. Also tallied were 10 sparrow species

which included Chipping, Savannah, Swamp, Fox, and White-crowned.

Copies of the full results for the count have been recently published on the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia (ASNV) website.

—Phil Silas

NORTHERN VIRGINIA BIRD CLUB
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ARLINGTON, VA 22205-0812

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**DATED
MATERIAL**

JOIN THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA BIRD CLUB

Northern Virginia Bird Club dues for 2020 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: April 15 (cancelled), September (tbd), and November (tbd), 2020.

Next Board Meeting: Thursday, June 4, 2020, 7:30 pm, at Diane Marton's home. All club members are welcome at board meetings. For directions or to have items put on the agenda, please call or email Diane Marton at dsdm42@gmail.com.

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

Deadline for next issue of *The Siskin*: The August issue will include activities through October 2020. Please send items for publication by **July 1, 2020** to the editors at siskineditor@verizon.net.

CLUB CONTACTS

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