



# The SISKIN

Newsletter of the Northern Virginia Bird Club

Vol. 68, No. 3

August 2023

[www.nvabc.org](http://www.nvabc.org)

## Inside

- Calendar of NVBC field trips August 12 - November 4, 2023
- American Woodcocks at Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens
- Spring Chincoteague Trip Report
- Twitching in Oregon

**General Meeting Notes:** 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

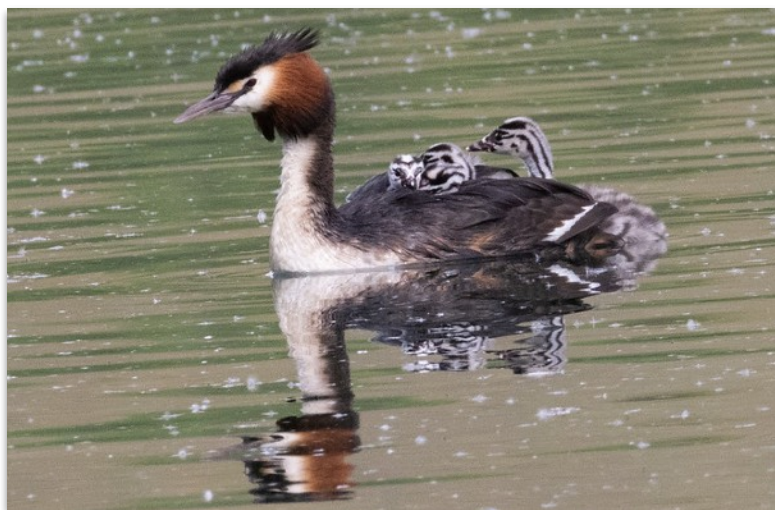
NVBC GENERAL MEETING—THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 8 PM

## Exploring the Birds and Islands of New Zealand

*Speaker: Dixie Sommers*

**D**ixie Sommers joined a Field Guides tour of New Zealand in November 2022 and observed 134 bird species including 53 endemics. The first stop was in Auckland to adjust to the time and season change with a visit to Tiritiri Matangi Island. This one square mile island near the edge of the harbor is a great conservation success story as it had been deforested and home to introduced predators such as rats and stoats. Reforestation and predator removal has allowed native birds to thrive. Besides the North and South Islands, they made 2 day-trips to other islands so there were boat rides and plenty of seabirds, shorebirds and waterfowl. And, of course, they saw a kiwi, and 3 penguin species. Dixie will tell the stories to go with some of her best photos, and the complete photos are in her New Zealand file available at [www.ddpix.smugmug.com](http://www.ddpix.smugmug.com).

Dixie last presented to NVBC about her visit to Cuba in 2016. She has now birded all over the world including all 7 continents. Her volunteer activities have also grown as she is currently the Treasurer of the Virginia Society of Ornithology as well as editing their newsletter. She leads bird walks for NVBC, Audubon Society of Northern Virginia, and Friends of Dyke Marsh. Dixie's efforts have been and continue to be very important in our efforts to help get the 2nd Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas fully funded and published.



*Tui (above left) and Great Crested Grebe with young (above right) photographed by Dixie Sommers*

## *Presidential Peentings*

**I**dentifying shorebirds can be frustrating for many birders. These birds can all look pretty much the same as they scurry around on beaches, mudflats or plowed fields. Even experienced birders can sometimes struggle to figure them out, especially if they are far away. We often say that color is not always the best field mark to use when making an ID and this is especially true with shorebirds. Noting the leg or bill color of a shorebird can be useful, but these features could be covered in mud. Usually, it's best to focus more on the size and shape of the bird's body and its bill. If there are many shorebirds, comparing and contrasting the different species present can be helpful. A large godwit with a long curved bill will really stand out from the smaller sandpipers.

While shorebirds can be challenging, they also provide rewarding birding experiences. The best months to see them are during spring migration in May and during fall migration in late July, August and into September. I always enjoy setting up my spotting scope to scan for unusual shorebirds. At a place like Bombay Hook in Delaware (where we will be going to in August) there can be hundreds of small sandpipers (peeps), dowitchers, avocets, and plovers to sort through. If you find something out of the ordinary while scanning the multitudes, it can be exciting. As mentioned in Elton's article, NVBC birders at Chincoteague found a breeding plumage Red-necked Phalarope. Rare shorebirds from Europe can sometimes show up and draw birders from far away who are hoping to add them to their life lists. Several years ago, a Black-tailed Godwit at Chincoteague was seen by throngs of enthusiastic birders.

Coastal locations are the best places to see shorebirds, but you can also find them in Northern Virginia. If the water levels are low enough, Huntley Meadows can be productive. Hunting Creek near Dyke Marsh has historically been a great place to see

shorebirds including the occasional rarity. A lesser known spot is Middlesex Pond in Chantilly which is easy to access and often has a nice assortment of shorebirds. Birders flocked there to see a Ruff a few years ago. I hope you can get out to see some of these sometimes challenging, but always fun to see, birds this year.

—Larry Meade



*Short-billed Dowitcher at Chincoteague photographed in 2007 by Larry Meade.*

## *American Woodcocks at Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens*

Last April, I learned through the birding grapevine that an American Woodcock could be seen feeding her young at Kenilworth Gardens Park in Washington DC. After the Dyke Marsh walk, I crossed the river to go look for them. I arrived at the park and found the River Trail where they were being seen. After asking a couple of other birders, I eventually was thrilled to find the mother woodcock with her young not far from the trail. She was feeding her four babies worms and did not seem to be bothered by my presence at all. I had never seen young woodcocks or ever photographed any woodcock at all. This was great! In my photo, you can see three of the young lined up behind their mother. I learned later that woodcocks only feed their young for about a week, so birders who saw these birds were fortunate to be within the window to see them.

—Larry Meade





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## *Spring Weekend Trip: Chincoteague, May 19 - 21, 2023*

The Northern Virginia Bird Club's spring trip to Chincoteague on May 19 to 21 was front-loaded with the best bird of the weekend. The trip started with a foray onto the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge's Wildlife Loop on Friday afternoon. On the far north end of the Wildlife Loop is Shoveler Pond where we arrived in perfect conditions for shore-birding – the water level was just right for concentrating together hundreds of shorebirds and the sun was behind us giving us ideal light. As we sifted through our first viewing of Dunlins, Short-billed Dowitchers, Semipalmated Sandpipers and Plovers, and Greater Yellowlegs, Ana Arguelles called me over to her scope to look at a phalarope. It was a female Red-necked Phalarope in full breeding plumage – what a stunningly beautiful shorebird! It augured a great start to the trip on which we collectively found 85 species.

That same drive around the Wildlife Loop also netted us a very active Snowy Egret as well as a Cattle Egret dining on two frogs it had caught in the marsh. Next on the agenda was a quick drive to the far end of the south beach parking lot where a previously scouted Piping Plover was nesting in an exclosure. We managed to get excellent looks at her as she hunkered down in the sand as best as she could.

We were undaunted by swarms of mosquitos on our outing to find the Chuck-will's-widow at sunset on Friday night, though we were successful only so far as hearing them. Despite being tantalizingly close to two singing "Chucks," we couldn't manage to see either.

Saturday morning began with a walk along the boardwalk near the hotel in the foggy, misting aftermath of a rain shower. We heard many Clapper Rails but failed to get a good look at one. We did manage to see both Glossy and White ibises and a handsome Black-bellied Plover.

The morning visit to the refuge yielded a Black Tern flying distantly offshore. We broke for lunch to elude a midday rain shower and regrouped in the afternoon. A pair of Black-necked Stilts on the causeway gave us nice looks while a pair of copulating Common Terns at the Queens Sound Landing tern colony were quite entertaining. A return trip to the refuge in the afternoon finally produced good looks at Pine Warblers and Brown-headed Nuthatches along the Marsh Trail, but again we were attacked by marauding mosquitos.

Our boat trip on Sunday morning with Daisey's Island Cruises on the Chincoteague Inlet was quite pleasant compared to the previous day's rain showers. We motored out to Gunboat Point where we found a pair of Red Knots in breeding plumage. We then proceeded to Fishing Point at the south entrance to Tom's Cove where there is an expanse of beach habitat. Hundreds of shorebirds -- mostly Sanderlings -- were feeding on Horseshoe Crab eggs. In amongst this feeding frenzy were four Red Knots. We also spotted a small group of Royal Terns, three of which were waddling together in a curious and delightful courtship dance.

—*Elton Morel*



*Red-necked Phalarope photographed by RJ Benson*



*Piping Plover in exclosure photographed by Peter Penczer*



*Common Terns photographed by RJ Benson*

## 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
<b><u>August</u></b>						
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <b>Trip Leaders</b>   Jeremy Beck 703-517-1816  Dave Boltz 703-599-8305  Larry Cartwright 703-941-3142  Toby Hardwick 703-201-1517  Bert Harris 615-440-0666  Ed LeGrand 908-268-6627  Joan Mashburn 703-209-8678  Larry Meade 571-275-2523  Mer Mietzelfeld 607-643-8307  Elton Morel 703-907-9951  Tom Nardone 703-946-7738  Phil Silas 703-987-0817  Dixie Sommers 703-969-7931 </div>						<b>12</b> <b>8 AM</b> <b>Bombay Hook X-Trip</b> <b>Members only/</b> <b>Registration Required</b> Larry Meade
						<b>19</b> <b>7:30 AM</b> <b>Huntley Meadows</b> Tom Nardone Mer Mietzelfeld
						<b>26</b> <b>8 AM</b> <b>Shenandoah River</b> <b>Campus at Cool</b> <b>Springs Battlefield</b> Elton Morel Dave Boltz
						<b><u>September</u></b> <b>2</b> <b>7:30 AM</b> <b>Silver Lake RP</b> Larry Meade
<b>3</b> <b>7:15 PM</b> <b>Swift Watch</b> Joan Mashburn <u>Call leader for meeting</u> <u>place and directions</u>			<b>6</b> <b>8:30 AM</b> <b>Long Branch</b> Dixie Sommers Tom Nardone			<b>9</b> <b>7:30 AM</b> <b>Leesylvania SP</b> Phil Silas
			<b>13</b> <b>8:30 AM</b> <b>Fort C.F. Smith</b> Jeremy Beck			<b>16</b> <b>7:30 AM</b> <b>Clifton Institute</b> Bert Harris Elton Morel
			<b>20</b> <b>8:30 AM</b> <b>Algonkian RP</b> Elton Morel Dave Boltz	<b>21</b> <b>NVBC</b> <b>Meeting</b> <b>8 PM</b>		<b>23</b> <b>7:30 AM</b> <b>Ocoquan Bay NWR</b> Phil Silas Larry Cartwright
			<b>27</b> <b>8:30 AM</b> <b>Huntley Meadows</b> <b>Hike/Bike Trail</b> Dixie Sommers			<b>30</b> <b>7:30 AM</b> <b>Leopold's Preserve</b> Ed LeGrand Toby Hardwick
<b><u>October</u></b>						
			<b>4</b> <b>8:30 AM</b> <b>Long Branch</b> Dixie Sommers Tom Nardone			<b>7</b> <b>8 AM</b> <b>Aquia Landing</b> <b>Beach Park</b> Elton Morel

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b><u>October</u></b>			<b>11</b> 8:30 AM <b>Neabsco Regional Park Boardwalk</b> Phil Silas			<b>14</b> 8 AM <b>Bristoe Station Battlefield Park</b> Toby Hardwick
			<b>18</b> 8:30 AM <b>Laurel Hill Equestrian Center</b> Phil Silas			<b>21</b> 8:15 AM <b>Sky Meadows SP</b> Elton Morel Ed LeGrand
			<b>25</b> 8:30 AM <b>Meadowood Recreation Area - Lower Potomac Field Station</b> Larry Cartwright Dixie Sommers			<b>28</b> 8 AM <b>Manassas Battlefield Park — Brawner Farm</b> Toby Hardwick
			<b><u>November 1</u></b> 8:30 AM <b>Long Branch</b> Tom Nardone			<b>4</b> 8 AM <b>Silver Lake RP</b> Ed LeGrand Toby Hardwick

#### DIRECTIONS

**NVBC Meeting (9/21) St. Andrews Episcopal Church**, 4000 Lorcom Ln, Arlington 22207, at the intersection of Lorcom Ln and Military Rd. From the intersection of Spout Run Pkwy and Lorcom Ln, go about a half mile on Lorcom to the second traffic light. Turn left onto Military and enter the first driveway on the right. There is some parking near the Church's back entrance and a bigger lot up the driveway. There is on-street parking. Enter at the back door facing Military Rd which leads to the Undercroft where the meeting is held.

**Algonkian Regional Park (9/20)** 47001 Fairway Dr, Sterling 20165 From I-495, take Rt 7 west 11 miles (mi.) to Cascades Pkwy north and drive 3 mi. to the park entrance. Proceed on Fairway Dr turning left onto Volcano Island Dr, then turn right into parking lot. Meet at the parking lot beside restrooms and Park Shelter 1.

**Aquia Landing Beach Park (10/7)** 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.

**Bombay Hook X-trip (8/12)** 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 (10/14)** 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 (9/16)** 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 0.3 mi. To the first lake and parking in the parking lot on the left. Please do not drive up to the house and park there.

**Fort C.F. Smith (9/13)** 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 Park (8/19)** 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 to park entrance on left. Meet in parking lot.

**Huntley Meadows Hike & Bake Trail (9/27)** From I-495, take Rt 1 south 0.5 mi. to Rt 633 (S. King Hwy). Turn right (west), go 2.5 mi. to park entrance and lot on left (just before Telegraph Rd).

**Laurel Hill Equestrian Center (10/18)** Lorton From I-495, take I-95 outh about 7 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



## **Trip Directions** *from page 5*

**Laurel Hill Equestrian Center (10/18)** *(continued)* onto Dairy Rd. Proceed to and meet in the parking lot.

**Leesylvania State Park (9/9)** 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 (9/30)** 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 (9/6, 10/4, 11/1)** 625 S Carlin Springs Rd, Arlington 22204 Take Rt 50, east from Fairfax or west from Rosslyn to Carlin Springs exit. Go south on Carlin Springs 0.5 mi. to Nature Center on left, just south of N. Va Community Hospital on left. Meet at Nature Center parking lot.

**Manassas Battlefield Park - Brawner Farm (10/28)** Manassas 20109 From I-495 take I-66 west 21 mi. to exit 43B for US-29 N. Continue on US 29 for 1.3 mi. Turn left onto Pageland Ln. Continue 0.5 mi. then turn right into Brawner Farm. Continue 0.3 mi. to Brawner Farm parking lot (6501 Pageland Ln, Gainesville 20155). Meet in the parking lot.

**Meadowood Recreation Area (10/25)** 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.

**Neabsco Regional Park Boardwalk (10/11)** 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 the traffic light and turn right on Blackburn Rd. The park parking lot is then 0.2 mi. on the left.

**Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge (9/23)** 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 (8/26)** 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 (9/2, 11/4)** 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 (10/21)** 11012 Edmonds Ln, Delaplane 20144 From I-495, take I-66 west 42 mi. to exit for Rt 17 north (Delaplane/Paris). Go 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/](http://www.loudounwildlife.org/events/)
- **Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship, fourth Saturday, 8 am** Meet at Education Center. [www.loudounwildlife.org/events/](http://www.loudounwildlife.org/events/)
- **Dyke Marsh, Sundays, 8 am** Visit the Friends of Dyke Marsh web site, [www.fodm.org](http://www.fodm.org)
- **Great Falls National Park, Sundays, 8 am** Meet in front of snack/concession stand the main parking lot near 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](http://www.pwconserve.org/eventsindex.html#birds)
- **Riverbend Park, first and third Fridays, 8 am, beginning April to October 20.** Meet at the Nature Center parking lot off Jeffrey Road. No fee but call Riverbend Park at 703-759-9018 to register. Leader: Robin Duska

## **eBird Sharing Contact Update**

We are updating the NVBC eBird contacts so that sharing lists on walks is a bit easier. Please help by sending your first and last name, preferred eBird email and eBird username to [Joan@mashburns.com](mailto:Joan@mashburns.com).



*Northern Bobwhite photographed by Joan Mashburn at Hog Island WMA*

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## *Twitching in Oregon*

It was a rainy Friday afternoon before the Superbowl, and I found myself in Portland, Oregon. The purpose of my visit was a weekend-long conference for my work, but my heart wasn't in my work. This was my first visit to the west coast as a birder, and I was really excited to see some west coast birds!

For work, I was committed to teaching a class at 11am that Friday, but immediately after the class, I jumped in my rental car. If I left right then, I would have time for the two hour drive out on Hwy 26 to the Oregon coast, and specifically Nehalem Bay, where the Nehalem River dumps into the Pacific. This is a brackish water system surrounded by low scrub, sandy beaches and low salt-pine forests.

As I walked up and down the windy beaches, I was delighted to spot Pelagic Cormorants, Red-throated and Common Loons, Common Goldeneyes, Western, Iceland, and Glaucous-winged Gulls (gulls being particularly difficult for me!). One rare sighting was a flock of 12 Semi-palmated Plovers and two Dunlins, who happened to be on the beach at the same time as me.

Finally, with the sun fading, I figured I'd better get back to the hotel before my wife called out the state patrol looking for me. My route back had me headed up US 101 ("The 101" as the locals call it). For those of you not familiar with the Pacific Coast Highway, it is one of the most stunning highways in the United States. From San Diego to Seattle, it is essentially a cliffside two-lane road where on one side you have the booming Pacific Ocean, and on the other, sheer rock face and tall old-growth Douglas Fir forest.

When one finds oneself on this highway, at sunset, one is biologically compelled to pull over and take a picture of the sunset for Instagram. So that's what I did. I found a pull-off, turned off my car, and grabbed my cell phone. I left my good camera and binoculars in the car, figuring there's not much need, since you can't see anything from high up above the beach. I had already done my birding and submitted my checklists. I just wanted a quick snap of the sunset and would be on my way.

Having taken my sunset photo, I noticed, in a scrubby tree just beyond the rock wall keeping me from plunging 200 feet to my death, was a small round bird, about the size of my fist. What was it though? It just looked like a fuzzy lump in the tree. I decided to get closer.

As I got within six feet of the bird, I realized I was looking at a very tiny owl. Not being an expert on owls, I assumed it must be a Western Screech Owl. But I only had my phone, and the pictures from my phone are terrible. I needed my good camera.

Backing away slowly, I softly chanted to the owl, pleading, "Please stay! Please stay! Please stay!"

I quickly and quietly opened my car door and grabbed my camera from the front seat. As I turned it on and checked the settings, a lime-green VW camper bus full of hippies pulled up right in front of the owl. (The 101 is absolutely full of these VW hippie buses.)

I made a motion to the occupants as they were getting out, waving my arms at them and pleading with my eyes, as if to say, "QUIET! BE STILL!" They were somewhat confused, but complied, standing still.

I stepped into place, and \*click click click\* got the shot. Owl!!!!!!

Breathing easier, I told the hippies (incorrectly), "That's a screech owl! See it?"

"Yeah, man, that's so cool!" They smiled and beamed, and we all laughed, and I assured them that I really was very normal, but it was very special to see such a bird. I got in my car and drove away, with the owl still in that tree when I left.

Later, when I was able to study the photos more clearly, I realized that my owl was, in fact, not a screech owl, but a Northern Pygmy Owl, and now, isn't that just a cool bird?

I drove the remaining two hours in the total darkness of night back to the hotel, completely beaming inside that the best bird I saw that day was the one I totally never expected to see.

—*Scott Harris*



*Northern Pygmy Owl photographed by Scott Harris*

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

Northern Virginia Bird Club dues for 2023 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](mailto:lgmeade@gmail.com) or leave a message for Elizabeth Fenton at [emfenton@cox.net](mailto:emfenton@cox.net).

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

#### **NVBC ON THE WEB**

Current information and special notices about NVBC meetings, field trips, and other activities, along with a printable membership form, are posted on the club's website, [www.nvabc.org](http://www.nvabc.org). If you have information or pictures you would like to see on the website, please email the webmaster, Jeremy Beck at [jghyll+nvabc@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:lgmeade@gmail.com). Put "EXCHANGE" in the subject field and your full name in the message area. You will receive a response from [nvbc-exchange@googlegroups.com](mailto:nvbc-exchange@googlegroups.com). The list is for NVBC members' use only.

**General Meeting Dates:** September 21, 2023 and November 16, 2023, February 15 and April 18, 2024.

**Next Board Meeting:** Thursday, September 1, 2023, 7:30 pm. To join the Zoom board meeting or to have items put on the agenda, please email [lgmeade@gmail.com](mailto:lgmeade@gmail.com).

**Deadline for next issue of *The Siskin*:** The November issue will include activities through January 2024. Please send items for publication by **October 1, 2023** to the editors at [nvbcisiskineditor@gmail.com](mailto:nvbcisiskineditor@gmail.com).

#### **CLUB CONTACTS**

**President:** Larry Meade,  
571-275-2523

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## Chincoteague Spring Trip Birds



*Snowy Egret (above) photographed by RJ Benson*



*Ruddy Turnstone (left) and Semipalmated Plover (below left) photographed by Peter Penczer*



*Red Knot (below) photographed by RJ Benson*

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## Additional Chincoteague Birds



*American Oystercatcher photographed by RJ Benson*



*Black-necked Stilts photographed by RJ Benson*



*Forster's Tern photographed by RJ Benson*



*Least Tern photographed by Peter Penczer*



*Royal Terns photographed by RJ Benson*