



The SISKIN

Newsletter of the Northern Virginia Bird Club

Vol. 68, No. 4

November 2023

www.nvabc.org

Inside

- Calendar of NVBC field trips, November 1, 2023 - February 11, 2024
- 2024 ASNV Winter Waterfowl Survey
- Upcoming Christmas Bird Counts in Northern Virginia
- 2nd VA Breeding Bird Atlas Update
- 2023 Treasurer's Report
- Pelicans at Smith Island and Fort Wool

Insert - 2024 membership renewal notice

New Siskin Image On Nameplate

The NVBC Board determined it was time for a refresh of the Siskin nameplate and was fortunate to receive the above photograph from club member Seth Honig. We want to recognize the long-term use of the previous image taken by Larry Meade.

Winter Chincoteague Trip

The Winter Chincoteague Weekend club trip is scheduled for February 9 to February 11 (Friday to Sunday), 2024. The trip will be limited to 16 people and sign-up procedures are detailed below. NVBC membership is required for this trip and all tour participants will need to declare that they are vaccinated for COVID when they sign up.

February is an excellent time to visit Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and the Chesapeake

Continued on pg. 2

NVBC GENERAL MEETING—THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 8 PM

Research on the Effects of Forest Fragmentation on Birds of Sabah, Malaysian Borneo

Speaker: Will Brooks

Will Brooks traveled to Malaysian Borneo to conduct field work for his PhD dissertation research at George Mason University. Borneo holds hyper-species-diverse tropical rainforests which are imperiled by deforestation. In tropical rainforests, some species will experience population declines in response to forest fragmentation. Will aims to find which bird species are negatively impacted by forest fragmentation in Sabah, Malaysian Borneo and explore mechanisms explaining their sensitivity. He used automatic recording devices to document species presence in fragments and captured birds to gather body measurements and samples for DNA analysis. This summer he worked in forest fragments in an oil palm plantation and in primary rainforest in Maliau Basin, a circular geological feature known as "Sabah's lost world."

His presentation will cover the challenges as well as the lovely surprises of working in this environment. One example, besides the wonderful birds, was encountering a Bay Cat, the most elusive cat in the world.



Bulwer's Pheasant photographed by Will Brooks

Early bird refreshments start at 7:30 pm. Any contributions of food or beverage will be most gratefully received. There will be a drawing for door prizes. Northern Virginia Bird Club pins will be available for members who would like to buy them (\$5 each).

MEETING PLACE: St. Andrews Episcopal Church, 4000 Lorcom Lane, Arlington, 22207. Directions are on page 4.

Presidential Peentings

Birding together as a group is rewarding. It's a great way to see your birding friends and make new ones. Birders learn from each other and help each other spot the birds. It can be great fun sharing the experience of seeing an unexpected bird or watching interesting avian behaviors. I especially enjoy it when I am with new birders who get excited about seeing life birds that they were hoping for.

As much as I enjoy birding with others by leading and participating in bird walks, I have found that birding by myself can also be gratifying and fruitful. When I head out, I can go wherever I want on my own time schedule. It's a great opportunity to explore smaller birding locations not generally visited by bird clubs. Some birders have been endeavoring to visit all of the eBird hotspots within a five-mile radius of where they live. This has the potential to expand their local knowledge and also help eBird by providing them with data from under-birded locations.

I found when I first started birding that I often seemed to develop more active knowledge by birding solo. Of course I enjoyed seeing birds pointed out to me by more experienced birders, but sometimes this can be somewhat of a passive experience. To me, figuring out a bird that I found myself gave me extra satisfaction and really helped me learn. I remember that one of the first unusual birds that I identified myself was a Wilson's

Snipe that I found at Huntley Meadows. When I first saw this strange looking bird, I was mystified and very curious. I soon found it in my handy Sibley Guide and came to the realization that snipe are real! Who knew? Birding solo also helped me learn bird vocalizations as I puzzled over the various songs and chips that I was hearing out in the field. No one was there to tell me what they were, so I had to puzzle them out myself. I think this active way of learning helped it all stick in my brain. Whether you are birding alone or with others, I hope you have fun and keep learning about the birds around us.

—Larry Meade



*A Wilson's Snipe photographed at Huntley Meadows
by Larry Meade*

Winter Chincoteague Trip *from p.1*

Bay Bridge-Tunnel Islands (CBBT). The Refuge is loaded with wintering waterfowl while the CBBT is famous for wintering sea ducks. We typically find 90 or more species on this trip. Highlights from previous years have been Northern Gannets, Red-necked Grebes, Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Snow Geese, Brants, Common Goldeneyes, Long-tailed Ducks, Common Eiders, Harlequin Ducks, Purple Sandpipers, Great Cormorants and even Razorbills. One of last year's highlights was a visit to the refuge at dusk on Friday night to listen and watch American Woodcocks displaying above the horse corral. We will try to do that again weather permitting.

Plans for the weekend include birding the Chincoteague area Friday afternoon starting at 3:15 pm. (optional) and Saturday starting at 7:30 am. Activities on Friday and Saturday include birding along Beach Road, Swan Cove, Tom's Cove and around the Wildlife Loop. Time and tides permitting, we will also visit the Queen Sound Flats and Mariner's Point. On Sunday, we will bird Kiptopeke State Park before our trip to CBBT Island #4. We will be limited to a one and a half hour visit on island #4 due to the construction of a new tunnel. The CBBT trip requires security forms in advance and an extra fee for the security escort, expected to be five dollars per person. The trip concludes at 12:30 pm on Sunday.

Because the Chincoteague weekends are such popular trips, we will continue with the new sign-up procedure established last spring to enable wider member participation. Registration will open on Wednesday, November 15, 2023, at 6 am. To sign up for this trip,

please email Elton Morel at eltonmorel@verizon.net. All members who send an email between 6 and 7 am will be eligible to be put on the list. However, club members who were not on the Winter 2023 or the Spring 2023 trip will get a higher priority, in the order received. They will be followed by those who have been on one of those trips, in time stamp order. The 16 slots are likely to fill up very fast and therefore, a waiting list will be started with those who respond in the first hour. Any club member who sends an email after 7 am on November 15 will not be given the higher priority over those in the first hour but will be considered for any available slot or waitlisted in order of the time stamp. When signing up, please affirm that you are vaccinated for the COVID-19 virus and indicate whether you are interested in the group dinner on Saturday night at Bill's Seafood Restaurant and Sunday morning's CBBT Island trip. Please do not make your hotel reservations until your trip registration has been confirmed.

We have obtained a special rate of \$92 including taxes per night on fifteen rooms for Friday and Saturday nights at the Best Western Chincoteague Island Hotel on Maddox Boulevard. A two-night stay is usually required. Hotel reservations must be made by January 20 to get this special group rate. Participants should make their own reservations by calling 800-553-6117 once they have received confirmation they are on the trip. Be sure to say that you are with the Northern Virginia Bird Club. Check-in time is 3 pm on Friday, February 9, with a prior 48-hour notice policy for cancellation. Also note that Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge has an entrance fee per car.

—Elton Morel

Winter Waterfowl Survey

On Saturday, February 3 and Sunday, February 4, 2024, birders of all skill levels will join up to count waterfowl in Fairfax, Arlington, and Prince William counties, including the Potomac and Occoquan watersheds. Novice birders will be paired with expert bird enthusiasts. Larry Cartwright continues as the volunteer compiler for this year's count. For more information and to join the team, email info@audubonva.org at the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia. Tina Dudley will be the point of contact.

The Second Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas

Thanks to the support of the Northern Virginia Bird Club and many others, work toward publication of the Atlas is ramping up!

The Atlas now has a Managing Editor. Austin Kane began her new duties on July 31, and is on staff at Virginia Tech's Conservation Management Institute (CMI). Among her initial tasks are to complete the draft Atlas publication plan and standards, and to hire the species account authors. The goal is to publish the web site in late 2025.

The Atlas website will present the results of five years of field data collection on breeding birds throughout Virginia, gathered by a few paid staff and many trained volunteers — including NVBC members! The review and “clean up” of these 5.5 million records was completed in 2022. The analysis that results in data for maps, tables, charts and other content of the Atlas species accounts is expected to be completed in October 2023.

The publication work is being funded by the Virginia Society of Ornithology. As NVBC members know, the VSO has been working toward raising the \$300,000 needed to complete the publication of the Atlas as a publicly available free website. To date, we have raised more than half of the total needed! NVBC has generously sponsored the Hooded Merganser as part of the Sponsor-a-Species campaign.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA

Saturday, December 16, 2023

- *WASHINGTON D.C.*

Includes area of Virginia inside the Beltway and parts of Fairfax County south of Alexandria to include Dyke Marsh. To participate, email compiler, Larry Cartwright: prowarbler@verizon.net or contact Nature Forward (formerly Audubon Naturalist Society) through Pam Oves at Pam.Oves@natureforward.org.

Monday, December 18, 2023

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

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

Sunday, December 17, 2023

- *MANASSAS-BULL RUN*

To participate, contact Phil Silas by December 8 at epsdcva@aol.com or 703-987-0817.

- *THE PLAINS/AIRLIE*

To participate, please register online at: <https://cliftoninstitute.org/event/the-24th-annual-the-plains-airlie-christmas-bird-count/>. If you have questions or need help registering, please contact coordinator, Bridget Bradshaw (email: bbradshaw@cliftoninstitute.org, phone: 540-341-3651).

- *SENECA MD/VA*

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

Wednesday, December 27, 2023

- *NOKESVILLE*

For more information or to register, contact Ashley Studholme at the Prince William Conservation Alliance at alliance@pwconserve.org.

Thursday, December 28, 2023

- *CENTRAL LOUDOUN*

Sign up at www.loudounwildlife.org or contact compiler, Joe Coleman at jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org or Bryan Henson at bhenson@loudounwildlife.org.

Saturday, December 30, 2023

- *CALMES NECK*

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

- *FORT BELVOIR*

To volunteer, contact compiler, Kurt Gaskill at kurtcapt87@verizon.net or 703-768-2172.

Sunday, December 31, 2023

- *SUGARLOAF MOUNTAIN*

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

Dec 31, 2023 or Jan 1, 2024 - not determined by printing deadline:

- *WALKERTON*

Count area is primarily in Middle Peninsula. Contact by December 13. Contact compiler, Fred Atwood at fredatwood@yahoo.com.

There are still species available to sponsor! And we welcome any contributions at <https://>

www.virginiabirds.org/about-vabba2
Thank you!

—Dixie Sommers

Upcoming Trips and Events

Compiled by Elton Morel

Note:

- Beginning birders are welcome on all trips.
- When reservations are required, please call one of the trip leaders. Phone numbers are below.
- If in doubt about a trip because of weather, please call one of the leaders.
- Check the NVBC website for updated information about trips: <http://www.nvabc.org/trips.htm>.
- To receive email notices, join the NVBC eMail Exchange. For sign-up directions see back page of the newsletter.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																												
<u>November</u>			1 8:30 AM Long Branch Tom Nardone Bob Butterworth			4 8 AM Silver Lake RP Ed LeGrand Toby Hardwick																												
<table border="1"><tr><td colspan="2">Trip Leaders</td></tr><tr><td>Bob Butterworth</td><td>703-343-0933</td></tr><tr><td>Larry Cartwright</td><td>703-941-3142</td></tr><tr><td>Toby Hardwick</td><td>703-201-1517</td></tr><tr><td>Ed LeGrand</td><td>908-268-6627</td></tr><tr><td>Joan Mashburn</td><td>703-209-8678</td></tr><tr><td>Larry Meade</td><td>571-275-2523</td></tr><tr><td>Mer Mietzelfeld</td><td>607-643-8307</td></tr><tr><td>Elton Morel</td><td>703-907-9951</td></tr><tr><td>Tom Nardone</td><td>703-946-7738</td></tr><tr><td>Cindy Nickerson</td><td>917-825-5327</td></tr><tr><td>Phil Silas</td><td>703-987-0817</td></tr><tr><td>Dixie Sommers</td><td>703-969-7931</td></tr><tr><td>Ed Wallace</td><td>504-343-1433</td></tr></table>			Trip Leaders		Bob Butterworth	703-343-0933	Larry Cartwright	703-941-3142	Toby Hardwick	703-201-1517	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	Cindy Nickerson	917-825-5327	Phil Silas	703-987-0817	Dixie Sommers	703-969-7931	Ed Wallace	504-343-1433	8 8 AM Dyke Marsh Tom Nardone Bob Butterworth			11 8 AM Leopold's Preserve Ed LeGrand Toby Hardwick
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December 14, 2023 - January 5, 2024— CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS (NORTHERN VIRGINIA CBC See p. 3)																																		

DIRECTIONS

NVBC Meeting (11/16) 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 Park (11/18, 1/27)
 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),

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<u>January</u>			3 8:30 AM Long Branch Tom Nardone Dixie Sommers			6 8:30 AM Riverbend RP Mer Mietzelfeld Larry Meade
			10 8:30 AM Burke Lake Park Phil Silas Bob Butterworth			13 8 AM Northern Neck X-trip Members only/ email leader to register Larry Meade Joan Mashburn
			17 8:30 AM Neabsco Regional Park - Boardwalk Phil Silas Bob Butterworth			20 8 AM Silver Lake RP Toby Hardwick Bob Butterworth
			24 8 AM Huntley Meadows Park Tom Nardone Dixie Sommers			27 8 AM Aquia Landing Park Elton Morel Bob Butterworth
			31 8 AM Dyke Marsh Tom Nardone Joan Mashburn	<u>February</u>		3 8 AM Occoquan Bay NWR Phil Silas Larry Meade
			7 8:30 AM Long Branch Tom Nardone Bob Butterworth			9 - 11 Chincoteague Weekend Members only Sign up via email starting on November 15, 2023 at 6 am Elton Morel Phil Silas

Aquia Landing Park (11/18, 1/27)
go 4.4 mi. to the park entrance, continue past park entrance gate to the parking lot at the end of the road. Meet in the parking lot.

Blandy Experimental Farm/State Arboretum of Virginia (11/25) 400 Blandy Farm Ln, Boyce, 22620 Take I-66 west to Rt 17 north (Exit 23, Delaplane/Paris). Follow Rt 17 north to junction with Rt 50 west. Turn left at traffic light onto Rt 50/17; go 7.8 mi., turn left onto Rt 750 to the Arboretum.

Burke Lake Park (1/10) 7315 Ox Rd, Fairfax Station 22039 From I-495, take exit 54 west (Braddock Rd). If coming from the North, stay in right lane of exit. Go 1.5 mi. on Braddock Rd then left onto Burke Lake Rd. Go 4.7 mi. and turn left onto Rt 123 (Ox Rd). Turn left at second traffic light

(big park signs), and turn left immediately after the entrance booth. Park in the first lot on the right (by the mini-golf course).

Dyke Marsh (11/8, 12/13, 1/31) 6401 George Washington Memorial Pkwy, Alexandria 22307 (Belle Haven Park and Marina) From Alexandria, take George Washington Pkwy south. Cross I-495; continue 1.2 mi. to Belle Haven Park entrance on the left. Meet at south parking lot.

Huntley Meadows Park (11/29, 1/24) 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.

Leopold's Preserve (11/11) 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 (11/12/6, 1/3, 2/7) 625 S Carlin Springs Rd, Arlington 22204 Take Rt 50, east from Fairfax or west from Rosslyn to Carlin Springs exit. Go south on Carlin Springs 0.5 mi. to Nature Center on left, just south of N. Va Community Hospital on left. Meet at Nature Center parking lot.

Mason Neck State Park (12/9) 7301 High Point Rd, Lorton 22079 From I-495, take I-95 south 7 mi. to Lorton exit. Left on Rt 642 to Rt 1. Right on Rt 1 to Rt 242 (Gunston Rd). Left on

Trip Directions from page 4

Mason Neck State Park (12/9)

Rt 242; go 4 mi. to Mason Neck Management Area. Turn right, follow paved road to end at Visitor Center. State fee area.

Neabsco Regional Park - Boardwalk

(1/17) 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 it 156A for Rt 784 east toward Rippon Landing. Continue 0.7 mi. across Rt 1 where Dale Blvd becomes Rippon Blvd and continue down the hill another 0.4 mi. to a stop light and turn right on Blackburn Rd. The park parking lot is then 0.2 mi. away on the left.

Northern Neck X-trip (1/13) Meet at the Silver Diner, 6592 Springfield Mall. From the Beltway, take I-95 south to exit 169A (Springfield/Franconia) (Rt 644E). From exit ramp, turn right onto Franconia Rd E. Stay in the right lane. Go about 0.3 mi. on Franconia Rd E, past Loisdale Rd, and turn right into Springfield Mall. Go about 325 ft; turn left and go about 150 ft; then turn left again and go another 200 ft to the Silver Diner on the left.

Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge (12/2, 2/3)

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.

Riverbend Park (Visitor Center)

(1/6) 8700 Potomac Hills St, Great Falls 22066 From I-495, take Rt. 193 west 5 mi. to Rt 603 (Riverbend Rd). Turn right onto Rt 603; go 2 mi. to Jeffery Rd. Turn right onto Jeffery; and go 0.8 mi. to main park entrance sign on right. Turn right and continue 0.5 mi. to Visitor Center parking lot. Meet in front of Visitor Center.

Silver Lake RP (11/4, 1/20)

16198 Silver Lake Rd, Haymarket 20169 From I-495, take I-66 west 24 mi. to exit 40 (Rt 15). Turn south onto Rt 15 (toward Haymarket) and go 0.3 miles to Rt 55. Turn right onto Rt 55 and go 0.9 mi. to Antioch Rd. Turn right onto Antioch and go 1.3 mi. to Silver Lake Rd. Turn right and proceed to park entrance and continue to parking lot next to the lake. Meet in parking lot.

Woodbridge Veterans Memorial

Park (11/15) 14300 Veterans Dr, Woodbridge, 22191 From I-495, take I-95 south 9 mi. to (left) exit 161 (Woodbridge). Go south on Rt 1 about 3.5 mi. to left turn onto Featherstone Rd. Continue on Featherstone about a mile and cross the RR tracks, turn left and proceed about 1 mile to the community center on the left, meet near Veterans Drive in front of the center.

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
- **Great Falls National Park, Sundays, 8 am** Meet in 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/events/.
- **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

Pine Siskins

See short article and additional photographs of Pine Siskins in the online addendum.

Treasurer's Report for Fiscal Year 2023

The Club 2023 Financial Report follows. The membership chair reports 170 family memberships and 287 individual memberships with a total of 627 members at the time of the August Siskin mailing.

In FY 2023 the Club once again gave a grant to the Community Cloud Forest Conservation organization. In addition, the Club donated \$500 to the VA Breeding Bird Atlas publishing efforts as part of our 3 year pledge.

During the year, it became clear that with the increase in costs for speaker honorariums, meeting hall use, and printing costs, that the Club would not break even for the year. At its February meeting, the Board looked at cost projections for 5 years and considered what dues would be necessary to have revenues meet expenses. Because the Club has over \$10,000 in reserve funds, the Board decided to use our reserve funds to offset the higher expenses for the next few years and will consider a dues increase when necessary.

At the close of the year, the Club had \$14,086 in total assets, including those deposited for future years dues (\$3,580) and for future grants (\$378). Amazon discontinued their Smile donation program this year.

Income received

Dues for 2023	5,725
Pin sales	35
Donations,	315
Amazon Smile	126
Total Income	\$6,201

Expenses

Organizational costs (includes fees for Paypal, web host, PO box, supplies, etc.)	\$965
Meeting expenses (includes hall rental, speaker honorariums, prizes, refreshments)	1,154
Printing and postage	4,049
Educational Grants	500
Atlas Donation	500
Total expenses	\$7,168

Net for 2023 - \$967

—Jean Tatalias, Treasurer

Pelicans at Smith Island and Fort Wool

This past June I took a day trip to Smith Island, a community in the middle of the Chesapeake Bay. Smith Island is a series of islands which is mostly in Maryland, but some islands are in Virginia. The people of Smith Island all live in four villages in the Maryland section. This tour was run by a company called Delmarva Birding Weekends. I did a couple of trips earlier in the year with them which I also enjoyed.

Our main objective for the day was to see and photograph the Brown Pelican colonies in the area. For me, the main draw was to see baby pelicans. We started at the dock in Crisfield, Maryland where we boarded a boat bound for Smith Island. After a forty-five minute ride, we arrived at the village of Tylerton. The group split up and boarded several small skiffs which then motored out to see the pelican colonies. We saw several interesting birds on the way, but we were mostly focused on getting to the pelicans.

We first arrived at a Brown Pelican colony on one of the Virginia islands. Pelicans were everywhere! I estimated that there were at least a thousand of them. Unfortunately, there were no baby pelicans to be seen there. Many of the pelicans were incubating eggs, but babies would come later in the season. We then headed over to another colony which was in Maryland and immediately saw many baby Brown Pelicans. We were able to pull the skiffs right up to the shore and photograph what are referred to as “heart-back” baby pelicans. We caught them at just the right time to see the brown feathers starting to develop on their backs in contrast to their otherwise all white bodies. Amazingly, the brown feathers formed perfectly shaped hearts.

After seeing the pelicans, we headed back to have a lunch of crab cakes and a slice of the famous Smith Island Cake. We then visited the museum where we learned about the people and history of Smith Island. During a short bird walk around the area on foot, we found several Seaside Sparrows. The day ended with the boat ride back to Crisfield.

It's nice to see that our region's Brown Pelicans are doing so well

—*Larry Meade*

On June 26, 2023, Diane Woolverton and I had a memorable up-close experience with baby Brown Pelicans. We visited the Royal Tern colony at Fort Wool on Rip Rap Island, Hampton Virginia — my winning prize in the raffle organized by the Virginia Society of Ornithology to raise funds for the Second Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas. This location that is closed to the public is the alternative nesting habitat created for the displaced colony of seabirds from the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel complex.

In addition to the numerous nesting Royal Terns, Laughing Gulls, and Snowy Egrets, we found baby Brown Pelicans. We saw pips open, eggs hatch, eggshells fall to the side, and many pelican families.

—*Joan Mashburn*

(Note: additional pelican photographs in online addendum)



Smith Island Brown Pelicans with “heart-back” baby pelicans photographed by Larry Meade



Joan Mashburn photographed Brown Pelicans hatching and very young stage at Fort Wool on Rip Raps Island.

NORTHERN VIRGINIA BIRD CLUB
P.O. BOX 5812
ARLINGTON, VA 22205-0812

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**DATED
MATERIAL**

JOIN THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA BIRD CLUB

Northern Virginia Bird Club dues for 2024 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 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.

If you have information or pictures you would like to see on the website,

please email the webmaster, Jeremy Beck at jghyll+nvabc@gmail.com.

NVBC eMail Exchange

By participating in the club's email exchange, you can get email notices of late updates to *The Siskin* and the field trip schedule. To join the exchange, send an email to lgmeade@gmail.com. Put "EXCHANGE" in the subject field and your full name in the message area. You will receive a response from nvbc-exchange@googlegroups.com. The list is for NVBC members' use only.

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

Next Board Meeting: Thursday, November 30, 2023, 7:30 pm. To join the Zoom board meeting or to have items put on the agenda, please email lgmeade@gmail.com.

Deadline for next issue of *The Siskin*: The February issue will include activities through April 2024. Please send items for publication by January 1, 2024, to the editors at nvbcsiskineditor@gmail.com.

CLUB CONTACTS

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Photographs of Pine Siskins

By Seth Honig

Photographing the Pine Siskin

Every two or three years, Pine Siskins make irregular movements called irruptions into southern and eastern North America. When Conifer and Alder Tree seeds are scarce in the boreal forests of Canada, Pine Siskin flocks move south to fields of wild sunflowers, thistles, and feed on grass seeds, young tree buds, insects and visit suburban feeders.

One such irruption happened in late October 2018 at Fort C. F. Smith. Feeders were out, and the Pine Siskins showed up in good numbers. They arrived hungry after their long flight and enjoyed the seeds there; so much in fact, that one individual sat on a branch for quite a long time, his belly bulging. (Photograph on right.) Although they were seen elsewhere that year, including Leesylvania State Park and Huntley Meadows, they seemed most numerous at Fort C. F. Smith.

—Seth Honig



Photographs taken:

Top Right and Bottom Right: Fort C. F. Smith

Right: on Eastern Arborvitae at Blandy Farm

Below Left : Leesylvania State Park



Additional Brown Pelican Photographs at Fort Wool



Brown Pelicans at Fort Wool, Rip Raps Island photographed by Joan Mashburn



Brown Pelican family photographed by Diane Woolverton



Brown Pelican hatchlings photographed by Joan Mashburn

Additional Photographs of Brown Pelicans at Smith Island

By Larry Meade



Brown Pelican colony on Virginia area of Smith Island Baby Pelicans



Brown Pelican families