



# The SISKIN

Newsletter of the Northern Virginia Bird Club

Vol. 69, No. 1

February 2024

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

## Inside

- Calendar of NVBC field trips, February 14 - May 4, 2024
- Occoquan Bird Banding Station Report
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### ***A reminder to pay your 2024 dues***

If not paid, this will be the last issue you receive. *The Siskin* mailing label shows the year through which your dues are current or "CO" for complimentary. **Thanks!**

## Chincoteague Spring Weekend Trip

**T**he Chincoteague Spring weekend is scheduled for May 17 through 19, 2024 (Friday to Sunday). The trip is limited to 24 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.

Mid-May is an excellent time to visit the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Spring shorebird migration is in full swing with most birds in breeding plumage. Historically, the club's trips tally about 100 species including such Eastern Shore specialties as Black-necked Stilts, American Oystercatchers, Piping Plovers, Whimbrels, Marbled Godwits, Red Knots, Little Blue Herons, Tricolored Herons, Western Cattle Egrets, Glossy and White Ibis, Least, Royal, and Common Terns, Black Skimmers,

*Continued on p.2*

NVBC GENERAL MEETING—THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 8 PM

## Battlefields for Birds

*Speaker: Megan Massa*

**L**ocal birder, artist and scientist Megan Massa will present on her recently completed master's degree in Applied Ecology and Conservation Biology from Frostburg State University/University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science Appalachian Lab. Our local National Battlefield Parks such as Manassas and Harpers Ferry are managed for historical and cultural heritage, not necessarily for wildlife. Megan will share the results of her research on how well these parks conserve Grasshopper Sparrows and Eastern Meadowlarks, and how populations are doing in parklands compared to privately owned lands in the region. The results may surprise you!



Eastern Meadowlark artwork by Megan Massa

Megan's fascination with birds started with the Bird Club of William & Mary, where she developed a Bird of the Week illustration project as a way to share the identification and natural history of local species. Much of her artwork focuses on depicting everyday birds in a compelling light, drawing inspiration from her experiences not only as a birder but as a researcher. In 2019, she was honored as the American Birding Association's Bird of the Year Artist.

She has also done various hands-on avian technician work including following Red-backed Fairywrens around in Australia, monitoring Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, and being an Interpretive Naturalist during peak fall migration at Cape May. Her artwork can be found at [MeganMassa.com](http://MeganMassa.com).

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 Peenting

When I first started birding about twenty years ago, the first two things I bought were a decent pair of binoculars and the National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America. I began to peruse my new field guide and found a variety of birds in our region that I never even knew existed. There were others that I had known of, but had never seen. It's been said that birds you have not seen can be like movie stars. You know they exist because you have seen pictures of them, but they don't seem real until you actually see them in real life. Since I love books in addition to birds, I went on to buy several more field guides. The one that ended up being my favorite is the Sibley Guide to Birds. Since then, I have also acquired field guides for butterflies, dragonflies, damselflies and moths.

Field guides are one of the best ways to learn the birds in your area. You can see which birds are in your region and during which seasons you can find them. You can also compare birds that are similar and become familiar with the field marks that will help when you are outside birding and seeing them in person. For example, what's the difference between a Savannah Sparrow and a Song Sparrow? If you have studied a field guide ahead of time, you can be more confident in your identification skills when you actually see these species in your local park. If you are going on a trip, especially to another country, having a field guide for



the area you are visiting can help you take a more active role in your birding trip and not just depend on the guide to point everything out.

Many people are depending more on technology these days to help them with bird identification. The Merlin and Google photo ID apps are fine as tools to aid in identifications, but using them does not really improve your birding skills as much as a field guide will. Also, they are not always accurate. Sometimes they will claim that you are seeing a bird that is very unlikely to be there because it is out of range or out of season. Unlike the apps, a field guide has maps that will tell when and where various bird species are likely to occur. Knowing what birds commonly are seen will help you recognize a rarity when you see one. I do use my phone in the field since I have a Sibley field guide on it. However, it's more of a reference and does not automatically identify birds for me like the other apps do. When I have a mystery bird that I am having trouble identifying, I still

like to go to my old-fashioned paper field guide. It's got the most information in one place and has never done me wrong.

—Larry Meade

*Yellow-bellied Sapsucker photographed by Larry Meade during an NVBC trip to Blandy Farm*

## Chincoteague Spring Weekend *from p. 1*

Clapper Rails, Chuck-will's-widow, Brown-headed Nuthatches and Boat-tailed Grackles.

Plans for the weekend include birding the Chincoteague NWR on Friday afternoon starting at 3:15 p.m. (optional) or on Saturday starting at 7:30 a.m. Activities on Saturday morning include birding along Beach Road, Swan Cove and Tom's Cove. We will also visit Chincoteague Island Park Trail looking for land bird migrants as well as visiting Queens Sound Flats and Mariner's Point. On Sunday morning, we will board a pontoon boat and travel along Chincoteague Inlet then to Fishing Point at the end of Tom's Cove and finally Black Point Landing, all the while looking mostly for shorebirds along the mudflats. The trip concludes at noon 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, March 13, 2024 at 6 a.m.** To sign up for this trip, please email Elton Morel at [eltonlmorel@verizon.net](mailto:eltonlmorel@verizon.net). All members who send an email between 6 and 7 a.m. will be eligible to be put on the list. However, club members who were not on the Spring 2023 or the Winter 2024 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 24 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 a.m. on March 13 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 COVID-19 virus and indicate whether you are interested in the group dinner on Saturday night and the boat trip (which has an estimated \$35 fee) on Sunday morning. Please do not make your hotel reservations until your trip registration has been confirmed.

We have obtained a special rate of \$135.00 per night, including tax, on twenty rooms for Friday and Saturday nights at the Best Western Chincoteague Island Hotel on Maddox Boulevard. A two-night stay is usually required. Hotel reservations must be made by April 19 to get this special group rate. Confirmed participants should make their own reservations by calling 800-553-6117 and be sure to say you are with the Northern Virginia Bird Club. Check-in time is 3 p.m. on Friday, May 17, and a 48-hour cancellation notice is required. Also note that Chincoteague NWR has an entrance fee per car.

—Elton Morel



## Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge Bird Banding 2023

In 2023 Occoquan Bay's 15 volunteers worked 1,130 hours at the Potomac River NWR Complex to band 559 birds of 56 bird species. No new species were banded so the station's species total remained at 103. The daily count ranged between 4 to 51 birds banded, and the 559 birds banded was slightly above average.

April banding operations got off to a slow start when the first day was cancelled due to cold weather. Highlights of April included banding the second ever Fox Sparrow, the season's first recapture a Carolina Chickadee banded in 2021, which was also the first return in 2022, and the oldest return recapture, a Northern Cardinal first banded on April 1, 2016. Only seven warblers were banded in April and the month ended with two days of rain (one day breaking a 100-year record).

Migrating bird activity picked up in May. On May 10 the most birds (51) and the most species (19) were banded. Mid-May had two more outstanding days, but then migration drew to a close.

Banding in 2023 was a mixture of new records and contrasting low numbers. Ruby-crowned Kinglets set a record of 12 while woodpecker numbers were minimal. Song Sparrows were banded at double their average (43 vs. 20); Swamp Sparrows at triple (57 vs. 19) and American Goldfinches at five times (48 vs. 9). Thrushes were half their yearly average of 20 individual birds with only 1 Veery, 4 Gray-cheeks and 5 Swainson's Thrushes captured. Oddly, the first American Robin in five years was captured and banded this season.

The only hatchling-year bird banded was a blue-eyed fuzzy brown Common Grackle on the last day.

Sixteen species of Warblers were banded in 2023, which was two more than average, but the 92 warblers banded was half the usual total banded. The first warbler was a Yellow Palm on Palm Sunday. Almost two weeks later a Common Yellowthroat was banded and a week after that a Yellow-rumped Warbler. Warblers banded included Blue-winged, Chestnut-sided, Yellow-throated, Worm-eating, Northern Waterthrush and Prothonotary Warblers. However, there were no Northern Parulas, Ovenbirds or Prairie Warblers. The total included only two Palm Warblers, one Blackpoll Warbler and a single Yellow-rumped Warbler! Past Yellow-rumped Warbler numbers



*The first-ever returned Winter Wren (banded on March 23, 2022) fueled by a very good fat rating in the top 5%, and ready to take off. Photographed by Christopher Radermacher*

have ranged from single digits to as many as 158. Common Yellowthroat numbers were only 60 percent of their yearly average for the station. No Cooper's Hawks were caught, but they tore holes through nets, and the only Wild Turkey just strolled by.

The results of 2023 operations did not change the order of

Occoquan's top five most numerous species which remain the White-throated Sparrow, Common Yellowthroat, Gray Catbird, Yellow-rumped Warbler (Myrtle) and Northern Cardinal. However, the order of the next five most numerous species did change due to the increase in sparrows to Swamp Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Northern Waterthrush, Red-winged Blackbird, and Common Grackle.

The banding station will be open on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays from 7 a.m. to noon, weather permitting, starting March 20, 2024, and ending Sunday, May 26, 2024. It is located near the gazebo on Deephole Point Road overlooking Marumsco Creek.

—*Suzanne Miller*

*All banding, marking, and sampling is being conducted under a federally authorized Bird Banding Permit issued by the U.S. Geological Survey's Bird Banding Laboratory, a Virginia license and National Wildlife Refuge permit.*



*Prothonotary Warbler photographed by Mary Scala*

## Way Out - Off Wi-Fi

Grouse, curlews, kites, and many warblers are likely to be found way out in rural and mountain areas, where Wi-Fi is intermittent or absent.

During my first Warbler Road trip, upon hearing about two escaped convicts seen in the last hour within a mile from me, I drove east and ended up on an unmarked Forest Service Road for 45 minutes with no pull off spots. Then later that month, driving from Briery Branch Gap to Bramble Hill, I led Seth Honig into a large cattle field, with our dirt road clearly in sight, but blocked by a cattle gate.

Wi-Fi was not available in either spot. I printed directions for both trips, but secondary and service roads

often lack road signs. I drove until I found access to the internet.

With the help of Jeremy Beck and Kay Bushman, I now have offline maps on my iPhone for the full state of Virginia, Delaware, Warbler Road, Eastern Shore and more. I tested the maps in airplane mode and successfully drove to Kay's house.

### Google Maps

Use your cell phone or tablet from a Wi-Fi accessible spot. Go to Google Maps, enter your destination, e.g., Arcadia Boat Launch.

Zoom out to show larger area

*Continued on p. 7*

## 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/field-trips-this-month>.
- 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>February</u></b>			<b>14</b> <b>8:30 AM</b> <b>Dyke March</b> Bob Butterworth Tom Nardone	<b>15</b> <b>NVBC</b> <b>Meeting</b> <b>8 PM</b>		<b>17</b> <b>8:30 AM</b> <b>Mason Neck SP</b> Larry Meade Bob Butterworth																													
			<b>21</b> <b>8:30 AM</b> <b>Huntley Meadows</b> Tom Nardone			<b>24</b> <b>8 AM</b> <b>Leopold's Preserve</b> Toby Hardwick Ed LeGrand																													
<b>25</b> <b>5:00 PM</b> <b>Woodcock Display</b> <b>at Dusk -</b> <b>Huntley Meadows</b> <b>Hike/Bike Trail</b> Larry Cartwright Joan Mashburn			<b>28</b> <b>8:30 AM</b> <b>Burke Lake Park</b> Tom Nardone Bob Butterworth		<b><u>March</u></b>	<b>2</b> <b>8:30 AM</b> <b>Blandy Farm</b> Elton Morel Dave Boltz																													
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<b><u>April</u></b>			<b>3</b> <b>8:30 AM</b> <b>Long Branch</b> Tom Nardone			<b>6</b> <b>7:30 AM</b> <b>Silver Lake RP</b> Toby Hardwick Ed LeGrand																													

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b><u>April</u></b>			<b>10</b> 8:30 AM <b>Meadowood Recreation Area - Lower Potomac Field Station</b> Dixie Sommers Bob Butterworth			<b>13</b> 7:30 AM <b>Ocoquan Bay NWR</b> Phil Silas Larry Meade
		<b>17</b> 8:30 AM <b>Dyke Marsh</b> Bob Butterworth		<b>18</b> <b>NVBC Meeting 8 PM</b>		<b>20</b> 7:30 AM <b>Leopold's Preserve</b> Toby Hardwick Ed LeGrand
		<b>24</b> 8:30 AM <b>Fort C. F. Smith</b> Tom Nardone Joan Mashburn				<b>27</b> 7:30 AM <b>Clifton Institute</b> Bert Harris Elton Morel
		<b><u>May 1</u></b> 8:30 AM <b>Long Branch</b> Bob Butterworth				<b>4</b> 7:30 AM <b>Leesylvania SP</b> Bob Butterworth Mer Mietzelfeld

#### DIRECTIONS

**NVBC Meeting (2/15, 4/18) 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 (3/30)** 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 parking lot.

**Blandy Experimental Farm/State Arboretum of Virginia (3/2)** 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. Turn left at traffic light onto Rt 50/17; go 7.8 mi., turn left onto Rt 750 to the Arboretum. Meet in parking lot.

**Burke Lake Park (2/28)** 7315 Ox Rd, Fairfax Station 22039 From I-495, take exit 54 west (Braddock Rd). Stay in right lane of exit if you are coming from the north. On Braddock Rd, go 1.5 mi. and turn left onto Burke Lake Rd. Go 4.7 mi. and turn left onto Rt 123 (Ox Rd). Turn left at second traffic light (big park signs), and turn left immediately after the entrance booth. Park in the first lot on the right (by the mini-golf course).

**Clifton Institute (4/27)** 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 park in the parking lot on the left. Meet your leader at this parking lot. Please do not drive up to the house and park there.

**Dyke Marsh (2/14, 4/17)** 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 (4/24)** 2411 24th St N, Arlington 22207 From I-66 east, take exit 72 (Spout Run Pkwy). At traffic light, turn right on ee 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. From Alexandria: take GW Pkwy north, take left exit onto Spout Run, then right exit onto Lorcom Ln, and follow remaining directions above.

**Huntley Meadows Hike & Bike Trail (2/25)** 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).

**Huntley Meadows Park (2/21, 3/27)** 3701 Lockheed Blvd, Alexandria 22306 From I-495, take Rt 1 south 3 mi. to Lockheed Blvd. Turn right on Lockheed and go 0.5 mi. to Harrison Ln to park entrance on left. Meet in parking lot.



## Directions

**Leesylvania State Park (5/4)** 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 (2/24, 4/20)** 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 (3/6, 4/3, 5/1)** 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 (3/23)** 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.

**Mason Neck State Park (2/17)** 7301 High Point Rd, Lorton 22079 From I-495, take I-95 south 7 mi. to Lorton exit. Left on Rt 642 to Rt 1. Right on Rt 1 to Rt 242 (Gunston Rd). Left on Rt 242, go 4 mi. to Mason Neck Management Area. Turn right, follow paved road to end at Visitor Center. State fee area.

**Meadowood Recreation Area - Lower Potomac Field Station (4/10)**

10406 Gunston Rd, Lorton 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 (3/20)** 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 light and turn right on Blackburn Rd. The park parking lot is then 0.2 mi. away on the left.

**Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge (3/9, 4/13)** 13950 Dawson Beach Rd, Woodbridge 22191 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.

**Riverbend Park (Visitor Center) (3/13)** 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 Park (4/6)** 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 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.

**Widewater State Park (3/16)** 101 Widewater State Park Rd, Stafford 22554 From I-95, take exit 148 to Quantico Marine Corps Base and follow signs to Widewater State Park. Left on Russell Rd. Right on Rt 1 South, go 1 mi. Left turn on Telegraph

Rd, go 0.5 mi. and turn left on Widewater Rd. Widewater Rd. (Rt 611) turns into Arkendale Rd. (Rt 633) after about four miles. Follow this road for about 2 mi. and cross railroad tracks. Entrance to park Visitor Center entrance is about 2.5 mi. on right. Meet at the Visitor Center. State fee area.



*Golden-crowned Kinglet at Occoquan Bay NWR photographed by Larry Meade*

## Bird Walks at Local Parks

- **Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve, second Saturdays, 8 a.m.** 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 a.m.** Meet at Education Center. [www.loudounwildlife.org/events/](http://www.loudounwildlife.org/events/)
- **Dyke Marsh, Sundays, 8 a.m.** See directions. Visit the Friends of Dyke Marsh web site, [www.fodm.org](http://www.fodm.org)
- **Great Falls National Park, Sundays, 8 a.m.** Meet in the main parking lot near the Park Visitor Center.
- **Huntley Meadows Park, Mondays, 7 a.m. (Apr-Sep) ) 8 a.m. (Oct-Mar)** Meet in parking lot. Leader: Harry Glasgow
- **Merrimac Farm, last Sunday, 8 a.m.** Meet at Merrimac Farm Stone House. [www.pwconserve.org/events/index.html#birds](http://www.pwconserve.org/events/index.html#birds)
- **Riverbend Park, first and third Fridays, 8 a.m., beginning April 5 to October 18.** 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



In 2018 I flew to Taiwan with my mother and brother to attend my grandmother's funeral. The funeral and related services were a drawn-out affair. A ceremony after the cremation was held in my grandmother's church on the ground floor of an old three-story building on a narrow street in the outskirts of the (old) Taipei City. During the lunch break before the service started, I sneaked out to the park down the street.

Almost immediately I saw an odd-looking bird. It was about the size of a skinny, tall chicken. It was strutting about like it owned the small paved path. It pooped. I asked a local what it was called. They called it a "night heron". Mind you, this was before I had an eBird account: I was still struggling to identify backyard birds. I had yet to encounter the Great Blue Heron at Huntley Meadows, and I didn't know that this bird was the size of a Green Heron. Then there was a commotion up in a tree. A few of these Malayan Night Herons had a bit of a dispute and they flew from branch to branch over the lunch crowd.

On the morning of our last day, I took a long walk to Da'an Forest Park. This urban park is not that far from my childhood home, but I had absolutely no memory of it. Taipei seems a lot greener, with a lot more open spaces than I remembered. My memories of Taipei were city views from crowded buses that I took to and from school.

As I entered the park, I was immediately greeted by a few Malayan Night Herons, the same crazy birds I met a few days before. I continued walking, encountering more night herons, before I stumbled upon the lake. In the middle of the lake, there was a large island where egret-like birds lived almost in the same density as the people of Taipei outside the park. The island seemed far away

without binoculars. I could see that there were many nests with little fuzzballs. I furtively took a bunch of blurry phone photos.

I was able to identify Cattle Egrets and Snowy Egrets via the Merlin app. Over the years, the Taiwan bird pack got more complete; alas, most of my photos from Da'an were still not good enough for Merlin Photo ID. I hope that would not be my last trip to Taiwan: I've still got some serious birding to do.

—Karen Pao



*Photographs by Karen Pao:  
Da'an Forest Park panorama and Birds in trees (header  
photographs) and Malayan Night Heron (above)*

## Way Out from p. 3

### Google Maps *(continued)*.

In the search bar – remove the address, use X to delete. Then see your photo or initial on the right and click this button.

Select Offline maps.

Hit the down arrow entitled Select Your Own Map, then adjust/enlarge image, if necessary, and hit download on bottom right.

Map will be named with a number, just hit three dots, rename, and save.

To access the offline map when you are Way Out, go to Google Maps, hit your photo or initial button, select Offline Maps and then specific map you need and you can zoom in, drop a pin and get driving directions, add stops, see all that Google Maps has to offer... stores & streets, paths & ponds

### OsmAnd Maps and Travel

This App allows 7 free downloads. It offers car, bicycle, pedestrian maps, terrain data but no Satellite images.

Download OsmAnd Maps and Travel from App Store

Open OsmAnd app.

Hit bars on left bottom to open the menu.

Select Maps and Resources.

Select, North American, US, then whatever State you want.

App will indicate storage needed and available on your device

Return to US map and see your selected state in green.

Zoom in as needed.

Use magnifying glass to select specific location for directions.

Both of these maps systems work with CarPlay. Get Way Out and not lost.

—Joan Mashburn



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## 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](mailto:lgmeade@gmail.com) or send 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:** February 15, April 18, September (tbd), and Nov (tbd) 2024..

**Next Board Meeting:** Thursday, February 29, 2024, 7:30 p.m. 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 April issue will include activities through June 2024. Please send items for publication by **March 15, 2024** to the editors at [nvbc-siskineditor@gmail.com](mailto:nvbc-siskineditor@gmail.com).

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