



The SISKIN

Newsletter of the Northern Virginia Bird Club

Vol. 69, No. 4

November 2024

www.nvabc.org

Inside

- Calendar of NVBC field trips, October 30, 2024 - February 9, 2025
- Winter Chincoteague Trip
- Upcoming Christmas Bird Counts in Northern Virginia
- 2025 Northern Virginia Bird Alliance Winter Waterfowl Survey
- 2024 Treasurer's Report
- Birding in Colorado

Insert - 2025 membership renewal notice

General Meeting Notes: Early bird refreshments start at 7:30 p.m. 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

NVBC GENERAL MEETING—THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 8 PM

Exploring the Birds of Chile

Speaker: Dixie Sommers

Dixie Sommers joined a WINGS Birding Tours trip to Chile in November 2023. The tour ranged from the far south and sea level Tierra del Fuego to the far north and high altitude Atacama Desert. The group counted 258 species ranging from penguins to flamingos to tapaculos and Furnarids (ovenbirds).



White-sided Hillstar photographed by Dixie Sommers

Chile's diverse habitats and species result from its extreme geography. This long and skinny country ranges from the tropical 18th to the cold 56th parallel, nearly 2,700 miles. But it averages only 110 miles in width. This strange land shape encompasses the gateway to Antarctica, temperate rain forests, the world's driest desert, and the Andes mountains reaching as high as 22,000 feet. The entire coast faces the Humboldt current, bringing cold water up from the Antarctic and with it a rich variety of seabirds and other marine wildlife.

Darwin visited many spots in Chile and left some entertaining comments on birds.

Dixie will tell the stories to go with some of her best photos and videos. The complete photo library is in the Chile file at www.ddpix.smugmug.com. Dixie last presented to NVBC in September of 2023 about her 2022 visit to New Zealand. She has birded all over the world including all 7 continents and in half of the US states. Her current volunteer activities include serving as Treasurer of the Virginia Society of Ornithology, editor of the VSO Newsletter, and Friends of Dyke Marsh board member. She leads bird walks for NVBC, NVBA, 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.



Volcan Parinacota and Lago Chungará, on the Chile-Bolivian border photographed by Dixie Sommers

Presidential Peentings

Top ten lists seem to be everywhere in our culture. There seem to be lists for everything from top ten movies to top ten best foodie cities. Humans like to rank and categorize things and top ten lists are an easily consumable way to share information. With a little thought, anyone who has been birding for a while could assemble several top ten lists related to their birding adventures. It's an interesting way to reflect on your birding experiences over the years. For example, you could make a top ten list of the rarest birds that you have seen. How about your rarest sightings just in Virginia? Other lists might be made up of top ten birding trips, favorite birding spots, or favorite bird photos. For birders with less experience, a top ten list could be more aspirational. What are the top



*Yellow-breasted Chat photographed at Occoquan Bay NWR
by Larry Meade*

ten birds that you still want to see? What are top ten places that you want visit to see birds? I would be interested to see some of the top ten lists that NVBC members might be interested in assembling. The lists don't necessarily need to be in order.

If you send them to me, we can share them on the exchange or in a future issue of the Siskin. Here is my list of top ten birding spots, not in order:

1. Huntley Meadows
2. Dyke Marsh
3. Chincoteague
4. Cape May
5. Atlantic Gulf Stream
6. Dry Tortugas
7. Southern Arizona
8. Rio Grande Valley
9. Algonkian Park
10. Occoquan Bay

—Larry Meade

Winter Chincoteague Trip

The Winter Chincoteague Weekend club trip is scheduled for February 7 to February 9 (Friday to Sunday), 2025. The trip will be limited to 16 people and sign-up procedures are detailed below. NVBC membership is required for this trip.

February is an excellent time to visit Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and the Chesapeake 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. We will also try again to listen and watch for American Woodcocks displaying above the horse corral at dusk on Friday night.

Plans for the weekend include birding the Chincoteague area Friday afternoon starting at 3:15 p.m. (optional) and Saturday starting at 7:30 a.m. 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 p.m. on Sunday

Because the Chincoteague weekends are such popular trips, we will continue with the new sign-up procedure to enable wider member participation. Registration will open on Wednesday, November 13, 2024, at 6 a.m. To sign up for this trip, please email Elton Morel at eltonmorel@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 Winter 2024 or the Spring 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 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 a.m. on November 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 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 24 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 p.m. on Friday, February 7, with a prior 24-

Continued on p 3

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA

Saturday, December 14, 2024

- *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.

Sunday, December 15, 2024

- *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/25th-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.

Tuesday, December 17, 2024

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

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

Friday, December 27, 2024

- *NOKESVILLE*

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

Saturday, December 28, 2024

- *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, January 4, 2025

- *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, January 5, 2025

- *WALKERTON*

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

Date unknown when newsletter printed:

- *SUGARLOAF MOUNTAIN*

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

Northern Virginia Bird Alliance

Winter Waterfowl Survey

On Saturday, January 25 and Sunday, January 26, 2025, birders of all skill levels will join up to count waterfowl in Fairfax, Arlington, Loudoun, 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 Tina Dudley at tina@nvbirdalliance.org at the Northern Virginia Bird Alliance (formerly Audubon Society of Northern Virginia). Or contact Larry Cartwright at prowarbler@verizon.net.

Winter Chincoteague Trip from p 2

hour notice policy for cancellation. Also note that Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge has an entrance fee per car.

—Elton Morel



While the birders looked for rails along the Chincoteague Island boardwalk on the morning of February 10, 2023, Alyssa Ford Morel photographed a parhelion (a.k.a. a sundog).

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.
- Check the NVBC website for updated information about trips: <http://www.nvabc.org/updated-field-trips/>.
- **Next-day rainy day make-up day may be possible if trip leader is available. Cancellation and make up day will be announced via NVBC email exchange and web site.**
- 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																								
<p><u>October</u></p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p style="text-align: center;">Trip Leaders</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <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>Carol Mullen</td><td>571-313-9926</td></tr> <tr><td>Tom Nardone</td><td>703-946-7738</td></tr> <tr><td>Phil Silas</td><td>703-987-0817</td></tr> <tr><td>Dixie Sommers</td><td>703-969-7931</td></tr> </table> </div>	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	Carol Mullen	571-313-9926	Tom Nardone	703-946-7738	Phil Silas	703-987-0817	Dixie Sommers	703-969-7931			<p style="text-align: center;">30 8:30 AM Meadowood Recreation Area - Lower Potomac Field Station Tom Nardone Bob Butterworth</p> <p style="text-align: center;">6 8:30 AM Long Branch Tom Nardone Bob Butterworth</p> <p style="text-align: center;">13 8 AM Dyke Marsh Tom Nardone Dixie Sommers</p>		<p><u>November</u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2 8 AM Aquia Landing Beach Park Elton Morel Bob Butterworth</p> <p style="text-align: center;">9 8 AM Leopold's Preserve Toby Hardwick Ed LeGrand</p> <p style="text-align: center;">16 8 AM Silver Lake RP Toby Hardwick Ed LeGrand</p> <p style="text-align: center;">21 NVBC Meeting 8 PM</p> <p style="text-align: center;">23 8 AM Occoquan Bay NWR Phil Silas Joan Mashburn</p> <p style="text-align: center;">30 8 AM Aquia Landing Beach Park Elton Morel Joan Mashburn</p>
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<p>December 14, 2024 - January 5, 2025— CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS (NORTHERN VIRGINIA CBC See p. 3)</p>																														

DIRECTIONS

NVBC Meeting (11/21) 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

Aquia Landing Park (11/2, 11/30)
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

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<u>January</u>			8 8:30 AM Burke Lake Park Tom Nardone Bob Butterworth			11 8 AM Northern Neck X-trip Members only/ email leader to register Larry Meade Joan Mashburn
			15 8:30 AM Neabsco Regional Park - Boardwalk Phil Silas Bob Butterworth			18 8:30 AM Riverbend RP Joan Mashburn Mer Mietzelfeld
			22 8 AM Huntley Meadows Tom Nardone Larry Cartwright			25 8 AM Silver Lake RP Toby Hardwick Ed LeGrand
			29 8 AM Dyke Marsh Bob Butterworth Carol Mullen			<u>February 1</u> 8 AM Occoquan Bay NWR Phil Silas Larry Meade
			5 8:30 AM Long Branch Dixie Sommers Tom Nardone		7 - 9 Chincoteague Weekend Members only Sign up via email starting on November 13, 2024, at 6 am Elton Morel	

Aquia Landing Park (11/2, 11/30)
 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.

Blandy Experimental Farm/State Arboretum of Virginia (12/7) 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 (1/8) 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 (11/13, 1/29) 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 (12/11, 1/22) 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 (11/9) 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 (11/6 12/4, 2/5) 625 S Carlin Springs Rd,

Arlington 22204 Take Rt 50, east from Fairfax or west from Rosslyn to Carlin Springs exit. Go south on Carlin Springs 0.5 mi. to Nature Center on left, just south of N. Va Community Hospital on left. Meet at Nature Center parking lot.

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

Neabsco Regional Park - Boardwalk (1/15) 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

Trip Directions from page 4

Neabsco Regional Park - Boardwalk (1/15) 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 (1/11) 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.

Ocoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge (11/23, 2/1) 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) (1/18) 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 (11/16, 1/25) 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 (11/19) 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. Online registration. 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.
- **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 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
- **Sweet Run State Park, fourth Saturdays, 8 am** Meet at Education Center. Online registration. www.loudounwildlife.org/events/



Prairie Falcon photographed by Larry Meade

Treasurer's Report for Fiscal Year 2024

The Club 2024 Financial Report follows. The membership chair reports 167 Family memberships and 275 individual memberships as of July 2, 2024, giving the club a count of over 600 members.

In 2024, the Club once again gave a grant of \$500 to the Community Cloud Forest Conservation organization using funds donated for this purpose. The Club also donated \$500 to the VA Breeding Bird Atlas publishing efforts as part of our multi-year pledge.

As anticipated, the annual expenses exceeded the annual revenues by \$1,423. When the budget was adopted, the Board continued with its policy to spend down the Club's reserve funds without a dues increase

This plan will continue in 2025 when a shortfall of \$1,600 is projected. At the end of FY 2025, the reserve fund will be at a level where the Board plans to end deficit spending.

Early next year the Board will propose a dues increase for FY 2026 to \$15 for an individual membership and \$25 for families (or roughly a \$5 increase per person). This will allow a break-even budget for 2026 going forward.

At the close of FY 2024, the Club had \$12,297 in total assets including future years' dues on deposit (\$3,225) and grant donations (\$105).

Income received

Dues for 2024	\$5,750
Pin sales	5
Donations,	<u>870</u>
Total Income	\$6,625

Expenses

Organizational costs	\$1,340
(includes fees for web host	
PO box, VA, Paypal, etc)	
Meeting expenses	1,254
(includes hall rental, speaker	
honorariums, prizes,	
refreshments)	
Printing and postage	4,454
Educational Grants	500
Atlas Donation	<u>500</u>
Total expenses	\$8,048

Net for 2024 -\$1,423

—Jean Tatalias, Treasurer

Birding in Colorado

In July, I traveled to Colorado to join a trip with Colorado Birding Adventures. We were based in Longmont which is not far from Denver. During the three-day tour we birded a variety of habitats and found plenty of fascinating birds, interesting mammals and beautiful scenery. I had never been to Colorado before, so joining a tour was an ideal way to take advantage of the various birding hotspots in the area. I ended up with five new birds for my life list. Another advantage of joining a birding tour is that all meals, lodging and transportation are taken care of. All I had to worry about was getting up on time and birding.

The first day we headed over to the Pawnee Grasslands. The strategy here was to drive around and stop where we saw birds along the roads that traversed this vast flat habitat. Sometimes this type of birding is referred to as a “prairie pelagic”. Our first stop was made before we got to the actual grasslands. Our target bird was Mountain Plover which we found among the plowed furrows in a farm field. We were able to see them well through spotting scopes, but they were far off and backlit, so I was not able to photograph my first life

bird of the tour. At the Pawnee Grasslands many of the birds were very cooperative as they sat on fences and posts to pose for photographs. I got excellent shots of three more lifers: Chestnut-collared Longspur, Thick-billed Longspur, and Lark Bunting. We also saw a closeup Prairie Falcon and a colony of Burrowing Owls. On the way back we stopped at a reservoir which had both Western and Clark’s Grebes. Stewart’s Pond was another productive location which had a variety of ducks, wading birds and shorebirds. While we were there, a small flock of Baird’s Sandpipers flew by low over our heads.

The next day we drove west and climbed up the mountains at Rocky Mountain National Park. Our plan was to drive up beyond the tree line to an elevation of 12,000 feet and look for the much sought after White-

tailed Ptarmigan. Being from Virginia, I was not used to these high-altitude conditions, so I took the precautions of taking a few Advil tablets to prevent headaches and drinking plenty of water to avoid dehydration. The good news was that when we got to the top, I was fine. The even better news was that we found the White-tailed Ptarmigan after walking up a short path through the tundra. The bird was kind enough to sit out in the open for several minutes and provide excellent photo opportunities. Other birds we spotted in the park included a profusion of Violet-green Swallows, a Virginia’s Warbler, a Dusky Flycatcher and a Red-naped Sapsucker. Another highlight for me was seeing

the mammals of Rocky Mountain National Park. We saw some large ones like Moose and Elk as well as small ones like Pikas, Golden-collared Ground Squirrels and Yellow-bellied Marmots. The Pikas, which are related to rabbits, were especially cute. For me another notable sighting was of a Rocky Mountain Parnassian, a new butterfly for me.

On the third day we spent the morning birding local spots near Longmont. Old Saint Vrain Road was especially productive. We had great views of Lesser Goldfinches, a Black-headed Grosbeak, and a Western Flycatcher. I also saw a Blue-eyed Darter, a new dragonfly for me. Unfortunately, none of the darners I saw ever landed for a photo. Later, we made a quick stop at Rabbit Mountain where we saw a Golden Eagle. We had lunch at Lagerman Reservoir where we observed some water birds including American Avocets, Redheads and American Wigeon. I really enjoyed Colorado where I was able to meet some new people, see some new birds and other wildlife and enjoy some majestic mountain landscapes.

—Larry Meade

Chestnut-collared Longspur (above), White-tailed Ptarmigan (below left) and Pika (below) photographed by Larry Meade



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 2025 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, <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 send 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

For emails on bird walk updates, late weather changes and detailed directions for Swift/Nighthawk watch, get on our Exchange. We do not bombard members with local bird sightings or ID help requests. 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 21, 2024, February 20 and April 24, 2025

Next Board Meeting: Thursday, December 5, 2024, 7:30 p.m. 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 2025. Please send items for publication by

January 1, 2025, to the editors at nvbciskineditor@gmail.com.

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