



# The SISKIN

Newsletter of the Northern Virginia Bird Club

Vol. 70, No. 1

February 2025

www.nvabc.org

## Inside

- Calendar of NVBC field trips, February 12 - May 10, 2025
- Chincoteague Spring Weekend Trip Announcement
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### *A reminder to pay your 2025 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!**



*Eared Poorwill photographed by Benjamin Hack*

**MEETING PLACE:** St. Andrews Episcopal Church, 4000 Lorcom Lane, Arlington, 22207. Directions are on page 5.

NVBC GENERAL MEETING—THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 8 PM

## Birding in Western Mexico

*Speaker: Benjamin Hack*

**B**enjamin Hack, a birder and science journalist based in Arlington, will present on his trip to the west Mexican states of Nayarit and Jalisco. Western Mexico's wide range of habitats and elevations supports an incredible diversity of birds, many of which are endemic to the region. Ben will lead a photographic tour of his travels, introducing the audience to a selection of the 318 species he observed across nine days in the region's dry coastal scrubland, lush volcanic forests, and everything in between.



Red Warbler photographed by Benjamin Hack

When Ben was six years old, he noticed some crows fly overhead while on the swings during recess. He asked for a field guide when he got home, and the rest is history. His fascination with birds led him to complete his undergraduate studies at Cornell, where he worked on the Lab of Ornithology's eBird and Merlin projects and conducted research on Olive-sided Flycatchers. He also served as Vice President of the Birding Club at Cornell. If you run into Ben in the field, he will most likely be scanning the sky for flyovers or sorting through a flock of gulls.

After graduation, Ben turned his focus to science communication. He is currently a science writer with the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History and has previously written for *Audubon*, *Living Bird*, and *Birding* magazines.

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).

## Presidential Peenting

I asked ChatGPT what makes a good bird club. Here's the answer. I think NVBC fits this pretty well. If you have suggestions as to how we can get even better in any of these areas or improve in some other way, please let us know. NVBC belongs to all of us. Also, if you would like to play a more active role in our club by being on the NVBC board, that would also be most welcome.

A good bird club is one that fosters a sense of community, provides educational opportunities, and promotes the enjoyment and protection of birds. Here are some features that make a bird club great:

1. **Diverse Membership:** A strong bird club is inclusive of all bird enthusiasts, from beginners to experts. It provides a supportive environment for people to share knowledge, experiences, and resources.
2. **Educational Programs:** Look for clubs that offer workshops, field trips, and guest speakers who can help members improve their birdwatching skills, identify species, or learn about bird conservation.
3. **Active Field Trips:** A bird club that organizes regular birdwatching outings to local hotspots is a major perk. These outings provide hands-on learning and the chance to observe birds in their natural habitats.
4. **Conservation Efforts:** A good bird club is involved in local or global conservation projects, helping protect bird habitats and endangered species. It might also promote bird-friendly practices in communities.

5. **Networking and Socializing:** A welcoming atmosphere with social events or online forums for members to connect makes a club more enjoyable. Members often share birding tips, photos, and stories with one another.
6. **Resources and Support:** Clubs often provide access to birding resources like guides, equipment, or even discounts at local bird stores. Being part of a club can also help members get advice from more experienced birders.

—Larry Meade



*White-throated Sparrow photographed by Larry Meade at Huntley Meadows Park*

## Chincoteague Spring Weekend Trip

The Chincoteague Spring weekend is scheduled for May 16 through 18, 2025 (Friday to Sunday). The trip is limited to 24 people and sign-up procedures are detailed below. NVBC membership is required for this trip.

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, Tri-colored Herons, Western Cattle Egrets, Glossy and White Ibis, Least, Royal, and Common Terns, Black Skimmers, 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. Other locations we may visit in the afternoon are Chincoteague Island Park Trail, 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 to enable wider member participation. **Registration will open on Wednesday, February 26, 2025 at 6 a.m.** To sign up for this trip, please email Elton Morel at [eltonmorel@verizon.net](mailto: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 Spring 2024 or the Winter 2025 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 February 26 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 and the boat trip (which has an estimated \$30 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 \$139.00 per night, including tax, on twenty rooms for Friday and Saturday nights at the Best Western Chincoteague Island Hotel on

*Continued on p. 3*

## My Top Ten Virginia Rare Birds

The last Peenting column started me thinking about my top ten rare birds seen in Virginia. I came up with a quick list but decided to go through my eBird Virginia sightings for life birds and found others that resulted in a new ranking. I used eBird total observations in Virginia to rank the birds. I left off seabirds from pelagic trips.

1. Mottled Duck
2. Curlew Sandpiper\*
3. Arctic Tern\*
4. Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch\*
5. Mountain Bluebird
6. Couch's Kingbird
7. Sabine's Gull
8. American Flamingo\*
9. Tropical Kingbird\*
10. Western Flycatcher\*

\*Seen in 2024

Some rarities involved extreme effort. Most notably achieving the Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch sighting began with a 3.5 hour drive to Amherst County, scouting the trail head for next day, an overnight stay at a local motel, and then an early drive in the dark on Valentine's Day 2024, to meet Jeremy Beck and Dan Bailey at 6:30 a.m. We hiked 3.1 miles on a frosty rocky leaf-covered trail to an eventual elevation of 4,040



feet. The chocolate-covered strawberry bird was sighted at 10 a.m. and in view for over 100 minutes. Then I got to hike down and drive home the same day. Jeremy thought he would have to carry me. I struggled with breathing, considered just sitting down and skipping the summit. I felt my age, then found out the next day that I had Covid which explained my struggles hiking. But I saw the bird!

Other rarities were seen by just driving to the spot. The Mountain Bluebird was found at Botetourt Center at Greenfield, in an open field, sitting on one of three poles, 15 feet away. I was less than an hour away when I got the alert.

Alerts come from eBird, GroupMe, and friends. I get hourly Needs Alerts for Virginia through eBird. Some reviewers follow Facebook sites like Birding Virginia, and wildlife, naturalist and photography sites to find birds not reported on eBird. They generously share these birds on GroupMe.

What is rare? On eBird, observation counts reflect reported sightings, so the Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch had 69 observations, but it is the only one ever seen in Virginia. Only a handful of times has this bird ever been seen east of the Rocky Mountains. So my ranking list is skewed.

Virginia has 497 species all time per eBird. Beautiful beaches, wetlands, mountains, creek beds and forests remain for us all to explore. Happy Birding.

—Joan Mashburn

*Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch  
photographed by Joan Mashburn*

### **Chincoteague Spring Weekend** *from p. 2*

Maddox Boulevard. A two-night stay is usually required. Hotel reservations must be made by April 4 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 16, and a 48-hour cancellation notice is required. Also note that Chincoteague NWR has an entrance fee per car.

—Elton Morel

### **Election of Officers**

The election of club officers and directors for two-year terms that begin July 1 is on the agenda for the April 24, 2025 NVBC general meeting. If you are interested in serving on the NVBC Board or have suggestions to make to the Nominating Committee, please send an email to [nvbcskinseditor@gmail.com](mailto:nvbcskinseditor@gmail.com) by April 5, 2025. The Nominating Committee will present a slate of candidates at the meeting. The by-laws allow for nominations from the floor.

### **NVBC 2026 Dues Increase**

At the February meeting, the Board will propose that the Club, starting in FY 2026, increase our annual dues from \$10 to \$15 for an individual membership and from \$15 to \$25 for a family membership. This is an increase of about \$5 per person.

The Board recognized in 2023 that expenses were rising. An analysis of expected revenues and expenses determined that we were no longer in a breakeven budget situation. However the Board also decided that we should use the Club's accumulated funds to offset the deficits while this was prudent.

Consequently, the Club operated at a loss for 2023, of (\$967) and at a loss for 2024 of (\$1,423). The expected loss for 2025 is (\$1,600).. Net assets at the end of 2025 are expected to be \$7,500, which would represent less than a year's expenditures in reserve.

The increase in dues for 2026 is expected to bring the Club back to the point where our projected annual revenues and the expected annual expenditures would each be approximately \$8000. The last dues increase was in 2016.

—Jean Tatalias, Treasurer

## 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/field-trips-this-month>.
- **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																													
<b><u>February</u></b>			<b>12</b> <b>8:30 AM</b> <b>Dyke March</b> Dixie Sommers Larry Cartwright			<b>15</b> <b>8:30 AM</b> <b>Mason Neck SP</b> Dixie Sommers Larry Meade																													
			<b>19</b> <b>8:30 AM</b> <b>Woodbridge Veterans Memorial Park</b> Carol Mullen Phil Silas	<b>20</b> <b>NVBC Meeting</b> <b>8 PM</b>		<b>22</b> <b>8 AM</b> <b>Silver Lake RP</b> Toby Hardwick Ed LeGrand																													
<b>23</b> <b>5:00 PM</b> <b>Woodcock Display at Dusk - Huntley Meadows Hike/Bike Trail</b> Larry Cartwright Ed Wallace			<b>26</b> <b>8:30 AM</b> <b>Huntley Meadows Park</b> Tom Nardone Dixie Sommers			<b><u>March 1</u></b> <b>8 AM</b> <b>Aquia Landing Beach Park</b> Elton Morel Ed Wallace																													
<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">Trip Leaders</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <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>Bert Harris</td><td>615-440-0666</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> <tr><td>Ed Wallace</td><td>504-343-1433</td></tr> </tbody> </table>			Trip Leaders		Bob Butterworth	703-343-0933	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	Carol Mullen	571-313-9926	Tom Nardone	703-946-7738	Phil Silas	703-987-0817	Dixie Sommers	703-969-7931	Ed Wallace	504-343-1433	<b>5</b> <b>8:30 AM</b> <b>Long Branch</b> Carol Mullen Tom Nardone		<b>8</b> <b>8 AM</b> <b>Occoquan Bay NWR</b> Phil Silas Larry Meade
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<b><u>April</u></b>			<b>9</b> 8:30 AM <b>Frying Pan Farm Park</b> Elton Morel Bob Butterworth			<b>12</b> 7:30 AM <b>Occoquan Bay NWR</b> Phil Silas Bob Butterworth
			<b>16</b> 8:30 AM <b>Meadowood Recreation Area - Lower Potomac Field Station</b> Tom Nardone Bob Butterworth			<b>19</b> 7:30 AM <b>Leopold's Preserve</b> Toby Hardwick Ed LeGrand
		<b>23</b> 8:30 AM <b>Dyke Marsh</b> Tom Nardone Bob Butterworth		<b>24</b> <b>NVBC Meeting 8 PM</b>		<b>26</b> 7:30 AM <b>Clifton Institute</b> Bert Harris Elton Morel
		<b>30</b> 8:30 AM <b>Huntley Meadows Hike/Bike Trail</b> Larry Cartwright Bob Butterworth		<b><u>May</u></b>		<b>3</b> 7:30 AM <b>Leesylvania SP</b> Phil Silas Bob Butterworth
		<b>7</b> 8:30 AM <b>Long Branch</b> Carol Mullen Tom Nardone		<b>8</b> 8:30 AM <b>Frying Pan Farm Park</b> Elton Morel Bob Butterworth		<b>10</b> 7:30 AM <b>Trillium Trail</b> Elton Morel Mer Mietzelfeld

### DIRECTIONS

**NVBC Meeting (2/20, 4/24) 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 (3/1, 4/5) 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.

**Clifton Institute (4/26) 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 (2/12, 4/23) 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.

**Frying Pan Farm Park (4/9/, 5/8) 2739 West Ox Rd, Herndon 20171**

From Fairfax County Parkway (Rte 286), go 0.8 miles northwest on West Ox Rd (Rte. 608), turn right into the Visitor Center Parking lot. Meet the group in the parking area at the north end of the Visitor Center.

**Huntley Meadows Hike & Bike Trail (2/23, 4/30)** 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 (2/26, 3/26) 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.

**Leesylvania State Park (5/3) 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

## Trip Directions *from p. 5*

**Leesylvania State Park (5/3)** (continued) 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 (3/15, 4/19)** 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 (3/5, 4/2, 5/7)** 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.

**Manassas Battlefield Park - Brawner Farm (3/29)** 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 (2/15)** 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 (4/16)** 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 (3/19)** 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 (3/8, 4/12)** 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.

**Riverbend Park (Visitor Center) (3/12)** 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 (2/22, 3/22)** 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.

**Woodbridge Veterans Memorial Park (2/19)** 4300 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.

**Trillium Trail-G. Richard Thompson Wildlife Management Area (5/10)** (Fauquier Co) From I-495, take I-66 west 51 mi. to Linden exit (Rt 79). Go left (south) from exit ramp on Rt 79 approx. 1000 ft. to Rt 55. Turn left (east) onto Rt 55; go 1.2 mi. to Rt 638 (Freezeland Rd). Turn left (north) onto Rt 638. Follow Rt 638, as it bears right, 5.3 mi. to Trillium Trail Parking Area on right—look for sign on kiosk. (Parking Area is just before radio towers.) **Note:** participant must have an **access permit** issued by VA Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, [www.dgif.virginia.gov](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov), 1-866-721-6911

## Bird Walks at Local Parks

- **Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve, second Saturdays, 8 a.m.** Meet at the parking lot. Online registration. Visit the Loudoun Wildlife web site, [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.
- **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 4 to October 17.** Meet at the Nature Center parking lot off Jeffery 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](http://www.loudounwildlife.org/events)

# Cape May Fall Weekend Trip

In October, the Northern Virginia Bird Club made a triumphant return to Cape May after a five-year absence. We were there for the weekend, from Friday afternoon October 13 until Sunday afternoon October 15. The trip was led by Gerco Hoogeweg and me. Special thanks to Gerco for taking care of logistics and for planning our itinerary. Thanks, Gerco! We all enjoyed good birds, good food and good company.

In the past, we have based the trip in Cape May, but this time we stayed in Wildwood. This actually worked out well, because it necessitated less driving back and forth between birding locations. On Friday afternoon, we visited Nummy Island and Stone Harbor Point which are near Wildwood. It was high tide, so we could only bird near the road at Nummy Island. We did see some warblers in the bushes along with a Northern Harrier and some terns. Stone Harbor Point was more productive with a nice assortment of shorebirds including Red Knots, American Oystercatchers, a Willet, Dunlin, and both a Black-bellied and Semipalmated Plovers. The parking lot at Stone Harbor Point was also active with Yellow-rumped Warblers visiting a birdbath and Brown Creepers moving from tree to tree. We also saw several Monarch butterflies there feeding on the Seaside Goldenrod.

On Saturday, we had a full day of birding beginning at Hereford Inlet. In the garden near the lighthouse, a Winter Wren was scampering across the lawn and Red-breasted Nuthatches were vocalizing in the trees. The area by the seawall was not as birdy as it has been in the past, but there were hundreds of Sanderlings and dozens of Royal Terns there. Our next stop was at Two Mile Beach where a Peregrine Falcon flew low over our heads as it hunted some of the shorebirds. We also noticed a swarm of over two thousand Tree Swallows in the distance. On our way to Cape May, we stopped at Ocean Drive where we saw a Clapper Rail and some Snowy Egrets. As usual, the best

location of the day was at the hawkwatch near the lighthouse. We saw most of the expected raptors from the hawkwatch platform, but the Mississippi Kite that flew over was definitely not expected. Other nice birds were in and near the ponds and included a Stilt Sandpiper, various waterfowl including a Eurasian Wigeon, Wild Turkeys, and an American Bittern. We finished the day at the Meadows which was fairly quiet. We did see a wheel bug eating a bumble bee though, which was cool.

Sunday morning found us at Higbee Beach for morning flight. It was not a fallout like we have seen in the past, but we did see well over one thousand Yellow-rumped Warblers and close to two hundred Palm Warblers. Down near the tower, a Northern Bobwhite was hanging out. This was very likely a released bird, but we were happy to see and photograph it anyway. Afterwards, we headed over to the Cape May Bird Observatory store. There is a nice birding area in the back

where we saw a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and a Cape May Warbler. Ironically, this was the first time that I had ever actually seen a Cape May Warbler in Cape May. We finished the trip on the ferry from Cape May to Lewes. Several gulls followed the boat and some birders spotted a Parasitic Jaeger in the mix. As a group, we saw 110 bird species in about 48 hours. In addition to the birds, we found some nice places to eat. I would especially recommend the Westside Market and Big Wave Burritos. It turned out to be a fun and birdy weekend all around.

—Larry Meade

*Photographed by Larry Meade:*

*Above: Yellow-rumped Warbler at Stone Harbor Point*

*Below Left: Northern Shovelers*

*Below Right: Northern Bobwhite at Higbee Beach*



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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 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

For emails on bird walk updates and late weather changes, 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](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 20, April 24, September (tbd), and Nov (tbd) 2025..

**Next Board Meeting:** Thursday, February 27, 2025, 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 2025. Please

send items for publication by **March 15, 2025** to the editors at [nvbcsiskineditor@gmail.com](mailto:nvbcsiskineditor@gmail.com).

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