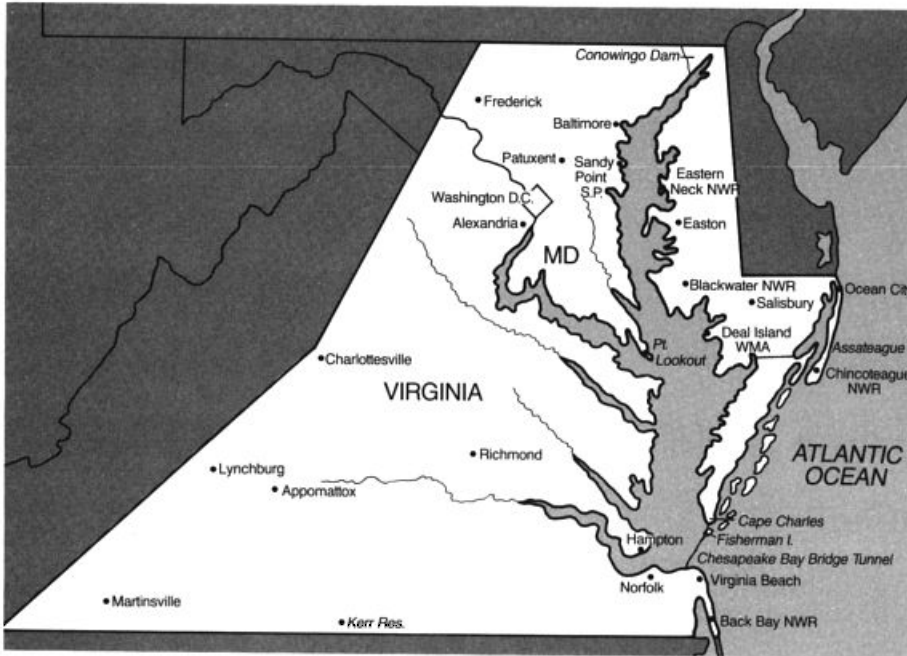


# middle atlantic coast region



Bird Counts.” The Caroline Chapter of M.O.S. plans a memorial bench and small garden in his memory. Contributions are appreciated and checks can be made out to Debby Bennett, Treasurer, P.O. Box 404, Denton, MD 21626.

Since the overwhelming majority of reports came from Maryland (calling all Virginia birders!), all locations can be assumed to be in Maryland, except that each Virginia location is annotated the *first time* it is mentioned in the text.

**Abbreviations:** Assat. (*Assateague Island Nat'l. Seashore*); Bay (*Chesapeake Bay*); Black. (*Blackwater N.W.R.*); C.B.B.T. (*Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel*); Chinc. (*Chincoteague N.W.R.*); Conowingo (*Conowingo Dam*); Craney (*Craney I. Disposal Area*); D.C. (*District of Columbia*); D.N.R. (*Department of Natural Resources*); E.S.V.N.W.R. (*Eastern Shore of Virginia N.W.R.*); Hart (*Hart-Miller Island*); Kipt. (*Kiptopeke State Park*); p.a. (*pending acceptance by state records committee*); P.R.N.A.S. (*Patuxent River Naval Air Station*); P.L.S.P. (*Point Lookout State Park*); P.W.R.C. (*Patuxent Wildlife Research Center*); W.W.T.P. (*Waste Water Treatment Plant*).

## LOONS TO WATERFOWL

A **Pacific Loon** (p.a.), originally found gracing the Susquehanna R. shore a few mi above the Maryland line in Pennsylvania, strayed down river to Maryland, *Harford/Cecil*, to be seen by Blom Nov. 7. It was seen on several occasions after that, as late as Nov. 23 (AB), and could provide Maryland's first accepted report. Pacific Loon seekers witnessed a massive fallout Nov. 8 associated with a severe Nor'easter that day, which included 110+ Red-throated and 15 Common loons on the same section of the Susquehanna R. above Conowingo Dam (known as Conowingo Res.). Never before has such a quantity of Red-throated Loons been found at an inland locale in Maryland. The avian effects of this storm were felt elsewhere in the northeast, depositing loons, grebes, and ducks (especially scoters) on inland lakes and rivers. Elsewhere, three Red-throated Loons were at Piney Run, *Carroll*, Nov. 8 (RFR). A single immature at

## MARSHALL ILIFF

According to most accounts, the passerine flight was poor this fall, with most Neotropical migrants being particularly scarce. American Pipits and Red-breasted Nuthatches did muster strong and notably early presences in the Region. Perhaps driven south by the same forces that brought the nuthatches, both crossbills appeared in the Region for the first time in at least 10 years. Other finches were present but didn't break any records in terms of numbers.

Weather for the season was fairly demure in September and October, with few significant cold fronts to bring the migrants. November turned chilly and brought some rainy weather, especially along the coast. A Nor'easter November 8 grounded an exciting quantity of waterbirds (especially Red-throated Loons) along the Susquehanna River and elsewhere.

Rarities of note included some interesting finds at Kiptopeke, two rare storm-petrels on a Maryland pelagic trip, and a co-

operative Fork-tailed Flycatcher and a somewhat less cooperative Pacific Loon, both in Maryland. We also received news of two Gray Kingbirds and a Lazuli Bunting in Virginia, but no details were received by press time.

Ethel Engle's report included news of the passing of Marvin Hewitt, an active and energetic contributor to the Maryland Ornithological Society (M.O.S.). The following is excerpted from her letter: "The Caroline County Chapter of M.O.S. sadly shares the news of the death of Marvin Ward Hewitt. Marvin died October 13, 1997, at the Memorial Hospital, Easton, Maryland. He was 85. A charter member of the Caroline County Chapter of M.O.S., Marvin was active in Caroline County and at the State level. He was past M.O.S. Vice President and President and for years he has been the Chairman of the Pelot Sanctuary Committee. Marvin also participated in migration counts, the Nesting Bird surveys, and the Breeding Bird Survey, along with helping to author the *List of Caroline County Birds* publication. Additionally, Marvin participated in 48 Caroline County Christmas

Choptank, *Caroline*, Oct. 29 (MJI) was both the earliest of the season and at an unusual inland location.

Eared Grebes are increasingly regular finds in the Region. This year, *Dorchester's* 2nd was at Hurlock W.W.T.P. Sept. 6 (ph. †MJI, ph. JLS); one was at Dulles Airport Pond, *Loudoun*, VA, Sept. 20–29 (DFA, KM) and another Sept. 29; one graced Craney, Portsmouth, VA, Oct. 6–9 (GS); and another was on Conowingo Res., for a *Cecil* first, Nov. 5 (EB).

The Aug. 17 pelagic trip out of Ocean City was one for the record books; not only did it produce Maryland's first **Band-rumped Storm-Petrel** (p.a. BP, †NB, †RC, †MO, m.ob.) but also netted the state's 2nd **White-faced Storm-Petrel** just 14.7 mi out from Ocean City (p.a. †PO, †NB, †RC, MH, MO). The count of 29 Audubon's Shearwaters on that same trip was good for Maryland, while 13 Cory's and two Greater shearwaters, as well as 305 Wilson's Storm-Petrels, were average counts (BP et al.). The first N. Gannets were at Ocean City, *Worcester*, Oct. 14 (PP, OJ), but none entered the Bay. An Am. White Pelican spent another fall at Chinc. (m.ob.), *Accomack*, VA, and others passed over Kipt., *Northampton*, VA, with two Oct. 11 (HLW, LMD) and one Oct. 23 (BS, HTA). Brown Pelicans showed no signs of abating their increase either on the coast or in the Bay, and one immature on the lower Nanticoke R., Oct. 26, furnished a *Wicomico* first (MJI, JLS). A Great Cormorant arrived at Hart, *Baltimore*, Oct. 11 (EJS) and other singles were unusual on Conowingo Res.: an adult Nov. 7–9 (EB, m.ob.), and an immature Nov. 10–11 (ph. MJI, ph. JLS).

No interesting herons strayed much out of range or lingered particularly late, save a Green Heron at L. Elkhorn, *Howard*, Nov. 11 (DE). A record Maryland count of 14 White Ibis at P.R.N.A.S., *Saint Mary's*, Aug. 22 (KR) was strangely the only report away from their regular Fisherman's I., *Northampton*, VA, nesting grounds.

A few groups of Tundra Swans arrived early in October, with 107 over Hart Oct. 11 (EJS) being the first good-sized flock. The big push was first noticed the weekend of Nov. 8–9 (v.o.). A startling count of 263 Mute Swans at Eastern Neck N.W.R., *Kent*, Sept. 7 (MJI, JLS) was indicative of the unfortunate health of the population on the Bay's Eastern Shore.

A Greater White-fronted Goose consorted with a large Canada Goose flock in c. *Queen Anne's*, and was seen Oct. 29 (ph. MJI) and Nov. 26 (ph. MJI), when it was

joined by a 2nd bird. Singles seen at Black., *Dorchester*, Nov. 5 (MJI) and Bayhead Rd., *Anne Arundel*, Nov. 11 (HLW, LMD), both lingered through the end of the season. All were noted to be adults of the expected Greenland race (*flavirostris*). In the past 10 years Ross's Geese have proven to be regular in large flocks of Snow Geese on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Reports this year were too many to mention individually, but two near Kennedysville Nov. 2 (EBo, MJI, JLS) provided a first for *Kent*, and six (including a family of two adults and three immatures) off Red House Rd., *Worcester*, was a good count Oct. 26 (MJI, JLS). Much more surprising were the two reports of Ross's Geese w. of the Bay. One imm. white was at Dulles Greenways, *Loudoun*, Oct. 19 (ph. DFA), and one ad. white was at a pond off Greenock Rd. Nov. 19–30 († ph. MJI, m.ob.), a first for *Anne Arundel*, and only Maryland's 2nd ever away from the Eastern Shore. Both birds were associating with Canada Geese. Two other Western Shore reports were of single small birds flying over among Snow Goose flocks, but in light of the hybrid situation reported earlier, they are best left only as probables.

The most unusual Brant report was of two immatures in Piscataway Bay, *Prince George's*, Nov. 16 (JG), with one lingering at least through Nov. 26 (DM). A Barnacle Goose Oct. 17 (SC, DFA) off Smith's Switch Rd., *Loudoun*, VA, was reported with little comment other than "probable escapee." Since that assumption may not always be correct, I urge observers to try to note in reports whether there is any particular reason that the bird was assumed not to be wild (i.e. unusually tame, wildfowl collector nearby, etc.).

**SA** A fascinating family association of an ad. white Ross's and its apparent blue hybrid mate, along with their three white and one blue young, was seen near Starr, *Queen Anne's*, Oct. 29 (†MJI). The (probable) hybrid parent was notably smaller and smaller billed than any of the Snows present (which were apparently Lesser Snow Geese), and had a pattern more like that shown for the blue morph of Ross's Goose. The young, however, were indistinguishable in size from the ad. Ross's, but had small (but noticeable) grinning patches, perhaps slightly less triangular bills, and intermediate head patterns.

Some observers have begun looking more closely at small races of Canada Geese (generally believed to be rare, or at least irregular, in the Region), and such birds are proving to be regular in small numbers in large Canada Goose flocks. Of 10 reports, six were examined closely (JLS, ph. MJI) and showed characters (most notably a very pale gray back) of *hutchinsii*, the expected race (though there is at least one report of *minima*). It is hoped that more observers will try to detect these birds, and try to separate the several subspecies among the small Canada Geese.

The hybrid Wood Duck x Mallard returned to Centennial L., *Howard*, for its 3rd consecutive fall Oct. 15–Nov. 8 (KS, JFC, PK). Single ad. male Eur. Wigeons visited Brown's Station Rd., *Prince George's*, from Oct. 30 onward (ph. MJI, m.ob.), and Chinc. Nov. 23 (BT). All three jetty ducks were noted early at the C.B.B.T., VA. At least one male Harlequin summered and remained into October, while the singles of both King and Common eiders there Sept. 28 could have been early arrivals (HTA). An out-of-range imm. male King Eider was at Cambridge, *Dorchester*, Nov. 22–29 (DRS, ph. †MJI, m.ob.).

A number of significant scoter reports came in, and the November Nor'easter contributed to some unusual scoters dropping in. A flock on the Choptank R. contained first *Caroline* records of both Black and Surf scoters, with 17 (16 ad. males) of the former and three of the latter, at Kingston Landing Oct. 20 (MJI). Other scoters of interest were a female White-winged at Bivalve Oct. 26, for *Wicomico's* 2nd (MJI, JLS); seven Blacks on Piney Run Nov. 8 (RFR); and a female Black on Centennial L., *Howard*, Nov. 11 (DE, m.ob.). Scoters were also part of the Susquehanna R. loon fallout; of several reported Nov. 7–9, high counts were nine Black and eight Surf on Conowingo Res. Nov. 8 (EB), both providing *Cecil* firsts, and one White-winged at Lapidum, *Cecil*, that same day (N&FS, LE).

While Com. Goldeneyes remained essentially absent through the season, Ruddy Ducks were unusually ubiquitous and abundant, with individuals decorating even the smallest of ponds for most of the fall.

#### HAWKS TO SHOREBIRDS

For the past 3 years, employment of Brian Sullivan as full-time hawk watcher at Kiptopeke S.P. has produced interesting reading in this section. This year is no exception. His final report for the 1997 season (available from K.E.ST.R.E.L., P.O. Box 111,

Franktown, VA 23354) provides far more detail on this fall's flight than can be summarized here. The 1997 season at Kipt. was marked by fair flight conditions (good weather, if unfavorable winds) through September and early October, while the latter half of the season was dominated by coastal storms that resulted in several periods of rainy days followed by periods of unfavorable W winds (Kipt. fares best in NE winds). The rainy conditions in October and November resulted in particularly low counts of both vultures, Red-tailed Hawk, and Golden Eagle, with the seasonal total of 14 for the latter being less than half of the total in each of the previous 2 years. Cooper's and Sharp-shinned hawk counts were close to being on par with the previous 2 years, but Sharp-shinneds seemed to peak early with a big mid-September flight. The westerly component to much of the winds apparently produced a great season for the latter at Cape May, while it undoubtedly hurt the totals at Kiptopeke.

Northern Goshawks staged a "veritable invasion," as the 26 immature birds tallied set a new seasonal record and a new one-day high of six Nov. 27. Rough-legged Hawk was missed for the 2nd consecutive year, and no Broad-winged Hawk flight materialized; the count of 1469 was way down from the previous 2 year's counts. Late imm. Broad-winged Hawks were tallied Nov. 27 & 29. The Am. Kestrel count was lower than expected (9766), given several days of good conditions in September. This year, however, "set new standards" for Merlin and Peregrine at this location. Merlins had 4 days over 200 (including a one-day record of 225 Sept. 30) and six 100+ days, combining for a record seasonal total of 2780. A record-setting Peregrine flight, on a warm Oct. 7 with variable SE winds, numbered 364 birds (along with 161 Merlins), and contributed to the high seasonal total of 1640. These counts are especially impressive since both of these falcons also use the barrier islands to the east, and hundreds must pass S via that route, escaping notice at Kiptopeke.

Other species setting seasonal highs were Bald Eagle (363) and Red-shouldered Hawk (182). Two Swainson's Hawks included a light-morph juvenile Sept. 16 and a dark-morph juvenile Nov. 5. Other especially noteworthy flights included record one-day counts of 44 Red-shouldered and 347 Red-tailed hawks, along with three N. Goshawks, and the season's high of 29 Bald Eagles Nov. 5. A good flight Sept. 16 included the peaks for Osprey (505) and Am.

Kestrel (1270), while Sept. 27 was the best day for Sharp-shinned Hawk (2243) and brought a good Bald Eagle flight of 27.

Raptor reports were generally unremarkable from the rest of the Region (there are no other hawk watches). At least one of the nesting pair of Mississippi Kites and a fledged juvenile remained in the Woodbridge, *Prince William*, VA, area through at least Aug. 24 (KM, m.ob.). The only N. Goshawk reported away from Kipt. was an adult in downtown D.C. Nov. 6 (CB), and the only other Golden Eagle was one at Turkey Pt., *Cecil*, Nov. 24 (GG).

Declines of Ring-necked Pheasant and N. Bobwhite showed no signs of abating, with reports of the former at just one locale, and no reports of more than nine of the latter. A Sandhill Crane flying across Rte. 5 near Forest Park Sept. 24 (KR) furnished a *Charles* first; the only other reports were of a single at Kipt. Oct. 21 (BS) and Nov. 14 (BS, HTA).

Of a most impressive 53 reports, totaling 655 Am. Golden-Plovers from 24 locations, nearly half (306) came from Maryland's Upper Eastern Shore in *Queen Anne's*, *Caroline*, *Kent*, *Talbot*, and n. *Dorchester*—the result of some intensive searches of plowed fields there Sept. 6–7 and thereafter (MJI, JLS). The species appears to be regular there in good numbers, though appropriate habitat is abundant and finding them requires some effort. Most were small groups of one–twenty individuals, but a few notable high counts were 123 off Hanesville Rd., *Kent*, Sept. 7 and 59 at Clarke's Lane, *Caroline*, Sept. 12 (MJI, JLS). The Upper Eastern Shore's attraction to the species has never been so conclusively demonstrated, though scattered reports have come in over the years, and some have even been of similar large flocks.

A high Killdeer count of 650 in a growing spinach field at Clarke's Lane Sept. 25 (MJI) was by far the highest of the season. American Avocets were found at Chinc. from Sept. 9 (NB) through Oct. 3 (JBB), with a high count of six there Sept. 19–20 (JT). Two others were at Black. Oct. 25 (HTA), with one there Oct. 28 (SW). More observers are trying to pay attention to the 2 Willet subspecies, and many reports came with annotations to that regard. Two of the more interesting "Western" Willet (*inornatus*) reports came from Terrapin Pt. Park, *Queen Anne's*, with one juvenile Aug. 9 (MJI) & 16 (JLS), and one–two juveniles at North Beach, *Calvert*, Aug. 13–Aug. 19 (JLS), which also hosted one–two juvenile "Eastern" Willets during the same period.

Away from the breeding grounds in early fall, *inornatus* appears to be the more likely subspecies, while "Eastern" Willets seem to stick closely to their breeding grounds in the lower Bay and coastal salt marshes.

A late Spotted Sandpiper was still at Easton W.W.T.P. Nov. 18 (MJI). Two Marbled Godwits at North Beach furnished only *Calvert's* 2nd record Aug. 12 (JLS) Sanderlings are generally notable inland in the Region, and this year singles at Ridgely W.W.T.P. Sept. 12 (MJI, JLS) and Liberty Res. Sept. 20 (EBo) and Nov. 23 (RFR) were additions to the few *Caroline* and *Carroll* records, respectively. An ad. White-rumped Sandpiper at Triadelphia Res., *Howard*, Sept. 9–10 (JLS, MJI) was one of few for that county. White-rumped Sandpipers rarely linger well into November, so one at Brown's Station Landfill, *Prince George's*, was notable Nov. 13–22 (MJI, JLS). Two at Liberty Res., *Carroll*, Nov. 23 and one still there Nov. 30 (RFR), and one at Tanyard, *Caroline*, Nov. 26 (MJI) were among Maryland's latest. Baird's Sandpipers were generally scarce, but one at Remington Farms Sept. 7 was *Kent's* first, and one at Havre de Grace was *Harford's* 2nd Oct. 11 (EB). The searches of Eastern Shore fields also produced seven Buff-breasted Sandpipers at 5 locations Sept. 7–Sept. 28 (MJI, JLS), which provided first records for *Caroline* and *Queen Anne's*, and a *Kent* 2nd. Clearly this bird has been overlooked there in the past, and those Upper Eastern Shore fields may prove to be the best place (short of the dredged material on Hart) to find this species in Maryland. Others were at Shady Oaks Turf Farm, *Anne Arundel*, Sept. 20 (MJI) and Harney Rd. Pond, *Frederick*, Sept. 9 (ph. MJI), as well as the more usual Hart (EJS) and Chinc. (m.ob.) locations.

Interesting Wilson's Phalarope reports were one at Remington Farms Sept. 7 (MJI, JLS), another at Terrapin Pt. Park the same day (MJI), and one at the Wildfowl Trust, *Queen Anne's*, Sept. 25 (JSe). Ridgely W.W.T.P. played host to *Caroline's* 2nd juv Red-necked Phalarope Sept. 7 (JLS, MJI) and its first Red Phalarope Oct. 2 (ph. MJI) Another Red-necked Phalarope was at Fairmont W.M.A., *Somerset*, Aug. 19 (†P&ED) The Aug. 18 pelagic trip from Ocean City recorded one Red and three Red-necked phalaropes (BP, m.ob.).

#### JAEGERS TO SHRIKES

Along with the Pacific Loon, a juv. dark **Parasitic Jaeger** on Conowingo Res. Nov. 8 (p.a. EB) provided firsts for both *Cecil* and *Harford*, and was only Maryland's 2nd in-

land report. Other single ad. Parasitic Jaegers were spotted from the C.B.B.T. Oct. 17 (GLA, BS) and Nov. 6 (HTA, BS). A first-winter Franklin's Gull at Schoolhouse Pond, *Prince George's*, Nov. 3 (JLS) was relocated later that day at Brown's Station Landfill (MJI, JLS), and two (first-winter, 2nd-winter) visited Schoolhouse Pond Nov. 18 (JLS). A first-winter Thayer's Gull at the Charles County Landfill provided a first county record Nov. 21 (†MJI); single first-winter Iceland Gulls at Georgetown Res., D.C., Nov. 23 (HE) and the C.B.B.T. Nov. 29 (ER) were the only ones reported.

Despite some serious gull-watching by a few observers, of 41 reports of Lesser Black-backed Gulls at 15 locations the only ones in juv./first-winter plumage reported were one Oct. 19 at Conowingo (EB) and three at Brown's Station Landfill Oct. 30 (ph. MJI), with one still there Nov. 3 (MJI). This is the rarest plumage in the Region through the winter, while it is the most common plumage among summer lingerers. It seems that these late October/early November birds are most likely migrants in transit to more southerly winter areas, and that first-winters simply do not winter in our Region regularly. Some had speculated previously that these birds were being overlooked, but that seems not to be the case.

Maryland's 2nd August Glaucous Gull was a first-summer bird at P.R.N.A.S. Aug. 26 (KR), and another Nov. 18 (MJI) at Bay Ridge, *Anne Arundel*, was one of the earliest arrivals on record.

Stasz garnered a *Queen Anne's* first with an ad. Gull-billed Tern at Terrapin Pt. Park Aug. 16, and his Nov. 11 Caspian was lingering a little late at Conowingo Res. Rarely birded Smith I. hosted four ad. Sandwich Terns on the late date of Sept. 27 (JLS, MJI): *Somerset* has few prior records despite the



**Juvenile Red Phalarope at the sewage ponds at Ridgely, Maryland, on October 2, 1997. A first record for Caroline County, a landlocked county on the Delmarva Peninsula east of Chesapeake Bay. Photograph/Marshall Iliiff**

**SA** The star bird of the season for most in Maryland was the state's 2nd **Fork-tailed Flycatcher**, an ad. male that decorated power lines along Yowaiski Mill Rd., near Mechanicsville, *St. Mary's*, Sept. 19–23 (p.a. MP, ph. MH, ph. JLS, m.ob.), although only known to birders for the last 2 days of its stay. Mary Piotrowski, a non-birder but a self-proclaimed "wire-watcher," discovered the bird late Sept. 22 and alerted local birders who were able to spread the word instantaneously via the Internet. She maintained nearly a constant vigil of the bird with the throngs of birders, and accepted inquiries on her cell phone at the site! The bird was superbly documented by numerous photographs, the most valuable of which show the spread wing and the diagnostic emarginated outer 3 primaries of the southern migratory nominate subspecies. Maryland's first was an immature at Sandy Point S.P., *Anne Arundel*, Sept. 23, 1978.



**Only a second for Maryland, and almost twenty years after the first record, was this Fork-tailed Flycatcher near Mechanicsville on September 23, 1997. See another photo under "Pictorial Highlights." Photograph/George M. Jett**

species' regularity on the other side of the Bay at P.L.S.P., *St. Mary's*. Two Sept. 30 Black Terns at P.L.S.P. (PC) were Maryland's 2nd latest ever.

Sullivan had a **White-winged Dove** at Kipt. Nov. 28, one of only a few reports for Virginia. A hummingbird matching the description of a *Selasphorus* was reported from Federalsburg, *Caroline*, Sept. 10–21 (RR), but was never conclusively documented. Three Olive-sided Flycatcher reports included a *Carroll* first at Mariottsville Rd., Sept. 20 (EBo). Virginia's Eastern Shore is the best area in the Region for W. Kingbirds, and all of the Region's 5 reports hail from various s. *Northampton* areas Sept. 5 & 8, Oct. 1 (BS, *vide* BT), and Nov. 15 (BW) & 22 (JSp). Eastern Kingbirds typically depart very early, and the singles at Tanyard Oct. 3 (EE), and E.S.V.N.W.R. Oct. 3 & 6 (JBB) were notably late. A flight of 310 near Kipt. Aug. 30 (HTA) was notable. With recent improved coverage, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher has been seen at Kipt. most recent years and it is probably annual or nearly so in the area.

This year one flew over the Kipt. hawk watch Oct. 20 (BS).

A number of late swallows were seen, perhaps keeping with the Cape May theme this year. Two Purple Martins were behind schedule at Hart Oct. 5 (EJS), and a N. Rough-winged Swallow was at Terrapin Pt. Park Nov. 18 (MJI). Extremely late Bank Swallows were one at the Oyster Landfill, *Northampton*, VA, Oct. 23 (HTA), and two at Hart Oct. 26 (EJS). Finally, an extraordinarily late Cliff Swallow at Kipt. Nov. 16 (HTA) was seen well enough to eliminate Cave Swallow, but not a southwestern Cliff. A massive Tree Swallow roost in *phragmites* at Oyster was variously estimated at 30,000 (HTA) and 100,000 (KG) Oct. 4. A pure white Barn Swallow was at Conowingo Sept. 7 (LE).

Red-breasted Nuthatches were newsworthy this season. They first invaded in late August (6 reports), were common and widespread by early September, then seemed to lapse a bit before another big push in November (m.ob.). A Brown-headed Nuthatch at the Wildfowl Trust Sept. 9 onward (JSe) was at the extreme n. limit of their range on the Eastern Shore, where they are very scarce. No kinglets of either species arrived even moderately early, and numbers may have been low on the average.

A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher on Cornfield Harbor Rd., *St. Mary's*, Nov. 29 (N&FS) was a month later than any other reported. Bazuin found a very late Veery at New Pt. Comfort, *Mathews*, VA, Oct. 25. Bicknell's Thrushes were mist-netted at Jug Bay Wet-

lands Sanctuary, *Anne Arundel*, Oct. 2 & 17 (DB), the latter the latest for Maryland by one day. Another late thrush was the Wood Thrush banded at P.W.R.C., *Prince George's*, Nov. 29 (DD), one of the latest ever for Maryland.

American Pipits arrived in good numbers remarkably early. The first was at Hart on the record-early date of Sept. 6 (EJS), while five off Rte. 94, *Howard*, Sept. 9 (MJI) were a day behind the previous record. At least 8 other September reports, evenly distributed through the month, is far above average (m.ob.). A Loggerhead Shrike near Ridgely, *Caroline*, Oct. 17 (MJI) was the only report of this nearly extirpated migrant.

### VIROS TO FINCHES

A Blue-headed Vireo (nominate) at Aberdeen Proving Grounds, *Harford*, Nov. 20 (MJI) was quite late. A Red-eyed Vireo banded at P.W.R.C. Nov. 5-6 (MJI, DD) was among the latest for Maryland. One of the later and more interesting Warbling Vireos was a single at Smith I. Sept. 27 (JLS, MJI), where practically no fall birding has been done previously.

Warblers and passerines in general were—you guessed it—low this season. Most migrants were either particularly scarce, or just not reported much. A few September weekends were rainy, and this may have contributed to reduced reporting as well. The less common species may show the trend best: just two Golden-winged Warblers were found, 15 Tennessee Warblers, four Orange-crowned, 16 Nashville, seven Connecticut and nine Mourning. Cape May and Bay-breasted warblers use the Appalachians more than our Region, but 11 and 10, respectively, were especially low.

Among very few warblers at Assat. Aug. 18 (HTA) were an ad. male Prothonotary and a Cerulean, both very rare for the island. Another Cerulean at Chinc. Sept. 13 (LL) was unusual on the coast as well. The only species showing any real signs of having a good year was N. Waterthrush, which had a record year at the P.W.R.C. banding station (DD) and seemed to be encountered in the field in decent numbers. A late one was at Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary Nov. 4 (DM). No one reported high numbers of even the commoner migrants. One of the more notable flight days was Sept. 14, when good numbers of migrants were found at a couple locations on Maryland's Eastern Shore (MJI, JLS, HTA), and Sept. 21. The North American Migration Count

Sept. 20 was disappointing for most, as the weather was foul for most of the day and totals reported were quite low. Once the system cleared the next morning, however, a large number of birds moved through. For those that got out, Sept. 21 was one of the better flight days. Most of the better numbers of the common warblers (Black-and-white, Am. Redstart, Magnolia) were reported this day. Most notable and telling was the 13 Cape Mays at Dameron, *St. Mary's* (PC), especially in a season in which the species seemed so scarce.

The last Blue Grosbeak was one at King's Cr., *Talbot*, Oct. 29 (MJI). The only inland Dickcissel reported was one at Hart Sept. 13 (EJS), but migrants at Kipt. Sept. 7 and Oct. 1 & 7 (BS) were along the coast, where they are regular. Single Clay-colored Sparrows were at P.L.S.P. Oct. 14 (PC) and Ninetown Rd., *Caroline*, Oct. 18 (JLS), for a county first. Another adult was at the C.B.B.T. Sept. 28 (HTA, BS) to Oct. 2 (HLW, LMD). A Lark Sparrow was at Wallop's I., *Accomack*, VA, Sept. 12 (CV) and another fairly late one was at Kipt. Oct. 21 (BS, *fide* BT). Most migrants in out Region pass through in late August and September.

Another small piece of the sharp-tailed sparrow puzzle was added this fall. Single Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows detected Sept. 27 at P.L.S.P. (MJI, JLS), Assat. Oct. 14 (PP, OJ), and Terrapin Pt. Park Oct. 18 (†MJI) & 25 (JLS) were believed to be *alterus* or *alterus/nelsoni*, while others reported Oct. 1 (HLW, LMD) & 18 at the C.B.B.T. (GLA, BJ), and Oct. 25 at P.L.S.P. (PC) were not assigned to subspecies. Another was reported as a Sharp-tailed Sparrow Oct. 13 at Easton W.W.T.P. (LC), but was almost surely a Nelson's. The status of the 3 races of Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows remains to be sorted out in the Region, as all appear to be regular. Since the split, *subvirgatus* has been the least reported, perhaps because it is the most coastal of the 3 races and is thus difficult for observers in the Region to encounter. I encourage all observers to try to take notes or photos of the Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows to try to clarify this issue.

Fox Sparrows seemed unusually common; reports from the P.W.R.C. banding station (which had a record season of 36) support this. A near record-early Lincoln's Sparrow was mist-netted at Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary Sept. 6 (DB). Only one Lapland Longspur was reported, a male at Hart Nov. 15 (EJS, RCu, GF)

The only Yellow-headed Blackbird was one at Oyster Oct. 4 (HTA, KG), and the only Brewer's was one in a blackbird flock

off Crouse Mill Rd. Nov. 29 (PD), a *Queen Anne's* first. Purple Finches were present in fair numbers in October and November, though no really large groups were reported. The first of 6 Red Crossbill reports was one at Centennial L. Oct. 2 (†MB, †RO, †MK), and the only fair-sized flock was 23 at Charlottesville, VA, Nov. 19 (NB). A single White-winged Crossbill appeared at a feeder in Bellhaven, *Northampton*, VA, Nov. 13 (WI); another was at Kipt. Nov. 28 (BS). The only other reports this season were fly-by flocks of eight at Turkey Pt., *Cecil*, Nov. 14 (GG) and Germantown, *Montgomery*, Nov. 25 (DC). Obviously, this was the tip of the iceberg as far as crossbills were concerned, and they will be reported on in more detail in the winter season.

A single Common Redpoll at Ocean City Inlet, *Worcester*, Nov. 9 (MB) did not have any followers, however. Small numbers of Pine Siskins appeared in October, and in November small numbers were reported from widespread locales, but no truly big groups ever appeared. Evening Grosbeaks followed the same theme: a few were reported from some widely scattered locales, but none persisted in one place for long and no large flocks were found.

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Place names that are frequently mentioned, but very long, may be abbreviated in a form such as "C.B.B.T." or "W.P.B.O." Such local abbreviations will be explained in a key at the beginning of the particular regional report in which they are used. Standard abbreviations that are used throughout *Field Notes* are keyed on page 21.

# southern atlantic coast region



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## RICKY DAVIS

The fall season is always one of great contrasts. Birds are found migrating early (during summer) and late (into winter), and their numbers fluctuate during the period (and from year to year).

And the weather is certainly different. This year, August to October was about normal in temperatures, but quite dry. Then from October through November, the precipitation levels rose considerably. Wet weather systems came through the Region one after the other, at about five-day intervals. Some of these were major rain events. One can assume that this increase in storms was most likely related to the major El Niño event that was cranking up in the Pacific this fall.

What this meant to the birds migrating in our Region was that there were some major groundings and some better-than-average numbers of certain species normally found farther to the west. The highlight of the fall, the Region's first Virginia's Warbler, was no doubt caught up in one of these weather systems.

**Abbreviations:** C. Hatt. (Cape Hatteras, NC); C.R.N.R.A. (Chattahoochee River Nat'l Recreation Area, GA); E.L.H. (E. L. Huie Land Application Facility, Clayton Co., GA); H.B.S.P. (Huntington Beach State Park, SC); K.Mt. (Kennesaw Mt. Nat'l Battlefield Park, GA); O.S.F. (Orangeburg, SC, Sod Farm); S.S.S. (Savannah Spoil Site, Jasper Co., SC); W.T.P. (Wastewater Treatment Plant).

## LOONS TO SPOONBILL

Only one inland Red-throated Loon was reported, at Falls L., NC, Nov. 16 (RD), and the numbers of Commons were about average. There was once again a Pacific Loon found, at H.B.S.P., SC, Nov. 11 (JP). This species is reported annually in the Carolinas, but many have not been reviewed by the respective state records committees and therefore all sightings need to be documented. Two Horned Grebes in Augusta, GA, Aug. 30–Sept. 6 (AW) and one at the S.S.S., SC, Aug. 31 (L&CEL) were exceptionally early for the Region. Only one Red-necked Grebe was located, at H.B.S.P., SC, Nov. 18 (JP). Eared Grebes continue to return to the Region each fall. Good numbers included a peak of 16 at the Goldsboro, NC, W.T.P.