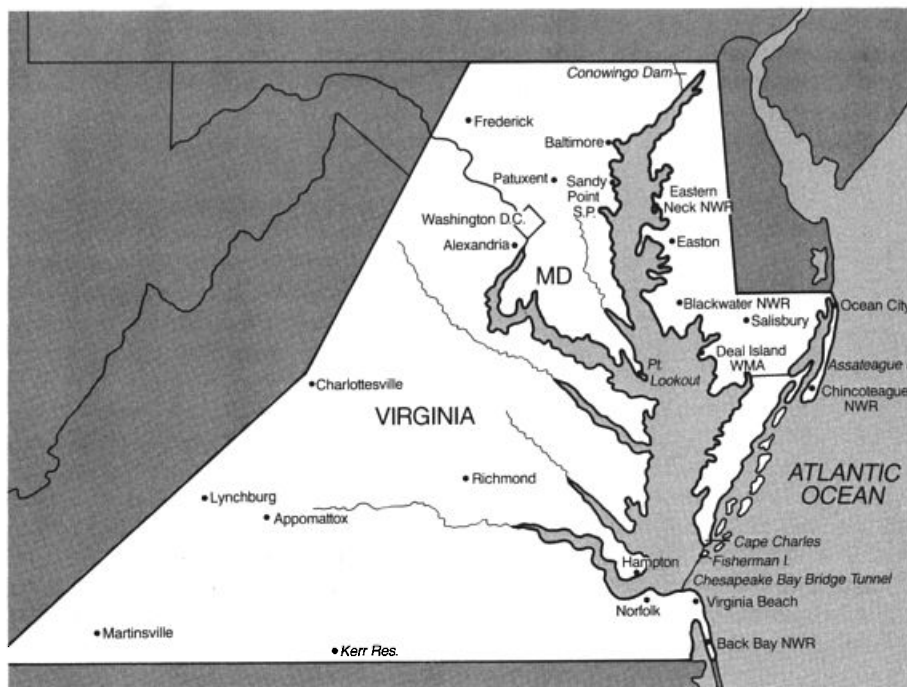


middle atlantic coast region



Black. (*Blackwater N.W.R.*); C.B.B.T. (*Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel*); Chinc. (*Chincoteague N.W.R.*); Craney (*Craney I. Disposal Area*); D.C. (*District of Columbia*); Hart (*Hart-Miller I.*); Lower Bay (*Chesapeake Bay from Maryland line south*); Middle Bay (*Chesapeake Bay from Bay Bridge to Maryland line*); Upper Bay (*Chesapeake Bay north of Bay Bridge*); p.a. (*pending acceptance by state records committee*); P.R.N.A.S. (*Patuxent R. Naval Air Station*); P.L.S.P. (*Point Lookout State Park*); W.W.T.P. (*Waste Water Treatment Plant*).

LOONS TO DUCKS

Relatively large numbers of Red-throated Loons were seen from Ft. Smallwood, *Anne Arundel*, in the Upper Bay during March and April, the high count being 42 Mar. 6 (HLW, LMD). Singles at 2 Nanticoke R. locations Mar. 17 (MJI) and another Mar. 27 (JLS) are still among a mere handful of *Wicomico* records. Much excitement was caused by an alternate-plumaged **Pacific Loon**, D.C.'s first, that dazzled observers at Hains Pt. May 25 onward (p.a. RH, m.ob., ph.), and often allowed approach to within 10 ft. Only the 2nd inland record for the Region, it does match a May pattern of vagrancy in the Northeast. Grebes were relatively scarce, with just four Red-necked Grebes reported, no significant groups of Horned Grebes reported, and no Eared Grebes found. However, a single **Western Grebe** seen May 21 onward (p.a., ph. RN, m.ob.) at L. Thoreau, *Fairfax*, VA, was the exception, being one of few for Virginia's Piedmont. Though more regular in the East from November through the winter, there is precedence for this bird's late spring appearance.

Some N. Gannets pressed in to the Bay, but most counts were not over 10 individuals, save for the season's high of 50 at N. Beach, *Calvert*, Apr. 10 (JLS). An **American White Pelican** was a *Montgomery* first at Violette's Lock Mar. 1 (+DC). Virginia's Eastern Shore is a much more typical location for this species, with the bulk of Regional reports coming from there, so one at Kipt., *Northampton*, VA, May 10 (BT) was more expected. Brown Pelicans return-

MARSHALL ILIFF

Weather this season was typical in most respects, with rainfall close to average on the lower Eastern Shore, according to Dyke. High winter rainfall flooded fields, providing good shorebird habitat. The most significant weather system of the season was a coastal low pressure cell that lingered May 3–14 off the coast of the Region, resulting in sustained northeast winds and much precipitation. In addition to several pelagic species being pushed close to shore, high May 13 tides associated with the storm were responsible for a significant delay in beach and low marsh nesting species, as noted by Bazuin. Additionally, Brinkley reports that one of the winter nor'easters formed an inlet in Cedar I. in coastal Virginia.

As in spring 1997, the passerine migration seemed to be split, this time probably due to the coastal low. There was a push of early migrants in the beginning of April, with notable early arrival dates for several species. This was followed by a considerable lull, with some of the later warblers arriving well behind schedule. The coastal low

delayed many species of migrants (and stifled observations) through May 14, and a good movement was noted by several observers May 15 after the system cleared. A report of a small May 17 fallout on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel by Brinkley was composed of late April migrants rather than mid-May migrants, including counts of 26 Common Yellowthroats and seven Gray Catbirds. Thrushes again were noted as being unusually scarce. Widespread comments that the migration was unusually poor could have been due to the above mentioned double peak. Observer activity is strongest in early May, which is typically most productive in the Region. A delay in migration, coupled with a good push in early April (note Bazuin's Ovenbird count), could be responsible for such comments.

Several species reported without details were not included. All locations can be assumed to be in Maryland except that each Virginia locale is annotated the *first time* it appears in the text.

Abbreviations: Assat. (*Assateague Island National Seashore*); Bay (*Chesapeake Bay*);



Two views of the Pacific Loon at Hains Point, Washington, D.C., May 25, 1998. The species is rare in the east and especially so inland, and this bird provided a first record for the District of Columbia. Photographs/ Dave Czaplak

ed Mar. 1 (JBB) when three were at Haven Beach, *Mathews*, VA, and were first noted in the Middle Bay May 2 with three in *Saint Mary's* (v.o.) and two in *Dorchester* (HTA et al.). Increasingly pushing their limits of distribution in the Bay, a sub-ad. Great Cormorant at Bivalve, *Wicomico*, Mar. 27 (JLS) and one adult at Hart, *Baltimore*, Apr. 10 (EJS) were still noteworthy. Undocumented reports of **Anhingas** from Maryland included one among 25 Double-crested Cormorants at Chino Farms, a *Queen Anne's* first, Apr. 12 (p.a. JG, WS); four over King's Landing, *Calvert*, Apr. 26 (p.a. TH); and one in *Saint Mary's*, a first report for that county, May 2 (p.a. BB).

Unusual for the W. Shore were Tricolored Herons at Ft. Smallwood May 2 (SR) and N. Beach May 3 (JLS), while a Cattle Egret at Darnestown, *Montgomery*, was unexpected so far inland Apr. 18 (JLS). The Fisherman's I. colony of White Ibis typically gives Virginia's Eastern Shore a monopoly on White Ibis reports, so two at Kipt. May 2 (BT) and five at E.S.V.N.W.R., *Northampton*, VA, May 23 (LS) were expected. However, one at Dulles Greenways Wetlands, *Loudoun*, VA, was exceptional May 19 (BL).

A count of 40 Mute Swans at Dundee Marina, *Baltimore*, Mar. 12 (DB) was an alarming number for that location, since the species has strangely avoided the Upper Bay counties of *Baltimore* and *Harford* in its colonization. Perhaps the species is not

done yet. Two white-morph ad. Ross's Geese were picked out of a Snow Goose flock at Black., *Dorchester*, on the record-late date of Mar. 20 (MJI, HTA). A "**Eurasian**" **Green-winged Teal** at E. A. Vaughn W.M.A., *Worcester*, Mar. 17 (p.a. †MJI) & 26 (p.a. MH) was a good rarity. More jetty ducks are lingering in better numbers. One imm. male Com. Eider was at Ocean City Inlet, *Worcester*, as late as May 13 (SHD); an imm. male King Eider remained at the C.B.B.T., *Northampton*, through May 9 (BT); and of a quite high count of 12 Harlequin Ducks at Ocean City present Mar. 26 (MH), four tarried to at least May 12 (SHD). A high count was eight King Eiders at Ocean City Mar.17 (MJI). In late March and early April, many observers commented on a conspicuous influx of Red-breasted Mergansers to inland ponds and lakes, as well as in coastal estuaries.

HAWKS TO CRANES

A well-described Swallow-tailed Kite was spotted over Hughes Hollow, *Montgomery*, May 16 (p.a. JA). More exceptional was a ragged ad. **White-tailed Kite** at Cheriton, *Northampton*, VA, Apr. 26 (p.a. BW) for the 2nd Regional and Virginia report. This species' pattern of vagrancy in the Northeast is not well established, with reports seemingly evenly scattered from spring to late fall. A further increase in Mississippi Kite reports comes as no surprise. The first hit Maryland May 2 (p.a. FF, JF) at Aquasco

Farm, *Prince George's*, followed by one at the traditional Woodbridge, *Fairfax*, VA, nesting locale May 9 (CS); record high Maryland counts of three or four in *Saint Mary's* at P.L.S.P. May 17 (p.a. TB, JK), and four at nearby Dameron May 26 (p.a. PC); a new Ft. Smallwood high of two sub-adults May 22 (p.a. HLW, LMD); one at E.S.V.N.W.R. May 23 (LS); and singles at Huntley Meadows, *Fairfax*, May 25 (DS) & 31 (AH). Still retained on the Maryland Records Committee review list, this species has become so regular and predictable that it is due to be removed very soon.

Armistead's 59 Bald Eagles in s. *Dorchester* Mar. 6 indicates the recovery of this species and its exceptional success in that area of Maryland. Fort Smallwood recorded single imm. N. Goshawks Apr. 27 & 28 (HLW), and an adult was at Huntley Meadows Mar. 27 (DD). An imm. Golden Eagle overflew Rigby's Folly, *Talbot*, Mar. 29 (HTA).

Barely hanging on in the Region, a couple reports of Ring-necked Pheasants were received. In contrast, Wild Turkey reports are becoming more numerous and from more and more new locales. Six stops along Elliot Island Rd., *Dorchester*, May 16 (HLW, LMD) produced an encouraging total of 12 Black Rails. A Com. Moorhen at L. Artemesia, *Prince George's*, May 30 (JSa) was at an unusual location and a late date for a presumed migrant. A shocking **Limpkin** heard May 26 (p.a. GK) on the Patuxent R.



It might make a good quiz photo, but it's better than that—it's a field-mark photo of the adult Black-tailed Gull at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel, Virginia, January 31, 1998. This bird remained at least to mid-March. Photograph/ Robert Anderson

near Nottingham, *Calvert*, produced Maryland's 4th report. The two previous well-documented reports occurred during this exact period, while a 3rd was reportedly tape-recorded "over the summer" more than 10 years ago not far north along the Patuxent. A Regional high count was the 13 Sandhill Cranes noted over Lucketts, *Loudoun*, VA, Mar. 15 (JT et al.). Another flew over Eleanor Lawrence Park, *Fairfax*, VA, Mar. 25 (CT).

SHOREBIRDS TO ALCIDS

A good shorebird flight (composed of Black-bellied Plovers, Ruddy Turnstones, Red Knots, Semipalmated Sandpipers, Dunlins, and Short-billed Dowitchers) was moving low and fast over Sinepuxent Bay, *Worcester*, May 13–14 (SHD). Always notable in spring, especially when so late, three Am. Golden-Plovers were at Hart May 23 (EJS). A Piping Plover on Assat., *Worcester*, Mar. 17 (MJI) was the first report, and the 19 Wilson's Plovers at Cedar I., *Accomack*, VA, May 14 (NB, BP, LW) indicates that this species is hanging on at Virginia's barrier islands.

Delays in Am. Oystercatcher nesting were reported in *Mathews*, certainly due to high tides from the early May nor'easter. A *Saint Mary's* first was the Black-necked Stilt at Longneck Rd. May 4 (TB, JK, PC), a time when vagrants are often found. Other reports were one at E. A. Vaughn W.M.A. May 16 (SHD); six (including one downy

young) at Deal, *Somerset*, May 31 (SHD); two at Elliot I.; and seven in s. *Dorchester* May 9 (HTA et al.), a record-high count where nesting has been anticipated.

Willetts appear to have wintered successfully in the Ocean City area, evidenced by six there Mar. 12–13 (EB, BBI) and one Mar. 17 (MJI). A "Western" Willet was at N. Beach Apr. 8 (JLS), while at Hart, where both races are equally likely, singles on 2 dates in May were identified as "Eastern" Willetts. In *Mathews*, VA, Bazuin notes that Willetts were far less aggressive than is typical May 25 and probably had their eggs washed out by the high May 13 tides. Unusual locations for single Upland Sandpipers were Comus, *Montgomery*, where one was seen Apr. 18 (JLS); Scotland, *Saint Mary's*, Apr. 26 (PC, AB); and the Capital St. Bridge, Anacostia, D.C., May 2 (PP). Single Whimbrel were noteworthy at Scotland (PC, AB) and Back River W.W.T.P., *Baltimore*, Apr. 26 (NS, FS), and P.R.N.A.S., *Saint Mary's*, May 26 (KR). A survey of Quinby, Cedar, and Parramore I., *Accomack*, VA, produced a count of 1500 May 14 (NB, BP, LW), though past surveys have had up to 10 times this amount. In the Upper Bay, large flocks are occasionally noted, but 242 at Hart May 23 (EJS) represented a record-high for the island; 2 flocks totaling 200–300 seen and heard at dusk over Arnold, *Anne Arundel*, the same day (HLW, LMD) were noteworthy. Another record-high Hart count was 2316 Dunlin May 25

(EJS). Three Red Knots seen at Ocean City Mar. 12–13 (EB, BBI) provided evidence that the birds wintered.

Four W. Sandpipers at Hart Apr. 28 (EJS) furnished a record-early spring arrival for Maryland, and two were there May 2 (EJS), tying the previous record. Another two were at Craney, Portsmouth, VA, May 22 (BL). A White-rumped Sandpiper at Merkle N.W.R., *Prince George's*, Apr. 26 (SSa) was very early but was followed closely by several reports in early May. An alternate-plumaged **Curlew Sandpiper** at Hart May 31 (p.a. EJS) into early June (m.ob.) represented the 3rd for Maryland and for the island. Previous records have come from late May and October, and more records are expected from this premier shorebird location. Four Stilt Sandpipers at Hart May 31 (EJS) made a good spring count, and one May 2 in *Saint Mary's* (BB) was even more unusual. The nor'easter May 13–14 was responsible for the remarkable May 13 (C&GV) report of 11 Red Phalaropes on W. Ocean City Pond, *Worcester*, a good mile inland from the coast. Three lingered the next day (SHD). Other singles at the Assateague I. headquarters, *Worcester*, on the mainland side of Assateague Bay (*vide* C&GV) and another at the C.B.B.T. May 13 (BP, LW) were evidence of a more widespread phenomenon.

Other evidence of pelagic species pushed inland by the northeasterly winds were C.B.B.T. counts of Parasitic Jaegers: two

hosted them through the winter (AM). Two Dickcissels were first noted at their Lilypons Rd., Frederick, site May 28, and another was singing along Triadelphia Lake Rd., Montgomery, May 31 (RS).

Always notable, especially in spring, Clay-colored Sparrows were found at P.R.N.A.S., the 2nd record there, Apr. 17 (KR), and at P.L.S.P. for the first time May 3 (†KG, TD, MD). A Lark Sparrow at Oatland Mills Rd., Loudoun, VA, May 9 (KK, DFA) was an even more notable spring sighting. A Dorchester first, and one of very few Bay records, was an Ipswich Sparrow at the Cambridge Fishing Pier Mar. 19 (HTA, †ph. MJI). It also was the 2nd-latest ever for the state, though this is clearly due to lack of coverage of its remote habitat on Assateague I. during early spring. A **Le Conte's Sparrow** at Dulles Greenways Wetlands was exceptional for the Piedmont Apr. 13 (ph. DFA). Increased observer awareness led to several reports of Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows, though only one was tentatively identified to subspecies (*subvirgatus* should at least be separable from *alterus/nelsoni*). One identified as *alterus* was at N. Beach Apr. 10 (JLS), one was unusual inland near Lilipons Apr. 18 (NS, FS), one was at Flag Ponds, Calvert, Apr. 23 (AR), one was at Cornfield Harbor, Saint Mary's, May 2 (BB, MC), and one was on the C.B.B.T. May 17 (NB).

Lincoln's Sparrow reports mirrored other scarce migrants: only six were reported. One of the most remarkable reports of the season was a "**Slate-colored**" Fox Sparrow observed at close range near Herndon, Loudoun, VA, Mar. 20 (†CT). A first for the Region and the state, there may only be one prior East Coast report (from New York).

A Baltimore Oriole at Leonardtown, Saint Mary's, remained through Mar. 6 (PC). The crossbill show abated significantly with the arrival of spring, but some of both species remained. Red Crossbills were reported about 8 times, with two lingering at Swannanoa, Nelson, VA (BP), and six in Rock Cr. Park, D.C. (RH), both May 16. White-winged Crossbill reports were limited to the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland, surprisingly, where four were in a Salisbury, Wicomico, backyard May 2 (D&CB) and another, an imm. male, at a Berlin, Worcester, feeder from Mar. 7–May 18 (LSc, ph. MH), setting a new Maryland late date by one day. Pine Siskins remained scarce, but there was a small influx of Evening Grosbeaks in late April and early May, punctuated by the report of 50 in Saint Mary's May 2 (*vide* EW).



Following the winter's invasion, a few crossbills lingered in Maryland into the spring. This male White-winged Crossbill was photographed at Berlin, Worcester County, Maryland, April 7, 1998. Photograph/ Mark L. Hoffman

CORRIGENDA

In this report for the winter season, please note that an alcid sp. reported from Kipt. Jan. 5 by Ralph Wall, should actually have been included in this season, as it was seen Mar. 5. I apologize for the error.

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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 295.