

Pennsylvania's first record if accepted by PORC. After repeated viewings of the videotape of a skulking bird, the NJBRC concluded that the Le Conte's Sparrow reported at Sandy Hook for the week following 26 Dec 1998 was in fact a Grasshopper Sparrow, itself a good find, though not quite up to a Le Conte's.

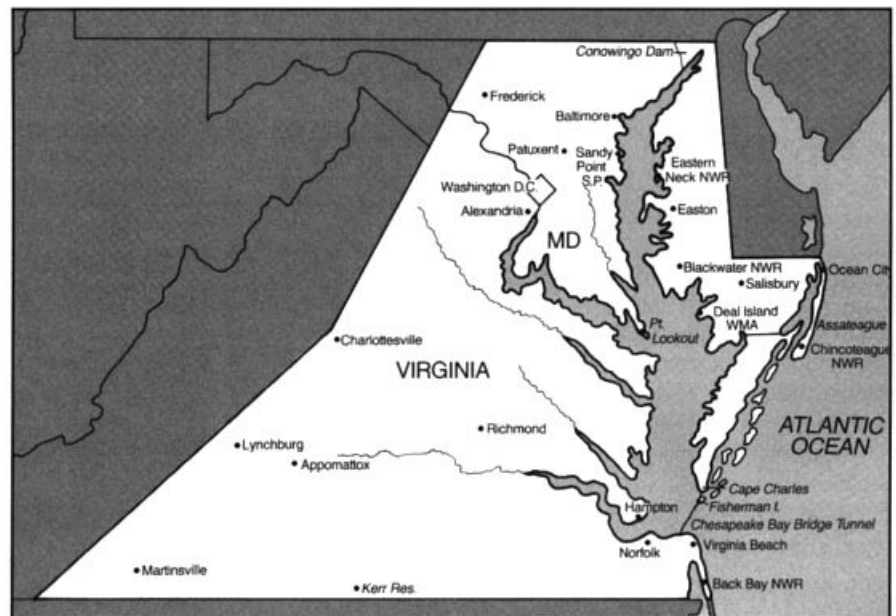
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# middle atlantic coast



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. In most regions, place names given in italic type are counties. Standard abbreviations that are used throughout *North American Birds* are keyed on page 254.

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Spring was early again, as has been the recent trend. March migrants were certainly helped along by a period of strong southerlies that may have been responsible for such remarkably early discoveries as the

Barn Swallow and Whip-poor-will listed below. The trend continued into early and mid-April, when most species arrived ahead of schedule and record-early dates continued to be set.

Locations can be assumed to be in Maryland, except that each Virginia locale is annotated the *first time* it appears in the text.

**Abbreviations:** Assateague (Assateague I. National Seashore, Worcester, MD); Bay (Chesapeake Bay); C.B.B.T. (Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel, Northampton, VA); Craney

(Craney I. Disposal Area, *Portsmouth*, VA); DC (District of Columbia); Deal (Deal Island W.M.A., *Somerset*, MD); E.S.V.N.W.R. (Eastern Shore of Virginia N.W.R., *Northampton*, VA); Kiptopeke (Kiptopeke S.P., *Northampton*, VA); P.L.S.P. (Point Lookout S.P., *Saint Mary's*, MD); P.R.N.A.S. (Patuxent River Naval Air Station, *Saint Mary's*, MD); P.W.R.C. (Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, *Prince George's*, MD); Vaughn (E. A. Vaughn W.M.A., *Worcester*, MD).

#### LOONS THROUGH DUCKS

A basic **Pacific/Arctic Loon** (@) on the South R. at Edgewater 19 (†W. Heigermeijer, S. Droegge) & 22 Mar. (S. Arnold, B. Taylor) will serve as *Anne Arundel's* first and Maryland's 4th report. The Pacific Loon was first documented in the state only last November. An imm. Red-throated Loon was late at Lapidum, *Harford*, 21–22 May (DP, S. Simon). An Eared Grebe 29 Mar–4 Apr was unusual inland at Beaverdam Res., *Loudoun*, VA (DFA, SH), whereas one 12 Apr at N. Beach, *Calvert* (JLS), was at a perennial location. An American White Pelican was at Hog Island W.M.A., *Surry*, VA, 26 Apr (BT) and another roosted at Bodkin I., *Queen Anne's*, in late May (@ PRS). The species has become annual in Maryland in spring. With a booming population in the lower Bay, it has been surprising that relatively few Brown Pelicans have penetrated beyond *Dorchester* and *Saint Mary's*. This spring 4 at Rose Haven, *Anne Arundel*, 22 May (DB) and one resting on Bodkin I., *Queen Anne's*, 31 May (PRS) foreshadowed the flood that would reach the Upper Bay this summer. Northern Gannets occasionally stage great invasions that reach far into the Bay. This year was one of the better on record, with frequent sightings as far up as the Bay Bridge (which appears to represent a barrier to their movement). Among a number of excellent counts were 205 from Cobb I., *Charles*, 27 Mar (MJI), a record-high for that county, where gannets are irregular in spring. Late Great Cormorants were at P.L.S.P. 6 May (GM) and Assateague 25 May (MJI). A Least Bittern 11 Apr at N. Beach (CMM) was notably early. Surprisingly, a Snowy Egret pair built a nest on a duck blind at the mouth of Broad Cr., *Talbot*, first noticed 26 May (PRS). Black-crowned Night-Herons were first found nesting at L. Whetstone, *Montgomery*, a couple years ago; this year a nest was seen 11 Apr (K. Stewart). The vanguard of the Yellow-crowned Night-Heron arrival was again at a Baltimore residence, where they returned this year 23 Mar (PW). Also in Baltimore, three nests and 6 adults were seen 6 May (E&NK) at Wyman Park. Maryland's 2nd well-documented **White-faced Ibis** (@) was

a first-summer found at Vaughn 25 May (†MJI), relocated 26 (MLH, MH, GM) & 27 May (D&CB, H.&M. Mudd). In addition, an alternate-plumaged adult (possibly the same as last year?) flew by 28 May (DC, MAT, JLS).

**SA** A nominate *bernicla* **Brant** (Dark-bellied Brent Goose) 22 Mar (@ †ESB) at Cape Charles, *Northampton*, VA, is surely the bird of the season. Although the Black Brant (*nigricans*) of the Pacific Coast is known from a number of East Coast records (especially from New Jersey, New York, and Massachusetts), the nominate subspecies has been found only once previously and is as yet undocumented by specimen or photograph. The three Brant subspecies might be granted full species status in the near future. Observers in the Region and beyond would do well to study up on Brant identification and check each bird carefully (look for an upcoming *North American Birds* paper by P. A. Buckley, S. Mitra, and E. S. Brinkley).

Small Canada Geese not thought to be the expected *hutchinsii* were seen at Hurlock WTP, *Dorchester*, 13 Mar (HTA, GLA) and Bellevue, *Talbot*, 18 Mar (HTA). The occurrence of other races in the Region has been indicated by sight reports but has not yet been documented. A Eurasian Wigeon 3 Mar in *Fauquier*, VA (KG), one at Deal 7 Mar (PD), and 2 there 19 Mar (SHD) were the only reports. A female Harlequin Duck 21 May off Assateague (SHD) bettered Maryland's previous record late date of 9 May. Unprecedented inland in late May, an ad. male Long-tailed Duck was on Centennial L., *Howard*, 26 May+ (BO, v.o.). A record-early egg date for Hooded Merganser was established 3 Mar at P.W.R.C. (C. Turner). They also nested at Huntley Meadows, *Fairfax*, VA, where two broods were seen 4–24 May (CF, KG).

#### HAWKS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

The Ft. Smallwood, *Anne Arundel*, hawk-watch logged its poorest season since regular coverage (305+ hours) began in 1994, with only 8926 raptors in 402.2 hours through 6 Jun, including record lows for Osprey and Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks. According to Ricciardi, bad weather was the culprit. Although Feb and Mar counts were above-average, numbers in Apr (usually the best month) were only half of the 5-yr average at 3476. Coverage was only possible on 22 days and several of those were

“marginal weather-wise.” May was average but “the damage had been done.” The season did log a record 17 species of raptors (see below).

**Swallow-tailed Kites** typically occur in the Region in May or early June, but 2 very early ones were seen this year on 2 Apr at False Cape S.P., VA, (J. Smith) and 7 Apr at Martinak S.P., *Caroline*, (@†R. Orr, a record-early Maryland date). One imm. passed Ft. Smallwood on a more typical date of 18 May (@GS) and was followed an hour later by an imm. Mississippi Kite (GS, HLW). Other Mississippiis at Ft. Smallwood occurred 9 & 24 May (SR<sub>i</sub>). One at Vaughn 25 May (MJI, MO et al.) provided a *Worcester* first, and others in Maryland were at Jug Bay 19 May (DB), Schoolhouse Pond (JLS) and P.R.N.A.S. 26 May (KR), and at Cylburn Mansion, *Baltimore*, 13 May (K. E. Costley, S. Geddes et al.). Pairs returned to Runt Powell's Farm, *Halifax*, VA, 30 Apr (J. Blalock) and Huntley Meadows, *Fairfax*, VA, 7 May (R. Hilton). A dark-morph adult **Red-tailed Hawk** heading n. past Ft. Smallwood 6 Apr (@†HLW) was apparently a western *calurus*, a first for *Anne Arundel* and only the 4th for the state. It was conceivably the same bird that wintered at the I-66/Route 238 junction, *Prince William*, VA, last seen there 22 Mar (TMD). A Golden Eagle at Ft. Smallwood 6 Apr (HLW) was the first in spring there; one at Williamsburg, VA, 1 May (BT) was notably late.

Rare away from coastal saltmarshes, single Black Rails sang 15–23 May (DB) at Jug Bay and at James Run 26 May (E. Blom) for a *Harford* second. A good flight of Sandhill Cranes reached the Region this year, including 3 flying past the Belle Haven Marina, *Fairfax*, 6 Mar (†S. Suter); one between Routes 614 & 15, *Culpepper*, VA, 15–16 Apr (KH, G. B. Harris); one at E.S.V.N.W.R. 27 Apr and 1 May (CB); and one at Univ. of Maryland Central Farm, *Howard*, 29 Apr (BO, JS).

An above-average number of American Golden-Plovers included singles at Hart 8 Apr (EJS), Craney 29 Apr–4 May (BL, G. Weinberger et al.), Scotland, *Saint Mary's*, 13–14 May (PC, KR et al.), and Bradford Johnson Rd., *Kent*, 20 May (JLS). Black-necked Stilt reports were pretty much from the typical locations, except for one at Salisbury 21 Apr (SHD), a *Wicomico* first, and 2 off Route 611, *Worcester*, 25 May (MJI). Nesting again occurred at Elliott I., with one on a nest 24 May (MO et al.), the first confirmation this season. Four American Avocets at Trent Hall, *Saint Mary's*, 16 Apr (J. Fuchs) provided one of

**SA** A new shorebird location is the Poplar Island Dredge Spoil Impoundments, which have been under construction since 1998 and which now have three large impoundments, with another in progress. The site is similar to the Hart-Miller Island facility in Baltimore County, which has proven a gold mine for the shorebird-deprived state of Maryland. Because Poplar is lower in the Bay than Hart-Miller, we expect coastal species to appear there with more frequency. Access is by boat only. A preliminary visit there 18 May (MJI, GLA) yielded 600 shorebirds of 14 species, highlighted by 19 White-rumped and 4 Stilt Sandpipers. Though the habitat seemed appropriate, overall numbers were somewhat lower than would be expected. The reasons for this are unclear, but it will be interesting to observe whether this facility will “mature” to the same level of attractiveness for shorebirds as Hart-Miller. Extensive rip-rap around the edges has already proven attractive to Purple Sandpipers, 8 of which Spitzer found on a 27 May visit.

few county records, while 3 at Hart 16 May (EJS) were typical in location and timing. An early Solitary Sandpiper at Kershner's Pond, *Frederick*, 24 Mar (JLS, MH, MJI, K. Fehskens) was a full two weeks ahead of the next ones. Whimbrels had their typical late May departure from the coast, with 787 still at Willis Wharf, *Accomack*, 23 May (SHD), whereas 33 at non-coastal Hart 26 May (EJS) were typical of the mass withdrawal. Western Sandpiper is still rare in spring but one was seen near Scotland, *Saint Mary's*, 9 May (PC) and 3 stopped in at N. Beach 24 May (JLS). White-rumped Sandpipers in April are unusual, so one near Cherrix Lane, *Worcester*, 30 Apr (MLH) was noteworthy. **Curlew Sandpipers** were found at Craney 4 May (DLH) and Chincoteague 11 May (BL), the most reliable locations in the Region. The Thorofare Gap Wetlands (a.k.a. North Fork Wetlands) is a recent mitigation project that provided some good birding this spring. Good shorebird spots are scarce in the Virginia Piedmont and highlights at Thorofare included 2 White-rumped Sandpipers 27 May (SR) and 6 on 29 May (SR, KG), and a rare spring Long-billed Dowitcher 3 May (†SR, CT). The only other Long-billed Dowitchers were the 15 identified by sight and call at Elliott I. 8 May (MJI, GLA), along with 2 Short-billed Dowitchers.

Long-billeds have been suspected of wintering there, so it is possible that these birds overwintered. Ruffs were found at the new shorebird pond at the Assateague Visitor's Center 15–20 Apr (PD et al.), Route 577 on 21 Apr (G. Lovelace), and Kibler Rd. 29 Apr (ph. MH, JLS), the last two constituting 2nd and 3rd records for *Caroline*. Stilt Sandpipers were found in surprising numbers this spring, including 2–6 at the Assateague pond 22 Apr–8 May (PD, SHD, MJI); Lakeside Ponds, *Harford*, 27–28 Apr (ph. MH et al.); Harney Rd. pond 20–21 May (PCD et al.); and Kingman L., DC, 28 May (BC), along with five other locations. Singles of both Red-necked and Wilson's Phalaropes were at Hart 13 & 20 May (EJS), while 6 Red-neckeds and 4 Wilson's were there 27 May (EJS et al.).

#### GULLS THROUGH FLYCATCHERS

The Region's 9 Little Gull reports were concentrated in March, but one first-summer at Hart 27 May (EJS et al.) was one of the latest ever for Maryland. Three Black-headed Gulls included singles in *Saint Mary's* at P.R.N.A.S. 30 Mar (KR) and P.L.S.P. 9 Apr (PC, A. Bishop). As was the case last spring, “Shrimpy” the **Kelp Gull** lingered at Sandgates, *Saint Mary's*, to 4 Mar and was absent through the rest of the spring, save for a lone appearance 25 Apr (*vide* J. Kostenko). It reappeared during the summer, but no one knows where it goes in the intervening time—perhaps looking for mates at one of the central Bay gull colonies? A late first-summer Iceland Gull was at Hart 20 & 27 May (EJS et al.). The first returning Caspian Tern was at Jug Bay 30 Mar (DB). A single Black Tern report was below average. A large alcid at Ocean City Inlet 5–7 Mar (A. Ripley, C&DB) was not identified.

After an exceptional owl year, a few lingered late. A Short-eared Owl 6 May at Irish Grove (GMJ, G. Brewer) was late and at a locality where nesting was suspected a little more than a decade ago. Later searches there did not reveal breeding activity. A Long-eared Owl 8 Apr near Easton, *Talbot* (MJI, GLA), was late but showed no particular signs of nesting. A Whip-poor-will that sang a couple times at Dameron, *Saint Mary's*, 9 Mar (PC) established a record-early Maryland arrival. The next, 24 Mar (KR) at Hollywood, *Saint Mary's*, was also early. “Spot,” the much-loved wintering Rufous Hummingbird, was last seen at the Lorton, VA, feeder 9 Mar (S. Gobar). The latest Yellow-bellied Sapsucker by almost a month was one 18 May on The Mall in DC (JF). A flicker with the head pattern of a typical Yellow-shafted but with bright orange

undersides to the remiges and retrices was at Annapolis, *Anne Arundel*, 13 Apr (†MJI). Ten Olive-sided Flycatchers 5–27 May was a good total, but only 3 Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, all at Rock Creek Park 16 May (GM, BC), was surprisingly low for the season but good for a single day. An early Eastern Kingbird appeared 6 Apr at Hurlock W.T.P. (MJI). An ad. male **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** at Hart 6 May (@EJS) was new for *Baltimore* and about the 12th for Maryland. It was closely followed by a couple in s. NJ, possibly harbingers of the summer's mini-invasion to s. states.

#### SHRIKES THROUGH WARBLERS

A Loggerhead Shrike at Cool Spring Rd., *Harford*, 22 Apr (D. Hafner) was the only migrant record this season, but a pair discovered near Lilypons, *Frederick*, 21 May (CMM et al.) was even more exciting. Although regular nesters in this general area through 1995, Loggerheads have apparently not nested since. This pair was watched through the summer (see the next issue). In the Virginia Piedmont a few pairs persist, including a pair near Rapidan, *Culpepper*, VA, present through the season (KH, v.ob.) and observed nest-building 11 Mar (J. Fitzgerald). Two extremely early Yellow-throated Vireos were at Kiptopeke 30 Mar (CB). There were five reports of Philadelphia Vireo. Early Northern Rough-winged Swallows appeared 11 Mar (M. Bowen) at Hughes Hollow, 12 Mar (AM) at Dyke Marsh, and 16 Mar (G. Gough) at Anacostia River Park, DC. A Bank Swallow at Ft. Belvoir 30 Mar (TMD) was also early. Record early and three weeks before its followers, a Barn Swallow appeared 1 Mar (GM) at P.R.N.A.S. And topping off the unusual swallow records, 2 **Cave Swallows** were seen 1 May (ESB) at Cape Charles, *Northampton*, VA.

A Red-breasted Nuthatch 26 May at a Parsonsburg, *Wicomico*, feeder was unusually late (ELP). A Sedge Wren 3 May (CT) in the Cedar Run Wetlands, *Prince William*, VA, was unusual for the Virginia Piedmont. A singing Veery 7 Apr at P.W.R.C. was early (K. Klimkiewicz). There were nine reports of Bicknell's Thrushes, including a county-first singing at Middle Patuxent Environmental Area, *Howard*, 13 May (CSR) and a couple of birds at Weyanoke Sanctuary, Norfolk, VA, 13–21 May (DLH, A. Whitlock, tape ESB et al.); Brinkley reported that they are annual at the latter location. One observer heard 4 in nocturnal migration 7 May over *Montgomery* (PO). This method is clearly the way to survey for this difficult-to-identify species, which rarely sings on migration, though

recordings and sonogram analysis should be used to confirm the subtly different nocturnal calls.

Early warblers included a Golden-winged 21 Apr (S. French) at Carroll Mill Rd., *Howard*; a Black-throated Blue 22 Apr at Surveyor Rd.; a Northern Waterthrush 21 Apr at Hallmark Rd., *Howard* (W. Ebert); a record-tying Worm-eating 11 Apr at Twilley's Bridge, *Wicomico* (C&DB), and another 14 Apr at Hollywood, *Saint Mary's* (KR) with a Hooded Warbler; and an Ovenbird 4 Apr at Dameron, *Saint Mary's* (PC), which bested the previous record by a day. Another Ovenbird on Maryland's Lower E. Shore 5 Apr (SHD) and reports from three additional locations on 7 Apr (v.o.) indicated a generally early arrival for the species. A Yellow-breasted Chat 15 Apr at Mt. Olive Church Rd., *Worcester* (PD), was fairly early as well. A small push of early warblers arrived 8 Apr across the Region. Northern Parulas were reported suddenly from 15 locations 8 Apr, though there were no earlier reports. Black-throated Green Warblers 7-8 Apr at Dameron, *Saint Mary's* (PC), and 8 Apr at Marriottsville, *Howard* (T. D. Coskren), were ahead of schedule. Yellow-throated Warblers arrived 25 Mar at Jug Bay (DB) and were found immediately thereafter at a range of Coastal Plain locations. The first Prairie Warblers were 7 on 1 Apr at the Great Dismal Swamp, *Suffolk*, VA (L. Gore), followed by a female 7 Apr at Huntley Meadows and others at several locations over the next couple days. Cerulean Warblers are tough to detect in migration, so those 6 May on Maryland's Lower E. Shore (SHD), at P.L.S.P. 9 (PC) & 11 May (GM), and 11 May at Greenwell S.P., *Saint Mary's* (KR), were notable. Wilson's Warblers seemed to be reported in good numbers this year and there were about 15 Mourning Warbler reports. The latest Myrtle Warbler departed 28 May (KG), when one was seen at Dyke Marsh, *Fairfax*, VA. At least 3 territorial male Swainson's Warblers were found in the Pocomoke R. area of Maryland's Lower E. Shore (v.o.).

**TANAGERS THROUGH FINCHES**

The first tanagers arrived 16 Apr, with a Summer at False Cape S.P. (J. Spahr) and a Scarlet at Waverly, *Sussex*, VA (D. Bradshaw). Chipping Sparrows were in evidence a bit earlier than is typical, with several reports in early March away from wintering areas. A singing Clay-colored Sparrow 29 Apr at Assateague (SHD) was the first in spring for *Worcester*. The Lark Sparrow at Bywater Rd., *Anne Arundel*, was last seen 28 Mar (B. Schreitz). Non-coastal Nelson's Sharp-tailed

Sparrows were at Cornfield Harbor, *Saint Mary's*, 15 Apr (PC), and 3 at N. Beach 3 May (JLS). Eleven Lincoln's Sparrows were reported this spring. The **Harris's Sparrow** at Sykesville, *Carroll*, lingered through 1 May (@D. Harvey). A Slate-colored Junco 6 May was late at Hallmark Rd., *Howard* (W. Ebert), with others notably late in DC 1 May at Rock Creek Park (BC, GMc) and 3 May on The Mall (JF). An early Rose-breasted Grosbeak visited a Timberleigh, *Howard*, feeder 16 Apr (D. Nagengast). Not mentioned in the Winter Season report, 3 Painted Buntings (2 ad. males, one green) apparently wintered again at Holiday Trav-L Park, VA, (ph. LL, TMD, v.o.), with a male last reported 7 Mar (BL).

Several Dickcissels appeared at Regional feeders this spring, including singles at Annandale 10 Mar-24 Apr (M. Collins et al.), Sykesville, *Carroll*, 29 Mar-12 Apr (A. Hoffman, MLH), and Oxon Hill Children's Farm, *Prince George's*, 8 Apr (F. Schaffer). Were these wintering birds or extremely early overshoot migrants? A second push represented nomadic breeders that formed the forefront of a massive invasion this summer (see the summer report). Typical invasions occur about once every three years, correspond with droughts in the Midwest, and are not noticed until early June, but this year the appearance was much earlier. The first appeared 9 May (LL) at Hog I., *Surry*, VA, followed in the next four days by reports from five other locations in both states. Most May reports were of birds at "traditional" locations such as the Frederick Valley, *Frederick*, Lucketts, *Loudoun*, VA, and Curles Neck Farm, VA, with others in Maryland in *Saint Mary's* and *Kent*; the only other Virginia report was from 27 May (CB) at Kiptopeke. All were in reasonable nesting habitat save for ones at Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens, DC, 14 May (B. Dobbins) and Kingman L., DC, 27 May (BC).

Only a few Red Crossbills were seen this spring: 5 were at Rigby's Folly, *Talbot*, 15 Mar (GLA); a female at Royal Oak, *Talbot*, 27 Apr (J. Crump); a male at Riverbend Park, *Fairfax*, 9 May (M. Smith); and 15 at Soldiers' Delight, *Baltimore*, 17 May, with several there 24 May as well (J.&C. McDaniel). Other rare feeder finches included the 2 White-winged Crossbills in Portsmouth, VA, through 9 Mar (S. Bolinaga) and a Common Redpoll in Parsonsburg, *Wicomico*, through 8 Mar (ELP). A Pine Siskin 14 May at Wilde L., *Howard* (H. Zeichner), was surprisingly late, as was a female Evening Grosbeak 7 May at Woodbridge, *Prince William*, VA (M. Rubaudo). A female *Euplectes* bishop, a cer-

tain escapee, was at the Huntley Meadows feeder 25 May+ (CF et al.).

**Undocumented rarities:** A Fulvous Whistling-Duck 28-30 Mar at Chincoteague was submitted without details.

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