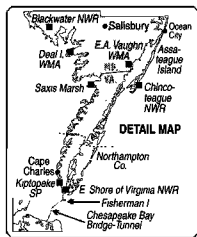


Middle Atlantic



Todd M. Day | Edward S. Brinkley

The season was a study in contrasts: unusually balmy through early January, but often quite chilly, even bitterly so, in the second half of the period. The warm weather in December showed no connection to half-hardy or “lingering” species, which were noted in average or below-average numbers, and no real influxes of boreal birds appeared with the onset of cold weather, aside from minor increases in waterfowl and white-winged gulls. Precipitation was below average in most areas, and snowfall was negligible except in the highest elevations (and even then below average). In a year with alcids—especially Dovekie and Common Murre—breaking records along the East Coast, Maryland had several highlights from a single pelagic trip, but for the first time in over a decade not a single birding trip left port in Virginia. The mix of rarities—Green-tailed Towhee, Yellow Rail, Tropical Kingbird, Black-chinned Hummingbird, blue-morph Ross’s Goose, Wood Stork—was whelming, if not overwhelming.

WATERFOWL THROUGH WOOD STORK

In Virginia, up to 11 Greater White-fronted Geese were reported in the Mountains and Valleys (Augusta, Staunton, Russell) 5 Dec–26 Feb, with the largest count being 6 at Elk Garden, Russell (T. Hunter, B. Riggs), and 4 were between three locations in the w. Coastal Plain (Fairfax, King William, Surry) 10 Dec–4 Feb, with 2 in the Piedmont in Culpeper 25 Feb (TMD). Maryland reported 8 Greater White-fronteds 5 Dec–23 Feb, including 2 ad. *flavirostris* near Union Mills 25 Jan–9 Feb (RFR et al.) and one in Calvert, MD 4 Feb (JLS et al.). An imm. dark-morph Ross’s Goose at Chincoteague N.W.R. 15 Dec (†HTA) furnishes the 3rd sight report of this rare morph in the state—and one of very few on the East Coast. Only two other reports of the species came from Virginia: from Staunton (AL) and Prince William (KG et al.) in Jan. In Maryland, Ross’s Geese were widespread

again (reports of 14 total, 7 Dec–25 Feb), and it is apparent that the many fewer Virginia reports of the species in recent years (the species is regular at Chincoteague N.W.R.) indicate waning zeal in reporting the species rather than an actual decline. Cackling Goose, which has come to occupy the niche of birder-interest once held by Ross’s, was reported in 13 locations in Virginia, with the peak count of 5 coming from Bell’s Lane, Staunton, Augusta 21 Dec (AL). Other Virginia counts above 2 came from the Rte. 3 ponds in King George 3 Dec (3; FA) and near Radford 3 Jan (4; C. Kessler). Sixty-eight Cackling Geese were reported in Maryland 3 Dec–2 Feb, with a high of 5 at Westminster Res. 11 Dec (RFR). A Snow Goose x Canada Goose hybrid was noted at Elk Neck, Cecil, MD 7 Jan (WE et al.). The only report of Barnacle Goose was from Meadow L., Garrett 1–3 Dec (JLS).

In Virginia, 2 Trumpeter Swans (one clearly from the Ohio program) turned up at Air-lie, Fauquier 10 Dec–28 Feb, with one marked with neck collar reading “OA4.” In Maryland, one continued at Oxbow, Kent through 2 Mar (M. Stutzman et al.), one from a Canadian introduction program (with patagial tag “962”) at Upper Marlboro, Prince George’s through 27 Feb (ph. S. J. Davies), and a pair with 5 yearlings cruised Fairlee Cr. 16 Dec (L. & N. Dulak et al.). Counts of 1000 Gadwalls and 1000 American Wigeons came from Piscataway Park, Prince George’s, MD 10 Dec (T. Feild, BH); no other concentrations came close to four digits. Five male Eurasian Wigeons in Virginia and 3 in Maryland, 1 Dec–3 Mar, was about normal, all in the Coastal Plain. The decline of Northern Pintail is most palpable in the s. parts of the Region; Armistead managed to count 475, a good recent count, at Blackwater N.W.R. 12 Feb. The only Eurasian Teal of the season was a male at Great Oak Pond, Kent 15–18 Jan (WE). An injured female Blue-winged Teal was on the New R. in Radford 21 Dec–3 Jan (C. Kessler); 10 were still at Elliott I. 16 Dec (BH).

Numbers of Redhead were reported only from Maryland, where the high was just 410 on the Honga R. 12 Feb (HTA); all other *Aythya* were in predictable numbers and locations. The only certain King Eider reported was an imm. male at Ocean City Inlet 19 Feb (E. Starling); that location also had the only Common Eiders in the Region, with a whopping 17, including 8 ad. males, 5 Dec+ (S. Dyke, m.ob.). Harlequin Duck reports included one to 2 at Ocean City (2 Jan–10 Mar), one at Point Lookout, MD (17 & 24 Feb), and an imm. male at C.B.B.T. 12

Dec (S. Devan, F. Blyston, B. Williams) through at least 13 May (ESB et al.). Rare for the mts. at any time, a subad. male White-winged Scoter was at Whitethorn, Garrett, MD 25 Feb–4 Mar (M. Hafner). One at Cumberland 4 Feb (D. Yeany II) and 2 at Little Seneca Res., Montgomery 18–20 Feb and one a km upriver from Little Falls 22–24 Feb (both DCz et al.) were equally rare for Maryland’s w. half. A Long-tailed Duck at L. Shenandoah, Rockingham 16 Dec (G. Moyers) furnished one of few recent county records. A possible female Barrow’s Goldeneye was seen at Hooper’s I., MD 14 (HTA) & 15 Jan (D. Cole). Mergansers and Ruddy Ducks wintered in average numbers for recent years. Wild Turkey continues to proliferate, whereas Northern Bobwhite slowly disappears, and the introduced Ring-necked Pheasant has nearly vanished from the Region; reports of the latter were restricted to Maryland at three locations, with a high of 3 at Carmichael, Queen Anne’s 19 Jan (D. Poet). Common Peafowl has become locally common around Church Creek, Dorchester, MD, where 11 were counted 29 Dec (B. Mumford).

Red-throated Loons were rare in Virginia were on the Shenandoah R., Clarke 1–3 Dec (J. Coleman, F. Bogar), and at Kerr Res., Mecklenburg 4 & 13 Jan (fide AD; A. Bryan), the latter now a more-expected locale in the Piedmont for this species. A few were located in the greater D.C. area as well. Patient searching at Kerr Res. netted D’Onofrio another Pacific Loon, 10 Dec and 4 Jan. The only coastal Pacific Loon was one seen in a large loon and duck flight at Cape Charles, Northampton 13 Dec (ESB). Maryland had no reports of this species. A grand flight of Common Loons—885—passed hawkwatchers at Snicker’s Gap, on the line between Clarke and Loudoun 3 Dec (B. Abrams, J. Boudreau); in Maryland, 400+ passed Monument Knob the same day (D. Weesner). A Western Grebe was studied critically in the Potomac R. off Washington’s Birthplace, VA 14 Jan (p.a.; C. Tumer); this is a Maryland record. Only a dozen Red-necked Grebes were reported Regionwide; and aside from a single at Leadenhram Cr., Talbot, MD 17 Dec (D. Curson, RFR), the only Eared Grebes were at S. Holston L., the only reliable spot in the Region for this w. species. A count of 64 Pied-billed Grebes at Loch Raven Res. 27 Jan (D. Terry) was heartening.

A Manx Shearwater at C.B.B.T. 14 Jan (BTa) was remarkably only the 2nd sight report for this well-watched spot. The only report of Northern Fulmar came from a 25 Feb pelagic trip off Ocean City, 22 birds total (PG et al.). In recent years, American White Pelicans are not nearly as numerous in Virginia as

in Maryland; one was at Accotink Bay, VA 26 Nov–21 Dec, then at nearby Pohick Cr. 31 Dec (*vide* KG), for the only Virginia report. At Blackwater N.W.R., it was tough to keep track of all the reports of the species, but the high count during the season was 31 on 14 Jan (HTA), certainly the highest Regional count ever and mirrored in the steadily increasing numbers that winter in the e. Carolinas. Singles were at Ocean City and Jug Bay in Dec–Jan as well. Brown Pelicans and Northern Gannets continue to forage farther n. in the Chesapeake Bay than historically, sometimes in large numbers. The only report of Cattle Egret came from Blackwater N.W.R. 25 Nov–9 Dec (D. Burggraf). Late Green Herons were at Leeds Cr. 21 Dec (L. Roslund) and 6 Feb at Rigby's Folly (E. Armistead). Two Glossy Ibis at Deal Island W.M.A. 28 Dec (C. & L. McCollough) were remarkable rarities for the season. A Wood Stork at First Landing S.P., Virginia Beach 19–23 Jan (K. & T. Beatty, m.ob., ph.) may have been the first truly "twitchable" one in the state in over 20 years!

RAPTORS THROUGH ALCIDS

A count of Bald Eagles of between 134 and 144 from Cat Cr., *Richmond* 22 Feb (*vide* S. Spencer) was remarkable from such a small site. Single Ospreys continue to haunt the Region through the season, though there is a distinct "lull" in records in Jan, suggesting that many of the more northerly birds clear out by the end of Dec, and the Feb birds are returnees. However, the bays around Virginia Beach have at least a half-dozen through Jan in most recent years. Northern Goshawks remain very scarce; a female at Mt. Airy, MD ca. 28–31 Jan (G. Bach-Watson) was the only one reported. An albino Red-tailed Hawk n. of Taneytown, MD 25 Jan (RFR, D. Terry) surely stood out. In Virginia, Rough-legged Hawks were absent except in their stronghold, *Highland*, where up to 3 were seen; Maryland had singles at Shorters Wharf 27 Dec (F. Jacobsen) and at Elliott I. exactly a month later (HTA). Virginia Golden Eagles away from *Highland* (where tracked assiduously this season into spring and summer by local birders) were numerous: one juv. at *Prince William* landfill 10 Nov–17 Dec (JK, KG), one near the Dublin, *Pulaski* airport on New Year's Day and 2 there 23 Feb (C. Kessler), 2 in e. *Russell* 20 Jan (R. Mayhorn et al.), and a subad. in nw. *Rockbridge* 23 Feb (P. Cabe). Maryland held at least 11 Golden, including up to 3 at Blackwater N.W.R. through the season. Peregrines and Merlins wintered in typical numbers and localities.

The only Little Gull report came from Ocean City 6 Jan (KG et al.). A Black-headed

Gull at *Prince William* landfill 9–17 Dec (†JK, m.ob., ph.) was locally rare; Iceland and Glaucous Gulls were limited to that location and *Fauquier* landfill; none was reported coastally in Virginia. Five Iceland, 3 Glaucous, and 2 Glaucous x Herring hybrids in Maryland was likewise at or below par, but an ad. Iceland, a plumage rarely reported in the Region, was seen at Upper Marlboro, *Prince George's*, MD 22 Feb (B. Schaefer). Ten thousand Ring-billed Gulls near Pickering Creek 6 Jan (L. Roslund) made the only concentration away from a landfill. Lesser Black-backed Gulls have become too widespread to mention in this column. Only 2 Black-legged Kittiwakes were noted on the 22 Feb pelagic off Ocean City (PG et al.). Forster's Terns hung on in Maryland through mid- and late Dec, but there were no reports after 28 Dec.

A Yellow Rail was caught in a mist-net, but not banded or photographed, by researchers working on marsh sparrows and wrens near Mockhorn W.M.A., *Northampton* 30 Jan (†E. Smith). This furnishes the 3rd mid-winter report of the species for the Region. A few Common Moorhens made it into Jan in Maryland, but none were reported after the C.B.C. season in Virginia (though *Northampton* surely had several). The top count of American Coot came from Loch Raven Res., 1500 on 24 Feb (D. Terry). Sandhill Cranes are now numerous enough that tracking their numbers can be difficult. Maryland had reports of 12 birds 5 Dec–27 Jan, though some of these may represent duplications; Virginia had no winter reports at all. Shorebird numbers and diversity did not make for much copy in these pages. Word of a few late (and early?) Spotted Sandpipers, not unusual in warm winters, a few lingering Lesser Yellowlegs, and a few wintering or late Red Knots and Least Sandpipers reached the editors, but nothing more exotic; a tale of a lone Long-billed Dowitcher chased over the inlet at Ocean City by a Northern Harrier 9 Dec (Z. Baer) was memorable.

Representing a new Regional high count, 3885 Dovekies were carefully counted on the 25 Feb pelagic trip off Ocean City, along with 24 Razorbills, 10 large alcids, and a Common Murre. To put the Dovekie count in context, this is almost double the total of these little auks ever recorded in Virginia and quintuple Maryland's previous high count! Single Thick-billed Murres from shore were noted at Ocean City 17 Feb–1 Mar (J. Elmer et al.) and possibly later. A Razorbill at Ocean City 3 Feb (J. Green et al.) was the only one reported from shore.

DOVES THROUGH THRUSHES

Eurasian Collared-Doves were at the usual

sites in Virginia and also seen at Hooper's I., MD: one through 11 Dec (HTA) and 2 there 20 Dec–21 Jan (RFR et al.). Small numbers of Short-eared Owls were reported in both states, no site having more than 3 or 4, and 2 Long-eared Owls were detected in *Queen Anne's*, MD 19 Dec (D. Gill). Rufous Hummingbirds have become annual winter residents, mostly at feeders, and have become difficult to track, as many are not reported Maryland typically has far fewer reports than Virginia of the species; this year, one was near Silver Spring through 6 Dec (S. Long et al.), a female near Patapsco was banded 8 Dec, one was near Frederick through 5 Feb, and another was banded s. of Burtonsville 8 Dec (all *vide* RFR). A female Black-chinned Hummingbird, flushed by a beagle from a thicket at Cape Charles 9–11 Dec (acc., †ESB et al.), remained long enough to be photographed and was the 2nd for the town (the first was just a block away) and 3rd for the state. Recorded perhaps four or five times as frequently in winter in se. Virginia, a Ruby-throated Hummingbird was banded at Virginia Beach 20 Dec (S. Heath, B. Peterjohn). An unidentified hummer was at Rigby's Folly, *Talbot*, MD 13 Jan (HTA).

The rarest bird of the season was surely the Tropical Kingbird found near Widgeon, *Somerset*, MD 17 Dec (J. & L. Fry et al.) through 3 Jan (m.ob., ph.). A first for the Region, it has some precedent, as there are records from North Carolina. An Ash-throated Flycatcher on Polk Kellam's farm, *Northampton* was a first for the brand-new Nassawadox C.B.C. 17 Dec (T. Saunders, G. Tracy; ph. ESB), a *Myiarchus* near Centreville, MD 17 Dec (D. Poet et al.) was likely this species. Loggerhead Shrikes, now always on the radar, were reported in *Russell*, *Fauquier*, *Shenandoah*, *Albemarle*, *Augusta*, and *Tazewell*, VA 20 Jan–28 Feb but not in Maryland. Are wintering birds gone from the s. Piedmont of Virginia, or is the area just woefully underbirded? Common Ravens continue to inch eastward, with singles 9 & 17 Dec at the *Prince William* landfill (JK et al.), where now regular, and 21 Jan at Centreville, *Fairfax* (S. Baron); Maryland birds get closer and closer to the D.C. area as well (m.ob.). A Pied Crow in the vicinity of Brooklyn Park, *Anne Arundel* 12 Dec–4 Feb (V. Burke, B. Sykes, S. Byrd et al.) must have made a strange sight. The only out-of-place Black-capped Chickadees reported were 2 at Rileys Lock, MD 27 Jan (J. Peters). A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher was the prize on the D.C. C.B.C. 16 Dec (P. G. Dumont). A Wood Thrush at Phoenix, MD 2 Dec (K. Jenkins) furnishes one of very few Dec records for the Region.

WARBLERS THROUGH WEAVER FINCHES

Lingering warblers were nothing to write home about this season. Single Nashville Warblers tarried at Huntley Meadows County Park, Fairfax, VA 2 Dec (B. Jesup) and wintered, probably, at L. Smith, Virginia Beach (seen only 4 Feb; K. & D. Schroeder) and at a feeder in Annapolis, MD (seen 18 Jan; C. Wible); C.B.C. birds were in Somerset 27-31 Dec (G. L. Armistead, C. Vaughn) and West Ocean City 28 Dec (M. J. Iliiff et al.). A Black-throated Blue Warbler was found w. of Harrisonburg in Rockingham, for a rare montane record 7 Feb (E. Glick, C. Mellinger); another was rumored around Damascus, MD (T. Lipe), but dates were not reported. A Yellow-throated Warbler of subspecies *albilora* (Sycamore Warbler) was at L. Smith, Virginia Beach, noted at least 8 Dec-4 Feb (K. & D. Schroeder); another was on the Fort Belvoir C.B.C. 31 Dec (*fide* KG), in the Prince George's, MD sector. An Audubon's Warbler was the rarest of the parulid lot, found 16 Dec at Brooklyn Park, Anne Arundel (p.a., M. Schwartz, P. Webb). Reports of more expected species—a Black-and-white Warbler, 3 Ovenbirds, a Wilson's Warbler, and at least one Yellow-breasted Chat—came mostly from Maryland.

Virginia's "Bird of the Season" award goes to the state's first Green-tailed Towhee in ages, found by Bob Perkins (†) in his Galax yard 13 Feb and shared with scores of birders from four states, often with helpful updates and in-field assistance from Glen Eller; it was last observed 1 May (ph., m.ob.). This record (acc.) now moves the species from Category 2 to Category 1, as the single state specimen has not been located. American Tree Sparrows were limited to the w. and n. reaches of the Region, as is typical. Clay-colored Sparrow was not found in Virginia but seen in five Maryland locations, 9 Dec-24 Feb. Increasingly difficult to find wintering in the Region, Vesper Sparrow eluded searchers on the Virginia Eastern Shore and s. Virginia Beach, its last winter "strongholds" in the state (where counts of 12 or more in a day were common 25 years ago), but 3 were found

along Steel Pond Rd., Worcester, MD 29 Dec (M. Hoffman) and 3 at Oak Grove, Caroline, MD 14 Jan (G. Lovelace). Results of a study of wintering site fidelity in sharp-tailed sparrows in Northampton, VA will be published by the Center for Conservation Biology (F. Smith et al.). Stasz's decades-long attention to this complex has borne fruit repeatedly, including 29 Dec at E. A. Vaughn W.M.A., Worcester, MD, where he found 6 Acadian and 21 James Bay (plus six unidentified to subspecies) Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows, along with 11 Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows. No other counts in the Region approached these numbers. In Maryland, a Lincoln's Sparrow was found along Big Mill Rd., Worcester 29 Dec (M. Hoffman), and others were reported at Lilypons 31 Dec in Boonsboro for most of Jan (Voice of the Naturalist). A Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow was noted at Chesapeake Farms, MD 24 Feb (WE et al.); another, also an imm., was near Worton, MD 25 Feb. Dark-eyed Juncos bearing some resemblance to Pink-sided Junco (p.a.) were at Sandy Point, MD 31 Dec (GS, M. Watson, D. Mozurkewich) and Queenstown, MD 17 Feb (D. Poet). A female Oregon Junco spent 19-24 Jan at Frostburg, MD (M. Lutmerding). Lapland Longspurs were limited to five Virginia and 12 Maryland areas, all expected counts and locations. Three Snow Buntings at First Landing S.P., Virginia Beach 17 Jan (K. Lipshy) were the only ones reported in e. Virginia; 93 were scattered among eight locations in e. Maryland, 15 Dec-27 Feb.

Dickcissels went unreported in Virginia but were noted twice in Maryland on C.B.C.s at year's end. An ad. male Painted Bunting in Loudoun, VA 16-25 Feb (*fide* ANS) was rare for that part of the state, likewise a male in Arnold, Anne Arundel, MD 9 Dec (T. Hitter). The only Brewer's Blackbirds noted were 2 at reliable Nokesville, Prince William 28 Jan (R. Rieger, KG); 2 males were also at Windmill Pt., Charles, MD 17-19 Dec (G. Jett, G. Brewer). Eight wintering Baltimore Orioles in Virginia and nine in Maryland made about average totals for recent years. Yellow-headed Blackbirds

missed Virginia but dropped into Maryland near Blackwater N.W.R. 8 Dec (J. B. Churchill, M. Lutmerding), near Ewington, Queen Anne's 17 Dec (D. Gill), both ad. males, and at Rising Sun, Cecil, MD from late Jan through at least 3 Feb—3 birds, including an ad. male (S. Fogleman et al.). Winter finches? Not this winter. An eerie-looking House Sparrow with white eyes was noted at Columbia, MD 15 Jan (J. Tveekrem).

Contributors (subregional/county compilers in boldface): Bob Abrams, Henry T. Armistead, Elaine Arnold, Stan Arnold, Fred Atwood (e. Virginia), Zach Baer, Scott Baron, Tyler Bell, Michael R. Boatwright (cen. Virginia), Arun Bose, Joan Boudreau, David Brinker, Edward S. Brinkley, Carol & Don Broderick (C&DB), Don Burggraf, Larry Cartwright, Joe Coleman, David Clark (DCI), Dave Czaplak (DCz), Todd M. Day, Adam D'Onofrio (se. Virginia), Samuel H. Dyke, Glen Eller, Walter Ellison, Kurt Gaskill, Paul Guris, Matt Hafner, Susan A. Heath, Robert Hilton, Hans Holbrook, Mark L. Hoffman, John Hubbell, Bill Hubick, George Jett, Jay Keller, Glenn Koppel, Allen Lerner, YuLee Lerner (Augusta, VA), Ellen Lawler, Roger & Linda Mayhorn (sw. Virginia), Sean McCandless, Helen Patton (Montgomery, MD), Bruce Peterjohn, Paul Pisano, Elizabeth Pitney (Tri-County Bird Club, MD), Kyle Rambo, Jan Reese, Robert F. Ringler, Les Roslund, Fran & Norm Saunders (N&FS), Lydia Schindler, Fletcher Smith, Gary Smyle, Jo Solem (JSO) (Howard, MD), John Spahr (JSp) (w. Virginia), James L. Stasz, C. Michael Stinson (s.-cen. Virginia), Brian L. Sullivan, Brenda Tekin, Craig Tumer, Bryan D. Watts, Dave Webb, Bill Williams (coastal Virginia). Many others who could not be personally acknowledged also contributed to this report; all have our thanks for the effort and interest. 🐦

Todd M. Day, 5118 Beaver Dam Road
Jefferson, Virginia 22724, (blkvulture@aol.com)
Edward S. Brinkley, 106 Monroe Avenue
Cape Charles, Virginia 23310, (ensifera@aol.com)



North American Birds

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ORNITHOLOGICAL RECORD

"The premier periodical dealing with status and distribution of North American birds."
—Kenn Kaufman

"Why should you subscribe? Quite simply, you should subscribe to become a better birder."
—Jon Dunn

Subscriptions are available for \$32 for US or \$37 for Canadian.

Renew or give a Gift Subscription, today • (800) 850-2473





American Birding Association