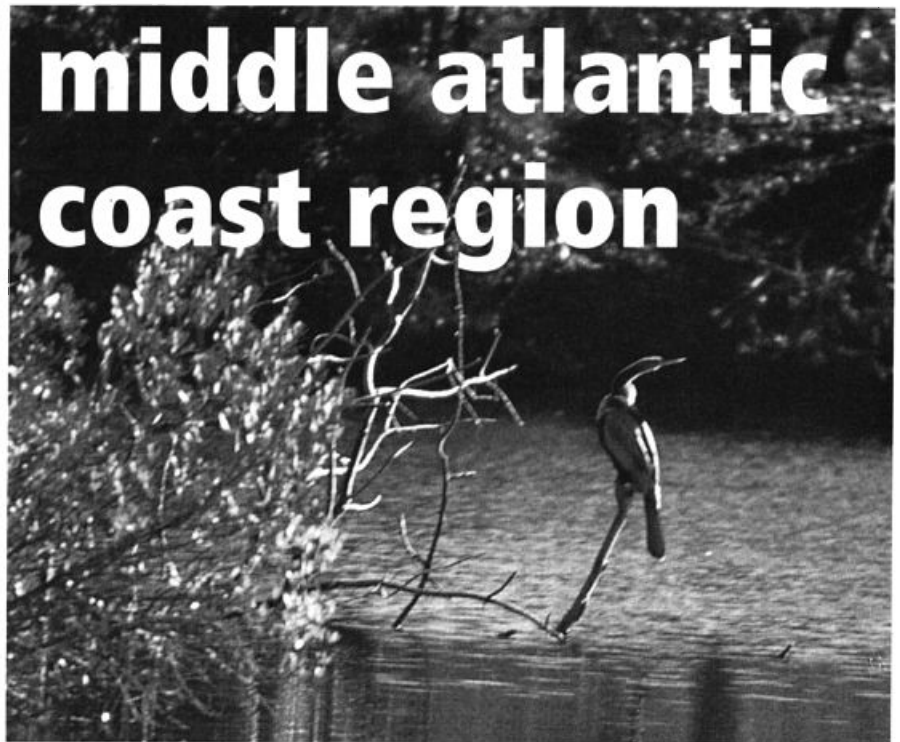


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Place names that are frequently mentioned, but very long, may be abbreviated in a form such as "C.B.B.T." or "W.P.B.O." Such local abbreviations will be explained in a key at the beginning of the particular regional report in which they are used. Standard abbreviations that are used throughout *North American Birds* are keyed on page 138.



Found on the Little Creek, Virginia, CBC December 31, 1998, this female Anhinga stayed at the same location as last year, providing a remarkable third record for this CBC. Photograph/Tim Barry



## MARSHALL J. ILIFF

This winter was generally very mild, and December exceptionally so, but a few notable storms swept through the Region. A devastating ice storm in Virginia December 23–24 deposited 0.75 inches of ice, knocked down numbers of trees, and caused a blackout that extended for ten days in some southern Virginia areas (JBB). Another large, cold storm brought freezing rain and snow January 2–3 but was followed by warm temperatures and clear skies: Three butterfly species were seen on the Annapolis Christmas Bird Count January 3 (MJI). A week long cold snap in early January froze most open water, and another ice storm hit January 14–15 effecting much of northern Virginia and southern Maryland. Temperatures remained rel-

atively mild for most of the rest of the season. Several species reported without adequate details were not included. The birding this winter was excellent and the highlights included visitors from the southern (Black-browed Albatross, Kelp Gull) and western hemispheres (Black-tailed and possible Slaty-backed gulls). 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 I. National Seashore*); Bay (*Chesapeake Bay*); 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*); E.N.N.W.R. (*Eastern Neck N.W.R.*); E.S.V.N.W.R. (*Eastern Shore of Virginia N.W.R.*); p.a. (*pending acceptance by state records committee*); P.R.N.A.S. (*Patuxent R. Naval Air Station*); P.L.S.P. (*Pt. Lookout State Park*).

## LOONS THROUGH DUCKS

The stellar count of 1238 Red-throated Loons at Winter Harbor, Mathews, VA, Dec. 12 (JBB) was a record number for the area. A fair number of others were found in the Bay this winter, while one at Triadelphia L., Howard, Jan. 24 was extremely unusual inland in mid-winter (DE). Among the

below-average 3 reports of Red-necked Grebe were two on the *Mathews*, VA, CBC Jan. 3 (*fide* MP).

Other tubenoses from the Feb. 6 pelagic (BP et al.) were three N. Fulmars and a good count of five Manx Shearwaters, which seemed to be somewhat more common than usual off the east coast this winter. The 800 N. Gannets in *Mathews* Dec. 12 (JBB) were evidence (along with the record Red-throated Loon count) of a significant movement of coastal birds into the lower Bay. Some gannets remained all season as far north as *Saint Mary's*, continuing the 5-year trend for this species. The only Am. White Pelican was a single flyby at Ft. Story, Virginia Beach, VA, Jan. 23 (DB, ED). With the recent recovery and expansion of Brown Pelican in the mid-Atlantic, it now regularly winters in the mouth of the Bay, but is usually gone from summering grounds in the Maryland portion of the Bay by mid-December. Not surprisingly, that may be changing. One was seen at Cambridge, *Dorchester*, Jan. 9 (DC, MAT); an adult was at Smith I., *Somerset*, Jan. 16 (JLS, MJI); an immature was there Jan. 17 (JLS, MJI), and one (possibly the same?) was across the Bay at P.L.S.P., *Saint Mary's*, the same day (J&BG). Prior to this year there had been 4 January reports in the state.

Double-crested Cormorants have successfully completed their colonization of Bay waters as a regular wintering ground—witness the surprising count of 175 along the Potomac R. in *Charles*, MD, Jan. 24 (JLS). A female **Anhinga** on the Little Cr., VA, CBC Dec. 31 (ph.TBa) was in the same place as last year and provided a remarkable 3rd record for that CBC.

**SA** After a number of unverified reports for the Eastern Seaboard, **Black-browed Albatross** has finally been well-documented in U.S. waters (p.a. NB, ph. BP et al.). The lucky participants on a Feb. 6 pelagic trip off Virginia Beach, VA, were treated to half-hour views of this large tubenose at close range. Good photos were obtained by a number of individuals. It was separated from Gray-headed Albatross primarily by its paler head, wider wings, and dark gray bill, and was aged as a juvenile by its very dark underwing and dark bill. Previous reports have hailed from North Carolina to Massachusetts but have come mostly in the summer.

Records of Ardeids alone could have served as an accurate barometer of the mild weather. Snowy Egret is rare in Maryland even as late as the CBC season, so one on the Ocean City CBC Dec. 29 (LMD) was noteworthy. The discovery of two ad. Snowy Egrets at Smith I., along with two (adult and immature) Little Blue Herons, Jan. 16–17 (ph. MJI, JLS) adds evidence to the suspicion that southern herons may winter more regularly at this temperate central Bay island than at similar mainland sites like Deal, *Somerset*, and Assat., *Worcester*. Tricolored Herons winter more regularly in Maryland, and multiples were seen at several coastal locales through February. A Green Heron in *Mathews* endured the mild winter at least through the Jan. 3 CBC (*fide* MP). Glossy Ibis are unusual members of Maryland's winter avifauna, but quite a few braved the mild winter at Deal. Singles and small groups were seen through January and February (v.o.), and Ringler encountered a veritable flock of 17 Feb. 27. White Ibis seems now to be a regular winterer on Fisherman I., *Northampton*, VA. The Cape Charles–Kiptopeke CBC, *Northampton*, VA, counted 64 Dec. 27 (*fide* HTA) and two were at nearby E.S.V.N.W.R., *Northampton*, VA, Feb. 8 (DH, BL, CS).

The *Talbot* CBC tallied 864 Mute Swans. Oh joy.

Remarkably, we received reports of Greater White-fronted Geese from 13 locations, including high counts of four (three adults, one immature) at W. Ocean City Pond, *Worcester*, Dec. 5–12 (GL), three at Locustville, *Northampton*, VA, Jan. 16–Feb. 7 (SA), and six at Easton, *Talbot*, Jan. 16 (DMo). The five identified to race were all Greenland *flavirostris*. Observer attention to goose flocks has continued to produce regular records of Ross's Geese and *hutchinsii* Canada Geese in the Region. *Baltimore's* first record of the latter was obtained Jan. 1 (EB, BM). Interestingly, two white geese with pink bills and gray backs at Schoolhouse Pond, *Prince George's*, Dec. 8–16 (ph. JLS) were apparently aberrant Canada Geese (the eyes were dark, so they were not true albinos).

The presence of more Wood Ducks in the Piedmont than usual was more evidence of the milder temperatures. A male **"Eurasian" Green-winged (Common) Teal** was at Deal Feb. 25 (p.a. SHD) and another was in *Prince William*, VA, Feb. 8 (CT). This split is imminent, perhaps contributing to the recent flourish of reports of this "species" in the Region. **Cinnamon Teal** in

**SA** Trumpeter Swans, undoubtedly originating from recent reintroduction programs in the Great Lakes as far east as upstate New York, have appeared several times in the Region since the early 1990s. Unfortunately, reports rarely receive much attention as they are "uncountable." Whether they are occurring regularly in the large swan flocks in the Region is still largely unknown, but this year at least one immature (and possibly as many as four) was at Conowingo from mid-December to at least Jan. 23. Though unbanded and not associating with other swans for comparison, they were well-studied and described by several (†EB, BM, EJS). I hope field observers will start paying a bit more attention to the swans they encounter.

the Region lingered until mid-December, with the last date for the Eastern Neck N.W.R., *Kent*, pair being Dec. 15 (p.a. LS) and the Accotink Cr., *Fairfax*, VA, male staying through Dec. 17 (p.a. KG). Five Eur. Wigeon was par for recent years. A remarkable movement of Redheads into the Region took place in mid- and late January, especially at inland locations where there are usually very few or none. Counts in *Montgomery* along the Potomac R.—including 185 at Sycamore Landing Dec. 17 (PW), 440 at Seneca (DC), and more than 300 at Riley's Lock Jan. 24 (N&FS)—were evidence of an incredible invasion but probably involved parts of the same flock. A number of other groups dropped in on small ponds, and numbers everywhere were higher than usual. Common Eiders (four–seven) and Harlequin Ducks (up to 15) wintered at Ocean City Inlet, but the C.B.B.T., *Northampton*, VA, hosted Harlequin Ducks with a high of three Feb. 27 (MR) and no Com. Eiders. Eiders in Virginia were one-day-wonders with only a Common at Fisherman I. Dec. 13 (NB) and an ad. male King on the C.B.B.T. Jan. 31 (SH). *Saint Mary's* hosted both eiders with an imm. male Common at P.L.S.P. Jan. 10 (GM) and a King at P.R.N.A.S. Dec. 3 (PC, DL).

The ad. male **Barrow's Goldeneye** at P.R.N.A.S. during 1996 and 1997 returned Feb. 27 (p.a. DL, LL, KR, m.ob.) after a one-year absence and was seen well into March. Hooded Merganser counts have been increasing recently. This year's most impressive counts were 794 on the Cape Charles–Kiptopeke CBC Dec. 27 (*fide* HTA) and 640 counted flying past George's I.

**SA** Two star appearances by rare larids prompted Miller to dub the Maryland-Virginia area "Gulltopia," and though the Chesapeake Bay and the Region have always hosted great gulls (e.g., Yellow-legged Gull, Black-tailed Gull, etc.), this season surely must have been the best ever. Things got really exciting when an enigmatic gull at Conowingo was tentatively identified as an ad. **Slaty-backed Gull** (p.a.) Feb. 6 (EB, DC, MAT). It was seen daily by many over the next week and was last seen Feb. 21 (EJS). Similar in size to a Herring Gull, it was about as dark-backed as a Lesser Black-backed Gull, had pinkish legs, very large white apical spots to the primaries, hints of the "string of pearls" pattern, pale gray primaries below, and a virtually unstreaked head. Almost always distant, it was difficult to photograph, yet some good results were obtained Feb. 12 (MJI, MH) and posted on the Web for opinions. Most of those experienced with the species felt the white trailing edge of the wing was too narrow, the back was too pale, and the "string of pearls" not obvious enough.

At the moment, it seems likely that one of the parents was a Slaty-backed Gull, but whether the bird was within the range of variation for "pure" Slaty-backed seems unlikely. If not, it begs the question of how many U.S. sightings have been of pure birds since many have thought it is similar or identical to birds in Alaska and in n. parts of the breeding range. Also present at Conowingo were a first-winter Thayer's Gull, at least four Iceland Gulls, a first-winter Glaucous Gull, and two **California Gulls**—a third-winter Feb. 6–13 (p.a. EB, DC, MAT, ph. †m.ob.) and a second-winter Feb. 8–21 (p.a. ph. †MJI, HLW, GLA, ph. †m.ob.). Another interesting bird there Feb. 10 (ph. MJI, MO) was a pale first-winter Herring Gull that had a largely white rump and white tail with a dark terminal band, features associated with European Herring Gulls (i.e., *argenteus/argentatus*).

During the same period the correct identification of a large, dark-backed gull at Sandgates, *Saint Mary's*, came to light. Though first noted (as a possible *intermedius* Lesser Black-backed Gull) during January 1998 (ph. PC), the bird did not receive due attention until it reappeared this year in late December (PC) and was seen again Jan. 3 (KR), Jan. 18 (PC, MC), and Feb. 11 (ph. MJI). Still, it was not until Janni and Hilton visited Feb. 13 that it was tentatively identified as a **Kelp Gull** (p.a.), the Region's first and only the 2nd away from the Gulf Coast where the species has been breeding (and interbreeding with Herring Gulls) for 10 years now. The overwhelming opinion is that this bird must be pure (or close to it) and could not be an F1 or even F2 hybrid. It proved to be extremely loyal to the small dock behind the Sea Breeze restaurant where the owners and employees became phenomenal hosts both for the bird, which received a *gratis* daily meal of oysters on the half-shell, and for 700+ birders who paid for meals often including the restaurant's now-famous cream of crab soup. It remained through the end of the season.

Finally, the **Black-tailed Gull** (p.a.) that spent the past several winters at the C.B.B.T. was back again this year, first being noted on the C.B.B.T. CBC Dec. 26 (NB et al.) and staying through the season († ph. m.ob.). Remarkably, it was joined by a 2nd individual Dec. 31 (ph. KW, †JL) and Jan. 10 (BL), and individual plumage differences allowed Brinkley to recognize the 2nd bird Jan. 3. One of those two birds strayed to either side of the Bay to be recorded on the Cape Charles-Kiptopeke CBC at Fisherman I. Dec. 27 (†BW, RLA) and the Little Cr. CBC Dec. 31 (†PS). With the appearance of other birds in New Jersey and New York, the status of this bird in the East is even more puzzling. Just how many individuals were involved in these reports?

at the Rte. 234/66 intersection Jan. 11 (†TMD, m.ob.) and remained through the season, during which time it was banded and photographed (ph. PN). Rough-legged Hawks were not particularly common, but a single juvenile was at Cape Charles, *Northampton*, VA, Dec. 27 (TG, DS); another wintered at Craney, Portsmouth, VA (m.ob.). Though there were several Golden Eagle reports scattered around the Region as usual, the Blackwater area, *Dorchester*, is still the only regular wintering area. This year the CBC there registered a record four, all, most surprisingly, listed as adult. There were reports of, remarkably, at least 45 different Merlins.

A Com. Moorhen still at Elliot I., *Dorchester*, Feb. 6–7 (HTA, JLS) provided one of the latest winter records for the species. The Sandhill Crane pens at Patuxent Wildlife Refuge are surely the best attractant of vagrant cranes in the Region, and wild sandhills have been observed there several times. One was seen circling the pens Dec. 25 (*vide* FWF), about the 4th record there.

Semipalmated Plovers responded favorably to the low temperatures: five were on the Wachapreague CBC Dec. 19 (*vide* IA); the Cape Charles-Kiptopeke CBC recorded a new high of 74 Dec. 27 (*vide* HTA); one was on Skimmer I., *Worcester*, Dec. 28 (HLW, LMD); and 11 were at Willis Wharf, *Northampton*, VA, Feb. 7 (SA). One of the more remarkable reports involved a Killdeer with a freshly hatched young Dec. 20 (†SS) on the Hopewell, VA, CBC; perhaps it thought it was in the Southern Hemisphere?

American Avocets wintered in Virginia in several locations, including two at Fisherman I. Dec. 27 (BW, RLA), one at Oyster, *Northampton*, Feb. 6–7 (BL, DH, CS), and several at Craney with a high of seven Jan. 31 (AW). Lesser Yellowlegs are usually scarce in Maryland in winter, but many remained at coastal locations, most notably a flock of 62 Feb. 7 (JLS) at Elliot I. One Willet spent the winter in the Ocean City area (ph. MJI, N&FS, v.o.), and late Spotted Sandpipers in Maryland included one at Horn Pt., *Dorchester*, Dec. 10 (JR, DM), one at Cape Charles Dec. 27 (†DOM), and one at Janes I., *Somerset*, Dec. 28 (HLW, LMD). A Whimbrel was on the Wachapreague, *Accomack*, VA, CBC Dec. 19 (HTA). Despite mild conditions only one Red Knot was reported, but four January reports of Least Sandpipers in Maryland testified to the weather; the high count was nine at Vienna, *Dorchester*, Jan. 9 (MJI, JLS). The Purple Sandpiper flock at Smith I.

Landing, *Worcester*, at dusk Dec. 30 (MO, LZ, MH). The two best Ruddy Duck counts were a flock of 15,000 in Lecompte Bay, *Dorchester*, Dec. 10 (JR, DM) and 10,000 along the Potomac R., *Charles*, Jan. 24 (JLS).

#### RAPTORS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

Five Osprey reports along the Potomac R., D.C. and *Montgomery*, during late December and January may have pertained to one or several birds. A couple of other reports

were received for the winter, and returning birds were noted in *Prince George's* Feb. 22 (JLS) and *Talbot* Feb. 27 (HTA). Of 5 N. Goshawk reports, the most widely enjoyed was an immature that spent several weeks in late December and early January in D.C. on The Mall. Despite some other incredible sightings this season, the imm. light-morph **Swainson's Hawk** soaring over Cheriton, *Northampton*, VA, Jan. 5 (p.a. NB) may have been one of the most shocking! A juv. dark-morph *calurus* Red-tailed Hawk was found

numbered 23 Jan. 17 (MJI, JLS); the species obviously winters there annually.

Dowitchers wintered in numbers far above average. The Cape Charles-Kiptopeke CBC shattered the previous high for Short-billed Dowitcher with 248 counted Dec. 27 (*fide* HTA) though Long-billed was the common dowitcher elsewhere. Records of the latter included 10 on the Cape Charles-Kiptopeke CBC Dec. 27 (*fide* HTA); six at Fairmont W.M.A., *Somerset*, for a Crisfield CBC first (MJI, JLS); 39 on the Ocean City CBC Dec. 29 (*fide* CSR); one at George's I. Landing Dec. 30 (MO, LZ); 15 at Crisfield, *Somerset*, Jan. 18 (MJI, JLS); and one at Elliot I. Feb. 6 (HTA). Maryland has few prior winter records. Unidentified dowitchers were seen at 5 additional locations, all in coastal Maryland and Virginia.

#### JAEGERS THROUGH GULLS

The only jaeger this season was an ad. Pomarine at the C.B.B.T. Feb. 21 (CT, PW) though Great Skuas were seen on both the Feb. 6 and Feb. 27 (BP et al.) pelagic trips, two apiece. The departure of Laughing Gulls in the Region is an interesting puzzle: Do they leave at the end of December each year or just with the first cold snap? In most years they seem to be locally common through New Years. The D.C. CBC recorded more than 4000 Dec. 19 (*fide* JBj), and hundreds were still in Upper Marlboro at least through Christmas (MJI), but none were reported in Maryland after Jan. 1 (singles were noted in Virginia through the winter). A massive storm Jan. 2-3 may have been instrumental in clearing them out, but their complete and sudden disappearance is always a surprise. That same storm apparently moved hundreds of Bonaparte's Gulls into the Region with the Annapolis CBC tallying 625 (*fide* HLW), the *Mathews* CBC getting a record 138 (*fide* MP), and more than 200 occurring off *Saint Mary's* (TH) Jan. 3. Others were found inland where they are very unusual in mid-winter. Of the rarer gulls in the Region, Black-headed Gulls were found at Ocean City, where semi-regular; at the C.B.B.T., where distinctly rarer (v.o.); at Hains Pt., D.C., Dec. 17 (TMD, KG, BA); and at P.R.N.A.S. Jan. 13 (MJI, KR), the 2nd record there. Little Gulls were at Ocean City, the C.B.B.T. (high of four Feb. 7; MAP), and Ft. Story Feb. 7 (MAP). Black-legged Kittiwakes were extremely scarce offshore (two Feb. 6 and four Feb. 27; BP et al.), but were detected regularly at the C.B.B.T. during January and February, and one was at Cape Charles Dec. 27 (DS, TG). **Franklin's Gull** is unknown during winter

in the Region, but what better time for each state to get its first record than following the landmark November invasion? One was reported Dec. 7 (N&FS) from S.P.S.P., *Anne Arundel*, and Virginia's came Feb. 16 (SJ) from the C.B.B.T. Lake Reddington, *Prince George's*, was the premier gullwatching spot in early January when, during cold spells, gulls came to rest on the ice and to bathe in the open water. Sightings of up to two Glaucous, three Iceland, one first-winter Thayer's Jan. 23 (DC), and an ad. California Gull Feb. 16 (TH) brought a number of birders to the Patuxent Research Refuge's Visitor Center where the pond and gulls could be viewed from a heated, indoor observation room. That sure beat the cold and winds of Conowingo (if not the warm food at the Sea Breeze)! Another ad. **California Gull** was at the Tidal Basin, D.C., Jan. 16 (p.a. †OJ) and a first-winter, the age most rarely found in the Region, was at Schoolhouse Pond Feb. 22 (p.a. JLS).

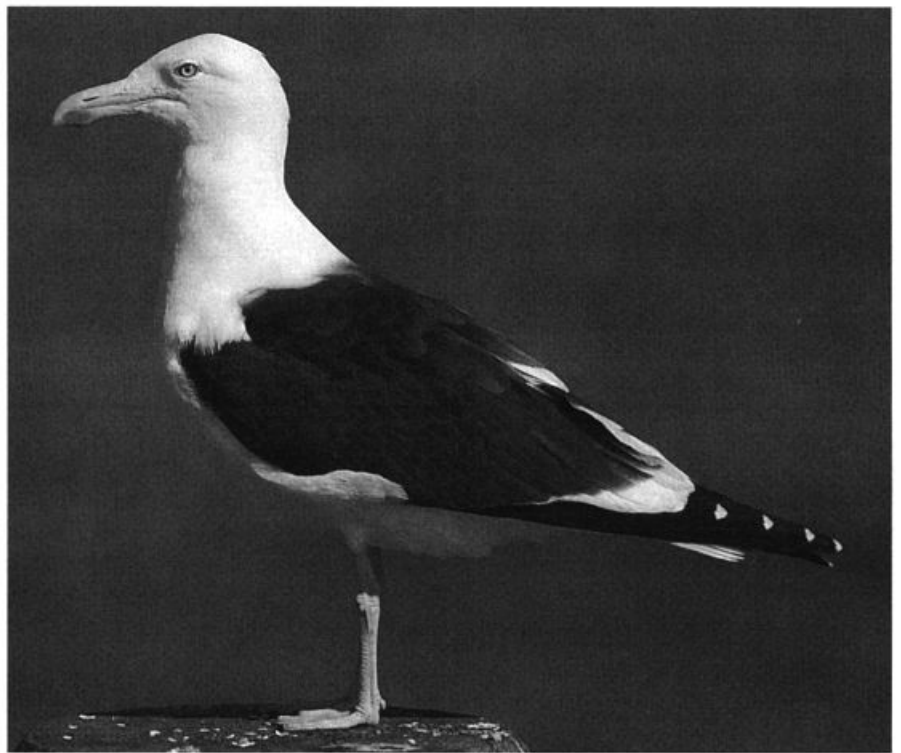
#### TERNS THROUGH FINCHES

Forster's Terns lingered in very good numbers with February reports from *Mathews* (JBB) and *Saint Mary's* (PC et al.). Rarer were Black Skimmers at Chincoteague with two Jan. 16 (SA) and six Jan. 31 (SH), and

one at Ocean City Inlet Jan. 30 (SHD). Alcids were extremely scarce in the relatively warm offshore waters, with two Atlantic Puffins and just one Razorbill on the Feb. 6 pelagic (BP et al.). A strange exception was the Feb. 27 pelagic (BP et al.), which recorded 50+ Atlantic Puffins along a sharp thermal change, a record count for Virginia waters. The count might have been higher with more effort along that change (NB). A Razorbill at the C.B.B.T. Feb 1 (LW) & 7 (MAP, BL, DH, CS) was the only onshore alcid.

Seven Long-eared and five N. Saw-whet owl reports indicated that this was not a significant flight year for either. Short-eared Owls were present in fair numbers, certainly more widespread and numerous than last winter. An imm. female Ruby-throated Hummingbird banded at South Pt., *Worcester*, for the Ocean City CBC Dec. 27 (ph. MG) provided only the 2nd winter record for Maryland. It was last seen Jan. 5 (*fide* MG). A hummingbird at Queenstown, *Queen Anne's*, Dec. 5 (A&CP) was not described but was identified as a Ruby-throated perhaps partly because it was seen where the feeder had hung all summer!

A curiosity was a Downy Woodpecker with a crimson wash, believed to be natural, on the sides of the face and upper breast;



**This extremely well-fed Kelp Gull stayed much of the season in Saint Mary's County, Maryland, where this photograph was taken during February 1999. A first for the Middle Atlantic Coast Region and only the second ever to be found away from the Gulf Coast, it had probably been present the previous winter in the same location. Photograph/George Armistead**

it was present in Glen Dale, *Prince George's*, during January (TB). Eastern Phoebes were not especially common on some coastal CBCs, but the Cape Charles–Kiptopeke CBC logged a record 60 Dec. 27 (*fide* HTA), and there were more inland reports than usual, including four on the *Howard* Winter Bird Count Feb. 6 (*fide* JS). Tree Swallows were not widespread winterers on the lower Eastern Shore of Maryland like last year, but 100–200 wintered at Deal (SHD, MJI, JLS). A Barn Swallow on Fisherman I. Dec. 13 (NB) was notably late. A Com. Raven off Rte. 7 in *Loudoun* Jan. 10 (TMD, KG) was slightly e. of its normal range. Exactly 17 Red-breasted Nuthatches were reported this season, a dismal total. Two Brown-headed Nuthatches at Solomon's, *Calvert*, Jan. 10 (AB) were relocated Feb. 11 (ph. MJI). This is the northernmost outpost for the species on the W. Shore, but since they had not been reported since 1994, they were believed gone. A new high for House Wrens was set for the Cape Charles–Kiptopeke CBC Dec. 27 with 57, most of which were at the E.S.V.N.W.R. (MJI, JLS). Ruby-crowned Kinglets were more common and penetrated farther inland than in most years. A Loggerhead Shrike was seen Dec. 20 on the Hopewell CBC (*fide* SS).

A Blue-headed Vireo was found on the Salisbury CBC, *Wicomico*, Dec. 20 (C&GV); the species has recently occurred almost annually on one of Maryland's Lower Eastern Shore CBCs. It is a more regular winterer in Virginia where singles at Seashore S.P., Virginia Beach, Feb. 6 (MAP) and Kiptopeke S.P., *Northampton*, Feb. 8 (BL, CS, DH) suggested the species persists beyond the CBC season. The 15 Orange-crowned Warbler reports represented an impressive total. The LBJ Grove in D.C. hosted the most cooperative individuals of this species, with one–two there Dec. 25–Feb. 15 (KG, m.ob.). A late Nashville Warbler Dec. 6 (RFR et al.) was found at E.N.N.W.R., *Kent*. A Cape May Warbler was found at Craney Dec. 10 (SS), and an ad. female was at Bellevue, *Talbot*, Dec. 20 (†HTA). Maryland's first January Cape May Warbler was an ad. male coming to a feeder at Glen Dale, *Prince George's*, Jan. 6–Feb. 18 (LK, ph. FWE, ph. MJI, ph. GMJ). Other late warblers were a Black-and-white on the Cape Charles–Kiptopeke CBC Dec. 27 (AH, WCR), an Ovenbird at Chino Farms, *Queen Anne's*, Dec. 20 (BS), an Am. Redstart on the Hopewell CBC Dec. 20 (*fide* SS), and two Yellow-breasted Chats on the D.C. CBC Dec. 19 (*fide* SF).

Chipping Sparrows mirrored other half-

hardies, being more common and widespread than usual. Two Clay-colored Sparrows were found in Maryland: the first was at E. A. Vaughn, *Worcester*, Dec. 30 (MO, LZ); the 2nd was near Berlin, *Worcester*, Dec. 30–Feb. 14 (ph. MH, SHD, m.ob.). Ten wintering Vesper Sparrows were found this season. The new high of 63 Ipswich Sparrows on the Ocean City CBC Dec. 29 (*fide* CSR) was due to good coverage of Assateague and Skimmer islands. Sharp-tailed Sparrow reports were split about evenly between the 2 species. Three Nelson's at Smith I. Dec. 17 (JLS, MJI) and one at Elliot I. Feb. 7 (JLS) were the only reports away from the immediate coast. Smith I. again was a hotbed of wintering Seaside Sparrows (rare winterers on the mainland), with 16 counted Feb. 7 (JLS, MJI). Nine Lincoln's Sparrow reports furnished a good total, including three in *Worcester* (MH, MJI) and an amazing four at one location on the Cape Charles–Kiptopeke CBC Dec. 27 (TG, DS). Lapland Longspurs were fairly widespread, the largest count being 65 at P.R.N.A.S. Feb. 10–28 (KR, DL et al.). Single Yellow-headed Blackbirds included an imm. male at Bradenbaugh, *Harford*, Dec. 1 (EB, BM) and an ad. male at Craney Jan. 30 (AW). Four Baltimore Orioles were reported.

Winter finches were extraordinarily scarce with almost no reports for Purple Finches and Pine Siskins, and no Evening Grosbeaks or crossbills. One Com. Redpoll at Glen Burnie, *Anne Arundel*, visited a feeder for about a week starting Dec. 18 (SA), the only report.

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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 *North American Birds* are keyed on page 138.