

This season continued the spring's pattern of cooler and wetter weather than normal, particularly on the Atlantic coast, where rain fell almost daily through the period. As in areas to the Region's north, strong easterly winds compounded high tides at the mid-June full moon and overwashed marsh-, wrack- and beach-nesting species' nests on the Virginia barrier islands, causing extensive nesting failure in American Oystercatcher, Forster's and Gull-billed Terns, Clapper Rails, Willets, Laughing Gulls, and others. Many of these losses were already renestings from failures in the previous stormy month. As a result, few juveniles were observed at season's end and later in the most vulnerable species.

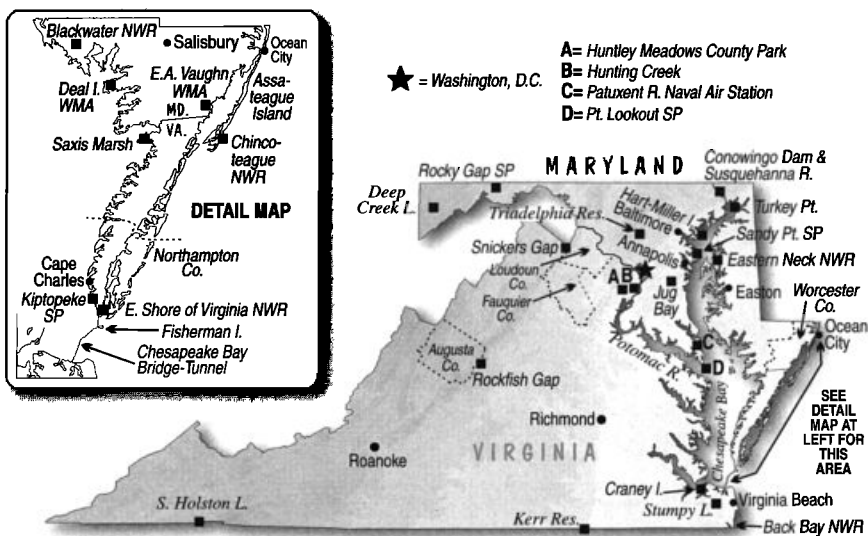
**Abbreviations:** Bay (Chesapeake Bay); Blandy (Blandy Experimental Farm/Virginia State Arboretum, *Clarke*, VA); Chinc. (Chincoteague N.W.R., *Accomack*, VA); D.C. (District of Columbia); Middle Bay (Chesapeake Bay from Maryland line to Bay Bridge); U.M.C.F. (University of Maryland Central Farm, *Howard*, MD); Upper Bay (Chesapeake Bay n. of Bay Bridge, MD). The state for each county is noted the first time it is mentioned in the text.

#### LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

A single Common Loon was present at the Tidal Basin in D.C. through 3 Jul (Jim Felley), and a Red-throated Loon was at Ft. McHenry, Baltimore, MD 15 Jun (HH, JBr). Several Red-necked Grebes left over from the spring invasion were in *Montgomery*, MD at Seneca Cr. 1 Jun (DCz) and Clopper L. through 8 Jun (DP), and at Loch Raven Res., *Baltimore*, MD 21 Jun (Lori Brown), with a single in Virginia to 19 Jul at either Burke L. or Woodglen L., *Fairfax* (Sarah Mayhew, KG, m. ob.). A pair of Pied-billed Grebes was at Blandy from 19 Jun, heard singing and seen interacting (Dave Carr et al.), but more interesting were the following breeding confirmations: 2 ads., each with a brood of 3 young found at Clyde's Pond, Dick Cross W.M.A., *Mecklenburg*, VA 3 Jul (CMS), and another ad. with 4 tiny young seen 20 Jun in *Harford*, MD (MH).

A pelagic trip out of Lewes, Delaware into Maryland waters 7 Jun netted 17 Sooty and 4 Greater Shearwaters (PG et al.), and 75 Wilson's Storm-Petrels. Wilson's Storm-Petrels were reported 19 & 26 Jun on the Bay from the ferry to Smith I., *Somerset*, MD (MC). A small black-and-white shearwater in the Upper Bay, s. of Howell Pt., *Kent* Jun (p. a., †CS) was described well enough to eliminate larger shearwaters and other seabirds but

# Middle Atlantic



not well enough to distinguish Manx from Audubon's. There are just two prior shearwater reports from the Maryland section of Chesapeake Bay, both in the context of hurricanes: one Greater in *Somerset* 19 Jul 1996 following Hurricane *Bertha* and one Audubon's/Manx in *St. Mary's* 28 Aug 1998 following Hurricane *Bonnie*.

Single American White Pelicans were noted 14 Jun on the Patuxent R., *Prince George's*, MD (p. a., Paul Dumont, Greg Kearns, Mike Callahan) and 13 Jul+ at Hog I., *Surry*, VA (DCI). Rare in *Cecil*, MD, a Brown Pelican was reported from Turkey Pt. 24 Jun (*fide* CS), while Cribb reported over 1000 from Smith I., *Somerset* 4 Jul, probably a Maryland high count. Pelicans have apparently abandoned the Spring I., *Dorchester*, MD colony, but a portion of the colony (previously 200+ pairs) apparently relocated to Pry I., where 45 nests with eggs (4 without eggs) were counted 3 Jun (HTA, CRV); also found there were two Double-crested Cormorant nests with two eggs. Just off South Marsh I., these constitute new *Somerset* breeding records for both the pelicans and the cormorants. At the Cabin John, *Montgomery*, MD Double-crested Cormorant colony mentioned in the spring report, at total of six nests, some with young, was noted (Clive Harris). A single Anhinga was at Stumpy L., *Virginia Beach* 19 Jul (KB).

An ad. dark-morph Reddish Egret was

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found along the causeway to Chincoteague I., *Accomack* 20 Jun (p. a., Jerry Via, Bill Akers et al.): Virginia has several previous reports but no documented, accepted records to date. Almost certainly the same bird, an ad. dark-morph Reddish Egret appeared at Skimmer I., *Worcester* 23 Jun (p. a., †J. Hubbell) for a first Maryland record. The description is excellent and should establish a first state record. Although both the Virginia and Maryland birds were looked for on the following day, both sightings were one-day only. An American Bittern at Cheltenham Wetlands, *Prince George's* 6 Jun (Fred & Jane Fallon) may have attempted breeding, rare in the state. A Least Bittern at U.M.C.F. through 4 Jun (BO et al.) may have been the first record

of potential summering in *Howard*, where they have not bred. Least Bitterns were confirmed as breeders on the Piedmont of Virginia for the second time. Catterton found a bird at Cedar Run Wetlands, *Prince William* 6 Jun and was able to return several times over the next two weeks to find 2 juvs., one still downy on 20 Jun. Also reported at Cedar Run Wetlands was a Little Blue Heron 3 Jun (LC) and 3 Glossy Ibis 15–22 Jul (LC, TMD). Three Great Egret nests were found 21 Jun among the Great Blue Heron nests at Mason Neck N.W.R., *Fairfax* (KG). A good count of 52 Cattle Egrets was tallied at North Point S.P., *Baltimore*, MD 7 Jul (Mary Chetelat, *fide* GF). The only Maryland White Ibis was at Ocean City, *Worcester* 14 Jul (Kevin Graff).

An ad. Tundra Swan was at Leggett's Pond, *Halifax*, VA 25–28 Jul (JBI), and another summered at Hurlock W.T.P., *Dorchester* (HTA, v. o.). Six Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks were discovered on a lake in the Braxton subdivision in *Chesterfield*, VA 2–3 Jun (p. a., Margrete Stinnes, m. ob., ph. TMD). Although Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks are kept in captivity and known escapees have occurred in the Region, these birds were wary and showed no signs of captivity. More importantly, the presence of a flock in the Region strongly suggests wild occurrence and, interestingly, matches the date of another Regional record: a flock of 12 at Pott's Pt., *Calvert*, MD 6 Jun 1993. Maryland has two other accepted records, and Virginia has five others. This year's record, as in 1993, comes in the context of a much larger-scale movement of this species. A late Ring-necked Duck was found 28 Jun at Little Meadows L., *Garrett*, MD (RFR), while up to 2 continued through 24 Jul at L. Elkhorn (JS et al.), with one at Wilkins L., *Winchester*, VA (William Leigh). Two Greater Scaup and a Lesser Scaup summered in *Kent*, MD, the former at Chesapeake Farms, and the latter at Great Oak Pond (WGE). A Redhead lingered at L. Artemesia, *Prince George's*, last seen 2 Jun (DM), and a pair was at Clopper L., *Montgomery*, MD through 19

Jun (Tom Marko). A Black Scoter was at Pt. Lookout S.P., *St. Mary's*, MD 11 Jul (MC). Lingering diving ducks are routine at Poplar I., *Talbot*, MD, where a dozen Surf Scoters, 2 White-winged Scoters, 2 Long-tailed Ducks, and best of all, a Common Goldeneye were seen 4



Only the sixth record for Virginia, these six Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks spent a few days (here 3 June 2003) on suburban Lake Braxton in Chesterfield County, part of a large flight of this species out of range in the East. Photograph by Larry R. Lynch.

Jun (JR *fide* LR). One Surf Scoter was seen off Cox Neck, *Queen Anne's*, MD 17 Jun, 8 were reported near The Wildfowl Trust, *Queen Anne's* 6 Jul (both Scott Crabtree), and 2 were near Ft. Story, *Virginia Beach*, VA 31 Jul (Sharon Stiteler). Another Long-tailed Duck was on the Chester R., *Queen Anne's* 25 Jun (Danny Poet). Three Buffleheads were reported, extremely unusual in summer. One found 28 Jun at Huntley Meadows Park, *Fairfax* was seen through the end of the reporting period (Lori Keeler, Gwen Petitjean, Fred Bogar), another was at Clopper L. 5–8 Jun (Tom Marko), and another 8 Jul at Ft. McHenry (JP, *fide* GF). Red-breasted Mergansers also lingered into summer a bit later than usual. Singles were seen 6–8 Jun at Clopper L. (Lou Nielsen), 21 Jun at Mason Neck S.P., *Fairfax* (KG), 22 Jun at MacMillan Res., D.C. (Denise Ryan), and 13 Jul at Point Lookout S.P., *St. Mary's* (MC). A Common Merganser hen with 8 young was found 4 Jun on the Little R., *Montgomery*, VA and seen again 21 Jun (Suzie Leslie, Peggy Spiegel). Virginia (and the Region) has just three prior breeding records, all from *Rockingham*; another report, from Dyke Marsh, *Fairfax*, seems questionable (cf. Clapp, R.B. 1997. Egg dates for *Virginia Birds*). Ruddy Ducks are perhaps the third most common diving duck to summer, after Red-breasted Merganser and Surf Scoter, but 2 at

*Staunton* 16 Jun (Allen Larner) still constituted just the 2nd summer record for well-watched *Augusta*, VA.

## RAPTORS THROUGH TERNS

Two Swallow-tailed Kites (a pair?) apparently summered near Sarah's Cr., *Gloucester*, VA 23 Jul (Joyce Williams), causing speculation that they may be breeding locally. This species is not known to breed n. of South Carolina, so this possibility merits close attention next year, especially in light of summering Swallow-taileds in e. North Carolina. Mississippi Kites were reported regularly from n. Virginia, well away from their known stronghold in *Greensville* and *Southampton* Counties. A pair was routinely seen in the Waynewood subdivision in *Fairfax* 24 Jun–

(Don Peterson), and 2 ads. and 2 young were reported through 30 Aug. Other Virginia birds were found in *Halifax*, *Prince William*, and *Fredericksburg*, totaling four reports. Still not as well established in Maryland, and with no indications of breeding to date, one bird was reported 21 Jun n. of the Blackwater R., *Dorchester* (HLW, LMD). We received a detailed report on Peregrine Falcon nesting in Virginia (Watts, B.D., S.M. Padgett, and M.A. Byrd. 2003. Virginia Peregrine Falcon monitoring and management program: Year 2003 report. CCBTR-03-05. College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA). Peregrines nested on Virginia's Eastern Shore, on the James R., and there was one pair on the Rappahannock R. Pairs occupied 18 of the 52 nest structures in the state, and 17 of those pairs nested and raised 29 chicks. Of 14 nests that were closely monitored, just 61% of the eggs hatched, and three chicks that hatched died, possibly as a result of complications from infection with West Nile Virus. What this means for the future of the population is unknown.

A rare breeder in the Region, a Sora was reported 3 Jun from the North Branch of the Patapsco R., *Carroll*, MD (HH), while as many as 3 were heard calling at Cedar Run Wetlands, *Prince William* 6 Jul (LC, TMD, SH, ICT). A Common Moorhen was at Blandly 19–29 Jun (Dave Carr, JL, JLa). Black-necked

**Table 1.** Nest totals for selected species at Poplar I., Talbot, MD (from HTA). This fairly new facility has been managed to a certain extent for tern nesting, and the construction of this island has created much new habitat for Common and Least Terns in the state.

Species	Count
Double-crested Cormorant	495 nests
Herring Gull	190 nests
Great Black-backed Gull	10, approximately
Common Tern	827 nests
Least Tern	76 nests
Willet	one nest, at least

Stilts were seen several times at Craney, with a high count of 13 on 24 Jun (EE), and a 3 were along the causeway to Chincoteague I., *Accomack* 21 Jun (ESB et al.). The lone Maryland report was 20 Jun from Elliott I., *Dorchester* (FS), where they seem to be declining as breeders as rapidly as they colonized. American Avocets were found 28–31 Jul at Craney, with as many as 7 reported (EE), and one was at Ft. McHenry 28 Jul (JP, *fide* Keith Eric Costley). Migrating Whimbrels were noted in coastal *Worcester* 16 Jul, with flocks of 5 and 10 reported at different locations (FS, MH, Zach Baer). Inland Ruddy Turnstones are always unusual in the Region, but the 20 reported from Cedar Run Wetlands, *Prince William* 1 Jun were unprecedented (KG) and apparently the result of a small fallout due to inclement weather.

A Western Willet and Marbled Godwit were early at Chinc. 21 Jun (TS, ESB, SWH). Compared to recent years, shorebirds were present in good numbers at Chinc. in late Jul: 3200 Short-billed Dowitchers (many *hendersoni*), 72 Stilt Sandpipers, and an early Dunlin, all on 23 Jul (ESB). Two Stilt Sandpipers were at Cedar Run Wetlands, *Prince William* 30 Jul, unusual on the Piedmont (LC). A Red-necked Phalarope was noted at Craney 17 Jul (EE), while 2, with a female still in bright plumage, were discovered at Chinc. 27 Jul (Mitchell & Lois Byrd).

Four reports of Sandwich Tern were submitted from *Worcester* 2 Jun–16 Jul, with a high count of 3 but no sign of nesting. A Sandwich Tern at Little Fox I., *Accomack*, VA 31 Jul (HTA et al.) also showed no sign of nesting among the Royal Terns (440 young banded there this summer); nesting would be

unprecedented for Chesapeake Bay (away from Fisherman I.). Nearby Poplar I., MD held many nesting terns this year (Table 1).

An Arctic Tern was seen in Maryland waters during the 7 Jun pelagic trip out of Lewes, Delaware (p. a., †MH, PG et al.). Although Arctic Tern is surely an annual migrant in small numbers in pelagic waters off Maryland, and despite the fact that there are 17 reports for the state, there are just three accepted records to date. Least Tern was noted repeatedly 9–16 Jun (KG) at Dyke Marsh, *Fairfax*, where nearby breeding should be considered, and a pair in breeding plumage was found 30 Jun on the James R. along the *Goochland* and *Powhatan* line, a most unusual record for the Virginia Piedmont (CMS). Four Black Skimmers at Poplar I., *Talbot* 4 Jun (JR, *fide* LR) were in the Middle Bay, where rare.

## FLYCATCHERS THROUGH BLACKBIRDS

A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher provided a

first *Rockingham*, VA record 28–30 Jun near Cross Keys (Leonard Teuber, Clair Mellinger, ph. BTe). Alder and Least Flycatchers reported in Baltimore 8 Jun (Cathy Carroll) were late migrants, while a Least 19 Jul at Mt. Pleasant, *Howard* (BO, RC) was more enigmatic, falling outside this species' typical migration period. A Willow Flycatcher at Craney 4–18 Jun (DCI) represented a remarkable summering record for se. Virginia, where they are not yet known to breed.

As many as 5 Cliff Swallow nests were found 15 Jun over Broad Cr. (Mike Burchett, MH), rare for *Harford*. On Maryland's Eastern Shore, nesting by two pairs was suspected at the MD-14 crossing of Marshyhope Cr., *Dorchester* 21 Jun (GL); Eastern Shore nesting for Cliff Swallow was first discovered just two years ago but has now been reported from three or four locations in two counties. Virginia Coastal Plain reports continue from areas around *Fairfax*, with birds observed 5 & 6 Jun at Difficult Run

**SA** Last year's Western Kingbird returned this season to Ft. McHenry, Baltimore City, MD, where it again engaged in various nesting-related antics with an Eastern Kingbird. Last year, the Western Kingbird was seen 7 May–30 Jun (also a sighting in Jul at nearby Camden Yards Stadium), and assisted an Eastern Kingbird in the building of two nests, but had both nests destroyed by Fish Crows. This year the Western Kingbird was first seen 10 Jun and was seen daily through 31 Jul. Jim Peters kept close watch on the bird this year; a summary of his observations follows.

The Western Kingbird, a presumed male by behavior, was clearly territorial, driving off grackles and crows and apparently calling to an Eastern Kingbird in the area. It became evident that a pair bond had formed, and on 23 Jun the Eastern Kingbird was found sitting on a nest, apparently incubating, and the Western would incubate when the Eastern left the nest. The Western also would bring food to the Eastern. On 2 Jul, Peters observed the Eastern Kingbird removing a fecal sac from the nest, and for the next week, the ad. birds fed the young, with the Eastern assuming 90% of the care of the young and the Western typically standing sentry. By 8 Jul, the young were visible, and, contrary to expectations, they looked to be perfectly typical Eastern Kingbirds. The young had fledged by 17 Jun, and both species continued to feed the young and drive intruders out of the territory until 31 Jul. Although the ad. Eastern and 2 juvs. were readily found thereafter, the Western was not seen again, despite searching.

Although Western Kingbird has hybridized with the closely-related Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Eastern and Western Kingbirds are not known to have hybridized (Pyle, P. 1997. *Identification Guide to North American Birds*; M.T. Murphy, pers. comm.); we have not heard the outcome of the Michigan pairing reported in *A.B.* 42: 1292 and mentioned in *N.A.B.* 56: 294. It is not yet known if Eastern and Western Kingbirds would be capable of producing young, let alone fertile young. Dr. Michael T. Murphy, of Portland State University, has studied Eastern Kingbirds extensively and provided comments to Les Roslund that gave some context for what may have happened. Dr. Murphy reports that extra-pair copulation in Eastern Kingbirds is fairly common, and that 60–70% of paired males lose paternity, and furthermore that up to 25% of males may not successfully father any young, either in paired or unpaired copulations. No copulations were observed in the Maryland mixed pairing, nor were any male Eastern Kingbirds in the immediate vicinity. Dr. Murphy points out that this is not surprising, given that kingbirds apparently copulate in the pre-dawn darkness (the time at which the often unique dawn flycatcher songs are sung) and that it is the females that travel (sometimes quite some distance) in search of males for extra-pair copulation, rather than vice-versa. If the Western Kingbird returns next summer, we will look forward to another fascinating saga. Many thanks to Jim Peters, Gail Frantz, Keith Eric Costley, and Elliot Kirschbaum for assistance in compiling this summary.

and Reston, respectively (Fred Atwood, Liz Koomin), and one 18 Jun at Long Branch Park, Arlington (Val Kitchens, Joanna Taylor). Another Virginia Coastal Plain colony under a bridge over the Mattaponi R. at Walkerton, King and Queen/King William, VA involved up to a dozen nests 18 Jun (TMD); this colony was also present last year. Clapp (1996; see above) reports a Coastal Plain breeding record from near Hopewell in 1979, and four egg clutches collected in 1927 and 1891, at Morrison and Denbigh, respectively. A likely breeding Golden-crowned Kinglet was on Iron Mt., Smyth, VA 11 Jun (Ron Harrington, JWC). Single Loggerhead Shrikes were at Warren, VA 5 Jun (JL), Blandy 24 Jun (JLa, Tom Kennedy), near Chase City, Mecklenburg 3 Jul (CMS), and Burke's Garden, Tazewell, VA 13 Jul (Brian Kane).

A Chestnut-sided Warbler was late in n. Anne Arundel, MD 2 Jun (Stan Arnold). A pair of Myrtle Warblers was at New Germany S.P., Garrett 29 Jun (DCz, MAT); although several summer annually in Garrett, nesting evidence has been obtained there only once. A singing alternate-plumaged male Myrtle Warbler was seen in a Red Cedar stand at Big Meadows in Shenandoah N.P., Madison, VA 26 Jul (CT, Diane Holsinger). There were

**SA** Four male and up to 3 female **Sedge Wrens** were present in a wet meadow outside of Blacksburg, *Montgomery* from mid-May until August. Ryan Mays found a single nest 4 Jun containing seven eggs. A check 9 Jun revealed young estimated at one to three days old, and the nest was empty when checked 17 Jun. Two immatures were found 6 September near the nest site. A rare breeder in the Region, this is believed to be the first nest with contents discovered in Virginia.

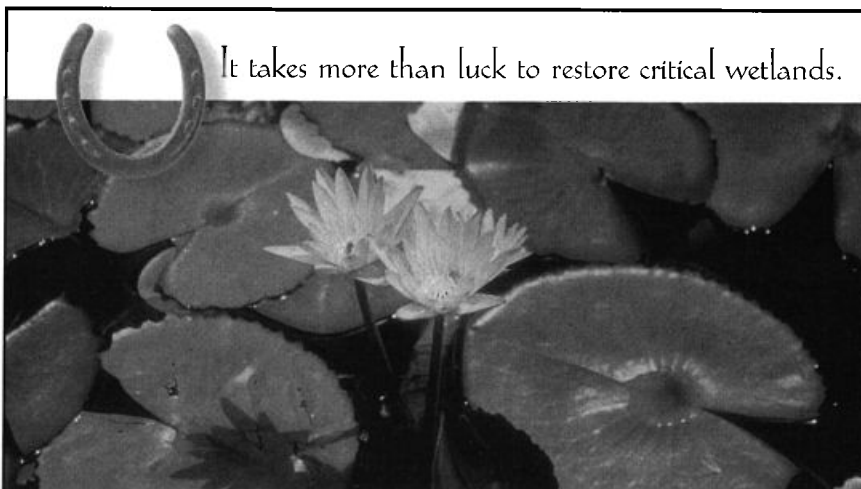
two reports of exceptionally late Black-poll Warblers: the first was of 2 birds 22 Jun along the C&O Canal path in D.C. (Mike Bowen) and the other 4 Jul at Four Mile Run, Arlington (Malcolm Scully).

Dickcissels were again found through the period at Piedmont locations in n. cen. Virginia, all in *Fauquier* or *Culpeper*. An ad. was seen feeding young at Remington, *Fauquier* 2 Jul (TMD). Maryland Eastern Shore Dickcissel reports were confined to *Queen Anne's* and two locations in *Caroline*. A female Dickcissel at Hooper I., *Dorchester* 9 Jun (L. Willey) was in habitat that indicated a migrant bird. Four singing Savannah Sparrows at Cecilton, *Cecil* 17 Jun (WGE) represented the first modern indication of breeding on Maryland's Eastern Shore and a significant range extension from the next closest birds in *Carroll* and *Fredrick*. Two singing at Mullinix Rd., *Howard* 10 Jun (JC et al.) were closer to those breeding grounds but still out of

place. A Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow at U.M.C.F 2 Jun (BO, EH, JS) was a somewhat late migrant and potentially the first inland report in spring in Maryland. A Swamp Sparrow was seen there the same day. White-throated Sparrows sometimes summer in the Region, for reasons unknown. This year's reports included one in a Parsonsburg yard, *Wicomico*, MD 13 Jun (ELP), one in a Darnestown yard, *Montgomery*, MD 3 Jul (LS), and one near Elkton, *Rockingham* 6 Jul (Mike Smith, *fide* John M. Irvine). Bobolinks continue to breed on the Virginia Piedmont, but just barely, thus 2 birds 23–24 Jun at Lucketts, *Loudoun* were notable (Roger B. Clapp).

**Undocumented reports:** We received undocumented reports of a Sandhill Crane along Interstate 64, *New Kent*, VA, and of an extremely early Baird's Sandpiper at Chinc. 19 Jul, along with 2 Ruffs.

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