

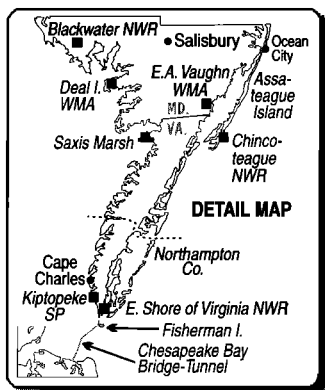
Following the unusual heat wave of May and the first week of June, temperatures abated to pleasant (80–90° F range), with no periods of extreme heat, as in most recent nesting seasons, and no extreme summer storms to overwhelm islands and marshes of the Eastern Shore. In short, the nesting season seemed to be a good one for most birds. The summer rains were regular, and rainfall amounts were well above normal across the Region. This led to over-filled reservoirs at Chincoteague N.W.R., which depressed counts of migrant shorebirds there considerably. Rains were not sufficient to flood agricultural fields in July—a situation that would change with the tropical storms of August and September.

Abbreviations: Assat. (Assateague I., Worcester, MD); Back Bay (Back Bay N.W.R., Virginia Beach); Bay (Chesapeake Bay); Black. (Blackwater N.W.R., Dorchester, MD); Blandy (Blandy Experimental Farm, Clarke, VA); C.B.B.T. (Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel, s. of Northampton, VA); Chinc. (Chincoteague N.W.R., Accomack, VA); Craney (Craney I., Portsmouth, VA); D.C. (District of Columbia); Dyke (Dyke Marsh, Fairfax, VA); E.S.V.N.W.R. (Eastern Shore of Virginia N.W.R.); Hart (Hart Miller I., Baltimore, MD); Huntley (Huntley Meadows Park, Fairfax, VA); Julie Metz (Julie Metz Wetlands Mitigation Bank, Prince William, VA); Kerr (Kerr Res., Mecklenburg, VA); O.C. Inlet (Ocean City Inlet, Worcester, MD). The state for a location is noted the first time it is mentioned in the text.

LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

Summering Common Loons are not unexpected, but 2 at L. Moomaw, Bath, VA 14 Jul were at an unlikely location (Jim Goehring), and an imm. with a broken wing summered at L. Anna, Louisa (MRB); more unusual was a Red-throated Loon seen from Assat. 6 Jun (JLS, MB). Evidence of breeding Pied-billed

Middle Atlantic



Grebes is always welcomed, and this summer's reports included 2 ads. with 3 young near Queenstown, a first breeding record for *Queen Anne's*, MD (DP); two broods totaling 8 birds were found at Swan Harbor, *Harford*, MD (MH, DW); and at Hart, at least one calling bird was present 10 Jul, with an ad. seen with a stripe-headed young 24 Jul (MH, JLS et al.). In Virginia, summer reports without evidence of breeding were 2 birds 6 Jul at Bay Creek G.C., *Northampton* (TS) and one 20 Jul at Fairystone L., a first summer record for *Patrick* (CK, Alan Kessler, Ray Callahan). Maryland had a few reports, including 6 Jun and 24 Jul at L. Elkhorn, *Howard* (SN, MS), 26 Jun–5 Jul at Schumaker Pond, *Wicomico*

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(SHD), and 10 Jul at W. Ocean City pond, *Worcester* (N&FS).

Good seawatching at Assat. 5 Jun produced 3 Cory's, a Greater, and 3 Sooty Shearwaters and 8 Wilson's Storm-Petrels (JB, HH, JLS, MB et al.). Single Sooty Shearwaters were off O.C. Inlet 7 & 9 Jun (D&CB; SHD).

Since 1987, Dave Brinker, John Weske, and others have banded Brown Pelicans in the Region. This season's total of banded young on the Bay was 2485, far exceeding the previous high count of circa 1700. Since 1987, over 10,000 Brown Pelican chicks have been banded. The American White Pelican reported in spring at Back Bay was seen through 6 Jun (Dorrie Stolley, RLA). The Double-crested Cormorant colony on the Potomac R., *Montgomery*, MD had at least eight nests this season, seven of them producing 10 young, seen 26 Jun (Clive Harris). At *Holland I.*, *Dorchester* 1 Jun, Armistead noted that the mixed heronries hosted all 10 of Maryland's heron and ibis species, many in good numbers. Previously undiscovered Great Blue Heron nesting colonies were found on a tributary of Bull Run, *Loudoun*, VA in a flooded beaver pond

SA Since about 1970, pelagic birding trips have provided a good picture of the distribution of the Region's seabirds out as far as 120 km, in water depths mostly 500–800 fathoms; a few trips have gone into waters well over 1000 fathoms deep, most of these off Virginia Beach. Beyond the Continental Slope, however, few observers have had the opportunity to make observations of birds in the deep water and Gulf Stream in the remainder of the Exclusive Economic Zone, some 130–370 km farther offshore: Rich Rowlett conducted whale and seabird surveys here in 1980; John Bazuin was a fisheries observer with the Japanese tuna fleet in autumn 1980; and British naval officers have submitted sightings to the *Sea Swallow* as recently as 1997. Iliff got a glimpse of these waters 0930–1150 EDT on 3 Jul from the *Queen Mary II* (from Virginia waters at 37° 49.1'N, 70° 45.9'W to Maryland waters at 38° 12.29' N, 70° 41.98' W). He observed 20 Cory's, 3 Audubon's, and 3 Greater Shearwaters, one Band-rumped, 12 Leach's, and 42 Wilson's Storm-Petrels, plus 26 unidentified storm-petrels. The single **Band-rumped Storm-Petrel** (†MJ) was at 38° 01.732' N, 70° 39.806' W, in Virginia waters just s. of the Maryland line. Aside from many records of the species associated with hurricanes *Bertha* (1996), *Bonnie* (1998), and *Isabel* (2003), Band-rumped is known from about four pelagic records in Virginia 1988–2002 (totaling 21 birds). The first records of the species for North America were of 2 in Washington, D. C. 28 & 29 Aug 1893, following the *Sea Islands* Hurricane, still the only records for the District. There is just one previous Maryland record of the species (one at Baltimore Canyon, 17 Aug 1997). This storm-petrel species, along with several gadfly petrel and tropicbird species, would almost certainly be found regularly in deep waters of both states if there were more coverage of deep waters.

SA In 2003, a comprehensive survey of colonial waterbirds was conducted in Virginia, 10 years after a similar survey prompted agreement to maintain a ten-year interval between surveys (Watts, B. D. 2004. Status and distribution of colonial waterbirds in Coastal Virginia: 2003 breeding season. CCBTR-04-06. Center for Conservation Biology, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA). The report is highly recommended to everyone interested in colonial waterbirds in the Region. Consult the Center for Conservation Biology's website at: <http://fsweb.wm.edu/ccb/publications/publications_technical.cfm>.

In 800 surveys, 446 colonies were identified, with an estimated 79,343 breeding pairs of 24 species. Over 50,000 of these were gulls, 8399 were terns, and 15,557 were waders. Laughing Gulls comprised 56.7% of the total community. Great Blue Herons were most widely distributed, with over 200 colonies. One important conclusion of the report was that the barrier island/lagoon system of the Eastern Shore was the most important region for the majority of birds surveyed (22 of 24 species), accounting for over 70% of the breeding pairs and 35% of the colonies found. For 18 of the 24 species, this ecosystem supported over 50% of the known coastal population. Overall, a 16% decline was noted since 1993. Some 17 of 24 species showed declines, with 10 of these exhibiting declines over 40%, and four species declined over 70% (though two of them had fewer than 30 pairs in 1993, Sandwich Tern and Caspian Tern). Cattle Egret was the biggest loser, down from 1459 pairs to 166, but also severe were declines of 62% for Snowy Egrets and 61% for Green Herons. Seven species showed increases, the four most dramatic being White Ibis, Great Black-backed Gull, Double-crested Cormorant, and Brown Pelican. The Delmarva Peninsula's seaside accounted for 85% of the coastal decline, and all of the species that nest on open barrier island beaches experienced substantial declines. If there is a silver lining here, it might be that the declines appear linked to increases in predator populations, and with continued predator management, populations in these colonies should respond favorably.

14 Jul (Craig Turner) and very likely in *Augusta*, discovered 19 Jul, where up to 29 ads. and imm. were seen 29 Jul, though nests have yet to be discovered. It would be the first documentation of breeding for this well-birded county, and one of few for Virginia's Mountains & Valleys (BT, YL). A Least Bittern was heard calling and seen at Airlie, *Fauquier*, VA 8 Jul, in a Piedmont area where at least one has summered since 2001 (TMD). A good count of 42 Cattle Egrets was at Todd's Inheritance, *Baltimore*, MD 29 Jul (Joel Martin). Two ad. and 4 young Yellow-crowned Night-Herons were seen 10 Jul at a nest originally discovered 22 Jun at Tinker Cr., *Roanoke*, VA (Allen Boynton, GE); several nests were reported at a known colony near Leakin Park, *Baltimore*, MD (Elise Kress); one bird was reported 15–18 Jun at McKee–Beshers W.M.A., *Montgomery*, MD (PW); and one was at L. Elkhorn, *Howard* 7 Jul (MS, Barry Miller). White-faced Ibis continues to be reported from Chinc., with the latest report 24 Jun (ESB, TMD, RH); the number of individuals here is still unknown, but more than one is suspected. A Glossy Ibis arrived at Huntley 16 Jul and remained throughout summer (Fred Bogar, m.ob.); one was also at L. Red-dington, *Prince Georges*, MD 28 Jul (Steve Noyes).

A Tundra Swan was at the Chain Bridge on the Potomac R., D.C. 17 Jun (John Beetham). A Trumpeter Swan of uncertain provenance arrived in spring at Shorter's Marsh, *Dorchester*, MD and was seen through 25 Jul (HTA). A blue-morph Snow

Goose summered at Crystal L., Cape Charles, VA (TS). A pair of Northern Shovelers was near New Windsor, *Carroll*, MD, with the drake seen through 26 Jun, the hen as late as 23 Jul, though no evidence of breeding was observed (RFR); another hen was seen at Swan Harbor, *Harford*, 24 Jul (MH). Four *Aythya* species were reported during summer. A drake Canvasback was at Graysonville, *Queen Anne's* 4 Jul (DP). Seven Ring-necked Ducks were reported: a hen was in a run-off pond in *Henry*, VA 26 Jun (CK et al.); 4 drakes summered at Airlie, *Fauquier*, first noted 18 Jun, and were watched molting throughout the reporting period (Dana Thompson, TMD); one drake was at Larriland Farm, *Howard* 27 Jun and 25 Jul (JS, EH); and another was seen 10 Jul at Hart (MH, JLS, HH). A Greater Scaup was at Town Cr., *Talbot*, MD 17 Jun (JB). As many as 5 Lesser Scaup summered at Dyke, with the last report being of 2 on 23 Jul (KG, m.ob.), while 3 drakes and a hen were at Belmont Bay 12 Jun (KG et al.), both *Fairfax*, VA locations; another Lesser Scaup was at Washington Channel, D.C. 24 Jul (John Hubbell), and 2 were reported throughout summer at Hart (EJS, MH et al.).

A molting hen Common Eider was at Cape Charles 25 Jun, joined by another 27 Jun (ph. ESB, TMD). Late scoter reports included a Black. 13 Jun on the Honga R., *Dorchester* (Levin Wiley, *vide* HTA), with the remainder being Surfs: an ad. drake 12 Jun at Ft. Story, Virginia Beach (Bert Harris, Jennifer Phillips); an ad. drake on the C.B.B.T.

20 Jun (KG, KP) and an imm. drake there 3 Jul (RR); and 2 drakes on the Nanticoke R., *Dorchester* 10 Jul (HTA, GLA). Two lingering Buffleheads reported from spring stayed long enough to be noted in summer: the ad. male at Oyster, *Northampton* was last reported 1 Jun (ESB), while the bird at Dyke Marsh, *Fairfax* stayed through at least 6 Jun (S. Eccles); L. Elkhorn, *Howard*, hosted a drake 30 May–13 Jul (SN, MS, EH, Jordan Wilkerson). A hen Red-breasted Merganser was at Back Bay 6 Jun (Karen Kearney). A drake Common Merganser was at Brown's Bridge, *Howard* 16 Jun (EH).

RAPTORS THROUGH TERNS

In some n. parts of the Region, there was an emergence of 17-year periodical cicadas consisting of *Magicalcaca cassini*, *M. septendecula*, and *M. septendecim*, beginning in May and lasting into Jun. There seemed to be a relationship to the emergence of cicadas and reports of kites, with the bulk of sightings in spring (see Spring report). Mississippi Kites are certainly gaining a foothold in the Region, and the presence of cicadas might have muddied the waters some, as it is difficult to determine whether new breeding evidence was associated with the emergence. Still, one Virginia nesting was confirmed in *Fairfax*, providing the northernmost nesting of the species anywhere and only the 3rd or 4th confirmed breeding attempt for the Region. Birds seen for the 3rd year at the Waynewood subdivision, *Fairfax* 24 Jul led observers to a nest 7 Aug. Two young were noted in the nest 7–8 Aug (ph., †Donald Sweig, ph. Bob Augustine, KG, m.ob.). At the Riverview subdivision, *Prince William*, the first bird was reported 16 May, with as many as 7 seen at once. A rough nest of sticks was found and photographed, but there was no evidence of incubation or young (Jim Pearson, SAH, BT, m.ob.). The last report from this location was one kite 16 Jun. Southside Virginia certainly has breeding kites; however, no nesting evidence has been reported, despite many observations throughout the reporting period. For

SA Most unusual this summer was evidence of ducks breeding that are very rarely confirmed as breeders in the Region. On 30 May, Czaplak found a small **Common Merganser** chick on a rock in the Potomac R., *Montgomery*, MD. From the Virginia shoreline only a few km downstream, Christie Huffman observed a hen **Common Merganser** with 6 young 8 Jun. The Potomac R. serves as the border between Virginia and Maryland, and as such it will never be determined where these birds hatched. Still, the find represents only the 5th known breeding occurrence for the Region.

While oversummering Ruddy Ducks are not uncommon in the n. fringes of the Region, breeding evidence is decidedly so. At Druid Lake Park, *Baltimore*, Kress discovered 3 young **Ruddy Ducks** closely following an ad. hen and 2 ad. drakes 1 Jul. The young were about one-fifth the size of the hen and were seen diving alongside her while she repeatedly defended the young from one of the drakes. This marks the first firm evidence of breeding in the Region.

the past several summers, at least one pair of Mississippi Kites has frequented Huntley, but Jul reports are scarce; the latest report for this summer was 2 on 27 Jun (KG). The Elkton, Cecil, MD kite show lasted through mid-Jun, with a single Swallow-tailed Kite through 17 Jun (Sean McCandless). Other scattered Mississippi Kite reports from Maryland were: 6 Jun near Graysonville, *Queen Anne's* (JLS, MB); 12 Jun in *Montgomery* (Rick Sussman); and 11 Jul at North East, Cecil (Chris Starling). The Virginia reports were: 14 Jun above the Landmark Mall, Alexandria (KP); at Altavista 4 Jul, the first summer and 3rd record for *Campbell* (J&TD); one at Dyke, quite possibly one of the Waynewood birds 22 Jul (Larry Cartwright); 3 in a yard in *Dinwiddie* 31 Jul (AD); and 5 over Annandale, *Fairfax* 31 Jul (Barbara Chambers).

There seemed an above-average number of Northern Harrier reports for summer, but only one came with details of breeding, a nest with eggs on Wreck I., *Northampton* in mid-Jun (Alex Wilkie, Deniz Aygen). A Sharp-shinned Hawk nest with one nestling was discovered in mid-Jul by a group of U.S. Forest Service workers at 1465 m in a mature Red Spruce, near Whitetop Mt. Road, *Smyth*, VA (*vide* R&LM). An ad. Sharp-shinned Hawk at Burke L., *Fairfax* 10 Jul was an interesting find (FA), as was one 24 Jun at *Dorchester* (HTA). The long-term Virginia Peregrine Falcon monitoring and management program undertaken by the Center for Conservation Biology at the College of William and Mary reports a slow but steady increase of breeding Peregrines; however, hatching rate and chick survival remains somewhat erratic. Of 19 occupied territories, there were 15 breeding attempts producing 27 chicks that survived beyond fledging. Of 14 clutches followed completely, 39 of 53 eggs hatched, and 27 of the 39 chicks fledged, albeit with success influenced by translocation of some young. Some of the eggs that did not hatch were cracked and thin-shelled. Eggs examined in 2001 and 2002 identified the presence of several different compounds, including polybrominated diphenyl ethers, which are used as flame-retardants and are environmentally persistent. Eggs collected in 2004 will be sent for potential analysis (Watts, B.D., S.M. Padgett, M.A. Byrd and E.C. Long, 2004. Virginia Peregrine Falcon monitoring and management program: Year 2004 report.). Osprey productivity in the Bay was

said to be extremely low, possibly owing to the anoxic conditions over most of the n. two-thirds of the Bay; hopefully, more information will become available and be reported here. Two ad. Osprey, and then later one juv., were seen mid-Jul at L. Anna, *Louisa*, possible breeders (MRB). Long-time Virginia raptor bander Mark Causey reports that pro-



Mississippi Kites gorged themselves on cicadas in areas of emergence this season, and a few lingered well away from southside Virginia, where present each year. This bird was one of a nesting pair in *Fairfax*, Virginia (near Washington, DC), about 2 km from the Waynewood Elementary School; the only other confirmed nesting in the Middle Atlantic region was also from suburban northern Virginia. Photograph by Donald Sweig.

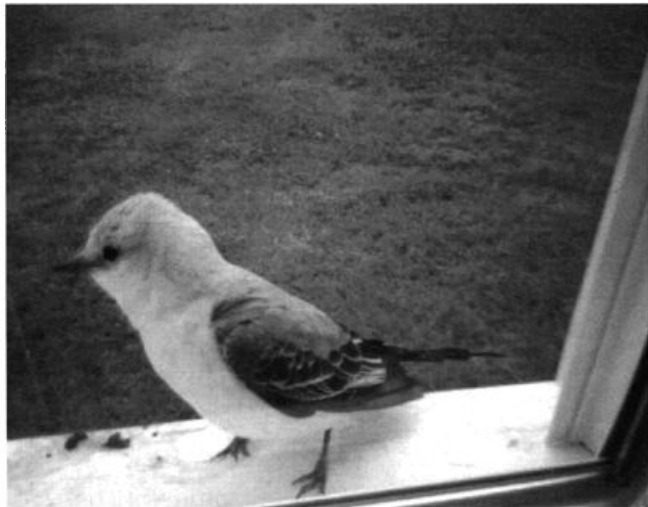
ductivity among American Kestrels and Barn Owls in *Prince William* and *Fauquier* was among the worst on record.

Six King Rails were heard at Back Bay 1 Jun during a weekly survey (RLA); 3 were noted at the Great Marsh at Mason Neck N.W.R., *Fairfax* 12 Jun, the latter accompanied by a Virginia Rail (KG et al.); another King was at Schooley Mill Park, *Howard* 27 Jun (Brad Lanning). This scarce species should be reported whenever detected in the Region. Two ad. Virginia Rails were seen with one chick 19 Jun at University of Maryland Central Farm *Howard* (BO, EH), and an ad. was seen there 21 Jun (EH, Robert Solem); this constitutes only the 3rd known breeding for the species in *Howard* (others in 1974 and 1992). Four juv. Soras were found 18 Jul at Blandy, where one had been reported along with a Virginia Rail 18 Jun (Jon Little, B. J. Westervelt, Dave Carr); other Sora reports were of 2 at McKee-Beshers, *Montgomery* (PW) 3 Jul and one 24 Jul at Swan Harbor, *Harford* (MH, DW). Black Rails were reported only from coastal areas this summer, with 4 at Saxis, *Accomack*, VA 2 Jun and

one on 6 Jun (MRB, Glenn Koppel, Mary Alice Koeneke); in Maryland, one juv. was found road-killed at Black. 17 Jul (Tom Miller, HTA). The Purple Gallinule reported in spring at Hughes Hollow, *Montgomery*, MD was seen sporadically through 15 Jun (PW); another was discovered 30 Jun at Oxbow L., *Anne Arundel*, and seen through 7 Jul (Jay Sheppard, SA, m.ob.). Three ad. Sandhill Cranes appeared near Mt. Solon roughly around 14 Jul, and stayed through Aug, only the 3rd record for *Augusta* (Jane Reeves, *vide* YL, ph. BT, m.ob.). Such summering birds should be watched very closely for breeding activity.

A pair of Black-necked Stilts in suitable breeding habitat 1 Jun at Back Bay (RLA) was more unusual than the 5 seen at the causeway to Chincoteague I., *Accomack* 1 & 3 Jun (ESB; MRB), and at Craney 3 Jun (Elisa Enders); one 27 Jun at Deal I., *Somerset* (MH, ZB) and 2 ads. and one juv. at Hart 31 Jul (EJS, RFR et al.) were the lone Maryland reports. American Avocets were regular at Hart in Jul, the peak being 16 on 24 & 31 Jul (EJS, MH et al.). Fourteen Upland Sandpipers were at the Salisbury-Wicomico Airport 17-18 Jul (SHD), and another was found at Alpha Ridge Park, *Howard* 19 Jun (Ralph Cullison). One Hudsonian Godwit at Hart 31 Jul was the season's only report (EJS, RFR et al.). About 55 White-rumped Sandpipers at Chinc. 1 Jun was a healthy count (ESB, GLA). Mason Dixon farm near Emmitsburg, *Frederick*, MD produced a few decent inland shorebird finds, including 2 White-rumped Sandpipers 1 Jun, a Dunlin there 2 Jun, and likely the first fall shorebird migrant, a single Least Sandpiper 28 Jun (RFR, Gary Smyle). A pair of courting Spotted Sandpipers was noted there 7 Jun, and an ad. and a juv. were present 28 Jun (RFR). The Cumberland Terminus, *Alleghany*, MD hosted a Sanderling and one Short-billed Dowitcher 18-19 Jul (JBC). An injured Purple Sandpiper was picked up at the Cape Charles jetty, *Northampton* 17 Jun (Matt Ramah); summering birds are almost unprecedented in Virginia. A dozen Red Knots seen flying n. over the Bay at Cape Charles (ESB) on 15 Jul was most unusual for midsummer, perhaps a sign of a dismal breeding season. A White-rumped Sandpiper at Hart 31 Jul was a touch early (EJS, RFR et al.). A Wilson's Phalarope at Chinc. 24 Jun was late for a spring migrant but early for fall (J. Via, B. Akers).

Unusual gull sightings were limited to a second-winter Iceland Gull 23–25 Jun at Nanticoke Harbor, *Wicomico*, MD (SHD, ph. D. Broderick); a Bonaparte's Gull at Morgantown, *Charles*, MD 22 Jul (GJ); and a Ring-billed Gull 24 Jul at Staunton, a first *Augusta* summer record (AL). Three Gull-billed Terns were seen carrying food at N. Vaughn



How often does a rare bird locate a birder? This Scissor-tailed Flycatcher announced its arrival at Roanoke, Virginia by pecking on the laundry-room window at the photographer's house on 5 June 2004. This bird built a nest, laid and incubated five apparently infertile eggs, and was last observed 24 July. This marks the third attempted nesting of the species in Virginia. Photograph by Kevin Bingham.

W.M.A. 27 Jun and again 8 Jul (MH, ZB). Brinker and Weske's tern banding efforts resulted in high totals for the year. In Virginia, 2189 Royal Terns were banded between Little Fox I., *Accomack*, and Wreck I., *Northampton* in Jul and Aug, and 577 were banded at Skimmer I., *Worcester*, MD. A new state record, 122 Sandwich Terns were banded at these two Virginia locations. At least a dozen Sandwich Tern nests were at Wreck I., and three or four were at Fisherman I. (*fide* HTA). Single Sandwich Terns were reported at Eagle's Nest Campground 27 Jun (MH, ZB) and at Skimmer I. 8 Jul (DP), both *Worcester*. A Caspian Tern at Centennial Park, *Howard* 8 Jul was likely an early fall migrant (JT). A Common Tern nest was observed near Graysonville, *Queen Anne's*, with an ad. seen on the nest 4 Jul and 2 juvs. 11 Jul (DP). A Common and 12 Forster's Terns were at Anacostia Park, D.C. 19 Jul (MB, Mary Paul). Arctic Tern, rarely detected in the Region though certainly an annual migrant well offshore, was reported 5 & 6 Jun from Assat. (p.a., JB, HH, JLS, MB et al.). A Least Tern was at an industrial park pond in *Henry* 26 Jun (CK, Jim Beard et al.); there are very few inland records of the species in Virginia. An ad. Least was seen feeding 3 fledged young at Bladensburg Waterfront Marina, *Prince George's* 18–19 Jul (Mike Donovan, *fide* RH) and at Anacostia Park, D.C. 24 Jul (John Hubbell).

DOVES THROUGH SHRIKES

The well-established Eurasian Collared-Doves near Kiptopeke, *Northampton* were seen regularly during summer. Another was at Montross 26 Jul, the 2nd for *Westmoreland*, VA (TMD). Regional observers largely felt that cuckoo numbers were high, probably owing to the cicada emergence. However, 78 Yellow-billed Cuckoos were tallied during a survey at Mason Neck, *Fairfax* 12 Jun, up from 11 in 2003—in an area where there was no cicada emergence (KG et al.). Lynchburg, another area outside of the cicada emergence, reported a high count of 44 Yellow-billed 5 Jun (GS). A Rufous Hummingbird found 23 Jul near Pamplin, *Appomattox*, VA was identified by photograph by hummingbird expert Bob Sargent (ph. Florence Hix, *fide* J&TD). Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was finally documented and confirmed breeding in

Virginia with the discovery of an active nest in w. *Highland* at Bear Mountain Farm 25 May (ph., †John L. Rowlett, Patti Reum, m.ob.). Farther s., Coffey and Harrington explored high-elevation areas in Jefferson N.F. and Stone Mt., *Grayson*, VA on 17 & 19 Jun, discovering nine sapsucker territories at elevations of 1158–1290 m.

The 3rd Virginia and Regional breeding attempt of Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was discovered at Countryside G.C., Roanoke. In early Jun, an ad. (presumably) female was seen on the window sill of area birder Kevin Bingham's townhouse. The bird was seen several times at the nearby golf course during the following weeks, until 2 Jul, when a nest with five eggs was found by Kinzie. Sightings of the ad. continued until 24 Jul. On 27 Jul, the nest was examined and two abandoned eggs remained. A Western Kingbird was found at Chesapeake Farms, *Kent*, MD 6 Jul, one of few summer records for the Region (Walter Ellison, Nancy Martin). The Western Kingbird at Ft. McHenry, Baltimore was seen again 10 Jul after an absence since 31 May (Jim Peters, *fide* Keith Eric Costley). An Eastern Kingbird nest with young was seen 23 Jul at Dyke, notably late (KG, Chip Johnston). A Yellow-bellied Flycatcher was singing 5 Jun at Salt Cr. Road along the James R., a 4th for *Amherst*, VA (MRB). Often undetected during migration, Alder Flycatchers made appearances at Mason Neck S.P., *Fairfax* 12 Jun

(RR) and at the headwaters of Pomonkey Cr. 8 Jun, *Charles's* 2nd (GJ). Four occupied Cliff Swallow nests were found 10 Jun on the Nanticoke R. bridge between *Dorchester* and *Wicomico*, up from one nest in 2003 (SHD); while nests were not observed, birds were seen flying under bridges on U.S. 17 at Mt. Landing Cr. and at the U.S. Rt. 360 bridge over the Rappahannock R., both *Essex*, VA 12 Jun (TMD, SAH).

A Common Raven was well out of place at Baltimore 17 Jul (ph., vt. JLS). Red-breasted Nuthatches appeared at two feeders in Jul away from breeding areas: 8 Jul in *Worcester* (N&FS) and 15 Jul at Lynchburg, VA, the first summer record there (GS). Three Sedge Wrens were found singing at Glebe School Road 22–31 Jul, *Augusta's* 3rd overall and first summer record. While no evidence of nesting was obtained, the presence of these singing birds may indicate breeding (AL, YL, ph. BT). A disjunct population of Golden-crowned Kinglets was found 19 Jun in the Hurricane Branch area, *Smyth*, VA (JWC et al.); 3 ads. were found singing at Elliott Knob 26 Jun, *Augusta's* 2nd record (JSp, LH, AL). Some seven Loggerhead Shrike reports were all confined to the Mountains & Valleys of Virginia. Most reports likely pertain to breeders, but the only firm evidence was a family of 4 along Plantation Rd., *Montgomery* 5 Jul (Brian Kane, Peter Laver).

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

A traditional spot for Golden-winged Warblers at George Washington N.F., *Frederick*, VA produced reports only of Brewster's Warblers this summer (William Leigh). Five singing male Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warblers, one carrying food, were seen with a female that was accompanied by 2 recently fledged young at Elliott Knob 26 Jun (JSp, LH, AL); *Augusta* has no previous confirmed breeding records. Other summer reports of Yellow-rumped were a pair at Whitetop Mt., *Grayson* 28 Jun (MRB), 7 on 3 Jul at Bother Knob, *Rockingham* (Peter Van Acker, JSp), and 2 seen 6 Jul at Mt. Rogers, *Grayson* (Ryan Smith). A Prothonotary Warbler laid five eggs in a nest-box in Roanoke, discovered 19 Jun (Alyce Quinn). An interesting discovery was an ad. male Mourning Warbler at Wakefield Park, *Fairfax*, that sang from 9 May through at least 27 Jun; this bird was well away from any known breeding areas (ph. Mike Collins). A Kentucky Warbler near Townsend, *Northampton*, VA 3 Jun was a first for that B.B.S. route; the species breeds very sparingly on the outer Coastal Plain (ESB).

It seemed an above-average year for Dickcissels in the Region. Seven reports hailed from seven counties in Virginia, most of multiple birds, while Maryland had at least eight reports from eight different counties, usually

of more than one bird, perhaps the most notable there being a pair found in Jun at Hurlock, *Dorchester* and seen again 11 Jul (HLW, LD, HTA). Aside from traditional Henslow's Sparrow spots in w. Maryland, Arnold's atlas-ing efforts revealed several venues not known prior to 2003 in *Garrett*: two spots along Pea Ridge Rd., one having as many as 8 birds singing on various visits 15 May–10 Jul; another site s. of Lancaster Hill Rd. with one singing 11 Jul; one singing at Green Lantern Rd. 23 Jun; and 5 singing at Frostburg Rd. There were several reports of late or unexpected summering sparrows. White-throated Sparrows were at Staunton, *Augusta* 6 Jun (LH); Red House Road, *Worcester* 22 Jun (SHD); Sparks Mill Rd., *Queen Anne's* 27 Jun (Scott Crabtree); and a *Howard* yard 29 Jun (JT). Dark-eyed Juncos were noted 4 Jun at the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship, *Loudoun* (*fide* KG); 30 Jun at Boyce, *Clarke* (Charles Vandervoot); and 2 Jul at Alexandria, *Fairfax* (Renee Grebe). Three displaying male Bobolinks were near Taylorstown, *Loudoun* 19 Jun (FA); new locations in *Carroll*, MD hosted males: singles at two Keysville sites 2 & 7 Jun, 2 near Taneytown 19 Jun, and 3 at Keysville and another heard near Taneytown on 28 Jun (RFR). There were three late-Jun reports of single Pine Siskins, away from breeding areas: 22–28 Jun at a Davidsonville, *Anne Arundel* feeder (Phil Davis); 24 Jun at Bowie, *Prince George's* (Abbie Banks); and 29 Jun in Stuart, *Patrick*, VA (Eric Johnson). Red Crossbills were at Whitetop Mt., *Grayson* 10 & 28 Jun, numbering as many as 15 birds (GE, MRB, m.ob.), and were reported frequently at Glen Alton, *Giles*, VA 17 Jul–Aug (CK, m.ob.).

Addendum: A late report surfaced of an ad. male Painted Bunting that was pho-



Waterfowl that normally nest at high latitudes are occasionally observed well south of range in summer; at least some of these are injured or lead-poisoned birds. A blue-morph Snow Goose spent the season in Virginia on Cape Charles's Crystal Lake (here 13 July 2004), with a flock of resident Canada Geese, while two female Common Eiders frequented the town's jetties in late June (here 25 June) 2004. Photographs by Edward S. Brinkley.



tographed at a *James City*, VA feeder on or near 24 Apr, constituting about the 8th local record (*fide* Bill Williams).

Corrigendum: The caption for the White-winged Dove photographed in Suffolk, VA (N.A.B. 58: 210) should have listed Town Point rather than Eclipse as the location.

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State of the Region

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The Middle Atlantic Region separates neatly into three physiographic provinces, Mountains & Valleys, Piedmont, and Coastal Plain, all of which are portion of three NABCI Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) of similar names, in which 55 regularly occurring species that breed, winter, or migrate through the Region's provinces are listed. In addition, Bald Eagle, Piping Plover, Roseate Tern (Regionally extirpated breeder), and Red-cockaded Woodpecker are listed as either federally threatened or endangered. In 2003, the American Bird Conservancy's Green List's included 64 species in the Region. Birds considered of highest concern on the Green List but not listed for the BCRs include King Rail, a marginal nester, and Bicknell's Thrush, a regular migrant here. These lists do not treat rare and poorly known subspecies, such as the coastal *susurrans* Henslow's Sparrow and *nigrescens* Swamp Sparrow, most of which may be considered "data deficient."

Many readers are aware of the varied and interrelated pressures on birds in the Region: habitat loss and fragmentation resulting from land conversion (but also forestry and agricultural

practices, and even hurricanes); proliferation of predators, including cats; mortality and habitat degradation caused by pollution of many kinds; habitat degradation by invasive exotic flora; and over-harvesting of cornerstone species such as Horseshoe Crabs. Species in most immediate peril are familiar from long-standing lists of endangered taxa, but more sobering is the second category on the Green List, species exhibiting steep declines over the past few decades, such as Lesser Yellowlegs and Sanderling. Planners, habitat managers, and biologists can refer to these and many other documents (including state lists of endangered and threatened taxa in Maryland and Virginia) to help guide policy-making and management practices. Nevertheless, for those of us who do not specialize in bird conservation, the effect of seeing all of these familiar, even abundant species "listed" can be disorienting and dispiriting. To bring some order to the proliferation of lists, we offer an overview of ecoregions and their habitats from east to west.

Few beach-nesting and other coastal colonial waterbirds have seen population increases in the Region in the recent decade; most have declined, some precipitously. A recent survey of colonial waterbirds in coastal Virginia (Watts 2003) emphasized the importance of the barrier island/lagoon system of the Eastern Shore for numerous "listed" species. Between 1993 and 2003, the colonial waterbird population in coastal Virginia declined by 16%. The biggest decline was in Cattle Egret, down to 166 breeding pairs from 1459 (–88.6%). Other significant losses were terns, notably Common and Royal, with Common decreasing to 1891 pairs (–72.1%) and Royal dropping to 2858 (–54.3%). Other losers include Snowy Egret (882 pairs remain, –62.1%), Black Skimmer

(1828 pairs; -41.0%), Herring Gull (4521 pairs, -48.6%), and Green Heron (-61.0%). Reasons for these declines and similar ones in adjacent regions are under investigation, but some known causes of disturbance and nest failure are depredation (Great Horned Owls, gulls, foxes, and other small mammals), illegal human activities in the colonies (visits in the nesting season, often with dogs), displacement of terns by gull colonies, and spring storms; other suspected causes include degradations of habitat, both marine and terrestrial, which would negatively impact migrant shorebirds and wading birds as well, which use the marshes and mudflats in the many thousands.

Fortunately, the outer coast of Virginia has been protected to varying degrees for decades, with most of the barrier islands and much of the Back Bay area wetlands in the hands of the federal government or The Nature Conservancy, where studies of habitat use, human disturbance, predation, and other factors are ongoing. Unfortunately, sufficient staff is not available to prevent increasing numbers of boaters from coming ashore and disrupting colonies, but this is at least a remediable problem in theory. In coastal Virginia, The Nature Conservancy has also partnered with NASA to study patterns of coastal habitat usage by stopover migrants, using the NASA Polarimetric Radar, the most sophisticated technology of its kind. There is now broad public, governmental, and private support for increased land acquisition in the outer coastal plain—not a moment too soon, as development pressures mount on the once-pristine Eastern Shore—and there exist intelligent comprehensive plans for such acquisitions. Moreover, there has been extensive public discussion in 2001–2004 of the benefits and drawbacks of proposed offshore and coastal wind-farms in this migrant-rich corridor, with the result that all such proposals have been abandoned as of 2004. Sea-level rise, should it continue, would render most conservation concerns regarding protection of salt marshes and other coastal habitats moot: it is doubtful that Black Rails and Seaside Sparrows would distract the powers that be from the large-scale inundation of high-priced real estate.

Chesapeake Bay, the largest estuary in the United States, is in very poor health (as is Back Bay), and the uncountable flocks of waterfowl of even a generation ago, not to speak of colonial times, recede further in memory with each passing year. To restore the health of the Bay even partially would require \$30 billion, a sum most political figures are unwilling to consider, despite intelligent lobbying efforts by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and many other groups. Virginia's remarkable Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act of 1988 is under-enforced—almost unenforced—as developers and local municipalities disregard both its letter and spirit. The Bay's chief problem is that it cannot sustain healthy marine life under the current assault of nitrogen pollution (from sewage, runoff, and air pollution). In summer 2004, the anoxic "dead zone" of the Bay was the largest in the past two decades: fish and crabs died by the many thousands, red tides and harmful algal blooms were widespread, and beaches were closed. These problems have been especially severe in the Maryland portion of the Bay (see www.cbf.org). The consequences of ecological disequilibrium are clear: birds that forage on fish and other marine life or on aquatic grasses are in steep decline or absent in these waters. These declines are exacerbated by over-harvest of key prey species such as Menhaden. Although not listed as being of concern on the NABCI roster, Brant, Black Scoter, and American Black Duck are on the second tier of the Green List. From a Regional historical perspective, many more waterfowl species could be added, along with Red-throated Loon, Horned Grebe, Northern Gannet, Bonaparte's Gull, and other species once more numerous on the Bay. Brown Pelican, a success story of the post-DDT era, is likewise now declining in Virginia, as is productivity in Osprey and several other larger piscivores. Bald Eagle, however, maintains its robust population in the Region, one that has increased annually since 1977, from a few dozen pairs to over 500.

Habitats of the inner Coastal Plain and Piedmont are many, but both woodlands and open habitats are being developed and fragmented at a steady pace: the Region's population has grown by over 600,000 residents since 2000, a growth rate of about 4%. Most of these people settle in the Piedmont or Coastal Plain. The effects of population growth fall both on forest species dependent on mature woodlands (Prothonotary, Swainson's, Kentucky, Worm-eating, and Black-throated Green Warblers, Acadian Flycatcher, Wood Thrush) and on upland field-associated species such as Northern Harrier, Eastern Meadowlark, Dickcissel, and Upland Sandpiper, the latter a species that has vanished from Maryland, from rapidly developing Loudoun County, Virginia, and now barely hangs on in the Region in Culpeper/Fauquier County, Virginia. Suburban growth has put residents into proximity of roosting Turkey and Black Vultures, which have

been (legally) slaughtered by the hundreds to protect suburbanites from the inconvenience of their excrement. Declines of species in these habitats are known from BBS and other data, but these are much less complete than data for endangered species and coastal colonial nesters.

The question of how to rank Regional conservation concerns for species of grassland early successional habitats (many of which are not "natural," arguably, in the Region) is an open one in both states, but in the current political climate, they receive focus because they are scarce Regionally and because their habitats are often easily identified and "managed." When considered in continental terms, however, state lists of imperiled fauna sometimes miss the forest for the fields: the Region's warblers, flycatchers, and spotted thrushes—and forest habitats generally—are probably more important from a global perspective than its breeding cardinalids and emberizids (saltmarsh sparrows aside) in disturbed habitats. If not always pragmatic, our impulse to protect or maintain diverse habitats is not misguided: the Region would be much the poorer without its few Loggerhead Shrikes, Bachman's Sparrows, and Henslow's Sparrows—declining species in need of as many outposts as we can provide them, even "artificial" ones. We should perhaps admit to ourselves that we are stewards of birds in the here and now, and that aspersions such as "artificial grassland" advance the cause of real bird conservation very little.

Like the more densely settled areas to the east, the montane sections of western Maryland and Virginia have experienced a spike in population growth since the economic boom of the 1990s, but the modification of habitat here goes back several centuries, and only about 15% of this area remains relatively unaltered, despite large tracts of national forest (the "land of many uses"). Essentially all of Shenandoah National Park (200,000 acres, 40% designated "wilderness" area), for instance, has been logged; what remains is regrowth: a faunally poor area, with few large trees and little structural complexity. Species that serve as indicators of forest complexity and health, such as Cerulean Warbler, are most at risk, but many woodland birds of northern affinity are in steep decline (or now absent, e.g., Yellow-bellied Flycatcher) as breeders in the Region. Certain valley species, such as Loggerhead Shrike and Vesper Sparrow, are declining, and Bewick's Wren has disappeared just in the past 15 years or so, for reasons unknown. Our basic inability to explain such losses is itself frightening. Even where open lands remain, changes in agricultural technology have rendered many rural farming areas sterile for breeding birds; the Region's many Mennonite farms in the Shenandoah Valley are exceptional in eschewing application of chemicals to the land.

Between the chestnut blight, over-browsing of undergrowth by deer, heavy logging of spruce, fir, oak, and other trees, acid rain, and the spread of Gypsy Moth, Spruce Budworm, and Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, few blocks of intact woodland habitat remain in 2004, though larger (but severely isolated) fragments extend from the Allegheny Front Range in the north to the Mount Rogers highlands in the south. Timber extraction and other consumptive activities continue on most of these fragments, helpful at least to some species that favor early successional habitats (e.g., Chestnut-sided and Golden-winged Warblers). If modest corridors of complex woodlands are to be re-established in the Region, a comprehensive plan for land acquisition and management should be established and implemented. The highest-elevation woodland communities, of spruce-fir, are extremely susceptible to damage by air pollutants and acid rain—worsening problems that overshadow the best acquisition and management schemes.

In this rather bleak picture, there are bright spots. Ongoing studies of species and habitats by the Center for Conservation Biology (<<http://fsweb.wm.edu/ccb/>>) and other groups are beginning to provide distributional data needed to identify areas of top-priority habitat. Though beset by budget cuts and worse, the many state agencies charged with conserving habitat and wildlife have produced many victories, among them a three-part Birding and Wildlife trail that spans the entire state, the first in the country and a boon to ecotourism—low-impact outdoor activities that carry economic clout. Ongoing land acquisitions and arrangements of conservation easements, by state offices of The Nature Conservancy (<<http://nature.org/>>) and many smaller land trusts, have been successful in establishing islands of productive, diverse habitat in a shrinking natural world.

Literature cited

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Over the past decade, numbers of nesting Cattle Egrets have declined by about 90% on the Atlantic coast north of the Carolinas, perhaps partly as a consequence of the rapid conversion of agricultural lands to suburban housing developments, as here at Kiptopeke, Virginia. Photograph by Edward S. Brinkley.