

Hotline: Voice of the Naturalist
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Coverage: MD/DC/VA/central and southern DE/WV panhandle
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This is the Voice of the Naturalist, a service of the Audubon Naturalist Society. This report covers the week starting Tuesday, January 30 and was completed on Tuesday, February 6, at 9:30 a.m.

Information on noteworthy birds is presented below in taxonomic order, as set forth in the American Ornithological Society Checklist for North and Middle American Birds, as revised through the 58th Supplement (July 2017).

The top birds this week were WESTERN GREBE* in MD, THICK-BILLED MURRE* in MD, LARK SPARROW* in DC, HARRIS'S SPARROW* in MD and YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD* in MD.

Other birds of interest included SNOW GOOSE, ROSS'S GOOSE, GREATER-WHITE FRONTED GOOSE, CACKLING GOOSE, TRUMPETER SWAN, HARLEQUIN DUCK, LONG-TAILED DUCK, RED-NECKED GREBE, COMMON GALLINULE, SANDHILL CRANE, DUNLIN, WILSON'S SNIPE, SPOTTED SANDPIPER, RAZORBILL, BLACK-HEADED GULL, ICELAND GULL, GLAUCOUS GULL, RED-THROATED LOON, DOUBLE-CRESTED and GREAT CORMORANTS, AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN and BROWN PELICAN, AMERICAN BITTERN, ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK, GOLDEN EAGLE, SNOWY OWL, SHORT-EARED OWL, RED-HEADED WOODPECKER, LOGGERHEAD and NORTHERN SHRIKES, COMMON RAVEN, TREE SWALLOW, RED CROSSBILL, PINE SISKIN, LAPLAND LONGSPUR, CLAY-COLORED and VESPER SPARROWS, BALTIMORE ORIOLE, RUSTY BLACKBIRD, warblers, and WESTERN TANAGER.

TOP BIRDS

A WESTERN GREBE* was spotted and photographed, in less-than-ideal conditions, off the South Point Boat Ramp in Worcester Co, MD in mid-afternoon on Feb 2.

A photographer snapped a shot of a THICK-BILLED MURRE* and mistakenly thought it was a Dovekie until corrected by a MD birder, at the jetty at Ocean City Inlet, Worcester Co, MD on Feb 3. It was not relocated.

The LARK SPARROW* continues to be seen at the National Arboretum in NE DC, with the most recent sighting on Feb 4.

The wintering HARRIS'S SPARROW* along the Anacostia River Trail in Prince George's Co, MD continued to be seen on Jan 31, and Feb 1, 2, 3 and 4.

A YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD* has been seen off and on at Fort Howard Veterans Park, and vicinity, Baltimore Co, MD on Feb 1, 2, 3 and 4.

OTHER BIRDS OF INTEREST

SNOW GOOSE reports this week came from Penns Hill Rd. in Charles Co, MD on Jan 30 and 31, another continuing bird at Kershner's Pond in Frederick Co, MD on Jan 31, a continuing bird at Piney Run Reservoir in Carroll Co, MD on Jan 31, and another in Jarrettsville, Harford Co, MD on Feb 1. ROSS'S GEESE were seen at Lake Frederick in Frederick Co, VA on Jan 31, and one in Rockingham Co, VA on Feb 2 and 3, while another was seen at Prime Hook NWR-Fowler Beach, Sussex Co, DE on Feb 3. GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE reports have dwindled from the past few weeks, with four seen at Lake Artemesia, Prince George's Co, MD on Feb 3, two continuing at Foggy Branch Farm Ponds, Montgomery Co, VA on Jan 30, another the same day at Manassas National Battlefield Park in Prince William Co, VA, and a single bird at the Rockingham Memorial Hospital Health Campus in Rockingham Co, VA on Feb 1. CACKLING GOOSE reports came from the Foggy Branch Farm Ponds, Montgomery Co, VA and Sherwood Lakes in Virginia Beach, VA on Jan 30, and Lake Fairfax in Fairfax Co, VA on Jan 31, and Feb 2.

TRUMPETER SWANS were spotted at Lake Elkhorn, Howard Co, MD on Jan 30 and 31, and Feb 1, 3, 4 and 5, and another pair at a pond off Owensville Rd, Anne Arundel Co, MD on Feb 3. In VA, six birds were seen at the Clifton Institute (restricted access) in Fauquier Co on Jan 31 and Feb 3, a single bird continued at the Ivy Street Ponds in Waynesboro, on Jan 31 and Feb 4 and 5, and four were seen at the Daleville Ponds in Botetourt Co, on Feb 3.

A female HARLEQUIN DUCK continued in Luke, Allegany Co, MD on Jan 31, and was seen again on Feb 2. On Feb 5, a pair of LONG-TAILED DUCKS were seen at the C&O Canal-Riley's Lock, Montgomery Co, MD.

RED-NECKED GREBES were seen from many locations this week, including two at the South Point Boat Ramp in Worcester Co, MD on Feb 1, 3 and 4, another at Kingston Landing, Talbot Co, MD on Feb 3, 4 and 5, one reported from Delaware Seashore State Park, Sussex Co, DE on Feb 1, 3, and 4, one at Lake Mooney Park, Stafford Co, VA on Jan 31 and individuals from Algonkian Regional Park, Loudoun Co, VA, Occoquan Bay NWR, Prince William Co, VA and The Gardens at Sunday Park in Chesterfield, VA, all on Feb 3. Another was seen on Feb 4 at Smith Mountain Lake SP, Bedford Co, VA.

The continuing COMMON GALLINULE at the Bayside Development Pond, Worcester Co, MD was seen on Jan 31, Feb 1, 2, 3 and 4. Two SANDHILL CRANES were seen flying in to the C&O Canal-Violette's Lock area, Montgomery Co, MD from across the river at Algonkian Regional Park, Loudoun Co, VA on Feb 4.

A lone DUNLIN was scoped from shore at Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, Fairfax, Co, VA on Feb 4. A single WILSON'S SNIBE was feeding in a snow-encrusted stream in Garrett Co, MD on Feb 5. An apparently continuing but out-of-season SPOTTED SANDPIPER was spotted again by birders on Feb 3 at the John H. Kerr Reservoir in Mecklenburg Co, VA.

The only RAZORBILL sighting this week was of a lone individual seen at the Indian River Inlet, Sussex Co, DE on Feb 1, 3 and 4.

Interesting gulls seen this week include the continuing BLACK-HEADED GULL at Rudee Inlet and Pleasure House Point Natural Area, both in Virginia Beach, VA seen on Jan 31, Feb 1, 2, 3,4 and 5. ICELAND GULLS were seen at several locations including Dorsey Rd, Howard Co, MD on Jan 31, the Annapolis Junction Transfer Station, Anne Arundel and Howard Co, MD on Feb 1, one seen at the Cambridge waterfront in Dorchester Co, MD on Feb 3, and another at the Ocean City Inlet, Worcester Co, MD on Feb 3. One was seen on Feb 2 at the Walmart Ponds in Colonial Heights, VA and a continuing bird was seen again at the CBBT Island No. 4 in Northampton Co, VA on Feb 4. GLAUCOUS GULLS were reported from the Annapolis Junction Transfer Station, Anne Arundel Co, MD on Feb 1, and on Feb 3 at the same location on the Howard Co, MD side, and a continuing bird was seen at the Wharton's Bluff TH in Sussex Co, DE on Jan 31.

A single RED-THROATED LOON was seen and photographed at the C&O Canal-Riley's Lock, Montgomery Co, MD on Feb 5.

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS don't usually spend the winter very far inland, so one seen along the C&O Canal-Great Falls, Montgomery Co, MD on Jan 31 and Feb 1, and another seen at Lake Frank, Montgomery Co, MD also on Feb 1, seems notable. Four GREAT CORMORANTS were seen at Gloucester Point Beach, Gloucester Co, VA on Feb 2.

An AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN was seen on Feb 1 at the James River Bridge area, Newport News, VA. On Feb 5, a flock of 17 AMERICAN WHITE PELICANS were seen flying in formation at First Landing State Park in Virginia Beach, VA. A lone BROWN PELICAN was spotted at the Ocean City Inlet, Worcester Co, MD on Feb 1 and 5, and again from Sunset Park in Ocean City, Worcester Co, MD on Feb 3.

Two reports of AMERICAN BITTERN came in this week. One was seen at North Point State Park, Baltimore Co, MD on Feb 1, and the other at Aberdeen Proving Grounds; Rt 715 Gate Ponds, Harford Co, MD on Feb 2.

An adult ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK was seen feeding along the road shoulder in Accident, Garrett Co, MD on Jan 31. On Feb 1 one was spotted on Peat Moss Rd, also in Garrett Co, MD. A continuing bird was seen again at Pemberton Manor, Queen Anne's Co, MD on Feb 1 and 3. ROUGH-LEGGED HAWKS were seen again at Prime Hook NWR-Broadkill Marsh, Sussex Co, DE on Feb 1, 2, 3 and 4. GOLDEN EAGLE reports this week were of a flyover bird at the International Conservation House, Fauquier Co, VA on Feb 3, and one seen and well photographed perched in a tree at the entrance to Pickering Creek Audubon Center in Talbot Co, MD on Feb 4, and seen again on Feb 5.

SNOWY OWL reports continued but in smaller numbers than previous weeks. On Feb 1 one was seen at Deal Island WMA, Somerset Co, MD, while an individual at Assateague Island National Seashore was reported on Feb 2 and 3. In the District of Columbia, one was reported from the Independence Ave area and the USDA building, SE DC on Jan 30, Feb 1, 2 and 5, sometimes roosting during the day in the inner courtyard, and two from the C Street area SW on Jan 31 and Feb 2. SHORT-EARED OWLS continued at the Konterra fields and ponds (restricted access, no trespassing without permission), Prince George's Co, MD with reports from Jan 31, Feb 1 and 3 and another continuing bird at the Pemberton Manor area in Queen Anne's Co, MD on Jan 31.

RED-HEADED WOODPECKERS were reported from Fox Chase Ponds and Wetlands (continuing) Howard Co, MD on Feb 1, 4 and 5, the Center for Maryland Agriculture and Farm Park, Baltimore Co, MD on Feb 3, Perryville Community Park, Cecil Co, MD on Feb 5, and two visiting a home feeder in Sussex Co, DE on Feb 1.

A LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE was seen and photographed in Baskerville, Mecklenburg Co, VA on Feb 3. The wintering NORTHERN SHRIKE in Sully Woodlands, Fairfax Co, VA was seen again on Feb 3 and 4.

A COMMON RAVEN was seen flying overhead along I-64 in Henrico Co, VA on Feb 1.

TREE SWALLOW reports have begun to filter in this week. One was spotted along the C&O Canal-Great Falls, Montgomery Co, MD on Feb 3, while six were reported from the John H. Kerr Reservoir in Mecklenburg Co, VA also on Feb 3. On Feb 5, an estimated flock of 400 were over the marsh at dusk at Bethel Beach Natural Area Preserve, Mathews Co, VA at the southern end of the Chesapeake Bay.

A RED CROSSBILL was seen and photographed atop Shenandoah Mountain at Briery Branch Gap, Rockingham Co, VA on Feb 3. A PINE SISKIN was also seen and photographed there the same day.

LAPLAND LONGSPURS have been very scarce this winter, so the two continuing birds seen in Westmoreland Co, VA on Jan 31, and the lone continuing bird in Elkton, Rockingham Co, VA on Feb 3 and 4, were significant.

A CLAY-COLORED SPARROW was seen again at Laurel Hill Equestrian Center, Fairfax Co, VA on Feb 3. Five VESPER SPARROWS were seen on Jan 31 at the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park, Dorchester Co, MD, and nine were seen there on Feb 3.

Wintering BALTIMORE ORIOLES are always fun to see at feeders. A female has been visiting a feeder at a yard in Anne Arundel Co, MD since around Jan 22, and most recently seen on Feb 2. Another, a bright male, has been coming to a yard in College Park, Prince George's Co, MD, seen daily Feb 1 through 4. Another male has been visiting a feeder in Waynesboro, VA, seen most recently on Feb 5. Four RUSTY BLACKBIRDS were seen and photographed at the Washington Sailing Marina in SW DC, on Feb 4, and a single bird was seen in Accident, Garrett Co, MD the same day, and again on Feb 5.

Warblers seen this week include a BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER at a yard in Virginia Beach, VA on Feb 3, an ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER seen and heard at the Oxon Hill Farm Park, Prince George's Co, MD on Feb 3, another the same day at Prime Hook NWR Visitor's Center, Sussex Co, DE, and on Feb 5 one was seen in foraging in a holly tree at Cox Point Park, Baltimore Co, MD. A PALM WARBLER was seen along Dorsey Run Rd, Howard Co, MD on Feb 3, and a PINE WARBLER was reported at Pemberton Manor, Queen Anne's Co, MD on Feb 3. A YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER continues to come to feeders for peanut butter and mealworms at a home near Stumpy Lake, Virginia Beach, VA, seen again on Feb 3.

A WESTERN TANAGER was reported from a yard in Chesapeake Co, VA on Feb 3.

This week's report was based on reports on the DE, MD, VA, and WV list servers, eBird records and various birding pages on Facebook.

The Audubon Sanctuary Shop (301-652-3606, <http://anshome.org/naturalist-shop>) is an excellent source for guidebooks and many other nature-related titles.

To report bird sightings, e-mail your report to voice@anshome.org. Please post reports before midnight Monday, identify the county as well as the state, and include your name and a Tuesday morning contact, e-mail or phone.

Thank you for your interest, and enjoy the birds.

*Of interest to the applicable state records committee