

Hotline: Voice of the Naturalist
Date: April 3, 2018
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, March 27, and was completed on Tuesday, April 3, at 9:00 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).

TOP BIRDS: BROWN BOOBY* in VA, WHITE IBIS in MD, SWALLOW-TAILED KITE* in VA, SNOWY OWL in MD, LARK SPARROW in DC, and BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER* in MD.

OTHER BIRDS OF INTEREST: COMMON EIDER, LONG-TAILED DUCK, RING-NECKED PHEASANT, RUFFED GROUSE, RED-NECKED GREBE, EARED GREBE, CHUCK-WILLS-WIDOW, CHIMNEY SWIFT, RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD, KING RAIL, SORA, SANDHILL CRANE, BLACK-NECKED STILT, PURPLE SANDPIPER, SPOTTED SANDPIPER, gulls, CASPIAN TERN, RED-THROATED LOON, AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN, AMERICAN BITTERN, egrets and herons, GLOSSY IBIS, ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK, WHITE-EYED and BLUE-HEADED VIREOS, PURPLE MARTIN, BANK and BARN SWALLOW, BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER, BROWN THRASHER, AMERICAN TREE SPARROW, VESPER SPARROW, early warblers, and PAINTED BUNTING.

TOP BIRDS

An adult BROWN BOOBY* was photographed in flight and seen perching on the dam, to the delight of several observers, at the John H. Kerr Reservoir in Mecklenburg Co, VA on Mar 31, and again on Apr 1.

An adult WHITE IBIS was seen and photographed feeding in a creek along Harry James Rd., Scotland, St. Mary's Co, MD on Apr 2.

A SWALLOW-TAILED KITE* was seen and photographed flying over a home in Hollins, just north of Roanoke, in western VA on Mar 31. Another was seen flying northward, west of the dune line at Back Bay NWR, Virginia Beach, VA also on Mar 31.

The female SNOWY OWL at Assateague Island NS was seen and photographed in the dunes along the OSV zone Worcester Co, MD on Mar 28.

The continuing LARK SPARROW was seen once again near the intersection of Meadow and Valley Roads at the National Arboretum in NE DC on Mar 31.

The BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER* first seen last week, was seen again near the intersection of Market and Lewis Streets, in Harford Co, MD on Mar 29, 30, 31, and Apr 2.

OTHER BIRDS OF INTEREST

A continuing female COMMON EIDER was seen again at the end of the south jetty at the Indian River Inlet, Sussex Co, DE on Mar 30 and 31, and Apr 1. On Mar 27, 28, and 29, the wintering male LONG-TAILED DUCK was spotted again at the Denton WWTP in Caroline Co, MD.

A pair of RING-NECKED PHEASANTS were seen right next to the trail along the C&O Canal-Pearre Station, Washington Co, MD on Mar 31. A RUFFED GROUSE crossed the road, lingering long enough for a photograph, at Sleepy Creek Rd, Berkeley Co, WV on Apr 1.

A late RED-NECKED GREBE was seen at Sandy Point SP, Anne Arundel Co, MD on Mar 31 and another was seen at Algonkian Regional Park, Loudoun Co, VA the same day. An EARED GREBE was reported from Chincoteague NWR, Accomack Co, VA on Mar 27.

A very early CHUCK-WILLS-WIDOW was seen and photographed as it rested on a branch 25-30 feet up a tree, at Marshview Park, Virginia Beach, VA on Mar 30.

A pair of CHIMNEY SWIFTS were seen in Nottoway Co, VA on Mar 29, while others were seen in James City Co, Prince Edward Co, and Virginia Beach, VA on Mar 30. A male RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD was seen looking for a feeder at a home in Virginia Beach, VA on Mar 30, while another flew by the edge of the woods at Fort Boykin Historic Park in Isle of Wight Co, VA the same day.

The KING RAIL at Swan Harbor Farm Park, Harford Co, MD was being very vocal in the marsh on Mar 27, 29, and 31. A SORA was heard calling from the Observation Point Trail, at Prime Hook NWR, Sussex Co, DE on Mar 31.

SANDHILL CRANES were widely reported this week. On Mar 28, one was seen in a field along Stone House Rd in Onley, Accomack Co, VA. On Mar 29, three were seen on Rock Lodge Rd in Garrett Co, MD. On Mar 30, one was seen at Cherry Creek Glades in Garrett Co, MD, two were seen flying over Lily Pons Rd in Frederick Co, MD, and a single bird was seen along a tree line of a pine woods in St. Inigoes, St Mary's Co, MD. On Mar 31, one was seen landing in a marsh (restricted section) at Stauffer's Marsh Nature Preserve, Berkeley Co, WV.

BLACK-NECKED STILTS are arriving back to our area, with reports of a single bird at Deal Island, Somerset Co, MD on Mar 30, two seen on Mar 31 at Blackwater NWR, Dorchester Co, MD, and a single seen in Accomack Co, VA the same day. A PURPLE SANDPIPER was on the jetty at Chesapeake Beach Veterans Memorial Park, Calvert Co, MD on Mar 31. A SPOTTED SANDPIPER was seen at the Wheaton Branch Storm water Ponds in Montgomery Co, MD on Mar 30, and another was spotted at Royal Lake Park, Fairfax Co, VA on Apr 2.

Gulls of interest this week include a continuing adult BLACK-HEADED GULL at Back River-Diamond Point Rd, Baltimore Co, MD seen daily from Mar 27 through Apr 1. A LITTLE GULL was spotted on Mar 28 from both sides of the Susquehanna River, in Havre De Grace, Harford Co, and Port Deposit, Cecil Co, both in MD, and another was seen at Back River-Diamond Point Rd, Baltimore Co, MD on Apr 1. A LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL was seen on the Anne Arundel side of Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary, Anne Arundel Co, MD on Mar 29, and another was spotted at the C & O Canal-Violette's Lock, Montgomery Co, MD on Apr 1. A GLAUCOUS GULL was seen on the Anne Arundel side of Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary, Anne Arundel Co, MD on Mar 29, while another was at Gunpowder Falls SP-Days Cove Area (restricted access), Baltimore Co, MD on Apr 1.

CASPIAN TERNS were widely reported this week from both MD and VA.

A possibly injured RED-THROATED LOON was seen at the Rocky Gorge Reservoir-Suplee Park, Prince George's Co, MD on Mar 30 and 31, and again on Apr 1. Another RED-THROATED LOON swam among a group of Common Loons at Carvins Cove Recreation Area, Botetourt Co, VA on Apr 2.

Five AMERICAN WHITE PELICANS were seen in Virginia Beach, VA on Mar 28 and 36 were at Hog Island WMA, Surry Co, VA the same day. At least 55 were seen at Hog Island WMA, Surry Co, VA on Mar 29.

A pair of AMERICAN BITTERNS flew out of the marsh at dusk at Gunpowder Falls SP, Baltimore Co, MD on Mar 29. The wintering AMERICAN BITTERN at Black Marsh, Baltimore Co, MD was seen most recently on Mar 31.

Three GREAT EGRETS were seen perched in a tree at the Claytor Nature Study Center of Lynchburg College, Bedford Co, VA on Mar 28 and a single GREAT EGRET was seen along Peat Moss Rd, Garrett Co, MD on Mar 31. Three SNOWY EGRETS were at Messick Point, Poquoson Co, VA on Mar 29. LITTLE BLUE HERONS were reported from several locations this week, with one seen at Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens, NE DC on Mar 29, another seen flying over Black Marsh, Baltimore Co, MD on Mar 30, another at Loch Raven Reservoir, Baltimore Co, MD on Mar 30, and one photographed flying over a yard in Norfolk Co, VA on Mar 31. On Mar 29, a CATTLE EGRET was seen at the ponds on Old Claiborne Rd, Talbot Co, MD. Several reports of GREEN HERONS came in this week, mostly from around Virginia Beach, VA on Mar 27, 29, and 31, and a single bird reported from the piedmont in Prince William Co, VA on Mar 31. YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS were also seen, with a report of one from Isle of Wight Co, VA on Mar 28, and another in Hampton Co, VA on Mar 31. Two were seen at a known nesting site along Sligo Creek, Montgomery Co, MD on Apr 1.

GLOSSY IBIS have begun to return to the bay region, with a report of five seen at Fairmont WMA-East Impoundment, Somerset Co, MD on Mar 27, and two seen at Swan Harbor Farm Park, Harford Co, MD on Apr 1.

Lingering ROUGH-LEGGED HAWKS were seen again at Russell Rd, Accident, Garrett Co, MD on Mar 29 and 30, and at Prime Hook NWR-Broadkill Marsh, Sussex Co, DE on Mar 31. On Mar 30, a ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK was reported flying over the National Zoo in NW DC, by a visiting birder.

WHITE-EYED VIREOS were seen on Mar 30 in Prince Edward Co, VA, and on Mar 31 at Hog Island WMA, Surry Co, VA and near the John H. Kerr Reservoir in Mecklenburg Co, VA. A BLUE-HEADED VIREO was reported from Bryan Park, Richmond City, VA on Mar 31, and another was seen in a mixed flock of kinglets at Georgetown Reservoir, NW DC on Apr 1.

The only PURPLE MARTIN reports this week were of a single male at a yard in Kent Co, DE, on Mar 30, and three there on Mar 31. On Apr 2, five BANK SWALLOWS were perched on a railing of a fishing dock at Patuxent research Refuge-South tract, Prince George's Co, MD. BARN SWALLOWS began to return this week, with two seen at the Olympia Drive Ponds, Albemarle Co, VA on Mar 27, one seen at the Emmitsburg WWTP (restricted access), Frederick Co, MD on Mar 27, another single bird seen at Back River-Eastern Blvd, Baltimore Co, MD on Mar 28, and several reports from the Virginia Beach, VA area, of between one to nine birds on Mar 29.

On Mar 29, a BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER returned to Sands Road Park, Anne Arundel Co, MD, spotted low in the woods near the parking area. Another was at Milford Neck Wildlife Area-Big Stone Beach Rd, Kent Co, DE on Mar 30, and another was seen at Swan Harbor Farm Park, Harford Co, MD on Apr 1.

Reports of BROWN THRASHERS were of a pair at a yard in Queen Anne's Co, MD and a single in a yard in Woodbine, Carroll Co, MD both on Mar 31.

Nine AMERICAN TREE SPARROWS were seen this week in Accident, Garrett Co, MD on Mar 27 and continuing on Mar 28, 30, and 31. On Mar 28, between seven and ten birds were seen flying from thicket to thicket near Mt. Nebo WMA, Garrett Co, MD. On Mar 29, a single AMERICAN TREE SPARROW was seen at Susquehanna SP, Harford Co, MD. VESPER SPARROWS were seen in low numbers this week, with three seen at Masonville Cove, Baltimore Co, MD on Mar 29, one spotted along Cordova Rd, Talbot Co, MD on Mar 30, one seen at the Alpha Ridge Landfill (restricted access) Howard Co, MD on Mar 31, and another at the Irvine Nature Center, Baltimore Co, MD also on Mar 31.

Warblers, everybody's favorite sign of spring, began to arrive back in our area this week. Several sightings of OVENBIRDS came from the Virginia Beach, VA area with reports from West Neck Creek Natural Area on Mar 29 and 31, and Marshview Park, Virginia Beach, VA, on Mar 30. LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSHES were seen and heard in various spots in St. Mary's Co, and Montgomery Co, MD early in the week. BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLERS were widely seen this week with reports beginning on Mar 28 in both MD and VA. An ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER is still visiting a feeder at a yard in Sussex Co, DE, most recently seen on Apr 1. On Mar 31, an amazing eight warbler species were seen around the John H. Kerr Reservoir in Mecklenburg Co, VA, including BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER, PROTHONOTARY WARBLER, COMMON YELLOWTHROAT, NORTHERN PARULA, PALM WARBLER, PINE WARBLER, YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER, and YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER. A PRAIRIE WARBLER was seen in a yard in Virginia Beach, VA, on Mar 31. A female WILSON'S WARBLER was seen and photographed actively foraging in thickets near the Rappahannock River in Fredericksburg Co, VA on Apr 1 and 2.

A beautiful male PAINTED BUNTING was at a feeder in a yard in Crownsville, Anne Arundel Co, MD on Mar 27.

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