

Hotline: Voice of the Naturalistt
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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, July 3 and was completed on Tuesday, July 10 at 7:45 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 59th Supplement (June 2018).

The top birds this week were RUFF in DE, ROSEATE TERN* in MD, GREAT WHITE HERON (white form of the GREAT BLUE HERON)* in MD and ROSEATE SPOONBILL* in MD.

Other birds of interest this week included TUNDRA SWAN, NORTHERN SHOVELER, RING-NECKED DUCK, SURF and BLACK SCOTERS, HOODED MERGANSER, RUDDY DUCK, HORNED GREBE, VIRGINIA RAIL, SORA, AMERICAN COOT, SANDHILL CRANE, AMERICAN AVOCET, BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER, BONAPARTE'S GULL, GULL-BILLED TERN, COMMON LOON, WILSON'S STORM-PETREL, ANHINGA, AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN, AMERICAN and LEAST BITTERNS, WHITE IBIS, NORTHERN HARRIER, SHARP-SHINNED HAWK, MISSISSIPPI KITE, PEREGRINE FALCON, RED-BREASTED and BROWN-HEADED NUTHATCHES, PINE SISKIN, BOBOLINK, SUMMER Tanager, ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK and DICKCISSEL.

TOP BIRDS

One of at least two continuing RUFFS was seen at Bombay Hook NWR, Kent Co, DE on July 4, 5, 6 and 9.

A ROSEATE TERN* was photographed at Assateague I. NS in Worcester Co, MD on July 3 and on Skimmer Island in Ocean City, Worcester Co, MD on July 5.

A continuing GREAT WHITE HERON (a distinct white form of the GREAT BLUE HERON)* was last seen on July 5 at Israel Creek along Route 26 a short distance east of the intersection with Route 194 in Frederick Co, MD.

A continuing young ROSEATE SPOONBILL* first found on June 17 at the North Beach marsh and nearby Walton Beach Nature Preserve in Calvert Co, MD was last seen at this location early in the morning on July 6. On January 8 presumably this same bird showed up at Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary in Anne Arundel Co, MD, where a ROSEATE SPOONBILL also was photographed on June 13, and later in this same day it was seen at nearby Patuxent River Park-Mt. Calvert in Prince George's Co, MD. According to a reliable second-hand report a ROSEATE SPOONBILL also was seen at Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary in the morning on July 9. Whether one bird, as seems likely, or two, the result is that a ROSEATE SPOONBILL has visited at least four Maryland counties in recent weeks (the fourth being Dorchester on June 24).

OTHER BIRDS OF INTEREST

A continuing TUNDRA SWAN was at Back Bay NWR-Impoundments in Virginia Beach, VA on July 5, 7 and 8. Out-of-season ducks included a NORTHERN SHOVELER and a RUDDY DUCK at the Little Creek Wildlife Area in Kent Co, DE on July 8; and a RING-NECKED DUCK at Breaks Interstate Park in Dickinson Co, VA on July 5, an apparent first summer record for southwestern VA, Black Hill RP in Montgomery Co, MD on July 7, Duvall Farm Ponds in Talbot Co, MD on July 7 and Loch Raven Reservoir in Baltimore Co, MD on July 8. In addition, two continuing SURF SCOTERS were seen off Hog Island in Queen Anne's Co, MD on July 8, a BLACK SCOTER was seen off North Beach in Calvert Co, MD on July 6 and six HOODED MERGANSERS were at Berlin Falls Park in Worcester Co, MD on July 9.

A continuing HORNED GREBE was seen most recently at Big Water Farm (private) in Queen Anne's Co, MD on July 3, and likely this same bird was seen on the other side of Prospect Bay in Queen Anne's Co on July 9.

Highlights of a survey of the Little Creek Wildlife Area in Kent Co, DE on July 8 included a SORA and three continuing AMERICAN COOT. Highlights at the Shenandoah Wetlands Bank along Cold Springs Road in Augusta Co, VA during the week included a continuing first county record breeding VIRGINIA RAIL on July 7 and 9 and a SORA on July 7. A single AMERICAN COOT continues at Constitution Gardens in Washington, DC.

On July 7 two SANDHILL CRANES were seen again along Sunset Drive a short distance south of the intersection with Cedar Run Trail in Broadway, Rockingham Co, VA.

On July 5 a week high 64 and 69 AMERICAN AVOCETS were counted at Bombay Hook NWR, Kent Co, DE and the Craney Island Disposal Area (restricted/no public access) in Portsmouth, VA, respectively, presumed migrants as this species no longer breeds in eastern North America. The early stage of shorebird migration was indicated by a small number of BLACK-BELLIED PLOVERS at several locations, including an area high 38 individuals at Chincoteague NWR, Accomack Co, VA on July 5, as well as small numbers of several other migratory shorebird species, including LEAST and SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPERS, SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER and GREATER and LESSER YELLOWLEGS at expected locations (such as Bombay Hook NWR in DE and Chincoteague NWR in VA).

A continuing BONAPARTE'S GULL was seen most recently at Bombay Hook NWR, Kent Co, DE on July 9. A single BONAPARTE'S GULL also was found at Cape Henlopen SP, Sussex Co, DE on July 9.

During the week a small number of GULL-BILLED TERNS was seen at several locations in southeastern Virginia, where this species is an uncommon breeder, including the Craney Island Disposal Area (restricted/no public access) in Portsmouth, the 85th Street Beach in Virginia Beach and Metompkin Island in Accomack Co.

On July 5 a COMMON LOON was seen off Lewes in Sussex Co, DE.

A total of three WILSON'S STORM-PETRELS were spotted off the north end of coastal Virginia Beach, VA on July 3 and 4.

ANHINGAS continue to visit the Carson Wetlands in Prince George Co, VA, with two individuals seen on July 4.

A single AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN continues to linger along Wildlife Drive at Blackwater NWR, Dorchester Co, MD, with the most recent sighting on July 8.

On July 8 an AMERICAN BITTERN was heard uttering its distinctive pumping vocalization near Deal Island State WMA along Game Reserve Road in Somerset Co, MD. On July 8 at least 12 LEAST BITTERNS were counted during a survey by kayak of the Little Creek Wildlife Area in Kent Co, DE. Far away a single LEAST BITTERN was encountered at the Shenandoah Wetlands Bank in Augusta Co, VA on July 3, 7 and 9. A YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON continues to be seen flying up and down the Potomac River near Chain Bridge in Washington, DC, with the most recent sighting on July 4.

The northernmost sighting of WHITE IBIS in the reporting area during the week was at Delaware Seashore SP-Savages Ditch Road in Sussex Co, DE, where a high of 21 individuals were counted on July 3 and 5.

Raptor highlights during the week included a NORTHERN HARRIER photographed along Research Road in Prince George's Co, MD on July 7, and a juvenile SHARP-SHINNED HAWK photographed at David W. Force Park in Howard Co, MD on July 8. A highlight of the regular Sunday morning walk at Dyke Marsh WP in Fairfax Co, VA on July 8 was a soaring MISSISSIPPI KITE, which perhaps was one of the individuals nesting near nearby Monticello Park in Alexandria, VA. Local MISSISSIPPI KITE sightings also included an individual reported along Route 118 near Richter Farm Road in Montgomery Co, MD on July 4.

On July 5 the Maryland Department of Natural Resources-Wildlife and Heritage Service announced on its Facebook page that for the first time since 1950 a pair of PEREGRINE FALCONS has successfully nested on a natural cliff site in Maryland, at an undisclosed location in Allegany County. PEREGRINE FALCONS resumed breeding in Maryland in the 1980s following the ban of the pesticide DDT and reintroduction efforts, but until recently breeding has occurred mainly on bridges, water towers and skyscrapers in urban settings.

Out-of-season RED-BREASTED NUTHATCHES were encountered at two locations in Cecil Co, MD: a single individual at a

residential feeder in Whitaker Woods on July 6 and 7, and 2-3 individuals at Elk Neck State Forest on July 7 and 8. The Milford Neck Wildlife Area-Big Stone Beach Road in Kent Co, DE continues to be a reliable location for BROWN-HEADED NUTHATCH, with 3-4 individuals encountered there on July 7 and 8. In Virginia a single BROWN-HEADED NUTHATCH was found in pine trees at Mountain Run Lake Park in Culpeper on July 5 and 9.

Another possible sign of an upcoming irruptive finch season was a single PINE SISKIN observed on July 9 visiting a feeder in front of an apartment building on the east side of Route 1107 (Mountaineer Drive) just south of Alleghany High School in Covington, VA.

Early BOBOLINKS included at least ten individuals in a field along 3249 Hyser Road in Taneytown, Carroll Co, MD on July 8, 11 individuals at the Chester River Field Research Center (Chino Farms) (private) in Queen Anne's Co, MD on July 9 and a single individual at Bombay Hook NWR, Kent Co, DE on July 7.

On July 4 a SUMMER TANAGER was seen and heard singing at Soldiers Delight NEA in Baltimore Co, MD.

On July 4 two ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAKS were encountered along Freezeland Road in Fauquier Co, VA.

DICKCISSELS continued at several locations in the reporting area, with multiple (three or more) individuals encountered along Underwood Road in Howard Co, MD on July 3, 4, 5 and 8; Bristoe Station Battlefield Park in Prince William Co, VA on July 5; Mountain Run Farm (private) in Bedford Co, VA on July 6; and a private property along Milton Highway in Ringgold, Pittsylvania Co, VA on July 4. In Delaware, a single DICKCISSEL was seen along the entrance road to the visitors' center at Prime Hook NWR in Sussex Co on July 4-5 and 7-9.

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