

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, September 18, and was completed on Tuesday, September 25, 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 this week were LONG-TAILED JAEGER* in MD, BLACK-HEADED GULL* in DC and VA, and BROWN PELICAN* in MD and VA.

Other Birds of Interest were SNOW GOOSE, EASTERN WHIP-POOR-WILL, KING RAIL, COMMON GALLINULE, SANDHILL CRANE, shorebirds, BONAPARTE'S and LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL, terns, RED-THROATED and COMMON LOON, GREAT and DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT, AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN, WHITE IBIS, MISSISSIPPI KITE, BROAD-WINGED HAWK, GOLDEN EAGLE, OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER, RED-BREASTED and BROWN-HEADED NUTHATCH, WINTER, SEDGE, and MARSH WREN, CLAY-COLORED and LARK SPARROW, warblers including ORANGE-CROWNED, CONNECTICUT and MOURNING, and DICKCISSEL.

TOP BIRDS

In the fallout from Hurricane Florence, a very displaced juvenile LONG-TAILED JAEGER* was found flying around and sitting on the water at Deep Creek Lake, Garrett Co, MD, seen on Sept 20, 21, and last seen early on the morning of Sept 22.

A first-winter BLACK-HEADED GULL* with a taste for artisanal bread and baguettes, delighted birders along Georgetown Waterfront Park, NW DC, on Sept 21 and 22, for the first confirmed DC record since 1989. It was seen standing in and flying above the parking lot at Gravelly Point Park, in Arlington Co, VA on Sept 23 and 24.

Two interesting reports came in this week of storm-tossed (and far out of range) BROWN PELICANS*, both initially found on Sept 20. An immature bird was found at Deep Creek Lake in Garrett Co, MD, continuing through Sept 24 while another was at Sandy River Reservoir-Dam and Boat Launch area in Prince Edward Co, VA, west of Richmond, from Sept 20-22.

OTHER BIRDS OF INTEREST

A very early flock of 19 SNOW GEESE flew by the Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch in Augusta Co, VA on Sept 20.

Though not rare, a rarely seen, and beautifully photographed EASTERN WHIP-POOR-WILL was discovered as it flushed from a piney bluff then relocated sitting on a log, where it was enjoyed by a party of birders for more than ten minutes, at the Rivanna Trail Belvedere in Albemarle Co, VA on Sept 19.

An Anne Arundel Bird Club field trip to Swan Creek Wetland-Cox Creek DMCF (restricted access) in Anne Arundel Co, MD reported a KING RAIL calling twice from the marsh, on Sept 22.

A continuing COMMON GALLINULE was at Hart-Miller Island, Baltimore Co, MD on Sept 19, and another was seen at Falls Mills Lake in Tazewell Co, VA, in the far western part of that state, on Sept 21.

SANDHILL CRANES were reported again from the area of Peat Moss Road in Garrett Co, MD, with between two and four birds being seen Sept 19-23.

Continuing days of rain hampered shorebirds on their way south, with many stopping over at flooded fields and wetlands throughout the area, and the following reports are just some of the many received this week:

A single AMERICAN AVOCET was seen at Peat Moss Road (private) in Garrett Co, MD on Sept 18, while eight flew by the Kiptopeke SP-Fishing Pier, Northampton Co, VA the same day.

AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVERS continued at Gregg Road in Taneytown, Frederick Co, MD with four seen there on Sept 18, while another pair was seen at Assateague Island NS-OSV Zone, Worcester Co, MD on Sept 22. Four AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVERS were seen along Honey Run Road, in Dayton, Rockingham Co, VA on Sept 22. A WILSON'S PLOVER was seen and photographed on Sept 21, at Chincoteague NWR-Tom's Cove in Accomack Co, VA. On Sept 18 a PIPING PLOVER was seen in the company of Semipalmated Plovers at Cape Henlopen SP-Nature Center area in Sussex Co, DE, and five PIPING PLOVERS were reported there on Sept 21.

An UPLAND SANDPIPER was reported from the Salisbury Airport in Wicomico Co, MD on Sept 20.

A single HUDSONIAN GODWIT was at Prime Hook NWR-Broadkill Marsh in Sussex Co, DE on Sept 19 and 20. Another was at Wachapreague-Marsh Islands, Accomack Co, VA on Sept 21 and 22, and two were seen in MD, at Figgs Landing Road, Worcester Co on Sept 22. Also, on Sept 22, six HUDSONIAN GODWITS were at Raymond Pool, Bombay Hook NWR, Kent Co, DE. Two MARBLED GODWITS were reported from Skimmer Island, Ocean City, Worcester Co, MD on Sept 21, and one was reported from Figgs Landing Road in the same county on Sept 23.

A BAIRD'S SANDPIPER was seen on Sept 18 and 19 at Snowden Bridge Blvd, Frederick Co, VA, while three were at the Hughes Road polo fields in Montgomery Co, MD on Sept 20, with one there the following three days. WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPERS were still being seen in good numbers this week. Two continued at Gregg Road, Taneytown, Frederick Co, MD, on Sept 18, 19, and 24. On Sept 19, two were at Lilypons Water Gardens, Frederick Co, MD, while one was seen at the C&O Canal-North Branch, Allegany Co, MD. The polo fields along Hughes Road in Montgomery Co, MD held between one and four birds Sept 19-22. On Sept 18, in Augusta Co, VA three WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPERS were seen along Patton Farm Road, and eight at flooded fields on Wayne Avenue. A single juvenile BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER continued at Wright Road, Federalsburg, Caroline Co, MD and two were seen at Patton Farm Road, in Augusta Co, VA, on Sept 18. Another BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER was spotted in a potato field at Whitehall Crossroads in Kent Co, DE on Sept 24.

A WILSON'S PHALAROPE was seen again at the Hurlock WWTP, in Dorchester Co, MD on Sept 18. A single RED-NECKED PHALAROPE was first spotted swimming above the rapids and flying upriver, landing on the water and floating downstream again and again, at the C&O Canal-Violette's Lock, Montgomery Co, MD on Sept 18, and two were seen there on Sept 19-21. On Sept 19 five RED-NECKED PHALAROPES were reported from the SW cell at the Hurlock WWTP in Dorchester Co, MD.

An early BONAPARTE'S GULL was reported from the C&O Canal, Violette's Lock, Montgomery Co, MD on Sept 21, and another was at the Georgetown Waterfront Park, NW DC the same day. Three LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS were reported from Poplar Island, Talbot Co, MD on Sept 21.

A possibly storm-displaced GULL-BILLED TERN was seen at Hog Island WMA, Surry Co, VA on Sept 22. Three CASPIAN TERNS and two COMMON TERNS were over Deep Creek Lake in Garrett Co, MD on Sept 23, and three FORSTER'S TERNS were there on Sept 24. Five SANDWICH TERNS were roosting with a mixed group of FORSTER'S and ROYAL TERNS at a home in the lower Chesapeake Bay, in York Co, VA on Sept 21. A BLACK TERN was spotted at Big Water Farm (private), Queen Anne's Co, MD on Sept 18, another in St. Mary's Co, MD on Sept 21, and singles in Nottoway, Prince Edward, and Rockingham Co's, all in VA on Sept 18.

An early RED-THROATED LOON was seen flying past the hawk watch at Cape Henlopen in Sussex Co, DE on Sept 20. On Sept 21 a COMMON LOON was on Smith Mountain Lake in Bedford Co, VA.

On Sept 18, a GREAT CORMORANT was seen flying north from Sandy Point SP, Anne Arundel Co, MD. Another common bird in an uncommon location was the lone DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT spotted standing on a lamppost over the intersection of Rts 50 and 197 in Prince George's Co, MD on Sept 22.

A lone AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN was seen flying along Raymond Pool dike late in the morning on Sept 22, at Bombay Hook NWR, Kent Co, DE.

An immature WHITE IBIS was spotted through a scope as it flew southeast at the C&O Canal-Violette's Lock, Montgomery Co, MD on Sept 18. Three immature WHITE IBIS were seen in flight at Cape Henlopen SP-Gordon's Pond, Sussex Co, DE on Sept 22.

MISSISSIPPI KITES were seen at the Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch in Augusta Co, VA and another in Virginia Beach, VA both on Sept 18, while another was seen from the Hawk Watch at Harvey's Knob on the Blue Ridge Pkwy in Botetourt/Bedford Co's, VA on the 19th.

BROAD-WINGED HAWKS took advantage of a passing cold front and a brief period with no rain, to stream through on Sept 22, with large numbers being seen at many locations throughout the area. It was hit or miss however, with some hawk watch sights having low numbers, while others saw many, even from backyards. One particularly good place for viewing turned out to be Mt. Vista Park in Baltimore Co, MD, where they tallied over 4700 BROAD-WINGED HAWKS, with the highlight coming around 3 PM, when three large kettles joined up into one "swirling tornado of hawks" numbering over 1000 birds!

Early GOLDEN EAGLE reports came in from the Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch, Augusta Co, VA, with an adult and an immature both passing through on Sept 18. On the 19th, immature birds were seen passing by at Harvey's Knob Overlook on the Blue Ridge Pkwy, Botetourt/Bedford Co's and at Reddish Knob in Augusta Co, both in VA.

Late OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHERS were found at Lake Kittamaqundi, Howard Co, MD on Sept 18, one at Dunkirk District Park, Calvert Co, MD Sept 19, and another at Deep Creek Lake, Garrett Co, MD on Sept 19 and 20.

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH sightings increased this week, with reports coming in from widely scattered locations throughout the area, indicating a possible "invasion" year for us in the mid-Atlantic states. Three BROWN-HEADED NUTHATCHES were heard and seen on Sept 20, at Milford Neck Wildlife Area-Big Stone Beach Road, in Kent Co, DE.

The first WINTER WRENS of the season showed up this week, with one seen in a yard in Bethesda, Montgomery Co, MD on Sept 20 and another at the C&O Canal-Violette's Lock, also in Montgomery Co, MD, on Sept 21. Others were at Cromwell Valley Park in Baltimore Co, MD and at Hughes Hollow-McKee Beshers WMA, Montgomery Co, MD, both on Sept 22. On Sept 18, two SEDGE WRENS were seen again at the Aquatic Resources Education Center, Woodland Beach, Kent Co, DE. A well-seen MARSH WREN was a nice surprise for a homeowner in Ellicott City, Howard Co, MD on Sept 19, and two were seen at the Blandy Experimental Farm/State Arboretum of Virginia, in Clarke Co, VA on Sept 22.

A CLAY-COLORED SPARROW was reported from Kinder Farm Park Anne Arundel Co, MD on Sept 21, and another was at Back Bay NWR Virginia Beach, VA on Sept 19, 21, and 23. A LARK SPARROW was found and photographed near the pond and ballfields, before flying off, at Kinder Farm Park in Anne Arundel Co, MD on Sept 20, and two were seen and photographed at Back Bay NWR, Virginia Beach, VA on Sept 21.

Warbler migration continued, with many birds passing through undetected in frequently bad weather. One of the few consistent locations for seeing them was at Rock Creek Park in NW DC, either at the Nature Center area or Maintenance Yard. An early ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER was reported from a yard in Greenbelt, Prince George's Co, MD on Sept 19, and another was seen in Cape Charles, Northampton Co, VA on Sept 23. CONNECTICUT WARBLERS were seen at Severn Run NEA, Anne Arundel Co, MD and Blandair, Howard Co, MD on Sept 18, two at Masonville Cove, Baltimore Co, MD on Sept 19, and individuals in Queen Anne's, Allegany and Baltimore Co's, MD on Sept 20. MOURNING WARBLERS were found at the Amberley section in Anne Arundel Co, MD on Sept 18, one at the Chestnut Land Trust in Calvert Co, MD on Sept 19 and 20, and another at Rocky Gap SP-camping loop in Allegany Co, MD on Sept 20 and 21. On Sept 21 an immature MOURNING WARBLER was found at Schoolhouse Pond in Prince George's Co, MD, and an adult was seen on Sept 24 at the Rockfish Valley Trail, in Nelson Co, VA.

A DICKCISSEL was heard calling in flight as it flew over at Masonville Cove, Baltimore Co, MD on Sept 19.

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