

Hotline: Voice of the Naturalist
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Coverage: MD/DC/VA/central and southern DE/WV panhandle
Reports, comments and questions: voice@anshome.org
Compiler: Gerry Hawkins
Sponsor: Audubon Naturalist Society of the Central Atlantic States
(independent of NAS)
Transcriber: Steve Cordle

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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, October 9 and was completed on Tuesday, October 16 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). This report does not provide information about likely escaped or released birds (e.g. various parrots and parakeets and a continuing Ruddy Shelduck in Delaware), non-established feral birds (e.g., Muscovy Duck) and introduced game birds (e.g., Ring-necked Pheasant).

The top birds this week were BLACK-HEADED GULL in Washington, DC and REDDISH EGRET* in Delaware.

Other birds of interest this week included SNOW and CACKLING GEESE,

TUNDRA SWAN, EURASIAN WIGEON, REDHEAD, RING-NECKED DUCK, GREATER SCAUP, LONG-TAILED DUCK, COMMON MERGANSER, HORNED GREBE, BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO, COMMON NIGHTHAWK, RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD, KING RAIL, COMMON GALLINULE, SANDHILL and WHOOPING CRANES, AMERICAN AVOCET, PIPING PLOVER, WHIMBREL, HUDSONIAN GODWIT, WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER, LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER, RED-NECKED PHALAROPE, POMARINE JAEGER, BONAPARTE'S and LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS, AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN, AMERICAN BITTERN, GREAT and CATTLE EGRETS, YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON, WHITE and GLOSSY IBIS, MISSISSIPPI KITE, RED-HEADED WOODPECKER, EASTERN KINGBIRD, LEAST FLYCATCHER, LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE, PHILADELPHIA VIREO, COMMON RAVEN, RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH, SEDGE and MARSH WRENS, PURPLE FINCH, PINE SISKIN, CLAY-COLORED, LARK and WHITE-CROWNED (GAMBEL'S) SPARROWS, ORANGE-CROWNED, CONNECTICUT and MOURNING WARBLERS, SUMMER TANAGER and DICKCISSEL.

TOP BIRDS

A continuing juvenile/first winter BLACK-HEADED GULL was seen at Georgetown Waterfront Park in Washington, DC on October 9, 10 and 14 and in flight over Hains Point in Washington, DC on October 12. Human sources of food undoubtedly have contributed to this bird's fidelity to Georgetown Waterfront Park.

A young REDDISH EGRET* was an unexpected visitor at Gordon's Pond in Cape Henlopen SP, Sussex Co, DE on October 13 and 14.

OTHER BIRDS OF INTEREST

Waterfowl highlights during the week included a SNOW GOOSE photographed at the Signature Golf Course in Virginia Beach, VA on

October 15 and a CACKLING GOOSE spotted among the CANADA GEESE at Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens in Washington, DC on October 13. An injured TUNDRA SWAN continues at Kinder Farm Park in Anne Arundel Co, MD. An early TUNDRA SWAN was heard at Hurlock WWTP in Dorchester Co, MD on October 12.

Migratory dabbling ducks included a EURASIAN WIGEON reported at Chincoteague NWR-Wash Flats, Accomack Co, VA on October 10 and a retention pond northwest of Cedar Lane and SR 164 in Portsmouth, VA on October 14. Noteworthy diving ducks included a continuing RING-NECKED DUCK at Silver Lake in Rockingham Co, VA and a continuing REDHEAD at the Kerr Reservoir-Tailrace Park in Mecklenburg Co, VA, which were seen most recently on October 14 and 13, respectively. Migratory diving ducks continued to arrive in the reporting area, with highlights including a GREATER SCAUP found at the Cheriton Landfill in Northampton Co, VA on October 13; a LONG-TAILED DUCK spotted off Hains Point in Washington, DC on October 13; and three or fewer COMMON MERGANSERS at Bladensburg Waterfront Park in Prince George's Co, MD and Lapidum in Harford Co, MD on October 11 and Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary in Anne Arundel Co, MD on October 13.

On October 13 a HORNED GREBE was spotted at Violette's Lock on the C & O Canal in Montgomery Co, MD.

A BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO was seen in a residential yard in Charlottesville, VA on October 14 and at Trout Run WWTP in Garrett Co, MD on October 14.

COMMON NIGHTHAWKS continued to move through the reporting area during the week, with a high of 35 individuals counted at dusk at Ken-Gar Palisades Park in Montgomery Co, MD on October 10.

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRDS were seen at many locations in the

reporting area but by the end of the week there were fewer reports of them at area feeders.

Several KING RAILS were heard and one was filmed at Occoquan Bay NWR in Prince William Co, VA on October 14. Highlights of a Northern Virginia Bird Club visit to Leopold's Preserve in Prince William Co, VA on October 13 included a VIRGINIA RAIL and a SORA. A high of six COMMON GALLINULES visited the West Ocean City Pond in Worcester Co, MD on October 9-12. A continuing COMMON GALLINULE was seen at Greenfield-Botetourt Center in Botetourt Co, VA on October 10.

SANDHILL CRANES continued near a private pond along Peat Moss Road in Garrett Co, MD, with 3-6 individuals seen all week. During the week the endangered WHOOPING CRANE also was in the news as the U. S. Geological Survey's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, MD began the process of relocating all of its about 75 captive breeders to zoos and other facilities in the United States that will take over its captive breeding and reintroduction efforts.

Large numbers of AMERICAN AVOCETS continued at Bombay Hook NWR in Kent Co, DE and the Craney Island Disposal Area (restricted/no public access) in Portsmouth, VA, with a week high whopping 748 and 235 individuals counted by experienced birders at these respective locations on October 10. Elsewhere, one continuing AMERICAN AVOCET was observed at Gordon's Pond in Cape Henlopen SP, Sussex Co, DE on October 12 and 13, and three continuing AMERICAN AVOCETS were seen at Figg's Landing in Worcester Co, MD on October 9 and 12.

PIPING PLOVERS continued to move through the area, with sightings including several individuals at Cape Henlopen SP in Sussex Co, DE on October 9 and 12 and farther south at Assateague Island NS in Worcester Co, MD on October 9. Shorebird highlights during the week also included a WHIMBREL in flight at Rudee Inlet in Virginia Beach,

VA on October 12 and three HUDSONIAN GODWITS and three LONG-BILLED DOWITCHERS at Chincoteague NWR-Wash Flats, Accomack Co, VA on October 10. One to six WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPERS were found during the week at the Craney Island Disposal Area (restricted/no public access) in Portsmouth, VA, Chincoteague NWR-Wash Flats, Accomack Co, VA and Bombay Hook NWR, Kent Co, DE, all on October 10. A RED-NECKED PHALAROPE was photographed at First Landing SP in Virginia Beach, VA on October 12.

Some fortunate observers at the Cape Henlopen Hawk Watch in Sussex Co, DE enjoyed watching a POMARINE JAEGER harass gulls on October 12 and 15.

On October 14 a BONAPARTE'S GULL was spotted among the other gulls at George Washington Birthplace NM in Westmoreland Co, VA. A LAUGHING GULL was photographed over a pond along Cabell Road in Nelson County, VA on October 15 and reported in flight over Walnut Creek Park in Albemarle Co, VA on October 13, an apparent first record for each of these inland Piedmont counties. On October 11 a LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL was found at Chesapeake Beach in Calvert Co, MD and Sandy Point SP in Anne Arundel Co, MD.

A summering AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN at Blackwater NWR in Dorchester Co, MD was reported most recently on October 10.

An AMERICAN BITTERN was encountered at Lilypons Water Gardens in Frederick Co, MD on October 13 and 15; Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens in Washington, DC on October 14; and Pleasure House Point NA in Virginia Beach, VA on October 14.

Observers at the Kiptopeke Hawk Watch in Northampton Co, VA did not expect to count a southwest-bound flock containing 56 GREAT EGRETS on October 12. Also unexpected and possibly storm related

were four CATTLE EGRETS observed flying up the Potomac River from Violette's Lock on the C & O Canal in Montgomery Co, MD on the same day. YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS continued at Baker Park in Frederick Co, MD, with 2-3 individuals seen on October 10 and 12.

The northernmost WHITE IBIS seen in the reporting area during the week were a high of 14 individuals at Cape Henlopen SP-Gordon's Pond in Sussex Co, DE on October 10 and 12-14. On October 14 three GLOSSY IBIS were photographed at the Princess Anne WMA-Whitehurst Tract in Virginia Beach, VA.

Raptor highlights during the week included a southbound MISSISSIPPI KITE at the Kiptopeke Hawk Watch in Northampton Co, VA on October 10.

On October 10 a RED-HEADED WOODPECKER was encountered at Bombay Hook NWR, Kent Co, DE.

Late flycatchers included an EASTERN KINGBIRD at New Quarter Park in York Co, VA on October 9 and a LEAST FLYCATCHER at the Cape Henlopen Hawk Watch in Sussex Co, DE on October 12 and Rock Creek Park-Maintenance Yard in Washington, DC on October 14 and 15.

On October 9 a LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE was observed a short distance north of Bethlehem Baptist Church along Cartersville Road in Cumberland Co, VA.

The unassuming and often undetected PHILADELPHIA VIREO was seen at several locations, including Cromwell Valley Park in Baltimore Co, MD on October 10; Schoolhouse Pond in Prince George's Co, MD on October 11; Wheaton RP in Montgomery Co, MD on October 12; Cape Henlopen SP-Herring Point in Sussex Co, DE on October 14; and Back Bay NWR in Virginia Beach, VA on October 14.

Lowland COMMON RAVENS included an individual photographed soaring over Swan Harbor Farm Park in Harford Co, MD on October 9.

As a result of poor conifer seed crops in most of the eastern boreal forest, RED-BREASTED NUTHATCHES are now being encountered in wooded habitats throughout the reporting area.

A SEDGE WREN was found at the Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center (Horsehead) in Queen Anne's Co, MD on October 13 and photographed at Hog Island WMA in Surry Co, VA on October 14. Migrating MARSH WRENS included a continuing individual at Kenilworth Park in Washington, DC that was encountered most recently on October 13 and two individuals encountered at the National Arboretum in Washington, DC on October 9.

Seemingly omnipresent PURPLE FINCHES and small numbers of PINE SISKINS at several locations in the reporting area further confirmed the predicted irruption season for boreal forest finches.

The early stage of sparrow migration was evident at many locations. Noteworthy sightings included a CLAY-COLORED SPARROW that briefly visited a residential yard in Bethesda, Montgomery Co, MD on October 9. On October 13 a LARK SPARROW was photographed at Newport News Park in Newport News, VA. A GRASSHOPPER SPARROW was seen in Kenilworth Park in Washington, DC on October 8, 9 and 13. The identification challenge of separating NELSON'S and SALTMARSH SPARROWS was experienced at several locations in Virginia Beach, VA and other coastal locations in the reporting area during the week. On October 14 an AMERICAN TREE SPARROW was found at Sky Meadows SP in Fauquier Co, VA, and on the same day a first-of-season FOX SPARROW made an appearance at the Irvine Nature Center in Baltimore Co, MD. LINCOLN'S SPARROWS were found at many locations

during the week, as were WHITE-CROWNED SPARROWS, which included a an apparent pale-lored member of the western Gambel's subspecies photographed at the Cheriton Landfill in Northampton Co, VA on October 13.

Migratory warblers continued to move through the reporting area in good numbers and diversity and included several species that were in the later part of their historical migratory timing. Highlights included an ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER at several locations, including Azalea Park in Charlottesville, VA on October 13; Kiptopeke Hawk Watch in Northampton Co, VA on October 13; Occoquan Bay NWR in Prince William Co, VA on October 14; and Rock Creek Park in Washington, DC on October 15. The always desired CONNECTICUT WARBLER was reported at several locations, including Bombay Hook NWR, Kent Co, DE on October 10; Finzel Swamp in Garrett Co, MD on October 10; Gymnociadus Way (private) in Calvert Co, MD on October 12; Allegheny Highlands Trail-Helmstetter's Curve in Alleghany Co, MD on October 13; and Jack Creek Park in Anne Arundel Co, MD on October 14. In Washington, DC a CONNECTICUT WARBLER was reported at the Rock Creek Park Maintenance Yard on October 12 and the Hains Point Maintenance Yard on October 13. On October 14 members of the Blue Ridge Young Birders Club reported two apparent MOURNING WARBLERS along the Rockfish Valley Trail in Nelson Co, VA, which was the only report of this species in the reporting area during the week.

A late SUMMER TANAGER was spotted in a residential yard in South Boston, Halifax Co, VA on October 11 and 15 and along Glenorchy Drive in Albemarle Co, VA on October 14.

A single DICKCISSEL was observed at several locations, including Swan Harbor Farm Park in Harford Co, MD on October 9; Kauffman's Mill Road in Page Co, VA on October 11; and Rock Creek Park-Dog Run in Washington, DC on October 14 and 15, where this bird was seen by

some within 30 feet in a mixed-species flock that included an ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER and a LINCOLN'S SPARROW.

Finally, on behalf of the birding community, thanks much again to Wallace Kornack for compiling and reporting on a daily basis in spring and fall noteworthy migrants in Rock Creek Park in Washington, DC. Many birders, including this compiler, look forward to reading Wallace's daily reports.

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