

Hotline: Voice of the Naturalist
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Coverage: MD/DC/VA/central and southern DE/WV panhandle
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(independent of NAS)
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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 23, and was completed on Tuesday, October 30, 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: BLACK-HEADED GULL* in DC, REDDISH EGRET in DE, WHITE IBIS in DE, EVENING GROSBEAK in MD, LAPLAND LONGSPUR in VA and MD, LARK SPARROW in DC and MD, and WESTERN Tanager in MD.

Other Birds of Interest were: GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE, BRANT, CACKLING GOOSE, ducks including EURASIAN WIGEON, REDHEAD, GREATER SCAUP, COMMON EIDER, and LONG-TAILED DUCK, YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO, CHIMNEY SWIFT, RUBY-THROATED and SELASPHORUS HUMMINGBIRD, VIRGINIA RAIL, SORA, SANDHILL CRANE, shorebirds, LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL, SANDWICH TERN, AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN, SNOWY EGRET, TRICOLORED HERON, CATTLE EGRET, BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON, NORTHERN GOSHAWK, GOLDEN EAGLE, SHORT-EARED and NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL, LEAST FLYCATCHER, late swallows, RED-BREASTED and BROWN-HEADED NUTHATCH, GRAY-CHEEKED and SWAINSON'S THRUSH, PURPLE FINCH, PINE SISKIN, sparrows, YELLOW-HEADED and RUSTY BLACKBIRD, late warblers including ORANGE-CROWNED and CONNECTICUT, and DICKCISSEL.

TOP BIRDS

The first-winter BLACK-HEADED GULL*, initially found on Sept. 21, was seen again near the Gangplank Marina in SW DC on Oct 24.

The REDDISH EGRET seen last week continued to be seen early this week on Oct 23, at Gordon's Pond in Sussex Co, DE.

Four juvenile WHITE IBIS were seen at the north end of Gordon's Pond at Cape Henlopen, Sussex Co, DE on Oct 28.

On Oct 26, ahead of the nor'easter, a female EVENING GROSBEAK showed up at feeders in a yard on Deal Island, Somerset Co, MD, much to the delight of the homeowners.

A single, very photogenic LAPLAND LONGSPUR was seen in plain view along the road at the Visitor's Center at Tom's Cove, at Chincoteague NWR, Accomack Co, VA on Oct 25. On Oct 27 a pair were seen at the same location. On Oct 28, six LAPLAND LONGSPURS were discovered in a

field (private research plot) at the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, Beltsville, Prince George's Co, MD. The same flock was relocated on Oct 29.

A (possibly returning) LARK SPARROW was found in a stream restoration area at the National Arboretum, in NE DC on Oct 28. Another LARK SPARROW was seen and photographed at Assateague Island NS-Oceanside Campground, Worcester Co, MD also on Oct 28.

A WESTERN Tanager was seen and photographed at Assateague Island NS-Bayside Peninsula, Worcester Co, MD, in the campground at site Number 28, on Oct 25.

OTHER BIRDS OF INTEREST

An early GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE was discovered at the Preston Recycling Station-WWTP in Caroline Co, MD on Oct 26, and continued through Oct 29. A single BRANT flew in to join a group of cormorants, on Oct 25, at Brown's Island in Richmond City, VA, and continued nearby on Oct 27 at Richmond National Battlefield Park-Civil War Visitor Center, Richmond City, VA. A CACKLING GOOSE was seen on Broadford Lake in Garrett Co, MD on Oct 25.

Wintering waterfowl are returning to our area, and many species were seen and widely reported throughout the region during the week. What follows are just some of the highlights. A EURASIAN WIGEON was at Lake Joyce and Shore Drive, Virginia Beach, VA on Oct 24. A drake REDHEAD was spotted at Piney Run Park in Carroll Co, MD on Oct 23, while a pair of males were reported from the International Conservation House in Fauquier Co, VA the same day. On Oct 24, a pair of GREATER SCAUP were seen at Broadford Lake in Garrett Co, MD. Four COMMON EIDERS were reported from Rudee Inlet at Virginia Beach on Oct 26, and a pair were also seen at Cape Henlopen SP-The Point, Sussex Co, DE on Oct 27. A single LONG-TAILED DUCK was seen flying south down the eastern bay from Big Water Farm (private) in Queen Anne's Co, MD on Oct 25, and four males were seen flying together up the Potomac River from East Potomac Park-Hains Point, SW DC on Oct 27.

YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOOS were widely reported throughout the area during the week. Individuals were seen at Blue Mash Nature Trail in Montgomery Co, and at Masonville Cove in Baltimore Co, both in MD, two were heard calling from distinct locations at Sky Meadows SP in Fauquier Co, VA, and one was seen and photographed at Deal Middle School Fields in NW DC, all on Oct 23. Later in the week, a very cold looking individual was seen sitting on a fence line in Roanoke, VA on Oct 25, and singles were seen the same day in MD at Assateague Island NS-Bayside peninsula, Worcester Co, and Fort Smallwood Park and Oxbow Lake, both in Anne Arundel Co. On Oct 27, a YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO was seen at Dutch Gap Conservation Area-Henricus Historical Park, Chesterfield Co, VA.

Notable because of the lateness of the date, CHIMNEY SWIFTS were seen in small numbers this week with one seen at Little Island Park, Virginia Beach, VA on Oct 24, and nine seen the same day from the C&O Canal-Fletcher's Cove, and three over the National Zoological Park, both in NW DC. On Oct 28, two were seen flying over the lake at Patterson Park, Baltimore Co, MD.

Late RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRDS were reported from a home in Raphine, Augusta Co, VA, visiting the pineapple sage daily from Oct 23-Oct 25, and another visiting a feeder throughout the day on Oct 24 in Broadmeade (private), Baltimore Co, MD. Still another was continuing at a feeder in Columbia, Howard Co, MD as late as Oct 27. A SELASPHORUS type (Rufous or Allen's) HUMMINGBIRD visited a feeder at a home in Somerset, Co, MD on Oct 26.

A pair of VIRGINIA RAILS were heard giving their raspy interaction calls across the marsh from one another at Newport News Park-Swamp Bridge, York Co, VA on Oct 24, and another pair were heard at the edge of a wet field with scattered cattails, at Back Bay NWR, Virginia Beach, VA on Oct 28. A

SORA was heard and briefly seen at the beginning of Raymond Pool, Bombay Hook NWR, Kent Co, DE on Oct 28, and a pair were heard at Gala Wetlands, Botetourt Co, VA also on Oct 28.

SANDHILL CRANES are usually on the move this time of year, so it was surprising that only a single report came in this week, on Oct 23, of an individual seen in flight as it flew past a yard in Sussex Co, DE and landed in a creek area at Prime Hook NWR, off of Cod's Road.

Shorebird reports this week were varied and widely scattered. An AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER was found on John Shirk Road in Taneytown, Carroll Co, MD on Oct 27, and seen again on Oct 28 and 29. The first-county-record HUDSONIAN GODWIT found last week continued through Oct 25 in Bel Air, Harford Co, MD, finally leaving when the small retention pond it favored had mostly dried up. Two HUDSONIAN GODWITS were seen at Bombay Hook NWR in the flats opposite Shearneck Pool, Kent Co, DE on Oct 28, and three were reported from Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary, Anne Arundel Co, MD the same day. Three RUDDY TURNSTONES were lingering at Bodkin Island, Queen Anne's Co, MD on Oct 23. A DUNLIN continued to be enjoyed by local birders at Fulton Pond, Howard Co, MD from Oct 23-26, while another was reported from Broadford Lake, in Garrett Co, in western MD on Oct 24, and yet another was found in Taneytown, Carroll Co, MD on Oct 28. A single BAIRD'S SANDPIPER was reported from the observation point trail at Prime Hook NWR, Sussex Co, DE on Oct 25 and seen again Oct 27. Late SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPERS were reported from several areas including two at Laytonsville Pond, Montgomery Co, MD on Oct 23, and 20 at Tanyard Marsh, Caroline Co, MD on Oct 26. A LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER was seen at Cape Henlopen SP-Gordon's Pond, Sussex Co, DE on Oct 25. A RED-NECKED PHALAROPE was spotted as it swam in tell-tale circles, "spinning like a top", in the water at Hog Island WMA-Surry Co, VA on Oct 24.

An adult LESSER BLACK-BACKED Gull was seen on Oct 24 at Tydings Memorial Park in Havre de Grace, Harford Co, MD. A SANDWICH TERN was seen at Rudee Inlet in Virginia Beach, VA on Oct 26. Another SANDWICH TERN was reported from Pleasure House Point Natural Area in Virginia Beach, VA on Oct 28.

A pair of AMERICAN WHITE PELICANS were seen at Assateague Island NS-Causeway, in Worcester Co, MD on Oct 27, flying towards the NW, and another pair (the same pair?) were spotted at Cape Henlopen-Hawk Watch, flying in from the south, in Sussex Co, DE on Oct 28.

Several reports of lingering long-legged waders came in this week. A late SNOWY EGRET was seen in Baltimore Co, MD at Gwynns Falls Trail-South on Oct 26, and a lone TRICOLORED HERON was at Pleasure House Point Natural Area in Virginia Beach, VA on Oct 24. Four late CATTLE EGRETS were seen at Sinepuxent Road, Worcester Co, MD on Oct 26, and seven were seen flying up Leeds Creek, Talbot Co, MD on Oct 27. A BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON was spotted at a pond at Grosvenor Park in Montgomery Co, MD on Oct 26.

Three southbound migrating NORTHERN GOSHAWKS, one adult and two immatures, were cause for celebration at the Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch, Augusta Co, VA on Oct 24, while another passed by there the following day. A well-described GOLDEN EAGLE was reported from White Marsh Road in Madison, Dorchester Co, MD on Oct 24.

A SHORT-EARED OWL was flushed from an impoundment at Swan Harbor Farm Park, Harford Co, MD on Oct 25. A NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL was flushed by a mob of Blue Jays over an opening in a canopy in an area of pine woods, in Howard Co, MD on Oct 26.

Late EASTERN WOOD-PEWEES were seen in several locations in both MD and VA this week, and a lingering LEAST FLYCATCHER was heard and seen at Greenbriar Park in Charlottesville, VA on Oct 26.

Some very late swallows were seen in the area this week. On Oct 26, eight NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOWS were seen at Holiday Lake SP, Appomattox Co, VA and a single individual was seen at LaGrange Lane, King George Co, VA the same day. On Oct 27, 13 NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOWS were seen at the C&O Canal-Violette's Lock, Montgomery Co, MD, and three were at North Beach, Calvert Co, MD. A pair of late BARN SWALLOWS were also at the C&O Canal-Violette's Lock, Montgomery Co, MD on Oct 27, and a single bird was at Centennial Park, Howard Co, MD as late as Oct 29.

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCHES were reported again from scattered locations throughout the region this week. A single BROWN-HEADED NUTHATCH was seen and heard at Mountain Run Lake Park in Culpeper Co, VA on Oct 25. A very lucky homeowner in Bishopville, Worcester Co, MD had both a RED-BREASTED and BROWN-HEADED NUTHATCH coming to his feeders on Oct 28. Another BROWN-HEADED NUTHATCH was heard giving its squeaky toy call at Milford Neck Wildlife Area-Big Stone Beach Road, Kent Co, DE also on Oct 28.

GRAY-CHEEKED and SWAINSON'S THRUSH were widely reported this week as they made a late-season push south. GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSHES were reported from the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (SERC), Anne Arundel Co, MD on Oct 25, two from Huntley Meadows Park, Fairfax Co and another from Greensprings Interpretive Trail, James City, both in VA also on Oct 25. Several reports of SWAINSON'S THRUSH came in on Oct 23, but perhaps the most surprising, for both the homeowner and the bird, presumably, was one that flew into a house in Newport News, VA, while the owner was having a refrigerator delivered! The bird flew into an upstairs bedroom where it was caught and released to the backyard. Others were seen on Oct 25 at Greensprings Interpretive Trail, James City and Rockingham Co, both in VA, and in MD on Oct 26 in Greenbelt, Prince George's Co, and at Black Walnut Point, Talbot Co.

Both PURPLE FINCHES and PINE SISKINS have pushed well south of their northern territories, in search of food. Interestingly, most of the reports of PURPLE FINCH have come from mid to northern MD while the PINE SISKINS seem to be more common south into VA. But, many of both species were being reported, especially at bird feeders, throughout the area, with reports of feeder-emptying flocks of PURPLE FINCHES in many yards. A PINE SISKIN was heard as it flew over the National Zoo, NW DC and another was seen and heard near the Sidwell Friends School, also in NW DC both on Oct 23, while a pair were seen feeding with House Finches at a feeder on Fessenden Street NW DC on Oct 24. Additional sightings of between one and six PINE SISKINS came from Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens, NE DC on Oct 28.

Everyone's favorite LBJs, the sparrows, are returning to our area. Besides the usual suspects, reports have come in for more unusual species. AMERICAN TREE SPARROWS are usually found in our area in winter, but an early one was seen mixed in with a flock of Field Sparrows at NW Branch Park-Sherwood Forest area on Oct 26, in Montgomery Co, MD. A CLAY-COLORED SPARROW was seen at Sunset Park, Ocean City, Worcester Co, MD on Oct 24 and another was discovered at Albemarle County Community Park in Albemarle Co, VA on Oct 27, and relocated on Oct 28. A VESPER SPARROW was reported from Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens, NE DC, on Oct 27 and 28 and another was found at International Conservation House, in Fauquier Co, VA, on Oct 27. Late GRASSHOPPER SPARROWS were reported from Masonville Cove, Baltimore Co, MD on Oct 23, one in a yard in Kent Co, DE on Oct 25, and a pair at the Howard County Conservancy-Mount Pleasant Farm on Oct. 26. A NELSON'S SPARROW was reported from the edge of the saltmarsh on Oyster Rocks Road in Sussex Co, DE, on Oct 25, while another was found by a bushwacking birder at Hydes Road Park, Baltimore Co, MD on Oct 29. Early FOX SPARROWS were seen at NW Branch Park-Sherwood Forest Area, Montgomery Co, MD on Oct 23, and at Blandy Experimental Farm/State Arboretum of VA, Clarke Co, VA on Oct 25. LINCOLN'S SPARROWS were seen on Oct 24 at the Ocean City-94th St. Woods, on Oct 25 at Assateague Island NS, and on Oct 26 at Isle of Wight County Park, all in Worcester Co, MD, and in VA at Fluvanna Heritage Trail-River Bluff Trail in Fluvanna Co, on Oct 27.

Two YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRDS were seen in a yard in Kent Co, DE on Oct 29. A single RUSTY BLACKBIRD was reported from Back Bay NWR, Virginia Beach, VA on Oct 25.

A surprising variety of late and lingering warblers were widely reported this week, in locations too numerous to list. It seemed more like mid-September than late October, as individuals of nearly every species were reported somewhere in the area. ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLERS, never very common, were seen at Irvine Nature Center, and Masonville Cove, both in Baltimore Co, MD on Oct 23. On Oct 25, two were seen at Woodlawn Wildlife Area, Cecil Co, MD, and singles at Swan Harbor Farm Park, Harford Co, and Hydes Road Park, Baltimore Co, both in MD. In VA, an ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER was seen at Azalea Park in Charlottesville, on Oct 25. Another was at the Bethesda Trolley Trail-Woodmont Ave. in Montgomery Co, MD on Oct 26-29. A late CONNECTICUT WARBLER was caught and banded on Oct 24, at Patuxent Research Refuge in Anne Arundel Co, MD.

A DICKCISSEL was reported from Blandy Experimental Farm/State Arboretum of VA, Clarke Co, VA on Oct 25, and another was seen in North Beach, Calvert Co, MD on Oct 26 and 29.

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, <https://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