

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, April 30, and was completed on Tuesday, May 7, at 10 AM.

The top bird this week is YELLOW RAIL* in Delaware.

Other birds of interest include TRUMPETER SWAN, HORNED GREBE, EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE, YELLOW-BILLED and BLACK-BILLED CUCKOOS, COMMON NIGHTHAWK, EASTERN WHIP-POOR-WILL, rails, SANDHILL CRANE, shorebirds including WILSON'S PLOVER, WHIMBREL, and RED KNOT, AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN, AMERICAN and LEAST BITTERNs, RED-THROATED LOON, herons including SNOWY EGRET and LITTLE BLUE HERON, ROSEATE SPOONBILL, MISSISSIPPI KITE, flycatchers including OLIVE-SIDED, HORNED LARK, AMERICAN PIPIT, sparrows, YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD, warblers, SUMMER TANAGER, ROSE-BREADED GROSBEAK, PAINTED BUNTING, and DICKCISSEL.

TOP BIRDS

The YELLOW RAIL* that was found last week at Pickering Beach, Kent Co, DE, continued to draw birders. The vocalization of this rare and elusive nocturnal bird, which has been likened to the clack of typewriter keys, is heard only after dark. This bird could be heard each night; at first it was close to the road but eventually it moved deeper into the marsh. It was last reported in the wee hours of May 4.

OTHER BIRDS OF INTEREST

This was a week when the birds flowed in. A great variety of new arrivals are all around, mixing with the regulars and the lingerers, ornamenting the trees with scarlet and gold and orange and rose and indigo.

TRUMPETER SWANS were observed at several locations in MD, including Patuxent Research Refuge-North Tract, as recently as May 4.

A dozen HORNED GREBES were photographed as they flew upriver at East Potomac Park, DC, on May 4.

A EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE continued to visit a yard in Kent Co, DE, through at least May 4.

In addition to YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOOS, which are widely reported, BLACK-BILLED CUCKOOS showed up at several locations: In VA, at Monticello Park, Alexandria, April 30; Huntley Meadows Park, Fairfax Co, May 4; and Ashby Pond Conservation Site in Fairfax City, May 5. In MD, at Lake Artemesia, Prince George's Co, MD, May 1 to 4, and two on May 2 in College Park, Prince George's Co, along the Anacostia Tributary Trail System.

COMMON NIGHTHAWKS paid evening visits to several DC parks: Battery Kemble, Fort Bunker Hill, and Rock Creek. On May 2, they were reported from Carroll Park Golf Course in Baltimore. An EASTERN WHIP-POOR-WILL was calling along Peters Rd, Frederick Co, MD, on May 2. And on April 30 one posed for a daytime portrait at Camden Yards, the Baltimore Orioles Park.

The discovery of the Yellow Rail led to a full-blown nighttime Delaware Ornithological Society "Rail Trip" on May 4-5. At Pickering Beach, in addition to the YELLOW RAIL, the group scored 6 VIRGINIA RAILS, 2 SORAS, and 1 BLACK RAIL—as well as a WHIP-POOR-WILL, an AMERICAN BITTERN, and GREEN and BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS. Continuing on to Big Stone Beach Rd in Milford Neck WA, the group added yet another BLACK RAIL, well heard by all.

On April 30 a SANDHILL CRANE flew over the Fort Smallwood Hawkwatch in Anne Arundel Co, MD. On May 4 a SANDHILL CRANE visited Lilypons Water Gardens, Frederick Co, MD.

Report of WILSON'S PLOVER*—seemingly two birds, a male and a female—came from Assateague Island National Seashore, Worcester Co, MD, on May 3. The first was seen around 10 am near MP 34.0 on the Over Sand Vehicle(OSV) zone; the second was seen and photographed several hours and several miles to the north.

Leading the shorebird parade at Bombay Hook NWR, Kent Co, DE, were scores of AMERICAN AVOCETS. An UPLAND SANDPIPER was reported from Cape Charles Beach, Northampton, VA, May 1. A WHIMBREL was spotted at Terrapin Nature Park, Queen Anne's Co, MD, May 3; 9 WHIMBRELS showed up at Swan Creek Wetlands, Anne Arundel Co, MD, May 6. As many as eight RED KNOTS were found at Assateague Island NS May 4. A PURPLE SANDPIPER continued at Chesapeake Beach Veterans Memorial Park in Calvert Co, MD. A WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER

was spotted at Hart-Miller Island, Baltimore Co, MD, May 1; two were reported from Bombay Hook May 3.

A LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL visited North Beach, Calvert Co, MD, May 1.

A RED-THROATED LOON flew by Big Stone Beach, Kent Co, DE, on May 4.

A dozen AMERICAN WHITE PELICANS found May 5 by the NoVa Teen Birding Club have since been sighted from several area locations, including Belle Haven Park and Dyke Marsh, both in Fairfax Co, and Jones Point Park in Alexandria. Four AMERICAN WHITE PELICANS were seen May 6 from the Chain Bridge Overlook in DC.

An AMERICAN BITTERN was reported at Bles Park, Loudoun Co, VA, May 3 and 4. In MD, AMERICAN BITTERN was found May 5 at Irvine Nature Center, Baltimore, and May 6 at Patuxent River Park-Wootton's Landing, Prince George's Co, MD. Two AMERICAN BITTERNS continue to entertain birders at Hughes Hollow, Montgomery Co, MD, with reports through May 5. Hughes has also been hosting 2 LEAST BITTERNS. Another place to look/listen for LEAST BITTERN is Swan Harbor Farm Park in Harford Co, MD.

A SNOWY EGRET visited Lilypons Water Gardens, Frederick Co, MD, on May 4 and 5, and Swan Harbor Farm Park, Harford Co, MD, May 6. An immature LITTLE BLUE HERON—first spring plumage—showed up at Hughes Hollow May 5, and a LITTLE BLUE HERON was seen May 6 at Fletcher's Boathouse on the C&O Canal in the District of Columbia. Franklin Point SP in Anne Arundel Co. hosted a TRICOLORED HERON May 4.

A CATTLE EGRET showed up May 1 at the Dulles Airport-Pond, Loudoun Co, VA. A CATTLE EGRET flew by Violette's Lock on the C&O Canal, Montgomery Co, MD, May 5.

On May 4 a ROSEATE SPOONBILL flew over Back Bay NWR, Virginia Beach VA. (Back Bay also hosted a KING RAIL and a LEAST BITTERN.)

On May 4, MISSISSIPPI KITES were sighted at Monticello Park, Alexandria, and Broadland Wetlands Nature Park, Loudoun Co, VA.

Lots of flycatchers appeared. A SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER paused and posed on a wire on Wardtown Rd, Northampton Co, VA, May 5. On May 6 OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHERS were surveying the landscape from high perches at both Rock Creek Park, DC, and Pennyfield Lock, Montgomery Co. In addition to numerous sightings of GREAT CRESTED, EASTERN KINGBIRD, EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE, and ACADIAN, there were reports of WILLOW at Lilypons, Frederick Co, MD on May 3 and 4, and of LEAST FLYCATCHER at

Susquehanna SP, Harford Co April 30, Quiet Waters Park, Anne Arundel May 3, and Cremen Rd, Anne Arundel, May 4.

Three HORNED LARKS were sighted at Dulles Airport, Loudoun Co, VA, on May 2; and Hughes Rd Polo Fields, Montgomery Co, MD, May 5.

AMERICAN PIPIT was seen May 4 at Shirley Plantation (restricted access), Charles City, VA.

A MARSH WREN was photographed at Hughes Hollow, Montgomery Co, MD, April 30. One was found May 1 at Schoolhouse Pond, Prince George's Co, MD. A MARSH WREN could be heard singing at New Windsor-Atlee Walking Path, Carroll Co, MD, May 3, 4, and 5.

A CLAY-COLORED SPARROW visited a yard in Columbia, Howard Co, MD, on April 30. One or two CLAY-COLORED SPARROWS were reported May 1 and 2 at Dulles Airport-Pond, Loudoun Co, VA. In DC, a GRASSHOPPER SPARROW was found at Lower Senate Park on May 1. LINCOLN'S SPARROW reports came from Westbrook Park on April 30 and Green Hill Farm Wetlands May 1, both in Montgomery Co, MD.

A YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD caught attention Griffith Rd, Garrett Co, MD, on May 2.

BOBOLINKS popped up in a variety of locations. In VA these included Morgans Ford Rd (Oxbow Farm), Warren Co on April 30; on May 2, a flock of 18 enlivened Sky Meadows SP, Fauquier Co, VA, and two were seen at Bles Park, Loudoun Co. On May 6 a flock of 20 was seen at the Hughes Rd Polo Fields, Montgomery Co, MD.

WARBLERS were flitting through, with numbers in double digits at hotspots like Rock Creek Park in the District, Monticello Park in Alexandria, VA, and Lake Artemesia, Prince George's Co, MD. On May 1 a GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER appeared on the Gwynn Acres Path, Howard Co, MD and also at Monticello Park in Alexandria. On May 2, a MOURNING WARBLER provided a thrill at the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, Prince George's Co, MD. Reports of CERULEAN WARBLER came from Lake Artemesia and Rock Creek Park, both on April 30, as well as along Manahan Rd, Frederick Co, MD, May 2, and Northwest Golf Course, Montgomery Co, MD, May 6.

SUMMER TANAGERS were reported from a variety of locations, including several Baltimore neighborhoods (Herring Run Park, Holt Park, Milford Mill Park). One was found May 6 at St Elizabeths-DHS Center Building in DC, and one April 30 at Rock Creek Park. SUMMER TANAGERS are being seen again this year on River Rd extended, near the entrance to the Summit Hall Turf Farm, Montgomery Co, MD.

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAKS are beautifying yards and trails throughout the area. BLUE GROSBEAK polo fields May 5.

A female PAINTED BUNTING showed up April 30 at the Fran Uhler Natural Area, Prince George's Co, MD.

DICKCISSELS have been reported from Cremen Road and Fort Smallwood Park, both in Anne Arundel Co, MD. In VA, single birds were seen at McIntire Park in Charlottesville as well as at a private farm in Bedford Co.

This week's report was based on reports on the DE, MD, VA, and WV list servers, eBird records, various birding pages on Facebook, and reports to ANS. Birds are listed 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 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