

Voice of the Naturalist

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Coverage: MD/DC/VA/DE

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Please consider joining ANS, especially if you are a regular user of the Voice (Individual \$40; Family \$50; Nature Steward \$75; Audubon Advocate \$150). The membership number is 301-652-9188 x12, the address is 8940 Jones Mill Road, Chevy Chase, MD 20815.

This is the Voice of the Naturalist, a service of the Audubon Naturalist Society. This report was completed Wednesday, May 28, at 2 pm.

Top birds this week are the estimated 10,000 RED KNOTS feeding along the Delaware Bayshore.

Other birds of interest include AMERICAN and LEAST BITTERNs, TRICOLORED HERON, CATTLE EGRET, ibis, raptors including MISSISSIPPI KITE, rails, SANDHILL CRANE, shorebirds, BLACK TERN, BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO, nightjars, flycatchers including OLIVE-SIDED and YELLOW-BELLIED, thrushes, warblers including GOLDEN-WINGED, MOURNING, and SWAINSON'S, SUMMER TANAGER, HENSLOW'S and other SPARROWS, DICKCISSEL, and PINE SISKIN.

The shorebird spectacle is in full swing in Delaware Bay. Researchers estimate that by May 26 the number of RED KNOTS in the vicinity of Mispillion Harbor reached 10,000. Mingling with them were thousands of RUDDY TURNSTONES, SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPERS, DUNLIN, and SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS, plus lesser numbers of BLACK-BELLIED PLOVERS and SANDERLINGS. Every so often, a PEREGRINE FALCON flies through, putting swirling masses of shorebirds into the air. A fine place to take in this extraordinary experience is the deck of the Dupont Nature Center, at the end of Lighthouse Rd off Rte 36.

Closer to home, on May 26 Huntley Meadows Park, Fairfax Co, VA, hosted both AMERICAN BITTERN and LEAST BITTERN. On May 23 an AMERICAN BITTERN was flushed from the first impoundment at Hughes Hollow, Montgomery Co, MD.

A TRICOLORED HERON was reported May 22 from Fowler Beach, DE.

Two CATTLE EGRETS were spotted May 22 in a farm field near Damascus, close to the Montgomery/Frederick Co (MD) line. A small flock of CATTLE EGRETS was noted along the road to North Point SP, Baltimore Co, along with GLOSSY IBISES.

An immature WHITE IBIS was seen May 26 at Swan Pool at Chincoteague NWR, Accomack Co, VA.

MISSISSIPPI KITES were spotted at a wide variety of locations: in VA, just west of West Springfield HS, Fairfax Co; in eastern Fairfax Co, over the Fort Hunt peninsula; around Buckland near the Fauquier/Prince William (VA) Co line; and at the College Creek Hawkwatch, Williamsburg. In MD, a subadult MISSISSIPPI KITE cruised over the marina at Herrington Harbor, Anne Arundel Co, May 22; that same day a bird flew over Governor Bridge Natural Area near Bowie, Prince George's Co; another was seen over Jarrettsville, Harford Co, MD May 25; and another over Parker's Creek, Calvert Co, May 26.

On May 23, the hawkwatch at Fort Smallwood Park, Anne Arundel Co, registered 141 BROAD-WINGED HAWKS.

Kayakers came upon a KING RAIL along the Patuxent River in Charles Co, MD, on May 26. A May 25 report of a family of VIRGINIA RAILS--2 adults and 3 young--signals the first known instance of breeding VIRGINIA RAILS at Huntley Meadows. Also on May 25, a VIRGINIA RAIL was found at Lilypons Water Gardens, Frederick Co. A VIRGINIA RAIL and a SORA were found at Finzel Swamp, Garrett Co, MD, on May 27.

Puddles left by heavy rains produced patches of shorebird haven. On May 20 in DC, Hain's Point was home to BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER, both YELLOWLEGS, and SOLITARY and SPOTTED SANDPIPERS; Anacostia Park added LEAST SANDPIPER; and there were 2 SEMIPALMATED PLOVERS at Kenilworth Park.

On May 21 shorebirds at North Branch, Allegany Co, MD, included 3 WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPERS; the next day, there were 21 SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS. Four SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHERS were also noted at Sky Meadows SP, Fauquier Co, on May 22.

Mixtures of shorebirds were also found in flooded fields behind the Home Depot in Hagerstown, Washington Co, MD; Laws Rd, Wicomico Co, MD, and Sugarland Rd, Montgomery Co.

Two BLACK TERNS visited a yard in Eldersburg, Carroll Co, MD, May 20.

BLACK-BILLED CUCKOOS were noted at several locations, including 2 at Greenbury Point's Bobwhite Trail, near Annapolis; West St in Annapolis; Russett, Anne Arundel; Potomac, Montgomery Co; Indian Springs, Washington Co; Fort McHenry, Baltimore.

On the baseball front, COMMON NIGHTHAWKS were drawn to the lights at the National's park in DC and to the Key's park in Frederick. A number of nighthawks were seen at Soldiers Delight May 24; more than two dozen visited a yard in Fairfax City.

A WHIP-POOR-WILL has been entertaining residents at a home in Waldorf, Charles Co. A Whip was spotted May 24 in Rock Creek Park, NW DC, perched near the Equitation Field. Pre-dawn on May 25, a WHIP-POOR-WILL was singing near the base of Sugarloaf Mt, on the Frederick/Montgomery Co line.

It was a superior week for flycatchers. OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER was found May 22 at Barry's Hill Rd, Charles Co; May 24 at Huntley Meadows; May 24 at Patuxent Research Refuge/North Tract (along with 19 species of warbler); May 25, Prescott Rd, Little Bennett RP, Montgomery Co; May 25 near Sugarloaf Mt; on May 26 at the picnic area at Great Falls NP, VA; May 26 and 27 on Race Rd, Howard Co;

Reports of YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER came from Hains Point May 20; Finzel Swamp May 23; a yard in Fairfax Station May 24; and Thompson WMA, May 25.

ALDER FLYCATCHERS were noted May 22 at Greenbury Point and Susquehanna SP; May 23, along Bumpy Oak Rd, Charles Co, and at Huntley Meadows; on May 24, at Dyke Marsh and at Cockpit Point Rd; May 25, at Pigpen Pond near UMBC; and May 26, Kenilworth Park and KAG, NE DC.

Reports of LEAST FLYCATCHERS came from Huntley Meadows, along the Middle Branch of the Patapsco in Baltimore Co; Milford Mill Park, Baltimore Co; and Hunting Quarter Rd, Montgomery Co.

Thrush migration continued heavy. BICKNELL'S THRUSH was found May 20 at Weyanoke Sanctuary, VA, along with several SWAINSON'S and GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSHES. BICKNELL'S THRUSH visited a yard in Fairfax Station, VA, May 21 and a yard in Anne Arundel Co May 22.

On May 23, a Potomac yard entertained VEERY, GRAY-CHEEKED, and WOOD THRUSH. At Piney Run, May 25 brought an amazing 7 GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSHES, a dozen SWAINSON'S, and 4 WOOD THRUSHES. That same day 20 SWAINSON'S were reported from the McKeldin area of Patapsco Valley SP. Twelve were noted at Rock Creek Park May 20.

Warbler highlights included a GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER along Old Legislative Rd, Allegany Co, May 25. An ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER was reported May 24 from Quiet Waters Park, Anne Arundel Co. CERULEAN WARBLERS were found at several locations, including Tower Rd in the Catoctin Mts, Frederick Co, the Blue Ridge Center in Loudoun Co, VA, the Aspen Hill Rec area in Rockville, Montgomery Co, and the Rock Run area of Susquehanna SP. SWAINSON'S WARBLER is back at the Great Dismal Swamp NWR, Suffolk, VA.

The week brought numerous sightings of MOURNING WARBLERS. They popped up in yards in Frederick Co May 21 and Columbia May 24. Rock Creek Park registered MOURNING WARBLER daily from May 21 through May 25, when two were sighted. A MOURNING WARBLER was found May 25 at Harford Glen Park.

A SUMMER TANAGER was discovered May 22 at the Liberty Watershed in Carroll Co; it was in the Morgan Run section of the lake east and north of the Rte 32 bridge. This bird, only the second county record, was re-found the following day. Other SUMMER TANAGER reports came from Soldiers Delight NEA May 24, and from the Ellick Woodlands, along Pleasant Valley Rd in western Fairfax Co.

HENSLOW'S SPARROWS were found along Old Legislative Rd May 24 and Pea Ridge Rd, Garrett Co May 26. A NELSON'S SHARP-TAILED SPARROW was present May 21 at a marsh in North Beach, Calvert Co, and on May 24, a NELSON'S was singing at a small creek near Pigpen Pond, next to the UMBC campus. SALTMARSH SHARP-TAILED SPARROWS were found May 26 along Elliott Island Rd, Dorchester Co, and along Oyster Rocks Rd, DE, May 26.

DICKCISSELS are up and singing: in Dorchester Co, MD, along Egypt Rd 2 miles south of Rte 16; in Fauquier Co, VA, at Remington Sod Farms on Sumerduck Rd; in Milford, DE, at Abbot's Mill Nature Center.

A PINE SISKIN was glimpsed May 26 at Cylburn Arboretum, Baltimore.

Some of this week's reports have been gleaned from the MDOsprey, VA-Bird, and DE-bird list servers.

Finding Birds in the National Capital Area by Claudia Wilds is an excellent source for directions to many birding sites. The [Audubon Sanctuary Shop](#) (301-652-3606) is an excellent source for this and many other nature-related titles.

To report bird sightings, e-mail your report to voice@AudubonNaturalist.org or call 301-652-1088 and select menu option 2. Please post reports before midnight Monday, identify the county as well as state, and include your name and a Tuesday morning contact, either e-mail or phone.

Thank you for calling, and GOOD BIRDING.

*Of interest to the records committee.