

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, option 12; 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 Tuesday, Dec 1, at noon.

Top birds this week are *WHITE-WINGED DOVE and *WESTERN TANAGER in VA and *BULLOCK'S ORIOLE in MD.

Other birds of interest include waterfowl, RED-THROATED LOON, EARED GREBE, NORTHERN GANNET, BROWN PELICAN, WHITE IBIS, OSPREY, rails, POMARINE JAEGER, gulls including FRANKLIN'S and ICELAND, SHORT-EARED OWL, NORTHERN SHRIKE, vireos, HORNED LARK, wrens, AMERICAN PIPIT, ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER, sparrows, LAPLAND LONGSPUR, YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD, RUSTY BLACKBIRD, BALTIMORE ORIOLE, PURPLE FINCH, and PINE SISKIN.

A *WHITE-WINGED DOVE was reported to have spent 15 minutes at a feeder near Claytor Lake, in Pulaski Co, VA, on Nov 27.

A *WESTERN TANAGER paid two visits to the hawk watch platform at Kiptopeke SP, Northampton Co, VA, on Nov 25.

A *BULLOCK'S ORIOLE was spotted Nov 24 in Montgomery Co, MD; it was loosely associated with flocks of birds feeding in fruiting trees along the C&O towpath about one-third of a mile north/west of Sycamore Landing Rd. Intense searching in the following days turned up 2 BALTIMORE ORIOLES but not the Bullock's.

A CACKLING GOOSE was discerned among the CANADA GEESE at Anacostia River Park, SE DC, on November 28.

Overhead flocks of TUNDRA SWANS were noted at numerous locations, including Carderock, along the Potomac River in Montgomery Co; Middleton in Frederick Co, MD; and a yard in Arlington, VA. Two TUNDRA SWANS were a highlight of the weekly walk at Dyke Marsh, Fairfax Co, VA, on Nov 28.

A good-sized raft encompassing a dozen species of waterfowl was observed in the Potomac River from Occoquan Bay NWR, Prince William Co, VA, on Nov 27. A EURASIAN WIGEON was again reported from Ridgeway Park, Newport News, VA, on Nov 28. Thousands of SCAUP and BUFFLEHEAD were afloat off Thomas Point SP, Anne Arundel Co, MD, Nov 25.

The Ocean City Inlet, Worcester Co, MD, was alive with bird activity this week, as hundreds of ducks and loons headed south. Highlights on Nov 25 included more than 100 BRANT, all 3 SCOTERS, 2 female COMMON EIDERS, 2 HARLEQUIN DUCKS, and at least 200 NORTHERN GANNETS. On Nov 29, an immature male KING EIDER, as well as 8 COMMON EIDERS, were seen flying south. Also winging past were 500 RED-THROATED LOONS, 1,000 NORTHERN GANNETS, and 400 BONAPARTE'S GULLS.

A female COMMON EIDER showed up Nov 29 at Point Lookout SP, St. Mary's Co, MD; it was spotted near the lighthouse.

Two SURF SCOTERS were at Piney Run Lake, Carroll Co, MD on November 24.

An EARED GREBE continued to be seen from the boardwalk at Piscataway Park, Prince George's Co, MD, with reports from Nov 24 through Nov 29.

Three BROWN PELICANS (and 2 NORTHERN GANNETS) were observed Nov 26 north of North Beach, Anne Arundel Co. Two BROWN PELICANS were spotted Nov 29 off Greenbury Point, also in Anne Arundel.

Chincoteague NWR, Accomack Co, VA, is gradually recovering from the storm damage it suffered two weeks ago; the Wildlife Drive opened to traffic Nov 28. The star attraction continues to be immature WHITE IBIS, reported as recently as Nov 29.

There have been several sightings of late OSPREY, including a bird seen Nov 29 at Four Mile Run, Arlington, VA.

On Nov 26 and again Nov 30, Huntley Meadows Park, Fairfax Co, offered a rail trifecta: KING RAIL, VIRGINIA RAIL, and SORA.

On Nov 25, Ocean City Inlet attracted an adult ICELAND GULL. On Nov 29, one highlight among the scores of larids at the Inlet was first-winter FRANKLIN'S GULL, which cooperatively posed for the cameras. Another highlight, seen both Nov 28 and 29, was a POMERINE JAEGER.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS were spotted at several sites: In addition to Assateague on Nov 25 and the Ocean City Inlet on Nov 28, these included--all on Nov 28--Kerr Dam, Mecklenburg Co, VA; along the James River in Hopewell, VA; the Prince William Co (VA) landfill; and over the Tidal Basin in SW DC.

On Nov 29, 3 SHORT-EARED OWLS were hunting at dusk at Shorter's Wharf, south of Blackwater NWR, Dorchester Co, MD.

The NORTHERN SHRIKE near Chino Farms in northern Queen Anne's Co, MD, was refound on Nov 29.

A couple of late vireos made an appearance: a WHITE-EYED VIREO at Greenbury Point Nov 29 and a WARBLING VIREO in a Norfolk, VA yard Nov 30.

WINTER WRENS were noted at several locations. Two very vocal SEDGE WRENS enlivened the saltmarshes north of Bayside campground at Assateague Island Nov 28. A MARSH WREN was found Lilypons Nov 26. On Nov 28, multiple WINTER, SEDGE, and MARSH WRENS were in evidence at Fairmount WMA, Somerset Co, MD.

A flock of 83 AMERICAN PIPITS was seen at Antietam National Battlefield, Washington Co, MD, Nov 24.

An ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER was discovered Nov 28 at Anacostia River Park, SE DC; it was in the tree/brush line along the river, not far from the Poplar Point parking lot. An ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER was again seen on Nov 28 in the city of Hopewell, VA.

SPARROWS made a good showing this week. On Nov 26 Lilypons hosted 5 AMERICAN TREE, 2 WHITE-CROWNED, and 1 FOX; these species were still in evidence at Lilypons Nov 29. An AMERICAN TREE SPARROW was found Nov 28 at Terrapin Park on Kent Island, Anne Arundel Co. A LINCOLN'S SPARROW was present at Piney Run Nov 25. FOX SPARROWS were again singing at Blue Mash Nature Trail, Montgomery Co, on Nov 26, and a FOX SPARROW was found at Triadelphia Reservoir, Montgomery Co, Nov 24.

On Nov 29 the saltmarshes of Assateague held SAVANNAH SPARROWS, including a pale IPSWICH variant, as well as 2 SALTMARSH SPARROWS,

A LAPLAND LONGSPUR and 5 AMERICAN PIPITS were among a large flock of HORNED LARKS on Oland Rd, Frederick Co, on Nov 26. On Nov 29, 3 LAPLAND LONGSPURS were identified in these flocks.

An adult male YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD was found Thanksgiving morning, Nov 26, in dense fog, in Culpeper Co, VA: it was in a large flock of mixed blackbirds and Starlings along Route 802 (Springs Road) at the intersection of Route 623 (Myers Mill Road).

RUSTY BLACKBIRD reports included a single bird found during the monthly walk at the Blue Ridge Center, Loudoun Co, VA, on Nov 28, and 2 or 3 at Huntley Meadows that same day. On Nov 29 a flock of 40 RUSTY BLACKBIRDS was found in the southeast portion of Ft Hunt Park, Fairfax Co, while a single bird appeared at Great Falls NP, Fairfax Co.

An adult male PURPLE FINCH appeared at a feeder in Annapolis on Nov 25.

A PINE SISKIN visited a feeder in Blue Ridge, Botetourt Co, VA, on Nov 26 and 27.

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

The Audubon Sanctuary Shop (301-652-3606, <http://www.audubonnaturalist.org/default.asp?page=511>) is an excellent source for guidebooks 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