

Hotline: Voice of the Naturalist
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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; and the web site is <http://www.AudubonNaturalist.org>.

This is the Voice of the Naturalist, a service of the Audubon Naturalist Society. This report was completed Tuesday, March 31, at 8 am.

Top birds this week are PAINTED BUNTING* and HARRIS'S SPARROW*, both in MD.

Other birds of interest include GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE, TRUMPETER SWAN*, WILD TURKEY, loons, grebes, NORTHERN GANNETT, AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN, AMERICAN BITTERN, night-herons, ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK, rails, shorebirds, LITTLE, BLACK-HEADED, and ICELAND GULLS, terns, EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE, EASTERN KINGBIRD, HORNED LARK, PURPLE MARTIN, swallows, BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER, AMERICAN PIPIT, YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER, sparrows, LAPLAND LONGSPUR, SNOW BUNTING, EASTERN MEADOWLARK, RUSTY BLACKBIRD, and WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL.

The HARRIS'S SPARROW* reported last week in Howard Co, MD, continued to be seen daily through March 29 at 6760 Alexander Bell Drive in Columbia. (From I-95, take MD 175 west 1/2 mile to Gateway Drive; go south on Gateway to a right on A. Bell. Walk around the right side of the building to the rear, where there are several feeders.) As always, treat this private property with respect.

A brilliant male PAINTED BUNTING has been enlivening another neighborhood in Howard County, near Savage, with sporadic and typically brief appearances through March 28. Detailed directions to two homes with feeders that the bird frequents are on the MDOsprey listserver. The homeowners and neighbors are being extremely accomodating to birders, so please respond in kind.

A GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE near the Gibson Island Causeway, Anne Arundel Co, MD, was reported again March 26.

A TRUMPETER SWAN* was again present at Lakeside Business Park, Harford

Co, MD, on March 27; this location can be accessed from the Rte 24 exit from I-95.

A flock of 17 WILD TURKEYS visited a neighborhood in Charles Co, MD, on March 24. A single WILD TURKEY strolled through a yard in Owings, MD, March 26.

Reports of RED-THROATED LOON came from Fort Smallwood, Anne Arundel Co, MD, March 24 and Loch Raven, Baltimore Co--in the area of #1 bridge-- March 27. On March 28, 3 RED-THROATED LOONS and a RED-NECKED GREBE were found near Annapolis; they were on the Arnold side of the Rte 450 Severn River Bridge; 1 of the loons was still there the next day. COMMON LOONS were spotted at Black Hill Reservoir on March 24 and 27, at Lilypons Water Gardens, Frederick Co, MD, March 29, and on the Washington Channel off Hains Point, SW DC, March 30.

RED-NECKED GREBES were noted at Piney Run, Carroll County, MD, March 25; Rocky Gap SP, Allegany Co, MD, March 26; the National Colonial Farm, Prince George's Co, MD March 27; Occoquan Bay NWR, Prince William Co, VA, March 28; and Dyke Marsh, Fairfax Co, VA, March 30.

EARED GREBES were reported March 24 at Prettyboy Reservoir, Baltimore Co, and March 28 and 30 on the Potomac, seen from the Riverview pullout off the GW Parkway in Fairfax Co.

NORTHERN GANNETS were observed at a variety of locations.

AMERICAN WHITE PELICANS were still at Blackwater NWR, Dorchester Co, MD, as of March 25.

In the Richmond (VA) area, an AMERICAN BITTERN occasionally rewards patient birders at the James River Park System wetlands; entrance is at the end of Landria Dr off Wallowa Rd. An AMERICAN BITTERN materialized at Jug Bay/Patuxent River Park, Prince George's Co, MD, on March 29.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS were tracked down March 25 on the back side of the heron rookery on Lake Whetstone in Montgomery Village, Montgomery Co, MD; they could be viewed from Lookout Place. YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS had returned to Chevy Chase Lake Drive, Montgomery Co, as of March 27.

A dark morph ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK was soaring above a power plant near the end of Chelsea Rd, Harford Co, on March 29.

On March 28, Truitt's Landing in southern Worcester Co, MD, hosted CLAPPER, KING, and VIRGINIA RAILS. A SORA was reported March 29 from Huntley Meadows Park, Fairfax Co.

A single PIPING PLOVER was found at Mispillion Harbor, Sussex Co, DE on March 25. A SOLITARY SANDPIPER was noted at Occoquan March 28. On

March 24, 2 DUNLIN rested on a log in the Potomac at Violette's Lock, Montgomery Co.

A LITTLE GULL was discovered March 24 among the BONAPARTE'S GULLS on the Susquehanna River, Harford Co, and seen again March 28 and 29, from the Lapidum boat launch in Susquehanna SP. (Exit from I-95 at Rte 155 toward Havre de Grace, then make a left onto Lapidum Road and follow it for about 4 miles to the end at Lapidum landing.) On March 29, birders looking from the eastern side of the river, from Port Deposit in Cecil Co, found a BLACK-HEADED GULL and 2 LITTLE GULLS (as well as 5 RED-NECKED GREBES).

On March 27 a LITTLE GULL was seen at Back River, Baltimore Co; on March 28 and 29 a BLACK-HEADED GULL was seen at Back River. The gulls were on docks seen from the restaurant behind the Royal Farms on Island Point Rd near the Rte 150 bridge.

On March 28 a "frosty white" first-winter ICELAND GULL was roosting on the flats west of Fowlers Beach, DE.

TERN sightings included CASPIAN March 30 on the Potomac at Fletcher's Boathouse, off the C&O Canal in NW DC; ROYAL March 29 at Flag Ponds SP, Calvert Co, MD, and at Weems Creek in West Annapolis; and 2 FORSTER'S at Neabsco Creek, Prince William Co, VA, March 28.

A pair of EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVES was discovered near Dividing Creek, Somerset Co, MD, on March 28; the birds sat on a telephone wire in the vicinity of Pokomoke River Rd and Clearfield Dr.

An EASTERN KINGBIRD showed up March 28 at Assateague Island, Worcester Co.

PURPLE MARTINS have arrived, with sightings near the Back River sewage plant, Baltimore Co, March 28, and in Anne Arundel Co, in Edgewater March 28 and at the Naval Academy Farm March 29. By March 29, ROUGH-WINGED and BARN SWALLOWS had joined the TREE SWALLOWS at Dyke Marsh.

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHERS are edging north, with sightings in St. Mary's and Calvert Cos, MD.

The fields of Bombay Hook NWR, DE, were alive with scores of AMERICAN PIPITS, HORNED LARKS, and EASTERN MEADOWLARKS.

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER was reported from Possum Pt Rd, Dumfries, Prince William Co, March 28.

On March 28 Truitt's Landing hosted multiple SALT-MARSH and NELSON'S SHARP-TAILED SPARROWS--including two, one of each, that sat up on a twig next to one another. Nearby Taylor's Landing boasted 7 SALT-MARSH SPARROWS. CHIPPING SPARROWS are showing up around town.

RUSTY BLACKBIRDS continued, with appearances at Schoolhouse Pond, Upper Marlboro, Prince George's Co; Occoquan Bay; Huntley Meadows; and Patuxent NWR.

For several weeks Middletown, DE, has been enjoying a "Longspur Spectacular." A flock numbering up to 100 LAPLAND LONGSPURS, some in breeding plumage, as well as 4 or 5 SNOW BUNTINGS and hundreds of HORNED LARKS, has been frequenting an Auto Park on the west side of Middletown, off Rte 301 next to a Home Depot.

WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILLS persist. On March 24, a group of 9 was "raining down pine cones" in West Annapolis. On March 28, crossbills were found at Gunpowder Falls SP, Harford Co, around the parking area near Green Rd and Moores Rd; on March 27, they were at Gunpowder's "Sweet Air" section. On March 29, a group was seen at Druid Ridge Cemetery, Baltimore. On March 29, a flock of at least 58 WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILLS was feeding in hemlocks at the edge of the Fountain Head golf course north of Hagerstown, Washington Co, MD; some of these birds were still there March 30.

Some of this week's reports have been gleaned from the MDOsprey, VA-Bird, and Delaware 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.