



The SISKIN

Newsletter of the Northern Virginia Bird Club

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February 2017

www.nvabc.org

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To see the newsletter photographs in color, go to www.nvabc.org and click on *The Siskin* icon

A reminder to pay your 2017 dues

If not paid, this will be the last issue you receive. *The Siskin* mailing label shows the year through which your dues are current or "CO" for complimentary. **Thanks!**

Winter Highland County Trip

Our winter trip to Highland County will be held on the weekend of March 3 to 5 (Friday to Sunday). The trip will be led this year by Gerco Hoogeweg and Beth Moore. We will spend Friday night in Staunton and Saturday night at Monterey in Highland County. There will be an optional birding trip in the Staunton area on Friday afternoon after meeting at the motel at 3 pm. We will travel to Highland County on Saturday morning and spend the remainder of the weekend there.

We plan to arrange a group dinner Friday evening at a local restaurant in Staunton and Saturday night we will

continued on p. 2

NVBC GENERAL MEETING—WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 8 PM

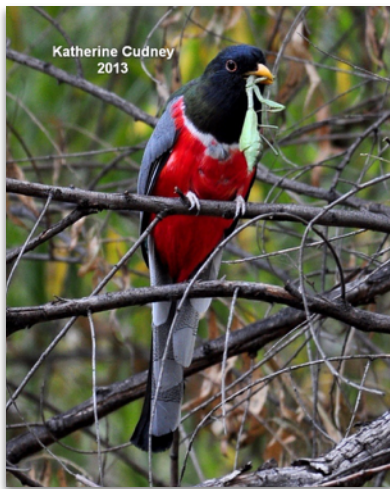
What Do Birds Eat?

Examining bird-insect food webs to improve avian conservation efforts

Speaker: Ashley Kennedy

Although insects serve as a vital food source for most terrestrial bird species, we still don't know much about which insects birds prefer as prey. Every birder knows that birds eat fruits, nuts, and insects but many underestimate the latter. Birds rely on insects during the breeding season and will dramatically change foraging patterns to take advantage of the varied proteins, fats, and nutrients insects provide. Most reference materials provide order-level identification, e.g., beetles and caterpillars. Would a chickadee prefer a smooth, green inchworm or a toxic monarch caterpillar?

To address this need for information, Doug Tallamy's lab at the University of Delaware has launched a citizen science project inviting birders across the country to contribute photos of birds with insects in their bills. Ultimately the lab hopes to be able to answer questions like, "Do House Wrens in Montana and Pennsylvania prefer the same types of insects?" Currently they have about 3,000 photographs of a desired 10,000 plus. A better understanding of avian food webs will help us better manage landscapes for avian conservation.



Elegant Trogon, Patagonia, AZ

Ashley Kennedy is a PhD student in the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware. She is also a Northern Virginia native whose interest in birds and insects began right here! Along with her advisor Doug Tallamy, she is investigating birds' dietary choices and hopes that a better understanding of "what birds eat" will help guide future bird conservation efforts.

Early bird refreshments start at 7:30 pm. Any contributions of food or beverage will be most gratefully received. There will be a drawing for door prizes. Northern Virginia Bird Club pins will be available for members who would like to buy them (\$5 each).

MEETING PLACE: St. Andrews Episcopal Church, 4000 Lorcom Lane, Arlington, 22207. Directions are on page 5.

Presidential Peentings

Seeing a rare bird is one of the most rewarding experiences that a birder can have. It can be even more exciting if the bird is one that you have never seen before (AKA a life bird). If the bird is what is known as a "mega rarity" the excitement level is dialed up to eleven. Finding one of these birds is in a way akin to seeing a major Hollywood star in person. I know these celebrities exist, but I have never seen them in the flesh, so it's just an academic knowledge. The same was true for a bird like a Northern Lapwing until someone found one in a farm field in Maryland in 2005 and I went up to see it. It was also true when I drove to Lynchburg to see a pair of Swallow-tailed Kites in 2011. For a birder, experiences like these are never to be forgotten.

When I know that a rare bird is within chasing distance, the feeling of anticipation can be intense. When can I get time to go after the bird? Will the bird still be there? How many of my friends have already seen it? The day finally arrives to chase the bird. Do I have everything I

need? Check VA-Bird. Has the bird been seen this morning yet? As I get closer, I feel cautiously optimistic. I have come all this way, so there's really no choice but to be positive. Following my directions carefully, I look for a crowd of people with scopes and cameras. I find the crowd. I ask if the bird is here. Yes! I park the car and walk back and have the bird in view in short order. This is the ideal scenario, and it sometimes does work out this way. Other times, you have to work harder to get the bird. It is also possible that you might not see the bird that you are looking for at all. That's life, though.

A rare bird sighting is also an occasion for birders to have a mini reunion. I have reconnected with old friends and made new ones while at the location of a rare bird sighting. It's also fun to put a face to a name of someone you have never met, but is well known to you on Facebook or VA-Bird. Birders are usually generous in giving directions and helping others to find rarities. This is a big part of what makes the birding community so strong.

—Larry Meade

Winter Highland County Trip *from p. 1*

stay and dine at the Highland Inn in Monterey. We will carpool in Highland County. The trip will end in Monterey about midday Sunday.

Please email Gerco Hoogeweg at drgerco@hotmail.com for more information (hotels, itinerary, meals, etc.) and to sign up. The trip limit is 20 people. Current NVBC membership is required for our weekend trip.

—Gerco Hoogeweg

guest speaker. The program will appear in the next issue of *The Siskin*.

Also on the agenda is the election of club officers and directors for two-year terms that begin July 1. If you are interested in serving on the NVBC Board or have suggestions to make to the Nominating Committee, please send an email to lgmeade@gmail.com. The Nominating Committee will present a slate of candidates and there will be an opportunity for club members to make nominations from the floor.

Chincoteague Spring Weekend Trip

The club's spring trip to Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) will be held on the weekend of May 19-21 (Friday to Sunday), 2017. The trip is limited to 28 people. A complete description of the trip will be in the April 2017 edition of *The Siskin*. This is a very popular weekend trip, so sign up early. To sign up, call Elton Morel at (703) 553-4860 or email him at eltonmorel@verizon.net. NVBC membership is required.

—Elton Morel

Saving Secretive Marsh Birds

Learn about secretive marsh birds and how we can improve their habitat on February 26, 2 pm, Sherwood Regional Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane, Alexandria (Mount Vernon area) 22306 (<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/sh/direct.htm>).

Some marsh birds, like the King Rail, Virginia Rail, Sora, Least Bittern and American Bittern are difficult to detect, often hidden in dense vegetation. Wetland-dependent, marsh birds have adaptations like cryptically-colored plumage that helps them be secretive. Secretive marsh birds are in decline across their range and are designated in need of conservation in most states. Because they are hard to find and see, there is relatively sparse information available on their ecology.

Patrice Nielson, a University of Maryland PhD candidate and Northern Virginia resident, surveyed for secretive species at 51 points in 25 marshes in the Washington, D.C., area in 2013, 2014 and 2015. She modeled the presence of secretive marsh birds as a function of habitat characteristics. Among many findings, she found that secretive marsh birds were using both restored and natural marshes, marshes with and without invasive plant species and marshes with a variety of dominant vegetation species.

This program is sponsored by the Friends of Dyke Marsh, Audubon Society of Northern Virginia, the Audubon Society of the District of Columbia, the Northern Virginia Bird Club, and the Virginia Society of Ornithology.

Youth Birding Scholarship Opportunity

Deadline: February 1, 2017

Please help spread the word about the Val Kitchens Memorial Young Birder Scholarship for 2017. The Club is seeking applicants from 13 to 18 years of age for a grant of up to \$500 to attend a birding activity. See all the information for applying on the website. For more information, contact David Farner at 443-643-6141 or Ghazali Raheem at 703-563-3810 or go to <http://www.nvabc.org/youth-birding-scholarship-opportunity>.

April NVBC Meeting Election of Officers

Mark April 19 on your calendar for the Northern Virginia Bird Club's spring meeting. Bill Young will be the

Cape May Fall Weekend Trip 2016



Our Cape May Fall weekend trip was attended by over 24 NVBC members who enjoyed a nice weekend driving, walking and watching birds. As always, the weather dictated our birding itinerary. Friday's ferry crossing was rough, but Gannets and a Parasitic Jaeger were good birds to see. A planned trip to a new location in the City of Cape May was changed in favor of a trip to the Hawkwatch on Friday afternoon. The winds were good and so were the birds.

Saturday morning, we walked from the hotel to the pavilion on the beach to see if anything was to be seen there. A group of skimmers and various scoters flew by. Nearby a few Lesser Black-backed Gulls were spotted, but that was about it. Up next was Hereford Lighthouse and Inlet. Birding was excellent there. We found a Red-breasted Nuthatch, both Kinglets, Blackpoll, Palm and Pine Warblers as well as a female Purple Finch. Our beach walk was truly excellent with many shorebirds still present. A Short-billed Dowitcher posed an interesting ID challenge. We also found Dunlins, Sanderlings, Red Knots, Semi-palmated and Western Sandpipers. We saw Northern Gannets too. Most impressive was a large group of over 200 American Oystercatchers. Later we learned that Hereford Inlet is used as a staging area for northern breeding



Oystercatchers. The local birders were not surprised that we saw such a large number.

In the afternoon we went to the Cape May State Park and Hawkwatch. Hawk migration was down so we went for our usual walk. Highlights were two male Eurasian Wigeons, Cattle Egrets, many ducks and blue morph Snow Geese. Our last stop of the day was The Meadows. That spot was good for a nice variety of ducks including Wood Ducks, Northern Pintails, American Wigeons and Green-winged Teals. We also found a small group of shorebirds with some nice surprises, including Pectoral, Least and Semi-palmated Sandpipers and via photo ID a few White-rumped Sandpipers.

Sunday morning's morning flight was weak as expected based on unfavorable wind direction. The local counter was kind enough to show his new tablet with software for counting the birds. It was a Dutch product called Trektellen (aka migration count; see <http://www.trektellen.nl> for more info) that allows them to share quickly what they see via the internet whilst the count is still going on. With morning flight being weak, we went for a long walk at Higbee Beach. Initially the birds were quiet, but eventually we found a few pockets full of them. We saw many sparrows including Swamp, Field, Song and Eastern Towhee. The biggest surprises were several Gray Catbirds, a Yellow-billed Cuckoo, a Rusty Blackbird and a Baltimore Oriole. We frequently saw Sharp-shinned Hawks flying by. At times we wondered if it was the same bird.

The ferry ride back was not as eventful as the one on Friday morning. Unfortunately, only a few scoters were seen and several gulls. I guess all birds had blown out to sea. We ended up with a total of 123 species of birds, which is on par for our trip.

—Gerco Hoogweg



Photographs by:
Neal Gause: group photo at Cape May State Park

Chris White: Birding on the beach (above)

Gerco Hoogweg: Short-billed Dowitcher at Hereford Inlet (left), and Banded Sanderling at Higbee Beach (right)



Tech Talk and Birding

The NVBC web site will feature news and information on Technology, Apps, Software, Optics, Binoculars, Spotting Scopes, and related gadgets as they relate to birding from time to time. Members are welcome to send a paragraph or two of suggestions to Ghazali Raheem, webmaster at rcomm19@gmail.com.

The first in this series features thoughts and ideas from Charles Studholme, owner of One Good Tern, about the Celestron Hummingbird Micro-Scopes. The article can be read at <http://www.nvabc.org/tech-talk-and-birding>.

—Ghazali Raheem

Upcoming Trips and Events

Compiled by Elton Morel

Note:

- Beginning birders are welcome on all trips.
- When reservations are required, please call one of the trip leaders. Phone numbers are below.
- If in doubt about a trip because of weather, please call one of the leaders.
- Check the NVBC website for updated information about trips: <http://www.nvabc.org/field-trips-this-month>.
- To receive email notices, join the NVBC eMail Exchange. For sign-up directions see back page of *The Siskin*.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																												
February																																		
<p style="text-align: center;">Trip Leaders</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td>Larry Cartwright</td><td>703-941-3142</td></tr> <tr><td>David Farner</td><td>443-643-6141</td></tr> <tr><td>Elizabeth Fenton</td><td>703-533-0851</td></tr> <tr><td>Gerco Hoogeweg</td><td>540-822-5857</td></tr> <tr><td>David Ledwith</td><td>703-933-9477</td></tr> <tr><td>Larry Meade</td><td>703-206-9030</td></tr> <tr><td>Beth Moore</td><td>703-989-2563</td></tr> <tr><td>Elton Morel</td><td>703-553-4860</td></tr> <tr><td>Tom Nardone</td><td>703-394-7738</td></tr> <tr><td>Ghazali Raheem</td><td>703-563-3810</td></tr> <tr><td>Marc Ribaldo</td><td>703-680-1134</td></tr> <tr><td>Phil Silas</td><td>703-590-7286</td></tr> <tr><td>Dixie Sommers</td><td>703-969-7931</td></tr> <tr><td>Jean Tatalias</td><td>571-447-7977</td></tr> </table>		Larry Cartwright	703-941-3142	David Farner	443-643-6141	Elizabeth Fenton	703-533-0851	Gerco Hoogeweg	540-822-5857	David Ledwith	703-933-9477	Larry Meade	703-206-9030	Beth Moore	703-989-2563	Elton Morel	703-553-4860	Tom Nardone	703-394-7738	Ghazali Raheem	703-563-3810	Marc Ribaldo	703-680-1134	Phil Silas	703-590-7286	Dixie Sommers	703-969-7931	Jean Tatalias	571-447-7977		<p>11 8 AM Aquia Landing Beach Park David Ledwith Elton Morel</p>			
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April 2 8 AM Dyke Marsh (FODM)			5 8:30 AM Long Branch Elizabeth Fenton Tom Nardone			8 7:30 AM Bristoe Station Battlefield Park David Ledwith Elton Morel
Bird Walks at Local Parks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dyke Marsh, Sundays, 8 am See directions. Visit the Friends of Dyke Marsh web site, www.fodm.org • Eakin Park, Mondays, 7:30 am Meet at Prosperity Ave parking lot. Leader: Carolyn Williams • Great Falls National Park, Sundays, 8 am Meet at the Park Visitor Center parking lot. • Huntley Meadows Park, Mondays, 7 am (Mar-Oct) 8 am (Nov-Feb) Meet in parking lot. Leader: Harry Glasgow 			12 8:30 AM Fort C.F. Smith David Farner Ghazali Raheem			15 7:30 AM Silver Lake RP Larry Meade Phil Silas
			19 8:30 AM Daniels Run Tom Nardone 8 PM NVBC Meeting			22 7:30 AM Huntley Meadows Hike/Bike Trail Larry Cartwright
			26 8:30 AM Bles Park Jean Tatalias			29 7:30 AM Leesylvania SP Larry Meade Phil Silas
		30 8 AM Dyke Marsh (FODM)		May	3 8:30 AM Long Branch David Farner	

DIRECTIONS

NVBC Meeting (2/15, 4/19) St. Andrews Episcopal Church, 4000 Lorcom Ln, Arlington 22207, at the intersection of Lorcom Ln and Military Rd. From the intersection of Spout Run Pkwy and Lorcom Ln, go about a half mile on Lorcom to the second traffic light. Turn left onto Military and enter the first driveway on the right. There is some parking near the Church's back entrance and a bigger lot up the driveway. There is on-street parking. Enter at the back door facing Military Rd which leads to the Undercroft where the meeting is held.

Aquia Landing Beach Park (2/11, 3/18) 2846 Brooke Rd, Stafford 22554 From southbound I-95 towards Stafford, take exit 140 to Stafford, then left (east) on Courthouse Rd (Rt 630), go 3.5 mi. and turn right on Andrew Chapel Rd (Rt 629), go 0.9 mi. and under the railroad bridge to a slight left onto Brooke Rd (Rt 608), go 4.4 mi. to the park entrance, continue past park entrance gate to the parking lot at the end of the road. Meet in the parking lot.

Bles Park (4/26) 44830 Riverside Pkwy., Ashburn 20147 Take Rt 7 west to Loudoun County Pkwy. Turn right onto Loudoun County Pkwy and proceed 0.2 mi. Turn right onto George Washington Blvd and go 0.8 mi. to Riverside Pkwy. Turn left and proceed 1.1 mi. to park entrance. Meet at parking lot.

Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park (4/8) 10708 Bristow Rd, Bristow, VA 20136. From I-95: Take Rt 234 north (exit 152B), travel 7.5 mi. and make a left onto Independent Hill Dr. Then make immediate right onto Rt 619 (Bristow Rd). Travel 7 mi. and turn left onto Iron Brigade Unit Ave. The parking lot is located on the left at the traffic circle. From I-66: Take Rt 234 south (Exit 44). Travel 4.5 miles and turn right onto Rt 28 (Nokesville Rd). Travel 1.5 mi. and turn left onto Rt 619 (Bristow Rd). Travel 0.25 mi., turn right onto Iron Brigade Unit Ave and continue to parking lot. Meet in parking lot.

Burke Lake Park (2/15, 3/22) 7315 Ox Rd, Fairfax Station 22039 From I-495, take exit 54 west (Braddock Rd). Stay in right lane of exit if you are coming from the north. On Braddock

Rd, go 1.5 mi. and turn left onto BurkeLake Rd. Go 4.7 mi. and turn left onto Rt 123 (Ox Rd). Turn left at second traffic light (big park signs), and turn left immediately after the entrance booth. Park in the first lot on the right (by the mini-golf course).

Daniels Run Park (4/19) 3622 Old Post Rd, Fairfax 22031 From I-495, take US 50 west 2.7 mi. to Fairfax Circle. Exit the circle southwest on Old Lee Hwy. In 1.2 mi. turn left on Old Post Rd (just past Historic Blenheim on the right). Drive 1 1/2 blocks to the end of the street. We have walk-day permission to park in the Country Club Hills pool parking lot.

Dyke Marsh (2/22, 3/5, 3/15, 4/2, 4/30) 6401 George Washington Memorial Pkwy, Alexandria 22307 (Belle Haven Park and Marina). From Alexandria, take George Washington Pkwy south. Cross I-495, continue 1.2 mi. to Belle Haven Park entrance on the left. Meet at south parking lot.

Eakin Park (3/29) 3401 Prosperity Ave, Fairfax 22031 From I-495, take Rt 50 west one mi. to Prosperity Ave. Turn left onto Prosperity and go one mi. to parking lot on left.



Northern Shrike (left) photographed by Donald Sweig at Sully Woodlands in October 31, 2016. Loggerhead Shrike (right) photographed by Elton Morel along Featherbed Road, Clark County, December 3, 2016. Northern Shrikes are uncommon to rare in the mid-Atlantic area. They breed in Upper Canada and occasionally are seen locally here in the winter. Northern Shrikes are noticeably larger (about 10 percent) than the much more common Loggerhead Shrike. Notice the distinctive hook on the upper mandible of the beaks of both birds. The Northern Shrike tends to have a narrower mask with a white upper border. Both prey on insects, small birds and mammals.

Directions

Fort C F Smith (4/12) 2411 24th St N, Arlington 22207 From I-66 east, take exit 72 (Spout Run Pkwy). At traffic light, turn right on Lee Hwy. At successive traffic lights, turn left onto Spout Run Pkwy, then left onto Lorcom Ln, then right onto Fillmore St. Go one block on Fillmore, turn right onto N. 24th St (watch for speed humps), and continue to park on left. Meet in parking lot at east end of park. From Alexandria: take GW Pkwy north, take left exit onto Spout Run, then right exit onto Lorcom Ln, and follow remaining directions above.

Huntley Meadows Hike and Bike Trail (3/5, 4/22) From I-495, take Rt 1 south 0.5 mi to Rt 633 (S. King Hwy). Turn right (west); go 2.5 miles to park entrance and lot on left (just before Telegraph Rd).

Huntley Meadows Park (3/8, 4/1) 3701 Lockheed Blvd, Alexandria 22306 From I-495, take Rt 1 south 3 mi. to Lockheed Blvd. Turn right on Lockheed and go 0.5 mi. to Harrison Ln to park entrance on left. Meet in parking lot.

Leesylvania State Park (3/11, 4/29) 2001 Daniel K Ludwig Dr, Woodbridge 22191 From I-495, take I-95 south about 14 mi. to exit 156 (Dale City/Rippon Landing/Rt 784). Following the posted highway signs for Leesylvania State Park, exit east on R784. Proceed eastward 1.1 mi. to Rt 1. Turn right (south) on Rt 1 and go 0.9

mi. to Neabsco Rd. Immediately past the Wawa service station, turn left (east) on Neabsco Rd and proceed 2 mi. to park entrance on right. After passing through the park entrance gate, go 2.2 mi. to end of paved road and park in "Picnic Area" parking lot, immediately before turn-around circle at fishing pier. State fee area.

Long Branch Nature Area (3/1, 4/5, 5/3) 625 S Carlin Springs Rd, Arlington 22204 Take Rt 50, east from Fairfax or west from Rosslyn to Carlin Springs exit. Go south on Carlin Springs 0.5 mi. to Nature Center on left, just south of N. Va Community Hospital on left. Meet at Nature Center parking lot.

Mason Neck State Park (2/25) 7301 High Point Rd, Lorton 22079 From I-495, take I-95 south 7 mi. to Lorton exit. Left on Rt 642 to Rt 1. Right on Rt 1 to Rt 242 (Gunston Rd). Left on Rt 242, go 4 mi. to Mason Neck Management Area. Turn right, follow paved road to end at Visitor Center. State fee area.

Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge (3/25) 13950 Dawson Beach Rd, Woodbridge 22192 From I-495, take I-95 south 9 mi. to (left) exit 161 (Woodbridge). Go south on Rt 1 about 2 mi. to left turn onto Dawson Beach Rd. Continue on Dawson Beach 0.7 mi. to entrance gate. Meet in parking lot. US fee area.

Riverbend Park (Visitor Center) (2/18) 8700 Potomac Hills St, Great

Falls 22066 From I-495, take Rt 193 west 5 mi. to Rt 603 (Riverbend Rd). Turn right onto Rt 603, go 2 mi. to Jeffery Rd. Turn right onto Jeffery and go 0.8 mi. to main park entrance sign on right. Turn right and continue 0.5 mi to Visitor Center parking lot. Meet in front of Visitor Center.

Silver Lake Park (4/15) 16198 Silver Lake Rd, Haymarket 20169 From I-495, take I-66 west 24 miles to exit 40 (Rt 15). Turn south onto Rt 15 (toward Haymarket) and go 0.3 miles to Rt 55. Turn right onto Rt 55 and go 0.9 miles to Antioch Rd. Turn right onto Antioch and go 1.3 miles to Silver Lake Rd. Turn right and proceed to park entrance and continue to parking lot next to the lake. Meet in parking lot.

Trillium Trail - G. Richard Thompson Wildlife Management Area (5/6) (Fauquier Co) From I-495, take I-66 west 51 mi. to Linden exit (Rt 79). Go left (south) from exit ramp on Rt 79 approx. 1000 ft. to Rt 55. Turn left (east) onto Rt 55; go 1.2 mi. to Rt 638 (Freezeland Rd). Turn left (north) onto Rt 638. Follow Rt 638, as it bears right, 5.3 mi. to Trillium Trail Parking Area on right—look for sign on kiosk. (Parking Area is just before radio towers.) **Note:** participants must have **access permit** issued by VA Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, www.dgif.virginia.gov, 1-866-721-6911.

Birding in Hungary and the Czech Republic

This past September, NVBC members, Jean Tatalias, Dixie Sommers, and Neal and Pat Gause joined other birders on a cultural and birding tour of Hungary and the Czech Republic. They went on a two-week Victor Emanuel Nature Tours trip led by Rafael Galvez and Balazs Szigeti. These excellent guides were dedicated to spotting and assisting us in viewing birds and other wildlife, doing their utmost to ensure we enjoyed the local food and drink, musical events, and sightseeing, and for Balazs explaining local culture and society. The tour included birding, sightseeing and musical events in Budapest and Prague as well as birding in the countryside's varied habitats from marshes, steppes and forests.

The group saw or heard 147 bird species. For many of us there were significant numbers of life birds. There were wetlands and marshes with wading birds such as Eurasian Spoonbill and Curlew Sandpipers and passerines including Bearded Reedlings, Penduline Tits and Reed Buntings. We had stellar views of Saker Falcons, Imperial Eagle and Red-footed Falcons. The group found seven woodpecker species, including Black and Gray-headed.

Other animals were featured on the tour with a visit to the conservation center for endangered Meadow Vipers, a local naturalist's nest boxes for Forest and Hazel dormice, and a preserved traditional peasant house that had the added surprise of beams hung with four species of bats.

And of course, culture must include the food. We had Hungarian goulash (a soup there, not a stew) and catfish stew, both made with the locally produced paprika. Hungarian meals "always" start with a soup; a couple of marvelous lunches were soup followed by strudel. We enjoyed a banquet of roast pork, chicken, root veggies, and sausage after a tour of a winery. Local grapes saved from the wine vats tasted marvelous—such an intense flavor. In the lake district in the Czech Republic, we had lots of great fish meals. And for one dinner, the first course was what the guides called fish milk. They told us it was "like caviar." It turns out the actual name is fish milt, and it is parallel to caviar, since it's the male fish contribution to the spawning process. Actually it was rich tasting and quite good.

At our last shared dinner, Rafael asked the group to mention their most memorable moments from the tour. Most of us cited birding experiences including the flock of Great Bustards that was seen flying over a field as we drove by in the bus. The birds landed far enough away not to be disturbed by our getting out and slowly approaching within scope and binocular views. Of course during that time Eurasian Kestrels, Marsh Harriers, Common Buzzards and a Hobby flew over the fields. Everyone agreed about the small park within the town limits that seemed unremarkable until someone spotted the first Long-eared Owl perched in a tree. The guides explained that the trees were filled with owls that roosted there for the winter. There were dozens of owls. The medieval walled city of Cesky Krumlov ranked high on our lists not only for its architecture, shops, restaurants and coffee houses but because of the White-throated Dipper seen as we crossed the moat to the city and more dippers seen there before leaving the city. We walked in the Czech Sumava Mountain's Boubin Primeval Forest preserve filled with gigantic trees and mossy growth. We had great looks at Crested and Coal Tits but the forest was the highlight. The musical highlight for many was the spectacular performance by the Prague Philharmonic Orchestra of Martinu's choral masterpiece, Field Mass. The dinner cruise for just the tour group along the Danube included fine food and wonderful views of the illuminated buildings especially the Hungarian Parliament and bridges. All in all a trip full of memories never to be forgotten...

—Jean Tatalias and Pat and Neal Gause
Photographs by Dixie Sommers



*Birds above starting from top:
Eurasian Kestrel above a field in the
Kiskunsag Region, Hungary*

*Long-eared Owl - one of dozens roosting
in a small park in Kiskunfelegyhaza,
Hungary*

*Eurasian Jay outside the walls of Cesky
Krumlov, Czech Republic*

*White-throated Dipper in the water next
to Cesky Krumlov*



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JOIN THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA BIRD CLUB

Northern Virginia Bird Club dues for 2017 are \$10 for Individual and \$15 for Family Membership. Members receive our quarterly newsletter, *The Siskin*. Checks for dues should be sent to Northern Virginia Bird Club, Attn: Membership, P.O. Box 5812, Arlington, VA 22205-0812. Or join or renew online at the club's web site.

If you miss an issue of *The Siskin* or need to report an address or ZIP Code change, please send an email message to lgmeade@gmail.com or leave a message for Elizabeth Fenton at 703-533-0851.

Please note: NVBC does not exchange, give away, or sell its membership lists.

NVBC ON THE WEB

Current information and special notices about NVBC meetings, field trips, and other activities, along with a printable membership form, are posted on the club's website, www.nvabc.org. If you have information or pictures you would like to see on the website, please email the webmaster, Ghazali Raheem, at rgcomm19@gmail.com.

NVBC eMail Exchange

By participating in the club's email exchange, you can get email notices of late updates to *The Siskin* and the field trip schedule. To join the exchange, send an email to lgmeade@gmail.com. Put "EXCHANGE" in the subject field and your full name in the message area. You will receive a response from nvbc-exchange@googlegroups.com. The list is for NVBC members' use only.

General Meeting Dates: February 15, April 19, September 20, and November 15, 2017.

Next Board Meeting: Wednesday, March 1, 2017, 7:30 pm, at Diane Marton's home. All club members are welcome at board meetings. For directions or to have items put on the agenda, please call or email Diane Marton at dsdm42@gmail.com.

Thanks to the mailing crew: Many thanks to the November mail out crew: Robbie Ross, Maxine Sorenson and Joanna Taylor.

Deadline for next issue of *The Siskin*: The April issue will include activities through June 2017. Please send items for publication by **March 15, 2017** to the editors at siskineditor@verizon.net.

CLUB CONTACTS

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