



The SISKIN

Newsletter of the Northern Virginia Bird Club

Vol. 62, No. 4

November 2017

www.nvabc.org

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Insert - 2018 membership renewal notice

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

Winter Chincoteague Trip

The Winter Chincoteague Weekend club trip is scheduled for February 2-4 (Friday to Sunday) co-led by Marc Ribaud and myself. February is an excellent time to visit Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel (CBBT) Islands. The Refuge is loaded with wintering waterfowl while the CBBT is famous for wintering sea ducks. On last year's trip, we tallied 109 species including 21 species of waterfowl. Despite the bitterly cold weather, our highlight sightings at Chincoteague were a male Eurasian Wigeon in Swan Cove and a spectacular flyover of Snow Geese while we were at the beach. At the CBBT Islands, we found Long-tailed Ducks, Great

continued on p.2

NVBC GENERAL MEETING—WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 8 PM

Wood Thrush Research and Conservation

Speaker: Dana McCoskey

Dana McCoskey assisted with the research of Wood Thrushes on their wintering grounds in Costa Rica and then conducted her graduate research with the thrushes on their Indiana breeding grounds as part of a larger Smithsonian Institution project. At George Mason University, she used DNA sequencing and barcoding to develop a novel method to study migratory bird diets and identify prey species that the thrushes in Indiana forage on in different types of forests. Dana's presentation will focus on Wood Thrush research and conservation.

Dana McCoskey is a fish and wildlife ecologist who spent over ten years in the field conducting research on migratory animals, monitoring threatened and endangered species, and studying the effects of land use practices such as forestry, fire, and renewable energy development on animal populations. This work took her into the forests, streams, refuges, and back country of Oregon, Washington, California, Idaho, Nevada, Indiana, Massachusetts, Hawaii and Costa Rica. She is a board member of the DC Audubon Society focused on bird conservation and education. She currently works for Allegheny Science and Technology supporting environmental research initiatives onsite in the US Department of Energy's Water Power Technologies Office.



Wood Thrush Nestlings at Owen-Putnam State Forest and Adult bird at Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge, near Madison, Indiana photographed by Dana McCoskey

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 4.

Presidential Peentings

If you measure your life based on your experiences, then birding should be a perfect match for you. Every life bird is a novelty and every new birding location is an adventure. For beginning birders, these new encounters can sometimes come at a furious pace. I remember when I first started birding, I would often go to Huntley Meadows Park. Usually, it was not a matter of if I would find a lifer there, but how many I would find. I also enjoyed traveling all around the region exploring local birding hotspots that were all new to me. The sense of wonder and discovery was exhilarating. As a birding community, we should all be going the extra mile to encourage beginning birders. They are the future of birding and it's up to us to make sure that they feel included. I have noticed that some new birders these days are strongly focused on the photography aspect of birding. A few do not even carry binoculars and use just their camera to bird. They may miss a few birds that others see, but they can often capture some amazing bird images. I would still recommend that everyone carry binoculars while birding, but to each his own. I want as many people as possible to experience the wonders of the natural world in whatever way is best for them. Also consider the fact that every birder, no matter how experienced, started out as a beginning birder. We need to do our best to inspire new birders so that they keep it up and potentially become valuable advocates for our birds and for the conservation of our environment.

—Larry Meade



Ruby-throated Hummingbird photographed by Larry Meade at Bombay Hook NWR

Winter Chincoteague Trip *from p.1*

Cormorants, Northern Gannets, Purple Sandpipers, Lesser Black-backed Gulls and best of all, Razorbills and Common Eiders.

Plans for the weekend include birding the Chincoteague area Friday afternoon starting at 3:15 pm (optional) and Saturday starting at 7:30 am. Activities on Friday and Saturday include birding along Beach Road, Swan Cove and Tom's Cove and around the Wildlife Loop. Time and tides permitting, we will also visit the Queen Sound Flats, the Chincoteague City mudflats and Mariner's Point.

On Sunday, we will bird Kiptopeke State Park and, time permitting, the Eastern Shore National Wildlife Refuge before our trip to the CBBT Islands. We will be limited to a one hour visit to island #4 due to the construction of a new tunnel between islands #1 and #2 and the storage of construction equipment on island #3. The CBBT trip requires security forms in advance and an extra fee for the security escort. The trip concludes at noon on Sunday.

NVBC membership is required for this trip. **Registration will open on November 15, 2017.** To sign up

for this trip, please email Elton Morel at eltonmorel@verizon.net. The trip is limited to 24 people and usually fills up quickly. Please do not make hotel reservations until your trip registration has been confirmed. When signing up, please indicate whether you are interested in Sunday morning's CBBT Island trip and a Saturday evening group dinner. If the trip is full, your name can be put on a waiting list.

We have obtained a special rate of \$76 per night on twenty rooms for Friday and Saturday nights at the Best Western Chincoteague Island Hotel on Maddox Boulevard. A two-night stay is usually required. Hotel reservations must be made by January 19 to get this special group rate. Participants should make your own reservations by calling 800-553-6117 and be sure to say you are with the Northern Virginia Bird Club. Check-in time is 3 pm on Friday, February 2, with 24-hour notice required for cancellation. Chincoteague NWR is a US fee area.

—Elton Morel

NVBC Announcement: There will not be a club-sponsored Winter Highland County trip.

Youth Birding Scholarship Opportunity

Please spread the word and help support a young birder learn more about the wonders of birding and about this great opportunity.

The Northern Virginia Bird Club is sponsoring the Val Kitchens Memorial Young Birder Scholarship for 2018. We are seeking applicants from 13 to 18 years of age to receive a financial grant of up to \$500 to attend a Virginia Society of Ornithology (VSO) activity, a birding camp, a birding course or educational offering, or a similar activity. Applicants are asked to submit a completed application form with a short essay describing the goals in participating in the planned activity. Candidates will be asked to provide a reference from a member of NVBC, VSO, or from a birder familiar to the club.

The deadline is February 1, 2018. Applications can be submitted as an attachment via email to the Club at lgmeade@gmail.com, or mailed to Northern Virginia Bird Club, Attn: Scholarship, P.O. Box 5812, Arlington, VA 22205-0812.

continued on p.3

Winter Waterfowl Survey

On **Saturday, February 3** and **Sunday, February 4, 2018**, birders of all skill levels will join up to count waterfowl in Fairfax, Arlington, and Prince William counties, including the Potomac and Occoquan watersheds. Novice birders will be paired with expert bird enthusiasts. Larry Cartwright continues as the volunteer compiler for this year's count. For more information and to join the team, email info@audubonva.org or call 703-438-6008.

Treasurer's Report for Fiscal Year 2017

The Club has 366 family and individual memberships, with 500 total members

Income received

Dues for 2017	4,456
Bird Watcher's Digest & pins	20
Donations	<u>181</u>

Total Income \$4,657

Expenses

Organizational costs (includes fees for PO box, Paypal, website hosting, state registration, VSO dues, and supplies)	\$707
Meeting expenses (includes hall rental, speaker honorariums, prizes, refreshments)	1,021
Printing and postage (includes bulk mail permit)	2,515
Scholarships	<u>500</u>

Total expenses \$4,743

Net for 2017 -\$86

The Club anticipated and achieved close to a breakeven budget. Our largest expense area is the printing and mailing of our Siskin newsletter. Members continue to value receiving a mailed copy as well as having the information on our website. Once again the Club awarded a Val Kitchens Memorial scholarship to a youth birder. Net assets at the end of the year were \$7,821.

—Jean Tatalias, Treasurer

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA

Thursday, December 14, 2017

- *BROOKE, VA (Stafford area, lower Potomac)*

Contact coordinators and compiler, Laurel Bybell at lbybell@gmail.com or David Govoni at david.govoni@gmail.com.

Saturday, December 16, 2017

- *WASHINGTON D.C.*

Includes area of Virginia inside the Beltway and parts of Fairfax County south of Alexandria to include Dyke Marsh. To participate, email compiler, Larry Cartwright: prowarbler@verizon.net or contact the Audubon Naturalist Society through Carol Hayes at carol.hayes@anshome.org or call 301-652-9188 extension 10.

Sunday, December 17, 2017

- *MANASSAS-BULL RUN*

To participate, contact Bob Shipman at ships333@yahoo.com; or register online at www.audubonva.org/christmas-bird-count/.

- *SENECA MD/VA*

Count has five Virginia sectors, ranging from Great Falls Park to the eastern corner of Loudoun County. To participate, email compiler Jim Nelson at kingfishers2@verizon.net.

- *THE PLAINS/AIRLIE*

To participate, email compiler, Sue Garvin at Environmental Studies on the Piedmont, sgarvin@envstudies.org.

Saturday, December 23, 2017

- *CALMES NECK*

Parts of western Loudoun and eastern Clarke counties. The cutoff date to join up to participate is December 18. Contact compiler, Margaret Wester at margaretwester@hotmail.com

- *NOKESVILLE*

For more information or to register, contact Kim Hosen at 703-499-4954 or khosen@pwconserve.org.

Thursday, December 28, 2017

- *CENTRAL LOUDOUN*

Sign up at www.loudounwildlife.org or contact compiler, Joe Coleman: 540-554-2542 or joecoleman@rstarmail.com.

Sunday, December 31, 2017

- *FORT BELVOIR*

Contact compiler, Kurt Gaskill at kurtcapt87@verizon.net or 703-768-2172.

- *SUGARLOAF MOUNTAIN*

Lucketts Sector is in northern Loudoun County. To participate contact sector leader, Gerco Hoogeweg: at drgerco@hotmail.com

- *WALKERTON*

Count area is primarily in Middle Peninsula. Contact by December 16. Contact compiler, Fred Atwood at fredatwood@yahoo.com.

Youth Birding Scholarship from p. 2

The scholarship application form and program guidelines are available online at www.nvabc.org/youth-birding-scholarship-opportunity.

For more information, interested parties can call David Farner at 443-643-6141 or Ghazali Raheem at 703-563-3810, send an email to the Club at lgmeade@gmail.com or contact other Officers or Directors listed in the Club Contacts list on the back page of the newsletter.

—Ghazali Raheem



10% Birder Discount to NVBC members at Birdwatchers Seed and Supply Company.

Mention you are in the club at checkout.

Address: 396 Maple Avenue East (corner of Beulah Rd) in Vienna
703-242-4565

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/trips.htm>.
- To receive email notices, join the NVBC eMail Exchange. For sign-up directions see back page of the newsletter.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																					
<u>November</u>																											
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">Trip Leaders</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Dave Boltz</td> <td style="text-align: right;">703-599-8305</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Larry Cartwright</td> <td style="text-align: right;">703-941-3142</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Kenneth Hunt</td> <td style="text-align: right;">319-354-1079</td> </tr> <tr> <td>David Ledwith</td> <td style="text-align: right;">703-933-9477</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Larry Meade</td> <td style="text-align: right;">703-206-9030</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Elton Morel</td> <td style="text-align: right;">703-553-4860</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tom Nardone</td> <td style="text-align: right;">703-946-7738</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Marc Ribaldo</td> <td style="text-align: right;">703-680-1134</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Phil Silas</td> <td style="text-align: right;">703-590-7286</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dixie Sommers</td> <td style="text-align: right;">703-969-7931</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jean Tatalias</td> <td style="text-align: right;">571-447-7977</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Trip Leaders		Dave Boltz	703-599-8305	Larry Cartwright	703-941-3142	Kenneth Hunt	319-354-1079	David Ledwith	703-933-9477	Larry Meade	703-206-9030	Elton Morel	703-553-4860	Tom Nardone	703-946-7738	Marc Ribaldo	703-680-1134	Phil Silas	703-590-7286	Dixie Sommers	703-969-7931	Jean Tatalias	571-447-7977	<p>8 8:30 AM Huntley Meadows Dixie Sommers</p>	<p>11 8 AM Bristoe Station Battlefield Park Marc Ribaldo David Ledwith</p>
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		<p>NVBC Meeting 8 PM</p>			<p>25 8 AM Aquia Landing Elton Morel David Ledwith</p>																						
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December 14, 2017 - January 5, 2018— CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA (See p. 3)

DIRECTIONS

NVBC Meeting (11/15) 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 (11/25)
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.

Blandy Experimental Farm/State Arboretum of Virginia (12/2) 400 Blandy Farm Ln, Boyce, 22620 Take I-66 west to Rt 17 north (Exit 23, Delaplane/Paris). Follow Rt 17 north to junction with Rt 50 west. Turn left at traffic light onto Rt 50/17; go 7.8

mi., turn left onto Rt 750 to the Arboretum.

Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park (11/11) 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.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
January			3 8:30 am Long Branch Tom Nardone			6 8 AM Northern Neck X-trip <i>Members only/</i> <i>Reservations required</i> email leader Larry Meade
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Bird Walks at Local Parks</p> <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 in front of the snack bar/concession stand at the Park Visitor Center. • Huntley Meadows Park, Mondays, 7 am (Mar-Oct) 8 am (Nov-Feb) Meet in parking lot. Leader: Harry Glasgow </div>			10 8:30 AM Burke Lake Mark Ribaud			13 8 AM Riverbend-Visitor Ctr Larry Cartwright David Ledwith
			17 8:30 AM Huntley Meadows Dixie Sommers			20 8 AM Leesylvania SP Phil Silas Marc Ribaud
			24 8:30 AM Dyke Marsh Larry Cartwright			27 8 AM Occoquan Bay NWR Marc Ribaud Kenneth Hunt
			31 8:30 AM Royal Lake - Lakeside Park Phil Silas Jean Tatalias	February		2-4 Chincoteague Weekend <i>Members only/Reservations required</i> Elton Morel Marc Ribaud

Burke Lake Park (1/10) 7315 Ox Rd, Fairfax Station 22039 From I-495, take exit 54 west (Braddock Rd). If coming from the North, stay in right lane of exit. Go 1.5 mi. on Braddock Rd then left onto Burke Lake 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).

Cub Run Stream Valley Park (11/15) Between 15075 and 15077 Stillfield Pl, Centreville 20120 Take I-66 west to exit 52, (Rte 29 to Centreville), right onto Rt 29. Drive 1.25 mi. and turn right on Pleasant Valley Rd. Proceed north on Pleasant Valley for about 0.75 mi. and turn right on Stillfield Pl. Proceed about 0.7 mi. to meeting place on right.

Dyke Marsh (11/29, 1/24) 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.

Huntley Meadows Park (11/8, 1/17) 3701 Lockheed Blvd, Alexandria

22306 From I-495, take Rt 1 south 3 mi. to Lockheed Blvd. Right on Lockheed; go 0.5 mi. to Harrison Ln, park entrance on left. Meet in parking lot.

Leesylvania State Park (1/20) 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 Rt 784. 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 turnaround circle at fishing pier. State fee area.

Long Branch Nature Area (12/6, 1/3) 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 (12/9) 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.

Northern Neck X-trip (1/6) Meet at the Silver Diner, 6592 Springfield Mall. From the Beltway, take I-95 south to exit 169A (Springfield/Franconia) (Rt 644E). From exit ramp, turn right onto Franconia Rd E. Stay in the right lane. Go about 0.3 mi. on Franconia Rd E, past Loisdale Rd, and turn right into Springfield Mall. Go about 325 ft; turn left and go about 150 ft; then turn left again and go another 200 ft to the Silver Diner on the left.

Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge (1/27) 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.

Report from Hog Island

This summer I attended Hog Island's Coastal Maine Bird Studies for Teens in midcoast Maine.

Hog Island is a great opportunity for birders of all ages to see the unique wildlife of Maine. Hog Island is a small, 330-acre island in Muscongus Bay with a rocky coast and spruce-fir forests. The scenery is beautiful and the buildings on Hog Island are as well: most of them were built in the nineteenth century.

Although Hog Island itself is extremely unique, the people are what really make it amazing. During the week I was able to meet fellow young birders from all over the country that shared my passion for birds.

Every evening at camp we ate dinner in the Bridge (the lobster is absolutely delicious) and then regrouped at the Fish House, where we listened to the evening presentation, which varied from identifying birds by song to bird photography.

We went birding around the island every day, seeing lots of the breeding warblers, kinglets and Winter Wrens, as well as Black Guillemots, Common Eiders, scoters, and Common Loons on the bay. We also went owling the first night and heard a Northern Saw-whet Owl.

Aside from birding on Hog Island, we stopped at some nearby locations on the mainland, seeing lots of interesting species, including Ruffed Grouse, Bobolink, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, and a great diversity of dragonflies and damselflies. Probably the most interesting location we visited was Hidden Valley Nature Center, where we explored a kettle-hole bog covered in

carnivorous plants such as pitcher plants and bladderwort. On our last day of camp we sailed to Burnt Island, where we did some bird banding. Many species were banded, including Red-breasted Nuthatch, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and White-throated Sparrow. There, we saw a large flock of Red Crossbills.

The most special day at camp was visiting Eastern Egg Rock, the seven-acre island known for its Atlantic Puffins, which Steve Kress reintroduced after they were extirpated from the bay due to overhunting. We landed on the island and were taken to the blinds, where I was able to watch the puffins at close range for about an hour and a half, which I consider the most exhilarating and memorable birding experience of my life.

The puffins weren't the only amazing bird we saw. The Black Guillemots, Common Eiders, and Razorbills were fun to watch, as well as Arctic and Roseate Terns, both of which are rare breeders and birds I had never seen before.

Overall, Hog Island is a truly magical place with some amazing people that share your passion, and unique birds that you don't get to see every day. It is a life-changing experience that I highly recommend.

—Max Nootbaar

2017 Recipient of the NVBC's

Val Kitchens Memorial Young Birder Scholarship

Note: see more about Max's week on Hog Island on his blog: blueridgebirder.wordpress.com



Atlantic Puffin at Eastern Egg Rock
Photographs by Max Nootbaar



Black Guillemots



Razorbills

Trip Directions *from page 5*

Riverbend Park (Visitor Center) (1/13) 8700 Potomac Hills St, Great Falls 22066 From I-495, take Rt 193 west 5 mi. to Rt 603 (Riverbend Rd). Right onto Rt 603, go 2 mi. to Jeffery Rd. Right onto Jeffery; 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.

Royal Lake - Lakeside Park (1/31) 5216 Pommeroy Dr, Fairfax 22032 From I-495, take exit to VA-620 (Braddock Rd) and continue on Braddock Rd for 2.36 mi. Turn left onto Rt 651, Guinea Rd continue .64 mi. and stay straight at intersection onto Commonwealth Blvd (do not turn left to follow Guinea Rd) for .4 mi. Turn left on Pommeroy Dr and then turn right at the intersection with Bronte Dr to the entrance leading to the parking lot.

Silver Lake Park (11/18) 16198 Silver Lake Rd, Haymarket 20169 From I-495, take I-66 west 24 mi. to exit 40 (Rt 15). Turn south onto Rt 15 (toward Haymarket) and go 0.3 mi. to Rt 55. Turn right onto Rt 55 and go 0.9 mi. to Antioch Rd. Turn right onto Antioch and go 1.3 mi. to Silver Lake Rd. Turn right and proceed to park entrance and continue to parking lot next to the lake. Meet in parking lot.

Observing Mississippi Kites in Northern Virginia

During the spring and summer of 2017, I had the opportunity to closely monitor two local nestings of Mississippi Kites (*Ictinia mississippiensis*), one near the Green Spring Gardens Park in Fairfax County and a second one near Monticello Park in Alexandria. There were at least five pairs of Mississippi Kites reported nesting in Northern Virginia in 2017.

The Green Spring pair returned to nest in the same tree in which they had nested in 2016. They successfully hatched and fledged two chicks. I began monitoring and photographing in mid-July after the chicks were hatched, but still in the nest.

In Alexandria, in May, before the kites actually established their nest, there were as many as six Mississippi kites (two adults, two second year, sub-adults, and two of undetermined age) flying and soaring over the area. It was a great show to watch. I was also able to observe these kites mate several times as well as construct their new nest. This pair hatched two and fledged one chick. The other chick was found dead at the base of the nest tree.

As interesting as the nest and young kites were, I found watching the adult birds fly and hunt to be especially satisfying. This is a truly beautiful and elegant bird, which can just sit on the wind, navigate with its tail, and then execute almost instantaneous and stunning dives after insect prey. I also thought that the interaction between the adults and the juveniles, and between the two fledged juveniles at the Green Spring nesting to be both interesting and educational.

The adults at the Alexandria nesting frequently left the juvenile alone, and unfed, for a long periods of time, perhaps an hour or more. On one occasion, I saw a crow land very near the Alexandria nest, which caused the juvenile to call incessantly, but no adult appeared to protect it. Somehow the juvenile persevered and fledged.

Meanwhile, at Green Spring, both of the adults fed the chicks at least every five or ten minutes and sometimes more often. The adults came in again and again with the cicadas for their offspring. And, in late August, when a Red-shouldered Hawk got too near the snag on which the juveniles were perched, they both begin calling, took off in flight, and within 15 to 20 seconds an adult kite came swooping out of the sky to chase the hawk away.

On another occasion, as the Green Spring adults continued to bring in cicadas, they always seemed to feed the same juvenile, although the other juvenile was calling and begging for his share. I began to wonder if the unfed juvenile would be OK, when suddenly it peeled off the snag, did a swooping dive through the yard (as I had seen the adults do to catch insect prey) and landed in a nearby tree; then it took off and started soaring over the whole area, until it saw the adult coming back, when it made a beeline for the snag hoping to get the next cicada. What fun to watch !!

The kites from all of the nestings left on their migration to South America shortly before Labor Day. I suppose we shall

never know which of them did or didn't make it successfully.

Presumably, next spring the same or different pairs of adults will return to nest in Northern Virginia again. The easiest and best time to see them is when they first arrive and are still looking for a nesting location. They often fly and soar extensively at that time, usually in very late April or early May.

I have posted 46 of my photographs from the Alexandria and Green Spring nestings on my nature blog at Skybirdsvie.blogspot.com.

—Donald Sweig



Mississippi Kite chicks in nest near Green Spring Park, July 22, 2017



Fledged juvenile Mississippi Kite chicks from Green Spring nest, August 25, 2017



Adult Mississippi Kite bringing a cicada to juveniles, August 25, 2017

NORTHERN VIRGINIA BIRD CLUB
P.O. BOX 5812
ARLINGTON, VA 22205-0812

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
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**DATED
MATERIAL**

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, <http://www.nvabc.org/join/>.

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 WebmasterNVBC@gmail.com.

.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: November 15, 2017, February 21, and April 18, 2018.

Next Board Meeting: Wednesday, December 6, 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.

Thanks to the mailing crew: Many thanks to the August mail out crew:

Sally Carson, Elizabeth Fenton, Jane Grawe, Maxine Sorenson, Jean Tatalias and Joanna Taylor

Deadline for next issue of *The Siskin*: The February issue will

include activities through April 2018. Please send items for publication by January 1, 2018 to the editors at siskineditor@verizon.net.

CLUB CONTACTS

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Phil Silas, 703-590-7286, Joanna Taylor, 703-243-5989

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Administrator, NVBC Facebook

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