Rappahannock River Valley National
Wildlife Refuge
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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
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http://www.fws.gov

September 2007

Scarlet Tanager
Les Brooks

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Rappahannock River Valley

National Wildlife Refuge

Birds

This goose, designed by J.N. "Ding" Darling, has become a symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1996, with a goal of protecting 20,000 acres along a 65-mile stretch of the lower Rappahannock River. As of June 2007, the refuge consisted of 17 tracts, distributed on both sides of the river, totaling 7,711 acres. This total includes 1,359 acres in conservation easements.

Hardwood and pine forests, steep shady ravines, forested swamps, tidal marshes, wet meadows, ponds, and grasslands make up the diverse habitats which have attracted about 208 species of birds. An additional 22 species are listed as rare, accidental, or infrequent occurrences.

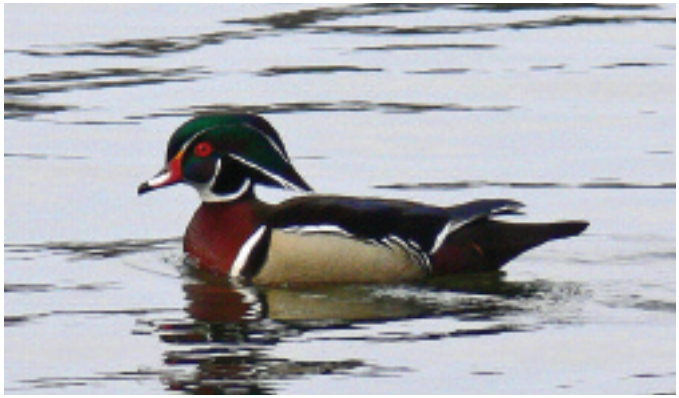
Focus species or suites include bald eagles, waterfowl, forest interior birds, grassland birds, shrub/early succession species, and marshbirds. Several refuge tracts lie within one of the most important concentration areas for bald eagles in the Chesapeake Bay region. Winter counts recorded a peak of nearly 400 eagles. Barn owls also nest in the high cliffs of this area. Three of the refuge tracts are destinations on the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail. The Lower Rappahannock Important Bird Area, designated on the basis of the bald eagles, barn owls, Virginia's only population of the coastal plain swamp sparrow, and other birds of conservation concern, includes 8 refuge tracts.

The Wilna tract, open to the public year round from sunrise to sunset, offers a great diversity of bird watching opportunities throughout the year.

Les Brooks

Blue grosbeak

In spring and summer, grassland and shrub birds include grasshopper sparrow, eastern meadowlark, dickcissel, eastern kingbird, yellow-breasted chat, indigo bunting, blue grosbeak, prairie warbler, eastern towhee, American woodcock, bobwhite quail, wild turkey, American kestrel, and perhaps a barn owl. In the forested trails near Wilna Pond, look or listen for scarlet tanager, summer tanager, orchard oriole, northern parula, prothonotary warbler, Louisiana waterthrush, yellow-throated warbler, Kentucky warbler, yellow-throated vireo, and red-tailed and red-shouldered hawks. Check the pond too for wood duck, red-winged blackbird, green heron, and great blue heron. The shallow end contains many snags—there you might find pileated and red-headed woodpeckers any time of the year. Also in the spring or summer walk along the deep forest trail to find black and white warbler, hooded warbler, wood thrush, ovenbird, Acadian flycatcher, and maybe a Chuck-will's-widow, great horned or barred owl.



Larry Meade

Wood duck

During spring migration, these same forests are also stopovers for beautiful long distance migrants such as: magnolia warbler; blue-winged warbler; American redstart; black throated blue and black-throated green warblers; yellow warbler; Blackburnian warbler; mourning warbler; warbling vireo and blue-headed warbler; veery; and Swainson's thrush. Check the grasslands too for bobolinks dancing across the tops of the grasses.

In winter, the river and its tributaries teem with waterfowl. The sounds of geese and swans can be heard from miles away. Many grassland species winter here: northern harrier; Cooper's hawk; sharp-shinned hawk; savannah sparrow; swamp sparrow; horned lark; American pipit; dark-eyed junco and white-throated sparrow. In the flocks of mixed blackbirds, you might spot a few rusty blackbirds. Return to the forest trails to see if you can find kinglets, brown creeper, and winter wren amidst all the robins and scores of grackles.

We are continuously working to enhance our visitor services program and facilities. Please check with the refuge headquarters to learn about other birding opportunities.

Season

Sp	Spring	March – May
S	Summer	June – August
F	Fall	September – November
W	Winter	December – February

- Birds known to nest on or near the refuge
  Italics indicate threatened/endangered species

Relative Abundance

Relative abundance indicates how frequently you might see a bird in its favored habitat.

a	abundant	a species which is very numerous
c	common	likely to be seen or heard in suitable habitat
u	uncommon	present, but not certain to be seen
o	occasional	seen only a few times during a season
r	rare	may be present but not every year

		Sp	S	F	W
Swans – Geese – Ducks					
___	Snow Goose	o			o
___	• Canada Goose	a	c	a	a
___	• Mute Swan	o	o	o	o
___	Tundra Swan	c		u	a
___	• Wood Duck	c	c	c	c
___	Gadwall	u		u	u
___	American Wigeon	u		u	u
___	• American Black Duck	u	u	c	c
___	• Mallard	c	c	c	a
___	Blue-winged Teal	c		o	c
___	Northern Shoveler	c		o	c
___	Northern Pintail	c		o	c
___	Green-winged Teal	c		u	c
___	Canvasback	o			a
___	Ring-necked Duck	c		o	c
___	Greater Scaup	u		u	u
___	Lesser Scaup	c		u	c
___	Long-tailed Duck	o		o	o
___	Bufflehead	c		c	a
___	Common Goldeneye	o			o
___	Hooded Merganser	c		c	c
___	Common Merganser	c		c	c
___	Red-breasted Merganser	c		c	c
___	Ruddy Duck	c		c	a

Larry Lynch

Red-tailed hawk

	Sp	S	F	W
GALLINACEOUS BIRDS				
___ • Wild Turkey	c	c	c	c
___ • Northern Bobwhite	o/u	c	c	o/u
LOONS				
___ Red-throated Loon				r
___ Common Loon	u		c	c
GREBES				
___ Pied-billed Grebe	c	r	u	u
___ Horned Grebe	o		u	o
PELICANS				
___ Brown Pelican				o
CORMORANTS				
___ Double-crested Cormorant	c	c	c	c

	Sp	S	F	W
BITTERNS – HERONS - EGRETS				
___ American Bittern	r	u	r	r
___ • Least Bittern	c	c		
___ • Great Blue Heron	c	c	c	c
___ Great Egret	o	o	o	
___ • Green Heron	c	c	c	
___ Black-crowned Night-Heron	o	o		r
___ Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	r			
NEW WORLD VULTURES				
___ • Black Vulture	c	c	c	c
___ • Turkey Vulture	c	c	c	c
OSPREY – KITES – HAWKS - EAGLES				
___ • Osprey	c	c		
___ • Bald Eagle	a	c	c	a
___ Sharp-shinned Hawk	c	c	c	c
___ • Cooper's Hawk	o	o	c	c
___ • Red-shouldered Hawk	c	c	c	c
___ Broad-winged Hawk	o		o	
___ • Red-tailed Hawk	c	c	c	c
___ Rough-legged Hawk			r	r
___ Northern Harrier	u		u	c
FALCONS - CARCARAS				
___ Peregrine Falcon	r		r	
___ • American Kestrel	c	o	c	c
___ Merlin	r		r	
RAILS				
___ Clapper Rail	r	r	r	
___ • King Rail	u	u	u	
___ • Virginia Rail	c	u	u	
___ Sora	r		r	
___ Common Moorhen	r			
___ American Coot	u		o	r
CRANES				
___ Sandhill Crane			r	r
PLOVERS				
___ Semipalmated Plover			r	
___ • Killdeer	c	c	c	c

	Sp	S	F	W
SANDPIPERS - PHALAROPES				
___ Greater Yellowlegs	c		u	
___ Lesser Yellowlegs	u		u	
___ Solitary Sandpiper	u		u	
___ • Spotted Sandpiper	u	u	u	
___ Least Sandpiper	r			
___ Pectoral Sandpiper			r	
___ Dunlin	r		r	r
___ Stilt Sandpiper			r	
___ Wilson's Snipe	u	u	u	u
___ • American Woodcock	c	u	u	c
SKUAS – JAEGERS – GULLS – TERNS				
___ Laughing Gull	c	c	c	
___ Bonaparte's Gull	r		r	r
___ Ring-billed Gull	c	c	c	c
___ Herring Gull	c	c	c	c
___ Great Black-backed Gull	c	c	c	c
___ Caspian Tern	u	o	u	
___ Royal Tern	c	c	c	
___ Common Tern	r		r	
___ Forster's Tern	c	o	c	
___ Least Tern	u	u	u	
___ Black Tern	r		o	
PIGEONS - DOVES				
___ • Mourning Dove	a	a	a	a
___ • Rock Pigeon	c	c	c	c
CUCKOOS – ANIS				
___ • Black-billed Cuckoo	o	o	o	
___ • Yellow-billed Cuckoo	c	c	c	

Larry Lynch

American Woodcock chick

Teta Kain

Chuck-will's widow

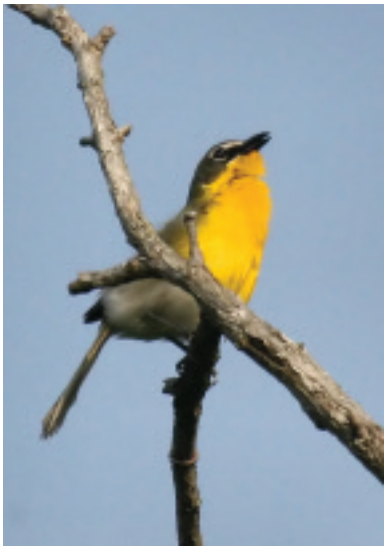
	Sp	S	F	W
BARN OWLS				
___ • Barn Owl	c	c	c	c
TYPICAL OWLS				
___ • Great Horned Owl	c	c	c	c
___ • Eastern Screech Owl	c	c	c	c
___ • Barred Owl	c	c	c	c
___ Long-eared Owl				r
___ Short-eared Owl			r	r
NIGHTJARS				
___ Common Nighthawk	c	u	u	
___ • Chuck-will's-widow	c	c	u	
___ • Whip-poor-will	u	u	u	
SWIFTS				
___ • Chimney Swift	c	c	c	
HUMMINGBIRDS				
___ • Ruby-throated Hummingbird	c	c	c	
KINGFISHER				
___ • Belted Kingfisher	c	c	c	c
WOODPECKER				
___ • Red-headed Woodpecker	u	u	u	u
___ • Red-bellied Woodpecker	c	c	c	c
___ Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	u	r	u	c
___ • Downy Woodpecker	c	c	c	c
___ • Hairy Woodpecker	o	o	o	o
___ • Northern Flicker	c	c	c	c
___ • Pileated Woodpecker	c	c	c	c

John Drummond

Grasshopper sparrow

	Sp	S	F	W
TYRANT FLYCATCHERS				
___ Olive-sided Flycatcher			r	
___ • Eastern Wood-Pewee	c	c	c	
___ Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	r		r	
___ • Acadian Flycatcher	c	c	c	
___ • Willow Flycatcher	o	o	r	
___ Least Flycatcher	r	r		
___ • Eastern Phoebe	c	c	c	c
___ • Great Crested Flycatcher	c	c	c	
___ • Eastern Kingbird	c	c	c	
VIREOS				
___ • White-eyed Vireo	c	c	c	
___ Warbling Vireo	r		r	
___ • Yellow-throated Vireo	c	c	c	
___ Blue-headed Vireo	o	o	o	
___ • Red-eyed Vireo	c	c	c	
CROWS – JAYS – MAGPIES				
___ • Blue Jay	c	c	c	c
___ • American Crow	c	c	c	c
___ Fish Crow	u	u	u	u
LARKS				
___ Horned Lark	u		u	a/u
SWALLOWS				
___ • Purple Martin	c	c	c	
___ • Tree Swallow	a	c	c	
___ • Northern Rough-winged Swallow	o	o	u	
___ Bank Swallow	r	u	r	
___ • Cliff Swallow	r	o	r	
___ • Barn Swallow	a	a	c	

	Sp	S	F	W
TITMICE - CHICKADEES				
___ • Carolina Chickadee	c	c	c	c
___ • Tufted Titmouse	c	c	c	c
NUTHATCHES				
___ Red-breasted Nuthatch	o		o	o
___ • White-breasted Nuthatch	c	c	c	c
___ Brown-headed Nuthatch	o		o	o
CREEPERS				
___ Brown Creeper	o		u	c
WRENS				
___ • Carolina Wren	c	c	c	c
___ • House Wren	o	o	o	r
___ Winter Wren	o		o	o
___ Sedge Wren		r		
___ • Marsh Wren	c	c	c	u
KINGLETS				
___ Golden-crowned Kinglet.	u		u	c
___ Ruby-crowned Kinglet	u		u	c
OLD WORLD WARBLERS				
___ • Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	c	c	c	



Les Brooks

Yellow breasted chat

	Sp	S	F	W
THRUSHES				
___ • Eastern Bluebird	c	c	c	c
___ Veery	u		u	
___ Gray-cheeked Thrush	r		r	
___ Bicknell's Thrush	r		r	
___ Swainson's Thrush	o		o	
___ Hermit Thrush	u		u	c
___ • Wood Thrush	c	c	c	
___ • American Robin	c	c	c	a
MIMIC THRUSHES				
___ • Gray Catbird	c	c	c	u
___ • Northern Mockingbird	c	c	c	c
___ • Brown Thrasher	c	c	c	u
STARLINGS				
___ • European Starling	c	c	c	a
WAGTAILS - PIPITS				
___ American Pipit	r		r	u/a
WAXWINGS				
___ • Cedar Waxwing	c	u	c	c
WOOD WARBLERS				
___ Blue-winged Warbler	u		r	
___ Orange-crowned Warbler	r		r	r
___ Nashville Warbler			r	
___ • Northern Parula	c	c	u	
___ • Yellow Warbler	c	c	u	
___ Chestnut-sided Warbler	u		u	
___ Magnolia Warbler	u		u	
___ Cape May Warbler	u		u	

Les Brooks

Cedar waxwing

Larry Meade

Prothonotary warbler

	Sp	S	F	W
___ Black-throated Blue Warbler	c		u	
___ Yellow-rumped Warbler	c		a	a
___ Black-throated Green Warbler	u		u	
___ Blackburnian Warbler	o		r	
___ • Yellow-throated Warbler	c	c	u	
___ • Pine Warbler	c	c	c	o
___ • Prairie Warbler	c	c	c	
___ Palm Warbler	u		u	r
___ Bay-breasted Warbler	u		u	
___ Blackpoll Warbler	c		u	
___ Cerulean Warbler.	r			
___ • Black-and-white Warbler	c	c	u	
___ American Redstart	c		u	
___ • Prothonotary Warbler	c	c	u	
___ • Worm-eating Warbler	c	c	u	
___ Swainson's Warbler	r	r		
___ • Ovenbird	c	c	u	
___ Northern Waterthrush	u		u	
___ • Louisiana Waterthrush	c	u	u	
___ • Kentucky Warbler	c	u	u	
___ Mourning Warbler	o		u	
___ • Common Yellowthroat	c	c	c	o
___ • Hooded Warbler	c	c	u	
___ Canada Warbler	r		r	
___ • Yellow-breasted Chat	c	c	c	

Les Brooks

Baltimore oriole

	Sp	S	F	W
TANAGERS				
___ • Summer Tanager	c	c	c	
___ • Scarlet Tanager	c	c	c	
SPARROWS - TOWHEES				
___ • Eastern Towhee	c	c	c	c
___ American Tree Sparrow	r			r
___ • Chipping Sparrow	c	c	c	c
___ Clay-colored Sparrow				r
___ • Field Sparrow	c	c	c	c
___ Vesper Sparrow			r	
___ Savannah Sparrow.	u		c	a
___ • Grasshopper Sparrow	c	c	u	
___ Le Conte's Sparrow				r
___ • Seaside Sparrow	c	c	u	
___ Fox Sparrow				u
___ • Song Sparrow	c	c	c	c
___ Lincoln's Sparrow			r	
___ Swamp Sparrow	c		c	c
___ • Coastal Plain Swamp Sparrow (subsp)	c	c		
___ White-crowned Sparrow				u
___ White-throated Sparrow	c		c	a
___ Dark-eyed Junco	c		c	a

	Sp	S	F	W
CARDINALS – GROSBEAKS - ALLIES				
___ • Northern Cardinal	c	c	c	c
___ Rose-breasted Grosbeak	u		u	
___ • Blue Grosbeak	c	c	u	
___ • Indigo Bunting	c	c	c	
___ • Dickcissel	u	u		
BLACKBIRDS - ORIOLES				
___ Bobolink	u		u	
___ • Red-winged Blackbird	a	a	a	a
___ • Eastern Meadowlark	c	c	c	c
___ Rusty Blackbird			o	u
___ • Common Grackle	c	c	c	a
___ • Brown-headed Cowbird	c	c	c	c
___ • Orchard Oriole	c	c	o	
___ Baltimore Oriole	u		u	
FINCHES				
___ Purple Finch	u		u	u
___ • House Finch	c	c	c	c
___ White-winged Crossbill				r
___ • American Goldfinch	a	c	c	a
Old World Sparrows				
___ • House Sparrow	u	u	u	u

Les Brooks

Singing Dickcissel