



# Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas 2

**A note from the Atlas Coordinator Ashley Peele, PhD**

The second Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas project (VABBA2) is a five-year volunteer-driven effort to document the occurrence and distribution of all bird species that breed in VA. Throughout the first spring, summer, and fall of the VABBA2, I've been impressed time and again with the leadership shown by Atlas volunteers. Whether it's eBird tutoring, leading field trips, or just talking about the project with their buddies, many folks have helped make the 2016 season a success. Now, we've got four years to go and a lot of ground to cover. Yet, the more Virginia birders I meet, the more confident I am we can achieve our goals.

**Let's continue to promote a message of hands-on conservation and volunteer for the VABBA2 in 2017!**

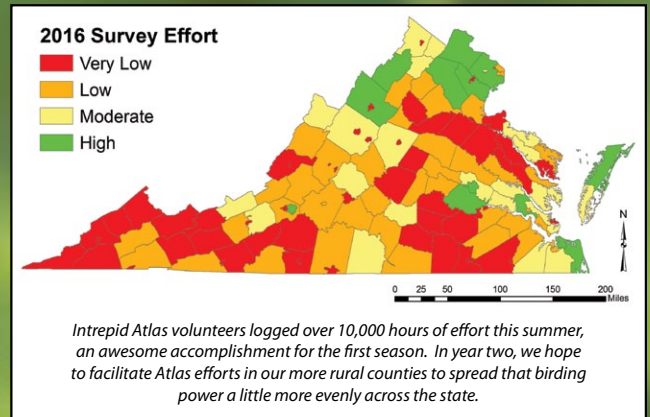
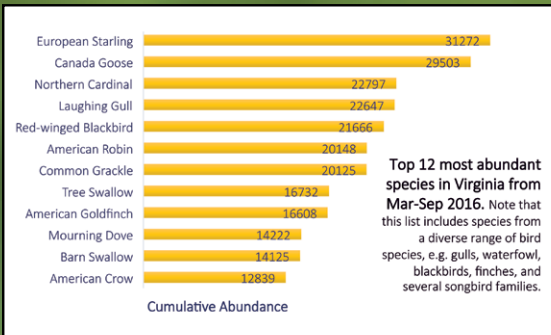
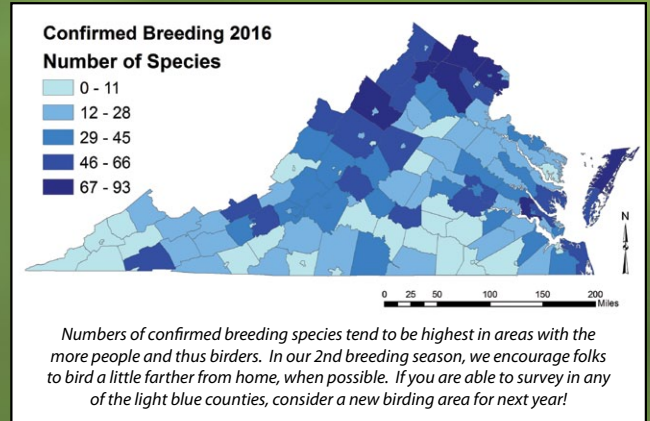
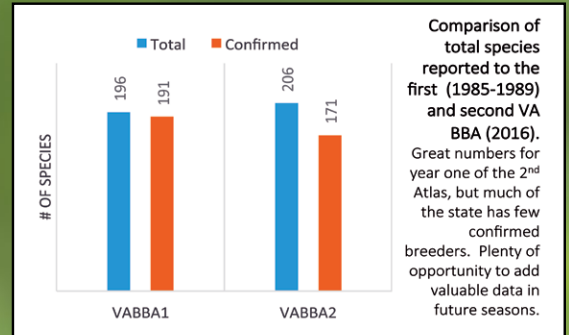


## VABBA Breeders for the First Time in 2016

- Mississippi Kite
- Common Merganser
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
- Magnolia Warbler
- Yellow-rumped Warbler
- Sandhill Crane\*

\*This species was not a confirmed breeder, but it is notable that a pair of Sandhill cranes spent the summer in region 3 and demonstrated courtship behavior while there. Perhaps a breeding confirmation will be possible in 2017!

(Sandhill Crane photo by Kim Harrell)



**Bird on Virginia!**  
[www.vabba2.org](http://www.vabba2.org)

## Species Profile: Common Merganser (*Mergus merganser*)

In the eastern US, this large, predatory duck species typically breeds in northern boreal forest areas. However, their range continues to expand south following large rivers into Maryland and Virginia. This year, an Atlas volunteer documented a female with four chicks on the Shenandoah river, the first breeding confirmation for a VA BBA. Other volunteers documented pairs of Common Merganser on rivers throughout western VA. Exciting evidence of a possible range expansion, these data also highlight the value of a BBA to better our knowledge of Virginia's avifauna. It's amazing what a paddle down the river or on the local dam can turn up!

(Photos by Bob Schamerhorn • [www.iPhotoBirds.com](http://www.iPhotoBirds.com))

