



# The Goldfinch

Newsletter of the Howard County Bird Club  
A Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society  
[www.howardbirds.org](http://www.howardbirds.org)



## CLUB MEETINGS - BY [JANE GEUDER](#)

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**PLEASE NOTE THAT CLUB MEETINGS AT ROBINSON NATURE CENTER WILL NOW START HALF AN HOUR EARLIER:  
7:00 p.m. SOCIAL TIME, 7:30 p.m. OFFICIAL MEETING**

Thursday, September 10, 2015 "Behind the Scenes of the MD/DC Records Committee," by Phil Davis. Having served as the committee secretary for 20 years, Phil will outline the history, role, and functions of the committee and share images of and anecdotes about some of our region's more unusual and interesting records. Some tales of little-known vintage records will comprise a future publication, *The History of the Rare Birds of Maryland and the District of Columbia*. Phil has spoken to our club in the past.

Thursday, October 8, 2015 "The Physics and Evolution of Flight," by Tom Reider. How did birds gain such fluid movement to become airborne, stay aloft, and land safely? What adaptations allow birds to specialize in speed, hovering, and slow flight? Tom will answer these questions using pictures, models, feathers, and bones. Tom is retired from the aircraft flight simulation industry. Growing up near Hawk Mountain, he spent many hours observing the flight of raptors

**Meetings are at the Robinson Nature Center**, 6692 Cedar Lane, Columbia MD 21044. Hospitality at 7:00 p.m. Meeting with program begins at 7:30 p.m. Nature Center doors unlocked at 6:45 p.m. and locked again at 7:45 p.m. There is no admission charge. For further information call Robin Todd at 410-491-5333

### TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

If you were interested in seeing the following raptors during the fall season in Howard County, what month would be best for A. Broad-winged Hawk, B. Golden Eagle, C. Sharp-shinned Hawk?

[Answer](#) on page 8.



Broad-winged Hawk *by Richard Orr*

## PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

BY ROBIN TODD

As I sit down to write this, a hot, soggy and rather bird-less summer day looms. But when you read this, the first brisk days of Fall will be beckoning and migrants will have started to wend their way south. The 44<sup>th</sup> year of the Club will have begun.

My first year as president has been more enjoyable and less arduous than expected (hope I am not jinxing the second year). This has been due to the enthusiasm, energy, and

[\(President's Welcome continued on page 3\)](#)

## FALL FIELD TRIPS BY [JOE HANFMAN](#) & [BONNIE OTT](#)

**Field trips** are a great way to improve birding skills, explore new places and meet other birders. Arrive at the meeting site ready to leave at the designated time with appropriate footwear and gear. Carpooling is strongly encouraged. The leader may cancel due to inclement weather/hazardous driving conditions. Directions for trips not on ADC maps are on the Club's website. Questions? Contact the trip leader or Field Trip Coordinator Joe Hanfman at [auk1844@gmail.com](mailto:auk1844@gmail.com). HCBC members receive priority on trips that are limited by number of participants. No pets.

### **Butterflies through Binoculars – Lake Elkhorn Powerline Vegetation Management Study Tract**

September 5, Saturday, 9:30 a.m. (2-3 hours). *Meet at Elkhorn Garden Plots, Oakland Mills Rd opposite Dasher Ct.* Enjoy searching for late summer butterflies, and receive expert instruction on their identification. Dick will add information about caterpillar host and adult nectar plants as we encounter various species. Easy walking in the garden plot and on paved paths and mowed areas near the right-of-way alongside open, flowery, wet meadows and brushy hillsides. Bring close-focus binoculars to view nectaring behavior; Dick will also use net and jars to provide brief close-up examinations if requested. Cancelled if raining or overcast. No facilities.

Leader - Dick Smith, [RichardSmith9070@verizon.net](mailto:RichardSmith9070@verizon.net) or 410-997-7439.

### **Rockburn Branch Park**

September 6, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. (half day). *Meet in parking lot on the left just past the restored schoolhouse, 6105 Rockburn Branch Rd (West).* Moderate walking through the woods and fields of our largest county park looking for migrants. Paths may be muddy. Facilities available.

Leaders - Karen and Kevin Heffernan, [KJHeff@aol.com](mailto:KJHeff@aol.com) or 410-418-8731.

### **Middle Patuxent Environmental Area**

September 10, Thursday 7:30 a.m. (half day). *Meet at the Clegg Meadow off South Wind Cir, Columbia, MD 21044.*

Moderate walking through wooded trails and along the river. Great area for migrants of all species. Field edges and thickets provide sparrow habitat. If time and birds warrant, we will also do the Trotter Rd. Loop. Prepare for wet grass and mud on the trails.

Anyone is welcome to contribute articles or ideas which you think will be of interest to other birders. Copy may be sent to

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4209 Hermitage Drive  
Ellicott City, MD 21042-6235  
[howard21042@verizon.net](mailto:howard21042@verizon.net)

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Howard Patterson, *Editor*  
Joanne Solem, *Proofreader*

No facilities.

Leader - Joe Hanfman, [auk1844@gmail.com](mailto:auk1844@gmail.com) or 410-772-8424

### **Howard County Conservancy at Mt Pleasant Farm**

September 12, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Two hour bird walk followed by a four hour hawk watch. *Meet at parking lot.* Easy walking through the fields of Mt. Pleasant Farm. Tree lines, hedgerows, and streams provide opportunity for non-meadow species. Great opportunity for flyovers. Facilities available.

Leader - Mike Kerwin, [m63kerwin@verizon.net](mailto:m63kerwin@verizon.net) or 410-461-2408

### **Howard County Conservancy at Mt Pleasant Farm**

September 16, Wednesday, 7:30 a.m. Half day. *Meet at parking lot.* Easy walking through the fields of Mt. Pleasant Farm. Tree lines, hedgerows, and streams provide opportunity for non-meadow species. Great opportunity for flyovers. Facilities available.

Leader - Warren Cummings, [wcummings9@gmail.com](mailto:wcummings9@gmail.com), or 410-925-1809

### **Fall Count**

September 19, Saturday. See [page 10](#) for details. Please go to the following link to sign up. <http://howardbirds.org/howard/counts.htm>

### **Lake Elkhorn**

October 3, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. (2-3 hours.) *Meet at Dockside Parking lot.* Easy walking along the lake and to Forebay Pond. Migrants will be moving through. Warblers are generally in abundance. The lake can turn up interesting surprises. Hawks are also possible flying over. No facilities.

Leader – Allen Lewis, [allenlewis@gmail.com](mailto:allenlewis@gmail.com)

### **Sparrow Big Day**

October 17, Saturday (all day). **Reservations required.** Limit: 12 people. Search the wetland and dry fields in this intensive search for as many sparrows as possible. Going for 12 species! Previous years have turned up non-sparrow rarities! Expect difficult walking for most of the day. Knee boots a must. Facilities at some spots. Contact Bonnie Ott, [bonnieott@verizon.net](mailto:bonnieott@verizon.net), or 443-285-3302 to sign up and get information.

### **West Friendship Park**

October 18, Sunday, 7:45 a.m. (half day). *Meet at shopping center just west of Rt. 32 and Rt. 144. Will carpool to nearby park.* Moderate walking along field edges and through stream valleys. Small ponds may have some surprises. Expect wet areas.

(Field Trips continued from page 2)

Rustic facilities.

Leader - Jeff Culler, [cullersfuls@hotmail.com](mailto:cullersfuls@hotmail.com) or 410-465-9006

### **Fungi Search**

October 24, Saturday, afternoon. (date subject to change). Explore local parkland for a variety of fall fungi. Site to be determined. May be cancelled if weather has been exceedingly dry. Contact Bob/Jo Solem at [odenata@msn.com](mailto:odenata@msn.com)

### **Howard County Conservancy at Mt Pleasant Farm**

October 25, Sunday, 7:30 a.m. (half day). Meet at parking lot. Joint trip with the Baltimore Bird Club. Easy walking through the fields of Mt. Pleasant Farm. Tree lines, hedgerows, and streams provide opportunity for non-meadow species. Great opportunity for flyovers. Facilities available. Leader - Joe Hanfman, [auk1844@gmail.com](mailto:auk1844@gmail.com) or 410-772-8424

### **Centennial Park**

November 1, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours. (Daylight Saving Time ends). Meet at west end parking lot off Centennial Lane. Easy walking on paved path around Centennial Lake. Woodlands, fields, and water host a wide variety of species. Great view of the sky for flyovers. Early waterfowl, lingering migrants likely. Facilities available. Leaders - Karen and Kevin Heffernan, [KJHeff@aol.com](mailto:KJHeff@aol.com) or 410-418-8731

### **SHARPS AT WATERFORD FARM**

November 7, Saturday 8:00 a.m. (half day). Meet at farm parking area, through barns on right. Rte. 97 S. to right on Jennings Chapel Rd., 1 mile to right into farm at sign. Moderate walking over crop stubble, farm roads, and paths on this working farm. Fields with crop residue, extensive woodlands, Cattail Creek and floodplain, three ponds, and five shallow waterfowl impoundments make for diverse habitats and good birding opportunities. Port-a-pots available. Knee-high waterproof footwear is advisable for part of hike.


Leader – Wes Earp, [wesandsue@gmail.com](mailto:wesandsue@gmail.com) or 410-531-3197

### **Howard County Conservancy at Mt Pleasant Farm**

Hawk Watch, November 7, Saturday, 9:30 a.m. (half day). Meet at parking lot. This trip will be strictly a sky watch for late migrating raptors and other potential goodies. Our main target will be Golden Eagle; while not expected, early November is the best time to catch one flying over Howard County. Last year a half day sky watch less than a mile from this location produced an immature Golden Eagle and a Sandhill Crane, along with good numbers of Bald Eagles and Red-tailed Hawks, plus Northern Harriers, accipiters, and some waterfowl. We will watch the skies and tally the birds as long as conditions are productive. Hope for a north wind! Bring water, lunch, hat, sunscreen, light-colored sunglasses, comfortable lawn chair (recliners are best), binocular, scope, and camera if you like. Participants can also walk the Conservancy trails if sky-watching proves non-productive. Facilities available. Leader – Russ Ruffing, [ruff2@verizon.net](mailto:ruff2@verizon.net)

### **Centennial Park**

November 8, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours. Meet at west end parking lot off Centennial Lane. Easy walking on paved path around Centennial Lake. Woodlands, fields, and water host a wide variety of species. Great view of the sky for flyovers. Facilities available. Leader – Mike Kerwin, [m63kerwin@verizon.net](mailto:m63kerwin@verizon.net) or 410-461-2408

 = Great for beginning birders

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(President's Welcome continued from page 1)  
support of you, the members. Thank you.

As you surely know, birds and their habitats are under threat on many fronts. Therefore, please participate in calls to our legislators, media, and organizations and corporations to urge their support for bird-friendly measures and against those harmful to birds.

As in my first welcome letter, I ask that you tell me if there are things which the Club should be doing (or should not be doing).

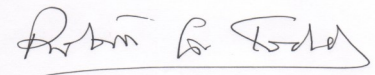
And please encourage non-birders to come to our meetings and our field trips. There are potential converts in that check-out line, among those families getting their kids on to the school bus, or with co-workers in that van pool.

I am always impressed by the dedication, ability, and energy of our members in volunteering for the Club. Some of these good folk have been doing so for years. Please feel free to step up and volunteer to spread the load. You will find it a rewarding experience.

Finally, I look forward to seeing you on field trips and at Club meetings. Meetings are on the second Thursday of the month at the Robinson Nature Center. Please note the new earlier start time: 7:00 p.m. for hospitality, followed by the meeting at 7:30 p.m. In the September 10<sup>th</sup> meeting, Phil Davis will explain the rigorous fact-checking that underpins the MD/DC Records Committee's decisions on species occurrence in our area.

So until then – good birding!

Best regards,



Robin Todd  
President

## SPRING BIRD RECORDS: MARCH 1 – MAY 31, 2015

BY [JOANNE SOLEM](#)

Too cold, too hot, badly timed rain, winds from the wrong direction: Are birders ever satisfied? Birding relies heavily on weather patterns which are never perfect. Spring weather was definitely not perfect. Winter continued well into March with ice covering the reservoirs until mid-month; above average rainfall almost eliminated shorebird habitat; and hot, dry weather during much of May contributed to a mediocre passerine migration. Despite the weather, there were a few choice sightings. Three Trumpeter Swans on Lake Elkhorn could be a new county species, while Little Gull and Least Tern were notable records. Other fine reports were Little Blue Heron, nesting Osprey, and Rough-legged Hawk.

A **Snow Goose** over Mt. Pleasant (MTPLT) 4/7 set a new late date (**MKw**) [4/6/92 M. Wallace, 4/6/13 M. Kerwin, 4/6/14 R. Peters]. A **Cackling Goose** over Cavey La 3/16 was the second latest (**RRf**). **Canada Goose** migration peaked from 3/13 with 2,400 (**BO**) at Centennial Park (CENPK) to 3/16 with a high of 6,009 over Cavey La (**RRf**). Almost 20 **Tundra Swan** records clustered in mid to late March, with the last two at Fulton 4/29 (**JHf**). The biggest surprise of the season was three **Trumpeter Swans** photographed on Lake Elkhorn during the late afternoon



Trumpeter Swans

by Albert Holm

of 5/19 (**AHm**). The observer contacted two friends (**G&SMY**) who arrived shortly before the birds lifted off and continued west. If accepted by the Maryland/DC Records Committee, this would constitute a new county record! Speculation is that these birds were the same ones that had spent time at Patuxent Refuge last winter.

Most waterfowl went through in low numbers. Two Gadwalls at Waterford 5/18 were the second latest ever (**DCm, HPt, NM, JS**), while the season's high count was 21 at Race Rd 3/23 (**JHf**). The last **Blue-winged Teal** was noted at Big Branch 4/10 (**DCm**); two **American Black Ducks** at Race Rd 4/2 were the second latest record (**NM**); 132 waxy (perhaps truly wild?) **Mallards** at Waterford (WATFD) 3/21 were unusual (**WE+**); while six **Northern Shovelers** and two **Northern Pintails** on the same field trip were

also noteworthy (**WE+**). A few **Redheads** passed through. **Ring-necked Duck** numbers were strangely low. A **Greater Scaup** at a pond along Marriottsville Rd on 4/30 established a new late date (**JCu**) [4/29/03 B. Ott]. **Red-breasted Merganser** reports were surprisingly numerous; in contrast, for the second consecutive spring, **Ruddy Ducks** were few.

Sightings of **Ring-necked Pheasants** along Long Corner Rd 3/6 (**INg**) and east of Pigtail 3/26 (**RPo**) could both be traced to releases—more's the pity. **Wild Turkeys** turned up in a number of locations including five in a Linden Church Rd yard 3/20 (**HFk**); the season's final two were at Henryton (HENPV) 5/25 (**MKw**).

A **Pied-billed Grebe** on 5/22 at Lake Kittamaqundi established the second latest date (**CKc**). Three **American Bittern** sightings were nice: David Force WMA 4/27 (**BO**), Cavey La (flyover) 5/5 (**JHf, RRf**), and a McNeal Rd pond 5/9 (**MW**). Breeding **Great Blue Herons** continued to do well at Vantage Point with at least 28 active nests on 3/26 (**JS, ROOr**). An adult **Little Blue Heron** was a treat at CENPK on 4/27 (**JCu**), the first since 2011. **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** were elusive. One was photographed in a small wetland at Mt. Hebron H. S. on 4/8 (**BDb**); one was heard at 11:00 p.m. at Elkhorn 4/12 (**SCI**); and one was present briefly at Elkhorn 5/11 (**ALw**).

**Ospreys** built a nest on a grain storage tower visible from Michele Dr 5/20 (**WE; MW**). This is the first verified report in many decades. Viewed from afar, the **Bald Eagle** nest at the U. of MD Farm contained an adult and two nestlings on 4/27 (**G&MMcC**). On 3/2, when winter still prevailed, an observer in Dorsey Hall was reduced to raiding her pantry after running out of seed. In desperation, she tossed out an English muffin for the crows. Instead, an adult **Red-shouldered Hawk** dropped onto the muffin, began eating it, then picked it up and continued its break-



Rough-legged Hawk

by Bonnie Ott

fast in a nearby tree (**AA**). As usual, Red-shouldered nested near Forebay with at least two nestlings on 5/14 (**SN**). **Broad-winged Hawks** arrived 4/11: Cavey La (**RRf-2**), MTPLT (**MKw-2**), and Annapolis Rock (**DCm-1**). Quick eyes (and equally quick camera work) caught a **Rough-legged Hawk** over Meadowbrook 3/7

(**BO**), the first county report since 2008!

A **Virginia Rail** and a **Sora** were tallied at the U. of MD Farm  
[\(Records continued on page 5\)](#)



*(Records continued from page 4)*

5/9 (**MMcC, ANw**), the only spring date birders have access to the swale. The last two **American Coots** were spotted on May Count 5/9: Loyola Pond, E. Col. (**SN**) and a McNeal Rd pond (**MW**).

Shorebird numbers were few and diversity low. High water levels meant there was little habitat available. The last two **Semipalmated Plovers** were seen at WATFD 5/18 (**DCm+**). The 49 **Wilson's Snipe** on the Alpha Ridge Landfill trip 4/4 were the season's high (**JHf+**). **American Woodcock** reports, with two exceptions, were all in March beginning with a photo of one standing on the ice-covered pond at Warfield's Pond Park 3/8 (**HMz**). The hot spot for sightings was Hipsley Mill; other woodcock were present at Stephens Rd 3/9 (**TFe-5**), a W. Friendship yard 3/10 (**LCg-1**), a Jessup yard 3/15+ (**R&RnP-2**), MTPLT 3/16 (**WMk-2**), private property near MD100/Owings Overlook 3/25 (**BMy-1**), and Brush Run, E. Col. 4/27 (**JW**).

A flock of 250 **Bonaparte's Gulls** at CENPK 4/12 was the largest of the season, tying the record for the second largest ever (**JHf, RHI**). What was even more exciting was that an adult **Little Gull** was traveling with them, the county's second record, just one year after the first. The 165 **Ring-billed Gulls** at Fulton 3/27 were a fine number (**JHf**). Two **Least Terns** at Fulton 5/30 were the third record (**JHf**). Soon after the sighting they continued north, much to the disappointment of local birders. All **Caspian Tern** sightings were in April with no more than three at once.

This spring it was easier to find a **Black-billed Cuckoo** than a **Yellow-billed**. The former were reported from half a dozen locations; Cavey La again hosted two for several weeks in early May (**RRf**). Seldom are all three owl species heard in proximity. That happened at 5:00 a.m. at HENPV 5/9 (**RRf, MRg**). One or two **Eastern Screech-Owls** roosted in a box at Timberleigh in late winter/early spring, but did not nest or, if they attempted, were unsuccessful (**DNg**). A **Great Horned Owl** nest along Florence Rd contained two nestlings on 4/21 (**NM**).

**Common Nighthawks** moved through from 5/5 at Burleigh Manor (**MKw-3**) to 5/25 at Jamina Downs (**EHS-2**). **Eastern Whip-poor-wills** in this county have been reduced from regular breeders to scarce and elusive migrants. One reported at 7:30 a.m. 4/6 just west of the bridge at HENPV was described as calling consistently for almost four minutes (**EHS**). In this county, the floodplain is definitely an odd location for this species.

The first **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** arrived at a Bushy Park feeder 4/13 (*vide* **BHi**). **Red-headed Woodpeckers** made a good showing with the long-present adult continuing at Linden Church Rd feeders into May (**HFk**); two appeared at Timberleigh 5/25 (**DNg**). The last **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** lingered until 5/6 at Cavey La (**SCI, JS, NM**). Two **Pileated Woodpeckers** were seen at a cavity at Lake Kittamaquidi 4/26 (**CKc**). On 5/19 at MPEA, an interaction between a Pileated and a black rat snake was video

recorded (**KS**).

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Four **American Kestrels** at the landfill 4/4 (**JHf+**) were a nice number for this increasingly scarce breeder and migrant. One at W. Friendship Pk 4/9 was at a consistent location (**LCg**). **Merlins** were reported from CENPK 3/9 (**BO**), MTPLT 4/5 (**RHI**), and MD 100/103 on 4/11 (**KS**). A **Peregrine Falcon** flew over Florence Rd 3/9 (**EHS**); another was spotted along the Patapsco, east of Morgan Station Rd 5/9 (**SE**).

The season's only **Olive-sided Flycatcher** appeared briefly at Manahan Dr 5/19 (**BO**). A record early **Alder Flycatcher** arrived at MPEA 5/8 (**JS**) [5/9/02 H. Holbrook]; it proved elusive, but that one (or another) was photographed and recorded at the same location 5/23 (**DCm**). One at Meadowbrook 5/23 (**BO**) was much more cooperative. **Least Flycatchers** were all seen within a narrow window: 5/22 MPEA (**RHI; J&JnHf**), 5/23 MTPLT (**MKw+**), and 5/25 HENPV (**KS**). Eight **Eastern Phoebes** were at Centennial 3/1 (**BO**).

The first **Blue-headed Vireo** sighted was at Marriottsville 4/7 (**JW**); the final one, at MPEA 5/22, was the third latest (**RHI**). A **Warbling Vireo** at Cavey La 4/18 established a new arrival date (**RRf**) [4/19/04 M. Eames; 4/19/11 R. Ruffing].

**Common Ravens** were widely reported, mostly near the reservoirs or along the northern border of the county. The pair at Duckett Dam moved their nest to the Howard County side this year. The nesting was successful. A WSSC employee reported seeing three at the dam on 5/28; on 6/6, he counted five (**TFy**).

A **Horned Lark** flock of 21 was reported at Underwood Rd 3/7 (**DCm, EHS**). About 1,000 swallows (mostly **Trees**) at CENPK 4/8 must have been an arresting sight (**RRf**). Two **Rough-winged Swallows** were observed nest building in a riverbank at HENPV 4/30 (**KTf, KLI**). **Bank Swallows** were reported from 4/25 at CENPK (**JHf-1**) to 5/14 at WATFD (**ALw-1**). **Cliff Swallows** on 4/14 were late in arriving at Brighton Dam (**DCm**).

A lingering **Red-breasted Nuthatch** at the Girl Scout Camp, Ilchester 5/9 was a special bird for a winter that produced few (**AVS, RQo**). The first two **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** were spotted at CENPK 4/1 (**MEk**). **Golden-crowned Kinglets** continued their winter scarcity. Thrush migration could only be described as lack-luster. Several **Gray-cheekeds** were noted. **Swainson's** moved through mostly the third week of May. Three spent a week prior to 5/23 at Mt. Albert adding their lovely songs to that of the local residents (**M&GMcC**). The last one was tallied at Elkhorn 5/31 (**ALw**), the third latest record. **Cedar Waxwings** were scarce until mid-May.

Warbler migration was slow. Large numbers never appeared, a situation I would like to believe was solely weather-related. May was one of the hottest on record, with few storm fronts materializing to ground migrants. A notable exception was **Northern Wa-**

[\*\(Records continued on page 6\)\*](#)

*(Records continued from page 5)*

**terthrush.** That species was reported from at least 10 sites for more than a month; many were singing. A **Black-and-white Warbler** at MPEA 4/4 was the second earliest (**JHr**). Three **Prothonotary** reports were nice: 5/2 Forebay (**ALw-1**), 5/21 MTPLT (**KnHf, HPt**), and 5/29 more than a mile west of Daniels (**BO; JHf**). One **Nashville** was heard at MPEA 5/13 (**NM, JS, JHf, CSt**). A single **Mourning** report came from Marriottsville 5/19 (**GRk**). A **Kentucky** along Schooley Mill Rd 4/26 tied the third earliest arrival date (**JW**). An early **Cape May** was spotted at Elkhorn 5/1 (**SCI**). **Ceruleans** again nested along the Patapsco from Marriottsville to HENPV (m. obs.) The species was also reported on 5/9 from the Savage Mill Trail and near the county line along the Patuxent River (**BNw**). A **Bay-breasted** at Cavey La 5/14 was a fine spring record (**RRf**). A **Blackburnian** at HENPV 4/22 was the third earliest (**RHI**). **Palm** numbers were low, as were **Yellow-rumpeds**. Despite searching, **Yellow-throateds** were not detected until 4/19, at Daniels (**BO, ph.**) The **Pine** that appeared at an Elkhorn feeder 1/26 was last seen 3/20 (**SCI**). The two **Prairies** sighted at CENPK 4/15 tied the second earliest date (**RHI**). Likewise, a **Wilson's** at CENPK 4/24 was the second earliest (**BO**).

Almost all **American Tree Sparrows** departed by the end of March. The last reported was at CENPK 4/6 (**MEk**). Two **Vespers** at MTPLT 4/7 (**JHf**) stayed at least five days (m. obs.). Two were also noted at the Franciscan Friary on Folly Quarter Rd 4/29 (**M&GMcC**). The high count of **Fox Sparrows** was nine at Schooley Mill Pk 3/24 (**JHr**). Spring's only **Lincoln's** turned up at Western Reg. Pk 5/12 (**BO**). The season's last **White-crowned Sparrow** was at W. Friendship Pk 5/9 (**JCu, DCm**).

Thirteen **Scarlet Tanagers** were counted at HENPV 5/9 (**KS, FLv**). A leucistic **Northern Cardinal** was at Font Hill Wetland Park 5/15 (**MKw**). On 4/26, a cardinal nest in Allview contained four eggs (**ESu**).

Birds are adaptable. **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** (**POs, HFk, R&JGr, M&GMcC, JS**), **Blue Grosbeak** (**HFk**), and **Indigo Bunting** (**H&CPt**) were all reported at feeders, something that would have been an extreme rarity decades ago. **Bobolink** numbers were low. An interestingly patterned leuistic **Red-winged Blackbird** spent late April to May 20 visiting a Forsythe Rd feeder (**MSd**).



Bobolink

by Kevin Heffernan

It was heartening to receive reports of **Eastern Meadowlarks** from five locations with ten at the landfill 4/4 (**JHf+**) and six at W. Friendship Pk 4/9 (**LCg**). **Rusty Blackbirds** wintered at the

Florence Rd silage pit; the peak spring number was 45 on 3/9 (**BO, JS, ROR**). Small numbers turned up at half a dozen other locations with the last one at Gwynn Acres Path 5/3 (**MRg**).



Baltimore Oriole

by Connie Perry

A **Baltimore Oriole** photographed in Clemens Crossing, W. Col. on 3/18 was not a wildly early migrant (**LHt**). Connie Perry, a neighbor on an adjacent street, mentioned that for the last three years, a male had appeared at her feeders (ph.) in December and stayed until sometime in the spring!

April is the month to look for **Purple Finches**. The highest numbers were that month, mostly in the west. The high was 39 at Duvall Rd on 4/11 (**KTf**). **Common Redpolls** were few with reports from Heatherwood Way 3/13 (**SHs**) and 3/21 (**RRf**), and W. Friendship 3/19 (**JW**). **Pine Siskins** visited many feeders. Numbers were usually single digits with 17 the high at Diversified La 3/10 (**Kn&KHf**). A few were still reported at Cavey La 5/27 (**RRf**).

**Drones:** Will drones become a problem for local birds? One was photographed at Elkhorn on 3/9. It flew over a flock of **Ring-billed Gulls**, startling them into flight (**J&CW**).

**Correction:** The lingering **Nashville Warbler** at MTPLT was last seen on 1/5/15 (**KS**), a new late date [12/06/12 M Bowen+].

Many thanks to Nancy Magnusson, Joe Hanfman, and Howard Patterson for edits and corrections.

**Abbreviations:** CENPK – Centennial Park, HENPV – Henrynton, Patapsco Valley State Park, MPEA – Middle Patuxent Environmental Area, MTPLT – Mount Pleasant, ph. – photograph.

**Observers:** AA – Annette Allor, LCg – Lisa Colangelo, SCI – Steve Collins, JCu – Jeff Culler, DCm – David Cummings, BDb – Beth Dobbs, SE – Sue Earp, WE – Wes Earp, MEk – Mary Erickson, TFe – Tom Feild, HFk – Harry Fink, TFy – Tony Frye, JnHf – Jane Hanfman, JHf – Joe Hanfman, JHr – John Harris, KHf – Kevin Heffernan, KnHf – Karen Heffernan, BHi – Bill Hill, RHI – Russell Hillsley, AHm – Albert Holm, SHs – Scott Houston, EHs – Ed Huestis, LHt – Linda Hunt, MKw – Mike Kerwin, CKc – Clayton Koonce, ALw – Allen Lewis, KLI – Kathie Lillie, FLv – Felicia Lovelett, NM – Nancy Magnusson, GMcC – Grazina McClure, MMcC – Mike McClure, WMk – Woody Merkle, HMz – Helen Metzman, BMy – Bryan Moody, GMy – Guy Moody, SMY – Susan Moody, DNg – Diane Nagengast, ING – Ian Nagengast, SN – Sue Neri, BNw – Ben Newton, ANw – Anne Nowicki, ROR – Richard Orr, POs – Peter Osenton, BO – Bonnie Ott, CPt – Carolyn Patterson, HPt – Howard Patterson, RPt – Richard Peters, RnPt – Renee Peters, RPo – Ron Polniaszek, RQo – Rodolpho Quinio, GRk – Gene Ricks, MRg – Matt Rogosky, RRF – Russ Ruffing, MSd – Martha Schmidt, KS – Kurt Schwarz, JS – Jo Solem, CSt – Chuck Stirrat, ESu – Eva Sunell, KTF – Kate Tufts, AVS – Anthony Van Schoor, MW – Mark Wallace, CW – Carol Wilkinson, JW – Jim Wilkinson.

## MOS 2015 SCHOLARSHIPS ANNOUNCED

BY KATE TUFTS

If you are a teacher or naturalist involved with conservation and environmental education, here is your chance to apply for a scholarship to the Hog Island Audubon Camp in Bremen, Maine. The Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) annually awards a number of scholarships which include tuition, room and board for a five or six day intensive course of study in ornithology, ecology, conservation, and natural history. Travel arrangements and costs are the recipient's responsibility.

The Hog Island Audubon Camps are known for their high levels of instruction by top-notch educators such as Pete Dunne, Scott Weidensaul, and Steve Kress. The location is stunning and the food is first rate.

Tentatively, courses offered for 2016 scholarships will be as follows:

- Joy of Birding: June 5 - 10
- Field Ornithology: June 12 - 17
- Hands-on Bird Science: June 19 - 24
- Raptor Rapture: July 10 - 15
- Sharing Nature: an Educator's Week: July 17 - 22

For details regarding the application process, please check the MOS web site: [www.mdbirds.org](http://www.mdbirds.org) and click on "Education."

Scholarships are also available for the Maryland Bird and Bird Habitats program co-sponsored with Washington College Center for Environment and Society, Chestertown, Maryland. Details to follow on [www.mdbirds.org](http://www.mdbirds.org).

## THE HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB

WELCOMES THE FOLLOWING

NEW MEMBERS

APRIL 1—JULY 31, 2015

- Mark Baker
- Marc & Jennifer Baldwin
- Barbara Denney
- Candice Discepolo
- Robert Gladding
- Margaret Kraak and Morgan Vanderhei
- Mary Pagan
- Carolyn Parsa
- Alan Patterson
- Patricia Pitts
- Dane Ratajski
- Meneka Rodrigo

## SEED SALE ANNOUNCEMENT

BY WARD EBERT

Kevin Cassidy, the owner of The Wildlife Authority, has agreed to again host our seed sale. The sale will be held on Saturday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, and again this year customers will have the option to pick up their orders any day through the following Saturday if they are unable to do so on the 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Around the first or second week of September an order form will be sent by mail and by email, as well as posted on the Howard County Bird Club website. Seed can be picked up from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Saturday (see website for hours on other days) at The Wildlife Authority, 3275 Bethany Lane, Suite B, Ellicott City, MD 21042. Please visit their website, [www.wildlifeauthority.com](http://www.wildlifeauthority.com), for a map and more information.

As in the past, our net proceeds from the seed sale will be contributed to conservation causes. Over the years the Howard County Bird Club has contributed more than \$71,000 to various conservation organizations for habitat preservation. See our website for a list of locations and organizations benefited by your support. The vast majority of these funds have come from the seed sales, so please stock up on seed and help the birds!

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS

Board meetings are held the fourth Thursday of the month at 7:30 p.m., unless otherwise noted, at the home of the board member listed. If directions are required, please call the hosting board member.

September 24, 2015

Robin Todd  
10174 Green Clover Drive  
Ellicott City, MD 21042  
Totnesman@aol.com, 410-491-5333

October 22, 2015

Karen Heffernan  
9775 Diversified Lane  
Ellicott City, MD 21042  
Khdarcy4@aol.com, 410-418-8731

## HOWARD COUNTY MAY COUNT RESULTS

BY [KEVIN HEFFERNAN](#)

Fifty-nine birders participated in the 68<sup>th</sup> annual May Count which was held on May 9, 2015. The day was cloudy with periods of light rain and temperatures in the 70's. The 136 total species was the lowest total since 1998 and the total number of birds (13,334) was the lowest since 1993. A total of 230 species have been seen over the 42 years that the count has been run by the Howard County Bird Club. Seventy-seven species have been seen every year while 21 species have been seen only once. No species was seen for the first time this year.

Four species established or tied all-time high counts: Bald Eagle (9), Peregrine Falcon (1), Eastern Screech-Owl (4), and Common Raven (5). An additional seven species reached or tied 10 year high counts including American Bittern, American Coot, Great Horned Owl, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, American Pipit, Yellow-throated Warbler, and Cerulean Warbler.

No species had an all-time low count. Twenty-two species had 10 year low counts including Great Blue Heron, Spotted Sandpiper, Solitary Sandpiper, Eastern Phoebe, Barn Swallow, Eastern Bluebird, Veery, Swainson's Thrush, Gray Catbird, Northern Mockingbird, Cedar Waxwing, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Black-throated Blue, Blackpoll, and Canada Warblers, Northern Waterthrush, Yellow-breasted Chat, Bobolink, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, and Baltimore Oriole.

Sora was seen for the eighth time, Virginia Rail for the sixth time, and Common Raven for the fourth time. The rarest bird of the count was Peregrine Falcon which was seen only for the second time. Both Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs were missed for the first time since 1996 and Great Egret's string of 11 years in a row ended. Warblers showed the starkest result. The 913 total warblers and the 26 total warbler species were the lowest and second lowest respectively since the May Count switched to the second week of May in 1988. We also have to go back to prior to 1988 to have lower numbers of Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Black-throated Green, and Blackpoll Warblers and Northern Waterthrush.

A [compilation spreadsheet](#) of the May Count data from 1974 through 2015 can be found on the Howard County Bird club website.

Many thanks to our compiler, Chuck Stirrat. His tireless efforts and attention to detail make this task much easier than it would otherwise be. I also want to thank the Area Coordinators, Bill Hill, Tom Strikwerda, Chuck Stirrat, Mike McClure, Karen Heffernan, Bonnie Ott, and John McKitterick. Finally, I want to give a special thanks to Kathie and Ralph Lillie for volunteering to host the tally rally. Their hospitality is always very much

appreciated.

And to the following participants, a big thank you; without you, these counts could not happen: Dena and Scott Berglund, Dennis Coskren, Jeff Culler, Ralph Cullison, David Cummings, Sue Earp, Wes Earp, Ward Ebert, Tom Feild, Ralph Geuder, Joe Hanfman, John Harris, **Karen Heffernan (Area 5 Coordinator)**, **Kevin Heffernan (May Count Coordinator)**, **Bill Hill (Area 1 Coordinator)**, Gayle Hill, Russ Hillsley, Ed Huestis, Mike Kerwin, Brenda Kidera, Geraldine King, Mike Leumas, Allen Lewis, Kathie Lillie, Felicia Lovelett, Nancy Magnusson, Grazina McClure, **Mike McClure (Area 4 Coordinator)**, **John McKitterick (Area 7 Coordinator)**, Woody Merkle, Barry Miller, Sue Muller, Sue Neri, Anne Nowicki, **Bonnie Ott (Area 6 Coordinator)**, Howard Patterson, Rodolpho Quinio, Ryan Peters, Ron and Sue Polniaszek, Derek and Frances Richardson, Matt Rogosky, Russ Ruffing, David Sandler, Kurt Schwarz, Jay Sheppard, Jo Solem, Michelle Stewart, **Chuck Stirrat (Area 3 Coordinator)**, **Tom Strikwerda (Area 2 Coordinator)**, Marcie Stutzman, Eva Sunell, Kate Tufts, Anthony Van Schoor, Mark Wallace, Jim Wilkinson, and Paul Zucker.

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### WREN VS. FLICKER

BY WES EARP

We had just returned from errands when I noticed a Northern Flicker on the ground in our South Trotter Road back yard. It was probing the ground repeatedly and I could see mud on its bill. It kept at it for minutes, so I finally got my binoculars.

As I was watching the flicker, trying to figure out what it was eating, all of a sudden it was slammed sideways by an LBJ (Little Brown Job). While not rolled off its feet, the flicker was solidly struck. The binocular tunnel vision kept me from seeing the approaching House Wren. It attempted a dozen or more additional attacks, but the flicker would look up and the wren would veer off. It managed to strike the flicker only one more time.

The flicker continued probing the area well after the wren left. After it flew off, I went out to find a disheveled ant mound with adults about the ground. Since the adults were plentiful but the flicker repeatedly searched and then stopped to feed, I assume it was probing for the larvae.

The wren's behavior may be explained by the fact that it had an active nest ten feet away.

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#### TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE ANSWER:

- A. September (Broad-winged Hawk)
- B. November (Golden Eagle)
- C. October (Sharp-shinned Hawk)



## HOWARD COUNTY MAY COUNT RESULTS - MAY 9, 2015

Canada Goose	665
Wood Duck	24
Mallard	98
Wild Turkey	9
Double-crested Cormorant	8
American Bittern	1
Great Blue Heron	35
Green Heron	30
Black-crowned Night-Heron	1
Black Vulture	88
Turkey Vulture	207
Osprey	6
Bald Eagle	9
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1
Cooper's Hawk	8
Red-shouldered Hawk	45
Broad-winged Hawk	1
Red-tailed Hawk	24
Virginia Rail	1
Sora	1
American Coot	2
Killdeer	24
Spotted Sandpiper	10
Solitary Sandpiper	22
Least Sandpiper	29
Wilson's Snipe	2
Rock Pigeon	70
Mourning Dove	339
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	7
Black-billed Cuckoo	3
Eastern Screech-Owl	4
Great Horned Owl	8
Barred Owl	18
Chimney Swift	99
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	19
Belted Kingfisher	20
Red-bellied Woodpecker	275
Downy Woodpecker	94
Hairy Woodpecker	26
Northern Flicker	47
Pileated Woodpecker	38
American Kestrel	2
Peregrine Falcon	1
Eastern Wood-Pewee	66
Acadian Flycatcher	121
Willow Flycatcher	10
<i>Empidonax species</i>	2

Eastern Phoebe	46
Great Crested Flycatcher	119
Eastern Kingbird	113
White-eyed Vireo	60
Yellow-throated Vireo	29
Blue-headed Vireo	2
Warbling Vireo	34
Red-eyed Vireo	415
Blue Jay	343
American Crow	392
Fish Crow	43
<i>crow species</i>	114
Common Raven	5
Horned Lark	22
Purple Martin	88
Tree Swallow	196
N. Rough-winged Swallow	34
Bank Swallow	2
Cliff Swallow	35
Barn Swallow	286
Carolina Chickadee	264
Tufted Titmouse	329
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1
White-breasted Nuthatch	86
House Wren	115
Carolina Wren	171
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	248
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	5
Eastern Bluebird	143
Veery	3
Swainson's Thrush	3
Hermit Thrush	1
Wood Thrush	300
American Robin	594
Gray Catbird	461
Brown Thrasher	38
Northern Mockingbird	145
European Starling	630
American Pipit	11
Cedar Waxwing	46
Ovenbird	183
Worm-eating Warbler	15
Louisiana Waterthrush	54
Northern Waterthrush	3
Blue-winged Warbler	6
Black-&-white Warbler	27
Kentucky Warbler	12

Common Yellowthroat	251
Hooded Warbler	10
American Redstart	55
Cerulean Warbler	4
Northern Parula	125
Magnolia Warbler	3
Yellow Warbler	81
Chestnut-sided Warbler	3
Blackpoll Warbler	3
Blk.-thrted. Blue Warbler	8
Palm Warbler	3
Pine Warbler	5
Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler	15
Yellow-throated Warbler	2
Prairie Warbler	30
Blk.-thrted. Green Warbler	2
Canada Warbler	2
Wilson's Warbler	1
Yellow-breasted Chat	10
Eastern Towhee	160
Chipping Sparrow	279
Field Sparrow	54
Savannah Sparrow	18
Grasshopper Sparrow	20
Song Sparrow	157
Swamp Sparrow	3
White-throated Sparrow	15
White-crowned Sparrow	1
Scarlet Tanager	145
Northern Cardinal	752
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	4
Blue Grosbeak	7
Indigo Bunting	234
Bobolink	13
Red-winged Blackbird	561
Eastern Meadowlark	16
Common Grackle	201
Brown-headed Cowbird	237
Orchard Oriole	67
Baltimore Oriole	140
House Finch	100
Pine Siskin	4
American Goldfinch	405
House Sparrow	236
<b>Area Total Birds:</b>	<b>13,334</b>
<b>Area Total Species:</b>	<b>136</b>



## HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB

*Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society*

P.O. Box 1323

Columbia, MD 21044

### September/October 2015 - Inside This Issue

Club Meetings	President's Welcome
Field Trips	Spring Bird Records
Seed Sale Announcement	MOS Scholarships
May Count Results	Fall Count Announcement

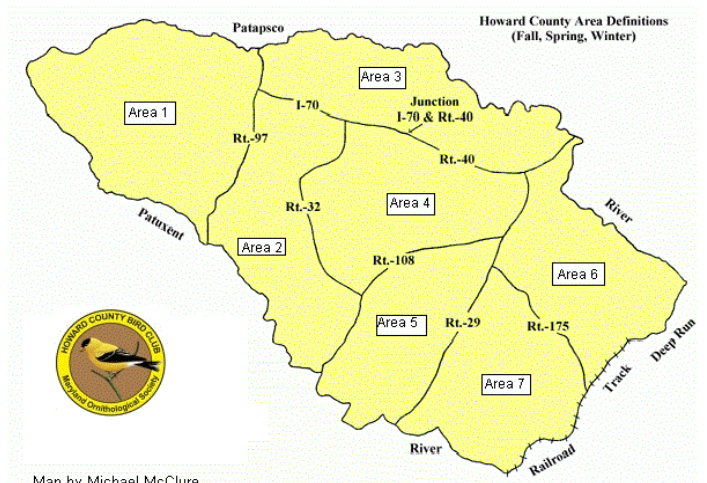
## TWENTY-SECOND ANNUAL FALL COUNT

BY [MIKE MCCLURE](#)

The Howard County Bird Club's annual Fall Count, scheduled each year on the third Saturday of September, will be on September 19<sup>th</sup>. Mike McClure 410-531-2780 and Chuck Stirrat 410-531-2417 are the county co-coordinators. Prior years have set an average of 125 species of birds identified on the count. Spend the day birding with us and help raise the average! Birders of all skill levels are encouraged to participate. Ask to be put with an experienced individual if you do not wish to have your own territory. The county is divided into seven areas (shown below) which are used for all annual counts. A fall season field sheet for Howard County is available on the Club's website. Species that require a write-up include those identified with a double asterisk (\*\*), as well as any write-ins. Others that may require a write-up or oral amplification (\*), as well as those that are early or late dates (@), are indicated. Also, plan on helping out with the butterfly, dragonfly, and damselfly count. Check sheets will be available on the web.

The following area coordinators have been named: Area 1) Mark Wallace 301-725-6370 and Wes Earp 410-531-3197; Area 2) Jeff Culler 410-465-9006; Area 3) Karen Darcy & Kevin Heffernan 410-418-8731; Area 4) Mike McClure 410-531-2780; Area 5) Kurt Schwarz 410-461-1643; Area 6) Bonnie Ott 443-285-3302; and Area 7) Allen Lewis 787-590-4501. You may call an area or county coordinator to

volunteer, or check at the September meeting. June Tveekrem will host the tally at 10970 Millbank Row, Columbia, MD 21044. The potluck dinner will be served at approximately 7:00 pm, r.s.v.p with food category at 410-292-3267 by Sept. 17<sup>th</sup>, to reserve space and, if necessary, obtain directions.



Map by Michael McClure