



# 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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Thursday, March 10, 2016 "Rachel Carson and Her Maryland Legacy," by Dr. Robert K. Musil, President and CEO of the Rachel Carson Council. Dr. Musil is also adjunct professor at the School of Public Affairs, American University, where he teaches about climate change and American environmental politics. He is the author of *Rachel Carson and Her Sisters: Extraordinary Women Who Have Shaped America's Environment*.

Thursday, April 14, 2016 "By the Shores of Gitche Gummee..." by Sue and Wes Earp. Located within the boreal forest, Lake Superior provides both a pathway and an obstacle for migrant birds. Sue and Wes will share photos and experiences from several late fall trips to White Fish Point and Hawk Ridge, two renowned birding destinations.

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. There is no admission charge. For further information call Robin Todd, 410-491-5333.

### HOST NEEDED FOR MAY COUNT TALLY RALLY

The club is seeking a one-time host for the May Count Tally Rally and potluck dinner on Saturday, May 14. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. with 15-25 attendees expected. Attendees bring an appetizer, salad, side dish, or dessert. The host purchases frozen meat and vegetarian lasagna (cost is reimbursed by HCBC). The club provides drinks, utensils, plates, and cups. Dinner is at 6:45 p.m. with the tally beginning about 7:30-7:45 p.m. Everyone should be gone by 9:00 p.m. For details and answers to questions, contact Kathy Lillie, [klillie12@verzion.net](mailto:klillie12@verzion.net) or 301-807-3785. To volunteer, please contact May Count Coordinator Kevin Heffernan, [kjheff122@gmail.com](mailto:kjheff122@gmail.com) or 410-857-1789.

## AUTUMN BIRD RECORDS: AUGUST 1 – NOVEMBER 30, 2015

BY JOANNE SOLEM

It was an interesting season with low numbers of waterfowl and shore-birds, but a nice variety of unusual species. Among the notables were White-winged Scoter, Mississippi Kite, American Golden-Plover, Sand-erling, Baird's Sandpiper, Black Tern, Snow Bunting, and Clay-colored Sparrow. There is a good chance that a Western Tanager may be added to the county list pending MD/DCRC acceptance.

Since flocks of **Snow Geese** are seldom detected in the county, nine over Mt. Pleasant (MTPLT) 10/24 were nice (**HPt, K&KnHf**). **Cackling Geese** arrived in late November with one over Meadowbrook Park (MDBRK) 11/25 (**BO**) and one on Scott's Pond, So. Trotter Rd

*(Records continued on page 3)*

## SPRING 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 Coordinators Joe Hanfman at [auk1844@gmail.com](mailto:auk1844@gmail.com) or Bonnie Ott at [bonnieott@verizon.net](mailto:bonnieott@verizon.net). HCBC members receive priority on trips that are limited by number of participants. No pets.

### WATERFOWL SEARCH

March 5, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. (half day). *Meet at Lake Elkhorn Broken Land Pkwy parking lot.* We'll carpool to search the Howard County waterways for ducks, grebes, mergansers and loons. Chance of an early migrant. Leader - Kurt Schwarz, [krschwal@verizon.net](mailto:krschwal@verizon.net), 410-461-1643

### CENTENNIAL PARK

March 6, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours. *Meet at west end parking lot off Centennial Lane.* Easy walking around the lake on paved path. Waterfowl expected, early migrant passerines possible. Facilities available. Leader - Jeff Culler, [cullerfuls@hotmail.com](mailto:cullerfuls@hotmail.com), 410-465-9006.

### CENTENNIAL PARK

March 13, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours. Daylight Saving Time starts (set clocks ahead). *Meet at west end parking lot off Centennial Lane.* Easy walking around the lake on paved path. Waterfowl expected, early migrant passerines possible. Facilities available. Leader - Allen Lewis, [allenlewis@gmail.com](mailto:allenlewis@gmail.com)

### SHARPS AT WATERFORD FARM

March 19, 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. Knee-high waterproof footwear required for part of walk. Port-a-pots available. Leader - Wes Earp, [wesandsue@gmail.com](mailto:wesandsue@gmail.com), 410-531-3197

### CENTENNIAL PARK

March 20, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours. *Meet at west end parking lot off Centennial Lane.* Easy walking around the

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

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

**The Goldfinch**, newsletter of the Howard County Bird Club, is published five times per year. Copy deadline for the May/June 2016 issue is March 25, 2016

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

lake on paved path. Waterfowl expected, woodland trails for passerines. Facilities available. Leaders - Richard /Renee Peters, [Richard@rrrrpeters.org](mailto:Richard@rrrrpeters.org)

### CENTENNIAL PARK

March 27, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours. *Meet at west end parking lot off Centennial Lane.* Easy walking around the lake on paved path. Waterfowl expected, early migrant passerines possible. Facilities available. Leader - Mike Kerwin, [m63kerwin@verizon.net](mailto:m63kerwin@verizon.net), 410-461-2408

### MT. PLEASANT FARM-HOWARD COUNTY CONSERVANCY BEGINNERS' WALK


April 2, Saturday, 8.00 am (2-3 hours). *Meet in parking lot.* Gentle ramble around rough pastures, brushy thickets and stream valleys. Early migrants arriving and resident birds starting to nest. Good chance for beginners to learn bird ID and habits before the spring migration brings in a profusion (= confusion) of later migrants. Facilities available. Leaders - John Harris, [jaybee.harris@gmail.com](mailto:jaybee.harris@gmail.com), 240-755-0183, and Robin Todd, [totnesman@aol.com](mailto:totnesman@aol.com), 410-491-5333

### ALPHA RIDGE LANDFILL

April 9, Saturday, Half day. *Meet at Alpha Ridge Park at 7:45 a.m. to carpool to landfill.* Carpooling required. Moderate walking over hills and fields of the landfill. Vesper Sparrow and other field birds possible. Meadowlarks, kestrels and other open country birds expected. Rarities possible. Facilities at Alpha Ridge Park. Leader - Joe Hanfman, [auk1844@gmail.com](mailto:auk1844@gmail.com), 410-772-8424.

### MT. PLEASANT FARM - HOWARD COUNTY CONSERVANCY

April 23, Saturday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours. Earth Day Walk in conjunction with the Howard County Conservancy. *Meet at parking lot near the barn.* 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 - Anthony VanSchoor, [tonyvanschoor@gmail.com](mailto:tonyvanschoor@gmail.com)

 = Great for beginning birders

*(Records continued from page 1)*

11/26 (**W&PE**). Three **Gadwall** at the north end of Triadelphia Reservoir (TRIRS) 9/4 (**JHr, NMcA**, later m. obs.) set a new early arrival date [9/7/94 H. Zeichner]. A **Blue-winged Teal** was present at CENPK 9/10 (**AVS**, ph.). Twelve (third highest number) **Northern Shovelers** were seen from Brighton Dam 8/31 (**JCu, JHf**). The lone **Northern Pintail** appeared at CENPK 11/1 (**ADG**). Eleven **Redheads** were spotted at Lake Elkhorn 11/27 (**ALw**). A **White-winged Scoter** (female) and a **Long-tailed Duck** (male), both seen the late afternoon of 11/30 (TRIRS) (**JHf**), barely made it into this season's records. Although **Ruddy Ducks** have been scarce the last two springs, reports increased this fall; numbers, however, were all in the low single digits.

**Wild Turkeys** continue to do well with sightings in all fall months. The 22 at West Friendship Park 10/4 (**BO, ROr**) were an impressive number—until a record high 35 were photographed at the Circle-D Farm on Carrs Mill Rd 11/26 (**SDd**). Appropriately, it was Thanksgiving Day.

Few **Common Loon** flights were caught; the high was 46 at Mount Pleasant (MTPLT) 11/7 (**RRf, MKw**). The first **Pied-billed Grebe** was noted at Gateway 9/5 (**SN**), while a **Horned Grebe** was seen at Lake Kittamaqundi 11/1 (**CKc**). A juvenile **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** was photographed at CENPK 8/18 (**KLz**); a juvenile was also noted at Waterford Farm 8/13 and 8/18 (**WE**).

The season began auspiciously with a lovely perched **Mississippi Kite** at MTPLT 8/1 (**BO+**, ph.), one of the season's special sightings.

**Bald Eagles** of all ages continued to delight observers countywide. Four **Northern Harriers** at MTPLT 11/7 were a fine count (**RRf+**). A **Sharp-shinned Hawk** arrived at MTPLT 9/12 (**MKw**). The first **Broad-winged Hawk** was spotted over Manahan Dr 8/28 (tied second earliest) (**BO**); the last drifted over Martin Rd 10/8 (**JHf**). At noon on 9/21, Broadwings were streaming over Cavey Lane (**RRf**); a mile away at MTPLT, observers counted 200 (**KnHf, HPT**); on So. Trotter Rd that same afternoon, 77 were tallied in six groups (**WE, MW**). The season's only **Golden Eagle** sailed over Cavey Lane 10/26 (**RRf**).



Mississippi Kite by Bonnie Ott

An **American Coot** appeared on Lake Kittamaqundi 10/16 (**CKc**), one of the few this season.

Although the spring shorebird flight had been disappoint-

ing, some choice species appeared during fall migration. An **American Golden-Plover** fed on the mudflats at No. TRIRS 9/4 (**JHr, NMcA**, later m. obs.). A **Greater Yellowlegs**, which had been frequenting Pigtail, lingered until 11/26, tying the late departure date (**SSt**). A **Sanderling** at TRIRS 8/30 (**JHf**) was seen by many. A **Baird's Sandpiper**, spotted by two kayaking birders at No.



Sanderling

by Russ Ruffing

TRIRS 9/4 (second earliest) (**RRf, SCI**), cooperatively hung around until at least 9/11 (**KS**). Forty-two **Least Sandpipers** at No. TRIRS 8/31 (**JCu, JHf**) were the high. A **Wilson's Snipe** was present at Oxford Square, Coca-Cola Dr on 10/8 (**JW**); another was at W. Friendship Pk 10/18 (**JCu**). Six **American Woodcock** were photographed along a wood edge at Rockburn Branch Park ~11/20 (**MFh**), one of the season's more intriguing finds.

Autumn's lone **Bonaparte's Gull** appeared on a rainy afternoon at TRIRS 11/30 (**JHf**). **Laughing Gulls** are scarce locally. The two sightings were three over MTPLT 8/22 (**BO**, ph.) and one over the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area (MPEA) 9/3 (**JHf**). Although **Caspian Terns** were few, the two at TRIRS 10/4 (**JHf**) were the second latest record. **Black Terns** are unpredictable and years may pass between sightings. Two were spotted at TRIRS 8/11 (**JS**; later m. obs.). Two were also seen there on 8/20 (**BCp**), perhaps the same two birds? The only **Forster's Tern** reported was at TRIRS 8/11 (**W&RDuB**).

**Yellow-billed** and **Black-billed Cuckoos** were still being heard in the W. Friendship area in mid-August (**LCg**). **Eastern Screech-Owls** were reported from Carrs Mill Rd 9/13 (**LCg**), Hall Shop Rd adjacent to Schooley Mill Park 9/19 (**NM**), and Timberleigh 11/2, where one roosted in a box (**DNg**). **Great Horned Owls** are known for early courtship. Pairs were calling at Hallmark 10/15 (**WEb**) and at Allview 10/19 (**JMcK**).

**Common Nighthawks** were well-reported from two on 8/18 at So. Trotter Rd (**W&SE**) to two on 10/6 at MTPLT (third latest record) (**MKw**), with a high of 12 on 9/5 at MTPLT (**BO**). A flock of 150+ **Chimney Swifts** utilized a chimney at Vantage House, W. Columbia from late August to at least mid-September (**SBw; W&SE**). There must have been a good hatch of insects on 9/23 at So. Trotter Rd. In addition to the 36 Chimney Swifts swirling above the treetops, 24 Common Green Darners and one saddlebags (migrating dragonflies) swarmed in an opening in the trees (**J&WE**).

*(Records continued on page 4)*



Five **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds** lingered into October (**JCu**, **JHf**, **K&KnHf**, **POs**, **JW**); the latest stayed until 10/12 at an Ellicott City location (**POs**). Although **Red-headed Woodpeckers** were reported from 9/11 (**BO**) to 11/1 (**ALw**), five of the nine sightings at seven locations took place between 9/11 and 9/17.

Three **Merlins** at MTPLT 10/4 during a hawkwatch were a fine number (**Mkw**). Other than a **Peregrine Falcon** at TRIRS 8/23 (**RRf**), all others were reported during October—the expected month.

An elusive **Olive-sided Flycatcher** at MTPLT 9/2 (**JHf**, **KnHf**, **HPt**, **CSt**) and 9/3 (**RHl**; **THg**) was the only one detected this season. MTPLT also hosted a **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** 8/22 (**JHf**), which was found again 8/29 (**RRf**, **HPt+**). **Least Flycatchers** were reported from four locations, all between 9/5 at W. Friendship Pk (**BO** -, ph.) and 9/17 at MTPLT (**EHs**).

A **Blue-headed Vireo** at MTPLT 9/11 tied the early date (**EHs**). Two late birds were detected in November: 11/2 Lake Elkhorn (**ALw**) and 11/9 Allview (**ESu**). **Philadelphia Vireo** sightings spanned more than a month from 9/2 at MTPLT to a record late 10/10 at Western Regional Park (**RHl**) [10/8/11 R. Ruffing].

A nice flight of 162 **Blue Jays** was caught at MTPLT 10/6 (**K&KnHf**, **HPt**). **Common Ravens** continued to be seen and heard. The most consistent sightings were at MTPLT—one or two birds, often accompanied by an escort of vocal crows. Scattered reports from elsewhere included Elkridge 10/20 (**JW**), Crest Lawn Memorial Gardens 11/3 (**ALw**), Waterford 11/7 (**WE+**), and Brush Run, E. Col. 11/30 (**JW**-2).

A flock of 30 **Tree Swallows** was noted over Wilde Lake 10/3 (**JFr**). Two late **Barn Swallows** lingered at Waterford until 10/17 (**BO+**).

A **Marsh Wren** was detected at W. Friendship Pk 10/4 (**BO**). Thrush migration was thin. A **Gray-cheeked Thrush** was spotted at Lake Elkhorn 9/27 (**ALw**). Although the first **Swainson's Thrush** was reported at MTPLT on 9/11, a nice early date (**JCu**), it was not the beginning of a major influx. **American Robins** continued to be present in the county in unusually high numbers; 1,499 were tallied during the 11/7 skywatch at MTPLT (**RRf**, **Mkw+**).

The first **American Pipit** was a flyover at MTPLT 10/11 (**KS**). After seeing many **Snow Buntings** during a recent trip to the Midwest, one at Waterford 11/7 (third earliest) was a pleasant surprise (**SE**).

Warbler migration was far from memorable, but there were some notable records. **Orange-crowned Warblers** are frequently one of the latest warblers reported. This year one was spotted at CENPK 10/3 (**KS**) and a later one

at Blandair 11/3 (**AVS**, ph.). A **Connecticut** was found at Lake Elkhorn 9/20 (**ALw**) and one at MTPLT 10/5 (**NDB**, ph.). A **Mourning** was detected at MPEA 8/30 (**JSn**) and another at the Elkhorn Garden Plots 9/24 (**JW**). The final **Hooded** was noted at MPEA 9/22 (**JHr**); the last **American Redstart** was there on 10/10 (**RHl**). The first **Cape May** at Wynfield arrived on 10/5, later than usual; the last was seen 10/12 for an unusually short stay in their favored tree (**RCu**). On 10/7, three were present at CENPK (**AVS**). **Magnolias** drifted through from 8/23 at MPEA (**ALw**) to 10/13 at MPEA (**JHf**). A **Bay-breasted** in western Howard County 9/19 (**TFd**, **GKg**) and one at MTPLT 9/21 were real treats (**KS**). At MPEA, both the **Blackburnian** on 8/16 (**DCm**) and the **Chestnut-sided** on 8/13 (**DCm**) were the second earliest records. **Yellow-throateds** were noted in two locations: 9/9 and 9/19 at Cavey La (**RRf**, **SCI**) and 9/20 at Lake Elkhorn (**ALw**). A **Yellow-breasted Chat** hung around Lake Elkhorn until 11/6 (**SCI**), a fine date.

**American Tree Sparrows** arrived late. Despite searching, they were not noted until 11/26 at MTPLT (**BO** - 2). A flock of 30 **Chipping Sparrows** was present at W. Friendship Pk 10/18 (**JCu+**). The season's only **Clay-colored** was a choice find at MTPLT 10/5, tying the second earliest record (**JHf**); it was seen again 10/8 (**HPt**; **RHl**, ph.). **Vespers** provided no record-breaking dates, but there were reports from four locations between 10/16 and 10/29 (**BO**-2; **KLz**; **JW**). Two **Savannahs** showed up at Troy Park 9/17 (**BO**, **ROr**, **JS**); the season's high of 110 was notched on Sparrow Big Day 10/17 (**BO+**). Two **Grasshopper Sparrows** lingered until mid-October: 10/16 MTPLT (**BO**) and 10/17 W. Friendship Pk (**BO+**). As usual, **Lincoln's** were well-represented in fall records. The first was at MTPLT 9/17 (**KS**, **KnHf**, **HPt**); numbers peaked there with six on 10/21 (**BO**). They were also reported from W. Friendship Pk (**BO**; **JCu**), MDBRK (**JW**), Elkhorn Garden Plots (**JW**), and Allview (**ESu**). A high of 18 **White-crowned Sparrows** was recorded at Rockburn Branch Park 11/25 (**BO**).

An adult **Northern Cardinal** was still feeding a fledgling at Stone Hill Dr on 9/28 (**KLz**). The season's only **Dickcissel** was spotted at Waterford 10/15 (**BO**, **ROr**, **AVS**). Single **Eastern Meadowlarks** were found at MDBRK 10/10 (**BO**) and MTPLT 10/24 (**BO**). A **Rusty Blackbird** at MDBRK 9/30 (**BO**) was the third earliest record; all reports were of one or two birds. The last week of November brought multiple reports of **Common Grackles** massing in flocks of several thousand. The jackpot was 20,000 over Cavey La on 11/28 in a single species flock that went on...and on...and on (**RRf**).

**Purple Finches** straggled through beginning with one at MTPLT 10/14 (**JW**); most of the remaining reports were from mid to late November with a high of four at

## FLYING SQUIRRELS VISIT BLUEBIRD FEEDER

BY JOANNE SOLEM

Michelle Stewart and Barry Miller live on the northeast corner of Lake Elkhorn in an area dominated by mature American Beech trees. They have fed birds for many years in multiple feeders on or below their deck. During that time they have succeeded in luring a variety of birds within camera range. Late January produced a new and unexpected visitor.

The evening of January 21, 2016, a Southern Flying Squirrel appeared in their bluebird feeder. Michelle, of course, reached for her camera to verify the squirrel's presence with a short video. The following evening (as snow was beginning to pile up), two flying squirrels shared the feeder.



Southern Flying Squirrel

by Michelle Stewart

The feeder was stocked with shelled peanuts for chickadees, titmice, and nuthatches and peanut suet for bluebirds. The squirrels were stoking up on peanuts. Since seeds are among their favorite foods, their choice was not surprising. They also eat beechnuts, hickory nuts, a variety of seeds and fruits, as well as insects, eggs, and even nestlings. Since they are common in mature deciduous woods near water, it appears they have a perfect situation in this location.

What is a bluebird feeder? As can be noted in the photograph, it's a glass-sided box with wooden ends. Each end has a 1½"-diameter hole which is the precise size of the entrance to an Eastern Bluebird nesting box. This allows bluebirds and other small cavity nesting birds to enter, but effectively excludes European Starlings and Brown-headed Cowbirds. Michelle noted that a Northern Flicker occasionally visits this feeder and sticks its head inside to obtain suet, but the hole size prevents it from eating all of the desired food. The glass sides not only enable observers to watch what is happening inside the box, but the light deters most cavity nesters from using it as a nesting box. Originally, this type of feeder was designed to feed mealworms to bluebirds. It prevented the expensive protein source from being eaten by more aggressive species

before the usually more retiring bluebirds had a chance to eat.

Although perhaps one of the county's most common mammals, many long-time residents have never seen a flying squirrel. Since they are one of the county's most completely nocturnal mammals, seldom becoming active until long after sunset, this attractive small animal is seldom detected unless it uses a bird nesting box. Its unusually large eyes, soft fur, handsome tail, and small size make it an appealing addition to the usual feeder visitors.

*(Records continued from page 4)*

MTPLT 11/20 (**BHi, K&KnHf, HPt**). **Pine Siskins** most often were caught in small flocks of nine or ten (**BO**-two records; **JCu**). A flock of 35 **American Goldfinches** visited feeders at Thornbrook, Mt. Hebron 10/17 (**JCu**).

*Reviewable species:* This season there were five reports of four species that require review by the MD/DC Records Committee. The species are Reddish Egret, Northern Goshawk (2), Brown-headed Nuthatch, and Western Tanager. No new species in the above list will be added to the Howard County list until accepted by the MD/DCRC.

Many thanks to Joe Hanfman, Nancy Magnusson, and Howard Patterson for editing and proofing assistance.

**Abbreviations:** CENPK – Centennial Park, LKELK – Lake Elkhorn, MDBRK – Meadowbrook Park, MPEA – Middle Patuxent Environmental Area, MTPLT – Mt. Pleasant, TRIRS – Triadelphia Reservoir, m. obs. – many observers, ph. - photograph

**Observers:** **SBw** – Sue Buswell, **LCg** – Lisa Colangelo, **SCI** – Steve Collins, **BCp** – Barry Cooper, **JCu** – Jeff Culler, **RCu** – Ralph Cullison, III, **DCm** – David Cummings, **NDB** – Nikki DeBraccio, **SDD** – Sabrina Dowd, **ADG** – Alisa De George, **RDuB** – Rae DuBois, **WDuB** – Woody DuBois, **JE** – Justin Earp, **PE** – Paul Earp, **SE** – Sue Earp, **WE** – Wes Earp, **WEb** – Ward Ebert, **TFd** – Tom Feild, **MFh** – Mark Fisher, **JFr** – Jeff Friedhoffer, **JHf** – Joe Hanfman, **JHr** – John Harris, **KnHf** – Karen Heffernan, **KHf** – Kevin Heffernan, **RHl** – Russell Hillsley, **THg** – Timothy Houghton, **EHS** – Ed Huestis, **Mkw** – Mike Kerwin, **GKg** – Geraldine King, **CKc** – Clayton Koonce, **ALw** – Allen Lewis, **KLz** – Kathy Litzinger, **NM** – Nancy Magnusson, **NMcA** – Nancy McAllister, **JMcK** – John McKitterick, **DNg** – Diane Nagengast, **SN** – Sue Neri, **ROR** – Richard Orr, **POs** – Peter Osenton, **BO** – Bonnie Ott, **HPt** – Howard Patterson, **RRf** – Russ Ruffing, **KS** – Kurt Schwarz, **JSn** – Jeff Shenot, **JS** – Jo Solem, **CSt** – Chuck Stirrat, **SSt** – Sam Stuart, **ESu** – Eva Sunell, **AVS** – Anthony VanSchoor, **MW** – Mark Wallace, **JW** – Jim Wilkinson.

Potluck Dinner  
Robinson Nature Center  
Saturday, March 19, 2016

Please remember to contact Kathy Lillie by March 18 at 301-807-3785 or [killie12@verizon.net](mailto:killie12@verizon.net) to sign up for the club's annual potluck dinner.

# 2015 ODONATE SUMMARY

BY JOANNE SOLEM

2015 was a fine year for county odonate records, especially since a new dragonfly species was added. A **Sable Clubtail** (*Gomphus rogersi*) exuvia (see photo) found along the Patapsco River west of Daniels by Bonnie Ott (BO) on 5/28 and identified by Richard Orr (RO) was species number 99 for Howard County.



Sable Clubtail exuvia

by Richard Orr

An unusually warm December kept a few odes on the wing. The **Autumn Meadowhawk**, photographed on 12/16 at a sediment pond west of Cedar Lane by Linda Hunt, was not only an extension for that species but the all-time late date for any county odonate.



Autumn Meadowhawk

by Linda Hunt

New early dates were significant changes. Great Spreadwing on 7/3 by Jim Wilkinson (JW), was almost two months earlier than the previous date of 9/2; Vesper Blu-et on 5/24 (JW), moved that date forward almost three weeks from 6/14; and Eastern Least Clubtail on 5/25 (RO, BO) constituted a five day change. A search along the Patapsco River on 5/28 turned up 38 exuviae of the Umber Shadowdragon (BO), a dragonfly whose presence was first established in the county on 6/1/14.

In addition to the record-breaking meadowhawk record cited above, the other late date was Eastern Red Damsel on 7/25 (Jo Solem, Nancy Magnusson, ph.), extending the 7/23 late date. However, there had actually been a sighting on 8/16/14 by the same observers which had been inadvertently left out of last year's summary.

Of special interest was an occasional variant of the Blue-faced Meadowhawk—with a green face—photographed at the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area 9/7 (RO).

Additional fine records were a Gray Petaltail at Bloede Dam, Patapsco Valley State Park on 6/8 (Mike Lathroum) and a Swift River Cruiser photographed on 6/22 in a Mt. Albert yard (Grazina and Mike McClure).

The Tenth Annual Howard County Dragonfly Count was held on July 25, 2015. The summary article by Beth Johnson and June Tveekrem was published in the [January / February 2016 issue of The Goldfinch](#). Ten Sweet-flag Spreadwings at Centennial Park (Tom Feild, Wayne Gordon, Larry Bachman, Ruth Siegel) were a new species for the count. The 2016 count will be held on June 18. Anyone interested in learning more about these fascinating “tigers of the air” is welcome and encouraged to participate.

All species and photographs were either identified or verified by Richard Orr. Photographs of Howard County dragonflies and damselflies can be found at the club's website: [http://www.howardbirds.org/odonates/HC\\_Odonate\\_identification.htm](http://www.howardbirds.org/odonates/HC_Odonate_identification.htm)

## THE HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB WELCOMES THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS, DECEMBER 1, 2015-JANUARY 31, 2016

Douglas Isokait and Kim Morgenstern  
Michael Osborne  
Madeleine Rubenstein and Joseph Muhlhausen

## 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.

### March 24, 2016

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

### April 28, 2016

Kate Tufts  
2830 Duvall Rd.  
Woodbine, MD 21797  
(410) 489-7052  
ktufts@verizon.net



## OWL ENCOUNTER-NUMBER 1

BY KURT SCHWARZ

On January 28, my neighbor Leslie discovered a Barred Owl stuck in an uncovered storm drain along our common drive. I had been hearing Barred Owl calls on the three preceding days, including one instance of a pair carrying on. When I got to the drain, I found the owl at the bottom of the hole, with the right eye apparently having issues. The owl was also sitting in a small trickle of running water. The hole appeared too small for it to fly out, and the sides perhaps were too steep to climb. I frantically tried to contact All Creatures Great and Small and Frisky's Sanctuary. Fortunately, Judy Holzman from All Creatures called back shortly. Meanwhile, Leslie's brother, Greg, appeared with a pair of massive leather gloves. He proceeded to reach down and retrieve the owl. It clacked its bill in an aggressive display and flapped a bit, but its resistance was not vigorous. Greg and Leslie wrapped it in towels, including some warmed in a dryer. Greg and I then drove the owl to Judy's sanctuary.



Barred Owl in Storm Drain by Kurt Schwarz

Judy determined it to be a male, based on the weight. She also tested the wings, and found the right one to be likely dislocated. She held it overnight, gave it water, and force fed it liver. The next day she took it to a veterinarian in Pasadena, who confirmed the dislocated wing. He also found a detached right retina. The owl also had balance problems, and kept falling over, which meant there was brain damage. Dislocations are generally not fixable in owls, since the shoulder is not a ball and socket, as in mammals, but is held together by tendons. These get stretched irreparably in a dislocation. There is also a dearth of venues in which to place a disabled owl, such as Ranger at the Howard County Conservancy. The injuries to the owl were considered so severe that it had to be euthanized.

The next day, I flushed a Barred Owl nearby off an apparent kill, based on the blood I saw on the snow. The fol-

lowing day I heard a Barred Owl give at least five iterations of its classic call. But it would appear that a Barred Owl pair formation in my neighborhood is not too likely this year.

## OWL ENCOUNTER-NUMBER 2

BY RUSS RUFFING

When I turned onto my road coming home from work on January 29, I noticed a small animal on the side of the road as I passed by. At first, I thought it was a squirrel but something didn't look right, so I backed up to have another look and discovered it was an Eastern Screech-Owl with a fresh kill! The bird let me park and walk up close enough to take a picture with my iPhone before trying to fly off with the kill. The prey was too heavy to lift; after dragging it for some distance, it finally released the unfortunate jay on the road and flew into a nearby pine tree. The poor jay was still barely alive. I left it there, hoping the owl would return to eventually eat its prey. I didn't think a screech-owl would take something as large as a Blue Jay!



Eastern Screech-Owl with prey by Russ Ruffing

Thanks to Jo Solem, who let me know that although most references say "small birds," the *Birds of North America* life history (#165) says it has the most varied diet of any N. A. owl. It takes rabbits and squirrels as well as smaller rodents, along with various insects and crayfish while the list of birds includes jays, thrashers, doves, pigeons, and other screech-owls. In experiments the largest prey taken was a four-kg domestic chicken! That doesn't mean the owl can always carry away what it kills, but it appears to have an eclectic appetite and is an efficient hunter.



## HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB

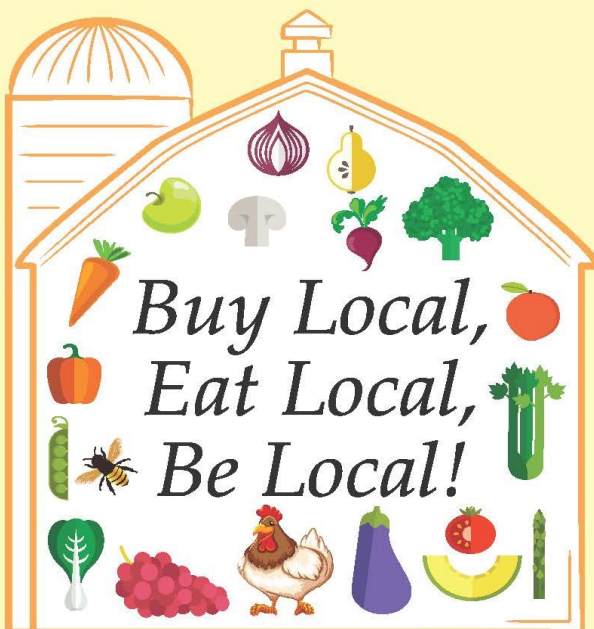
*Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society*

10970 Millbank Row  
Columbia, MD 21044

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# Howard County GreenFest



## Save the Date!

**Saturday  
April 16, 2016  
10 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
Howard Community  
College**

[www.HCGreenFest.org](http://www.HCGreenFest.org)