



The Goldfinch

Newsletter of the Howard County Bird Club
 A Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society
www.howardbirds.org



CLUB MEETINGS - BY JANE GEUDER

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Thursday, May 11, 2017 "Three Decades of Birding Howard County," by Bonnie Ott. Discover how the birds have changed along with changes in the county. Bonnie will tell us how and where to find birds in suburbia. Bonnie draws on years of leading field trips for our club and extensive personal birding to show us some of her "hot spots."

Update on January 12, 2017 meeting: David Johnson, our scheduled speaker, missed the January meeting due to a sudden severe illness. He apologizes and is looking forward to giving his presentation at our November 9, 2017 meeting. Steve Sheffield, who filled in for David Johnson, has been properly thanked and has offered to give us a "real" scheduled program at a future meeting.

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 John Harris at 240-755-0183.

Website: <http://www.howardcountymd.gov/RobinsonNatureCenter>

WINTER BIRD RECORDS:

DECEMBER 1, 2016 – FEBRUARY 28, 2017

BY JOANNE SOLEM

IS THIS HOW TO SAY "PEENT?"



American Woodcock by Anthony VanSchoor
 February 17 at Patuxent River State Park,
 Hipsley Mill Road

An unusually mild winter, including one of the warmest Februarys on record, produced relatively few rarities. Ross's Goose, Sandhill Crane, Long-eared Owl, and Snow Bunting were the season's highlights.

Snow Geese are an increasing challenge to find in this county. One appeared at a Daisy Rd dairy farm on 1/4 (DCm). For part of the winter there were two birds. On 2/1, one was present at Days End Horse Farm, MD 94, while a few minutes later one was spotted at Larriland Farm, MD 94 (AVS). Although the county has fewer than 10 records for **Ross's Goose**, the species in recent years has become annual. Likely the same bird was spotted at both a farm adjoining W. Friendship Pk 1/1 (JCu; m. obs.) and at Centennial Pk 1/7 (CENPK) (RRf). A hybrid (probable Snow/Ross's) was photographed along MD 94 so. of Lisbon on 12/31 (K&KnHf). **Cackling Geese** were mostly singles, although three were present in a field at Brighton Dam Rd/Triadelphia Mill Rd 1/3 (JHf), and at least six were noted at the So. Trotter Rd Pd 1/31 (WE; m. obs.). Traditionally, birders anticipate the majority of **Canada Geese** decamping during the first week of March. This year the major movement occurred in February. The night of 2/23 at 9:00 p.m. a large flock passed over Allview heading north (ESu). The following morning 1,500 were counted in 10 flocks between 7 – 9:00 a.m. in the Lake Elkhorn area (SRm). **Tundra Swans** were still moving south in early December with 60 over Talbots Ldg, e. Howard Co. on

([Records](#) continued on page 3)

SPRING FIELD TRIPS BY JOE HANFMAN

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. HCBC members receive priority on trips that are limited by number of participants. No pets.

Western Regional Park

May 7, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours

Meet at Carr's Mill Road parking lot. Moderate walking along field edges and woodland trails. Opportunity for warblers, sparrows, thrushes, and flyovers. Facilities available. Leader – David Sandler, detour65@gmail.com 410-370-0747

May Count

May 13, Saturday. See details on [page 6](#).

Patapsco Scrubland

May 27, Saturday, 7:30 a.m. (half day)

Meet at 735 River Road (up long drive take right-hand split & park by house). Starting in the scrubland, we'll look for warblers, vireos, thrushes, and other edge species. Depending on conditions, we may continue into the woods. Moderate to possibly difficult walking: steep trails with several stream crossings, so wear appropriate footwear. Facilities available. Leader - Felicia Lovelett 301-802-1969 or c5nest@gmail.com

\$ Ospreys at Jug Bay

June 30, Friday, 9-12 a.m. A three-hour tour by pontoon boat at high tide to see Ospreys and their chicks. There is a \$20 fee (cash only) for this trip. Meeting at Patuxent River Park, 16000 Croom Airport Rd, Upper Marlboro, MD. For reservations contact Mary Maxey at maximom11998@gmail.com

Dick Smith Memorial Butterfly Walk

September 3, Sunday, 9:30 a.m. 2-3 hours. Meet at Elkhorn Garden Plots, Oakland Mills Rd opposite Dasher Ct. Enjoy searching for late-summer butterflies with instruction on their identification. Easy walking on mowed paths around the community garden plots and Elkhorn meadow. We will continue 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. Cancelled if raining or overcast. No facilities. Leader – Linda Hunt, raven10322@hotmail.com

\$ Jug Bay Boat Trip

September 30, Saturday, 7:00 a.m.

Look for migrants, Sora, Virginia Rail, Least Bittern, and shorebirds during this boat trip along Jug Bay at low tide. There is a \$6 fee (cash only) for this trip. Meeting at Patuxent River Park, 16000 Croom Airport Rd, Upper Marlboro, MD. For reservations contact Mary Maxey at maximom11998@gmail.com

NOTE: *the following three field trips are not sponsored by the Howard County Bird Club or the Maryland Ornithological Society.*

Glenwood Community Center Nature Walk

Friday, May 12: Nature walk with Kurt Schwarz, Howard County Bird Club member. Meet at 8:15 a.m. at the Glenwood Community Center. Duration about 2 hours. Free. We will walk the paths of Western Regional Park, and seek out songbirds. Migrating migratory songbirds, such as warblers, orioles, and sparrow are expected. We may also see or hear Eastern Meadowlarks and Grasshopper Sparrows from the farm across Carrs Mill Road. Wear sturdy footwear, some of the trails are bare dirt or grass. Bring binoculars and water. Registration required. Call 410-313-5440.


C&O Canal Association


Saturday, May 27: Nature Walk focusing on birds, Riley's Lock, 8 a.m. to about 11 a.m., heading upstream from Riley's Lock in hope of Prothonotary Warblers and other migrants. Association member Kurt Schwarz of the Maryland Ornithological Society will lead the group. For more information or to register, contact Kurt at krschwal@verizon.net or 443-538-2370 (cell). Walk will be canceled in case of inclement weather. If in doubt, contact Kurt.

Glenwood Community Center

Monday, June 12: Nature walk with Kurt Schwarz, Howard County Bird Club member. Meet at 8:15 a.m. at the Glenwood Community Center. Duration about 2 hours. Free. We will walk the paths of Western Regional Park, and seek out songbirds. We will hope to find nesting birds, such as Eastern Kingbird, Baltimore Oriole, and American Goldfinch. Wear sturdy footwear, some of the trails are bare dirt or grass. Bring binoculars and water. Registration required. Call 410-313-5440.

Butterflies: Late spring/summer butterfly trips and workshops are listed on the HCBC website under Natural History, Butterflies, [Butterfly News](#). Questions: Contact Linda Hunt raven10322@hotmail.com

 = Great for beginning birders

 = Reservations required

\$ = There is a fee for this trip

12/7 (**R&JGr**). The reverse movement began in late February. Nine were at Waterford Farm (WATFD) 2/22 (**C&DSh**), a flock was heard before dawn on 2/25 over Falls Run Rd (NM), and 27 were over Cavey La on 2/27 (**RRf**).



Snow x Ross's Goose by Kevin Heffernan

Gadwalls, Northern Shovelers, and Northern Pintails are puddle ducks which winter very irregularly—most years ice covers their shallow-water haunts for long periods. Other than a few weeks this winter, these species could usually be found in open water at the Race Road Wetlands. Highs were 20 Gadwalls on 1/21 (**KS**), 16 No. Shovelers on 1/2 (**JHf**), and a lone female No. Pintail from 12/30 on (**JHr**). **Mallards** massed at WATFD with 190 on 12/13 (**AVS**). Although **Redheads** are sometimes difficult to locate, this winter they were reported from at least five locations; the similar-appearing **Canvasback** was missing most of the season. Beautiful **Long-tailed Ducks** are eagerly sought by birders. One was spotted at Brighton Dam (BRDAM) on 1/3 (**RRf**) and a pair were there on 2/4 (**RRf**). **Common Goldeneye** is another choice species. Two turned up at WATFD on 1/3 (**AVS**) and two at Brighton Dam Rd Quarry 1/8 (**MKw**). A high of 26 **Hooded Mergansers** was at Gateway 12/1 (**KS**); as usual, a few **Red-breasted Mergansers** could be found at BRDAM. One of the local bird spectacles is the wintering flock of **Common Mergansers** on Triadelphia Reservoir (TRIRS) observed from BRDAM. This season's high count was 1,500 on 1/2 (**JHf**).

Wild Turkeys can appear almost anywhere in the county. See [story](#) on page 5 for an entertaining interaction between a car and a tom (**KTf**). When a camera was placed in a wooded area on Mission Rd the night of 1/12, the images unexpectedly revealed the presence of a turkey (**GPr**).

Horned Grebes were few with two on Wilde Lake on 1/2 (**ALw**) and one at BRDAM on 1/4 (**KHf, KnHf, DCm**). Triadelphia Christmas Count on 12/17 was one of the season's truly wintry days. Ice on roads and underfoot kept many territories from being covered in more than a cursory fashion. Two intrepid birders worked the Howard Co side of TRIRS in the afternoon and were rewarded with a flock of



Sandhill Cranes by Josh Ward

20 **Sandhill Cranes** standing on the Montgomery Co shoreline near Big Branch (**MW, JWd**). Fortunately, the birds rose and circled over Howard Co before departing.

A **Wilson's Snipe** at CENPK was seen in all winter months and was still being reported in March. Seven were present on the Alpha Ridge Landfill trip 1/14 (**JHf, RCu+**). With some warm evenings in mid-winter, observers were able to watch **American Woodcock** at Hipsley Mill, PRSP engaged in courtship flights as early as 1/19 (**JHr-2**) with a high of six on 2/17 (**JSh+**). The last flock of 18 **Bonaparte's Gulls** swirled briefly over Lake Kittamaquondi on 12/14 (**BO**).

During late January, **Great Blue Herons** were returning to Vantage Point (**CKc**). **Bald Eagles**, as usual, attracted attention. The high of 35 was logged at BRDAM on 12/29 (**MKw**). An incubating bird continued on the nest along Folly Quarter Rd on 2/11 (**DCm**). A dead deer in a driveway at Roxbury Mill Rd attracted not only an eagle but also six **Black Vultures** and a **Red-tailed Hawk** on 1/27 (**KLI**). By early February, local hawks were engaging in courtship and territorial battles. Two **Red-shouldered Hawks** with talons interlocked dropped to the ground at Meadowbrook Pk 2/7 (**EHs**). A nice count of 23 **Great Black-backed Gulls** was at Jessup 1/16 (**DCm; CSt+**); 125 **Herring Gulls** were counted there on the same date (**KS**).

All resident owls were well-reported. A skittish **Eastern Screech-Owl** roosted in a box at Timberleigh again, but the box has yet to be used for nesting (**DNg**). A **Long-eared Owl** was found in the pines at Annapolis Rock on 1/19 (see [story](#)



Northern Saw-whet Owl by Anthony VanSchoor

on page 9). (**AVS, ph.+**). One or two **Northern Saw-whets** wintered in that same area. David Cummings records bird sounds. The evening of 1/25 he recorded the "whine" call of the saw-whet, a remarkably different sound from its usual "toot." Each February Jay Sheppard leads a field trip, "How to Find an Owl." It's a great tutorial with pellet samples and handouts followed by a search of pines stands for owls. For a summary of this year's trip, go to <http://www.howardbirds.org/records/fieldtrips/FindingOwlsWorkshopFinalRep2017.pdf>

An adult **Red-headed Woodpecker** was first seen at Fox Chase on 1/8 (**AVS**). It was still present at the end of the winter season. Another adult was spotted briefly at Lake Kittamaquondi on 1/27 (**BO**).
(Records continued on page 4)

maqundi 1/16 (**HPt**). More wintering **Merlins** than usual were noted. They were reported from at least 11 locations, including one at Cavey La on 12/17 that was observed for 30 minutes as it consumed its prey (**RRf**). In contrast to the number of **Merlins**, there were just two **Peregrine Falcon** sightings: CENPK 2/24 (**BO**) and Mt. Pleasant's SkyWatch 2/25 (**MKw**).



Red-headed Woodpecker by Kevin Heffernan (left) and Jeff Culler (right)

Common Ravens were again widely reported. In the continuing search for the nest along the Patapsco River, the most promising sighting was four birds seen at different spots from one-half to two miles west of Daniels, PVSP on 2/18 (**RCu**). **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were one of the boreal species that arrived in good numbers showing up at feeders as well as in some pine stands. A pair of this appealing species arrived on 10/22 in a Pointers Run, w. Col. yard and was still present at the end of February. A combination of split peanuts (the birds appeared to cache some in nearby trees) and water were obvious attractions (**J&MHR**).

A **House Wren** box being cleaned in late winter contained the usual twiggy nest with the addition of a number of small peacock feathers and some cardinal feathers—seemingly a bird with a flair for interior decoration (**DNg**). **Carolina Wrens** are quick to take advantage of protected locations for roosting and nesting. It was a surprise, however, to find one perched on a sign in the cat food aisle of the Hickory Ridge Giant in Columbia on 1/9 (**JTv**, video).

During a mild winter one can expect a few mimic thrushes to remain. **Gray Catbirds** were detected at Blandair 1/4 (**JW**), as well as 2/4 and 2/19 (**AVS**), 1/16 at Lake Elkhorn (**SRm**), and 2/18 at Miller Library (**JW**). **Brown Thrashers** were also at Blandair 1/4 (**JW-2**) and 2/4 (**AVS**), at Western Regional Pk 1/8 (**AVS**), at Annapolis Rock 1/17 (**AVS**), and at the Soccer Assoc, Cent. La (**JW**).

The 2,069 **European Starlings** on the Howard Co. Mid-winter Ct (HCMC) 2/4 was an all-time low, although even that number seems excessive. Fifteen **American Pipits** were spotted at Underwood Rd 2/23 (**WE**). **Purple Finches** moved in (or through) in smaller than expected numbers. Feeders near Duval Rd were a consistent location where they topped out at 18 on 1/3 (**KTf**). Two **Snow Buntings** at WATFD 12/18 were one of the winter's choice sightings (**AVS**).

An **Orange-crowned Warbler** was present at Mt. Pleasant 12/5 (**JW**). The individual at Blandair 12/14 (**AVS+**) and again 2/19 (**AVS**) gave a positive indication of a wintering bird, highly unusual for this county. A **Northern Parula** was photographed at Blandair 12/3 (**JW**). An early returning

Pine Warbler was present in a pine grove at Gateway 2/24 (**JW**).

American Tree Sparrows were few with a high of three at Mt. Pleasant 12/15 (**BO**). Just one was spotted on HCMC 2/4, the all-time low count (Fox Chase - **JCu**, **DCm**). **Chipping Sparrows** are normally scarce in winter, but 16 were counted at W. Friendship Pk 1/19 (**KS**, **HPt**, **KnHf**). Seven **Fox Sparrows** were noted at Blandair 1/4 (**JW**). Among the few **White-crowned Sparrows** this season was a Gambel's-type at Mt. Pleasant 12/4 (**BO**).

As usual, **Rusty Blackbirds** were in short supply so the 30 in a single flock at a farm along Underwood Rd on 2/4 was a surprise (**D&MH**). That turned out to be the all-time high for that species on any HCMC! A blackbird with white wing patches in a flock of 200 **Red-winged Blackbirds** at Cavey La provided a heart-stopping moment until it was determined that the bird was a leucistic Red-wing and not a Yellow-headed (**RRf**). **Baltimore Orioles** winter occasionally frequently visiting feeders to augment their diet. For a second winter, orioles were reported from the vicinity of Lake Elkhorn. On 12/24 an adult male appeared at feeders near the lake (**MSt**, **BMr**); it was photographed in the same general area on 1/18 (**ALw**). On 12/27 a female showed up at the lake (**MSt**, **BMr**, ph.); it was seen intermittently near the north shore of the lake during January and February (**ALw**, ph.). One or both birds were noticed by others not far from the lake at Madrigal Terrace (**DSn**), Tinted Hill (**MKv**), and Sweet Fern (*fide* **JSh**). A lone **Pine Siskin** showed up at Cavey La 2/12 (**RRf**). Hardly an invasion this winter.

Remember the flying squirrel that visited the bluebird feeder near Lake Elkhorn last year? The attractive small mammals still appear to be in the area. One returned to the feeder on 12/24 (**MSt**, **BMr**). White-nose syndrome has so drastically reduced many bat populations that it was pleasant to receive reports of bats seen on 1/12 and 2/8 at Talbots Landing (**R&JGr**), as well as one at Hipsley Mill, PRSP on 2/8 (**NM**).

My thanks to Nancy Magnusson, Joe Hanfman, and Howard Patterson for eagle-eye proofing.

Abbreviations: BRDAM – Brighton Dam, CENPK – Centennial Park, HCMC – Howard County Mid-winter Count, PVSP – Patapsco Valley State Park, PRSP – Patuxent River State Park, TRIRS – Triadelphia Reservoir, WATFD – Waterford Farm.

Observers: **JCu** – Jeff Culler, **RCu** – Ralph Cullison, III, **DCm** – David Cummings, **WE** – Wes Earp, **JGr** – Jane Geuder, **RGr** – Ralph Geuder, **JHf** – Joe Hanfman, **JHr** – John Harris, **MHR** – Meg Harris, **DHv** – Dave Harvey, **MHV** – Maureen Harvey, **KnHf** – Karen Heffernan, **KHf** – Kevin Heffernan, **EHS** – Ed Huestis, **MKw** – Mike Kerwin, **MKv** – Margaret Kvaak, **KLI** – Kathy Lillie, **CKc** – Clayton Koonce, **ALw** – Allen Lewis, **NM** – Nancy Magnusson, **BMr** – Barry Miller, **DNg** – Diane Nagengast, **BO** – Bonnie Ott, **HPt** – Howard Patterson, **GPr** – Gary Prestianni, **SRm** – Sarah Romero, **RRf** – Russ Ruffing, **DSn** – David Sandler, **KS** – Kurt Schwarz, **CSH** – Chuck Sharp, **DSh** – Denise Sharp, **JSh** – Jay Sheppard, **MSt** – Michelle Stewart, **ESu** – Eva Sunell, **KTf** – Kate Tufts, **JTv** – June Tveekrem, **AVS** – Anthony VanSchoor, **MW** – Mark Wallace, **JWd** – Josh Ward, **JW** – Jim Wilkinson.

ULTIMATE HOWARD COUNTY DRAGONFLY COUNT

BY JUNE TVEEKREM

Come join us for our last hurrah! The Twelfth Howard County Dragonfly Count, co-sponsored with the Howard County Dept. of Recreation and Parks, will be held this year on Saturday, August 5, 2017. (After that we will be discontinuing the count due to increasing difficulty of scheduling and availability of leaders.)

No experience is necessary to participate; beginners are welcome. Each group of observers, with an experienced leader, visits sites within the county. The group identifies and counts every dragonfly and damselfly seen. Photography is encouraged, so bring your camera if you are so inclined.

A tally will be held afterwards at 4:00 pm at the house of June Tveekrem, 10970 Millbank Row, Columbia, MD.

For more details and to sign up, please contact June Tveekrem at jtveekrem@gmail.com.

POTLUCK THANKS

BY KATHIE LILLIE

Thanks to everyone for the successful 2017 Annual Potluck Dinner, held on March 25th in the auditorium of the Robinson Nature Center. At the end of a wonderfully mild spring day, 31 people came out, including Pam and Josh from the Nature Center, and shared great food and great photos. We'd like to thank the RNC staff for arranging the tables and chairs for us, as usual. Many thanks to the people who assisted with set-up and take-down so that, like the wind, we came in and then moved on. A number of our birding compadres were unable to attend because of illness, trips, or other issues. John Harris stepped in and coordinated the "slide" show. People shared photos from places such as Alaska, Finland, Costa Rica, Namibia, and more. In addition, there were photos from the ever-surprising backyards and feeders, and in commemoration of the late Chan Robbins, a photo of his favorite, the winter wren. Thank you all for the sharing and comradery!

Chandler S. Robbins 1918-2017: In Memoriam

Eminent ornithologist and honorary life member of the Howard County Bird Club died March 20, 2017 at the age of 98. For a description of his long-time relationship with Howard County birds and its birders, go to the Club web site [home page](http://www.howardbirds.org/), <http://www.howardbirds.org/>

AN ATTACK TURKEY

BY KATE TUFTS

This Wild Turkey has been seen in the area of AE Mullinix Rd and Daisy Rd on numerous occasions during the winter, usually in someone's yard. On February 2, 2017, I was at the stop sign at AE Mullinix Rd preparing to turn when I saw the bird across Daisy Rd. It immediately ran straight for my car and stopped right in front of the front bumper. It then walked over to the side and made a few funny little turkey noises. I was enjoying this unusual behavior until it started pecking on the hood of the car. I decided it was time to leave. Easier said than done. I beeped my horn and it just looked at me. I slowly pulled out onto Daisy Rd with the turkey running right alongside the car. I picked up a bit of speed and looked in the rearview mirror to see the crazy bird running down Daisy Rd chasing the car. Quite a sight! One of our neighbors said the same thing happened to him. What a hoot! Or should I say gobble!



The Attack Turkey

by Kate Tufts

Note: On 1/8/17 Kevin and Karen Heffernan and Chuck Stirrat had this bird near the same intersection, but at that time it did not attack. On the other hand, on March 8, Chuck had the same experience that Kate had had. The turkey continued to be seen in the same area through at least March 28.

MAY COUNT IS SATURDAY, MAY 13, 2017

BY KEVIN HEFFERNAN

This is the time of year when spring is teasing us with warm days followed by cold ones. May however, will be here before we know it. May Count, always the second Saturday in May, is on May 13. For beginning birders, this is an excellent opportunity to be paired with more experienced birders in order to see and hear a number of both residents and spring migrants. Think warblers, vireos, thrushes, shorebirds, etc. The spring migrants are passing through headed north, the summer residents are back and some of the winter migrants are still around. Over the last ten years across the county, we have tallied an average of 144 species during the May Count. Last year's total was 148.

For the count, Howard County is divided into the seven areas shown on the map. Each area has an Area Coordinator (name and phone number listed below) who communicates with the counters, assigns territories, and compiles area results. If you are a beginner, ask to be paired with a more experienced birder. Since the point is to tally every individual bird, extra eyes and ears are helpful. If you want to see a particular species, give me a call (443-668-7618) and I will try to place you in a location where you would have a good chance of seeing that bird.

- | | | |
|--------|-----------------|--------------|
| Area 1 | Bill Hill | 410-442-5512 |
| Area 2 | Ward Ebert | 301-490-5807 |
| Area 3 | Chuck Stirrat | 410-531-2417 |
| Area 4 | Mike McClure | 410-531-2780 |
| Area 5 | Karen Darcy | 443-857-1789 |
| Area 6 | Kevin Heffernan | 443-668-7618 |
| Area 7 | John McKittrick | 410-997-3122 |

At the end of the day, all of the counters are invited to a tally rally at Kathie Lillie's house (Note: this is a change from last year) to share what was seen and come up with the county totals. It is a great oppor-

tunity to relax, swap stories of the day, and find out what everyone else has seen. (Directions to Kathie's house will be provided by the area coordinators.) Please call Kathie in advance (301-807-3785) and let her know how many are coming from your party and your choice of food or beverage to bring. Dinner will begin at 7:00 p.m. and the tally will start at 8:00 p.m. The completed checklist must be turned in to the area coordinators at the tally rally. If you cannot make it, be sure that your checklist gets delivered or gets called in by 7:00 p.m. We will find out what rarities were seen and often go out the next day to try to relocate them.

Come join us. This is a great chance for beginning birders to see many new and beautiful species of birds as they pass through in their spring plumage.



**THE HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB
WELCOMES THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS,
FEBRUARY 1-MARCH 30 , 2017**

Christina Ayala
James Kaiser, Kathryn Jones, and Amy Kaiser-Jones
Steve and Cyndy Parr
Paul and Laura Riger
Ryan Salsman
Anna Schrad
George and Kay Simmons

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

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.

May 25, 2017
Cindy Albright
10363 Windstream Dr
Columbia, MD 21044
240-463-5380
cindy@cindyalbright.com

HOWARD COUNTY MID-WINTER COUNT, FEBRUARY 4, 2017

BY JOE HANFMAN

A cold and overcast day with temperatures 21 – 35° F. The reservoir and ponds were 75-100% iced over and rivers were 5% iced over. We recorded 88 species which is the average number of the last 31. The total number of individual birds was 24,870 which is 27,110 below the average and the third lowest number ever recorded. It is also 140,030 below the maximum number of birds recorded.

Common Ravens are becoming more common with a new high count of six. This is the fourth year in a row that ravens have been found.

All-time high counts were recorded for Ring-necked Duck (336), Long-tailed Duck (2, a tie), Northern Saw-whet Owl (2), and Rusty Blackbird (30).

All-time low counts were recorded for Mallard (250), European Starling (2,069), American Tree Sparrow (1), and Northern Cardinal (520).

Fifty-two of the 88 species tallied have been seen on all 31 Mid-winter Counts. Eighty-one of the 88 species tallied have been seen on at least 50% of all 31 Mid-winter Counts.

The birds that have been seen on more than half of the counts but missed this year were Mute Swan (not expected), Tundra Swan, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Northern Pintail, Canvasback, Lesser Scaup, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Meadowlark, and Pine Siskin. This was the only year that American Wigeon and Canvasback have been missed.

Many people contributed to the success of the day. Seventy-five observers spent 211.6 hours and covered 130.8 miles on foot and 471.4 miles by car. Another 5.9 hours were spent feeder watching, plus 3.4 hours stationary and 5.3 hours of owling.

Chuck Stirrat updated the taxonomic order, summarized the area worksheets, and provided field and feeder checklists. Area leaders arrange coverage, do follow-up if necessary, and compile area totals. Their names are in boldface below (*anyone who counted in more than one area or also at a feeder is listed just once*). Once again, we thank Karen and Jeff Culler for generously serving as hosts for the tally and welcoming us to their home.

Land permission from Howard County Dept. of Recrea-

tion and Parks, Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, and many private property owners assure good coverage—we are extremely grateful.

Observers: *Area 1.* **Mark Wallace, Wes Earp, Jim & Marilyn Brinkley, Lisa Colangelo, Trish Cope, Sue Earp, Toni Evans, Tom Feild, Ron Griffin, Brenda Kidera, Geraldine King, Kathy Lillie, Woody Merkle, Mary Prowell, Jay Sheppard, Marcy Stutzman, Robin Todd, Kent & Lisa Troutman, Kate Tufts, Bruce Woodward;** *Area 2.* **Ward Ebert, Jeff Culler, David Cummings, Heidi Osterman, Ron & Susan Polniaszek, Russ Ruffing, Paul Zucker;** *Area 3.* **Dave & Maureen Harvey, Mary Lou Clark, Ralph Cullison, Joe Hanfman, David Holmes, Felicia Lovelett, Tom Miller, Robin & Will Tress;** *Area 4.* **Mike McClure, John Harris, Patsy Kennan, Mike Leumas, Grazina McClure, Chuck Stirrat.** *Area 5.* **Karen & Kevin Heffernan, Meg Harris, Clayton Koonce, Nancy Magnusson, Howard Patterson, Ginny Walker;** *Area 6.* **Bonnie Ott, Karan Blum, Brigitte Lund, Richard Orr, Sue Probst, Anthony VanSchoor, Michele Wright.** *Area 7.* **Kurt Schwarz, Dennis Coskren, Ed Huestis, Allen Lewis, Rosa Lubitz, John McKitterick, Sue Muller, Sue Neri, Sarah Romero, Anna Schrad, Jo Solem, Eva Sunell, Jim Wilkinson**

Note: For the 2018 Mid-winter Count we need a volunteer to take over as the Area 3 Coordinator. We thank Dave and Maureen Harvey for their many years of service.

MIGRATORY BIRD COLLISIONS

The Howard County Environmental Sustainability Board is forming a new committee to gather data and study migratory bird collisions with newly constructed, mirrored buildings near the Columbia Mall. If you are interested in helping with this effort, please contact Nancy McAllister at nancymcallister@yahoo.com
Thank you!

Howard County Mid-Winter Count - February 4, 2017

Totals		Totals		Totals	
Cackling Goose	2	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	17	Fox Sparrow	7
Canada Goose	4,734	Downy Woodpecker	204	Song Sparrow	595
Wood Duck	3	Hairy Woodpecker	39	Swamp Sparrow	19
American Black Duck	31	Northern Flicker	68	White-throated Sparrow	1,677
Mallard	250	Pileated Woodpecker	46	White-crowned Sparrow	29
Green-winged Teal	2	American Kestrel	5	<i>sparrow species</i>	30
Ring-necked Duck	336	Merlin	2	Dark-eyed Junco	1,141
Long-tailed Duck	2	Eastern Phoebe	6	Northern Cardinal	520
Bufflehead	15	Blue Jay	294	Red-winged Blackbird	2,406
Hooded Merganser	54	American Crow	1,504	Rusty Blackbird	30
Common Merganser	944	Fish Crow	83	Common Grackle	509
Ruddy Duck	1	<i>crow species</i>	479	Brown-headed Cowbird	536
Wild Turkey	1	Common Raven	6	<i>blackbird species</i>	1,294
Pied-billed Grebe	4	Horned Lark	22	Total Birds:	24,870
Rock Pigeon	350	Carolina Chickadee	455	Total Species:	88
Mourning Dove	319	Tufted Titmouse	408		Totals
American Coot	1	Red-breasted Nuthatch	9	Supplemental Data	
Killdeer	3	White-breasted Nuthatch	200	Deer Seen:	152
Wilson's Snipe	1	Brown Creeper	12	Time Start:	5:30 a
American Woodcock	2	Winter Wren	17	Time Stop:	6:30 p
Ring-billed Gull	231	Carolina Wren	234	Hours on Foot:	160.9
<i>gull species</i>	11	Golden-crowned Kinglet	20	Hours by Car:	50.7
Double-crested Cormorant	1	Eastern Bluebird	361	Miles on Foot:	130.8
Great Blue Heron	16	Hermit Thrush	12	Miles by Car:	471.4
Black Vulture	298	American Robin	315	Hours Feeder Watching:	5.9
Turkey Vulture	226	Gray Catbird	1	Hours Stationary:	3.4
Bald Eagle [ad/im/unk]	28	Brown Thrasher	1	Hours "Owling":	5.3
Northern Harrier	2	Northern Mockingbird	105	Miles "Owling":	9.2
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2	European Starling	2,069		Totals
Cooper's Hawk	10	Cedar Waxwing	64	Tot. Field Obs. in Area:	72
Red-shouldered Hawk	85	House Sparrow	186	Tot. Field Parties in Area:	47
Red-tailed Hawk	62	House Finch	217	Tot. Feederwatchers:	3
<i>buteo species</i>	4	Purple Finch	10	Tot. Feederwatch Parties:	2
Eastern Screech-Owl	4	American Goldfinch	179	Total Observers in Area:	75
Great Horned Owl	8	Yel.-rump'd (Myrtle) Warbler	8	Total Parties in Area:	49
Barred Owl	8	Eastern Towhee	54	Tot. Field Pty-Hrs (Reg.):	211.6
Northern Saw-whet Owl	2	American Tree Sparrow	1	Total Party-Hrs (Feeder):	5.9
Belted Kingfisher	16	Chipping Sparrow	8	Tot. Pty-Hrs (Stationary):	3.4
Red-headed Woodpecker	1	Field Sparrow	52	Total Party-Hrs (Owling):	5.3
Red-bellied Woodpecker	206	Savannah Sparrow	28	Total Party-Hours:	226.2
	Totals		Totals		Totals

RENDEZVOUS WITH A LONG-EARED OWL

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BY ANTHONY VANSCHOOR



Photos by Anthony VanSchoor

At 8:30 a.m. on January 19, 2017, I arrived at the parking lot at Annapolis Rock Road for another attempt to locate a Northern Saw-whet Owl. A large number of American Crows drew my attention so I walked in their direction hoping they were on to something. When I found a nice spot, I sat down anticipating that the crows might mob their victim toward me. I opened my breakfast sandwich and enjoyed the foggy and misty blanket that hung low over the area. Directly in front of me was a honeysuckle crown I kept peering into. After half an hour, the fog began to lift. With binoculars I thought I saw a saw-whet at the top of the crown, a not unlikely perch for that small owl. In order to get a better look, I took a few steps toward the spot stepping over a thick vine that crossed the path into the brambles. At that moment I was startled by a bird that flushed from a low area to my right. Thirty feet down the path I could see a beautiful Long-eared Owl. I took a few documentation photos and backed off slowly. The owl did not appear to notice me, perhaps because I was wearing a camouflage shirt and a hat with a built-in face screen. When I reached a safe spot to use my phone, I had no reception (typical for that location). Eventually, I sent an email to a number of people and soon birders arrived. We split into two groups to try to re-find the bird. We spent some time searching without success; eventually both groups met back at the honeysuckle tangle. I was still shaking from excitement and started to relate the story and go through the same motions. As I had the first time, I approached the honeysuckle tangle. As my foot started over the large vine, I froze. Two eyes were staring at me. The owl had returned to its original perch! I slowly backed up, carefully turned around, and told everyone to follow me slowly. We retreated another 10 feet and turned left. In front of us, four inches off the ground was the owl. It was my rendezvous with a Long-eared Owl!

MARYLAND BIODIVERSITY PROJECT BIOBLITZ

Date: Saturday, August 12, 2016

Location: Howard County Conservancy

Surveys: Birds, Insects, Trees, Wildflowers, Herps & more

Needed: Specialist leaders and survey participants

To volunteer sign up at : <https://www.hcconservancy.org/event/family-bio-blitz/>

A species checklist has been started at: <https://www.marylandbiodiversity.com/viewSite.php?site=8>

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:

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The Goldfinch, newsletter of the Howard County Bird Club, is published five times per year. Copy deadline for the September/October 2017 issue is July 25, 2017.



HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB

Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society

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COLUMBIA MD 21044-1323

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Bioblitz	

Joe Hanfman captured this excellent photo showing a Cackling Goose (right) with a Canada Goose for comparison, at Centennial Lake on January 12.

