



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, September 14, 2017 "Namibia Overland," by Allen Lewis. This road trip, through starkly beautiful open country in one of the least densely populated countries in Africa, included Okavango Delta in Botswana and Victoria Falls in Zambia. In his professional career, Allen taught and conducted biological research at the University of Puerto Rico for thirty years. He is a club member.

Thursday October 12, 2017 "Rescuing Cold-stunned Sea Turtles," by Sue Muller, Howard County Recreation and Parks. Her presentation will take you on the rescue trip every step of the way! Learn how you can volunteer to help save endangered sea turtles as well as actions you can take locally. Sue Muller is a club member and has presented previous programs. She has served as the Howard County coordinator for the Maryland Amphibian and Reptile Atlas.

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, 240-755-0183

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

PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

Mississippi Kite



© Anthony Van Schoor

Found and photographed by
Anthony VanSchoor
on May 29, 2017

Welcome to another great year of birding with the Howard County Bird Club! A while back I was surprised to find out that some of our club members have observed particular bird species, somewhere in Maryland, every day of the year, including February 29! Of course, not all observations were in the same year. For example, a Northern Mockingbird may have been seen on January 1st in 2017, January 2nd in 2016, and so on. Whether or not pursuing something like this interests you, the concept of "day-listing" has merit. I have not embraced day-listing completely, but I do practice a variant of it. I try to record as many species as possible, every day, no matter where I am. For health reasons, it is good for me to walk two to three miles a day, which I often do while birding. However, beyond health, my "bird-every-day" regimen has had other, unexpected benefits. When I joined the Club a few years ago, I mostly took the summer off from birding locally. My reasons included that it was too hot, there were many hungry insects, the birds were mostly not visible, and so on. But, as of writing this, in July 2017, I am happy to report that as a result of my goal to "bird-every-day," I am improving my birding skills and I am discovering creatures that I mostly overlooked before, like butterflies and dragonflies. Because the birds are mostly not visible, my ear-birding skills are improving. And very recently, as I went out on hot summer days, I found that it was impossible to ignore the beauty of the butterflies and dragonflies.

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Fall 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.

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

MIDDLE PATUXENT ENVIRONMENTAL AREA

September 7, Thursday, 7:30 a.m. Half day. *Meet at the Clegg Meadow off South Wind Cir, Columbia, MD 21044.* Moderate walking on 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. No facilities. Leader – Kurt Schwarz, krschwal@verizon.net, 410-461-1643

HOWARD COUNTY CONSERVANCY (HCC) AT MT. PLEASANT FARM

September 9, 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, 410-461-2408

ROCKBURN BRANCH PARK

September 10, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. Half day. *Meet in parking lot on the left just past the restored schoolhouse. The park gate is just beyond Rockburn Elementary School.* 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, 410-418-8731

HCC AT AT MT. PLEASANT

September 13, 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, 410-925-1809

FALL COUNT

September 16, Saturday. See article on page 10. Please go to the following link to sign up. <http://howardbirds.org/howard/counts.htm>

🍷 \$ JUG BAY BOAT TRIP

September 30, Saturday, 7:00 a.m. *Meet at Patuxent River Park, 16000 Croom Airport Rd, Upper Marlboro, MD.* Look for migrant 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. For reservations contact Mary Maxey at maximom11998@gmail.com. Contact Mary if you are interested in carpooling.

🦅 LAKE ELKHORN

October 1, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. 2-3 hour. *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, allenrlewis@gmail.com

UNIVERSITY OF MD CENTRAL MARYLAND RESEARCH AND EDUCATION CENTER

October 14, Saturday, 7:30 - 9:15 a.m. preceding the Big Sit. *Meet at the farm office's concrete parking lot (just past the office on the left) on Folly Quarter Road* for a walk in the wetlands and Middle Patuxent floodplain. The tract has a history of uncommon county sightings. Waterproof footwear is advised. As requested, we will be back across the Folly Quarter Rd. bridge by 9:30.

🦅 UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND OPEN HOUSE BIG SIT

October 14, Saturday, 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. *Meet just outside of the front lawn tent on the University Farm on Folly Quarter Rd.* The Club will once again hold an informal Big Sit. All are welcome to bring a chair and skywatch or interact with the farm's visitors at the Club's booth. Stop by any time it is convenient. Leader – Wes Earp, wesandsue@gmail.com, 410-531-3197

WEST FRIENDSHIP PARK

October 15, Sunday, 7:45 a.m. *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. Rustic facilities. Leader – Jeff Culler,

cullersfuls@hotmail.com, 410-465-9006

HCC AT MT. PLEASANT

October 22, Sunday, 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 – Russ Ruffing, ruff2@verizon.net

HCC AT MT. PLEASANT SKYWATCH

November 4, Saturday, 9:30 a.m. Half day. *Meet at parking lot.* This trip will be strictly a skywatch 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. In a recent year a half-day skywatch 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, binocular, scope, and camera if you like. Bring chairs if you prefer your own. There are benches with backs on site. Participants can also walk the Conservancy trails if skywatching proves non-productive. Facilities available.

Leader – Russ Ruffing, ruff2@verizon.net

CENTENNIAL PARK

November 5, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours. (Daylight Saving Time ends). *Meet at the 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, 410-418-8731

SHARPS AT WATERFORD FARM

November 11, 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, 410-531-3197




CENTENNIAL PARK

November 12, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours. *Meet at the*

west end parking lot off Centennial Lane. See Nov. 5 trip for details. Leader – Mary Lou Clark, doc-torfx_99@yahoo.com

CHANDLER S. ROBBINS SKYWATCH SITE AT MT. PLEASANT

Visit the Club's skywatch site any day to watch for migrants. Official counters will be present on most weekend days and sometimes weekdays. Questions? Contact Mike Kerwin: m63kerwin@verizon.net

-  = Reservations required
-  = Fee for this trip
-  = Great for beginning birders

**OSPREY TRIP TO JUG BAY
BY MARY MAXEY**

On June 30, 2017, Howard County Bird Club members traveled to Patuxent River Park for an Osprey tour with Greg Kearns, Naturalist, Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission. Greg, who spoke at the December 2016 Club meeting, educated us on the comeback of the Osprey to the bay, and the history and ecology of the river. Greg also described the reintroduction and growth of the wild rice in the marsh. This is the largest stand of wild rice in Maryland. Members participated in banding, recording, and holding Osprey young. We also witnessed the detrimental effects of fishing line on Osprey when we approached a nest with three young. One had strangled itself on the fishing line and had died. The second one had his feet tangled in the line to the point that it was embedded in the skin and the feet were engorged. Greg carefully cut out the line as best he could. The third chick was ill and died while we were there.

Greg Kearns examining a banded Osprey chick



by Mary Lou Clark

Other birds of note on the trip were a Belted Kingfisher feeding young in a cliffside nest, Prothonotary Warblers, and a Wood Duck box with eggs.

SPRING BIRD RECORDS: MARCH 1 – MAY 31, 2017

BY [JOANNE SOLEM](#)

Spring saw a few early-arriving species, delayed migration for others, and a sprinkling of rarities, mostly in late May. Highlights were Swallow-tailed Kite, Mississippi Kite, Bicknell's Thrush, Clay-colored Sparrow, and Dickcissel.

A flock of 100 **Snow Geese** was reported over Centennial Park (CENPK) 3/5 (**R&RnPr, JHy**); four flew over Driver Rd 4/13 (**AVS**). The last **Cackling Goose** was picked out at Larriland 3/15 (**JHf**). On 4/29, **Canada Goose** goslings were present at both Columbia Crossing II Pd (SN) and at the GE Pond at Gateway (SN). The peak **Tundra Swan** flight of 220 over the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area (MPEA) the morning of 3/21 was an impressive sight (**MLC, KnHf, JS**).

Waterfowl migration was marked by few surprises and mostly low numbers. Some interesting puddle duck records included the following (all at Race Rd Wetlands - RACRW): 14 **Gadwalls** 3/1 (**JHf**); two **No. Shovelers** 3/25 (**JHf**); and one **No. Pintail** 3/8 (**EHs**), with one pintail at Triadelphia Reservoir (TRIRS) 3/29 (**JHf**) and 23 **Green-winged Teal** at TRIRS on the same date (**JHf**). A few diving ducks and mergansers were of particular interest. **Canvashacks** continued their winter scarcity into spring with one at Larriland 3/13 (**AVS**) and one at Brighton Dam 3/28 (**RHI**). **Lesser Scaup** peaked at 30 on Lime Kiln Rd Pd 3/9 (**MW**). A female **Long-tailed Duck** was a nice find at Brighton Dam 3/29 (**KnHf, HPt**; i.d. **JHf**). A late female **Bufflehead** was present at Lake Elkhorn (LKELK) on 5/5 (**JS; HPt, KS**). Five **Red-breasted Mergansers** were at TRIRS on 3/29 (**DCm**) with four females at CENPK 3/27 (**KS**). **Ruddy Ducks** stayed late with one at Pigtail 5/16 (**EHs**); another appeared at LKELK 5/24 (**MSt, BMr**) and was still present at the end of the period.

Decades ago the **Northern Bobwhite** at Robinson Nature Center 5/19 (*vide* **BO**) would have been cause for excitement. Since then, bobwhites and pheasants have been raised and released so regularly that the origin of all county individuals of these species is suspect. **Wild Turkeys** continued to be widely noted with a high of 16 at Browns Bridge 3/16 (**JW**).

Red-throated Loons always merit special attention. One at TRIRS 4/3 (**DCm**) stayed the day enabling many birders to check it. A **Common Loon** appeared on LKELK 3/24 (**MSt, BMr**); it was still present at the end of the season. **Horned Grebes** were relatively scarce with highs of five at CENPK 3/21 (**KS**) and four at TRIRS 3/28 (**KS**). One at Sewell's Orchard 3/18 was at an infrequent location (**CKc**), while one at Lake Kittamaquidi (LKKIT) on 5/20 tied the third latest date (**HPt, DSn**).

American Bitterns were detected at three locations, about par for that cryptically plumaged species. On 4/7 at RACRW, an observer watched in astonishment as a bittern grabbed and swallowed one of the two Marsh Wrens present in a small cattail patch (**AVS**). A second bittern was seen by a dozen people as the bird flew from the mud at river's edge to a grassy bank at the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area (MPEA) 5/3 (**JHf+**). The third bird was in one of the cattail-dominated ponds at Meadowbrook Park 5/16 (**RHI**).



© Kevin J. Heffernan
American Bittern

by Kevin Heffernan

Great Blue Herons again nested successfully at Vantage Point with 21 active nests on 3/29 (**JS, MLC**). A more recent colony of ~12 nests was spotted along the Patuxent River below Haviland Mill Rd in March (**JSh**). The nests were unusual because they were in pines rather than in deciduous trees. The first **Great Egret** of the year turned up at LKKIT 3/18 (**CKc**). A **Cattle Egret**, always a notable find, spent a day at Ful-

ton on 4/17 (**JW**). Spring **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** were one at Marriottsville on 5/2 (**LPk**), and two adults feeding on a lawn in the business park along Guilford Rd, not far from the Pratt Bridge on 5/13 (**SMu, ph.**). A seasonal highlight, a **Glossy Ibis**, was noted at a western county farm on 5/13 (**MW**).

Unfortunately, the **Osprey** pair that had nested on a relay tower along Triadelphia Mill Rd in 2016 did not return this year as verified on 5/18 (**JS**). Even though it lacked prey, an Osprey over Allview on 5/10 was harassed by a Bald Eagle, which even nipped its tail (**JHy**).

Kites in Howard County merit headlines. Two kite species in the same week—unprecedented! A lone **Swallow-tailed Kite** (4th record) was spotted by an observer who pulled over along MD 144 just east of Hardy Rd and Watersville Rd on 5/25 to watch the soaring bird before it drifted out of sight (**MJM**). Birders were more fortunate with the **Mississippi Kites** that appeared over Glenmont, Long Reach, E. Col. (**AVS**). One appeared at 9:30 a.m. on 5/29. It was seen intermittently until 12:20 p.m. Between 11:20 and 11:45 a.m. another was spotted over LKELK (**DSn**). The time both birds were seen overlapped establishing the presence of two, possibly three birds (**JHf**). At least one kite remained in the Glenmont neighborhood into June, much to the delight of dozens of Maryland birders. A high population of cicadas along with plenty of dead-branch perches appeared to have attracted the birds. With the exception of one adult reported on 5/30 (**AVS**), all were first-summer birds.

The **Bald Eagle** nest, visible from Folly Quarter Rd at the University of MD Central Farm and used successfully since 2013, was abandoned for unknown reasons. An adult had been seen on the nest either incubating eggs or covering

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small young as late as 3/20 (JW); however, during April, adults were seen in the nest tree only sporadically. By 5/8, it was obvious that the nest had been abandoned (M&GMcC). A different pair built a nest in the Gorman Stream Valley NRA along the Middle Patuxent River. When it was discovered on 3/23, it contained an incubating bird (TRy). Later in the spring, conversations with people who live nearby verified that nestlings had been observed (*fide* TRy).

Northern Harriers were widely reported with most sightings in March, a few in April, and a lingering female in the Underwood Rd area that was present from 5/24 (AVS+) into June. By late May, two downy young were seen in the **Red-shouldered Hawk** nest at the east end of LKELK (SN). County **Broad-winged Hawk** migration rarely produces the numbers seen in fall, but the species is always eagerly awaited. Among the earliest this year were 12 over Burleigh Manor 4/12 (MKw) and eight over Driver Rd, PVSP 4/14 (BO+).

A **Sora** was reported at the Univ. of MD Central Farm (heard from Folly Qtr Rd) 5/6 (RRf, MRg, AVS); one was also heard at the same location on 5/13 (AVS). **American Coots** were all singles with sightings from RACRW 3/25 (JHf) to LKELK 5/4 (SRm).

Shorebirds provided a few surprises. Twenty-six **Semipalmated Plovers** at TRIRS on 5/22 (JHf) set a new high [15 - N. Magnusson 5/21/01]. **Greater Yellowlegs** were present sporadically for almost two months from 4/8 at Alpha Ridge Landfill (RCu, JHf+1) and Pigtail (RRf-2) to 5/25 at Pigtail (JHf, ALw-1). **Lesser Yellowlegs**, on the other hand, were reported for barely more than two weeks: 4/26 Western Reg. Pk (RRf-1) to 5/13 May Count at the U. of M. Farm (MMcC). Two **Dunlin** at Pigtail on 5/18 were a choice sighting (JS). One stayed until 5/25 (JHf) establishing a new late departure date [5/22/01 N. Magnusson, J. Solem]. **Least Sandpipers** peaked at 52 at Pigtail on 5/25 (JHf, ALw). Kudos to the observers who counted that many little brown birds feeding on similar-colored mud! **Pectoral Sandpipers** were few, but the earliest was at the Meadowridge Rd Pd 4/28 (AVS). Another, at TRIRS 5/22 (JHf), drifted around the reservoir for a few days until making a final stop at Pigtail on 5/26 (KCv), establishing the second latest record. Two **Semipalmated Sandpipers** at Pigtail 4/29 (DCm) tied the third earliest date.

The **Bonaparte's Gull** migration window was narrow and numbers low (3/28 TRIRS, DCm - 3 to 4/4 CENPK, AVS - 2). **Caspian Tern** numbers and dates were disappointing with relatively few sightings, all of them in April and all single digits.

Although there were a few earlier arrivals, most of the **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** filtered in during the third week of May or later. As is often the case, **Black-billed** began arriving at the end of April and early May. An **Eastern Screech-Owl** again roosted in a box at Timberleigh Rd, but the box has yet to be used for nesting (D&JNg). The **Barred Owl** pair at Gwynn Acres Path was successful; two fuzzy young were seen on 5/23 (JMI). The last **No. Saw-whet Owl** at Annapolis Rock, PRSP was spotted on 3/28 (AVS), the second latest departure date.

Common Nighthawks were tracked for a month from one on 4/29 over Long Reach, E. Col. (AVS) to one on 5/29 at Triadelphia Rd (POs). The high was a modest eight at CENPK

5/15 (RHI). A **Red-headed Woodpecker**, present at Fox Chase since early January, continued into summer (JCu, m. obs.). Others, in the course of spring, were tallied at at least six sites countywide. A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** at LKELK 5/6 (ALw) was a fine sighting as few linger into May.

Merlins were reported from at least four sites during March and early April. A **Peregrine Falcon** was spotted over West Friendship Park 4/1 (RRf) and one flew over Dobbin Rd/MD 175 on 4/2 (RHI).

Olive-sided Flycatchers moved north slowly with one in PRSP on 5/13 (TFe, GKg). One appeared at Long Reach, E. Col. 5/29 (seen while watching Miss. Kites!) (RRf, KS+). Nearby Blandair Park may have hosted the same bird that same day (MEk). Another was spotted at Clegg Meadow, MPEA 5/31 (DCm, ALw). No **Yellow-bellieds** or **Alders** were detected. Single **Least Flycatchers** were at MPEA 5/11 (KS, JHf, HPt) and 5/20 (Rn&RPr), with four (each in a different area) on 5/13.

Few vireos pushed record arrival dates. As usual, **Blue-headed Vireos** could be detected for a long period, with the first at David Force WMA 4/8 (SJn), the last at Mt. Pleasant 5/16 (DFd).

Common Ravens continued to be widely observed, especially in the Patapsco River Valley, where they are presumed to be nesting (no nest yet located). Those nesting on the Prince George's Co. side of Duckett Dam were successful (TFy) with four ravens tallied from the Howard Co side on 5/13 (JS, SMu, MMx). Ten **Horned Larks** were counted in two different areas on 5/13 in western Howard Co.

Normally, **Bank Swallows** are among the later arriving swallows. This year the species set a new arrival record when one appeared at Wilde Lake on 4/1 (RRf) [4/2/93 J. Coskren]. The last two were reported from Meadowridge Rd Pd 5/29 (EHs).

Red-breasted Nuthatches were among winter's bright spots; many continued into March and April. A Pointer's Run yard near Clarksville hosted a pair most of the winter; the female was the last to leave on 4/28 (J&MHR). One that had been regular at a Mt. Albert Rd feeder was last seen 4/30 (G&MMcC).

Winter Wrens appeared eager to depart with the last individuals along the Patuxent Branch Trail 4/8 (ALw) and at Burleigh Manor 4/10 (MKw), a month before the latest record. **Marsh Wrens** were detected at two locations. One continued at RACRW until 4/27 (CSt); another was observed in uncharacteristically dry habitat at Western Regional Park 5/12 (KS+). The last **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** was spotted at MPEA 5/6 (C&SPr).

Thrush migration was unremarkable, or so it seemed to those birders who limit their observations to daylight hours. On the other hand, Russ Ruffing's recordings of night migrants indicated that 4/28-29 and 4/29-30 were nights of exceptional thrush movement over Cavey La. A recording the night of 5/16 produced a **Bicknell's Thrush**, a rare migrant (RRf). A major surprise came the night of 5/30-31 when 29 **Gray-**

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checked Thrushes and 65 **Swainson's** flew over. Numbers of that magnitude and that late in the season had not been previously recorded locally. It was a welcome reminder that much of the remarkable flow of birds known as migration goes on outside of most birders' observations. Additional daytime **Gray-checked Thrushes** reported were at Cavey La 5/18 (**RRf**), at Brush Run, E. Col. 5/23-24 (**JW**), and at Martin Rd, E. Col. 5/28 (**JHf**).

Purple Finches, which had produced scattered winter records, showed up in greater numbers in spring, especially during the first half of April. The highest total was 34 at Henryton, PVSP on 4/23 (**RRf**) where the feeding flock in the tops of trees made it difficult to count (could have been many more than number shown; 60% were brown). A high count of 30 on 4/5 and 4/18 appeared at Duvall Rd feeders which had hosted the species most of the winter (**KTf**). That slowly dwindling flock remained in the area until 5/1 when the last three were seen. The county's final two were tallied in two different areas on 5/13 (**M&GMcC**; **BLd**, **MWr**).

Warbler migration promised more than it delivered, but there were a few good days and fine variety. **Northern Waterthrushes** were reported for more than a month including a 4/18 bird at Gateway (**BHb**) which tied the third earliest arrival date; the last was at MPEA 5/27 (**C&SPr**). **Prothonotary Warblers** showed up at three sites: Marriottsville, PVSP 4/21 (**THg**), LKELK 5/5 (**ALw**), and LKKIT 5/13 (**CKc**). The LKKIT bird was unusually cooperative. Although he sang lustily, established territory, and even found a fine nest cavity, he was (as is often the case in this county) unsuccessful in attracting a mate. He was last seen 5/31 (**CKc**). The window for **Tennessees** was small with the first two at Mt. Pleasant on 5/13 (**RTd**, **CAy**, **BGs**), and the last on 5/17 at MPEA (**RHl**; **JGn**). A **Nashville** at Mt. Pleasant on 4/21 was the second earliest ever (**JHf**). **Mourning Warblers** were also reported briefly with each of the five records from a different site: 5/13 Patuxent Branch Trail (**BNt**) and W. Friendship Pk (**AVS**), 5/15 Marriottsville, PVSP (**ALw**), 5/17 MPEA (**KS**), and 5/18 Brush Run, E. Col. (**JW**). **Cape Mays** were well-represented this spring with the earliest on 4/30 at Allview (**JMcK**), tying the third earliest date. Two early **Bay-breasteds** broke the arrival record for this species: one was at Allview 4/28 (**ESu**) and the other at MPEA 4/30 (**AVS**) [5/1/93 S. Atkinson; 5/1/12 R. Ruffing]. Five along the Gwynn Acres Path 5/17 was an unusual number (**RHl**). **Blackpolls** are often among the latest warblers to depart.



Blackpoll Warbler

by Kevin Heffernan

This year it was "early to arrive, early to depart," with few making it into June. **Palms** filtered through for six weeks from 3/29 at CENPK (**JCu-2**) and W. Friendship Pk (**EFl-1**) to 5/16 at MPEA (**JCu-1** western), the second latest departure date for any Palm, latest for a western. A **Black-throated Green** at CENPK 4/16 was the year's first (**J&MHR**). A **Canada** on 5/1 at RACRW tied the third earliest date (**AVS**), while six at Blandair on 5/16 was a nice count (**AVS**). **Wilson's** were reported from 5/11 at MPEA (**KS**) to 5/21 at Waterford Farm (**HPt**), a rather limited period.

American Tree Sparrows departed early with the last one reported on 3/17 at W. Friendship Pk (**JHf**). A **Clay-colored Sparrow** (15th record), one of the stars of the season, was photographed on 4/3 at Driver Rd, PVSP (**AVS**). From



Clay-colored Sparrow

by Anthony VanSchoor

then until 4/22 (**AVS**), the Maryland birding community streamed to the site. The bird was often difficult to see, but with patience (and sometimes repeated visits) several dozen people enjoyed the county's first-ever spring visit of this wanderer from mid-continent. **Vespers** were noticed at both W. Friendship Pk 4/5 (**AVS-**

1) and at Waterford 4/18 (**AVS-2**). Many years **Grasshopper Sparrows** arrive in April. This year the first report was 5/5 at Waterford (**AVS**). **Fox Sparrows** were widely noted from mid to late March. Spring **Lincoln's** are never as easy to find as in the fall. One was spotted at W. Friendship Pk 5/6 (**ALw**) and one at MPEA 5/16 (**ALw**, **DCm**). The last **Swamp** was at Blandair 5/15 (**AVS**). For some reason, when **Dark-eyed Juncos** disappear (this year on 4/29, Hallowed Stream, **MRg**), many birders assume **White-throated Sparrows** will leave also. White-throats, however, are regular well into May—there are even a dozen summer records. This year the last spring bird was at MPEA 5/26 (**JHf**). **White-crowned**s lingered, as usual, into May with the last five in three different areas on May Count, 5/13.

Summer Tanagers were reported at MPEA 5/6 (**CPr-1** male) and at Manahan Dr 5/20 (**BO**).

Grosbeaks and buntings all appeared at feeders. Most feeder reports were of **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks**, which sometimes dined in groups of three to six, occasionally staying for days. A **Blue Grosbeak** at a Jessup feeder 4/30 was a special visitor (**R&RnPr**). An **Indigo Bunting** at a neighbor's in Allenford on 4/14 was the third earliest date (**RTd**, ph.); others at feeders appeared the last week of April (**KLz**; **M&GMcC**; **JHf**; **HTd**; **ESu**).

Dickcissels were one of the notable spring birds. Two males

and a female were identified in an oldfield adjacent to Underwood Rd on 5/23 (JGn). Little did he know what that sighting would produce! During succeeding days, birders from all over Maryland visited the site to view this unusual county visitor. Because there are only two previous confirmed county nestings for this nomadic Midwestern species, excitement increased when a female was seen with nesting material on 5/24 (AVS, EHs, DSn). Additional information will appear in the summer summary.

Bobolinks held on in the same field until late May with the last one reported 5/30 (LSt). Is it too much to hope that some year they will stay to nest? Sporadic reports of **Rusty Blackbirds** ranged from a few in March to a few more in April, mostly one or two birds. The highest numbers were 20 at RACRW 4/17 (RRf) and 17 at W. Friendship Pk 3/27 (EHs).

A Big Day team (RRf, MRg, AVS) made an attempt on 5/6/17 to break the one-day county record of 122 set on 5/11/13 (RRf, HFk, MRg). Although they notched more than 100 species by mid-day and had a decent number of migrants, it was not a major flight day. That, coupled with rain in the afternoon and extreme exhaustion of some of the team members, caused the team to abandon the chase around 4:00 p.m., ending with 107 species. There's always next year....

For all the good news at the end of the season, spring ended on a sour note. On 5/31, Triadelphia Reservoir was closed to most public access for at least two years so that work could proceed on aging Brighton Dam. Water levels would be dropped dramatically and Brighton Dam Rd was supposed to become a single lane across the dam to accommodate construction equipment. Obviously, the reservoir's closure with a dramatic drawdown of water as well as dredging at several locations will have a significant impact on shorebirds and various waterbirds, as well as on the birders of the region.

Thanks to Joe Hanfman, Nancy Magnusson and Howard Patterson for proofing, also thanks to Russ Ruffing for verifying early and late records.

Abbreviations: PRSP – Patuxent River State Park, PVSP – Patuxent Valley State Park, ph. – photograph.

Observers: CAy – Christina Ayala, KCv – Kathy Calvert, MLC – Mary Lou Clark, JCu – Jeff Culler, RCu – Ralph Cullison III, DCm – David Cummings, MEk – Mary Erikson, TFe – Tom Feild, HFk – Harry Fink, EFl – Esther Fleischmann, DFd – Diane Ford, TFy – Tony Frye, BGs – Bryant Gesualdo, JGr – Jane Geuder, RGr – Ralph Geuder, JGn – Jim Green, JHf – Joe Hanfman, JHr – John Harris, MHR – Meg Harris, JHy – John Hayes, KnHf – Karen Heffernan, RHI – Russell Hillsley, THg – Tim Houghton, BHB – Bill Hubick, EHs – Ed Huestis, SJn – Steven Jones, MKw – Mike Kerwin, GKg – Geraldine King, CKc – Clayton Koonce, ALw – Allen Lewis, KLz – Kathy Litzinger, BLD – Brigitte Lund, JMI – John Maloney, MMx – Mary Maxey, GMcC – Grazina McClure, MMcC – Mike McClure, JMCK – John McKitterick, MJM – Mary Jane McMillan, BMr – Barry Miller, SMu – Sue Muller, DNg – Diane Nagengast, JNg – John Nagengast, SN – Sue Neri, BNw – Ben Newton, POs – Peter Osenton, BO – Bonnie Ott, LPk – Lynne Parks, CPr – Cynthia Parr, SPr – Steve Parr, HPT – Howard Patterson, RnPr – Renee Peters, RPr – Richard Peters, TRy – Tim Ray, MRg – Matt Rogosky, SRm – Sarah Romero, RRf – Russ Ruffing, DSn – David Sandler, KS – Kurt Schwarz, JSh – Jay Sheppard, JS – Jo Solem, LSt – Leslie Starr, MSt – Michelle Stewart, CSt – Chuck Stirrat, ESu – Eva Sunell, HTd – Hyacinth Todd, RTd – Robin Todd, KTF – Kate Tufts, AVS – Anthony VanSchoor, MW – Mark Wallace, JW – Jim Wilkinson, MWr – Michele Wright.

(President's Welcome continued from page 1)

Though this has been a personal journey, the Club has been the common thread. We are lucky to have so much expertise among people that are so sharing. I encourage you to take advantage of all of the things that this club has to offer: field trips led by highly accomplished birders, excellent programs, and some of the non-birding events, like butterfly counts. Yes, I know this is a *bird* club, but note that I participated in a butterfly count on July 16, 2017 at Western Regional Pk and recorded 23 species of *birds* in eBird and Linda Hunt reported 24 butterfly species, plus I got a few "life butterflies" in the process!

So, welcome to the Club's 46th year! I look forward to seeing you for all of our upcoming programs and especially for the first two, when two of our own, Allen Lewis in September and Sue Muller in October, will present programs about travels in Namibia and rescuing sea turtles, respectively. Also, please consider helping out with the Fall Count and volunteering for club events and for club officer and committee positions as they open up. I hope to see you soon at club meetings and on a field trip or just out and about.

Happy birding – John Harris



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.

September 28, 2017
Robin Todd
10174 Green Clover Dr
Ellicott City, MD 21042
Totnesman@aol.com
410-491-5333

October 26, 2017
John and Meg Harris
6400 Ripe Apple Ln
Columbia, MD 21044
jaybee.harris@gmail.com
240-755-0183

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

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

HOWARD COUNTY MAY COUNT RESULTS

BY KEVIN HEFFERNAN

Seventy-three birders participated in the 70th annual May Count which was held on May 13, 2017. Before getting into the details, however, a note about the history of the May Count. The first Maryland state May Count was held in 1948. The first May Count that was run by the Howard County Bird Club was in 1974, making this year the 44th May Count run by the club. Prior to forming the club however, Howard County was represented in the Maryland state May Count at least as far back as 1956. The results quoted in this summary are based on data from 1974 on.

The count day was forecast to be a total washout but instead had scattered and sporadic rain with a high in the mid-fifties. The 136 total species was tied for 34th and the total number of birds (14,382) was 26th out of the 44 years the count has been held. These low totals were not due to lack of counters as the 73 participants were the second highest number ever on the count. A total of 231 species have been seen over the 44 years that the count has been run. 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.

Five species had greater than or tied all-time high counts: Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (2), Osprey (38), Common Raven (6), Northern Rough-winged Swallow (127), and Mourning Warbler (2). An additional seven species had or tied 10-year high counts including Glossy Ibis, Least Flycatcher, American Crow, Nashville Warbler, Black-and-White Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Prothonotary Warbler.



Yellow-crowned Night Heron *by Sue Muller*

Four species had all-time low counts: Barred Owl (2), White-eyed Vireo (29), Hooded Warbler (2), and Common Grackle (167). An additional 20 species had 10-year low counts including Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Spotted Sandpiper, Rock Pigeon, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Acadian Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Red-eyed Vireo, Cliff Swallow, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Wood Thrush, Prairie Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Scarlet Tanager, Eastern Towhee, Indigo Bunting, Orchard Oriole, and Baltimore Oriole.

Two species were seen for only the fourth time, Hooded Merganser (three of the last six years) and Yellow-crowned Night Heron. Glossy Ibis was seen for only the sixth time (first time in 10 years) and Sora for the ninth time (seven of the last 10 years). Ruby-crowned Kinglet was missed for only the third time and Cerulean Warbler for only the fourth

time. We tallied 32 warbler species.

A [compilation spreadsheet](#) of the May Count data from 1974 through this year can be found on the Howard County Bird Club's 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, Ward Ebert, Chuck Stirrat, Mike McClure, Karen Heffernan, Janet Lydon 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 was very much appreciated.

And to the following participants, a big thank you; without you, these counts could not happen: Christina Ayala, Bonnie Bezila, Jim and Marilyn Brinkley, Mary Lou Clark, Lisa Colangelo, Dennis Coskren, Jeff Culler, Ralph Cullison, David Cummings, Sue Earp, Wes Earp, Ward Ebert (Area 2 Coordinator), Loren and Mary Erickson, Tom Feild, Bryant Gesualdo, Ralph Geuder, John Harris, Karen Heffernan (Area 5 Coordinator), Kevin Heffernan (May Count Coordinator), Bill Hill (Area 1 Coordinator), Gayle Hill, Mike Kerwin, Geraldine King, Clayton Koonce, Shashi Lengade, Allen Lewis, Kathy Lillie, Felicia Lovelett, Rosa Lubitz, Brigitte Lund, Janet Lydon, Nancy Magnusson, Mary Maxey, Grazina McClure, Mike McClure (Area 4 Coordinator), Ann McEvoy, John McKitterick (Area 7 Coordinator), Woody Merkle, Barry Miller, Sue Muller, Sue Neri, Ben Newton, Peter Osenton, Heidi and Howard Osterman, Howard Patterson, Renee and Richard Peters, Mary Prowell, Russ Ruffing, Jack, Kalina and Ryan Salzman, David Sandler, Kurt Schwarz, Nancy Schweiss, Jay Sheppard, Andy Smith, Bob and Jo Solem, Michelle Stewart, Chuck Stirrat (Area 3 Coordinator), Eva Sunell, Tim Thompson, Robin Todd, Sherrie Tomlinson, Gael Tous-saint, Anthony VanSchoor, Mark Wallace, Michele Wright, and Paul Zucker.

BIRD SEED SALE

BY WARD EBERT

Our annual seed sale will be held on Saturday, October 7th, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Wildlife Authority at 3275 Bethany Lane, just off Route 40. You will have the option to pick up your order any day through the following Saturday if you are unable to do so on the 7th. Please visit their website, www.wildlifeauthority.com, for a map and more information.

Around the first or second week of September an order form will sent by email, and will be available on the Howard County Bird Club website. You must prepay and use this form for the lower seed sale prices. Jeff Friedhoffer will be compiling the orders and for your convenience he can also take membership forms and payments as well as separate donations for habitat (tax deductible). Jeff will send an e-mail acknowledgement upon receipt of your order if you include a legible email address. Non-members are eligible to participate as well – so get the word out to your neighbors!

Net proceeds from the seed sale will be contributed to conservation causes. Over the years the Howard County Bird Club has contributed over \$85,000 to various conservation organizations. See our [website](#) for a list of locations and organizations benefited by your support.

HOWARD COUNTY MAY COUNT RESULTS - MAY 13, 2017

Canada Goose	702
Wood Duck	46
Mallard	112
Hooded Merganser	1
Wild Turkey	7
Rock Pigeon	55
Mourning Dove	343
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	1
Common Nighthawk	3
Chimney Swift	159
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	19
Sora	1
Killdeer	24
Spotted Sandpiper	6
Solitary Sandpiper	55
Lesser Yellowlegs	1
Double-crested Cormorant	7
Great Blue Heron	32
Great Egret	3
Green Heron	27
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	2
Glossy Ibis	1
Black Vulture	136
Turkey Vulture	149
Osprey	38
Bald Eagle [ad/im/unk]	9
Cooper's Hawk	5
<i>accipiter species</i>	1
Red-shouldered Hawk	51
Broad-winged Hawk	1
Red-tailed Hawk	20
Eastern Screech-Owl	2
Great Horned Owl	1
Barred Owl	2
Belted Kingfisher	18
Red-bellied Woodpecker	228
Downy Woodpecker	98
Hairy Woodpecker	20
Northern Flicker	37
Pileated Woodpecker	52
American Kestrel	1
Olive-sided Flycatcher	1
Eastern Wood-Pewee	19
Acadian Flycatcher	35
Willow Flycatcher	2
Least Flycatcher	4
<i>Empidonax species</i>	5

Eastern Phoebe	67
Great Crested Flycatcher	88
Eastern Kingbird	82
White-eyed Vireo	29
Yellow-throated Vireo	14
Blue-headed Vireo	2
Warbling Vireo	23
Red-eyed Vireo	280
Blue Jay	379
American Crow	479
Fish Crow	63
<i>crow species</i>	210
Common Raven	6
Horned Lark	25
Purple Martin	55
Tree Swallow	239
N. Rough-winged Swallow	127
Cliff Swallow	10
Barn Swallow	371
Carolina Chickadee	261
Tufted Titmouse	277
White-breasted Nuthatch	73
House Wren	119
Carolina Wren	313
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	186
Eastern Bluebird	212
Veery	8
Swainson's Thrush	16
Wood Thrush	195
American Robin	597
Gray Catbird	492
Brown Thrasher	35
Northern Mockingbird	160
European Starling	805
Cedar Waxwing	224
House Sparrow	285
House Finch	168
Purple Finch	2
American Goldfinch	415
Ovenbird	192
Worm-eating Warbler	13
Louisiana Waterthrush	38
Northern Waterthrush	13
Blue-winged Warbler	4
Black-&-white Warbler	78
Prothonotary Warbler	1
Tennessee Warbler	2

Nashville Warbler	3
Mourning Warbler	2
Kentucky Warbler	4
Common Yellowthroat	254
Hooded Warbler	2
American Redstart	110
Cape May Warbler	3
Northern Parula	141
Magnolia Warbler	17
Bay-breasted Warbler	1
Blackburnian Warbler	4
Yellow Warbler	91
Chestnut-sided Warbler	21
Blackpoll Warbler	27
Blk.-thrt'd. Blue Warbler	63
Palm Warbler	3
Pine Warbler	4
Yel.-rump'd (Myrtle) Warbler	143
Yellow-throated Warbler	1
Prairie Warbler	16
Blk.-thrt'd. Green Warbler	22
Canada Warbler	5
Wilson's Warbler	5
Yellow-breasted Chat	8
Eastern Towhee	142
Chipping Sparrow	300
Field Sparrow	45
Savannah Sparrow	33
Grasshopper Sparrow	27
Song Sparrow	138
Swamp Sparrow	4
White-throated Sparrow	80
White-crowned Sparrow	5
Scarlet Tanager	109
Northern Cardinal	853
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	20
Blue Grosbeak	12
Indigo Bunting	166
Bobolink	57
Red-winged Blackbird	626
Eastern Meadowlark	15
Common Grackle	167
Brown-headed Cowbird	210
Orchard Oriole	41
Baltimore Oriole	107
Area Total Birds:	14,382
Area Total Species:	136



HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB

Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society

P. O. BOX 1323

COLUMBIA MD 21044-1323

September/October 2017 - Inside This Issue

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TWENTY-FOURTH 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 16, 2017. 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 writeup include those identified with a double asterisk (**), as well as any writeins. Others that may require a writeup 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 & Kevin Hefferman 410-857-1789; Area 4) Mike McClure 410-531-2780; Area 5) Kurt Schwarz 410-461-1643; Area 6) Janet Lydon 410-744-

5012; 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. 15th, to reserve space and if necessary obtain directions.

