



The Goldfinch

Newsletter of the Howard County Bird Club

A Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society



CLUB MEETINGS - BY [JANE GEUDER](#)

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Thursday, November 9, 2017 “Owls in Myth and Culture-a Global Perspective,” by David H. Johnson, Director, Global Owl Project. What people believe about owls makes a difference in how they protect and conserve them. GLOW is a non-profit consortium of some 450 researchers, museum curators, students, and volunteers working in 65 countries. This presentation will describe the methods, cultural insights, and results of their findings.

Thursday, December 14, 2017 “Monarch Butterflies: their Amazing Life History and Current Conservation Status,” by Pam Spencer of the Baltimore County Master Gardeners. Pam is an emergency room nurse who finds time to work with butterflies in their several life stages and promote their conservation through educational programs.

Meetings are at the **Robinson Nature Center**, 6692 Cedar Lane, Columbia MD 21044. Hospitality at 7:00 p.m. Meeting with program begins at 7:30 p.m. Nature Center doors unlocked at 6:45 p.m. There is no admission charge. For further information call John Harris at 240-

**Baltimore Oriole at Wilde Lake
with three hungry nestlings!**



by Bonnie Ott

SUMMER BIRD RECORDS: JUNE 1 – JULY 31, 2017

BY JOANNE SOLEM

Rarely does the short summer season produce the number of highlights that it did this year. Specialties included Glossy Ibis, Mississippi Kite, Short-billed Dowitcher, Summer Tanager, and nesting Dickcissels. Also of note were Northern Harrier, Barn Owl, and Bobolink, as well as Osprey and Red-headed Woodpecker nests.

Although breeding **Wood Ducks** are regular along the Patapsco River and sometimes at Centennial Pk (CENPK), it was pleasant to see a female with three ducklings in the river at the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area (MPEA) 6/15 (JHr). Summer diving duck records are few. A **Ring-necked Duck** at Lake Kittamaquindi (LKKIT) 6/9 was a one-day wonder (CKc). The late May **Ruddy Duck** at Lake Elkhorn (LKELK) remained into summer. On 6/6, there were two (ALw); one stayed until 6/9 (ALw).

The **Wild Turkey** that attacked cars for months along Daisy Rd was still present 7/6 (KTf). A handsome **Common Loon** at LKELK lingered until 6/8 (ALw).

Three **Great Egrets** were the modest seasonal high at Race Rd Wetlands 7/24 (AVS).

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

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.

[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, docorf_x_99@yahoo.com

[CENTENNIAL PARK](#)

November 19, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours. *Meet at the west end parking lot off Centennial Lane.* See Nov. 5 trip for details. Leaders – Renee and Richard Peters, Richard@rrrpeters.org

[CENTENNIAL PARK](#)

November 26, 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 – Mike Kerwin, m63kerwin@verizon.net, 410-461-2408

HOWARD WATERFOWL SEARCH

December 2, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Meet at the Broken Land Parkway parking lot at Lake Elkhorn. Plan to visit the Columbia lakes search for gulls, ducks, grebes, loons, and other waterfowl Easy walking involved. Plan to carpool. Bring lunch and drinks. Scopes helpful. Facilities available. Leader – Kurt Schwarz, krschwal@verizon.net, 410-461-1643

START YOUR YEAR LIST

January 1, 2018, Monday. Start at 8:00 (half day). Meet at the Howard Conservancy – Mount Pleasant Farm. Easy walking on paved paths and woodland trails. Plan to carpool to different locations to find as many species as possible. The one day of the year where every bird is new! Facilities available. Leader – Kurt Schwarz, krschwal@verizon.net, 410-461-1643





BLACKWATER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

January 13, Saturday, all day trip. Plan to stop at the Choptank River Bridge for ducks and coffee. Bring lunch and drinks. Dress warmly, Entrance fee or Duck Stamp required. Email the leader to reserve a spot and get details. We will carpool. Facilities at some spots. Leader – Kurt Schwarz, krschwal@verizon.net, 410-461-1643

CHANDLER S. ROBBINS SKYWATCH SITE AT MT. PLEASANT

Visit the Club's skywatch site any day into early December to watch for migrants. Days with winds out of the northwest are best for fall raptor migration. Official counters will be present on some weekend days and sometimes weekdays. Questions? Contact Mike Kerwin: m63kerwin@verizon.net

(Field Trips continued on page 3)

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

(Records continued from page 1)

Green Herons have done so well the last few decades that one observer said he found them “everywhere” in W. Col. (CKc). Wilde Lake again had multiple nestings; at least two were successful (HPt). **Black-crowned Night-Herons** were reported from both Wilde Lake 7/8 (EHs-1) and CENPK 7/21 (RRc-1). Three **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** (two adults) in the Patapsco River at Ilchester Rd 7/21 were a surprise (AVS). One adult was present at LKELK 7/31 (ALw). A **Glossy Ibis** flying over Fox Chase 7/21 (FSh) was a treat.

Black Vultures nested in an historic house along Old Scaggsville Rd. Openings in the unoccupied building, which dates to the late 1830s, allowed the pair to enter and lay two eggs. By mid-July the downy young birds were walking around outside (BNk, JS).

An unusual number of **Osprey** sightings this season included one or two most of the summer at LKKIT (CKc) and three over Guilford Rd/Oakland Mills Rd 7/29 (SMu). This raised the possibility of multiple unknown nest sites. Although the Triadelphia Mill Rd pair did not return to that relay tower, they may have moved to a similar location. On 7/30 and 7/31, three Ospreys were seen flying from a nest high on a relay tower on the west side of Murphy Rd (HMz). Perhaps other Osprey nests eluded birders’ eyes. The late May **Mississippi Kites** continued into June in the Glenmont area of E. Col.



Mississippi Kite

by Anthony VanSchoor

with a high of five in one tree on 6/5 (AVS, KS, EFl). The last report was one over the Phelps Luck Elem. School on 6/9 (MKz). A female **Northern Harrier** was a surprise at Underwood Rd on 6/11 (RRf, MKw, JS), the first summer record. When the bird was reported on 6/17 at the same location (DPg), it raised the possibility of a summering individual. A **Broad-winged Hawk** over Underwood Rd on 6/4 was not far from PVSP, the last verified county nesting area of this species (AMy).

The modest **Killdeer** high was 21 at Browns Bridge 7/24 (JS). The last spring **Spotted Sandpiper** appeared at LKELK 6/3 (MEk); the first fall bird was at Waverly 7/5 (RRf). Between those dates, however, one was noted at Wilde Lake

6/28 (EHs; EBt, photo). That is within the safe dates for breeding, but, unfortunately, it was not reported more than once. Two **Least Sandpipers** at Waverly Pd 7/5 (RRf) set a new early date [7/10/08 – B. Hill]. The best shorebird of the season, by far, was a **Short-billed Dowitcher** that appeared at Waverly Pd 7/4 (RRf), a new county early date [7/19/91 M. Chestem, N. Magnusson, H. Zeichner]. It stayed until well after dark (AVS), although sadly, all the shorebirds at that location were frightened away by exploding fireworks set off by people celebrating the holiday.

The first post-breeding **Ring-billed Gull** showed up in the REI parking lot, E. Col. 7/18 (BO). On 6/9, a **Barn Owl** appeared briefly at Camp Ilchester (BHh), probably in response to the permanently injured Barn Owl in an outdoor cage. Summer **Common Nighthawks** are unusual. One was reported over Montgomery Rd, Elkridge 7/11 (MCd). **Chimney Swifts** nested in a flue of a house along So. Trotter Rd (WE). On 7/28, nestlings could still be heard begging for food. A family of four **Belted Kingfishers** at LKKIT 7/26 (CKc) was fun to watch.

Although there are sporadic **Red-headed Woodpecker** nest records, they have usually been on private property with limited options for consistent observations. This year a single bird appeared at Fox Chase in early January. The location is frequented by birders so the presence of that bird during spring and into summer was followed consistently, with most of the following data supplied by one individual (JCu). Final-



Red-headed Woodpecker, with food for nestling

by Jeff Culler

ly, on 6/1, a second adult Red-headed was seen, and both engaged in excavating a cavity. Excavation continued during early June; on 6/23, copulation was observed; the exchange of adults at the cavity entrance was noted on 6/25; by 7/8, an adult was seen carrying food; and on 7/24, a nestling was seen in the entrance. By the end of the season, the single nestling had fledged and the pair was excavating a new cavity. When the breeding cycle is complete, Jeff’s summary with photographs and text will be posted on the Club’s website. On 7/30, a **Pileated Woodpecker** was seen on a window ledge of an office building at Gateway Business Park (SN), an odd location for this species, especially outside of the normal breeding season.

(Records continued on page 4)

(Records continued from page 3)

American Kestrels were reported at Underwood Rd with two on 7/8 (ALw) and two males on 7/11 (KS). A **Peregrine Falcon**, a species not frequently seen in summer, was spotted over LKELK 7/28 (JGn).

An **Olive-sided Flycatcher** continued at Glenmont until 6/1 (AVS). At CENPK on 6/24, an adult **Eastern Kingbird** showed up with an interesting food item, a frog, for the waiting fledglings (HPT).



Eastern Kingbird fledgling about to swallow a small frog by H. Patterson

Common Ravens continued to be regularly reported, most frequently from or near PVSP. The high of three was over Underwood Rd 6/2 (EFI). The same location produced regular sightings of **Horned Larks**. On 7/11, 12 **Rough-winged Swallows** made use of a dead tree near the water's edge at LKKIT where fledglings were being fed by attentive adults (CKc). **Bank Swallows** were reported much of the summer, including, oddly, a small flock in mid-June: 6/7 CENPK (SGr - 1), 6/11 W. Friendship Pk (JCu - 1), 6/14 CENPK (BO - 12!), and 7/9 Underwood Rd (RRf - 1).

Although most **Eastern Bluebirds** are produced in the western half of the county, several broods at Talbots Landing and at Rockburn Branch Pk in the east (R&JGr) were a reminder that this species has been successful in most parts of the county, thanks to the untiring efforts of dozens of people over the last 40 years.

Migrant thrushes were among the most surprising summer species. Russ Ruffing's night recording equipment may change some of our ideas about local bird movement (See p. 6.) On 6/1, over Cavey La, 12 **Swainson's Thrushes** were recorded, an unusually large number for that late in the season. A single **Gray-checked Thrush** the same evening established a new late date [5/31/16 - J. Harris], while a Swainson's the night of 6/5 tied the late date for that species.

Summer warblers were mostly unremarkable. There were scattered reports of nesting **Worm-eating**, **Black-and-white**, and **Kentucky Warblers**, mostly from PVSP and Patuxent River State Pk (PRSP); a **Kentucky** at MPEA 7/15 (JHr) was at an expected nesting location. **Hoodeds** hung on at two sites at PRSP (EHs; K&KnHf; MLC, JS). **American Redstarts**

were reported from both river valleys, as well as from David Force NRA 7/29 (SJn). Two **Cerulean Warblers** continued at Marriottsville 6/8 (THg). Late migrant **Blackpolls** were picked up at night at Cavey La on 6/1 and 6/5 (RRf). A **Pine** at Blandair on 6/25 was a fine sighting (EHs). **Prairie Warblers** nesting at Mt. Pleasant were well-documented (MKw+). A **Canada** over Cavey La on the night of 6/1 tied the third latest date (RRf).

Savannah Sparrows are an elusive and unusual nesting species in this county. No evidence of breeding was reported this year, but single adults were found at Mt. Pleasant 7/2 (JHf) and along Old Frederick Rd near Underwood Rd 7/19 (JKb), indicating potential breeding. Nesting **Grasshopper Sparrows** were well reported at Underwood Rd. The latest **White-throated** of the spring lingered until 6/1, singing as it flew over Cavey La at night (RRf).



Grasshopper Sparrow at Underwood Road

by Anthony VanSchoor

One of the season's special reports was of probable **Summer Tanager** nesting in the Cascade Trail/Norris La area of PVSP (DZk). On 7/20, and for several days thereafter, a male was singing at that location. On 7/29, the same observer watched a female leave a potential nest site (either after incubating or nestling feeding). Also on 7/29, a male was photographed near the entrance to Rockburn Branch Pk, about three-quarters of a mile from the previous sightings (AVS).

Nesting **Dickcissels** were one of the most exciting aspects of the summer. As noted in the spring summary, three Dickcissels (2 males, 1 female) were seen in a fallow field along Underwood Rd 5/23 (JGr), and a female with nesting material was noted on 5/24 (AVS, EHs, DSn). Breeding by this Mid-western species is rare in this county so birders wondered whether this habitat could be maintained during the nesting season (RRf, HCBC board, WE). The farm owner proved receptive to postponing planting in the field until early September. The HCBC leased the field during the breeding season by using Habitat Preservation Funds, which generous donors replenished. All observations were made from the roadside so no accurate count of the size of the colony was possible, but multiple males, females, and fledglings were counted on a number of occasions by the many birders visiting the site. The two most frequent observers (RRf, MKw)

(Records continued on page 5)

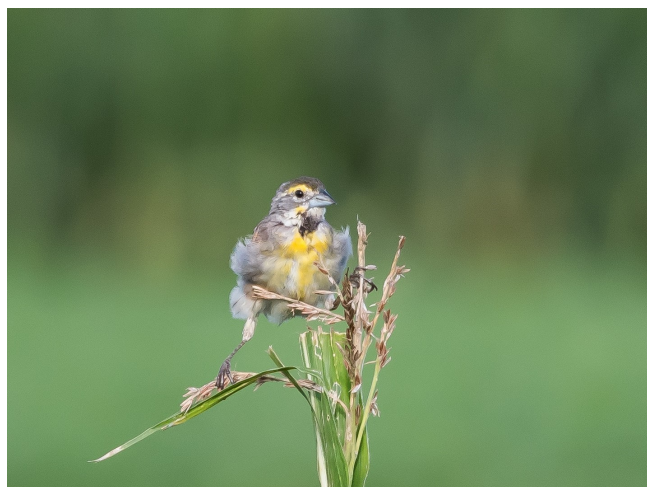
(Records continued from page 4)



Dickcissel at Underwood Road

by Anthony VanSchoor

provided essential data. The first fledgling was noted on 6/25 (**RRf**); on 7/1, ten birds were counted with three fledglings being fed by a female (**RRf**). Fourteen trips to the site during the summer provided a personal high of nine on 7/3 and two fledglings on 7/29 (**MKw**). Activity continued through August.



Young Male Dickcissel at Underwood Road

by Bonnie Ott

Bobolinks have never been documented as nesting in the county (although they nest in adjoining Carroll Co.). This year a pair lingered until late May at Underwood Rd in or near the Dickcissel field. The last one departed (or so it was thought) on 5/30 (**LSt**). Unless some definite signs of breeding are seen outside of 6/15 – 6/30, the presence of adults alone cannot be considered proof of breeding. Although not within that small window, two flying over Underwood Rd 7/19 (one male calling; sex of other unknown) (**JKb**) was a tantalizing record.

An **Eastern Meadowlark** at Blandair (south) on 6/12 was at an unexpected location (**EHS**). And finally, ten **American Goldfinches**, the county bird, were feeding on chicory seeds along So. Trotter Rd on 7/28 (**WE**).

Thanks to Joe Hanfman, Nancy Magnusson, and Howard Patterson for editing assistance; Russ Ruffing reviewed the early and late date citations.

Abbreviations: CENPK – Centennial Park, Col. – Columbia, LKELK – Lake Elkhorn, LKKIT – Lake Kittamaqundi, MPEA – Middle Patuxent Environmental Area, PRSP – Patuxent River State Park, PVSP – Patapsco Valley State Park.

Observers: **EBt** – Ellen Biliter, **MLC** – Mary Lou Clark, **MCd** – Matthew Conrad, **JCu** – Jeff Culler, **WE** – Wes Earp, **MEk** – Mary Erickson, **EFl** – Esther Fleischmann, **JGr** – Jane Geuder, **RGr** – Ralph Geuder, **JGn** – Jim Green, **SGr** – Sue Greer, **JHn** – Joe Hanfman, **JHr** – John Harris, **KHf** – Kevin Heffernan, **KuHf** – Karen Heffernan, **BHh** – Billy Heinbach, **THg** – Timothy Houghton, **EHS** – Ed Huestis, **SJn** – Steven Jones, **JKb** – Josephine Kalbfleisch, **MKz** – Mara Kaminowicz, **MKw** – Mike Kerwin, **CKc** – Clayton Koonce, **ALw** – Allen Lewis, **HMz** – Helen Metzman, **SMu** – Sue Muller, **AMy** – Anne Mytych, **SN** – Sue Neri, **BNk** – Bea Newkirk, **BO** – Bonnie Ott, **HPt** – Howard Patterson, **DPg** – Dorothy Paugh, **RRc** – Rick Roche, **RRf** – Russ Ruffing, **DSn** – David Sandler, **KS** – Kurt Schwarz, **FSh** – Fred Shaffer, **JS** – Jo Solem, **LSt** – Leslie Stahl, **KTF** – Kate Tufts, **AVS** – Anthony VanSchoor, **DZk** – David Zielokowski, Jr.

**THE HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB
WELCOMES THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS,
APRIL–SEPTEMBER, 2017**

Regina Allen
Thomas Condrasky
Beth Decker
Dean Mahlstedt & Mary Lally
Vivek Mathur
Brian Moyer
Ron & Helen Schwartz
Frank (Tex) Wilkens

HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB EMAIL HACKED

On October 2, many Club members received a phishing (spam) email message, purportedly from the Club, soliciting donations to “Save Hugh.” The message, which included the Club’s seal in an attempt to show authenticity, included a link to make a donation through a fund transfer site “Fundly.”

The webmaster sent a message to the Club membership that this message did not come from the Club, that the sender’s email was not a valid Club email address, and that the Club does not do these types of solicitations. As cybersecurity experts advise, be aware of email scams, and always go to the organization’s web page rather than clicking on an enclosed link unless you are certain of the validity of the sender.

NIGHT FLIGHT CALLS

BY RUSS RUFFING

In early April, I finally acted on something that I've been considering doing for a long time - I acquired and installed a Nocturnal Flight Call monitoring station at my house. The birding subset of listening to, recording, and trying to identify Nocturnal Flight Calls (NFCs) is a growing hobby, and I finally made the leap. Most people aren't aware of it, but there is a fascinating drama that is going on overhead at night when massive numbers of birds migrate through and over the continent in spring and fall. A growing number of scientists and birders alike are trying to tune into this drama by way of NFC recorders.

This may sound like a complicated process, but really it isn't - well, at least the tuning-in part isn't. Thanks to Bill Evans (oldbird.org), who many consider the "father" of recording and identifying NFCs, one can buy a fully-functional NFC microphone (the Old Bird 21c) for about \$310 (see picture). It's really a simple device - a hearing-aid quality microphone mounted within an inverted cone that is mounted inside a two-gallon bucket and sealed with a thin plastic membrane. A polyester cover affixed over the bucket completes the unit. It all arrives at your door in a few days complete with 100 feet of cable, a pre-amp, and a power cord. All you have to do is mount it at a preferred location (hopefully on a roof-top or somewhere where ground noise is minimized), hook it up to a computer or other recording device, and you're ready to go. The mic is *exceptionally* sensitive! It's believed that it can pull down calls of migrating geese and waterfowl at 10,000 feet, and the most subtle calls of warblers, thrushes, and sparrows at 3,000 feet!



Old Bird 21c Microphone

A software package to record and analyze calls and their spectrographs can be downloaded for free (I use Audacity) or purchased (Raven Pro, from the Cornell Lab, for example). That's all there is to it! You can listen in live while you record or just let it run all night and view/listen to the recording at a later time. As of yet, there is no software available that actually identifies calls for you; that would feel like cheating anyway, wouldn't it? However, free software is available that will sample your recording files and create and store small individual file snippets of calls in certain frequency ranges. This can simplify the process quite a bit. I prefer to manually browse my recordings and find the calls myself.

I mounted my microphone on my barn roof and began recording on the night of April 20-21 and continued through early June, then picked up again in late July. I plan to record through at least October. On good flight nights, it is possible to record in excess of 45 calls *per minute*, especially right before dawn when migrants descend. Other nights, you hardly get any detections. It's really all about the weather and how favorable it is for migration.

Identifying the calls is not easy, as many warbler and spar-

row NFCs are just too similar to be separated with any degree of certainty. Only about half of warbler NFCs are distinct enough to be ID'd, while the others are better left as "sp," although they can be safely grouped into "buckets" such as "single-banded downsweeps" or "double-banded upsweeps." The thrushes, which call in the lower frequency range, are fairly easily identified to species. Shorebirds and herons are also easy to identify.

If you care a lot about your own personal yard list, using an NFC station - "binoculars for your ears" - can be a good way to add to your list. Here in Howard County, we are generally shorebird poor, but shorebirds certainly move overhead at night even though they may not show up on the ground much. For example, on the night of April 30th, I recorded several American Bitterns, two Least Sandpipers, five Spotted Sandpipers, one Greater Yellowlegs, and the county's third spring record of Short-billed Dowitcher. All four shorebird species were new yard birds for me! Other great birds I've recorded were a Dickcissel on August 17 and a Barn Owl on September 7. Unusual seasonal records include a very late White-throated Sparrow on June 1 and an *exceptionally early* Swainson's Thrush on August 1.

As of this writing, I've got about 20 nights worth of recordings to review, but some of the more interesting things I've learned or recorded so far include:

- Black-crowned Night-Herons passed overhead on multiple nights in April. I've seen one from my yard as a flyover before, but certainly had no idea they were as common flying over at night as they are in April.
- Cuckoos (both species) *really* like to call at night! Almost every night I've recorded through August I've picked up both species spontaneously vocalizing. Their calls are very distinctive and can be ID'd by sight alone.
- There are coyotes about! Virtually every time the mic picks up a distant police siren at night, a number of coyotes begin to vocalize in response. I've never seen a coyote in Howard County, but make no mistake, they are present and quite common, apparently, in the Patapsco Valley area where I live!
- On April 30 in the dead of night, a Red-breasted Nuthatch broke out in full chorus from somewhere close by in my yard. Never expected that to happen! Later the same night, an as-yet unidentified gull passed over, which is odd since gulls typically are diurnal migrants.
- Mockingbirds will sing non-stop for hours on end even in the middle of the night. It's a wonder they aren't picked off by owls at a higher rate, since they apparently have no concern about revealing their location at night. I don't know when these birds ever sleep, and their repertoire is absolutely stunning. I've identified at least 26 species that my local mockers have mimicked.

Caution - NFC recording and perusing the files can be addictive! But it sure can be fun and informative too. If you want to give it a try, feel free to google "Nocturnal Flight Calls" and read up on it. Make sure to visit oldbird.org. You can also reach out to me at ruff2@verizon.net!

SUMMARY OF THE 2017 HOWARD COUNTY FALL COUNT

BY MIKE McCLURE AND CHUCK STIRRAT

The twenty-fourth annual Howard County Fall Count was conducted on Sept. 16, 2017 with the count data shown in the table below. This count has turned out to be below average countywide for the number of bird species, as well as for the number of birds. For the warblers, the species count was near average, while the number of individual warblers continued their slow but sure decline.

The number of participants, parties, and the overall effort as measured by the hours and miles continues to remain strong in spite of the occasional difficult season with few birds in the field, as was the case this year.

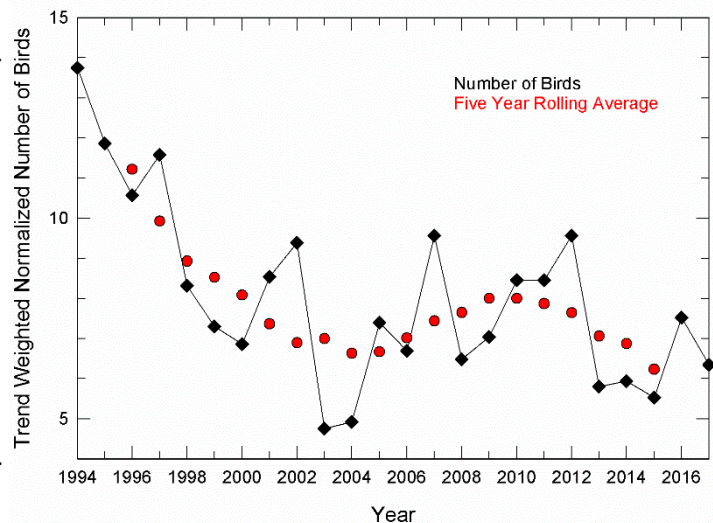
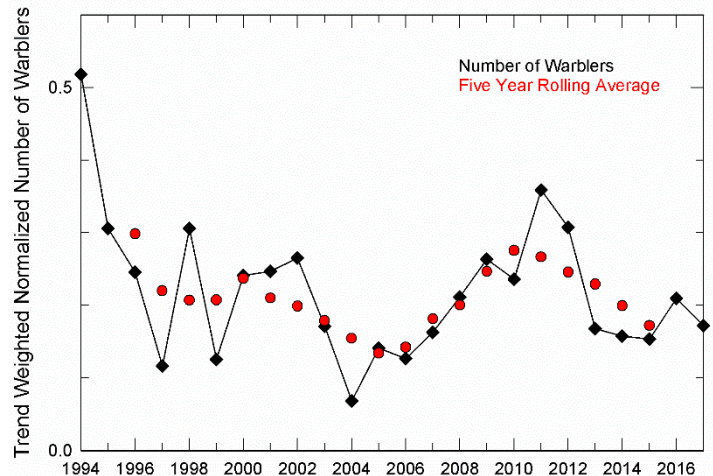
	Observed Birds Countywide		Observed Warblers Countywide		Statistics
	Species	Birds	Species	Birds	
2017 Numbers	123	11,776	22	319	
High: Low	140: 108	26,651: 9,293	30: 13	1,004: 130	
Year 's of High: Low	2010: 2004	1994: 2004	1994: 2004	1994: 2004	
Averages for Birds & Species	125.13	15,741.29	23.54	432.75	
2017 Counters: Parties					65: 46
Counters: Parties Averages					54.6: 33.3
2017 Counters Hours: Miles					229.1: 524.4
Counters Hours: Miles Averages					195.6: 404.6

Saturday's temperature started at 59° F. at 6:00 a.m. with scattered clouds, rising to 87° F. in late afternoon with increasing cloud cover to total cloud cover until the evening. The morning was comfortable-ish (dew point: 68° F.) at 6:00 a.m. becoming marginally uncomfortable in the late morning and afternoon with the dew point rising to 74° F. by late afternoon. Winds were calm during the day.

Counters continue to complain about the lack of birds. This problem is reflected in the data from 24 years of Fall Counts. The graphics for the total number of individual birds and warblers observed countywide and by their Rolling Five Year Average [RFYA] data. The RFYAs seems to support that the numbers had reached their lows during the mid 2000's, began to rise, and now seem to be in decline. For how long is, of course, unknown. It is worth noting that the RFYA is by design slow to change direction and requires several years of sighting increases or decreases to respond. However, this apparent decline [now ongoing for five years] may just be the normal variation as the resident local population declines with several difficult winters in a row. Only additional data will answer the question; are we seeing the beginning of another precipitous decline similar to that of the early Fall Count years?

There were 14 species for which there was only one bird sighted countywide and 11 species for which there were only two birds sighted countywide. The single bird sighting remains high but is down from a prior high of 19 in 2015 while the two sighting is down from 15 also in 2015. Species showing moderately high numbers (>500) are European Starling, 1,251; Canada Goose, 1,123; Crows [American + Fish + species], 744; Doves [Mourning + Rock], 574; Blue Jay, 631; Brown-headed Cowbird, 525; Northern Cardinal, 521; and American Goldfinch, 505.

Bird count participants were Christina Ayala, Jim & Marilyn Brinkley, Mary Lou Clark, Lisa Colangelo, Dennis Coskren, Jeff Culler (Area 2 Coordinator), Ralph Cullison III, David Cummings, Susan & Wes Earp (Area 1 Co-coordinator), Ward Ebert, John Finadore, Jeffrey Friedhoffer, Bryant Gesualdo, John & Meg Harris, Karen & Kevin Heffernan (Area 3 Co-coordinators), Bill & Gayle Hill, Ed Huestis, Clayton Koonce, Della LeConte, Shashi Lengade, Allen Lewis (Area 7 Coordinator), Kathie Lillie, Felicia Lovelett, Rosa Lubitz,



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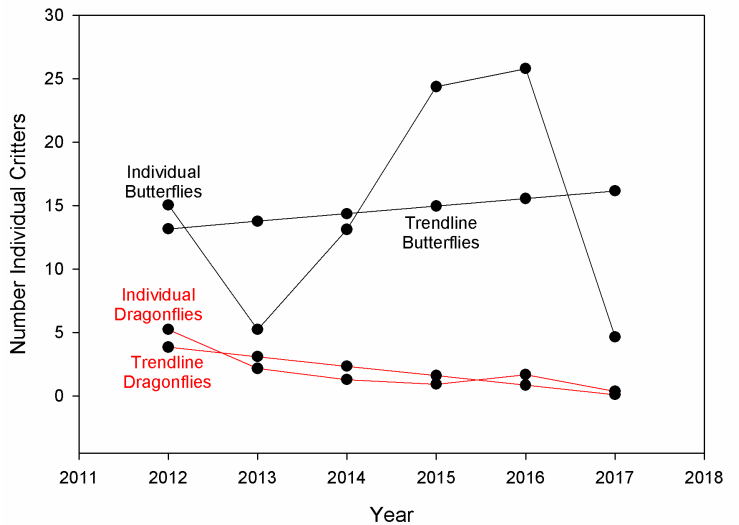
Brigitte Lund, Janet Lydon (Area 6 Coordinator), Nancy Mason, Grazina & Mike McClure (County Co-coordinator & Area 4 Coordinator), Anne McEvoy, John McKitterick, Barry Miller, Sue Muller, Diane Nagengast, Sue Neri, Ben Newton, Heidi Osterman, Howard Patterson, Renee, Richard & Ryan Peters, Ron & Susan Polniaszek, Cari Price, Sarah Romero, Russ Ruffing, David & Karen Sandler, Kurt Schwarz (Area 5 Coordinator), Jo Solem, Michelle Stewart, Chuck Stirrat (County Co-coordinator), Eva Sunell, Robin Todd, Sherry Tomlinson, Anthony VanSchoor, Mark Wallace (Area 1 Co-coordinator), Joshua Ward, Tex Wilkins, Michele Wright. Lastly, a very special thanks to June Tveekrem, who hosted the evening tally.

For the sixth year counters were given the option to list the species of butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies seen as they were counting birds. A total of ten people turned in a list: Bill & Gayle Hill; Linda Hunt; Grazina & Mike McClure; Sue Muller; Jo Solem; Janet Lydon, Michele Wright, and Brigitte Lund;. See the table for greater detail.

	Obs. Butterflies Countywide		Obs. Dragonflies Countywide		Statistics
	Species	Butterflies	Species	Dragonflies	
2017 Numbers	27	1,006	11	83	
High: Low	43: 22	2,285: 305	16: 11	142: 50	
Year 's of High: Low	2016: 2013	2016: 2013	2016: 2017	2012: 2015	
Averages for Ind. & Species	33.83	1,083.17	13.59	111.83	
2017 Counters: Parties					11: 9
Counters: Parties Averages					15.7: 10.3
2017 Counters Hours: Miles					37.6: 68.3
Counters Hours: Miles Averages					63.5: 153.3

The Butterfly Count was below normal for both the number of species and individuals, respectively. There was only one species of butterfly with >100 individuals sighted: Sachem 698. This year's total of individuals seen, 1,006, is less than half of the 2,285 sightings on last year's count. This decrease is probably due to a combination of fewer counters and parties but also less countywide coverage with only five areas reporting results. Also of note, the butterfly trendline is increasing.

The Dragonfly Count was equally disappointing with even fewer participants than for the butterflies. This year also set a new low for number of participant at 11, down from the prior low of 13. For dragonflies, the most abundant species [>10] were Common White, 16; Common Green Darner, 15; Blue Dasher, 15; and finally, Twelve-spotted Skimmer, 11. Only two areas reported results! Unlike the butterflies, the dragonfly trendline is decreasing. With only six years of data, it's difficult to draw too much from the graphics.



Complete bird, butterfly, and dragonfly results are posted on the HCBC's website at <http://howardbirds.org/howard/counts.htm>.

Plan now to join us on a future seasonal count and, if possible, attend the tally as well. Next year the 2018 Fall Count will be held on the third Saturday of September which will be the 15th.

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. Because of the Thanksgiving holiday, the November meeting is a week earlier. If directions are required, please call the hosting board member.

November 16, 2017
 John McKitterick
 10018 Maple Avenue Columbia MD 21046
 410-997-3122
 jbmck@verizon.net

December, 2017 No Meeting

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

Howard Patterson
 4209 Hermitage Drive
 Ellicott City, MD 21042-6235
howard21042@verizon.net

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Howard Patterson, Editor
 Joanne Solem, Proofreader

HOWARD COUNTY FALL COUNT RESULTS - SEPTEMBER 16, 2017

Canada Goose	1,123	American Kestrel	8	American Goldfinch	505
Wood Duck	20	Eastern Wood-Pewee	56	Ovenbird	6
Mallard	115	Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	1	Worm-eating Warbler	1
Wild Turkey	4	Least Flycatcher	3	Northern Waterthrush	1
Pied-billed Grebe	1	<i>Empidonax species</i>	11	Blue-winged Warbler	3
Rock Pigeon	110	Eastern Phoebe	62	Black-&-white Warbler	22
Mourning Dove	464	Great Crested Flycatcher	5	Prothonotary Warbler	1
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	6	Eastern Kingbird	2	Nashville Warbler	3
Common Nighthawk	11	White-eyed Vireo	22	Common Yellowthroat	72
Chimney Swift	116	Yellow-throated Vireo	6	American Redstart	48
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	52	Blue-headed Vireo	2	Northern Parula	16
Killdeer	50	Philadelphia Vireo	2	Magnolia Warbler	52
Least Sandpiper	2	Warbling Vireo	4	Bay-breasted Warbler	2
Spotted Sandpiper	3	Red-eyed Vireo	79	Blackburnian Warbler	2
Solitary Sandpiper	7	Blue Jay	631	Yellow Warbler	1
Ring-billed Gull	4	American Crow	471	Chestnut-sided Warbler	14
<i>gull species</i>	3	Fish Crow	75	Blk.-thrt'd. Blue Warbler	11
Caspian Tern	2	<i>crow species</i>	198	Palm Warbler	4
Double-crested Cormorant	15	Common Raven	2	Pine Warbler	4
Great Blue Heron	35	Horned Lark	2	Yel.-rump'd (Myrtle) Warbler	1
Great Egret	4	Purple Martin	3	Prairie Warbler	2
Green Heron	20	Tree Swallow	48	Blk.-thrt'd. Green Warbler	16
Black-crowned Night-Heron	1	Barn Swallow	1	Wilson's Warbler	1
Black Vulture	115	Carolina Chickadee	299	<i>warbler species</i>	36
Turkey Vulture	180	Tufted Titmouse	248	Eastern Towhee	54
Osprey	2	White-breasted Nuthatch	163	Chipping Sparrow	337
Bald Eagle [ad/im/unk]	2	House Wren	37	Field Sparrow	10
Northern Harrier	1	Marsh Wren	1	Savannah Sparrow	15
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	Carolina Wren	383	Grasshopper Sparrow	1
Cooper's Hawk	8	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	22	Song Sparrow	80
<i>accipiter species</i>	2	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	3	Lincoln's Sparrow	1
Red-shouldered Hawk	79	Eastern Bluebird	346	<i>sparrow species</i>	6
Broad-winged Hawk	24	Veery	4	Scarlet Tanager	9
Red-tailed Hawk	16	Gray-cheeked Thrush	2	Northern Cardinal	521
Eastern Screech-Owl	3	Swainson's Thrush	10	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	2
Great Horned Owl	6	Wood Thrush	17	Blue Grosbeak	7
Barred Owl	7	American Robin	309	Indigo Bunting	31
Belted Kingfisher	27	Gray Catbird	389	Red-winged Blackbird	14
Red-headed Woodpecker	4	Brown Thrasher	17	Eastern Meadowlark	7
Red-bellied Woodpecker	233	Northern Mockingbird	131	Brown-headed Cowbird	525
Downy Woodpecker	119	European Starling	1,251	Baltimore Oriole	2
Hairy Woodpecker	34	Cedar Waxwing	155		
Northern Flicker	91	House Sparrow	467		
Pileated Woodpecker	53	House Finch	207		
				Area Total Birds:	11,776
				Area Total Species:	123



HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB

Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society

PO Box 1323

Columbia, MD 21044

November/December 2017 - Inside This Issue

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Eastern Kingbird



The red feathers on an Eastern Kingbird's crown are very rarely seen ... even for Bonnie Ott, who got a great look at Centennial Lake on June 14, 2017.