



The Goldfinch

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



CLUB MEETINGS - BY JANE GEUDER

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

| | |
|--|----|
| Club Meetings | 1 |
| Winter Bird Records | 1 |
| Field Trips | 2 |
| New Member Welcome | 6 |
| Board of Directors Meeting ... | 7 |
| Mid-winter Count Summary .. | 7 |
| May Count | 9 |
| One Less Bufflehead | 9 |
| Potluck Thanks | 10 |

Thursday, May 10, 2018 “Global Owl Distribution, Diversity and Conservation,” by Dr. Steve Sheffield, professor of biology at Bowie State University. Steve holds research associate positions at both Carnegie Museum of Natural History and the National Museum of Natural History. He is a field biologist conducting research with mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians, and has presented research papers internationally. Steve is an avid birder and is a member of MOS, Raptor Research Foundation, and the Association of Field Ornithologists. He was an emergency presenter at a Howard County Bird Club meeting last year.

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, 2017 – FEBRUARY 28, 2018 BY JOANNE SOLEM

The winter of 2017-18 had erratic high and low temperatures and little snow. Highlights were numerous including a new county bird: King Eider! Among the other special birds were Greater White-fronted Goose, Trumpeter Swan, Golden Eagle, Snowy Owl, white-winged gulls, Tree Swallow, and Palm Warbler.

A **Greater White-fronted Goose** was spotted at Centennial Park (CENPK) 12/29 (JHf) with a flock of Canadas; it was seen periodically, most often at CENPK, until 2/21 (RRf). A family group of four appeared at Centennial on 1/14 (EHs, BHb). Both the



Snow Goose and Greater White-fronted Goose at Centennial Lake, 1/7/18

by Richard Orr

([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.

SHARPS AT WATERFORD FARM

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

Leader – Wes Earp, wesandsue@gmail.com, 410-531-3197

🔥 MT. PLEASANT FARM - HOWARD COUNTY CONSERVANCY

April 21, Saturday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours Earth Day Walk in conjunction with the Howard County Conservancy. Meet at parking lot near the barn. Easy walking through the fields of Mt. Pleasant Farm. Tree lines, hedgerows and streams provide opportunity for non-meadow species. Great opportunity for flyovers. Facilities available

Leader – [Anthony VanSchoor, tonyvanschoor@gmail.com](mailto:AnthonyVanSchoor.tonyvanschoor@gmail.com)

🔥 MT. PLEASANT BEGINNERS' WALK

April 28 Saturday, 8.00 a.m. (2-3 hours) Meet in parking lot. Gentle ramble around rough pastures, brushy thickets and stream valleys. Early migrants arriving and resident birds starting to nest. Good chance for beginners to learn bird ID and habits before the spring migration brings in a profusion (= confusion) of later migrants. Facilities available.

Leaders: John Harris (jaybee.harris@gmail.com, 240-755-0183) and Robin Todd (totnesman@aol.com, 410-491-5333)

🇺🇸 SMITH ISLAND, SOMERSET COUNTY FROM POINT LOOKOUT

April 28, Saturday, Full day, Joint trip with Baltimore Bird Club. All-day trip to see the herons, egrets, marsh birds, early migrants, and other birds on the island, plus possible sea ducks, and gannets up close, during the boat rides to and from the island. Bring lunch, snacks, beverages and cash. The General Store on the island may be open, offering sandwiches, cakes, drinks and snacks (cash only). Bike and golf cart rentals are available on the island. Two carpools: from Broken Land Pkwy & Rt. 32 WEST Park & Ride, leaving at 5:00 a.m. and the Nursery Road Park & Ride at Baltimore Beltway exit 8 (NOT exit 8A), leaving at 7:00 a.m., or meet at the Point Lookout boat launch by 9:00 a.m. The boat leaves at 9:30 a.m., arrives at the island before 11 a.m., and leaves the island at 2:30 p.m. for the hour-and-a-half ride back to Point Lookout. THIS TRIP REQUIRES \$40-\$50 CASH FOR EACH PERSON depending on the number attending. NO CREDIT CARDS OR CHECKS accepted either at the boat or on the island. The cash will be paid at the boat

launch before boarding Saturday morning. Make reservations with the leader. LET THE LEADER KNOW IF YOU WANT A SLICE OF SMITH ISLAND CAKE. Leader – Kevin Graff, keyweststyle2001@gmail.com or 410-976-5896 (text only). Check again on 4/27 to learn if the trip is a go.

🔥 WESTERN REGIONAL PARK

May 6, 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 12, Saturday. Details on p. 9.

PATAPSCO SCRUBLAND

May 26, 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 27, Wednesday, 9-12. A three-hour tour by pontoon boat at high tide to see Ospreys and their chicks. There is a \$26 fee (cash only) for this trip. Meet 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 2, 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 22, Saturday, 7:00 a.m. Look for migrants, Sora, Virginia Rail, Least Bittern, and shorebirds during this boat

(Field Trips continued on page 3)

trip along Jug Bay at low tide. There is a \$6 fee (cash only) for this trip. Meet at Patuxent River Park, 16000 Croom Airport Rd, Upper Marlboro, MD. For reservations contact Mary Maxey at maximom11998@gmail.com

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

(Records continued from page 1)

four and the single goose were seen there later the same day (JHf; CHR-5). It was challenging to keep track of the parade of **Snow Geese**. On 12/10, three (two white) were noted at one of the Larriland ponds (ALw). On 12/24, a juvenile blue Snow was spotted at CENPK (JCu); on 12/29, an adult blue was at CENPK—for the third different Snow Goose within the week (JHf). On 2/21, four white Snows were counted there (RRf). The last winter Snow (white) was seen heading north over Cavey La on 2/24 (RRf). Three **Cackling Geese** were picked out of the multi-hundreds of Canadas at CENPK 12/2 (KS+); that number rose to four on 12/29 (JHf), then to five on 1/14 (JHf), and finally to seven on 1/18 (CHR). The last winter bird headed north over Cavey La 2/27 (RRf) in a flock of Canadas. **Canada Geese** kept a portion of the lake at CENPK open all winter, as up to 2,000 on 1/3–1/4 loafed there (KS). Some geese got a jump on spring when high-flying flocks began heading north on 2/21: Cavey La (several flocks) (RRf), River Hill 200 (JHr), and Sewell’s Orchard Pk 75 (BMy). The second major flight came a week later with swans.

The county’s third **Trumpeter Swan** appeared at Sewell’s Orchard Pk on 12/11 (BMy) and was identified on 12/12 (HPt). Like most eastern Trumpeters, it had been banded and wing-tagged. This one was a female, hatched in 2014 or earlier, banded and yellow wing-tagged P95 in Ontario, Can-



Trumpeter Swan at Sewell’s Orchard Park

by Howard Patterson

ada on 4/24/17 (HPt). P95, as she came to be known among birders, moved to Lake Elkhorn (LKELK) on 12/14 (ALw) where she stayed for most of January. Periodic absences were eventually traced to Stone Lake, an old quarry (now a lake), in a community along Gorman Rd (AsLw). From LKELK, she moved once again, for most of February, to a pond within the cloverleaf of US 29/Broken Land Pkwy. She was last seen the morning of 2/26 (JMCK), probably having joined flocks of northbound geese and swans. On 2/19, 50 **Tundra Swans** were resting on the Springdale Quarry Pond (Quarry) (AVS; KS-52). There was a significant movement of geese and swans the last days of February. On 2/27, 55 swans were glimpsed over Mt. Pleasant (SRm), 200 over Gwynn Acres Path (GRk), 50+ at Rockburn Branch Pk (KLz), 40+ over Stone Hill Dr (KLz), and night flocks were heard over Ellicott City (PWf), Cavey La (RRf), Burleigh Manor (MKw), and Martin Rd (JHf), with a flock heard over Jamina Downs on 2/28 (EHs). An idea of the magnitude of the waterfowl movement the night of 2/27-28 was picked up by the NFC equipment at Cavey La (RRf). It recorded 38 Canada Goose and 12 Tundra Swan flocks along with two flocks of Long-tailed Ducks and one of American Wigeon, plus additional unidentified groups.

Periodic breaks in the cold temperatures thawed shallow water at Race Road Wetlands producing highs of 14 **Gadwalls** on 1/28 (JHf) and 18 **Northern Shovelers** on 1/24 (HPt, DSn). A warm late February encouraged waterfowl movement with 15 **American Black Ducks** at the Quarry 2/20 (SPr). A **Northern Pintail** was reported from LKELK 1/13 (BTw); the following day one appeared at CENPK (EHs); on 1/15 there were two there (J&MHR). Single **Green-winged Teal** were spotted at Brighton Dam (BRDAM) 12/16 (RRf+) and 1/1 (RRf, JHf) before temperatures plunged. It took until 2/24 before the species reappeared with two at LKELK for one day (S&CPr); on 2/27, two were noted at the pond at Fox Chase (HPt).

After the species’ absence for a year, a male **Canvasback** showed up at CENPK 2/5 (JHf); it rotated among local bodies of water for several weeks, last seen at Lake Kittamaqundi 2/16 (CKc; DSI). **Redheads**, which used to be unusual in winter, were present during all three months at at least five sites; the high was seven at CENPK 12/29 (BO). **Ring-necked Ducks** can usually be found on local lakes all winter. On a rainy 2/11, 48 were counted at Lake Kittamaqundi (MKw); the following day the Marriottsville Pond held 135 (JGr). **Greater Scaup** can be an identification challenge—two were reported this season. One male was at the Quarry 1/19 (JGr) and one female at the US 29/Broken Land pond 2/20 (RRf, JHf).

Two first-winter **King Eiders** at BRDAM on 12/16-Triadelphia Christmas Ct (TCC) (RRf; later m. obs.), were a new county species and the stars of the winter season. Any eider is rare anywhere in Maryland, but especially so away

(Records continued on page 4)

from the coast. Since the number of mergansers at BRDAM had recently jumped into the multi-hundreds, it is speculated that the two eiders may have been on the Great Lakes; when the mergansers left that location, the eiders joined the east-flying mergs. Although the eiders spent most of their time in the Montgomery County cove to the west, they did swim and fly into Howard County (HOWCO). Despite intensive searching, they were not seen the following day.



King Eider

by Kevin Heffernan

The evening of 12/3, three flocks of **Long-tailed Ducks** were detected over Cavey La (RRf-NFC); on 12/13 one male appeared briefly at CENPK (ALw, DCm). Small numbers of handsome little **Buffleheads** were present much of the winter at CENPK, with a high of 17 on 2/3 (MRg). The most interesting observation involving this species was an interaction with a **Red-shouldered Hawk** (see story on p. 9) (MKw). **Common Goldeneyes** are a choice species. One or two were seen sporadically in each of the winter months beginning at BRDAM 12/16 (RRf+) and the Quarry 1/1 (RRf). **Hooded Mergansers** were present at the Columbia lakes most of the winter with 35 at LKELK 2/5 (SRm); the high of 50 was counted at BRDAM 2/20 (SPr). **Common Mergansers** are indeed “common” most years on Triadelphia Reservoir. By late December, numbers had built to ~1,000 (m. obs.), but increasing ice early in the new year forced most of them to move on. A few **Red-breasted Mergansers** usually associate with the Commons. One was reported on 12/10 at BRDAM (DCm), with up to two later in the month. At CENPK a changing cast of two or three males and females made a brief appearance on 1/6 (CSt+).

Wild Turkeys are one of the success stories of the last few decades. Not only are they being found in an increasing number of locations countywide, but winter flock numbers are impressive. A flock of 15 along Meadow Wood Way 12/16 -TCC (*fide* CSt, D&MHv) was just the beginning. That number was followed by 22 on 1/8 at Fox Chase (CSt), 22 in western HOWCO on 1/27-HCMC, a wintering flock of 33 at the Circle D on Carrs Mill Rd 2/12 (*fide* LCg), and 11 west of Henryton, Patapsco Valley SP 2/22 (RCu). Three at Trinity

School on Landing Rd was an indication of their eastern presence (AVS).

Single **Horned Grebes** appeared each month; the bird at Lake Kittamaquundi was present 2/8-2/20 (CKc). The few **American Coot** reports were mostly singles, the majority during the cold snap in January beginning 1/1 at CENPK (AVS). **Wilson’s Snipe** may winter sparingly. This season all months were represented: 12/14 CENPK (KS), 1/27 University of MD Central Farm (UMDCF-HCMC) (CSt, MMcC), and 2/22 W. Friendship Pk (JHf), probably a migrant. The last **American Woodcocks** reported in 2017 were two at Annapolis Rock 12/6 (THg). When February brought a welcome hint of spring, two were observed courting at Hipsley Mill Rd 2/15 (AVS), with a high of 12+ at that location 2/25 (RRf, SRm). Other reports came from US 29/Broken Land Pkwy 2/22 (ALw-2), a Long Reach yard 2/22 (AVS-1), River Rd, Sykesville 2/26 (FLv-1), Warfield’s Pond Pk 2/27 (HMz-1), and Cavey Ln 2/27 (RRf-NFC).

The final **Bonaparte’s Gulls** of the year were singles: 12/2 at LKELK (KS) and 12/15 BRDAM (DCm). Although winter always provides a varying number of **Ring-billed Gulls** at local lakes, late February usually brings a surge in numbers, mostly in fields. From Carroll Mill Rd, 200 were counted at UMDCF 2/24 (CSt), 200 were at Fulton 2/25 (JHr), 250 on the ground at Oakland Mills High School, E. Col. 2/26 (HPT), while the same day 60 were noted in a field at Ten Oaks Rd/Brighton Dam Rd (W/SE) and 300-400 were present in a field along Daisy Rd (AVS). Gull diversity was a pleasant surprise. An **Iceland Gull** was picked out of the dozens of gulls at the Anne Arundel Trash Transfer Station 12/9; the Iceland eventually crossed the nearby railroad tracks into HOWCO (JHf). Surprisingly, another appeared on 12/12 at Wilde Lake (CKc). They were not the same bird (JHf-thanks Joe). The species was seen sporadically until 2/21 at the transfer station (KS). Also dining on trash was a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** on 1/19 (DCm), seen infrequently until 2/21 (SRm). Adding to the variety of gulls was a **Glaucous Gull** on 1/31 (RHI, ph., ID by JHf), last logged on 2/8 (RHI). **Great Black-backed Gull** was also an addition to the list of trash-eating gulls on 1/7 (JHf); the high reached four on 2/20 (JHf).

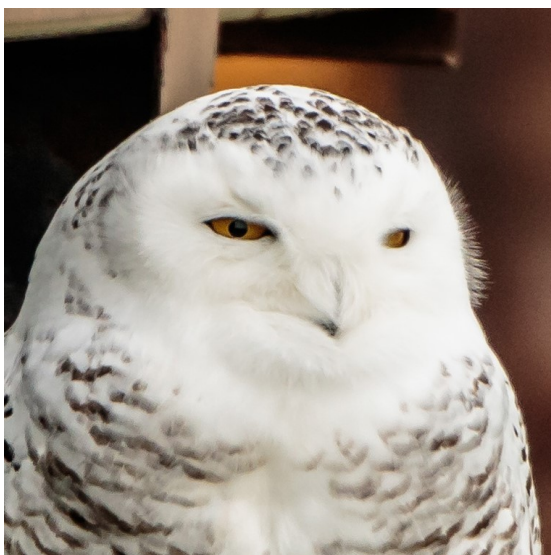
Although there are sporadic winter records of **Double-crested Cormorants** after December, this was not one of their best years. The high count was 21 at Wilde Lake and one at LKELK, both on 12/1 (KS+). The species was not reported on HCMC on 1/27. The **Great Blue Heron** colony at Vantage Point was slow to begin breeding. A brief visit on 2/24 found only 11 birds incubating or standing on eight nests (JS).

A dead deer provided a banquet for 38 **Black Vultures** along Centennial La near Pierce Dr on 1/28 (MKw). **Bald Eagles** continue to be widely reported from many parts of the county, most from the central lakes. Although water levels have

been low at Triadelphia during dam repairs, there was no unusual concentration of eagles at BRDAM during the winter (WSSC ranger, *pers. comm.*). Initially, the nest at UMDCF appeared to be active as one or two birds were seen near the nest in December and January (CSt). On HCMC, an incubating bird was on the nest (GMcC, JKy). Since then, however, although an occasional adult has been seen, no incubating bird or feeding trips have been observed (CSt). East of US 29, one adult eagle was observed over Brush Run on 1/3 carrying a squirrel (JW).

A **Rough-legged Hawk** flew over Manahan Dr 12/4 (BO), always an excellent county bird. A first-year **Golden Eagle** was photographed during the winter by a trail camera as the bird was eating a roadkilled deer placed by the property owner in a field adjacent to Patuxent River SP the first week of February (ID DBk).

Eastern Screech-Owls roosted intermittently in boxes at Timberleigh (DNg) and Cavey La (RRf). A **Snowy Owl** appeared at a farm south of Lisbon along MD 94. Although it was present since at least 12/17, it was not validated until 12/20 (WE), likely a first-year female (JHf). The bird probably remained in the general vicinity for some time after that date, but the rolling terrain made it difficult to examine potential sites from the road. Although that bird (or another) was reported on the north side of the Patapsco River during the last



Snowy Owl

by Kevin Heffernan

days of 2017, the only other HOWCO report was from St. Michael's Rd 12/28 (RDk). This was the county's fourth confirmed sighting. The best bird on the 1/27 HCMC was a **Long-eared Owl** that flushed from a small group of pines at the landfill (JHf). This was not an invasion year for **Northern Saw-whet Owls**. Although there were indications of a single bird at Annapolis Rock, it eluded observers during two seasonal counts. On 2/12, however, fussing titmice drew attention to the diminutive owl near the top of a pine (AVS).

The adult **Red-headed Woodpecker** continued at Fox Chase

during the winter (JCu). On 1/21, it was heartening to see it defending its favorite tree from **European Starlings** (MLC, ALk, JS). On four occasions in February, a second adult was present providing hope for nesting in the coming season (JCu). A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** hung around a Stone Hill Dr yard 12/10-12/21 (KLz).

American Kestrels have been in decline for decades so multiple sightings from at least five different sites was good news. Twelve on the HCMC was the highest since the 16 on the 2002 count! Single **Merlins** were reported in all winter months with records from at least seven sites (many with photos); two were seen at CENPK on 1/20 (BO+). **Peregrine Falcons** were reported from Brown's Bridge 12/12 (KS), UMDCF 12/16-TCC (WE, MMcC), and several times in February at the trash transfer station (EHs; JHf).

An infrequently reported "caramel" crow (tan instead of black) was spotted along MD 32 near Dayton 2/11 (BHy). At least 120 **Fish Crows** were counted in a field near Cabin Branch Ct 1/24 (NM). **Common Ravens** may not yet be truly "common," but they are increasing and continue to be reported from many parts of the county.

Horned Larks were present in fields; as usual, it was necessary to search for them. Highs were 32 along Old Frederick Rd 12/10 (KS), 30 at Duvall Rd 1/17 (ALw), and 33 at Underwood Rd 2/18 (DSn). A high-flying **Tree Swallow** at Sewell's Orchard Pk on 2/21 (BMy) was extremely unusual in winter—just the fourth February record (second earliest). **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were almost no-shows with one eBird report 2/19 (no revealed location) and one heard-bird in a S. Trotter Rd pine grove 2/9 (WE). **Winter Wrens** were well-reported with a high of three at Gwynn Acres Path 1/10 (DSn).

Eastern Bluebirds are known to occasionally roost together in cold weather. At Henryton, four were seen entering and exiting a natural cavity on HCMC (FLv). **Gray Catbirds** and **Brown Thrashers** normally winter in small numbers. There were a few catbird records throughout the season with just one on HCMC—at Blandair (AVS). Thrashers survived much better with observations from twice as many locations—even two at Middle Patuxent Env. Area 1/2 (MHR). HCMC notched five countywide.

On 1/1, when open water was at a premium, 76 **Cedar Waxwings** entertained observers by eating snow (photo on p. 6) from the roof of a one-story house at S. Trotter Rd (W/SE). Sixteen **American Pipits** were detected at Underwood Rd 12/16 (RRf), the season's modest high.

Purple Finch sightings barely registered this winter with singles sighted by experienced observers in each winter month: 12/22 CENPK (JSn), 1/3 Brush Run (JW), 1/24 at Mt. Pleasant (JHf), and 2/24 Long Reach (AVS). **Pine Siskins** were

(Records continued on page 6)

likewise elusive: two visited a Jamina Downs, E. Col. feeder with a dozen **American Goldfinches** 2/5 (EHs), and two were reported on eBird at a Folly Quarter Rd feeder with goldfinches 2/18 on the Great Backyard Bird Count.



Cedar Waxwing Eating Snow

by Sue Earp

A major surprise was a well-described **Palm Warbler** along Dorsey Run Rd 2/3 (R/RnPr), for the county's second February record. A few **Pine Warblers** normally winter—some with feeder assistance. One appeared at a suet feeder at Brush Run 12/9 and was seen periodically most of the season (JW). One at Allenford appeared at a feeder 1/1 and was seen infrequently after that (H/RTd). The single singing birds at Gateway on 2/27 (JW) and at Annapolis Rock 2/28 (JHr) were probably on territory. **Yellow-rumped Warblers** were reported occasionally with a high of six at Gateway 1/28 (JHr) and a countywide total of 25 on HCMC.

Seven **Eastern Towhees** were spotted at W. Friendship Pk 2/19 (JHr). **American Tree Sparrows** peaked at 10 at Mt. Pleasant 1/20 (BO) where they had been present, mostly in the low single digits, all winter. Fox Chase, with one bird on 1/15 (JCu) and several times thereafter, was the only other location where they were reported multiple times. **Chipping Sparrows** winter in small numbers. They were reported from at least 10 locations with a high of six at the Miller Branch Library 2/26 (JW). A total of 26 **Field Sparrows** on 2/3 and 33+ on 2/6 (both mostly single flocks) at Mt. Pleasant were excellent counts (RRf). Thirty-six **Savannah Sparrows** were tallied at Alpha Ridge Landfill (JHf+) and 10 at Mt. Pleasant (RHI), both on 1/20. **Fox Sparrow** sightings picked up, as expected, in late February. The partially leucistic **Song Sparrow** (white head) first seen in mid-October at Fox Chase (AVS) continued there, last seen 2/10 (JCu). Wintering **White-crowned Sparrows** are becoming increasingly difficult to find except in a few spots. Of the 21 on HCMC, 20 were in Area 1.

Twenty-seven **Northern Cardinals** were counted at Middle Patuxent Env. Area 1/27-HCMC (K/KnHf+). **Eastern Meadowlark** habitat continues to dwindle so wintering flocks of 26

at the landfill 1/20 (JHf+) and 17 at W. Friendship Pk 1/19 (DSn) were fine counts. **Rusty Blackbirds** were well-reported from five at Pigtail 12/16-TCC (S/CPr) to a flock of 39 in Symphony Woods in downtown Columbia 1/27-HCMC (CKc). The latter number swelled to a high of 47 on 1/28 (KS); 30 were seen at nearby Lake Kittamaquundi on 2/17 (CKc, JHf+); and 11 were still present at Symphony Woods on 2/26 (DSn). **Baltimore Orioles** are always a winter bright spot. One adult male was present at feeders in Holiday Hills 12/16-TCC (fide DHm), one showed up briefly at LKELK 12/23 (ALw), two were present sporadically much of the winter at Sweet Fern feeders (north of LKELK, 1 ad. male, ph. 2/10) (fide JSh), and one ad. male was spotted on 2/15 in a River Hill yard, near Clarksville (ECh).

Thanks to Joe Hanfman, Nancy Magnusson, and Howard Patterson for editing and to Russ Ruffing for checking specific records.

Abbreviations: BRDAM – Brighton Dam, CENPK – Centennial Park, HCMC – Howard County Mid-winter Count 1/27/18, HOWCO – Howard County, LKELK – Lake Elkhorn, NFC – Night Flight Call equipment, ph. – photograph, Quarry – Springdale Quarry Pond, TCC – Triadelphia Christmas Count 12/16/17.

Observers: DBk – Dave Brinker, ECh – Eric Chang, MLC – Mary Lou Clark, LCg – Lisa Colangelo, JCu – Jeff Culler, RCu – Ralph Cullison III, DCm – David Cummings, RDK – Ryan Dockins, SE – Sue Earp, WE – Wes Earp, JGr – Jim Green, JHf – Joe Hanfman, CHr – Clive Harris, JHr – John Harris, MHR – Meg Harris, DHv – Dave Harvey, MHv – Maureen Harvey, BHy – Brian Henry, RHI – Russell Hillsley, DHm – David Holmes, THg – Timothy Houghton, EHs – Ed Huestis, BHb – Bill Hubick, JKy – Joyce Kelly, MKw – Mike Kerwin, CKc – Clayton Koonce, AsLw – Aisha Lewis, ALw – Allen Lewis, KLz – Kathy Litzinger, ALk – Anne Looker, FLv – Felicia Lovelett, NM – Nancy Magnusson, NMCA – Nancy McAllister, GMcC – Grazina McClure, MMcC – Mike McClure, JMCK – John McKitterick, HMz – Helen Metzman, BMy – Brian Moyer, DNg – Diane Nagengast, BO – Bonnie Ott, CPr – Cindy Parr, SPr – Steve Parr, HPt – Howard Patterson, RnPr – Renee Peters, RPr – Richard Peters, GRk – Gene Ricks, MRg – Matt Rogosky, SRm – Sarah Romero, RRf – Russ Ruffing, KS – Kurt Schwarz, JSh – Jay Sheppard, JSn – Jeff Shenot, DSI – Daniel Sloan, JS – Jo Solem, CSt – Chuck Stirrat, HTd – Hyacinth Todd, RTd – Robin Todd, BTw – Bill Townsend, AVS – Anthony VanSchoor, JW – Jim Wilkinson, PWf – Paul Woodford.

**THE HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB
WELCOMES THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS,
FEBRUARY-MARCH 2018**

Lisa Cole
Griffith Family
Cheryl Hogue

HOWARD COUNTY MID-WINTER COUNT, JANUARY 27, 2018

BY JOE HANFMAN

A cold and mostly sunny day recorded temperatures from 24 to 64° F. The reservoir and ponds were 50-90% iced over and rivers were open. We recorded 88 species which is the average number of the last 32 years. The total number of individual birds was 32,508 which is 19,832 below the average and the fourth lowest number ever recorded. It is also 133,392 below the maximum number of birds recorded.

A new bird for the count was our long-staying Trumpeter Swan with wing tag P95. Common Ravens are becoming more common with a new high count of seven found. This is the fifth year in a row that ravens have been recorded. All-time high counts were recorded for Northern Shoveler (6), Black Vulture (364), Brown Thrasher (5), and Rusty Blackbird (39). All-time low counts were recorded for American Black Duck (9). Fifty-one of the 88 species tallied have been seen on all 32 Mid-winter Counts. Seventy-nine of the 88 species tallied have been seen on at least 50% of all 32 Mid-winter Counts.

Species that have been seen on more than half of the counts but missed this year were Mute Swan (not expected), Tundra Swan, Northern Pintail, Canvasback, American Coot, Killdeer, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Purple Finch, Pine Siskin, and American Tree Sparrow. This was the only year that American Tree Sparrow has been missed and only the second year that Canvasback have been missed.

Many people contributed to the success of the day. Seventy-four observers spent 208.1 hours and covered 150.5 miles on foot and 530.8 miles by car. Another 19.7 hours were spent feeder watching, plus 1.9 hours stationary and 5.1 hours of owling. Chuck Stirrat updated the taxonomic order, summarized the area worksheets, and provided field and feeder checklists. Area leaders arranged coverage, did follow-up if necessary, and compiled 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 into their home.

Land permission from Howard County Dept. of Recreation 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, Susan Earp, Tom Feild, Brenda Kidera, Geraldine King, Kathie & Ralph Lillie, Woody Merkle, Mary Prowell, Robert Ringler, Jay Sheppard, Marcy Stutzman, Robin Todd; *Area 2.* **Brian Moyer**, Lisa Colangelo, Jeff Culler, David Cummings, Debbie MacDonald, Joshua Ward; *Area 3.* **Chuck Stirrat**, John Finedore, Joe Hanfman, Dave & Maureen Harvey, Paul Littman Jr., Felicia Lovelett, Tom Miller, Russ Ruffing; *Area 4.* **Mike McClure**, Deborah Belchis, John Harris, Chris & Joyce Kelly, Michael Kerwin, Mike Leumas, Grazina McClure; *Area 5.* **Karen & Kevin Heffernan**, John & Sue Greer, Meg Harris, Clayton Koonce, Nancy Magnusson, Cyndy & Steve Parr, Howard Patterson, Ginny Walker; *Area 6.* **Bonnie Ott**, Karan Blum, Mary Lou Clark, Brigitte Lund, Janet Lydon, Richard Orr, Tim Thompson, Anthony VanSchoor, Michele Wright; *Area 7.* **Kurt Schwarz**, Dennis Coskren, Ed Huestis, Anne Looker, Rosa Lubitz, John McKitterick, Barry Miller, Sue Muller, Sue Neri, Linda Roberts, Sarah Romero, Jo Solem, Michelle Stewart, Eva Sunell, Jim Wilkinson.

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

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

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 24, 2018
John McKitterick
10018 Maple Ave
Columbia MD 21046
410-997-3122
jbmck@verizon.net

Howard County Mid-Winter Count - January 27, 2018

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-------|--------------------------|-------|---------------------------------|---------|
| Canada Goose | 8,313 | Red-bellied Woodpecker | 262 | Song Sparrow | 653 |
| Trumpeter Swan | 1 | Yellow-bellied Sapsucker | 6 | Swamp Sparrow | 22 |
| Wood Duck | 5 | Downy Woodpecker | 190 | White-throated Sparrow | 1,823 |
| Northern Shoveler | 6 | Hairy Woodpecker | 39 | White-crowned Sparrow | 21 |
| Gadwall | 8 | Northern Flicker | 89 | Dark-eyed Junco | 892 |
| American Wigeon | 1 | Pileated Woodpecker | 56 | Eastern Meadowlark | 33 |
| Mallard | 314 | American Kestrel | 12 | Red-winged Blackbird | 4,502 |
| American Black Duck | 9 | Merlin | 1 | Brown-headed Cowbird | 289 |
| Ring-necked Duck | 41 | Eastern Phoebe | 1 | Rusty Blackbird | 39 |
| Lesser Scaup | 1 | Blue Jay | 550 | Common Grackle | 83 |
| Bufflehead | 16 | American Crow | 1,372 | <i>blackbird species</i> | 87 |
| Hooded Merganser | 55 | Fish Crow | 233 | Pine Warbler | 1 |
| Common Merganser | 242 | <i>crow species</i> | 1,066 | Yel.-rump'd (Myrtle) Warbler | 25 |
| Red-breasted Merganser | 1 | Common Raven | 7 | Northern Cardinal | 611 |
| Ruddy Duck | 5 | Horned Lark | 27 | Area Total Birds: | 31,508 |
| Wild Turkey | 25 | Carolina Chickadee | 518 | Area Total Species: | 88 |
| Pied-billed Grebe | 3 | Tufted Titmouse | 465 | Supplemental Data | |
| Rock Pigeon | 140 | White-breasted Nuthatch | 220 | Deer Seen: | 94 |
| Mourning Dove | 1,322 | Brown Creeper | 7 | Time Start: | 2:10 a |
| Wilson's Snipe | 1 | Winter Wren | 10 | Time Stop: | 11:15 p |
| American Woodcock | 1 | Carolina Wren | 316 | Hours on Foot: | 166.7 |
| Ring-billed Gull | 429 | Golden-crowned Kinglet | 21 | Hours by Car: | 41.4 |
| <i>gull species</i> | 1 | Ruby-crowned Kinglet | 2 | Miles on Foot: | 150.5 |
| Great Blue Heron | 16 | Eastern Bluebird | 426 | Miles by Car: | 530.8 |
| Black Vulture | 364 | Hermit Thrush | 8 | Hours Feeder Watching: | 19.7 |
| Turkey Vulture | 419 | American Robin | 184 | Hours Stationary: | 1.9 |
| Bald Eagle [ad/im/unk] | 21 | Gray Catbird | 1 | Hours "Owling": | 5.1 |
| Northern Harrier | 3 | Brown Thrasher | 5 | Miles "Owling": | 21.8 |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk | 10 | Northern Mockingbird | 115 | Tot. Field Obs. in Area: | 71 |
| Cooper's Hawk | 10 | European Starling | 2,761 | Tot. Field Parties in Area: | 52 |
| <i>accipiter species</i> | 3 | Cedar Waxwing | 181 | Tot. Feederwatchers: | 3 |
| Red-shouldered Hawk | 95 | House Sparrow | 475 | Tot. Feederwatch Parties: | 3 |
| Red-tailed Hawk | 65 | House Finch | 393 | Total Observers in Area: | 74 |
| Eastern Screech-Owl | 1 | American Goldfinch | 223 | Total Parties in Area: | 55 |
| Great Horned Owl | 10 | Eastern Towhee | 57 | Tot. Field Pty-Hrs (Reg.): | 208.1 |
| Barred Owl | 13 | Chipping Sparrow | 7 | Total Party-Hrs (Feeder): | 19.7 |
| Long-eared Owl | 1 | Field Sparrow | 83 | Tot. Pty-Hrs (Stationary): | 1.9 |
| Belted Kingfisher | 9 | Savannah Sparrow | 47 | Total Party-Hrs (Owling): | 5.1 |
| Red-headed Woodpecker | 3 | Fox Sparrow | 8 | Total Party-Hours: | 234.8 |

MAY COUNT IS SATURDAY, MAY 12, 2018

BY KEVIN HEFFERNAN

We had a couple of warm days in February this year, but it has been unseasonably cold since. May, however, will be here before you know it. May Count, always the second Saturday in May, is on May 12th. For beginning birders, this is an excellent opportunity to be paired with more experienced birders and get 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 10 years across the county, we have tallied an average of 143 species during the May Count. Last year's total was 136.

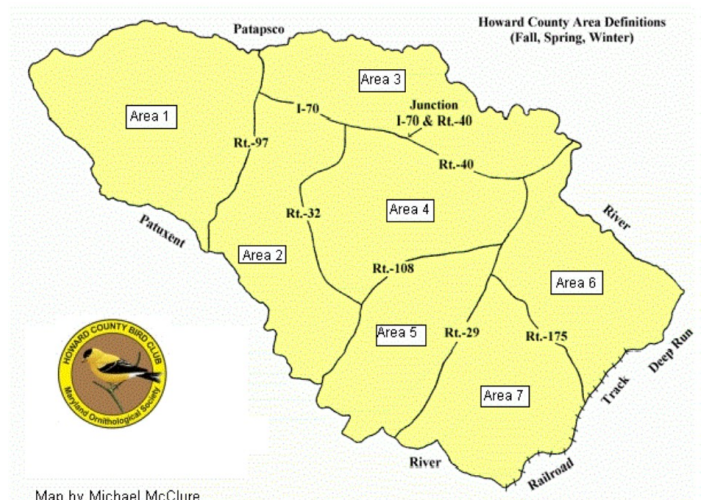
For the count, Howard County is divided into the seven areas shown on the map. Each area has an Area Coordinator (name and phone number listed below) who communicates with the counters, assigns territories, and compiles area results. If you are a beginner, ask to be paired with a more experienced birder. 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 | Brian Moyer | 410-441-9901 |
| Area 3 | Chuck Stirrat | 410-531-2417 |
| Area 4 | Mike McClure | 410-531-2780 |
| Area 5 | Karen Darcy | 443-857-1789 |
| Area 6 | Janet Lydon | 410-744-5012 |
| Area 7 | John McKittrick | 410-997-3122 |

At the end of the day, all of the counters are invited to a tally rally at Linda Hunt'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 opportunity to relax, swap stories of the day, and find out what everyone else has seen.

(Directions to Linda's house will be provided by the area coordinators.) Please call Linda in advance (410-964-0180) and let her know how many are coming from your party and your choice of food or beverage to bring. Meet at 6:00 to 6:15, 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.



ONE LESS BUFFLEHEAD

by Mike Kerwin

I was at the boat ramp at Centennial Lake on 1/21/18 checking out the birds in the water when an adult Red-shouldered Hawk landed in a tree on the near shoreline. It sat there for a minute or two and then flew directly past my right shoulder across the

lake and landed in the water about 10 yards from the opposite shoreline. It sat in the water for four or five minutes not really doing anything. (Seeing what ensued, I think it was trying to drown a Bufflehead). It then swam the ten yards to the shoreline; when I say "swam" it was literally using its wings like oars and swam to the shoreline. It then climbed out dragging an inert male Bufflehead behind it. It pulled the bird three or four yards into the woods. I could no longer see the Bufflehead at this point, but presume the hawk was standing on top of the duck. After a minute or so I saw what I believe was wing movement by the duck, then the hawk, sensing the duck was still alive, dispatched the duck and began eating it. I watched this for at least 10 minutes. Totally awesome!



Hawk swimming to shore after striking Bufflehead in the water. A Hooded Merganser is swimming left of the hawk.



Hawk dragging Bufflehead onto the shore. Photos by Mike Kerwin



HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB

Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society

P. O. BOX 1323

COLUMBIA MD 21044-1323

May/June 2018 - Inside This Issue

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Club Meetings | Winter Bird Records |
| Field Trips | New Member Welcome |
| Mid-winter Count Summary | May Count |
| One Less Bufflehead | Potluck Thanks |

POTLUCK THANKS

BY KATHIE LILLIE

Thanks to everyone for a most successful 2018 Annual Potluck Dinner, held on March 17th in the auditorium of the Robinson Nature Center. We had 43 people in attendance, including Pam and Josh from the Nature Center, and shared great food and great photos. A special thank you goes to Tim and Mitzi Jones, who were presented a Certificate of Appreciation and composite photograph in recognition of the Jones family's support of Dickcissel nesting habitat on their Bowling Green Farm in 2017. Well done! We'd like to thank the RNC staff for arranging the tables and chairs for us, which is much appreciated. Many thanks to the people who generously assisted with set-up and take-down, and to John McKetterick for coordination of the after-dinner slide and video show. Thank you all for the sharing and comraderie!



President John Harris with Certificate of Appreciation



Tim and Mitzi Jones with Dickcissel Photo Montage

Photos by Jo Solem