



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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Great Horned Owllet



Anthony VanSchoor witnessed this owllet's first flight at Centennial Park on April 9, 2018. The owllet was blown off course and had to climb the final way to its destination.

Thursday, September 13, 2018 “In Light of Recent Trends in Development, What Does the Future Hold for our Birds? Safe Skies Maryland, Working Toward a Model of Real Sustainability.” Beth Decker and Carolyn Parsa co-founded Safe Skies to impact the loss of an estimated one billion healthy birds to collisions each year in North America. Join us to learn what members of the MOS community are doing to address this growing problem. These club members worked with a task force of the Howard County Sustainability Board to found the Safe Skies Maryland initiative which targets outreach, education, and legislation. Their organization is also a conservation subcommittee of MOS and partners with other conservation organizations.

Thursday, October 11, 2018 “Youth Birding in Maryland,” by Joshua Heiser and Daniel and Jonathan Irons, YMOS birders. YMOS birders will share information about youth birding opportunities in Maryland including their experiences, research, and participation in the World Series of Birding. These young people hail from Montgomery and Queen Anne’s counties. Their YMOS team, The Mighty Merlins, placed first and second in recent World Series of Birding Competitions. They have a Gofundme site to defray expenses for such events.

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 Mary Lou Clark, 410-465-4061.
 Website: <http://www.howardcountymd.gov/RobinsonNatureCenter>

PRESIDENT’S WELCOME

Welcome to the beginning of the 47th year of the Howard County Bird Club. I am as excited about the beginning of this birding year as I was when a teacher beginning a new school year. I have been a member of the bird club during two different periods in my life. First, back in the 1980s, before I became a mother; then, beginning a few years ago, after I retired from teaching. This time I began as a bird watcher, then evolved to a lister. Our club is more than just about observing the birds and the bees (and the many other denizens of the natural world). We are also interested in the conservation of the natural environment and the wildlife living there. As the impact on our world by humans continues to increase, we have become more involved in the preservation, protection, and restoration of the natural environment. Our first program of the year, a talk by the founders of “Safe Skies Maryland,” reflects that concern.

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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 2, Sunday, 10:00 a.m. 2-3 hours. *Meet at Elkhorn Garden Plots, Oakland Mills Rd opposite Dash-er 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 6, 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

ROCKBURN BRANCH PARK

September 9, 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

HOWARD COUNTY CONSERVANCY (HCC) AT MT. PLEASANT FARM

September 12, 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, wccummings9@gmail.com, 410-925-1809

FALL COUNT

September 15, 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 22, 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.

BLANDAIR PARK NORTH

September 29, Saturday, 7:30 a.m., 2-3 hours. *Meet at the south end of Summer Hollow Ln, Columbia.* Walk the trails along scrubland and woods looking for migrants. No facilities, boots recommended. Leader – Anthony VanSchoor, tonyvanschoor@gmail.com

UNIVERSITY OF MD CENTRAL MARYLAND RESEARCH AND EDUCATION CENTER

October 6, Saturday, 7:00 - 9:30 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. (See next item.)

⚡ UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND OPEN HOUSE BIG SIT

October 6, 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 14, 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, cullerfuls@hotmail.com, 410-465-9006

⚡ LAKE ELKHORN

October 20, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. 2-3 hours. *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

(Field Trips continued on page 3)

(Field Trips continued from page 2)

turn up interesting surprises. Hawks are also possible flying over. No facilities.

Leader – Allen Lewis, allenrlewis@gmail.com

HOWARD COUNTY CONSERVANCY AT MT. PLEASANT SKYWATCH

November 3, 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 4, 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 – Richard and Renee Peters, Richard@rrrrpeters.org


SHARPS AT WATERFORD FARM

November 10, 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

 = Reservation required

\$ = Fee for this trip

 = Great for beginning birders

(President's Welcome continued from page 1)

I am very thankful for the contributions of the club members who give of their time and talents to make the club as strong as it is. Remember, however, the phrase “many hands make light work.” We are always in need of volunteers who can help with refreshments at club meetings, spend part of the day counting birds during one of the bird counts, help maintain the area of the Skywatch, man the club booth at outreach events, or even become an officer or board member. Please let me know if you can help in even some small way. I am looking forward to seeing you out birding this fall or maybe at a club program.

Mary Lou Clark

BIRD SEED SALE

BY WARD EBERT

Our annual seed sale will be held on Saturday, October 6th, 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 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 6th. 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 nearly \$90,000 to various conservation organizations. See our [website](#) for a list of locations and organizations benefited by your support.

Board of Directors Meetings

Board meetings are held the fourth Thursday of the month at 7:30 p.m., unless otherwise noted, at the home of the board member listed. If directions are required, please call the hosting board member.

September 27, 2018
 Mary Lou Clark
 5153 Morningside Lane
 Ellicott City, MD 21043
 410-465-4061
doctorfx_99@yahoo.com

October 25, 2018
 David Sandler
 6578 Madrigal Terrace
 Columbia, MD 21044
 410-370-0747
detour65@gmail.com

SPRING BIRD RECORDS: MARCH 1 – MAY 31, 2018

BY [JOANNE SOLEM](#)

After above average temperatures in February, March proved chillier than normal and spring came slowly. Below normal precipitation for several seasons ended during the last half of May when much of the county received more than 10" of rain. Surf Scoter, Red-throated Loon, Glossy Ibis, Mississippi Kite, and Clay-colored Sparrow were the headliners.

The last **Snow Geese** were a flock of 14 over West Friendship Park 3/17 (EHs). A neck-banded **Canada Goose** present at Henryton, Patapsco Valley State Park (HENPV) 3/14 (RRf) was reported to the Bird Banding Laboratory. They indicated that it was a female (f.) banded 6/20/16 near Ithaca, New York. **Tundra Swan** movement peaked from 3/17 to 19 with six reports during that period.



Banded Canada Goose

by Russ Ruffing

Wood Ducks nested at Water Lily Way, Kings Contrivance (f. with eight ducklings) 5/12 (ALw) and Vantage Point (f. with three ducklings) 5/21 (CKc). Interaction with a duckling on railroad tracks west of Marriottsville Rd, PVSP (MARPV) 5/21 (CSt) is detailed on [p. 7](#). Most of the migrant puddle ducks appeared in at least a few locations with numbers mostly in the single digits. Race Road Wetlands (RACRW) continued to be the consistent location for **Gadwall** and **Northern Shoveler**. **Blue-winged Teal** were the biggest surprise with a f. at RACRW 3/17 (TCy), four at Univ. of MD Central Farm (road view) 4/8 (RRf), a pair at Centennial (CENPK) 4/19 (RHI), and a laggard at Gwynn Acres Path 5/7 (J/MHr).

A **Greater Scaup** at CENPK 5/8 (JCu; i.d. RRf) proved to be a new late date. The bird then moved to Lake Kittamaquidi (LKKIT) 5/9 to further extend the date (CKc; i.d. TCy) [5/4/63 May Count, observer unknown]. Three **Surf Scoters** at CENPK 4/4 (RHI) (14th record) cooperatively stayed till 4/11 (D/LTr). **Long-tailed Ducks** flew over Cavey La the nights of 3/31 and 4/11 (RRf-NFC [Night Flight Call]). One was spotted in county waters at Duckett Reservoir 4/7 (DCm). A f. **Hooded Merganser** with two/three young was observed on the river at MARPV 5/12 (AVS). (The county of origin could not be determined, but any Piedmont nest of this species is notable.) A male (m.) Hooded on a pond at Troy Hill Park on 5/28 (JW) was either a lingering non-breeder or indicated nesting in the Route 1 corridor.

The presence of a f. at the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area (MPEA) 4/20 (CFf) and 4/21 (JHr) was intriguing as the date could still involve a migrating bird. Because of favorable habitat there, breeding in the near future would not be surprising. The last **Horned Grebe** was seen on Lake Elkhorn (LKELK) 4/22 (ALw).

Wild Turkeys are especially obvious in March and April prior to nesting. PVSP and Patuxent River State Park (PRSP) are consistent locations for this species. The nearby PVSP scrubland on several dates produced a turkey as a "yard bird" at River Rd/Sykesville (FLv). Unexpected turkey locations included Hammond Village 4/4 (RS), Swansfield 4/7 (BSm), and Mink Hollow Rd 4/16 and 4/19 (SWm).

Common Nighthawks drifted through from one at Nordau Ct near Savage 5/5 (R/RnPr) to one near Plumtree Branch Trail 5/21 (MRg). Highs were 16 at CENPK 5/7 (AVS+) and 5/8 (HPT, m. obs.). **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds** were not unusually early; observers at five locations reported a 4/24 arrival date (JCu, AVS, MHr, LOL, SWm).

A lone **Sora** was heard over Cavey La 4/28 (RRf-NFC), the only one of the season. **American Coots** were reported irregularly in small numbers most of the season.

Shorebird numbers and variety were disappointing. The half dozen migratory species arrived late and were few in number. A high of 61 **Wilson's Snipe** at Alpha Ridge Landfill (ALRGL) 3/31 (JHf, RCu+) was a fine count. March **American Woodcock** included one at Gorman Stream Valley Natural Resource Area 3/4 (JMcK), a high of 12 at Hipsley Mill Rd 3/7 (AVS), and one at Cavey La 3/28 (RRf-NFC).

Graceful **Bonaparte's Gulls** were first spotted on 4/7 from at least four sites (CENPK-JHf; Fulton Pd-MW; JW; Duckett Dam-DCm; LKKIT-CKc) to two at Fulton Pond 4/22 (JHr). The high was 61 at Duckett Reservoir 4/9 (ALw). A **Caspian Tern** over LKKIT 3/25 established a new early date (CKc, ph.) [3/26/07 B/G Hill; 3/26/08 J. Hanfman].

A **Red-throated Loon** in winter plumage was reported on Duckett Reservoir 3/30 (DRn). The location was not visible from any Howard Co access so it was necessary to visit the Supplee Lane Recreation Area in Prince George's Co and look north. The bird was visible in that locality until 4/9 (ALw). No major **Double-crested Cormorant** flights were noted.

American Bitterns were spotted on two dates at MPEA: 4/11 (JHr) and 4/14 (AVS), possibly a single individual. One was also reported at RACRW 4/14 in a small patch of cattails (SRm); it was still being seen 4/20 (J/MHr). The good news for lovers of **Great Blue Herons** was that not only were there 20 active nests at Vantage Point on 3/29 (JS), but a second county colony was

(Records continued on page 5)

verified this season. In 2017, during trout stocking in the Patuxent River below Haviland Mill Rd, a group of heron nests was spotted in some White Pines not far from the river (**JSh**). During the 2018 spring season, the nests were reported independently from near Mink Hollow Rd (the next road downstream) (**SWm**). A return visit on 5/2 came up with a count of 16 active nests (**MWm**, **SWm**). Two good-sized colonies are excellent in the Piedmont. A **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** appeared at LKELK on 4/28 (**FSh**). One along the Little Patuxent River at Vantage Point was a surprise (**CKc**). **Glossy Ibis** is always a special species. One was at the Supplee Lane Rec. Area 4/8 (short flight into Howard Co) (**AVS**), one appeared at LKKIT briefly 4/16 (**SRm**), and two were in a field along MD 97 near Longfield Rd 4/18 (**KTf**).

A pair of **Black Vultures** nested in a shed at Florence Rd near MD 94; on 5/18 there were two eggs (**JRn**). Numbers of lingering **Osprey** continue to increase, especially over the central lakes, although the locations of few nests are known. One, at a relay tower along Murphy Rd, was used for the second year (5/12 – **HMz**), while the nest on a relay tower on the south side of Duckett Dam was again occupied (5/12 – **JS**, **SMu**, **ALk**). On 5/26, an Osprey carrying a fish was seen in flight along Union Chapel Rd (**DNg**) suggesting a nest in the western part of the county.

A **Mississippi Kite** was photographed over Font Hill Wetland Park 5/24 (**BO**). In addition to the single active **Bald Eagle** nest on each reservoir (per Wash. Suburban Sanitary Comm. rangers), observers were hopeful that the Folly Quarter nest would be reclaimed. Although there was activity early in the year and the reportedly damaged nest seemed to have been repaired, there was no consistent breeding activity and by mid-May it was obvious the nest was unsuccessful (**CSt**). The nest in the Gorman area along the Middle Patuxent River was lost when the nest tree was damaged (**JMcK**; **TRy**). A new nest in the west was discovered at Waterford Farm when an eagle carrying a branch was spotted (**CSH**). The nest was observed during a club field trip on 4/29 (**WE+**). Although eagles were seen in the area during spring, there was no evidence the nest was used successfully (**MW**).

Red-shouldered Hawk nests in several locations were watched for extended periods with at least one fledged from nests at LKELK (**SN**), LKKIT (**CKc**), and MPEA (**JHr**). **Broad-winged Hawks** made a dual initial appearance on 4/13 with four over MTPLT (**J/MHr**) and one over Meadowbrook Pk (**SRm**). No one reported evidence of nesting, but a bird over MTPLT 5/27 (**WCr**) was not far from their last known nesting location in the Patapsco Valley.

On 4/21, a sunny Saturday morning, the Chandler S. Robbins SkyWatch at Mt. Pleasant was dedicated. It was preceded by an Earth Day bird walk (**AVS**). Attending members of the Robbins family participated in both events and stayed afterward to continue birding (**JHf+**). Chan's oldest son, George, used his father's beloved, albeit battered, binoculars. During the ceremony there were a few birds flying; later, some distant Broad-wings were picked up. The morning was a fitting tribute to one of the premier field birders of his generation.

Two spring **Barn Owls** were a pleasant surprise. One was spotted

near the entrance to W. Friendship Pk 3/4 (**RHl**); the other was heard over Cavy La 3/19 (**RRf-NFC**). **Eastern Screech-Owls** at Timberleigh were entertaining as a red/gray pair roosted sporadically in a box from early March through April (**DNg**). At deep dusk on 3/26, the red owl trilled from a low branch. The gray male flew to her and they copulated. The pair continued to be present calling daily until 4/30 when they departed. Disappointingly, they were not seen or heard again. A pair of **Great Horned Owls** nested at CENPK. This was not the first time this has occurred, but, since this nest tree was within 15' of the heavily traveled loop path, it presented an unusual challenge. Some individuals of this species are prone to abandon a nest when watched; also, crows can harass and predate a nest. Aggressive photographers had been a problem in recent years for nesting **Barred Owls** at Gwynn Acres, so the person who discovered the CENPK nest requested that an effort be made to not share the location until the young were old enough to prevent abandonment. This was difficult because of the number of people who regularly walk at the park. Fortunately, the female had begun incubation during the coldest days of January so few people were walking around the lake. Several birders who discovered the nest independently were cooperative and temporarily removed postings from eBird. In March, when scheduled Centennial Walks were held, attendees were given instructions as to how to view the nest so that anyone who wished to see the birds had the opportunity. There were still a few people, mostly photographers, who harassed the birds (including one man who beat on the trunk of the tree so the sitting owl would turn its head for the waiting photographer). Fortunately, the nest fledged two owls thanks to the cooperation and understanding of many people. (See photo of fledgling on [p.1](#).)

The **Red-headed Woodpeckers** at Fox Chase were tracked during the spring season with the hope that they would again nest (**JCu**). Only one adult was seen for long periods. Although he defended his favorite dead trees, a pair of **European Starlings** appeared to have taken over a cavity in the original nest tree. On 5/12, two adult Red-headed were seen (**JCu**, **DCm**). Heavy rains the last half of May made access to the floodplain difficult, but two adult woodpeckers were later spotted a short distance from the original nest tree. By the end of the spring season, nesting had not yet been verified (**JCu**). A f. **Pileated Woodpecker** took a leisurely dust bath at Timberleigh 4/22 (**DNg**), an infrequently observed Pileated behavior.

Seven **American Kestrels** at ALRGL 3/31 (**JHf**, **RCu+**) was a fine count for this dwindling species. **Merlins** were reported at five sites from one at W. Friendship Pk 3/1 (**ALw**) to one at the SkyWatch on 4/22 (**Mkw**). May Count observers on 5/12 spotted a **Peregrine Falcon** being chased by **Tree Swallows** in the River Rd/Sykesville area (**KS**, **FLv**).

Olive-sided Flycatchers moved through during May: 5/2 HENPV (**AVS**, ph.), 5/18 MARPV (**RHl**, ph.), and 5/26 Manahan Dr (**BO**, ph.). **Acadian Flycatchers** were slow to arrive, but by 5/21 a total of 12 were on territory at MPEA (**SRm**). **Alder Flycatcher** identification requires a trained ear more than a trained eye. On the night of 5/12, one passed over Cavy La near the Patapsco River (**RRf-NFC**); on 5/13, a calling bird was detected at MPEA (**JHf**, **TCy**, **JMo**). Single **Least Flycatchers** were

noted at MARPV 5/4 (M/SWm), Cavey La 5/11 (RRf), ALRGL 5/12 (JHf, RCu), MPEA 5/13 (JHf), and Triadelphia Reservoir 5/20 (JWd). An **Eastern Kingbird** on 4/13 at RACRW (JW) was a fine arrival date.

A **Yellow-throated Vireo** at MARPV on 4/22 (JHf) led the species. **Warbling Vireos** arrived in good numbers with seven on 5/12 at LKKIT (CKc) breaking the previous count of six, while six were recorded on 5/17 at CENPK (HPt). The highest **Red-eyed** count was 35 at MPEA 5/3 (JHf).

On 3/23, there were 82 **Fish Crows** at CENPK (KS). **Common Ravens** continue to be reported countywide. Sightings in the southern/southeastern part of the county can probably be traced to the nest on Duckett Dam (in 2018, three fledged from a nest on the Prince George's Co side – TFy). Although ravens are strong flyers, consistent reports from RACRW, MPEA, MTPLT, and Annapolis Rock probably represent one or more undiscovered nests, not necessarily in Howard Co. An adult **Horned Lark** was feeding a fledgling at Underwood Rd on 5/28 (FSh). A few early **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** attempted to defy the weather. Two were spotted at RACRW 3/18 (SRm+) on a normal March day. On 3/21, two at LKKIT were flying in a snow squall (CKc, ph.). A count of 52 **Cliff Swallows** at Brighton Dam 5/30 (AVS) verified a healthy colony.

The lone **Red-breasted Nuthatch** of the season was an oddly late bird on 5/20 along the Patuxent Branch Trail (Rn/RPr). A **House Wren** on 4/3 at consistently-birded LKKIT was almost certainly a new arrival (CKc). **Winter Wrens** were again well-reported with the last one at LKKIT 4/22 (CKc, ph.). The later the spring date the more likely the observer is to hear the complex song of this secretive species. Two **Marsh Wrens** were detected. One was at MPEA 5/12 (K/KnHf); the other was a cooperative bird which spent most of 5/21 at LKELK (SRm) singing repeatedly as it established a new late departure date.

The first **Gray-cheeked Thrush** on 5/5 at MPEA (JHf, ph.) missed the early date by a single day. For the following two weeks, there were reports from at least seven locations, all numbers in the low single digits. **Swainson's Thrushes** were particularly obvious at MPEA: 12 (SRm, MLC) and 14 (DSn, HPt) on 5/4; 16 on 5/14 (CSt). Twenty-six **Gray Catbirds** were tallied at ALRGL on 5/12 (JHf, RCu). A rotating group of **Cedar Waxwings** fed eagerly on sap oozing from a Sugar Maple in Long Reach on 3/18 (AVS). Fifty-two were counted feeding on American Holly in Owen Brown on 3/27 (SRm).

The third week of March brought an influx of **American Pipits**, not only to the expected western locations, but on 3/22 to both LKKIT (KWn-2) and CENPK (TFe-2); 3/23 Waverly Pond (RRf-1), and 4/5 LKELK (ALw-1).

There were few boreal birds during the winter so spring visitors were scarce. A few **Purple Finches** passed through mostly in March and the first half of April with four on 3/19 at Brush Run, LKELK as the high (JW), the last on 5/14 at Stone Hill Dr (KLz, ph.). Other than four **Pine Siskins** on 4/18 at Mink Hollow Rd (SWm), a varying number could be counted much of the season at Burleigh Manor with 10 the high count on 4/15;

the last four were seen on 5/9 (MKw).

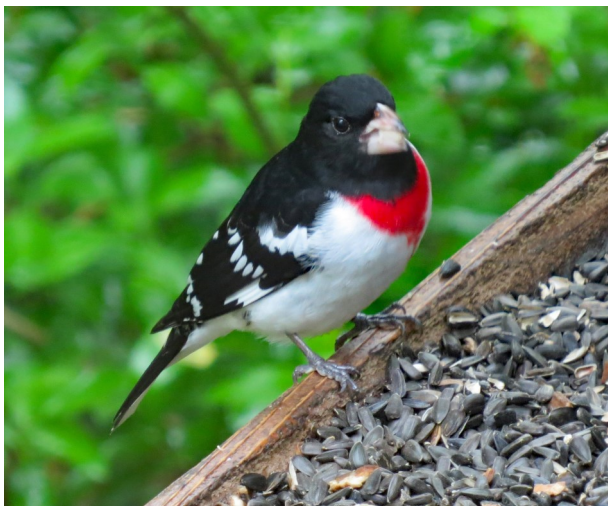
A number of observers remarked that the spring passerine migration was unusually good. For those who like variety, the high warbler count was 21 species at MPEA on 5/13 (JHf, TCy, JMo). **Northern Waterthrushes** were well-reported from 4/21 at Meadowbrook Pk (BO) to 5/21 at Patuxent Branch Trail (SRm). A **Blue-winged Warbler** at RACRW 4/17 tied the early arrival date (SRm). **Prothonotary Warblers** always attract attention. One heard at infrequently birded Savage Pk on 4/14 was a new second earliest date (MWm). They were also reported (most photographed) on 4/22 at both HENPV (AAI) and CENPK (SRm), 5/6 LKELK (FSh), and 5/12 MPEA (FSh; JMo). **Tennessees** are more common in the fall, but this year they were seen at at least five locations from an early 4/26 HENPV (CSt) to 5/18 at MARPV (RHI). **Nashvilles** are not easy to spot, but they were reported from half a dozen sites including lightly birded High Ridge Pk (BSw). **Mourning**s were detected for less than a week: 5/11 Cavey La (RRf), 5/15 HENPV (TRY), and 5/16 MARPV (AVS), ph./recording. A **Common Yellowthroat** arrived at LKKIT 4/1 (JHf), establishing a new second earliest arrival date. Twenty-three was the high tallied at MPEA 5/4 (DSn, HPt). **Cape Mays** made a nice showing from 5/2 at Sea Shadow, E. Col. (ELa) to 5/17 at both Warfield's Pond Pk (BHi) and Brush Run, LKELK (JW). **Ceruleans** have been a declining breeding species in the county for decades, but, to some extent, our current knowledge is limited to areas where birders spend most of their time. The species was recorded at HENPV 4/28 (J/MHr) and MARPV 5/12 (AVS), but continued to be reported only at the latter site. One at LKELK 5/2 (EHs) was certainly a migrant. It would be easy to conclude that they are breeding in only one location in the county. Other sites at which they have nested historically (along the Middle Patuxent River and Patuxent River) are not visited frequently and, except to a trained ear, the similarity of their song to one of the **Northern Parula's** makes discrimination risky based on hearing alone. Perhaps the next breeding bird atlas will provide a more accurate picture. **American Redstarts** and **Magnolia Warblers**, normally among the most easily observed migrants, seemed in short supply; on the other hand, **Bay-breasted**s were a pleasant surprise. Always a choice migrant, reports came from at least eight sites from 5/3 MPEA (AVS-2) to 5/25 at Atholton Pk (EHs) with a high of three at LKELK 5/21 (AVS). **Blackpolls** often move through for more than a month. This year the first was sighted on 5/3 at Meadowbrook Pk (BO) and, as usual, movement continued into June. The peak appeared to be from 5/14 when 10 were counted at LKELK (HPt) to 5/21 when 15 were tallied at LKELK (MLC, SRm). Because a few **Pine Warblers** overwinter, it is difficult to pinpoint when migrants arrive, but six heard from the horse trailer parking area at Annapolis Rock 3/29 (AVS) certainly indicated multiple territorial males. **Yellow-rumped**s are often among the most numerous spring migrants; occasionally counts reach triple digits. The high this spring was ~100 on 4/15 at LKELK (AVS) and 4/18 LKELK (ALw), both likely undercounts. In addition to their usual haunts at MARPV and HENPV, **Yellow-throated Warblers** were also spotted at MPEA on 4/8 (JHr, ph.) and MTPLT 5/14 (SRm, MLC). A **Wilson's** on 4/18 at RACRW established a new early date (JHf)

(Records continued on page 7)

(Records continued from page 6)
[4/19/93 S. Atkinson].

American Tree Sparrows wasted no time returning to their northern breeding grounds with the last one seen at Fox Chase 3/4 (RHI). Migrant **Chipping Sparrows** began appearing with a singing bird at Montgomery Run 3/1 (NM). A major influx occurred 3/29-30 (CKc, J/MHr, MKw, JS). Reports of 10 to 20 were frequent. A **Clay-colored Sparrow** was one of the stars of the season. Not only was it just the second spring record, but its 4/3 arrival date and the Driver Rd location were identical to the 2017 bird that stayed almost three weeks (AVS). Unlike last year's bird, this one was detected for one day only. We can only speculate that it was likely the same bird. A count of 13 **Field Sparrows** on 3/14 was unusual for LKELK (ALw). **Vesper Sparrows** were almost missed with a single bird at ALRGL 3/31 (JHf, RCu+) the lone report. On 5/12, ALRGL produced high counts of 22 **Savannahs** and 14 **Grasshoppers** (JHf, RCu). **Lincoln's** were noted at nine sites, an excellent number for this retiring species, which is often hard to find in spring. They were reported from 3/1 at MPEA (ALw), the county's first March record, to 5/24 at MTPLT (BO). Some seldom-reported sites included Warfield's Pond Pk (BHi), Gwynn Acres Path (J/MHr), Zirn park property along Haviland Mill Rd (ALk, ph.), and two at Stone Hill Dr 5/14 (KLz, ph; i.d. BO). A count of 120+ **White-throated Sparrows** at MTPLT on 3/17 was the season's high (BO+). One was noted on 5/15 at Sewell's Orchard (CSt), which may have been the same loitering bird that was last noted 5/26 (BMy). Few **Dark-eyed Juncos** linger into May. This year the last one was at Meadowbrook Pk 5/10 (DYd). **Northern Cardinals** may be common year-round, but seldom are more than a dozen or two seen. On 5/3 at MPEA, 55 were conted (JHf).

With increasing frequency **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks**, **Blue Grosbeaks**, and **Indigo Buntings** are reported as "feeder" birds during spring migration. This year a Blue Grosbeak showed up at a Jessup feeder on 4/20 (R/RnPr, ph.), even earlier than last year,



Rose-beasted Grosbeak

by Joe Hanfman

establishing a new early arrival date [4/24/98 K. Schwarz]. A m. was still making an occasional visit in June (R/RnPr).

Every season produces surprises. Unexpected was the return of multiple **Dickeissels** to Underwood Rd. This year one m. and two f. were noted on 5/11 (AVS), approximately two weeks earlier than they were detected in 2017. A high of 11 m. was reached on 5/17 (AVS), but that number was not counted again. By 5/24, there was evidence of nest building (MLm). After consultation, the family again agreed to lease the field to the Howard County Bird Club for the breeding season. Generous contributions from members and friends covered the cost. To date, although adults have been observed carrying food, no fledged young have been seen.

May 4 produced a minimum count of 260 **Bobolinks** along Un-
(Records continued on page 8)

Experience with a Downy Wood Duck by Chuck Stirrat

On Monday, May 21st, 2018, I was walking east from the tunnel along the railroad tracks at Marriottsville, Patapsco Valley State Park, about 10:30 a.m. when I spotted movement ahead of me. To my surprise, it was a downy Wood Duck running along the tracks. Every time he tried to cross one of the rails, he fell short. I tried to catch up with him while trying to figure out how I might get him over the rails. Amazingly, he was very fast. I was walking as fast as I could, but he kept ahead of me running along the lower edge of a rail most of the time. Every few seconds he would lose his balance and drop into the stones. I stopped long enough to find a flat stick thinking I could possibly make a ramp. I realized that every so often there was a place where the rocks had been removed from between the cross-ties; at those points a small gap existed under the rails. The duckling ran right over several of these gaps. I finally ran around him so that he stopped. As I walked toward him, he started back the way he had come. As he approached one of the openings, I tossed the stick ahead of him hoping to slow him enough that he would drop between the ties and discover the exit. The first time he just kept running, but at the next gap I again tossed the stick; this time he dropped into the gap and scurried under the rail on the uphill side. He quickly ran into the foliage and disappeared.

Unfortunately, I'm not sure this was really a rescue as we were now 200 yards from where I first saw him, and I had seen neither an adult nor other ducklings. If, as I suspect, the nest had been on the uphill side, the female must have been successful in getting the rest of the brood across the tracks headed toward the river. I don't know how long the single duckling had been trapped, but a train had come through within the previous half hour. The rest of the brood had either crossed very recently or the lone duckling had been under a very long train.

Ed. Note: Wood Ducks are cavity nesters. The young are precocial and the whole brood (up to ~ a dozen) leave the nest within about a day of hatching. The female wastes little time in leading the downy ducklings to water which could be as much as a mile away. (*The Birds of North America: Wood Duck* – Hepp and Bellrose).

HOWARD COUNTY MAY COUNT RESULTS

BY KEVIN HEFFERNAN

Seventy-six birders participated in the 45th annual May count compiled by the Howard County Bird Club. The count was held on May 12, 2018. This was the 71st annual May Count in Maryland. The count day had light wind, no precipitation, and temperatures from the upper 50s to the upper 80s. The 134 total species tallied was the lowest in the last 30 years. The total number of birds (13,644) ranked 31st. These low totals were not due to lack of counters as the 76 participants was the second highest ever on the count. A total of 231 species have been seen over the 45 years, 76 every year while 21 have been seen only once. Hooded Warbler was missed for the first time this year. No species was seen for the first time this year.

Eight species had greater than or tied all-time high counts: Peregrine Falcon (1), Lesser Yellowlegs (25), Red-headed (3) and Pileated (55) Woodpeckers, Great-crested Flycatcher (129), Common Raven (9), Marsh Wren (1), and Dickcissel (2). An additional seven species had or tied 10-year high counts including: Glossy Ibis, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Blue-headed Vireo, Yellow-throated, Pine, Bay-breasted, and Prothonotary Warblers.

Two species had all-time low counts: Rock Pigeon (16) and Common Grackle (160). An additional 16 species had 10-year low counts including Mallard, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, American Crow, Tree and Barn Swallows, Carolina Chickadee, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, Blue-winged and Kentucky Warblers, Yellow-breasted Chat, Scarlet Tanager, Red-winged Blackbird, and Eastern Meadowlark.

Peregrine Falcon and Dickcissel were seen for only the third time, Hooded Merganser for the fifth, (four of the last seven years), Marsh Wren the sixth, and Glossy Ibis and Common Raven for the seventh time. Common Raven was first seen 11 years ago. We tallied 30 warbler species (about average). The numbers of warblers (1,225) ranked 29th out of 45.

A couple of notes about the count should be discussed. First, four of the participants came from eBird reports from birders that happened to be birding in Howard County on count day. They are marked in the participants list. Second, Russ Ruffing recorded "Night Flight Calls" (NFC) in the early morning hours on count day. There was much discussion regarding whether and how to include these records in the count totals. Due to the fact that the number of miles and hours birding does not apply and to the difficulty in determining the number of birds calling using this technique, it was decided not to include these records in the count totals for now, but to keep the records until a determination about how to handle them long-term has been established. The MOS does not have a policy on this yet. It will be an agenda item at the September MOS board meeting.

A compilation spreadsheet of the May Count data from 1974 through this year can be found on the Howard County Bird Club website.

Many thanks to our compiler, Chuck Stirrat, and the Area Coordinators: Bill Hill, Brian Moyer, Chuck Stirrat, Mike McClure, Karen Heffernan, Janet Lydon and John McKitterick. Finally, I want to give a special thanks to Linda and Al Hunt for hosting 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: Karan Blum, Marilyn Brinkley, Mary Lou Clark, Lisa Colangelo, Dennis Coskren, Keith Costley (eBird), Jeff Culler, Ralph Cullison, David Cummings, Sue Earp, Wes Earp, Rose Eiker, Garcia-Ojeda, Pablo (eBird), Ralph Geuder, Eric Goldman, Joe Hanfman, John Harris, Meg Harris, Karen Heffernan, Kevin Heffernan, Bill Hill, Gayle Hill, Ed Heustis, Steve Jones (eBird), Chris Kelly, Joyce Kelly, Mike Kerwin, Clayton Koonce, Shashi Lengade, Mike Leumas, Allen Lewis, Anne Looker, Felicia Lovelett, Rosa Lubitz, Brigitte Lund, Janet Lydon, Grazina McClure, Mike McClure, Kimberly McDowell, John McKitterick, Jennie McNichol, Woody Merkle, Barry Miller, Brian Moyer (Area 2 coordinator), Sue Muller, Sue Neri, Ben Pagac, Howard Patterson, Renee Peters, Richard Peters, Patricia Pitts, Mary Prowell, Matt Rogosky, Russ Ruffing, David Sandler, Anna Schrad, Kurt Schwarz, Fred Shaffer (eBird), Jim Smith, Sharon Smith, Jo Solem, Michelle Stewart, Chuck Stirrat, Tom Strikwerda, Tim Thompson, Robin Todd, Lisa Troutman, Anthony VanSchoor, Ginny Walker, Mark Wallace, Joshua Ward, Frank (Tex) Wilkins, Jim Wilkinson, Paul Woodford, Michele Wright, and Paul Zucker.

(Records continued from page 7)

derwood Rd (AVS), certainly one of the highest county totals ever. The last one was seen there on 5/28 (FSh). This, once again, crushed our hopes for breeding, at least at this site. **Rusty Blackbirds** did not set late records, but did stay into late April: 4/7 Mt. Hebron (JCu-2), 4/17 RACRW (KS-8), 4/20 LKKIT (BO, CKc-1), and 4/21 Meadowbrook Pk (BO-10).

Thanks to Joe Hanfman and Nancy Magnusson for editing and to Russ Ruffing for verifying new records.

Abbreviations: f. – female, m. – male, NFC – Night Flight Call equipment, ph. – photograph, PRSP – Patuxent River State Park, PVSP – Patapsco Valley State Park

Observers: Anal – Annette Allor, TCy – Tim Carney, MLC – Mary Lou Clark, WCr – Wendy Crowe, JCu – Jeff Culler, RCu – Ralph Cullison, III, DCM – David Cummings, WE – Wes Earp, CFF – Cheryl Farfaras, TFe – Tom Feild, TFy – Tony Frye, JHf – Joe Hanfman, JHr – John Harris, MHR – Meg Harris, KHf – Kevin Heffernan, KnHf – Karen Heffernan, BHi – Bill Hill, RHI – Russell Hillsley, EHs – Ed Huestis, MKw – Mike Kerwin, CKc – Clayton Koonce, ELa – Ellen Lathrop, MLm – Mike Lathroum, ALw – Allen Lewis, KLz – Kathy Litzinger, ALk – Anne Looker, FLv – Felicia Lovelett, NM – Nancy Magnusson, JMCK – John McKitterick, HMz – Helen Metzman, JMo – Jim Moore, BMy – Brian Moyer, SMu – Sue Muller, DNg – Diane Nagengast, SN – Sue Neri, LOI – Leslie Olson, BO – Bonnie Ott, HPT – Howard Patterson, RnPr – Renee Peters, RPr – Richard Peters, JRn – Janet Randle, TRy – Tim Ray, DRn – Derek Richardson, MRg – Matt Rogosky, SRm – Sarah Romero, MRs – Mark Rositol, RRF – Russ Ruffing, DSu – David Sandler, KS – Kurt Schwarz, FSh – Fred Shaffer, CSh – Chuck Sharp, JSh – Jay Sheppard, BSm – Bill Small, JS – Jo Solem, RS – Robert Solem, CSt – Chuck Stirrat, BSw – Byron Swift, DTr – Debbie Taylor, LTr – Lou Taylor, KTF – Kate Tufts, AVS – Anthony VanSchoor, MW – Mark Wallace, JWd – Josh Ward, KWn – Kelsey Wellons, JW – Jim Wilkinson, MWm – Matt Williams, SWm – Silvester Williams, DYd – Daryl Yoder.

HOWARD COUNTY MAY COUNT RESULTS - MAY 12, 2018 WITHOUT NIGHT FLIGHT CALL DATA

Canada Goose	625
Wood Duck	43
Mallard	55
Hooded Merganser	4
Rock Pigeon	16
Mourning Dove	314
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	11
Black-billed Cuckoo	2
Common Nighthawk	2
Chimney Swift	108
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	15
American Coot	1
Killdeer	19
Least Sandpiper	3
Spotted Sandpiper	17
Solitary Sandpiper	23
Lesser Yellowlegs	25
Double-crested Cormorant	38
Great Blue Heron	34
Green Heron	33
Glossy Ibis	1
Black Vulture	103
Turkey Vulture	184
Osprey	6
Bald Eagle [ad/im/unk]	3
Cooper's Hawk	10
Red-shouldered Hawk	64
Broad-winged Hawk	4
Red-tailed Hawk	20
Eastern Screech-Owl	2
Barred Owl	8
Belted Kingfisher	14
Red-headed Woodpecker	3
Red-bellied Woodpecker	268
Downy Woodpecker	96
Hairy Woodpecker	23
Northern Flicker	48
Pileated Woodpecker	55
Peregrine Falcon	1
Eastern Wood-Pewee	172
Acadian Flycatcher	129
Alder Flycatcher	
Willow Flycatcher	3
Least Flycatcher	2
Eastern Phoebe	54
Great Crested Flycatcher	129

Eastern Kingbird	97
White-eyed Vireo	36
Yellow-throated Vireo	20
Blue-headed Vireo	6
Warbling Vireo	26
Red-eyed Vireo	355
Blue Jay	395
American Crow	315
Fish Crow	82
<i>crow species</i>	144
Common Raven	9
Horned Lark	17
Purple Martin	52
Tree Swallow	123
N. Rough-winged Swallow	30
Cliff Swallow	61
Barn Swallow	244
Carolina Chickadee	226
Tufted Titmouse	378
White-breasted Nuthatch	103
House Wren	126
Marsh Wren	1
Carolina Wren	299
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	211
Eastern Bluebird	203
Veery	13
Gray-cheeked Thrush	1
Swainson's Thrush	16
Wood Thrush	216
American Robin	474
Gray Catbird	505
Brown Thrasher	29
Northern Mockingbird	143
European Starling	524
Cedar Waxwing	359
House Sparrow	196
House Finch	182
American Goldfinch	309
Eastern Towhee	164
Chipping Sparrow	297
Field Sparrow	58
Savannah Sparrow	27
Grasshopper Sparrow	28
Song Sparrow	174
Swamp Sparrow	2
White-throated Sparrow	26

White-crowned Sparrow	2
Yellow-breasted Chat	8
Bobolink	74
Eastern Meadowlark	9
Orchard Oriole	56
Baltimore Oriole	143
Red-winged Blackbird	545
Brown-headed Cowbird	157
Common Grackle	160
Ovenbird	176
Worm-eating Warbler	11
Louisiana Waterthrush	53
Northern Waterthrush	7
Blue-winged Warbler	1
Black-&-white Warbler	29
Prothonotary Warbler	3
Tennessee Warbler	2
Nashville Warbler	1
Kentucky Warbler	3
Common Yellowthroat	318
American Redstart	93
Cape May Warbler	2
Cerulean Warbler	1
Northern Parula	149
Magnolia Warbler	29
Bay-breasted Warbler	9
Blackburnian Warbler	1
Yellow Warbler	77
Chestnut-sided Warbler	11
Blackpoll Warbler	96
Black-throated Blue Warbler	35
Pine Warbler	9
Yel.-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler	45
Yellow-throated Warbler	2
Prairie Warbler	22
Black-throated Green Warbler	9
Canada Warbler	21
Wilson's Warbler	2
Scarlet Tanager	105
Northern Cardinal	811
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	7
Blue Grosbeak	11
Indigo Bunting	245
Dickcissel	2
Area Total Birds:	13,644
Area Total Species:	134

Write-in species

Night Flight Call data submitted but not included in this table



HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB

Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society

P. O. BOX 1323

COLUMBIA MD 21044-1323

September/October 2018 - Inside This Issue

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Field Trips	Seed Sale
Spring Bird Records	Wood Duck Experience
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TWENTY-FIFTH ANNUAL FALL COUNT

BY MIKE MCCLURE

Twenty Fifth Annual Fall Count - The Howard County Bird Club's annual Fall Count, scheduled each year on the third Saturday of September, will be on September 15th, 2018. 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 will be 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) TBD; Area 3) Karen & Kevin Heffernan 410-857-1789; Area 4) Mike McClure 410-531-2780; Area 5) Kurt Schwarz 410-461-1643; Area 6) TBD2; and Area 7) Allen

Lewis 787-590-4501. You may call an area or county coordinator to volunteer, or check at the September meeting. Mary Lou Clark will host the tally rally at 5153 Morningside Lane, Columbia, MD 21043. The potluck dinner will be served at approximately 7:00 pm, r.s.v.p with food category at 410-465-4061 by Sept. 14th, to reserve space and if necessary obtain directions.

