



# The Goldfinch

Newsletter of the Howard County Bird Club  
 A Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society  
[www.howardbirds.website](http://www.howardbirds.website)



## CLUB MEETINGS - BY SUE MULLER

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Thursday, March 12, 2020 “California Dreaming,” by Kurt Schwarz. Kurt will relate his August 2015 trip to California, which ranged all over central California from Mono Lake to Monterey via Yosemite. Lots of birds, plus a few mammals and insects. Kurt is a past president of the HCBC and is conservation chair for the Maryland Ornithological Society and the HCBC.

Thursday, April 9, 2020 “Birding on the Snake River Plain,” by Wes and Sue Earp. A geologic hot spot, the slow creep of plate tectonics, and a prehistoric flood have created a beautiful and unique landscape of arid prairie, barren lava flows, deep river gorges, waterfalls, and some of the world’s largest springs. This is the home of the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area, the Peregrine Fund, Craters of the Moon National Monument, Yellowstone National Park, and numerous other parks and wildlife management areas. Wes and Sue will recount their attempts to find and watch birds in this fascinating region. They have spent many years following raptor migration at sites in the East and Midwest. Wes is a past president of the HCBC. Sue’s talents as a photographer are well-known.

### SEDFE WREN



by Bonnie Ott

Sedge Wrens are not seen every year in Howard County. Bonnie Ott found one at Mount Pleasant on 10/10/2019 and assisted several other birders in locating it.

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

## AUTUMN BIRD RECORDS: AUGUST 1 – NOVEMBER 30, 2019

BY JOANNE SOLEM

Autumn always brings surprises. This year it was Cackling Geese in jaw-dropping numbers and two Rufous Hummingbirds at the same location! Also meriting special mention were Mississippi Kite, Upland Sandpiper, Sedge Wren, Golden-winged Warbler, and Summer Tanager.

On 11/17, at least five **Cackling Geese** appeared at a pond on S. Trotter Rd (WE). Over the following 10 days, careful observations documented a steady rise in Cackler numbers finally topping out at an astonishing **52** on 11/27 (JHf)—the all-time high count for the state of Maryland! Interestingly, 30 were reported at a Virginia site on 12/25/19. Since fewer than 15 of Howard County’s high count were seen locally subsequent to late Nov, perhaps most of them continued on their southward journey.

(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](mailto:auk1844@gmail.com). HCBC members receive priority on trips that are limited by number of participants. No pets.

## **CENTENNIAL PARK**

March 1, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours. *Meet at west end parking lot off Centennial Lane.* Easy walking around the lake on paved path. Waterfowl expected, early migrant passerines possible. Facilities available.

Leaders - Richard and Renee Peters, [Richard@rrrrpeters.org](mailto:Richard@rrrrpeters.org)

## **CENTENNIAL PARK**

March 8, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours. Daylight Saving Time starts (set clocks ahead). *Meet at west end parking lot off Centennial Lane.* Easy walking around the lake on paved path. Waterfowl expected, early migrant passerines possible. Facilities available.

Leader - Sarah Romero, [Smyrna\\_38@yahoo.com](mailto:Smyrna_38@yahoo.com), 586-337-3860

## **CENTENNIAL PARK**

March 15, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours. *Meet at west end parking lot off Centennial Lane.* Easy walking around the lake on paved path. Waterfowl expected, woodland trails for passerines. Facilities available.

Leader - Mary Lou Clark, [doctorfx\\_99@yahoo.com](mailto:doctorfx_99@yahoo.com)

## **CENTENNIAL PARK**

March 22, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours. *Meet at west end parking lot off Centennial Lane.* Easy walking around the lake on paved path. Waterfowl expected, woodland trails for passerines. Facilities available.

Leaders - [David Sandler, detour65@gmail.com](mailto:David Sandler, detour65@gmail.com)

## **CENTENNIAL PARK**

March 29, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours. *Meet at west end parking lot off Centennial Lane.* Easy walking around the lake on paved path. Waterfowl expected, woodland trails for passerines. Facilities available.

Leaders - Karen and Kevin Heffernan, 410-418-8731 or [KJHeff122@gmail.com](mailto:KJHeff122@gmail.com).

## **ALPHA RIDGE LANDFILL**

April 4, Saturday, half day. *Reservations and carpooling required.* Moderate walking over hills and fields of the landfill. Vesper Sparrow and other field birds possible. Meadowlarks, kestrels, and other open country birds expected. Rarities possible. Facilities at Alpha Ridge Park.

Contact Joe Hanfman, [auk1844@gmail.com](mailto:auk1844@gmail.com), 410-772-8424.

## **SHARPS AT WATERFORD FARM**

April 5, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. (half day). *Meet at farm parking area, through barns on right. Rte. 97 S. to right on Jennings Chapel Rd., one 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](mailto:wesandsue@gmail.com), 410-531-3197

## **MT. PLEASANT FARM - HOWARD COUNTY CONSERVANCY**

April 25, 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. Treelines, hedgerows, and streams provide opportunity for non-meadow species. Great opportunity for flyovers. Facilities available.

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

## **SPRING WILDFLOWER WALK AT CYPRESSMEDE PARK**


Late April or Early May. Check the HCBC website in late April for date and time. Bob and Jo Solem will lead the trip.

## **MAY COUNT**


May 9, Saturday. Details in May/June 2020 *Goldfinch*.

## **PATAPSCO SCRUBLAND**

May 23, 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](mailto:c5nest@gmail.com)

 = Reservations required

 = Wheelchair accessible

 = Great for beginning birders

## **BEYOND BIRDING BASICS**

Beyond Birding Basics class will be taught at Mt. Pleasant on Saturday, April 18, 2020, 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., combining classroom presentations with a limited field experience near the building. It is free. The class is sponsored by the Howard County Bird Club and the Howard County Conservancy (HCC). It is intended for intermediate birders who are interested in learning about bird calls and songs. There will also be material about helpful references and apps, as well as the role of photos in identification. Birding tips from experienced birders are a bonus. Presenters are John Harris, Kevin Heffernan, Allen Lewis, and Woody Merkle.

Register on the HCC website: <https://www.howardnature.org/event/beyond-birding-basics-bird-sounds-technology-and-tips-free/>

The [Birding Basics](#) class was held at Mt. Pleasant on March 9, 2019. See the May/June 2019 issue of *The Goldfinch* for a summary.

Patient individuals with good optics/cameras can aid the Bird Banding Laboratory (BBL). Three leg-banded **Canada Geese** were photographed at Centennial Park (CENPK) on 8/18 (KTn). All three were banded on 6/27/19, a male and a female near Pine Orchard in Howard County, and a male that was too young to fly when banded near Wolfsville, Frederick County.

Most maximum waterfowl numbers were modest: **Wood Duck** 21, Brokenland Pkwy/US 29, 10/20 (JHf); **Northern Shoveler** 10, Race Road Wetlands 11/13 (MLC, SRm); **Gadwall** 1, Lake Kittamaquidi (LKKIT) 10/25 (CKc); **American Wigeon** 2, CENPK 11/13 (KTn); and **Green-winged Teal** 2, LKKIT 9/27 (CKc). The seemingly healthy male **Redhead** that summered at a pond on Nichols Dr was still present in mid-Nov during fall migration (MW). The first three **Buffleheads** of the season at CENPK 11/5 (DSn) were the vanguard. The following day the species was reported from five locations ranging in numbers from one at Waverly Pd (JCu) and one at Jackson Pd (CKc) to a flock of 47 that rested briefly at CENPK (HPt). Although a **Ruddy Duck** put in an appearance on 10/8 at CENPK (J/MHr), numbers did not rise substantially until the end of the period. A **Pied-billed Grebe** at LKKIT 8/22 was a nice arrival date (CKc).

A flock of 150 **Rock Pigeons** 8/17 continued at a Gateway Overlook parking lot (CKc). (On 1/15/19, 200 had been reported at the same location feeding on spread seed (ESu)—apparently the bounty continued through the summer.) A begging juvenile **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** 9/15 was a late surprise at Long Corner Rd (MPw). A **Black-billed Cuckoo** along the Patuxent Branch Trail 10/7 (SRm) was the third latest record. Although no major **Common Nighthawk** flights were noted, reports were numerous beginning 8/27 at River Rd, Sykesville (FLv-1) and Sarasota Ct (KTn-6) to 9/21 over Waverly Woods (LGg-6) and Blandair (AVS-4). Five hundred **Chimney Swifts** were counted in six hours at the Mt. Pleasant (MTPLT) SkyWatch (SW) on 8/27 (BO, ACm).

Hummingbirds were major news. The last **Ruby-throated** of the season was photographed on 10/13 at Hobbs Rd (BHi). On the same date, a hummer at Thornbrook Rd (JCu) was less definitive. The eBird reviewer noted that, although it was probably a Ruby-throated, the photo did not rule out a more unusual western species. On 11/3, a hummingbird turned up at a feeder south of Ellicott City. Photos established that it was a male **Rufous**, a visitor from the West and the county's third definite record. On 11/7, two hummers were seen at the same location (homeowner and ACm). Photos sent to the BBL (KS) were used to determine that a female had joined the male (BPj). By 11/11, when a scheduled banding took place (BPj, DHm), only the male remained. Likely the male of this aggressive species had driven off the female. The male has continued into February 2020 so the location and homeowners' names are not cited. If the hummingbird is still present after publication of this issue, interested birders may contact Mary Lou Clark at docfrx\_99@yahoo.com for an appointment and guidance.

**American Coots** were scarce with the first (and one of the few) at LKKIT 10/9 (CKc, ph.). Shorebird migration was thin. Not only was Triadelphia Reservoir still closed (which severely limited access to good shorebird habitat), but a drought from mid-August to early October quickly turned

any available mudflats into hardpan. An **Upland Sandpiper** at Cavey Lane 9/8 (RRf-NFC [Night Flight Call]) was one of the season's special birds, the first of this species detected in the county since 2010! One **Pectoral Sandpiper** was picked out at a temporary pond near MD 32/Linden Church Rd 8/17 (RRf), with another at Tarbay Pond 9/27 (DCm). An **American Woodcock** near the Trotter Rd parking lot entrance to the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area (MPEA) 11/15 was a pleasant surprise (JHr).

A flock of 55 **Bonaparte's Gulls**, the season's high, swirled briefly over LKKIT 11/12 before moving on (CKc). Strangely, there were no terns reported this season. The first three **Common Loons** flew over MTPLT 10/1 (MKw). A **Great Blue Heron** was photographed at the Stanford Blvd Pd 10/5 with a good-sized Northern Snakehead, an invasive fish, in its bill (CKc). A **Green Heron** hung around until 10/21 at LKKIT (CKc; KS). A late **Black-crowned Night-Heron** was recorded over Cavey La 11/4 (RRf-NFC). **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** turned up at two unexpected locations: Tarbay Pd 8/3 (ALw-1) and a Montgomery Run stormwater management pond 9/7 (RSm-1).



Yellow-crowned Night-Heron at Tarbay Pond

by Anthony VanSchoor

**Osprey** at Brighton Dam 11/11 (JSh-1) and at US 29/Duckett Reservoir 11/12 (DSn-2) moved at the end of normal migration. A **Northern Harrier** over Martin Rd, W. Col. 8/10 (JHf) was a second earliest fall arrival date. The **Bald Eagle** pair was at the Folly Quarter Rd nest 11/19 (JHf). A **Mississippi Kite**, one of the season's notable birds, was photographed over Cyprus Cedar La 8/31 (BO). **Broad-winged Hawk** migration began 8/31 at the MTPLT-SW (MKw, ASm-2) and lasted until 10/7 MTPLT (MKw-1). A nice peak occurred on 9/16: MTPLT 450 (MKw), Blandair 175 (AVS), Turf Valley Country Club ~100 (KTn), and CENPK 4 (KTn). The bonanza, however, was on 9/18: Crest Lawn Memorial Gardens 66 (JCu), LKELK 8 (SRm), Wynfield Dr 86+ (RCu), MTPLT 20 in the a.m. (MKw), and 2,500 at the SW in a six-hour period from noon on (BO, ACm). The three regularly breeding owls were widely noted. The most interesting report came from Norris La off Landing Rd where, at dusk on 9/26, two **Eastern Screech-Owls**, two **Great Horned Owls**, and one **Barred Owl** were all heard within a few minutes (DZk).

**Red-headed Woodpeckers** were reported from at least five sites. A small movement of 12 **Northern Flickers** was caught at Blandair 11/3 (AVS). **Merlins** were well-reported, especially from MTPLT where one or two were present from 9/17



(MKw) into Nov. **Peregrine Falcons**, which are most often observed in Oct, were detected twice in Sept: 9/18 LKELK (SRm); 9/28 Blandair (MLC, SRm) and once in Oct: 10/5 Cavey La (RRf, SRm).

**Olive-sided Flycatcher** sightings were concentrated with the first at Crest Lawn Mem. Gardens 9/15 (JCu). On the following day, three were photographed at Blandair (AVS); the last one was seen there 9/21 (AVS). **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers** are an identification challenge with more sightings rejected than accepted. On 9/1, one was reported from MTPLT (JHf, ph.) as well as one at Cavey La (RRf). On 9/8, birds were noted at Cavey La (RRf-1) and at Blandair (AVS-2, ph.). **Least Flycatchers** were spotted at at least five sites from 9/5 at Cavey La (RRf) to 9/23 at Gateway (JW).



Yellow-bellied Flycatcher at Blandair

by Anthony VanSchoor

As usual, **Blue-headed Vireos** could be found for more than a month with the last two dribbling into Nov at Burleigh Manor 11/4 (MKw) and at LKELK 11/7 (J/MHr). Based on photographs submitted to eBird, a substantial number of **Philadelphia Vireos** are misidentified. Among the correct reports were one at Meadowbrook Pk 10/5 (BO, ph.) which continued to 10/6 (AWb, ph.). The high was three at Cavey La 9/25 (RRf, SRm, ph.).

A flock of 125 **Fish Crows** was calling over Martin Rd, W. Co. 9/28 (JHf). **Common Ravens** were reported from much of the county. The high count was a group of five over Cavey La 11/20 (RRf). (A nest on the Baltimore Co side of the Woodstock/Old Court Rd bridge over the Patapsco River (KCl; RRf) the last two years is certainly the source of many Howard County birds.) The last **Tree Swallow** was sighted over CENPK 11/3 on a Howard Co Bird Club (HCBC) field trip (R/RyPr; JHr+). Courtship feeding between a pair of **Tufted Titmice** was observed at LKELK 11/14 (MLC, SRm). Boreal species numbers were forecast to be low this winter so it was no surprise that **Red-breasted Nuthatch** reports were few: Daniels, Patapsco Valley State Park (PVSP) 10/19 (FSh-1), Morningside La 11/7 (MLC-1), and the Patuxent Branch Trail 11/16 (EBt-2). A **Sedge Wren** at MTPLT 10/10 was one of the season's choice species (BO, SRm). **Marsh Wrens** were spotted at Schooley Mill Park 10/19 (JW) and at Howard County Community College 10/21 (KS, ph.).

Thrush migration was unremarkable with a few exceptions. The Cavey La NFC station picked up 17 **Swainson's Thrushes** 9/21 (RRf) as well as a **Gray-cheeked Thrush** on 10/19 that set a new late date [10/18/13 N. Magnusson]. Large flocks of **American Robins** were noted at MTPLT 11/1 (MKw-413) and at Blandair 11/3 (AVS-250) and 11/19 (JW~300). **Gray Catbirds** found excellent habitat at Blandair. Seventy (one of the highest one person county counts ever) were tallied in two hours and 1.5 miles on 9/22 before the observer stopped counting (JHf). **Cedar Waxwing** flocks of up to 100 are expected annually. Ample fruit at CENPK produced a count of 180 on a HCBC field trip 11/17 (RPr+).

Fifty **House Finches** were feeding on a Meadowbrook Pk ball-field 10/7 (MLC, SRm). A few **Purple Finches** appeared: Morningside La on 10/27 (MLC-1) and Blandair 11/19 (JW-1). The 85 **American Goldfinches** at MTPLT on 8/30 (JHf) were aptly described as "a modest count for this location and time." On 10/8 at Dorsey Hall, 50+ dined on hulled sunflower seeds (AAI).

Sparrow migration was mediocre. No **American Tree Sparrows** were reported. Flocks of **Chipping Sparrows** were present at Symphony Woods 10/30 (CKc-25), at Cavey La 11/2 (RRf-29), and at Elkhorn Garden Plots 11/6 (JW-28). A **Vesper** was picked out at MTPLT 11/6 (HPt, ph.). The last **Grasshopper** was notched at MTPLT 10/28 (HPt). A flock of 21 **Fox Sparrows** at Annapolis Rock 11/16 (AVS) was eye-catching. This county consistently produces numerous reports of autumn **Lincoln's**, sometimes in the high single digits in one location. Not this year. Almost all sightings were lone birds. A count of 150 **White-throated Sparrows** at MTPLT 11/18 (MKw) marked a major movement. A **Dark-eyed Junco** at Manahan Dr stayed through the summer and well into Oct, but it was not a healthy bird. Its flight was described as "slow and with the wings and tail spread out as if it was constantly landing" (HSt).



White-crowned Sparrow at Mount Pleasant

by Richard Orr

**Bobolink** reports were few and numbers low. Six **Eastern Meadowlarks** were present at W. Friendship Pk 11/9 (LCg). Twenty **Rusty Blackbirds** were tallied at Waterford Farm 11/9 (WE+); two were spotted at CENPK 11/15 (KHf). By Nov, birders were reporting blackbird flocks in the hundreds; 800 **Common Grackles** over Dunloggin Ct 11/25 (KS) was a species total that would continue to increase in winter.



Bobolink, Sharps at Waterford Farm

by Richard Orr

By mid-August, migrant warblers began drifting through. A **Northern Waterthrush** at LKKIT 10/1 (**CKc**) accommodately hung around until 10/9 (**CKc**), the second latest record. A **Golden-winged Warbler** at MPEA 9/8 (**JHf**) was one of the season's notable species. A hybrid **Brewster's Warbler** (at least 18 records) was in the company of two **Blue-wingeds** at



Brewster's Warbler at Blandair, 9-2-2019

by Anthony VanSchoor

Blandair 9/2 (**AVS**). Two of the latter species at Cedar Lane Pk 9/3 (**CKc**) were a new species for that site. Nine **Black-and-whites** along the Middle Patuxent River between Old Columbia Rd and Murray Hill Rd 9/21 (**JMcK**) were nice. Two **Prothonotary Warblers** near the Centennial La bridge at CENPK 8/6 were early and unusual at that location (**MLC, SRm, ph.**). As usual, **Tennessees** slipped through for many weeks. Nine (eight in one tree) at Cavey La 9/25 (**RRf**) were unusual; while one at LKKIT 11/5 (**KTn, ph.**) was just the third Nov record. **Orange-crowns** are one of the least reported warblers and one of the latest to migrate. Sightings included Blandair 10/27 and 11/5 (**AVS, ph.**), Elkhorn Garden Plots 11/7-8 (**JW, ph.**), and MTPLT 11/10 (**HPt, ph.**). **Connecticut** reports included Cavey La 9/8 (**RRf**), Blandair 9/21 (**AVS**), Western Regional Pk 9/27 (**BO**), and MTPLT 9/28 (**BO, ABr**). A **Mourning** was noted at Blandair 9/21 (**AVS**). A dozen **Magnolias** at Blandair 9/7 (**AVS**) marked the peak for that species. The last two **Blackpolls** showed up at MTPLT 10/19 (**BO, JHr+**). A male **Black-throated Blue** at CENPK 11/5 was the third latest record (**DSn, ph.**). **Palms** can be one of the most common migrant warblers. Twenty-two was the modest high at MTPLT 10/10 (**BO**). A few **Pines** may linger into Nov and sometimes a few winter over. One appeared at a suet feeder in Hammond Village on 11/13. Visits continued

into winter (**KO'S**). One wandered through Mt. Hebron 11/20 (**JCu**). A **Yellow-throated**, an infrequently detected species outside the breeding season, was picked out at W. Friendship Pk 8/27 (**BO, ACm**). A late **Black-throated Green** at Mt. Hebron 11/4 (**JCu, ph.**) was the fourth Nov record. **Wilson's** are always scarce. The earliest was at MPEA 9/10 (**HPt**), while the last individuals were at Cattail Creek (**BMy**) and at Blandair (**AVS**) on 9/21.

**Summer Tanagers** were one of the featured species this season, surprisingly turning up at three locations: a male at a Fulton birdbath 8/27 (**MSp, ph.**), one at Bushy Park Rd 9/19 (**PPn, ph.**), and a late female at Norris La 10/3 (**DZk, ph.**).



Summer Tanager

by Pam Parna

In a circuit of the lake, 33 **Northern Cardinals** were tallied at CENPK on 9/6 (**SDv**). **Dickcissels** continued at Underwood Rd through 8/18 with a high of three on 8/8 (**MKw**). Unfortunately, no juveniles were observed this year. A single **Dickcissel** at Cavey La was heard on 9/21 (**RRf-NFC**).

Many thanks to Joe Hanfman, Howard Patterson, and Russ Ruffing for proofreading and improving the text and verifying records.

**Abbreviations:** BBL – Bird Banding Laboratory, CENPK – Centennial Park, HCBC – Howard County Bird Club, LKKIT – Lake Kitamaquandi, MPEA – Middle Patuxent Environmental Area, MTPLT – Mt. Pleasant, NFC – Night Flight Call equipment, ph. – photograph, SW – SkyWatch at Mt. Pleasant

**Observers:** AAI – Annette Allor, EBT – Ellen Billiter, ABr – Ashley Bradford, MLC – Mary Lou Clark, LCg – Lisa Colangelo, ACm – Aaron Coolman, KCl – Keith Costley, JCu – Jeff Culler, RCu – Ralph Cullison III, DCm – David Cummings, SDv – Stephen Davies, WE – Wes Earp, LGg – Lynn Gregg, JHf – Joe Hanfman, JHr – John Harris, MHR – Meg Harris, KHf – Kevin Heffernan, BHi – Bill Hill, DHm – David Holmes, MKw – Mike Kerwin, CKc – Clayton Koonce, ALw – Allen Lewis, FLv – Felicia Lovelett, JMcK – John McKitterick, BMy – Brian Moyer, KO'S – Karen O'Steen, BO – Bonnie Ott, HPt – Howard Patterson, PPn – Pam Parna, BPj – Bruce Peterjohn, RPr – Richard Peters, RyPr – Ryan Peters, MPw – Mary Prowell, SRm – Sarah Romero, RRf – Russ Ruffing, RSm – Ryan Salsman, DSn – David Sandler, KS – Kurt Schwarz, FSh – Fred Shaffer, JSh – Jay Sheppard, ASm – Andy Smith, HSt – Hank Stanton, MSp – Mike Stepanek, ESu – Eva Sunell, KTn – Kristin Trouton, AVS – Anthony VanSchoor, MW – Mark Wallace, AWb – Alex Wiebe, JW – Jim Wilkinson, DZk – Dave Ziolkowski.



# 2019 HOWARD COUNTY BUTTERFLY YEAR

BY KEVIN HEFFERNAN AND LINDA HUNT

With the conclusion of the original five-year Howard County Butterfly Survey in 2018, and the subsequent decision to continue the survey to gather long term trends, there was a question regarding how many people would continue to actively monitor butterflies and report their findings. That question was answered resoundingly. The 62 contributors to the 2019 survey were the most in the six years that the survey has been conducted. A total of 26,258 individual butterflies (also a record) of 72 species (2nd highest) were reported. We feel that this survey is extremely important and we thank each and every one of you for continuing to support it.

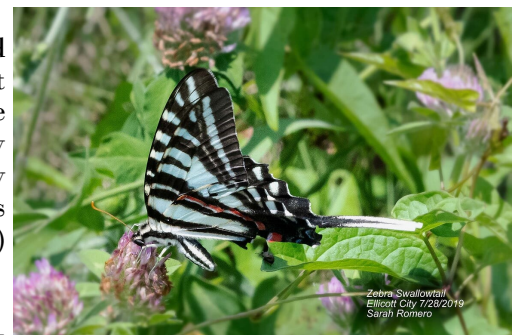
2014-2019 Howard County Butterfly Totals							
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Totals
Total number of species	68	69	74	70	71	72	80
Total number of people	20	45	56	44	56	62	113
Total number of butterflies	10,360	17,570	21,622	25,053	25,245	26,258	126,108
Total number of minutes	19,970	19,437	35,924	50,196	55,787	49,242	230,556
Total number of surveys	372	696	715	870	958	748	4,359
Total number of sites	43	79	79	77	98	121	

**Early Season:** The 2019 season started very early. On February 4th, Kathy Litzinger saw the first butterfly of the year, a Mourning Cloak, in one of Howard County's best butterfly hotspots, her backyard. Dave Ziolkowski saw an incredible 35 Eastern Commas and five Question Marks on March 14th attracted to the sap of two walnut trees that he had cut down. All three of these species overwinter as adults and can be seen on warm winter days. On March 24th, Mary Lou Clark found the first of the 5968 (new high count) Cabbage Whites seen in 2019. Grazina McClure found the first azure on March 31st in her yard. White M Hairstreaks are hard to find in Howard County anytime during the year, but the spring brood is particularly difficult to find. Incredibly, Sharon Smith found one in her yard on April 3rd. It was one of only two found during the year. The first Juniper Hairstreak was found by Annette Allor on April 7th at Mt. Pleasant. This was one of the species that was found at new locations, one of the goals of the survey, this year. They were reported at Centennial Park (Heffernans), Patapsco Valley State Park off of Landing Rd (Litzinger and Heffernans), and Alpha Ridge Park (Merkle). There were three FOY sightings on April 9th, Juvenal's Duskywing (Gateway, Linda Hunt), Falcate Orangetip (Western Regional, Bill Hill), and E. Tiger Swallowtail (Schooley Mill Park, John Harris). After missing it in 2018, the Eastern Pine Elfin reported by Jim Wilkinson nectaring on pussytoes at Trinity Cemetery on April 22nd was a welcome find.



Eastern Pine Elphin by Kevin Heffernan

**Peak Years:** Of the 72 species reported in 2019, 21 had peak years and eight of those more than doubled their previous peak. Anyone who spent any time in the field last summer knew that the E. Tiger Swallowtails were everywhere. Woody Merkle found 90 in a field at Mt. Pleasant on July 16th only to be exceeded by Linda Hunt's 125 at the Westside Community Garden on July 29th. During the previous peak year, 2016, contributors reported 1508. In 2019, 3234 were found. Amazing! Red Admirals (205/93) and Eastern Commas (132/63) also more than doubled their previous peak.



Zebra Swallowtail by Sarah Romero

**Southern Migrants:** There seems to be a growing trend of southern migrants being more common in our area in recent years. American Snout was very difficult to find in the early years of the survey with one, zero, eight, and one found in 2014 through 2017. Then, in 2018, with the discovery of a number of Hackberry trees at Mt. Pleasant, 30 were reported followed by an

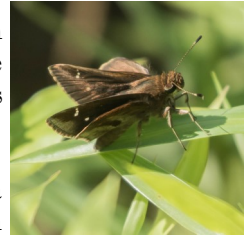
(Continued on page 7)



Giant Swallowtail by Annette Allor

incredible 65 in 2019. They were common throughout the area this year. There were a total of seven Giant Swallowtails (peak year of three) seen in the first five years of the survey. This year 12 were reported. The 474 Fiery Skippers reported in 2019, more than doubled the previous peak of 208. From 2014 through 2016, seven, 19, and 30 Sleepy Oranges were reported. The 2017 through 2019 years had 153, 157, and 256. A similar trend is being seen with Cloudless Sulphurs. Both are currently believed to be reproducing in the county.

One of the most interesting stories of 2019 was Clouded Skipper. In the first five years of the survey, a total of six were reported. The three seen in 2016 earned it runner-up butterfly of the year. This year we saw 47, and again, they were common throughout the area.



Clouded Skipper by Kevin Heffernan

Jim Wilkinson (the Rare Butterfly Whisperer) found four Brazilian Skipper caterpillars on Canna Lily at Hopewell Pool on October 9, 2018. Almost exactly a year later, on October 8th, 2019, Jim fittingly reported an adult Brazilian Skipper butterfly, a first for the county.



Dainty Sulphur by Annette Allor

The most exciting find of the year was, once again, by Kathy Litzinger. She was walking her dog on the Baltimore County side of the Patapsco River along the Grist Mill Trail on September 16<sup>th</sup> when she found 10+ Dainty Sulphurs. Eventually, a total of 132 were reported on the Howard County side of the Patapsco, most of them found by Annette Allor. This was the first sighting of Dainty Sulphur in Howard County since 2012. Unlike 2012, which was an invasion year for Dainty Sulphur, this was the only location where this species was found in the area this year. The location had recently been landscaped, leading people to believe that the eggs were on plants that were transported north. We will check to determine if any survived the winter. *This Dainty Sulphur sighting was a new species for the survey bringing the total to 80.*

One of the great benefits of a long term survey is to look for trends and we will be looking closely at these species over the next few years.

**Low Counts:** Nine species of butterflies had the fewest numbers seen in the six years of the survey. Two of these were missed for the first time, Harvester and Dusted Skipper. Prior to the survey, not a single Harvester butterfly was seen in Howard County between 1996 and 2014. Seven were seen in 2014, four in 2015 and singles in each of the next three years. It is always tough to find. Missing it is disappointing but not a surprise. Last year we didn't even see aphids which the caterpillar feeds on. This is one species that we could use some help with in 2020.

The Dusted Skipper has been found in nine quads in Maryland according to the Maryland Biodiversity Project. Only five of these records are less than 10 years old. Three of these were on the Western Shore: Soldiers Delight, Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, and on a single hill on the Murray Hill powerline in Howard County. Over the winter of 2018 / 2019, The Columbia Association dumped sludge from the lakes next to the powerline area where the Dusted Skippers have been found. We missed Dusted Skipper for the first time during the survey in 2019. We will look for them again in 2020 and beyond.

Several hairstreaks had a rough year. Red-banded (13) and White M (2) posted six year low counts. Gray Hairstreak (67) had its second lowest count. Great Spangled Fritillary (39), Mourning Cloak (8), Orange Sulphur (748) and Tawny-edged Skipper (70) also had six year lows. Swarthy Skipper has had counts of 40, 31, nine and two in the last four years. Similar to previous years, 16 species had fewer than 10 individual butterflies reported.



Cloudless Sulphur by Kelsey Wellons

**Monarch:** The 2018 year was great for Monarchs with a six year peak of 1937 individuals reported. In 2019, the numbers dropped back more to the norm with 681 reported. This represents a 65% drop from the previous year, however, and is worth monitoring particularly with the issues being reported regarding the Western Monarchs.

**Butterfly Gardens and Bee City:** In our butterfly survey, 33% of the individual butterflies and 83% of the species have been found in garden sites. These gardens have been critically important particularly given the butterfly population trends. The lepidopterists in Ohio have been conducting a state-wide butterfly survey for the last 20 years. Over that time, the butterfly population in Ohio has dropped by 33%. Bees are suffering the same fate.

[Howard County has recently joined Bee City](#), a program of the Xerces Society designed to encourage people to plant pollinator gardens for these animals. We are working on a list of pollinator plants for different sun and soil moisture conditions. These lists will be released in the next few weeks. Please sign up for the Howard County Bee City Newsletter to follow the activities and gather helpful information regarding the planting of pollinator gardens. Also, please consider registering your garden with Bee City.

The 2019 year was very good for the Howard County butterflies and the butterfly survey thanks to the 62 people who have been active participants. We encourage the submission of as many surveys as you can even if they have a single butterfly. Every survey is important. If you are looking for something to contribute your time to where you can make a significant difference, this may be it. One person recorded 28% of the butterflies seen in the survey this year. The top three contributors recorded 52% of the butterflies. The top seven saw 75% and the top 14 recorded 88% of the total. Below is a list of all 62 contributors to the 2019 survey with the top 14 names in bold. Thank you all.

The 2019 volunteers were Annette Allor, Paul Bade, Renee Bade, **Kathy Barylski**, Gill Bentley, Jonathan Blithe, Karen Blum, Mary Lou Clark, Conservancy intern Kiley, Conservancy intern Riley, Robyn Evans, Sherry Fisher, Timothy Foard, Jeff Friedhoffer, Ed Gould, John Harris, John Hayes, **Karen Heffernan**, **Kevin Heffernan**, **Bill Hill**, Gayle Hill, **Linda Hunt**, Kathy Kaberle, Clayton Koonce, **Kathy Litzinger**, Anne Looker, Janet Lydon, Mary Maxey, Grazina McClure, Mike McClure, Allison McDaniel, John McKitterick, **Woody Merkle**, **Sue Muller**, Michelle Okonski, Michael Osborne, Bonnie Ott, Howard Patterson, Siobham Percy, Paul Petkus, **Sue Probst**, Tim Reichard, Linda Roberts, **Sarah Romero**, David Sandler, Kurt Schwarz, **Sharon Smith**, Bob Solem, Jo Solem, Chuck Stirrat, Ann Strozyk, Lou Taylor, Tim Thompson, Robin Todd, Anthony VanSchoor, Kelsey Wellons, **Barbara White**, Robin White, **Jim Wilkinson**, **Katherine Wilson**, Michele Wright, and Dave Ziolkowski.

Spring is right around the corner and the butterflies will soon be back. Bonnie Ott has already recorded the first butterfly of 2020, an anglewing (Eastern Comma or Question Mark) on January 11th at Alpha Ridge Park.

## 2019 ANNUAL LIST FOR HOWARD COUNTY

Birders reported a total of 226 species for Howard County in 2019. This total was the 19th highest total in the last 41. An additional four species were only detected through Russ Ruffing's Night Flight Calls recordings. The top county birds of the year were the county's third Rufous Hummingbird, fourth Least Tern, fifth Trumpeter Swan, second Whimbrel (recorded only) and sixth King Rail (recorded only).

Other highlights included Iceland and Lesser Black-backed gulls, an Evening Grosbeak, and breeding Dickcissels.

The biggest misses were Laughing Gull which has been seen in 37 of the last 41 years and Forster's Tern which has been seen in 26 of the last 41 years.

168 of the 308 species that have been seen in the county, have been seen in each of the last 41 years. 218 of the 308 species that have been seen in the county, have been seen 21 or more times in the last 41 years.

Examine the complete list at: <https://howardbirds.website/birding/howard-annual-bird-list/>

Thanks and congratulations to all those who spent many hours scouring the county, finding birds, and sharing their sightings.

### Leucistic Blue Jay



This leucistic and nearly tailless Blue Jay visited Mary Lou Clark's feeders for several days in November and December 2019.



**BIRD LOSSES AND WHAT YOU CAN DO**

You've seen the publicity about the loss of up to three billion birds over the last decades. The American Bird Conservancy has summarized the [five key threats](#) to birds and seven actions you can take to try to reverse declines.

**The following are major threats:**

1. Habitat loss.
2. Climate change
3. Pesticides.
4. Invasive species.
5. Collisions with windows, towers, turbines, etc

**What are actions you can take?**

1. Make windows safer.
2. Keep cats indoors.
3. Reduce lawns by planting native species.
4. Avoid pesticides.
5. Drink bird-friendly coffee.
6. Protect our planet from plastics.
7. Get involved.

We see several of the threatened species in Howard County, including those shown below.



Wood Thrush by Howard Patterson



Horned Lark by Karen Heffernan



Cerulean Warbler by Anthony VanSchoor



Common Nighthawk by Bonnie Ott

**ANNUAL [POTLUCK DINNER](#)**

Join your friends at the Annual Potluck Dinner

Time: Saturday, March 28, 2020  
Where: Robinson Nature Center Time: 6-10 p.m.  
Doors open 6:00 p.m. for room set-up  
Snacks start at 6:30 p.m.  
Dinner starts at 7:00 p.m.

Sign up at the March club meeting, or contact Kathie Lillie by Friday, March 27, 2020 at 301-807-3785 or [klillie12@verizon.net](mailto:klillie12@verizon.net).

See the January/February Goldfinch for more details.

**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.

March 26, 2020

Kevin & Karen Heffernan  
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[KJHeff122@gmail.com](mailto:KJHeff122@gmail.com)

April 23, 2020

Jo & Bob Solem  
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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](mailto:howard21042@verizon.net)

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## HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB

*Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society*

**P.O. Box 1323**

**Columbia, MD 21044-1323**

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GreenFest	

CELEBRATING  
**50**  
YEARS  
OF EARTH DAY

Saturday, April 4, 2020  
10am-3pm  
Howard Community College  
[www.HCGreenFest.org](http://www.HCGreenFest.org)

Howard County  
**GreenFest**