



The Goldfinch

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

CLUB MEETINGS - BY MARY LOU CLARK

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Thursday, September 10, 2020 "California Dreaming" by Kurt Schwarz. Kurt will recount his 2015 birding trip to central California, ranging from Mono Lake to Big Sur via Yosemite. Lots of charismatic birds, plus state-endemics. This trip brought his USA bird list across the 600 species threshold. Kurt is the Conservation Chair for HCBC and MOS, and a past president of HCBC. His worldwide life list just shrank from 1100 species with the lumping of the Northwestern Crow with American Crow.

Thursday, October 8, 2020 "The Bahama Oriole" by Kevin Omland. Kevin is a professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. He has been at UMBC for 20 years with most of this time focused on the evolution and ecology of orioles. He and his students have worked in Maryland, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and, now, the Bahamas. The Bahama Oriole is a critically endangered species.

Please note: Club programs will be held on-line using Google Meet. See the [Club Programs and Field Trips](#) page on the HCBC website for details and registration procedures.

PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

BY MARY MAXEY

Welcome back longtime and new members. This is the beginning of the 49th year of the Howard County Bird Club (HCBC). I look forward to the torch being passed from Mary Lou Clark to me. She has done a fantastic job these past two years as president. I previously lived in Baltimore and was a member of the Baltimore Bird Club and was vice-president from 1996-1998. I moved to Howard County in 2004 and joined the Howard County Bird Club in 2006. I currently live in Catonsville but still continue to serve the HCBC. I am the Breeding Bird Atlas 3 (BBA3) block coordinator for Ellicott City CE which covers both Baltimore and Howard counties. There are still two block coordinator positions vacant if you would like to volunteer. Anyone can contribute to the project by using eBird to list your species and codes and setting the portal to the Maryland-DC Breeding Bird Atlas 3. For additional information see the [Breeding](#)

[Bird Atlas 3 in Howard County](#) page on the club website or contact Howard County BBA3 co-coordinators Sue Muller or David Ziolkowski.

This has been a challenging time during this global pandemic, but we still have plans to keep connected with you. Read on in the newsletter to see how we will handle socially distant bird walks, virtual meetings, and the Fall Count. Rest assured we will forge on and enjoy seeing birds in a new way. Keep an eye out for additional information in upcoming Newsgrams and on the HCBC website.

I look forward to meeting each and every one of you whether it is virtually or on a field trip. Feel free to reach out to me anytime. Email to maximom11998@gmail.com

EASTERN WHIP-POOR-WILL AT SAVAGE MILL TRAIL

BY RICHARD PETERS

On Saturday, May 9, 2020, on a record-cold morning with WNW winds of 20 – 30 mph, Renee and Richard Peters found a perched Eastern Whip-poor-will, a bird that is difficult to locate anywhere in the county. Because of its crepuscular habits and cryptic coloration, it is almost always heard, seldom seen, and almost never seen well. —Ed.

Oh yes, we're going to remember the day!

Normally, on a Saturday you would find us at our church, but as churches are closed right now due to COVID-19 and the on-line streaming church service didn't start until almost noon, we decided to take a short bird walk on the Savage Mill Trail. It's only two miles from where we live and is a trail we hadn't been on in a couple of years. Not only did we want to use every opportunity to bird during the peak of migration, but because it was Global Big Day, we wanted to contribute in some small way.

We arrived at the corner of Gorman Rd and Foundry St shortly after 7:30 a.m. The winds were almost calm, but picking up. We entered the trail which was like a dark tunnel with overhanging trees. It was hard to see anything but silhouettes and it was cold. As soon as the opportunity presented itself, we headed downhill to the river's edge where we hoped the sun would have warmed things enough so birds would be foraging. Almost immediately, a beautiful adult Bald Eagle came gliding down the river about 20 feet above the water. A few minutes later a couple of Spotted Sandpipers came zig-zagging down the river as well. They were followed by an Osprey which perched in a tree and began to enjoy the fish it had caught. Then an immature eagle followed, landing in the same tree as the Osprey. No sooner did we remark that things were really picking up than the trail came to an abrupt end. We were forced back up the steep hillside to the main wide, groomed trail about 8:00 a.m.

I was out in front. (Those who know Renee also know that she's always in the rear on bird walks and lags in order to find every possible bird.) We had walked only about a hundred feet when I heard Renee's shouted whisper, "Richard, stop!" I carefully made my way back and saw her excitedly pointing at a bush about 30 inches high (later identified by Sue Muller as wisteria, an invasive vine) on top of which appeared to be a chunk of bark/debris—and I let her know that. She insisted it was a bird and I should look again as the "debris" had a tail! She had taken a second look because she was puzzled how such a small tree could support heavy debris. The tree, of course, consisted of intertwined parts of the vine so it was more stable than a sapling would have been. We quickly realized we had a nightjar bouncing around in the wind, but had no idea which one. Our initial thought was a Common Nighthawk, but it just didn't look right.

I was going to head back to the car to grab a good camera, but Renee insisted that we first get a few pictures with the cell phone in case the bird flew before I returned. The sleeping bird made no indication of being aware of our presence, so I carefully approached from the rear with the cell phone to try to document it—still uncertain which nightjar we had

(having never actually seen one before). I succeeded in getting a close-up using my cell phone and quickly headed the quarter mile to the car to get my good camera. On my way back, I pulled up my eBird pro on the phone and read up on nightjars. I also sent an email to the Solems and tried to contact Kurt Schwarz, because Renee and I wanted to share this find—especially since this bird was being so cooperative. By this point, Renee and I had determined that we had an Eastern Whip-poor-will. I put in a call to our youngest son, Ryan, who was still asleep, wanting him to know about this probable once in a lifetime opportunity. He soon brought his family along to see our find. The bird was still sitting on top of the foliage, but the wind had really picked up. After one particularly bad gust, we noticed the bird was gone, even though we had pulled back quite a distance so that we could give others the best chance of seeing it without us scaring it away should it awaken from its sound sleep. We panicked and were sure we had seen the last of the bird. But, no—we soon found it again under the same group of vines. At this point, we had been observing the bird for about 90 minutes. My family and I had arranged ourselves in a line on the bird's side of the wide trail to force passers-by, especially those with dogs, to the other side. We tried to look like we were just talking as a family group, so as to not to attract attention. Soon we were joined by Kurt Schwarz; then other birders arrived.

We enjoyed the whip-poor-will until around 10:20 a.m. when it apparently woke up (no one was close to it just then) and flew into/through a tree next to where it had been sleeping. We tried to find it in the tree but were unsuccessful. Renee and I figure we were just blessed with a nice Sabbath day's treat, so we headed home to catch our church service.

PROCEDURAL CHANGES

Because of COVID-19, the HCBC Board of Directors has determined that the following procedures are necessary until further notice.

Programs: All programs will be presented on-line using Google Meet. See the [Club Programs and Field Trips](#) page on the HCBC website for details and sign-up procedures.

Field Trips: Field trips may or may not be scheduled for the early fall season. Some who have led field trips for many years may not be comfortable doing so at this time. Any field trips that do take place will be limited to ten participants, and masks will be required. Current status, details, and sign-up procedures can be found on the HCBC website [Club Programs and Field Trips](#) page. Please check that page regularly for updates, as slots for each field trip will be filled by the first ten who apply.

Board Meetings: HCBC board meetings will continue to be held by teleconference.

SPRING BIRD RECORDS: MARCH 1 – MAY 31, 2020

BY [JOANNE SOLEM](#)

We will not soon forget spring 2020. The season featured the coronavirus pandemic and the first spring season of the third statewide breeding bird atlas. Spring migration was enhanced by an unusually warm March followed in mid-April by extended chilly, rainy weather through much of May. Surprisingly, these factors combined to produce a unique, even oddly rewarding season. A Clapper Rail (specimen) was a new species for the county. Other headline species were Trumpeter Swan, Rufous Hummingbird, Common Gallinule, Sandhill Crane, Whimbrel, Tricolored Heron, Mississippi Kite, and Painted Bunting.

Sixty-two **Snow Geese** were spotted heading north over Burleigh Manor on 3/29 (**MKw**). That same week **Canada Geese** were on the move with 140 high over Mt. Pleasant (MTPLT) 3/2 (**J/MHr**); on 3/5, 120 were noted over Dark Hawk Cir, E. Col. (**MO'S**) and 65 in two skeins passed over the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area (MPEA) (**JHf**). On 4/15, along the Patuxent Branch Trail, two adults and eight goslings were early (**HPt**). Two **Trumpeter Swans** appeared at Wilde Lake 3/27 (**DDy**), the seventh county record. Likely the same two visited Lake Elkhorn the morning of 4/6 (**MSt**; **ID**; **JHf**) and moved to Lake Kittamaqundi in mid-afternoon (**CKc**). **Tundra Swans** included three calling over West Friendship Park (WFRDP) 3/3 (**EHs**) and four over Tawney Bloom, E. Col. 3/19 (**DCm**).

The high **Wood Duck** count was 18 at Race Road Wetlands (RACRW) 4/23 (**JW**). This cavity nester is doing well in the county. Beginning 4/27, when a hen with eight downy ducklings was spotted at RACRW (**JW**), broods were reported from at least six sites (some locations hosted multiple broods). Three **Blue-winged Teal** (two males, one female) were present at Sewells Orchard 4/1 (**BMy**). In mid-April they moved to Lake Elkhorn/Forebay Pd where various combinations were reported until the end of the first week of May. A **Northern Shoveler** made a brief appearance at Lake Elkhorn 3/9 (**HPt**). A **Gadwall** at Waverly Pond 3/3 (**RRf**) was a new species for that location. A **Mallard** hen with eight ducklings at Helaine Hamlet Way 3/22 (**PKr**) must have begun nesting during a warm February for a new early county record. Four **Northern Pintails** were noticed at Triadelphia Reservoir (TRIRS) 3/20 (**JHf**). There were just two **Canvasback** reports: four at Big Branch 3/7 (**JRg**) and one at TRIRS 3/23 (**JHf**), continuing their recent local scarcity. **Redheads** made a limited appearance between 3/15 at Springdale Quarry Pd (**DSn-3**) and 3/23 at TRIRS (**JHf-7**). Nine **Long-tailed Ducks** rested on TRIRS 3/23 (**JHf**). **Common Mergansers** left early with the last seen on 3/2 TRIRS (**SDv-18**). Waterfowl are known to move occasionally among the central lakes. A good example was a single **Red-breasted Merganser** noted at Lake Kittamaqundi until early p.m. on 3/14 (**CKc+**); it then moved to Wilde Lake (**HPt**); during the late afternoon it was disturbed and headed back to Lake Kittamaqundi (**SRm**). The last **Ruddy Ducks** appeared on 4/18 both at Centennial Park (CENPK) (**KTn-10**) and at Lake Elkhorn (**ALw-1**).

The county's **Wild Turkey** success story continued. The species was reported from at least 19 sites. On 5/17, along the

Middle Patuxent River, a hen engaged in repeated odd calls and actions likely indicating she had a brood in the vicinity (**J/MHr**).

A few **Horned Grebes** were spotted including birds at TRIRS 3/22 (**JHf-4**), Wilde Lake 3/22 (**CKc-2**) and again 4/18 (**CSp-1**), and Waverly Pd 4/24 (**MKw-1**).

Black-billed Cuckoos made a fine appearance, especially around the middle of May. One was the 100th yard bird at Thornbrook Rd on 5/10 (**JCu**); four were counted at MTPLT on 5/16 (**BO**). The first **Common Nighthawk** was logged over Kings Contrivance, E. Col. 5/14 (**TRy**). A few were spotted most evenings until the final bird flew over Pebble Beach Dr 5/27 (**KTn**).



Eastern Whip-poor-will

by Richard Paters

Thanks to their crepuscular habits, **Eastern Whip-poor-wills** are will'-o'-the-wisps. Over the last two decades they have become so scarce and irregular in the county that the two reports this season were unusual. One was heard at 8:30 p.m. at Bushy Park Rd 5/2 (**PPr**), while the second—a daytime sighting along the Savage Mill Trail 5/9—is detailed in an [article](#) on p. 2 (**R/RnPr**). A **Chimney Swift** at Cyprus Cedar La 4/5 tied the third earliest record (**BO**).

The first **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** was spotted at Cyprus Cedar La 4/19 (**BO**); a nest was photographed near the river at Marriottsville 5/16 (**MKw**). The male **Rufous Hummingbird**, south of Ellicott City present since 11/3, was last seen 4/5. Feeders were not only faithfully filled all winter, but the solution was maintained above freezing enabling the bird to survive and allowing dozens of birders from across the state to admire this wanderer from the West (**HSt**). Another **Rufous** was reported in the Woodstock area in early May, almost certainly a bird that had been banded earlier in Montgomery County (*vide* **DZk**). These were the third and fourth confirmed records of this species.

Rails were a pleasant surprise. Most astonishing was a **Clapper Rail**, a new county species! The bird was found dead in an area adjacent to the Whole Foods parking lot south of Lake Kittamaqundi in downtown Columbia at 8:45 p.m. on 4/14 (**Bsk**). Although this species of salt and brackish marshes was definitely unanticipated well away from its normal

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haunts, records in Baltimore and Anne Arundel counties during the same period indicated a probable weather-related pattern.



Clapper Rail

by Bryan Sirotkin

A pair of **Virginia Rails** took up residence at the large pond at Font Hill Wetland Park (FHWLP) 5/5 (BO). Photos of them in cattail patches allopreening (preening each other) and copulating were indications of probable breeding. As the vegetation became more dense, sightings became irregular, but they continued to be tracked by sound. Not until summer will it be known whether they nested successfully. Another Virginia, a flyover at Cavey La, was heard the night of 5/31 with Night Flight Call (NFC) equipment (RRf).



Virginia Rail

by Bonnie Ott

A **Sora** was spotted at the edge of emergent vegetation in a large pond at downtown Maple Lawn 5/2 (BO); another was heard along Folly Quarter Rd 5/3 (RRf, SRm). **Common Gallinules** are not recorded annually; in fact, there are fewer than two dozen county records. Spring 2020 produced two sightings. One was seen briefly at RACRW 5/1 (JW, ph.); a second was spotted in a pond at Meadowbrook Park 5/14 (BO, ph.). It stayed for six days, ducking in and out of dense vegetation, to the delight of many birders. **American Coots** were in short supply with one present at CENPK 3/29 (J/MHr). A strung-out group (five, four, two) of calling **Sandhill Cranes** flew northeast over a W. Friendship home on 3/27 (LCg) (~15th record).



Sora

by Bonnie Ott

Four **Semipalmated Plovers** at Tarbay Pond 5/17 (DCm) and three at a Howard Community College pond 5/19 (KS) were the peak numbers for that species. A movement of **Whimbrels** through central Maryland in late May was picked up by observers with NFC equipment in Frederick and Howard counties. One bird was calling over Cavey La the night of 5/26 (RRf-NFC), only the fourth county record (one ground, three NFC). Particularly intriguing was a 5/27 report of a mind-boggling 500 “large brown shorebirds” in a high “V” heading north over Montgomery Run, MD 100/Snowden River Pkwy, at 8:00 p.m. (RSm). One of the few shorebirds that fits that limited description is Whimbrel (JHf). It isn’t possible to know with certainty the flock’s identity, but it is fun to speculate about such an unusual number of migrating shorebirds. The last two **Wilson’s Snipe** were logged at Gateway, 4/19 (JW). The **American Woodcock** high was seven at Hipsley Mill on 3/9 (KS, HPt). May records are always minimal so one at Rockburn Branch Park (RKBRP) 5/12 (BO) was notable.



Common Gallinule

by Bonnie Ott

Bonaparte’s Gulls made a good showing for more than a month from three on 3/19 at the MTPLT Skywatch (BO) to one on 4/29 at Lake Kittamaquindi (CKc). A handful of **Caspian Terns** dribbled through during the last half of April. A **Forster’s Tern** at Fulton Pd 4/18 (JHf) was noteworthy as the species was not reported in 2019.

A **Common Loon** hung on at CENPK past the end of the season. Twenty active nests were counted at the **Great Blue**

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Heron colony at Vantage Point on 3/26 (JS, SMu). Late April and May storms with high winds damaged several nest trees (CKc) so production may be low. The first **Great Egret** was notched at CENPK 4/6 (R/HSz). An adult **Little Blue Heron** at CENPK 4/24 was a good find (DDy, ph.). A **Tricolored Heron** flying along the Patapsco River at Daniels 5/3 (BO) was the county's sixth record, only the second in spring. A **Yellow-crowned Night Heron** was present near Tamar Dr, E. Col. 4/17 (SFi, AZn, ph.). Perhaps the same bird appeared at Sewells Orchard 5/17 (WOr) and hung around until 5/27 (FSf).



Little Blue Heron

by Donald Dey

Ospreys received more than their usual share of attention during this first year of the statewide atlas. Three nests were built on cell towers (HMz, TRy; SMu; JS). Based on the frequency and numbers of adults reported near county lakes and rivers, additional nests will likely be discovered. **Bald Eagle** nests included a new one on, what else, a cell tower along a major powerline in the Savage area (DZk), as well as a new nest in a deciduous tree on Old Frederick Rd (SRm). The nest along Folly Quarter Rd fledged three; the nest on TRIRS west of Pigtail did not appear to have been used this year (HMz); the Duckett Reservoir nest may have fledged one (unverified). An adult eagle was last seen near the Waterford Farm nest 5/13 (MW) so that one was unsuccessful.

Again this year the last week of May produced multiple sightings of **Mississippi Kites**, most in the late afternoon: 5/23 Sarasota Ct (KTn), 5/24 Diversified La (K/KnHf), 5/25 Bushy Park Rd/MD 144 (AVS), 5/26 Cavey La (RRf), and 5/31 MTPLT Skywatch (BO). Although dragonflies are a diet staple, cicadas are also appealing. At least a portion of the county's brood-10 emerged this year instead of waiting until 2021, helping to fuel the influx of the kites.

Red-shouldered Hawks continued to do well in the county with numerous nests reported. **Broad-winged Hawks** drifted through, mostly by one's and two's, almost daily from 4/6 at Cyprus Cedar La (BO) and continuing for six weeks. The high was 29 at the MTPLT Skywatch on 4/19 (SRm). A **Barn Owl**, heard on 3/2 at Sewells Orchard (BMy), raised hopes that it was a local bird; unfortunately, it was not heard again, so it was most likely a migrant. For the atlas, some owl nests were verified in early spring, but, by May, fledged **Barred Owls**

attracted the most attention.

A **Belted Kingfisher** became entangled in discarded fishing line along the Patuxent Branch Trail 5/31 (TRy). After a trip home for tools to assist the flapping bird, there was a happy ending for the bird managed to extricate itself without assistance. Although **Red-headed Woodpeckers** did not return to Fox Chase to breed this spring, there were about a dozen sightings from other county locations including three individuals at Lake Elkhorn 4/20 (JW); the continuing adult and first-year bird at Patuxent Branch Trail; multiple reports from MTPLT; and one at a suet feeder at Carroll Mill Rd 5/9, a stunning life bird (SFr). Seventeen **Red-bellied Woodpeckers** were notched in less than two miles at MPEA 4/20 (JHf). A pair of **Downy Woodpeckers** provided a pleasant distraction and a fine learning experience excavating a cavity and raising a brood not far from a window at Kings Contrivance, E. Col. during May (KWn). A **Pileated Woodpecker** with a rare variant yellow head was photographed at Cavey La 5/29 (DRf).

The last **Merlin** was noted at MPEA 4/23 (JHf). Six **Peregrine Falcon** records were contributed in late March and the first half of April.

Perhaps **Least Flycatchers** were vocalizing more than usual enabling them to be counted from half a dozen sites including FHWLP, MPEA, MTPLT (multiple birds), and Sewells Orchard. **Eastern Phoebes** peaked at 10 at Blandair on 3/23 (J/MHr). **Alder Flycatchers** are a choice species, but can pose an identification challenge. They must be heard and the sound accurately differentiated from the look-alike, similar-sounding **Willow Flycatcher**. Alders were noted at MTPLT 5/19 (BO-1), MPEA 5/25 (J/MHr-1), Cyprus Cedar La 5/24 (BO-1), and RKBPR 5/25 (BO-2).

A **White-eyed Vireo**, found initially along the Patuxent River at Howard Chapel Rd 2/2 (GKg, MPw), was last seen 3/8 (JHf) on the Montgomery Co side of the river verifying MD's first overwintering individual of this species. The **White-eyed** at CENPK 4/19 (HPt) was considered the first spring migrant. The high **Red-eyed Vireo** count was 40 at MPEA 5/13 (JHf).

County birders occasionally see groups of three to five **Common Ravens**. Extremely unusual was the 7:00 a.m. straggling flight of 11 (two, seven, two) out of the Patapsco Valley near MD 103 on 3/14 (BO). In addition to several nests close to county boundaries, this year ravens nested atop a cell tower adjacent to the Dorsey Search Shopping Center 3/14 (KS, ph.; nest ID JS). Two birds fledged on 5/14 (KS).

Rough-winged Swallows frequently nest in riverbank tunnels, but they are an adaptable species. In addition to their more traditional nest sites, they were observed investigating weep holes on the US 29 bridge at Broken Land Pkwy during the latter part of April (where they eventually nested) (JMck) and carrying nesting material under the hitch of a truck trailer at Tarbay Dr 4/28 (SRm). At Bascom Creek, Coca-Cola Dr, adults were seen and nestlings heard in a pipe of a stormwater overflow structure on 5/13 (MLC, SRm). One or two **Bank Swallows** were spotted half a dozen times

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this season. **Cliff Swallows** appeared at known nesting colonies with high counts of 30 at Brighton Dam 5/1 (DSn) and 32 at MD 32/Sykesville bridge 5/19 (MLC, SRm).



Dorsey Hall Common Raven Nest and Nestlings by Kurt Schwarz

A **Carolina Chickadee** nesting in a Maple Ave, Allview cavity was certain to have a distinctive nest after collecting fuzz from a bright orange tennis ball on 4/25 (JMck). Boreal species were tough to find with a **Red-breasted Nuthatch** present in pines at Gateway 3/4 (JW). **Marsh Wrens** were reported from MTPLT 4/25 (BO), CENPK 5/1 (SRm), and a Maple Lawn pond 5/2 (BO). A **Carolina Wren** got an unusually early start at Hickory Ridge, W. Col. with nestlings on 4/15 (CFf). A lingering **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** at Marriottsville 5/24 set a new departure date (Cag, ph.) [5/19/10 J. Hanfman].

Most **Eastern Bluebird** eggs are blue, rarely a female's eggs may lack pigment. Six pale pink eggs were laid in a box at Cavey La (RRf). The eggs hatched and all six fledged successfully. There were no major thrush fallouts. **Gray-cheeked Thrushes** were reported from at least 10 sites with the first at Martin Rd, W. Col. 5/8 (JHf) to one at MTPLT 5/24 (RHI). Late migration this spring was reflected in two of the most productive thrush migration nights being 5/24 and 5/25 (RRf -NFC).

Cedar Waxwings, which had been scarce to non-existent for much of the winter and early spring, made a dramatic appearance the third week of May with numerous flocks of 30-40 birds, a few of 60 (5/19 MPEA SUB, AKc; 5/20 CENPK BO), and an astonishing 300 birds in three miles at MPEA 5/25 (SUB). Three **American Pipits** flushed from Clegg Meadow, MPEA 4/19 startling the observers (J/MHr).

Sadly, no **American Tree Sparrow** sightings were verified continuing a trend from winter. **Vespers** were noted at four sites from one at Schooley Mill Pk 3/20, a new spring arrival date (SRm, MLC, ALk), [3/26/16 D. Cummings] to two at WFRDP 4/19 (AKr, SUB). **Savannah Sparrow** numbers topped out at 43 at WFRDP 5/7 (BO). The high **Song Sparrow** count was 87 at MTPLT 3/16 (BO). **Lincoln's** were spotted at at least seven sites from one at FHWLP 3/14 (LWf ph. ID: BO) to 5/16 at WFRDP (BO). The rare wintering individual first reported from Alpha Ridge Pk 12/2 (JHf) was last noted 3/13 (RSm). One at Sewells Orchard, an infrequent location, hung around from 3/22 to 4/11 (BMy). A leucistic

Dark-eyed Junco visited Dark Hawk Cir, E. Coi. 3/10 (MO'S, ph.); another was present at Dorsey Woods 4/19 (DZk, ph.). The last junco hung on until 5/18 at Martin Rd, W. Col. (JHf, ph.).

Bobolinks appeared in a few scattered locations with the largest flock of 80 at Underwood Rd 5/6 (AVS). Six **Eastern Meadowlarks** were counted at both WFRDP 4/19 and in the 12900 section of Old Frederick Rd 5/27 (LCg). On 1/30, a male **Baltimore Oriole** appeared in a Thornbook Rd yard. A feeder with half an orange enticed it to stay until 4/19. For the observers, the bird's almost daily visits brightened a sheltering-in-place period (J/KCu). On 4/29, a female Baltimore visited a hummingbird feeder at Timberleigh Way (DNg); on 5/1, the same observer and a neighbor each had up to three orioles feeding all day on cut oranges. **Rusty Blackbirds** were surprisingly widespread (mostly in single digits) during March and the first half of April with reports from at least 15 locations, including flocks of 25 at both Preston Ct (SMu, ph.) and Dorsey Woods (DZk, SMu).

Finally, by the third week of May, the cold, rainy weather changed producing the delayed peak passerine migration. Unusual wind patterns for almost a week brought remarkably high numbers of several normally scarce warbler species.

Ovenbirds reached a high of 14 at Long Corner on 5/10 (MPw). A singing **Louisiana Waterthrush** at Schooley Mill Park 3/20 (SRm, MLC, ALk) ushered in the spring search for migrant warblers. The similar-appearing **Northern Waterthrush** was first detected on 4/20 at MPEA (SUB, AKc).



Golden-winged Warbler

by Kristin Trouton

Golden-wingeds are among our choicest migrants. The species was detected twice: CENPK 5/12 (KTn, ph.) and along the Stevens Forest trail system, E. Col. 5/13 (DLn, ph.). Their close relatives and local breeders, **Blue-winged Warblers**, were first noticed on 4/21 at MPEA (SRm). The number of **Prothonotary** sightings was above average. Although a few pass through each spring, they are a rare nester in this Piedmont county. Reports from at least 11 locations may auger well for potential breeding. Sightings ranged from one bird, temporarily stunned after bouncing off a window at Burleigh Manor 4/23 (MKw, ph.), to one at RA-CRW on 5/30 (JW). A male at the US 29/Broken Land Pkwy cloverleaf investigated a drainage pipe on the bridge 5/2 (JMck). A male at Lake Kittamaquundi 4/26 (LBs)

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stayed two weeks, even choosing a suitable cavity and carrying in nesting material on 5/3 (**RSm**, ph., **HPT**). Although the bird continued to sing for another week, no female was ever seen.

Tennessee and **Nashville** warblers both moved through in higher than usual numbers. **Mourning**s are typically scarce, late migrants. The two reported this year were at Brush Run, E. Col. 5/23 (**JW**) and at MPEA 5/29 (**SUB**). The first **Kentucky** was noted at Hipsley Mill 5/2 (**J/MHr**). A **Common Yellowthroat** at Schooley 3/20 tied the spring arrival date (**SRm**, **MLC**, **ALk**). **Hooded**s were one of the season's bright spots. The last two decades have seen a dramatic drop in both seasonal sightings and in nesting locations (abetted by the disappearance of deciduous understory after the deer population exploded). This spring produced reports, not only from nesting strongholds in Patuxent River State Park, but from several infrequently reported locations, perhaps a byproduct of birders searching habitats close to home. A high of four at RKBRP 5/13 (**KS**) was particularly encouraging as this location used to host several nesting pairs. The high count of **American Redstarts** was 34 in three hours at RKBRP 5/25 (**BO**). Six **Cape Mays** were tallied along the trails at So. Trotter Rd on 5/10 (**W/SE**). **Ceruleans** are not only elusive, thanks to their canopy-inhabiting preference, but are also difficult to locate because their song is reminiscent of one of the **Northern Parula's** primary songs. Despite careful and continued searches at known nesting locations at Marriottsville and Henryton, they were not found along the Patapsco River. They are still hanging on in the county, however, for one was detected in a Patuxent River SP location 5/22 (**AVS**), where they have been known to nest. **Bay-breasted**s are usually a species reported by only a few sharp-eyed (or lucky) birders each spring. This was another species that weather patterns seemed to have moved to our benefit for they were reported from at least 18 sites, frequently multiple birds. The highs were 10 along the Gwynn Acres Path 5/15 (**MRg**) and six at MPEA 5/16 (**DSn**, **HPT**). All sightings were between 5/15 and 5/25. **Blackpolls** are notoriously late migrants. Peak numbers were reached on 5/25 with 15 at RKBRP (**BO**) and 13 at MPEA (**SUB**). Eleven **Black-throated Blues** were counted at MPEA 5/27 (**CFf**). March racked up eight **Palm Warbler** sightings beginning 3/21 at Lake Elkhorn (**R/RnPr**), eclipsing the total of five from all previous years. **Yellow-throated**s appeared on 3/30 at Marriottsville, a favored nesting area (**J/MHr**); later individuals were spotted at two other locations along the Patapsco. Sightings along the Middle Patuxent River and at Big Branch raised hopes for nesting beyond a few Patapsco sites. **Wilson's** was another species appearing in higher than usual numbers with nine reports for this elusive warbler.

Summer Tanagers wandered into the county in at least four locations: one male at a suet feeder near Guilford Park 4/23 (unidentified obs.; 4/24 **JHf**); Woodstock area 5/12 and a second bird photographed at the same location on 5/15 (*vide* **DZk**); and, finally, males on 5/24 at both RKBRP (**BO**) and Murphy Rd (**TRy**).

Northern Cardinals were particularly obvious at CENPK this season with a lake circuit producing a high of 41 on 4/29 (**DSn**). Some birders remember a time when **Blue Grosbeaks**, **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks**, and **Indigo Buntings** were almost

unknown at feeders. That has changed dramatically. More than a dozen observers reported visits from one or more of these species. A male **Blue Grosbeak** at a Linden Church Rd feeder 4/17 was a new early date (**HFk**) [4/24/98 K. Schwarz]. A female **Painted Bunting** continued to be seen intermittently at Stone Hill Dr; it was last noted 4/14 (**KLz**).

The bird club has not been able to lease a field on Underwood Rd since 2018; however, a few **Dickcissels** have returned to the area each year. Although breeding was never verified in 2019, the high count was five making breeding likely. In 2020, the first two males were noted on 5/18 (**SRm**) with a spring high of three on 5/24 (**ASm**). The distant field where the males were singing appeared to have similar vegetation to the one in which they nested in the past.

Thanks to the coronavirus, many avid birders spent most of the spring season close to home. This restrictive cloud had had an unexpected silver lining. An intense focus on one's yard, neighborhood, and nearby public areas meant individuals often tabulated a surprising number and variety of species in some normally under-surveyed areas. A walk along the paths near the creek in Owen Brown, E. Col. on 5/16 netted not only a **Yellow-billed Cuckoo**, but an assortment of warblers including a **Tennessee**, **Bay-breasted**, **Canada**, and **Wilson's** (**DCm**). Those species would make a red letter list at any county location!

Thanks to Joe Hanfman and Howard Patterson for careful proofing and to Russ Ruffing for meticulously verifying records.

Abbreviations: CENPK – Centennial Park, FHWP – Font Hill Wetland Park, MTPLT – Mt. Pleasant, MPEA – Middle Patuxent Environmental Area, NFC – Night Flight Call, RACRW – Race Road Wetlands, RKBRP – Rockburn Branch Park, TRIRS – Triadelphia Reservoir, WFRDP – West Friendship Park

Observers: **CAG** – Chris Argent, **LBs** – Len Bisson, **MLC** – Mary Lou Clark, **LCg** – Lisa Colangelo, **JCu** – Jeff Culler, **KCu** – Karen Culler, **DCm** – David Cummings, **SDv** – Stephen Davis, **DDy** – Donald Dey, **SE** – Sue Earp, **WE** – Wes Earp, **CFf** – Cheryl Farfaras, **HFk** – Harry Fink, **SFi** – Sean Fischer, **SFr** – Sandra French, **JHf** – Joe Hanfman, **JHr** – John Harris, **MHr** – Meg Harris, **KHf** – Kevin Heffernan, **KnHf** – Karen Heffernan, **RHI** – Russell Hillsley, **EHS** – Ed Huestis, **MKw** – Mike Kerwin, **GKg** – Geraldine King, **AKc** – Acadia Kocher, **CKc** – Clayton Koonce, **PKr** – Paul Kreiss, **DLn** – David Lane, **ALw** – Allen Lewis, **KLz** – Kathy Litzinger, **ALk** – Anne Looker, **JMcK** – John McKitterick, **HMz** – Helen Metzman, **BMy** – Brian Moyer, **SMu** – Sue Muller, **DNg** – Diane Nagengast, **WOr** – Wendy Ormont, **MO'S** – Michael O'Sullivan, **BO** – Bonnie Ott, **HPT** – Howard Patterson, **PPr** – Pam Perna, **RnPr** – Renee Peters, **RPr** – Richard Peters, **MPw** – Mary Prowell, **TRy** – Tim Ray, **JRg** – Judy Riggie, **MRg** – Matt Rogosky, **SRm** – Sarah Romero, **DRf** – Donna Ruffing, **RRf** – Russ Ruffing, **RSm** – Ryan Salsman, **DSn** – David Sandler, **HSz** – Helen Schwartz, **RSz** – Ron Schwartz, **KS** – Kurt Schwarz, **FSf** – Fred Shaffer, **BSk** – Bryan Sirotkin, **ASm** – Andy Smith, **JS** – Jo Solem, **HSt** – Hank Stanton, **CSp** – Cathy Starpoli, **MSt** – Michelle Stewart, **KTn** – Kristin Trouton, **SUB** – Severin Uebbing, **AVS** – Anthony VanSchoor, **MW** – Mark Wallace, **KWn** – Kelsey Wellons, **JW** – Jim Wilkinson, **LWf** – Laura Wolf, **AZn** – Aerial Zane, **DZk** – Dave Ziolkowski.

HOWARD COUNTY MAY COUNT RESULTS, MAY 9 AND 10, 2020

BY KEVIN HEFFERNAN

Obviously, with the COVID-19 virus, this year's May Count (the 73rd in Maryland and 47th compiled by the Howard County Bird Club) was vastly different from previous years. In March, because of health concern, the Howard County Bird Club (HCBC) Board of Directors voted to cancel the count. The Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) board, however, later came up with the idea of conducting a different type of count. It would take place on both Saturday and Sunday and anyone counting would enter results in eBird or use an email tally sheet. There were no area coordinators. To avoid potential health issues, people were not assigned to a specific area. Each person counted wherever he wished. The idea was to get people outside in a safe situation so they could enjoy counting the birds. With these provisions, the HCBC board agreed to hold the count. Results went to the MOS where they were broken down by county, tabulated, and totals sent back to the county coordinators. There was a total count by species for Saturday and for Sunday which is included in this newsletter; however, for the historical spreadsheet, I chose to use the maximum count between Saturday and Sunday as the official count. A total of 35 people counted in Howard County. For comparison, over the last 10 years, we have had between 59 and 76 participants.

Given the fact that we had approximately half the normal number of counters and some key locations were not covered, we still tallied a fairly impressive 128 species. The average number of species over the last 10 years has been 141. We had 29 species of warblers, the same number as last year. We did, however, tally <25% of the total number of birds (3,516 vs. a 10-year average of 14,870). (See the [table](#) on p.9.)

It is about this time that I normally go through Maximum and Minimum counts in May Count history, 10-year Max and Min counts, species seen for the first time, or first time miss-

es. Given the nature of this year's count, I didn't think that made sense to include. Interestingly, we did tally two species for the first time since 2004, Blue-winged Teal and Eastern Whip-poor-will.

A big thank you goes to the participants: Karan Blum, Mary Lou Clark, Wes and Sue Earp, Rose Eicker, Lynn Gregg, Scott Guzewich, Joe Hanfman, John Harris, Michael Kerwin, Acadia Kocher, Clayton Koonce, Shashi Lengade, Anne Looker, Rosa Lubitz, Mary Maxey, John McKitterick, Woody Merkle, Frank Morgan, Sue Neri, Wendy Ormont, Peter Osenton, Carolyn Patterson, Howard Patterson, Pam Perna, Suzanne Probst, Sarah Romero, David Sandler, Kurt Schwarz, Joanne and Bob Solem, Chuck Stirrat, Robin Todd, Kate Tufts, Severin Uebbing, Kelsey Wellons, and Jim Wilkinson. I also want to give a big thank you to John McKitterick and the MOS for coming up with the idea and seeing it through, including breaking down and compiling most of the data and getting it back to us. Also, I want to thank Chuck Stirrat for doing the final data compilation, and formatting the tables for the newsletter and the website.

Appreciation: Finally, for 24 years from 1981 through 2004, Paul Zucker served as the Howard County May Count Coordinator. Anyone who has been a count coordinator knows how much work it takes to put together a successful count, and the fact that Paul did it for 24 years speaks volumes about his commitment to the club. When I took over in 2006 (Emy Holdridge coordinated the May Count in 2005), Paul spent a lot of time training me in how to properly coordinate a count; he was an enormous help to me as I took on this role. Being the scientist that he was, Paul also maintained all of the records of the Howard County May Counts from 1974 in an easy to digest form. These records, which provide an important historical record of the May Count and Howard County bird population trends, are now located on the website as a spreadsheet: "May Count Annual Results 1974 – 2020." Paul passed away on July 4th, an enormous loss for the club. I want to give my condolences to Sherry and the Zucker family and to publicly acknowledge the time and effort that Paul put in to making the May Count what it is today. Rest in peace, Paul.

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

It is time to renew your membership in the Maryland Ornithological Society and the Howard County Bird Club for the 2020-21 season. The process to join or renew membership has been revised. Click on the [Join Us](#) link at the top of the HCBC website home page for details.

SEED SALE CANCELED

There will be no seed sale in 2020. In lieu of the seed sale, please consider making a donation to the HCBC habitat fund. Click on [Support Us](#) at the top of the HCBC website home page for instructions to contribute by credit card, check, or Pay Pal.

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:

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The Goldfinch, newsletter of the Howard County Bird Club, is published five times per year. Copy deadline for the November/December 2020 issue is September 25, 2020.

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

HOWARD COUNTY MAY COUNT RESULTS, May 9 and 10, 2020

Species	Sat Count	Sun Count	Total
Canada Goose	147	212	359
Wood Duck	3	42	45
Blue-winged Teal	2		2
Mallard	23	38	61
<i>duck sp.</i>	1		1
Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon)	4		4
Mourning Dove	70	84	154
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	1		1
Eastern Whip-poor-will	2		2
Chimney Swift	3	49	52
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	11	8	19
Killdeer		2	2
Least Sandpiper		8	8
Spotted Sandpiper	3	5	8
Solitary Sandpiper	2	20	22
Lesser Yellowlegs		6	6
Common Loon		1	1
Double-crested Cormorant		7	7
Great Blue Heron	4	15	19
Great Egret		1	1
Green Heron		2	2
Black Vulture	25	60	85
Turkey Vulture	48	39	87
Osprey	2	15	17
Northern Harrier		1	1
Sharp-shinned Hawk		1	1
Cooper's Hawk	4	3	7
Bald Eagle	1	3	4
Red-shouldered Hawk	21	27	48
Broad-winged Hawk		3	3
Red-tailed Hawk	6	10	16
<i>Buteo sp.</i>	1		1
Barred Owl	3	5	8
Belted Kingfisher	4	1	5
Red-headed Woodpecker	3		3
Red-bellied Woodpecker	63	80	143
Downy Woodpecker	55	43	98
Hairy Woodpecker	17	21	38
Pileated Woodpecker	16	21	37
Northern Flicker	15	16	31
Eastern Wood-Pewee	5	5	10
Acadian Flycatcher	1	2	3
Least Flycatcher	1		1
<i>Empidonax sp.</i>	1		1
Eastern Phoebe	17	16	33
Great Crested Flycatcher	12	20	32

Species	Sat Count	Sun Count	Total
Eastern Kingbird	11	10	21
White-eyed Vireo	5	7	12
Yellow-throated Vireo	1	3	4
Blue-headed Vireo	3	4	7
Warbling Vireo	2	6	8
Red-eyed Vireo	34	62	96
Blue Jay	107	100	207
American Crow	110	75	185
Fish Crow	12	11	23
<i>crow sp.</i>	9	13	22
Common Raven	1	1	2
Carolina Chickadee	46	43	89
Tufted Titmouse	44	57	101
Horned Lark		2	2
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	5	46	51
Purple Martin		5	5
Tree Swallow	9	33	42
Barn Swallow	9	83	92
Cliff Swallow	3		3
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	2	2	4
White-breasted Nuthatch	24	28	52
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	54	71	125
House Wren	35	57	92
Carolina Wren	83	110	193
European Starling	87	89	176
Gray Catbird	99	95	194
Brown Thrasher	7	4	11
Northern Mockingbird	25	29	54
Eastern Bluebird	52	43	95
Veery	1	2	3
Swainson's Thrush	4	1	5
Wood Thrush	7	12	19
American Robin	100	128	228
Cedar Waxwing	16	11	27
House Sparrow	40	33	73
House Finch	69	67	136
American Goldfinch	85	75	160
Grasshopper Sparrow	1		1
Chipping Sparrow	57	45	102
Field Sparrow	10	15	25
White-throated Sparrow	24	38	62
Savannah Sparrow	2		2
Song Sparrow	24	40	64
Swamp Sparrow		1	1
Eastern Towhee	23	36	59
<i>sparrow sp.</i>	1		1

Species	Sat Count	Sun Count	Total
Yellow-breasted Chat		2	2
Bobolink	22		22
Eastern Meadowlark	3	2	5
Orchard Oriole	5	4	9
Baltimore Oriole	13	32	45
Red-winged Blackbird	69	133	202
Brown-headed Cowbird	31	37	68
Common Grackle	52	81	133
Ovenbird	6	17	23
Worm-eating Warbler	1	6	7
Louisiana Waterthrush	6	6	12
Northern Waterthrush		2	2
<i>Louisiana/Northern Waterthrush</i>	1	1	2
Blue-winged Warbler	1	1	2
Black-and-white Warbler	15	15	30
Prothonotary Warbler	1		1
Tennessee Warbler	1		1
Nashville Warbler	1	3	4
Kentucky Warbler	1	1	2
Common Yellowthroat	19	37	56
Hooded Warbler	1	2	3
American Redstart	14	39	53
Cape May Warbler	2	7	9
Northern Parula	16	23	39
Magnolia Warbler	2		2
Blackburnian Warbler	2		2
Yellow Warbler	2	7	9
Chestnut-sided Warbler	7	8	15
Blackpoll Warbler	5	5	10
Black-throated Blue Warbler	16	24	40
Palm Warbler	1	4	5
Yellow-rumped Warbler	50	62	112
Yellow-throated Warbler	1	1	2
Prairie Warbler	5	5	10
Black-throated Green Warbler	3	5	8
Canada Warbler		3	3
Wilson's Warbler	1	1	2
Scarlet Tanager	10	19	29
Northern Cardinal	224	219	443
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	3	6	9
Blue Grosbeak	5	3	8
Indigo Bunting	35	33	68
Grand Total	2593	3341	5934

Species Totals include taxa	118	116	134
Taxa	5	1	5
Species W/O taxa	113	115	129



HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB

Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society

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TWENTY-SEVENTH ANNUAL FALL COUNT

BY MIKE MCCLURE

FALL COUNT

September 19, 2020. Plans for a traditional count consistent with COVID-19 restrictions are being formulated. Details including contact information for area coordinators will be posted on the club website. <https://howardbirds.website/birding/seasonal-bird-counts/>

