



The Goldfinch

Newsletter of the Howard County Bird Club
 A Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society



CLUB MEETINGS - BY MARY LOU CLARK

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Thursday, January 14, 2021 “Backyard Butterflying: Howard County Butterfly Survey Results during the 2020 Pandemic,” by Kevin Heffernan and Linda Hunt. Kevin is a past president of the Howard County Bird Club and is interested in gardening and encouraging the planting of native pollinator gardens through [Bee City](#). Linda is a Master Naturalist interested in native pollinator habitat preservation and gardening. Kevin and Linda co-chair the HCBC’s Butterfly Group.

Thursday, Feb 11, 2021 “Patuxent Riverkeeper,” by Fred Tutman. Fred Tutman’s family has farmed and fished along the banks of Maryland’s Patuxent River since the 1700’s. Fred was named for Frederick Douglass, the 19th century abolitionist. The Tutman family continues to operate a farm in Prince George’s County, within walking distance of the river. Fred is also the founding Patuxent Riverkeeper who serves as a community watershed advocate for Maryland’s longest and deepest intrastate waterway. His organization has worked on a wide range of issues and watershed problems in its 17-year history.

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.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

If you have not yet renewed your membership for 2020-21, go to the HCBC website at <https://www.howardbirds.website> and click on “Join Us” at the top of the home page.

NEW HCBC FACEBOOK MODERATOR

Welcome Kristin Trouton as the new [Howard County Bird Club Facebook page](#) moderator. Please check out the page and "like" us on Facebook. Posts will be made at least a couple times a month of an interesting bird of the season as well as reminders for upcoming events.

Thanks to Anthony VanShoor who managed the page and provided updates to the board for the past five years. You have done a terrific job. Thanks for all you did and for getting Kristin up to speed.

Eastern Screech-Owl



In Ward Ebert’s Owl Box, 11/2/2020

HAND-FEED A NUTHATCH? WHY NOT?

BY SARAH ROMERO

It's not often I see big smudges on my windows or screens, but on May 27, 2020, while starting lunch I noticed quite a large smudge or leaf or some such debris blocking my view on my slider screen. Upon closer inspection I determined it to be a fledgling White-breasted Nuthatch! It looked stuck to the screen, so I thought I'd try to rescue it.

But then I thought, why not see if it needs to eat? I ran out to the deck and grabbed a chunk of suet and brought it back in. I stuck my hand out the door and got as close as I could to the little tyke. I'm guessing it could smell it or tell somehow it was food because it came right over and started to feed from my outstretched hand. Honestly, my arm was getting tired from holding it up there so long as it pecked away at the little ball I had rolled up. I even got my niece to go snag an ant and shoved that into the suet to try to get a little extra treat into its belly. My arm was tired, so I didn't put it as high up the second time, and it fluttered its wings, begging for more. I had gotten about a one inch ball that the tot tucked into. It gobbled about half

before it seemed to have had enough by wiping its little beak on my screen (thanks for that) and sitting still.

It had moved a bit across the screen to get to the suet ball, so I could tell it wasn't stuck. Since it was in the front of the house where there are no sizable trees, I thought I would "rescue" it and take it to a shrub to see if the parents would come around to gather it up. Although my arm must not have been threatening, I seemed to be. As soon as I tried to go outside to collect it from the screen, it flew in a straight line downward, under the cars in the parking lot. So much for a smooth rescue. I went around the back of the cars and herded it onto the curb; it then took off for a shrub on its own. The parents eventually did come around from the back of the townhouse to the front and coaxed it along. From the deck in subsequent days, I heard the family, allowing me to rest on my laurels knowing that I played mama, if just for one feeding.

FIELD TRIPS CANCELLED

No field trips are currently being scheduled because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and field trips previously scheduled for January 2021 have been cancelled. Information will be posted on the club website when field trips resume.

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

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The Goldfinch, newsletter of the Howard County Bird Club, is published five times per year. Copy deadline for the March/April 2021 issue is January 25, 2021.

Board Meetings

The January 28 and February 25 board meetings will be conducted virtually. Send any input or questions to Pres. Mary Maxey at maximom11998@gmail.com.

Site Guide

Included with this issue is the site guide for Warfields Pond Park. [Guides](#) to other birding spots are available on the club's website.



Sarah and the Nuthatch

by Rick Romero

2020 ODONATE UPDATE

BY JOANNE SOLEM

The headline ode in 2020 was a Sable Clubtail photographed in the parking lot at the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area (MPEA) 6/18 (Nathaniel Schwartz). This was the second record and the first adult verified in the county. The first record was an exuvia found along the Patapsco River west of Daniels, Patapsco Valley State Park 5/28/2015 (Bonnie Ott; ID Richard Orr).



Sable Clubtail (not Howard County)

by Bonnie Ott

The first dragonfly sighting of the year is always a welcome sign of spring: a Common Green Darner on 3/26 at Font Hill Wetland Park (B. Ott). It was not only the first in the county, but also in the state per R. Orr. As the date was two weeks later than the county's all-time early date, it was an indication of how much a chilly March had retarded arrivals.

An Eastern Red Damsel was photographed at Oxford Square, Coca-Cola Drive 6/8 for a new location (Jim Wilkinson). In this same seepage area behind the school, he also spotted a Seepage Dancer 6/24, adding another location for one of our tiniest damselflies.

Some fine observations by B. Ott in 2020 included the following: Appalachian Snaketail, MPEA 6/6 and 6/12, Great Spreadwing, Meadowbrook Park 10/9, Brown Spiketail, Hugg-Thomas Wildlife Management Area 6/7, and Tiger Spiketails at Mt. Pleasant 8/5.



Brown Spiketail

by Bonnie Ott

Although Comet Darners are not unusual in the county, their large size and the striking red abdomen of the male attract attention as this insect flies endlessly back and forth across a pond. They seldom are seen perched, J. Wilkinson added a

fine photo to the Odonate Gallery with one at a pond along Hi Tech Road 6/6. A Shadow Darner was photographed at MPEA 10/15 (Pam Franks).



Comet Darner

by Jim Wilkinson

Unusually warm temperatures into the second week of November continued to produce dragonfly records. A probable immature Common Green Darner at Annapolis Rock, Patuxent River State Park parking lot 11/9 was just two days short of the county late date for that species (Jay Sheppard). On 11/10 an unidentified medium-sized *Aeschna* with a slender black and blue abdomen was patrolling a small wet area along the south side of the Middle Patuxent River in the Gorman Stream Valley Natural Resource Area (Bob/Jo Solem).



Tiger Spiketail

by Bonnie Ott

In addition to the above records, sight records or photos of many of the more frequently seen odes were received from a number of observers. As usual, many photos were posted on either iNaturalist or the Maryland Biodiversity Project websites. All records were appreciated.

Thanks to Richard Orr for overseeing and identifying Howard County's unusual species.

Addendum: In 2019, a Swamp Darner was added to the High Ridge Park list on 5/6: it was also a new early date (Sue Muller).

BIRD STRIKE REMEDIATION PROJECT AT THE HOWARD COUNTY CONSERVANCY BY MARY LOU CLARK



Artist's Sketch by Daria Parsa

From its inception, the Howard County Bird Club (HCBC) has donated time and money to preserve habitat and encourage conservation. The most recently completed conservation project involved a partnership among the Howard County Bird Club, Safe Skies Maryland, and the Howard County Conservancy.

[Safe Skies Maryland](#) is a conservation organization whose mission is to deal with human-caused factors of the loss of biodiversity and population decline of birds. One of the organization's primary goals is to deal with the fact that over a billion birds die every year in window collisions. The [Howard County Conservancy](#) is a non-profit land trust that operates a nature center in Woodstock, Maryland. Its main building has several large windows overlooking a lawn where there are many trees and bird feeders.

In March 2018, Safe Skies partnered with the Conservancy to install Accopian Bird Savers (paracords) on one large window on the lower level to discourage birds from flying into the glass. To complement this initial bird strike project, these two organizations turned to the HCBC for financial support to install different types of bird saver options. The bird club agreed in January 2019, to use funds from the Marty Chestem bequest to pay for custom and standard film applications on the remaining windows plus signage to explain the purpose of the project and recognize Marty Chestem, who had been a founding member of the bird club.

The project slowly evolved over time with great care shown in the execution of the custom design. It was drawn by Daria Parsa who received her Bachelor of Arts in Studio Art and Art History from the University of Maryland, College Park. She is based in Laurel. Once the design was approved, then it and the standard panels of either dots or lines were printed. Installation took place during the fall of 2020. Completing this project during the middle of a pandemic meant that only a limited number of people, usually four or fewer, could work on the windows at any one time.

This volunteer effort was guided by Carolyn Parsa of Safe Skies. She, along with Afshin Parsa, Daria Parsa, Will Decker, Woody Merkle, and Mary Lou Clark installed the film on the windows. More than 50 volunteer hours were needed to complete the project.

The purpose of this project is not only to save birds but to be a place where people can learn about the problem with bird deaths due to collisions with windows, and find resources to help them protect birds from colliding with windows at their homes.

Stop by the Conservancy, located at Mt. Pleasant on Route 99 just east of Woodstock Road, to see these windows. Then imagine what you could do to protect birds from striking your windows!!!



Window Treatment and Accopian Bird Savers by Allison Anderson

ANNUAL MIDWINTER COUNT

BY JOE HANFMAN

The Howard County Bird Club's Thirty-Sixth Annual Midwinter count is scheduled for Saturday, February 13, 2021. Still to be determined is how to conduct the count safely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Volunteers are needed to fill vacancies in three areas. Contact count coordinator Joe Hanfman (410-772-8424 / auk1844@gmail.com) to volunteer or for information about area coordinator responsibilities. See the area map below.

Area 1	Vacant		
Area 2	Brian Moyer		Bmoyer36@yahoo.com
Area 3	Chuck Stirrat	443-462-8234	Stirrc1@gmail.com
Area 4	Vacant		
Area 5	Vacant		
Area 6	John Harris	843-592-4051	Jaybee.harris@gmail.com
Area 7	Kurt Schwarz	410-461-1643	krschwa1@verizon.net

Beginning birders are always welcome, as are individuals who wish to count only for part of the day. If you wish to count only at your feeder email Joe H. and request a feeder form.

There will be no potluck tally due to COVID concerns.

If there is a question about the weather, we will try to make a decision the night before. Contact your area coordinator or Joe H. if you are unsure of the status of the count.



SEED SALE CONTINUES IN NEW FORMAT

During much of 2020, it appeared that 40 years of Howard County Bird Club (HCBC) seed sales would come to an end. After Jeff Friedhoffer retired from the seed sale team, no one responded to the ad for a replacement. Understandably, during a pandemic, a position requiring the receipt of paper orders and checks would not be easy to fill. With reluctance, in late August, the board accepted the fact that no sale would be held in 2020—and possibly in the foreseeable future. A cancellation announcement was sent to club members and customers in early September.

Despite the cancellation, a few members continued to pursue possible options with Kevin Cassidy, The Wildlife Authority's owner, who, for a decade, had been highly supportive of the sales. There was a desire on both sides to continue a traditional fundraiser and assist a local business during the pandemic. The sticking point was finding a method of ordering and payment that would neither require physical orders and checks nor create a burden for Kevin. No easy solution was obvious.

Technology and Kevin's refusal to give up came to the rescue. In late September, Kevin suggested a one-day sale with a 15% discount. He offered to match, dollar for dollar, any

contributions to the HCBC received as part of an order. By using a dedicated website, accessed only with a password, all orders and payments would be on-line. The board approved this new prototype. Word went out in a Newsgram on September 30 for an ordering period from October 1 – 16 with a single pickup date of Saturday, October 24.

Although the announcement provided minimal lead time, 65 orders were received. Especially heartening was that 34 orders included a donation! With Kevin's generous match, the total raised was \$1,230. The HCBC hopes the success of this type of sale can be continued in the future. Major changes have been made a number of times in the 40-year history of the seed sale. This was simply another example of the flexibility to pivot to new methods as circumstances required.

Sale proceeds and member contributions have enabled the club to donate more than \$100,000 to a wide variety of environmental and habitat preservation projects. For a glimpse of some of the highs and lows, challenges and successes of past seed sales, along with photos of early sales, go to Howard County Bird Club Seed Sales: Forty Years and Counting; by Joanne Solem: <https://howardbirds.website/conservation/hcbc-seed-sales/>



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WINTER FINCHES ARE HERE

Evening Grosbeaks, Purple Finches, and Pine Siskins have moved south in good numbers this year. Pine Siskins like nyger, especially in the metal mesh feeders, as well as hulled sunflower seeds. Purple Finches and Evening Grosbeaks like sunflower seeds, either hulled or whole. If you have not already done so, consider putting feeders out to attract these birds. And keep looking for Common Redpoll and Red Crossbill!



Evening Grosbeak, male

by Pam Perna



Evening Grosbeaks, four males with a female on the right

by Pam Perna