



The Goldfinch

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



CLUB MEETINGS - MARY LOU CLARK

Thursday, March 11, 2021 “Creek Ecosystem Importance for Breeding Birds and Aquatic Life,” by Emilio Concari. Emilio grew up in Eldersburg, MD. He first became interested in birds and then his interests expanded to include herps, fish, plants, mushrooms, aquatic ecosystems, and nature photography. He currently attends UMBC for a degree in environmental studies and plans to become a naturalist/environmental educator.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

| | |
|---|---|
| Club Meetings | 1 |
| Autumn Bird Records | 1 |
| BBA3 | 6 |
| Board of Directors Meetings | 6 |
| 2020 Annual List | 6 |
| 2020 Butterfly Year | 7 |
| Bird Art and Children | 9 |

Thursday, April 8, 2021 “Ghana: Birds, Butterflies, and Mammals,” by Gwen Brewer and George Jett Enjoy the flora and fauna of Ghana’s grasslands, forests, and wetlands as experienced by Gwen and George during their three-week trip to west Africa. Bird highlights included the unique yellow-headed picathartes, colorful turacos, bee-eaters, and sunbirds, impressive hornbills, and 11 species of kingfishers. Mammals of note included hammerhead and yellow-winged bats as well as elephants, monkeys, and nine species of large hoofed animals.

George Jett and Gwen Brewer have led Maryland field trips and presented talks on their travels together for bird clubs for over 15 years. Gwen manages the science program for rare species at the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and previously was a professor at Frostburg State University. George is retired from the Environmental Protection Agency and is an avid nature photographer—check out his photos at georgejett.net. When not looking for birds, mammals, and herps in far-off places, they enjoy birding and kayaking from their property near Jug Bay in southern Anne Arundel County.

Club programs will be presented online using ZOOM. The portal will open at 7:00 p.m. At 7:30 p.m. there will be a few brief announcements and then the program will begin. Go to the Howard County Bird Club website under the Club Programs and Field Trips page for details and registration procedures. <https://howardbirds.website/>

MEMBERSHIP

Share your love of nature by encouraging your friends and family to join the HCBC. They can explore the extensive information on the website at <https://www.howardbirds.website> and click on “Join Us” at the top of the home page.

COVID-19

HCBC field trips and other in-person activities have been cancelled or changed to on-line events due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Any changes will be posted on the club website and/or via News-gram.

AUTUMN BIRD RECORDS: AUGUST 1 – NOVEMBER 30, 2020

BY JOANNE SOLEM

After birders spent months adhering to COVID-19 guidelines, it was tempting in this summary to decry what was lost without the usual easily shared sightings, group birding, and social connections at favorite “hot spots.” Doing so would have been a mistake. One can’t help but admire and applaud the resilience and flexibility of this birding community. Some individuals focused on their yard or neighborhood; others found infrequently birded locations that attracted few other people. There were, of course, intrepid souls who donned masks and headed for one of the popular birding sites where social distancing was practiced. Despite limita-

(Records continued on page 2)

(Records continued from page 1)

tions, local birders are to be congratulated for carefully, sometimes imaginatively, finding ways to do what they do so well: record unusual species, share special sightings, exploit multiple habitats, assist new or inexperienced birders, welcome visitors temporarily relocated here, and, above all, enjoy their time spent birding. The following summary is a tribute to all Howard County birders, even if your name does not appear.

The four month autumn season is the longest seasonal reporting period. As usual, it brought both surprises and rewards to birders afield and at home. Rufous Hummingbird, Lawrence's Warbler (hybrid), and LeConte's Sparrow perched atop the list. Just below were Black-bellied Plover, White-rumped Sandpiper, Golden Eagle, Rough-legged Hawk, Short-eared Owl, Black-capped Chickadee, Sedge Wren, Nelson's Sparrow, Golden-winged Warbler, and boreal species including Evening Grosbeak and Pine Siskin.

As might be anticipated, waterfowl attracted substantial attention. Five **Snow Geese** at Waterford Farm on 10/5 (**CSh**, *vide MW*) were the only ones reported this season. The first five **Cackling Geese** appeared on a So. Trotter Rd pond 10/31 (**WE**). The species has been consistent at this location for the last few winters. This year, with more people than usual at home, pedestrian traffic may have limited the birds' initial stay to a single day.

Autumn **Tundra Swan** migration is a sign of approaching winter. The first two birds over Cavey La 10/31 (**RRf**) built to a peak 11/12-14. Those three days coincided with a major weather change during which time swan passage was tracked countywide day and night, in sun and rain (**Kck**, **LGg**, **JHf**, **CKc**, **ALw**, **GPs**, **RSs**, **DSn**, **KTn**, **MW**). Swans continued to move through Nov with a flock over Fulton at 4:30 a.m. 11/21 (**MW**) and 76 over the C. S. Robbins SkyWatch at Mt. Pleasant (MTPLT-SW) 11/28 (**LGg**).

While Triadelphia Reservoir (TRIRS) was closed several years for dam repair, birders waited impatiently for the reopening. Although unusual waterfowl, shorebirds, gulls, and terns appear sporadically on most county lakes and ponds, it is often this reservoir's extensive autumn mudflats and watery expanse that produce the greatest variety and highest numbers of migrating waterbirds. The last days of Oct and first few of Nov at TRIRS brought a sample of duck migration including four **American Wigeon** and three **Greater Scaup** on 10/29 (**RHI**), two **Gadwall** on 10/30 (**JHf**), and a flock of 228 **Buffleheads** (among the largest number ever) on 11/2 (**MKw**). A record string of 70°F. Nov days came to an abrupt end. On 11/12, a strong cold wave accompanied by heavy rain and high winds littered the water's surface with waterfowl. That morning a total of 18 duck species were present including one **No. Shoveler**, 65 **Gadwall**, 20 **American Blacks**, one **Canvasback**, six **Redheads**, 15 **Greater Scaup**, 225 **Lesser Scaup**, seven **Surf Scoters**, one **White-winged Scoter**, two **Black Scoters**, two **Long-tailed Ducks**, and a flock of 125 **Buffleheads** (**JHf**). The counts of both scaup species are likely

new highs and this was only the second time all three scoter species were noted in the county at the same time.

Elsewhere in the county, a female **Blue-winged Teal** at Maple Lawn Blvd ponds 8/26 (**TFy**) was a taste of fall. Two **No. Shovelers** over MTPLT were unexpected 11/1 (**CSPr**). Occasionally, someone reports something bizarre. Two bikers crossing the Patapsco River bridge in Ellicott City on 10/26 noticed downy **Mallard** ducklings in the water (*vide SRm*). This odd date for young is attributed to a hormonal situation related to day length that would not result in a successful nesting for wild, migrating birds, which local semi-feral ones are not (**DZk**). A **Greater Scaup** showed up at Lake Kittamaquidi (LKKIT) on 10/31 (**CKc**), remaining through 11/13 (**KTn**; **LGg**); two **Long-tailed Ducks** and three **Horned Grebes** appeared at Centennial Park (CENPK) 12/13 (**KTn**); while a **Common Goldeneye** was counted at Lake Elkhorn 11/13 (**KTn**). The **Hooded Merganser** in eclipse plumage at CENPK (See: 49(2):3) continued into late Oct (**HPt**; **DZk**; m. obs.). By that time, the bird had completed its molt and was easily recognized as a male. After a sighting on 10/28 (**KTn**, ph.), additional Hoodies appeared on the lake making it impossible to track the original male. A female **Red-breasted Merganser** on LKKIT in a heavy rain on 10/29 was the first Oct record and an early fall date by several weeks (**GPs**; **CKc**, ph.) [11/10/89 – R. Ringler]. A **Pied-billed Grebe** popped up at CENPK 8/15 (**JB**).

Wild Turkeys were detected in most parts of the county, although the two state parks probably harbor the most consistent populations. Among the more than two dozen scattered records this fall were the following: Mission Rd H.S. site 8/2 (**JS** – 8: 1 ad, 7 poults), Browns Bridge 8/26 (**ALk** – 14: 5 ad., 9 juv. of 2 sizes), Patapsco Scrub, Sykesville 8/12 and 8/14 (**FLv** – 2 or 3 ad., plus juv.), Maple Lawn Blvd ponds 9/26 (**TFy** - 3), and Etchison Rd 11/8 (**NMcA** – 1).

Rock Pigeons continued to gather near Gateway and Long Reach shopping centers (60-65, m. obs.). Eighty were counted on a pylon and wires along Hammond Branch, Fulton 10/17 (**J/MHr**). A **Mourning Dove** with nesting material at Clemens Crossing 8/27 (**DHm**) was consistent with their long breeding season. Earlier in 2020, doves fledged two young from a nest near the ceiling on a garage door mechanism at Shady La (*vide MW*).

A few **Black-billed Cuckoos** were reported from 8/26 at Browns Bridge (**ALk**) to 10/6 at Stone Hill Dr (**KLz**). **Common Nighthawks** were first seen on 8/19 with 12 at Waverly Woods (**LGg**) and one at Sarasota Court (**KTn**). The high was 33 over Stone Hill Dr 9/4 (**KLz**), with the final bird over Rachel Court 10/7 (**KTn**).

In addition to the nesting and roosting **Chimney Swifts** mentioned in the summer summary, swifts also nested at a W. Friendship neighbor's house (**LCg**). Swifts again nested in one or two chimneys at a So. Trotter Rd home, also possibly in other neighborhood chimneys (**WE**). Wes noted that new owners of a nearby farmhouse capped four chimneys above

(Records continued on page 3)

(Records continued from page 2)

which swifts used to be seen in summer. Such capping is posing increasing nesting problem for this species. Massing of swifts at roosts in late summer is an anticipated spectacle. The Glenelg H. S. numbers rose to 425 on 8/24 (BHi), while Clarksville E. S.'s high was 60 on 8/26 (JHr). Counts at those two sites were made in the morning. It proved easier to see the birds emerging in early to mid-a.m. rather than disappearing during the diminishing light of deep dusk. The most eye-popping total was at Savage Mill. At 7:30 p.m. on 8/26, swifts were counted by 50s and 100s as they dropped into the tall brick chimney for a total of ~1,000 birds (JSh). The high diurnal migrant count was 283 at Cavey La on 9/5 (RRf); the last swift was sighted over Baltimore National Pike 10/17 (CKc).

Most **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds** depart by mid to late Oct, with occasional stragglers into early Nov. By that time, wandering hummers from the West begin to filter into the region. For the second consecutive year, a **Rufous Hummingbird** (fifth definitive record) appeared—this time at an Old Fence Ct, Ellicott City feeder (BDn). It arrived on 10/29 and was banded successfully on 11/13 (BPj, DHm, DZk). Bruce indicated its 3.9 gram weight at banding was “migration weight” (*vide* JHf). The bird had stopped long enough to gain sufficient fat reserves to continue its journey. It was last seen on 11/15 (BDn).

One of the few **American Coots** this fall was present on LKKIT 10/16 (CKc). Shorebird numbers and species were modest. The two stars of the season were both at TRIRS: a **White-rumped Sandpiper** 8/4 (JHf) and a late **Black-bellied Plover** 10/30 (JHf). The plover broke one of the county's longest-standing late migration records [10/28/51 – S. Low]. Two **Semipalmated Plovers** arrived at TRIRS 8/4 (JHf); 12 **Semipalmated Sandpipers** the same day were the season's modest high (JHf). Mudflats at Browns Bridge were of limited value this season; they did, however, produce two **Pectoral Sandpipers** 9/13 (ALk). A **Greater Yellowlegs** hung on at TRIRS until 11/12 (RRf), one of the county's few Nov dates. A flushed **American Woodcock** at Patuxent River SP 8/5 (MPw) and one at Hugg-Thomas WMA 10/4 (RTd) startled the observers.

Bonaparte's Gulls were the only uncommon gull this season. Although spring traditionally produces the highest single flock counts, 300 in three flocks at TRIRS the a.m. of 11/12 was impressive (JHf). A total of 207 were on the water mid-day (RRf). A dozen went through at TRIRS on 11/22 (KTn) as the last fall migrants. **Caspian Terns** were in short supply with one on TRIRS 8/8 (JHf). A **Forster's Tern** was also present that day (JHf); three had been recorded there on 10/29 (RHI).

Wilde Lakes's high count of **Double-crested Cormorants** was 30 on 10/26 (CAb). Notable long-legged waders this fall were a juvenile **Little Blue Heron** at CENPK 8/10 (HPt, ph.) and a late **Green Heron** at Jackson Pond 11/13 (RVr), last reported 11/17 (JHf), the second latest record. Single juvenile **Yellow-**



Little Blue Heron by H. Patterson

crowned Night-Herons appeared at CENPK 8/10 (HPt) - 8/13 (GPs) and at Merriweather Pk, Col 9/5-11 (CKc). A **Great Egret** at Race Road Wetlands 11/28 (TCr) was the last of the season.

Migrating Turkey Vultures are not easy to track, but high birds over Burleigh Manor that appeared to be migrants included one group of 53 flying SE on 10/8 (MKw). A **Golden Eagle**, one of the season's choice species, sailed over Cavey La 11/13 (RRf, ph.). A **Cooper's Hawk**, a well-known bird predator, had the tables turned on it along River Rd, Sykesville on 8/3. It was seen flying “with a songbird in full pursuit” (FLv). **Bald Eagles** were ubiquitous, as wintering birds joined the resident population. The seasonal high was 13 at TRIRS 11/19 (KTn). **Broad-winged Hawk** migration peaked between 9/19 and 9/22. Among substantial numbers reported were 365 at Viburnum Dr at 12:30 p.m. on 9/19, then another 110 in the following 45 minutes not far away (SRm); 180 along the Gwynn Acres Path 9/20 (SPr), and 264 in four hours at the MTPLT-SW 9/21 (LGg). The last Broad-wing of the season drifted over the MTPLT-SW 11/16, the second latest record (MKw, ph., LGg, KTn). A **Rough-legged Hawk**, a species seldom recorded locally, soared over the SW 10/28 (MKw, ph.). There were consistent sightings of **American Kestrels** at W. Friendship Pk (WFRDP) (LCg). The first **Merlin** appeared at MTPLT 8/28 (BO). **Peregrine Falcons** were reported from at least eight locations throughout the period.

An **Eastern Screech-Owl** roosted intermittently in a box at Hallmark during Nov (WEb). Four **Great Horned Owls** were carrying on a conversation in the River Rd, Sykesville area 9/30 (FLv). The county's three breeding owls were all heard at Norris La, adjacent to Patapsco Valley SP on 10/4 (DZk). A **Short-eared Owl**, observed from the MTPLT-SW over Davis Branch 11/8 (BO), was just the fourth fall record, 13th overall.

Red-headed Woodpeckers were present at a minimum of seven sites this season (unfortunately, they were not confirmed nesting locally during 2020). **Olive-sided Flycatchers** appeared on time with one at MTPLT 8/23 (TCn) and one at Browns Bridge 8/24 (ALk). From the MTPLT-SW, two were picked out on dead-branch perches in the same tree 9/14 (KTn, SRm, ph.). A well-documented **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** (one of the trickiest ID challenges) was photographed at MTPLT 9/5 (PKn, ph., WSb). **Least Flycatchers** were widely reported with the first at MTPLT 8/23 (RRf, DSn). The last, at Plumtree Path 10/7 (MRg), extended the late date by almost a week [10/1/17 - R. Ruffing].

Blue-headed Vireos have a long migration period. The earliest was seen at MTPLT 8/30 (KS), a record early date [9/5/18 - J Shenot, heard only]; the last of the season was 11/10, the third latest record (MKw). **Philadelphia Vireos** were reported from

(Records continued on page 4)

(Records continued from page 3)

9/5 at MTPLT (MHk) to 10/13 at MTPLT (BPh). A **Red-eyed Vireo** was feeding a cowbird fledgling at Pigtail 8/4 (TFy); another was doing so at CENPK 8/25 (KTn).

There were half a dozen sightings of probable family groups of four or five **Common Ravens**. A **Bank Swallow** was at TRIRS 8/8 (JHf). A **Black-capped Chickadee**, at MTPLT feeders 11/18 (JHf, ph.), was still present at the end of the season. Because this species is extremely tricky to identify (with the possibility for hybrids) and visits the county only sparingly, a page on the HCBC website has been created to aid in distinguishing the species from the resident **Carolina**: <https://howardbirds.website/photo-galleries/bird-photo-gallery/black-capped-and-carolina-chickadee/>



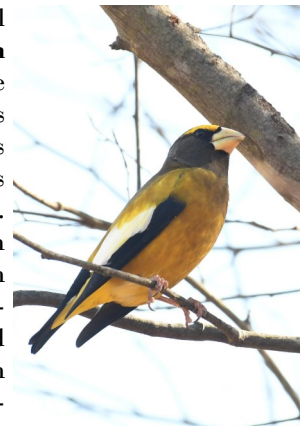
Black-capped Chickadee by Tim Frye

A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** at Crest Lawn Memorial Gardens (Crest Lawn) 8/23 (J/MHr) was the first of many reports. The season's high of 10 was logged there 9/19 (JHf). One on 10/12-13 in a LKELK yard (MSt) and another on 10/16 at Hermitage Dr (HPt) concentrated on peanut hearts. A **Sedge Wren**, always a seasonal specialty, was photographed at MTPLT 8/23 (BO). **Marsh Wrens** were noted at Hammond Branch, Fulton Schools 9/19 (KS, MMx), along Plumtree Path 9/23 (MRg), and at MTPLT 9/27 (BO) with additional sightings there until 11/1 (TFy). Two begging **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** at Starting Gate 8/15 (KCK) indicated late nesting for that species.

Thrush migration was mostly unremarkable. A good movement of all thrush species, dominated by **Swainson's**, was picked up by Night Flight Call equipment at Cavey La near dawn on 10/4 (RRf). A group of 10 **Cedar Waxwings** at WFRDP 8/18 included recently fledged young (LCg). Although the first **American Pipit** was noted at Cavey La 10/17 (RRf), the other sightings were mostly the first half of Nov. Autumn's high count was 49 at Ten Oaks Rd/Brighton Dam Rd 11/15 (MKw).

Some boreal species were predicted to move south in 2020—and did they ever! It has been decades since more than an occasional **Evening Grosbeak** appeared in fall and winter. The first report came from Jennings Chapel Rd 10/25 (LTm -1). On 10/27, single females were reported at Norris La (DZk) and Cavey La (RRf), both not far from sections of the Patapsco River, nine visited feeders at Roxbury Mill Rd 11/2 (KLI), 14 were at Triadelphia Mill Rd 11/3 (POs), and 12 made an appearance at Bushy Park Rd 11/4 (PPn), with reports continuing till mid-month. The four spotted along the Patuxent Branch Trail 11/5 (KCK) drew eager birders with the count gradually rising to a high of 17 on 11/6 (JSn, SLv)—just shy

of the 18 at Alpha Ridge Landfill 11/2 (JHf). The first **Purple Finch** was photographed at David Force WMA 8/25 (KTn). Small numbers (with a few reports of as many as 12 or 13) continued at numerous locations throughout the season. **Pine Siskins** appeared initially in single digits in mid-Oct; between 35 and 100 or more were soon being reported (totals not noted since early 2009). At Crest Lawn on 10/18, "Huge flocks were feeding on pine cone seeds and the empty shells were cascading down like raindrops. A really cool sight" (JCu). The same day, at a townhouse deck near Plumtree Path, 30 siskins were present, while more than 100 fed on seeds in trees along the path. "Something spooked them and they flew right past us. It was incredible to hear the sound of that many wings beating" (AAI). The following day her feeders were again overwhelmed by between 75 and 100 siskins: "I just ended up throwing hulled sunflower directly on the deck and handrails" (AAI). Feeders at Manahan Dr hosted 111 on 10/15 (HSt). The season's counted high may have been 140 at Burleigh Manor on 10/27 (MKw). A nice bonus was the unusual "green-morph" siskin picked out at Brush Run, LKELK on 11/27 (JW, ph.). (See the [Stokes Birding Blog](#) article on "Green-Morph Pine Siskin.") Flocks of **American Goldfinches** are routine in fall; however, 83 in a field of thistle at MTPLT 8/28 was attention-grabbing (BO).



Evening Grosbeak by Pam Perna



Pine Siskin (green morph)

by Jim Wilkinson

An **American Tree Sparrow** was spotted at MTPLT 11/19 (JHf), a hopeful sign for a species that has become increasingly scarce the last few winters. In addition to one or two **Vespers** from 10/18 (KS-1) through 11/6 (B/DFy-1) at well-birded MTPLT, individuals were also spotted along Hammond Branch, Fulton 10/28 (J/MHr) and at Alpha Ridge Pk 11/4 (GPs), with two at WFRDP 11/8 (DSn, DZk+). A **Savannah Sparrow** at Crest Lawn 8/16 (JCu) was an interesting new species for that location. **Grasshopper Sparrows** are a grassland species no longer as easy to find in the county as they once were. Besides MTPLT, one was noted at New Cut Landfill 8/29 (BO); another was present in a field along Windsor Forest Rd 8/30 (MPw). A **LeConte's Sparrow** at MTPLT 11/1 (KS) was a special sighting, just the fourth county record. Their rarity arises partly from their secretive

(Records continued on page 5)

(Records continued from page 4)

nature. This bird had not read the book. It was one of the most accommodating individuals most birders had ever seen. Not only did almost all people who tried to find it obtain good looks, but many observers had an opportunity to study and to photograph it from many angles. A **Nelson's Sparrow** detected at MTPLT 10/2 (**BO**) was last spotted 10/5 (**KS**, ph.). Autumn's first **Lincoln's Sparrow** appeared at CENPK 9/20 (**HPt**). As usual, they were present consistently at MTPLT with a high of an astonishing 10 on 10/13 for this normally rather shy species (**BPh**).



LeConte's Sparrow

by Kurt Schwarz

The first two fall **Bobolinks** were at the MTPLT-SW 8/5 (**BO**). One at Elkhorn Garden Plots, E. Col. 10/14 was unusual there (**JW**). Twelve **Eastern Meadowlarks** at MTPLT 8/17 (**PLm**, **MHR**) was a fine count. A **Baltimore Oriole** appeared at a Dark Hawk, E. Col. feeder in a rainstorm 11/11 (**MO'S**). During the winter of 2019-20 (until 4/19), a male was a consistent visitor at a feeder on Thornbrook Rd (**JCu**). On 11/27, a male appeared and perched on the empty shepherd's crook (**KCu**). The feeder was hastily retrieved and filled with the bird's favorite jelly and an orange half; within minutes, the oriole was feeding and continued to make almost daily visits (**JCu**). Fledged **Brown-headed Cowbirds** were being fed by Red-eyed Vireos (2) and a Scarlet Tanager (details elsewhere in article). **Rusty Blackbirds** were few; all the reports were in the single digits. The first was photographed at MTPLT 10/13 (**GPs**), with the season's high of eight at the same location on 10/27 (**MKw**; **KTn**, ph.).

August brings the first wave of migrant fall warblers. Among early migrants spotted were **Magnolia** at MDBRK 8/22 (**DMs**), **Chestnut-sided**, Mt. Hebron 8/17 (**JCu**), **Black-throated Blue**, Woodbine 8/23 (**PPn**), and **Canada**, Starting Gate 8/15 (**KCK**). Two **Ovenbirds** were definitely an oddity under a feeder in Wilde Lake intermittently 9/20-27 (**SPb**). Although **Black-and-whites** and **American Redstarts** nest sparingly in the county, multiple reports the same day likely indicate movement from elsewhere: B&Ws on 8/15 were at both Long Corner (**MPwr**) and Browns Bridge (**ALk**); redstarts were reported from three locations that day: David Force WMA (**RTd**), Trotter Rd (**J/MHR**), and Daniels (**CHR**). Among the special warblers this season were a **Golden-winged** at MTPLT 9/3 (**JHf**), a **Lawrence's** (hybrid, eighth record) at Cavey La 9/8 (**RRf**), an **Orange-crowned** at MTPLT 9/27 (**TCr**), single **Connecticuts** at Browns Bridge 8/24 (**ALk**, **BSf**), US 29/Brokenland Pkwy 9/6 (**JMcK**), along the Maple Lawn powerlines 9/29 (**TFy**, ph.), at Plumtree 10/1 (**HPt**, ph.), and MPTL 10/22 (**PAr**), plus **Mourning**s at Cavey La 9/3 and 9/19-20 (**RRf+**). **Yellow-throated**s were noted at MPEA 8/20 (**CFr**), 8/24 at MTPLT (**GPs**), 8/26 at Browns Bridge (**ALk**), and 9/19 at both Waterford (**MW**) and the Carr's Mill Landfill (**LCg**). Among late warblers were **Worm-eating** at Cavey

La 9/27 (**RRf**) (second latest), **Tennessee** at MTPLT 11/6 (**B/DFy**), **American Redstart** at Ducketts La 10/31 (**DSu**), **Cape May** at LKKIT 10/30 (**GPs**), **Blackburnian** at MTPLT 10/20 (**PAr**), **Chestnut-sided** at MTPLT 10/14, just one day short of the late date (**LGg**, ph.), and **Palm** 11/10 (**TFy**). Nice numbers of some species were tallied with 22 **Black-and-whites** at MPEA 9/16 (**MLC**, **MMx**, **SRm**), 8 **Cape Mays** at Cavey La 9/15 (**RRf**), 10 **Chestnut-sided**s at MTPLT 9/5 (**PKn**), 15 **Blackpoll**s at CENPK 10/14 (**TFy**), and 16 **Black-throated Greens** at MTPLT 9/19 (**LGg**).

On mornings following a good night flight, there can be both a variety of species and numbers of birds. On 9/15, multiple birders scoured MTPLT and came up with 18 warbler species. On 9/24, single parties notched 14 species at Plumtree Path (**MRg**) and 12 species at both Cavey La (**RRf**) and Meadowbrook (**SRm**, **MLC**). Warm, sunny weather does not guarantee success; in fact, bad weather or strong headwinds may produce better birding. On the foggy, rainy morning of 9/2, this email summarized it nicely: "Conditions are bad, but the birds are wonderful" (**BO**). Strong northerly winds produced an excellent fallout at the southwest portion of CENPK 9/19 (**DZk**). In two hours that morning, his total was aided by a calling screech-owl which brought in dozens of agitated birds. A partial list included 13 species of warblers (7 Tennessees, 21 redstarts, 18 N. Parulas, 24 Magnolias 5 Bay-breasteds, and 4 Chestnut-sideds), 3 Red-breasted Nuthatches, 1 Swainson's Thrush, 1 Purple Finch, and 1 Lincoln's Sparrow. Such a list is enough to make any birder's mouth water.

A female **Scarlet Tanager** was feeding a fledgling cowbird at Kindler Rd, Gorman Stream Valley NRA 8/10 (**KCK**). At Font Hill Wetland Pk, a late **Northern Cardinal** nest contained young on 9/2 (**MLC**, **SRm**). A **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** at a Jessup feeder 10/25 was the last of the season (**R/RnPr**). A flyover **Dickcissel** at Cavey La 9/29 (**RRf**) was the season's only record.

Bonus: Time in the field can produce sightings of more than birds. A mink was a treat along the Patuxent Branch Trail on 9/19 (**KWn**).

Addendum: On 5/7/20, southwest of the junction of US40/US29, a loose group of about a dozen calling **Common Ravens** flew over (**KJn**), one of the largest groups ever recorded in the county.

Appreciation: Many thanks to Joe Hanfman, Russ Ruffing, and Howard Patterson for careful proofing of this long and complicated seasonal summary.

Observers: **CAb** - Cindy Albright, **AAI** - Annette Allor, **PAr** - Patti Armistead, **JBl** - Jonathan Blithe, **TCr** - Tim Carney, **KCK** - Ken Clark, **LCg** - Lisa Colangelo, **JCu** - Jeff Culler, **KCu** - Karen Culler, **BDn** - Beth Daniel, **WE** - Wes Earp, **WEB** - Ward Ebert, **CFr** - Cheryl Farfaras, **BFy** - Bernard Foy, **DFy** - Dawn Foy, **TFy** - Tim Frye, **LGg** - Lynn Gregg, **MHk** - Matt Hack, **CHR** - Connie Hager, **JHf** - Joe Hanfman, **JHr** - John Harris, **MHR** - Meg Harris, **BHi** -

(Records continued on page 6)

(Records continued from page 5)

Bill Hill, **RHI** – Russell Hillsley, **DHm** – David Holmes, **KJn** – Kelli Johnson, **MKw** – Mike Kerwin, **PKn** – Peter Kaestner, **CKe** – Clayton Koonce, **ALw** – Allen Lewis, **KLI** – Kathie Lillie, **PLm** – Paul Littman, **KLz** – Kathy Litzinger, **ALk** – Anne Looker, **FLv** – Felicia Lovelett, **SLv** – Sabrina Lovell, **DMs** – Dean Mahlstedt, **MMx** – Mary Maxey, **NMcA** – Nancy McAllister, **JMcK** – John McKitterick, **BMy** – Brian Moyer, **POs** – Peter Osenton, **MO'S** – Michael O'Sullivan, **BO** – Bonnie Ott, **CPr** – Cynthia Parr, **SPr** – Steve Parr, **HPt** – Howard Patterson, **PPn** – Pam Perna, **BPj** – Bruce Peterjohn, **RnPr** – Renee Peters, **RPr** – Richard Peters, **GP** – Gregg Petersen, **BPh** – Brad Phoebus, **SPb** – Sue Probst, **MPw** – Mary Prowell, **MRg** – Matt Rogosky, **RRf** – Russ Ruffing, **RSs** – Ryan Salsman, **DSn** – David Sandler, **KS** – Kurt Schwarz, **BSf** – Bill Sefton, **CSh** – Chuck Sharp, **JSh** – Jay Sheppard, **JSn** – Jeff Shenot, **JS** – Jo Solem, **HSt** – Hank Stanton, **MSt** – Michelle Stewart, **WSb** – Warren Strobel, **DSu** – David Sun, **RTd** – Robin Todd, **LTm** – Lisa Troutman, **KTn** – Kristin Trouton, **RVr** – Roshan Vignarajah, **MW** – Mark Wallace, **KWn** – Kelsey Wellons, **DZk** – Dave Ziolkowski.

Maryland/DC Breeding Bird Atlas 3

by Sue Muller

2021 has gotten off to a great start! We have confirmed a new Bald Eagle nest at Brighton Dam and it is being monitored for the Bald Eagle Nest Monitoring Program by Ken Clark. On January 19th, a new Common Raven nest was confirmed in Savage on a cell tower. This is a great time of year to be checking cell towers for piles of sticks on top as well as perching birds. We are watching several towers that have had Bald Eagles perched on top. One cell tower even had a pair copulating recently!

We are also in the prime breeding season for Great Horned Owls. Be sure to step outside in the evening and listen for any that might be calling. If you hear any calling, they may be nesting nearby. Remember, these birds use old nests from other birds and they especially like Red-tailed Hawk nests.

The Rock Pigeon is also within breeding dates right now. As common as this bird is, it can be difficult to confirm. They often nest underneath highway overpasses which often are difficult places to stop and view. Many will nest on private property on farms. Do you have any friends or family on farms that you can reach out to and see if they have any nesting Rock Pigeons?

If you are not involved yet, no worries! It is not too late to contribute to this project. A good place to get started is the Howard County Bird Club website and review the resources available to you (maps, FAQ section, Atlas handbook, observation tips and more):

<https://howardbirds.website/birding/breeding-bird-atlases/bba3/>

Board Meetings

The March 25 and April 22 board meetings will be conducted virtually. Send any input or questions to Pres. Mary Maxey at maximom11998@gmail.com.

2020 ANNUAL LIST FOR HOWARD COUNTY

BY JOE HANFMAN

Birders reported a total of 234 species for Howard County in 2020. This total was the seventh highest total in the last 42 years. An additional two species were only detected through Russ Ruffing's Night Flight Calls recordings. The top county birds of the year were both first county records, a White-winged Dove seen by many birders and a Clapper Rail that, unfortunately, was found deceased. 2020 was only the third year in which a LeConte's Sparrow was found. Rufous Hummingbird was seen for the fifth year and Painted Bunting for the fourth. Trumpeter Swans have now been reported in each of the last six years.



LeConte's Sparrow by Russ Ruffing

See additional photos of the LeConte's Sparrow with examples of key field marks on the club's photo gallery [here](#).

Other highlights included a fallout of all three scoters on the same day, an Iceland Gull, Short-eared Owl, Evening Grosbeak, Common Redpoll, and an overwintering Baltimore Oriole eating globs of apple jelly.

The biggest misses were Laughing Gull which has been seen in 37 of the last 42 years and American Bittern which has been seen in 36 of the last 42 years.

168 of the 310 species that have been seen in the county, have been seen in each of the last 42 years. 218 of the 310 species that have been seen in the county have been seen 21 or more times in the last 42 years.

Examine the complete list at [Howard County, Maryland, Bird Club \(howardbirds.website\)](https://howardbirds.website)

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

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

Howard Patterson, Editor
4209 Hermitage Drive
Ellicott City, MD 21042-6235
howard21042@verizon.net

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

2020 HOWARD COUNTY BUTTERFLY YEAR

BY LINDA HUNT AND KEVIN HEFFERNAN

This year, just as the first non-overwintering butterflies emerged in mid-March, the county shut down due to COVID-19. There was a serious question about whether people would get out and support the seventh year of the Howard County butterfly survey. The answer, again, was that you did support the survey. In 2020, 48 observers, looking in 128 different locations, spent 40,684 minutes locating 20,828 individual butterflies of 71 species. Just incredible. We continue to feel that this survey is extremely important and we thank each and every one of you for continuing to support it. In general, the season started out very slow and the butterfly numbers did not pick up until mid-July. We did not find any species new to the survey this year.

Early Season: This spring the Average Maximum Temperature (AMT) in April and May 2020 was 10° and 8° cooler than the AMT of those months from 2014 to 2019. This, along with the COVID restrictions, clearly seemed to affect the early sightings this year. The first butterfly of the year was an anglewing (Eastern Comma or Question Mark) found by Bonnie Ott on Jan 11th at Alpha Ridge Park. John McKittrick found a Variegated Fritillary in his garden on February 17th. It was very worn and was clearly overwintering as an adult, something that we had not seen before. Variegated Fritillaries do overwinter as adults farther south in the Carolinas but are not supposed to be able to survive this far north. The first of year (FOY) sightings of the other overwintering adult butterflies were Mourning Cloak (Sue Muller, March 2nd), Eastern Comma (Sarah Romero, March 20th) and Question Mark (Clayton Koonce, April 5th). The 21 Eastern Commas found this year were a seven year low following the 2019 peak year count of 132. The first non-overwintering adult was an azure found by Allen Lewis on March 10th followed closely by the FOY Cabbage White (Clayton Koonce, March 13th), Orange Sulphur (Jim Wilkinson, March 30th) and Eastern Tiger Swallowtail (Sue Muller, April 3rd). The March 30th Falcate Orangetip sighting by Jim Wilkinson was the earliest in the survey; however, the 11 individuals total found this year was the lowest count in seven years. The FOY Juniper Hairstreak was found by Jim Wilkinson on April 22nd. Juniper Hairstreaks have two broods, one from mid-April to mid-May and the second in July. This year, only six Juniper Hairstreaks were found, (again the lowest annual count in the survey), all of which were in the spring brood. The July brood was missed completely. A new location for Juniper Hairstreak in Elkridge was discovered by Julie and Logan Costantino on April 29th. Logan is the youngest contributor to the survey this year. The only Eastern Pine Elfin for the year was found by Linda Hunt on May 2nd in western Howard County (new loca-



Variegated Fritillary by John McKittrick



Juniper Hairstreak by Julie Costantino

tion). The FOY Juvenal's Duskywing (Sue Muller, April 19th), was one of only five found this year.

Overwintering Butterflies: Kathy Litzinger found both a FOY American Snout and Red Admiral on April 1st and the FOY Sleepy Orange was sighted by Jim Wilkinson on April 8th. These are all very early dates. The question is, did these individuals also overwinter in our area as adults? Butterflies have several strategies for surviving the winter. The most common is to undergo diapause. Some species undergo diapause in the egg phase, others in the caterpillar phase and finally others in the pupa / chrysalis phase. The second strategy is to overwinter as adults in hibernation. The third strategy is to avoid the cold weather and migrate south. These species are replenished by the migration north the following year. This third strategy is what the Variegated Fritillary, Red Admiral, American Snout, and Sleepy Orange typically employ. Is it possible



American Snout by Kristin Trouton

that we are observing a mix of strategies where a majority of individuals are migrating south and a small number of individuals are overwintering as adults during the mild winters? Is the northernmost limit to the area where certain species overwinter as adults, moving north due to global warming? In *Butterflies of the Mid-Atlantic*, Blakney and Gallagher state that snout "apparently can overwinter as far north as New York if we have mild winters." Regarding Sleepy Orange, they say that it "may survive the mid-Atlantic winter in reproductive diapause since it has been found in April." Regarding Red Admiral, Blakney and Gallagher state, "Red Admirals are not freeze tolerant north of about the Carolinas." However, Jack Connor in the *Press of Atlantic City* states "Red Admiral: A few individuals of this tough species apparently over-winter as adults in our area, like the anglewings." Winters in South Jersey are milder than in Howard County but if Red Admirals aren't already overwintering here, they are close. We found a total of four Red Admirals in the survey in April 2020. Finally, in the *South Jersey Butterfly Log* in October 2015 concerning Variegated Fritillaries, Dave Amadio is quoted "I don't usually find this species in South Jersey until at least May [although we have] a number of April records on the spreadsheet. I think there is a strong possibility that in a mild winter a few may survive here." We have proof of that in Howard County this year.



Sleepy Orange by Annette Allor

Peak Years: Seven species established or tied their peak annual survey count numbers in 2020. They were the Sleepy Orange (588), Cloudless Sulphur (424), Silvery Checkerspot (32), Coral Hairstreak (26), Northern Broken-Dash (17), Brazilian Skipper (6), and Long-tailed Skipper (4). For six

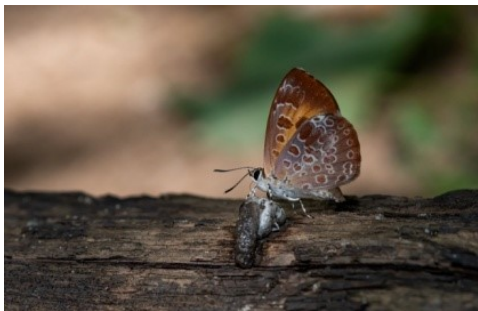
(Butterflies continued on page 8)

(Butterflies continued from page 7)

species, the last two years were the two peak years in the survey. These were Sleepy Orange, Cloudless Sulphur, Common Buckeye, American Snout, Fiery Skipper, and Clouded Skipper. All of these are southern migrants. The top 11 species in terms of percentage of individuals to the total seen in 2020 are the same 11 species (in different order) for the entire survey.

Low counts: Fourteen species had the lowest count in the seven year survey. These are Juvenal's (5) and Wild Indigo (55) Duskywings, Least (255), Dusted (0), Tawny-edged (44), and Broad-winged Skippers (2), Zebra Swallowtail (8), Falcate Orange-tip (11), American Copper (20), Juniper Hairstreak (6), Summer Azure (127), American Lady (22), Eastern Comma (21), and Common Wood-Nymph (3). Seven species had their lowest counts in the last two years including Wild-Indigo Duskywing, Dusted and Tawny-edged Skippers, Orange Sulphur, White M Hairstreak, Great Spangled Fritillary, and Mourning Cloak. These species will be watched closely.

Of the 71 species seen this year, 17 (~25%) had <10 individuals. Two species were represented by a single individual, Eastern Pine Elfin (Linda Hunt, May 2nd) and Harvester (Bonnie Ott, Aug 4th). Only two Broad-winged Skippers were found and three each of Common Wood-Nymph, White M Hairstreak, and Mulberry Wing. Four individuals of Common Sootywing and Long-tailed Skipper and five each of Tawny Emperor, Hackberry Emperor, and Juvenal's Duskywing were seen. Overall, all three duskywings, all three anglewings, the two ladies, and Great Spangled Fritillary all had subpar years.



Harvester

by Bonnie Ott

Notes from the year:

- After seeing the Dusted Skipper in each of the first five years, we have missed it the last two.
- After a peak of 12 Giant Swallowtails in 2019, we missed it in 2020
- The 132 Dainty Sulphurs that were seen in 2019 apparently did not survive the winter
- Since the Tawny Emperor sighting in 2016 (Kathy Litzinger, third sighting in 50 years), 60 have been found in eight locations including two new locations this year.
- Both Sleepy Orange and Cloudless Sulphur sightings were higher than Clouded Sulphur for the first time in the survey
- Howard County Conservancy butterfly list is at 66 species, the highest location list in the county. It has been cited as one of 14 "Noted places to observe" in the new *Butterflies of the Mid-Atlantic* field guide.
- The Brazilian Skipper caterpillars were found on Canna

Lily planted this year so that the eggs could have been transported on the plant from a nursery down south.

- Grazina McClure, however, also found (unreported) Brazilian Skipper caterpillars on existing Canna Lily plants near her home which means that adults had to have been present.
- The Silvery Checkerspot was named the Butterfly of the Year in 2020 in Howard County

Butterflies of the Past, the Present, and the Future: In 1993, Dick Smith put together the first checklist of "Butterflies of Howard County." In it, he gave the occurrence levels of each species (rare, common, etc.). Dick updated that list in 2000, 2012, and 2016 and, from the four lists, you can see the trend in occurrence level of each species. Eighteen species on the 1993 list have become extremely rare or have been extirpated from Howard County in the 27 intervening years. Sixteen species have become more common or are new arrivals to the county. Of those, 13 are southern migrants. We are definitely seeing migration of butterflies north and west out of the county and into the county from the south. In addition, we asked eight members to guess at the next new species for the survey. The response included eighteen species, six of which were on more than one person's list. They were Gulf Fritillary (6), Delaware Skipper (5), Hoary Edge (4), Dion Skipper (2), Eufala Skipper (2), and Brown Elfin (2). All three detailed lists are included in the PowerPoint presentation on the [2020 Butterfly Year](#) presented at the January bird club meeting now posted on the website.

The Impact of Gardens: Doug Tallamy opens his watershed book, *Bringing Nature Home*, by stating "Like it or not, gardeners have become important players in the management of our nation's wildlife. It is now within the power of our nation's gardeners to do something that we all dream of doing: to make a difference." Pollinator gardens not only provide pollen for bees and nectar for bees and butterflies, but host plants for caterpillars which provide food for birds, etc. Planting host plants for certain species of butterflies has made a difference in the numbers of those species that we have seen. There have been 105 Pipevine Swallowtails seen in the seven year survey, 71 of which have been in Barbara White's garden where she has planted their host plant, Dutchman's Pipe. Silvery Checkerspot numbers have increased this year with several people including Kathy Kaberle planting Rudbeckia, Echinacea and Verbesina species. The numbers of Sleepy Orange and Cloudless Sulphurs have skyrocketed and people planting Maryland Senna in their gardens (and fields) has been very beneficial. Monarchs not only benefit from planting milkweed in your garden but also late blooming nectar plants like goldenrod and asters to fuel their bodies for the journey south. We have seen 47 Broad-winged Skippers during the survey, 39 of which were found by Kathy Litzinger, including 35 in her garden. One garden can make a difference. What if we had dozens or even hundreds of these gardens? Please consider planting or expanding a pollinator garden. Go to the bird club website under [Butterflies/Pollinators](#) to find suggested garden design templates and a spreadsheet under "Howard County Plants for Pollinators" for help with plant selection. Fritillary numbers have started to drop so planting violets becomes very important.

(Butterflies continued on page 9)

BIRD ART AND CHILDREN

BY PATTY IAMMATTEO

I had my first commission a year ago that I recently brought to completion. My yoga instructor at The Yoga Center of Columbia asked me to paint birds on the newly painted walls of their big studio. Realistic birds! I'd never done such a thing but agreed, shaking in my boots. Then I learned through author Robert MacFarlane that names of everyday natural things were being removed from *The Oxford Children's Dictionary*—words like wren, heron, raven, lark, kingfisher, acorn, fern, willow, otter, newt! The dictionary has a limited number of words, and they made room for “avatar” and “cut and paste.” I was shocked and heartbroken. Children are spending more time in the virtual world than playing outside and knowing the living beings around them. My intention became clear—paint birds from my local area to create a sort of bird guide for the yoga students so they would learn the names of eleven local species and teach them to the little ones. So this has been my mission. Please

take the children you know outside. Show them the wonders around them. Teach them their names so these words won't die. If they do not know and love these beings, they will not bother protecting them. The world depends on us being good teachers. This is intentional creativity.

The book for children by Robert MacFarlane is called *The Lost Words*. It is a beautiful book of poetry and watercolor. There is also an album of music with these poems made into songs, called Spell Songs.

Patty Iammatteo is a pediatric occupational therapist and an artist who teaches personal development painting classes for women. Club members will remember Patty as Sarah Romero's friend who hosted an Evening Grosbeak at her home during February and March 2019. Many club members had the pleasure of seeing the grosbeak.



(Butterflies continued from page 8)

Going Forward: What We Can Use More Help With: Butterflies tend to fall into several categories in terms of habitat, numbers of broods, and flight time. Those that have multiple broods that nectar in gardens and fields tend to be the most observed. There are single brood species that nectar, but you have to be looking for them during the few weeks that they are active. There are species that rarely or never nectar and those that are in habitats that you have to go out of your way to visit. Then there are the late summer / fall migrants and those that are hard to ID. We are hoping to find people to help look for the single brood species, those that are in habitats that you have to go out of your way to visit, and the late summer / fall migrants. Please let one of us know if you are interested in helping out with these more difficult to find species.

The 2020 year was very good for the Howard County butterflies and the butterfly survey, thanks to the 48 people who have been participants. We encourage the submission of as many surveys as possible, even if they list 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.

See the Butterflies Photo Gallery [here](#) on the club website for more excellent pictures of butterflies seen in 2020.

The 2020 volunteers were Annette Allor, Kathy Barylski, Alicia Buxton, Julie and Logan Costantino, Andrew Dugas, Susan Earp, Robyn Evans, Timothy Foard, Pam Franks, Jan Goetz, Patricia Greenwald, Meg and John Harris, Karen and Kevin Heffernan, Pam Henry, Bill and Gayle Hill, Linda Hunt, Kathy Kaberle, Brenda Kaufman, Clayton Koonce, Jenny Krantz, Nancy Lawson, Allen Lewis, Kathy Litzinger, Janet Lydon, Grazina and Mike McClure, John McKitterick, Woody Merkle, Sue Muller, Michael Osborne, Bonnie Ott, Pam Perna, Paul Petkus, Suzanne Probst, Sarah Romero, Seth Rosenfeld, David Ryan, Kurt Schwarz, Sharon Smith, Trudy Snope, Jo and Bob Solem, Robin Todd, Kristin Trouton, Mark Wallace, Kelsey Wellons, Barbara White, Jim Wilkinson, Katherine Wilson. Thank you again to each and every one of you.

Spring is right around the corner and the butterflies will soon be back. We could see an overwintering adult any warm day now. The first non-overwintering adult will be seen in a few short weeks from now. We can't wait.



HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB

Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society

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March/April 2021 - Inside This Issue

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Club Meetings | Autumn Bird Records |
| Breeding Bird Atlas 3 | 2020 Annual List |
| 2020 Butterfly Year | Board Meetings |
| Bird Art and Children | |

Paintings by Patty Iammatteo

See the *Bird Songs and Children* article on page 9 for more.

