Size: 25 acres including a 1.3 acre pond and a second 0.6 acre pond. GPS: N39 21 01.5 W76 54 51.8

Habitat: The diverse wetland habitats in this park include two ponds, a stream, a marsh, shrubby wetlands, and deciduous floodplain forest. In addition, there are mown areas, boardwalks, and a few ornamental conifers. Water levels fluctuate with seasonal precipitation. A sewer line right-of-way runs through a portion of the park so periodic clearing takes place along the line.

Layout: The park has two entry points: Centennial Lane and Font Hill Drive, with information boards near each entrance. Parking along Font Hill Drive is the safer location. (If you choose to park along Centennial Lane, you must parallel
park along the street. **Do not park** in the small paved driveway that is marked "Authorized Vehicles Only" and **do not park** in the lot of the adjoining Jehovah's Witness Kingdom Hall.) The two ponds are separated by a wooded area and what was once a cattail marsh. A paved path and boardwalks allow access to much of the park. There are mown areas to explore along the north edge, adjacent to mostly fenced private property (complete with barking dogs).

**Best Time to Visit:** Winter is the most quiet time; the other three seasons provide multiple possibilities for the nature observer. Early morning and evening are the best times to observe birds, frogs, and mammals. Saturday and Sunday early mornings are especially pleasant because there is little traffic and a minimum of human-generated sound. Mid-morning to late afternoon in summer is the peak period for dragonfly and butterfly activity.

**Birding:** From Font Hill Drive, first check Pond 2. Walking around much of the perimeter during migration can be useful. American Bittern and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher have both been found here. At the information board near the bridge, follow the paved path across the stream. When standing on the bridge, check the vegetation and water in both directions. Be sure to scan the mature conifers on the north side of the bridge. These trees and a few along Centennial Lane have occasionally played host to Red-breasted Nuthatch, Pine Siskin, Purple Finch, and even a rare White-winged Crossbill. Follow the boardwalk west. The large marsh on the north has produced Virginia Rail, Marsh Wren, Swamp Sparrow, and Lincoln's Sparrow. In spring and early summer, you may be treated to a passing Red-shouldered Hawk carrying a snake to feed its young. South of the boardwalk lies a stream. The adjacent paved path continues through a small wooded area that has never been particularly productive. After emerging from the woods, check the view from the bridge. A Prothonotary Warbler has been the prize on at least two May mornings. The path then circles Pond 1. Bubblers keep portions of the pond open.
most of the year. Mallards and Canada Geese are resident and serve as decoys to attract occasional migratory or wintering waterfowl. American Wigeon, American Black Duck, Northern Shoveler, Lesser Scaup, and Ring-necked Duck are among the waterfowl that have appeared here. Great Egret, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, and Common Moorhen (on the island) are among the special birds noted at this location. The shallow edges sometimes attract shorebirds, but never in large numbers. Greater Yellowlegs and Pectoral Sandpiper are among the less common species spotted. Be sure to take advantage of the short boardwalk leading over the water to the gazebo. This is a good place to turn around and survey the shoreline for any birds skulking in the edge vegetation. Trees and understory should be checked for passerines. Watch the sky at every opportunity; in addition to migrating and resident hawks, a Common Raven has flown over the park.

Highlights: A variety of wetland habitats makes this park a worthwhile stop in any season. It is a destination spot for anyone interested in dragonflies and damselflies. Its list of almost five dozen species continues to be either the longest or second longest of any Howard County location, as it vies with the larger Centennial Park for the top spot.

Handicapped Access: The paved path and boardwalks allow access to a majority of the park. Grades are gentle. The entrance along Font Hill Drive is reasonable for wheelchair access—there is room to unload and the paved entrance path extends out to the road without a curb. Several benches with good views provide opportunities for "armchair birding."

This material is a digest taken from the revised version of Birding Howard County, Maryland by Joanne K. Solem. For complete species lists, photographs, and additional information, go to Font Hill Wetland Park. More than 40 sites are available at the web site howardbirds.org under the tab Birding Howard County.
Font Hill Wetland Park Bird List

Snow Goose
Canada Goose
Wood Duck
American Wigeon
American Black Duck
Mallard
Ring-necked Duck
Northern Shoveler
Lesser Scaup
Hooded Merganser
Common Loon
Pied-billed Grebe
Double-crested Cormorant
American Bittern
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Green Heron
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron
Black Vulture
Turkey Vulture
Bald Eagle
Sharp-shinned Hawk
Cooper’s Hawk
Red-shouldered Hawk
Broad-winged Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
Virginia Rail
Common Gallinule
American Coot
Killdeer
Spotted Sandpiper
Solitary Sandpiper
Greater Yellowlegs
Pectoral Sandpiper
Wilson’s Snipe
Ring-billed Gull
Herring Gull
Caspian Tern
Rock Pigeon
Mourning Dove
Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Great Horned Owl
Chimney Swift
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Belted Kingfisher
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Downy Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
Pileated Woodpecker
American Kestrel
Peregrine Falcon
Eastern Wood-Pewee
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher
Acadian Flycatcher
Least Flycatcher
Eastern Phoebe
Great Crested Flycatcher
Eastern Kingbird
White-eyed Vireo
Yellow-throated Vireo
Blue-headed Vireo
Red-eyed Vireo
Blue Jay
American Crow
Fish Crow
Common Raven
Purple Martin
Tree Swallow
N. Rough-winged Swallow
Barn Swallow
Carolina Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
Red-breasted Nuthatch
White-breasted Nuthatch
Brown Creeper
House Wren
Winter Wren
Marsh Wren
Carolina Wren
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Golden-crowned Kinglet
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Eastern Bluebird
Swainson’s Thrush
Hermit Thrush
Wood Thrush
American Robin
Gray Catbird
Northern Mockingbird
Brown Thrasher
European Starling
Cedar Waxwing
Ovenbird
Louisiana Waterthrush
Blue-winged Warbler
Black-and-white Warbler
Prothonotary Warbler
Tennessee Warbler
Orange-crowned Warbler
Nashville Warbler

Connecticut Warbler
Kentucky Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
American Redstart
Cape May Warbler
Cerulean Warbler
Northern Parula
Magnolia Warbler
Bay-breasted Warbler*
Blackburnian Warbler
Yellow Warbler
Chestnut-sided Warbler
Blackpoll Warbler*
Black-throated Blue Warbler
Palm Warbler*
Pine Warbler*
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Yellow-throated Warbler
Prairie Warbler
Black-throated Green Warbler
Canada Warbler
Wilson’s Warbler
Eastern Towhee
Chipping Sparrow
Field Sparrow
Savannah Sparrow
Fox Sparrow
Song Sparrow
Lincoln’s Sparrow
Swamp Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco
Scarlet Tanager
Northern Cardinal
Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Indigo Bunting
Red-winged Blackbird
Rusty Blackbird
Common Grackle
Brown-headed Cowbird
Orchard Oriole
Baltimore Oriole
Purple Finch
House Finch
White-winged Crossbill
Pine Siskin
American Goldfinch
House Sparrow

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