that are habituated to people. In 2007, a juvenile Cattle Egret created a stir by
hanging around with the flock of Mallards on the dock. In the short stretch between
the cove and the dam, the lakeside vegetation holds dozens of House Sparrows.
Check them carefully during the winter months. Once a Dickcissel was spotted
among the flock. Search the water behind the dam for various gulls and ducks.
Rarely, an American Bittern has stalked the shoreline near the dam, while one year
a Snow Bunting entertained birders for three November days in the short grass on
the dam. Gadwall, Ring-necked Duck, Greater and Lesser scaup, and Redhead have
been spotted in the pond below the dam.

At the northwest corner of the lake, the path divides. If desired, continue straight
through the pedestrian tunnel under Broken Land Parkway to connect with the
Patuxent Branch Trail. Otherwise, to return to the Broken Land parking lot, follow
the path left (south) across the bridge. Pause at the bridge to search for Eastern
Phoebes and Winter Wrens depending on the season.

Highlights: The lake and Forebay Pond have interesting bird potential much of the
year. This lake has also produced several state-rare dragonflies and unusual
butterflies at the east end.

Handicapped Access: The loop trail is paved with mostly gentle grades; the steepest
portion is at the northwest end from the dam to the bridge. Although a short dirt
path provides the only good view of Forebay Pond, the paved path offers glimpses
through trees when leaves have dropped. All the wooden bridges can be slippery
when wet.

Seasonal Bird List: A complete seasonal bird list is on the HCBC’s web page. There
are also butterfly, dragonfly, mammal, amphibian and reptile lists. The URL is
http://www.howardbirds.org/birdinghowardcountyLakeElkhorn/lake_elkhorn_species_lists.htm
For photographs, directions, and additional information, check the following
website: http://www.howardbirds.org. Click on Birding Howard County, Maryland,
Site Guides, Lake Elkhorn.

Compilers: Joanne Solem and Allen Lewis.

This material is a digest taken from the revised version of Birding Howard County,
Maryland by Joanne K. Solem. More than 40 sites are available at the above
website.

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Amenities: No facilities. Below the dam, there is a small picnic pavilion and a scattering of picnic tables. A few benches are positioned along the loop trail.

Operation and Hours: Columbia Association property; 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Special Attractions: A 16-station Fitness Circuit Trail is laid out along the side of the lake. Trees with labels on the north side constitute an arboretum.

Habitat: The lake is 15 feet at its deepest gradually to shallow water or even mudflats at the east end above the bridge. There can be extensive amounts of emergent and submergent vegetation depending on the season. Groups of mature trees are interspersed with some shrubby vegetation and mown grass. A few streams enter the lake. East of the lake under the powerlines, there is scrubby second-growth, wet meadow, and open water varying with precipitation and beaver activity. Forebay Pond may have mudflats for shorebirds, although that is relatively unpredictable from year to year. Beaver activity and planned dredging may temporarily alter habitat.

Layout: The lake is oriented roughly east to west with a dam at the west end. There are dwellings on the north and south side—some close to the path. Two major parking lots are at the west end: one is adjacent to Broken Land Parkway, the other is off Dockside Lane. A paved loop trail around the perimeter of the lake offers access to all habitats either directly or through path extensions. By continuing east, it is possible to walk to the Elkhorn Garden Plots after crossing to the east side of Oakland Mills Road. At the west end below the dam, the path connects to the Patuxent Branch Trail which continues to Savage.

Birding: From the Broken Land Parkway lot, follow the south shore scanning the open water and the sky at any opportunity. Check brushy areas along the shore and any location where a bridge crosses a stream. This wooded side of the lake is usually the best for passerines, especially during migration. Thirty-six species of warblers have been recorded at this lake, many of them in this section which has good filtered morning light. Most of the paved paths intersecting the main loop have stenciled street names—a highly useful idea when they are visible. The path toward Peace Chimes Court heads south along a stream and is a worthwhile side trip as far as the powerlines. Frequently, a Red-shouldered Hawk nests along the stream. Winter Wrens should be looked for in the colder months. During spring and fall, Palm Warblers in the shrubby growth along the lakeshore and Yellow-rumped Warblers in the trees and shrubs may sometimes appear in considerable numbers.

Forebay Pond: This pond is located at the southeast end of Lake Elkhorn and is reached by following the Brush Run path south from the bridge at the east end of the lake. The path goes uphill into a wooded area and shortly the pond is visible on the left. Look for a dirt path which leads to the north end of the pond. Forebay is mostly ringed by willows and scrubby vegetation. The water level fluctuates depending on the amount of beaver activity and rainfall. It is sited above the main lake and a wet meadow that extends east to Oakland Mills Road. Forebay receives much less pedestrian traffic than the main lake so there are times when birds retreat to this location. In addition to ubiquitous Mallards and Canada Geese, this pond has attracted an interesting array of birds. Wood Ducks and Hooded Mergansers are regular, but choice species like Blue-winged Teal and Northern Shoveler have also made an appearance. Both species of night-herons and various egrets and herons should be looked for during the warmer months, especially July and August. One early spring day an American Bittern wandered the lawns east of the pond. If a drop in water level coincides with shorebird migration, the muddy mudflats at the east end above the bridge. There can be extensive amounts of trees are interspersed with some shrubby vegetation and mown grass. A few streams enter the lake. East of the lake under the powerlines, there is scrubby second-growth, wet meadow, and open water varying with precipitation and beaver activity. Forebay Pond may have mudflats for shorebirds, although that is relatively unpredictable from year to year. Beaver activity and planned dredging may temporarily alter habitat.

Return to the main loop trail where a bridge with benches crosses the narrow east end of the lake. Scan carefully in both directions. East of the bridge there is extensive emergent vegetation in the shallow water during the warmer months. Night-Herons have been seen here and once a Common Moorhen spent a couple of days. Barn Swallows nest under the bridge. Looking west from the bridge, check the water and the shoreline. Little Blue Heron, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, and American Avocet have all been spotted in the vicinity. Barred Owls are regular nesters at the east end of the lake. Near the north end of the bridge there are several houses with feeders worth checking. From the bridge, turn right (east) along the transmission line to view the wet meadow. Look and listen for Willow Flycatchers. After exploring this area, reverse direction and walk west toward the dam. This side of the lake is more open than the south side with a good view of the sky, birds on the water, or those flying low over the lake. Facing the sun can be a major disadvantage however. Ring-necked Duck, Canvasback, Lesser Scaup, Pied-billed Grebe, Horned Grebe, and Double-crested Cormorant are annual.

Almost any duck, merganser, or grebe could appear as records for Greater Scaup, Surf Scoter, Black Scoter, and Red-necked Grebe attest. During appropriate seasons, check the far edge of the lake for egrets and herons as well as resting ducks. A cove (with pilings, benches, picnic tables, a tot lot, and a boat launch) is adjacent to the parking area off Dockside Lane so is a magnet for people. Bubblers (marked by plastic decoys) keep this area ice-free in winter and help to oxygenate the water in summer. Often an American Coot will be found among the ducks, geese, and gulls.