

Howard County Bird Club

A Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS)

Field Trip: Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge

Trip Leader: Kurt Schwarz

Recorder: John Harris

Date of Trip: Saturday, December 10, 2016

Number: 11



Brown Pelican, Pintail, and Red-headed Woodpecker by Kurt Schwarz

Details: The day dawned frosty, temps in the high 20s, with a stiff 10+ mph breeze. It was a return to the chilly Blackwater trips, which were the norm a decade ago. It remained mostly sunny for the entire day.

We drove across the Bay Bridge with a sharp eye out for the Northern Gannets seen the day before, Brown Pelicans which have been in numbers at the Bay Bridge for the past week, and the Snowy Owl photographed two days before from Hemmingway's on Kent Island. Alas, none of them were seen.

Since diving ducks on the Choptank River had not been seen for the past two annual Blackwater trips, we decided to move the date back a week to the second Saturday in December. Well, even that didn't work out. Most stops on the Choptank only produced a few Buffleheads. But as has been the case in the past, Hambrooks Bay did have some, with several hundred Ruddy Ducks, a few Buffleheads and Tundra Swans, and two Lesser Scaup. Once again, Kurt led the group on a scenic tour of Cambridge, but we did finally succeed in finding Race Road and making our way to Blackwater. The drive on Egypt Road was largely devoid of the hoped for field birds, but some Slate-colored Juncos at one house along that road made for an unusual tick on the list. And we were greeted by flock of 8+ Eastern Meadowlarks at the Blackwater Visitor Center.

A productive walk was had on the Marsh Edge Trail, with many kinglets, and the highlight of a very cooperative Red-headed Woodpecker. It put on quite a show, and many photos were taken. Later on the Wildlife Loop we managed to find four American White Pelicans, far short of the 49 reported earlier in the week. We only found one American Green-winged Teal! Half a dozen Northern Pintails helped round out the list for the Refuge. Alas the Cattle Egret(s) that had graced the Refuge for several weeks prior, to include the day before, proved to elusive.

After a short break at the Visitor Center, we set out for Hooper's Island. We were unable to find the American Oystercatcher seen in the week leading up to our trip. But we did find the only Horned Grebes of the trip. And on the way back, the only Red-breasted Mergansers.

- Canada Goose 1925
- Tundra Swan 249
- American Wigeon 2
- American Black Duck 8
- Mallard 295
- Northern Shoveler 16
- Northern Pintail 10
- Green-winged Teal 1
- Ring-necked Duck 5
- Lesser Scaup 2
- Bufflehead 103
- Hooded Merganser 23
- Red-breasted Merganser 3
- Ruddy Duck 90
- Horned Grebe 4
- Double-crested Cormorant 11
- American White Pelican 4
- Great Blue Heron 22
- Black Vulture 31
- Turkey Vulture 28
- Northern Harrier 6
- Bald Eagle 23
- Red-shouldered Hawk 1
- Red-tailed Hawk 4
- American Coot 3
- Killdeer 9
- Dunlin 8
- Greater Yellowlegs 2
- Ring-billed Gull 226
- Herring Gull 129
- Great Black-backed Gull 221
- gull sp. 5
- Forster's Tern 10
- Rock Pigeon 36
- Mourning Dove 4
- Belted Kingfisher 1
- Red-headed Woodpecker 1
- Red-bellied Woodpecker 2
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 1
- Downy Woodpecker 2
- Northern Flicker 3
- American Kestrel 2
- Blue Jay 2
- American Crow 3
- crow sp. 6
- Carolina Chickadee 5
- Tufted Titmouse 1
- White-breasted Nuthatch 1
- Brown-headed Nuthatch 6
- Carolina Wren 3
- Winter Wren 1
- Golden-crowned Kinglet 3
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet 5
- Eastern Bluebird 15
- American Robin 35
- Northern Mockingbird 3
- European Starling 95
- Yellow-rumped Warbler 1
- Dark-eyed Junco 6
- Savannah Sparrow 3
- Song Sparrow 8
- Swamp Sparrow 3
- Northern Cardinal 1
- Red-winged Blackbird 312
- Eastern Meadowlark 8
- House Finch 1
- American Goldfinch 1
- House Sparrow 1