



# The Goldfinch

Newsletter of the Howard County Bird Club  
A Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society  
[www.howardbirds.website](http://www.howardbirds.website)



## Inside this Issue:

- [Club Meetings](#) ..... 1
- [Summer Bird Records](#) ..... 1
- [Field Trips](#) ..... 2
- [Fall Count Summary](#) ..... 5
- [Membership Renewal](#) ..... 5
- [Owling](#) ..... 7
- [Breeding Bird Atlas 3](#) ..... 7
- [Jo Solem's County 300th](#) ..... 7
- [So. Flying Squirrel vs. Birds](#) ..... 8
- [Fishing Line Danger](#) ..... 8
- [Atlaser of Month: L. Colangelo](#) ..... 9
- [In Memoriam: Randle Coskren](#) . 10

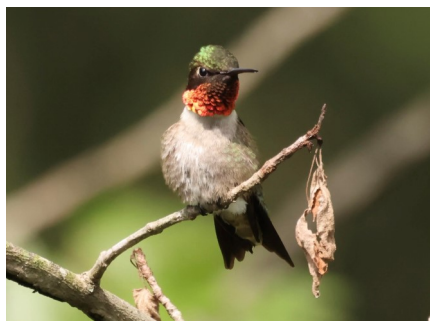
## CLUB MEETINGS - BY MARY LOU CLARK

**Thursday, November 10, 2022** “Historic Amazements” by David Holmes. This talk is part of the Howard County Bird Club’s celebration of its Fiftieth Anniversary Year. The club was organized in November 1972. David was one of the founding members and its first treasurer. He will describe some of the rare birds that have appeared in the county during the club’s 50-year history.

**Thursday, December 8, 2022** “Loggerhead Shrike Conservation: Saving North America’s Butcherbird” by Leighann Cline. This talk is about the Loggerhead Shrike Breeding and Reintroduction Program at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute.

Leighann graduated from Washington State University with a degree in zoology. In college she realized her passion for working with wildlife and had a special interest in ornithology. After graduating, she started working in wildlife rehabilitation and took immense satisfaction from helping our native wildlife species in need. She is in charge of the Smithsonian’s Loggerhead Shrike breeding program.

Club programs are presented online using Zoom. The portal opens at 7:00 p.m. At 7:30 p.m. there will be a few brief announcements and then the program will begin. On the HCBC website’s Home page, click on the “[Coming Events Details](#)” tab at the top of the page for the most recent information.



Ruby-throated Hummingbird by Steve Luke

## SUMMER BIRD RECORDS: JUNE 1 – JULY 31, 2022

BY [JOANNE SOLEM](#)

**A** lack of extended heat waves until the last third of July was a boon to birders. The relatively moderate temperatures aided atlasers during the third year of the statewide breeding bird atlas (BBA3).

Summer highlights included Common Merganser, Wilson’s Snipe, Mississippi Kite, Broad-winged Hawk, Bank Swallow, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Purple Finch, Northern Waterthrush, and a hybrid warbler. A Northern Bobwhite posed the usual question of origin. Special atlas confirmations were Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Red-headed Woodpecker, Veery, Grasshopper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Prothonotary Warbler, and Dickcissel. A territorial male Summer Tanager was a tantalizing presence at Schooley Mill Park for six weeks.

At dusk, 28 **Wood Ducks** flew out of a flooded cornfield at Waterford Farm (WATFD) on 6/7 (W/SE). A single female **Common Merganser** at Brighton Dam 7/24 (Kck), only the county’s second July record, was a particularly interesting sighting since the species is a rare nester in Maryland. The bird was seen again the following day (JHf).

(Records [continued](#) on page 3)

## FALL/WINTER FIELD TRIPS BY [JOE HANFMAN](#)

Field trips are a great way to improve birding skills, explore new places and meet other birders. Arrive at the meeting site ready to leave at the designated time with appropriate footwear and gear. Depending on the COVID situation at the time, there may be restrictions imposed. The leader may cancel due to inclement weather/hazardous driving conditions. Directions for trips not on ADC maps are on the Club's website. Questions? Contact the trip leader or Field Trip Coordinator Joe Hanfman at [auk1844@gmail.com](mailto:auk1844@gmail.com). HCBC members receive priority on trips that are limited by number of participants. No pets.

### [Habitat Discovery Walk, Mt Pleasant, Howard County Conservancy](#)

November 1, Tuesday, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon. Meet at the Montjoy Barn. Emphasis on winter birds.

Leader – Bonnie Ott, [sparrowdamsel@gmail.com](mailto:sparrowdamsel@gmail.com),

### [Skywatch, Mt Pleasant, Howard County Conservancy](#)

November 5, Saturday, 9:30 a.m. Half day. Meet at the parking lot. This trip will be strictly a sky watch for late-migrating raptors and other potential goodies. Our main target will be Golden Eagle; while not expected, early November is the best time to catch one flying over Howard County. In a recent year a half-day sky watch less than a mile from this location produced an immature Golden Eagle and a Sandhill Crane, along with good numbers of Bald Eagles and Red-tailed Hawks, plus Northern Harriers, accipiters, and some waterfowl. We will watch the skies and tally the birds as long as conditions are productive. Hope for a north wind! Bring water, lunch, hat, sunscreen, light-colored sun glasses, comfortable lawn chair (recliners are best), binocular, scope, and camera if you like. Participants can also walk the Conservancy trails if skywatching proves non-productive. Facilities available.

Leader – Russ Ruffing, [russruffing@gmail.com](mailto:russruffing@gmail.com)

### [B W Centennial Park](#)

November 6, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours. (Daylight Saving Time ends.) West end parking lot. Easy walking on paved paths around Centennial Lake. Woodlands, fields, and water host a wide variety of species. Great view of the sky for flyovers. Early waterfowl, lingering migrants likely. Facilities available.

Leader – Mary Maxey, [maximom11998@gmail.com](mailto:maximom11998@gmail.com)

### [B Mt Pleasant, Howard County Conservancy](#)

November 9, Wednesday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours. This is an impromptu leaderless walk for an opportunity to bird with any friends who show up.

### [B W Centennial Park](#)

November 13, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours.

See November 6 entry.

Leader – Mary Lou Clark, [doctorfx\\_99@yahoo.com](mailto:doctorfx_99@yahoo.com)

### [B W Centennial Park](#)

November 20, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours.

See November 6 entry.

Leaders – David Holmes, [musiclbndr@gmail.com](mailto:musiclbndr@gmail.com)

### [B W Centennial Park](#)

November 27, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours.

See November 6 entry.

Leader – David Ziolkowski, [dziolkowski@usgs.gov](mailto:dziolkowski@usgs.gov)

### **Start Your Year List**

January 1, 2023, Sunday, start at 8:00 a.m. (half day) Meet at Mt Pleasant, Howard County Conservancy. Easy walking on woodland trails. May plan to bird several different locations to find as many species as possible. The one day of the year where every bird is new! Facilities available.

Leader – Kurt Schwarz, [krschwal@verizon.net](mailto:krschwal@verizon.net)

### **R Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge**

January 7, Saturday, all day trip. Plan to stop at the Choptank River Bridge for ducks and coffee. Bring lunch and drinks. Dress warmly, Entrance fee or Duck Stamp required. Email the leader to reserve a spot and get details. We will carpool. Facilities at some spots.

Leader – Kurt Schwarz, [krschwal@verizon.net](mailto:krschwal@verizon.net)

**B** = Good for beginning birders

**W** = Wheelchair accessible

**R** = Reservations Required

### HCBC TREASURER POSITION

Howard County Bird Club is seeking a new Treasurer. The Treasurer position is an elected office. If interested, please contact Brian Moyer at 410-441-9901 or drop a note at [bmoyer0@gmail.com](mailto:bmoyer0@gmail.com) for a description of duties.

(Records continued from page 1)

A **Northern Bobwhite** was present at Longfield Rd 6/24 (**BHi**, ph.) and at Mustang Path, Glenwood 6/26 (**DCo**). Bobwhite and pheasant sightings are of interest, but both species are often released, so is any sighting of an adult a truly wild bird? **Wild Turkeys** continue to turn up countywide. Examples include one or two on multiple dates at a Brightfield home (**DMs**), four feeding on red mulberries at Alpha Ridge Landfill (ALRGL) 6/10 (**RCu**), a hen with at least eight poults (slightly larger than robins) visiting a Woodbine yard 6/12 (**PPn**), and two in a Waverly Woods yard 7/23+ (**LGg**).

A **Pied-billed Grebe** appeared at Sewell's Orchard Pk 7/23 (**WOr**). Possibly the same bird was reported at Lake Kittamaquundi 7/24 (**NSw**) where it remained until 7/26. Fortunately, **Chimney Swifts** still have a few uncapped chimneys in which to nest: River Rd, Sykesville (**FLv**); So. Trotter Rd (**W/SE**); and two chimneys at Wynfield Rd (**RCu**).

Shorebird sightings were meager. A **Wilson's Snipe** lingered at WATFD until 6/1, just long enough to become the fourth June record (**BHi**, ph.). A **Spotted Sandpiper** at Wilde Lake (WILLK) 7/13 (**ELp**), was probably a migrant; the first **Solitary Sandpiper** was noted at the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area 7/13 (**KCK**).

At WILLK on 7/26, the Howard County Police Animal Control officers rescued an injured **Great Blue Heron** entangled in fishing line ([See story, p. 8.](#)). (If you see abandoned monofilament line along the shoreline of any lake or reservoir, please pick it up. You may be saving a bird from a gruesome death.) **Great Egrets** were relatively scarce, with the exception of a few small flocks including the eight that flew over Lake Elkhorn 7/16 (**ALw**). **Green Herons** continued to find plenty of good nesting sites. At least one adult **Black-crowned Night-Heron** frequented WILLK and Lake Kittamaquundi. They nest colonially with no known county colonies. **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons**, on the other hand, do not need the company of others. This species may have nested, or attempted nesting, locally for at least a decade. Only once in that period has a nest been observed (unsuccessful). With so few records, photographs of an adult with a stick at WILLK 7/6 (**STb**) and at Lake Kittamaquundi 7/22 (**CKc**) were exciting. Sightings of an adult continued, but no other confirmation of nesting was established by this season's end.

A pair of **Cooper's Hawks** built and abandoned a nest at Talbots Landing in 2021. They returned and used the nest successfully in 2022 fledging at least one young (**RGr**). A **Mississippi Kite** sailed over the Cascade Trail, Patapsco Valley SP 6/6 (**BCt**). Although hundreds of **Broad-winged Hawks** pass over during fall migration, their numbers as a breeding species locally have declined to near zero in the last 30 years. Two summer reports at Brown's Bridge were a pleasant surprise. Photos on 6/26 (**LGg**, ph., **Hpt**) and 7/10 (**LGg**, ph.) of single adults appeared to reveal plumage differences establishing two individuals. The possibility that these two birds constituted a pair became stronger when an atlaser observed two juveniles testing their balance and flying ability in a dead tree not far from the ramp on the Montgomery County side of the bridge on 7/30, 7/31, and 8/1 (**ALk**, ph.). An excel-

lent confirmation for the atlas block even if it wasn't in Howard County!

Although adult **Red-headed Woodpeckers** were reported from six locations, the only confirmed nesting was at Long Corner Rd 7/7 (**MPw**, ph.). An immature **Downy Woodpecker** in a W. Friendship yard developed a taste for sweets. It began visiting a hummingbird feeder positioned near a suet feeder (**LCg**). A **Peregrine Falcon** was spotted over Waverly Pd 7/31 (**RRf**).

**Willow Flycatchers** are a species requiring a specialized wetland habitat. They are not easily or casually confirmed. This year they were breeding at WATFD 6/24 (**BHi**) and at Gateway 7/24 (**JHr**). Interestingly, at Mt. Pleasant (MTPLT), despite the species appearing on more than two dozen summer eBird lists, not one indicated a confirmed breeding code. Does that mean that they weren't nesting in the scrubby swamp near Davis Branch? No, it likely indicates that, unless observers specifically target some of the unusual species or habitats, chances of confirmation depend largely on serendipity.

**Warbling Vireos** blend well with the vegetation and their meandering song is easily overlooked. An observer who was attuned to them, however, notched a high of eight at Centennial Pk on 6/24 (**SSt**), a location with plenty of choice habitat. A **Blue Jay** downed a rough greensnake ("thought it was a green ribbon") at Stone Hill Dr 6/14 (**KLz**). Nature is not always easy to watch. At Long Corner on 6/15, a **Fish Crow**, carrying a nestling **European Starling**, flew into a yard with starlings and **Common Grackles** in pursuit. The crow headed to a birdbath where it swished the nestling in the water and flew to the shed roof. It was soon chased off again, still carrying its prey (**MPw**).

**Bank Swallows** were slow to arrive in spring, so perhaps it was not surprising that a laggard showed up at WATFD on 6/12 (**KCK**, ph.). **Cedar Waxwings** are late nesters. A pair was nest building on 7/10 at the Robinson Nature Center (**J/MHr**). A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was unexpected at Cavey La on 7/1 (**RRf**, ph., audio), just the fourth July record, as well as the earliest. Let's hope it is part of next winter's vanguard. A **Brown Creeper** in a Haley's Ct yard was a choice summer sighting 6/10, although seen just once (**BBz**). Because of their excellent camouflage, high, thin song, and nest beneath loose bark, creepers are a difficult species to track during the breeding season.



Broad-winged Hawk

by Lynn Gregg

(Records continued on page 4)

*(Records continued from page 3)*

A **Veery** nest with an incubating bird was a notable find at Long Corner Rd, Patuxent River SP 6/1 (**MPw**). There was a slight uptick in reports of this species with three on successive early July days at different sites (**SJn**, **RTd**, **CHm**). But is that really surprising? Who wouldn't take note of a melodic woodwind in dense woods?

A **House Finch** raised three young in a candleholder hanging from a porch ceiling at Starward Farm, Triadelphia Mill Rd 6/15 (**JWd**). Despite few **Purple Finches** invading last winter, a late male was described at WILLK 6/3 (**J/MHr**), which is the county's latest spring record to date.

As a grassland species subject to continuing habitat loss in the last five decades, **Grasshopper Sparrows** have been a species of special interest to atlasers. Fortunately, the species has taken advantage of fallow or cultivated land in various parts of the county. ALRGL has consistently hosted a colony with a high of 24 on 7/13 (**RCu**)! Although other areas had much lower numbers, confirmations were good news at New Cut Landfill 6/28 (**DZk**), a field along Florence Rd 6/28 (**SMu**), and R. Fulton Dr at Gateway 7/24 (**JHr**). **Savannah Sparrows** are a choice breeding species. A pair was present again at ALRGL 6/6 (**RCu**). They went from consistent singing in early to mid June, to a distraction display on 6/29, and finally to an adult carrying food on 7/13. The combination of grassland habitat at the landfill and Ralph's careful, continuing observations have made it possible to, once again, confirm a rare county nester.

Among sites where **Eastern Meadowlarks** were consistent were New Cut Landfill (**MLC**), ALRGL (**RCu**), and MTPLT (m. obs.). **Brown-headed Cowbird** fledglings were again well-reported—not good news. The following host species were noted in the two summer months: **Eastern Wood-Pewee** (**J/MHr**), **Carolina Wren** (**KCK**), **Tufted Titmouse** (2: **AAI**; **JWd**), **Chipping Sparrow** (2: **GPn**; **RTd**), **Song Sparrow** (4: **KCK**; **Liv**; **PPn**; **MPw**), **Louisiana Waterthrush** (**KCK**), **Prairie Warbler** (**CHm**), **Northern Cardinal** (3: **VSw**; **KCK**; **BCt**), and **Indigo Bunting** (**MPw**).

An early **Northern Waterthrush** at Race Road Wetlands 7/31 (**TCr**) was the first July record for this species and a full eight days earlier than our previous early fall date [8/8/14 Russ Ruffing]. A singing **Black-and-white Warbler** at North Laurel Pk 6/8 (**KCK**) was an unusual location for the species. It was likely a wandering, non-breeding individual. A **Prothonotary Warbler** was reported at Big Branch 6/1 (**MKw**), likely passing through. More exciting was a nest with young in a willow stump near the Howard County parking lot at Brown's Bridge 6/25 (**Mif**). Earlier in the current atlas, the species nested on the Montgomery County side of the bridge (**ALk**). (Brown's Bridge has been a nesting location since at least the second breeding bird atlas more than 15 years ago.) Unfortunately, this year's nesting did not have a happy ending—or so it seemed. On 6/26, a black rat snake was photographed climbing the stump (**LGg**). No Prothonotary was seen subsequently at that cavity. All was not lost, however. Apparently, after the snake predation, the female immediately attempted a second nesting in a different cavity. On 8/4, in

the same willow grove, a fledgling was observed following and being fed by an adult (**ALk**). **Hoodeds** are uncommon breeders. Sightings at MTPLT on 6/3 (**BFr**) and on 6/22 (**DCm**) were at a distinctly odd location. Although many of the county's breeding **American Redstarts** are resident along the Patapsco River, an active nest was found at W. Friendship Pk 6/1 (**LCg**). Undoubtedly, some of the 10 counted at Henryton 6/2 (**J/MHr**) were migrants; a female carrying food confirmed nesting at Marriottsville 7/5 (**GPn**). A female **Northern Parula** feeding a fledgling was a fine confirmation at Dorsey Run Woods 7/23 (**KCK**).

A well-described **Blue-winged x Golden-winged Warbler** at MTPLT 6/3 did not fit neatly into any of the named hybrids (**LCn**). All hybrids of these two species are rare county sightings.

**Summer Tanagers** always attract attention, especially so during a breeding bird atlas. This year a male at Schooley Mill Pk was first heard on 5/21 (**ALk**). Surprisingly, it was not a one-day wonder. It sang—and—sang—and sang. It was even heard counter-singing with a male **Scarlet Tanager** on 6/30 (**ALk**). Multiple birders assisted in trying to confirm nesting. The bird was seen, photographed, and recorded until 7/6 (**ALk**), but there was never verification of a mate or of nesting.

Although the HCBC has been unable to lease **Dickcissel** nesting habitat along Underwood Rd since 2018, the species' presence continues to thrill birders, as the tiny colony hung on for another breeding season. A few birds have returned each year with at least a small number of young fledging. On 7/11, a juvenile was photographed (**VSw**). The same day that observer also spotted a female carrying nesting material indicating a second nesting was underway.

**Correction:** Bill Hill asked to change his Alder Flycatcher report of 5/28/22 at WATFD to a Willow. He had learned that Willows can sing an alternate song that is extremely similar to an Alder's. In addition to the 2022 record, he recalled reporting an Alder on 6/4/2005 at Shady La and believed that bird was also a Willow and not an Alder. Bird records rest on the accuracy of the submission and the integrity of the birder. We applaud Bill's assistance in continuing to set and maintain a high standard for county bird records.

**Appreciation:** *Joe Hanfman and Russ Ruffing carefully edited this article. Their time and efforts produced a more accurate seasonal summary.*

**Observers:** **AAI** – Annette Allor, **BBz** – Bonnie Bezila, **TCr** – Tim Carney, **LCn** – Larss Celnieks, **KCK** – Ken Clark, **MLC** – Mary Lou Clark, **LCg** – Lisa Colangelo, **DCo** – Donna Corollo, **BCt** – Ben Costello, **RCu** – Ralph Cullison, **DCm** – David Cummings, **SE** – Sue Earp, **WE** – Wes Earp, **BFr** – Brian Fourr, **RGr** – Ralph Geuder, **LGg** – Lynn Gregg, **CHm** – Catherine Hallam, **JHf** – Joe Hanfman, **JHr** – John Harris, **MHr** – Meg Harris, **BHi** Bill Hill, **Mif** – Marshall Iliff, **SJn** – Steven Jones, **MKw** – Mike Kerwin, **CKc** – Clayton Koonce, **ELp** – Ellen Lathrop, **ALw** – Allen Lewis, **KLz** – Kathy Litzinger, **Liv** – Livia, **ALk** – Anne Looker, **FLv** – Felicia Lovelett, **DMS** – Dean Mahlstedt, **SMu** – Sue Muller, **WOr** – Wendy Ormont, **HPt** – Howard Patterson, **PPn** – Pam Perna, **GPn** – Gregg Petersen, **MPw** – Mary Prowell, **RRf** – Russ Ruffing, **SSt** – Sidney Schechet, **NSw** – Nancy Schweiss, **VSw** – Val Swan, **STb** – Steven Talabec, **RTd** – Robin Todd, **JWd** – Josh Ward, **DZk** – Dave Ziolkowski.



## SUMMARY OF THE 2022 HOWARD COUNTY FALL COUNT

BY MIKE MCCLURE AND CHUCK STIRRAT

The twenty-ninth annual Howard County Fall Count was conducted on Sept. 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022 with the count data shown in the table below. This count has turned out to be notably above average with numbers for the total birds and warblers mostly up countywide. The total number of bird species was up 13 from last year while the number of individuals was up 3,608. For the warblers, the species count was up five while the number of individual warblers was up 203.

The number of participants, parties, and the overall effort as measured by the hours and miles continued to remain strong despite the unusual circumstances imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic with notably increased effort in hours and miles for the count.

2022 Count Data					
	Observed Birds Countywide		Observed Warblers Countywide		Statistics
	Species	Birds	Species	Birds	
Numbers	125	15,248	23	553	
Historical High: Low	140 : 108	26,651 : 9,293	30 : 13	1,004 : 130	
Year 's of High: Low	2010 : 2004	1994 : 2004	1994 : 2004	1994 : 2004	
Averages for Birds & Species	124.34	15,059.62	23.00	429.31	
Counters: Parties					70 : 50
Counters: Parties Averages					55.3 : 36.0
Counters Hours: Miles					259.2 : 709.5
Counters Hours: Miles Averages					196.7: 434.2

Saturday's temperature started in the mid 50s [dew point 53°F] at 6:00 a.m. with light cloud cover. The temperature rose to 80°F [dew point 63°F] in late afternoon. Winds were light to nonexistent from morning until early evening. The temperature and dew point made for mildly uncomfortable conditions when in full sun.

Bird count participants were Dianne Aguilera, Karan Blum, Jim & Marilyn Brinkley, Donna Carollo, Ken Clark, **Mary Lou Clark (Area 6 Coordinator)**, Lisa Colangelo, Dennis Coskren, Jeff & Karen Culler, Ralph Cullison III, Bob & Jan Depuy, Susan & **Wes Earp (Area 1 Co-coordinator)**, Marti Elenbrock, Lynn Gregg, Joe Hanfman, John & Meg Harris, Bill & Gayle Hill, David Holmes, Arlene Kerber, Brenda Kidera, Clayton Koonce, Andrew & **Russell Kovach (Area 2 Coordinator)**, Yi-Ying Lee, Shashi Lengade, Mike Leumas, **Allen Lewis (Area 7 Coordinator)**, Kathie Lillie, Felicia Lovelett, Brigitte Lund, Mary Maxey, **Mike McClure (Area 4 & County Co-coordinator)**, John McKitterick, Karlyn McPartland, Barry Miller, Brian Moyer, Sue Muller, Sue Neri, Ben Newton, Wendy Ormont, Bonnie Ott, Steve Parr, Howard Patterson, Pam Perna, **Gregg Petersen (Area 3 Coordinator)**, Kate & Matt Plough, Suzanne Probst, Mary Prowell, Russ Ruffing, David Sandler, **Kurt Schwarz (Area 5 Coordinator)**, Clare Sebok, Jo Solem, Teresa Spencer, Michelle Stewart, **Chuck Stirrat (County Co-coordinator)**, Valerie Swan, Robin Todd, Sherry Tomlinson, Lisa Troutman, Kristin Trouton, **Mark Wallace (Area 1 Co-coordinator)**, Michele Wright.

Plan now to join us on a future seasonal count and if possible attend the tally (if there is one) as well. Next year the 2022 Fall Count will be held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of September which will be the 16<sup>th</sup>.

Individual species table is on [page 6](#). A full report of the results will be available [in two weeks or less] at the [Seasonal Counts Results](#) page on the club's website.

### MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

If you have not yet renewed your membership for 2022-23, go to the HCBC website at <https://www.howardbirds.website> and click on "Join Us" at the top of the home page.

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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Megan Bolcar, *Editor*  
Joanne Solem, *Proofreader*

## HOWARD COUNTY FALL COUNT RESULTS - SEPTEMBER 17, 2022

Totals		Totals		Totals	
Canada Goose	1,420	Eastern Wood-Pewee	105	Field Sparrow	22
Wood Duck	33	Acadian Flycatcher	8	Savannah Sparrow	1
Mallard	106	<i>Trail's Flycatcher</i>	1	Song Sparrow	48
Wild Turkey	19	Least Flycatcher	1	Swamp Sparrow	1
Rock Pigeon	172	<i>Empidonax species</i>	20	<i>unidentified sparrow</i>	20
Mourning Dove	452	Eastern Phoebe	73	Eastern Towhee	83
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	22	White-eyed Vireo	15	Yellow-breasted Chat	2
Common Nighthawk	3	Yellow-throated Vireo	9	Eastern Meadowlark	5
Chimney Swift	416	Blue-headed Vireo	4	Red-winged Blackbird	61
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	42	Philadelphia Vireo	2	Brown-headed Cowbird	319
Killdeer	21	Warbling Vireo	5	Common Grackle	72
Spotted Sandpiper	2	Red-eyed Vireo	101	Ovenbird	9
Solitary Sandpiper	1	Blue Jay	862	Black-&-white Warbler	59
Ring-billed Gull	1	American Crow	589	Tennessee Warbler	12
Double-crested Cormorant	36	Fish Crow	258	Nashville Warbler	2
Great Blue Heron	43	<i>crow species</i>	525	Kentucky Warbler	1
Great Egret	1	Common Raven	6	Common Yellowthroat	77
Green Heron	13	Carolina Chickadee	274	American Redstart	98
Black Vulture	107	Tufted Titmouse	239	Cape May Warbler	9
Turkey Vulture	282	Horned Lark	2	Northern Parula	41
Osprey	6	Tree Swallow	24	Magnolia Warbler	79
Northern Harrier	1	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	4	Bay-breasted Warbler	14
Sharp-shinned Hawk	7	Cedar Waxwing	93	Blackburnian Warbler	11
Cooper's Hawk	19	Red-breasted Nuthatch	10	Yellow Warbler	2
<i>accipiter species</i>	1	White-breasted Nuthatch	248	Chestnut-sided Warbler	24
Bald Eagle [ad/im/unk]	12	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	23	Blackpoll Warbler	6
Red-shouldered Hawk	97	House Wren	44	Blk.-thrt'd. Blue Warbler	9
Broad-winged Hawk	823	Winter Wren	1	Palm Warbler	10
Red-tailed Hawk	19	Marsh Wren	1	Pine Warbler	3
Eastern Screech-Owl	2	Carolina Wren	489	Yel.-rump'd (Myrtle) Warbler	16
Great Horned Owl	6	Gray Catbird	527	Prairie Warbler	5
Barred Owl	8	Brown Thrasher	26	Blk.-thrt'd. Green Warbler	55
Belted Kingfisher	30	Northern Mockingbird	185	Canada Warbler	4
Red-headed Woodpecker	3	European Starling	1,355	Wilson's Warbler	1
Red-bellied Woodpecker	267	Eastern Bluebird	373	<i>unidentified warbler</i>	6
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1	Veery	10	Scarlet Tanager	12
Downy Woodpecker	197	Gray-cheeked Thrush	2	Northern Cardinal	685
Hairy Woodpecker	49	Swainson's Thrush	25	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	22
Northern Flicker	117	Wood Thrush	19	Blue Grosbeak	12
Pileated Woodpecker	64	American Robin	644	Indigo Bunting	71
American Kestrel	20	House Sparrow	340	Painted Bunting	
Merlin	3	House Finch	177	Dickcissel	
<b>Peregrine Falcon</b>	1	American Goldfinch	447		
Great Crested Flycatcher	9	Grasshopper Sparrow	1	<b>Area Total Birds:</b>	<b>15,248</b>
Eastern Kingbird	1	Chipping Sparrow	137	<b>Area Total Species:</b>	<b>125</b>

## OWLING—IT'S LIKE A BOX OF CHOCOLATES

BY GREGG PETERSEN

So, there I was pulling up to the small Patuxent River State Park (PRSP) parking area just inside the Howard County line for the Fall Bird Count on September 17<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 in the morning. Why so early? I was there to try my ear at “owling.” Russ Kovach had assigned me the eastern wedge of the PVSP that is the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission’s (WSSC) northwestern edge of the Triadelphia Reservoir. It was pitch dark. As I pulled through the small gate in the rough gravel, I noticed another car there barely illuminated in the twilight which meant that at least one deer hunter might be along the path I was planning to follow to Cattail Creek in pursuit of owls. Then I thought, “Hmmm, I forgot to wear any reflective or orange clothing today.” But I’m good at rationalizing. I thought, “It’ll be OK, Gregg. All the deer hunters aren’t wearing orange either and they ought to be able to discern bipeds from quadrupeds...”

The dark forest was quiet. I was a bit early. I understood from my less-than-extensive Wikipedia research, two of the owls I sought tend to be “crepuscular”: meaning that an animal tends to appear or be more active in twilight hours of dawn and dusk. Crepuscular is a big word I learned last year from Mary Lou Clark when we were searching for American Woodcocks as the light was waning off Samuel Morse Drive in Columbia (See Mary Lou, I do listen to you ... sometimes).

As I trudged down the path towards Cattail Creek under the scant light of a sliver of a moon, I reflected some of my previous attempts at owling since I joined the Howard County Bird Club in the last three years. I had travelled up to the

*(Owling [continued](#) on page 9)*

### WINTER FINCH FORECAST

Tyler Hoar of the Finch Research Network has prepared the 2022-2023 Winter Finch Forecast. The forecast for the upcoming winter season can be found here: <https://finchnetwork.org/winter-finch-forecast-2022>

## MARYLAND/DC BREEDING BIRD ATLAS 3, 2020-2024

BY SUE MULLER

As we are nearing the end of the third year of surveys, we are already looking forward to year four! We have had over 300 volunteers submit over 15,000 atlas checklists in eBird, amazing numbers.

December is a great time to be watching the skies for Bald Eagle courtship displays as well as looking for them carrying sticks in their talons. Be listening for the hoots of the Great Horned Owl (safe dates begin December 15<sup>th</sup>). Refresh your memory of the courtship calls of this bird by listening here: <https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/great-horned-owl>.



Great Horned Owl

by Sue Muller

The one bird that breeds year-round is the Rock Pigeon. Be looking for these birds in barns, under bridges, in pavilions, etc. This species has only been confirmed in eight blocks.

If you are new to atlasing, it is never too late to get started, we have two more years ahead of us! We document our breeding observations using eBird. Contact County Coordinators Sue Muller and Dave Ziolkowski, they will get you started; they can be reached at: [howard@mdbirds.org](mailto:howard@mdbirds.org). You can join the atlas email list and keep up to date on the latest finds and training opportunities etc. For more information about the atlas, go to the club website at <https://howardbirds.website/birding/breeding-bird-atlases/bba3/>.

## HOWARD COUNTY NUMBER 300 FOR JO SOLEM

Howard County Bird Club would like to take a moment to congratulate one of our longest time members of the club, Jo Solem, on her 300th county bird. A special number for our 50th anniversary of the club!

Jo Solem saw the Western Kingbird, the 300th bird in Howard County for her, at Mount Pleasant on September 20, 2022. The kingbird was first spotted that morning at Mt Pleasant by Allen Lewis and was observed by many others when word was spread.

Jo is a lifelong birder and has been active in the Howard County Bird Club since its first year (1972). She wrote *Birding Howard County, Maryland* and *Attracting Birds in the Maryland Piedmont*. Jo has served as president of the bird club, was an initiator of the statewide Midwinter Bird Count, and since 1979 has compiled Howard County bird records for several publications. Currently, she is chair of the club’s Fiftieth Anniversary Committee.

Fellow club member Joe Hanfman had the following to say about the incredible achievement: “An amazing feat. There have only been 312 birds seen in Howard County all-time and Jo has seen 96% of them. There is no one in the state who has a higher percentage of county birds seen in any of Maryland’s 23 counties.”



## SOUTHERN FLYING SQUIRREL VS. BIRDS

BY CLAYTON KOONCE



Red-bellied Woodpecker and Flying Squirrel  
by Clayton Koonce

On March 19, 2022, I was listing at "Donleigh ponds and woods" (an eBird hotspot in the Atholton area of Columbia) when I came across birds mobbing a southern flying squirrel in a tree cavity. I had made my first pass along the path through this belt of woods connecting two ponds and had not noticed anything unusual yet. On my return down the path, at about 1:00 p.m., I noticed a flurry of birds excited around the top of a tall stump a few yards from the path. I could see three Eastern Bluebirds, a pair of Red-bellied Woodpeckers and a pair of Downy Woodpeckers. Later, a White-breasted Nuthatch was attracted by the activity, but it did not approach the stump. The birds were flying at and perching near a 12 - 14 inch vertical fissure, near the stump's top, about 15 feet off the ground. One at a time, they were clinging to the bottom edge of the cavity and thrusting their heads inside. I first thought some food source was attracting them, but as I peered through binoculars and camera zoom I spotted the head of an animal peeking out. One of the images I captured on my camera showed a mammal with the large eyes of a nocturnal species — a flying squirrel, probably in a daytime sleeping chamber. The birds were not foraging as first thought but behaving just the way a mob of birds does when a black rat snake is climbing a tree or posing a threat to a nest cavity. (According to the literature, a flying squirrel's diet, although mainly acorns, nuts and seeds, can include bird eggs and young.) A couple of times, I spotted the squirrel lunging and swatting at a bird clinging at the edge of the cavity. The male Red-bellied Woodpecker is seen in one of my photos making a stab at the squirrel. I don't know if this or any of the birds made physical contact, but a photo of the mammal peeking out after this encounter indicates that it was not injured.

After about ten minutes of observation, the birds quickly dispersed. A few more minutes watching and photographing the location of the cavity and two more passes by it showed that all was quiet now, and the flying squirrel remained out of sight. I was later asked what noises were made by any of the animals during the activity, but I can remember only that the birds were making a lot of commotion or agitated noises. If the squirrel vocalized at all, it was inaudible from my position. (Temperatures were in the low 70s that afternoon, but it felt like a front was moving in during my walk. It was sunny at the start, but by the time the activity was noticed clouds and breeze were increasing.)

*Acknowledgment:* Thanks to Jo Solem for suggesting this article after seeing my eBird list. Jo pointed out that activity like this involving a flying squirrel is rarely seen. This incident was also my first time seeing a flying squirrel live.



Flying Squirrel by Clayton Koonce

## FISHING LINE DANGER

BY HOWARD PATTERSON AND BRENDA HOLLEY



Great Blue Heron snared in fishing line  
by Howard Patterson

On the afternoon of July 26, Brenda Holley noticed a Great Blue Heron on the lakeshore at Wilde Lake that was caught in fishing line. The bird was calm, but would regularly shake its right wing, moving the surrounding vegetation. It was snared a by a frog-like fishing lure, with fishing line snagged in nearby brush. Brenda called the county, and in about 15 minutes two Howard County Police Animal Control officers arrived. When they approached the heron, it flushed from the bank to a fallen horizontal log over the water. As one of the officers carefully crawled along the log, the heron dropped into the water. The officer was able to use the fishing line to pull the wing closer and, with some difficulty, was able to free the bird. After being freed, the heron perched on a nearby branch over the water.

Later, Howard County Fire and Rescue Services personnel arrived, having been called by another person. They attempted to capture the bird, thinking that its wing was injured. They intended to then turn the bird over to migratory bird rescuer, Lee Prouty. During that water rescue attempt the bird ultimately hopped to a higher dead branch, then flew away.

Thanks to both organizations for responding to this incident.

Every year many thousands of birds are killed or injured after becoming entangled in fishing line. Please politely remind fishermen of how dangerous monofilament can be for many birds (including those who try to use the line for nesting material) and encourage them to retrieve and properly dispose of lost line. Birders should also take the initiative and always pick up any discarded fishing line or lures they find along shorelines.



Great Blue Heron after rescue  
by Howard Patterson



## LISA COLANGELO-ATLASER OF THE MONTH

BY GABRIEL FOLEY

*(The following interview is an excerpt from the September issue of “What’s Happening?” the BBA3 newsletter from State Coordinator Gabe Foley, in which our very own Lisa Colangelo is featured as the Atlaser of the Month!)*

***Lisa Colangelo, from West Friendship, is a long-time Howard County chapter member.***

*Where is your favorite place to atlas?*

Wherever the MOS conference was that year—that’s my favorite until the next one!

*Have you been involved with any atlases prior to this one?*

Yes, I participated in the last one. Same block, Sykesville CW. Although during the last atlas I had a pre-schooler and an elementary schooler. I used to drop one off at school and the other at preschool, grab my binoculars and head out! Fun times!

*What is the best thing about atlasing?*

I love the new format—no quarter blocks, and also the opportunity to travel throughout the state and participate in atlasing no matter where you are.

*What’s our biggest conservation issue?*

Global warming. I’m trading my car this year for an electric one.

*You can take binoculars, a field guide, and what other item?*

Toss-up between snacks or my dog!

*Who would you go atlasing with?*

It would have been fun to go out with Chan Robbins, back in the day.

*What bird do you particularly like?*

American Woodcock is a particular favorite. Love that crazy peent.

*What bird best reflects your personality?*

I’m a curious, active Gray Catbird.

*What made you interested in birds?*

My father was a great all-around naturalist and we were the family that was always outdoors!

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*(Owling continued from page 7)*

pine forests off Annapolis Rock Road with Howard County owl experienced birder Jay Sheppard and sometimes without him many times in search of Northern Saw-Whet Owls. This year we had success, sort of: we found pellets! But wait, finding owl poop is not acceptable for eBird postings. So, I had waited in the evening twilight with Jay and many mornings by myself in the pre-dawn minutes for the desired birds to call. But I had not had success as opposed to the guy I think I will call the “Owling Doctor Doolittle of Howard County”: Joe Hanfman. It seems that Joe doesn’t even have to leave his house to find owls! During the May Count last year, he had two Barred Owls regaling him at his house at 3:00 a.m. and earlier this year he had a Northern Saw-Whet Owl “toot-tooting” in the woods outside of his place for ten minutes.

I continued down the dark path on my mission. Owling, like birding overall, is as the famous American philosopher Forest

Gump said, “Like a box of chocolates, you never know what you’re gonna get.” One thing was certain to me, if I didn’t go out looking for the birds at the right time, I was certain to not be successful. During the May Count this year, we only had 90 minutes total owling hours in all of Howard County and I was one of those slackers that “slept in” until 7:00 a.m. I was determined to “represent” and at least make the effort this time.

As I crested the final rise leading to Cattail Creek, I began to hear a low sound that I began to imagine was a Great Horned Owl. But, sometimes in the past, I had been fooled by the low barking of a nearby farm dog accompanied by the crow of the local insomniac rooster. But as I got closer to the water, the sounds became clear. Two Great Horned Owls were indeed hooting to each other from opposite sides of the creek. Success! I then heard another louder, incomplete hoot dissonant with the Great Horned Owls from off to my left, but I could not identify it at first.

So, I began the owling call playback process starting in order of smallest owl, the Eastern Screech-Owl, then playing the Barred Owl, and finally playing a Great Horned Owl to see what might respond. Truthfully, I might have also whimsically played Northern Saw-whet and Long-eared Owl calls as well. Very experienced birders Russ Ruffing and Jo Solem would have told me that was a wasted endeavor based on the time of the year and previous historical records, but a guy can wish, can’t he?

I heard no specific responses until I played the Barred Owl. But then I saw as the sky was getting lighter, a dark predatory shape flew over me. I could tell it was a larger owl, but not which one it was. It landed quietly, then moved tree-to-tree over me watching like it was sizing me up for breakfast. Then it sounded off! It was a classic “Who cooks for you?” Barred Owl call and then two more Barred Owls joined in the chorus off to the side loudly caterwauling where it sounds like one Barred Owl is trying to exceed the other in volume. Success! I now had seen or heard five owls! I tried to capture a Merlin recording of the Barred Owl ruckus, then I walked the half mile back to the car after trying one last time to get an Eastern Screech-Owl for a trifecta.

What a morning and start to my Fall Count! But my owling experience was not over. As I crested the last hill to the parking lot, I heard yet another pair of Great Horned Owls hooting to each other! And as I stopped to listen in the ever-increasing dawn light, a third Great Horned Owl landed 15 feet over my head on a snag and began calling as well. Eight owls to start my Fall Count Day and no hunting arrows whistled by my ear in the process! I will remember this day for a very, very long time.

Why go out owling? Because it is fun and rewarding. The birds are out there and if you are persistent, you will have a similar experience. And importantly, on bird count days you will help the HCBC document a more accurate historical record. I know I’m going to try to make it a habit for all future counts.



## HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB

*Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society*

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### November/December 2022 - Inside this Issue

Club Meetings	Breeding Bird Atlas
Summer Bird Records	Jo Solem's County 300th
Field Trips	So. Flying Squirrel vs. Birds
Fall Count Summary	Fishing Line Danger
Membership Renewal	Atlaser of the Month
Owling	In Memoriam

### IN MEMORIAM

Janet Randle, a 41-year member, died in June at the age of 97. She was the club's oldest member. Jan participated in numerous club activities, was the bookstore manager 1982-85, and, with husband Don, hosted the May Count tally 1982-2006.

Fellow member Eileen Clegg paid tribute to her dear friend in the eulogy at Jan's memorial service. It can be accessed on the Howard County Bird Club's website at <https://howardbirds.website/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Janet-Randle-1.pdf>

### IN MEMORIAM

Jane Coskren, a 36-year member, died in July after several years of failing health. For several decades, Jane was an extremely active member both as a birder and in leadership roles. Her consuming interest in the first statewide breeding bird atlas, led to her becoming chair of the editorial committee for the second one. She, and husband Dennis, traveled widely both to add birds to their lists and to gain a wider understanding of the cultures of the countries they visited.

A more detailed tribute can be found on the Howard County Bird Club's website at <https://howardbirds.website/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Jane-H-Coskren.pdf>