



The Goldfinch

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

Founded 1972



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- [Club Meetings](#).....1
- [President’s Message](#).....1
- [Spring Field Trips](#).....2
- [Winter Records](#).....3
- [Swan Identification](#).....6
- [Mid-winter Count Summary](#).....7
- [Beginner Birder’s Corner](#).....7
- [Board of Directors Meeting](#).....8
- [Mocha Emerald Dragonfly](#).....8
- [May Count Announcement](#).....9
- [MD/DC Breeding Bird Atlas 3](#).....9
- [Welcome New Members](#).....9
- [Club Member Honored](#).....9
- [2024 Potluck](#).....10

CLUB MEETINGS - BY MARY LOU CLARK



Thursday, May 9, 2024 “Recent Advances in Owl Biology and Conservation” by Steve Sheffield. Dr. Sheffield will present highlights from the recent World Owl Conference held in Wisconsin in late October 2023. In addition, he will summarize several of the many papers that he and his team are in the process of compiling into manuscripts for published proceedings of the conference, for which he is the lead editor.

Steve Sheffield is a professor of Biology at Bowie State University. Dr. Sheffield is a field biologist who holds a Ph.D. in Zoology from Oklahoma State University, a M.S. in Wildlife Ecology from University of Maryland—CEES, and a B.A. in Zoology from SUNY-Oswego. Dr. Sheffield completed a post-doc with Oak Ridge Nat Laboratory and the EPA, and has previously served on the faculty at Clemson University, Virginia Tech, and George Mason University. Dr. Sheffield has held research associate positions at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History and Carnegie Museum of Natural History, and is the curator of mammals for the Natural History Society of Mammals. Steve is also the current vice president of the Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) and serves on a number of MOS committees. Dr. Sheffield is the compiler for the spring migratory bird count for Anne Arundel County, and covers five miles on the C&O Canal for the mid-winter bird count, and is an avid CBC participant, having completed 150-200 CBCs in five states and initiated a count circle in Oklahoma, serving as its compiler for five years.

Club programs are presented in a hybrid format and include a brief business meeting, club announcements, and guest speaker presentation. Attendees may join either in person at the Robinson Nature Center, 6692 Cedar Lane, Columbia MD 21044, or online using Zoom. The in-person hospitality session begins, and the Zoom portal opens, at 7:00 p.m. with the meeting beginning at 7:30 p.m. Click on the “Calendar” tab on the HCBC website’s Home page at the top of the page for the most recent information.

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE: CHIRPS TO THE FLOCK - BY GREGG PETERSEN

Hello all! I’m still beaming from the great potluck dinner and slideshow we had on March 23rd! We had 54 attendees, and everyone enjoyed a great event organized by Sherry Tomlinson and Meghaan Lane. I know many others of you helped, and thanks to you all for another fun get together. I know our special guests, Shannon Davis, the Robinson Nature Center Manager, and Chuck and Denise Sharp, who host our Waterford Flats site, had a good time. And for the very many of us that were stumped trying to distinguish between a Tundra and a Trumpeter Swan, Dave Ziolkowski gave us more clues on how to resolve this challenging ID in the field.

By the time you get this Goldfinch, we will have given out some significant Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) awards at our annual meeting and election. This year, we conferred three types of MOS awards, plus for the second year, ran a Young Birder MOS (YMOS) Backpack competition. The three awards were the Valued Service, Rookie of the Year, and the Blood, Sweat and Tears awards.

The Valued Service Award is the MOS’s formal award given to someone “for outstanding sustained performance in some role or capacity.” Generally, no more than two per chapter are awarded any given year, if at all. What I have found is that we have many well-qualified members deserving of this award, and it is a tough decision—one that I was not qualified to make, since I have only been in the club for four years. So, I convened a board of seven of our nine previous Valued Service honorees to help me choose our two winners. Based on their thoughtful assessments, this year we recognized Eva Sunnell and Wes Earp.

Eva’s accomplishments over 40 years of service included Field Trip, Potluck, and Program Committee Chairmanships, participation in multiple breeding bird atlases, decades of service on bird counts, the annual seed sale, the Wildflower Project, leading field trips, and giving community bird talks.

Wes’s over 35 years of service included terms as club Vice-President and President. He also acted as farming community liaison, organized a display and Big Sit at multiple U. of MD Farm open houses, designed Waterford Flats, for years organized members’ photos on the TV screen each meeting, breeding bird atlas contributor, served as area leader for many seasonal counts, and was an annual seed sale, herp atlas, and bluebird trail monitoring volunteer.

(Continued on [page 5](#))

SPRING 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. HCBC members receive priority on trips that are limited by number of participants. No pets. There is a listing of all previous field trips on the "Calendar" page titled [Previous Field Trips](#). The trips with links have results on a separate page.

R Spring Wildflower Walk

Weekday afternoon. Late April/mid-May. Date and location to be determined within a few days of the trip. If you would like to be contacted, send email to Bob and Jo Solem odenata@msn.com

[West Friendship Park](#)

May 1, Wednesday, 8:00 a.m.

Meet in the front parking lot behind the white farmhouse near MD 144. Moderate walking along field edges and through stream valleys. The park now has very nice meadows which were used by meadowlarks and Grasshopper Sparrows, in addition to plenty of other types of habitat. Expect wet areas. Rustic facilities.

Leader – Lisa Colangelo, icolangelo@verizon.net

Mullinix Mill Road

May 3, Friday, 8:00 a.m. - about 11:00 a.m.

Meet at the parking lot on the south side of the road near the river (39.29474N, 77.14641W). The new mountain bike trail will head up into the forest with a nice overlook of the river at one point. Then, it's down to a little meadow and back on the old horse trail along the river. Walking distance is about two miles. Expect the usual woodland birds, with any number of migrants passing through. Resident nesters are Louisiana Waterthrushes, Worm-eating Warblers, Ovenbirds, Common Yellowthroats, Wood Thrushes, and more.

Leader – Mary Prowell, Boprow@aol.com

[Western Regional Park](#)

May 4, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. 2-3 hours.

Park in first parking lot on the right. Moderate walking along field edges and woodland trails. Opportunities for warblers, sparrows, thrushes, and flyovers. Facilities available.

Leader – David Sandler, detour65@gmail.com

B May Count

May 11, Saturday. See announcement on [page 9](#).

B Big Sit, Mt Pleasant, Howard County Conservancy

May 14, Tuesday, 8:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Meet at the Skywatch. Join fellow birders at the Chandler S. Robbins Skywatch at the Howard County Conservancy. You can show up and leave at any time. This is an unofficial Big Sit. We will look for flyovers, and look for and listen to surrounding birds. No need to sign up, just show up. Facilities available. Cancelled in case of heavy rain.

[Western Regional Park](#)

May 19, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. 2-3 hours.

Use parking lot to the left of the Gary Arthur Senior Center (2400 MD-97, Cooksville, MD), not the Western Regional Park lots. Moderate walking along field edges and woodland trails. Opportunities for warblers, sparrows, thrushes, and flyovers. Facilities available.

Leader – Lisa Colangelo, icolangelo@verizon.net

Patapsco Scrubland

May 25, Saturday, 7:30 a.m. (half day).

Meet at 735 River Road (up long drive take right-hand split & park by house). Starting in the scrubland, we'll look for warblers, vireos, thrushes, and other edge species. Depending on conditions, we may continue into the woods. Moderate to possibly difficult walking; steep trails with several stream crossings, so wear appropriate footwear. We will also be able to view Felicia's Chimney Swift tower. Facilities available.

Leader – Felicia Lovelett, c5nest@gmail.com

R Hot Spots for Red Knots

May 26, Sunday. All-day.

We will visit Delaware along the shore of the Delaware River and Delaware Bay. The tentative itinerary is Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge, Dupont Nature Center, Slaughter Beach, and the Broadkill impoundment at Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge. This is subject to change in the event of spectacular rarities, conditions at sites, etc. The trip will be limited to a total of 12 people, four cars. Carpooling is mandatory. The leader will bring short-range radios. This is all day; if you cannot commit to the full day, please do not sign up. Expect biting insects; bring repellent and pray for a stiff breeze. Bring lunch, water, snacks. Email trip leader to reserve your spot and receive meeting location details.

Leader – Kurt Schwarz, krschwal@verizon.net

R B Black Birders Week Field Trip at [Mt Pleasant, Howard County Conservancy](#)

June 1, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Meet at parking lot near the barn. Part of Black Birders Week events at Mt Pleasant, Howard County Conservancy. Easy walking through the fields of Mt Pleasant Farm. Treelines, hedgerows, and streams provide opportunities for non-meadow species. Facilities available. Register with the [Howard County Conservancy](#).

Leaders – Kojo Baidoo, Teresa Spencer, and Mary Lou Clark, doctorfx_99@yahoo.com, with guest photographer Desmond Johnson

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

The HCBC Butterfly Group will be leading six summer walks, two each in June, July, and August. These walks are being co-sponsored with the Howard County Conservancy. Later in spring, check the website for information and details, and to register: <https://www.howardnature.org/events/>

B Dick Smith Memorial Butterfly Walk

September 1, Sunday, 10:30 a.m. 2-3 hours

Meet at [Elkhorn Garden Plots](#), Oakland Mills Rd opposite Dasher Ct. Enjoy searching for late-summer butterflies with instruction on their identification. Easy walking on mowed paths around the community garden plots and Elkhorn meadow. We will continue on paved paths and mowed areas near the right-of-way alongside open, flowery wet meadows and brushy hillsides. Bring close-focus binoculars to view nectaring behavior. Cancelled if raining or overcast. No facilities.

Leader – Linda Hunt, raven10322@hotmail.com

<p>B = Good for beginning birders W = Wheelchair accessible R = Reservations Required</p>
--

WINTER BIRD RECORDS: DECEMBER 1, 2023 – FEBRUARY 29, 2024

BY JOANNE SOLEM

Although December's precipitation and temperatures were above average, January's seesawed from early mild temps to two modest snowfalls followed by a polar freeze. As the mid-month cold air spread over much of the country and the Great Lakes began to freeze, lingering waterfowl finally moved south. In contrast, February was at least four degrees warmer than normal, continuing the generally mild winter.

A female **Western Tanager** (second winter record, third overall) took top seasonal honors! The bird showed up at a ball seed feeder southwest of US 29/MD 32 first at Moosberger Ct 1/4 - 1/5 (**ARF**), then on 1/6 at a suet feeder at nearby Silent Dell, where it appeared intermittently until noon on 1/8.

Other notable species were Short-eared Owl, Blue-headed Vireo,



Western Tanager

by Steve Luke

Tree Swallow, Vesper Sparrow, and Orange-crowned Warbler. Additional highlights included Snow Goose, Ross's Goose, Greater White-fronted Goose, Trumpeter Swan, Redhead, Long-tailed Duck, Sora, Sandhill Crane, Bonaparte's Gull, and Northern Saw-whet Owl.

A **Snow Goose**, intermediate between dark and white morphs, was noted at a Jennings Chapel Rd pond 1/1 (**JHf**). It reappeared at a Larriland Farm pond, MD 94 on 1/8 (**DCm, JSm**). Lone *white* Snows were picked out at Brighton Dam (BRDAM) 1/20 (**JHf**), at Centennial Park (CENPK) 1/26 in a flock of flyover Canada Geese (**BO, ph.; DCm, ph.**), and two were noted with eight Canadas over Meadowridge Business Pk pond 1/22 (**MLn**). The Snow reported at the University of MD Central Farm 1/30 (**SLk**) was ultimately identified as a hybrid Snow x Canada (**KS**). A flyover white goose in the Ellicott City area 12/9 (**VLi**) lacked species details.

A **Ross's Goose** spotted at Waterford (WATFD) 12/1 (**VSw, ph.**) stayed two days—a fine start for the new season. A **Greater White-fronted Goose** appeared on a Larriland pond on 1/16 (**VSw, ph.**) on the heels of the year's first snowstorm, remaining until 1/18; two were spotted at the same location the afternoon of 2/10 (**YYL, VSw**).

Cackling Geese have become seasonal regulars. Though they

pose some ID challenges, reports from at least a dozen locations were accepted. Springdale Quarry continued autumn's pattern of hosting numbers in the mid to high single digits, reaching a "minimum of 22" with 250 Canadas (some small) on 1/20 (**JHf**). The winter's peak was a flock of 35 that stopped briefly at Scott's Pd, So. Trotter Rd early on 2/16 (**WE**). The first major wave of northward bound **Canada Geese** was picked up on 2/26 by observers at multiple locations (**RBy, LGg, SMu, RRf, VSw**).

Swan ID is no longer as easy as when the local choices were Whistling (now Tundra) or Mute. A pair of **Trumpeter Swans** that spent 1/27 at CENPK (m. obs.) posed a particular challenge. Eventually, a recording helped make the ID (**HPT**). After an exchange of emails with a member of the HC Records Committee, Dave Ziolkowski was asked to consolidate the swan ID information for all HCBC members. (See [p. 6.](#)) A few **Tundra Swans** appeared sporadically; the majority were vocalizing which confirmed the ID: four over Sewell's Orchard 12/1 (**BMy**), six at Brighton Dam (BRDAM) 1/21 (**RRf+**), nine at WATFD 2/19 (**SLk, LMcD, GPn**), and two at Howard Chapel Rd 2/22 (**CSt**).

Puddle ducks were well-represented. The **Northern Shoveler** high was 21 at Race Road Wetlands (RACRW) 1/7 (**JMHR**). **Gadwalls** were spotted at three sites with highs of 16 at RACRW 1/1 (**DCm**), 19 at the Jessup Trash Transfer Station 1/1 (**GPn**), and 23 at Springdale Quarry 1/21 (**JHf**).

The semi-domesticated **Mallards** populating local ponds and lakes tolerate human contact; truly wild individuals are extremely wary. At least 125 were counted at BRDAM 1/17 (**JHf**); the best was yet to come. On 2/3, a party of birders at Triadelphia Reservoir's (TRIRS) north end spooked at least 375, one of the largest flocks on record, near the mouth of Cattail Creek. Russ Kovach described the impressive sight as "a wave of green taking off along the upper creek" (**RKv, AKv, TFk**).

A flock of 90 **American Black Ducks** gathered behind BRDAM 1/5 (**JHf**). **Northern Pintails** appeared in all three months: BRDAM 12/16 (**JHf-2**), CENPK 1/23 (**MNT-1**), and RACRW 2/2 (**SLk-1**). The number of **Green-winged Teal** at WATFD swelled from two on 12/1 (**VSw**) to 37 on 12/12 (**VSw**); 33 were tallied at Pigtail 12/16 (**JHf**).

A good variety of diving ducks appeared. The first **Canvasback** was tallied at BRDAM 1/1 (**RRf+**); scattered sightings continued into mid-Feb. A male **Redhead** at Wilde Lake 12/22 (**BFg, ph.**) was unexpected. A bigger surprise, at the end of a snowstorm with strong north tailwinds, was a flock of 46 at Waverly Pond 1/16 (**RHI**). That same day one was present at a Maple Lawn pond, Fulton (**JWr**); and around 3:00 p.m., at least 19 in three flocks were flying south rapidly over Cavey La (**RRf, ph.**).

The high **Ring-necked Duck** count was 162 at Willow Green Pd 1/1 (**RRf+**). Among the accepted **Greater Scaup** reports were one at Larriland 1/16 (**RRf+, ph.**), one at Duckett Res 1/25 (**KCK, ph.**), and four at BRDAM 1/27 (**JMHR**). A handsome male **Long-tailed Duck** appeared at Larriland 1/2 (**SLk, ph.**); one was seen there again on 1/16 following a snowstorm (**VSw, ph.**). **Buffleheads** reached a peak of 35 at Alpha Ridge Landfill (ALRGL)

([Records continued on page 4](#))

(Records continued from page 3)

2/22 (**RCu**). A **Common Goldeneye** was recorded at Lake Elkhorn 1/15 (**TFr**, **MFr**, ph.).

Thirty-one **Hooded Mergansers** were present at CENPK 12/16 (**MNT**); 50 were counted at BRDAM 1/17 (**JHf**). The 65 **Common Mergansers** at BRDAM on 12/2 (**J/MHr**) increased to 420 by 12/22 (**GPn**, **VSw**) and 840 on 1/10 (**BCt**). After the mid-Jan cold snap, numbers were slow to rebound. It took until 2/19 before 300 were present (**MHs/WSg**); by 2/29, the total was up to 575 (**GPn**). As usual, a search of TRIRS's Common Merg flock often turned up one to four **Red-breasted Mergansers**.

Multiple **Wild Turkey** reports continued. A sampling included four toms in a Woodbine yard 1/21 (**PPn**), a high of 15 at ALRGL 2/3 (**RCu**, **JHf**), and nine at the west entrance to CENPK 2/18 (**SKh**). A **Ring-necked Pheasant** at the Long Corner bridge 2/5 was noted as a release from a local farm sponsoring a hunt (**MPw**). (A photo of a nest with eggs or hen with downy young is needed to establish the presence of a wild bird.)

Single **American Coots** were reported from five sites. A **Sora** (first Dec record) was spotted at the edge of the upper pond at WATFD 12/1 (**SLk**) and heard on 12/2 (**JHf**). A **Sandhill Crane** was reported over MD 32, just west of I-95 on 12/8 (**B/TEv**, desc.).

A **Wilson's Snipe** was heard live and recorded via Night Flight Call (NFC) equipment over Cavey La in pre-dawn hours of 1/1 (**RRf**). One was present at ALRGL 12/28 (**JHf**, **RCu+**); two were there on 2/26 (**RCu**). **American Woodcock** were slow to be detected this year. Not until 2/22 was the first one heard at Hip-sley Mill Rd (**GPn**); the winter's high there was four on 2/25 (**ALw**, **D/KSn**, **CSt**, **RVg**).

Only occasionally do **Bonaparte's Gulls** make a winter appearance. This year two were spotted at BRDAM 1/8 (**SLk**); four were present on 1/17 (**JHf**). There was a conspicuous lack of white-winged gulls this winter. **Great Black-backed Gulls** were recorded in the low single digits at the Jessup Trash Transfer site.

A **Common Loon** achieved extensive publicity after being rescued from an iced-over pond by two kind-hearted Swans (Val and Jeff) on 1/22. (See article in March/April *Goldfinch*, p. 9). A few **Double-crested Cormorants** were present briefly at several locations; an immature spent the season at CENPK (**MNT**; m. obs.). A dozen **Great Blue Herons** circled over the Vantage Point area 2/28 (**CKc**), near the site of one of the county's herony's.

Northern Harriers were noted at more than a dozen sites. A **Cooper's Hawk** slammed into the screen on a gazebo at Stone Hill Dr 2/29, bounced off, and managed to snag a grackle (**KLz**). **Bald Eagles** provided some of the most intriguing winter records. The high at BRDAM, where they often congregate, was a modest 13 on 1/18 (**RHl**). At W. Friendship Pk on 2/1, an adult was spotted carrying a stick in a direction toward no known nest (**CSt**, **DSn**, **ALw**). Tracking raptor migration in spring is much more difficult than in fall. Unexpectedly, nine eagles were caught at the Mt Pleasant Skywatch 2/26 (**LGg**), seven of them heading north. Seven of the total were noted between 11:45 a.m. - 12:10 p.m. (with **JWd**).

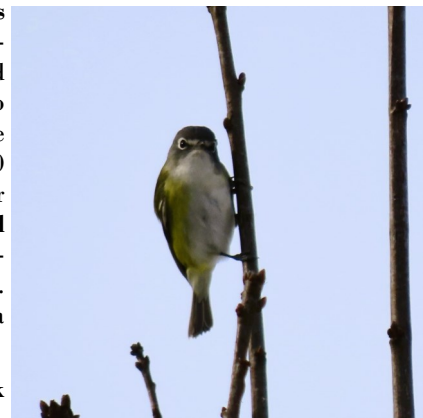
An **Eastern Screech-Owl** roosted intermittently in a box at Hallmark (**WEb**). Kings Contrivance birders enjoyed a **Barred Owl** in a sycamore cavity. It has been present in that location for

more than a year (**TRy**). A **Short-eared Owl** (only a dozen records) was present at ALRGL 12/23 (**RCu**); unfortunately, despite a careful search by 22 birders on 12/28, it could not be relocated. A **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was heard on WSSC property 12/12 (**SLk**, **LMcD**) from a nearby Beaufort Park road.

Red-headed Woodpeckers were seen at four sites, mostly multiple times: ALRGL, Annapolis Rock, Howard Chapel Rd/Patuxent River, and Middle Patuxent Env. Area (**MPEA**). Five **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** at MPEA 1/8 was the season's high (**J/MHr**).

Merlins, which used to be unusual in winter, were seen throughout the county at almost 20 sites. One was present sporadically at Joey Dr from 12/2 - 2/16 (**J/MCh**). **Peregrine Falcons** are most consistent at TRIRS. One at Lake Kittamaquidi 1/26 (**CKc**, ph.) was just the third record. Interestingly, the first one was also seen in late Jan (1/28/89 J. Clegg).

Winter **Eastern Phoebe**s can be scarce some winters. Perhaps the record warmth enabled many to overwinter as they were recorded at more than 30 sites. A star of the winter season was a **Blue-headed Vireo** photo'd at Oakland/Vantage Point, Col. 1/23 (**CKc**), establishing a second winter record.



Blue-headed Vireo

by Clayton Koonce

Most of the **Horned Lark** numbers were single digits. The high was 150 at Underwood Rd 1/15 (**RRf**, **DCm**; **MKw**). Fifteen **White-breasted Nuthatches** were counted at Blandair 2/3 (**SPr**). **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were scarce; notably, there were none on either the Triadelphia Christmas Ct (**TCC**) 12/16 or Howard County Mid-winter Ct (**HCMC**) 2/3.

There was an uptick in **Cedar Waxwing** reports in Dec, topped by at least 150 at CENPK ~12/15 (**BO**, **ROr**). The flock was eating fruit from Callery pear, as well as grapes and seeds from golden raintrees.

With moderate late fall temperatures, it was not surprising that there were substantial numbers of **Carolina Wrens** in the Howard areas of the TCC (3: 145; 4: 84). The HCMC tallied 345, signaling a significant number of winter survivors.

Some **Gray Catbirds** and **Brown Thrashers** stuck around into mid-Dec for TCC (GC: A 3-1; A 4-9); (BT: A 3-4; A-4); HCMC numbers were also good (GC: 8 and BT: 5). Three catbirds at Rockburn Branch Pk 2/8 (**DMs**) were a fine winter number.

Hermit Thrushes topped out at 11 at Schooley Mill Pk 12/16 (**J/MHr**, **M/JCh**). Fifty+ **American Robins** at Pointer's Run, Clarksville 2/13 were feeding on American holly fruit (**J/MHr**); the same day 20+ dined in a large holly in Hammond Village (**JS**).

Thirty **American Pipits** along Pindell School Rd 12/16 (**KMcP**) and eight at A. E. Mullinix Rd 1/17 (**JHf**) were among the best of winter's tallies.

A total of 42 **House Finches** at Lake Elkhorn 2/12 (**KS**) was an

(Records continued on page 5)

(Records continued from page 4)

indication this species' numbers are again on the rise. No **Purple Finches** were counted in Areas 3 or 4 of TCC; however, seven were recorded on HCMC. Following the pattern of most other boreal species, only a few **Pine Siskins** were detected. The highest number and best documented were seven at Swansfield Rd 2/10 (HGt, ph., audio).

Chipping Sparrows are regular in small numbers all winter. Twenty-one were photo'd perched together in a scrubby area at Barberry Way 2/29 (VSw). Eight **Fox Sparrows** were counted at Blandair 1/11 (J/MHr). **American Tree Sparrows** continue to be scarce. Singles were at Barberry Way 12/13 (VSw), MD 97/WSSC 12/16 (CSt, VSw, YYL); MT Pleasant 1/26 (BO) until 2/23 (GPn); MPEA 2/2 (KS); and WATFD 2/19 (SLk, LMcd, GPn). A flock of 75 **Dark-eyed Juncos** was present at Crest Lawn Memorial Gardens 1/3 (GPn). **White-crowned Sparrows** were detected at fewer than 10 sites, with a high of three at an Underwood Rd farm 2/3 (CSt, VSw, ph.). A total of 115 **White-throated Sparrows** massed at MPEA 1/8 (J/MHr). After a snowfall, a **Vesper Sparrow** was spotted in a pasture near a cattle feeder along Triadelphia Mill Rd on 1/20 (first Jan record) (GPn, ph.). It remained through 1/22. Forty-seven **Savannah Sparrows** at ALRGL 1/15 (RCu) was an unusually high winter number. The flock seemed to have left barely ahead of a snowstorm and cold wave probably explaining the zero on HCMC 2/3 (RCu, JHf).

Early winter flocks of **Eastern Meadowlarks** did not remain. Twenty-six at ALRGL 12/26 (JHf) dwindled to a disappointing zero by HCMC (RCu, JHf). Of the scattered reports in mid to late winter, the high was four at Gateway 2/15 (SMu). Three male **Baltimore Orioles** were winter residents. The longest-running record, a bird near Lake Elkhorn, turned up for the eighth winter on 1/20 (WSb); the Mt Hebron bird continued for the fifth year (JCu); and one appeared at So. Trotter Rd feeders 1/3 dining on peanuts in the shell, then orange slices (S/WE). All three remained through Feb. A female dropped in to visit a hulled sunflower seed feeder on Roxbury Rd 1/16 (K/BBI, ph.). As usual, few **Rusty Blackbirds** were winter visitors. The high was four in Hammond Village 1/16 (GCs); they made a brief ap-

pearance in a yard as a snowstorm tapered off.

An **Orange-crowned Warbler** photo'd at a Columbia feeder 1/15 (Kot, *fide* JHf) was just the second Jan record. Presumably, the same bird was seen again at a feeder in Savage on 2/24 and 2/26 (TRd). Astonishingly, three **Palms** were seen together in south-western HOWCO on HCMC (MWI, desc.), one of the few Jan records. **Pine Warblers** also appeared at feeders: Lake Elkhorn 12/4 (ALw-suet); Grae Loch Rd 12/21 (KOS-suet; intermittent through mid-Feb); and Mother Nature's 2/23 (ARF-hulled sunflower; through Feb). Two were present at Crest Lawn Memorial Gardens 12/30 (JHf);

Bonus: Birds were not noteworthy at Rockburn Branch Pk mid-afternoon on a calm, 52 degree 12/25, but Dean Mahlstedt did see both a small brown bat fluttering overhead for seven minutes and a raccoon in a tree nest.

Appreciation: *My thanks, as always, to Joe Hanfman and Russ Ruffing for their careful editing of this material. Their assistance is essential.*

Observers: BBI – Bill Blum, KBI – Karan Blum, RBy – Rod Burley, JCh – Jane Chandler, MCh – Mark Chandler, GCs – George Chase, KCK – Ken Clark, BCt – Ben Costello, JCu – Jeff Culler, RCu – Ralph Cullison III, DCm – David Cummings, SE – Sue Earp, WE – Wes Earp, WEb – Ward Ebert, BEv – Bruce Evans, TEv – Toni Evans, ARF – Ann Rogers Finneran, TFK – Tiffany Fisk, BFG – Brian Fleming, MFr – Martin Forrester, TFr – Tim Forrester, HGt – Heather Goethals, LGg – Lynn Gregg, JHf – Joe Hanfman, JHr – John Harris, MHr – Meg Harris, RHI – Russell Hillsley, MHS – Mei Hsiao, MKw – Mike Kerwin, SKh – Susan Kirchhausen, CKe – Clayton Koonce, AKv – Andrew Kovach, RKv – Russ Kovach, MLn – Meghaan Lane, YYL – Yi-Ying Lee, ALw – Allen Lewis, VLi – Vitus Li, KLz – Kathy Litzinger, SLk – Steve Luke, DMs – Dean Mahlstedt, LMcd – Lauren McDougle, KMcp – Karlyn McPartland, BMy – Brian Moyer, SMu – Sue Muller, ROrr – Richard Orr, KOS – Karen O'Steen, Kot – Kristin Ostlie, BO – Bonnie Ott, SPrr – Steve Parr, HPT – Howard Patterson, PPn – Pam Perna, GPn – Gregg Petersen, MPw – Mary Prowell, TRd – Tim Reichard, RRF – Russ Ruffing, TRY – Tim Ray, DSn – David Sandler, KSn – Karen Sandler, KS – Kurt Schwarz, WSG – Wen Shyong, JSm – Jason Simon, JS – Jo Solem, CSt – Chuck Stirrat, WSb – Warren Strobel, VSw – Val Swan, MNT – MarkNhu Tewell, RVg – Roshan Vignarajah, MWI – Mark Wallace, JWw – Jayden Ward, JWd – Josh Ward.

(President's Message continued from page 1)

The club officers also decided to recognize Co-Rookies of the Year in 2024. This is an optional award for members in their first two years, and our two winners this year were Lauren McDougle and Tom Seivert. The criteria for this award focus on service to the club and participation, and Lauren and Tom have hit the ground at a dead sprint helping our club. Lauren immediately stepped up to serve as a Chapter Director on the board, organized a Brownie walk, worked with Steve Luke to design our first Merlin class, and participates on all our counts. As soon as he joined, Tom jumped into an Area Coordinator position for our counts, volunteered to serve as a State Director on the board, arrived early at member meetings to help, and has attended nearly every field trip.

For the third award, we recognized our new Treasurer, Tim Thompson, with the Blood, Sweat, and Tears Award. This award recognizes "someone who rolled-up their sleeves and tackled a hard, gritty, unglamorous job." His justification read: "For your welcome to the Howard County Bird Club as our Treasurer, we gave you two years of incredibly complicated back taxes to file! You did it with a smile and expertise!" Tim handled this all with aplomb...shall I say, like water off a duck's back? I should also note that our long-serving Secretary Chuck Stirrat was also instrumental to helping us resolve this situation. Thank you, Chuck!

Finally, thanks to our other two new board members! In addition to Tom Seivert, we welcome Yi Ying Lee as our first year Chapter Director, and Guy DiRoma as a State Director. They were selected for their enthusiastic, active participation and assistance to the club as well. Please congratulate all our winners and new officers when you see them at meetings or out in the woods. These wonderful volunteers have helped make and continue to help our club run and be a great organization to be part of.

It was a pleasure to award the YMOS backpacks to winners Floralei Renjifo and Wesley DeGiulio, and an honorable mention prize to Joseph Phelps. It was a joy to read all of the heart-warming entries, and all our young contestants will be awarded a one-year membership to the club. Thanks to Brittany Parsons and Kelsey Wellons for running this competition for us.

That's all for now. The May Count is on May 11th. See the article on [page 9](#) for details.

Warmest regards,

Gregg

TRUMPETER SWAN VS TUNDRA SWAN IDENTIFICATION

BY DAVE ZIOLKOWSKI

What an exciting time for Howard County birders as all signs suggest we may be in the early stages of the triumphant return of the Trumpeter Swan to our region. Documenting this momentous change as accurately as we're able to will be of great benefit to future generations. And that begs the question: how hard is it to distinguish a six-foot-long bird that's nearly twice as large as its nearest relative? Well, when it comes to swans, that can be more of a challenge than it seems.

But this is a story of unspoken expectations more so than of technical difficulty, and I hope what I describe here will leave all birders feeling up to the challenge. It starts in recognizing that we birders still mostly expect the natural world to operate as Roger Tory Peterson had illustrated in his 1934 book, *A Field Guide to the Birds*. His genius lives on in modern guides in the tenet that one or two pictures are sufficient to identify most of our birds. That's because most North American bird species generally differ in individual size, structure, and/or plumage in ways that are discrete and diagnostic. And whatever variation might exist for these features within species doesn't usually overlap with that of other species.

Trumpeter and Tundra Swans are an exception. Their relative size can be difficult to judge, and their all-white plumage provides us very few features to compare. Hence why the 'classic' ID features are mostly all on the head. **Individuals can show considerable variation in one or several of these features to an extent that overlaps what is often illustrated for the other species.** This doesn't mean these swans aren't good species – it means natural patterns of variation in swans aren't aligned with the kind of one-illustration-describes-all logic that makes field guides work. **Swans are instead best identified using a more holistic weight of evidence approach, with each feature considered as additive rather than diagnostic in its own right.**

Below is a list of ID features to consider with suggestions on how best to weight them. Tough cases are par for the course and focusing on information gathering is usually better than focusing on ID. I encourage taking photos of potential Trumpeter Swans whenever possible because it immortalizes key information, allows additional study later, and gives you a chance to confer with others once back at home.

IDEALIZED TRUMPETER

IDEALIZED TUNDRA

EYES: USE EXTREMES. In swans, the eyes touch the facial skin of the bill. Each individual swan falls somewhere on a continuum of "a lot" touching or "a little." The extremes shown here produce reliable IDs. But **most individuals fall somewhere in between, and this feature should be weighted less in those cases.**

HEAD: BEWARE OF BAD LOOKS AND BALDING. Looking down on the head, if the feather line at the top of the bill shows as a strong "V", that's diagnostic for Trumpeter. But some show a "U" like Tundra, especially if not seen perfectly head-on or when the fine feathering that makes the point of the "V" is missing.

THE SHAPE OF FACIAL SKIN AND WHERE IT MEETS THE BILL IS KEY.

Although both are black, the wrinkled facial skin is a matte patch that contrasts the shiny, hard bill. In Trumpeter, these meet high up, above a shiny, support strut on the top of the bill. **This gives Trumpeter a straight, long-looking bill profile.** In Tundra, they meet lower down, and there's usually a change in angle there. **This gives most Tundra's a concave bill profile.** Many also show a yellow spot.

WHY THE LONG FACE? Trumpeter's have long nose holes (nares) and a long distance from there to bill tip. Tundra's can have long bills with similar proportions but usually don't.

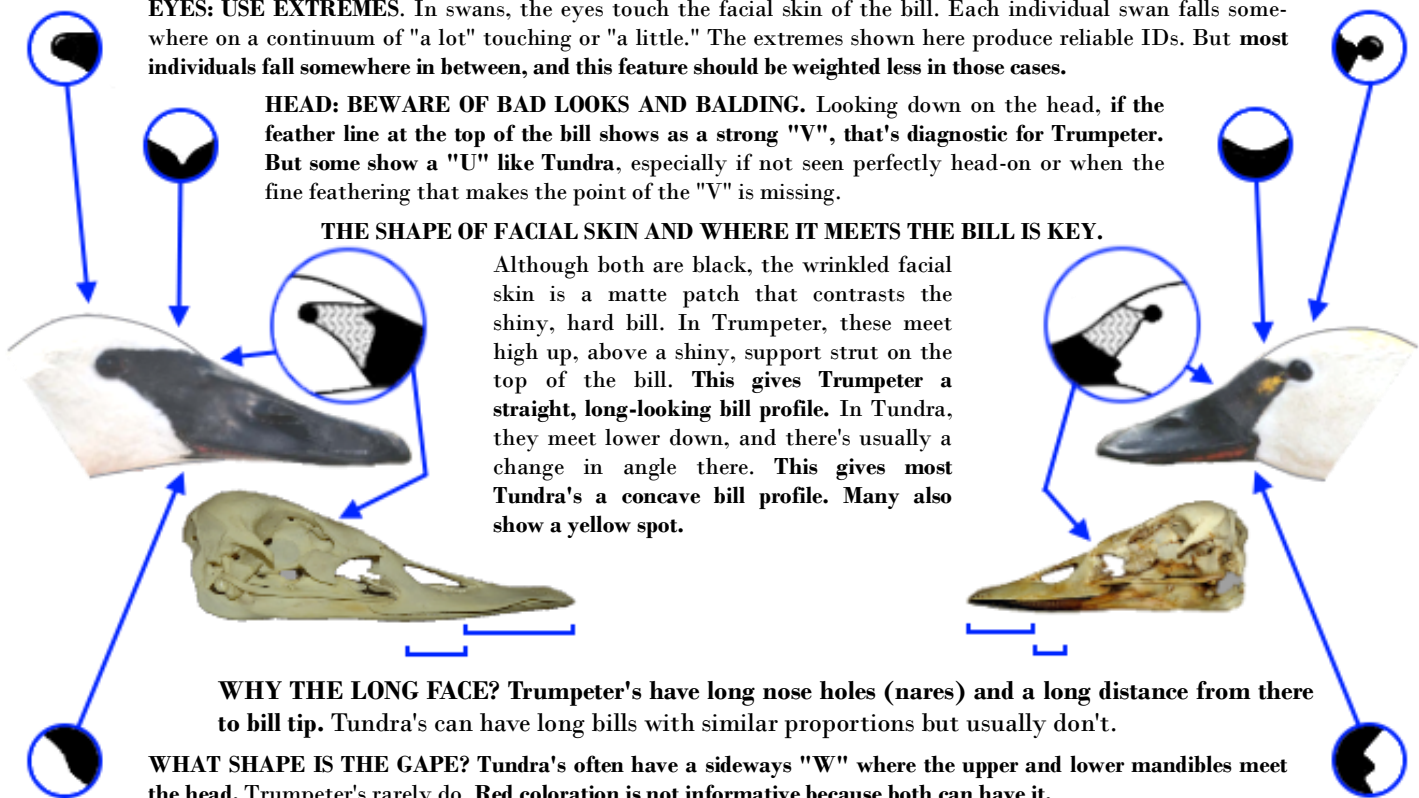
WHAT SHAPE IS THE GAPE? Tundra's often have a sideways "W" where the upper and lower mandibles meet the head. Trumpeter's rarely do. Red coloration is not informative because both can have it.

HEAD DIPS, BOBS, AND NODS: WHAT MATTERS MOST?

All swans tend to nod or shallowly dip their heads when alarmed or anxious, so these movements are not helpful for ID. But the stereotyped, repeated, deep head squats ritualistically performed by Trumpeter Swans are diagnostic for the species. They differ from other movements in being a quick, precise pump of the bill exactly to the breast, with tip just touching water, then rapidly up. They are typically performed in unison.

TAKE LOCAL CONTEXT INTO ACCOUNT. Tundra Swans breed in high arctic wetlands, far from the din of modern mid-Atlantic life. They are generally wary of people during transit or when wintering in our county. **Tundra's are wont to be in family groups and larger flocks, so we rarely see them alone or in lone pairs. The opposite is true for our region's Trumpeter Swans.** And they got their start in human-dominated landscapes, so are generally not averse to people and parks. Exceptions happen, but these general occurrence patterns are good to know.

Please note: the entries for Trumpeter Swan and Tundra Swan in the photo gallery on the HCBC website will include a link to this article for reference.



HOWARD COUNTY MID-WINTER COUNT, FEBRUARY 3, 2024

BY JOE HANFMAN

A cool and partially cloudy day with temperatures 35 to 51° F and no precipitation. The ponds were 5% frozen and rivers were flowing. We recorded 90 species, which is slightly above the average of 88.2 species recorded in the last 38 years. The total number of individual birds was 22,990, which is 23,784 below the average number of birds recorded, and 141,910 below the maximum number of birds recorded.

The top birds were three Palm Warblers, a first for the count, and a Baltimore Oriole that was seen for only the seventh time on the count.

All-time high counts were recorded for Northern Shoveler (6), Bufflehead (35), Great Blue Heron (36), Red-shouldered Hawk (122), Eastern Screech-Owl (7), Eastern Phoebe (9), Gray Catbird (8), Brown Thrasher (5), and Hermit Thrush (33).

There were no all-time low counts.

Forty-seven of the 90 species tallied have been seen on all 38 Mid-winter Counts. Eighty-one of the 90 species tallied have been seen on at least 50% of all 38 Mid-winter Counts.

The birds that have been seen on more than half of the counts, but missed this year, were Mute Swan (not expected), Gadwall, American Wigeon, Northern Pintail, Northern Harrier, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Pine Siskin, Savannah Sparrow, and Eastern Meadowlark.

Many people contributed to the success of the day. Eighty parties of 89 observers spent 220.7 hours, and covered 153.0 miles on foot and 410.3 miles by car. Another 18.7 hours were spent feeder watching, plus 5.2 hours stationary and 5.1 hours of owling.

Chuck Stirrat updated the taxonomic order, summarized the area worksheets, and provided field and feeder checklists. Area leaders arranged coverage, did follow-up if necessary, and compiled area totals. Their names are in boldface below (*anyone who counted in more than one area or also at a feeder is listed just once*). The tally was done in person, thanks to Meg and John Harris, with a virtual option via Zoom.

Land permission from Howard County Dept. of Recreation and Parks, Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, and many private property owners assured good coverage—we are extremely grateful.

Observers: *Area 1.* **Wes Earp**, Jim Brinkley, Marilyn Brinkley, Donna Carollo, Lisa Colangelo, Susan Earp, Lynn Gregg, Brenda Kidera, Geraldine King, Kathie Lillie, Woody Merkle, Pam Perna, Mary Prowell, Hsiao (Mei) Shyong, Wen-Jong (Wen) Shyong, Lisa Troutman, Bruce Woodward, Mark Wallace; *Area 2.* **Russell Kovach**, Jeff & Karen Culler, Tiffany Fisk, David Holmes, Andrew Kovach, Yi-Ying Lee, Ashley Tipton; *Area 3.* **Chuck Stirrat**, Andy & Dianne Aguilera, Cindy Albright, Jane & Mark Chandler, Chen Chiu, Ralph Cullison III, Bob & Jan Depuy, Guy DiRoma, Joe Hanfman, Steve Jones, Vitus Li, Felicia Lovelett, Valerie Swan; *Area 4.* **Mike McClure**, Stephanie Coakley, Michele DeMuisis, Mike Leumas; *Area 5.* **Thomas Seivert**, Peter Ashley, Megan Bolcar, Mary Lou Clark, David Cummings, Cheryl Farfaras, Shashi Lengade, Sabrina Lovell, Mary Maxey, David Sandler, David Sarfaraz, Sharon Smith, Sherry Tomlinson; *Area 6.* **John Harris**, Meg Harris, Brigitte Lund, Janet Lydon, Bonnie Ott, Steve Parr, Suzanne Probst, Ryan Salsman, Clare Sebok, Tim Thompson, Michele Wright; *Area 7.* **Kurt Schwarz**, George & Teresa Berkheimer, Ken Clark, Dennis Coskren, Meghaan Lane, Allen Lewis, John McKitterick, Brian Moyer, Sue Muller, Sue Neri, Wendy Ormont, Brittany Parsons, Brett Rowland, Jo Solem, Arnie Strand, August & Eva Sunell, Kristin Trouton.

BEGINNER BIRDER'S CORNER

BY MEGAN BOLCAR

In our previous two issues of The Goldfinch, I had the opportunity to share with you pieces of advice from our trip and workshop leaders. I am glad to say there was no shortage of leaders willing to share their words of wisdom with our readers upon request, and I continue to share some of those tips here. When I first reached out to gather some pointers from our team, I was not quite sure of the response that I would get, but from my own experience of attending field trips and club meetings since I joined the club, I was not surprised that we have so many birders eager to share a few tips, and that the advice varied across so many topics! I could not agree more with the advice below; to go out on as many trips as possible, to practice your binocular technique (and don't be afraid to ask for help, we've all been beginners at one time and this can be tricky), and to take the time to learn songs and calls before heading into the field, as you will often hear more than you will see.

"Without a doubt, the most important thing for a new birder to do is to go outside and go birding! Even if it's a short walk around town, keep an ear / eye out for birds! People often ask me how often I go birdwatching - the truth is that I am almost always bird watching, even when walking into work or taking a short walk; it's fun to just listen and see what's around you even if not on an organized trip. That being said... go on HCBC or other MOS trips when you can, and do not be afraid whatsoever to ask questions of those around you - most experienced birders LOVE to work with those that are new (it's exciting for us to work with those that are excited about even the common birds!). Looking forward to meeting you on a bird walk soon!"
~Russell Kovach

"What made a difference for me was getting a better pair of binoculars than the crummy pair I owned. Luckily, I dropped them on the floor one day and they broke. When I replaced them with a better pair, it made a huge, huge difference in how I saw birds. People talk about a spark bird. (Mine was a Song Sparrow). But my 'spark binoculars' were the deal breaker for me. They weren't hugely expensive (They run about \$300 on Amazon) but they just opened up the world of birds for me that my cheap binoculars didn't." ~Mary Lou Clark

"The idea that I want to put out for beginning birders is about binocular technique. Most people look down at their binoculars when bringing the binoculars to their eyes. This means that they take their eyes off the bird and then wonder why they can't find the bird they are trying to look at. Experienced birders have learned to keep their eyes on the bird while bringing their binoculars up for use. We do see the binoculars in time to keep from damaging ourselves! Practice that set of motions. And - please remember that size, shape, proportions, and behaviors can be hugely helpful in the process of determining where to look in your book or app to find the bird you are attempting to ID. Beginners tend to look at color only and LOTS of birds have similar colors." ~David Holmes

"Learn bird calls and songs by listening to CDs or whatever other medium is available. Learning them this way before going to the field hard-wires them into our brains. I have yet to meet a birder that has tried to learn by using Merlin in the field who has any confidence or competence in their ear birding. They don't learn to trust their own ears that way. They always have the crutch to rely on with the app. Alternatively, if you learn the calls and then later match that call with the bird in the field, it sets in hard." ~Anonymous

Howard County Mid-Winter Count -February 3, 2024					
	Totals		Totals		Totals
Cackling Goose	1	Red-headed Woodpecker	3	Song Sparrow	426
Canada Goose	6,656	Red-bellied Woodpecker	324	Swamp Sparrow	39
Wood Duck	6	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	31	Eastern Towhee	100
Northern Shoveler	6	Downy Woodpecker	182	Baltimore Oriole	1
Mallard	583	Hairy Woodpecker	47	Red-winged Blackbird	423
American Black Duck	64	Northern Flicker	132	Brown-headed Cowbird	66
Green-winged Teal	7	Pileated Woodpecker	47	Common Grackle	55
Canvasback	4	American Kestrel	3	Palm Warbler	3
Redhead	9	Eastern Phoebe	9	Yel.-rump'd (Myrtle) Warbler	57
Ring-necked Duck	211	Blue Jay	563	Northern Cardinal	596
Greater Scaup	1	American Crow	1,176	Area Total Birds:	22,990
Lesser Scaup	2	Fish Crow	526	Area Total Species:	90
Bufflehead	35	<i>crow species</i>	459		Totals
Hooded Merganser	84	Common Raven	21		
Common Merganser	79	Carolina Chickadee	438	Time Start:	4:00 a
Ruddy Duck	11	Tufted Titmouse	438	Time Stop:	11:40 p
Wild Turkey	31	Horned Lark	10	Hours on Foot:	168.5
Pied-billed Grebe	2	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	7	Hours by Car:	52.2
Rock Pigeon	57	Golden-crowned Kinglet	11	Hours by Boat:	.0
Mourning Dove	577	Cedar Waxwing	118	Hours Other:	.0
American Coot	1	White-breasted Nuthatch	267	Miles on Foot:	153.0
Killdeer	11	Brown Creeper	13	Miles by Car:	410.3
Wilson's Snipe	2	Carolina Wren	345	Miles by Boat:	.0
Ring-billed Gull	210	Winter Wren	12	Miles Other:	.0
Herring Gull	24	Gray Catbird	8	Hours Feeder Watching:	9.8
Great Black-backed Gull	3	Brown Thrasher	5	Hours Stationary:	5.2
<i>gull species</i>	1	Northern Mockingbird	183	Hours "Owling":	5.1
Double-crested Cormorant	1	European Starling	1,115	Miles "Owling":	24.3
Great Blue Heron	36	Eastern Bluebird	468		Totals
Black Vulture	173	Hermit Thrush	33		
Turkey Vulture	368	American Robin	1,463	Total Field Obs.:	89
Sharp-shinned Hawk	5	House Sparrow	390	Total Field Parties:	69
Cooper's Hawk	8	House Finch	329	Total Feederwatchers:	12
<i>accipiter species</i>	1	Purple Finch	7	Total Feeder Parties:	11
Bald Eagle <small>[ad/im/unk]</small>	35	American Goldfinch	154	Total Observers:	89
Red-shouldered Hawk	122	Chipping Sparrow	17	Total Parties:	80
Red-tailed Hawk	32	Field Sparrow	102	Total Field Pty-Hrs (Reg.):	220.7
<i>buteo species</i>	2	Fox Sparrow	9	Total Party-Hrs (Feeder):	9.8
Eastern Screech-Owl	7	American Tree Sparrow	1	Total Pty-Hrs (Stationary):	5.2
Great Horned Owl	12	Dark-eyed Junco	507	Total Party-Hrs (Owling):	5.1
Barred Owl	13	White-crowned Sparrow	29	Total Party-Hours:	240.8
Belted Kingfisher	27	White-throated Sparrow	1,702		Totals

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

The May 23 board meeting will be held in a hybrid format. All members are welcome to attend in person or virtually. If you have input, questions, or would like to attend, please email Gregg Petersen at sig29@aol.com.

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:

Megan Bolcar, Editor
12136 Gray Star Way
Columbia, MD 21044
howardbirdclub@mdbirds.org

The Goldfinch, newsletter of the Howard County Bird Club, is published five times per year. Copy deadline for the September/October 2024 issue is July 25, 2024.

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



A Mocha Emerald (above) was found dead on a sidewalk at Quarry Bridge Ct, Guilford 9/6/23 by Nick Ott (fewer than six records). ID verified by Richard Orr. An Atlantic Bluethroat (*Enallagma double-dayi*), new county damselfly, was photographed at a pond on Marshalee Dr, Elkridge, July 12, 2023 by Madhuri Shenker. ID by Richard Orr.

MAY COUNT IS SATURDAY, MAY 11, 2024

BY GREGG PETERSEN

Hello everyone! We are in the early stages of migration. We will see more and more species in the coming weeks, until the peak in early May. May Count, which is always the second Saturday in May, is on May 11th this year.

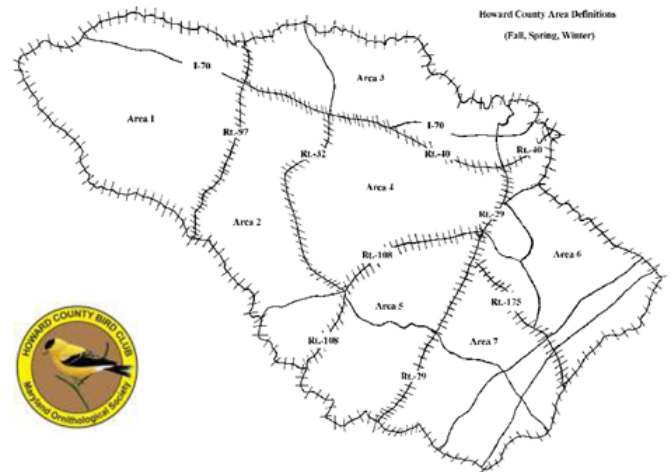
For beginning birders, this is an excellent opportunity to be paired with more experienced birders in order to see and hear many residents and spring migrants. Think warblers, vireos, thrushes, shorebirds, etc. The spring migrants are passing through headed north, the summer residents are back, and some of the winter migrants are still around. Over the last 10 years across the county, we have tallied an average of 137 species during the May Count. The total for 2023 was 133.

For the count, Howard County is divided up into the seven areas shown on the map below (map with area descriptions available on the club website; go to Birding, Seasonal Bird Counts, [Map and Boundaries for Howard County Bird Count Areas](#)). Each area has an Area Coordinator (name and phone number listed below) who communicates with the counters, assigns territories, and compiles area results. If you are a beginner, ask to be teamed with a more experienced birder. Since the point is to tally every individual bird, your extra eyes and ears are helpful. If you want to see a particular species, give me a call, or send an email (202-256-8166/sig29@aol.com), and I will try to place you in a location where you will have a good chance of seeing that bird. If your time is not predictable for the count, I encourage you to join a team or count as an individual in your yard or neighborhood for some time that day. If you decide to pursue this approach, please let me know of your intent and what constitutes your neighborhood.

Area 1	Bill Hill	410-599-9493/gandb2000-02@yahoo.com
Area 2	Russ Kovach	443-386-4787/russell.kovach@gmail.com
Area 3	Chuck Stirrat	443-462-8234/stirrcl@gmail.com
Area 4	Mike McClure	410-531-2780/michael.mcclure@jhuapl.edu
Area 5	Tom Seivert	410-926-9237/tomseivert@verizon.net
Area 6	John Harris	843-592-4051/jaybee.harris@gmail.com
Area 7	Meghaan Lane	410-829-6192/meghaanlane@gmail.com

At the end of the day, all our counters are invited to a tally rally to share what was seen and come up with the county totals. This year's tally rally will be preceded by a one hour in-person potluck starting at 6:00 p.m. at my house. Unless you are still in the field, please try to submit your checklist to your Area Coordinator by the start of the tally rally at 7:00 p.m. It's a great opportunity to swap stories of the day and find out what everyone else has seen, especially some of the rarities of the day. The goal is for the completed checklists to be turned into Area Coordinators by the time of the tally rally. I will also provide a Zoom link for those counters that are interested in that option.

Come join us! This is a great chance for beginning birders to see many new and beautiful species of birds in their spring plumage.



MARYLAND/DC BREEDING BIRD ATLAS 3, 2020-2024

BY SUE MULLER

The time has come for all hands on deck as we enter the final months of the Maryland Breeding Bird Atlas (3). Your observations of breeding activity are important! The data is being collected via eBird, just make sure you have your portal set to the Maryland/DC Breeding Bird Atlas. If you are new to atlasing, just send an email to your coordinators (Sue & Dave – howard@mdbirds.org). They will be happy to provide instruction! We currently have confirmed 100 species breeding in Howard County. If you don't want to actively atlas, we can still accept your observations via email. Do you have a Purple Martin colony in your yard? How about owls or a turkey with poults? Maybe a hawk nest? The possibilities are endless! Please help with the atlas for the love of birds.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Jeffrey, Katie, Benjamin, & Alexandra Abadie; Jillian Adams; Lauren Carey; Greg Couch; Cathy Cruttenden; Ella Davani; Shannon Emmel; Jason Fleishcer; Kendra Fryer; Stacy Giordani; Kathy Glyshaw; Janine Grossman, Sara Hurtado, Mary & Tim Keller, Crystal Konny, Joyce Mcchesney; Christine McGrath; Ruth Merkel; Jacky Mueck; Kirk Nabors; Stephanie Oberle; Alan Reich; Heather & Raul Rivas; Robin Russel; Jill, Maggie, and Hannah Rowland; Marilyn Sanchez-Henry; June Santoro; Paul Schlegel; Bryan Sirotkin; Nalayini & Vaidivelu Sivaraman; Kerry & Sada Stone; Thea Turnage; Elizabeth Ussery; and Laura Wolf.

LIZ GUERTIN HONORED

Howard County Bird Club member, Liz Guertin, was recently named 2023 Volunteer of the Year by Nature Forward (formerly Audubon Naturalist Society). A Columbia resident, Liz is a wildlife photographer and artist. Congratulations, Liz!

Do you have an old pair of binoculars you are no longer using? Consider donating them to the Howard County Bird Club! Gently used pairs of binoculars come in handy during our beginner/intermediate workshops. Loaners allow newer birders to try out different types of binoculars and to become comfortable with proper use before purchasing a new pair. Contact President Gregg Petersen (Sig29@aol.com) to arrange a donation.



HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB

Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society

P. O. BOX 1323

COLUMBIA MD 21044-1323

May/June 2024 - Inside This Issue

Club Meetings	Board of Directors Meeting
President's Message	Mocha Emerald Dragonfly
Spring Field Trips	May Count Announcement
Winter Records	MD/DC Breeding Bird Atlas 3
Swan Identification	Welcome New Members
Mid-winter Count Summary	Club Member Honored
Beginner Birder's Corner	2024 Potluck

2024 POTLUCK REVIEW AND THANKS

BY SHERRY TOMLINSON AND MEGHAAN LANE



Potluck co-chairs Meghaan Lane and Sherry Tomlinson. Photo by Mary Lou Clark

The results are in, and the 2024 Howard County Bird Club's Annual Potluck gets an A+ rating. As the weather started to warm up, flowers started to bloom, and birders became excited about spring migration, our members flocked together on Saturday, March 23, at the Robinson Nature Center for a wonderful evening of sharing and camaraderie. Upwards of 50 members, and special guests Shannon Davis from the Robinson Nature Center and Chuck and Denise Sharp from Waterford Farm, all enjoyed a variety of tasty appetizers, delicious main dishes, and delectable desserts, all of which made for a wonderful meal. The after-dinner slide shows took us places near and far. Twelve members participated in sharing their incredible bird photography. We saw birds from Costa Rica, Taiwan, The Pantanal in Brazil, birds in flight, feeder birds from our own back yards, and so much more. Thank you to all the members who presented their slides, and to David Sandler for your tech support for the audio and visual system. Truly, the after dinner slides were the highlight of the evening. The potluck committee incorporated new ideas this year, including tri-fold display boards and educational posters full of valuable information for our members. Thank you to Mary Lou for making the tri-fold displays, and to Cornell Lab of Ornithology for donating posters to our event. The club's deepest gratitude goes out to the staff at the Robinson Nature Center for organizing the tables and chairs, and providing us such a wonderful space for this event.

I would like to sincerely thank potluck co-chair Meghaan Lane for her skills and talents in assisting with organizing such an amazing evening. In addition, Meghaan and I would like to thank everyone who attended, and everyone who helped with setup and cleanup. If any members have comments or suggestions on how to enhance and improve this event, the committee would love to hear from you (Sherry Tomlinson - stbirder@yahoo.com, and Meghaan Lane - Meghaanlane@gmail.com). Here's to wishing you all another spectacular year of birding.