



Founded 1972

The Goldfinch

Newsletter of the Howard County Bird Club
A Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society

www.howardbirds.website

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CLUB MEETINGS - BY MARY LOU CLARK

Thursday, November 14, 2024 “Birding Taiwan (and a Bit of China)” by Gail Mackiernan. The beautiful country of Taiwan, the Fragrant Isle, is rich in tradition—and spectacular wildlife. Its coasts, mountains, and parks host 33 endemic birds, as well as regional rarities like Fairy Pitta. It is no wonder that Taiwan is a “must stop” on every world birder’s travels. In 2016, Gail joined a BirdTour Asia trip that explored this beautiful country from top to bottom. All the expected (and some unexpected) bird species were seen, from tiny Flamecrests to a towering Siberian Crane. A short post-trip extension to mainland China added more goodies, including Cabot’s Tragopan, and the critically endangered Chinese Crested Tern.



Gail is a biological oceanographer with expertise on the Chesapeake Bay. Gail has co-authored reports on the health of the bay while working for the EPA Chesapeake Bay Program, and has previously served as research director for the University of Maryland Sea Grant College. Gail started birdwatching seriously in high school, took a “break” during grad school, and revived her interest about 40 years ago. She has traveled to all seven continents, along with her husband, in search of birds.



Thursday, December 12, 2024 “Birding Idaho’s Snake River Plain” by Wes and Sue Earp. The volcanism that reshaped the Rocky Mountains into Idaho’s Snake River Plain created an expansive diverse sagebrush steppe. Cut by deep gorges and underlain by deposits of basalt lava, the result was a habitat ideal for both rodents and breeding raptors. In addition, aquatic features including expansive manmade lakes, three of the world’s five largest fresh water springs, and the Snake River’s open water, along with cottonwood/willow corridors and oases provide a migratory pathway for passerines, shorebirds, and waterfowl. After covering the volcanic transformation, we will visit some of the central and eastern birding destinations, ending with the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area and the home of the World Center for Birds of Prey.

Wes and Sue have been Howard County Bird Club members since the 1980s. Wes is a past club president and recipient of the MOS Valued Service Award. Sue has contributed pictures to the club’s annual potluck, website, and Waterford Flats ID book. Frequenting hawk watches is a favorite birding pastime, and when home, they enjoy managing their flora to attract and feed birds naturally year-round.

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

Wow! Fall Count, and some of our migrants, have already come and gone!

I thought I would take a little time this issue to talk about Sue Probst’s Habitat Committee and other recent related habitat work we do in Howard County. In my opinion, of our club’s committees, Sue’s committee has the broadest reach and most significant impact on the birds that stay in and transit Howard County. She helps coordinate and get resources for the Waterford Flats, Purple Martin, Motus, and Howard County Conservancy Meadow Working Groups.

With regard to Russ Ruffing’s Waterford Flats at Sharp’s Farm effort to provide a migrating shorebird oasis, we have been tinkering with it for over four years now. We have had varied success over time, but we will continue to work with the farmer to improve the habitat, vary our approaches, and increase the numbers and variety of shorebird visitors. We are very grateful to the farmer, Chuck Sharp, and his wife, Denise, for hosting us there and often allowing us greater access to the farm.

[\(Chirps to the Flock continued on page 5\)](#)

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 [aak1844@gmail.com](mailto: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.

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

October 28, Monday, 9:30 a.m. Half day. Meet at the parking lot or go directly to the Skywatch site. This trip will be a skywatch for migrating raptors and other potential flybys. Leader – open to whoever shows up.

B R [Beginner Birder Field Trip - Mt Pleasant, Howard County Conservancy](#)

November 2, Saturday, 9:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Join Mary Maxey for a beginner birder field trip at the Howard County Conservancy. We will go over the basics of birding, then take a walk around the area and down to the wetland. Trip limited to 10 people. Email the trip leader to reserve a spot. Leader - Mary Maxey, maximom11998@gmail.com

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

November 2, 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. 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 sunglasses, comfortable lawn chair (recliners are best), binoculars, scope, and camera if you like. Participants can also walk the Conservancy trails if skywatching proves non-productive. Facilities available. Leader – To be determined.

B W [Centennial Park](#)

November 3, 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. Leaders – Richard and Renee Peters, Richard@rrrrpeters.org

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

November 4, Monday, 9:30 a.m. Half day. Meet at the parking lot or go directly to the Skywatch site. This trip will be a skywatch for migrating raptors and other potential flybys. Leader – open to whoever shows up.

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

November 6, Wednesday, 8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Meet at the Montjoy barn. Join Bonnie for a search for winter sparrows. Good for both beginners and advanced sparrow lovers. Bonnie will cover the basics of winter sparrows, but there is a chance to find rarities. Limit 8. Email the trip leader to reserve a spot. Leader - Bonnie Ott, sparrowdamsel@gmail.com

[Mt Pleasant, Howard County Conservancy](#)

November 6, 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 10, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. 2-3 hours. West end parking lot. See November 3 entry. Leader – Russell Kovach, Russell.kovach@gmail.com

Conowingo Dam

November 16, Saturday. Half-day. Meet at the Broken Land Park and Ride Lot West at 8:00 a.m. and plan to carpool. Half-day driving trip to Conowingo Dam to see Bald Eagles, Great Blue Herons, cormorants, vultures, and ducks. We will arrive by 9:30 a.m. and depart at 1:00 p.m. Bring lunch and water. There is also a nearby diner and Wawa. Dress for chilly weather. Parking and portable toilets are available at Conowingo Fisherman's Park. There is no quota on the number of people who can go but please RSVP by emailing the trip leader. Leader – Guy Di Roma, guydiroma@hotmail.com

B W [Centennial Park](#)

November 17, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours. See November 3 entry. Leader – David Holmes, musiclbndr@gmail.com

B W [Centennial Park](#)

November 24, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours. See November 3 entry. Leader – To be determined.

R [Triadelphia Christmas Count](#)

December 14, Saturday. For information or to volunteer to participate, contact the compiler, David Holmes, musiclbndr@gmail.com.

SUMMER BIRD RECORDS: JUNE 1 – JULY 31, 2024

BY [JOANNE SOLEM](#)

Summer's first extended heat wave arrived the third week of June, followed by another in mid-July marked by four successive record-setting three-digit highs. Despite the often uncomfortable temperatures, atlasers persevered during this final year of the Maryland/DC Breeding Bird Atlas 3.

Notable birds this season were Bufflehead (late date), Yellow-crowned Night Heron, White Ibis, Alder Flycatcher, Black-poll Warbler (late date), and Rose-breasted Grosbeak.



Juvenile White Ibis

by Albert Holm

A female (f.) **Wood Duck** with four downy ducklings on the pond at Water Lily Way 7/6 (**TRy**), and multiple reports of young at Centennial (CENPK) in early to mid-July continued spring's successful breeding. A f. **Bufflehead** at Alpha Ridge Landfill set a new late date by staying through 7/22 (**RCu**) [7/13/04 S. Neri+]. It was never observed to fly.

A hen **Wild Turkey** with at least three poults was seen in a meadow off the Wildlife Loop Trail, Middle Patuxent Env. Area (MPEA) 6/12 (**Jcf**), verifying long-suspected breeding. A f. with three half-grown young was a surprise near the GE Pond, Gateway Business Pk 7/19 (**MHs, WSy**).

A **Black-billed Cuckoo** at the edge of the MPEA parking lot 7/26 (**J/MHr, KS-ID/ph.**) was intriguing. Although the bird was not an adult, Dave Ziolkowski provided valuable information about the ability of this age-group to fly long distances.

After 17 years, a pair of **Chimney Swifts** nested in a wooden River Rd swift tower (**FLv**). Providing a nesting structure for this declining species, may seem similar to erecting a bluebird box; however, a tower is many times larger, much more complicated and expensive to build, and, unfortunately, less likely to be occupied. Yet, Felicia's patience paid off.

As usual, there was little light between spring and fall shore-bird migration. The last spring **Spotted Sandpipers** dawdled until 6/5 along the Patuxent Branch Trail (PATBT) (**Lck**) and 6/6 at CENPK (**MNT**). The first three fall Spotted ap-

peared at Waterford Farm (WATFD) 7/16 (**VSw**)—along with two **Leasts** and three **Solitarys**. A **Pectoral Sandpiper** at WATFD 7/29 (**JHf, GPn**) was a fine sighting.

Nine **Great Blue Herons** circling over Race Road Wetlands 7/4 (**BFm**) could have indicated an undiscovered colony in the area. Six **Great Egrets** (five together) passing over Barberry Way 7/17 (**VSw**) were the year's high. Single adult **Yellow-crowned Night Herons** were logged at three sites, while a juvenile along the PATBT 7/20 (**JHf**) played hide-and-seek with birders for several days. Two young **Black-crowned Night Herons** turned up at CENPK 7/28 (**JHf**).



Juvenile Yellow-crowned Night Heron

by Gregg Petersen

An immature **White Ibis** along the PATBT 7/19 just below Lake Elkhorn (**AHm, ph.**) was the county's ninth record and a premier summer sighting. The last previous record was 9/16/16.

Locally, **Ospreys** continue to show a strong nesting preference for cell towers. Atlas observers verified at least six nests this year (*fide SMu*). The only summer **Mississippi Kite** soared over Mt Pleasant's (MTPLT) far west field 6/29 (**RSm, MKw, ph.**).

Unprecedented describes the number of summer **Red-headed Woodpeckers** and successful nestings! During this final atlas year, the push to confirm this species netted at least four breeding sites this season; single adults or pairs were noted at an additional nine locations. Especially exciting were the six seen at four places along a three-quarter mile stretch of the Patuxent River (juveniles were present at two spots) 7/7 (**Kck**). On 7/26, three birds, including at least one juvenile, were observed at W. Friendship Pk (**LCg**). The final nesting occurred at WATFD where a field trip on 7/27 photographed a juvenile (**GPn, CSt+**). Among other sites with adults was the Houchens property on Morgan Woodbine Rd where, on 7/2, two adults were seen and a third bird was heard calling—which may or may not have been another adult (**DSm**). Could

(Records continued on page 4)

(Records continued from page 3)

the population explosion of spotted lanternflies in parts of the county be a possible factor in this increased breeding success?

An **Alder Flycatcher** was heard and seen at MTPLT near the Davis Branch 6/18 (**MKw**; audio 6/19). It remained until 6/24 (**JCt**, audio; **MKw**), establishing a new late record [6/17/12 E. Boyd, J. Stasz]. Because Willow and Alder flycatchers are virtually identical in appearance and cannot be safely identified by field marks (often not even in hand), sound becomes essential—and even that may not be decisive.



Alder Flycatcher

by Mike Kerwin

A **White-throated Sparrow** was singing near the Long Reach bridge on the Kendall Loop 6/1 (**SGz**). One was also reported at WATFD 7/27 (**GPn**, **CSt+**); it remained until 7/29 (**GPn**, **JHf**).

Bobolinks were still on the move in early June with one male (m.) present at Alpha Ridge Landfill 6/3 and two there 6/10 (**RCu**). Three (two m., one f.) were tallied on 7/11 (**RCu**)

Brown-headed Cowbird fledglings were noted being fed by the following hosts: **Chipping Sparrows** at both Linden Church Rd 7/14 (**SMu**) and Green Clover Dr 7/15 (**RTd**), **Song Sparrow** Alpha Ridge Park 6/6 (**RCu**), **Eastern Towhee** Mill Creek Ct 6/23 (**SMu**), and **Indigo Bunting** MPEA 7/2 (**KS**).



Rose-breasted Grosbeak

by Nigel Samaroo

A juvenile **Kentucky Warbler** along the Dorsey's Search Loop 7/21 (**MRg**) was at a non-breeding location. One or two territorial **Hoodeds** at several sites at MPEA during June and July (**J/MHr**; **KS**; **Cfr**) were exciting, as the species no longer nests there. The deer management program may be making a significant difference in the presence of understory. A **Blackpoll** lingered until 6/12 at Montgomery Run (**RSm**) for a new late date [6/10/86 J. Hill]. Sixteen **Prairies** at MTPLT 6/30 (**SDn**) were easily the season's high count.

A m. **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** frequented a King's Contrivance neighborhood for two days—a lovely summer oddity. It was reported at feeders on 7/16 (**NSr**) and 7/17 (**MLv**).

Acknowledgments: Joe Hanfman's and Russ Ruffing's careful editing was much appreciated.

Observers: **JCf** – Jeff Claffy, **KCk** – Ken Clark, **LCg** – Lisa Colangelo, **JCt** – Joseph Costa, **LCK** – Lauren Crocker, **RCu** – Ralph Cullison III, **SDn** – Sam Denenberg, **Cfr** – Cheryl Farfaras, **BFm** – Brian Fleming, **SGz** – Scott Guzewich, **JHf** – Joe Hanfman, **JHr** – John Harris, **MHr** – Meg Harris, **AHm** – Albert Holm, **MHs** – Mei Hsiao, **MKw** – Mike Kerwin, **MLv** – Mary Love, **FLv** – Felicia Lovelett, **SMu** – Sue Muller, **GPn** – Gregg Petersen, **TRy** – Tim Ray, **MRg** – Matt Rogosky, **RSm** – Ryan Salsman, **NSr** – Nigel Samaroo, **KS** – Kurt Schwarz, **WSy** – Wen Shyong, **DSm** – David Smith, **CSt** – Chuck Stirrat, **VSw** – Val Swan, **MNT** – MarkNhu Tewell, **RTd** – Robin Todd.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Ann Black	Elizabeth & Ed Fletcher	Erin Morrarty
Paul Brandenberger	Ellen Grill	Carrie Olszyk
David Cissel	Gabrielle, Richard, & Lucy Hayes	Natalie Rebetsky
Tara Clifton	Sarah Kelsey	Diana Vogel
Bill & Melissa Crew	Marcy & Richard Kolodrubetz	Shannon White
Rion Durkan	Wren Kreinar	Sam Yarmus
Patricia Feurer	Matthew Lustig	

(Chirps to the Flock continued from page 1)

Russ Ruffing also has led our Purple Martin (PUMA) box installation effort over the last two years, placing boxes at Howard County Conservancy, Sharp's Farm, and most recently his Working Group completed placement of three boxes at Alpha Ridge Landfill. We have had rapid occupation success with the first boxes placed, but our PUMA boxes have been preyed upon by very resourceful Eastern Black Rat Snakes, so we have had to continue to up our game on baffles and predator guards.

Sue has been leading an effort to install our first Motus tracking station in Howard County. Motus Wildlife Tracking System (Motus) is an international collaborative research network that uses coordinated automated radio telemetry to facilitate research and education on the ecology and conservation of migratory animals. We are progressing toward installation of our first station at Mount Pleasant, Howard County Conservancy (HCC). It will provide a useful geographical gap-filling listening post for important data in a known north-south migration corridor between the mountains and the Eastern Shore.

In addition, at Mount Pleasant, Sue has led an effort to partner with HCC to collaborate on development of an 11-acre pollinator meadow to the left (west) of the entrance road. Former HCBC President Kristin Trouton started this initiative two years ago. HCC has applied for a Chesapeake Bay Trust Grant to fund the installation of the meadow, and the club will cover the cost of the seed and the initial years maintenance cost.

Our club has also had some success engaging senior Howard County Directorate of Public Works (DPW) and Recreation and Parks (DRP) officials on bird-friendly grassland mowing practices and installation of pollinator meadows. This year, a significant amount of the 800+ acre Alpha Ridge Landfill (ARL) (DPW) and the western field adjacent to Davis Branch at HCC (DRP) were not mowed during the April 15 to August 15 breeding window. Club member Ralph Cullison, who has been our ARL liaison for over 30 years, has been incredibly helpful connecting us to the DPW leadership. At our suggestion, DPW is also in consultation with DPR for planting of a pollinator "cell" at ARL. In addition, since I am a member of the Howard County Public Garden Focus Group for a 97-acre plot west of the junction of Burntwoods Road and Maryland Route 97/Georgia Avenue, I am receiving warm acceptance from the group and from the county for reservation of a large portion of the property for a grassland pollinator area.

So, we have made some inroads for the birds here, but there is more to be done in other places, such as the New Cut Landfill site. We will continue to look for additional locations to improve, and for other allies as we go. If these efforts interest you, we can always use more help in our outreach and projects to make Howard County more bird friendly.

Warm regards and I hope to see you out birding or at a meeting,

Gregg Petersen

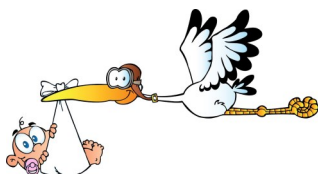


PUMA box installation at Alpha Ridge Landfill.

Photo by Russ Ruffing

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CLUB'S CHAPTER DIRECTOR!

Congratulations to Howard County Bird Club Chapter Director, Lauren Crocker, on the birth of her daughter! Lauren and Mike welcomed Lucy May on Tuesday, August 27. Lauren, we are all so happy for you!



WHAT ARE YOU READING?

While there is still plenty of good birding during the winter months, you may find yourself keeping the outdoor excursions a bit shorter, and the time inside by the fire watching the feeders a bit longer during the colder months. The frigid weather and shorter daylight hours can become an opportunity to spend some time getting caught up on your reading list. What are some of your favorite birding- or nature-related books? Send your recommendations to howardbirdclub@mdbirds.org to be featured in a future issue.

SUMMARY OF THE 2024 HOWARD COUNTY FALL COUNT

BY MIKE MCCLURE AND CHUCK STIRRAT

The thirty-first annual Howard County Fall Count was conducted on Sept. 21st, 2024, with the count data shown in the table below. This count has turned out to be slightly about average with numbers for the total birds near the average, but down again for warblers. The total number of bird species was the same as last year, while the number of individuals was down 649. For the warblers, the species count was down two, while the number of individual warblers was down 80. The two Northern Shovelers at Wilde Lake, and the Yellow-crowned Night Heron at Hollifield Station, had not been seen on any of the 30 prior counts. The 16 Red-headed Woodpeckers was a new high count.

The number of participants, parties, and the overall effort as measured by the hours and miles continued to still be strong with new highs in counters and parties. Effort showed a slight increase in hours to a new high and a decrease in miles for the count (primarily in car mileage).

2024 Count Data					
	Observed Birds Countywide		Observed Warblers Countywide		Statistics
	Species	Birds	Species	Birds	
Numbers	130	15,439	23	363	
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	124.71	15,105.03	23.06	427.09	
Counters : Parties					99 : 61
Counters : Parties Averages					57.3 : 37.4
Counters Hours : Miles					261.2 : 491.9
Counters Hours : Miles Averages					203.4 : 438.5

Saturday's temperature started in the low 60s [dew point 63 °F] at 7:00 a.m. with considerable variability in cloud cover across the county. The temperature rose to 80 °F [dew point 69 °F] in late afternoon. Winds were light early, increasing slightly as the day progressed. The day could be described as an enjoyable but humid warm Fall day.

Bird count participants were Jillian Adams, Andy & Dianne Aguilera, David Azambawk, Everett & Virginia Behr, Debbie Belchis, John Blaisdell, Karan Blum, Megan Bolcar, Marilyn Brinkley, Donna Carollo, Andrew Christiansen, Ken Clark, Mary Lou Clark, Stephanie Coakley, Jonathan Comeau, Ann Coren, Dennis Coskren, Ben Costello, Lauren Crocker, Jeff & Karen Culler, Ralph Cullison III, David Cummings, Bob & Jan Depuy, Kumar & Rej Dixit, Susan & **Wes Earp (Area 1 Co-coordinator)**, Rose Eicker, Tim & Cathy Forrester, Cathy Hallam, Joe Hanfman, John & Meg Harris, Bill & Gayle Hill, David Holmes, Steve Jones, Arlene Kerber, Michael Kerwin, Clayton Koonce, **Russell Kovach (Area 2 Coordinator)**, **Meghaan Lane (Area 7 Coordinator)**, Yi-Ying Lee, Shashi Lengade, Mike Leumas, Allen Lewis, Vitus Li, Kathie Lillie, Richard Love, Felicia Lovelett, Steve Luke, Brigitte Lund, Janet Lydon, Jeremy Mawhinney, Mary Maxey, **Mike McClure (Area 4 & County Co-coordinator)**, Karlyn McPartland, Sue Muller, Sue Neri, Ben Newton, Kevin Omland, Richard Orr, Bonnie Ott, Steve Parr, Brittany Parsons, Pam Perna, **Gregg Petersen (Area 3 Coordinator)**, Suzanne Probst, Mary Prowell, David Richardson, John Henri & Melody Rorabeck, Brett Rowland, Russ Ruffing, David Sandler, **Kurt Schwarz (Area 5 Coordinator)**, Nancy Schweiss, Thomas Seivert, Hsiao (Mei) Shyong, Wen-Jong Shyong, Jo Solem, Michelle Stewart, **Chuck Stirrat (County-Co-coordinator)**, August & Eva Sunell, Valerie Swan, Tim Thompson, Ashley Tipton, Sherry Tomlinson, Lisa Troutman, Roshan Vignarajah, **Mark Wallace (Area 1 Co-coordinator)**, Hilary & Sam Yarmus. A special thanks to **Cathy Hallam** who stepped forward to host the in-person part of the tally rally.

Plan now to join us on a future seasonal count, and if possible, attend the tally rally as well. Next year, the 2024 Fall Count will be held on the 3rd Saturday of September, which will be the 20th.

Individual species table is on [page 7](#). A full report of the results will be available at the Seasonal Counts [Results](#) page on the club's website. Due to newsletter deadlines, there could be a few changes.

HOWARD COUNTY FALL COUNT RESULTS - SEPTEMBER 21, 2024

Totals		Totals		Totals	
Canada Goose	1,786	Eastern Kingbird	2	White-throated Sparrow	2
Wood Duck	61	Eastern Wood-Pewee	55	Savannah Sparrow	2
Northern Shoveler	2	Acadian Flycatcher	2	Song Sparrow	43
Mallard	76	Least Flycatcher	2	Swamp Sparrow	2
Wild Turkey	16	<i>Empidonax species</i>	7	<i>unidentified sparrow</i>	1
Pied-billed Grebe	1	Eastern Phoebe	82	Eastern Towhee	60
Rock Pigeon	211	White-eyed Vireo	8	Bobolink	50
Mourning Dove	337	Yellow-throated Vireo	4	Eastern Meadowlark	13
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	13	Blue-headed Vireo	2	Baltimore Oriole	4
Common Nighthawk	8	Philadelphia Vireo	1	Red-winged Blackbird	162
Chimney Swift	154	Red-eyed Vireo	41	Brown-headed Cowbird	60
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	34	Blue Jay	1,430	Common Grackle	120
Killdeer	20	American Crow	795	<i>unidentified blackbird</i>	3
Spotted Sandpiper	1	Fish Crow	103	Ovenbird	3
Solitary Sandpiper	2	<i>crow species</i>	96	Northern Waterthrush	3
Double-crested Cormorant	30	Common Raven	19	Black-&-white Warbler	36
Great Blue Heron	37	Carolina Chickadee	249	Tennessee Warbler	3
Great Egret	4	Tufted Titmouse	281	Nashville Warbler	2
Green Heron	14	Horned Lark	1	Connecticut Warbler	1
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	1	Tree Swallow	5	Common Yellowthroat	75
Black Vulture	175	N. Rough-winged Swallow	2	American Redstart	50
Turkey Vulture	409	Barn Swallow	8	Cape May Warbler	26
Osprey	10	Cliff Swallow	20	Northern Parula	35
Northern Harrier	3	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	7	Magnolia Warbler	48
Sharp-shinned Hawk	12	Cedar Waxwing	84	Bay-breasted Warbler	5
Cooper's Hawk	24	White-breasted Nuthatch	196	Blackburnian Warbler	1
<i>accipiter species</i>	7	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	15	Yellow Warbler	1
Bald Eagle [add/munk]	21	Carolina Wren	449	Chestnut-sided Warbler	9
Red-shouldered Hawk	82	House Wren	27	Blackpoll Warbler	4
Broad-winged Hawk	97	Gray Catbird	367	Blk.-thrt'd. Blue Warbler	13
Red-tailed Hawk	23	Brown Thrasher	24	Palm Warbler	3
Eastern Screech-Owl	10	Northern Mockingbird	232	Pine Warbler	4
Great Horned Owl	2	European Starling	2,651	Yel.-rump'd (Myrtle) Warbler	6
Barred Owl	14	Eastern Bluebird	410	Prairie Warbler	3
Belted Kingfisher	40	Veery	3	Blk.-thrt'd. Green Warbler	14
Red-headed Woodpecker	16	Gray-cheeked Thrush	4	Canada Warbler	2
Red-bellied Woodpecker	387	Swainson's Thrush	12	<i>unidentified warbler</i>	16
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	2	Hermit Thrush	1	Summer Tanager	2
Downy Woodpecker	169	Wood Thrush	5	Scarlet Tanager	6
Hairy Woodpecker	47	American Robin	434	Northern Cardinal	614
Northern Flicker	232	House Sparrow	315	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	14
Pileated Woodpecker	61	House Finch	227	Blue Grosbeak	7
American Kestrel	21	Purple Finch	1	Indigo Bunting	36
Merlin	1	American Goldfinch	303	Dickcissel	2
Peregrine Falcon	1	Chipping Sparrow	201	Total Birds:	15,439
Great Crested Flycatcher	6	Field Sparrow	9	Total Species:	130

BEGINNER BIRDER'S CORNER

BY MEGAN BOLCAR

Whether you are new to birding overall, or just new to birding in Howard County, you may be wondering what locations are best suited to new birders. Howard County has many great birding spots covering a wide variety of habitat types. I asked two experienced birders for their suggestions on the best birding spots for beginners. The locations they suggested have convenient parking, walking trails, and are fairly well known (and therefore easy to navigate to) in Howard County. They also cover a variety of habitats and have a reputation for good birding. In addition, the sites are popular amongst birders of all levels, so you might even get lucky and encounter an experienced birder on your visit who can provide tips and point you in the direction of any interesting birds that they have found.

Two of Howard County's lake sites were recommended: Centennial Park and Lake Elkhorn. It was also noted that any of the lakes in the county would likely be of interest to beginner birders. The visibility at the lakes is ideal for practicing binocular use on waterfowl, and the adjacent forests and fields provide variety of habitat, and therefore a variety of species, that may be seen. Additional sites that were recommended for beginner birders include Middle Patuxent Environmental Area – Trotter Road; Western Regional Park; and Rockburn Branch Park.

In addition to knowing where to go, knowing what to expect when you arrive can be very helpful. The Howard County Bird Club website includes site guides to assist those members who may want to explore new locations and to know what to expect at each. These guides can be found at www.howardbirds.website/birding/site-guides/. Each site guide provides information such as the size of the site, habitats you will find, amenities and accessibility, links to directions and lists of species you may encounter, and more. The site guides are great resources to help identify a spot that is new to you and to prepare for your visit.

We would love to hear from you about your experiences in the county as a new birder! What locations have you found particularly useful and productive as a new (or new-to-the-county) birder? What are some features of the locations that you enjoyed that have led you to make return visits? Send your comments to howardbirdclub@mdbirds.org.

Do you have a question you've always wanted to ask as a beginner birder, or a topic on which you would like more information? Send it to howardbirdclub@mdbirds.org and we will consider it for future editions of Beginner Birder's Corner! All submissions will remain anonymous.

HOUSE FINCH EYE DISEASE SURFACES IN COLUMBIA

BY KATHLEEN REILLY AND RICHARD LOVE

A resident in Kings Contrivance recently became alarmed in mid-September after observing two House Finches on separate occasions becoming blind, lethargic, and then dying. These birds most likely had [House Finch Eye Disease](#) (also known as Avian Conjunctivitis), a bacterial disease now endemic in the US. Its spread is exacerbated by bird feeders that are not regularly cleaned. Since several species of birds congregate at the same bird feeders, the disease can spread to other susceptible species such as the American Goldfinch, Evening Grosbeak, and Purple Finch.

To avoid this from happening in your yard:

Clean and disinfect your feeders every two weeks.

To prevent the spread of this disease, clean and disinfect your feeders at least every two weeks. This is especially important if your feeder has large ports that the birds can rub their heads against. You can wash tube feeders in the dishwasher with a hot setting, or with soap and water, or diluted bleach, or with a weak vinegar solution of 10%. Rinse and dry thoroughly.

What to do if a diseased bird shows up at your feeders:

Take down the feeders for a few days so the diseased birds disperse. Thoroughly clean and disinfect the feeders. Also rake up any spilled seeds and droppings under the feeders. Clean and disinfect weekly. If sick birds return, you should likely stop using large port feeders.

Create a natural habitat: Plant native vegetation to attract insects and natural food sources, reducing reliance on feeders.

Take your feeders down in the summer. If you've created a healthy native landscape, birds will find plenty to eat in your garden during the summer and fall seasons.

If you are interested in helping to provide data to help track the spread of House Finch Eye Disease throughout the US, you may wish to consider joining [Project FeederWatch](#).

For more details on the Finch Eye Disease, see: <https://feederwatch.org/learn/house-finch-eye-disease/>



ECLIPSE BIRDING

BY BEN COSTELLO

On April 8, 2024, I had the opportunity to observe the partial solar eclipse from an hour before the closest Howard County would get to totality (88.6% of the sun covered at my location) through around half an hour after the near-totality. Knowing that this was probably a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and having read about both past and present efforts by professional ornithologists to document bird behavior during a solar eclipse, I decided to contribute my own bird data by creating 10-minute stationary eBird checklists. I hoped to see if I could find any particular changes in bird behavior or frequency as the near-totality approached. I observed both the eclipse and the local birds from my front yard in Ellicott City, which offered a good view of the sky. The peak of the moon's coverage of the sun occurred at about 3:23 p.m. where I was, and my first list began at 2:28 p.m. This endeavor proved to be a test of patience, as there was relatively little bird activity for most of the 90 minutes. Most of the birds I noted were heard-only, and although I eventually recorded a total of 18 species, all were expected and common for the open suburban area.

I tried to keep notes on how the birds were behaving in relation to how much darker the sky became as the peak of the eclipse approached. I was somewhat surprised to find that there was very little obvious change in bird behavior or frequency for most of the observation period. Only during the period around two minutes before the peak through exactly five minutes past the peak was there a discernable change. During that seven-minute period at the height of the eclipse's darkness, every bird fell silent except for a few murmurs of House Sparrow chatter and several singing Northern Cardinals. Moreover, during that period, I did not see a single bird. I found this somewhat surprising, having read reports of birds giving their evening songs during previous solar eclipses. Interestingly, at precisely 3:28 p.m., bird song picked up all around me, and several species immediately came into view. The most vocal bird at that moment was a White-breasted Nuthatch, a bird I had not observed before then. About ten minutes after the peak of eclipse-induced darkness, bird activity and diversity were essentially back to where it had been when I began my series of checklists.

At the peak of the eclipse, the light was not much less than it would have been on a normal overcast day, at least to my eyes. I wonder if the fact that the light level was still within the normal spring daytime range kept the birds from altering their behavior too much. Still, the fact that every bird except the Northern Cardinals disappeared and fell silent at the peak of the eclipse suggests to me that the birds were aware that something unusual was occurring. If I were able to repeat this birding "experiment," I would probably try to do the same thing from the same place for a day or two before the eclipse to better capture the baseline bird activity and frequency. Although I had no dramatic findings to report, the experience of birding during such a rare event was quite rewarding, and has renewed my appreciation of the subtleties of bird behavior even in common species.

(The eBird Trip Report for this attempt at birding during the eclipse may be found at <https://ebird.org/tripreport/263582>)

MARYLAND/DC BREEDING BIRD ATLAS 3, 2020-2024

BY SUE MULLER

The Breeding Bird Atlas 3 (BBA3) is coming to an end on December 31st. It is not too late to contribute records! Howard County had 24 blocks assigned to survey. In those 24 blocks, we as a team confirmed 28 species in all blocks! Here is the list:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. American Crow | 11. Downy Woodpecker | 21. Mourning Dove |
| 2. American Goldfinch | 12. Eastern Bluebird | 22. Northern Cardinal |
| 3. American Robin | 13. Eastern Kingbird | 23. Northern Mockingbird |
| 4. Barn Swallow | 14. Eastern Phoebe | 24. Red-bellied Woodpecker |
| 5. Blue Jay | 15. European Starling | 25. Red-shouldered Hawk |
| 6. Canada Goose | 16. Fish Crow | 26. Red-winged Blackbird |
| 7. Carolina Chickadee | 17. Gray Catbird | 27. Tufted Titmouse |
| 8. Carolina Wren | 18. House Finch | 28. White-breasted Nuthatch |
| 9. Chipping Sparrow | 19. House Sparrow | |
| 10. Common Grackle | 20. House Wren | |

How can you still contribute? Well, take a careful look at that list. If you had a bird nest in your yard that is not on that list, please email your County Coordinators with your species and address to: howard@mdbirds.org. This would be any time between January 1, 2020 and now. Simple!



HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB

Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society

PO Box 1323

Columbia, MD 21044

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MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

If you have not yet renewed your membership for 2024-25, go to the HCBC website at <https://www.howardbirds.website> and click on "Join Us" at the top of the home page.



GIVE THE GIFT OF MEMBERSHIP



Consider a gift membership in the HCBC for the upcoming holidays. A gift membership is also always welcome for a birthday, thank you, or special occasion. Given to a young person, it may spark a lifelong interest! Look for the 'Gift Membership' section on the [Join Us](#) page of the HCBC website.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS

The December 5 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:

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