



Founded 1972

# The Goldfinch

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



## CLUB MEETINGS - BY MARY LOU CLARK

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- [Club Meetings](#) ..... 1
- [Chirps to the Flock](#) ..... 1
- [Spring Field Trips](#)..... 2
- [Autumn Bird Records](#)..... 3
- [Board of Directors Meetings](#) ..... 4
- [Welcome New Members](#) ..... 4
- [2024 Annual List](#) ..... 5
- [Birding Less Popular Spots](#) ..... 5
- [Annual Potluck Dinner](#)..... 6
- [GreenFest](#)..... 6
- [May Count](#)..... 6
- [2024 Butterfly Year](#)..... 7
- [2024 Habitat Hero](#) ..... 10



**Thursday, March 13, 2025** “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 freshwater 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.

**Thursday, April 10, 2025** "Birding Colombia as a Family Man" by Russ Ruffing. In September 2022, Russ’ oldest daughter moved to Armenia, Colombia, home to over 2,000 bird species. Since then, the family has now visited her four times. Mixing birding with family time, Russ has managed to see 415 species of birds both by birding by himself and by hiring a guide. This talk will give a brief description of Colombian birding and focus on some of the challenges he encountered in a country where English is spoken very little. There will be lots of pictures of birdlife!



Russ took an interest in birds in grade school and began keeping records of nesting birds in his home area. When he attended Penn State, he worked for a wildlife professor who introduced him to survey protocols used on tracts of contiguous habitat. Relocating to the Los Angeles area in the early 1990s, he birded southern California extensively. After a hiatus of ten years, the advent of eBird led to Russ birding again. In recent years, Russ worked on a three-year project to produce the Annotated Bird Records for Howard County, to which he continues to contribute.

*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](#)”*

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

**A**s I write this, the temperature has just risen out of the single digits. So, I thought it was a good day for me stay indoors briefly to delve into the rich trove of information that is on our Howard County Bird Club (HCBC) website, to learn more about the club, and to discover some resources that I can guide you to that you may not know exist.

As many of you know, our webmaster, Bob Solem, has literally spent thousands of hours curating the information there. So, how best to discover what is on our site? I propose a virtual scavenger hunt. I’m going to provide you a list of questions about the club that you can find the answers to on our site. And I hope that along the way, you will enjoy the task and learn more about our club. I know we have some folks with competitive natures in the club, so I will offer a prize to the first club member to provide me the correct answers to the following questions and list anyone who answers all of the questions correctly. I’ll start with a softball question:

1. In what year was the HCBC established?
2. Who was the first president of the HCBC?

*(Continued on [page 6](#))*

# 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 [auki1844@gmail.com](mailto:auki1844@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.

## **B** Woodcock Search

Late February or early March, exact date to be determined based on the weather. Let leader know of your interest.

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

## **B W** Centennial Park

March 2, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours. *West end parking lot.* Easy walking around the lake on paved path. Facilities available. Waterfowl expected, early migrant passerines possible.

Leader – Russell Kovach, [Russell.kovach@gmail.com](mailto:Russell.kovach@gmail.com)

## **B W** Centennial Park

March 9, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours. Daylight Savings Time starts (set clocks ahead). *See March 2 entry.*

Leader – Richard Peters, [Richard@rrrrpeters.org](mailto:Richard@rrrrpeters.org)

## **B W** Centennial Park

March 16, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours. *See March 2 entry.*

Leader – Dave Ziolkowski, [djziolkowski@yahoo.com](mailto:djziolkowski@yahoo.com)

## **B R** Beginning Birder Question and Answer Walk at [Belmont Manor & Historic Park](#)

March 19, Wednesday, 9:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. *Meet at the parking lot on the right, near the barn.* Slow pace through fields, along woods edges, and around a pond. Terri Berkheimer and Val Swan will discuss the methods used to identify birds in a variety of habitats. Limit 12; e-mail the leader to reserve a spot and get details. Facilities available. Boots recommended.

Leaders – Val Swan, [valnjevff55@gmail.com](mailto:valnjevff55@gmail.com), and Terri Berkheimer

## **B W** Centennial Park

March 23, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours. *See March 2 entry.*

Leader – John Henri Rorabeck, [johnhenri14@gmail.com](mailto:johnhenri14@gmail.com)

## **B R** Beginning Birder Trip: Font Hill Wetlands Park

March 29, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. *Meet at the red park sign at 10018-10020 Autumn View Ln., Ellicott City, MD 21042.* The paved trail is about a mile long, featuring a short boardwalk, three ponds and a stream through woods. Chance of seeing Great Blue Heron, woodpeckers, waterfowl, Red-shouldered Hawk, Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Bluebird. No facilities. Limit 6; e-mail the leader to reserve a spot and get details.

Leader – Laura Wolf, [bakerswifemadeit@gmail.com](mailto:bakerswifemadeit@gmail.com)

## [Sharps at Waterford Farm](#)

March 29, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. (half day). *Meet at farm parking area, through barns on right. Rte. 97 S. to right on Jennings Chapel Rd., 1 mile to right into farm at sign.* Moderate walking over crop stubble, farm roads, and paths on this working farm. Fields with crop residue, extensive woodlands, Cattail Creek and floodplain, three ponds, and five shallow waterfowl impoundments make for diverse habitats and good birding opportunities. Port-a-pots available. Knee-high waterproof footwear required for part of walk.

Leader – Wes Earp, [wesandsue@gmail.com](mailto:wesandsue@gmail.com)

## **B W** Centennial Park

March 30, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours. *See March 2 entry.*

Leader – David Sandler, [detour65@gmail.com](mailto:detour65@gmail.com)

## **B R** Merlin Bird ID App Class and Bird Walk, [Mt Pleasant, Howard County Conservancy](#)

April 5, Saturday, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Indoor training session covering how to use the Merlin Bird Identification App, followed by an outdoor bird walk. Email the trip leaders for information and to register.

Leaders – Steve Luke [steveluke@gmail.com](mailto:steveluke@gmail.com) and Lauren Crocker [lauren.k.crocker@gmail.com](mailto:lauren.k.crocker@gmail.com)

## [Schooley Mill Park](#)

April 14, Monday, 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. *Meet in the back parking lot by the restrooms.* Spring migrants in open woods and fields. Facilities available.

Leader – To Be Announced; check the website for updates.

## **B R** Beginning Birder Trip: Early Spring Migrants at [Dunloggin Wetlands](#)

April 19, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. *Park and meet at Dunloggin Middle School.* Opportunity to see early spring migrants and resident woodland birds and to learn the details of local woodpeckers. Limit 8; e-mail the leader to reserve a spot and get details.

Leader – Ben Costello, [bcostel3@gmail.com](mailto:bcostel3@gmail.com)

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

April 19, Saturday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours  
Earth Day Walk in conjunction with the Howard County Conservancy. *Meet at parking lot near the barn.* Easy walking through the fields of Mt Pleasant Farm. Tree lines, hedgerows, and streams provide opportunity for non-meadow species. Great opportunity for flyovers.

Facilities available.

Leader – Gregg Petersen, [sig29@aol.com](mailto:sig29@aol.com)

## [West Friendship Park](#)

April 30, Wednesday, 8:00 a.m. *Meet in front parking lot.* Moderate walking along field edges and through stream valleys. The park now has very nice meadows which were used by the meadowlarks and Grasshopper Sparrows, in addition to plenty of other types of habitat. Expect wet areas. Rustic facilities.

Leader – Lisa Colangelo, [lcolangelo@verizon.net](mailto:lcolangelo@verizon.net)

## Spring Wildflower Walk at [Savage Mill Trail](#)

May 1, Thursday, 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. (Rain date: Tuesday, May 6.) Look for spring wildflowers at one of the county's most scenic locations. Easy walking on wide flat packed earth trail above Fall Line on the Little Patuxent River. Park on Foundry Street off Gorman Road. Reservations via email to the trip leaders are suggested in case trip is postponed.

Leaders – Bob and Jo Solem, [odenata@msn.com](mailto:odenata@msn.com), and Sue Muller

**B** = Good for beginning birders **W** = Wheelchair accessible **R** = Reservations Required

# AUTUMN BIRD RECORDS: AUGUST 1 – NOVEMBER 30, 2024

BY JOANNE SOLEM

The season was marked by dramatic swings in the weather. Mid-Sept tallied 10 consecutive days with measurable precipitation, Oct had 33 days with none, and Nov careened from a record 81° F. on the 6<sup>th</sup> to a low of 23° F. by the 30<sup>th</sup>.

Species that deserved special comment this season included Common Merganser (early date), American Golden-Plover, Least Bittern, Little Blue Heron, Mississippi Kite, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Pine Siskin (early date), Clay-colored Sparrow, Orange-crowned Warbler, Connecticut Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler (late date), and Summer Tanager.

The first large flock of **Tundra Swans** spent the night at a pond on Jennings Chapel Road 11/24 (*vide* JSh).

Waterfowl migration started on 8/28 with one **Blue-winged Teal** and two **Northern Shovelers** at Barberry Way (VSw). A shoveler at Meadowridge Business Pk Pond (MRBPP) 11/11 (SGz) was unexpected at that location. Eleven **Gadwalls** at Race Rd Wetlands 11/15 (HLm) are to be expected; four at Crest Lawn Memorial Gardens 11/17 were a surprise (JCu). Two female **Common Mergansers** at Lake Kittamaquidi 10/5 (T/MFr) established a new early date, only the second Oct record [10/19/87 S. Atkinson].

Top **Wild Turkey** counts were 20 at Driver Rd 8/10 (RTd), 14 at Sand Hill Rd 9/1 (JCu, ph.), 14 at Alpha Ridge Landfill (ALRGL) 11/8 (RCu), and 12 at Barberry Way 9/12 (VSw).

**Common Nighthawk** migration began with one on 8/10 at Cyprus Cedar La (BO), with the last one over Font Hill Wetland Pk 10/12 (PMg). Peak numbers were 15 at Joey Dr 8/30 (JMCh) and 12-15 at Stone Hill Dr 9/1 (KLz). After a change in wind and humidity, one was caught in reverse migration flying north over an Ellicott City home 9/2 (BCs). Multiple sightings were notched on 9/26 despite days of overcast skies and showers.

A largely white (most likely leucistic **Ruby-throated**) hummingbird was photog'd at an Elkridge feeder (DBm) 8/25-27. On 9/1, probably the same bird was seen at a feeder on Morningside La (*vide* MLC, ph.).

In marked contrast to 2023, shorebird migration produced few species of note. The choice sightings were an **American Golden-Plover** at ALRGL 10/8 (RCu, JHf) and a **Least Sandpiper** at MRBPP 11/1 (YYL; RVg, ph.), one day shy of the late date. Single **American Woodcock** were noted at five sites: Oct (RRf; MKm; ECs; JNg), Nov (TCh, SMe). A **Lesser Yellowlegs** at MRBPP 11/1 (YYL) and a **Greater** at Centennial Pk 11/11 (GDR) were nice, although both were considerably short of late records.

Surprisingly, a **Caspian Tern** at Centennial Pk 10/1 (MNT) was the only report of *any* tern species this season.



Least Bittern (deceased)  
by Wren Kreinar

Single **American Bitterns** were detected at Meadowbrook Pk 10/4 (K/KvMcP) and at Cavey La 10/7, heard on NFC live (RRf). One of the season's best records was a **Least Bittern** (unfortunately deceased), photog'd at Lake Elkhorn 10/1 (WKn).

Perhaps the same juvenile (juv.) **Little Blue Heron** was sighted twice: MRBPP 8/6 (TCr, ph.) and Fulton Pd 8/9 (KS, ph.). Adult and juv. **Yellow-crowned** and **Black-crowned Night Herons** were reported, most often at Centennial Pk and Wilde Lake. A juv. YCNH played tag with observers along the Patuxent Branch Trail 8/16 (SMu); one was also photog'd at a pond behind Hollifield ES 9/21 (KMCP, MHs, WSy) where it remained until 9/24.

At least six **Osprey** pairs nested in HOWCO in 2024; all used cell towers (*vide* SMu). Autumn's only well-documented **Mississippi Kite** was spotted over Mt Pleasant (MTPLT) 9/3 (BO, ph.). **Northern Harriers** at ALRGL 8/23 (RCu) and at MTPLT 8/25 (RVg, VLi) were early migrants. Large numbers of **Broad-winged Hawks** are never certainties locally, but overcast skies and drizzle/rain for 10 days in mid-Sept limited sightings. The best day was 9/22 between 12:30 – 2:30 p.m.: 520 at Joey Dr (JMCh), 80 at Hobson's Choice Ln (CHm), and 123 at Schooley Mill Pk (SLk, ph.). The last one was recorded at MTPLT 10/26 (SLv, JSn).

Two sightings of multiple **American Kestrels** were a pleasant surprise: 10 (seven perched and three hovering nearby) at ALRGL 9/16 (RCu) and seven, probably grounded by remnants of Hurricane Helene, perched on utility wires at Triadelphia Rd near Triadelphia Mill Rd 9/27 (JWd).

Autumn's lone **Olive-sided Flycatcher** stayed at MTPLT from 8/28 (MHs, WSy, ph.) through 8/31 (m. obs.). More **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers** were claimed than were accepted as photos/excellent descriptions are required. To date, sightings with adequate documentation were credited as follows: W. Friendship Pk 9/5 (JHf, desc.); Montgomery Run 9/8 (RSm, ph./desc.); MTPLT 9/9 (VSw, ph.); Schooley Mill Pk 9/11 (SLk, ph. desc.). **Leasts** were reported from MTPLT 8/20 (WCw) to Lake Kittamaquidi 10/3 (CKc, ph.).



Olive-sided Flycatcher eating a Spotted Lanternfly, an invasive species of insect. by Mei Shyong

**Philadelphia Vireos** are one of the trickiest IDs. (Most accepted records included photos or descriptions.) Reports from at least seven sites ran from 9/3 at MTPLT (WCw, desc.) to 10/7 MTPLT (TFr, ph.), with the majority during the first half of Sept.

On 11/2 at the MTPLT Skywatch, 446 **Cedar Waxwings** were counted in 15 – 20 flocks during 3.5 hours (RRf+). Fewer than a dozen sites have hosted **Red-breasted Nuthatches** this season. **Marsh Wrens** showed up at three locations; all were verified with photos (SMc/TCM; VSw; RVg+). A partially leucistic **American Robin** appeared in a Burleigh Manor yard 10/30 (MKw, ph.).

Numbers of **Purple Finches** spiked in late Oct with counts of 17 on 10/26 at MTPLT (SLv, JSn) and 16 on 10/27 at Dorsey's Search (AAl); the peak was 20 on 11/16 at MTPLT (RVg, VLi). An early **Pine Siskin** photog'd at Norris La 9/9 (DZk) broke one of the county's oldest records [10/3/55 R. Munro]. Few siskins were reported the rest of the season.

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



(Records continued from page 3)

A **Clay-colored Sparrow** at Meadowbrook Pk 10/1 - 2 (**BO**, ph.) was one of the stars of the season. An **American Tree Sparrow** at MTPLT 11/17 (**MKw**) was the only record of this declining species accompanied by a description. One or two **Vespers** appeared, as usual, at both ALRGL and MTPLT, mostly the last half of Oct. One spotted along the Mt Hebron Pumping Station Rd 10/25 (**JCu**) was a nice find—and a testament to birding your neighborhood consistently. The **Savannah** high for the season was 34 at MTPLT 10/16 (**BO**). It was unusual in 2024 for the six *spring Lincoln's* sites to equal *fall's* usually more impressive number. The season's high was three at MTPLT 10/16 (**BO**).

A single **Bobolink** at New Cut Landfill 8/15 was the season's first (**BO**); the high was at least 100 at Waterford Farm 9/15 (**GPn**). A flock of 31 **Eastern Meadowlarks** was an excellent count at ALRGL 10/21 (**RCu**). A **Brown-headed Cowbird** in a Pointers Ridge yard 8/22 was being fed by a **Song Sparrow** (**J/MHr**). **Rusty Blackbirds** were noted at seven sites, all single digits.



Orange-crowned Warbler

by Bonnie Ott

The season's only **Prothonotary** was seen at Howard Chapel Rd, Patuxent River SP 8/14 (**JHf**). Photos verified at least two **Orange-crowned Warblers** at MTPLT intermittently from 10/15 (**BO**, ph.) to 11/6 (**TFr**, ph.; **SLk**, ph.), with one still present 11/20 (**MKw**, desc.). One was also photog'd at nearby Cavey La (**RRf**) 10/31-11/1. **Connecticuts** were recorded at five sites from 8/30 - 10/7: Cavey La (**RRf**), Race Road Wetlands (**MRJ**), Schooley Mill Pk (**TFy**), W. Friendship Pk (**JHf**), and MTPLT (**MKw**; **WCw**; **JHf**). Numerous observations at MTPLT during this period involved an unknown number of individuals. (Thanks to the many observers who provided photos and/or descriptions.)



Blackpoll Warbler

by Clayton Koonce

A **Mourning Warbler** at Martin Rd 10/3 (**JHf**) was the only one accepted this season. A **Blackpoll** at Lake Kitamaquundi 10/30 (**CKc**, ph.) set a new late date [10/23/86 S. Atkinson]. A well-described male **Black-throated Blue** in an Owen Brown yard 11/7 (**TFr**) tied the second latest record.

Three **Summer Tanagers** were spotted, two on Fall Count 9/21: Gorman Stream Valley NRA south of Hammond H.S. (**TDC**, **BPr**, **BRw**, **JMh**) and Waterford (**MW**). One dined on peanuts at a Kings Contrivance feeder 9/27 - 10/2 (**KCK**).

A juv. male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** showed up at MTPLT 8/22, one day later than the early fall date (**MHs**, **WSy**, ph.) The species was bookended by a laggard that appeared at a Hammond Village safflower feeder 11/3 (**KOS**, desc.).

Two **Dickcissels** were reported from Waterford Farm 9/21 (**MW**); likewise, two were picked out at MTPLT 10/14 (**TFr**, ph.) and one there on 10/15 (**BO**, ph.)

**Appreciation:** Joe Hanfman, Russ Ruffing, and Tim Carney provided invaluable edits and advice. Sorting through the material for this long season requires extensive assistance. I am always grateful.

**Observers:** AAI - Annette Allor, DBm - Darlene Brotsman, TCr - Tim Carney, TCh - Teresa Chaconas, JCh - Jane Chandler, MCh - Mark Chandler, KCK - Ken Clark, MLC - Mary Lou Clark, ECs - Eric Clawson, TDC - T. Dennis Coskren, BCs - Ben Costello, WCw - Wendy Crowe, JCu - Jeff Culler, RCu - Ralph Cullison III, GDR - Guy DiRoma, MFr - Martin Forrester, TFr - Tim Forrester, TFy - Tim Frye, SGz - Scott Guzewich, CHm - Cathy Hallam, JHf - Joe Hanfman, JHr - John Harris, MHr - Meg Harris, MHs - Mei Hsiao, MRJ - Mark R. Johnson, MKm - Mara Kaminowitz, MKw - Mike Kerwin, CKc - Clayton Koonce, WKn - Wren Kreinar, YYL - Yi-Ying Lee, HLm - Henry Lehman, VLi - Vitus Li, KLz - Kathy Litzinger, SLv - Sabrina Lovell, SLk - Steve Luke, SMe - Sara Macri, PMg - Paige Magrogan, JMh - Jeremy Mahhinney, KMCP - Karlyn McPartland, KvMcP - Kevin McPartland, TCM - T.C. Moynihan, SMu - Sue Muller, JNg - John Nolting, KOS - Karen O'Steen, BO - Bonnie Ott, BPr - Brittany Parsons, GPn - Gregg Petersen, BRw - Brett Rowan, RRF - Russ Ruffing, RSm - Ryan Salsman, KS - Kurt Schwarz, JSh - Jay Sheppard, JSn - Jeff Shernot, WSy - Wen Shyong, VSw - Val Swan, MNT - MarkNhu Twell, RTd - Robin Todd, RVg - Roshan Vignarajah, MW - Mark Wallace, JWD - Josh Ward, DZk - Dave Ziolkowski.

### WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Deanna Lentz, Paul Goldenberg, Paget Donnelly, Mary Beth O'Brien, Pauline Tran, Jerome Bishop, Lilian Saul, Doug Wassmer.

Welcome, and happy birding!

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS

The March 27 and April 24 board meetings 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](mailto: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  
12136 Gray Star Way  
Columbia, MD 21044  
[howardbirdclub@mdbirds.org](mailto:howardbirdclub@mdbirds.org)

The **Goldfinch**, newsletter of the Howard County Bird Club, is published five times per year. Copy deadline for the May/June 2025 issue is March 25, 2025.

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

## 2024 ANNUAL LIST FOR HOWARD COUNTY

BY JOE HANFMAN

**B**irders reported a total of 225 species for Howard County in 2024. This total was the 28th highest total in the last 46 years. The top county birds of the year were a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, that was a first county record, a Western Tanager that was a second county record, and two Wilson's Phalaropes, a fourth county record.

Only 13 species of shorebirds were seen mainly due to the high-water levels at Triadelphia Reservoir.

The biggest misses were Laughing Gull which has been seen in 37 of the last 46 years, Lesser Black-backed Gull seen in 23 years, Forster's Tern seen in 28 years, Rough-legged Hawk seen in 25 years, and Evening Grosbeak seen in 34 years.

168 of the 315 species that have been seen in the county, have been seen in each of the last 46 years. 208 of the 315 species that have been seen in the county, have been seen 23 or more times in the last 46 years.

Examine the complete list at <https://howardbirds.website/birding/howard-county-annual-bird-list/>

Thanks, and congratulations to all those who spent many hours scouring the county, finding birds, and sharing their sightings.

### Thanks for Birding Less Popular Sites!

**T**hat Mount Pleasant, Centennial Park, and the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area are the county's three most popular birding sites should be no surprise to local birders. Another dozen locations, including the Columbia lakes, portions of Triadelphia Reservoir, and several of the county's largest parks, are a strong second tier.

The popularity of these heavily visited spots *tends to give the mistaken impression that certain bird species are limited to or most likely to be found in these locales*. To the contrary, most unusual species can and do turn up anywhere their specialized habitat is present. Only by regular visits to a wide variety of sites countywide is it possible to survey Howard County's birdlife adequately.

The Howard County Records Committee (HCRC) extends special thanks to those bird club members who, month after month, and, year after year, focus much of their limited time and energy on less-visited locations. By birding a few places consistently (in addition to faithfully covering their own property), observers recognize subtle habitat changes, know what species to expect at each season, and can spot unusual species quickly. It doesn't mean that these birders never visit the more popular sites but, by focusing a significant amount of their efforts on less well-loved or less publicized sites, they are adding to our understanding of the county's birdlife. These efforts have a number of advantages.

Unusual species may be found.

Long-term oversight can verify subtle habitat changes, obvious only over a long time period.

Covering areas close to home saves valuable birding time.

A consistently watchful eye can catch illegal activities. (Did you know that county birders have reported chemical and oil drainage into waterways, cutting of trees for personal use, dumping of trash, use of off-road vehicles on park trails, camping in county parks, the capture of turtles for commercial purposes, and unauthorized placement of exotic waterfowl on lakes?)

Following are a few sites that have been visited regularly, sometimes for years. *They represent only a small sample*. The HC Records Committee appreciates the commitment of all members who help to find and document the county's diverse birdlife.

**Ken Clark:** Wincopin Trail; various Savage sites.

**Ben Costello:** Dunloggin Wetlands; Gwynn Acres Path (Dorseys Search Loop Trail).

**Jeff Culler:** Crest Lawn Memorial Gardens; Mt. Hebron neighborhood.

**Ralph Cullison III:** Bon Secours Retreat and Conference Center.

**Tim Frye:** Gorman Stream Valley NRA—Kindler section.

**Clayton Koonce:** Oakland—Vantage Point, Merriweather Park at Symphony Woods.

**Brian Moyer:** Sewells Orchard Community Park.

**Ryan Salsman:** Montgomery Run area; Stanford Blvd Pond.

**Mary Prowell:** Sections of Patuxent River State Park.

**Jim Wilkinson:** Elkhorn Gardens, Oxford Square, Brush Run neighborhood.

You, too, can add to our knowledge of county birdlife by covering an under-birded location regularly!

*HCRC: Joanne Solem, Joe Hanfman, Russ Ruffing.*

(Continued from page 1)

3. In 1991, Connie Bockstie won the MOS pin design competition for her rendition of what bird?
4. Our current Board of Directors and Committee Organization includes two members of the Howard County Conservancy (HCC). Name one of those members.
5. In the *Fungi of Howard County* written by Jo and Bob Solem, what does the abbreviation GWACP stand for?
6. How many different colors are offered for our HCBC logo-ed North Face Connector Backpack on our merchandise page?
7. In what month and year was our first newsletter published and who was scheduled to give the February 8<sup>th</sup> program: Milpas, Motmots, and Mayas?
8. What year was the first Fall Count conducted and how many Northern Bobwhite were counted? (this is a tricky access, but the information is there)
9. How many Northern Bobwhite were counted during the HCBC May Count in 1975?
10. When was the Worthington Dog Park pollinator meadow established?
11. According to Kevin Heffernan's Plants for Pollinators reference dated 3/12/21, what butterflies are *Boehmeria cylindrica* the larval host for?
12. What are the Howard County Odonate dates for the Stream Cruiser (*Didymops transversa*)?
13. What is the FULL NAME of the author of the The Butterflies of Howard County, Maryland ("A Biological Summary and Checklist")?
14. According to **our glossary**, what is the definition of crepuscular?
15. Who is the first known person to tally 200 species in Howard County in a single year?
16. What edition of the Goldfinch was its first color newsletter?
17. What documents do you require to access the "additional access areas" at the Triadelphia Reservoir and T. Howard Duckett Reservoir for "the sole purpose of birding" from March 15, 2025 thru November 30, 2025?

That's it! If you decided to take me up on my challenge, I hope you learned more about the club and about nature on your journey through the website. Along the way of your quest, you can help us maintain the site quality—if you discover links that do not work, please copy that link address and email it to Bob Solem at [odenata@msn.com](mailto:odenata@msn.com). It's a big site to maintain and we need your help to check its function.

Please send me your answers at [sig29@aol.com](mailto:sig29@aol.com). Also, the next newsletter will have a list of the answers. As always, I hope to see you at a meeting or out birding somewhere!

Best regards,

Gregg Petersen

### HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB'S ANNUAL POTLUCK DINNER

Saturday March 22, 2025 at The Robinson Nature Center.  
Time: 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

You may RSVP, or volunteer for setup or cleanup, at the March club meeting, by contacting Meghaan Lane by Friday, March 21, 2025 at 410-829-6192 or [meghaanlane@gmail.com](mailto:meghaanlane@gmail.com), or through the link <https://www.PerfectPotluck.com/NZUW7114>.

For more details, please see "Annual Potluck 2025" in the January/February 2025 issue of The Goldfinch.

### MAY COUNT

Join the fun! The May Count will take place Saturday, May 10, 2025. All levels welcome. Details to come in the May/June issue of *The Goldfinch*.

Coordinator: Gregg Petersen [sig29@aol.com](mailto:sig29@aol.com)



### TELL YOUR FRIENDS!

Do you have a friend or family member who has been thinking about joining the club? Let them know that NEW members joining between March 1 - August 31, 2025 do not have to renew their membership until September 1, 2026. A great deal they won't want to pass up!

Howard County **GreenFest** 2025  
Save The Date!  
Saturday, April 12 • 10:00am – 3:00pm  
Howard Community College, Academic Commons  
[HCGreenfest.org](http://HCGreenfest.org)



# 2024 HOWARD COUNTY BUTTERFLY YEAR

BY KEVIN HEFFERNAN

Last year we completed the 11<sup>th</sup> year of the Howard County Butterfly Survey. A total of 928 surveys were submitted by 58 people and 44,909 minutes were spent in the field. We found 70 species this year and 21,278 individual butterflies. We now have seen a total of 81 species and 236,747 individual butterflies in the 11 years of the survey. The 482,380 minutes in the field = 8,043 hours or 201 40-hour work weeks, which are equivalent to 3.87 years of effort. We also conducted six butterfly walks which 165 people attended.

A project of this size does not succeed without a lot of help and dedication. So, some big thank yous are in order, particularly to the contributors. The following 23 people submitted 10 or more butterfly reports this year: Linda Hunt (156), Kathy Litzinger (139), Clayton Koonce (91), Jim Wilkinson (63), Annette Allor (56), Janet Lydon (42), Jim McFadden (39), Kevin Heffernan (38), Woody Merkle (33), Cris Ausin (32), Jennifer Kanera (27), Barbara White (23), Lynn Gregg (19), Susan Tucker (19), Bill Hill (17), Sharon Smith (17), Andrea Cockran (16), Robyn Evans (16), Pam Perna (14), Mike Riley (12), David Ryan (10), Heather Dulaney (10), and Kurt Schwarz (10). Thank you also to the other 35 contributors as well. An extra big thank you to Linda Hunt and Kathy Litzinger who submitted 156 and 139 reports respectively. A big thank you also to the walk leaders: Woody Merkle, Linda Hunt, Kathy Litzinger, and Cris Ausin. Another big thank you goes to Bob Solem for providing the tools to get the data from emails to a spreadsheet where it can be analyzed, expanding the photo gallery, posting trip reports, and a host of other things. Finally, a huge thank you to Kathy Litzinger for co-chairing the survey and for helping organize all of the data from the year which is a large and time-consuming task.

**First Butterfly of the Year:** The first butterfly reported this year was an Eastern Comma seen by Cheryl Farfaras on February 9th. It was the third earliest date that the first identified butterfly of the year was seen during the survey. *A total of two butterflies (both Eastern Commas) were seen in February. For comparison, 19 were reported in 2023.*

**Peak Years:** Six species had ten-year high counts for the survey: Long-tailed Skipper (4), Common Sootywing (26), Sachem (6,436), Dusted Skipper (7), Gray Hairstreak (223), and American Lady (100). Four species had the second highest count in the ten years: Pipevine Swallowtail (38), Red Admiral (149), Little Wood-Satyr (332), and Ocola Skipper (62). Overall, 14.3% of the 70 species found were peak or second highest count years.

The 6,436 Sachems were the highest count for any species for any year during the survey. The only other two counts above 6,000 in a year were Sachem in 2023 (6,037) and Cabbage White in 2021 (6,032).

**Low counts:** The following seven species had ten-year low counts for the survey: Southern Cloudywing (4), Swarthy Skipper (2), Peck's Skipper (151), Zebra Swallowtail (8), Orange Sulphur (612), Northern Pearly-eye (38), and Common Wood-Nymph (1). An additional eight species had their second lowest count during the survey. These include Tawny-edged Skipper (22), Cabbage White (2,333), Clouded Sulphur (245), Banded Hairstreak (6), White M Hairstreak (3), Meadow Fritillary (12), Viceroy (11), and Monarch (364).

Overall, 21.4% of the 70 species found had their lowest or second lowest count during the survey. For two species, only a single individual was found, Common Wood-Nymph and Tawny Emperor.

**Howard County Watch List:** Southern Cloudywing has only been found in one location. Their numbers were never high but they have dropped every year since 2019. We reported four this year. This could be that the Murray Hill powerline location has not been visited as often in the last few years particularly since the Dusted Skipper was not being seen there. Swarthy Skipper reports have been six or fewer the last four years. Peck's Skipper numbers have dropped significantly each of the last four years. The 151 reported in 2024 is 20.4% of the 738 reported in 2020. The three lowest number of sightings for Tawny-edged Skipper have been the last three years. The 22 reported in 2024 is 25% of the 88 reported in 2021. Common Wood-Nymph numbers have only reached double digits in 2015 when 11 were reported. There have been five or fewer for eight years of the survey. There have been six reported in the last three years total. This year, we found a single individual. This could be a species that we miss in the near future. Monarch numbers were steady during the survey until 2022. There were 928 Monarchs reported in 2022, 374 in 2023 and 364 in 2024. This is worth keeping an eye on.

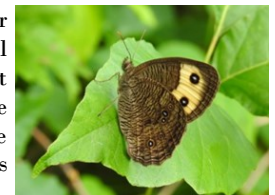
Common Checkered-Skipper numbers had dropped for five years in a row from a peak of 331 in 2017 to 14 in 2022. In 2023, they rebounded slightly to 20 but this number was still historically low. A total of 86 were reported in 2024, most of them at Little Portion Farm showing, once again, the value of a single location. American Copper numbers had dropped for six out of the seven years from 2016 to 2023. In 2023, the number reported was nine. This year, 42 were reported, all by Linda Hunt and all of them at Foxfield Farm. Great Spangled Fritillary numbers have dropped from 168 in 2018 to 39 (2019), 45 (2020), 32 (2021), and a low of 23 in both 2022 and 2023. A total of 71 were reported in 2024, many of them at Schooley Mill Park. These three species all had a rebound year but are worth continuing to monitor.

Of the 70 species found this year, 18 (~26%) had <10 individuals reported. These include *Northern Cloudywing* (9), Southern Broken-Dash (9), Harvester (9), *Juvenal's Duskywing* (8), Zebra Swallowtail (8), Coral Hairstreak (8), Appalachian Brown (8), **Dusted Skipper** (7), Banded Hairstreak (6), *Long-tailed Skipper* (4), *Southern Cloudywing* (4), *Northern Broken-Dash* (4), *White M Hairstreak* (3), *Swarthy Skipper* (2), *Hackberry Emperor* (2), *Tawny Emperor* (1), and *Common Wood-Nymph* (1). Ten of these (italics) were also on last year's "<10 individuals" reported list. One in bold was not seen last year. The other seven were not on last year's list.



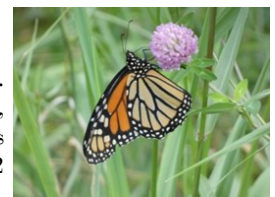
Tawny Emperor

Annette Allor



Common Wood-Nymph

Annette Allor



Monarch

Cris Ausin

(Continued from [page 7](#))

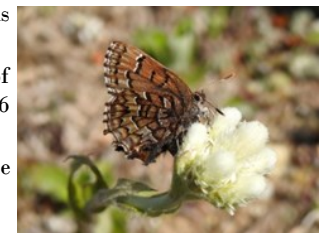
**New Early and Late Dates:** There were 14 new early dates established this year. These were Clouded Sulphur (3/13), Sleepy Orange (3/14), Falcate Orangetip (3/29), American Lady (4/9), Pipevine Swallowtail (4/16), Zabulon Skipper (4/23), Sachem (4/30), Peck's Skipper (5/2), Harvester (5/2), Least Skipper (5/3), Hobomok Skipper (5/3), Swarthy Skipper (5/16), Northern Pearly-Eye (5/21), and Appalachian Brown (5/21). There were also eight new late dates recorded this year. They were: Silver-spotted Skipper (11/5), Little Glasswing (11/6), Gray Hairstreak (11/11), Red-banded Hairstreak (11/11), American Lady (11/11), Clouded Skipper (11/18), Black Swallowtail (11/20), and Common Buckeye (11/27). The Early – Late Date spreadsheet has been updated and is on the website.

**Notes from the year:**

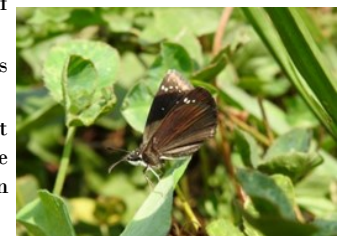
- Bonnie Ott found a Clouded Sulphur on March 13<sup>th</sup>, a full 15 days earlier than its previous early date of March 28<sup>th</sup>. It is possible that this butterfly overwintered as an adult.
- Annette Allor found a Sleepy Orange on March 14<sup>th</sup> which was three weeks earlier than its previous early date on April 4<sup>th</sup>. This butterfly was a winter form indicating that it definitely had overwintered as an adult.
- Pipevine Swallowtails continue to do well in Barbara White's garden. She reported 22 of the 38 seen this year. Kathy Litzinger reported 11 including one on April 16<sup>th</sup>, 13 days ahead of its previous early date of April 29<sup>th</sup>.
- Bill Hill found a Zabulon Skipper on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, eight days ahead of its previous early date on May 1<sup>st</sup>. Annette Allor found a Sachem on April 30<sup>th</sup>, two days ahead of its previous early date of May 2<sup>nd</sup>. The Zabulon Skipper and Sachem are the first two sightings of any grass-skipper before May 1<sup>st</sup> during the survey.
- Annette Allor found a Harvester on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, a whopping 20 days ahead of its previous early date of May 22<sup>nd</sup>.
- On May 24, 2023, Annette Allor found what was possibly an Appalachian Azure on the Wincopin Trail. Without more documentation, Annette was not sure of the ID, and we did not count it at her request. This species was considered rare in Howard County in 1993 and extirpated by 2012. We did not refind it this year. This species uses Black Cohosh as a host plant.
- Annette Allor photographed a Cloudless Sulphur caterpillar on May 30<sup>th</sup>. The early date for this species is May 29<sup>th</sup>.
- From early in 2024, it was obvious that American Lady was going to have a good year. In 2023, a total of 23 were reported. This year, 32 were reported by the end of April. The previous annual high number of 76 (2019) was exceeded on July 19<sup>th</sup>. A total of 100 were reported this year.
- Annette Allor found two Eastern Pine Elfins on April 14<sup>th</sup>. She found a third one on April 23<sup>rd</sup>. This is the first time that this species has been found in the county since 2020.
- American Copper had a bounce back year. After only 13, 16 and 9 being reported in the last three years, 42 were found this year. All 42 were found by Linda Hunt at Foxfield Farm.
- Great Spangled Fritillary also had a bounce back year. The 71 found more than tripled last year's total of 23.
- Common Checkered-Skipper also had a good year. The 86 reported more than quadrupled last year's total of 20.
- A total of 26 Common Sootywings were found this year. This exceeds the total number found in the last seven years combined. Most of these were found at Little Portion Farm (St. Anthony's Shrine). Annette Allor found 10 at Little Portion Farm on July 26<sup>th</sup>. This report alone exceeds the total for each year in the first 10 years of the survey.
- Common Sootywing uses Lamb's Quarters as its host plant. Hayhurst's Scallopwing which has only been found once (one individual in 2015) during the survey, also uses Lamb's Quarters. We will be on the lookout for this species next year.
- Cris Ausin photographed an Appalachian Brown near the Davis Branch at Mt. Pleasant. This would not have been possible before 2018 when the site was reworked into wetlands after the Ellicott City flood. The Appalachian Brown is the 69<sup>th</sup> species on the Howard County Conservancy's butterfly list. Our best guess for the next species is Checkered White or Little Yellow.
- The single Common Wood-Nymph found by Annette Allor brings the 11-year total for this species to 53 individuals. This is the lowest number for any species that has been found all 11 years of the survey.
- According to the literature, Black Swallowtails use asparagus as a host plant. Annette Allor confirmed that with a photo on May 22<sup>nd</sup>.
- Jack Litzinger found a Little Wood-Satyr in his and Kathy's yard on June 13<sup>th</sup>. That is the 54<sup>th</sup> species found in their yard.
- On September 12<sup>th</sup>, Jim Wilkinson found an aberrant Common Buckeye. The stripes on the forewings are red instead of the usual white. It looks like a cross with a Mangrove Buckeye. Silvery Checkerspot continues at Ilchester Elementary School. A total of 138 were reported for the year. Most of them were reported at the school.
- A total of 223 Gray Hairstreaks were found this year. This established a new high count exceeding the previous high count of 184 in 2017. A total of 70 of these were reported at St. Anthony's Shrine including 21 on August 12<sup>th</sup>.



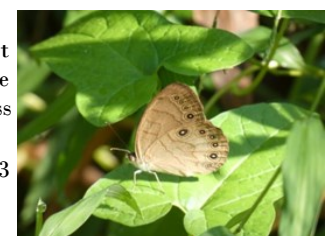
Pipevine Swallowtail  
Barbara White



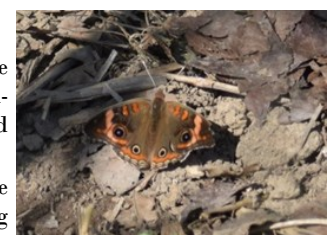
Eastern Pine Elfin  
Annette Allor



Common Sootywing  
Annette Allor



Appalachian Brown  
Cris Ausin



Common Buckeye  
Jim Wilkinson

(Continued on [page 9](#))



(Continued from [page 8](#))

- On July 5<sup>th</sup>, Kathy Litzinger observed a Sleepy Orange ovipositing in her garden. She went out a few days later to photograph the eggs. Amazingly, she watched as the caterpillar emerged from the egg. She has photos of each step in the life cycle: the adult ovipositing the egg, the caterpillar recently emerged from the egg, the chrysalis, and the recently eclosed adult. Amazing!
- Kathy Litzinger found a Joro spider on August 12<sup>th</sup>.
- Annette Allor photographed a pair of Fiery Skippers mating on October 6<sup>th</sup>. Fiery Skippers do not overwinter in the Mid-Atlantic. They are migrants and cannot survive the winter here. Annette emailed Harry Pavulaan and he wrote this back. “The sad thing is that many of these seasonal migrants continue to move north, even breeding, then perish with the first hard freeze..... Nature can be cruel at times.”
- We are recording a drop in the number of Monarchs in the survey. A total of 928 were found in 2022 followed by 374 and 364 in 2023 and 2024 respectively. That is a 60% drop. We will be monitoring this species closely.
- One of the target butterflies on the August 10<sup>th</sup> walk was Hackberry Emperor. Only two of this species were seen this year. Not only was one seen during the walk, but it landed on my hand and I was able to walk it around and show everyone on the walk a close-up view.
- Three species accounted for more than half of the total number of butterflies reported this year. They are SACHEM, Cabbage White, and Eastern Tailed-Blue.



Sleepy Orange egg and caterpillar.

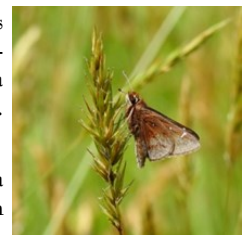
Kathy Litzinger



Hackberry Emperor

Vicki Sattler

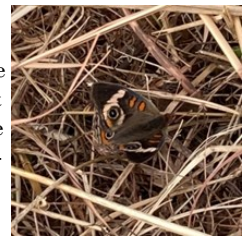
**Butterfly of the Year:** Each year we award a “Butterfly of the Year” to a species that had an outstanding year. This year the award goes to the Dusted Skipper. This species was not seen in the county for >20 years prior to the survey. It was found in three locations on Maryland’s Western Shore: Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Soldier’s Delight, and on a single hill in the Murray Hill neighborhood. Linda Hunt initially found this species in 2014. It was found in each of the first five years of the survey (2014 – 2018). In 2019, the Columbia Association dumped dredge from the lakes next to the hill and the butterflies were not recorded from 2019 through 2023. Linda kept returning in the subsequent years in the hope that the skipper would return and her persistence paid off this year. The seven recorded matches the peak year count in 2017.



Dusted Skipper

Annette Allor

**Last Butterfly of the Year Contest:** We again had the “Last Butterfly of the Year” contest with the winner receiving a *Butterflies of the Mid-Atlantic* field guide. The winner this year was Terri Berkheimer who sent in a photo of a Common Buckeye seen at Belmont on November 27<sup>th</sup>. Congratulations, Terri. A total of 12 species were the last ones found in a given year during the survey. These include: Cabbage White, Orange Sulphur, Clouded Sulphur, Cloudless Sulphur, Sleepy Orange, Eastern Tailed-Blue, Variegated Fritillary, Pearl Crescent, Eastern Comma, Painted Lady, Common Buckeye, and Monarch.



Common Buckeye

Terri Berkheimer

**Photos and Videos from participants:** This year we, once again, have received many excellent photos of butterflies. Some of the photos are proof of a sighting. Others are to request help with an ID which we enjoy receiving. Please do not hesitate to reach out with a request for an ID. Some of the photos we receive are simply eye-popping. Many of these photos will be in the emails that I send out every few weeks during butterfly season and in the PowerPoint presentation given annually at the January Howard County Bird Club meeting.

**New Data / Tools for the Butterfly Survey:** In the eleven years that the butterfly survey has been taking place, you surveyors have reported over 236,000 butterflies. With this vast amount of data, we were able to publish flight times, early and late dates, and overwintering strategies for each of the 81 species that we have found. These are all on the Howard County Bird Club website. They are in pdf format and can be downloaded to your phone for use in the field.

#### What you can do to help butterflies:

- Provide a Pocket Habitat for butterflies.
- Plant a native plant pollinator garden and landscape for caterpillars.
- Leave the leaves.
- Reduce the size of your lawn (or mow less frequently).
- Reduce mosquito spray and insecticide usage.
- Get rid of invasive plants.
- Embrace the wild in your garden.



American Lady ovipositing on Pussytoes.

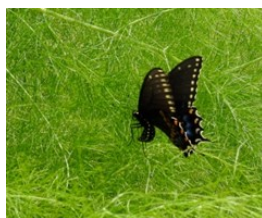
Kevin Heffernan

Another big thanks to all of you for another very successful year for the Howard County Butterfly Survey.



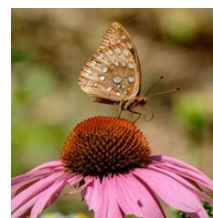
Harvester

Annette Allor



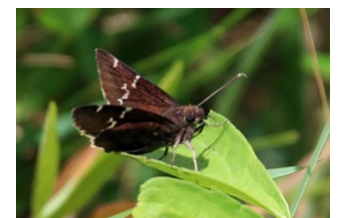
Black Swallowtail ovipositing on asparagus.

Annette Allor



Great Spangled Fritillary

Kevin Heffernan



Southern Cloudywing

Linda Hunt



## HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB

*Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society*

P.O. Box 1323

Columbia, MD 21044-1323

### March/April 2025 - Inside This Issue

Club Meetings	Birding Less Popular Spots
Chirps to the Flock	Annual Potluck Dinner
Spring Field Trips	2025 May Count
Autumn Bird Records	GreenFest
Board Meetings	2024 Butterfly Year
Welcome New Members	Habitat Hero Award
2024 Annual List	

## HABITAT HERO AWARD 2024

BY LISA COLANGELO

**B**renda Lee of the Howard County Department of Recreation & Parks, Natural Resources Division (NRD) was given the Habitat Hero Award for 2024. Brenda gave a short presentation to the Howard County Bird Club on Thursday December 12, 2024, discussing how she manages meadows throughout the County. After the talk, the award presentation was made.

The NRD has proven to be an ally to the HCBC, working to preserve habitat and protecting wildlife. The club felt that it was long overdue to recognize her work. Brenda was also awarded an Appreciation Coin.



HCBC President Gregg Petersen awards Brenda Lee with the 2024 Habitat Hero Award. (Pictured from left to right: Sue Probst, Lisa Colangelo, Brenda Lee, and Gregg Petersen).

*by Mary Lou Clark*



HCBC President Gregg Petersen (right) awards Brenda Lee (left) with an Appreciation Coin following her presentation.

*by Mary Lou Clark*