



Founded 1972

The Goldfinch

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

www.howardbirds.website

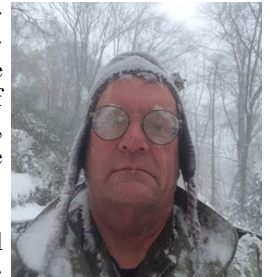
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CLUB MEETINGS - BY MARY LOU CLARK

Thursday, May 8, 2025 "Birding on the Equator: The Chaco Region of Ecuador" by Kurt Schwarz. Kurt visited the Chaco region of Ecuador in October 2023 on an MOS-sponsored trip. The trip visited private refuges and national parks on both sides of the Equator. Habitats visited included rain and cloud forests, and Paramo grasslands high up in the Andes. (It did not include the Galapagos.)

Kurt is a retired Department of Defense employee. He joined the HCBC in 1994 and began serious birding then. He is a former president of the HCBC and Conservation Chair Emeritus of both MOS and HCBC. Kurt has seen 1,570 species worldwide, 700 species in the U.S., 403 species in Maryland, and 288 in Howard County.



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

This is the last newsletter of our 24-25 birding year and my final one as president. First thing's first. Congratulations to Chen Chiu for getting all the answers correct on the website quiz in my March-April Chirps submission! Sadly, for me at least, Chen was the only one of our 450 members to submit an entry. But at least I know that one of our members knows a bunch more about our website, and club, after competing in the quiz. At first, Chen tried using the artificial intelligence tool ChatGPT to answer the quiz, and her son Vitus Li pointed out to her that several of the answers derived from the "artificial smarts" ... were wrong! So, Chen used her "natural intelligence" to get the right answers. I guess machines aren't yet ready to do everything yet, and I take some comfort in that.

It's time to say thanks to a few people who have made special contributions to our club as they transition off our board and to those that were of great assistance to me during my tenure as president. First, thanks to past president, Mary Maxey, state director, Sherry Tomlinson, chapter director, Lauren Crocker, and Goldfinch editor, Megan Bolcar, for their respective service as they depart our board. Lauren was a dynamo orchestrating volunteers to provide refreshments for membership meetings and co-developing a Merlin class for our members. Megan could always be counted on to keep our Goldfinch publications on time and interesting. Megan demonstrated special skills to shepherd and edit multiple submissions and multiple authors to get everything in on time every two months.

While I truly appreciated the efforts of all our board members, I am in especial awe of how much our long-time husband-wife team of Bob (Webmaster and Membership Working Group Chair) and Jo Solem (Records and Ponce Working Group Chair) do for the club every single day. Whether it is updating our website, coaching board or new club members, keeping records, or sending welcome letters to new members, Bob and Jo are constantly guiding this club to smooth sailing. In addition, one of the first board members I met when I joined the club and volunteered to coordinate the May Count, was our Secretary of 31 years, Chuck Stirrat. He has also essentially coordinated and recorded all our yearly count submissions over that period. With his vast experience and sound judgement, he has also been one of my most trusted confidants and advisors. Finally, Past President and Program Chair Mary Lou Clark has also played a key role in keeping me, and consequently the club, on course for the last three

(Continued on [page 10](#))

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.

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, and Sue Muller

Mullinix Mill Road

May 2, 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

B Western Regional Park

May 3, 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

R Patuxent Research Refuge North Tract

May 4, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Meet at the parking lot by the Ranger Station (230 Bald Eagle Drive, Laurel, MD). This trip will include driving on the 8.5 mile Wildlife Drive as well as some walking, and features forest, meadow, wetland, and river habitats. Search for migrating and breeding birds such as warblers, vireos, tanagers, cuckoos, grosbeaks, and Indigo Buntings. Facilities available. Don't forget sunscreen, insect repellent, water, and food. Limit 8 people. Email trip leader to reserve a spot.
Leader – Laura Wolf, bakerswifemadeit@gmail.com

R W Font Hill Wetland Park

May 5, Monday, 7:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.
Park on the street at the Font Hill Dr. entrance (3520 Font Hill Drive). This 25-acre neighborhood park consists of a variety of wetland habitats connected by a paved path and boardwalks. It was Maryland's first state, county, and private-sector joint-venture wetland project. No facilities. Limit 8 people. Email the trip leader to reserve a spot.
Leader – Lily Saul, ljsaul604@gmail.com

B Belmont Manor Historic Park

May 7, Wednesday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours.
A walk around the fields looking for early migrants. This trip will have special guests Mike Bowen and Anne Cianni. Mike used to work at the property, and will be able to show attendees around and tell stories about the history of the location.
Leader – Gregg Petersen, sig29@aol.com

B May Count

May 10, Saturday. See announcement on [page 9](#).

B Mt Pleasant, Howard County Conservancy

May 13, Tuesday, 8:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. (Cancelled in the event of heavy rain).
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.

R Potential New Frederick County MOS Sanctuary

May 14, Wednesday, 7:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.
Meet at the West Friendship park-and-ride on the west side of Rt. 32 just north of Interstate 70 and carpool the 25 minutes to the potential sanctuary. Come and walk the 125 acres of what is slated to become the 11th MOS sanctuary and the only one of size in central Maryland. Expect warblers, chats, Red-headed Woodpeckers, and birds of the open fields such as Bobolinks, Field Sparrows, and American Kestrels. Be ready for wet grass and one stream crossing. Carpooling and reservations required. Email trip leader to reserve your spot.
Leader – John McKitterick, john.mckitterick@mdbirds.org

B Western Regional Park

May 18, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. 2-3 hours.
Meet at the 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, lcolangelo@verizon.net

Patapsco Scrubland

May 24, 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 25, 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

WINTER BIRD RECORDS: DECEMBER 1, 2024 – FEBRUARY 28, 2025

BY JOANNE SOLEM

Moderate weather in December completed the hottest year on record. It was followed by a colder than normal January, while February's weather was close to normal.

Any season that adds a species to the county's bird list is memorable. This time it was a female/immature **MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD** that Douglas Vaughn saw (and, fortunately, photographed) early on 1/11 near Talbot Springs ES, Oakland Mills. A subsequent three-day search of the area by experienced birders failed to find the bird.

Other winter highlights were Snow Goose (both morphs), Ross's Goose (white), Common Goldeneye, Bonaparte's Gull, Red-necked Grebe, Tree Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, Baltimore Oriole, and Orange-crowned Warbler,

Two white morph **Snow Geese** were present on a Jennings Chapel Rd pond 12/8 (T/SMc, ph.; 3 RVg, VLi), while a blue morph was present about a mile west at a pond at Warfield's Cemetery 12/24 (JHf). For a month, it moved around western HOWCO. An intermediate morph was present at Larriland Farm 1/14 (GPn, ph.) to 1/31 (VSw, ph.); it was still in the county 2/27 (JHf). One white Snow also wandered in eastern HOWCO where it flew over the Kendall Ridge Loop early on 12/23 (RVg, ph.); mid p.m. that day it was spotted at the REI Pond (BBc; KS, ph.); and likely the same individual turned up at Lake Elkhorn 12/26 (T/MFr) where it stayed until 12/31 (KS). A flock of nine (three blues) dropped in at Larriland 2/9 (MLC, LCK, CSt). A **Ross's Goose** was photog'd in flight with a flock of **Canadas** at Barberry Way 12/30 (VSw, desc.). A **Cackling Goose** was spotted with a flock of 183 **Canadas** over the Robbins Skywatch 12/8 (LGg, desc.). Scattered reports continued the rest of the season with a probable family group of seven at Springdale Quarry (SPDQY) 1/8 (JHf).



Two Ross's Goose (left) and Snow Goose (right) at Larriland Farm, February 16
by Russ Ruffing

Fourteen **Tundra Swans** flew over Mt Hebron 12/4 (JCu). Four were spotted at Brighton Dam (BRDAM) 1/12 (LCK, SLk, ph.); a few other family groups appeared, mostly the last 10 days of Feb.

Northern Shovelers are regulars at Race Road Wetlands where the high was 14 on 12/21 (BRf). **Gadwalls** made a fine showing at seven sites, topping out at a dozen at Race Rd 12/13 (JW). **Northern Pintails** are among the earliest migrant ducks. More



Mountain Bluebird

by Douglas Vaughn

widespread than usual this winter, most of the seven sites recorded birds during Feb.

Canvasbacks have been scarce the last few winters. They appeared at three sites, the first two at SPDQY 1/22 (RSm); most of the rest were seen the last 10 days of Feb, including one at less-visited Johns Hopkins APL Pond 2/24 (WKn). Five **Red-heads** were noted at BRDAM 12/14 (RVg, VLi, ph.); scattered singles continued to be reported through 2/28, with a high of 45 at SPDQY 1/22 (JHf), one of the season's coldest days. A **Greater Scaup** was reported at SPDQY 1/7 (RRf, desc.). A **Long-tailed Duck** was a brief visitor at Centennial Pk (CENPK) 12/27 (DSn), and one appeared at Wilde Lake 12/31 (MYg). A female **Common Goldeneye** was at Warfield's Cemetery 12/30 (JHf); three were at Pigtail 1/8 (MKw); and they ended the winter with dual appearances at Lake Kittamaquidi (CKc) and Stanford Blvd Pond (RSm) on 2/26, and at CENPK 2/28 (KGS-6).

Seventy-two was the season's largest count of **Hooded Mergansers**; they were present at Triadelphia Reservoir (TRIRS) 12/23 (JHf, ph.). Although the first **Common Mergansers** arrived in Nov, the normal buildup at TRIRS takes place in Dec. This year 80 on 12/4 (MKw) increased to 600 on 12/15 (JHf), and 750 12/24 (VLi); all totals were well below winter's usual four digits. A flock of 22 briefly visited CENPK 12/20 (MNT). As usual, a few **Red-breasted Mergansers** were mixed with TRIRS's wintering flock of Commons, with a seasonal high of three on 12/27 (RVg, VLi).

American Woodcock were few, with displaying birds finally appearing at multiple sites the last 10 days of Feb. A **Wilson's Snipe** lingered at Alpha Ridge Landfill until 12/19 (RCu), one appeared there again on 2/14; and one was also seen at Waterford 2/15 (RRf, VSw). One **American Coot** was spotted at

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

(Records continued from page 3)

SPDQY 1/7 (**VLi**, **RVg**); a few made appearances at four other sites, mostly in Feb.

Winter **Bonaparte's Gulls** are always a treat. They were present at TRIRS 12/15 (**JHf**-1), 12/20 (**JHf**-1), and 1/10 (**SRb**-2). A **Great Black-backed Gull** at the Jessup Trash Transfer Station 12/28 (**JHf**) was the first of the season. (At this Anne Arundel County site, HOWCO observers must wait to count the species until the bird flies west across the railroad tracks.)

Two **Red-necked Grebes** at Brighton Dam 2/22 (**RVg**, **VLi**, ph.) caused a stir among local birders. One was still present at the end of the season. Long-time birders remember the last visit of this species in 2014 when the freeze-up on the Great Lakes triggered the largest county invasion in at least 70 years.

As of 2/25, the **Great Blue Heron** colony south of Haviland Mill Rd. was active again this season (**JSh**). The Vantage Point colony was still inactive as of late Feb (**CKc**).

Eastern Screech-Owls were tracked down at a dozen sites, including an intermediate phase bird that roosted in a Hallmark box (**WEb**). A **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was heard at Annapolis Rock (ANNRK) 12/30 and 1/12 (**LRh**, **MHu**, rec.). Three were turned up on HC Mid-winter Ct 2/1 with two at Annapolis Rd and one at a Jennings Chapel Rd site (**JSh**, **JKb**).

Red-headed Woodpeckers are scarce in winter. A first-winter bird was tracked down on Columbia Rd, east of CENPK 12/30 (**LSl**, ph.) and was last recorded 2/26 (**MLn**). An adult was reported multiple times at Howard Chapel Rd, PRSP, where they nest (**JHf**), and an imm. was photog'd at Waterford 2/2 (**RVg**, **VLi**).

For a second consecutive winter, a **Merlin** was regular at Joey Dr 12/15-2/17 (**J/MCh**); two were present 2/9. A **Peregrine Falcon** was a sporadic visitor for several weeks at CENPK beginning 12/30 (**BO**); there were five other winter sites.

Eastern Phoebes are the only flycatchers that overwinter here occasionally. They were reported from more than a dozen sites despite the low temperatures.

The high **Common Raven** count was a probable family group of seven over Cavey La 1/18 (**RRf**), one-quarter mile from a known nest site.

A **Black-capped Chickadee** visited a feeder adjacent to Sewell's Orchard Community Pk 1/1 (**BMy**, desc.). **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were scarce. The four Dec records were all between 12/22 – 12/25; fewer than a dozen sites were recorded the rest of the winter. Two **Tree Swallows** were northbound low over I-70 on 2/23 (**Anon.**, desc.). There are fewer than 10 Feb records.

A leucistic **American Robin** photog'd in a Burleigh Manor yard 10/30 (**MKw**) reappeared on 12/25 (ph.). **Gray Catbirds** appeared at five sites through Jan; **Brown Thrashers** did better with reports from at least 10 sites during all winter months.

A flock of 40 **American Pipits** swirled around a Long Corner Rd field 12/15 (**MPw**). All other reports were single digits. **Purple Finches** were the most widespread boreal species, but far from common. The high was only five at Old Roxbury Rd 12/24 (**ATp**). **Pine Siskins** were scarce, mostly one or two at half a dozen sites. The exception was a flock of 22 in a single maple tree at Ellicott City 2/15 (**DRs**).

Eighteen **Chipping Sparrows** were counted at Barberry Way 1/1 (**VSw**, **Lck**, **RRf**). **Field Sparrow** numbers peaked at 25 at Mt Pleasant 1/20 (**RVg**, **VLi**). Of the two **American Tree Sparrows** reported, the bird at Mt Pleasant remained for a month beginning 12/27 (**RVg**). A leucistic **Song Sparrow** appeared in a Stone Hill Dr. yard 1/6 (**KLz**).

As many as five **Baltimore Orioles** (four males) wandered the county this season. Presumably, the same male returned to a Mt Hebron yard on 12/1 for the sixth winter (**JCu**). A male showed up at a Barberry Way feeder 12/7 (**VSw**), then was intermittent. For an astonishing eight consecutive years, a male has wintered at a Lake Elkhorn feeder (*fide* **KS**). It is not possible to know if it is the same bird, with the complication that in 2024 the individual stayed continuously from late summer (*fide* **PBe**). It was still present at the end of the season (**KS**). On 1/10, a male was listed at a home just east of MD 94 with the notation of regular appearances for several weeks (**DGg**). A female showed up at a Roxbury Rd hulled sunflower seed feeder 1/6 and 1/16 (**KBl**). Scattered single-digit **Rusty Blackbird** sightings were the rule. The 24 at the Florence Rd Silage Pit 1/11 (**RVg**, **VLi**, ph.) was an unusual number, the largest flock since the 39 in downtown Columbia 1/27/18 (**CKc**).

An **Orange-crowned Warbler** settled in at an Elkridge suet feeder 12/14 (**MCr**, ph.); it was still present on 2/27 (**M/WCr**). A first-winter **Common Yellowthroat** at Schooley Mill Pk 12/15 was a nice find (**LSl**, ph.). A few **Pine Warblers** overwinter, mostly appearing at suet feeders. Three were present at Crest Lawn Memorial Gardens several times where they are regulars (**JCu**; **BCs**). Four sites were in Columbia (**WKn**; **CKc**; **GPn**, **JW**), plus Barberry Way (**VSw**) and Woodbine (**PPn**).

A leucistic Northern Cardinal continued at Font Hill Wetland Pk (m. obs., ph.).

On 12/14/25, a River Otter entertained Tim and Grace Ray at a pond in Kings Contrivance. Four days later likely the same mammal (range is almost 20 miles) was spotted at Lake Elkhorn by Michelle Stewart and others.

***Appreciation.** HC Records Committee Members, Joe Hanfman and Russ Ruffing, along with eBird reviewer, Tim Carney, continue to provide vital editing and clarification for which I am deeply grateful.*

Observers: **Anon.** – Anonymous (does not wish to be publicly identified), **BBc** – Bob Baca, **PBe** – Paul Bacich, **KBl** – Karan Blum, **JKb** – Jon K. Boone, **TCr** – Tim Carney, **JCh** – Jane Chandler, **MCh** – Mark Chandler, **MLC** – Mary Lou Clark, **MCr** – Melissa Crew, **WCr** – William Crew, **Lck** – Lauren Crocker, **JCu** – Jeff Culler, **RCu** – Ralph Cullison III, **WEb** – Ward Ebert, **MFr** – Martin Forrester, **TFr** – Tim Forrester, **KGs** – Kain Gleason, **LGg** – Lynn Gregg, **DGg** – Dave Grogan, **JHf** – Joe Hanfman, **MHu** – Maxine Hsu, **MKw** – Mike Kerwin, **CKc** – Clayton Koonce, **WKn** – Wren Kreinar, **MLn** – Meghaan Lane, **VLi** – Vitus Li, **KLz** – Kathy Litzinger, **SLk** – Steve Luke, **SMc** – Sara Macri, **TMc** – Teddy Macri, **BMy** – Brian Moyer, **BO** – Bonnie Ott, **PPn** – Pam Perna, **GPn** – Gregg Petersen, **MPw** – Mary Prowell, **SRb** – Stacy Rabinovitz, **LRh** – Lawrence Rhoades, **DRs** – David Richardson, **BRf** – Brian Rollfinke, **RRf** – Russ Ruffing, **RSm** – Ryan Salsman, **DSn** – David Sandler, **LSl** – Lilian Saul, **KS** – Kurt Schwarz, **JSh** – Jay Sheppard, **CSl** – Chuck Stirrat, **VSw** – Valerie Swan, **MNT** – MarkNhuTewell, **ATp** – Ashley Tipton, **RVg** – Roshan Vignarajah, **JW** – Jim Wilkinson, **MYg** – Marc Young.

MANY ARE THE WAYS

BY JOANNE SOLEM

Birding is a lifelong big-tent interest! There are many ways to pursue it depending on your personality, available time, health, location, and other commitments.

The word “birder” is frequently used synonymously with “lister.” The term refers to the person who creates multiple lists of birds, amassing as many species as possible. Becoming an accomplished observer who can do this accurately requires intensive study, extensive field time, and cooperation with other birders. Most listers defy the cartoonish caricature of being highly competitive or exclusive. Instead, they may be extremely generous in mentoring those with less proficiency and experience. The Howard County Bird Club is fortunate in having a large and growing cadre of excellent birders who enthusiastically share their skills and knowledge.

But what if you are not a lister? Are you also a birder? Absolutely! There are many ways to enjoy birds. Your method may fall into one (or more) of the following categories (or one that isn’t listed). Interests can change and overlap, sometimes within a short period, almost certainly multiple times in the course of one’s life. What characterizes your birding interest?

Behavior. Focus is on the actions of one bird or interactions of a pair, family group, or flock.

Sounds. Songs, chip notes, and wing sounds often appeal to those with a musical ear.

Groups. Fascination with a particular group (shorebirds, gulls, raptors, sparrows, etc.). This intense interest may dictate a year’s calendar, even determining vacation destinations.

Single species. Preference for one species (Wood Duck, Purple Martin, Eastern Bluebird, etc.). Enthusiasts may improve habitat, provide nest sites, or offer food.

Photography. The most successful wildlife photographers cultivate a knowledge and understanding of the behavior and habitats of certain groups or species.

Research. Even amateurs can assist in scholarly research, while involvement in Citizen Science projects is limited only by one’s time and energy.

Banding. Assisting at a banding station requires deep commitment and extensive training. The intimacy of handling birds can be an excellent educational experience, as well as awe-inspiring.

Aesthetics. Appreciating birds for their grace and beauty is legendary.

Social/Family Activity. Sharing an interest with a friend, social group, or family may be more satisfying than amassing long lists of species. It may spark a lifelong interest and strengthen generational bonds.

Health and Exercise. The sights and sounds of birds can enrich a daily walk or run, while immersion in the natural world is a way to reduce stress. Gardening is gentle exercise that can also improve habitat.

Feeding. Providing food is an easy way to connect with local birds without leaving home.

Conservation. An interest in birds can lead to activism protecting habitats and species.

Journaling. Writing sharpens observational skills and preserves memorable experiences.

Art and Crafts. Birds are both subjects and inspirations for a wide variety of arts and crafts.

Whatever your method of enjoying birds, you, too, are a birder!

I am deeply grateful to the dozens of individuals who, over a birding lifetime, have opened my eyes to the size and scope of the birding tent.

2025 POTLUCK REVIEW

BY MEGHAAN LANE

The 2025 Howard County Bird Club Potluck Dinner was a smashing success thanks to everyone who attended! The food and company were spectacular, and the photo presentations were inspiring and insightful. The natural world is full of wonders to behold!

Attendance grew again, with over 60 attendees, including special guests of Councilmember Rigby; Councilmember Jung; Jaimie Wilder from RNC Safe Skies; Chuck Sharp of Sharp’s Farm; Kevin Cassidy of The Wildlife Authority; Scott Munroe of Howard County Department of Recreation & Parks; and Brian Lockwood, Mary-Lynn Ragot and Sarah Richards of Wild Birds Unlimited.

The raffle was an exciting portion of the evening, and special thanks goes out to those who donated to this Year’s Raffle: Terri Berkeimer for the donation of the Bird Feeder and the Bird Wine Key; Kevin Cassidy of The Wildlife Authority for gift cards; Brian Lockwood of Wild Birds Unlimited for gift cards; and the HCBC Board of Directors for the two HCBC hats.

The evening couldn’t have gone as smoothly without the following volunteers: Gregg Petersen and Val Swan for their support through planning; David Sandler and John McKitterick to run our slideshow presentation; the set-up and clean-up volunteers, who are too many to name; and, of course, the staff at Robinson Nature Center, who without them this event could not happen!

Lastly, a HUGE thank you to my self-described sous chef of the year, Kim Gross, who coordinated the donations for our raffle, kept reminding me I could give her things to do, and helped with all the random tasks I sent her way!

If you have any ideas on how to make things bigger and better for next year, send me your thoughts! meghaanlane@gmail.com

BOOK REVIEW: KENN KAUFMAN, *THE BIRDS THAT AUDUBON MISSED*

BY BOB SOLEM

No, this is not another field guide from Kenn Kaufmann. It is a history of John James Audubon's painting and documentation of birds, Kaufmann's journey as a birder and painter, a history of ornithological phylogeny and scientific documentation, and an account of Kaufmann's birding philosophy. Each chapter documents Kaufmann revisiting parts of the United States where Audubon traveled to show both what Audubon saw and what he missed. For example, in Kentucky, Audubon missed Swainson's and Gray-cheeked Thrushes, lumping them with the five brown-backed species that occur there. They are among the dozen birds that Kaufmann painted in the style of Audubon and included as color plates in the book, hence the title chosen. Kaufmann tries to balance ornithological history, bird anecdotes, and his own experiences, along with Audubon's travels, experiences, documentations, and paintings within the scientific limitations of that era.

During the Covid epidemic, Kaufmann decided to try learning Audubon's methodology and how to use the artistic media (water colors, gauche, overpainting, etc.) that Audubon used so that the author could make his own paintings of some of the birds that Audubon never saw (even though, in many cases, he was in the correct area and season to have observed them). The author describes in detail areas where he birded that were also locations that Audubon frequented, explaining the circumstances that contributed to Audubon missing the birds that he did.

It is not easy to understand how different natural history study was at the time Audubon lived. Carolus Linnaeus invented the system of binomial nomenclature, but he was only one of the early scientists who tried to establish an orderly system to classify living organisms. All were European men who, lacking binoculars, relied on specimens collected worldwide that could be sketched, skinned, written up, and incorporated into a painting. The specimens were sent to Europe by ship and saved, often in private collections. Many of the collectors were highly competitive, each striving to describe and name as many new species as possible. Comte de Buffon, Brisson, Gmelin, and Latham were preeminent, even though none had traveled in North America. But men (and they were all men) who traveled, studied, and painted on this continent were no less competitive. Mark Catesby, Charles W. Peale, John and William Bartam, Alexander Wilson, and Audubon engaged in a similar pattern of rivalry during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Although there was a formal protocol for creating the scientific name and for making revisions when needed, common names were quite fluid. Different authors used different common names for the same bird, and the same author might use a different common name at different times, or even within the same article! Only after the concept of a "family" began to be used more often (starting in the 1840s) and emphasized as part of the phylogenetic system did related birds become grouped based on similar features. Prior to that, the scientific name was often assigned to the genus of the European species that the author thought it most closely resembled, without providing clues about related species.

The concept of a biological species has evolved from describing only physical characteristics of dead birds to observations at varying times of the year, verbal attempts to describe songs, calls, and chips, and breeding behavior to the use of improved optics allowing more accurate descriptions of live birds, sound recordings, and DNA. Despite these improvements, it is still not possible to tease out every species.

Among the birds that Audubon did not overlook but rather misidentified, there are two that stand out in my mind. One is the Carbonated Warbler, which he painted years after he had first described it—and then lied about the circumstances. Its status was always doubtful, but David Sibley completely discredited Audubon's claim when he carefully studied the illustration itself and documented the discrepancies. The other is the Bird of Washington, a large brown eagle "more than 25% larger than the Bald Eagle," which again, Audubon maintained was based on his own observations, notes, and illustration. It was later shown to be a mashup taken from another publication with the body of a Golden Eagle and the feet from a generic bird of prey in the same publication.

The final chapter is titled "The Search Never Ends" and summarizes Kaufmann's birding philosophy and ethos with the reminder that there are birds recently described or whose status is still in a state of flux that the serious amateur birder can help resolve by carefully noting the plumage, behavior, vocalizations, and habitat of each sighting (e.g., Red Crossbill), just as Kaufmann did in helping to establish Clark's Grebe and Western Grebe as separate species several decades ago when he was only one of many young "hotshot" birders.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

David Appel; Margaret Bandera; Andrea Benjamin; Tom & Linda Conover; Wendy Crowe; Randee Gordon; Richard & Betsy Johnson; Bob Leker; Jim McFadden; Sheldon Aldan McKenzie Evans; Dan, Emily, Madeline & Sophie Omohundro; Jessi Steere

HOWARD COUNTY MID-WINTER COUNT, FEBRUARY 1, 2025

BY JOE HANFMAN

A cool and 75% cloudy day with temperatures 37 to 43° F, winds 10 mph, and no precipitation. The ponds were 95% frozen and rivers were flowing. We recorded 91 species, which is slightly above the average of 88.3 species recorded in the last 39 years. The total number of individual birds was 27,037, which is 19,231 below the average number of birds recorded, and 137,863 below the maximum number of birds recorded.

All-time high counts were recorded for Cackling Goose (8), Double-crested Cormorant (5), Eastern Screech-Owl (12), Northern Saw-whet Owl (3), Peregrine Falcon (2), and Common Raven (32).

All-time low counts were Ring-billed Gull (128).

Forty-seven of the 91 species tallied have been seen on all 39 Mid-winter Counts; 79 of the 91 species tallied have been seen on at least 50% of all 39 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), Wood Duck, American Wigeon, Canvasback, American Coot, Wilson's Snipe, Great Black-backed Gull, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Pine Siskin, and American Tree Sparrow.

Many people contributed to the success of the day. Sixty-seven parties of 92 observers spent 172.4 hours and covered 156.6 miles on foot and 388.0 miles by car. Another 6.9 hours were spent feeder watching, plus 6.6 hours stationary and 4.1 hours of owl-ing.

Chuck Stirrat updated the taxonomic order, summarized the area worksheets, and provided field and feeder checklists. Area leaders arrange coverage, do follow-up if necessary, and compile 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.

The 2025 Mid-winter Count results are posted at the club's website:

https://howardbirds.website/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Results_WinterCount_2025.pdf

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

Observers: *Area 1.* **Wes Earp**, Jon Boone, Jim Brinkley, Marilyn Brinkley, Lisa Colangelo, Susan Earp, Tom Feild, Geraldine King, Kathie Lillie, Connie McRill, Woody Merkle, Kent Middlekuff, Pam Perna, Mary Prowell, Jay Sheppard, Lisa Troutman, Bruce Woodward, Mark Wallace; *Area 2.* **Russell Kovach**, Ben Costello, Jeff & Karen Culler, David Holmes, Yi-Ying Lee, Vitus Li, Mary Maxey, Hsiao (Mei) & Wen-Jong Shyong, Ashley Tipton, Roshan Vignarajah; *Area 3.* **Chuck Stirrat**, Jane & Mark Chandler, Ralph Cullison III, Michele DeMuis, Guy DiRoma, Joe Hanfman, Steve Jones, Felicia Lovelett, David Richardson, Russ Ruffing, Lilian Saul, Valerie Swan; *Area 4.* **Mike McClure**, Sandra French, Mike Leumas, John Henri Rorabeck; *Area 5.* **Thomas Seivert**, Debbie Belchis, George and Teresa Berkheimer, Mary Lou Clark, Rose Eicker, John & Sue Greer, Clayton Koonce, Shashi Lengade, Allen Lewis, David Sandler, Sherry Tomlinson, Doug Wassmer; *Area 6.* **Dianne Aguilera**, Jillian Adams, Bob & Jan Depuy, Mandy Elder, John & Meg Harris, Andy & Ralph Geuder, Liz Guertin, Brigitte Lund, Janet Lydon, Richard Orr, Bonnie Ott, Steve Parr, Suzanne Probst, Tim Thompson, Laura Wolf; *Area 7.* **Kurt Schwarz**, Ken Clark, Dennis Coskren, Meghaan Lane, Rosa Lubitz, John McKitterick, Brian Moyer, Sue Neri, Brittany Parsons, Brett Rowland, Jo Solem, Jim Wilkinson, Hillary Yarmus.

WHERE THE WOODCOCKS WEREN'T

BY TOM SEIVERT

Each night over a month-long period from 15 February to 15 March, two HCBC members from a core team of six stood in the gathering dark at the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area (MPEA) monitoring for American Woodcock, hoping to hear the distinctive peents and witness their unique display flights. This survey was conducted to help determine if the efforts by the Howard County Natural Resources Management Team to restore a habitat attractive to American Woodcock are having the desired effect.

The origin story of the MPEA owes a debt to the American Woodcock, since it was Columbia developer Jim Rouse's being shown the courting rituals of this bird on these grounds that convinced him to gift the land to the county as an in-perpetuity protected natural resource area. So trying to make a safe, attractive environment where American Woodcock can thrive is in the MPEA's DNA.

Unfortunately, the team could report nary a peent nor whistle of wings. This period was marked by unusual cold and high winds, which may have contributed to the birds not being noted, but American Woodcock had been observed elsewhere in the area during this timeframe, just not at the MPEA. Despite the lack of success this year in noting American Woodcock, the survey still provided valuable data regarding their absence. Only future surveys will help determine if this year was an anomaly or a part of a long-term trend.

Special thanks to core team members Meghaan Lane, Megan Bolcar, Anne Looker, Peter Ashley, Robin Todd, and Tom Seivert, as well as to substitutes Brittany Parsons, Karlyn McPartland, Josh Ward, and dragged-along husbands Patrick Lane and Vincent Parsons. All participants experienced the meditative quiet and calm of standing still in the dark, provided one was warmly bundled up.

Howard County Mid-Winter Count - February 1, 2025					
	Totals		Totals		Totals
Cackling Goose	8	Downy Woodpecker	150	Song Sparrow	270
Canada Goose	13,365	Hairy Woodpecker	39	Swamp Sparrow	5
Gadwall	12	Northern Flicker	61	Eastern Towhee	24
Mallard	111	Pileated Woodpecker	52	Eastern Meadowlark	3
American Black Duck	14	American Kestrel	6	Baltimore Oriole	1
Northern Pintail	2	Merlin	1	Red-winged Blackbird	333
Green-winged Teal	7	Peregrine Falcon	2	Brown-headed Cowbird	44
Redhead	21	Eastern Phoebe	3	Rusty Blackbird	36
Ring-necked Duck	82	Blue Jay	356	Common Grackle	202
Lesser Scaup	1	American Crow	1,227	unidentified blackbird	55
Bufflehead	19	Fish Crow	466	Yel.-rump'd (Myrtle) Warbler	5
Hooded Merganser	76	American/Fish Crow	141	Northern Cardinal	618
Common Merganser	124	Common Raven	32	Area Total Birds:	27,036
Ruddy Duck	10	Carolina Chickadee	392	Area Total Species:	90
Wild Turkey	2	Tufted Titmouse	408		Totals
Pied-billed Grebe	4	Horned Lark	8		
Rock Pigeon	73	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	12	Supplemental Data	
Mourning Dove	321	Golden-crowned Kinglet	46	Time Start:	4:48 a
Killdeer	3	Cedar Waxwing	25	Time Stop:	7:05 p
Ring-billed Gull	128	Red-breasted Nuthatch	1	Hours on Foot:	172.4
Herring Gull	2	White-breasted Nuthatch	220	Hours by Car:	42.0
<i>gull species</i>	43	Brown Creeper	19	Hours by Boat:	.0
Double-crested Cormorant	5	Carolina Wren	273	Hours Other:	.0
Great Blue Heron	17	Winter Wren	18	Miles on Foot:	156.6
Black Vulture	347	Northern Mockingbird	183	Miles by Car:	388.0
Turkey Vulture	418	European Starling	1,497	Miles by Boat:	.0
Northern Harrier	1	Eastern Bluebird	467	Miles Other:	.0
Sharp-shinned Hawk	3	Hermit Thrush	8	Hours Feeder Watching:	6.9
Cooper's Hawk	11	American Robin	770	Hours Stationary:	6.6
<i>accipiter species</i>	1	House Sparrow	337	Hours "Owling":	4.1
Bald Eagle [ad/lim/unk]	27	American Pipit	6	Miles "Owling":	7.1
Red-shouldered Hawk	80	House Finch	352		Totals
Red-tailed Hawk	48	Purple Finch	11		
Eastern Screech-Owl	12	American Goldfinch	130	Total Observers:	92
Great Horned Owl	9	Chipping Sparrow	17	Total Parties:	67
Barred Owl	10	Field Sparrow	43	Tot. Field Pty-Hrs (Reg.):	214.4
Northern Saw-whet Owl	3	Fox Sparrow	8	Total Party-Hrs (Feeder):	6.9
Belted Kingfisher	16	Dark-eyed Junco	807	Tot. Pty-Hrs (Stationary):	6.6
Red-headed Woodpecker	1	White-crowned Sparrow	10	Total Party-Hrs (Owling):	4.1
Red-bellied Woodpecker	184	White-throated Sparrow	1,182	Total Party-Hours:	231.9
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	31	Savannah Sparrow	2		Totals

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
goldfinch@mdbirds.org

The Goldfinch, newsletter of the Howard County Bird Club, is published five times per year. Copy deadline for the September/October 2025 issue is July 25, 2025.

Editor's Note: There will be a new editor, Jamie Lynch, beginning with the September-October 2025 issue. In addition, the email address to send submissions has changed from that printed in previous issues (noted above).

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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

The May 22 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.

BUTTERFLY TRIPS

The HCBC Butterfly Group will be leading summer walks at Mt Pleasant, Howard County Conservancy (co-sponsored with the Howard County Conservancy). Check the website for information and details, and to register:

<https://www.howardnature.org/events/>



MAY COUNT IS SATURDAY, MAY 10, 2025

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 10th this year.

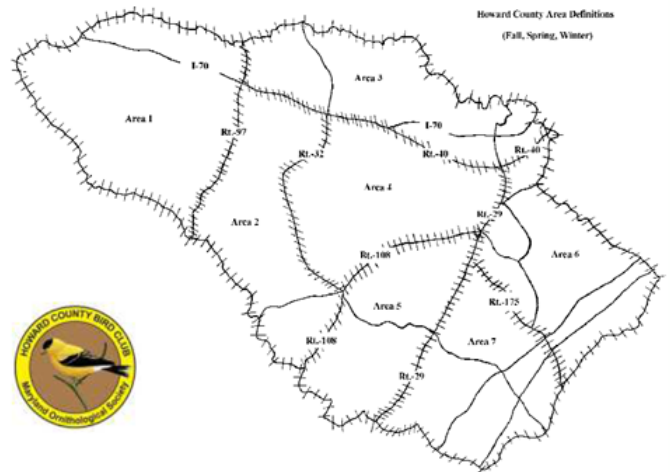
For beginning birders, this is an excellent opportunity to be paired with more experienced birders in order to see and hear many residents and spring migrants. Think warblers, vireos, thrushes, shorebirds, etc. The spring migrants are passing through headed north, the summer residents are back, and some of the winter migrants are still around. Over the last 10 years across the county, we have tallied an average of 138 species during the May Count. The total for 2024 was 143.

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/ McCluMD2@hotmail.com
Area 5	Tom Seivert	410-926-9237/ tomseivert@verizon.net
Area 6	Brian Moyer	410-441-9901/ bmoyer0@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 in to Area Coordinators by the time of the tally rally.

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, TOP 20 SHOUT OUT!

BY SUE MULLER

The Maryland/DC Breeding Bird Atlas 3 ended December 31, 2024. Are you curious who confirmed the most species of birds in Howard County? Thanks to eBird, we have an easy compilation of the top 20 atlasers by species in Howard County for the Breeding Bird Atlas 3. Please note these totals only reflect the 24 map blocks assigned to Howard County, and not any of the border blocks that Howard County atlasers surveyed.

If you see these people, be sure to thank them for their outstanding atlasing efforts!

Name:	Species Confirmed:	Name:	Species Confirmed:
1. Russ Ruffing	87	10. Dave Ziolkowski, Jr.	63
2. Sue Muller	83	12. Bonnie Ott	56
3. John Harris	81	13. Clayton Koonce	55
4. Lisa Colangelo	77	13. Kurt Schwarz	55
4. Tim Ray	77	15. Gregg Petersen	53
6. Ken Clark	75	15. Bill Hill	53
7. Margaret Harris	72	17. Michael Kerwin	52
8. Mary Lou Clark	68	17. Valerie Swan	52
9. Mary Prowell	67	19. Joe Hanfman	51
10. Sarah Romero	63	20. Kristin Trouton	49



HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB

Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society

P. O. BOX 1323

COLUMBIA MD 21044-1323

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HCBC MEMBER NAMED FEBRUARY eBIRDER OF THE MONTH!

Congratulations to Howard County Bird Club's very own Vitus Li for being named eBirder of the Month for February! To be eligible for the contest, birders were required to submit 31 or more completed checklists during February that included counts for every species recorded. Vitus is the second HCBC member to win eBirder of the month, with Mary Prowell a previous winner in 2020. To read more about the eBirder of the Month contest and Vitus's birding story, visit <https://ebird.org/news/vitus-li-february-ebirder-of-the-month>



February 2025 eBirder of the Month, Vitus Li (left), birding at Sharp's at Waterford Farm with Mary Prowell, the January 2020 eBirder of the Month, during the March 29, 2025 HCBC field trip.

photo by Mary Lou Clark

(President's Message continued from page 1)

years. Mary Lou attends several other MOS Chapter meetings to find new program material for membership meetings and often brought back recommendations for new best practices for our club. Mary Lou's experience, advice, and diplomacy has helped me, and therefore all of us, to grow and embrace new initiatives beneficial to the club.

I am thrilled to be turning club leadership over to President-elect Val Swan and Vice-President-elect Tom Seivert. Val's efforts as VP and advisor for the last two years have been exceptional to include spearheading an incredible effort to organize and rapidly expand a new birder program. Val and Tom's teamwork, enthusiasm, energy, and ideas will keep this club fun to be a part of.

Finally, thanks to all our many volunteers for supporting counts, walks, potlucks, and tabling events over the last two years. I'll see you in the woods, and you can expect to still hear from me about the May Count and Fall Count Area 3.

Your fellow bird club member and volunteer,
Gregg

March/April Chirps Quiz Answers (See the [March/April](#) issue of *The Goldfinch* for the questions):

1. 1972; 2. Nanine Rhinelander; 3. Marsh Wren (*I got the year wrong on the question so I would have accepted several answers-this ended up being a freebie*); 4. Tabby Figue and Woody Merkle; 5. Gwynn Acres Path (includes Plumtree Acres); 6. 3; 7. December 1972, Dr. Erwin Klaas; 8. 1994, 2; 9. 1974, 83; 10. 2021; 11. Eastern Comma, Question Mark, Red Admiral; 12. 3/26, 6/13; 13. Richard H. Smith, Jr.; 14. Birds that are active at dusk and dawn; 15. Jon K. Boone; 16. Sep/Oct '12; 17. Valid WSSC User Permit and a copy of the MOS Permission Letter from WSSC.