

The Goldfinch

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



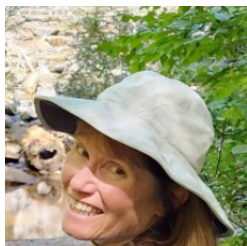
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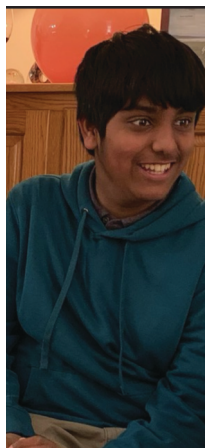
CLUB MEETINGS

BY MARY LOU CLARK



Thursday, November 13, 2025 "The Maryland Biodiversity Project" featuring Sue Muller. The Maryland Biodiversity Project (MBP) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization focused on cataloging the living things of Maryland. The project was started in June 2012 by Bill Hubick and Jim Brighton. The MBP community has cataloged more than 22,000 species, including more than 14,000 species with photographs, and features the work of more than 28,000 naturalists and photographers.

Sue Muller is retired from the Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks after a 40-year career in natural resources. She served as the Howard County Coordinator for the Maryland Amphibian & Reptile Atlas (2010-2014), Co-coordinator for the Maryland BBA3 (2020-2024) and is currently a contributing editor for the Maryland Biodiversity Project. She is a long-time member of the bird club.



Thursday, December 11, 2025 "The World Series of Birding" by Roshan Vignarajah. The World Series of Birding is the largest annual bird competition in the world, held in Cape May, NJ, by New Jersey Audubon (for the last 40 years). It is a 24-hour-long blitz where teams attempt to find as many species as possible within given restrictions. Participants hail from all around the world and can participate no matter their age.

Roshan Vignarajah is a young birder and a member of the Youth Maryland Ornithological Society (YMOS), as well as a naturalist with a passion for insects, especially fireflies and moths. Since the age of eight, Roshan has been a dedicated birder and student of nature. Roshan has participated in and won the World Series of Birding middle school division three times, and has captained the team two times. He is an active birder in Howard County whose favorite spots include the Howard County Conservancy and Triadelphia Reservoir. His favorite local birds are the Connecticut Warbler, Rock Pigeon, and Cackling Goose.

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 at 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 VAL SWAN



As we settle into cooler weather, leaving migration and the confusion of identifying fall warblers behind us, we look forward to the festivities of the holiday season. It's in this spirit that several of you asked me, "How can we give back and help the club?" Well, first, thank you for asking! Inquiry is step one. If you have some time or talent you'd like to share, please email me at valnjeff55@gmail.com. Some volunteer opportunities include adopting a nest box, writing an article for the Goldfinch, weeding the Skywatch, providing refreshments at the General Meeting, or helping at field trips, tabling events, seasonal counts, or the annual potluck. I promise we are a fun, engaging group!

(Continued on page 3)

FALL - WINTER FIELD TRIPS

BY [JOE HANFMAN](#)

Field trips are a great way to improve birding skills, explore new places and meet other birders. Arrive at the meeting site ready to leave at the designated time with appropriate footwear and gear. 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.

B W Skywatch, Howard County Conservancy, Mt Pleasant

October 27, Monday, 9:30 a.m. Half day.

Meet at the parking lot or go directly to the Skywatch site. This trip will be a skywatch for migrating raptors and other potential flybys.

Leader-Lynn Gregg, lhg5037@gmail.com

B R Beginning Birder Trip, Howard County Conservancy

November 1, Saturday, 9:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.

Join us for a beginner birder field trip at Mt Pleasant. We will go over the basics of birding, then a walk around the farm and down to the wetland. We will finish at the Skywatch.

Limit 10 people.

Register with leader.

Leader-David Ziolkowski, djziolkowski@yahoo.com

B W Skywatch, Howard County Conservancy, Mt Pleasant

November 1, Saturday, 9:30 a.m. Half day.

Meet at the parking lot.

This trip will be strictly a skywatch for late-migrating raptors and other potential goodies. Our main target will be Golden Eagle; while not expected, early November is the best time to catch one flying over Howard County. We will watch the skies and tally the birds as long as conditions are productive. Hope for a north wind! Bring water, lunch, hat, sunscreen, light-colored sunglasses, comfortable lawn chair (recliners are best), binoculars, scope, and camera if you like. Participants can also walk the conservancy trails if skywatching proves non-productive.

Facilities available.

Leader-Russ Ruffling, russruffling@gmail.com

B W Centennial Park

November 2, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. 2-3 hours Daylight Saving Time

West end parking lot.

Easy walking on paved paths around Centennial Lake. Woodlands, fields and water host a wide variety of species. Great view of the sky for flyovers. Early waterfowl, lingering migrants likely.

Facilities available.

Leaders-Richard and Renee Peters, Richard@rrrpeters.org

B R Wilde Lake

November 3, Monday, 8:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Suburban with mown grass; native and planted trees and shrubs in a park-like setting with a few brushy tangles. A deciduous woods flanking a stream can be found at the northwest corner; trails there are narrow, often muddy. The lake has hosted many rarities in the past. Limit 10 people.

Register with leader.

Leader-Lilian Saul, ljsaul604@gmail.com

B W Skywatch, Howard County Conservancy, Mt Pleasant

November 4, Tuesday, 9:30 a.m. Half day.

Meet at the parking lot or go directly to the Skywatch site.

This trip will be a skywatch for migrating raptors and other potential flybys dedicated to the memory of Bob Ringler. Show up to find out why.

Leader-Joe Hanfman, auk1844@gmail.com

B R Winter Sparrows, Howard County Conservancy. Mt Pleasant

November 5, Wednesday, 8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Meet at the Montjoy Barn.

Join Bonnie for a search for winter sparrows. Good for both beginners and advanced sparrow lovers. Bonnie will cover the basics of winter sparrows but it is also the chance to find rarities.

Limit 8. Register with leader.

Leader-Bonnie Ott, sparrowdamsel@gmail.com

B W Howard County Conservancy, Mt Pleasant

November 6, Thursday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours

Meet in the parking lot. This is an impromptu leaderless walk for an opportunity to bird with any friends who show up.

B W Centennial Park

November 9, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours.

West end parking lot.

Easy walking on paved paths around Centennial Lake.

Woodlands, fields and water host a wide variety of species.

Great view of the sky for flyovers. Facilities available.

Leader-Russell Kovach, Russell.Kovach@gmail.com

B R Beyond Field Guides - Introduction to Birding Using Apps and Websites

November 15, Saturday, 8:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m.

Location: Howard County Conservancy, Mt Pleasant

This will be an outdoor bird walk followed by a presentation in the Gudelsky Center classroom. Meet in the parking lot.

Join Terri Berkheimer and Val Swan for a bird walk over mowed paths with possible mud, followed by the presentation. Learn about online resources to help you identify birds, discover birding locations and participate in the local, regional, and global birding communities through participatory science opportunities. Resources covered include: Cornell Lab's All About Birds, eBird, Project FeederWatch, Merlin Bird ID and BirdCast.

What to bring:

1. Binoculars, if you have a pair.

(A few pairs will be available to borrow).

2. Merlin Bird ID by Cornell Lab app on your phone. Download the Merlin Bird ID by Cornell Lab app with NE and SE bird packs before the workshop (if you are comfortable doing so). It is free but requires an email address. We will be using this app for some workshop exercises. Reservations required. Max 20 participants. Register with leader.

Leader-Terri Berkheimer, tgtberk@gmail.com

B R Conowingo Dam

November 15, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. Half day

Meet at the Broken Land Park and Ride Lot West at 8:00 a.m. and plan to carpool.

Half-day driving trip to Conowingo Dam to see Bald Eagles, Great Blue Herons, cormorants, vultures, and ducks. We will arrive by 9:30 a.m. and depart at 1:00 p.m.. Bring lunch and water. There is also a nearby diner and Wawa. Dress for chilly weather. Parking and portable toilets are available at Conowingo Fisherman's Park. Please RSVP, but there is no quota on the number of people who can go.

Leader-Guy Di Roma, guydiroma@hotmail.com

B W Centennial Park

November 16, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours.

West end parking lot.

Easy walking on paved paths around Centennial Lake. Woodlands, fields and water host a wide variety of species. Great view of the sky for flyovers.

Facilities available.

Leaders – David Holmes, musiclbndr@gmail.com, Megan

Bolcar, megbolcar@gmail.com

B W Centennial Park

November 23, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours.

West end parking lot.

Easy walking on paved paths around Centennial Lake. Woodlands, fields and water host a wide variety of species. Great view of the sky for flyovers.

Facilities available.

Leader – John Henri Rorabeck, johnhenri14@gmail.com

B W Centennial Park

November 30, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours.

West end parking lot.

Easy walking on paved paths around Centennial Lake. Woodlands, fields and water host a wide variety of species. Great view of the sky for flyovers. Facilities available.

Leader – Lilian Saul, ljsaul604@gmail.com

B R Cedar Lane Park

December 8, Monday, 8:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Mature deciduous woods, extensive edge, a small stream, and a tiny wetland adjacent to athletic fields.

Limit 10 people. Register with leader.

Leader – Lily Saul, ljsaul604@gmail.com

B Triadelphia CBC

December 20, Saturday

Contact David Holmes to participate, musiclbndr@gmail.com

B W Start Your Year List

January 1, 2026, 8:00 a.m. Half day.

Meet at the Howard County Conservancy, Mt Pleasant

Easy walking on woodland trails. May plan to bird several different locations to find as many species as possible. The one day of the year where every bird is new! Facilities available.

Leader – Kurt Schwarz, krschwal@verizon.net

B = Good for beginning birders

W = Wheelchair accessible

R = Reservations required

Anyone is welcome to contribute articles or ideas which you think will be of interest to other birders. Copy may be sent to goldfinch@mdbirds.org

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

Jamie Lynch, Editor
Joanne Solem, Proofreader

President's Message (continued from page 1)

I would also encourage you to renew your membership if you haven't done so already. Yes, it's that time of year! As a club member, you will meet new friends, connect with nature, and learn from experienced birders and through our newsletter, *The Goldfinch*. You can join our "Rare Bird Alerts" for insider Howard County birding information and access Waterford Flats Shorebird Habitat. Lastly, a 10% discount is offered to members at The Wildlife Authority and Wild Birds Unlimited, Columbia.

I am thankful for each and every one of you and wish you a joyous holiday season.

Val Swan

ADVICE FOR eBIRDERS

BY TIM CARNEY

When creating an eBird list, what is the best way to treat a bird that can't be determined to species?

For the most part, I suggest "downgrading" to spuh/slash. If I see a distant yellowlegs, I'll enter it as "Lesser/Greater Yellowlegs" rather than 1) entering at species level based on a hunch/guess, or 2) omitting it entirely. You're still documenting the presence of the bird, just not falling under the spell of false precision. It always irks me when birders say, "I'll just remove it from my list" when their sighting is challenged. Don't remove it, just downgrade it!

On the other hand, sometimes we can be *too* hard on ourselves as birders. I've heard of some birders leaving birds off of their lists because it would have been a life bird, and they only got a mediocre (not great) view. The bird was still there, so it should still be on the list! We can also talk ourselves out of an ID even if everything points to it being correct. This fall, I saw a warbler in Montgomery County that was a female Cerulean. I was just hesitant to count it because I didn't get a photo, nor were any of my views excellent. But when I reviewed all of the field marks with my birding buddy, I realized that it couldn't have been anything else. In these cases, I suggest eBirding it to species level **listing all the relevant field marks**, and letting the reviewer judge it.

Whatever the circumstance, I encourage eBirders to always enter birds with questionable IDs rather than omitting them entirely. If your Yellow-bellied Flycatcher ID is challenged, just downgrade it to "Empidonax sp" or even "flycatcher sp" rather than removing it from the list.

Tim Carney is the primary eBird reviewer for Howard County.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

The October 23 board meeting will be held in hybrid format. All members are welcome to attend in person or virtually. If you have input, questions or would like to attend, please email Val Swan at valnjeff55@gmail.com.

Summer BIRD RECORDS: June 1- July 31, 2025

BY [JOANNE SOLEM](#)

Below normal temperatures for the first part of June were followed by a brutal heat wave the last week of the month. July was hotter than normal, and summer's ample precipitation erased the year's deficit producing lush foliage.

Notable birds: Common Merganser, Least Tern, Pied-billed Grebe, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Osprey (new nest at Lake Kittamaqundi), and Mississippi Kite.

The **Common Merganser** at Centennial Park 7/4 (**RRv**, ph.) was the third July record.

Summer shorebirds were unremarkable. The few **Spotted Sandpiper** reports gave no indication of breeding activity. The first certain migrant fall shorebird was a **Solitary Sandpiper** at Alpha Ridge Landfill (ALRGL) 7/15 (**RCu**).

Least Terns are a Piedmont rarity. Since the first county sighting on 7/10/06 (**KHf**), there had been only four additional records until one was spotted at Race Road Wetlands (RACRW) 5/22/25 (**BO**) and again on 6/20 (**BO**). From the latter date through 6/29 (**RHl**), one or two appeared there daily with sightings from early a.m. to early evening. Although this species is often a colonial nester on tidal substrates with little vegetation, scattered single pairs have gradually adapted to light-colored gravel on flat-roofed buildings near water, including a few on Maryland's Western Shore. The source of the RACRW birds was likely related to those breeding on a high school roof at Lansdowne, Baltimore Co, ~four miles from RACRW as the tern flies.



Least Tern, June 20, 2025, Race Road, by Mei Hsiao

A **Pied-billed Grebe** seen at a pond at Barberry Way from 6/12 – 6/18 (**VSw**) was unusual for June.

Summer **American Bitterns** are extremely rare locally. Unfortunately, the report of a flyover (seen while driving on June 23) could not be further validated. The **Great Blue Heron** colony, not far from Haviland Mill Park, was successful with at least half a dozen nestlings heard on 6/4 (**JSh**).

A new **Osprey** nest was positioned on a lamppost in a seldom-used parking lot near Lake Kittamaqundi. Two young fledged successfully in late July (**CKc**) having survived extreme heat, the explosion of nearby lakefront fireworks, and heavy rains with numerous thunderstorms.



Ospreys, June 24, 2025, Lake Kittamaqundi, by Clayton Koonce

Three **Broad-winged Hawks** circling slowly over Triadelphia Rd 6/2 (**POs**) were likely late migrants. The season's few **Mississippi Kites** were sighted at Mt Pleasant on two dates: 6/1 Skywatch (**RVg**, **VLi**, desc.-1) and 7/16 (**RVg**, desc.-2 "bothering a **Turkey Vulture**").

Although one or two adult **Red-headed Woodpeckers** were seen multiple times at up to 10 sites, young were verified at only two locations: Howard Chapel Rd, Patuxent River SP 7/1 (**JHf** - 2 ad., 1 juv.) and A.E. Mullinix Rd 7/10 (**SMu** - 1 ad., 1 juv.)

Acadian Flycatchers appeared to be doing well with several counts of breeding adults rivaling the year's high of 20 during spring migration. The peak occurred on 6/11 at three sites: Daniels 19 (**J/MHr**), Long Corner 9 (**MPw**), and Patapsco Tunnel/Bridge 3 (**CHm**), with an additional 17 at Henryton on 6/20 (**J/MHr**).

Bank Swallows are scarce at any season; wandering July birds are very occasional. One was noted at Waterford Farm (WATFD) 7/16 (**RRf**) and two were there 7/21 (**GPn**, ph.); an additional single bird was picked out at ALRGL 7/28 (**RCu**).



On left and right are Bank Swallows, in center is a Cliff Swallow July 21, 2025, Waterford Farm, by Gregg Petersen

Purple Martins were slow to arrive, with many still appearing in mid-June. Among boxes erected by the HCBC, one at ALRGL held eight nests on 6/28, but some eggs and young mysteriously and subsequently disappeared. It is believed that up to 10 young may have fledged at that location (**RRf**, **RCu**). Two boxes at WATFD had a combined 19 nesting attempts, with a total of 67 eggs; one box fledged 46 young from 51 eggs, while the other box fledged one young from 16 eggs (**RRf**).

Cliff Swallows were one of the signature species of the season. Their expansion continued with a newly discovered colony at Stephens Road this spring. On May Count, at least 30 nests were being built or repaired on both sides of the bridge over Hammond Branch (**KCK**). Successful fledging took place in July. Two pairs attempted nesting in an open WATFD shed 6/13 (**VSw**). The 110 Cliffs that were seen at WATFD during the late afternoon of 7/16 (**RRf**) were carefully counted while perched on wires. This flock of adults and juveniles was gone the next morning. It constituted a new single-party high [7/9/00 BRDAM 100+ K. Schwarz]. The new record stood for less than two weeks! On 7/21, again at WATFD, a flock of 179 appeared mid-morning (**GPn**). These groups are almost certainly single-colony flocks disbursing from nest locations after the young have fledged. Another Cliff Swallow success story in Carroll County was made possible thanks to the concerns and actions of two HCBC members: Felicia Lovelett and Robin Todd. Read the details on page 8 in the August 2025 *Maryland Yellowthroat*.

Long Corner, Patuxent River SP (PRSP) is one of the best county locations for **Veeries**. The ethereal songs of four could be heard on 6/11 (**MPw**), while three were counted at Henryton 6/20 (**JHf**).

The season's high of 25 ad./juv. **Grasshopper Sparrows** was logged at ALRGL 7/15 (**RCu**). **White-throated Sparrows** lingered at Howard Chapel Rd until 6/12 with one type on each side of the Patuxent River (**JHf**).



Grasshopper Sparrow, July 4, 2025, New Cut Landfill by Lilian Saul

Reports of **Brown-headed Cowbird** fledglings and their hosts were as follows: 6/7 **Eastern Phoebe**, Vantage Pt (**CKc**); 7/5 **Red-eyed Vireo**, Mary's Land Farm (**GPn**); and 7/10 **Song Sparrow**, Iager Blvd Ponds (**KCK**).

Sadly, the **Black-and-white Warbler** at Long Corner, PRSP 6/11-28 (**MPw**) was the only one reported in likely breeding habitat this season. It is expected that multiple laggard warblers are last spotted in June. This year summer lingerers were a **Chestnut-sided Warbler** along the Kendall Ridge Loop 6/1 (**SGz**), a **Blackpoll** at Henryton 6/2 (**ASm**), a **Yellow-rumped** at MTPLT 6/1 (**J/MCh**) (second only to a 6/3/24 bird), and a **Canada** at the Middle Patuxent Env. Area 6/2 (**KS**) — all barely making it into June.

Acknowledgments: My thanks to Russ Ruffing and Joe Hanfman for additions and edits. Their assistance is essential to the accuracy of this report.

Observers: **JCh** – Jane Chandler, **MCh** – Mark Chandler, **KCK** – Ken Clark, **RCu** – Ralph Cullison, **SGz** – Scott Guzewich, **CHm** – Catherine Hallam, **JHf** – Joe Hanfman, **JHr** – John Harris, **MHR** – Meg Harris, **KHF** – Kevin Heffernan, **RHI** – Russell Hillsley, **CKc** – Clayton Koonce, **VLi** – Vitus Li, **SMu** – Sue Muller, **POs** – Peter Osenton, **BO** – Bonnie Ott, **GPn** Gregg Petersen, **MPw** – Mary Prowell, **RRv** – Ruth Raven, **RRf** – Russ Ruffing, **KS** – Kurt Schwarz, **JSh** – Jay Sheppard, **ASm** – Andy Smith, **VSw** – Val Swan, **RVg** – Roshan Vignarajah.

HART-MILLER ISLAND FIELD TRIP

BY JOE HANFMAN

Twenty members of the Howard County Bird Club got a special trip to Hart-Miller Island on 8/27/2025. Maryland Environmental Service (MES) allowed this trip providing a round-trip boat trip and bus service around the island.

Thirteen of the 20 participants had never been to the island. There were no participant cancellations and all participants were on time. We tallied 67 species which included two species that have never been recorded in Howard County – Hudsonian and Marbled godwits. Some of the other highlights were American Avocets, Black-bellied Plover, Short-billed Dowitchers, Stilt Sandpipers, White-rumped Sandpipers, and Common Tern.

From the MES Land Base a few of us saw a Royal Tern that is another species never recorded in Howard County.

A special thank you goes out to Cal Liddell, Beth Ross, Tim Carney, and additional staff at Hart-Miller Island.

HAVENS FOR WILDLIFE

Have you transformed your lot/land into a sanctuary for wildlife (with a special focus on birds or butterflies)? Are you constantly improving the quality of food, water, and shelter in order to attract varied wildlife? Whether you are in an urbanized area, suburban setting, or rural location, share your story and the steps you took to make your location attractive. Others may benefit from your experience. Material will be printed in *The Goldfinch* as space allows.

Include the following:

Introduction: Several sentences describing the general habitat and surroundings, as well as the length of time you have been improving it.

Description: 500-word maximum. Describe what you have done. Did you have a plan? Professional help? Your biggest successes? What would you do differently if you were starting over? Or whatever would help others understand how to go about attracting wildlife in a similar situation. A few photos are welcome.

Highlights: Memorable (or surprising) sightings that you believe were a direct result of your efforts.

Send material to goldfinch@mdbirds.org.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Mariah Beyers	William, Samuel & Adelynn Londeree
Kelsey Brooks	Cherie McGovern
Dwight & Leslie Cheu	Tara Miner
Travis Crane	Lisa & Robert Noorani
Cheryl & Matt Dunigan	Devang, Kiran & Mila Patel
Rosemarie Eicker	Junian Pedulla
John Gfeller VI	Beverly Polk
Sarah Gordon	Dana Risse
Kevin Graff	David & Anne Richardson
Angela Kopeck	Rebecca Rothey
Daniel LaChapelle	Nichemat Saroff
Carrie Lancos	David & Julia Swan
Samantha Levy	James Wright

ANTARCTICA ADVENTURE-

TRAVEL DATES JANUARY 10-21, 2025/TOUR COMPANY *ANTARCTICA 21*

BY LAURA WOLF



Gentoo Penguins

While visiting Antarctica might not be on your radar as a birder, I can assure you it's entirely worth adding to your bucket list! The species you will encounter are beyond enchanting. My friend Laurie, who wanted to visit all the continents, invited me along. She is not a birder and indeed, I was one of only two on the ship. I suppose most other serious birders are saving for a voyage that involves stopping at the Falklands and South Georgia Island, but that doubles the cost and time commitment for the trip. Our simpler package cost around \$6000 and included a five day cruise with only one day for landings, a short flight back to the mainland, and a hotel stay in Punta Arenas, Chile. We chose to add some time in Ushuaia, the southernmost town in Argentina, and a bit more on the back end in Punta Arenas as well. Flying is so chaotic now and you really *don't* want to miss that boat!

Getting to Ushuaia wasn't simple in January as we had to dodge a blizzard in Atlanta and ended up needing four different legs and a ride to a second airport in Buenos Aires. When we finally arrived, we enjoyed exploring the beautiful waterfront town. With the rental car, we visited the stunning Tierra Del Fuego National Park and had a lovely lunch at a tearoom afterward. Ushuaia is surrounded by mountains and water in every direction, so the views were splendid no matter where we went.



Tierra del Fuego National Park

I hired an excellent birding guide, Esteban Daniels of Birding Ushuaia, and in seven hours, we saw three different species of Caracara, handsome Southern Lapwings, Flightless and Flying

Steamer Ducks, Thorn-tailed Rayadito, an adorable Tufted Tit-Tyrant, Patagonian Sierra Finch, Blackish and Magellanic Oystercatchers, Upland and Kelp Geese, Dolphin and Kelp Gulls, Chilean Skua, Long-tailed Meadowlark, Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, and many more. He noted that I was a bit late to catch the Magellanic Woodpecker as the nestlings had already fledged.



Black-chested
Buzzard-Eagle



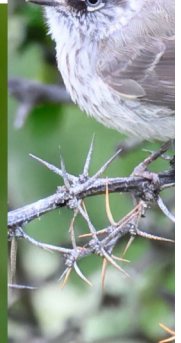
Tufted Tit-
Tyrant



Chimango
Caracara



Patagonian
Sierra Finch



Upland
Geese



We boarded the Ocean Nova, our floating home for the Antarctica journey, at 3:00 in the afternoon. As we left the town behind and moved through the Beagle Channel, we enjoyed mountains, rainbows, cormorants, a Sei Whale, and Black-browed Albatrosses. The Beagle is very calm, but overnight we entered the infamous Drake Passage. I know just when, because I woke up only to barely keep myself from falling out of bed! This area of the sea is known for unpredictable conditions and requires about two days to cross. Happily, we were extremely fortunate in terms of weather and the only major stop we missed was Cape Horn. Most days, it was breezy, overcast, and around 40 degrees Fahrenheit.



Our ship, the Ocean Nova

Wonderful staff experts gave talks in the lounge as we moved through the Drake Passage, all about glaciers, history, birds, sea mammals, and even photography tips. The food was decent, and most travelers were kind, enthusiastic people who were

delighted to have the opportunity we were enjoying. Aside from the talks, I spent my time on deck birding solo or with the staff naturalists. Therefore, I was able to see five species of whale and one gorgeous species of dolphin, the Hourglass Dolphin. The bow is best for whale watching and the aft for birdwatching.



One of the reasons I agreed so eagerly to go on what might *seem* like a crazy trip was one enchanting family of birds I dearly wished to meet: Albatrosses. Podcasts are one of my favorite ways to learn about birds and I can't forget hearing Peter Harrison describe in his ABA podcast interview how remarkable these birds are to behold in person. He didn't overstate their splendor one bit. Watching them float with impossibly effortless ease behind the ship was powerfully moving to me. I was lucky to see five different Albatross species: Black-browed, Snowy, Southern Royal, Light-mantled, and Gray-headed. Being so large and disinclined to flap made them fairly easy to photograph when measured against tiny, sweet little prions and petrels picking treats from our wake. Each creature was so beautiful, yet so different from anything back home. Aside from a splash of turquoise in some glaciers, and the cobalt sea when the sun is shining, most everything in Antarctica is black and white.



When the big day came for our landings, we set out in Zodiac boats to visit two different penguin colonies. They are crowded, loud, and extremely FRAGRANT. You don't need a nice camera to document them as they will be everywhere you look. Sometimes, you must have the self-awareness to back away from them in order to be respectful of their activities. Half Moon Island was the first stop, home to a few hundred Chinstrap Penguins. There was one individual Macaroni Penguin among them, which was so exciting to see. The second stop was Yankee Harbor, where we saw a few thousand Gentoo Penguins along with several species of seal basking on the rocky beaches. There were many babies at both stops and a variety of other seabirds to see. We had almost three hours each at both places, though it was painful to peel myself away from them! Penguins are absolute comedy gold and you would have to be made of stone not to be delighted by them. The staff spread out to keep us on the trail, answer questions, and make sure no one harassed the wildlife. Seeing these massive colonies in person was humbling and absolutely magical.



The next day, we anchored at a small airstrip on King George Island and flew back to the mainland, landing in Punta Arenas, Chile. The tour package included a night at a hotel there, but we added one more night so we could visit a Magellanic Penguin colony nearby. We made a few other quick stops near the dock and got White-tufted Grebes, Magellanic Snipe, Baird's Sandpiper, and Red-banded Coots with their young.



I am deeply grateful to have had this extraordinary experience. Visiting Antarctica made me feel like I could do anything. I hope this has helped you consider this destination, so that you might one day feel the same.

HOWARD COUNTY Fall COUNT Results, September 20, 2025

BY CHUCK STIRRAT AND LILIAN SAUL

The thirty-second annual Howard County Fall Count was conducted on Sept. 20th, 2025, with the count data shown in the table below. This count has turned out to be slightly above average with numbers for the total birds near the average, but the number of warblers broke a downward trend and set the second highest-ever number of warblers. The total number of bird species, including Traill's Flycatcher (Alder/Willow), was up two from last year, while the number of individuals was down 151. For the warblers, the species count was up two while the number of individual warblers was up 453. There were 19 species that had new high counts, in part reflecting increased coverage. Highlights include Cape May Warbler 86 (prior high 26 last year), Swainson's Thrush 58 (prior high 25 in 2021), and the continuing increase of Common Raven 34 (prior high 25 in 2023, first ever in 2007).

The number of participants, parties, and the overall effort as measured by the hours and miles continued to still be strong with new highs in counters and parties. Effort showed an increase in hours to a new high and a decrease in miles for the count (primarily in car mileage). Noteworthy effort was put in by a group of Young Birders at the Howard County Conservancy spending approximately 13 hours in the field.

2025 Count Data					
	Observed Birds Countywide		Observed Warblers Countywide		Statistics
	Species	Birds	Species	Birds	
Numbers	132	15,288	25	816	
Historical High : Low	140:108	26,651:9293	30:13	1,004:130	
Year's of High : Low	2010:2004	1994:2004	1994:2004	1994:2004	
Averages for Birds & Species	124.91	15,110.8	23.13	440.06	
Counters : Parties					100:65
Counters : Parties Averages					58.63:38.28
Counters Hours : Miles					293.9:516.9
Counter Hours:Miles Averages					206.2:440.9

Saturday's temperature started in the high 50s to low 60s [dew point 59.3 °F] at 7:00 a.m. with considerable variability in cloud cover across the county. The temperature rose to 77.5 °F [dew point 65.6 °F] in late afternoon. Winds were light from the NNE early, shifting to from the East in the afternoon but remained below 10 mph. The day could be described as an enjoyable but humid warm Fall day that was comfortable when you were not in full sun.

Bird count participants were Dianne Aguilera, Peter Ashley, Cris Ausin, Everett & Virginia Behr, Debbie Belchis, Karan Blum, Jim & Marilyn Brinkley, Jane & Mark Chandler, Ken Clark, Mary Lou Clark, Stephanie Coakley, Lisa Colangelo, Jonathan Comeau, Dennis Coskren, Ben Costello, Lauren Crocker, Jeff & Karen Culler, Ralph Cullison III, Guy DiRoma, Susan & **Wes Earp (Area 1 Co-coordinator)**, Rose Eicker, Tim Frye, Lynn Gregg, Cathy Hallam, Joe Hanfman, John & Meg Harris, Bill & Gayle Hill, David Holmes, Crystal Konny, Clayton Koonce, **Russell Kovach (Area 2 Coordinator)**, Wren Kreinar, **Meghaan Lane (Area 7 Coordinator)**, Yi-Ying Lee, Shashi Lengade, Mike Leumas, Jessica Leung, Vitus Li, Kathie Lillie, Richard Love, Felicia Lovelett, Steve Luke, Matthew Lustig, Janet Lydon, Sara & Teddy Macri, Mary Maxey, **Mike McClure (Area 4 Coordinator)**, Karlyn McPartland, Kent Middlehauff, Barry Miller, Brian Moyer, Colin & TC Moynihan, Joanna & Mila Mulligan, Sue Neri, Ben Newton, Richard Orr, Bonnie Ott, Steve Parr, Brittany Parsons, Vincent Paul, Pam Perna, **Gregg Petersen (Area 3 Coordinator)**, Suzanne Probst, Mary Prowell, David Richardson, John Henri & Melody Rorabeck, Brett Rowland, Russ Ruffing, **Lilian Saul (County Co-Co-coordinator)**, **Kurt Schwarz (Area 5 Coordinator)**, **Thomas Seivert (Area 6 Coordinator)**, Mark Shavers, Hsiao (Mei) & Wen-Jong Shyong, Naylayini Sivaraman, Jo Solem, Jessi Steere, Michelle Stewart, **Chuck Stirrat (County-Co-coordinator)**, Valerie Swan, Tim Thompson, Robin Todd, Sherry Tomlinson, Lisa Troutman, Roshan Vignarajah, Pam Villanyl, Mark Wallace. A special thanks to **Cathy Hallam** who stepped forward again to host the in-person tally rally.

Individual species table is on page 9. A full report of the results including Area results will be available at the Seasonal Counts Results page on the club's website.

Plan now to join us on future seasonal counts and, if possible, attend the tally as well. The 2026 Fall Count will be held on the 3rd Saturday of September which will be the 17th.

HOWARD COUNTY FALL COUNT RESULTS - SEPTEMBER 20, 2025

	Totals		Totals		Totals
Canada Goose	2,072	Acadian Flycatcher	2	Song Sparrow	47
Wood Duck	34	<i>Trail's Flycatcher</i>	4	Lincoln's Sparrow	2
Mallard	49	Least Flycatcher	1	<i>unidentified sparrow</i>	2
Wild Turkey	35	<i>Empidonax species</i>	8	Eastern Towhee	42
Rock Pigeon	295	Eastern Phoebe	68	Yellow-breasted Chat	4
Mourning Dove	444	White-eyed Vireo	16	Bobolink	3
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	5	Yellow-throated Vireo	2	Eastern Meadowlark	7
Common Nighthawk	9	Blue-headed Vireo	1	Baltimore Oriole	4
Chimney Swift	172	Philadelphia Vireo	7	Red-winged Blackbird	36
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	61	Warbling Vireo	3	Brown-headed Cowbird	131
Killdeer	11	Red-eyed Vireo	82	Common Grackle	12
Least Sandpiper	4	Blue Jay	850	<i>unidentified blackbird</i>	111
Semipalmated Sandpiper	3	American Crow	843	Ovenbird	17
Wilson's Snipe	1	Fish Crow	99	Northern Waterthrush	2
Spotted Sandpiper	4	<i>American/Fish Crow</i>	74	Blue-winged Warbler	1
Solitary Sandpiper	6	Common Raven	34	Black-&-white Warbler	92
Double-crested Cormorant	25	Carolina Chickadee	247	Tennessee Warbler	25
Green Heron	21	Tufted Titmouse	243	Nashville Warbler	5
Great Egret	1	Horned Lark	3	<i>Connecticut Warbler</i>	2
Great Blue Heron	55	Tree Swallow	3	Common Yellowthroat	106
Black Vulture	166	N. Rough-winged Swallow	2	Hooded Warbler	1
Turkey Vulture	478	Purple Martin	1	American Redstart	91
Osprey	12	Barn Swallow	11	Cape May Warbler	86
Northern Harrier	2	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	6	Northern Parula	66
Sharp-shinned Hawk	14	Cedar Waxwing	265	Magnolia Warbler	132
Cooper's Hawk	22	Red-breasted Nuthatch	7	Bay-breasted Warbler	7
<i>accipiter species</i>	1	White-breasted Nuthatch	194	Blackburnian Warbler	9
Bald Eagle [ad/im/unk]	38	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	12	Yellow Warbler	2
Red-shouldered Hawk	113	Carolina Wren	377	Chestnut-sided Warbler	24
Broad-winged Hawk	923	Northern House Wren	45	Blackpoll Warbler	10
Red-tailed Hawk	20	Gray Catbird	385	Blk.-thrt'd. Blue Warbler	20
Eastern Screech-Owl	10	Brown Thrasher	20	Palm Warbler	27
Great Horned Owl	1	Northern Mockingbird	128	Pine Warbler	8
Barred Owl	11	European Starling	1,539	Yel.-rump'd (Myrtle) Warbler	8
Belted Kingfisher	29	Eastern Bluebird	352	Yellow-throated Warbler	1
Red-headed Woodpecker	14	Veery	5	Prairie Warbler	2
Red-bellied Woodpecker	315	Gray-cheeked Thrush	5	Blk.-thrt'd. Green Warbler	28
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1	Swainson's Thrush	58	<i>unidentified warbler</i>	44
Downy Woodpecker	165	Wood Thrush	21	<i>Summer Tanager</i>	1
Hairy Woodpecker	48	American Robin	338	Scarlet Tanager	15
Northern Flicker	218	House Sparrow	295	Northern Cardinal	644
Pileated Woodpecker	79	House Finch	164	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	30
American Kestrel	16	American Goldfinch	274	Blue Grosbeak	8
Merlin	2	Chipping Sparrow	144	Indigo Bunting	36
<i>Peregrine Falcon</i>	2	Field Sparrow	10		
Great Crested Flycatcher	5	<i>White-throated Sparrow</i>	3		
Eastern Wood-Pewee	65	Savannah Sparrow	9		
				Total Birds:	15,288
				Total Species:¹	132

¹ Trail's Flycatcher counted as a species



HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB
Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society
P.O Box 1323
COLUMBIA, MD 21044-1323

Howard County Bird Photographers!

An Opportunity to Contribute to a Study of Non-Breeding Season Movements of Eastern Bluebirds

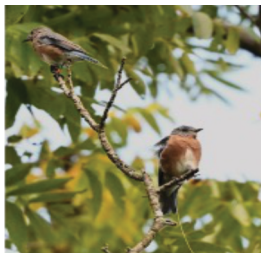
*by Alan Reich, M.S. Student in the Omland Lab
 University of Maryland, Baltimore County*

As part of my thesis research, I am studying the movements of year-round resident populations of Eastern Bluebirds during the non-breeding season from September to March. I will use **unique color band** combos to identify individual birds and keep records of locations they are spotted throughout the local area.

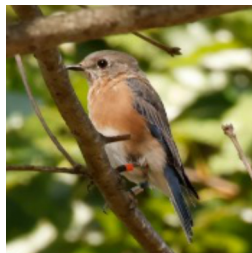
I am appealing to those of you in Howard County who enjoy bird photography. If you walk the trails at West Friendship Park* or Howard County Conservancy at Mt Pleasant, there is a unique opportunity for you to contribute to an ornithological study. Readers who have any close-up photos of Eastern Bluebirds with visible color bands may be able to contribute to the project. Some Montgomery County parks also have color-banded bluebirds: South Germantown Recreation Park*, Rachel Carson Conservation Park, Lois Green Conservation Park, and Little Bennett Regional Park.

In order to have your photos included in our dataset, please **email me at r257@umbc.edu with your photo attached using the following format: Subject line "Bluebird pics."** Include the **date, time of day, and location**. Location can be the coordinates, a nest box number, a map screenshot with a pin, a picture of an X on a trail map, a link to Google Maps pin, or any other way you can show me where exactly you saw them on the landscape. It must be more fine-scale than just an address for the photos to be used in our project.

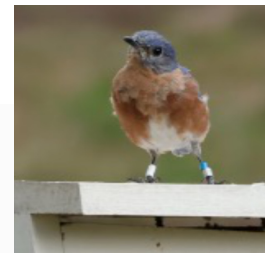
What are those wires hanging off their tails? (See the male pictured below on the left). A handful of birds have radio tracking devices! Specially designed for birds, these tiny devices allow us to locate them in the field with a handheld receiver and using the **Motus Wildlife Tracking System**. A Motus tower is expected to be operational at the Howard County Conservancy in October 2025, thanks to the Howard County Bird Club. The tower will detect these birds automatically.



Maureen McBeth



Jack Hawkins



Jack Hawkins

*We have 37 color-banded adults at West Friendship Park and many more with federal bands that fledged from our boxes this year. We especially need your help at this park. South Germantown Recreation Park is in Montgomery County, but it does have a whopping 44 color banded adults.