

The Goldfinch

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



Founded 1972

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CLUB MEETINGS

BY MARY LOU CLARK



Thursday, January 8, 2026 “The 2025 Howard County Butterfly Survey Results” by Kevin Heffernan. For the eighth consecutive year, Kevin will update us on the status of butterflies in Howard County.

Kevin is the co-chair of the Howard County, Maryland Butterfly Survey. He is a Past President of the Howard County Bird Club. He is encouraging the planting of native pollinator gardens as part of the Howard Bee City

Pollinator Committee, and the Habitat Creation and Enhancement and Pesticide Reduction Subcommittee.

Thursday, February 12, 2026 "Birding in the Antarctic" by Laura Wolf. Laura recently visited the Antarctic and took extensive photos in preparation to use the images as the basis for her artwork.



Laura Wolf is an elementary school art teacher and freelance artist. She received her Bachelor's and Master's in Art Education from Towson University and has taught elementary school art for 18 years. Besides teaching she has mentored student teachers from the Maryland Institute College of Art. Her love of birds and birding is combined in her artwork. She was the winner of the 2024 convention pin design for the Maryland Ornithological Society.

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.

We Are Proud to Announce the MOS Valued Service Award Honorees

See Full Article on Page 3



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 Start Your Year List, Howard County Conservancy, Mt Pleasant

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

Meet at the parking lot.

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 when every bird is new! Facilities available.

Leader – Kurt Schwarz, krschwal@verizon.net

R Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge

January 3, Saturday, All day trip.

Plan to stop at the Choptank River Bridge for ducks and coffee. Bring lunch and drinks. Dress warmly. Entrance fee, Duck Stamp, Senior Pass or Military I.D. required. Email the leader to reserve a spot and get details. We will carpool. Facilities at some spots. Limit 15 people.

Leader – Kurt Schwarz, krschwal@verizon.net

B/W/R Centennial Park

January 12, Monday, 8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

Meet at the boat ramp, accessed from the South Entrance.

This trip will hopefully focus on waterfowl.

Limit 10 people.

Leader – Lily Saul, ljsaul604@gmail.com

B/W/R Lake Elkhorn

February 6, Friday, 8:00 a.m. 2-3 hours.

Meet at Dockside Parking lot.

Easy walking along the lake and to Forebay Pond. Waterfowl, sparrows and winter finches are possible. The lake can turn up interesting surprises. No facilities.

Leader – David Sandler, detout65@gmail.com

B/W Mid-winter Count

February 7, Saturday, See page 6 for details.

B/W/R Meadowbrook Park

February 9, Monday, 8:00 a.m. 2-3 hours.

Paved paths, seven ponds, a stream, an extensive marsh, brushy habitat, and great for flyovers. Limit 10 people.

Leader – Lily Saul, ljsaul604@gmail.com

B/W/R Birds and Beverages Feeder Watch and Walk during the Great Backyard Bird Count, Howard County Conservancy, Mt. Pleasant

February 14, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Join Woody Merkle (HCC-MP), Val Swan, and Terri Berkheimer (Howard County Bird Club). Bring your hot chocolate and participate in Cornell's Great Backyard Bird Count by identifying and counting birds at the feeders from the warmth of the Guldesky Environmental Education Center. Weather permitting, there will also be a short walk on the grounds. Limit 25 people.

Register by Feb 13th at tgtberk@gmail.com

B/R How to Find Owls

February 15, Sunday, Two sessions - 9:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

Learn how to find owls by habitat and signs. Our target species are Long-eared, saw-whet, and other owls. No facilities. Please email Gregg Petersen (email below) to reserve a spot and get details.

Leaders-Jay Sheppard, jaymsheppard95@gmail.com

Gregg Petersen, sig29@aol.com

David Cummings, wcummings9@gmail.com

B/R Woodcock Search

Late February or early March, exact dates to be determined based on the weather. There will be 2-3 walks to keep the group size down.

Leader - Mary Lou Clark, doctorfx_99@yahoo.com

B = Good for beginning birders

W = Wheelchair accessible

R = Reservations required

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Michael Brent
Tom Feild and Geraldine King
Tee Goh
Bernadette, Jack and Jacob Naquin
Melissa and Nathan Pressler
Vicki Rosenthal
Drew Roth
Christian Stager
Julie Stipes
Manoli Strecker
Hua Yang

CLARK, CULLER, EARP AND SUNELL RECOGNIZED WITH MOS'S TOP SERVICE AWARD

BY GREGG PETERSEN, HCBC PAST PRESIDENT

It takes the efforts of many volunteers to make this club the vibrant, growing, fun organization that it has been for over 50 years and continues to be. We appreciate all your efforts and strive to thank every one of you for your generosity. For exceptional efforts, we try to recognize our members in a way commensurate with their "above and beyond" service.

In the last two years, the Howard County Bird Club (HCBC) awarded Mary Lou Clark, Jeff Culler, Wes Earp, and Eva Sunell with the Maryland Ornithological Society's (MOS) Valued Service Award (VSA), which is its highest level of recognition for "outstanding sustained performance."

We had many qualified club members to consider. The minimum qualifications for VSA consideration were as follows: each of the candidates should have given a minimum of over eight years' service to different, varied activities of the club. While the club president is empowered to make the selections, I had only been a club member for three years at the time of our first two selections. I decided that it was more appropriate to use a committee comprised of nine of our prior VSA selectees to serve as judges to identify our best qualified members for recognition. The distinguished group of HCBC past VSA winners included Eileen Clegg, Jo and Bob Solem, Bonnie Ott, Chuck Stirrat, Anne Marie Raterman, Mike McClure, Marty Chestem, Jane (Farrell) Coskren, Jane Geuder, Kevin Heffernan, Kurt Schwarz, and David Holmes. Sue Probst also earned this award for her work for the Maryland Ornithological Society at the state level.

I think that you will agree that each of our four most recent VSA winners far exceeded the minimum service time and helped in many, many different capacities for our club. Here are their biographies in alphabetical order.



Mary Lou Clark had a unique period of consideration: 43 years over two separate periods. She was a club member for 14 years from 1986 to 2000 when she participated in quarterly counts, field trips and meetings.

She then stepped back from club activities to focus on her family through 2015, when she returned to active membership with an incredible zest. She began participating in all seasonal counts, volunteered her home for tally rallies and board meetings, led and assisted on field trips, and offered space in her garage and basement

for storage of club archives and nest boxes. In 2016, MaryLou began serving a six-year period in club senior leadership with 2-year stints as Vice President, President, and finally as Past President. During that time, she also assisted with the 50th Anniversary Committee and was one of the original members of the Waterford Flats Committee. After she stepped down from those jobs, she immediately took up service as our Programs Committee Chairperson. In that role, Mary Lou attended other chapter meetings in search of the best speakers for our own monthly programs and returned with new ideas for improving our club. Those new ideas included the establishment of our logo-wear site and recently helping establish and teach the Wingspan board game monthly at Wild Birds Unlimited in Columbia. In recent years, she has been the lead on most of our tabling events, took on a block of the Breeding Bird Atlas 3, and assisted at MOS annual conventions.



Jeff Culler helped us in many important ways for over 16 years. Since December of 2008, he has been responsible for changing the HCBC Information Board at Centennial Park seasonally where he uses his own photos and write-ups. We

have realized the results of his postings when some of our new members cited the board at Centennial as their reason for joining. Jeff participated in Breeding Bird Atlas 2, compiled the bird lists and wrote site guides for West Friendship Park and Poplar Springs Park and helped create the Beginning Birding section for our website, served as a field trip leader, and participated in all seasonal counts and the annual seed sale for many years. He was an HCBC Chapter Director for four different years from 2005 to 2011, sometimes stepping in on short notice when the position was vacated unexpectedly. He and his wife, Karen, hosted the Mid-winter Count tally rally at their home for 14 years from 2006 to 2020.

In 2022, we obtained HCBC magnets after Jeff suggested it to me because Karen showed him her spiffy American Bird Conservancy magnet. Many of us are very familiar with where Jeff lives, because in recent years he has provided open access to his yard where he had an off-season Baltimore Oriole over-winter and one year had a White-winged Dove vagrant for a time; another year he had a Black-capped Chickadee at his feeder. Today, he continues to compile the Crest Lawn Memorial Gardens bird list.



Wes Earp has served in many impactful capacities for our club for well over two decades. Like Mary Lou, he served for a six-year period as the Vice President, President, and Past Pres. He has been the Areal leader for tens of

seasonal counts for many years, a Schooley Mill Park bluebird trail monitor for decades, participated in Breeding Bird Atlases 2 & 3; the annual club seed sale, and as a Herp Atlas volunteer. He has led many field trips, often at Sharp's Farm, provided seasonal bird records for over 20 years, and has given several trip presentations at monthly club meetings. Wes has special expertise and as such took the lead as our engineer for our Sharp's at Waterford Farm shorebird flats project and was our Waterford Flats Committee Chairperson. Our partnership with Sharp's farm has rewarded us with sightings of shorebirds we may not have otherwise seen. Wes also has extensive contacts in the Howard County farming community, and as a liaison has provided us access for several rare birds and to important habitats for seasonal bird counts.



Eva Sunell has been a club member for over 40 years and volunteered in many roles. During the 80's, she was incredibly active supporting our club activities in various board roles. Eva was our Field Trip Chairperson from

1980-1981 and from 1982-1983, Bookstore Manager from 1981-1982, Potluck Chairperson in 1982, Program Committee Chairperson from 1983-1984, and a State Director and club Treasurer from 1985-1989 for two-year periods respectively! In addition to her extensive board service, Eva was a Wildflower Project participant from the late 1970s to the early 1990s, participated in all seasonal counts and provided seasonal bird records for decades, was a Breeding Bird Atlas 1 & 2 block leader; a frequent field trip leader, an annual seed sale volunteer and presented dozens of talks to school and community groups with bird specimens. Past VSA winner Sue Probst shared that "Eva, for many early years in the history of the bird club, imparted her wealth of knowledge concerning nature, habitat, bird life, caring for injured wild birds, and sharing those interests with young people and adults through Club activities, walks and talks. She gave many bird talks to school age kids in the 80's and 90's." Clearly, Eva was a great ambassador of the club and for nature to our community.

Our club activities are improved, fueled and sustained by the passion and energy of our volunteers. Over many decades, Jeff, Mary Lou, Wes, and Eva are four who have been exceptionally helpful for the good of our club and well deserving of this recognition

RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD

By BILL HILL



Rufous Hummingbird, October 2025 by Bill Hill

The homeowner, Bobbie Eckhoff, is a friend of ours and has a long history of supporting many Ruby-throated Hummingbirds at her property. The last Ruby-throat to visit her feeders was one in early October. I had been maintaining her feeder this year and we left the feeder up in hopes of attracting more migrants. On the afternoon of 10/21/25 she told me that a hummingbird had visited her feeder numerous times, but she couldn't identify it because of sun glare.

I went over the next day and as soon as I parked in the driveway I saw a hummingbird on the feeder. I quickly got some photos which proved to be eye-opening. When I looked at them on my camera display, I knew immediately the bird was an adult male, either a Rufous Hummingbird or an Allen's. After getting Bobbie's permission to share the information, I called Joe Hanfman and Russ Ruffing.

Then I studied the photos more closely and concluded that it was most likely a Rufous Hummingbird (RUHU) based on the completely orange back. I tried unsuccessfully to photograph the diagnostic notch on its tail feather; however, when Joe arrived later that afternoon he was able to use his scope to see the identifying notch. With Bobbie's permission, Joe, as Field Trip Chair, established protocols and arranged for birders to visit. Over the following several days, Bobbie estimated at least 100 birders visited (most saw the bird); Joe said almost 70 signed the guest log. Arrangements were made to attempt to band this bird. It was banded successfully by Bruce Peterjohn, with assistance from Joe, on Saturday, 10/25. The identification as an adult male Rufous was verified*, thus establishing a new arrival date for RUHU in Howard County. Its weight was 3.02 grams with almost no fat. This indicated a potential for the bird to stay at least a few more days; unfortunately, it left several hours after being banded.

Almost everyone thought it had moved on, but then something totally unexpected happened. The RUHU returned on Monday. It stayed for an additional 16 days; it eventually left on 11/11/25 when a major cold front arrived. I suspect that during the time it was gone it visited various other area food sources and eventually decided that the nectar at Bobbie's place tasted better, so it returned.

(Continued on page 5)

HAVENS FOR WILDLIFE

BY WES AND SUE EARP

Our home was nestled in a crop field some 60 years ago. Before the windows were installed a bird built a nest in the basement ceiling where it remains to this day. Landscaped with ornamentals, some of the original deciduous trees remain providing food, perches, and cavities. Hairy Woodpeckers nested here several years ago and the same Silver Maple occasionally hosts a pair of Red-shouldered Hawks watching the sunrise. Time has passed, our neighborhood has developed, and we are now surrounded by half acre and smaller manicured lots.

In the mid-70s, ten conifers were added to the backyard. Five remain, now some 50 to 70 feet tall. Two of five White Pines stand as large dead trunks topped by storms. The boles, left intentionally, provide scaffolding for Virginia Creeper and a bat box, while Pileated Woodpeckers now probe for insects, hastening their decay. On some winter nights, the remaining towering threesome hosts a Great Horned Owl declaring its territory. Its hooting once interrupted a HCBC board meeting held here.

About that time, a DNR wildlife packet was also planted. The annually distributed bundles contained five whips. Remaining from that group are two Chinese Chestnuts and a rapidly declining crabapple. In its day, the grape-sized apples were a fall bird magnet; in recent years, however, the fruit has persisted well into the winter leaving us wondering if they have lost their appeal.

In 2003, we stepped up our bird-friendly planting effort; we now track the timing of fruit-ripening, looking to bridge seasonal food gaps. We keep an eye on 17 species of trees, 20 species of shrubs, eight types of vines, and three brambles providing food, shelter, and nesting for birds and flowers for pollinators.

In nooks and crannies we allow herbaceous volunteers such as White Vervain, Wingstem, and the hawkweeds for their seeds, nectar, and pollen. We let areas “go wild” creating thickets of woody volunteers, while actively culling invasives like Asian Bittersweet and Bradford Pear. Having stopped mowing all but the edge of the front yard, the heavily deer-browsed invading Pin Oak and mulberry seedlings have hosted nesting Red-winged Blackbirds for two years.

We maintain perennial flower patches and reseed an annual wildflower bed each spring. This year’s cosmos seed production was sufficient to feed American Goldfinches for several weeks. We provide commercial bird feed from November until the following May and water, spring through fall, from a goldfish pond and a birdbath that catches dripping air conditioning condensate.



American Goldfinch by Wes Earp

In the winter, we provide a heated ground level water bowl. Right now, along with the bird seed and herbaceous seed heads, fruit of Gray-stemmed Dogwood, winterberry, American Holly, cotoneaster, Tartarian Honeysuckle, Black Haw, crabapples, Barberry, Poison Ivy, Pokeweed, and Flowering Dogwood are available.

While there are many anecdotes and observations to share, perhaps the most significant is our recent accounting of nesting. The 15th stick nest was found atop the White Mulberry and we have also noted 14 nests in bird boxes and on shelves, all attributed to possibly 16 bird species. Several were failed attempts and Gray

Catbirds are believed to be the most active.

We’ve added Black Haw and Eastern Huckleberry recently and continue to expand and create beds, patches, clumps, tangles, and thickets. While at times frustrating, with several hard-learned lessons, it has been, and continues to be, quite rewarding.



Downy Woodpecker by Wes Earp

Rufous Hummingbird (continued from page 4)

I kept Bobbie’s feeder filled with a 1:3 nectar ratio that Jay Sheppard had recommended to me. He said it does not spoil as quickly as the more usually recommended 1:4 ratio, and it seems to be more attractive to the hummingbirds. (Incidentally, after switching to the 1:3 ratio at my feeder in June, I immediately started seeing hummingbirds at the feeder they had previously ignored.)

Sheri L. Williamson, an internationally known expert on hummingbirds and author of *A FieldGuide to Hummingbirds of North America* in the Peterson Field Guide series, presented an interesting YouTube video about hummingbird nectar ratios. One of the things she noted was that researchers sampled the amount of sugar in 250 of the main flowers used by hummingbirds. They found the nectar contained an average of 25% sugar, which is very close to the 1:3 ratio. The 1:4 ratio contains about 20% sugar. Near the end of the video she said that if your hummingbird recipe falls within the ratio of 1:3-to-1:5 you are doing fine, it’s not rocket science.

The RUHU at Bobbie’s has been featured in two publications: *The Birding Community E-Bulletin*, November 2025, while its photo is featured on the cover of the December 2025 issue of *The Osprey*, newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society.

Congratulations go to Bobbie for finding a fantastic hummingbird!!

*Note: Bander Bruce Peterjohn estimated that “adult males total only 3-4% of the Rufous Hummingbirds banded in the region” (pers. com).

WEATHER 101 FOR BIRDERS

Have you sometimes wondered why certain birders seem to consistently turn up unusual species? What do they know or what special techniques are they using that give them an edge?

Of course there is always an element of chance, but, as Bonnie Ott frequently quotes, “Chance favors the prepared mind.”

The prepared mind of the most consistently successful birders contains knowledge acquired through years of study and time in the field. These individuals recognize most locally-occurring bird species and their songs, as well as any specialized habitats and distinctive behavior. In addition, these birders are likely to utilize another, often under-appreciated factor: knowledge of local weather.

In a series of upcoming Goldfinch articles, the Howard County Bird Club Records Committee and the county’s eBird reviewer will address some weather basics and how they can impact the presence and movement of birds in an attempt to make your time in the field more efficient, productive, and enjoyable.

If most of your current birding is done in “bluebird weather,” featuring fair skies, light breezes, and moderate temperatures, you may be missing many special species. Often, some of the most exciting bird discoveries are made during or soon after dramatic weather events.

Learning to anticipate what may show up based on forecast weather conditions combined with your own judgment is an acquired skill. Like birding itself, judging weather conditions is not always an exact science. In this part of the Mid Atlantic, even professionals are challenged and make mistakes; however, an acquaintance with weather basics and how they can affect the local birdlife may mean the difference between deciding where to go on a given day, whether time in the field is likely to be productive, or if it would be better to stay home.

Two things about the weather are worth keeping in mind: 1. Even in a county as small as Howard, weather is not uniform. Sometimes there are substantial variations in temperature, winds, and precipitation in different parts of the county; 2. Topography and weather are linked with both natural and manmade aspects of the landscape important. Water bodies have an impact, and the steepness and orientation of river valleys may significantly affect the birdlife in that location. Howard County is adjacent to the Coastal Plain to the east, while the rolling hills of the Piedmont become increasingly more pronounced as one moves west.

Although all aspects of the weather are interconnected, topics addressed in coming issues may be high and low pressure systems and fronts, summer/winter storm systems (clouds, winds, and precipitation), and resources.

“The Birding Year in Howard County” on the club’s website was first published in *Birding Howard County, Maryland* in 1995. The first lines for the month of January are “Begin the new year by becoming a weather watcher.” That advice is just as valid today as it was more than 30 years ago.

HCBC Records Committee: Joanne Solem, Joe Hanfman, Russ Ruffing; eBird reviewer: Tim Carney.

ANNUAL MID-WINTER COUNT

BY BRIAN MOYER

Join the Howard County Bird Club’s Forty-first Annual Mid-winter Count on Saturday, February 7, 2026. You can volunteer to participate by contacting one of the area coordinators below:

Area 1) Wes Earp 410-531-3197 / wesandsue@gmail.com

Area 2) Russ Kovach 443-386-4787 / russell.kovach@gmail.com

Area 3) Chuck Stirrat 410-531-2417 / 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) Dianne Aguilera 602-487-5289 / dianne.aguilera@gmail.com

Area 7) Kurt Schwarz 410-461-1643 / krschwal@verizon.net

New birders are always welcome, as are individuals who wish to count only for part of the day. If you wish to count only at your feeder, email Brian at bmoyer0@gmail.com and request a feeder form.

The evening potluck tally will be at John & Meg Harris's home, details will be distributed later for this. There will be a Zoom meeting link provided also for those who cannot attend in person.

Park anywhere on the street, avoiding blocking fire hydrants and other driveways.

If there is a question about the weather, we will try to make a decision the night before. Contact your area coordinator if you are unsure of the status of the count.



EAGLES ALOFT WITH LYNN GREGG

BY JOANNE SOLEM

Each autumn, raptor enthusiasts head to locations known for consistently good flights. These sites have topographic and/or geographic advantages. Although Howard County lacks the topographic features making any local spot a destination, some days at the Skywatch are better than many days at more publicized sites.

The Chandler S. Robbins Skywatch (SW) at Mount Pleasant, Howard County Conservancy was dedicated on Earth Day, April 21, 2018. Installed and maintained by the Howard County Bird Club, it is located on an east-west ridge facing north. The SW is just over a mile south of the Patapsco River Valley and offers a fine view of the sky in most directions. At least 160 species have been tallied there.



Red-tailed Hawk, Nov. 2025 by Lynn Gregg

To illustrate the value of the SW, data shown below from the autumn of 2025 is that of a single observer, Lynn Gregg, and the focus is on a single species, the Bald Eagle. As a snapshot of the season, it is not intended to encompass all eagles seen at the SW in the course of the season.

To date, the SW has not been regularly staffed. A few field trips are scheduled each fall, and birders visiting Mt Pleasant spend varying amounts of time at the SW. During autumn 2025, the most consistent observer, by far, was Lynn Gregg.

Between 31 Aug and 30 Nov, he spent 125.5 hours on 39 days at the SW. That's a presence of a little over one-third of the season's days; each visit averaged 3.14 hours, mostly in the a.m. He tallied 118 eagles. Astonishingly, although the best seasonal raptor species was an eagle, they were Golden Eagles, not Balds! Two drifted over together about noon on 17 Oct, certainly one of the season's choice county sightings. Roshan Vignarajah and Vitus Li were also present that day having been spotters and identifiers as well as photographers of the this unusual record. The seven Bald Eagles Lynn tallied that morning were almost an afterthought in the excitement.

A half century ago numbers of our National Bird had dropped dramatically in the East. During many years, Howard County did not log a single individual!

When DDT was finally outlawed on Dec 31, 1972, it would take decades before the breeding population rebounded. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the only nest in the area was one at Triadelphia Reservoir in Montgomery County. (When the tree holding that nest fell, the pair moved to a tree in Howard County.) In contrast, according to BBA co-coordinator Sue Muller, during the five years of the Third Breeding Bird Atlas (completed Dec 31, 2024), at least seven active eagle nests were confirmed in Howard

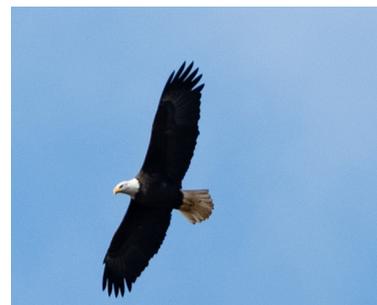
County. Lynn's limited sample illustrates that many more eagles are being produced in the East than could have been imagined even a few years ago. Yes, there is the possibility that some eagles were double-counted, but the vast majority of multi-eagle days and high counts were between mid- Oct and the end of Nov, normal peak migration. (Some of the highest daily totals were counted by other observers, not included here.) Even this limited amount of data demonstrates that the SW can be really productive during consistent observations.



Bald Eagles, Nov. 2025 by Lynn Gregg

In addition to eagles, 2,032 other raptors (including both vultures) were tallied including Osprey, Northern Harrier, Merlin, and hundreds of Broad-winged Hawks. Besides the Golden Eagle day, another red-letter day was 20 Sept when 562 Broad-winged Hawks were counted. Lynn commented, "It's always exciting to see a huge mass of swirling hawks overhead."

As could be expected for this season, Lynn encountered varied weather. He enjoyed the soft southerly breezes and warm temperatures of early fall days (which often produced very few migrants); he also sat for hours braving gusting 20+ mph NNW winds in Nov.



Bald Eagle, Nov. 2025 by Lynn Gregg

As he put it in understated fashion, "These colder November days can be a little challenging and sometimes I wonder, 'Why am I out here?' and yet bad weather sometimes brings good birds."

Sitting on a bench at the SW scanning the sky can be done even by birders who can't walk far. There's always the potential for exciting surprises. And when you visit the SW, there's a good chance you'll find Lynn there, no matter the weather, waiting for the next exciting bird to appear.

ANNUAL POTLUCK ON MARCH 21, 2026

BY MEGHAAN LANE AND CONNIE MCRILL, POTLUCK COORDINATORS

The 2026 Howard County Bird Club's annual potluck dinner is fast approaching and will be here before we know it! Whether you are new to birding, or have been birding for years, you won't want to miss this wonderful event. The Howard County Bird Club kindly invites all club members and their guests to share in the fun, food, and evening's program.

Location: Robinson Nature Center *

Time: 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

6:00 p.m. - Doors open for room setup

6:30 p.m. - Snacks and Socializing

7:00 p.m. - Dinner

Please bring a main dish, hors d'oeuvres, a salad, side dish, or dessert. (To assist those with food allergies and dietary preferences, it is suggested that you include a card with the list of ingredients to display with your dish.) The bird club furnishes water and eating utensils. (You may want to mark your dishes and accompanying serving implements with your name so we can make sure they return with you!) You can bring beer and wine (bring an opener if your bottle requires one).

Members will have the opportunity to participate in the after dinner Slide Show, with a limit of 15 photos per person. Please contact Meghaan Lane for details on submitting photos.

Please let us know in advance that you will be attending so we can arrange for enough seating, beverages, etc. Sign up at club meetings, or contact Meghaan by Friday, March 20, 2026 at 410-829-6192 or meghaanlane@gmail.com, or via <https://www.PerfectPotluck.com/KOCY8390>

If you would like to help with setup or cleanup, we would love to have your help. It does not take long and is greatly appreciated. For setup please arrive by 6:00 p.m. Cleanup will begin after the program at 9:00 p.m.

This event is a highlight for so many of us birders, and especially new members. If you have not attended the potluck dinner before, we encourage you to come and get to know others who share your interests in birds, bird photography, nature, other creatures, and more.

So one and all, mark your calendars and come join in the fun!

**Directions: The Robinson Nature Center is located at 6692 Cedar Lane, Columbia, MD 21044, Route 32 exit 17 takes you to Cedar Lane. There is ample parking available. The RNC's phone number is 410-313-0400.*



WANTED: HAVENS FOR WILDLIFE ARTICLES

The article by Wes and Sue Earp on page 5 is an excellent beginning for this ongoing series. To be as helpful to as many members as possible we need to feature areas of many different sizes, habitats, and locations. How have you improved your location to attract wildlife, whether it is the deck of a condominium, a townhouse, a suburban lot, or multi-acres. Summarize your efforts in a maximum of 500 words and a few photos. Your experience could be invaluable!

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 March/April issue is January 25, 2025.

Jamie Lynch, Editor
Joanne Solem, Proofreader

HCBC, P.O. Box 1323, Columbia, MD 21044-1323