

# The Goldfinch

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



Founded 1972

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## CLUB MEETINGS

BY MARY LOU CLARK



**Thursday, March 12, 2026** “The HCBC Trip to Costa Rica” by Tom Seivert. Using photographs from several Howard County birders who traveled with Bonnie Ott to Costa Rica in 2025, Tom has put together a slide program to show us what fabulous birds were seen and to give the birders who will be traveling to Costa Rica in April 2026 a taste of what they might see.

Tom Sievert, currently serving as the HCBC Vice President, began birding only after retiring in 2023. He's been trying to gain some passable skills ever since. It's still a work in progress.



**Thursday, April 9, 2026** "Shorebirds 101: An Introductory Overview" by Gene Scarpulla. This presentation will concentrate on how to get started with shorebird identification and will be appropriate for new birders; for experienced birders who have never gotten around to figuring out shorebirds; and for birders of all levels who need a brush-up in preparation for the upcoming shorebird migration season. Gene will review the different groups and species of shorebirds found in Maryland, with tips on their identification. Gene may be known primarily as a gull guru but his expertise on shorebirds is just as deep, having been honed through weekly trips to the Delaware Bay shore and to Hart-Miller Island over many years' time.

Gene Scarpulla is retired after working 30 years at the City of Baltimore's Reservoir Natural Resources Section, his last eight years serving as the City's Watershed Manager, in charge of Loch Raven, Prettyboy, and Liberty Watersheds. He earned a B.S. and an M.S. in biology with a concentration in ecology at Towson State College and Towson State University, respectively. Gene serves as editor of *The Maryland Entomologist* and recently retired as editor of *Maryland Birdlife*. He lives in Phoenix (MD) with his wife Marcia Watson and Rudy, their highly intelligent Lower Eastern Shore cat that adopted them.

*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.*

# 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. The leader may cancel due to inclement weather/hazardous driving conditions. Directions for trips not on ADC maps are on the Club's website. Have questions? Contact the trip leader or Field Trip Coordinator Joe Hanfman at [auk1844@gmail.com](mailto:auk1844@gmail.com). **Please remember to register with the Field Trip Leader when you see the red "R" in the Field Trip Title.** 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/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](mailto:doctorfx_99@yahoo.com)

## **B/W Centennial Park**

March 1, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

*West end parking lot*

Easy walking around the lake on paved path. Waterfowl expected, early migrant passerines possible. Facilities available.

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

## **B/R West Friendship Park**

March 2, Monday, 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Moderate walking along field edges and through stream valleys. The park now has very nice meadows and extensive sparrow habitat, in addition to plenty of other types of habitats. Expect wet areas. Rustic facilities. Limit 10 people.

Leader - Lily Saul, [ljsaul604@gmail.com](mailto:ljsaul604@gmail.com)

## **B/W Centennial Park**

March 8, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

See March 1 Centennial Park field trip for details.

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

## **B/W Centennial Park**

March 15, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

See March 1 Centennial Park field trip for details.

Leader - David Ziolkowski, [djziolkowski@yahoo.com](mailto:djziolkowski@yahoo.com)

## **B/W Centennial Park**

March 22, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

See March 1 Centennial Park field trip for details.

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

## **B/R Beginning Birder Field Trip, Wilde Lake**

March 27, Friday, 9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Slow pace. Learn techniques to improve your birding. Let the leader know if you need to borrow binoculars when you register. Limit 10 people. Registration required.

Leader - Lily Saul, [ljsaul604@gmail.com](mailto:ljsaul604@gmail.com)

## **B Sharps at Waterford Farm**

March 28, Saturday 8:00 a.m. Half day.

*Rte. 97 S. to right on Jennings Chapel Road, 1 mile to right into farm sign. Meet at the farm parking area, through the barns on the right.*

Moderate walking over crop stubble, farm roads and paths

on this working farm. Fields with crop residue, extensive woodlands, Cattail Creek and floodplain, three ponds and five shallow waterfowl impoundments make for diverse habitats and good birding opportunities. Porta pottys available. Knee-high waterproof footwear required for part of the walk.

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

## **B/W Centennial Park**

March 29, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

See March 1 Centennial Park field trip for details.

Leader - TBA

## **B/R Alpha Ridge Landfill**

April 4, Saturday, Half day.

*Carpooling is required.*

Moderate walking over hills and fields of the landfill. Possibilities are Northern Harrier, Great Horned Owl, American Kestrel, Horned Lark, American Pipit, Vesper Sparrow and Eastern Meadowlark. Reservations required with a few spaces reserved for people who have **never** been to the landfill. Limited to a maximum of five cars. No facilities available.

Leader - Joe Hanfman, [auk1844@gmail.com](mailto:auk1844@gmail.com)

## **B/W/R Font Hill Wetlands Park**

April 6, Monday, 7:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

*Park on the street at the Font Hill Drive entrance (3520 Font Hill Drive).* No facilities. Limit 10 people.

Leader - Lily Saul, [ljsaul604@gmail.com](mailto:ljsaul604@gmail.com)

## **B Schooley Mill Park**

April 11, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

*Meet in the back parking lot by the restrooms.*

Spring migrants in open woods and fields. Facilities available.

Leader - Steve Luke, [stevebirder3@gmail.com](mailto:stevebirder3@gmail.com)

## **B/R Beginning Birder Field Trip, private property in Western Howard County**

April 18, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Slow pace over uneven, possibly muddy farmland with a variety of habitats. Boots recommended. Limit 8 people. Location details when you register. Let trip leader know if you need to borrow binoculars when you register.

Leader - Val Swan, [valnjeff55@gmail.com](mailto:valnjeff55@gmail.com)

## **Earth Day Walk, Howard County Conservancy, Mt Pleasant**

April 25, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

*Meet at the parking lot near the barn.*

Easy walking through the fields of Mt Pleasant Farm. Tree lines, hedgerows and streams provide opportunity for non-meadow species. Great opportunity for flyovers.

Facilities available.

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

### **B West Friendship Park**

April 29, Wednesday, 8:00 a.m.

*Meet in the front parking lot.*

Moderate walking along field edges and through stream valleys. The park how has very nice meadows which were used by Eastern Meadowlarks and Grasshopper Sparrows, in addition to plenty of other types of habitats. Expect wet areas. Rustic facilities.

Leader - Lisa Colangelo, [icolangelo@verizon.net](mailto:icolangelo@verizon.net)

**B = Good for beginning birders**

**W = Wheelchair accessible**

**R = Reservations required**

*And mark your calendars for...*

### **R Linganore Creek Sanctuary**

May 30, Saturday, 7:30 a.m.

*Meet at the West Friendship park-and-ride on the west side of MD 32 just north of Interstate 70 at 7:30 a.m. and carpool the 25 minutes to the potential sanctuary.*

Walk the 125 acres of what is slated to become the 11<sup>th</sup> 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 but mowed grass and one stream crossing (with stepping stones). RSVP required. Contact Leader - John McKitterick, [john.mckitterick@mdbirds.org](mailto:john.mckitterick@mdbirds.org)

### **R Birding Unplugged – Middle Patuxent Environmental Area**

May 31, Sunday, 7:30 a.m., 2-3 hours.

*Meet at the South Wind Trailhead.*

Join us for a restorative, low-tech birding field trip focused on sharpening your own eyes and ears. We'll leave the apps behind—no Merlin Bird ID, no eBird—and immerse ourselves in careful observation, field marks, behavior, and birdsong. This is a chance to slow down, tune in, and experience birding the old-fashioned way: present, attentive, and unplugged. The trip leader will keep a paper list and will enter an eBird list manually to share with the group following the trip. Limit 10 people. RSVP required. Contact Leader - Megan Bolcar, [megbolcar@gmail.com](mailto:megbolcar@gmail.com)

## A LETTER OF GRATITUDE TO HCBC FROM THE MD COASTAL BAYS PROGRAM



*A Common Tern with its one-day-old chick next to a painted chick shelter on the tern raft. Photo by Kim Abplanalp.*

Dear Howard County Bird Club,

On this [2025] Thanksgiving weekend, I was reflecting on your remarkable and generous gift to our bird habitat program.

The bird program is a collaboration of DNR, Audubon, and the Maryland Coastal Bays Program, beginning in 2020 with the creation of the tern raft to provide habitat for three State-listed Endangered colonial waterbirds, the Common Tern, Royal Tern, and Black Skimmer. The program monitors the raft, all waterbirds, wading birds, Ospreys and American Oystercatchers in the five bays that make up the Coastal Bays along Ocean City and Assateague.

Our large goal is to restore island habitat caused by sea level rise that species depend on for breeding. Our first project was Reedy Island in 2024. By 2025, the first colony of Common Terns had 39 nests that fledged 38 birds. This winter, we'll be restoring a larger island just a few yards away called West Reedy, excited to what it may bring. Currently I've been working on the permits for three more areas in the bays. These take quite a bit of planning, engineering and permitting with our partners: Army Corps of Engineers, Maryland Department of the Environment, as well as other agencies. This takes time but is our major focus for the bird program. In the meantime, we had our largest Common Tern nest count this year on the tern raft with 349 in addition to a surprise second species, Royal Terns with 31 nests.

Funded primarily by DNR's Wildlife and Heritage Service, our bird program depends on a portion coming from a non-federal match to access these funds. Your donation makes it possible for us to be funded into 2027. Thank you for being part of something bigger. Your commitment and generosity will help birds find a home as well as keep the tern raft going strong.

On behalf of the Bird Program, I'd like to express my sincerest gratitude. Deepest thanks for your dedication to the birds that depend on the coastal bays. We'll look forward to sharing the coastal bays with you this summer.

*Kim Abplanalp, Bird Habitat Coordinator, Maryland Coastal Bays Program*

## AUTUMN BIRD RECORDS: AUGUST 1-NOVEMBER 30, 2025

BY JOANNE SOLEM

As usual, autumn's weather was varied. Three of the four months were unusually dry. From September through the first week of November, temperatures were near normal, then winter blew in with a record-breaking cold front covering the eastern half of the country.

Seasonal highlights were numerous: Ross's Goose, Greater White-fronted Goose, Surf Scoter, Black Scoter, Rufous Hummingbird, Virginia Rail, American Golden-Plover, Baird's Sandpiper, Lesser Black-backed Gull, White Ibis, Little Blue Heron, Golden Eagle, American Barn Owl, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Evening Grosbeak, Clay-colored Sparrow, Nelson's Sparrow, Golden-winged Warbler, Connecticut Warbler, and Brewster's Warbler.

A **Snow Goose** (blue phase) (GPn), **Ross's** (Anon.), and **Greater White-fronted** (GPn) all appeared at Larriland Farm 11/26. A white Snow was reported from Warfield's Cemetery Pond 11/29 (Anon, ph.). The first **Cackling Geese** were two in a flock of 520 **Canadas** (RVg, VLi) at West Friendship Park (WFRDP) 10/19. A **Blue-winged Teal** was present at Centennial Pk (CENPK) 9/13 (GDR, ph.). Eight **Common Mergansers** at the Woodstock section of the Patapsco River 8/23 were the county's first record for Aug (CHm, ph.). Waterfowl were slow to arrive until a record-setting polar air mass pushed through from 11/9-11 causing a spike in numbers and species. The increase was particularly noticeable at Triadelphia Reservoir (TRIRS) which hosted Cackling Goose (VLi, RVg-5), **Northern Shoveler** (JHf-4), **Gadwall** (JHf-20), **American Wigeon** (JHf-1), **Northern Pintail** (JHf-3), **Bufflehead** (JHf-210), and **Common Goldeneye** (GPn-1) among others. Choice finds there were one **Surf Scoter** and two **Black Scoters** on 11/17 (JHf), while two **Long-tailed Ducks** were observed on 11/18 (DSn).

A **Wild Turkey** roosting in a Hickory Ridge yard the evening of 8/29 was a first in 35 years at that location (CFf). The high was 19 at Alpha Ridge Landfill (ALRGL) 11/20 (RCu). The first fall **Common Nighthawk** was spotted over the Roger Carter Community Center 8/23 (VLi); the last at CENPK 10/1 (MRg). The high was at least 275 foraging along the leading edge of a distant cold front approaching from the west during the annual evening field trip to New Cut Landfill 9/4 (DZk+). The highest count of **Chimney Swifts** was 397 at Mount Pleasant (MTPLT) on 9/28 (RVg, VLi). No large roosts were reported.

A **Black-billed Cuckoo** over Cavey La (NFC record) on 10/9 (RRf) is the third latest fall record. The last **Ruby-throated Hummingbird**, a male, visited a Sewell's Orchard feeder 10/15 (BMy). An adult male **Rufous Hummingbird** at a Woodbine feeder on 10/22 (BHi, BEk), was a seasonal highlight, the eighth county record and the earliest by one day [10/23/13 Woodmark Lake, J Kelly]. The diagnostic notched tail feather was noted visually that same day (JHf) and verified during banding 10/26 (BPj;

JHf, ph.). The homeowner generously shared the sighting for almost a week after Field Trip Chair Joe Hanfman arranged a visitation protocol. (See article 54(3):4.)

A **Virginia Rail** at MTPLT 9/14 (RVg, VLi) responded to a recording.

Unlike 2024, when low water levels at TRIRS rewarded birders with record shorebird sightings, 2025's levels remained high much of the summer and early fall, forcing birders to turn to small ponds for suitable mudflats.



*Baird's Sandpiper (left) Aug. 30, 2025, Tar Bay, by Jayden Ward*

Tar Bay Pd produced a **Baird's Sandpiper** on 8/30 (JWr). Interestingly, the ID for this seldom-recorded species (10th/11th) was made several days after the sighting when photos were examined (RVg). By early Sept, TRIRS's water levels had dropped. On 9/16, both an **American Golden-Plover** (JHf, ph.) and a second Baird's Sandpiper (JHf) were logged at TRIRS-Cattail Creek (CC). A record-late **Pectoral Sandpiper** was present at TRIRS-CC 11/15 (RVg, VLi, JWr, ph.) [11/13/23 Pigtail, K Schwarz]. Two single birds were the only **American Woodcock** reported: Walt-Ann Dr 11/19 (MLn) and Grooms La 11/22 (MLn). **Wilson's Snipe** were reported from seven sites from late Sept to late Nov.



*Am. Golden-Plover, Sept. 16, 2025, Tridelphia Res., by Gregg Petersen*

A few **Bonaparte's Gulls** moved ahead of the Arctic blast with one at TRIRS 11/3 (JHf), a high of 14 on 11/22 (VLi, RVg), and the last fall bird on 11/28 (VLi, RVg). A distant **Laughing Gull** was seen at Race Road Wetlands 10/25 (JWr, ph.). One **Great Black-backed** was spotted from the Jessup Trash Transfer Station over Howard County on 11/15 (RVg, VLi). Two **Lesser Black-backed**s there 11/23 (RVg, VLi) were the first of the season.

Oddly, the lone **Caspian Tern** flying over the Sucker Branch neighborhood 9/11 (**VLi**) was the only seasonal report. An im. **White Ibis** at TRIRS-CC 9/8 and 9/13 (**VLi**, **RVg**, ph.) was a great find. An **American Bittern** was heard on Night Flight Call equipment live at Cavey La the evenings of 9/9 and 9/15 (**RRf**); another was recorded over Silent Sun the evening of 10/8 (**SLk**). The last **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** was noted at CENPK 9/27 (**MNT**). A **Little Blue Heron** was seen briefly at Gateway 8/27 (**DTg**).



*White Ibis, Sept. 13, 2025, Tridelfia Reservoir, by Steve Luke*

October 17 was a special day at the C. S. Robbins Skywatch (SW). Among the stars of the season were two im. **Golden Eagles** traveling together as they passed over at noon (**RVg**, **VLi**, **LGg**). **Bald Eagle** numbers peaked there that same day with an exceptional 24 (mostly adults) in ~6 hours. (**RVg**, **VLi**). Raptors continued to be counted through Nov with Lynn Gregg the most consistent SW observer. (See article 54(3):7.)

Peak **Broad-winged Hawk** migration began on 9/19 with 93 at the SW (**LGg**). On 9/20 (Fall Count), 562 were tallied at the SW (**LGg**), with a countywide total of 923. Good numbers were still moving on 9/28 with 107 at MTPLT (**RVg**, **VLi**) and 37 over Joey Dr (**J/MCh**) where the last one was seen on 10/19 (**J/MCh**).

An **American Barn Owl** in western HOWCO was calling at 3:00 a.m. 8/27 (**JKg**, aud.). The species was also heard (NFC live) on 9/1 and 9/15 over Cavey La (**RRf**). **Northern Saw-whet Owls** were detected at two sites in Nov (**LCK**, **SLk**; **VLi**, **RVg**; **TFy**).

Three **Red-headed Woodpeckers**, (at least one juv. bird), were noted at Howard Chapel Rd 8/2 (**JHf**) and WFRDP 9/3 (**JHf**), locations where they had been seen during the breeding season. Up to three birds (at least one juv.) were also seen from 9/1 to 11/30 at Yellowstone Ct in the Little Patuxent floodplain, south of Frederick Rd (**NPr**).

Multiple falcons were tallied. Ten **American Kestrels** in 2.5 hours at ALRGL 9/20 (**RCu**, **JHf**) were not only the season's high, but a fine number for a declining species. **Merlins** were noted at more than a dozen locations; **Peregrine Falcons** were observed at nine.

An **Olive-sided Flycatcher** was spotted at Howard Chapel Rd 8/24 (**RTd**); another was noted at the SW 8/27 (**LGg**); and a singing bird appeared at Cavey 9/6 (**RRf**) and was seen again on 9/7.

A **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** at MTPLT 8/30 (**RVg**, **VLi**) was still present 8/31 (**ELk**, ph.); likely a second bird was there on 9/15 (**JHf**). Another was reported from Cavey 9/14 (**RRf**, ph.). **Alder Flycatchers** are normally accepted as Traill's sp. in the fall. **Least Flycatchers** were reported from more than a dozen sites 8/27 – 9/28.



*Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Sept. 14, 2025, Cavey Lane, by Russ Ruffing*

Three **Blue-headed Vireos** lingered into Nov, the last was at Lake Elkhorn 11/10 (**LSI**, ph.), tying the second latest fall record. An unusually large number of **Philadelphia Vireos** were tallied *and accepted* from 14 sites. (Thanks to those observers who provided excellent documentation.)



*Philadelphia Vireo, Sept. 20, 2025, Tridelfia Reservoir, by Gregg Petersen*

Groups of eight or more **Common Ravens** have been reported with increasing regularity attesting to their recent area breeding success. A total of 14 (one group of 11), mostly over the SW in eight hours at MTPLT 10/25 (**RVg**, **VLi**, **JWr**), was a new high—for less than a month. The 48 at TRIRS in 1.5 hrs. on 11/22 (**RVg**, **VLi**) was an astonishing total captured in a series of photos of up to a dozen birds! They came from the west (vicinity of a cell tower) along the HOWCO side of the reservoir without backtracking, flying east over the Pigtail area. The mid-afternoon timing suggests they may have been heading to a roost.

**Red-breasted Nuthatches** made appearances the last week of Aug (**ATH**; **CFf**; **JHf**; **Mkw**; **RRf**). Reports through Nov were consistent with winter predictions. The last **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was picked out at Alpha Ridge Pk (ALRGP) 11/15 (**DSn**), the third overall Nov record.

The first **Marsh Wren** was detected at MTPLT 9/23 (**RVg**, **VLi**); sightings there continued through 10/6 (**JHf**). The species was also seen at WFRDP 10/1 (**BO**) and at SLMLP 10/11 (**LCK**).

A **Gray-checked Thrush** at MTPLT 8/31 (**MMcB**) established a new early fall record [9/8/01 Sandchain Rd, D. Coskren]. Nov produced significant numbers of **American Robins** at or near the SW. Totals rose from 850 on 11/1 in 5.5 hrs. (**VLi, RVg+**) to 2,400 on 11/9 (**VLi, RVg**); topping out at 6,000 in 5.5 hrs. on 11/15 (**VLi, RVg**). (The all-time high is 9,730 crossing Duckett Res. 12/20/14 D. Richardson.) The SW hosted 200 **Cedar Waxwings** on 11/1 rising to a peak of at least 400 as the front arrived on 11/9 (**VLi, RVg**).

Irruptives made varied appearances. The last half of Nov produced two **Evening Grosbeak** sightings, both at MTPLT: 11/15 (**RVg, VLi-1**) and 11/22 (**RVg, VLi-7**). **Purple Finches** in steadily increasing numbers proved the accuracy of the winter “finch forecast.” They far outnumbered the movement of any other boreal species with a peak count of 98 in more than eight hours at MTPLT 10/25 (**VLi, RVg**). **Pine Siskins** made scattered appearances countywide with a high of 26 at MTPLT 11/15 (**VLi, RVg**).

A **Clay-colored Sparrow**, always a notable find, was reported in the a.m. at MTPLT 10/18 (**JMb; VLi**, desc.), then not again until late afternoon (**JWr**, ph.). Another was found at ALRGP 10/22 (**BO**) where it remained through 11/6 (**SMcD**).

Single **American Tree Sparrows** were picked out at Silent Sun 10/23 (**SLk**, aud.) and SLMLP 11/13 (**LCK**, ph.). The 170 **White-throateds** at MTPLT 11/5 (**BO**) were fall’s peak count. **Vespers** were notched at seven sites, primarily the last two weeks of Oct. MTPLT continued to burnish its reputation with one **Nelson’s** on 10/18 (**JCm, JHR**) and two on 10/26 (**RVg, VLi**). On 10/18, 10 sparrow species were notched at WFRDP, including three **Vespers**, along with an astonishing record-high count of 380 **Savannahs** (**BO, ROr**) [250 UMD Central Farm 11/7/98 B. Ott; also 10/26/08 B Ott+]. A **Lincoln’s** was spotted at WFRDP 9/20 (**JCu**). The peak was 10/11 at MTPLT. Whatever the total, it was “probably an undercount” (**BO-7**).

A flock of 31 **Eastern Meadowlarks** at ALRGL 10/28 (**RCu**) was the season’s high. A **Brown-headed Cowbird** fledgling was being fed by a **Red-eyed Vireo** at the Middle Patuxent Env. Area 8/29 (**RSn**), while a **Chipping Sparrow** was the host at WFRDP 9/3 (**JHf**). **Rusty Blackbirds** were counted at seven sites, arriving on 10/17 at MTPLT (**RVg, VLi-1**) peaking at 30 there on 11/15 (**RVg, VLi**).

This was a notable season for **Golden-winged Warblers**, a species that has become so scarce that one at MTPLT 8/30 (**VLi, RVg-1 f.**) attracted a flock of birders. When many eyes are searching, other good birds may be found. This day it was a hybrid **Brewster’s** (**JWr**, ph.; ID **RVg**). Surprisingly, Golden-winged reports continued: MTPLT 8/31 (**COK**, 1 m. desc.) intermittently until 9/10 (**MPw, DCr**) and one f. at Kendall Ridge Loop 9/1 (**SGz**). The season’s first **Orange-crowned** was spotted in the J. L. Clark Native Plant Garden at MTPLT 10/1 (**BO**), last reported 11/26 (**BO**). One appeared at ALRGP 10/24 (**LRh**, ph.), it was last reported 11/4 (**JHf**). A late **Nashville** in a Mt Hebron yard 11/11 (**JCu**, ph.) was a pleasant surprise.

Accepted **Connecticut** sightings (ph., audio, or desc.) came from Cavey 9/12-9/29 (**RRf**), TRIRS-CC 9/14 (**JHf**), MTPLT 9/16 (**WCw**) to 10/5 (**YYL**), and SLMLP 9/19 (**J/MHr**) to 10/4 (**SLk**). Four **Mourning**s were well-documented: Cavey 8/23 (**RRf**), Sucker Branch 8/28 (**VLi**), Woodbine 9/2 (**PPn**), and Western Reg. Pk 9/16 (**MPw**). Breeding **Cape Mays** appeared to benefit from spruce budworm outbreaks in Canada. Fall Count 9/20 tallied 86, topping its previous high of 26 over the 32 years of the count. Multiple double digit single party highs of 42 on 9/8 over the Meadow Trail at MTPLT (**JWd**) and 22 there on 9/27 (**RVg, VLi+**) were unprecedented for this species. No high **Palm** numbers were tallied, but the breakout of 20 W and 4 E at MTPLT 9/27 (**RVg, VLi+**) was useful. (Thanks to those observers who specified E or W!) As Palms are among the latest warblers to depart, the 11/10 bird at ALRGP (**TFd, GKg**) may not be the year’s last.

**Summer Tanagers** were tallied at Cavey 9/26 (**RRf**, 1 f.) and at MTPLT 9/20 (**RVg, VLi, T/TCMh**, 1 m.) and 9/28 (**RVg, VLi+**, 1 f.). A **Blue Grosbeak** at Cavey 10/27 (**RRf**, ph.), tied the 10/27/88 (**JFC**) late date.

**Dickcissels**, heard mostly as flyovers, were reported from MTPLT 9/8 (**JWd**, desc.) to 10/6 (**JHf**).

*Note:* In 2025, **Warbling Vireo** was split into two species: **Eastern** and **Western**. Separating the two species in the field is virtually impossible. HOWCO is not within thousands of miles of the Western species. All warbling vireos reported will be assumed to be Eastern, based on range. Do **NOT** list them as warbling vireo sp.

*Acknowledgments:* This lengthy detailed summary could not be completed without significant input and careful editing from Joe Hanfman and Russ Ruffing. EBird reviewer Tim Carney always answers multiple questions.

**Observers:** **DCr** – Donna Carollo, **JCh** – Jame Chandler, **MCh** – Mark Chandler, **JCm** – Jonathan Comeau, **JFC** – Jane Farrell Coskren, **LCK** – Lauren Crocker, **WCw** – Wendy Crowe, **JCu** – Jeff Culler, **RCu** – Ralph Cullison III, **GDR** – Guy DiRoma, **BEk** – Bobbie Eckhoff, **Cff** -Cheryl Farfaras, **TFd** – Tom Feild, **TFy** – Tim Frye, **LGg** – Lynn Gregg, **SGz** – Scott Guzewich, **CHm** – Catherine Hallam, **JHf** – Joe Hanfman, **JHR** – John Harris, **MHr** – Meg Harris, **BHi** – Bill Hill, **MKw** – Mike Kerwin, **GKg** – Geraldine King, **JKg** – John King, **MLn** – Meghaan Lane, **YYL** – Yi-Ying Lee, **VLi** – Vitus Li, **ELk** – Eric Link, **SLk** – Steve Luke, **MMcB** – Maureen McBeth, **SMcD** – Scott McDaniel, **JMb** – Jon Milburn, **BMy** – Brian Moyer, **TMh** – T. Moynihan, **TCMh** – T.C. Moynihan, **COK** – Carrie Olszyk, **ROr** – Richard Orr, **BO** – Bonnie Ott, **PPn** – Pam Perna, **BPj** – Bruce Peterjohn, **GPN** – Gregg Petersen, **NPr** – Nathan Pressler, **MPw** – Mary Prowell, **LRh** – Lawrence Rhoads, **MRg** – Matt Rogosky, **JHR** – John Henri Rorabeck, **RRf** – Russ Ruffing, **RSn** – Ryan Salsman, **DSn** – David Sandler, **LSI** – Lilian Saul, **DTg** – Danny Tang, **MNT** – MarkNhu Tewell, **ATh** – Alison Theodore, **RTd** – Robin Todd, **RVg** – Roshan Vignarajah, **JWr** – Jayden Ward, **JWd** – Josh Ward, **DZk** – Dave Zielkowski.

## WEATHER 101 FOR BIRDERS: HIGHS, LOWS AND FRONTS

A prepared birder has a horizon extending well beyond this county's borders. Becoming a continental "weather watcher" is worth the time and effort required as it is likely to pay dividends in better birding.

The majority of this county's weather originates in the West, although the most dramatic storms come from the South or East (nor'easters). Tracking what's happening in the Midwest can provide a glimpse of what's in store in the coming days. Looking beyond the center of the continent to the West/Northwest, provides a longer, although somewhat less accurate, outlook.

Simplistically, most of our weather systems originate over the Pacific Ocean and move across the country as two types of large, roughly circular, areas: high pressure systems and low pressure systems. Either one may be hundreds of miles in diameter. A "high" is characterized by high or rising barometric pressure, fair skies, light winds, clockwise rotation (in the Northern Hemisphere), and generally stable conditions. A "low" is dominated by low or dropping air pressure, extensive cloud cover, high humidity or precipitation often coupled with strong winds, counterclockwise rotation, and usually unstable conditions. The movement of these systems across the continent may vary in speed, size, number, and path depending to some extent on the season, averaging about a week to travel coast to coast.

The leading edge of each system is called a "front." Birders know that the most bird species are often found where two ecotones meet; similarly, it is at or near the junction of two weather systems that some of the most dynamic birding takes place. Fronts are unstable areas of varying width, and may be either invisible or obvious. A rising wind with a change in its direction, if coupled with clearing skies and a drop in temperature, marks the passage of a front and the arrival of a high. The front of an approaching low will likely bring strong winds, overcast skies, and some sort of precipitation, sometimes in the form of damaging storms. This leading edge of a low may occasionally be seen as a defined line of clouds advancing over a period of minutes or hours.

Oftentimes, the leading or trailing edge of a high or a low can dramatically affect bird movements during migration periods. Because highs rotate in a clockwise direction, the trailing edge of a high in spring can bring with it a surge of northward migration as the birds leverage the winds moving from south to north along the trailing edge. Conversely in fall, a low with its counterclockwise movement can bring a surge of southward-moving birds along its trailing edge and prevailing winds from north to south. Similar but opposite movements occur on the leading edges of those fronts, and those can be anticipated by birders depending on the respective season. The path of weather systems is influenced by the jet stream which is an invisible band of high winds in the upper atmosphere flowing roughly west to east, most often associated with the northern part of the continent.

It is especially dominant during the colder months when temperature contrasts are greatest. Like a river, it seldom moves in a straight line. A portion of the jet stream may dip southward periodically in winter bringing polar air into parts of the U.S. unprepared for extended cold periods. These dramatic winter temperature drops should be of interest to birders. If the Great Lakes freeze almost completely, flights of diving waterfowl are triggered; eventually, even Red-necked Grebes and laggard scoters may appear. The jet stream's retreat northward, expected in spring, is followed by rising temperatures.

As the days lengthen, the weather battles of late winter and early spring give way gradually to more consistent and much warmer temperatures dominated by stable, sometimes stagnant, highs. Eventually, as summer begins to wind down, intense lows from the South, (occasionally hurricane remnants), push northward. At the same time, the jet stream begins to drift southward. Summer's lingering warm/hot temperatures and humidity meeting this cooler, drier air may produce dramatic storms.

***How do experienced birders utilize knowledge of these large systems? Following are some ways weather knowledge can be applied to local birding.***

- Couple your weather research with frequent reference to the Howard County Annotated Records. The bar graphs showing peak movements assist anticipation of species.
- Spring is the most compressed season for bird movement as species are anxious to reach breeding grounds. When a rarity shows up, there is less likelihood of it lingering than in the fall.
- Timing of movement is individual for each species, many tend to move with a particular temperature (isotherm). Decades ago, local farmers looked for Canada Geese to head north during the first week or 10 days of March. More recently, the last week of February is likely to see equally major movement.
- Short-distance migrants such as American Robins and Eastern Bluebirds, which are not dependent on flying insects or recent insect hatches, usually appear long before the long-distance migrants.
- Insectivorous birds are later to move north in spring and among the first to start south in fall. For birds dependent on flying insects, misjudging their northward timing in spring can have dire consequences. For waterfowl, they may simply be grounded far short of their destination until ice thaws water on their breeding grounds.
- In March and early April, watching the highs with southerly winds positioned south/east of HOWCO and the lows to the north/west can provide keys to the timing of various waterfowl flights.
- Paying attention to daytime weather is as important as knowing what's happening at night as not all species are nocturnal migrants.

- Cranes, gulls, terns, eagles, hawks, and swallows are all examples of daytime migrants. Nocturnal migrants also move around during the day so there may be different species present at a lake or reservoir at varying times of the day. Some of this movement is weather-related; at other times, it may have to do with feeding, resting, or bathing schedules.
- “Bluebird weather” is enjoyable and can produce good birding; however, the more unpleasant the birding weather, the better the odds for turning up rarities or fallouts.
- Don’t chalk off a day based on the situation at dawn. Weather can change dramatically within hours as fronts may move through quickly.
- Immatures of some southern waterbirds are known to wander long distances after fledging. Stable highs, beginning in late May, may produce an occasional surprise like a kite, Limpkin, or Anhinga.
- Autumn movement, in contrast to spring, is longer and more leisurely. Despite local heat waves in August, it pays to watch areas in Canada and the Upper Midwest for drops in temperature. This first cool front in August may not change local temperatures dramatically, but it likely produces the first migratory warblers.
- In mid to late August, fronts approaching from the west, are a signal for local birders to head to Triadelphia Reservoir to watch for various tern species flying ahead of the storms. Sometimes as little as a single day will offer the chance for an unusual tern.
- Waterfowl are much slower to move than passerines, although there are always a few exceptions. A low that causes sudden icing of potholes and small lakes in the Prairie Provinces and Upper Midwest may trigger major migration, but some individuals simply move shorter distances to larger water bodies. It may take truly polar blasts of air in late fall or early winter for some to begin their journey.
- If farm ponds and other shallow water habitats like Race Road Wetlands are frozen, check the reservoirs or Springdale Quarry where sometimes even puddle ducks are forced to concentrate.
- Watch surrounding states and other parts of Maryland for the appearance of species seldom seen in this county. For example, when Sandhill Cranes appear within 50 to 100 miles, there is a reasonable chance that the species could appear here, perhaps in a local harvested corn field or at the reservoirs.

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

## 2026 POTLUCK REMINDER

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 ([meghaanlane@gmail.com](mailto:meghaanlane@gmail.com)) 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 [Howard County Bird Club potluck](#)

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Frank Canastar  
Janice Clements  
Lauren Kantelis  
Pamela Kumar  
Kathryn LaPlaca  
Judith & David Peck  
Cheryl Shimer  
Dave Sullivan

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](mailto:goldfinch@mdbirds.org).

**The Goldfinch**, newsletter of the Howard County Bird Club, is published five times per year. Copy deadline for the May/June issue is March 25, 2026.

Jamie Lynch, Editor  
Joanne Solem, Proofreader

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

## 2025 HOWARD COUNTY BUTTERFLY YEAR

BY KEVEN HEFFERNAN

Last year we completed the 12<sup>th</sup> year of the Howard County Butterfly Survey. A total of 1,257 surveys were submitted by 77 people and 69,128 minutes were spent in the field. We found 72 species and 26,728 individual butterflies. The number of surveys submitted, minutes in the field and number of individual butterflies reported are all new records for the survey. We now have a total of 81 species and 261,722 individual butterflies seen in the 12 years of the survey. That number is not a typo. We exceeded a **quarter million butterflies** recorded in the survey this year. The 551,933 minutes in the field = 9198 hours. We have now **spent more than a full year in the field**, a full year being 60 minutes / hour \* 24 hours / day \* 365 days). We also **exceeded 10,000 surveys** submitted during the survey. Finally, in 2025, we conducted six butterfly walks which 179 people attended. Dick Smith would be proud.

A project of this size does not succeed without a lot of help and dedication. So, some big thank yous are in order, particularly to the contributors. The following 20 people submitted 20 or more butterfly reports this year: Clayton Koonce (146), Kathy Litzinger (138), Linda Hunt (121), Annette Allor (109), Kevin Heffernan (69), Jennifer Kanera (57), Cris Ausin (47), Emily Schweich (45), Jim McFadden (45), David Ryan (39), Jim Wilkinson (37), Karan Blum (37), Woody Merkle (35), Barbara White (29), Pam Perna (28), Sue Probst (27), Sharon Smith (26), Janet Lydon (24), Susan Tucker (22), and Sue Mueller (20). Thank you also to the other 57 contributors as well. An extra big thank you goes to four people who contributed >100 reports this year, Clayton Koonce, Kathy Litzinger, Linda Hunt, and Annette Allor. Big thank yous also go to the walk leaders: Woody Merkle, Linda Hunt, Kathy Litzinger, Cris Ausin and Annette Allor. Another big thank you goes to Bob Solem for providing the tools to get the data from emails to a spreadsheet where it can be analyzed, the photo gallery, posted trip reports, and a host of other things. Also, a huge thank you goes to Kathy Litzinger for co-chairing the survey and for helping organize all of the data from the year, which is a large and time-consuming task.

In 2016, Bob Solem designed the butterfly report form that automated the butterfly reporting system. It worked flawlessly for nearly 10 years. On August 11<sup>th</sup>, it suddenly stopped working during the busiest time of the year for the survey. Bob worked tirelessly for days trying to get it up and running again. He thought that he had it fixed twice, but each fix still had some issues. As a backup plan, Gregg Petersen asked Steve Luke to come up with a different system. He came up with a Google Forms solution that is working well. The original system was down for two weeks. We manually entered data into this system from the reports that we received during those two weeks; many people held off submitting their reports until after the system was back up and running. A HUGE thank you goes out to Steve Luke for designing the new system on short notice, and to Bob Solem for keeping the original system

running for nearly 10 years and for working many hours trying to fix the problem.

**First Butterfly of the Year:** The first 11 butterflies of the year were found on March 10<sup>th</sup> by Annette Allor and Linda Hunt. Annette found five Mourning Cloaks and four Eastern Commas. Linda found one of each. Annette was out earlier than Linda, and her first butterfly was a Mourning Cloak.



*Mourning Cloak by Annette Allor*

**Peak Years:** Fourteen species had 12-year high counts for the survey: Common Sootywing (53), Least Skipper (779), Fiery Skipper (851), Hobomok Skipper (37), Broad-winged Skipper (29), Pipevine Swallowtail (53), Zebra Swallowtail (57), Spicebush Swallowtail (687), Harvester (25), Juniper Hairstreak (51), Spring Azure (2), Summer Azure (652), American Snout (83), and Hackberry Emperor (21). Ten species had the second highest count in the 12 years: Juvenal's Duskywing (28), Horace's Duskywing (101), Clouded Skipper (21), Ocola Skipper (148), Eastern Tiger Swallowtail (2,367), Sleepy Orange (418), Coral Hairstreak (14), Gray Hairstreak (216), Pearl Crescent (1,389), and Monarch (1,015). Overall, 33.3% of the 72 species found had peak or second highest count years.

**Low counts:** The following four species had 12-year low counts for the survey: Southern Cloudywing (4), American Copper (8), Banded Hairstreak (3), and Eastern Tailed-blue (1,241). An additional three species had their second lowest count during the survey. These include Cloudless Sulphur (9), Red Admiral (45), and Viceroy (10).

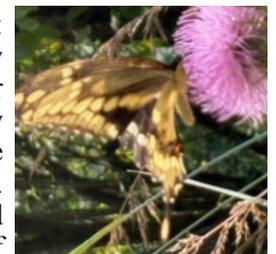


*Dusted Skipper by Annette Allor*

Overall, 9.7% of the 72 species found had their lowest or second lowest count during the survey. For two species, only a single individual was found: Dusted Skipper and Giant Swallowtail.

### Howard County Watch List:

Southern Cloudywing has only been found in one location. Their numbers were never high, but they have dropped every year since 2019. We reported four total. Northern Cloudywings, have had about half the total number of Southern Cloudywings. These have been found in low numbers in multiple locations. Only four of these were recorded this past year as well.



*Giant Swallowtail by Jim McFadden*

Swarthy Skipper annual totals have been six or fewer in the last four years. This year, four were recorded.

Banded Hairstreak had a peak of 51 reported in 2022. The last three years, 11, six and three have been reported. They are getting very difficult to find.

Common Wood-Nymph numbers have only reached double digits in 2015 when 11 were reported. Their number has been five or fewer for nine years of the survey. A total of eight have been reported in the last four years. This year, Annette Allor, found the only two of them at Mt. Pleasant. This could be a species that we miss in the near future.



*Common Wood-Nymph by Annette Allor*

American Copper numbers had dropped for six out of the seven years from 2016 to 2023. In 2023, the number reported was nine. In 2024, 42 were reported, all by Linda Hunt and all of them at Foxfield Farm. Linda was not able to get out to Foxfield Farm as often in 2025, and the number reported dropped to eight. This is a species that we need to watch carefully and to try to find additional locations.

Dusted Skipper has been found in a single location in low numbers each of the first five years of the survey. It was missed in each of the next five years. In 2024, seven were found. In 2025, only a single individual was found. This is another species to keep an eye on.

Of the 72 species found this year, 14 (19.4%) had <10 individuals reported. These include Cloudless Sulphur (9), American Copper (8), **Mulberry Wing (7)**, *Tawny Emperor (6)*, *Southern Cloudywing (4)*, *Northern Cloudywing (4)*, *Swarthy Skipper (4)*, *Northern Broken Dash (3)*, *Banded Hairstreak (3)*, *Long-tailed Skipper (2)*, **Spring Azure (2)**, *Common Wood-Nymph (2)*, *Dusted Skipper (1)*, and **Giant Swallowtail (1)**. Nine of these (italics) were also on last year's "<10 individuals" reported list. Three in bold were not seen last year. The other two were seen but not on last year's list.

**New Early and Late Dates:** There were three new early dates established this year. These were Harvester (4/18), Clouded Skipper (5/8), and Ocola Skipper (6/18).



*Harvester by Annette Allor*

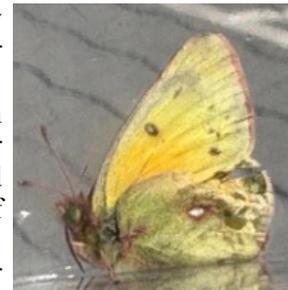
There were also four new late dates recorded this year. They were:

- Appalachian Brown (9/20)
- Broad-winged Skipper (9/21)
- Tawny-edged Skipper (10/26)
- Silver-spotted Skipper (11/7)

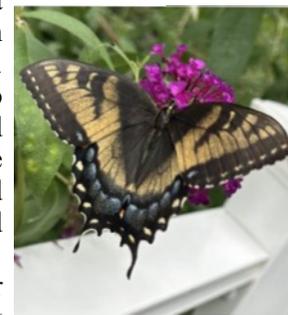
The Early – Late date spreadsheet has been updated and is on the website.

### Notes from the year:

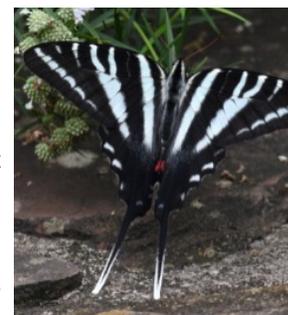
- Two Common Wood-Nymphs were recorded this year, both by Annette Allor. This species has the distinction of the one that has been seen in all 12 years of the survey that has the fewest total number of individuals found (55).
- Jim McFadden found a likely overwintering Orange Sulphur on March 25<sup>th</sup> at MPEA.
- On April 8<sup>th</sup>, Kevin Heffernan reported an Eastern Tiger Swallowtail. It was cold and windy with a temperature of 47 degrees.
- Kevin Heffernan and Jennifer Kanera found a winter form Sleepy Orange at Centennial Park on April 14<sup>th</sup>. Sue Muller also found one on April 23<sup>rd</sup>. This is the third year in a row that overwintering Sleepy Oranges have been found.
- A survey record 53 Pipevine Swallowtails were reported this year. Kathy Kaberle had three broods on her Pipevine this year. Pipevine Swallowtails continue to do well in Barbara White's garden.
- Swallowtails had a good year with Pipevine, Zebra and Spicebush having record years in the 12-year survey. Eastern Tiger Swallowtail had the second highest annual count.
- On August 15<sup>th</sup>, Jenny Kanera found an aberrant Eastern Tiger Swallowtail in her yard. The photo was forwarded to Harry Pavulaan who stated that he had never seen one like it. The next day, Jenny found an aberrant Red-spotted Purple also in her yard.
- Last year, Annette Allor confirmed that Black Swallowtails use asparagus as a host plant. This year she confirmed that they use Lovage as a host plant as well.
- A new high count of 21 Hackberry Emperors was reported in 2025. The previous high count was 15 in 2017. Eight Hackberry Emperors were found on the Mt Pleasant butterfly walk on August 19<sup>th</sup>. This met or exceeded the annual totals of eight of the 12 years of the survey. It was also the first walk where both Emperors were found.
- Kevin Heffernan photographed three Coral Hairstreaks on a single Common Milkweed flower on June 21<sup>st</sup> at Mt. Pleasant. This number exceeded the total number for 2014 and 2018.



*Orange Sulphur by Jim McFadden*



*Eastern Tiger Swallowtail by Jenny Kanera*



*Zebra Swallowtail by Pam Perna*

- A total of 53 species have been recorded at St. Anthony's Shrine. We have only known about this location for three years.
- A total of 215 Cloudless Sulphurs were recorded in 2024. We found only nine in 2025.
- Common Sootywing has never been an easy find in the county. Over the first 10 years of the survey, a total of 40 individuals were recorded. In year 11, 26 were reported, which tied the total of the previous seven years. In 2025, 53 were reported. We found a private farm in western Howard County that had Lamb's Quarters and Pigweed, both of which are their host plants.
- Fiery Skipper was very common this fall. The 851 individuals reported greatly exceeds the previous high count of 474 in 2019.
- Common Checkered-Skipper numbers had dropped for five years in a row from a peak of 331 in 2017 to 14 in 2022. In 2023, they rebounded slightly to 20 but this number was still historically low. A total of 86 were reported in 2024, most of them at Little Portion Farm showing, once again, the value of a single location. In 2025, we found a second location and the number reported climbed to 190.
- A high count of 223 Gray Hairstreaks were found in 2024. This was, in large part, to finding a new location, Little Portion Farm. We followed that up with 216 reported in 2025.
- Harvesters have classically been a difficult find in the county. A total of 25 were reported this year. That number exceeds the total seen in the first eight years of the survey (18). The previous high count was 15 in 2023.
- A total of 24 Meadow Fritillaries were reported this year. Half of them were seen on June 3<sup>rd</sup> on a private farm.
- We are closely tracking the number of Monarchs each year. A total of 928 were found in 2022 followed by 374 and 364 in 2023 and 2024 respectively. That is a 60% drop. This year, we recorded 1,015. It will be interesting to see what numbers are recorded in their overwintering site in Mexico this year. We also had high counts this year for both Monarch caterpillars and chrysalises.
- Five species accounted for more than half of the total number of butterflies reported this year. They are Sachem, Cabbage White, Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Pearl Crescent, and Silver-spotted Skipper.



*Coral Hairstreaks by Kevin Hefferman*



*Common Sootywing by Annette Allor*

**Butterfly of the Year:** Each year we award a "Butterfly of the Year" to a species that had an outstanding year. This year the award goes to the Spring Azure. Two individuals of this species were seen in 2014 by Annette Allor (Western Regional Park) and Richard Orr (MPEA). It was not reported for the next 10 years. This year, Annette found one on April 4<sup>th</sup> at the Shrine of St. Anthony's and Chris Ausin found a second one on April 9<sup>th</sup> at the same location. Harry Pavulaan confirmed the ID of both sightings.



*Spring Azure by Chris Ausin*

**Last Butterfly of the Year Contest:** We again had the "Last Butterfly of the Year" contest this year. The winner this year was Karan Blum who sent in a photo of an Eastern Comma at St. Anthony's Shrine on November 26<sup>th</sup>. This is the third year that the date of the last butterfly seen was November 26<sup>th</sup>. Congratulations, Karan.



*Eastern Comma by Karan Blum*

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

**New Data / Tools for the Butterfly Survey:** In the 12 years that the butterfly survey has been taking place, you surveyors have reported over 261,000 butterflies. With this vast amount of data, we were able to publish flight times, early and late dates, and overwintering strategies for each of the 81 species that we have found. These are all on the Howard County Bird Club website. They are in pdf format and can be downloaded to your phone for use in the field.

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

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

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

## HOWARD COUNTY MID-WINTER COUNT, FEBRUARY 7, 2026

AN UPDATE BY BRIAN MOYER



*Wood Ducks, Feb 2026, Wilde Lake by Joe Hanfman*

An extremely poor weather forecast for 7 Feb ultimately ended with the Howard County Bird Club (HCBC) cancelling the Mid-winter Count. I am told that this is only the second time the count has had to be cancelled. On the afternoon of 3 Feb, I spoke with HCBC President Val Swan and we concluded the forecast of below zero wind chills and gusty winds predicted to possibly exceed 60 mph at times was enough to present dangers we collectively didn't want our counter volunteers to endure. In addition, snow was forecast for Friday evening (it did not materialize), but a coating of snow on top of the deep snow and thick ice crust would make walking treacherous except in limited areas. Water was almost completely frozen. It was indeed dangerous. Many counters have communicated that they were happy with the cancellation.

However, counters in the area were birding both the week prior to the Count and after, once the weather improved. They were lucky with some sightings. Species such as Lapland Longspur, Snow Bunting, and Iceland Gull were all found in the county during that period. So, although we could not conduct the official count on 7 Feb, great birds were in the area. Some still are, so, while being careful, get out there and enjoy as you are able.



*Leucistic Northern Cardinal, Feb 2026,  
Font Hill Wetlands Park by Lily Saul*



*Hooded Mergansers, Feb 2026,  
Font Hill Wetlands Park by Lily Saul*



*Snow Bunting, Feb 2026,  
Alpha Ridge Landfill by Guy DiRoma*