

Howard County, Maryland

May 7, 2005, Seventh Unofficial Big Day

Joanne Solem

Leaders and participants: 2. Daryl Olson and Joanne Solem (Recorder). Weather: from the low 50s, cloudy until late a.m., light breeze increased to 15+ mph from north with a high in the 60s (less than ideal weather). Time: 6:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. Total species: 95. Meeting site: MD 100 park-and-ride adjacent to Meadowbrook Park. Notable birds: 16 warbler species total. Wild Turkey and Nashville Warbler – Rockburn Branch Park; Prothonotary Warbler and Yellow-throated Warbler – Marriottsville. There was a scheduled HCBC field trip to Jug Bay, and many regular Big Day birders had personal commitments which made for a near-cancellation. Though Joanne had a mid-p.m. appointment, she and Daryl decided to do an abbreviated day concentrating on the eastern half of the county. Daryl drove while Joanne recorded. A dozen species were picked up quickly before leaving the parking lot (Meadowbrook Park was in the final stages of construction). We headed to Rockburn but left after half an hour because birding was so slow, although the gobbling turkey between the historic house and the old farmhouse (haunted house) was a welcome surprise. We swung over to the park's entrance on Landing Road to cover the "wood chip" trail; other than a Nashville Warbler, that portion of the park was also disappointing. Since we were not far from the entrance to the Cascade Trail, that seemed worth a try. Ten minutes downhill with nothing new changed our minds, although on the way back to the top, we did pick up five species. From there, it was on to Race Road Wetlands for half an hour, but there was no Great Egret. We continued west on Race Road to Hanover Road to the state-owned area on the right after walking across a small bridge. As expected, two Virginia Rails responded quickly to tapes. At 9:30 a.m., we headed to Marriottsville with 82 species. We managed to squeeze into the crowded parking lot, but had no luck upstream so turned around and tried east of the road. After a quarter of a mile with no better results, we turned around and soon spotted a Prothonotary Warbler and then a Yellow-throated. There was little to show for the hour at Henryton--Kentucky and Worm-eating warblers plus our first pewee of the day. An hour and a half at the UMDCF was also unproductive. We even had trouble scaring up Savannah and Grasshopper sparrows there until we crossed Folly Quarter Road and walked along the east side. Our final stop was Wilde Lake. The Caspian Tern had departed, so we finished the day at 2:30 p.m. with a Double-crested Cormorant and 95 species.

Many years, the end of the first week of May would have seen a flood of migrants. This was not one of those years.