

Howard County, Maryland

May 11, 2009, Eleventh Unofficial Big Day

Joanne Solem

Leaders: Bonnie Ott, Ralph Cullison, and Nancy Magnusson. Recorder: Joe Hanfman. Total participants: 8. John Hubbell, Michael O'Sullivan, Joanne Solem, plus one more person. Weather: Overcast with occasional showers, but most of the day was quite dry. Time: 6:30 a.m. - 8:30 p.m. Total species: 114. Meeting site: Rockburn Elementary School. Notable species: 18 warbler species total. Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Blue-winged Warbler – Rockburn Branch Park; Great Egret – Marriottsville; Yellow-throated Warbler – Henryton; Northern Harrier, White-crowned Sparrow – Alpha Ridge Landfill; Virginia Rail, Sora, Northern Waterthrush – UMDCF; Pine Siskin – Manahan Dr (Ott's); Swainson's Thrush, Kentucky Warbler – MPEA.

We started at Rockburn limiting ourselves to the west loop (the haunted house trail) where we tallied a modest dozen warbler species. We then headed to the MD 100 park-and-ride adjacent to Meadowbrook Park to consolidate cars. The eight of us fit into two vehicles and then headed to Daniels. Our 20 minutes there produced a Bald Eagle, but NO warblers, so we went on to Marriottsville where, surprisingly, a Great Egret was the best bird. At Henryton, the floodplain loop west added a Yellow-throated Warbler but no migrant warblers for the 20 minutes there. Time at Alpha Ridge Landfill netted the expected grassland species and a few shorebirds. A Northern Harrier was a treat and a White-crowned Sparrow was a great find. Between showers, migrating hawks were spotted high so lunches were eaten atop the first cell while birders scanned the sky. The middle of the afternoon was spent along the swale at the UMDCF. Good additions were Virginia Rail, a Sora that popped up out of a clump of shoreline grass at pond 3, and several warblers. After the farm as we headed east, our first stop was Bonnie's feeders to add Pine Siskin, a regular, and a hummingbird. A Barred Owl was picked up at Lake Elkhorn, along with two more Pine Siskins. Who could have predicted? After brief stops at Fulton Pond and Brighton Dam, we finished the surprisingly productive day at MPEA with a Swainson's Thrush and a Kentucky Warbler. Our total was a respectable 114 species.