

Howard County, Maryland

May 7, 2011, Thirteenth Unofficial Big Day

Joanne Solem

Bonnie Ott. Recorder: Joe Hanfman. Total participants: 8. Ralph Cullison, Jim Green, Emmalyn Holdridge, Nancy Magnusson, Kurt Schwarz, Joanne Solem. Weather: Mostly sunny, high in 70s, becoming breezy in p.m. Time: 6:15 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. Total species: 109. Meeting site: Daniels. Notable species: 18 warbler species total. Yellow-throated Warbler – Marriottsville; Veery and Canada Warbler – Henryton; Kentucky Warbler – River Road floodplain; Pine Siskin, White-crowned Sparrow, Blue-winged Warbler – River Road scrub (Felicia Lovelett's property adjacent to the state park); Pied-billed Grebe, American Coot, Great Egret – Centennial Park; Black-crowned Night-Heron – Wilde Lake.

For the first time, the group started at Daniels and worked west along the Patapsco River. It was still cool and shady early. There has been no strong southerly flow of air recently so there was a minimal overnight passerine flight. At Marriottsville, we did pick up a Yellow-throated Warbler and enjoyed the company of an American Redstart fluttering like a butterfly alongside us as we followed the railroad tracks. At Henryton, a walk west netted Veery and Canada Warbler along with other floodplain species. We then headed for River Road east of MD 32 along the river where the Cliff Swallow colony under the bridge was admired and we added Kentucky Warbler. Our next stop at the top of the hill on River Road was at Felicia Lovelett's. Her property abuts scrubby Patapsco Valley State Park land. Here, Blue-winged and Prairie warblers plus a chat were added. Equally attractive were her feeders with Pine Siskin and White-crowned Sparrow—definitely a worthwhile stop. It was time to head to Alpha Ridge Park to join with the Little Big Day crew to cover the landfill. At first, there was some confusion about timing of lunch and number of cars at the landfill, but that was sorted out and the landfill produced the usual grassland species, a few shorebirds, an Osprey, and a Bald Eagle. By the time we reached the UMDCF at 2:00 p.m., Kevin's group was down to Kevin, Karen Darcy Heffernan, and Shashi Lengade. Unfortunately, there were no rails, bitterns, or Marsh Wren at the farm. At Centennial Park's west end, a Great Egret was present, as it sometimes is; the bigger surprise was a Pied-billed Grebe. Wilde Lake's Black-crowned Night-Heron made an appearance. At Fulton, the Semipalmated Plover that had been present had departed; we continued to Brighton Dam and contented ourselves by adding cormorant. Our final stop was MPEA for thrushes, but we might as well have saved ourselves the hike. Not only were there no thrushes, but the hummingbird that zipped past Ralph's head was not seen or heard by anyone else so it didn't make the list. An anticlimactic ending to the day.