



howard county
BIRD CLUB

50th ANNIVERSARY • 1972 – 2022

MEMBERS' MEMORIES

Chuck Stirrat

My favorite memories associated with the HCBC are many.

- Intro class – taught by Nan Rhineland & Jo Solem (then a Common Yellowthroat on the patio was my “spark” bird on 5/19/82 when I started my life bird list).
- Meetings in the gym at Longfellow Elementary School in the 1980s through May 2004.
- Meeting for field trips behind Grempler Realty off Little Patuxent Pkwy in central Columbia.
- Club field trips to Blackwater NWR (on a school bus).
- Meetings at Howard Recreation & Parks Department HQ started in 2004 (with the comradery of taking down and putting back tables & chairs).
- First May Count with Marty Chestem 5/7/83. (I inherited the territory of Daniels & Hollofield, PVSP.)
- First organized bird tour – Manitoba & Churchill – Dave Harvey & I with Van Os tours in June 1987 – and was caffeine deprived during the visit to my parents on my return.
- Self-guided tour to the Maritimes with Dave Harvey & Paul Zucker Jun 1988 – caffeine deprived again.
- Manning the club booth in the 4-H building at the Howard County Fair.
- “Dawn Chorus” field trip to Nanticoke Swamp led by Chan Robbins at the 1985 MOS Convention (my first convention).
- Loading seed from a semi-trailer truck into cars at annual seed sale behind First Presbyterian Church under Eileen Clegg’s excellent direction.
- May Count tally rallies at Jan & Don Randle’s.
- Fall Count tally rallies at Martha & Don Waugh’s.
- Field Guides’ Colorado Grouse tour with club members (Harveys, Heffernans, Patterson, Schwarz) in April 2017.
- Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival, Nov 2018, with other club members (Hanfman, Culler, Heffernans, Sandler, Wilkins, Hill, Harris).
- VENT Costa Rica tour, July 1992, with Harveys (adding more than 370 species to my world life list).

I’ve participated in many club activities and held a number of leadership positions.

- Joined the club in 1982 after finishing the intro class.
- Attended MOS Conventions from 1985 (Salsbury) to 2021 (virtual) and only missed 2 or 3.
- First elected secretary for 1995-96 membership year and continue to present. (My buddy Dave Harvey was in his second year of club presidency and urged me to take the office.)
- Participated in almost every seasonal bird count since 1983.
- Initiated Fall Count with Mike McClure in 1994 (and am still co-coordinator today).
- Served as seasonal count compiler for all three counts since the 1994 Fall Count.
- Coordinated MOS statewide Fall Count from 2000 until present.

The following are my favorite birds.

- Greater Prairie Chicken, Greater Sage Grouse and all the great birds on the Grouse tour.
- Limpkin (Lakeway Drive – less than 2 miles from my home on WaltAnn Drive 5/30/1985).
- Piping Plover – Wilde Lake 4/29/1994.
- Kirtland’s Warbler – Michigan found after the area was opened to the public.
- Blackfooted Albatross – Monterey Bay Pelagic 2004.
- Little Gull – Centennial 4/6/2014.

Major county birds missed: Snowy Owl, Eurasean Collared Dove, Wood Stork, and Western Tanager.

And Snowy Owl in Maryland remains my nemesis bird!

I have experienced major changes in technology.

- Serving as count compiler and secretary has provided an opportunity to apply and use the evolution of PC technology/applications (another hobby).
- I have been an SLR photographer since grad school at Michigan State, and bird photography became my focus once I took up birding (but it hasn't been a major element of hobby in contrast to some others).
- I had kept all my birding records in Birder's Diary, and when eBird came along I tried to maintain both archives (including entering all my historical records in eBird). I've given up on maintaining both and now use eBird exclusively. I monitor eBird alerts daily/hourly as they come on my iPhone.

Birding is an important party of my life.

- Birding is my primary social activity since I retired completely.
- I live alone (divorced), so almost all my nearby friendships are with those in the bird club.
- Since covid pandemic I have birded most of the time alone and have missed organized field trips and in-person meetings
- I really can't imagine any reason why I wouldn't be a HCBC member as long as my health permits, given it is a major a portion of my life.