

# Howard County, Maryland

## Sparrow Big Days

Bonnie Ott and Joanne Solem

**Sparrow Big Day 3 October 16, 2005.** No leader: Bonnie Ott was ill, so the group operated without a leader. Total participants: 8. Ralph Cullison, Karen Darcy Heffernan, Tom Feild, Kevin Heffernan, Emmalyn Holdridge, Kurt Schwarz, Joanne Solem, Mark Wallace. Weather: Cloudy early, then clearing; wind came up in late a.m. making birding increasingly challenging; high of 70 F. Time: 7:30 a.m. – 6:30 p.m. Total sparrow species: 10. Meeting site: UMDCF. Notable bird species: Wilson's Snipe, Nashville Warbler – UMDCF. Most attention-getting bird was a leucistic crow flying in a flock of 300 of normal plumage.

Bonnie became ill the night before the trip so was unable to lead. Joanne's notes mentioned, "Without her ears and great eyes we were at a disadvantage." The group started by going north along the swale at the UMDCF, then crossed Folly Quarter Road to the east side and worked around the weedy areas as we returned to the cars near the office. Once there, we changed out of boots, crossed the road to the east side again, and headed for the pigpen area near the eastside barns. Eventually, we returned to the cars moving them to the Homewood Road section in a vain search for a Vesper Sparrow. All the walking had added Grasshopper, Lincoln's, and White-crowned sparrows, but nothing really unexpected. Alpha Ridge Park was not productive so we went on to Mt. Pleasant. Initially, we parked in the post office lot at the corner of MD 99/Woodstock Road and crossed the road to walk the Howard County Conservancy's field and swale. Savannahs kept popping up, but not much else. We then went on to the Mt. Pleasant parking lot in order to cover much of the rest of the property. Purple Finch was the nicest addition. The group broke up about 2:30 p.m. Tom, Mark, and Kurt went on to David Force Wildlife Management Area; after that, Tom and Mark continued to Waterford Farm which they searched until dark.

This was one of the longest of any of the Sparrow Big Days. Despite the time and effort, it was not particularly memorable.