

# Howard County, Maryland

## Unofficial Little Big Days

Kevin Heffernan and Joanne Solem

### First Little Big Day, May 7, 2011

Leaders: Kevin Heffernan and Karen Darcy Heffernan. Total participants: 11. Mary Jane Arnold, Bill Hill, Gayle Hill, Shashi Lengade, Jim Lubitz, Rosa Lubitz, Anne McEvoy, Holly Waddell, Jim Wilkinson. Weather: Mostly sunny, high in 70s, becoming breezy in p.m. Trip started at 6:30 AM, ended at 9:15 PM. Total species: 105. Notable species: 17 warbler species total. Middle Patuxent Environmental Area, Meadowbrook Park, Daniels section of Patapsco River, Waverly Pond, Alpha Ridge Landfill, Md Central Farm, Marriottsville section of Patapsco River, Mt. Pleasant, Centennial Lake, Wilde Lake, Brighton Dam, Hipsley Mill Rd., Annapolis Rock Road. Because access to the Alpha Ridge Landfill and the University of Maryland Central Farm (UMDCF) were limited, arrangements were made between the two Big Day groups to meet at prearranged times in order to access the two sites together. This protocol was also followed in 2012, but not in 2013 as described below.

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### Second Little Big Day, May 19, 2012

Leaders: Kevin Heffernan and Karen Darcy Heffernan. Recorder: Kevin Heffernan. Total participants: 12. Andrew Davis, Eric Goldman, Gayle Hill, Bill Hill, Diane Johns, Shashi Lengade, Howard Patterson, Ed Steadman, Chuck Stirrat, Sherry Tomlinson. Weather: Time: 6:00 a.m until early evening. Total species: 90. Meeting site: MPEA parking lot, carpooled to South Wind Circle to begin. Notable species: 14 warbler species total. Veery, Blackburnian, Worm-eating, Kentucky, and Canada warblers—MPEA?; Horned Lark – Alpha Ridge Landfill; Virginia Rail – UMDCF; Common Loon – Centennial Park.

Migration had been early and the biggest push of migrants had moved through days earlier. Kevin's summary comment was "It was a slow and often frustrating day."

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### Third Little Big Day, May 18, 2013

Leaders: Karen Darcy Heffernan and Kevin Heffernan. Recorder: Kevin Heffernan. Total participants: 10. Sue Earp, Wes Earp, John Harris, Bill Hill, Gayle Hill, Woody Merkle, David Sandler, Chuck Stirrat. Weather: Time: 6:15 a.m. – 5:55 p.m. Total species: 94. Meeting site: South Wind Circle, MPEA. Notable species: 16 warbler species total. Veery, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Tennessee and Kentucky warblers, White-throated Sparrow – MPEA; Great Egret, Black-crowned Night-Heron, American Coot – Centennial.

Kevin remembered, "Prior to this field trip, there had been a discussion concerning whether this trip should attempt to maximize the species count (as the other Big Group planned), or instead, try to maximize migrants. putting more emphasis on certain habitats, perhaps at the expense of missing some special species at the UMDCF or the landfill. Because Ralph Cullison could only bird half a day, the landfill would be on the schedule by mid-morning. When Wes Earp was able to obtain permission for our group to access the UMDCF separately from the other Big Day trip, we decided not to meet the other group to jointly cover either the landfill or the farm; rather, we would take our time in the Middle Patuxent Valley. This would also give us more flexibility during the rest of the day."