



howard county
BIRD CLUB
50th ANNIVERSARY • 1972 – 2022

MEMBERS' MEMORIES

Kurt Schwarz

After several years of fumbling around with birds, engaging in few Cornell studies, etc., in 1994, I realized, “there’s a club that does this?” And in just five or so years, I found myself president. Those fine memories of field trips. One sub-frigid trip, I forget where, only Bonnie Ott and I showed up. The Frostbite Forays organized by Kate Tufts to Delaware or Ocean City were always very enjoyable. And, at some point, I became a lister, for better or worse.

In 2004, Bob Solem asked me to take over the Conservation Chair post. Fortunately, there are not too many big conservation issues in Howard County. Meanwhile, George Alderson, a member and retiree from the Department of Interior, suggested he could write letters on our behalf about conservation issues, mostly in western states. I agreed, and this made an impact at the state level, when in 2008, MOS President Wayne Bell convinced me to take over the state post from Maureen Harvey. As time went on, we took on more and more, and eventually I was even going to Annapolis to testify. We had some notable achievements, as part of coalitions, such as the fracking ban and ban on neonicotinoid pesticides. And Howard County has become one of the very first jurisdictions in the United States to enact bird-safe building legislation.

While I seem to think that I NEVER find rarities, there have been a few. The first was an American Golden-Plover in 2001, which I misidentified as a Black-bellied Plover. The next nice find was a White-winged Scoter at Triadelphia in 2004. The fall 2011 Waterfowl Search I led began with a Snow Bunting, and ended with Howard’s only Western Grebe. In the aftermath of Hurricane/Tropical Storm Sandy in 2012, I found Howard’s third Brant, and later a small flock of Black Scoters. I have found two or three Mourning Warblers. And finally, there was the epic LeConte’s Sparrow, Howard’s fourth, on November 1, 2020. Some thirty other birders got to see that bird.

It has been a fun 27 or so years, and I can only hope it will continue. And that HCBC continues to be a voice and small source of funding for bird conservation.