

Trip Report
How to Find an Owl
February 19, 2022
Leader: Jay Sheppard

It was a crisp day with brisk NW winds and temps in the high 30s and low 40s. Due to very low preregistration for the morning session, I asked the few who did register for the morning session to come in the afternoon. So the morning session was canceled and only the 1 PM workshop took place. We had twenty-six participants, and I was assisted by two experienced owlers. Although we found pellets of three species of owls, we were unable to see any owls. Below is our eBird list for the day of six species.

The session started off with a discussion of habitat and prey needs of our owls. Thus, we need to focus on the prey's habitat first and then see if there are any owls benefitting from the abundance of the local prey. We examined a variety of owl pellets and their contents. After this informational part of the workshop, the participants filed over to the white pines nearby. They all lined up and took a row of pines. Then they slowly walked down the rows looking for scat/droppings and pellets of owls and other wildlife. They found some Northern Saw-whet Owl pellets in about eight sites in these pines. The freshest pellet was maybe 7 days old. That was about as close as we got to finding any owls, but we did ID three species of owls from the pellets—saw-whet, Barred and screech. We did not come back in the evening for woodcocks, as we thought the high winds would suppress their displays and thwart our hearing them.

All participants got a 'Certificate' (see below sample from 2020) for completing this little class, and hopefully they will all now find owls in their bird walks around Maryland and elsewhere. It was disappointing not finding any saw-whets or other owls, but everyone seemed to appreciate the time spent learning to look down for signs of owls and not just up.

No identification of participants as to MOS chapter membership was made. All will receive a copy of this report. I want to thank my two assistants, Marcy Stutzman and Mary Lou Clark. A group of two dozen participants wandering through the pines is much like herding cats. Everyone is finding something on the ground that needs attention at the same time but in opposite directions. This was the lowest number of participants in some 20 years. Not sure why? Covid? Weather? Date? Satiation of potential audiences?

2022 Participant:

Scott Buswell	Jake Hall	Karlyn McPartland
Sue Buswell	Robin Hessey	Kevin McPartland
Tim Carney	Crystal Konny	Tyler Meneely
Chen Chiu	Yi-Ying Lee	Frank Morgan
Fran Cincotta	Houng LI	Linda Roberts
Peter Cincotta	Molly Li	Val Swan
Scott Class	Vitus Li	Pam Villanyi
Brian Costello	Mary Maxey	Steve Villanyi
Debbie Fang	Kari McPartland	

eBird List:

Patuxent River SP--Annapolis Rock Rd, Howard, Maryland, US

Feb 19, 2022 12:30 PM - 4:30 PM

Protocol: Traveling

2.0 mile(s)

Checklist Comments: 37-42 F, mostly sunny, wind NW 10-20 mph. HCBC field trip "How to Find an Owl".

6 species

Bald Eagle 2

Eastern Screech-Owl 0 pellets found in the white pines, no bird present.

Barred Owl 0 pellets found in the woods, but no bird seen.

Northern Saw-whet Owl 0 About 10-12 pellets found in pines, none really fresh. No birds found.

American Crow 6

Fish Crow 2

Common Raven 1

Hermit Thrush 1

White-throated Sparrow 2

View this checklist online at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S103128663>

Class photo:



Sample certificate:

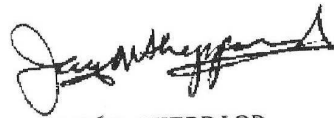
Certificate of Course Completion

This certifies that

JANE BIRDER

*Has completed a course in **How to Find an Owl** at Patuxent River State Park, Howard County, Maryland. Upon completion of the course, she is now able to identify scat, pellets and other animal signs found in the forest. Further, she has learned the habitat and dietary needs of our local owls.*

Dated: 22 February 2020



JAY M. SHEPPARD
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WISE OWL UNIVERSITY

Other pics from the day: Pulling pellets apart and Mary Maxey receiving her certificate at the end of day.

