



howard county
BIRD CLUB
50th ANNIVERSARY • 1972 - 2022

MEMBERS' MEMORIES

Sue Muller

Members of the Howard County Bird Club are friendly and welcoming and I love hanging out with them! They are eager to share their knowledge and love of birds.

I have participated in the Herp Atlas (as county coordinator), field trips, bird counts, butterfly surveys, fungi surveys, and the potluck. I've shared some of my travels as programs. I've been a board member and served as program chair for one year before becoming co-coordinator for Howard County the Third Breeding Bird Atlas.

My all-time favorite bird is the Bald Eagle

Technology has brought major changes. Atlasing now done with a smart phone so there is no more paper. The Merlin sound app provides identifications. No more CD's!

I have been one with birds from a very young age. As a child I could not see Bald Eagles or my state bird, the Eastern Bluebird. This troubled me and channeled my career path into Wildlife Management. I wanted to save birds and save the planet. There is not a day that goes by that I don't look at birds.

I have a member memory I would like to share about Dick Smith that goes back about 20-25 years. It goes back to the time of floppy disk cameras! "Although Dick Smith was an engineer, butterflies had been his passion since he was 10-years old. I even remember him telling me he saw Regal Fritillaries on the farm in Baltimore when he was growing up. I remember feeling envious since this species was extirpated in Maryland many years ago. For decades, he was recognized as Maryland's butterfly identification and distribution expert. And we were fortunate he lived in Columbia!

For many years, I was involved in a program with Trout Unlimited called "Trout in the Classroom". The children raise trout in tanks in their classroom from eggs and then release them a couple months later and learn all about the importance of cool, clean water for trout to survive. I met with students and volunteers from Trout Unlimited at the end of Eden Brook Drive one May morning. The students had released their trout and were standing on the banks of the Middle Patuxent River watching a fly fishing demonstration. I was standing behind all of the students. As the students were watching the demonstration, a butterfly landed on a rotting log. It was exciting because I didn't know what it was! I took many photos and then couldn't wait to get back to the office and pull out my field guides and identify it. This was long before the time of cell phones. I decided that I had found a Northern Pearly-eye. This was a new one for me. I looked in the checklist that Dick Smith had created and this was an uncommon find indeed. I picked up the phone and gave Dick a call at work. I told him of my find and that I was emailing him the photo for verification. YES!! Dick was so excited. This butterfly is common now, as it adapted to using Japanese Stiltgrass as a host plant.

If you have never seen Dick's butterfly checklist for Howard County, it is on the Howard County Bird Club website on the "Butterfly Resources" page. Although Dick died in 2016, his passion for butterflies was infectious and influenced many club members to study butterflies and think about butterfly conservation, myself included. His passion, guidance and knowledge of butterflies will always be with us!