



howard county
BIRD CLUB

50th ANNIVERSARY • 1972 – 2022

MEMBERS' MEMORIES

Clayton Koonce

I have been birding only for a few years, but I seem to have built up some memorable experiences already. One I will never forget, no matter how hard I try, was when I went looking for the snow goose reported at Larriland Farm Pond in January 2017. I had never seen a snow goose, and this one seemed like it would be easy to find, so I drove out there on a gray winter day and parked at the usual observing point along the road to look at the pond. No snow goose or any geese in view. After watching for a while and listing other birds -- and just one Canada goose flying over -- I decided to drive around the area and check any flocks of Canada geese as I had heard about other birders doing when looking for unusual goose species. I recall finding flocks browsing on the farm fields and seeing some in flight and stopping to examine them, but no obvious white goose could be seen mixing with them. Frustrated and cold, I headed back home in Columbia but decided to stop at a favorite antique store in Glenelg on the way. I love this antique store and usually visit when I'm out in that part of the county. It's full of a constantly changing hoard of treasures, and I've found lots of lovely stuff there to buy and take home to make my own hoard. (I've even found some good bird art there.) Well, I began my exploration of the store and slowly worked my way through the various rooms as I browsed over furniture, pottery, book-ends, mirrors, pictures, lamps and so on. Eventually, I made it to the back room, and there hanging over the fireplace was a stuffed snow goose. All white with the black wing tips and orange bill, just like in so many photos I'd seen. It had been mounted with wings spread out so that it looked like it was in flight. A gorgeous specimen. So I did not find the snow goose everyone else had seen, but I did find a snow goose. My life snow goose was a dead one? Any way, I photographed it with the proprietor's permission even though I could not list or post it on eBird or really count it as my first snow goose. One day a few weeks later, I rode out to the Eastern Shore with Kurt Schwarz, and I saw a thousand snow geese -- all alive.