



# The Goldfinch

Newsletter of the Howard County Bird Club  
 A Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society  
[www.howardbirds.website](http://www.howardbirds.website)



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## CLUB MEETINGS - BY MARY LOU CLARK

**Thursday, May 11, 2023** “Birding During a Semester Abroad in Panama“ by Kojo Baidoo. Kojo will have just returned from Panama and will share information about the ornithology-related work he did and birds he saw while there, and general information about the area.

Kojo is a 21-year-old birder and wildlife photographer from Baltimore, Maryland. He currently attends Princeton University, where he is pursuing a degree in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. Although he has always been interested in nature, he became fully immersed in birding in first grade after reading a book about raptors. Kojo added photography in seventh grade, finding it an excellent way to communicate the beauty of nature to the public.

Please note: Beginning with the January 2023 meeting, club programs will be presented in a hybrid format; attendees may join either in person at the Robinson Nature Center, 6692 Cedar Lane, Columbia MD 21044, or online using Zoom. At 7:00 p.m., the in-person hospitality session begins and the Zoom portal opens. Meeting and announcements begin at 7:30 p.m. with the program beginning around 8:00. On the HCBC website’s Home page, click on the “Calendar” tab at the top of the page for the most recent information. If you are symptomatic of an illness, we encourage you to attend the program virtually. Although masks are no longer required, they will be available for those who would feel more comfortable wearing them. There is a listing of all previous programs on the “Calendar” page titled [Previous Programs](#). Those (with exceptions) starting December 2020, are available on the [HCBC channel on YouTube](#).

## WINTER BIRD RECORDS: DECEMBER 1, 2022 – FEBRUARY 28, 2023

BY JOANNE SOLEM



Greater White-fronted Goose by Gregg Petersen

**B**irders not only enjoyed one of the warmest winters on record with no measurable snow, but were rewarded with numerous unusual birds.

The headline species this season were Ross’s Goose, Greater White-fronted Goose, Trumpeter Swan, Rufous Hummingbird, and Lapland Longspur. Also notable were Snow Goose, Long-tailed Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Common Goldeneye, Osprey, two record-early Great Horned Owl nestings, Long-eared Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Black-capped Chickadee, Marsh Wren, Lincoln’s Sparrow, and Baltimore Oriole.

A **Snow Goose** at a Jennings Chapel Rd pond 1/4 (**JHf**) wandered the area until 1/12 at Larriland Farm (**JHf**). An exciting start to the new year was a **Ross’s Goose** (9<sup>th</sup> record) in a field along Roxbury Mill Rd near Burnt Woods Rd 1/1 (**POs**, ph.). To complete the rare goose trifecta, a **Greater White-fronted Goose** (at least the 17<sup>th</sup>) appeared at Crest Lawn Memorial Gardens 2/19 (**JCu**); the same bird or another was photo’d heading north with hundreds of geese over the Mt Pleasant Skywatch 2/23 (**LGg**). **Cackling Goose** reports came from at least 15 locations; with highs of four at Larriland Farm 1/10 (**GPn**) and along Old Frederick Rd 2/19 (**JHf**). A strong northward movement of **Canada Geese** occurred on 2/23 (**MLC**, **JCu**, **RCu**, **LGg**, **J/MHr**, **SMu**, **CSt**, **VSw**, +).

Although **Trumpeter Swans** have been seen in small numbers for the last eight years, they are not frequent and identifying them requires care. A likely family group of eight was reported at a Larriland Farm pond 2/18 (**CSt**, verif. **JHf**), where they remained for the ([Records continued on page 3](#))

# SPRING FIELD TRIPS BY JOE HANFMAN

Field trips are a great way to improve birding skills, explore new places and meet other birders. Arrive at the meeting site ready to leave at the designated time with appropriate footwear and gear. Depending on the COVID situation at the time, there may be restrictions imposed. The leader may cancel due to inclement weather/hazardous driving conditions. Directions for trips not on ADC maps are on the Club's website. Questions? Contact the trip leader or Field Trip Coordinator Joe Hanfman at [aui1844@gmail.com](mailto:aui1844@gmail.com). HCBC members receive priority on trips that are limited by number of participants. No pets. There is a listing of all previous field trips on the "Calendar" page titled [Previous Field Trips](#). The trips with links have results on a separate page.

## **R** Spring Wildflower Walk

Weekday afternoon. Late April/mid-May. Date and location to be determined within a few days of the trip. If you would like to be contacted, send email to Bob and Jo Solem [odenata@msn.com](mailto:odenata@msn.com)

## **W**estern Regional Park

May 7, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 2-3 hours

Meet at Carr's Mill Road parking lot. Moderate walking along field edges and woodland trails. Opportunity for warblers, sparrows, thrushes, and flyovers. Facilities available.

Leader – David Sandler, [detour65@gmail.com](mailto:detour65@gmail.com)

## **B** May Count

May 13, Saturday. See announcement on [page 8](#).

## **B** Big Sit, Mt Pleasant, Howard County Conservancy

May 16, Tuesday, 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Please park on the grass away from the large parking pad and black topped areas, and meet at the Skywatch.

Join fellow birders at the Chandler S. Robbins Skywatch at the Howard County Conservancy. You can show up and leave at any time. This is an unofficial Big Sit. We will look for flyovers, and look for and listen to surrounding birds. No need to sign up, just show up. Different leaders have volunteered to take shifts for this day-long event (John Harris, Meg Harris, Mary Lou Clark, Kurt Schwarz, and Gregg Petersen).

Facilities available. Cancelled in case of heavy rain.

## **B R** MOS Convention

May 19 - 21. Registration open through May 3. See [www.mosconvention.org](http://www.mosconvention.org) for details.

## **P**atapsco Scrubland

May 27, Saturday, 7:30 a.m. (half day). Meet at 735 River Road (up long drive take right-hand split & park by house).

Starting in the scrubland, we'll look for warblers, vireos, thrushes, and other edge species. Depending on conditions, we may continue into the woods. Moderate to possibly difficult walking: steep trails with several stream crossings, so wear appropriate footwear. We will also be able to view Felicia's Chimney Swift tower. Facilities available.

Leader – Felicia Lovelett, [c5nest@gmail.com](mailto:c5nest@gmail.com)

## **B R** Birding for Beginners Series at [Rockburn Branch Park](#)

June 14 and June 28, Wednesdays, 8:00 a.m. Meet at end of the parking lot off Landing Rd entrance. Easy walking on trails and paths to learn the birds of woodland (June 14) and second-growth (June 28) habitats. Participants will use visual, auditory, and behavioral clues to learn basic identification skills. Use of binoculars and identification resources will be covered. Limit for each trip: 10. E-mail the leader to reserve a spot for either trip and get details.

Leader – Bonnie Ott, [sparrowdamsel@gmail.com](mailto:sparrowdamsel@gmail.com)

## **B** Butterfly Trips. [Mt Pleasant, Howard County Conservancy](#).

The HCBC Butterfly Group will be leading six summer walks, two each in June, July, and August. These walks are being co-sponsored with the Howard County Conservancy. Later in spring check the websites of both organizations for information and details.

## **B** Dick Smith Memorial Butterfly Walk

September 3, Sunday, 10:30 a.m. 2-3 hours

Meet at [Elkhorn Garden Plots](#), Oakland Mills Rd opposite Dasher Ct. Enjoy searching for late-summer butterflies with instruction on their identification. Easy walking on mowed paths around the community garden plots and Elkhorn meadow. We will continue on paved paths and mowed areas near the right-of-way alongside open, flowery wet meadows and brushy hillsides. Bring close-focus binoculars to view nectaring behavior. Cancelled if raining or overcast. No facilities.

Leader – Linda Hunt, [raven10322@hotmail.com](mailto:raven10322@hotmail.com)

<p><b>B</b> = Good for beginning birders  <b>W</b> = Wheelchair accessible  <b>R</b> = Reservations Required</p>
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## FIELD WORKSHOPS COMING

**D**o you want to see and hear more birds? Would you like to increase your enjoyment of those you do see? Are you willing to practice new techniques? If so, then the coming field workshops, beginning in the fall of 2023, may be just what you are looking for.

John Harris is an experienced HCBC birder and past club president with a strong commitment to mentorship as essential to improving birding skills. He will lead a series of small-group, hands-on, field workshops for beginning and intermediate birders eager to learn new skills. These will not be identification classes, nor are they regular field trips. They are designed, instead, to provide tools that experienced birders use routinely. The subjects covered will allow you to become more aware of your surroundings as well as help you understand some of the subtleties of bird observation. In other words, the workshops will help you enjoy even more birds!

Whether your interest lies in the birds at your feeders, in your neighborhood, or wherever a vacation might take you, these skills will be useful.

Watch for details in a summer Newsgram and the September/October *Goldfinch*.

(Records continued from page 1)

day. One or two **Tundras** lingered into the last days of 2022: Wilde Lake 12/28 (**LMcD**) and Centennial Pk 12/30 (**JCu-1; CHm-2**). A significant northward movement was caught the early morning of 2/22 with 73 at Triadelphia Reservoir (**TRIRS**) (**JHf**) and 402 over Barberry Way (appropriately by **Val Swan**).

A banded male **Wood Duck** with a female was photo'd in the Dorsey's Search area 2/23 (**AAI**). Four **Blue-winged Teal** at Alpha Ridge Landfill (**ALRGL**) 1/23 (**JHf**) were not only the county's sole winter record, but just the second Jan record. With mild temperatures, Race Rd Wetlands (**RACRW**) was ice-free most of the season. **Northern Shovelers** topped out there at 23 on 1/8 (**RSm**), while one at Lake Kittamaquidi on 1/21 (**K/MPI**, ph.) was at an infrequent location. The **Gadwall** total at **RACRW** reached 25 on 1/9 (**CSt**). One **Northern Pintail** was present on **TRIRS** 1/2 (**GPn, RRf**); one or two stayed at **RACRW** from 1/6 (**MMx-2**) to 2/11 (**JW-1**).

Diving ducks were well represented. A female **Canvasback** at Centennial Pk 1/9 (**W/SE**, ph.) settled there for the rest of the winter. A male at a Meadowridge Business Park pond 1/31 (**JW**) was at an unusual location. A few **Redheads** made an appearance with nine at **TRIRS** 12/26 (**GPn**). The number of **Ring-necked Ducks** at Lake Kittamaquidi fluctuated dramatically all winter with the flock reaching 97 on 1/15 (**CKc**), a fine number for that location. A **Long-tailed Duck** was photo'd at Big Branch, **TRIRS** 1/3 (**SLk**). The reservoir is an expected location; shallow Waverly Pond, where one appeared during Mid-winter Count 2/4 (**KS, YYL**), is not. A **Common Goldeneye** at **TRIRS** 12/19 was the winter's lone sighting (**SLk, GPn**). Fifty **Hooded Mergansers** at Pigtail 12/21 (**CHm**) was a fine count. The wintering **Common Mergansers** at **TRIRS** peaked at 1,880 on 12/26 (**GPn**), close to their usual high.

The 30 **Wild Turkeys** counted in a field along MD 94, near Cooksville on 1/18 (**SMc**) were one of the county's higher counts, though the 42 at W. Friendship Pk 2/14/16 (**BO**) still tops the list. Seventeen in a field at the edge of Clarksville remained in view much of 1/23 (**SLk**).

An im. male **Rufous Hummingbird** was banded at a Woodmark feeder 12/14 (**BPj**). It was last seen 12/15 (**JKy**); the second Rufous, an adult male, had left earlier on an unknown date. Many birders were grateful to Joyce for sharing this visitor from the West. Single **American Coots** showed up in Dec at Lake Elkhorn (**ALw**) and **RACRW** (**RSm**) on 12/2, Lime Kiln Rd ponds 12/17 (**JHr**), and Fulton Pd 12/20 (**GPn**); reappearing in Feb at Lake Elkhorn 2/10 (**J/MHr**).

The last **Wilson's Snipe** of 2022 was photo'd at David Force WMA 12/10 (**SJn**); the first two of 2023 were counted at **ALRGL** 2/27 (**RCu, JHf**). **American Woodcock** sightings began on 2/14 at **RACRW** (**MLC**). There were also reports from Hipsley Mill (**GPn**), River Rd, Sykesville (**FLv**), and two sites at Gateway (**SLk; J/MHr**), with a high of six at Hipsley 2/23 (**DCm, RRf**). The most unexpected was one in the grass and dry leaves at Symphony Woods, downtown Columbia the early p.m. of 2/19 (**CKc**). Photographing this crepuscular bird in daylight was a rare treat.

A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** at the Jessup Trash Transfer Station 1/1 (**JHf**) was the most interesting gull of the season and a promising start to the new year. An **Osprey** (second Feb record) at Lake Kittamaquidi 2/12 (**CCt**) got a three week jump on the species' usual March arrival date.

An **Eastern Screech-Owl** calling the early afternoon of 1/21 at W. Friendship Pk (**J/MHr**) was odd. The Hallmark box has hosted an intermediate phase bird for months; on 1/22, it and a gray phase were seen there at different times. So, the saga continues—maybe this will be the year they will nest (**WEb**). **Great Horned Owls** are among the county's earliest nesters. They utilize old nests of hawks, crows, and squirrels, only infrequently reusing a nest. This season, however, two pairs returned to well-built hawk nests and began egg-laying prior to any previous county records. One at Blandair was first observed on the nest in late Dec (**MEI**), while a female at **ALRGL** was first observed on 1/3 (**RCu**). A **Long-eared Owl** was the highlight of the Annapolis Rock field workshop 2/18 (**DCm, GPn, VSw**). Although no **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was found on the owl trip, there was an individual in those pines. It was heard from the parking lot the early evening of 2/23 (**DCm, RRf**).

Four **Tree Swallows** got a Feb jump on spring. One was flying over the Skywatch at Mt Pleasant 2/23 (**LGg**); the same day one rested on a utility line along So. Trotter Rd (**WE**); the third was at **RACRW** 2/27 (**BO**); the fourth site was **ALRGL** 2/27 (**JHf**).

**Merlins** were spotted at more than a dozen locations, some repeatedly at a site. Two **Peregrine Falcons** were flying together at **TRIRS** 12/16 (**SLk, ph.**); one was noted the same day at MD 108/Middle Patuxent River (**S/WE**).

Occasionally, a **Black-capped Chickadee** moves in for the winter. Identification by sight and sound is subtle—and there is a strong possibility of hybrids. A bird at A E Mullinix Rd with three resident **Carolinas** on 2/6 (**GPn**) was well-substantiated with photos and description. The appearance of a second at Tiller Dr on 2/22 (**JCu, ph.**) was “in the range of a Black-capped” (**JHf**).



Black-capped Chickadee

by Gregg Petersen

(Records continued on page 4)

*(Records continued from page 3)*

Five **Winter Wrens** at Long Corner 12/4 (MPw) was a nice count. A **Marsh Wren** at Belmont 12/8 (KS, BO) to 12/28 (LGg) was just the third winter record. As might be expected during a mild winter, a scattering of **Gray Catbirds** and **Brown Thrashers** were reported. Few contained details, however.

Boreal bird numbers were better than the previous winter, but not by much. **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were well-reported; numbers were generally low with six at Gateway 1/15 (JHf). A few **Pine Siskins** moved around with little consistency. Two at TRIRS 2/4 (JWd) were flyovers. **Purple Finches** were widespread, but also inconsistent. The high count was 23 at Duvall Rd feeders 2/18 (K Tf) swelling the usual daily half dozen.

Four **Lapland Longspurs** (19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> record) in near-breeding plumage were present at ALRGL 2/27 (RCu, JHf, ph.). After a Rare Bird Alert, 18 people visited the limited access site on a 2/28 field trip; unfortunately, the birds were not refound. On the late morning of 3/2 Ralph found one. He and Joe hastily obtained permission and made arrangements for an early afternoon trip for the original group. This time they were successful! **American Tree Sparrows** continue their downward trend with the entire season producing just one or two at half a dozen sites. For the second consecutive year, there were zero on Mid-winter Count. There have always been fluctuations in their numbers, but small flocks were usually present each winter. It's hard to believe that the MW count in 1996 tallied 205! The high **Chipping Sparrow** count was 15 at Barberry Way 2/13 (VSw). A flock of ~100 **Song Sparrows** was counted at W. Friendship Pk 12/26 (CHm). A **Lincoln's Sparrow** was at Barberry Way 12/27 (VSw, details). Although the species is rare in winter, this individual may have been a lingerer from the one or two that had been seen sporadically and photo'd from late Sept through Oct at that location. Seven **White-crowned Sparrows** were notched at Bowling Green Farm, Underwood Rd 2/4 (CSt, VSw). Sadly, it was one of the few winter sightings.

The **Eastern Meadowlark** flock at ALRGL topped out at 25 on 2/28 (RCu, JHf+). Seven along Florence Rd 12/26 (MPw) were a pleasant surprise. Three male **Baltimore Orioles** were reported during the season. One at So. Trotter Rd on 12/11, 15, and 24 "frequented a globe feeder with a seed mix that contained dried fruit" (W/SE). The second was the well-known Mt Hebron bird that showed up on 1/1 for the fourth consecutive winter to feast on his favorite apple jelly (JCu). The third appeared at Sweet Fern, E. Col. 1/16 (*fide* JSh). **Rusty Blackbirds** were reported from about a dozen locations, always in the low to mid single digits.

A few **Pine Warblers** usually spend the winter. One joined a flock of **Eastern Bluebirds** at Crest Lawn Mem. Gardens where it was noticed 1/5 (JHf); it remained the rest of the winter. The earliest migrant Pines came in the last week of Feb. At least two availed themselves of suet at feeders (KO'S; ATp).

An im. **Indigo Bunting** frequented a feeder at Indian Hill Dr from 2/22 into spring (CLm, ph.); this bird was the county's first-ever Feb record.



Lapland Longspur

by Val Swan

**Correction:** The Mt Pleasant **Prairie Warbler** on 10/14/22 (KS) has been retracted.

**Bonus sightings:** A Mink in the stream at Schooley Mill Pk 12/13/22 was a fine sighting (JHr). An Eastern Chipmunk was out in snow showers at Stone Hill Dr 2/25/23 (KLz).

**Appreciation** – Many thanks to Joe Hanfman and Russ Ruffing for their careful editing of the text.

**Observers:** AAI – Annette Allor, MLC – Mary Lou Clark, Cct – Carly Costello, JCu – Jeff Culler, RCu – Ralph Cullison, DCm – David Cummings, SE – Sue Earp, WE – Wes Earp, WEb – Ward Ebert, MEI – Mandy Elder, LGg – Lynn Gregg, CHm – Catherine Hallam, JHf – Joe Hanfman, JHr – John Harris, MHR – Meg Harris, SJn – Steven Jones, JKy – Joyce Kelly, CKc – Clayton Koonce, YYL – Yi-Ying Lee, CLm – Connie Lemon, ALw – Allen Lewis, KLz – Kathy Litzinger, FLv – Felicia Lovelett, SLk – Steve Luke, SMe – Sara Macri, MMx – Mary Maxey, LMcD – Lauren McDougale, SMu – Sue Muller, POs – Peter Osenton, KO'S – Karen O'Steen, BO – Bonnie Ott, BPj – Bruce Peterjohn, GPn – Gregg Petersen, KPI – Kate Plough, MPI – Matt Plough, MPw – Mary Prowell, RRF – Russ Ruffing, RSm – Ryan Salsman, KS – Kurt Schwarz, JSh – Jay Sheppard, CSt – Chuck Stirrat, VSw – Val Swan, ATp – Ashley Tipton, K Tf – Kate Tufts, JWd – Josh Ward, JW – Jim Wilkinson.

## LESSONS LEARNED ABOUT “SEEING” AN OWL

BY DAVID CUMMINGS

On February 18, 2023, the Howard County Bird Club sponsored its annual field trip to look for owls. Usually the target is the Northern Saw-whet Owl. It roosts in the daytime and sometimes can be found by looking carefully around the base of pine trees for its excrement (“whitewash”) and pellets of undigested prey that it coughs up once each day.

Co-leader Gregg Petersen had sent each of the 32 participants information sheets on Mid-Atlantic owls that had been written by Jay Sheppard who, for decades, had led this trip. Armed with Jay’s keys to identifying owls, about 10:00 a.m. we spread out and started looking for whitewash and pellets in a grove of pines. It was not long before one of the participants, Val Swan, found a nice swath of whitewash beneath a pine tree, and soon others began finding pellets nearby. Val finally located the owl, but it remained well hidden among the pine needles and branches near the top of the tree.



Prey items from owl pellets collected February 18, 2023 at Annapolis Rock. Jay Sheppard identified most of these small mammal skeletal fragments as meadow voles. The reddish tooth indicates a shrew species.

*by David Cummings*

Though we could only see parts of the side and back, the owl seemed much too large to be a Northern Saw-whet. Finally, a trip participant was able to get a quick look at the head and noticed that the owl had ear tufts. This ruled out a Barred Owl, leaving Great Horned and Longed-eared Owls as possibilities.

While deliberations were ongoing, another trip participant, Melissa Chapman, informed a trip co-leader that someone had noticed the red teeth of a shrew in one of the pellets.

It was commendable that the participant had read and remembered the key to owl prey that Jay had provided in his information sheets. It was not so commendable that the trip co-leader (me) did not “see” that the observation made the owl more likely to be a Long-eared than a Great Horned Owl. Had we investigated some of the pellets, we would have seen several skull and bone fragments of small mammals, such as meadow voles, white-footed mice, and shrews (see the photo of some of the contents of pellets collected by Melissa and later examined by me). We would not have seen fragments of larger bones that, per Jay Sheppard, would make up the contents of a Great Horned Owl pellet.

We departed from the owl’s roost site under the impression that it was a Great Horned Owl, partly because we “experienced” birders couldn’t imagine that a Long-eared Owl would tolerate 32 people milling at the base of its roost tree. Later, after close examination of a photo taken by Joe Hanfman, it was determined that our call was wrong. It was a Long-eared Owl.

I learned two lessons from this field trip:

1. Listen to and incorporate into your thinking the observations of your trip participants.
2. There is more than one way to “see” an owl, even one that is largely hidden from view.

## WEST FRIENDSHIP PARK KESTREL BOX

BY GREGG PETERSEN

The Howard County Bird Club (HCBC) received a kestrel box some time ago and we have been looking for a good place to put it. After reviewing sites at Mount Pleasant and West Friendship Park we obtained Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks permission to place a box at the West Friendship property. We have seen American Kestrels routinely in the West Friendship area and hope to encourage a pair to nest there in a place with sufficient grassland and bugs to eat. As for timing, the breeding season has begun for the kestrels, and HCBC member Donna Carollo has volunteered to assist with the monitoring of the box. We especially appreciate the assistance we received from Brenda Lee, the Howard County Natural Resource Coordination Manager, who not only approved our project but helped me install the box. You can view pictures of the event on our Howard County Bird Club [Facebook](#) site.

## HOWARD COUNTY MID-WINTER COUNT, FEBRUARY 4, 2023

BY JOE HANFMAN

Count day was cold and partially cloudy with temperatures 14 to 24°F and no precipitation. The ponds were 90% frozen and rivers were flowing. We recorded 81 species which is below the average of 88.2 species recorded in the last 37 years. The total number of individual birds was 19,412, which is 28,005 below the average number of birds recorded and 145,488 below the maximum number of birds recorded.

The top birds were a Long-tailed Duck and Pine Warbler for the eighth time, and a Baltimore Oriole was seen for only the sixth time on the count. The Baltimore Oriole returned to the same feeder for the fourth winter eating apple jelly.

An all-time high count was recorded for Gray Catbird (5). All-time low counts were recorded for Killdeer (1), Sharpshinned Hawk (1), American Crow (558), crow sp. (213), American Goldfinch (84), and White-crowned Sparrow (8).

Forty-seven of the 81 species tallied have been seen on all 37 Midwinter Counts. Seventy-six of the 81 species tallied have been seen on at least 50% of all 37 Midwinter Counts.

The birds that have been seen on more than half of the counts but were missed this year were Mute Swan (not expected), Gadwall, American Wigeon, Northern Pintail, Canvasback, Lesser Scaup, Pied-billed Grebe, American Coot, Wilson's Snipe, Northern Harrier, American Kestrel, Brown Thrasher, Cedar Waxwing, and American Tree Sparrow.

Many people contributed to the success of the day. Fifty-eight parties of 67 observers spent 184.8 hours and covered 120.1 miles on foot and 480.8 miles by car. Another 18.7

hours were spent feeder watching, plus 8.4 hours stationary and 2.9 hours of owling.

Chuck Stirrat updated the taxonomic order, summarized the area worksheets, and provided field and feeder checklists. Area leaders arranged coverage, did follow-up as necessary, and compiled area totals. Their names are in boldface below (*anyone who counted in more than one area or also at a feeder is listed just once*). Due to Covid-19 protocols, the tally was done virtually with Zoom.

Land permission from Howard County Dept. of Recreation and Parks, Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, and many private property owners assure good coverage—we are extremely grateful.

Observers: *Area 1.* **Wes Earp**, Jim & Marilyn Brinkley, Donna Carollo, Sue Earp, Lynn Gregg, Brenda Kidera, Megan Kirkegaard, Kathie Lillie, Woody Merkle, Mary Prowell, Lisa Troutman, Mark Wallace; *Area 2.* **Russ Kovach**, Mary Lou Clark, Jeff & Karen Culler, David Holmes, Patty Iammatteo, Andrew Kovach, Lauren McDougle, Joshua Ward; *Area 3.* **Chuck Stirrat**, Jane & Mark Chandler, Ralph Cullison, Joe Hanfman, Dave & Maureen Harvey, Steve Jones, Mike Kerwin, Yi-Ying Lee, Felicia Lovelett, Kari & Karlyn McPartland, Bonnie Ott, Russ Ruffing, Valerie Swan; *Area 4.* **Mike McClure**, Meghaan Lane, Mike Leumas, *Area 5.* **Chuck Stirrat**, David Cummings, Clayton Koonce, Steve Luke, Brian Moyer, Sherry Tomlinson; *Area 6.* **John Harris**, Karan Blum, Meg Harris, Brigitte Lund, Janet Lydon, Karlyn McPartland, Steve Parr; *Area 7.* **Kurt Schwarz**, Andy & Dianne Aguilera, George & Theresa Berkheimer, Ken Clark, Bob & Jan Depuy, John McKitterick, Sue Muller, Sue Neri, Tim Ray, Linda Roberts, Jo Solem, Eva Sunell, Jim Wilkinson.

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## MARYLAND/DC BREEDING BIRD ATLAS 3, 2020-2024

BY SUE MULLER

Well, it won't be long and the wave of migrants and nesting birds will arrive in Maryland! We do have some early nesters, though, like the Red-tailed Hawk and Red-shouldered Hawk. Do you have any hawks nesting in your yard that you have not documented in the Breeding Bird Atlas portal? If you need help, just contact your County Coordinators: [howard@mdbirds.org](mailto:howard@mdbirds.org).

Everyone can help out with the Atlas just documenting yard birds. Keep an eye out for Wild Turkey with poults. Do you hear or have owls nesting in your yard? Maybe you have a Purple Martin colony. Perhaps you see a Ruby-throated Hummingbird taking nest material you have put out. The possibilities are endless right in your own yard!

After three years of surveys, 100 species have been confirmed breeding in Howard County! Over 300 people have contributed more than 16,000 checklists to the eBird Breeding Bird Atlas Portal.

Howard County Mid-Winter Count -February 4, 2023					
	Totals		Totals		Totals
Cackling Goose	1	Pileated Woodpecker	46	Baltimore Oriole	1
Canada Goose	4,551	Eastern Phoebe	2	Red-winged Blackbird	777
Wood Duck	2	Blue Jay	219	Brown-headed Cowbird	42
Mallard	178	American Crow	558	Common Grackle	368
American Black Duck	16	Fish Crow	262	Pine Warbler	1
Ring-necked Duck	206	<i>crow species</i>	213	Yel.-rump'd (Myrtle) Warbler	5
Long-tailed Duck	1	Common Raven	11	Northern Cardinal	708
Bufflehead	20	Carolina Chickadee	257	<b>Total Birds:</b>	<b>19,412</b>
Hooded Merganser	64	Tufted Titmouse	325	<b>Total Species:</b>	<b>81</b>
Common Merganser	372	Horned Lark	19		<b>Totals</b>
Ruddy Duck	1	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	5		
Wild Turkey	6	Golden-crowned Kinglet	14	<b>Time Start:</b>	5:00 a
Rock Pigeon	80	Red-breasted Nuthatch	3	<b>Time Stop:</b>	6:00 p
Mourning Dove	285	White-breasted Nuthatch	215	<b>Hours on Foot:</b>	126.3
Killdeer	1	Brown Creeper	14	<b>Hours by Car:</b>	58.5
Ring-billed Gull	188	Carolina Wren	290	<b>Hours by Boat:</b>	.0
Herring Gull	21	Winter Wren	21	<b>Hours Other:</b>	.0
Great Black-backed Gull	1	Gray Catbird	5	<b>Miles on Foot:</b>	120.1
<i>gull species</i>	2	Northern Mockingbird	124	<b>Miles by Car:</b>	480.8
Great Blue Heron	16	European Starling	1,622	<b>Miles by Boat:</b>	.0
Black Vulture	192	Eastern Bluebird	378	<b>Miles Other:</b>	.0
Turkey Vulture	288	Hermit Thrush	24	<b>Hours Feeder Watching:</b>	18.7
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	American Robin	681	<b>Hours Stationary:</b>	8.4
Cooper's Hawk	8	House Sparrow	496	<b>Hours "Owling":</b>	2.9
<i>accipiter species</i>	1	House Finch	233	<b>Miles "Owling":</b>	14.7
Bald Eagle [ad/im/unk]	15	Purple Finch	13		<b>Totals</b>
Red-shouldered Hawk	74	Pine Siskin	2	Total Field Observers:	64
Red-tailed Hawk	34	American Goldfinch	84	Total Field Parties:	50
<i>buteo species</i>	1	Chipping Sparrow	13	Total Feederwatchers:	12
Eastern Screech-Owl	1	Field Sparrow	50	Total Feeder Parties:	8
Great Horned Owl	3	Fox Sparrow	11	<b>Total Observers:</b>	<b>67</b>
Barred Owl	6	Dark-eyed Junco	1,113	<b>Total Parties:</b>	<b>58</b>
Belted Kingfisher	16	White-crowned Sparrow	8	Total Field Party-Hrs (Reg.):	184.8
Red-headed Woodpecker	1	White-throated Sparrow	2,266	Total Party-Hrs (Feeder):	18.7
Red-bellied Woodpecker	189	Savannah Sparrow	32	Total Party-Hrs (Stationary):	8.4
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	22	Song Sparrow	604	Total Party-Hrs (Owling):	2.9
Downy Woodpecker	175	Swamp Sparrow	47	<b>Total Party-Hours:</b>	<b>214.7</b>
Hairy Woodpecker	54	Eastern Towhee	42		<b>Totals</b>

Anyone is welcome to contribute articles or ideas which you think will be of interest to other birders. Copy may be sent to the following address:

Megan Bolcar, Editor  
12136 Gray Star Way  
Columbia, MD 21044  
howardbirdclub@mdbirds.org

**The Goldfinch**, newsletter of the Howard County Bird Club, is published five times per year. Copy deadline for the September/October 2023 issue is July 25, 2023.

Megan Bolcar, *Editor*  
Joanne Solem, *Proofreader*

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS

The May 25 board meeting will be held by teleconference or videoconference. If you have input or questions, please send an email to Kristin Trouton at [kristing4420@gmail.com](mailto:kristing4420@gmail.com).

## DO YOU GARDEN FOR WILDLIFE? CHECK HCBC'S POLLINATOR RESOURCE PAGE:

<https://howardbirds.website/pollinator-resources/>

## MAY COUNT IS SATURDAY, MAY 13, 2023

BY GREGG PETERSEN

**H**ello everyone! We are in the early stages of migration. We will see more and more species in the coming weeks until the peak in early May. May Count, always the second Saturday in May, is on May 13<sup>th</sup> this year.

For beginning birders, this is an excellent opportunity to be paired with more experienced birders in order to see and hear many residents and spring migrants. Think warblers, vireos, thrushes, shorebirds, etc. The spring migrants are passing through headed north, the summer residents are back and some of the winter migrants are still around. Over the last 10 years across the county, we have tallied an average of 139 species during the May Count. The total for 2022 was 132.

For the count, Howard County is divided up into the seven areas shown on the map ([Page 9](#)). (The PDF with the map and boundaries is always available at <https://howardbirds.website/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CountAreaArticle.pdf>.) Each area has an Area Coordinator (name and phone number listed below) who communicates with the counters, assigns territories, and compiles area results. If you are a beginner, ask to be teamed with a more experienced birder. Since the point is to tally every individual bird, your extra eyes and ears are helpful. If you want to see a particular species, give me a call, or send an email (202-256-8166/sig29@aol.com) and I will try to place you in a location where you would have a good chance of seeing that bird. If your time is not predictable for the Count, I encourage you to join a team or count as an individual in your yard or neighborhood for some time that day. If you decide to pursue this approach, please let me know of your intent and what constitutes your neighborhood.

Area 1	Bill Hill	410-599-9493
Area 2	Russ Kovach	443-386-4787/russell.kovach@gmail.com
Area 3	Chuck Stirrat	443-462-8234/stirrer1@gmail.com
Area 4	Mike McClure	410-531-2780/michael.mcclure@jhupl.edu
Area 5	Kristin Trouton	410-299-3387/kristing4420@gmail.com
Area 6	John Harris	843-592-4051/jaybee.harris@gmail.com
Area 7	Amy Anderson	904-891-4458/amyanderson72@gmail.com

At the end of the day, all our counters are invited to a tally rally to share what was seen and come up with the county totals. This year's tally rally will be preceded by a one hour in-person potluck starting at 6 p.m. at Mary Lou Clark's house, 5153 Morningside Lane, Ellicott City 21043; [doctorfx\\_99@yahoo.com](mailto:doctorfx_99@yahoo.com). Unless you are still in the field, please try to submit your checklist to your Area Coordinator by the start of the tally rally at 7:00 p.m. It's a great opportunity to swap stories of the day and find out what everyone else has seen, especially some of the rarities of the day. The goal is for the completed checklists to be turned in Area Coordinators by the time of the tally rally. I will also provide a Zoom link for those counters that are interested in that option.

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## 2023 POTLUCK

BY SHERRY TOMLINSON

**T**he Howard County Bird Club's Annual Potluck was back and better than ever. After a three-year absence, our bird club members were excited and energized to be together doing what we love - talking about birds and our birding adventures. On Saturday, March 25th, thirty-two members gathered at the Robinson Nature Center, bringing delicious food - from Kurt's famous split pea soup to Caprese salad, Spanish omelette, and a smorgasbord of goodness. We enjoyed a dessert extravaganza with homemade pies, Kristin's amazing double chocolate chip cookies, meringues and oatmeal bars. We'd like to say congratulations to the winner of the drawing for two tickets to the Wine in the Garden / Beer in the Barn event - Meg Harris. The second half of the evening, the after dinner slide show was equally enjoyable. We want to thank Bonnie, Kurt, Gregg, Sue and Wes, and Sherry, for presenting their incredible photos to the group, and John McKitterick for handling the audio-visual system. A special thank you goes out to Kathie Lillie for being this year's potluck co-chair - your help and experience were invaluable. We'd like to thank the Robinson Nature Center's staff for arranging the tables and chairs for us, which is much appreciated. Lastly, I'd like to thank the many people who generously assisted with set-up and take-down. This year's potluck was a tremendous success. Happy birding to all, as we look forward to another year of birding adventures and the 2024 annual potluck.



Club members enjoy a variety of dishes and a chance to socialize at the long-awaited return of the annual potluck.

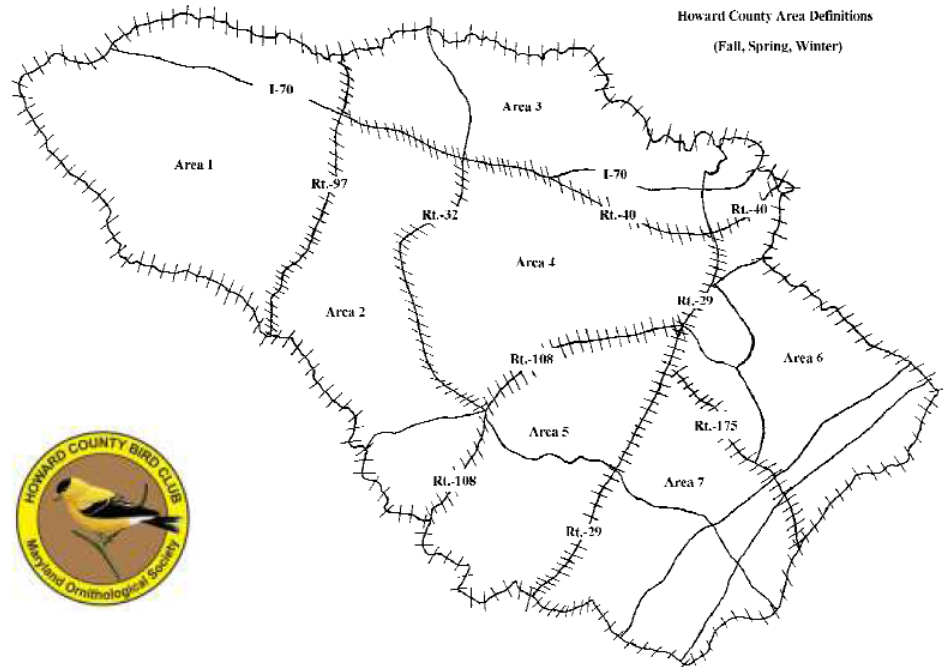
by Kelsey Wellons



## Boundaries for Howard County Bird Count Areas

By Chuck Stirrat and Mike McClure

A standard set of areas are now used for all three seasonal bird counts conducted in Howard County. The definitions of these areas are described below and shown in the accompanying figure. The count results are collected and published using these area boundaries. If you have a preference for counting in one area contact the coordinator for that area or specify the area when you call the county count coordinator to volunteer.



**Area 1:** Western sections of Howard County west of MD 97, bordered by Montgomery County to southwest and Carroll County to the north. Includes the western end of Patuxent River State Park. Rural farm areas. Several farms not open to the public are accessed.

**Area 2:** Bordered by MD 97 on west, I-70 on north, Montgomery County on south, and on east is bounded by MD 32 north of Clarksville and MD 108 south to county line. Includes Triadelphia Reservoir area of WSSC.

**Area 3:** Bordered on west by MD 97, on north and east by Patapsco River and on south by US 40 till it joins I-70 and then I-70 west to MD 97.

Includes Mt. Pleasant, Patapsco St. Park [Daniels, Hollofield (N), Henryton], David Force Park, Hugg-Thomas WMA, and Alpha Ridge Landfill and Park.

**Area 4:** Central portions of county bordered on west by MD 32, on south by MD 108, on east by US 29 and on north by US 40/I-70. Includes Centennial Park, Univ. of Maryland Central Farm, Benson Branch Environmental Area, and Glenelg Country School.

**Area 5:** South central portion of county bordered by MD 108 on west & north, by US 29 on east, and Montgomery County to south. Includes Wilde Lake, Browns Bridge (WSSC), Howard Comm. College, Lake Kittamaquundi,

JHU/APL, Middle Patuxent River valley, Schooley Mill Park.

**Area 6:** Eastern end of county bordered by US 40 and the Patapsco River on the north, US 29 on the west, MD 175 on the south, and Anne Arundel County on the east. It includes Rockburn Branch Park, Patapsco Valley St. Park (Avalon, Hollofield (S)), Belmont Conference Center, and New Cut Landfill.

**Area 7:** Southeast corner of county, bordered by US 29 on the west, MD 175 on the north, Prince George's County on the south and Anne Arundel County on the east. Includes Rocky Gorge Reservoir area (WSSC), Lake Elkhorn, and Gateway.



## HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB

*Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society*

P. O. BOX 1323

COLUMBIA MD 21044-1323

### May/June 2023 - Inside This Issue

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W. Friendship Park Kestrel Box	Returning (Closer) to Normal

## RETURNING (CLOSER) TO NORMAL

It can, at times, be difficult to remember life before the Covid-19 pandemic. Early in 2020, the Howard County Bird Club (HCBC) took measures to keep members safe while still providing opportunities to learn, explore, and socialize. Field trips were initially cancelled early in 2020, slowly returning with mask requirements and limits on the number of participants. Events that previously occurred in-person, including club programs, tally rallies, and the annual potluck, were switched to virtual events or cancelled. Sometimes it felt as though things would never return to normal. While we may not be fully there, the 2022-23 year brought us closer than ever. HCBC continued to provide field trip opportunities, hosted a wonderful in-person 50th anniversary celebration weekend, and welcomed the much-anticipated return of the annual potluck! As of January 2023, monthly meetings changed from exclusively Zoom to a hybrid format so that those who were comfortable meeting in person could again attend at the Robinson Nature Center. Thanks to everyone's patience, understanding, and hard work, the HCBC had a truly amazing birding year!



HCBC members enjoy the return of the annual potluck.

*by Kelsey Wellons*



Field trip leader Russell Kovach demonstrates a Barred Owl call for attendees of the March 12 Centennial Park field trip.

*by Mary Lou Clark*



The 50th anniversary celebration features many events, including field trips and a commemorative event at Gudelsky Environmental Education Center.

*Left photo by Kelsey Wellons; middle and right photo by Mary Maxey*