

The newsletter of the Montgomery County Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society

May 2008

Volume 38, No. 4

PRESIDENT'S CHAT

As I write this in early April, the weather is going from Spring to Winter and back again, but the early warblers are making their appearance, so it won't be long until migration is really under way.

Since this is my last President's Chat, I want to take the time to tell you all that I have enjoyed my two years as your President. I couldn't have done it without a most dedicated and helpful Council. Many thanks to Mike Bowen, Mark England, David Gray, Howard Lefkowitz, Andy Martin, Judy McCartney, Jim Nelson, Ed Patten, Tricia Tice, and Anna Urciolo.



You will all be receiving an invitation to the dedication of the Luther Goldman Birding Trail on May 19. The dedication, sponsored by the MD-National Park and Planning Commission, is not open to the public; the only way individuals will be able to attend will be if their name is on the invitation list and they RSVP by the printed date. MBC is being invited, as we made a contribution to the trail some time ago. So watch your mailboxes!

Many thanks to the Nominating Committee, Ann Lucy, Lou DeMouy, and Ann Weeks, for a job well done. For the results of their work, see the slate for the 2008-2009 year on page 2.

I look forward to seeing you at the meetings or in the field.

—Helen Patton

Many Thanks

The Club is grateful for the support from donors to the Claudia Wilds Fund and/or sustaining members: William Adams, Stephen Boehm, Robert and Janet Barnard, Mike and Joy Bowen, David and Ellen Cohen, Josephine Cox and Glen Johnston, Lou and Jane DeMouy, Clare Gnecco, David and Helen Gray, David Griffin, Clive Harris, Bob Hartman, Ann Hobbs and David Livengood, Paul and Ruth Honke, Cyndie Loeper, Kay Jones, Ann Lucy, Edwin Lyon, Mieke Mehlman, Gary Nelson, Jim and Ann Nelson, Robert Parsons, Helen Patton, Marie Plante, Michelle Price and Megan Carroll, Charles Moseley and Kit Angell, Evelyn Ralston, Lydia Schindler, Emma Shelton and F. K. Millar, Ralph and Betsy Stevens, Elinor Talmadge, John Williamson, and Chris Wright.

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Spring/Summer Calendar



May 10 (Saturday), 25th Annual World Series of Birding. New Jersey Audubon will host the 25th annual World Series of Birding, an event that has changed the birding landscape and raised over \$8 million for bird conservation. Every species found/every dollar raised preserves and protects critical bird habitat.

May 19 (Monday), 6 p.m. Dedication of the Luther Goldman Birding Trail, Lake Artemesia Natural Area Park, Prince George's County (invitation only, RSVP required).

May 21 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m. Election of Officers. Then, "*Birds of Kenya and Tanzania.*" Ed Patten, MBC. In December 2006, Ed and his wife joined their daughter, who was spending a semester in Kenya, and took one week exploring Amboseli National Park, Ngorongoro Crater (where they spent Christmas), and the Serengeti plains, and another week in Nairobi. Chairs: David and Helen Gray. Refreshments: Helen and David Gray.

May 30-June 1 (Friday-Sunday), MOS 2008 Conference. Ramada Conference Center, Edgewood, Harford County.

June 14 (Saturday), MOS Board Meeting. Hosted by Cecil County Bird Club at Colchester Farm in Kent County. For info, contact Janet Shields, MOS Secretary, at janetbill@prodigy.net.

Meetings take place at the Potomac Presbyterian Church, 10301 River Road. Potomac. From the Beltway, take Exit 39 (River Rd/Rte 190) toward Potomac. After crossing Falls Rd (Rte 189), continue 1/4 mile to Gary Rd on the right. Turn right on Gary Rd, then take an immediate left into the church parking area. (OK to park in the adjacent elementary school lot as well.) Meetings take place in the Fellowship Hall, ground level. Doors open at 7 p.m. Cancellation policy: Chapter meetings are canceled if Montgomery County schools have been closed. If you have questions, call Helen Patton at 301-588-5418.

The Chat is published in February, May, August, and November by the Montgomery Bird Club, a chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society.

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Visit our homepage at www.mdkinc.com/mccbld.
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MAY COUNT: MAY 10

Wherever you're birding in Montgomery County on this day, in your backyard or in the field, bring along a copy of the May Count Checklist, and keep track of the variety and numbers of birds you see. The May Count Checklist can be downloaded from the MOS web site (www.md-birds.org/counts/namc/namcchecklist.pdf). Please submit completed checklist forms by mail to the compiler, Andy Martin, at 3 Thorburn Road, Gaithersburg, MD 20878 or fax to 301-294-4805 by June 15. For more information, contact Andy at 301-294-4805 (h), 301-529-2066 (m), or apmartin2@comcast.net or visit the MOS web page: [www.md-birds.org/counts/namc.html](http://www.md-birds.org/counts/namc/namc.html).


Election Slate

- President:** Jim Nelson
Vice President: Steve Pretl
Secretary: Tricia Tice*
Treasurer: Sally Wechsler
State Directors:
Mike Bowen*
Brad Beukema
Judy McCartney*
Chapter Directors:
Mark England*
Jim Green
Chris Wright
Anna Urciolo*

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Lucy, Chair,
Nominating Committee
Lou DeMouy
Ann Weeks
*incumbent


For the past year, the Club has made a special effort to share in the joys and concerns of our members. If a club member learns of any occasion that should be recognized, please share that information with the President or Secretary or other member of the MBC Council.

Field Trips

New Chapter members, new birders, and guests are cordially welcome on every chapter field trip. Because some trips offer an easier learning environment, we have marked them with an . If in doubt, don't hesitate to contact field trip coordinator Linda Friedland at linnet1@verizon.net or 301-983-2136 (before 9 p.m.).


April 28 (Monday) WOODSTOCK PARK/DICKERSON CONSERVATION AREA. Half day. A search for migrants around the parking area at Woodstock Equestrian Park (Dr. William Rickman side). Afterwards, a quick car ride will take us to the wooded trails of the Dickerson Conservation Area and the nearby C&O Canal. Meet 7 a.m. at Woodstock. [Take MD 28 north/west from Rockville. About 1 mile past MD 28/Rte 109 intersection, turn right on dirt entrance road (stone sign says "Dr. William Rickman Equestrian Center"). Follow road for 1/8 of a mile to parking area.] Limit: 10. Reservations required. LEADER: Andy Martin, 301-294-4805 (home), 301-529-2066 (cell), or apmartin2@comcast.net.

April 30 (Wednesday) ROCK CREEK PARK, DC. One-third day. Early migrant warblers, vireos, etc. Meet 7 a.m. at Picnic Area 18, 1/2 mile below the Nature Center on Ridge Rd. Call the leader for more info or specific directions. Reservations required. LEADER: Wallace Kornack, 202-338-7859.

 **May 4 (Sunday) LITTLE BENNETT RP.** Half day. Near peak migration for warblers and vireos, including those breeding in this varied habitat. Reservations required. For time and directions, contact LEADER: Gemma Radko, 301-514-2894.

May 7 (Wednesday) EXPLORING CALVERT COUNTY. Three-quarters day. Local expert Sue Hamilton will guide us around birding hotspots of Calvert County. Meet at 7 a.m. at the entrance road to Flag Ponds. We'll also visit Battle Creek Cypress Swamp and other spots before we stop for lunch on the beach. Reservations required. Limit: 10. For detailed directions and more info, contact the COORDINATORS: Lydia Schindler, 301-977-5252, and Linda Friedland, 301-983-2136.

May 8 (Thursday) PATUXENT RIVER PARK. Half day. Songbirds, some marsh and waterbirds. Joint trip with ANS. Meet Greg Kearns, park naturalist, at 6:30 a.m. at entrance gate to park. Drift-boat trip followed by hiking on trails and through marshes. Make reservation with Liz Jones at ANS, 301-652-9188 x30.

 **May 9 (Friday) PENNYFIELD LOCK: BIRDING BY EAR.** The emphasis is on listening, so tune up your ears for this half day on the C&O Canal. Migrant and nesting landbirds. One-way walk to Violette's Lock with car pooling return a possibility. Meet 7 a.m. at the end of Pennyfield Lock Road. Reservations required. For more info and reservations call LEADERS: Cyndie Loeper, 301-530-8226, and Ann Lucy, 301 229-8810.

May 10 (Saturday) UPPER WATTS BRANCH, ROCKVILLE. Half day. Migrant warblers, vireos, thrushes, and assorted woodland residents, including possible Red-shouldered Hawks. Meet 7:30 a.m. at corner of Princeton Place and Fordham St. Reservations only; limit 12. LEADER: Paul O'Brien, pobrien776@aol.com or 301-424-6491.

May 13 (Tuesday) ROCK CREEK PARK, DC. One-third day. Active time for migrant warblers, vireos, etc. Meet 7 a.m. at Picnic Area #18, one-half mile below the Nature Center on Ridge Road. Reservations required. Call the leader for more info or specific directions. LEADER: Wallace Kornack, 202-338-7859.

May 14 (Wednesday) RUGGED GREEN RIDGE STATE FOREST, ALLEGANY COUNTY. Three-quarters to full day. Meet 7 a.m. "Facilities are natural." Bring snacks, beverages, lunch, and insect repellent. Wear sturdy shoes; some hiking involved. 4-wheel drive or pickup truck recommended (but not necessary). Prior arrangements to car pool via leader highly suggested. Target birds include Ruffed Grouse, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and nesting vireos and warblers (Hooded, Cerulean, Worm-eating, etc). Limit: 12. Required reservations must be made by Sunday, May 11. For directions to starting location, call LEADER: Jim Green, 301-208-2393.

May 24 (Saturday) HOT SPOTS FOR RED KNOTS. Full day. Joint trip with Howard County Bird Club. We'll start at 8:30 a.m. at the Visitor Center at Prime Hook NWR and work our way north along Delaware Bay, including a stop at the new Nature Center at Mispillion Light. We'll go until dark or exhaustion, whichever comes first. Bring binoculars, scopes,

continued on next page

Field Trips

food, water, sunscreen, and insect repellent. Trip limited to 12 persons/3 vehicles per club. Reservations required. Kurt Schwarz, krschwa1@comcast.net or 410-461-1643 will co-lead for Howard Co. For reservations and info, contact co-leader Cyndie Loeper, cyndieloeper@comcast.net or 301-535-8584.

June 8 (Sunday) WOODPECKER ALLEY: NORTH BRANCH OF ROCK CREEK. Half day. Nesting woodpeckers and other woodland birds. Meet 7 a.m. at Swim Center parking lot of Olney Manor Recreational Park on right-hand (east) side of Georgia Ave opposite Emory Lane and carpool from there. Reservations required. Limit: 10. LEADER: John Williamson, jwilliamson12@yahoo.com or 301-654-5312.

June 19 (Thursday) BANDING AT ADVENTURE. Half day. Joint ANS/MBC trip. Licensed Bander Gemma Radko will demonstrate the techniques of netting and banding birds at Adventure Banding Station on Glen Road in Potomac. A great opportunity to see familiar birds up close and personal! For reservations (required), directions, and starting time, call the leader at 301-514-2894.

July 9 (Wednesday) HATTERAS, NC, PELAGIC CHARTER. All-day deep-water pelagic trip to the Gulf Stream aboard the 61-foot Stormy Petrel II, a trip that typically nets 9-15 species of pelagic seabirds, including Black-capped Petrel, Audubon's Shearwater, and Band-rumped Storm-Petrel. Designed to introduce MBC birders to pelagics and encourage more participation in Lewes, DE trips for MD birds. For reservations, directions, and details, contact leader, Paul O'Brien, at pobrien776@aol.com.

August 23 and 24 (Saturday and Sunday). BOMBAY HOOK AND NEARBY BEACHES. This is a terrific time of year to study adult and juvenile shorebirds, with the possibility of a large number of species. Lunch will be in the field both days, dinner at a local restaurant. Make hotel reservations in advance. Bring plenty of water, insect repellent, hat, sunscreen, and snacks. CO-LEADERS: Cyndie Loeper and Frank Witebsky. Call Cyndie, 301-530-8226 or cyndieloeper@comcast.net, for reservations and meeting time.

2008 Bird Club Social

Nearly 80 Montgomery Bird Club members and guests enjoyed good food, company, and pictures at the annual social, held Friday evening, March 14. Once again, **Neal Fitzpatrick** of the Audubon Naturalist Society provided free use of the ANS headquarters at Woodend, and we are grateful for the continuing relationship with ANS. For the second year, Smokey Glen Farm provided a wonderful barbeque meal with tasty fruit pies for dessert—special thanks to **Jim Green** for helping to arrange this. As if setting up the barbeque weren't already service above and beyond the call of duty, Jim also provided ice, coolers, and beer. Many thanks also to the other folks who helped make the social a success. **Howard Lefkowitz** procured the fine wine and was ably assisted at the bar by **Johanna Thompson**. **Helen Patton** and **Cyndie Loeper** provided table decorations and other necessary supplies and, assisted by **Anna Urciolo**, set up all the tables to greet the arriving throng. **Ellen Dashner** coordinated the flowers for the tables, and the flower arrangements were created by the very modest **Yoli Del Buono**. **Joan Moyer** produced the

name tags, and **John Hubbell** coordinated the member slide show.

After socializing and a great meal, Club President Helen Patton introduced **Marcia Balestri**, President of the Maryland Ornithological Society. Marcia spoke about a number of MOS activities, including work on the Maryland Bird Trail and fielding an MOS team for 2nd Annual Delaware Bird-A-Thon (proceeds will go toward purchasing bayshore in Delaware to protect birds). Helen then introduced the evening's Guest of Honor, **Mike Bowen**. After reviewing Mike's contributions to the club and MOS over many years, Helen presented him with a plaque. Mike spoke affectionately about how he and Joy came to the club shortly after its founding, and his many years of birding with MOS.

To cap a very nice evening, members shared their pictures of birds taken everywhere from local backyards to exotic locations around the world. Many thanks to the folks who shared their wonderful images with us.

—*Jim Nelson*
Vice President and Social Chairman



Trip Reports



Introduction to the Winter Shore, January 19. Leaders: Linda Friedland and Lydia Schindler. Participants: 10. Weather: Benign, for a change; temp around 40 and wind light. Species: about 65. Starting with killer views of Harlequin Ducks at the Ocean City Inlet and ending with killer views of Short-eared Owl at Broadkill Beach Road, this trip ticked just about all of our target birds. The OC Inlet also held a flock of Brant, a flotilla of Common Loons, a sprinkling of Red-throated Loons, Red-breasted Mergansers, Long-tailed Ducks, and distant Surf Scoters. The rocks drew Purple Sandpipers, Sanderlings, Ruddy Turnstones, and fly-around American Oystercatchers. Further out were a few Northern Gannets and a few Bonaparte's Gulls. Overseeing it all was the Peregrine Falcon on the water tower.

At the 4th Street Flats we added Bufflehead and Great Blue Heron, but with the Rte 50 drawbridge closed for repairs, we skipped the West Ocean City Pond and drove straight to Indian River Inlet. Here, amidst a good-sized flock of Long-tailed Ducks, rode a handsome first-winter male Common Eider. Great Cormorants lounged on the tower, and Boat-tailed Grackles flounced around on the rocks. A search in the marshy edges of the campground yielded few of the hoped-for sparrows, but did score Cooper's and Red-tailed Hawks and Northern Harrier.

After refueling at McD's, we headed to Cape Henlopen SP. Near the campground we checked small flocks for crossbills but settled for waxwings. (Herring Point was closed for construction.) Feeders at the Nature Center hosted Red-breasted and Brown-headed Nuthatches. At the beach, a flock of about 70 Snow Buntings flew low overhead.

North to Broadkill Beach Road, where we found Prime Hook NWR closed for a deer hunt (third closure for the day!), precluding hoped-for sparrows. The roadside impoundments held a smattering of ducks, at least four Northern Harriers were quartering the fields, and alerted by Gemma's keen ear, we heard a distant Great Horned Owl. As we drove up to the bridge area, a Short-eared Owl was working next to the road; we leapt from our cars and watched, thrilled, as it flew back and forth alongside us. The finishing touch: skeins of Snow Geese, doing the wave.

Ducks at a Distance, January 26. Leader: Dave Powell. One person joined me for a walk shortened by rain and wind. At Riley's Lock, we saw DC Cormorants, Canvasbacks, Lesser Scaup, Goldeneye and Bonaparte's Gull on the Potomac. At Hughes Hollow, the impoundment was full of Ring-necked Ducks, with a few Redheads and Canvasbacks mixed in. Also present were American Wigeon and Black Ducks. Right next to the dikes were flocks of sparrows: Swamp, Song, White-throats, and a Field. A flock of Rusty Blackbirds gave us good looks.



Blackwater NWR, February 2. Leader: Bill Hubick. A group of 15 birders set forth on a well-timed field trip to Blackwater NWR, Hoopers Island, and Shorters Wharf. Lovely weather, cooperative birds, and excellent company combined to make it an outing to be remembered. The weather was chilly, but sunny and clear. Great birds were found consistently throughout the day, and many of them were unusually cooperative. Highlights included two Greenland Greater White-fronted Geese, Cackling Goose, Redheads amidst the excellent waterfowl showing in Cambridge, a 20-minute scope view of American Bittern, Rough-legged Hawk, two Golden Eagles, Peregrine Falcon, Eurasian Collared-Dove, and Short-eared Owls. A winter visit to this area is always enjoyable, but this trip exceeded even the most optimistic expectations. An impressive 88 species were tallied for the day.



Black Hill RP, February 10. Leader: Andy Martin. Participants 8. Weather: Very windy and sunny, with temperatures in the 40s. We managed to find 44 species scoping the lake from the park's HQ building, the boat ramp, the MD 121 bridge, and the Ten Mile Creek area. We also walked the trail that runs from the north end of the MD 121 Bridge along the lakeshore to the parking area just past Ridge Oak Drive.

Windy conditions made for a tough day of birding. Waterfowl numbers and variety seemed lower than in past Februarys. Best bird of day was a Pine Warbler at the park HQ building feeders, but unfortunately only Ed Escalante and I got to see it before it flew off and did not return. We also had nice looks at a low soaring Bald Eagle in the bright sunshine.



Trip Reports

Jug Bay, Patuxent River Park, March 8. Leader: John Bjerke. Participants: 4. Species: 41. The weather was wet and gloomy but the birdsong was exuberant, and there were plenty of green buds (and skunk cabbage) waiting on a little light. The trip was rain-shortened but graced with several nice sights. Two Purple Finches at the feeders complemented the usual feeding crew. Two pairs of Osprey were involved in nest building and mating. There were almost constant sightings of flying and squalling Wood Ducks. An adult Bald Eagle flew by. As compensation for the reduced visibility, we got a beautiful burst of song from a Winter Wren.



Walks at Dusk, March 12, 18, and 19. Leader: Jim Green. Each evening we met at Riley's Lock and scanned the Potomac River for a half hour or so. We then moved down to Violette's Lock, then to Hughes Hollow, and lastly over to Hughes Road for potential American Woodcock displays. On March 19, it rained lightly for most of the trip, so we didn't try for woodcocks, but instead covered Hunting Quarter and Sycamore Landing Roads. The trips were not that well attended this year, with only a total of 7 individuals joining the leader. Temperatures ranged from the mid- to low 40s, and the March 18 trip included some rain and wind, as well. The following is a summary of the three nights; since it was already daylight savings time, we had an extra hour of daylight, so could move in a more leisurely fashion than in other years.

Sixteen species of waterfowl were observed. A pair of White-winged Scoters were seen lazily drifting down the Potomac River from Riley's Lock. Several breeding-plumaged Common Loons, both Pied-billed and Horned Grebes (some beginning to get their breeding plumage) were very close to the bridge. We observed all three species of mergansers, with a high of 22 Red-breasted Mergansers on March 18. That same evening, as we were walking to our cars, we heard and then saw a flock of 19 Tundra Swans heading north. There were several Bonaparte's Gulls moving north then south then north again low over the water between Riley's and Violette's.

Welcome to Hughes Hollow, also known as Ring-necked Duckville—they were all over the left-hand impoundment. We estimated the numbers to be 550 (others had reported as many as 750); they were difficult to count because they were constantly in motion. If you got tired of

looking at Ring-necks, there were plenty of other species drifting into scope view: Canvasback, Redhead, Green- and Blue-winged Teal, American Wigeon, and Gadwall, as well as Wood Ducks and Hooded Mergansers. Other species noted at Hughes included Red-headed and Hairy Woodpeckers, Swamp Sparrow, and Red-shouldered Hawk. Sure signs of spring included Tree Swallows, singing Eastern Phoebes, Red-winged Blackbirds, and Common Grackles.

We typically stand on the dike between the impoundments until about 7:15; during this time, some of the ducks take flight and many others fly in to roost. Several nights we heard both Barred and Great Horned Owls.

The woodcock location this year was the corner field bordering River and Hughes Roads (opposite side from the Polo Fields). It was a lean year for numbers; we had one bird perform the entire display (but only once), with short looks while in flight as well as peenting on the ground. Still, while we were standing in the field, we once again heard Great Horned Owls. We also heard and then saw Wilson's Snipe flying towards us and then continuing across Hughes Road. They are easily recognizable with their zig-zag flight and raspy alarm call. One night they came by in several groups, totaling at least 22.

On the evening prior to the first trip, the leader saw a single male Long-Tailed Duck on the Virginia side of the Potomac. To update you on the waterfowl at Hughes Hollow, the numbers of ducks dwindled during the end of the last week of March to fewer than 40 Ring-necked Ducks. All other divers (with the exception of Hooded Mergs) were long gone, and the other dabblers remaining were Wood Ducks and both teal.



Lingering Waterfowl, March 16. Leader: Dave Powell. Eight people joined me on a beginner waterfowl trip to Black Hill RP. We saw 16 species of waterfowl as well as Pied-billed Grebes and American Coots, with great looks at nearly every species. Highlights were eight Redheads, three Green-winged Teal, and noisy Tundra Swans. The best land birds were Red-breasted Nuthatch and Pine Warbler at the Nature Center feeder. Total species for the trip was 47.



Birds of Note (January - April 2008)



Noah Kahn's White-winged Crossbill, last seen 12/24, reappeared in his backyard on 1/26. Unlike its previous visits, where it only used the bird bath, this time it fed from a thistle feeder. The bird became a fairly regular visitor, allowing many state and county birders to see it. Remarkably, the bird was still around as of 4/14.

Another cooperative visitor was a **Northern Saw-whet Owl** reported by **Paul O'Brien** in January. This bird took up residence in a spruce tree adjacent to a sidewalk in Paul's Rockville neighborhood. The bird was first reported on 1/21 and was still suspected of being around as recently as the last week of March.

Despite a seemingly lackluster winter for waterfowl around the county, early- to mid-March yielded a better than average display of ducks at Hughes Hollow. At one point, **Ring-necked Duck** numbers were estimated to be above 700. The species mix was rich, including **Redhead** and **Canvasback**, two ducks not commonly seen at Hughes.

Good numbers of **Redheads** (40-50) were reported on the Potomac River between Violette's and Riley's Locks on 2/15 by **Jim Green** and **Jim Nelson**. **Anna Urciolo** and **Karen** and **Ed Escalante** watched a dozen **Redheads** at Black Hill's Ten Mile Creek on 2/18. A lone **Redhead** was found 3/15 on the "big pond" at Blue Mash by **Elaine Hendricks**.

On 3/1, **Dave Czaplak** and **Clive Harris** observed **White-winged Scoters** on the Potomac River above Violette's Lock. Two more (perhaps the same birds) were seen in the same area by **Jim Green** on 3/18.

Clive Harris found a **Ring-necked Pheasant**, skulking in undergrowth just off Sycamore Landing Rd on 3/1.

Regina Spallone reported a **Monk Parakeet** from her Silver Spring backyard on 3/30.

Paul Woodward found an **American Bittern** in a cattail marsh near the towpath at McKee-Beshers WMA on 4/1. **Kevin Graff** reported an **American Bittern** from Hughes Hollow on 4/3.

Kerry Stone found three different pair of **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** sitting near previous years' nests along Sligo Creek on 3/28.

Rob Hilton reported a flyover **Peregrine Falcon** in the vicinity of Bethesda and Wisconsin Avenues on 1/25. A pair of **Peregrine Falcons** continue in the American Legion Bridge area.

A **Short-eared Owl** reported by **Tom Feild** was seen coursing low over the retired landfill adjacent to the "big pond" at Blue Mash on 3/29.

Red-headed Woodpeckers continued to be seen at Hughes Hollow sporadically throughout the winter. **Janet Millenson**, **Chris Wright**, **Brad Beukema**, and **Marcy Logan** reported seeing as many as eight different **Red-headed Woodpeckers** along the C&O Canal just north of Riley's Lock on 1/19.

Paul Woodward spotted a **Common Raven** over the C&O Canal near Sycamore Landing Road on 2/9. **Clive Harris** saw two **Common Ravens** over MacArthur Boulevard in the Cabin John area on 3/9. A **Common Raven** was also seen over Hughes Hollow on 3/24.

A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** visited **Bob Hartman's** backyard suet feeder on 1/21.

A couple out-of-season **Gray Catbirds** were reported this past winter, including one along Old Bucklodge Lane near Black Hill RP on 1/4 and another found by **Michael Redmond** at Hughes Hollow on 3/2.

A **Pine Warbler** visited **Claire Wolfe's** backyard feeder in Germantown on 1/12. Another Pine Warbler was seen near the Black Hill RP Visitor Center during an MBC field trip on 2/10.

Individual **Fox Sparrows** were reported at feeders from a number of yards in March, including **Jim and Ann Nelson's** in Bethesda, **Maryellen and Chris Cullotta's** in Gaithersburg, **George Lane's** in Silver Spring, and **Don Simonson's** in Darnestown.

Four **Vesper Sparrows** were found at the Germantown Soccerplex on 4/2 by **Jim Green** and **Dave Young**.

Over 200 **Rusty Blackbirds** were seen at Blue Mash by **Rick Sussman** on 3/29. **Rusty Blackbirds** were also seen in the vicinity of the C&O Canal near Carderock on 3/30 by **Mike Bowen** and 4/1 by **Tom Feild**. The last week of March/first week of April produced a numerous sightings of **Rusty Blackbirds** at Hughes Hollow.

Ed Patten found two female **Common Redpolls** mixed in with American Goldfinch and **Purple Finch** at McKee-Beshers WMA on 1/13.

Purple Finch and **Pine Siskin** continued to show up sporadically throughout the winter. On 1/13, **Bob Mumford's** Darnestown yard was visited by both **Pine Siskin** and **Purple Finch**. Also in Darnestown, **Lydia Schindler** observed **Pine Siskins** as well as **Purple Finch** at her feeder on 3/17 and 3/18. **Mike Bowen** noted four **Purple Finch** along the C&O Canal near Pennyfield Lock on 4/1.

—*Andy Martin*



Remembering Paul DuMont

Paul DuMont was the first “super birder” I ever knew. He came regularly to meetings of the relatively new Montgomery County Chapter of MOS in the early 1970s, often reporting on some North American rarity that he had traveled to see and that the rest of us had usually never even heard about. Paul, with his ruffled appearance and slow, deliberate delivery, presented a striking contrast to the almost ramrod-straight bearing, thin mustache, and clipped speech of his father, Phil, a senior Interior Department official.

When I joined the American Birding Association in 1975, the second issue of *Birding* magazine I received named the top listers in the AOU area: Paul DuMont, with a then-staggering total of 696, species was #2 on the list. Only Joe Taylor, founder and former President of ABA, topped him. (Kenn Kaufman was #9, Roger Tory Peterson #28, and Chandler Robbins #166!)

Paul traveled far and wide to work on his lists, and despite never adopting any of the electronic communication aids that started being available in the 1980s, he continued to find out about and pursue rarities wherever they showed up. Paul birded the Aleutian island of Attu when the principal means of locomotion was a rusty bicycle and living conditions were so bad that many birders fell ill.

I have lost count of the number of hours I spent on the phone with Paul. He might call with a simple request, but the conversation would inevitably get around to where he or I had been birding lately. He was always very well informed; if I said I had just been in San Francisco, he would ask, “Did you see the Smew in San Mateo?” If I’d been in Miami, he would wonder if I’d had a chance to get to the reported Western Spindalis. And he would tell of his three-day visit to California to see a Greater Sand-Plover or a sudden dash up to New England to look for an Ivory Gull.

After a spell of travel, I would sometimes come home to find the tape on my answering machine completely full with calls from Paul. His answering machine, too, was often overflowing. When poor health prevented him from traveling to look for rarities, Paul unselfishly thought of others. In 2007, he called to make sure that I knew there was a Loggerhead Kingbird down in Key West, and he wanted me to contact Tom Marko, then on vacation in Florida, so that Tom would have a chance to see the bird.

I have lasting memories of Paul, the breast pocket of his shirt stuffed with innumerable pens and pencils, standing in the dining area of our house during a tally rally for the Seneca Christmas Bird Count, sipping a glass of wine, smiling and reminiscing in that slow way of his.

In recent years I several times heard whisperings from younger birders to the effect that maybe Paul really didn’t know his birds. As something of an old-timer myself, I want to state emphatically that Paul DuMont was one hell of a birder, perhaps the “Last of the Mohicans” of the pre-electronic age of birding.

—Michael Bowen

Although Paul stopped reporting his life list to ABA after he reached 800 in 1996, I know for a fact that he never lost his enthusiasm for life birds. As many of you know, for the past few years he was significantly restricted in his long-distance birding by both health issues and economic restraints. Lacking internet access, he was in the habit of calling me regularly to find out what rarities were being seen around the country.

What developed was my making a sort of trial run, seeing the bird, and reporting back to Paul. He would then painstakingly copy down every detail of my itinerary: Southwest flights, car rental, Motel 6 location, and every single left or right turn by car and foot. It took hours, but he got it all down and went out and duplicated each move. And it worked! First he saw the Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush in Pharr, TX in June of 2004, then he went to Martha’s Vineyard that August to see the Red-footed Falcon. In 2005 he saw the Redwing in Olympia, WA, and in 2006, the Yellow Grosbeak in Albuquerque, NM. He had to pass on the Fan-tailed Warbler in Big Bend this past August because he judged, correctly, that he wouldn’t be able to make the hike up Pine Canyon. That was the last rarity that he might have chased.

We last spoke with him at Christmas. Typically, he would always inquire about Barbara and John and Michael. He wished us all a happy holiday. You will never meet a gentler soul or a more helpful or considerate friend than Paul.

—Paul O’Brien

I had the privilege of birding with Paul over 43 years. Paul’s father and mother took me on marvelous birding trips in the early 1960s before I could drive! Paul and Byron Swift and I did the first-ever Cape Charles Christmas Count, organized by Will Russell. How exciting that was to be in Paul’s sector, exploring new count territory! Paul was a spisher *par excellence* and pulled a Black-throated Blue Warbler out of a thicket on that count.

Paul went on to become a legendary trip leader, but for me it was always best to encounter him by chance in the field: at the C&O Canal enjoying the first Yellow-throated Warblers of the spring; or seeing his station wagon come rolling up the dirt road on the flats of Bombay Hook in the middle of May, taking in the shorebirds; or standing sentry in a snowstorm watching for the Gyrfalcon in Frederick County. I will miss him.

—Don Simonson

Paul DuMont was a unique personality and trip leader. With keen eyes and ears, he was quick to locate and identify birds by sight and sound. He was patient with beginners and always made sure that everyone in his group got to see the targeted bird.

Ted and I went on many trips with Paul, but the one that stands out in memory is the Outer Banks trip in October 1972. At a stop in Kitty Hawk, Paul’s father Phil, who was also a first-class birder, was explaining fine points of shorebird identification to



the group, when Paul, who had wandered off on his own, interrupted. Trying hard to hide his excitement and appear ever-so-casual, he said, “Would you like to see a Vermillion Flycatcher?”

A most unlikely sighting in North Carolina—but there it was, perched on a chain link fence—a life bird for us and another feather in Paul’s cap.

—Lola Oberman

Many years ago, when I was pretty new to our birding club, I went on a winter weekend trip with Paul to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge/Tunnel. It was very cold and on our way back it started to snow, but this did not deter Paul from stopping at Chincoteague. The Pony Trail was covered with snow. The day was sunny and our surroundings were sparkling, and unlike proper birders, we were noisily conversing, when all of a sudden Paul put his arms out like a crossing guard. We immediately fell silent. There, not more than five feet away, a woodcock was stepping gingerly across the snow to the other side of the path. Then the bird saw us. So as any smart woodcock would do, it hid behind a small rock. But because the rock was covered with snow, the bird was in plain view; all of us had a chance to look at every part of his body, not even needing to use our binoculars. After about 15 minutes, it was we who left him. Whenever I saw Paul, I always remembered our woodcock.

—Susan Warsinger

Soon after coming to Maryland in the early 1960s I met Phil DuMont, Paul’s father, a top-notch birder and fine gentleman. A little later I met Paul, and I was awed by his birding skills; his skill and dedication to field birding outshone almost everyone in our area. He and Phil often led trips together.

When Paul began doing the local Atlantic Ocean pelagic trips, I went on a few and always added a bird or two to my own life list. In 1991 I asked Paul to lead a pelagic trip for our World Nature Association annual meeting on the Outer Banks; he did this just for our group, but he never would accept pay for this trip.

In recent years I occasionally ran into Paul on the Eastern Shore, scouting for one of his long-weekend trips—another indication of his thoroughness and skill as a leader. His unexpected and unusual Christmas Count finds of birds out of season were a regular surprise to many of us and were sometimes questioned by newer birders to our area. I never felt any question about a bird reported by Paul.

He was a good friend, a truly great birder, and big loss to the Mid-Atlantic birding community.

—Don Messersmith

Among my memories of Paul are his kindness and his ability to communicate his incredible knowledge of birds. Years ago, when my mother was in a nursing home in a remote part of Virginia, I shared with Paul how emotionally difficult it was for me to visit her. He did some research, found a refuge area near the nursing home, and suggested that I combine a birding trip with visits to Mother. It worked—the birding gave me a chance to digest the downward changes in my mother’s condition and gain the needed strength to return to the world.

Over the last few years Paul had continuing problems with his eyesight, so when leading birding trips he occasionally could not identify a bird by sight. But ever the leader and teacher, once the species was established, he would walk among the group reciting field marks in great detail, all from memory. If anyone was having difficulty, he could talk them through making the identification for themselves. An incredible amount of knowledge, and a drive to share it, was packed into that man!

—Johanna Thompson

For many years, Paul along with his father participated in the Cape Charles, VA, Christmas Bird Count. Paul took his party area lists very seriously; he would take them home with him and make certain they were what he considered to be perfect. I’d finally get his numbers, but he would always insist on reporting all of the reasonably possible species his party did NOT see in addition to the ones they did.

Perhaps Paul’s most important contribution to regional birding was that, along with Robert (Bob) L. Ake, he pioneered pelagic birding off of the North Carolina Outer Banks, establishing that Black-capped Petrels were almost a certain species to find there each trip. This was in the days before Bermuda (the Cahow), Fea’s, and Herald Petrels were confirmed as being tantamount to regular thereabouts. He and Bob were aware of the great potential of these then relatively unknown waters.

Later such species as Black-bellied and European Storm Petrels were also seen, and possibly Swinhoe’s as well, plus Cape Verde Shearwater, skuas, and tropicbirds. Notices about these upcoming trips would always say “BOBS available,” as if everyone knew what BOBS was: a pamphlet he’d done: “Birding the Outer Banks.”

One time Paul organized a pelagic trip out from Delaware. We saw hardly any pelagic birds other than Wilson’s Storm-Petrels, but one of these was a White-faced Storm-Petrel, then only the fourth or fifth North American record. Paul called it out instantly, knew what it was right away, and proceeded to discourse on the species.

When the Whiskered Tern turned up in Delaware in 1993, running into Paul at the Ted Harvey WMA near Dover. In spite of his back problems then, he was lugging in his pack the magisterial volume of *Birds of the Western Palearctic* that dealt with terns, a volume with the heft of a big city phone book.

I remember Paul’s amusement when, after one of the AOU’s phylogenetic reshufflings, Green-winged Teal was moved on the list so it came right after Canada Goose, and Paul laughing and saying it was “because they look so much alike.”

Friendly and expansive, Paul will be missed.

—Henry (“Harry”) T. Armistead

See John Bjerke’s remembrance of Paul in the May/June *Yellowthroat*.



More Cell Phone Towers for Rock Creek Park?

Marjorie Rachlin alerted the club that the National Park Service has issued a proposed "Wireless Telecommunications Plan" to improve cell phone coverage in Rock Creek Park. This plan presents three alternatives; the "Preferred Alternative" calls for 30-foot poles along Beach Drive and secondary roads. At the request of the Audubon Naturalist Society, the Institute for Public Representation at Georgetown law school is preparing coalition comments, and has invited MBC to participate. MBC Conservation Chair Gail Mackiernan and Barry Cooper, who were heavily involved in the original RCP cell phone tower battle, are reviewing the issue for the club.



Welcome, New Members!

Janet Arden	Sharon Fisher
Paul Brodsky	George Green
Betty Brody	Roxana Laing
Tom Busby	Nancy McIntyre
Terry Cox	Charles Moseley and Kit Angell
Lazzlo Domaruk	

Montgomery Bird Club Site Guide

The second edition of the site guide is well under way. Editors have been enlisted to revise notes on current sites and to draft entries for new sites. Four new sites are proposed: Blue Mash Nature Trail, Germantown Soccerplex, Dickerson Conservation Area, and Green Farm. It was decided that Woodstock Equestrian Park and Dry Seneca Creek are not well enough known at present for inclusion. The guide will be published later this year.

MAPS banding, Summer 2008

It's Gemma Radko's 10th season of banding at Adventure! Anyone is welcome to assist, observe, and enjoy close-up looks at the area's breeding bird species.

Contact Gemma at 301-514-2894 if you'd like to participate.

2008 Banding Dates

Monday, May 26	Sunday, July 6
Sunday, June 8	Saturday, July 19
Thursday, June 19	Sunday, July 27
Sunday, June 29	Sunday, August 3

Potomac, MD 20859-9639
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MBC/MOS
The Chat

