

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

May 2009

Volume 39, No. 3

President's Chat

As I write this in early April, reports are coming in of arriving migrants and departing winter visitors, whetting our appetites for the adrenaline rush of spring birding.

As you read this, I will be completing my first year as your President. I have enjoyed the experience, have learned a great deal, and look forward to serving you for another year. As President, you quickly realize how many people contribute to the club's success on an ongoing basis. I want to thank three who will be leaving the council after this May. **Tricia Tice** has served as Secretary since 2004, an essential but often unrecognized job. **Mike Bowen** and **Judy McCartney** have served as State Directors since 2005. All three brought their years of experience and common sense to a wide array of issues facing MBC. **Mark England** and **Anna Urciolo**, both completing four years as Chapter Directors, have agreed to be nominated as State Directors. Thanks to the Nominating Committee, **Lou DeMouy**, **Janet Millenson**, and **Dave Winer**, for coming up with a fine slate of nominees for 2008-2009 (see page 7).

Another very important job in the club is editor of this newsletter. **Lydia Schindler** is stepping down after 11 years of editing the *Chat*; this is her last issue. Throughout her time as editor, Lydia has kept the *Chat* fresh and informative, something we all look forward to reading. I am pleased to announce that **Susan Hunt** will be taking over the editorial duties as of the August issue. Susan has a strong background in writing and editing and a long-time interest in birding. Lydia and Susan are working together to make the transition a smooth one. We are fortunate that **Gemma Radko** is continuing in her role as *Chat* designer.

For many years, **Jane Farber** and **Jeanne Lacerte** served as the club's librarians, bringing magazines, books, and tapes to meetings. Due to changed circumstances, they had to give up the job this winter, and

I am pleased to announce that **Pat Tonkin** agreed to take over as librarian.

We are very fortunate that **Linda Friedland** is continuing in her role as field trip coordinator. This job requires a great deal of commitment and planning, and Linda continues to present a wonderful variety of field trips. We have noted some drop-off in participation in field trips, and Linda, in consultation with trip leaders and the Council, has developed a questionnaire to help identify ways to improve the field trip program to meet members' needs. The questionnaire appears in this *Chat*, and I encourage you to take the time to fill it out and return it. We will use the results to refine the program over the summer.

We are always looking for ways to connect local birders with our club. Gemma Radko has created a "business" card, which has been printed and is available for all members. Take a few, and when you meet birders in the field who might be interested in joining, give them a card.

I look forward to seeing you at our meetings, in the field, and at the MOS Conference in Frederick. Wishing you good birds this spring!

—Jim Nelson

CONTENTS	
Spring Calendar	2
Chit-Chat/May Count	2
Field Trips	3
Annual Social/Paul O'Brien Hits 400!	4
Trip Reports	5-7
Birds of Note	8
Looking Back with Lydia	9
Field Trip Questionnaire	10-11
Slate of Officers 2008-9	12



Spring Calendar



May 9 (Saturday), May Count. Download the May Count checklist and keep track of all the birds you see in Montgomery County this day. (See article in adjacent column.)

May 9 (Saturday), 26th Annual World Series of Birding. The 26th Annual World Series of Birding in New Jersey. This premier conservation event has raised over \$8 million for bird conservation.

May 15-17 (Friday-Sunday), MOS 2009 Annual Conference. Holiday Inn, Francis Scott Key Conference Center, Frederick, MD. For info, contact Janet Shields, janetbill@prodigy.net, or check www.mdbirds.org/activities/conference/annual.html.

May 20 (Wednesday), 7:30p.m. "The Galapagos: Marvel of Evolution." Forty-two percent of all the birds in the Galapagos are found nowhere else in the world. But, unlike Darwin, you don't have to wait very long to get some inkling of what's going on in these remarkable equatorial islands. Join *Richard Schubert* as he discusses and shows photos of Blue-footed Boobies, Red-footed Boobies, finches and more finches, and plenty of other remarkable birds (and a few tortoises, too) from his recent trip to this marvel of evolution.

June 6 (Saturday), MOS Board Meeting. Greenbrier SP. Hosted by the Washington County Bird Club. For more 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, contact Jim Nelson at 301-588-5418 or kingfishers2@verizon.net.

Youth MOS Backpack

Two students have been recommended as possible recipients of the MOS Youth Backpack. We will ask each to write a short essay on their favorite bird. We hope to present the winner with the backpack at the May meeting.

—Anna Urciolo

Chit-chat

Best wishes for a speedy recovery to **Bill Young**. Shortly after he gave his terrific presentation on bird stamps, "Going Postal," at the February meeting, Bill was hospitalized with a complex disease, but is now recuperating.

Thanks to **John Combs**, who worked with **Rob Gibbs** of M-NCPPC to add paired bluebird boxes to several sites along the trail at Blue Mash. Tree Swallows often preempt a single box; the second box gives the bluebirds a better chance of nesting successfully.

Thanks to **Gail Mackiernan**, MBC's Conservation Chair, for her spirited letter to the *Gazette* explaining the rationale for Mute Swan control.



May Count

Wherever you're birding in Montgomery County this May 9, bring along a copy of the May Count Checklist and keep track of the variety and numbers of birds you see. The checklist can be downloaded from the MOS web site at <http://www.mdbirds.org/counts/namc/namcchecklist.pdf>. Submit completed checklist forms to Andy Martin, 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), by e-mail at apmartin2@comcast.net, or visit the MOS web page. ♪

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

Editor: Lydia Schindler **Designer:** Gemma Radko

Circulation: Judy McCartney

President: Jim Nelson: 301-530-6574
e-mail: kingfishers2@verizon.net

Membership: Helen Patton: 301-588-5418
e-mail: helen@dataprompt.com

Visit our homepage at www.montgomerybirdclub.org
Deadline for submissions is the 5th of the preceding month.
Send items to Susan Hunt, 10705 Tenbrook Drive, Silver Spring, Maryland 20901. Phone: 301-530-2807, e-mail: shunt820@yahoo.com.





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 linnetl@verizon.net or 301-983-2136 (before 9 p.m.).



MAY 3 (Sunday) LITTLE BENNETT RP. Half day. Near peak migration for warblers and vireos, including those breeding in this varied habitat. Contact the leader for time and directions. Reservations required. LEADER: Gemma Radko, 301-514-2894.

MAY 6 (Wednesday) EXPLORING CALVERT COUNTY. Three-quarters day. Sue Hamilton will guide us through some of the county's birding hotspots. Meet 7 a.m. at the road leading to Flag Ponds. We'll later visit Battle Creek Cypress Swamp and other spots and lunch on the beach. Reservations required. Limit: 10. Call the coordinators for detailed directions and more info. LEADER: Sue Hamilton. COORDINATORS: Lydia Schindler, 301-977-5252, and Linda Friedland, 301-983-2136.

MAY 7 (Thursday) PATUXENT RIVER PARK, PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY. Half day. Peak migration time for songbirds, some marsh and waterbirds. Joint trip with ANS. Meet Greg Kearns, park naturalist, at 6:30 a.m. at park entrance gate. Drift-boat trip followed by hiking on trails and through marshes. Make reservations with Liz Jones at ANS, 301-652-9188, x30.



MAY 8 (Friday) PENNYFIELD LOCK: BIRDING BY EAR. The emphasis is on listening, so tune up your ears for this half-day canal walk. Migrant and nesting landbirds. Meet 7 a.m. at the end of Pennyfield Lock Rd. Reservations required. For more info and reservations, call the LEADERS: Cyndie Loeper, 301-530-8226, and Ann Lucy, 301-229-8810.

MAY 9 (Saturday), MONTGOMERY COUNTY MAY COUNT. See article on page 2 for more information.

MAY 9 (Saturday) UPPER WATTS BRANCH, ROCKVILLE. Half day. Migrant warblers, vireos and thrushes, and assorted woodland residents, including possible Red-shouldered Hawks. Meet 7:30 a.m. at corner of Princeton Pl and Fordham St. Limit: 12. Reservations required. LEADER: Paul O'Brien, 301-424-6491.

MAY 12 (Tuesday) ROCK CREEK PARK, DC. 1/3 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. Call the leader for more info or specific directions. Reservations required. LEADER: Wallace Kornack, 202-338-7859.

MAY 23 (Saturday) HOT SPOTS FOR RED KNOTS. Full day. Joint trip with Howard Co. We will start at 8:30 a.m. at Prime Hook NWR's Visitor Center and work our way north along Delaware Bay. Also on the itinerary will be the DuPont Nature Center at Mispillion Lighthouse, a wonderful facility that offers great views of Red Knots and other shorebirds. We will go until dark or exhaustion, whichever comes first. Bring binoculars, lunch and snacks, water, sunscreen, and plenty of insect repellent. Bring scopes if you got 'em. Trip is limited to 12 persons/3 vehicles per chapter. Reservations required. For reservations and information, contact CO-LEADER Cyndie Loeper, cyndieloeper@comcast.net or 301-535-8584. Kurt Schwarz, krschwal@comcast.net or 410-461-1643, will co-lead for Howard County.



JUNE 4 (Thursday) and JUNE 7 (Sunday) BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY FOR BEGINNERS. On Thurs we will meet in Bethesda from 7:30 to 9 p.m. to discuss notions of photographic technique, equipment, and philosophy pertinent to enjoying bird photography. On Sun we will meet at Hughes Hollow from 8 a.m. to 12 noon to photograph Red-winged Blackbirds, Tree Swallows, and any other birds that cooperate. Limit: 6-8. For information and reservations, contact LEADER Evelyn Ralston at 301-493-4132 or evelynsr@verizon.net. Rain date: Sunday, June 14.

JULY 25 (Saturday) DELAWARE COASTAL AREAS. Full day at Bombay Hook, Little Creek, Logan Tract, and other sites. Joint trip with ANS. Shorebirds, marsh birds, and some songbirds. Bring pack lunch. Meet 8 a.m. at Bombay Hook Visitor Center parking lot. Make reservation (15-person limit) with John Bjerke, 240-401-1643. Cyndie Loeper will co-lead.

At the Top of the List ...

Maryland's top lister, **Paul O'Brien**, began 2008 with his Montgomery County and Maryland life lists hanging tantalizingly at 299 and 399, respectively. But this past year he passed the magic mark in both jurisdictions, becoming the first member of Maryland's vaunted "400 Club." Paul's take on how it came about:

Early last summer Phil Davis [Secretary of the MD/DC Records Committee] informed me that the final tally of MD/DC Records Committee votes was in and that they had accepted the March, 1992, Western Meadowlark(s) that Michael [O'Brien] found in Frederick County. That put my MD list at 400.

Why did I wait 16 years to count the Meadowlark, you ask. Well, as a courtesy I generally refrain from adding a controversial species to the list until the Records Committee has had a chance to review it. And that Western Meadowlark, being a first state record and a sight record, is definitely controversial.

I thought I would end the year at 400 even, but along came the Allen's Hummingbird [in Charles County] on Christmas Eve with in-hand measurements to confirm the ID, so I added it to the list.

My Montgomery County list reached 300 in 2008 with the addition of a Eurasian Collared-Dove that Chris

Barnard found in his back yard. He called me and I was there in about 15 minutes, just in time to see it before it flew off, not to be seen again. It did the same thing a year earlier, in 2007, but left before I got there.

I had hoped to make 2008 a three-fer, but the year ended with my life list at 799. I had finally seen Bermuda Petrel (on my 49th try) off Hatteras, then added Loggerhead Kingbird, which I had seen in 2007, when ABA accepted the record and added it to their list. Also added by ABA was Common Mynah, which is all over Homestead, FL. I went to Connecticut in November to see the Barnacle Goose, which I had never added to my list because of the possibility of an escape. But this one came in with Greenland Greater White-fronted Goose, Cackling Geese, and nine Canada Geese with yellow neck bands that had been placed on the birds a few months earlier by Danish biologists in western Greenland. Bingo! Finally I had the strong circumstantial evidence I was holding out for—and the goose had all its toes, too.

I might have made it to 800, but I missed the Jabiru in Raymondville, Texas, by four hours last August. That goes along with a troublesome trend in Texas. I also missed the Piratic Flycatcher in Corpus Christi by a day last May, just as I had missed the Social Flycatcher in Bentsen State Park by a day a couple of years ago. What is it with Texas?

But all in all, I won't complain about 2008.

2009 Bird Club Social

Sixty-five Montgomery Bird Club members and guests enjoyed good food, company, and pictures at the annual social, held Friday evening, March 13. 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. ANS Property Manager Raj Sakaria coordinated the room setup and cleanup. We are delighted that Neal and Raj were both able to join us for the evening. For the third 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--AND did an outstanding job as our bartender.

Many thanks also to the other folks who helped make the social a success. Helen Patton provided beautiful table

decorations and other necessary supplies and, assisted by Anna Urciolo, Cyndie Loeper, and Kathy Tinius, set up all the tables to greet the arriving throng. Gemma Radko produced the beautiful customized name tags, Jim Nelson picked up the plaque, and Mike Bowen smoothly coordinated the member slide show.

After socializing and a great meal, Club President Jim Nelson welcomed us and after a few remarks got to the important business of introducing the evening's Guest of Honor, Howard Lefkowitz. Jim presented Howard with a plaque honoring him and listing some of his many accomplishments for the club. Howard spoke briefly, showing us a little of his unique wit.

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!

—Steve Pretl
Vice President and Social Chairman





Trip Reports

Lilypons area, February 15, 2009. Leaders: Gail Mackiernan and Barry Cooper. Participants: 13 plus leaders. Species: 45. Temperature: 28-40 F, but the breeze made it seem colder. Visited: Lilypons Water Gardens, Oland Road, Bishop Clagett Center. As the group gathered at the Monocacy River Bridge, a Bald Eagle perched up for good views. A rather cold wind kept field bird activity down along Oland Road, and we were lucky to have a couple of Horned Larks fly in almost in front of the group for close views and photos. Landbird activity was also low at Lilypons, although a good number of waterfowl were tallied, including Hooded Merganser, Black Duck, Wood Duck, and N. Pintail. We flushed a Wilson's Snipe, which did a nice fly-by. Other birds of note included a pair of Killdeer and a phoebe near the white house. Sparrow numbers were low; we saw only three species (Song, Swamp, and White-throated); the Fields and White-crowns seen by the leaders while scouting Friday (in even windier weather) eluded us! Everyone valiantly walked for about two hours (although we covered barely a third of this huge area) before deciding that we needed to find a birdier place. En route to the Clagett Center, 20 Tundra Swans graced a field along Route 85. At the Center, we finally got good views of White-crowned Sparrows, about 20 in total in two locations, plus a few other species for the list. A strange list indeed, Pileated but no Downy Woodpecker, and NO Starlings!



Lois Green Conservation Park, February 22. Leader: Mark England. Participants: 9 plus leader. Species: 26. Weather: Overcast with some snow flurries, a constant 37 degrees. Although the birding was slow, everyone liked this new county park near the air park in Gaithersburg. (Seven people were seeing it for the first time.) We had hoped for a good sparrow day, but saw only Field, White-throated, and Song, though Janice Brose and Brad Beukema had good looks at a Fox Sparrow as well. We also saw a Red-shouldered Hawk, Hermit Thrush, a Killdeer, and a Great Blue Heron. The two large ponds held small flocks of Hooded Mergansers and Ring-necked Ducks, with great scope views.

A probable female Greater Scaup was the most unusual bird. New MBC member Jim Moore correctly questioned the leader's premature ID of Lesser Scaup, the default scaup inland. With a second look, all agreed that the smoothly-rounded head shape did not fit a Lesser Scaup.



Charles County, February 28. Leaders: George Jett and Gwen Brewer. Participants: 10. Species: 58. Our group met at the La Plata, Charles Co. mall for a half day of coastal plain winter birding. We made several stops on our way toward Cobb Island. On our very short list of 58 species, the diving ducks were well represented, with Long-tailed Duck, both scaup, American Goldeneye, Surf Scoter, Bufflehead, and Ruddy Duck. Gull species were low, with only three species found. Woodpeckers were also in short supply, with only Red-belly, Downy, Hairy, and Northern Flicker. The sparrow highlight was a single Fox Sparrow that only called along Pope's Creek Road.

Most of the usual suspects like Carolina Chickadee and Tufted Titmouse were located along the way, but the highlight might have been the two Rock Pigeons at the La Plata Mall; this is not an easy species to pick up in Charles County, so the listers on the trip were happy. We found a handful of Yellow-rumped Warblers at the Visitor Center, and 14 Cedar Waxwings at Morgantown. The large flock of Canada Geese at Morgantown turf farm did not produce any other geese. At Port Tobacco we found a likely over-wintering Brown Thrasher. All in all it was a slow day for birds, but all attendees had a good time.

Many thanks to Joe Hanfman for compiling our list and posting it on eBird. Joe was not satisfied with our poor showing of puddle ducks, so Gwen and I directed him to several sites on the western side of Charles--including Goose Bay Marina. Before we got home, Joe was on the cell phone reporting a male Eurasian Wigeon at Goose Bay. A quick about-face and Gwen and I were shortly at Goose Bay Marina to see and photograph the fourth Charles County record of this species. We tried calling other field trip members with no luck, but we understand that some went to Goose Bay Marina the next day.

continued next page

Trip Reports

Montgomery County Waterfowl Tour, March 1.

Leader: Andy Martin. Participants: 9 plus leader. Species: 73. Weather: mostly cloudy, a few snow flurries with temperatures reaching the upper 30s by afternoon, and a winter storm threatening by evening. Ten of us traveled around the county to check as many bodies of water as we could in one day. We started at 8 AM at Violette's Lock on the Potomac (including a walk down to milepost 21 to search for recently reported Trumpeter Swans) and proceeded thereafter to Riley's Lock, Hughes Hollow, Sycamore Landing, Edwards Ferry, Germantown Soccerplex Pond, Black Hill RP, Zion Rd Pond, Triadelphia Reservoir, Lake Needwood, and Crabb's Branch stormwater management pond. We found 21 species of swans/geese/ducks plus 2 grebe species and an American Coot. We missed Gadwall, N. Pintail, and N. Shoveler, the latter two expected to a lesser extent. Highlights include four Trumpeter Swans on the Potomac River at Blockhouse Point, a Surf and a White-winged Scoter at Riley's Lock, seven Bald Eagles at various locations, a Purple Finch at Black Hill RP, and Pine Siskins at three different sites.



Patuxent River Park, Jug Bay Natural Area, March 7.

Leader: John Bjerke. Participants: 12. Species: 51. A joint trip with Audubon Naturalist Society on a beautifully warm early spring day saw the return of Osprey and Tree Swallows. Dozens of bluebirds were setting up nests. Perhaps our best migrants were the five Wilson's Snipe that hid on the mud flats at low tide but were discovered nevertheless. Among the birds getting ready to leave the area were several species of waterfowl, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, a Hermit Thrush, two Fox Sparrows, lots of White-throated Sparrows, Juncos, a sapsucker, some Yellow-rumped Warblers, and at least one Rusty Blackbird. Although the large eagle nest on the Mattaponi Creek is gone, we saw four Bald Eagles.



Informal Late Afternoon Walks. Leader: Jim Green

March 11. Reporter: Mike Bowen. Despite gusty NW winds brought on by the passage of a cold front, the trip was successful in hearing 3-4 American Woodcock and seeing one flying on both sides of Sycamore Landing Road.

The group earlier had some good birding from the C&O Canal bridge over Seneca Creek at Riley's Lock; most notable was a group of 4 scoters seen on the water and flying—three White-winged Scoters, one a male in breeding plumage, and a Surf Scoter that was most probably a young male. Also in the water off Riley's Lock were four Red-breasted Merganser, a few Bufflehead, and three species of Grebe, including a Horned and a Red-necked with several Pied-billed. Just upstream was a rowdy group of crows, which looked and sounded like it consisted of at least 100 Fish Crows. The group also visited Hughes Hollow, which had about 50 Ring-necked Duck, flying groups of Wood Duck and Hooded Merganser, a pair of Gadwall, and about a dozen Tree Swallows.

March 18. Participants: 15. It was a beautiful evening. We started out at Riley's Lock. Most of the waterfowl seem to have moved out, though two of the White-winged Scoters and the lone Surf Scoter were still hanging around near the Virginia shore. Other than Pied-billed and Horned Grebes and a flyby immature Bald Eagle, there was not much to report. Next, as we walked down Sycamore Landing Road, a surprised (15 birders approaching) Wild Turkey came out of the woods, stopped halfway across the road, reversed direction, and quickly disappeared. Our real highlight was a flock of Rusty Blackbirds moving around in the trees and then descending into the wet areas. We had good looks at some perched birds. Their motion made it difficult to count them, but several of us agreed that 200 was a conservative estimate.

The Hughes Hollow impoundments held little variety—primarily Ring-necked Ducks. We had a pair of Hooded Mergansers, quite a few Wood Ducks, and 3 Northern Pintails overhead, and two male Blue-winged Teal dropped into the impoundment. Other species of note included a Winter Wren, a very distant Red-headed Woodpecker, and about a dozen Tree Swallows. We heard a single note from a Barred Owl.

Our last stop, back at Sycamore Landing Road, left us standing empty-handed after 25 minutes, because we did not hear or see a single displaying American Woodcock. We did have two raspily (if that's a word) calling Wilson's Snipe fly by about 7:50 PM.



Trip Reports

Delaware Refuges, April 18. Leaders: John Bjerke and Cyndie Loeper. Participants: 16. Species: 76+. This joint trip with Audubon Naturalist Society encountered excellent weather and thousands of migrating Dunlin. The shorebird focus produced nine other species at Bombay Hook, including recently arrived Black-necked Stilt and several transiting Wilson's Snipe. We had interesting discussions of Greater vs. Lesser Yellowlegs and the absence of black bellies on Black-bellied Plovers. There were also several species of lingering waterfowl, one Cattle Egret and numerous Black-crowned Night-Herons, several Bald Eagles and Northern Harriers, and Glossy Ibis at the Hook. An attempt to bird Ted Harvey WMA was thwarted by locked gates, but the entrance road had two Hermit Thrushes and Brown Thrashers. Port Mahon Road was very quiet, with only Willet and a few waterfowl. On a late afternoon swing down Cartanza Road, we found more Horned Larks and eagles but no golden-plovers. A Cooper's Hawk completed the day.



Hughes Hollow and Vicinity, April 19. Leader: Jim Nelson. Participants: 17. Species: 59. Weather: Upper 40s to 60s F, partly cloudy. Highlights: Most interesting of the lingering winter birds was a large flock of Rusty Blackbirds. We had good looks at a Red-headed Woodpecker, first-of-season Green Heron, Eastern Kingbird, Broad-winged Hawk, and Ruby-throated Hummingbird, and singing Field Sparrow, Common Yellowthroat, and White-eyed Vireo. A very cooperative American Bittern gave all of us good looks right by the levee. In spite of lowered water levels in the impoundments, we had good duck variety with seven species, including both species of teal and Hooded and Common Mergansers, most of which were flushed from a small vernal wetland back in one of the cornfields. We also saw three swans in distant flight which we were unable to identify but likely were Tundras. A nice morning with good company.



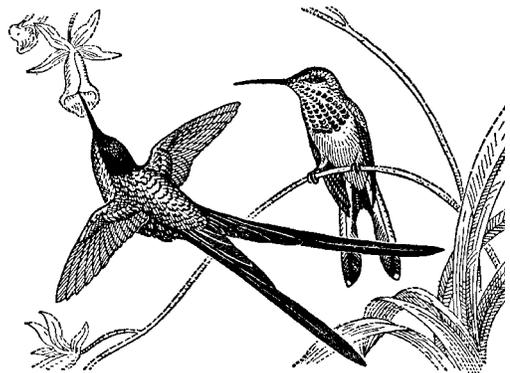
Rock Creek Park, April 29. Leader: Wallace Kornack. Participants: 11. One of our goals was to find a good number of early migrating warbler species but the weather failed to cooperate. The morning started out with distant songs of the Ovenbird and Wood Thrush, ever promising

to make an appearance. By contrast, the songs of the Blue-winged Warbler and the Northern Parula seemed so very close, but alas the birds were unattainable at the outset of the tour. Most of the early part of the morning was spent sorting out birds from the numerous Yellow-rumped Warblers. We managed to see a few Black-and-white Warblers and a Yellow Warbler. Later, individual members of our group reported seeing the Blue-winged (finally), Nashville, and Black-throated Blue Warblers. Standing out from the dark, overcast sky were the striking colors of the Scarlet Tanager and the Baltimore Oriole. Overhead we had a glimpse of the swift-moving Double-crested Cormorant. In addition, the Swainson's Thrush made a first-of-the-year appearance. Despite the rain later in the morning, we were able to complete the tour of the key birding sites, giving those new to Rock Creek Park a foundation for returning when conditions would be more favorable for seeing birds and enjoying the park's riches.

From the Field...

I went on the ANS/Costa Rica Expeditions trip in late January-early February [2009], seeing over 300 birds. We visited both the wet Caribbean slope and the dry Pacific slope, staying in excellent accommodations with great food. Some of the highlights were White-eared Ground Sparrow, Great Potoo, Jabiru, Green Ibis, White Hawk, Vermiculated Screech Owl, Pied Puffbird, Snowy Cotinga, Red-legged Honeycreeper, Violet Sabrewing, Azure-hooded Jay, Golden-headed Tanager, four motmot species, and several trogons including Resplendent Quetzal, but there were many other interesting species as well. A great trip!

—Mark England



Birds of Note: mid-January 200 to late March 2009



Trumpeter Swans highlight this issue's *Birds of Note* column. On 2/22 Dave Czaplak found four probable **Trumpeter Swans** mixed in with some **Tundra Swans** on the Potomac River at Milepost 21 adjacent to Blockhouse Point. The birds stuck around through at least mid-March.

Other notable waterfowl sightings over last few months include six **Cackling Geese** reported by Clive Harris at Little Seneca Lake on 1/20. Bill Hubick picked out two **Cackling Geese** in a formation of Canada Geese over Triadelphia Reservoir on 3/11. A **Greater White-fronted Goose** was reported at Triadelphia Reservoir on 1/24 by Joe Hanfman. Joe Coleman and Andy Rabin spotted two **Surf Scoters** on the Potomac River adjacent to Algonkian RP, VA, on 2/7. Dave Czaplak reported a **White-winged Scoter** and a **Surf Scoter** on the Potomac River between Violette's and Riley's Locks on 2/17; these birds stayed around for more than a month, at some points joined by two or three other **White-winged Scoters**.

This has been a good winter for **Red-necked Grebes**. The last time they seemed this common in our area was late winter of 2004. Gail Mackiernan and Barry Cooper reported a single **Red-necked Grebe** at Triadelphia Reservoir on 1/26. **Red-necked Grebes** continued to be reported from Triadelphia, with Tom Feild reporting a total of five birds there on 3/23. Other **Red-necked Grebes** were noted along the Potomac River between Violette's and Riley's Lock and in the Cabin John and Little Falls areas.

Tom Stock reported the return of a **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** to Sligo Creek on 3/18. The Ostrowski brothers (Michael, Robert, and Thomas) located a **Black-crowned Night-Heron** at Lake Whetstone on 3/28.

A **Pergrine Falcon** pair continues to reside along the Potomac River near the American Legion Bridge.

Clive Harris saw a **Wild Turkey** fly over I-270 in the Germantown vicinity on 3/29.

Two **Dunlin** were reported from the Potomac River at Violette's Lock on 3/24.

A few **Bonaparte's Gulls** passed through the county in mid-January. Jim Green reported three **Bonaparte's Gulls** over the Potomac River adjacent to Riley's Lock on 1/15. **Bonaparte's Gulls** were also noted at Triadelphia Reservoir by Joe Hanfman on 1/16 and the same day at Little Seneca Lake by Mike Bowen. Dave Czaplak reported a **Lesser**

Black-backed Gull mixed in with some Ring-billed Gulls in a field at the corner of Montevideo and Sugarland Roads in mid-March.

Paul Woodward has consistently been seeing **Red-headed Woodpeckers** at McKee-Beshers WMA during his winter bird surveys. Janet Millenson, Brad Beukema, and Chris Wright found three **Red-headed Woodpeckers** along the C&O Canal between mileposts 22 and 25 on 1/24.

Mike Bowen reported two **Common Ravens** at Black Hill RP on 1/16. Jim Nelson found two along the C&O Canal near Sycamore Landing Road on 1/24 and reported a fly-over **Common Raven** near NIH in Bethesda on 3/2.

Paul Woodward reported some less-than-common winter birds at McKee-Beshers WMA in January and February, including **Brown Thrasher** and **Gray Catbird**, **Rusty Blackbird**, **Eastern Phoebe**, and **American Tree Sparrow**.

A major irruption of **White-winged Crossbills** occurred across MD this winter. **White-winged Crossbills** were reported by the following birders over past few months; Gail Mackiernan and Barry Cooper in their backyard on 1/20 and 2/17 and also on 2/5 at Woodend (Audubon Naturalist Society HQ in Bethesda), and John Beetham found six on 1/25 in the spruce grove at Hughes Hollow.

Dave Powell located a female **Red Crossbill** atop a tree along River Road about a quarter mile west of Montevideo Road on 2/12.

A **Common Redpoll** paid a brief visit to Don Simonson's backyard thistle feeder in Darnestown on 1/15. Nancy Green reported a **Common Redpoll** at her backyard feeder in Gaithersburg on 2/2. Husband Jim and past president Helen Patton (out birding in the Howard County) raced back to the house, but the bird never showed up again.

Irruptive Pine Siskins continued to be fairly common throughout the county this winter. The following birders reported **Pine Siskins** either at their backyard feeders or in the field over the past few months: Janet Millenson, Gemma Radko, Jim Green, Sarah Anderson, Evelyn Ralston, Gail Mackiernan and Barry Cooper, Lydia Schindler, Mike Bowen, and Diane Ford.

Chris Barnard found a flock of twelve **Purple Finches** in the woods and fields near the intersection of Hunting Quarter and River Roads on 2/8.

—Andy Martin



Looking back ...

In the eleven years since Gemma Radko's lovely banner masthead first unfurled, in September 1998, *The Chat* has tracked a wealth of MBC history (including a 2003 change of identity, to Montgomery Bird Club). With six issues a year for the first six years and then, for purposes of economy, quarterly, *The Chat* has announced dozens of meetings and hundreds of field trips. It has reported on forays to Cape May in September, Garrett County in June, the Outer Banks in January (long led by Frank Witebsky and starring, in 1999, Jim Green's memorable cookout), Presidents' Weekend at the coast with Paul DuMont, Huntley Meadows with Luther Goldman, Bird Pedals and Paddles with Dave Winer. Still on the books: the Presidents' opening-day walk (now named for Hugh Mahanes), Little Bennett with Gemma, Jim Green's evening walks, Gail Mackiernan's Lilypons, John Bjerke to Delaware refuges in summer and Jug Bay in late winter, Mike Bowen's New Year's Day outing, Ocean City to Broadkill Beach in January, Calvert County in May. It has tracked the Counts: Christmas, May, Canal in winter.

Under the presidencies of Linda Friedland, Mike Bowen, Sam Freiberg, Hugh Mahanes, Helen Patton, and now Jim Nelson, the Club has overseen the installation of the **Claudia Wilds library** at Black Hill RP in 1999; the 2001 publication of the **Site Guide** (many sections previewed in *The Chat*), Editor Linda Friedland; and the evolution of the **Atlas**, from 2002 through 2006, with Jim Green at the helm. Gemma Radko began **MAPS banding** at Adventure in 2000, Rick Sussman launched the **Big Sit** in 2002, and Montgomery County hosted the state **MOS conference** at the Bolger Center in 2003, Mike Bowen coordinating. Mike Bowen was also the driving force when, in 2008, Montgomery County won its first **IBA**, the Lower C&O Canal. In 2006, Claire Wolfe identified Maryland's first **Townsend's Warbler** (in Frederick County) and in 2007 Dave Czaplak found the state's first **Say's Phoebe**.

Back in 2000, *The Chat* remarked on novelty of using cell phones to track a Tufted Duck along the Potomac, and the club published its initial list of e-mail addresses, boasting more than 200 entries. The video library blossomed, and the electronic *Chat* became available in 2007.

The Club's **workshop program** got under way with a focus on larids at Patuxent NWR in the gull-heavy winter of 1999 (the Kelp Gull was around then). Workshops soon expanded to cover shorebirds, sparrows, raptors, and more gulls and terns; Cyndie Loeper hosted many evening gatherings. For several years, Don Simonson fielded a

Montgomery County **World Series of Birding** team to benefit Pronatura Veracruz. Rick Sussman and David Farner, along with Cyndie and Gemma, spent several seasons nurturing a **Youth Bird Club**.

In 2001 the **Annual Social** migrated from the Far East Restaurant in Rockville to ANS Headquarters Chevy Chase, but the fledgling Guest of Honor program, initiated with Margaret and Don Donald and then Luther Goldman, continued with the likes of Bill Oberman, Bill Kulp, Frank Witebsky, and Lola Oberman. In 2005 the Social celebrated the Club's **40th anniversary** by honoring charter and "near-Charter" members, including Kay Jones, Helen Meloney, Cora Morgan, Bill Oberman, Chan Robbins, and Don Messersmith.

There have been more sobering moments, too. During the past eleven years, the Club has mourned the passing of, among others, Grace Sims, Ann Kennedy, Henry Bielstein, Betty Goldman and Luther Goldman, Margaret Donald, Faye Barnes, Vince Jones, Dick Cleveland, Jeff Swinebroad, John Vance, Shirley Kramer, Hugh Mahanes, Naomi Ulmer, and the incomparable Paul DuMont.

My thanks to all our regular contributors, Presidents included. Very special thanks to Andy Martin, who lines up the Calendar and the Field Trips (for the *Yellowthroat*, too!), and who tracks Birds of Note; to Judy McCartney, who so promptly gets the newsletter into circulation, and to her faithful back-up, Doris Brody; to Helen Patton, who keeps the lists and supplies the mailing labels. And of course an enormous thanks to Gemma, who seemingly effortlessly transforms content into visual pleasure.

It's been a great run. I have very much enjoyed the opportunity of interacting with so many fine and fun people. I look forward to seeing you all in the field.

—Lydia Schindler

And Looking Ahead....

Taking over as Editor is **Susan Hunt**, an accomplished editor and enthusiastic birder who lives in Silver Spring. Susan grew up in Bethesda "where my mother always kept the bird feeders filled." She has written book reviews and edited articles for *Birder's World*, and she currently works for an assessment company, editing standardized tests. Per President Jim Nelson's request, Susan will be introducing herself in more detail in the August issue.



From the Far East

It's hard to believe, but my wife and I are coming up on six months since we left the States. Retirement is indeed great. Island living, Eastern philosophy, and the warmth and friendliness of the Okinawan people are providing a welcome contrast to the fast pace of the metro DC area. However, recent posts do make me feel a tad homesick...

From what I've been reading on MDOsprey, birding has been exciting in Maryland this winter. With Barrow's Goldeneye, Tufted Duck, and Eurasian Wigeon visiting the Eastern Shore and Pine Siskins and White-winged Crossbills just about everywhere, there was plenty to pursue on a cold winter's day. It's funny from my perspective reading about the excitement generated by the Tufted Duck and Eurasian Wigeon, since both of these ducks are as common as Mallards here in Japan.

Birding is great in Okinawa. The climate is subtropical, at about the same latitude as Miami. Although the island is small (approx 67 miles long and 2-1/4 miles wide), there is a wide range of habitats. Surprisingly, gulls and terns are a rare sight despite hundreds of miles of coastline. However, shorebirds are in abundance, since Japan lies along the Western Pacific migration route. Okinawa has two endemic birds: Okinawa (Pryor's) Woodpecker and Okinawa Rail, both endangered. The Ryukyu Island chain (which Okinawa is part of) has Ryukyu Minivet and Ryukyu Robin as endemics.

In January, I flew to Kyushu (the southernmost of the four main Japanese islands) and visited the Arasaki Crane Reserve. It was breathtaking to see 12,000 wintering cranes at one location. That trip put my Japan list at 138 species. My Okinawa list currently stands at 93. Spring migration will be starting shortly, so I'm looking forward to new birds passing through and summer migrants arriving to breed.

—Tom Marko
Yomitan-son, Okinawa, Japan
kingbird123@gmail.com

Field Trips: What's Your Pleasure?

Over the years, the MBC field trip program has changed and evolved as the field trip coordinators have tried to adapt to the changing needs and desires of the Club's members. For example, years ago we scheduled overnight trips to more far-flung places (Chincoteague, Garrett County, the Outer Banks), but as fewer and fewer members were signing up, such trips were eventually eliminated. More recently, we have noticed that fewer Club members are signing up for and participating in local field trips as well. Because we want our field trip program to reflect what you as Club members find most interesting, we have developed the questionnaire on the facing page to explore how we can improve the field trip program.

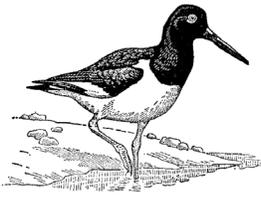
Please take some time to consider the questions, provide your answers and suggestions, and return the completed questionnaire to us by May 31. You can either bring the completed questionnaire to the May 20 club meeting or mail it to:

Linda Friedland
8611 Victory Lane
Potomac, MD 20854

Thank you for taking the time to help us improve the MBC field trip program.

*Linda Friedland
Field Trip Coordinator*





FIELD TRIP QUESTIONNAIRE

(Please circle your answers and fill in blanks where appropriate.)



1. How would you describe your level of birding experience? (circle one) beginner / intermediate / advanced
2. Have you attended any MBC field trips since the beginning of 2008? yes / no If yes, about how many? _____
If no, why not? _____
3. When are you generally available for birding field trips? (circle all that apply) weekdays / Saturdays / Sundays
4. Would a later starting time--say 8:30, 9:00, or 9:30 AM--make it more likely you would attend more trips? yes / no
5. Would a shorter "stroll and enjoy" type of outing be more compatible with your style of birding? yes / no
6. Would you be more likely to attend a field trip if carpooling were available from home to the trip location? yes / no
7. Are you interested in specialized trips, such as nighttime searches for owls or whip-poor-wills? yes / no
If yes, circle choices and suggest others: _____

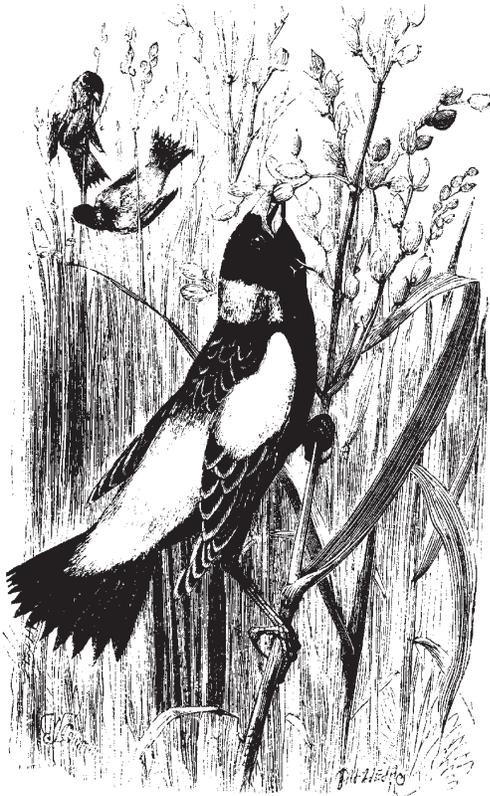
8. Are you interested in 2-3 day trips to places like Garrett County, Chincoteague, the Outer Banks? yes / no
If yes, circle choices and suggest other destinations: _____

9. Would you attend special-interest, non-birding trips, such as a visit to the Smithsonian bird skin collection? yes / no
Other suggestions? _____

10. Do you hesitate to sign up for "reservations only" trips? yes / no
If yes, do you: wait until the last minute / not sign up at all?
11. I would attend more MBC field trips if _____

12. Please list any suggestions for new field trip destinations. _____

Thank you for helping us improve the MBC field trip program!



Slate of Officers, 2008-2009

The Nominating Committee proposes the following slate:

President – Jim Nelson*
Vice President – Steve Pretl*
Secretary – Diane Ford
Treasurer – Sally Wechsler*

Chapter Director – Chris Wright
Chapter Director – Jim Green
Chapter Director – Suzanne Dater*
Chapter Director – David Strother*

State Director – Brad Beukema
State Director – Mark England
State Director – Anna Urciolo

**incumbent*

The election will take place at the meeting on May 20.
Additional nominations may be made from the floor,
provided that the nominee has agreed beforehand.

—Lou DeMouy, Chair
Janet Millenson
David Winer

The Chat
MBC/MOS
P.O. Box 59639
Potomac, MD 20859-9639

