

the Chat



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

August 2009

Volume 40, No. 1

President's Chat

It's hard to believe summer is coming to a close. Fall is nearly upon us with its beautiful colors, cooler weather, and wonderful birds.

Our field trip coordinator, **Linda Friedland**, is again serving up a varied menu of interesting trips for this year. We appreciate your responses to the Field Trip Questionnaire last spring — the information gave Linda many ideas for future trips. I want to extend a special thanks to the field trip leaders who continue to volunteer their time.

Vice President **Steve Pretl** is arranging another group of interesting speakers for our monthly meetings. Please be sure to pass along to Steve any ideas for future speakers.

I enjoyed seeing many of you at this year's MOS Conference in Frederick County. As always, MBCers volunteered to lead and co-lead many of the field trips, helping to make the conference a great success. The weather gods smiled on us, and we saw lots of great birds in congenial company.

At our May meeting, we awarded birding backpacks to two wonderfully articulate and enthusiastic young birders — **Christina Chang** and **Cormac Close** (see page 7). Thank you to **Anna Urciolo** for taking charge of this effort. Young birders are the future, and we hope to find ways to encourage more young birders. We anticipate awarding another backpack this year. Please let Anna know if you have any ideas for identifying interested young birders.

Also at the May meeting, we held the annual election of Club officers and directors. I am pleased to welcome new Club Secretary **Diane Ford** and new Chapter Directors **Suzanne Dater** and **David Strother**. **Mark England** and **Anna Urciolo** will continue to serve the Club in their new roles as State Directors, joining



Brad Beukema (serving a second term). We had our first Club Council meeting in June, and the new Council members are already contributing to our work.

Last March, several MBCers joined members of the Potomac Chapter of the North American Versatile Hunting Dog Association to help clean up trash at the McKee-Beshers Wildlife Management Area. This was a great chance to help preserve an area we enjoy as birders, and we will be doing this cleanup again this year. In June and July, MBCers had another opportunity to help preserve a popular birding location. The Montgomery County Sierra Club invited MBCers to join them in monthly projects to remove invasive plants at the Blue Mash Nature Trail. At our May meeting, MBCer **John Combs** told us about the importance of the Weed Warriors program to combat invasive plants in local parks and natural areas, and the Blue Mash project is a chance to do this important work. The Sierra Club plans future monthly removal projects at Blue Mash starting in September (see Calendar). MBC will be partnering with them, and we will lead a bird walk before each removal project. I encourage you to participate in these coming projects.

continued on page 2

CONTENTS	
Fall Calendar	2
Got News?.....	2
Field Trips/MOS Conference Notes.....	3-4
Trip Reports.....	5-6
Year-end Awards.....	6
New Birder Mentoring/Youth MOS.....	7
Birds of Note/In Memoriam: Craig Tufts.....	8
Meet Your New Secretary and Editor	9
MBC Officers, 2009-2010	9
Membership Application/Renewal.....	10



September 12 (Saturday), 10 a.m., MOS Board Meeting. Hosted by Baltimore Bird Club at Cylburn Mansion, Baltimore. Contact Janet Shields, MOS Secretary, at janetbill@prodigy.net for more information.

September 16 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m., "Oriole Bias." *Kevin Omland.* Discover how the evolution of sexual dimorphism in color and song has occurred in Baltimore Orioles and other migratory species.

September 27 (Sunday), Invasive Species Removal at Blue Mash Nature Trail. Join the Montgomery County Sierra Club, MBC, and others to remove invasive plants to help maintain good habitat at this great birding site. Meet 9 a.m. at the Zion Rd parking lot for two hours of work. There will be a bird walk at 7:30 a.m. starting from the parking lot. To sign up for the removal project, contact Mimi Abdu at mimi.abdu@maryland.sierraclub.org or 301-919-6060.

October 11 (Sunday), Big Sit. Join the Sitting Ducks at Black Hill RP starting at dawn and continuing until ? Come for the day or just a few hours. Meet at the dike across the road from the park boat ramp. Leader: TBA. Questions? Call field trip coordinator Linda Friedland at 301-983-2136 (before 9 p.m.).

October 21 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m., "My Big Photographic Year." *George Jett.* For the year 2008, George took on an impossible-sounding challenge — to not only see but photograph 300 species of birds in Maryland — as a fund-raiser to protect the Blue-billed Curassow. Come hear his adventures and the results of this quest.

October 25 (Sunday), Invasive Species Removal at Blue Mash Nature Trail.
See September 27 listing.

November 18 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m., "The Best of Ecuador." *Bob Mumford.* Bob shares photos from his eight trips to Ecuador and over two months in the field.

November 22 (Sunday), Invasive Species Removal at Blue Mash Nature Trail.
See September 27 listing.

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 Road, 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: Club meetings are canceled if Montgomery County schools have been closed. If you have questions, contact Jim Nelson at 301-530-6574 or kingfishers2@verizon.net.

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

Editor: Susan Hunt **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.



PRESIDENT'S CHAT, from page 1

We can also help preserve and protect our birds and natural areas by weighing in with public officials and others on issues that affect Maryland's natural resources. Our Conservation Chair, **Gail Mackiernan**, tracks these matters for us, and other MBCers often bring issues to our attention. Sometimes we send letters on behalf of the Club, and other times we encourage members to write directly as individuals. We use our Club e-mail list to notify you of time-sensitive issues upon which you may want to take action. If you have an e-mail address and did not already give it to us when you renewed your membership, please give it to **Steve Pretl** so you will receive these important notices (you are already on the list if you have been receiving e-mail messages from Steve).

I look forward to seeing you again as we start our new year. Enjoy the birds of fall. ♪

—Jim Nelson

Got News?

Birding magazine, published by the American Birding Association (ABA), will soon be publishing regular compilations of very short (about 150 words) announcements and summaries of news stories with broad interest to the North American birding community. Possible topics include recent conservation successes (and failures), new bird initiatives by NGOs and government agencies, and human interest items. Please send announcements and summaries to Ted Floyd, tfloyd@aba.org (e-mail submissions only). Include your name and place of residence, and please keep your submission as close to 150 words as possible. ♪

Don't miss it! Don Messersmith's article on Orville Crowder in the July issue of *Birding*.



Field Trips

New Club members, new birders, and guests are cordially welcome on every 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.).

 **August 26 (Wednesday) C&O CANAL/McKEE-BESHERS WMA.** Half day. Meet at Riley's Lock on the bridge overlooking the Potomac River at 7:30 a.m. Bring scope, snack, and insect repellent. Trip will cover parts of the C&O Canal and other areas along River Road. All are welcome. Reservations not required. For more info and directions, contact the LEADER: Jim Green, 301-208-2393 or jgreen@smokeyglenfarm.com.

September 12 (Saturday) PATUXENT RIVER PARK. Half day. Joint trip with ANS. Driftboat on Patuxent River followed by trail walk. Migrant and resident songbirds and waterbirds; Sora likely. Meet 6:30 a.m. at park entrance gate. Bring fee of \$5/person for park program; boat trip can be cool and a bit damp. Make reservations with LEADER: John Bjerke, 240-401-1643. CO-LEADER: Paul Baicich.

September 12 (Saturday) ASSATEAGUE ISLAND/COASTAL WORCESTER. Full day (to dusk). Bring food, water, sunscreen, and insect repellent. Focus will be migrant warblers, shorebirds, and rarities such as Lark Sparrow. Reservations required. Limit: 14. For reservations and directions, contact the LEADER: Bill Hubick, bill_hubick@yahoo.com.

September 13 (Sunday) PENNYFIELD TO VIOLETTE'S BIRD STALK. Half day. In response to requests from our recent field trip questionnaire for a later start time, we will meet at 9 a.m. at Violette's Lock parking lot at the end of Violette's Lock Road. We will carpool to Pennyfield Lock and walk up the C&O Canal towpath to Violette's Lock. This walk should net an interesting mix of late warblers, land bird migrants, a few first-show winter visitors, raptors, and waterbirds. If you plan to attend, contact the LEADER: Jim Nelson, kingfishers2@verizon.net or 301-530-6574.

September 16 (Wednesday) ROCK CREEK PARK, DC. One-third day. Urban birding at its best with one of Rock Creek Park's "Regulars." Migrant warblers, vireos, and sparrows. Meet 7 a.m. at Picnic Area 18 (on Ridge Rd, one-half mile below the Nature Center). Reservations required. For reservations and directions, call the LEADER: Wallace Kornack, 202-338-7859.

September 20 (Sunday) ROCK CREEK PARK, DC. One-third day. We've expanded our urban bird walks to include those who can meet only on weekends. Same great birds: migrant warblers, vireos, and sparrows. Meet 6:45 a.m. at Picnic Area 18 (on Ridge Road, one-half mile below the Nature Center). Reservations required. For reservations and directions, call the LEADER: Wallace Kornack, 202-338-7859.

 **September 23 (Wednesday) LITTLE BENNETT RP.** Half day. Meet 7:30 a.m. to bird some of the trails of Little Bennett RP for migrant and resident birds. Expect to walk 2 to 3 miles on gravel and dirt trails, with some uphill. Beginners welcome! Reservations required. Limit: 8. For reservations and directions, contact the LEADER: Claire Wolfe, 301-972-4278 or c_wolfe2003@yahoo.com.

September 26 (Saturday) UPPER WATTS BRANCH PARK. Half day. Migrant warblers, vireos, thrushes, and assorted woodland residents. Meet 8 a.m. at the corner of Princeton Place and Fordham Street. Reservations required. Limit: 12. LEADER: Paul O'Brien, 301-424-6491.

 **September 27 (Sunday) LOISY GREEN CONSERVATION PARK.** Half day. Explore the varied habitats of this new 204-acre park. Migrant/resident songbirds, raptors, waterfowl are possible. Meet 7:30 a.m. at parking lot on Snouffer School Road, Gaithersburg. Reservations required. For detailed directions and reservations, call the LEADER: Mark England, 240-207-3132 (home) or 240-375-4500 (cell).

 **October 3 (Saturday) LITTLE BENNETT RP.** Half day. Everyone welcome, but we'll target new birders and focus on some birding basics. Join us for a slow-paced walk listening for and observing common species. Late warblers and vireos, early sparrows, and some raptors possible. Limit: 8. For reservations, time, and meeting place, contact the LEADER: Gemma Radko, 301-514-2894.

October 10 (Saturday) LILYPONS WATER GARDENS. Half day. Please join us for a joint Montgomery/Frederick County Bird Club trip to this southern Fred Co hotspot. Target species include American Bittern, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, and a variety of raptors. Meet at Lilypons at 7:30 a.m. Reservations required. For reservations and directions, contact the LEADER: Mike Welch, 301-685-3561 or manddwelch@comcast.net.

continued next page

Field Trips

October 11 (Sunday) BIG SIT. Join the Sitting Ducks at Black Hill RP starting at dawn and continuing until ? Come for the day or just a few hours. Meet at the dike across the road from the park boat ramp. LEADER: TBA. Questions? Call field trip coordinator Linda Friedland at 301-983-2136.

October 18 (Sunday) HUGH MAHANES PRESIDENTS' WALK. Half day. For our traditional Presidents' Walk, participation of all former Chapter Presidents is encouraged, and everyone is welcome. This is a wonderful chance for newer birders to be in the field with "old hands" who enjoy sharing what they know. Meet 7:30 a.m. at the parking lot at the end of Riley's Lock Road off River Road. Bring lunch for a post-walk picnic. Reservations not required. For more info, contact Jim Nelson at kingfishers2@verizon.net or 301-530-6574.

October 28 (Wednesday) WESTERN MONTGOMERY COUNTY MIXED BAG. Half day trip looking for sparrows, ducks, and who knows what else. Meet 7:30 a.m. at Hughes Hollow parking lot. Plan on doing some walking through wet grass in several locations throughout the county. No reservations needed. For further information, call the LEADER: Dave Powell at 301-540-8776.

November 8 (Sunday) LOISY. GREEN CONSERVATION PARK. Half day. Explore the varied habitats of this new 204-acre park. Songbirds, raptors, and waterfowl are possible. Meet 7:30 a.m. at parking lot on Snouffer School Road, Gaithersburg. Reservations required. For detailed directions and reservations, call the LEADER: Ed Patten, 301-948-5648.

November 11 (Wednesday) LBJs AT BLUE MASH NATURE TRAIL. Blue Mash is hoppin' with Little Brown Jobs, making it a good place to work on the basics of sparrow ID. We'll look for similarities and differences among the common species, like Song and Field and Chipping, while keeping an eye out for less-likely White-crowned and Swamp. This trip is primarily for beginners, but all are welcome. Half day. For reservations, time, and directions, contact the LEADER: Lydia Schindler, 301-977-5252 or lydiaschindler@verizon.net.

November 21 (Saturday) BLACKWATER NWR. Full day (to dusk). Ducks and thousands of Canada and Snow Geese. Brown-headed Nuthatch possible. Rough-legged Hawk and Short-eared Owl possible in late afternoon. Bring lunch and drinks. Reservations required. Limit: 12. For meeting place and time, contact the LEADER: Andy Martin, apmartin2@comcast.net or 301-294-4805 or 301-529-2066 (cell).

November 29 (Sunday) LILYPONS/NEW DESIGN ROAD. Half day. Wintering field birds, targeting Fox and American Tree Sparrows and possibly Sora and American Bittern. Reservations required. For more info and reservations, contact the LEADER: Gail Mackiernan, 301-989-1828.

December 6 (Sunday) OCCOQUAN NWR, VA. Three-quarters day. Bring lunch and warm drink. We will look for sparrows and other field birds and early waterfowl. Established in 1998, Occoquan NWR is located at the confluence of the Potomac and Occoquan Rivers. Wetland habitats cover about half the refuge; upland meadows and mature oak-hickory-beech forest are interspersed throughout. Meet 8 a.m. at the refuge car park. Reservations required. Directions: Refuge is located in Woodbridge, VA, 20 miles south of Washington. From north: Take I-95 south to exit 161 (Woodbridge), follow Rte. 1 South, cross the Occoquan River, and turn left at the light onto Dawson Beach Road. Follow road to end at entrance to refuge and proceed on same road to large parking lot on right. LEADER: Mike Bowen, 301-530-5764.

MOS Conference Notes

The MOS Conference, held this year in May in Frederick County, took full advantage of the varied habitat of this part of the state, encompassing the Piedmont and Ridge and Valley areas of Maryland. The forecast that weekend was for rain, but for the most part the rain held off. MBCers could take pride in the number of our members who led field trips and, especially, in this year's conference pin and T-shirt, both with Diane Ford's Least Bittern illustration. The conference workshop on sparrows, led

by James Rising of the University of Toronto, filled up quickly, but the keynote speech on Friday night was open to all. Doug Tallamy, chair of the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware, spoke on "Native Plants, Insects, Birds, and the Future of Biodiversity in Suburbia." For more information about his message ("All plants are not created equal...") check out his book *Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants*. ♣



Trip Reports

Blue Mash Nature Trail, April 25. Leader: Mark England. Participants: 10 plus leader. Species: 51. Weather: Sunny/excellent! We started off auspiciously with scope views of a Yellow-billed Cuckoo (thanks to Jim Moore) perched near the parking lot. Along the gravel road, we had a flyover Common Merganser and a Green Heron. Resident birds on territory included Field Sparrow, Brown Thrasher, Yellow Warbler, Eastern Phoebe, White-eyed Vireo, Great Crested Flycatcher, and Prairie Warbler, a life bird for some. We saw a soaring Sharp-shinned Hawk early on and a closer Cooper's Hawk near the end of the walk. In the ponds were Double-crested Cormorants, a single American Coot, and Ring-necked Ducks. The only disappointment was not seeing any migrant warblers of note.



Calvert County, May 6. Leader: Sue Hamilton. Coordinators: Lydia Schindler and Linda Friedland. Participants: 8. Species: 86. Seven MBCers headed out to Calvert County for our club's annual three-quarters day foray. The weather was overcast and threatened rain. But this did not materialize, and, under the expert guidance of local resident Sue Hamilton, we had a lovely, birdy day. Starting at Flag Ponds Nature Park, we explored its diverse habitat of upland woods, swamp, and beach to find 17 species of warblers including Northern Waterthrush, Prairie, Northern Parula, Worm-eating, Pine, Yellow-throated, Kentucky, and Hooded. Adding to our pleasure were a pair of Summer Tanagers, Indigo Buntings, and Acadian and Great Crested Flycatchers. Then on to Battle Creek Cypress Swamp to chase and finally see a Hooded Warbler and get good looks at a Prothonotary. We finished up enjoying lunch at the beach at Scientists' Cliffs in the company of a Blue Grosbeak. A great day!



Upper Watts Branch, Rockville, May 9. Leader: Paul O'Brien. Participants: 8. Species: 52. On this pleasant morning, many more birds were heard than seen as has been true for the past few years and probably will be for the foreseeable future. The cause is the now regular early spring leafing-out of the trees, making it extremely difficult to get a clear look at treetop warblers. Nonetheless, we persisted and had fleeting looks at Northern Parula,

Yellow-rumped, Blackburnian, Blackpoll, and Black-and-white Warblers and a Common Yellowthroat. Heard only were Black-throated Blue, American Redstart, and Northern Waterthrush. Timing is everything — we had had 17-warbler days on May 7 and 8 with a grand total of 25 warbler species throughout the week, including Cerulean and Mourning.

The thrushes did not disappoint, and we saw both transient Swainson's and the breeding Wood Thrushes. Another resident, an adult Red-shouldered Hawk, made a low pass over the group as did a flock of about 25 Cedar Waxwings, the latter repeatedly. There was ample opportunity to enjoy Scarlet Tanagers, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and Baltimore Orioles before finally paying some attention to a very noisy Hairy Woodpecker. It dawned on us that there might be a young bird begging for food, and, sure enough, an adult female was flying excitedly from tree to tree with a substantial insect in her mouth. After several minutes of trying to lead us off the track, she gave up and went to a hole in a nearby tree. When she emerged, a nearly fledged young poked its head out of the hole for all to see.

The totals for the walk included nine warbler species and 52 species overall, counting the female Ruby-throated Hummingbird the leader found on his feeder when he got back home.



Rock Creek Park, Migrant Warblers Tour, May 12. Leader: Wallace Kornack. Participants: 7. Species: 46. We had a picture-perfect morning at Rock Creek Park. Of the 46 species reported by various people, 21 were warblers. Particularly noteworthy were the Mourning, Cerulean, Cape May, Canada, Blackburnian, Bay-breasted, and Tennessee. The tour group was able to see a good sampling of the warblers, especially the Cape May, Bay-breasted, and Blackburnian Warblers and a number of the more numerous species like the Black-throated Blue, Chestnut-sided, Northern Parula, and Magnolia. They were also treated to close views of the Wood Thrush, Swainson's Thrush, and Veery, as well as the brilliantly fashioned Scarlet Tanager and Baltimore Oriole.

continued on next page

Trip Reports

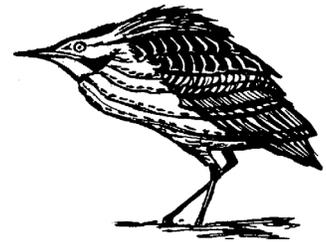
Hot Spots for Red Knots, May 23. Co-leaders: Cyndie Loeper and Kurt Schwarz, with local birding expert Bill Steward. Joint trip with Howard County. Participants: 18 plus three leaders (and 11 cars). Species: 100 species including 16 species of shorebirds. Weather: Partly cloudy with some breeze to mitigate the flies — if not the ticks!

Starting at Prime Hook we had numerous highlights although unfortunately not seen or heard by all. In honor of our annual trip, we did have the traditional displaying Wild Turkey in all his glory. Other surprises included King Rail and Kentucky Warbler — not too shabby! Terns included Forster's, Common, and Least at Fowler's Beach with accommodating comparative views.

Mispillion (Dupont Nature Center) was breathtaking. Thousands of Red Knots were carpeting the exposed flats. American Oystercatchers, Ruddy Turnstones, dowitchers, and Dunlin filled the interstitial gaps. The surveyors were saying it was a higher count for Red Knots than in many recent years. We can only hope!

Bombay Hook shorebird highlights were four remaining American Avocets in breeding plumage, incoming Black-necked Stilts, and a good opportunity to study Least and Semipalmated Sandpipers. Marsh Wrens and Seaside Sparrows were persistently entertaining.

Bird Photography for Beginners, June 7. Leader: Evelyn Ralston. Participants, 9. Species: 40. Weather: early morning fog, then beautiful, sunny. We lucked out with the weather, since June 7 was a rare bright day in a string of storm systems, and the early morning fog was cool and nice for atmosphere shots. Armed with every kind of camera, from small point-and-shoots to SLR and from small zooms to 600 mm lenses, we invaded the dikes of Hughes Hollow. We were more interested in photographing birds than in counting species, but we nevertheless tallied 40 species including Willow Flycatchers, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, American Bittern, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (flyover), Great Egret (flyover), Baltimore and Orchard Orioles, Eastern Kingbird, Red-headed Woodpecker, and a few fleeting warblers (Yellow, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, and Prothonotary). Regrettably, the bittern's stay was too short to be immortalized, but lots of shots were taken of the Willow Flycatchers and of the usual summer residents, Red-winged Blackbirds, Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, Gray Catbirds, dragonflies, etc.



Year-end Awards

At May's meeting, President Jim Nelson presented:

A **Distinguished Service Award** to **Lydia Schindler** in grateful recognition for her many years of outstanding service as editor of the *Chat*.

Valued Service Awards to:

Mike Bowen, in appreciation for his years of dedicated service as a State Director, field trip leader, and MOS Education Committee Chair;

Mark England, in appreciation for his years of dedicated service as Chapter Director, field trip leader, and Christmas Count Compiler;

Judy McCartney, in appreciation for her years of dedicated service as a State Director and very efficient "Postmistress of the *Chat*";

Janet Millenson, in appreciation for her years of dedicated service as a State Director and Christmas Count Compiler;

Tricia Tice in appreciation for her years of dedicated service as Secretary, listening patiently and capturing accurately the musings of the MBC Council; and

Anna Urciolo, in appreciation for her years of dedicated service as a Chapter Director, New Member Chair, and countless hours as our all-around volunteer.

And certificates in sincere appreciation for their invaluable contributions to the successful publication of the Second Edition of *A Birder's Guide to Montgomery County, Maryland* to **John Bjerke, Mike Bowen, Mark England, Linda Friedland, Denise Gibbs, Rob Gibbs, Jim Green, Howard Lefkowitz, Cyndie Loeper, Stephanie Lovell, Gail Mackiernan, Tom Marko, Andy Martin, Don Messersmith, Paul O'Brien, Helen Patton, Dave Powell, Gemma Radko, Lydia Schindler, Rick Sussman, Anna Urciolo, and Paul Woodward.** †



Proposed New Birder Mentoring Program

As I have talked to and birded with newer Club members, I have realized how important it is for beginning birders to go out in the field with experienced birders who like to share their knowledge and skills. Many Club members have told me about how, as they discovered the joy of birding, they benefited from a Club member taking them under her or his wing as they went birding together. Some folks find that field trips are a good way to learn the birds and the birding process, but others may feel intimidated in the group setting or may find it difficult to get out on field trips due to other time commitments. I think newer birders really do benefit from time in the field, one on one, with experienced birders, so I am proposing that we establish a birder mentoring program for newer birders.

What I envision is a group of volunteer mentors who are willing to spend some time birding one on one with a newer birder in the Club. We would identify the mentors by area of the county where they live, so that a new birder could connect with someone close by. Each pair, mentor and new birder, would decide on their own when and where to bird together.

I would like your feedback on this idea so we can decide whether to proceed. It would be helpful to know how many folks would be willing to act as mentors, so please let me know if you would be willing to be a mentor. ♪



Youth MOS Backpacks

MOS has given each chapter a backpack crammed with birding goodies to give to a deserving student in the chapter area. We had two such deserving youths, Christina Chang and Cormac Close, and we presented them with the backpacks at our May meeting. The packs contained a pair of Eagle Optics “Triumph” binoculars (partially donated by Eagle Optics), a signed copy of *The Young Birder’s Guide to Birds of Eastern North America* by Bill Thompson III, and several used birding books donated by MOS members.

Christina and Cormac had each written an essay about their favorite bird, which they spoke about at the meeting. Christina’s choice was the Black-capped/Carolina Chickadee, not just for its colors but for its personality. “They’re full of energy ... and are bright cheery birds.” Cormac’s favorite bird is the House Wren, also because of its personality. “Despite its size, the wren can be the boldest and loudest of all birds, and it never lets anyone push it around.” He finished his essay declaring that “the wren truly deserves to be the king of all birds.” All present at the meeting were impressed with how articulate the students were at speaking in front of a large group. In addition to the MOS backpacks, Christina and Cormac received a Youth Membership in our bird club. We are delighted to have such budding birders join our club. ♪

—Anna Urciolo

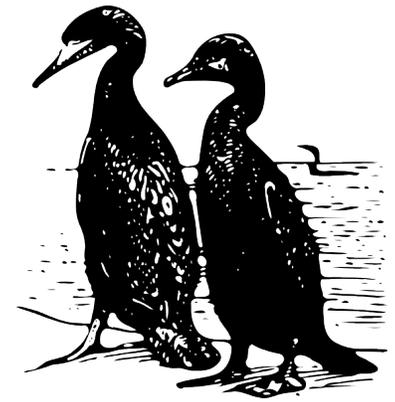
—Jim Nelson
kingfishers2@verizon.net
301-530-6574

Welcome, New Members

Phil Mathieu Barbara Skelly
Martha Morris Anne T. Sturm
Jay Resnick



Birds of Note: April to late June 2009



Cormorant species highlight this issue's *Birds of Note* column. Dave Czaplak has found both **Great Cormorant** and **Neotropic Cormorant** along the Potomac River in the vicinity of Violette's Lock over the past 3 months. Dave saw a Great Cormorant about 8:30 a.m. on 4/4 as it flew downstream past Violette's Lock. He noted that "it gave a fine view of its large head and thick straight neck, yellow facial skin surrounded by a broad band of white feathering, and a large oblong white patch on the rear flanks." The bird was not seen again in subsequent days. On 6/17, Dave reported an immature Neotropic Cormorant along the Maryland shoreline just upstream of Violette's Lock. This bird was still being seen as of 6/30. This is his third record of this species in Montgomery County since 2005.

On 5/30, Keith and Beth Hamilton found and took photographic evidence of 10 **Black-bellied Whistling Ducks** at Lake Churchill in Germantown. Despite efforts by a few Montgomery birders the following day, the birds were not relocated.

During the early evening hours on both 4/24 and 4/26, Paul O'Brien heard a **Whip-poor-will** singing in the woods behind his Rockville house, which backs up to Upper Watts Branch Park. Other good birds found in Upper Watts Branch Park this past migration season include a **Cerulean Warbler** on 5/6, a **Wilson's and Mourning Warbler** on 5/11 (the Mourning Warbler was reported again on 5/12), an **Olive-sided Flycatcher** on 5/16, and a **Bicknell's Thrush** heard by Paul O'Brien on

5/20. Paul heard the Bicknell's Thrush sing behind his house on a few different occasions between 5/20 and 5/22, but it seems as if Stan Arnold was the only other birder lucky enough to locate this bird besides Paul.

Woody and Rae Dubois found a **Least Flycatcher** at Layhill Park on 5/30.

Least Bitterns were heard at two different locations within McKee-Beshers WMA over the past few months. On 5/17, Jim Green heard a **Least Bittern** calling in the Hughes Hollow area, and on 6/6, Paul Woodward heard one in the swampy area along River Road just north of West Willard Road. Paul also reported a **Little Blue Heron** at Hughes Hollow on 6/16. Five **Glossy Ibis** were seen by Dave Roberts at Hughes Hollow on 5/19.

A wet spring made for some good shorebirding in the county in May. On 5/31, Dave Czaplak found a **Ruddy Turnstone** at Violette's Lock. Further upstream at the Summit Hall Turf Farm, Dave noted two **Sanderlings** and a single **White-rumped Sandpiper** among a larger group of **Semipalmated Sandpipers**. A White-rumped Sandpiper was also found the next day at the Patton Turf Farm.

Dave Czaplak found a **Red-throated Loon** at Little Seneca Lake on 4/2. The bird was seen again on 4/3.

—Andy Martin

IN MEMORIAM: Craig Tufts

Craig Tufts, who died in June at the age of 62, was the chief naturalist of the National Wildlife Federation and was the most visible advocate for its Backyard Wildlife Habitat program. Craig was a compiler of the Seneca Christmas bird count for the MBC from 1990 to 1994.

Although Craig did not start the Backyard Habitat program, he refined it and gave it national prominence. In his two books, *The Backyard Naturalist* and *The National Wildlife Federation's Guide to Gardening for*

Wildlife, Craig encouraged homeowners to think of gardens as a place for plants and animals rather than humans and to add water features and native plants to provide places for animals to hide, shelter, and raise young.

In the announcement of his death, the NWF called him "a real champion of birds, butterflies, native plants ... a wonderful ambassador to those who did not understand how the natural world worked." ♣



Meet Your New Secretary

Our new secretary, Diane Ford, has been birding as long as she can remember. As a teenager growing up in Bethesda, she spent a lot of time on the Chesapeake Bay on her parents' boat, which gave her plenty of opportunity to observe the natural world. After high school, she attended Montgomery College where, she says, "strangely, I majored in business management, being practical." She currently works as an office clerk for a software company in Bethesda and continues to enjoy the outdoors, hiking and birding at least a couple of days a week. Her usual birding haunts include Rock Creek Park, Lake Frank, and Lake Needwood. She is also somewhat of a bird chaser, most recently adding the Barrow's Goldeneye in Charles County to her life list.

Diane's wonderful picture of a Least Bittern won the MOS pin contest this year, which means you can also see it on the conference T-shirt, if you were lucky enough to get one of those. She had entered the contest several times previously, and each time, she tried to find the right bird "jizz" to portray. She did the Least Bittern design at the last minute. "Something was nagging at me," she says, "and I followed my intuition and drew it."

Diane has been a wildlife artist since she was seven. She works in pencil and charcoal, oil and acrylic paints, and papier-maché. To see more of Diane's artwork, visit www.dfordwildlifeart.com.

Diane also has four homing pigeons, which she says are wonderful pets: "If my spirits are down, I go out and sit with them and they cheer me up."

As MBC secretary, Diane's responsibilities include taking minutes of the Council meetings and sending cards of concern to club members when needed. She plans to add her own special brand of birding humor to these duties. ♪



MBC Officers, 2009-2010

These officers were elected at the May meeting:

President — Jim Nelson

Vice President — Steve Pretl

Secretary — Diane Ford

Treasurer — Sally Wechsler

Chapter Director — Chris Wright*

Chapter Director — Jim Green*

**Second year of two-year term.*

Chapter Director — Suzanne Dater

Chapter Director — David Strother

State Director — Brad Beukema

State Director — Mark England

State Director — Anna Urciolo

Meet Your New Editor

I am pleased to introduce myself as the new editor of the *Chat*. I look forward to working with Gemma Radko whose lovely design and bird pictures have graced this newsletter for 11 years. And Lydia Schindler has kindly showed me the ropes and shepherded me through this first issue, being on call for countless questions and encouragement. I also welcome your comments and suggestions for the *Chat*.

I've been an editor for most of my working life, but this is the first time I've had the pleasure of editing copy on a subject so dear to my heart. I grew up in Bethesda, which was then more rural than it is now, and I have always been interested in birds. I birded regularly and also wrote book reviews and occasionally edited articles for *Birder's World*. But it was not until a few years ago when I took the USDA/ANS Bird Life course that I realized that other people birded (who knew?) and that I would see more and learn more by birding with others.

I work for the American Institutes for Research, a behavioral and social science research organization with offices across the street from Washington Harbour in Georgetown. I edit standardized tests for state compliance with No Child Left Behind, which, although not very exciting, means that I can spend my lunch hour walking along the towpath or the Capital Crescent Trail, where I am continually astonished by the richness of the bird life in the midst of noisy Georgetown.

I look forward to getting more involved in the Montgomery Bird Club through the *Chat* and through the birding trips. See you in the field! ♪

—Susan Hunt
shunt820@yahoo.com
301-530-2807



