

the Chat



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

May 2010

Volume 41, No. 2

President's Chat

As I write this, we are experiencing unseasonably warm, early April temperatures, and spring is in the air! What an amazing winter and early spring so far with record snows in December and February and unusually warm temperatures in March. And the birds, of course, continue to surprise us, with interesting visitors showing up around the area (Painted Bunting, Varied Thrush, and Tufted Duck among the more unusual). Who knows what new birds will come with spring migration?

This is my last President's Chat. At the May 19 Club meeting, you will elect a new President, and I will step down. This year's Nominating Committee—**Mike Bowen** (Chair), **Janet Millenson**, and **Andy Martin**—is presenting a strong slate of candidates to be Club officers and directors (see page 10). I want to thank the Committee for their thoughtful work and the Club members who agreed to be nominated to serve. As a volunteer organization, we depend on people stepping forward to help. With good people like these, the Club's affairs will be in good hands.

It is hard for me to believe that almost two years have passed since I became your Club President. I learned a lot in the job and had a lot of great experiences. This gave me a chance to get to know many of you much better, and I appreciate very much the help you gave me and the wisdom you shared with me along the way. In particular, I had the benefit of a strong Club Council over the two years. The Council members really helped keep things running smoothly. I thanked some of those folks in my President's Chat last May as they finished their terms. This year I would like to thank the others for their many contributions.

Helen Patton, as immediate Past President, gave me the benefit of her long experience with the Club and also served as Membership Chair, a very important



role. **Steve Pretl**, as Vice President, arranged a series of interesting presenters and topics for Club meetings, nimbly handled last-minute glitches, served up two fine Club Socials, and kept the Club informed of breaking news through messages to the Club e-mail group. **Sally Wechsler**, as Treasurer, kept our books in order and brought her unique perspective to Council meetings. **Diane Ford**, as Secretary, brought enthusiasm to her functions and fresh ideas to the Council. State Directors **Brad Beukema**, **Mark England**, and **Anna Urciolo** ably represented the Club at the MOS Board meetings and, together with departing Chapter Directors **Jim Green** and **Chris Wright** and continuing Chapter Directors **Suzanne Dater** and **David Strother**, brought a wealth of experience to the Council and a wide array of views. I really appreciated the lively discussions and camaraderie in our Council meetings.

I would also like to recognize some other folks who quietly ensured that our most important Club functions continued smoothly and made my job much easier. First, for our all-important Club field trip program, field trip coordinator **Linda Friedland** took the results of last year's questionnaire and further

continued on page 2

CONTENTS	
Spring Calendar	2
Field Trips	3
Bill Kulp/MOS 2010 Conference	4
Trip Reports	5-6
2010 Social.....	7
Birding Chile, From Bottom to Top.....	8
Birds of Note	9
Slate of Officers, 2010-11	10



Spring Calendar

PRESIDENT'S CHAT, from page 1

refined our already great program. I extend my personal thanks to Linda for her ongoing fine work and to those who continue to volunteer as field trip leaders. Second, for our vital Club communications, as new editor of the *Chat*, **Susan Hunt** did a fine job of maintaining the high standards established by long-time editor **Lydia Schindler**. My personal thanks to Susan for her great start; to **Gemma Radko** for her fine *Chat* design work; to **Andy Martin** for his diligent work on the *Chat* Calendar, Field Trips list, and Birds of Note; and to all who provided interesting articles.

As I end my term, I wish you all continued good birding in good company, and I look forward to seeing you at future meetings and in the field.

—Jim Nelson

May 8 (Saturday), May Count. Wherever you're birding in Montgomery County on this day, bring along a copy of the May Count Checklist (www.mdbirds.org/counts/namc/namcchecklist.pdf). Submit completed checklists to Andy Martin, 3 Thorburn Road, Gaithersburg, MD 20878 by June 15; eBird reports also acceptable. For more info, contact Andy at apmartin2@comcast.net.

May 15 (Saturday), 27th Annual World Series of Birding. New Jersey Audubon hosts North America's premier conservation event. This event has raised over \$8 million for bird conservation. For more information, visit New Jersey Audubon's website at www.njaudubon.org.

May 19 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m. "East Pacific Odyssey or ... If It's Tuesday It Must Be Ecuador." *Gail Mackiernan.* In autumn 2009 Gail, her husband, and two friends took a cruise from California to Chile. Their primary targets were seabirds, but the cruise's 12 port stops in Mexico and Central and South America also yielded a wonderful array of landbirds. Gail's presentation follows their "odyssey" from the California deserts to the mist-filled beech forests of Chile and everything in between.

May 23 (Sunday), 9:00 a.m. Blue Mash Invasives Removal. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the Zion Road parking lot for two hours of work. Beginners' bird walk leaves from the parking lot at 7:30 a.m. To sign up, contact Mimi Abdu at mimi-abdu@maryland.sierraclub.org or 301-919-6060. Bring clippers, saws, and loppers if possible. Long sleeves, pants, comfortable walking shoes or boots, gloves, hat, water, sunscreen, and insect repellent are recommended.

June 11–13 (Friday–Sunday), MOS Annual Conference. This year's conference will be held in Kent County, with accommodations at Washington College in Chestertown. For more information, visit the MOS website at www.mdbirds.org or see page 4.

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.



Please Go Away!

Doing any interesting birding trips this summer? Stay-at-home birders (your editor included!) would love to hear about the places you went and the birds you saw this summer. Tell all or as little or much as you wish! We'll look forward to hearing whatever you care to share—and photographs too, if you have them!

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.




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.).

 **APRIL 29 (Thursday) and MAY 2 (Sunday) BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY FOR BEGINNERS.** On Thursday we will meet in Bethesda from 7:30 to 9 p.m. and discuss photographic technique, equipment, and philosophy pertinent to enjoying bird photography. On Sunday we will meet for a field trip from 8 a.m. to 12 noon to photograph any and all birds that cooperate. Limited to 6–8 participants. For more information and reservations, contact LEADER: Evelyn Ralston, 301-493-4132 or evelynsr@verizon.net. Rain date: Sunday, May 9.

MAY 1 (Saturday) PIGTAIL AND TRIADELPHIA. One-third day. Joint trip with Howard County in conjunction with WSSC. Meet at Green Bridge Road parking lot, off Triadelphia Mill Road in Howard County. Variety of migrant and resident species expected. Facilities available (but rustic). LEADER: Joe Hanfman, aukl844@comcast.net, 410-772-8424.

 **MAY 2 (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 4 (Tuesday) ROCK CREEK PARK, DC. One-third day. Early migrant warblers, vireos, etc. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at Picnic Area #18, one-half mile below the Nature Center on Ridge Road. Limit: 8. Reservations required. Call the leader for more information or specific directions. LEADER: Wallace Kornack, 202-338-7859.

 **MAY 5 (Wednesday) EXPLORING CALVERT COUNTY.** Three-quarter day. Sue Hamilton will guide us as we cover some of the birding hotspots of Calvert County. Participants will meet at 7 a.m. at the road leading to Flag Ponds. We'll begin at Battle Creek Cypress Swamp and move on to other spots before we stop for lunch on the beach. Reservations required. Limit: 10. Call the coordinators for detailed directions and more information. LEADER: Sue Hamilton. COORDINATORS: Lydia Schindler, 301-977-5252, and Linda Friedland, 301-983-2136.

MAY 7 (Friday) BIRDING BY EAR ALONG THE C&O CANAL. The emphasis is on listening, so tune up your ears for this half-day canal walk. We'll be on the lookout for nesting and migrant landbirds. Meet at 7 a.m. at the end of Pennyfield Lock Road. Reservations required. For more information and reservations, call the leaders: Cyndie Loeper, 301-530-8226, or Ann Lucy, 301-229-8810.

MAY 16 (Sunday) ROCK CREEK PARK, DC. See May 4 description. Reservations required. Limit: 6. LEADER: Wallace Kornack, 202-338-7859.

MAY 22 (Saturday) HOT SPOTS FOR RED KNOTS. Full day. Joint trip with Howard County. We will start at 8:30 a.m. at the visitor center at Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge and work our way north along the Bay. We will also visit the Nature Center at Mispillion Lighthouse, which offers great views of Red Knots and other shorebirds. We will go until dark or exhaustion, whichever comes first. Bring binoculars, scopes, food, water, sunscreen, and insect repellent. Trip is limited to 12 persons/3 vehicles per chapter. Reservations required. Kurt Schwarz (krschwal@comcast.net or 410-461-1643) will co-lead for Howard County. For reservations and information, contact co-leader Cyndie Loeper, cyndieloeper@comcast.net or 240-535-8584.

July 24 (Saturday) DELAWARE COASTAL AREAS. Bombay Hook, Little Creek, Logan Tract. Join us for a full-day joint trip with ANS. Shorebirds, marsh birds, and some songbirds. Bring packed lunch and drinks. Meet 8:00 a.m. at Bombay Hook Visitor Center parking lot. For reservations (15-person limit) and more information, contact LEADER: John Bjerke, 240-401-1643. Cyndie Loeper will co-lead.



Bill Kulp, 1926–2010

Our friend Bill Kulp, fellow birder and past president of the Montgomery County Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society, died on April 8 after a long fight with cancer. Bill was born in Philadelphia of Pennsylvania Dutch heritage. He graduated from Muhlenberg College in 1949 with a major in German. He joined the Naval Air Force but never saw active service. His first job was at the National Security Agency where he studied Russian for two years. For about 11 years of his career at NSA, he worked as a cryptanalyst deciphering Russian secret codes and exposing a number of spies, including the famous Rosenbergs. He received the NSA Certificate of Achievement and the CIA Exceptional Accomplishment Award for his work at that agency. He and Carol were married on February 16, 1952, and had two boys and two girls.

The Kulpes were our neighbors in the Woodmoor section of Silver Spring for 41 years and continued as our neighbors when we both moved to the Riderwood Retirement Village four years ago. In about 1970, I suggested he should put up a bird feeder in his yard, which resembled an English garden. These ideas for an English-type garden and his building an authentic English pub in his basement came from his two NSA assignments in England 1958–61 and 1972–75. He took my Introduction to Ornithology class in 1971 and from then on he became an active birder.

He birded while in England and upon his return joined MOS and the Montgomery County Chapter where he became an active volunteer. He served as a Christmas Count compiler, field trip leader, state director, speaker (especially to garden clubs), and eventually president of the Montgomery Chapter from 1992 to 1994. He and Carol attended 45 Elderhostel trips, the majority of which featured birding. They attended American Birding Association conventions or trips to Texas, Utah, and Mississippi. Other birding trips took them to Costa Rica, Australia, Florida, Colorado, and Point Pelee, Canada. For 10 years he volunteered as a docent at Brookside Gardens where he led both flower and birding trips and served as the Gardens' official photographer for which he received their Volunteer Appreciation Award.

At Riderwood Retirement Village, he and I co-led weekly bird walks. He was also the bluebird box coordinator, a member of the Wildlife Habitat Management Program Committee, and program chair for the Riderwood Garden Club. Memorial donations may be sent to the Maryland Ornithological Society, 4915 Greenspring Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21290-4698, or The Nature Conservancy, 4245 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 100, Arlington, VA 22230.

—Don Messersmith

MOS Annual Conference 2010

This year's Annual Conference will be held on the Eastern Shore, hosted by the Kent, Cecil, and Talbot county chapters. Participants will stay at Washington College in Chestertown. This will give us access to many wonderful birding areas, including Eastern Neck and Bombay Hook, Delaware. Field trips will include listers' trips and, in some cases, will provide access to private property not ordinarily available for birding. The design for the Conference pin and T-shirt will feature a Tundra Swan by our own Gemma Radko.

The keynote speaker, Professor Doug Gill of the University of Maryland, will provide an update on Chino Farms, a 5,600-acre row-crop farm in Queen Anne's County that has been restored to its original state of Atlantic coastal grassland. Marshall Iliff will present the conference workshop on eBird, an online checklist program that has revolutionized the way the birding community reports and



accesses information about birds. Launched in 2002 by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, eBird provides rich data sources for basic information on bird abundance and distribution. In January 2010, more than 1.5 million bird observations

were reported on eBird. Marshall will lead a field trip on Saturday morning, and use the sightings from the field trip to illustrate how to get started with eBird.

For more information about the Conference, visit the MOS website at www.mdbirds.org.



Trip Reports

Waterfowl for Beginners, Black Hill RP, January 30.

Leader: Dave Powell. Two people joined the leader for a morning of waterfowl searching, which produced 16 species plus some Horned and Pied-billed Grebes. Two Cackling Geese on the grass near the Visitors' Center provided the highlight of the morning.



Oaks Landfill, Laytonsville, February 21. Leader: Mark England. Participants: 14 plus leader. Weather: Sunny, clear, temperature in the 40s. Despite about two feet of recent snow on the ground, there was good interest in this first-ever MBC trip inside the Oaks Landfill, previously best seen from the other side of the fence at Blue Mash Nature Trail. After checking in with the guard, we gathered at the Administrative Building parking lot and started the morning with a low flyby Cooper's Hawk. This bird proved to be a good omen for raptors, as we later saw Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks, a soaring adult Bald Eagle, and best of all, a Rough-legged Hawk, seen flying low and away from us as we birded the top of a landfill hill. Though we puzzled over the bird for a bit, Brad Beukema and Ed Patten tramped through deep snow to get a better look, and reported back with assurance that it was indeed a Rough-leg. Other good sightings were a very close Pileated Woodpecker flying across the landfill from one woodlot to another, two Horned Larks, and a Savannah Sparrow in a gravel road atop the hill. We were able to observe and photograph this sparrow for several minutes as it stayed on the road, reluctant to fly. Only 25 species were seen during the morning, but the deep snow cover probably had a lot to do with that. There seemed to be good interest in doing an October/November trip at the landfill to see what birds might be there in the fall. Thanks to the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection, particularly Peter Karasik and Steve Lezinski, for their permission to bird this interesting site.



Informal Late Afternoon Walks until Dusk, March 4, 9, and 16.

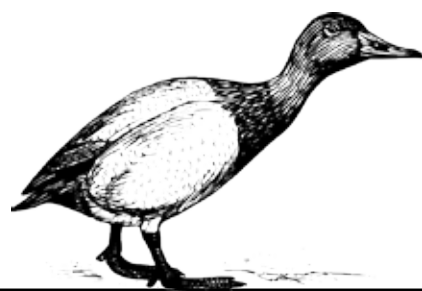
Leader: Jim Green. Participants: March 4, leader only; March 9, 16 participants; March 16, 11 participants. Weather: March 4, cold and windy; March 9 and 16: warm and pleasant. All trips began on the bridge at Riley's Lock. Waterfowl seen included Gadwall, American Wigeon, Northern Pintail, Common Goldeneye,

Bufflehead, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, both Scaup, and all three Mergansers. Landbirds seemed to have been significantly affected by the winter's major snowstorms as sightings were few and far between. For instance, not one Carolina Wren was seen or heard on any of the trips along the towpath. Highlights of species we did see: Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and a pair of Barred Owls calling near the parking lot. At Hughes Hollow, Ring-necked Ducks picked up with a high of 50 (3/16), and Wood Ducks were seen (mostly as flyovers). On one trip, a Wilson's Snipe was flushed from the edge of the dike.

Our attempt to find American Woodcocks ended the trips in the first field on the right after you turn onto Sycamore Landing Road. On 3/9 we had two birds "peent." The best showing was on 3/16 with at least four peenting males who ascended into the air to perform their unique display. And one bird flew by close to us at eye level.

It was interesting to observe the diversity of waterfowl seen on the river between Riley's and Violette's Locks and how it changed during the eight days between 3/9 and 3/16 (see chart).

Species	3/4	3/9	3/16
Gadwall	4	0	5
American Wigeon	134	3	0
N. Pintail	8	0	0
Greater Scaup	11	3	20
Lesser Scaup	0	6	40
Bufflehead	55	45	25
Common Goldeneye	24	0	7
Redhead	56	30	0
Common Merganser	9	2	7
Red-breasted Merganser	0	1	2
Hooded Merganser	0	1	0
Ring-necked Duck	3	6	2



Trip Reports

Hugh Mahanes Presidents' Walk at Hughes Hollow and Vicinity, April 18. Leader: Jim Nelson. Seventeen birders, including five present or former presidents of the Club, met on a very chilly, gray mid-April day to explore Hughes Hollow and adjacent Sycamore Landing Road. Temperatures started in the 30s and reached only the 40s with increasing wind as the morning progressed. We started at Hughes Hollow and were immediately surprised to see a Common Loon overhead, which was followed in the next hour by 24 others, apparently representing a general movement north. Landbirds were in short supply. We had two singing Common Yellowthroats and a single Yellow-rumped Warbler as our only warblers, a singing White-eyed Vireo that finally popped into view, and three singing House Wrens, one of which gave us a short look. A turkey was heard gobbling very briefly. A Red-headed Woodpecker gave us good scope views. Great Egrets had arrived in the impoundment, and we saw flyover Wood Duck, Blue-winged Teal, and a Hooded Merganser (which may be nesting in one of the Wood Duck boxes). Two good-sized flocks of Blue Jays flew overhead going north. Sparrows were remarkably scarce, with only one Swamp Sparrow heard along with a few White-throated Sparrows. A single Barn Swallow joined the numerous Tree Swallows. We moved on to Sycamore Landing Road where we heard, but could never find, an actively singing Brown Thrasher and added a Chipping Sparrow to our sparse sparrow list. As we finished up, about half the group decided to go to West Offutt Road to look for a reported Vesper Sparrow. We were rewarded with nice views of the actively singing bird, and at one point had a nice Savannah Sparrow perched directly behind the singing Vesper. Our total species for the first two stops was 42, and we added three more at Offutt Road for a grand total of 45 for the day.

Blue Mash Nature Trail, April 17. Leader: Mark England. Participants: 8. Weather: Very windy and cool (50s). This was a mostly uneventful birdwalk, with no warblers or vireos, only two duck species, and one raptor. This may have been partially due to the constant winds about 25 mph or possibly because the Frederick Bird Club had preceded us on the trail and scared the good birds away. (Just kidding). We had some excellent looks at several Eastern Towhees and bluebirds, scores of Tree Swallows, and a very close Field Sparrow. We had glimpses of a Brown Thrasher and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet before they disappeared into vegetation. Best sightings were scope views of an American Wigeon and Spotted Sandpiper on the far side of the landfill pond and a low flyby Sharp-shinned Hawk that came out of the woods on cue, just as the leader was checking his watch and saying that "mid-morning was a good time for hawks."

We only had 30 species, but early arrival Ron Johnson picked up five more species early on, including Double-crested Cormorant and White-eyed Vireo. Some of us went on to the Rachel Carson Conservation Park about 10 a.m. and picked up Eastern Phoebe, Red-tailed Hawk, and a Hermit Thrush. We went down to the Hawlings River hoping for Louisiana Waterthrush or any other warblers but had no luck, though all who had never before been to Rachel Carson agreed that it was a very fine park, particularly nice along the river.



Participants from this year's President's Day Walk celebrate another successful outing. From left to right: Evelyn Ralston, *Linda Friedland*, Andy Carpenter, Judy Schaefer, Laura Coombs, Lisa Orcutt, Betty James, David Orcutt, Anna Urciolo, *Jim Nelson*, *Lydia Schindler*, Joy Bowen, Ron Johnson, Susan Hunt, Mike Bowen, Diane Ford, *Helen Patton*. (Past presidents in italics)

2010 Bird Club Social

Eighty Montgomery Bird Club members and guests enjoyed good food, company, and pictures at the annual social, held Friday evening, March 12. 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 and that Raj was able to bring his family. For the fourth year, Smokey Glen Farm provided a wonderful barbeque meal with tasty fruit pies for dessert—special thanks to Jim Green for arranging this. Jim also provided ice, coolers, and wine and beer. Many thanks also to the other folks who helped make the social a success. Last year's Guest of Honor Howard Lefkowitz returned to serve as our trusty bartender. Helen Patton provided beautiful table decorations and other necessary

supplies and, assisted by Cyndie Loeper, Anna Urciolo, and Sally Wechsler, set up all the tables to greet the arriving throng. 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, Gemma Radko. Jim presented Gemma with a plaque honoring her and listing some of her many accomplishments for the club (see below). Gemma spoke briefly and was appreciative of the honor.

To cap a wonderful 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

Gemma Radko, Guest of Honor at the MBC Social

The Montgomery Bird Club Council chose Gemma Radko to be honored this year as the Guest of Honor at the annual Club Social. This honor is bestowed each year on a person who has made significant ongoing contributions to the Club, the Maryland Ornithological Society, and birding.

Gemma studied both art and biology in college. She has been an active birder and member of the Club for many years. Gemma's contributions to the Club are very significant—many years as a popular field trip leader, very active in the Breeding Bird Atlas work, and a contributor to both editions of the Montgomery County Site Guide. Gemma is known for her work as a graphic designer, as well as her birding, and has brought those skills to the Club, including many years as designer of the *Chat*, our quarterly newsletter, as graphic designer of both editions of the *Montgomery County Site Guide*, and as designer of our new business cards. MOS has recognized Gemma, including her selection as winner of the contest to design the lapel pin for this year's MOS Conference, a striking Tundra Swan (see page 4). Gemma also won this contest back in 1998 with a Black-throated Blue Warbler.

In 1998 Gemma completed training in Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) and is a licensed bird bander. She has operated the MAPS banding operation at Adventure in Potomac, Maryland, since 2000, continuing to provide data from that long-term banding site originally established by Don and Margaret Donald back in 1972.

Gemma also teaches birding, including the Spring Birding course offered by ANS and the Graduate School as part of the Natural History Field Studies Program.

Gemma is Communications/Media Manager for the American Bird Conservancy (www.abcbirds.org). She worked on the communications team for the recently issued report, *The State of the Birds*, and worked on the *Saving Migratory Birds for Future Generations* report.

As if all these things didn't keep her busy enough, Gemma also works as a Big Sister.

As Guest of Honor and in appreciation of her many contributions to MOS and the Montgomery Bird Club, Gemma received a plaque at the Social.



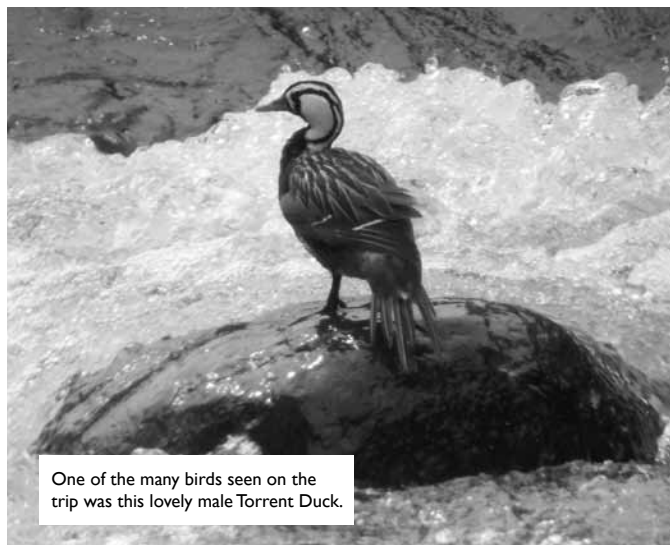
Birding Chile — From Bottom to Top

(continued from the February Chat)

The last leg of our Chilean tour started at Arica, in the far North, an area ceded to Chile by Peru and Bolivia after a war in the late nineteenth century. Most of the 1,000-mile flight from Santiago was over the Atacama Desert, one of the driest and least populated places in the world, where no rain has fallen since the Spanish conquest. From Arica, we traveled by bus 100 miles up the Lluta River Valley, along roads as twisty as we had ever been on and through some truly desolate country. Enormous trucks headed to or from La Paz in Bolivia trundled by at regular intervals. (Because Bolivia no longer possesses a port city, it uses Arica in Chile.) Putre, a small town at about 10,000 ft. elevation, was relatively green and a nice little oasis for birds. Warm by day and—you guessed it—cold at night. Alpacas grazed on the grass in front of the hotel, and a pair of Andean Hillstars (hummingbirds) nested on one of the cottage units. Nice local species included Blue-and-Yellow Tanager, Spot-winged Pigeon, Mourning Sierra-Finch, Black-throated Flowerpiercer, Chiguanco Thrush, and Golden-billed Saltator. A Band-winged Nightjar was spotted soon after dusk.

From Putre we climbed another 5,000 ft. into Lauca National Park, which while not exactly lush is much greener than lower elevations. Vicuñas were quite numerous in the park and easy to photograph. Among the “bofedales” (boggy areas), those of us capable of sloggng through the streams and mud were rewarded by seeing an Aplomado Falcon, then an Andean Lapwing, and last but not best, a pair of Diademed Sandpiper-Plovers, another trip highlight for the wader lovers. At 15,000 ft., Lago Chungara is the highest lake in the world and part of a Biosphere Reserve. Up there, in between each hard-won lungful of oxygen, we found three species of Flamingoes, Puna Ibis, Andean Avocets, and Giant Coots with enormous floating nests. The scenery was simply fantastic, featuring two huge, inactive (for the present) volcanoes and one that showed signs of imminent activity. Andean Negritos replaced the Austral Negritos farther south, and large, dark-hooded Andean Gulls replaced the Kelps and Grays of the coast. A tame llama took a large chocolate bar from our bus driver and dispatched it in about one second!

Back in Arica, we birded a couple of narrow valleys leading eastward from the town. Irrigation with Andean snow-melt



One of the many birds seen on the trip was this lovely male Torrent Duck.

Photo: Mike Bowen

water permits crop cultivation so there is some bird habitat. A hummingbird reserve yielded us Oasis Hummingbirds and Peruvian Sheartails, but we had to go to an adjacent valley to find the fast-vanishing Chilean Woodstar. We found and photographed at least four males and a female. We also found Rufescent Flycatcher, Cinereous Conebill, and an interesting flycatcher that turned out to be Chile’s first recorded Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher. Slender-billed Finch, Chestnut-throated Seedeater, and Peruvian Meadowlark were other good local birds. In the middle of a stony field, our eagle-eyed leaders found two sleeping Peruvian Thick-knees, a nocturnally active species that stands stock-still during the daylight hours.

As a final coup de grace, the leaders scheduled a morning pelagic trip from Arica harbor just before the return flight to Santiago, which most of the group was still fit enough or crazy enough to join. Although the boat was even smaller than the one at Valparaíso (this one lacked a “head,” a bit of a challenge for a 5-hour voyage), the ocean was placid, the captain competent, and the birds cooperative. Belcher’s (Band-tailed) Gull joined our gull list, and White-vented joined our list of Storm-Petrels. A Parasitic Jaeger was seen harassing gulls, and this time we had better and closer views of Peruvian Diving-Petrels.

After three solid weeks of birding, we had racked up about 280 species, with a full 180 being “lifers.” We had a greatly increased appreciation for the attractiveness of Chilean birds and wines and for the sheer size and habitat variety of the country, especially the near 2,500 miles north to south. None of Chile lies in the Tropics, but it’s a darn good place for the peripatetic North American birder to visit nevertheless. Chileans are very courteous and friendly. Just dress warmly! ¡Salud!

—Mike Bowen



Birds of Note: Late January—early April 2010

Back-to-back snowstorms of historic proportions made birding afield difficult in Montgomery from late January to the last few days of February. Walking pathways and trails was near impossible without snowshoes or cross-country skis. The C&O Canal and other park access roads and parking lots remained snow-covered as transportation officials concentrated on clearing higher priority locations. Even “road-shoulder” birding, usually a dependable post-snowstorm pattern, fizzled as many birds either left the area or perished. Still, a few good birds dropped into the county over the last few months.

Best find would be a **Sandhill Crane** at the NIH Animal Facility near Poolesville. J.D. Neuman first reported the bird on 3/1. The bird seemed to favor the pasture with the horses, just to the left of the front gate of the NIH facility but was found by others in the large cornfield across from the Patton Turf Farm. The bird was still being reported as of 3/21. A few Sandhill Cranes are reported in Montgomery almost every year, most as flyovers. Lingerings, “chasable” birds are a little more on the rare side.

Dave Czaplak had a brief encounter with a **California Gull** at Violette’s Lock on 3/3. The bird lingered briefly at Violette’s before heading down river. Individual California Gulls have previously been reported in the county at the now retired Laytonsville Landfill in 1993 and 1995.

An MBC field trip inside the retired Laytonsville Landfill netted a possible **Rough-legged Hawk** on 2/21. Montgomery’s first **Broad-winged Hawk** of the year was reported in the vicinity of Lake Needwood by Diane Ford on 4/3. Don Simonson saw a Broad-winged Hawk flying low and northerly over the former National Geographic site in Gaithersburg on 4/8. An FOS (first of the season) **Osprey** was spotted over the C&O Canal near Great Falls by David Engelen on 3/27.

Rob Hilton picked out at least six **Snow Geese** from a larger flock of Canada Geese flying over Bethesda on 3/8. Kevin Graff reported a **Long-tailed Duck** on the Potomac at Violette’s Lock on 3/6. Two Long-tailed Ducks were observed at Black Hill RP on 3/3 by Woody and Rae Dubois.

Dave Czaplak flushed an **American Bittern** along Sycamore Landing Road on 4/4. Tom Stock reported the return of **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** to the Sligo Creek watershed on 3/22.

Paul Woodward noted a fairly early **Greater Yellowlegs** at Hughes Hollow on 3/21. Michael Ostrowski found a **Wilson’s Snipe** off Sugarland Road on 2/20. Jim Green reported a couple of **American Woodcock** displaying in the wet fields along Sycamore Landing Road during the first few weeks of March.

Six **Forster’s Terns** were observed on the Potomac at Violette’s Lock on 4/2 by Stephanie Lovell. Linda Friedland and Lydia Schindler noted four **Bonaparte’s Gulls** over the Potomac River at Violette’s on 3/25.

Jim Moore had two **Red-headed Woodpeckers** at Hughes Hollow on 4/4. An early **Barn Swallow** was found at Hughes Hollow on 3/14, and Montgomery’s first **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** of 2010 was found by Matt Von Hendy near Lake Needwood on 4/3. John Hubbell reported an FOS **House Wren** in Chevy Chase on the GEICO property on 4/8.

A few **Red-breasted Nuthatches** (fairly rare the past couple of winters) were reported in the latter half of January by Daniel Romney, Mike Bowen, and Jim Moore.

Some warbler arrival dates for 2010 include a **Pine Warbler** in Darnestown on 3/17 (Don Simonson); **Louisiana Waterthrush** at Violette’s Lock on 3/25 (Lydia Schindler and Linda Friedland); **Palm Warbler** at Summit Hall Turf Farm on 4/2 (Michael Ostrowski); and **Northern Parulas** along the C&O Canal on 4/8.

Jim Moore found a single **American Tree Sparrow** at Blue Mash on 3/6.

Five **American Pipits** were noted off Mt. Ephraim Road on 2/14. **Rusty Blackbirds** were reported on 3/21 by both Diane Ford near Lake Frank and Gail Mackiernan and Barry Cooper at Northwest Branch on 3/21. Additional sightings were made at Hughes Hollow throughout March.

—Andy Martin



Check It Out!

A Barn Owl nest with four owlets in California is being monitored by webcam. To see real-time footage of the nest and chicks, visit www.sportsmansparadiseonline.com. Select “Live Wildlife Webcams” and click on “Live Barn Owl Nest.”



Slate of Officers, 2010-2011

The Nominating Committee proposes the following slate:

President: Steve Pretl

Vice President: Anna Urciolo

Secretary: Diane Ford*

Treasurer: Sally Wechsler*

Chapter Director: Stephanie Lovell

Chapter Director: Jim Moore

State Director: Brad Beukema*

State Director: Mark England*

State Director: Chris Wright

* *Incumbent*

Note: Chapter Directors Suzanne Dater and David Strother have another year to run on their present two-year terms.

All positions are being nominated for the 2010–2011 Montgomery Bird Club year. Each person listed has agreed to run and to serve if elected. Additional nominations

may be made from the floor, provided the nominee has agreed beforehand. The election will take place at the meeting on May 19.

—*Mike Bowen, Chair*
Janet Millenson
Andy Martin



Welcome, New Members

Ronald Griffin

Paul Hagen and family

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

