



The newsletter of the Montgomery Bird Club of the Maryland Ornithological Society

May 2011

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## President's Chat

I feel we have a lot of club members to thank for their support, so I'll use this space to acknowledge some of them.

First of all, I hope that most of you have had a chance to visit our new club website. The new site retains the useful features of the old site (which was already quite good) and is found at the same URL: [www.montgomerybirdclub.org](http://www.montgomerybirdclub.org). But it now has a simplified, user-friendly layout, an updated look, and new content. Eric Skrzypczak designed it and has become our webmaster, bringing his considerable skills and some of his wonderful photography. Howard Lefkowitz, who has managed the site for years, will be Eric's backup.

And Jim Moore has added new content for the new "Local Birds and Birding" page on the site. This includes explanations and links to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's eBird.org website, showing how to access eBird reports of county bird sightings and maps of birding hotspots, an eBird Google gadget showing recent Maryland rare bird sightings, and a new downloadable multi-location Field Checklist of Montgomery County birds especially designed for use with eBird.

Thanks to Howard for all his years of service, on the website and in so many other capacities; to Eric for this upgrade and for taking on the webmaster job; and to Jim for the great eBird interfaces.

Another group whose work you may not be aware of is the many MBC members who hold important committee positions at the state level. As of the last published listing, Montgomery Bird Club members hold the following positions for MOS:

**Johanna Thompson** has taken over Development, which includes finding ways to build the membership.

**Ann Lucy** is Budget Chair.



**Paul Zucker** is Long-Range Planning Chair and also MOS rep to the American Bird Conservancy.

**Helen Patton** is Nominations Chair.

**Janet Millenson** is Communications Chair, with oversight of all the MOS publications.

**Lydia Schindler** is editor of the *Yellowthroat*.

**Andy Martin** is Calendar editor.

**John Malcolm** handles awards and sales of merchandise.

**Don Messersmith** is MOS Historian.

When you get a chance, thank some of these hard-working folks, and maybe learn more about their jobs at MOS. And keep in mind that there are always openings for all of us to help out at the chapter or state level. The club will appreciate it, and getting involved in work with other birders can be very satisfying.

Good Birding! ♪

—Steve Pretl

CONTENTS	
Spring Calendar .....	2
Bill Kulp Memorial Signs .....	2
Field Trips .....	3-4
Field Trip to Somerset Marshes .....	4, 7
Trip Reports .....	5-7
Birds of Note .....	8
MBC Library/2011 Social .....	9
2010-2011 Slate of Officers.....	10



# Spring Calendar

## Bill Kulp Memorial Signs

After the death of Bill Kulp, our Club's president from 1992 to 1994, a Memorial Fund was established under the auspices of the Maryland Ornithological Society. Through the generous donations of many of our members who knew him and his many contributions to the Society and our Club, this fund has grown to the point where the MOS Board has agreed to use it for signs at our new Piscataway Sanctuary, which is located in southern Prince George's County. This 80-plus acre property is hilly, almost completely wooded, and has two small streams passing through it. During the Breeding Bird Census, I recorded about 60 species of birds there, including Wild Turkey, Barred and Screech Owls, five species of woodpeckers, Kentucky and other warblers, and Scarlet Tanagers.

We are contemplating erecting signs at the entrance and at the head of the trails. These signs will not only provide directions, length of the trails, and other pertinent information, but they will also include such words as "In Memory of Bill Kulp, MBC President 1992-1994, and the many Maryland Ornithological Society volunteers who have served the Society since its founding in 1945." The final wording will be determined by a committee and Bill's family. If you have any suggestions, please contact me at [dsmessersmith@comcast.net](mailto:dsmessersmith@comcast.net). ♪

—Don Messersmith



**May 14 (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](http://www.mdbirds.org/counts/namc/namcchecklist.pdf)), and count all the birds you find. Submit completed checklists to compiler Diane Ford by email ([dmford455@yahoo.com](mailto:dmford455@yahoo.com)) or by snail mail (9813 Parkwood Drive, Bethesda, MD 20814) by June 15; eBird reports also acceptable. For more info, contact Diane at [dmford455@yahoo.com](mailto:dmford455@yahoo.com).

**May 14 (Saturday), 28th 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 info, visit New Jersey Audubon's website at [www.njaudubon.org](http://www.njaudubon.org).

**May 18 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m., "Birding in the Great North: Maine, Quebec, and Nunavut."** By heading north, *Bob Schaefer* got the chance to see up close some of the birds we rarely get a glimpse of in Maryland — puffins, gannets, and Razorbills along the coast and longspurs and Harris's Sparrows in the tundra. On Bob's numerous trips by canoe down northern rivers, the birds were just one of many attractions.

**May 20-22 (Friday-Sunday), MOS Annual Conference,** WISP Resort, McHenry, MD (Garrett Co). Join your fellow birders from across the state for the MOS Annual Conference, featuring field trips, workshops, social events, business meeting, and special guest speaker for the gala banquet. Visit the MOS website ([www.mdbirds.org](http://www.mdbirds.org)) for details.

*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 a quarter-mile to Gary Road 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 Steve Pretl at 202-413-8351 or [stevep@takomavillage.org](mailto:stevep@takomavillage.org).*

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**Editor:** Susan Hunt      **Designer:** Gemma Radko      **Circulation:** Jane Farber and Jeanne Lacerte

**President:** Steve Pretl: 202-413-8351  
email: [stevep@takomavillage.org](mailto:stevep@takomavillage.org)

**Membership:** Helen Patton: 301-588-5418  
email: [helen@dataprompt.com](mailto:helen@dataprompt.com)

Visit our homepage at [www.montgomerybirdclub.org](http://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, email: [shunt820@yahoo.com](mailto: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](mailto:linnetl@verizon.net) or 301-983-2136 (before 9 p.m.).

 **MAY 1 (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 or [gradko@yahoo.com](mailto:gradko@yahoo.com).

**MAY 3 (Tuesday) ROCK CREEK PARK, DC.** One-third day. Early migrant warblers, vireos, etc. Meet at 7 a.m. at Picnic Area #18, one-half mile below the Nature Center on Ridge Road. Limit: 8. Reservations required. For more info or directions, call the LEADER: Wallace Kornack, 202-338-7859.

**MAY 4 (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 spend the morning beginning at Battle Creek Cypress Swamp and moving 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 6 (Friday) BIRDING BY EAR ALONG THE C&O CANAL.** Half day. The emphasis is on listening, so tune up your ears! 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 info and reservations, contact the LEADERS: Cyndie Loeper, [cyndieloeper@comcast.net](mailto:cyndieloeper@comcast.net), or Ann Lucy, 301-229-8810.

**MAY 7 (Saturday) PIGTAIL AND TRIADELPHIA.** One-third day. Joint trip with Howard County in conjunction with WSSC. Meet 8 a.m. at the Green Bridge Rd parking lot (the Howard County side of Green Bridge Road), off Triadelphia Mill Rd. Extensive mudflats may exist with the possibility of shorebirds. Facilities available (but rustic). LEADER: Jeff Culler, [cullerfuls@hotmail.com](mailto:cullerfuls@hotmail.com), 410-465-9006.

**MAY 8 (Sunday) IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE, B-CC CHAPTER.** Half day. The Club's first field trip to this large private property south of Poolesville, previously birded only as part of the Seneca CBC. Woods, hedgerows, streams, fields, and ponds provide a wide range of bird habitats, and migration should be in full swing on this date. Trip starts at 7 a.m. at the League's chapter house. Reservations required, but no attendee limit. Driving directions will be provided to those who make reservations. Contact LEADER: Mike Bowen, 301-530-5764 or [dhmbowen@yahoo.com](mailto:dhmbowen@yahoo.com). B-CC Chapter Treasurer and MBC member Jim Tate will co-lead.

**MAY 14 (Saturday) MAY COUNT.** Compiler: Diane Ford (see page 2).

**MAY 15 (Sunday) ROCK CREEK PARK, DC.** One-third day. Early migrant warblers, vireos, etc. Meet at 7 a.m. at Picnic Area #18, one-half mile below the Nature Center on Ridge Road. Limit: 6. Reservations required. For more info or directions, call the LEADER: Wallace Kornack, 202-338-7859.

**MAY 24 (Tuesday) WASHINGTON COUNTY: SEEKING BREEDERS AND LATE MIGRANTS.** Three-quarter to full day. Explore some of Washington County's underbirded treasures. Some roadside birding mixed with moderate hikes (nothing overly strenuous). Walking conditions could be wet in some areas. We'll visit several parts of Indian Springs WMA, look for grassland birds in the farm country west of Hagerstown, and finish with stops at potential shorebird habitats. Bring snacks, drinks, lunch, insect repellent, etc. Reservations required. Limit: 10. Carpooling strongly suggested. For reservations and directions, call the LEADER: Jim Green, 301-742-0036.

**MAY 28 (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 for 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, scope, food, water, sunscreen, insect repellent. Trip is limited to 12 persons/three vehicles per chapter. Reservations required. Kurt Schwarz will co-lead for Howard County ([krschwal@comcast.net](mailto:krschwal@comcast.net) or 410-461-1643). For reservations and info, contact CO-LEADER: Cyndie Loeper at [cyndieloeper@comcast.net](mailto:cyndieloeper@comcast.net).

*continued on next page*

# Field Trips

**JUNE 4 (Saturday) PATUXENT RIVER STATE PARK, Hipsley Mill Road.** Two to three hours. Joint trip with Howard County. Meet at 7:30 a.m. We will walk downriver, with our main target being breeding Cerulean Warblers along the Howard/Montgomery border. Other notable nesting birds include American Woodcock, Yellow-throated Vireo, Veery, American Redstart, Worm-eating Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, and Hooded Warbler. Moderate to possibly difficult walking with steep trails, waist-high wet vegetation, and muddy trails, so wear appropriate footwear. Hand-clippers can be useful to cut the multiflora rose canes, which are difficult to avoid. No facilities. LEADER: Joe Hanfman, auk1844@comcast.net or 410-772-8424. CO-LEADER: Jim Moore at epiphenomenon9@gmail.com.

**JULY 23 (Saturday) DELAWARE COASTAL AREAS: Bombay Hook, Little Creek, Logan Tract.** (Call leader to confirm that trip is on.) Join us for a full-day joint trip with ANS. Shorebirds, marsh birds, and some songbirds. Bring packed lunch and drinks. Meet at 8 a.m. at Bombay Hook Visitor Center parking lot. Limit: 15. For reservations and more info, contact the LEADER: John Bjerke, 240-401-1643. Cyndie Loeper will co-lead.

**JULY 27 (Wednesday) POPLAR ISLAND BOAT TRIP.** There is no cost for these trips but limited seats (20) are available. Expect a good selection of shorebirds, terns, gulls, and a few waterfowl. Half of the seats will be reserved for MBC members up until a week before the trip. For reservations and details about departure time and meeting place, call Barry Cooper at 301-989-1828 or cooper1939@yahoo.com.

**AUGUST 17 (Wednesday) POPLAR ISLAND BOAT TRIP.** See July 27 listing for details.

**SEPTEMBER 7 (Wednesday) POPLAR ISLAND BOAT TRIP.** See July 27 listing for details.

## Field Trip to Somerset Marshes

*Editor's Note: Since this is a new field trip, we thought it would be interesting to include Bill Hubick's full report.*

Jim Brighton and I led a new Montgomery Bird Club trip to the Somerset Marshes on February 12. Twelve dedicated and hardy birders joined us in weathering the biting winds for this long-planned winter visit to the under-explored marshes around Fairmount and Deal Island. Our focus was on marsh birds and uncommon wintering species, and we were very well-rewarded. Here are some of the highlights:

Just after sunrise, we gathered at the marshes near the town of Rumbly. The temperature was in the low 20s with a light wind that continued to gain momentum throughout the morning. The marshes were very quiet, but not as stingy as they could have been under these conditions. We saw a Seaside Sparrow, a very scarce and local wintering species; 11 Black-crowned Night-Herons; four Tree Swallows; and seven Boat-tailed Grackles. The open water nearby held small numbers of Surf Scoters, Long-tailed Ducks, and Red-breasted Mergansers. A probable hen Black Scoter was left unconfirmed due to tough viewing conditions.

At the Fairmount WMA, East Impoundment, the water levels were low, ideal for the usual teal flock and a small number of wintering shorebirds. In addition to the

regulars, we were surprised to find a diversity of dabblers, a flock of over 200 of the common gulls (a concentration we'd never seen here), and a number of gulls we'd never previously encountered at this location — two Bonaparte's Gulls, an adult Lesser Black-backed Gull, and a rare Ring-billed Gull x Black-Headed Gull hybrid that would be thoroughly documented over the next week.

We decided to invest some time scanning the water off Crisfield rather than spend the full afternoon out on the marsh at Deal. These marshes can be really quiet when it's windy. Overall it was very slow, but we did have a roosting Black-crowned Night-Heron, 15 Canvasbacks, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Ruddy Ducks, a couple of Common Loons, and more Boat-tailed Grackles (not always easy in midwinter). The wind was now severe, and we had a decision to make — risk a slow afternoon pishing for the huddled, miserable Marsh Wrens at Deal or head for the coast. We headed for the coast.

It was extremely windy at Truitt's Landing, but we quickly picked out the continuing Common Teal, and everyone enjoyed extended scope views. We counted 445 Green-winged Teal and two Greater Yellowlegs. We walked the road in hopes of the Ruff found earlier by Ron Gutberlet, but we had almost nothing on the open marsh. The idea of

*continued on page 7*



# Trip Reports

**Western County Mixed Bag, Sunday, January 9.** Leader: Andy Martin. There was only one attendee plus the leader for this trip. A fairly slow morning that started out cold and calm but turned uncomfortably windy all too soon. The wind made us give up a bit earlier than I intended. Roger Hamilton and I managed about 30 species, birding on the canal from Violette's to Blockhouse Pt. and also once around the frozen impoundments at Hughes Hollow. Highlights included a Great Black-backed Gull at Violette's, Horned Larks at the Polo Grounds, and an Eastern Phoebe along Hunting Quarter Rd near Hughes Hollow. Roger was great company — he writes a regular column called "RiverWatch" for *Potomac Patch*, an online newspaper, and is the only person I have ever met (besides myself) who has gone snorkeling in the Potomac.



**Eastern Shore, Maryland, and Southern Delaware ocean and bay front, Friday–Sunday, January 14–16, 2011.**

Leader: Mike Bowen. Participants: 5 (Friday and Sunday), 7 (Saturday). Weather: All three days cold and blustery, with gusty winds from every point of the compass and temperatures never much above freezing, but with copious amounts of welcome sunshine and no precipitation of any sort. Species count: 106.

Highlights: 26 species of waterfowl, with impressively large flocks of Tundra Swans, Snow Geese, Greater Scaup, and Canvasbacks in a few places along the way. All 3 Scoter species and 20 Common Eiders were seen, and seen well, along with both loons and Long-tailed Ducks at Ocean City Inlet, which also had a group of 7 Horned Grebes. Later, Indian River Inlet gave us particularly stunning close views of scoters and our only Great Cormorant of the trip. Freshwater ponds, and even some salty creek areas, were mostly or totally frozen, so finding dabbling ducks was a challenge, but we were pretty successful and missed only Wood Duck and Harlequin Duck of the regularly occurring winter species. Four Redheads flew in and landed in the Bayside Development Pond just as we were ready to leave for lunch, which was a great appetite stimulant. We saw 10 species of shorebirds, with the standouts being a Red Knot and 6 American Oystercatchers at Ocean City Inlet, 2 (Western) Willets at Castaways Campground, 22 Greater Yellowlegs at Truitts Landing, and a flock of 80 Dunlin at Fowler Beach in Delaware. As usual, Purple Sandpipers, Sanderlings, and Ruddy Turnstones showed

well on the rock jetties. Our 6 gull species included Lesser Black-backed at two different Delaware locations and the first-cycle Iceland Gull at the east end of the Bay Bridge in Queen Anne's County, originally found by MBC member Clive Harris. We had nice looks at a continuing American White Pelican at Blackwater NWR, a Short-eared Owl at dusk in southern Dorchester County, numerous Northern Harriers, several Kestrels, and a Merlin in both states.

Passerines were for the most part lying low, due to the winds, and tough to find. Best of these were a Clay-colored Sparrow near Berlin, MD, and an Orange-crowned Warbler coming to a suet feeder near Lewes, DE. We also had a Brown Thrasher at Herring Creek Nature Park in West Ocean City and both Brown-headed and Red-breasted Nuthatches in several places. A notable if poignant highlight was seeing a group of American Coots on the ice at Kent Narrows, huddled together for warmth in a tight little circle. It was a brutal winter, folks, but nevertheless a good one for us birders who can at least occasionally get in out of the cold.



**Black Hill RP, Sunday, February 6.** Leader: Andy Martin. Participants: 6. Species: About 37. We started the day on the Rte 121 bridge over Little Seneca Lake looking for waterfowl. The temperature was in the upper 20s with a bit of a breeze coming downlake from the Ten Mile Creek arm, but all of us were in a hopeful mood as the mid-day was expected to be sunny, in the 40s with very little wind.

Recent weeks of below freezing temps left only a little bit of ice-free water for us to scan for ducks. In the open water on the NW side of Route 121, we found about eight species of ducks including two Common Goldeneye and five Canvasbacks. An adult Bald Eagle could often be seen flying overhead as well.

We finished scanning the reservoir in about an hour, and with the rest of the lake iced up and the trails still covered with snow, we went to Plan B: Head for Riley's Lock on the Potomac River. Driving down some back roads and seeing nothing of note, we made our way to Riley's. However, snow cover on the C&O Canal Towpath had become packed, icy, and generally unsafe, so we had to go to Plan C: birding along the Canal downstream from

*continued on next page*



# Trip Reports

Swain's Lock, checking the woods on one side and the river on the other. The towpath actually gets plowed along this section, from Swain's Lock about 3/4 mile south to the City of Rockville's water intake pumphouse, so we had good firm (and safe) footing for most of the way. Highlights along this section of the canal included great looks at Redheads, Lesser Scaup, American Wigeon, Ring-necked Ducks, three Bald Eagles, and a pair of Red-tailed Hawks. We also enjoyed some very close looks at a foraging Golden-crowned Kinglet.

After Swain's Lock, we returned to Riley's, and Emily Chiu and I stayed a bit longer, crossing over a slightly more melted and safer towpath to see if any of the White-winged Scoters found earlier in the week by Dave Czaplak were still around. We were able to find one and get good looks at it through a spotting scope. Also present were two Horned Grebes. A very pleasant day of birding with good weather and good company!



**Oaks Sanitary Landfill, Laytonville, Md., February 20, 2011.** Leader: Mark England. Participants: 10 at 6 a.m., 5 additional at 8 a.m. Weather: Mid-20s early on, but sunny and nice later. Species: 39. Following up on Linda Friedland's suggestion, I met some early risers at the landfill gate at 6 a.m. in order to carpool to the top of the hill before sunrise, in hopes of seeing a Short-eared Owl hunting the fields. Amazingly, about 7 a.m. we were successful, as David Moulton spotted one against a tree line some distance away and radioed the sighting to the rest of us. The owl then dropped out of sight, and as the sun was turning the eastern sky a vivid orange, the owl came right toward us on deep, floppy wingbeats. We were transfixed as the bird flew by from no more than 20 yards, turned once, then settled into deep grass to roost for the day. Evelyn Ralston was calm enough to get three nice photos of the owl as it flew by.

It was all downhill from there, literally and figuratively, as we descended from the hill and met 8 a.m. arrivals at the maintenance building. We then set off with the sun at our backs, walking the gravel ring road around much of the landfill. We saw many Song Sparrows, five Savannah Sparrows, and single Field and Swamp Sparrows. In the pond near the Blue Mash Nature Trail, we had good looks at waterfowl including Gadwall, Ring-necked Ducks, two

American Black Ducks, four Hooded Mergansers, and five flyover Common Mergansers. We found a lone Bufflehead in the leachate pond, and Bob Augustine spotted two Horned Larks on the gravel road nearby.

As usual, there was no shortage of raptors. In addition to the owl, we estimated eight Red-tailed Hawks, both adult and immature, a Northern Harrier, two Red-shouldered Hawks, and two Bald Eagles flying over as we returned to the maintenance building. A few of us who lingered a bit at the end were treated to a handsome male kestrel perched near the entrance road in great light.



**Informal Late Afternoon Walks.** Leader: Jim Green. I led three joint ANS/MBC trips after work in March. This report is from the second of the walks, March 13, but sightings on all three walks were similar. Highlights here included the two Red-necked Grebes seen on the first walk. Periodically one would swim into the waters just below the bridge, providing great looks for everybody. There were also 8 Horned Grebes in the same area, with one or two showing the beginnings of molting into their breeding plumage. Tree Swallows were moving up the river in loose groups. I counted 30+ and later Jared Fisher had another 60+ fly by.

The White-winged Scoter was still in the waters just above the rapids at Violette's Lock among the Redheads and Greater Scaup. As we approached the dikes at Hughes Hollow, a Greater Yellowlegs put on a nice show calling and circling several times before heading west. Waterfowl seen in the large impoundment included two American Wigeon, a Green-winged Teal, 15 Ring-necked Ducks, four Hooded Mergansers, and a Pied-billed Grebe. We were here for only 15 minutes and then headed over to Sycamore Landing Road where we finished with four American Woodcocks heard, including one nearby display. There was another bird close to us that "peented" on the ground but never displayed. Since the temperature had dropped to 33 degrees, we were lucky to see any display at all.



**Patuxent River Park, Jug Bay Natural Area, March 12, 2011.** Leader: John Bjerke. Participants: 9. Species: 47. This half-day trip was co-sponsored with Audubon Naturalist Society. The weather was typical of what one



# Trip Reports

participant called the “shoulder season” in birding. It started sunny and cool and soon changed to cloudy and almost cold. It is the season of turn-over. We delighted in excellent views of some birds that will soon leave our area — Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Fox Sparrow, and Rusty Blackbird. These were balanced with the first summer residents — Osprey and Tree Swallow. And there were the birds that are scarce in winter but that will become more numerous in the months ahead — Eastern Phoebe and Pine Warbler. Jug Bay’s Osprey population continues to increase, and we enjoyed the aerial combat as a mated pair drove off a pair of subadult Bald Eagles (two of the five eagles we saw during the morning). March is a great time to find migrating Wilson’s Snipe at Jug Bay, and we were not disappointed. The recent heavy rains left large puddles on the airport field, and we had several snipe at very close range. They were complemented with Greater Yellowlegs and Killdeer. Finally, the squeals of Wood Ducks confirmed that spring is here.

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## Somerset Marshes trip, *continued from page 4*

getting looks at Nelson’s Sparrows or Sedge Wrens in that wind was laughable, but we went through the motions. We tend to have some pretty amazing luck on these trips!

We decided to do a sunset watch at the Ocean City Inlet. There was an impressive density of Common Eiders (32 was our highest count) and scoters (200+ Surf Scoters and 80 Black Scoters) that were visible when we arrived, but many of them took off en masse and headed south after a few minutes, the flock slowly building back up over the next hour. We had small numbers of both loons, Ruddy Turnstones, and Purple Sandpipers, but no Harlequins or un-Common Eiders despite very careful checking.

In the late afternoon, participants parted ways with half of us choosing to spend dusk watching Skimmer Island. We quickly picked out three Lesser Black-backed Gulls, a Black-bellied Plover, and some Dunlin. As light quickly faded, I almost had a heart attack when I spotted an unusual head pattern among the Ring-billed Gulls on the nearby flats. This gull appeared to have a partial hood and was decidedly dark-backed. I exclaimed something

**Hugh Mahanes Presidents’ Walk at Hughes Hollow, April 16.** An intrepid and congenial group of 13 birders from the Montgomery Bird Club braved a gray, windy morning with rain fast approaching to do our annual Hugh Mahanes Presidents’ Walk at Hughes Hollow/McKee-Beshers Wildlife Management Area in Montgomery County. The group included five (past or current) presidents.

Going less than 2 hours before being rained out, we still managed 39 species. Highlights were a very cooperative American Bittern that gave us nice views in flight and standing in its classic neck-straight-up, you-can’t-see-me position; a male Purple Martin that joined the many Tree Swallows and Northern Rough-winged Swallows in flight over the impoundments; and a flock of Rusty Blackbirds giving us very close views.



Participants gather for the Presidents’ Day Walk: (back row) *Jim Nelson, Robert Parsons, Steve Pretl, Bill Adams*; (front row) *Lou DeMouy, Dillon Rankin, Lydia Schindler, Susan Hunt, Linda Friedland* (current and former presidents in italics). Photo: Evelyn Ralston

(probably requiring minor censorship) about having either a Laughing or a Franklin’s Gull, and we scrambled to align our scopes. As it turned in profile, we let out a collective gasp. It appeared to be a Franklin’s! Although this theory was soon disproved, the identity was nearly as rare — a Ring-billed Gull x Laughing Gull hybrid, our second very rare Ring-billed Gull hybrid in a single day! Although our two rarest finds were hybrids, they are very noteworthy records that proved to be excellent learning opportunities.

In all, a great trip with great birds! ♪

—*Bill Hubick*

# Birds of Note (early January 2011 to early April 2011)

One of the most exciting birds to show up over the past few months was a light-phase **Rough-legged Hawk** over the retired Laytonsville landfill adjacent to Blue Mash on 1/24. The bird was seen for about a week or so thereafter from both the Zion Road and the Route 108 side of the landfill. For those willing to wait until dusk or visit around dawn, a **Short-eared Owl** was another bonus bird seen over the landfill in January and February. An early morning **Short-eared Owl** was the highlight of an MBC Field Trip inside the old landfill on 2/20.

A **Mute Swan** continues to be seen occasionally along the Potomac River, mostly about a half-mile upstream of Riley's Lock and sometimes as far as White's Ferry.

Bob Augustine found a **Greater White-fronted Goose** at the Poolesville WTTP adjacent to LM Stevens Park on 3/1. The bird was seen for about 3-4 days thereafter, sometimes at the pond within the WTTP but also grazing with a flock of Canada Geese on a nearby field along Rte 107.

Dave Czaplak noted a single **Cackling Goose** at Little Seneca Lake on 1/9. Three **Cackling Geese** were seen in flight among a larger flock of Canada Geese over E. Gude Drive near the Washington Natural Gas Plant on 2/10.

Dave Czaplak reported nine **White-winged Scoters** on the Potomac adjacent to Violette's Lock on 1/31. Most of these birds departed in a few days, but a single bird remained for most of February into March, departing sometime around 3/19. Individual **Black Scoters** (again, initially found by Dave Czaplak) have shown up twice between Riley's and Violette's Lock over the past few months. To complete his scoter trifecta, Dave found a **Surf Scoter** in the Violette's Lock vicinity on 3/24. A beautiful drake **Surf Scoter** was seen across from the Black Hill RP Visitor Center at Little Seneca Lake on 3/27, and five more birds were seen on the Potomac near Riley's Lock on 4/3. A few **Long-tailed Ducks** have popped in and out of the county this winter, with reports coming from the Potomac River between Riley's and Violette's Lock, Little Seneca Lake, and Triadelphia Reservoir.

Other water birds of interest include a **Red-throated Loon** at Riley's Lock on 3/23 and a **Red-necked Grebe**, first noted by Dave Czaplak on 2/24 and seen off and on in the same vicinity through late March.

Tom Stock noted the return of breeding **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** to Sligo Creek near Silver Spring on 3/20.

A pair of **Peregrine Falcons** continues in and around the American Legion Bridge, being reported on 1/20 by Mike Bowen. Jeff Shenot has occasionally observed **Peregrine Falcons** atop buildings or in flight in downtown Silver Spring over the winter months. David Hunter reported a **Peregrine Falcon** in the Silver Spring area on 3/13.

Rob and Mike Ostrowski reported a **Merlin** just off Clarksburg Road near the Montgomery/Frederick line on 1/15. Another **Merlin** was observed on 1/30 along the Rte 108 side of Blue Mash while folks were pursuing the **Rough-legged Hawk**. Jim Moore saw a **Merlin** near his Rockville apartment building multiple times from the end of February through the middle of March.

On 3/19 around 8 a.m., Dave Czaplak caught what he thought was the tail end of an impressive northward movement of wintering gulls. In about a half-hour, he counted 2,450 **Ring-billed Gulls**, 37 **Herring Gulls**, and a single **Lesser Black-backed Gull** -- all heading upstream over the Potomac.

Mike Bowen noted a very early **Tree Swallow** at Hughes Hollow on 2/19 — a personal early date for Mike.

Scattered reports of **Black-capped Chickadees** in the county continued throughout the latter half of the winter, with a bird being seen most recently by Bradley Cernohorsky at Brookside Nature Center on 3/15.

Paul Woodward reported at least three different **Gray Catbirds** wintering at McKee-Beshers WMA. Jim and Ann Nelson noted a "mewing" **Gray Catbird** at Hughes Hollow on 3/2.

**American Tree Sparrows** were noted at both Blue Mash and Lois Green Conservation Park in January and February.

Dan Haas found two **Lapland Longspurs** mixed in with some **Horned Larks** along Damascus Rd on 1/30.

A few lucky birders have seen **Common Redpolls** in the county this winter. John Bjerke came across a **Common Redpoll** in Rock Creek RP about a mile below Lake Needwood on 2/17. Max Wilson also found a **Common Redpoll** at Hughes Hollow on 2/20. A few **Purple Finches** have shown up this winter, but in general they have been scarce, with reports from backyard feeders and McKee-Beshers WMA.

—Andy Martin



## Montgomery Bird Club Library

At a meeting several months ago, I asked the membership for ideas about what should be done with our library, which consists chiefly of videotapes and a few CDs that are only occasionally borrowed. I received only one suggestion, but it was well worth pursuing — to list and publish the titles in the collection. (See the complete list below.)

There is a lot of useful information in this collection if you can use the VHS format. Please contact me if you'd like to borrow any of these items. Meanwhile, I would like to have Club input for the future of this collection. I am happy to bring the collection to meetings — if it is being used. Otherwise, this is just wasted time and energy. My suggestion is that we sell or auction the material to interested members and use the proceeds for another Club project. I plan to offer this idea to the leadership committee, and I would be happy to bring any other suggestions to their attention. Please share your ideas with me at [ostrich7@verizon.net](mailto:ostrich7@verizon.net) or 301-622-4015. ♪

—Pat Tonkin

### MBC Library Holdings

Audubon Society's Butterfly Gardening (VHS)  
Australian Bird Calls: Favourites (CD)  
Australian Bird Calls: Subtropical East (CD)  
Birding Hotspots of Texas II (VHS)  
Birds of Alaska (VHS)  
Common Butterflies (VHS)  
Fall Colors: Trees of the Eastern Forests (VHS)  
Fall Wild Flowers of the Northeast (VHS)  
Hummingbirds Up Close (VHS)  
Life of Birds (Attenborough/PBS) (5 VHS)  
Mallee Bird Calls of Southeastern Australia (CD)  
Native Forest Birds: Kauai (VHS)  
Sea Birds of the Maine Coast (VHS)  
Skippers of the Northeast (VHS)  
Small Gulls of North America (VHS)  
Spring Migration at the Dry Tortugas (VHS)  
Stokes Field Guide to Bird Songs (2 CDs + booklet)  
Warblers of Maryland ID Workshop (CD)  
Watching Hummingbirds (VHS)  
Watching Sparrows (VHS)  
Watching Waders (VHS)  
Watching Warblers (VHS)



## 2011 MBC Social

Seventy-eight Montgomery Bird Club members and guests enjoyed wonderful food, company, and photos at the annual MBC Social on Friday evening, March 11. Neal Fitzpatrick of the Audubon Naturalist Society once again made the beautiful ANS headquarters at Woodend available. We are very grateful to have this continuing association with ANS.

ANS Property Manager Raj Sakaria organized the table setup prior to the festivities and the cleanup afterwards. Smokey Glen Farm provided us with a tasty barbeque dinner, complete with delicious fruit pies. Thanks to Jim Green for handling the dinner arrangements; it really is a marvel to see him at work—Mr. Organization personified! Jim also shared bartending duties with Howard Lefkowitz, who tended the wine-pouring.

Thanks to Johanna Thompson who arrived early to spread out the tablecloths and start the coffee, and to Mike Bowen who ably handled the member slide show, which was truly outstanding. More thanks go to all those who provided the many appetizers, which disappeared quickly.

After the delightful meal, our club president, Steve Pretl, introduced this year's guest of honor, Mark England. Mark shared how he came to birding and thanked all of those who helped him along the way. (For Mark's remarks, please see our website at [www.montgomerybirdclub.org](http://www.montgomerybirdclub.org).)

The evening was topped off by all of us admiring the superb pictures, photos, and sketches, presented by our talented members. Everyone had a great time! ♪

—Anna Urciolo



### Welcome New Members!

Kathy Calvert

Emily Chiu

Gayle Hobson and Ken Keppel

# Slate of Officers 2011–2012

The Nominating Committee proposes the following slate:

**State Director:** Chris Barnard

**State Director:** John Combs

**Chapter Director:** Woody Dubois

**Chapter Director:** Susan Hunt

**Note:** President Steve Pretl, Vice-President Anna Urciolo, Treasurer Sally Wechsler, Secretary Diane Ford, State Director Chris Wright, and Chapter Directors Stephanie Lovell and Jim Moore, have another year to go on their two-year terms.

All positions are being nominated for the 2011–2012 Montgomery Bird Club year. Each person has agreed to run and serve if elected. Additional nominations may be made from the floor provided the nominee has agreed beforehand. The election will take place at the MBC meeting on May 18.

—*Andy Martin, Chair*  
*Don Messersmith*  
*Helen Patton*



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

