

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

November 2012

Volume 43, No. 4

## President's Chat

Greetings, everyone. Thanks to all of you who have already renewed your membership. If you haven't yet renewed, you can download the application from our website. Welcome to all of our new members. I hope you will have a chance to take advantage of all the terrific field trips that are available. The leaders are knowledgeable, good-humored, and just fun to be with.

Our fall season has really been exploding with so many reports of warblers that I am flabbergasted (and wondering why they aren't in my backyard). Of course, as you're reading this, those jewels are long gone, and our winter birds are settling in. We have many Christmas bird counts coming up, and I know many of you have participated in them for many years. These counts are open to all levels of birders. Everyone is invited and encouraged to join in. There is no longer a five-dollar fee to participate so the more counts, the merrier!

The September MOS board meeting was held at Rocky Gap State Park and was attended by Chris Barnard, Andy Martin, and myself. Maureen Harvey is the new MOS president. The annual conference will be held in Harford County on May 24–26, 2013, with Mark Johnson hosting a warbler workshop. More information about the conference will be in a later *Chat* newsletter. There will also be a duck workshop to be held at the Holiday Inn at Ocean City on Friday, February 8, 2013, at 6:00 p.m. with a field trip the following day, February 9. More information will be available when I receive it.



Here is an important reminder about our next two MBC meetings. The November meeting will be held on the **fourth Wednesday, November 28**, so as not to conflict with Thanksgiving. The December meeting has also been changed as the church needs the hall on our usual night. Please mark your calendars that our meeting will be on **Tuesday, December 18**. I will send out reminders about both meetings.

Good birding! ♪

— Anna Urciolo

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# Winter Calendar

**November 28 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m., Midway Atoll.** (Note meeting date is on *fourth* Wednesday to avoid conflict with Thanksgiving.) Midway is the world's largest subtropical seabird rookery, and it is scheduled to be closed to visitors as of next year. *Suzanne Dater* went there for nine days in April 2011. Midway was the scene of the definitive Pacific battle of World War II and is now a UNESCO world heritage site, protecting the world's longest-flying species, the Laysan Albatross, as well as the Black-footed Albatross and other birds, the Laysan Monk Seal, and the Green Sea Turtle. Thousands of pairs of albatross come to the island to breed and feed their young. The island is a cacophony of bird calls—whistles, croaking, and clicking beaks like castanets—and the sound of high winds and crashing waves on pearly beaches is unforgettable!

**December 18 (Tuesday), 7:30 p.m., A Tour of Texas.** *Chris Barnard.* (Note change in meeting day to **Tuesday**.)

**January 16 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m., South Georgia Island.** *Bob Mumford.*

**February 20 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m., Night Flight Calls.** *Andy Martin.*

*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 Road (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 Anna Urciolo at 301-251-9452 or [urcioloa@sidwell.edu](mailto:urcioloa@sidwell.edu).*



## Say "Thanks" to Don!

The Audubon Naturalist Society is hosting a Thanksgiving party for Don Messersmith, who has now (officially) retired (really!) from teaching in the Natural History Field Studies program. This certificate program is run jointly by ANS and the Graduate School USA. The party is planned as an open house that will allow former students (and everyone else) to come by and say "thanks" to Don for all his years of superb teaching about birds and insects.

My first Field Studies course, in 1998, was Don's "Introduction to Ornithology," which I took because I had heard he was retiring soon. Don taught in the program for 48 years, was honored with the Graduate School's Faculty Excellence Award in 2006, and retired 14 years after the year I feared would be his last. He'll still be teaching occasional classes for ANS, though.

The party will be at Woodend on Nov. 30 from 7 to 9 p.m. Please email [chayes@audubonnaturalist.org](mailto:chayes@audubonnaturalist.org) if you plan to attend. ♪

—Cecily Nabors

## Birders' Guide to Montgomery County at a Special Price!

If you don't already have this wonderful site guide to birding in Montgomery County, you can pick one up at a reduced cost at the next Montgomery Bird Club meeting, where they will be on sale for \$10 each. Complete with reviews of all the important birding sites, directions for getting there, and answers to that important question (are there facilities?). This is the guide to have whether you are new to birding or have been birding since the days when there was only one field guide and it was Peterson's. ♪

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

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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](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.).

**NOVEMBER 4 (Sunday) BLACKWATER NWR.** Full day (to dusk). Early waterfowl and lingering migrants plus late afternoon marsh watch. Brown-headed Nuthatch possible. Bring lunch and drinks. Reservations required. Limit: 12. For meeting place, time, and reservations, contact the LEADER: Andy Martin at [martinap2@verizon.net](mailto:martinap2@verizon.net) or 301-529-2066 (cell).

 **NOVEMBER 11 (Sunday) 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 at 301-977-5252 or [lydiaschindler@verizon.net](mailto:lydiaschindler@verizon.net).

**NOVEMBER 18 (Sunday) LOIS GREEN PARK.** Half day. Explore the varied habitats of this relatively new 204-acre Montgomery County park. Songbirds, raptors, and waterfowl are possible. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at parking lot on Snouffer School Road, Gaithersburg, Md. Reservations required. For detailed directions and reservations, call the LEADER: Ed Patten at 301-948-5648.

**NOVEMBER 25 (Sunday) OCCOQUAN BAY NWR, VA.** Half day. Explore the diverse habitats in this one-square-mile refuge at the confluence of the Potomac and Occoquan Rivers in Woodbridge, VA. A variety of migratory ducks and boreal migrants should be present. Meet at the parking lot in the center of the refuge at 8 a.m. Reservations necessary. Limit: 20. For reservations and more information, contact the LEADERS: Mike Bowen at 301-530-5764 or [dhmbowen@yahoo.com](mailto:dhmbowen@yahoo.com), or Gerry Hawkins at 571-277-8406 or [maineusa@comcast.net](mailto:maineusa@comcast.net).

**DECEMBER 2 (Sunday) LILYPONS/NEW DESIGN ROAD.** Half day. Wintering field birds, targeting Fox and Tree Sparrows, possibly Virginia Rail and American Bittern. For reservations (required) and more info, contact the LEADER: Gail Mackiernan at 301-989-1828.

**DECEMBER 15 (Saturday) TRIADELPHIA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT.** Triadelphia Reservoir, MD. For information, contact COMPILER: David Holmes, [musiclbndr@verizon.net](mailto:musiclbndr@verizon.net) (preferred) or 410-730-7083.

**DECEMBER 15 (Saturday) WASHINGTON, DC, CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT** (includes portions of MD and VA). COMPILER: Larry Cartwright. For information, contact Carol Hayes, Audubon Naturalist Society, [chayes@audubonnaturalist.org](mailto:chayes@audubonnaturalist.org) or 301-652-9188, ext 10.

**DECEMBER 15 (Saturday) CATOCTIN MOUNTAIN CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT.** Contact Mike Welch at 301-685-3561 or [manddwelch@comcast.net](mailto:manddwelch@comcast.net) to participate.

**DECEMBER 16 (Sunday) SENECA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT** (Maryland and Virginia). For information, contact CO-COMPILERS: Mark England, 240-207-3132 (h), 240-375-4500 (cell), or [markengland@canamcontractors.com](mailto:markengland@canamcontractors.com), or Jim Nelson, 301-530-6574 or [kingfishers2@verizon.net](mailto:kingfishers2@verizon.net).


**DECEMBER 28 (Friday) CENTRAL LOUDOUN CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT** (includes 5 miles along the C&O Canal in Montgomery County, MD). For information, contact COMPILER: Joe Coleman, 540-554-2542 or [joecoleman@rstarmail.com](mailto:joecoleman@rstarmail.com).

**DECEMBER 30 (Sunday) SUGARLOAF CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT.** For information, contact CO-COMPILERS: Helen Horrocks (Frederick), 301-831-6315 or [hjh\\_37@yahoo.com](mailto:hjh_37@yahoo.com), or Janet Millenson (Montgomery), 301-983-9337 or [janet@twocrows.com](mailto:janet@twocrows.com).

 **JANUARY 1 (Tuesday) EARLIEST BIRD WALK, GEORGETOWN RESERVOIR, DC HOTSPOTS.** Half day. Start the New Year right! Meet at 8 a.m. at Georgetown reservoir, DC, by the gate leading to the dike between the pools. Reservations required. Limit: 20 participants. LEADER: Mike Bowen at 301-530-5764 or [dhmbowen@yahoo.com](mailto:dhmbowen@yahoo.com).

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
# Field Trips

 **JANUARY 13 (Sunday) BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK.** Learn and review the basics of duck ID at this premiere county spot for winter waterfowl. The trip will be geared to new birders, but all are welcome. Bring a scope if you have one. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the pull-off next to the Rte 121 bridge. Half day. No reservations needed. For more information or directions, call the LEADER: Dave Powell at 301-540-8776.

**JANUARY 26 (Saturday) BLUE MASH.** Search for wintering sparrows and raptors. Walk will be around 1.5 miles on grass trails. Waterproof shoes recommended. Targets include Northern Harrier, American Tree Sparrow, and Fox Sparrow. Meet at 8 a.m. at the Blue Mash parking lot along Zion Road. Limit: 8 participants. For reservations and more information, email the LEADER: Jared Fisher at [jared.fisher@gmail.com](mailto:jared.fisher@gmail.com).

**FEBRUARY 3 (Sunday) WINTER WATERFOWL ON THE POTOMAC.** Half day. We'll plan to check the river for wintering ducks in a portion of the Urban Zone (a no firearms discharge area) between the mouth of Watts Branch and Great Falls. Expect some winter passerines along the C&O Canal as well. Meet at 8 a.m. in the Swain's Lock parking lot at the end of Swain's Lock Road. Bring a scope if you have one. Trip will be canceled if icy conditions along canal towpath make walking treacherous. Reservations required. For reservations and more info, contact the LEADER: Andy Martin at [martinap2@verizon.net](mailto:martinap2@verizon.net) or 301-529-2066 (cell).

**FEBRUARY 10 (Sunday) OAKS LANDFILL, LAYTONSVILLE.** Bundle up to explore this now-closed landfill adjacent to the Blue Mash Nature Trail. Mostly open terrain with some ponds. Probable wintering sparrows and raptors and possible waterfowl if ponds are not iced over. Leader will have scope for distant birds. We have special permission to enter this "closed to the public" landfill so reservations are essential. Limit: 16. Meet at 8 a.m. For reservations and more information, contact the LEADER: Mark England at 240-207-3132 (home), 240-375-4500 (cell), or [markengland@canamcontractors.com](mailto:markengland@canamcontractors.com).

 **MARCH 5 (Tuesday); MARCH 7 (Thursday); MARCH 12 (Tuesday); MARCH 19 (Tuesday) INFORMAL LATE AFTERNOON WALKS** until dusk. Joint trip with ANS. Meet promptly at 5 p.m. at the end of Seneca Road at Riley's Lock "on the bridge." After checking out the river, we will proceed to Hughes Hollow. Highlights here will include waterfowl flying into roost. We will try for displaying woodcock if they are in the vicinity. Bring scope and flashlight, and wear "muddy conditions" footgear. Reservations not required—all are welcome. For more info, call the LEADER: Jim Green at 301-742-0036 (cell).

**MARCH 9 (Saturday) PATUXENT RIVER PARK,** Jug Bay Natural Area, Prince George's Co. Half day. Joint trip with Audubon Naturalist Society. Waterfowl, Wilson's Snipe, winter and early spring songbirds, Ospreys displaying. Meet at 8 a.m. at parking by park headquarters. Wear "muddy conditions" footgear. Reservations required (15-person limit). Contact the LEADER: John Bjerke at 240-401-1643.

## New Policy for the Christmas Bird Counts

The National Audubon Society recently announced a new policy for the 113th Christmas Bird Count (CBC) in December 2012: the CBC is now free. Audubon will no longer charge the \$5 fee for field participants, and *American Birds* will no longer be printed and mailed to participants; instead the summary results of the CBC will be available online.

Audubon had invited people to participate in an online survey earlier this year. The results of the survey will be summarized in the upcoming 112th CBC summary issue of *American Birds*—the last one to appear in print. Responses indicated that for many the fee was a major obstacle to the program. The strong message was that

more people would be involved, more counts would be included in the CBC database, and more accurate data would be collected if the fee were dropped. It was also apparent that recipients did not value *American Birds* in its current format and did not read most of it. Many survey respondents felt that an interactive, online version of the magazine would better suit their needs. With the online delivery of *American Birds* via a new interactive web presence including photos, summaries, and features, content can now be presented as the counts are completed.

All MBC members are encouraged to help with this year's CBC. The five counts that include portions of Montgomery County are listed in the "Field Trips" section of this *Chat*. All the Maryland CBCs will be listed in the November/December MOS *Yellowthroat* and on the MOS website at [www.mdbirds.org](http://www.mdbirds.org). ♪





# Trip Reports



**Delaware Bay Refuges, Saturday, August 25.** Leaders: John Bjerke and Cyndie Loeper. Participants: 13. Species: 51. Weather: Overcast with mild temperatures and steady winds; therefore, no heat stroke and very few biting insects! This trip is a joint trip with the Audubon Naturalist Society, which has sponsored it as a shorebird workshop for about 40 years. The day started with about 30 Hudsonian Godwits in Raymond Pool at Bombay Hook NWR. The birds were molting into basic plumage. Including stops at Port Mahon Road and Ted Harvey WMA, we had 15 species of shorebird. We had a chance to study juvenile Semipalmated Sandpipers and a juvenile Least Sandpiper. There were a few Long-billed Dowitchers mixed into flocks that included two subspecies of Short-billed Dowitcher. We studied the difference in feeding behavior between dowitchers and Stilt Sandpipers. We watched a juvenile Peregrine Falcon make several passes at a small shorebird that had the wisdom to crouch down in a thin patch of grass and eventually survive the attack. Migrating Bobolinks were a highlight for many. We also spent time on juvenile night-heron identification and studies of Caspian and Royal Terns.



**Little Bennett Regional Park, Wednesday, September 5.** Leader: Claire Wolfe. Three intrepid birders set out at Wilson's Mill parking lot in Little Bennett Regional Park in hopes that the last remnants of Hurricane Isaac would not dampen the day's birding. A gentle, cool breeze gave us a fairly comfortable morning with no rain, but evidently the birds did not get the memo, as birding was generally very quiet throughout the morning. But as always, there were highlights, most notable of which was a calling Red-breasted Nuthatch. We ended the day with five warbler species, Prairie, Pine, Redstart, Parula, and Magnolia, along with Red-eyed and White-eyed Vireos, both still quite vocal.

**Upper Watts Branch Park, Sunday, September 9.** Leader: Paul O'Brien. Seven participants joined the two locals on a pleasantly cool but sunny morning in search of neotropical migrants, of which there were very few. Most of the 39 species we saw were resident birds, but that turned out to be quite beneficial to our Australian visitor, for whom almost all were life birds. The rest of us formed a cheering section for him and renewed our appreciation for some very nice creatures. We were hoping for more than four warbler species (Magnolia, Blackburnian,

Redstart, and Yellowthroat) for our visitor, but he cashed in later with a visit to Rock Creek. The local woodpeckers cooperated, including Pileated, which is stunning for someone coming from a woodpecker-free part of the world. Some of the more interesting observations were fly-overs such as Red-shouldered Hawks, a Green Heron, a Black-billed Cuckoo, and two Ravens, which are now resident in the neighborhood. Even though the only flurry of migrants consisted chiefly of Red-eyed Vireos, the four warbler species, and two Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, all participants agreed that it was a pleasing outing.



**Poplar Island, Talbot County, MD, Wednesday, September 12.** Leader: Mike Bowen with Joe Hanfman as co-leader. Participants: 22. Weather: Sunny, cloudless, and perfectly gorgeous with no humidity, little breeze but no mosquitoes. (They sprayed the day before.) Temps. were 65° to 80°F. Species: 56 (a few people had more). Highlights included 20 species of shorebirds, including four each of Wilson's and Red-necked Phalaropes, several White-rumped and Pectoral and a dozen Stilt Sandpipers, and two American Golden-Plovers, along with many "peep," occasionally chased into panicked flight by a migrating Merlin. Lesser Yellowlegs were by far the most numerous wader (a couple hundred), with 53 American Avocets and six Black-necked Stilts a real pleasure to see at fairly close range. We found an immature Little Blue Heron among a group of Snowy Egrets and spotted three different Northern Harriers. An active group of swallows afforded great, if brief, scope views. Among them were two Cliff Swallows and two Purple Martins. Lots of ducks had arrived in the week before our trip, most still in eclipse plumage and a little difficult to ID. Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, and Northern Shoveler were particularly common, with a few Pintail, Gadwall, Green-winged Teal, and Ruddy Duck. Particularly notable were two Surf Scoters that decided to hang around the island all summer rather than go North. The leader wishes to thank Joe Hanfman for his knowledgeable assistance with trip leadership and all the participants for their willingness to share telescopes and camaraderie. Particular thanks to Rich Galloway and Stephanie Lovell for providing photos to accompany this report on the club's website. And no one was seasick on the short boat trip there and back!

*continued on next page*

# Trip Reports

**Rock Creek Park, DC, Thursday, September 13.** Leader: Wallace Kornack. I led one participant on a visit to the park's best birding sites. The tour started at the equestrian field where Chimney Swifts were circling as we waited for the warblers to arrive. Soon thereafter Black-and-white, Chestnut-sided, and Magnolia Warblers; American Redstart; and Red-eyed Vireos were coursing through the trees. A particularly nice Tennessee Warbler made a brief display followed by a possible Northern Parula. At the Ridge, a Common Nighthawk was picked out from numerous Chimney Swifts. At the maintenance yard, we were greeted with a report that a Nashville Warbler and a Northern Parula had been seen. Subsequently other warblers were spotted, including Blackburnian Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, and Northern Parula. A Willow/Alder Flycatcher (Traill's Flycatcher) hovered close by, and a Yellow-billed Cuckoo flew overhead. Blue Jays were calling as Scarlet Tanagers picked their way through the oak trees. The dog run produced the usual Northern Mockingbird and Gray Catbird as well as a Baltimore Oriole, European Starling, and many American Robins.



**Rock Creek Park, DC, Sunday, September 16.** Leader: Wallace Kornack. Five participants were able to see a good number of warblers, thrushes, and grosbeaks. The tour began with very slow bird activity at the equestrian field, marked by a single Magnolia Warbler, several Common Nighthawks among many Chimney Swifts, and a collection of flickers and woodpeckers. As we moved to the Ridge, warbler activity picked up with the sighting of Chestnut-sided, Black-and-white, and Black-throated Blue Warblers and additional nighthawks. Then the birding reached a peak in the maintenance yard with the appearance of American Redstart, Bay-breasted Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, and more Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Black-and-white, and Black-throated Blue warblers. Wood Thrushes, Swainson's Thrushes, and Veery were hopping in and around the mulberry vines. They were joined by an eye-catching male Rose-breasted Grosbeak, a handsome Brown Thrasher, and unshowy Gray Catbirds.

**Patuxent River Park, Jug Bay Natural Area, Saturday, September 22.** Leaders: Greg Kearns, Paul Baicich, and John Bjerke. Participants: 15. Species: 57. A beautiful morning on the river for members of Audubon Naturalist Society and MBC; sunny and cool. This is the annual search for Sora, and we had mixed results. At least 40 Soras were heard, but only one was seen briefly. We also heard Virginia Rail and saw a Coot for a three-rail day. The marsh was full of blackbirds, and we had numerous Wood Ducks, Blue-winged Teal, and Green-winged Teal. Good views were had of several raptors including three Bald Eagles, two Harriers, a Cooper's Hawk, an Osprey, and Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks. There were lingering Marsh Wrens and fly-over Wilson's Snipe. A flurry of excitement happened during the boat ride when the keys to the boat fell into the marsh, but Greg Kearns quickly jumped in and retrieved them. Two hardy birders stayed for the walk to Mattaponi Creek and were rewarded with a small flock of Palm Warblers, a Blackpoll, and a Black-and-white Warbler. Two female Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were a nice wrap-up for the day.



**Pennyfield to Violette's Bird Stalk, Sunday, September 23.** Leader: Jim Nelson. Joint trip with Anne Arundel Bird Club. Participants: 12, including the leader, pretty evenly split between the two clubs. Weather: Sunny, clear, and cool after the passage of a cold front; wind came up for the last half of walk. Total species: 42. The beautiful morning and recent passage of a cold front, which usually bodes well for migrants at this time of year, had us expecting lots of action. But we had very few migrants—only a Common Yellowthroat, a Magnolia Warbler, a Ruby-throated Hummingbird, two Red-eyed Vireos, a Scarlet Tanager, and two Yellow-billed Cuckoos. The highlights were primarily bigger birds and included a Merlin, spotted by sharp-eyed *Chat* editor Susan Hunt, which gave us great views sitting at the top of a snag, and at least five Bald Eagles including two adult eagles with an immature above the lock at Pennyfield and, later, three immature eagles interacting over the Potomac with two of them locking talons as adults often do during mating flights. At Violette's Lock before the walk started, several of us saw a Sharp-shinned Hawk interacting with a flock of European Starlings overhead (the hawk seemed to be herding them into a tight formation like a shark around a school of smaller fish), an Osprey, and groups of Blue Jays moving overhead in migration.



# Trip Reports

**Lilypons Water Gardens, Saturday, October 6.** Leader: Marcia Balestri. A big group of Montgomery County and Frederick County birders enjoyed a nice walk around Lilypons. Rather quiet, with sparrows and warblers hard to come by (last week was hopping, of course!). We ended up with 56 species and did have a few highlights: a Rose-breasted Grosbeak that most folks saw, a cooperative Yellow-billed Cuckoo that caught a couple of fat grubs and put on a nice show for everyone, a very uncooperative Lincoln's Sparrow that only a few folks saw, both Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal, a rather large flock of Wood Ducks (10 in one flock and several later), a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and to finish the trip off before the weather turned, a calling Sora in the reed area by the parking lot.



**Little Bennett RP, Monday, October 8.** Leader: Gemma Radko. Participants: One plus leader. Species: 42. Highlights: Several "brownie" Purple Finches, White-throated, Swamp, Chipping, and Field Sparrows, Red-breasted Nuthatch, both kinglets, and a late Scarlet Tanager. Common Ravens calling, a lovely Blue-headed Vireo, Yellow-breasted Sapsucker, and a House Wren rounded off an enjoyable morning.

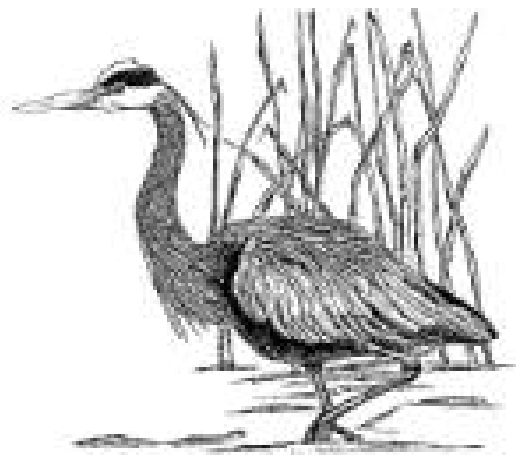


**The Big Sit, Sunday, October 14.** Leader: Chuck Parker. Participants: About 20 (including two young children). Species: 58. We had our annual Big Sit at Black Hill Regional Park from 5:20 a.m. till 2:40 p.m. The temperature was 47 degrees in the early morning and 70 degrees at the end of the "Sit." The highlights were a Great Horned Owl, Northern Harriers, Osprey, Gadwall, Northern Pintail, Pine Siskins, Rusty Blackbirds, a late Northern Rough-Winged Swallow, and a slightly early Dark-eyed Junco. The owl was heard at 5:20 by the leader and Joette Borzik, who had come early to try for a Barred Owl. But when they played the owl call on birdJam, a Great Horned Owl called back. Two Pine Siskins were

heard by all and ID'ed in flight by Mike Bowen. They were followed by a flock of 10+ birds that might have been siskins but never called and so could not be positively identified. The most exciting nature event of the day, however, involved a confrontation between a Great Blue Heron and a decent-sized black snake that swam across the marshy area. He went about halfway across and caught the attention of the Great Blue Heron, who hung out there for most of the day. The heron immediately headed for the snake and began stalking him from several angles. But when he made a few half-hearted stabs at the snake, the snake was a little too big and fast, and after several riveting minutes, the heron allowed the snake to leave. We were all betting on the heron!!

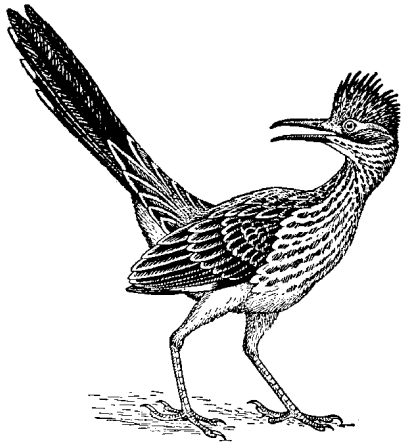


**Montgomery County Sparrow Search, Tuesday, October 16.** Leader: Dave Powell. Two people joined the leader in a search for sparrows off of Huntmaster Road (off Brink Road, near 124). The sparrows were there in good numbers, with Song and Swamp being the most numerous. The group also found White-throated, White-Crowned, Field, and Chipping. The best sparrow was a Clay-colored Sparrow mixed in with the Chipping Sparrows. Other nice birds seen were a Cooper's Hawk, followed by a Sharp-shinned Hawk, which gave us a nice comparison. A gorgeous day to be out birding!



## Texas Trip

**MBC** member Mark England and Hal Wierenga of Anne Arundel County will be co-leading their second trip to the Lower Rio Grande Valley January 19–26, 2013, for the Audubon Naturalist Society. On the previous trip in mid-November 2010, the group saw 174 bird species, including most of the South Texas specialties, such as Green Jay, Common Pauraque, Buff-bellied Hummingbird, Green and Ringed Kingfishers, Tropical and Couch's Kingbirds, Olive Sparrow, Altamira and Audubon's Orioles, Green Parakeet, and Red-crowned Parrot. Raptors included White-tailed Kite; Crested Caracara; Gray, Harris's, and White-tailed Hawks; and Aplomado Falcon. The group will stay in a single location in McAllen, Texas, and do day trips to local wildlife refuges and state parks, which worked well in 2010. See the ANS website ([www.audubonnaturalist.org](http://www.audubonnaturalist.org)) for a trip itinerary, cost sheet, and sightings list from 2010. ♪



## “Being Home”: Paintings by Patricia Tice

**P**atricia (Tricia) Tice shares her love of Maryland and the Mid-Atlantic Region with an exhibit of her plein-air paintings at the River Road Unitarian Universalist Church in Bethesda, now through November 17. Gallery hours are 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday. Please check the church calendar at [www.rruuc.org](http://www.rruuc.org) or call 301-229-0400 for weekend hours and to make sure the gallery is open during the week (it may be closed during church events). The church is at 6301 River Road, Bethesda (entrance on Whittier Blvd). ♪

## A Victory for Ten Mile Creek

**M**ontgomery County environmentalists praised the County Council for taking action in October to protect what they called the county's last, best stream — Ten Mile Creek in Clarksburg. The nine-member council voted unanimously to have the Planning Board prepare a Limited Master Plan Amendment for Ten Mile Creek/Clarksburg Stage 4 in order to establish science-based watershed protections for Ten Mile Creek.

The Council's action was supported by hundreds of emails and calls received from citizens supporting the Creek's protection, while developers pressured for extensions of water and sewer lines into the forests and farmlands of the Ten Mile Creek Watershed.

“Citizen scientists have been monitoring Ten Mile Creek for 14 years,” noted ANS Water Quality Monitoring Coordinator Cathy Wiss. “This creek harbors sensitive animals, including stoneflies, salamanders, trout, and other creatures that make it special and worth saving.” Diane Cameron, Conservation Director for ANS, said, “We are thrilled that the Council listened to the voices of the people who spoke out...including the more than 1,000 Montgomery County residents who signed our petition.” Dolores Milmoie, ANS's Maryland Conservation Associate, said, “Now, it is the mission of our County's expert planners to find ways to protect both the creek and the land that surrounds it, which filters its water. The creek is the source of supplemental drinking water for three million people in the region.”

The Limited Master Plan Amendment for Ten Mile Creek will be a fast-track process, taking 12 to 18 months. Three large development parcels, totaling more than 1,600 residential units on nearly 800 acres, are now proposed for this area on both sides of I-270. ♪

## Welcome New Members!

Nitin Agarwal

Jeanne Farrell

Bonnie Bell

Judy Filner

Rick Borchelt

Sheila Maher

Jennifer and Jason  
Brodsky

Shannon Oler

William Archer Brown

Thomas Stock

Liz Walker





# Birds of Note (late July—early October 2012)

**T**op bird find in the county since last issue would have to be the **Sabine's Gull** found by Tom Feild at Triadelphia Reservoir on 9/8. Really quite a beautiful gull, especially when seen in flight. The bird stuck around for several days allowing many birders to see, enjoy, and twitch it.

A heavy irruption of **Red-breasted Nuthatch** into our area is occurring this winter. As of this writing, Red-breasted Nuthatch reports are coming in fast and furious from all parts of the county, Maryland, and the mid-Atlantic. Scattered reports of **Purple Finch** and **Pine Siskins** are also increasing. Many birders are anticipating a good winter finch year as food sources to the north of us are thought to be in poor shape this winter.

A **King Rail** at Hughes Hollow on 9/13 was a great find by Jim Stasz. This is the first King Rail reported in the county since 1996. Jim stated on eBird that the bird was apparently spooked out of the cattails by something and seen in flight for a few moments only 75 feet away!

Some nice waders passed through our county during their post-breeding dispersal. Lucy Uncu found two **White Ibis** within Dierssen WMA near Pennyfield Lock on 7/16. Jim Stasz spotted a **Little Blue Heron** and a **Cattle Egret** at Violette's Lock on 8/4. Dave Czaplak reported a flock of seven **Glossy Ibis** flying high over Violette's Lock on 8/26.

Dave Czaplak had a flyover **Mississippi Kite** near the intersection of Travilah and River Roads on 8/24.

Low water levels toward late summer yielded some good shorebirds at Triadelphia Reservoir. The reservoir has two main shorebird hotspots that are worth checking July through late September—the upstream end mudflats north of Triadelphia Lake Road and the mid-lake gravel/mud spit north of Greenbridge Road boat ramp. Joe Hanfman found three **Western Sandpipers** at the upstream mudflats on 8/5. Woody and Rae Dubois reported an **American Avocet** at the gravel spit on 8/7. A **Black-bellied Plover** was observed at Triadelphia by Gerco Hoogeweg on 9/15.

Additional shorebirds reported over the past few months include an **Upland Sandpiper** over the Potomac at Violette's Lock on 8/11. Dave Czaplak reported that the bird was initially flushed from the golf course on the Virginia side by mowing activity. A **Baird's Sandpiper** was found by Jim Stasz at the Hughes Road polo grounds on 8/22 and another individual on 9/8 by birders at Triadelphia Reservoir. The first **American Golden-Plover**

of fall migration was seen at Summit Hall Turf Farm on 8/17. Dave Czaplak reported 12 American Golden-Plovers in flight over the Potomac adjacent to Violette's Lock on 9/3. Single **Sanderlings** were reported from Violette's Lock on 10/8 and 10/10 and at Triadelphia Reservoir on 9/8 with the above mentioned Baird's Sandpiper. Two **Dunlin** (with 16 **Lesser Yellowlegs**) were reported at Violette's Lock on 10/8.

Wheaton Regional Park/Brookside Gardens has proven to be a hotspot for passerine migrants, producing an **Olive-sided Flycatcher** and **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** for Gail Mackiernan and Barry Cooper on 8/18 and 8/22 respectively. A **Golden-winged Warbler** was reported there by Jeff Shenot on 8/24. **Lawrence's Warbler** (Golden-winged/Blue-winged hybrid) was found by Frank Fogarty on 9/12. Other interesting migrants from Wheaton RP include a **Philadelphia Vireo**, reported by Jeff Shenot on 8/23, and a **Clay-colored Sparrow** on 9/16. David Gersten observed a **Connecticut Warbler** at Wheaton RP on 9/16.

It has been a very productive fall for **Connecticut Warblers** in Montgomery with additional sightings in October from Hughes Hollow, Blue Mash, and the Wheaton Branch Stormwater Ponds. Cliff Comeau reported a **Connecticut Warbler** from Silver Spring on 10/8 but unfortunately it was a dead bird found on the sidewalk below a glass-covered walkway at his apartment complex. Daniel Kraushaar reported an **Orange-crowned Warbler** at Blue Mash on 10/7. Another **Orange-crowned Warbler** was seen there the following day by Clive Harris.

A cooperative **Marsh Wren** was found at Hughes Hollow on 9/14 and again by a number of birders through 9/16.

A **Black Tern** was seen by Dave Czaplak feeding over the Potomac River adjacent to Violette's Lock on 8/11. Dave also reported a **Snow Goose** in the Ten-Mile Creek Arm of Black Hill RP on 9/30.

In "twitching news," birders have reported 245 total species for the year in Montgomery, according to the eBird online checklist. That's three short of last year's total of 348. Some birds to keep an eye out for: Northern Saw-Whet Owl, Lapland Longspur, Snow Bunting, a flyover Golden Eagle, or maybe an Eared Grebe. Jim Nelson leads the "yard list" category with 45 species reported from his Bethesda yard so far this year. Dave Czaplak has found 231 birds in the county this year.

— Andy Martin



## The Sustaining Comfort of Birds

*This is excerpted from Mike Bowen's reflections on the aftermath of 9/11 in his "President's Chat," published in the November 2001 Chat. His remarks seem timely today when so much of the news we hear is disturbing and the threats to our habitat—and our birds—sometimes seem overwhelming. And yet the birds are still there....*

One day, after a particularly harrowing TV diet of death, destruction and imminent threat from lethal substances, I realized I just had to get out of the house. I headed to upper Rock Creek Park near Meadowside, where the great swath of the park takes off south, away from the noise and surging traffic... Everywhere there were birds. Not rare birds, mind you, but OUR birds...chickadees, titmice, and nuthatches, coming down to check on my spishing; on their heels kinglets of both species just arrived from the north; bold Red-bellied Woodpeckers and Flickers; an Eastern Phoebe tail-wagging; Yellow-rumped Warblers insouciantly snacking on poison ivy berries; Carolina Wrens screaming their annoyance at intruders, now including dozens of White-throated Sparrows who simply hadn't been there the week before....

In the space of 20 minutes, my stress level fell and my shoulders lifted as if a physical load had been removed. Never have the timelessness and restless innocence of nature, always in flux yet always marvelously predictable, been more apparent to me and so soothing to the soul. I realized, too, that we birders are more than a bunch of escapists or naïve idealists. We envisage a world free of war and senseless destruction of people and nature, certainly. In our world vision, birds and other creatures are free to move as they will, as they must, as they have for centuries; humankind has no business putting roadblocks in their way or destroying the habitats they depend upon. That vision, surely, is of the sort of world that all its inhabitants should want to live in. ♪

—Mike Bowen



## A New Spin on Hawk Watching...

For several years I've been raising pigeons as a hobby, but I've always been interested in pigeon racing and performance. A friend in Rockville has a racing loft, so one day in late June I decided to visit. I went on an early morning training release or "toss." I'd always known that pigeons were great navigators, and after I had watched them, Amor gave me four birds to train. I would have to make some changes to my aviary to accommodate these new birds. For several weeks these young pigeons stay in a "settling cage" to learn their surroundings. When they are old enough (by aging the wing feather), they are let go around the loft and fly short distances. They return home because home is where they get food and a good roost.

When the pigeons are familiar with the area, the owner can take them a distance away. This summer I enjoyed watching my birds fly and return to the pigeon house. However, I'm more alert to accipiters than I ever was before! During the fall and winter, the pigeons are not flown due to wintering hawk population. My binoculars will be busy... ♪

—Diane Ford

## ...and Hawk Viewing

One day last June, I walked to Bel Pre Creek on the Matthew Henson Trail. When I stopped at the new bridge to scan the creek, I was stunned to see a Red-shouldered Hawk standing in the water upstream. The bird was bathing. The hawk fluffed and fluttered in the water as joyfully as any robin, ducked its head under a couple of times, let the water trickle down its back, and shook itself. After draining for a bit, it repeated the process. A hawk, bathing! I wanted to show this amazing sight to someone, but no one came along the trail. Finally the hawk flew up out of the creek and I lost it.

A short time later, the thin soft whistle of a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher caught my ear, so I stopped to try to find it. The little guy was buzzing my hawk! On a dead branch in full sun, the Red-shouldered was basking, its damp russet chest dazzling against the spring-green woods. The darting attacks of the gnatcatcher, dragonfly-sized next to the big bird, left the hawk unmoved.

A woman walking her dog saw my binoculars, stopped at the trail intersection and called, "Are you looking for birds?" I urged, "There's a Red-shouldered Hawk right here in this tree—take a look!"

She came closer. "A hawk? Really?" Then she saw the bird. Her eyes grew big and her mouth dropped open. I smiled. It's such a treat to show someone an unexpected marvel. ♪

—Cecily Nabors



# In Memoriam

## William (Bill) Oberman

*Frank Witebsky remembers Bill Oberman, who died on September 28 at the age of 87.*

A dedicated pediatrician and a devoted Redskins fan, Bill was also passionate about birding, bird banding, and bird photography. A former President of MBC, Bill gave many beautifully illustrated lectures to the Club regarding his travels around the world. He also served for many years as the compiler of the Club's annual Seneca Christmas Count. In addition, for many years he presented annual workshops for the Audubon Naturalist Society on two of his favorite groups, sparrows and warblers, using photographs he had taken himself, often of mist-netted birds. As a contributor to birding and conservation causes, as a physician, and as a friend, he will be greatly missed.

*Donations may be made in Bill's memory to Grace Fellowship Church, 25350 Poland Road, Chantilly, VA 20152, or Capital Caring, 2900 Telestar Ct., Falls Church, VA 22042. ♪*

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## Judy McCartney

Long-time Montgomery Bird Club member Judy McCartney passed away on October 19 in her sleep at the Washington Home.

Judy was very active in both the MBC and MOS and will be sadly missed. We will have a longer tribute to Judy in the next issue of the *Chat*. ♪

## Feeder Alert!

**K**ee an eye on your feeders this fall. Because of poor food crops in southern Canada this summer, we are experiencing an irruption of northern species. Red-breasted Nuthatches have been in evidence since September, and in October, many birders reported large flocks of Pine Siskins emptying feeders. Late in the month, Evening Grosbeaks were heard or seen flying overhead, and at least two people reported grosbeaks visiting feeders. ♪

## Duck Stamps: Preserving Wetland Habitat

**Y**ou can't use the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (otherwise known as the Duck Stamp) to mail a letter, but it will get you into national wildlife refuges that charge admission. Even more important, 98 cents of every dollar generated by the sale of the stamps goes to buying or leasing wetland habitat. The stamp was originally created in 1934 as a license to hunt migratory waterfowl. The first one was a pen and ink drawing of mallards by "Ding" Darling, noted conservationist and then chief of the Biological Survey (predecessor to U.S. Fish & Wildlife). It was Darling's idea to use the stamps to raise money to buy wetlands.

In September of this year, the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission approved the investment of nearly \$11 million in revenue from the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund to add an estimated 10,640 wetland acres to seven units of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The commission also approved \$18.4 million in federal funding to conserve more than 95,000 acres of wetlands and associated habitat in the United States under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. This year's Duck Stamp is a gorgeous male Wood Duck by James Hautman. You can buy the stamp at the post office or refuges, or order it online at [duckstamp.com](http://duckstamp.com). ♪

## New Prince George's County Birding History

**A**fter the great birder and wildlife photographer Luther C. Goldman died, a group of his friends wanted to have a proper memorial for him. The committee established the Luther Goldman Memorial Bird Trail around Lake Artemesia in Prince George's County and asked Don Messersmith to write a history of Prince George's County birding and dedicate it to Luther.

*A History of Birding in Prince George's County, Maryland, 1634 to 2011* has just come off the press. The 72-page book includes not only the history but also research and other activities of the famous ornithologists who worked at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, as well as the contributions of many amateur birders. There are 36 color photographs illustrating some of the top birding spots in the County. Copies of the book may be obtained by sending a check for \$10 plus \$2.50 postage to Don Messersmith, 3158 Gracefield Road, Apt. 322, Silver Spring, MD 20904. It can also be purchased at MBC meetings. ♪





# MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL



I/we wish to join the Montgomery Bird Club, a chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society, for the year beginning September 2012 and enclose dues for:

- Individual—\$30 (\$10 Chapter/\$20 State)
- Sustaining—\$70 (\$20 Chapter/\$50 State)
- Household—\$40 (\$15 Chapter/\$25 State)
- Life—\$1200 (\$200 Chapter/ \$1000 State)
- Junior—\$6 (\$1 Chapter/\$5 State)
- Associate\*— \$8

*\*member of MOS through another chapter*

- \$ \_\_\_\_\_ **Dues**
- \$ \_\_\_\_\_ **Donation to Claudia Wilds Fund**
- \$ \_\_\_\_\_ **Total enclosed**

New Membership     Renewal

Total number of Club members \_\_\_\_\_  
(Household, Sustaining, or Life memberships)

Please make check payable to MBC/MOS and mail to:  
MBC/MOS, PO Box 59639, Potomac, MD 20859-9639

\_\_\_\_\_  
NAME(S)

\_\_\_\_\_  
STREET ADDRESS

\_\_\_\_\_  
CITY STATE ZIP

\_\_\_\_\_  
TELEPHONE E-MAIL

Check if you **DO NOT** want your email address listed on the members-only section of our website.

List your cellphone here if you **DO** want it listed on the members-only section of our website. \_\_\_\_\_

Check if you would like to read *The Chat* on the Internet instead of receiving it by mail. You will receive an email message when *The Chat* is posted on the club website.

Check if you would like to receive *The Maryland Yellowthroat* on the Internet instead of receiving it by mail.

Check if you would like to work on a committee.



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

