

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

August 2013

Volume 44, No. 3

President's Chat

Greetings, everyone. We are ready to jump into a new MBC season with enthusiasm. Yes, those hot, humid, hazy days of summer still linger into September, but that won't hold us back.

At our last MBC meeting in May, we held the annual election of officers and directors. New officers are in **bold**:

Vice President: Ed Patten

Treasurer: Sally Wechsler

Secretary: Rae Dubois

Chapter Directors: Bill Adams, Cecily Nabors, and **Evelyn Ralston**

State Directors: Chris Barnard, Andy Martin, and **Jim Moore**

Thanks are in order for our departing Council members who served so well for the last two years: **John Combs**, State Director, and **Susan Hunt**, Chapter Director.

Ed Patten is lining up some fascinating speakers for the year, and **Linda Friedland** has once again created a tasty smorgasbord of field trips both on weekends and weekdays that are sure to be a hit. Thanks to all of the field trip leaders who donate their time and knowledge for these trips.

Speaking of donating time, MOS has several committee vacancies that Maureen Harvey (President) would love to fill. After many years of service, Janet Shields will be stepping down from the position of MOS Secretary and also Conference Chair at the end of 2014. Other vacancies are for the communications, investments, development, membership, nominations, and scholarship committees. You do not need to be an expert in these fields. Please contact Maureen at tangara@comcast.net for more information.

Finally, it is time to renew your membership. The form on page 12 of this newsletter is also on the homepage of our website: <http://montgomerybirdclub.org/>.

For several years now, members have been able to receive the *Chat*, our quarterly newsletter, electronically. The Maryland Ornithological Society is again urging its members to do the same with the MOS publication, the *Maryland Yellowthroat*. Doing so will reduce printing and mailing costs tremendously and will also demonstrate how "green" we can be by saving paper. Another bonus with choosing the electronic version of the *Maryland Yellowthroat* is that you will also get colored photos highlighting the articles. These photos will not be in the hard copy. Please read the membership application carefully to be sure to check the option you want. And thank you for printing your email address legibly!

I'm looking forward to a fabulous MBC year. Good birding! ♪

—Anna Urciolo

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Fall Calendar

Except for the September program, the fall calendar speakers' list is still tentative, but these are the dates to put on your calendar. Updated information will be emailed to you and included in the November issue of the *Chat*.

September 18 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m., Maryland Biodiversity Project. *Jim Brighton* will provide an overview of this important Maryland project.

October 23 (fourth Wednesday), 7:30 p.m. (Note meeting date is on the fourth Wednesday to avoid conflict with the school calendar.)

November 20 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m.

December 11 (second Wednesday), 7:30 p.m. (Note meeting date is on the second Wednesday to avoid conflict with a church event.)

January 15 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m.

February 19 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m.

March (TBA), MBC Social

April 16 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m.

May 21 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m.

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 Anna Urciolo at 301-251-9452 or urcioloa@sidwell.edu.

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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, email: shunt820@yahoo.com.



Club News

Pat Tonkin

We received the sad news of Pat Tonkin's death in early July. A remembrance of Pat will be included in a later issue of the *Chat*. †

Milestone

In "Milestones," a new feature appearing in the May/June issue of ABA's *Birding* magazine, this item appeared: "Don Messersmith of Silver Spring, Maryland, saw his 4,000th world bird, an Olive-capped Warbler in Pinar del Rio Province, Cuba, on Thursday, February 9, 2012." That number is even higher now (see Don's article, "Big Birding Trip"). Congratulations, Don! †

Maryland Naturalist Program

Looking for another way to volunteer? The Audubon Naturalist Society is now accepting applications for its Maryland Master Naturalist 2013 training class. The 60 hours of naturalist training will occur on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m. from October 1 to November 14. For more information and a link to the application, go to www.audubonnaturalist.org/index.php/master-naturalist-training. †



A Painted Bunting visited Prince George's County in July. Photo: Evelyn Ralston.

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 linnet1@verizon.net or 301-983-2136 (before 9 p.m.).

SEPTEMBER 7 (Saturday) UPPER WATTS BRANCH PARK, ROCKVILLE. Half day. Migrant warblers, vireos, thrushes, and assorted woodland residents. Meet 8 a.m. at corner of Princeton Place and Fordham Street. Reservations required. Limit: 12. LEADER: Paul O'Brien, 301-424-6491.

SEPTEMBER 10 (Tuesday) ROCK CREEK PARK, DC. One-third day. Urban birding at its best with one of Rock Creek Park's "Regulars." Migrant warblers, vireos, and sparrows. Meet 7 a.m. at Picnic Area 18 (on Ridge Rd, ½ mile below Nature Center). Reservations required. For reservations and directions, call the LEADER: Wallace Kornack, 202-338-7859.

SEPTEMBER 11 (Wednesday) LITTLE BENNETT RP. Half day. All are welcome on this traditional early fall trip, but we especially encourage new members and those new to birding to join us! Meet at 7:30 a.m. We'll slowly walk some of the woodland trails looking for migrant and resident birds. Reservations required. Limit: 8. For reservations and directions, contact the LEADER: Claire Wolfe, 301-972-4278 or c_wolfe2003@yahoo.com.

SEPTEMBER 14 (Saturday) ROCK CREEK PARK, DC. We've expanded our urban bird walks to include those who can meet only on weekends. One-third day. Same great birds: migrant warblers, vireos, and sparrows. Meet at 6:45 a.m. at Picnic Area 18 (on Ridge Rd, ½ mile below Nature Center). (Note the earlier meeting time necessary to secure a parking spot.) Reservations required. For reservations and directions, call the LEADER: Wallace Kornack, 202-338-7859.

SEPTEMBER 15 (Sunday) WHEATON REGIONAL PARK. Half day. Fall is the best time to find migrant warblers, vireos, and flycatchers (Yellow-bellied is a good possibility) in this interesting park. Reservations required. Limit: 10. For more information and reservations, email the LEADER: Jared Fisher at Jared.Fisher@gmail.com.

SEPTEMBER 21 (Saturday) SNICKERS GAP, VA. Two-thirds day. Joint trip with ANS. Migrant raptors at peak time for Broad-winged Hawks. Meet at 9:30 a.m. at commuter parking lot at VA 7 and VA 601. Bring tripods, scopes, chairs, pack lunch, and rain/wind gear. Reservations required. For directions and reservations, call the LEADERS: Joan Boudreau and Bob Abrams, 703-734-1238.

SEPTEMBER 22 (Sunday) PENNYFIELD TO VIOLETTE'S BIRD STALK. Half day. For folks who prefer a somewhat later start to their birding, we will meet at 9 a.m. at Violette's Lock parking lot, end of Violette's Lock Road. We will carpool to Pennyfield Lock and walk back up the C&O Canal towpath to Violette's. This walk should net an interesting mix of late warblers, other land bird migrants, and probably a few early winter visitors. Limit: 12. If you plan to attend, contact the LEADER: Jim Nelson, kingfishers2@verizon.net or 301-530-6574.

SEPTEMBER 28 (Saturday) Patuxent River Park, Jug Bay Natural Area, MD. Half day; joint trip with Audubon Naturalist Society. Driftboat on Patuxent River followed by trail walk. Search for Sora, also migrant and resident songbirds and waterbirds. Meet 6:30 a.m. at park entrance gate. Bring fee of \$6 per person for park program; boat trip can be cool and a bit damp. LEADERS: Greg Kearns and John Bjerke. Reservations required (15-person limit). Make reservations with Pam Oves at ANS, 301-652-9188 ext 16 or poves@audubonnaturalist.org.

SEPTEMBER 29 (Sunday) CATOCTIN MOUNTAINS. Full day to dusk. Bring food, water. Focus on migrant songbirds, but time will be spent discussing wildflowers, insects, and other natural history topics. Reservations required. Limit: 14. CO-LEADERS: Bill Hubick and Jim Brighton. For reservations and directions, email Bill Hubick, bill_hubick@yahoo.com.

OCTOBER 5 (Saturday) LILYPONS WATER GARDENS. Half day. Join us for a joint trip with Frederick County Bird Club to this southern Frederick County hotspot. Target species include American Bittern, Nelson's Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, and a variety of raptors. Meet at Lilypons at 7:30 a.m. Reservations required. For reservations and directions, contact the LEADER: Bob Schaefer, 301-831-5660 or robert.schaefer@gmail.com.

OCTOBER 9 (Wednesday) MONTGOMERY COUNTY SPARROW SEARCH. Meet at 7 a.m. and bird until 10. Be prepared to walk in long wet grass and in muddy areas. The meeting place will be determined by the leader at a later date. Likely sparrows: White-throated, Swamp, Song, maybe White-crowned. Possible more difficult species: Clay-colored and Nelson's Sparrows. Limit: 8. For information and reservations, call the LEADER: Dave Powell, 301-540-8776.

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Field Trips

 **OCTOBER 13 (Sunday) BIG SIT 2013!** Join the Sitting Ducks at Black Hill RP starting at dawn and continuing until ? Come for the day or just a few hours. Meet at the dike across the road from the park boat ramp. For more information or directions, contact the LEADER: Chuck Parker, 240-446-8423 or chparker@access.k12.wv.us.

OCTOBER 27 (Sunday) OAKS LANDFILL. Half day. Explore this now-closed landfill adjacent to the Blue Mash Nature Trail. Mostly open terrain on a gravel road, including two pond views and one hill climb of moderate difficulty. Possible sparrows, raptors, and waterfowl. 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. Contact a leader for reservations and more information. CO-LEADERS: Mark England, 240-207-3132 (home) or 240-375-4500 (cell) and Ed Patten, 301-948-5648.

NOVEMBER 3 (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 and time, contact the LEADER: Andy Martin, martinap2@verizon.net or 301-529-2066 (cell).

NOVEMBER 9 (Saturday) LOISY. GREEN PARK: Remembering Lou. Half day. A new walk in honor of former MBC president and all-round naturalist Lou DeMouy, who passed away in November 2012. The trip will be jointly led by a group of his friends. Meet at 8 a.m. Reservations required. For more information and reservations, email Linda Friedland, linnet1@verizon.net.

 **NOVEMBER 11 (Monday) LBJs at BLUE MASH NATURE TRAIL.** Half day. Blue Mash is a good place to work on the basics of sparrow ID. In addition to the common species, like Song and Field and Chipping, we'll keep an eye out for less-likely White-crowned and Swamp. This trip is primarily for beginners, but all are welcome. For reservations, time, and directions, email the LEADER: Lydia Schindler, lydiaschindler@verizon.net.

NOVEMBER 17 (Sunday) MYSTERY MORNING! Half day. Ed Patton will guide us to an as yet undetermined spot to search for seasonal songbirds and raptors with the possibility of a rarity or two. Reservations required. For directions and reservations, call the LEADER: Ed Patten, 301-948-5648.

DECEMBER 1 (Sunday) OCCOQUAN BAY NWR. Half day. Explore the diverse habitats in this one-square-mile refuge at the confluence of the Potomac and Occoquan Rivers in Woodbridge, Virginia. 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 required. Limit: 20. For reservations, directions, and more information, call one of the LEADERS: Mike Bowen, 301-530-5764 or dhmbowen@yahoo.com, or Gerry Hawkins, 571-277-8406 or maineusa@comcast.net.

DECEMBER 8 (Sunday) LILYPONS/NEW DESIGN ROAD. Half day. Wintering field birds, targeting Fox and Tree Sparrows, possibly Virginia Rail and American Bittern. Call leader for reservation (required) and more info. LEADER: Gail Mackiernan, 301-989-1828.

JANUARY 1 (Wednesday) EARLIEST BIRD WALK—GEORGETOWN RESERVOIR AND 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. Strict limit: 20. LEADER: Mike Bowen, 301-530-5764 or dhmbowen@yahoo.com.



Welcome New Members!

David Chang

Jaci Rutiser





Trip Reports

Hugh Mahanes Presidents' Walk at Hughes Hollow, Sunday, April 21. Leader: Anna Urciolo. Twenty birders met shortly after 7 a.m. on a brisk and chilling (37 degree) morning, including three former MBC presidents. The first bird was a rail that popped up and just as quickly popped down in the first impoundment on the right. Eventually the bird flew a short distance and was identified as a Sora. We heard and then saw a Pied-billed Grebe. Slowly making our way down the dike, we saw a male Orchard Oriole perched at the top of a tree, several Blue-winged Teal that flew over our heads, and two Ospreys trying to make a nest on top of the cell phone tower. A Green Heron was spotted in the large impoundment on the left, and while watching that bird, we saw a female Hooded Merganser swim by. She climbed up on a rock and gave us a view of her white belly, a view that many of us had never seen. A flock of 11 American Coots happily swam around, ignoring us completely.

Quite a few Wood Ducks flew overhead, a Great Egret appeared, and we saw a distant Red-headed Woodpecker atop a tree. After passing the impoundments, we turned right at the clearing to bird along the wood edge where we saw several Common Yellowthroats. Several FOY White-eyed Vireos serenaded us, along with a Blue-headed Vireo heard by one birder. As one birder ventured close to the woods, she startled a Wild Turkey. A Palm Warbler showed up along with some Yellow-rumped Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and other usual suspects. Watching a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher land on a branch, I realized that it was going into a beautiful fully developed nest. We eventually tallied three gnatcatcher nests in different stages of development.

Making our way back to the cross dike, we found several golden Prothonotary Warblers with one bird finally singing.



Blue Mash, Saturday, April 27. Leader: Mark England. Weather: Chilly but sunny with temps from mid-40s to near 60. Participants: 16. Species: 53. A rather large group enjoyed a crisp, clear morning walk at Blue Mash Nature Trail, where most of the usual suspects were singing and setting up nesting territories, including many Common Yellowthroats, a few Yellow Warblers, two Prairie Warblers, a very close White-eyed Vireo, Eastern Phoebes, Towhees,

and Bluebirds, among others. There was one Yellow-rumped Warbler, a heard Ovenbird in the wooded far corner of the park, and an unseen (and uncounted) “dry triller,” either a Palm or Worm-eating Warbler, but no other migrant warblers. Raptors included Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks, Northern Harrier, Osprey, and a brief look for some of us at a fast-moving Sharp-shinned Hawk. Other highlights included a Hairy Woodpecker, a Green Heron in a tree, and a group of several Purple Finches, seen both at the nature trail and later (for some) at the Oaks Landfill. A few Savannah Sparrows were also seen at the landfill by those who car-birded their way up to the top of the hill.



Occoquan Bay NWR, Sunday, April 28. Leaders: Mike Bowen and Gerry Hawkins. Participants: 19, including an invited contingent from the Virginia Society of Ornithology Conference (held in Leesburg). Weather: Clear and sunny, cool to start but warming up to the 60s. Species: 63. Highlights: Four Wild Turkeys, including a displaying male, four Bald Eagles, numerous Ospreys with up to 10 nests seen, and three Red-tailed Hawks. Other nice birds over the water included Laughing Gulls and a few Bonaparte's Gulls and Caspian Terns; two of the Caspians dove for fish very close to shore. Most waterfowl had left the area, but we did spy a large raft of American Coot and a few Lesser Scaup. Eastern Kingbirds were our only flycatchers, but one posed repeatedly for photos right in front of us. Most of the Swallows were Trees, but a few Barns, Rough-wings and Purple Martins were seen too. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers popped up all over, and a pair visited a nest right by the central parking area.

Our seven species of warblers were all local breeders, except for Yellow-rumped, but we were treated to splendid scope views of Prothonotary, Prairie, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow, and most impressive of all, two close and perched up Yellow-breasted Chats, each singing away and trying to scare off the other fella—without success. We heard, but did not see, several Northern Parulas. Other notable sightings were two White-crowned Sparrows, two singing male Orchard Orioles, and a couple of well-seen Rusty Blackbirds, fairly late for this stage of the spring migration season.

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Trip Reports

Rock Creek Park, Tuesday, May 7. Leader: Bill Butler (filling in for Wallace Kornack). One participant. Weather was a problem. Drizzle eventually changed to rain hard enough to truncate the morning's birding, but not before lone tour member Rich Galloway proved himself at least as expert as the five Rock Creek "regulars" at spotting birds under the difficult circumstances. The tour began on a high note with a successful chase to see a singing Worm-eating Warbler on a path off the northwest corner of the ridge at picnic area 17. Other birds seen on the ridge included a Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Mourning Doves, a Carolina Chickadee, several Red-bellied Woodpeckers, flickers, and a Downy Woodpecker. Great-crested Flycatchers and Baltimore Orioles were heard long before they could eventually be seen in the treetops. We heard but never did see late White-throated Sparrows, as well as Red-eyed and Yellow-throated Vireos. Wood Thrushes were much in evidence by their songs, as were Tufted Titmice, Carolina Wrens, Ovenbirds, and a lone White-breasted Nuthatch.

The group walked down to the equitation field, keeping out of the rain under the cover of the trees, and was rewarded by close views of a singing Scarlet Tanager, cardinals, and several towhees. The equitation field had cowbirds, goldfinches, and singing Chipping Sparrows, plus a flyover crow (sp.), but the increasing rain made it hard to look up in the trees where Yellow-rumped and Parula Warblers were heard. At 8 a.m. the crew decided to call it quits as the rain started to come down in earnest.



Washington County: Seeking Breeders and Migrants, Wednesday, May 8. Leader: Jim Green. Participants: Six. Species: 90 plus. We lucked out with the weather and only had to deal with afternoon showers. My usual route spends most of the morning in Indian Springs WMA and some adjacent areas, then slowly working our way across Broadfording Road., then looking for shorebirds, mostly around the Hagerstown area. Some of the highlights: 35 Bobolinks on Mercersburg Road that were chattering vociferously the entire 20 minutes we observed them. On Blair's Valley Road and Lake area, we found a Blue-winged Warbler, Osprey, and Bald Eagle, and we got some great looks at an adult Swamp Sparrow. We found several warblers on Hanging Rock Road—Black-throated Blue, Black-and-White, American Redstart, and a Worm-eating Warbler, as well as a Scarlet Tanager.

Mummert Road gave us Kentucky and Hooded Warblers, a Northern Waterthrush, and a Black-billed Cuckoo. The Indian Springs Fishing Pond area yielded another Blue-winged Warbler, and at Kuhn's Ridge Road, we found Pine and Prairie Warblers. Galilee Rd produced a Blackburnian Warbler. On Park Head Rd, we had some great looks at both orioles and a Prairie Warbler. There were numerous Grasshopper Sparrows and Eastern Meadowlarks, a Northern Harrier, Least and Solitary Sandpipers, and a Lesser Yellowlegs on Broadfording Road. We found a Greater Yellowlegs in the pond behind the Pool House on Sedgewick Way, and behind the Hagerstown Airport were Killdeer; Least, Solitary, and Spotted Sandpipers; Lesser Yellowlegs; and Wilson's Snipe.

On the way home three of us were able to see the cooperative Red Phalarope (great find!) at Lilypons and ended the day with a flyover adult Yellow-crowned Night-Heron.



Birding by Ear Along the C&O Canal, Friday, May 10. Leaders: Cyndie Loeper and Ann Lucy. Weather: Sunny, no wind, 50+ degrees at 7 a.m. and almost 80 by noon. Participants: 12. Species: 65. It was a lovely day. We did well with the "throats": Yellow-throated, Black-throated Green, and Black-throated Blue Warblers as well as a cooperative Yellow-throated Vireo. Total count of 11 warblers including a possible Nashville thanks to Ann. Surprising finds were a Least Flycatcher (by call) and a Black-crowned Night-Heron. We had seven raptors, with the most notable being a gorgeous Broad-winged Hawk showing all field marks. Hyperactive Yellow-billed Cuckoos availed us of vocalizations and many clear views; we also had good comparisons of both oriole songs. Our participants made wonderful contributions and were keen on listening.



Izaak Walton League of America, B-CC Chapter, Poolesville, Saturday, May 11. Leader: Mike Bowen. Participants: 20. Weather: Despite dire warnings of heavy precipitation, the rain held off until the trip was over; cool, overcast, and even sunny at times. Species: 42. Highlights: Two Green Herons, one perched on a telephone pole along the road when we first arrived; a Scarlet Tanager, Great Crested Flycatcher, and numerous Cedar Waxwings close



Trip Reports

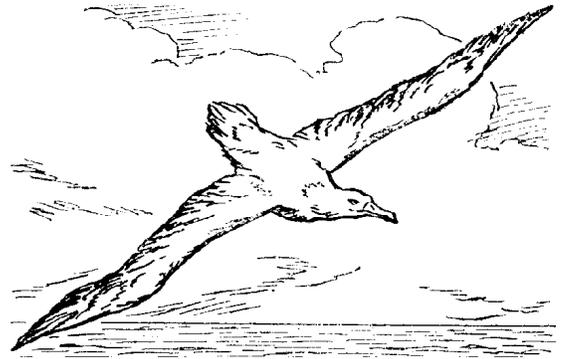
to the parking lot; wonderful views of Indigo Buntings, including two males fiercely contesting territory, and of Prairie Warblers, a male Orchard Oriole, and a singing Brown Thrasher. Purple Martins were occupying their quarters near the chapter house, and several were seen at close range sitting on the ground. Best bird of the morning was a newly arrived Acadian Flycatcher, whose song was heard at a distance by Ron Johnson. We subsequently got close enough for several participants to take nice photos.

MBC thanks Jim Tate and members of the B-CC Chapter for their warm welcome, hospitality, and refreshments. Jim could not co-lead the trip this year, as he was recovering from hip replacement surgery.



Rock Creek Park, DC, Sunday, May 19. Leader: Wallace Kornack. Participants: 2. We gathered in the fog at the Ridge listening to the distant Wood Thrush and Ovenbird and observing Magnolia and Yellow-rumped Warblers, Red-eyed Vireos, dozens of Cedar Waxwings, Chipping Sparrows, and the usual suspects. In due course, we left for the Equitation Field and spent most of our time focusing on birds in the giant post oak at the south end of the field. The fog made it difficult to identify the birds, but we managed to find Magnolia, Black-and-White, and Yellow-rumped Warblers; Blue-Gray Gnatcatchers; Chipping Sparrows; and an Eastern Wood-Pewee.

In the immediate area there were Barn Swallows, Chimney Swifts, Scarlet Tanager, and Baltimore Oriole. The Maintenance Yard Parking Lot was less active, but the views were clearer as the fog was replaced by drizzle. There we saw Blackpoll, Magnolia, and Yellow-rumped Warblers; a Gray Catbird; Ruby-throated Hummingbird; and Red-eyed Vireo. A Great Crested Flycatcher and a Yellow-throated Vireo were calling from afar.



Habitat Restoration Project on South Georgia Island

Sally Wechsler writes: In March I took a cruise from Ushuaia, Argentina, to Cape Town, South Africa. Along the way, we spent four days in the South Georgia Island, walking among huge breeding colonies of King Penguins, southern fur seals and elephant seals. We also saw adult and chick Gentoo, Macaroni, and Chinstrap penguins, as well as breeding Southern Giant Petrels, Wandering Albatross, and Light-mantled Albatross. South Georgia Pipits, shags, and diving petrels were also seen. We saw numerous albatrosses, shearwaters, and petrels from the ship in the chilly Antarctic Ocean.

Unfortunately, the bird-breeding colonies are being devastated by rats and mice, brought to the island by successive generations of sealers and whalers. Smaller ground-nesting bird species are especially vulnerable, including the endemic South Georgia Pipit and South Georgia Pintail.

Donations to the Habitat Restoration Project may be sent to Friends of South Georgia Island, 25 Dakota Meadows Dr., Carbondale, CO 81623. A donation of \$145 will help treat one hectare—shipping materials to the islands, distributing them by helicopter, if necessary, and pre- and post-treatment surveys. For more information, visit www.fosgi.org.

Birds of Note (late March to early July 2013)

Duvall Sollers spotted an **Anhinga** in flight southwest of the Poolesville area on 7/5.

Dave Czaplak reported four **Trumpeter Swans** on the Potomac River near Violette's Lock on 3/17. The four birds were immatures and traveling with a flock of approximately 139 **Tundra Swans**. The entire flock (Tundras and Trumpeters) alighted briefly on the river for about 10 minutes before taking off and heading for parts unknown. Dave also had a single **Black Scoter** in the same vicinity on 5/8. A **Red-necked Grebe** was found on the Potomac River near Violette's Lock by Reid Rumelt on 3/21.

A nice surprise for Jim and Ann Nelson in the sky above the Pennyfield Lock area on 4/1 was a **Golden Eagle**. Jim Stasz and Ed Boyd reported a flyover **Mississippi Kite** near the intersection of Brink and Glendalough Roads on 5/11.

Eastern Whip-poor-wills were heard at Hughes Hollow in April and early May. Jim Green heard a **Whip-poor-will** calling from the woods adjacent to the Hughes Hollow parking lot off Hunting Quarter Road in the early morning hours of 4/13. Maryann Todd and Dave Czaplak heard one briefly at Hughes Hollow on 4/28, as did Don Simonson on 5/2.

Jim Green noted a **Sora** at Hughes Hollow on 4/13, and it (or another bird) was briefly seen at the same place by Mike Bowen and Ed Patton on the Hugh Mahanes Presidents' Walk on 4/21. Dave Czaplak found a **Common Gallinule** in the same location on 4/24.

There have been some good wader sightings over the last few months including a **Cattle Egret** spotted in flight on 4/19 by Dave Czaplak. Dave initially saw the bird flying over the Trump National Golf Club, VA, and followed it as it headed across the Potomac River, passing over Violette's Lock. On 4/22, Jim Green reported a **Least Bittern** at Hughes Hollow, and the day after that, Lydia Schindler found a **Little Blue Heron** in the same area. Bill Adams reported two **Glossy Ibis** feeding in a small backwater area of the C&O Canal upstream of Pennyfield Lock on 4/30. These birds stuck around for a few days after that, being seen by both Linda Friedland and Chris Wright on 5/2. The Wheaton Branch Stormwater Ponds continue to produce good birds for Stephen Davies with the sighting of a flyover **Snowy Egret** there on 5/8.

Dave Czaplak's almost daily surveillance of bird life along Potomac River adjacent to Violette's Lock yielded another county record of an **Arctic Tern** on 5/9. Other first-of-

the-season tern sightings include a **Forster's Tern** over Croydon Creek Nature Center in Rockville on 3/23 by Ben Martin, a **Caspian Tern** near Great Falls on 4/4 by Gerry Hawkins, and a **Common Tern** at Violette's Lock on 5/22 by Dave Czaplak. Jeff Shenot noted a flyover **Laughing Gull** over Wheaton Regional Park on 5/16.

Some notable shorebirds reported in May include a **Short-billed Dowitcher** at the Huntmaster Road Wetlands and a **Red-necked Phalarope** on the Potomac adjacent to Violette's Lock, both on 5/8.

Joe Hanfman noted the return of four **Cliff Swallows** to their traditional nesting site along Brighton Dam at Triadelphia Reservoir on 4/20.

Dave Czaplak had a **Mourning Warbler** along the C&O Canal at Violette's Lock on 5/14. Jim Green noted a late migrating **Black-throated Green Warbler** in his Gaithersburg neighborhood on 6/9.

Like 2012, it was a good spring for **Summer Tanager** sightings in the county. David Kidwell had one visit his Damascus area yard on 4/21. **Summer Tanagers** were also reported along the C&O Canal in both Pennyfield and Violette's Lock areas during May. Clive Harris reported a female **Summer Tanager** at Blockhouse Point Park on 5/10, and Linda Friedland and Lydia Schindler had another **Summer Tanager** near the entrance to the Summit Hall Turf Farm off River Road on 6/2.

Vesper Sparrows have been noted with some frequency over the past few months along Budd, Hughes, and Westerly Roads, southwest of Poolesville. Sporadic but fairly frequent sightings of **Pine Siskins** were reported from around the county as recently as the last few days of May.

And in Prince George's County, many MBC'ers had the pleasure of seeing a **Painted Bunting**, which hung out for over a week (as of this writing), singing in a stand of dead trees on the WB&A Trail. Linda Weir first spotted the bird on 7/6. Speculation as to what the bird was doing here ramped up when a few birders spotted a juvenile bird (species not identified) hanging out with the PABU.

In "twitching" news, according to eBird (<http://ebird.org/content/ebird/>), as of 7/16, we stand at 227 species reported for Montgomery for the year — six species higher than reported by this time last year. There is still some work to do to reach last year's total species count of 257.

Good birding!

—Andy Martin



Big Birding Trip, 2013

After his wife, Sherry, died unexpectedly last Thanksgiving Day, Don Messersmith found that the memories in his apartment were such that he needed a change.

Don writes: Gradually an idea evolved in my mind to take a trip and look for birds I had never seen. In discussions with my four daughters who encouraged me to do this, I decided on a cross-country, four-month long trip to visit family and friends I seldom see and to look for birds along the way. I made a list of about 60 “target” species I had never seen and wrote to people in 15 states that I would like to visit them. I expect to travel in about 36 states in these four months and return in mid-September when I begin teaching a bird class at Johns Hopkins University. I have no set itinerary or timetable. I am writing this in July in Western Montana with the mountains of Glacier National Park in view to the east. My halfway point is San Diego. I have been underway now for two months, taking a northern route that has covered West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, North and South

Dakota, Montana, and the southern part of four Canadian Provinces. I have seen 227 species including three that are life birds for me—Baird’s Sparrow, McCown’s Longspur, and Cassin’s Vireo. From San Diego I will return eastward via a southern and central U.S. route.

I am travelling alone most of the time but have been happy to have one of my daughters, Betsy, join me in Eastern North Dakota for the week including Father’s Day. We really liked North Dakota for its history and open plains, including a stop at the exact center of North America in Rugby, ND. For the past nine days Bill Murphy, a former student and now longtime friend, joined me here in Montana, traveling 36 hours by train from Indianapolis and back. He was a great help with the mountain driving in Glacier and Waterton Lakes National Parks and, with his sharp eyes and good hearing, he located many birds I might have missed, including two of my life birds and a couple of others for himself. I am keeping a journal and periodically sending chronological portions of it to a selected group of family and friends. This is not a “Big Year” effort, nor am I doing a blog. However, I am taking many photographs, which I will use in my January “Birds of North America” class at ANS. ♪

A Ghana Birding Saga

(Continued from the May Chat)

From the Hotel Alexis we traveled back through Tema and Accra, where the traffic was just as dreadful as it is around DC, to the Rain Forest Hotel near Kakum National Park. We paid a short return visit to the Sakumono Lagoon near Tema, primarily to pad our list with shorebirds and water birds. While there, the leader spied a wader he believed to be a Baird’s Sandpiper (a “Yank” to the Brits) and queried the three U.S. participants on this theory. We could hardly see the bird through the murk and had to admit that we just didn’t know. Where are Cyndie Loeper and John Bjerke when you need them? Later we stopped briefly at the Winneba Plains, where I recorded my only Yellow-throated Longclaw, a Meadowlark look-alike, of the tour. Kakum was a real thrill: the park has the only canopy walkway in Africa, a series of five narrow, swaying, planked walkways suspended by ropes 120 ft. above the rain forest floor. Around the giant trees to which the walkways were anchored, there was just enough space for our group to stand and look down at the canopy. Some of the birds seen from this vantage point were Yellowbill (Blue Malkoha), Sabine’s Puffback, and Red-headed Malimbe. Velvet-mantled Drongos perched insouciantly on the guide wires.

We even had permission from the park to come back after dark. Negotiating those walkways in total darkness was quite frankly a scary experience, one that I don’t wish to repeat in my lifetime. Happily, I caught a brief glimpse of Fraser’s Eagle Owl leaving its perch as we left the park trails for the hotel.

After several days birding in and around Kakum National Park, we moved west, first to Shama, near Takoradi, where the electricity and water remained off for our entire stay, then to the appropriately named small town of Half Assini near the border with the Ivory Coast and our base for several days of visits to Ankasa National Park. Ankasa is the finest rain forest left in Ghana, with many special birds. Unfortunately, the humidity was so high that my glasses kept steaming up, and I was forced to bird without them, resulting in an inability to focus or have much depth perception and consequent ill-timed misses of birds that were not seen again on the trip. One evening’s owling session was cut short by a violent thunderstorm, and it was only by the skill of our bus driver—fortunately just recovered from a two-day bout of malaria—that we were able to negotiate miles of flooded dirt roads and a hill partially blocked by a vehicle stuck in the flowing red mud.

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A Ghana Birding Saga

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Egyptian Plover by Mike Bowen

Another evening, our super guide James located a night roost of Nkulengu Rails, a not uncommon but rarely seen forest species. My own view was from a fully supine position, having tripped and tumbled down a steep bank, much to the amusement of my fellow night birders.

From Half Assini we traveled back east, lunching in Cape Coast on delicious Cassava fish and ice-cold beers at a seafront restaurant right by Cape Coast Castle, built in the 17th century, where thousands of unfortunate human beings were kept before being forcibly shipped to America during the long, barbarous years of the slave trade. Near Takoradi, I took note of the large airfield where my father was stationed for a year with the British Royal Air Force during the early stages of WW2. Takoradi docks were used for the delivery of aircraft by sea from the U.S.A., via Brazil, after which they were flown by mostly inexperienced pilots thousands of miles from RAF Takoradi to Cairo for use in the air offensive of the Allies' North African campaign.

Next came one of the trip highlights: a visit to the breeding site of the Yellow-headed Picathartes, or Rockfowl, one of Africa's rarest and most magical of birds. Ashanti African Tours has partnered with a local village so that it can benefit financially from ecotourism, which is slowly on the rise in Ghana. A long afternoon climb to a vantage point just below the rocks where this strange species makes its nest was followed by an almost two-hour wait in total silence for the birds to appear, bounding over the rocks like avian kangaroos. What a thrill when four or five birds appeared shortly before dark. The return journey downhill was marred for me by cramps in my right leg. Due to a re-injury to my left ankle that had occurred days earlier at Kakum and exacerbated by my tumble at Ankasa, I was favoring my left foot and putting most of my weight on my right. Finally I could walk no more and had to be half carried the final stages by tour assistant Jackson. A humbling experience, rationalized by me by observing that I was at least 15 years older than most everyone in the group. After that, Jackson was permanently assigned to assist me, carry my scope and tripod, and generally watch over me lest I keel over for good.

to be continued in next issue

Remembering Morrill "Don" Donald

Don and Margaret Donald ran the Adventure bird banding station in Potomac, Maryland, from 1972 to 1995, for 5 months of each year, from one half-hour before sunrise to one half-hour past sunset. At each end of those on-site periods of time, the 15 to 20 or so nets in three habitats—creek and flood plain, rising meadow, and upland hillside—had to be unfurled and furlled and set up and taken down each season—a work of love, not for the slack or undisciplined!

My wife Helen and I had the good fortune of being mentored by them and then sharing in their passion for a number of years. We worked the "night shift"—from about 2 p.m. to closing, ending with taking the station's paraphernalia to the Donalds' home, just up the creek, and debriefing on events, large and small. Before they could call it a day, the day's data had to be entered in their spreadsheets. They both took courses by CD-ROM on the process.

Don and Margaret were an amazing and unique couple. Both were from small towns—Don from Spartanburg, SC, Margaret from somewhere in Kansas; both had professional backgrounds as well as a variety of personal interests. While Margaret was the personal "face" of Adventure, Don was the behind-the-scenes detail man.

Having a live bird in one's hand is a humbling experience. Don patiently taught me how to extract birds from the net with my larger than necessary fingers. With extreme sadness, I recall the time I broke a bird's leg in struggling to extract it from a tangle of net strands. I believe I wept. Don quietly assured me that it was not the end of the world. Rather, he stayed with me in subsequent encounters, demonstrating best methods in such circumstances. He told me that they could minister the bird, up to a point, and beyond that, they had a contact who ran a sanctuary for injured birds.

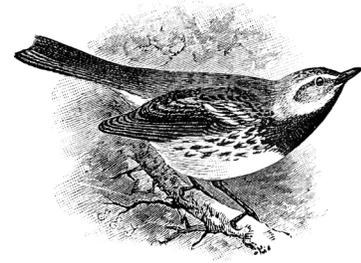
Don's southern charm was much in evidence at our annual picnics, usually in August just before the start of the fall opening of Adventure. It was then that we got to meet other volunteers of the enterprise, many of whom we otherwise would never have known.

And we were present for the closing of Adventure in 1995, after 23 eventful and data-filled years. It was not a happy

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Remembering Morrill “Don” Donnald



occasion. We all wondered what would happen with that magical place, maintained and nurtured all those sunset years of their lifetimes.

One of the enduring treasures and legacy of Adventure under the Donnalds was the data on those 23 years of spreadsheets. They had been very mindful of fielding requests for the data by various researchers and were both aware of the value of the data. It was bequeathed to the National Conservation and Training Center of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in Shepherdstown, WV.

When Margaret became ill, Don devoted his life to her until her death. Don and Margaret were among those who left the world a better place than they found it. †

—David Gray

**Don Donnald died in April at the age of 97.
Contributions in his memory may be made
to the American Bird Conservancy, PO Box
249, The Plains, VA 20198-2237
or at www.abcbirds.org.**

Don Donnald was a great friend and inspiration to me, my young daughter Lily, and many others. Don had served a long career in the government and the World Health Organization. I was just starting mine at the U.S. Public Health Service when I met him. I remember him looking up with a bird in his hand at Adventure as he chortled, “This is a lot more fun than pushing papers for the Public Health Service!”

I had never seen a Connecticut Warbler, and one day Don said to me, “The next time we net one, you should come see it.” But how would he let me know? My job was deep in a mainframe computer center a few miles away from the banding station. Don and Marge were very careful of the health and safety of the birds they netted, and they wouldn’t keep one long enough for me to be called over the PA system at work and drive over to Adventure. No cell phones back then, but one day my employer issued me a new gizmo called a “pager.” Don’s eyes twinkled when I explained how it worked. A few days later around 11 a.m. the pager went off. It displayed the Donnalds’ phone number—followed by “911”!

I raced over to Adventure and there was Don wearing his most pixie grin—and holding a Connecticut Warbler!

Don and Marge banded over 96,000 individual birds at Adventure over the years, ably assisted by Montgomery Bird Club members Helen and David Gray, Gemma Radko, and many others, including my daughter Lily.

Don always said that the very best banders were kids; they had the coordination, patience, and small fingers perfect for untangling nets and gently handling tiny birds. For several years before or after elementary school in spring and fall, my wife or I would drop Lily off at Adventure and she would work under the Donnalds’ tutelage for hours. Marge was an artist, a painter, a medical illustrator, watercolorist, and enamelist as well as a bander.

Lily began drawing all the birds she observed at Adventure, and has since made a career out of this practice. As an Artist in Residence on various research expeditions, she observes and paints new species as they are collected around the Antarctic and deep sea, continually drawing upon the skills of careful, close observation that Margaret and Don instilled in her during her early days as a bander.

What a wonderful man Don was! †

—Don Simonson





MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL



I/we wish to join the Montgomery Bird Club, a chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society, for the year beginning September 2013 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
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The Chat

