

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

November 2013

Volume 44, 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 or use the form on the back of this *Chat*. Welcome to all of our new members. I hope you will have a chance to take advantage of the numerous field trips that are available. The leaders are knowledgeable, good-humored, patient, and always willing to share their expertise with all of us.

The September MOS board meeting was held at Piney Run Park Nature Center in Carroll County and was attended by **Jim Moore** and myself. The next MOS conference will be held at Solomon's in Calvert County from May 15 to 18, 2014. The keynote speakers will be **Bill Hubick** and **Jim Brighton**. Jim was the speaker at our September meeting so you know that this will be a presentation that will be exciting and informative. Besides the traditional birding field trips, Bill and Jim also want to include trips that focus on biodiversity. There will be more information about the conference in a later issue of the *Chat*.

We have five Christmas Bird Counts coming up that include Montgomery County, beginning on December 14 and ending on December 29. (The Sugarloaf CBC is early this year.) I know that a lot of you have participated in the counts for many years. These counts are open to all levels of birders, and everyone is invited and encouraged to join in. The dates and contact information for the



CBCs are listed in the Field Trip calendar in this issue.

Here is a note about our next two MBC meetings. The November meeting will be held on November 20. **Rich Galloway** and **Kent Minichiello** will present a program on Nicaragua. The December meeting, however, has been moved a week earlier to December 11. The topic for this meeting will be "Lights Out Baltimore." Please mark your calendars.

Good birding! ♪

— Anna Urciolo

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# Winter Calendar



The speakers' list for 2014 is still tentative, but these are the dates to put on your calendar. Updated information will be emailed to you and included in the February issue of the Chat.

**November 20 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m.** *Richard Galloway* and *Kent Minichiello* will discuss the birds of Nicaragua.

**December 11 (second Wednesday), 7:30 p.m.** (*Note meeting date is on the second Wednesday to avoid conflict with a church event.*) *Lights Out Baltimore* was formed by a group of concerned birdwatchers in the Baltimore Bird Club who had seen the toll that lights and windows play on birds. *Lindsay Jacks* will discuss the program.

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

**February 19 (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 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).*



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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).



## Hummingbird Alert

This is the time of year to start looking for out-of-season, out-of-range hummingbirds. The Maryland state list includes six possible species: Ruby-throated (RTHU), Rufous, Calliope, Allen's, Anna's, and Green Violet-ear. We also had Black-chinned in DC in 2003. October and November are the best times to expect the non-RTHU to show up, and the records increased when people started leaving their feeders out longer. RTHUs start leaving our region during the second half of September and are usually gone by the second half of October.

Hummingbirds can be easily attracted by putting out an artificial feeder. I recommend leaving your hummingbird feeders out until January 1. There is no evidence that having feeders out will delay the birds' migration; hummingbirds leave when the available daylight triggers chemicals in the brain to tell them it is time to move along, and this occurs around the equinox, when periods of daylight and darkness are equal. Leaving your feeder out until migration is complete could provide the extra boost of energy to make the difference in survival in less than ideal migration conditions.

Please make sure your feeder is clean, the food is fresh, and the feeder is located where you can see it easily and check it on a daily basis. Sugar and water will freeze around 20 degrees, so to prevent damage to your feeder when ice expands inside it, fill it just two-thirds full. If a hard freeze is expected, it is best to bring the feeder in at night; when you put it out in the morning it will be nice and warm for the birds.

If you get a hummingbird to your feeder after October 30, contact me at 301-843-3524 or [gmjett@comcast.net](mailto:gmjett@comcast.net).

—George Jett



# 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 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, contract the LEADER: Andy Martin at [martinap2@verizon.net](mailto:martinap2@verizon.net) or 301-529-2066 (cell).

**NOVEMBER 9 (Saturday) BLUE MASH Remembering Lou.** A new walk in honor of former MBC president and all-around naturalist Lou DeMouy who passed away in November 2012. The trip will be jointly led by a group of his friends. Meet at the Zion Road parking lot at 7:30 a.m. Reservations required. For more information and reservations, contact Linda Friedland at [linnetl@verizon.net](mailto:linnetl@verizon.net).

**NOVEMBER 11 (Monday) LBJs AT BLUE MASH NATURE TRAIL.** 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. Half day. For reservations, time, and directions, contact the LEADER: Lydia Schindler at [lydiaschindler@verizon.net](mailto: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 at 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 are necessary. Limit: 20. For reservations and more information, contact one of 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 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 at 301-989-1828.

**DECEMBER 14 (Saturday) TRIADELPHIA RESERVOIR CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT** (includes Montgomery, Howard, and small portion of Prince George's Counties, MD). For information, contact the COMPILER: David Holmes at [musicbndr@verizon.net](mailto:musicbndr@verizon.net) (preferred) or 410-730-7083.

**DECEMBER 14 (Saturday) WASHINGTON, DC, CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT** (includes portions of Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, MD; the District of Columbia; and Arlington and Alexandria, VA). COMPILER: Larry Cartwright. For information, contact Carol Hayes, Audubon Naturalist Society, at [chayes@audubonnaturalist.org](mailto:chayes@audubonnaturalist.org) or 301-652-9188, ext 10.

**DECEMBER 15 (Sunday) SENECA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT** (Montgomery County, MD, and Loudoun/Fairfax Counties, VA). For information, contact the COMPILER: Jim Nelson at 301-530-6574 or [kingfishers2@verizon.net](mailto:kingfishers2@verizon.net).

**DECEMBER 29 (Sunday) CENTRAL LOUDOUN CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT** (includes Loudoun County, VA, and 5 miles along the C&O Canal in Montgomery County, MD). For information, contact the COMPILER: Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or [joecoleman@rstarmail.com](mailto:joecoleman@rstarmail.com).

**DECEMBER 29 (Sunday) SUGARLOAF CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT** (Montgomery and Frederick Counties, MD). For information, contact the COMPILER: Janet Millenson at 301-983-9337 or [janet@twocrows.com](mailto:janet@twocrows.com).

**JANUARY 1 (Wednesday) EARLIEST BIRD WALK, GEORGETOWN RESERVOIR AND D.C. 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 participants. Contact the LEADER: Mike Bowen at 301-530-5764 or [dhmbowen@yahoo.com](mailto:dhmbowen@yahoo.com).

*continued on next page*



# Field Trips

**JANUARY 16 (Thursday) BLUE MASH.** A mid-week walk to this popular site seeking winter birds: the expected cardinals, towhees, and mockingbirds as well as raptors (Northern Harrier a possibility) and sparrows. We'll check for ducks on the pond. Expect to walk (waterproof boots suggested!) about a mile on level trails. With luck we'll have a brilliant day with ice crystals over the fields. But maybe not! The trip will be cancelled or postponed in case of sleet, ice, or rain. Start at 8 a.m. Reservations not necessary. For directions or more information, contact the LEADER: Stephanie Lovell at ctlovel1@yahoo.com or 240-242-3235.

**JANUARY 19 (Sunday) BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK.** Learn or 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.

**FEBRUARY 2 (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 Watt's 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 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 or 301-529-2066.

**FEBRUARY 9 (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) or 240-375-4500 (cell).

## Field Trip Etiquette

With fall migration underway, MBC kicks off the birding season with an array of trips, thanks to leaders who volunteer their time and expertise.

Let's remember that as trip participants, we too need to do our part. By following these tips, we can help make the trips enjoyable for all.

- Call the leader well in advance for a sign-up trip—and call again if you can't make it.
- Never show up for a reservations-only trip without a reservation.
- Plan to arrive a little in advance of the starting time, appropriately dressed for the weather.
- No pets, please!
- Once on the trail, remember to stay with the group, keep talking to a minimum, and walk softly.
- Let the leader lead. Don't walk ahead, don't pish, and refrain from using playbacks without the leader's permission.

- Don't monopolize the conversation.
- As you eyeball that gorgeous warbler or thrush, be mindful that shorter folks may be behind you!
- When the leader has a bird in the scope, form a line, look briefly, and move aside so others may enjoy. ♪

—Linda Friedland, MBC Field Trip Coordinator

## Welcome New Members!

- |                                                                             |                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Conceicao Andrade                                                           | Kelly Kimbis                                   |
| Peg Dorgan                                                                  | Alec and Carol McClelland                      |
| Ruth Hanessian                                                              | Ann Mitchell                                   |
| Kevin Harris, Maria Peralta, Ryan Peralta Harris, and Daniel Peralta Harris | Charles Parker, Sara Parker, and Jessie Parker |
| Miles Jones, Maya Jones, and Diara Holmes                                   |                                                |





# Trip Reports

**Bombay Hook NWR, Saturday, August 24.** Leaders: John Bjerke and Cyndie Loeper. Participants: 14. Species: 51. This joint trip with Audubon Naturalist Society continued ANS's over 30-year tradition of a shorebird-intensive trip in late August. The weather was great: sunny, warm, low humidity, and breezes that kept the bugs away. Unfortunately, the tides were wrong, but we found much to study anyway. Perhaps the best birds of the day were two molting adult American Golden-Plovers that were standing in shallow water in Raymond Pool in the morning (rather than in the more expected short grass or dirt fields). In late afternoon we found a Hudsonian Godwit, also in Raymond Pool. In between were 14 other species of shorebird including some Western Sandpipers, a White-rumped Sandpiper, an out-of-place Ruddy Turnstone, a few Long-billed Dowitchers, and hundreds of Semipalmated Plovers and American Avocets. A Peregrine Falcon made two appearances during the day, sending the shorebirds into complicated flight maneuvers that were a wonder to behold. A soaring Northern Harrier and several beautiful Blue Grosbeaks added some non-shorebird thrills to the trip.



**Upper Watts Branch Park, Rockville, September 7.** Leader: Paul O'Brien. Eight birders stood around for a couple of hours and saw only an immature Cooper's Hawk, a local. There were no migrants except the Yellow-billed Cuckoo behind my house, which was seen by only a few of the lingering birdless birders. There has been a lot of activity elsewhere in the region but not in Upper Watts Branch Park. I have no idea what has changed, if anything, but the park has been quiet for the past couple of migrations.



**Little Bennett RP, September 11.** Leader: Claire Wolfe. Eight birders joined me at Little Bennett Regional Park on what turned out to be a very hot and humid day. But the birds did not seem to notice, as we started our trip off with a bang, finding a nice flock of warblers at Wilson's Mill, which included several Cape May, Black-throated Green, and Pine Warblers. After a long time enjoying that flock, we continued on the trail. Although we did not encounter another big flock like the first, we still managed to see new species as we went. We ended the trip with 38 species of birds, including 11 warblers, and eight hot but happy

birders. Thanks to all the participants whose enthusiasm and sharp eyes and ears made the trip a success!



**Rock Creek Park, September 14.** Leader: Wallace Kornack. Participants: 4. All the signs were present for a very good morning at the park. A cold front with a north wind was forecast that was preceded by a week of hot, humid conditions and south wind. The result was that we had 18 warbler species and 47 other species. The tour began at the ridge. There, the first hints of a good day were experienced. The warblers included Black-throated Green, Parula, Black-and-white, Black-throated Blue, Magnolia, and Redstart. In addition, four species of thrush were spotted—Swainson's, Wood, Gray-cheeked, and Veery. Next, we went to the equitation field where the activity really picked up. Warblers included the same species seen at the ridge plus Blue-wing, Chestnut-sided, Bay-breasted, Blackburnian, Nashville, Tennessee, and Yellowthroat. But the very special warblers were to be found in the maintenance yard, e.g., Hooded, Canada, Wilson's, and Prairie. An Ovenbird plus many of the warbler species seen earlier were also present. Other birds of note were a White-eyed Vireo (flitting about in the vines above the yard ravine), a Marsh Wren (a very rare visitor to the yard), a Yellow-throated Vireo, Summer Tanager (rare), and a Red-headed Woodpecker (also rare) that flew by. One of the best days we have had at the park in recent times.



**Pennyfield to Violette's Bird Stalk, September 22.** Leader: Jim Nelson. Participants: 14, including leader. Weather: Mix of sun and clouds, temps rising from 50s to about 70. Total species: 29. This walk is designed for folks who generally cannot get out as early. We met at Violette's Lock at 9, carpooled down to Pennyfield Lock, and then walked upstream along the C&O Canal towpath back to Violette's, ending at noon. The total species count was disappointing for fall migration and the lowest for this walk since we began doing it several years ago. In spite of the nice morning weather, we had very few songbird migrants—an Eastern Wood Pewee, a Philadelphia Vireo (seen only by the leader), and two warblers that were not seen well enough to identify. Larger birds included eight Great Egrets, a Wood Duck, and single Greater and Lesser

*continued on next page*

# Trip Reports

Yellowlegs that gave everyone great views in the shallow, rapidly drying second impoundment above Pennyfield. A beautiful adult Red-shouldered Hawk gave us close, long looks, posing in a tree. A calling Common Raven and a hooting Barred Owl were a treat. The complete checklist from the walk can be viewed in eBird at <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S15230944>.



**Wheaton Regional Park, September 15.** Leader: Jared Fisher. Participants: 13. Total species: 43. Weather: Mix of sun and clouds, temps about 60 to low 70s. This trip's primary focus was on fall migrants, particularly warblers. The group started off at the Shorefield Rd parking lot waiting for the sun to hit the trees. Several warblers were noted in this area, including Magnolia, Redstart, Parula, and Prairie. Our only Swainson's Thrushes were seen by most participants in this location. We next walked toward Pine Lake along the mini-railroad tracks, running into a few highlights on the way, including a Rose-breasted Grosbeak and good looks at a Blue-winged Warbler, a life bird for some of the participants. We continued on toward Pine Lake coming across more warbler species, including Black-and-white Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, several Black-throated Green Warblers, and extended close-up views of a Blackburnian Warbler. Unfortunately, we had a few warblers (including a Bay-breasted) that stayed hidden from most of the group high in the treetops. We finished up at around 10 a.m. with 11 definite warbler species and a lesson about warbler-neck. The complete checklist from the walk can be viewed at <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S15176613>.



**Patuxent River Park—Jug Bay Natural Area, September 28.** Leaders: Greg Kearns and John Bjerke. Participants: 18. Species: at least 57. This joint trip with Audubon Naturalist Society is an annual event focused on finding Sora. And once again, Greg came through, luring an adult and an immature Sora onto the mud. Then, to increase our joy, a Virginia Rail also appeared. Farther up the river we encountered about a dozen migrating Bobolinks; a few perched quite close in the wild rice, aster, and burr marigold. Eagles, harriers, a Merlin, and Cooper's Hawks stirred the hundreds of blackbirds. We saw large numbers of Wood Duck and Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal.

A Ruddy Duck was unusually early. Land birding was slow until we hit a patch of willow in a sheltered area that had Chestnut-sided, Black-and-white, Black-throated Green, and Black-throated Blue Warblers. The patch also had Ruby-crowned Kinglets and American Redstart. Back in the parking lot, our final bird was a well-seen Tennessee Warbler. A morning at Jug Bay is always a good morning.



**Catoctin Mountains, September 29.** Leaders: Jim Brighton and Bill Hubick. As always, we had a very fun and laid-back group of birders who tolerated our worsening inability to walk past insects and wildflowers. We met up well before dawn and arrived way too early at Gambrill State Park, finding all the gates still closed. This might have worked to our benefit, because our dawn stop just north of the park proved to be far and away our best stop. We stepped out of our cars and heard a couple of Swainson's Thrushes calling as they passed overhead. A pair of Common Ravens flew off grokking as we approached a tower on the ridge. We enjoyed discussing some of the tell-tale dawn calls of species around us, such as the thin, ascending "tsrrrr" of Eastern Towhees and the diagnostic "ta-tick" of Ruby-crowned Kinglets. As sun hit the wooded edges, we started hearing warbler chip notes and detected flitting songbirds. By 7:30 we were at double-digit warbler species, and by the time we continued north on Gambrill Park Road, we'd reached 14 warbler species. It's a good thing, too, as we added just one warbler species—Common Yellowthroat—over the next eight hours! Highlights were Nashville, Blackburnian (2), Bay-breasted, and Tennessee Warblers, Ovenbird, and a late Great-Crested Flycatcher.

We spent the whole day hiking and driving through beautiful areas and enjoying perfect fall weather. Along with a slow but steady trickle of migrants, we added many first-of-fall species to our list: Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets, Winter Wren, and White-throated Sparrows. Eastern Phoebe and Blue-headed Vireos were widespread and conspicuous. It looks like we tallied 68 bird species for the day.

General nature discussion kept things interesting—we hope!—during the slower points of the day. A beautiful Northern Ring-necked Snake spotted by Stephanie Lovell probably earned favorite sighting of the trip.



# Trip Reports

## Montgomery County Sparrow Search, October 9.

Leader: Dave Powell. Seven people joined the leader on the annual sparrow search. We had over 200 sparrows for the trip, but unfortunately it was limited in diversity with only Swamp, Chipping, White-throated, and Song Sparrows and Eastern Towhee making the list. A flock of over 100-plus Chipping Sparrows in front of us was a special sight. Other nice birds were Common Snipe, Solitary Sandpiper, Green Heron, and both Kinglets.

**Big Sit at Black Hill Regional Park, October 13.** Leader: Chuck Parker. The day began at 5:25 a.m. with my best birding buddy (and the only one I know nutty enough to get up at 4 a.m. and call for owls in the rain!). The day was rainy off and on all day long, but the great company made it a nice day with a few good birds. There were eight birders who braved the weather to help us locate 57 species! Given the weather, it was a great day. Highlights of the day were Double-crested Cormorant, Great Egret, Green Heron, Osprey, Peregrine, Nashville Warbler, Lincoln's Sparrow, and seven Palm Warblers.

## Living on the Wind

September is the perfect month to go north, which is what Helen Patton and I did, heading for National Audubon's *Living on the Wind: Fall Migration and Monhegan Island*, starting on Hog Island, Audubon's special island off the coast of Maine. The title of the program is taken from Scott Weidensaul's book, and that was what we were there to see, birds heading back to their home territories after breeding in the north.

We arrived in good time to be ferried over to the island and were warmly welcomed by Scott who was in charge of the program. It was a smaller group than usual—the summer programs are quite large—but the “cottages” are not heated and it was quite cold at night. Birding began immediately with a number of migrants zipping through the trees around the central area. Tom Johnson was one of the leaders and let me tell you, he has impressive eyes and ears; every few moments he would look up and say, “...that's a Blackpoll just going by” or “...hear that, it's a Swainson's Thrush.” Wow.

The first day we spent on mainland birding Pemaquid Point, Damariscotta River Club, and Clarry Hill hawk watch, where Tom spotted three Pomarine Jaegers zipping overhead, a most unusual sighting so far inland. There were many Kestrels and Cedar Waxwings along with a few high-flying hawks.

Then the day for Monhegan arrived! We took the boat down the bay to the island and started birding right away. A cold front had come in and the birds were everywhere—Blackpolls; Black-throated Greens; Red-eyed, Philadelphia,

and Yellow-throated Vireos; orioles; Merlins, waxwings—by the end of the day we had had 20 species of warbler!!

The next day was more of the same in the morning but with a “pelagic” of a sort on the way home to Hog Island. Tom was chumming, trying to bring in some sea birds, but only managed to attract a few gulls and one lone Gannet who distained to dive for the days-old menhaden Tom was throwing out! We did have a flotilla of Surf Scoters, mostly males, along with a few Great Cormorants, seals, loons, and guillemots. That evening Scott gave a talk about migration (a subject he knows very well); it is just amazing what these tiny grams of feathers can do.

The last day was spent on Harbor Island, just a few miles away, again a gorgeous day and slightly warmer than previous days. Yellow-rumped Warblers were all over, a Hairy Woodpecker, and more Merlins. That evening was the final dinner, a sumptuous feast of lobster followed by Puffin éclairs!

They sent us off early Friday morning, but we had had a wonderful time and look forward to going again because every time it's different. †

—Stephanie Lovell



No puffins were harmed in the making of this dessert. Photo by Stephanie Lovell.

# A Ghana Birding Saga

*(Continued from the August Chat)*

We spent a night in Kumasi, the second largest city in Ghana, before driving the long way north to Mole National Park, the country's largest park (nearly 2,000 square miles). Only the extreme southern part can be visited due to the poor condition of park roads. Our base at the Mole Motel was quite comfortable, apart from the night when the air conditioning went out and water had to be supplied to us in plastic buckets. The motel had the only swimming pool on the tour that I felt confident was clean enough to risk taking a dip—it certainly felt good at 105 degrees to jump in, a feeling somewhat mitigated afterwards by my sitting on and breaking my glasses on a poolside chair. The motel overlooks water holes where animals and birds come to drink, and we saw from the terrace our only Woolly-necked Storks of the trip and a variety of antelopes. The trees by the motel attracted many birds, among them Bruce's Green Pigeon and Bearded Barbet. Twice a day we went out into the park and walked around in the heat. Top sightings here were of two groups of Savanna elephants, all males, up close and personal, taking mud and dust baths. Best of the birds seen in the savanna habitat of the park was a rare Forbes's Plover.

From Mole we made another long drive north, stopping briefly at Tongo Hills to see Fox Kestrel, and ending up in the city of Bolgatanga, close to the border of Burkina Faso. Close by was the large Tono reservoir, part of an ambitious scheme to provide irrigation water for agriculture and which proved to be full of White-faced Whistling Ducks and Spur-winged Geese. We walked the savanna near the dam and found Senegal Parrots, Great Spotted Cuckoo, Little Bee-eater, and Rufous-crowned Roller, among many other species. Our only Black-headed Lapwings were here.

The next day we traveled to a promontory of land next to the White Volta River, right at the borders with Burkina Faso and Togo. Here on the sandy banks of the river is a reliable wintering place of the Egyptian Plover, #2 target bird of the trip after the Yellow-headed Picathartes. Some of us spent more than an hour in the searing heat photographing as many as five of these wonderful birds, dwarfed as they were by nearby, much larger Spur-winged and Wattled Lapwings. As elsewhere, we attracted a big crowd of locals here, curious but invariably friendly.

After a long and bumpy drive back to Kumasi, we spent a morning at the Bobiri Butterfly Sanctuary. Nice birds here were African Cuckoo Hawk, Red-thighed Sparrowhawk, African Hobby, Gray and Red-fronted Parrots, Narina's

Trogon, and (best of all) a Red-chested Owlet. The next day we tackled the tough climb up a steep track in the Atewa Hills, walking more than 7 kilometers uphill and gaining 1,400 feet in altitude, in order to reach unbroken forest near the top ridge. It was disconcerting to hear the constant chatter of chain saws, testament to the porous nature of protection from poachers and illegal loggers that categorizes parks and forests in Ghana. Here we ran into lots of tinkerbirds and barbets and the gorgeous Blue-headed Bee-eater, one of nine bee-eaters seen on the trip. We raced back down the hill when it was obvious that a rainstorm was fast approaching, and once again I distinguished myself by becoming dehydrated and light-headed, falling over and needing Jackson's assistance to get back to the bus. Did I mention how hot it was? Or that the day's walk was described as "moderate" in the tour company's catalog?

The last three birding sessions of the tour were at the nearby Kalakpa Forest Reserve. We concentrated on difficult-to-see species of the undergrowth that had previously eluded us. A Puvell's Illadopsis finally deigned to be seen, as did a Brown Illadopsis and a Western Forest Robin the next day, but a flock of Capuchin Babblers stoutly refused to take the bait of the leader's iPod. We ran our count of sunbird species up to a staggering 21 and saw White-shouldered Black Tit for only the second time in 21 days of intense birding.

By the time we were ready to head back to Accra Airport, I had 424 species on my trip list, 218 of them lifers. Others in the group had a greater total since I missed 20 or more, but few had more lifers, due to their greater experience with West African birds. However, I certainly don't want to crow about my numbers. In fact, this trip demonstrated clearly to me the downside of concentrating on listing. The constant search for new "ticks" meant that once a bird was recorded, we spent no more time on it. As a birder with (normally) a keen ear, I was frustrated not to be able to learn calls and songs of even the most common birds, because once heard and identified they were never mentioned again.

After some thought, I have decided to deemphasize world bird listing and to concentrate on enjoying birds at home and helping others to do so. I know that my constitution won't allow me to bird any more tropical countries, no matter how many species they offer. Notwithstanding the heat, humidity, and pratfalls, those Picathartes and Egyptian Plovers really were special, and I'm very glad I saw them. But don't be surprised if the next time I go birding abroad, it will be to Finland or Estonia! ♪

—Michael Bowen



# Birds of Note (late July—mid-October 2013)

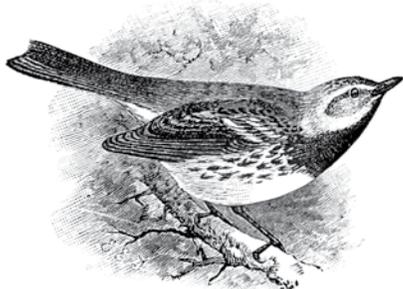
One of the best birds to appear in the county in the past few months was the juvenile **Tricolored Heron** found by Susan Hunt on 7/28 at the Dierssen WMA impoundments along the C&O Canal just upstream of Pennyfield Lock. The bird cooperatively stuck around for another 7 or 8 days giving ample time for plenty of birders to “tick” this bird for the county. A Tricolored Heron seems to show up in the county every three to four years or so (mostly along the Potomac River corridor), but this is first one in recent memory that stuck around for more than a day.

Don Simonson observed an astounding 1,117 **Broad-winged Hawks** pass over his Darnestown yard between 1 and 3 p.m. on 9/16. Heavy morning rains gave way to clearing skies with northerly winds creating perfect migration conditions for these hawks. A few **Merlins** were seen around the county late September into early October. Single **Merlins** were noted at Wheaton RP on 9/26 by Gail Mackiernan and Barry Cooper and again on 10/8 by Sally Wechsler. Max Wilson noted a **Merlin** in Rockville, perched on a snag at the Strathmore Center’s storm water management pond (SWMP) on 10/3, and Dr. James Gibson found one near the intersection of Calhoun and E. Gude Drives in Rockville on 10/7. A **Peregrine Falcon** was reported by Stephen Davies at the Wheaton Branch SWMP near Sligo Creek on 7/28; by Elaine Hendricks and Dave Czaplak at Violette’s Lock; by Hugh McGuinness over Tilden MS in Rockville on 9/10; and by the MBC “Big Sit” crew at Black Hill RP on 10/13.

Dave Czaplak had a single **Black Tern** at Violette’s Lock on 8/9 and noted additional sightings of this species in the same location on 8/24 and 9/11. Mary Ann Todd observed nine **Laughing Gulls** at Violette’s Lock on 8/19.

Some good passerine migrants have been seen over past few months, including a **Connecticut Warbler** found along Sligo Creek by Rob Ostrowski on 10/1. Diane Ford found a **Golden-winged Warbler** near Aspen Hill on 9/4. Gail Mackiernan and Barry Cooper found a **Yellow-bellied**

**Flycatcher** at Wheaton RP on 8/14. Additional **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers** were seen at the park through mid-September. Two **Olive-sided Flycatchers** were also noted by Gail and Barry at Wheaton RP on 9/6. David Gersten

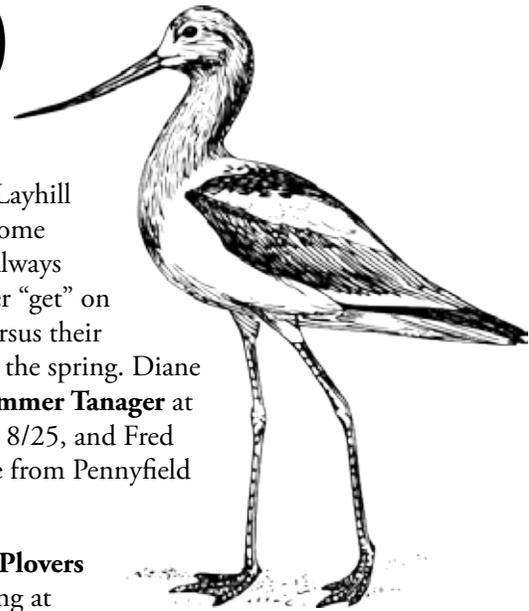


spotted the first **Philadelphia Vireo** of the fall at Layhill Park on 8/28. For some reason this species always seems to be an easier “get” on return migration versus their northbound trek in the spring. Diane Ford observed a **Summer Tanager** at Lake Needwood on 8/25, and Fred Hoffman noted one from Pennyfield Lock on 9/7.

**American Golden-Plovers** made a good showing at the Hughes Road polo fields during the first few weeks of September, the one caveat being that most sightings came fairly early in the morning before the polo matches started. Linda Friedland reported three **American Golden-Plovers** there on 9/1. Jim Green found an outstanding total of 10 **American Golden-Plovers** in the same location on 9/12. Some other shorebirds of note over the last few months include three **American Avocets** found in the Triadelphia Reservoir pipeline area by Woody and Rae Dubois on 8/2, three **Stilt Sandpipers** at Violette’s Lock by Dave Czaplak on 9/18, and a **White-rumped Sandpiper** in the almost dried out “big” pond at Blue Mash by Daniel Kraushaar on 8/31. Woody and Rae Dubois relocated the Blue Mash **White-rumped Sandpiper** the following day and got a “shorebird bonus” by spotting a **Short-billed Dowitcher**. Some early return migrant shorebirds included an **Upland Sandpiper** at the Hughes Road polo fields on 7/21 and two **Black-bellied Plovers** at Violette’s Lock on 7/23 reported by Dave Czaplak and Mary Ann Todd.

In “twitching” news, according to ebird (<http://ebird.org/content/ebird/>), as of 10/13, we stand at 243 species reported in Montgomery for the year, 14 behind last year’s impressive total of 257 species. Top five listers (technically we’ll call it six because Woody and Rae Dubois report as a team) include Dave Czaplak (226), Mary Ann Todd (205), Linda Friedland (195), Woody and Rae Dubois (188), and Lydia Schindler (181). †

—Andy Martin





# 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: Helen Patton, 429 Hamilton Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20901.

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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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