



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

February 2016

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President's Chat

Normally writing this column I would be thinking about the start of spring and more seasonable weather. This winter has been different with very unseasonable warm weather and a few out of season birds. There has also been a lack of winter birds and waterfowl. Probably by the time you read this more seasonable birds and weather will have returned.

Just a reminder that our inclement weather policy is that if Montgomery County public schools are closed for the day or if evening activities have been cancelled, our meeting will also be cancelled.

Brady Hartley received the MOS scholarship for Hog Island, Maine in 2016. Congratulations to Brady!

In May, we will elect club officers and state and chapter directors. The members of the Nominating Committee will be doing their important work and will be approaching members about serving as officers or directors. As you know, we depend on members who volunteer their time to make our club work. Please consider serving if you are asked by the Nominating Committee. The nominating committee is comprised of Jim Nelson, Mark England, and Anna Urciolo.

An additional reminder that we have many good field trips on the schedule. Check the calendar, and get out in the field. See what birds are in Montgomery County this season!

Montgomery Bird Club will be participating in Meadowside Nature Centers Raptor Festival on May



1st. If anyone is interested in helping with the table we will have at the festival send me an email.

MOS Conference will be held in Salisbury this year in June 2016.

Details should be available on the MOS website.

And let's not forget our own party! On the back of this *Chat* is the sign-up form for our Club Social on Friday, March 11, 2016 at the ANS Woodend mansion. This is a great chance for all of us to get together over delicious food, chat, and be amazed at the wonderful photos presented by our members. I encourage you to sign up early since space is limited. Please contact Clive Harris (cliveharris@yahoo.com) if you would like to help with the social or can bring appetizers. Also send your 10 favorite digital photos to Clive Harris by March 1st.

Good birding! ♪

—Ed Patten

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Winter/Spring Calendar

Club News

We report with great sadness that **Ann Lucy**, a longtime Montgomery Bird Club member, passed away on December 31, 2015. Ann was active in the club for many years, serving on committees and leading field trips.

Ann was especially gifted in her ability to hear and identify bird calls and for years led trips focusing on birding by ear. She was a lively and enthusiastic participant at the meetings and she will be missed.

We also mourn the loss of **Howard Lefkowitz**, another long-standing member of the Club, who passed away suddenly on November 7, 2015.

Howard served as club treasurer for many years and was essential to the publication of the site guide. He was always willing to help set up meetings and pitch in wherever needed.

We send our condolences to their families and friends. ♪

The Messenger

The Messenger, a film based on the award-winning book, *Silence of the Songbirds* by Dr. Bridget Stutchbury, will be shown March 29th at 7:30 p.m. at the Cinema Arts Theatre, 9650 Main Street, Fairfax, VA.

The film is an investigation into the causes of mass songbird mortality, and the compassionate people who are working to turn the tide.

Dr. Stutchbury will be available for a Q&A session after the film.

Reserve your tickets today at www.tugg.com/events/87282. There will be no ticket sales at the theatre. ♪

March 11 (Friday), 7:00 p.m. Annual Montgomery Bird Club Social, Audubon Naturalist Society, Woodend, Chevy Chase. Guest of Honor: Steve Pretl. Program includes members' slide show. See back cover for sign-up form.

April 20 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m. Andy Brown "Sea Turtles of the Mid-Atlantic"

May 18 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m. Exploring New Guinea's Lost Worlds and Elusive Birds of Paradise. Bruce Beehler, naturalist and explorer, will give an illustrated lecture on his nearly four decades of field study of the birds and rainforests of the great island of New Guinea. The presentation will feature a review of the remarkable diversity of the bird life inhabiting New Guinea, as well as a field expedition to the Foja Mountains of western New Guinea—perhaps the most isolated and untouched place on planet earth. The scientists on the expedition risked their lives and suffered various hardships but came away with more than a hundred species of plants and animals new to science.

Meetings take place at the Potomac Presbyterian Church, 10301 River Road, Potomac. From the Beltway, take Exit 39 (River Road/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 are 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 Ed Patten at 301-948-5648 or epatten1022@verizon.net.

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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Visit our homepage at www.montgomerybirdclub.org

Deadline for submissions is the 5th of the preceding month.
Send items to Patrick Newcombe, 12005 Smoketree Road, Potomac, MD 20854. Phone: 301-424-3259, e-mail: stonecroft5@verizon.net.



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.).

 **March 9 (Wednesday); MARCH 15 (Tuesday); MARCH 17 (Thursday) 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, flashlight and wear "muddy conditions" footwear. Reservations not required- all are welcome. For more info call the leader. LEADER: Jim Green 301-742-0036.

MARCH 12 (Saturday) PATUXENT RIVER PARK, Jug Bay Natural Area, Prince Georges Co., Half day. Joint trip with Audubon Naturalist Society. Waterfowl, Wilson's Snipe, winter and early spring songbirds, Ospreys displaying. Meet at 8 am at the parking by the park headquarters. Wear muddy conditions footwear. Reservation required. Limit 15. LEADER: John Bjerke 240-401-1643.

 **APRIL 10 (Sunday) HUGHES HOLLOW AND VICINITY.** Half day. We will explore the wetlands of Hughes Hollow and Sycamore Landing. Species to be expected include Red-headed Woodpeckers, Wood Ducks, Blue-winged Teal, and many other marsh dwellers. A chance for several warblers including Prothonotary. Meet at Hughes Hollow parking lot in the McKee-Beshers WMA at 7 a.m. Reservations are not required. For more information, contact the leader. LEADER: Jim Nelson 240-515-4517 or kingfishers2@verizon.net.

April 23 (Saturday) BLUE MASH NATURE TRAIL/OAKS LANDFILL. Half day. Interesting walk at these adjacent and surprisingly birdy sites in Montgomery County. Waterproof boots helpful at Blue Mash, but not needed at the landfill. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at Zion Road parking lot. Call leader for reservations and directions. Trip is limited to 8-10 participants. LEADER: Mark England 240-207-3132 cell: 240-375-4500.

 **April 24 (Sunday) HUGH MAHANES PRESIDENTS' WALK AT HUGHES HOLLOW.** Half day. Participation of all former Chapter Presidents is encouraged, and everyone is welcome. This is a wonderful chance for newer birders to be in the field with "old hands" who enjoy sharing what they know. With a variety of habitats, Hughes Hollow is always interesting in spring. We will look for water birds on the move and early songbird migrants. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the Hughes Hollow parking lot. Reservations required. For more information, directions, and reservations contact the leader. LEADER: Ed Patten 301-948-5648 or epatten1022@verizon.net.

MAY 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 raptors and migratory warblers, vireos, thrushes and flycatchers should be present, and rails and bitterns are possibilities. Meet at the parking lot in the center of the refuge at 7:30 a.m. Reservations required. Limit:25. LEADERS: Mike Bowen, 301-530-5764 or dhmbowen@yahoo.com, and Gerry Hawkins, 571-277-8406 or maineusa@comcast.net.

 **May 1 (Sunday) LITTLE BENNETT RP.** Half day. Near peak migration for warblers and vireos, including those breeding in this varied habitat. Contact the leader for time and directions. Reservations required. LEADER: Gemma Radko (301) 514-2894

May 3 (Tuesday)- ROCK CREEK PARK, DC. One third day. Early migrant warblers, vireos, etc. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at Picnic Area #18, one-half mile below the Nature Center on Ridge Road. Reservations required. Call the leader for more information or specific directions. LEADER: Wallace Kornack (202) 338-7859

 **MAY 6 (Friday) BIRDING BY EAR AT HUGHES HOLLOW.** Tune up your ears as we listen for and learn to identify the songs and calls of migrant and local breeding birds. The trip will be geared to new birders but all are welcome. Meet at 7 am at the parking lot at Hughes Hollow. Limit 10. Reservations required. For more information email the leader Paul Woodward at grackling@ATT.NET

MAY 8 (Sunday) IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE CONSERVATION FARM. Half day. Once again, the B-CC Chapter is generously providing us access to this large private property south of Poolesville. Woods, hedgerows, streams, fields, and ponds provide a wide range of bird habitats, and migration should be well underway. Trip will start at 7 a.m. at the League's Chapterhouse. Reservations required, limit 12. Driving directions will be provided. For reservations and more information, contact the LEADER Jim Nelson at kingfishers2@verizon.net or 240-515-4517.



Trip Reports

Oaks Landfill, Saturday, November 7. Leaders: Mark England and Ed Patten. It is a great opportunity that Montgomery County allows MBC to have field trips to this closed landfill that is not open to the public. The annual fall trip to Oaks Landfill is always great for finding raptors and sparrows and this trip was no different. Highlights include two each of Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, and Red-shouldered Hawk. Sparrow highlights included six species of sparrows with the best being a Vesper Sparrow. Another highlight was an Eastern Meadowlark calling from the top of the landfill that provided excellent scope views. We had 30 species total for the trip and finished the walk just before the rain.



LBJs at Blue Mash, Wednesday, November 11. Leader: Lydia Schindler A pleasant morning with an amiable group, but fairly quiet on the bird front. We had nice looks at raptors and woodpeckers but sparrows, our ostensible target, were in unusually short supply: Song, White-throated, Swamp. The most dramatic moment of the morning came when a Sharp-shin barreled through a flock of Cedar Waxwings.



Occoquan Bay NWR, Sunday, November 22. Leaders: Gerry Hawkins and Mike Bowen Participants: 22 Species count: 46 (well below average for this trip). Weather: rather cold with a biting NW wind, never out of the 40's. Highlights: The strong wind contributed to a relative dearth of sparrows and the earlier opening of waterfowl hunting season to rather few ducks beyond a few Mallard and a nice flock of Gadwall – certainly fewer than expected. Only a single Ruddy Duck was spotted in the diving duck department. Nevertheless, two Fox Sparrows gave everyone super looks and we were kept entertained all morning with large flocks of Cedar Waxwings, Yellow-rumped Warblers, and Robins feeding on the abundant berry crops. 20 Pied-billed Grebes and a single Horned Grebe enlivened our search for birds out on the rather empty bay. An estimated 800 American Coot were found huddled together at a great distance – just a mass of black against the far shore. We went for long periods without

seeing much and then, suddenly, there was a nice group of birds actively feeding on the lea side of the refuge, away from the wind. The group contained Pileated, Red-bellied, and Downy Woodpeckers, an Eastern Phoebe, both species of Kinglet and, best of all, four Pine Siskins, who continued to preen as we took nice, close looks. Photographers Scott Young and Bill Young provided photos to flesh out our official eBird checklist at: <http://bit.ly/21cCbom>. They were able to capture the splendid sight of a pair of Bald Eagles just offshore as well as some other neat memories.



Lilypons/New Design Road, Sunday, December 6. Leader: Clive Harris Participants: 11. Species count: 37. Highlights: A foggy start to the day suppressed the activity you would expect to find at the start of an otherwise pleasant morning. Nonetheless we managed to find many of our targets although we had to work hard for them. Searching through groups of sparrows turned up a single American Tree and two Fox Sparrows in the brushy areas under the power lines, and we found a small group of White-crowned Sparrows in the hedgerow near the gap in the fence on Lilypons Road. A seasonal rarity was a Common Yellowthroat, a decent bird for December! We had great views of Horned Lark which was a life bird for one of the participants but although we found a decent sized flock of these birds on New Design Road we were unable to find anything else mixed in. There were some surprise misses including Winter Wren and Field Sparrow.



Earliest Bird Walk – Georgetown Reservoir and D.C. Hotspots, Friday, January 1, 2016. Leader: Mike Bowen Participants: 14 Species count: 46 Weather: Mild with almost no wind; another balmy year for this trip. Highlights: Three fast departing Common Mergansers and a large, berry-eating flock of Cedar Waxwings were the hits at Georgetown Reservoir. The Constitution Gardens pond was once again productive, with Ring-necked Ducks, Bufflehead, Gadwall, Northern Shoveler and a pair of American Wigeon at close range, in addition to the usual Mallards, Ring-billed Gulls and Canada Geese. A perched Red-tailed Hawk very close to us was a standout at the



Trip Reports

FDR Memorial, which also had lots of Robins and a few other small passerines. Once again a small group (just 4 this year) of Black-crowned Night-herons greeted us at the head of the Washington Channel. We were able to find several Redheads in with a large group of Lesser Scaup near the confluence of the Anacostia and Potomac, although viewing was tough, looking right into the winter sun. Two Bald Eagles were nice, but we missed falcons this year. Then off over the Memorial Bridge to the LBJ Grove and Columbia Marina, although we were running late and a bit rushed. Here we had Great Blue Heron, Hooded Mergansers, a perched Cooper's Hawk, a Red-shouldered Hawk and another Bald Eagle. Best of all were a couple of Golden-crowned Kinglets, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and an Orange-crowned Warbler. Some of us stopped off briefly at Roaches Run before looping back to Georgetown Reservoir by way of National Airport. Roaches gave us Pied-billed Grebes and our only Belted Kingfisher of the day.



BLUE MASH, Wednesday, January 13. Leader: Stephanie Lovell Participants: 3. Species Count 26. Bill, Dave and Tex joined me on a bitterly cold morning to see if any birds were awake and moving. It was 18° but nice and sunny with a chill wind. As I drove in and got out of the car a Pileated Woodpecker flew across into the woods, a nice beginning. As we moved up the road a few things started to warm up, but sparrows were not having any of it, they were still hunkered down. The first pond was almost all frozen over and not a duck of any kind to be seen, but as we walked up to the road junction a Hermit Thrush flew in, the first of several we saw. Then there some activity in the cedars and there were a few White-throated Sparrows, a Mourning Dove and Cardinals. Along the fence line there were Mocking Birds soaking up the chilly rays of sun, lots and lots of Robins mixed with Cedar Waxwings flew over in great numbers, we called it about 200. They were on the move! Oddly enough, no Canada Geese were heard or sighted, nor were any raptors seen, we have heard a Red-tail and oddly, not one Carolina Wren seen, only faintly heard.

We did have several Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers in a clearing we bush whacked into. That was a very productive little site, Bluebirds, a Towhee, Northern Flickers, and lots of White-throated Sparrows. By the back fence line there were several titmice, more Hermit Thrushes, more cardinals and more robins. Another Pileated was hammering away, Dave was the one who spotted it and got everyone on it. Around by the big pond nothing to be seen on it, not frozen but very full. We did finally get a few Yellow-rumped Warblers. House Finch were in the cedars and finally in the parking lot, a White-breasted Nuthatch. Most interesting event, as we're sitting in the car compiling the bird list of the day there was a woodpecker convention in front of us, a Hairy and a Downy, plus several Flickers, and a few Red-bellies; just goes to prove the old saying you just have to be in the right place at the right time! So two and half hours later it has warmed up to 27°, and we felt pleased with ourselves for list of 26 good species on a cold day.



BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK, Sunday, January 17. Leader: Gerry Hawkins Participants: 10 Species count: 40 Weather: Cloudy and cold, with snow flakes starting to fall shortly after the field trip ended Highlights: Ten persons joined leader Gerry Hawkins for a waterfowl focused field trip to Black Hill RP in the morning on January 17. We started the field trip at the Visitors Center and then visited the boat ramp area and stopped at the Route 121 bridge over Little Seneca Lake. The trip was very productive and enjoyable but did not have an auspicious start because a large flock of Canada Geese that contained a Greater White-fronted Goose seen by Gerry and MBC VP Clive Harris earlier in the morning from the Route 121 bridge flew off just as trip participants arrived at the observation deck at the Visitors Center. Although we missed this bird, while at the Visitors Center we saw a Common Loon a short distance from the observation deck, a Horned Grebe, several Pied-billed Grebes, four male Common Goldeneyes together, Buffleheads, a pair of Hooded Mergansers, two American Black Ducks and several Common Mergansers in flight. We also enjoyed watching a Belted Kingfisher and the expected bird species at the feeders by the

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Trip Reports

observation deck. Waterbird highlights during our time at the boat ramp area included 23 Common Mergansers, 16 Hooded Mergansers, American Black Ducks, Ruddy Ducks, Buffleheads, another Horned Grebe and several Pied-billed Grebes, all of which were seen at relatively close range. During a short walk at this location we also saw several Great Blue Herons and a large number of American Robins and Cedar Waxwings among other songbirds. Our only new bird at the Route 121 bridge was a heard-only Red-shouldered Hawk. The 40 total species encountered during the field trip included eight species of waterfowl, one loon and two grebe species, which we thought was excellent during a mild winter that has not brought much waterfowl to the area.

Christmas Bird Counts



In case you missed it last year, there is an informative piece on Christmas Bird Counts featuring the Seneca CBC at <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/12/141227-christmas-bird-count-anniversary-audubon-animals-science/>.

Washington, DC, December 20

The District of Columbia Christmas Bird Count was held on December 19 under rather pleasant conditions. Preliminary results indicate that waterfowl numbers were low overall, but a team at Hains Point recorded an amazing 56 Long-tailed Ducks flying downriver at dusk. The wintering Double-crested Cormorant population continues its apparent increase, with almost 300 birds reported from downtown locations alone. The regional Red-headed Woodpecker invasion was in evidence in the count circle, with birds found at several locations. We had a respectable number of vagrants and tardy migrants, with teams reporting an American Redstart at LBJ Grove, a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher at Hains Point, and an American Bittern at Keniworth Aquatic Gardens, just to name a few.

—Larry Cartwright

Seneca, Maryland/Virginia, December 20

Count day dawned cold but sunny and ended with highs in the 40's. On this 57th Seneca CBC, our intrepid counters found 93 species on count day, one less than last year and below the average for the last 10 years.

The warm fall and early winter made for reduced waterfowl numbers (no Wood Duck, Northern Shoveler, or Ruddy Duck) and fewer of the other expected winter visitors (our first year since 2008 without a single American Pipit, our second year in a row with no Rusty Blackbird, and no Pine Siskin), but the weather also gave us some unusual lingerers. Most notable are two species, Chestnut-sided Warbler and Golden-winged Warbler, which, if accepted, will be the first ever for our count. A Lincoln's Sparrow, if accepted, will be only the fourth ever for this count. Recently split Cackling Goose was tallied again this year along with Rough-legged Hawk (first since 2009), Double-crested Cormorant (becoming more regular now), Red-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, and Purple Finch (lowest number in at least 10 years).

Thanks to everyone who came out to count this year and especially to the sector leaders for their hard work before, during, and after the count. I will post a more detailed report on the Club's website.

—Jim Nelson

Triadelphia, December 20, 2014

El Nino trashes Christmas Bird Counts! The 68th Triadelphia Reservoir Christmas Bird Count was held as scheduled on December 17. The day was a bit windy but otherwise fairly comfortable. However, our species count (tentatively 75) was the lowest since we had had to do the Count in an all day rain. Waterfowl had not been pushed south and the finches were still up in the Boreal belt. And, most unfortunately, we had almost no late lingerers which the mild weather might have led us to expect. At the migration banding station where I work we would call this the sort of day that "gave the bugs a rest". Our only rather unexpected birds were a Peregrine Falcon soaring up a thermal near Derwood and a Bonaparte's Gull briefly in Fulton Pond. Numbers of common winter residents were very low on every count I helped with. Howard County

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Birds of Note (late October 2015 to early January 2016)

Kicking off 2016, a large influx of rarities in January has made Montgomery county birding very exciting. The highlight is undoubtedly the **Ash-throated Flycatcher**, which was the very first Montgomery county record! Robert Parsons discovered this excellent bird along Turkey Foot Road on January 13th.

William Adams and Woody and Rae Dubois spotted a trio of **Sandhill Cranes** flying past Blue Mash on January 5th. Dave Czaplak and Mike Ostrowski also found a pair of Sandhill Cranes, these ones flying past Violette's Lock on January 10th. Quick on the uptake, Tom Feild and John Hubbell relocated the two feeding at Homestead farm later that day, allowing many to chase them. Mike Ostrowski discovered a **Greater White-fronted Goose** on the morning of January 16th at Black Hill Regional Park. David Roberts found a **Ross's Goose** (a second county record), at Partnership pond on January 16th.

2015 went out with a bang, thanks to a massive invasion of **Franklin's Gulls** into the Northeast. Along with five other Maryland counties, dedicated birders were able to detect this rare gull in Montgomery County. Mike, Robert, and Thomas Ostrowski found a Franklin's Gull flying up past Violette's Lock on November 22nd. Only a few days later, on November 24th, Dave Czaplak located a Franklin's Gull at Sycamore Landing on the C&O canal. It stayed there for at least the next few days, drawn to the newly cut soil. However, because the Ostrowskis' bird was flying up-river, or towards Sycamore Landing, it is almost probable that it was the same bird. Either way, it was a terrific find because, as according to eBird, it was only the third record for Montgomery County!

A nice amount of waterfowl rounded out the end of 2015. Dave Czaplak and Mike Ostrowski observed five **Snow Geese** flying past Violette's Lock on December 26th. On January 9th, Mike Ostrowski found seven more Snow Geese at Patton Turf Farm. Harvey, the **Trumpeter Swan** at Lake Churchill, celebrated its one year anniversary on November 15th. What a cooperative rarity! A **Red-throated Loon** was found by Dave Czaplak at Violette's Lock on November 25th. All three scoters were seen in the final quarter of 2015, including a single **White-winged Scoter** found at Black Hill Regional Park by Mike, Robert, and Thomas Ostrowski on November 22nd. Dave Czaplak found a single **Surf Scoter** at Violette's Lock on 10/28,

and more showed up in the next following days, with a high of seven on the 30th. A pair of **Black Scoters** was found off Riverbend Park in Virginia on November 22nd, and Jim Statz, Mike Ostrowski, and Michael Bowen were able to see them in Maryland waters.

Kathy Calvert and Michael Welch found a very late **Green Heron** at Lilypons Water Garden on November 7th. However, on December 5th, Scott Baron found an even later Green Heron at the Maydale Nature Center. On January 3rd, Jared Fisher discovered a very late **Spotted Sandpiper** at Violette's Lock. Dave Czaplak and Mike Ostrowski had a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** at Violette's Lock on December 24th. Stephen Davies also found a Lesser Black-backed Gull at 23995 River Road on January 1st.

Another interesting phenomenon at the end of the year was the abundance of lingering species due to the unusually warm weather. Warblers, grosbeaks, orioles, swallows, and gnatcatchers all turned up—in December! During the Seneca CBC on December 20th, Justin Golden discovered a **Chestnut-sided Warbler**, the very first record for Maryland in winter, at Stonebridge View Drive. Although finicky (to the point of inspiring a lovely poem by Janet Millenson!), the bird stuck around until at least January 2nd and allowed some lucky birders crushing views.

Joe Hanfman spotted a pair of very late **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** at the Mouth of the Monocacy on the C&O Canal. In addition, Dave Czaplak discovered three **Barn Swallows** at Violette's Lock on January 3rd. At least two of the birds survived nights as cold as 12 degrees, so hopefully they will be able to survive the winter.

Dave Czaplak found a **Broad-winged Hawk** on November 11th at Violette's Lock, later than the previous late date by around a month! In addition to the aforementioned Franklin's Gull on November 22nd, Mike, Robert, and Thomas Ostrowski also spotted a **Golden Eagle** at Violette's Lock! On November 11th, John McDonough



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Trip Reports

Christmas Bird Counts *(continued)*

does a Mid-winter Count on 7 February. I'm excited about the differences that will probably be apparent. Our number of observers increased a bit with real help from the people at Brookside Nature Center. THANK YOU Brookside! And the founder of the count, Chan Robbins at age 97, was one of our counters again this year. It is truly important to document what is happening out there even if the results aren't much fun. This is one of the greatest values of a long term (relatively) controlled effort like our Christmas Bird Count. Thank you to everyone who helped and supported and we certainly look forward to next year!!

—David Holmes

Sugarloaf Mountain Christmas Bird Count, December 28, 2014

The 75 participants in the 31st Sugarloaf CBC enjoyed beautiful weather on January 3, 2016. Conditions were perfect for birding — except for the scarcity of birds. Most species tallies were on the low side of average, and the total number of individual birds was our third-lowest ever. The mild autumn probably explains why only eight kinds of ducks made it this far south by count day, instead of the usual dozen varieties. No winter visitors such as Red-breasted Nuthatches or Snow Buntings were reported, either. We missed Ring-billed Gull on count day for the

first time ever. As a result of all these factors, we tallied a below-average 86 species (plus three during Count Week).

Record lows were reached for Mallards and European Starlings (a tragedy, you'll agree). American Black Duck, Sharp-shinned Hawk, American Kestrel, and House Sparrow were near their all-time lows, as was the total number of crows.

On the other hand, several species were tallied for the first time in seven years or more: Lesser Scaup, Barn Owl, Red-headed Woodpecker (six of them!), and Brown Thrasher. Two of the Count Week birds — Northern Shoveler and Golden Eagle — also had been absent a long time. Gray Catbirds tied their previous high and Black Vultures almost did the same. Out of our 14 sectors, ten reported Bald Eagles and ten reported Common Ravens. A terrific new species was added to our cumulative list: a Great Egret seen flying near Lilypons.

Thanks very much to everyone who participated. Your time and efforts make this count possible. And extra thanks go to the Friends of Ten Mile Creek & Little Seneca Reservoir (www.tenmilecreek.org), who once again sponsored a very enjoyable Tally Rally at the Black Hill Regional Park visitor center.

Next year's Sugarloaf CBC will be held on Monday, January 2, 2017. See you then!

—Janet Millenson

Birds of Note *continued from page 7*

spotted another Golden Eagle at the Mouth of the Monocacy, C&O canal. Jim Nelson had a nice start to the year with a Golden Eagle at Black Hill Regional Park on January 2nd. A **Short-eared Owl** was found at Patton Turf Farm on November 28th by Gerco Hoogeweg. Mike Ostrowski found two **Short-eared Owls** at Blue Mash on January 6th.

On November 22nd at Sycamore Landing, Dave Czaplak found a very late **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** that stayed until December 9th. Also at Sycamore Landing were two late **Baltimore Orioles**, which were found by Jack Schultz on

December 8th. Dave Czaplak also found a very late **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** at Violette's Lock on November 18th that stayed until December 3rd.

Jim Nelson had a bonus day on December 11th at Hughes Hollow, with both a pair of **Marsh Wrens** and two **Lincoln's Sparrows**. Dave Czaplak and Mary Ann Todd found a couple of **Lapland Longspurs** at Homestead farm on December 26th, which were seen by many.

A total of 250 bird species were reported in Montgomery County this year, edging out last year's total by one. The top five eBird listers in the county include Mike Ostrowski with 237, Dave Czaplak with 230, Mary Ann Todd with 206, and a tie between Adam Parr and Woody and Rae Dubois at 202. Linda Friedland also broke 200, with 201 birds.





NAOC Conference 2016

“Bringing Science and Conservation Together” is the theme for the North American Ornithological Conference held in Washington, D.C. from August 16-20, 2016.

An estimated 2,000 ornithological professionals, amateurs and students from North America, the Caribbean, and around the world will attend this event hosted by the Smithsonian Institution (Migratory Bird Center). Early registration begins in March. †

See <http://americanornithology.org/content/north-american-ornithological-conference-2016> for more information.

North with the Spring redux

In 1947, naturalist Edwin Way Teale wrote *North with the Spring*, which chronicled his 17,000 mile road trip keeping pace with the advancing tide of that season. Inspired by Teale, naturalist Bruce Beehler (also a Montgomery Bird Club member), followed the migration of billions of songbirds in his own cross-country road trip from Texas to Ontario last year.

The American Bird Conservancy, one Bruce’s sponsors, worked with him to create a blog about his journey, which is available at www.abcbirds.org/north-with-the-spring. The blog is not only about birds, but also about the people involved with bird conservation work.

Bruce’s blog and photos are sure to inspire you to get out and experience migration this spring! †

Lights Out D.C. Helping Address the Problem of Bird Collisions

As migration begins, volunteers for Lights Out D.C. will be up early, walking a four-mile route downtown to collect dead or injured birds that have collided with glass.

Many birds migrating at night become disoriented by the lights of tall buildings and become “trapped” in cities, where they collide with glass, often with fatal results. Birds do not recognize reflective glass, and see it as merely another corridor to fly through.

Glass-covered buildings and reflective windows on homes kill between three hundred million to one billion birds each year in North America alone.

Many birds succumb to window strikes, including White-throated Sparrow, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Brown Creeper, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, and even declining species such as Golden-winged Warbler.

In Washington D.C., volunteers tag and document dead birds found in the streets. Injured birds are taken to the City Wildlife’s rehabilitation center. The data collected is used to convince building owners and managers to take measures to save the birds.

Similar programs, such as Lights Out Baltimore, exist in other cities. †

For more information on Lights Out DC, visit: <http://citywildlife.org/programs/lights-out-dc>

Lights Out Baltimore: www.lightsoutbaltimore.org

Learn more about the problem of window collisions, and find ways to make your windows safer for birds, at:

<http://abcbirds.org/program/glass-collisions>

www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/faq/attracting/challenges/window_collisions

www.flap.org



Welcome New Members!

Ruan Baker-Branstette

Anne Mytych

William Price

ANNUAL MBC SOCIAL

Friday, March 11, 2016

Guest of Honor: Steve Pretl

Join us for our annual social at Woodend, headquarters of the Audubon Naturalist Society, 8940 Jones Mill Road, Chevy Chase. The evening begins with a social hour at 6:30, followed by dinner at 7:30. Smokey Glen Farm of Gaithersburg will once again cater this delicious dinner.

The evening will feature the traditional members' slide show. Please limit your presentation to your 10 favorite digital photos; send them to Clive Harris in digital form (either on a CD or a thumb drive) in the order you want them to be shown, **no later than March 4.**

Because space is limited, places will go to the first 90 persons to reserve and pay. Send this form (or a copy) and your check (\$20 per person), payable to Montgomery Bird Club, to:

Clive Harris, 6507 75th Place, Cabin John, MD 20818.
Clive's e-mail is cliveharris@yahoo.com.

Name(s) to appear on tags:

Phone #: _____

Signup deadline is March 4.

_____ Please check here if you would like a vegetarian meal. Vegetarian lasagna will be available.

_____ reservations at \$20 per person

\$ _____ enclosed



The Chat
MBC/MOS
P.O. Box 59639
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