

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

May 2016

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President's Chat

The change of seasons is well underway. While migration is certainly underway, winter weather seems to be lingering into April. I am sure everyone is enjoying the migration. Speaking of change, we are still looking for a designer for the *Chat* to take over from Gemma Radko. Gemma is willing to train someone and the club can provide the software. Gemma has been instrumental in the design and formatting of the *Chat* for over fifteen years. We appreciate her tremendous dedication and work --- thank you. We would also like to thank Patrick Newcombe for all of his hard work as the editor of the *Chat*.



the MBC site guides and field guides. We will certainly answer questions about raptors and talked with people that are new birders and are interested in becoming MBC members.

Clive Harris has reserved a shelter at Black Hills Park on June 4th for the second annual Montgomery Bird Club picnic, details to follow.

The nominating committee for next year's officers was comprised of Jim Nelson, Anna Urciolo and Mark England. I would like to thank them for their hard work. The slate of Montgomery Bird Club (MBC) officers is as follows: Clive Harris President, Stephanie Lovell Vice President, Rae Dubois Secretary and Chris Wright Treasurer. The state directors are Brooke Smith, Andy Martin and Jim Moore. The Chapter Directors are Woody Dubois, Gail Mackiernan, and Evelyn Ralston.

Thank you to Clive Harris for the excellent club social on March 11th. Thanks also to the many people who helped with the setup. The guest of honor was Steve Pretl. Unfortunately, Steve had some health issues and was not present, but we still honored Steve and will catch up with him at a later date. The great food, as always, was from Smokey Glen, thanks to Jim Green. We finished the evening with a great slide show of our members photographs and fine artwork.

This is my last President's Chat. I have certainly enjoyed working for the Club as President and appreciate all of the people who have helped the club during the past two years. Thanks for all of the support. All the best! ♪

— Ed Patten

We should all thank Linda Friedland for all of the work that she continues to do in arranging the fine field trips for Montgomery Bird Club. We still have some nice upcoming trips. Make sure you sign up. A thanks also goes out to all of the trip leaders, without whom these trips would not happen.

Owen Crise was chosen as the recipient of the MOS Youth Backpack. His presentation will be at the April 20 meeting.

On Sunday May 1st we will participate in the Meadowside Nature Center Raptor Festival. At the festival we will have a display with photographs of raptors found in Montgomery County,

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Spring/Summer Calendar

May 14 (Saturday), May Count. Wherever you're birding in Montgomery County on this day, bring along a copy of the May Count checklist and count all the birds you find. Submit completed checklists to compiler Diane Ford by email (dmford455@yahoo.com) or by snail mail (9813 Parkwood Drive, Bethesda, MD 20814) by June 4; eBird reports are also acceptable.

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 earth.

June 4 (Saturday), 5-8 p.m. Montgomery Bird Club Picnic. Please join us for the Montgomery Bird Club picnic at Black Hills Regional Park. Bring a dish to share—we will eat and then go for some birding in the early evening. Please remember no alcoholic drinks are allowed in the park—please bring sodas, water, and iced tea. Families are most welcome!

The Club does not meet during the summer, but check out our website for news about bird sightings, and note the field trip schedule for the rest of May and the shorebird trip in August.

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 Patrick Newcombe at 301-424-3259 or stonecroft5@verizon.net.

Club News

This year's Maryland Ornithological Society's Conference is June 10-12 at Salisbury University.

Highlights include field trips and workshops. Sign up at the MOS or MBC websites. ♪



Bald Eagle Deaths Investigated

Birders, wildlife watchers, and even those with a casual interest in nature savor the chance to watch our national bird. People not only enjoy observing these birds in person, but also online from across the continent as shown by an eagle cam at the National Arboretum in Washington, DC, which has attracted attention from hundreds of thousands of viewers.

Despite the success of eagle conservation programs, eagles are in great danger. To many people's horror, 13 dead Bald Eagles were found dead on a farm on the eastern shore of Maryland, likely poisoned. American Bird Conservancy has offered a \$5,000 reward for information leading to the prosecution and conviction of the criminals, bringing the reward to a sum of \$30,000.

This case is being investigated by the Maryland Natural Resource Police as well as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and serves as a reminder of the terrible things that some people do to birds, but also as a reminder of the many people and organizations who work together to protect them. ♪

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

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Deadline for submissions is the 5th of the preceding month. Send items to 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.).

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. Directions: From Maryland, take Rt. 495 south to I-95 south LEFT Exit 161 (Woodbridge), follow Rt. 1 south, cross the Occoquan River, turn left at the light onto Dawson Beach Road and follow this road to the end.

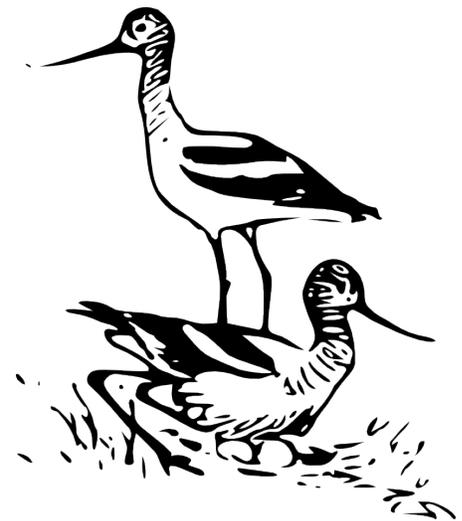
 **May 1 (Sunday) LITTLE BENNETT RP.** Half day. Near peak migration for warblers and vireos, including those breeding in this varied habitat. Contact the leader for time and directions. Reservations required. LEADER: Gemma Radko (301) 514-2894

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, BETHESDA-CHEVY CHASE CHAPTER, 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 to those who make reservations. For reservations and more information, contact the LEADER Jim Nelson at kingfishers2@verizon.net or 240-515-4517.

JULY 23 (Saturday) DELAWARE COASTAL AREAS. Full day at Bombay Hook, Little Creek, Logan Tract, and other sites. Shorebirds, marsh birds, and some songbirds. Bring pack lunch. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at Bombay Hook Visitor Center parking lot. Make reservation (15-person limit) with LEADER: John Bjerke at johnbjerke1@mac.com or 240-401-1643. Cyndie Loeper will co-lead.



Trip Reports

Patuxent River Park, Jug Bay Natural Area, March 12, 2016. Leader: John Bjerke. Participants: 16. Species: at least 42. The Audubon Naturalist Society and MBC joint trip to Jug Bay had cool gray weather. Ospreys and Tree Swallows were in good numbers on the river. Perhaps our most interesting sighting was two Bald Eagles (one adult, one immature) harassing an Osprey and forcing it to drop a fish—but neither eagle was able to grab the fish before it dropped beneath the surface of the river. We had great views of a Brown Thrasher and a Pine Warbler. Lingering winter residents included a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Juncos, and several White-throated Sparrows. We found a Red-headed Woodpecker, two Eastern Phoebes, and a small flock of about a dozen Rusty Blackbirds. Although waterfowl were scarce, we had several encounters with Wood Ducks and a brief view of three Tundra Swans leaving the area. Another nice March on Jug Bay!



Informal Late Afternoon Walks, March 9, Thursday, March 12, and Tuesday, March 17. Leader: Jim Green. March 9th was the first of three joint MBC/ANS (Audubon Naturalist Society) evening bird trips. We started on the bridge at Riley's Lock, then moved to Hughes Hollow and finished on Sycamore Landing Road. There were 13 people who attended. There were virtually no ducks on the Potomac River between Riley's and Violette's Lock. Everything we observed was fairly distant. There were 150-200 Ring-billed Gulls, most of them hanging out just above the rapids at Violette's Lock. We had decent scope views of four Horned Grebes, saw one Pied-billed Grebe and a pair of Hooded Mergansers. There were several species of ducks at Hughes Hollow... nine Ring-necked Ducks, five Hooded Mergansers (including flyovers) and some Wood Ducks (all flyovers). A half dozen Tree Swallows were the first of the year for most of the group. Our last stop was Sycamore Landing Road for the American Woodcock display. While waiting for that to begin, we had numerous Wood Ducks and approximately 30 American Wigeon fly over. Great Blue Herons also joined the airwaves. One of our group identified a pair of Northern Pintail flying by based on the pointed tail feathers. Just before the woodcocks started we heard a pair of Barred Owls calling and cackling back and forth and a third distant one as well. We heard our first "peent" at 6:34 p.m. and our last "peent" at 6:50 p.m. In

between we had several flight displays. Some of the group had quick looks of one bird on the ground and all saw a pair silhouetted against a partially still lit western sky. I estimated that there were four birds in various stages of display. It was a warm and pleasant evening to be out.

March 15th was the second evening bird walk. Once again we started at Riley's Lock at 5 PM, then proceeded to Hughes Hollow and finished on Sycamore Landing Road at dusk. At Riley's Lock the Potomac River was calm, almost like a sheet of glass. There was a little more waterfowl variety than last Wednesday, with pair of American Wigeon, great looks at four Northern Shovelers and several each of Horned and Pied-billed Grebes. Sure signs that spring is right around the corner included an Eastern Phoebe singing, chipping and moving around in tree tops perching and wagging its tail. At Hughes Hollow we hit the dabbler jackpot. With the sun behind us towards the west, we had super looks at the birds in the large impoundment on the left: six Northern Shovelers, at least four American Wigeon, one Gadwall, one flyover Green-winged Teal and a pair of Wood Ducks. Throughout our time there we also had at least 30 Wood Ducks flying over the impoundments without landing. There were several pair of Hooded Mergansers and around 74 Ring-necked Ducks.

Though never seen, we heard Pied-billed Grebes vocalizing with their unique, far-carrying sounds. Several American Coots also were heard and seen. A pair of Hairy Woodpeckers put on a short display for us and a half dozen Tree Swallows were actively feeding on insects over the impoundment.

Our last stop was standing in a field off of Sycamore Landing Road. We heard our first "peent" at 7:44 p.m. and our last one at 8:03 p.m. (daylight savings time had started the weekend before). In between, we had numerous displays by an estimated four American Woodcocks. Adding to the evening sounds were two different pairs of Barred Owls hooting and hollering and cackling quite a bit throughout the woodcock display.

A bonus bird was a flyby Wilson's Snipe that was identified by its raspy call and erratic flight pattern that was nice enough to circle back towards us for further looks. It was a great evening to be out. There were 10 participants on the trip at various times.



Trip Reports

Hughes Hollow, Sunday, April 10, 2016. Leader: Jim Nelson. Participants: 10. Weather: Sunny, temps started in the low 20's rising to about 40 by the end. Species: 40. The very cold start and recent string of below-average days kept down the numbers of birds and number of species and changed the mix of species a bit from the same walk the last two years. Birds of note included first-of-year Blue-gray Gnatcatchers. Very cooperative Tree and Northern Rough-winged Swallows (first-of-year for many of us) sat in low trees right by the levee posing in the early sun as they waited for aerial insects to start stirring. There were lots of Blue-winged Teal present along with calling Pied-billed Grebes, American Coot, Wood

Duck, Northern Shoveler, and Ring-necked Duck. We found a Red-headed Woodpecker in the usual area at the back of the southwest impoundment. We also enjoyed several singing male Ruby-crowned Kinglets, two Brown Thrashers, two Hermit Thrush, Swamp Sparrow, and many singing male American Goldfinch in their breeding finery (the literature talks about this early spring period of goldfinch singing and pairing up even though breeding does not begin until July). It is interesting to see the changes from year to year. Last year's walk on April 12, 2014, yielded 52 species with many more migratory species present, and April 13, 2013, had a comparable 51 species.

2015 SENECA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT ANALYSIS

The Seneca CBC has been conducted since 1955, but there are no published results for 1958, 1960, 1962, and 1966. This CBC was the 57th. The 15-mile diameter count circle, centered at Violette's Lock on the C&O Canal, includes areas of Montgomery (60% of the circle), Fairfax, and Loudoun counties (40% of the circle), divided into 16 sectors.

We had 119 people participating, 111 in the field and eight feeder watchers, the highest number since 1995. Through our combined efforts, we tallied 93 species on December 20 with six additional species found in our count circle only during "count week" (the period from December 17 through December 23). The total species count of 99 is one above the average of 98 for the last 10 years, and one above our 2014 count. We tallied 25,946 individual birds, below our 28,491 last year and below the average of 29,129 for the last 10 years.

A warmer fall and early winter reduced the numbers of waterfowl and other winter visitors as better weather to our north kept the birds there. On the other hand, this same warm pattern helped give us three very unusual species.

The first was our fourth-ever Lincoln's Sparrow. The bird was seen at Hughes Hollow, for a few seconds. The other two unusual species caused a real stir—four Golden-winged Warblers and two Chestnut-sided Warblers observed at one location. At least one Chestnut-sided Warbler was found and photographed by others at the same location

in the days following the count. These warblers were in a place that birders would not be looking except on a CBC.

We had new high counts for Cackling Goose (first seen in 2014), Northern Pintail, Black Vulture (continuing an upward trend in the last eight years), and Fish Crow.

Other significant high counts (looking at the last ten years or more of data for this CBC) are for Common Loon, Ring-billed Gull, Barred Owl, Red-headed Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Cedar Waxwing, Fox Sparrow, and Common Grackle.

One continuing trend to note—since 2000 when it was first observed on our CBC, Double-crested Cormorant has become pretty regular (probably due to warming climate), with birds seen in nine out of last 16 years.

Once again this year, we see the importance of having many sets of eyes in the field in a variety of habitats, with 19 species found in only one sector, and, of those, 11 species represented by sightings of only a single bird. The value of geographic diversity is shown by the four species found only in Virginia sectors and the 21 species found only in Maryland sectors.

We've come a long way since the first Seneca CBC in 1955 which tallied 32 species and 1,305 individual birds. Twenty species have been tallied on all 57 reported Seneca CBCs, and 11 more have been tallied on 56 Seneca CBCs. At the other extreme, 11 species have been tallied on only one Seneca CBC, including our two new warbler species. †

— Jim Nelson, Compiler

Meet American Bird Conservancy

American Bird Conservancy (ABC) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the conservation of birds of the Americas. The organization has four main priorities. First is extinction prevention – protecting the rarest of the rare. Its second focus is conserving habitats for species on the U.S. Watch List and declining neotropical migrants. The third is reducing threats to birds, such as collisions with glass and free-roaming cats. Lastly, ABC works to build capacity for conservation.

An interview with Dr. Daniel J. Lebbin, Vice President of International Programs at ABC, is featured here. Dr. Lebbin grew up as a birder in Montgomery County and studied ornithology in university.

Lebbin explained one international project that illustrates the depth and breadth of ABC's international work: the establishment of Abra Patricia Reserve in 2005. The reserve is located in northern Peru and, in addition to many species of mammals and insects, is home to the Long-whiskered Owlet and Ochre-fronted Antpitta, two endangered, endemic species of birds. ABC worked with a local Peruvian organization, Asociación Ecosistemas Andinos (ECOAN), to envision a reserve here and acquire lands to make this vision a reality. To help the reserve become self-sufficient and generate funds for ongoing management, ABC helped ECOAN build an ecolodge and research center, generating profits that now supplement grants and help sustain the reserve and ECOAN's other projects. ABC is replicating this model of reserve creation for the rarest birds and investment in sustainability for these reserves with ECOAN at other sites in Peru, and with other partners across Latin America and the Caribbean.

In Lebbin's opinion, one of the biggest obstacles to conservation is insufficient political will. For conservation to be more successful on a larger scale, more support from society and governments is needed. There are millions of bird-watchers in the United States, for example, but a relatively tiny percentage of these participate in bird conservation.

Lebbin says that ABC is unique among bird conservation groups because of its focused mission of bird conservation throughout the Americas, record of achieving results, and in the manner ABC works in partnership with a variety of other conservation groups, governments, individuals, researchers, private landowners and other stakeholders.



Lebbin is one of the authors of the *American Bird Conservancy Guide to Bird Conservation*, a very detailed guide to conservation that, in my opinion, every up-and-coming conservationist should read.

Conservation is most successful and lasting when it includes communities, an idea that ABC finds very important. For example, ABC and Mexican partner Pronatura Noreste are working to restore grasslands on tens of thousands of acres managed by communities and private ranchers. In the Vilcanota Mountains of Peru, partner group ECOAN has worked with more than 20 local communities to protect high Andean woodlands, raising their standards of living and establishing a network of eight Private Conservation Areas managed by the communities and recognized by the Peruvian government as part of the national system of protected areas.

Now is one of the most important times for bird conservation in Latin America. In the U.S., there are relatively few opportunities to create new nature reserves and much of the focus is improving management of previously established conservation lands. In Latin America, the creation of new reserves is ongoing, and in some places happening on a large scale. Many species have populations down to dangerously low numbers, and now is the time to save them.

Since its founding, ABC has seen incredible results. Few organizations match its focused mission and effectiveness. ABC's website, abcbirds.org, has information on ABC's other programs, including migratory birds, bird-smart glass, wind energy, and pesticides.

If you are interested in seeing some of the places ABC has helped protect in Latin America, visit ConservationBirding.org for ideas for your next birding adventure.

ABC is a remarkably reliable organization that has seen phenomenal results over the years, bringing back the birds that have been and are so important in the lives of ABC members. Our thanks go out to all those at ABC for the amazing work they do. ♪

—Patrick Newcombe



Birds of Note (January through late March 2016)

This season was relatively quiet, except, of course, for a certain **Lark Sparrow**, which was Montgomery County's second record, according to eBird. Francis Dirren and Yoli Del Buono discovered it at the polo fields along Hughes Road on January 18th. This sparrow was finicky, sometimes showing up in fifteen minutes, and sometimes showing up after three hours! However, the Lark Sparrow stayed for over a month and even survived a hefty snowstorm. (Much to the relief of birders who hadn't seen it before the storm!)



Warren Cummings found a **Red-throated Loon** at Triadelphia Reservoir on March 30th. Eager birders from both Howard and Montgomery counties converged to enjoy this bird. On March 25th, Mike Ostrowski discovered a **Pectoral Sandpiper**, which are quite common in spring, at Patton Turf Farm.

It was a good winter for **Short-eared Owl** sightings at the now defunct Oaks Landfill. Lucky Montgomery Bird Club trips found two birds on both January 31st and February 7th. It was also a good winter for **Cackling Geese**, which were found in various spots around the county. At Violette's Lock, Dave Czaplak's count of eighteen individual birds was impressive.

Possibly due to the warm winter, some migratory species have arrived earlier than usual or were found during the winter. Ryan Douglas found an early **Louisiana Waterthrush** at the Rachel Carson Conservation Park on March 16th. Michael Bowen found another Louisiana Waterthrush at the Old Angler's Inn along the C&O Canal on March 25th, his earliest by five days. At the Blue Mash Nature Trail, Adam Parr found an extremely early **House Wren** on January 19th. In February, Maureen Smith saw a shock of orange in the snow—an adult male **Baltimore Oriole**! Regularly visiting her feeders, this bird was last sighted on February 16th. †

—Kevin Ebert

Welcome New Members!



Don Chauls
Lorie Coston
Moirra Davenport
Edward and Karen Escalante
Patrick and Esther Malloy
Mary Kimm
Emma Kimm Dixon
Kathleen Burger
Glen Gerada



Candidates for Officers and Directors 2016-2017

In accordance with Article V of the Montgomery Bird Club Constitution, at the April 20, 2016, Club meeting, the Nominating Committee will announce the following candidates to serve as officers and directors for the Club. Each person nominated has agreed to run and to serve if elected.

President: Clive Harris

Vice-President: Stephanie Lovell

Secretary: Rae Dubois

Treasurer: Chris Wright

Chapter Director: Gail Mackiernan

Chapter Director: Scott Young

Chapter Director: Woody Dubois

Chapter Director: Evelyn Ralston

State Director: Jim Moore

State Director: Andy Martin

State Director: Brooke Smith



There were no additional nominations from the floor, and nominations are now closed. The election will take place at the Club's May 18 meeting. The Officers and the State Directors serve one-year terms. The Chapter Directors serve two-year terms. Chapter Directors Woody Dubois and Evelyn Ralston, elected last year, have one year remaining in their terms. †

Jim Nelson, Chair, Mark England, Anna Urciolo

The Chat
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