

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

May 2017

Volume 48, No. 2

## President's Chat

By the time you are reading this, we will be well into Spring migration. I am sure this is the favorite season for nearly every birder in the area. There just aren't enough hours in the day to bird most springs and we are really fortunate to have some great spots to find both migrating and summer breeding neotropical migrants.

As the seasons change it seems like a good opportunity to take stock of how we've fared as a club this year. We started the year with little over 170 members but with a lot of outreach and all of your support we are now over 205 members, back to the levels we had 4-5 years ago. The extra membership dues will really benefit the conservation and outreach efforts of our parent organization, the Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS). We've also had really encouraging participation in our field trips, averaging double figures for our trips and with many newcomers joining these. And the annual social was a well-attended, vibrant event which raised money for the Claudia Wilds Fund through a silent auction of some of her book collection.

As we approach the summer we also begin to wind down our club activities. However we are not quite done with activities yet. We have the Annual Picnic on June 3 at Black Hill Regional Park. Please bring a dish to share, mingle with other club members and enjoy an evening bird walk down at the lake.

It's also the time of year when we have to select a new slate of club officers. I'd like to thank Rae and Woody Dubois, Andy Martin, and Brooke Smith, who are all stepping down this year, for their service to the club



during their time on the council. You will read inside about the nominations for club officers for the coming year.

We're looking for people interested in helping the club expand its outreach.

As you might have seen we are active on Facebook now, and reach out to you through Mailchimp. If you are interested in social media, then please let me know as we are looking for someone to be the focal point for this. Secondly, we are putting together a slide show of Montgomery County birds which we can present to local organizations. If you'd be interested in being one of those on the roster willing to give these talks, please also let me know. Finally please let me know if you'd be interested in helping the club in any other way. You can reach me at [clivegharris@yahoo.com](mailto:clivegharris@yahoo.com).

Happy spring birding, and I hope to see you out in the field in May and June. ♪

—Clive Harris

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# Spring Calendar

**May 17 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m. Kurt Schwartz on Cape May.** Kurt will share his latest photos from his frequent trips to Cape May especially during the migration season.

**June 3 (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 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!

*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 Clive Harris at 301-320-9769 or [clivegharris@yahoo.com](mailto:clivegharris@yahoo.com)*

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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](mailto:stonecroft5@verizon.net).



## Used Binoculars for Kids

This summer, I am volunteering at an organization called CEPIA, with 6 other students, which provides daycare and camp services to 6 to 12 year old children in a low-income community in one of the poorest parts of rural Costa Rica. I will be working there for three weeks.



In the area that CEPIA is based, tourism is quite a significant source of employment, and I believe that the skills learned from birding are incredibly valuable, especially in this area, because of the potential for future employment in ecotourism. Even if the students don't end up becoming birders, I would hopefully raise their awareness of nature and conservation.

I have been fortunate to learn from many opportunities for young birders, including from the generosity of the Montgomery Bird Club, and I want to make a similar impact on kids in Costa Rica.

The same birds we see here, in many cases, migrate south to Costa Rica, so I would love to make a connection to the future young birders of Costa Rica. I am trying to put together birding kits which I can leave at CEPIA. The kits would include binoculars, Costa Rican bird books, and bird-related activities.

Any donations of used binoculars or Costa Rican bird books to support this endeavor would be very much appreciated. Please contact me at [stonecroft5@verizon.net](mailto:stonecroft5@verizon.net) by June 1st if you would like to donate to this project. Thank you! ♪

— Patrick Newcombe

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

**MAY 2 (Tuesday) and MAY 6 (Saturday) - 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 5 (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](mailto:grackling@ATT.NET)

**MAY 6 (SATURDAY) JUG BAY/PATUXENT RIVER.** Join visiting Hartford Audubon Society Connecticut members at 8:00 am when Jug Bay Naturalist Greg Kearns takes us on a pontoon trip up the Patuxent River. Highlight of the trip: an opportunity to visit a nest of one of the thirty nesting pairs of Osprey and take a look at the young. In addition there's a good chance of spring warblers including Prothonotary. Greg will be filling us in on how his work planting wild rice has brought back many duck and rail species to this area. Trip limit 10. For reservations and further information contact Stephanie Lovell, 240-242-3235 or [amorellovell@gmail.com](mailto:amorellovell@gmail.com)

**MAY 7 (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 [kingfishers2@verizon.net](mailto:kingfishers2@verizon.net) or 240-515-4517.



**May 14 (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 or [gradko@yahoo.com](mailto:gradko@yahoo.com)

## Lola Oberman – An Appreciation

Lola Oberman – who passed away in her Bethesda home on April 3, 2017 at the age of 100 – was not particularly tall. A very deceiving physical appearance. In other respects her stature was enormous. A gifted political speechwriter for nationally-prominent Democrats, and a life-long activist for liberal (I would prefer to say “sensible”) causes, she was also for decades a pillar of what is now the Montgomery Bird Club (then the Montgomery County Chapter of the MOS) and of ANS.

Growing up in rural Illinois, where she developed her fondness for nature, it was the sight of a Prothonotary Warbler during a 1969 walk along the C&O canal that really ignited what was to remain a life-long passion for birds and natural history. From 1982 to 1984 she was the county Chapter President. A many-year contributor to what was then the Audubon Naturalist News, her column “Notes from Melody Lane”—her home was on



Melody Lane—was an unending delight. She published two books on her bird-and-people-related encounters, *The Pleasures of Watching Birds* and *Dial B for Birder*—the latter chronicling her experiences resulting from answering

*continued on page 5*





# Trip Reports

**Oaks Landfill, February 5.** Leader: Mark England. Participants: 19. Weather: Very good, high 40's. Species: 22. We met at 3:30 for another late-afternoon winter bird walk at the closed Oaks Landfill. Before we formed carpools, I felt it necessary to temper expectations for seeing Short-eared Owls on this trip, as I had not seen one all winter at the landfill, even though the Meadow Voles seem to be thriving as usual—a real mystery! As expected, we had no SEOW's this day either, but we were compensated with an excellent show of hunting Northern Harriers, at least six, but probably more, both male and female. Other raptors included juvenile and adult Red-shouldered Hawks, and two Red-tailed Hawks. We had good views of some sparrows, including Field, White-crowned (juv.), White-throated, and Savannah. Waterfowl variety was lacking, but we did see an American Black Duck and a Green-winged Teal in flight.



**McKee-Beshers WMA (Hughes Hollow and Sycamore Landing Road), February 25.** Leaders: Patrick Newcombe and Kevin Ebert. Eight participants joined us to explore Hughes Hollow and the vicinity on this brisk day. The weather cooled off since the past couple of weeks, with a slight wind adding to the chill, but the clouds opened intermittently to let the sun peek through. The first arrivals were treated to a Winter Wren's dazzling song in the impoundment parking lot, which is now accessible from both ends of Hunting Quarter Road, and the group worked its way out along the dike of the impoundments to see Ring-necked Ducks, three on the far side of the impoundment, Hooded Mergansers, which seemed to be constantly zipping around the vicinity, and Wood Ducks, which provided fleeting glimpses to accompany their squeals as they shot into the thickly covered marsh habitat. We were surprised to flush a Wilson's Snipe from the reeds along the bank, and were fortunate to receive excellent looks when it landed farther down, out in the open. The fields, woods, and hedgerows yielded few songbirds, so we turned back and most of the group headed off to Sycamore Landing Road, where we heard a Golden-crowned Kinglet. The local Red-headed Woodpeckers did not disappoint, though we did not observe their territorial behavior

stemming from their tendency to stockpile acorns and insects. Instead, the woodpeckers moved only a little, presumably acting as sentinels to guard their territories. This allowed for the group to absorb prolonged views of their striking plumage, especially when the sun illuminated their brilliant red heads.



**Jug Bay Natural Area of Patuxent River Park, March 11.** Leader: John Bjerke. Participants: 8. Species: 35. The annual ANS/MBC March trip to Jug Bay met very chilly temperatures and sometimes blustery winds under sunny skies. Numerous sightings of Bald Eagle probably involved 5 individuals. Two Ospreys were checking out a nesting platform. Although there had been an early arrival of Osprey in February, most of the platforms along this stretch of the Patuxent were still unvisited and the main migration seemed later than usual. Waterfowl were scarce except for Black Ducks and Wood Ducks. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Hermit Thrush were winter holdovers. Eastern Phoebe had arrived and large flocks of American Robins were feeding in the fields. The most unusual bird was a Gray Catbird seen from the bridge over Mattaponi Creek. We wondered if it had wintered in the area. We had three singing Pine Warblers announcing that spring was coming despite the forecast for a foot of snow.



**Hughes Hollow and Vicinity, April 9.** Leader: Jim Nelson. Participants: 11. Weather: Sunny, temps started in the low 40's rising to about 60 by the end. Species: 54. The warm late winter and early spring brought a nice variety of species and numbers of birds. Highest species total for this walk in 4 years. Birds of note included lots of first-of-year birds for the participants -- Green Heron, lots of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, singing Common Yellowthroats, both Western and Yellow Palm Warblers, singing Pine Warblers, and a Yellow-throated Warbler. Lingering winter birds included a nice Red-breasted Nuthatch and a single Rusty Blackbird. Waterfowl included Blue-winged Teal, Wood Duck, American Wigeon, Ring-necked Duck, and Hooded Merganser, along with calling Pied-billed Grebes



# Trip Reports

and some American Coot. We also enjoyed a Barred Owl sitting quietly in the woods, a singing male Ruby-crowned Kinglet, a very vocal Brown Thrasher, many Swamp Sparrows, and a lot of American Goldfinch with many singing males in their breeding finery. Most interesting pre-walk bird was the Wild Turkey that walked across River Road near Riley's lock as the trip leader and another participant were driving to Hughes. As the cars stopped and then drove slowly by, the Turkey sat down in the middle of road and remained there as the cars drove off.

## Lola Oberman, *continued from page 3*

queries to ANS from members of the public puzzled by something they had noticed about birds. Some of her essays for ANS and for other publications are included in these books; both are still available with only a little searching on line. For her numerous contributions to natural history she received the Bartsch Award from ANS in 1998.

Everything about Lola sparkled, and that sparkle is now perhaps best experienced through some of her writings. In "The Curiosity Quotient" (1997) she begins her column about a Tufted Titmouse she noticed outside her window while riding on her exercise bicycle (and she was then about 80). Illustrated with a spirit-capturing photograph of a titmouse by her husband Ted, the article makes clear why she rated the titmouse so highly for its "curiosity quotient", compared not only with other birds, but with other people with whom she had been acquainted. Perhaps this particular Titmouse had had his curiosity aroused by the squeak of her bicycle. "The titmouse is a born investigator, a private-eye keeping watch on the activities of humans"—and so like Lola, keeping her eye on the activities of both birds and humans! And thus she begins to weave together, as she did so frequently, a story about both birds and people.

Lola saw the cup of life as much more than half full. In "Gone on Vacation" (1996) she begins by commenting approvingly on a mother's explanation to her young daughter about the death of the girl's goldfish: "They went on vacation." Lola recalls this as an "antidote" to the gloomy poems by William Cullen Bryant that she was forced to memorize in her youth. He saw in November "The melancholy days...Of wailing winds, and naked

## Welcome New Members!

Patti dePorter

Mario Gallereta

Syd Johnson

Margie Steffens

Jacky Wershale



woods..." Lola, however, thought "November with its foot in the door of winter is a month of great possibilities." "What can be melancholy about a season that brings blizzards of Snow Geese to the skies? ... A pilgrimage to the Eastern Shore in November is guaranteed to dispel the deepest depression."

In "Unsung Hero" for the column "A Piece of My Mind" for the Journal of the American Medical Association (April 15, 1988) she describes her feelings just prior to her surgery. An elderly but compassionate orderly came to wheel her to the operating room, humming softly. Even though she was already in a medication-induced pre-op haze, they immediately bonded, as she recognized the tune – and then they hummed others together. As he left her in the operating room, "I knew everything would be all right." The surgery itself is never even mentioned. (The humming orderly was, of course, the "unsung hero".)

And a final favorite, "The Last Life Bird". A friend had called her to tell her of his sighting of two Red-necked Grebes at Seneca, a life bird for him. His enthusiasm recalled for her A. E. Housman's poem "Loveliest of Trees". But just a few days later, her friend died. Right after his call, Lola had gone out with some friends and had found the grebes. At his funeral service, we "rejoiced for ... a good friend who had been granted, in the final week of a rewarding life, the special joy of discovering a life bird and passing the word to comrades."

I last saw Lola about two months ago, standing with some difficulty in her walker at the head of the stairs as we said good-bye. She was still sparkling. ♯

— Frank Witebsky

## Montgomery Bird Club Annual Social

Once again ANS provided the venue for a successful Social attended by 58 members. Thanks to Pam Oves for her help. This year there were a few changes. First, there was an interesting exhibit in the ANS library of Fiber Art consisting of individual interpretations of birds in wool, wood and paper. Second, the absence of Jim Green was a hole that was ably filled by Andy Martin who did double duty in providing all the drinks and bar tending. In this he was capably assisted by Evelyn Ralston, who allowed that it was a great way to meet all the members! Helen Patton once again provided all the paper goods to cover the tables. Many people provided delicious appetizers.

A new feature was a Silent Auction of some of the Claudia Wild's books. Many folks bought or were successful in their bids to own some of her books, and we made \$265! Thanks to all who bought. Most of all, thanks go to Smokey Glenn Farm for donating the dinner as a gesture of solidarity to our club and its purpose, a huge thank you to Jim Sweet!!

Our guest of Honor, Anna Urciolo, was very surprised to receive her gift for all the years of her service, a painting



Clive presents Anna with her painting at the Social.  
Photo: Stephanie Lovell

of Snow Buntings by the talented Diane Ford. Anna is an important member who always pitches in when something is needed be it manning a booth, filling in for refreshments or whatever needs to be done. Thank you Anna!

Last but not least, Scott Young stepped up to run the members' picture show. One of the funniest was Tony Mead's series of Black Vulture adventures in their back yard. Lots of good pictures from far flung places. Several folks had gone to Iceland this past year. This is one of our favorite features, but you have to be there to show your best shots. Looking forward to next year, where will our members go?

—Stephanie Lovell

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### Meet a Trip Leader: Jim Nelson

Many of our members have enjoyed Jim Nelson's insightful and interesting field trips during fall and spring migration. He has also played an instrumental role in the Montgomery Bird Club. We thank him for all the time and effort he has put into the Montgomery Bird Club!

**Year joined Montgomery Bird Club:** 2006, after retiring from the Environmental Protection Agency

**Volunteer positions with MBC:** Vice President 2007-2008, President 2008-2010 (I got recruited to fill in a term as Vice President about a year after joining the Club and said "yes" without asking what the position entailed.)

**Year began leading bird walks:** 2008

**Favorite bird:** Hard to pick just one. Each year I gain a new appreciation for birds I have seen many times, especially when I discover new behavior. But it is also great to discover new birds. I really enjoy all birds, even Starlings and House Sparrows that we watch in our yard.

**Favorite bird book:** Hard to pick a favorite bird guide. Ken Kaufman's *Kingbird Highway* is a wonderful book.

**Favorite Montgomery County birding spot:** Toss-up between Hughes Hollow and the C&O Canal Pennyfield to Violette's.

**How did you start birding:** Around the time Ann and I got married in 1980, we went to Berkley Springs, West Virginia, for a weekend with a couple we were friends with from work. They were interested in birds and started showing us birds. We were both hooked immediately, though we pretty much birded on our own until we joined the Montgomery Bird Club in 2006. Mike Bowen got me started on the Seneca Christmas Bird Count in 1983, a great introduction to counting birds and contributing to citizen science. I had collected butterflies as a kid and have always enjoyed all aspects of nature, and I'm sorry I didn't discover birding sooner.

**Significant birding accomplishments:** I started doing Project FeederWatch in 1988, almost a charter member. I was a very early-adopter of eBird and have been a committed

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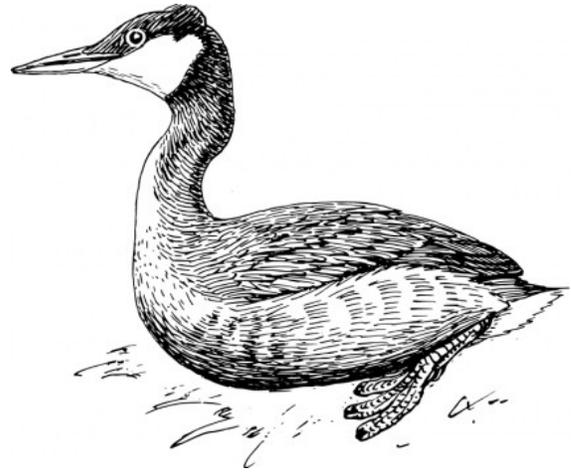
# Birds of Note (late January 2017 through March 2017)

On January 21, Alex Wiebe found a **Ross's Goose** near the pond at the Universities at Shady Grove. Although this bird wandered in the following days, many birders were able to see it. Another **Ross's Goose** was found by Ann Hobbs and David Livengood at Black Hills Regional Park on February 17. **Cackling Geese** were found throughout the county this winter at quite a few locations.

Fred Shaffer found a **Eurasian Wigeon** upstream from Violette's Lock on February 20. I assumed that this was the same bird from the Poplar Animal Sanctuary, and I thought I was reaffirmed when Andy Martin refound that bird on March 18. However, that changed when Karl Krueger found a second Eurasian Wigeon along with the first one on March 28th! On February 11, Dave Czaplak had a group of 18 **Black Scoters** flying past Violette's Lock. There were several **Long-tailed Ducks** present in the county, including some in the Potomac, Black Hills Regional Park, and Tridelfia Reservoir.

On January 18, Dave Czaplak saw two **Sandhill Cranes** from Riley's and Violette's Lock at the Lowes Golf Course. On February 15, Dave Czaplak found a **Red-necked Grebe**, the only one of the winter, at Blockhouse Point. David Roberts found a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** mixed in with Ring-billed Gulls at the Patton Turf Farm on March 19.

At Sycamore Landing Road Fields on January 13, our own editor, Patrick Newcombe, found a **Ring-necked**



**Pheasant.** On March 11, Ed Vigezzi found a group of **Northern Bobwhite** also at these same fields. However, the close proximity of both of these game birds is a good implication that they were released by hunters in the area.

**Pine Siskins** were not especially common this winter, so it was a treat when Don Simonson found one on Springfield Road on February 22. Dave Czaplak also found a siskin at Hughes Hollow on March 20. †

—Kevin Ebert

## Kevin Ebert

*This is the last issue in which Kevin Ebert will be writing the Birds of Note column. The Club thanks him for all the time and effort he has put into these extremely well-written and researched updates. We wish him luck at Cornell University, where he will attend starting this fall. Thank you, Kevin!*

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## Meet a Trip Leader, from previous page

contributor of checklists, participating in the Seneca Christmas Bird Count for over 30 years and being the compiler for the last four years, and leading bird walks for MBC and other organizations and introducing others to the joy of birding at all levels.

**Memorable birding experience:** There are so many but one in particular comes to mind--spotting an immature Black-legged Kittiwake at Lake Estes in Estes Park, Colorado, while birding at the lake in a late-December snowstorm. We were visiting Colorado for Christmas, and

I had helped out on the Rocky Mountain National Park Christmas Bird Count two days before. I got to alert local birders to this unusual bird, add a great "count week" bird and first-time species to the CBC, and write it up for the Colorado Birds Record Committee.

**Something that inspires you about birding:** Having a hobby that gets me out enjoying all aspects of nature and contributes in a small way to helping protect our natural world. †



The Chat  
MBC/Maryland Ornithological Society  
429 Hamilton Avenue  
Silver Spring, MD 20901

## Candidates for Officers and Directors 2017-2018

In accordance with Article V of the Montgomery Bird Club Constitution, at the April 19, 2017, 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:** Alice Jacobsohn

**Treasurer:** Chris Wright

**Chapter Director:** Gail Mackiernan

**Chapter Director:** Scott Young

**Chapter Director:** Carolyn Smith

**Chapter Director:** Martha Morris

**State Director:** Jim Moore

**State Director:** Evelyn Ralston

**State Director:** Ed Vigezzi



There were no additional nominations from the floor, and nominations are now closed. The election will take place at the Club's May 17 meeting. The Officers and the State Directors serve one-year terms. The Chapter Directors serve two-year terms. ♪

— Anna Urciolo