



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

November 2011

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President's Chat

The seasons are changing, as seasons do. After an unusually hot summer in many places, fall in this area seems to have come in with a vengeance, as I write this in early October. Birders, of course, have plenty of reasons to notice changes in the weather and changes in long-term weather patterns. Like others, we are very concerned about what climate change will mean for our world — both the built world and the natural world. But for birders, change at least does hold the promise of interesting birds. An unusual weather pattern is likely to bring unexpected birds for our enjoyment and study.

Speaking of seasons, we have all gotten word about the 2012 MOS Conference — unusual in that it's a winter conference. February on the mid-Atlantic coast should produce a very different list of birds from most of our conferences. We will keep our fingers crossed for decent weather and driving conditions, and let's get over there for a fun experience.

And here's another winter activity you should check out — the several opportunities to participate in a Christmas Bird Count. See page 3 for a listing of the counts and the count coordinators, and get in touch if you are interested. You don't have to be an expert to take part in this event!

The continued vitality of our club depends on a stream of new members to complement us



“seasoned veterans.” I want to continue to remind everybody to promote the club in whatever ways we can. An easy thing to do is to carry a few of the MBC “business cards” to give to prospective members. I have given them out at ANS events and to neighbors and friends. And we now have a new opportunity to get our name and logo visible: MOS is working with an online merchandiser where we can buy T-shirts, mugs, and other stuff, all with the familiar MBC Pileated Woodpecker logo or those of the other chapters. See the MOS website for details.

Good Birding! ♯

—Steve Pretl

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Winter Calendar

Volunteer Project at Little Bennett

Reed Diskey, a Life Scout in Troop 439, Kensington, Maryland, is doing an Eagle Scout project at Little Bennett Regional Park. He is mapping the location of bluebird boxes for a GIS survey. To carry out the project, he has organized a series of hikes throughout the park. If you are interested in going on one of the hikes on November 12 or 13, please contact him at pack478diskey@aol.com. †

Condolences

The club offers its condolences to Mark England on the death of his mother in August. Mary Clare England was head librarian at Chevy Chase Library in the 1970s and 1980s, when the Montgomery Bird Club used the library as a meeting place — long before Mark got interested in birding. †

The Atlas — A Winner!

The *Second Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Maryland and the District of Columbia* won first place for book design in the category of Professional Reference Books at the 25th Annual New York Book Show. Congratulations to the many MBC members who participated in the five-year project — and especially to *Atlas* editor Walter Ellison. †

November 9 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m., “Wildlife of Northern Ecuador and Amazonia.” *Note meeting date on second Wednesday.* Suzanne Dater spent two weeks in northern Ecuador in late May and early June 2010 observing and photographing wildlife. She visited sites four to five hours drive from Quito in the northeastern and northwestern slopes of the Andes, between 3,000 and 11,000 feet, east to the Napo River, a tributary of the Amazon, and finally flew back to Quito.

December 21 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m., “Birding in the Land of the Thunder Dragon — Bhutan.” The Himalayan Buddhist kingdom of Bhutan is one of the world’s premier birding destinations, both for its variety of species and its enlightened environmental policies. Only open to tourism since 1979, Bhutan welcomes birders. Gail Mackiernan, Barry Cooper, and three friends traveled to Bhutan in 2010, their second trip to this wonderful country, and saw many beautiful birds, splendid scenery, and a unique and vibrant culture.

January 18 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m., “On a Clear Day, You Can See L.A. — Birding Opportunities near the Los Angeles Airports.” You are flying into the metropolitan Los Angeles region for business, pleasure, or to catch another plane, and you have some time to go birding. Jeff Metter will tell us about some bird-watching opportunities relatively close to metropolitan airports.

February 8 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m., “A Snapshot of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, Texas — Going Digital.” *Note meeting date on second Wednesday.* George Jett took his new digital camera to one of the best birding/photography spots during peak migration — the lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas. Over 190 species were identified in a 10-day vacation, and many neotropical migrants were captured (digitally speaking). Butterflies, mammals, reptiles, plants, and other unique natural resources will also be shown.

March 16 (Friday), 6:30 p.m., Annual Montgomery Bird Club Social, Woodend, Chevy Chase.

Meetings take place at the Potomac Presbyterian Church, 10301 River Road, Potomac. From the Beltway, take Exit 39 (River Rd/Rte 190) toward Potomac. After crossing Falls Rd (Rte 189), continue a quarter-mile to Gary Road on the right. Turn right on Gary Road, then take an immediate left into the church parking area. (OK to park in the adjacent elementary school lot as well.) Meetings take place in the Fellowship Hall, ground level. Doors open at 7 p.m. Cancellation policy: Club meetings are canceled if Montgomery County schools have been closed. If you have questions, contact Steve Pretl at 202-413-8351 or stevep@takomavillage.org.

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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.



Welcome New Members!

- Carol and William Daugherty
- Gary Jones
- Anne Kulak
- Nancy Laurson
- Marc Liebermann
- Kathryn and Brian Montague
- Helen Schietinger
- Margaret Schmelz



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 or 301-983-2136 (before 9 p.m.).

NOVEMBER 6 (Sunday) LOIS GREEN PARK. Half day. Explore the varied habitats of this new 204-acre Montgomery County park. Songbirds, raptors, and waterfowl are possible. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at parking lot on Snouffer School Road, Gaithersburg, Md. Reservations required. For detailed directions and reservations, call the LEADER: Ed Patten, 301-948-5648.

 **NOVEMBER 11 (Friday) LBJs AT BLUE MASH NATURE TRAIL.** Half day. Blue Mash is hoppin' with Little Brown Jobs, making it a good place to work on the basics of sparrow ID. We'll look for similarities and differences among the common species, like Song and Field and Chipping, while keeping an eye out for less-likely White-crowned and Swamp. This trip is primarily for beginners, but all are welcome. For reservations, time, and directions, contact the LEADER: Lydia Schindler, 301-977-5252 or lydiaschindler@verizon.net.

DECEMBER 4 (Sunday) LILYPONS/NEW DESIGN ROAD. Half day. Wintering field birds, targeting Fox and Tree Sparrows, possibly Virginia Rail and American Bittern. For reservations (required) and more info, call the LEADER: Gail Mackiernan, 301-989-1828.

DECEMBER 11 (Sunday) BLACKWATER NWR. Full day (to dusk). Ducks and thousands of Canada and Snow Geese. Brown-headed Nuthatch possible. Rough-legged Hawk and Short-eared Owl possible in late afternoon. Bring lunch and drinks. Reservations required. Limit: 12. For meeting place, time, and reservations, contact the LEADER: Andy Martin, martinap2@verizon.net or 301-529-2066 (cell).

DECEMBER 17 (Saturday) TRIADELPHIA RESERVOIR CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT. COMPILER: David Holmes, musiclbndr@verizon.net (preferred) or 410-730-7083.

DECEMBER 17 (Saturday) WASHINGTON, DC CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT. Compiler: Larry Cartwright. Info: Carol Hayes at Audubon Naturalist Society, carolh@audubonnaturalist.org or 301-652-9188, ext 10.

DECEMBER 18 (Sunday) SENECA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT. COMPILER: Mark England, 240-307-3132 (h), 240-375-4500 (cell), or markengland@canamcontractors.com.

DECEMBER 28 (Wednesday) CENTRAL LOUDOUN CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT. This count includes 5 miles along the C&O Canal in Maryland near White's Ferry. COMPILER: Joe Coleman, 540-554-2542 or joecoleman@rstartmail.com.

 **JANUARY 1 (Sunday) EARLIEST BIRD WALK AT GEORGETOWN RESERVOIR AND DC HOT SPOTS.** 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. Limit: 20 participants. LEADER: Mike Bowen, 301-530-5764 or dhmbowen@yahoo.com.

JANUARY 2 (Monday) SUGARLOAF MOUNTAIN CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT. If you can help out, contact Helen Horrocks (Frederick), 301-831-6315 or hlh_37@yahoo.com, or Janet Millenson (Montgomery), 301-983-9337 or janet@twocrows.com.

 **JANUARY 15 (Sunday) BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK.** Learn and 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 at the pull-off next to the Route 121 bridge. Half day. No reservations needed. For more information or directions, call the LEADER: Dave Powell, 301-540-8776.

continued on next page



Field Trips

 **FEBRUARY 5 (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 the end of Swain's Lock Road. Bring a scope if you have one. Trip will be canceled if icy conditions along the canal towpath make walking treacherous. Reservations required. For reservations and more info, contact LEADER: Andy Martin, martinap2@verizon.net or 301-529-2066.

FEBRUARY 11 (Saturday) SOMERSET MARSHES. Full day (to dusk). Bring food, water, warm clothing. Visit the amazingly under-explored wilderness of Somerset County's marshes. Emphasis will be waterfowl and uncommon wintering species such as Short-eared Owl, Rough-legged Hawk, and American Bittern. LEADERS: Bill Hubick and Jim Brighton. Reservations required. Limit: 14 participants. For reservations and directions, contact Bill Hubick at bill_hubick@yahoo.com.

FEBRUARY 19 (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. Possible wintering sparrows, raptors, and waterfowl. Leader will have scope for distant birds. We have special permission to enter this "closed to the public" landfill so *reservations are essential*. Limit 16. Meet at 8 a.m. Contact leader for reservations and more information. LEADER: Mark England, 240-207-3132 (home), 240-375-4500 (cell), or markengland@canamcontractors.com.

FEBRUARY 24-26 (Friday-Sunday) MOS ANNUAL CONFERENCE, OCEAN CITY, MD.

 **MARCH 6 (Tuesday), MARCH 8 (Thursday), MARCH 13 (Tuesday), and MARCH 20 (Tuesday) INFORMAL LATE AFTERNOON WALKS UNTIL DUSK.** Joint trip with ANS. Meet promptly at 5 p.m. at the end of Seneca Rd 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 and flashlight, and wear "muddy conditions" footwear. Reservations not required — all are welcome. For more information, contact LEADER: Jim Green, 301-742-0036 (cell).

Notes from Cape May

My husband and I have been going to the Cape May hawk watch in October since the mid-1970s. On our first trip, we saw a sign offering a "visit to a hawk-banding station" if we made a donation to a new organization, the Cape May Bird Observatory. It was then just a room in somebody's house on Lily Lake.

Having donated our \$10, we got up before dawn the next day and sat in a blind in a field somewhere and waited with the bander (Bill Clark) until a tiny speck appeared high over the field. Bill manipulated a long line that had on the end of it a pigeon in a harness. Then a flurry of wings hurled itself toward the pigeon and hit the net. A sharpie, a Cooper's — I forget exactly what after all these years, but a hawk in the hand nevertheless, beautiful and thrilling.

We went to the New Jersey Audubon fall conference that year. The presentation that stands out in memory was Pete

Dunne's talk about the Peregrine Falcon. At that time, I don't think anyone had heard of Pete outside of Cape May, but he knew his stuff. He told us about the disappearance of the Peregrine from the East Coast and Cornell's efforts to restore the bird to its habitat.

The conference was held in a dilapidated hotel near the beach. As we left the hotel, we all saw the bird perched on a ledge above the door. An adult male Peregrine Falcon with radio streamers attached! A minor pandemonium followed, and the awestruck crowd grew bigger and bigger until the bird silently launched itself into the air and was gone.

We saw quite a few Peregrines this October, those that had mated and raised young somewhere to the north or were birds of the year themselves. And they are still thrilling. ♪

—Susan Hunt



Trip Reports

Bombay Hook and Environs, July 23. Leaders: John Bjerke and Cyndie Loeper. Species: 48. The traditional shorebird trip with ANS encountered a shutdown of Rt 50 that required creative backroad driving to reach the Bay Bridge and impressive heat (100 degrees). The reward for perseverance was some resident birds and many southbound shorebirds. Water levels at Raymond Pool and Taylor's Gut were optimal. The 13 species of shorebirds included several nice Stilt Sandpipers, numerous American Avocets, two juvenile Black-necked Stilts, two of the subspecies of Short-billed Dowitcher, and opportunities to study Least, Semipalmated, and Western Sandpipers. A stop in the shade along the Bear Swamp Road in the midmorning produced a surprising number of singing birds. A visit to Port Mahon caught the rising tide, which is not good for birding, and we found only one Sanderling. We retreated to Sambos in Leipsic for a late afternoon cool-off. Our final stop was back at Raymond Pool. Although the study of silhouettes was interesting, the ever-increasing heat encouraged a slightly early end to the day.



Poplar Island Boat Trips. Coordinators: Barry Cooper and Gail Mackiernan. **Wednesday, July 27.** The weather was far better than expected, hot but with low humidity and a nice breeze. En route to the dock, some birds of interest were recorded: Easton Airport: Grasshopper Sparrow, Blue Grosbeak; Knapp's Narrows: Red-breasted Merganser. On Poplar Island, we saw 50 species. Highlights included a Horned Grebe; two of the scoters (Surf and White-winged); an assortment of herons and egrets — Great Blues (35), Great Egrets (20), Cattle Egrets (25), Snowy Egrets (39), and Green Heron and Black-crowned and Yellow-crowned Night-Herons (1 each) — 52 Black-necked Stilts and 34 American Avocets; plus a nice selection of terns, including Least (273), Common (129), Black (5), and Caspian and Forster's (2 each).

Wednesday, August 17. Another trip out to Poplar Island found shorebird numbers rather low despite the habitat looking great — the rains of the last few days have really helped. Most shorebirds were worn adults so the juveniles are still to come. Unfortunately, the Hudsonian Godwit seen on two recent trips was not recorded, but participants had great views of a Least Bittern in the scope and two Virginia Rails crossing the road! A young Yellow-Crowned Night-Heron was a good find. We also had some spectacular

flyby of a Peregrine Falcon in close (but unsuccessful) pursuit of a young Black Tern. Only some of the group saw the single worn adult White-rumped Sandpiper.



Assateague Island/Coastal Worcester, Saturday, September 10. Leaders: Bill Hubick and Jim Brighton. There was impressive fog before dawn, and when we arrived at Bayside we found that a nice flight of Veery and Bobolink was underway, their calls intermixed with occasional warbler notes. The best bird of the morning was a Clay-colored Sparrow that was viewed closely, but briefly, by about half of the group. We tallied around 12 species of warbler during the morning flight, with Magnolia Warbler and American Redstart most numerous. Baltimore Orioles were also conspicuous. A Traill's Flycatcher dropped in briefly as we headed to the campground. Murray Sod Farm hosted a nice collection of shorebirds in the large plowed area, including three Buff-breasted Sandpipers, seven Black-bellied Plovers, six American Golden-Plovers, and five Ruddy Turnstones. One Buff-breasted decided to wander practically to the edge of the road, certainly at least tying everyone's best-ever views of the species.

Skimmer Island at low tide offered a good variety — 52 Black Skimmers (mostly juveniles resting with heads outstretched), two Sandwich Terns, a Black Tern, and a nice comparison of a Western Willet and a lingering Eastern Willet. Jim B. also picked out a Clapper Rail feeding on the edge of the phragmites on Skimmer Island proper.

Noting the low tide, we decided to run to Castaway's. (Remember to always check in.) On the distant flats, Jim Moore spotted a Marbled Godwit just as I announced two Piping Plovers. As we traded scopes, the godwit count increased by one, then another, then another, until we had an impressive total of five. There were also 12 Western Willets nearby for good comparisons.

From there, we worked the Wicomico sod farms to Hurlock. Hampshire Road held a small collection that included the continuing Stilt Sandpiper, one White-rumped, five Pectoral, and seven Solitary Sandpipers. We also stopped at an awesome puddle at the Atkins Road turf farm. I counted over 1,500 Laughing Gulls.

continued on next page



Trip Reports

At Log Cabin Road, we encountered a small group of peeps that included two or three White-rumped Sandpipers. Further down the road, three Buff-breasted Sandpipers were cooperative and close to the road. A Merlin tore through our field of view, scattering literally dozens of Mourning Doves in its wake.

A field adjoining Hurlock WWTP held yet another trio of Buff-breasted Sandpipers. As we stepped out of our cars, we spotted three Common Nighthawks feeding overhead. While a favorite anywhere, nighthawks are tough even as migrants on the Eastern Shore these days, now breeding only on Assateague Island as far as we know. The impoundments themselves held a Ruddy Duck, Northern Shovelers (8), and small numbers of expected shorebirds. The southeast impoundment held an exceptional count of 23 (!) Black Terns. After enjoying them at some length, we watched as first five, then the remaining 18 kettled up and headed southeast as the light faded. On our walk back to the car, we spotted our first Savannah Sparrow of the fall scurrying down the path ahead of us.

A Great-Horned Owl was silhouetted against the last light as we approached Preston.



Hughes Hollow/McKee-Beshers Wildlife Management Area (formerly “Pennyfield to Violette’s Bird Stalk”), Sunday, September 11. Leader: Jim Nelson. Participants: 6. The weather was sunny, humid, and rather still. There was a lot of water in the impoundments and back in the fields and woods, and we saw many crawfish that had crawled up onto the levee, probably forced out by the high water, including several females with eggs and one really aggressive (male?) waving its claws at us and pinching the helpful human who moved it nearer the water. On the bird front, it was fairly quiet. We saw a respectable 36 species. Dog trainers were using the first impoundment, so we skipped that area, probably reducing our overall count. Highlights included seeing a young Mississippi Kite soaring high overhead with a Red-shouldered Hawk (an adult had been seen in this area earlier in the summer). We had nice views of a Red-headed Woodpecker in the dead snags at the back of the impoundments and an Osprey over the impoundments. Lots of White-eyed Vireos sang from the brushy edges of the fields but remained frustratingly

out of view. Common Yellowthroat and Northern Waterthrush were the only warblers seen.



Little Bennett Regional Park, Wednesday, September 14. Leader: Claire Wolfe. After being rained out on our original date, six enthusiastic birders joined me for a morning walk at Little Bennett Regional Park on this rescheduled date. We were hoping to come across some migrants, and we were not disappointed. We encountered several fast-moving flocks that tested our birding skills (and sometimes our patience). We ended the day with 9 species of warbler, 3 species of vireo (White-eyed, Red-eyed, Yellow-throated), and several looks at *empidonax* flycatchers that defied identification.



Rock Creek Park Tours. Wednesday, September 14. Leader: Wallace Kornack. Three participants and the leader toured the principal areas of the park — Ridge, Maintenance Yard, Nature Center, and Dog Run. We had five warbler species: Black-and-white, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Chestnut-sided, and Cape May. There was nothing of particular note among the other birds that were seen.

Sunday, September 18. A newcomer and I visited all of the main birding areas in the park. The nine warbler species we saw were found mainly at the Ridge and the Maintenance Yard parking lot. They were American Redstart, Black-and-white Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Northern Parula, Magnolia Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, and Ovenbird. Philadelphia Vireo and Yellow-billed Cuckoo were the highlights at the Dog Run. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were seen or heard at three locations.



Lois Y. Green Conservation Park, Sunday, September 18. Participants: nine, including leader Mark England. Weather: Sunny, in the 70s. Species: 45. We enjoyed a nice variety of birds in a three-and-a-half-hour walk around most of the park, which was the first time most of the group had been there. From the hill near the park sign, we had some early warbler activity, including Parula, Redstart,





Trip Reports

Black-throated Green, and Magnolia, in addition to well-seen Cooper's Hawk and Northern Harrier. Later we added two Sharpies, a nice adult Broad-wing, and Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks as well. Other good birds included a late Warbling Vireo, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Waterthrush, both eastern and western Palm Warblers, and Nashville Warbler. We totaled 10 warbler species, but there were certainly a few species we missed. I had seen a Wilson's Warbler the previous morning, but we had no luck re-finding it. At the second pond we watched a very tame pair of Wood Ducks, including the male in eclipse plumage, with his unmistakable red eye and base of the bill easy to see in the scope. A pleasant walk on a nice morning!



Patuxent River Park, Jug Bay Natural Area, Saturday, September 24. Leaders: John Bjerke and Greg Kearns. Participants: 12. Species: 42. The annual September search by ANS and MBC for Sora and other marsh creatures went on under cloudy, humid skies. River and creek flows were very high after a month of exceptional rainfall. We had good, if brief, views of two Soras, two Virginia Rails, and two Least Bitterns. We heard at least four other Soras. Another highlight was a good study of a Common Tern flying about with several Forster's. There were many Wood Ducks and a few Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal. The cloudy skies slowed raptors but eventually we had Bald Eagles, Northern Harrier, Red-shouldered Hawk, and a Cooper's Hawk. Marsh Wren antics delighted everyone. Perhaps the most interesting passerine was a hatch-year White-eyed Vireo that softly sang a version of its primary song, which will certainly be much louder and more assured next Spring.



Western Montgomery County Mixed Bag, Friday, October 7. Leader: Dave Powell. The group started at Lois Green Park in Montgomery County, and we were treated to several nice birds. A few minutes into the walk, we had a large flock of 40 to 50 Myrtles go past us; included in the flock was a Cape May, Black-throated Greens, and a Blue-headed Vireo. Near the second pond, we found a mystery warbler, which gave us great looks in a tree while it preened away in full sun, but its identification as a Nashville Warbler was not confirmed until Stephanie Lovell's photos were shared. Nearby we found a second, normal-looking

Nashville Warbler. Other warblers seen were Tennessee, Blackpoll, western Palms, and a Magnolia. A last warbler was seen close, and again it was Stephanie's photo that showed it to be an Orange-crowned Warbler. Sparrows had arrived, and we were treated to White-throated, Swamp, Field, and Song. It was a great morning to be out.



Lilypons Water Gardens, Saturday, October 8. Leader: Mike Welch. A joint field trip of the Montgomery and Frederick Bird Clubs visited Lilypons Water Gardens in southern Frederick County. A dozen birders enjoyed gorgeous early fall weather and good birding. More than 60 species were recorded, including 11 species of warblers. The warblers included a Cape May, several Tennessees, a couple of Nashvilles, and a Blackpoll. Although we couldn't turn up a Nelson's or a Lincoln's Sparrow, sparrows were well-represented with several White-Crowns and a Savannah being the most notable. A few of us had a quick glimpse of a probable Least Bittern, but it refused to come back out of the cattails. An adult Bald Eagle, a Great Egret, and a small flock of Rusty Blackbirds were other highlights.



The Big Sit, Sunday, October 9, at Black Hill. Leader: Chuck Parker. Participants: 13. We had beautiful weather for this year's Big Sit and some wonderful sightings of raptors — although missing in action was the Red-tailed Hawk. We did see a Cooper's, a couple of Sharpies, a few Red-shouldered Hawks, an Osprey, a Northern Harrier, a Broad-winged Hawk, and both an immature and a beautiful adult Bald Eagle. There were still Chimney Swifts overhead along with a Northern Rough-winged Swallow and a few Tree Swallows. A Common Yellowthroat was heard and a couple of Yellow-rumps were seen. Nice views of Solitary Sandpipers and Spotted Sandpipers gave us an opportunity to compare the two, and a male and female Belted Kingfisher spent a lot of time over the water and noisily squabbling with each other. A Ruby-crowned Kinglet was seen on the path but unfortunately did not come within view of our Big Sit circle. New arrivals were White-throated Sparrow and the first-of-the-season Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, but as yet there were no ducks on the water except mallards.

Managed Deer Hunts

These parks will be closed for managed deer hunts, sunrise through sunset.

Blockhouse Point Conservation Park (Darnestown), 11/8, 11/22, 12/13

Bucklodge Forest Conservation Park (Boyd), 12/2 and 1/13/2012

Great Seneca Stream Valley Park, Unit 2 (Gaithersburg), 11/2, 11/16, 12/14

Hoyles Mill Conservation Park and attached segments of Little Seneca Stream Valley Park (Boyd), 11/4, 11/12, 11/18, 12/3, 12/9, 12/17, 1/6/12, 1/14/12, 1/21/12

Little Bennett Regional Park (Clarksburg), 12/7 through 12/9 and 1/4/2012 through 1/6/2012

North Germantown Greenway Park (Clarksburg), 11/2, 11/16, 12/14

Rachel Carson Conservation Park (Olney), 11/7, 11/21, 12/12

Woodstock Equestrian Special Park (Beallsville), 10/28, 11/4, 12/2, 1/13/12

These parks will be closed for Park Police sharpshooters, 5:30 p.m. through sunrise, January 1 through March 31, 2012.

Agricultural History Farm Park and attached segments of Rock Creek Stream Valley Park (Derwood)

Layhill Local Park (Wheaton)

Needwood Golf Course (Rockville)

North Branch Stream Valley Park, Units 2 and 3 (Norbeck)

North Branch Stream Valley Park, Unit 4 (Olney)

Northwest Branch Recreational Park (Aspen Hill)

Northwest Branch Stream Valley Park, Unit 7 (Norwood)

Northwest Golf Course (Wheaton)

Rock Creek Regional Park (Rockville)

Rock Creek Stream Valley Park, Unit 7 (Aspect Hill)

Wheaton Regional Park (Wheaton)

Woodlawn Special Park (Sandy Spring)



Bus Birding: Is Metro Ready for This?

A new program called “Bus Birding” began in Boulder, Colorado. But don’t go there just yet — it only runs August through October. Bus Birding is designed to inspire people to ride the bus while looking for birds on their travels and at selected bus stops. The “JUMP” bus route was selected as a pilot because it travels through a variety of habitats in the Boulder area. Bus Birding includes bus panels, an informational brochure, bus stop signs, an interactive website, and inclusion in a visual arts exhibit at the Colorado University Museum of Natural History called “Bird Shift; The Anthropogenic Ornithology of North America” (how human activity has affected birds). Bus riders can also post bird sightings. The program was created in collaboration with arts organization, museums, birders, ornithologists, climate scientists, transportation specialists and others. ♪

Thanks to Jim Nelson for noting this item on MDOsprey.

Kirtland’s Warbler Results: Some Good News

A summary of this year’s Kirtland’s Warbler census appeared in the Birding Community E-Bulletin (a free monthly electronic newsletter about birds, birding, and bird conservation news co-edited by Paul Baicich and Wayne Peterson).

In central Michigan there were 1,770 singing males counted, while in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula there were an additional 35 birds (an all-time high record for the UP). The first nests found outside of Michigan were found in 2007. This year in Wisconsin, there were 21 singing birds, and in Ontario, Canada, there were two.

The total of 1,828 singing males is a record high, just eclipsing the previous high of 1,826 in 2009. This is a far cry from the first formal census of singing males started in 1971. At that time, the species was at the edge of extinction, with only 201 singing males counted, all of them in central Michigan. ♪



Birds of Note (mid-July—early October 2011)

Some great shorebird finds in August and September highlight this issue's edition of "Birds of Note." All told, birders reported 19 species of shorebirds in Montgomery between mid-July and late September. Notable sightings include individual **Stilt Sandpipers** at the Summit Hall Turf Farm found on 8/7 by John Hubbell and 9/8 by Dave Czaplak. Other notable shorebird species reported from Summit Hall in August and early September include **American Avocet**, **Black-bellied** and **American Golden-Plover**, **Buff-breasted** and **White-rumped Sandpipers**, **Short-billed Dowitcher**, and **Sanderling**. Dave Czaplak had a brief look at a **Wilson's Phalarope** there on 9/8. This was Dave's second Montgomery County Wilson's Phalarope this year, having seen another bird at Violette's Lock back in June. Please note that although the Summit Hall Turf Farm can be great for shorebirds, it is also private property. A spotting scope and a modest amount of patience are almost essential when scanning the turf farm for shorebirds through breaks in the foliage along the C&O Canal towpath.

Although Hurricane Irene did not come inland and deliver the rare pelagic treasures that birders further north in New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut enjoyed, Jim Moore, Jared Fisher, Dave Czaplak, and Mary Ann Todd staked out Violette's Lock for a good part of the day on 8/28, and the storm's fringes produced a **Royal Tern** and Montgomery's second **Least Tern** of the year. **Black** and **Caspian Terns** were seen at Violette's Lock on 8/28 as well. Joe Hanfman reported a **Black Tern** at Triadelphia Reservoir on 8/28. **Common** and **Forster's Terns** were seen along Montgomery's portions of the Potomac River in the week prior to Irene's passing.

Jim Nelson had a flyover **Mississippi Kite** at Hughes Hollow on 9/11. A **Peregrine Falcon** was seen by Dave Czaplak at Violette's Lock on 9/6. Individual **Merlins** were reported a number of times from the Violette's Lock area on 8/27 and 9/15.

A **Glossy Ibis** was seen by Dave Czaplak at Violette's Lock on 8/14. A **Snowy Egret** was reported from the same location on 9/8 and 9/15. **Little Blue Herons** were reported from Riley's Lock on 7/13 by Clifton McKee; 7/31 and 8/1 from Pennyfield Lock by Chris Wright and Mike Bowen; and 8/18 from Blue Mash by Ron Johnson.

Louis Warren tracked down a **Sora** at Hughes Hollow on 9/20.

Gail Mackiernan reported two (possibly three) **Olive-sided Flycatchers** at Brookside Gardens within Wheaton RP on 8/22. Jim and Ann Nelson had an **Olive-sided Flycatcher** at Hughes Hollow on 9/19. Tom Feild and Geraldine King found a **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** in Patuxent River SP downstream of Hipsley Mill on 9/17.

Jared Fisher found a **Philadelphia Vireo** at Pennyfield Lock on 9/18. Another **Philadelphia Vireo** was noted by Noah Kahn at Wheaton RP on the same day.

Dave Czaplak found a **Connecticut Warbler** in the Ten-Mile Creek area of Black Hill RP on 9/25. A **Golden-winged Warbler** was reported from Lake Needwood by Ron Johnson on 8/22, and Noah Kahn found a **Golden-winged Warbler** in the vicinity of Pine Lake in Wheaton RP on 9/18. Jason Berry "spished" up a **Mourning Warbler** in a weedy section of Rock Creek Park just north of the DC line on 8/30.

In "twitching news," birders have reported 246 total species for the year in Montgomery, according to Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's and National Audubon's eBird online checklist. Not sure what's left yet to find? Biggest miss at this point (10/5) would probably be a Northern Saw-Whet Owl, or maybe some lucky (or skillful) birder will find a Snow Bunting, Clay-colored Sparrow, Sedge Wren, or flyover Golden Eagle before year's end, taking us closer to the 250 mark. Outstanding personal achievements so far in 2011 go to Dave Czaplak and Jared Fisher, currently at 231 and 224 respectively. Dave's mark of 231 breaks the current "most Montgomery species in a year" mark of 229 (according to the 2010 MOS Locality List Report), set by Paul O'Brien back in 1991. ♪

—Andy Martin



