



The newsletter of the Montgomery County Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society

November 2009

Volume 40, No. 2

President's Chat

As I write this column on an early October day, there is already a feel of fall in the air with the promise of late-arriving migrants and returning winter visitors. This year seems to have raced by, and it is hard to believe summer is over.



hard to choose. Many thanks to the Club members who have participated in these counts over the years and especially to the folks who serve as count compilers and sector leaders. CBCs are great fun, and I encourage folks who have not done one to sign up. We can always use more counters, and CBCs are a fun way to meet new people and explore new areas.

Our Club year is off to a good start. My thanks to the many members who have already renewed your memberships. If you have not yet renewed, please use the form on the back of this *Chat* to do so promptly. I would like to extend a special welcome to new members. It has been a pleasure to meet you in the field and at Club meetings. I know you will enjoy having the chance to bird with our wonderful field trip leaders and other members.

I always enjoy reading the reports of interesting bird sightings in the *Chat* and on the MDOsprey listserv. While I usually don't get to chase good birds, it is fun to live vicariously as others share their good fortune. Having instant communication on the Internet is a blessing and a curse. We have been out of town a lot this year, and it is frustrating to be sitting at a computer in a public library a thousand miles away reading about a good bird someone has just seen close to home (like the Swallow-tailed Kite at Hughes Hollow that I missed by one day). I am pleased to see many people using eBird to report sightings so that their observations can contribute to bird science as well as their own birding pleasure. I encourage others to use eBird. If you have any questions about getting started, I and others would be happy to help you.

In the August *Chat* I wrote about a proposed new birder mentoring program. I have only heard from a very few people. I would appreciate your feedback.

As you read this in November, the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) season is fast approaching. We have so many interesting counts around the area that it is

One of the long-standing Maryland CBCs is Triadelphia Reservoir in Montgomery and Howard Counties (the first Triadelphia count in the CBC online database is 1949!). The count covers the Triadelphia Reservoir and other habitats contained within a 15-mile-diameter circle centered (roughly) on Ashton, MD. In recent years, well over 100 species have been tallied within the count circle. Volunteer counters number above 50 each year, and some have been counting in their areas for decades.

Club member **Jay Jones** has been serving as compiler for the count since 2002. Work and family obligations have made it necessary for him to give up this job, so we need to find a replacement for this year and subsequent counts. If we do not find a replacement

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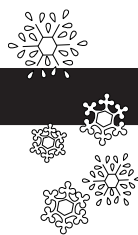


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Montgomery Bird Club

Fall/Winter Calendar



PRESIDENT'S CHAT, from page 1

compiler, the count will not happen this year. Please consider volunteering to take on this job and help keep this count going. Jay is offering to "mentor" his replacement for this year's count and to be available for consultation throughout the process. Interested parties should contact Jay at www.gauntowl@comcast.net for further information.

The count compiler distributes individual count sheets and relevant supporting documents several weeks before the count date to the area leaders. Area leaders meet with their respective volunteers the morning of the count and collect the tally sheets when they are completed. The compiler collects these sheets from seven area leaders, usually at a tally rally open to all participants. The compiler tabulates and records the count data as total numbers for the count circle, then enters the data in the Audubon CBC website, where it is available to anyone. Jay estimates that the compiler spends about 10 hours on this work each year.

I would like to pass along some updates from the most recent MOS Board meeting. The *Breeding Bird Atlas* is well on its way to publication by Johns Hopkins Press, scheduled for Fall 2010. Advance orders at a discount will be taken at the MOS Conference at Washington College in Chestertown in June. Work is well underway on the Conference. Our own Ann Lucy has volunteered to chair the MOS Budget Committee. MOS is looking at ways to update its website and create a presence on Facebook.

As always, good birding! ♪

—Jim Nelson

November 18 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m. "The Best of Ecuador." Bob Mumford.

Compelling images come from the Amazon Basin to the top of Papallacta Pass at 14,000 feet. See the Beryl-spangled Tanager feeding young; endangered species such as the Black-faced Ibis and Jocotoco Antpitta; flashy hummers in flight; and parrots and parakeets at the world-famous Napo River clay licks.

November 22 (Sunday), 7:30 a.m. Invasive Species Removal at Blue Mash Nature Trail. (See page 4.)

December 5 (Saturday), 10:30 a.m. MOS Board Meeting. Hosted by Frederick Bird Club at Urbana Library. Contact Janet Shields, MOS Secretary at janetbill@prodigy.net for information.

December 16 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m. "A Shade-grown and Bird-compatible Coffee Future." Paul Baicich. Some coffees threaten the lives of birds; some coffees can actually benefit birds. And millions of coffee drinkers can make the difference.

January 20 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m. "Birding in a Changing China." Don Messersmith. Don has pioneered and led tours to China since 1982—a total of 14 tours in all. The period brought great advances in travel facilities, field guides, local participation, and bird clubs. Birders from all over the world discovered the great diversity of the Chinese avifauna. Don will talk about these changes and illustrate them with slides from his tours.

February 12 to 15 (Friday to Monday), Great Backyard Bird Count. (See page 4.)

February 17 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m. "Important Bird Areas: Making the Connection between Birders and Bird Conservation." David Yeany. IBAs guide the bird conservation efforts of Audubon Maryland-DC, and establishing new sites relies heavily on volunteer-based breeding bird surveys known as Bird Blitzes. From the Program Coordinator, hear the results of Bird Blitzes across Maryland and learn about recently identified IBAs.

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 1/4 mile to Gary Rd 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 Jim Nelson at 301-530-6574 or kingfishers2@verizon.net.

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Deadline for submissions is the 5th of the preceding month.
Send items to Susan Hunt, 10705 Tenbrook Drive, Silver Spring,
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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 8 (Sunday) LOISY. GREEN CONSERVATION PARK. Half day. Explore the varied habitats of this new 204-acre park. Songbirds, raptors, and waterfowl are possible. Meet 7:30 a.m. at parking lot on Snouffer School Road, Gaithersburg. Reservations required. For detailed directions and reservations, call LEADER: Ed Patten, 301-948-5648.



November 11 (Wednesday) LBJs at BLUE MASH NATURE TRAIL. 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. Half day. For reservations, time, and directions, contact LEADER: Lydia Schindler, 301-977-5252 or lydiaschindler@verizon.net.

November 21 (Saturday) 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. Contact leader for meeting place and time. LEADER: Andy Martin, apmartin2@comcast.net or 301-294-4805 or 301-529-2066 (cell).

November 29 (Sunday) LILYPONS/NEW DESIGN ROAD. Half day. Wintering field birds, targeting Fox and American Tree Sparrows and possibly Sora and American Bittern. Call leader for reservations (required) and more info. LEADER: Gail Mackiernan, 301-989-1828.

December 6 (Sunday) OCCOQUAN NWR, VA. Three-quarters day. Bring lunch and warm drink. We will look for sparrows and other field birds and early waterfowl. Reservations required. Directions: The refuge is located in Woodbridge, VA, 20 miles south of Washington. From the north: Take 95 south to exit 161 (Woodbridge), follow Rte 1 South, cross the Occoquan River, turn left at light onto Dawson Beach Road. Follow road to end at entrance to refuge and proceed on same road to large parking lot on right. LEADER: Mike Bowen, 301-530-5764.

December 19 (Saturday) TRIADELPHIA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT. Compiler still to be determined.

December 19 (Saturday) WASHINGTON, DC CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT. Compiler: Larry Cartwright. Information: Kathy Wilson at Audubon Naturalist Society, 301-652-9188 x10.

December 20 (Sunday) SENECA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT. Contact Compiler: Mark England, 240-207-3132 (home), 240-375-4500 (cell) or markengland@canamcontractors.com if you need information or would like to participate.

December 27 (Sunday) CENTRAL LOUDOUN CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT. (This count includes five miles along the C&O Canal in MD near White's Ferry.) Compiler: Joe Coleman, 540-554-2542 or joecoleman@rcn.com. Contact Joe if you would like to help out in the Montgomery County section or across the Potomac River in VA.

January 1 (Friday) EARLIEST BIRD WALK—GEORGETOWN RESERVOIR AND D.C. HOTSPOTS. Half day. Start the New Year right. Meet 8 a.m. at Georgetown reservoir, DC, by the gate leading to the dike between the pools. Reservations required. Limit: 20. LEADER: Mike Bowen 301-530-5764.

January 2 (Saturday) 2010 COUNTY LISTER'S TRIP. 3/4 to full day. Let's get a good start on our 2010 Montgomery lists. Weather permitting, we will start at Violette's Lock with a walk down the canal to Blockhouse Point. From Violette's, we'll head up the western side of the county, stopping briefly at Hughes Hollow, take another walk at Edward's Ferry Horse Loop, "scope" the Patton Turf Farm area from the road, and finish the day with a brief stop at the Rte 121 bridge at Black Hill RP before heading back to Violette's. Dress for the weather. Trip may involve a total of 3 or 4 miles walked by day's end. Reservations required. Contact leader for meeting time and place. Leader: Andy Martin, 301-529-2066 or apmartin2@comcast.net.

January 3 (Sunday) SUGARLOAF CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT. If you can help out, contact Helen Horrocks (Frederick), 301-831-6315, or Janet Millenson (Montgomery), 301-983-9337.

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Field Trips

January 15–17 (Friday–Sunday) INTRODUCTION TO THE WINTER SHORE: OCEAN CITY TO BROAD-KILL MARSH. Our 2010 “brave winter’s icy blasts” trip offers birders who have the time up to 3 full days on the Eastern shore. Those who can take off Friday will coordinate vehicles from the DC area and stop at birdy locations such as Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center and Bombay Hook NWR on the way to the beach. Saturday will be spent birding sites in Worcester Co, probably including Assateague I. NS and South Point. Sunday we will bird Sussex Co, DE, probably including Silver Lake, Cape Henlopen SP, and Prime Hook NWR. New members and new birders are particularly encouraged but all are welcome. Carpooling strongly encouraged. Reservations absolutely required, due to possibly complex itineraries. Limit: 14. For reservations and directions, call the LEADER: Mike Bowen, 301-530-5764.

JANUARY 30 (Saturday) WATERFOWL FOR BEGINNERS—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 a.m. at the pull-off next to the Rte 121 bridge. Half day. No reservations needed. For more information or directions, call the LEADER: Dave Powell, 301-540-8776.

Managed Deer Hunts

The following parks will be closed, sunrise through sunset, for managed deer hunts this fall and winter.

Blockhouse Point Conservation Park (Darnestown): 11/3–17; 12/2

Bucklodge Forest Conservation Park (Barnesville): 12/4, 12; 1/8

Dry Seneca Stream Valley Park (Seneca): 11/6, 13, 20

Hoyles Mill Conservation Park (Boyd): 10/30; 11/7, 13, 21; 12/5, 11, 19; 1/9, 22, 30

Little Bennett RP (Clarksburg): 12/9–11, 12/16–18

Little Seneca Stream Valley Park, Unit 1 (Boyd): 12/5, 11; 1/9

North Germantown Greenway Park (Goshen) and Great Seneca Stream Valley Park (Gaithersburg): 11/4, 18; 12/23

Rachel Carson Conservation Park (Olney): 11/9, 23; 12/21

Woodstock Equestrian Park (Beallsville): 11/6, 14, 20; 12/4, 12, 18; 1/8, 23, 29

Hunts will also be conducted in 10 additional parks between 5:30 p.m. and sunrise, January through March: **Agricultural History Farm Park; Black Hill RP; Layhill Local Park; North Branch Stream Valley Park’s Units 2 and 3; Northwest Branch Recreation Park; Northwest Branch Stream Valley Park’s Unit 7; Rock Creek Regional Park; Rock Creek Stream Valley Park’s Unit 7; Wheaton Regional Park; and Woodlawn Special Park.**

Blue Mash Cleanup

Join the Montgomery County Sierra Club, MBC, and others to remove invasive plants to help maintain good habitat at this great birding site. Meet 9 a.m. at the Zion Road parking lot for two hours of work. Or come earlier for a bird walk at 7:30 a.m. To sign up for the removal project, contact Mimi Abdu at mimi.abdu@maryland.sierraclub.org or 301-919-6060. ♯

Great Backyard Bird Count

Anyone can take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, from novice bird-watchers to experts, by counting birds for as little as 15 minutes on one or more days and reporting the sightings online at www.birdsource.org/gbbc. Additional online resources include tips to help identify birds, a photo gallery, and special materials for educators. ♯



Trip Reports

Delaware Refuges, July 24. Co-leaders: John Bjerke and Cyndie Loeper. Participants: 14. Species: 70. This joint trip with ANS focuses on shorebirds; this time, we saw 17 species. Raymond Pool at Bombay Hook was graced with numerous American Avocets and Black-necked Stilts and hundreds of Great and Snowy Egrets. We had many intense studies of peeps and dowitchers. Long-billed Dowitchers are still scarce at this point, but at least two were found. Good numbers of Stilt Sandpipers were enjoyed by all. An American Oystercatcher made an uncommon appearance along Port Mahon Road; they may be expanding their range in the Delaware Bay. Other highlights included five Bald Eagles at Bombay Hook, Black Skimmers in Raymond Pool, and two well-seen but somewhat confusing juvenile Virginia Rails in Bear Swamp. Marsh Wrens, Blue Grosbeaks, and singing Wood Thrush and Bobwhite added some nice spice to the mix.



Patuxent River Park, Jug Bay, September 12. Co-leaders: Paul Baicich and John Bjerke, with Greg Kearns. Participants: eight. Species: about 50. This joint trip with ANS boated around the wild rice marshes of Jug Bay. We had excellent views of two Sora, the target bird for the trip, and at least a dozen were heard. A dramatic highlight was the flyover of two adult Bald Eagles, who perched on a snag and allowed close approach in the boat and wonderful photo opportunities. They were joined by a pair of Red-shouldered Hawks that also posed obligingly. Great Egrets, Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal, Wood Ducks, Spotted Sandpiper, Belted Kingfisher, Forster's Terns, Ospreys, and two more eagles added to the glories of the morning on the river. Somewhat unusual was a fly-by Glossy Ibis. A short walk on land produced the usual small landbirds, including Black-and-white Warbler and American Redstart. There were several pewees with variation in molt and song to challenge our skills. Although mostly cloudy throughout the morning, the views over the marsh were more than worth the early start.



Pennyfield to Violette's Bird Stalk, September 13. Leader: Jim Nelson. Participants: 11 plus leader. Species: 30. Weather: Sunny and beautiful. We had a perfect day for walking on the C&O Canal but didn't manage to turn up many migrants. Highlights for the participants were

good views of a perched female Pileated Woodpecker, a perched immature Red-shouldered Hawk, a fall-plumaged male Scarlet Tanager, and Red-eyed Vireos. Surprisingly, we saw NO warblers and had almost no birds on or over the River, and overall numbers of birds were low. Before the walk officially started, we had a flyover Osprey and large numbers of Chimney Swifts and Cedar Waxwings in flight at Violette's Lock.



Assateague Island/Coastal Worcester, September 12. Leaders: Bill Hubick and Jim Brighton. Participants: 16 (including leaders). Species: about 122. It was a fun group, and the 16 sets of eyes paid off in great sightings throughout the day. We began the day with an unforgettable morning flight at Bayside, spent the rest of the morning working migrant flocks on Assateague, and then worked a scenic and productive route to Hurlock. Without targeting a high species tally, we ended with about 122 species. Standing out among highlights were Lark Sparrow; the continuing Marbled Godwit; two Black Terns; two Sandwich Terns; five migrant Dickcissels; 14 species of warbler including Wilson's, Nashville, and Tennessee; and impressive morning flights of Magnolia Warbler (27), American Redstart (166), and Baltimore Oriole (125). These latter totals are conservative and represent only the minimum Bayside counts before 9:00 a.m. New arrivals included Red-breasted Nuthatch, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and Northern Shovelers. We also had Common Nighthawks. The tour group benefitted from the participation of another trip leader—Mike Bowen.



Rock Creek Park, September 16. Leader: Wallace Kornack. Participants: four. Species: 28. We visited the main birding locations at the Park—the Ridge, Equitation Field, Maintenance Yard, Yard Parking Lot, Stable Area, and Dog Run. Overall bird activity was very slow, yielding four warbler species—Black-throated Blue, Black-and-white, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart—and 24 other species. Five woodpecker species were seen: Red-bellied, Downy, Hairy, Pileated, and Flicker.

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Trip Reports

Rock Creek Park, September 20. Leader: Wallace Kornack. Participants: 12. Participants, including five from the eastern shore (Talbot Bird Club), toured all the main birding areas, with the Maintenance Yard yielding some of the most interesting birds. Highlights included Philadelphia, Warbling, and White-eyed Vireos; Red-headed Woodpeckers; and Gray-cheeked Thrush. In addition, the group saw or heard nine warbler species, distributed fairly evenly at each of the major sites. The Tennessee Warbler stood out as the best of the lot. Swainson's Thrush, Wood Thrush, Veery, and Gray-cheeked Thrush rounded out the noteworthy birds.



Little Bennett RP, September 23. Leader: Claire Wolfe. Participants: 4. Species 41. Four birders set out on the Kingsley Trail at Little Bennett RP on a warm, muggy morning. After a slow start, we decided to try the trail on the other side of Clarksburg Road. On the way back to the parking lot, we stopped to investigate some chickadee activity. That flock turned up a nice group of warblers, including Blackpoll, Bay-breasted, and Cape May. By the end of the morning, we had accumulated 41 species including warblers and a few FOS birds, including Red-breasted Nuthatch (heard only) and Ruby-crowned Kinglet. The last bird of the day was the croaking Raven (becoming a familiar sound at Little Bennett). Miss Congeniality went to a lovely female Black-throated Blue Warbler that posed at eye level for several minutes.



Upper Watts Branch Park, September 26. Leader: Paul O'Brien. Participants: 3. Three courageous participants braved the threatening weather to look for "migrant warblers, vireos, thrushes and assorted woodland residents," as advertised. The variety was sparse, but some of the individuals were worth the effort. As for warblers, we found only a single female Magnolia, a Black-and-white, two male American Redstarts (one adult and one immature), and a Common Yellowthroat. But a cooperative Yellow Palm Warbler two feet off the ground made it worthwhile. The vireo list was shorter but sweet: a single Red-eyed and one colorful Philadelphia, which

we see here perhaps once a season. Timing is everything. Despite high hopes of a thrush fallout, we saw only a single Wood Thrush. The edges were more productive than the woodland with the usual suspects, including a fearless Brown Thrasher that stood its ground at 10 feet. The woodland turned up only four species of woodpeckers. But the highlights of the day turned out to be resident hawks, which made themselves conspicuous with both adult and juvenile female Cooper's Hawks making repeated passes nearby, along with a juvenile Red-shouldered Hawk. At about 10 a.m. there was a liftoff of hawks that had spent the night nearby—an Osprey, then a Broad-winged and a Sharp-shinned, all at low altitude. A few minutes later a small kettle of five Broad-winged Hawks plus one Red-shouldered Hawk, also low, struggled to gain altitude in the absence of thermal-generating sunshine. The low altitude made the viewing quite satisfactory. Although the species list was a mere 41, the participants had good looks at some handsome birds.



Lois Y. Green Conservation Park, September 27. Leader: Mark England. Participants: seven. Species: 42. Seven birders joined the leader for a nice walk that produced 42 species. The weather was overcast with some light drizzle, but the temperatures were mild. We had an especially good raptor day, with a few nice migrants as well as many of the resident park species. Early on, we had a low Cooper's Hawk over the field near the parking lot, and we later had another good Coop sighting and three separate good looks at Sharpies. We had a close, tail-molting Merlin fly overhead as we were checking out a mixed songbird flock, and later Ed Patten spotted a hovering Kestrel that we all saw. The only buteo was a Red-shouldered Hawk near the end of the walk—no Red-tailed or Broad-wings. Other highlights included six warbler species, with Magnolia, Yellow, Palm, and Common Yellowthroat being the best seen, but Nashville and Northern Parula were seen by some. Everyone saw two Rose-breasted Grosbeaks (female and probably a young male) perched atop a close small tree, and a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher was a nice find near the end of the walk. Sparrows were strangely absent—only one Song Sparrow was seen by some.

Trip Reports

Little Bennett RP, October 3. Leader: Gemma Radko. Participants: 3. Species: 34. Not a big day in terms of total species, but some great birds and a lovely fall day. We had excellent looks at a flock of Swainson's Thrush (6–8 individuals), with other individual Swainson's seen at several other stops along the way. We also had fantastic looks at 3 or 4 Gray-cheeked Thrush, with a tag-along Wood Thrush and a probable Bicknell's Thrush (Gray-cheeked-like but with rusty primaries/tail and a lighter-colored lower mandible). Common Ravens called throughout the morning, and we surprised a Barred Owl as we descended the (appropriately named) Owl Ridge Trail. A nice burst of warbler activity near the end of our walk included American Redstart, Cape May, Tennessee, and Black-throated Green Warblers.

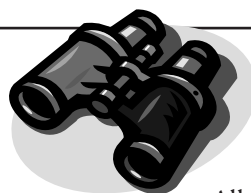
Lilypons Water Gardens, October 10. Leaders: David Smith and Barbara Gearhart. Participants: 11. Species: 53. The weather started out warm but turned cool and breezy with an occasional drizzle. Although we were disappointed in our attempt to see a Nelson's Sparrow (despite the leader's heroic attempts to encourage it to emerge), there was a nice turnout of raptors, including a Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier (seen by only one member of the group), American Kestrel, Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks, and a Cooper's. Wilson's Snipe were busy doing their thing, a late Green Heron was calling, Blue-winged Teal flew over several times, Eastern Towhees were noisy, and Yellow-rumped Warblers were beginning to be seen in little flocks. The best birds of the day were a Lincoln's Sparrow and Nashville Warbler.

MBC Field Trip Survey Results

Thanks to the some 40 MBC members who responded to the survey printed in the *Chat* and handed out at the May meeting. We were pleased to find that in general most participants were happy with the field trip program as it stands. But as the main goal of the survey was to increase the number of participants on the trips, we have taken into account your suggestions for improvement as we set up the 2009–2010 program.

With the enthusiasm and support of our team of trip leaders, we have already incorporated many requests into the 2009 fall program. There you will find trips geared to newer birders with a slower pace and a more limited number of participants, a later starting time for those whose schedule makes the normal early start difficult, more weekend trips, and a new full-day trip to Assateague. A number of you asked about an evening owl/nightjar trip, but we still lack a leader (volunteer, anyone?) to make this happen.

And for those who requested longer and farther-flung trips—coming up in January 2010, an extended 3-day trip to Ocean City and environs, a Montgomery County Big Day in the spring, and a 2–3 day trip to Garrett County in early June.



All of this plus our tried-and-true trips to hotspots like Blue Mash, Little Bennett, the C&O Canal, and Hughes Hollow, along with several joint trips with other MOS chapters to Lilypons and Bombay Hook, should make for an exciting and balanced program. We encourage you to take advantage of these no-cost trips and participate as much as possible to make this year's program one of the most successful! ♪

—Linda Friedland, Field Trip Coordinator

Welcome, New Members



Marion Balsam
Rose Blakely
Michael Bender
Andy Carpenter/
Betty James
Anne Chaka
Christina Chang
Cormac Close
Gayle Countryman-Mills
Woody and Rae Dubois
Marti Eisentraut
Susanna Feder

Susan Higginbotham/
Eugene Murray
Laurie Hollander and
Ben/Mariah
Finnkelstein
Claire Nemes
Jason Netherton
Lin Pinskey
Ron/Sally Pugsley
Dan Zinder

Birds of Note: July to early October 2009



One of the most exciting birds to show up in the county over the past three months was a **Swallow-tailed Kite** that spent 9/4 and 9/5 catching dragonflies on the wing over Hughes Hollow. The bird was initially seen by Lydia Schindler and myself and subsequently by many birders from both the county and the state. Congratulations to leading county lister Paul O'Brien. The Swallow-tailed Kite is number 301 for his Montgomery bird list.

Another notable sighting was a **Western Kingbird** found at Lois Green Conservation Park on 9/19 by Lisa Norwalk.

Some nice waders were reported in the past few months including a **Tricolored Heron**, found by Mike and Robert Ostrowski at Violette's Lock on 7/26. Another Tricolored Heron was reported from the same vicinity by Ed Patten during the last week of August. Joe Hanfman spotted a **Little Blue Heron** hanging out along the muddy shoreline above Brown's Bridge at north end of Rocky Gorge Reservoir on 9/9. Jared Fisher picked out a **Cattle Egret** among the numerous **Great Egrets** at Hughes Hollow on 9/25. A juvenile **White Ibis** (found by Jonathan Balcombe and Marty Stephens) showed up at the Ten Mile Creek arm of Little Seneca Lake on 8/16 and stuck around until 8/21.

Clive Harris found three **Upland Sandpipers** at the Patton and Sons Turf Farm on 8/2. **American Golden-Plovers** were found with some regularity at both the Patton and Sons and Summit Hall Turf Farms in August and September. Jim Beard and John Fox reported eight American Golden-Plovers at the Patton and Sons Turf Farm on 9/6. Clive Harris found a **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** in the same location on 9/7. Dave Czaplak reported a Buff-breasted Sandpiper at the Hughes Road Polo Grounds on 9/16. Two **Stilt Sandpipers** and a **Short-billed Dowitcher** were seen at the Summit Hall Turf Farm on 7/26. A **Black-bellied Plover** was located at Summit Hall on 8/6 by Bill Hubick who, along with Robert and Mike Ostrowski, reported more Black-bellied Plovers and a **Sanderling** there on 8/22.

Dave Czaplak spotted **Black Terns** over the Potomac River at Violette's Lock on 7/23, 7/26, 8/19, and 8/21. Jared Fisher had four more there on 8/23. Bill Hill found a Black Tern at Triadelphia on 8/21. Dave Czaplak noted a final Black Tern at Violette's Lock on 9/23.

Paul O'Brien found both **Olive-sided** and **Alder Flycatchers** at Hughes Hollow on 9/5 while folks were watching the Swallow-tailed Kite. Bill Hubick noted an Alder Flycatcher along the Patuxent River below Brighton Dam on 9/17. This past September has been a great month for **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers**. Yellow-bellied Flycatchers were seen in quite a few locations around the county including Hughes Hollow, Brookside Gardens, Rock Creek RP, and Cabin John RP.

Philadelphia Vireos were reported at the following locations: Violette's Lock on 9/15, Brookside Gardens on 9/25, and along the Patuxent River below Brighton Dam on 9/17.

On 9/9, Tony Quezon saw a **Common Raven** perched on the water tower at the Naval Surface Warfare Center (formerly David Taylor Model Basin) in Carderock. Another Common Raven was reported on 9/14 at Hughes Hollow by Paul Woodward.

John Stup found a **Marsh Wren** in the brushy area along the beginning of Kingsley Trail at Little Bennett RP on 9/17. Gail Mackiernan and Barry Cooper reported a Marsh Wren at Pine Lake in Wheaton RP on 9/28. This same bird was seen again on 9/29 and 9/30. A third Marsh Wren showed up at a storm water management pond in Rockville near East Gude Drive on 10/1.

On 9/19, a **Red-breasted Nuthatch** visited a feeder in Gaithersburg.

A **Gray-cheeked Thrush** visited Gail Mackiernan and Barry Cooper's Colesville backyard on 9/19. Another one was found in Rock Creek RP on 9/21 by Mike Ostrowski.

Gail Mackiernan and Barry Cooper turned up an **Orange-crowned Warbler** in the birch grove at Brookside Gardens on 9/30. Mike Ostrowski reported a **Wilson's Warbler** at Swain's Lock on 9/7. A **Mourning Warbler** was hanging out in Bob Mumford's yard on 9/15, and John Stup found a **Golden-winged Warbler** at Little Bennett RP on 9/16.

Summer Tanagers were found 9/13 by Ron Johnson at Meadowside Nature Center; 9/24 by James Moore in Rockville; and 9/30 by Gail Mackiernan and Barry Cooper at Brookside Gardens, Wheaton RP.

Paul Woodward found a **Lincoln's Sparrow** at Hughes Hollow on 9/17. Jared Fisher found one at Brookside Gardens on 9/29. One was also seen at the Big Sit at Black Hill RP on 10/11.

Rob Hilton spotted a lovely (and slightly early) female **Rusty Blackbird** at Hughes Hollow on 9/26.

As of 10/10, eBird (<http://ebird.org/content/ebird>) reports that a total of 232 species have been found in Montgomery County this year. Additional species seen in the county during the year but not reported on eBird include **Glossy Ibis**, **Black-bellied Whistling-Duck**, **Ruddy Turnstone**, **Lesser Black-backed Gull**, **Great Cormorant**, **Whip-poor-will**, **Orange-crowned Warbler**, **Red Crossbill**, and **Common Redpoll**, bringing the current total to 241. ♪

—Andy Martin



Chit-Chat



Check out fledgling actress Anna Urciolo's performance as one of the "doting aunts" in *Arsenic and Old Lace*, presented by the Sandy Spring Theater Group at the Kentlands Arts Barn, Gaithersburg. Performances are Nov. 6-22, Friday and Saturday nights at 8, Sunday matinees at 2. Call 301-258-6394 or use RecXpress online: www.gaithersburgmd.gov/RecXpress. ♪

Mega-Maryland-lister John Hubbell has recently scored several coups. He becomes the state's #2 in "county close-outs" with 147: John has seen 147 species in each and every one of Maryland's 23 counties. (Jim Stasz leads with 182; the most possible is around 200.) John is now gunning for a couple more: Common Goldeneye (in Garrett County) and Northern Pintail (in Calvert County). He hit two other county listing milestones in early fall: at least 200 species in every county and, adding up all those county lists, 5,000 total county ticks (out of a max of 7,022). ♪

Top Maryland Lister: Paul O'Brien has seen a remarkable 402 species in Maryland. He reached the magic 400 mark when a Western Meadowlark seen in Frederick County way back in 1991 gained official acceptance. An Allen's Hummingbird in fall 2008 was #401, and a Yellow Rail at Rumbley Point, Somerset County, in April 2009 made #402. Paul also holds the top spot on the official Montgomery County list; the Swallow-tailed Kite at Hughes Hollow in September 2009 was #301. ♪

Andy Martin has been conducting a "Big Year Montgomery." As of mid-October 2009, he reached 218 with a Connecticut Warbler at Hughes Hollow. He's hoping for 220 by the end of the year, maybe with the help of an Orange-crowned Warbler or an irruption of Common Redpolls. The record is 229, set by Paul O'Brien in the early 1990s. ♪

Old Club Ties Thrive: Mike and Joy Bowen, birding in Cape Cod, stayed with former MBC members **Peter and Elaine Bono** and ran into **Chris Wright** at the National Seashore. In Arizona, **Anna Urciolo** benefited from the expertise of former MBC member **Erika Wilson**. **Bob Hartman** and **Lydia Schindler** traveled to Trinidad and Tobago on a tour led by former MBC member Bill Murphy. And **Gemma Radko**, visiting Ecuador, birded extensively with MBCer **Howard Youth**, currently residing in Quito. ♪

—Lydia Schindler

Financial Report, 2009/2010

EXPENSES

MOS Dues	\$2,200
Post Office	200
Speakers	200
Office Supplies	100
Miscellaneous	200
Rent (\$75/meeting)	600
Chat	1,000
Web	250
Social	1,500
Donation	2,000
TOTAL	\$8,250

INCOME

MOS Dues	\$5,500
Wilds Fund	700
Site Guide	200
Miscellaneous	150
Interest	100
Social	1,200
TOTAL	\$7,850

What's in a Name?

The July 2009 issue of *The Auk* included the 50th supplement to the AOU *Checklist of North American Birds* summarizing decisions made in 2008 by the AOU's Committee on Classification and Nomenclature—North and Middle America.

Among the changes of interest to MBCers are the following:

The Scarlet Tanager, the Summer Tanager, and the Western Tanager have been moved from the tanager family (*Thraupidae*) to the cardinal and grosbeak family (*Cardinalidae*). But no need to learn new names ("Scarlet Grosbeak"? "Scarlet Cardinal"?); the common names remain the same. Common names that have changed, however, include the Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (now just Nelson's Sparrow) and the Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow (now the Saltmarsh Sparrow). ♪

Volunteer Needed

As you know, Howard Lefkowitz served as managing editor for the Bird Club's successful publication of the second edition of *A Birder's Guide to Montgomery County, Maryland*. Since publication last year, Howard has also been responsible for sales and distribution of the Site Guide. Howard has now asked that we find someone to take over these sale and distribution duties.

Howard currently has most of the Site Guides but also has a network of Club members around the county who store some of the guides and deliver them under Howard's direction to local vendors. The job includes periodically contacting current and potential vendors by phone and e-mail, distributing copies to vendors (some distribution

is done by shipping, some by personal delivery within Montgomery County), billing vendors and collecting their payments, and storing copies of the Site Guide (Howard currently has 25 boxes). Howard estimates that this work takes about five hours per month.

We are looking for someone who would take over all these duties, and Howard would work closely with whoever does so to ensure a smooth transition. Howard is willing to retain responsibility for billing and collection, if desired. Howard would also keep a supply of Site Guides for delivery in the Wheaton/Silver Spring area.

If you are interested, please contact me at 301-530-6574 or kingfishers2@verizon.net. If you have any questions about the job, contact Howard at wa3vez@comcast.net. ♪

—Jim Nelson

Book Review: Sibley on Trees

When an interviewer from *Parade* Magazine asked David Allen Sibley, "why trees?" he answered, "I've always noticed them, but most of the time they were just what was holding up the birds." *Sibley's Guide to Trees* was a hot topic on MDOsprey almost as soon as the book appeared in bookstores. It seems that many other birders are (or claim to be) as ignorant about trees as I am. I am sometimes able to recognize the sycamore ("Which tree?") but am otherwise at a loss. In the *Parade* article, Sibley said that the sycamore was one of his favorite trees: "Sycamores are associated with the sort of classic sitting on the riverbank with your toes in the water, leaning against a tree in the shade and listening to birdsongs"

Sibley sets the scene with some tree facts:

- The tallest tree: a Coast Redwood in Northern California, at 379.1 feet tall
- The largest single tree (volume and weight), a Giant Sequoia, estimated at 3.6 million pounds
- The oldest tree, a grove of Quaking Aspens in Utah with a single root system, estimated to be at least 80,000 years old



Trees can't fly away just as you get your binoculars on them, but identifying them is not as easy as I had hoped. Even trees of the same species can show a great deal of variation depending on their age, their environment, the season, and the conditions.

In the "guide" part of the book, Sibley describes 52 tree families in North America. Each species description includes illustrations of the leaves (spring and fall), the fruit and flower, the bark, a twig, the shape of the full-grown tree, and a range map. As you would expect, the illustrations are lovely.

Also included is a map of plant hardiness zones and a species checklist. (Now we can begin lifelisting trees!)

The book is the size of *Sibley's Guide to Birds* so it won't fit in your jacket pocket, and the price is hefty too (\$39.95) but well worth it for experts and beginners alike. ♪

—Susan Hunt





The Big Sit 2009

On Sunday October 11 the team gathered at Black Hill Regional Park at 7:00 a.m. on the earthen dike near the boat ramp. The day started out clear and cold with a temperature of 42°. The sunrise was beautiful and the weather the rest of the day was clear and warm. We had a total of nine birders (Chuck Parker [compiler], Mike Bowen, Clive Harris, John Pangborn, Bob Hartman, Susan Hunt, Lydia Schindler, Woody and Rae Dubois) come out for the event, and several curious onlookers stopped by.

Total species count was 55, with highlights including a Lincoln's Sparrow, American Wigeon, Northern Shoveler, and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. The most impressive sight of the day came when two soaring Red-tails locked talons and engaged in a freefall spin that last more than ten seconds.

Good Birding! ✧

—Chuck Parker

Mary LaMarca, In Memoriam

I first met Mary LaMarca in the late '90s in the USDA "Woody Plant Identification" class taught by Cris Fleming. Cris had us outside in small groups trying to identify trees, using the key in Brown and Brown's *Woody Plants of Maryland*, and after Mary overruled my suggested key choice, I watched as she unerringly led us to the correct ID.

As we shared a broad range of natural history interests (including birds), I found myself in Mary's company several times over the years. We both traipsed to Garrett County in a two-year search for rare and endangered Maryland butterflies, and on another ANS-led butterfly foray to Southern Maryland, Mary rode in my car and we had lots of time to talk. We talked about Irish ceili dancing and folk music, and when I mentioned that one of my favorite musicians was the Brit singer/songwriter Richard Thompson, Mary not only knew the name, she surprised me by launching into one of his songs as we drove along. I particularly remember that day, April 28, 2002, because the weather turned bad in the afternoon as we left Charles County, and we later heard that the strongest tornado ever to hit Maryland had devastated LaPlata.

During this period, Mary was battling cancer, but whenever I would see her, she was always upbeat and

full of life. She had not an ounce of self-pity and always enjoyed the moment. One of the last times we shared a memorable outdoor experience was when the Northern Lapwing turned up in upper Frederick County. I had been looking at the distant bird in my scope when Mary drove up, now using a cane as her ALS was in its early stages. She came over and enjoyed a long look at the spectacular bird, and then I offered to show her a nearby Great Horned Owl nest that Hal Wierenga and Lynn Davidson had found. She followed me to the spot, and as I left, she was still looking eye-to-eye at the mother owl, enjoying the moment as always.

I will always remember Mary as a bright, talented, and above all courageous person, who accepted her illnesses with grace and lived joyously despite them.

—Mark England

Condolences

The club offers its condolences to Frank Witebsky on the death of his wife, Phyllis Joan Baron, on October 16.



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL



I/we wish to join the Montgomery Bird Club, a chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society, for the year beginning September 2009 and enclose dues for:

- ☐ Individual—\$30 (\$10 Chapter/\$20 State)
☐ Sustaining—\$70 (\$20 Chapter/\$50 State)
☐ Household—\$40 (\$15 Chapter/\$25 State)
☐ Life—\$1200 (\$200 Chapter/ \$1000 State)
☐ Junior—\$6 (\$1 Chapter/\$5 State)
☐ Associate*—\$8

**member of MOS through another chapter*

\$ _____ **Dues**

\$ _____ **Donation to Claudia Wilds Fund**

\$ _____ **Total enclosed**

☐ New Membership ☐ Renewal

Total number of Chapter members _____
(Household, Sustaining, or Life memberships)

NAME(S) _____

STREET ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____

ZIP _____

TELEPHONE _____

E-MAIL _____

☐ Check here if you would like to read *The Chat* on the Internet instead of receiving a mailed copy. We encourage members with Internet access to receive *The Chat* electronically to save trees, and to reduce club printing and mailing costs. You will receive an e-mail message when *The Chat* becomes available on the club website.

☐ Check if you would like to be contacted for work on a committee.

☐ Check if any information above has changed.

Please make check payable to MBC/MOS and mail to:
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