



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

November 2010

Volume 41, No. 4

President's Chat

I'm happy that the club year is off to a good start, with a variety of field trips and interesting speakers. The weather has had its ups and downs but hasn't caused us any real problems so far. (We can hope that winter doesn't come close to last year's extremes.)

Running an organization like this requires work contributions from many people, and we are fortunate to have a large pool of generous and skilled members. Most recently, **Suzanne Dater** has taken over nametag coordination, and **Jane Farber** and **Jeanne Lacerte** are distributing the *Chat*. Many thanks!

We will continue to ask for volunteers for any number of jobs. You can expect to hear about these opportunities at meetings, or by email, or in the *Chat*. I hope you'll consider what you can do for the club and for your birding friends. As one example, the club expects to host an MOS Board Meeting early in 2011, and we will be looking for members to provide refreshments for the meeting.

I also want to solicit your ideas on any of our programs, on possible new undertakings, or on the club's communications. Let me or any of the Club Council know how we can make MBC even better. I promise we will listen!

Finally, something we're doing to solve a problem that's affected many of us — parking at our meetings has been really difficult when the school next door has a major event on the same night,



as happened in September. The lot was packed, and members were faced with a long walk down a dark street. Some chose to go home instead! To avoid this problem in the future, we are putting in place a procedure of contacting the school to check for any conflicts before we firm up our

meeting schedule. We've found one future conflict already and have taken action on it — the February meeting has been moved to February 9. Attending a Montgomery Bird Club meeting, and finding parking here, should be an enjoyable experience.

Good Birding! ♪

—Steve Pretl



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Montgomery Bird Club

Fall/Winter Calendar



WANTED:

Bluebird lover(s) to take over a Bluebird Box Trail, starting April 2011

Where: Parklawn Cemetery, Veirs Mill Road, just south of Twinbrook Parkway, Rockville, MD

What: 20 Bluebird boxes, plus three Kestrel boxes

When: Trail to be monitored once a week during breeding season: Early April through early August. Tools, supplies, and books provided

Who: Please contact Helen and David Gray at 301-681-8041 or graydl@erols.com



Coffee Break for the Birds

As birders, we are probably more aware than most people that our choice of a cup of coffee can have a significant impact on birds. Last year, we heard Paul Baicich speak on this subject at our December meeting. This year, our friends at ANS are offering us a chance to hear more about this subject on Wednesday, November 3rd at 7:30 pm.

Robert Rice of the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center will discuss "Bird-friendly Coffee Saves Songbirds and Helps Central American Farmers."

Shade-grown coffee will be on sale (as always) at the Woodend Shop. ♪

November 17 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m., "Protecting Bird Habitats Outside the U.S." More than 360 species of birds that breed in the U.S. spend significant parts of their life cycle beyond our borders. The conservation of habitats that "our" birds rely on when they migrate outside the U.S. is essential to their survival. *Matt Jeffery* of Audubon's International Alliances Program will illustrate Audubon's approach to conserving these important habitats by focusing on successes in Veracruz, Mexico, home to the world-renowned River of Raptors. (Rescheduled from the October meeting.)

December 15 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m., "Birding in Singapore, Sulawesi, and Halmahera — Crossing the Wallace Line." *Mike Welch's* birding adventures in Singapore, a modern city-state with several nature preserves, were followed by birding two islands in Indonesia noted for their endemic species.

January 19 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m., "Brazil." Through the Partners of the Americas exchange program, join naturalist *Greg Kearns* touring Rio de Janeiro, the Carnival capital of the world, and see the top 10 nature and historical attractions. Then tour the largest wetland in the world, the Pantanal, and end in Iguassu Falls on the Argentine border, one of the world's most spectacular!

February 9 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m., "Important Bird Areas: Making the Connection between Birders and Bird Conservation." 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 *David Yeany*, hear the results of recent Bird Blitz surveys across Maryland, learn about newly identified IBAs, and find out what Audubon is doing to protect our birds and their habitats across the state.

March 11 (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.

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

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
Deadline for submissions is the 5th of the preceding month.
Send items to Susan Hunt, 10705 Tenbrook Drive, Silver Spring, Maryland 20901. Phone: 301-530-2807, e-mail: shunt820@yahoo.com.



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 7 (Sunday) LOISY. GREEN CP. 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 Rd, Gaithersburg, Md. Reservations required. For directions and reservations, call the LEADER: Ed Patten, 301-948-5648.

 **November 11 (Thursday) LBJs at BLUE MASH.** 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.

November 20 (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. For meeting place and time, contact the LEADER: Andy Martin, apmartin2@comcast.net or 301-529-2066.

November 21 (Sunday) LILYPONS/NEW DESIGN ROAD. Half day. Wintering field birds, targeting Fox and Tree Sparrows, possibly Sora and American Bittern. Reservations required. For reservations and more info, call the LEADER: Gail Mackiernan, 301-989-1828.

December 12 (Sunday) OCCOQUAN NWR, VA. Half day. Bring snacks and warm drinks for the trails. Those who wish can join the leader at a local restaurant for lunch following the trip. We will look for field birds, especially sparrows, and waterfowl. (Established in 1998, Occoquan NWR is located at the confluence of the Potomac and Occoquan Rivers. Wetland habitats cover about 50% of the refuge; upland meadows and mature oak-hickory-beech forest are interspersed among the wetlands.) Meet at 8 a.m. at the refuge car park. Reservations required. LEADER: Mike Bowen, 301-530-5764 or dhmbowen@yahoo.com.

December 18 (Saturday) TRIADDELPHIA RESERVOIR CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT. COMPILER: David Holmes, musiclbndr@verizon.net (preferred) or 410-730-7083.

December 18 (Saturday) WASHINGTON, DC CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT. COMPILER: Larry Cartwright. Info: Carol Hayes at Audubon Naturalist Society, carolh@audubonnaturalist.org or 301-652-9188 x10.

December 19 (Sunday) SENECA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT. COMPILER: Mark England, 240-207-3132 (h), 240-375-4500 (cell), or markengland@canamcontractors.com.

December 29 (Wednesday) CENTRAL LOUDOUN CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT. This count includes 5 miles along the C&O Canal in MD near White's Ferry. COMPILER: Joe Coleman, 540-554-2542 or joecoleman@rstarmail.com.

 **JANUARY 1 (Saturday) EARLIEST BIRD WALK, GEORGETOWN RESERVOIR AND DC HOTSPOTS.** 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. LEADER: Mike Bowen, 301-530-5764 or dhmbowen@yahoo.com.

January 2 (Sunday) 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 9 (Sunday) WESTERN COUNTY WINTER MIXED BAG. Three-quarter to full day. Weather conditions permitting, we'll meet at Violette's Lock and 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, then continuing on to Edward's Ferry Horse Loop. Next we'll 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 3 to 4 miles of walking by day's end. Reservations required. For meeting time and place, contact the LEADER: Andy Martin, 301-529-2066 (cell) or apmartin2@comcast.net.

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Field Trips



JANUARY 14–17 (Friday–Monday) INTRODUCTION TO THE WINTER SHORE: OCEAN CITY TO BROADKILL MARSH. Our 2011 “brave winter’s icy blasts” trip offers birders up to three full days on the Eastern Shore. On Friday we’ll coordinate vehicles from the DC area and stop at birdy locations such as Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center and Bombay Hook NWR en route to the beach. Saturday will be spent birding sites in Worcester County, probably including Assateague Island NS and South Point. Sunday we’ll bird Sussex County, DE, probably including Silver Lake, Cape Henlopen State Park, and Prime Hook NWR. Target birds include scoters, eiders, Harlequin Duck, loons, Bonaparte’s Gull, Purple Sandpiper, and any rarities that may have been reported in our path. New members and new birders are particularly encouraged, but all are welcome. Carpooling strongly encouraged. Reservations required, due to complex itineraries. Limit: 14. For reservations and directions, contact the LEADER: Mike Bowen, 301-530-5764 or dhmbowen@yahoo.com.



JANUARY 29 (Saturday) WATERFOWL FOR BEGINNERS AT BLACK HILL RP. Half day. Learn or review the basics of duck ID at this premiere county spot for winter waterfowl. Geared to new birders, but all are welcome. Bring a scope if you have one. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the small parking area next to the Rte 121 bridge. No reservations needed. For more info or directions, call the LEADER: Dave Powell, 301-540-8776.

FEBRUARY 6 (Sunday) BLACK HILL RP. Half day. We’ll focus on identifying winter waterfowl on the lake but look for landbirds too. Short easy walks with car jaunts in between. Area can be windy, so dress appropriately. Scopes are helpful. Limit: 10. Meet at 8 a.m. at the small parking area next to the Rte 121 bridge. Reservations required. LEADER: Andy Martin, 301-529-2066 (cell) or apmartin2@comcast.net.

FEBRUARY 12 (Saturday) SOMERSET MARSHES. New trip! Full day (to dusk). Bring food, water, and warm clothing. Visit the under-explored wilderness of Somerset County’s marshes. Emphasis on 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. For reservations and directions, contact Bill Hubick at bill_hubick@yahoo.com.

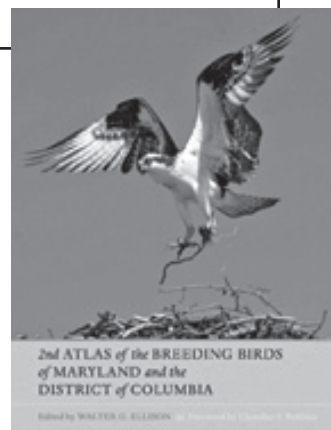
FEBRUARY 20 (Sunday) OAKS LANDFILL, LAYTONSVILLE. Bundle up to explore this now-closed landfill adjacent to the Blue Mash Nature Trail. Mostly open terrain with some ponds. Possible wintering sparrows, raptors, and waterfowl. Leader will have scope for distant birds. We have special permission to enter this “closed to the public” landfill so reservations are essential. Limit: 16. Meet at 8 a.m. For reservations and more info, contact the LEADER: Mark England, 240-207-3132 (h), 240-375-4500 (cell), or markengland@canamcontractors.com.

Coming Soon: *The Breeding Bird Atlas!*

Remember those five long but fun years you spent atlas-ing? Were you still thinking “NB!” whenever you saw a bird carrying nest material this past summer?

Well, the excitement continues — all the hard work of the army of MOS atlas volunteers and coordinators will soon come to fruition with the late November publication by Johns Hopkins University Press of the *Second Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Maryland and the District of Columbia*. With maps providing important information on population changes in our region, color photographs accompanying the species reports, and a foreword by Chandler Robbins, the *Atlas* promises to be both informative and beautiful, providing solid data for birders and researchers alike on success stories and declines in bird species and habitat in Maryland and DC.

The book will be priced at \$75, but pre-orders get a 25% discount. You can pre-order by going to the MOS (www.mdbirds.org/atlas.html) or JHU (www.press.jhu.edu) websites or by phoning 1-800-537-5487. Be sure to mention the code NAF to get your special pre-order discount. You can get your book signed and hear more about the Atlas Project by attending a presentation with *Atlas* editor Walter Ellison at the Audubon Naturalist Society on December 15 at 7:30 p.m. For more information, visit www.audubonnaturalist.org. ♪



—Lisa Shannon



Trip Reports

Delaware Refuges, July 24. Leaders: John Bjerke and Cyndie Loeper. Participants: 6; Species: 65. Joint trip with ANS to Bombay Hook NWR and environs. The day was exceptionally hot (98°) and somewhat muggy. Although the tides were right for birding the Hook, the water levels in the impoundments were too high. Nevertheless, the refuge never disappoints and scattered numbers of shorebirds were located. We had 14 species of shorebird, slightly below the expected 15 to 17. Best was a Pectoral in Bear Swamp. A number of landbirds were still singing, and a Marsh Wren put on quite a display for us. We had perhaps four Bald Eagles and many herons, including a juvenile Yellow-crowned. The best shorebirding was at Taylor's Gut where hundreds of peep and dowitchers kept us working. Particularly notable were the large numbers of Western Sandpipers. We had close views of all three peep and plenty of time to enjoy their subtle differences. The best crabs were at Sambos in Leipsic where we took some respite from the sun.



Leader's Choice, August 25. Leader: Jim Green. Participants 9; species 53. The best part of the day was that we had a beautiful pleasant morning with a slight breeze and no humidity with temps in the low 80s — none of the heat wave that was lurking throughout the area for most of August. The trip began at Riley's Lock. We scanned the Potomac River for an hour or so and had great scope views of a patient Solitary Sandpiper on the near mud flat just below us. The best birds here were three or four Caspian Terns. One of them landed for quite awhile on a log in the middle of the river and enabled us to study it with the scopes as well. We walked north on the towpath a short distance. We had only 4 warblers for the morning, and our first one was a Prothonotary Warbler. Our next stop was Hughes Hollow. There were quite a number of Great Egrets in the impoundments. We were also able to find several immature Little Blue Herons and one Snowy Egret. Little Blues usually show up most summers here, but the Snowy Egret is certainly not an annual visitor. Hughes Hollow had several of them visit this past summer. We then proceeded over to Sycamore Landing and walked the last part of the road. Things were extremely quiet. A Chestnut-sided Warbler was seen briefly by some of the group. Our last stop was at the Polo Fields on Hughes Road with hopes of some nice grasspipers. We had to settle for Killdeer and a few Horned Larks.

Little Bennett RP, September 8. Leader: Claire Wolfe. Eight enthusiastic birders joined me for a morning walk down the Kingsley Trail in Little Bennett Regional Park. Although warblers proved to be in short supply, we were still treated to some excellent birding, including a tree containing a heavily fruiting vine. Among the numerous robins and Red-eyed Vireos enjoying the berries, we had great views of Veery, Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Baltimore Orioles, Scarlet Tanagers, and Great Crested Flycatchers. As the morning warmed up, we were treated to Veery, Swainson's Thrush, and Wood Thrush, all coming down to the bank of the creek for a bath. Even though the wind started to pick up, the trip ended nicely when Mike Bowen spotted a Red-headed Woodpecker, very uncommon in the park, flying along the creek.



Assateague Island/Coastal Worcester, September 11. Leader: Bill Hubick; Mikey Lutmerding, co-leading. Participants began pre-dawn at Bayside and spent hours enjoying a steady stream of quality migrants. Standing out among these were at least 12 (!) White Ibis as well as American Golden-Plover, Tennessee and Wilson's Warblers, and Warbling and Philadelphia Vireos. The coastal specialties were three Marbled Godwits and 12 Sandwich Terns, well-studied on Skimmer Island. Another welcome sight was 28 Black Skimmers, of which all but three were juveniles. We spent the afternoon working the sod farms between Worcester, Wicomico, and Dorchester Counties, landing Buff-Breasted Sandpipers, Baird's Sandpiper, and another American Golden-Plover. Other stops brought bonus birds such as Red-headed Woodpeckers and Common Nighthawk. Species total: 120!



Pennyfield to Violette's Bird Stalk, September 12. Leader: Jim Nelson. An intrepid group of seven hardy souls met on a rainy, gray morning to walk from Pennyfield to Violette's Lock on the C&O Canal. The weather made for poor viewing conditions for the many migrant warblers moving through. We had good-sized groups of migrants, primarily warblers, at several points along the almost 3 miles we walked, but many of them remained high in trees and hard to see in the gray light. Even so, we tallied 47 species for the morning.

continued on next page

Trip Reports

We had Scarlet Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Red-eyed Vireo, and nine species of warblers that at least some of us were able to see well, including Worm-eating, Blackburnian, Black-and-white, Bay-breasted, Chestnut-sided, Black-throated Green, and Magnolia. In most cases the migrating flocks were clearly moving south as we would see them briefly on the north side of the Canal and then they would fly over us to the south and out of view. The river was fairly quiet except for large numbers of swallows flying low near the Virginia shore. We did NOT see the group of Glossy Ibis that apparently flew from Violette's to Great Falls that morning, but we had nice views of two adult Bald Eagles, including one catching a fish. Our sole Yellow-billed Cuckoo had a very short, ragged tail, perhaps a young bird completing its molt. We observed a Sharp-shinned Hawk pursued by a group of Blue Jays, and just before we got to Violette's, we had large numbers of Common Grackles, perhaps related to the large numbers reported at Hughes Hollow a little earlier that morning.



Rock Creek Park, DC, September 15. Leader: Wallace Kornack. I led several birders on a tour of the Ridge, Equitation Field, and Maintenance Yard and introduced them to the Nature Center and Dog Run. The group saw a good fraction of the 11 warbler species reported at the various park locations, including the Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Magnolia, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Northern Parula, Nashville, and Black-and-white. We missed the Canada and Blackburnian warblers reported by others. By far the most thrilling highlight was the Hooded Warbler that posed for at least 10 minutes in the Maintenance Yard ravine. Its plumage in the bright sun was striking as it hopped vigorously among the fallen tree trunks. Also seen were Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Brown Thrasher, and a few Rose-breasted Grosbeak, while the Yellow-throated Vireo called in the background. In all it was an excellent morning.



Rock Creek Park, DC, September 19. Leader: Wallace Kornack. Eight participants joined the tour of all major birding areas at the park. The group's main focus was warblers, and the very first one observed was a highly cooperative male Black-throated Blue. It was on the ground within easy view by all and remained so for at least

ten minutes before it approached us within 20 feet. Other warblers included the Black-and-white, Black-throated Green, American Redstart, Common Yellowthroat, Magnolia, and Northern Parula. Other birds of interest were an immature Rose-breasted Grosbeak, an Eastern Phoebe, numerous Chimney Swifts aloft, and an Indigo Bunting in the open field of the Dog Run.



Upper Watts Branch Park, Rockville, September 25. Leader: Paul O'Brien. Five enthusiastic birders convened at the corner of Princeton and Fordham in Rockville hoping for a fine day of birding. And a fine day it was, with fleecy white clouds high in the sky and temperatures in the low 70s. The only problem was that there weren't any birds. In the course of a bit over two hours, the only migrants we saw were a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, a female Magnolia Warbler, an Ovenbird, and two Common Yellowthroats. But the butterflies were cooperating in the neighboring yards: 3 Sachem, 6 Tiger Swallowtails, 4 Cabbage Whites, Red Admiral, Red-spotted Purple, and 2 Monarchs. This is the second example that we have documented of the absence of migrants when the springs along the stream valley are dry, as they certainly are with the drought we have been experiencing. It seems that the springs, particularly the one directly behind the wood edge at our meeting point, might be a breeding ground for many of the insects the migrants find along the wood edge on typical days in spring and fall. The entire month of September, while other nearby locations were reporting good numbers of migrants, very few were found at this park. It's micro-ecology at work.



Lois Y. Green Conservation Park, September 26. Leader: Mark England. Participants: 6. Species: 34. The morning started cold (50s) and rainy and improved only slightly as we went along. We first saw a Sharp-shinned Hawk from the parking lot, fairly high up in the gray sky. We scanned the treeline near the gravel path for migrants, which had worked well the previous weekend but had no luck. Through the trees, a few had a glimpse of a large, long-tailed bird that they thought was a Northern Harrier, and at the end of the trip I saw a harrier come out of those same woods to join another migrating harrier. At the first pond, we had a great look in the steady rain at two drake

Trip Reports

Wood Ducks, a Great Blue Heron, and a Green Heron. Stephanie Lovell left early but later reported a Pied-billed Grebe on the same pond on her way back. At the second pond we had good looks at a Belted Kingfisher. We saw lots of phoebes, and a good assortment of woodpeckers, including a juvenile sapsucker near the farmhouse. In this same area just below the farmhouse, we had our only good flock of migrant (and fast-moving) warblers, including Bay-breasted, adult male American Redstart, a “yellowstart,” a Magnolia, and an unmistakable Mourning Warbler — not seen by all unfortunately. Sparrows were scarce in this usually good sparrow habitat, but we saw both Field and Song, a few brown Indigo Buntings, and a skulking House Wren. Coming down the gravel road from the farmhouse back to the parking lot, we ended the trip on a high point with a good look at a Cooper’s Hawk from about 80 yards.



Little Bennett RP, October 3. Leader: Gemma Radko.

Three participants enjoyed good weather, cool and sunny with the wind picking up toward the end. We hiked up Hyattstown Mill Road and along some of the trails at that end of the park. Highlights included a Barred Owl on the appropriately named Owl Ridge Trail, a soaring Osprey, and a good sampling of newly arrived winter species, including Brown Creeper, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, both Ruby- and Golden-crowned Kinglets, and White-throated Sparrows. There were still some good warblers around: Nashville, Tennessee, Magnolia, Black-throated Blue and Green, American Redstart, Common Yellowthroat, and Yellow-rumped were all seen. Other highlights were Swainson’s Thrush and Veery, Blue-headed and Red-eyed Vireos, and vociferous Common Ravens, which are becoming fairly regular at Little Bennett. Also heard and seen were Red-breasted Nuthatches at several spots along the way.



Western Montgomery County Mixed Bag, October 8.

Leader: Dave Powell. This walk began at Hughes Hollow, but when no Club members showed up, the leader checked several Western Montgomery locations. Highlights were a Northern Harrier and Merlin, along with Black-throated Green and Palm (Western) Warbler. Numerous sparrows were present, with Swamp and Song being the most numerous. He then went to Violette’s Lock where he

spotted three American Avocets flying up and down the river. He observed them flying in the area for about three-quarters of an hour, most often near and over the golf course on the Virginia side.



Lilypons Water Gardens, October 9. Leader: Mike

Welch. Eleven birders from Frederick and Montgomery County enjoyed beautiful weather at this southern Frederick County site. Sixty species were recorded, with an outstanding nine species of sparrows. Most notable were single Nelson’s, Lincoln’s, and Grasshopper Sparrows, joining Savannah, Field, White-crowned, White-throated, and hoards of Swamp and Song Sparrows. Other notable sightings included Sora, Wilson’s Snipe, and Red-breasted Nuthatch. The Nelson’s, Grasshopper, and one of the two Soras were all found in one small pond in the large, central pond area. Late-season butterflies were abundant as the day warmed. As we were about to leave, we were entertained by a pair of Ravens harassing a juvenile Bald Eagle.



Big Sit, October 10. Leader: Chuck Parker. The Big Sit began before dawn (6:19 a.m.) with one vigilant observer (Jim Green) and continued throughout the morning with about six Club members plus some visitors. The weather was perfect, cool and clear. The first part of the morning, the dominant birds were flickers and bluejays, while a Great Egret and Great Blue Heron placidly fished not far from the observers, a small flock of Wood Ducks flew over, and Red-breasted Nuthatches were heard calling. A small flock of four Ruddy Ducks were seen on Seneca Lake. In addition to the flickers, Red-bellied, Downy, Pileated, and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker were seen. As the day warmed, several raptors appeared, giving us good looks at Cooper’s Hawks, Osprey, two vociferously interacting Red-shouldered Hawks, Sharpies, a Redtail, and an American Kestrel. We also observed an American Crow obsessively pursuing one of the Cooper’s. Warblers included Common Yellowthroat, Nashville, Magnolia, and Yellow-rumps. There were several phoebes and both kinglets.

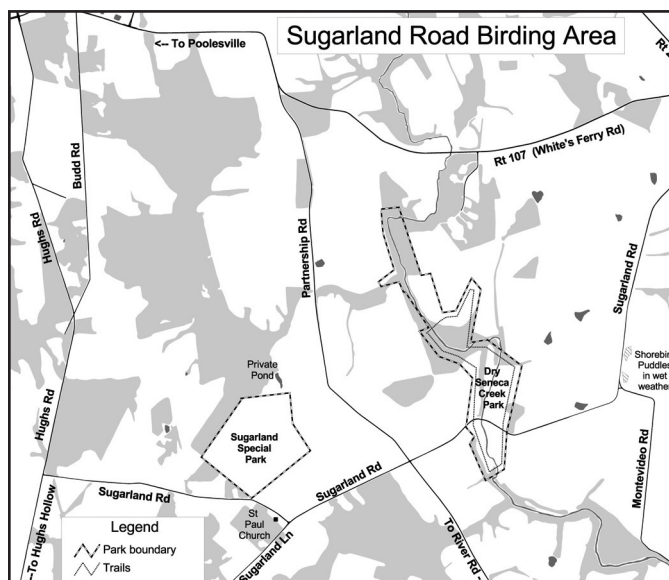
Beyond the MBC Site Guide*: Sugarland Road Parklands

(Continued from the August issue)

Let me paint a scenario for you. It's a beautiful Saturday morning in late April or early May with sunny skies, light winds, and midday temps expected to be in the upper 70s. Perfect conditions for an early morning trip to Pennyfield's or Violette's Lock along the C&O Canal for migrants and returning breeders. But guess what? Tired from a long work week, you hit the "snooze" button by accident, sleep in until 9 a.m. and by the time you get dressed, have something to eat, drink a cup of coffee, and arrive at the Pennyfield or Violette's parking lot, every hiker, biker, dog owner, fisherman, and kayaker in Montgomery County has gotten there before you. You know the birds you're seeking will still be there, but how about the peace and spring-restoring solace you were searching for?

Discouraged, you get back in the car and head toward Hughes Hollow only to find a hunting dog tournament in full progress with plenty of dogs, people, gunshots, and — even more annoying — southerly winds have got commercial jets coming in low and loud for a landing at Dulles. What now? If the dog folks are at Hughes Hollow they're probably also along Sycamore Landing Road. You could bird some less popular areas of McKee-Beshers WMA, but the turkey hunters will be out till noon and you don't want to chance getting in the way of an arrow or bullet! Where to now for some birds, peace, and solitude? Well, Sugarland Road has a couple of relatively unknown parkland areas with trails that are worth exploring and are a mere 5 minutes or so away.

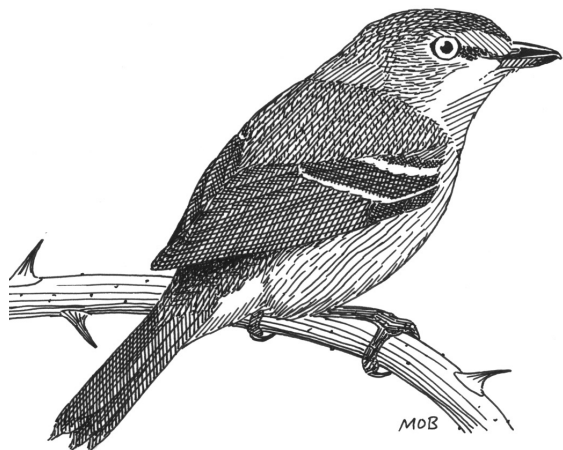
If traveling from the direction of Rte 107, the first one you will come to is called Dry Seneca Creek Stream Valley Units 1 and 2 (I'll call these the "Dry Seneca Creek Horse

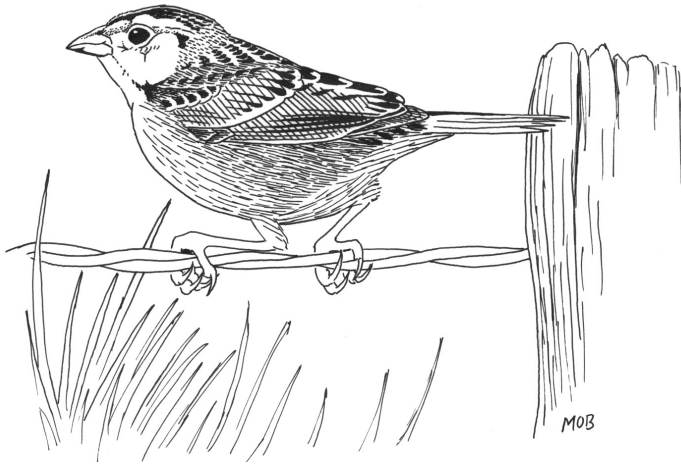


Map courtesy of Rob Gibbs

Trails"). You can find the Dry Seneca Creek Horse Trails about 2.2 miles from Rte 107 or just before crossing over the bridge at Dry Seneca Creek. Two fairly short loop trails about (0.5 to 0.75 miles in length) are to be found on both the south and north sides of the road. (A trail map can be accessed at <http://epicmontgomery.org/trails/dry-seneca-trail/>.) The entrance to each trail is marked by a 4"x 4" post with a small sign on each that reads E.P.I.C. (Equestrian Partners In Conservation). This land is owned by the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), and the trails are loosely maintained for horseback riding by volunteers from E.P.I.C. The trails are occasionally but not consistently mowed. As with many birding areas around the county, tick bite prevention measures are a good idea here. I usually park on the grassy shoulder, being careful not to pick too wet a spot if recent weather has been rainy.

Habitat on both sides of the road consists mostly of heavy brush and very young forest, some young cedar trees, and a riparian strip of mature trees directly along the banks of Dry Seneca Creek. Some species to be expected spring through summer include breeding Yellow Warblers and Prairie Warblers, Common Yellowthroats, Yellow-breasted Chats, White-eyed Vireos, both orioles, Eastern Kingbird, and Yellow-billed Cuckoos. All three mimids are common, and the trail on the north side has a couple high spots for good views of the sky. Both Red-tailed and Red-shouldered





Hawks breed in the vicinity, and in winter the occasional Common Raven or Northern Harrier can be found. Migrant warblers can often be heard and seen in the trees along the creek's riparian area in May and September. Sparrows can also be found in good numbers during their fall migration in October.

For birders wishing to walk a little further and willing to cross shallow water to the other side of the creek, both loops have an additional extension trail to follow. Again, check out the trail map at <http://epicmontgomery.org/trails/dry-seneca-trail/>. The trail extension on the north side of Sugarland Road crosses a mix of private and public land, leading to another loop trail and eventually a horse farm where many equestrian enthusiasts start their rides. E.P.I.C. has worked with private landowners in the area to allow public access to equestrians and hikers. However, the agreement applies strictly to the trail only.

There is also a trail extension leading away from the loop on the south side of Sugarland Road that can take you on a two-mile or so trek all the way down to Montevideo Road. Both trail extensions pass through a mixture of forest, fields, and riparian and edge habitat. A couple of times, I have used the southern trail extension to do a super loop walk of about four miles. I park along Sugarland Road where it crosses Dry Seneca Creek, and starting at horse trail south loop, cross the creek and pick up the trail that leads to Montevideo Road. At Montevideo Road, I follow it east to the intersection with Sugarland Road. Turning left, I follow Sugarland Road back to my car.

Probably the best descriptor of Sugarland Special Park is that it's a large agricultural field (almost 104 acres) preserved for some future but yet undetermined use by M-NCPPC. What makes this park an interesting place to

bird is not only the public land you can access but also the private land and habitat that's viewable from its border.

The field itself is still actively farmed and can be accessed on the right side of Sugarland Road about 0.2 mile west of its intersection with Sugarland Lane. The park entrance itself is unmarked. A large concrete block sits on the right side of the entrance. I usually park in the grassy area along the roadside, being careful not to block the entrance. The park consists mainly of a large actively farmed field with a tree and brush-lined edge. A tractor-wide path is occasionally mowed along the park's perimeter and also along some of the interior tree lines by the local farmer who tends the field. Walking the outside perimeter of this park will take you on a 1.5-mile trek, passing by hedgerow and grassland habitat with fairly close views of a medium-sized pond and forest lots on the northern and west sides.

Possibly due to its isolated nature, the pond, which is on private land but easily viewable from the park, can hold some waterfowl in the winter. A few years back in January, I found 15 Canvasback there. The pond can also hold some shorebirds during dry spells in spring and fall migration. In the warmer months, Grasshopper and Field Sparrows are common, and the park might also produce a Bobolink in migration. Horned Larks also breed in the area. There's a great view of the sky at all times to check for anything interesting passing overhead.

Because this park entrance is so poorly marked and looks so much like a private farm field, I double-checked with M-NCPPC Regional Manager Jim McMahon regarding access. He confirmed that the area is open to the public but also added the following caveats to birders wishing to access Sugarland Special Park. He asked that birders not disturb or trample crops during the growing season and stick to mowed paths along the perimeter and interior tree lines and also be mindful of personal safety during the hunting season. A few deer stands are set up on the private property along its north and west sides adjacent to the park. †

*The MBC Site Guide is officially known as *A Birder's Guide to Montgomery County, MD*

—Andy Martin

Birds of Note (July—late September 2010)

Midsummer through September was a great period for migrating shorebirds and waders in the county. Separate sightings of **American Avocets** (not seen in the county since the Lake Needwood bird on 07/21/01) occurred three different times in July and August. Dave Czaplak reported five **American Avocets** at Violette's Lock on 7/10. He saw two more flybys on 8/22. On 8/17, Bill Hill found three **American Avocets** at Triadelphia Reservoir near the Greenbridge Road pipeline mudflats. The following day, Bob Ringler reported that a single **American Avocet** remained and had been joined by eight **Short-billed Dowitchers** and a single **Ruddy Turnstone**. The Greenbridge Road pipeline mudflats also produced a **Baird's Sandpiper** for John Hubbell on 9/12.

Jim Green found three **Short-billed Dowitchers** in the big pond (just inside the landfill fence) at Blue Mash on 7/10. Dave Czaplak picked out a lone **White-rumped Sandpiper** among a small flock of shorebirds flying down-river past Violette's Lock on 9/29.

Low water levels produced some great shorebird finds at Triadelphia Reservoir during the latter half of September. Action switched from the Greenbridge Road pipeline area to mudflats in the reservoir's upper end north of Triadelphia Lake Road, which straddles the Montgomery County/Howard County line, drawing birders from both counties. On 9/17, Joe Hanfman reported single **Western** and **White-rumped Sandpipers** among a large flock of shorebirds consisting of Pectoral, Least, Spotted, and Semipalmated Sandpipers plus Lesser Yellowlegs, Killdeer, and Semipalmated Plovers. Bill Hill reported 10 **Stilt Sandpipers** in the same area on 9/30.

During a "big day" on 8/28, Robert and Mike Ostrowski reported two **American Woodcock** at Hughes Hollow. A great find outside its early spring migration period.

July through September seemed only a "so-so" period for "grasspipers" in Montgomery. However, Dave Czaplak did find a single **American Golden-Plover** at the Patton Turf Farm on 8/25 and observed five **American Golden-Plovers** fly down-river past Violette's Lock on 9/16. Dave Czaplak and Jared Fisher reported a couple of **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** at the Hughes Road polo grounds on 9/12. There were no reports of **Upland Sandpipers** in Montgomery this year.

This has been one of the best periods (both in variety and numbers) for waders in Montgomery that I can recall.

Dave Czaplak found a juvenile **White Ibis** and a **Snowy Egret** at Violette's Lock on 7/21. A few days later, Paul Woodward and Mike Bowen reported three **Little Blue Herons** at Hughes Hollow, and Mike also observed an **American Bittern** (quite rare in mid-summer) in flight as it passed over the impoundments. Over the next few weeks, the **Little Blue Heron** numbers at Hughes Hollow rose to as high as nine. Reported from Hughes Hollow from 7/21 to early September: **Little Blue Heron**, **Great Blue Heron**, **Green Heron**, **Snowy Egret**, **Great Egret** (as many as 75 on 8/5), **Black** and **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons**, **American Bittern**, and **White Ibis**.

On 9/12 at approximately 8:04 AM, Dave Czaplak reported nine juvenile **Glossy Ibis** flying past Violette's Lock. Approximately 12 minutes later and seven miles downstream at Great Falls, Sally Wechsler also reported a skein of **Glossy Ibis** passing by. Maybe these were two different flocks; however, calculating flight speed based on the distance between Violette's Lock and Great Falls, this does fit within the known migratory flight speed range of 22.5 to 35.8 mph of the **Glossy Ibis**.

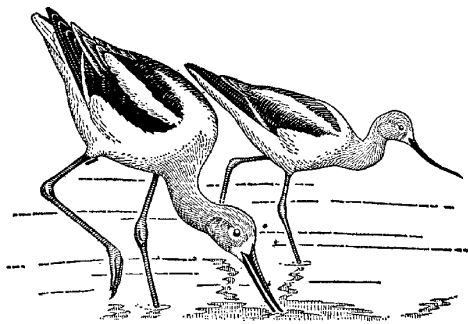
On 7/6, Dave Czaplak reported a **Mute Swan** upstream of Riley's Lock. **Mute Swans** have become quite rare in Montgomery since the sedentary bird at Lake Whetstone went to bird heaven three years or so ago. The Riley's Lock **Mute Swan** was seen as recently as 10/2. Paul Woodward reported six **Blue-winged Teal** flying around Hughes Hollow on 8/14.

Jim Moore spotted an early returning **Merlin** just outside his residence in Rockville on 8/21. Bob Ringler, current editor of *MD Birdlife*, noted that this was a record early return date for this species in Montgomery.

Bill Hill observed three **Forster's Terns** at Triadelphia on 8/4. Additional **Forster's Terns** were seen by Bob Ringler at Triadelphia on 8/18 and by Jim Moore at Violette's Lock on 8/21. Joe Hanfman spotted a **Common Tern** flying over Triadelphia on 8/18. Two **Common Terns** were seen at Violette's Lock on 8/22 by Warren and Lisa Strobel. Dave Czaplak reported nine **Black Terns** at Violette's Lock on 8/18 and a **Black Tern** in the same location on 9/4.

Ed Patten and Chris Barnard found a **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** at Hughes Hollow on 9/4. Gail Mackiernan and Barry Cooper's consistent effort yielded a treasure trove of "hard to find in the county" flycatchers during September. Covering Wheaton RP/Brookside Gardens





almost every day during September, Gail and Barry found **Yellow-bellied, Olive-sided, and Least Flycatchers.**

Evelyn Ralston and Jennifer Kewar had good

looks at a **Olive-sided Flycatcher** at Hughes Hollow on 9/12.

Clive Harris found a **Philadelphia Vireo** along the C&O Canal near Cabin John on 9/12. Gail Mackiernan and Barry Cooper had **Philadelphia Vireos** at Wheaton RP on four different dates in September: 9/15, 9/16, 9/18, and 9/21. Mike Bowen found one at Lois Green CP on 9/16, and Jim Nelson had one in his Bethesda backyard on 9/22.

Red-breasted Nuthatch appear to be irrupting into our area this fall. A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was found at Little Bennett RP on 9/3 by Claire Nemes and on 9/5 by Jim Moore. Jim Nelson heard **Red-breasted Nuthatch** in his Bethesda backyard on 9/16 and 9/21. Individual birds were also noted by Mike Bowen at Violette's Lock on 9/21 and Jim Moore at Lake Needwood on 9/26.

Some great warblers were reported in late August and September. A **Golden-winged Warbler** was found by Donald Sweig at Pennyfield Lock on 8/23. Single **Brewster's Warblers** (Blue-winged X Golden-winged hybrid) were observed by John Hubbell along the Kingsley Trail at Little Bennett RP on 9/6 and by Gail Mackiernan and Barry Cooper at Wheaton RP on 9/11. **Wilson's Warblers** were noted by Rob and Mike Ostrowski at Hughes Hollow on 8/28 and by Jim Moore at Little Bennett RP on 9/5.

Mourning Warblers were reported by Knut Waagan at McKenny Hills Neighborhood Park in Forest Glen on 9/11; by Clive Harris at the C&O Canal near Brookmont Dam on 9/17; and by Mark England and Gemma Radko at Lois Green CP on 9/26.

Jim Moore found a first-year **Connecticut Warbler** at Hughes Hollow on 9/19.

Don Simonson reported an out-of-season **Dark-eyed Junco** near his house in Darnestown on 7/12. Diane Ford found a **Lincoln's Sparrow** in the Kensington area of Rock Creek Park on 9/15. Jared Fisher reported a **Lincoln's Sparrow** from Wheaton RP on 10/2. ♪

— Andy Martin

Financial Report, 2010-2011

OUTGO

MOS Dues	\$4,500
Post Office	150
Speaker	400
Office Supplies	100
Miscellaneous	200
Rent	600
Chat	1,000
Web	250
MBC Social	1,800

TOTAL \$9,000

INCOME

MOS Dues	\$7,300
Wilds Fund	800
Site Guide	200
Miscellaneous	150
Interest	200
Social	1,600

TOTAL \$10,250

SITE GUIDE

Cost	\$6,593.00
Sales	3,855.50

NET -\$2,737.50



Welcome New Members

Brendan Lanpher
Heather and Tony Pierce





MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL



I/we wish to join the Montgomery Bird Club, a chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society, for the year beginning September 2010 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 Club 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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