



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

February 2012

Volume 43, No. 1

President's Chat

How did you come to join this Club? I was recruited by a couple of enthusiastic members I met on ANS birding trips. I will always be thankful that Jane Hill and Bob Augustine encouraged me to try the next meeting. Before then, I had hardly heard of the Montgomery Bird Club and certainly didn't know what to expect.

I am sure there are many birders in the area, of various experience levels, who would be happy to join if they knew about the Club and what we do here. Let's all make a point of promoting MBC to our birding friends and other likely prospects. Only by keeping a stream of new members coming in can we keep the club healthy and vibrant.

I want to remind you that a supply of our club's wallet-sized cards is available for your taking in the back of the hall at our meetings. Carry a few and hand them to prospective members! We are also developing a display board to tell people about the Club, and we plan to use it starting this spring at neighborhood fairs and other events.

Another issue has to do with scheduling our meetings. For many years now, we have met at the Potomac Presbyterian Church, and we really appreciate the good relationship we have had



with the church. Its facilities have been completely satisfactory for our needs. But recently the Council has been discussing the possibility of looking for a new meeting site.

When the school next door to the church has an event on the same night as our meeting, parking becomes difficult. Working with the school and the church, we have been able to avoid a parking crunch this year by changing a number of meetings to the second Wednesday. It has also been suggested that perhaps a more central location within the county, such as Rockville, would draw more members to our meetings.

You will hear more as we gather ideas. If you have suggestions, please email them to me at stevep@takomavillage.org.

Good Birding! ♪

—Steve Pretl

CONTENTS	
Winter/Spring Calendar	2
Backyard Bird Count/Sunday Hunting	2
Field Trips/MOS Member in Ecuador	3-4
Trip Reports	5-6
Montgomery County Atlas	6
Birds of Note/Welcome New Members	7
Christmas Bird Count Results	8-9
Meet Our New Secretary: Rae Dubois.....	9
MBC Social Sign-Up Form	10





Winter/Spring Calendar

Great Backyard Bird Count: February 17-20

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is a wonderful way to interest children in birding and to teach them to participate in citizen-science projects! (The GBBC website has a special page for kids.) You don't have to be an expert to participate. You can count for as little as 15 minutes on one day or all day long on all four days. You simply count birds anywhere for as little or as long as you wish during the GBBC period. Then tally the highest number of birds of each species seen together at any one time, and fill out an online checklist at the GBBC website. Even if you aren't able to count, you can visit www.birdsource.org/gbbc to see what is being reported from anywhere in the United States and Canada.

The GBBC is led by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, with Canadian partner Bird Studies Canada and sponsorship from Wild Birds Unlimited. ♪



No Hunting on Sundays

This was posted recently on MDOSprey: There is no Sunday waterfowl hunting allowed in Maryland. There is some Sunday deer hunting on private lands in certain counties on specific Sundays only. Violations can be reported 24/7 to 410-260-8888. For the complete waterfowl regulations for 2011–2012, visit this link: www.dnr.state.md.us/huntersguide/pdfs/MGB_Flier_2011_2012.pdf. ♪

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 switched to digital photography in January 2005. Shortly afterwards he took his new toys to one of the best birding/photography spots during peak migration — the lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas. He ID'd over 190 species in a 10-day vacation and captured many neotropical migrants (digitally speaking). Butterflies, mammals, reptiles, and plants will also be shown. Come share this photographic experience, including George's thoughts on the pros and cons of digital photography.

March 16 (Friday), 6:30 p.m., Annual Montgomery Bird Club Social, Woodend, Chevy Chase. Social hour followed by dinner and presentation to this year's Guest of Honor, **Helen Patton**. The evening will conclude with the traditional members' slide show. See the back page of this issue of the *Chat* for the sign-up form and information on submitting photos for the slide show.

April 18 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m., “Revised Workshop on Warblers.” *Mike Bowen, Linda Friedland, and Jim Nelson.* To help us get ready for spring migration, three former MBC presidents and warbler aficionados have combined forces to give a shortened and recently updated version of “Warblers of Maryland.” first prepared for the June 2006 MOS Conference in Allegheny County. The presentation covers nearly every warbler species that breeds in or migrates through our state, stressing those that can be found locally and arranging them generally in the order of arrival. ID and spring songs will be especially emphasized.

May 16 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m. “Birds of Southern Africa.” *Mark Abdy* leads safaris to southern Africa each year and will present a slide program on some of the beautiful birds he has photographed.

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.

Editor: Susan Hunt **Designer:** Gemma Radko **Circulation:** Jane Farber and Jeanne Lacerte

President: Steve Pretl: 202-413-8351
e-mail: stevep@takomavillage.org

Membership: Helen Patton: 301-588-5418
e-mail: helen@dataprompt.com


Visit our homepage at www.montgomerybirdclub.org


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




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 end of Swain's Lock Road. Bring a scope if you have one. Trip will be canceled if icy conditions along canal towpath make walking treacherous. Reservations required. For reservations and more information, 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. Max: 14 participants. For reservations and directions, contact Bill 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 8:00 a.m. For reservations and more information, contact the LEADER: Mark England, 240-207-3132 (home) or 240-375-4500 (cell), or markengland@canamcontractors.com.

MOS ANNUAL CONFERENCE, OCEAN CITY, FEBRUARY 24-26



MARCH 6 (Tuesday), MARCH 8 (Thursday), MARCH 13 (Tuesday), 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 info, call the LEADER: Jim Green, 301-742-0036 (cell).

MARCH 10 (Saturday) JUG BAY, PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY. Half day. Joint trip with ANS. Possible Rusty Blackbirds, migrating Wilson's Snipe, and courtship display of Osprey. Wear footwear for muddy conditions. Meet 8 a.m. Call leader for details and driving instructions. Check ANS News for more info. Reservations required. Limit: 15. LEADER: John Bjerke, 240-401-1643.

APRIL 14 (Saturday) IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE, B-CC CHAPTER. Half day. This is the Club's second official field trip to this large private property south of Poolesville. Woods, hedgerows, streams, fields, and ponds provide a wide range of bird habitats, and migration should be on its way by this date. Trip will start at 7:00 a.m. at the League's chapterhouse. For reservations (required) and more information, please contact the LEADER: Mike Bowen, 301-530-5764 or dhmbowen@yahoo.com. B-CC Chapter Treasurer and MBC member Jim Tate will co-lead.



APRIL 22 (Sunday) HUGH MAHANES PRESIDENTS' WALK AT HUGHES: HUGHES HOLLOW AND VICINITY. Half day. Participation of all former Club presidents is encouraged, and everyone is welcome. This is a wonderful chance for newer birders to be in the field with "old hands" who enjoy sharing what they know. Depending on where interesting birds have been seen, we may also visit nearby areas. We will look for water birds on the move and early songbird migrants. Possible birds include Purple Finches, Blue-winged Teal, swallows, and maybe even an American Bittern. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the Hughes Hollow parking lot in McKee-Beshers WMA. For more information, directions, and reservations (required), contact the LEADER: Steve Pretl, stevep@takomavillage.org.

APRIL 28 (Saturday) BLUE MASH NATURE TRAIL. Half day. Interesting walk at this relatively new and surprisingly birdy site in Montgomery County. Waterproof boots helpful. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at Zion Road parking lot. Trip is limited to 8 to 10 participants. For reservations and directions, contact the LEADER: Mark England, 240-207-3132, 240-375-4500 (cell), or markengland@canamcontractors.com.

continued on next page

Field Trips

APRIL 29 (Sunday) OCCOQUAN BAY NWR. Half day. Explore the diverse habitats in this one-square-mile refuge at the confluence of the Potomac and Occoquan Rivers in Woodbridge, Virginia. A variety of raptors and migratory warblers, vireos, thrushes, and flycatchers should be present, and rails and bitterns are possibilities. Meet at the parking lot in the center of the refuge at 8 a.m. LEADER: Gerry Hawkins, 571-277-8406 or maineusa@comcast.net. **Directions:** From Maryland, take Rt. 495 south to I-95 south to Exit 161 (Woodbridge), follow Rt. 1 south, cross the Occoquan River, turn left at the light onto Dawson Beach Rd., and follow this road to the end.

MAY 6 (Sunday) LITTLE BENNETT RP. Joint trip with Talbot Bird Club. Half day. Near peak migration for warblers and vireos, including those breeding in this varied habitat. Contact the leader for time and directions. Reservations required. LEADER: Gemma Radko, 301-514-2894.

MAY 8 (Tuesday) ROCK CREEK PARK, DC. One-third day. Early migrant warblers, vireos, etc. Meet at 7 a.m. at Picnic Area #18, one-half mile below the Nature Center on Ridge Road. Reservations required. Call the leader for more information or specific directions. LEADER: Wallace Kornack, 202-338-7859.

MAY 11 (Friday) BIRDING BY EAR ALONG THE C&O CANAL. The emphasis is on listening so tune up your ears for this half-day canal walk. We'll be on the lookout for nesting and migrant landbirds. Meet at 7 a.m. at the end of Pennyfield Lock Road. Reservations required. For more information and reservations, call the leaders: Cyndie Loeper at cyndieloeper@comcast.net or 240-535-8584, or Ann Lucy at 301-229-8810.

MAY 20 (Sunday) ROCK CREEK PARK, DC. One-third day. Migrant warblers, vireos, etc. Meet at 7 a.m. at Picnic Area #18, one-half mile below the Nature Center on Ridge Road. Limit: 6. Reservations required. Call the leader for more information or specific directions. LEADER: Wallace Kornack, 202-338-7859.

MAY 23 (Wednesday) WASHINGTON COUNTY: SEEKING BREEDERS AND LATE MIGRANTS. Three-quarter day. Explore some of Washington County's underbirded treasures. Expect some birding from the road mixed in with some moderate hikes (nothing overly strenuous). Walking conditions could be wet in some areas. We will visit several parts of Indian Springs Wildlife Management Area, look for grassland birds in the farm country west of Hagerstown, and finish with some stops at potential shorebird habitats. Bring snacks, drinks, lunch, insect repellent, etc. *Reservations required.* Limit: 10. Carpooling strongly suggested. For reservations and directions to meeting place, call the LEADER: Jim Green, 301-742-0036 (cell).

MAY 26 (Saturday) HOT SPOTS FOR RED KNOTS. Full day. Joint trip with Howard County. We will start at 8:30 a.m. at the visitor center for Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge and work our way north along the Bay. We will also visit the handsome and informative nature center at Mispillion Lighthouse, which offers great views of Red Knots and other shorebirds. We will go until dark or exhaustion, whichever comes first. Bring binoculars, scopes, food, water, sunscreen, loads of insect repellent. Trip is limited to 12 persons/3 vehicles per chapter. Reservations required. Kurt Schwarz will co-lead for Howard County (krschwal@verizon.net or 410-461-1643). For reservations and information, contact CO-LEADER: Cyndie Loeper at cyndieloeper@comcast.net or 240-535-8584.

MBC Member Back from Ecuador Again

MBC member and photographer, Bob Mumford, returned in September from his 12th trip to Ecuador in four years. He has now spent 120 days in the field working on a photographic book on the colorful birds of that country. Although not birding on these trips, he has spotted 707 species and photographed 595. He estimates that if he were birding and not photographing, he would have tallied at least 150 more species. For example, he spent over three hours on this trip just working one Orange-breasted Fruiteater. He considers that 232 species of those photographed are book-worthy.

On this trip he visited old haunts such as Mindo, Milpe, Rio Silanche, Bellevista, Guango, Yanayacu Research Station, and Papallacta Springs, but also new places like Pululua Crater, Mashpi Reserve, and the upper reaches of the Napo River just downstream from Tena.

He successfully photographed the ever-elusive Oscillated Tapaculo, after hearing but never seeing one before. He also discovered and photographed a rare Orange-breasted Falcon near Yanayacu, a location on the East Slope where it has never been recorded. In that same general area, his guide relocated and Bob photographed a Noble Snipe, a bird not at all expected in that location. The bird successfully fledged two young in the cow pasture where it was found. ♪



Trip Reports



Oaks Landfill, Sunday, October 30. Leaders: Mark England and Ed Patten. Participants: 12, including leaders. Weather: Chilly, but sunny and clear. Species: 30. As a harbinger of a good morning, co-leaders Ed and Mark had flyby Cooper's Hawk and Northern Harrier while waiting outside the locked gate to the Landfill about 7:30 a.m. When the group had assembled at 8 a.m., we had great scope looks at a close Red-shouldered Hawk near the maintenance building and a flyover Sharp-shinned Hawk. We set off on the gravel ring road with the sun behind our backs and soon encountered some good songbirds trying to warm up in sunny areas, including Palm Warbler, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, bluebirds, Yellow-rumped Warbler, juvenile Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and a very good variety of sparrows. These included over a hundred Song Sparrows and good numbers of Savannah, White-throated, juvenile and adult White-crowned, Chipping, a few Field, and two Swamp Sparrows — all in excellent light. Later we heard towhees and saw juncos, for a nine-sparrow day. Raptor diversity was also excellent. In addition to the accipiters mentioned above, we saw Northern Harriers several times, including a close flyby male "gray ghost," as well as beautifully lit Red-tailed Hawks and a female American Kestrel at the end, unfortunately after some had already left the parking lot. There was a lone Horned Lark by the leachate pond, which gave us good scope looks. Somewhat surprisingly, there were no waterfowl on the ponds and none of the usual woodpeckers except a flicker. But for sparrows and raptors, this walk was hard to beat!



Lois Green Park, Sunday, November 6. Leader: Ed Patten. Participants: 6. Weather: Temperature ranging from 25 to 54°F — a very pleasant day. Species: 38. We started off with juncos and a few sparrows, but a very cooperative Winter Wren was one of the highlights of the trip. This bird perched up so that everyone had good looks at a usually elusive bird. A Hairy Woodpecker was also a nice treat early on in the walk. The first pond had Pied-billed Grebe, Canada Goose, Mallard, Ring-necked Duck, and American Coot. There were seven species of sparrows seen, including a very cooperative Fox Sparrow and a Dark-eyed Junco that was singing.

LBJs at Blue Mash, Friday, November 11. Leader: Lydia Schindler. Participants: A full complement of 8, plus leader. Species: 41. Weather: Mostly sunny, blustery, chilly. We started out with an hour at the Oaks Landfill (with special permission), then followed the loop from Zion Road. Given the "gale force" winds, it is not surprising that raptor species outnumbered sparrows. We opened with an adult Bald Eagle and continued with kestrel, harrier, red-tail, red-shoulder, Cooper's, and sharp-shinned. The large pond held one Green-winged Teal and one Ring-necked Duck. Sparrows were Song, Savannah, White-throated, and Field, plus junco and towhee — meager variety but some satisfying looks.



Lilypons Water Gardens, Bishop Claggett Center, Oland Rd., Sunday, December 4. Leaders: Gail Mackiernan and Barry Cooper. Participants: 10. Weather: Sunny, cold at 7:30 (heavy frost, light skim of ice) but warming to high 40s by late morning. Fortunately almost no wind. Species: 45 (plus two more seen by leader after group broke up just before noon). Not too many sparrows at Lilypons (compared to previous years) but a fair variety including American Tree and Swamp. Other birds of interest were a good assortment of ducks — Green-winged Teal, American Black Duck, Hooded Merganser, and a single Bufflehead — Wilson's Snipe and great looks at an American Bittern. The Claggett Center came through with 8 White-crowned Sparrows and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, as hoped. The most exciting moments came when we pulled off at the corner of Oland Rd. and Rt. 85 and found a little group of Horned Larks and one bright male Lapland Longspur just in front of the cars (near a tiny puddle)! Showing a lot of color, this bird aggressively attacked several larks and chased them off. The birds stuck around for about 10 minutes and all enjoyed great scope views.



Blackwater NWR and Vicinity, December 11. Leader: Andy Martin. Participants: 11. Species: 70. It's always a great time birding down and around Blackwater NWR, but the day always seems to go so quickly. December just does not give birders enough daylight hours. We started the day in typical fashion, meeting at Sailwinds Park to

continued on next page

Trip Reports

scan the Choptank River for waterfowl. There were not too many ducks on the Choptank, but we got a close look at a Long-tailed Duck from Great Marsh Point. We also scoped about 75 Snow Geese in flight over Talbot County and spotted at least 25 Common Goldeneye out in the middle of the river. We then cut across Cambridge and headed for Egypt Road. The best bird along Egypt was a beautiful “gray ghost” Northern Harrier. We stopped at a number of places along Wildlife Drive, spending quite a bit of time watching Bald Eagles, more harriers, Tundra Swans, and Northern Pintail. A few American White Pelicans were mixed in with the swans on mudflats on the south side of Wildlife Drive. A walk through the pine woods along the Marsh Edge Trail produced half a dozen or so Brown-headed Nuthatches, a Hermit Thrush, and a Fox Sparrow.

After leaving Blackwater, we proceeded to Decoursey Bridge Road to look for some recently reported Golden Eagles. We missed the eagles but did get some nice looks at Lesser Yellowlegs and Wilson’s Snipe. We ended the day searching for Short-eared Owls from Shorter’s Wharf and were rewarded by two birds in flight over the expansive and seemingly infinite marshlands that give Dorchester County its nickname of “Maryland’s Everglades.” A great winter’s day with good birds and good friends.

Earliest Bird Trip to DC sites Sunday, January 1, 2012.
Leader: Mike Bowen. Participants: 20. Weather: The warmest and most comfortable January 1st trip any of us could remember. Sunny, no wind, just gorgeous. Species count: 42. Highlights: Georgetown Reservoir was strangely unproductive again this year, but the lack of waterfowl was compensated for by the sight of a Peregrine Falcon putting gulls and pigeons to panicked flight. The Peregrine then perched in a tree behind the reservoir. The pond at Constitution Gardens was completely free of ice and gave us terrific close views of Ring-necked Ducks, Lesser Scaup, and Bufflehead. The customary Black-crowned Night-Herons were at the roost in the Washington Channel, but just four of them this year. Hains Point was not very birdy, although a few lucky participants got to see a flying Common Loon. Our next birding spot was, as usual, the LBJ Memorial Grove on the DC side of the Boundary Channel. Top birds there were a surprisingly late Great Egret on the channel bank above the footbridge to the Pentagon and a single Cackling Goose among many Canadas in the Columbia Island Marina. The trip ended in Arlington County, Virginia, with a stop at Roaches Run near National Airport, where there were Pied-billed Grebes, Hooded Mergansers, more Black-crowned Night-Herons, our only Belted Kingfisher of the day, and a soaring adult Bald Eagle.

The Montgomery County Atlas

A great (and free) online site for the exploration-minded Montgomery birder

Despite the ever-increasing suburbanization of our landscape, Montgomery County is still blessed with over 56,000 acres of parkland. A majority of these acres are undeveloped parcels of property tucked away into stream valleys and in the back of neighborhoods and are perfect for birding and exploration. The only trouble is that sometimes they are hard to find, you’re not sure where to access them, and you don’t know what kind of habitat they contain.

For many years, I relied on my trusty Alexandria Drafting Company (ADC) map of Montgomery to access and explore parkland. While I still find this book map essential and keep a copy in my car at all times, I have increasingly turned to aerial photographic maps on the Internet, such as

Google Earth and more recently the MC Atlas, an online interactive map tailored specifically to our county, to find new spots to bird. The MC Atlas can show you access points and assess habitat of many of our county parks before you even step out the door.

The version of the MC Atlas I most often use, can be found at www.mcatlas.org/Atlas/. Special-purpose versions can be found at www.montgomeryplanning.org/gis/interactive/index.shtm. At this web location, they (our county government’s Geographic Information Systems [GIS] Department) have developed a series of specifically tailored versions of the atlas. There is one for county bikeways, demographics, historic preservation, etc. I often go to the map at bottom of the page titled “watersheds.” This version is very useful for exploring county parklands, and the aerial photography is some of the best I have seen on a map of this type — in many ways rivaling that found on Google Earth. All versions of the MC Atlas seem to work by checking and unchecking the layers (overlays) you

continued on next page



Birds of Note (late October 2011 to early January 2012)

Only one “new for the year” species showed up in the county since last issue’s “Birds of Note” column. On 10/30, Jared Fisher found a **Northern Shrike** at Green Hill Farm Wetlands off Huntmaster Road on the eastern edge of Gaithersburg. I believe this to be the first **Northern Shrike** to be seen in county since the Hughes Road bird in January 2001. The bird was seen the following day as well but then departed for destinations unknown.

A blue phase **Snow Goose** was found on the Potomac River between Riley’s and Violette’s Lock on 11/25 by Dave Czaplak and Mary Ann Todd. **Cackling Geese** were reported from LM Stevens Park in Poolesville by Mike Bowen and from Violette’s Lock by Dave Czaplak, both on 11/21. Ron Johnson found a Cackling Goose at Lake Needwood on 12/4. The **Mute Swan** continues on the Potomac River north of Seneca.

A few **Merlin** were seen around the county October through December. Jim Nelson reported a **Merlin** from Hughes Hollow on 10/12, and Dave Czaplak found one at Violette’s Lock on 11/1. One additional **Merlin** each were reported from the Triadelphia and Seneca Christmas Bird Counts on 12/17 and 12/18 respectively. **Peregrine Falcon** were noted in the county on 11/25,



want to see. On the watershed version, I simply uncheck the watersheds and contours box and check the parks box, zoom in, and start exploring.

Another useful GIS product consists of a series of overlay files made specifically for use with Google Earth that will show you the borders of all county parks and public lands (including state and federal lands). If you’re not familiar with Google Earth, it is a searchable virtual globe, map, and geographic information program that can be downloaded for free at www.google.com/earth/index.html. Once you have downloaded it onto your computer, you can take advantage of a series of Montgomery County-specific map overlays (.kmz files) made by our GIS department that can be added to Google Earth. These overlays can be found at www.montgomeryplanning.org/gis/GISData.shtm, and the site will instruct you on how to add them to your Google Earth program.

—Andy Martin

12/07, and 12/08. A **Rough-legged Hawk** was seen near Violette’s Lock on 11/23.

Two **Short-eared Owls** were seen just before dawn at the old Laytonsville landfill by Rick and Ally Sussman on 12/17 during the Triadelphia CBC.

Russ Ruffing, Nancy Magnusson, Joe Hanfman, and Fred Shaffer reported a very late **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** at Triadelphia Reservoir on both the Montgomery and the Howard sides on 11/13. Only a couple other records exist for November **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** on the Maryland piedmont.

Red-headed Woodpeckers have been consistently seen in McKee-Beshers. **Common Ravens** continue to be seen with increasing regularity in the county. As many as five different ravens were seen on the Seneca CBC.

Two **Pine Siskins** and two **Purple Finch** were found by Paul Woodward at McKee-Beshers WMA on 11/24. A few **Purple Finch** have also shown up over at the feeders near the Black Hill RP Visitor’s Center. One of the few **Red-breasted Nuthatches** reported this fall was spotted at Violette’s Lock by Dave Czaplak on 11/23.

2011 Year-end Wrap-up

A lot of birds were seen in Montgomery County in 2011. Total species reported to eBird were 247. Dave Czaplak ended the year with 234, which breaks Paul O’Brien’s record of 229 from 1991. Not too far behind was Jared Fisher with a total of 225. Good enough for third highest annual total ever reported since 1990!



Welcome New Members!

Paul Budde	Nathan Romney
Becky Cromwell	Margaret Schultz
Jason Kenealey	Susan Volman



Christmas Bird Counts



Washington, DC, December 17. Although I have not completed analyzing all the data, a preliminary review shows that waterfowl numbers were very low during the 2011 count. In contrast, Double-crested Cormorants were present in larger numbers than normal. Red-shouldered, Red-tailed, and Cooper's Hawks were well-represented, suggesting that they have adapted to urbanization. The presence of Sharp-shinned Hawks was up, so perhaps they are making the transition as well. Small passerine numbers, primarily migrants, seemed low this year, and some sectors had trouble finding even one Golden-crowned Kinglet or Brown Creeper. Notable rarities were Nashville Warbler (1) and Orange-crowned Warbler (2). I'm still waiting for documentation for a Baltimore Oriole. †

—Larry Cartwright

Triadelphia, Maryland, December 17. The 64th (or is it 65th?) Triadelphia Reservoir Christmas Bird Count took place on day that was generally pleasant to be out in, but the birds seemed scarce. Our totals of 84 species and 26,121 individuals are well below last year's fairly amazing 96 species and 46,717 individuals. What happened? The biggest difference was the geese! We only counted 7,453 Canada Geese. Last year's count set a record with 22,759. That accounts for 15,000 fewer birds right there. Other ducks were somewhat less present with 5 fewer species and roughly 750 fewer individuals compared to last year. Then Common Mergansers did a takeover of Triadelphia Reservoir last year with over 1,700 birds. This year the whole count found 62. There is another roughly 1,650 birds we did not see. Juncos came in at 953 this year compared to 2,121 last year. That gives us another 1,000 plus birds we didn't see. Do you suppose they simply hadn't moved south yet because the winter was so mild? House Finches, Goldfinches, and House Sparrows were at the lowest numbers since 2003 when it rained all day. Red-breasted Nuthatches and Purple Finches did not fly this year, and we missed both Pipit and Meadowlark. There were no new species for the count this year and no lingering warblers. The most unfortunate story concerns White-crowned Sparrows. Our prime counter had the location all staked out on a Howard County farm only to be met with the response "Oh, we can't let you go out there today. We're doing a serious deer hunt."

Now, did anything GOOD happen on our count? Black Vultures were 95 birds above the highest count in the past

12 years with 276 birds. Turkey Vultures were average at 206. We doubled our previous high count of Common Ravens!! Apparently the Rocky Gorge birds nested this year and were seen in the appropriate place. The real surprise was the 2 birds seen and photographed flying south over Northwest Branch Park. Our Silver Spring Rufous Hummingbird is apparently back for her third winter. Last year, her hostess didn't think to call us (hummingbird banders) until February although the little lady had been there since October. Short-eared Owls are always a treat even though they have been seen in four of our past five years, and two were found at their usual site (the old Laytonsville Landfill). The number of participants (56) came back up to average for the past 10 years although we fielded 65+ in 1999 and 2001. However, we spent a bit less time in the field (is age making us lazier??). We would love to find some more feeder watchers and could use some more help and AN AREA ORGANIZER in Area 5 (South of Rt. 108, roughly north of Randolph Road and between Georgia and New Hampshire Avenues) and more birders in Area 2 — just east of Area 5. The Tally Rally featured some very nice food and "bird that got away" stories. And we were done in time for you to appear at your other holiday parties. Looking forward to next year already. Do get in touch!! †

—David Holmes

Seneca, Maryland, December 18, 2011. Though the weather was good (40 degrees, sunny, light winds) for the Seneca Maryland/Virginia CBC, the birding was generally reported as slow, somewhat reflected by the preliminary species total of 93. Numbers for woodpeckers and both vultures held up very well, but accipiter hawks were scarce, along with Savannah, Fox, and White-crowned Sparrows. It appears that no Red-breasted Nuthatches or Eastern Screech Owls were seen, and both kinglets were hard-to-find this year. Some of the best birds included Merlin, several Common Ravens, Purple Finches in two sectors, six Wild Turkeys, and an American Woodcock, both recorded at the Izaak Walton League in Poolesville, a Common Loon seen on the Potomac near Riley's Lock, and nine American Pipits at the Poolesville Polo Grounds. Eighteen Winter Wrens found in Sector 3/4 from Pennyfield to Sycamore Landing was noticeably high for only one sector. Good food and beverages at Branded '72 in Rockville rounded out the day at the tally rally. Thanks to all who counted, and to the sector leaders for their hard work as well! †

—Mark England



Central Loudoun (MD Sector), December 28. This year we had a hardy group of seven birders to count the birds in the Montgomery County part of the Loudoun Christmas Bird Count. The weather was chilly with a nice bit of wind but could not dampen our spirits.

We met at White's Ferry at 7:15 a.m. just as it was getting light, and before we started out, we spied two adult Bald Eagles winging their way down river. "A very good start," we all agreed. We piled into two cars to drive down Old River Road and park one mile upriver from Edward's Ferry. Along the way, we spotted a Kestrel on the wire. Four counters (Liz and Stephen Jones, Ed Patten and I) hiked through the woods to get to the towpath, and Andy Martin, Jim Nelson, and a new birder, Lydia Johnson, started walking back along the road. Both parties walked back to White's Ferry. Neither had a lot of birds, probably because the winds came up strongly, leaving most birds hidden and quiet. Collectively, our parties counted about 40 species, all of which were ones we would expect to see in this area at this time of year. The towpath and the open fields really give us a nice variety of birds and do emphasize the different habitats. This is an easy trek (especially if you're on the sheltered towpath and only need to watch out for falling tree limbs) and a great way to end the year. †

—Anna Urciolo

Sugarloaf Mountain, January 2, 2012. The 27th annual Sugarloaf Mountain CBC took place in chilly, windy weather, but fortunately ponds and streams were unfrozen. Fifty-five dauntless participants tallied a total of 87 species (plus two during Count Week), including one species new to the count: a Clay-colored Sparrow seen near Lucketts, Virginia. Tallies for Green-winged Teal and Black Vulture reached new highs; Gadwall, Wild Turkey, and Bald Eagle tied their previous highs; and Turkey Vulture and Cooper's Hawk numbers were at near-record levels. Other results were more disturbing. The total number of individual birds fell to a new minimum. Ten species hit new lows: Ring-billed Gull, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, Blue Jay, Northern Mockingbird, White-throated Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, and House Sparrow. Of these, Blue Jays, Mockingbirds, and Cardinals showed the most dramatic declines. Barred Owl and Eastern Towhee tied their previous lows. Other species with near-record lows were Mallard, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Common Grackle, and House Finch. For the first time in the count's history, no Herring Gulls were reported. Thanks to everyone who helped out. Next winter's Sugarloaf Count will take place on Sunday, December 30, 2012. Hope to see you then. †

—Janet Millenson and Helen Horrocks

Our New Secretary: Rae Dubois

When Diane Ford resigned as secretary due to family concerns, Rae Dubois was elected to fill the position. We asked her to write a few words about herself.

I am a Maryland transplant though I have lived here for well over 40 years. I was born in Arizona and grew up in places like St. George, Utah, and Durango, Colorado, while my father worked for the Department of the Interior in what was then called the Grazing Service and, after that, as foreman of a ranch in northeastern New Mexico.

After graduating from the University of New Mexico, I came to Washington during the Vietnam years to live with a friend, met my husband Woody, and have been here ever since, though we do return to Arizona once a year to see my relatives in the Gila Valley and, needless to say, to bird. Every time we are there and looking at something like the Red-faced Warbler or the Spotted Owl, I bemoan all the years we visited Arizona and were not birders!

I received a degree in Library Science from the University of Maryland during the early 1970s and then was a federal librarian for 23 years, first at Walter Reed Army Institute of Research and then at the National Agricultural Library in Beltsville, retiring in 2003.

I wish I could say I have been birding all my life but not so. Woody and I have belonged to the Audubon Naturalist Society ever since our children were young, but we finally started traveling with ANS in 2001, often on trips where Don Messersmith was the leader. When we went to eastern Peru with Don, traveling on tributaries of the Amazon and seeing birds like the Great Potoo and the Plum-throated Cotinga, we knew we were hooked. (In other words, Don, this is all your fault!) As a result, I often say that my birding experience has been gained backwards. I worked on identifying birds from Central and South America, Australia, and China before I had much experience birding in the U.S. During the last three or four years I have been working hard to rectify this, exploring great birding sites from Texas to Washington State to Montgomery County and meeting wonderful birding people in the process.

My other favorite things besides birding are taking care of our two grandsons and making quilts. †

—Rae Dubois



ANNUAL MBC SOCIAL

Friday, March 16, 2012

Guest of Honor: Helen Patton

Join us for our annual social at Woodend, headquarters of the Audubon Naturalist Society, 8940 Jones Mill Road, Chevy Chase. The evening begins with a social hour at 6:30, followed by dinner at 7:30. Smokey Glen Farm of Gaithersburg will once again cater this delicious dinner.

The evening will feature the traditional members' slide show. John Hubbell will be the compiler. Please limit your presentation to 10 digital photos and send them to John at johngilhub@yahoo.com *no later than March 12* in digital form (either on a CD or a thumb drive) in the order you want them to be shown.

Because space is limited, places will go to the first 90 persons to reserve and pay. **Signup deadline is Wednesday, March 7.**

Send this form (or a copy) and your check (\$20 per person), payable to Montgomery Bird Club, to Anna Urciolo, 8 Leyton Ct, Rockville, MD 20850. Anna's email is urcioloa@sidwell.edu.

Name(s) to appear on tags:

Phone #: _____

_____ Please check here if you would like a vegetarian meal. Vegetarian lasagna will be available.

_____ reservations at \$20 per person

\$_____ enclosed



The Chat
MBC/MOS
P.O. Box 59639
Potomac, MD 20859-9639

