

President's Chat

This is my last President's Chat, as my term is drawing to a close. This has been a very enjoyable two years for me, and a major reason is the wonderful people I have had the opportunity to work with. So I want to use this space to thank some of them.

First, **Anna Urciolo** has been a steady hand at the vice president post, finding and scheduling a great lineup of speakers, dealing smoothly with necessary schedule changes, and honchoing two successful Socials. **Sally Wechsler** continues to fulfill her treasurer duties efficiently and does a great job of keeping us on track. As secretary, **Diane Ford** and more recently **Rae Dubois** have kept our correspondence in shape.

I thank our state directors for representing MBC well at MOS and helping to carry back news of statewide programs. Over the past two years, **Chris Barnard**, **Brad Beukema**, **John Combs**, **Mark England**, and **Chris Wright** have had a turn at this post. Our chapter directors—**Stephanie Lovell** and **Jim Moore** (both years), **Suzanne Dater** and **David Strother** (first year), and **Woody Dubois** and **Susan Hunt** (second year)—have added their energy, experience, and wisdom to the Club Council's discussions.

And thanks to the many others who have helped keep the club running. A partial list must include these members:

Linda Friedland, our long-serving and hardworking field trip coordinator;

Eric Skrzypczak, our new webmaster, replacing **Howard Lefkowitz**;

Gail Mackiernan, Conservation chair;

Gemma Radko, continuing as *Chat* designer;



Susan Hunt, who has smoothly taken over as *Chat* editor from **Lydia Schindler**;

Jane Farber and **Jeanne Lacerte**, who handle distribution of the *Chat*;

Robert Parsons, for sales and distribution of our Site Guide; and, of course, **all our wonderful field trip leaders**.

Finally, thanks are also due to our Nominating Committee: **Helen Patton** (chair), **Gail Mackiernan**, and **Mark England**. They have put together a strong slate of candidates for officer and director positions (see back page) that will move our club into the future.


I will stay involved as past president. And by the way, I expect to keep the job of email coordinator. Our email list is a great way to get news and reminders to members. I urge everyone to get onto the list. If you have not been getting email from the Club, let me know. We will correct the problem quickly.

Good Birding! ♪

—Steve Pretl



CONTENTS



Spring Calendar/Chit-Chat	2
Field Trips	3
Birding Vignette/New Record?	4
Trip Reports	5-7
A Taste of Birding	7
Birds of Note/Welcome New Members	8
Scott's Fined for Contaminated Birdseed.....	9
2012-2013 Slate of Officers.....	10



Spring Calendar

May 9 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m. "Birds of Southern Africa." (Note meeting date on second Wednesday.) Mark Abdy leads safaris to southern Africa each year and will present a slide program on some of the beautiful birds he has photographed.

May 12 (Saturday), May Count. Wherever you're birding in Montgomery County on this day, bring along a copy of the May Count Checklist (www.mdbirds.org/counts/namc/namcchecklist.pdf), and count all the birds you find. Submit completed checklists to compiler Diane Ford by email (dmford455@yahoo.com) or by snail mail (9813 Parkwood Drive, Bethesda, MD 20814) by June 15; eBird reports also acceptable.

May 12 (Saturday), 29th Annual World Series of Birding. New Jersey Audubon hosts North America's premier conservation event. This event has raised over \$8 million for bird conservation. For more information, visit New Jersey Audubon's website at www.njaudubon.org.

The Club does not meet during the summer, but check out our website for news about bird sightings, and note the field trip schedule for the rest of May and the shorebird trip in August.

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.



Teal



Quail



Snipe



Plover



Ruff

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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, email: shunt820@yahoo.com.



Have You Heard from Us Lately?

If you haven't been getting email notifications from Montgomery Bird Club President Steve Pretl about upcoming events and issues and, especially, when the *Chat* is posted on our website, perhaps we don't have your current email address. Please let us know if it has changed by emailing Helen Patton at helen@dataprompt.com. Let's keep communicating! ♪

Annual Social

More than 75 MBC members and guests enjoyed wonderful food, company, and photos at the annual social on March 16. Neal Fitzpatrick once again made the beautiful ANS headquarters at Woodend available, although he was unable to attend this year. We are very grateful to have this continuing association with ANS. Raj Sakaria, the ANS property manager, organized the setup and cleanup.

As always, Smokey Glen Farm provided us with a tasty dinner; thanks to Jim Green for handling the dinner arrangements! Jim also shared bartending duties with Andy Martin.


Additional "thank-yous" go to Gemma Radko for designing the nametags, Lydia Schindler who arrived early and helped wrestle the top onto the coffee urn, John Hubbell, who organized the member slide show, and Cyndie Loeper and Helen Patton, who shopped for all of the snappy tablecloths. Thanks also to everyone who provided appetizers.

Club President Steve Pretl introduced this year's guest of honor, Helen Patton, who took us on a whirlwind trip with anecdotes of her many birding adventures. The evening was topped off by all of us admiring the superb pictures, photos, and sketches presented by our talented members. Everyone had a great time! ♪

—Anna Urciolo



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.).

MAY 5 (Saturday) PIGTAIL-TRIADDELPHIA. Joint trip with Howard Bird Club in conjunction with WSSC. Meet 8 a.m. at the Green Bridge Road parking lot off Triadelphia Mill Road. The cove is bordered on three sides by deciduous and coniferous woods. Extensive mudflats may exist with the possibility of shorebirds. Two- to three-hour trip. Facilities available (rustic). For more information, contact the LEADER: Michael O'Sullivan, fr84wrdr@yahoo.com.



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 Rd. 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-quarters to full 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 Co. (krschwal@verizon.net or 410-461-1643). For reservations and information, contact CO-LEADER: Cyndie Loeper at cyndieloeper@comcast.net or 240-535-8584.

AUGUST 25 (Saturday) DELAWARE COASTAL AREAS. Joint trip with ANS. Full day at Bombay Hook, Little Creek, Logan Tract, and other sites. Shorebirds, marsh birds, and some songbirds. Bring pack lunch. Meet 8:00 a.m. at Bombay Hook Visitor Center parking lot. Make reservations (15-person limit) with CO-LEADER: John Bjerke, 240-401-1643. Cyndie Loeper will also co-lead.

Birding Vignette

As birders, we have experiences that are funny or wonderful or amazing and are indelibly imprinted in our minds. Here are a few of mine:

In 2007, Don Messersmith led a trip to China. In Sichuan Province, we paid a visit to the Panda Reserve in Wolong. They spent some time with us explaining their program and said that the previous year had been very successful for their baby panda program and they had quite a number of young pandas that we could see. Considering our experience with the difficulty of producing baby pandas at the National Zoo, we were thinking that three or four would constitute great success. Much to our surprise, the Wolong reserve had produced in excess of 14! (I don't remember the exact number.) The little pandas were in a fenced-in yard with lots of wooden structures that they used for exercise and entertainment.

When you consider that an adult panda can send most people into spasms of delight and a baby panda is beyond cute, and then multiply that by 14 or so and the result is pure "Panda-monium." These guys were very active, jostling for position on the climbing posts, falling off platforms, wrestling with each other, grabbing keepers around the legs to prevent food dishes from being removed, and generally being adorable. We must have watched them for a half hour or so and left reluctantly.

From Wolong, we headed for Jiuzhaigou (pronounced *jew zhai go*). Part of the road that we traveled was along the Pi Tao River. At one point, we entered an area where the local villagers were "improving" the road. They had added new dirt and gotten the road pretty straight and smooth, but



Panda photograph by Gary Van Velsir

the edges were fairly soft. A large truck carrying a load of bricks (I think) was ahead of us and was forced over to the newly made edge by oncoming traffic. The edge gave way, and the now unbalanced truck fell over onto its side. This caused a lot of commotion and argument. We were told that the villagers wanted to be compensated for the damage to their road. In order to keep everyone who might make a contribution, they put rocks across the road so that no one could escape. And so our bus was stopped.

For birders, unexpected happenings can be an opportunity rather than an irritant. So we got out and started to look around. In this case, we were beside a stream, so we started to scan and came up with a Brown Dipper, a new bird for our trip. As we were doing that, the police showed up and informed the villagers that they could not block the road no matter how unhappy they were. So the stones were removed and traffic started up again. We—happy as Dippers—reboarded our bus and continued on our way. ♪

—Helen Patton



Solander's Petrel photographed by Gail Mackiernan

New Bird Record?

The current issue of *North American Birds* (an ABA publication) features a detailed article by our own **Gail Mackiernan** and **Barry Cooper**, titled "First Record of Solander's Petrel for Alaska," replete with photos by Gail. If accepted, this record, from two hours east of the International Dateline in the Bering Sea, would constitute the first record of this species for North America.

Gail comments: "Other Solander's reports are also being reviewed at this time. The committee will decide which record to accept, based on the level of documentation of the various reports."

Congratulations, Gail and Barry! ♪

—Phil Davis



Trip Reports

Black Hill Regional Park, Sunday, January 15. Leader: Dave Powell. We struck gold this year with 11 people in attendance on a very chilly morning for our beginners' waterfowl walk. The waterfowl cooperated with good looks at all species except for a Cackling Goose, which was just a flyby. Highlights were all the waterfowl, but I especially liked seeing the Canvasbacks, Goldeneyes, and Hooded Mergansers. A total of 16 waterbird species were seen as well as a great look at the resident adult Bald Eagle.



Winter Waterfowl on the Potomac, Sunday, February 5.

Leader: Andy Martin. Ten of us met in the parking lot at Great Falls for a one-way walk from Great Falls to Swain's Lock. The weather was surprisingly cooperative given the previous night's forecast. Snow was predicted, but the storm apparently weakened and passed quickly, leaving us with a mostly dry but chilly morning. We followed the River Trail upstream to its junction with the C&O Canal and continued along the towpath to Swain's Lock. Birding was a bit on the slow side with only 27 species reported. Waterfowl on the river included an estimated 300 Ring-necked Ducks along with a few Bufflehead, Common Mergansers, and a single Lesser Scaup. Other highlights included a couple of Bald Eagles, an estimated 18 Great Blue Herons starting to tend nests on Conn Island, and great looks at a Barred Owl roosting in a hollow tree just 20 or so feet off the towpath.



Somerset Marshes, Sunday, February 11. Leaders: Bill Hubick and Jim Brighton. The weather forecast was intimidating, so we semi-canceled the trip. We tried our best to lower expectations and encourage people to opt out of the cold, wet, windy day that seemed certain. But this was a dedicated, hard-core group, and most of the participants showed up anyway! The weather was gloomy, but restrained itself enough for us to function until the last minutes of daylight. We began the day at Rumbly Point Road in lower Somerset County, which featured ideal mudflats that attracted good numbers of Greater (16) and Lesser Yellowlegs (14), Dunlin (93), and Wilson's Snipe (9). A Peregrine Falcon offered nice views, both perched and in flight, and a flock of 12 Snow Geese roosting on the marsh proper was an uncommon sight in the county. Rounding out the suite of nice but expected species here

were Northern Harriers (4), Virginia Rails (2), singing Eastern Meadowlarks (4), and Boat-tailed Grackles (3). The open water to the south held a large raft of 2600+ Ruddy Ducks, 400+ Scaup, and smaller numbers of Common Goldeneye, Canvasback, and one Redhead.

Crisfield held only small numbers of expected species, but we did note a surge of Hooded Mergansers throughout the day. Two of our three Red-shouldered Hawks (uncommon in the county) were along Crisfield Highway east of town

Riley Roberts Road in Deal WMA was very exciting, hosting a nice diversity of dabbling ducks, rare-in-winter waders, and the continuing American White Pelican. We counted 13 Great Egrets, four Snowy Egrets, five Tricolored Herons, and nine Black-crowned Night-Herons. Also present were Brown-headed Nuthatches, a Gray Catbird, and a Fox Sparrow.

Polks Road in northern Somerset County continued to host a large Canada Goose flock that had attracted Greater White-fronted Geese since at least 1/22. The group was excited to quickly locate four Greater White-fronted Geese in just moments, allowing great scope views for all. When the geese flushed, Jim Moore spotted a Snow Goose that hadn't been visible on the ground.

Back at Deal Island, we visited Messick Road, Chance Inlet, and the town of Wenona. We noted Belted Kingfisher at five sites in a row. One was perched on a rock jetty and then seen in flight over open water west of Chance Inlet. There was a Peregrine Falcon on the hack tower at the Messick Road boat ramp. At Wenona, I heard a distant Clapper Rail, a new February species for me and a month closeout (noted in all 12 months in Maryland).

We ended the day back at Riley Roberts Road. We positioned ourselves at the southern end of the road, noting intimidating weather arriving rapidly from the west. As Jim Brighton was describing the habits of wintering American Bitterns, a bittern lifted out of the marsh nearby and flew right past us only feet away and at eye level. We spotted a total of three bitterns, but the storm cut short our dusk watch as sleet began to fall. The sleet escorted us out of Somerset County, and snow followed us until about the Nanticoke River as we worked west.

Quite a day! The bird gods like persistence.

continued on next page

Trip Reports

Oaks Landfill, Sunday, February 19. Leader: Mark England. Participants: 15, including leader. Weather: Chilly and overcast, temperature 33-41°, but little wind. Species: 36. About 10 birders came early (6:15 a.m.) hoping to see Short-eared Owls, which the leader had seen three weeks earlier. Though well-positioned in four different cars on top of the landfill, with all in radio contact, we saw no owls this year. (The previous year, we had a SEOW flyby at about 7 a.m., which resulted in a great photo by Evelyn Ralston.) While waiting for dawn, some heard a Great-Horned Owl and saw an American Woodcock toward the north, outside the landfill. There was also a Northern Harrier up early hunting. The rest of the group arrived at the scheduled 8 a.m. start, and we set off walking the gravel ring road as usual. Probably because of the raw weather, we had trouble getting decent looks at sparrows along the Riggs Road fenceline, but by the end of the walk had recorded many Song Sparrows and a few each of Savannah, Field, White-throated, and Junco. But we had great looks at two American Tree Sparrows, coaxed with some difficulty out of a small bush as we walked toward the top of the hill. As usual, there was no shortage of raptors, with Cooper's, Red-shouldered, and Red-tailed Hawks all seen and another harrier as well. A very low-flying adult Bald Eagle was spotted first by Jim Felley, as we were looking at a nice assortment of waterfowl in the large pond. These included 14 American Black Ducks, Mallards, 16 Northern Pintail (flying), three Green-winged Teal, a Canvasback, 18 Ring-necked Ducks, eight Bufflehead, four Hooded Mergansers, and two Ruddy Ducks.



Jug Bay, Prince George's County, Saturday, March 10. Leader: John Bjerke. Participants: 15. Species: 41. A beautiful sunny day with very chilly temperatures and brisk breezes. We had many Bald Eagle sightings and probably at least 6 individual eagles. Both Osprey and Tree Swallow had returned to confirm Spring. Two of us had brief views of distant American Pipit. Rusty Blackbirds were well seen, and several Wilson's Snipe that were flushed gave good views in flight before disappearing into the cornstalk stubble. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and White-throated Sparrow are birds that will soon move on. The morning ended with a brilliant male Pine Warbler singing to us from the treetops.

Informal Late Afternoon Walk Until Dusk, Tuesday, March 20. Leader: Jim Green. For this joint MBC/ANS bird trip, we met at Riley's Lock, moved down to Violette's Lock, and then went to Hughes Hollow before finishing on Sycamore Landing Road. Seen on the Potomac River at Riley's Lock were a pair of Green-winged Teal, a Horned Grebe, and 10 Double-crested Cormorants, some with their crests raised. We also heard an Eastern Phoebe. There was a mixed flock of waterfowl at Violette's Lock so we ventured there for our next stop. At Violette's we saw a Bald Eagle, six Tree Swallows, eight Mallards, two American Wigeon, two Wood Duck, four Lesser Scaup, 10 Bufflehead, a Common Merganser, four Hooded Merganser, and 36 Horned Grebe in various stages of winter and breeding plumage—a nice study! We also saw two Swamp Sparrows along the canal.

On to Hughes Hollow: there were very few ducks here. We saw three Pied-billed Grebes in one impoundment and later heard others calling in a different impoundment. There were two Gadwall, three Wood Ducks, a pair of Blue-winged Teal, 11 Ring-necked Ducks, a Hooded Merganser, and 33 American Coots. We flushed the Blue-winged Teal from the impoundment just past the bulletin board and then had "knock your socks off" looks as they circled low several times, then landed on the edge of the island in the large impoundment where we also enjoyed scope views in ideal light. We made a quick check of the polo fields on Hughes Road and heard several Horned Larks.

We finished on Sycamore Landing Road as darkness moved in and did NOT hear any American Woodcocks. We did hear three different Barred Owls calling. It was a beautiful evening to be out.



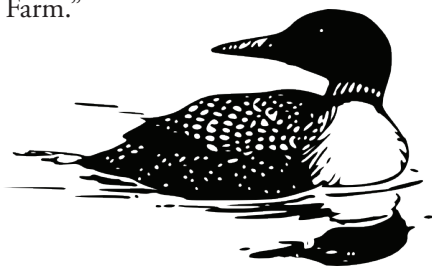
Izaak Walton League, B-CC Chapter, Poolesville, Saturday, April 14. Leader: Mike Bowen, with John Lamb as trail guide. Participants: 15. Weather: Cold initially, but soon warming up to the 60s with blue skies and very little wind. Species count: 39. Highlights: Two Wild Turkeys out in the fields beyond the skeet shooting range; two Broad-winged Hawks lifting off from woodlots on the property, giving us superb views before they gained altitude and soared off to the north. Warblers were unfortunately almost impossible to find—four Myrtles were all we spied—but

Trip Reports

Field Sparrows were everywhere and easy to see at close range. The pond area had lots of Bluebirds and Tree Sparrows. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers had arrived in numbers, and we had the great pleasure of seeing a pair working on a nest very close to the archery area, where there also were several Eastern Phoebes. We had excellent views of a singing male Eastern Towhee and a singing Brown Thrasher.

After the end of the official trip, some of the participants went over to the C&O Canal at Sycamore Landing. No warblers here either, but we saw a female Common Merganser on the Potomac and, with a lot of luck, located a Pileated Woodpecker nest in a cavity in a dead tree that could be seen well in the scope with an adult woodpecker crouched within.

MBC thanks Jim Tate, John Lamb, and members of the B-CC Chapter for their warm welcome and hospitality. We were sorry that Jim could not be with us on April 14 but very grateful to John for filling in at the last minute as our official host at "The Farm."



Hugh Mahanes Presidents' Walk at Hughes Hollow, Sunday, April 22. Leader: Steve Pretl. Participants: 15, including the president and four former presidents. Species: 40+ (some seen by a smaller group). Weather: Cold, damp, and a bit miserable, but the threatened rain held off until later in the morning. Overall, not very birdy, but some good sightings. We had excellent looks at several singing Prothonotary Warblers. Common Yellowthroats were also obliging. An Orchard Oriole sang and gave us some good looks. A flyby Wilson's Snipe was seen by many participants. A couple of White-eyed Vireos were present and singing but, as usual, were hard to find. A House Wren announced itself and provided brief glimpses. A FOS (for many) Green Heron was seen. Participants also heard (and some saw) a Common Raven, and a Wild Turkey was heard calling in the distance. A Barred Owl made a brief but exciting flight almost over our heads and then disappeared into the trees. Only the Red-headed Woodpeckers and the American Bittern (seen there earlier in the week) failed to appear.

Some of the participants went on to Dry Seneca where we got wonderful looks at a Prairie Warbler and an Eastern Towhee. One person continued on the other side of the road and saw an Eastern Meadowlark and heard a Yellow-Breasted Chat. Two others stopped at Riley's Lock and spotted six Common Loons, four in breeding plumage, on the river.

A Taste of Birding

Do you have a nonbirding spouse, child, or friend who has been wondering why you are getting up before the crack of dawn and rushing out to spend hours tromping through the woods and fields, peering up at nearly invisible creatures flitting about in the canopy? Or perhaps you have friends who think that life is too short to spend all day birding and wonder why you do it. That's the perfect opportunity to suggest that they get a taste of birding by going on a free, hour-long Saturday morning beginner bird walk at Woodend.

Our friends at the Audubon Naturalist Society offer these walks for beginners. The walks start at 8 o'clock every Saturday through June and again from September through November (monthly from December to February).

Experienced leaders (familiar faces to MBC members) are eager to introduce those who wish to see what it's all about, pacing the hour-long walk to the interests of participants. Binoculars are available for those who don't have them, and registration is not required. The walks begin and end outside the Sanctuary Shop, which conveniently opens at 9:00 A.M.

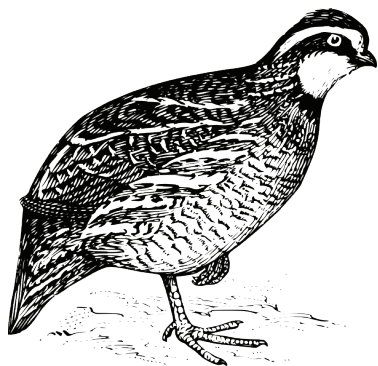


And don't forget, for those inclined to a longer birding event, check out the field trips marked with an egg symbol on page 3. ♪

Birds of Note (January to late March 2012)

The past few months (January through late March) have been relatively uneventful from a birding standpoint. Relatively few rarities have been reported in the county since the last part of December. Both waterfowl and land bird numbers seemed to be down during this unusually mild winter.

Probably one of the better sightings over the past few months was a pair of **White-winged Scoters** along the Potomac just downstream from Old Angler's Inn. The birds were initially found by Dave Roberts on February 12 and stuck around for 3 or 4 days thereafter. Mary Ann Todd noted a **Greater White-fronted Goose** at Black Hill RP on February 1, and Dave Czaplak found two **Cackling Geese** on the Potomac near Violette's Lock on January 16.



This year's mild winter combined with an exceptionally warm March brought the early migrating warblers in a few weeks ahead of schedule. **Louisiana Waterthrush** and **Pine, Palm, and Yellow-throated Warblers** all

seemed to have arrived a bit early this year compared with previous ones.

Paul Woodward found a couple of **Rusty Blackbirds** at Hughes Hollow on January 22.

On January 13, on a trip to the Oaks Landfill adjacent to Blue Mash, Anna Urciolo and Mark England saw a **Short-eared Owl** and a single **Northern Bobwhite**, a very rare bird for our county these days.

Jim Moore noted a **Peregrine Falcon** during the Sugarloaf CBC on January 2, and Kurt Schwarz reported a **Merlin** from the Oaks Landfill on January 14.

Scott Stephenson reported a **Red-headed Woodpecker** from Violette's Lock on January 15. Paul Woodward found a couple of **Rusty Blackbirds** at Hughes Hollow on January 22. David Hunter's backyard feeder in Takoma Park was visited by a **Red-breasted Nuthatch** on February 11. Dave Czaplak heard a **Pine Siskin** while exploring Blockhouse Point CP on March 23.

Mary Ann Todd found an **American Bittern** at Hughes Hollow on April 2 and a **Red-throated Loon** at Black Hill RP on April 3. Jim Nelson reported a **Sora** from Hughes Hollow on April 4. ♪

—Andy Martin

Message for New Members

Welcome to the Montgomery Bird Club! We encourage you to go on as many field trips as your schedule permits. Our monthly meetings (from September to May) are a great way to meet other birders and to share experiences.

The Site Guide (*A Birder's Guide to Montgomery County Maryland, Second Edition*), for sale at our meetings and at the Audubon Naturalist Society bookstore at Woodend, is full of information about places to bird in the county. Read the *Chat* and the *Maryland Yellowthroat* (the Maryland Ornithological Society newsletter) to learn about birding opportunities throughout the state and elsewhere.



And most important, have fun birding! ♪

Welcome New Members!

Cindy and Arne Anderson	Peter Kaestner
Elda Banks	Michelle Ratcliffe
William Archer Brown	Jon Siemien
Anne Ashburn Cianni	Kristianne Taweel
Bruce and Owen Crise	Joan Van der Slice
Neal Fitzpatrick	



Just When You Thought It Was Safe: Scotts Fined on Birdseed

In May 2011, the *Birding Community E-Bulletin* reported on birdseed testing and safety issues that showed that inspected seed was either free from pesticides or fell below levels that would threaten avian health (see <http://refugeassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/sbc-may11.pdf>).

In late January 2012, however, Scotts Miracle-Gro Co., based in Marysville, Ohio, agreed to plead guilty to charges in federal court and to pay fines in connection with birdseed incidents dating back a number of years. The plea agreement is waiting the judge's approval and may not be resolved for another 60 days, but fines for this case and for another related Scotts case (on falsified pesticide registration numbers) add up to \$4.5 million.

Scotts is the world's largest marketer of branded consumer lawn and garden products. The seed case specifically deals with the recall of seed for wild birds that had been coated with pesticides that were determined to be toxic to birds. It seems that Scotts had distributed 73 million units of birdseed coated with the insecticides Storcide II and/or Actellic 5E between November 2005 and March 2008. The chemicals were used to keep insects from eating the seed during storage. Storcide II is labeled as "Toxic to birds. Toxic to wildlife" and "exposed treated seed may be



hazardous to birds." The EPA regards pirimphos-methyl, an active ingredient in Actellic 5E, as highly toxic to birds and fish.

Documents filed with the court indicate that Scotts continued to sell the products, despite warnings from two employees, a pesticide chemist, and an ornithologist, in the summer and fall of 2007.

Finally, in spring 2008 the company initiated its own recall of all birdseed that might be harmful with the intent of replacing the contaminated product with birdseed that had been treated with Diacon II. (Just about every major birdseed company uses Diacon II in their products to prevent insect infestation.) The Scotts recall announcement drew attention to their original inappropriate use of Storcide II and Actellic 5E, and the legal actions were launched with punitive results.

A few days before the plea agreement, Scotts and the National Wildlife Federation had announced a nationwide cause marketing program to address songbird declines, a partnership which would include a \$1 donation per bag sold of "Songbirds Selections NutriThrive" birdfood to the National Wildlife Federation. Three days later, NWF announced that the partnership was "not viable" and that the parties would work to end the relationship in a "friendly and mutually beneficial way."

Part of the fine imposed on Scotts—\$500,000—will be split among a number of groups and agencies to fund efforts to protect birds, mostly based in Ohio. They are Audubon Ohio (for the IBA program), the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (Urban Forestry Program), Columbus Metro Parks (Bird Habitat Enhancement Program), The Nature Conservancy of Ohio, and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

The issue highlights the need for ongoing monitoring of the quality and safety of the nation's birdseed supply. ♪

(Adapted from the Birding Community E-Bulletin, a free monthly electronic newsletter co-edited by Paul Baicich and Wayne Peterson.)

Slate of Officers 2012-2013

President: Anna Urciolo
Vice-President: Ed Patten
Secretary: Rae Dubois
Treasurer: Sally Wechsler

Chapter Director: Cecily Nabors
Chapter Director: Bill Adams

State Director: Andy Martin
State Director: Chris Barnard
State Director: John Combs

*Continuing to serve the second year of
their two-year terms:*

Chapter Director: Susan Hunt
Chapter Director: Woody Dubois

All positions are being nominated
for the 2012–2013 Montgomery
Bird Club year. Each person has
agreed to run and serve if elected.
Additional nominations may be
made from the floor provided the
nominee has agreed beforehand.
The election will take place at the
MBC meeting on May 16. ♪

—*Helen Patton, Chair*
Mark England
Gail Mackiernan



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