

President's Chat

Welcome to a new year! I am the new MBC president, and I certainly have a tough act to follow of our many talented leaders.

As I contemplate this undertaking, I think about the 150 years since the birth of Frank Chapman (that's my Jersey roots talking!). For those who have not heard of Frank Chapman, you have to go back to before the Sibley and Peterson guides. Chapman wrote *The Handbook of Birds of Eastern North America* (1895), *A Guide to the Study of Our Common Birds* (1897), and *Warblers of North America* (1907), as well as many other references. These were the field guides and major references of that time.

So as I contemplate my position as MBC president, you have to think we have a site guide for the county in which we live. We have a very diverse group: birders who travel the world in search of birds as well as folks who are happy just to bird the county or their own little patch of it. This is what makes this position interesting—no matter where or how we do it, we are all coming together for birds. I also know that I will be supported by a great team of officers, which includes our past-president, **Anna Urciolo**.



The annual election of officers and directors was held at the May meeting. **Clive Harris** is our new vice-president, **Sally Wechsler** continues as treasurer, and **Rae Dubois** is ably filling the role of secretary (thanks Sally and Rae!). Chapter directors are **Woody Dubois**, **Evelyn Ralston**, **Gail Mackiernan**, and **Brooke Smith**. The state directors are **Bill Adams**, **Andy Martin**, and **Jim Moore**.

Clive Harris has lined up some wonderful speakers for the year. And **Linda Friedland** continues to put in an extraordinary effort in scheduling field trips and recruiting some great leaders for these trips. Be sure to support the field trip leaders who donate their time and knowledge for these trips.

And, by the way, it is time to renew your membership; you will find the membership renewal form on the back of this newsletter. For several years now, members have been able to receive the *Chat* electronically. Please indicate on the renewal form if you would like to read the *Chat* and *The Maryland Yellowthroat* on the Internet, rather than receiving them in the mail.

Thanks to all MBC members, and get out in the field! ♪

—Ed Patten

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Fall Calendar

September 17 (Wednesday), Birds and Other Wildlife in Botswana and Zimbabwe. *Suzanne Dater* will present a slide show of the landscape, birds, mammals, and reptiles of southern Africa.

October 15 (Wednesday), Birds of a Feather: Seasonal Changes on Both Sides of the Atlantic. *Colin Rees*, one of the co-authors of the book *Birds of a Feather*, will show snapshots/portraits of birds and landscapes observed over a year in the UK and the U.S. The presentation will highlight incidents involving migrants and the unfolding of the breeding season.

November 19 (Wednesday), Hummingbirds in the Mid-Atlantic. Local birders are well aware of the increase in recent years of wintering hummingbirds. *Bruce Peterjohn* from the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center will summarize our current knowledge of the status of hummingbirds across the mid-Atlantic region with an emphasis on wintering species.

December 17 (Wednesday), Northwest Atlantic Seabird Surveys. Well-known to many birders through the photo quiz in the ABA's *Birding* magazine, *Tom Johnson* has been working for the last two years as a seabird biologist aboard NOAA ships, where he conducted bird surveys in the ocean. Tom will talk about the birds that are found far offshore in Maryland waters, beyond the range of our local pelagic trips.

January 21 (Wednesday), Project Snowstorm. *David Brinker*, a regional wildlife ecologist for Maryland's Department of Natural Resources, will discuss the massive irruption of Snowy Owls in the winter of 2013-2014, the biggest in decades, which provided an opportunity for scientists to learn about the lifestyle and biology of this fascinating species.

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 Ed Patten at 301-948-5648 or epatten1022@verizon.net.

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,
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Club News

Congratulations to Jim Green and Dave Powell! When Jim spotted a Lapland Longspur in January, this put his Carroll County list at 200, the last of his 23 Maryland counties list to reach 200. A few months after Jim reached this milestone, Dave Powell achieved it also. Only six people have reached this goal—two of them Montgomery County birders.


Jim comments: It has taken a lot of persistence and also many tanks full of gas and paid tolls, but when you really only have one hobby you don't think about those things. If I have a day off or partial day off and no family obligations, I am out birding, usually in Maryland.

I was first introduced to the concept of county listing by Helen Patton and Dave Powell. At the time I told them I did not have time because it was toward the end of the Maryland breeding bird atlas project, and I was Montgomery County's coordinator. But when the atlas project ended in 2006, I quickly caught the county listing disease.

The one common thread along the way to this milestone has been the friendship of the Maryland birders that I have met and shared birds with along the way. It was Bill Hubick who explained to me that sometimes you are the *lion*—you find the good birds and then watch everybody else chase what you have found. And sometimes you are the *jackal*—you chase the good birds found by others. How true! The bottom line is that we are all out there for the same reason: to see and enjoy the birds. ♪

Editor's Note: As anyone knows who reads Jim's emails on the listserve, he lives up to his own motto: Work in moderation, BIRD IN EXCESS!

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.).

AUGUST 23 (Saturday) DELAWARE COASTAL AREAS (joint trip with Audubon Naturalist Society). Full day at Bombay Hook NWR, Ted Harvey WMA, possibly Little Creek, and other sites. Shorebirds, marsh birds, and some songbirds. Bring pack lunch and water. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at Bombay Hook Visitor Center parking lot. Reservations required (15-person limit). Make reservations with the LEADER: John Bjerke at 240-401-1643 or johnbjerke1@mac.com. Cyndie Loeper will co-lead.


SEPTEMBER 6 (Saturday) PATUXENT RIVER PARK, JUG BAY NATURAL AREA, PRINCE GEORGE'S CO., MD. Half day; joint trip with Audubon Naturalist Society. Driftboat on Patuxent River followed by trail walk. Search for Sora, also migrant and resident songbirds and waterbirds. Meet at 7 a.m. at park entrance gate (or visitor center parking lot if gate is open). Bring fee of \$6 per person for park program; boat trip can be cool and a bit damp. LEADERS: Greg Kearns and Paul Baicich. Reservations required (15-person limit). Make reservations with John Bjerke at 240-401-1643 or johnbjerke1@mac.com.

SEPTEMBER 9 (Tuesday) ROCK CREEK PARK, DC. Urban birding at its best with one of Rock Creek Park's "Regulars." One-third day. Migrant warblers, vireos, and sparrows. Meet 7 a.m. at Picnic Area 18 (on Ridge Road, half-mile below the Nature Center). Reservations required. For reservations and directions, call the LEADER: Wallace Kornack at 202-338-7859.


SEPTEMBER 13 (Saturday) ROCK CREEK PARK, DC. We've expanded our urban bird walks to include those who can meet only on weekends. One-third day. Same great birds: migrant warblers, vireos, and sparrows. Meet at 6:45 a.m. at Picnic Area 18 (on Ridge Road, half-mile below the Nature Center). Note the earlier meeting time necessary to secure a parking spot. Reservations required. For reservations and directions, call the LEADER: Wallace Kornack at 202-338-7859.

 **SEPTEMBER 14 (Sunday) LITTLE BENNETT RP.** All are welcome on this traditional early fall trip, but we especially encourage new members and those new to birding to join us. Meet at 7:30 a.m. We'll slowly walk some of the woodland trails looking for migrant and resident birds. Reservations required. Limit: 8. For reservations and directions, contact the LEADER: Claire Wolfe at 301-972-4278 or c_wolfe2003@yahoo.com.

SEPTEMBER 20 (Saturday) SNICKERS GAP, VA. Two-thirds day. Joint trip with Audubon Naturalist Society. Peak time for Broad-winged Hawks. Meet at 10:30 a.m. at commuter parking lot at VA 7 and VA 601. (Arrive at 8:30 if you wish to join the morning bird walk at nearby Shenandoah River Campus at Cool Spring Battlefield.) Make reservations (required) with LEADERS: Joan Boudreau and Bob Abrams at icepeep@aol.com or 703-734-1238 (home). Bring tripods, scopes, chairs, pack lunch, and rain/wind gear. Call leaders for directions.

 **SEPTEMBER 21 (Sunday) PENNYFIELD TO VIOLETTE'S BIRD STALK.** Half day. For folks who prefer a somewhat later start to their birding, we will meet at 9 a.m. at Violette's Lock parking lot, end of Violette's Lock Road. We will carpool to Pennyfield Lock and walk back up the C&O Canal towpath to Violette's. This walk should net an interesting mix of late warblers, other land bird migrants, and probably a few early winter visitors, as we scan the skies and river for raptors and waterbirds. Limit: 12. If you plan to attend, contact the LEADER: Jim Nelson at kingfishers2@verizon.net or 301-530-6574.


SEPTEMBER 28 (Sunday) CATOCTIN MOUNTAINS. Full day. Bring food, water. Focus on migrant songbirds, but time will be spent discussing wildflowers, insects, and other general natural history topics. Reservations required. Limit: 14. For reservations and directions, contact one of the CO-LEADERS: Jim Brighton at jimbrighton3@gmail.com or Tom Feild at Thomas.C.Feild@nasa.gov.

 **OCTOBER 5 (Sunday) LITTLE BENNETT RP.** All are welcome on this half-day trip, but we especially encourage new members and those new to birding to join us. Meet at 7:30 a.m. We'll slowly walk some of the woodland trails looking for migrant and resident birds. Reservations required. Limit: 8. For reservations and directions, contact the LEADER: Gemma Radko at 301-514-2894.

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Field Trips


OCTOBER 8 (Wednesday) MONTGOMERY COUNTY SPARROW SEARCH. Meet at 7 a.m. and bird until 10. Be prepared to walk in long, wet grass and in muddy areas. The meeting place will be determined by the leader at a later date. Likely sparrows: White-throated, Swamp, Song, maybe White-crowned. Possible more difficult species: Clay-colored and Nelson's Sparrows. Limit: 8. For information and reservations, call the LEADER: Dave Powell at 301-540-8776.


 **OCTOBER 11 (Saturday) BIG SIT 2014!** Join the Sitting Ducks at Black Hill RP starting at dawn and continuing until ? Come for the day or just a few hours. Meet at the dike across the road from the park boat ramp. For more information or directions, contact the LEADER: Chuck Parker at 240-446-8423 or chparker@access.k12.wv.us.

OCTOBER 13 (Monday) WHEATON REGIONAL PARK. Fall is the best time to find migrant warblers, vireos, and flycatchers (Yellow-bellied is a good possibility) in this interesting park. Reservations required. Limit: 10. For more information about meeting time and place and for reservations, contact the CO-LEADERS: Woody and Rae Dubois at dengue1@verizon.net.

OCTOBER 15 (Wednesday) LEADER'S CHOICE, MONTGOMERY COUNTY. Half-day morning trip targeting seasonal migrants as well as local birds. Reservations required. For reservations and details about meeting time and place, contact the LEADER: Jim Green at 301-742-0036 or jkgbirdman53@gmail.com.

NOVEMBER 2 (Sunday) OAKS LANDFILL. Explore this now-closed landfill adjacent to the Blue Mash Nature Trail. Mostly open terrain on a gravel road, including two pond views and one hill climb of moderate difficulty. Possible 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 information, contact one of the CO-LEADERS: Mark England at 240-207-3132 (home) or 240-375-4500 (cell) or Ed Patten at 301-948-5648.

 **NOVEMBER 9 (Sunday) LOISY. GREEN PARK: REMEMBERING LOU.** The second annual walk in honor of former MBC president and all-round naturalist Lou DeMouy who passed away in November 2012. The trip will be led by current MBC President Ed Patten. Meet at 7:30 a.m. Reservations required. For more information and reservations, contact the LEADER: Ed Patten at 301-948-5648.

 **NOVEMBER 11 (Tuesday) LBJs at BLUE MASH NATURE TRAIL.** Half day. Blue Mash is a good place to work on the basics of sparrow ID. In addition to the common species, like Song and Field and Chipping, we'll keep 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 at lydiaschindler@verizon.net.

NOVEMBER 15 (Saturday) BLACKWATER NWR. Full day (to dusk). Early waterfowl and lingering migrants plus late afternoon marsh watch. Brown-headed Nuthatch possible. Bring lunch and drinks. Reservations required. Limit: 12. For meeting place and time, contact one of the CO-LEADERS: Mark England at 240-207-3132 (home) or 240-375-4500 (cell) or Ed Patton at 301-948-5648.

NOVEMBER 23 (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 migratory ducks and boreal migrants should be present. Meet at the parking lot in the center of the refuge at 8 a.m. Reservations are necessary. Limit: 20. For reservations and more information, contact one of the CO-LEADERS: Mike Bowen at 301-530-5764 or dhmbowen@yahoo.com or Gerry Hawkins at 571-277-8406 or maineusa@comcast.net. **Directions:** From Maryland, take Rt. 495 south to I-95 south to Woodbridge, Exit 161 (left exit); follow Rt. 1 south, cross the Occoquan River, turn left at the light onto Dawson Beach Road, and follow this road to the end.

DECEMBER 7 (Sunday) LILYPONS/NEW DESIGN ROAD. Half day. Wintering field birds, targeting Fox and Tree Sparrows, possibly Virginia Rail and American Bittern. For reservations (required) and more info, contact the LEADER: Clive Harris at cliveharris@yahoo.com.



Trip Reports

Hugh Mahanes Presidents' Walk at Hughes Hollow, Sunday, April 27. The Montgomery Bird Club held its annual Hugh Mahanes walk this fine Sunday morning. Led by our current Club president, Anna Urciolo, and four past presidents, our group of 21 had some great birds (49 species total), including many first-of-year species for the participants. Best birds were a Common Gallinule in the lily pads of the large eastern impoundment spotted by Emma Dixon, a Wilson's Snipe that obligingly flew around in a large circle for all to see, two Wild Turkey that were apparently flushed from the swampy area at the back of the wooded impoundment by a couple of hunting dogs and which flew right over our heads, a Barred Owl, calling Great Crested Flycatchers, three singing Yellow-throated Vireos including one right at the parking lot when we returned to our cars, Gray Catbirds, a nice male Prothonotary Warbler exploring a Wood Duck box, a host of singing male Common Yellowthroats, two singing male Prairie Warblers at the corner of Hunting Quarter and River Roads, and two singing male Orchard Orioles.



Occoquan Bay NWR, Sunday, May 4. Leaders: Mike Bowen and Gerry Hawkins. Participants: 12. Weather: Clear and sunny, warming up to the low 70s. Species count: 65. Highlights: Several Yellow-breasted Chats and Prairie Warblers, perched up and singing in good view. Some nice Yellow and Prothonotary Warblers, too. The Yellow Warblers were everywhere, as were Common Yellowthroats, although they were not always easy to see. Indigo Buntings and Orchard Orioles were very vocal and conspicuous, as were Blue-gray Gnatcatchers. We managed a good look at two singing Yellow-throated Vireos and a nice pair of Blue Grosbeak, first seen at the beginning of the walk. Waterfowl had mostly left the area, but we did find a flock of about 70 Ruddy Ducks, accompanied by a single male Bufflehead, and a flyby Wood Duck. Ospreys were very common overhead, but Bald Eagles were fewer in number, with several unoccupied nests seen. An occupied eagle nest on Charlie Road prevented us from visiting part of the refuge. Probably the best birds of the morning were two King Rails heard calling from extremely close by, but never actually seen.

Little Bennett RP, Sunday, May 4. Leader: Gemma Radko. The highlight of our walk was a Whip-poor-will that flushed off the ground as we hiked up the Beaver Valley Trail. The whip then sat in a tree next to the path, less than 50 yards ahead of us, so everyone got excellent looks and a few folks took photos as well. Other highlights included excellent close looks at Wood Thrush, Scarlet Tanager, Ovenbird, and White-eyed Vireo for the entire group; 13 other warbler species including Black-throated Blue and Green, Nashville, Prairie, Black-and-white, and American Redstart; Veery, Hermit, and Swainson's Thrushes; Orchard Oriole, Indigo Bunting, and Eastern Wood-Pewee.



Pennyfield Traditional Birding by Ear Trip, Friday, May 9. Leaders: Cyndie Loeper and Ann Lucy. Participants: 12. Weather: Still cool and overcast. Species: 59 with 14 warblers. The highlight of this walk was a Mourning Warbler, spotted at 11 a.m. on our return trip, when many of the participants had already left. Interestingly it was in the habitat I am familiar with at Magee Marsh: an area of felled trees is tangled in vines. Three of the four stalwart participants saw the bird (I was the no-go), and they simultaneously reported the same field marks. A great reminder to self: Do not assume a bird is "only" a Common Yellowthroat. Another highlight was a Canada Warbler. One participant saw a Wilson's in the parking lot. None of these notable birds were vocalizing. Black-throated blues were signing incessantly, but a number of other warblers only sang once or twice making them hard to identify. Good birds and birders!



Izaak Walton League, B-CC Chapter, Conservation Farm, Saturday, May 10. Leader: Jim Nelson. Participants: 15. Weather: Partly cloudy and progressively warmer into the high 70s. Thanks to Club member Jim Tate, our group enjoyed access to this prime private property near Poolesville with a great mix of habitats. Jim Nelson started the day with a Wild Turkey at the main gate as he waited for the rest of the group to arrive. Overall we tallied 57 species across many families of birds. Unfortunately, many of our birds were heard only, and

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Trip Reports

the array of warblers was somewhat disappointing for this date in migration, yielding only Ovenbird (singing all over the wooded areas), Worm-eating, Common Yellowthroat, Northern Parula, Black-throated Blue, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Prairie, and Black-throated Green. We had good views of several singing Scarlet Tanagers, and Cedar Waxwings seemed to be all over. We had good views of a male Baltimore Oriole and heard singing Wood Thrush. After the walk driving out of the property, Jim had at least two Grasshopper Sparrows along Izaak Walton Way and an Eastern Meadowlark.



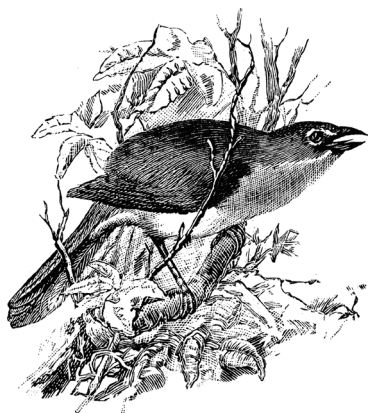
Rock Creek Park, Saturday, May 11. Leader: Wallace Kornack. Seven mostly inexperienced but enthusiastic people participated in a tour of the key birding sites at RCP. We had a beautiful morning for a leisurely paced exploration. At the outset, several brilliant Baltimore Orioles were seen moving through vines at eye level at the ridge. Then a Blackburnian Warbler was spotted high in an oak. These striking birds stimulated the group. In the background there was a continuing chorus of singing birds including Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Great Crested

Flycatcher, Red-eyed Vireo, Ovenbird, Wood Thrush, and several flocks of Cedar Waxwings. The walk to the equitation field was slow and deliberate in order to focus on the usual birds of the park, such as the White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Chickadee, and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. As we entered the equitation field several birders reported seeing numerous warblers high in the trees. This sparked enthusiasm, but for our group we needed to see birds at a lower level, and so we proceeded to the maintenance yard. There, the birding atmosphere in the yard was electric as two Golden-winged Warblers had just been seen but not relocated. We saw an American Redstart, Black-throated Green, Black-and-white, Black-throated Blue, and Magnolia Warblers as well as the Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Gray Catbird, American Goldfinch, and Blue Jay. Our last stop, the Nature Center, was quiet by comparison. Even so we found Yellow-rumped, Magnolia, and Blackpoll Warblers and an American Redstart. The tour ended on a high note with the appearance of Swainson's and Wood Thrushes. They were concentrated in a relatively quiet end of the parking lot where the viewing was excellent. One member of the group took a wonderful photo of a Wood Thrush for all to enjoy.

Name That Place!

What's your favorite birding spot? We'd love to print a brief write-up of some of these, not in competition with *A Birder's Guide to Montgomery County*, but just because it's always interesting to know where other people bird. I usually avoid Blue Mash in the summertime because I think it's a particularly

ticky place. Then Linda Friedland reminded me of how beautiful Blue Mash is this time of year (well, any time of year really), and I hadn't seen a Yellow-breasted Chat yet, so I went there one morning in July. There were Common Yellowthroats, Field Sparrows, and Bluebirds everywhere, as well as some shy Yellow Warblers that



did not want to be seen. Finally I heard the chat calling from deep within a tangled shrub. I'm not very good at pishing, but no one else was around so I made a kind of clucking noise, and the chat popped right out. He had a bright green insect in his beak, and when he saw that it was just me and no one interesting, he popped back in again to enjoy his bug in peace. I, however, did not get to enjoy my chat sighting in peace because just as he disappeared, I became aware that two Tree Swallows thought I was too close to their nesting box and were heading straight for me at about 100 miles an hour. I hastily retreated.

I particularly love Blue Mash because hardly anyone else goes there—so why am I publicizing it, you may ask! But that's what birders do, don't they? They tell other people about the places they love and the birds they see there. Have a favorite place you'd like to share with MBCers? Send it to me at shunt820@yahoo.com. ♪

—Susan Hunt



Meet Your New Vice-President: Clive Harris

I got into birding at an early age, encouraged by my dad who, while never into anything like listing, enjoyed birds. We moved to Hong Kong while I was very small, where we lived at the top of a 20-story apartment building so some of my earliest bird memories are seeing Black Kites soaring around, with the occasional White-bellied Sea-eagle adding excitement, and White Wagtails parading around our rooftop garden. We joined the local birding club and went on walks around fish ponds near the border with China, which would later become the world famous Mai Po reserve. And I got a real thrill discovering a Black Kite nest at the back of our building—at that time, although the species was common in the colony, very few nests had been located. One of the top local birders came to check it out!

Unlike my dad I haven't been able to get any of my three kids (two boys and a girl) into birding—the oldest is now at college and the younger two at high school—but they (and my wife, Helen) will look at the bigger or flashier birds. It's the LBJs they don't get. They have all been very

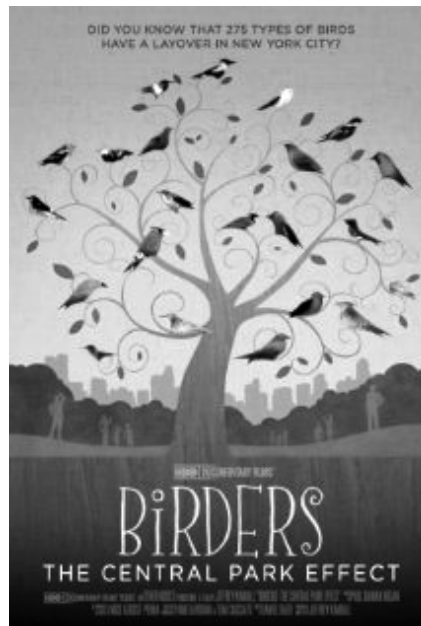
active kids and played club soccer, so driving them to and from practices, games, and out-of-town tournaments takes up a lot of time, and there are some weekends I just don't have time to get out birding. I like watching soccer although it's a long time since I've been in good enough shape to play it!

We are really lucky here in the mid-Atlantic to have great birding year-round. I'm afraid I regularly venture outside of Maryland for my birding, going to landfills in Northern Virginia in winter to watch gulls and to the Delaware Bay in summer for shorebirds. The southeast corner of Raymond Pool is one of my favorite spots. Standing there in summer with a rising tide pushing the shorebirds off the flats so they fly literally right over your head into the refuge is something I can't get enough of. But I do love the great birding spots our county has and particularly enjoy field and woodland birding in the western part of the county. I'm really looking forward to serving as club vice-president. ♯

—Clive Harris

Birders: The Central Park Effect

In the midst of Manhattan's skyscrapers and busy streets, Central Park provides an oasis for migrants ("the Central Park effect"). The Park's 843 acres have attracted more than 280 species of birds over the years, as well as a colorful cast of some 200 hard-core regulars who schedule their lives around spring and fall migration. Of these, the "star" was certainly Starr Saphir, who, for some 40 years until her death in February 2013, led bird trips through the Park four times a week. The trips would start at 7:30 a.m. and continue until she felt there were no more species to be seen, sometimes as late as dusk. Participants paid \$8 per walk, up from \$6 a few years ago.



Birders: The Central Park Effect is an HBO documentary that describes this phenomenon, including interviews with many members of the Central Park birding community and gorgeous footage of the birds they observe during migration. The birds are clearly identified, but a special feature included with the movie shows and identifies each bird in case you missed it the first time around.

The movie, which is dedicated to Starr Saphir, can be rented from Netflix or Amazon. Visit <http://centralparkbirdfilm.com/birders/watch-the-film> for more information. ♯

Birds of Note (April to early July 2014)

As of July 14 when I sat down to write this column, it has been a fairly quiet period for birding in Montgomery since the beginning of June. Current 2014 total number of species for the county stands at 227, the most recent new bird for the year being three **Dickcissels** found by Mary Ann Todd at the Patton Turf Farm on 6/1.

Mary Ann also reported four **Surf Scoters** on the Potomac River just upstream of Violette's Lock on 4/1. A few **Red-necked Grebes** continue to linger along the east coast of the United States after their tremendous irruption south last winter. Locally, they have been reported from the Potomac River in April, May, and June. Joe Hanfman added a July record with his report of a **Red-necked Grebe** on the river between Riley's and Violette's Lock on 7/12.

Jonathan Alderfer (uber illustrator of *National Geographic* bird guide fame) reported a flyover **Mississippi Kite** on the east side of McKee-Beshers WMA on May 2. Dave Czaplak reported the county's first migrating **Broad-winged Hawk** of the year over Homestead Farm along Sugarland Rd on 4/6.

A total of three separate reports of **Eastern Whip-poor-wills** came in during April. All appear to be migrants. Jim Green heard one briefly at the intersection of Query Mill Rd and Glen Road in North Potomac on 4/7. On 5/4, Linda Friedland and Brooke Smith were on an MBC trip to Little Bennett RP, led by Gemma Radko. Walking the Beaver Valley Trail, everyone was pleasantly surprised by a "flushed" **Eastern Whip-poor-will**. The bird, first seen in flight and then perched was described as having a moth-like flight and white tail tips. Len Bisson and Lisa Norwalk heard an **Eastern Whip-poor-will** calling from their Derwood-area front yard on the night of 5/6.

For those out birding around the county in May, some nice waders were found. David Roberts had a flyover **Glossy Ibis** along the Potomac River in the vicinity of Riley's Lock on 5/1. On the same date, Leigh Broadhurst spotted a **Least Bittern** in a small pond in Cloverly Field. The following day on 5/2, David Gersten reported a **Least Bittern** at Hughes Hollow.

Mary Ann Todd and Dave Czaplak observed a **Cattle Egret** flying up river along the Potomac near Violette's Lock on 5/16. A little further north, on the same day at Hughes Hollow, Chandler Wiegand found two **Little Blue Herons**. Amy Heller reported a **Tricolored Heron** at Riley's Lock on 5/18.

Some nice gulls and terns were seen along the Potomac flyway over the past three months. Best bird among these was a **Franklin's Gull** seen by Dave Czaplak over the Potomac River adjacent to Violette's Lock on 5/6. Dave and Mary Ann Todd reported two **Laughing Gulls** at Violette's Lock on 5/16. Tern species found include a **Caspian Tern** by Lydia Schindler at Riley's Lock on 4/1; 20 **Forster's Terns** at Lock 8 (near Seven Locks) by Tim Boucher on 4/4; two **Common Terns** at Riley's Lock by Chandler Wiegand on 4/30; and two **Black Terns** by Dave Czaplak at Violette's Lock on 5/19.

Unusual shorebirds were in short supply this past spring, but Mary Ann Todd did find an **Upland Sandpiper** at the Hughes Rd polo fields on 5/22. A group of 10 or so **Semipalmated Plovers** hung around a wet field at the Patton Turf Farm for about 12 days starting on 5/10. On 5/16 in the same location Dave Czaplak and Mary Ann Todd were able to pick out a single **Semipalmated Sandpiper** among the more numerous **Least Sandpipers** and **Semipalmated Plovers**.

A few **Olive-sided Flycatchers** were seen around the county this spring. Jared Fisher had one at Violette's Lock on 5/10. Additional birds were seen by Mary Ann Todd at Little Bennett RP on 5/19 and Ron Johnson at Lake Needwood on 5/25. There was a nice influx of **Least Flycatchers** migrating through the county this past spring. **Least Flycatchers** are never very common in spring migration, and they become a hard bird to identify on their way back through in the fall when not vocalizing. Seven or eight different birds were reported from across the county during late April into the first week of May.

A couple of rail species were reported from Hughes Hollow area on 4/26. John Williamson found a **Common Gallinule**, and Chandler Wiegand reported a **Sora**.

Dave Czaplak heard and saw a **Cerulean Warbler** in the early evening of 4/28 along the C&O Canal near Riley's Lock. Kathy Calvert found a **Brewster's Warbler** (a **Golden-winged** x **Blue-winged Warbler** hybrid) at Pennyfield Lock on 5/4. A number of **Mourning Warblers** were noted along the canal in May, including one found by Mike Bowen on 5/5 at Riley's Lock, another by Bob Cantilli on 5/9 at Pennyfield Lock, and a third by Chris Wright on 5/17, also at Pennyfield.

Good birding! ♪

—Andy Martin



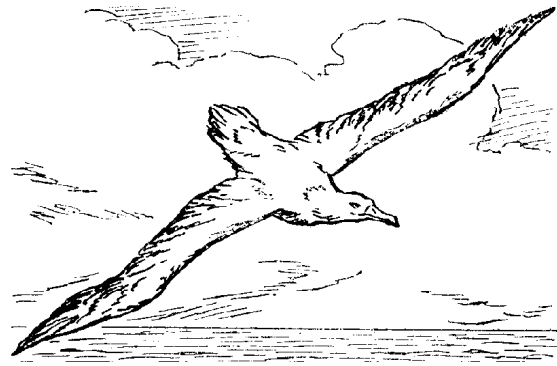
Birding Vignette

As birders, we sometimes have experiences that are attributable to pure serendipity. After the experience, we realize that if we had started out a half hour sooner or later, stopped for coffee, or didn't stop for coffee, we would have missed the event completely. So here is a tale of serendipity in New Zealand.

In 1995, I went on a trip to New Zealand. The focus was textiles, and while one of my companions had an interest in birds, the other did not. This meant that, for the most part, we did not make a great effort to visit birding sites.

We spent the first few days on a Sheep Ranch in Mitchum, getting over jet lag, learning about driving on the left, and communing with local textile people, which included our hostess. We intended to drive throughout New Zealand, and our host and hostess gave us some advice—one of which was to watch the Little Penguins come in to their burrows at Oamaru. We did stop there and were surprised to find bleachers set up for penguin viewing. The Little Penguins performed as advertised to our great appreciation, and then we continued on.

When we stopped in Dunedin, we found that we were close to one of the few places where the Royal Albatross nests that is accessible for viewing. An albatross sighting holds some attraction even for a non-birder, so we set out



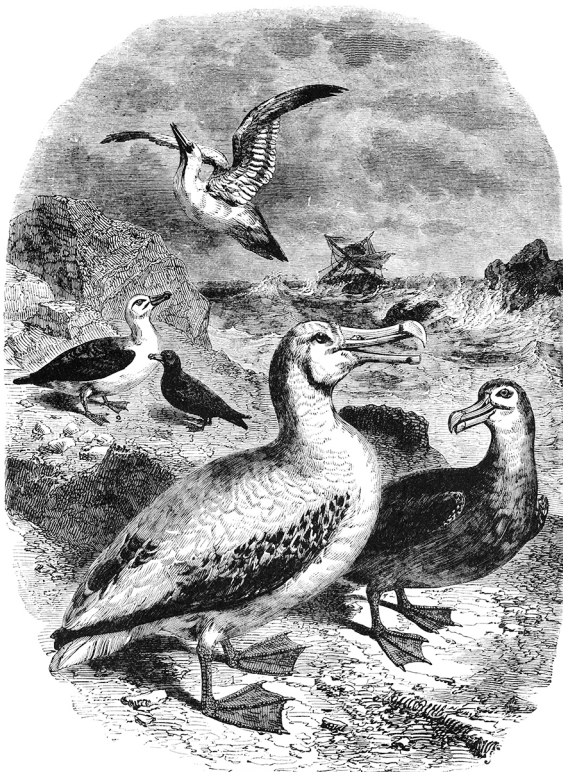
for Taiaroa on the Otago Peninsula. We didn't choose any particular time, and we didn't particularly hurry.

When we got to the location, we found that they had guided access to a hide so that you could view the birds, and they provided a short lecture on the Royal Albatross, showing the immense wingspan (3 meters or 9.8 feet). The Royal is second in size only to the Wandering Albatross. They explained that we would only see the chicks as the adults were at sea gathering food, and they no longer fed the chicks every day as a weight loss for the chicks was a necessary thing if they were not to drop off the cliffs like stones once they learned to fly.

So, up we went and into a hide that was partially underground, with the windows just above ground level. And we did see chicks! Now, my vision of a chick is something that you can hold in one hand. These chicks would require both arms to lift. As we watched, an adult came in, much to the surprise and delight of our guide. From the multiple leg bands on the adult, it was determined that it was a female. The adult did not go over to her chick, but instead called as an inducement to make the chick come to her (and perhaps get a little exercise). The chick rubbed its beak up and down the adult's beak as an inducement to being fed. Our guide told us to watch for the adult to raise her tail as that would be when she would regurgitate the food into the chick's hungry beak.

Sure enough, it all happened just as we were told. And then our guide suddenly said, "Oh dear, there is another group down at the Visitor Center and they should be seeing this!" She called down, and the next group of people came stampeding up the hill to the hide. They burst through the door just as the adult Albatross sailed off the cliff so they missed her entirely. But for us, serendipity put us in the right place at the right time! ♪

—Helen Patton



Youth Backpack Recipients

Every year, MOS gives each chapter a backpack to present to a promising young birder. Our club was delighted to award Kelly Kimbis and Kevin Ebert the Youth Backpack awards at our May 21 meeting. Kelly had just completed sixth grade at Robert Frost Middle School in Rockville, and Kevin had just finished ninth grade at Bethesda Chevy Chase High School.

Kelly and her family have already attracted Screech Owls to their backyard screech owl box. Kevin participated in the 31st annual World Series of Birding this past May. His team, the Raucous Gulls, finished first place for high school teams with 203 species!

Kelly and Kevin shared their essays about their favorite birds at our meeting, producing some oohs and ahs from those attending. It was obvious that these two young birders are well on their way to becoming fanatics for life.

Enjoy reading their essays. ♪

—Anna Urciolo

The American Kestrel: My Favorite Bird

I've always loved the American Kestrel for many reasons. It is an underappreciated bird with a distinctive call.

Because of its size and its color, some beginning birders may not realize the kestrel is a bird of prey. It is a falcon, and most falcons have drab-colored feathers, are really big, and have sharp talons. The kestrel has sharp talons, but its feathers are multi-colored and bright and it is the size of a robin. Even the merlin is larger than the kestrel.

The kestrel has secrets unknown to most people. American Kestrels rarely have to drink water because they get all of the moisture they need from the prey that they eat. The

call of the kestrel is a surprising "Killy Killy Killy," which is similar to my name! Also, the black stripes under the eyes of the kestrel can keep heat away from its eyes. (Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, www.ct.gov)

There's no reason why the kestrel couldn't be our national bird. Compared to the Bald

Eagle, the American Kestrel is just as graceful, proud, and powerful as an eagle. But the Bald Eagle is larger and more exciting to see for most people.

I remember my first time seeing a kestrel. I had always wanted to see one. I was visiting my grandma in Florida. My dad and I were sitting on the boardwalk when I heard a SWOOSH and looked up. I saw a small bird land on the top of a pine tree across the tiny marina. I took out my binoculars and looked in amazement when I realized it was, in fact, a kestrel!

I practically yelled to my dad, "Daddy!!!! It's a kestrel!" At first he didn't believe me, but then we looked again together and it was one. Then we heard a SWOOSH again and the kestrel took off, yelling "Killy, Killy, Killy!" into the afternoon air. It was, literally, calling my name.

I love the American Kestrel not just because its call sounds like my name, not just because it's colorful, but because it's taken for granted. And even though others may not notice the kestrel anytime soon, I definitely do.

Whenever I look at one, I think, "Wow, those birds are beautiful." ♪

—Kelly Kimbis



Ruby-Crowned Kinglet: My Favorite Bird

Favorite bird... Favorite bird... It is quite hard to pick, isn't it? Out of over 10,000 choices, which bird is so beautiful, so tough, or so unique that it stands out? I had to think long and hard about which bird resonates the most with me, but my favorite bird is probably the Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Spastic and energetic, this bird spends its time hopping through the trees as it looks for tiny insects to eat. Despite being small and easily overlooked, it can show a surprising beauty if you are lucky enough to see it unfurl its magnificent vermilion crest. And while all attempts to scope them will end in total failure, they are common enough in the fall to get very good looks with binoculars.

However, my favorite thing about the Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and birds in general, is the amount of absolutely stunning birds or bird behaviors that most people will never experience—unless you happen to be a birder. Birding opens your eyes to wonders that go unnoticed by

others. How many non-birders stumble upon the splendor of a Prothonotary Warbler or marvel at the complexity of the Winter Wren's song?

It reminds me of how I got interested, not in the field like most, but in the library. I was always interested in nature, and while reading *To See Every Bird in the World* by Dan Koeppel, I decided to try this birding thing. My first birding trip I kept a list for was a venture into Rock Creek Park. I was fairly lucky for an incompetent birder, managing to find a kingfisher and a Pileated Woodpecker among some other common species. However, what made birding stick to me like glue is the Florida vacation we had directly after I became interested in birds. I was able to see large, pretty birds like Louisiana Herons, White Ibis, and Swallow-tailed Kites. I was fascinated, and that trip instilled a hunger to see more birds that I suspect will never leave. Birding is one of the most important factors of my life, and I wouldn't stop for anything. ♯

—Kevin Ebert

It's Never Too Early to Start Birding!

The Youth Division of MOS has its own website at www.ymos.org and its own Facebook page. Topics covered include Birding Basics, where kids can learn about binoculars, birding ethics, field guides, birding ID, and how to keep a birding journal. A test-your-knowledge quiz about Maryland birds follows.

While each MOS chapter runs its own field trips and youth are always welcome on these, YMOS also runs a series of trips for youth only. The YMOS website and Facebook page list these trips.

YMOS supports a team of Maryland youth at the World Series of Birding. This international birding event in Cape May, New Jersey, raises money for bird conservation worldwide and is a fantastic learning venue for youth and students of all ages.

YMOS also co-sponsors a Summer Birding Program each June. The week-long program is co-sponsored with Washington College and provides opportunities for teachers and kids to learn birding skills and how to use technology to access, collect, and report data.

In a recent email about the YMOS website, Andy Martin commented: "One of my favorite birding memories is from a few years back while leading an MBC trip to Blackwater. Along Egypt Road we ran into YMOS folks heading down the road in a minivan, with Amanda Spears sticking out the top of the car through the moon-roof with binos surveying both sides of the road and calling out species IDs to folks in the car below. I had the distinct feeling that, having only discovered the joys of birding in my early 40s, I missed a lot of good times that could have been!"



Congratulations to Maryland Young Birders, Kevin Ebert and Alex Wiebe. Montgomery birders Kevin and Alex were on the YMOS team, the Raucous Gulls, which won the youth division in the World Series of Birding in New Jersey this past May. The team finished third overall behind the Cornell/Swarovski team and some other veteran bunch, with a terrific total of 203 species!



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL



I/we wish to join the Montgomery Bird Club, a chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society, for the year beginning September 2014 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**
\$ **Additional Donation to MOS**
\$ **Total enclosed**

☐ New Membership ☐ Renewal

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

Please make check payable to MBC/MOS and mail to:
mail to Helen Patton, 429 Hamilton Avenue, Silver Spring,
MD 20901

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☐ Check if you **DO NOT** want your email address listed on the members-only section of our website.

List your cellphone here if you **DO** want it listed on the members-only section of our website.

☐ Check if you would like to read *The Chat* on the Internet instead of receiving it by mail. You will receive an email message when *The Chat* is posted on the club website.

☐ Check if you would like to receive *The Maryland Yellowthroat* on the Internet instead of receiving it by mail.

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

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

