

President's Chat

There is something wonderfully relaxing about summer birding in Montgomery County. After the hectic pace of spring, when many days you just can't be out in the field enough, or get to enough places in one day to catch up with all the migrants rushing through, catching up with our local breeding birds is a relatively sedate pursuit. They will, for the most part, be predictably at the same spot day after day. Not that we don't have some great breeding birds in our county this year. When I was covering the block including Whites Ferry for the last Breeding Bird Atlas (2003-2007) I noticed a single Great Egret in with the Great Blue Heron colony on the island downstream from the ferry landing. That atlasing might have been the last time I looked hard at that island till this year when in May I went and saw to my surprise that the Great Blues had been replaced completely by Great Egrets which had taken up nesting there. To date around 30 Great Egrets have been seen at once at this site, an extraordinary number for the county and they are clearly nesting there. When did they take over the colony from the herons? It's a reminder that despite there being many of us – the club numbers around 200 members – there are plenty of spots in the county that are not well covered.

We also had a banner year for Dickcissels – as many as 13, the highest count in the state, at the old Oaks Landfill. This is a fabulous habitat, and will be maintained as grassland for some years to come because of the need to protect the old landfill site. The pond on the landfill can also be a great shorebird stopover site – look out for some evening field trips to that location in August, water levels at the pond permitting.



On a slightly negative trend for our breeding birds, while we've been lucky enough to have a small colony of Vesper Sparrows in the area south of Poolesville, there seemed to be fewer locations with these birds this year. I could not find any on the Westerly

Road and nearby stretches where up to three males held territories in recent years. Hopefully, they will rebound next year.

I'm very much looking forward to my second year as club President. We had a strong year with a big increase in membership back to just over 200, increased attendance at field trips and meetings, and our first efforts at better outreach to members through Facebook and mailchimp. We have a great program planned this year - please visit our website to see our great list of upcoming field trips and meetings.

Continued on next page...

	<h2>Contents</h2>	
Fall Calendar		2
Field Trips		3-4
Smart Phone Apps for Birders		5
Treasurer's Report.....		5
Thank You, Gemma!.....		6
Trip Reports.....		7-8
Bird Friendly Coffee.....		9
New Chat Designer.....		9
Birds of Note		10
Birding in Costa Rica		11



Fall Calendar

September 20 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m. Bonnie Ott on Sparrows. Bonnie is a passionate amateur birder, photographer, and has been exploring the natural world of Maryland for three decades. She is a long time Howard Bird Club member and has led countless field trips and helped expand people's knowledge of nature.

October 18 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m. Agriculture Reserve. There will be a short film on Montgomery County's Agriculture Reserve followed by a question and answer discussion on this feature that makes our county unique in the State of Maryland.

November 8 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m. Greg Kearns on Wild Rice. Greg is returning to follow up with a talk on his thirty-year program to establish wild rice in the Patuxent Bay. He has been successful in reestablishing the rice and making the Bay an important stop over for ducks and Sora.

December 13 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m. Suzanne Dater on Tanzania. Suzanne is a prize-winning photographer and her program will feature not just birds but some of the animals found in Tanzania. She took her first photography course in 2001 and has since been hooked on this art form, specializing in nature and travel photography to all seven continents. The slide show she will be presenting in December will cover a trip she took to the Serengeti in 2016—one of several trips she has taken to Africa photographing wildlife.

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 Road (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 Clive Harris, clivegharris@yahoo.com or 301-320-9769.

President's Chat Continued...

I'd like to thank all those who have agreed to be club officers for this year: Stephanie Lovell (Vice President), Alice Jacobsohn (Secretary), Chris Wright (Treasurer), Gail Mackiernan, Scott Young, Carolyn Smith and Martha Morris (all Chapter Directors), and Jim Moore, Evelyn Ralston and Ed Vigezzi (all State Directors). And also, I'd like to give a big shout out to those who are doing other really important tasks for the club: Patrick Newcombe for compiling and editing the Chat, Christel Poelman for designing and publishing it, and Linda Friedland for putting together our great list of field trips; and of course, to all of our dedicated field trip leaders for sharing their time and expertise.

I hope to see you all out in the field or at a club event or meeting soon.

—Clive Harris

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

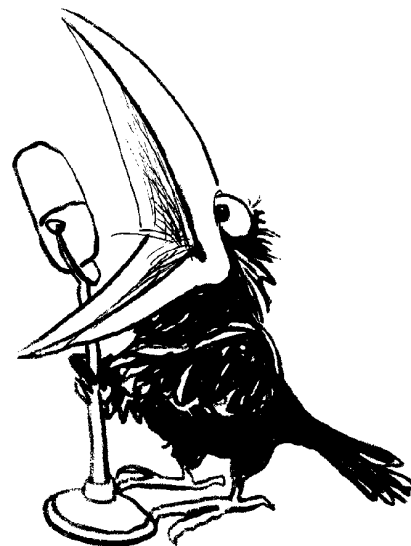
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Visit our homepage at www.montgomerybirdclub.org

Deadline for submissions is the 5th of the preceding month.

Send items to Patrick Newcombe, 12005 Smoketree Road, Potomac, MD 20854

Phone: 301-424-3259, e-mail: stonecroft5@verizon.net



Field Trips

New Club members, new birders, and guests are welcome on every field trip. Because some trips offer an easier learning environment, we have marked them with an asterisk (*). 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.).

August 26 (Saturday), DELAWARE COASTAL AREAS. Full day at Bombay Hook, Little Creek, Logan Tract, and other sites. Joint trip with ANS. Shorebirds, marshbirds, and some songbirds. Bring sunscreen, hat, bug repellent, lunch, snacks and lots of water. Meet 8:30 am at Bombay Hook Visitor Center parking lot. Make reservations. Limit 15.

LEADER: Clive Harris at clivegharris@yahoo.com. Cyndie Loeper will co-lead.

September 10 (Sunday), ROCK CREEK PARK D.C. FOR BEGINNERS.* One-third day. The focus will be on identifying migrant warblers, vireos and sparrows but we'll also look closely at more common birds. Meet at 6:30 am at Picnic Area 18 (on Ridge Rd, ½ mile below the nature center) (Note the early meeting time necessary to secure a parking spot.) Reservations required. For reservations and directions call the LEADER: Wallace Kornack, 202-338-7859.

September 12 (Tuesday), ROCK CREEK PARK, D.C.* Urban birding at its best with one of Rock Creek Park's "Regulars." This trip is geared to those who may be fairly new to birding but all are welcome. One-third day. Migrant warblers, vireos and sparrows. Meet 6:45. a.m. at Picnic Area 18 (on Ridge Rd, 1/2 mile below Nature Center.) Reservations required. For reservations and directions call the LEADER: Wallace Kornack, 202-338-7859.

September 13 (Wednesday), WHEATON REGIONAL PARK. Join us to look for lingering migrant warblers, vireos and flycatchers. Reservations required. Limit 10. For more information about meeting time and place and for reservations email the LEADERS: Woody & Rae Dubois dengue1@verizon.net.

September 16 (Saturday), PATUXENT RIVER PARK, JUG BAG NATURAL AREA. Half day. Joint trip with Audubon Naturalist Society. Drift boat on Patuxent River followed by trail walk. Search for Sora, also migrant and resident songbirds and waterbirds. Meet 6:30 am at park entrance gate. Bring fee of \$5 per person (Maryland residents) or \$7 (Virginia, DC residents) per person for park program. Boat trip can be cool and a bit damp. LEADERS: Greg Kearns and John Bjerke. Limit 20. For reservations contact John Bjerke, johnbjerke1@mac.com or 240-401-1643.

September 23 (Saturday), SNICKERS GAP HAWKWATCH (between Bluemont & Berryville, VA) Two-thirds day. Joint trip with Audubon Naturalist Society. Peak time for Broad-winged Hawks. Meet 10 a.m. at commuter parking lot at VA 7 and VA 601. Bring tripods, scopes, chairs, pack lunch, and rain/wind gear. LEADERS: Joan Boudreau and Bob Abrams at icepeep@aol.com or 703-734-1238 (home). Call leaders for reservations and directions.

September 24 (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 the Violette's Lock parking lot, end of Violette's Lock Road. We will then carpool to Pennyfield Lock and walk back up the C&O Canal towpath to Violette's Lock. 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. To sign up, contact LEADER: Jim Nelson, kingfishers2@verizon.net or 240-515-4517.

October 7 (Saturday), MONTGOMERY'S BIG SIT!* The object of a Big Sit is to tally as many bird species seen or heard within 24 hours from a single spot. Our club has picked a good place for a day of bird watching and over the years has tallied more than 50 species. Join our host Chuck Parker at the dike across the road from the Black Hill RP boat ramp. We'll start at dawn and continue until we run out of steam. Come for the day or just an hour or two. New birders and new members encouraged! For more information or directions contact the LEADER: Chuck Parker chparker@k12.wv.us

October 8 (Sunday), LITTLE BENNETT R.P. FOR BEGINNERS.* All are welcome on this half- day trip but we especially encourage those new to birding to join us. Meet at 7:30 a.m.

October 28 (Saturday), BLUE MASH: REMEMBERING LOU.* Our annual morning walk in honor of former MBC president and all-round naturalist Lou DeMouy who passed away in the fall of 2012. This year the trip will be geared to beginning birders and new members but all are welcome. Meet at 8 a.m. Reservations required. For more information, directions and reservations contact the LEADER: Andy Martin at martinap2@verizon.net or 301-529-2066.

Continued on next page...

Field Trips

October 29 (Sunday), 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. Contact the leader for meeting place and time. LEADER: Mark England 240 207-3132 (home) or 240 375-4500 (cell).

November 4 (Saturday), 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. Contact the leader for reservations and more information. LEADER: Mark England 240-207-3132 (home) or 240-375-4500 (cell).

November 10 (Friday), BASICS OF SPARROW ID AT HUGHES HOLLOW.* Sparrows are often referred to as LBJs (little brown jobs) because of the initial difficulty in sorting them out. Hughes Hollow is a good place to spend the morning learning and reviewing basic field marks that are key to identification. In addition to common species, like White-throated and Song and Swamp, we'll keep an eye out for less-likely White-crowned and Field. This trip is primarily for beginners but all are welcome. Limit 8. For reservations, time, and directions, contact one of the CO-LEADERS: Lydia Schindler lydia13621@gmail.com or Linda Friedland linnet1@verizon.net.

November 19 (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 7:30 a.m. Reservations required. Limit 25. LEADERS: Mike Bowen, 301-530-5764 or dhmbowen@yahoo.com, and Gerry Hawkins, 571-277-8406 or maineusa@comcast.net. Directions: From Maryland, take Rt. 495 south to I-95 south to LEFT 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.

November 27 (Sunday), LILYPONS/NEW DESIGN ROAD. Half day. Wintering field birds, targeting Fox and Tree Sparrows, possibly Virginia Rail and American Bittern. Call leader for reservation (required) and more info. LEADER: Clive Harris clivegharris@yahoo.com

Mark Your Calendar!



The next Maryland Ornithological Society Convention will be held early, February 2-4, 2018.

This date should yield a variety of unique winter birds due to the location in Ocean City at the 66th St Holiday Inn near the inlet and jetty. The convention will include post-banquet speaker Dr. Peter Marra (Head of the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center), field trips, research posters, a birding supply store, and several seminars, including a young birder presentation. More details will be available by mid-October.

For more information about the Conference, visit the MOS website at www.mdbirds.org.

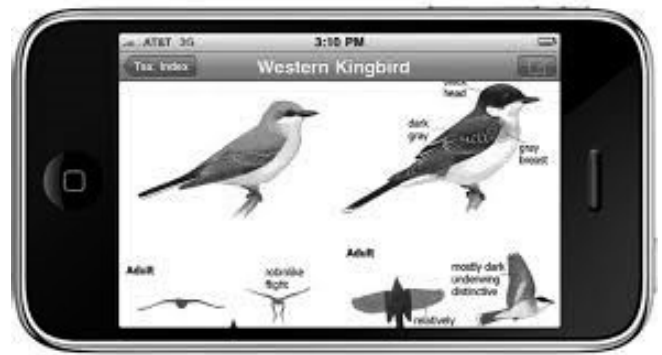


Going birding? Don't Forget your Smartphone

Smartphones and the development of specialized bird applications have transformed the way that many practice the hobby of birding. No longer is it necessary to pack along heavy bird ID guides or notebooks for a day of birding (although many of us still do). Below I present a few apps that fellow club members might want to try on a future outing:

The Cornell Lab's Merlin Bird ID: This app combines an intuitive bird ID tool with a directory of 1,100+ species. The Bird ID feature allows users to answer a few simple questions regarding location, color and habitat to generate a list of likely birds. The interface is so easy to use it can be navigated easily by adults and children alike. The guide feature presents photos, sound recordings and range maps that draws from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's deep knowledge base.

The Cornell Lab's eBird: Linked to the well-known eBird website, this app is a must for creating and submitting checklists of birds where you need it – in the field – and supports both online and offline use. Once submitted, checklists can be further edited via the eBird website to add photos, recordings, and additional information about sited birds. The Trip Summaries feature gives a quick snapshot of the number of checklists and species that have been submitted via the app by a user over a period of time.



Song Sleuth by Wildlife Acoustics: Hearing a bird call, but can't confirm the ID because the species is stubbornly elusive in a tree or bush? Linked to your phone or tablet's microphone, this app allows you to record the call and then generates a list of possible species. The app's Species List is a powerful guide that includes images, range maps, recordings, and written descriptions.

RecForge II (Android) and RØDE Rec (iOS): Want to capture a bird call for use later, or to upload with a checklist on the eBird website? These two apps are recommended by Cornell for making high-quality recordings. For great tips about how to make a sound recording with your smartphone, check out this resource: <https://goo.gl/2Qa6Ff>

Are there other apps that you use that other club members should know about? Let me know and we'll feature them in an upcoming issue.

— Christel Poelman



Treasurer's Report—2017

I'm pleased to report our club finished the 2017 financial year within budget and with income exceeding expenditures by \$822.50 after year-end adjustments. This is largely due to the efforts of Clive Harris and Stephanie Lovell to increase dues-paying membership over the 200 mark and thanks to the generosity of Jim Sweet, owner of Smokey Glen Farm Barbecuers, who donated the food for our March Annual Social. As a result, we finished the year with income of \$10,152 and expenditures of \$9,329.50. Of the \$8,587 contributed by members, \$4,797 or 56% went directly to support the Maryland Ornithological Society. The club had \$8,095.99 in its PNC checking account on June 30 and \$30,860 in its Vanguard investment account (return on investment in the Site Guide). A fuller account and financial statement can be found on the club's website

<http://www.montgomerybirdclub.org>

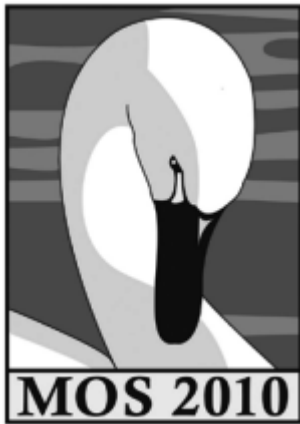
— Chris Wright, Treasurer



Thank you Gemma!

Whatever pleasures you may take in looking at The Chat, you can thank Gemma Radko, who has been designing the newsletter for nearly 20 years—but is poised to retire. As Chat designer, she debuted with brio: the now classic masthead, with its unmistakable Yellow-breasted Chat displaying above a flowery meadow. Gemma's professional touches are evident throughout: carefully chosen type faces, inviting layout, zany cartoons, original artwork to head up regular features like Field Trips and Trip Reports. Less obvious but also key is her good editorial sense, allowing her to tailor copy to the space. Plus, Gemma's good-natured sense of humor makes working with her a delight.

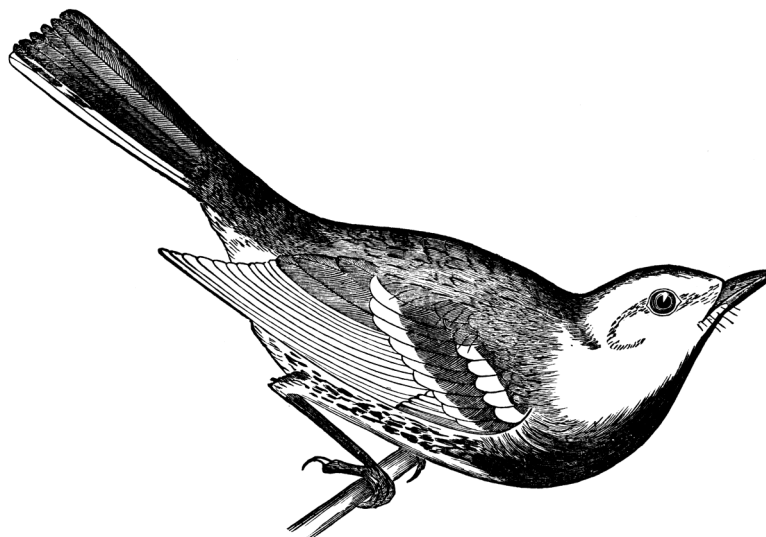
Gemma's talents are many, as are her contributions to the Montgomery Bird Club and the Maryland Ornithological Society. Her day job is Communications and Media Manager



for the American Bird Conservancy. She designed the Montgomery County Site Guide, designs the brochures announcing the annual MOS conference, and along the way designs name tags for the Club's annual social. In 2010 she was Guest of Honor at the Annual Social and designed the MOS Annual Conference pin and T-shirt that featured a Tundra Swan.

An accredited bander, Gemma ran a bird banding operation at Adventure Sanctuary in Potomac. She leads trip for the Club, notably to Little Bennett (where a few years ago she discovered a Black-throated Gray Warbler). Her “ears” are phenomenal; she has a disconcerting ability to identify background bird sounds in mid-conversation. And, as folks who attended an evening session at the 2016 North American Ornithology Conference in Washington can attest, she plays a mean set of drums.

— Lydia Schlinder



Trip Reports

BLUE MASH NATURE TRAIL AND OAKS

LANDFILL, April 23. Leader: Mark England Participants: Leader only; six signups cancelled due to the weather. Weather: Cold, dark, and rainy—not good at all! Species: 38. Though it was a lousy weather day, I had looked forward to this first spring outing, so I toured Blue Mash and made a brief stop later at the Oaks Landfill. Before I even left the parking lot, I noticed a lot of songbird activity high up in the oaks nearby. Scope views revealed dozens of American Goldfinches, House Finches, and a few Purple Finches as well, feasting on the flowering oak catkins. After that, I found most of the usual suspects, but had some good looks at Swamp Sparrow, Eastern Towhee, Brown Thrasher, Green Heron, Belted Kingfisher, Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks, and a very surprising pair of Lesser Scaup on the Blue Mash pond near Zion Road, the first ones I have ever seen there. I also heard an early Ovenbird in the woods. At the Oaks Landfill I picked up ever-present Savannah Sparrows and several Horned Larks in the shortgrass areas.



OCCOQUAN BAY NWR, April 30. Leaders: Gerry Hawkins and Mike Bowen. Seven persons joined leaders Gerry Hawkins and Mike Bowen on a warm, sunny field trip to Occoquan Bay NWR in Woodbridge, VA. Once again, closure of Charlie Road due to nesting Bald Eagles dictated our route, which took us by Turtle Pond and the active bird banding site, where we watched volunteers at work and were allowed to help return banded birds to the wild. Trip highlights were eleven species of warbler, which included some well seen (normally skulking) Yellow-breasted Chats, Prothonotary Warblers, and Yellow Warblers. Most unexpected warbler was an early migrant male Wilson's, spotted by Susan and seen at eye level. Other highlights included numerous singing Orchard Orioles, a vocal Blue Grosbeak, a half-dozen Ospreys and a couple of Bald Eagles. A few Ring-billed Gulls flew over the bay, together with a Caspian and a Forster's Tern. Only shorebirds for the day were a couple of nicely plumaged Solitary Sandpipers. Altogether we encountered 57 bird species and thoroughly enjoyed our visit to one of northern Virginia's premier birding locations – a long way from Montgomery County but well worth the trip.

JUG BAY NATURAL AREA, PATUXENT RIVER

PARK, May 6. A cold and threatening day Saturday did not deter members of Montgomery Bird from joining members of Hartford Audubon Society (CT) on a trip up the Patuxent River on one of Greg Kearns' trips. This was specially arranged for the HAS people, but there was plenty of room for MBC people too. It is always a treat to join Greg on one of his trips up the Bay. The boat was covered in Tree and Barn Swallows when we got to the dock and got on board, they were constant companions up the bay. The water was very high due to three days of rain, and there was more to come later, but not enough to ruin the trip. There were many juvenile Bald Eagles in trees and overhead. Two flew over with huge golden carp in their talons that they had caught in the bay. Greg said that people had dumped their goldfish in the water and they had grown! a lot! Kingfisher, Cormorants, lots of Wood ducks feeding in the arrowhead. Many of the Osprey were hunkered down on nests, some males were still bringing sticks in to "improve" the homestead. They'll be hatching soon. The trip up the western arm of the river was quiet and full of bird song, Red-eyed and White-eyed Vireos, Orchard Orioles, Indigo Buntings, Wood Thrush singing, and best of all, a great display by a singing Prothonotary Warbler who posed for pictures. However, at this point, the drizzle started and we headed back to increasing rain, we all fit under the roof and made it to dry land. Maybe next year we can pick a dry, sunny day and do this again.

—Stephanie Lovell

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Trip Reports

IZAAK WALTON LEAAGUE, B-CC CHAPTER, CONSERVATION FARM, May 7. Leader: Jim Nelson. Participants: 12. Weather: Cloudy and cool after several days of rain. Once again, thanks to Club member Jim Tate, our group enjoyed access to this prime private property near Poolesville with a great mix of habitats. Two League members acted as our escorts. Overall, we tallied 53 species, behind last year's 75 species but in the range of 2015's 44 species and 2014's 57. Many of our birds were heard only, and not everyone got to see or hear each species. We had only 6 species of warblers (a big factor in our lower species count) -- Common Yellowthroat, Northern Parula, Yellow-rumped, Prairie, Cape May, and Yellow -- and missed some other expected migrant species. Good finds included Double-crested Cormorant, Broad-winged Hawk, and a very cooperative Least Flycatcher. We also had Baltimore and Orchard Orioles, Scarlet Tanager, Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Acadian and Great-crested Flycatchers, Swamp Sparrow, and singing Grasshopper and Field Sparrows. The total eBird species list for this "hot spot" now stands at 131 species with the Least Flycatcher added on this trip. We also saw a black snake trying to climb up to a bluebird box, which we later learned had successfully entered the house and eaten the young bluebirds.



Welcome New Members!

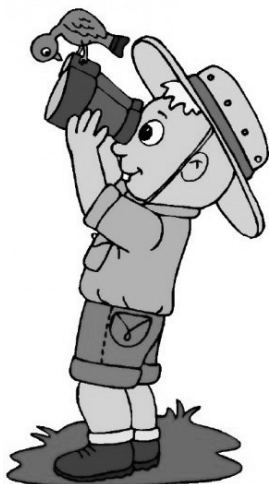
Jonathan Higman

Emily Huang

Valerie Portney

Sean and Catherine Robinson

Julianne Shinnick



OAKS LANDFILL, June 11, 15, 18, and 22. The first visit to the Landfill was an ANS free birding trip, led by Mark England. This was a wonderful trip with some life birds for several participants and good looks at birds not often seen in our area—Dickcissels and Grasshopper Sparrows. Dickcissels are being seen this year in Howard County, but there hadn't been any sightings in Montgomery County until someone working at the Landfill reported seeing one a week or two before this trip. Because this is an unusual Montgomery County bird and because the Oaks Landfill is not otherwise open to the public, Mark kindly agreed to lead three more trips to accommodate Montgomery Bird Club members who wanted to see the Dickcissels. A second trip took place on June 15, where eight Dickcissels were seen. On the June 18 and 25 trips, participants counted 13 Dickcissels—10 singing males and 3 females. There were also excellent views of singing (for those who could hear them!) Grasshopper Sparrows and beautiful views of a male and female Blue Grosbeak. Willow Flycatchers were calling, and Common Yellowthroats were seen and heard in number. On the June 18 trip, several birders also saw a Northern Harrier.

— Susan Hunt

Early Bird Friendly Coffee



Songbirds, including Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Baltimore Orioles, Yellows Warblers, and the like migrate south into the neotropics each winter. In the spring, many of these songbirds disperse across the expanse of North America. On their wintering grounds, the birds are often concentrated into smaller areas with dense songbird populations, making

it important to address the conservation of the full life cycle of migratory birds. These birds face many threats ranging from clear glass to feral cats to toxic pesticides. But one of the most vicious factors seems simple: habitat loss.

More than 40 percent of Latin America's shade coffee farms have already been lost to clear cut plantations that let the sun shine directly down upon the coffee, destroying valuable habitat. Fortunately, however, coffee drinkers have a choice of whether to support this sort of environmental destruction. Shade grown coffee leaves the canopy standing, providing valuable for habitat for many warblers, thrushes, and tanagers that breed in the eastern United States. At the same time, people use the landscape to make a sustainable living by farming coffee.

The Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center certifies bird-friendly coffee that is shade grown and organic, supporting the conservation of habitat for birds on their wintering grounds. It is the only certification for 100 percent high quality, shade-grown, organic coffee, and if more people drink it more bird habitat will be made to meet the demand. Birds and Beans, listed on the American Bird Conservancy's website, is an example of one coffee supplier that sells certified bird-friendly coffee.

— Patrick Newcombe



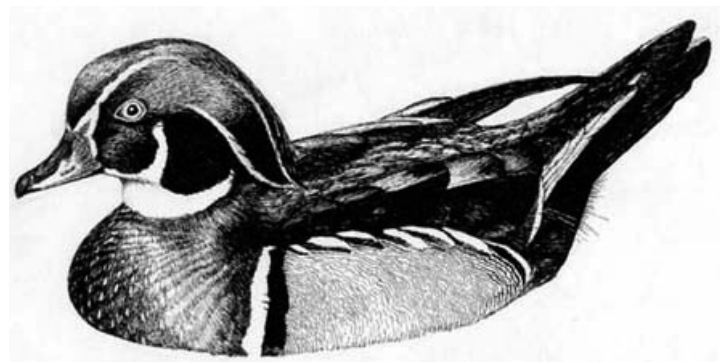
Introducing the Chat's New Designer... Christel Poelman

Are you ever outside in the early morning hours keying out a new bird, or seeing an old favorite, and think "I'm happy as a lark"? I am! I was introduced to birding a few years ago and found in it a hobby that combines my love of learning, wild places, photography and travel.

I grew up in British Columbia, Canada and settled in Maryland in 2003. Professionally I work as a Senior Program Manager for DAI (www.dai.com) where I manage donor-funded biodiversity conservation and climate change adaptation projects in Asia and the Pacific. My work affords me the opportunity for regular international travel, and just in 2017 I've been fortunate enough to build my bird list through visits to Fiji, Nepal and the Philippines. I also enjoy teaching my two children about birds, and can proudly say that at ages 5 and 6 they can identify most of the birds that arrive at our home bird feeders.

Through active involvement with the Montgomery Bird Club, I've explored new local birding sites, improved my bird ID skills, and enjoyed meeting fellow birders. I look forward to serving the club as the new designer of The Chat and I hope to meet you out at a local hotspot or at a club event sometime soon.

— Christel Poelman



Birds of Note (April—June 2017)

A **Swallow-tailed Kite** found at Blue Mash on May 29 tops the list for this edition of the Montgomery County Birds of Note. Spotted initially by Dave Roberts and subsequently by a number of other birders that same day. Some theorized that this bird was possibly drawn north by an unexpected emergence of a brood of periodical cicadas. **Mississippi Kites** were also reported nearby in both Howard and Prince George's Counties but as of this writing, Montgomery County thus far, has missed out.

Dave Czaplak reported a late migrating **Surf Scoter** on the Potomac River adjacent to Violette's Lock April 28.

Some interesting waders have been seen in Montgomery County over the last few months. Clive Harris counted a total of 29 **Great Egrets** on July 2 both in and around their breeding colony on a small island in the Potomac River just downstream of White's Ferry. Jay Sheppard reported an astonishing 14 **Cattle Egrets** at Waredaca Farms west of Sunshine on April 17.

A cooperative pair of **Least Bitterns** have shown up at Hughes Hollow this spring. First reported by Dave Powell on April 22, this pair was still being seen (more often just "heard") as of early July. Will Knowland found a **Snowy Egret** at Lake Churchill in Germantown on May 18. A juvenile **Little Blue Heron** was observed at Violette's Lock by Dave Czaplak on July 2. Dave also had four **White Ibis** at this same location on June 30. Robert Shapiro noted a **Glossy Ibis** at Green Hills Farm Wetland off Huntmaster Rd on May 25.

Glen Dalby and Ryan Fick reported a **Virginia Rail** at Hughes Hollow on April 5 and a **Sora** was reported from the same location on April 9 with additional sightings of this species at the same location into early May.

A great find by Joshua Heiser on May 27, was an adult female **Red-necked Phalarope** at Lake Needwood. Luckily, Kevin Ebert was in the vicinity to get a few confirming photos. Dave Czaplak and MaryAnn Todd reported a **Sanderling** at the Summit Hall Turf Farm on April 26. Later that same day, in the vicinity of the Battleview Turf Farm (formerly the Patton Turf Farm), they came across four **Black-bellied Plovers**. Clive Harris found a **Short-billed Dowitcher** mixed in with a few other shorebirds at the Battleview Turf Farm on May 5. Ed Vigezzi and Tom Kimbis found in additional **Short-billed Dowitcher** at Pennyfield Lock on May 9.

Non-resident flycatchers noted during this spring's migration include a **Least Flycatcher** found by Julia Mispelon at Northwest Branch Trail on May 1; a **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** seen by Jim Nelson at Pennyfield Lock on May 12; an Alder **Flycatcher** observed by Scott Young at King Farm Stream Park on May 15; and an **Olive-sided Flycatcher** found by Bill Lafley also at Pennyfield Lock on June 4.

A few **Golden-winged Warblers** were noted from around Montgomery County during migration in May. Patricia Wood found one on May 13 in a row of Honey Locust trees planted along Crooked Creek Drive in the King Farm development in Rockville. Susan Hunt found another Golden-winged Warbler at Wheaton Regional Park on May 15. In the "getting harder to find with each passing year" category, Justin Hill noted two male **Cerulean Warblers** along the C&O Canal near intersection of Brickyard Rd and MacArthur Blvd on May 30.

Max Wilson found a **Clay-colored Sparrow** associating with a small flock of Chipping Sparrows at Mattie JT Stepannek Park in Rockville on April 29.

Scott Baron found two **Dickcissels** at Oaks Landfill near Blue Mash in Olney on May 17 and amazingly, just a little over a month later this number had risen to 13 individuals (10 males and 3 females). A few **Blue Grosbeaks** were also being seen in the same vicinity.

Summer Tanagers (hopefully successfully breeding) were reported May through early July along the Potomac River corridor from Pennyfield to Riley's Lock.

As of July 4th, a total of 236 species had been reported in Montgomery County so far, this year.

— Andy Martin



Birding the Osa Peninsula in Costa Rica

Until it collided with the tectonic plates of mainland Costa Rica millions of years ago, the Osa Peninsula's wildlife evolved in isolation. Now, it is home to nearly 2.5 percent of the world's biodiversity, despite occupying less than a thousandth of a percent of the world's surface area. This intense and unique concentration makes it a birder's paradise.

I based my birding on the Osa Peninsula out of the Piro Research Station (Osa Conservation's biological station), where I helped with bird surveys. The primary and secondary forests around the station yielded over one hundred species of birds, including such endemics as the rare Black-cheeked Ant Tanager and striking Fiery-billed Aracari, which visited the Cecropia trees visible from the dining area and pavilion.

Before arriving at the station, one must drive for approximately an hour, through muddy potholes and rivers, after landing in Puerto Jimenez (the airport was closed when I visited, so we took an hour-long water taxi from Golfito to Puerto Jimenez). The Golfito airport is not much more than an air strip – to land, the small plane flew through a valley that carved a gap in the rainforest, meeting a single runway with few aviation facilities.

Near “downtown” Puerto Jimenez, a patch of mangroves hosted the endangered and endemic Mangrove Hummingbird, a surprisingly aggressive little marvel that zips around its flowers before perching motionless in the heat of the sun. In the opposite direction from Jimenez, we visited



the Rincon River bridge for Yellow-billed Cotinga.

Conservationists have given the endangered Yellow-billed Cotinga more attention than some of the peninsula's other endemics, discovering from a geolocation study that the birds likely require the proximity of both mangroves and rainforest. This is a key characteristic of the Yellow-billed Cotinga sanctuary that American Bird Conservancy and Osa Conservation protect.

We were lucky to see a male Cotinga perched high in the canopy, where their bright white color can look like a gap in the leaves before spotting the namesake yellow bill and beady black eye. Population estimates for the Yellow-billed Cotinga are unclear, though all agree that their numbers are tiny (250 to 999 individuals).

At the research station, I enjoyed meeting the people from countries including Spain, England, Scotland, Germany, Canada, Peru, the United States, Columbia, and, of course, Costa Rica. These people research a wide variety of topics such as primates, dung beetles, otters, frogs, and sea turtles, and come from incredibly diverse backgrounds, while all collaborating on their scientific work and pursuing the mission of Osa Conservation.

I will always remember my time on the Osa, and in addition to all the rare birds I saw there, the experience of visiting such a marvelous area is something that I would recommend for anyone.

— Patrick Newcombe





The Chat
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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL 2017-18

I/we wish to join the Montgomery Bird Club, a chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society, for the year beginning September 2016 and enclose dues for:

- ____ Individual—\$30 (\$10 Chapter/\$20 State)
____ Sustaining—\$70 (\$20 Chapter/\$50 State)
____ Household—\$40 (\$15 Chapter/\$25 State)
____ Life—\$1,200 (\$200 Chapter/ \$1,000 State)
____ Junior—\$6 (\$1 Chapter/\$5 State)
____ Associate*— \$8

*member of MOS through another chapter

\$_____ **Dues**

\$_____ **Donation to Claudia Wilds Fund** (To augment the club's regular income for promoting local understanding of birds and the need for habitat protection.)

\$_____ **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:
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