

# President’s Chat



First of all, a big thank-you to Clive Harris for his four years of service to the club! Then thank-yous to the members who stepped up to fulfill the necessary things that need to be done every year: Helen Patton, our Membership Chair; Anna Urciolo, who sorts the name tags and often answers the call of duty; Linda Friedland, who puts together the trips for us; and all the leaders who volunteer their time to lead. It is a fact that the club could not exist without help from a lot of people, so I’m grateful that so many do want to come together and help out. In the time of declining membership in organizations like ours, it is still worthwhile to join in fellowship and knowledge.

Thank YOU for your participation.

Like most of you, I started birding when my kids were almost out of the house and I had some time on my hands. I tried a few things at neighborhood evening classes, but the only thing that stuck was Birding 101. I started out with my grandmother’s opera glasses! But when a bluebird came at me head on because I was too near its nest, I thought, this is really cool, and went and got a real pair of binoculars. Many years later, it is still the best activity ever! It gets you outdoors, you learn new things, you get involved in ecology because you need to know what that tree is that the leader calls a Pin Oak or a Larch. If you’re so inclined, you can travel to exotic places to find different species or develop a close relationship with your “patch” over the years. Best of all, you meet like-minded folk who are willing to offer IDs or help in locating that shy bird.



Getting outdoors is one major benefit of this pastime. Books have been written and opinions voiced about the benefits of

being outdoors. One such book is *The Nature Fix* by Florence Williams. In it she tells of her travels to Japan and Korea and investigates the research into why it’s so good for you to be outdoors. She meets “forest-healing” rangers in Korea and takes a river trip in Idaho for vets suffering from PTSD. In West Virginia, she discovers how being outside helps kids with ADHD.

As more and more of us move into cities, the Finns recommend at least five hours a month outdoors. Maybe as birders we know something about this, and we try to get out as often as we can.

John Muir had it right: “Between two pine trees there is a door leading to a new way of life.”

Stephanie Lovell

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# Calendar

Meetings take place at the Potomac Presbyterian Church, 10301 River Road, Potomac: From the Beltway, take Exit 39 (River Road/Rte. 190) towards 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 cancelled if Montgomery County schools have been closed.

If you have questions, contact Stephanie Lovell, [ctlovel1@yahoo.com](mailto:ctlovel1@yahoo.com) or 240-242-3235.

Mark your calendar for our meetings this year:

**September 19, 2018 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m. Youth Birding in Maryland**

**October 17**

**November 14**

**December 12**

**January 16**

**February 20**

**March 8 (MBC Social at Woodend)**

**April 24**

**May 15**

## Big Day on the Osa Peninsula by Patrick Newcombe

On the Osa Peninsula of Costa Rica, Osa Conservation's landscape is a mosaic of terrestrial habitats including grasslands, palm forests, reforested areas, secondary and primary forests as well as aquatic habitats such as ponds, rivers, lagoons and ocean. Elevation ranges from sea level to 1,083 feet (330 meters). This habitat and elevation range results in phenomenal bird diversity and illustrates the importance of the habitat conservation and restoration occurring at Osa Conservation.

June 25, 2018, was the first Big Day at Osa Conservation! In birding circles, a Big Day is a twenty-four-hour time period from midnight to midnight where a team tries to identify as many species as possible by sight or sound, in compliance with the American Birding Association's official rules. At the same time, we used the day as a chance to quickly inventory many of the birds that use Osa Conservation's land. Adding to the challenge, we planned a carbon-free big day without motorized vehicles. We found 135 bird species despite a three-hour downpour in prime birding hours! We would love to do this big day again during migration to include migrating species such as warblers and shorebirds and feel that we could break a much higher benchmark. Our team consists of Thomas, Zac and Patrick from Osa Conservation and local residents, Henry and Nito, a Costa Rican birding expert and owner of Surcos Tours. The excitement mounts the evening before as we discuss strategies and plans over dinner. "What do you think a realistic goal is? ...80? ...90?" "What time should we look for the crested owl?" "What do you think of walking up the river?"



The alarm goes off at 3:45 a.m. and we quickly pick up Crested Owl and Common Pauraque around the Piro Research Station clearing. And we are off!

We walk down to Osa Verde where we bird the farm fields interspersed with hedgerows and trees along with the reforestation arboretum. Then, we continue along the former air strip reclaimed by marsh and grassland and along the ocean before heading back down the driveway to the entrance of Osa Verde.

Here we stop to enjoy Emilie's delicious field breakfast of gallo pinto, fried eggs, and plantain (Emilie was awake even earlier than us to prepare our field breakfasts!). It's still not 9 a.m. and we have an amazing seventy-four species far surpassing our expectations! Nito comments that it's a good thing that Osa Conservation has worked so hard to conserve this land and the wide variety of habitats allowing us to find such a wide range of species.

Our plan is to head off to the primary and secondary forest where we anticipate quickly adding many forest species. But, as birders know, the results of a Big Day are often influenced by the weather. Before entering the forest, the torrential downpour begins and we rush along the trail to reach a shelter overlooking the pond known for its "frog explosions" after rainy nights. We hang out on the platform for an hour with only a Purple Gallinule making an appearance. Although realizing that most species will be hiding quietly in the rain, we decide to head out in the downpour and, luckily, spot a Green Heron as we leave the pond area on Discovery trail. Just recently, we had hiked the second half of Discovery Trail in the morning and seen twenty-three species but, disappointingly, now the birds are in hiding.

Reaching Piro River, the water level has risen significantly but we decide to stick to our plan to head up through the river to look for an occupied Band-tailed Barbthroat's nest, staked out by Patrick and Zach the day before. Piro River raises our spirits as we also spot Fasciated Tiger-Heron.

The rain continues steadily and we head back along Discovery Trail. When we reach Piro Research Station, everyone is gathering for lunch and eagerly question us about the Big Day.



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# Field Trips

*Please note: Registration for joint MBC/ANS trips is now being done online at [ANShome.org/adults](http://ANShome.org/adults).*

**August 11 (Saturday) DELAWARE BAY COASTAL AREAS.** Full day at Bombay Hook. Joint trip with Audubon Naturalist Society. Shorebirds, marsh birds, and some songbirds. Bring sunscreen, hat, bug repellent, lunch, snacks and lots!! of water. Meet at 8:30 am at Bombay Hook Visitor Center parking lot. Reservations required. Limit: 15. *Trip is full—register online for waitlist at [ANShome.org/adults](http://ANShome.org/adults).* LEADER: John Bjerke. Cyndie Loeper will co-lead. For more information, contact John at [johnbjerke1@mac.com](mailto:johnbjerke1@mac.com).

**September 6 (Thursday) WHEATON REGIONAL PARK.** Join us to look for migrant warblers, vireos, and flycatchers. Reservations required. Limit 10. For more information about meeting time and place and for reservations, email the LEADERS: Woody and Rae Dubois at [denguel@verizon.net](mailto:denguel@verizon.net).

**September 8 (Saturday) PATUXENT RIVER PARK, JUG BAY NATURAL AREA, PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY.** Half day. Joint trip with Audubon Naturalist Society. Three-hour pontoon boat trip on the Patuxent followed by trail walk. Search for Sora, also migrant and resident songbirds and waterbirds. Meet at 7:30 am at park entrance gate. Bring fee of \$5 per person (Maryland residents) or \$7 (Virginia, DC residents) for park program; boat trip can be cool and a bit damp. Registrations required (20-person limit). Register online at [ANShome.org/adults](http://ANShome.org/adults). LEADERS: Greg Kearns and John Bjerke. For more information, contact John at [johnbjerke1@mac.com](mailto:johnbjerke1@mac.com).

**September 9 (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, half a 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 at 202-338-7859.

**September 15 (Saturday) SNICKERS GAP HAWKWATCH (BETWEEN BLUEMONT & BERRYVILLE, VA).** Two-thirds day. Joint trip with Audubon Naturalist Society. Peak time for Broad-winged Hawks. Meet at 10 am at commuter parking lot at VA 7 and VA 601. Registrations required (no limit). Register online at [ANShome.org/adults](http://ANShome.org/adults). LEADERS: Joan Boudreau and Bob Abrams. Bring tripods, scopes, chairs, and pack lunch. Contact leaders for directions at [icepeep@aol.com](mailto:icepeep@aol.com) or 703-282-9495 (cell).

**September 23 (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 am 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 the LEADER: Jim Nelson, [kingfishers2@verizon.net](mailto:kingfishers2@verizon.net) or 240-515-4517.

**October 7 (Sunday) KENILWORTH PARK AND AQUATIC GARDENS.** Half day. Explore the diverse habitats of scenic and historic Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens, which include a complex of cultivated ponds with rare waterlilies and lotuses, marshes, wooded trails, fields, and the Anacostia River. A variety of raptors and migratory warblers, vireos, thrushes, and flycatchers should be present, and rails and bitterns are possibilities. Reservations required. Limit: 25. Meet at 8 am in the parking lot at Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens. LEADERS: Mike Bowen, 301-530-5764 or [dhmbowen@yahoo.com](mailto:dhmbowen@yahoo.com), and Gerry Hawkins, 571-277-8406 or [maineusa@comcast.net](mailto:maineusa@comcast.net).

**October 7 (Sunday) LITTLE BENNETT REGIONAL PARK 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 am. 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.



# Field Trips

**October 10 (Wednesday) LOIS GREEN PARK.** Join us for the morning as we learn and review some of the basics of bird ID. This is a great place to find our more common species as well as some of the harder sparrows. This trip is primarily for new birders or new members, but all are welcome. Meet at the parking lot at 9 am. For information, directions, and reservations, contact the LEADER: Stephanie Lovell at [amorellovell@gmail.com](mailto:amorellovell@gmail.com).

**October 27 (Saturday) BLUE MASH: Remembering Lou.** Our annual morning walk in honor of former MBC president and all-around 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 am. Reservations required. For more information, directions, and reservations, contact the LEADER: Andy Martin at [martinap2@verizon.net](mailto:martinap2@verizon.net) or 301-529-2066.

**November 4 (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 am. For reservations and more information, contact the LEADER: Mark England at [mengland@canamcontractors.com](mailto:mengland@canamcontractors.com) or 240-375-4500.

**November 12 (Monday) 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, 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](mailto:lydia13621@gmail.com), or Linda Friedland, [linnet1@verizon.net](mailto:linnet1@verizon.net).

**November 25 (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 information, contact the LEADER: Clive Harris at [clivegharris@yahoo.com](mailto:clivegharris@yahoo.com).

**December 9 (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. For reservations and meeting place and time, contact the LEADER: Mark England at [mengland@canamcontractors.com](mailto:mengland@canamcontractors.com) or 240-375-4500.

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

Send items to Patrick Newcombe, [stonecroft5@verizon.net](mailto:stonecroft5@verizon.net)



## Welcome New Members :

Elaine Kim

Michael Stern

Deborah Wheeler



# Trip Reports

**Hughes Hollow, April 8.** Leader: Jim Nelson. Participants: 10. Weather: Mostly sunny, temps started at 28 rising to about 40 by the end. Species: 53. We had a nice variety of bird species on this cold morning. The species total was just one less than last year's trip, but overall numbers of birds were down a bit. Birds of note included an Osprey flying over the impoundments; an actively calling Cooper's Hawk back in the fields; a cooperative Wilson's Snipe; calling Barred Owl; Northern Rough-winged, Tree, and Barn Swallows; a Marsh Wren that had been present for a couple of months; Brown Creeper; Blue-gray Gnatcatchers; Hermit Thrush; lots of yellow Palm Warblers and Yellow-rumped Warblers; a nice Savannah Sparrow; and Rusty Blackbirds. Waterfowl included Blue-winged Teal, Wood Duck, Ring-necked Duck, Hooded Merganser, Great Blue Heron, Double-crested Cormorant, lots of American Coot, and calling Pied-billed Grebes. A very congenial group used the many sets of eyes to spot good birds. The complete checklist is available at <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S44361957>.

**Wheaton Regional Park, April 14.** Leaders: Gail Mackiernan and Evelyn Ralston. The morning started with a bird walk led by Gail Mackiernan and continued with a park cleanup organized by Evelyn Ralston. The weather was unbelievably sunny and warm (upper 70s) after a cold and wet week. We found a nice variety of birds (36 species total) although two Palms were our only Warblers. There were a newly arrived Green Heron and an Osprey at Pine Lake, several Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and two Blue-gray Gnatcatchers. Bluebirds were checking and filling the boxes, and we met "the last" Dark-eyed Junco, according to Gail. We were 12 for the walk and 17 for the cleanup, which filled about 10 bags of trash and four bags of recyclables. Amazing for a park that looks rather clean! Photos have been posted on the Club's Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/MontgomeryBirdClub/>).

**Occoquan Bay NWR, VA, April 15.** Leaders: Gerry Hawkins and Mike Bowen. Participants: 13 plus leaders. Species count: 64. On this surprisingly warm and sunny (rain had been forecast) field trip to Occoquan Bay NWR in Woodbridge, VA, the closure of Charlie Road due to nesting Bald Eagles took us by Turtle Pond and the bird-banding site, where we watched volunteers at work banding Yellow-rumped Warblers and saw both teal species, Greater Yellowlegs, and several Spotted Sandpipers. Trip highlights included a quite unusual Little Blue Heron; numerous Brown Thrashers and Prairie Warblers; Tree, Northern Rough-winged, and Barn Swallows; a few Purple Martins; confiding Eastern Bluebirds; Common Yellowthroats; a few Palm Warblers; several stunning Prothonotary Warblers; and (for some of the group) a Yellow-throated Warbler. Occoquan did not disappoint on the raptor front, with numerous Ospreys

and Bald Eagles, both species heavily engaged in nesting activity. Herring, Ring-billed, and Bonaparte's Gulls were seen over the bay, together with numerous Caspian Terns. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to Virginia's Prince William County—a long way from the familiar spots in Montgomery County but well worth the trip. The checklist for the trip, including Gerry's photos, can be found at <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S44607102>.

**Blue Mash Nature Trail/Oaks Landfill, April 21.** Leader: Mark England. Participants: 16 plus leader. Weather: Clear and sunny, temps at 35-55. While still in the Blue Mash parking lot, we heard two Barred Owls calling in the nearby woods. Along the gravel road, we had a Palm Warbler, a well-seen Eastern Towhee or two singing atop small trees, and our first of a few Brown Thrashers. We saw four flyover Double-crested Cormorants, several Eastern Bluebirds, a Swamp Sparrow, a few Yellow-rumped Warblers, and a singing Common Yellowthroat. From the Blue Mash side of the fence line, we scoped a pair of American Kestrels in a landfill tree about 150 yards off, and as we came around the last pond near Zion Road, we watched an adult Red-shouldered Hawk fly into a large tree and flush another medium-sized hawk, which turned out to be an adult Broad-winged Hawk, with its bold tail banding clearly seen. We also had a Northern Harrier and a Red-tailed Hawk about this time, as well as two beavers in the pond. At the Oaks Landfill, we added eight new species to the 40 seen at Blue Mash, including Barn Swallow, Savannah Sparrow, Chimney Swifts, Spotted Sandpiper, and Bufflehead. We had repeated good looks at both kestrels and harriers (probably three of each) but searched without luck for early Grasshopper Sparrows, Blue Grosbeaks, and Dickcissels, all of which bred last summer at the landfill and, we hope, will return again in May (*see the report for the Landfill trips below*). A final note is that Tesla Solar had not yet started the planned installation of about 17 acres of solar panels on the south end of the landfill hill.

**Old Legislative Road, Allegany County, June 2.** Leader: Gemma Radko. Participants: 8 plus leader. Weather: cool and cloudy, but we managed to finish up before that afternoon's downpours. First stop was Old Legislative Road where everyone in the group got stellar looks at singing Henslow's Sparrows and Grasshopper Sparrows. We heard Blue-winged Warblers singing—several members of the group went back later and actually found the birds—but no Golden-winged Warblers, which can usually be found at this spot. The species is experiencing worrisome declines in Maryland as well as in most of its range. Other notable species at Old Legislative Road: Willow Flycatcher, Yellow-breasted Chat, Yellow Warbler, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Common Raven. Next, we went up to Pea Ridge

# Trip Reports

Road, where we saw many displaying Bobolinks and Eastern Meadowlarks. Bonus bird was a singing male Dickcissel. We all enjoyed watching a colony of Cliff Swallows that were nesting in abandoned buildings at the end of the road. We ended up at West Slate Road in Garrett County, where we heard singing Hermit Thrush and Veery, plus Chestnut-sided, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, and Magnolia Warblers.

**Oaks Landfill, June 16 and June 30.** Leader: Mark England. Both the weather (hot!) and the birds were similar on these two trips, which had 20 and 21 participants, respectively, including the leader. We started the June 16 trip at 7:30 am, perhaps a little late for a summer trip but had good looks early on at target species Blue Grosbeak (both male and female) and three Dickcissels, including a richly colored male, a drab immature male, and a female. Frank Witebsky later spotted a Grasshopper Sparrow, but it flew briefly and then dropped into the grass out of sight. We had close looks at several Indigo Buntings and Brown Thrashers and an adult male Orchard Oriole singing from the top of a pine tree. We saw numerous Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Yellowthroats, both breeding in big numbers at the landfill, possibly because of the wet spring weather. Birding slowed considerably after 10 am with the increasing heat, and we adjourned to the Olney

Grille for an excellent lunch with refreshing cold iced tea.

We started the **June 30 trip** at 6:45 am to get in more birding before it got too hot. We ended up with 51 species seen or heard, about 17 more than the earlier trip. We had two Dickcissels in roughly the same area as before, then a hovering American Kestrel, but the previous Blue Grosbeak stake-out spot had been abandoned. Luckily, we heard a singing male as we drove around the back side of the landfill, and we had good looks at a pair perched on a fence. We had another well-seen singing Orchard Oriole, three Eastern Kingbirds, a Willow Flycatcher, and some in the group saw a Baltimore Oriole near the leachate ponds. We heard both Prairie Warbler and Yellow-billed Cuckoo near the Blue Mash fence line, but neither appeared in view. At the big pond, we saw Cedar Waxwings hawking insects over the water, but little else. I mentioned to the group that late summer shore birding can be quite good when the water levels are low enough for some mudflats to emerge, as in 2017. Let's hope there will some pond evaporation over the next few weeks, and we can do some late afternoon MBC trips to the landfill to look for migrating shorebirds.

After lunch, we head up Tangara Trail in hopes of seeing the Spectacled Owl that Patrick and Eduardo had found on Saturday. Our hopes are also set on finding a flock. Rainforest birding is tough because we often go long distances with few birds until meeting a flock where we have to pick out as many species as possible before it moves off.

The forest is quiet except for Scarlet Macaws and Orange-chinned Parakeets making a racket. It is not until high up Ajo Trail that we encounter our first flock. What a reward – about fifteen species including a Gray-headed Kite that flies in. Nito suggests heading up towards Cerra Osa in hopes of spotting some birds of prey. Cerra Osa is at 1,083 feet (330 meters) elevation and consists of a reforested area where the tree cover is not as dense. We are rewarded by a Northern Bentbill and White-necked Puffbird, two very unexpected species, while also finishing out our honeycreeper sweep with Green Honeycreeper.

After checking out Cerro Osa, we head back down to the research station to reassess our list. Since we usually see Amazon Kingfishers and a Ringed Kingfisher lower down Piro River, we head down to explore the river some more, quickly snagging a few more species including the kingfishers as well as Scarlet-rumped Cacique and Golden-naped Woodpecker. Night is approaching and Nito and Henry have to return to Puerto Jimenez. Osa Conservation's first Big Day has come to an end.

It's been a fulfilling day. Before coming to the Osa Peninsula I had participated in some Big Days as well as the World Series of Birding and was very curious to see we could accomplish during a Big Day on Osa Conservation's property. One hundred and thirty-five species far surpassed my expectations. More important than the overall number, the Big Day illustrated to me the engaged and motivated community at Osa Conservation. At lunch and dinner, many people asked questions about the Big Day and the birds, often wishing us luck during our search. We worked as a team in partnership with local guides, Nito and Henry, continuing our friendship. It is the comradeship within the team and at Osa Conservation that I will remember most.

Hopefully, there will be more Big Days at Osa Conservation to illustrate its amazing bird diversity and the importance of the conservation being done by Osa Conservation in Costa Rica.





# MEET OUR NEW VICE-PRESIDENT



My initiation to birding had nothing to do with my grandparents, nor did I grow up with a garden around my house; my childhood in Brussels, Belgium, was urban and bookish. However, our apartment on the ninth floor of one of the first local “skyscrapers” (eleven floors total) gave me a great vantage point for observing gulls. In winter we just had to open the kitchen window and out of nowhere they appeared, ready to swoop down and catch the breadcrumbs I was throwing (no one told me it was not good for them). I also followed gulls and small shorebirds on the beach of Knokke, a small North Sea resort where we often spent vacations. I would walk quietly towards the birds to find out how close they would let me come. That was not really birding but maybe my first love story with shorebirds.

Fast forward a couple of decades, I am living in San Francisco. On the small deck of our apartment we install a hummingbird feeder. I watch the birds with delight while feeding our young daughter breakfast. When in 1991 we move to Bethesda for new jobs at the NIH, I miss the hummingbirds. Finally, a good Samaritan points out that they live around here too. When I notice a *Washington Post* ad for free bird walks at Woodend, Saturdays 8 to 9 a.m., I think that's a way to find out where to find hummers.

At the ANS Saturdays, I did find hummers and a lot more, including my first warbler, a Common Yellowthroat. I was hooked. I also made new friends, Jennifer and Dan, with whom I remain close, even though Dan now lives in Wisconsin. I also found fantastic

teacher: Hugh Mahanes and Lou DeMouy, Mike Bowen, and later Mark England, Stephen Jones, and several others. Hugh Mahanes encouraged Jennifer and me to join him on our first Christmas Bird Count, and I also began to bird on my own. I joined ANS first and then MBC, where I found more friends and mentors such as Linda Friedland and Lydia Schindler.

Unlike birding, my love of photography began really early. When I was about five or six, I asked my father for a popular toy. It was a small fake camera; you pointed it at a friend, clicked, and out came a small cartoon of a piglet that you showed to the friend. My father said no, if you want a camera, then it should be a real one. Soon thereafter he bought me a Kodak box camera that I still have, and I started photographing everything and everyone around me. I inherited my father's cameras when he upgraded, eventually got my own and learned to print black-and-white photos.

It was fated that one day my love of birds and of photography would meet. About 2005 I realized that digital SLRs had become good enough to let me take one hundred shots if necessary to get a good bird photo without ruining myself with film and printing. Nowadays I rarely go birding without a camera, although I realize that my attention to the birds is different and that finding a great bird close at hand is more likely when my camera is at home or not ready.

MBC has felt like home for many years, and I am honored to have been selected as Vice-President. I look forward to working with our new President, Stephanie Lovell, and we hope Clive Harris will remain present and help with his recent experience. The Vice-President's main responsibility is organizing the monthly meetings. I hope I will find ways to keep these appealing and to introduce new topics. I have a few ideas and look forward very much to hearing yours.

Have a great summer and see you at the first meeting of the fall, Wednesday September 19th.

*Evelyn Ralston*

**Don't forget to renew your membership!! We look forward to seeing you in September!**

# Montgomery County Birds of Note

## (mid April to late June 2018)

An **Anhinga** spotted at a pond in the Kentlands in Gaithersburg on May 15 was a great find by Jim Ivett. Unfortunately, Jim was the only birder to see and get a photograph despite some intensive searching by other birders in the days that followed. **Anhinga** is a very rare visitor to the county. Jim's bird may not be a first county record, (I vaguely remember one being reported from the Potomac River in vicinity of Sycamore Island in the early 2000s) but this sighting is the only one in recent years verified by eBird.

Some great waders were seen in the county over the past few months. There seemed to be an influx of **Little Blue Herons** into the county during mid-April. Shawn Steely reported a **Little Blue Heron** from one of the ponds at Green Farm CP on April 13. Thomas Doebel found two different **Little Blue Herons** on April 14 and 15. One was at Green Hills Farm Wetlands in Gaithersburg and the other near Violette's Lock along the Potomac River. A **Little Blue Heron** was also reported at Dierrsen WMA near Pennyfield Lock on April 17. Anne Mytych spotted a **Snowy Egret** in flight over the Potomac at Violette's Lock on May 6. Dave Czaplak had two flyover **Cattle Egrets** from the same location on May 5. A **Glossy Ibis** was noted at both Violette's Lock and Hughes Hollow on May 5. A **Least Bittern** was found by Dave Czaplak at Hughes Hollow on May 29 and was still being reported from there as of June 23.

Joe Hanfman and Dave Czaplak observed two **Mississippi Kites** over the Potomac River at Violette's Lock on June 1. Rob Hilton had great looks at a **Mississippi Kite** soaring over Pine Lake in Wheaton RP on June 10.

Individual **Sora** were noted from Hughes Hollow on April 14 by Nathan Tea; the Sherwood Forest area of Northwest Branch on April 18 by Gail Mackiernan; and the boat ramp area of Black Hill RP on April 28 by Lois Forster. Thomas Doebel was first to report a **Common Gallinule** this season at Hughes Hollow on April 15. Additional **Common Gallinule** (sometimes as many as two) were seen at Hughes Hollow through May 22.

It did not seem like the best of conditions for migrant shorebirds this past spring, fall usually being the best time to pick up a rarity. However, a **Short-billed Dowitcher** was a nice find by Ryan Douglas at Blue Mash on May 17. A couple **Black-bellied Plovers** flew upriver past MaryAnn Todd's and Dave Czaplak's location at Violette's Lock on May 10. Dave also noted a **Red-necked Phalarope** from Violette's Lock on May 31.

On April 16, Dave Czaplak found two species of semi-rare gull for the county on the Potomac River at Violette's Lock, observing both a single **Lesser Black-backed** and **Laughing Gull**.

A few days later on April 19, Dave Czaplak and MaryAnn Todd found a **Little Gull** in the same location. Migrating **Common** and **Forster's Terns** were found on the Potomac River along the Violette's to Riley's Lock stretch a few days each in both April and May and a single **Black Tern** was reported from there on May 19.

Tom Kimbis reported an **Alder Flycatcher** along Hunting Quarter Rd on May 12. Additional **Alder Flycatcher** sightings came in from Dry Seneca Creek Park and Hughes Hollow. Dave Czaplak and MaryAnn Todd pointed out an **Olive-sided Flycatcher** at Violette's Lock to a group of birders, including Linda Friedland, Lydia Schindler, Moira Davenport, and Susan Hunt. Michael Moffatt found a late migrating **Olive-sided Flycatcher** at Meadowside Nature Center on June 2.

Linda Friedland, Lydia Schindler and Evelyn Ralston found a **Golden-winged Warbler** along the C&O Canal at Violette's Lock on May 5. At least six or seven **Mourning Warblers** were noted from around the county during spring migration. Woody and Rae Dubois reported one from Little Bennett RP on May 14. Howard Youth scored successive **Mourning Warbler** sightings on May 14 and 15 with a bird seen at Violette's Lock and the next day from Meadowbrook Park.

**Dickcissels** have returned to breed atop the Oaks Landfill adjacent to Blue Mash with as many as three birds being seen from mid-May through June 27. **Summer Tanagers**, as well, seem to have become a regular breeder in the county. The season's first being reported by Thomas Doebel on May 4 from the Pennyfield Lock/Blockhouse Point CP area. Additional **Summer Tanager** sightings have come from Great Falls, Violette's Lock and Watts Branch Park in Rockville. MBC President Clive Harris noted one in the woods along Mt. Nebo Road (River Road) across from the Summit Hall Turf Farm entrance on May 12. This marks the fifth year in a row that a **Summer Tanager** has been found at this location.

Two hundred and thirty-seven different species for the county have been reported so far to Cornell's Lab of Ornithology eBird Project as of June 27, 2018.

- Andy Martin



# Curious About the MBC Council?

Have you ever wondered about the make-up and function of our Montgomery Bird Club (MBC) Council? Every year at the May chapter meeting we vote for nominees but after that, what do the members of the Council discuss and how do they serve MBC?

First, some basics: The Council consists of four officers: President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and Secretary, as well as four Chapter Directors, three State Directors and the immediate Past President. Meetings are held quarterly at the President's house or apartment. Refreshments, though not mentioned in the By-Laws, are always provided. The President and Vice-President serve for two years, then the Vice-President becomes President and a new Vice-President must be elected. The Treasurer and Secretary often serve for longer than two years if they are willing to do so. The four Chapter Directors serve for two years, two of them being elected one year and two the next, in a staggered manner. One or more of the three State Directors occasionally serve longer than two years. The number of State Directors Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) allows each chapter to have is based upon the size of the chapter's membership.

## OFFICERS -

Most of us have some idea of the official responsibilities of the President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary, but as with any organization, what is in writing doesn't tell the whole story. The President presides over each chapter meeting but is also a liaison with other organizations. He or she provides leadership at the Council meetings concerning questions such as how to increase MBC's visibility and membership, and how to keep our technology up to date. The Vice-President is not just an occasional stand-in for the President; she puts together the slate of speakers that we have at our chapter meetings every year plus helping the President with a myriad of other issues that arise. An annual financial report to the membership is certainly one of the Treasurer's jobs, but he also pays the bills, sends the correct percentage of our membership dues to MOS, and makes sure our expenses don't exceed our income. If you have received a handwritten card or note from MBC, it was written by the Secretary, who also takes part in the Council discussions and activities in addition to compiling the minutes.

## CHAPTER DIRECTORS -

Before I was a member of the Council I always found the term Chapter Director a little mysterious, not to say rather grand. It turned out that all MOS chapters use the term Chapter Director which simply means a person who can suggest issues for the Council meeting agendas, takes part in the ensuing discussions and votes on how to proceed.

## STATE DIRECTORS -

The State Directors attend the Board meetings of MOS and vote on issues concerning the conservation of birds and bird habitat in Maryland. They also attend the Council meetings and report on key topics that were discussed by the Board such as maintaining the MOS sanctuaries, making the state legislature aware of steps needed for bird conservation and so on. They have equal voting rights with the Officers and the Chapter Directors on Council issues.

## COUNCIL BUSINESS -

Just to name a few examples, Council members have voted money for special projects, made annual award decisions, planned our social gatherings, manned the MBC booth at county nature events and investigated alternative chapter meeting locations. They have made MBC merchandise available online, made suggestions for our website, helped put us on Facebook, and investigated MailChimp, making mass mailings to the membership possible.

The Council meetings are casual, friendly and a great way to meet other MBC members while also finding out more about what it is we do. So, when the Nominating Committee calls don't hesitate. It will be fun.

*Rae Dubois*



## Meet a Trip Leader: John Bjerke

John Bjerke leads our popular birding trips in the fall and spring to Patuxent River Park as well as a summer trip to the Delaware Bay coastal areas. Besides being a trip leader, he has held many roles in the Montgomery Bird Club and the Maryland Ornithological Society. We thank him for all the time and effort he has put into the club! Here is an interview with John Bjerke:

**Year joined Montgomery Bird Club:** 1982

**Volunteer positions with MBC:** Chapter Director, Vice President, President, Treasurer, State Director,

Seneca CBC compiler (these were all in the 1980s I believe)

**Year began leading bird walks:** 1984

**Favorite bird:** On any given day it will usually be a shorebird but sometimes Wood Thrush or Canyon Wren or some other incredible singer.

**Favorite bird book:** For field guides, I love the National Geographic guide now in its 7<sup>th</sup> edition. For more in depth, The Shorebird Guide by Michael O'Brien, Richard Crossley, and Kevin Karlson. For a view of a particular bird and the people who care about it, Moonbird by Phillip Hoose. And if you really want to go deeper, the species monographs in the Birds of North America series (Cornell).

**Favorite Montgomery County birding spot:** My neighborhood where my wife and I walk each morning. Our walk includes the Shady Grove Metro storm water management pond where we look for herons and Hooded Mergansers and other treats such as the Common Loon that stayed there for a week this Spring.

**How did you start birding:** I joined ANS in order to support a local conservation group. After a couple of years of seeing announcements of birding trips I thought I would check one out—I got hooked. It wasn't just one bird in particular, it was the variety.

**Significant birding accomplishments:** Learning to identify birds by songs and calls.

**Memorable birding experience:** Sitting on the South Rim of the Grand Canyon watching the ravens at play. Incredible aerial acrobatics with birds plunging thousands of feet below the rim and then powering back up above the rim in pursuit of each other.

**Something that inspires you about birding:** When we care enough we can help nature regenerate. Bald Eagles and Osprey are back from the brink and that means we can have hope.



**Don't forget to renew your membership!! We look forward to seeing you in September!**

## Treasurer's Report: Club Financial Year ending April 30, 2018

Our club ended its 2018 financial year in a strong financial position, with \$10,097 in the bank and 204 paid memberships representing 347 individual birders.

Our financial security is due to several pieces of good fortune. First, we cleared \$985 from the annual social, thanks to the generosity Jim Sweet, owner of Smokey Glen Farm Barbecuers, who donated the meal for the second year in a row, and Audubon Naturalist Society, which opened the doors of Woodend free of charge once again. Second, we received an unexpected gift of \$1,500 from the estate of Chandler Robbins donated to MOS. And last but not least, our own members supplemented their dues with an additional \$825 in donations to the Claudia Wilds Fund. Our income from dues was \$6,930 of which \$4,212 was passed to MOS, leaving us \$2,718 income from dues, an amount that just barely covers the cost of The Chat and the eight monthly meetings. This momentary affluence comes at a good time since we anticipate unusual expenses in the coming year to upgrade our website and renewal procedures to match the new MOS website coming on line this Fall.

*Chris Wright, Treasurer*

Montgomery Bird Club: April 30, 2018				
Financial Summary and Estimated Budget for 2019				
	2018 Budget	2018 Actual		2019 Budget (proposed)
<b>Income</b>				
Dues	\$7,000.00	\$6,930.00		\$7,000.00
Wilds Fund	1,000.00	2,325.00		1,000.00
Social/Picnic	1,500.00	1,220.00		1,000.00
Site Guide/Misc	100.00	60.00		100.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$9,600.00</b>	<b>\$10,535.00</b>		<b>\$9,100.00</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>				
MOS	\$4,400.00	\$4,212.00		\$4,400.00
Chat	1,200.00	1,020.75		1,200.00
Web	850.00	177.00		500.00
Office Sup/Misc	150.00	617.11		500.00
Rent/Speakers	2,000.00	1,905.62		1,500.00
Social/Picnic	1,000.00	704.85		1,000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$9,600.00</b>	<b>\$8,637.33</b>		<b>\$9,100.00</b>

### Bird Club News

Montgomery Bird Club members Patrick Newcombe and Joshua Heiser were featured in a National Audubon article following their route on the World Series of Birding, which their YMOS team left with 199 species, the highest total. See <https://www.audubon.org/news/inside-birdings-most-dramatic-24-hours>.



*The Chat*



The Chat  
MBC/Maryland Ornithological Society  
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Silver Spring, MD 20901

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## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL 2018—19

I/we wish to join the Montgomery Bird Club, a chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society, for the year beginning September 2018 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:

Helen Patton, 429 Hamilton Avenue,  
Silver Spring, MD 20901

NAME(S) \_\_\_\_\_  
STREET ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY, STATE, ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_  
E-MAIL \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ 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 receive The Maryland Yellowthroat by mail. Otherwise, you will be notified when The Yellowthroat is posted on the MOS website.