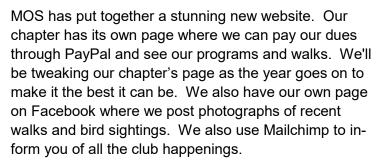


The newsletter of the Montgomery Bird Club of the Maryland Ornithological Society

November 2018 President's Chat

As I write this, we are getting some rain, maybe a little more than we had in mind thanks to hurricanes coming through. Hopefully, the fall migration won't be affected too much, a lot of birds have gone through already. As usual someone found a Connecticut Warbler, my nemesis bird, it's always "it was just there" but not for me! Someone has a "magic meadow "where there were two!



One of the ubiquitous birds around us is the crow. We are lucky in that we have three kinds of corvids in our state, the American Crow, the Fish Crow, and, farther west, the Raven. I've always been fascinated with them, watching the winter river in the sky as they head to the night roost and the various calls they make. One of the recent books on the subject is one called Gifts of the *Crow*, by John Marzluff and Tony Angell. Illustrations are by Tony Angell. The subtext is How Perception, Emotion, and Thought Allow Smart Birds to Behave Like Humans. We all know how crows react when a predator is near: the harsh cries, the mobbing behavior that drives away a hawk or a human. But did you know they recognize people who give them food and take care of them? The University of Washington has done years of research and gone to many parts of the world to follow up on reports of unusual behavior. The book has detailed accounts of their intelligence and adaptability and the



authors base every thesis on how a crow's brain works. There are some very funny stories of things corvids have done.

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There are chapters on the amazing feats they do. For instance, they can figure out how to make a bit of food rise in a column of water by fashioning a hooked wire to retrieve it. Crows recognize faces, in a study by the University of Washington you may have heard of, a mask was used to

harass a group of crows; when the wearer of the mask went about without it, he was not bothered, but as soon as the mask appeared he was mobbed. Subsequent tests showed that offspring of that crow knew about the mask and reacted to it even though he was not part of the original brood.

An illustration of how the corvid brain works is a how they work a row of cars waiting to board a ferry in Puget Sound. The crows assess the line of waiting cars and evaluate their own safety and check to see if there's any movement in their direction. Meanwhile they inspect Cont on pg 5

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Calendar

November 14 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m. Claire Nemes on "Cats and Birds: What We Know, What We Don't, and How to Help." Claire Nemes, a Ph.D. student at the University of Maryland, will present on the impacts of cats on neotropical migratory bird populations. She will also discuss what actions birders can take to help solve the problem and keep both cats and birds safe.

December 12 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m. Wine & Cheese followed by a Bird Quiz led by Evelyn Ralston. Relax, meet other members and make new birding friends over Wine and Cheese. Then test your skills at bird identification based on Evelyn's and others' bird photographs and other means of getting a bird ID.

January 16, 2019 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m. More information to come.

January 26, 2019 (Saturday), 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Maryland Bird Conservation Symposium. The Maryland Bird Conservation Partnership (MBCP) and Youth Maryland Ornithological Society (YMOS) will unite the expertise of professional conservationists and the passion of youth birders to discuss the status of and threats to Maryland's birds and their protection. Presentations and Q&A sessions will help identify needed bird conservation actions to secure populations of Maryland's birds and their habitats.

February 20, 2019 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m. More information to come.

March 8, 2019 (Friday) Montgomery Bird Club Annual Social. The announcement of the Member of the Year, members' photographs, and a delicious dinner are highlights of our annual get-together at Woodend.

'Tis the Season: Christmas BirdCounts

Christmas Bird Counts are just around the corner. If you can help out, please contact the compiler. The counts in Montgomery County include:

Saturday, December 15 - Triadelphia Reservoir CBC, MD. Compiler: David Holmes, musiclbndr@gmail.com (preferred) or 410-730-7083 or 410-952-3584 (cell).

Sunday, December 16 - Seneca CBC, MD and VA. Compiler: Jim Nelson, kingfishers2@verizon.net (preferred) or 240-515-4517 (cell).

Friday, December 28 - Central Loudoun CBC, VA and MD (this count includes 5 miles along the C&O Canal in Montgomery Co, MD). Compiler: Joe Coleman, 540-554-2542 or joecoleman@rstarmail.com or jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org. Sign up at www.loudounwildlife.org.

Sunday, December 30 - Sugarloaf Mountain CBC, MD. Compiler: Janet Millenson, 301-983-9337 or janet@twocrows.com.

This year is the 119th year for the Christmas Bird Counts. The website, <u>http://www.audubon.org/</u> <u>conservation/christmas-bird-count</u>, has a wide array of information on the Christmas Bird Count including a history of the count narrated by Chandler Robbins in Patuxent, Maryland. Other videos explain how Christmas Bird Counts help scientists and conservationists.





Please note: Registration for joint MBC/ANS trips is now being done online at ANShome.org/adults.

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 a.m. Contact the
leader for reservations and information. LEADER: Mark England 240 207-3132 (home)

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 <u>lydia13621@gmail.com</u> or Linda Friedland <u>linnet1@verizon.net</u>

NOVEMBER 25 (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 information. LEADER: Clive Harris <u>clivegharris@yahoo.com</u>

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

JANUARY 1 (Tuesday) EARLIEST BIRD WALK- GEORGETOWN RESERVOIR AND D.C./VA HOTSPOTS. Half day. Start the New Year right. Meet at 8 a.m. at Georgetown Reservoir, D.C., by the gate leading to the dike between the pools. Itinerary will be different this year due to new parking restrictions along the route. Reservations required. Strict limit: 20 participants who absolutely must be prepared to carpool. (No singletons!) LEADER: Mike Bowen <u>dhmbowen@yahoo.com</u> or 301-530-5764.

JANUARY 11-13 (Friday to Sunday) OCEAN CITY AND ENVIRONS. Explore winter birding on the Eastern Shore! Friday morning, we'll cross the Bay Bridge and check out locations from Kent Island to Assateague, stopping at Blackwater NWR and points in between, looking for ducks in from the north. We'll overnight in Ocean City on Friday and Saturday. Trip is limited to 10. Please consider carpooling. If a Nor'easter comes howling down, we won't go. For reservations and information contact the LEADER: Stephanie Lovell amorellovell@gmail.com or 240-242-3325. Cheryl Hogue will co-lead.

JANUARY 20 (Sunday) BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK. All birders, but especially new birders, are welcome on this half day trip, which will focus on the identification of ducks at this premiere county spot for winter waterfowl. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Visitors Center to Black Hill Regional Park, and bring a spotting scope if you have one. For reservations (which are required) and more information, contact the LEADER: Gerry Hawkins maineusa@comcast.net or 571-277-8406 (cell).

JANUARY 27 (Sunday) WINTER WATERFOWL SEARCH. Half day. Waterfowl search of Montgomery County waterways for ducks, grebes, and mergansers. Based on the unpredictability of winter weather conditions, the leader will decide on the meeting place a few weeks before the trip and use recent bird reports to decide best locations to visit. Bring a scope if you have one. Reservations required. For reservations and more information, contact the LEADER: Andy Martin <u>martinap2@verizon.net</u> or 301-529-2066.

IFEBRUARY 2 (Saturday) OAKS LANDFILL, LAYTONSVILLE. Bundle up for a late afternoon search for winterling sparrows and raptors, including possible Northern Harriers and Short-eared Owls, at this now-closed landfill adjacent to the Blue Mash Nature Trail. Mostly open terrain with some ponds, which we will check if not frozen lover. Leader will have scope for distant birds. We have special permission to enter this "closed to the public" landfill so reservations are essential. Limit 20. Meet at 3:30 pm. on landfill entrance drive at 6001 Rt. 108, Laytonsville, Md. Contact the leader for reservations and more information.

LEADER: Mark Enlanland@canamcontractors.com or 240-375-4500 (cell).



FEBRUARY 6 (Wednesday) BLUE MASH A mid-week morning walk geared to new birders. We'll look for the expected winter birds: cardinals, towhees and sparrows as well as raptors (Northern Harrier a possibility) and ducks. Expect to walk (waterproof boots suggested!) about a mile on level trails. The trip will be cancelled or postponed in case of sleet, ice or rain. Start at 9 am. Reservations not necessary. For directions or more information call or e-mail the LEADER: Stephanie Lovell <u>ctlovell1@yahoo.com</u> or 240-242 3235.

MARCH 6 (Wednesday), MARCH 12 (Tuesday) and MARCH 14 (Thursday) - INFORMAL LATE AFTERNOON BIRD WALKS until dusk. Joint trips with ANS. Meet promptly at 4:30 pm at the end of Seneca Rd at Riley's Lock "on the bridge." We'll be checking out the Potomac River for waterfowl, gulls, terns, etc. Next stop will be Hughes Hollow - part of McKee Beshers WMA. Potential highlights here include early Tree Swallows, calling Pied-billed Grebes and Wood Ducks and other waterfowl flying into roost. We'll then finish with American Woodcock display if they are in the vicinity. Bring scope, flashlight and wear "muddy conditions" footwear. Reservations are not required - all are welcome. For more info call the LEADER: Jim Green 301-742-0036

Hats Off to Anne Mytych!

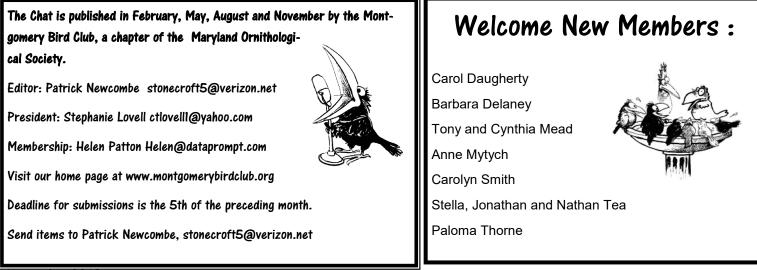
For the past few months, Anne was a familiar presence on the birdways of Montgomery County—along the C&O, at Hughes Hollow, at Little Bennett. She was looking for a new job, but between job interviews she would, of course, go birding.

Starting in September, Anne took a position at a small firm in Georgetown, and it seemed her birding runs would be curtailed. Wrong! On September 21, during a lunchtime visit to the nearby Georgetown Water-front Park, she saw a gull that reminded her of a Bonaparte's, but different, and bigger. She took photos, checked with an eBird reviewer, and sought opinions on ABA's "What's This Bird?" By the time Anne revisited the park later that afternoon, she knew she was looking at a Black-headed Gull—the first seen in the District of Columbia since 1989.

Her find galvanized the birding community. Within the next three days more than a score of birders got a look at this gull, first from the Georgetown Water Park and subsequently from Hains Point and from Gravelly Point (just north of Reagan airport.

Good job, Anne!

Lydia Schindler





Wheaton Regional Park September 6. Leaders: Woody and Rae Dubois. Early morning was already sunny, very warm, and humid. We started the walk with eight participants at 7:15 a.m. by scanning the trees at the edge of the train station parking lot. These trees can be quite productive because they receive the first sun. They did yield three American Redstarts. We made our way to the train tracks and found a number of Red-Eyed Vireos and a couple of Baltimore Orioles in a large walnut tree, plus assorted Northern Flickers, Red-bellied Woodpeckers and Robins. They all love the wild grapes and porcelain berries which are a prominent feature in this park in the fall. Also, in this area were two Great Crested Flycatchers. Five Wood Ducks, two Mallards and two Killdeer were at the pond but we failed to hear the Belted Kingfisher or see the Green Heron. Also, near the pond was another cooperative Red-Eyed Vireo eating a caterpillar and posing for pictures. In the trees bordering the dam a Warbling Vireo sang repeatedly but remained stubbornly hidden. We ended at 9:45 with 35 species, the most numerous being Red-eved Vireos and Eastern Wood-Pewees. We had only two warbler species, the American Redstarts and a Common Yellowthroat. Migrants in general seem to have been late arriving at Wheaton this year. Thanks to Scott Young for adding some great photographs to the ebird list.

Pennyfield to Violette's "Bird Stalk", Sunday, September 23. Leader: Jim Nelson. Participants: 5, including leader. Weather: Overcast with steady rain, 57-60 F. Total species: 36. This walk is for folks who generally cannot get out as early. We met at Violette's Lock at 9:00, carpooled down to Pennyfield Lock, and then walked upstream along the C&O Canal towpath back to Violette's, ending just after noon. The total species count was equal to last year's sunny, warm walk, but with a very different species mix. The steady rain made it difficult to spot birds along the towpath resulting in very low numbers of land birds (only a few warblers representing 3 species, one Song Sparrow, and no tanagers or orioles) and few water birds or waders (only one Double-crested Cormorant, two Great Blue Herons, and one Great Egret). The river was running high and fast, and the second impoundment was full, so no good shorebird habitat. Highlights were significant numbers of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks (apparently a general movement with more than one seen at a time in several locations), lots of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds visiting the Jewelweed in the relatively dry bed of the Canal, the cooperative Great Egret, a Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and a Swainson's Thrush. Before the walk while waiting at Violette's Lock for everyone to arrive, the leader added Mourning Dove and American Redstart to the trip list. The complete checklist from the walk can be viewed in eBird at https://ebird.org/ view/checklist/S48693562

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every bit of trash that is on the ground to see if there are any tidbits for them in it. The crow uses its past experience to measure whether it can gain anything, or if there's any danger. More often than not they get a treat from the car.

There's a lot of discussion about the biology of the crow's brain and how it compares to that of other species, including humans, and there's a lot in common! We take Nature for granted and think we know how animals think and dream. By studying the crow, we begin to realize that we need to step away from our urban lifestyle and explore, to understand and appreciate nature which in turn expands our souls and minds.

Stephanie Lovell, President

Flight Paths

Daphne Gemmill writes that Angola, the latest country to emerge from a civil war (2002), is now a prime birding destination. "It has the fourth largest bird list in Africa with 996 species of which 18 are endemics. Until recently, the only way to visit good birding spots was to camp. Today you have an option to stay in clean hotels or small lodges ranging from two-star to -four. New road construction is underway making it easier to travel from birding spot to birding spot. Being Africa, you still have many miles of dusty, pot-holed roads. The core birding route is guite safe. The biggest danger is crazy drivers. During my threeweek trip in August, I saw or heard 400 bird species and saw all the endemic birds. Highlights were the national bird, Red-crested Turaco, and my bird-of-the trip, Pennant-winged Nightjar. Sadly, the civil war and the bush meat trade have decimated the mammal population. The only mammals seen regularly were squirrels. All in all, it was a fascinating trip to an off-the-beaten path destination."

In June, Gail Mackiernan and Barry Cooper, along with two friends from England, traveled to Mongolia in search of birds. Gail writes, "Mongolia is a truly incredible birding destination. The immense grasslands, incredible Gobi Desert, surprisingly varied wetlands, and the limited human habitation over much of the country outside of the capital made this an unforgettable experience. The total population of Mongolia is only about 3 million, of which half live in Ulaanbaatar; making it one of the least densely populations nations on the planet. Our in-country arrangements were through Tum-Ecotour Ltd. whose owner, Khumbaa Tumendelger (Tumen for short), is probably the most experienced birder in Mongolia. Our guide was Frank Lambert, a Brit who has spent years birding in Asia. In 17 days, the group traveled to the dense taiga forest of the north, south through the steppe grasslands and into the Great Gobi Desert Protected area near Mongolia's

southern border with China. We camped, stayed in yurts (*gers* in the Mongolian language) with an occasional respite in local hotels. Except for hotel nights, all food was cooked and eaten in the field. Most of our travel was off-road, on faint tracks or even over trackless desert. We experienced sand-

storms, hailstorms, wind but almost no rain. It was wonderful. The groups recorded about 175 species of birds, including some of the mostwanted by world birders: Blackbilled Capercaillie at its lek, Altai Snowcoack. Oriental Plover. Pallas's Sand-grouse (pictured), Amur and Saker Falcons at their nests, Henderson's Groundjay, Mongolian Lark. Azure Tit.



and Saxaul Sparrow as well as four species of crane. We also scored with mammals, including Przewalski's Horse (the only true wild horse), wild Bactrian Camels and several cute hopping Jerboas.

Bruce Crise writes about Iceland: "My son, Owen

Crise, and I were in Iceland kayaking the northwest fjords and then went looking for the whitetailed eagle in the NW region of the island. We stopped off at the White Tailed Eagle Center



and we were told there had been recent sightings

Flight Paths

in the area west-north-west of Búðardalur. We lucked out and found a pair of eagles along the western coast at approximately 65.143979, -22.317519. We saw one immature eagle perched along the side of the road and an adult soaring while being harassed by a couple crows."

Geoff Edgar reports on the Amazon: "On August 22 I set out with my birding traveling companion, Johnnie Ramos, to an ecolodge, the Explorers Inn, in the Amazon river basin in Peru. The trip there totaled 30 hours of travel time and required three flights, and a bus trip. Our last flight landed in Puerto Maldonado, a small town in the middle of a mayoral election. We then embarked on a two-hour boat trip and the birding immediately started. We almost immediately saw a new heron, a Cocoi Heron. On our boat ride we also saw a jaguar sitting on the shore of the river. This is a rare sighting in this part of South America. The extensive travel was worth it. We saw 248 species, most of which were new to me. The trip highlights included a 4:30 AM trek to a 150-foot high observation tower where we spent over two hours looking for birds in the treetops. During the time we saw a Harpy Eagle, multiple Paradise Tanagers, Turquoise Tanagers, and many other exotic species. Despite my fear of heights and the swaying of the tower, it was an experience I will never forget. Johnnie's favorite bird of the trip was the Scarlet Winged Puffbird. Mine was the Great Potoo, the largest member of the order, which includes nightiars and allies. We saw it twice, once on a nighttime river boat ride when I couldn't see what everybody else clearly saw, and once during the day when I had a clear view of this odd-looking bird. After 7 days and six nights of almost non-stop birding we reluctantly began the 30-plus-hour return trip home.

Summer 2018 brought **Cheryl Hogue** three trips that she hadn't expected to take. "I wasn't overly thrilled when my boss sent me to a meeting in Toulouse, **France**, in July. But quickly I realized it was an opportunity for birding. After fulfilling my business commitments, I spent a few vacation days in the Camargue (Rhone Delta) along the Mediterranean coast and pumped up my life list. I gawked at flocks of noisy Greater Flamingos, which, unlike their shrimphued American Flamingo counterparts, are a light pink



color. I was surprised by early arriving shorebirds with bright orange legs, Spotted Redshank and Common Redshank. A Sacred Ibis landed near me as I was admiring a rookery of Grey Herons. I stumbled across a pair of European Bee-eaters decked out in snazzy blocks of blue, yellow, and orang-y brown plumage as they perched in a snag under the hot midday sun. I studied multitudes of Black-headed Gulls and delighted in many other species, including the Eurasian Nightjar that swooped across the motorway as I whizzed to the airport on my last morning in France.

"Bermuda was the destination my sister chose for a cruise in June and she took me along. I was thrilled to see White-tailed Tropicbirds. Alas, our visit started a week after the last Bermuda Petrel (Cahow) had left the local breeding grounds. (I will try for this endangered species next time.) Pelagics were nowhere to be seen on our North Atlantic passage -- except on the very last evening aboard ship, just east of Cape Cod. Before sunset, shearwaters appeared, Cory's, Greater, and Sooty, all lifers. I also snapped photos of a bird that was definitely not a shearwater and posted them on the ABA Facebook page "What's that Bird?" I got expert confirmation that I had scored a Northern Fulmar, also a lifer.

"In early July, I accompanied a friend to a family get-together near Bozeman, **Montana**. We stayed next to farmland that hosted breeding Wilson's Snipe and Yellow Warblers. A pair of Sandhill Cranes flew overhead in the evening. A day trip to the Missouri Headwaters State Park netted six species of swallows: violet-green, bank, barn, cliff, tree, and northern rough-winged. Three dozen American White Pelicans graced the skies and rivers, a Peregrine Falcon came and went from a nest tucked into a crevice on a cliff face, a pair of Bullock's Orioles chased around our picnic table, a duo of Rock Wrens posed conveniently on a rock, and I added a species to my life list: Lark Sparrow."



The Chat

MBC/Maryland Ornithological Society

429 Hamilton Avenue

Silver Spring, MD 20901

Non-Profit Org. US Postage PAID Permit #2737 Suburban, MD

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

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