

February 2020

Volume 51, No. 1

President's Chat

Oh, the weather outside has not been so frightful ... and the winter birds are begging us to come and look at them and there have been plenty.

Many of you participated in the recent CBCs. Congratulations to all of you who tallied birds on those counts. The Seneca CBC had 157 counters in the field and 19 feeder-watchers. Impressive! According to Marcia Watson, the compiler of the Jug Bay CBC, this was almost exactly one counter for each square mile in the Seneca Circle! The Sugarloaf CBC had an above-average 67 counters in the field, plus 4 feeder-watchers. Janet Millenson was very grateful to the dedicated participants who spent much of the day getting rained on! (Note: It's harder to recruit people for Sugarloaf than for Seneca because our date is always closer to Christmas and New Year's.) Their tallies of Wild Turkeys and American Robins soared past our old record high numbers.

For an easier, warmer, and drier count, we can all join in the Great Backyard Bird Count that begins on Friday, February 14, and continues through Monday, February 17, 2020.

This is a great chance to talk up birds with neighbors, colleagues, and kids. Have them check out Cornell's GBBC website: <https://gbbc.birdcount.org/>. Who can resist a story about a Snowy Owl or seeing the interactive map on Cornell's site suddenly flaring when a report has been sent online?

With that in mind, I'd like to thank everyone who has joined in any of these activities. More thanks are due to all of our field trip leaders who contribute their time and patience and knowledge no matter what the weather.

Save these dates for the 2020 MOS Conference (officially now referred to as Convention): May 15-17





in Cumberland, MD. This conference is especially important as it celebrates 75 years of MOS. If you have never been to a conference, you're in for a treat. There are lots of field trips for every birding level, a wine and cheese gathering, great guest speaker, and camaraderie galore. Registration opens on February 15, 2020. Check out <https://mdbirds.org/join/annual-conference/> for more information.

And let's not forget our own party! On the back of this Chat is the registration form for our Club Social, which will be held on Friday, March 13, 2020, at the ANS Woodend mansion. Our guest of honor will be Janet Millenson. This is a great chance for all of us to get together and chat over delicious food and be amazed at the wonderful photos presented by our members. I encourage you to sign up. Please contact Evelyn Ralston evelynralston@icloud.com if you would like to help with the Social or can bring appetizers.

Good birding!

—Anna Urciolo

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Winter to Spring Calendar



February 19 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m., David Curson: “Saving the Chesapeake’s Shrinking Marshes.” Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge lies at the heart of one of the largest tidal marsh complexes in the northeastern United State and is recognized as an Important Bird Area (Southern Dorchester County IBA) supporting globally important populations of Black Rail and Saltmarsh Sparrow. Rapid sea-level rise threatens the survival of this ecosystem. Hear from David Curson, Director of Bird Conservation, Audubon Maryland-DC, how Audubon, working with federal, state, and NGO partners, is implementing innovative strategies to ensure the survival of Maryland’s saltwater marshes and their birds.

March 13 (Friday), Montgomery Bird Club Annual Social, 6:30 p.m. The celebration of the Member of the Year who will be our Guest of Honor, members’ presentation of their most beloved recent photographs, our famous bar and bartender, and a delicious dinner in the beautiful setting of Woodend are highlights of our annual get-together.

April 15 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m., Gail Mackiernan: “Panama.” Last April, Gail Mackiernan and Barry Cooper spent five days at the famous Canopy Tower near the Panama Canal and six days at the Canopy Camp in the far-eastern province of Darién. They tallied about 300 species of birds, as well as a number of interesting mammals, including cute Sloths and noisy Howler Monkeys. Bird highlights included smashing views of a Harpy Eagle at its nest, feeding a large chick; a totally unexpected encounter with a huge Crested Eagle; close views of a confiding Black-crowned Antpitta; the enigmatic Sapayoa, Ocellated, and Bare-crowned Antbirds; and thousands of Mississippi Kites winging their way north over the forest.

May 15-17 (Friday-Sunday), MOS 75th Anniversary Convention, Cumberland, MD. The 73rd annual Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) Convention will be held at the Cumberland Ramada. This convention will celebrate MOS’s 75th anniversary. Updates will be posted by MOS on the convention website (<http://www.mosconvention.org>).

May 20 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m. Elections and Speaker TBA

May 30 (Saturday) MBC Annual Picnic. Lunch picnic following morning bird walk. Details will be announced in the Spring but save the date!



Welcome New Members!

Wayne Breslyn

Eve Farber

Bruce and Patty Millar

Anubhav Saini

Justine Short

Stan Smith

Gretchen Stires

Field Trips

New Club members, new birders, and guests are cordially welcome on every field trip. Don't hesitate to contact field trip coordinator Linda Friedland at linnetl@verizon.net or 301-983-2136 (before 9 p.m.). Registration for joint MBC/ANS trips is done online at ANShome.org/adults.

FEBRUARY 2 (Sunday) BLUE MASH NATURE

TRAIL. Morning walk at this surprisingly birdy spot. We'll be looking for winter sparrows, woodpeckers, raptors, and possible waterfowl on the ponds. Waterproof boots suggested as the trails can be muddy. Meet at the Zion Rd parking lot at 8 a.m. Reservations required (limit: 12). For reservations or more information, contact the LEADER: Mark England at 240-375-4500 (cell) or markengland@canamcontractors.com.

MARCH 4 (Wednesday), MARCH 10 (Tuesday), and MARCH 12 (Thursday) INFORMAL LATE AFTERNOON BIRD WALKS until dusk. Joint trips with Audubon Naturalist Society. Meet promptly at 4:30 p.m. 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 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 at 301-742-0036.

MARCH 14 (Saturday) PATUXENT RIVER PARK, JUG BAY NATURAL AREA, PRINCE GEORGE'S CO., MD. Half day. Joint trip with ANS. Waterfowl, as well as winter and early spring songbirds. Ospreys may be displaying. Meet at 8 a.m. at parking lot by park headquarters (16000 Croom Airport Rd). Wear muddy conditions footwear. Registration required (18-person limit). Register online at ANShome.org/adults. For more information, contact the LEADER: Mark England at markengland@canamcontractors.com.

APRIL 5 (Sunday) HUGHES HOLLOW. Half day. We will explore the wetlands of Hughes Hollow. Species to be expected include Red-headed Woodpeckers, Wood Ducks, Blue-winged Teal, and many other marsh-dwellers. A chance for several warblers including Prothonotary. Meet at Hughes Hollow parking lot in the McKee-Beshers WMA at 7 a.m. Reservations are not required, but please contact the leader if you are planning to come so he can provide additional information before the trip. LEADER: Jim Nelson at kingfishers2@verizon.net or 240-515-4517 (cell).

APRIL 19 (Sunday) BLUE MASH NATURE TRAIL. Half day walk at this surprisingly birdy site in Montgomery

County. Waterproof boots helpful. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at Zion Road parking lot. Call leader for reservations and directions. Trip is limited to 12 participants. LEADER: Mark England at 240-375-4500 (cell) or markengland@canamcontractors.com.

APRIL 25 (Saturday) WHEATON REGIONAL PARK TRASH CLEANUP. Wheaton Regional Park is popular with birders, local fishermen and families. Once a year we pick up trash and contribute to improving the park for all, including the birds. Meet at the Shorefield parking lot, near the carousel, at 7:30 a.m. for a pre-cleanup birdwalk (leader TBA) or at 9 a.m. for the cleanup. Bags, gloves, and grabbers will be provided. Rubber boots recommended. We'll finish before noon. Number of participants unlimited, but please sign up with the organizer, Evelyn Ralston (evelynralston@icloud.com).

MAY 1 (Friday) BIRDING BY EAR AT HUGHES HOLLOW. Tune up your ears as we listen for and learn to identify the songs and calls of migrant and local breeding birds. The trip will be geared to new birders but all are welcome. Meet at 7 a.m. at the parking lot at Hughes Hollow. Limit 10. Reservations required. For reservations and more information, email the LEADER: Paul Woodward at grackling@ATT.NET.

MAY 2 (Saturday) CROYDON CREEK NATURE CENTER. Come discover a hidden Montgomery County birding gem. A total of 125 species of bird have been recorded in this park. Several species of warblers and other migrants possible. Meet 7:30 a.m. at the nature center parking lot. Moderate hiking. CO-LEADERS: Anne Mytych and Emily Huang. For more information and for reservations (required: 10-person limit), contact Anne at amytych@yahoo.com or (240) 506-0236 or Emily at EPHuang@verizon.net.

MAY 3 (Sunday) IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE, BETHESDA-CHEVY CHASE CHAPTER, CONSERVATION FARM. Half day. Once again, the B-CC Chapter is generously providing us access to this large private property south of Poolesville. Woods, hedgerows, streams, fields, and ponds provide a wide range of bird habitats, and migration should be well underway. Trip will start at 7 a.m. at the League's Chapterhouse. Reservations required (limit: 12). For reservations and driving directions, contact the LEADER: Jim Nelson at kingfishers2@verizon.net or 240-515-4517.

Trip Reports

Oaks Landfill, Laytonsville, November 3, 2019. Leader: Mark England; participants: 13. Weather: Sunny with little wind—a beautiful fall day! Species: 39. We started by driving down to the pond, which is also visible from Blue Mash, hoping to find a Cackling Goose among the hundreds of Canadas before they took flight. We had no luck in that endeavor, but after the geese had gone, we saw a mixed group of six Gadwall, two American Black Ducks, and a lone female Green-winged Teal. Recent rains had refilled the entire pond, so, except for two Killdeer, the excellent shorebirds seen in September and October had gone. While at the pond, we had a flyover group of 33 Cedar Waxwings and picked up a nearby juvenile White-crowned Sparrow. We later added six more sparrows, including well-seen Savannahs and Swamp. It was well into the trip before we saw our first raptor, a juvenile Red-shouldered Hawk, but soon after we added three or four Red-tails, a male Kestrel, two Bald Eagles some distance off, a juvenile Cooper's Hawk, and a Northern Harrier—surprisingly the only harrier of the morning. It was a fun trip in great weather!

Sparrow Walk, Redgate Park, November 11. Leaders: Lydia Schindler and Linda Friedland. A dozen birders convened for the annual Veterans Day sparrow hunt, with the venue changed from Blue Mash to Redgate, a recently abandoned golf course in Rockville. Weather was ideal, mild and not windy. Sparrows, though, were slow to emerge; for the first hour the famously hoppin' pond-side bushes and reeds remained unnaturally quiet. Eventually the park's scenic hills and vales yielded six sparrow species among the 30 we found—Chipping, Field, White-throated, Song, Swamp, and Savannah—with touches of color added by bluebirds and Palm Warblers.



Song or Savannah Sparrow? Photo Chris Wright

Lilypons and Surrounding Areas, November 24. Leader: Clive Harris; participants: 10. The annual MBC field trip to Lilypons started off with cool, windy, and rainy, slightly damp weather. Most of the participants stuck it out. As the leader pointed out, if people didn't go birding in the rain, in some places—like the UK—they'd never get out! So it can be done. We had 35 species on our short walk around Lilypons itself. This included a good selection of ducks, including a dozen Hooded Mergansers and 15 American Black Ducks. Other highlights included a pair of Rusty Blackbirds as well as four White-crowned Sparrows. A quick stop at Oland Road failed to turn up any sizable groups of Horned Lark. We did stop later on down Greenfield Road and added a few more species to the day's total.

Cambridge, MD, Waterfront and Blackwater NWR, December 9. Leader: Mark England; participants: 13. Weather: Sunny with little wind—a great day for a bird trip! Species: 50 for main group; 5 more for late-stayers. We met at the Sailwinds Visitor Center just across the Choptank River in Cambridge, where we had exceptional looks at close Long-tailed Ducks and Surf Scoters, Buffleheads, Ruddy Ducks, DC Cormorants, as well as the three common gull species. At Oakley Street, photographers had to be pried away from the close-up Canvasbacks, American Wigeons, Lesser Scaup, and one Redhead. We picked up a hen Common Goldeneye at Marsh Point but little else. We then headed down Egypt Road but found it less birdy than usual. Eventually a flock of brownish songbirds descended into a corn-stubble field, and they turned out to be mostly American Pipits, with at least one verified Horned Lark as well. For the first time ever, there were no Kestrels on either Egypt Rd or Key Wallace Drive! On the Blackwater Refuge Wildlife Drive, we had brief glimpses of fast-moving Brown-headed Nuthatches, a Fox Sparrow, three heard-only Clapper Rails near the Observation Platform, Yellow-rumps and one Pine Warbler, close-in Tundra Swans and American White Pelicans, Forster's Terns, and numerous Bald Eagles. We added Northern Pintails, Northern Shovelers, and Black Ducks to our lengthy waterfowl list, and most of us headed back. Die-hards Andy Martin, Diane Ford, and Bob Cantilli drove over to the superb marsh at Bestpitch Ferry Bridge and were rewarded near dusk with a distant perched Short-eared Owl, four Northern Harriers, an American Kestrel, and a well-seen Virginia Rail that fluttered out onto a mudflat.

Earliest Bird Trip, Washington DC, January 1, 2020. Leader: Mike Bowen; participants: 14; species: 44.

Weather: Sunny and mild for the season: low to mid-40s. Our club's customary trip to DC on New Year's Day turned up some quite special birds: a male Common Merganser at Georgetown Reservoir, a perched Red-shouldered Hawk nearby, an adult Red-tailed Hawk soaring over the U.S. Capitol, and, best of all, a beautiful Lark Sparrow, a Western stray, on the Capitol grounds. Some nice ducks at Constitution Gardens included Bufflehead, Ring-necked Duck, Northern Shoveler, Ruddy Duck, and Gadwall. The U.S. Botanic Gardens yielded an impressive Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Yellow-rumped Warblers, and a Swamp Sparrow. The Potomac off Hains Point held hundreds of Lesser Scaup. Many thanks to Gerry Hawkins for recording the eBird checklists and to Gerry and John Stinson for helping to drive the participants around DC.

Redgate Park, January 11. Leader: Anne Mytych (with major help from Vickie Baily); participants: 9, including leader. Weather: Overcast, dry, upper 60s F. Total species: 31. This walk was to expose birders to a "new" park on a former golf course. We met at the parking lot at 8 a.m. and ended around 11:00 a.m. We had a special guest—Cintia Cabib, a documentary filmmaker who filmed our walk for a project. We started at the twin ponds, which were quiet except for four Mallards, so we headed toward the sound of Blue Jays and saw a Red-shouldered Hawk. Many areas where we expected sparrow activity were quiet. We finally hit pay dirt at the end of the morning near the small marsh pond at the front of the park. There was a flurry of activity with Field, Song, Chipping, and White-throated Sparrows,

Carolina Wrens, Dark-eyed Juncos, and American Goldfinches. Two participants were lucky enough to see Rusty Blackbirds. We also saw a flyover flock of 300-plus Red-winged Blackbirds. One participant saw a Wood Duck flyover. The complete checklist from the walk can be viewed in eBird at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S63268414>.

Rusty Blackbird

Photo Vickie Baily



Black Hill Regional Park, January 11. Leader: Gerry Hawkins. Three people joined the leader on a waterfowl-focused field trip to Black Hill Regional Park and nearby Gunner's Lake. We saw 12 waterfowl species notwithstanding unseasonably warm weather and the fact that we could not figure out how to get to the Route 121 bridge over Little Seneca Lake due to two road closures. Highlights at Black Hill RP included many Common and Hooded Mergansers, a small number of American Black Ducks, and a Common Loon. There was more diversity at Gunner's Lake, which contained many Ring-necked Ducks, seven Hooded Mergansers, five Ruddy Ducks, four Redheads, three Canvasbacks, two Buffleheads, one male Gadwall, and one male Wood Duck. Non-waterfowl highlights included adult and immature Bald Eagles and an adult Red-tailed Hawk in overhead flight at Black Hill RP.



Redgate in November, on a lovely birding morning



Chapter Chatter

No Siesta!

Last July I took a VENT tour to the Choco Region of Colombia, led by the famed author of guides to Colombia and Venezuela, Steve Hilty. It was co-led by Colombian guide Cristian Daza of Manakin Tours.

The Choco region is known for its regional endemics and is one of the wettest and least visited and most coveted regions in the American Tropics. Birds that I saw included the Sooty-capped Puffbird, Dusky Pigeon, Tooth-billed Hummingbird, Brown Wood-Rail, Rose-faced Parrot, Black-tipped Cotinga, Stub-tailed Antbird, and Baudo Oropendola.

But surely the highlight of the trip occurred while I was resting in my cabin and my next door neighbor shouted, “Bill, you better get out here!” And amazingly, right above our cabin, was a Harpy Eagle perched in full view. Everyone hurried over to see it, but that turned out to be unnecessary as it remained on that perch for at least 30 minutes, allowing for multiple photos. It was holding a partially eaten Mantled Howler Monkey in its talons. Spectacular!



—Bill (William) W. Adams

A Booby for Christmas?

In early December, I noticed in the daily ABA list of rarities that a Red-footed Booby, *Sula sula*, was “continuing” in San Francisco, where I would fly a couple of weeks later. I had to calm myself down. Were the bird to wait for me (ha!), my trip was occasioned by my daughter’s wedding. She, always mildly sarcastic about my birding, would not gladly compete with a bird for my attention in these circumstances (but, a Booby?).

The day before my flight, the Booby was still in the S.F. Presidio. I packed a light photographic gear. Thick fog delayed landing, but the next morning was sunny. After breakfast, my daughter accepted a walk with me to Crissy Fields, a natural reserve along the Bay near the Presidio. Besides gorgeous views, there were many gulls, including Westerns; a Long-billed Curlew; several Red-breasted Mergansers; American Coots; a Common Loon; Sanderlings; Black and Say’s Phoebes; a seal, which much interested my daughter; Clark’s and Western Grebes, which she agreed were extremely graceful. No Booby, but a lovely walk regardless.

Two days later, Lyft took me back there, and I rapidly spotted the Booby’s profile on its usual roosting site, an old pier. It soon flew away towards the ocean but returned 20 minutes later. And a local photographer agreed to let me on a small boardwalk for a better view. Heaven!



The bird remained in S.F. until after Christmas and then vanished. A similar bird was then reported once along the coast south of L.A. I hope it was the S.F. individual headed for warmer climate. There had been some discussion in eBird about whether it was a juvenile. It was definitely not a “white adult,” but looked like Sibley’s “dark adult,” light brown head and breast feathers, dark brown wings, and orange-red feet.

In the end, the ABA list gained me a life bird, many photos, and the best: my first ever bird walk with my daughter.

—Evelyn Ralston

Cuban Encounter

I made the connection in Miami, but my second flight was delayed, meaning I was hours late for arrival in Havana. This amped up the anxiety that was already brewing in me. I knew none of the dozen birders from the U.S. who I'd be traveling with for the next week on a tour arranged by Alaska Audubon and led by Salt Lake City Audubon. I was a bit comforted to know that two other birders from Maryland were on the trip, but their names were unfamiliar.

When I finally arrived at the hotel, I was disappointed when I slid into a chair at the end of a long table. Our Cuban tour leaders were almost through with their welcome presentation. Everyone seemed to know each other already. Finally, I was introduced to everyone in the group. It took me a while to figure out that the couple from Maryland, Diane Durham and Steve Krupa, had just relocated from Alaska. And I almost fell over when I learned that Diane and Steve lived not 10 miles from me. I was inviting them to become members of the Montgomery County Bird Club when they laughed—and told me they'd joined just weeks before! It's a small world.

On our November birding trip to Cuba, we saw lots of endemic birds, from the Cuban Trogon to Bee Hummingbirds, and the beautiful east-central Cuban countryside. (Our journey was approved and thus "grandfathered" under the less stringent rules that the current administration has since tightened.)

One of the highlights of our tour was a visit to the home of Nils Navarro, wildlife artist, scientist, and author of the book "Endemic Birds of Cuba." Nils showed us his artwork and talked to us about the birds we had seen and were likely to find in future stops. We asked him about raptors as we had seen only a few. He told us about the endemic Gundlach's Hawk, an accipiter, but warned us we were highly unlikely to see this rare bird.

We left his home and headed to a nearby overlook to take in scenery filled with Cuba's steep-sided mountains called mogotes. But scenery doesn't necessarily hold birders' interest for long. A few of us espied a raptor flapping away from us. Diane raised her camera and snapped photos of the hawk. Our ornithologist guide took a good look at her images and positively identified the bird as a Gundlach's Hawk! Not 15 minutes after Nils' prediction, we had a documented sighting. It was the most unexpected bird of the trip.

I am delighted to get to know Diane and Steve and welcome them to MBC.

—Cheryl Hogue

From left:: Cheryl, Nils, Diane and Steve

Gundlach's Hawk (eBird photo)



Birds of Note (October 2019 to early January 2020)

Johnnie Ramos reported 6 **Greater White-fronted Geese** at Black Hill RP on December 31. MaryAnn Todd and Dave Czaplak found 3 **Greater White-fronted Geese** at Rickman/Woodstock Equestrian Park on January 4. Dave Czaplak also noted a single **Snow Goose** on the Potomac River at Violette's Lock on November 15. Rob Garriock was surprised to come across a **Mute Swan** on Pine Lake at Wheaton RP on December 28. Glenn Dalby also reported a **Mute Swan**, this one on January 8 at a pond along Rte. 29 north of the Silver Spring area.

Jim Ivett found a **Surf Scoter** at Violette's Lock on October 21, and Dave Czaplak found a **White-winged Scoter** at the same location on December 19. David Clark located a late lingering female **Blue-winged Teal** near the boat ramp area of Black Hill RP on December 28.

Three **Sandhill Cranes** have been seen with some regularity over the past month, mostly spotted flying across the Potomac River from the VA to the MD side in the vicinity of Riley's Lock but also relocated with some frequency feeding in the fields near the Poolesville Public Golf Course along West Willard Rd.

Persistence and effort finally paid off for Susan Early Petro on January 5 as she was able to locate and photograph a **leucistic Red-tailed Hawk** that's been reported in Poolesville/Dickerson area over the past 3-4 years.

A **Long-billed Dowitcher** was found among some other shorebirds (Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Killdeer, Pectoral and Solitary Sandpiper) at the "big pond" at Blue Mash on October 6. Dave Czaplak reported a **Franklin's Gull** at Violette's Lock on November 6.

Dave Czaplak was birding Rickman/Woodstock Equestrian Park on October 6 and came across a western Empidonax species he could identify only as either a **Hammond's** or a **Dusky Flycatcher**.

Some folks (David Hunter, Margaret Bowman, Rhonda Kranz, Gabriel Foley, Keith and Jordan Rutter, and others) birding the C&O Canal between Sycamore Landing Rd and Edwards Ferry on December 15 came across an aseasonal **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** during the Seneca Christmas Bird Count. Pete Marra found a

female **Common Yellowthroat** in the Takoma Park area on December 22.

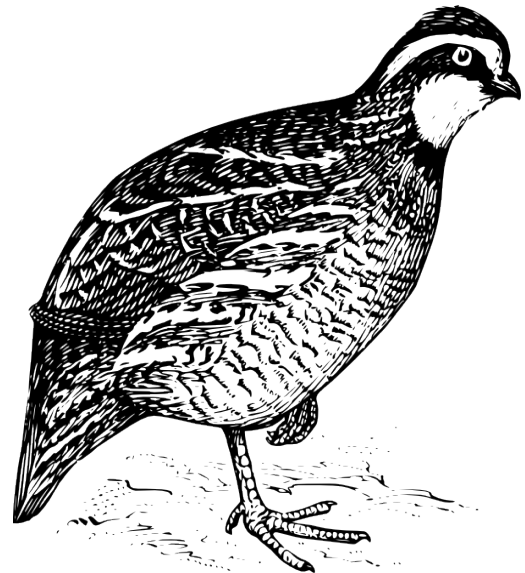
A female **Baltimore Oriole** has been an unlikely winter visitor to Duane Schmidt's backyard feeders near Sugarloaf Mountain on December 21.

Nathan and Stella Tea reported a **Lincoln's Sparrow** at Redgate Park in Rockville on December 22.

2019 County Wrap-up

Montgomery birders finished 2019 with 247 total species reported, nine less than the 256 found in 2018. Congrats to the following birders for going over the 200 species mark for the year: **MaryAnn Todd, Ed Vigezzi, Dave Roberts, Nathan Tea, Dave Czaplak, Robin Skinner, and Woody and Rae Dubois.**

—Andy Martin

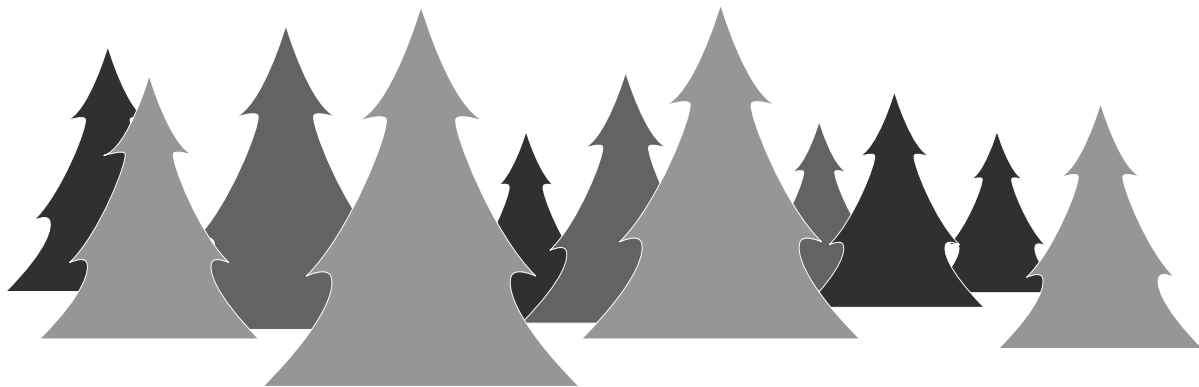


Youth Birding

Patrick Newcombe, with college in sight, is no longer able to contribute to the Chat, but this is no reason to lose track of what's going on in the energetic group of young birders in the Youth Maryland Ornithological Society (YMOS). The following news was kindly provided by Stella and Nathan Tea, parent and youth members, respectively, of the YMOS.

The YMOS had a meeting in December at Patuxent NWR to discuss the group's participation in the BBA3 (Breeding Bird Atlas 3). Gabriel Foley, coordinator of the BBA3, was at the meeting as well. Since we have youth members all over the state and beyond, it will be interesting to see their contributions to the new atlas. Locally, Stella and Nathan have adopted their own block. We can be sure that this block will be superbly covered. Best wishes, Stella and Nathan!

(At the time this *Chat* is going to the printer, the 2020 Maryland Bird Symposium is still in the future. By the time you have the *Chat* in hand, the Symposium will be over.) As it did last year, the YMOS is participating to the Symposium in coordination with the Maryland Bird Conservation Partnership. We hope many of you will attend. You do not need to be under 18 and it promises to be a great event! For more information as well as for accounts of past meetings, visit <https://marylandbirds.org/2020-bird-symposium>. It's not too early to plan attending next year!



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

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Deadline for submission to Evelyn Ralston, evelynralston@icloud.com, is the 10th of the preceding month.





Christmas Bird Count Reports



Seneca Maryland/Virginia CBC, December 15, 2019

Unlike 2018, we had good weather, but the above-average fall temperatures meant some expected winter visitors had not arrived. Nonetheless, on this 61st Seneca CBC, our 157 enthusiastic field counters and 19 feeder-watchers (highest number of participants ever) found 99 species on count day, well above the 96 median for the previous 10 years. Three additional species were found only during “count week” (the period starting 3 days before and ending 3 days after the count day) for a grand total of 102 species, well above the previous 10-year median of 98. The 27,702 individual birds counted is above the previous 10-year median of 26,310.

This year a number of unusual birds were found in the count circle: a second-time-ever Laughing Gull in MD, a third-time-ever Common Redpoll in MD, the first Pine Warbler in MD since 2011, and the first Blue-gray Gnatcatcher in MD since 2004. For a 4th year, a male Eurasian Wigeon was in the same location as on the last 3 counts. Three Sandhill Cranes were seen first in MD, took flight to the south, and then immediately were observed landing in VA, possibly the same two birds as the last 3 years with their offspring. The biggest news is a first-ever adult female Rufous Hummingbird visiting a private feeder in MD that was captured, identified, and banded by a licensed hummingbird bander during count week. This brings the cumulative total count of species for the Seneca CBC (count day plus count-week-only) to 173.

We had new high counts for Double-crested Cormorant, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, and Common Raven, the second highest count of Red-headed Woodpecker, second highest of Eastern Towhee, and third highest of Fish Crow. On the other end, we had no Red-breasted Nuthatches or Pine Siskins and surprisingly low counts of Mallard, Dark-eyed Junco, and White-throated Sparrow.

Thanks to everyone who came out to count this year and especially to the sector leaders for their hard work before, during, and after the count. I will post a more detailed report on the Club's website.

—Jim Nelson, Compiler

Sugarloaf Mountain CBC, December 29, 2019

The 35th Sugarloaf Mountain Christmas Count can be summarized with three R's: Rain and Record Robins. Although it wasn't windy or icy cold on December 29, the rain started before 10 a.m. and never really let up. Our damp but dedicated 67 field counters (plus four feeder-watchers) did the best they could in the wet and foggy conditions, but birds were hard to find. Along with the poor weather, climate change and habitat loss undoubtedly also contributed to our final tally of a below-average 82 species.

There were a few bright spots in the results, however. Our “always seen” species were all present. We set a new record for Wild Turkey and nearly doubled our previous record high for American Robin, with a total of more than 6,000. We also racked up a record 10 Count Week species, thanks in large part to Jim Nelson's efforts. These CW birds include two well-documented species new to our cumulative list: Blue-winged Teal and Baltimore Oriole.

Unfortunately, seven species fell to new lows: Cooper's Hawk, American Crow, Tufted Titmouse, Winter Wren, Northern Mockingbird, Dark-eyed Junco, and White-crowned Sparrow. American Tree Sparrow tied its previous low (one bird), and Carolina Chickadee came very close to a new low.

Thank you to everyone who showed up and made this Christmas Count possible! The next Sugarloaf CBC will be held on Sunday, January 3, 2021. Hope to see you then.

—Janet Millenson, Compiler



2020 MBC Social, Friday, March 13

with Janet Millenson, our Member of the Year, as Guest of Honor

Join us for our annual Social at Woodend, headquarters of the Audubon Naturalist Society, 8940 Jones Mill Road, Chevy Chase. **The evening begins with a social hour at 6:30, followed by dinner at 7:30.** Smokey Glen Farm of Gaithersburg will once again cater this delicious dinner. Bring appetizers to share.

The evening will feature our traditional recognition of the Member of the Year, followed by the popular members' slide show. **Please limit your presentation to 8 digital slides of photos or bird art;** send them to Evelyn Ralston at evelynralston@icloud.com in .tif or .jpeg format. Please have each filename include your name preceded by the order in which the photo should be shown (e.g., 01-Scott Young).

Because seating is limited, places will go to the first 90 persons to reserve and pay. **Send this form (or a copy) and your check (\$20 per person), payable to Montgomery Bird Club, to Evelyn Ralston, 5918 Anniston Rd, Bethesda MD 20817. We need to receive photo submissions and participation form with check no later than March 1.**

Number of reservations at \$20 per person: _____

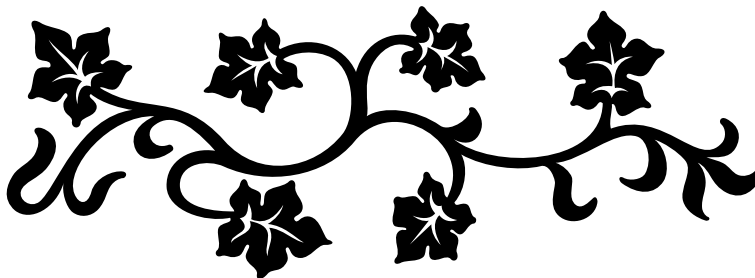
Name(s) to appear on tags: _____

Email: _____

Phone number: _____

Number of vegetarian meals (lasagna): _____

\$_____ enclosed



The Chat
MBC/MOS
429 Hamilton Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20901

