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## President's Chat

This was a memorable summer for me. My first as the Montgomery Bird Club's President. My first as a retired neuroscientist at the National Institutes of Health. And, my first visit to Colombia (more about that at the February Club meeting). And one of my favorite sightings of the summer was of an occupied Yellow-billed Cuckoo nest in a branch over the C&O Canal near Violette's Lock.





In the beginning of the summer, I read the quite stimulating book, *The Last Days of the Dinosaurs*, by Riley Black. It gave me a deeper appreciation of birds, the only dinosaurs to survive the mass extinction caused by the fluke impact of a massive asteroid crashing into the Chicxulub crater in the Gulf of Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula 66 million years ago. It's amazing that most of the other dinosaurs died within a day and others shortly thereafter for a loss of about 75% of all species, not just dinosaurs or animals! Without this Cretaceous–Paleogene (K–Pg) extinction event, it is possible, perhaps likely, that a sentient creature would not have evolved a few million years ago to discover and contemplate the consequences of this 5th mass extinction. But species with certain lucky characteristics were able to adapt and change over the succeeding Cenozoic era. Each species interacting with its physical and biological environment. Some surviving for millions of years and then going extinct. Others persisting and evolving, with the greater than 10,600 bird species a prime example.

Now we may be entering a 6th mass extinction that many are calling the man-made Holocene extinction. While not happening at the pace of the K–Pg extinction, it is rapid in geological terms. We are witnesses to an overall 30% decline in the bird population of North America and Europe already.

Many species are barely hanging on, largely due to habitat changes, both landscape and climate, secondary to human activities. So, how to reconcile travels to see birds in other parts of the world? Should we feel guilty when we fly a CO<sub>2</sub> spewing machine to get there—or should we realize that the tourist industry has sparked an emphasis on conservation in many areas? (I have learned that traveling by large commercial jet is, in fact, more efficient than traveling solo in a car using gasoline over a long distance.) I wonder about this as I bird, enjoying the marvelous interactions of a bird species with itself, other bird species, and other forms of life. I know that I also marvel at the fact that birds are the last surviving dinosaurs! It is good to know that our Club has some fantastic conservationists such as Gail Mackiernan, our Conservation Chair.

Finally, we introduced our new Club officers in the previous *Chat*. We want our members to know how important they and other volunteers are to our Club's vitality. In this regard, we will present short biographies of some officers in this and the next couple of issues.

—Scott Young

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# Meet Our New Vice-President: Emily Huang

Many Club members know Emily through her work with the MD-DC Breeding Bird Atlas 3 (BBA3). In 2020 she signed on as co-coordinator, along with her friend and neighbor Karen Cyr, to oversee the Atlas project in Montgomery County. Nowadays, understandably, much of her birding focuses on breeding birds.



But this many-faceted and multi-talented woman has a host of other interests, including conservation, native plants, and art—plus a résumé that includes a BA in physics, a PhD in neuroscience, a 14-year career with NIH, and four years at Croydon Creek Nature Center in Rockville.

Emily grew up in Texas, studied physics at Harvard (where she met her future husband, Solomon Woods) and neuroscience at the University of California, San Diego. In 2002 the couple moved to Maryland, where Emily began a career at the National Human Genome Research Institute at NIH. Solomon is a physicist at NIST.

The family grew to include two children, Jacob and Eli, but their world was turned inside out when, as Emily would write in the May 2021 issue of the MD-DC Breeding Bird Atlas 3 newsletter ([tinyurl.com/3ufca5et](https://tinyurl.com/3ufca5et)), three-year-old Eli was diagnosed with brain cancer. “A lover of color and motion and animals,” Eli died in 2013 at the age of eight.

The years that followed were dark. Then, one day at NIH, Emily was struck by the yellow flash of an American Goldfinch—the first goldfinch she’d ever really noticed, and she credits this bird for rousing her out of her apathy. She began to visit parks with feeders, like Locust Grove, bought binoculars and bird guides, and joined multiple bird advocacy groups, including MOS. She went on ANS and MOS bird walks, and she took an ornithology course at ANS with Gemma Radko.

In 2017, Emily made the decision to leave biomedicine and follow the pull of nature. She found a job at Croydon Creek, where her duties grew to include caring for the resident animals and leading field trips. She also refurbished the park’s bluebird trail.

Watching the bluebirds nest and hatch and fledge cemented Emily’s fascination with bird behavior. When the Atlas came along, offering “a chance to make a close study of bird behaviors while contributing to conservation data,” she was ready.

These days Emily spends about half of her time on Atlas work, including visits to the several blocks she signed up for plus others that have defaulted to her. (Solomon has a block of his own; he even gave a talk on the BBA3 at NIST.) The Atlas in Montgomery County is doing extremely well, she says, “a tribute to how much work the volunteers have done.”

Emily started her native plant garden a few years ago, determined to turn their Kensington yard into a wildlife haven. It began with a clutch of spice bushes from Gemma Radko, and it has been boosted with lots of donations and advice from Karen Cyr. Today it includes some 30 species of native trees, shrubs, and flowers.

It was at Croydon Creek that Emily began to draw birds—and then to paint them, taking watercolor classes from Yellow Barn Studio at Glen Echo. Now painting has become a major focus. (This summer she even painted while she and Solomon vacationed in Troy, NY, where Jacob is a junior at RPI.) In February she launched a website [finchandowl.com](https://finchandowl.com) featuring her watercolors, and next April her work will be on exhibit at Brookside Gardens.

Favorite local birding spots, besides Croydon Creek (where she still volunteers), include Lois Green and the Billy Goat Trail, especially in migration, and Ken-Gar Palisades Park. She is looking forward to a first visit to Hart-Miller Island and upcoming trips with Solomon to Arizona and Colorado.

Lest you think Emily might be spread too thin, not to worry. As Vice-President, it’s her job to recruit speakers for the Club’s meetings; Emily has a year’s worth already in place.

—Lydia Schindler



# Editor's Corner

This was a memorable summer for me too. As of this writing, I have been an empty nester for a full day! Words can't begin to express how I feel, but words can express my gratitude to you—Club members and friends—who welcomed Nathan and our family with open arms and provided him with encouragement and support in the last few years. It has been a spectacular summer of finding and photographing moths most days, and I am getting ready for the return of fall birding. See you out in the field!

—Stella Tea

## Club Chapter Directors

Josephine



### Josephine Cox

Jo grew up in the UK, and although she was not a *twitcher* back then, both parents encouraged her love of the outdoors. A chance to become a visiting scientist at NIH brought her to Maryland in 1988 where the brightly colored local birds were soon noticed. In 2020, she retired from a career working on HIV and other vaccines that took her to Thailand, Africa, and South America. She now spends a lot of time atlasing and conducting other bird counts. She enjoys many outdoor activities with her husband, often hearing and spotting birds from a kayak, bike, or cross-country skis.

### Francesca Grifo

Francesca's first memories of birds involve her father teaching her the calls of common yard birds. In high school she took an ornithology class and was hooked. She majored in biology, spent summers monitoring seabirds on Great Gull Island, and thought she would become an ornithologist. But while studying Bridled Quail-Doves on St. John in the U.S. Virgin Islands, she realized no one could identify the seeds they were eating so she opted for a PhD in botany instead. Consequently, until about five years ago, Francesca did very little birding. She thanks the welcoming MBC for giving her a place to nurture this reawakened passion! After many years of work in biodiversity conservation, she now co-leads White House initiatives to enhance scientific integrity at federal agencies, including EPA where she is the scientific integrity official.

Francesca



Roy



### Roy Howard

Roy moved to Montgomery County in 2001 with his wife and two daughters and their beloved dog. He has been a birder since 1981 when a friend invited him to see the Vermilion Flycatcher in Florida. That sighting was an epiphany! His birding continued slowly, balanced by the necessity of working and helping to raise a family. He retired from his pastoral ministry in 2020 just in time for the pandemic and the appearance of the Painted Bunting, which put his birding into high gear. Roy is currently the dean of the Academy of Artful Leadership and has a practice of individual and group leadership coaching through the International Coaching Federation.

Brooke



### Brooke Levey

Brooke first started birding in her early 20s when she spent a semester of grad school studying in the Pacific Northwest. She earned an MS in Environmental Education through the combined Lesley University/Audubon Expedition Institute Program based in Maine. Brooke is passionate about the natural world and brought that enthusiasm to the environmental education field for over 20 years. In 2008, Brooke and her family relocated to Germantown. Currently, Brooke is the executive director of the Down Syndrome Network of Montgomery County. She enjoys gardening, knitting, and cooking, as well as birding with her husband and friends. She has three children and a dog who all also love spending time outdoors.



# Fall Meetings

For Club guidance on in-person events including COVID restrictions and inclement weather changes, please visit [montgomerybirdclub.org/](http://montgomerybirdclub.org/).

**SEPTEMBER 21, 2022 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m.**

**Poplar Island: An International Model of Innovative Reuse**

**Speakers: Tim Carney and Kristina Motley**

Poplar Island is an environmental restoration project located in the Chesapeake Bay in Talbot County, Maryland. The beneficial use project, started in the 1990s, relies on dredged material collected from the approach channels to the Baltimore Harbor to restore lost remote island habitat within the Chesapeake Bay. The project partnership between MDOT Maryland Port Administration, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and Maryland Environmental Service has been in place for over 20 years and has seen the restoration of almost 400 acres of wetland habitat. Upland habitat and additional wetland habitat are planned, and the island is slated to be completed in the 2040s. Over 400 different species of wildlife have been documented, and over 30 different birds have been confirmed as nesting onsite.

**OCTOBER 19, 2022 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m.**

**Birds of Bulgaria and Greece: Griffon Vultures, Dalmatian Pelicans, and Other Birds**

**Speaker: Suzanne Taylor Dater**

In January 2020, Suzanne traveled from Sofia in Bulgaria to Vitosha Mountain to photograph Spotted Nutcrackers, then to eastern Rhodope Mountains to photograph Golden Eagles and Griffon Vultures, and finally to Lake Kerkini in northern Greece to photograph Dalmatian Pelicans, the largest flying land birds in the world.

**NOVEMBER 16, 2022 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m.**

**Birding Taiwan (and a Bit of China)**

**Speaker: Gail Mackiernan**

The beautiful country of Taiwan, the Fragrant Isle, is rich in tradition—and spectacular wildlife. Its coasts, mountains, and parks host 33 endemic birds, as well as regional rarities like Fairy Pitta. It is no wonder that Taiwan is a “must stop” on every world birder’s travels. In 2016, Gail joined a BirdTour Asia trip that explored this beautiful country from top to bottom. All the expected (and some unexpected) bird species were seen, from tiny Flamecrests to a towering Siberian Crane. A short post-trip extension to China added more goodies, including Cabot’s Tragopan and the critically endangered Chinese Crested Tern.



Dalmatian Pelicans.  
Photo by Suzanne Taylor Dater



Mikado Pheasant. Photo by Gail Mackiernan



# Annual Review and Financial Report for 2021-2022

Our Club ended the 2022 financial year with a remarkable 362 memberships (about 100 more than last year) and \$15,714 in our bank account. By continuing to offer field trips with COVID-19 precautions during the pandemic, the Club was a welcoming place for new birders seeking outdoor activities. Monthly email newsletters and a stimulating array of monthly virtual meetings provided new birders and longtime members a chance to interact safely. When the easing of pandemic restrictions finally permitted our Social to take place, it was not only a gastronomic success but brought in over \$1,700 at the silent auction. In total, thanks to several very generous members, the Claudia Wilds Fund received over \$3,500 in donations this year.

In June, the Council approved a 2022-2023 budget that assumes we will retain most of our new members and will continue to provide a mixture of in-person and virtual activities that meet the needs and interests of new and longtime birders in a world in which COVID still shadows our activities.

As required by the bylaws, a financial report and proposed budget approved by the Council on June 8, 2022, are presented below:

—Chris Wright, Treasurer

<b>Montgomery County Bird Club, Financial Summary and Budget for Fiscal Year 2022-2023*</b>			
<b>Status of Funds as of June 8, 2022</b>			
	<b>2021-2022 Final</b>	<b>2022-2023 Budget</b>	
<b>INCOME</b>			
<b>Dues</b>	\$4,498.00	\$4,000.00	Assumes retaining new members
<b>Wilds Fund</b>	\$3,564.00	\$500.00	Extraordinary funds not expected
<b>Social/Picnic</b>	\$1,705.00	\$2,100.00	Social attendees pay \$30 per person
<b>Site Guide/Misc</b>	\$70.00	\$50.00	All Site Guides sold
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$9,837.00</b>	<b>\$6,650.00</b>	
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>			
<b>MOS</b>	\$239.96	\$100.00	
<b>The Chat</b>	\$1,703.10	\$1,700.00	Four 12-page issues at \$425 each
<b>Web</b>	\$152.51	\$250.00	GoDaddy and maintenance
<b>Office Supplies/ Misc</b>	\$598.92	\$350.00	Mailchimp and member mailings
<b>Rent/Speakers</b>	\$514.68	\$1,200.00	Zoom, Vimeo, and rent for church
<b>Social/Picnic</b>	\$3,169.16	\$2,500.00	Social attendees cover cost of dinner
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6,378.33</b>	<b>\$6,100.00</b>	
* The Maryland Ornithological Society fiscal year runs from May 1 to April 30.			



# Membership Update

## MOS/MBC Membership Dues Reminder

This is the time of year when membership renewals are due. Your membership dues help sustain all our activities and those of the Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) and allow us to contribute to environmental conservation. Included in your membership are the MBC newsletter *The Chat* and the MOS newsletter *The Maryland Yellowthroat*. An email notice was sent from MOS on August 3 with a link for online payment. Electronic payments are greatly preferred. You can search your emails for the August 3 message and follow the link, or you can go directly to the MOS website and log in to your MOS account at [mdbirds.org/join/login/](http://mdbirds.org/join/login/) and follow the renewal instructions. If you wish to pay by check, please visit [mdbirds.org/dues-by-check/](http://mdbirds.org/dues-by-check/). Many of you have already responded and we appreciate your promptness. If not, please take a moment to do so.

—Moirra Davenport, Membership Chair

## Youth Birding

The YMOS (Youth Maryland Ornithological Society) runs birding trips for youth throughout the year, including participation in the New Jersey Audubon's World Series of Birding each May. Read Ryan's captivating account below. For more information about the YMOS, visit the Young Birders page on the MOS website ([mdbirds.org/young-birders/](http://mdbirds.org/young-birders/)) or contact George Radcliffe at [radclifg@gmail.com](mailto:radclifg@gmail.com).

—Stella Tea

## My First World Series of Birding: May 14, 2022

I had a great time at the WSB. Our team was The Fantastic Fledglings, and we were the YMOS Grades 1-5 team. I had four other teammates named Tyme, Cam, Sophia, and Will. We scouted in Cape May County on Thursday and half of Friday. The reason we scouted only half of Friday is because we had to go to bed very early in order to get up at 3:30 a.m. on Saturday, which was the competition day.

Our first stop was at Jake's Landing Boat Ramp where we got our first 24 species. Our first species was the Clapper Rail. When we were at the Wetlands Institute, we had one of our biggest highlights, seeing two Black Skimmers flying in synchrony. Another of our highlights was when we found the Red-headed Woodpecker. When we got to the spot where we had found it during scouting, it was very foggy. So I tried jinxing it and said we will have no luck finding this bird in this weather. About two seconds later we heard it call really loudly. It must have been within a few feet of us!

One of the hardest birds for us to get was the Turkey Vulture. It took us almost 12 hours to spot one because it was very foggy and rainy most of the day. So when I finally saw one circling overhead we were all jumping up and down like we had never seen one before! Another highlight was seeing the Bobolinks—there were at least 6 of them flying over a field. Our last stop was at Cape May Meadows where we found a Stilt Sandpiper along with our last species, the Gadwall, which we spotted just a few minutes before our ending time of 8:00 p.m.

At the finish line at The Grand Hotel we got participation medals and our picture taken. The next morning there was an award ceremony with brunch. We won first place in our division by finding 118 species in 15 hours. We had a great team and mentors. A big thanks to Mr. George Radcliffe for helping us prepare and leading us to victory. I am excited to do it again next year!

—Ryan Carr (Age 10)



Ryan (left) with George Radcliffe and his teammates. Photo by Jean Palanuwech



# Birds of Note (Mid-May to Mid-August)

According to Cornell's eBird database, the number of species found in Montgomery County for the year (as of August) stands at 240. Montgomery birders added 10 new First of Season (FOS) species to the cumulative total since last issue's "Birds of Note" column.

Jared Fisher noted a **Red-necked Phalarope** on the Potomac River adjacent to Violette's Lock on May 14 and three **Whimbrels** at the Patton Farm turf field area on May 24. Walking up the C&O Canal to view the Summit Hall Turf Farm area, Jared noted a **White-rumped** and a **Semipalmated Sandpiper** on May 10 and a **Black-bellied Plover** and **Short-billed Dowitcher** on May 19. John Sojda found an **American Avocet** at Violette's Lock on July 19. And further upriver near Sycamore Landing Rd, Jared Fisher observed six **American Avocets** flying downriver on July 28. Dave Czaplak noted an astounding 13 **American Avocets** at Violette's Lock on August 19. A single **American Avocet**, seen by Stephen Davies at the Wheaton Stormwater Ponds on August 22, lingered throughout the day.

Anne Mytych observed a **Snowy Egret** at the Watkins Pond area at King Farm Park in Rockville on May 18. Clive Harris reported a **White Ibis** in the pond at Sugarview Farm in Dickerson. Although this pond is on private property, it is easily viewable from the northern edge of Woodstock Equestrian Park. A flyover **White Ibis** was noted by Stan Smith over Our Lady of Good Counsel High School in Olney on August 12, and another **White Ibis** was found at Riley's Lock near Seneca Creek by Donna Rathbone on August 14. Immature "wader wander" season (post-breeding dispersal) has also been confirmed by reports of **Little Blue Herons** along the Potomac River between Riley's and Violette's Locks and Hughes Hollow at McKee-Beshers WMA.

As reported in the last issue, **Mississippi Kites** returned to the area of Welsh Park in Rockville in May. On July 18, Bob Augustine reported that this year's pair had produced a chick, nesting again in Welsh Park but using a different tree. Other birders reported seeing two immature birds flying with one adult by early August. Kevin Ebert reported five **Mississippi Kites** over Welsh Park on August 6. Dave Roberts also reported seeing four **Mississippi Kites** in a different Montgomery location (over the

Potomac River adjacent to Blockhouse Point) on June 20. Stella Uiterwaal noted three **Mississippi Kites** soaring over Glenstone Museum in North Potomac on August 18.

An "out-of-season" **White-throated Sparrow** was seen in Forest Glen Park, Silver Spring, on July 2.

Mark England, while working his Breeding Bird Atlas route in the Damascus area on June 20, noted a "rare for midsummer" but seemingly healthy female **Bufflehead** in a small stormwater management pond behind Shell Drake Circle.

Gail Mackiernan reported on June 20 that the **Cliff Swallow** colony using the underside of the Route 200 bridge (the MD ICC) had almost doubled in size, with twice as many nests this summer compared to 2021.

Joe Hanfman noted a **Black-billed Cuckoo** at Violette's Lock on May 19. Jared Fisher observed an **Olive-sided Flycatcher** at Violette's on August 15.

Julie Maynard reported a **Cerulean Warbler** on July 19, while working her Atlas block along the Little Monocacy River near Dickerson.

—Andy Martin



Yellow-billed Cuckoo nest in a branch over the C&O Canal near Violette's Lock. Photo by Scott Young

# Fall Field Trips

Reservations are required for all MBC field trips unless otherwise noted. Contact trip leaders for reservations, directions, and other information. For recent field trip reports and Club guidance on in-person events including COVID restrictions and inclement weather changes, please visit [montgomerybirdclub.org/](https://montgomerybirdclub.org/).

—Linda Friedland, Field Trip Coordinator

## SEPTEMBER 10 (Saturday)

### WHEATON REGIONAL PARK

On this walk, aimed at new birders but open to all, we will spend a morning exploring Wheaton RP (accessible by Metrobuses Y2 and Y8). Starting at 7:30 a.m., we will use our eyes and ears to identify forest birds, likely some waterfowl, and perhaps early migrants. Limit: 16. LEADER: Cheryl Hogue at [cheryl.hogue@gmail.com](mailto:cheryl.hogue@gmail.com). Martha Morris will co-lead.

## SEPTEMBER 11 (Sunday)

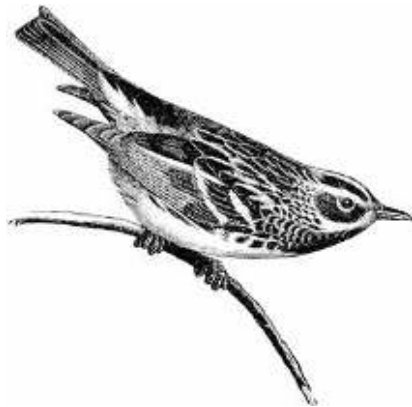
### HUGHES HOLLOW

This half-day trip is targeted at newer birders. We will start in the Hughes Hollow parking lot at McKee-Beshers WMA at 7:30 a.m. We will explore the wetlands and fields of Hughes Hollow. Species to be expected include migrant warblers, Green Heron and other waterbirds, and possibly raptors. Limit: 8. LEADER: Clive Harris at [clivegharris@yahoo.com](mailto:clivegharris@yahoo.com).

## SEPTEMBER 14 (Wednesday)

### PENNYFIELD TO VIOLETTE'S BIRD STALK

Half day. We will gather at 8 a.m. in the Violette's Lock parking lot at the 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. This walk should net an interesting mix of late warblers, other land bird migrants, and maybe a few early winter visitors, as we scan the skies and river for raptors and waterbirds. Because we will be carpooling, do not sign up if you are not vaccinated against COVID-19 or if you are uncomfortable carpooling. Limit: 10. LEADER: Jim Nelson at [kingfishers2@verizon.net](mailto:kingfishers2@verizon.net).



## SEPTEMBER 18 (Sunday)

### RICKMAN/WOODSTOCK EQUESTRIAN PARK

Join us for some early morning autumn birding as we explore the Equestrian Park on the west side of Route 28 (<https://rb.gy/qpdqda>). We will begin at 7:30 a.m. and bird the broad fields and separating woods for warblers and sparrows, vireos, woodpeckers, and raptors. Limit: 12. LEADER: Scott Young at [scott4aves@icloud.com](mailto:scott4aves@icloud.com). Dave Roberts will co-lead.

## SEPTEMBER 24 (Saturday)

### CROYDON CREEK NATURE CENTER

Come discover (or rediscover) a Montgomery County birding gem. Some 140 species of birds have been recorded in this park. Multiple warblers, thrushes, and Common Nighthawks are possible. Some moderate hiking. We will start at 7:30 a.m. in the Nature Center parking lot. Limit: 8. LEADER: Emily Huang at [ephuang@verizon.net](mailto:ephuang@verizon.net).

## OCTOBER 1 (Saturday)

### LITTLE BENNETT RP FOR BEGINNERS

All are welcome on this half-day trip, but we especially encourage those new to birding to join us. Starting at 7:30 a.m., we will slowly walk some of the woodland trails looking for migrant and resident birds. Limit: 6. LEADER: Gemma Radko at [gradko@yahoo.com](mailto:gradko@yahoo.com).

## OCTOBER 5 (Wednesday)

### OAKS LANDFILL

Explore in carpools this now-closed landfill adjacent to the Blue Mash Nature Trail. Mostly open terrain on a gravel road, including two pond views. In addition to sparrows, raptors, and waterfowl, shorebirds are possible if there are mudflats at the big pond. The leader will have a scope for distant birds. We will start at 8 a.m. Limit: 16. LEADER: Mark England at [englandmark@comcast.net](mailto:englandmark@comcast.net) or 240-308-4114.





**OCTOBER 9 (Sunday)****HUGHES HOLLOW**

Join us for a morning of marsh and woodland birding. Targets are fall migrants such as warblers, sparrows, and ducks. Beginners and young birders are especially encouraged to join. We will gather at 7:30 a.m. at the Hughes Hollow parking lot. No reservations required. LEADER: Dave Powell at [seneca.ranger@gmail.com](mailto:seneca.ranger@gmail.com).

**OCTOBER 22 (Saturday)****BLUE MASH: REMEMBERING OUR PAST PRESIDENTS**

Join us for this year's annual walk in honor of former MBC presidents. We will especially remember those who are no longer with us. Longtime birders and new birders, new members and nonmembers—all are welcome. We will start at 8 a.m. LEADER: Andy Martin at [martinap2@verizon.net](mailto:martinap2@verizon.net) or 301-529-2066.

**OCTOBER 29 (Saturday)****REDGATE PARK**

Come explore this "new" park on a former golf course. The area offers multiple habitats, including a small marsh, wooded areas, and lots of meadow areas for potential winter sparrows. In its first 10 months as a park, birders identified 147 species. Some areas have steep hills. We will start at 8 a.m. in the parking lot. Limit: 10. LEADER: Anne Mytych at 240-506-0236 or [amytych@yahoo.com](mailto:amytych@yahoo.com). Brooke Levey will co-lead.

**NOVEMBER 5 (Saturday)****ROCK CREEK'S NORTH BRANCH STREAM VALLEY**

Discover upper Rock Creek's watershed with a variety of habitats. We will start along open fields and marshy areas next to Bowie Mill Park with the opportunity to see a variety of sparrows, hawks, fall migrants, and turkeys if we're lucky. Previous lists included 8 species of sparrows including Fox, White-crowned, Swamp, and Savannah Sparrows. For those wanting a longer foray, a 4-mile loop that includes the stream valley will be possible, and we will likely see woodpeckers and other resident woodland species. The path at this point along Rock Creek is meandering and narrow with some steep sections. We will start at 8 a.m. at Bowie Mill Park ([tinyurl.com/yckj7enh](http://tinyurl.com/yckj7enh)) next to Sequoyah Elementary School with the option to do the shorter paved walk or the longer loop. Limit: 16. LEADER: Jo Cox at [jobird11@gmail.com](mailto:jobird11@gmail.com) or 240-506-1723. Kathy Reitz will co-lead.

**NOVEMBER 8 (Tuesday)****LOIS Y. GREEN CONSERVATION PARK**

Morning walk through the woods. We will be looking for overwintering songbirds, waterfowl, and raptors. The trip will start at 8 a.m. in the parking lot at 8711 Snouffer School Road, Gaithersburg, Md. Limit: 12. LEADER: Mark England at [englandmark@comcast.net](mailto:englandmark@comcast.net) or 240-308-4114.

**NOVEMBER 11 (Friday)****REDGATE PARK: SEEKING SPARROWS**

If you are just starting to sort out the sparrows, join us for our annual Veteran's Day Sparrow Walk. We will work on ID-ing familiar species such as Song and White-throated while looking for less common ones like White-crowned and Swamp. This trip is geared to beginners. Limit: 8. LEADER: Jo Cox at [jobird11@gmail.com](mailto:jobird11@gmail.com) or 240-506-1723.

**DECEMBER 3 (Saturday)****BLACKWATER NWR**

Full day (to dusk). Early waterfowl and lingering migrants plus late afternoon marsh watch. Brown-headed Nuthatch possible. Bring lunch and drinks. Limit: 12. LEADER: Mark England at [englandmark@comcast.net](mailto:englandmark@comcast.net) or 240-308-4114.

**DECEMBER 7****(Wednesday)****LILYPONS/NEW DESIGN ROAD**

Half day. Wintering field birds, targeting Fox and Tree Sparrows, possibly Virginia Rail and American Bittern. Start at 8 a.m. by the entrance to Lilypons. Limit: 8. LEADER: Clive Harris at [cliveharris@yahoo.com](mailto:cliveharris@yahoo.com).

**DECEMBER 10 (Saturday)****BLACKWATER NWR**

Full day (to dusk). Early waterfowl and lingering migrants plus late afternoon marsh watch. Brown-headed Nuthatch possible. Bring lunch and drinks. Limit: 12. LEADER: Mark England at [englandmark@comcast.net](mailto:englandmark@comcast.net) or 240-308-4114.

# Other Field Trips and Events

## Audubon Naturalist Hour to Feature RedGate Park Birds and Birders

How did a defunct golf course become an oasis for birds and birders? Join filmmaker Cintia Cabib and nature photographer Vickie Baily, both MBC members, at the Audubon Naturalist Society's October "Naturalist Hour" as they explain how Rockville's former RedGate Golf Course was transformed into a public park and is now a sanctuary for 167 bird species. Vickie will share the stunning photos she has taken of the RedGate Park birds. Cintia will preview her documentary *Bird Walk*. The virtual program will be followed by a bird walk at RedGate Park.

The "Naturalist Hour" will take place virtually on Tuesday, October 18 at 7 p.m. To register, visit [anshome.org/naturalist-hour/](http://anshome.org/naturalist-hour/). The RedGate Park bird walk will take place on Saturday, October 22 at 9 a.m. To register, visit the Audubon Naturalist Society events calendar for October at [anshome.org/nature-classes](http://anshome.org/nature-classes). The Bird Walk Facebook page can be found at [facebook.com/RedGateBirds](https://facebook.com/RedGateBirds).

## Welcome New Members

Keith Apple

Laura Coleman

Susan Daum

Polly Dhond and Luis Selva

Deborah Dohne

Bernadette Hritzo and Matt Browne

Elaine Larkin

Marcia Laurenzano

Phyllis Mahoney

Kathryn Moore with Elliot, Owen, Peter, and Theo

Jane Quirk

Maria Restrepo-Hartwig with Claire Hengjing Hartwig  
and Ronald Hartwig

Suma Singh

Elaine and Matt Sullivan

Andrea Vercoe



## Gardening for Birds

### Fall: Planting Native Shrubs for Migrants and Local Birds

One of the best things you can do for birds in fall is to cancel the "Big Yard Cleanup." Native grasses and perennials produce seeds after they flower, which help overwintering migrants and local birds survive. Sparrows, grosbeaks, buntings, and other small songbirds eat the tiny seeds of native grasses such as Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum* spp.) and Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), while goldfinches, sparrows, towhees, siskins, and juncos feed on the many varieties of goldenrod (*Solidago* spp.), a staple in pollinator gardens and wild meadows.

Resist cutting back your native perennials and grasses until spring when new growth emerges. None of these plants need to be cut back in fall, and they add beautiful color and texture from fall to winter when garden beds are empty. Native grass species are also deer resistant. Keep out the leaf blowers, and don't clear out plant debris either, which robs the soil of vital nutrients and destroys habitat for overwintering insects—bird food for the spring.

If you are clearing leaves, consider conserving dead leaves and plant debris in an unmowed corner of your garden. Caterpillars that nourish summer's young birds emerge from eggs laid on the underside of fallen leaves. Over half of our native bees are ground nesters and mostly solitary. The brush pile you maintain





Robin eating berries of Satyr Hill American Holly (*Ilex opaca*) in winter. Photo by Lisa Wilcox Deyo



Staghorn Sumac (*Rhus typhina*) in early November. Photo by Lisa Wilcox Deyo

provides them with a place to burrow until spring. Migrating birds in spring also find cover from predators here during their stopovers in unfamiliar habitats. I once startled a woodcock hiding in the brush pile at the back of my garden.

Over half of the North American breeding bird species migrate between breeding and wintering grounds. A 2015 study examined the nutrients that birds need to power them and alleviate stress during these endurance flights (see the link to “Recommended Plantings for Migratory Songbird Habitat Management” below). The researchers compared the nutritional composition of native shrubs to nonnative varieties and determined that native species have the highest concentration of fat, protein, and other nutrients that birds need. Native fruiting shrubs highest in nourishment are Southern Arrowwood (*Viburnum dentatum*), Red Chokeberry (*Aronia arbutifolia*), and Red Osier Dogwood (*Cornus sericea*). The study emphasized that migratory stopovers are short, and habitats with a variety of fruiting shrubs are critical for birds to quickly get the food they need. Fall is a great time to plant some native shrubs with late-ripening berries in your garden.

Native shrubs can grow large, but resist cutting them back until late winter when all the fruits have been eaten, which is better for the plant too. Last winter a Hermit Thrush overwintering in my yard was able to find dried berries on my Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*).

Below are additional resources for native plant gardening.

On selecting the right goldenrod species for your garden

- <https://donnalong.com/attracting-pollinators-with-the-goldenrods/>

Native grasses that provide seed for birds

- <https://www.ecobeneficial.com/2013/03/native-grasses-for-wild-birds/>

“Recommended Plantings for Migratory Songbird Habitat Management”

- <https://scholarworks.rit.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1816&context=other>

Questions? Reach me at [montgomerybirdclub@mdbirds.org](mailto:montgomerybirdclub@mdbirds.org).

—Lisa Wilcox Deyo

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