

President's Chat

Winter will be fast approaching when this *Chat* arrives. And winter brings the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC). I can still remember my first participation in the Seneca Circle Count. Our former President, Jim Nelson, was organizing that count as he has graciously continued to do since. My mentor at my first count was Bob Augustine, a superb birder. We covered an extensive area in Poolesville from before dawn to dusk! This first CBC began with two calling Great Horned Owls and included an American Tree Sparrow. I learned the sounds of Horned Larks and of a reliable spot for White-crowned Sparrows. Eventually, I took over Bob's duties, although I will never approach his skills. I also began participating in the Sugarloaf Mountain CBC organized by past MOS President and current MBC State Director, Janet Millenson.



I hope that members who have participated in the local CBCs will continue to do so. If you haven't in the past, please consider trying it this year. Further information about the local Christmas Bird Counts is available on page 9. I am sure that the CBC compilers would appreciate your help! I can honestly say that these outings have been a lot of fun. And they are a great way to see areas of the county that may be unfamiliar to you. Perhaps you will be in another county or state that has a circle of interest to you; then



you can find out more about that CBC at audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count.

Finally, we introduced some of our new Club officers in the last couple of issues. We want our members to know how important they and other volunteers are to our Club's vitality. In this issue, we introduce our State Directors who are also part of the governing council of the Club. They offer advice about issues that arise, especially those concerning the Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) whose quarterly meetings they attend along with the Club President. Meet our new group of State Directors, Mark England, Jim Ivett, Janet Millenson, Anne Mytych, and Ed Vigezzi.

—Scott Young

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Meet Our State Directors

Mark England

Mark got hooked on birding in May 1995 when he had a several-second scope look at a male American Redstart and then birded for years with Hugh Mahanes, a great friend and mentor. During a career in commercial construction, Mark took natural history courses in the ANS/USDA Graduate School program, most importantly including Don Messersmith's ornithology classes. Mark assisted Don for a few years and then took over teaching "Bird Life" in 2005. He has led local bird walks for MBC and ANS (now Nature Forward) for over 20 years and was lucky to co-lead 10 ANS Nature Travel trips to US hotspots. Now retired in Damascus, he is doing some carpentry projects, playing music, and enjoying chasing around his 3-year-old grandson.



Anne Mytych

Anne started birding in 2015 after encountering a Red-shouldered Hawk near her local community center. Since then, her passion for birds, birding, and conservation has grown. Every vacation is now a birding vacation. In the last 7 years, she has traveled to Texas, Arizona, New York, Vermont, Colorado, Florida, Minnesota, and California in search of new birds. In September, she saw her 500th life bird—a Golden-crowned Sparrow—in California. Her favorite bird is the Common Loon. In her non-birding life, Anne is an executive assistant for a company in Georgetown.



Jim Ivett

Jim spent his early Western NY years birding with his grandmother. Seven years were spent on Long Island with Jan, his botany/ecologist spouse and naturalist at the South Shore Nature Center. Birds were always in his world although the early years were focused on a PhD in toxicology and his career, first in environmental safety and then in preclinical pharmaceutical development, which included living in Maryland, Illinois, Indiana, and finally retirement back in Maryland in 2017. Jim's interest in birding and photography were then rekindled. Jim and Jan enjoy their birding friends while learning about, watching, and photographically documenting the birds they observe. When they visit their son in Massachusetts, trips to NWRs and eBird hotspots are a mutually enjoyed family priority.



Ed Vigezzi

Ed first started birding in 1986 when his parents gave him a bird feeder for his first home. After only two months, he was hooked. Since then, he has birded in almost every state and in Peru, France, Spain, Canada, and Mexico. After retirement in 2017, Ed really became involved in the local birding community. Ed is the webmaster for the Montgomery Bird Club and the Maryland & DC Breeding Bird Atlas. He has been a State Director for several years and a member of the MDDCBBA3 Steering Committee. He resides in Germantown, MD, with his wife Kathy. He loves spending time with Kathy and their children, Stephanie (Frostburg University) and Joe (Clemson University).



Janet Millenson

Janet is a native of the DC area and has been a bird nerd since early childhood. Her first identification guide was a small edition of Audubon prints, and her first optics were an old pair of folding opera glasses. (Her birding gear is rather more sophisticated now.) When Janet and her husband moved back to Montgomery County in late 1990 after 15 years elsewhere, she immediately looked for a Christmas Bird Count to join, and that led her to MOS. Although Janet's academic and professional background is in information technology, with degrees from Penn and MIT, these days she leads election-related advocacy for the League of Women Voters of Maryland. Janet has served MOS in a variety of roles, including as president from 2004 to 2006.



Editor's Corner

December is an interesting time of the year. To me, it is the present between the past and the future. I hope you have had a great birding year and are looking forward to an even better one in 2023. Perhaps you will make 2022 more memorable by participating in a CBC or kicking off the new year with a renewed enthusiasm for the BBA3 (I know I am). It has been another amazing year for the *Chat*, and I want to thank everyone who has contributed or provided feedback. Please join me in welcoming young MBC/YMOS member Ryan Carr, who has taken over the Youth Birding column. See you out in the field and, hopefully, at the in-person December Social as well.

—Stella Tea

It's Official—Audubon Naturalist Society Is Now Nature Forward!

During their October 20, 2022 Annual Meeting, members enthusiastically approved Nature Forward as the new name of the former Audubon Naturalist Society.

While we acknowledge that the art of John James Audubon was a catalyst for the bird conservation movement in this country, we believe that, over time, Nature Forward will help us more successfully achieve our mission by allowing us to engage more diverse audiences, including younger people, who want to appreciate, preserve, and protect the natural world. Our name has changed but our mission and vision remain the same.

Nature Forward feels approachable and memorable. It's future-focused and appeals to a younger generation as well as valued members who've been around for decades.

We are excited about the opportunities the new name and logo bring. But in the end, we know that an organization is so much more than what we call ourselves. Nature Forward reflects the impact we can have, as stewards of our region's outdoors, when we move forward together.

—Lisa Alexander, Executive Director, Nature Forward

Welcome New Members

Daniel Abrahams
Peggy Bourg
Sarah Caldwell
Heather Clarke
Isabelle Doucet
Susan Ferrara
Virginia Hartman
Nancy, Donald, and Brian Hensel
Rebecca Henson
Michelle Herrmann
Ed Hodge and Irene Frasier

Mindy and Steve Kania with Will and Lena
Pamela Langer
Suet Man
Annie Mealey
Lillian Nolan
Craig Palosky
Eva Rodezno
Charlie Sheehan
Bruce Steinhardt
Christina Uliano and Josue Guzman
Sagie Wagage



Winter Meetings

For general Club guidance on in-person events including COVID restrictions and inclement weather changes, please visit montgomerybirdclub.org/.



DECEMBER 14, 2022 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m.

Holiday Wine & Cheese, Mystery Birds, and Other Fun! (*in-person only*)

Meet other members over wine and cheese and shop for bird books before enjoying the President's photos of the month and bird science tidbit. Then sharpen your visual and auditory bird identification skills for the traditional Vice-President's Bird Quiz. To mark the 4th year of the Maryland & DC Breeding Bird Atlas, this year's quiz will include mystery nests and baby birds! The evening will wind up with members' favorite photos from 2022. Please note: This year's December social will meet in person **ONLY** at the Potomac Presbyterian Church; should the county COVID-19 transmission rate not be "Low," then the meeting will be held by Zoom.

JANUARY 18, 2023 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m.

Progress Update on the Maryland & DC Breeding Bird Atlas 3 by Gabriel Foley

How time flies! Three years of data collection are now complete for the Maryland & DC Breeding Bird Atlas 3 (BBA3). This five-year community science project is documenting the distribution, abundance, and timing of each bird species that breeds in Maryland or DC. When complete, the BBA3 dataset can be compared to similar past projects and will provide an unparalleled record of how local bird distributions have changed over the last 40 years. Atlas Coordinator Gabriel Foley will provide an overview of how the project collects data, an update on the current status, and ways you can get involved and submit your own observations.



Gabriel Foley is an avid birder from the prairie province of Saskatchewan, Canada. While at the University of Regina, he researched nighthawk habitat use in Canada's boreal forest; then he studied White-browed Sparrow-Weaver nest-building behavior at the University of Pretoria, South Africa. He coordinated Saskatchewan's nightjar surveys and hosted a weekly nature radio show, *The Prairie Naturalist*. Now, he is excited to be the Coordinator for the Maryland & DC Breeding Bird Atlas 3. You can connect with him at mddcbba3@mdbirds.org.

FEBRUARY 15, 2023 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m.

Colorful Birds of Costa Rica, Colombia, and Brazil by Scott Young

In 2022, Scott Young traveled to Costa Rica, Colombia, and Brazil, with the first two trips COVID-postponed from 2020 and 2021, respectively. In Costa Rica, he saw birds in the Arenal and southwest Pacific coast regions. In Colombia, he joined a group exploring the immediate highlands around Bogotá, the central Magdalena Valley, and the foothills and highlands of the Central Andes around Manizales and Pereira. In Brazil, he joined another group focused on one of the world's great wetland ecosystems, the Pantanal. They also explored the Chapada dos Guimarães and the fabulous Iguazu Falls, with short day trips into neighboring Argentina and Paraguay. Scott will show some of the amazing birds he photographed during his excursions.



Scott Young trained as a neurologist and neuroscientist. He is currently a Scientist Emeritus at the National Institutes of Health, having retired from the National Institute of Mental Health this past July. At the NIMH, he discovered an essential brain area for social memory, finding a way to greatly enhance this memory in a model system. As President of the Montgomery Bird Club, he hopes to grow enthusiasm for birding for all county residents.



Birds of Note (Late August to Late October)

Jared Fisher found a **Snow Goose** (blue morph) along with two **Cackling Geese** in the “big pond” at Blue Mash on October 16. Robin Skinner noted three **Greater White-fronted Geese** on the reservoir at Black Hill RP on October 26. Jared Fisher reported an immature **Surf Scoter** (also at Black Hill RP) on the same day. Four **Black Scoters** were seen just upstream of Riley’s Lock on October 26 and again on November 2.

A **Red-necked Grebe**, collectively reported by Jared Fisher, John Sojda, Dave Czaplak, and Mary Ann Todd, was found between Riley’s Lock and Violette’s Lock on October 26.

Jared Fisher found four **Stilt Sandpipers** at the Summit Hall Turf Farm on September 11. Some other interesting early fall shorebirds include **American Golden-Plover** and a **Sanderling** at Violette’s Lock on September 2. Frank Witebsky found three **American Golden-Plovers** at the Hughes Rd polo fields on September 27. And one or two of these birds cooperatively stuck around for other county birders to find through October 3. Another early fall “grasspiper” species (shorebirds more adapted to grasslands), the **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** has been absent in the county this year. Scott Young and Jared Fisher reported two **White-rumped Sandpipers** at Summit Hall Turf Farm on September 9. Dave Czaplak noted a **Dunlin** at Violette’s Lock on October 13.

It has been a good fall for **Connecticut Warblers** in the county with over 10 individual birds showing up in various locations. David Kidwell got things started, finding one at Little Bennett RP on September 2. Charlie and Ryan Carr reported a **Connecticut Warbler** at Swain’s Lock on October 16, and reports of single birds also came in from Clive Harris at Woodstock Equestrian Park, Jared Fisher along the East Gude Trail, Roy Howard and Kathy Brown at Blue Mash Nature Trail, and David Clark at Ken-Gar Palisades Park. Jared Fisher noted an **Orange-crowned Warbler** at Lois Y. Green Park on October 14. Robin Skinner found a **Golden-winged Warbler** at Blue Mash on September 9.

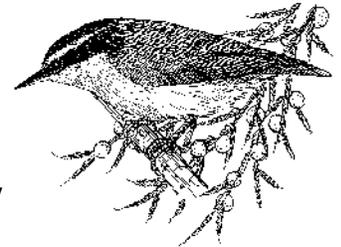
The county’s first **Philadelphia Vireo** of the year was reported by David Kidwell at Little Bennett RP on September 2. Emily Huang found a **Philadelphia Vireo** at Croydon Creek Nature Center on September 21.

Jared Fisher, listening for calls of night migrating birds at Sycamore Landing Rd, noted both a **Dickcissel** and a **Sora** passing overhead in the “wee” morning hours of September 1.

Two flycatcher species that seem to be a little easier to find in fall migration versus spring include **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** and **Olive-sided Flycatcher**. Dave Czaplak noted a **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** at Violette’s Lock on August 30. Little Bennett RP, Wheaton Stormwater Ponds, and the C&O Canal between Riley’s and Pennyfield Locks all produced sightings of **Olive-sided Flycatchers** late August through September.

While birding the East Gude Trail in Rockville on October 11, Jared Fisher found a **Clay-colored Sparrow**. And during the same trip he was surprised to flush a migrating **Virginia Rail** out of a grassy wet spot.

An impressive southbound irruption of **Red-breasted Nuthatches** seems to be underway this fall, with over 50 reports of this species from various points around the county late September into October.



According to Cornell’s eBird database, the number of species found in Montgomery County for the year (as of late October) stands at 251. Leading birders to this point include Jared Fisher (240) and John Sojda (234), Mary Ann Todd (227), Roy Howard (216), and Dave Roberts (211).

—Andy Martin

Birds of Note Extra!

Eurasian Marsh-Harrier Spotted by Lifetime MBC Member

When Byron Swift, a lifetime MBC/MOS member for the past 55 years, visited birding spots near his house on North Haven Island, Maine, he did not set out to find a rare bird. But the bird he found and photographed in late August, a female Eurasian Marsh-Harrier, is positioned to become the first accepted ABA (American Birding Association) record of this species in North America (US and Canada). To learn more about Byron’s once-in-a-lifetime encounter, check out his eBird checklist at ebird.org/checklist/S117527547, and read his story in the next issue of the *Chat*. Byron started birding at the age of 7 in England and has visited more than 50 countries, compiling a life list of over 4,650 species. Byron currently works for Re:wild and has dedicated many years to wildlife conservation around the world.

—Stella Tea



Montgomery County Breeding Bird Atlas: Where Are We Now?

After 3 years, the Montgomery County team has made excellent progress on its goals for the Maryland & DC Breeding Bird Atlas 3 (BBA3)—ebird.org/atlasmdcc/about. Half of the county's area is completed, and much more is on the way to completion—all thanks to the hard work of the atlas volunteers in this county.

The BBA3 is a 5-year project (2020-2024) to determine the distribution, abundance, and timing for all birds breeding in Maryland and the District of Columbia. The atlas is overseen by a statewide Steering Committee and the state coordinator, Gabriel Foley, who manages the data (submitted as coded checklists to the BBA3's eBird portal) and heads the state team of volunteers.

The basic spatial unit in the atlas is a block, a ~10-square-mile area; 1,302 blocks cover Maryland and DC. However, atlas volunteer teams are divided by counties and organized by the county coordinators. Karen Cyr and I, co-coordinators for Montgomery County, have recruited volunteers to adopt each of the county's 59 blocks—and adopted 7 of them ourselves. Adoption is a commitment to collect data within that block and to complete atlas goals, such as documenting at least 70 breeding bird species. As coordinators, we train adopters and monitor their progress. It is our responsibility to determine when each county block is complete to the standards of the atlas protocol.

The volunteer team in Montgomery County consists of 42 block adopters, including four stalwarts who have adopted 3 or more blocks: Gail Mackiernan, Julie Maynard, Anna Urciolo, and Ed Vigezzi.

Gail Mackiernan adopted 3 blocks in Silver Spring, where she is a top birder in the local hotspots. In such locations as Wheaton Regional Park and Northwest Branch, she has detected breeding activity of a stunning 90 species, confirming nesting activity for 70 of them. Despite an observed decline of Neotropical breeders and field birds, she notes that some surprising species continue, for example, Veery in upper Sligo Creek Park.

Julie Maynard is a Frederick County resident who volunteered in previous BBAs of Maryland, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Virginia. She has adopted 4 contiguous blocks on the northwest side of Montgomery County.

As the nest box monitor at Avenel Golf Course in Potomac, Anna Urciolo is an expert in local breeders. She valiantly took on 3 disparate blocks in Rockville and Poolesville and is near completion despite pandemic obstacles. Her favorite findings so far are Cedar Waxwings building a nest and a Red-shouldered Hawk nest with two babies.

Ed Vigezzi has adopted three seldom-birded blocks in Germantown; the adoption of overlooked blocks is an important contribution to the atlas. Ed has confirmed over 40 different species in his blocks, including Grasshopper Sparrow carrying food for young.

Two productive adopters have moved away but not before completing their 2-block commitments. Jim Green, county coordinator for BBA2 (2002-2006), was particularly helpful in advising us and in leveraging experience to speedily complete his adopted blocks. CJ DeMarco, on the other hand, was new to atlasing but proved to be ferociously dedicated. After 2021, he ranked as top atlaser in 5 of the county blocks before departing in early 2022.

In addition to adopting two county blocks, Mark England is volunteering in a special capacity as our expert in nocturnal atlasing for owls. Mark spent many hours in 2022 training volunteers in the art of owling, as well as contributing nocturnal effort in multiple blocks.

Other adopters were so successful with their first blocks that they cheerfully adopted another and agreed to work in under-atlased areas. Mike Bowen, Jo Cox, Andy Martin, Anne Mytych, Margaret Poethig, Mary Prowell, Gemma Radko, and Julie Super make up this team of dedicated, skilled, and flexible workers.

Finally, our team is ably rounded out by the remaining block adopters, whose contributions have put this county into excellent shape as we enter the BBA3's fourth year. They are Carol Daugherty, Woody and Rae Dubois, Jared Fisher and Roy Howard, Diane Ford, Clive Harris, Rob Hilton and Lisa Shannon, David Kidwell, Brooke Levey, Anne Looker, Jim Moore, Ed Patten, David Powell, Evelyn Ralston, Kathy Reitz, Tom Strikwerda and Paul Zucker, Stella and Nathan Tea, Claire Wolfe, Solomon Woods, and Scott Young.



Figure 1. BBA3 Volunteer Effort in Montgomery County

Atlas volunteer effort in Montgomery County in each of the 59 blocks as of July 2022. Total atlasing hours are shown by the brightness of the block color. Time spent on nocturnal atlasing in a block is shown by the brightness of the central dot. 100% of full-size county blocks have met the minimum effort requirement of 20 hours, and 21 blocks have exceeded 150 hours of volunteer effort. 31 of 53 full-size county blocks (58%) have met the minimum nocturnal effort requirement of 1 hour.



Youth Birding

The YMOS (Youth Maryland Ornithological Society) has had several trips early this fall, and I attended two of the September trips.

The first trip, to Taylor’s Island in Dorchester County, started at 5 a.m. We heard several Eastern Screech-Owls as well as Great Horned Owls and Barred Owls. As the sun came up, our bird count numbers started to skyrocket, ending with 98 species. We drove through many wooded roads for the first half of the day. After lunch, we went farther south to the marshes and ponds. We finished on a peninsula that was down a long gravel road. Highlights included a Baltimore Oriole, Black-throated Blue Warblers, Brown Pelicans, and a Blackpoll Warbler.

The other September trip was to Patuxent Wildlife Refuge in Prince George’s County. Many new young birders participated on this trip. We started out going through a little garden with only a few species. On the trail, we saw a Rose-breasted Grosbeak and a Black-throated Green Warbler. Going around a little pond, we saw a Great Blue Heron and a Wood Duck. Then we headed into the woods, and there were hundreds of geese flying over. A highlight was an American Redstart right near the water’s edge. We walked across a little bridge where we heard a Belted Kingfisher and saw it dive. Walking along the forest for a while, we saw a Cooper’s Hawk and heard several Killdeer. We stopped to rest at a dock. After that we saw a Downy Woodpecker, a Red-breasted Nuthatch, and a Northern Flicker. When we returned to the parking lot, we saw Cedar Waxwings and American Goldfinches.

Both trips were great, and I can’t wait to do more. If you are a young birder, please join us! Visit the Young Birders page on the MOS website (mdbirds.org/young-birders/), the MBC website (montgomerybirdclub.org/young-birders/), or contact George Radcliffe at radclifg@gmail.com.

—Ryan Carr (age 11)



Gardening for Birds

Winter: Native Plant Gardening and Creating a Habitat for Birds

Whether you plan to add a few native trees and shrubs to your garden or replace your lawn entirely, winter is the time to start planning. The leaves have dropped (hopefully some remaining on your garden beds for winter sparrows to sift through) revealing the structure, or bones, of your garden. It is easier to visualize the garden space and evaluate it as habitat that might be attractive to birds. Winter is a great time to imagine the possibilities and prepare for spring planting.

If your goal is to add more native perennials for pollinators into your existing flower beds or add a berry-producing native shrub, there are multiple sources of information on native species and where to purchase them. When selecting plants, understanding the soil, light, and moisture conditions of your yard is critical. Planting a flowering native viburnum in too much shade means there will be minimal berries in fall. Also understand the growth habit of the new native: How tall and wide does it grow? How fast? Don't be afraid to experiment. Plants can always be moved to another place in your garden where the conditions are right and they will thrive.

It is a greater challenge to create a unified and complete native plant habitat for birds, with food, shelter, and water all year round. Successful native plant gardens integrate with local ecosystems. In the Maryland/DC area the dominant ecosystem is woodland, once mature forest. In deciding what types of native plants to add to your garden, observe the native plant layers in local parks where you are birding, which is still evident in winter. The woodland ecosystem comprises an "overstory," or canopy layer, of mature trees; an understory of small trees and shrubs; and a groundcover layer of "forbs" (herbaceous flowering plants), grasses, ferns, and sedges. The understory layer of shrubs and bottom layer of groundcover plants are largely missing in the typical suburban garden. Where there are canopy trees, the shrub layer is often sparse or has been removed entirely, replaced with grass or mulch and ornamental flowering beds. Yet in local native woodlands, the understory and groundcover layer are where so many songbirds seek shelter, nest, and find food.

Is there a shrubby patch or hedgerow in or around your garden where birds can shelter and hide? Consider planting more shrubs around a solo bush on your property. Instead of one native shrub, buy 3 or 5 of different species and plant them close together. If you have tall native overstory trees, you can add a dense native shrub and perennial "edge" habitat. As you evaluate your garden space, make a list of your native tree and shrub species and consider adding a few new ones. To complete your native garden for birds, add a bird bath, small fountain, or perhaps a pond. Birds need water in winter as well as warmer months for drinking. They need to bathe to maintain healthy feathers.

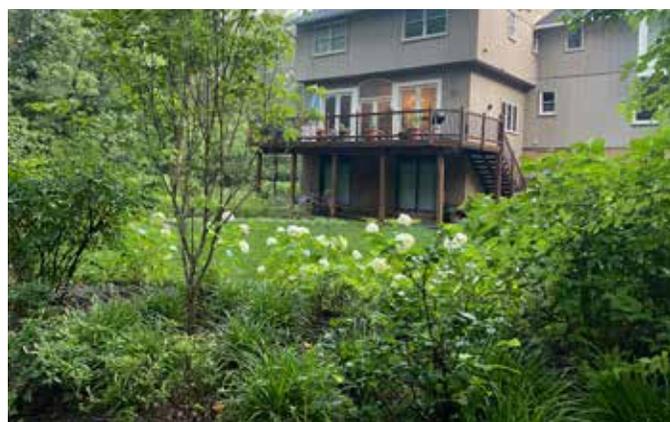
The winter is also a good time to consider garden maintenance and tackle the invasive vines that are more visible after the leaves have dropped. Non-native vines and weeds creep into native plant gardens and can persist through our mild winter. Search your garden and pull them out so your shrubs and perennials will get a good start in spring.

Questions? Reach me at montgomerybirdclub@mdbirds.org.

—Lisa Wilcox Deyo



Before: This property in Rockville, Maryland was carved out of woodlands and planted with turf grass. Photo by Lisa Wilcox Deyo



After: A wide border of native shrubs and perennials, including Flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*), Red buckeye (*Aesculus pavia*), Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*), Annabelle hydrangea (*Hydrangea arborescens*), and Witch-alder (*Fothergilla major*). Photo by Lisa Wilcox Deyo





This native plant garden in Cape May, New Jersey, has all the layers of a natural ecosystem. Shrubs and trees include Inkberry (*Ilex glabra*), Oakleaf hydrangea (*Hydrangea quercifolia*), and Sweetbay magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana*). Photos by Lisa Wilcox Deyo

Christmas Bird Counts

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) season is rapidly approaching. This year will be the 123rd year that CBCs have been conducted. The annual CBC has been organized by National Audubon for many years, and the resulting data is available to everyone in a public database online at netapp.audubon.org/CBCObservation/.



The compilers of our local CBCs can always use new volunteers to help with the counts. Participating in a CBC can be fun and educational, and you are contributing to a very valuable, long-term citizen science effort. You can participate in the CBC as a field counter, or, if you don't want to count in the field and you are located inside one of the count circles, you can participate by counting birds at your feeders and around your yard.

Many of you have been participating in the CBC for years and may already be hearing from your CBC leaders about this year's counts. If you would like to participate again or try out a CBC, contact one of the compilers below.

Triadelphia Reservoir CBC: DECEMBER 17 (Saturday)

Compiler: David Holmes, musiclbndr@gmail.com (preferred) or 410-730-7083 (home) or 410-952-3584 (cell).

District of Columbia CBC: DECEMBER 17 (Saturday)

Compiler: Larry Cartwright, prowarbler@verizon.net or 703-941-3142. Alternatively, contact Nature Forward (formerly Audubon Naturalist Society) through Pam Oves at pam.oves@natureforward.org.

Seneca CBC: DECEMBER 18 (Sunday)

Compiler: Jim Nelson, kingfishers2@verizon.net (preferred) or 240-515-4517 (cell).

Central Loudoun CBC: DECEMBER 28 (Wednesday)

Compiler: Joe Coleman, joecoleman@rstarmail.com or jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org or 540-554-2542, or sign up at loudounwildlife.org, or contact Bryan Henson at bhenson@loudounwildlife.org. This count includes 5 miles along the C&O Canal in Montgomery County, MD.

Sugarloaf Mountain CBC: JANUARY 2 (Monday)

Compiler: Janet Millenson, janet@twocrows.com or 301-983-9337.

—Jim Nelson



Winter 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/.

With the great increase in membership numbers, we'd like to try something new to accommodate more beginning birders. Longtime trip leader Dave Powell has suggested that we include one or two informal trips per month at seasonally appropriate birding sites. These trips will be open to all, with no reservations required. Watch the Club's monthly Mailchimp for trip announcements!

Please email me at montgomerybirdclub@mdbirds.org if you are interested in leading one of these trips—or know someone who might be.

—Linda Friedland, Field Trip Coordinator

JANUARY 5 (Thursday)

BLUE MASH

Join us for the morning as we walk the circuit trail looking for overwintering birds, including especially sparrows and raptors. We will start at the Zion Road entrance at 8:30 a.m. Probable waterfowl in both ponds if not frozen over. Leader will have scope for distant views. Waterproof boots recommended. Limit: 12. LEADER: Mark England at englandmark@comcast.net.

JANUARY 8 (Sunday)

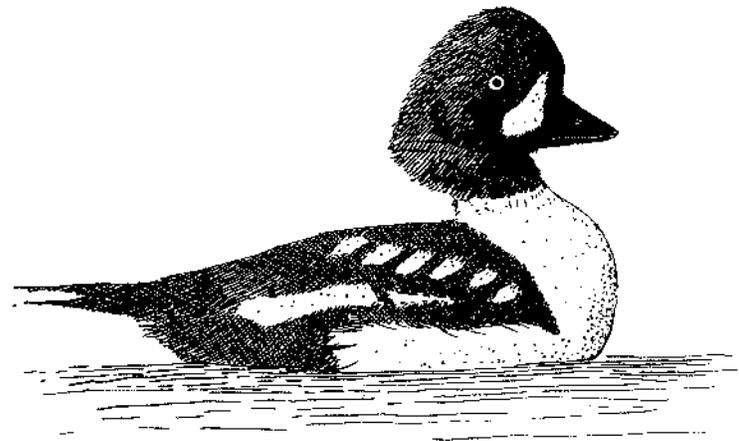
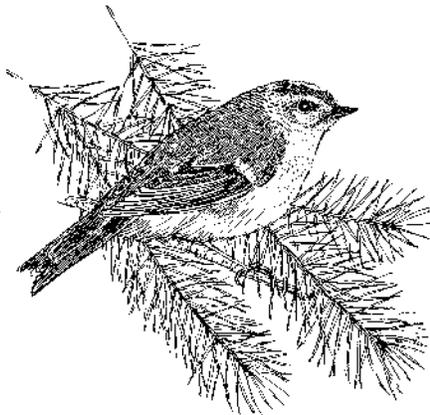
BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK AND GUNNERS LAKE

All birders, but especially new birders, are welcome on this half-day trip, which will focus on the identification of ducks at these premier county spots for winter waterfowl. We will gather at 8 a.m. at the Visitors Center in Black Hill Regional Park. Bring a spotting scope if you have one. Limit: 15. LEADER: Gerry Hawkins at maineusa@comcast.net or 571-277-8406.

JANUARY 18 (Wednesday)

CARDEROCK RECREATION AREA

Join us for a leisurely morning walk from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. on the C&O Canal towpath. We will start at Carderock at 8 a.m. and will walk upriver as we look for ducks, woodpeckers, kinglets, and sparrows. Brown Creeper and Winter Wren are possible. This walk is geared toward beginning birders, but all are welcome. Limit: 8. LEADERS: Gene Murray at eugenemurray@comcast.net and Susan Higginbotham at smhigginb@gmail.com.



JANUARY 28 (Saturday)

OCEAN CITY AND THE COAST

We will bird the Ocean City inlet in the morning, looking for sea ducks, gulls, wintering shorebirds, and anything else that might be around (hopefully Razorbill). After that we will check a few local areas around OC and then, depending on what is being seen in the area, head further north, possibly to Indian River Inlet or a little further inland. We will start at 8 a.m. in the Ocean City Inlet parking lot so plan to either get up early or stay overnight in the area. Scopes would be useful. Possible additional birding on the way down Friday afternoon, including a stop by Salisbury landfill, depending on the weather and the leader's availability. Limit: 10. LEADER: Clive Harris at clivegharris@yahoo.com.

FEBRUARY 4 (Saturday)

HUGHES HOLLOW

Join us for a morning of winter marsh and woodland birding. Targets are sparrows and possibly ducks. We will begin in the parking lot. Dress for the weather, and bring water and a snack if you like. Beginner and young birders are encouraged to join. Limit: 12. LEADER: Roy Howard at royhoward@me.com.



FEBRUARY 12 (Sunday)**RILEY'S LOCK**

Join us for a morning at and around Riley's Lock where we will first spend some time scanning the river for waterfowl. After that we'll head upstream on the towpath, checking the turning basin for any elusive waterfowl and then continuing on to look for winter woodland birds. Meet at 8:30 a.m., and bring a scope if you have one. Limit: 8. LEADER: Scott Young at 202-313-1444. Dave Roberts will co-lead.

FEBRUARY 23 (Thursday)**LOIS Y. GREEN CONSERVATION PARK**

Morning walk through the varied habitats of this excellent 250-acre park, including two ponds, fields, and deciduous and coniferous woods. We'll be looking for overwintering songbirds, waterfowl, and raptors. We 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 or 240-308-4114.

MARCH 2 (Thursday)**GUNNERS LAKE, GERMANTOWN**

This little body of water has established a deserved reputation over the years for a nice variety of wintering waterfowl and rather close views of the birds. If the lake is frozen over at the time of the trip, we will switch to a nearby larger body of water. Walking will be along a level, paved path. We will start at 8 a.m. along the north side of Wisteria Drive, where there is ample parking. Specific maps giving directions will be sent to participants. Limit: 10. LEADER: Mike Bowen at 202-236-0510 or dhmbowen@yahoo.com. Anne Cianni will co-lead.

MARCH 5 (Sunday)**ROCK CREEK'S NORTH BRANCH
STREAM VALLEY**

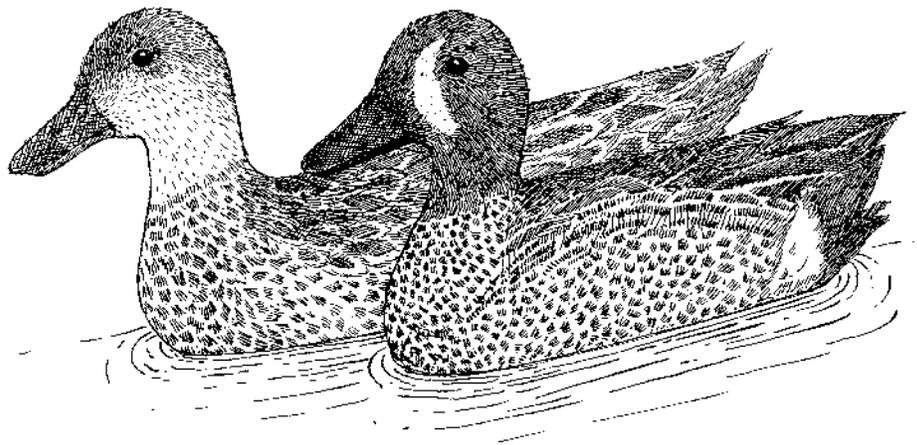
Discover upper Rock Creek's watershed with a variety of habitats. We'll start along open fields and marshy areas next to Bowie Mill Park with the opportunity to see sparrows, hawks, and early migrants. Turkeys and a woodcock have been spotted in this area. For those wanting a longer foray, a 4-mile loop that includes the stream valley will be possible, and likely we'll 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 7:30 a.m. at Bowie Mill Park (<https://tinyurl.com/ym8rn8zb>) next to Sequoyah Elementary School with the option to do the shorter paved walk or the longer loop. Limit: 12 in two groups of 6 each. CO-LEADERS: Josephine Cox at jobird11@gmail.com and Anne Mytych at amtych@yahoo.com.

MARCH 11 (Saturday)**WHEATON REGIONAL PARK FOR NEW BIRDERS**

A bit early for spring migration but who knows? Wheaton RP always surprises us. Ducks, woodpeckers, flycatchers, raptors (sometimes a Merlin!), bluebirds, towhees are all possible, and if you don't know WRP you will enjoy the variety of terrain and landscape. Limit: 12 in two groups of 6 each. CO-LEADERS: Evelyn Ralston at evelynralston@icloud.com and Martha Morris at mamorris1123@verizon.net.

APRIL 1 (Saturday)**HUGHES HOLLOW**

Half day. We will begin at the Hughes Hollow parking lot in the McKee-Beshers WMA at 7 a.m. We will explore the wetlands and fields of Hughes Hollow. Species to be expected include Red-headed Woodpeckers, Wood Ducks, Blue-winged Teal, and many other marsh-dwellers, as well as lingering winter land birds. Depending on the early spring weather trends, we have a chance for some early warbler species and other early neotropical migrants. Limit: 16. LEADER: Jim Nelson at kingfishers2@verizon.net.



The Chat
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