

# President’s Chat

By Scott Young

I hope everyone is enjoying the beginning of the New Year. At this time of year, one of the Club’s most important things to do is to begin the process of filling all the official Council positions. This is sort of an “off-year” as all but one of the positions are likely to be filled by incumbents. The one position not in that category is that for the treasurer. The Club has been extremely privileged to have Chris Wright as the treasurer since 2015! Chris has been extremely approachable and helpful. He has been instrumental in helping us transition to using MailChimp and online membership fee processing (in collaboration with MOS). But, alas, Chris is retiring from this position. I will undoubtedly mention our gratitude several times over the coming months as we seek a new treasurer. Each time I will be quite sincere.

This year marks the end of my 10th year of officially birding—that is, taking note of what birds I’ve seen in an organized way, going on local bird trips (former MBC President Jim Nelson led my first one), and even hiring guides in out-of-state adventures. I must say, it has been a great hobby. It has provided opportunities to meet fellow birders and learn of their experiences. I’ve been fortunate to go to places as part of my past work life and to other places at my own expense. Even to some that I would never have imagined traveling, such as Bogotá, Colombia. But birding in our county is still full of the new and unexpected, such as the 4th year Bald Eagle I observed within the woods of the Muddy Branch Trail the other day. Birding allowed me to combine an older hobby, nature photography, with this more focused experience. (Of course, as the decade progressed, so did the quality of my equipment and the rationalizations for their occasional upgrade. My wife seems very understanding.) Something related that I heard on a recent Science Friday podcast struck home: “Through us, nature has self-awareness.”



I do look back on the opportunities I missed to have begun birding earlier, such as during summer camps as a kid. Learning bird sounds, I believe, is like learning a second language—the younger one begins, the easier they are to pick up. This hits home when I organize local trips, and the kids are amazing at what they are pointing out by ear! So, this brings me to mention that the Club is researching the possibility of a youth-oriented bird trip program. The initial efforts are being organized by Ed Vigezzi and Brooke Levey. We hope to enlarge the number of interested children and opportunities. Please reach out to children you think might like to attend these trips. The first trip was on February 26 at Gunner’s Lake as described in more detail on the MBC website ([montgomerybirdclub.org/event/youth-walk-at-gunners-lake/](http://montgomerybirdclub.org/event/youth-walk-at-gunners-lake/)). This program could become an exciting way for kids to get acquainted with birds and conservation. I hope many of you help to make this program a success by volunteering to lead future trips and spreading the news. Thank you.

CONTENTS	
Editor’s Corner & Club News.....	2
Spring Meetings.....	3
Conservation Update.....	4
Birds of Note.....	5
Gardening for Birds.....	5-6
Birdsong Identification Using Haikubox.....	7
Spring Field Trips.....	8-9
Youth Birding.....	9
Birds of Note Extra!.....	10
Social Participation Form.....	11
Welcome New Members.....	11

# Editor's Corner

By Stella Tea

I hope you have found Lisa Wilcox Deyo's Gardening for Birds series informative and interesting. We started the four-part series with a summer edition last June, and this March we are finishing up with a spring edition. I want to give Lisa sincere thanks for taking the time to share her experience and knowledge with the Club. In this issue, Dave Roberts shares his experience using a relatively new smart device, Haikubox, for continuous birdsong identification in his yard. Will this article be the first in a new series for the *Chat*? Maybe. See you out in the field!

## Club News

### Club Elections for Officers and Directors

In May, we hold our annual elections for club officers and directors. The Nominating Committee for this year was announced at the February Club meeting. It is composed of Dave Roberts (Chair), Stella Tea, and Carol Daugherty.

At the April 19 Club meeting, whether held on Zoom, in-person, or in a hybrid of the two, Dave will present the list of candidates for the open positions and ask if there are additional nominations from the floor. After additional nominations are received, or if there are none, the nominations will be closed.

Within a week thereafter, every active member will receive a special elections email with the final candidate list and instructions on how to vote electronically. The results of the electronic vote will be announced at our May 10 Annual Meeting.

Please participate! A quorum of 20% of the membership is needed for the vote to be valid.

### Emily Huang: Art Exhibit at Brookside Garden



MBC Vice-President Emily Huang will be showing her watercolor paintings at Brookside Gardens' "Art in the Gardens" exhibits from April 17 to May 15. Emily's paintings focus on local wildlife, particularly the birds she sees while atlas-ing and conducting censuses in Montgomery County. She will be on hand Tuesday, April 18 and Sunday, April 23 (hours to be announced) to meet interested members and to answer your questions! To see more of Emily's artwork besides this featured Northern Cardinal painting, visit her portfolio website at [finchandowl.com](http://finchandowl.com). For information about Brookside's "Art in the Gardens" exhibits, visit [tinyurl.com/yktxujk2](http://tinyurl.com/yktxujk2).

### New Pop-up Field Trips a Success!

Dave Powell and Cheryl Hogue with Paul Orsinger led the Club's first two pop-up field trips to Black Hill Regional Park and Wheaton Branch Stormwater Ponds, respectively. The January 1 trip to Black Hill yielded 38 species with highlights of the continuing Red-necked Grebe and a Cackling Goose. The February 18 trip to the stormwater ponds yielded 22 species with highlights of a female and then a male Belted Kingfisher individually flying back and forth along the length of the westernmost ponds, plus sightings of an immature Sharp-shinned Hawk and an immature Cooper's Hawk. Visit the Club website to read the trip reports. For pop-up field trip announcements, watch for future Mailchimp emails.



# Spring Meetings

By Emily Huang, MBC Vice-President

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

**MARCH 23, 2023 (Thursday), 7:30 p.m.**

## **Enhancing Your Landscape to Entice Birds by Francesca Grifo**

We all love birds and would like more of them in our yards, but how do we go from lawn to habitat? Francesca undertook a 10-year journey to convert a rather barren Bethesda yard into a lawn-less, bird-centered habitat. She will talk about her favorite plants, including the unkillable native 10, and discuss the must-remove dozen. Whether your goal is to enhance the current landscape, create a hybrid native-cultivated plant environment, or take on a wholesale redo, Francesca will explore ways to provide the essentials—shelter, water, and food—that will increase the biodiversity of your yard and the birds who visit.

Francesca Grifo has a PhD in botany from Cornell University and has taught a variety of classes at Columbia, NYU, American University, and Georgetown. She is the scientific integrity official at the Environmental Protection Agency. This talk connects her three great loves: biodiversity conservation, gardening with native plants, and birds.



**April 19, 2023 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m.**

## **Solutions to Bird Collisions by Christine Sheppard**

Every year, hundreds of millions of birds die in the US alone from collisions with glass. Birds strike glass as they fly toward reflections of sky or vegetation or as they try to reach habitat seen through glass. Unfortunately, advances in technology that increase the use of glass curtain walls and other large glass features also increase the rate of bird mortality. However, we now have materials that can make buildings safe for birds without sacrificing light, appearance, or view clarity. In 2011, San Francisco became the first US city to require bird-friendly design for some new construction. Since then, over 30 jurisdictions at levels from state to town—notably New York City in 2019—have legislated bird-friendly construction, and more are pending. Christine will discuss some of the latest solutions, including techniques for evaluating the relative threat level of different materials.

Christine Sheppard has a BA and PhD in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from Cornell University. Her first job was at the Bronx Zoo, where she eventually became curator and chair of the Ornithology Department. In 2007, she joined the board of the Bird-Safe Glass Foundation as science adviser, and in 2009, she became collisions program manager at the American Bird Conservancy where she co-authored *Bird-Friendly Building Design*. She helped create San Francisco's Standards for Bird-Safe Buildings and was part of the team that developed a USGBC LEED innovation credit for reducing bird mortality.



**May 10, 2023 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m.**

## **Annual MBC Social at Woodend (*in-person only*)**

Join us for our annual social at the Woodend headquarters of Nature Forward! The evening begins with a social hour at 6:00 p.m., with dinner at 7:30 p.m. Smokey Glen Farm of Gaithersburg will once again cater a delicious meal. The evening will feature our recognition of this year's Guest of Honor, Clive Harris (pictured), as well as awesome slide shows by our members. Please see page 11 for details on how to register and submit your photos. Don't miss the fun!

For your reference, here is the link to the reservation form:  
[mdbirds.org/join/chapters/montgomery-bird-club/mbc-payment/](http://mdbirds.org/join/chapters/montgomery-bird-club/mbc-payment/).



# Conservation Update

By Gail Mackiernan, MBC Conservation Chair

## The MOS Conservation Committee

The Maryland Ornithological Society bylaws state that the organization will further educational, scientific, and charitable pursuits relating to birdlife in Maryland. Conservation is an important facet of our activities and, as such, MOS has an active Conservation Committee. The current chair is Robin Todd. I have been a member of the committee for about six years.

The Conservation Committee does not limit itself to state and local issues, although these of course are a priority, but also weighs in on those of national or even global importance. The committee monitors government activities and coordinates with other environmental groups.

Members give testimony at hearings, meet with legislators and government representatives, develop joint actions with other groups (e.g., American Bird Conservancy), submit official MOS comments in response to proposed government actions, draft position papers for MOS on a variety of subjects (e.g., fracking in the state), and sign on to letters from conservation partners. The committee also assists MOS chapters with issues impacting birds or their habitats in their locality.

Examples of recent MOS Conservation Committee actions since the last update:

### National

Letter of support to our federal legislative team to ensure the \$20 billion in funding for climate-smart agriculture and Farm Bill conservation programs included in the Inflation Reduction Act does not get cut in the 2023 Farm Bill.

### State

MOS Committee drafted a letter of concern to Maryland Department of Natural Resources about the proposed large solar project at Old Legislative Road; its environmental summary notes this is only a “potential” breeding site for Henslow’s Sparrows and does not even mention Golden-winged Warbler. Both are “Species of Special Concern” in the state and their breeding at this site has been documented for several decades. The approval process exposed a weakness in DNR oversight, as they apparently do not use readily available material in review (e.g., Breeding Bird Atlas data).

MOS continues to monitor and oppose, with letters and testimony, the proposed MAGLEV project, a super-conducting magnetic levitation railway, between Washington and Baltimore, as it threatens the integrity of the Patuxent Research Refuge/Beltsville Agricultural Research Center “green island.” It also has significant environmental justice issues.

### Local

As Conservation Chair, I recently submitted written testimony to the County Council supporting an improved and more rigorous Forest Protection policy. Review of recent forest loss in the state found that 44% of this loss occurred in Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties.

A final thought: Some of these issues would benefit greatly from increased involvement by MOS members. Please watch for announcements from MOS or MBC asking you to submit a comment or contact your national, state, or local representative on behalf of birds or their habitats. For more information, visit [mdbirds.org/conservation/](https://mdbirds.org/conservation/).



# Birds of Note (November through January)

By Andy Martin

A couple of good owl finds have been reported in Montgomery since the start of the new year. Dave Czaplak heard a

**Northern Saw-whet Owl** singing in the wee hours of January 1, and Stephen Davies found a **Long-eared Owl** on January 12. This is the first report of a **Long-eared Owl** in the county since 2008. As birding ethics recommend, no specific locations for these two owls (or any owl species for that matter) are given.



On December 2, Jared Fisher found a **Ross's Goose** on the private pond just inside the fence at Homestead Farm but viewable from the road near the intersection of Sugarland and Montevideo Rd. Another (or the same?) **Ross's Goose** was seen by Will Knowland at Lake Churchill in Germantown on December 16. Also on December 16, Sharon Polidoro found two **Snow Geese** at Lake Churchill. Additional **Snow Geese** reports came from Little Seneca Lake in Boyds, the Potomac River adjacent to Violette's Lock, and the big pond at Blue Mash Nature Trail.

John Sojda reported a **Red-necked Grebe** at Little Seneca Lake on January 1.

For an unusual midwinter sighting, at least in Montgomery County, Allie Bluestein and Nathan Tea noted an **American Woodcock** at Blue Mash on December 21. And maybe as a result of a mid-January mild streak, one or two **American Woodcock** were observed performing their pre-breeding display flights in predawn hours at Blue Mash between January 11 and 18.

Birders out in the early morning in December and January along the Potomac were rewarded with either spotting or hearing a pair of calling **Sandhill Cranes** in flight between Violette's Lock and upstream toward the Patton (now Battlefield) Turf Farm. These cranes are assumed to be roosting overnight in the vicinity of Algonkian RP on the Virginia side of the river and flying out in the morning to forage in western Montgomery. One outlier to this pattern was a report on January 1 by Gene DeAnna of not just two but five **Sandhill Cranes** in flight over Hughes Hollow within McKee-Beshers WMA.

Sightings of **Evening Grosbeaks** in the county were few this year. But Susan Higginbotham and Gene Murray saw three **Evening Grosbeaks** at Riley's Lock in the beginning of November, and Jared Fisher, along with John Sojda, Mary Ann Todd, and Dave Czaplak, found a single **Evening Grosbeak** at Violette's Lock on December 1.

While birding Rachel Carson Conservation Park during the Triadelphia Christmas Bird Count on December 17, Jay Sheppard and Dave Ziolkowski found both a late **Orange-crowned** and a **Nashville Warbler**. Another **Orange-crowned Warbler** was reported by Joe Hanfman at Blue Mash on January 19.

A lingering **Baltimore Oriole** visited Renate Wilson's Olney area backyard feeder for grape jelly and orange slices between January 14 and 21. Another **Baltimore Oriole** was seen at a feeder in the Gaithersburg area on January 21.

Jared Fisher finished the year 2022 with a total of 244 species seen in Montgomery County—not quite matching his 2021 total of 248 but impressive nonetheless! Jared was followed by John Sojda at 236, Mary Ann Todd at 230, Roy Howard and Dave Roberts tied at 217, and Woody and Rae Dubois at 208. Well done to all and good birding in 2023!

## Gardening for Birds

By Lisa Wilcox Deyo

### Spring: Creating and Maintaining a Native Plant Garden

In late winter, both gardeners and birders are restless for spring. The native plant garden can look particularly stark as most native shrubs and trees are deciduous. If you look closely, however, some native perennials are emerging from the ground as early as February in our warm winters. Also hidden beneath the dead leaves are caterpillars and bees, waiting to emerge when the temperature is consistently warm. Resist clearing dead leaves and fallen twigs in the garden. Remember that sustainable gardening practices provide food and habitat for birds, build healthy soils, combat erosion, and soak up stormwater.

Yet gardens are for people, too, and the care and maintenance of an attractive native plant garden provide some unique challenges. Here are some of the

*(continued on page 6)*



# Gardening for Birds

(continued from page 5)

common questions and concerns that I have heard, with some personal recommendations based on my experience as a landscape designer and gardener.

## How can I identify and control weeds?

Don't wait until May. In the mid-Atlantic's warming climate, many invasives start spreading in late winter. Identify and start removing these weeds early before they become established. Spray with vinegar or horticultural vinegar and water, which can help kill them. (See [tinyurl.com/yc7awyzp](http://tinyurl.com/yc7awyzp) for when and how to use horticultural vinegar.)

Know your invasives. In spring and summer, it can be challenging to find the invasives among densely growing native wildflowers. Furthermore, the stems and leaves of some native perennials, and their growth habits, can be similar to invasive weeds. Closely examine your garden on a regular basis, and identify the plants you don't know. Plant ID apps such as LeafSnap are helpful in identifying both invasives and native "volunteers" in the garden.

**Maintenance tip:** For weed suppression, instead of using mulch, plant native groundcovers under trees, shrubs, and perennials. Birds feed on the insects, mice, and garden snakes that shelter beneath groundcover plants. Barred Owls and Red-shouldered Hawks regularly hunt and find food beneath the extensive groundcovers in my garden. Two of my favorites are *Packera obovata* (Golden Groundsel) and *Erigeron pulchellus* "Lynnhaven Carpet" (Robin's Plantain). Both are semi-evergreen and deer resistant and will keep out invasives.

## How can I make my native plant garden look more tidy?

For a more tailored look, limit your plant pallet. Group species that have similar textures and colors. Plant dwarf varieties such as *Rudbeckia fulgida* "Little Goldstar" (Black-Eyed Susan) or *Echinacea purpurea* "Kim's Knee High" (Coneflower). Contain a sprawling native plant patch with a border of low-growing *Sisyrinchium angustifolium* "Lucerne" (Blue-Eyed Grass). Or plant semi-evergreen groundcover and seasonal native grasses and wildflowers together for a layered garden. Plant short groundcover 6 to 12 inches apart and taller seasonal perennials 3 to 4 feet apart. When the seasonal perennials die back in fall, semi-evergreen groundcovers remain for winter interest.

**Design/maintenance tips:** Coneflowers and other native wildflowers can grow 3 to 4 feet tall and will droop in the summer, especially in shady areas. In early to mid-spring,

before the buds are set, cut some or all of the plants back so that they will bloom later on shorter stems.

## Where can I add native plants in my garden?

Anywhere! Most native plants thrive in poor (well-drained soil), so little soil prep is required beyond adding some compost or Leafgro®. Whether you are planting a native tree, adding native wildflowers to a border, or carving out a planting bed in your lawn, you are providing new habitat for birds and pollinating insects.

## Some resources for native plant gardening:

Blog post about different buying options for native plants, which names some local nurseries: [nutsfor natives.com/post/native-plant-gardens-at-what-cost](https://nutsfor natives.com/post/native-plant-gardens-at-what-cost)

Online publication for identifying and controlling invasives: [invasive.org/alien/pubs/midatlantic/midatlantic.pdf](https://invasive.org/alien/pubs/midatlantic/midatlantic.pdf)

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



Cape May Warbler feeding in the Ironwood tree. Photo by Lisa Wilcox Deyo



Indigo Bunting sheltering in a native Oakleaf Hydrangea shrub. Photo by Lisa Wilcox Deyo



# Birdsong Identification Using Haikubox

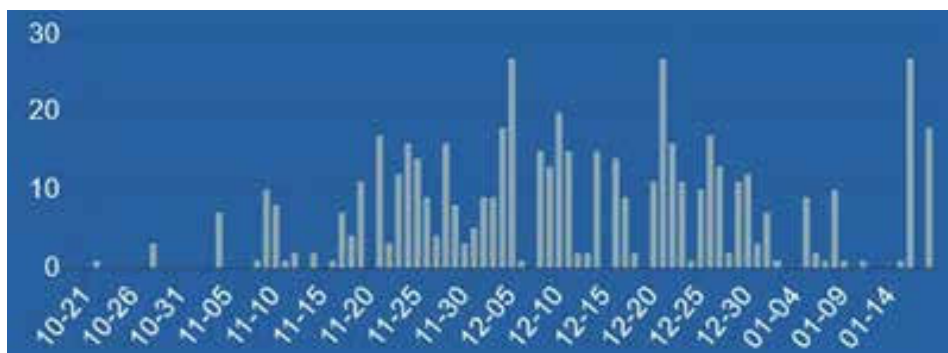
By Dave Roberts

The Haikubox is a smart device for recording and identifying bird sounds over a period of time. It was invented by Dr. David Mann, an expert in animal acoustics, in partnership with the K. Lisa Yang Center for Conservation Bioacoustics at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and supported by the National Science Foundation. They partnered with the underwater bioacoustics company Loggerhead Instruments, which manufactures the Haikubox units in Sarasota, Florida. Production there was interrupted by Hurricane Ian, and additional supply chain issues have led to a long waitlist. I was fortunate to receive my unit in early October.

The small box (4 by 6 by 2½ inches) is mounted outdoors and requires a 120V power outlet and a Wi-Fi signal to transfer recorded data to its cloud database at Cornell. Every time a bird sound is detected, a 3-second recording is uploaded for real-time analysis using a proprietary neural net software BirdNet for Haikubox. Each ID is ranked as high, medium, or low confidence. The results are linked to your Haikubox account, which is distinct from your eBird account, and can be viewed on the Haikubox app on Android and iPhone or on the Haikubox website. The 6 most recent recordings in the last 24 hours for each detected species can be reviewed on the phone app. You can listen to each recording, review the audio spectrograms and suggested identifications, and provide feedback by selecting “Yes,” “No,” “No it’s a...,” or “Not sure.”

A typical 24-hour cycle produces approximately 1,000 high-confidence IDs in my yard, with the bulk being common yard species. These data can be used to track seasonal migrants, such as the arrival of juncos. Others have used their data to analyze breeding behavior of yard birds ([haikubox.com/newsletter/haikubox-birdsong-story](http://haikubox.com/newsletter/haikubox-birdsong-story)).

**Figure 1. Dark-eyed Junco Detections.** Arrival of juncos in my yard between late October last year and mid-January.



The Haikubox project is providing valuable real-time data to Cornell while enabling both novice and experienced birders to discover new yard birds. The Haikubox costs \$249 plus an annual membership fee. If you are interested in learning more about this AI-enabled birding tool, please visit [haikubox.com](http://haikubox.com) or contact me at [montgomerybirdclub@mdbirds.org](mailto:montgomerybirdclub@mdbirds.org).

My Haikubox has found several new yard birds, including a brief visit by a migrating American Pipit and a predawn visit by Peregrine Falcons, presumably from the nearby American Legion Bridge nesting site. That supports published studies demonstrating that peregrines have adapted to urban living by becoming nocturnal hunters. Other nocturnal bird IDs to date include owls, Brown Thrashers, and migrating geese.

Unlike the Merlin Bird ID app, also by Cornell, the AI (Artificial Intelligence) learned after I corrected several false Black-capped Chickadee IDs that I have only Carolina Chickadees in my yard. For an unexpected or rare species ID, I can download the recording to compare it with reference spectrograms in the Macaulay Library. In a few cases, this enabled me to find a common bird sound that Haikubox misidentified as a rarity. I was suspicious when Haikubox continued to report Cape May Warblers (CMWA) into early November. Because it was also reporting Golden-crowned Kinglets (GCKI), I compared the spectrograms with variations on GCKI calls and identified one that was close to a CMWA vocalization. Removing traffic noise from the recording after downloading to my laptop also enabled BirdNet to correctly ID the GCKI call. After I provided feedback to the app developer, the Haikubox AI adapted and now reports only kinglets.

The program can also be fooled by some human sounds. The app developer is aware that false Broad-winged Hawk IDs can result from brake noises of buses. Rain occasionally results in false hummingbird IDs.

I may be temporarily privileged as an early adopter to have the app developer respond quickly to my suggestions. Initially, only the most recent 24 hours of recordings could be downloaded for analysis. In response to my inquiry, the app developer added a calendar icon that allows retrieval of archival recordings. Using a dropdown that shows bar graphs over time for each species, I can easily retrieve recordings for rarities I have missed while traveling.



# Spring Field Trips

By Linda Friedland, Field Trip Coordinator

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/](http://montgomerybirdclub.org/).

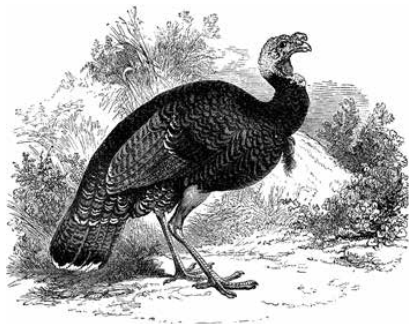
## **MARCH 2 (Thursday)**

### **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. Meet 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. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at Bowie Mill Park ([montgomeryparks.org/parks-and-trails/bowie-mill-local-park/](http://montgomeryparks.org/parks-and-trails/bowie-mill-local-park/)) next to Sequoyah Elementary School with the option to do the shorter paved walk or the longer loop. Limit: 12 in two groups of six each. CO-LEADERS: Josephine Cox at jobird11@gmail.com and Anne Mytych at amytych@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 six 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 meet at 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.

## **APRIL 22 (Saturday)**

### **CROYDON CREEK NATURE CENTER**

Come discover this lovely park during spring migration. Lots of migrants pass through, including many warblers. Meet in the parking lot at 7:30 a.m. Limit: 16. LEADER: Emily Huang at EPHuang@verizon.net.

## **APRIL 30 (Sunday)**

### **LITTLE BENNETT RP**

Half day. We will be looking for warblers and other migrants on the Wilson Mill Trail. Possible Kentucky Warbler. Limit: 8. LEADER: Gemma Radko at gradko@yahoo.com.

## **MAY 5 (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: 8. LEADER: Paul Woodward at grackling@ATT.NET.

## **MAY 7 (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. Limit: 10. LEADER: Jim Nelson at kingfishers2@verizon.net.





**MAY 7 (Sunday)**

**GUDE TRAIL**

A trip especially for beginning birders! Come discover this hidden trail adjacent to the Rockville city landfill. The area offers multiple habitats, including long open meadows, marshy areas, and woods. Birders have reported 134 species, including rarities such as Clay-colored Sparrow and American Woodcock during migration. Mostly flat, but one area has a mildly steep hill. We will meet at 7:30 a.m. in the parking lot. Limit: 12. LEADER: Anne Mytych at amytych@yahoo.com.

**MAY 10 (Wednesday)**

**BLUE MASH AND OAKS LANDFILL**

Half-day trip starting at the Blue Mash Nature Trail, where we will look for a variety of songbirds and other species. Then we will drive over to the adjacent Oaks Landfill to look for raptors, Blue Grosbeaks, and possible Dickcissels and Grasshopper Sparrows. Meet at 7 a.m. at 20500 Zion Road, Laytonsville, Md. LEADER: Mark England at englandmark@comcast.net or 240-308-4114.



**MAY 13 (Saturday)**

**RICKMAN/WOODSTOCK EQUESTRIAN PARK**

Join us as we explore this location for some early morning spring birding on the west side of Route 28 (<https://rb.gy/qpdqda>). We'll bird the broad fields and separating woods, beginning at 7 a.m., hoping for warblers and sparrows, vireos, woodpeckers, and raptors. Limit: 10. LEADER: Scott Young at scott4aves@icloud.com. Dave Roberts will co-lead.

**MAY 14 (Sunday)**

**OCCOQUAN BAY NWR**

Half day. Explore the diverse habitats in this one-square-mile refuge at the confluence of the Potomac and Occoquan Rivers in Woodbridge, Virginia. A variety of raptors and migratory warblers, vireos, thrushes, and flycatchers should be present, and rails and bitterns are possibilities. Meet at the parking lot in the center of the refuge at 7:30 a.m. Limit: 20. LEADERS: Mike Bowen at 202-236-0510 or dhmbowen@yahoo.com and Gerry Hawkins at 571-277-8406 or maineusa@comcast.net. Directions: From Maryland, take Rt. 495 south to I-95 south; take LEFT Exit 161 (Woodbridge), follow Rt. 1 south, cross the Occoquan River, turn left at the light onto Dawson Beach Rd. and follow this road to the end.

**JUNE 3 (Saturday)**

**PATUXENT RIVER AT BROWN'S BRIDGE**

On a morning walk, we'll look for Cliff Swallows building mud nests beneath this bridge in the northeastern part of the county. We will also explore wooded trails on WSSC property bordering the reservoir to observe other possible breeding birds including Scarlet Tanager, flycatchers, and thrushes. Be prepared for bright sunlight at the bridge and possible biting insects in wooded areas. Trip will be cancelled in case of heavy rain or thunderstorms. LEADER: Cheryl Hogue at cheryl.hogue@gmail.com.

## Youth Birding

By Ryan Carr (age 11)

The YMOS (Youth Maryland Ornithological Society) had several more trips this season. I was able to attend two of them, the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge trip in November and the Dorchester County trip in January. Each trip had a dozen or so youth from various locations across Maryland. Two highlights from Chincoteague were seeing a pair of Piping Plovers nearby on the beach and spotting a Lark Sparrow right above us on a power line. Highlights from Dorchester County included close-up views of numerous Bald Eagles in a nearby field along Egypt Road, Brown-headed Nuthatches along the Wildlife Loop at Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, and various waterfowl throughout the entire trip. One of the great places for seeing different species of waterfowl up close is Oakley Street in Downtown Cambridge, where we saw a Redhead, Canvasbacks, Lesser and Greater Scaups, American Wigeons, and Mallards. Buffleheads are usually there but we didn't see them at that spot on this trip.

Our next big event will be the annual Birdathon on March 18-19. The two-day event raises funds to help pay for participation in the New Jersey Audubon's World Series of Birding in May. Thank you in advance for your pledges and support!

For more information about the YMOS, visit the Young Birders page on the MOS website ([mdbirds.org/young-birders/](http://mdbirds.org/young-birders/)), the MBC website ([montgomerybirdclub.org/young-birders/](http://montgomerybirdclub.org/young-birders/)), or contact George Radcliffe at radclifg@gmail.com.

If you are interested in youth bird walks organized by MBC, please reach out to our mentor leaders, Brooke Levey and Ed Vigezzi, at montgomerybirdclub@mdbirds.org.



# Birds of Note Extra!

By Byron Swift, Lifetime MBC Member

## Candidate for First Confirmed Record of Eurasian Marsh-Harrier in North America

Last August, I decided to take an early morning bird walk to some local spots near our house on North Haven Island, Maine. I first looked at Southern Harbor for waders and then, to find some migrant land birds, decided to take the walk through the woods to Fresh Pond, the biggest freshwater area on the island. When I got there, I saw a raptor flying around the marshes to my left, which I initially thought was an Osprey. It was quite large with a whitish head and brown eyeline. But after about a minute, I realized it wasn't flying like an Osprey, it was gliding over the marshes like a harrier, and I began to look more closely at the bird.

I was confused as it was considerably larger than our native Northern Harrier and lacked the white rump of that species. And it couldn't be an Osprey—the body was all brown. I kept thinking to myself that it must be an aberrant young Osprey, but the flight pattern was totally wrong. In fact, it looked exactly like a female Eurasian Marsh-Harrier, which I'd seen several times in Europe when I lived there working for the World Wildlife Fund. I had a European field guide on my phone, and I compared the bird I was seeing to the images of the female Eurasian Marsh-Harrier, and all the field marks kept checking out—yellow legs, dark brown body, white crown and throat, and an irregular white patch on the upper wing.

For the next few minutes as I watched the bird, two thoughts kept going through my head: “This can't be a Eurasian Marsh-Harrier,” and “This looks exactly like a female Eurasian Marsh-Harrier.” That harrier breeds in Europe and western Asia, and normally at this time should be on its way to Africa for the winter, not heading down the eastern seaboard of the United States.

Then, miraculously, the harrier decided to take a flight around the pond's shoreline and headed toward me; I was able to get out my iPhone and snap some pictures as it passed by. I then had to retreat toward the main road to get cell service where I posted the photos on my eBird checklist [ebird.org/checklist/S117527547](https://ebird.org/checklist/S117527547) with the bird identified merely as a “hawk species.” I also sent an email with the pictures to some bird ID experts, saying, “I am seeing an unusual bird here on North Haven—do you think it could possibly be a Eurasian Marsh-Harrier?” Gerry Hawkins responded with the emails of some Maine eBirders. I emailed them with the photos, suggesting the bird might be a Eurasian Marsh-Harrier. If it was, this would be the first confirmed record for North America (US and Canada)!

I got an immediate response from Doug Hitchcox, staff naturalist of the Maine Audubon Society, who replied, “Wow, Byron! That is incredible. Can you keep us updated on any other sightings? I'm trying to figure out boat/flight options for getting out there!” Most important, he posted the sighting on the Maine Rare Bird Alert, which led others in the region to start looking for it.

By this time I had started to believe this was for real, so I alerted other members of the North Haven bird group, and we met at Fresh Pond at 10 a.m. But no harrier appeared—apparently there was not enough marsh habitat on the island to hold it, and it had moved on.

Doug and two other avid Maine birders arrived the next morning by boat from nearby Rockland, and we re-checked the pond, but with the same result—no harrier. Then Doug received some welcome news: The bird had been relocated nearby on the mainland at Weskeag Marsh by Evan Obercian. The alert had worked, the bird had been found, and over the next 24 hours more than 100 people would drive or fly in to see it. It has now moved on, but hopefully it will be found again as it keeps heading south.



Eurasian Marsh-Harrier by Dr. Raju Kasambe/Wikimedia Commons



# Social Participation Form

## Annual MBC Social, May 10, 2023

### Guest of Honor Clive Harris

Join us for our annual social at the Woodend headquarters of Nature Forward, 8940 Jones Mill Road, Chevy Chase. The evening begins with a social hour at 6:00 p.m., with dinner at 7:30 p.m.

Smokey Glen Farm of Gaithersburg will once again cater this delicious dinner. Please bring an appetizer or a dessert to share!

The evening will feature our traditional recognition of the Guest of Honor and brief, but awesome, slide shows by our members. For those interested in presenting in the slide shows, please limit your presentations to 8 digital photos. You can send them to Emily Huang (ephuang@verizon.net) as a PowerPoint display, as individual photos, or as a link to a Dropbox (or similar) folder. Make sure that the photos are identified as to presenter and preferred order.

As a bonus, we will have a great selection of our used bird books to browse and buy throughout the evening. It's your chance to stock up on guides, coffee table books, and ID companions for dream destinations!

Space is limited! Places will go to the first 90 persons to reserve and pay.

**We need to receive both the paid reservations and photo submissions no later than April 26.**

This year we have a **convenient online reservation system**. Reserve your spaces online; then opt to pay either by credit card or by mailing a check.

To reserve, go to:  
<https://mdbirds.org/join/chapters/montgomery-bird-club/mbc-payment/>

## Welcome New Members

Joe Ballschneider

Anna Banyai

Timothy Benner

James Boughton

Sharon Buchanan

Francoise Clottes and Family

Michele Cornwell and Family

Todd and Jill Epstein

Louise Fleischman

Mary Kay Floeter

Robert Gerard

Krystyna Gurstelle

Robert and Debbie Hickey

John Kelly

Gabriella LaVerghetta

Sean Lynch

Susan Lyon

Diane Makuc

Benjamin and Michelle McMurtray

Samantha Mendoza

Andy Oare

Sean Paul

Rachel Prickman and Family

Julia Ross

Lesley Simmons

Daniel Sloan

Benjamin Sumners

Victoria Trapani

Ted Usdin

David Vierling

Douglas Weisburger

Rebecca and Gary Wheeler

Eileen Zeitz



The Chat  
MBC/MOS  
7101 Ridgewood Ave  
Chevy Chase, MD 20815



*The Chat* is published in March, June, September, and December by the Montgomery Bird Club, a chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society.

**Editor:** Stella Tea

**Designer:** Pam Oves

**Proofing:** Susan Hunt

**Art:** Gemma Radko

**President:** Scott Young

**Membership:** Moira Davenport

Deadline for submission to the Editor is the 10th of the month before publication.

**Contact:** montgomerybirdclub@mdbirds.org

**Montgomery Bird Club Websites:**

**MBC Home Page:**

[www.montgomerybirdclub.org](http://www.montgomerybirdclub.org)

**MBC Facebook Page:**

[www.facebook.com/MontgomeryBirdClub/](http://www.facebook.com/MontgomeryBirdClub/)

**MBC Meeting Videos:** [vimeo.com/mocobc](http://vimeo.com/mocobc)

**MBC on MOS Website:**

[mdbirds.org/join/chapters/montgomery-bird-club/](http://mdbirds.org/join/chapters/montgomery-bird-club/)