

President's Chat

By Scott Young

Rapidly, my term as the Montgomery Bird Club President is coming to an end in May, so this is my last President's Chat! I became the Vice-President as the COVID-19 pandemic was hitting its stride in 2020. Our meetings then went virtual, which did prepare us to be more flexible by the time the pandemic eased. During those early days, we were able to revamp our website, which, I believe, has served the Club well. Our membership has risen to the highest levels ever since, due in large part, perhaps, to people being confined to their neighborhoods during the pandemic and, maybe, to visiting our website.

I've seen the MBC as a team that I was honored to serve (despite some arm-twisting initially!). Evelyn Ralston was the President when I became the VP, and she was awesome in her guidance. And then I became President, and she continued to help tremendously while Emily Huang has been incredible as the VP, doing everything from the MailChimps to the various meetings. The Club will be quite fortunate to have her take the helm. And speaking of good fortune, Mark England has agreed to be nominated to serve as the next VP. We know Mark, among other things, for his tireless leading of birding trips.

Some standouts of the MBC team deserve mention. Past presidents such as Jim Nelson, Clive Harris, and Anna Urciolo were always available for advice. Chris Wright (this year's Guest of Honor at the Social in May) and, recently, Lisa Norwalk took on the treasurer's responsibilities superbly. We could always count on Ed Vigezzi to attend to the website and provide notes from the quarterly MOS meetings. Moira Davenport supervised our rise in membership and reminded our members what a good deal it is! Linda Friedland superbly worked with and recruited trip leaders and managed our program of wonderful birding outings. Alice Jacobsohn and Karen Cyr earned my admiration as very thorough Council Secretaries. Stella Tea has

done an awesome job getting the quarterly *Chat* out. Other committee chairs and our Council and state directors were crucial to the smooth operation of the Club as well.



Since this is my last President's Chat, this will be my last time from this column to encourage everyone to appreciate the dire consequences of climate change to life on earth. Only humans can work toward reducing our impact. I urge all to pursue knowledge and efforts at reducing our effects on our environment, both at atmospheric and land use levels. I'm hoping my grandkids will develop an interest in nature including, fingers-crossed, ornithology and will be able to experience what I have.

Of course, I will become the Past-President and happily serve as a member of the Council. I hope to offer occasional Science Tidbits for the meetings if that suits the next administration! And I plan to see and meet more of our membership out and about and on the trips I lead or join. Thanks to all the MBC members for making my Presidency such a pleasure!

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Conservation Updates

By Gail Mackiernan, MBC Conservation Chair

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 seven 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. These actions are not limited to Maryland, since the committee recognizes that actions elsewhere can impact our state. The committee also assists MOS chapters with issues impacting birds or their habitats in their locality.

A few examples of recent MOS and MBC Conservation Committee actions since the last update:

National

Submitted comments to Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) on their plan to protect and restore the population of Gunnison Sage-Grouse, an endemic species, now considered critically endangered. I also submitted comments on behalf of MBC, since some members, including myself, have visited Colorado to see this iconic bird.

Sent a letter to BLM supporting a proposed rule for Onshore Gas and Oil Leasing, which specifies that consideration must be given to prevent “unnecessary or undue degradation of the lands and their resources” when deciding if a lease should be issued.

Signed on to a letter by the American Bird Conservancy in support of the Migratory Birds of the Americas Conservation Enhancements Act of 2023 (H.R.4389). This would increase funding for the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA). I also signed MBC on to this letter.

State

The Maryland State Assembly is now in session, and MOS Conservation Committee is supporting a number of bills that would benefit birds. Last session, we were successful in (finally) getting the Sustainable Buildings Act passed—this requires use of bird-safe glass in all state-funded construction.

On some bills, the Committee simply signs on to testimony spearheaded by another organization, but in most cases MOS submits its own testimony by letter or even in-person. Bills of special concern so far:

Senate Bill 178: Establishes requirements for the State Highway Administration’s pollinator habitat plans, including use of native plants, control of invasive plant species, and restricting use of pesticides toxic to pollinators. MOS has submitted written testimony supporting this bill.

House Bill 957: Would direct Department of Natural Resources to establish a hunting season for Tundra Swans (if allowed by federal law); permits would be distributed by lottery. MOS will submit testimony opposing this bill, based on long-term decline in TUSW numbers and known difficulty in distinguishing TUSW from the protected Trumpeter Swan, (even by experienced birders at close range). Should note a similar bill last year was soundly defeated.

Right now bills are still in committee, where their merits are debated and the bills themselves potentially modified. On both of these as well as any other important legislation, I will be submitting testimony on behalf of MBC to all Montgomery County legislators on the relevant committees.

Local

Anne Arundel County was considering developing some parcels of county land for playing fields and related sports facilities. One of these was a Board of Education owned tract of 66 acres of forest in the Oxbow Preserve watershed. **The County proposed clearing this forest to construct sports facilities, although the forest protects the headwaters of Oxbow Lake** and also supports a variety of breeding and wintering birds. I submitted comments to the AA County website on behalf of MBC. For now, due to strong opposition from the community as well as environmental groups, the proposal has been tabled.

I also submitted a letter this month to the Montgomery County Council on behalf of MBC, making the case that any funds for **Stream Restoration projects in the 2024 Budget** must be linked with effective control of storm water runoff, which is the major cause of stream scouring and erosion.

Until the next update, please visit mdbirds.org/conservation/ for more information.



Editor's Corner

By Stella Tea

Welcome to a new year of *The Chat*. However, I have to admit that this is not an easy note to write. From the recent passing of long-time member and leader, Don Messersmith, in our close birding community, to the current and new environmental and conservation challenges highlighted by Scott and in Gail's annual report, it is hard to be optimistic. But then I am also reminded of the legacy Don left behind and the different ways our Club continues to thrive; members step up to fill Club positions, lead field trips, mentor young birders, and share experiences and talents. This February also celebrated love, friendship, and new beginnings (think Year of the Wood Dragon); therefore, with hope and enthusiasm, I look forward to connecting with you through words and actions. See you out in the field!

Club News

Club Elections for Officers and Directors

By Scott Young, MBC President and Dave Roberts, Nominating Committee Chair

On May 8th, we hold our annual elections for Club officers and directors. The Nominating Committee for this year is composed of Dave Roberts (Chair), Tara Clifton, Carol Daugherty, and Stella Tea.

Prior to April 7th, the committee will announce the slate via a MailChimp. At the April 17th Club meeting, whether held on Zoom, in-person, or in a hybrid of the two, Dave will again 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 8th Annual Meeting.

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

Annual MBC Social May 8, 2024

Guest of Honor Chris Wright

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 appetizers to share!

The evening will feature our traditional recognition of the Guest of Honor and the brief, but awesome, slide shows by our members. For those interested in presenting in the slide show, please limit your presentations to 8 digital photos. You can send them to Emily Huang (montgomery@mdbirds.org) 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.

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 24.

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, copy and paste this link into your browser:
<https://mdbirds.org/join/chapters/montgomery-bird-club/mbc-payment/>



Spring Meetings

By Emily Huang, MBC Vice-President

For general Club guidance on in-person events including COVID-19 precautions and inclement weather changes, please visit montgomerybirdclub.org/.

MARCH 21, 2024 (Thursday), 7:30 p.m.

Clive Harris presents “Shorebird Identification in the Mid-Atlantic”

Brush up on your shorebird ID skills in time for the passage of these fascinating birds through our area in spring and their return in fall. Clive will cover the expected species—common, less common, and rare—taking a seasonal approach and focusing on some of the main approaches for ID, as well as covering possible pitfalls.

Clive Harris started birding as a young boy, going on walks with his father when the family lived in Hong Kong in the 1970s. His favorite groups of birds are gulls, shorebirds, and waterfowl—all birds you can aim a scope at! He makes regular trips over the spring, summer, and fall to the Delaware Bay area to enjoy shorebird migration. One of his greatest pleasures in birding is sorting through a flock of late summer peeps. As well as being a past president of the Montgomery Bird Club he has served two terms on the MOS Maryland/District of Columbia Records Committee.

APRIL 17, 2024 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m.

Dianna Rose presents “As the Crow Flies: What It Means When Birds Utilize Parkland Habitat”

Montgomery County, Maryland, seeks to achieve the “right” balance for development, recreation, and conservation across an urban environment gradient. The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) is charged with meeting this challenge. The M-NCPPC’s Department of Parks identifies, protects, and restores lands and waterways that support important aquatic and terrestrial natural resources. To determine which lands become a priority for protection, park habitats are surveyed and classified by the bird species that utilize them.

Dianna Rose works for Montgomery Parks as a Natural Resources Specialist 3 and Analyst formulating management plans for Parks’ vegetation ecology unit. She works on inventory and monitoring of vegetation and wildlife, as well as developing management plans for the Parks’ meadows and reforestation programs. Dianna holds a BS in Biology from Florida Gulf Coast University and a master’s in Environmental Biology from Hood College, Maryland.

MAY 8, 2024 (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, Chris Wright, as well as awesome slide shows by our members. Please see page 3 for details on how to register and submit your photos. Don’t miss the fun!

Welcome New Members



By Moira Davenport, MBC Membership Chair

Ivy Baer
Lynn Barclay and family
Louis Campagna
Ng Cumberland
Ela Green
Sung Han, Susan Laessig, and family
Alex Higgins and Fran Murphy
Nayeem Hoq

Jennifer Levin
Judy and Irving Lieberman
Teresa Lopez, Greg Pierce, and
Paulina Orduna
Stewart Mayhew
Angela, Moya, and Ruel Michelin
Ken Nguyen
Jennifer Pekkinen and David Kaye

Leo Prikhodko
Timothy Rahn
Mary Lyman Ryan and Kevin Ryan
Pei-Hong Shen and Felix Kong
Kelly Shima
Pigeon Smith
Sara Watkins and David Sears
Zhe Yuan
Anan Zhou



Birds of Note (Late November to Early February)

By Andy Martin

A **Black-legged Kittiwake** was a great find on November 11 at Triadelphia Reservoir by a quartet of Howard County birders: Joe Hanfman, Kurt Schwarz, Margaret Harris, and Steve Luke. This represents only the second record of this species in Montgomery and the first sighting since 1996. The bird was observed in flight over both the Montgomery and Howard County sides of the reservoir. Another notable *Laridae* species found in the last few months was Montgomery's first-ever record of a **Black-headed Gull**. Initially found by Dave Czaplak on December 11, the bird was mixed in with a large group of **Ring-billed Gulls** and a few **Bonaparte's Gulls** foraging on earthworms at Patton Farms near White's Ferry. John Sojda found a **Laughing Gull** resting on the rocks in the Potomac River rapids adjacent to Violette's Lock on December 3—a gull species not particularly uncommon east of I-95 or down in Washington, DC, but always a good find in Montgomery and further out western Maryland way. Jared Fisher and Dave Czaplak reported a **Great Black-backed Gull** at Patton Farms on December 27.

A pretty rare for winter **Spotted Sandpiper** was seen by Kent Anderson on the Potomac River near Bear Island on both January 7 and 27.

Mid to late November brought a bit of a rare "grebefest" to Potomac River waters near Seneca. Dave Czaplak first reported a **Red-necked Grebe** on the Potomac River near Riley's Lock on November 26. A few days later, on November 29 and in the same area, John Sojda found an **Eared Grebe** (a species not seen in the county since 2016) along with the continuing **Red-necked Grebe** and the two grebe species more common to our area, **Horned** and **Pied-billed**. An outstanding four-grebe day for John!

Dave Czaplak observed a **Red-throated Loon** on the Potomac River near Violette's Lock on November 22.

The last few months have produced some interesting *Anatidae* species sightings in Montgomery. A **Ross's Goose** was noted at a farm pond within the Poplar Springs Animal Sanctuary near Poolesville on December 19. Stephen Davies reported a single bird of the same species from Blue Mash on December 20, and Dave Czaplak, Mary Ann Todd, and Jared Fisher found a **Ross's Goose** in the roadside pond at Homestead Farms near the intersection of Montevideo and Sugarland Rds. After looking at photos of all three of these birds posted on eBird, Jared Fisher noted that each was a

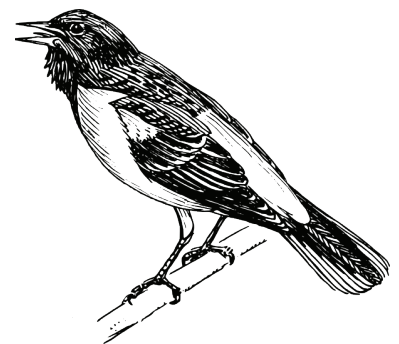
different individual. Jared Fisher and Stephen Davies noted a **Greater White-fronted Goose** at Blue Mash on December 29. Additional **Greater White-fronted Geese** were also noted from Triadelphia Reservoir, Black Hill RP in Boyds, and Clopper Lake within Seneca Creek SP in both January and February.

Scott Young reported four **White-winged Scoters** at Black Hill RP on January 16.

A group of four **Sandhill Cranes** have been seen with some regularity roaming and foraging in various agricultural fields mostly along the Hughes to Budd Rds corridor near Poolesville.

Short-eared Owls (as many as three at one time) have been observed at Blue Mash/Oaks Landfill this winter. Folks have been able to see these birds in two ways: either by joining one of Mark England's Montgomery Bird Club field trips to the inside portions of the Landfill or by taking a dawn or dusk hike along the Blue Mash Nature Trail while keeping an eye up the hill toward the landfill.

Tim Benner's backyard feeder in the Silver Spring area has been hosting a wintering **Orange-crowned Warbler** for the third year in a row. Additional **Orange-crowned Warbler** sightings have come from Gunner's Lake, Lois Y. Green CP, Rachel Carson CP, and Blue Mash. A **Baltimore Oriole** has been coming to grape jelly at Renate Wilson's Olney area yard feeders since January. And in what would seem like quite the Christmas present, Laura Tierney had both a male and female **Baltimore Oriole** show up in her Gaithersburg area backyard on December 25!



John Sojda reported a **Lapland Longspur** at Patton Farms near White's Ferry on December 10.

Montgomery County ended 2023 with a total of 262 species reported, tying the record total reported in 2021. And so far, as of February 7, 118 species have been seen in the county with John Sojda, Jared Fisher, Scott Young, Roy Howard, and Mary Ann Todd leading the way.

In Remembrance of Don Messersmith



Don as a young man after he had climbed one of the pyramids in Egypt. Photo courtesy of the Messersmith family



Don teaching at Radford University in the '50s. Photo courtesy of the Messersmith family

That is indeed exceedingly sad news. Don was one of a kind, and I feel very privileged to have known him. One of the highlights of my stint as Chair of the Awards Committee of the American Birding Association was to see Don receiving ABA's Chandler Robbins Award in 2011, with Robbins present at his table. (Chan himself won the ABA Roger Tory Peterson Award in 2015.)—*Mike Bowen*

Don was truly the “Johnny Appleseed” of birding—spreading knowledge and enthusiasm wherever he went, and inspiring many generations of birders whom he taught and led on trips.—*Janet Millenson*

Sad indeed, but an amazingly long life, well lived until the end. Lots of wonderful memories. Such a special guy.—*Jim Nelson*

As we age, many of us get more easily worried about the limited time left to us to live. That was not the case with Don. He seemed in fact more eager to enjoy life as time passed, and he impressed me a lot. In 2012 I signed up for Don's class on insects at Woodend. During the outdoor practice sessions I took as many photos of insects as I could. Don liked them and asked me to work with him on a book that would show insects doing activities that we normally consider limited to humans: for example, using tools or heating/cooling our living quarters. I agreed, in principle, but the following spring I understood that few of the insects we needed could be found in Maryland. We needed to plan. I expressed to him that I was worried because I didn't have much time, but Don replied with a big, ironic smile: “Oh, I am not in a hurry.” He was right. That was a good lesson.... More recently, during the pandemic, we were at Woodend for the memorial celebrating Helen Patton's life. At the time, the Club meetings were virtual, and we kept our 6 ft of distance, etc. “Are you going to soon start in-person meetings again?” asked Don. I was surprised. “Maybe; will you attend them if I do?” I replied. Many of my friends were worried about meeting in-person. Not Don. “Of course,” he replied with a smile and a movement as if to say “What do I have to lose?” He did indeed come back to meetings, and he was at the 2022 and 2023 Conventions. He was right again.—*Evelyn Ralston*

I've never known a teacher who had a more enthusiastic following of students and devotees.—*Lydia Schindler*

William “Bill” Adams

The Montgomery Bird Club has just learned that Bill Adams passed away in February. A remembrance of Bill will be included in the next issue of *The Chat*. Donations in his memory may be given to Nature Forward at <https://www.natureforward.org>. Please see <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/washingtonpost/name/william-adams-obituary?id=54405871> for more about Bill.



Remembering Don Messersmith, Teacher

By Mark England, MBC State Director

I first knew Don when I took his “Bird Life” class in 1999, part of the ANS/USDA Natural History Field Studies program, which Don had taught continuously since the early 1960s. He taught then in his University of Maryland entomology classroom, and as a Professor Emeritus, he was fully qualified to be a “sage on the stage,” but fortunately his classes were anything but dry. In subsequent years, I was Don’s understudy till I took over teaching “Bird Life” in 2005.

Each year Don would introduce himself at the first class, take attendance, and then hand out a quiz called “A First Bird Walk,” which was a narrative of an imaginary bird walk with context clues to the answers. He would then show slides of the correct birds and ask the students to grade themselves, asking how many got 20 right, 19? 18? and so on, stopping around 15 so as not to embarrass anyone. Students sighed with relief to not have to reveal how little they knew about common birds, and Don would say, “I see that we’ve got some work to do!”

Don enjoyed joking about his age and particularly enjoyed showing a class attendance book from years back. He would ask an unsuspecting student to read out the name “G. Washington” and then confirm that he did indeed once teach George Washington, to the class’s hilarity. Then Don would say with a straight face that “George was a good student, but that little Tommy Jefferson was nothing but trouble.”

Don had a very relaxed, seemingly effortless teaching style, while using a rather noisy Kodak Carousel slide projector to illustrate his lectures. He was a master at quickly fixing the often-stuck projector in the dark or rearranging slides that were out of order. Most of the slides were Don’s own taken over many years, either locally or on trips to 118 countries and all seven continents with the World Nature Tours group that he operated with his partner, Orville Crowder. He would often tell an interesting story about one of the birds being viewed, but still almost always completed that night’s lecture on time, never referring to notes that I can remember.

Don welcomed questions from students and would joke that “If I don’t know the answer, I’ll make one up!” He told me once that even after years of teaching, he found it remarkable that in every class he would get a question that he had never heard before. He also surprisingly told me that he used to have a fear of public speaking but had made an important speech as a young professor that was very well-received, and he never had the problem again.

Don stressed to his students that the field trips were as important as the lectures in learning about birds. The last field trip of the class would be all-day, usually to Bombay Hook, Delaware, and then south to other bayshore locations, ending near dark in Rehoboth Beach. He enjoyed leading these trips and seemed indefatigable, but he kept a very strict schedule and would often speed ahead in the lead van and vanish from sight for a while. I once offered him the use of my walkie-talkie radios, but he politely refused, saying, “I have never lost anyone yet.” Finally, though, he agreed to my suggestion that I tape a large “X” on his back windshield so we could try to keep him in sight in the distance.

Don was a kind and genial person, but he did have a few pet peeves: what Maryland paid their sports coaches compared to faculty; the constant mistakes made by the USDA staff regarding the field studies classes; and students talking too much on field trips, once stopping a walk at Dyke Marsh to severely chastise a too-chatty group.

Don always ended his bird classes with the same take-home exam, saying that all the answers were covered in the many handouts given out during the term. As far as I know, no one ever received less than an “A.”

Once, after I had started teaching the “Bird Life” class, Don and I were talking, and I asked him if he had ever felt like not going to the classroom because of a stressful or tiring day. He looked directly at me like I had asked a very strange question and simply said “No.” I thought that amazing, but that was Don.



Don Messersmith (left) and Mark England at the Club annual meeting. Photo by Evelyn Ralston

Behind the Lens: RedGate Park Documentary “Bird Walk”

By Lydia Schindler

When Cintia Cabib first set foot in Rockville’s RedGate Park (now formally RedGate Park and Arboretum) in January 2020, she already had a string of well-regarded documentary films to her credit, but she had never seen a Baltimore Oriole. This spring, some four and a half years later, Cintia will debut a film featuring RedGate Park and its birds, and she has become an enthusiastic birder.

“Bird Walk,” as the new documentary is titled, is a heady amalgam of birds, birding, habitat, conservation, citizen science, and people power: RedGate Park, a 131-acre former golf course, is now safe from development, officially designated a park for passive recreation.

Cintia has lived in Montgomery County since she was six, when her family moved here from Buenos Aires, Argentina. She attended Montgomery County Public Schools, majored in international relations at Goucher College near Baltimore, and received a master’s degree in Latin American studies at the University of Florida.

Cintia had been working for organizations that dealt with immigration and refugee issues when a PBS documentary sparked “a really interesting idea”: What about making documentaries about the DC area’s Latino community? She promptly signed up for classes at Montgomery Community Media, where she learned

the basics of filming, editing, and producing videos—and she loved it. Montgomery Community Media soon hired her; over the next nearly 20 years she rose from teaching assistant to overseeing the station’s community-produced programs and video production workshops.

Cintia also started making documentaries on her own. The first, “Here to Stay,” focused on the challenges faced by young Salvadoran immigrants in the DC area. Another, “Carousel of Memories,” looked at the historical significance of Glen Echo Park’s antique Dentzel Carousel. Her most recent documentary, “Kindred Spirits,” tells the story of two accomplished but unsung Black women artists who forged careers during the era of segregation. Like many of the others, it has aired on PBS and has been distributed across the country. This past November it headlined a screening/discussion session sponsored by HumanitiesDC at Busboys and Poets in Washington, DC.

Cintia was introduced to RedGate Park by Garrett Park resident Vickie Baily, an avid birder and photographer. The two had met through yet another of Cintia’s projects, “Labyrinth Journeys.” This 2016 film depicts seven walking/meditation labyrinths in the DC area, including one in Vickie’s backyard.

In November 2019, Vickie emailed Cintia about RedGate Park, this former golf course whose future was up for grabs. Not only was this a story that could resonate on a national level (defunct golf courses are being earmarked for development across the country), it also happened to be a great place for birding; Vickie’s species list already topped 100. Cintia joined Vickie for an MBC bird walk on a warm January day, naturally with her camera, and almost immediately began weighing a documentary about “this really interesting place.”

In fall 2021, Cintia began interviewing birders and local conservationists for the film. But she had grown frustrated trying to



Vickie Baily (left) introduced filmmaker Cintia Cabib to RedGate Park.
Photo by Leila Cabib



catch birds in action using a video camera that did not have a long zoom. She began researching a better camera, settling on a Panasonic LUMIX FZ2500 with an internal zoom lens, and started taking it out to RedGate Park in November 2021. “It took a lot of practice to focus on a bird before it flew away,” she admits, “but I really enjoyed the challenge.”

She was also learning to love the birds. “I was familiar with the backyard birds,” she says, “but I had no idea there were Eastern Bluebirds and Scarlet Tanagers, even Baltimore Orioles—all just 15 minutes from my home. It was a real revelation.”

During this same time, Rockville citizens and local birders, Vickie prominent among them, had been mounting a movement to “Save RedGate Park” from development. Cintia jumped into that, too. She filmed special events created to familiarize local citizens with the beauties of the park.

Next steps for “Bird Walk”? Cintia recently secured grants to cover the cost of the sound edit and mix and the color correction. She will now be seeking funds to finance distribution and outreach. Also on her calendar: Birding. “I’ll be doing this the rest of my life.”

Mark your calendars: “Bird Walk” will be screened at Brookside Gardens on Saturday, May 4, at 10 a.m., preceded by a bird walk and followed by a panel discussion. For event registration, visit <https://montgomeryparks.org/event/bird-walk-a-film-screening-panel-discussion>. For more information about the film, visit <https://birdwalkfilm.com>.

Lydia Schindler, science writer by trade and former MBC President, inherited editorship of The Chat from Janet Millenson in 1998 and, with Gemma Radko as designer, produced the newsletter for the next decade. Her first assignment for The Chat, instigated by then-President Bill Kulp in the early '90s, was a Q&A interview series called “In the Scope”; one early interviewee was local boy Michael O’Brien.



Cintia Cabib filming young birder and photographer Karsyn Sterns at RedGate Park. Photo by Stephon Sterns

Spring Field Trips

By Linda Friedland, MBC 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-19 precautions and inclement weather changes, please visit montgomerybirdclub.org/.

APRIL 10 (Wednesday)

VIOLETS AT VIOLETTE'S

Join us for something a little different! We'll meet at Violette's Lock for a leisurely morning walk from 10 a.m. to noon in search of early spring wildflowers. We'll scan the towpath edges and take the side paths toward the river, hoping to find not only violets but also spring beauties, bluebells, trillium, and other plants that sustain the insect life and produce the fruit that birds depend on. Limit: 10. LEADERS: Moira Davenport at moiradavenport@gmail.com and Karen Cyr.

APRIL 14 (Sunday)

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 a chance for several warblers including Prothonotary. Limit: 16. LEADER: Jim Nelson at kingfishers2@verizon.net.

APRIL 20 (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: 12. CO-LEADERS: Anne Mytych at amytych@yahoo.com or 240-506-0236 or Emily Huang at EPHuang@verizon.net.

APRIL 28 (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: 12. CO-LEADERS: Gerry Hawkins at 571-277-8406 or maineusa@comcast.net, or Emily Huang at EPHuang@verizon.net. Directions: From Maryland, take Rt. 495 south to I-95 south, 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.

MAY 3 (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. Meet at 7 a.m. at the parking lot at Hughes Hollow. Limit: 6. LEADER: Leo Dilling at leodilling@hotmail.com.

MAY 5 (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 11 (Saturday)

LITTLE BENNETT REGIONAL PARK

We will be looking for warblers and other migrants on the Wilson Mill and Kingsley Trails. Possible Kentucky Warbler. We'll meet at 8 a.m. at the parking area for Wilson Mill Trail at <https://maps.app.goo.gl/GLJgXdCdZkcGyUzv8>. Limit: 8. LEADERS: Katie Moore at katie.lamp@gmail.com and Paul Orsinger at paulorsinger@gmail.com.

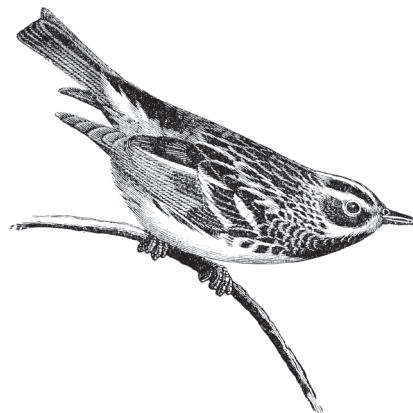
MAY 12 (Sunday)

RICKMAN/WOODSTOCK EQUESTRIAN PARK

Join us as we explore this location for some spring early morning birding on the west side of Route 28 ([https://](https://rb.gy/qpdqda)

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 16 (Thursday)

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. Limit: 12. LEADER: Mark England at englandmark@comcast.net.



JUNE 8 (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. Meet at 7:30 a.m. Limit: 10. LEADER: Paul Orsinger at paulorsinger@gmail.com.

Youth Birding

By Ryan Carr, Youth Montgomery Bird Club

This winter we had two amazing YMBC bird walks at Oaks Landfill and Gunners Lake. On the Oaks Landfill trip we were treated to close-in scope views of the Short-Eared Owl sitting on a fence. It was so cool to see its head swivel with such a clear view, and the eyes were so bright and glowing. We also got some prime views of a White-crowned Sparrow in a bush along the road. We are looking forward to our March trip to Lois Y. Green Conservation Park. Big shout-outs to some really supportive mentors this season: Bob Cantilli, Lauren Carey, Mark England, Andy Martin, Dave Powell, and Stella Tea!

We are also looking forward to our YMBC spring trips! These are planned for April 14 (Blue Mash Nature Trail), May 5 (Rachel Carson Conservation Park), and June 2 (Hughes Hollow). Stay tuned for more information on these walks via email and on the MBC website. We are always looking for new mentors too. We handle all of the administrative work, you just pick the place and show up! If you are interested in being a mentor on a walk or want to tag along to see what being a mentor is like, please reach out to us at youth.birding@gmail.com.

For me, snow birding is something I haven't had much of an opportunity to do during the last few years, but in January we got the first real snow we had in a while! It was really cool to explore along the canal and Potomac River when they were frozen. So many birds were out, and I got to see 300+ ducks all together in the river. It was also a great time to watch our feeders for lots of bird activity! What did you see while snow birding? Send us your stories or photos at youth.birding@gmail.com.



Mark England (far left) and Lauren Carey (far right) led a YMBC field trip to Oaks Landfill in January. Photo by Kathryn Carr

The Youth Maryland Ornithological Society (YMOS) has spring trips planned as well. For more information and the complete schedule, please contact George Radcliffe at radclifg@gmail.com.

We'd love to hear any advice you might have for young birders. Whether you were a birder as a kid or came to it later in life, let us know what you think would have been helpful to know as a young birder, and we'll pass new information along at each of our walks. Drop us a line at youth.birding@gmail.com.



The Chat
MBC/MOS
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