



September 2024

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President's Chat

By Emily Huang

Fall is nearly upon us, and a new season begins for the Montgomery Bird Club! Please join us at an upcoming monthly meeting (every 3rd Wednesday of the month); we have an exciting schedule of speakers lined up this year, starting on September 18 with local birder Stephen Davies. Stephen's "Self-Drive Birding Safaris in Southern Africa" will be illustrated with exceptional wildlife photographs. If you can't make it to a meeting, sign up for one of the Club's guided bird walks, led by our team of expert volunteers. From Wheaton Regional Park to the C&O Canal to Charles County on the Eastern Shore, there's a whopping 19 trips planned for the fall migration season—plus a possible popup trip! Remember, members receive preference for registration, but sign up early, as walks fill up at the speed of light.

Summer is traditionally a time of relaxation, and birding does slow down a bit on hot days. For many of us, it's a chance to get away and bird somewhere else—perhaps Maryland's Eastern Shore or perhaps somewhere more far-flung. I look forward to hearing about your summer adventures! For me, the season began with work on the Maryland-DC Breeding Bird Atlas 3 in Somerset County, continued with nest box maintenance (more about the Club's work with nest boxes on page 6), and is ending more gently with a trip to Ocean City, where I hope to catch the beginnings of shorebird migration and perhaps a tern or two—if I can identify them.

In between, I took a break when the temperatures rose to the insufferable upper 90s for weeks on end and spent my free time anxiously nursing my garden. The world's warming temperatures were very much in evidence all over the state, and the impact could be seen on our summer bird lists. The breeding Mississippi Kites of Rockville and elsewhere in Maryland are becoming an annual event, delighting us

with their graceful flights and adorable fuzzy young (but see update on page 5). Yet the flip side to this sleek new breeding species is the precipitous loss of forest breeders, such as Eastern Whip-poor-will, Kentucky Warbler, and even American Redstart. The BBA3 will tell a story of considerable loss of species diversity in the county over the past 40 years alone, which calls for redoubled efforts to conserve county lands for wildlife and to counteract habitat degradation.



With that in mind, we begin the year with a renewed sense of purpose. Although Lisa Wilcox Deyo has stepped down from her State Director position, we have a new volunteer in long-time member and former Secretary, Karen Cyr. MOS will be holding its Annual Convention from November 22 to 24 in Ocean City, Maryland—a great time to go birding, meet fellow birders, and learn how you can get involved. Finally, birders will have two exciting local fall events to look forward to: Montgomery Parks' Birdability Week from October 21 to 27 and the Owl Moon Raptor Festival on November 9. Montgomery Bird Club will have a table at the festival, so save the dates!

CONTENTS	
Who's Who.....	2
Club News.....	2
Annual Review and Financial Report.....	3
Fall Meetings.....	4
Birds of Note.....	5
Giving Native Birds a Hand at Blue Mash.....	6-7
Fall Field Trips.....	8-9
Youth Birding.....	10
Membership Renewal Form.....	11

Who's Who

We want our members to know how important our Council members and other volunteers are to the Club's vitality. In this issue, we introduce the Club's newest Chapter Director and Secretary.

Luis Selva, Chapter Director



Luis grew up in Los Angeles, California. He developed an interest in nature when he joined the Boy Scouts. Later, as an undergraduate, he joined a student-run philanthropic organization called Troy Camp. Underprivileged boys and girls from the South Los Angeles

area were selected by their teachers to attend Troy Camp free of charge. Long-term mentors and leadership programs helped foster personal growth for the children and instill the value of learning and respect for nature. In 2011, Luis moved to Boston, Massachusetts. It was during this time that he took up photography as a hobby. In 2022, Luis moved to Montgomery County and discovered the joy of birding after spotting his spark bird, the Northern Cardinal.

Elaine Kim, Secretary



A resident of Montgomery County since the age of 5, Elaine has lived in Rockville, Bethesda, and Silver Spring. But it was when she moved to Olney in 2018 and attended a few events at Meadowside Nature Center (including her first-ever organized

bird walk with binoculars) that she fell for birds and birding "hook, line and sinker" (to mix metaphors). She has a special love for hawks (all kinds), and her spark birds include the Brown Thrasher and Indigo Bunting. As a bereavement counselor, Elaine is fascinated and enchanted by the hope and meaning so many of us humans attach to birds, and she finds time in nature to be the best self-care of all. Playing the ukulele poorly is a close second.

Club News

By Moira Davenport, Membership Chair

Time to Renew Your MOS/MBC Membership!

Please take a moment to renew your membership if you haven't already done so! Electronic payments are fast and easy at <https://mdbirds.org/join/chapters/montgomery-bird-club>. If you wish to pay by check, you will find instructions on this MOS website page: <https://mdbirds.org/dues-by-check/>. Membership runs from September 1 to August 31 each year.

Our membership dues help sustain all our activities and those of the MOS and allow us to contribute to environmental conservation. Included in your membership are the MBC newsletter, *The Chat*; the MOS newsletter, *The Maryland Yellowthroat*; and the MOS journal, *Maryland Birdlife*. Many thanks for your continued support!

Welcome New Members

Susan Board
Jay Goldman
Crystal Gould Perrott, Eric
Perrott, and James Perrott
Laura Hambleton and John Donnelly

Victoria Kidd
Gouri Krishna
Donna Perlmutter
Chris Rhodes
Stefanie Trop and David Grolling
John Truesdell and Elin Zurbrigg



Annual Review and Financial Report for 2023-2024

By Lisa Norwalk, MBC Treasurer

I am pleased to report that the Club finished the 2023-2024 fiscal year with a remarkable 535 memberships and \$31,602 in its bank account. This performance is due to an energetic program of bird walks, a combination of in-person and Zoom monthly meetings, a lively and informative monthly email newsletter, and, of course, the quarterly *Chat*. The annual Social Dinner, held as always at Woodend Sanctuary courtesy of Nature Forward, was a great success with 68 attendees. We also received \$17,000 in grants and donations, thanks to our generous members.

As required by the bylaws, a financial report and budget approved by the Council on June 11, 2024, are presented below:

Montgomery County Bird Club, Financial Summary and Budget for Fiscal Year 2024-2025		
Status of Funds as of June 11, 2024		
	2023-2024 Final	2024-2025 Budget
INCOME		
Dues	\$4,535.00	\$4,500.00
Grants/Donations	\$17,000.00	\$2,500.00
Social/Picnic	\$2,306.00	\$2,400.00
Miscellaneous Income	\$283.00	\$350.00
Total	\$24,124.00	\$9,750.00
EXPENDITURES		
MOS	\$40.00	\$100.00
<i>The Chat</i>	\$1,543.00	\$1,600.00
Website	\$891.00	\$900.00
Office Supplies/Misc	\$260.00	\$250.00
Meetings/Speakers' honoraria	\$2,170.00	\$1,100.00
Social/Picnic	\$2,768.00	\$2,800.00
Donations to other organizations	\$1,500.00	\$3,000.00
Total	\$9,172.00	\$9,750.00



Fall Meetings

By Mark England, MBC Vice-President

MBC continues to recommend full COVID-19 vaccination and booster shots. Wear a mask if it makes you feel more comfortable. Also, please follow any current CDC recommendations for this or other respiratory illnesses. The Club's monthly meetings are recorded and are accessible at our YouTube Channel: <https://bit.ly/49Ur9N1>.

SEPTEMBER 18, 2024 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m. Stephen Davies presents “Self-Drive Birding Safaris in Southern Africa”



“Wait—what?? You can do that?” “Is that a good idea?” “Is it safe?” These are the questions that usually arise at the suggestion of a self-drive African safari. For answers to these questions and more, come hear about Stephen's experiences from

almost six weeks of independent exploration in the African backcountry. Stephen will discuss logistics, as well as the birds and other wildlife you can expect to see in the majestic landscapes of Namibia, Botswana, and Zambia.

Originally from Wales, Stephen lived in upstate New York and California before moving to the DC area 20 years ago. The son of a biology teacher, he's been birding for 40-something years. He particularly enjoys thorny identification challenges like shorebirds and gulls, morning flight counts, and studying all forms of visible migration.

OCTOBER 16, 2024 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m. Lisa Burke and Anne Mytych present “Finding Birds, Getting Lost, and Winning the Prize in Southeast Arizona”



Lisa and Anne will share their adventures, along with many photos, of birding in Southeast Arizona, including stops in Patagonia, Madera

Canyon, Sierra Vista, and Portal, near the New Mexico border. Some of the featured birds include Elf Owl, Lucifer Hummingbird, Violet-crowned Hummingbird, and one special bird—the prize!—that is highly coveted in SE Arizona.

Lisa started birding shortly after moving back to Montgomery County five years ago from the San Francisco area, where she lived for 25 years. Spark bird? A male American Goldfinch in spring plumage. She works as a marketing project manager.

Anne grew up in Vermont and has lived in Maryland since 1989. She started birding in 2015. Her spark bird is the Red-shouldered Hawk, which she found along a creek in her neighborhood in April 2015. A subsequent, but all too brief, trip to south Texas in August 2015 was the final hook. All trips are now birding trips. Her favorite bird is the Common Loon, which she heard calling on Lake Winnepesaukee for 6 weeks in 1983, long before she was a birder. She currently works as an executive assistant for a merchant bank company in Georgetown.

NOVEMBER 20, 2024 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m. Josephine Cox presents “The C&O Canal Count and the Sugarloaf CBC”



Jo will talk about the joys of participating in and helping organize the mid-winter C&O canal count and the Sugarloaf Christmas Bird Count. She shares the excitement—with many photos—of finding hundreds of robins snacking on berries, spotting a

lurking Hermit Thrush, and seeing a Tundra Swan flyover just as you are about to pack up for the day, to name a few memorable moments. Jo also enjoys working with the many hardy birders who participate in the canal count and the CBC and who are happy to head out in all sorts of challenging weather conditions. Come learn more about these citizen science projects and this season's opportunities to participate!

Jo grew up in the UK. A chance to become a visiting scientist at NIH brought her to Maryland in 1988 where the brightly colored local birds were soon noticed. Jo and her husband participate in many outdoor activities, often hearing and spotting birds from a kayak, bike, or cross-country skis.

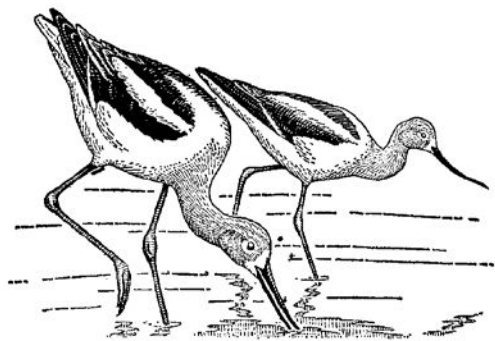


Birds of Note (Mid-May to Early August)

By Andy Martin

In many ways reminiscent of 2023, **Mississippi Kites** have again made a good showing in the county for 2024. Howard Youth spotted the first **Mississippi Kite** of the year over the Potomac River near Blockhouse Point around 10 a.m. on May 11. A few hours later and a little further upriver at the Seneca Breaks, John Sojda observed as many as 20 **Mississippi Kites** flying over the river! And two different pairs are nesting in the county this summer. A **Mississippi Kite** pair has again successfully nested and hatched a chick in Rockville's Welsh Park,* and a new pair has taken up residence near the Norbeck area, also in Rockville.

Six **Willetts** (only the fourth record for the county) were observed on the Potomac River adjacent to Violette's Lock on August 9 as the remnants of Tropical Storm Debby passed through our area. Scott Young also reported a **Ruddy Turnstone** on August 9 in the same



location. Dave Czaplak found an **American Avocet** over the Potomac River adjacent to Violette's Lock on June 26. A **Whimbrel**

was a great find by John Sojda in the same location on May 30. On May 19, Jared Fisher skillfully picked out a single **White-rumped Sandpiper** flying over the Potomac among a group of eight **Semipalmated Sandpipers**. Jared was able to see the White-rump's distinctive "all white" rump (upper tail coverts). Stephen Davies found a **Sanderling** feeding on the mudflats of the "big" pond at Blue Mash on July 26. Clive Harris spotted and heard a **Black-bellied Plover** in flight high over Homestead Farm near Poolesville on May 9.

Bryan Henson was first to note a **Tricolored Heron** perched atop a tree on the west end of Sharpshin Island on July 28. On July 20, as many as six juvenile **Little Blue Herons** were in view at one time in the "big" pond at Blue Mash. Dave Czaplak reported two **Snowy Egrets** flying upriver at Violette's on August 7. Jeff Smith reported a **Least Bittern** at Hughes Hollow on May 4.

Update: Sadly, the MIKI chick was found badly injured in late August. It was taken to Owl Moon Raptor Center, but they were unable to save it.

Least Bitterns, sometimes as many as two individuals, have been noted from the same location through much of the summer. Jared Fisher spotted four **Glossy Ibis** flying high over the Virginia shoreline of the Potomac adjacent to Riley's Lock on May 7. And David Allen found a **Glossy Ibis** foraging in a wet area near Carderock on May 8. Joe Hanfman and Dave Czaplak reported a **White Ibis** in the vicinity of Violette's Lock on July 21.

Ryan and Kathryn Carr noted two **Common Terns** flying upriver over the Potomac adjacent to Pennyfield Lock on May 4, and Jared Fisher spotted a **Black Tern** flying upriver at Violette's Lock on May 9.

Scott Young found a yearling **Mute Swan** on the Potomac River at Violette's Lock on July 8. Fortunately, **Mute Swans** are a rarely sighted invasive in our county.

A surprise for Max Wilson on May 13 was a flyover **Golden Eagle** near the Falls Road Golf Course in Potomac.

Ryan Douglas found a **Eurasian Collared-Dove** at the Damascus Recreation Center on June 9. This invasive species escaped from captivity in the Bahamas almost 50 years ago, but contrary to expectations, it has not become common in the eastern United States. Montgomery's only other record of the **Eurasian Collared-Dove** was found by Chris Barnard in Rockville back in 2009.

The first **Willow Flycatcher** (an expected breeder) of the year was reported by Clifton Barry at Royce Hanson Conservation Park in Poolesville (formerly Broad Run SVP) on May 3. First of the year flycatcher species—Alder and Olive-sided—passing through on their way to breeding areas further north include an **Alder Flycatcher** noted by Stacey Rabinowitz at Blue Mash on May 12 and an **Olive-sided Flycatcher** found by Gabriel Urso at Little Bennett RP on May 12.

On the morning of July 24 at McKee-Beshers WMA, Jared Fisher saw (and photographed!) a non-bird species of interest—a young Black Bear crossing Sycamore Landing Rd! And while scouting for an MBC field trip to Hughes Hollow, Lisa Shannon saw another or the same Black Bear on August 10.

As of August 10, there have been 237 species of birds reported in Montgomery County. The top five county listers to date: Jared Fisher, John Sojda, Team Carr (Ryan and his mom Kathryn), and Mary Ann Todd.

Giving Native Birds a Hand at Blue Mash

By Emily Huang

Perhaps you saw one this summer—a tiny wooden house with an Eastern Bluebird peeking out of the hole. It’s a bluebird nest box! Did you know that Montgomery Bird Club plays an important role in maintaining local nest box trails? One of this county’s finest collections of songbird nest boxes on public property is at Blue Mash Nature Trail, and it’s monitored by MBC member Katie Moore.

Blue Mash has long hosted nest boxes, which are designed to support cavity-nesting birds in places where available tree cavities have become scarce. But by 2020, the Blue Mash trail was in disrepair, with many boxes too decayed to use. In early 2023, Club representatives Mark England, Gail Mackiernan, and I worked with Eagle Scout Michael Hersey and Montgomery County’s Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to replace and add nest boxes, expanding the collection from about a dozen rickety boxes to a bountiful 22 new and refurbished boxes spaced along the trails and ponds of the popular birding area. At the same time, the Club called for volunteers to do the critical job of monitoring the boxes during nesting season. New MBC member Katie Moore took charge.

“I was interested in getting more involved in birding and, also, in doing what I could to help the environment. This was a volunteer job that hit both those points,” says Katie. In March 2023, she and a small crew of backup volunteers trained in the art of nest box monitoring with fellow Club member and experienced bluebird trail technician Ed Escalante, who brought examples of different types of nests, gave a detailed tutorial, and shared many resources with the team. “It was incredible. I’m so grateful for Ed’s help,” Katie adds.

Since that time, Katie has monitored the Blue Mash nest box trail for two full nesting seasons, with weekly visits starting in April and ending in August. A monitoring visit involves walking the trail, opening each nest box to assess nesting status, and taking action if necessary—and Katie likes to bird along the way. One visit might take her 1.5 hours—longer, if all the nest boxes are active, if the birding at Blue Mash is especially exciting, or if her children are tagging along! For Katie, a love of birds and nature is clearly a family affair.

Monitoring at Blue Mash is not without its hazards. “Blue Mash is a known hotbed for dog ticks,” says Katie, adding that Mark and the DEP help a lot by mowing and trimming around the nest boxes. Other problems arise within the boxes: from wasp nests to bird poop, from rat snakes to the occasional dead bird, she sees it all—and deals with it, too.



*Eastern Rat Snake after it snacked on young House Wrens.
Photo by Katie Moore*



Eastern Bluebird eggs in a nest. Photo by Katie Moore

But the rewards are splendid. The Blue Mash nest boxes support the breeding of numerous Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, Carolina Chickadees, and House Wrens, and Katie has recorded roughly 120 fledging birds. In addition, Katie enters all the data from the boxes to NestWatch, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's nest database, detailing the progress of each nest from building to fledging. "I feel like I'm contributing to citizen science," says Katie, "and I hope that I'm helping more birds lay eggs, too." She adds that she feels good when she goes to Blue Mash in late summer and sees the flocks of juvenile bluebirds.

The work Katie does at Blue Mash exemplifies one of the Club's chief missions: to "encourage the conservation of wild birds." In the future, the Club hopes to support more work like hers to include boxes for other cavity nesters such as Prothonotary Warblers, American Kestrels, and Eastern Screech Owls. "There's so much bad news about the environment, it can get overwhelming," says Katie. "Just to do this one thing gives you a sense of purpose. There's always reward when you feel like you're giving back to nature."



Young Eastern Bluebirds in a nest—one looking disgruntled at being disturbed. Photo by Katie Moore



Katie in a Montgomery Bird Club shirt posing next to one of the nest boxes she monitors at Blue Mash Nature Trail. Photo by Peter Moore

Editor's Corner

By Stella Tea

It's hard to believe that Labor Day is just around the corner, and fall migration is underway. Just two days ago on August 19, I spotted my first fall warbler, a female American Redstart darting in and out of my berry tree! The hummingbirds and first-year songbirds continue to come to the feeders; among them the Eastern Bluebirds fledged from our yard. I still remember vividly the first time I saw bluebird eggs and hatchlings. It was on the first day of bluebird nest box monitoring training in 2018 at a local golf course. Soon after, Nathan and I were inspired to solicit help from my husband to set up nesting boxes at home. When I read Emily Huang's article (page 6), I was overcome with acute nostalgia for the rewards and elation, challenges and heartache that nest monitors face. Thank you, Katie Moore and other Club members, for your hard work at Blue Mash, and Emily for sharing this wonderful effort with us. If you are interested in learning more about these native birds, visit the Maryland Bluebird Society (MBS) website at <https://mdbluebirdsociety.org/>. Happy fall birding, and see you out in the field!

Fall 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 <https://www.montgomerybirdclub.org/>.

SEPTEMBER 8 (Sunday)

WHEATON REGIONAL PARK

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

SEPTEMBER 8 (Sunday)

HUGHES HOLLOW

This half-day trip is targeted at newer birders, but all are welcome. We will meet in the Hughes Hollow parking lot at McKee-Beshers WMA at 7:30 a.m. We will explore the wetlands and fields of Hughes Hollow. Species to be expected include migrant warblers, Green Heron and other waterbirds, and possibly raptors. Limit: 10. LEADER: Clive Harris at clivegharris@yahoo.com.

SEPTEMBER 15 (Sunday)

CHARLES COUNTY

Join us as we explore Charles County with its BBA3 Coordinator and one of its Atlas participants. The focus will be on Nanjemoy, a difficult area to bird because of all of its private land. We will have access to the very large property of the Lion's Club-owned Camp Merrick for forests, wetlands, and the Potomac and will make other stops. *Carpooling is necessary with a limit of three cars.* We will meet in Charles County at 8 a.m. and carpool from there. Bring lunch and drinks. This should be a rich time for migrants, but we also hope to pick up Worm-eating Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, and other lingering nesting species. Limit: 10. LEADERS: Francesca Grifo at francescatgrifo@gmail.com and Lynne Wheeler at somdaudubon@yahoo.com.

SEPTEMBER 15 (Sunday)

RICKMAN/WOODSTOCK EQUESTRIAN PARK

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

SEPTEMBER 18 (Wednesday)

PENNYFIELD TO VIOLETTE'S BIRD STALK

Half day. We will meet at 8 a.m. in the Violette's Lock parking lot at the end of Violette's Lock Road. We will then carpool to Pennyfield Lock and walk back up the C&O Canal towpath to Violette's. This walk should net an interesting mix of late warblers, other landbird migrants, and maybe a few early winter visitors, as we scan the skies and river for raptors and waterbirds. Because we will be carpooling, do not sign up if you are not vaccinated against COVID-19 or if you are uncomfortable carpooling. Limit: 10. LEADER: Jim Nelson at kingfishers2@verizon.net.

SEPTEMBER 21 (Saturday)

CROYDON CREEK NATURE CENTER

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

SEPTEMBER 25 (Wednesday)

OAKS LANDFILL

Explore in carpools this now-closed landfill adjacent to the Blue Mash Nature Trail. Mostly open terrain on a gravel road, including two pond views. In addition to sparrows, raptors, and waterfowl, shorebirds are possible if there are mudflats at the big pond. The leader will have a scope for distant birds. We will meet at 8 a.m. Limit: 16. LEADER: Mark England at englandmark@comcast.net. NOTE: The county requires all participants to provide their names and phone numbers when they register with the leader.

OCTOBER 5 (Saturday)

WHEATON REGIONAL PARK

Early and mid-October can be quite productive in Wheaton Regional Park, which is often particularly good during fall migration. Warblers, vireos, thrushes, and sparrows are all possible. All are welcome, and beginners are particularly encouraged to join. We will begin at 7:30 a.m. and finish around 10 or when bird activity drops off. Limit: 10. LEADER: Rob Hilton at rob.hilton2010@gmail.com. Lisa Shannon will co-lead.



OCTOBER 6 (Sunday)
HUGHES HOLLOW

Join us for a morning of marsh and woodland birding. Targets are fall migrants such as warblers, sparrows, and ducks. Beginners and young birders are especially encouraged to join. We will meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Hughes Hollow parking lot. Limit: 10. LEADER: Lauren Carey at ljcarey011@gmail.com.

OCTOBER 9 (Wednesday)
GREAT FALLS, MARYLAND

Join us for a leisurely morning walk on the C&O Canal towpath. We will meet at Great Falls, Maryland, at 8 a.m. and will walk downriver looking and listening for woodpeckers, kinglets, and a variety of sparrows. Possible ducks include American Black Duck and Common Merganser. 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.

OCTOBER 13 (Sunday)
OAKS LANDFILL

Explore in carpools this now-closed landfill adjacent to the Blue Mash Nature Trail. Mostly open terrain on a gravel road, including two pond views. In addition to sparrows, raptors, and waterfowl, shorebirds are possible if there are mudflats at the big pond. The leader will have a scope for distant birds. We will meet at 8 a.m. Limit: 16. LEADER: Mark England at englandmark@comcast.net. NOTE: The county requires all participants to provide their names and phone numbers when they register with the leader.

OCTOBER 20 (Sunday)
LITTLE BENNETT RP FOR BEGINNERS

All are welcome on this half-day trip, but we especially encourage those new to birding to join us. Starting at 7:30 a.m., we'll slowly walk some of the woodland trails looking for migrant and resident birds. Limit: 10. LEADER: Paul Orsinger at paulorsinger@gmail.com. Katie Moore will co-lead.

OCTOBER 26 (Saturday)
REDGATE PARK

Come explore this "new" park on a former golf course. The area offers multiple habitats, including a small marsh, wooded areas, and lots of meadow areas for potential winter sparrows.

In its first 10 months as a park, birders identified 147 species. Some parts have steep hills. Meet at 8 a.m. in the parking lot. Limit: 10. LEADER: Anne Mytych at amytych@yahoo.com.



NOVEMBER 2 (Saturday)
ROCK CREEK'S NORTH BRANCH STREAM VALLEY

Discover upper Rock Creek's watershed with a variety of habitats. We will start along open fields and marshy areas next to Bowie Mill Park with the opportunity to see a variety of sparrows, hawks, fall migrants, and turkeys if we're lucky. Previous lists included 8 species of sparrows. Depending on the weather, we'll opt to explore a section of the stream valley for woodpeckers and other resident woodland species. Meet at 8 a.m. at Bowie Mill Park. Limit: 16. LEADER: Jo Cox at jobird11@gmail.com or Kathy Reitz will co-lead.

NOVEMBER 5 (Tuesday)
LOIS Y. GREEN CONSERVATION PARK

Morning walk through the woods. We'll be looking for overwintering songbirds, waterfowl, and raptors. Meet at 8 a.m. in the parking lot at 8711 Snouffer School Road, Gaithersburg, Md. Limit: 12. LEADER: Mark England at englandmark@comcast.net.

NOVEMBER 11 (Monday)
REDGATE PARK: SEEKING SPARROWS

If you are just starting to sort out the sparrows, join us for our annual Veterans Day walk. We'll work on ID-ing familiar species such as Song and White-throated Sparrow, while looking for less common ones like White-crowned and Swamp. This trip is geared to beginners, but all are welcome. Limit: 8. LEADER: Jo Cox at jobird11@gmail.com.

DECEMBER 8 (Sunday)
BLACKWATER NWR

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

DECEMBER 12 (Thursday)
BLUE MASH NATURE TRAIL

Join us for a morning at one of Montgomery County's top Hotspots. We'll be looking for raptors and overwintering sparrows and waterfowl. The path can be muddy and overgrown, so waterproof boots are recommended. Meet at 8 a.m. in the Zion Road parking lot. Limit: 10. LEADER: Lauren Carey at ljcarey011@gmail.com.

DECEMBER 14 (Saturday)
LOIS Y. GREEN CONSERVATION PARK

Morning walk through fields and woodland edges. We'll be looking for sparrows, waterfowl, and raptors. Trails are well-maintained with some hills. Meet at 8 a.m. in the parking lot at 8711 Snouffer School Road, Gaithersburg, Md. Limit: 12. LEADER: Leo Dilling at LeoDilling@hotmail.com.



Youth Birding

By Ryan Carr

Fall Field Trips

The summer heat doesn't stop the Youth Montgomery Bird Club (YMBC)! This summer we had trips to Hughes Hollow, Patuxent Research Refuge—North Tract, and Blue Mash Nature Trail. We are looking forward to our early September trip to Meadowside Nature Center as well. We are grateful to Bob Cantilli, Lauren Carey, Mark England, Andy Martin, Dave Powell, Stella Tea, and Laura Wolf for mentoring us this season!

Patuxent Research Refuge—North Tract was a new birding location for me. We drove along Wildlife Drive and identified 48 species that morning. It was packed with Scarlet and Summer Tanagers, both of which we got super close-up views. It was a neat place to visit, and I recommend it for a great air-conditioned and accessible birding experience! Our Blue Mash trip also had some highlights, with great views of a Little Blue Heron, and three new youth joined us for this trip. Lately our walks have all been full with waitlists, and it's been awesome to meet new friends who enjoy birding.

This fall we have trips scheduled for October 6 at Wheaton Regional Park and November 3 at Lois Y. Green Conservation Park. We are also planning a January trip to Oaks Landfill. Reservations are required via <https://tinyurl.com/YMBCFall24>. Got questions? Please email us at youth.birding@gmail.com.

Mentors Reflect on Their YMBC Experience

In the last *Chat*, I had the honor of writing about what makes the YMBC special to its members. As our mentors are a huge part of what makes it special, we can't do these trips without them. Therefore, I thought I would reach out to them to get their thoughts on their mentoring experience with the YMBC.

For a little background, my mom, Kathryn Carr, and Tara Clifton do all of the organizing, registration, and eBird checklists. Ada Clifton does the trip reports. The mentor's only responsibility is to show up and walk with us! We are all pretty experienced birders who occasionally have ID questions, but mainly we love talking to you and hearing your birding stories. We are always looking for new mentors to join us on a trip, so if any of these quotes resonate with you, please reach out to youth.birding@gmail.com to join us! Mentors are welcome to pick the trip location if they have a special place they would like to share with us.

One thing I'm especially thankful for is our trips to Oaks Landfill with Mark England. One time we were able to

see amazing scope views of a Short-eared Owl sitting on a fence. We saw the eyes as its head swiveled, which was so cool. See some of our mentors' thoughts below.

I've had the opportunity to mentor several of the YMBC walks, and I always look forward to the trips. The youth birders are every bit as passionate as the adult birders of Montgomery Bird Club, with the added benefit of keener ears and eyes! There's often a chance of seeing lifers during trips for one or more of the birders and always an even greater chance for some adventure along the way. It's great to know so many great up-and-coming birders are out and about in Montgomery County.—*Lauren Carey*

I was lucky that Ada and Calla Clifton joined me on one of my regular MBC field trips. This made me realize how fun it is to have keen young birders along on trips. I have since helped lead two YMBC trips, I love to help encourage their love of birds and being outside. An added benefit is that they help me find and ID birds too!—*Jo Cox*

I would encourage MBC members to act as mentors for our enthusiastic YMBC birding group. It's fun to see these young birders get excited about their bird sightings as they essentially lead themselves during these trips. As a mentor, you only need to stand back, let them figure out the birds, and they even send in the trip report afterwards—a piece of cake!—*Mark England*

I have really enjoyed being able to lead and help with a few of the YMBC trips! Such a blast of a program to be a part of—and a much-needed addition to the Montgomery Bird Club. Family fun at its finest and what sharp eyes and ears and enthusiasm for knowledge those kids have! I should have started birding at 7 and not 40! I am signed up, along with Bob Cantilli, to mentor the October trip to Wheaton Regional Park and looking forward to it!—*Andy Martin*

It was a total pleasure working with such smart, capable, and fun young birders for our Patuxent Research Refuge North Tract tour in June. The families were all caring and well-organized, and even took care of the eBird lists so I could focus on guiding. Meeting young birders like them makes me feel inspired and optimistic about the future of science and conservation.—*Laura Wolf*



*Scarlet Tanager at Patuxent Research Refuge North Tract.
Photo by Stella Tea*





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