

President’s Chat

By Mark England

I don’t have a bucket list, but in late June I fulfilled a long-held wish to visit Alaska. On a trip led by Red Hill Birding, I had the chance to see many of the Alaskan “specialties” among 43 life birds and some pristine surroundings, especially near the remote town of Nome. Two weeks away from newspapers and endless “talking head” discussions of the world’s problems let me immerse myself in the trip and the cheerful company of my fellow birders; we were all there for the same reason—to see exciting new birds, mammals, and the natural beauty of Alaska.

It had been 17 years since I was on a distant trip (Costa Rica) solely for the pleasure of birding, letting the leaders do the hard work of driving, scouting, and planning ahead. Some years back, I co-led 10 Audubon Naturalist Society (Nature Forward) trips to the western US. I knew all too well that trip leaders had to be constantly thinking of others and rarely able to simply enjoy the birds. In Alaska, it was nice to relax and simply be a passenger taking it all in.

I would highly recommend the unforgettable Alaskan birding experience, though the necessary in-state flights and luggage slogging between Anchorage, Nome, and Utqiagvik make the trip both costly and tiring. Finally, speaking from experience, don’t wait till you are (nearly) too old to do the trip, don’t lose your balance on the boat foredeck out of Seward, and, most of all, don’t venture into tundra tussock grass, the quicksand of the Arctic!

On more familiar ground, the MBC Council and I are looking forward to some exciting fall field trips put together by Field Trip Coordinator Linda Friedland, and some fun, informative monthly meetings planned by VP Cheryl Hogue. Please see the October-December list of trips on pages 10-11 and the full list on our website, expertly managed by Ed Vigezzi. As you will see, some intriguing new trip destinations have been added,



including two full-day trips to Dorchester County led by stellar birder Jim Green. Another new trip this fall is to Blockhouse Point, led by James Fleming and Roy Howard. Thanks to all the leaders!

Our fall monthly meetings at the Potomac Presbyterian Church (also via Zoom) will feature talks by Tim Boucher of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) on native plant gardening and TNC’s work; Stacy Hill, Bird House assistant curator at the National Zoo, on bird conservation issues; and Gabriel Foley on the Breeding Bird Atlas 3 results for Montgomery County.

In addition to lining up these speakers, Cheryl found time to restart the MBC Social Committee, which Annie Mealey will chair—thanks, Annie! And the Social Committee will continue providing wine and cheese at the monthly meetings, another reason to join in the fun! I hope to see you there!

 CONTENTS 	
Annual Club Election Updates.....	2
Editor’s Corner.....	2
Annual Financial Report.....	3
Club News.....	4
Fall Meetings.....	5
In Memoriam.....	6
Partnering to Host Purple Martins.....	7
Birds of Note.....	8
Youth Birding.....	9
Fall Field Trips.....	10-11

Annual Club Election Updates

Chapter Director Nomination and Confirmation

Roy Howard recently relocated to Frederick and is stepping down as Chapter Director. The MBC Council thanks Roy for his dedicated leadership and contributions to the Montgomery Bird Club. To fill the remainder of his one-year term, the MBC Nominating Committee has nominated Kathy Brown. Please join us at the September meeting, where members will vote to confirm Kathy's nomination.

Meet Our New Club Vice-President

Cheryl Hogue faced a quandary during her junior year at the College of William & Mary. Until then, she'd only taken botany courses because she was crazy about plants. But she needed to complete a zoology class to earn a BS in biology. A friend and fellow biology major convinced Cheryl to take ornithology, a course taught by a professor named Dr. Byrd.



Cheryl knew cardinals, blue jays, robins, and mallards by sight from childhood, which was mostly in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. But she'd never looked through decent binoculars until she had a pair assigned to her in Dr. Byrd's class. The diversity and colors of wintering waterfowl surprised her. She was awed by her first warbler that spring. She's been birding ever since.

Cheryl is a retired journalist. She worked for a newspaper on Maryland's Eastern Shore and then moved to Montgomery County to work at a newspaper, now defunct, in Rockville. Following this, for over 30 years, she covered federal and international policy on climate change and pollution for several publications based in Washington, DC. Along the way, she earned an MS in environmental sciences and policy from Johns Hopkins.

Cheryl was probably the first journalist to take a detailed look into microplastics and was one of the first to delve into the "forever chemicals" called PFAS. Based on what she learned in her reporting, Cheryl chucked her nonstick cookware and is working to replace her plastic kitchen gadgets.

She has served on the MBC Council since 2018, first as a Chapter Director then as a State Director, before becoming Vice-President. She chaired the Maryland Ornithological Society's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee for three years and introduced land acknowledgments at the MOS convention and at its board meetings. She and Mark England developed and taught a workshop to train volunteers to lead birding field trips.

As a student at William & Mary, Cheryl worked evenings in Colonial Williamsburg at Chowning's Tavern, where she taught The Royal and Most Pleasant Game of the Goose. Her written account of that experience appears as a chapter in the recently published book *Mob Caps and Cocked Hats: Memoirs of Living in History* by K.K. Bruno.

Editor's Corner

By Stella Tea

As I sat in front of the computer contemplating what to say in my last Editor's Corner (and under 200 words no less), I kept coming back to what I would miss the most, and it was hard to put my fingers on just one thing. I also wanted to acknowledge and thank every single person who helped shape and deliver two dozen issues of *The Chat* in the past 6 years; unfortunately, I have a word limit to uphold. Instead, I want to thank the Montgomery Bird Club for continuing to expand its programming and community engagement through creative, inclusive ways, and to allow *The Chat* to tell some of the stories; stories that matter to the enjoyment of birds and bird conservation. My most sincere thanks to Susan Hunt and Pam Oves for a fun-filled journey. Thank you, Danielle Nagele, for taking on the role of editor. I won't stray too far because I will be looking forward to holding future issues in my hands and reading them cover to cover. If anyone wishes to connect, you can find me at stazandgazer@gmail.com or as stazandgazer on iNaturalist. See you out in the field!



Annual Financial Report

By Lisa Norwalk, MBC Treasurer

I am pleased to report that the Club finished the 2025-2026 fiscal year with a remarkable 605 memberships, \$22,000 in the bank account, and an additional \$43,000 in the Vanguard account. This performance is due to an energetic program of bird walks, a combination of in-person and Zoom monthly meetings, and a lively and informative monthly email newsletter and the quarterly *Chat*. The annual Social Dinner, held as always at Woodend Sanctuary courtesy of Nature Forward, was a great success with 77 attendees. We also received \$2,350 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 26, 2026, are presented below.

Montgomery Bird Club 2025-2026 Summary and 2026-2027 Budget Status of Funds as of June 26, 2026*		
	2025-2026 Final	2026-2027 Budget
INCOME		
Dues	\$5,867.00	\$5,750.00
Grants/Donations	\$2,350.00	\$2,000.00
Social/Picnic	\$3,040.00	\$3,000.00
Withdrawal from Club Savings	\$2,985.00	\$4,000.00
Total	\$14,242.00	\$14,750.00
EXPENDITURES		
<i>The Chat</i>	\$2,430.00	\$2,500.00
Website	\$344.00	\$350.00
Office Supplies/Misc	\$1,398.00	\$1,125.00
Meetings/Speakers' honoraria	\$2,213.00	\$2,775.00
Social/Picnic	\$2,732.00	\$3,000.00
Donations to other organizations**	\$5,125.00	\$5,000.00
Total	\$14,242.00	\$14,750.00

*The Maryland Ornithological Society fiscal year runs May 1 to April 30.

**The Club made donations to the following organizations: DC Bird Alliance, Friends of Brookside Gardens, Nature Forward, and Owl Moon Raptor Center.

Club News

Time to Renew your MOS/MBC Membership

Our membership renewals are due on September 1 of each year. Thank you to all those who responded to the email from MOS with links to payment options. If you missed it, please take a moment to pull up the email that links to your membership record for easy payment. Or you can go directly to <https://mdbirds.org/join>.

Electronic payments are preferred, but if you wish to pay by check, please see the "Join/Renew by Check" option, which includes the address to send your payment on the MBC website at <https://www.montgomerybirdclub.org/join-renew/>.

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!

"Bird Walk" October Film Screenings

Mark your calendars! Local filmmaker and MBC member Cintia Cabib will screen and discuss her documentary "Bird Walk" at the North Potomac Senior Center on Monday, October 5 at 9:30 a.m. and at the Gaithersburg Library on Saturday, October 10 at 2 p.m. The film features the birds and birders that flock to an abandoned golf course in Rockville, Maryland, and follows the grassroots campaign that helped preserve this avian oasis as a public park. The screenings are free and open to the public. To learn more about the film, please visit <https://birdwalkfilm.com/>.

These screenings are supported in part by funding from the Montgomery County Government and the Arts & Humanities Council of Montgomery County.

Welcome New Members

Chad Buskirk
Pete Epanchin
Caren Ginsberg
Deborah Girasek
Roger Griffis
Colleen Kalb-Cimerman and Richard Cimerman
Paivi Koljonen
Shannon and Stanford Lange
Andrew Meserole and Brooke Berner
Matthew Parrott
Lei Tong and family

New eBird Hotspot "About" Pages: You Can Help!

By Mike Bowen, eBird Hotspot Editor/Reviewer for Maryland

At the end of April 2026, eBird introduced, without any fanfare, new "About" pages for eBird Hotspots—Maryland has more than 2,000 Hotspots. Each About page features detailed information about the Hotspot, such as opening hours, trails, and best seasons for rarities; it also provides links to other information, such as maps. See, for example, <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L1437577/about> for the eBird Hotspot at Wheaton Regional Park--Shorefield/mini-train tracks/Pine Lake. An About page is particularly useful for alerting birders if there are access restrictions to a Hotspot.

But eBird needs birders to help write and edit the About pages. If you have posted more than 100 eBird checklists, you are eligible to write About pages or to edit what others have written. This is often called "Wiki style," as it follows the method used to write Wikipedia pages.

By this time, I have written or edited About pages for many Hotspots in Maryland (also Delaware and Washington, DC). Experienced birders in several counties, including Montgomery and Frederick, have gratifyingly responded to my urging by doing the same. Thank you! If I can help explain more about this exciting development, don't hesitate to contact me at dhmbowen@yahoo.com.

For more information, please go to: <https://support.ebird.org/en/support/solutions/articles/48001281732-ebird-hotspot-about-pages>.



Fall Meetings

By Cheryl Hogue, MBC Vice-President

MBC's monthly meetings are recorded and are accessible at our YouTube Channel at <https://bit.ly/3MH3FB4>.

SEPTEMBER 16, 2026 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m.

Tim Boucher, Senior Conservation Scientist with The Nature Conservancy's Africa Program, presents "Native Plant Gardening for Birds and Other Wildlife."



Want to turn your yard into a haven for birds, butterflies, bees, and other wildlife? Tim Boucher, a senior conservation scientist with The Nature Conservancy, will discuss native plant gardens that support local biodiversity. Drawing on his own experience creating a thriving pollinator garden in Bethesda, Tim will share practical tips on what to plant, what to avoid, and how to create habitat that benefits wildlife year-round. Through photographs taken in his garden, he'll show how even a modest yard can become a vibrant oasis for nature—and why native plants are one of the most effective things homeowners can do to help local ecosystems. Tim's professional work spans ecological restoration, protected area management, biodiversity monitoring, and the application of emerging technologies—including AI, bioacoustics, camera traps, and remote sensing—to conservation challenges. He has worked extensively across Africa and the Americas.

OCTOBER 21, 2026 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m.

Stacy Hill, Assistant Curator of the Bird House at Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute, presents "Bird Conservation Efforts."



With the landmark research that quantified the loss of 3 billion birds across North America in the last 50 years, we as conservationists need to prepare for further declines and the possible need for future reintroduction programs. The Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute has dedicated its new Bird House to migratory birds of North America, having had landmark successes in breeding 16 species of songbirds and 7 species of waterfowl. Managing the reproduction of these birds requires careful observations and quickly pivoting to address challenges as they arise. Stacy Hill, assistant curator, will share a behind-the-scenes look at the husbandry research and planning needed for these conservation milestones. She completed her master's thesis on the endangered Red Siskin with the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute in 2018, contracted with the Migratory Bird Center for a year, and then came to the Bird House in 2019.

NOVEMBER 18, 2026 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m.

Gabriel Foley, Executive Director of the Maryland Bird Conservation Partnership and Coordinator for the Third Maryland & DC Breeding Bird Atlas, presents "Health and Conservations Insights from the BBA3."

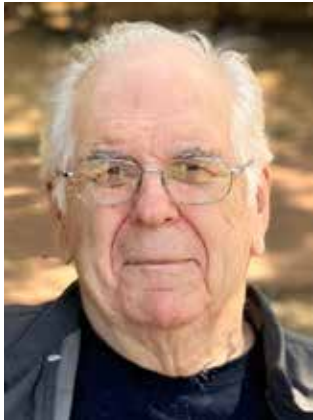


More than 200 bird species breed in the Maryland-DC region. The Maryland & DC Breeding Bird Atlas 3 (BBA3) was a community science project that documented the distribution of the region's breeding birds from 2020-2024. Over 2,000 volunteers contributed to this dataset, building the most precise, comprehensive dataset of breeding birds ever compiled for our region. Gabriel Foley, who coordinated this project, will discuss what these data tell us about the health of our birds, and some of the unexpected discoveries made along the way, including in Montgomery County, and how BBA3 results are used to help inform conservation decision-making regionally and beyond.

In Memoriam

Wallace Kornack (1935-2026) by Mark England, MBC President

Wallace Kornack is warmly remembered by many MBC birders for his bird postings from Rock Creek Park in Northwest DC. Wallace died on June 23, 2026, at the age of 91, after dedicating at least 15 years to reporting each day's bird sightings during spring and fall migrations. Before leaving Rock Creek Park, birders knew to find Wallace usually in the maintenance yard to give him their sightings, which he would meticulously record along with the contributors' names. A detailed listing of warblers seen that day would always be at the top of his lists.



A Georgetown resident, he would arrive early to Rock Creek Park and spend most of the morning there until birding slowed and then type his reports from home before posting via the birding listserv MDOsprey and, later, on MDBirding after MDOsprey closed in 2012.

Wallace's son Tom writes that his father's last Rock Creek post was from October 2023. Tom comments: *"He loved both the birds and the bird watchers. He kept an entire guide to the bird watchers with pithy (private!) notes that helped to keep names attached to their people. During migrations he rose before dawn, was first on the scene, and stayed until the activity had subsided and reports from everyone had been collected."*

Another Rock Creek Park devotee, MBC Past President Mike Bowen, remembers Wallace *"sitting on the wall in the Maintenance Yard with a wry smile and a comradely greeting to birders he might not have seen for a while. Always quiet, always relaxed. Seeing this unassuming, modest man among a scrum of active (and often noisy) birders, you might be surprised to learn that he was the brains behind the whole scene. And in a former life he was a noted nuclear engineer and was welcomed to membership in The Cosmos Club, an honor that has eluded many aspirants. Many in the birding community will never again bird in Rock Creek Park without thinking of him."*

For more on the remarkable Wallace Kornack, please visit his obituary page, the "Forest Hills Connection" article, and listen to this WAMU Metro Connection audio story from 2013, in which MBC members Lisa Shannon and Paul Pisano are interviewed:

<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/washingtonpost/name/wallace-kornack-obituary?id=61966269>

<https://www.foresthillsconnection.com/news/the-spring-bird-migration-brings-out-the-bird-watchers-in-rock-creek-park/>

https://wamu.org/story/13/05/17/districts_bird_man_documents_citys_winged_creatures/

Finally, for an example of one of Wallace's nearly 1,600 daily reports, please visit: <https://www.mdbirding.com/archives/posts/A2=ind0809E&L=5903.htm>

Thanks to Mike Bowen, Gail Mackiernan, and Paul Pisano for sharing their memories of Wallace.

Barry Cooper (1939-2026): A Thank You from Gail Mackiernan

I wanted to thank all the MBC members who attended Barry Cooper's Celebration of Life at Glenview Mansion on July 18. I know Barry would have been pleased to see so many of his friends there to bid him farewell. We had wanted it to be an upbeat look at a life well-lived, and I think we succeeded (although I also know a few tears were shed). It was great to see some of our older members in person, as well. A special shout-out to Mark England, who lent us his Bluetooth speakers and mics, as well as helping us set up, and to Evelyn Ralston for taking photographs. The giant map showing all of Barry's birding travels (over 75 countries!), a gift from a family friend, attracted a lot of attention. I know many of us—me especially—will miss his cheerful face and limey accent at Wheaton Regional Park this autumn. Also, thanks to all the members who sent me notes and cards after Barry's death—they have really helped.

The Life & Adventures of Barry Cooper



MBC and Brookside Gardens Partner to Host Purple Martins

By Emily Huang

I stand within renowned Brookside Gardens in Wheaton, MD, watching a pair of Purple Martins launch into long, graceful flights. Occasionally, two other martins join them to become a lively party, full of chatter and cheer. A nest with four babies sits snugly in a martin house installed in March 2026—a collaboration between Montgomery Bird Club and Brookside Gardens to promote bird conservation and to bring martins back to the neighborhood.

It's a heartwarming sight, and I would love to say that the promise of this nest was fulfilled. Unfortunately, one July morning, I discovered a rat snake had defied the predator guard, climbed the 15-foot pole, and consumed the nestlings. The adult martins departed by next morning.

Despite this sad ending to an encouraging season, I continue to advocate for hosting Purple Martins. Purple Martins in the Eastern US depend on manufactured homes, and colonies have become rarer in our historically agricultural county. Also, as MBC trip leader Lauren Carey says, martins are an excellent "bridge" species—birds that evoke interest and wonder even among non-birders. I became convinced of this while monitoring the Brookside martin house, which became a magnet for guests asking eager questions.



Emily and Solomon perform a nest change. Photo by Katie Moore

Negotiations for this novel collaboration between MBC and Brookside began in summer 2025. Following a suggestion from member Stacy Rabinovitz, I spent months on emails, research, and visits with then Assistant Horticultural Manager Christopher

Elenstar. We consulted with the Purple Martin Conservation Association to decide housing type, location, and management plan. Per Brookside's request, I assembled an MBC monitoring team: myself, Carolyn Copper, and Solomon Woods, with Dee Brown, Katie Moore, and Gaurav Kapoor as unofficial "martin watchers." Training was provided by Cheryl Bader of the Purple Martin and Bird Club at Leisure World and by Pat McNeilly of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America, which maintains one of the largest martin colonies in the County. The MBC Council approved and purchased a 12-gourd house in January 2026.

Once Brookside installed the house in its Rose Garden, however, the work really began. Almost daily, we came to keep out unwanted species and to watch for martin "scouts," playing prerecorded chatter to attract their attention. Forewarned that houses often stand empty in the first year, I was resigned to a quiet season, especially when May went by without martins. But on June 2, Dee sent a text ("Purple Martins in the hotel"), and I rushed over to find a beautiful subadult female and deep-purple adult male calling over the house. In short order, the pair occupied a south-facing gourd, built a nest, and laid eggs, all within two weeks of arrival! We were on our toes, inspecting the gourds weekly, collecting data, stressing over the extreme heat, and changing the nest to reduce parasites at the midway point. We were anticipating fledging on July 27, when I made my sad discovery a week earlier.

The possibility of painful endings should not deter us from making the attempt. The Brookside martins brought us joy, and, with adjustments, we can still give them a productive home in future summers. Furthermore, MBC members have eyes on expansion: former Chapter Director Jo Cox, Lauren Carey, and I are reaching out to local government property managers to propose new martin houses at County parks. Stay tuned!



Martin mother keeps watch at the nest entrance. Photo by Emily Huang

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

By Andy Martin

A **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** was a great find by Jim Ivett on utility wires across from the entrance to Crossvines (formerly the Poolesville Golf Course) along West Willard Rd near Poolesville on August 16.

Weather conditions and migration combined for some great shorebird sightings in the county during the latter half of May. Jared Fisher noted 3 **Hudsonian Whimbrels** at the Summit Hall Turf Farm on May 23. The new name for this species reflects the formal adoption of the split into **Hudsonian Whimbrel** and **Eurasian Whimbrel** by eBird in 2025. Also mixed in amongst the whimbrels at the turf farm were 8 **Black-bellied Plovers**, a single **White-rumped Sandpiper**, **Semipalmated Plovers**, **Semipalmated Sandpipers**, **Least Sandpipers** and **Yellowlegs species**. A **Sanderling** was found on the Potomac River adjacent to Violette's Lock on May 23 by Jared Fisher. On May 24 at Violette's Lock, Jared reported 3 **Red-necked Phalaropes**. The same day, across county, Joe Hanfman found 2 **Red-necked Phalaropes** at Triadelphia Reservoir. A **Ruddy Turnstone** on its way north was seen taking a break on some midriver rocks at Violette's Lock on May 14. Another **Ruddy Turnstone** was seen in the same location, in southbound migration on July 29. Joshua Rosenthal found 2 **Willetts** at Violette's Lock on August 2. And more from the Violette's Lock area, John Sojda spotted 3 **American Avocets** flying down river on August 20.

Brandon Weaver reported a **Black Tern** on the Potomac River adjacent to Edwards Ferry on May 30. **Black Terns** were also seen downriver near Riley's to Violette's Lock stretch on June 3 and July 18.

Jared Fisher reported a **Tricolored Heron** at Violette's Lock on August 2. Ryan and Kathryn Carr found a **Western Cattle Egret** at Violette's Lock on May 25.

Jared Fisher noted a "rare" for midsummer **Common Gallinule** at the National Cancer Institute (NCI) pond along Rte 28 (Key West Ave) in Gaithersburg on August 6.

Mississippi Kites appear to be successfully nesting in Montgomery County again this summer, with two different pairs raising young—one pair at Welsh Park in Rockville and the other off Holly Ridge Dr in the Norbeck area. Jim Ivett observed adult birds tending to associated juveniles at both locations on August 11. And while not in Montgomery County per se, an additional **Mississippi Kite** pair has been seen consistently this summer nearby in the District of Columbia near Eastern Ave, NE.

Mississippi Kite at Welsh Park in Rockville. Photo by Sal Cabaldon Campos



Leo Prikhodko reported a **Bicknell's Thrush** in the North Potomac area on May 17. This bird was seen or heard by other Montgomery County birders through May 19.

Wren Manderscheid and Jingkan Wu noted 13 **Black-bellied Whistling Ducks** at Lake Whetstone on May 19. Emily Huang and Anne Looker both spotted a group of 16 **Black-bellied Whistling Ducks** at Pine Lake within Wheaton RP on June 26; the ducks only stayed one day but were seen by several birders. Ryan and Kathryn Carr reported a **Mute Swan** at Black Hill Regional Park on June 2, and a **Mute Swan** (possibly the same bird) has been observed consistently at nearby Gunner's Lake through the first half of August.

Jim Ivett found an **Alder Flycatcher** along Izaak Walton Way on May 15 and Angela Atwood-Moore noted an **Olive-sided Flycatcher** at Wheaton Regional Park on May 13.

Jared Fisher reported a **Cerulean Warbler** along the C&O Canal near Violette's Lock on May 12. Scott Young found a **Mourning Warbler** in the same location on the same day. Scott Young also heard a **Mourning Warbler** along the C&O Canal at Violette's Lock on May 11 and Carla Morris heard one at Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park on May 12.

Jared Fisher detected the flight call of a migrating **Dickcissel** over his Darnestown yard on the night of May 10.

The total number of species reported in the county year to date stands at 247 as of August 16.



Youth Birding

By Ryan Carr, Youth Montgomery Bird Club

This past July, five of the YMBC members attended the Taking Flight weeklong birding sleepaway camp in Colorado, hosted by the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies. It was fantastic!

Since many of us arrived the day before camp started, we had the opportunity to go birding around the Denver area. We had many highlights such as a Western Kingbird seen from our plane window when we landed, six Burrowing Owls on the side of the road, a Marbled Godwit, a Long-billed Curlew, two White-faced Ibises, many American White Pelicans, four Franklin's Gulls, and finally we visited a refuge where we hoped to see a Lark Bunting. We found many sparrows including Cassin's, Brewer's, Lark, Grasshopper, and Vesper, but no Lark Bunting. Next, we met up with the rest of the campers and camp staff and drove into the mountains to the Cal-Wood Education Center in Jamestown where we would be staying.

During the next five days we found many great western species such as a Common Poorwill in the middle of our path at night, many Rufous and Broad-tailed Hummingbirds, American Dippers, nesting Red-naped and Williamson's Sapsuckers, multiple Lewis's Woodpeckers, a Golden Eagle, Virginia's and MacGillivray's warblers, and many more cool birds. However, the highlight of the week was in Rocky Mountain National Park at an elevation of more than 13,000 feet.

We were searching for White-tailed Ptarmigans, and someone walked up to us and asked what we were looking for. We responded, not expecting them to understand, but to our surprise, they informed us that there were ptarmigans about 300 feet up the trail. Everyone started sprinting. I had the scope and was

holding it over my head as we ran as fast as we could up the trail. When we arrived, we were all gasping for breath as the lower oxygen levels made it difficult to breathe. However, we soon forgot our need for air as there were two ptarmigans right next to the path. We were shocked. They were within 10 feet of us! We hung around taking photo after photo as this was a lifer for almost all of us. Eventually we had to leave, but that moment will stay with us forever.

As camp came to a close, we met back up with our families and prepared to head home. We had just enough time to go back to the Lark Bunting spot, and this time we succeeded. It was a fantastic way to end the trip. This was truly an incredible trip that we all are so glad we could be a part of and are grateful to our parents for making it happen!

Closer to home, we had a June trip at Royce Hanson Conservation Park this season. We thank Lauren Carey and Carla Morris for mentoring us. We had a great day with 53 species identified, including close looks at an American Kestrel family. (eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S357324412>)

Trips planned for September include **September 5 at Masonville Cove** for an introduction to bird banding and **September 20 at Jug Bay**. Look out for more dates soon via the MailChimp and the MBC website. We'd love to have some new members join us!

We are always looking for new mentors. 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.

Is your child interested in birding in other parts of the state? The Youth Maryland Ornithological Society (YMOS) has trips all over! You can learn more at <https://mdbirds.org/young-birders/> or by reaching out to George Radcliffe at radcliffg@gmail.com.



Pine Grosbeak. Photo by Leo Prikhodko



White-tailed Ptarmigan. Photo by Ryan Carr

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. If you need to cancel, please notify the leader well in advance so those on the (often long!) waiting lists will get a chance to participate. For recent field trip reports and for guidance on in-person events and inclement weather changes, please visit <https://www.montgomerybirdclub.org/>.

OCTOBER 3 (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: 12. LEADER: Rob Hilton at rob.hilton.2010@gmail.com. Lisa Shannon will co-lead.

OCTOBER 4 (Sunday)

HUGHES HOLLOW

Join us for a morning of marsh and woodland birding. Targets are fall migrants such as warblers, sparrows, and ducks. Beginners and young birders are especially encouraged to join. We will gather at 7:30 a.m. in the Hughes Hollow parking lot. Limit: 12. LEADER: Lauren Carey at ljcarey011@gmail.com.

OCTOBER 10 (Saturday)

ROYCE HANSON CONSERVATION PARK

Join us for a sparrow-laden autumn walk along the field edges of Royce Hanson Conservation Park. In addition, we'll hope for passing raptors, resident woodpeckers, and other field birds, with perhaps a foray into the woods to see who's tucking in for the winter. Meet at 8 a.m. in the parking lot. Limit: 10. Leader: Lauren Carey at ljcarey011@gmail.com.

OCTOBER 11 (Sunday)

OAKS LANDFILL, LAYTONSVILLE

Explore in carpools this now-closed landfill adjacent to the Blue Mash Nature Trail. Mostly open terrain on both paved and gravel roads, including two pond views. Possible sparrows, raptors, and waterfowl. Shorebirds are possible if there are mudflats at the big pond. Leader will have scope for distant birds. Meet at 8 a.m. at 6001 Rt. 108, Laytonsville, Md. Limit: 17. *Note: Reservations with a phone number required at least a week ahead of the trip for names to be submitted to the County.* LEADER: Mark England at englandmark@comcast.net.

OCTOBER 14 (Wednesday)

DORCHESTER COUNTY

Full-day birding trip to Dorchester County on MD's Eastern Shore. Meet in Cambridge at the Visitor Center at Sailwind Park at 8:30 a.m. Carpooling from the meeting place is required. Birding locations include Egypt Rd, Blackwater NWR, and Hurlock WWTP. We will be targeting lingering shorebirds, late migrants, and early arriving waterfowl plus any rarities reported in the area. Limit: 12. Sunscreen, insect repellent, and sturdy walking shoes suggested. Bring your own lunch, snacks, water, etc. We will plan to eat lunch in the field. LEADER: Jim Green at jkgbirdman53@gmail.com.

OCTOBER 18 (Sunday)

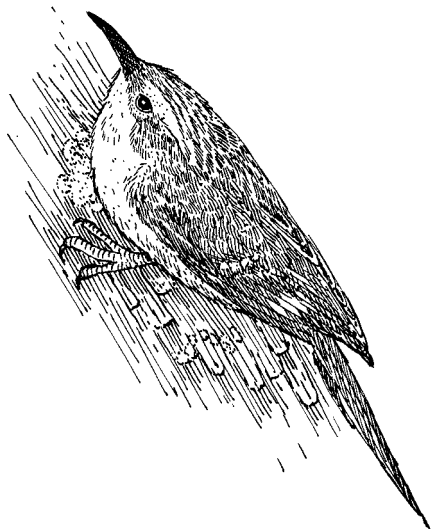
LITTLE BENNETT RP FOR BEGINNERS

All are welcome on this 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.

OCTOBER 22 (Thursday)

BLOCKHOUSE POINT CONSERVATION PARK

Join us for a late fall morning half-day walk at this historic conservation park off River Road with woods, a stream, clearings, and a Potomac River overlook. We will meet at 8 a.m. hoping to see year-round residents as well as wintering species like Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets, Brown Creeper, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and Winter Wren. No facilities available. Limit 10. LEADER: James Fleming at jameshhfleming@gmail.com. Roy Howard will co-lead.



OCTOBER 31 (Saturday)**REDGATE PARK**

Come explore this 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: 12. LEADER: Anne Mytych at amytych@yahoo.com.

OCTOBER 31 (Saturday)**ROCK CREEK'S NORTH BRANCH STREAM VALLEY**

Discover upper Rock Creek's watershed with a variety of habitats. We will start along open fields and marshy areas next to Bowie Mill Park with the opportunity to see a variety of sparrows, hawks, fall migrants, and turkeys if we're lucky. Previous lists included 8 species of sparrows including Fox, White-crowned, Swamp, and Savannah Sparrows. 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 (<https://tinyurl.com/yswz6v95>) next to Sequoyah Elementary School. Limit: 16. LEADER: Jo Cox at jobird11@gmail.com. Kathy Reitz will co-lead.

NOVEMBER 2 (Monday)**ROYCE HANSON CONSERVATION PARK POP-UP**

No reservations needed! Enjoy some fall birding at one of Montgomery's newer parks, targeting sparrows and lingering fall migrants along both field and forest edge habitat. Meet at 7:30 a.m. in the parking lot at 21820 Club Hollow Road in Poolesville, MD. LEADER: Andy Martin at martinap2@verizon.net. Note: We return to standard time on Sunday, November 1.

NOVEMBER 3 (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 (Wednesday)**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. Meet at 8 a.m. Limit: 12. LEADER: Jo Cox at jobird11@gmail.com. Kathy Reitz will co-lead.

NOVEMBER 12 (Thursday)**DORCHESTER COUNTY**

Full-day birding trip to Dorchester County on MD's Eastern Shore. Meet in Cambridge at the visitor center at Sailwind Park at 8:30am. Carpooling from the meeting location is required. Birding locations include Egypt Rd, Blackwater NWR, and many more. Target birds include waterfowl, sparrows, year-round residents like Brown-headed Nuthatch, etc. If there are rarities reported in the area, we will look for them. Limit: 12. Sunscreen, insect repellent, and sturdy walking shoes suggested. Bring your own lunch, snacks, and water. We will plan to eat in the field. LEADER: Jim Green at Jkgbirdman53@gmail.com.

NOVEMBER 14 (Saturday)**LAKE ARTEMESIA**

Join us at 8 a.m. for a late fall trip. Half a dozen species of ducks are possible, as well as other waterbirds. Wintering landbirds such as Hermit Thrush and sparrows are usually present. Easy walking on a paved path. Limit: 10. Leader: Rob Hilton at rob.hilton.2010@gmail.com. Lisa Shannon will co-lead.

DECEMBER 6 (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: Leo Dilling at LeoDilling@hotmail.com.

DECEMBER 12 (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.

DECEMBER 15 (Tuesday)**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.



The Chat
MBC/MOS
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