

President's Chat

By Scott Young

I am pleased to see that the American Ornithological Society has decided to commit "to changing all English-language names of birds within its geographic jurisdiction that are named directly after people (eponyms), along with other names deemed offensive and exclusionary, focusing first on those species that occur primarily within the U.S. or Canada."

Further information is available here: bit.ly/3u3eKpg. Some of the people that the birds are named after were excellent observers but lousy representatives of our own species, including Confederate generals (J.P. McCowan), slave-owners (J.J. Audubon, J. Bachman, W.A. Hammond), grave robbers (Audubon, W. MacGillivray, J.K. Townsend), displacers and killers of Indigenous peoples (C. Bendire, W. Scott), fraudsters/plagiarists (Audubon), and eugenicists (Hammond). Further information is presented at the Bird Names for Birds website (birdnamesforbirds.wordpress.com/profile-index/). A promised additional benefit to removing these eponyms is that the new names will be related to some behavioral or physical characteristic of the bird, making the bird slightly easier to identify.

I can't end this section of *The Chat* without mentioning that these name changes remind us that the Montgomery Bird Club, although seeing record numbers of members, has barely begun to make our Club more inclusive. We need to become more proactive in this regard.

As I wrote last year, winter is approaching, and with it, the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Counts (CBC). I hope that members who have participated in the local CBCs will continue to do so. If you haven't in the past, please consider trying it this year by contacting any of the CBC compilers. Further information about the local CBCs is available in this issue of *The Chat*. Perhaps you will be in another county or state that has a circle of interest to you there—you can find out

more about that CBC at audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count. I am sure that they would appreciate your help! I can honestly say that these outings have been a lot of fun. And they are a great way to see areas of the county that may be unfamiliar to you.



In perhaps a related matter, the Winter Finch Forecast for 2023-2024 has been released (finchnetwork.org/winter-finch-forecast-2023-2024). Purple Finches may be present in numbers in later winter with perhaps some redpolls and crossbills. Pine Siskins may show in significant numbers. Curiously, I couldn't find any prognostications related to the effects of the recent huge Canadian forest fires on food supplies and interruptions. It may be that more lateral movements of some of the bird species may serve them well this year. If anyone has further insights that they care to forward to me, I will be happy to share them with our members. Of course, time will tell!

P.S. The Club's recordings of meetings are available now on the Club's YouTube channel, Montgomery Bird Club Videos, at bit.ly/49Ur9N1.

CONTENTS	
Who's Who.....	2
Editor's Corner.....	3
Club News.....	3-4
Winter Meetings.....	5
Owling Basics for Atlasers.....	6
Birds of Note.....	7
Winter/Spring Field Trips.....	8-9
Youth Birding.....	10
Christmas Bird Counts.....	11
Welcome New Members.....	11

Who's Who?

By Stella Tea

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 three people whose work has been critical to the mission of the Montgomery Bird Club.



Moira Davenport, Membership Chair

Moira got hooked on birding after retirement from a professional medical society in 2014, when she went on a couple of bird walks led by Jim Nelson and Mike Bowen. An American Redstart on one of those walks got her interest into high gear, and then a chance meeting with Linda Friedland and Lydia Schindler a few weeks later at Violette's Lock turned her into an avid birder. Linda and Lydia patiently (and repeatedly) identified birds and their calls for her and have been (and continue to be) wonderful mentors and good friends. Originally from South Africa, Moira regrets not taking up birding when she lived there, but luckily birder family members take her out when she visits. When not birding, Moira is transforming her yard into a wildlife habitat and volunteering with the native plant advocacy organization, Wild Ones. She and husband Bill have four sons and 8 grandchildren.



Linda Friedland, Field Trip Coordinator

Linda moved from her native Canada to Maryland in the late '60s. Between child rearing and teaching, Linda spent many happy hours exploring county parks. But it was the sighting of a Blackburnian Warbler that changed the focus of these walks from simply enjoying nature to actively birding! By joining MBC, Linda realized the benefits of being in a group and of gaining knowledge from skilled leaders. She later went on to serve as MBC VP and President. As editor-in-chief, she was a driving force in the publication of *A Birder's Guide to Montgomery County* in 2001. Her special love of warblers persisted and, joined by Mike Bowen and Jim Nelson, the trio of former MBC presidents hosted a series of hour-long warbler workshops throughout the state. Linda is still in love with warblers and each spring can be found at Pennyfield Lock waiting impatiently for the first Louisiana Waterthrush to sing out.



Gail Mackiernan, Conservation Chair

Gail is by training a marine biologist or, more accurately, a biological oceanographer. Her area of expertise is the Chesapeake Bay, and she worked throughout her professional life on this estuary. As research director for the University of Maryland Sea Grant College, she oversaw studies in a wide range of disciplines from fisheries to biotechnology, all directed toward the Bay and its ecology. She retired from the University in 1997. Gail started birdwatching seriously in high school, then took a "break" during grad school, only to revive her interest about 40 years ago. Since then, along with her husband Barry Cooper, she has traveled to all seven continents in search of birds.

Editor's Corner

By Stella Tea

Another year of *The Chat* is in the books! I want to thank our contributors of the past year: Lisa Alexander, Vickie Baily, Cintia Cabib, Charlie/Kathryn/Ryan Carr, Tara Clifton, Becky Cromwell, Karen Cyr, Moira Davenport, Lisa Wilcox Deyo, Mark England, Gabriel Foley, Linda Friedland, Cheryl Hogue, Roy Howard, Emily Huang, Jim Ivett, Gail Mackiernan, Andy Martin, Janet Millenson, Anne Mytych, Jim Nelson, Lisa Norwalk, Evelyn Ralston, Dave Roberts, Byron Swift, Anna Urciolo, Ed Vigezzi, Chris Wright, and Scott Young. I have enjoyed collaborating with you and learning from you.

A special shoutout to Susan Hunt, Pam Oves, Gemma Radko, and Ed Vigezzi for your expertise, enthusiasm, and patience. I am proud of every issue we have published together on behalf of the Club. Finally, I want to thank young member Ryan Carr and mom Kathryn for taking over the Youth Birding column since last December. When you see Ryan out in the field, congratulate him on getting his 200th bird in Montgomery County. It is an exciting milestone! Find out which bird it was on page 10. Hope to see you at the in-person December Social.

Club News

Time to Renew Your MOS/MBC Membership!

By Moira Davenport, Membership Chair

If you haven't already had a chance to renew your MOS/MBC membership, this would be the perfect time! Log in to your MOS record at mdbirds.org, and click on the Join/Renew tab. If you wish to pay by check, you will find instructions on this MOS website page: mdbirds.org/dues-by-check/. 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!

Club Donation from Phyllis and Joseph Meltzer

By Scott Young, MBC President

It is with great pleasure and gratitude that the Montgomery Bird Club acknowledges a donation of \$15,000 from Phyllis and Joseph Meltzer. The Meltzers, birders since 1987, enjoyed their travels to many countries and regions of the United States. They were delighted to share their passions with other birders with whom they developed deep and dear friendships. Joe, age 90, was an aerospace engineer for 48 years at The Aerospace Corporation, based in El Segundo, CA. He was head of the Washington Office and, later, Chief Engineer of the Corporation. He earned his doctorate at UCLA in Engineering. Phyllis earned her doctorate at USC in Occupational Science.

Phyllis wrote, "It is our pleasure to support the Montgomery Bird Club ... and to help its members encourage and enable persons with limited abilities to join the ranks of those of us who love being out of doors, supporting the natural world, and preserving bird life as much as possible." In addition to accessibility improvements, some of the funds will be used to strengthen our youth birding program (YMBC). The MBC Council will be actively involved in allocating these funds, but suggestions are always welcome.

Maryland-DC BBA3: Final Year!

By Emily Huang, County Co-Coordinator, and Gabriel Foley, Atlas Coordinator

Montgomery County atlasers have all but completed their goals for the Maryland-DC Breeding Bird Atlas, a large-scale, 5-year project (2020-2024) to determine the distribution of breeding birds in Maryland and the District of

Continued on page 4



Club News

Continued from page 3

Columbia. Thanks to the hard work of our atlas volunteers, most of whom are also MBC members, 55 out of 59 of the county's atlas blocks are complete! We have now reached the "mop-up" stage of BBA3. In our fifth and final year, we will be highlighting specific needs each unfinished block requires to be considered complete. Each of these specific needs (for example, a short list of species) will then be entrusted to a volunteer—a very streamlined version of block adoption. Thanks to Club members' hard work in Montgomery County, the majority of incomplete blocks are elsewhere, so 2024 will be a year for exploring! Let's share the load and help out those counties with fewer volunteers (where, incidentally, you might see some new and interesting breeding birds). Interested in helping? There will be an in-person event early next year—stay tuned for details. Alternatively, contact Emily Huang at montgomery@mdbirds.org with questions or to sign up in advance.

MBC Celebrates Birdability

By Emily Huang, Vice-President, and Cheryl Hogue, MBC State Director

Montgomery Bird Club has been working behind the scenes to improve the county's birdability. Recently, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources listened to our request for improved accessibility at Hughes Hollow/McKee-Beshers WMA. The picture below shows the result: a widened and graded path around the entrance gate designed to make it easier for motorized scooter and wheelchair access.

The Club was a charter participant in Montgomery Parks' first observance of Birdability Week in October. Birdability Week is an annual event to share ideas and resources for making birding a more enjoyable experience for all, including for people with differing abilities. MBC President Scott Young and State Director Cheryl Hogue staffed a table at the October 15 county celebration held at Ray's Meadow Local Park in Chevy Chase. Though the most heavily attended aspect of the event was distribution of EnChroma© glasses that help make colors visible for



A widened and graded path around the Hughes Hollow entrance gate to make it easier for motorized scooter and wheelchair access. Photo by Jim Ivett

people with red-green color blindness, Scott and Cheryl spoke with a number of participants about MBC. The two also trained scopes on Red-shouldered Hawks perched in nearby trees and shared views of the raptors with delighted attendees. See the eBird report for the sunny, blustery day with 18 species: ebird.org/checklist/S152335458. For event photos and videos, visit the Montgomery Parks Flickr page here: [flickr.com/photos/mc_parks_mncppc/albums/72177720312061362/with/53270937232/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/mc_parks_mncppc/albums/72177720312061362/with/53270937232/).

Good News About RedGate Park!

By Vickie Baily

As one of their final acts, the Rockville Mayor and Council voted to designate RedGate an arboretum. The park has a new name: RedGate Park and Arboretum. The dog park has been built but isn't opened yet, and the community gardens are planned but not started. The Montgomery Bird Club had a hand in the final stages of the arboretum designation. A big thank you to Emily Huang and Jo Cox! To learn more about the park and keep up with updates, visit redgatepark.org.



Winter Meetings

By Emily Huang, Vice-President

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

DECEMBER 13, 2023 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m. Holiday Wine & Cheese, Mystery Birds, and Other Fun! (in-person only at the Potomac Presbyterian Church)

Meet other members over wine and cheese before enjoying the President's member photos of the month and bird science tidbit. Then sharpen your visual and auditory bird identification skills for the traditional Vice-President's Bird Quiz. To mark the 4th year of the Maryland-DC Breeding Bird Atlas, this year's quiz will include mystery nests and baby birds!

The evening will wind up with members' favorite photos from 2023. Photos do not have to be exclusively from the State of Maryland—just your favorite! To submit photos for the show, please send to montgomerybirdclub@mdbirds.org with name of Club member, location, date of photo, and bird species. Up to *two photos* may be submitted per Club member but indicate your favorite in case of time restrictions.

JANUARY 17, 2024 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m. Gabriel Foley presents "Atlasing in the Final Year of the Maryland and DC Breeding Bird Atlas 3"

Next year is the fifth and final year of data collection for the Maryland & DC Breeding Bird Atlas 3 (BBA3). This community science project is documenting the distribution, abundance, and timing of each bird species that breeds in Maryland or DC. When complete, the BBA3 dataset can be compared to similar past projects and will provide an unparalleled record of how local bird distributions have changed over the last 40 years. Atlas Coordinator Gabriel Foley will provide an overview of how the project collects data, an update on the current status, and a review of the strategy for completing the project's goals in its final year.

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

FEBRUARY 21, 2024 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m. Cheryl Hogue presents "Creating My Own Bird Expeditions: Tucson, Big Bend, and Sax-Zim Bog"

Cheryl Hogue spent a month in Southwest Arizona in the spring of 2023 and then birded Big Bend National Park in Texas as a stop on the drive home. She's just returned from Sax-Zim Bog in northern Minnesota on a trek in search of owls. Cheryl will share her tips on crafting domestic bird trips that don't rely on tour operators, private guides, or festivals. Her strategy costs less and allows for more extensive exploration of an area and connection with other birders. Plus, she'll share images of some of the many birds she saw.

Cheryl Hogue is a journalist who retired a year ago from a scientific magazine where she covered plastic pollution, the "forever chemicals" called PFAS, and climate change. She still freelances. Cheryl and Mark England recently crafted and taught a workshop for MBC on best practices for leading field trips for potential new leaders. Cheryl is an MBC state director and serves on the MOS committee on diversity, equity, and inclusion. She lives in Silver Spring and leads field trips in the eastern and central parts of Montgomery County. Her favorite bird is Australia's Superb Fairywren.



Owling Basics for Atlasers

By Mark England, MBC State Director

This past July and August, I went searching primarily for Eastern Screech Owls in several upcounty atlas blocks where they had not been found. I had little success in early July, but all owl species responses improved toward the end of the month and up to the atlas end “safe date” of August 15. By then it was likely that owlets had departed and the parents started vocalizing more, mostly calling as a territorial defense. I’d like to share some observations from this period for atlasers hoping for better owling results in the upcoming final year of the Maryland & DC Breeding Bird Atlas 3.

The equipment needed for owling is minimal: a good birding app with a variety of owl vocalizations (I use Sibley V2), an amplified playback device like a Bluetooth speaker, and a flashlight or headlamp—to avoid tripping in the dark and to see an owl that has flown in to investigate. The current smartphone birding apps and Bluetooth technology have greatly simplified owling. In the last days of BBA2 in 2006, I had to use a large Sony boombox and a “Night Sounds” CD sent out by the atlas coordinator, which was cumbersome but still worked. Now, a midsize Bluetooth device from companies like JBL, Ultimate Ears, or Bose, in the range of \$70-\$120, should be sufficient for most owling.

Consider taking a partner with you when owling, as this can be a lonely and nerve-racking pursuit by yourself. You will be surprised at the number of distant dogs that start barking at owl calls or even the occasional police car that stops to ask what you are doing. It’s reassuring to have a friend to talk to in the often pitch-black night in parts unknown, and if you should fall or sprain an ankle, a partner can assist you.

Where to go owling? Look for natural areas away from houses that might support our three most common owls—Eastern Screech, Barred, and Great Horned. For screech owls, I have found it best to avoid deep woods and look for more open woods, small woodlots, or local parks with a wooded border. A thin line of trees, or a copse, is almost always preferable to deep forest for finding screech owls. Barred Owls have a strong affinity for mature woods with open understory for hunting mammals, usually near water, where they hunt amphibians. The difficult-to-find Great Horned Owl likes trees bordering open areas, preferably fallow weedy fields with rabbits and other prey—powerline cuts can be productive. Many county parks do not allow night use, but there is a nocturnal scientific use permit available for atlasers.

Try for the small screech owl first. They are the first to emerge, sometimes just after sundown, but more likely to respond to playback about 1.5 hours after sunset. In the early spring, screech owls will likely be using their “monotone trill” call for courting and pair contact, but if that doesn’t elicit a reply, try the “whinny & trill” call, which the owls use year-round and is particularly effective in late summer and fall. Try a 30- or 45-second playback at first, then wait a minute or two to listen. If there is no response, try the playback again, perhaps varying the volume a bit or playing the call for up to a minute. If you haven’t heard anything in 10 minutes, move on to another spot. Use the same approach later in the evening for the Barred and Great Horned Owls but only after first trying for the easily intimidated screech owl. Crank up the volume for the two large owls, often farther away and slower to respond, if they do at all.

I use the Merlin Bird ID app to record owl responses, so I have a record of the date and time of night. Even if you have no response, record that in eBird for nocturnal effort. Also, eBird will record your location, which could assist others in finding owls on the future BBA4. Finally, and most important, minimize your use of playback to avoid stressing the owls, and do not share owl nest locations or roost sites on eBird and social media.

Have questions? Contact me at englandmark@comcast.net.



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

By Andy Martin

A **Limpkin** was a great find in the county in the last weeks of August. A first for this species in the county! The bird, which was initially found and reported by Ryan Webb on August 19, was observed enjoying a seemingly endless feast of freshwater mollusks in a leftover rivulet of the semi-dry canal bed just upstream from Pennyfield Lock and very near to the Dierssen WMA. The **Limpkin** cooperatively stuck around in the same location through September 11, providing an opportunity for many to add it to their county bird lists.

Jonathan Putnam reported a **Brant** on the Potomac River downstream of Swain's Lock on November 4. Jared Fisher reported a **Surf Scoter** on Little Seneca Lake at Black Hill RP on October 29, and Dave Czaplak found a **Black Scoter** in the same location on October 31.

Dry weather conditions from late summer to early fall in combination with southbound migration made for some good inland shorebirding over the past few months. Exposed shoreline and sandbars at Triadelphia Reservoir attracted 2 **Baird's Sandpipers** reported by Joe Hanfman on August 30. Dave Roberts found a **Sanderling** in the same location on August 27. On September 24, Dave Ziolkowski found an impressive shorebird mix at Triadelphia Reservoir that included 12 **Black-bellied Plovers**, 2 **American Golden-Plovers**, **Stilt** and **Baird's Sandpipers**, and 14 **White-rumped Sandpipers**. Dave Roberts had a **Black-bellied Plover** at the Hughes Rd Polo Fields on September 24. Dave Czaplak reported a flyby **Whimbrel** over the Potomac River adjacent to Violette's Lock on August 22. Jared Fisher found a **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** at the Hughes Rd Polo Fields on August 26. Mary Ann Todd and Dave Czaplak found an **Upland Sandpiper** at the Polo Fields on August 20. Early November saw a good passage of **Dunlin** through our area, with birds being reported from both Blue Mash Nature Trail and the Potomac



Lark Sparrow at Woodstock Equestrian Park. Photo by Roy Howard

River adjacent to Violette's and Riley's Locks. A few latish **Pectoral** and **White-rumped Sandpipers** were also mixed in with the **Dunlins**.

Dave Powell found 2 **Sandhill Cranes** at Green Hills Farm Wetland off Huntmaster Rd on October 15.

Ryan Douglas noted a **Golden Eagle** soaring with a mixed kettle of vultures high over Moyer Rd Local Park near Damascus on October 1.

Jared Fisher heard an **Eastern Whip-poor-will** from the parking area at the end of Sycamore Landing Rd in the early morning hours of August 27.

John McDonough found a **Dickcissel** at Blue Mash Nature Trail on October 16. A few nights later on October 19, Jared Fisher detected the nocturnal flight call of a **Dickcissel** passing over his house near North Potomac.

Mark England found a **Lark Sparrow** at Woodstock Equestrian Park near Dickerson on October 26. **Lark Sparrow** is quite rare for the county, previously reported in the county only two times over the last 57 years, once from 2016 and another all the way back to 1966.

Jared Fisher found a **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** along the C&O Canal near Sycamore Landing on September 3. David Farner came across a **Connecticut Warbler** at Little Bennett RP on August 31, and John Sojda noted a **Philadelphia Vireo** at the boat ramp area of Black Hill RP on September 9. Clive Harris spotted an **American Tree Sparrow** (a very early record and a pretty rare bird in the county these days) at RedGate Park in Rockville on November 8.



Stacy Rabinovitz used Cornell University's Merlin Bird ID app to note a **Marsh Wren** at Ken-Gar Palisades Park off Beach Dr on October 12. Mont Co birding expat Jim Green found a **Marsh Wren** in the sorghum fields at the end of Sycamore Landing Rd near the C&O Canal.

As of November 11, there have been 254 species of birds reported in Montgomery County this year. The top five county listers continue to be Jared Fisher, John Sojda, Roy Howard, Dave Roberts, and Mary Ann Todd.

Winter/Spring Field Trips

By Linda Friedland, Field Trip Coordinator

Reservations are required for all MBC field trips unless otherwise noted. Contact trip leaders for reservations, directions, and other information. For recent field trip reports and Club guidance on in-person events including COVID restrictions and inclement weather changes, please visit montgomerybirdclub.org/.

JANUARY 4 (Thursday)

BLUE MASH

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

JANUARY 7 (Sunday)

BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK AND GUNNERS LAKE

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

JANUARY 10 (Wednesday)

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.

JANUARY 13 (Saturday)

OAKS LANDFILL, LAYTONSVILLE

Bundle up for LATE AFTERNOON (3:00 to 5:30 p.m.) search for wintering sparrows and raptors, including possible Northern Harriers and Short-eared Owls. Mostly open terrain with some ponds, which we will check if they are not frozen over. Reservations required at least a week ahead of the trip for names to be submitted to the county. Meet at 3 p.m. on the Landfill entrance drive at 6001 Rt. 108, Laytonsville, Md. Limit: 16. LEADER: Mark England at englandmark@comcast.net.

JANUARY 21 (Sunday)

RILEY'S LOCK, C&O CANAL

Join us for a morning at and around Riley's Lock where we will first spend some time scanning the river for waterfowl. After that, we'll head upstream on the towpath checking the turning basin for any elusive waterfowl and then continue on looking for winter woodland birds. Meet at 8:30 a.m., and bring a scope if you have one. Limit: 12. LEADER: Scott Young at scott4aves@icloud.com. Dave Roberts will co-lead.

FEBRUARY 3 (Saturday)

OAKS LANDFILL, LAYTONSVILLE

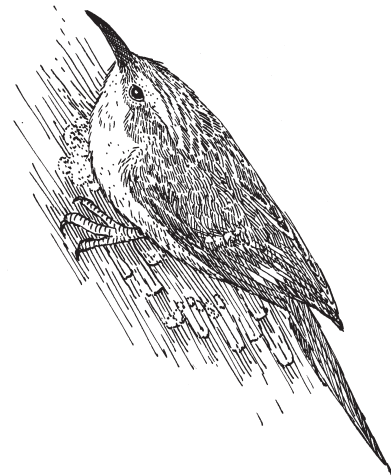
Bundle up for LATE AFTERNOON (3:30 to 6:00 p.m.) search for wintering sparrows and raptors, including possible Northern Harriers and Short-eared Owls. Mostly open terrain with some ponds, which we will check if they are not frozen over. Reservations required at least a week ahead of the trip for names to be submitted to the county. Meet at 3:30 p.m. on the Landfill entrance drive at 6001 Rt. 108, Laytonsville, Md. Limit: 16. LEADER: Mark England at englandmark@comcast.net.

FEBRUARY 7 (Wednesday)

GREAT FALLS

Join us for a leisurely morning walk from 8 to 10 a.m. on the C&O Canal towpath. We will meet at Great Falls at 8 a.m. and will walk downriver as we look for ducks, woodpeckers, kinglets, and sparrows. Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, and Winter Wren are possible. This walk is geared toward beginning birders, but all are welcome.

Limit: 8. LEADERS: Gene Murray at eugenemurray@comcast.net and Susan Higginbotham at smhigginb@gmail.com.



FEBRUARY 10 (Saturday)
OAKS LANDFILL, LAYTONSVILLE
(Joint Trip with Nature Forward)

Bundle up for LATE AFTERNOON (3:30 to 6:00 p.m.) search for wintering sparrows and raptors, including possible Northern Harriers and Short-eared Owls. Mostly open terrain with some ponds, which we will check if they are not frozen over. Leader will have scope for distant birds. Meet at 3:30 p.m. on the Landfill entrance drive at 6001 Rt. 108, Laytonsville, Md. Limit: 9. Reservations required at least a week ahead of the trip for names to be submitted to the county. Preference given to new birders and those who have never been to Oaks Landfill. LEADER: Mark England at englandmark@comcast.net.

FEBRUARY 11 (Sunday)
HUGHES HOLLOW

Join us for a morning of winter marsh and woodland birding. Targets are sparrows, woodpeckers, and ducks. Be prepared for possible wet/muddy conditions. Beginners and young birders are encouraged to join. Limit: 12. LEADER: Roy Howard at royhoward@me.com. Kathy Brown at ktb nurse@gmail.com will co-lead.

FEBRUARY 22 (Thursday)
LOIS Y. GREEN CONSERVATION PARK

Morning walk through the varied habitats of this excellent 250-acre park, including two ponds, fields, deciduous and coniferous 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.

FEBRUARY 24 (Saturday)
OCEAN CITY AND THE COAST

We will bird the Ocean City inlet in the morning, looking for sea ducks, gulls, wintering shorebirds, and anything else that might be around (hopefully Razorbill). After that, we will check a few local areas around OC and then, depending on what is being seen in the area, head further north, possibly to Indian River Inlet or a little further inland. We will meet at 8 a.m. in the Ocean City Inlet parking lot, so participants will need to either get up early or stay overnight in the area. Scopes would be useful. Carpooling will likely be needed on the day to visit different locations. Limit: 12. LEADER: Clive Harris at cliveharris@yahoo.com.

MARCH 1 (Friday)
GUNNERS LAKE, GERMANTOWN

This little body of water has established a deserved reputation over the years for a nice variety of wintering waterfowl and rather close views of the birds. If the lake is frozen over at the time of the trip, we will switch to a nearby larger body of water. Walking will be along a

level, paved path. Meet at 8 a.m. along the north side of Wisteria Drive, where there is ample parking. Specific maps giving directions will be sent to participants. Limit: 10. LEADER: Andy Martin at apmartin2@gmail.com.

MARCH 3 (Sunday)
LAKE ARTEMESIA, PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY

Join us for a late winter trip to Lake Artemesia. Half a dozen species of ducks or more are likely; early landbird migrants such as Tree Swallow and Eastern Phoebe are possible; winter birds are still present. Easy walking on a paved path. Trip will begin at 7:30 a.m. Limit: 8. LEADER: Rob Hilton at rob.hilton.2010@gmail.com. Lisa Shannon will co-lead.

MARCH 10 (Sunday)
ROCK CREEK'S NORTH BRANCH STREAM VALLEY

Discover upper Rock Creek's watershed with a variety of habitats. We'll start along open fields and marshy areas next to Bowie Mill Park with the opportunity to see sparrows, hawks, and early migrants. Turkeys and a woodcock have been spotted in this area. For those wanting a longer foray, a 4-mile loop that includes the stream valley will be possible, and likely we'll see woodpeckers and other resident woodland species. The path at this point along Rock Creek is meandering and narrow with some steep sections. Meet at 8 a.m. at Bowie Mill Park (montgomeryparks.org/parks-and-trails/bowie-mill-local-park/) next to Sequoyah Elementary School with the option to do the shorter paved walk or the longer loop. Limit: 12 in two groups of six. CO-LEADERS: Josephine Cox at jobird11@gmail.com and Anne Mytych at amytych@yahoo.com.

MARCH 16 (Saturday)
WHEATON REGIONAL PARK

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

MARCH 23 (Saturday)
BROOKSIDE GARDENS

If you've been wanting to explore this garden oasis in suburban Maryland, here is your chance. Easy walk with mostly local birds and a few winter visitors or early spring arrivals. Good for beginners and anyone wanting to begin their spring birding in a lovely setting. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Visitor Center parking lot. Limit: 8. LEADER: Karen Cyr at kdcyr@comcast.net.

Youth Birding

By Ryan and Kathryn Carr

Our September walk planned for Wheaton Regional Park was a complete rainout, but we still had three exciting Youth Montgomery Bird Club (YMBC) bird walks this fall—Oaks Landfill, Black Hill Regional Park, and Pennyfield Lock. The Oaks Landfill trip was especially successful with 49 species, including 8 types of raptors (including an American Kestrel) and a surprise Vesper Sparrow and Greater Yellowlegs. As usual, our mentors were super engaging and fun. Big shoutouts to Bob Cantilli, Lauren Carey, Jo Cox, Becky Cromwell, Lisa Wilcox Deyo, Mark England, Andy Martin, Dave Powell, and Stella Tea!

Many thanks to Janet Bogue, Jennifer Kawar, Julia Ross, and Stella Tea for binocular and field guide donations. And a huge thank you to Ed Vigezzi for his donation of a sturdy tripod for our scope!

Our YMBC winter walks should be awesome too. These are planned for January 6 (late afternoon at Oaks Landfill), February 11 (Gunners Lake), and March 10 (Lois Y. Green Conservation Park). Keep an eye out for these walks via email and on the MBC website. 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.

The Youth Maryland Ornithological Society (YMOS) has released the 2023-2024 youth birding schedule. For more information and the complete schedule, please reach out to George Radcliffe at radclifg@gmail.com.

We'd love to hear any advice you might have for young birders. Whether you birded 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 share the information on our walks. Drop us a line at youth.birding@gmail.com.



Ryan Carr got his 200th Montgomery County bird—Lark Sparrow—on October 26 at Woodstock Equestrian Park. Photo by Kathryn Carr



Mark England, Becky Cromwell, and Stella Tea (back row from right to left) led a YMBC field trip to Oaks Landfill in October. Photo by Kathryn Carr



Christmas Bird Counts

By Jim Nelson, Seneca CBC Compiler

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) season is rapidly approaching. This year will be the 124th year that CBCs have been conducted. The annual CBC has been organized by National Audubon for many years, and the resulting data is available to everyone in a public database online at netapp.audubon.org/CBCObservation/.



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

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

Triadelphia Reservoir CBC: DECEMBER 16 (Saturday)

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

District of Columbia CBC: DECEMBER 16 (Saturday)

Compiler: Larry Cartwright, prowarbler@verizon.net or 571-359-2395. Alternatively, contact Nature Forward (formerly Audubon Naturalist Society) through Pam Oves at pam.oves@natureforward.org.

Seneca CBC: DECEMBER 17 (Sunday)

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

Central Loudoun CBC: DECEMBER 28 (Thursday)

Compiler: Joe Coleman, jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org, or sign up at loudounwildlife.org, or contact Bryan Henson at bhenson@loudounwildlife.org. This count includes 5 miles along the C&O Canal around White's Ferry in Montgomery County, MD.

Sugarloaf Mountain CBC: DECEMBER 31 (Sunday)

Compiler: Josephine Cox, jobird11@gmail.com or 240-506-1723.

Welcome New Members

By Moira Davenport

Michelle Browning

Ellen and Brandon Cameron

Martha and Brian Canning

Sandeep and Meenal Chavan

Corina Giron and Michael McCloy

Colin Hogan

Tom Hudson and Kay Haynes

Douglas Kaufman

Albert Kim, Malathy Knight, and Mikal Knight Kim

Carla Morris

Isabelle Mouysset

Deborah Nielsen

Margaret Poethig

Stacy Rabinovitz

Jeff Smith

Joy Stein

Ryan Webb



The Chat
MBC/MOS
9825 Moyer Road
Damascus, MD 20872



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

Editor: Stella Tea

Designer: Pam Oves

Proofing: Susan Hunt

Art: Gemma Radko

President: Scott Young

Vice-President: Emily Huang

Membership: Moira Davenport

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

Contact: montgomerybirdclub@mdbirds.org

Montgomery Bird Club Websites:

MBC Home Page:
www.montgomerybirdclub.org

MBC Facebook Page:
www.facebook.com/MontgomeryBirdClub/

MBC Meeting Videos on YouTube:
bit.ly/49Ur9N1

MBC on MOS Website:
mdbirds.org/join/chapters/montgomery-bird-club/