



September 2021

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## President's Chat

I am disappointed that we had to cancel our Social (again), but the good news is that our friends at the Audubon Naturalist Society have generously reserved Woodend for us on Friday, March 11, 2022. As Pam Oves said: "Third time is the charm."





In the meantime, the Club is doing well, with a lot of new members. I find it interesting to see how the mail form on the new website is being used. Spam mails are easy to ignore. Technical or administrative questions have been addressed by Tom Strikwerda, Moira Davenport, or myself. But there are interesting birding requests. Someone asked if we could organize a bird walk in July for a group of Boy Scouts. Anne Mytych volunteered and reports that everyone had a good time. A Minnesota family with a 17-year-old would like a guide for a bird walk. A new convert to birding would like to share her interest with others in her senior residence; Don Messersmith is offering his encyclopedic knowledge and his love of teaching to answer this one, and Scott Young has dealt with a question about sick jays. The existence of the mail form, unexpectedly, expands the range of our activities. Thank you to each of the responders (sorry if I forgot anyone). And if you are interested in answering such queries, let us know (by using the website form!).

We recently learned the sad news that past MBC President Steve Pretl had died in February. Steve would have turned 82 on August 20. He was a pleasant, low-key, unassuming person. He will be missed. His family would appreciate anecdotes and memories. Please contact Sara.Pretl@gmail.com and find more information in the September Mailchimp.

To end on a happier key, I hope that you have been able to travel this summer, even close to home. With other MBC members, including Scott Young and Woody and Rae Dubois, I participated in two MOS trips organized by Josh Engel and his company, Red Hill Birding: Montana and Wyoming in June, Arizona in July. Mountains, "Big Sky," saguaro cacti, what a change of scenery! We came back with impressive numbers of life birds and photos by the hundreds. Favorite birds in Montana included Thick-billed and Chestnut-collared Longspurs, American Dipper, Lazuli Bunting, Bullock's Oriole, and Black-headed Grosbeak. In Southeastern Arizona, we enjoyed some of the most glorious hummingbirds: Berylline, Rivoli's, Violet-crowned, and Blue-throated Mountain-gem and a pair of Elegant Trogons diving in turn into their nest to feed well-hidden young.

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# Club News

## **Diane Ford: Winner of the 2021 California Duck Stamp Art Contest**

Diane's entry in the 2021 California Duck Stamp Art Contest won first place out of a field of 11 entries. Hunters buy duck stamps, and the revenue goes to habitat restoration/protection and other wildlife areas. Her design of a pair of Gadwalls sitting in a marsh will be used by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Diane is really excited as this win is her first national contest win after receiving several third, fifth, and top ten finishes. Congratulations, Diane! To view the press release, visit <https://wildlife.ca.gov/News/maryland-artist-wins-2021-california-duck-stamp-art-contest>.



## **Members of Montgomery Bird Club contributing to *Maryland Birdlife***

Members of the MBC have been taking pen to paper, or fingers to keyboards, to report various bird studies and observations over the spring in the publication *Maryland Birdlife*.

Past president Clive Harris wrote an extensive treatise on the various subspecies, especially the two found in Maryland, of the Greater White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*). He presents detailed information on how to distinguish A.a. gambelli ("Western") from the less common A.a. flavirostris ("Greenland"). YMOS member Nathan Tea found a pale Carolina Chickadee (*Poecile carolinensis*) that he and current MBC VP Scott Young wrote up as an example of the "Brown" mutation. Another pale bird, a Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina*), was suggested by Scott in another report to be an example of progressive graying. The latter two reports will help us not automatically think "leucistic" or "albino" when we find pale birds.

## **Beyond Club News**

Congratulations to MOS President John McKitterick on the birth of his grandson Maxwell!



# Annual Review and Financial Report for 2020-2021

We are pleased to report that our Club finished the 2020-2021 financial and membership year with 261 paying memberships (including over 70 new members since July 2020), a balanced budget and \$12,118 in the bank, and a brand-new website—all of this despite COVID-related restrictions that forced our meetings to become Zoom events and at first limited our field trips to six masked attendees. In the end, we put on 40 field trips with over 300 places filled. Much of this can be attributed to the Club’s rapid deployment of new technology. Our monthly meetings on Zoom enabled a broader audience to enjoy programs featuring a number of speakers from outside the area. As many as 60 households signed on, which was a much broader audience than when we met at the church. Also, regular email reminders with lots of stirring photos helped keep upcoming Club events in members’ minds. As we keep improving the new website funded by two very generous donors and a bequest from the Chandler Robbins estate, we look forward to a new year in which we can combine the lessons of this COVID year with our normal in-person birding life to provide everyone with new and inspiring Club activities.

As required by the bylaws, a financial report and proposed budget approved by the Council on June 14, 2021, are presented below.

—Chris Wright, Treasurer, and Evelyn Ralston, President

<b>Montgomery County Bird Club, Financial Summary and Budget for Fiscal Year 2021-2022*</b>			
<b>Status of Funds as of May 31, 2021</b>			
	<b>2020-2021 Final</b>	<b>2021-2022 Budget</b>	
<b>INCOME</b>			
<b>Dues</b>	\$3,103.00	\$3,000.00	Equal to first year of dues collected by MOS
<b>Wilds Fund</b>	\$2,242.00	\$500.00	Previous year average without special donations
<b>Social/Picnic</b>	\$0	\$1,000.00	Equal to dinner receipts from previous Socials
<b>Site Guide/Misc</b>	\$440.00	\$100.00	Remaining Guides and merchandise
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,785.00</b>	<b>\$4,600.00</b>	
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>			
<b>MOS</b>	\$325.00	\$0	All dues are collected by MOS now
<b>the Chat</b>	\$1,254.03	\$1,200.00	Two 16-page and two 12-page issues
<b>Web</b>	\$3,049.63	\$500.00	Development cost vs. annual maintenance
<b>Office Supplies/Misc</b>	\$140.05	\$200.00	Mailchimp monthly fee (\$15)
<b>Rent/Speakers</b>	\$589.80	\$1,200.00	Zoom (\$150) Vimeo (\$240) church (\$800)
<b>Social/Picnic</b>	\$0	\$1,320.00	Cost of previous Socials plus Black Hill picnic
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,358.51</b>	<b>\$4,420.00</b>	
* The Maryland Ornithological Society fiscal year runs from May 1 to April 30.			

# Fall Meetings

Unfortunately, the Club has had to cancel the September 2021 Social because of an increase in new COVID-19 cases and changes in social distancing and safety protocols. Let us hope that Spring 2022 will be better and that we will finally return to our tradition of meeting in person to honor the Member of the Year, enjoy members' presentation of their most beloved recent photographs, and have a delicious dinner in the beautiful setting of Woodend. Until further notice, our monthly meetings will continue to be conducted virtually. Links to the meetings will be provided separately.

**September 22 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m.**

## Photographing Birds

**Leaders: Evelyn Ralston and Scott Young**

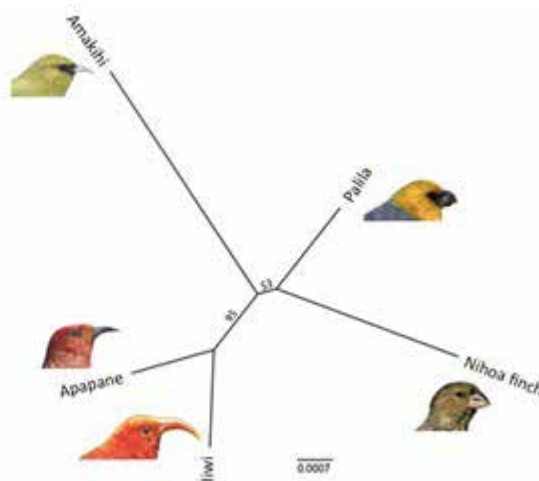
We are developing an open discussion about photography, especially in relation to cameras and techniques for capturing and processing bird photographs and videos. We hope this session will be entertaining and educational for both novice and experienced photographers, as well as for those who just enjoy a good photo! Please send us questions and suggestions at [montgomerybirdclub@mdbirds.org](mailto:montgomerybirdclub@mdbirds.org), and bring tidbits of your knowledge to the meeting.

**October 20 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m.**

## Genetics and Songbirds

**Speaker: James Thomas**

What is a species? Traditionally, species have been distinguished based on behavior and morphology studies. Modern molecular biology has opened the bird genome for examination. Dr. James W. Thomas has studied the correlation between variations in behavior of the White-throated Sparrow and variations in specific genes of the bird. Now at the NIH Intramural Sequencing Center (NISC), he has also participated in an extensive study of the genome of the Hawaiian amakihi (a honeycreeper) that will help resolve questions of species and population genetics in these and possibly other bird families. Dr. Thomas, who evaluates and oversees new DNA sequencing technologies, will discuss how these modern genetic studies are performed.



**November 17 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m.**

## Effects of Climate Change and Wind Energy Facilities on Birds

**Speaker: Joel Merriman**

We are all concerned about the effects of climate change on birds as their numbers dwindle. The use of wind energy to reduce our carbon footprint is welcome, but it is not without consequences. Joel Merriman, M.S., Director of the Bird-Smart Wind Energy Campaign of the American Bird Conservancy, will discuss efforts to reduce these consequences.



# Tree Planting Ceremony for Helen Patton

The Audubon Naturalist Society is delighted to host a tree planting ceremony in honor of Helen Ann Patton, a former president, secretary, and longtime member of the Montgomery Bird Club. Please join us to honor our dear friend by planting a tree donated by Mike Bowen, share memories, and gather together at a place she loved so much.

- Date/Time: October 17 (Sunday) at 10 a.m.
- Location: Woodend Nature Sanctuary, 8940 Jones Mill Road, Chevy Chase, MD 20815

All are welcome. While there is no limit, a head count would be helpful for planning and parking purposes. Please RSVP at <https://forms.office.com/r/dBmtKxjGGN>.

For an article dedicated to Helen, see the February 2021 issue of *the Chat*.



*Helen Patton on a Field Guides birding tour of Chile in 2009. Photo by Mike Bowen*

## Welcome New Members



**Joanne Allen**

**Wendy Ayres**

**Cheryl Bader**

**Helena Bello**

**Todd Bethel**

**Charles Black**

**Martin Boer**

**Lisa Burke**

**Ryan Carr**

**Shoumitro Chatterjee**

**Amy Christianson**

**Gabrielle (Vicki) Datlow**

**Nancy A. Donnelly**

**David Duren**

**Norma Lynn Fox**

**James Frid**

**Elizabeth Haggerty**

**Corrine Isakson**

**Virginia Joehl**

**Ellen Kreis**

**Phyllis Lingenfelter**

**Bill McBee**

**Jill Merrill**

**Marcia Mitnick**

**Jennifer Montooth**

**Julia Porter**

**Robin Ross**

**Kelly Singel**

**Neil Stern**

**Elizabeth Thomas**

**Lorraine Thorpe**

**Kimberly Tryka**

**Tom Urso**

**Jennifer Vongsathorn**

**Dayananda (Daya) Weerakkody**

**Katherine Williams**



# Birds of Note (mid-April to early August 2021)

It has been an exciting season for **Mississippi Kites** in Montgomery County, culminating in reports of successful breeding of a kite pair in Rockville. The Club's Artist-in-Residence Diane Ford has captured this excitement in her sketches, two of which are included in this issue (see pages 7 and 10). Max Wilson noted a **Mississippi Kite** flying over Blue Mash Nature Trail near Laytonsville on May 9. Individual (in flight) **Mississippi Kites** were also reported from the Potomac, Gaithersburg, and Wheaton areas. On June 12, Jared Fisher photographed an adult **Mississippi Kite** perched on a tree snag behind Beall Elementary School in Rockville. Later that afternoon, a second bird was found in the same location, and Gabriel Foley and Anne Mytych observed these two birds copulating. One of these birds was seen "on nest" the following day. And as of mid-August, the Rockville kite pair continued to raise a single chick. Jared Fisher observed a **Swallow-tailed Kite** flying over Berryville Rd near Seneca Creek on April 30.

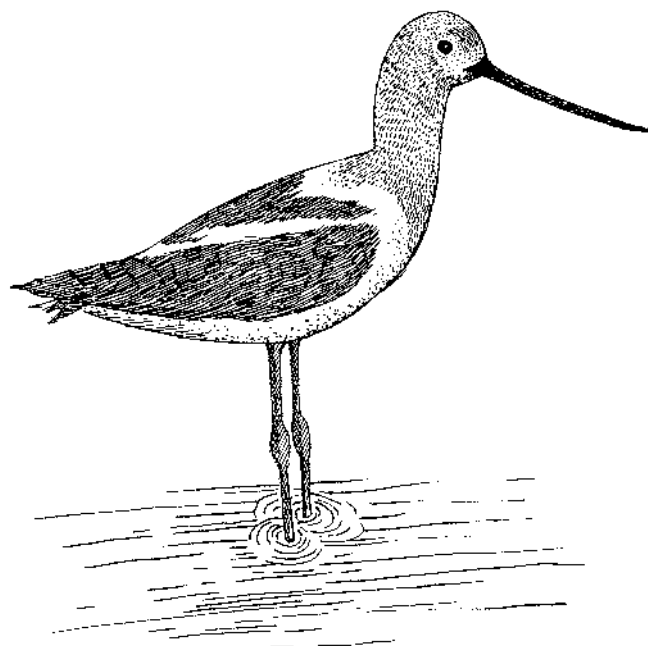
A very tough bird to find in Montgomery these days is the **Eastern Whip-poor-will**. Best chances to put one on your Montgomery life list in the 21st century seem to come at dawn or dusk during their migration period north in mid-April. Pete Mara noted an **Eastern Whip-poor-will** calling in his Takoma Park neighborhood in the early morning on April 19. Dave Czaplak, Jared Fisher, and John Sojda also reported a single "whip" calling in and around the Hughes Hollow area, McKee-Beshers WMA, between April 21 and 24. Josephine Kalbfleisch heard one call briefly at Hughes Hollow in the early morning on May 8.

John Sojda spotted Montgomery's second record of a **Roseate Spoonbill** flying over the Potomac River adjacent to Violette's Lock on July 19. This bird (or possibly a different spoonbill) was seen again in the same vicinity on July 26. An additional **Roseate Spoonbill** was reported by Jaroslav Holly at Lake Frank on August 2. Other good waders reported in the county over the last few months include a **Tricolored Heron** flying over the river at Violette's Lock on May 28, spotted by Jared Fisher. Dave Czaplak noted two **Snowy Egrets** mixed in with a couple of **Little Blue Herons** perched on mid-river rocks at Violette's Lock on July 25. Post-breeding dispersal produced some **Little Blue Heron** sightings with individual birds being reported from Edward's Ferry along the Potomac River as well as at Blue Mash and Black Hill RP. While birding the

Hughes Rd polo fields on May 29, Stella and Nathan Tea observed a flyover **Cattle Egret**. D. Woolverton noted a **Glossy Ibis** at Hughes Hollow on April 8. And under the heading of "great yard birds," Tom Kimbis observed a **Glossy Ibis** pass over his North Potomac yard on May 1. Additional **Glossy Ibis** were reported over the Potomac at Violette's Lock on May 2 and May 23. Clive Harris reported a **Least Bittern** at Hughes Hollow on May 2. And hopefully in a sign of successful breeding, Elaine Hendricks noted a still calling **Least Bittern** at Hughes Hollow as recently as July 21.

Nathan Oliver was first to note an **Anhinga** soaring over Hughes Hollow on April 16. This **Anhinga** or possibly a completely different bird was spotted again on May 2. **Anhinga**, sometimes seen perched or flying overhead, were reported at Hughes Hollow through May 18. Migrant **Virginia Rail** were reported from Hughes Hollow, Green Hills Farm Wetlands, Blue Mash, and Layhill Park, and Nathan Tea noted the nocturnal flight call of a **Virginia Rail** over his Aspen Hill area house at night/early morning hours of April 23 and again on May 4. **Common Gallinule** reports came in from Hughes Hollow, the wetland area off River Rd near the Summit Hall Turf Farm, and Lake Whetstone.

**Black-bellied Whistling-Duck** is another southern species that has found its way into Montgomery over the past few months. Ten **Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks** were found at Hughes Hollow on May 3 by MaryAnn Todd.



# Birds of Note (mid-April to early August 2021)

Water levels at Lake Whetstone in Gaithersburg were drawn down in mid-July for repairs, and the exposed mudflats made for great shorebird habitat. Tim Gier found an **American Avocet** on July 6. **American Avocets** were also seen along the Potomac River near Violette's and Riley's Locks on June 24, July 14, and July 26. David Roberts reported a **Red-necked Phalarope** on the Potomac River just above the "Seneca Breaks" adjacent to Violette's Lock on May 22. A **Black-bellied Plover** was also reported from the same location on May 22. Sara Demarest found a **Ruddy Turnstone** in the "big pond" at Blue Mash on May 27. Brooke Levey reported a **Short-billed Dowitcher** mixed in with some of the more expected spring shorebird species (**Least, Spotted, and Solitary Sandpipers and Lesser Yellowlegs**) on an exposed mudflat in Little Seneca Lake (Black Hill RP) on May 6.

MaryAnn Todd and Dave Czaplak observed a first-summer plumage **Black Tern** over the Potomac at Violette's Lock on June 5.

Some of the "harder to find" in the county flycatcher species were seen during this past spring's northward migration. Power birding quintet, Susan Hunt, Linda Friedland, Lydia Schindler, Jennifer Kavar, and Chris Wright, found an **Olive-sided Flycatcher** perched at the top of a dead snag along the C&O Canal near Pennyfield Lock on May 31. Other **Olive-sided Flycatchers** were reported from Black Hill and Wheaton RPs. An **Alder Flycatcher** (easier to ID in spring by knowing its different call from a very similar looking **Willow Flycatcher**) was reported by Nathan and Stella Tea on May 29 along Hughes Rd near the polo grounds.

Amy Christianson found and photo-documented a "quite rare for the county" **Henslow's Sparrow** at Lake Hallowell on May 3. **Henslow's Sparrow** had not been reported in Montgomery since 2013. Nathan and Stella Tea noted a singing **Dickcissel** in the fields at the end of Sycamore Landing Rd on May 8. Birders participating in Mark England's multiple forays to Oaks Landfill (adjacent to Blue Mash) reported **Dickcissels** in June along with evidence of breeding.

Jared Fisher reported a **Summer Tanager** in the woods across from the entrance to Summit Hall Turf Farm off River Rd on May 2.

A **Marsh Wren** was seen by Monte Tarbox at Hughes Hollow on April 24 and Ethan Porter noted another one at Blue Mash on April 30.

As of early August, 245 species have been reported in Montgomery so far in 2021. Jared Fisher has tallied an impressive 226 species on his own personal list, with Max Wilson not far behind at 220. An additional 7 birders (MaryAnn Todd, David Roberts, Nathan Tea, Rae and Woody Dubois, Anne Mytych, and CJ DeMarco) have all surpassed the 200 species mark as well.

—Andy Martin



*Sketch of Mississippi Kite at Beall Elementary School in Rockville by Diane Ford*

# Fall Field Trips

Montgomery Bird Club field trips follow the CDC's recommendations for safety during the pandemic. Please see our website at <https://www.montgomerybirdclub.org/calendar/> for up-to-date details. A special note of thanks to our intrepid trip leaders for continuing—in spite of restrictions—to take us to new places (and old favorites!) and to share their love of birds with us.

—Linda Friedland, Field Trip Coordinator

## **SEPTEMBER 9 (Thursday)**

### **WHEATON REGIONAL PARK**

Join us this morning to look for migrant warblers, vireos, and flycatchers. Limit: 8. For reservations (required) and information about starting time and place, contact the LEADERS: Woody and Rae Dubois at [dengue1@verizon.net](mailto:dengue1@verizon.net).

## **SEPTEMBER 12 (Sunday)**

### **HUGHES HOLLOW**

This half-day trip is geared to newer birders. We will meet at the Hughes Hollow parking lot in the 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 water birds, and possibly raptors. Limit: 8. For reservations (required) and more information, contact the LEADER: Clive Harris at [clivegharris@yahoo.com](mailto:clivegharris@yahoo.com).

## **SEPTEMBER 19 (Sunday)**

### **PENNYFIELD TO VIOLETTE'S BIRD STALK**

Half day. For folks who prefer a somewhat later start to their birding, we will meet at 9 a.m. at the Violette's Lock parking lot, 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 land bird migrants, and probably a few early winter visitors, as we scan the skies and river for raptors and water birds. Limit: 12. Because we will be carpooling, do not sign up if you are not vaccinated against COVID-19 or if you are uncomfortable carpooling. For reservations (required), contact the LEADER: Jim Nelson at [kingfishers2@verizon.net](mailto:kingfishers2@verizon.net) or 240-515-4517.

## **SEPTEMBER 24 (Friday)**

### **WHEATON REGIONAL PARK**

Late September can be very productive in Wheaton RP, which is often particularly good during fall migration. Warblers, vireos, thrushes, and grosbeaks are all possible. Sparrows may not be there yet but cannot be ruled out. All are welcome, but beginners are particularly encouraged to join. Limit: 10. We will start at 7:30 a.m. and stop around 10 or when birds become quiet. For reservations (required) and starting point information, contact one of the CO-

LEADERS: Evelyn Ralston at [evelynralston@icloud.com](mailto:evelynralston@icloud.com) or Martha Morris at [mamorris1123@verizon.net](mailto:mamorris1123@verizon.net).

## **SEPTEMBER 25 (Saturday)**

### **CROYDON CREEK NATURE CENTER**

Come discover (or re-discover) a Montgomery County birding gem: 125 species have been recorded in this park. Multiple warblers as well as thrushes and Common Nighthawks are possible. Some moderate hiking. Limit: 12. Meet at 7:30 a.m. in the Nature Center parking lot. For reservations (required) and more information, contact the LEADER: Anne Mytych at [amytych@yahoo.com](mailto:amytych@yahoo.com) or 240-506-0236.

## **SEPTEMBER 26 (Sunday)**

### **RICKMAN/WOODSTOCK EQUESTRIAN PARK**

Join us as we explore this location for some early morning autumn birding at the Equestrian Park on the west side of Route 28 (<https://rb.gy/qpdqda>). We'll bird the broad fields and separating woods, beginning at 7:30 a.m., for warblers and sparrows, vireos, woodpeckers, and raptors. Limit: 12. For reservations (required) and more information, contact the LEADER: Scott Young at [wasyacy@verizon.net](mailto:wasyacy@verizon.net). Dave Roberts will co-lead.

## **OCTOBER 2 (Saturday)**

### **LITTLE BENNETT RP FOR BEGINNERS**

All are welcome on this half-day trip, but we especially encourage those new to birding to join us. We'll start at 7:30 a.m. and slowly walk some of the woodland trails looking for migrant and resident birds. Limit: 6. For reservations (required) and directions, contact the LEADER: Gemma Radko at [gradko@yahoo.com](mailto:gradko@yahoo.com).

## **OCTOBER 6 (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. Possible sparrows, raptors, and waterfowl. Shorebirds are possible if there are mudflats at the big pond. Leader will have scope for distant birds. Limit: 16. We'll start at 8 a.m. For reservations (required) and directions, contact the LEADER: Mark England at [englandmark@comcast.net](mailto:englandmark@comcast.net) or 240-308-4114.





# Fall Field Trips

**OCTOBER 10 (Sunday)**

## **HUGHES HOLLOW**

Join us for a fall morning of marsh and woodland birding. Targets are fall migrants such as warblers, sparrows, and ducks. We will start at the parking lot. Dress for the weather, bring water and a snack if you like. We will not be too far away from the parking lot if anyone needs to leave early. Beginner and young birders are encouraged to join. Limit: 10. For reservations (required), starting time, and other information, contact the LEADER: Nathan Tea at [snowmie700@gmail.com](mailto:snowmie700@gmail.com).

**OCTOBER 23 (Saturday)**

## **BLUE MASH: Remembering Our Past Presidents**

Join us for this year's annual walk in honor of former MBC presidents. We will especially remember those who are no longer with us. Longtime birders and new birders, new members and nonmembers—all are welcome. We'll meet in the parking lot at 8 a.m. For reservations (required) and directions, contact the LEADER: Andy Martin at [martinap2@verizon.net](mailto:martinap2@verizon.net) or 301-529-2066.

**OCTOBER 30 (Saturday)**

## **REDGATE PARK**

Come explore this "new" park on a former golf course. RedGate offers multiple habitats, including a small marsh, woods, and lots of meadow areas for possible winter sparrows. In its first 10 months as a park, birders identified 147 species. Some areas have steep hills. Limit: 10. We'll start at 8 a.m. in the parking lot. For reservations (required) and directions, contact the LEADER: Anne Mytych at 240-506-0236 or [amytych@yahoo.com](mailto:amytych@yahoo.com).

**NOVEMBER 6 (Saturday)**

## **ROCK CREEK NORTH BRANCH'S 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, and fall migrants. The 2020 list included 8 species of sparrows including Fox, White-crowned, Swamp, and Savannah Sparrow. For those wanting a longer foray, a 4-mile loop that includes the stream valley will be possible, and we will likely see woodpeckers and other resident woodland species. The path at this point along Rock Creek is meandering and narrow with some steep sections. Limit: 8. Meet at 8 a.m. at Bowie Mill Park (<https://www.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. For reservations (required) and more information, contact the LEADER: Josephine Cox at [jobird11@gmail.com](mailto:jobird11@gmail.com) or 240-506-1723.

**NOVEMBER 9 (Tuesday)**

## **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. Limit: 12. We'll meet at 8 a.m. in the parking lot at 8711 Snouffer School Road, Gaithersburg, Md. For reservations (required), contact the LEADER: Mark England at [englandmark@comcast.net](mailto:englandmark@comcast.net) or 240-308-4114.

**NOVEMBER 11 (Thursday)**

## **REDGATE PARK: SEEKING SPARROWS**

Annual Veterans Day outing to check out the sparrows that bedeck our meadows and woods in the fall. We'll be working on key field marks as we sort through familiar species like Song and White-throated and less common ones like White-crowned and Field and Swamp. This trip is primarily for beginners, but all are welcome. Limit: 8. For reservations (required), time, and directions, contact one of the CO-LEADERS: Lydia Schindler at [lydia13621@gmail.com](mailto:lydia13621@gmail.com) or Linda Friedland at [linnet1@verizon.net](mailto:linnet1@verizon.net).

**DECEMBER 4 (Saturday)**

## **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. For reservations (required), starting place, and time, contact the LEADER: Mark England at [englandmark@comcast.net](mailto:englandmark@comcast.net) or 240-308-4114.

**DECEMBER 5 (Sunday)**

## **LILYPONS/NEW DESIGN ROAD**

Half day. Wintering field birds, targeting Fox and Tree Sparrows, possibly Virginia Rail and American Bittern. Limit: 6. For reservations (required) and starting time and place, contact the LEADER: Clive Harris at [clivegharris@yahoo.com](mailto:clivegharris@yahoo.com).



# Youth Birding

Have your kids, nieces, nephews, grandchildren, or young neighbors developed an interest in birds during this pandemic when many families opt to spend more time outdoors? The YMOS just kicked off the 2021-2022 season with a trip to Bombay Hook NWR on Saturday, 8/14, and has close to two dozen trips planned for the next year. For more information, upcoming events, and trip highlights, visit the Young Birders page on the MOS website (<https://mdbirds.org/young-birders/>), the MBC website (<https://www.montgomerybirdclub.org/young-birders/>), the Youth Maryland Ornithological Society page on Facebook, or contact George Radcliffe at [radclif@gmail.com](mailto:radclif@gmail.com).

## Spring Field Trips Summary

Before taking a summer break, the Club held 10 field trips from April through June. These well-attended trips took leaders and participants to birding locations throughout Montgomery County including two private locations: Oaks Landfill near Laytonsville and the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America (IWLA) in Poolesville. Two field trips also provided opportunities to visit Occoquan Bay NWR in Virginia and Rock Creek Park in D.C.

One of the field trips to Hughes Hollow on May 7 was attended by young Club member Ryan Carr (age 9). Ryan wrote:

*I really liked the Birding by Ear field trip because I learned a lot of new bird songs that day. It was exciting to learn the vireo and warbler songs and learn which bird made some songs that I've heard a bunch before, like the Northern Parula. We reported more than 40 species that day! It was also fun to talk with other birders, especially while birding.*

Interested in learning more about field trips from the spring? Visit the new Trip Reports page on our website at <https://www.montgomerybirdclub.org/trip-reports/>.

## President's Chat (continued from page 1)

This trip also gave us a chance to see and bird "the Wall." While we were in Douglas, New Mexico, birds flew freely to and from Agua Prieta, Mexico, just a few feet across the border. Finally, in August, I drove myself across the just opened border between the U.S. and Canada to visit my daughter. No barbed wire on the Peace Bridge, just a request for a proof of vaccination and a negative COVID-19 test. I wish all our borders could open and allow friends and families to reunite. As I hope we will all be able to be together, in person, some time in the fall.

Enjoy the passage of our migrant birds, and take care!

—Evelyn Ralston



*Sketch of Mississippi Kite at Beall Elementary School in Rockville by Diane Ford*

# Chapter Chatter

## Becky Cromwell: Thoughts of an “Advanced Beginner”

In 2017 and 2018 I had to take a break from birding due to health issues. In 2019, when I was able to return, I was so happy and excited to rejoin the Montgomery Bird Club. However, I was aware that my birding knowledge had lagged behind. I was intimidated by the veteran birders in the Club and overwhelmed when I considered how much I had to learn. In the Club we don't usually discuss skill levels, except perhaps when a field trip leader needs to figure out how many beginners are in the group. So when a trip leader asked me if I was a beginner, I came up with the term “advanced beginner.” It implied that I knew the basic birds, but it also gave me some wiggle room when faced with challenging IDs.

Once I started going on the Club's birding trips, I began to relax and enjoy the camaraderie of my fellow birders. Now I remembered how birding with a group could be a collaborative experience. Someone spots a bird, and we pause and focus on the nearby group of Tulip Poplars. Then someone else uses the clock face method to pinpoint the bird's location. This method is a clever way of communicating the location of the bird in the tree. The idea is to superimpose the shape of the clock face on the body of the tree and then use the numbers to indicate the bird's location: “He's between 12 and 1 near the crown of the tree.” If someone still can't see it, the person next to them will suggest moving a bit to get a better angle. There is always patience to go around.

Birders are committed to everyone seeing the bird. There is a strong sense of shared satisfaction. Some birders are really good at spotting, others at identifying, and someone else is lugging a scope on their shoulder and setting it up for each person to get a better look (unfortunately the shared scope may be out right now because of ongoing COVID concerns). The leader lets others identify the bird, and if someone makes a mistake, a peer will offer a gentle correction. The leader may also emphasize the key field marks, this bird's behavior, and the relevance of a particular habitat. This kind of learning, which is happening in the moment, is etched on my brain in a way that book learning seldom is.

So for those of you who are new to birding or perhaps “advanced beginners,” take advantage of our gatherings and field trips to make new friends and gain confidence as a birder. And many thanks to the veteran birders and trip leaders who share their wisdom so generously.



*2019 Oaks Landfill field trip led by Mark England. Photo by Stella Tea*



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