

President's Chat

By Emily Huang

It's difficult to believe only three months have passed since I last took up a pen to write the President's Chat. So much has happened on the personal, Club, and national scene. The MBC had an extremely successful fall season of walks, thanks to our stalwart volunteer trip leaders, and thanks also to a good turnout of warblers in September and October. Croydon Creek turned out to be the hotspot of choice for many, where day after day, warblers, thrushes, and grosbeaks paraded past the feeder area. Now, with a festive holiday wine and cheese on December 11, the Club kicks off its winter season, sponsoring 17 planned walks and another fun schedule of presentations beginning on January 15 with Suzanne Shoemaker, director of Owl Moon Raptor Center.



With our "members preferred" early registration, MBC's popular trips are filling faster than ever. However, with early signups, sometimes people find they cannot attend the walks they registered for. Unfortunately, a few do not notify trip leaders. Please, if you find you cannot make a walk, let the leader know as soon as possible so he or she can invite someone from the waitlist to join the trip. We do not want to have to begin tracking no-shows!

The Club participated in two important events this fall: Montgomery Parks Birdability celebration on October 27 and the Owl Moon Raptor Festival on November 9. Read about the Birdability event on page 2. Mark England, Gaurav Kapoor, and I staffed a table at the raptor festival on a beautiful autumn day. We handed out 40 MBC business cards and viewed the emotional releases of a rehabilitated Cooper's Hawk and a Barred Owl. Both events allowed us to demonstrate support of relevant issues and continue outreach efforts. MBC has also continued to partner on local conservation projects, including advocating for mowing schedules



that preserve bird habitat, installation of new nest boxes, and invasive plant removal.

On a personal level, the fall brought wonderful experiences, including a family trip to Japan and Taiwan in late October. While the focus of the trip was not birding, I took the opportunity to document my very first Asian bird species. Some new birds seemed very familiar—doppelgängers of our own native species, with only the subtlest of distinguishing differences—such as Gray Heron (Great Blue Heron), Common Sandpiper (Spotted Sandpiper), and Eurasian Moorhen (Common Gallinule). Other species were completely new, such as the delightfully sneaky Old World leaf warblers and the Taiwan Barbet, which looks like a child's bird design in Crayola crayon. However, the birds and birders back at home never left my mind. One Japanese business, coincidentally named MOS, had a sign in its window that summed it all up for us: "MOS makes moments to remember."

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Editor's Corner

By Stella Tea

Another year of *The Chat* is in the books! I want to thank our key contributors of the past year: Cintia Cabib, Kathryn Carr, Ryan Carr, Tara Clifton, Moira Davenport, Mark England, Linda Friedland, Cheryl Hogue, Roy Howard, Emily Huang, Elaine Kim, Gail Mackiernan, Andy Martin, Katie Moore, Jim Nelson, Lisa Norwalk, Evelyn Ralston, Dave Roberts, Lydia Schindler, Luis Selva, 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. To Club members, thank you for reading our newsletter! I hope you enjoy reading about some of the volunteers who make it possible on page 11. Please email us at montgomerybirdclub@mdbirds.org to share your feedback and suggestions. Happy winter birding!

Club News

Have you remembered to renew your Club membership?!

If you haven't already had a chance to renew your MOS/MBC membership, now would be the perfect time! Electronic payments are fast and easy at <https://mdbirds.org/join/chapters/montgomery-bird-club>. If you wish to pay by check, you will find instructions on this MOS website page: <https://mdbirds.org/dues-by-check/>. Membership runs from September 1 to August 31 each year.

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



MBC Representatives Participated in Montgomery Parks' Birdability Week

Birdability Week is a celebration dedicated to birders with disabilities and other health concerns. Cheryl Hogue and Gaurav Kapoor attended the festivities on October 27 at Ray's Meadow Local Park in Chevy Chase, where they educated attendees about birding and the activities of the Club. They also learned that Enchroma Glasses—which can help some people with colorblindness perceive colors—are available for use simply by asking at Brookside Gardens and Black Hill Regional Park. If you want to share your experience trying out the Enchroma Glasses, please email montgomerybirdclub@mdbirds.org. For more information, visit <https://enchroma.com>.

Welcome New Members

MJ (Alex) Alexander
Vicki Bishton
Charles Brown
Rebecca Hill
Ellen and Michael Hoffman
David Kennedy

Mary Rieser
Jim Stedman
Alexis and Grant Tays
Patricia Towler
Richard Uliano and Louise Schiavone
Alexandra Williamson



Conservation Updates

By Gail Mackiernan, MBC Conservation Chair

Most of the activities these past few months have been focused on threats outside Montgomery County per se, but which would impact birds or bird habitats elsewhere in the state, or even nationally. Our major spurt of activity will, of course, come early next year when the Maryland State legislature convenes. However, there are a couple of looming issues that we are watching closely.

Osprey/Menhaden Management. In 2024, there was an unprecedented failure of Osprey nests throughout the Chesapeake Bay Region. This continued a trend recorded in 2021; our Osprey population is now on a steeply declining trajectory. Most nest failures were due to lack of food for the chicks. Osprey depend on the fat-rich, abundant Menhaden (“the most important fish in the sea”) for the bulk of their chicks’ diets, and this species is being fished heavily for commercial purposes in Virginia. Naturalists concerned with the fate of this iconic bird are joined by sport and commercial fishermen, as Menhaden are also vital food for valuable Striped Bass and Bluefish.

In response to this, in August the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission established a workgroup to consider additional protections from industrial fishing of Menhaden in the Chesapeake Bay. The motion, offered by Maryland’s ASMFC delegation, directs the workgroup to consider management actions, including seasonal closures, that would protect important fish and bird predators in Chesapeake Bay that rely on Menhaden for food. The group is expected to release their report soon.

MAGLEV Train. Still lurking out there. Unfortunately, environmental groups supporting green energy and a reduction in automobile traffic support this. MOS has been working to establish a coordinated response to this ill-advised project, which threatens hundreds of acres of forest at Patuxent Research Refuge and adjacent Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, as well as local communities. The latter tract contains the southernmost stand of the (New Jersey) Pine Barrens vegetation community and is thus of statewide and regional importance.

Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP). This is the 800-pound gorilla in the room—a plan to build a high voltage powerline across the Maryland Piedmont, from southwest of Frederick (close to Doubs) to just south of the Pennsylvania line in Baltimore County, near Gorsuch Mills. The MPRP will consist of massive 140-foot-high towers carrying 500,000 volt transmission lines along a 150-foot-wide strip of land. This strip of land will be clear-cut; not a tree will be left standing. Once built, there will be strict limitations on what can be planted, grown, or built beneath the power lines. What is especially galling is that the main purpose of MPRP is to provide power for the burgeoning data center business (AI and cryptocurrency) in Northern Virginia.

Supporters predict that, without the MPRP, Maryland will suffer from rolling blackouts and brownouts, and electricity prices will increase. Other groups believe that Maryland will benefit little, if at all, from MPRP. (As an aside, 42% of Maryland’s electricity comes from nuclear; 43% from natural gas; <5% from coal; and 10% from renewables, mostly hydro.)

The preferred route for the power line was chosen in early November. MPRP will cross two IBAs (Important Bird Areas): Monocacy Grasslands (a large area stretching from near Frederick to the Pennsylvania state line) and Prettyboy in Baltimore County. MPRP will also cross numerous farms and protected areas, which serve as valuable habitat for birds. The power line will cross private farms that are under conservation easements or agricultural legacy programs. The Public Service Enterprise Group (PSEG) asserts that there should be no need to demolish any homes. Property owners who refuse to allow easements across their land could have their properties seized by eminent domain.

A very active citizens’ group has been formed to oppose MPRP; it is aptly named Stop MPRP, Inc. Visit <https://www.stopmprp.com> for more information. All Baltimore County, Carroll County, and Frederick County politicians have come out against the project. State officials, however, have been largely silent on their preferences.

MOS and its three “front line” chapters are already active in opposition to MPRP by communicating to the relevant authorities, including local elected officials, the Maryland Public Service Commission (PSC), and state elected officials. MBC members should consider sending letters as well, since loss of habitat anywhere in the state, especially grasslands and farmlands, will have serious impacts on declining bird species.

Until the next update, please visit <https://www.mdbirds.org/conservation> for more information.



Winter Meetings

By Mark England, MBC Vice-President

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

DECEMBER 11, 2024 (Wednesday), 7:00 p.m. Holiday Wine & Cheese, Puzzling Flying Raptors, and Other Fun! (in-person only at the Potomac Presbyterian Church)

Meet other members over wine and cheese, while keeping an ear out for several door prizes to be awarded during the evening. Then sharpen your raptor identification skills for the traditional Vice-President's Bird Quiz, which will focus on local "Puzzling Raptors in Flight," as photographed by MBC members. The evening will wind up with members' favorite photos from 2024.

CALL FOR PHOTOS: The December social will feature a slideshow of attending members' favorite bird photos from 2024. Photos do not have to be from Maryland just your favorites! 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 please indicate your preference in case of time restrictions. The deadline for submitting photos is Wednesday, December 4.

JANUARY 15, 2025 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m. Suzanne Shoemaker, Owl Moon Raptor Center, presents "Birds of Prey Rehabilitation"



Suzanne will explain the steps involved in the rescue and rehabilitation of injured raptors, as practiced at Owl Moon Raptor Center in Boyds, Maryland, a nonprofit that she founded in 2002. Owl Moon Raptor Center is a state and federally licensed wildlife

rehabilitation center, with a mission to rescue and rehabilitate injured, sick, and orphaned birds of prey and return them to the wild in sound, athletic condition; and to educate the public about raptors in the process. Suzanne will also describe the hazards

that birds face and how she got started in raptor rehabilitation.

Suzanne is licensed as a Master Wildlife Rehabilitator and Master Falconer (MD and USFWS). She trained first as an Animal Scientist (AAS, University of New Hampshire 1975), then as a Wildlife Biologist (BS, University of Massachusetts 1981, MS, Oregon State University 1986), and more recently as a Wildlife Rehabilitator (2002). Suzanne is an expert in animal behavior, ecology, and the adaptations of animals to their natural environment. She has taught nature and science classes for Friends of the National Zoo, Audubon Naturalist Society (now Nature Forward), Montgomery County Public Schools, and independently since 1991.

FEBRUARY 19, 2025 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m. David Kidwell, NOAA, presents "Algae, Birds, and Ocean Adventures: Uncovering of Harmful Blooms from Maine to Alaska"



Dave will discuss his work to understand harmful algae in Maine and the Bering Strait and Kodiak Island regions of Alaska. Across the country, blooms of harmful algae pose a risk to human health and communities, disrupt ecosystems, and impact wildlife and birds. Dave will give an

introduction to harmful algae and discuss some of the impact on birds. He'll also share some of his experiences viewing birds and wildlife while working from a research ship. From shearwaters and jaegers in the Gulf of Maine to auklets and whales in Alaska, working and birding offshore is always full of surprises!

A lifelong Marylander, Dave has lived in Damascus since 2012 and has been an avid birder for over 20 years. He currently works as a supervisory environmental scientist for NOAA, where he oversees research on harmful algae, sea level rise, water quality, and other ecosystem science.



Birds of Note (Late August to Mid-November)

By Andy Martin

Jared Fisher, Dave Czaplak, Mary Ann Todd, and Dave Roberts were birding the Potomac River adjacent to Violette's Lock around 8 a.m. on August 17 when, to their surprise, a Jaeger species flew past them and continued down river. Dave was able to snap a few photos to confirm the identity of the bird as a **Long-tailed Jaeger**. A Montgomery County first record!

Long-tailed Jaeger in flight. Photo by Dave Czaplak



Dave Czaplak and Mary Ann Todd also found not just one but two different Phalarope species on October 2. Again both birds dropped in for a few moments just above the rapids on

the Potomac River at Violette's Lock. First they noted a **Red Phalarope**, and then, about two hours later, a **Red-necked Phalarope** alighted on the water in front of them. Jared Fisher noted an **American Golden-Plover** in a plowed agricultural field along Sugarland Road in Poolesville on September 17. Additional **American Golden-Plovers** were seen the same day at the Hughes Rd Polo Grounds. Will Heinle noted seven **American Avocets** in flight over the Potomac River adjacent to Violette's Lock on October 5. Jared Fisher found an **Upland Sandpiper** at Hughes Rd Polo Grounds on September 1.

A beautiful male **Painted Bunting** was a surprise visitor to Michael Press's backyard feeder in North Potomac on October 30. His yard conveniently backed up to county parkland allowing other birders the chance to "stake out" his feeders the next day in hopes that the bird would return, but unfortunately it did not.

Michael McCloy found two **Laughing Gulls** at Violette's Lock on September 30.

Tom Kimbis and Jill Prater reported a flyover juvenile **Golden Eagle** at Blue Mash on November 2. Mike McCloy spotted a very late **Mississippi Kite** flying over Woodstock Equestrian Park near Dickerson on October 11.

John Sojda and Jared Fisher briefly heard an **Eastern whip-poor-will** along Sycamore Landing Rd on September 20.

Ada Clifton was first to spot a **Budgerigar** (presumed escapee) while birding at Lois Y. Green Conservation Park with fellow Youth Montgomery Bird Club birders on November 3.

Jared Fisher found three **Surf Scoters** on the Potomac at Violette's Lock on October 24. A single **Snow Goose** was reported from Lake Hallowell on November 9 and also from Blue Mash on November 10. Josephine Cox came across a **Common Gallinule** on the Potomac River upstream of Violette's Lock on October 3.

On October 21, Scott Young, Dave Roberts, and Roy Howard succeeded in getting a **Northern Saw-whet Owl** to respond to call playback at Lois Y. Green CP near Derwood. The bird had been found by Mark England a few days prior.

On October 3, Robin Skinner was, in her own words, "shocked" to come across a **Sedge Wren** while birding her property near Little Bennett RP. Michael McCloy reported a **Marsh Wren** at Woodstock Equestrian Park on October 11.

John Sojda reported a **Clay-colored Sparrow** along Izaak Walton Way on September 18. Heather Clarke found a **Connecticut Warbler** at Blue Mash on August 31. Claire Wolfe observed a **Golden-winged Warbler** at Little Bennett on August 17. **Orange-crowned Warblers** were recently reported from the Gude Trail in Rockville, Lois Y. Green CP, and Blue Mash. A few other notable migrant passerines found over the past few months include David Gersten's **Philadelphia Vireo** at Wheaton RP on September 2 and Jared Fisher's **Dickcissel** on September 11 and **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** on August 25, both at Hughes Hollow.

As of November 11, there have been 251 species of birds reported in Montgomery County. The top five county listers to date: Jared Fisher, John Sojda, Mary Ann Todd, Team Carr—Ryan and mom Kathryn, and Scott Young.



40 Years of Sugarloaf CBC: A Look Back

By Gail Mackiernan, Sector 6 Compiler

I participated in my first Sugarloaf Christmas Bird Count in 1985—I do not recall who was the Count Compiler or Sector 6 leader that year, but they assigned me to Lilypons. My major memories were that it was bitterly cold, everything was frozen solid except the spring creeks, and the only significant bird I saw was an Eastern Phoebe flying—again and again—from its perch to the surface of a frozen pond in a futile attempt to drink (I assume).

There have been a lot of changes since then—in both the habitat and the birds. Some species have gradually melted away while others have increased. Land use has also seen the small dairy farms disappear, to be replaced by different agricultural uses (a fair amount of Sector 6 has agricultural preservation designations) as well as new homes and other development. The intersection of Rts 80 and 270 has grown from the single light in the darkness of the Exxon station (bathrooms! coffee!) to a town center with a host of offerings to the weary birder.

Christmas Counts sometimes turn up the unexpected: In my first few years, the evening Tally Rally was held at Stronghold Mansion at the base of Sugarloaf Mountain itself (one of the caretakers there was a count participant). This was the setting for one of the Count's most exciting moments in 1987. It had been a long, cold day and after a supper of chili and other goodies, attendees were increasingly somnolent in the comfortable sofas while Compiler Gary Nelson took us through the list, species by species. His last duty—in these days before the internet—was to call the sector leader in Loudoun Co., Virginia, to get those birds. We all watched sleepily as Gary spoke on the hall phone, scribbled some notes, and walked back to us. He called off some additional numbers for a few good species and then, with very little drama, said, "Well, there was ONE other bird seen—a LEWIS'S WOODPECKER!" The room erupted! Everyone was now wide awake and loudly planning their trek to Loudoun the next morning (me included)—to be rewarded with one of the most unlikely species to ever show up on the Sugarloaf CBC!

Another year of excitement was 2000. Earlier in the month, my husband Barry Cooper and his brother John, visiting from England, found a totally unexpected female Harlequin Duck at Seneca Lake. The bird stayed until count day, as did another rarity, a Snowy Owl along Oland Rd. The duck caused no problem, but the owl was quite another matter. The horde of visitors—birders, photographers, and many locals—created significant issues with the local landowner on whose land the owl was usually seen. By the time count day came, tensions were high—counters in Sector 7 ticked it for the list but tried to keep a low profile while doing it! We Sector 6'ers wanted to see it as well, so we did some slow-rolling along Oland until the owl was sighted and then beat a hasty retreat before the farm's owner came out to yell at us!

Other rarities have been found, such as the vagrant Townsend's Warbler found along the C&O Canal in 2005; the bird was very cooperative for those of us who rushed to see it the next day! Those were probably the most unexpected species I recall. But Christmas Bird Counts are not really rarity chases, but a means to census the normal resident species in order to evaluate trends over time. Anyone who takes part, year after year, in the same count can't help but see these changes.

Sector 6, which is bordered by Rts 80, 85, 28, and Park Mills Rd., is still mostly rural but not the same habitat as 40 years ago. We no longer have the small dairies that were so great in attracting field birds to the spread manure and waste grain. Some years well over a thousand Horned Larks would be tallied, as well as a fair number of Lapland Longspurs and, very occasionally, a Snow Bunting. With the closure of the dairies and related loss of winter stubble fields about a decade ago, Horned Lark numbers have fallen off a cliff. Several recent counts have seen zero—and needless to say, there have been no Longspurs in years. Eastern Meadowlarks, not unexpectedly, show a similar trend.

Even more dramatic has been the melting away of one of the area's once iconic species—the Loggerhead Shrike. This species has retreated southward from its range in the mid-Atlantic, so the loss is regional and not due to local changes. But on my first CBC, the entire count tallied nine shrikes, and our very last one was seen in 1997, in Lilypons. A similar story can be told about Northern Bobwhite: seen in double digits every year until about 1993, and then they essentially vanished. Again, this reflects a regional loss of this once-widespread species, even in places where habitat has not (to our eyes) changed much—such as Lilypons.



Climate change may be the primary reason for another vanishing species—the American Tree Sparrow. Once, counters at Lilypons could hear the tinkling call notes of flocks of these little birds everywhere as they gleaned the cattail heads, and some years several hundred might be recorded in the entire count circle. But their numbers have slowly and inexorably declined, and we are lucky to see a dozen total now. Loss of hedgerow and shrub habitat probably accounts for the (less-dramatic) reduction in White-crowned Sparrows, as well. Other declining birds include Wilson’s Snipe and, more worrisome, American Kestrel in what used to be a stronghold—in the ’80s and ’90s the count might tally 75 or 80 individuals; the 2023 Sugarloaf CBC totaled only 16.

On the other hand, some species are on the increase. Bald Eagle has rebounded from its DDT-induced nadir (in 1985 only a single bird was seen in the entire count circle) to a healthy and growing population (31 were counted in 2023). Common Ravens were once a specialty of the slopes of Sugarloaf Mt, where counters struggled to get the species for the list. But in 2000 raven numbers started to climb, and 2023 had 34 in the whole circle. Wild Turkeys are also more frequent now.

So I am quite anxious to get out in the field again on December 29 of this year for the Sugarloaf CBC and see what else has changed—and if we will have any mega-surprises this year!



Christmas Bird Counts

By Jim Nelson, Seneca CBC Compiler

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) season is rapidly approaching. This year will be the 125th 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 <https://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. For general information, please visit the Audubon Christmas

Bird Count website at <https://www.audubon.org/community-science/christmas-bird-count>.

Triadelphia Reservoir CBC: DECEMBER 14 (Saturday)
Compiler: David Holmes, musiclbndr@gmail.com.

District of Columbia CBC: DECEMBER 14 (Saturday)
Compiler: Larry Cartwright, prowarbler@verizon.net. Alternatively, contact Nature Forward (formerly Audubon Naturalist Society) through Pam Oves at pam.oves@natureforward.org.

Seneca CBC: DECEMBER 15 (Sunday)
Compiler: Jim Nelson, kingfishers2@verizon.net.

Central Loudoun CBC: DECEMBER 28 (Saturday)
Compiler: Joe Coleman, jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org, or sign up at <https://www.loudounwildlife.org>, or contact Bryan Henson at bhenson@loudounwildlife.org. This count circle includes 5 miles along the C&O Canal around White's Ferry in Montgomery County, MD.

Sugarloaf Mountain CBC: DECEMBER 29 (Sunday)
Compiler: Josephine Cox, jobird11@gmail.com.



Winter Field Trips

By Linda Friedland, MBC Field Trip Coordinator

Reservations are required for all MBC field trips unless otherwise noted. Contact trip leaders for reservations, directions, and other information. For recent field trip reports and Club guidance on in-person events including COVID-19 precautions and inclement weather changes, please visit <https://www.montgomerybirdclub.org/>.

JANUARY 1 (Wednesday)

POP-UP TRIP AT LOIS Y. GREEN CONSERVATION PARK

Morning walk through the varied habitats of this excellent 250-acre park, including two ponds, fields, and deciduous and coniferous woods. We'll be looking for sparrows, waterfowl, and raptors. We will start at 8 a.m. in the parking lot at 8711 Snouffer School Road, Gaithersburg, Md. Walk will last about two hours. (Note: There are no restrooms or water facilities at the park.) The trip will be cancelled if it is snowing or sleeting. LEADER: Dave Powell at Seneca.ranger@gmail.com. **No reservations are required!**

JANUARY 4 (Saturday)

BLUE MASH NATURE TRAIL

Join us for the morning as we walk the circuit trail looking for overwintering birds, 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: Lauren Carey at ljcarey011@gmail.com.

JANUARY 5 (Sunday)

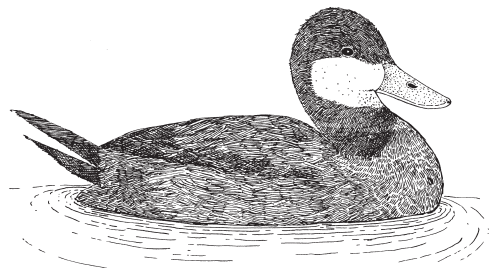
BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK AND GUNNERS LAKE

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

JANUARY 8 (Wednesday)

BLACKWATER NWR

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



JANUARY 11 (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. at Landfill entrance drive at 6001 Rt. 108, Laytonsville, Md. Limit: 16. LEADER: Mark England at englandmark@comcast.net.

JANUARY 12 (Sunday)

POP-UP TRIP AT RILEY'S LOCK, C&O CANAL

We'll meet at 8 a.m. in the parking lot at Riley's Lock and see what we find. We'll walk along the towpath with an eye on the river for mergansers and other waterfowl. We're likely to see a nice mix of woodland birds, wading birds, and raptors. Open to birders of all skill levels, and new birders are especially welcome. Walk will be cancelled in the event of heavy or freezing rain or snow. LEADERS: Paul Orsinger at paulorsinger@gmail.com and Katie Moore at katie.lamp@gmail.com. **No reservations are required!**

JANUARY 18 (Saturday)

OCEAN CITY AND THE COAST

We will bird the Ocean City inlet, looking for sea ducks, gulls, wintering shorebirds, and anything else that might be around (hopefully Razorbills). After that we will check a few local areas around OC and then head further north, possibly to Indian River Inlet or a little farther inland. We will meet at 8 a.m. in the Ocean City Inlet parking lot. (Participants might want to stay overnight in the area.) Scopes would be useful. Carpooling will likely be needed. Limit: 12. LEADER: Clive Harris at cliveharris@yahoo.com.

FEBRUARY 1 (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. at Landfill entrance drive at 6001 Rt. 108, Laytonsville, Md. Limit: 16. LEADER: Mark England at englandmark@comcast.net.



FEBRUARY 5 (Wednesday)**CARDEROCK, C&O CANAL**

Join us from 8 to 10 a.m. for a leisurely early morning walk on the C&O Canal towpath. We will look for woodpeckers, kinglets, sparrows, and winter ducks. Brown Creeper and Winter Wren should also be present. This walk is geared toward new and beginning birders, but all are welcome. Limit: 10. LEADERS: Gene Murray at eugenemurray@comcast.net and Susan Higginbotham at smhigginb@gmail.com.

FEBRUARY 8 (Saturday)**RILEY'S LOCK, C&O CANAL**

Join us for a morning at and around Riley's Lock. After spending some time scanning the river for waterfowl, 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 consider bringing a scope if you have one. Limit: 10. LEADER: Scott Young at scott4aves@icloud.com. Dave Roberts will co-lead.

FEBRUARY 9 (Sunday)**HUGHES HOLLOW**

Join us for a morning of winter marsh and woodland birding. Targets are sparrows, woodpeckers, and possibly ducks. Be prepared for possible wet/muddy conditions. Beginners and young birders are encouraged to join. Limit: 12. LEADER: Kathy Brown at ktbnurse@gmail.com.

FEBRUARY 21 (Friday)**LOIS Y. GREEN CONSERVATION PARK**

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

MARCH 2 (Sunday)**LAKE ARTEMESIA**

Join us at 7:30 a.m. 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, and winter birds will still be present. Easy walking on a paved path. Limit: 10. LEADER: Rob Hilton at rob.hilton.2010@gmail.com. Lisa Shannon will co-lead.

MARCH 7 (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. We'll start at 8 a.m. along the north side of Wisteria Drive, where there is ample parking. Maps giving directions will be sent to participants. Limit: 10. LEADER: Andy Martin at martinap2@verizon.net.

MARCH 8 (Saturday)**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. The path at this point along Rock Creek is meandering and narrow with some steep sections. We'll start at 8 a.m. at Bowie Mill Park (<https://tinyurl.com/yswz6v95>) next to Sequoyah Elementary School with the option to do the shorter paved walk or the longer loop. Limit: 12 (two groups of six). CO-LEADERS: Josephine Cox at jobird11@gmail.com and Anne Mytych at amytych@yahoo.com.

MARCH 9 (Sunday)**TIMBERDOODLING AT BLUE MASH**

Join us for some crepuscular adventuring and witness the whistling Woodcocks! We'll meet in the gravel lot off Zion Road in Laytonsville at 4 p.m. Pre-dusk we will be watching for late winter stragglers as well as early spring migrants. The grand finale will be listening for the first "peents" of the evening followed by the whistle and whirl of the sky-dancing American Woodcocks. Wear boots and bring a flashlight! Limit: 12. LEADER: Angela Atwood-Moore at getmoorphit@yahoo.com. Stacy Rabinovitz will co-lead.

MARCH 15 (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 (two groups of six). LEADER: Evelyn Ralston at evelynralston@icloud.com. Josephine Cox will co-lead.

MARCH 22 (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: 10. LEADER: Karen Cyr at kdcyr@comcast.net.



Youth Birding

By Ryan Carr, Youth Montgomery Bird Club

This fall we visited Wheaton Regional Park and Lois Y. Green Conservation Park. We are grateful to Bob Cantilli, Lauren Carey, and Andy Martin for mentoring us this season. Andy even got to come to both walks! Both trips were great, and each one produced new surprises!

At Wheaton Regional Park we saw a number of raptors, including a Sharp-shinned Hawk, a Broad-winged Hawk, a Red-shouldered Hawk, and an American Kestrel. A couple of other highlights included nice views of two Swainson's Thrushes and a Black-throated Blue Warbler. It was fun to walk along the train tracks and see all the Eye Spy Halloween decorations around the trees too.

Our trip to Lois Y. Green Conservation Park yielded 40 species including a Gadwall, multiple Green-winged Teal, two Killdeer, two Common Raven, and a Purple Finch. We also stumbled upon a bright green Budgerigar on a tree really close by! We tried to get it to come down to us, but no luck.

We would like to send a huge thank you to Susan Hunt for her large donation of bird books to the YMBC. We've all been enjoying them! If you have any bird guides or binoculars to donate, please reach out to youth.birding@gmail.com to arrange a pickup.

Coming up we have trips scheduled for **January 12 at Gunners Lake** and **January 25 at Oaks Landfill** for a late afternoon trip (rain date 1/31). Future trips are scheduled for **February 2 (Great Falls)** and **March 2 (Hughes Hollow)**. Look out for the reservation link to come soon via MailChimp and the MBC website. We'd love to have some new members join us!

We are always looking for 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) season is underway as well. You can learn more at <https://mdbirds.org/young-birders> or by contacting George Radcliffe at radclifg@gmail.com.



YMBC mentor, Lauren Carey, attempting to catch the Budgerigar spotted by YMBC member Ada Clifton. Photo by Dan Ryder



The Budgerigar (presumably an escapee) at Lois Y. Green CP. Photo by Dan Ryder



Who's Who

Have you wondered about the crew that produces *The Chat*? The Club's quarterly newsletter is published in March, June, September, and December. Members receive a paper copy, and anyone who visits the Club website can access the online version. While *The Chat* has a long, rich history, we want to introduce you to the current volunteers who make this possible. In this issue, we start with *The Chat*'s editor, designer, proofreader, and longtime author of the "Birds of Note" column.

Susan Hunt, Proofreader



Susan grew up in Bethesda where her mother kept the birdfeeders filled and where they enjoyed visits from Evening Grosbeaks and heard bobwhites calling from nearby fields. Twenty or so years later, she looked out of her apartment window in Queens and saw two male

Scarlet Tanagers on a solitary tree. Those "spark birds" convinced her that it was time to go home. During the 1970s, Susan and her husband G.T. participated in a breeding bird census in Glover-Archbold Park under the direction of Shirley Briggs. She joined the MBC in 2008, after attending the Bird Life course taught by Don Messersmith and Mark England. She edited *The Chat* from 2009 to 2014. Nowadays, when not birding at Pennyfield on the C&O Canal, Susan edits publications for the National Association of Independent Schools and for various friends and neighbors.

Stella Tea, Editor



Stella grew up in Hong Kong when it was a British colony and moved to Montgomery County when she was 16. Years later, she and her husband moved to Silver Spring when their son was just a baby. Since then, Stella and her family enjoy slow birding at home where a small creek runs through

their yard and provides opportunities to observe all kinds of wildlife including waterbirds—most notably night herons, ducks, and teals. They also enjoy traveling to see new birds. Stella liked to read at a young age and is still fascinated by words and the stories they tell. When current MOS president and past MBC president, Evelyn Ralston, put out a call for a new editor for *The Chat* in 2020, Stella jumped at the chance! Nowadays, she juggles between getting up early for birds and staying up late for moths with as much reading as possible thrown in.

Andy Martin, "Birds of Note"



Practically a lifelong resident of Montgomery County, Andy was born in Detroit, Michigan, but the family moved to MoCo in 1967 when Andy was just 4. Andy caught the birding "bug" in 1999 when he put feeders up in his backyard. He went to Borders Books and purchased the "big"

Sibley guidebook. After getting to know the usual dozen species coming to the feeders, Andy kept wondering where the rest of the 900+ species listed in the book lived, and that was his start! Andy has always enjoyed being involved with the Montgomery Bird Club. In 2006, Lydia Schindler, longtime Club member and past MBC *Chat* and MOS *Yellowthroat* editor, asked Andy to help with the *Voice of the Naturalist*, the weekly rare bird summary put out by the Audubon Naturalist Society (now Nature Forward). Soon he was writing "Birds of Note" for *The Chat*, and, with one short break, he's been doing it ever since—a total of 16 years. Andy's birding wish is that he had known how much fun birding was earlier in life.

Pam Oves, Designer



Pam has been the designer of *The Chat* for 4 years. Her career took a radical turn when, with a BA and MA in History, Pam found a passion for administrative work. She has worked for over 18 years as the Office Manager for Nature Forward (formerly Audubon Naturalist Society), where

she designs the *Naturalist Quarterly*. She and her husband became avid birdwatchers after moving to Lake Churchill in Germantown 20 years ago, but they now live near Harpers Ferry. They love to travel and to add new species to their eBird life list, 2024 being their "biggest year" to date with trips to Tanzania and Australia under their belts.



The Chat
MBC/MOS
9825 Moyer Road
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The Chat is published in March, June, September, and December by the Montgomery Bird Club, a chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society.

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