

# President’s Chat

By Emily Huang

I write this on the heels of a morning spent crunching and sliding along four miles of the C&O Canal towpath, from Fletcher’s Boat House to the Little Falls pumping station. Past MBC President Clive Harris and I have been birding the towpath in service of the Canal Count, an annual midwinter survey of the entire 185 miles of the C&O Canal. We are at the tail end of an unusually frigid January; after weeks of night-time temperatures in the teens and 20s, it’s taken some unusual grit and determination to haul out and go birding. But stalwart birders, eager to get started on their 2025 lists, have been out all month collecting such first-of-year birds as Vesper Sparrow, Ross’s Goose, and American Tree Sparrow—especially American Tree Sparrows, which have been popping up all over in the county, DC, and Virginia.



This deep chill has produced an atavistic longing for Spring and its pageant of migratory birds. Soon we will have color and song again in our favorite birding patches, and the Montgomery Bird Club has planned another exciting season of free, guided bird walks. Trip coordinator extraordinaire Linda Friedland continues to recruit and welcome new bird walk leaders and new destinations this year: Angela Atwood-Moore, Leo Dilling, Stacy Rabinowitz, and Jackie Raiford may be new leaders, but they’re experienced birders with a generous desire to share their knowledge with others. Thank you for joining the team! As a Club we will explore some uncharted territory, such as Pope Farm Nursery in Gaithersburg and Baltimore’s Hart-Miller Island (in September), as well as bring back old favorites, such as the annual May trip to the Izaak Walton Conservation Farm in Poolesville.

Many of you will celebrate the beginnings of spring with a little—or big—birding trip somewhere. My own “little” trip will be a short visit to southeast



Arizona. While the opportunity does not come quite at peak season for Arizona birding, I cannot resist the hope of seeing my first Phainopepla, Pyrrhuloxia, and Vermilion Flycatcher, not to mention the burning desire to photograph a Greater Roadrunner in a flat-out sprint—or, like Wile E. Coyote, go down trying! Extended birding tours are beyond my reach just now (as for many), but I’ve learned to make the most of any proffered chance to check out new bird habitat.

Further down the line, I look forward to the annual May Social, once again under the elegant tent of Nature Forward’s Woodend Mansion. This year, MBC will be pleased to honor Evelyn Ralston, former Club President, current MOS President, and eternally hard worker for the cause of birds and birding. I think we all know that more people like Evelyn are needed to step up for the birds. Look for Social ticket information on page 4 and save the date: Thursday, May 15!

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# Editor's Corner

By Stella Tea

As of this writing, we have only 30 more days to go until spring! Not that I don't like winter since it offers an entire season for overwintering waterfowl, sparrows, and other birds, but I am ready for a change of scenery. I am also looking forward to wrapping up my first Project FeederWatch season (see page 7). Congratulations to Evelyn Ralston who will be the Guest of Honor at the May Social (see page 3) and to Diane Ford who has won the 2025 Washington State Duck Stamp contest (see page 6). This follows her first win with the California Duck Stamp contest, which was featured in the September 2021 issue of *The Chat*. To learn more about Evelyn and her birding journey, please see her profile included in the August 2018 issue. Both issues can be found on the Club website. Happy Spring birding, and see you out in the field!

## Spring 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/3MH3FB4>.

### **MARCH 20, 2025 (Thursday), 7:30 p.m. John Sojda presents "Recording Bird Vocalizations: Do Not Attempt, But If You Must I Can Help"**

John will finally reveal why you see his name showing up so often involving those "zero dark thirty" pre-dawn eBird reports. Most of them involve the exciting endeavor of the custom recording of bird sounds. Almost everyone has heard of the Merlin phone app, and many use it routinely. If you enjoy using Merlin and ever wondered how to take the next step in creating your own bird recording setup (or why anyone would do this), John will introduce some basic recording concepts, entry-level tools that are available, and factors to consider, so you, too, can learn how to embark on this addictive birding hobby.

John became a birder as a kid when he was going stir crazy during the great Buffalo, New York "Blizzard of '77." The first time he used a parabolic mic to listen for birds was on a 1979 Christmas Bird Count owl prowling. Over 40 years later, he had saved enough allowance money to finally purchase his own audio recording equipment. And once again faced with homebound madness during the pandemic, John returned to birding.



*Note from John: If you see this person and his dog pictured here, run away.*





**APRIL 23, 2025 (Wednesday), 7:30 p.m.**  
**Gerry Hawkins presents “Wildlife and Evolution on the Galapagos Islands”**

Inspired by a trip to the Galapagos Islands in October 2024, Gerry will discuss wildlife and evolution on this world-renown destination, with a focus on endemic species and subspecies of birds, mammals, and reptiles. The discussion of birds will cover the 17 endemic species known as Darwin’s finches, which have historical importance in the field of evolutionary biology because they are a prominent and well-studied example of adaptive radiation. They were the first birds in which natural selection, the principal mechanism of evolution, was observed and studied as it happened in the wild.

Gerry is a retired business lawyer whose avid interests include birds and history. He is a member of the MD/DC Records Committee and a former member of the Virginia Avian Records Committee, an eBird reviewer for Maryland, and an author of several articles published in recent years in ornithological journals.



*Medium Ground-Finch. Photo by Gerry Hawkins*



*Galapagos Giant Tortoise. Photo by Gerry Hawkins*

**MAY 15, 2025 (Thursday), 7:30 p.m.**  
**Annual MBC Social at Woodend (in-person only)**

Join us for our Annual Social at the Woodend headquarters of Nature Forward! The evening begins with a social hour at 6 p.m., with dinner at 7:30 p.m. Smokey Glen Farm of Gaithersburg will once again cater a delicious meal. The evening will feature recognition of this year’s Guest of Honor, Evelyn Ralston, as well as awesome slide shows by our members. Please see page 4 for details on how to register and submit your photos. Don’t miss the fun!



*Guest of Honor, Evelyn Ralston, photographed with a Brown Pelican on Santa Cruz Island of the Galapagos. Photo by Carol Daugherty*



*A delightful outdoor space at Woodend Sanctuary & Mansion in Chevy Chase for the May Social. Photo by Scott Young*

# Club News

## Club Elections for Officers and Directors

In May, we hold our annual elections for Club officers and directors. The Nominating Committee for this year was announced in January. It is composed of Dave Roberts (Chair), Tara Clifton, Carol Daugherty, and Stella Tea.

At the April 23 Club meeting, whether held on Zoom, in-person, or in a hybrid of the two, Dave will present the list of candidates for the open positions and ask if there are additional nominations from the floor. After additional nominations are received or if there are none, the nominations will be closed.

Within a week thereafter, every active member will receive a special elections email with the final candidate list and instructions on how to vote electronically. The results of the electronic vote will be announced at our May 15 Annual Social.

Please participate! A quorum of 20% of the membership is needed for the vote to be valid.

## Annual MBC Social May 15, 2025

### Guest of Honor Evelyn Ralston

Join us for our annual social at the Woodend headquarters of Nature Forward, 8940 Jones Mill Road, Chevy Chase. The evening begins with a social hour at 6:00 p.m., with dinner at 7:30 p.m.

Smokey Glen Farm of Gaithersburg will once again cater this delicious dinner. Please bring appetizers to share!

The evening will feature our traditional recognition of the Guest of Honor and the brief, but awesome, slide shows by our members. For those interested in presenting in the slide show, please limit your presentations to 8 digital photos. You can send them to Mark England (montgomerybirdclub@mdbirds.org) as a PowerPoint display, as individual photos, or as a link to a Dropbox (or similar) folder. Make sure that the photos are identified as to presenter and preferred order.

Space is limited! Places will go to the first 90 persons to reserve and pay.

**We need to receive both the paid reservations and photo submissions no later than May 1.**

This year we have a **convenient online reservation system!** Reserve your spaces online; then opt to pay either by credit card or by mailing a check.

To reserve, copy and paste this link into your browser:  
**<https://mdbirds.org/join/chapters/montgomery-bird-club/mbc-payment/>**

## Welcome New Members

Elizabeth Adams  
David and Maureen Barr  
Marc Berg  
Glen Berman  
Peter Boice and Mary Belknap  
Suzan Borno  
Cara Cowdrey  
Deb Crandall  
Margaret Dailey

Danielle Deaver  
Abby Elgie  
Seth Factor, Katie Atkinson,  
and Piper Factor  
Simon Forster  
Trudy Goodloe  
Steven, Melinda, Will, and  
Lena Kania  
David Mosher

Chris Newhard and Alex Agiliga  
Susannah Parker  
Patricia and Bob Pinkard  
Barbara Racine  
Josh Rider  
Stacy Small-Lorenz  
Susan Smith  
Luke Sumberg and Hanna Nettles  
Julia Tanner  
Graham Thiel and Lilijana Sanz



# Birds of Note (Mid-November to Early February)

By Andy Martin

Montgomery County was treated to some great Western vagrants in the last few months of 2024! A **Bullock's Oriole** was a surprise visitor to a suet cake in Bruce Beehler's Bethesda backyard on December 14. A second county record! The bird hung around through Christmas Day and was seen by a number of county birders. A **Western Tanager** was another great vagrant to show up in the county on December 6. The bird was visiting a yard feeder in the Germantown area and visible from the street, providing a great opportunity for Montgomery birders to add it to their county and life lists. Dave Czaplak and Mary Ann Todd were in the right place—Riley's Lock along the Potomac River—to document a brief visit by a **Pacific Loon** on November 20. Second county record!

Jared Fisher found 7 **Trumpeter Swans** at Hughes Hollow on December 14. John Sojda noted a **Ross's Goose** in the Ten Mile Creek arm of Little Seneca Lake on November 23. A single **Ross's Goose** was subsequently reported from both Blue Mash Nature Trail and Gunner's Lake. Dave Czaplak found a male **Eurasian Wigeon** mixed in with 3 American Wigeon at Violette's Lock on February 8.

Individual **Red-throated Loons** were seen on the Potomac near Riley's Lock on December 17 by Dave Czaplak and again on February 7 by Carol Dors and Timothy Kelly.

Carrie Olszyk reported 3 **Sandhill Cranes** along the shoreline of the "big pond" at Blue Mash on November 20. By mid-December, this mini-flock had grown to 5 birds, with the birds sometimes being spotted near the pond or foraging in nearby agricultural fields. One of the birds in the group was noted as being the **Lesser Sandhill Crane** subspecies. Three different **Sandhill Cranes** were being reported again this winter, flying across the Potomac River from VA to MD in the vicinity of Riley's Lock in the morning, and some days they were refound afterwards, foraging in fields near the public Poolesville Golf Course/Crossvines Winery. According to Cornell University's eBird project, this particular group of **Sandhill Cranes** has become an annual winter sight in the county since 2016.

Dave Czaplak noted a single **Snow Bunting** in flight over the river at Violette's Lock on November 24. Ryan Douglas found a **Red Crossbill** at Moyer Road Local Park near Damascus on November 2. Jared Fisher's home-based microphone/Merlin recording setup noted the probable flight call of a **White-winged Crossbill** passing over his Darnestown residence on December 31.

In the first part of January, Dave Powell noted a seemingly larger chickadee species coming to his backyard feeder in the Germantown area. Finally able to get a photo of the bird on January 21, he was able to confirm it to be a "rare for the county" **Black-capped Chickadee**.

As many as 3 **Vesper Sparrows** were reported along and near the entrance road to Poolesville GC/Crossvines in December and early January, noted first by Clive Harris during the Seneca Christmas Bird Count on December 15. **Vesper Sparrows** continued to be seen in the same area through January 20.

Some interesting winter warbler sightings include an **Orange-crowned Warbler** visiting Tim Benner's Silver Spring backyard suet feeder on November 26 and continuing through much of December. Tim has noted this bird (assuming it is the same one) coming to his house for over 3 years in a row. Clive Harris found a **Palm Warbler** along the entrance road to the Poolesville GC/Crossvines during the Seneca Christmas Bird Count on December 15. Jim and Jan Ivett reported 2 **Palm Warblers** from the same location on January 1. Stella Tea's Layhill area backyard feeders have hosted a **Pine Warbler** for most of the winter.

A **Baltimore Oriole** stopped by Renate Wilson's Olney area yard to sample some grape jelly on December 5 and returned again December 15.

Montgomery County finished 2024 with a respectable 259 species reported—second highest yearly total but shy of the 262 in 2023 and 2021. Top 5 listers for 2024 were Jared Fisher, 243; John Sojda, 234; Mary Ann Todd, 233; Team Carr (Ryan and Kathryn), 225; and Scott Young, 223.





# Washington State Duck Stamp: My Journey

By Diane Ford

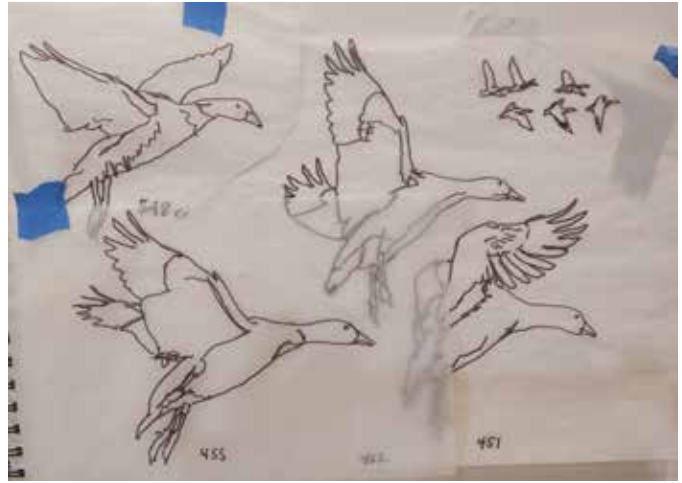
In the fall of 2023, Mr. Bell of the Washington Waterfowl Association contacted me and asked if I would be interested in painting for their 2025 state duck stamp. Previously, I had sent in a submission with a pool of other artists, but I didn't think I'd get picked. I was surprised! Mr. Bell requested a portrait of Snow Geese coming to land in a field, and this idea gave me a lot of room to work with.

In midwinter 2024, my husband took me to Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge on the Eastern Shore of Maryland to get some reference material for the painting. The first time we went, there were NO GEESE! However, we did see the beautiful Tundra Swans. A week later, we went again and were treated to a spectacular show of hundreds of Snow Geese—white and blue morphs, and they were everywhere! The light was also perfect with the sun setting amidst the clamorous calls of the geese.

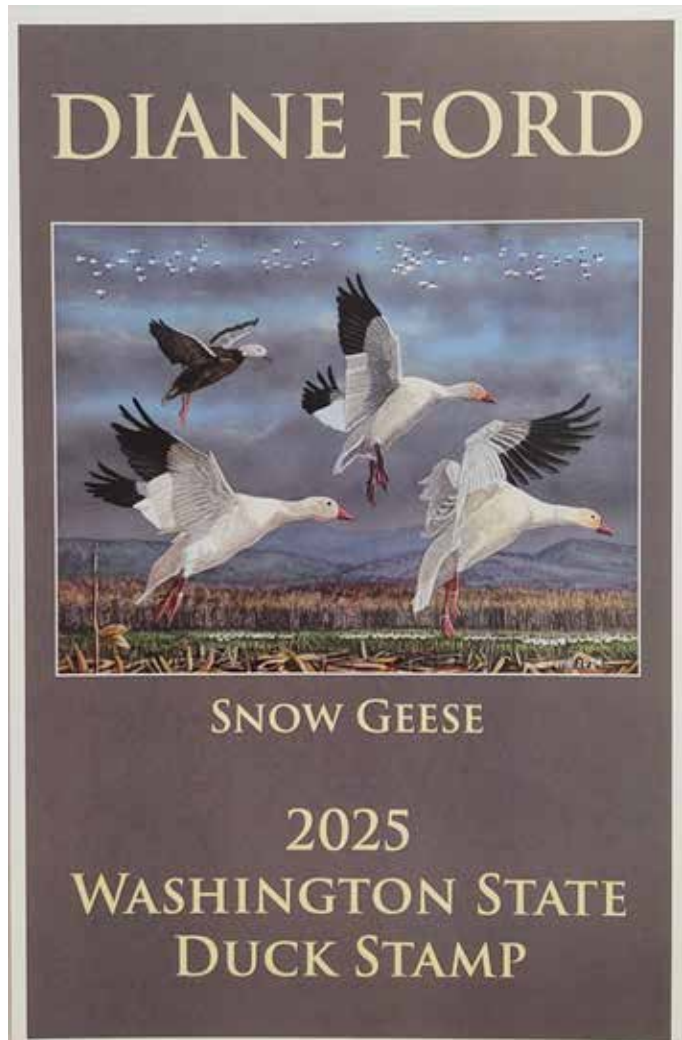
Over the next weeks, I sketched out ideas of bird positions and backgrounds and submitted a rough draft. It got approved! Then off to the races, painting in alkyd—a type of fast-drying oil—in layers and letting it dry. I also used a little oil pastel in spots. When the painting was finished, I took it to the printer to start the process of producing the prints.

The Washington State Duck Stamp is my second official duck stamp, and it will be printed in the coming weeks! However, it will be the last Washington State Duck Stamp to be published. Sadly, duck stamp contests are declining.

*Diane Ford is Montgomery Bird Club's current artist-in-residence. When many of us take bird photos, Diane drafts sketches, which she later turns into full paintings. Over the past few years, she has been commissioned to paint our Guest of Honor's favorite bird, to the recipients' delight. To learn more about Diane, please visit Members in the Spotlight on the Club website at <https://www.montgomerybirdclub.org/members-spotlight/>.*



*One of the earlier mockups. Photo by Diane Ford*



*Limited edition of the 2025 Washington State Duck Stamp poster. Photo by Diane Ford*



# First-Time Participant in Project FeederWatch

By Stella Tea

I first heard of Project FeederWatch (<https://www.feederwatch.org>) several years ago but didn't think about it too much at the time. I did think that I would like to participate one day because I enjoy birding at home. The moment finally came recently, and I have since learned what the program is and what it isn't. It is not exactly what I expected, but participating in it has been purposeful and fun.

Project FeederWatch is operated by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Birds Canada. The Cornell Lab is the same organization that has brought us the Great Backyard Bird Count each February, NestWatch, and Macaulay Library, plus the popular apps eBird and Merlin. Unlike these programs and apps, however, Project FeederWatch requires an annual participation fee. The 50% off email was the bonus motivation I needed to finally sign up. The program requires the creation of a detailed profile of the count site. The profile captures types and number of feeders, types of food supplies, immediate and surrounding habitats, etc.

Since I enjoy backyard birding all year round, I had this notion that Project FeederWatch would be a time-consuming endeavor requiring constant observations and reporting of birds visiting my yard and feeders. It was a pleasant surprise to learn that the annual survey only runs from November through April—outside of peak migration and nesting seasons. During the 6-month window, participants are advised to collect data for two consecutive days per week. This translates up to 26 counts for one season. I could do that! (See Figure 1 for my observations so far.)

Have you ever seen squirrels and other opportunists at your feeders? Project FeederWatch is interested in collecting these optional data as well, although participants can only count mammals and birds they see firsthand (not those heard or caught on camera). One day last December, I was fortunate enough to witness a coyote on one of the count days, and I included it in my report. It was the first time I had seen one with my own eyes even though our trail cams frequently picked up coyotes, foxes, and other animals.

Project FeederWatch emphasizes that everyday observations of common birds are very important for monitoring bird populations. The program is also interested in collecting data about sick or injured birds, birds with plumage anomalies or bill deformities, and territorial/predatory bird behaviors. In December, a Brown-headed Cowbird with a bill deformity visited with other cowbirds for about two weeks. Per instructions, I uploaded the information to the website and to the USGS Alaska Science Center's Beak Deformity and Banded Bird Observation Report collection. Interestingly, the survey also collects optional data on participants' feelings—angry, surprised, sad, neutral, content, happy, and love it—about their observations. You bet I entered "love it" when I photographed that coyote and the Rusty Blackbird, a new yard bird who visited during two count periods in January.

Project FeederWatch includes data analytics and visualizations that I find informative. For example, the "Site List Interactive" feature shows how often a bird species is observed at my site throughout the season and how that compares to other FeederWatch sites within 31 miles. For my Layhill area home, there are currently over 500 sites nearby.

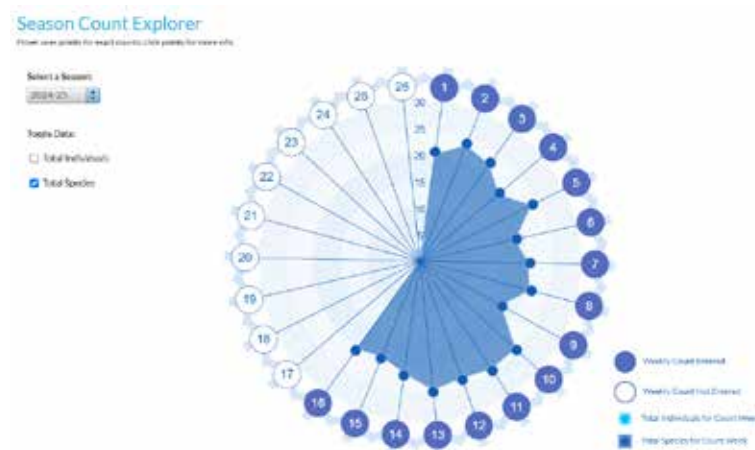


Figure 1. Season Count Explorer showing total number of bird species observed for each 2-day count completed since November 2024

For example, I have counted White-throated Sparrows 100% of the time so far this season while the average for the nearby sites is 58%. On the contrary, for the American Goldfinch, it's 31% at my site vs. 45% nearby. I do wish the goldfinches would stop by more often, especially on count days!

I am glad that I finally signed up to participate. I am learning a lot about Project FeederWatch and am looking forward to seeing how the data stack up at the end of the season and how they will compare in the future when I participate again. If anyone on the Cornell Lab development team is reading this, please consider adding "eBird and Project FeederWatch integration" to your product backlog, so that I can pull in my eBird checklists, even if they will just be a starting point. Thank you in advance!



# Spring Field Trips

By Linda Friedland, MBC Field Trip Coordinator

Reservations are required for all MBC field trips unless otherwise noted. Contact trip leaders for reservations, directions, and other information. If you need to cancel, please notify the leader well in advance so those on the (often long!) waiting lists will get a chance to participate. For recent field trip reports and Club guidance on in-person events including COVID-19 precautions and inclement weather changes, please visit <https://www.montgomerybirdclub.org/>.

The Club has planned a wide array of trips, thanks to leaders who volunteer their time and expertise. Here are some tips to help ensure that our trips are productive and enjoyable for everyone:

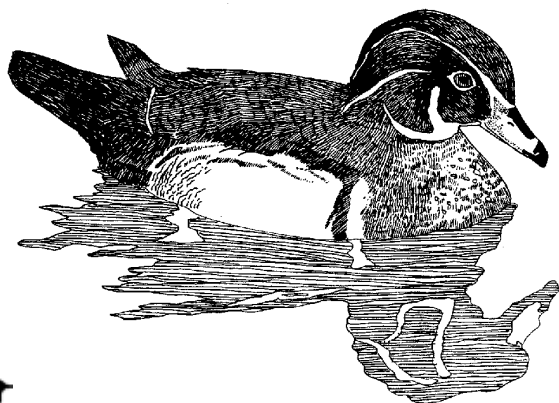
- Stay with the group, keep talking to a minimum, and walk with a soft tread.
- Let the leader lead, staying behind them, and remember that the leader is here for the whole group. Don't forget that shorter folks may be standing behind you.
- When the leader gets a bird in the scope, take a quick look, and then move aside so that others can get a view before the bird flies.
- If possible, avoid pointing if a bird is close by, as that movement may flush it. Unfortunately, this is not always easy to remember!
- Leaders often use the clock-face method of helping birders locate a bird—"The bird is at 11 o'clock in that sycamore tree." Imagine the tree as the face of a clock, and look for the bird on a branch on the left side of the tree near the top.
- See lots of birds!

## **APRIL 9 (Wednesday) VIOLETS AT VIOLETTE'S**

For something a little different, join us at Violette's Lock for a leisurely morning walk (10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.) in search of early spring wildflowers. We'll scan the towpath edges and take the side paths toward the river, hoping to find not only violets but also spring beauties, bluebells, trillium, and other plants that sustain insect life and produce the fruit that birds depend on. Limit: 10. LEADERS: Moira Davenport at moiradavenport@gmail.com and Karen Cyr.

## **APRIL 13 (Sunday) HUGHES HOLLOW**

Half day. Expected species include Red-headed Woodpeckers, Wood Ducks, Blue-winged Teal, and many other marsh-dwellers. A chance for several warblers including Prothonotary. Meet at 7 a.m. in the parking lot. Limit: 12. LEADER: Lauren Carey at ljcarey011@gmail.com. Gaurav Kapoor will co-lead.



## **APRIL 22 (Tuesday) SPRING BIRDS RETURN TO SLIGO NORTH**

Celebrate Spring and Earth Day along the shady, lush, and birdy northern end of the Sligo Creek trail. We'll begin at the stormwater pond by the Sligo trail at Kemp Mill to see whether waterfowl, herons, and wading birds are about (and also visit the ponds at Dennis Avenue if time permits). This area is good for songbirds, especially thrushes, vireos, and warblers. We'll walk mostly on paved trails, covering upwards of 3 miles. Meet in the parking lot at the Lamberton Shopping Center (off Arcola Drive in the Kemp Mill neighborhood) at 7:30 a.m. Limit: 12. LEADER: Angela Atwood-Moore at getmoorphen@yahoo.com.

## **APRIL 26 (Saturday) LAKE WHETSTONE**

We'll begin with a view of the Great Blue Heron and Black-crowned Night Heron rookeries on the island and then walk the shoreline to see other waterbirds and local breeders. The path is flat and easy walking, making it a great trip for new birders. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Lake Whetstone dock in Montgomery Village. Limit: 10. LEADER: Lauren Carey at ljcarey011@gmail.com.

## **MAY 1 (Thursday) BIRDING BY EAR AT PENNYFIELD LOCK**

Spring is the time to listen for and learn to identify the songs and calls of migrant and local breeding birds. Trip geared to new birders. We'll take the towpath upstream to the watered impoundment listening for songs and calls. Limit: 6. Meet at 7 a.m. at the Pennyfield parking lot. LEADER: Leo Dilling at leodilling@hotmail.com.





**MAY 3 (Saturday)****CROYDON CREEK NATURE CENTER**

Come discover this lovely park during spring migration. We'll expect to see lots of migrants as they pass through the park, including many warblers. Meet in the parking lot at 7:30 a.m. Limit: 12. LEADER: Anne Mytych at amytych@yahoo.com.

**MAY 4 (Sunday)****IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE, B-CC CHAPTER, CONSERVATION FARM**

Half day. The B-CC Chapter is generously providing us access to this large private property with woods, hedgerows, streams, fields, and ponds. Meet at 7 a.m. at the League's Chapterhouse. Limit: 10. LEADER: Emily Huang at ephuang@verizon.net.

**MAY 9 (Friday)****BIRDS & BLOOMS WALK AT POPE FARM NURSERY, GAITHERSBURG**

This Montgomery Parks facility is usually closed to the public. Parks staff and volunteers will lead us through the native plant gardens, whose spring wildflowers should be reaching their peak bloom, as we discuss the Farm's unique horticultural program. The Farm's diverse bird life includes spring migrants and possible orioles, chats, and other arriving summer residents. Registration is required for entrance to the Farm. Limit: 15. LEADER: Jackie Raiford at Jacqueline.Raiford@MontgomeryParks.org.

**MAY 10 (Saturday)****RICKMAN/WOODSTOCK EQUESTRIAN PARK**

We'll explore this location for some spring early morning birding on the west side of Route 28 (<https://rb.gy/qpdqda>). Limit: 10. LEADER: Scott Young at scott4aves@icloud.com. Dave Roberts will co-lead.

**MAY 11 (Sunday)****KENILWORTH PARK AND AQUATIC GARDENS**

Half day. We'll explore diverse habitats including a complex of cultivated ponds with rare waterlilies and lotuses, marshes, wooded trails, fields, and the Anacostia

River. A variety of raptors, warblers, vireos, thrushes, and flycatchers are expected, with possible rails and bitterns. Meet in the parking lot at 8 a.m. Limit: 15. LEADERS: Gerry Hawkins at maineusa@comcast.net and Emily Huang at ephuang@verizon.net.

**MAY 14 (Wednesday)****BLUE MASH AND OAKS LANDFILL**

Half-day trip. We'll start at the Blue Mash Nature Trail and then drive over to the Oaks Landfill to look for raptors, Blue Grosbeaks, and possible Dickcissels and Grasshopper Sparrows. Meet at 7 a.m. at Blue Mash. Limit: 12. LEADER: Mark England at englandmark@comcast.net.

**MAY 18 (Sunday)****LITTLE BENNETT REGIONAL PARK**

We will be looking for warblers and other migrants on the Wilson Mill and Kingsley Trails. Possible Kentucky Warbler. We'll meet at 8 a.m. at the parking area for Wilson Mill Trail at <https://maps.app.goo.gl/GLJgXdCdZkcGyUzv8>. Limit: 8. LEADERS: Katie Moore at katie.lamp@gmail.com and Paul Orsinger at paulorsinger@gmail.com.

**MAY 26 (MONDAY)****PATUXENT RIVER AT BROWN'S BRIDGE**

On a morning walk, we'll look for Cliff Swallows building mud nests beneath this bridge in the northeastern part of the county. We will also explore wooded trails on WSSC property bordering the reservoir to observe other possible breeding birds including Scarlet Tanager, flycatchers, and thrushes. Be prepared for bright sunlight at the bridge and possible biting insects in wooded areas. Trip will be cancelled in case of heavy rain or thunderstorms. Limit: 10. LEADERS: Cheryl Hogue at cheryl.hogue@gmail.com and Paul Orsinger at paulorsinger@gmail.com.

**MAY 31 to JUNE 1 (Saturday to Sunday)****EXPLORING WESTERN MARYLAND**

Two-day trip. We'll visit two MOS sanctuaries during spring migration. Saturday: Carey Run and the Chandler and Eleanor Robbins sanctuaries with established trails and a variety of habitats. Sunday: Nature Conservancy's Finzel Swamp, a unique peatlands home to an unusual range of plants, mammals, and birds. Limit: 12. LEADERS: Jo Cox at jobird11@gmail.com and Moira Davenport at moiradavenport@gmail.com.

**JUNE 1 (Sunday)****RACHEL CARSON CONSERVATION PARK**

Join us for a morning walk as we explore the meadow and wood edges of this lightly visited park. We'll be looking for Indigo Buntings, Orchard Orioles, Scarlet Tanagers, and plentiful warblers. Meet at 7 a.m. in the parking lot. Limit: 10. LEADERS: Lisa Norwalk at lhnorwalk@gmail.com and Cheryl Hogue at cheryl.hogue@gmail.com.



# Youth Birding

By Ryan Carr, Youth Montgomery Bird Club

This winter, the YMBC had a few trips where we had to cancel or change locations due to the extra cold weather. While it was cool to see some of the smaller lakes like Gunner's Lake frozen, it was especially neat to see a big lake like Little Seneca frozen. We ended up visiting Black Hill Regional Park, Oaks Landfill, and Great Falls. We are grateful to Bob Cantilli, Mark England, Andy Martin, Carla Morris, Dave Powell, and Stella Tea for mentoring us this season.

The first YMBC trip of the season was at Black Hill Regional Park. We started near the Visitor Center and got a wide variety of waterfowl including Gadwalls, Redheads, Buffleheads, Ruddy Ducks, Common Mergansers, and multiple American Coots. We also had an incredible view of Bald Eagles as they soared over the lake (and us!).

Next, we drove to the boat ramp to see what we could find and have an impromptu snowball fight. Our final stop was at the Route 121 bridge where we had great views of Ring-necked Ducks, Hooded Mergansers, and Common Mergansers. We also had another close flyover by a Bald Eagle! Overall it was a very exciting outing.

Our second trip was to a snow-covered Oaks Landfill. There were many raptors! Some highlights from the trip include a Common Raven, an Eastern Meadowlark, a few White-crowned Sparrows, an American Kestrel, several Short-eared Owls, and so many amazing views of Northern Harriers. We also got another special treat! When it got dark, we were able to see Mars, Venus, Jupiter, and Saturn with the naked eye and through the scope. I would like to thank Mark England for escorting us through the landfill.

Our final trip of the season was to Great Falls. We hiked the River Trail and found 32 species in about 3 hours. It was a great time, and I can't wait for the next trip.



*Mark England looked on when YMBC members observed White-crowned Sparrows at Oaks Landfill. Photo by Kathryn Carr*



*Bob Cantilli and Andy Martin joined the YMBC on a frigid morning at Great Falls. Photo by Kathryn Carr*

Coming up we have trips scheduled for **March 2 (Hughes Hollow)**, **April 6 (TBD)**, and **May 26 (TBD)**. Look for the reservation link to come out soon via email and the MBC website. We'd love to have some new members join us!

We are always looking for new mentors. We handle all of the administrative work, you just pick the place and show up. If you are interested in being a mentor on a walk or want to tag along to see what being a mentor is like, please reach out to us at [youth.birding@gmail.com](mailto: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 reaching out to George Radcliffe at [radcliff@gmail.com](mailto:radcliff@gmail.com).





# December Holiday Wine and Cheese

The December holiday social was a great success! A big thank-you to Evelyn Ralston, MOS President and Past MBC President, for taking and sharing these wonderful photos.



*Clockwise from top left: Emily Huang and Mark England; Solomon Woods and Linda Friedland; Roy Howard, Moira Davenport, and Chris Wright; Karen and Bruce Cyr; Ann and Jim Nelson*



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.

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