

Chip Notes



BALTIMORE BIRD CLUB NEWSLETTER

No. 383

Spring 2013

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January Covered Dish Dinner a Resounding Success



Guest speaker Chan Robbins

Share Your Travel Adventures

Have you traveled near or far to see birds lately? We'd love to present your adventures in Chip Notes. Please share with us! Send to Joan Cwi at jafjsc@verizon.net

By Joan Cwi - Photos by Rose Anderson

Since we had super-star ornithologist, Chan Robbins, as our Covered Dish Dinner lecture speaker this year, we had a record crowd of **99 attendees**, compared to our usual 65 or so! The groupees surrounding Chan were reminiscent of a movie star with young and old milling around to ask for autographs on their best bird books.

In addition to meeting friends, there was plenty to entertain during social hour. Of course we had our perennial displays of the BBC, LOB, youth program, and book sale table. But new additions in-

(Continued on page 8)

President's Corner

by Joan Cwi



I was reading the American Bird Conservancy's (ABC) October 2012 issue and was struck by how many conservation issues addressed there were also being addressed by BBC's Conservation Committee. As you may know, the ABC's mission is to conserve native American birds and their habitats, with an emphasis on habitat conservation and threat reduction.

The big news items in ABC's October issue were: eliminating threats from outdoor cats, damage done by glass strikes and wind power factories, and of course, saving habitat by persuasion, purchase, legislation and conservation including by purchasing shade-grown coffee. I felt great pride in our home-grown conservation efforts, knowing we have targeted the same areas, albeit on a more local level.

For example, we recently had an article in Chip Notes on keeping cats indoors and we support legislation on neutering pets. Entering our fifth year, Lights Out Baltimore is totally about the impact of glass and bird strikes. And we have testified against legislation in Maryland regarding building wind power factories along bird flyways. The Conservation Committee also tracks local habitat issues that would impact birdlife. We write letters and go to legislative meetings when necessary to give our input. Recently, for example, we went to the Patterson Park meeting to voice our concern over the City's proposal to pave the Park with a significant number of parking spaces and new roads.

Enough. Just want to let you know how proud I am of our Conservation Committee's good work in preserving birds at the local level. Special thanks go out to Carol Schreter, Chairperson and her team.

Conservation CORNER

eBIRD EXPERIMENT AT CROMWELL VALLEY PARK

by Carol Schreter

Do you birdwatch at Cromwell Valley Park (CVP)? Do you record your observations on eBird?

Launched in 2002 by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, the eBird website is now used in 211 countries. Bird observations are reported by latitude and longitude. Anyone can input bird observations from anywhere, and also learn what others have seen by examining the data collected over time. For convenience, eBird has a list of "Hot Spots" or often visited birding locations and an excellent tutorial called "About eBird." Using real numbers, attached to real places, eBird originators hope that this level of mapping can help with land use decisions and the protection of habitat, world-wide.

By providing your latitude and longitude, you can use eBird to record the birds seen in your backyard. Cromwell Valley Park, just south of Loch Raven Reservoir in Towson, is already listed as an eBird Hot Spot. Wayne Bell of MOS wonders if eBird can be useful locally for decisions about habitat preservation within a protected area.

At the request of Justine Schaeffer, the CVP Naturalist Wayne Bell set up 7 points within CVP for eBird reporting. If used for input instead of the single "Hotspot" location, this will collect data showing exactly what habitats are important to what birds. Wayne mapped out 5 walking trails and 2 stationary locations, the

(Continued on page 3)

Conservation Corner (cont)

Hawkwatch hill and the Willow Grove Nature Education Center.

Please consider entering your bird sightings in eBird using these 7 locations. For more information go to the Cromwell Valley Park website www.cromwellvalleypark.org, and look under "Wildlife and Birding." You will find a link to the new eBird trail maps and instructions. Naturalist Justine Schaeffer can then review and access the input, and use the data for questions such as: Do we keep a field open here?

For more information contact Justine Schaeffer, CVP Naturalist.
justine@cromwellvalleypark.org
(410) 887-3014



Grey Heron
on a canal in
Amsterdam



Jackdaw on wooden
clogs

SUMMER TRAVELS TO AMSTERDAM AND BANFF

By Mary Chetelat.

Photos by Mary Chetelat

This summer I was fortunate enough to do some birding in two very different places. In July, my husband and I visited Amsterdam and I was looking forward to seeing some new European birds. To do so, we planned on meeting a professional guide who would take us to some outlying nature preserves. Sadly, the weather scuttled our plans so I made do with birding on a sightseeing trip and in the city parks and canals. Amsterdam's parks and canals are very bird-friendly and I'll bet migrations are GREAT. As it was in July, I made do with enjoying some nice resident birds. Coots, Mute Swans and Mallard ducks were everywhere in the canals. On our walks in the parks we came upon a high tower on which was perched a nesting White Stork (really cool). We also saw a beautiful Great-crested Grebe in a park canal, and Graylag Geese among the ducks and Canada Geese around the ponds. Jackdaws and Magpies were regulars. On our trip out to a windmill village we spotted a Lapwing in the middle of a field and Grey Herons, a Great White Egret, Oystercatchers, Moorhen, Icterine Warbler, Blue tit and several kinds of gulls and a large number of domestic ducks.

In June I visited Banff, Canada with my daughter who went there on a business trip--what a gorgeous place! Just a short walk from the town is a huge marshland with an incredible boardwalk (the Cave and Basin Marsh Trail). There are some great walking and horseback riding trails around the marsh and along the Bow River. I never heard or saw so many Woodcocks! Pine Siskin's everywhere. Cinnamon Teals, Common Golden-eyes, Grey Jays, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Yellow, Black-throated Blue and Yellow-rumped Warblers, Common Yellowthroats. Oregon-Slate-colored (?) Juncos, Cedar Waxwings--these were just some of the birds I encountered. Met some nice birders on my walks too. I highly recommend a visit!

← **Take a look!**

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

*The 2012 **Christmas Bird Count** was a big success in several ways. As mentioned in the Winter Chip Notes, it was conducted on Sunday December 16th in a new area around Loch Raven Reservoir. In total, 53 birders in groups of one or two saturated the area throughout the day identifying and counting birds. A total of 87 species were identified for a total of 30,142 birds. These data were subsequently submitted to Audubon for incorporation in their publicly accessible database for use by researchers worldwide. Thank you Kevin Graff for organizing this effort and all the volunteers contributing their time. A Tally Rally was held that evening for birders to enjoy each other's company and report their findings.*

TALLY RALLY HIGHLIGHTS

By Rose Anderson

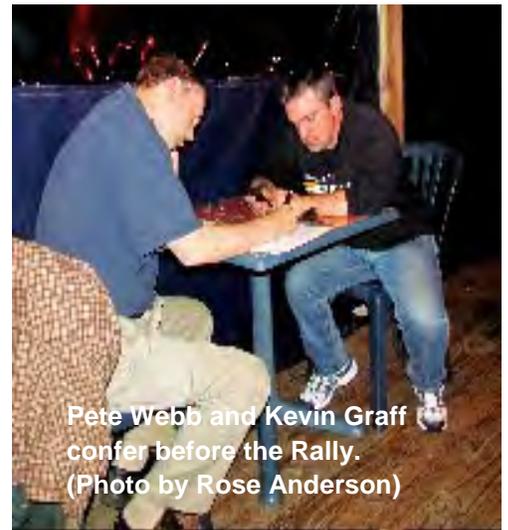
Over fifty volunteers turned out for the Baltimore Christmas Bird Count, ending in a cozy meal for the tally rally at McFaul's Iron Horse Tavern. This year the count circle included the entire Loch Raven Watershed, and volunteers split into nine sectors.

The day was chilly and overcast, and the Tavern's warmth was a pleasant welcome for the birders, many of whom had been out counting species since dawn. It seemed a general consensus that it was particularly tough day for counting birds. Some birders talked of not being able to find the numbers or species they had expected, especially because there was such heavy cloud cover that many flyovers may simply gone over our heads unnoticed. As all birders know, numbers and species can be hit or miss, but the key is to enjoy the challenge and have a great time outdoors--which we certainly did.

As we finished our meals, the room became quiet, and it was time to get down to business. Led by compiler Pete Webb, coordinators from each sector called out the day's counts for each species. As one non-birder at my table remarked, it was "serious business". I couldn't have said it better myself. The health of our environment and the role of birders in making sure that our beloved feathered friends continue to thrive is serious business indeed. Much of the seriousness at the tally rally, however, was just in the interest of getting through all of the species and recording our findings with as few do-overs as possible.

And it definitely wasn't all serious business. We birders are never without our own special brand of humor, and mirth spread through the room when tally rally compiler Pete Webb asked sector leaders to report their counts of "barking sparrow" (song sparrow). Volunteers in six of the sectors erupted in laughter when their missing red-winged blackbirds turned up entirely concentrated in the three remaining sectors. Thirteen-hundred juncos, over seven thousand Canada Geese, a Eurasian Wigeon and a Black-headed Gull later, we did get through with just a few raised hands for corrections along the way.

This year the Baltimore Bird club has boldly expanded social media outreach with a new group on Facebook, and reached out even further by keeping in touch with birds by e-newsletter. These efforts may bring even more volunteers to bird for a purpose and enjoy the excitement and camaraderie of next year's Christmas bird count and tally rally. We hope to see you there.



Pete Webb and Kevin Graff confer before the Rally.
(Photo by Rose Anderson)

KEVIN GRAFF'S 2012 BALTIMORE BIG YEAR

By Joan Cwi

Photos by Rose Anderson

In 1977 Rick Blom set a new Baltimore Big Year (City/County combined) record of 265 birds. In 1977 Kevin Graff was born. Thirty-five years later, in 2012, Kevin beat Rick's longstanding Baltimore Big Year record with 277 birds. Guess 77 is his lucky number!

I interviewed Kevin about his big year. Did he start thinking big year on January 1st? No, he started in earnest around April. In previous years his bird tally up to that point was much the same, but last year was different. Surprising birds were showing up, in part because of weather patterns and irruptions, and in part because he had started going almost weekly to Hart-Miller Island with Bob Ringler.

For years, Kevin has kept careful records of species, numbers and locations of birds seen, so he has a keen sense of change. For example, 225 of the Baltimore 277 species seen this year were on Hart-Miller Island (although not necessarily first seen there), and none were life birds for him. But many were new birds for the Island or for Baltimore City/County, including a Northern Gannet and Pileated Woodpecker first recorded at Hart-Miller this year, and the Yellow-headed Blackbird seen only for the second time.

As the year wore on, there were fewer and fewer new species to be seen and he wasn't sure he would break Rick's record. By the end of the summer he was at 242 birds, touching distance but most candidate species had already been seen. Through the fall new birds slowly accumulated and finally, on October 31st Kevin tied the old record when he found a Pomarine Jaeger at North Point State Park (a first for Baltimore County) and on November 1st broke the record when he spotted a Black Skimmer on Hart-Miller Island. Thank you Hurricane Sandy! And Bob Ringler, who had also birded Hart-Miller with Rick Blom many years earlier, was there to celebrate with him! Other Baltimore first-time record species seen this year include LeConte and Lark Sparrows, Ruff, Upland Sandpiper, Red Phalarope and Long-eared Owl.



November and December followed with eleven more species and his quest ended on December 29th when he finally saw the Eastern Screech Owl, bird 277, that had eluded him for months. Congratulations Kevin on a job well done!



Birdbits.....

Hear ye, hear ye!

Starting in 2012 MOS and BBC dues are tax deductible as a charitable contribution! (Part of the dues you pay to BBC goes to MOS) This information comes from the MOS accounting firm KatzAbosch. And donations to either organization continue to be tax deductible. So don't forget to take advantage of this ruling to save a few dollars!

MOS Convention

The Harford Chapter and the Conference Committee of MOS invite you to join them for the 66th annual conference of the Maryland Ornithological Society. This year it will be held May 24-26 at the Ramada Conference Center in Edgewood, MD. If interested in attending, please check the MOS website for a registration form: www.mdbirds.org

May Bird Count to be on May 11th

This spring, BBC will once again take part in the upcoming **May Count**. May Count is conducted statewide by volunteers of all birding skill levels, so anyone interested can join. The May Count allows us to take an inventory each spring of the bird species found throughout Maryland in a specific 24-hour point in time. It will be held the second Saturday of May - this year it's on May 11th. If interested in helping out, contact Joel Martin, 410-744-9211 or email jcdlmartin@aol.com for information about participating.

Program Booklet, part 2

Keep an eye out in your email box or snail mail box for the second part of BBC's 2012-2013 Program Booklet. It should be arriving by the end of the February.

Live - local -

late breaking!

Are you a member of the **BBC Facebook**? Almost a hundred people have signed up on our Facebook page. Members enthusiastically share their birding pictures, thoughts, experiences, and questions in a spontaneous and rapid way. It is also the fastest way to learn about a rarity or field trip changes (cancellations, new time, bring boots, etc.). Open to all, BBC member or not. **Join us at:** <http://www.facebook.com/groups/382565775136349/>

Covered Dish Dinner (continued)

cluded a poster display of the “birds in my backyard” photo essay made by our youth backpack awardee, Claire Wayner, another display of Kevin’ Graff’s Baltimore Big Year success, and Chris Davidson’s generous table of free bird-giveaways. Extra special were the remarkable photographs Lynne Parks displayed from her upcoming art show, *Unnatural Nature*, which will be presented at Goucher College from February 5th thru March 24th. These remarkable professional photographs were taken of Lights Out Baltimore birds. In showing these portraits taken during Spring 2012 migration, Lynne hopes to bring attention to the issue.

After a summary of the BBC’s accomplishments in 2012, awards were presented to recognize people whose accomplishments have helped the Club and birds in general. For the fourth consecutive year we had a **Youth Backpack Award** to give to a youth showing interest in birds. This year 12-year old Claire Wayner won based on her photo essay *Birdy Activity!* in which she describes how birds and other wildlife interact in her back yard. My favorite photo caption was “*A red-shouldered hawk dreams about the delicious little songbirds at my feeders.*”

Next, five **e-Team Service Awards** were given to Catherine Bishop, Terry Ross, Robin Tress, Tim Carney, and Mike Hudson (also our first Youth Backpack awardee). These were given to demonstrate how BBC uses digital technology and the people who help in terms of database management, website development, eNews delivery, and Facebook page administration.

Special awards were given to two people. Kevin Graff received an **Outstanding Achievement Award** for his work for the club in general, and specifically this year for reorganizing the Christmas Bird Count and setting a new record for the Baltimore Big Year. And last, but not least, Karen Morley received an **Exceptional Service Award** for her insightful leadership as MOS/BBC president and vice president, moving us forward in digital communication, artistic contribution to publications, revival of our Cylburn relationship, and collections policy development. Finally, Ajax Eastman and Jean Worthley were given public acknowledgement for their work in birding and habitat issues over the years. **Kudos to all!**

Chan’s lecture was the highlight of the evening. He presented on “***What I have learned from 100,000 hours of backyard bird banding.***” Of course, his backyard just happens to flank the Patuxent River across from High Ridge Park! Everyone came away a more knowledgeable about the effort serious banding and record-keeping takes, and information we have learned from Chan’s effort at banding, to say nothing of his contributions to birding in general.

Oh, did I forget the food?! It was abundant and delicious as always. If you were there, I hope you enjoyed the event. If you weren’t there—see what you missed on page 9!

Photos from the Covered Dish Dinner



The Gang's All Here at the Vollmer Center



Happy diners at the Vollmer Center



Scholarship Chair Wendy Olson with Youth Back Pack winner Claire Wayner



Claire Wayner's "Birdy Activity Project"



Chan's Fans



Lynne Park's Photo Display



Sale Table - thanks Joe Lewandowski



eTeam Service Awards to Terry Ross and Mike Hudson from Joan Cwi



Exceptional Service Award to Karen Morley

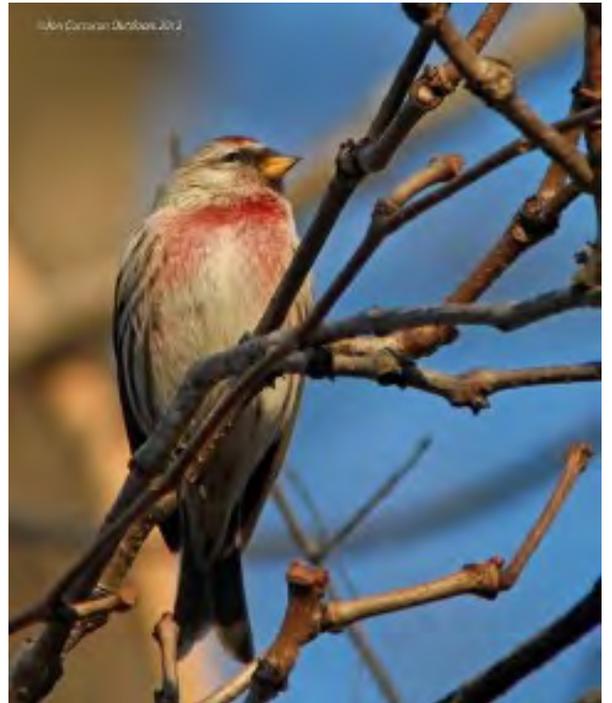
SURPRISE WINTER VISITORS!

Every winter local birders anxiously await for the incursion of birds not normally seen in this area to add some excitement to winter birding. And this Winter has been especially productive due, in large part to the irruption of winter finches (finches like Pine Grosbeak, Red Crossbill, White-winged Crossbill, Purple Finch, Pine Siskin, Common Redpoll, and Evening Grosbeak). Movements outside their normal range are called irruptions, and they generally happen because the birds' normal food supply is low in their usual winter grounds, so they move to find food. But weather patterns, such as Hurricane Sandy, can also play a role in bringing in birds not commonly seen in the area.

Below are some photos of some unusual birds seen and photographed this winter by our local birder-photographers.



White-winged Crossbill on sweetgum, photographed by Jon Corcoran at Fort Howard



Common Redpoll photographed by Jon Corcoran at Fort Howard



Evening Grosbeak photographed by Gail Wise at her feeders

More Winter Wonders



Eurasian Wigeon photographed by Jon Corcoran in Baltimore Harbor



Yellow-headed Blackbird photographed by Dan Small on Hart-Miller Island



Black-capped Chickadee photographed by Jon Corcoran in Monroe, PA

BALTIMORE BIRD CLUB

http://baltimorebirdclub.org

A Chapter of

MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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Submit materials to
Joan Cwi - jafjsc@verizon.net

Moving or email change?

Send correction to
Catherine Bishop at jcbishop1@verizon.net
Or... 6111 Bellona Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21212

Deadlines for submitting articles

for upcoming issues:

SUMMER: APRIL 24, 2013



**Baltimore Bird Club
APPLICATION**

*Membership year is September 1-August 31. Individuals/households
joining after March 1 may pay half-year rate. A full year's dues received
after April 30 will be applied to the next membership year.*

Name: _____

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Phone: _____ Email: _____

How do you want your newsletters delivered? Electronically _____

Hard Copy _____

Check dues category and circle amount sent.

Category	1-YR	½ YR	Chapter Only+
___ Individual	\$35.00	\$17.50	\$15.00
___ Household	\$45.00	\$22.50	\$20.00
___ Sustaining	\$100.00		
___ Junior*	\$10.00	\$5.00	\$5.00

* Through 17: record age here _____

+Chapter Only membership is available to MOS members who are already members of another MOS chapter or who are MOS life members.

Mail completed application with check payable to Baltimore Bird Club, Attn: Membership Chairman, 4915 Greenspring Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21209