

CHIP NOTES

Summer 2023, No. 424



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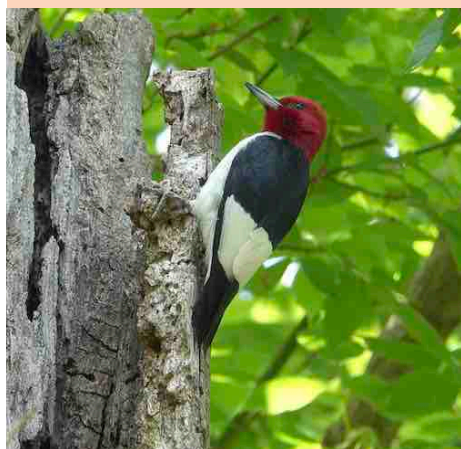
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Red-headed Woodpeckers have been seen at Oregon Ridge Park.

Conservation Corner

The Power of Collaboration – an Oregon Ridge Story

By: Kathy Lambrow

The commercial and political pressures present to exploit the natural environment are everywhere. For those of us who care for and work to protect that natural environment, they can be overwhelming and disheartening. This article is one of success and hope and truly shows the power of many different organizations joining together for a common goal. It is still a work in progress, but much has been gained to date.

Many of you are aware of the ongoing Master Planning process for Oregon Ridge Park (the Park) in northern Baltimore County and the proposal of installing a “Go Ape” recreational zip line facility. The “official” Oregon Ridge Master Plan began in the Spring of 2022, but earlier rumors of “Go Ape” (an activity supported by the new Baltimore County Director of Recreation and Parks) began in December 2021. A major effort began as advocates for the natural aspects, history and ecological conservation of Oregon Ridge Park started to come together to protect this gem of nature in Baltimore County.

For the Baltimore Bird Club, it began with a contact to Carol Schreter, our Conservation Chair, to determine if we were interested in supporting opposition of efforts to commercialize the Park. The situation was also made known to the Baltimore County Green Alliance of which I am BBC’s member representative. From the beginning, a groundswell of efforts were undertaken to lobby for the protection of the “nature” of the Park. A small subcommittee of interested BBC members was gathered to follow the Master Planning process, provide input and keep the BBC Board advised of actions in which we might be asked to participate.

Red-headed Woodpecker banner photo and pictures throughout newsletter: taken from video by Marty Brazeau.

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Conservation Committee Corner

Power of Collaboration - an Oregon Ridge Story

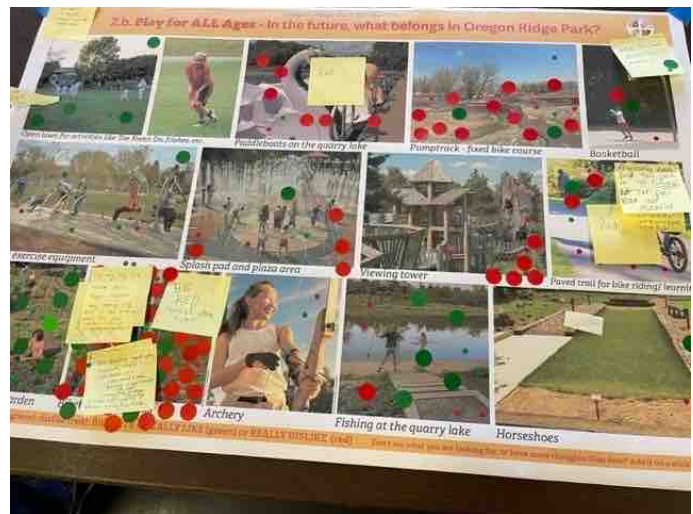
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Advocates from many different groups attended both WebEx and in-person meetings held by Baltimore County Recreation and Parks to educate and invite public input on the Master Planning process. Other meetings were held involving Park advocates and the Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council.

The Nature Council published a series of articles on their website and in newsletters about all the important nature activities that occur at the Park. These articles were often written by other organizations who use the Park – about Birdwatching, Scientific Research, Education, Nature Programs and hiking. Social media posts and articles were published with links to these nature articles, the Park Master Plan webpage, and notification of meetings including requests to submit written input directly to the Planner consultant, Lardner/Klein Landscape Architects. Interviews were held amongst advocates and the relevant team members of the Master Planning consultants. Bird walks were arranged with BBC members and master planning consultants with invitations extended to personnel of Baltimore County Recreation and Parks. Our own Marty Brazeau produced a video shared with the planners, Baltimore County and several Facebook groups on the importance of the Park's trees and trails to Maryland birds and the need to manage the forest and deer population.

All of the groups and individuals who participated in this effort are too numerous to list in this article, but the effort was enormous and effective. A preliminary draft of the Master Plan was presented on April 14, 2023 via Web Ex – and a link to the report is at

<https://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/departments/recreation/programs/oregon-ridge-lodge/master-plan>.



Oregon Ridge Voting Board: Citizens place green to approve projects and red to reject.



Title page of the video created by Marty Brazeau to promote forest conservation.

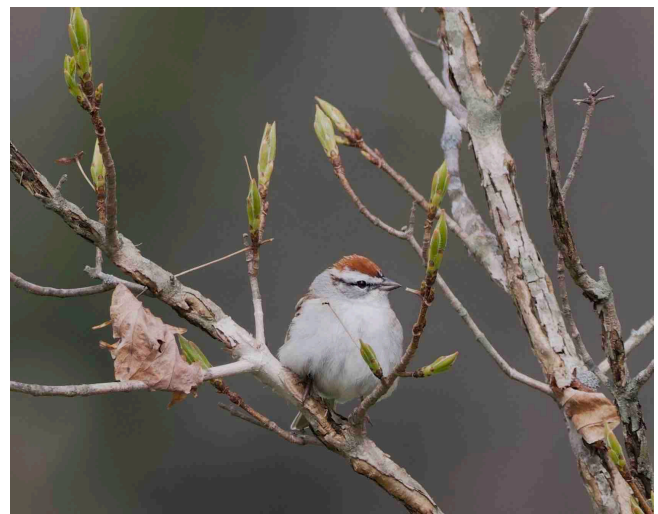


Photo by Toby Ditz

President's Corner

Modern Birding Revisited



From Tasco non-waterproof binoculars to present day thermal imaging monoculars!



President's Corner by Joe Corcoran

MODERN BIRDING REVISITED

In the Spring 2021 issue of Chip Notes I discussed how much modern birding has changed from the simple days when all that was needed to bird was a pair of ok binoculars and maybe a birding field guide or two. And that was compared to all the stuff needed today. Remember the photo with all the gear (see below)?



Well, it's getting even worse now! Thermal imaging monoculars, image stabilizing binoculars, super magnification cameras, nocturnal recording and analyzing of migrating birds' flight calls (Nocmig), and apps that ID a bird by sound or photo, or both, are some of the modern birding options. I can't keep up. My brain is hurting trying to learn all this new technology! And the poor birds don't have a chance to escape the detection of the well equipped new birder anymore!

Continued on next page

First, let's talk about the thermal imagers. This is the technology developed by the military to fight at night. Now it can be used to find birds not only at night, but in dense vegetation during the day. It uses infrared light to pick up the heat signal of a living bird or anything else.



Daylight Thermal Image Birding – the hot (orange) spot on the right is where the bird flew in to the dense vegetation

Or how about those image stabilizing bins?! Try to hold a pair of regular binoculars steady so that the image is not vibrating at all. You can't completely. Your hands shake at least some perceptible amount. But with a good pair of image stabilizing bins, you hardly, if at all, notice the vibration.



Image Stabilizing Binoculars



Image Stabilizing Binoculars non-eyepiece end

Image Stabilizing Binoculars with on and off switch

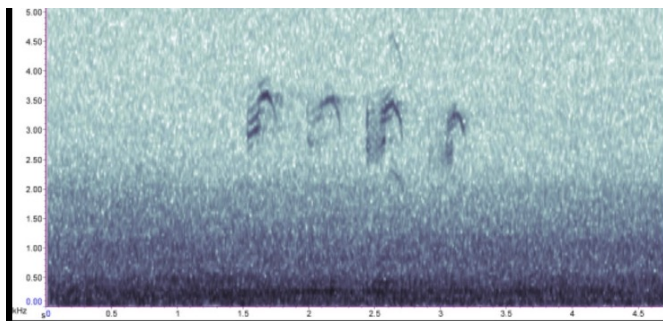


How do they work? Here's how one system works. "The image stabilization system uses dual piezo-motion and gyro position sensors that control direct drive motors for instant and continuous stabilization of the optical lens or prism system". IOW, tiny sensors control tiny motors that move the lenses to counter the vibration of the image. Electricity is needed to power the motors, and batteries do just fine, like the AA batteries used for the binoculars depicted in the photo.



Stabilized Image on Right – View video showing how stabilized binoculars work: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07IFEbEioBw>

Nocmig uses modern software and sensitive recording equipment to record night flying migrating bird calls, and transforms them to spectrograms which can be analyzed for bird identity. The spectrograms show on a graph the frequencies versus time of the bird sounds which are diagnostic to species in the great majority of cases.

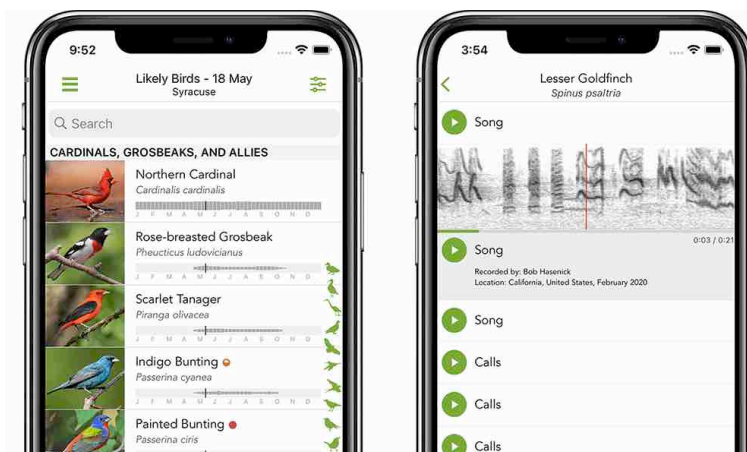


Nocmig Spectrogram of Water Rail Flying at Night Notes (a Eurasian species)

Speaking of spectrograms, one bird sound ID app, **Merlin**, uses sophisticated software to analyze surrounding bird sounds by comparing recorded spectrograms to known diagnostic spectrograms of individual species' various notes, calls, and songs in real time. Then it shows a good prediction of the exact bird species. It's not always accurate, but is getting more so with each update. It's a wonderful guide that I use to study bird sounds. I also use it to check periodically if a target bird has been recorded, which prompts me to look and/or listen for to confirm the species.

Wow, just Wow! What will come next?

For my (potentially humorous) prediction of birding in the future, check out the next Chip Notes.



<https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/>

Smart phone showing the Merlin application used to identify bird songs.



Tiffany Kersten

Birdie Big Year: Elevating Women Birders

Tiffany Kersten was the featured speaker at the Baltimore Bird Club meeting on Wednesday, May 24, 2023 at the Cylburn Arboretum. Entitled “Birdie Big Year: Elevating Women Birders”, Tiffany described what led up to and what made her decide to do a Big Year in 2021.

After being assaulted two years earlier and finding herself jobless she decided to attempt a Big Year (to spot as many different species of birds within a calendar year) of the contiguous United States. Only a few birders have spotted more than seven hundred different species in the lower 48 states during a Big Year.

As she ticked off various species early in her pursuit she was always aware of her safety in the remote areas that she traveled. Along the way Tiffany saw an ad for a personal-safety alarm on her social media feed. She decided to partner with the company that made the alarms so that her Big Year could be about more than just bird-watching. She gifted 257 of the personal safety “Birdie Alarms” to the women she met along the way.

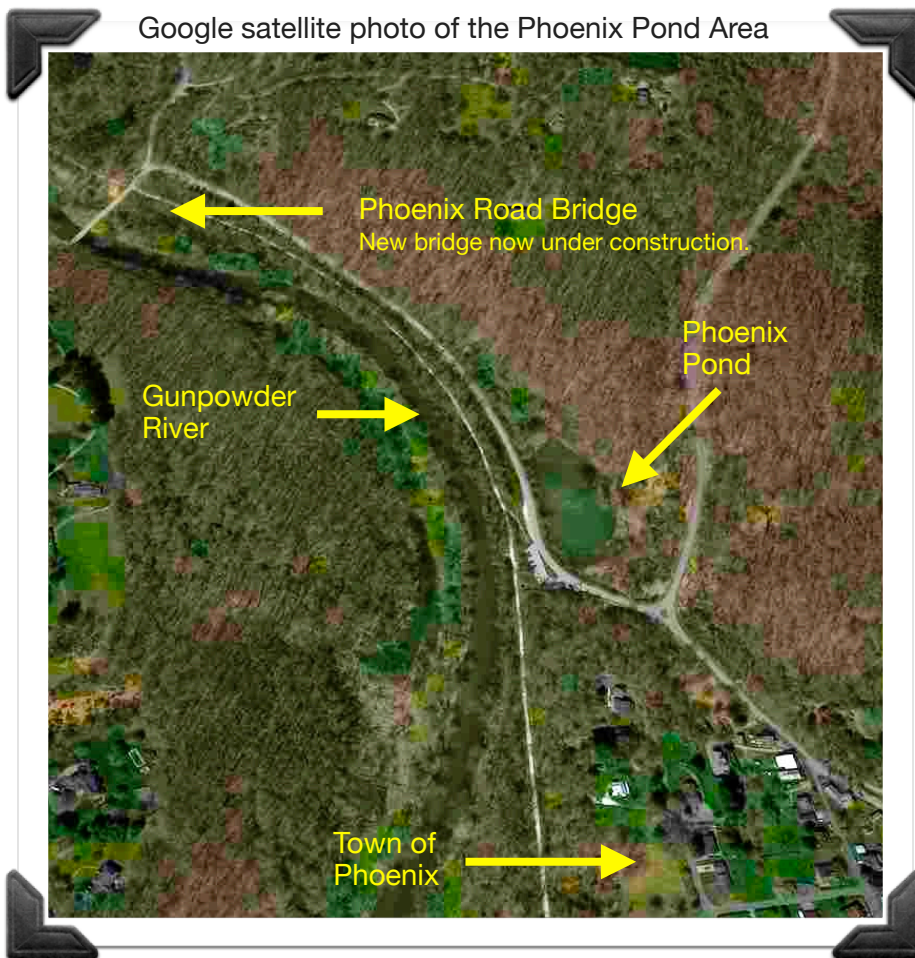
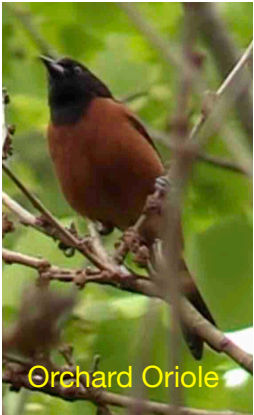
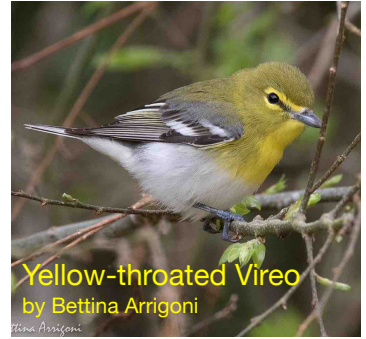
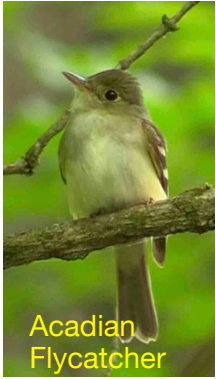
Of her Big Year, she said, “it strengthened me and softened my heart”. With two weeks left before the end of 2021 she saw her 724 the bird of the year - a Smith’s Longspur. A Bat Falcon (that had never before been documented in the United States) was her record-breaking species of 725. She finished her Big Year with a Northern Lapwing, finishing with 726 birds.

In 2022 she founded Nature Ninja Birding Tours, offering customized private tours in the Rio Grande Valley and beyond. An interesting statistic Tiffany cited was that fewer than 10% of all bird guides are women. Her talk at Cylburn was well done, well received, and well attended.



Birding Hotspot: Phoenix Pond, by Marty Brazeau

From 1848 until 1907, a cotton duck mill kept workers living in the town of Phoenix busy. The pond is a mill remnant. A railroad traveled along the river until Flood Agnes in 1972. Now it is a place to hike, bike, and bird, along the Torrey C. Brown Rail Trail! Visit the trail to see the summer birds below!



Pictures, except for the Yellow-throated Vireo, are by Marty Brazeau from videos taken for his birding YouTube channel:
<https://www.youtube.com/@birdecologyidentificationvideo>

New to the Baltimore Bird Club!

Baltimore Bird Club newly elected officers, newsletter editor, and members

Following are the results of the recent BBC election (the entire slate was elected):

BBC Officers for 2023-24

President: Joe Corcoran

Vice President: Mary Shock

Treasurer: Dick Krejci

Recording Secretary: Linda Corcoran

Membership Secretary: Terry Ross

BBC Director: Neville Fernandes

BBC Director: Nico Sarbanes

BBC Director: Mirat Shah

BBC Director: Dave Votta

State (MOS) Director: Charisma Burrows

State (MOS) Director: Kyle Gardiner

State (MOS) Director: Alison Moore

State (MOS) Director: Marcia Watson



JoAnn Bochmann,
Our New Newsletter editor

Welcome New Members!

A warm welcome to the Baltimore Bird Club! We hope you have enjoyed a wonderfully birdy spring here in Baltimore, or wherever your travels took you this season. Now soon summer will be bringing us sandpipers on the beach. Looking forward to birding with you at Bombay Hook, Cromwell Valley Park, and more this summer!

Kaiyuan Du ... Baltimore

Meredith Dunn & Sam Rudow ... Baltimore

Bridgette Eaton ... Baltimore

Roy & Diane Eisenstadt ... Baltimore

Cheryl Harris ... Baltimore

Leora Herrmann ... Baltimore

Leneora Genovese ... Linthicum

Alisa Baum & David Wright ... Lutherville

Irmina & James Boulter ... Millersville

Michael Donaldson ... Perry Hall

Constance (Connie) Bison ... Sparks Glencoe

Hello Baltimore Bird Club members, my name is **JoAnn Bochmann**. Starting with this issue of Chip Notes, I am the new editor. We thank Alina Martin for her service as past editor.

A little about me: My love of birding developed under the expert tutelage of my late husband, Carl. Together, we spent our vacations bird watching both here and abroad. In 2017 I retired from a career in employee training and development, most recently with Humana. I moved to Fallston, MD last spring, 2022. Prior to coming here, I lived in Louisville, KY for 15 years where I was active in their BBC (Beckham Bird Club). I served as Hospitality Chair and as the representative of the Kentucky Ornithological Society to the BBC.

I thank the Board for the opportunity to serve. And I look forward to meeting and birding with all of you.

JoAnn

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Baltimore Bird Club Trip Reports: January 29 to April 23, 2023

January 29

Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center.

Leader: Joe Corcoran

It was a gorgeous day for experiencing the waterfowl of CBEC. There were hundreds of ducks and geese, (including 43 Northern Pintail!), seen by eight trip participants.

Trip List:

Canada Goose 450	Northern Flicker 6
Tundra Swan 14	Blue Jay 6
Mallard 35	Carolina Chickadee 5
Northern Pintail 43	Tufted Titmouse 1
Canvasback 350	Ruby-crowned Kinglet 3
Greater Scaup 6	Golden-crowned Kinglet 5
Greater/Lesser Scaup 15	White-breasted Nuthatch 3
Surf Scoter 6	Brown-headed Nuthatch 11
Bufflehead 28	Carolina Wren 6
Ruddy Duck 500	Northern Mockingbird 3
Ring-billed Gull 2	Fox Sparrow 1
Common Loon 2	Dark-eyed Junco 38
Great Blue Heron 4	White-throated Sparrow) 9
Turkey Vulture 15	Song Sparrow 17
Sharp-shinned Hawk 1	Swamp Sparrow 1
Bald Eagle 1	Eastern Towhee 1
Red-tailed Hawk 1	Red-winged Blackbird 58
Belted Kingfisher 1	Yellow-rumped Warbler 18
Red-bellied Woodpecker 3	Northern Cardinal 5
Downy Woodpecker 5	

February 5.

Loch Raven Reservoir

Leader: Mark Linardi

Four participants for a chilly, February morning. We started at "The Point" of Loch Raven and visited a couple nearby stops, finally ending at the Lower Dam. Waterfowl numbers were decent with nice rafts of American Widgeons, Common Mergansers and Ring-Neck ducks. We did see a few Redheads, which was a nice addition.

We also had good looks at numerous Horned Grebes and Bald Eagles. However, the biggest surprise was a total of eighty Hooded Mergansers in one group at the lower dam. I was able to accurately count them individually as they drifted down stream in almost single file. Quite a sight.

February 11.

Herring Run Park

Leader: Kim Tomko

On Saturday, February 11, eleven participants met at the Tyndale Trail in Herring Run Park for a habitat walk. We were joined by Megan Carr, an urban forester from the Department of Recreation and Parks. Megan pointed out some of the invasive plants in the park that they are working on removing and replacing with native plants. She made a point of saying that the wineberries along the edge of the park will be replaced with a fruiting native plant since residents pick the berries. She also talked about the large number of deer in the park that either eat young saplings or rub their antlers on them which causes fatal girdling of the tree. New trees planted in the park are protected with tubes. We also learned how to identify poison hemlock. Bird highlights from the trip were a pair of Red-shouldered Hawks perched next to each other in a tree and a roosting Barred Owl.

February 26

Blackwater NWR and Cambridge Oakley St.

Leader: Joe Corcoran.

Over 60 species were observed by eight birders on this wonderful day trip, and the numerous waterfowl were spectacular. Over 2500 Tundra Swans were observed! And we had great views of a Great Horned Owl on nest.

Partial Trip List:

Snow Goose 2500	Great Horned Owl 1
Canada Goose 725	Belted Kingfisher) 1
Tundra Swan 247	Red-bellied Woodpecker 1
Wood Duck 1	Downy Woodpecker 1
Northern Shoveler 65	Pileated Woodpecker 1
Gadwall 34	American Kestrel 2
Mallard 25	Merlin 1
American Black Duck 23	Blue Jay 4
Northern Pintail 125	American Crow 15
Ring-necked Duck 57	Fish Crow 1
Ruddy Duck 1	Carolina Chickadee 3
Mourning Dove 3	Tufted Titmouse 1
American Coot 1	Ruby-crowned Kinglet 1
Greater Yellowlegs 6	White-breasted Nuthatch 2
Lesser Yellowlegs 1	Brown-headed Nuthatch 8
Ring-billed Gull 250	Carolina Wren 2
Herring Gull 40	Northern Mockingbird 1
Forster's Tern 30	Eastern Bluebird 3
American White Pelican 200	American Robin 2
Great Blue Heron 4	White-throated Sparrow 10
Turkey Vulture 10	Song Sparrow 5
Northern Harrier 2	Red-winged Blackbird 25
Bald Eagle 8	Common Grackle 15
	Northern Cardinal 3

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Baltimore Bird Club Trip Reports: January 29 to April 23, 2023 (Continued)

February 26

Oregon Ridge Park, Youth Birding.

Leader: Daisy Sundano

Hoot hoot goes the owl. Well, as we learned on Sunday, February 26 on our Family Birding trip to Oregon Ridge Park, not ALL owls "hoot". The day was beautiful and mild weather for a February morning. We had 13 participants which was really nice.

We started with a little discussion on the owls of Maryland and learned their cool different calls. We got to pass around some cool body parts of an owl. We had a Great Horned Owl's skull, feather, egg, talon, and pellet. One of the WOW moments was when I held up a softball and explained if our eyes were proportioned like an owl's, this is how big they would be! We examined an owl pellet and learned how to ID what bones were inside to determine what animal the owl ate.

Afterward, we took a walk to visit Oregon Ridge's resident owls: a Barred Owl and an Eastern Screech Owl. We all got a treat as it was feeding time. The Naturalist went in the Barred Owl's enclosure to retrieve any uneaten food. We got a little lesson from her about how they feed their owls.

We then took a visit inside the Nature Center to find any taxidermied owls and to ID them. We got lucky again as it was feeding time for ALL the inside animals. That is always fun to watch.

The day ended with a mini owl hunt and two friends won a Baltimore Orioles hat and a pair of owl socks. All the children received a sheet to record birds on a walk, Owls of Maryland chart, and a ceramic owl to paint.

March 5

Perryville Park.

Leader: Peter Lev

Only two birders made the trip to this winter waterfowl hotspot. Too bad—the birds were there! We saw big numbers of Common Merganser, Ruddy Duck, and Lesser Scaup, and smaller numbers of other ducks. Tundra Swans were harder to find, but we did eventually locate a raft of 120. Two Bald Eagles soared over the treetops, and we found one Golden-crowned Kinglet. Thirty-one species.

March 11

North Point State Park

Leaders: Mary and Brent Beyers

Eight people came out for the walk on a VERY windy day where wind chills were in the high 30s. We walked the Black Marsh Wildlands trail stopping at the old terminal pier and continuing around to the side of the vernal pond trail and up the park road. We found first of year Phoebes and Catbird and also, for some, FOY Tree Swallows.

After we arrived back at the cars we dove to the beach area and birded the beginning of the Chrystal Pier where it was slightly wind protected. Three members braved the unobstructed wind to walk to the end of the pier and were rewarded with a somewhat close raft of Red Breasted Mergansers diving in the currents. We had 16 species including Wood and Ring-necked ducks, Coots, both Kinglets, and Yellow-rumped Warblers.

March 12

Marshy Point

Leaders: Mary and Brent Beyers

What a difference a day makes. While the temperature was the same, the wind was not, making it a nice chilly birding day. Eighteen people enjoyed a walk across the bridge, around the vernal pond where Spring Peepers were trying to confuse some with their birdlike sounds, and through parts of the Blue Bird Trail. We were able to get good looks at Flickers and Sapsuckers working the trees around the ponds, Eagles flying and resting in the trees along the shore, and a Northern Harrier flying directly overhead. We searched for, but were unable to find, a Pine Warbler (three days later they were singing in the pine trees on White Tail Trail). Twenty species were found including Brown Thrasher, Northern Harrier, Fox Sparrow, and Common Merganser.

March 2023:

Baltimore Bird Club

Youth Coordinator Daisy Sudano

Daisy has been busy teaching children at the Coppermine School's Out Spring Break program all about Spring Migration and the sounds of birds. The children identified some by their calls and colors too. We made a cool bird on the wire craft and played the "Migration Game" from Flying Wild. While we were outside the children heard some of the birds we talked about and were able to spot them.

April 8

Oregon Ridge Park

Leader: Joe Corcoran

20 people of different skill levels joined in on this Oregon Ridge trip on a gorgeous early spring morning. No spectacular birds were seen out of the 37 recorded, just the normal special ones for this time of year.

April 16.

Irvine Nature Center

Leader: Brian Rollfinke

Fifteen birders enjoyed a warm morning full of bird activity along the trails of Irvine; forty-nine species were tallied in all. Already from the parking lot, we admired a mother Canada Goose sitting on her rooftop nest, an Osprey doing the same high atop the Crondall Lane cell tower, a low flying Pileated Woodpecker, and a tight V of seven northbound cormorants overhead.

The group focused on trails that skirt habitat edges. Highlights included a tight flock of seven 'butter-butts' (Yellow-rumped Warbler) sallying in the Woodland Garden, a trio of Savannah Sparrows ground-feeding in the sunflower field, and a pair of well-camouflaged female/immature Purple Finches feeding mid-story. Not surprising for Irvine, seven sparrow species were found, with Field Sparrows (20+) particularly abundant and Eastern Towhees (at least seven) unusually vocal.

Throughout the meadows and wetland areas Tree Swallows were already setting up shop in the nest boxes. The biggest bang (literally) of the day came when a hen turkey exploded from just five feet off the trail, startling everyone! She was clearly hunkered down, but we were unable to find a nest.



Photo by Toby Ditz

April 22.

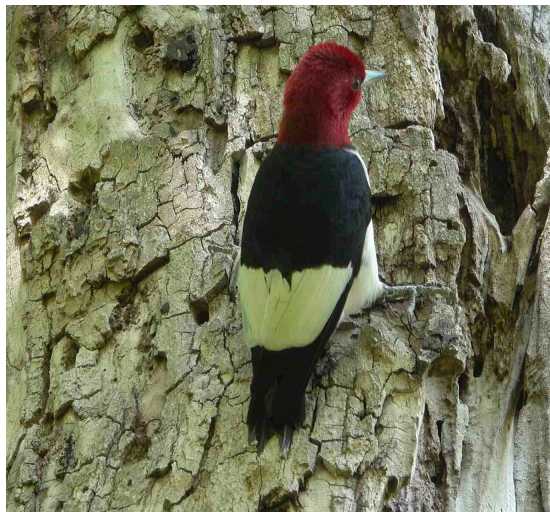
Wyman Park

Leader: Libby Errickson

Our walk started out much slower than we would have liked, with almost the first two hours devoid of notable sightings and no warblers seen except for Yellow-rumped. Finally, toward the end of the second hour we located a Black-and-white Warbler, and shortly after, a Northern Waterthrush. Morale was officially lifted when we heard an Orchard Oriole calling, and after quite a while of trying to figure out where it was coming from, we located the dapper adult male bird at the top of the tree directly above us.

The true highlight of the walk came toward the end when the group had traveled as far north as we would go before turning back. A Red-headed Woodpecker, an extremely infrequent visitor to Wyman Park and scant overall in Baltimore, was a life bird for a few birders in the group. The beautiful adult posed at the top of a tree for many minutes, allowing the entire group plus some passersby to get great looks before flying east and out of sight.

On our way out of the park we detected the faintest "beee-bzzz" coming from a nearby oak tree, and after a few moments of searching, found everyone's first Blue-winged Warbler of spring. In trying to get eyes on the Blue-winged Warbler, a group member just happened to fall on a silent adult male Baltimore Oriole at the top of the same tree, also a season first for many in the group. Despite the slow start, it turned out to be a perfect early-spring walk that left birders satisfied and ready for the rest of the treasures spring migration has in store. Thirteen participants, 3 hours, 21 mins, 3.31 miles.



In Memoriam: Christine M. 'Peggy' Smith

Christine M. "Peggy" Smith, age 89 of Parkville passed into eternal rest on Monday, April 17, 2023 in Pickersgill Retirement Community with family by her bedside. She will be lovingly missed.

An artist, Peggy was an avid oil painter in her younger adult years but continued to sketch and paint in various mediums throughout her life. She loved nature and the outdoors, walking through the woods, identifying plants and birds. A lifelong member of The Baltimore Bird Club and Maryland Ornithological Society, she was thrilled to have seen the most elusive of local birds in her backyard.

The family will appreciate trees being donated in her name (through the Parkville funeral home site).



Photo by Toby Ditz

Baltimore Bird Club

<http://baltimorebirdclub.org>

A Chapter of

Maryland Ornithological Society

4915 Greenspring Avenue

Baltimore, MD 21209

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JoAnn Bochmann, Editor
Marty Brazeau, Design

Submit materials to
JoAnn Bochmann – jlbochmann@gmail.com

Moving or email change?
Send update to
Terry Ross at trosstva@gmail.com

Deadlines for submitting articles
for upcoming issues:
July 24, 2023



Application

The membership year is September 1-August 31. New members only joining after March 1 will be members for the upcoming year as well as the remainder of the year that they enroll.

The most convenient way to join is at the Maryland Ornithological Society website using this address:
<https://mdbirds.org/join/chapters/baltimore-bird-club/#toggle-id-3>
where you may pay your dues using PayPal.

OR, you may join by mail.

Make check payable to "MOS" and mail with completed
application to:

Carol S Daugherty
MOS Treasurer
11925 Oden Court