

Chip Notes

Winter 2023, No. 426



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Bird Banding at Masonville Cove

Libby Errickson

Spring is always the busiest and most exciting season of a birder’s year due to the absolute whirlwind that is spring migration. Each year, we try to pack as much birding as possible into a few short weeks while warblers, vireos, orioles, grosbeaks, tanagers, and more are passing through on their way to their breeding grounds further north. This past spring, an exciting new bird research effort began in Baltimore: a permanent migratory bird banding station, one of the only urban banding stations in the country. Local non-profit Birds of Urban Baltimore (BUrB) leads the banding effort at Masonville Cove, where birds are captured, banded, assessed, and safely released to continue on their migration.

BUrB was founded by Eric Fishel in 2019 and has been providing valuable opportunities to engage with bird science and conservation throughout the Baltimore area ever since. Through community events, bird banding demonstrations, internships, and more, BUrB plants the seeds of interest in conservation in countless Baltimore communities. Masonville Cove, an Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership boasting one of the highest all-time bird species counts in the state of Maryland, was the perfect place for BUrB to set up a permanent bird banding station, which contributes to Masonville’s mission of community education and outreach. Located along a stretch of the Patapsco River long dominated by industrial activity, over the past two decades Masonville Cove has been converted from an industrial ship reclamation facility to a thriving urban green space with thousands of native plantings, several freshwater wetlands, pollinator meadows, and a restored shoreline. The significant environmental restoration has resulted in an incredibly valuable wildlife habitat, especially for migratory birds.

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Yellow-breasted Chat banded at Masonville Cove

Banner picture of a Black Skimmer, Marty Brazeau from a Pawley’s Island beach in South Carolina.

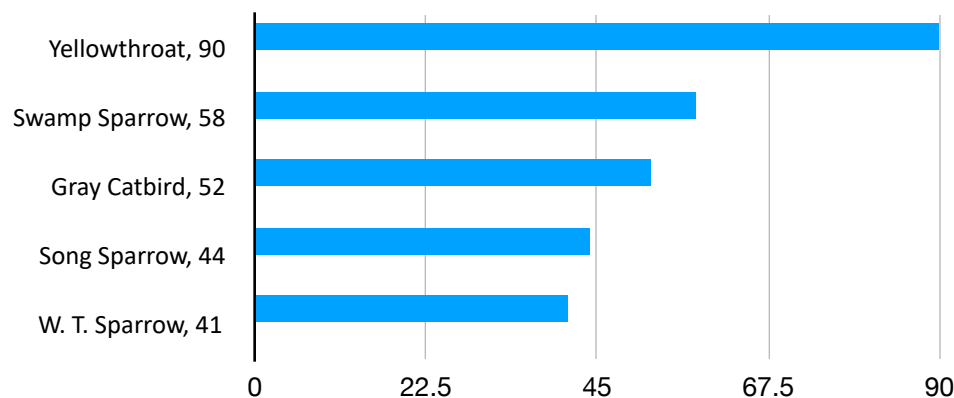
Monitoring the bird populations at Masonville Cove allows unique insight into how migratory birds utilize green spaces in urban landscapes. Masonville Cove is owned by the Maryland Port Administration (MPA), managed by Maryland Environmental Service (MES), and includes an education center staffed by Living Classrooms. It is through a partnership with MPA, MES, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Living Classrooms, and BUrb that operation of the banding station is possible.

With all appropriate Federal and State permits, BUrb Program Manager Mike Hudson runs the operation of the banding station. Under Mike's expert supervision, birds are safely captured in mist nets and extracted by trained volunteers. Mike outfits each bird with a metal leg band marked with a unique identification number obtained from the U.S. Geological Survey's Bird Banding Lab. He collects data from each bird such as age, sex, wing length, tail length, and weight, and then safely releases them to continue on their migration.

Data collected from each bird contributes to a giant, decades-old dataset that provides information about bird populations that can't be gleaned from observation only. The metal bands don't hurt the birds or hinder them, and they allow each bird's history to be available via the Bird Banding Lab to any future bander who captures them. Through bird banding, researchers have gathered information on how far and where birds travel, how their physiology may change over time, how long they live, how they are impacted by migration, habitat usage, and other important biological information. We also gain new insight regarding the bird communities using Masonville Cove as a migration stopover. The banding station operated every Wednesday and Thursday morning and every other Saturday between March 31st and June 10th.

This chart shows the five most common birds banded at the station:

Masonville Cove Birds Banded During Inaugural Spring Season, 2023



There were a few unusual captures, such as a Grasshopper Sparrow on April 13th, a Marsh Wren on May 4th, and a Yellow-breasted Chat on June 9th. After a long summer break, the banding station was up and running again in August for the fall season. *Continued on next page*

Diverse birds banded at Masonville Cove



Lincoln's Sparrow



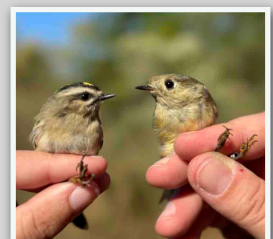
Wilson's Warbler, female left, male right



Connecticut Warbler



Clay-colored Sparrow



Kinglets:
Left: Golden-crowned
Right: Ruby-crowned



Marsh Wren

Bird Banding at Masonville Cove (continued)

At the time of this writing at the end of October, the fall banding season is still underway and season totals are not yet available, but notable catches so far have included three Connecticut Warblers, a Mourning Warbler, an Orange-crowned Warbler, a Clay-colored Sparrow, a Nelson's Sparrow, a Yellow-breasted Chat, several Marsh Wrens, and way more Lincoln's Sparrows than anyone ever suspected were using Masonville Cove. Among the most commonly caught species this fall so far have been Common Yellowthroats, Song Sparrows, Gray Catbirds, and House Wrens. The fall season will continue through mid-November. The banding table is located next to the greenhouse along the path to Upland Trail, and is accessible to the public to come observe and ask questions about the research effort.

Many BBC members have been able to observe, learn from, and help volunteer with the banding station since it started this past spring, and we are very grateful for the opportunity for our members to be able to get involved in such a worthwhile effort.

For more information regarding the Masonville Cove bird banding station, please visit:

<https://www.masonvillecove.org/bird-banding>



Bander-in-Charge Mike Hudson spreads a Song Sparrow's tail in order to analyze its feather molt pattern. Clues in the molt pattern help determine a bird's age.



Bander Mike Hudson holding a Yellow-billed Cuckoo at the banding station.



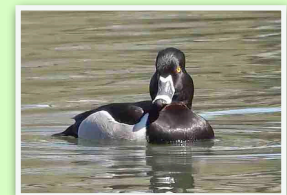
A mist net erected along the beach at Masonville Cove with Captain Trash Wheel in the background. The fine threads of the mist net are difficult for birds to see in the low morning light, which allows them to be safely captured as they fly along the shore.

Welcome New Members!

A warm welcome to the Baltimore Bird Club! We hope you enjoy our wonderfully ducky winter field trips on the Bay. Join us on bird lectures and introduce yourself at the Covered Dish Supper in January!

Andrea Appleton & Lawrence Lanahan ... Baltimore
Kristen Argenio ... Baltimore
Gabriel Ellenberger & Lindsey Loeper ... Baltimore
Marcia Ferguson & Chris Murphy ... Baltimore
Linda Forlifer ... Baltimore
George Frazier ... Baltimore
Chris Golden ... Baltimore
Holly Halliwill ... Baltimore
Kimberley & Zollie Lee ... Baltimore

Hillary Lewis ... Baltimore
Thomas Weiss ... Baltimore
Kathryn Mattingly ... Catonsville
Kevin Yan ... Cockeysville
Alison Theodore ... Gaithersburg
Melissa Madsen ... Nottingham
Stan Smith ... Olney
Ian Broussard ... Parkville
Jayme Abrams ... Towson



Ring-necked Duck
Image, Marty Brazeau

Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History Ornithology Tour with Sarah Luttrell

Written by Anna Champagne, www.Champagneoutdoors.com

The Division of Birds at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) in Washington, D.C., typically hosts 200-400 visitors yearly. They aren't open to the public and generally only admit scientists, graduate students, and other researchers who need access to the Division of Birds' vast collections of research specimens. But on August 10, they let in about a dozen excited birders for a Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History Ornithology Tour with Sarah Luttrell. This field trip, sponsored by the Baltimore Bird Club, provided an exclusive look at a portion of the museum's collection and an amazing presentation from Sarah on the museum's Feather Identification Lab.

Sarah is part of a small but mighty team of scientists at the Feather Identification Lab in the Division of Birds who identify the remains of birds hit by civil and military aircraft. They handle about 10,000 cases of bird strikes for the Federal Aviation Administration and the U.S. military every year. Their work protects people and birds by providing organizations with crucial information that can be used to reduce bird strikes. Species identification is critical to developing targeted wildlife management strategies and designing aircraft more resilient to bird strike events. Sarah explained the lab's process for solving each bird strike mystery. They examine the specimens they receive in the mail, which could be anything from a whole bird to small amounts of tissue or a single feather, to determine the best identification technique.

The team uses items in the museum's research collections, including bird skins, feathers, and DNA tissue vouchers to make comparisons and assist with identifications. They also use microscopic equipment and techniques to examine the structures of feathers. The Division of Birds has the third-largest bird collection in the world, with more than 640,000 specimens. Sarah explained how the specimens are prepared and maintained. Space limitations do not allow for whole mounts, so many birds are preserved as skins. *(Continued on next page)*

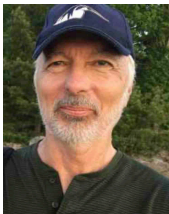


Baltimore Bird Club members examining Smithsonian preserved bird specimens.

(continued)

Sarah selected an interesting group of birds from the collection for us to see. Just a few of the highlights included several Baltimore Orioles, exotic Birds of Paradise, the largest hummingbird in the world (Giant Hummingbird), the smallest bird of prey in the world (Black-Thighed Falconet), a leucistic American Crow, an enormous pair of Harpy Eagle feet, colorful tanagers from around the world, and – wait for it – an Ivory Billed Woodpecker! Some of the research specimens we saw were new, such as the group of Ovenbirds killed by bird strikes and collected by Lights Out Baltimore volunteers, and some were old, such as the group of Song Sparrows collected from various regions and centuries. About 1,500 new specimens are added to the collection each year.

On the way out of the Division of Birds, we got a look at the Hall of Fame, a collection of photographs featuring some of the more influential ornithologists associated with the museum, including Roxie C. Laybourne, who pioneered forensic ornithology techniques still used by the museum today. The tour was enjoyable, educational, and unforgettable. Sarah did a fantastic job teaching us about the museum collection and the important work of the Feather ID Lab. Thank you, Sarah!



President's Corner by Joe Corcoran

How to keep your scopes tightly fastened to your tripod!



Again it's taken me a while to figure out what to write about. After much back and forth in my head, it came down to two choices. The first was titled, "The Birding Misadventures of Anila and Cable", which would be a parody of the travels of our good friends Alina (a budding naturalist) and Caleb (a professional guide), who are always on some wonderful and significant birding/nature adventure somewhere at the best spots in the United States, finding rarities for the rest of us typical birders.

The parody would be the opposite. Instead of amazing trips, they would experience nightmare type misadventures. I was even thinking of having seasons and episodes, like a popular Netflix series. Season 1, Episode 1 was going to be akin to the famous Outlander series, where Anila and Cable suddenly found themselves way back in time, like 1980, where there was no eBird, iPhones, or automatic cameras. Instead, they were faced with the dreaded dial-up rotary Phone Trees, or the newly invented Recorded Messages to learn of rarities. And they'd have to use maps and the frequently incorrect directions of locals to locate the birds, and make hand sketches to document them. Etc., etc.

The second choice, and the one I settled on is, "Why Does My Scope Become So Wobbly on the Tripod No Matter How Much I Tighten It Down, and How Do I Fix That?". This is a much more practical and relevant topic. Paraphrased from a review on the internet, the connection between most scopes and tripods, typically using a tripod plate and screw, has generally been unsatisfactory for many birders. This is because in regular use no matter how much you try to tighten the screw, the scope inevitably becomes loose and starts to wobble. Worse, the connection becomes even more unreliable as the internal threads on the scope become worn and stripped. Absolutely worse, the scope can just fall off unexpectedly and catastrophically. **So why is this?**

Continued on next page



Photo 1

1) There are hardly any threads involved in the attachment, many times only about two. Not many threads of the screw stick out past the plate to engage the internal threads of the scope body. It's easy for so few engaged threads to become loose. See photo 1.



Photo 2

2) The scope body and internal threads are generally made of aluminum, while the attachment screw is hardened steel, much harder than aluminum. So, tightening the steel screw actually wears out (strips) the internal soft aluminum threads on the scope, especially since there are so few threads engaged due to 1) above. See photo 2.

3) Most people will push on the scope itself to adjust its position rather than use the hand lever, as it can be more convenient to do so. See photo 3.

Or, sometimes there is not an adequate hand lever to use. Pushing on the scope actually puts load on the threaded connection which will eventually cause looseness.



Photo 3



Photo 4

And the solutions:

A. Put a thread lock compound like LOCTITE Thread Locker on the threads before tightening. See photo 4. It won't completely lock the threads, and you will still be able to loosen the threads if needed. But with the compound applied to the threads they will resist loosening.

B. Don't adjust the scope by pushing on the scope body. Use the hand lever!

C. If the threads in the scope body are wearing out, you can tap threads in a different location, using a thread tap. See photo 5. Typical threads are a quarter inch diameter, with 20 threads per inch.



Photo 5

D. Or, instead of tapping new threads in a different location, you can tap larger threads in the same location, and install a steel helicoil insert into those threads. See photo 6. Then the steel screw can thread in to the steel insert, making for a much better connection. However, the downside of this solution is the minor complexity of inserting the helicoil.



Photo 6

Well that's it for this quarter. Next quarter Episode 1 of Anila and Cable's birding misadventures?

CONSERVATION CORNER

Oregon Ridge Park Disaster Averted

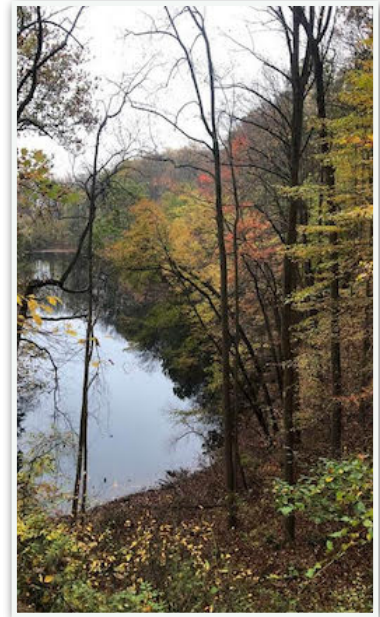
By Kathy Lambrow and Carol Schreter

In the Summer 2023 issue of Chip Notes, the Conservation Corner article reported the success of the collaboration between many different conservation groups advocating for the protection of the natural aspects at Oregon Ridge Park by providing input into a draft Master Plan. The draft Master Plan was published for public comment in April and May 2023, and due to be finalized in the fall of 2023. With many voices combined, park advocates focused on the need to prioritize the care of the forests, trees, meadows, streams and trails.

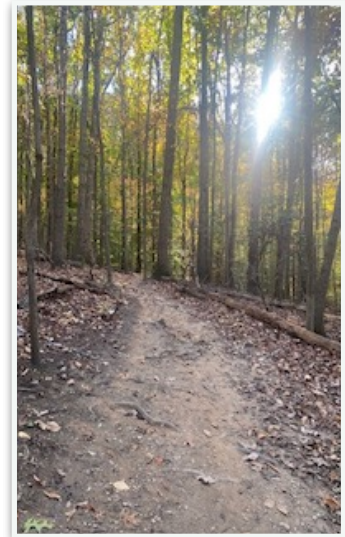
At the Master Plan meetings, the County promised community engagement and communication. However, on September 11th, construction equipment arrived at the entrance to the Orange Trail that edges the north side of the quarry lake. They began excavating an 8' wide opening along a much narrower trail, with no thought to trail design, sustainability, tree and vegetation protection, sediment control or even a design plan. It was reported that Baltimore County Recreation and Parks had discussed with the Property Management division the need to correct serious erosion uphill on this trail, and Property Management proceeded with the "unauthorized work.

Thankfully, the quick action of Nature Center personnel stopped the work, and limited the destruction to the first 150' of the trail. How can this happen? At this point in time, the Baltimore County Dept. of Recreation and Parks does not seem to see itself as responsible for care of trees and trails in this park, which has a 900 acre woodland up a steep slope to a ridge top. Instead, the Baltimore County Dept. of Recreation and Parks calls upon Baltimore County Property Management for park maintenance. Online, one sees that, "The Property Management Division of the Office of Budget and Finance coordinates grounds maintenance, design and construction, energy management, and building services to Baltimore County facilities and properties."

Their Grounds Maintenance group "Provides grounds maintenance services for County-owned properties, parks and recreation facilities, as well as public facilities such as library branches, police precincts and senior centers." Unfortunately, Property Management has no staff trained in care of trees and trails. They are the people who cut the lawns around the County Court House and County schools.



View of quarry lake from Oregon Ridge trail



Oregon Ridge Trail



Trail Erosion Control

After this damaging event, Baltimore County Recreation and Parks Director Bob Smith accepted responsibility for the error and personally apologized to Dr. Ralph Brown, President of the Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council, and Keith Rosenstiel, park volunteer and #1 Oregon Ridge Park advocate. Director Smith promised the engagement of a professional trail consultant and public communication for any future plans involving work on the trails.

Dr. Brown of the Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council had the opportunity to speak directly with the newly appointed Director of Baltimore County's Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability (DEPS) at the Baltimore County Green Alliance meeting on September 18th. While DEPS has no control over Recreation and Parks, there is no question that collaboration between the two divisions would greatly improve the conservation efforts in the County and at Oregon Ridge Park. A persistent point made by everyone in attendance at that meeting, given the opportunity to discuss conservation priorities with Director Tablada, was the public's frustration over a very "siloes" and segregated system wherein Divisions do not communicate with each other or the community.

This incident just brings home what advocates have stated during the entire Master Planning process – the Park needs the benefit of professional naturalists, on-site and on-staff, informed about trail management and forest conservation. Community engagement, inter-departmental cooperation and constant vigilance are necessary to protect our natural resources.

A HAPPY ENDING!!! On October 17th, Baltimore County issued a press release that the Master Plan had been approved and that Lardner/Klein Landscape Architects (the plan's author) has been selected as the consultant for the trail design, with modifications to the Orange Trail to begin this month. Full details can be found at: <https://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/county-news/2023/10/17/baltimore-county-releases-aspirational-community-driven-oregon-ridge-master-plan-announces-next-steps-for-immediate-trail-improvements-at-park-site>

Delightful Winter Birding in South Carolina

Jim Highsaw and Linda Prentice

During January 23 - 26, 2023 we repeated a trip we did to Huntington Beach State Park in the Myrtle Beach/Pawley's Island area in South Carolina in 2016. We also visited an inland park, Little Peedee State Park near Dillon, twice. Although the mornings were cold, we generally had good weather and saw lots of birds. Good seafood dinners at Murrell's Inlet were a nice way to finish the visits to Huntington Beach.

Some of the highlights at Huntington Beach were close-up looks at an American Bittern from one of the observation platforms, five species of Ducks including plenty of Hooded Mergansers, some White Pelicans, Great and Snowy Egrets, White Ibis and Kingfisher. Birds seen on trails, from observation platforms and at the Nature Center included a Marsh Wren, Hermit Thrush, Bluebirds, Pine Warblers, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, and a White-breasted Nuthatch. The semi-open area next to the historic Mansion was full of Phoebes.

An unusual event was watching a large group of Cedar Waxwings repeatedly dropping down to a pool of rainwater to take small sips of water, then flying back up to the tree branches again. They left the scene after a small Hawk attacked them but missed its target.

Marty also visited Pawley's Island in October 2023 during a family reunion. He snuck away for short periods to film birds. Watch his video on the next page!



White Ibis feeding at Huntington Beach State Park
Picture by Marty Brazeau from video

Introducing Marcia Watson, new MOS Director

Marcia Watson is a long-time member of the Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) and has been active in several chapters over the years. She was a founding member of the Cecil Bird Club, and after moving to Prince George's County, served as President of the Patuxent Bird Club. Marcia first joined Baltimore Bird Club as an associate member around 2008. This past summer, Marcia and her husband Gene Scarpulla (editor of Maryland Birdlife) moved back to Baltimore County, and now Baltimore Bird Club is once again their primary chapter.

The part of Baltimore County that Marcia knows best is Hart-Miller Island. Prior to 2010, Marcia accompanied Gene on his weekly bird surveys at Hart-Miller, and fondly recalls those days -- in the blistering sun and the bitter winds of winter -- watching the week-to-week changes in the habitat and bird life as the island was gradually built up with dredged material. Marcia and Gene had initially met at Conowingo Dam, and were brought together years later through some surreptitious match-making by their friends during the MOS Convention in 2005.



MOS Director, Marcia Watson

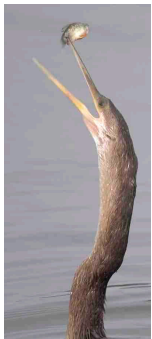
As a member of the MOS Board, Marcia has served on numerous committees, including the Scholarship, Budget, and Long-Range Planning Committees. Currently a member of the MOS Sanctuary Committee, Marcia keeps the committee's records and works to raise awareness of the sanctuaries among MOS members and the public, a role rooted in her interest in preserving land and natural habitats. Marcia also serves as editor of MOS's online *Birder's Guide to Maryland and DC*. She is a former board member of the Friends of Patuxent Research Refuge and continues to serve on committees with the Friends.

Marcia has an adult son and daughter-in-law who live in Japan, and looks forward to family visits and expanding her Japan bird list. Interested in biology and the outdoors from the time she was a little girl, Marcia holds a Ph.D. in Biological Sciences, and was a faculty member and administrator at the University of Delaware and later at the University of Maryland Global Campus. She is now retired and is enjoying exploring the area around their new home adjacent to Loch Raven.

Watch the Pawley's Island bird video by clicking on the osprey and then a play arrow button that appears.



Birds to see at Pawley's Island, South Carolina



Video by Marty Brazeau

August 19

Paper Mill Flats

Leader: Sam Tillman

We had a pleasant start to what would become an eventful day! Before we left the parking lot we spotted a female Scarlet Tanager feeding a young Brown-headed Cowbird, the first time I've seen this combination. A short walk along the Torrey C. Brown Trail (NCR) brought us to Ashland Flats and while there was little in the way of mudflats, we did get a few interesting birds. A Tennessee Warbler made a brief appearance, one of the first reported for this year's Fall migration, and a Yellow-billed Cuckoo said hello. The second part of our walk we knew would be challenging as a recent storm had brought down multiple trees which blocked the trail to Paper Mill flats. I had come equipped with a saw and hatchet, and had cleared the first downed tree when I heard a huge commotion farther back on the trail - yells, screams, and breaking branches! Apparently someone had accidentally disturbed a Yellow Jacket nest and they began attacking the group! We made a hasty retreat to the parking area to assess the situation. At least five participants had been stung, with two requiring mild medical attention (both were fine, and home by the end of the day). After a check-in we decided to try again, this time avoiding the nest by bushwhacking around it. This ended up being its own ordeal, but we did manage to get to the lookout spot! Our shaken, but intrepid, birders were treated to a nice collection of shorebirds including both Yellow-legs, and Least, Pectoral, and Semipalmated Sandpipers. Certainly a bird walk none will soon forget!



Yellow-billed Cuckoo, by Marty Brazeau

September 2

Herring Run Park

Leader: Kim Tomko

We were joined by birders from Anne Arundel and Harford Counties for this trip! It was a perfect fall day and a few of the newer birders in the group were very enthusiastic at seeing each bird which made the trip even more fun. A flock of warblers near the pedestrian bridge got things off to a good start.

These included Black-and-white Warblers, American Redstarts, a Northern Parula, Magnolia Warblers and even a Wilson's Warbler! The next highlight was a Spotted Sandpiper feeding in the stream which everyone got to see. At one point we were serenaded by a Common Raven although we never saw the bird. Yellow-throated and Warbling Vireos also made an appearance. We ended up with a total of 39 species for this trip.

September 16

Wyman Park

Leader: Libby Erickson. Sixteen participants.

Our walk in Wyman Park was a perfect sampling of mid-September migration. We started off walking south from the Remington Avenue bridge entrance to the Stony Run Trail. Our first migrants of the day were quite a few Chestnut-sided Warblers, a couple Black-and-white Warblers, a Northern Parula, a Least Flycatcher, and a Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Also along this stretch of the trail we spied a gorgeous male Rose-breasted Grosbeak just barely visible among the tree leaves. At the end of the southern stretch of Wyman Park we turned back north via the open field area behind the houses on Keswick Avenue, where we found the highlight of the day: Wyman Park's first Yellow-bellied Flycatcher! The bird cooperatively stayed in one tree for quite a long time, allowing us to catch several good looks and photos. We also counted nine Broad-winged Hawks migrating overhead while in this area. As we moved back north toward the ponds, we added Magnolia Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, and Bay-breasted Warbler to our list. Our walk was also punctuated by at least seven Eastern Wood-Pewees, two Red-shouldered Hawks, a Cooper's Hawk, Northern Flickers, and the occasional hoot from one of the park's resident Barred Owls. There are few better places to be in Baltimore on a mid-September morning than Wyman Park.



Northern Parula, by Marty Brazeau

September 17

Birding by Canoe, Days Cove

Leader: Sam Tillman

We couldn't have asked for better conditions, cool and clear as we hit the water. We started strong, with multiple Sora, Virginia Rail, and Marsh Wren within the same nearby cove. They remained stubbornly out of sight, but lots of vocalizing made for a good experience for all. Our convoy of nine canoes then left Days Cove to explore nearby waterways and began up the mouth of the Gunpowder River. Just like last year, we encountered an early Ring-necked Duck and a lone, migratory Broad-winged Hawk. Joe Davis, administrator of Days Cove, joined us and added loads of interesting anecdotes on the cove's history, plant life, and general goings-on. While our total species count of 53 fell well short of last year's excursion, we had a great time exploring this usually inaccessible hotspot.

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S150124498>

September 29 - October 1

Cape May Birdapalooza

Leaders: Alyssia Church and Libby Errickson

Thirteen participants (not including leaders). BBC's first ever weekend trip to Cape May, New Jersey, was a great success. We started the trip Saturday morning at the Cape May Bird Observatory's morning flight count on the dike at Higbee Beach. While it wasn't a huge migration day by Cape May standards, we were able to kick off the trip with a smattering of migrating warblers and raptors. After a short walk through the fields at Higbee Beach, we relocated to the famous Cape May Hawkwatch platform. There we saw a number of migrating raptors, but the most notable sighting were hundreds upon hundreds of Tree Swallows swirling together above the pond.

Some of us were also lucky enough to watch a White Ibis fly across the pond, a species that has only recently become a regular sight in South Jersey. We wrapped up our time at the hawkwatch with a short walk on the beach at Cape May Point State Park, where we had a bit of an ID lesson on Lesser Black-backed Gulls. We were able to continue birding while eating lunch at the Sunset Grille on Sunset Beach, and spied a handful of shorebirds such as Sanderlings and Dunlin as well as a migrating Black Scoter flying by over the water.

After lunch, we took a Birding by Boat trip on the Osprey, which explored the back bays of Cape May as well as part of Cape May Inlet. Highlights from the boat trip included American Oystercatchers, Black-bellied Plovers, Ruddy Turnstones, Semipalmated Plovers, Boat-tailed Grackles, Black-crowned Night-Herons, and a Tricolored Heron. After the boat trip, we went to the Cape May Meadows for a special surprise presentation from the Cape May Raptor Banding Project, where we got to see up close a Merlin and a Sharp-shinned Hawk that had been recently caught and banded, as well as learn about the project and raptor banding. What a treat! After the presentation, we took an evening walk around the Meadows and saw Blue-winged Teal, a Stilt Sandpiper, Common Nighthawks, as well as several more migrating raptors. What a great first day in Cape May!

The next day we met again at the Higbee Beach morning flight count, and what a difference the wind can make! The wind had shifted from the day prior from northeast to more north, and it opened the bird floodgates.



A great bunch of birders from the Baltimore Bird Club in front of a Cape May lighthouse.

Our group was treated to an incredible morning flight that consisted of thousands of birds. There were around 10,000 warblers of several species migrating by the dike, the majority of which were Northern Parulas, American Redstarts, Cape May Warblers, Palm Warblers, Yellow-rumped Warblers, and Black-and-white Warblers, with at least 10 additional warbler species present in smaller numbers. Other notable migrants of morning flight were the 2000+ Northern Flickers zooming by, truly a sight to behold. We also saw multiple flocks of Cedar Waxwings, several Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, and a Red-headed Woodpecker. Once morning flight started to die down, we went back to the hawkwatch platform in time to see the hawk counter tally the 1000th Sharp-shinned Hawk of the day before it was even noon. Other raptors included Cooper's Hawks, Broad-winged Hawks, Bald Eagles, American Kestrels, Merlins, and Peregrine Falcons. With a final group tally of 112 species for the weekend, it was a perfect ending to a perfect Cape May birding day and a fantastic first BBC trip to this incredible fall migration hotspot.



Marty Brazeau

October 1

Violette's Lock
Leaders: C&O Canal
Leaders: Deb and Lou Taylor.

With the first day of October, we ventured into Violette's Lock. It was a gorgeous day- sunny, into the 70s (not humid) and the bike traffic was not too bad for a Sunday. Although we were hoping for an assortment of warblers, it was woodpecker kind of day. The highlights were several Red Headed Woodpeckers, mostly juvie or female. It was fun to watch the wood chips fly as some were working on enlarging a hole in a tall dead tree.

Wonderful Backyard Visitor

Out of the blue, on a hot July afternoon, we caught sight of this elegant bird of blue foraging in my backyard. This bird was a Blue Grosbeak. We saw this beautiful bird a few more times, much to our delight. This stunning grosbeak especially liked hopping from the grass onto my little dogwood tree. I live in Edgemere and am so happy that this rather rare bird came to my house and not nearby North Point State Park.

Jane Aughenbaugh



Picture by Jane Aughenbaugh

A few hawks (Red-shouldered and Red-tailed) flew over as well as an Osprey, two Bald Eagles (one adult and one juvie) and both vultures. Several expected birds along the trail were a Belted Kingfisher, Double-crested Cormorant and several Great Blue Heron. A yet to be determined Flycatcher is still being debated. Not a super exciting day but it was very pleasant and we ended with close to 30 species.

October 7

The Big Sit at North Point State Park
Leaders: Alyssia Church and Libby Errickson.
Fifteen participants.

Libby Errickson and Alyssia Church co-captained the 2nd annual BBC Big Sit circle at North Point State Park (<https://www.thebigsit.org/>) which was once again a fun day of birds, birders, snacks, and beautiful scenery. We are very grateful for North Point State Park staff who were gracious enough to let us into the park a full hour before it officially opened for the day so we could have time to set up and start birding soon after sunrise.

We were presented with all kinds of weather throughout the 12 hours of the event including sunny, rainy, calm, breezy, chilly, and excessively warm. Libby and Alyssia were in the circle for the full 12 hours (except for bathroom breaks) and 13 other participants rotated in and out of the circle throughout the day which provided renewed energy to our birding. Libby also baked some delicious snacks for everyone which were a hit and kept us going even in the rain. One of the non-bird highlights of the day was a groundhog that attempted to join a wedding on the pier. We ended with 63 species and although we didn't quite reach our species count from last year (64), we had lots of fun and got to know other birders a little better.

Baltimore Bird Club

<http://baltimorebirdclub.org>

A Chapter of

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Moving or email change?
Send update to
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Deadlines for submitting articles
for upcoming issues:
January 24, 2024



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:

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