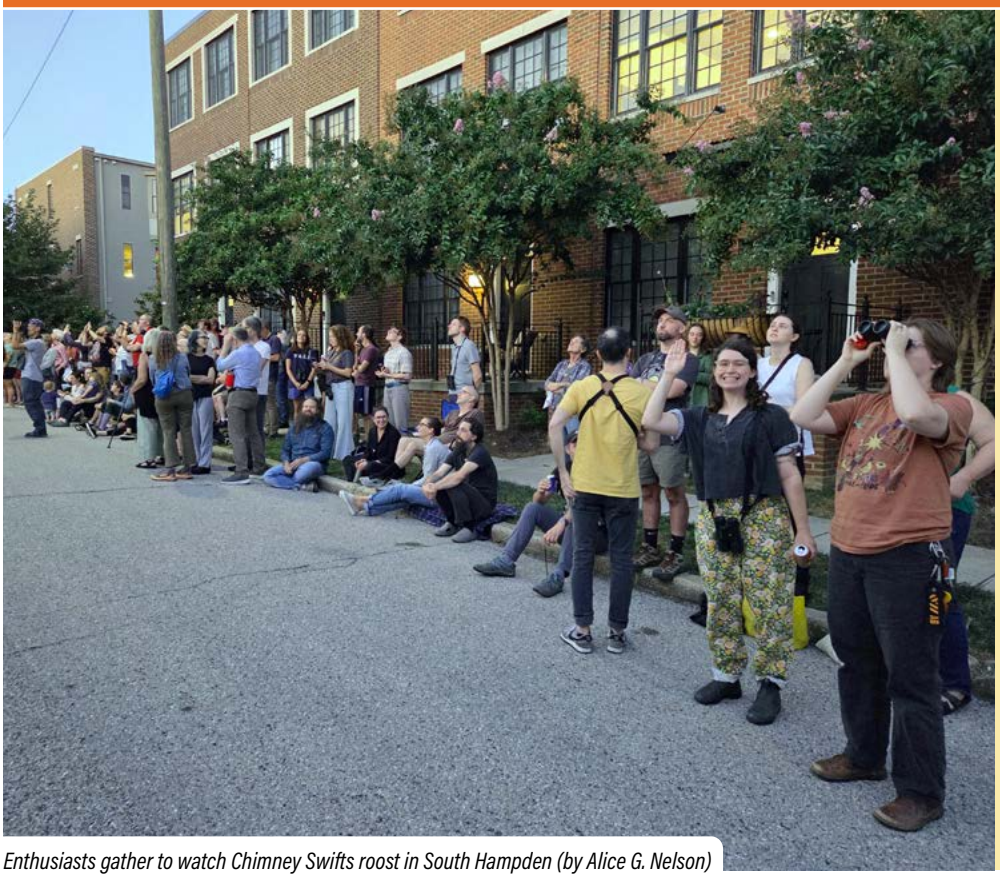
# Chip Notes

Winter 2026
No. 438

*Enthusiasts gather to watch Chimney Swifts roost in South Hampden (by Alice G. Nelson)*

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CONSERVATION CORNER

## New Developers, New Plan for the Swifts

*By Carol Schreter*

The mood was hopeful when 35+ South Hampden Neighbors gathered on September 17, 2026 to hear about a new plan for the Free State Bookbinders at 3110 Elm Ave. in Hampden. Principles from VS Development presented their ideas for "adaptive reuse" of the now vacant Book Bindery, still owned in part by members of the Roebuck family.

To VS Development, "adaptive reuse" at this site means:

- Historic building remains
- Historic chimney remains
- Chimney Swift habitat remains
- Industrial character remains

They foresee creating 60 affordable, mostly one bedroom/studio apartments, a fitness center and artist studios/gallery.

This is quite different from another plan presented four years ago, in October 2022, by another developer. That involved tearing down the existing structure and building a six story highrise with 140 high-end

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condominiums. That architect proudly called it a “castle on the hill”.

Back in 2022, neighbors were alarmed, much opposed. With the help of Councilwoman Odette Ramos, they worked hard for three years to get historic status for the Free State Bookbinders. At every meeting at City Hall, three designated Hampdenites spoke: about parking, traffic, and the birds, the Chimney Swifts.

On behalf of the birds, BBC member Alice Greely Nelson, known as the Swift Lady of Hampden, spoke passionately. Alice lives nearby on Stone Hill. She has been counting the Chimney Swifts at that chimney for 35 years. It was her data that charmed and amazed public officials as we went from one meeting to the next at City Hall, in search of a way to protect this building, and this chimney.

Alice explained that thousands of Chimney Swifts were using this 80’ tall brick chimney as a night-time roost for several months a year, while on migration. The nightly gathering of birds, at dusk, is a neighborhood attraction.

Jesse Vann, as spokesperson for VS Development, says the reduced scale and affordability aspect is a direct result of the recent historic designation for 3110 Elm Ave. Historic status from CHAP (Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation) will allow for tax reductions and tax credits from the city, state, and federal government.



*Chimney Swifts pour into the chimney of the Free State Bookbinders building (by Alice G. Nelson)*

The new developers hope to be involved in building management, long-term. They are trying to respect community wishes as conveyed in *Baltimore Banner*

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articles and a survey from South Hampden Neighbors. Vann said: we try to "put ourselves in your position."

Most of the questions asked at this meeting involved concerns about traffic and parking, given the greater density of people who would live in this old neighborhood with narrow streets.

Attending BBC members Alice Greely Nelson, Libby Errickson, Neville Fernandes, Anching Tang and I asked pointed questions which generated useful discussion. Can your rooftop deck, or rooftop air conditioners be located AWAY from the 80' chimney? How will prospective renters be informed about this weird bird phenomenon which draws 25 or 50 or even 100 on-lookers outside on the street every night, for weeks?

The 2026 concept plan from a new development team feels like progress to us birders. But there remains a long road ahead, getting financing, building permits, etc.

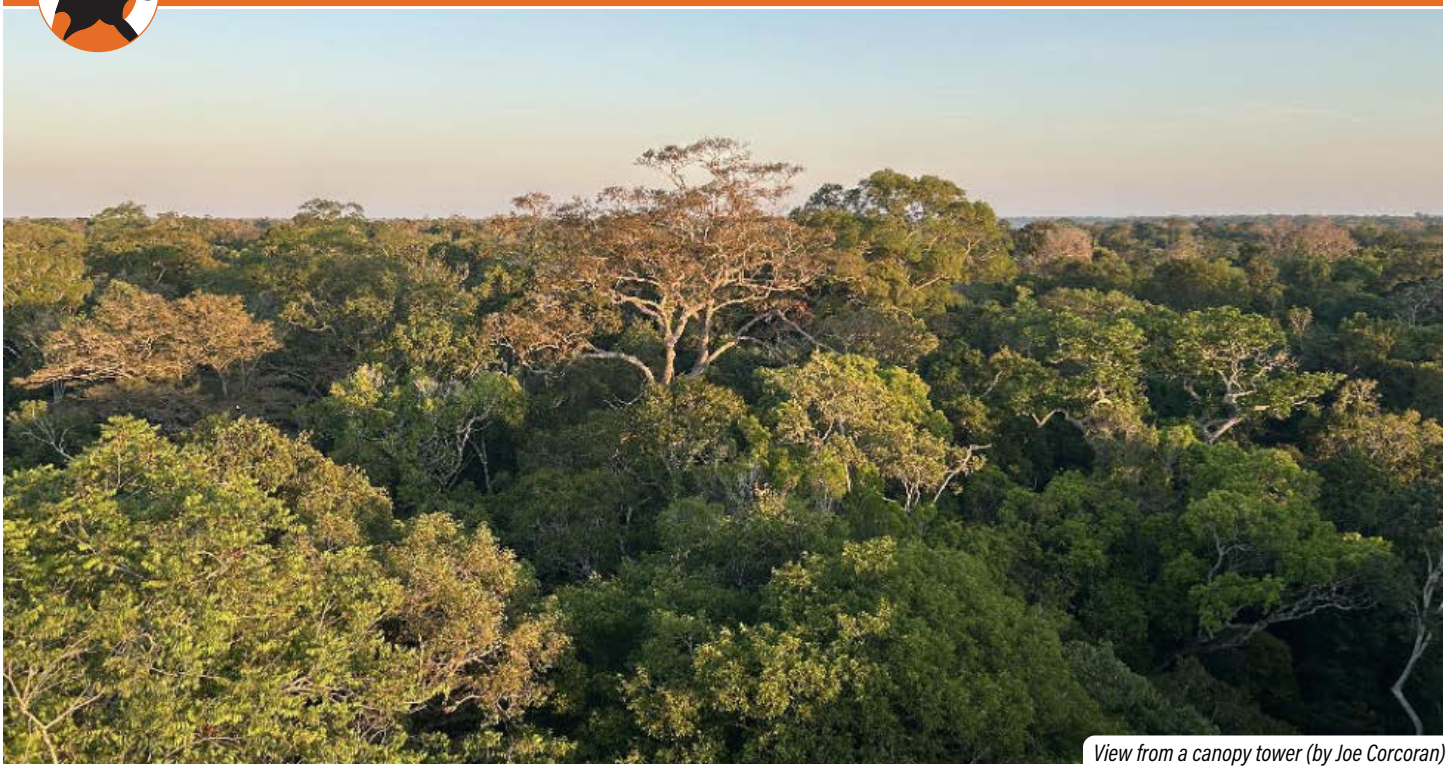
We are grateful that Alice Greely Nelson, our Swift Lady of Hampden, will continue working with the neighborhood to create open communication with the developers. Alice will continue to stress the importance of protecting this chimney, for the birds.

## APODIFORMES WORD SEARCH

U R V A L P I N E S W I F T Q N B C J H I K U G N
H A W M S C Z D H Z Y E B T T W R C U B R H O R E
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L D F V D C O L O R F U L P U F F L E G D C K E V
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S R G D N L J L P Y Z G K A U Y A M R Q C E A I J
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F E V S R V F E S T I V E C O Q U E T T E S Y H M
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A Y T W V U T W H K C X L B X X L C V W A E A N O

**Find these birds across, down or diagonally (but not backwards):**

Alpine Swift
Bee Hummingbird
Brazilian Ruby
Bronzy Hermit
Buffy Hummingbird
Chimney Swift
Colorful Puffleg
Crested Treeswift
Festive Coquette
Fiery Topaz
Glossy Swiftlet
Great Spinetail
Green Inca
Green Thorntail
Jamaican Mango
Shining Sunbeam
Sooty Barbthroat



*View from a canopy tower (by Joe Corcoran)*



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

## Backplays

Here comes another one, another literary masterpiece—if only someone else had written it. This one could have the dual titles, "Play It Again!—No Don't, Not So Fast!" and "Heard Only Doesn't Count!—Yes It Does!, Pfffttttt!!". Perplexed? Confused?

Where did all this come from? It's my cathartic and inspirational and very challenging 35 day Brazilian Amazon trip with a small group of some very skilled hard core birders (6 total including me, except I'm just skilled, take off the very) and wonderfully talented guides (Brazil Birding Experts).

The birding was demanding, especially on the Amazon rainforest floor and in the canopy looking from the floor. At the lowest levels of the forest there's not as much light, especially in the morning, as the foliage is so thick from the floor up to the canopy. Which meant also that the canopy could not be seen easily from below. So the canopy birds were best seen, and seen fabulously, on special trips, from two very tall (140 feet) observation towers.

There on the floor though, so many of the birds were very secretive and shy—Tinamous, Antbirds, Antwrens, Antshrikes, Antvireos, Antthrushes, and Antpittas. By the naming of the birds you can get the idea that ants, of all sorts, were everywhere, and they were, including on my body somewhere every now and then. Then there were some Woodcreepers and other ovenbirds like Spinetails and Foliage-gleaners (not our Ovenbird warbler type). The Ant birds were mostly gray, black, grayish black, blackish gray and charcoal, while the ovenbirds were brown, dark brown, light brown, medium brown, olive brown,

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and, if we were lucky, brown with some rufous.

Though the birds had dark/drab coloration on the surface, getting a good view of any of them in your bins revealed how especially beautiful they were. But therein lies the problem, and what this article is mainly about. How do you get to see them if they're so secretive and camouflaged? Playback is used. That is playing the call or song of a target species through a speaker, mimicking a rival in their territory, or playing an owl or other call to attract area birds who come to mob the perceived threat.

We can go over the pros and cons of playback and its effect on birds, and I think I will later on in this article, but what I want to start with is that no matter what level of playback is thought to be reasonable and judicious, the playback used on my trip many times was excessive, way too much. Hours at a time for one bird. And I don't blame the guides much at all, they were special. I blame the clients. The guides were trying to please their paying clients.

These clients were trying to get lifers, which is fine, we all love lifers. But they would only count it if the bird was seen well. Not just seen, seen well! For all five of the other clients, Heard Only did not count for them! A good glimpse did not count. Even if the bird responding, or the bird in any sighting at all, or both, was absolutely the target bird, with a zero chance of it being anything else, they would not count it and insist on more playback until the bird was seen really well.



*Guianan Cock-of-the-rock (by Joe Corcoran)*

There is no way hours of calling in a bird is good for it. Antpittas were a particular target because of their secrecy. You can easily hear them, but they will not easily let you see them, even from single digit meters away. Thank goodness the guides convinced the clients that Tinamous were impossible—we heard a few of them every day but never saw one! Even still, the guides were pressured into trying a couple of times to use shorter, but still too long, bursts of playback to draw the Tinamous in.

Back to Antpittas, I mentioned to others that guides in other South American birding areas used worms or other food to draw Antpittas to come out in sight in front of a hide, but the very best birder amongst us disagreed with that practice. She thought using food was cheating! Although using professional guides and hours of playback was not cheating! I do not understand.

Where did this idea come from that the bird has to be so well seen? I dunno for sure, and have a few ideas, but I do know that before birding by ear and easy playback tools were available, people pretty much counted only the ones they saw. What's wrong with just bird sounds anyway?! To me bird sounds are beautiful, and of course diagnostic, especially with sonogram recordings.

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*Crimson Topaz on nest (by Joe Corcoran)*

So the major point is that I believe people should think about the effects on the birds of too much recorded song playing, and accept Heard Only as ok for a lifer, or just give it up and not get the lifer, rather than use excessive playback. Oh, and I haven't even discussed the effect of the excessive playback habit on other birders. Many times we all had to wait, sometimes for hours or more, until the last person saw the bird well. Crazy! We could have been looking for other birds and leaving the target bird alone! And in our group there was one birder who was last the majority of the time, and put the most pressure on the guides. She knows who she is.

And I did get into a couple, no, a few, no, about 12, arguments with particularly two of the other birders about this issue (and also narrow trail etiquette, which is a whole other story). The arguments did not ruin my trip by any stretch, and we all got along pretty well generally, but it was an issue I would have rather not dealt with.

## Thoughts on Playback for Further Discussion

Here's some thoughts on playback from some of my limited research:

### CONS

- Song tapes waste a bird's energy trying to find the source of the sound, by calling back, or otherwise doing anything that disrupts their living life routine, especially if it's excessive
- Distress calls, pishing, and owl calls can be particularly stressful on a bird, especially if it's kept up for long periods
- Nesting season is a very sensitive time to be using playback
- Rare birds out of territory may be already really stressed and don't need any more stressors

### PROS

- Researchers can use playback to establish population densities and for other scientific reasons, especially for threatened and endangered birds
- Playback can bring in birds to enhance the experience of beginner and newer birders
- Playback can get more birds on a professional guided trip especially in a second or third world country, thereby bringing in more ecotourism dollars, which if used to eventually protect bird habitat can offset any negative effect of playback
- Playback can help you ID a bird you heard, or help you study a bird you want to hear or see
- And this is not necessarily a PRO, but there seems to be no direct scientific evidence of the deleterious effect of playback on bird populations, mainly due to the complexity of conducting any credible experiments

Email me your thoughts: corcoran2921@gmail.com
Perhaps I'll start a group chat.

BBC NEWS

# Welcome, New Board Members!



### Kojo Baidoo, BBC Director

Kojo has had a passion for nature and the environment for as long as he can remember. Born and raised in Baltimore, he developed a fascination with birds after reading a book about raptors in the first grade and seeking out as many more field guides as he could find in the library. Over the years, he has come to appreciate each and every species he sees, and his list of favorite birds grows with every minute he spends outside (although his absolute favorite is the Black Vulture!). Kojo attended Princeton University in New Jersey, earning a degree in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. After graduating in the spring of 2024, he spent the fall working in Cape May as an Interpretive Naturalist, and then spent 2025 working as a Hubbard Fellow for The Nature Conservancy in Nebraska. More than anything, Kojo loves sharing his passion for birds with others, both in-person and online (@kojobirder). He is now back in Baltimore and is looking forward to reconnecting with the birding community here!



### Collin Bates, State MOS Director

I'm Collin and I grew up in York, PA and moved back to Baltimore in 2020. I originally picked up birding through photography. I would bring my camera hiking and end up just taking photos of birds! I currently live in the Patterson Park neighborhood and have been enjoying birding Patterson Park whenever I can before work. I studied Geography and Environmental Planning at Towson University and now work as a GIS analyst for the Maryland Department of Planning, working on property mapping. Since fall 2024, my fiancée Charisma and I have been leading bird walks through the club's partnerships with Enoch Pratt Free Library and the Baltimore County Public Library. I am looking forward to continuing to contribute to the Baltimore Bird Club through my role as an MOS director.



### AB Brackett, BBC Director

AB is a Baltimore birder, quilter, and repair technician who is very excited to join the BBC as a chapter director!

They enjoy birding in Wyman Park and along the Jones Falls, and their spark bird was a Hooded Merganser.

When not birding, AB can be found giving scritches to their cat, Beatrice, or reading nonfiction.



### Ed Hirsch, BBC Treasurer

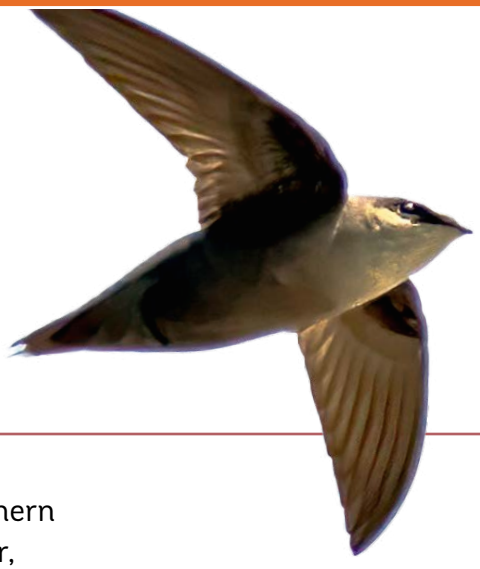
Ed is a lifelong outdoorsman and wildlife enthusiast who started birding in 2018. After spending a decade out west, in 2022 he returned to his home state of Maryland to be closer to family. He found his way to the Baltimore Bird Club after repeatedly crossing paths with BBC members while chasing birds on his eBird Needs List. Since then, he's become an active member of the club and the broader birding community, and he's still routinely awed by how fun, inclusive, and knowledgeable BBC members are. Ed lives in Baltimore City with his wife, Emily, and their dog, Harper.

BBC NEWS

# Chapter Chatter

*Compiled by Marcia Watson*

The Baltimore Bird Club is having a busy fall season, as our event organizers report below.



## BBC Annual Picnic

*By Rozanne Solomon, BBC Hospitality Chair*

The BBC annual members picnic on Saturday, September 19th was a great success. The picnic, organized by Rozanne Solomon, was held at Eagle Mill Farm in Parkton, MD, a 100+ acre private farm on the Gunpowder River, graciously made available by the family of BBC member Devi Abbott. The weather was perfect and everyone had a good time. Participants noshed on home-made dishes shared by members while enjoying the farm's plentiful bird life. The picnickers were treated to a big flight of Broad-winged Hawks; an eBird checklist contributed by Tim Carney shows 325 Broad-wingeds, but Alyssia Church spent a lot of time looking up and put her estimate at twice that number. With a total of 34 species overall, migrant birds on the checklist included a Merlin as well as Black-and-white Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Northern Parula, Magnolia Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, and Black-throated Green Warbler. A White-throated Sparrow heralded the arrival of winter residents.

## Chimney Swift Watch

Each fall, the BBC holds a Chimney Swift Watch, coordinated by Alice Nelson, at the Free State Bookbinders building in the Hampden neighborhood of Baltimore. This year, observations at the chimney started on August 18th and are still proceeding as of this writing in early October. Daily counts of swifts entering the chimney at dusk have ranged from lows in the hundreds to a high of 2730 on September 4, with totals in the 2000s on most days.

There were many spectacular viewings in September. One such occasion was the evening of September 14th, when the watch tallied 2,130 Chimney Swifts in about 8 minutes of viewing. A video by Danny Tang (Macaulay Library ML664921684) shows the swirling funnel of swifts entering the chimney, and you can hear the excited chattering of the human crowd. Also impressive was the estimated total of 114 people who came out to watch on that evening—BBC members, casual birders, Hampden community members, and visitors from near and far. Non-human "visitors" this season have included foxes, a raccoon, bats, and several dogs. eBird checklists for the Hampden location can be found at ebird.org/hotspot/L16194690.

And there's good news about the historic chimney that hosts the birds. The Free State Bookbinders building is set for redevelopment, and in community information meetings this past summer, the developer publicly pledged to preserve the chimney and keep it open for the birds to

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use. This is a welcome change from the situation in 2002, when a different developer was planning to tear down the whole building to erect high-rise apartments. That previous plan was abandoned after an intense outcry from the community on behalf of the Chimney Swifts.

*Based on eBird data and information from Alice Nelson, Chimney Swift Watch Coordinator*

## Big Sit!

### *By Alyssia Church, Big Sit! Co-organizer*

The Baltimore Bird Club held our annual Big Sit! at the Prettyboy Reservoir Boat Ramp on Saturday, October 10th. The sit, organized by Alyssia Church and Libby Erickson, was blessed with perfect weather and a beautiful quiet location in a grove of towering Virginia Pines overlooking the reservoir. Water levels in the reservoir were low because of the drought, which probably affected water bird sightings, but the group tallied 58 species—just 6 below our record of 64 species during the 2022 BBC Big Sit! See the eBird checklist here.

We had a total of 20 participants counting over a period of 11 hours and 47 minutes. The most fun moment was watching 2 Bald Eagles lock talons and spiral down toward the water before letting go at the last moment and soaring off, all right in front of our circle.



*Alyssia and Libby display the final Big Sit! tally (by Alyssia Church)*

In previous years, BBC held its Big Sit! at North Point State Park, but moving to Prettyboy this year was definitely the right choice. Not having the big sit at a state park allowed people to more freely come and go, allowed us to set up on time without having to wait for park staff to open the gate, greatly reduced paperwork hassles, and there was much, much less interference and distraction from the general public. The birds were also much more

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*BBC Big Sit! afternoon crew (by Marcia Watson)*

diverse and plentiful despite the lack of open water birds.

## Hawk Watch

***By Jim Meyers, CVP Hawk Watch Coordinator***

The annual Cromwell Valley Park (CVP) Hawk Watch kicked off on September 5th, and as of October 10th, we've seen 4,740 migrating hawks, eagles and falcons moving south, with 9 different species included. We have already surpassed last year's season total of 4,124 from September 1 through November 23rd.

Our most exciting day this year was on Saturday, September 19th, when over 3,800 Broad-winged Hawks were seen as kettle after kettle appeared, mostly over our north ridge. Over 20 observers were thrilled to witness this flight, many people seeing hawk kettles for the first time. Here's a link to a short video of a Broad-winged Hawk kettle shot by Julie Higgins on September 19th (Macaulay Library ML665584645), and also see Melissa Madsen's photo of broad-wingeds (Macaulay Library ML665212988) accompanying this article.

As October progresses and November approaches, we await the passage of good numbers of Red-tailed Hawks and Red-shouldered Hawks. In our records of past years, our highest single-day count of Red-tailed Hawks occurred on November 8th, 2014 with 227 birds, and for Red-shouldered Hawks the single-day record high count was 144 birds on November 9th, 2017. November also brings a few Golden Eagles most years.

This is our 22nd year of recording raptor migration at CVP, and interest continues to grow. All the CVP Hawk Watch data are available on the Hawk Migration Association's database at hawkcount.org/siteinfo.php?rsite=621.

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*Broad-winged Hawks at Cromwell Valley Park (by Melissa Madsen)*

The watch site is at a camp-fire circle with benches and picnic tables, located at the high point along the paved park road between the Sherwood and Willow Grove areas of the park. Visitors are welcome and can drop in at any time. The Hawk Watch site is marked with a blue star on the park map, or use GPS coordinates 39.416369, -76.549595. The site, on the south slope of a ridge above a stream valley, provides a view of open fields, woods, hedgerows, and flood plains. The CVP Hawk Watch team expects to have counters on site into early December, although not every day.

## Hart-Miller Island Citizens Oversight Committee

*By Marcia Watson*



BBC Member Kathy Lambrow Kahler has been appointed by Governor Wes Moore to serve on the Hart-Miller Island Citizens Oversight Committee. The committee was established by the state as part of the legislation that authorized the creation of Hart-Miller Island, and provides a means for local citizens to have a voice in the management of Hart-Miller. Kathy will be representing her local community in Middle River. Kathy serves as the Chair of the BBC Conservation Committee and is also active with the Friends of Hart-Miller Island State Park, and is the BBC's liaison for Oregon Ridge Park and the Gunpowder Watershed Partners.

## Youth Birding Week

***Compiled by Marcia Watson from the program website and an article by Laura Baker from p.6 of ChipNotes #437.***

BBC was one of several sponsors of the 5th Annual Youth Birding Week hosted by the Port of Baltimore this past summer. Two sessions of the 5-day camp were held this year: June 22-26 for new birders, and July 6-10 for experienced birders. The kids were taken to places around Baltimore Harbor, including Masonville Cove Environmental Education Center, and also enjoyed field trips to Poplar Island, Cox Creek, and Hart-Miller Island. Thanks to sponsorships by BBC, MOS, and the Chesapeake Bay Trust, Youth Birding Week is offered free of charge to all participants. Each child receives binoculars and a field guide (to keep!) and are provided with lunch and snacks. Most important, they are given an opportunity to see birds and nature up close. Some highlights this year were viewing Bald Eagles at Masonville Cove, coyotes on Hart-Miller Island, and dolphins off Poplar Island. A brief video on the program's website features the kids talking about their experiences, and a photo gallery displays images from camps in past years. The smiles say it all!

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*Youth Birding Week participants show their bird posters (photo courtesy of Port of Baltimore)*

## Urban Wildlife Day at Masonville Cove

*By Marcia Watson, with information provided by the Friends of Masonville Cove*

The BBC joined in the Urban Wildlife Day celebration at Masonville Cove Environmental Education Center on Saturday, September 19th. Many other organizations that partner with Masonville were on hand for the festive activities, including the Friends of Masonville Cove, the National Aquarium, Friends of Patuxent Research Refuge, The Links, the National Wildlife Refuge System/US Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Wildlife Refuge Association, the Maryland Port Administration, and the Masonville Cove Links WildSTEM Internship Program.

Over 200 visitors enjoyed a varied set of activities throughout the day. BBC members hosted a bird banding demonstration, an information table, and led bird walks. Other activities included monarch tagging, fishing, and boat rides. A new Nature-based Playground was unveiled for kids and families to enjoy. Another ceremony marked the Friends of Masonville Cove achieving 501(c)(3) status as a charitable nonprofit organization. This milestone will enable the Friends to accept direct donations to continue the important work at Masonville.



*Kids and adults celebrate the opening of the new Nature Playground at Masonville Cove (by Marcia Watson)*




↑ *Bird banding station schedule at Masonville Cove (by Marcia Watson)*

## Middle Branch Wetland Restoration

*By Marcia Watson, with information provided by Reimagine Middle Branch*

Speaking of restoring Baltimore Harbor, Reimagine Middle Branch is making huge strides in its ambitious multi-year project to restore wetland habitat in the arm of the Harbor formed by the Middle Branch of the Patapsco River. The project is also fostering mixed-use redevelopment, with beautiful residential areas, spaces for local businesses, and—a top priority for the local community—access to the waterfront in the form of walking trails, fishing piers, kayak and canoe launches, observation decks, and waterside parks, with a centerpiece of a brand spanking-new community center. Reimagine Middle Branch has reinvigorated waterfront birding spots now frequented by Baltimore birders, such as the cluster of eBird hotspots at West Covington Park, Swann Park, Middle

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Branch Park, Harbor Hospital Wetlands, Hanover Street Wetlands, Ferry Bar Park, and Winans Cove. The wetland restorations are already attracting birds to the area, and species numbers at the Middle Branch hotspots continue to grow robustly.

BBC Board member Nico Sarbanes serves as an official liaison to Reimagine Middle Branch, and fellow BBC Board member Kojo Baidoo is leading bird walks along the Middle Branch waterfront in partnership with the project and Women of Color Outdoors. Special events such as boat tours of the area are occasionally offered by Reimagine Middle Branch, and the Baltimore Bird Club also regularly sponsors field trips to these locations. The Reimagine Middle Branch project is led by the City of Baltimore with



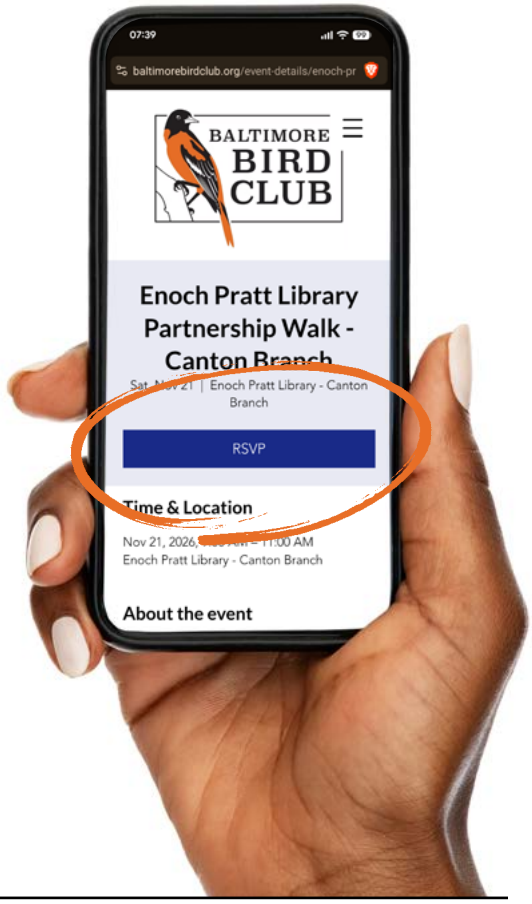



*Kojo, second from right, with BBC President Joe Corcoran (right) and participants in a Reimagine Middle Branch Bird Walk (by Kojo Baidoo)*

several partners, and is fueled by tax proceeds from the Baltimore Casino (monies that are required by law to be reinvested in the community), with additional funding from a mix of federal, state, and local grants and private investments totaling many millions of dollars.

## New Features on the BBC website!

And one last news tidbit that may be of interest. In the last Chip Notes, we announced that BBC had launched a newly redesigned website at baltimorebirdclub.org. We're especially proud of one of the new features: a built-in RSVP button for field trips. The button makes it easy to register for field trips, which can be capped by the leader at any size. Once registered, the birder receives an automatic email confirmation, as well as an email reminder as the event approaches. A plea for easier ways to sign up for field trips was an often-repeated theme in the MOS member survey conducted in spring of 2026. We think this works.



BBC NEWS

# BBC Representatives Needed for Park Plans

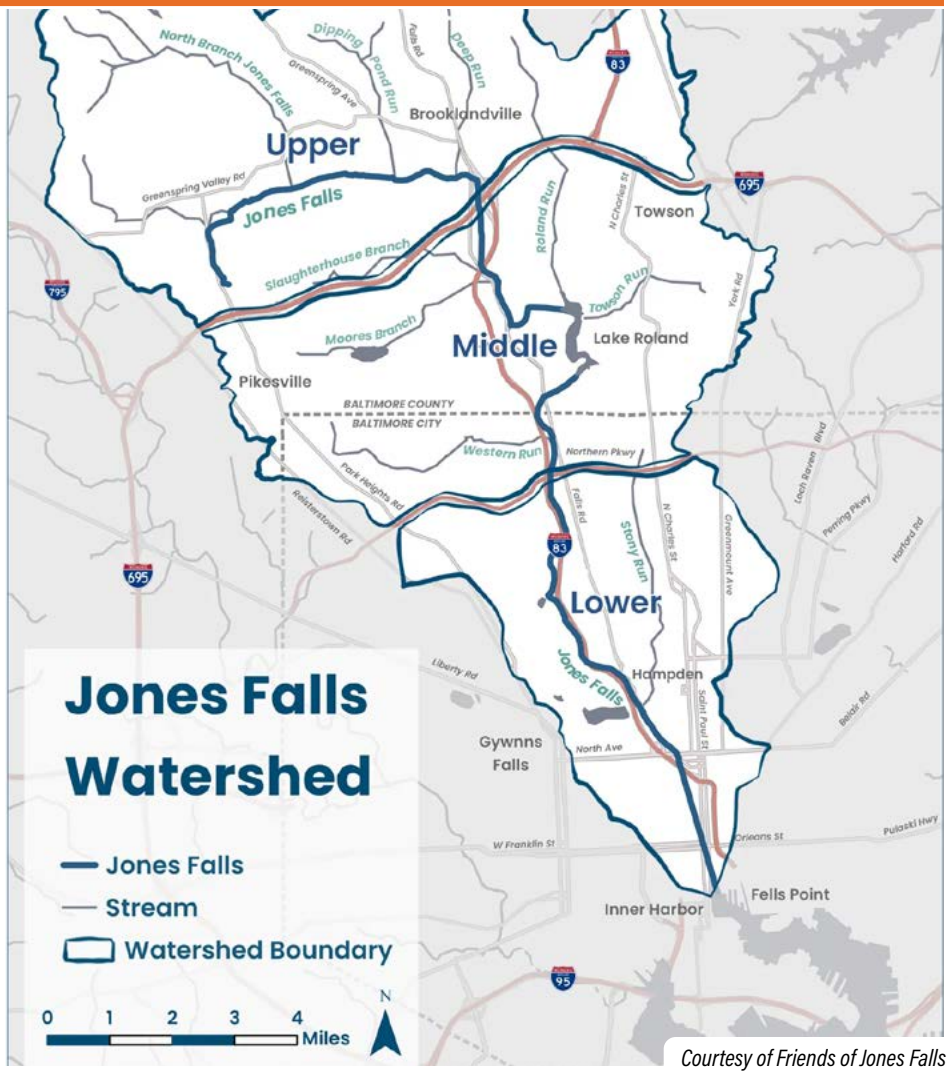
*By Marcia Watson*

Two park areas are developing formal plans for their future management, and your input can help shape how they are managed in the future. If you're interested in representing the Baltimore Bird Club for one or both of these planning processes, please send an email to Kathy Lambrow Kahler, BBC Conservation Chair, at klambrow@comcast.net.

## Jones Fall Watershed Strategic Plan

The Jones Falls Watershed started its strategic planning process in fall of 2025; see details at www.jonesfallswatershed.org. The planning area includes the Jones Falls Trail and parks scattered along the 18-mile length of the Jones Falls, comprising both the county and city portions of the watershed. Parks located in the watershed include Lake Roland, Druid Hill Park, Wyman Park, Cylburn Arboretum, the Irvine Nature Center, and numerous small parks.

For the planning, the Jones Falls Watershed has been divided into three areas—Upper, Middle and Lower—and community input meetings are being organized for each of these three areas. Pre-registration is requested.



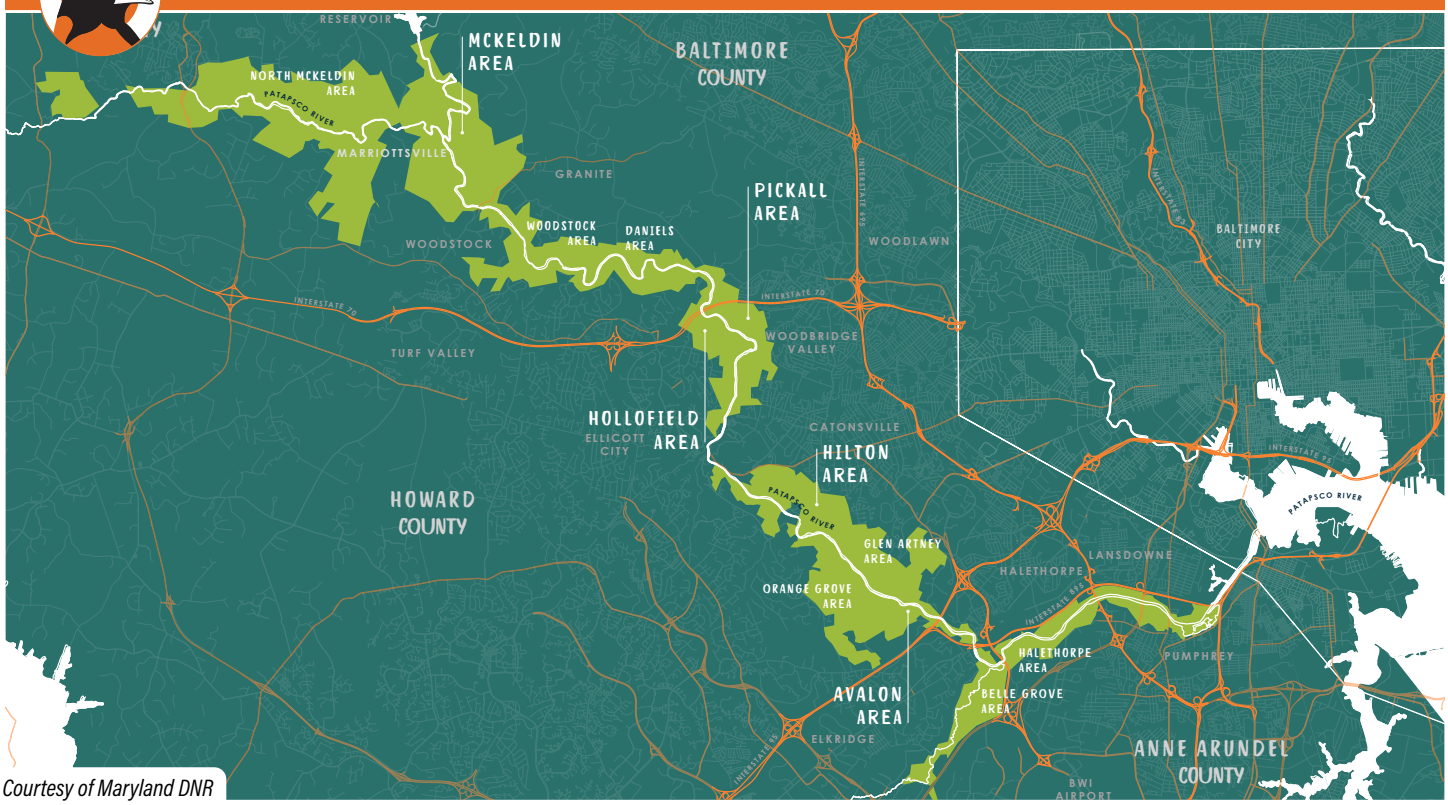

*Courtesy of Friends of Jones Falls*

**Upper Jones Falls –** From I-695 to Garrison Forest Veteran Cemetery. The Upper Team is based at the Irvine Nature Center and is led by Brooks Paternotte, Executive Director. The Fall input meeting has already been held but more opportunities will be available.

**Middle Jones Falls –** From Northern Parkway to I-695. The Middle Team is based at The Park School of Baltimore and is led by Julie Rogers, Science Faculty.

**Lower Jones Falls and Harbor Area –** From Inner Harbor to Northern Parkway. The Lower & Harbor Team is based at Baltimore Unity Hall and is led by Marian Glebes, Cultural and Preservation Planner. The next

*Continued, next page*



*Courtesy of Maryland DNR*

meeting is Saturday, November 14 at 1 pm at The Gateway.

The Strategic Planning Process is being led by the Friends of Jones Falls. The Central Baltimore Partnership is serving as the fiscal agent for the project, and the firm BioHabitats has been hired as the environmental consultant.

Sign up to receive updates on the Jones Falls Strategic Planning Process by visiting their website jonesfallswatershed.org; scroll to bottom right of the page and click the <Sign Up> button.

## Patapsco Valley State Park Master Plan

DNR has started a Master Plan process for Patapsco Valley State Park by putting out a call for a firm to develop the Master Plan. A web page with information about the planning process is at envirocollab.com/pvspmasterplan.

There will be public meetings in January 2027 for "park visioning" and again in September 2027 for "concept development." BBC is seeking people who will attend these meetings and represent the views of birders and conservationists. It would be beneficial to have multiple people attend and speak strongly on behalf of birds and habitat preservation.

Patapsco Valley State Park is Maryland's largest state park, with 16,000 acres spanning four counties: Carroll, Howard, Anne Arundel, and Baltimore. The park spreads along 32 miles of the Patapsco River and includes five major public recreation areas. Patapsco Valley State Park, originally called the Patapsco Forest Reserve, was the very first state park established in Maryland, dating back to 1907 with the donation of 43 acres of land in Catonsville by John Mark Glenn.

You can sign up to receive updates on the Patapsco Valley SP Master Planning Process by visiting the website envirocollab.com/pvspmasterplan; scroll to the bottom of the page, enter your name and email address, and click on the <Submit> button.

BBC PROGRAMS

# Lights Out, Baltimore!

*By Nicole Baer, LOB Volunteer*

As mere humans, we birders recognize the joy in finding a little feathered friend flitting amongst the treetops or bobbing about in the bushes. But these birds are much more than a pretty face! It is difficult for us to relate to migration, but imagine for a moment that you have undertaken a hemisphere-long road trip. You would likely follow a few choice routes, traveling along I-5, I-15, or I-35. Here on the east coast, you would surely take I-95, zipping along with fellow travelers. You might start your journey, as my dad always did, at 9pm after the sun goes down, to avoid the hustle and bustle of commuters. And then, you would drive. And drive, and drive some more. You would become drowsy as the sun came up, and about halfway through your journey you might come across the great city of Baltimore, where you hope there is a nice wide open park like one you've heard about, called Patterson, where you can enjoy sitting on a bench as you eat a little breakfast and watch the sun rise before you retire for the day.

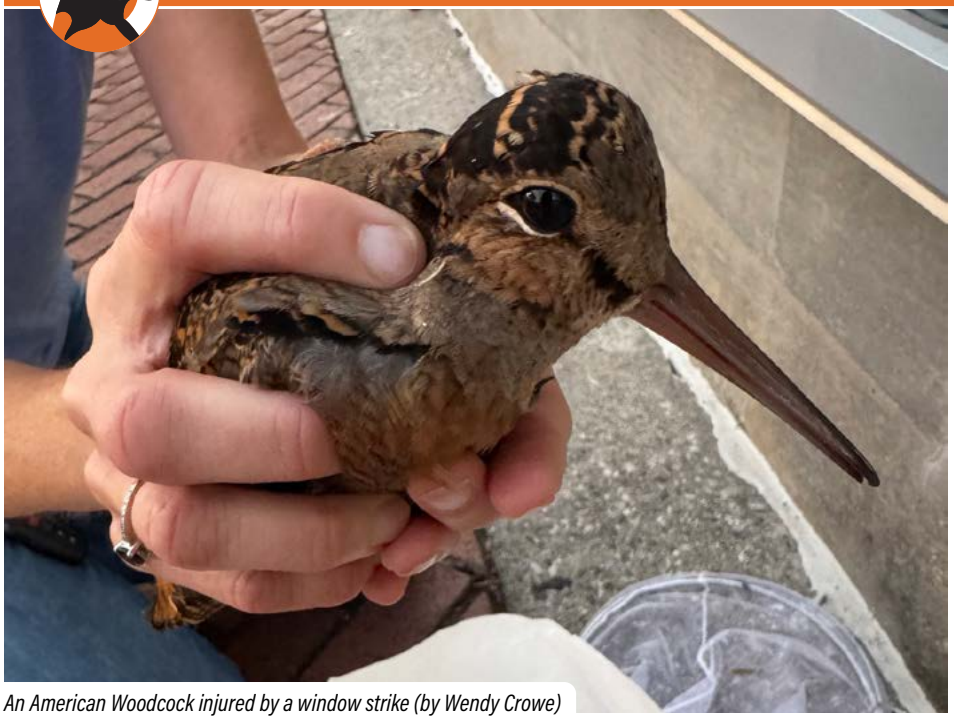



*A Swamp Sparrow injured by a window strike (by Tammi Stauffer)*

But alas, you get off I-95 and somehow end up on I-83. You take the St. Paul Street exit, full of hope, and you struggle to find anything appealing. You cannot park your car, and you become sleepier and sleepier as you look for solace. As you become excited for what looks like a spot, you cross three lanes, cut off another driver, and slam into a fire hydrant. Now you are in a pickle! Imagine your distress! Imagine the sheer exhaustion you would experience as you figure out your next move.

Now think—what if you were a bird, small enough to fit in a person's hand? And you have not just driven into Baltimore, you have flown here, using your own wingpower. And you have not flown into a fire hydrant, you have hit a building, and you have fallen. Your fellow birds have followed you into this building, and some have not been so lucky. They have broken their necks and died instanta-neously. And you are too dazed

*Continued, next page*



*An American Woodcock injured by a window strike (by Wendy Crowe)*

to really do anything but sit here by this building, listening to scary sounds of cars and buses and sirens, wondering what you should do next.

This is a scenario all too familiar to members of Lights Out Baltimore. Volunteers have come across hundreds of birds and bats on the streets of the city, and, one animal at a time, we carefully pick them up and take them to Phoenix Wildlife Center, where they are checked and rested before being released back into the wild to continue their journey.

Fall 2026 has been an interesting year, where the sparrows have not been seen until mid-October and warblers are still straggling in. As of this writing, fall migration has brought us at least 281 birds and bats that have collided with buildings, including 53 species, and we have sent 58 animals for rehabilitation, give or take. You can learn a bit about our recent rescues by searching social media posts for some "Rescues of the Week," including a Silver-haired Bat found downtown during Bat Week.

The next time you are out birding (or batting), appreciate not just the beauty of these amazing creatures, but think about the effort they have endured simply to be present! If you are able, consider volunteering for spring migration, which is just around the corner! Volunteers for Lights Out Baltimore experience firsthand the struggle for survival and gain a new appreciation for fragility of these tiny travelers that is truly life-changing. Whether you are able to walk the streets, give the animals a lift out of the city, or wish to educate the public about how to make their structures safer, there is a place for you! Go to lightsoutbaltimore.org/contact.html to get started.

*An Eastern Red Bat injured by a window strike (by Kristen Argenio)*





*Children in the Coppermine Du Burns Enrichment Program visit the waterfront to look for birds (by Daisy Sudano)*

BBC PROGRAMS

# Baltimore Bird Club Youth Program

*By Daisy Sudano,*
*BBC Youth Activities*

The Baltimore Bird Club Youth Program has had a busy fall. First, the children at Coppermine Du Burns Enrichment Program got a week-long lesson on migration. They had fun making migration silhouette paintings and visiting the water front to look for birds. We had a great sighting of a domestic-hybrid mallard mixed in with all the others mallards on the water front. They also got a kick out of guessing where a cormorant would pop up after diving.

On Oct. 10 we had a display at the Cromwell Valley Fall Festival. The "Hawk Match Game" is always a popular station because those who match 4 or more got to win a Beanie Bird. We had lots of visitors and 3 new members! On Nov. 7th we helped the Audubon Society in Patterson Park work in their Habitat Gardens, followed by a bird walk.



*Young birders at Canton Waterfront Park during Migration Week (by Daisy Sudano)*



*A young artist at Fall Fest (by Daisy Sudano*




*Daisy introducing children to the Hawk Match Game at Fall Fest (by Ray Alt)*

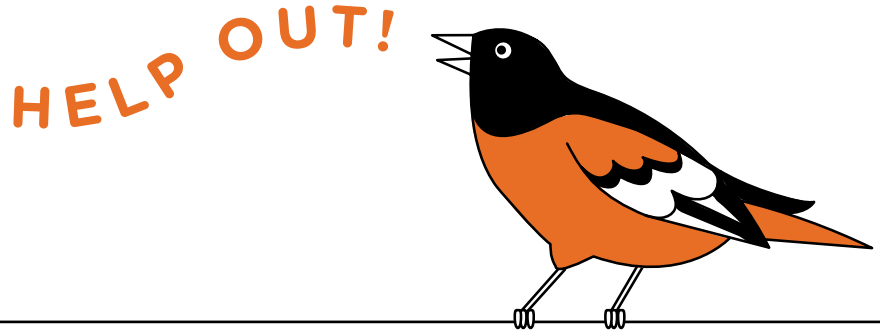
MOS NEWS

# MOS Seeks Committee Chairs and Project Coordinators

Would you like an opportunity to get to know more about statewide birding activities and help support the functioning of the MOS (Maryland Ornithological Society)? MOS has several vacant positions and is seeking volunteers to fill them. Most positions do not require specialized skills, just an interest in helping to keep things running smoothly for the good of birds and birders.

If interested in any of these positions, please contact Vice President Steve Lofgren at Steve.lofgren@mdbirds.org.

- **Fundraising Chair** ***NEW POSITION***. Will oversee the Linganore Creek fundraising campaign as well as general MOS donations.
- **Awards Coordinator** ***IMMEDIATE NEED*** to replace retired coordinator. Receives award nominations; creates certificates and other awards to honor MOS volunteers, with room for creativity. Much of the work takes place once a year, in advance of the MOS Convention, but some chapters may request awards mid-year. Templates are available for certificates and the retired coordinator can provide guidance.
- **Website Assistant–Chapter Pages** ***IMMEDIATE NEED.*** Keep chapter information on the MOS website up to date, including lists of chapter officers. Most updates are needed just once a year. The MOS website has a simple editing screen that is easy to use, similar to Word or other word-processing programs. If you can type an email, you can do this. Training will be provided.
- **MOS Calendar Editor** ***IMMEDIATE NEED*** to replace retired editor. Edits calendar items submitted by chapters for inclusion in the *Yellowthroat* and manages the online calendar that is part of the MOS website. Submissions from chapters are made four times a year and there may be occasional update requests in between the quarterly submissions. The online calendar involves using a simple web-based form to create the calendar items; training will be provided.
- **Spring Count Statewide Coordinator** ***IMMEDIATE NEED*** to replace retired coordinator. Communicates with county-level Spring Count coordinators; confirms scheduling of Spring Count at the county level; provides a schedule of County Spring Count dates and coordinator contacts to the MOS Calendar Editor; receives county-level Spring Count data and prepares a written report for publication in *Maryland Birdlife*. A template for the written report can be provided.
- **Sanctuary Committee Chair** ***NEED BY SEPTEMBER 2027***. This is the last year of service for our current chair, Jeremy Castle. This position could be split between co-chairs covering the Eastern Shore (4 sanctuaries) and Western Shore (6 sanctuaries), or some other split. Jeremy will remain involved and will provide guidance. New chair(s) could shadow Jeremy in the remaining months of his term.



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

# Back River Neighborhood Cleanup Day

*By Tim Carney*

The Back River Restoration Committee, Inc. (BRRC) is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to restoring the health of the tidal portion of the Back River watershed. Back River has been known for years as one of the most polluted rivers in Maryland, but BRRC is out to change that reputation.

Since 2011, BRRC has removed over 7 million pounds of trash and debris from Back River. Each year, spring and fall clean-ups are coordinated targeting areas that need attention based on community input or areas identified by the BRRC.

The local birding community, including many Baltimore Bird Club (BBC) members, has greatly benefited from access to the BRRC site on Diamond Point Rd. Here, local birders have been able to observe many rare birds over the years, especially Black-headed Gull and Little Gull.

We encourage any BBC members to volunteer at BRRC's cleanup events as a way to say thanks! Check their website (www.savebackriver.org) for information, and also follow BRRC member Austin (@baylifebrokerage on Instagram) for fascinating insight into the history of the river.



← *A Black-headed Gull in Baltimore Co.–12/18/2011 (by Bill Hubick)*





*Prairie Willet (left) and Saltmarsh Willet (right), Assateague ORV Zone–Aug. 2011 (by Bill Hubick)*

BIRDING NEWS

# Heads Up! Species Splits and New Bird Names: Say Hello to Prairie Willet, Saltmarsh Willet, and Eastern Marsh Wren

*By Marcia Watson*

Species splits and new bird names have been approved for three species that occur in Maryland.

Marsh Wren has been split into two species: Eastern Marsh Wren *(Cistothorus palustris)* and Western Marsh Wren *(Cistothorus paludicola)*. The new Western species does not normally occur in our area, while the Eastern Marsh Wren is what we should now call our local wren with the bubbly song.

These two new Marsh Wren species are practically identical in appearance (see photos at right) and are best separated by their songs (but not their calls).

See Earbirding or All About Birds for a detailed comparison of their songs.

Mostly, the ranges of the two new species are distinct, with Western occurring in the western third of the US and Eastern in the eastern third of the US, including Maryland. However, there is a broad range of overlap in the middle of the continent,



↑ *Western Marsh Wren, by Andrew Thomas, 3/3/24, Spokane County, WA, iNaturalist, Creative Commons use license.*



↑ *Eastern Marsh Wren, by Duncan Woolston, 7/5/26, Port Ewen, NY, iNaturalist, Creative Commons use license.*

especially during migration, including the states of Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Wyoming, Colorado, Nebraska, South Dakota, Montana, as well as Alberta Canada, and throughout Mexico.

The "old" single Marsh Wren species has a complicated taxonomy, with up to 14 different subspecies, according to some scientists (Kroodsma and Verner, 2020, Birds of the World). eBird's article summarizing the current splits and name changes covers how these subspecies are assigned to the two new Marsh Wren species.

Willet has also been split into two species with predominantly eastern and western ranges, but the names chosen—Prairie Willet *(Tringa inornata)* and Saltmarsh Willet *(Tringa semipalmata)*—are descriptive of their habitats rather than their geographic ranges, because it turns out that what we have long thought of as the "western" form does occur regularly in the east. The Prairie Willet is what we used to call "western" and the Saltmarsh Willet is what we used to call "eastern."

The two new species are easy to distinguish when side by side in the field; less so when not next to one another, similar to the Greater/Lesser Yellowlegs situation. As shown in the two photos by Bill Hubick taken on Assateague, the Prairie species has a longer bill and is larger, taller, and somewhat paler, grayer and drabber, compared to Saltmarsh Willet, which is more brown in tone and has shorter legs, a shorter bill, and a more compact outline.

*Saltmarsh Willet (left) and Prairie Willet (right), Assateague ORV Zone–July 2009 (by Bill Hubick)*



Also see Cornell's All About Birds Willet ID article.

Overall, at least for now, Saltmarsh Willets (what we have long thought of as "our" willet) appear to be more numerous in Maryland than Prairie Willets, but bird populations are dynamic and changes could come over time.

These changes, as well as others affecting birds that do not normally occur in Maryland, were approved by the American Ornithological Society (AOS) in July 2026. AOS is the organization that issues annual updates to the Checklist of North American Birds. The changes approved by the AOS are incorporated into a global list, called AviList, that is now the standard checklist used by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in eBird, Merlin, Birds of the World, and the Macaulay Library, as well as by ornithological societies and publications around the world.

eBird is currently preparing to incorporate all of the changes in the North American checklist as well as global changes into the eBird lists of species. These changes are to be finalized in eBird on October 27. In general, ***you won't need to do anything to update your bird lists in eBird***—eBird will do it for you.

Meanwhile, eBird notes that until October 27th, "…species names may appear in unexpected ways, other records may temporarily become subspecies groups, and your species totals may jump around. If you see these, ***please don't adjust your data! Wait until the process is complete in late October*** (we'll announce here when it's done)."

eBird will be using its extensive database to correctly assign your observations to the new species. eBird says that "…in some cases your records may be updated to a 'spuh' (e.g., Marsh Wren sp.) or 'slash' (e.g., Saltmarsh/Prairie Willet) instead. It is easy to see all of your reports of a 'spuh' or 'slash' under Additional Taxa on your eBird Life List. Please check those in the weeks after the update to make sure your records have been moved as expected."

This summary is based on ebird.org/news/2026-taxonomy-update#updates-underway, which should be consulted for more details.

## NEW MEMBERS

Cathy and Katie Brennan • Baltimore
Tracey Dorfmann • Baltimore
Erin FitzGerald • Baltimore
David Koelsch & Elizabeth Keyes • Baltimore
Sylvia Leith & Edmund Milly • Baltimore
Robert Lenning • Baltimore
Karen and Mike Ross • Baltimore
Emily Somach • Baltimore
Hannah Turner • Baltimore
Kit Vela • Baltimore
Noah Wass • Baltimore
Amy Yuhn • Baltimore
Wei Chao Chang • Cockeysville
Karen Diaz-O'Reilly • Columbia
Wendy Crowe • Glen Burnie
Wayne Hicks • Gwynn Oak
Nichemat Saroff • Owings Mills
Ellen and William Shipley • Owings Mills
Enza Allegretti • Rosedale
Sarah Benedict and Steven Dean • Towson
Colin Slator • York (United Kingdom)

TRIP REPORTS

# September—October 2026

## September 5, 2026: Tollgate Wyndham Preserve

*Leader: Will Kaselow*

This NeighborSpace of Baltimore County x Baltimore Bird Club joint field trip was led by Will Kaselow, who was joined by 11 birders for an early-fall walk in the woods at the Tollgate Wyndham Preserve in Owings Mills. Highlights included a greeting committee of Blue Jays arriving from the north, a Black-throated Green Warbler that was a lifer for many on the trip, and a gorgeous male Pileated Woodpecker. We heard the woodpecker moments before it flew directly over our heads and landed in a dead snag where it stayed long enough for all of us to get great views. Thank you to those who came out and look out for more trips in the future!

*View this checklist online at* *ebird.org/checklist/S391059734*

## September 19, 2026: Fort McHenry

*Leader: Wendy Alexander*

Wendy Alexander led the walk at Fort McHenry with Steve, Hannah, and Grayson. The four birders enjoyed a delightful partly cloudy day, with comfortable temperatures ranging from the high 60s to the mid-70s and a refreshing east-northeast breeze of about 10 mph. The trails were still covered with the lush green of late summer, while hints of yellow in a few trees offered an exciting preview of fall. Although the tally was modest at 26 species and 79 individual birds, the day brought plenty of memorable moments, including a Black-throated Green Warbler, a Black-and-white Warbler, sightings of a groundhog, a gray hairstreak butterfly, and an orb-weaver spider.



*Yellow Crowned Night Heron at Fort McHenry–9/19/2026 (by Wendy Alexander)*



*A Black-throated Green Warbler on Assateague Island, Maryland–10/22/2011 (by Bill Hubick)*

*Continued, next page*

## September 19, 2026: Levickas Woods

*Leader: Will Kaselow*

This NeighborSpace of Baltimore County x Baltimore Bird Club joint field trip was led by Will Kaselow who was joined by 10 birders for a crisp morning at Levickas Woods in Catonsville. The walk started with good numbers of birds in the air. Flocks of Blue Jays cruised by, some stopping in the oaks for a moment before moving on and some deciding to stay. Northern Flickers circled the woodlot in ones and twos weighing the same decisions. Some were drawn into the woods and others continued south. A single flock of Cedar Waxwings also flew by on their way south. Birding was slower inside the woods but we discussed tree identification, forest stewardship, and deer-resistant plants, and eventually bird activity picked up! We wrapped up with a mixed flock highlighted by a Northern Parula and Red-eyed Vireo and were sent off by a few passing Monarch butterflies. Thank you to those who came out and look out for more trips in the future!

*View this checklist online at* ebird.org/checklist/S395518434

## October 3, 2026: Volz Neighborhood Park

*Leader: Will Kaselow*

This NeighborSpace of Baltimore County x Baltimore Bird Club joint field trip was led by Will Kaselow who was joined by four intrepid birders who braved rainy conditions at the beautiful and under-birded Volz Neighborhood Park! Located at 9827 Ravenhurst Rd. in Middle River, this park features mixed wet woods with groves of Sassafras and Spicebush and a remnant stand of large pines. Conditions made viewing a little difficult, but we were able to track down a few mixed flocks! Highlights included Tennessee Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Thank you to those who came out and look out for more trips in the future!

*View this checklist online at* ebird.org/checklist/S398640855

## October 6, 2026: Cromwell Valley

*Leader: Joe Corcoran*

On another fall, beautiful cool sunny day, temps 50-65 degrees, we had a really nice BBC walk. Highlights were so many sparrows (WTSP, SWSP, SOSP, and CHSPs), 3 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, and both Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned



↑ *Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at Cromwell Valley–10/06/2026 (by Brian Schwartz)*

Kinglets. There were not so many Vireos or Warblers, though. 36 species!

*View this checklist online at* ebird.org/checklist/S399772654

## October 7, 2026: Fort McHenry

*Leader: Mary Chetelat*

Mary Chetelat led the Wednesday walk at Fort McHenry with Jen, Steve, Stephen, Devi, Chris. Teri, Tom, and Wendy. We welcomed birders from west-Montana and California. The weather was cool and mild and the sky clear. It was a great day. The number of species was 37 with 186 individuals. The birders spotted a very late Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and were able to catch that bird in photos on an eastern pine in the wetlands area. In addition, the group spotted a pair of American

*Continued, next page*



*Blue-gray Gnatcatcher at Fort McHenry–10/07/2026 (by Wendy Alexander)*

Kestrels, a great egret flying towards the wetlands area, a wonderfully bright immature Baltimore Oriole first spotted by Tom, and five warbler species. It was a great morning!

### October 18, 2026: Fort McHenry

*Leader: Wendy Alexander*

Wendy Alexander led the walk, with Roberta, Hannah, Jeff, and Terry. Under clear blue skies, the temperature rose from the low 40s to about 60 degrees, with light northeasterly winds near 5 mph. The group recorded 45 species, two Palm Warbler taxa with one Yellow Palm Warbler and one Western Palm Warbler and 183 individual birds. The walk began promisingly with a beautiful Blue-headed Vireo near the gate. Sparrow numbers and diversity were higher than on recent walks, and the return of Slate-colored Dark-eyed Juncos, along with many White-throated Sparrows, signaled colder weather. In the wetlands, the group was delighted to find a Nashville Warbler, Hermit Thrush, Brown Creepers, and kinglets. The bird of the day was a rare Red-necked Grebe in predominantly non-breeding plumage near the farther end of the wetland trail. There was one last seen there in July. This may be the same bird, but not 100% certain. At Peters' Perch, the birders raised their binoculars in honor of Jim Peters, a former National Aquarium and National Park Service volunteer who passed away on October 11, 2026, at age 96. The wooden shelter once served as a bird-banding station for Jim and Barbara Ross (who passed away in 2009), a longtime BBC member. It also sheltered Big Sit participants such as Keith Costley, Gail Franz, and other BBC walk leaders like Mary Chetelat and Ben Poscover. Jim was instrumental in creating the wetlands as a man-made birding haven 27 years ago. This walk brought back many cherished memories of this precious green space. I would be remiss in not sharing that I also had great flashbacks of post walk lunches at Rallo's in Locust Point in the early 2000s going over our checklists. That restaurant closed in 2011, but they served great diner fare. Finally, I think of Jim's words in a 2001 *Baltimore City Paper* article: "It does not have to be 5000 acres of wildlife refuge. If small places are all we have, nature will abound in small places." Twenty-six years later, I am happy to report that nature still abounds here, we will continue to enjoy our bird walks, and create new memories in the Fort McHenry Wetlands!



*Birders at Peters' Perch at Fort McHenry–10/18/26 (by Wendy Alexander)*

### October 24, 2026: Johnston Square Library Green Mount Cemetery Walk

*Leader: Joe Corcoran*

On a beautiful sunny fall day (55 degrees with light winds) we had a wonderful Enoch Pratt/BBC Partnership bird walk to nearby historic Green Mount Cemetery. There are many local,

*Continued, next page*



*Birds were everywhere judging by the binocular angles. (At Green Mount Cemetery–10/24/26, by Joe Corcoran)*

prominent people buried there; senators, generals, Johns Hopkins, Enoch Pratt, and many others, including some of the Booth family in a plot containing the unmarked grave of Lincoln assassin John Wilkes Booth.

Many coins were placed on and near his small grave marker, all Lincoln head pennies.

The cemetery contains much beautiful and ornate architecture, statues, a mausoleum, a chapel, and many sculptures and elaborate gravestones. The birding was a little slow, though, but we still managed 19 species with the highlight being a Cooper's that was seen well.

*View this checklist online at ebird.org/checklist/S405175833*


Chip Notes, newsletter of the Baltimore Bird Club, is published quarterly.

Current issue: **Winter 2026**

*Editor:* JoAnn Bochmann

*Designer:* Kristen Argenio, Ideal Design

Submit materials to: JoAnn Bochmann at jlbochmann@gmail.com

The deadline for submitting articles for the next issue is **Sunday, January 24**.

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


## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

The membership year is September 1—August 30. Only new members 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** where you may pay your dues using PayPal.

**Or, you may join by mail.** Make check payable to "MOS" and mail with completed application, which can be found at https://baltimorebirdclub.org/MembershipApplication_website.pdf

to: Carol S Daugherty
MOS Treasurer
11925 Oden Court
Rockville, MD 20852