

# Chip Notes

BALTIMORE BIRD CLUB NEWSLETTER



SPRING 2018 No. 403

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## Zoning Protects Wildlife in Baltimore County

By Dave Wilson, Audubon Maryland-DC Important Bird Areas

After drawing a line on urban and suburban development some 50 years ago, Baltimore County has become the state's poster child for smart growth and an unlikely haven for wildlife.

In 1967, the Baltimore County Planning Board approved the establishment of the **Urban-Rural Demarcation Line (URDL)** to "maximize the efficiency of county revenues on infrastructure in urban areas and preserve important natural and agricultural resources in rural areas." The move drew a line around the southern county's urban core, outside of which commercial and residential development is extremely limited.

The board made the decision amidst the backdrop of mounting growth pressure and the mid-sixties urban planning movement which helped bring zoning to states and counties all over the U.S. At the time, there was little opposition from landowners and farmers who saw the move as a way to protect farmland and keep it affordable to farm.

As a result of this historic decision, today about 90 percent of the County's 827,000 residents live on just one third of the county's total land area inside the URDL. In addition, for the past 15 years, Baltimore County has been able to preserve six acres for each acre converted to development. In counties with strict rural zoning, land conservation is rendered more tenable as landowners know the limits of development on their land.

The URDL distinguishes between areas served by public water and sewer from those not planned for service. Coupled with protective resource conservation (RC) zoning, the URDL places most new development and high density development within the suburban and urban communities of Baltimore County. Outside of the URDL, the RC2 zone limits development to two lots for properties that are 2 to 100 acres in size with an extra allowable lot for every 50 acres over 100 acres.

*Continued on page 3*



Albatross Breeding Colony

## WELCOME!

A warm Baltimore Bird Club welcome goes out to the following members who have joined us since the Fall Chip Notes was published. Thanks for joining, We look forward to seeing you out there on our birding trips and at our meetings.

Helen Z. Magida ..... Baltimore    Bridgid McMurtrie ..... Sparks  
Michael Quitt ..... Baltimore

## President's Corner

by Peter Lev



### Listing

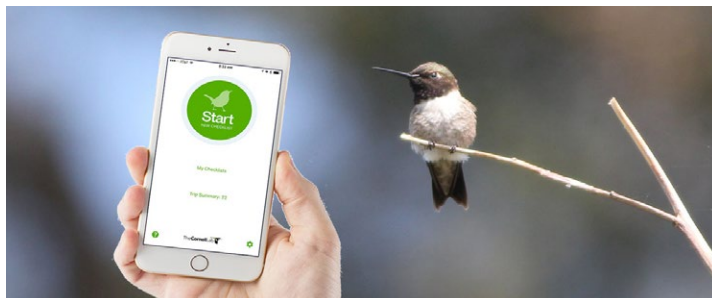
Most birders are listers, in one way or another. We make records of what we see, with special note of birds that are new to us, or new in a particular area—e.g., a county, a state, a nation. For some of us birding is all about adding to that life list, so that the experience of being outdoors and having fun in nature can't get lost. For others the list is relatively unimportant. I have one friend who has been filling notebooks with bird observations since adolescence, but he never goes back to compile an overall list of what he's seen. Other friends list by county, by month and by year, so it is hugely important to them whether a rare bird was flying in Baltimore or Howard County.

eBird makes listing easy. You record today's sightings on a cell phone or computer and eBird will use that data to assemble various lists. You can also share your sightings with others on a trip. I use eBird but sometimes, alas, I don't record my information in a timely way. Or, if I'm abroad, I may not know exactly where I'm birding. My eBird data is incomplete. I do try to record unusual sightings so that others can try for an

uncommon bird, and so that people looking at an eBird hotspot can see what is possible.

Listing does have a scientific use. It helps us chart the seasonal abundance of birds in a specific place. But in my opinion you, and I, and every birder compiles lists mainly for fun. It's a way to challenge yourself, to get to new places, to see more birds than last year.

British birders have given us the concept of the "twitcher:" the birder so obsessed by listing that he or she (usually he) will travel enormous distances to see a new bird, then leave immediately in search of the next one. The origin of twitcher is in doubt, but it may stem from long, uncomfortable rides on a motorcycle in search of rarities. Anyway, I am definitely not a twitcher. I like to enjoy my birding experiences and to link them, if possible, to bird conservation. I try not to get upset about chasing a rare bird and missing it. Of course, sometimes I do get upset... when a nemesis bird escapes me yet again. But that's birding, for listers and non-listers alike.



## Watching Birds During Spring Migration

By Marty Brazeau

*Seven Saturday mornings spread out from:*  
March 10 to May 19, 2018 **Cost \$159**

Birding Leader: **Marty Brazeau**

(See Marty's bio on page 7)

Register for the course: [www.ccbcmd.edu](http://www.ccbcmd.edu) or call  
**443-840-4700 – Course Number FIT 054**

Get outside and observe "bird traffic" during Spring migration as you team up with other birders of various skill levels. Use binoculars and scopes to observe birds up close. Field guides and cell phone apps will enable you to identify birds. Each hike will focus on a birding skill. You will keep a life list of the birds observed.

Learn how to use the eBird website to record birds you see and contribute bird data online.

- ▶ Increase your life list
- ▶ We will help you find and identify birds
- ▶ Observe bird behaviors
- ▶ illustrated tally cards will be provided



### Indoor Session

Hunt Valley 10:00 A.M.–2:00 P.M.

#### 1. March 10:

- ▶ Group introductions
- ▶ What is your birding IQ?
- ▶ Birding Strategies
- ▶ Field Trip Logistics
- ▶ Birding Ethics
- ▶ Bird field guide orientation
- ▶ <http://www.mdbirdingguide.com>

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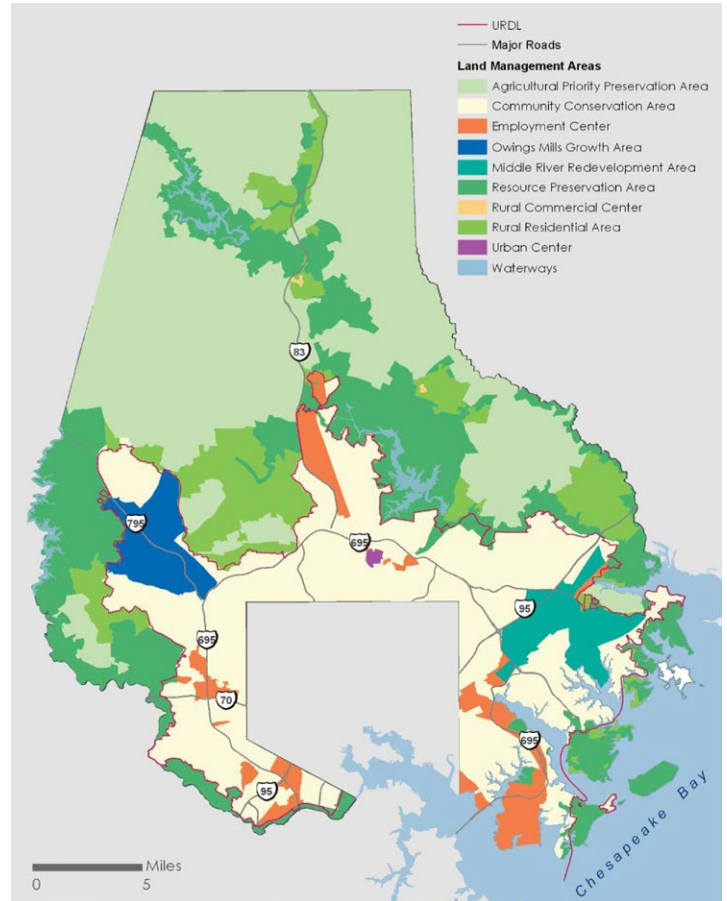
*Zoning Protects Wildlife in Baltimore County continued*

About 32 percent of the county is zoned RC2. Limited higher densities and commercial zoning does exist tightly packed around villages and towns outside the URDL, but the roughly two thirds of the county outside the URDL retains an effective zoning rate of about 1 lot per 25 acres.

**This protective zoning is a boon for birds.** With contiguous forest and open space remaining a critical need for struggling bird populations, the 292,000 acres of mostly open space outside the URDL remain a haven for wildlife. While some Maryland counties have opted for half acre-lot densities sprawled across the countryside, Baltimore County long ago adopted the central planning precept of keeping infrastructure and high density around an urban core while preserving open space outside of it. In addition to protecting wildlife and open space, the sophisticated model has substantially reduced burdens on infrastructure, public services, and ultimately taxes.

So far the URDL has stood the test of time, but the public must remain a watchful advocate to make sure the boundary remains compact and the zoning outside the boundary continues to be restrictive.

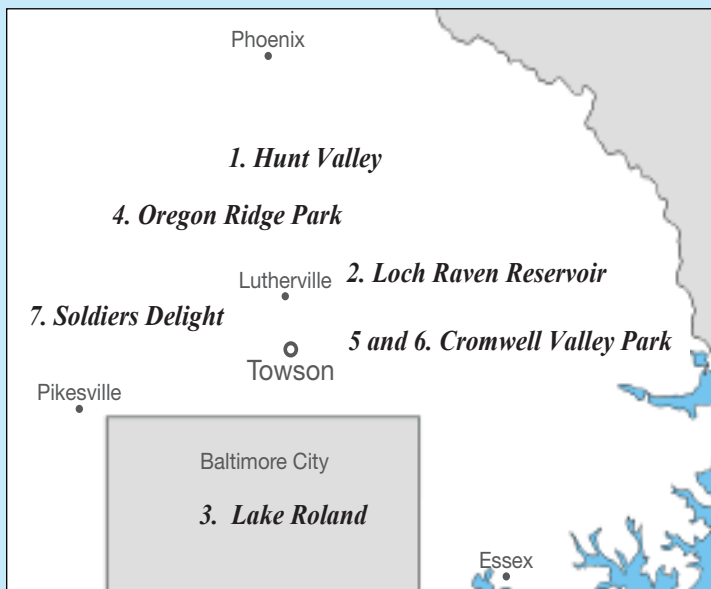
Baltimore County will be revising its comprehensive plan in 2020. Hopefully birders, farmers, and low tax proponents will again provide the elixir that keeps Baltimore County beautiful.



For Baltimore County land use planning info see:

<https://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/planning/publicationsmaps/mapgallery.html>

## CLASS LOCATIONS



## Outdoor Sessions

Various Locations 8:30–11:30 A.M.

2. **March 17:** Loch Raven Reservoir Duck Scoping
  - ▶ Team birding strategies
  - ▶ Field Guide Strategies
  - ▶ Birding by ear
  - ▶ Phone Apps
3. **April 14:** Lake Roland
 

Increase bird species seen by birding in varied habitats
4. **April 28:** Oregon Ridge Park
 

Focus on Bird Behavior
5. **May 5:** Cromwell Valley Park: Stream Trail
6. **May 12:** Cromwell Valley Park: Forest Paths
7. **May 19:** Soldiers Delight State Park
 

Explore a prairie-like habitat; Botany, Butterflies, and Birding

*Continued on page 7*



## Birdbits.....

### Wisdom has done it again!

Wisdom, the **67 year-old Laysan Albatross** we have been following in Chip Notes, has returned to the Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge and is nest incubating another egg! She and her mate, Akeakamai returned in late November to the same nest site on Midway Atoll that they have been using since at least 2006. This Atoll is incredibly important for reproduction of over three million seabirds, including 70% of the Laysan Albatross population. As you may recall, Chan Robins first banded Wisdom in 1956, and she has been followed closely ever since.



Akeakamai and his chick-to-be

### Snowy Owl Irruption

Four years from the last one, we are having another Snowy Owl irruption from the north. The Project Snowstorm people have been doing a wonderful job tracking these owls from their breeding grounds in the far north to their wintering grounds that stretch across the mid-west and north-east (and sometimes lower). When they can catch one large enough to wear a transmitter, they fit them out and follow them electronically. And they have been learning a lot. If interested, go to their website ([projectsnowstorm.org](http://projectsnowstorm.org)) to learn more. So far they have placed transmitters on 61 birds, of which ten are still active. If you go on the website, you can find interactive maps of 50 of these birds and track their winter time flight behavior. Because there are no receiving transmitters in the far north where they breed in summer, that information only gets downloaded when they fly further south in the winter.

One of the sad things they have learned this year is how vulnerable these owls are. So far, one of their tagged owls (York) was electrocuted, and another (Higbee) died in the severe storm that swept the east coast. Ironically Higbee was hit by a vehicle in the blizzard where he was probably impossible to see flying across the road.

You may recall that in 2014 they banded a snowy trapped at Martin State Airport and named him Baltimore—after the Baltimore Bird Club that paid for the transmitter. Alas, Baltimore's transmitter failed in March 2016, and although he has been seen around the Ottawa River valley in Ontario (identified by the defunct transmitter still on his back), he has eluded multiple efforts to re-catch him. It is likely he was spotted again this winter in the same area along with another snowy named Hardscrabble. The search continues...



Snowy Owl

## Claire Wayner is Graduating...

And her next stop is Princeton! Please congratulate her on early admittance to this prestigious school when you next see her. The New Jersey Audubon gains a great talent, but she will be missed locally!



## Covered Dish Dinner 2018

On a bitter cold Sunday night, BBC had another Covered Dish Dinner at the Vollmer Center at Cylburn Arboretum. About 80 of our hardiest birders attended, bringing with them a delicious repertoire of food for all to enjoy. The highlight, of course, was Joe Hanfmann's lecture on Birding Alaska. We got a great introduction on where the key birding areas are in this large state, and just how hard it is to get to them. Then we saw a series of very rare birds, the like of which most of us have not seen—certainly not here. Except, of course the Eastern Phoebe immediately identified by our young birder, Josie Kalbfleisch!

BBC president, Peter Lev, presented three individuals with Outstanding Service Awards for distinguished work for the BBC last year. They were:

- ▶ Kevin Graff for his many contributions, including organizing the Christmas Count and the Covered Dish Dinner, leading field trips, representing BBC at festivals and events, and helping us all see more birds.
- ▶ Nancy Alexander (consultant from Library of Congress) for her guidance as a volunteer consultant during the complicated and stressful move of the BBC/MOS collection of mounted birds from the Carriage House at Cylburn into storage.
- ▶ Claire Wayner for her work as moderator of the BBC Facebook page and for efforts to advance bird conservation in Baltimore City and the region.



Speaker Joe Hanfmann and his wife, and the rest of us!

In addition to the lecture and food, we had a large table of bird books and bird-related items for sale. But most popular of all was the lottery. Deb and Lou Taylor had collected 30 items from local vendors and sold lottery tickets for the buyers to distribute into the containers by the items of interest to them. The big winner of the night was Joan Cwi, who won four of these items, including a large grocery bag with goodies from Trader Joe's. Of course, the most coveted item was the bag of fine liquor, contributed by McFaul's Tavern and won by Tina Snyder! The two events brought in a total of \$362 to the club—\$136 from the book sale and \$226 from the lottery.

## Middle River Christmas Bird Count 2017

By Kevin Graff and Joan Cwi

The **Christmas Bird Count** is a census of birds in the Western Hemisphere, performed annually in the early Northern-hemisphere winter by volunteer



birdwatchers and administered by the National Audubon Society. The purpose is to provide population data for use in science,

especially conservation biology, though many people participate for recreation.

The first count took place in 1900 and has continued every year since. Each individual count is performed in a “count circle” with a diameter of 15 miles or 24 kilometers. At least ten volunteers, including a compiler to manage things, count in each circle. They break up into small parties and follow assigned routes, which change little from year to year, counting every bird they see. In most count circles, some people also watch feeders instead of following routes. Counts can be held on any day from December 14 to January 5 inclusive.

The Baltimore Bird Club has participated in the Christmas Bird Count since its the Club’s inception in 1945. This year we counted on December 16th, 2017. Kevin Graff coordinated the count. Initially the Count was conducted in the Baltimore Harbor area, but access became difficult and species counts were down. For the last four years the census has taken place in eastern Baltimore County in the Middle River area, encompassing Fort Howard up to Days Cove

at the mouth of the Gunpowder. This is a count of all birds seen or heard in the count circle. Count totals will be submitted to the National Audubon Society.

This year 24 birders in 12 parties participated in the Middle River count, starting at 7:07 am and ending at 4:30 pm. They spent 3.5 hours and 60 miles in the car, 42 hours and 26 miles on foot and 3 hours at feeder watches. In total, they observed 95 species during count week and roughly 23,784 individual birds on count day. Since counting (since 2013) at Middle River, we have had a total of 135 species during count week.

The Count took place in six sectors of Middle River. Counts by sector are presented below.

**Highlights:** Due to ice around edge of Back River and Middle River, ducks were forced out into the open, including a record number of Hooded Mergansers. Ruddy Ducks continued to dominate all over Back River. A Great Cormorant was the first for the Middle River Count, although they had been recorded over the years during the old Baltimore Harbor Count. Sandhill Cranes have been reliable during winter months at the Days Cove Area of the state park. With range expansion eastward toward Delaware, Common Ravens continue to be seen over a broader area—two were seen during the Count this year. This year we had two new Neotropical birds: a White-eyed Vireo (North Point Sector) and a Palm Warbler (Middle River Sector). In past years since 2013, we had records of at least one Neotropical bird during the count date, including Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Cape May Warbler, and Baltimore Oriole.

Christmas Bird Count website: [www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count](http://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count)

Sector	Name	Species	Individuals
1	White Marsh*	7	84
2	Chase	60	3,243
3	Back River	70	13,245
4	Middle River	59	3,115
5	Dundalk	49	1,831
6	North Point	63	2,266

\*Driving

# Field Trip Reports

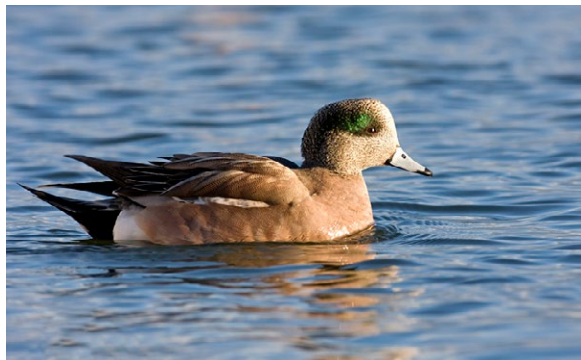
Compiled by Kevin Graff

Bird Photos by Bill Hubick



**OCT 24 – CROMWELL VALLEY PARK** – Nine birders turned up after overnight rains. The bird of the day was Orange-crowned Warbler found by John Landers. 40 species. 9 participants. Leader: Peter Lev.

**OCT 28 – NORTHAMPTON FURNACE TRAIL**–Nice views of Wood Ducks and American Wigeons. Single Merlin flew by after we reached the reservoir. Both Kinglets. Hundreds of robin and waxwing flyovers. 39 species. 3 participants. Leader: Kevin Graff.



American Wigeon

**NOV 18 – HYDES ROAD PARK**–Slow day, but we got to see several large flocks of geese, robins, waxwings and blackbird flyovers. Good views of Golden-crowned Kinglet, a Catbird and a Fox Sparrow. We're planning to move this trip to early October for more migrants. 31 species. 6 participants. Leader: Hugh Simmons.



Golden-crowned Kinglet

**NOV 19 – ASHLAND & PAPER MILL FLATS**–A very chilly morning (42°) with winds gusting to 23 mph, which probably kept our land birds hiding in the bushes. We did see 6 species of ducks and 2 Bonaparte's Gulls. 26 species. 2 participants. Leaders: Debbie Terry and Kevin Graff



Bonaparte's Gull

**JAN 14 – LOCH RAVEN POINT & DAMS**–Due to the fact the 8:00 am temperature was 14 degrees and Loch Raven was about 85% ice covered, our intrepid birders stayed home! 0 participants. Leader: Debbie Terry.

*Watching Birds During Spring Migration, from page 3*

Marty Brazeau, Baltimore Bird Club member (BBC), is a retired Baltimore County School Librarian and is currently an Academic Advisor at the Community College of Baltimore County. Marty has birded in the Baltimore area since childhood and has served as the BBC Youth Birding Leader and the Junior Naturalist Coordinator at Oregon Ridge Park. He has completed a masters degree in Outdoor Education. Marty has visited Costa Rica nine times to film birds.

Questions? Marty can be reached at [tropicbirder56@gmail.com](mailto:tropicbirder56@gmail.com)



Marty Brazeau

BALTIMORE BIRD CLUB  
<http://baltimorebirdclub.org>

A Chapter of

MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
4915 Greenspring Avenue  
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**Joan Cwi**, Editor  
**David Nelson**, Design

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**Moving or email change?**  
Send update to  
**Terry Ross** at [tross@ubalt.edu](mailto:tross@ubalt.edu)

**Deadlines for submitting articles  
for upcoming issues:**

**April 24, 2018**



## Baltimore Bird Club APPLICATION

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: City: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Benefits include membership in the BBC and Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS), free field trips, quarterly BBC and MOS newsletters sent electronically, lectures and other events.

### Check dues category and circle amount sent.

Category	1-YR	½ YR	Chapter Only+
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$35.00	\$17.00	\$15.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Household	\$45.00	\$22.50	\$20.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining	\$100.00	\$5.00	\$5.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Junior*	\$10.00		

\* Through 17: record age here \_\_\_\_

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

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