

Chip Notes

Fall
2025
No. 433



Photo from Reimagine Middle Branch website

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CONSERVATION CORNER

Coal Ash — Your Favorite Birding Site May be Toxic!

*By Elizabeth Ellen Champlin,
Conservation Committee*

Did you know there are over 100 toxic coal ash dump sites in the Chesapeake Bay watershed including Baltimore City and County? Their potential impact on bird populations (and humans) is a complicated issue for birders, conservationists, environmental groups, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the State of Maryland.

Coal ash sites are a serious and not well articulated concern for the birding community. Despite the presence of contaminants, some sites have active bird populations and are used by

birders for our birding pastime—in fact some are actual E-Bird Hotspots. While some coal ash sites are managed and monitored, especially those near power plants, many others are not. Heavy metals and toxins like arsenic, lead, and mercury among others leach into ground-water and nearby waterways affecting specific bird populations more than others. These toxins harm fish and wildlife and impact birds that feed on aquatic life in contaminated areas. They can damage entire aquatic ecosystems.

Baltimore has a history of industrial activity, environmental, and

coal ash contamination. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) compiled an inventory of coal ash deposits in a report dated January 2025 “Coal Ash Resources of Maryland”. Though far from complete, it lists eight (8) sites in Baltimore City and nine (9) sites in Baltimore County. Several key sites have been identified as having hazardous materials:

- **E-Bird hotspots in Baltimore City and County** include Cherry Hill Park, Fort Armistead, Reed Bird Park, Norris Farm Landfill, and the newly acquired CP Crane Power Plant property among others.

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- **The 68th Street Dump Superfund Site in Rosedale,** Baltimore County, which consists of 239 acres previously used for landfilling commercial, industrial, and municipal wastes.
- **Turner Station,** a historically African American community in Baltimore County. Contaminants there include heavy metals, oil and grease, PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls), and PAHs (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons).

It's difficult to know what the ultimate effect of these sites will be. The current Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rules require monitoring and remediation of contamination, but they do not require removal. The bad news is that we don't know what the current EPA administration will do to the



Cherry Hill Site (photo from DNR Coal Ash Resources of Maryland report)

2024 regulations. The good news is that coal ash can be recycled via “beneficial use” in making cement and other building products. DNR reports that across the Bay watershed, about 2 million tons of ash are recycled annually.

At its most recent legislative session, Maryland passed Senate Bill 425, “Environment – Coal Combustion By-Products –

Fees, Coordinating Committee, and Regulations” that will mirror current EPA regulations. Fees will be assessed to coal combustion generators and used to (1) increase beneficial reuse (recycling), and (2) mitigate human health and environmental impact due to the release of coal combustion by-products. The Maryland Act takes effect on October 1, 2025.

CONSERVATION CORNER – BREAKING NEWS

DC-Baltimore MagLev (Magnetic Levitation) Train Has Been Canceled

You may have already heard, but according to the U.S. Department of Transportation in its press release of August 1, 2025, “After nearly a decade of poor planning, significant community opposition, tremendous cost overruns, and nothing to show for it, Secretary Duffy is ending federal

involvement in the project and its cost to taxpayers.”

The project would have gone through parts of the Patuxent Research Refuge and BARC (Beltsville Agricultural Research Center) and was strongly opposed by the Maryland Coalition for

Responsible Transportation and the Friends of Patuxent Research Refuge along with many other environmentalists.

While not necessarily canceled solely because of environmental concerns, it is still a major “win” for the Refuge, at least for the moment!



Mike Hudson leading Black Birding Week banding at Masonville Cove



Thames Street Park Night Herons



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Go Baltimore Bird Club!

by Joe Corcoran,
BBC President

Holy smokes we had a good year this past one! I just went over our trip list and the board meeting minutes (thanks Jen Cookus!), and we have been out there in Baltimore. Bird walks, tables at partner events, lectures, boat trips, expert bird leading for community events; it's been a lot. We conducted over 200 events last year (September 2024 to August 2025), and to count how many more would have taken more time, which I don't have right now, because we've been so busy!

The year before, I counted 148 events, which was well

more than any year since I started as president. So the over 200 this past year is an over 33% increase. Well Done, Baltimore Birders! Special thanks to Mirat Shah, Toby Gingerich and the Trip Committee team for coordinating all these dates, and Terry Ross, Cathy Czakowski, Libby Errickson and Neville Fernandes for publicizing them on our website, Facebook and Instagram pages.

Moreover, with our emphasis on urban birding, over 65% of the events were in Baltimore City. There were walks at many of our parks (Patterson, Druid Hill, Wyman, Cherry Hill, Herring



↑ Black-crowned Night Heron

Run, Roland, Thames Street, Middle Branch), and Enoch Pratt libraries (Brooklyn Park, Cherry Hill, Canton, Walbrook and more branches). Plus, we birded Cylburn Arboretum and Masonville Cove, Fort McHenry and Federal Hill, Rash Field, Inner Harbor, etc., etc., etc.!

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We participated in multiple Black Birder week events, Open and Neighbor Space walks, two Big Sits, an awesome Cape May weekend, and because Baltimore County libraries heard about our city walks, we started at two county libraries, Pikesville and Woodlawn, and will be doing more. Charisma Burrows and Nico Sarbanes did a bang up job organizing these new library partnerships.

Counts, you like bird counts, well we were there for you. With Tim Carney joining Libby as Co-Chair of Community Science we conducted a May Count and not one but three Audubon Christmas Bird Counts. In addition to our Loch Raven and Middle River counts, we also organized one completely within Baltimore City borders! Nico helped with that one and it was a success. Note that Libby is also our new Vice President (Yay!).

And how about our Conservation team, chaired by Kathy Lambrow, which led the way in our part of the larger effort to keep Hart-Miller Island from being completely filled up with dredge material, thereby preventing damage to some critical wetland areas. This team also was quite active in many local and national environmental protection and conservation efforts.



Laverne Hicks talking about bird club activities

Continuing with this past year's highlights, from our Memorial Fund we awarded Cylburn over \$8000 with a grant for Bird Safe Glass for the Vollmer Center, which was applied successfully. And the first draft of the new website, being worked on by Alyssia Church, Kris McDaniel,

and Terry was revealed. We are planning for the roll out live to be before January 2026.

And finally, with our membership now at well over 500, we've enjoyed six straight years of increasing membership. What a vibrant healthy and really cool club we have!

NEW MEMBERS

Robert Abad • Baltimore
 Michele Bandler
 & Phil Farfel • Baltimore
 Azura Hassan • Baltimore
 Diane Iniguez • Baltimore
 Margalit Leiser • Baltimore
 Rob Mundy • Baltimore
 Caroline Myers • Baltimore
 Jennifer Pfister • Baltimore

Douglas & Judy
 Sandhaus • Baltimore
 Nikki Steiner
 & Michael Bemis • Baltimore
 Clare Nielsen • Catonsville
 Brent Bacon • Nottingham
 Thomas Thobe • Nottingham
 Richard Schoen • Reisterstown
 Andrew Blair
 & Norine Andrew • Towson
 Julie Stuckey • Walkersville



TRIP REPORTS

Through July 2025

February 8, 2025: Eccleston

Leader: Tim Carney

A cloudy and chilly day, lacking the sparrow activity we'd hoped for, but otherwise birdy. A low-flying skein of five geese contained one Cackling Goose, a lifer for several participants. The size difference between the Cackling and the Canadas was obvious. Sam Tillman and Ian Moody volunteered to walk through the wetlands to look for snipe and were able to get the rest of the group on two of these uncommon winter residents. A trio of Common Ravens and a perched American Kestrel rounded out the high-lights. 37 species, 15 birders.

February 26, 2025: Hart-Miller Island

Leader: Tim Carney

Cal Liddell of Maryland Environmental Service (MES) led a group of 16 around the island. A lone Snow Goose greeted everyone at the dock. Waterfowl were extremely numerous: the group estimated 4,340 Canvasbacks and 4,950 scaup (both species, with Lessers vastly outnumbering Greater). Early migrants included one Great Egret and two Tree



↑ "Short-eared Owl on the ground"
(by Sumeet Moghe, own work, CC BY-SA 4.0)

Swallows. The resident pair of Trumpeter Swans showed well and it was interesting to compare them to the nearby Tundra Swans, with the Trumpeters being much larger and with a more rounded back. However, the absolute highlight was a SHORT-EARED OWL that flew past the group and was

subsequently mobbed by a harrier. This species is not observed annually in Baltimore County, so it was a treat to see one here! 64 species, 16 birders.

March 2, 2025: Woodcocks on Bauers Farm Road

Leader: Tim Carney

After rescheduling/canceling both official woodcock trips due to inclement weather and/or high winds, Tim led an impromptu trip on the evening of March 2. Sunset was at 6:00 p.m. and the group heard the first woodcock "peent" at 6:16 p.m. followed by the first flight display at 6:20 p.m. We estimated four woodcocks total and they were still peenting and displaying when we left at 6:43 p.m.

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American Woodcock near Cranesville Swamp in Garrett Co. (by Bill Hubick)



**March 14, 2025:
Hart-Miller Island**

Leader: Tim Carney

Large numbers of waterfowl continued onsite. The group estimated 2,000 Canvasbacks, 8,950 scaup (both species, with Lessers outnumbering Greaters), and 3,200 Ruddy Ducks. The island’s resident Wild Turkey and Trumpeter Swans all made an appearance, and the group also got to see the overwintering Orange-crowned Warbler and two of the White-crowned Sparrows along the cross dike. 54 species, 14 birders.

**March 22, 2025:
Back River Gulls**

Leader: Tim Carney

Back River is one of the two main “hooded” gull spots in our area (the other being the Lapidum boat ramp at Susquehanna State Park). Little Gull and Black-headed Gull are both reliable here in early spring. We scoped the river from Cox’s Point Park but only found a few flyby Bonaparte’s Gulls, not the triple-digit swarm that we’d hoped for. However, the park itself offered a surprisingly high variety of birds for March—48 species total! Some unusual species included Northern Shoveler, American Black Duck, American Coot, Pied-billed Grebe, and a singing Winter Wren. Ospreys and Purple



↑ *Black-headed Gull in Baltimore Co. (by Bill Hubick)*

Martins were already back at their nest sites at Weaver’s Marine, and four Eastern Phoebes were a “FOY” for several birders. From there, we moved to the Essex Park & Ride, where Libby Errickson expertly picked out the continuing adult Black-headed Gull. We were able to compare the differences to the nearby Bonaparte’s Gulls, most notably that the Black-headed Gull had a full hood and most of the Bonaparte’s did not. Mirat Shah spotted a Barn Swallow, which was about a week earlier than the usual arrival date. And who doesn’t love seeing Wood Ducks up close? 48 species and 16 birders at Cox’s Point, 28 species and 13 birders (3 left to chase the Tufted Duck, which I supported!) at Essex P&R.

**April 9, 2025:
Hart-Miller Island**

Leader: Tim Carney

Another great day on the island. The resident Trumpeter Swans

showed well in the west pit and several pairs of Blue-winged Teal swam past. Diving ducks continued in unusually large numbers for this late in the season. The group estimated 500 Canvasbacks, over 3,100 scaup (both species), and 2,200 Ruddy Ducks. Early shorebirds included Greater Yellowlegs, Least Sandpiper, Dunlin, and Pectoral Sandpiper. Caspian Terns were already present in a triple-digit number—the group estimated 130. We ended with great looks at an American Kestrel perched next to the bus. 71 species, 20 birders.

April 13, 2025: Eccleston

Leader: Tim Carney

Another breezy and relatively sparrow-less trip to Eccleston. Maybe the next one will offer better conditions. Despite the lack of our hoped-for sparrows, we enjoyed a nice raptor flight and a not-too-shabby list of wetland birds, including Wood Ducks, two Virginia Rails giving grunting outbursts, Wilson’s Snipe, and 25+ Swamp Sparrows. (Frank Marengi also heard a Sora.) We ended with nice views of a perched American Kestrel and a singing Winter Wren. 52 species, 16 birders.

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April 19, 2025: Masonville Cove Habitat Walk

Leader: Tim Carney

Cal Liddell and Dimitri Rucker (MES) led a group around the Upland Trail at Masonville Cove, pointing out not just the birds, but also the habitat restoration/improvement efforts implemented onsite. The best bird was a Grasshopper Sparrow that showed well. Other highlights included Red-breasted Merganser, a surprise flyby Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Black-crowned Night Heron, Savannah Sparrow, and Palm Warbler. 46 species, 8 birders.

April 22, 2025: Black Marsh Evening Walk

Leader: Tim Carney

Well...we tried. I thought special evening access (thank you, North Point SP staff!) would give us a better opportunity to hear rails, bitterns, and other secretive marsh birds than during the day. We heard a distant Great Horned Owl, a close Barred Owl, three Virginia Rails, and one Marsh Wren. Though some birders were pleased with the results, I was expecting to hear Least Bitterns and Soras, and was hoping for something crazier like a King Rail, Common Gallinule, or Barn Owl. It was a good effort and I hope the mosquitoes enjoyed all the blood we donated.

I still want to keep trying this event, but maybe a little earlier in the season when the rails are present but the biting insects aren't as numerous. 18 species, 16 birders.

April 22, 2025: Lake Roland

Leader: Laura Lechtzin

This outing was part of the BBC Lake Roland birding spring migration series. We had a partly cloudy day, mild winds, and temperatures in the high 50s–mid 60s. Fifteen people joined the walk and together we heard and observed 56 species. Highlights included three species of Vireos: Warbling, Red-eyed and White-eyed all serenading us as we walked along the wooded trails. Both Solitary and Spotted Sandpiper were seen feeding along the mud flats. Eight Wood Duck, including a group of brightly colored males, gave us glances before swiftly swimming away into the back channels of the lake. The tiny but feisty Blue-gray Gnatcatcher scratchy fussing was a constant reminder that their nesting building and egg laying was underway. This, along with squeaky American Goldfinch and a single female Purple Finch moving about in the over-story. Some of our migrating warblers made appearances as well. A Northern Waterthrush,



↑ Northern Parula in PG. Co. (by Bill Hubick)

Black and White Warbler, Northern Parula, Palm Warbler, Pine Warbler and several Yellow-rumped Warblers gleaned for insects in the leaf litter, trees and shrubs of the park. All and all is was an enjoyable way to start the day!

May 18, 2025: Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park

Leaders: Elise and Paul Kreiss

Nineteen birders met on May 18th on a bright, cool morning in Winans Meadows, Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park to enjoy the spring migration. We proceeded along Dead Run to where it meets Gwynns Falls, walked up Weatheredsville Road to Hutton Avenue, and passed the Carrie Murray Nature Center; closing the loop by descending down a steep staircase with great views of the Park and took a trail below back towards

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the parking area. Highlights included good views of Barn Swallows on the ground, who may have been collecting nesting material. We also enjoyed listening and looking for the spring warblers. Nine species were found: Black-and-white Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Northern Parula, Magnolia Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, and Blackpoll Warbler. Other special birds included two Orchard Orioles (as well as the Baltimore Orioles more commonly seen in the Park) and an Indigo Bunting who sang at length from a Tulip Poplar. Fun vocalizations included the three part call of the Tennessee Warbler, and the powerful call of a Pileated Woodpecker.

**June 21, 2025:
North Central Railroad,
Bee Tree Section**

Leader: Sam Tillman

On a muggy, summer morning we ventured to Freeland, MD in northern Baltimore County, and walked a portion of the NCR trail that parallels Bee Tree Run and the Bee Tree Preserve. Our target species included Red-headed woodpecker and breeding warbler species. We were greeted in the parking lot by a fly over Red-headed woodpecker

almost immediately, and went on to see three more, including perched birds. Perhaps our most gratifying find was a fledgling Worm-eating warbler with an adult—a sight few in our group had seen! Another highlight was a singing Kentucky warbler, which stuck around long enough for all to get great looks. Despite the heat, we tallied 52 species, including six warblers.

**July 19, 2025:
Hopewell Area Recreation
Complex, York County, PA**

Leader: Libby Errickson

Our second annual summer visit to Hopewell Area Recreation Complex in York County, PA was a delightful trip. The long-established resident Red-headed Woodpecker family at this location was ready and waiting for us in the bare snags next to the parking lot right as we arrived and gave great views. After watching the woodpeckers for a bit, we started our walk through the grassland. We found our first Grasshopper Sparrow of the day almost immediately, and were treated to several more throughout the morning, including excellent views and photo opportunities, and everyone had a chance to get to know their unique song. Meadowlark song followed

us all morning long and we got good looks at several individuals. Pairs of Blue Grosbeaks and Willow Flycatchers offered decent looks, and multiple American Kestrels were spotted hunting the grasslands, much to the ire of the local Red-winged Blackbirds and one very feisty Eastern Kingbird. The group was incredibly pleased with their morning, and it was a joy to share this excellent grassland habitat with them, the likes of which are unparalleled by any of our Baltimore County hotspots. As an aside, when we returned from the parking lot we found that one of Libby's tires was flat, and several folks stepped in to help change it. If you're wondering how many birders it takes to change a tire, the answer is six. It was an exciting morning to say the least!



↑ *An Eastern Kingbird feasting on a tiger beetle at Fort Smallwood Park, Maryland (by Bill Hubick)*



Well attended Wyman Park walk led by Libby Errickson

OUR NEW PLUMAGE



Chip Notes is now being designed by member Kristen Argenio. Kristen runs [Ideal Design](#), which specializes in print and web design for nonprofits, and her favorite bird is the White-throated Sparrow.

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

Current issue: **Fall 2025**

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 **Friday, October 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

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