



# The Goldfinch

Newsletter of the Howard County Bird Club  
 A Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society

[www.howardbirds.org](http://www.howardbirds.org)



## CLUB MEETINGS - BY [JANE GEUDER](#)

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Thursday, January 10, 2013 “Birding Central Asia: How NOT to Do It,” by Kurt Schwarz. In addition to speaking about birding and ecotourism potentials of Kazakhstan, Kurt, MOS Conservation Chair and former HCBC President, will relate his birding mis-adventures in the 1990s.

Thursday, February 14, 2013 “The Ten Most Important Things You Can Do For Birds and Bird Conservation,” by Paul J. Baicich, HCBC member and former employee of the American Birding Association. While at ABA, Paul edited their “ABA Birdfinding Guides” as well as the bi-monthly magazine. He also served as Director of Conservation and Public Policy.

Meetings are at the Robinson Nature Center, 6692 Cedar Lane, Columbia MD 21044. Hospitality at 7:30 p.m. Meeting with program begins at 8:00 p.m. Nature Center doors unlocked at 7:15 p.m. and locked again at 8:15 p.m. There is no admission charge. For further information call Wes Earp, 410-531-3197.

## POST-SANDY BIRDING

BY KURT SCHWARZ

We were delighted that Sandy did not cause a lot of damage in our immediate neighborhood, though a mature American beech tree across the drive had to be dealt with. Nevertheless, I got out by 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, October 30th to try my birding luck. Since Howard County parks were closed, Centennial was out, and it had been reported that Brighton Dam Rd. was closed as well, so I thought I’d check the Columbia lakes. Alas, the Broken Land lot at Elkhorn was still overrun with dredging equipment, and Dockside was closed for unknown reasons.

I then decided to try reaching Brighton Dam via the Montgomery County side. That route took me past Fulton Pond which I, fortunately, decided to check. To my delight, I found the first Brant to be recorded in the county since 1959. After getting a documentation photo, I made a few calls. Both **Joe Hanfman** and **David Cummings** arrived in time to see it fly off.

At Brighton Dam a short time later I ran into **Jeff Culler**, who was tracking what he thought was a Bonaparte’s Gull. I, however, realized it was the Forster’s Tern seen earlier that day. Jeff then got a message about a Laughing Gull back at Fulton Pond, so we

*(Sandy continued on page 3)*

### TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Can you identify the species referred to in this description from Birding Howard County, Maryland?

Abundant migrant; common in winter. April to mid-May (one June 6 record); late September (a few earlier) to mid-November. Hedgerows, weedy fields, brushy wood edges, yards, and gardens. Frequents feeders, often in flocks. Highs of 160+ on December 19, 2002, near West Friendship and 150+ on March 17, 2002, at the University of Maryland Central Farm. (Answer on [page 5](#).)

## WINTER FIELD TRIPS BY [BONNIE OTT](#) & [JOE HANFMAN](#)

**Field trips** are a great way to improve birding skills, explore new places and meet other birders. Arrive at the meeting site ready to leave at the designated time with appropriate footwear and gear. Carpooling is strongly encouraged. The leader may cancel due to inclement weather/hazardous driving conditions. Directions for trips not on ADC maps are on the Club's website. Questions? Contact the trip leader or Field Trip Coordinator Bonnie Ott at [bonnieott@verizon.net](mailto:bonnieott@verizon.net). HCBC members receive priority on trips that are limited by number of participants. No pets.

### START YOUR YEAR LIST

January 1, Tuesday, 8:00 a.m. (2-3 hours). *Meet at boat ramp of Centennial Park.* Easy walking on paved paths and woodland trails. Plan to carpool to different locations to find as many species as possible — the one day of the year when every bird is new! Facilities available. *Leader - Bonnie Ott, [bonnieott@verizon.net](mailto:bonnieott@verizon.net) or 443-285-3302.*

### ALPHA RIDGE LANDFILL

January 12, Saturday, (half day) *Reservations required.* Carpooling is required. Moderate walking over hills and fields of the landfill. We will search for Short-eared Owls with no guarantee of finding one. Other possibilities are Northern Harrier, American Kestrel, Horned Lark, American Pipit, and Eastern Meadowlark. If we finish early, we may go to Mount Pleasant and look for wintering sparrows. Facilities at Alpha Ridge Park. Limited to a maximum of five cars. *Leader - Ralph Cullison, [rocciii@cullison.org](mailto:rocciii@cullison.org) or 410-442-2181. Contact Joe Hanfman for reservations, [auk1844@gmail.com](mailto:auk1844@gmail.com) or 410-772-8424.*

### MIDWINTER COUNT

February 2, Saturday See [page 3](#) for more details.

### HOW TO FIND AN OWL

February 16, Saturday, 1:00 p.m., possibility of birding till dusk. *Meet at Annapolis Rock Rd horse trailer parking lot, midway between Hipsley Mill Rd and MD 94.* Learn how to find owls by habitat and signs. Jay is an expert at finding owls and will share

his skills and knowledge as to how to find different species. Contact Jay to sign up so participants can be advised of weather related changes. Our target species are Long-eared, Northern Saw-whet, and other owls. *Leader- Jay Sheppard, [JMSheppar@aol.com](mailto:JMSheppar@aol.com) or 301-725-5559.*

### WINTER SPARROW SEARCH

March 2, Saturday, (half day)

Limit: 12 people

Search wetlands and dry fields in this intensive search for as many sparrows as possible. Previous years have turned up non-sparrow rarities! Expect difficult walking for most of the day. Knee boots a must. Facilities at some spots. *Contact Bonnie Ott, [bonnieott@verizon.net](mailto:bonnieott@verizon.net) or 443-285-3302 to sign up and get info.*



### [CENTENNIAL PARK](#)

March 3, Sunday, 8:00 a.m., (2-3 hours)

*Meet at west end parking lot off Centennial Lane.* Easy walking on paved path around Centennial Lake. Woodlands, fields, and water host a wide variety of species. Great view of the sky for flyovers. Facilities available. *Leader - Mike Kerwin, [m63kerwin@verizon.net](mailto:m63kerwin@verizon.net) or 410-461-2408.*



= Great for beginning birders

Anyone is welcome to contribute articles or ideas which you think will be of interest to other birders. Copy may be sent to:

Amanda Witt  
8865 Purple Iris Lane  
Elkridge, MD 21075  
[amanda.witt@yahoo.com](mailto:amanda.witt@yahoo.com)

**The Goldfinch**, newsletter of the Howard County Bird Club, is published five times per year. Copy deadline for the March/April 2013 issue is January 25, 2013.

Amanda Witt, *Editor*  
Joanne Solem, *Proofreader*

## PUBLICITY POSITION FILLED

The Howard County Bird Club has a new publicity chair — **Allen Lewis**. Thank you for volunteering for this important job.

There are several other positions that we need volunteers to fill. For more information see [page 5](#).

# TWENTY-EIGHTH ANNUAL MIDWINTER COUNT

BY JOE BYRNES AND JOE HANFMAN

Join the Howard County Bird Club’s Twenty-Eighth Annual Midwinter Count on Saturday, February 2, 2013. Joe Hanfman (410-772-8424 or [auk1844@gmail.com](mailto:auk1844@gmail.com)) and Joe Byrnes (410-730-5329 or [LBRoller@verizon.net](mailto:LBRoller@verizon.net)) are the count coordinators. You may volunteer to participate by signing up at a meeting, by calling Joe Byrnes, or by contacting one of the area coordinators:

Area 1: Mark Wallace - 301-725-6370 or [abcxyz5@verizon.net](mailto:abcxyz5@verizon.net)

Wes Earp - 410-531-3197 or [the\\_earps@verizon.net](mailto:the_earps@verizon.net)

Area 2: Ward Ebert - 301-490-5807 or [wardebort@verizon.net](mailto:wardebort@verizon.net)

Area 3: Maureen & Dave Harvey- 410-795-3117 or [tangara@comcast.net](mailto:tangara@comcast.net)

Area 4: Mike McClure - 410-531-2780 or [michael.mcclure@jhuapl.edu](mailto:michael.mcclure@jhuapl.edu)

Area 5: Kevin Heffernan and Karen Darcy - 410-418-8731 or [kjheff@aol.com](mailto:kjheff@aol.com) or [khdarcy4@aol.com](mailto:khdarcy4@aol.com)

Area 6: Bonnie Ott - 443-285-3302 or [bonnieott@verizon.net](mailto:bonnieott@verizon.net)

Area 7: Kurt Schwarz - 410-461-1643 or [krschwal@verizon.net](mailto:krschwal@verizon.net)

Beginning birders are always welcome, as are individuals who wish to count only for part of the day. If you wish to count only at your feeder, contact Joe B. or Joe H. and request a feeder form.

The evening potluck tally will be at Jeff and Karen Culler’s at 2672 Thornbrook Rd, Ellicott City, MD. Please contact the Cull-

ers at 410-465-9006 or [cullerfuls@hotmail.com](mailto:cullerfuls@hotmail.com) by Wednesday, January 30<sup>th</sup>, to sign up for a vegetable, salad, or dessert, and to obtain directions. Dinner will be served at 6:45 p.m. If you cannot make the meal, you are welcome to drop in about 7:30 p.m. for the tally.

If there is a question about the weather, we will try to make a decision the night before. Call your area coordinator, Joe B. or Joe H. (between 5:00 & 6:00 a.m. on the day of the count) if you are unsure of the status of the count.



*(Sandy continued from page 1)*

made our way back there. We found the Laughing Gull in pretty quick order, but I also got my scope on a Bonaparte’s Gull, so Jeff (and I) got his year bird after all.

At that point I went to Lake Kittmaquidi, which had nothing of any note. My last stop was Wilde Lake, where I scared up three female Black Scoters. After making some calls, close to a dozen other birders showed up. Sandy presumably produced five normally coastal species in Howard County: Brant (1), Black Scoter (3), Laughing Gull (2), Bonaparte’s Gull (1), and Forster’s Tern (1). I was fortunate to see all five species, having been the first to find three of them. I did miss one of the Laughing Gulls, but I’m not complaining. If it’s safe to go out, and your home is in decent shape, it pays to bird after a hurricane!



Brant at Fulton Pond, October 30, 2012 by Kurt Schwarz

## AN AMAZING BUTTERFLY YEAR

BY RICHARD SMITH

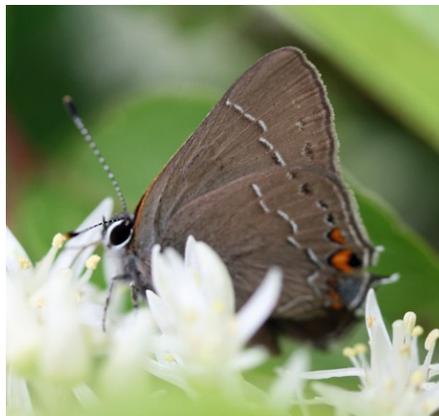
Since the inauguration of the Howard County Bird Club's (HCBC's) on-line butterfly photo guide (see [http://www.howardbirds.org/butterflies/HC\\_Butterfly\\_photos.htm](http://www.howardbirds.org/butterflies/HC_Butterfly_photos.htm)) in April 2011, the diversity of butterfly life in Howard County, MD has seemed to stage a fabulous improvement. This uptick in diversity is due in part, no doubt, to the interest the county's burgeoning amateur nature photographers have taken in county butterflies with the advent of the photographic website. After all, the site stipulates that all images must be taken in Howard County. However, we cannot also dismiss the recent dramatic range shifts in butterfly species occurring over much of the U.S. and the northern hemisphere as a factor in the diversity's climb. These shifts are very likely due to the cumulative effects of global warming, as suggested by a recently mounting body of evidence.

The local photographic surprises in butterfly occurrences appeared slowly toward the end of 2011 and then resumed, with increasing intensity, during the 2012 season. The first contribution was a video of the Silvery Checkerspot, unknown in Howard County since a single record in the early 1970s. The video was shot in June of 2009 by **Robert Schaefer** in his Long Corner Rd. yard and submitted in November 2011. This species was later turned up at two other sites in Howard County (**Dick Smith; Tom Feild**) during the HCBC's September 2012 Fall Count, which added butterflies and dragonflies to its count for the first time this year. In March 2012, a photo of the Broad-winged Skipper, a species supposedly confined to Chesapeake Bay shoreline marshes, was submitted. It had been snapped by **Allen Lewis** near Lake Elkhorn in July 2011. In May 2012, **Kathy Litzinger** secured a photo of a single specimen of the extremely rare Northern Oak Hairstreak in her backyard south of Ellicott City. Only one previous record of this butterfly had been logged in the county, sometime before the 1980s. After these early surprises, the appearances of unexpected southern butterfly species began to mount. In early June at Mt. Pleasant, and again in Columbia in August, **Annette Allor** photographed Southern Broken-Dash skippers. Except for a 2011 Harford County record, this southern U.S. species had not been known in Central Maryland north of Washington, D.C.

The year 2012, with its very early spring and unusually hot summer, was also the period for grand appearances of southern sulphur butterfly species. At the Robinson Nature Center and at other county sites such as the Elkhorn Garden Plots, multiple sightings of Cloudless Sulphurs, Little Yellows, and Sleepy Oranges were recorded. The appearances at the center were no doubt assisted by

the coincidental extensive plantings of Partridge Pea, a prime larval host plant of the Cloudless Sulphur. The caterpillars were even photographed there by **Cheryl Farfaras**. In August, a Giant Swallowtail, a southern butterfly having a citrus leaf-feeding caterpillar, was photographed by **Kathy Litzinger**, again in her Ellicott City yard for a first county record. A second Giant Swallowtail was photographed in early September by **John McKitterick** in his Allview yard, on the south edge of Columbia. Long-tailed Skippers and American Snouts, which are rare summer southern immigrant butterflies to Howard County, turned up with startling frequency in the county in September. Additional butterfly species considered to be rare in Howard County were also spotted, sometimes more than one at a time or in more than one location. These were the southern immigrant Clouded and Ocola Skippers and the White M and Juniper Hairstreaks and the Hackberry Emperor. The last three are usually confined to unique areas that harbor high concentrations of their respective and specialized larval host plants.

The unfolding of southern butterflies in Maryland in general was especially exemplified in 2012 by the recording of the Dainty Sulphur in nine Maryland counties. Amazingly, this was a species characterized only by sporadic strays in this entire part of the country in years before 2012. None had ever been reported at all before in Maryland. Howard County was not to be left out of this 2012 epic species expansion. In late October, **Jim Wilkinson** observed a Dainty Sulphur at Gateway, and **Linda Hunt** photographed one along the Patuxent Branch Trail. In all, 2012 was a phenomenal year in Howard County for butterflies with the addition of four new county records and the appearance of 12 other species long considered rare in the county. By way of comparison, the previous three county butterfly records occurred in 1994 (Long-tailed Skipper), in 1995 (American Snout), and the most recent in 1998 (Brown Elfin), which was of course 14 years ago.



*Northern Oak Hairstreak photograph taken May 23, 2012 in Ellicott City by Kathy Litzinger*

## SEED SALE A SUCCESS

BY WARD EBERT

Sales declined again this year as seed prices remained high. However, we netted about \$500 which will be designated for a habitat preservation project to be selected by the club's Board of Directors. Proceeds from last year's sale will be combined with this amount due to cancellation of the project we had selected last fall.

Thanks to all who bought seed, contributed money, and supported this sale. Thanks particularly are due to **Michael O'Sullivan** who took the orders. It was again a great pleasure to work with **Kevin Cassidy** and the staff of The Wildlife Authority.

We are exploring ways to improve the next sale, including the possibility of having multiple pick-up days. Your ideas are welcome.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS

Board meetings are held the fourth Thursday of the month at 7:30 p.m., unless otherwise noted, at the home of the board member listed. If directions are required, please call the hosting board member.

Thursday, January 24, 2013

Ward Ebert  
7366 Hallmark Rd  
Clarksville, MD 21029  
301-490-5807

Thursday, February 28, 2013

Jo Solem  
10617 Graeloch Rd  
Laurel, MD 20723  
301-725-5037

#### Test Your Knowledge Answer:

Dark-eyed Junco

## GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

BY AMANDA WITT

Will you miss the Midwinter Count or do you just need an excuse to do more birding? If so, the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is for you. The GBBC is sponsored by the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and will be held February 15-18, 2013. This is the first year that the count has been integrated with eBird. Observers count the highest number of each species they see during at least 15 minutes on one or more of the count days. Observers then enter their tallies on the GBBC website, [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org) or on eBird. Because of the inclusion of eBird, the 2013 GBBC is available to birders worldwide.

This count continues to be a huge success. In 2012, there were 104,000 checklists submitted across the United States and Canada and 623 species were represented. During last year's count, Columbia and Elkridge watchers each submitted 83 checklists. Columbia watchers listed 62 species and Ellicott City watchers reported 55 species. You can explore the results of prior years by visiting [www.birdsource.org/gbbc/](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/).

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### REMINDER

Please don't arrive at the Robinson Nature Center for meetings any earlier than 7:15 p.m. Thank you.

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### HELP WANTED

**Reporter for Chapter Chatter Column** – Requires submitting chapter news to The Maryland Yellowthroat. It's an easy job as there are only five submissions per year. The column practically writes itself. If interested, contact Kate Tufts at [ktufts@verizon.net](mailto:ktufts@verizon.net).

**Goldfinch Editor** – Requires good writing skills, basic knowledge of *Microsoft Word and Excel*, and email access. The newsletter is currently produced five times a year in *Microsoft Publisher*, and template files will be provided or graphic files that can be imported into another publishing program. If you are interested in the job, we will work closely with you to get out your first issue at the end of August. If interested, contact Amanda Witt at [amanda.witt@yahoo.com](mailto:amanda.witt@yahoo.com).



## HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB

*Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society*

10970 Millbank Row  
Columbia, MD 21044

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## ANNUAL POTLUCK

BY KATHIE LILLIE

The annual potluck dinner will again be held at the Robinson Nature Center, Columbia, MD on Saturday, March 23, 2013. The doors open at 6:00 p.m. for room set-up and dinner starts at 7:00 p.m. There is no entrance fee to attend the potluck. All club members and their guests are invited to share in the fun, the food and the program. The club furnishes beverages and utensils. Those attending bring a main dish, hors d'oeuvres, a salad, a vegetable, or a dessert. It is suggested that you include a list of ingredients along with your dish, as some members have food allergies. Be sure to mark your dishes and any accompanying serving implements with your name so we can return them to you.

Everyone is encouraged to participate in the after-dinner "slide show," so bring your nature photos. **However, please note that once again we ask each person to limit their slides to no more than 15 slides each.** Presentation time is limited, so please respect this request! You can bring digital photos (or a PowerPoint presentation) on a CD or USB thumb drive and the club will provide a laptop with a projector to display your photographs. For more information, contact **June Tveekrem** at 410-715-3979 or [june@southernspreadwing.com](mailto:june@southernspreadwing.com).

Please let us know in advance that you will be attending so we can arrange for sufficient beverages, etc. You may sign up at either the February or March club meetings, or contact **Kathie Lillie** by Friday, March 22 at 301-807-3785 or [klilie3@verizon.net](mailto:klilie3@verizon.net). Please specify the number of attendees and what food you are bringing. Let Kathie know if you would like to come early to help set up (6:00-6:30 p.m.), help clean up afterwards (9:00-10:00 p.m.), or help in any other way. If you are a new member, or if you have not attended our dinner before, we strongly encourage you to come and get to know others who share your passion for birds and birding. There will be many delicious dishes and great slide presentations. So mark your calendars and come join the fun!

*Directions: The Robinson Nature Center is located at 6692 Cedar Lane, Columbia, MD 21044 (410-313-0400). From MD Route 32, take exit 17 - Cedar Lane. Go north on Cedar Lane. The entrance will be on your left. There is ample parking.*