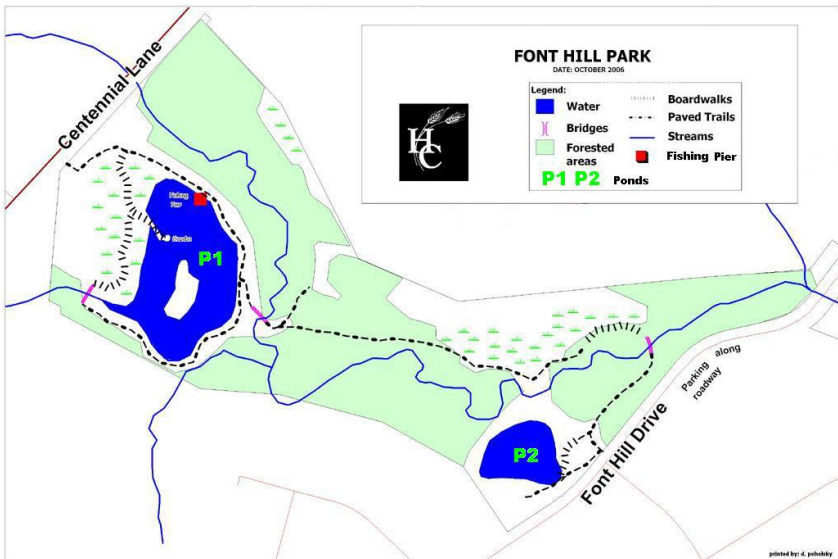
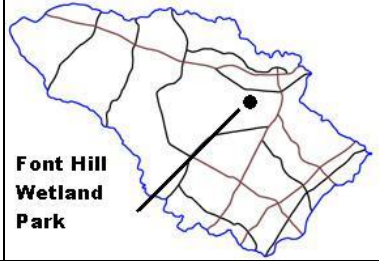


Howard County Bird Club

A Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS)

Font Hill Wetland Park Site Guide



Size: 25 acres including a 1.3 acre pond and a second 0.6 acre pond. **GPS:** N39 21 01.5 W76 54 51.8

Habitat: The diverse wetland habitats in this park include two ponds, a stream, a marsh, shrubby wetlands, and deciduous floodplain forest. In addition, there are mown areas, boardwalks, and a few ornamental conifers. Water levels fluctuate with seasonal precipitation. A sewer line right-of-way runs through a portion of the park so periodic clearing takes place along the line.

Layout: The park has two entry points: Centennial Lane and Font Hill Drive, with information boards near each entrance. Parking along Font Hill Drive is the safer location. (If you choose to park along Centennial Lane, you must parallel

park along the street. **Do not park** in the small paved driveway that is marked "Authorized Vehicles Only" and **do not park** in the lot of the adjoining Jehovah's Witness Kingdom Hall.) The two ponds are separated by a wooded area and what was once a cattail marsh. A paved path and boardwalks allow access to much of the park. There are mown areas to explore along the north edge, adjacent to mostly fenced private property (complete with barking dogs).

Best Time to Visit: Winter is the most quiet time; the other three seasons provide multiple possibilities for the nature observer. Early morning and evening are the best times to observe birds, frogs, and mammals. Saturday and Sunday early mornings are especially pleasant because there is little traffic and a minimum of human-generated sound. Mid-morning to late afternoon in summer is the peak period for dragonfly and butterfly activity.

Birding: From Font Hill Drive, first check Pond 2. Walking around much of the perimeter during migration can be useful. American Bittern and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher have both been found here. At the information board near the bridge, follow the paved path across the stream. When standing on the bridge, check the vegetation and water in both directions. Be sure to scan the mature conifers on the north side of the bridge. These trees and a few along Centennial Lane have occasionally played host to Red-breasted Nuthatch, Pine Siskin, Purple Finch, and even a rare White-winged Crossbill. Follow the boardwalk west. The large marsh on the north has produced Virginia Rail, Marsh Wren, Swamp Sparrow, and Lincoln's Sparrow. In spring and early summer, you may be treated to a passing Red-shouldered Hawk carrying a snake to feed its young. South of the boardwalk lies a stream. The adjacent paved path continues through a small wooded area that has never been particularly productive. After emerging from the woods, check the view from the bridge. A Prothonotary Warbler has been the prize on at least two May mornings. The path then circles Pond 1. Bubblers keep portions of the pond open

most of the year. Mallards and Canada Geese are resident and serve as decoys to attract occasional migratory or wintering waterfowl. American Wigeon, American Black Duck, Northern Shoveler, Lesser Scaup, and Ring-necked Duck are among the waterfowl that have appeared here. Great Egret, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, and Common Moorhen (on the island) are among the special birds noted at this location. The shallow edges sometimes attract shorebirds, but never in large numbers. Greater Yellowlegs and Pectoral Sandpiper are among the less common species spotted. Be sure to take advantage of the short boardwalk leading over the water to the gazebo. This is a good place to turn around and survey the shoreline for any birds skulking in the edge vegetation. Trees and understory should be checked for passerines. Watch the sky at every opportunity; in addition to migrating and resident hawks, a Common Raven has flown over the park.

Highlights: A variety of wetland habitats makes this park a worthwhile stop in any season. It is a destination spot for anyone interested in dragonflies and damselflies. Its list of almost five dozen species continues to be either the longest or second longest of any Howard County location, as it vies with the larger Centennial Park for the top spot.

Handicapped Access: The paved path and boardwalks allow access to a majority of the park. Grades are gentle. The entrance along Font Hill Drive is reasonable for wheelchair access—there is room to unload and the paved entrance path extends out to the road without a curb. Several benches with good views provide opportunities for "armchair birding."

This material is a digest taken from the revised version of *Birding Howard County, Maryland* by Joanne K. Solem. For complete species lists, photographs, and additional information, go to [Font Hill Wetland Park](#). More than 40 sites are available at the web site howardbirds.org under the tab **Birding Howard County**.

Font Hill Wetland Park Bird List

Snow Goose	American Kestrel	Connecticut Warbler
Canada Goose	Peregrine Falcon	Kentucky Warbler
Wood Duck	Eastern Wood-Pewee	Common Yellowthroat
American Wigeon	Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	American Redstart
American Black Duck	Acadian Flycatcher	Cape May Warbler
Mallard	Least Flycatcher	Cerulean Warbler
Ring-necked Duck	Eastern Phoebe	Northern Parula
Northern Shoveler	Great Crested Flycatcher	Magnolia Warbler
Lesser Scaup	Eastern Kingbird	Bay-breasted Warbler*
Hooded Merganser	White-eyed Vireo	Blackburnian Warbler
Common Loon	Yellow-throated Vireo	Yellow Warbler
Pied-billed Grebe	Blue-headed Vireo	Chestnut-sided Warbler
Double-crested Cormorant	Red-eyed Vireo	Blackpoll Warbler*
American Bittern	Blue Jay	Black-throated Blue Warbler
Great Blue Heron	American Crow	Palm Warbler*
Great Egret	Fish Crow	Pine Warbler*
Green Heron	Common Raven	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	Purple Martin	Yellow-throated Warbler
Black Vulture	Tree Swallow	Prairie Warbler
Turkey Vulture	N. Rough-winged Swallow	Black-throated Green Warbler
Bald Eagle	Barn Swallow	Canada Warbler
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Carolina Chickadee	Wilson's Warbler
Cooper's Hawk	Tufted Titmouse	Eastern Towhee
Red-shouldered Hawk	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Chipping Sparrow
Broad-winged Hawk	White-breasted Nuthatch	Field Sparrow
Red-tailed Hawk	Brown Creeper	Savannah Sparrow
Virginia Rail	House Wren	Fox Sparrow
Common Gallinule	Winter Wren	Song Sparrow
American Coot	Marsh Wren	Lincoln's Sparrow
Killdeer	Carolina Wren	Swamp Sparrow
Spotted Sandpiper	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	White-throated Sparrow
Solitary Sandpiper	Golden-crowned Kinglet	Dark-eyed Junco
Greater Yellowlegs	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Scarlet Tanager
Pectoral Sandpiper	Eastern Bluebird	Northern Cardinal
Wilson's Snipe	Swainson's Thrush	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Ring-billed Gull	Hermit Thrush	Indigo Bunting
Herring Gull	Wood Thrush	Red-winged Blackbird
Caspian Tern	American Robin	Rusty Blackbird
Rock Pigeon	Gray Catbird	Common Grackle
Mourning Dove	Northern Mockingbird	Brown-headed Cowbird
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Brown Thrasher	Orchard Oriole
Great Horned Owl	European Starling	Baltimore Oriole
Chimney Swift	Cedar Waxwing	Purple Finch
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	Ovenbird	House Finch
Belted Kingfisher	Louisiana Waterthrush	White-winged Crossbill
Red-bellied Woodpecker	Blue-winged Warbler	Pine Siskin
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Black-and-white Warbler	American Goldfinch
Downy Woodpecker	Prothonotary Warbler	House Sparrow
Hairy Woodpecker	Tennessee Warbler	
Northern Flicker	Orange-crowned Warbler	
Pileated Woodpecker	Nashville Warbler	