

that are habituated to people. In 2007, a juvenile Cattle Egret created a stir by hanging around with the flock of Mallards on the dock. In the short stretch between the cove and the dam, the lakeside vegetation holds dozens of House Sparrows. Check them carefully during the winter months. Once a Dickcissel was spotted among the flock. Search the water behind the dam for various gulls and ducks. Rarely, an American Bittern has stalked the shoreline near the dam, while one year a Snow Bunting entertained birders for three November days in the short grass on the dam. Gadwall, Ring-necked Duck, Greater and Lesser scaup, and Redhead have been spotted in the pond below the dam.

At the northwest corner of the lake, the path divides. If desired, continue straight through the pedestrian tunnel under Broken Land Parkway to connect with the Patuxent Branch Trail. Otherwise, to return to the Broken Land parking lot, follow the path left (south) across the bridge. Pause at the bridge to search for Eastern Phoebes and Winter Wrens depending on the season.

Highlights: The lake and Forebay Pond have interesting bird potential much of the year. This lake has also produced several state-rare dragonflies and unusual butterflies at the east end.

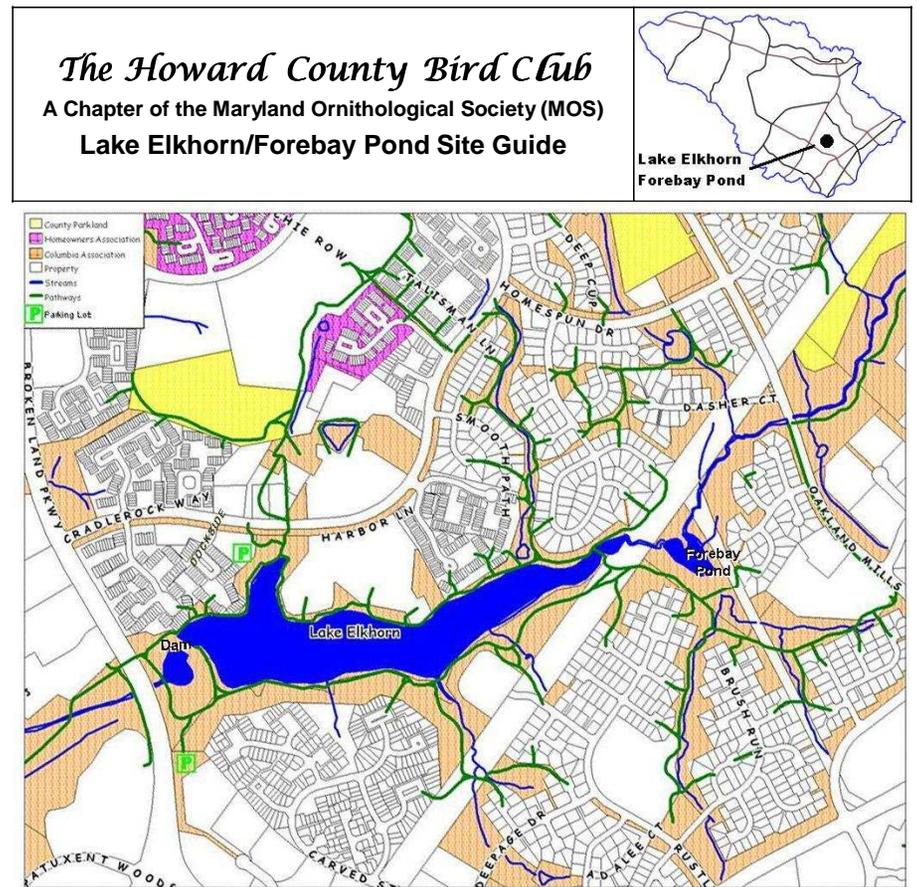
Handicapped Access: The loop trail is paved with mostly gentle grades; the steepest portion is at the northwest end from the dam to the bridge. Although a short dirt path provides the only good view of Forebay Pond, the paved path offers glimpses through trees when leaves have dropped. All the wooden bridges can be slippery when wet.

Seasonal Bird List: A complete seasonal bird list is on the HCBC's web page. There are also butterfly, dragonfly, mammal, amphibian and reptile lists. The URL is http://www.howardbirds.org/birdinghowardcountyLakeElkhorn/lake_elkhorn_species_lists.htm For photographs, directions, and additional information, check the following website: <http://www.howardbirds.org>. Click on *Birding Howard County, Maryland*, Site Guides, Lake Elkhorn.

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This material is a digest taken from the revised version of *Birding Howard County, Maryland* by Joanne K. Solem. More than 40 sites are available at the above website.

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Size: 37-acre lake with a 23-acre park surrounding the lake.

Habitat: Some mature deciduous woods, scrub, undergrowth, mown open space, and yards adjacent to the lake and Forebay Pond; the lake contains both emergent and submergent vegetation.

Best Time to Visit: Spring and fall migration (until freeze-up), as well as Dockside Lane cove in winter for ducks and gulls. During migration, early morning maximizes bird activity and minimizes people and noise; for gulls, terns, and hawks late morning or afternoon is best; in summer, night-herons are most often found at dawn or dusk. Best views of the sky and the lake are from the north side; however, on sunny days you will be facing the sun much of the day.

Coverage Time: Main loop: one to two hours, longer if birding intersecting paths.

Trails/Paths: A 2.0 mile paved path encircles the lake; a paved path east under the transmission lines extends to Oakland Mills Road. Paths intersecting with the loop are marked with street names (which may be worn off). Peace Chimes Court, on the south side, is one of the most productive; the uphill Brush Run path at the southeast corner goes past Forebay Pond.

Notable Birds: Greater Scaup, Surf Scoter, Black Scoter, Long-tailed Duck, American Bittern, Least Bittern, Snowy Egret, Red-necked Grebe, Little Blue Heron, Cattle Egret, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Peregrine Falcon, Virginia Rail, Common Moorhen, American Avocet, Black Tern, Common Tern, Forster's Tern, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Alder Flycatcher, Philadelphia Vireo, Marsh Wren, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Snow Bunting, Golden-winged Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Connecticut Warbler, Mourning Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Clay-colored Sparrow, Summer Tanager, Dickcissel, Pine Siskin.

Amenities: No facilities. Below the dam, there is a small picnic pavilion and a scattering of picnic tables. A few benches are positioned along the loop trail.

Operation and Hours: Columbia Association property; 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Special Attractions: A 16-station Fitness Circuit Trail is laid out along the south side of the lake. Trees with labels on the north side constitute an arboretum.

Habitat: The lake is 15 feet at its deepest graduating to shallow water or even mudflats at the east end above the bridge. There can be extensive amounts of emergent and submergent vegetation depending on the season. Groups of mature trees are interspersed with some shrubby vegetation and mown grass. A few streams enter the lake. East of the lake under the powerlines, there is scrubby second-growth, wet meadow, and open water varying with precipitation and beaver activity. Forebay Pond may have mudflats for shorebirds, although that is relatively unpredictable from year to year. Beaver activity and planned dredging may temporarily alter habitat.

Layout: The lake is oriented roughly east to west with a dam at the west end. There are dwellings on the north and south side—some close to the path. Two major parking lots are at the west end: one is adjacent to Broken Land Parkway, the other is off Dockside Lane. A paved loop trail around the perimeter of the lake offers access to all habitats either directly or through path extensions. By continuing east, it is possible to walk to the Elkhorn Garden Plots after crossing to the east side of Oakland Mills Road. At the west end below the dam, the path connects to the Patuxent Branch Trail which continues to Savage.

Birding: From the Broken Land Parkway lot, follow the south shore scanning the open water and the sky at any opportunity. Check brushy areas along the shore and any location where a bridge crosses a stream. This wooded side of the lake is usually the best for passerines, especially during migration. Thirty-six species of warblers have been recorded at this lake, many of them in this section which has good filtered morning light. Most of the paved paths intersecting the main loop have stenciled street names—a highly useful idea when they are visible. The path toward Peace Chimes Court heads south along a stream and is a worthwhile side trip as far as the powerlines. Frequently, a Red-shouldered Hawk nests along the stream. Winter Wrens should be looked for in the colder months. During spring and fall, Palm Warblers in the shrubby growth along the lakeshore and Yellow-rumped Warblers in the trees and shrubs may sometimes appear in considerable numbers.

Forebay Pond: This pond is located at the southeast end of Lake Elkhorn and is reached by following the Brush Run path south from the bridge at the east end of the lake. The path goes uphill into a wooded area and shortly the pond is visible on the left. Look for a dirt path which leads to the north end of the pond. Forebay is mostly ringed by willows and scrubby vegetation. The water level fluctuates depending on the amount of beaver activity and rainfall. It is sited above the main lake and a wet meadow that extends east to Oakland Mills Road. Forebay receives much less pedestrian traffic than the main lake so there are times when birds retreat to this location. In addition to ubiquitous Mallards and Canada Geese, this pond has attracted an interesting array of birds. Wood Ducks and Hooded Mergansers are regular, but choice species like Blue-winged Teal and Northern Shoveler have also made an appearance. Both species of night-herons and various egrets and herons should be looked for during the warmer months, especially July and August. One early spring day an American Bittern wandered the lawns east of the pond. If a drop in water level coincides with shorebird migration, the muddy edges may attract Solitary Spotted, and Least sandpipers and occasional yellowlegs or Semipalmated Plovers. Swallow are present in the warmer months. More than one Prothonotary Warbler has been spotted along the shrubby edge. Worm-eating, Connecticut, and Wilson's warblers has been seen here. Beavers and a variety of frogs, snakes, and turtles may be present. Rusty Blackbirds are reported a few times a year farther south along the Brush Run path.

Return to the main loop trail where a bridge with benches crosses the narrow east end of the lake. Scan carefully in both directions. East of the bridge there is extensive emergent vegetation in the shallow water during the warmer months. Night-Herons have been seen here and once a Common Moorhen spent a couple of days. Barn Swallows nest under the bridge. Looking west from the bridge, check the water and the shoreline. Little Blue Heron, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, and American Avocet have all been spotted in the vicinity. Barred Owls are regular nesters at the east end of the lake. Near the north end of the bridge there are several houses with feeders worth checking. From the bridge, turn right (east) along the transmission line to view the wet meadow. Look and listen for Willow Flycatchers. After exploring this area, reverse direction and walk west toward the dam. This side of the lake is more open than the south side with a good view of the sky, birds on the water, or those flying low over the lake. Facing the sun can be a major disadvantage however. Ring-necked Duck, Canvasback, Lesser Scaup, Pied-billed Grebe, Horned Grebe, and Double-crested Cormorant are annual.

Almost any duck, merganser, or grebe could appear as records for Greater Scaup, Surf Scoter, Black Scoter, and Red-necked Grebe attest. During appropriate seasons, check the far edge of the lake for egrets and herons as well as resting ducks. A cove (with pilings, benches, picnic tables, a tot lot, and a boat launch) is adjacent to the parking area off Dockside Lane so is a magnet for people. Bubbler (marked by plastic decoys) keep this area ice-free in winter and help to oxygenate the water in summer. Often an American Coot will be found among the ducks, geese, and gulls