

is low, scrubby vegetation along the south side of the sound barrier along MD 100 that can be attractive in fall both for sparrows and for late butterflies.

While most of the birds on the park list have been seen in the wooded or wetland areas, the more developed portions of Meadowbrook Park should also be checked. Although the tot lot is used year-round in favorable weather and the sports fields are popular spring, summer, and fall, there is a minimum overlap with birding activities. Willow Flycatchers have nested near the pond (P 6) directly behind the tot lot, as well as in the large cattail marsh in the west section. Eastern Bluebirds, various sparrows, and House Finches are present everywhere. When the ballfields are not in use, look for an assortment of blackbirds, sparrows, finches, and even an occasional migrant Palm Warbler on the turf or in the fences surrounding the fields. Gulls and hawks sometimes perch on the tall parking lot lights.

Highlights: The combination of multiple ponds, extensive cattail marshes, and open sky is unusual in this county. Because of its wetland environment, Meadowbrook Park is attractive not only to birds but to dragonflies and butterflies as well. Informational signs positioned along the paved path introduce users to aspects of the park's natural history.

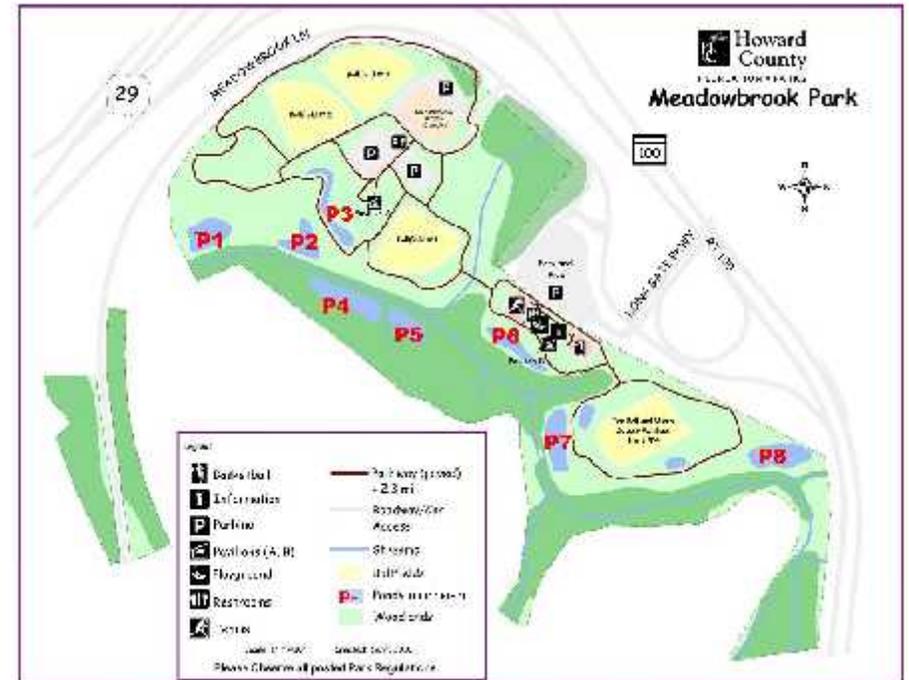
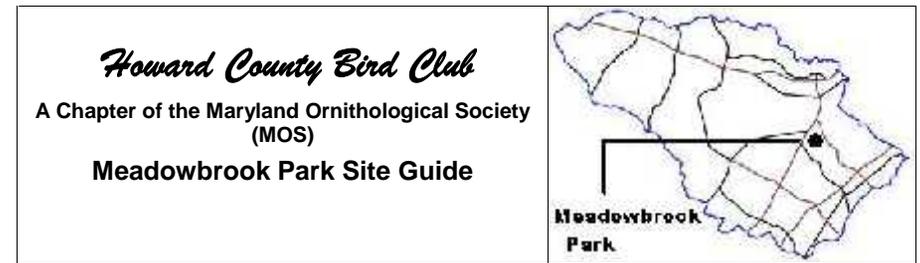
Handicapped Access: The central and eastern sections of the paved path are relatively flat. In the west there are a few steep sections, but these can be avoided.

Facilities: Restrooms are located adjacent to the tot lot in the central part of the park; portable toiletss are available near the ball fields in the west.

Compiler: Joanne Solem.

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

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This Howard County park is conveniently located between Columbia and Elliott City, adjacent to major highways. This park has excellent wetland habitats and a fine paved path system.

Size: 77 acres with 2.5 miles of paved pathways.

GPS: N39 09 38.5 W76 52 48.5
Park & Ride N39 14.863 W76 49.198

Habitat: Multiple ponds (most created when MD 100 was built) are linked by patches of cattails along a stream. There are shrubby edges as well as mature deciduous streamside trees.

Despite multiple sports fields and an athletic complex, attractive habitats exist.

Layout: The paved path has two loops (east and west). They are connected by a central area of active recreational facilities adjacent to a county park-and-ride lot. Except when teams are using ballfields, many people tend to cluster around the large tot lot, the basketball and tennis courts, or the picnic pavilion. The west loop, adjacent to Meadowbrook's parking lots, the athletic complex, and most sports fields, has the largest cattail marsh in the park as well as several productive ponds. A knoll, overlooking US 29 is used occasionally for hawkwatches.

Coverage Time: Usually an hour or less.

Best Time to Visit: Migration offers the most possibilities (especially for flyovers), although summer may attract wandering waterbirds and shorebirds, and winter can be good for sparrows. There are few people in the park in early morning; in late summer; dusk may also be good for marsh birds and flyovers. Mid-morning to mid-afternoon is best for hawkwatching spring and fall. Because most of the ponds lie south of the path, the sun can be a problem when scanning for water and marsh birds.

Notable Birds: American Bittern, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Mississippi Kite, Rough-legged Hawk, Sora, Alder Flycatcher, Marsh Wren Orange-crowned Warbler, Connecticut Warbler, Clay-colored Sparrow, Dickcissel, and Brewer's Blackbird.

Birding: This park is best known for its wetlands. Several extensive patches of cattails, a total of eight ponds (not all easily visible), and a narrow stream are all attractive features. There is a small amount of fairly mature mixed deciduous woods, mostly along the stream. Shrubby vegetation of various heights can be found near most of the ponds. This mix of habitats provides the best birding opportunities year-round. The paved path system allows a view of much of the park. A

few deer trails go into floodplain or streamside areas, but be aware that ticks are numerous. Warblers and other passerines should be looked for during spring and fall migration.

In the west area, the large cattail marsh, with its adjacent ponds (P 1, P 2) and scrub, is one of the most productive portions of the park. A variety of sparrows can usually be found here, and several times it has attracted an Orange-crowned Warbler. The high knoll, marked by several large rocks, has been used for hawkwatches. Currently, it provides an excellent view of the sky. (Trees have been planted on both north and south-facing slopes so the days of this panoramic view are numbered.) Almost all the expected hawks have been seen here in migration. The knoll is also a good lookout point for almost any migrant or wanderer flying over such as loons, herons, egrets, cormorants, gulls, and, once, a Red-headed Woodpecker. Noise from traffic on US 29 is a disadvantage of this location. Water levels in the ponds fluctuate depending on precipitation; occasionally small mudflats are present attracting a few shorebirds and marsh birds. During warmer months, Green Heron and Belted Kingfisher are resident; frequently a Great Egret visits. Little Blue Heron (P 1) and Sora (P 1, P 6) have both been tallied in this part of the park. The slope below the hilltop pavilion and edges of adjacent ballfields have attracted Vesper Sparrows more than once. (Trees and shrubs planted on the hillside eventually will reduce its value for this species.) Along the path near P-1 and P-2, Warbling Vireos nest and orioles usually can be heard. Red-shouldered Hawks frequently nest in the trees along the stream. Warblers and other passerines can be found anywhere in the park. .

On or near the bridge between the east and west areas, check the trees and scrubby vegetation adjacent to the stream, especially during migration.

The east loop is sometimes less "birdy" than the west, but White-crowned Sparrows have been found in fall and winter; Great Egrets often favor the ponds (P 7, P 8) at this end of the park; and an occasional duck (other than a Mallard) may show up. A few short deer trails lead into the narrow floodplain. There