



Howard County Bird Club

A Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society

Annual Report, June 2015 - May 2016

Highlights of the 44th year of the Club included the first verified successful fledging of Ospreys in the county in many decades; the second successful nesting of Spotted Sandpipers; and a state-rare winter Tennessee Warbler. Trumpeter Swan was accepted by the MD/DCRC, which added a new species to the county list, and another such bird was then seen on Fulton Pond in May.

Birders reported 225 species for 2015 in Howard County, one down from the 226 species in 2014.

Organization

Club membership fell from 234 to 221 adults, and from 9 to 3 younger (non-voting) members.

The eight Standing Committee Chairs were Joe Hanfman and Bonnie Ott, Field Trips; Jo Solem, Ornithological Data and Records; Kurt Schwarz, Conservation; Howard Patterson, Newsletter; Bob Solem, Webmaster; Kathie Lillie, Potluck Dinner; Jane Geuder, Programs; and Jeff Friedhoffer, Seed Sale. Chapter Director Nancy McAllister completed her first year, while Meg Harris completed her second.

At the April business meeting, the following slate of officers was elected for the 2016-17 year: John Harris, President; Mary Lou Clark, Vice-President; Chuck Stirrat, Secretary; Cindy Albright, Treasurer; and Woody Merkle, our new Chapter Director.

At the state level, Tom Strikwerda served as MOS President; MOS Scholarship Committee chair Kate Tufts, relinquished the post after fourteen years, with Anna Uricolo taking over, and Kurt Schwarz continued as MOS Conservation Chair. Karen Heffernan and John McKitterick continued as State Directors while Robin Todd became the third Director, replacing Kate Tufts who had served for many years.

Meetings and Programs

Monthly club meetings were held at the Robinson Nature Center (RNC) on the second Thursday from September through May. Jane Geuder continued to recruit great speakers. Attendance averaged 56. Members provided their photographs of birds (mostly) and other wildlife, before each meeting. John McKitterick, with assistance from Jeff Friedhoffer, ably managed the audio/video resources for our speakers. Kathie Lillie is in training as an additional back up.

Kathie Lillie ran our annual March Potluck at the RNC; with her usual expertise. Thirty members and guests, plus two RNC staff, attended and enjoyed excellent food. Three fine door prizes were awarded. Several members showed some excellent photographs.

Club Field Trips and Annual Counts

The Club led 35 birding field trips, during which 190 species were seen. The three annual bird counts (the 22nd Fall Count [124 species], the 31st Midwinter Count [87 species] and the 68th May Count [148 species – tentatively]) were held, with a potluck and tally after each. Members also participated in the National Audubon Society Triadelphia Christmas Count, compiled by David Holmes. The Club co-sponsored the 10th Annual Dragonfly Count this year with Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks. This countywide count was held on July 25 and turned up 41 species, with Sweetflag Spreadwing as new to the count.

The year 2015 was the second year for official butterfly surveys, energetically organized by Linda Hunt and Richard Smith.

Fund-raising, Conservation, and Habitat Preservation

Jeff Friedhoffer coordinated another successful bird seed sale in conjunction with Kevin Cassidy, owner of The Wildlife Authority. \$750 was contributed to the club.

The total funds donated to habitat conservation over 40 years are now just over \$72,000. In the last fiscal year HCBC donated \$300 to all Creatures Great and Small and \$254 to the YMOS (Youth Maryland Ornithological Society) to support their Bird-a-thon.

A donation of \$5,000 was made to the Howard County Conservancy for the expansion of the Gudulsky Environmental Education Center at Mount Pleasant. These funds will go toward signage in the outdoor classroom to showcase common birds of Howard County.

At the urging of Kurt Schwarz, club members wrote to the Howard County Planning Board to oppose an amendment to the County General Plan which could open 2,181 acres, which are currently under conservation zoning, to massive development. Kurt testified before the Planning Board as MOS Conservation Chair at a public hearing. The Planning Board voted 4 to 1 against recommending the amendment to the County Council in its guise as the Zoning Board. The County Council was expected to vote on the amendment in June.

On Kurt's advice, various letters were sent to local politicians in support of conservation, including the following. Letters in support of HB 211 and SB 198 Agriculture – Neonicotinoid Pesticides - Labeling, Signage, and Restrictions on Sales and Use (Pollinator Protection Act of 2016) were sent to our respective state representatives.

Letters in support of HB 1464 and SB 927, the Program Open Space Trust Fund Act of 2016, were sent to our respective county representatives.

Butterfly Activities

Dick Smith and Linda Hunt had an active year of butterfly-related activities, with Sue Muller and others also involved. This was the first year of the Lake Elkhorn Butterfly Meadow. Dick Smith led four butterfly walks over the Meadow. Two signs will shortly be erected at the Meadow, which will announce its function, contain a map and acknowledge HCBC's support.

There were a total of 19 field trips (including those noted for the Meadow) in 2015 and two counts. The trips and counts for 2016 are not reported here as the season is early at the time of writing. One butterfly identification seminar was held in 2015 and four so far have been held in 2016. Ten Club members completed season-long surveys involving bi-weekly counts at 11 sites. An additional 27 people contributed counts from their gardens and from over 12 other sites. Finally, over 30 Club members took part in season-long efforts to record two species which have been in decline: the Monarch and Eastern Tiger Swallowtail. The Club published a trifold brochure entitled "Backyard Butterflies" as a basic guide to 25 species which are still common in Howard County.

Youth Birding

An MOS youth backpack was given to Stacey Yankee of RNC for use by youngsters visiting the Center. The Club agreed to donate \$2 per species to the YMOS Birdathon.

Publications and Web Site

Howard Patterson continued his good work as editor of "The Goldfinch". Bob Solem's frequent "NewsGrams" provided late-breaking news items and needed reminders.

Bob Solem continued to manage and refine the website with his customary rigor. This information-rich site is now "mobile-friendly." After careful analysis of options, our webhost was changed from Yahoo!SmallBusiness to eHost.

Tony Van Schoor took over running the Club's FaceBook page from Amanda Witt, who created this valuable means for Club outreach.

External Relations and Outreach

As in previous years, Club members gave a lot of their time by staffing the club's table exhibit. Members staffed the display at the RNC annual Fall open house in September, and in April at HCDRP's GreenFest at Howard County Community College and at the Girl Scouts' Earth Day event at Camp Ilchester. Club members also led four walks for the Robinson Nature Center.

'SkyWatch' Proposed for HCC's Mount Pleasant Property

The Club's Board proposed that a hawk watch site be set up on the Mount Pleasant grounds of the Howard County Conservancy (HCC) for use by Club members and for HCC events. The original suggestion for the project came from Jo Solem. Mount Pleasant is already noted for being a good place to watch migrating hawks. Rather than building an observation tower, the

project would take advantage of a site with unobstructed views of the sky, especially north and south for fall and spring migrations respectively. Jo approached HCC informally to determine if they were might be willing to allow such a use of their property. HCC indicated that they might be.

The project was renamed the 'SkyWatch' since migrating non-raptorial birds and Monarch butterflies could also be observed. Mike Kerwin agreed to chair the HCBC's SkyWatch Committee and promptly identified the most suitable site at Mount Pleasant. The SkyWatch would be a 30 by 30 foot area cleared of undergrowth, covered with wood chips and bounded by lengths of lumber. Signs would instruct visitors as to the purpose of the SkyWatch and provide basic instructions on hawk identification. The proposed project was looked upon favorably at the HCC Grounds Committee meeting.

The next step is for the proposed SkyWatch to be discussed at HCC's full board meeting in June, at which a decision should be reached. If approved, the plan is to have the SkyWatch operational by September 1, 2016.

Financial activity

The treasurer, Cindy Albright, with the assistance of webmaster Bob Solem, made online payments available for joining the Club, renewing membership, and making donations. In addition, all checks are now drawn electronically for MOS payments, plus printing the newsletter and program expenses for speakers.

Respectfully submitted,

Handwritten signature of Robin G. Todd and the date May 30, 2016.

Robin G. Todd
President



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Respectfully submitted,

 May 30, 2016

Robin G. Todd
President

Howard County Bird Club, Annual Report, June 2013 - May 2014

The Howard Chapter's 42nd year will long be remembered for a few excellent birds. The county's first Black Rail (5/18/13) was accepted by the MD/DCRC, and a well-photographed Little Gull, seen by numerous birders was also a new county record. Other highlights included second county records of Swallow-tailed Kite (not seen in the county since 1879), a group of four Ross's Geese, and a Rufous Hummingbird. The year 2013 ended with 238 bird species seen in the county. According to compiler Joe Hanfman, this was the third highest total in the 34 years the number has been tallied.

Organization

Club membership continued to rise and stands at 220 voting members and eight juniors. The eight Standing Committee Chairs were Joe Hanfman and Bonnie Ott, Field Trips; Jo Solem, Ornithological Data and Records; Kurt Schwarz, Conservation; Howard Patterson, Newsletter; Bob Solem, Webmaster; Kathie Lillie, Potluck Dinner; Jane Geuder, Programs; and Ward Ebert, Seed Sale. Ward completed his first year and Eva Sunell her second as Chapter Directors.

At the April business meeting, the following slate of officers was elected for the 2014-15 year: Robin Todd, President; John Harris, Vice-president; Chuck Stirrat, Secretary; Emy Holdridge, Treasurer; and Meg Harris, Chapter Director.

At the state level, Tom Strikwerda served as MOS Vice-president; Kate Tufts chaired the MOS Scholarship Committee, and Kurt Schwarz continued as MOS Conservation Chair. Kate Tufts, Karen Darcy, and John McKitterick were State Directors.

Under Bob Solem's leadership the Board voted to secure offsite backup for club files. Bob located a suitable web storage provider and secured a password protected account. He placed much of the club's digital data at that location including vital membership records, historical and financial records, all past copies of the club's newsletters *The Goldfinch*, as well as the collection of original photographs. Bob also advanced the Club's email capabilities by moving to a web-based email service provider enabling management of multiple mailing lists, such as rare bird alerts, by different authorized users.

Meetings and Programs

Monthly club meetings were held at the Robinson Nature Center (RNC) on the second Thursday from September through May with the exception of the February meeting which was cancelled due to snow closures. Jane Geuder again did a wonderful job of arranging interesting programs. Attendance averaged around 60. A different member each month shared nature-related photographs prior to the meeting using the wall monitor. Although June Tveekrem stepped down from her audio/video role, she provided training to five club members in the use of the RNC audio/video equipment and club laptop. John McKitterick secured a new laptop for the Club and took over setup for meetings, while Jeff Friedhoffer agreed to handle overall program audio/video coordination for guest speakers.

Kathie Lillie again did a fine job of running the annual March Potluck held at the RNC. Thirty-eight members attended and several door prizes were awarded. Rosa Lubitz donated an attractive book that was the subject of a silent auction. The evening ended with the sharing of members' nature photographs.

Club Field Trips and Annual Counts

The Club led 32 outings, 30 of which were bird walks; two were butterfly trips or training sessions. The Sunday morning walks around Centennial Lake in November and March continued. Several birding trips and a fungi walk were canceled due to weather conditions.

The three annual bird counts – the 20th annual Fall Count, the 29th annual Midwinter Count and the 66th annual May Count--were held with a potluck and tally after each. Members also participated in the Audubon Triadelphia Christmas Count compiled by David Holmes. Joe Byrnes stepped down as Midwinter count co-coordinator having served in that capacity since 2006. On May 11, 2013, a Big Day team consisting of Russ Ruffing, Harry Fink, and Matt Rogosky set a new one day county record of 122 species.

In addition to bird counts, the Club was a co-sponsor for the 8th Annual Dragonfly Count. Umber Shadowdragon, identified by Richard Orr and Bonnie Ott, was a new species for the county. A number of members participated in the fourth year of the MARA statewide project providing herp information locally to Sue Muller. The 2013 year was the prototype year for a butterfly survey project which Richard Smith designed. Results and highlights, including the sightings of several unusual hairstreaks were detailed in newsletter articles.

Fund-raising, Conservation, and Habitat Preservation

Ward Ebert coordinated a successful bird seed sale, again working with Kevin Cassidy, owner of *The Wildlife Authority*. \$1,480 was contributed to the club bringing the all-time total donated to habitat conservation to just under \$70,000. Proceeds from the sale were directed locally to two Middle Patuxent Environmental Area (MPEA) projects: \$600 was provided to expand a planting of Eastern Red Cedars in Clegg's Meadow and \$720 was donated to plant native shrub species in the woodcock wetland habitat. A contribution of \$200 was also made to *All Creatures Great and Small*, a local wildlife rehabilitator. This year the club helped sponsor the Youth Division of MOS's Birdathon. The Club's pledge resulted in a \$248 donation.

Jay Sheppard's continued efforts to plant White Pines for future Northern Saw-whet Owl habitat led to a meeting with Club officials and Howard County Recreation and Parks (HCDRP) personnel. A Park property was selected, but the tract was withdrawn from consideration by Park's management shortly into the implementation phase.

Youth Birding

Efforts to establish a youth program ended when a Club-sponsored RNC summer program Kate Tufts helped design failed to draw any community interest. An MOS youth backpack was given to Eileen Griffin, a Howard County teacher and MOS Teacher/Naturalist Scholarship recipient, for use with her classes.

Publications and Web Site

Ann Marie Raterman continued her contributions to the MOS *Yellowthroat* "Chapter Chatter." Having done a fine job, Howard Patterson completed his first year as editor of *The Goldfinch*. At the September meeting, former editor Amanda Witt was awarded a certificate for her outstanding work in making *The Goldfinch* an interactive digital news medium.

The webpage continued to grow as a Howard County nature resource. Jo Solem provided her annual update of species accounts and lists in *Birding Howard County, Maryland*. An interactive Google map, created by Harry Fink, showing county birding hotspots was added. The Howard County MARA status portion of the website has proven an invaluable tool in making the best use of volunteer time. The Club also agreed to allow the website to be the repository for results from the county's first BioBlitz (April 26, 2014 at West Friendship Park) sponsored by Transition Howard County, HCDRP, the Howard County Farm Heritage Museum, and the Club.

External Relations and Outreach

Two MOS Teacher/Naturalist Scholarships were awarded this year to Howard County applicants. One went to Eileen Griffin, a Howard County teacher and the other to Molly Williams, an Environmental Educator with the RNC.

Susan Polniaszek gave an Introduction to Birding talk at the Miller Library to a “good turnout”—part of a series of bird/nature-related talks she is providing. In a cooperative effort with RNC, Wes Earp and RNC staff led an owl walk for 18 people at MPEA in November. The annual bird walk, cosponsored with the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, was held at Pigtail in early May.

Lots of volunteer hours were chalked up staffing the club’s table exhibit. Club members staffed the display at the following events: 2013 RNC Insect Extravaganza in July, RNC annual fall open house in September, a “Big Sit” at the University of Maryland Central Maryland Research and Education Center’s annual open house in October, HCDRP’s GreenFest in April, the Girl Scout’s Caitlin Dunbar Nature Center’s “Big Outdoor Event” in April, and finally, RNC’s Native Plant Palooza in May 2014. Ward Ebert donated a digital picture frame to use with the exhibit. Prior to an event, Bob Solem loads it with appropriate photographs.

Kurt Schwarz ably continued his dual role as both the Club’s and MOS’ Conservation Chair. Some local issues the club took a stand against during the year included a HCDRP’s county bike route plan that proposed several routes through the MPEA and a proposed State bill to legalize the release of neutered feral cats on State-owned lands. The Club supported legislation to expand State Wildlands and objected to a proposal to move picnic grounds and beach parking into the Bayside woodland of the Assateague National Seashore.

Respectfully submitted:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "L. Wesley Earp Jr.", written in a cursive style.

L. Wesley Earp Jr.

President, Howard County Bird Club

Howard County Bird Club, Annual Report, June 2012 - May 2013

This was the 41st year of the Howard Chapter. Of particular note was a Sabine's Gull, accepted as a first for the county. Hurricane Sandy blew in the third recorded Brant. The Board adopted policies facilitating support for deer population management and spelling out the Club's rare bird procedures. The latter, prepared by Joe Hanfman and Bill Hubick, received wide acclaim for its thoroughness. By the end of 2012, the club had sighted 240 county species, the second highest year on record.

Organization

Club membership climbed to 214 and John McKitterick was elected to be a third State Director. Ward Ebert was elected as first year Chapter Director. The Board reactivated the Publicity Chair position which was filled by Allen Lewis, and created a Robinson Nature Center (RNC) Program Coordinator position held Harry Fink.

Jo Solem continued to compile county records for regional, state, and local publications. Joe Hanfman became the new compiler of the Annual List taken over from Ward Ebert who has ably handled the task for five years.

At the state level, Joe Hanfman rotated off the Maryland/DC Records Committee and Nancy Magnusson was elected to that group. Tom Strikwerda is now serving as the state MOS Vice-president. Kate Tufts has agreed to chair the MOS Scholarship Committee and Kurt Schwarz continues as chapter and state Conservation Chair.

Meetings and Programs

The Chapter held monthly club meetings on the second Thursday of September through May. Jane Geuder performed her usual excellent job of providing interesting programs. Attendance averaged around 55. This was the first full year that members provided pictures for viewing on the large screen TV during the gathering period. June Tveekrem again handled the program audio and video needs.

Jim Lubitz arranged the club's first garage sale and a number of used items changed hands. In October, Ann Marie Raterman was recognized for her excellent job and long tenure of running the book store and the last of that inventory was sold at the December meeting.

Kathie Lillie organized the annual March Potluck held at the RNC. Thirty-five members attended and a number of door prizes, many obtained by Sherry Tomlinson, made the evening more enjoyable. Many fine pictures were shared by club members, some of whom went far afield in the past year.

Field Trips and Annual Counts

Twenty-three club members led 42 outings consisting of 38 bird walks and four trips devoted to other flora and fauna. Excursions to Poplar and Smith Islands were co-sponsored with other chapters.

The club again conducted three bird counts – the 19th annual Fall Count, the 28th annual Midwinter Count and the annual May count. Many members also participated in the Triadelphia Christmas Count which David Holmes compiles.

Fund-raising, Conservation, and Habitat Preservation

The annual bird seed sale was managed by Ward Ebert and hosted and supplied by Kevin Cassidy of *The Wildlife Authority*. Bird seed sale proceeds from 2011 and 2012 were combined and \$1,500 was donated to the Friends of Cape May National Wildlife Refuge to be used for repair of beach habitat damaged by Hurricane Sandy. Club donations for habitat conservation now total \$68,000. The annual contribution of \$200 was made to *All Creatures Great and Small*, local wildlife rehabilitator.

Youth Birding

The board voted to create Youth Bird Club Coordinator and Assistant positions. It also voted to initiate efforts to establish a Howard County Youth Bird Club. The positions remain unfilled while the Club continues to gather information in support of this effort. Two MOS youth backpacks were donated to the Miller Branch, Howard County Library, to assist with in-house programs and for possible circulation.

Publications and Web Site

With Kate Tufts stepping down, Ann Marie Raterman took over creating contributions to the MOS *Yellowthroat* "Chapter Chatter". Amanda Witt completed her sixth and final year of publishing *The Goldfinch*. Howard Paterson will become the editor.

In May, Bob Solem was recognized with a Valued Service Award for his work in creating and emailing timely "Newsgrams." They increased the volume and expedited the flow of information reaching the membership.

External Relations and Outreach

The relationship with RNC continued to evolve with the Club staffing tables at the RNC Insect Extravaganza and RNC's first annual open house. In addition, members worked a table and led bird walks at the Central Maryland Research and Education Center's annual open house. Kate Tufts again directed coverage of Howard County Recreation and Park's Greenfest and the club co-sponsored a bird walk with the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission.

The Board provided written testimony on a variety of issues to a number of organizations and politicians. Of note were efforts to influence new recreation regulations by the Washington Suburban and Sanitation Commission for their watershed.

Respectfully submitted:



L. Wesley Earp Jr.
President, Howard County Bird Club

Howard County Bird Club, Annual Report, June 2011 - May 2012

The 40th year of the Howard County Bird Club will long be remembered for the arrivals of a Pink-footed Goose, a first for Maryland, and a Green Violetear, a first for the county. It also marked the change of location for our monthly meetings to Howard County's new Robinson Nature Center which opened in the fall of 2011. The Board of Directors formally adopted a club logo for the first time, largely adapted from previous artwork.

Organization

Voting membership dipped below 200 reducing our number of representatives on the state-level Board of Directors. Jeff Friedhoffer volunteered to step down from that position and we thank him for his service. Robin Todd joins the club Board of Directors as vice president this coming fall, joined by Eva Sunell as first-year chapter director. Jim Lubitz served as second-year director and his presence will be missed.

Meetings and Programs

Regular meetings were held on the second Thursday of each month September through May. Average attendance for the nine meetings was about 50 persons. The high was 73 and the low was 35. Jane Geuder again did a wonderful job arranging a wide variety of speakers for our meetings, and attendance appears to be rising despite the loss of membership.

The club bookstore, operated by Ann Marie Raterman, was again a popular feature of the meetings. Sales, however, have consistently declined over the years as internet stores bring members the advantage low-cost, rapid-response, home delivery bookselling. After considerable discussion the Board of Directors decided to suspend acquisition of books and attempt to sell off as much of the inventory as possible. Kurt Schwarz was assigned to cull a set of volumes to be donated to the Robinson Nature Center to support the new research and educational initiatives at that facility.

The advance of technology has many advantages for us as well. Display set-up has been simplified with access to a ceiling-mounted projector in our meeting room, and a video screen at the back of the room has allowed us to host member-provided slide shows during the gathering period before the formal part of the meeting begins.

In March, the club held its annual Potluck dinner which was very successful with approximately 40 participants and many interesting stories and photos. By moving the event to the Robinson Nature Center we incurred less expense and were able to reserve the savings for our conservation work.

Field Trips and Annual Counts

There were a total of 38 field trips during the year not including counts and unadvertised responses to rare bird alerts – all trip reports are posted on our website with species seen and the occasional photograph. We held day trips to Smith Island and Blackwater NWR. A "Little Big Day" was again held for those not up to the rigors of the "Big Day" itinerary. Several walks were in support of requests from the Robinson Nature Center staff and the WSSC.

The long record of chapter bird counts continued with the 18th annual Fall Count, the 27th annual Midwinter Count, and the annual May count (whose origins predate the club).

The annual compilation of seasonal ornithological records was again performed by Jo Solem. Joe Hanfman and Bonnie Ott organized the field trips and greatly assisted listers with communications

about sightings and special opportunities. 232 species were recorded in the county for the 2011 calendar year making that the fifth year in a row of 232 or more species.

The club has continued to support the Maryland Department of Natural Resources in its five-year Maryland Amphibian & Reptile Atlas (MARA) effort by hosting and maintaining web pages for Howard County. Club member Sue Muller is the county coordinator.

Fund-raising, Conservation, and Habitat Preservation

Our fund-raiser bird seed sale was held again in the early fall this year (2011) organized by Ward Ebert and Michael O'Sullivan. Unfortunately, greatly increased prices of seed discouraged many customers and only \$500 was netted from sale of seed directly. However, donations during the year added hundreds more to allow us to continue our support of wild birdlife. A donation of \$200 was made to support All Creatures Great and Small, a local wildlife rehabilitation facility in the county and a contribution of \$1000 was set aside to support bird-strike mitigation at the Cylburn Visitor Center in Baltimore. This support was in conjunction with the Lights Out Baltimore project under auspices of the Baltimore Bird Club which also committed funds. Later in the year it became apparent that this project could not be carried out successfully as originally conceived, so we have reserved the funds for distribution in the 2012-2013 year.

Once again, our very active Conservation Committee Chairman, Kurt Schwarz, wrote numerous letters supporting conservation issues all over the country to the appropriate authorities.

Youth Birding

We again held an art contest in the spring as an effort to expand the interest of youngsters in birdlife. Kate Tufts again organized the contest, engaging a professional artist, Holly Highfill, to judge the entries; each of two age categories had a first, second, and third place plus three honorable mentions. Backpacks will be presented to the winners and the winning artwork will be displayed at the Robinson Nature Center, Mount Pleasant Farm, and Glenwood Community Center over the coming months.

Publications and Web Site

The club newsletter, The Goldfinch, is published five times a year; field trips and programs are publicized on the website. Archives of all issues dating back to the first issue (December 1972) are available on line. An effort is underway to transition the Goldfinch to be delivered primarily in electronic form as a cost-saving measure with the additional benefits of added color, speed of delivery, and hyperlinks to related content.

The club website has become an important resource for information about birds, but it also hosts a great amount of information about butterflies, bees, dragonflies, fungi, reptiles, and amphibians. It has links to other birding organizations, information about county facilities, wildlife rehabilitators, and environmental organizations.

External Relations and Outreach

We again supported the local “Greenfest” which is held annually at Howard Community College in Columbia and we take the opportunity to display mounted birds, photos, and literature to attract interested citizens to learn about the club.

Many members have volunteered to help out at the new Robinson Nature Center. Over recent years the club has collected funds as memorial gifts on the passing of former members or relatives. A donation of \$300 was made to the Robinson Nature Center in memory of Adam Friedhoffer, Marjorie Mountjoy, and Donald Randle. Funds will be used to purchase plants attractive to birds as part of a garden display area.

Respectfully submitted,

Ward Ebert
President, Howard County Bird Club

Howard County Bird Club, Annual Report, June 2010 - May 2011

The 39th year of the Howard County Bird Club was notable for another high calendar-year bird species count and a successful revival of our seed sale as means of funding habitat preservation.

Organization

Voting membership stayed barely above 200. April elections added Sherry Tomlinson as a chapter director and Jeff Friedhoffer as a state director, replacing Jeff Culler and Mary Jo Betts, respectively. We thank the outgoing directors for their many contributions to our local and state-level efforts.

Meetings and Programs

Regular meetings were held on the second Thursday of each month September through May. Average attendance for the nine meetings was about 45 persons. The high was 65 and the low was 37. The club bookstore, operated by Ann Marie Raterman, was again a popular feature of the meetings, and a well-planned program of speakers was arranged by Jane Geuder.

In March, the club held its annual Potluck dinner which was very successful with approximately 40 participants and many interesting stories and photos.

Field Trips and Annual Counts

There were a total of 39 field trips during the year not including counts and unadvertised responses to rare bird alerts – all trip reports are posted on our website with species seen and the occasional photograph. We held all-day trips to Poplar Island, Smith Island, and the Delaware shore. A “Little Big Day” was held for those not up to the rigors of the “Big Day” itinerary. There was also a special trip to the Garrett Library in Baltimore to see rare books and artwork related to the history of birding.

The long record of chapter bird counts continued with the 17th annual Fall Count, the 26th annual Midwinter Count, and the annual May count (whose origins predate the club).

The annual compilation of seasonal ornithological records was again performed by Jo Solem.

The 5th annual odonate count was held in June, coordinated by June Tveekrem. The club has continued to support the Maryland Department of Natural Resources in its five-year Maryland Amphibian & Reptile Atlas (MARA) effort by hosting and maintaining web pages for Howard County. Club member Sue Muller is the county coordinator.

Fund-raising, Conservation, and Habitat Preservation

In the summer of 2010 we received a donation of books from Virginia Donovan of Ellicott City. These had mostly belonged to her deceased husband, Alex, a former member of the club. Sales of these used books raised over \$200.

Our fund-raiser bird seed sale was held again in the early fall this year (2010) under the leadership of Michael O’Sullivan. A total of \$1,700 from the seed sale, sale of donated items, and individual contributions was distributed in two parts. A donation of \$200 was made to support All Creatures Great and Small, a local wildlife rehabilitation facility in the county and a contribution of \$1500 was made to the American Bird Conservancy for a project to restore seabird nesting islands in Barataria Bay in the Gulf of Mexico that had been impacted by the Macondo well disaster in the

spring of 2010. This project was picked in part because there was a 3-to-1 offer of matching funds available.

Once again, our very active Conservation Committee Chairman, Kurt Schwarz, wrote numerous letters supporting conservation issues all over the country to the appropriate authorities.

Our successful bluebird program continues both with Mark Wallace's hundreds of boxes and some members volunteering to monitor boxes for the Department of Recreation and Parks.

Youth Birding

For the YMOS backpack program we again held two art contests, one in the summer of 2010, and in an attempt to improve participation, another in the spring of 2011 rather than the summer. Kate Tufts organized both. Participation improved greatly in 2011 with strong support from local media and teachers, with 75 entries. A professional artist, Brenda Kidera, judged the entries; each of two age categories had a first, second, and third place plus three honorable mentions. Backpacks were presented to the winners at their schools in front of peers. Much publicity resulted with mention in the local newspapers from April through June, including pictures of the winning artwork.

Publications and Web Site

The club newsletter, The Goldfinch, is published five times a year; field trips and programs are publicized on the website. Archives of all issues dating back to the first issue (December 1972) are available on line.

External Relations and Outreach

We again supported the local "Greenfest" which is held annually at Howard Community College in Columbia and we take the opportunity to display mounted birds, photos, and literature to attract interested citizens to learn about the club. We also support Earth Day in April by leading a bird walk at Mt. Pleasant that is coordinated by organizers at the Howard County Conservancy.

Several members, including Joe Hanfman, Wes Earp, and Mike Kerwin volunteered to speak at local schools and community events.

We again provided leadership for a bird walk on Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission property at their request.

Respectfully submitted,

Ward Ebert
President, Howard County Bird Club

Howard County Bird Club, Annual Report, June 2009 - May 2010

The 38th year of the Howard County Bird Club was notable for a record high calendar-year bird species count, a cancelled Midwinter Count due to February snows, and an attempt to revive our seed sale as means of funding habitat preservation.

Organization

Voting membership dropped to 206, the lowest in decades. In November, President Tom Miller stepped down from his position for personal reasons and was replaced by Vice-president Ward Ebert.

Meetings and Programs

Regular meetings were held on the second Thursday of each month except for February when we were forced to cancel because of the closure of the Howard County Recreation and Parks headquarters building where we normally meet. Average attendance for the seven meetings through April was 55 persons. The high was 70 and the low was 43.

In March, the club held its annual Potluck dinner which was very successful with approximately 35 participants and many stunning photos.

Field Trips and Annual Counts

There were a total of 30 field trips during the year not including counts and unadvertised responses to rare bird alerts – all trip reports are posted on our website with species seen and the occasional photograph. We held all-day trips to Blackwater NWR and the Delaware shore. Two “Big Days” were held, one in October (sparrows) and one in May. There was also a special bird-photography outing.

The long record of chapter bird counts continued with the 16th annual Fall Count and the annual May count (whose origins predate the club), however what would have been the 25th annual Midwinter Count was cancelled by consensus that residual snow would make for safety issues and inability to access many areas. Data would not have been comparable to that of other midwinter counts and would be relatively meaningless.

The annual compilation of seasonal ornithological records was again performed by Jo Solem. The compilation of the annual species count for the county was resumed and historical records were computerized by Ward Ebert. A web page added last year shows several decades of records, and of note is the total of 241 species reported for calendar 2009 far surpassed the previous record of 236 species.

The 4th annual odonate count was held in July, coordinated by June Tveekrem. The club has actively supported the Maryland Department of Natural Resources as it begins a five-year Maryland Amphibian & Reptile Atlas (MARA) effort by hosting and maintaining web pages for Howard County. Club member Sue Muller is the county coordinator.

Fund-raising, Conservation, and Habitat Preservation

Last year's contribution of \$1,800 to the American Bird Conservancy's Thick-Billed Parrot Habitat Preservation Effort appears to have been well spent based on ABC published reports of successful breeding in provided nest boxes.

Our fund-raiser bird seed sale was held in the early fall this year (2009) after a one-year hiatus. A total of \$1,420 from the seed sale, bookstore profits, and individual contributions was distributed to three worthy causes. A donation of \$420 was made to support American Woodcock habitat restoration in the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area in response to a proposal from the Howard County Recreation and Parks managers of the MPEA; \$200 was given to support All Creatures Great and Small, a local wildlife rehabilitation facility in the county; lastly, a contribution of \$800 was made to the American Bird Conservancy for Cerulean Warbler habitat preservation.

Once again, our very active Conservation Committee Chairman, Kurt Schwarz, wrote numerous letters supporting conservation issues all over the country to the appropriate authorities.

Youth Birding

For the YMOS backpack program we again held an essay contest (My favorite Bird Watching Experience). Participation was less than hoped, but we had a winner honored at our March club meeting. We decided to strike a slightly different course in hopes of improved response by replacing the essay contest with an art contest. Advertising of the prizes of backpacks for two winners has begun, with the project set to conclude in October. By moving the contest to the summer we hope to have less conflict with school activities.

Publications and Web Site

Our web site continues to be changed and improved by our webmaster, Bob Solem. The previously published book, Birding Howard County, Maryland, by Joanne K. Solem, is now established on the website and is continually updated. Our website has drawn many kudos from across the state for content and presentation. Recent additions include many excellent photographs of birds taken by club members in Howard County. The site, as previously noted, also hosts current data on the DNR amphibian and reptile atlas.

The club newsletter, The Goldfinch, is published five times a year; field trips and programs are publicized on the website. Archives of all issues dating back to the first issue (December 1972) are available on line.

External Relations and Outreach

Last year we were approached by the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) folks about starting periodic (annual) bird walks for the public. We advised on dates, location, and provided leaders for the walks in the springs of 2009 and 2010. WSSC allows MOS access for our seasonal counts and we place them on distribution for the Goldfinch in which results are reported.

We have been actively supporting the Maryland DNR atlasing efforts as noted above under Field Trips and Counts.

The American Bird Conservancy has been a beneficiary of our recent monetary donations, which support both local and continental projects.

Sue Muller, a club member and Howard County Recreation and Parks employee, was the recipient of a MOS Eleanor Robbins scholarship to attend the Joy of Birding workshop on Hog Island, Maine, this June.

We support local wildlife rehabilitators, All Creatures Great and Small, in several ways: first, our website directs appropriate traffic to their website; second, we provide modest financial support from our charitable contributions each year; third, we provided a letter of recommendation in support of their application for more significant funding from a charitable trust.

Occasionally, we receive requests for talks at local schools. When these are within the county we try to find folks to match the needs. At least two of our members have volunteered this year for talks to children about hawks, backyard birds, dragonflies, and butterflies.

Lastly, we have supported two other county activities. A local "Greenfest" is held annually at Howard Community College in Columbia and we take the opportunity to display mounted birds, photos, and literature to attract interested citizens to learn about the club. We also support Earth Day in April by leading a bird walk at Mt. Pleasant that is coordinated by organizers at the Howard County Conservancy.

Respectfully submitted,

Ward Ebert
President, Howard County Bird Club