Chip Notes

Spring 2024, No. 427

Scarlet Tanager Image: Bill Hubick



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Time to Join the fun with BBC Members! Summer Picnic, Saturday, June 1 Noon - 4 PM at Eagle Mill Farms Parkton, Maryland

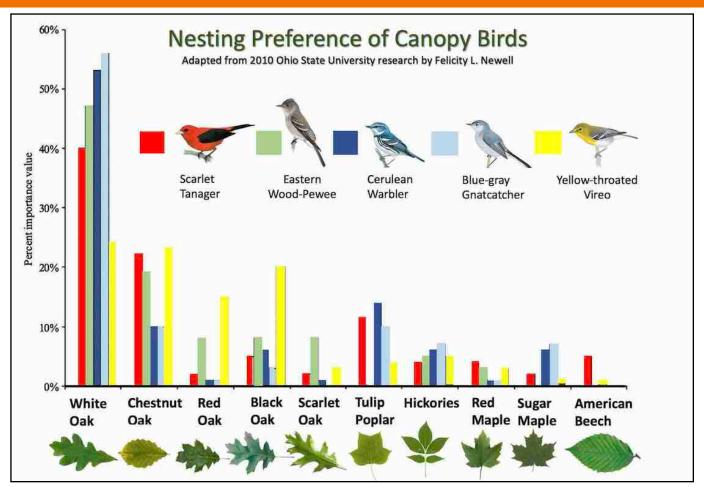
Good News!!! Baltimore County set to hire two Natural Resource Managers to restore Oregon Ridge habitat to benefit birds, especially Scarlet Tanagers.

By Marty Brazeau

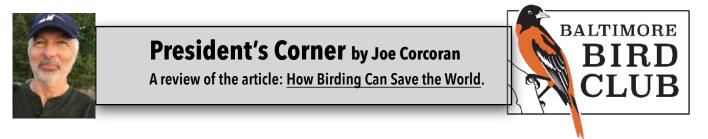
During the summer of 2013, while birding at Oregon Ridge Park, I remember hearing the roar of logging machines and had to avoid being flattened by the felling of white, red, and chestnut oaks trees. A Baltimore County sanctioned forest management plan recommended thinning the forest in hilltop areas to encourage oak regeneration. The plan backfired because deer herds enjoy eating acorns...no acorns, no oaks will sprout in now sunny logged areas where thousands of tulip tree saplings now dominate. Oaks in deer proof tubes have yet to be planted. The ground is now flush with wineberry, barberry, and multiflora rose bushes that deer do not chomp due to thorns.

Update: I went to an April 14 Oregon Ridge Nature Center Speaker series highlighting what Catoctin Mountain Park has done to control deer populations, remove invasives, and plant trees. During the lecture, Bob Smith, Baltimore County Recreation and Parks's Director, announced that the approved parks budget now includes hiring two resource management specialists to manage the parks throughout the county, similar to what is being done up in the Catoctin Mountains. Watch my video describing what needs to be done to restore habitat: https://youtu.be/j4gSIIJGbI0





Illustrations added by Marty Brazeau to a chart found in the study.



OK, I have a deadline tonight to finish my President's Corner. I've already been granted one extension, and I really don't want to feel the wrath of our new editor, JoAnn Bochmann, as she has been doing a great job as editor so far, and we'd like to keep it that way. Anyway, I'm working on it now, but I'm trying a new method of writing this time. I'm dictating the article to iMessage on my iPhone, then copying and pasting to Gmail, then copying from Gmail on my computer to a Word document, then editing there. It's not the most efficient way, I'm sure, but it's still a lot faster than my typing!

So I'm going to summarize, review and comment on a blog called "How Birding Can Save the World" posted on the Cottonwood Post site by Steve Hampton. The article covers how great Birding is, and gives the reasons, but also explains how certain sectors of the population are under- represented and why, and how that needs to change. (Continued next page)

As far as how great Birding is, he points out something that we all probably know. Everyone likes birds, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, race, social economic status, political orientation, urban or rural background. Everyone. Plus, birding is a pathway to greater environmental knowledge and belief in science. Birders learn about migration seasons, weather, ecology, habitats, and threats to habitats. Further, Birders tend to support environmental causes and fight against climate change, and are in general environmentalists.

The big point of the blog is that there are fewer birders than there should be, in good part due to underrepresentation in the birding community of certain demographics. These include non-white racial groups, younger people, and less educated people. And he goes on in his article to say that a paper written about a survey of 30,000 eBird users in 2016 showed that 94% were white, 1% were black, 1% were Asian, 2% Hispanic and 2% Native American, compared to our US adult population, also from 2016, of 69% white 11% black, etc. (See Fig.1) And this underrepresentation has been correlated with other outdoor activities, such as membership in conservation organizations, especially in leadership. Note that a similar survey taken today (2024) from eBird would likely show more diversity, but not anywhere near the amount the blogger thinks it should be. This doesn't take into account the demographic makeup of those that don't use eBird.

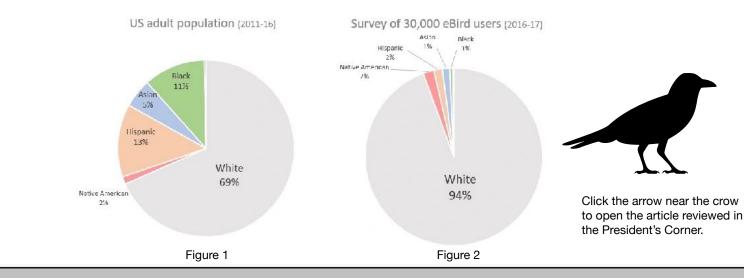
Other major points from the article are:

- There are more women than men birders, 56% to 44%, but not in the leadership positions
- Birders have a higher education level than the general population, 48% had advanced degrees in the survey! (see Fig.2)
- Hunters tend to be less educated than birders, but can be good allies in conservation causes

Many other good points were made in the blog. The link to it is below, and I encourage you to read it in detail. At the end the author does commit to further blogs with ideas to increase diversity. And he gives a few in this blog. Some that I believe that the Baltimore Bird Club can, and will, do right now, are:

- Offer a range of birding opportunities, targeting different demographics (e.g. youth, underrepresented ethno-racial groups)
- Promote birding locally within 1 to 5 miles of where people live

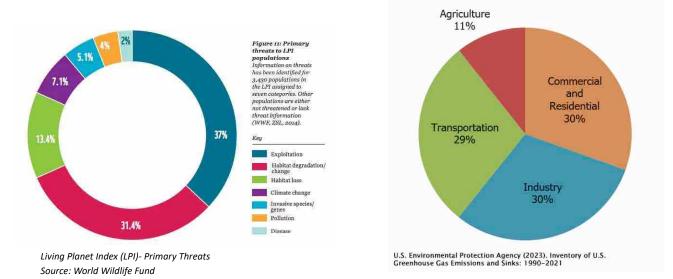
So to this end, starting this spring, in addition to our other partnerships, we will be partnering with Baltimore City's Enoch Pratt Free Library for walks and events at the local branches, with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Soldier's Delight Natural Environmental Area (NEA), Patapsco Valley State Park, and Morgan Run NEA, and with Baltimore County's NeighborSpace, for bird walks and events.



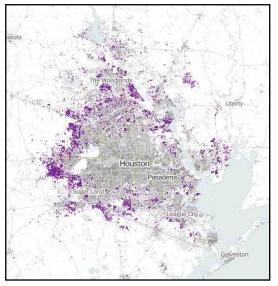
Endangered by Sprawl: Urban Expansion and the threat to Wildlife

by Neville Fernandes

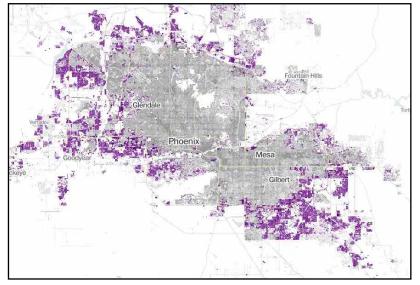
What is the biggest challenge to wildlife today? Many might think it is climate change. While climate change is consequential, the right answer is habitat change/destruction that has occurred over several centuries due to resource exploitation and conversion of land to agriculture, pasture use, urban, and industrial use. Without habitat, there is no wildlife and the result has been a precipitous drop in wildlife numbers with several species going extinct. Without a stable climate, thanks to climate change, whatever habitat is left will not be able to support the wildlife that has evolved with it over millennia. Hence both issues need to be addressed if we are to preserve biodiversity.



So how is land used today in the U.S.? Agricultural production is a major use of land accounting for roughly 52% of the U.S. land base. Almost all of this was habitat at one point in time. This sector accounts for 10% of total greenhouse gas emissions. Urban and industrial areas along with associated transportation corridors, while occupying much less land, are responsible for the remaining 90% emissions. However, while agricultural land holdings have stabilized and are seeing a slow downward trend, urban areas are the fastest growing land use to the tune of 1 million acres per year (roughly the size of Phoenix, Los Angeles, and Houston combined, added every single year).



Houston- New developed land 2001-2019 Source: Washington Post

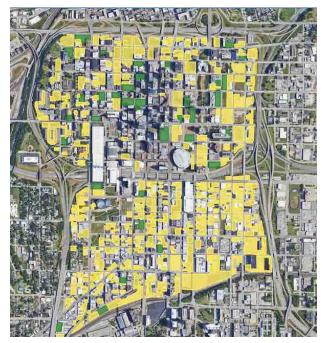


Phoenix- New developed land 2001-2019 Source: Washington Post

This is stunning growth that is contributing immensely to climate change and is mostly happening along the exurban areas where existing farmlands and undeveloped green areas are being developed as low density single family/townhouse developments reliant only on car infrastructure. This is called 'Sprawl' and is characterized by segregated single-use land use policy, with wide roadway/highway infrastructure that forever chews up wildlife habitat as well as creating unconnected patches of habitat. Unlike older urban areas which are resilient and amenable to redevelopment, it's incredibly challenging to redevelop these sprawled exurban areas or connect them via public transportation to make them sustainable and resilient.



American neighborhoods- 1940(left) vs today(right) Source: The Transit Guy



Hollowed out urban core areas for parking + highway infrastructure acting as barriers Source: The Transit Guy

But why are American urban areas, which already are one of the least dense urban areas in the world, spreading in this manner? Two major reasons are outlined here:

1-Inertia - It's easier to keep propagating a model which industry, finance, federal, local and state departments are all attuned to and,

2-Barriers to development in established urban areas - This is a big reason why development is moving to the exurbs. Following are some of the issues:

a) Urban areas still exhibit single use zoning. Rezoning efforts are expensive, time consuming and require 'nonconforming' developments to jump through several hoops to get realized.

b) Zoning codes require the compulsory building of parking (Parking minimums) to support building use. This entrenches a car-dependent lifestyle and increases the cost of development, especially in urban areas.

c) Current property tax policy taxes improvements on the land rather than the land itself. This makes it easier to maintain a property as a surface lot for parking rather than as a new development, leaving urban areas with 'hollowed' out sites bereft of development.

d) Neighborhood opposition in the form of NIMBYs (Not In My Backyard - people unhappy with change in their neighborhood) which unfortunately also includes conservation groups, who mostly just believe that development brings disaster to their neighborhoods.

e) Insignificant investment in public transportation - The regional transit expansion map for Baltimore from 2002 shows several new rail lines connecting different parts of the metro region. None of it is built today. Without effective public transportation, it is hard to break the reliance on cars as the only form of transport thereby making developments expensive.

So, what happens when urban areas cannot add density? Artificially restricting the building supply increases rents and real estate values and inevitably causes gentrification, pushing out those who can't keep up. Keeping urban areas low density makes them expensive to live in and naturally pushes development to the exurban areas where land is cheaper, NIMBYs are non-existent, and development comes with fewer hurdles.

So, what's a conservationist to do? Conservationists need to understand when, where, and in what form development is good and how it can aid overall conservation efforts. To preserve habitat for wildlife we need to 1) embrace land use reform that advocates for a smaller human footprint by encouraging denser developments in existing urban and suburban areas, 2) advocate for multi-modal forms of transportation over car-dependent infrastructure to support the goals of dense development, and 3) advocate for the conversion of unused farmland into habitat, and preserving and enhancing public parks (new and existing) in urban areas as important refuges for wildlife as well as people.



Aspern Seestadt on a brownfield site on the outskirts of Vienna, Austria. Transit oriented suburban development with Phase I completed. A walkable bikable neighborhood serviced by a train station with a 40-40-20 circulation split (40 public transportation, 40 walking and 20 personal vehicles). Final buildout by 2030 targets housing for 25,000 people and 20,000 jobs all within 800 acres. Source: ESRI blog

This won't happen overnight, but we have to start somewhere. A starting point in Baltimore would be to support Councilman Ryan Dorsey's 'Abundant Housing Act' which puts an end to parking minimums and reforms zoning laws allowing for more varied forms of residential development by-right. The resurrection of the 'Red Line Project' is another. There is still a long way to go but I hope conservationists question their beliefs about development and embrace a new future that keeps our footprint to a minimum and allows wildlife the habitat it needs to flourish.

Neville Fernandes is an Architect and Urban Designer and a current Board Member of the Baltimore Bird Club, with over twenty years of experience working on projects in urban and suburban areas in the U.S. and abroad.

Reference materials and further reading provided upon request.

Atlasing: a Paradox, by Peter Lev

For the Second MD/DC Breeding Bird Atlas, 2002-2006, my territory was Cockeysville SE, meaning Lake Roland and vicinity. 80 breeding birds—possible, probable, or confirmed—were observed during this period, which was considered a good result. North American birds have been in alarming decline over the last 50 years.

The key study, led by Cornell University, says that almost 3 billion breeding birds, or 30 percent of the total, have disappeared between 1970 and 2019. Anecdotally, I can confirm that songbird numbers have declined in the Baltimore area. For example, on one May morning in the 1990s I saw or heard 40 Wood Thrushes at Cylburn Arboretum. That kind of fallout is unlikely to happen again.

For the Third MD/DC Breeding Bird Atlas, 2020-2024, my territory is once again Cockeysville SE. As of Winter 2023-2024, 80 breeding species have been observed, with two more likely to be approved. North American bird populations are down, local bird populations are down, yet Atlas numbers are slightly up. What happened?

The explanation lies in a changed process and improved Atlas participation. In 2002-2006 I birded a site in my territory, wrote the results on a hard copy form, and sent my form by U. S. mail to Elliot Kirschbaum, one of the Baltimore County coordinators. Other people could have sent in forms but rarely did. However, in 2020-2024 observations for the Breeding Bird Atlas are made online via eBbird, and most birders use eBird anyway. So for the Third Atlas I've had a whole lot of help. There are multiple observations from Alina Martin, Tim Carney, John Dennehy (who also helped in 2002-2006), Sam Tillman, Simon Best, Keith Eric Costley, and other highly skilled birders.



Signs of breeding filmed by Marty Brazeau while atlasing.



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at nest (Maine Atlas)



Robin with nest material



Pine warbler feeding a cowbird



Northern Parula with a fecal sac

Click above the thrush's tail and an arrow will pop up allowing you to watch a YouTube video showing how to use eBird to record signs of breeding activity.



You Tube

You are invited to join a bird tour and star in a video showing Costa Rica bird diversity...

By Marty Brazeau

Portraying the diversity of birdlife from ground floor to emergent trees in rainforests is a goal of mine. On May 7, at 7 PM, I will be giving the following lecture for the Baltimore Bird Club at Cylburn:

"Marty Brazeau, Education and Outreach Specialist, will educate us on atypical birds from countries such as Australia, Costa Rica and Ecuador using high definition videos shot by the speaker himself. We will examine their characteristics and behaviors as well as the effects of geography and plate tectonics on these diverse species of birds. Hear about the speaker's humorous experiences--the rewards and challenges--of studying and filming birds in different countries. "

I have just returned from my Springtime April 1-12 tour where we birded at Cano Negro, Tortuguero, Pacific coastal mangroves, and La Selva Biological Station. Five boat rides and plenty of land birding highlighted this special 12 day tour.

The second tour, from June 25 to July 5, teachers and youth birders, with parent chaperones, are invited to attend a ten-day tour with three day visits to Arenal Volcano, La Selva Biological Station, and the Cloud Forest to see the Resplendent Quetzal.

I am teaming with Crescentia Expeditions to invite tour participants to serve as Rainforest Ambassadors as they will be invited (not required) to appear and contribute voiceovers to a film showing the amazing diversity of wildlife and plants found in rainforests. I will edit the video and upload it to YouTube after each tour. I will be showing the first edit of the video during the May lecture. For more information about the summer tour, email me, Marty Brazeau, at tropicbirder56@gmail.com.



Meet Jose, the expert Costa Rican bird guide who is leading both tours. Click on Jose's picture above to watch the video of Jose impersonating four birds.

Note: Baltimore Bird Club does not sponsor tours led by club members, nor do they assume any liability concerning this tour. It is also encouraged that tour members purchase travel insurance in case they need to cancel the tour after payment or to handle health needs while abroad.

Birds filmed In Costa Rica by Marty Brazeau



Yellow-throated Toucan



Golden-browed Chlorophonia



Resplendent Quetzal



Spotted Antbird



Red-capped Manakin

Oct. 14

Chinquapin Run Park

Leader: Sam Tillman

We nearly canceled with an ominous storm slowly approaching the City, but I'm glad we went for it! Under a slight drizzle we found a small flock of warblers almost immediately. The Tennessee Warbler was a lifer for multiple participants and a late Northern Parula was a welcome surprise. We then descended into the portion of the park below street level and followed Chinguapin Run down toward Loch Raven Boulevard. The previous night had seen a big movement of migratory birds, and newly arrived winter residents were abundant - Dark-eyed juncos, White-throated sparrows, a Yellow-bellied sapsucker, and both species of Kinglet. Most exciting was that we were able to add four birds to the park list, which only became a hotspot in Summer 2022 - Blue-headed Vireo, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, and long overdue Canada Goose.

Oct. 22

Hydes Road Park

Leader: Tim Carney

This was supposed to be a sparrow extravaganza, but the cloudy and windy conditions weren't ideal for sparrowwatching. We still managed to get great looks at Savannah Sparrows, and most participants saw two immature White-crowned Sparrows near the beaver pond. Other highlights included four Rusty Blackbirds (two of which were singing), two flyover American Pipits, great views of a Northern Harrier and two Blue-headed Vireos, and an Eastern Meadowlark that fluttered past as we were leaving. 46 species total.

Oct. 28

Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center.

Leader: Stacy Hartman

Seven participants. It was a beautiful day for the walk with clear sunny skies and about 70 degrees for the majority of the trip. There are a good variety of habitats here which also brought along a good variety of birds - 45 species in all. As we meandered through Fox Pass onto the Lake/Beach trail, there were many birds to see along the way. Some of the standouts were all of the Yellowrumped Warblers that kept popping up the entire walk there were a lot here! A nice group of Cedar Waxwings were also viewed eating berries. At the lake, we found some beautiful male and female Northern Pintail, Gadwall, Mallard, Great Blue Heron, and a Kingfisher. Joe C. spotted two Killdeer through the scope on the rocks while checking out the beach area. Next we spotted two gorgeous bright yellow Pine Warblers right in a perfect sunny spot of pine trees. They were hard to miss! (continued)

As we continued on checking out the usual sparrow suspects, one of them stood out from the group and turned out to be a Lincoln Sparrow! Nearing the end of the walk, we finally heard the unmistakable rubber ducky call of the Brown-headed Nuthatch which were nice enough to come in a little closer for some great looks along lower hanging pine branches. The last stop on the walk was the beach area to the right when exiting. We got to see a majestic Bald Eagle fly over the path on the drive there which made two total for the day including the one that Pam V. spied sticking it's head up out of some flat topped trees across from the kayak launch area. To end the walk, fifteen American Black Duck were spotted flying around the bay/marsh area to the right of the beach.



Black Duck, image: Marty Brazeau

Lake Roland Serpentine Barrens

Leader: Sam Tillman

Nov. 05

We had a crisp, Fall morning to explore one of Baltimore County's most unique habitats - the serpentine area of Lake Roland, known as Bare Hills. While inhospitable to most plants due to the lack of vital nutrients and the abundance of heavy metals including chromium and cobalt, serpentine habitats support an unusual variety of plants and animals. In fact Bare Hills was the first chrome mine in the United states and between 1828 and 1860, was (with Soldier's Delight) the only source of chrome for the entire world (the old mining pit is still visible off of the orange trail). The area is dominated by a pine barren containing Virginia Pine and Blackjack and Post Oaks, which can tolerate the soil, and in warmer months also hosts many rare butterflies. We saw a great collection of November birds, a time of year when the bulk of migration has concluded. A late Palm Warbler and our resident winter warbler, the Yellow-rumped Warbler, both made appearances. Other winter residents popped up as well, including Brown Creeper, Dark-eyed Junco, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and Hermit Thrush. Our most unlikely sighting was a Common Loon, which flew overhead as people were just arriving.

Nov. 12

Irvine Nature Center

Leader: Brian Rollfinke

A small group of six met on a chilly quiet Sunday morning at Irvine Nature Center. Debbie Taylor kept an eBird list while Rob Mardiney, a past Irvine Education Director led the walk. We walked down the path to the Meadows. The birds must have been cold and not moving much because there was not a lot of variety, at least initially. Several winter birds including Juncos, Flickers, and White-throated Sparrows were easily seen. One Hermit Thrush, several White-breasted Nuthatches, and one Brown Creeper made an appearance. Luckily, the next section near the fire pit area, we were able to see a Sharp-shined Hawk (thanks Pam!) and a Red-tailed Hawk. A little bit later a Redshouldered Hawk was spotted as well as both Red Vultures and Back Vultures.

The remainder of the walk was down towards the Sunflower fields, up the meadows and back up the hill, we found House Finch, Red-winged Blackbirds, Cowbirds and lots of usual winter birds. One nice surprise were two Pileated Woodpeckers.

Nov. 19

Serenity Ridge

Leader: Frank Marenghi

Nine participants tallied 48 species of birds on our walk around Serenity Ridge Natural Burial Cemetery and Arboretum in Windsor Mill. Weather was clear and sunny, temperatures in the upper 30s to upper 40s, with a 0-5 mph NW wind.

Highlights were Horned Larks and American Pipits heard and seen calling in flight, apparently in-part using the horse pasture on the adjacent property; the first Fox Sparrows of the year for many; a Purple Finch; three apparently migrating, Northern Harrier; and dozens of Cedar Waxwings eating berries along with many Robins, Flickers, Bluebirds and other species. Here is the full bird list from our walk: <u>https://</u> <u>ebird.org/checklist/S154770390</u>.

Serenity Ridge continues to provide an excellent diversity of bird habitat from open fields to old-field and edge, to mature riparian forest. Since June we've already collectively tallied 124 different bird species here! The location along the ridge is also great for looking for raptors and other migrants as they fly over. Our next walk here is scheduled for Sunday Feb 4th at 8am.

Dec. 02

Masonville Cove, "Breakfast with the Birds" Leader: Tim Carney

Eighteen birders joined me for a walk on Masonville Cove's Upland Trail on this calm, mild and very foggy morning. This was a great walk in terms of birds, weather, and people! I was thrilled when Sam Tillman spotted our continuing Nelson's Sparrows. Everyone got to see them, including in the scope! Sam also spotted an incredibly late Green Heron on the shore. Other highlights included Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Horned Grebe, Orange-crowned Warbler, Eastern Palm Warbler, and late Common Yellowthroats - definitely two, and possibly three individuals throughout the area. 44 species total.

Dec. 09

Herring Run Park

Leader: Kim Tomko

We were met with heavy fog at the start of the trip which provided an opportunity for birding by ear. There was a large flock of crows gathering in the park and we were able to differentiate the American Crows from the Fish Crows. A Common Raven also joined in. As the fog started to lift, we were treated to close views of Whitethroated Sparrows as well as Dark-Eyed Juncos and Song Sparrows. As we went further along the trail, we stumbled upon a patch of woods with multiple woodpeckers: Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, and Northern Flicker all posed nicely and offered good comparisons. Another treat was finding a pair of Brown Creepers in their favorite spot in the park!



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: image Marty Brazeau

Jan. 1

Loch Raven Reservoir – Old Picnic Area Leader: Joe Corcoran

What a great day to start the birding year! A beautiful sunrise preceded a walk of 10 people through the varied habitat of the Old Picnic Area Trail where we ended up recording 35 different species. There were Canada Geese and seven species of ducks including Common and beautiful Hooded Mergansers, both Pied and Horned Grebes, a few American Coots and a Common Loon, spotted by Charisma Burrows. It was a nice way to start off our Baltimore Year lists too.

Jan 21

Shrike Hunt

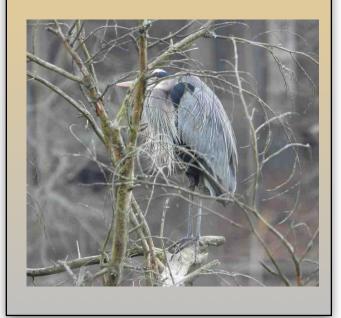
Leader: Tim Carney

Shrikes are notoriously hard to find in Maryland and both native species (Northern Shrike and Loggerhead Shrike) are not reported on an annual basis. Baltimore is a particularly hard place to find shrikes since our area lacks the expansive "overgrown" fields with scattered perches that these birds favor. Much of the potential shrike habitat in Baltimore is on little-traveled side roads in the northern half of the county. I had the crazy idea to have the BBC's first-ever Shrike Hunt, which would be styled like a Christmas Bird Count or May Count (assigning small groups to a particular territory and having them scour their area), but focusing on shrikes rather than counting all birds. I knew that we probably wouldn't find a shrike, but we would capture interesting data from under-birded areas. Fourteen other birders indulged my wacky idea and went shriking despite the cold and wind. As expected, we didn't find any shrikes, but collectively we did find a great variety of winter open-country birds, including Northern Harrier, Merlin, Red-headed Woodpecker, Horned Lark, American Pipit, Lapland Longspur, American Tree Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, and Eastern Meadowlark. I hope that we can make this an annual event, and I hope that we're eventually successful in our mission!

Loch Raven Sunset and Lone Heron

Photographed by Joe Corcoran





Welcome New Members!

Time to Spring into action birding for warblers in early May with the Baltimore Bird Club! Join us on bird lectures and introduce yourself on the next bird hike!

Ann Mason ... Baltimore Kriste Garman ... Baltimore Morris and Louisa Courtney ... Baltimore Shirley Thompson ... Baltimore Arthur Pfister ... Catonsville Barbara J. Bryant ... Catonsville Peter Ashley and Judi Ricci ... Catonsville Danny Tang ... Elkridge Janet Neilson ... Glen Arm Bobby and Noah Johnson ... Lutherville Gregory and Camilla Sucre ... Pikesville Jill Petersen and Todd Schappi ... Thurmont Aline Devreotes ... Towson Dahlia Haester ... Towson Jaden Martinez ... Towson Mary Kay Pogar ... Towson John Missing ... Washington, DC



Canada Warbler Image, Marty Brazeau

Baltimore Bird Club

http://baltimorebirdclub.org

A Chapter of Maryland Ornithological Society 4915 Greenspring Avenue Baltimore, MD 21209

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JoAnn Bochmann, Editor Marty Brazeau, Design and Educational Bird Video Creator

Submit materials to JoAnn Bochmann – jlbochmann@gmail.com

> Moving or email change? Send update to Terry Ross at trosstva@gmail.com

Deadlines for submitting articles for upcoming issues: April 24, 2024



Application

The membership year is September 1-August 31. New members only joining after March 1 will be members for the upcoming year as well as the remainder of the year that they enroll.

The most convenient way to join is at the Maryland Ornithological Society website using this address: <u>https://mdbirds.org/join/chapters/baltimore-bird-club/#toggle-id-3</u> where you may pay your dues using PayPal.

OR, you may join by mail.

Make check payable to "MOS" and mail with completed application to:

Carol S Daugherty MOS Treasurer 11925 Oden Court Rockville, MD 20852