

# Chip Notes



BALTIMORE BIRD CLUB NEWSLETTER

No. 391

Spring 2015

**SPRING 2015 No. 391**  
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## Happy 70th Anniversary

### Baltimore Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society!

by Joan Cwi

*2015 is an historic year for celebrating major anniversary milestones for many of Baltimore's institutions. It marks the 85th anniversary of The Natural History Society of Maryland, the 60th anniversary of the Cylburn Arboretum Association, and most important of all, the 70th anniversary of the Baltimore Bird Club! Ironically, our histories are linked and we all still work together introducing people to the wonders of the natural world. For Chip Notes, I am presenting an abbreviated history. The full history is available on the BBC Website. So here's our story...*



Cake by Paul Chalmus

In the late 1800s a group of scientists and amateurs revived the Maryland Academy of Sciences, which today runs the Maryland Science Center. In 1929, the Natural History Society of Maryland (NHSM) spun off from the Academy. In July 1944 the NHSM put out an "APPEAL TO BIRD LOVERS", wanting to form a separate club dedicated to bird watching.

*Continued on page 8*

### It's plain as black and white!

Sorry, but the colored printing of the winter Chip Notes was due to a mistake by the printer. Due to cost constraints, we're back to black and white!



### WELCOME!

A warm Baltimore Bird Club welcome goes out to the following members who have joined us since the Winter Chip Notes was published. Thanks for joining and we look forward to seeing you out there on our birding trips and at our meetings!

#### From Baltimore

Ted & Laurie Curtis .....	Baltimore
William (Bill) Gaynor.....	Baltimore
Judith Giuricich.....	Baltimore
David Harley .....	Baltimore
Aaron Heinsman & Nick Simko	Baltimore
Laura Lechtzin .....	Baltimore
Michael Matwichuk.....	Baltimore
Lynda L. McClary .....	Baltimore

#### From Other Cities

Lyn Brooks & Barbara Plunkett....	Phoenix
Pat & Jerry Jeffers.....	Pasadena
Miles Marshall .....	Parkville
Cynthia Yashinski .....	Nottingham



### What goes around comes around

What goes around comes around. In 1968, a teenage Bruce Beehler joined the BBC as a junior member. He was involved in the collecting of birds hitting the guide wires at TV Hill in 1977. Many of those birds were mounted and are now included in the Nature Museum. In the meantime he became an expert in the ecology of the New Guinea rainforest and on birds-of-paradise—hence his invitation to lecture on that topic this year at our Covered Dish Dinner highlighting the Greater Bird-of-Paradise skin that was mounted and now resides as a display in the Cylburn Mansion.

Having heard the introductory talk about BBC's accomplishments last year, Bruce noted that our name for "Conservation Corner" struck him as symbolic. He mentioned that conservation is always put into the corner, by whatever the government, even New Guinea. BBC and MOS have worked hard conserving the environment for birds and other creatures since their inception in 1945. Within a few months of the first meeting, the newly minted MOS/BBC was soliciting state protection of the Bald Eagle and Fox Squirrel.

In the MOS survey conducted last fall, a small percentage of members responded that they liked the club the way it is--with the emphasis on bird watching, not science or conservation. But in reality, from day one there has been a strong emphasis on science and conservation along with bird watching. Conservation efforts have remained a primary focus of the MOS and BBC since the beginning, and despite the frustration of losing many battles there

have been some major victories. From near extinction, witness the number of Bald Eagles that can be found today at Conowingo Dam or throughout the state! As a small club, we probably cannot reverse overpopulation, global warming or widespread habitat destruction, but we can save some forests and fields from urbanization and do our part in preventing runoff into the Bay, to name but a few of our successes. At least we succeed in sparing some percentage of birdlife for the future.

## Conservation CORNER

### When it Rains, it Pours

by Joan Cwi and Kurt Schwarz  
Photos by Keith Costly

A sense of mission and some dedicated money can help clean up the Harbor and the Bay. That is the theory behind THE STORM WATER REMEDIATION FEE—inaccurately dubbed the RAIN TAX by its opponents.

Signed into state law in May 2012, this fee was a response to a 2010 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) mandate telling seven states to reduce the pollution they put into the Chesapeake Bay.

In Maryland, this fee was authorized for the 10 most populous counties. Similar to a water or sewer fee, a stormwater fee is actually a user fee charged to property owners for the service of managing the polluted runoff coming from their impervious property. Each county can decide how to collect the fee and how to use it to reduce pollution caused by rains falling on roofs, roads and parking lots. This stormwater runoff carries a veritable stew of pollutants such as bacteria, trash, nutrients and sediment into nearby waterways.

Stormwater fees are used in strategic locations to slow down and filter pollutants, reduce flooding and erosion, and protect infrastructure, before the debris and pollutants hit the Bay.



Scott's Level Branch

With its Stormwater Remediation Fee, Baltimore City plans on buying 36 additional street sweepers for parts of the city that previously had no such service. With these, the city expects to sweep 15,000 tons (or 5,000 additional tons) of trash and debris out of Baltimore gutters this year.

Baltimore County has also increased its street sweeping and storm drain clearing efforts. Given the suburban/rural landscape, and with additional grant money, the County has also identified specific sites for stream restoration, shoreline enhancement, pond repairs, reforestation, and public facility environmental enhancement. Phew!!

For instance, Baltimore County's Environmental Protection and Sustainability Department recently did some stream restoration at Scotts Level Branch off Liberty Rd. in Randallstown. They created a meandering stream that slows stream velocity and reduces bank erosion. The site is now filled with native plants that keep pesticides and fertilizers out of the stream, while providing wildlife habitat in the midst of expansive suburbs.

The County invited BBC and MOS to initiate wildlife surveys there. We view it as money well spent. At Scotts Level Branch, our members Kurt Schwarz and Keith Costley have observed 70 bird, 5 butterfly, 5 dragonfly/

damselfly, several mammal, an unknown frog species, and an unknown crayfish species on the site. The birds spotted include Vesper and Savannah Sparrows, Eastern Meadowlark, and Rusty Blackbirds. The sparrows and the meadowlark are grassland species, making this constructed site an important migratory suburban stopover for grassland species, which are declining greatly in numbers. At nearby Scotts Level Park, only a quarter mile away, 77 species have been logged since 1995, so the list at Scotts Level Branch is bound to grow over time.

Like so many environmental efforts, it will come as no surprise that this fund is being targeted for extinction. In a Baltimore Sun editorial (January 23, 2015), the Baltimore Sun reported that "The county has discovered it can meet the short-term cleanup goals more cheaply than officials anticipated two years ago. Projects like enhanced street sweeping and stream restoration not only turned out to be less costly than anticipated but the county also secured outside grants that are helping in these efforts." As a result, "Mr. Kamenetz is pushing for a delay..." That's right folks—it is working, and working efficiently, so let's NOT clean the Bay on schedule so can say he's pushing back on taxes! And we won't enter into Governor Hogan's environmental agenda at this time...



Savannah Sparrow at Scott's Level Branch

Saving the bay requires more than a bumper sticker. It takes action. And actions take money. So birders should support the Stormwater Remediation Fees, the Rain Tax.



## Birdbits.....

### Commemorating BBC's First Lake Roland Walk

Join us at Robert E Lee Park on Wednesday, March 11 at 8:00 am to relive the fledgling BBC's first sponsored walk. Commemorating this, we repeat the walk at the same site 70 years later and compare results! Meet at the foot of the Boardwalk by the Light Rail station.



### Youth Backpack Award

The Patterson Park Audubon Center again identified a winner for BBC's 2015 Youth Backpack Award, Darrea Frazier, 12 years old. She is a dedicated volunteer at the Patterson Park environmental center and attends their youth bird walks. She travels across Baltimore city using public transportation, she always arrives on time, usually early, and excited for what tasks lay ahead. Tasks include helping educators and leading public programs often without staff oversight. Darrea is also a regular volunteer for the after-school program and serves as a wonderful helper to the instructor and, more importantly, a role model to the younger students. An after-school award ceremony was held at the Audubon Center on February 12th.

### Bird Bonanza at Robert E Lee Park

***Saturday-Sunday, February 14-15, 10 am—1 pm***

Having winter doldrums? Join the fun as BBC helps RELP with birding activities in this annual winter celebration for young and old. Our display will be by the large white tent at the end of the boardwalk, weather permitting! We will hold hourly bird walks from 10 am-1 pm, and you can also amuse yourself with crafts, games, live birds, hot drinks and a campfire. See February eNews for directions.

## **Masonville Cove Winter Waterfowl**

***Saturday, February 28, 8:30—10:30 am***

And more winter fun! Two weeks later Masonville Cove will be hosting a Migratory Waterfowl Program, from 8:30—10:30 am at the Masonville Cove Environmental Education Campus (see February eNews for directions). This is a free program that starts with a light breakfast, a 20-30 minute program about waterfowl migrations and identification, and a guided bird walk of the cove.

## **Unfriendly Skies: Birds, Buildings and Collisions**

Some of our members are contributing to this Lights Out Baltimore-related art show that will take place from March 31-May 3 at Goucher College. Lynne Parks is co-curating with Laura Amussen (from Goucher), and her work, along with that of BBC members Rose Marshall Anderson, Mike Hudson and Aaron Heinsman will be on display, along with 12 other artists. There will be artists' reception on Friday, April 10th from 6-9 pm. Save the date!

## **Wisdom**

We've been following Wisdom, the Laysan Albatross first banded at the age of 5 by Chan Robbins in 1956 on Midway Atoll. Well, she's at it again, and at the tender age of 64, her latest chick is due around February 6th! Too early for a report on Moonbeam, the Red Knot we've been following. We'll update you in the next Chip Notes.





## *Birdbits.....Continued*

### **Kevin's Biggest Year Yet!**

You may recall that Kevin Graff became the first place Baltimore Big Year winner in 2012 with a total of 277 species. This beat Rick Blom's long-standing record of 265 species in 1977. Kevin tried to beat his record again in 2013 and 2014. In 2013 he only got 271 species (putting him at that time in both first and second place), and this year he got 280. So now he is the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place holder!



A few other points of interest. Kevin was born in 1977, the year Rick set his record. And Bob Ringler was with Rick when he found his "winning" bird. Bob was also with Kevin in 2012 and again in 2014, witnessing his break-through sighting at Hart-Miller Island—which by the way is the number one hotspot in the Baltimore region according to eBird. **Congratulations Kevin!**

### **Only One Space Left to Costa Rica!**

If you are a female willing to share a room with another female, this is the trip of a lifetime. Spend the week of April 16-24 with other Maryland birders in central Costa Rica—the same trip our members took last year and raved about. And you can't beat the price. Contact Bob Ringler at [ringler.bob@gmail.com](mailto:ringler.bob@gmail.com) for more information. But you have to act quickly before the enrollment period ends!

### **Updated Spring and Summer Field Trip Schedule!**

Our field trip planning team has added some trips (above and beyond those already posted in the program booklet) for spring and summer 2015. These will be posted on the BBC website, Facebook page and monthly eNews. Keep your eyes peeled!!

## 2015 Covered Dish Dinner

### BBC Celebrates Its 70th Anniversary!

Photos by Lou Taylor

About 65 of our members came to this traditional event that seems to be more interesting every year. In addition to the wonderful food, this year we also had Lights Out Baltimore, 70th Anniversary and Baltimore Big Year exhibits; artwork for sale by Lynne Parks and Rose Anderson; our usual books&things sales table run by Joe Lewandowski and give-away table run by Chris Davidson, and a raffle table full of goods contributed by merchants and members. We also had a new continuous slide show depicting BBC members, events, places and birds over the past five years. Thank you Hospitality Chairperson, Kevin Graff, for pulling this together for us, and to members Debbie and Lou Taylor, Mary Shock, Mary Anne Fluke and John Fleishman for helping us set up and take down, and to Claire Wayner for her persuasive raffle ticket selling technique! We made a total of \$273 between the raffle and sales table.

The “business” meeting included an overview of BBC achievements in 2014, presenting yet another *Baltimore Big Year Award* to Kevin Graff, an *Exceptional Service Award* to Bob Ringler, and a brief overview of BBC’s 70-year history. This was followed by two speakers. The first was Dr. Al Sommer, who donated the bird-of-paradise skin to the BBC in 1980. He had us all laughing at his description of how he and his wife had to “smuggle” the illegal skin (a gift from the people of Indonesia) into London, then the United States. This was followed by the lecture by ornithologist and tropical bird expert Bruce Beehler on *Exploring New Guinea in Search of Birds of Paradise and Other Natural Wonders*. Great photos, great talk. The best part was his description of finding a bird that had toxic feathers—

evidently only one of the two in the world! He was with some young men who tested their manhood by licking the bird. Fortunately the toxin only numbed their mouth (think novocain)—they lived to tell the tale.

If you didn’t come, you missed a good time. Set aside the second Sunday in January 2016 for next year’s event.



*BBC History, continued...*

## Founders/Early History/Headquarters

Prior to 1945 there was little organized birding activity in Baltimore and none elsewhere in the state. The old Maryland Audubon Society had expired with the death of its members. The NHSM maintained an ornithological department that did fine research and educational work, but there was no attempt to maintain a general bird club. The Maryland Ornithological Society was organized in February 1945 by a group of 40 people, many of whom were members of NHSM.

- ❖ On February 23, 1945 the first gathering was held at NHSM in Bolton Hill. Forty people attended - the Charter members that would eventually become the Baltimore Bird Club and MOS. The club called itself the Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) but initially consisted of Baltimore-area residents.
- ❖ Our founders adopted a statement of goals: "The object of this Club shall be to record the observations of bird life in Maryland; to disseminate in a popular manner the results of such observations; to collate the scientific data furnished by bird students throughout the state, and to supply such available information to other groups as requested; and to promote the cultivation of public sentiment in the preservation of our native bird life."
- ❖ In the first year, they wrote a constitution and bylaws that, although modified, remain much the same today. In addition, some of the core components of the club were established, including the a dues structure, officers, first field trips, lectures, bird counts, conservation efforts, youth programs, routine publications (the first being *Maryland Birdlife*), and an annual meeting.



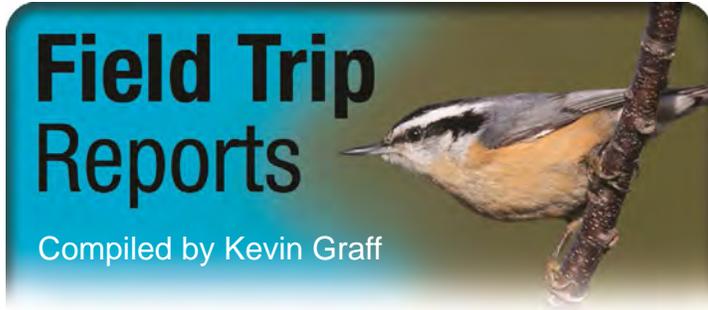
- ❖ As a matter of fact, the first Christmas Bird Count took place in 1945 and the first field trip was made to Roland Park on March 11, 1945, less than two weeks after founding!
- ❖ By 1948 there were so many widespread members that the Frederick Chapter was formed, followed by Harford in 1949 and Anne Arundel in 1950. Today MOS has 16 Chapters around the state.
- ❖ Irving Hampe was the first President (1945-46) followed by Orville Crowder (1946-1949).
- ❖ It was in the fall of 1949 that it was determined that a statewide organization needed to be founded and that Baltimore members be formally organized as a "local unit." Subsequently the formal name of the local unit became "Maryland Ornithological Society, Baltimore Chapter." I will refer to us as BBC henceforth, although that name did not happen for many years. Our then president, Orville Crowder, became the first MOS president in 1949 and William Triplett became the next BBC president from 1949-1950. FYI, Orville returned as BBC president again in 1952-1955.
- ❖ To date BBC has had 23 different presidents (counting the first two when BBC/MOS were inseparable) serving from less than one to eight years (Pete Webb) and averaging about three years apiece.

- ❖ BBC first met at the NHSM building, then located in Bolton Hill. Future meetings were held at the Pratt Library but in 1959 we moved to the Cylburn Arboretum, which had opened in 1954. Mr. Gerard Moudry, Chief City Horticulturalist at that time, graciously let MOS use the upstairs room at the Mansion for offices. Eventually we also were permitted to use other rooms in the Mansion and subsequently the Carriage House for the nature museum. Space has always been provided for our meetings, lectures and other needs—all this at no cost to BBC or MOS. Cylburn remains the official headquarters for both the MOS and BBC. While this address is basically a mail drop for MOS, BBC actively uses Cylburn as our headquarters and for field trips, lectures, meetings, and other birding activities offered free to the public. The new Vollmer Center is available for larger affairs.
- ❖ Although MOS and BBC officially split in 1949, MOS was not formally incorporated until 1956 as a non-profit organization to promote the study and enjoyment of birds. Since the split, on a statewide level, MOS supports educational and research activities; provides scholarships to teachers and wildlife managers for ornithological and natural resource training, owns and operates wildlife sanctuaries on 2000 acres of land from the eastern shore to Garrett County, and is very active in Maryland conservation activities. As a chapter, BBC supports local field trips, lectures, workshops, the Nature Museum and collections, bird counts, youth programs, conservation activities and Lights Out Baltimore.
- ❖ In 1979, BBC received a legacy of \$30,000 that was promptly invested and referred to as the Martin Trust Fund. There were no specific instructions left by the legator, so in 1981 the Board adopted guidelines

for the use of the principal and/or interest earned. The Board determined that the Fund would be used for five specific purposes that would benefit the Club or ornithological research. To date this Fund has contributed to 21 different projects with awards from \$1,000 to \$10,000. Although \$74,171 has been awarded over the years, due to careful investment we still maintain a \$32,000 balance.

- ❖ In 1983 the local chapter formally changed its name to the Baltimore Bird Club (BBC) to provide better recognition for the chapter serving Baltimore City and County. This is sometimes confusing historically because up until the early 1980s MOS was the name of both the state and the local Baltimore organization. However, the activities that took place at Cylburn were the work of what is now known as BBC, while the MOS retained statewide functions.
- ❖ We are pleased to be able to use Cylburn as our headquarters. BBC supports the eBird Trail Tracker in the Vollmer Center as an outreach effort to Cylburn visitors. The Carriage House Nature Museum, housing our extensive bird and nature collections, is a “hidden treasure” that is open free to the public. Our goal is to be seen as an important contributing partner at Cylburn which has been our home for so many years.

To learn more about BBC’s history--and there is a lot more to be learned—read the full document at <http://baltimorebirdclub.org/> Much more information is provided there about the evolution of our various programs and *milestone events*.



- **Jan 1 - Old Picnic Area Trail.** Slow day, very few waterfowls, only one coot. But the group enjoyed the eagles the most, with 4 adults and one immature on perch. Only unusual birds were one each Greater Scaup and Red-breasted Merganser, both uncommon to rare at the reservoir. 38 species. 10 participants. Leader: Kevin Graff

## 2014 Middle River Christmas Bird Count

by Kevin Graff and Pete Webb, Compilers

On Saturday, December 20, 2014 we had our second annual Middle River Christmas Bird Count, although it was the 70th Christmas Bird Count that BBC has participated in (previously Baltimore). We garnered 104 species on that day, plus two more within "Count Week", which covers from 3 days before to 3 days after the actual official Count. This compares to 100 species seen in 2013. Total birds seen and identified: 30,119, plus a few not identified by species. For a full listing, see the top box announcement box of the BBC website: <http://baltimorebirdclub.org/>

The effort to conduct the count consisted of 40 observers in 19 groups working from 6:00 am to 3:30 pm who put in 84 hours and 55 miles on foot, plus 36 car hours and 145 car miles and an additional 3 1/2 hours owling and time watching feeders, for a total of 125 hours of observation. The weather was moderate; still water was partly frozen, while moving water remained open. This doesn't include the couple of hours socializing, eating and tabulating after the rally at Pepe's on Falls Road!

There were a few standout birds:

- **Cackling Goose** – 1 in Back River sector
- **Wild Turkey\*** – 1 in White Marsh sector
- **Virginia Rail** – 1 in Chase sector, probably in Days Cove
- **Sandhill Crane\*\*** – 1 in Chase Sector near Days Cove
- **Laughing Gull** – 2 in Chase sector
- **Lesser Black-backed Gull** – 1 in Chase sector, possibly at the landfill
- **Eastern Phoebe** – 3 at three different locations
- **House Wren** – 1 in Chase sector
- **American Pipit** – 1 in Dundalk sector
- **Cape May Warbler** – 1 well documented bird at Essex Park-n-Ride, seen and reported by many observers over a few weeks
- **Savannah Sparrow** – 18 in Chase sector
- **White-crowned Sparrow\*** – 1 in Chase sector
- **Eastern Meadowlark** – 10 in Chase sector
- **Rusty Blackbird** – 50 in White Marsh sector, 2 in North Point sector
- **Purple Finch** – 1 in White Marsh sector
- **Pine Siskin** – 9 scattered among numerous locations.

*\*Found during Count week*

*\*\*The Bradshaw Road corn fields where Sandhill Cranes are usually seen are outside the Count circle*

So we're looking forward to doing it again - set your calendars for the Middle River Christmas Bird Count, coming to a metro area near you next December 19, 2015 (Saturday before Christmas). The birds will be waiting to be counted again!

## The Curse of the Christmas Landfill Count

by John Dennehy

If you have never before experienced birding at a landfill, beware the curse.

Jill Kessler, Leslie Starr and I birded the Eastern Sanitary Landfill as part of the Christmas Bird Count in December. Leslie had done this kind of thing before, but Jill and I were first-timers. We entered the landfill innocently enough, but after a few moments of driving among the large trucks looking for some kind of office, we realized the place held mysteries. We stopped by the weighing platform and I asked a worker where I might find Jerry, who was to be our contact.

He pointed us to a small parking lot, and, with reluctance, I left our parked car and brazenly entered one of the buildings. I found Jerry on his well-deserved lunch break; energetic, but courteous, he asked me to wait in my car and said he would be out when he finished eating.

In a short time he appeared in a work vehicle and instructed us to get into the truck. Where were we going? What was going to happen? Is this how one birds a landfill? Then he asked us where we wanted to go, but, never having been there before, we suggested he just show us the facility and the gulls. I guess we'll find some birds?

Frozen ponds, Canada geese, starlings and crows - ho hum. Then, alas, the dump appeared with accompanying swarms of gulls. Leslie's heart skipped a beat, Jill and I were awestruck. Having finished the tour, Jerry offered to take us back to our car, giving us permission to drive around the landfill on our own for the remainder of the day.

With his blessing, we got into my car and thanked him as he sped off to get back to his busy schedule. With trepidation, we went back to the gull swarm. Leslie thought it a great photo op, but quickly realized she had lost her camera. The Curse! Fortunately, I

had saved our tour guide's phone number as 'Jerry Landfill' and interrupted him again to ask about the possibility that it was still in his truck. It was. Jerry Landfill was there in a flash with Leslie's camera. Sheepishly, we thanked him as he sped off to get back to his busy schedule. We got the tourist photos and started scanning the flock.

Leslie immediately found a lesser black-backed gull but nothing else but the standard ring-billed, herring, and great black-backed gulls. I suggested we drive around to find some other birds and parked the car on a hill above the dump. But upon returning to my car after a half hour or so, I could see that the running lights were still on. Yikes! The Curse! The car wouldn't start.



"Hello, Jerry?" Within minutes, a truck with a kind man and jumper cables zoomed in and rescued us. We thanked him as he sped off to get back to his busy schedule. We promptly left the landfill, finally freed from the curse, somewhat embarrassed, but glad we had added some other good birds for the count. At our next stop, while sorting through the sparrow flocks, I reached into my pocket and inadvertently called Jerry Landfill on my cell phone. The Curse. I hung up before he answered so I wouldn't, for the FOURTH time, interrupt his busy schedule.

BALTIMORE BIRD CLUB  
http://baltimorebirdclub.org

A Chapter of

MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
4915 Greenspring Avenue  
Baltimore, MD 21209

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**Moving or email change?**  
Send update to  
**Roberta Ross** at [robertaross@aol.com](mailto:robertaross@aol.com)

**Deadlines for submitting articles  
for upcoming issues:**

**April 24, 2015**



## Baltimore Bird Club APPLICATION

*Membership year is September 1–August 31. New members only joining after March 1 may pay half-year rate. A full year's dues received after April 30 will be applied to the next membership year.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Benefits include membership in the BBC and Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS), free field trips, quarterly BBC and MOS newsletters sent electronically, lectures and other events.

### Check dues category and circle amount sent.

Category	1-YR	½ YR	Chapter Only+
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$35.00	\$17.00	\$15.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Household	\$45.00	\$22.50	\$20.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining	\$100.00		
<input type="checkbox"/> Junior*	\$10.00	\$5.00	\$5.00

\* Through 17: record age here \_\_\_\_

+Chapter Only membership is available to MOS members who are already members of another MOS chapter or who are MOS life members.

Mail completed application with check payable to:  
Baltimore Bird Club, Attn: Membership Chairman,  
4915 Greenspring Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21209