

Chip Notes

BALTIMORE BIRD CLUB NEWSLETTER



WINTER 2015 No. 394
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Grasslands

by Claire Wayner

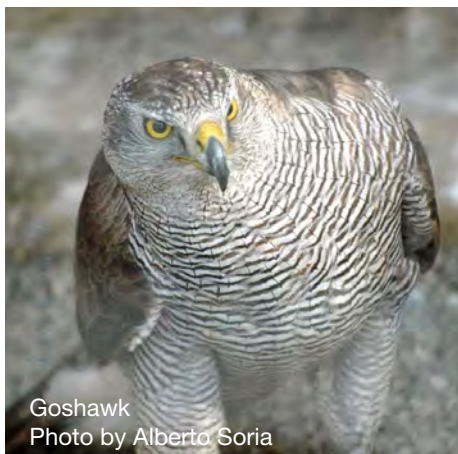
Prelude: At age 14, Claire is BBC's premier youth birder, and a wonderful observer and writer of nature to boot! She spent part of last summer attending Camp Colorado, run by the ABA and sponsored by Leica. Amid towering mountains and beautiful landscapes she discovered the variety of birds that northeastern Colorado has to offer, from the thick montane forests and the gurgling alpine streams to the snowy Rocky Mountain tundra and the extensive grasslands... every day had a new bird to offer. This article is about one day of this adventure--her visit to the Pawnee National Grassland in northeastern Colorado and her observations on grassland preservation and the wonderful birds found therein.



As I step out of the van onto the dirt road speckled with gravel, a lone wind sighs softly through the grass, the golden blades whispering as they slowly start to wave in synchrony, forming a flowing aureate carpet. Such was the elaborate dance of the prairie at Pawnee National Grassland in the northeastern corner of Colorado.

National grasslands, twenty in total, conserve almost four million acres of valuable habitat across the U.S., and it's a miracle that they exist. A newly planted forest, not a field of grass and scattered flowers, usually represents the face of conservation. In truth, the general public would more likely rush to protect an old-growth forest than a grassland, and although forests have their uses, grasslands are far more threatened and just as important. North

Continued on page 8



Goshawk
 Photo by Alberto Soria

WELCOME!

A warm Baltimore Bird Club welcome goes out to the following members who have joined us since the Summer 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

Melanie Brennan.....	Baltimore	Sara Rothamel.....	Baltimore
Nicole M. Jerr	Baltimore	Corkey Smith.....	Baltimore
Hollis Mooney	Baltimore	James D. Wright	Baltimore

From Other Cities

Thoma & Leslie Buchman	Catonsville	L. Reed Huppman	Reisterstown
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In the Fall Chip Notes, I wrote about the issue of possibly changing the name of Robert E. Lee Park to Lake Roland. I'm happy to report that on September 28th Baltimore County Executive Kevin Kamenetz announced initial steps to making this change. As a result, all references to Robert E. Lee Park have been removed from the county's website and replaced with Lake Roland. New signage is planned. In addition, the RELP Nature Council also changed its name to

the Lake Roland Nature Council. Since Baltimore City still owns the park, it has to work through its own legal processes before the name can formally be changed.



Another interesting sequel to this saga is that the plaque commemorating Elizabeth Garrett White's contribution to acquiring the land for this park has also been removed, leaving a big rough hole on the stone pillar! According to a park ranger I spoke to, this sign will be given to the Maryland Historical Society as part of their historical record of the city.

Conservation CORNER

Citizen Science: Masonville Cove Nestwatch

By Nancy O'Hara

I was asked to help with the Nestwatch project at Masonville Cove. When asked I had never heard of the Nestwatch project and furthermore, this was my first time visiting Masonville Cove.

Masonville Cove is 74 acres of water and 54 acres of cleaned up wetlands, nature trails and a protected bird sanctuary, of which about 11 acres are open to the public. To find out more visit www.masonvillecove.org.

Nestwatch is a program run by Cornell University designed to track trends in the reproductive biology of birds. Entered data are used to study the current condition of breeding bird populations and how they may be changing over time as a result of climate change, habitat degradation and loss, expansion of urban areas, and the

introduction of non-native plants and animals. My project involves studying when and where nesting occurs, number of eggs laid and how many hatch, and how many hatchlings live to fledge.



Barn Swallows in nest

I identified nine species having nests. They included the following:

9 Tree Swallows in nest boxes
1 American Robin
1 Mockingbird
1 Orchard Oriole
1 Baltimore Oriole
1 Eastern Kingbird
1 Killdeer

1 Osprey

Barn Swallows (who nested under the dock so I was unable to confirm number of nests, eggs, and young)

Canada Geese (nests also not reachable)

I was only able to access 16 nests to study and these resulted in 49 eggs, 44 hatchlings, and 30 fledged birds.

For someone new to the Nestwatch program, I found it to be a rewarding and educational experience, allowing me to spend time with a

hobby I am passionate about. Highlights include watching the young nestlings mature and fledge, experiencing first hand the dedication and perseverance of the parents to protect and fledge their young and the occasional “dive bomb” attack of the tree swallows accompanied by a funny sound, that I learned was made by clicking their wings, as they tried to scare me away from the nest.

This was the first time the Nestwatch was conducted at Masonville Cove so it will be interesting to watch what happens in the future. If you are interested in conducting a Nestwatch in your neighborhood, the time commitment is 2 days a week for 6 to 12 weeks depending on the species in your area. For more information contact nestwatch.org.

West Covington Park

By Joan Cwi

A new park by the harbor has appeared in Baltimore. Without fanfare, on September 4th the Department of Transportation removed the barriers that for many years had separated the public from the National Aquarium’s West Covington Park. So what ‘s the story? I read about this in *Baltimore Brew**, an online magazine, and it piqued my interest.

The park is located in an industrial/business area on the northwest side of the Hanover Street Bridge. You can’t miss it—look for a huge new red and black Costco-like building just before crossing the bridge. Hopefully their huge parking lot can be used for visitors to park, but right now a chain-link fence encloses the parking lot and the street signs say No Parking. What the hell—there wasn’t a soul around and I wanted to explore, so I parked on the street.

The 19-acre park/wildlife sanctuary is located on a small projection into the Patapsco River across from the Baltimore Rowing Club in Cherry Hill. It has about a half mile of wide, paved walkways that have lights embedded in them. I assume the lights are solar and will provide minimal night light. Lots of nice benches provide places to sit and admire the great view of the Hanover Street Bridge and any birds that may appear. There are coves on both sides, so hopefully ducks will linger during cold months.

The Aquarium has done a wonderful job landscaping with native plants that will provide

ample seed and berries for wildlife. This day (October 19) I only saw 12 Canada Geese, a couple of gulls, and 60—yes 60 Mourning Doves chowing down on all the seed planted by the gardeners. Two days later Matt Hafner reported in MDBirding seeing 100 doves, plus numerous sparrows and other birds. He made West Covington Park a Hotspot on eBird, where you can see his findings: <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S25496765>. It is a beautiful spot, but there is a hint of trouble. In this small park they have placed five police emergency alarm kiosks!

So what’s the story? Evidently the land is part of a tract of city property that the



Sheila Dixon administration sold to the Aquarium in 2007 to build an aquatic life center campus. This never materialized. Although the park was scheduled for completion in 2011, various funding and approval processes delayed the opening. According to the Baltimore Brew article, they were not able to find out about future park upkeep responsibilities. Hence the stealth opening? Whatever—it provides a great stopover for migrating birds.

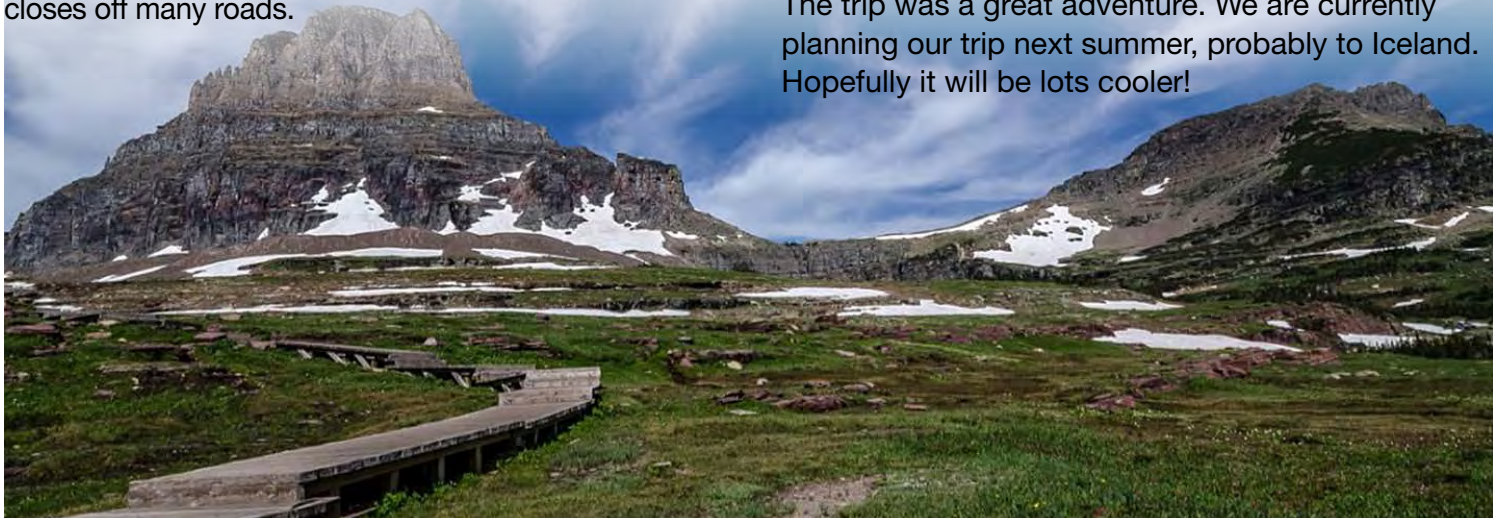
*<https://www.baltimorebrew.com/2015/09/04/the-wait-is-over-west-covington-park-is-quietly-opened-by-city/>

Glacier Goodness

by Debbie & Lou Taylor

Our trip in late June 2015 to Glacier National Park in Montana, Northern Idaho and Washington State, started with some trepidation because these areas were experiencing an unusual heat wave. The thermometer read 104 degrees as we landed in Spokane, Washington! Glacier National Park (GNP) does not have air conditioning ANYWHERE!! So, we put on our big girl and boy panties and trudged along. (Thank goodness for air conditioning in the car!!)

As we were driving to Glacier Lou said, wow, look at that smoke. Deb said, that isn't smoke-- those are clouds. Well, Lou won the bet on that one! Through the summer, there were many areas of fire and roads were blocked, although we were fortunate to miss most of that. Fireworks were cancelled for July 4 due to these fires and wind. Our adventure started with the Road Scholar Company, an international company that organizes educational and recreational trips. We met our 21 fellow trip mates at the Belton Chalet, which is half a mile from the entrance to GNP. So, off we went each morning... up at 6, breakfast at 6:30, packed our lunch and were in the van by 7:15. We usually went on short drives (less than 30 min) to spots that the general public doesn't know about, which was a good thing because the end of June starts the high season in GNP. The area gets crowded because the season is short, with snow from Oct to May that closes off many roads.



After five full days with the Road Scholar group, we ventured outside of GNP on our own --no rest for the weary! Lou and I did pretty well on our own, which included spotting a Yellow-headed Blackbird. We also enjoyed wandering through the towns of Whitefish, Kalispell, and Big Fork, seeing Osprey on their nests, trying interesting restaurants, going on boat rides and purchasing a few trinkets.



Yellow-headed Blackbird

On the way to Coeur d'Alene, ID, we visited the tiny town of Bonners Ferry, Idaho. The Kootenai NWR was phenomenal and provided much needed relief from the heat. We saw a female moose and her calf--WAY cool, boy are they big!! They took a quick look at us and bolted. We moved on to Coeur d'Alene area, where the many bays and lakes provided great opportunities for meandering without crowds. Everywhere you turned there was something new and exciting, like a Northern Harrier.

In Washington State, outside of Spokane, we went to the NWR but it was so hot that we didn't see too much, plus birds were nesting. We also went to the Steppe Butte Park where there wasn't a soul on the roads, just long, long roads of canola oil plants, which are bright yellow, and tons of farms and some livestock. We went up the mountain in spiral fashion and saw an Orchard Oriole's nest with an adult feeding the young.

The trip was a great adventure. We are currently planning our trip next summer, probably to Iceland. Hopefully it will be lots cooler!



Birdbits.....

Hawks, Eagles, and Falcons

On September 27th BBC collaborated with the Maryland Natural History Society to celebrate the thousands of raptors that soar high above us on their migration to spend winter in warmer climes. There were BBC and LOB exhibits as well as games and story-telling for kids. Kathy Woods from Phoenix Wildlife came with a magnificent Red-tailed Hawk. In addition to exhibits, BBC provided two lectures. Jim Meyers spoke about raptor migration, and Joan Cwi talked about “What makes a raptor a raptor.” Kevin Graff held the show-stealer--an impromptu hawk watch on the MNHS entrance ramp. In three hours they counted 65 hawks, as well as migrating Canada Geese, gulls, Blue Jays, American Crows and American Robins.



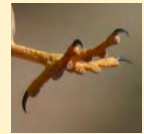
What Makes a Raptor?



Keen Vision



Hooked Beak



Strong Feet and Talons

Brown Booby at Inner Harbor

The top attraction in September and October for the Baltimore birding community was the presence of two BROWN BOOBIES in Baltimore Harbor. They were first discovered by Nico Sarbanes on September 5th while walking with his family around Fort McHenry NM. With the help of Deborah Rowan, one of Baltimore Harbor’s water taxi drivers, these two birds have been tracked daily since mid-September (it is now early November) providing information about their whereabouts and where folks might go in order to see and



Brown Boobies
Photo by Randy Kimmett

photograph them. They are thought to be an adult female and a juvenile. With great joy the birding community picked up this information and ran with it. Since discovery, literally hundreds of people—birders and non-birders alike—have come to see them and add money to the water-taxi coffers. Prior to this, the only accepted record for BROWN BOOBY in Maryland is one bird seen and reported from Assateague Island National Seashore on Aug 3, 2009.



Birdbits.....Continued

Save the Date! Time Again for January's Covered Dish Dinner and Lecture

The Covered Dish Dinner is just two months away, and we are already preparing to make it a better-than-ever event. **This year we need your help with the raffle!** Debbie and Lou Taylor have joined Kevin Graff to find more and better raffle awards. In addition to soliciting vendors, they are asking our members if they have things they might want to offer...things like electronic equipment, artwork, baked products, etc., etc., etc. Donations are tax deductible since BBC is a non-profit organization. Let us know soon if you have anything—contact Debbie Taylor at lougregdan@verizon.net or 410-852-9807.

The Covered Dish Dinner and Lecture on the evening of **Sunday January 10th, 2016** beginning at 4:30 pm, is open to all members,. Once again it will be held at Cylburn's Visitor Center. We look forward to this opportunity to socialize, see the exhibits, have some fun, and hear a fantastic lecture.



Last year lucky Lindsay won two owls!

This year's featured talk is **The Biodiversity Project** with Jim Brighton. Jim is one of the founders of this effort to catalog all of the living things of Maryland. The goal is to promote education and conservation by helping to build a vibrant nature study community. The project was started in June 2012 by Jim and Bill Hubick. They have already cataloged over 15,000 species, including over 6,000 species with photographs, and feature the work of more than 400 naturalists and photographers.

Be sure to contact Kevin Graff (KeyWeststyle2001@gmail.com) to let him know you are coming and what you plan to bring. If you prefer the telephone, call Joan Cwi at 410-467-5352. Hope to see you there!

Certificate of Appreciation MES



MOS presented a certificate of appreciation to the employees of the Maryland Environmental Service on July 22, 2015. It was presented to them because they added several additional boat trips to bring birders to Hart Miller Island while the Snowy Plover was in residence this past summer. This was the first state record!

eBird Hotspots

Fans of the Orioles and Nationals may like to know that both Oriole Park at Camden Yards and Nationals Park in D.C. are now eBird Hotspots. Both were recommended by a visiting birder from San Mateo County, California!

Although neither team has distinguished itself of late, local birders are encouraged to get out to these parks and to look for birds both on and off the field. As of this writing, 22 species have been reported seen at Camden Yard (most notably a Baltimore Oriole) and 16 at Nationals Park (most notable a Bald Eagle!).

Visit these sites at:

Camden Yard -- <http://ebird.org/ebird/hotspot/L580570>

Nationals Park -- <http://ebird.org/ebird/hotspot/L1619241>



Unfriendly Skies: Birds, Buildings, and Collisions



Chestertown Exhibit

Our artist extraordinaire, Lynne Parks, has been very busy the last few months curating art shows around the topic of bird strikes and the devastation inflicted on birds. We've reported on her first exhibit titled *Unfriendly Skies* held at Goucher College that was on exhibit from March 31-May 3. Following that was a show titled *Flight Risk* held at Washington University in Chestertown MD during the month of September. Letting no grass grow beneath her feet, she is now in the midst of preparing *Unfriendly Skies2* to be held at George Mason University from October 29 thru November 20. This is a larger version of the Goucher show. So please support Lynn and the LOB effort by visiting the exhibit!

Canton Affair

BBC and MOS sponsored a joint exhibit for Canton Waterfront Park's extravaganza on August 15th. This is the first organic park in Baltimore City and we were in good company joining the displays of other like-minded organizations such as Blue Water Baltimore and Tree Baltimore.



From left to right—Maureen Harvey, Tom Strikwerda, Kevin Graff, Nancy O'Hara

Grasslands, cont'd...

American prairies hold some of the most important habitat for breeding and migratory birds and for other forms of life, like our national mammal, the buffalo. They are also natural carbon sinks, capturing a large portion of our greenhouse gas emissions. Yet grasslands have wonderfully fertile soil for farming and hold huge potential for livestock grazing, leading to widespread exploitation of resources and removal of essential wildlife habitat. To protect the habitat, national grasslands were created, yet because of the conflict between humans and grasses, these preserves are actually open to hunting, grazing,

farming, and mineral extraction. It's a fragile balance between conservation and capitalization.

Farmers aren't the worst thing in the world, as it turns out when



Veloci-gos

we make our first stop at Pawnee. We turn left onto a dirt road from the main highway, searching for our first target bird of the day: **Mountain Plovers**. This search would not be easy, but the farmers make it easier for us and for the plovers. The fields to the left and right of the road are farmed in sections -- one year, a section is left unfarmed, and the strip next to it covered in crops. The farmers then rotate the plantings each year, so that every year, there is at least one strip left bare and perfect for plovers.

Thorough scoping turned up multiple jackrabbits and eventually, two plovers! The key for hunting for plovers: study the silhouette, shape, and structure, and then look for a plover-shaped object that may or may not move, all the way in the distance. I am content with my plover-shaped silhouette, although it seems to be a mirage -- shimmering out in the distant reaches of the field, about to disappear.

Indeed, Mountain Plovers were about to disappear from Pawnee many years back, a good friend informed me a month after the end of camp. BBC member, Joann Pettinicchio remembers that the dwindling populations of Mountain Plovers at the grasslands was a topic of contention, so much so

that the farmers, landowners, and conservationists got together at a meeting to discuss what to do. They developed plans for land maintenance to promote the health of the plover populations, and many years later, it seems like those land use policies are working.

From the plover spot, we drive into the Crow Valley Campground for a quick breakfast, checking off the birds as we see them. Today is not only a trip to the fabulous grasslands -- it is the Second Annual Camp Colorado Challenge! The goal of the challenge is to see as many bird species as possible from dawn until 7 PM or so. It would be a big day of sorts, but without quite as much agitated running around like a chicken with its head off -- we'd save that characteristic behavior for the last few hours when the goshawk made its appearance. **Bullock's Orioles, Loggerhead Shrikes, Brown Thrasher,** and a cooperative **Great Horned Owl** are all added to the lists before we head back into the fields of grass. The sky is delightfully overcast and cool, but the sun would come out by midday, so we step on the gas so that we can be done with the majority of our birding by lunchtime.

Along the way, we check off multiple species, some expected and some a welcome surprise: a **Burrowing Owl** family with several babies giving us intense stares; a **Swainson's Hawk** landing on a telephone pole; its close cousin, the **Ferruginous Hawk**, aptly named *Buteo regalis*, soaring over the horizon; an alert **American Avocet**, circling over our heads and vocalizing frantically before landing down on a sheltered pond with his mate. **Lark Buntings** and **Lark Sparrows** filled the air with their effervescent melodies, serenading us. A surreptitious **Brewer's Sparrow** perches on a skinny blade of green for a few seconds before he dips down into the grasses again, afraid of us predators with our long camera lenses.

Then come the longspurs, my favorite bird of the day. Our first **McCown's**, a curious female, lands right in front of our van, and luckily I am in the front row. As she flies away, I make note of the field mark that Jennie had just described to us: the black, upside down T on the tail, framed against a whitish background. As we get out of the vans to look for more, Raymond points out to the left. "Male, skylarking!" This is when I fall in love with the McCown's -- although they aren't the most colorful birds, they have some sweet dance moves.

In the prairie, there aren't any trees or natural perches (forget about fences) for males to declare their superiority to potential females. Thus, the wondrous adaptation called skylarking. Males fly straight up into the sky before letting go, stretching their wings out like a parachute and allowing gravity to take them back to earth. As they fall, they sing and tell females that their skydiving skills are the absolute greatest among all of the male McCown's. But the males aren't *falling* -- they are elegantly floating, like Mary Poppins on an outstretched umbrella. There's something about watching birds flying without flapping that is ethereal; it makes me feel like I'm skydiving next to them, as they sing spirals of song through the air.



McCown's skylarking

In order to get closer, we decide to hike out into the grasses, and that's when I notice the true nature of the grasses. Amidst the beautiful blades was a hidden arsenal of soldiers -- cacti. Dozens of cacti, and the ground wasn't wet and soft and spongy like I imagined it would be, but dry and a bit dusty. Yet another example of amazing adaptations -- green grass that can live in a powder.

We stand amidst the cacti for about ten minutes, leaving a respectful distance between the longspurs and us. I play around with one of the scopes (thanks, Leica!), trying to magnify each displaying longspur and attempting to predict where they would land. A few times, I am rewarded with a longspur face in the scope -- a black crown, a black chest, and an open mouth spilling out a series of ebullient notes. Finally, we decide to leave the longspurs to their dance, but not before Raymond finds us a **Lark Bunting** nest: a bowl of loosely woven grass, with a clutch of light blue eggs inside, as blue as the sky above.

For the rest of the day, my fellow campers and I spend the day birding at warp speed. Our time after the longspurs is spent checking off as many species as possible but at a leisurely pace. After hanging around at the campground for lunch and a quick paparazzi session of a sleeping **Common Nighthawk** that yawned most endearingly, we piled back into the vans and headed to a nearby lake for **Western and Clark's Grebes**. Both species proved present, as well as more

Bullock's Orioles and a **Say's Phoebe**. After that, we spend the rest of the van ride back to the Y with our noses pressed up against the window glass, searching for dippers in the bubbling montane stream that follows the path of the road. More than once, campers scream phrases like, "Gray object! Was that a rock? Or a dipper? Did you see that? It was bobbing!" and by the end of the ride, it is decided that among all of us, at least a few have seen what could feasibly count as an American Dipper.

We top off the day with some birding around the campgrounds after dinner. Scoping the skies above the mountains found us a **Northern Goshawk**. This was not just any goshawk, but the fearless "velocigos" (velociraptor + goshawk) who had taken up residence at the camp, named for his superb stalking, hunting, and *hiding* capabilities. We drive over to a Williamson's Sapsucker and Dusky Flycatcher spot, but no luck. The last few minutes were spent digging around near the dorm for a **MacGillivray's Warbler**, who made his appearance just before Jem Brumfield officially called an end to the day of birding.

We were exhausted but pleased when Raymond called out the total. Sure, we missed a few common birds, but it's common knowledge that when birds catch wind of a big day, they hunker down and snicker at the birders pishing frantically. I don't judge the day by the record, or even by my lifers. I judged it by the little moments -- McCown's Longspurs skylarking, Common Nighthawks yawning, a Mountain Plover looking like a large and lumpy potato -- and by my judgment, the second annual Camp Colorado Challenge went very well.



ABA young birders searching for McCown's Longspurs



AUG 22 - BOMBAY HOOK - Two Marbled Godwits at Sherness Pool, Royal Terns at Port Mahon Rd, immature Little Blue Heron and Indigo Bunting with youngster, chipping like a Cardinal at Finis Pool, Blue Grosbeak family on road out of Finis with mama chipping like a White-throated Sparrow “peep”, very convincing. Lovely weather. 62 species. 12 participants. Leader: Pete Webb.

AUG 25 - CROMWELL VALLEY PARK - Today was our first Tuesday walk of the fall. Wonderful to reconnect with Tuesday birding friends and see approximately 15 Orchard and Baltimore Orioles flying back and forth in the trees edging the field across from the hawk watch. A beautiful day in this field. 50 species. 14 participants. Leader: Debby Terry.

SEP 1 - CROMWELL VALLEY PARK - What a large group this week, including regulars and new people ready to go birding. Two groups were formed and good birds appeared. There were 9 species of warblers, the highlight being a beautiful Blue-winged Warbler. Lots of Magnolias and a Yellow-billed Cuckoo were a treat. 50 species. 22 participants. Leader: Ruth Culbertson.

SEP 13 - GWYNNS FALLS/LEAKIN PARK - Ten birders met at Winans Meadows on a cool and overcast morning and made a loop traveling along Dead Run, Gwynns Falls, up Hutton Avenue to the Carrie Murray Center, and down the hill back to the meadow. Highlights included a Summer Tanager and Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Particularly cooperative birds included a grouping of four Red-eyed Vireos, and a couple of Great Crested Flycatchers in good view at the Carrie Murray Center. A singing Yellow-throated Vireo was also seen. Numerous Common Grackles on migration were viewed from the parking lot, along with a few Cedar Waxwings.

Goldfinches were present in good numbers and the begging cries of the young were heard. Only a handful of warbler species were seen or heard. These included Blue-winged, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Black-throated Green, and Black-and-white Warblers, along with American Redstarts and Common Yellowthroats. Surprising in their absence, on the trip the group found no hawks, sparrows or thrushes other than robins. 38 species. 11 participants. Leaders: Paul & Elise Kreiss.

SEP 15 - CROMWELL VALLEY PARK - On this beautiful morning we followed a slightly different path, starting out around the field across from the hawk watch site. John Landers had scouted it out earlier and his tip was very worthwhile. A Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Yellow-breasted Chat and a gliding Sharp-shinned Hawk were found. Northern Flickers, Mockingbirds and Gray Catbirds seemed to be everywhere! Out by the bridge at the farm road were Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and a great view of a Red-tailed Hawk. Broadwings were soaring overhead. Minebank trail was rather quiet but the group spotted Black-and-white, Black-throated Green and Magnolia Warblers. A Warbling Vireo was heard and seen. 52 species. 19 participants. Leader: Mary Chetelat.

SEP 19 - SWIFT WATCH AT DUSK, HAMPDEN BOOKBINDERY - After many years of sparse patronage, the chimney swifts decided to return again to the Hampden Bookbindery in large numbers! On a beautiful, balmy fall evening the swifts circled the Bookbindery chimney for about a half hour before starting to enter at 7:20 pm. At least 1300 entered over the next 20 minutes in a slow but steady stream, much to the delight of onlookers. It was one of the highest numbers entering one chimney that we’ve had in several years. Earlier scouting found no swifts entering Roland Park Country School or the Scottish Rite Temple, and only 43 entering the schoolhouse chimney near St. Michael’s Church. A nice show. 27 participants at Hampden, including neighbors who have been watching this spectacle for years; 22 participants at Overlea. Leaders: Joan Cwi and Alice Nelson at Hampden, and Carol Schreter at Overlea.

SEP 22 - CROMWELL VALLEY PARK – All were excited to see kettles of Broadwings as they rose over the ridge line, totaling 317. Numerous other raptors were migrating also: Osprey, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned and Cooper's. Large flocks of Cedar Waxwings were heard and seen. A lucky few saw an Alder Flycatcher and a Least Flycatcher along the mowed path in the meadow. 53 species. 16 participants. Leader: John Landers

SEP 27 - MIGRATION: HAWKS, EAGLES and FALCONS - See story by same title in Bird Bits.

SEP 29 - CROMWELL VALLEY PARK - No highlights to speak of until end of the walk at the bridge on the Sherwood side of the Minebank Trail. In the dead walnut tree were 15 plus species and the group spent about a half hour observing. 44 species. 12 participants. Leader: Mike Bradley

OCT 6 - CROMWELL VALLEY PARK - After enduring five days of rain, wind and gray skies, birders enjoyed sunny skies, dry cool temperatures and close looks at Palm, Black-throated Green and Yellow-rumped Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Blue-headed Vireos, and a late Baltimore Oriole. 53 species. 14 participants. Leader: Debbie Terry.

OCT 10 - CAPE MAY HAWKWATCH - Highlights: an exotic Black Swan (native to Australia and probably an escaped domestic) greeted us from the pond near the platform when we arrived. Another stellar bird was also there - a male Eurasian Wigeon was mingling with American Wigeon in that pond. Another surprise awaited us when we took a trail walk: a Common Nighthawk flew over in broad daylight, showing the white spots on its wings. Other standouts: lots of Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks flew over, for comparison and I.D. practice. We also saw some Merlins and Kestrels and Kevin briefly spotted a Peregrine Falcon which dove out of view before the rest of us could get on it. On the trail, Pete heard and identified a calling Winter Wren, first of the season for most of us. Back at the platform one of two Blackpoll Warblers posed in plain view on a tree branch long enough for several of us to get a closer view through a telescope. Over a thousand Tree Swallows were flying around, and we managed to pick out Barn, Northern Rough-

winged, and Bank Swallows from the crowd. Similarly, there were a lot of warblers, including Yellow-rumped, Bay-breasted, and Palm (Yellow phase). Too many Mute Swans around; evidently folks there aren't keeping their numbers under control. Two of the rarest birds seen were also the most elusive; two small sandpipers flew by and the experts on the hawkwatch platform declared them to be a White-rumped Sandpiper and a Stilt Sandpiper. The rest of us didn't even manage to spot the two little birds as they flew away. Overall, we found the land bird and shorebird numbers and diversity a bit below average for this trip over the years, and the numbers of hawks to be up. We all did have an enjoyable day. 62 species. 6 participants. Leader: Pete Webb.

OCT 17 - HAWKWATCH ID WORKSHOP - Not a whole lot of raptors migrating, 76 were counted during 8 hours of hawk watching. But we get to see other migrants: 200 plus Canada Geese, 12 Common Loons high overhead, 42 Cormorants, several Tree Swallows, Flicker, Blue Jays, Bluebirds, Robins, Waxwings (100 plus), meadowlark and Goldfinches. 52 species. 10 participants. Leaders: Jim Meyers & Kevin Graff.

OCT 20 - CROMWELL VALLEY PARK - On this beautiful, crisp fall day birds were dancing all around us. We saw five hawk species, including a magnificent Red-shouldered riding a thermal. Three warbler species were still hanging around—Common Yellowthroat and Yellow-rumped and Palm Warblers.



Photo by Lou Taylor

A lively crowd of Ruby-crowned Kinglets entertained us, especially Lou Taylor who stayed with them for 20 minutes to finally get a photo of one displaying his red crown-patch! Other nice sightings included great looks at a male and female Eastern Towhees posing together on a bare branch, three Hermit Thrushes, and a Brown Creeper. 46 species, 19 participants. Leader: Joan Cwi

BALTIMORE BIRD CLUB
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Send update to
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