

# Chip Notes

BALTIMORE BIRD CLUB NEWSLETTER



SPRING 2020 No. 411

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## Graphic Designer Needed

Chip Notes is looking for a design editor. Beginning mid-year 2020 this person would be needed to take the articles and photographs and artfully arrange them into a newsletter every three months.

The core Adobe apps used are InDesign, Illustrator, Photoshop, and Acrobat Pro. But the new design editor could use other programs, such as the Microsoft Office suite.

If interested, please contact Joan Cwi at 410-467-5352 or [jafjsc@verizon.net](mailto:jafjsc@verizon.net). For more technical information contact David Nelson at 410-300-1163 or [dnelsonium@gmail.com](mailto:dnelsonium@gmail.com).

*BBC members have been birding around the world the past few weeks—in some places under attack by Mother Nature. Below is Lynne Parks' report on birding around Canberra, Australia, which was burning up around her. As I write Carol Schreter is still in Puerto Rico where she was when all the earthquakes were happening. And Terry Ross is soon leaving for the Philippines, where volcano Taal is still erupting. Geez!!!!*

## My Time Down Under

Article and photos by Lynne Parks

I have family in Canberra, Australia, and I'd been invited to spend the holidays with them. I'd decided that if I were traveling that far, I'd stay three weeks. There were bushfires to the south and east, but Canberra had moderate air quality.

I flew into Sydney on December twenty-first. The city was obscured by haze. You couldn't spot iconic landmarks. On the three-hour bus ride to Canberra, we never escaped a blanket of smoke. We passed farmland and bush, but I'd never seen a treed landscape that parched. We passed over dry creeks and riverbeds. Livestock ponds were shrunken to puddles. In an eerie moment, a white horse emerged out of the gloom to drink. I looked forward to seeing Lake George, but it had since turned into a sheep pasture. I coughed despite the filtered air. Smoke crept in.



Sydney Harbor

*Continued on page 6*

## 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! We look forward to seeing you out there on our birding trips and at our meetings.

Paula Fernandes .....	Baltimore
Boonyanan (Book) Karnjanakit .....	Baltimore
Lisa Helmer .....	Laurel
Brad Reiter .....	Marion Station

## President's Corner by Mark Linardi



Well here we are 2020! A new year, a new decade is upon us. Will we have perfect vision? Perhaps not, but we should at least achieve further clarity.

Right now, Australia is burning, Venice is drowning and here in America we continue to experience constant waves of unnatural disasters.

We are all stewards of this wondrous planet earth. As birders (and members of BBC) we have a closer connection to the nature world and a much better understanding of the elements that make up our terrestrial orb. We can see the workings of our ecosystems and the fragility of their existence. We have insight to the symbiotic relationships that exist between plants and animals and the precarious balance of nature.

So, I ask you, shouldn't we be at the forefront of protecting and promoting a healthy sustainable planet? Don't we have a sense of moral obligation? Can there possibly be a greater sense of urgency?

Why not make this year, this decade, one of action and commitment. The BBC is always seeking members who are interested in getting more involved and we certainly welcome your support, but let's not stop there. Why not venture into a new challenge. Get involved in conservation, participate in a stream clean-up, help with the removal of invasive plants, start planting a native garden..... you get the idea. Take a leap. "Be bold and mighty forces will come to your aid." (Goethe)

Above all, have a healthy happy New Year and as always, Good Birding!

## Conservation CORNER

### The Declining Chimney Swift Population

By Joan Cwi

We've all been reading about it, the recent publication by Cornell Lab of Ornithology scientists that uncovered a staggering magnitude of bird population decline in the past 50 years.\* They concluded that one in four birds in North America has disappeared. The losses vary by



Chimney Swifts Entering Freestate  
Bookbinders Chimney

type of bird, with grassland species showing the greatest decline at 53%. There are many reasons for this

decline, including cat predation, window strikes, pesticides, loss of habitat and native species and, unique to Chimney Swifts, capping chimneys.

Of particular interest to me, as the person coordinating our biannual Chimney Swift Watches, was these scientists found that aerial insectivores—birds like swallows, nighthawks, flycatchers and swifts—are down by 32%! This did not come as a surprise since Canada has been reporting that Chimney Swifts are more or less gone from their east coast, and just last October in Charlotte, when somewhat bafflingly the birds that crashed into NASCAR's glowing walls were chimney swifts, who fly all day catching insects high in the air and have no reason to be out at night when they should be roosting. Over 300 died that night. Even

downtown Baltimore has not been immune from window strikes—over the last ten years five Chimney Swifts have met their death in downtown Baltimore, the latest in the spring of 2018 at the National Aquarium Café windows on Pier 5. Chimney Swift conservation status has changed from “least concern” to “near threatened” then moved into the “threatened” zone in 2018.

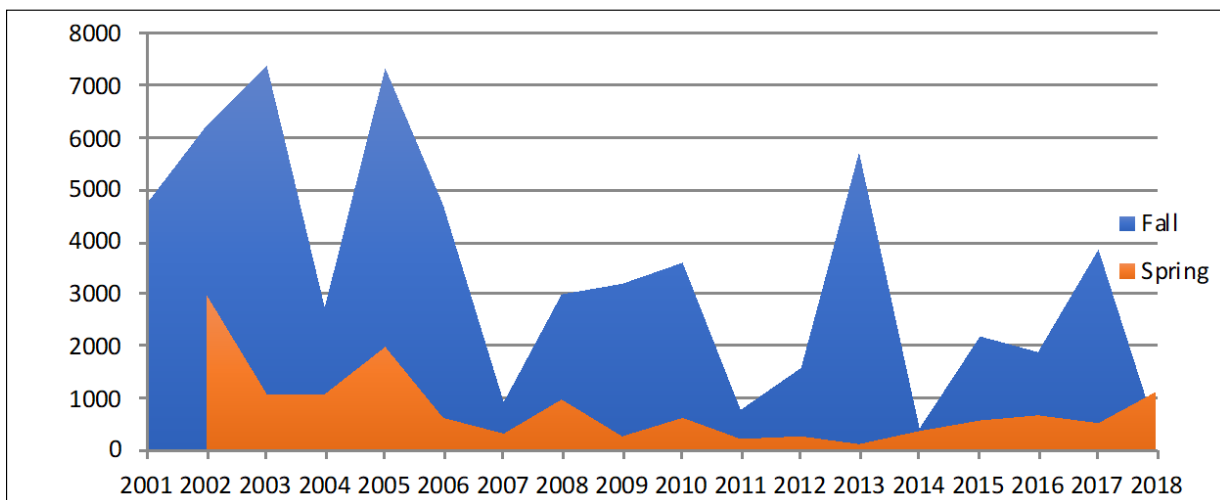
The Baltimore Bird Club has been tracking migrating Chimney Swifts and keeping records for 20 years and our records show this decline. We observe roosting swifts in spring and fall migration when they come into a communal roosting chimney at dusk, not leaving again until the next morning. Spring migration (occurring in late April/early May) numbers are considerably less than fall migration (middle of September). Most of the time we observe the roosting behavior at the Bookbindery Chimney in Hampden because they enter in great numbers there—generally. But they can be crafty and avoid the Bookbindery altogether so we have to figure out where they are roosting that season. Although they roost all over the City, for our swift watch we try to find a chimney that has many (thousands) of birds using it, and is also safe and has adequate parking. In addition to the Bookbindery, we have observed swifts using the Druid Hill Park Conservatory, the Temple of Scottish Rite on Charles Street, St. Michael’s

Archangel School, as well as many smaller chimneys. On any given night we may have as many as a hundred spectators, most not birders, to attend these events.

So, our numbers do not represent a census—just a convenience. But still, the numbers are interesting viewed over time. Starting in 2001, fall migration roosting numbers tended to be in the 4,000-7,400 numbers. Around 2007 we saw a big drop in these numbers, generally in the 3,000’s. Spring was similar, although the numbers are always less. Spring 2001 saw a couple thousand returning swifts, then by 2007 that number dropped to below 1,000, often as low as 130. See the graph below to get visual feel for the decline as witnessed by BBC here in Baltimore. As I said, this is not a census, but it certainly is a trend and reflects what the Cornell scientists observed.

One interesting observation happened in the fall of 2018 when we had only 350 swifts enter the Bookbindery chimney. That was very upsetting, knowing about the decline. But I checked Cornell’s eBird Live Migration Maps for that night and discovered that migrating birds were heading due west (rather than down the coast) to avoid the high winds of Hurricane Florence racking the Carolina’s that night. Phew! A logical explanation.

[\\*https://www.birds.cornell.edu/home/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/DECLINE-OF-NORTH-AMERICAN-AVIFAUNA-SCIENCE-2019.pdf](https://www.birds.cornell.edu/home/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/DECLINE-OF-NORTH-AMERICAN-AVIFAUNA-SCIENCE-2019.pdf)





## Birdbits.....

### Mark Your Calendar!

- ◆ **2020 marks the 75th anniversary of MOS and BBC.** So come celebrate with us at a potluck luncheon and lecture on Sunday, February 23 from 12:00-4:00 pm at the Vollmer Center at Cylburn Arboretum in Baltimore. All BBC members and MOS Board and Committee Chairpersons are invited. Join us for good food, a good lecture, and some special exhibits.
- ◆ Hank Kaestner will be presenting "The Jewels of Ecuador" about two of his favorite subjects: birding in South America and watching hummingbirds. Not only will you see many beautiful birds, but this talk will give you a real appreciation for what eco-tourism has meant to the locals and the environment.
- ◆ Space is limited, so sign up soon! To reserve a place and tell us what you will bring, please use the website [PerfectPotluck.com](http://PerfectPotluck.com) and enter Coordinator Name **Cwi**, and the password **9758**. For information contact the coordinator Joan Cwi at [jafjsc@verizon.net](mailto:jafjsc@verizon.net) or call Mark Linardi at 443-834-8413. If weather is iffy, check the BBC website in case of cancellation.

### Wisdom's Back!!!

Wisdom, the 69 year-old Laysan Albatross returned to her favorite nest site in the Midway Atoll in late November, and biologists at Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge have confirmed she's brooding. This remarkable albatross is believed to have laid nearly 40 eggs over the course of her life, although it's impossible to know the precise number. She has single-wingedly transformed scientists' understanding of albatross lifespans and of the age limits on avian reproduction. The bird is "a world-

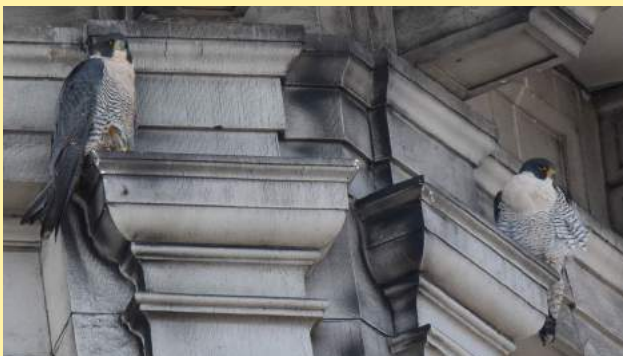
renowned symbol of hope for all species that depend upon the health of the ocean to survive," according to the Fish and Wildlife Service.



Wisdom

## Peregrine Falcon Update

Our intrepid Peregrine Falcon voyeur, Terry Ross, has been reporting sightings of our pair at the Roland Park Water Tower this winter. They were not there continuously like they were when nesting, and until recently they were not calling. But on the first of this year, Terry reported on Facebook that "The peregrine courtship is becoming a bit more elaborate. They were both perched on the tower, but on different sides and not in view of each other, when the male took off, flew a wide circle around the tower, and came back to where he had been. A few minutes later the female took off, flew a couple of higher and wider circles, and went back to where she had been. The male began calling to her ("EE-chup EE-chup"). The female flew off the tower, out of sight of the male. He called again several times, then he flew around the tower again and this time landed on the roof." As winter progresses, they are spending more and more time interacting with each other. Let's see what spring brings!!



Female

Male

## Great-horned Owl at Phoenix Wildlife Center

Thanks to all you generous birders, Phoenix received several discarded Christmas trees for their rehabbing birds to use as perches.



*My Time Down Under - Continued from page 1*



Eastern Gray Kangaroos

In Canberra, there'd been a temperature spike. It was a hundred and four degrees. Conditions had worsened. Unfortunately, face masks were sold out. During the clearest part of the day, I'd walk around the block where Galahs, Gang-gang and Sulphur-crested Cockatoos fed in the conifers. Crimson Rosellas sipped nectar. A pair of Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes dined on bugs.

The next morning, my nephew took us to Deua National Park. The drive was hazy, but we saw cockatoos grazing in the fields. Wombats crossed the road. I noticed a field full of dead kangaroos. They're competition for starving, dehydrated livestock. Some farmers shoot them. This practice is not unique to Australia.



Laughing Kookaburra

The trail we were meant to hike had closed since morning, so we'd found another. When my grandniece hopped onto a log, she startled a Superb Lyrebird. You think warblers are hard to spot? Try finding a Striated Thornbill in the top of an eighty-foot tall eucalyptus tree. Rufous Whistlers sang.



Superb Fairywren

We spent a few mornings birding local wetlands and bush, but the natural areas I'd researched were closed due to fire hazard. At Jerrabomberra, a Whistling Kite flushed Latham's Snipe and Australian Crake. Superb Fairy-wrens chased each other and Willie Wagtails were their sassy selves. My sister and I watched the kangaroo paw plants at the National Botanic Garden. Sure enough, Eastern Spinebills and New Holland Honeyeaters showed up. In the gully, Bassian Thrushes practiced their fart strategy to get worms and Eastern Yellow Robins perched. At Mulligans Flat, we saw kangaroos, wallabies, echidnas and a shingleback lizard. Scarlet Robins, and White-throated Treecreepers flocked together.

Christmas gave us a clear blue sky. There were epic wrapping paper tube fights with the kids on the trampoline. We ate homemade gingerbread cookie dough ice cream and Balmain bugs, which are lobster-like. We drove to the Snowy

Mountains. Below the tree line, Flame Robins and White-eared Honeyeaters bred. On Mt. Kosziuscko, Australasian Pipits staked territory and Australian Ravens rolled in pockets of snow. You could see the nearest ridges, but not the distant Victorian Alps.

Back in Canberra, Pied and Little Black Cormorants, Australian Reed Warblers, Hardheads, and Hoary-headed Grebes filled West Belconnen Pond, but hazardous levels of smoke



Echidna

rolled in compounded by high winds and dust. Following years of drought, there is no topsoil left. Canberra soon had the worst air quality on earth. We fed friends fleeing Mallacoota, their possessions left behind.



Gang-gang Cockatoo



Magpie-lark

We stayed indoors in museums, but then we fled to Brisbane for good air. We hiked Mt. Warning, it's caution heeded. There were Australian Brushturkeys, Lewin's Honeyeaters, and Rufous Fantails. Later, we stopped at two hardware stores, buying dozens of masks for future use. The day the kids went to the zoo, I opted to be dropped off in the bush. I found Fuscous Honeyeaters, Noisy Friarbirds, Common Cicadabirds, and Fan-tailed Cuckoos. The botanic garden was full of Blue-faced Honeyeaters and Black Flying Foxes, and an occasional Gray Butcherbird or Torresian Crow.

My family returned to Canberra, but the air quality was still unhealthy. I went to Sydney. On arrival, breathing was easy, and I spent the day in the botanic gardens photographing Rainbow Lorikeets feasting in a strawberry tree, begging Laughing Kookaburras, and napping Masked Lapwings. The next day was hazardous, and I stuck to art museums and went to the opera, La Boheme. Then it was time to come home. I'd miss the constant soundtrack of Noisy Miners, Pied Currawongs, and Australian Magpies.

You carry heavy thoughts. I could escape the smoke, but wildlife could not. Killing fires raged. People were stranded on beaches. At every donation box supporting firefighters and wildlife rescue, you dropped bills.

## Birding Patagonia, Argentina

By Kathy Lambrow

Photos by Kathy Lambrow unless otherwise noted.

Our group of eight fun-loving birders had been looking forward to this Patagonia trip since organized by our intrepid planner, Nancy, for over a year. We started in Buenos Aires, Argentina on October 25, 2019 and followed a path first north to the Ceibas area engaging local guide **Horacio Matarasso** of **Buenos Dias Birding** for a full day, arriving back to our hotel after dark. The remainder of the 13-day trip was planned by **Seriema Nature Tours** traveling south with flights to Trelew, Calafate, Ushuaia and then back to Buenos Aires. Local guides were engaged by Seriema for each section. See attached map to understand where our journey took us.



Argentina group photo: from left to right– front row – Mary Byers, Marina (guide), Nancy O'Hara, Kathy Lambrow. Back row – Brent Byers, Patrick Linardi, Linda Corcoran, Joe Corcoran and Mark Linardi (photographer).

A few words about Argentina and Patagonia – first, Buenos Aires is a beautiful city – very cosmopolitan with friendly people, great food and wine at reasonable prices and lots of attractions other than just birds – spend a few extra days there! Second, Argentina is a scenic country, much of the interior of Patagonia is very desert-like, flat with low brush and very brown, getting only 6 – 12 inches of rain per year. It can also be very windy. Finally, be prepared for changing weather. The high temps in Buenos Aires were in the 80s, but in Tierra del Fuego only in the low 30s changing from sunny to snow squalls very quickly.



The coastal areas are beautiful with breathtaking views, blue water and abundant sea life, birds and mammals alike. Along the coasts, ponds and lakes we saw many types of swans, ducks, geese,

gulls and terns, grebes, flamingos, lapwings and plovers, oystercatchers, stilts, snipes, sandpipers, phalaropes ... the list goes on. While all the birds were “special” the most “special” to me were the penguins (Magellanic, King and Gentoo); the albatross (Southern, Sooty and Black-browed); the Giant Petrels (Southern and Northern); the cormorants (Neotropic, Megellan and Imperial); the Snowy Sheathbill; Chilean and Brown



Flightless Steamer Duck

Skua, Dolphin Gull, Steamer Ducks .... Oh, I just can't name them all – there were SO many and they were all so special! You just need to look at the eBird lists of the trips! Overall, our group saw a total of 245 different birds – many lifers.



Gentoo Penguin

Outside of Trelew we visited Punta Tombo, an area that hosts one of the largest colonies of Megellanic Penguins in the world, estimated at about 1,000,000 breeding pairs. The land was donated and established as a preserve for the penguins who travel

up to a mile from the sea to make their nests in the ground. Boardwalks lead throughout the



Magellanic Penguin  
Photo by Nancy O'Hara

preserve and you sometimes have to detour around a resting penguin. Burrows are within a foot of the walk and as far as the eye can see. We witnessed courtship and

incubation, along with the many Kelp Gulls who were looking for a meal of fresh penguin eggs. Here we got a great look at the Elegant Crested-Tinamou and spotted some Lesser Rheas (ostrich looking birds) on the way.

Our base here was Puerto Madryn, a seaside resort in the season and home to Burrowing Parakeets, a beautiful bird. We explored a canyon outside of Puerto Madryn, simply a



Long-tailed Meadowlark

cut through the ground where water drain-off creates a canyon of sorts. Here we saw various spinetails, canasteros, tyrants and the ever-present and beautiful Patagonian Mockingbirds and Long-tailed Meadowlarks. Burrowing Owls were plentiful too, and how can I forget Rufous Collared Sparrows!



Burrowing Parakeets

What I want to emphasize is, not only were the birds amazing, but so was the sea life seen on two boat trips. One lasting several hours to see the seals and Southern Right Whales, who breed in the bay around Peninsula Valdes, and their babies.



Chilean Skua

The second was a 4 hour trip through the Beagle Channel to visit "Bird

Island" the Sea Lions and "Penguin Island"—a once in a lifetime excursion at the southern-most tip of South America. The day started with wind gusts of 35 – 40 mph that delayed us until the afternoon, but once cleared to leave port, we had calm seas – great for viewing and photographing birds. Our guide got us on one of the best boats and made sure that we had premium viewing spots. It's hard to express the exhilaration of



Elegant-crested Tinamou  
Photo by Nancy O'Hara

the trip, the sounds and smells (and oh yes, when nearing some of the islands with the cormorants, seals and penguins it was quite

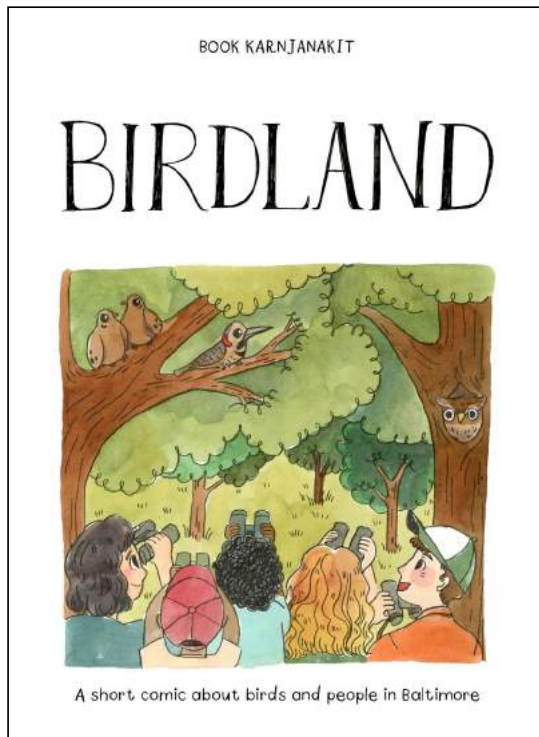
aromatic!), albatross and petrels soaring by, and all shared with fellow bird and nature lovers – an experience I will always remember!

In Part II available in the Summer 2020 Chip Notes: Now, on to the interiors, glaciers and Tierra del Fuego.

## Birdland

Please enjoy a couple of pages of *Birdland*, a short comic about birds and people in Baltimore. The artist, Book Karnjanakit, is a young woman who came from Thailand to attend the Maryland Institute College of Art where she created this comic book for

one of her classes. She has given us permission to disseminate her work. Here we have a few pages, and the full copy can be found on the BBC website: <https://baltimorebirdclub.org/birdland.pdf>.



# Field Trip Reports

Compiled by Kevin Graff  
Bird Photos by Bill Hubick



**OCT 15 - CROMWELL VALLY PARK** - Blue-headed Vireo - well seen; 5 warbler species and the variety of birders - from very experienced and some newer to birding - made for an enjoyable group. 42 species. 16 participants. Leader: Mary Chetelat.

**NOV 23 - BOMBAY HOOK** - It was an unexpectedly nice day with no rain. Highlights included Ring-necked Pheasant running along road and nearby farm; well seen Cackling Goose found first by Nancy O'Hara; thousands of Snow Geese including a Ross's Goose; great view of at least 8 marbled Godwits; a good collection of ducks, other shorebirds, and avocets. 63 species. 11 participants. Leader: Joe Corcoran.



Ross's Goose

**DEC 7 - MASONVILLE COVE** - After quick hot drinks and snacks, we started off a cold morning scanning the cove for waterfowl. Low numbers, handfuls of Lesser Scaups, a few Greater Scaup, single Ring-necked Duck and 60+ Canvasback in the mix. Good scope view of a pair of Bald Eagles, also lots of flickers and Ruby-crowned Kinglets. 36 species. 7 participants. Leader: Kevin Graff.

## DEC 8 - CAMBRIDGE WATERFRONT/

**BLACKWATER** - Excellent trip. We saw diving ducks at Cambridge Visitor Center, puddle ducks at Oakley St, and herons, rails, Tundra Swan, White Pelican, Brown-headed Nuthatch at Blackwater. Close views of American Bittern and Clapper Rail



Brown-headed Nuthatch

were unexpected. Beautiful late fall day. 54 species. 5 participants. Leader: Peter Lev.

**JAN 1 - NORTH POINT** - Pretty good day to start off new year birding. Handfuls of waterfowl, including pair of Tundra Swan flyover, single Long-tailed Duck, several Common Goldeneyes, nearly a dozen Hooded Mergansers; after hearing Virginia Rail calling, at least more than half of group got to see one each of Dunlin, Purple Sandpiper and Least Sandpipers on old pier; and 5 Bald Eagles, 11 Northern Flickers, nearly all in one tree!. 54 species. 11 participants Leader: Kevin Graff.



Dunlin

BALTIMORE BIRD CLUB  
<http://baltimorebirdclub.org>

A Chapter of

MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
4915 Greenspring Avenue  
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**Joan Cwi**, Editor  
**David Nelson**, Design

Submit materials to  
**Joan Cwi** – [jafjsc@verizon.net](mailto:jafjsc@verizon.net)

**Moving or email change?**  
Send update to  
**Terry Ross** at [trossstva@gmail.com](mailto:trossstva@gmail.com)

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

**April 24, 2020**



## 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	\$17.50	\$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