



CHIP NOTES

SUMMER 2021 • NO. 416



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President's Corner: My View of Scopes and Bins

By Joe Corcoran

Messages:

Modern birding spotting scopes and binoculars are too fragile.

Don't throw away old and broken spotting gear as it can be repaired and reused or given or lent to those who don't have access.

It all started with cleaning and repairing my bins and an old Bausch and Lomb very inexpensive spotting scope. Then it went to cleaning other people's bins and scopes. Then on to repairing faulty parts on my bins, then my wife's bins, then friends' bins, then friends' scopes. Now I have an operation going, with old binoculars used for parts, tiny screws and tiny tools for them, and much more.

And though this rehabbing



Cheap tape on expensive binoculars.

activity has only been going on for a few months, I'm at no loss for work. Business is booming! (Not really... I do it for free). Everyone seems to have issues with scopes and bins and even tripods (probably with cameras too but I'm not going there just yet).

What the Heavy Electric Led Lead

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WELCOME

Wow! Twenty-four new members!! A warm Baltimore Bird Club welcome goes out to the following members who have joined us since the Spring Chip Notes was published. Thanks for joining. We look forward to seeing you out there in our birding trips and at our meeting.

Peter Bungay – Annapolis
Joy Chambers – Annapolis
Andrew Beiderman – Baltimore
Maria Capino – Baltimore
Peter Conrad – Baltimore
Penelope Cordish – Baltimore
Chris Davidson – Baltimore
Jean Engelke – Baltimore
Rick White – Baltimore
Sally Foster – Baltimore
Tobias Pessoa Gingerich – Baltimore
Lindsay Hardesty – Baltimore

Elizabeth Lertch – Baltimore
Paula McLean – Baltimore
Taylor McLean – Baltimore
Scott Wilkinson – Baltimore
Cyril Brennan – Baltimore
Adid Fakhri – Glenwood
Adreon Hubbard – Idlewylde
Dorothy Stoltz – Idlewylde
Daniel Valentine – Parkville
Barbara Stevenson – Reisterstown
Robert David – Reisterstown
Nicolle Hahn – Towson

is going on? I'll tell you what's going on!

In My View: These overly expensive extremely delicate optical instruments are not designed for normal use by normal humans!

And worse, it may be on purpose! There's a lot of money to be made in factory repair of damaged optics. Think car repairs at a dealer. What a fleece job!... "and while your car's in for the scheduled oil change, we noticed with our FREE INSPECTION that your rear wheel differential defibering control module has only 30 hours of life left, so we recommend you change it out now. Using our top quality original manufacturer parts and the best trained auto technicians in the industry, it will only be \$1466.80 to replace this critical to function item. Plus \$44.99 for the oil change and filter. Plus tax". You know what I'm talking about.

So who hasn't had an eyepiece adjustable cup that won't adjust right? Or a focus knob cover that hasn't slipped off, or even the knob itself! Or a strap attachment issue? Or hasn't ever dropped their binoculars? Or had their scope fall over and hit the ground? (Right, that surely rarely ever happens... wink, wink.)

I'll tell you who hasn't. The opera enthusiast with what she considers naff (crappy in normal English) far away seats, who uses her bins three times a year and keeps them in a glass cabinet the rest of the time. Or the foofoo drink imbibing horseracing connoisseur who uses his spotting scope once a year to check out his favorite thoroughbred's freshly combed and brushed hair on the warm-up track from the upper crust priced grandstand seats before the Kentucky Derby first leg of the

Blueblood Equine Triple Crown race. That's who!

And look at my Leica binoculars. They cost me \$2400 and the optics are impeccably clear and spectacular, even at dawn and dusk in low light conditions. So why then, for all that money spent, is there electrical tape holding on the lens caps? Because the original plastic/rubber pieces that hold the caps on when you unblock the lens to see keep breaking off. Five times in two years it's happened. And Leica (the manufacturer) knows it's a problem. They just send me a couple of new caps every time I complain. And sooner or later they'll probably start charging.

Believe it or not, these caps are an improvement. The old way was for the caps to be loose after removal, and you had to put them away somewhere they would not get lost. And they got lost All The Time!!

Leica is not the only one! Swarovski, Zeiss - all of the manufacturers - have deficient and defective ergonomic designs. Look at the photos of some of the problems. It's like they put the top Engineers to work on the special optics manufacture and coatings, then put rookie engineers fresh out of college - or worse, engineering interns still in college - to work on the auxiliary parts. And the bean-counting CEOs and managers like it that way, because selling spare parts is so profitable.

At the (fictional) Krupp Optics bin and scope factory:

"Ah, Mr. Corcoran, velcum to owa engineering grrrrroup".

"Glad to be on board. I'm anxious for my first assignment."

"Ya, ya. You vill be verking vith Doktor Hansgrubben,"

"You mean THE Doctor Hansgrubben, one of the top optics

engineers on the planet?"

"Ya, ZE top Engineer. You vill be hees assistant".

"Oh, my. I'll get to work on fluorite glass designs."

"Vell, nein...no. At fust you vill mostly hold ze door and get cofve fur ze doctor ."

"Oh, that wasn't quite what I had in mind. May I work on the auxiliary knobs and lens cap design"

"Ahh, no! Zat verk is rezerved fur owa unpaid akademy engineering students. "

You get the gist.

Look at these tripod attachment problems. There's a standard 1/4 inch threaded hole in most scopes so a 1/4 inch screw in the tripod parts can attach the scope to the tripod. And if you can't attach a typically 20x plus magnification scope to a tripod to steady it, the scope is practically useless.

CASE #1 Scope was dropped and the piece where the 1/4 inch screw goes in fractured right across the threaded hole. There was then no way to attach this scope with beautifully designed optics to a tripod! Not a good design. And taping it with duct tape was NOT a great option because then you could not easily disassemble for transport. YUCK!

I was able to fix it with special weld epoxy and strong electrical tape, but it's definitely not a great permanent solution.

CASE #2 The scope attachment hole was threaded into an aluminum base. The problem with that is that the tripod screws are made of steel, which is much harder and stronger than aluminum. Invariably the steel screw will damage and strip the aluminum threads. That's what happened to this scope (which belonged to our new Chip Notes editor Alina Martin). Again, a nice

President's Corner

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scope cannot get attached to a tripod for use.

The fix was to drill and tap a steel plate with the ¼ inch threaded hole, then attach the plate to the scope with strong Gorilla Duct Tape and epoxy. Not the best long-term fix... but not much choice unless the scope was sent back to the factory for a repair that would cost near the price of a new scope!



Case #1 Broken mount (top) and fracture across threaded hole (bottom).



Case #2 Stripped and damaged threaded hole in aluminum.

Some more issues:

CASE #3 The focus knob fell off! Not break off...fell off! Ridiculous! (Alina's scope again btw). The part was not available online, likely discontinued. The repair was to find a radio tuning knob with a lock screw from a 1950s era ham radio set belonging to my 102 year old father-in-law. Really?!

CASE #4 The scope fell on ocean breaker rocks and the whole eyepiece ripped out, similar to the break shown in CASE #4 photo. The screws that held the eyepiece in place broke, and pulled out part of the body of the inner scope. You know why? Look at the size of the 3 screws holding the eyepiece to the scope. Really Nikon?!

This break rendered the scope un-repairable at a reasonable charge. The Non-Permanent Fix: Strong Gorilla Duct Tape reinforced by strong electrical tape. (By the way, be careful with the Gorilla Tape. I left a piece for just a second on my wife Linda's favorite place mat, and it pulled the top layer away.... oooops! I tried to hide the tear but was unsuccessful. Boy did I get an earful about working at the kitchen table!)



Case #3 Focus knob fell off.



Case #4 Scope broken from a fall on rocks.



Oops. Be careful with the gorilla tape.

President's Corner

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CASE #5 Speaking of small screws, a tiny screw sheared (broke) on this eyepiece rendering the magnification adjustment useless. (Another Alina scope issue; I hope she doesn't have these issues with her new scope). That should not happen! There are better ways to design this.

Finally, many birders bird in remote habitats and locations in all kinds of weather, and need equipment to hold up to the conditions, including slips and falls. Think about it. What if you're on a 3-day outdoor excursion high up in the Rocky Mountains and your birding partner is being a real pain, so much so that you want to knock them out with your scope. You can't do that nowadays, because if you hit them hard enough to put them under, you'll break something on your precious fragile scope. That's just not right. We need scopes to hold up to the habits and actions of real people. It's about time!



Case #5 One tiny screw shear and the magnification feature is lost.



Some of the tiny delicate screws. Try to find one after it drops on the floor!

Conservation Corner: What is a Habitat Walk?

By Mary Shock

A habitat for birds, as for all organisms, must include food, water, cover, and space. These elements are the essential environmental conditions any species requires to survive. Throughout Baltimore City and Baltimore County, municipal agencies, community groups, and developers have initiated restoration projects, altering the food, water, cover, and space of an area. The projects can include planting native shrubs and trees or reconfiguring waterways. What has been the success of these projects and what has been their impact on birds? Find out on a habitat walk.

Peter Lev ran the first BBC habitat walk at Lake Roland in fall 2019. There, the Lake Roland Nature Council and Baltimore County are restoring a rare serpentine grassland. Co-leader of the trip was Dwight Johnson of the Maryland Native Plant Society. For Peter, a habitat walk is a chance to talk about the ecology of a site. On the Lake Roland serpentine barrens trip the leaders discussed geology, plants, birds, and butterflies. Peter adds, “We were fortunate to pick a good fall migration day, with Eastern Phoebes (14 of them!),



Eastern Phoebe
Photo Credit: Bill Hubick

kinglets, and Palm Warblers passing through.”

At the Lower Stony Run project in Wyman Park, Baltimore City worked to mitigate erosion by widening the stream bank and creating a terraced stormwater wetland. Heavy rains in 2018 destroyed some of the restoration efforts. Lower Stony Run is Lynne Parks’ local green space. She has found that in some areas, the lesser celandine is wiping out wildflowers, but in other areas the restoration added new native species. On a habitat walk, Lynne shares which bird species show up in each area of the park during migration and which native trees and plants attract them. Lynne discusses the restoration in terms of what was successful and what failed.

At Prettyboy Reservoir the pine forest planted in the 1930s was aging. In 2010, Baltimore City cleared or thinned eleven acres of forest land. Some hardwood trees were then planted and protected from deer by tree shelters. In June 2021, Carol Schreter will lead a walk with a representative of the Baltimore City Forestry Board to examine how the trees are faring. Did the deer eat all the tree seedlings and saplings? Will there be a next generation of forest? For Carol a habitat walk is a walk with a “tree person” and a “bird person.”

In 2013, before the BBC’s planned habitat walks, members of the bird club visited Quarry Lake in Baltimore County, an old limestone quarry. Eric Hadaway of the development consulting firm, Daft McCune Walker, Inc., explained the project’s goal of creating habitat where different plant communities come together to attract different types of birds and other species.



Palm Warbler
Photo Credit: Bill Hubick

The developer reforested portions of the site, constructed two-acres of wetland, and restored over a half mile of stream channel. Within a ten-year period, the once barren landscape was attracting over 110 species of birds. Look for a habitat walk at this site sometime in the future. (See Quarry Lake – Reclamation, Development and Ecological Restoration, Joan Cwi and Eric Hadaway, Chip Notes, Summer 2013, No. 384 and Fall 2013, No. 385.)

Join the BBC for a habitat walk. The trips will include a person knowledgeable about the restoration project and a BBC member – a “plant person” and a “bird person.” Participants will discuss the goals of the restoration project, what was altered, improved, and transformed, what was taken out, what was planted, what thrived, what did not and why. And, we will look for birds!

Bird Bits: Roland Water Tower, Wisdom, and More

Roland Water Tower

Roland Water Tower has been under repair for several months now, and the repair will continue for a few months more. And even though they will be building a nesting platform, it is unlikely the Peregrines will be nesting there this spring. Keeping our fingers crossed for future years!



A Newly Fledged Peregrine Falcon
Photo Credit: Michael McCloskey



Wisdom Update

The world's oldest known wild bird is a parent once again. Wisdom, a Laysan Albatross, returned to her nesting site on Midway Atoll in November, along with her mate Akeakamai. Wisdom soon laid an egg, and in late January it began to hatch. The chick emerged on Monday, February 1. Wisdom is approximately 70 years old. Makes me weary to even think about it!!



Wisdom with her latest chick

Bird Bits: Roland Water Tower, Wisdom, and More



Debbie Blumenthal Taylor showing surprise at seeing a raft of turkeys.
Photo Credit: Lou Taylor



What kind of bird is this!??
Photo Credit: Aaron Heineman



Here's looking at you!
Golden-crowned Kinglet
Photo Credit: Michael McCloskey

Bird Bits: Roland Water Tower, Wisdom, and More



Changing of the Guard

By Alina Martin



Alina Martin (left) takes over as Chip Notes Editor. A role Joan Cwi (right) held for eleven years.

A Note from Joan

My fellow BBCers, this is just to let you know that, after eleven years, I will be stepping down as Chip Notes editor. I have enjoyed this job immensely, but my health has been failing so I cannot get around as much as I used to in order to ferret out ideas for articles. Plus, it is just time for a fresh, new face with new perspectives.

I'm happy to announce that Alina Martin has agreed to take over beginning with the next (Fall) issue. I will let Alina introduce herself in the following paragraphs. In the meantime, any information you may want to share via Chip Notes should be sent to Alina at alinacmartin@gmail.com.

-Joan Cwi

I got hooked on birding in college when, as I observed a Myrtle Warbler in the tree outside my campus housing, it dawned on me that I could find warblers without a professional background in birds. The beautiful campus of St. Mary's, the college I attended in southern Maryland, helped. The school is on the St. Mary's River and only a twenty minute drive from Point Lookout, a good spot for seabirds in the winter months, so I was provided with wonderful waterfowling opportunities. On more than one occasion I was late to class because I had to stop to observe a Common Loon eating fish or a Bald Eagle stealing from an Osprey. I found my lifer Worm-eating Warbler in the swampy woods by the dorms. I vividly remember the small flock of Scarlet Tanagers outside the study room window celebrating my completion of a night full of writing and editing for my Creative Writing final. In class later, my attention was pulled by these same tanagers as they foraged in the blossoming trees outside the classroom.

My interest in birds has been a life-long affair. My grandfather, a historian, was already an avid birder and lister by the time he met my grandmother in his early twenties. She happily accompanied him on his birding travels, cherishing the birds alongside him until the end. When he died this past January he left me his boxes of lists. My mother, who was raised on a farm in Montana, fostered a love for birds and all things nature. Despite inconsolable differences that ended in divorce when I was four, both of my parents took me and my younger sister to visit protected natural parks instead of amusement parks, instilling in me the absolute value of protected

land. Both of my grandmothers and my mother regularly stock their bird feeders and keep a life list. My father's mother, who lives in the Adirondacks, has had, for the first time ever, two mallards visiting her feeder daily. She is bemused, intrigued, and keeping us updated. I'm forever grateful that I can share my intense passion for birds with my family.

Since graduating, I've been living in Baltimore for the most part. My apartment overlooks one of the beautiful squares by the Washington Monument, which has turned out to be quite the migrant trap. One of my favorite moments was when I got out of bed and almost immediately spotted my lifer Orange-crowned Warbler just below my window. Another time I woke up to the largest tree sporting two Baltimore Orioles, an Indigo Bunting, and a Summer Tanager!

I took on the task of editing Chip Notes because I enjoy the process of editing. It involves me in the creative process without my having to stare down a blank sheet of paper. It will also keep me connected to the growth our Baltimore birding community is experiencing. I'm looking forward to reading your work and birding with you all.



Worm-eating Warbler
Photo Credit: Bill Hubick

Field Trip Report

Compiled by Nancy O'Hara

February 14, 2021 Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center

Leader: Joe Corcoran

On a cold, freezing and icy day when most all cancelled, a wonderful young birding family really wanted to bird. So we did it. They brought their brilliant birding children (age 9 and 11) for what turned out to be a very fun birding experience despite the nasty weather.

The children were on the Elementary Division World Series of Birding championship team, and were excellent birders. And soooo enthusiastic. It was so cool watching them get excited about the Red-breasted and Brown-headed Nuthatches. A highlight is when the son saw his lifer Long-tailed Duck. The whole family erupted in glee. Wow... Just wow!

We saw all the Scoters and a few Fox Sparrows and had 35 species in all. The family went on to Sandy Point and got a few more birds. What a joy this trip was for me.



Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center
February 14, 2021

February 20, 2021 Ocean City, MD Weekend

Leader: John Landers

Ten people participated in the Ocean City weekend. We had very cold but clear weather in Ocean City. We saw 45 species, with Common Eider, Purple Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstones, and Great Horned Owl (seen by a few) being some of the highlights of the trip. All three types of scoters were spotted, as well as Red-throated and Common Loons and many other species of waterfowl. Not to be missed, we also had some ponies show up on Assateague and join us briefly.

March 21, 2021 Loch Raven Paper Mill Flats

Leader: Sam Tillman

We started a beautiful spring morning at the Ashland parking lot of the NCR Trail and walked south to a spot overlooking a wide section of the Western Run, not far from where it joins the Gunpowder Falls. This has been a reliable spot for ducks all winter and did not disappoint with Green-winged Teals, American Black Ducks, Mallards, Northern Shovelers, and a lone Wood Duck. We spotted (and heard) an early Eastern Phoebe and had great looks at a Hermit Thrush feeding in the path. Our next stop was the Papermill Flats, a wide marsh found along the Gunpowder Falls. Here we saw a similar variety of ducks with the addition of American Wigeon and Bufflehead. Highlights were two Wilson's Snipes (life birds for a few participants) and Wood Ducks calling in flight.



Above: Photos from Ocean City, MD Weekend
February 20, 2021

April 11, 2021

Irvine Nature Center

**Leaders: Libby Errickson and
Brian Rollfinke**

This walk was a perfect sampling of early spring migration and bird activity. A pair of Blue-winged Teal had taken up temporary residence in the neighboring property's stormwater pond. Eastern Bluebirds and Tree Swallows, the latter only having just recently returned from voyages south, were already hard at work readying their nest boxes for the breeding season. Eleven Great Blue Herons were seen migrating overhead throughout the morning. Several Palm Warblers and one Yellow-rumped Warbler signaled the beginning trickle of warbler migration, which will turn into a deluge in the weeks to come. A dapper male American Kestrel soared overhead, a life bird for at least one of the participants. The group also enjoyed a flock of Rusty Blackbirds bathing and foraging in a forested wetland area, giving everyone excellent looks and a chance to really study the species. 13 participants, 45 species.

April 13, 2021

Lake Roland

The day started overcast and humid but eventually cleared. Highlight was a Bald Eagle chasing an Osprey over the peninsula for three minutes. The Osprey finally dropped a fish and the eagle caught it in the air. Four warbler species (good for this date): Palm, Yellow-rumped, Northern Parula, Yellow. Eight birders, 46 species.

April 17, 2021

North Point State Park

Leader: Peter Lev

A day good for water birds, light on passerines. In Black Marsh we saw Wood Ducks, Pied-billed Grebes, Coots, and some very close Swamp Sparrows. Near Crystal Pier, two Caspian Terns showed up first as distant white birds in flight. Then one of them flew directly over our group—a life bird for at least one participant. Eight birders, 42 species.

April 25, 2021

**Lake Roland Old Rugby Field
and Sorrento/Blue Trail**

Leader: Sam Tillman

A night of rain cleared up just in time for our walk, and muddiness aside, we had a beautiful morning. On the path out to the old rugby field we found Blue-gray Gnatcatchers nest-building, and had Green Heron and Wood Duck flyovers. We found our most anticipated bird, the Sutton's Warbler, along the Sorrento trail, not far from where it had been seen all week. This bird, first found by George Poscover, is a rare hybrid of the Northern Parula and Yellow-throated Warbler. While its song is distinctly parula, its appearance leans heavily towards the Yellow-throated Warbler, and was a definite highlight of the walk. Further along the trail we got great looks at a group of Yellow-rumped Warblers feeding over Roland Run, a Blue-headed Vireo, and Black-and-white Warbler.

April 25, 2021

Leakin Park

Leader: Keith Costley

Our leader proved SO good at songs that he was remarkably adept at spotting birds for twenty eager birders in GFLP, from beginner to experienced. As the rain clouds rolled away, we started out with feast-for-the-eyes views of Wood Ducks on Dead Run. Goldfinches were spotted aplenty, as well as Parula Warblers, phoebes singing their eponymous call, swallows and sparrows, and little crowds of fast-moving Blue-gray Gnatcatchers almost impossible to catch in your binoculars. We caught up with a Black-and-white Warbler, and both Northern and Louisiana Waterthrushes. We saw Chimney Swifts in synchronized courtship flight, cowbirds scouting where they might deposit their eggs in other birds' nests, kinglets, and great views of a kingbird. Red-tailed Hawks began to soar on the warming thermals. Lots more crowd-pleasers were on view, too, like the vivid bluebird, Great Blue Herons, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, and robins individualizing their nests with outlandish finds.



Great Blue Heron
Photo Credit: Bill Hubick

Baltimore Bird Club

<http://baltimorebirdclub.org>

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Moving or email change?

Send update to

Terry Ross – trosstva@gmail.com

**Deadline for submitting articles
for upcoming issue:**

July 15, 2021



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: <https://mdbirds.org/join/chapters/baltimore-bird-club/#toggle-id-3> 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:

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