



CHIP NOTES

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Daisy Sudano with Kaiden Corcoran

My Pandemic Patch

By Tobias Pessoa Gingerich

Crows, they say, are among the smartest birds, but sometimes even they are fools. Take for instance a flock overzealously defending their barren patch of December oaks against an intruding raptor last winter. All well and good so far. Such mobbing behavior generally serves them well, except they hadn't stumbled upon a ponderous buteo this time, or even a more agile accipiter. This was falcon – a Merlin, no less – and it did *not* take kindly to their attentions.

Undeterred to be out-sized and outnumbered, the Merlin gamely joined battle and put the crows to shame. In a spectacular display of aerial prowess, it easily evaded their attacks, then turned the tables, flying impossibly tight loops to flip around behind and above its would-be harassers and deliver its own broadsides, to rather greater effect. To their credit, the crows regrouped and tried again, but the Merlin was ready now and their second engagement was even less successful than the first sally.

Delighted to have a front-row seat to this little drama, I confess my disappointment when the crows gave up and returned to their perches. The Merlin appeared to share my feelings and took the opportunity to launch a counter-attack, driving the crows from their tree and harassing them in turn for several more minutes before they flapped raggedly away, thoroughly defeated. Finally satisfied, the feisty little falcon settled down again, secure in its dominion. What a show! And even better, practically in my back yard – just a short walk away in Druid Hill Park.

Through the past two years of pandemic, Druid Hill Park has been a godsend. Especially living without a car until recently, Druid Hill, along with Wyman Park just across the Jones Falls, was my best opportunity to go birding, and did not disappoint. I've often said half-jokingly that these parks have kept me sane through COVID. Access to trees, open spaces, and the birds that populate them has certainly made things easier.



The Merlin



Eastern Kingbird

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Birder's Anonymous (BA) and Birdanon

Article by: Joe Corcoran

What is going on with many birders (including me) and birding lately?! Every morning we're up at 5:30am, getting ready for a day of finding and watching birds, not only during this short but wonderful spring migration season, but during all seasons. Every daylight hour we're trying to be where there are birds; before work, on the way to pick up kids, between shopping stops, after errands, whenever we can. I'm out there with you, listening to all of you saying, "I've got to go to work but the birding is still good, I'm going to stay here just a few more minutes", or, "I'm not getting any work around my place done. I have to keep choosing between birding and garden work, and the weeds are getting quite tall!"

We're out in all kinds of habitats and weather too. Heavy rain, large briar patches, freezing cold, snow, poison ivy, ticks, mosquitos, high wind, thick mud. Doesn't matter. We're going where the birds are.

What's happening to us? We are the hard core birders. We're obsessed and addicted. We CAN'T stop. Where will it end? Our partners are irritated;

our houses are a wreck; our cars smell from the trash bags full of rotten fruit remains of our quick and easy breakfasts! Yet we continue to bird, and bird, and bird.

I know where this is going. Many of us need or are going to need treatment for this addiction, and we're going to need it soon. As a veteran of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) – haven't had a drop of alcohol in 7 years – and also of Alanon, the support group similar to AA for the loved ones of those addicted, here's what I see potentially (wink,wink). Soon there's going to be support groups for addicted birders and their loved ones. Birder's Anonymous (BA) and Birdanon.

Here's my fictitious and a bit humorous take of how this might play out.

Kai (K) and Alex (A) have been married for 10 years and are raising two children. But A is a birdaholic, and has finally come to that realization after years of denial, and is attending BA meetings. I've been asked to go to one for support.

"Hi, my name is Alex, and I'm a birdaholic" is followed by "Welcome, Alex" from the rest of the group.

And what a rough looking group it is. There are about 20 other people there, all showing signs of years of overbirding, but about 8 are obviously burnt out right now. The signs are there in those special few: bleary eyes, binocular eyepiece rings around both eyes, with their scope eye obvious from the extra scope ring contribution, and hunched and crooked necks from uplooking at warblers and other tree migrants, and more. They're skinny and malnourished, and underbathed and sleep deprived, and most are wearing wrinkled clothes.

Back to Alex, who looks just like one of those food and soap challenged few: "I can't take it anymore! All I want to do is bird, every day, all day. I've quit my job as an engineering consultant because I wanted time off to do a state big year and the company wouldn't give me the time off. They complained that I just did one last year. So I quit. And now my partner is furious and wants a divorce! And my kids hate me and say I'm never there for them". A bursts into tears. "And they're right! What are their names again, Joe?!", then more whimpering and tears.



Birding in Heavy Showers



High Elevation Birding Looking for Ptarmigan



Alina Martin Birding in Freezing Cold Weather

Birder's Anonymous (BA) and Birdanon

Continued from page 2



The Very Uncommon Common Myna

"Get those tissues over here", another person demands gently. A sobs some more.

The reality seems to have finally sunk in. A calms down and says, "I'm ok now", and the moderator calls on another birdaholic and the meeting goes on.

Afterwards, on the ride home, I ask how A's doing. A says "Good, I feel better". Then A's mobile dings. "There's was a Yellow-allulahed Spittlebird spotted over at the lake this afternoon!!", A exclaims excitedly. "I'll go see it in the morning". I say "What about your family, A, don't you have a job interview in the morning", and A goes, "It's ok Joe, got it covered. I'll tell that company I got the COVID. It's going around you know, and besides, that YASP (banding code for the Spittlebird) may never be back here again".

"What a nasty addiction", I think.

Later, I'm going to another meeting, again for support, but this time it's for Kai. We're going to a Birdanon meeting.



Parking Lot Birding

It's K's turn to speak. "A is never home! It's birds, morning, noon and night. When not outside watching them A is inside studying them. The children don't know him. I don't think he even remembers their names!"

K is obviously stressed, and really angry too, it seems. "But that kook remembers the bird names. Southern Crested Flymuncher, Bensonian Redbird, Blue-rumped Myarchian Locust-Shrike. AArrgghh! Unbelievable! Why can't A stop birding! I'm so angry!"

K takes a deep breath, then goes on, "and if it's a rare bird around, especially if he calls it an ABA rarity, A goes nuts! Must find that bird no matter what! Forget me, forget the kids. Just get that bird!"

"Like the time Alex was searching for a Common Myna near our vacation spot in Florida. Got up every morning before dawn, and drove an hour to a downtown mall parking lot and drove all around looking for this thing, this so-called common bird."

"And it usually took a few hours, as A kept missing the bird. Every morning

for five days Alex went out and left us in the morning without transportation, then in the evening took us to the same Wendy's or Chipotle for dinner in the same ugly mall because A wanted another shot at the bird. All for a COMMON bird!"

Whoah, I had never heard about all this. Neglected K and the kids. A needed help bad.

And there were more speakers with stories – mostly sad, but some hopeful - of living with a birdaholic. One story particularly touched me.

"My partner is the worst kind of birdaholic" a speaker complained. My partner is a LLLLLL..." then a sigh, "is a LLLLLiiii....", then tears and tissues, "is a LLIissterrrr!, A LISTER!!!", which drew groans and exclamations of horror from the rest of the attendees. Some got up to give the distressed person hugs of support, the poor soul. Oh my!

Well, that's my take if we don't control ourselves or seek moderation. But we won't, so don't be surprised if you hear about local BA meetings popping up.

Reimagine Middle Branch! Eleven Miles of Restored Wetland Planned

Article by: Mary Shock

Reimagine Middle Branch!

Ambitious plans are afoot for eleven miles of shoreline along the Patapsco River in South Baltimore. Designers of the plan aim to connect thirty parks and nineteen neighborhoods, from Curtis Bay to Port Covington, to each other and to the water. The City of Baltimore, the City of Baltimore Department of Planning, the Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks, the Parks and People Foundation, and the South Baltimore Gateway Partnership have joined to create a master plan for the project.

The bold and beautiful reimagining includes a restored waterfront with berms and resiliency wetlands, a network of trails and boardwalks, piers and boat houses, an African-American Heritage Trail, and “complete streets” with biking paths, pedestrian walkways,

connections between the different neighborhoods, and bridges to link various sections of South Baltimore.

James Corner Field Operations is a landscape architecture and urban design firm developing the master plan. The firm has held meetings to gather community input and to learn the neighborhoods’ major priorities, namely which projects to begin first. Some community members believe sidewalks and safe access to the water is their main concern. Others have raised the issue of water and air quality, infrastructure and raw sewage, and the Baltimore incinerator. What is the use of beautifying the area and failing to address those issues? Other community members have noted that gentrification might be on the horizon. Addressing the possibility of gentrification should be part of the plan.

Funding for the projects comes from mixed sources including Local Impact Grant funding from Maryland casinos and Maryland Capital Grants. Some projects are funded and have begun, like the Middle Branch Fitness and Wellness Center. Wetland restoration will be funded by federal, State, and local grants. Other projects are not yet authorized. For example, the plan calls for reconstructing the Little Hanover and Potee Street bridges for bikes and pedestrians lanes and for use of the CSX swing bridge; those uses have not been authorized by whomever owns or oversees those bridges (CSX or the City). The next stage of the plan is for to designers to determine an operational and maintenance plan, the cost of the projects, and a timeline for phasing in the projects.

The Reimagine Middle Branch plan with eleven miles of restored shoreline can only be beneficial for birds and birdwatchers. Look for a future BBC Habitat Walk in the area to learn about the restored wetlands and to spot the birds the habitat attracts.

Sources and for more information, go to:

www.reimaginemb.com.

www.baltimorefishbowl.com.

March 3, 2022.



New wetlands and boardwalks will transform Ridgely's Cove into nature-based parkland.
Credit James Corner Field Operations. www.reimaginemb.com.

My Pandemic Patch

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Pie-billed Grebe

My walks from home remain my go-to patch, even since capitulating to our auto-centric transportation system and buying a car. (Ask me sometime how I feel about the juxtaposition of North Point's historic trolley station and its now-total inaccessibility by bike or public transit). Birding on foot has been delightful. (Druid Hill is also accessible via the Yellow Line, and the 22 and 94 both cross Wyman Park). I might not get quite as many rarities as some other hotspots, but over the course of 600-odd checklists, I've found 170 species within walking distance of home. More importantly, I've gotten to know a beautiful side of the city and my wonderful avian neighbors who live here and travel through.

Spending regular time in my patch has opened my eyes to all sorts of little happenings, especially the fine distinctions of seasonal change. Each time of year has its delights. Fall is for welcoming back old friends – gulls and sparrows that return in numbers after mostly heading north for the summer, and ducks that all did. It's a



Trumpeter Swans on Druid Lake

delight each year to see the first Ruddy Ducks on the reservoir, a promise that the flock will in fact return. We get the occasional exciting visitor – Trumpeter Swans come to mind! – and a good laugh now and again. Possibly my favorite scene from the lake has been a Pied-billed Grebe trying to eat a frog it caught. The poor grebe couldn't get it down. The frog (poor *frog* I guess I should say), was bigger than the grebe's head and simply wouldn't fit down its throat, despite many comical adjustments to try every possible angle. The grebe eventually retreated into the reeds to avoid the ministrations of some kleptoparasitic Ring-billed Gulls who would have happily solved the problem, though not to anyone else's liking.

Winter brings falcons. Merlins are the most common, but there's also the solitary peregrine that looms over the park from its verdigris copper arch at the top of a neighboring apartment building, visible from a mile away if you know where to look. This spring I observed a pair for a while – I'm dearly

hoping that the female's disappearance right now means they have a nest up there somewhere! I occasionally see a kestrel, delightfully bright amid the tans and grays of the season.

The lake continues to deliver this time of year as well. It's always worth checking after a storm to see what blows in; Long-tailed Ducks were a particular treat this winter. The reliable Ruddy Ducks are still the stars, though, especially when they're actively feeding. My non-birder wife tells me the cuteness of diving ducks (or grebes) is the way to get more people into birding.

The height of avian drama comes in spring. Courtship, migrants in their breeding plumage, a general rush and bustle of feathered life. The returns of swallows and swifts are among the first signs of this coming ebullience. Though I'm sorry to see the gull numbers wane, I can never really mourn their replacement over the lake by these smaller but equally acrobatic fliers. The speed and precision of the swifts in particular almost makes me feel sorry for any insect unfortunate enough to

My Pandemic Patch

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fly. As we enter courtship season, I'm particularly fond of Northern Flickers. Not content with just any old tree for their drumming, some have discovered the tennis court lights have a much louder resonance and pound away on the aluminum, proudly announcing their presence to the world.

I'd also be remiss not to mention spring warblers. Both Druid Hill and Wyman benefit from the Central Park effect, which concentrates migrants into city green spaces. During the height of

migration, they practically teem with warblers – up to 20 different species in a single day. I particularly remember one walk at Wyman featuring a highly agitated House Wren. I never did figure out what upset it, but it scolded away from a little tulip poplar, maybe eight feet tall, which soon filled with at least that many species of warblers coming to see what the fuss was. Myrtle, Magnolia, Black-throated Blue, American Redstarts and more, all out in the open together – magnificent!

Late spring and early summer continue breeding season, which has been especially fun as I've gotten into atlasing for the third MD and DC Breeding Bird Atlas. The week after European Starlings all hatch out is a little overwhelming – hordes of squawking fledglings sort of overrun the park for a moment – but last year did offer delightful scenes of the awkward young birds chasing cicadas. One was so intent it ran right across my foot in the process! Others are more

WELCOME!

A warm Baltimore Bird Club welcome goes out to the following members who have joined us since the Spring Chip Notes was published. A couple of you were members in past years and have rejoined. Thanks for joining! We look forward to seeing you out there on our birding trips, and at our lectures and other events.

Audra Agnelly	Baltimore
Daniela Amzel	Baltimore
Roberto Anson	Baltimore
Wendy Balder	Baltimore
Julie and Mina Brunelle	Baltimore
Mary Burrows	Baltimore
Maura Cheney	Baltimore
Michael Coe	Baltimore
Michele Cookson	Baltimore
Jen Cookus	Baltimore
Toby Ditz & Mark Edward Martin	Baltimore
Kyle Gardiner & Kathryn Hendley	Baltimore
Katelyn Greller	Baltimore
Joe and Alicia Haberman	Baltimore
Jack Holmes and Victoria Aversa	Baltimore
Miguel Jimenez-Urias & Sarah James Kes	Baltimore
Book Karnjanakit	Baltimore
Patricia Lawson	Baltimore
Jackie MacMillan	Baltimore
Debby Malavenda	Baltimore
Jeffrey Martin	Baltimore
Georgia Marudas	Baltimore
Sarah Merrow & Robert Kanigel	Baltimore
Leah Nellis	Baltimore
David Nyweide	Baltimore
Anne Parshall	Baltimore
Julia Pierson	Baltimore
Babrara Pralle	Baltimore
David Rach	Baltimore

Juanita Rockwell	Baltimore
Meredith Safford	Baltimore
Mark & Poppy Siefert	Baltimore
Linda Sprenkle	Baltimore
Marilyn & Paul Timmel	Baltimore
Lyn White & Stephanie Sopka	Baltimore
Carol and Jonathan Zenilman	Baltimore
Charley Camp	Catonsville
Chris & Cherie Miller	Catonsville
Sarah Demarest	Chevy Chase
Leslie Lewis & Marjorie Pryse	Cockeysville
Heather Ogden & Michael Lins	Elkridge
JoAnn Bochmann	Fallston
Jessica Leung	Linthicum Heights
Kimberly Gough	Manchester
Stacy Hartman	Middle River
Ann Duncan	Monkton
Brian Jeffers & Ellensue Levinson-Jef	Owings Mills
Dwight and Donna Lakner	Parkton
David Votta	Parkville
Lynn Kendrick	Phoenix
Frank Marengi	Randallstown
Jeny and Will Dalrymple	Reisterstown
Gregory and Gail Grant	Reisterstown
Tirzah and Dror Rom	Reisterstown
Helen D. Kennedy	Towson
Laura Lechtzin	Towson
Bonnie and Roland Pechulis	Towson
Deborah Quirk	Towson

My Pandemic Patch

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elegant, like a first-year male Indigo Bunting that staked out a territory near the tree nursery. His still-patchy blue must not have been in style, though, because despite a month or so of dedicated singing I never saw any signs of a mate. Better luck next year!

The Red-tailed Hawks near the conservatory were more successful, hatching three chicks last spring. I found the right angle to see the nest well and taking a picnic and the scope to watch the little “floofs” wait for their parents bringing food has become something of a tradition. Sadly, we had a weekend of heavy rain just after they fledged, and I found one of the juveniles huddled on the ground near the nest. Lynne Parks came to the rescue though, and bundled it off to the Phoenix Wildlife Center where, last I heard, it was recovering well. The brood from 2020 certainly did well – my wife and I stumbled into their hunting practice that summer. Both juveniles took turns making passes at a fat groundhog, a good target since it was much too big to be afraid and mostly just stood there and snarled at them. After five or six dives though, it finally had enough and ambled off into the bushes.

As I write, we’re back in the height of spring migration, with neotropical migrants bustling through or joining our year-round residents in nest-building. I’m deeply grateful for my parks, and the opportunities they offer to connect with the land and the changing seasons. Getting to know my patch well has helped me delight in all the familiar birds and cultivated a sense of possibility – you never know what you’ll find! You’re welcome to explore these parks with me, of course, and I’d also invite you to walk out your door and explore your own local patch. Your feathered neighbors are just as interesting as mine!



Northern Cardinal



Hungry Red-tailed Hawk

Being a Blind Birder and Ornithologist

It's More Complicated than Black and White

Excerpts from article written by Sarah Kulis; originally published in *Birding* - American Birding Association, November 2021

Sarah Kulis; Baltimore, Maryland; skulis058@gmail.com

Blind Isn't Black and White

When you think of someone being "blind," do you think of someone who cannot see at all? But vision isn't just black and white, it isn't being able to see or not. There are forms of blindness where you can still see some things. "Blindness" isn't necessarily something you're born with, either. I lost my vision when I was in the fifth grade. I have a genetic condition called Stargardt disease, an early onset of macular degeneration. Macular degeneration is relatively common among older birders, but is very rare among younger birders like myself. My 20/20 vision suddenly became 20/200. With this condition, I lost my central vision but have retained my peripheral.

There isn't a cure for this disease, and corrective lenses don't work. You must find creative ways to adapt. Without the use of assistive technology, reading is impossible. Driving is illegal for me. I can identify large objects on the landscape like trees and buildings fine, but, when it comes to small objects like birds, things get tricky. My vision is more pixelated than blurry. When looking at the sky or over a mountain range, flying birds appear as dark, unidentifiable shapes. The mountains are there, the trees are there, but the birds are just flying ants.

How I Got Started in Birding

I wasn't always into birding. I used to get frustrated and say that all birds looked the same. As a junior in college, I was required to pick an area of focus. The course I wanted to take didn't fit into my schedule, so I was left with Ornithology. We were required to be able to identify more than 100 bird species, by looks and sound. Some species required

age and sex determination by visual details of the wings and feathers. Learning to identify by sight was hard for me. We learned on taxidermized specimens that were sometimes in

professor and the teaching assistants would pull up a photo of the bird in question so that I could enlarge the image. With these accommodations, I grew to know my birds. But it wasn't



The author is an activist and field ornithologist. Here she makes observations of a Red-shouldered Hawk feeding its young. Decent optics are especially important for birders with poor or declining vision, but, unfortunately, are quite pricey. Photo courtesy of Sarah Kulis.

rough condition. Some colors were faded, and parts were missing. Big birds were challenging, and looking at small species like warblers seemed impossible.

My professor would sit down with me and walk me through every single species' identifying characteristics. He would point out the yellow lores of the White-throated Sparrow and the wing bars on flycatchers. When it came to birding in the field, we were asked to do field quizzes. We had to write down the order, family, and common name of species we either heard or saw. This left me in another difficult situation. Without being able to see the birds, passing the quizzes was impossible. So as always, we adapted. My

until a year later that my passion really took off. I saw a post on Facebook about a Black-bellied Whistling-Duck in the Baltimore area. That bird struck me as beautiful and foreign. I tried to find it. The bird didn't show, but the thrill of looking for it hooked me for life.

The Challenges of Birding

When it comes to birding now, I still have my fair share of challenges. Driving, as I said, is impossible. I must rely on a seeing-eye human to get places. The global COVID-19 pandemic further complicates things. Most birders won't carpool now, and taking public transport isn't safe for me. Chasing a rarity is hard to nearly

Being a Blind Birder and Ornithologist

It's More Complicated than Black and White...Cont'd

impossible. So, all the birding I get done is more local, within 30–40 minutes of my home and typically only on the weekend. I manage to navigate the trails. Occasionally I stub my toe on a tree branch or rock, but I rarely ever fall. Trails that are handicap accessible are best for the visually impaired. As for identifying birds, I rely heavily on a seeing-eye human, a scope, binoculars, and a camera. It's easier to take a photo of every bird I see and identify it later than to struggle to identify it in the field. By the time I focus a scope or binoculars, the likelihood of the bird still being there is slim. And if the bird is too far, I won't be able to identify it even with binoculars. Birding, if you get into it, is an expensive hobby. It gets even more expensive when you factor in having a disability. You have to buy the best binoculars, scopes, and cameras to help you see and to help you enjoy birding. A lot of people with disabilities, including myself, are unemployed and cannot afford the tools we need. While birding is for all, we still have a long way to go for it to be accessible to all.

If you're new to the birding world, I recommend joining a local bird club. The members will help you learn and locate the species you want to see. Joining my local bird club was the best thing I ever did. The other birders I met have been very accepting. They accompany me while birding and help put me on the birds. They use landmarks such as dead trees or poles to guide me as to where to look. A few months before writing this, I went out to find a Brown Booby in the Baltimore Inner Harbor. The bird was sitting on ship ropes. A member of the birding club told me where the bird was, informing me of the letter of the ship's name where the bird was roosting.

Without that direction, I wouldn't have found the rarity. Since joining the club, I've found over 100 life birds, a total I certainly wouldn't have been able to attain on my own

Birding by ear is quite helpful to me, but living in an urban area I often struggle with ambient noise, such as when airplanes or helicopters fly overhead. Having sensitive hearing has its drawbacks. I've actually heard a vole's heartbeat in the leaves, but I get frustrated trying to enjoy a loud cardinal if conditions aren't perfect.

Scientist Before Birder

In 2020, I met a bird bander who focuses on raptors. Since then, I've shadowed him a handful of times, and have assisted in handling hawks and taking measurements. I gained experience with mist net set-up, balchatri traps, and bow nets. Having a bird in hand is the best learning experience, and I was educated on aging and sexing birds.

I recently finished working as an avian habitat technician for a university in Mississippi, traveling the state to multiple national forests and identifying every species I could. I counted the numbers of birds at precisely designated latitude and longitude points. Traveling to a new area of the country was definitely a test of my birding abilities! While some of the species were similar, there were many new species. The learning curve was steep. Common birds from back home, like Blue Jays, had different tones, pitches, and calls in new environments. I had to quickly adapt and relearn the species I was familiar with. I found myself struggling to differentiate between the Kentucky Warbler and the Carolina Wren. I was familiar with the sound

of the Carolina Wren, but had never heard the song of a Kentucky Warbler before. I studied up, going through audio clips on eBird of the species in the area, quickly learning differences in speed, pitch, and tone of the songs. There were sounds I had never really even thought about before. I got to experience the sounds of an adult Red-cockaded Woodpecker feeding young. Though I couldn't see this, the communication between the adult and young was magical. While surveying in the forests, I heard my first Bachman's Sparrow. I didn't recognize the song at first. So I got resourceful. I used the Voice Memos app on my iPhone to make a recording. When I got back to the hotel, I was able to determine the species. The birds were only a small challenge of the job. The largest hurdle was the landscape. The understory often consisted of dense mats of grasses. Sometimes I would unknowingly step into a puddle; other times I would stub my toe on a log. Using a walking stick held out in front of me helped me discover



Despite being legally blind, the author is a practicing ornithologist. In this image, she is part of a team studying Red-tailed Hawk biology. Photo courtesy of Sarah Kulis.

Being a Blind Birder and Ornithologist

It's More Complicated than Black and White...Cont'd

hidden obstacles. There are always risks in a landscape full of venomous snakes and spiders. But being “blind” in the field isn’t as much of a risk as it seems. Even someone with 20/20 vision would have struggled to navigate. Because I cannot drive myself, I had an assistant technician who drove. Unfortunately they didn’t have a background or interest in birds. This presented significant and frustrating challenges and was a real set-back to my work.

During my time in Mississippi, I had the opportunity to shadow a team working on Chuck-will’s-widow research. All our work was conducted after sunset. In the darkness, the researchers struggled to get their navigational bearings, but not being able to rely on sight to locate the birds was nothing new for me, and my ears did much of the work. Nevertheless, I would have benefited from binoculars that were good at dusk. Later in the field season, we ventured to St. Catherine Creek National Wildlife Refuge to look for Wood Storks. As dusk approached, I noticed birds in the trees. I was able to

Birdability: A Resource for Visually Impaired Birders

The Birdability initiative strives to make birding and the outdoors welcoming, inclusive, safe, and accessible for everybody. Birdability focuses on people with mobility challenges, blindness or low vision, chronic illness, intellectual or developmental disabilities, and mental illness, and supports those who are neurodivergent, are deaf or hard of hearing, or have other health concerns. In addition to providing resources to people who already are birders, Birdability aims to introduce birding to people with disabilities and other health issues who are not yet birders, so that they, too, can

experience the joys of birding.

A good starting point for vision-impaired birders is the Birdability website’s home- age (birdability.org), with easy-to-navigate links. “Tips and Resources for Birders who are Blind or have Low Vision” (tinyurl.com/low-vision-birding-tips) is, unsurprisingly, a link of particular interest to vision-impaired birders. A link to the “Birdability Map” (gis.audubon.org/birdability) is likewise useful; the crowdsourced map is a work in progress, but it is already a valuable resource.

identify them by their dark heads and light bodies, and by their distinctive body shape. But as it got darker, it was harder to see the birds, and I eventually lost sight of them. After facing that problem, I upgraded to high-end Nikons that perform well in low light. In 2020, Homeowners in the eastern United States were urged to cease bird-feeding operations and to remove feeders. A major part of birding for me has been watching my feeders with my scope or my binoculars from my house. I knew where my feeders were, and it was easy to spot the birds. Without feeders up, it’s nearly impossible for me to find my own backyard birds.

We’re in the midst of a revolution—a revolution for race, gender, and sexual orientation equality. In this revolution, people with disabilities are important, too. I’ve always known that life would be harder for me. I had professors and colleagues doubt my abilities in college. Initially, this didn’t bother me, as I was confident about

my intelligence and ability to identify birds. But now the seeds of doubt have sprouted. Since graduation from college, I’ve struggled to find employment. It keeps coming back to one thing: not being able to drive. That one problem that plagues me in birding is affecting my professional career. Over the past year, I’ve pushed for change. I spoke recently at the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Global Youth Summit about what it’s like to be a scientist with a disability. And now here I am to help the birding community. If you are a birder with low vision, total blindness, or another vision-related disability, know that you are not alone. There are resources out there to help. Birdability has been particularly valuable to me. As the revolution continues, I expect additional resources and advocacy for disabled birders to become available. Whatever you do, don’t give up doing what you love.



Looking at birds through binoculars is great, but holding birds in your hands adds a new dimension to understanding and appreciating them. In this image, the author pauses with a Yellow-throated Vireo during her seasonal field work. Photo courtesy of Sarah Kulis.

Being a Blind Birder and Ornithologist

It's More Complicated than Black and White...Cont'd



This is a sampler of how the author sees birds in the field. To create these images, the focus was adjusted to blur the center just enough that the bird would be hard to identify but that landscape features toward the edges (sand, water, trees, road) would be largely discernible. Photos by © Sarah Kulis. TOP TO BOTTOM: Least Terns. Jones Park, Gulfport, Mississippi; June 24, 2021; Snow Bunting. North Point State Park, Baltimore, Maryland; Dec. 3, 2020; Wood Stork. St. Catherine Creek National Wildlife Refuge, Natchez, Mississippi; July 1, 2021; Buteo, sp. Dans Mountain State Park, Allegany County, Maryland; July 20, 2021.

February 19, 2022

Southwest Area Park

Leader: Nico Sarbanes

Forty-three species including Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Killdeer, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Fish Crow, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Winter Wren (heard), Ruby-crowned Kinglet, American Robin, Gray Catbird (heard), Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, Fox Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, House Finch, and American Goldfinch.

February 26, 2022

Ocean City Weekend

Leader: John Landers

The group of fourteen people started out at the Ocean City inlet and drove in a convoy to seven more spots ending at Assateague National Seashore. The group observed forty-seven species and had a nice look at a Razorbill. Other species included Brant, Canada Goose, Tundra Swan, Mallard, Ring-necked Duck, Surf Scoter, White-winged Scoter, Long-tailed Duck, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Wild Turkey, Red-throated Loon,

Common Loon, Pied-billed Grebe, Horned Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron, Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, American Coot, American Oystercatcher, Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling, Dunlin, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Rock Pigeon, Great Horned Owl, Belted Kingfisher, American Crow, Fish Crow, Carolina Wren, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird.

March 5, 2022

Blackwater NWR

Leader: Joe Corcoran

We had a wonderful BBC trip to Blackwater Wildlife Refuge and Oakley Street in Cambridge

yesterday. We saw fifty-eight species including American White Pelican and four different owls! Red morph Eastern Screech-Owl, Gray morph Eastern Screech-Owl, Barred Owl and a real treat, Snowy Owl.

But the best thing about the day for me was witnessing the joy and enthusiasm of new Baltimore Birders Kinny and Sun. Sun had never seen birds in binoculars before and was ecstatic with the experiences. Her favorite was Red-winged Blackbirds showing off their colorful epaulets.

Kinny is cool. She figured out how to take photos through her binoculars with her mobile phone and got nice ones of a perched Bald Eagle.

Ten of us had a fun and joyous trip.



Snowy Owl



Kinny with mobile phone on binoculars

March 12, 2022

Cromwell Valley Park

Leader: Mark Linardi

Heavy rains postponed this walk until the following day. Overnight we lost about thirty degrees of warmth in addition to a precious hour of sleep due to Day Lights Savings Time. The lengthy list of participants predictably dissipated. The next morning I waited tentatively in my car listening to the last delicate notes of “Women of Ireland” emanating from the radio until a few bundled-up bodies appeared outside my window. There would be six of us today along with our mascot “Waddles the Turkey” (the latest escapee from the nearby captive bird pen).

Most of the grass fields had been cut a few weeks before the walk so we decided to follow the traditional paths along the stream; extending to some of the outer perimeters for additional coverage. The walking also helped keep us warm!

Highlights of the day included an American Woodcock which we



Great blue Heron with Snake Lunch

flushed and watched fly low across the stream. Sparrows (even w/o the grass fields) were still seen in decent numbers and afforded us the opportunity to find the handsome Field and Fox Sparrows. There were several Bald Eagles present and we did come across a small flock of Cedar Waxwings. Thirty nine species for the day and a warm car to finish.

Thanks Everyone!

March 20, 2022

North Point State Park

Leader: Libby Errickson

Forty-eight species observed including Canada Goose, Tundra Swan, Gadwall, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Bufflehead, Red-breasted Merganser, Pied-billed Grebe, Horned Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, American Coot, Ring-billed Gull, Mourning Dove, Belted Kingfisher, Red-bellied Woodpecker,

Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Phoebe, Blue Jay, American Crow, Tree Swallow, Carolina Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Carolina Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, American Robin, American Pipit, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, American Goldfinch.

March 26, 2022

Rocky Point State Park

Leader: Nico Sarbanes.

A beautiful morning spent with thirteen enthusiastic birders. Our fun began with a flock of twenty-eight Red-breasted Mergansers flying over the peninsula, surpassed a short time later by an even larger flock of about fifty-five birds, which was quite impressive. At the Point proper, a female Common Goldeneye stood out among the more common ducks, a steady stream of Bonaparte’s Gulls bounded over Back River, and the group got a great close look at a flyby Northern Harrier. Back in the woods at the north end of the park, we had a nice group of passerines, including both kinglets, and a Yellow-rumped Warbler already in almost full breeding plumage (getting a head start on the others!). We tallied nine species of raptor, including Peregrine Falcon and American Kestrel, and during a brief sky-watch were able to pick out two high-flying Common Loons, migrating north. We returned to the parking lot with fifty-nine species,

only to then have an early female Purple Martin flyover to give us sixty species for the morning—a great number for March!

April 3, 2022 Soldiers Delight

Leader: Sarah Luttrell

It was an overcast morning for our walk at Soldier's Delight on April 3, but nonetheless there was an enthusiastic group of thirteen in attendance. Their enthusiasm proved necessary, as the birds were not in the mood to be easily spotted. We added many of the species by sound, or under "better view desired" circumstances, and ended the trip with twenty-nine species and two general groups (crow sp. and blackbird sp.). The Northern Flicker seemed to be our bird of the day, appearing or calling at every turn but mostly forcing us to be satisfied with a quick glimpse of a white rump or golden wings. Finally, as patience was wearing low, rain was settling in, and folks were relaxing into a walk focused on camaraderie rather than birds we were rewarded with what Deb Taylor deemed a "parting gift", some lovely bright yellow Pine Warblers to remind us that spring migrants are



Pine Warbler - Photo courtesy of Bill Hubick

on their way. Overall, a lovely walk with some excellent birders and a chance to reacquaint ourselves with the usual suspects at Soldiers Delight.

April 5, 2022 Lake Roland

Leader: Joe Corcoran

We had so many people for this trip (over twenty) that we had to break up into two groups. Thanks to Deb and Lou Taylor for leading the second group.

Both groups had over fifty species! The highlights were two Merlin, six Wood Ducks in breeding plumage, seven newly arrived Eastern Phoebe's, two Pine Warblers, a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and multiple Tree and Rough-winged Swallows. Other raptors included Cooper's, Red-shouldered, and Red-tailed Hawks. And a gorgeous Fox Sparrow was found by Lou.

April 10, 2022 Lake Roland Serpentine Habitat Walk

Leader: Peter Lev

Eleven participants and thirty-five species. This was listed as a habitat walk, so we discussed the geology and ecology of the Serpentine area



Tree Swallow - Photo courtesy of Bill Hubick

of Lake Roland as well as the birds. East coast serpentine barrens are a globally rare ecosystem, with only about fifteen sites, including two in Baltimore County: Soldiers Delight and seventy-five acres of Lake Roland. Rare plants are found in the rockiest, shallowest soil. With a little more soil Virginia Pine thrives, and there are also groves of oaks. The birds here are a little different from the birds found in deciduous forests. We saw/heard Pine Warbler, Palm Warbler, Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Towhee, and so on. An unexpected bonus was six Common Loons passing overhead.

April 10, 2022 Youth Birding

Leader: Daisy Sudano

Our April Baltimore Bird Club Youth Trip "Song Birds and Daffodils" was at Cylburn Arboretum on Sunday, April 10th. It was a very overcast grey and cold morning, so I wasn't sure if anyone would come, but we had some wonderful troopers who braved the chill. I had seven youngsters and nine adults.

We got started with a little lecture on song birds and their eggs. I



Youth Trip Attendees

figured since Easter was coming it would be fun to learn about the many beautiful eggs birds lay. We then took our bird walk among the many trails with thousands of Daffodils darting this way and that and we spotted twenty-four species. Highlights would have to be the two Broad-winged Hawks that came out right on cue as the sun peaked through the grey skies and the two White-breasted

Nuthatches that obviously were making a nest in the hundred-year-old plus Black walnut tree in front of the Cylburn mansion.

On our way back I had a surprise for our young birders with an egg hunt and prizes. I had some fun stuffed bunnies for the younger birders and Baltimore Oriole hats and shirts for the older ones. We finished the day with decorating their own wooden eggs and were given copies of the beautiful egg poster to take home.

Our next trip is my favorite and it's to the Dupont Nature Center in DE to see the "Horseshoe Crabs and Shorebirds". We will meet at the park and ride off of 152 and N 95 at 9am, Sunday, May 15th. We can carpool or just meet at Du Pont Nature Center by 11-11:30am.

We will have a presentation on Horseshoe crabs and their role in the migration of millions of Shorebirds including the Red Knot. After visiting the center we will drive along the beach and make several stops to observe the birds and Horseshoe crabs.

April 12, 2022 Lake Roland

Leader: John Landers

The morning began a bit chilly with a shower and then turned warm. Sixteen people participated and saw forty-three species including Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Red-shouldered Hawk, Mourning Dove, Belted Kingfisher, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Phoebe, Blue Jay, American Crow, Fish Crow, Caroline Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Carolina Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Pine Warbler, Palm Warbler, Chipping Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, American Goldfinch, and House Sparrow.



A lesson in bird identification

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

July 24, 2022



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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