

CHIP NOTES

WINTER 2022 • No. 422



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Safari in Southern Africa

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

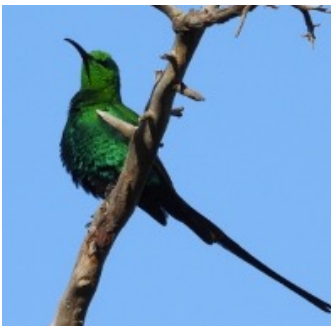
For this edition of Chip Notes I could not for the life of me think of any topics to write about save for the fantastic trip to Africa Linda and I just returned from. I can't yet get it off my mind, and am actually still going through all the photos and videos of the country (South Africa (SA) and Botswana border), the landscape, the animals, and of course, the birds! Maybe I'll find a confirmation amongst them of a lifer bird that I just wasn't sure about. Kudos again to Kathy Lambrow for suggesting I borrow her Nikon Coolpix 1000 (125x zoom) camera to try it out. Amazing! (Editors note: his pictures really are better!)

The whole trip was a whirlwind of travel, safari, birding, cultural exposure, then repeat. Day after day without great rest. "You can always sleep when you get home" was repeated a few times.

The Apartheid Museum and Soweto Monuments in Johannesburg were a must for me, along with Nelson Mandela's house. After a long and bitter struggle, and with worldwide protest against apartheid (South Africa's version of our Jim Crow segregation) apartheid ended in SA in 1994. In Soweto, in July of 1976, up to 700 high school students (exact figure still unknown) were killed, and many more injured, by police in a brutal repression of a 20,000 strong student protest of the Afrikaans Medium Decree, which forced all black schools to use especially Afrikaans as the language of instruction. Mandela spent 27 years in prison for opposing the apartheid system, then became the president of South Africa!



Lesser Flamingo on the flats



Malachite Sunbird

Credit: African wildlife photos throughout newsletter:
Joe Corcoran, banner illustration:
Golden-breasted Bunting



Marty Brazeau, (on right) Education Outreach specialist, painted birds on t-shirts for his Costa Rica tour last Spring. Learn how to make your own t-shirt and find out about Marty's recent Costa Rica trip. see Page 5

Continued on next page

Safari in Southern Africa*Continued from page 1*

And the animals on safari. There were so many, surprisingly supported by the vegetation on vast swatches of dry veldt and savannah. In case you weren't quite sure, safari now is driving through large sections of remote country in an open air 4 wheel drive jeep or van type vehicle, looking for African vegetation eaters like zebra, antelope, rhinoceros, and elephant, in addition to the flesh-eaters like cheetahs and lions. The rides are on typically bumpy dirt roads, with occasional small excursions into openings in the vegetation. And **DO NOT GET OUT OF THE VEHICLE!** In it, you're like an appendage of a large lumbering peaceful creature to the animals. Out of it you look like potential prey to the carnivores, or competitors to the herbivores.

And the birds. They were so amazing, especially unfamiliar families like Sunbirds, Africa's version of Hummingbirds, or Bustards, large and heavy walking birds that can still fly.

Finally, the watering holes. The best part of the trip. In the dry season, all the animals and birds are attracted to watering holes, or easy places to drink at springs, and near ponds, lakes and rivers. And behind a good hide (blind), it's a feast of African animals and birds, in a steady stream of appearances at the hole to drink.

I'm definitely going back to Africa before it's all over. Magical!



Tsessebe and Blue Wildebeast
(Tsessebe can run 56mph)



Endangered African Painted Dogs
(formerly Wild Dogs)



Crimson-breasted Gonolek



Banded Mongoose



African Penguins



Kori Bustard



Hammerkop (related to Pelicans and the Shoebill, it's known for its enormous stick nests)



Southern Cordonbleu at a Watering Hole

After the Segall Group purchased the Free State Book Bindery in Hampden in 2022, their architect Peter Fillat shared visions with the community of a 6 story high rise building with 155 luxury apartments on that site. The developers probably had no idea they were about to destroy a natural phenomenon.

The Book Bindery's 60 foot chimney at 3110 Elm Ave. is used in spring and fall by birds, chimney swifts in migration on their way to and from the Amazon basin. Hundreds or thousands of swifts gather at dusk, circle the chimney for 10-20-30 minutes, then dive in for the night. They gather in large numbers to stay warm. They share body heat and choose old, unlined brick chimneys because bricks warmed by sun in the day exude warmth for the birds at night.

Locals are stunned by the potential loss of this chimney. Journalist Julie Scharper wrote a sympathetic article for the Baltimore Banner: "Planned demolition of Hampden bookbindery would deprive migratory birds of their roost."

This site is a local phenomenon. In 2005 MPT's "Outdoors Maryland" aired an 8 minute TV segment featuring the Baltimore Bird Club (BBC) Swift Watch Team counting Hampden's Chimney Swifts. (On this link, the swifts segment starts at minute 1:45.)

<https://americanarchive.org/catalog/cpb-aacip-394-69z08z9v>

This site is also a national phenomenon. Starting in 2001, BBC would count the birds and post results to "Swift Night Out," a continent-wide Roost

Monitoring Project. For years, our counts were among the top three in the nation. (See www.chimneyswifts.org)

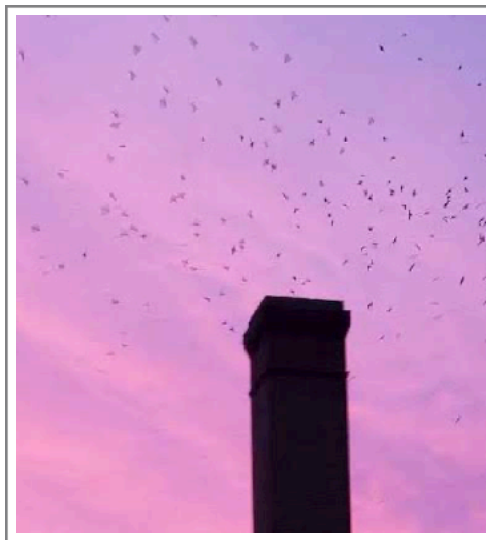
"I believe this particular chimney is host to one of the largest Chimney Swift roosts in that part of the country," according to Paul Kyle of the Chimney Swift Conservation Association. In recent years he has seen the numbers decline rapidly -- nation-wide. Chimney Swifts are classified as vulnerable on the

International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species.

In Baltimore our highest count was in 2003, with 7,400 chimney swifts in one evening. Our numbers have mirrored the downward national trend. In 2022, our high count was just 2,200 birds.

Hampden residents share with birders the joy of watching this phenomenon. Under the leadership of Joan Cwi, the BBC started a public Swift Watch 20 years ago, advertised throughout Hampden, one night each spring and one night each fall. The swifts became popular. Hampdenites began to show up on their own throughout September.

Now the BBC Swift Watch is led by local resident Alice Greely Nelson. She can see that chimney from her house atop nearby Stone Hill. She taught us how to count the birds. With a hand counter, we count by tens. Click, Click, Click, Click. Ten, Ten, Ten, Ten.



Chimney Swifts funneling in Chimney,
Photo by Alice Greely Nelson

Protecting a Chimney - - for the Swifts, Cont'd

Armed with decades of Swift Watch data, Alice Greely Nelson is working hard to protect this chimney. She helped organize a neighborhood meeting on Oct 27, 2022 moderated by City Councilwoman Odette Ramos. The architect Fillat faced 100 locals who railed about the scale of the proposed high rise, and how ill-suited this was for the narrow, surrounding streets. Discussion was divided into three topics: Parking, Traffic and Birds.

To mollify the bird fans, the architect offered to incorporate an 80 foot chimney shaft on the northwest corner of his design. But a newly built chimney will not likely attract the birds, explained David Curson, Audubon's Director of Bird Conservation, Maryland. Exterior dimensions are important, but the interior surface required is not fully understood, according to Curson. Swifts must be able to hold onto the brick. Even efforts to rebuild with the same brick have failed to attract the birds. Better to leave the old chimney intact.

To date, most development in Hampden has involved finding new purposes for old and interesting buildings, without great changes to their exterior structure. An old church was converted to office space. A former community hall was turned into apartments. A former factory just downhill from the Book Bindery was recently converted into the Fox Building apartments, without great exterior changes.

As Councilwoman Ramos explained, there is not much leverage here. The site's "industrial mixed-use zoning" allows for the proposed high rise, which also maximizes the developer's profits. The federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act allows the developer to demolish the chimney any time of year that the birds are not actually using it.

Looking for solutions. Can a community protect a chimney?



Photo: courtesy of Richard Crossley



Observing Chimney Swifts, Photo by Alice Greely Nelson

We saw most of the birds painted on our t-shirts in Costa Rica!

Costa Rica tour: March 19-29, 2022

Marty Brazeau

I enjoyed leading an eleven-day Costa Rica Bird tour in March of 2022. We visited Monteverde Cloud Forest, Savegre Valley for quetzals, Arenal Volcano, and Carara National Park. Enthusiastic Guide Jose Pablo Castillo made our tour very educational as he taught us about the ecology of the many tropical habitats visited while finding us many birds. I painted a Costa Rica bird on t-shirts given to everyone on the tour. My next Costa Rica tour is February 5-15, 2023. Interested? email me, Marty, at tropicbirder56@gmail.com. Video about the upcoming tour: https://youtu.be/a5xn_Wya9MY

Steps for making your own hand-painted bird t-shirts



1. Find a picture of a bird. This is a Palawan Hornbill from a video on my laptop. I get my shirts, fabric paint, and brushes at Michaels Craft store.

2. With a pencil and eraser, copy the bird on card stock paper. The bright spots show my fine tuning with an eraser!

3. Cut the bird out with scissors and place on t-shirt.

4. Trace the outline of the bird with pencil and pencil in remaining features.

5. Paint the bird with fabric paint. Use paint marker pens for details.

6. Let the paint dry for a day and wear the shirt while birding!



CCBC bird class participant Judy enjoyed the tour. She wears an Agami Heron shirt & husband Doug wears a Yellow-throated Toucan shirt.

Here are my Costa Rica bird paintings extracted from photos from t-shirts given to members of the tour.



August 21, 2022

Fairwood Forest, Family Birding

Leader: Daisy Sudano.

We had Eric Fishel from Baltimore Urban Birds come and do a bird banding demonstration. Though we only had one youth in attendance, we did have nine attendees in all.

Eric also spoke about his other amazing work with Baltimore Green Space. BGS helped the community save Fairwood Forest from being developed and is now in a land trust for future generations to enjoy. Fairwood Forest is a 4.5 acre green patch in east Baltimore with walking trails and is a major fly zone for hawk migration. A fellow BBC member used to do hawk counts at the site. Eric explained how the bird banding procedure works including the use of mist nets to catch the birds. As we waited for a bird to fly in, we took a walk through the forest. We were trying to identify a hawk that was driving a murder of crows crazy throughout the morning. We never could get a clear vision of it.

We got about five minutes into our walk when Eric signaled he got a bird. With the help from our youth, Kaiden, we took the bird, a female Northern Cardinal, to do the banding demonstration. Very cool to see and always educational. Every time I watch a bird-banding I learn something new. This time it was when Eric blew on the bird's belly to see if she was brooding. He explained how feathers insulate but don't provide warmth, so when a female bird has a clutch of eggs she'll lose some of her underneath feathers so that her own body provides the warmth needed to help hatch the eggs. Fascinating.

Before getting started Eric first decides what color combination of bands the bird will have and writes it in his log. He weighs the bird, measures the bird, checks a few facts about the bird, bands the bird and then releases it. Kaiden assisted in the release but not before allowing everyone to take a cool picture of our feathered friend who graciously helped educate and awe us. Thank you to Eric and everyone who came out. Please stop by Fairwood Forest anytime to enjoy a walk in an urban oasis.



Eric Fishel holding a female cardinal



Holding the bird to be banded quietly in a soft bag



A good and informative banding session

September 3, 2022

North Point State Park

Leader: Brent Byers

Eight o'clock, sunny skies, temperature in the low 89's most of the morning. Thirteen participants identified 47 different species in the three and one-half mile walk around the Black Marsh trail and the pond trail. Highlights included: Canada Warbler – seen by all; multiple Veerys, almost a common bird; 4 species of woodpeckers; and 29 Wood Ducks

September 10, 2022

Herring Run Park

Leader: Kim Tomko

It was a pleasant day for a bird walk with temps between 64-75 degrees and mostly cloudy skies. We walked three miles around the paved loop between Harford Road and Belair Road including the unpaved Tyndale Trail. Habitats included open fields, vegetation along the stream, and wooded areas. Highlights included a pair of Great Egrets fishing in the stream, two Solitary Sandpipers on a small sandbar, and a pair of Barred Owls that were calling in the distance. Warblers weren't abundant but included close looks at an Ovenbird along the Tyndale Trail and several Black-and-white Warblers and American Redstarts. There were fourteen participants.

September 13, 2022

Cromwell Valley Park

Leader: Mary Chetlat

What a lovely morning with a great group of birders, newbies and old hands. The Lime Kiln site was very productive with a Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Blue-grey Gnatcatchers, and Bluebirds. Lots of the others.

September 18, 2022

2022. Birding by Canoe, Days Cove

Leader: Sam Tillman

With ten boats on the water we took a different route than on past trips, forgoing the back pond to push deeper in the Gunpowder Marsh. We were guided by Joe Davis, who is intimately knowledgeable about the Gunpowder waterways, and is an all-round BCPS science educator extraordinaire. Our two targets, late Least Bittern and Marsh Wren, were no shows, but it didn't dim our joy at being immersed in the landscape. Notable sightings included an early Ring-necked duck and a distant, but impressive, kettle of migrating Broad-winged hawks.

<https://ebird.org/atlasmdcc/checklist/S118975474>

Watch the YouTube video shot by Marty Brazeau during the canoe trip: <https://youtu.be/kg7a-XXXWEE>

September 24,

2022. Loch Raven – Paper Mill & Ashland Flats

Leader: Sam Tillman

One of the first chilly Autumn mornings meant both the birders and the birds were slow to warm up. As the sun first hit the top of the tree-line we started seeing warbler activity and it didn't slow down. The previous nights had favorable winds and brought in many new migrants, notably Red-breasted Nuthatch, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, an early Swamp Sparrow, and nine warblers species throughout the day. The first half of the walk was along the Torrey C. Brown Rail Trail, ending at the Ashland Flats overlook, where we found Solitary Sandpiper, both Yellowlegs, Great Blue Herons, and a Great Egret. From there, we moved down the road to the Paper Mill Flats trail hoping for a variety of shorebirds. While shorebirds were thin, both Yellowlegs again and a few Killdeer, we were treated to a great, mixed flock of warblers towards the end. We racked up 56 species between the two hotspots, and with a few participants getting their lifer Wilson's and Bay-breasted warblers.



Birding from a canoe at Days Cove, photo Marty Brazeau

October 1, 2022.

Druid Hill Park

Leader: Tobias Pessoa Gingerich

We were a small but intrepid group of eight, braving intermittent cold rain and gusty winds in the remnants of Hurricane Ian, but well rewarded for our troubles. Our walk took us past the reservoir and the whole way around the zoo; through the mix of habitats we collected a good list of passerines, including seven warbler species, a Swainson's Thrush, a Scarlet Tanager, and *lots* of jays flocking up on their way south. Raptors really stole the show though: Cooper's, Broad-winged, Red-tailed, and Red-shouldered Hawks, a Bald Eagle, Barred Owl, and all three falcons: Kestrel, Merlin, and Peregrine, with good to fantastic looks at all of them.

October 8, 2022.

Big Sit at North Point State Park

Leaders: Peter Lev, Libby Errickson, and Alyssia Church

The Baltimore Big Sit, hosted by the Baltimore Bird Club at North Point State Park in Edgemere, Maryland, was a great success! The Big Sit is an annual international event where birders pick a location, define a seventeen-foot diameter circle, and count all birds heard or seen from within this circle – like tailgating for birders! Led by Libby Errickson and Alyssia Church, this was the first official Big Sit (thebigist.org) organized by the club, and the weather couldn't have been better! The temperature was 49F at our start time of 7:51a.m., but with very little breeze and a cloudless sky, the participants were soon shedding sweatshirts and jackets.

Birds were coming in from all directions during the morning hours, including some obvious loose flocks of migrating warblers coming in off of the Chesapeake Bay, and a particularly fun sighting of four White-breasted Nuthatches traveling together. Thirteen birders joined the circle, some staying all day and some staying just long enough to add to the bird list and keep everyone entertained!

The first three hours of the Big Sit resulted in a list of 50 species. Some notable sightings included a late Common Nighthawk that circled twice overhead, and a Cliff Swallow that came in off the bay early in the day. The raptor flight was active with many American Kestrels and Sharp-shinned Hawks along with a sprinkling of Northern Harriers and Cooper's Hawks. Of course, the Bald Eagles put on a show throughout the day and there was even a Groundhog that showed itself along the pier. Somehow, we managed to not see or hear ANY non-native species. That's right! Not a single House Sparrow, European Starling, or Rock Pigeon. Some other big misses included Gray Catbird, Great Blue Heron, Northern Mockingbird, and Red-winged Blackbird. We thought we were going to have another miss – Royal Tern – but miraculously, one flew by our circle at close range at 5:59 p.m. to make our 64th bird and the last one counted for the 2022 Baltimore Big Sit. We can't wait for next year!

Thanks to all for making the Big Sit a success! Here is the link to the checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S120301088>



Big Sit at North Point State Park

October 30, 2022

Big Sit at North Point State Park*Leaders: Daisy Sudano, BBC Youth Coordinator*

On October 30th, the Baltimore Bird Club took a Youth trip to Fairwood Forest, where they saw and learned about "Bats are Flying Friends that are NOT Birds" with special guest, Chris Bloom, from The Rhythms of the Night. He does research on the Echolocation sounds of bats in Baltimore and is trying to determine all the species that call Baltimore home. Even though Maryland is home to 10 species of bats, not all of them can be found in Charm City. Chris has found six species and hopes to find more through his research. joining!

We had nice mild weather at the start of our day, with ten family and friends in attendance and two lucky youths who were able to help Chris with some of his research. We had a short lecture about the bats of Maryland and Baltimore, and then Chris and the children hung a bat monitor to figure out which bats are living in Fairwood Forest. After, we took a little walk to visit the habitats in Fairwood Forest the bats use. Our lucky two young friends got to find and keep their own little hanging bats that were found along the pathways. When the sun began to set we went searching for whichever bats may be out that night.

Unfortunately none of our echolocation devices picked up on any bat sounds but that didn't keep us from having fun. We had crafts, hands-on activities, thanks to our DNR Bat Education Box, and a cute little brown (fake) bat that Chris had for us to hold. It looked so real!



Red-shouldered Hawk, Marty Brazeau

WELCOME!

A warm welcome to the Baltimore Bird Club! We hope you have enjoyed a wonderfully birdy fall here in Baltimore, or wherever your travels took you this season. Now the ducks are beginning to arrive and we can observe them preen, forage, paddle around, and fly across our many different bodies of water. Looking forward to birding with you at North Point State Park, Loch Raven Reservoir, Back River, Fort Howard, Quarry Lake, and more this winter!

Toni Capino Baltimore
 Elizabeth Champlin Baltimore
 Sandra Gohn Baltimore
 Elizabeth Hazel Baltimore
 Molly Hoopes Baltimore
 Roslyn Kellum Baltimore
 Carol Newill & Joseph Brough Schamp Baltimore
 David Nicholson Baltimore
 Bess Rose and Laurie Fogleman Baltimore
 Mike Beck Catonsville
 Ellen and Rich McCoy Catonsville
 Christopher Butzgy & Jill Nystrom Falls Church, VA
 Keavy Lyons Owings Mills
 Jack Dotzler Rockville Centre
 Jamie Sandutch Sparks Glencoe

**Birds at Forest Levels Video with
 a link to a Jeopardy game PowerPoint!**
**Watch the video!****Play the game!**

This YouTube video will help you learn about birds at forest levels. You can show the video to teach others about Maryland birds. Here is the video link:

<https://youtu.be/GCR2z2IDSHQ> Video by Marty Brazeau

You can download Marty's Powerpoint jeopardy game to play after watching the video by clicking on the website link below.

Directions are also included for playing the game.

<https://scoutnaturalist2018.wixsite.com/bird-study-bbc/bird-jeopardy>

In Memoriam

It is with a heavy heart we share that our friend and mentor to many Gene Ricks passed away in September of this year. Gene was a devoted husband, father, and grandfather, and leaves behind family and friends who miss him.

His wife, Barbara MacLellan says she is “glad you enjoyed him as much as [she] did” and told the story of how it was actually she who started Gene on his birding endeavors through which we all got to know him so well. She says “I bought him his first bino’s. His knee was going out and I got a little annoyed at his complaining. I told him that every interruption in your plan is an opportunity just waiting to be explored. I gave him a cheap pair of binoculars and told him that every time he had to stop his hike was an opportunity to watch the birds. ‘I don’t know anything about that’ he said. I told him it was easy - you just stop, listen, point your nose where you hear the birdsong, then just open your eyes. His first non-backyard bird was a Common Yellowthroat. He was hooked.”

Gene was a staple of the Baltimore Bird Club and would often join our walks. He especially enjoyed Soldier’s Delight, which he lived close to, but traveled all over Baltimore looking for birds. He was often found outside of the county, too, chasing birds throughout Maryland or driving down to Ocean City for a long day of shore birding. Numerous birders in the community got their start here in Baltimore with the help of Gene. He was warm and welcoming and loved meeting people, showing them the Baltimore birding ropes and helping them learn their birds and what times of year to expect them.

Here is an anecdote from John Landers that many of us remember from the rare bird alert: “We were down Ocean City at the inlet in January 2021. I went out to the beach and Gene was on the board walk along the inlet. I saw a Dovekie and called Gene with no answer, so I went back to get him. It may have been the fastest I’ve seen him walk to the beach! And there was the Dovekie floating in the inlet quite close to shore. Gene sent out the rare bird alert to the Maryland birding community, but just when he began taking pictures a Great Black-back gull flew down, grabbed the adorable Dovekie with its bill, and flew away with it! Gene’s first post to the Rare Bird Alert: ‘Dovekie in ocean just off North jetty’, then minutes later ‘Never mind. We watched in horror as a GBBG grabbed it and flew away’ accompanied by somewhat disturbing pictures.”

Gene was special and a well loved member of our birding community. In addition to giving of himself to local birders, Gene extended a commitment to science by his donation to the Maryland State Anatomy Board.



photo by Alina Martin

In Memoriam

We lost a wonderful person and a top Baltimore birder this past August. Pete Rattigan, a young man in his mid-forties died suddenly, leaving behind a wife and daughter, and is sorely missed.

Pete was a quiet and serious birder/naturalist/person, but was liked and loved by all who knew him, in the birding world and beyond. The top descriptive words for people who knew him were “gentle” and “generous”. Michael Bradley, a good friend who attended the funeral, described the motorcade as “a mile long” and said it was attended by “hundreds of people”.

Pete was an accomplished birder who understood bird habitats and knew where to look for certain birds. Described as an explorer in his make-up, Pete was not as keen on chasing after birds that someone else found, but preferred searching for different birds in new places based on habitat and behavior. He was very apt to go off trail to find and experience the birds he would encounter.

Along with Michael, they tallied the first, and only, eBird Chuck-will's-widow in Patterson Park. Then made sure that as many birders as possible could see it.

To honor Pete's memory, please consider a contribution to the National Audubon Society, 225 Varick Street, New York, NY 10014.



Village Weaver (Weavers are named for their nest building habits)



Lesser Striped Swallow

Baltimore Bird Club

<http://baltimorebirdclub.org>

A Chapter of

Maryland Ornithological Society

4915 Greenspring Avenue

Baltimore, MD 21209



Application

Chip Notes, newsletter of the Baltimore Bird Club, is published quarterly. Current issue: Winter 2023

Alina Martin, Editor
Marty Brazeau, Design

Submit materials to
Alina Martin – alinacmartin@gmail.com

Moving or email change?
Send update to
Terry Ross at trosstva@gmail.com

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:

Deadlines for submitting articles
for upcoming issues:
January 24, 2023

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MOS Treasurer
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