

Chip Notes

BALTIMORE BIRD CLUB NEWSLETTER



SPRING 2019 No. 407

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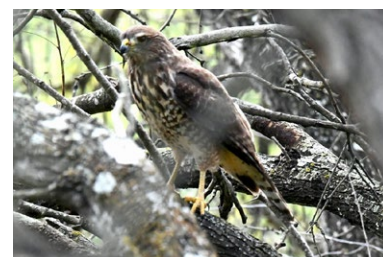


The good. The bad. The great. The ugly. And the utterly redunculous!

Article and photos by David Fleischmanns

Where do I start? This is a tale of eight days, starting Monday December 3rd and culminating Tuesday, December 11th.

THE GOOD: On December 4th, Jeff Shenot and I went to the Lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas in search of one primary target and three secondary targets. The primary target was the "second" rarest raptor in North America, the Roadside Hawk--an ABA code 4 bird from Mexico. After a day and a half of searching, the Roadside Hawk finally appeared. It stayed around for about 10 minutes and then was gone. What a cool bird!! ABA #618.



Roadside Hawk found in
Lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas

THE BAD: This would be my three secondary targets in Texas, of which I got none. The first was a Hook-billed Kite, an ABA code 3, which is an annual visitor to south Texas, but you need to be in the right place at the right time to find it. The day before we got there, three of them were perched in a tree, 20 feet from astonished spectators. Rarely is a Kite not kiting or soaring, certainly very rare to see three perched.

The second miss was a Golden-crowned Warbler, being seen regularly at Frontera Audubon Center. This is another code 4 and a real stunner. We searched for 5 to 6 hours over two days--to no avail.

Continued on page 8

WELCOME!

A warm Baltimore Bird Club welcome goes out to the following members who have joined us since the Winter Chip Notes was published. Thanks for joining! We look forward to seeing you out there on our birding trips and at our meetings.

Søren and Inge Bentzen	Baltimore	Brent Riha	Baltimore
Rebecca Clark	Baltimore	Mary Lou Clark	Ellicott City
Dena Crosson	Baltimore	Barbara Conrad	Glen Arm
Mia and Cliff Lamm	Baltimore	Alison Moore.....	Idlewyde
Karun Pandian	Baltimore	Bonnie Harper.....	Middle River
Benjamin Pedigo.....	Baltimore	Joyce A. Stevens.....	Nottingham
Pete Rattigan	Baltimore	Judy and Kevin Doyle	Reisterstown

President's Corner

by Peter Lev



Sandhill Cranes in Baltimore

Sandhill Crane is not a rare bird. Thousands of them gather in March on the Platte River in Nebraska. I've seen hundreds flying north in New Mexico in late February, following the Rio Grande. There's a non-migratory population in Florida. When I told my Aunt Pat I wanted to find a Sandhill Crane, she drove me around the parking lot of her housing development—north of Tampa—until we saw one.



Sandhill Cranes by Ryan Johnson

But Sandhill Crane in Maryland is something special, a big, beautiful species we don't see that often. A handful have wintered here in recent years, sometimes in hard to reach marshy areas. However, in 2018 one could see a few dozen Sandhills in fields bordering Bradshaw Road in Kingsville, a northern suburb of Baltimore.

I tried viewing the cranes twice in late fall. The first morning I saw birders but no cranes. Then a woman from the neighborhood stopped to ask about the large birds she had seen in the field an hour ago. I smiled and said "Sandhill Cranes," but I sure envied her.

My next attempt was on a Sunday—less traffic, better parking. I started earlier, because that's when the cranes were being seen (thank you, ebird!). One problem was that selfish birders were walking in the fields, spooking the birds and very likely angering the landowners. Folks, please use common sense and

respect private property. Anyway, on this misty morning I saw a dozen cranes in the field as I drove south on Bradshaw Road. I then parked and walked back for a better look—twenty-five majestic cranes feeding at the top of a small rise, less than a hundred yards from the road. What a great privilege to share a few moments with these creatures, or perhaps "beings" is the better word. I completely understand why the late Peter Matthiessen traveled the world to observe and write about all the crane species on the planet.

Matthiessen's book *The Birds of Heaven: Travels with Cranes* is wonderful, and I agree that traveling to find cranes is worthwhile. I can recommend a boat ride out of Rockport, Texas in winter or early spring to see Whooping Cranes. But I equally enjoyed a crane viewing on Bradshaw Road, thirty minutes from my home.

Conservation CORNER

Eco laws, Eco lawyers: A perspective

by Carol Schreter

The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) is a non-profit environmental advocacy group that takes polluters to court. I focus my charitable dollars on the NRDC. Why? These days it seems the best protectors of our wildlife and natural places are courts and judges.

Just after the 2018 mid-term elections, I joined a Post-Election Teleconference for NRDC donors. I wanted to know, from their point of view, what kinds of legislative policies or actions to watch for, or hope for, in the next two years. This is what I heard.

Yes, as of January 1, 2019, Democrats will be the Majority party in the House of Representatives. They will determine what bills are brought up for votes. Also hopeful: Democrats won 7 new governorships. There are now 17 pro-environment governors.

This presents opportunities, a chance for offense, not defense, especially about how money is allocated. But in order to get bipartisan bills presented and passed in DC, it may be wise not to speak of the "environment." For instance, speak of "Public Health" and seek money to improve drinking water. Present clean energy needs as "Infrastructure" projects, or money to modernize the grid. Argue that clean energy makes economic sense.

The NRDC will still focus on litigation. NRDC filed 70 cases in federal court between January 2017 and November 2018. The Keystone XL Pipeline was again stalled by a federal judge in November 2018. But the bad news is that federal government agencies are still led by appointees whose program is to dismantle the agencies they lead.



[For example: The Dept. of Interior is responsible for enforcing the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). This 100 year-old law was eviscerated in April 2018 when the Dept.

of Interior issued a ruling saying: "The take [killing] of birds resulting from an activity is not prohibited by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act when the underlying purpose of that activity is not to take birds." What counts now is purpose, not deadly side-effects.]

Of critical importance to the NRDC, the complexion of the federal judiciary is changing. The White House proposes people for judgeships. The Senate advises and consents, decides who gets the job. This administration has already appointed more federal appellate judges than any other president in his first two years. The rate of appointments is accelerating.

Before the 2018 mid-term elections, the Senate was split 51 – 49, with 51 Republicans and 49 Democrats. This gave some power to any one or two moderate Republican holdouts. The party gap is wider now (53 Republicans to 47 Democrats). Among newly elected Republican senators, there do not seem to be any moderates — except maybe Mitt Romney of Utah. Senate Democrats will be unable to block the president's appointments to the federal courts.

With a larger number of conservative judges, NRDC expects federal cases on environmental issues to be tougher to win. So the NRDC is now looking at state court strategies. What could be challenged, or accomplished, at the state court level?

Yes, this perspective on federal environmental policy is depressing. But I will still focus my charitable dollars on the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). Hostile actions from the Administration need to be challenged—loudly. And courts are the best place to do this—loudly.

March Events Not To Be Missed!

January 13th Covered Dish Dinner

Cancelled Because of ➡
Rescheduled for
Sunday, March 3rd
4:30- 7:30 pm.

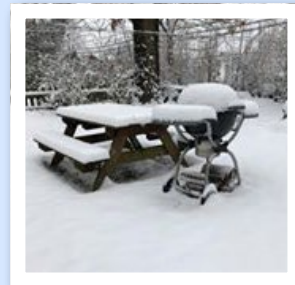
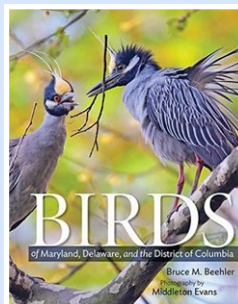


Photo by Terry Ross

Let us know if you are coming by logging into perfectpotluck.com and entering coordinator name GRAFF and password BBC19.

And another important bird-worthy event in March you will want to attend...

Exploring Backyard Birds, Birds Of Prey, And Birds Of The Open Ocean



Smithsonian ornithologist Bruce Beehler and premier nature photographer Middleton Evans have crafted a comprehensive volume unparalleled in its beauty and captivating storytelling. ***Birds of Maryland, Delaware, and the District of Columbia***

invites readers to experience the birds' lives as they live them: where they nest, how they forage, their various behaviors, and the natural environments they need to survive.

MOS and BBC are sponsoring a launch of this magnificent and comprehensive book on March 24, 2-4pm at the Cylburn Arboretum Vollmer Center. Come join us to hear about the adventures that the author and photographer had as they gathered material for this fantastic book. Printed by Johns Hopkins University Press.

Book info here: <https://jhupbooks.press.jhu.edu/content/birds-maryland-delaware-and-district-columbia>



Birdbits.....

Christmas Lights On 34Th Street, Hampden, Celebrated The Birds This Year



Owls by Joan Cwi



Flock Party by Lindsay Jacks

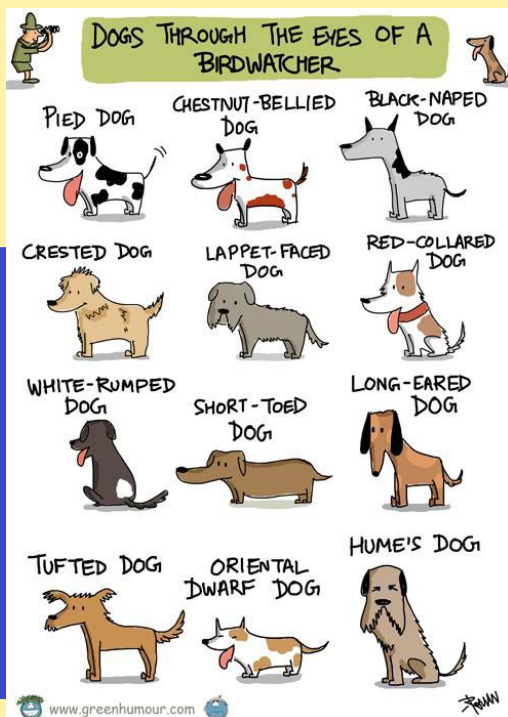
Take a look at
Lights Out Baltimore's
new logo

created by Sean Downs!

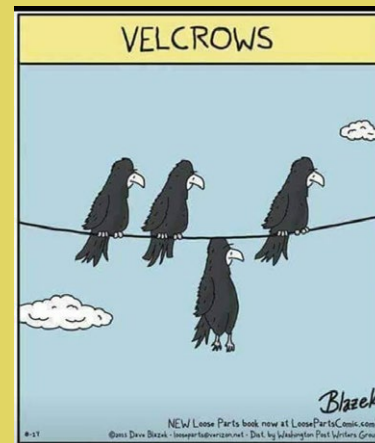
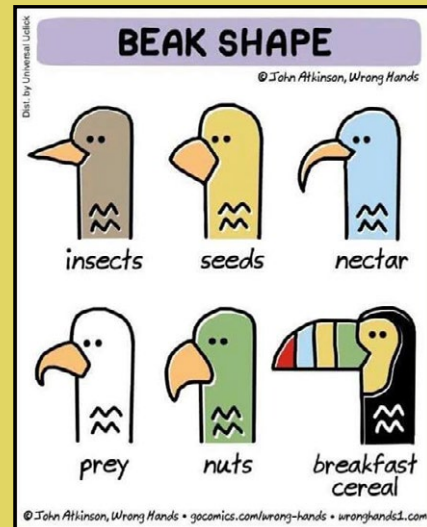


Notes...from BBC's General Information Manager Carol Schreter

Carol gets all kinds of calls and messages from people making inquiries about the BBC. She recently got an email from Theresa Cancila, who works in the Biology Department of Loyola University Maryland. They had about 15 Peterson bluebird nest boxes they wanted to donate to anyone who could use them. Carol immediately thought of Marshy Point where Brent and Mary Byers do a lot of volunteer work. Marshy Point was thrilled to have the extra boxes to add to their bluebird trail.



Birders laughing at themselves



Scientifically, a raven has 17 primary wing feathers, the big ones at the end of the wing. They are called pinion feathers. A crow has 16. So, the difference between a crow and a raven is only a matter of a pinion.

Update on Wisdom, the Laysan Albatross



Wisdom on egg in 2018

Wisdom, who turned 68 this year and is the world's oldest known bird, has successfully become a mother again! We've been following her story in Bird Bits for the last few years. As you may recall, she was first banded by Chan Robbins in 1956 on the Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge.

Then there's the other bird we have been following, Baltimore, the Snowy Owl

Article abstracted from the Project Snowstorm website
update January 6, 2019

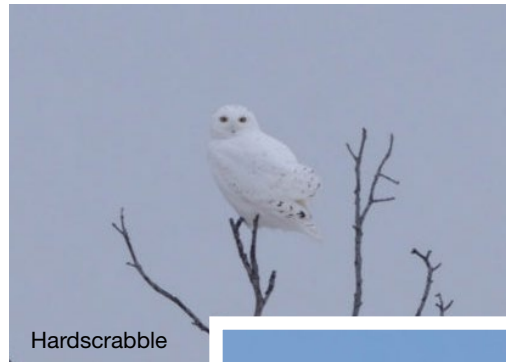
Project Snowstorm has been trying for a longtime to retrap two snowies, **Hardscrabble** and **Baltimore**, who were wintering within a few kilometers of each other in southern Ontario. (In both cases, their transmitters had failed, and they wanted to remove them, and extract whatever stored data they contained.). As you may recall, Baltimore was captured at the Martin State Airport and BBC paid for his transmitter.

After more than half a dozen attempts, Snowstorm partner Dave Okines from the Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory — with help from our good friends Patricia and Daniel Lafortune from Ottawa — was

able to catch Baltimore last winter and remove his transmitter. (They got some stored data from it, but it seems to have stopped collecting GPS points in January 2017 when the glitch hit.) Hardscrabble proved to be a cagey bird, and despite a lot of work on the team's part, they were unable to retrap him.

Dan and Pat haven't given up, though, and over the holidays they found that Hardscrabble is back on the same winter territory as last year, his backpack transmitter easily visible. Not only that, there is an adult male snowy whose plumage pattern matches that of Baltimore, back on the same territory Baltimore has used the past three winters, perching in his favorite trees — so while we can't be certain it's him, it seems a very good bet.

Hardscrabble was at least four years old when he was tagged in New York in 2016, while Baltimore was first banded as a juvenile in 2014 in Maryland, and tagged the following year. Both have contributed huge datasets to the Project's understanding of annual movements in snowy owls — and evidence that some snowies in the East, as in the West, can show a lot of fidelity to wintering sites.



Hardscrabble

Project
Snowstorm
remains
committed
to retrapping
Hardscrabble
and removing
his dead

transmitter,
both for his
sake and
to see if we
can extract
old data
from it, and
determine
why it failed.

Keep your fingers crossed, because he's been caught several times in the past and is a wary bird.



Baltimore

Cape May Surprises

by Jim Highsaw and Linda Prentice

In the recent Chip Notes, no one wrote an article about going to Cape May in Fall 2018, so we decided to write something about our visit during October 6–13, 2018. Cape May usually has a surprise or two, and this visit was no different. The two big surprises this time were a Black-throated Gray Warbler at the Higbee Beach WMA (a rare vagrant at Cape May), and a huge number of Kestrels counted at the Cape May Hawkwatch on October 12.



Black-throated Gray Warbler

We saw the Black-throated Gray Warbler because another birder waved us over to see it. It was in a small flock which also included a Blackpoll, a Black-and-White,

and a Bay-breasted. We had eight Warbler species on this visit, which also included a Cape May Warbler in the trees by the Hawkwatch, a Black-throated Green Warbler at Lily Lake, and a Yellow Warbler at Cape May Meadows.

Birders at the Hawkwatch on October 12 were excited about all the Kestrels flying over—the final count was about 5,400 that day, or about half of the total Kestrel count for the season. We also enjoyed seeing a Cape



May Warbler foraging in the trees by the Hawkwatch for a long time. Other highlights of the visit included a Peregrine Falcon on an Osprey nesting platform at the Wetlands Institute, a Merlin hunting at the Higbee Beach WMA, and a Black-bellied Plover across the road from the Coast Guard Ponds.

In terms of surprises, this visit ranks right up there with seeing an estimated 60,000 Monarch Butterflies near the Hawkwatch on a Saturday morning in 1999, and seeing a Northern Wheatear on the dune near the Lighthouse on a visit in 1996.

Black-bellied Plover

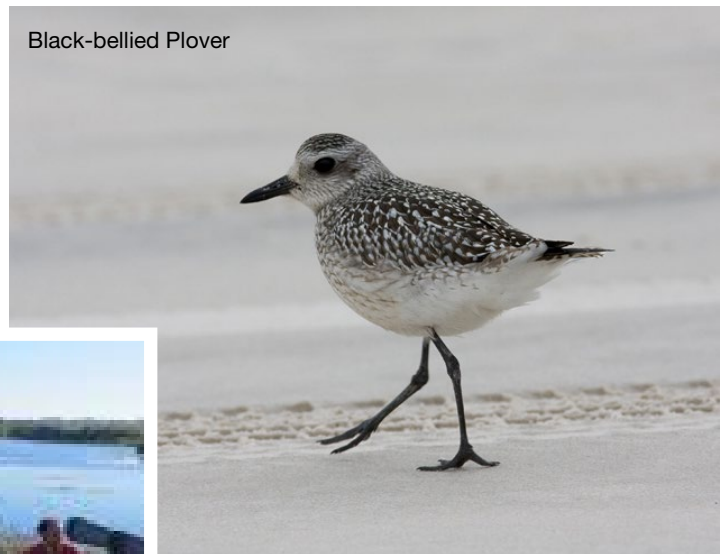


Photo by Bill Hubick



Continued from page 1

The third and final miss in Texas was the Masked Booby, a code 3, being seen at Pier 19, South Padre Island. The bird was there for at least two or three weeks. But two days before we got to Texas, the management of the pier decided that the bird was being too messy and power washed its area. That sent the bird on its way forever. Tough misses.



Barnacle Goose, Baltimore County

THE GREAT: Got back from Texas and on Wednesday, two amazing birds were found in Baltimore County, Maryland, my home county. The first was a Barnacle Goose, another code 4, at a private location. It was only around for a couple of hours and I was lucky enough to get an early Christmas present. Then I went to Prettyboy Reservoir and was lucky enough to have the continuing Red Crossbills fly over. Two lifers! These two birds were ABA #619 & 620; MD lifers; #350 & 351, and Baltimore County lifers # 265 & 266. The double trifecta. Not easily done when you have 350 birds in the state.

THE UGLY: This is about the “first” rarest raptor and rarest bird in America, at the time of these trips— a Great Black Hawk was seen in Portland, Maine—a unique first North American record. This is a real special bird—an ABA code 5 first occurrence, and it was causing quite a commotion. A little background is in order. This bird lives in the tropics of Central and South America and is not known to be a long-distance migrator. This exact same bird showed up in Texas in April as a very young juvenile. Then in August, on two separate

dates, it showed up very briefly (hours each time) in Maine. Through pictures, it was determined to be the same bird as the one in Texas. Then at end of October it showed up again in Maine for a very brief few hours. Then on November 29th, it showed up at Deering Oaks Park in Portland, Maine and has been seen every day since, except.....

Jeff Shenot and I decided that we had to see this incredible rarity. On Thursday evening we took off on a road trip—500 miles each way, about 18 hours of driving round trip. Then about 10 hours standing vigil at the park, waiting and praying for the bird to stop by for some fresh squirrel. So a total of 28 hours and 1100 miles and *NO BIRD WAS FOUND!* This was *THE ONLY DAY* that the bird had not seen since November 29th. Talk about a brutal drive home. Almost too painful to put in words.

THE UTTERLY REDUNCULOUS: I could not take dipping on this bird. It was literally tearing me up inside. I could not work, I could barely eat, I felt like I was addicted to the most powerful substance on the planet and had to have my fix, now. Unless you chase birds, this might be difficult to fully grasp.

What to do? So on Monday, December 10th, I hopped on an 11 PM flight to Portland, grabbed a rental car, grabbed a cheap hotel room, and woke up at 6 AM to do it all over again. This time I was by myself. I got to the park at 7 AM and by 7:15 I had the bird!!!! I can’t even fathom doing what I did. Two trips to Maine in four days. Redunculous. ABA #621!!!!

Let’s not even talk about how lifers are costing around \$700 to \$800 each at this point. Of course I got lucky with the local ones. So in eight days, a one trip to Texas, two trips to Maine, and a whole lot of local luck netted me four lifers—one code 5 and two code 4’s. WOW!!! Fun to be an obsessed birder. I hope you enjoyed my journey as much as I enjoyed living it and telling it!!

AWESOME BIRDING IN 2018!



Great Black-Hawk, Portland Maine

PS: Great Black Hawk update as of January 29:

The Great Black Hawk that David saw at Portland's Deering Oaks Park weeks was found on the ground on January 20th during a widespread sleet storm. Despite the storm, rescuers took the debilitated hawk that had frostbitten feet to Avian Haven in Freedom ME, located an hour and a half away on a good day, but four hours during this storm. Avian Haven is one of the best bird hospitals in the world. Despite initial optimism, the outcome is looking bleaker. See the most recent report from Avian Haven.

PSS: January 31: As this Chip Notes goes to press, we got a message that the Great Black Hawk succumbed to its frostbite and had to be euthanized. So sad.

Report from Avian Haven: We are extremely sad to report that the hawk's feet have deteriorated markedly in the last 24 hours. It now appears that at least two toes on each foot will most likely be lost, and we are concerned that the overall viability of both feet has been compromised. We will be doing further diagnostics tomorrow.

Some of you have asked why this individual was susceptible to frostbite, when our northern hawks seem to do fine in cold weather. This essay <http://askanaturalist.com/why-don%E2%80%99t-ducks%E2%80%99-.../> describes the "rete mirabile" or "retia" (basically, a net-like heat exchange mechanism between the arteries and

veins) in birds' legs. Perhaps the key sentence is "birds that live in cold weather habitats tend to have more elaborate retia." It seems logical that a species native to a warm climate would not have the kind of mechanism needed for legs and feet protection from extreme cold. Also, the very long legs of this hawk might have made it difficult to tuck a leg completely under the body plumage to protect it from the cold.

With regard to suggestions of prosthetics: At least in theory, one prosthetic foot could serve as a sort of crutch for a remaining natural foot that was fully functional but in this case, both feet are affected. Thank you all so much for your prayers, good wishes, love and support for this beautiful bird.

www.mightycause.com/organization/Avian-Haven

<https://www.audubon.org/news/a-mexican-hawk-maine-has-somehow-survived-two-snowstorms>



Great Black Hawk's with foot bandages

Field Trip Reports

Compiled by Kevin Graff

Bird Photos by Bill Hubick



NOV 4—ASHLAND/PAPER MILL FLATS—A

beautiful fall morning produced 29 species seen at the “flats” and 25 species along the NCR Trail—Ashland. Exciting to see a juvenile and



Bald Eagle

adult Bald Eagles at the “flats.” Lots of opportunity to practice “getting on a bird” along the NCR Trail... at least 20 or more White-throated Sparrows seen. 37 species. 6 participants. Leader: Debbie Terry.

NOV 17—MASONVILLE COVE BREAKFAST W/ THE BIRDS—After the group enjoyed a meal, the walk began. Waterfowl were putting on a nice show, but were a bit distant. Eight waterfowl species including a raft of 200 Lesser Scaup with a handful of Bufflehead, Ruddy Duck, Canvasback, Ring-necked Duck and Northern Shoveler. Two Horned Grebe seen from Access Zone #2. Many raptors seen by all, either on perch or in the air, including Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper’s Hawk, Bald Eagle, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk and American Kestrel. Multiple Eastern Phoebes were scattered about. Many got to see a female/immature-type Purple Finch via my scope. 47 species. 18 participants. Leader: Kevin Graff.

JAN 1—NORTH POINT STATE PARK—Days prior to trip, members were reminded to bring knee-high boots due to flooding along Black Marsh Trail. Up to 6 inches of water covered half of trail but that didn’t stop us from birding. Several nice surprises along Black Marsh Trail included a flock of 20 Snow Geese flying by, rare for this time



Ring-necked Duck

of year; a calling Virginia Rail; an over-wintering Eastern Phoebe behind an old powerhouse. Back at the lot and while switching from knee-high boots to hiking boots, we spotted two large flocks of Cedar

Waxwings. Final stop at Crystal Pier where everyone got to see 7 Snow Buntings up close. Many ducks out in bay included a large raft of Lesser Scaup with a few Greater Scaup, Bufflehead, and



Virginia Rail

single Common Goldeneye. While scanning the raft, we had a flock of 10 Red-breasted Mergansers flying around. 48 species. 14 participants. Leader: Kevin Graff.

MIDDLE RIVER CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Coordinated by Kevin Graff

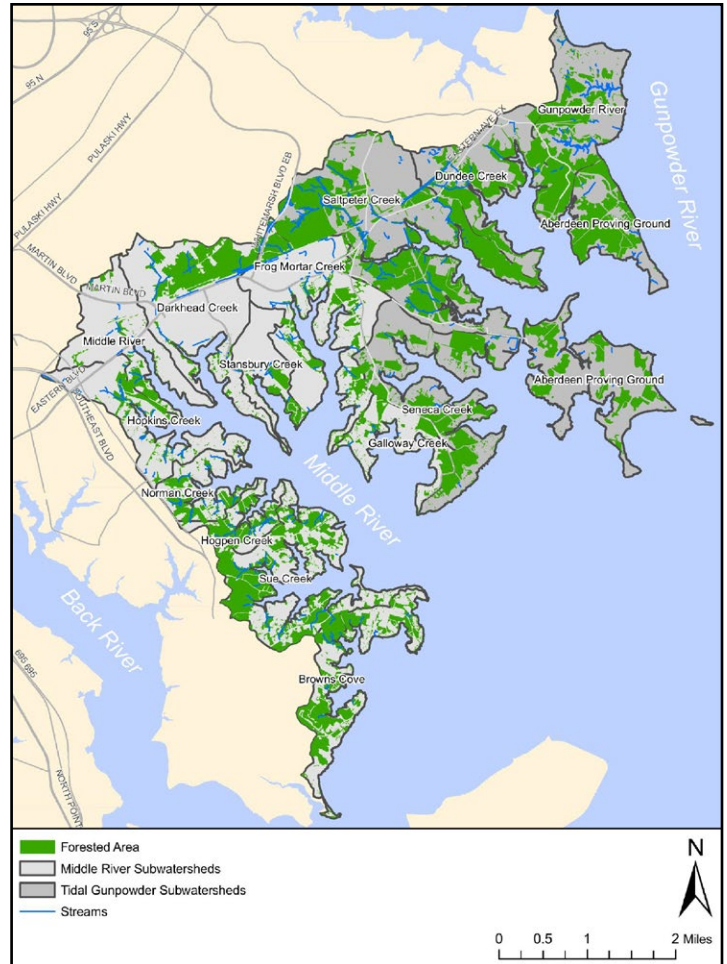
DECEMBER 22ND, 6:22 AM-4:23 PM

During the count week, **104 species and 18,579 individual birds** were identified. Of these, 96 species were identified on count day and 8 during count week. To see the species account, check out the BBC website at baltimorebirdclub.org.

- ◆ By Car
 - Miles by cars: 94.8
 - Hours by cars: 5 hr, 19 min
- ◆ By Foot
 - Miles by foot: 50.39
 - Hours by foot: 62 hr, 23 min
- ◆ Owling: 30 min, 0.5 miles
- ◆ Feeder Watch: 2
- ◆ **33 observers in 18 parties:** Wendy Alexander, Simon Best, Brent Byers, Mary Byers, Tim Carney, Joe Corcoran, Keith Costley, Mary Anne Fluke, Kevin Graff, Mark S Johnson, Ryan Johnson, Kathy Lambrow, John Landers, David Littlepage, Dan McDonald, Georgia McDonald, Elise Meyer-Bothling, Nancy O'Hara, Tabitha Olsen, Brad Phoebus, Gene Ricks, Bob Ringler, Gene Scarpulla, Eddie Smith, Maya Sterett, Susan Sterett, Debbie Taylor, Lou Taylor, Debbie Terry, Marcia Watson, Alan Young, Sue Young, David Ziolkowski Jr



Evening Grosbeak



Middle River - Forested Areas

Since starting the Christmas Bird Count in Middle River in 2013, 131 species have been seen on count day and 5 during count week. A new species to the Middle River count this year was an Evening Grosbeak.

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

A Chapter of

MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
4915 Greenspring Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21209

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Joan Cwi, Editor
David Nelson, Design

Submit materials to
Joan Cwi – jafjsc@verizon.net

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

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

April 24, 2019



Baltimore Bird Club APPLICATION

*Membership year is September 1–August 31. New members only
joining after March 1 may pay half-year rate. A full year's dues received
after April 30 will be applied to the next membership year.*

Name: _____

Address: City: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

Benefits include membership in the BBC and Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS), free field trips, quarterly BBC and MOS newsletters sent electronically, lectures and other events.

Check dues category and circle amount sent.

Category	1-YR	½ YR	Chapter Only+
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$35.00	\$17.50	\$15.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Household	\$45.00	\$22.50	\$20.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining	\$100.00		
<input type="checkbox"/> Junior*	\$10.00	\$5.00	\$5.00

* Through 17: record age here ____

+Chapter Only membership is available to MOS members who are already members of another MOS chapter or who are MOS life members.

Mail completed application with check payable to:
Baltimore Bird Club, Attn: Membership Chairman,
4915 Greenspring Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21209