

Chip Notes

Summer 2024, No. 428

Cedar Waxwings in flight: Image: Marty Brazeau



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- MAGLEV High Speed train update ..1-3
- Joe's Corner: Peter Kaestner.....4
- New Members, Ocean birds.....5
- Trip Reports6-9
- Fledgling Birders.....8
- Meadowlarks.....9

Update on MAGLEV High-Speed Train Project By Marcia Watson

MAGLEV (aka SCMAGLEV) is a proposed high-speed magnetic levitation train between Baltimore and DC. The train route would be partly tunneled and partly above-ground. The Baltimore-DC route would eventually be expanded up the East Coast to New York and Boston. The project is being developed by a private company based on technology from Japan. MAGLEV trains do NOT use the same technology as the famous “bullet trains” in Japan, which ride directly on metal tracks. Instead, the MAGLEV train would hover (levitate) over magnetized tracks, reducing friction and enabling it to achieve higher than normal travel speeds of over 300 mph. Currently, MAGLEV trains are operating in only three countries: China, South Korea, and Japan; the one in Japan is a short demonstration track and efforts to extend it for commercial use are currently delayed because of environmental concerns.

The Maryland project has been in the planning stages for years. The train route would require the construction of an entirely new track (MAGLEV cannot use existing conventional tracks) and supporting infrastructure such as air vent buildings, stations, maintenance yards, access roads, bridges and overpasses, and more. For an overview, please see the article “Proposed High Speed Train Threatens Habitat at Patuxent Research Refuge and Other Federal Lands” in the February 2021 issue of the Maryland Yellowthroat. Although that article is now three years old, the basic plans remain unchanged.



Cedar Waxwing in Mulberry Tree
Image, Marty Brazeau

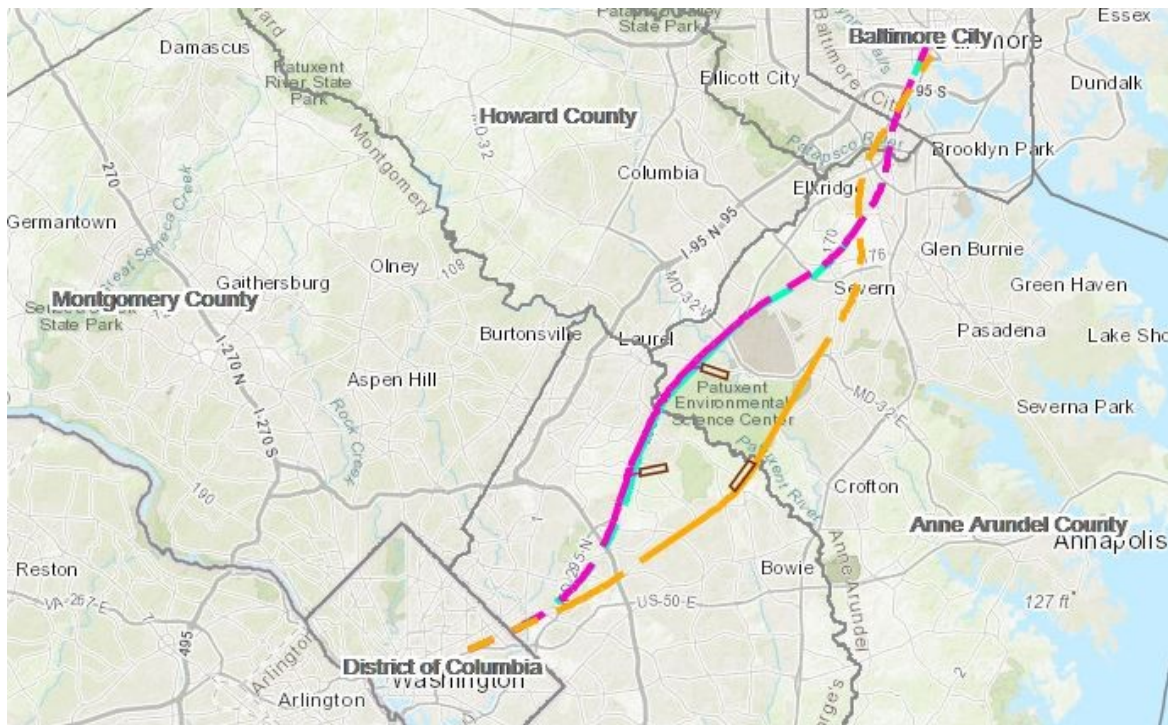


Proposed Maglev Train, Image by Maryland MTA

This current article is intended to provide an update on what has happened since the publication of the Yellowthroat article. In 2021, the MAGLEV project was working its way through the required process mandated by the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) with the issuance of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), a voluminous packet of planning documents offered for public review and comment. In Maryland, a grassroots cohort of concerned citizens, scientists, and environmentalists, known as Maryland Citizens for Responsible Transit (MCRT) spontaneously came together to create a team to write a comprehensive review of the DEIS and submit public comments opposing the MAGLEV plan. The MCRT public comment document (almost 500 pages) was submitted to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and is available on the MCRT website. Reportedly, the FRA received over a thousand public comments.

It was expected that the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) would make a decision by early 2022 on whether to allow the MAGLEV project to move forward. To the public's astonishment, on August 26, 2021, the FRA announced that it was placing the project on pause, and it remains on pause to this date; see <https://www.bwmaglev.info>, with no explanation or reason offered. Although the project is paused at the federal level, there have been some recent developments at the local and state levels.

In November 2023, a settlement was reached in a pair of counter-lawsuits involving a parcel of land in the Westport waterfront area in the City of Baltimore. The lawsuits were between the MAGLEV company and a development company that owns the land; the lawsuits involved the plan of the rail company to use eminent domain to acquire the land to build a tunnel and station. The terms of the settlement have not been made public, but the settlement allows MAGLEV to move forward with its plans for this parcel, as detailed in an article in the Baltimore Sun. The Westport waterfront is located on the Middle Branch of the Patapsco River, east of I-295 and south of I-95, and lies within the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area, an area that is supposed to receive the highest level of environmental protection.



Proposed route of the Maglev
Map by Greater Greater Washington (website)

Another recent issue concerns state-level permitting for the project. In 2023, MAGLEV submitted a request to the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) for Water Quality Certification, a necessary step in being allowed to build the tunnels and other infrastructure for the project. The application for Water Quality Certification is supposed to demonstrate that the project would not deleteriously affect water and wetlands. In its application to MDE, the MAGLEV company itself acknowledged there would be deleterious effects on water and wetlands, but requested approval anyway because of its assertion of public benefits of the project.

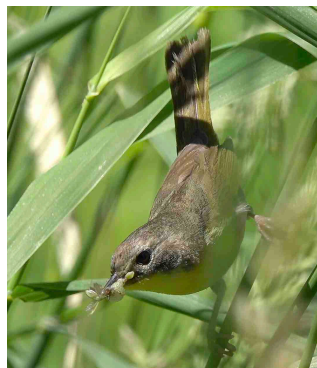
[Comments received from the public](#) in response to the MAGLEV application are available on the MDE website, and show overwhelming opposition by individuals, by organizations, and by communities that would be impacted. Formal letters were sent to MDE by the Maryland Ornithological Society, as well as the Sierra Club Maryland Chapter, the National Parks Conservation Organization, the Anacostia Watershed Community Advisory Council, the Anacostia Riverkeeper, the Patuxent River Commission, the Prince George County Council, Fort George Meade and the National Security Administration, and the towns of Landover Hills, Greenbelt, New Carrollton, and Colmar Manor, among others. In addition, 172 comments were received from citizens via an online MDE form, and 100% of these were in opposition. Rich Dolesh, writing on behalf of the Friends of Patuxent, submitted a [letter](#) that deserves to be read by anyone interested in a comprehensive explanation of the concerns about water quality and wetlands.

On December 21, 2023, [MDE announced a preliminary finding that it would deny MAGLEV's request](#) for Water Quality Certification, creating a major roadblock that would prevent the rail line from being built; the decision is further explained in a [December 22, 2023 letter](#) to the MAGLEV team. The final decision was to be published by MDE in early February 2024. However, on December 27, 2023, the MAGLEV organization [withdrew its application to MDE](#). While this seems like a victory in halting the project, the withdrawal of the application allows MAGLEV to re-apply at a later date without prejudice, that is, with no presumption that the application would again be denied.

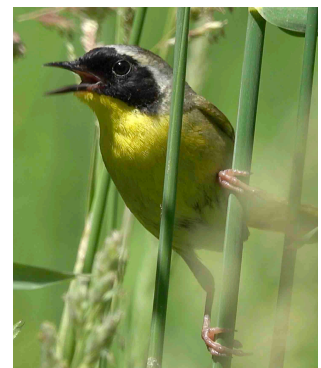
Another recent development on the state level was the introduction of legislation in the current session of the Maryland General Assembly to prevent state funds from being used to build the MAGLEV: [HB0170](#) and [SB0079](#). The MAGLEV company has stated that they plan to finance the entire \$16 billion project with private funds, but have gone on record as opposed to the introduced legislation because they would like to keep their option to request state funding "just in case." However, as of this writing (late March 2024), it is apparent that the bills will not be approved this session: they did not receive the required approval by at least one chamber before "crossover day," when approved bills are sent to the other chamber for consideration. It is expected that the bills will be reintroduced next year.



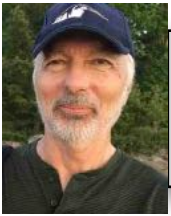
Female balancing on grass and carrying food to the nest.



Male looking for insects and calling out.



A pair of **Common Yellowthroats** near a ground nest that I filmed while my feet were in a muddy grass swale along the gas line near the Torrey C. Brown Railroad Trail, Phoenix Pond area. Marty Brazeau



President's Corner by Joe Corcoran
Peter Kaestner - Lifelong Baltimore Bird Club Member



The top bird lister in the world is a member of the Baltimore Bird Club, and has been so for well over 50 years. That's Peter Kaestner. Pretty cool, huh? I dug up some old membership/financial logs, and from at least 1967, his Aunt Alice was very involved in the Baltimore Bird Club, handling various duties.

33	✓ Dresser, Mrs Jay W		5.00	✓
34	✓ Bawesies, Mr Daniel W		5.00	✓
35	✓ Albert, Mr Irvin J		5.00	✓ New
36	✓ Albert, Joel		1.00	✓ New
37	✓ Grand H. Hersch	2/28	20.50	Bird Feed Cylburn
38	✓ Alice Kaestner	3/19	4.56	Slide Proj. Bulb
39	✓ Alice Kaestner	4/19	5.00	Audite Sept Mason
40	✓ Alice Kaestner	5/19	6.50	Lecturer 4/11

Alice Kaestner entries at bottom in 1967 BBC financial log book

Peter was born in Baltimore City in 1953, and graduated from Friends School in 1971. According to Peter, he's never known a time when he was not a birder. His older brother by 8 years, Hank, a very accomplished birder himself, started taking him birding when he was 2 years old (and Hank was 10!). Born to bird! Spectacularly, his 9th grade year was spent in India, attending an American Embassy school. Not only was he birding in India at 14 years old, it was there he had his first kiss! Wow, what a dream.



A very young Peter with binoculars

Back at Friends, he played lacrosse and was recruited by Cornell (go figure, where else would a birder go to college) and briefly played lacrosse there. Apparently, Peter's was a lacrosse family. His brother Hank and his father are both in the National Lacrosse Hall of Fame, located in Sparks, MD.

While in College during the 1970s he was on the BBC Board. (I wonder if, now that he's retired, he'd like to be on our board again? Maybe as our next president?) After college, he spent two years with the Peace Corps in Zaire (now Democratic Republic of the Congo), then entered the Foreign Service in 1980. Throughout his exceptional career, he was stationed in many countries, including Germany, India, Egypt, Brazil, Guatemala, Afghanistan, New Guinea, Colombia, Malaysia, Namibia, and Solomon Islands. But of course, due to the heavy diplomatic workload, he rarely got a chance to bird in these places, poor guy... of course he got to bird in those places! My jealous sarcasm slipped out a little there.



Peter Kaestner today!

Welcome New Members!

Thanks for joining!

Time to bring your binoculars to the beach as you enjoy your bird-filled summer! Join us on bird lectures and introduce yourself on the next bird hike!

Holly Anderson & Lisa Heidelmaier ... Baltimore
Leah Balkoski ... Baltimore
Collin Bates ... Baltimore
Charles Black ... Baltimore
Janice Bledsoe ... Baltimore
Tim and Laura Brennan ... Baltimore
Steph C and Connie Wheeler ... Baltimore
Shannon Camara ... Baltimore
Amanda Chicoli & John Stanley ... Baltimore
Daniel DiStefano & Carrie Vaughn ... Baltimore
Tabitha Drum ... Baltimore
Julie Higgins ... Baltimore
Richard Karel ... Baltimore
Emily Montoya ... Baltimore
Natalie Murphy & Noah Wass ... Baltimore
Adam Nicholson ... Baltimore
Christina Olson ... Baltimore
Alexander Pellegrini ... Baltimore
Kenny Perry ... Baltimore
Maggie Stephens ... Baltimore
Susan Behen & Andrew Goldberger ... Catonsville
Claire Dockman ... Lutherville-Timonium
Joseph Costa ... Mount Airy
Joanne Mozynski ... Perry Hall
Diana & Mike Fusting ... Phoenix
Mark Horning ... Phoenix
Patrick Maher ... Towson
Jon Lundak ... White Marsh



Piping Plover



Forster's Tern



American Oystercatcher



Laughing Gull

Seabirds pictures are from film footage taken during a May Ocean City weekend. Marty Brazeau.

February 4

Serenity Ridge

Leader: Frank Marengi.

Sunday February 4th, 2024 twelve participants met at Serenity Ridge Natural Cemetery and Arboretum for birding under clear skies with temps from the upper 20s to low 40s throughout the morning and a light north wind. Perfect for mid-winter birding! We hiked about 2.75 miles in a little under 3 hours, first through some open grassy areas and brushy edges looking for sparrows and other field birds with a single Eastern Meadowlark being a highlight. The horses on the adjacent property kept a close eye on us! After searching some more sparrow flocks along the brushy edges we hiked down and followed along a creek with some large sycamores and boulders for a while before looping back around to the parking area. Two Red-tail Hawks circled close by the group, possibly a pair. We tallied a total of 328 birds of 33 species. The next walk here is scheduled for March 17th at 8am where we will be targeting winter birds and some early spring migrants.

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S160614746>

February 4

Birding by Canoe at Days Cove.

Leader: Sam Tillman

Our first winter trip to Days Cove was fantastic! With 17 people on the water, in canoes provided by BCPS, we paddled nearly 4 miles in and around the cove, out into Back River, and up the Gunpowder river. While our targets were overwintering ducks, there were very few to admire - four species (Mallard, Bufflehead, Common Merganser, and American Black Duck) and only 14 individuals in total! This was made up for by excellent weather - warm (for February) and almost no wind. There was still skim ice on parts of the cove, which we crashed through in our mini icebreakers! The unexpected started early - while still up at the main house Sandhill Cranes started calling from deep in the marsh, though only a few heard them. I worried this was all we'd hear from them, but they began calling again as we hit the water, and everyone got to appreciate their magnificent vocalizations. A few of us got brief looks as they moved around an inaccessible area of the marsh. Another great moment was when a substantial flock of Snow Geese flew overhead - classic high flying V's of at least 200 individuals.

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S160638891>



Tree Sparrow, Marty Brazeau

March 3

North Point State Park.

Leader: Charisma Burrows

Five participants struck out on a walk along the Black Marsh Trail and then drove down to scope out crystal pier on this late winter day. The weather was uncertain leading up to the walk, with a very rainy and cold forecast for the day before, but the day of the walk the weather was cooperating with moderate cloud cover and a high of 66° F. Stand out species along the Black Marsh trail consisted of some Tree Swallows that had just returned to the area, so a first sighting for the year for many participants, and a variety of waterfowl on the water, including a pair of wood ducks that flew in and landed in a tree allowing for every participant to get a clear look.

While scoping Crystal Pier for any waterfowl we found a female red breasted merganser out on the water and the resident pairs of snow buntings were easily within view along the pier, sometimes only five feet away from participants. The walk ended with a total of 40 species.



Snow Bunting, Image: Collin Bates

March 3 and 8

Bauer's Farm Road, Woodcock Walk.

Leader: Tim Carney

This was a new trip offered this year to what is arguably the easiest place in Baltimore to see displaying woodcocks. The response to the original date (March 3) was overwhelming so I decided to cut it off at 30 RSVPs and offer a second trip, my reason being that I was concerned about a massive crowd descending upon this quiet side road at dusk and potentially disturbing the residents. Fortunately we didn't have any unpleasant encounters, and several residents who were out walking expressed interest in our pursuits! In total, 31 other birders joined me on March 3 and 14 additional birders joined me on March 8, for a total of 45 birders (plus me) between both events. Both groups got the full woodcock experience: seeing the flight displays, and hearing the peent, twitter, and "kissing" calls. We estimated eight total woodcocks on March 3 and three total on March 8. Both groups saw Wood Ducks drop into the wetland to roost, and the March 3 group observed a small bat flying around and a westbound skein of 32 Canvasbacks. There was a major waterfowl exodus on March 8, and we estimated 500 Canada Geese and 200 Tundra Swans flying north in multiple skeins, plus a flyover skein of 61 ducks, probably more Canvasbacks. A Virginia Rail gave its "kiddick" song from the marsh next to the road and an early Osprey flew past. However, the major non-woodcock highlight of both walks came on March 8, when we were treated to a truly impressive Coyote chorus!

March 10

Hydes Road Park

Leader: Brian Rollfinke

A sizable group of 15 intrepid birders braved breezy, cool weather and puddles galore, after several days of rain the week prior. All were fascinated by the tremendous impact that beavers have had on the habitat in this park; nearly a quarter of the property, which was entirely dry several years ago, is now flooded year-round. We marveled at the extensive dam the busy rodents have constructed, and some in the group waded over to examine the beaver lodge up close. This new wetland produced four species of dabbling ducks, including a pair of Wood Ducks and great looks at a small group of five Green-winged Teal. Meanwhile, the first Tree Swallows of the spring—over a dozen in all—zigged and zagged above the water surface. Four Rusty Blackbirds and a modest flock of 'Butter Butts' (Yellow-rumped Warblers) (continued next column)

fed near the edges of the pond. Raptors made a good showing, with seven species in all; the distant Northern Harrier and three Bald Eagles directly overhead were highlights. Further from the pond, we encountered good numbers of Field Sparrows, close to 20 Eastern Bluebirds, and noisy Red-winged Blackbirds already establishing breeding territories for the spring. In all, 40 species were found and much mud was accumulated on footwear, but all agreed it was well worth it!

March 16

Howard Count Conservancy

Leader: Bonnie Ott

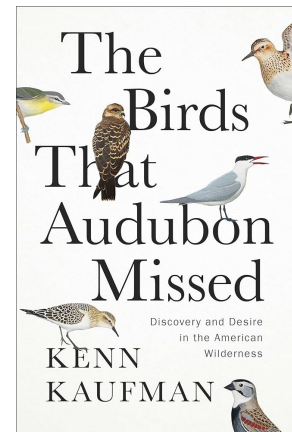
Bonnie Ott, the Sparrow Whisperer, lead our group of 12 on a 3 hour walk at the Howard County Conservancy. This beautiful sunny day showed signs of lingering winter species and signs of upcoming spring species. Our walk began with several Northern Mockingbirds, Eastern Bluebirds and Mourning Doves. Also, several Tree Swallows were dotting the power lines. Winding down a newly made path, we were surprised with a beautiful Eastern Meadowlark perched so nicely on top of a large tree in the distance. The many calls of Field Sparrows was lots of fun to hear with our group mimicking their silly sounding calls. We also saw a Cooper's Hawk soaring high amongst Turkey Vultures. Continuing our walk we were able to see several pretty rusty gray Swamp Sparrows and a variety of Woodpeckers, including Northern Flicker, Hairy, Downy and Red Bellied. The American Goldfinches, with changing plumages, were calling frequently. Our walk ended with Bonnie discussing varieties of bugs, insects, butterflies that were near us or were to become present during the upcoming spring and summer seasons. During this discussion, we were surprised with several Towhees, male and female, singing the Towhee song and their "Drink your Tea."

Baltimore Bird Club Book Recommendation

The Birds that Audubon Missed

by Kenn Kaufman
Avid Reader Press, 400 pages, \$32.50

In it, Kaufman discusses some of Audubon's shortcomings. Please consider buying books from your local, independent bookstore.



FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Baltimore Bird Club Trip Reports: February 4 to April 14, 2024, continued

March 17

Family Birding: Coppermine Fieldhouse

Leader: Daisy Sudano

We had a Beautiful day for a bird walk and Treasure hunt for St. Patrick's Day.

There were 20 people with 9 children (one was a baby). We saw 11 species and a total of 32 birds sightings. (I never count the ones we hear.)

The highlights of the day were definitely the 2 pair of Eagles and 3 different species of Hawks.

Along the bird walk were St. Patrick's themed birds hidden on trees with special 4 leaf coins under them to find and keep. There were 2 special coins for the grand prize of either an Oriole Hat or Kiwi Beanie Bird. A child named Ellis won the Kiwi bird and another child named Robbie won an Oriole Hat. Everyone got prizes of St. Patrick's Day necklace, and gnome.

March 17.

Serenity Ridge. Leader:

Frank Marengi

Twelve participants met at Serenity Ridge Natural Cemetery and Arboretum for birding with the Baltimore Bird Club. We had mostly cloudy skies to start becoming mostly clear, the wind was light and picked up over course of the morning. Many small groups of migrating grackles and robins were flying over all morning joined by an American Kestrel, multiple Red-tail hawks, an adult Bald Eagle and single fly-over Double-crested Cormorant. There was an active dawn chorus included singing Field Sparrows. We also heard a singing migrant Fox Sparrow later and heard a Barred Owl calling. We tallied at total of 437 individuals of 47 species. The next walk here will be April 21st at 7:30am by which time many new migrants will be arriving and moving through the area. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S165159012>

Fledgling birders and wood thrushes!



Thank you Daisy Sudano for leading youth to become enthusiastic birders!



I spotted this wood thrush nest on a limb that crossed over the Torrey C. Brown Railroad Trail path.

Marty Brazeau

Mar 27-28

Spring Break Coppermine

Daisy Sudano

On the 1st day we talked about Spring migration, how to use binoculars, bird calls, where to find birds, and of course the Baltimore Oriole. On the 2nd day since it was Opening Day, it was all about the Baltimore Oriole. We learned how it got its name, some history on it, listened to its beautiful song, watched its mating dance (and that of the funny Bird of Paradise), where to find them, and everyone made their own Baltimore Oriole coloring information booklet to take home and share with their families. I had 47 kids on March 27 and 46 on March 28.

April 14

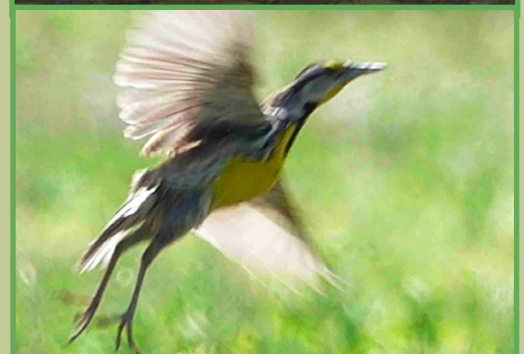
Habitat Tour: Eccleston Wetland Restoration Site

Leader: Tim Carney

Eccleston is a 99-acre restoration project in the Upper Jones Falls watershed. Jim Morris (JMT) is spearheading the effort to restore this former family farm into a flourishing wetland with a particular focus on Brown Trout. The property is privately owned, but birding groups are permitted to visit with prior approval from JMT or the property owners. This was a "Habitat Walk," so in addition to identifying all of the birds we encountered, Jim also interpreted the habitat itself. We learned how the Jones Falls has been re-routed here to create more diverse fish habitat, how snags and fallen trees have been deployed into the streams to create perches for birds and dragonflies, and wetland vegetation that was planted by JMT and is now thriving. Birding highlights included a Virginia Rail seen by all scurrying through one of the wetlands, a Vesper Sparrow seen by most (including in the scope!) at the start of the walk, a low-flying Broad-winged Hawk, high-flying Common Loons heading north, and a Ring-necked Pheasant (released locally for hunting) crowing near the parking lot as the walk was ending. It was a wonderfully holistic walk, and we're looking forward to making walks here a regular thing!

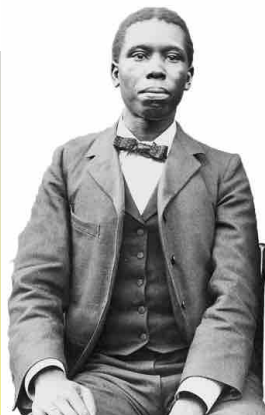
Eastern Meadowlark Fence Dance

From video footage of the bird taken by Marty Brazeau at the Hopewell Recreation Complex in Pennsylvania



The Meadowlark by Paul Laurence Dunbar

Though the winds be dank,
And the sky be sober,
And the grieving Day
In a mantle gray
Hath let her waiting maiden robe her, —
All the fields along
I can hear the song
Of the meadow lark,
As she flits and flutters,
And laughs at the thunder when it mutters.
O happy bird, of heart most gay
To sing when skies are gray!



Paul Laurence Dunbar

Photo courtesy of the National Park Service

Baltimore Bird Club

<http://baltimorebirdclub.org>

A Chapter of

Maryland Ornithological Society

4915 Greenspring Avenue

Baltimore, MD 21209

Chip Notes, newsletter of the Baltimore Bird Club,
is published quarterly. Current issue: Summer 2024

JoAnn Bochmann, Editor
Marty Brazeau, Design and Educational
Bird Video Creator

Submit materials to
JoAnn Bochmann – jlbochmann@gmail.com

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

Deadlines for submitting articles
for upcoming issues:
July 24, 2024



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:

Carol S Daugherty
MOS Treasurer
11925 Oden Court
Rockville, MD 20852