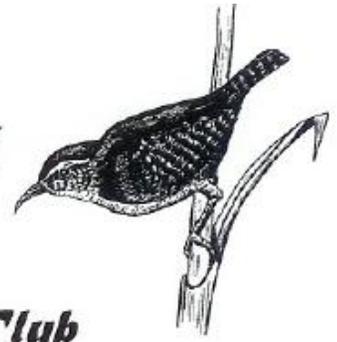




Wrenderings



The Newsletter of the Harford Bird Club

Volume 26 Number 3

December, 2012

President's Perch

Since this winter season is turning into a great invasion year for northern species, I thought it would be appropriate to discuss the backyard feeding of birds. It is probably safe to assume that if there is one practice that club members share, it is probably that we all attract birds to our property with regular treats. In fact, even non-birders share this part of our hobby as bird seed and the associated feeders are huge business in this country. It is estimated that we spend over one billion dollars on this endeavor each year. If you have witnessed the beautiful sunflower fields in Northern Harford County, planted near the Madonna area by Clear Meadow Farms, you have seen the future seed that will be marketed in feed stores, hardware stores, and even grocery chains and drugstores.

So why do we do it? Some may assume that birds need this easy storehouse of food to make it through the winter, but in reality, there are plenty of wild food sources for birds. Our little supplement has minimal to no effect on their survival success. Remember that they were here long before we were. An exception might be when we have our occasional ice storm that covers everything with a solid sheet of hard ice making it very difficult for the ground feeders. Some seed sprinkled on top of the ice then may indeed save a life.

It shouldn't be a guilty realization to recognize that the primary reason for maintaining a bird feeding station is for our own enjoyment and pleasure. By bringing birds to our property and yards, we increase our chances of seeing a select group of species that might otherwise escape our view. And the pretty colors and comical antics just plain brighten our day. Some of us dream of the appearance of a mega-rarity so that we can forever brag about a Harford County first-sighting or add to our yard and year lists. I believe it is a win-win situation for humans and birds - plus the teacher in me always appreciates that we usually learn something about bird distribution and habits as a result of our spending some of our recreational money on seed and precious time on leisurely observation.

While there is no "right" way to feed birds, there are a few suggestions that probably will maximize your pleasure and give you a fighting chance to see a good variety of feathered friends. Four food items are recommended: 1) black oil sunflower seed is a high-energy food preferred by most of our winter visitors and should be offered in both tube-type feeders and also on a platform. The platform can be very simple. Mine is a 12x12 inch piece of plywood with an inch border around it. Make sure it has drain holes. I've seen trash can lids used just as effectively. 2) White proso millet is now available in most feed stores and is preferred by many sparrows and juncos with most other birds taking some as well. The birds generally do a good job of putting some feed on the ground, but when it snows, sprinkle some millet on the ground (or in a trash can lid on the ground). Several species prefer to eat on terra firma. 3) Nyger (thistle) seed is a great food for most of the finches and is best feed in a tube dispenser or a hanging sock. Many of the northern irruptive species like Pine Siskins and Common Redpolls are very attracted by this treat.

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Plan Ahead!

- Rock Run Christmas Bird Count: Sat, Dec 29
- January Meeting @ Churchville Presbyterian Church. Jan 4. (Snow date Jan 11.)
- Sat Jan 26, 2013, Mid Winter Bird Count
- 24-26 May 2013, MOS annual conference at Edgewood, hosted by Harford Bird Club.

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4) Suet cakes are the preference of woodpeckers, and are used sparingly by most of the other visitors too. I've even had a ruby-crowned kinglet feed on mine. All other seed types (sorghum, cracked corn, cereal grains, etc.) are generally a waste of money and are eaten only reluctantly by grackles and maybe mourning doves. Peanuts are great energy food and loved by blue jays and squirrels but they are expensive. Plus they taste very good to humans.

I have no solution to the squirrel or raccoon problem other than to hang the feeders by thin wire from small branches or put them on shepherd's crook poles with a baffle and away from trees to prevent climbing. Mammals will always be attracted to free food (and I'm not just talking about the two-legged variety).

I hope you will find this winter to be an exceptionally special season to share with your backyard visitors. Remember that the club has many excellent birders if you need help with identification, or if you find the rarity that can be shared with other members. Our feeder watch field trip on January 12 is a great opportunity to see how other feeding stations have been arranged and to share some fellowship with other club members. I hope you will consider it.~ *Dennis Kirkwood*

Bird Droppings

Club News?

Have news the club should know about? Births, deaths, marriages, or any other notable events that belong in the newsletter? Please contact Corresponding Secretary Madeline Lovera at 410-879-6098 or email to mlovera30@aol.com.

Welcome!

A warm Harford Bird Club welcome goes out to the following new members. Thank you for joining... we look forward to seeing you out there on our birding trips and at our meetings!

Terry Haley of Abingdon
Bruce Russell of Havre de Grace

Member News

Club sympathy is extended to the family of Thirza Brandt, long time club member, who passed away recently. Thirza was in her nineties and until recently was a faithful attendee at club meetings along with her late husband Hammond. They formerly participated in the Christmas count each year and Thirza always had a delightful story to tell about birds she observed in her back yard. Her membership and activity in the club extends back to at least the 1960's.

Club member Phil Powers was recently recognized by Harford County as one of our "Most Beautiful People." No, not for his handsome demeanor, but for his many hours of volunteer service, mostly on behalf of birds and birding. Phil is a regular leader of field trips for the Harford Bird Club and serves on our field trip committee. He spends two mornings a week at the Harford Glen Environmental Center helping with a bird banding demonstration for fifth graders in the school system's environmental education residential program. He also serves on the volunteer Board for the Anita Leight Estuary Center in Edgewood where he also leads pontoon boat trips into the Otter Point Marsh. He does all this while being a Pop-Pop to his grandchildren and helping his wife with the care of their 90+ year old mothers. The award is a small but significant honor for a very generous man. Congratulations, Phil!

Debby Stewart Speaks at January Meeting

Join Debby Stewart as she reminisces about her favorite birds and trails on the January, 2012 South Florida trip led by Dennis and Jean Kirkwood. A slide show and fun activity are being planned by Deb with help from Susan and Bob Hood. Plan to see great photos from our own club members, share in some bird stories and have a little fun, too!

The January meeting will take place on Friday the 4th at 6:45 PM at Churchville Presbyterian Church. In case Harford County Public Schools are closed or let out early due to inclement weather, the meeting will be postponed until Friday, Jan 11th at the same start time. There will be no dinner but light refreshments will be provided.

Award Nominations for 2012

Each year the club recognizes club members and community members who contribute to our mission through our annual award program. We are now accepting nominations for our 2012 awards which include: Bird of the Year, Rookie of the Year, Birder of the Year, Lister of the Year and Volunteer of the Year. The awards will be presented at the March 2013 dinner meeting. See page 5 of the bylaws at <http://harfordbirdclub.org/HBCBylaws2009.pdf> for a description of each award. In addition to our regular Lister Award, we also want to recognize any club member who maintains bird lists of any type and has reached a memorable milestone on their list (e.g., 100 backyard birds, 500 life birds, etc.) Please send your nominations to Dennis Kirkwood (newarkfarms@gmail.com) with a brief explanation of why the individual merits recognition.

2012 Rock Run Christmas Bird Count

The 41st annual Rock Run Christmas Bird Count will take place on Saturday, December 29th, 2012. This event is centered around Susquehanna State Park and covers a 15-mile circle spreading inland around the lower Susquehanna River and upper bay in both Harford and Cecil Counties. Sponsored by the National Audubon Society, information about the count, it's history, previous years' results and a photo gallery can be found at <http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count>. The



Rock Run CBC is an excellent opportunity for Harford Bird Club members to have fun and build friendships while contributing to one of the largest scientific databases concerning bird populations. At the end of the afternoon, count participants may gather to warm up with good food and tales of the day's adventures. Whether you are veteran participant or a first-timer, become a citizen scientist and participate in this year's Rock Run CBC. The National Audubon Society has announced there will be NO fee for participation this year (donations will be accepted). Register today by emailing the HBC Count Coordinator Rick Cheicante at rickcheicante@cs.com.

2013 Mid-Winter Count

The 2013 Mid-Winter Bird Count is scheduled for Saturday, January 26th. The Mid-Winter Count is a bit more flexible than the Christmas Count in that you can bird anywhere you wish in Harford County! Feeder counts are welcome! Contact the coordinator, Rick Cheicante at rickcheicante@cs.com or 410-803-2712 to let him know where you will be counting to avoid overlap. Have fun, stay warm ... and good birding!

Some Dues Are Past Due

Some of you still have not paid your dues for the 2012-13 membership year. Members not paid by February 1 will be removed from the membership list at both the state and local level. Since the next newsletter will come out after February 1, **THIS IS THE LAST NEWSLETTER YOU WILL GET** if you don't renew your membership. If you are not sure if you have renewed, check the first line of your mailing label. It will say, "**Not renewed**" for those who have not renewed. Those who receive the newsletter by email will receive an email notifying them that they have not renewed. If you have any questions about your membership, contact Marjie Heagy at 410-557-9485 or msheagy@zoominternet.net.

Dues are tax deductible

The accounting firm employed by the MOS has determined that the membership dues paid to the Maryland Ornithological Society are deductible as a donation to a charitable organization. The full tax-deductibility of MOS memberships dues is only applicable to the current 2012 and future tax years.



Harford Birdlife

by Monroe Harden

Hurricane Sandy and the ongoing winter finch irruption have given us a number of excellent rarities this fall. This report covers the period from September 29th through December 1st, 2012. Most of the hurricane birds were seen on October 30th and the days immediately afterward.

Geese, Ducks, Grebes

DK found a **Cackling Goose** and two **Snow Geese** on Turney's Pond on Nov 16th. There was a blue-phased Snow Goose there on Nov 15th. MH saw hundreds of **Brant** over the Susquehanna River on Oct 30th after the hurricane. There were also **Gadwall**, **American Wigeon**, **Northern Shovelers**, **Northern Pintails**, **Green-winged Teal**, **Lesser Scaup**, **Surf Scoters**, **White-winged Scoters**, and **Black Scoters** reported on or over the river by MH and others that day. CS also saw 9 **White-winged Scoters** and 3 **Ruddy Ducks** on the bay near the Edgewood Area of APG on Oct 30th. MH saw a **Horned Grebe** above the Conowingo Dam on Oct 30th. TF found a **Red-necked Grebe** above the dam on Nov 1st.

Storm-Petrels, Gannets, Hawks, Plovers, Sandpipers

MI found 2, possibly 3, **Leach's Storm-Petrels** above the dam on Oct 30th. They were seen, photographed, and videotaped by several other observers. MH also saw a **Northern Gannet** flying southbound over Lapidum that day. SH saw a **Red-tailed Hawk** chasing a **Bald Eagle** near Laurel Brook Rd on Nov 24th. JT saw a **Golden Eagle** flying over Susquehanna State Park on Oct 20th. RB had a **Merlin** at Harford Glen on Oct 16th.

MH reported small numbers of **Red-necked** and **Red Phalaropes** near Lapidum on Oct 30th. There were birds on the water above and below the dam, with others seen in flight. DW also saw the **Red Phalaropes** above the dam on Oct 31st. WLS saw them there on Nov 3rd. MH reported 7 **Black-bellied Plovers**, a few **Sanderlings**, and large numbers of **Dunlin** over the river on Oct 30th.

Jaegers, Gulls, Terns, Owls

MI found a **Parasitic Jaeger** above the dam on Oct 30th. MH also saw 7 **Pomarine Jaegers** over the river on the morning of Oct 30th. More arrived that afternoon. He also reported an **Iceland Gull** above the dam, along with at least 20 **Common Terns**, hundreds of **Forster's Terns**, and 3 **Black Skimmers** over the river. DZ noted over a thousand **Laughing Gulls** on the bay near Joppa that same day. TF saw a **Black Skimmer** above the dam on Nov 1st.

RC had a pair of **Great Horned Owls** calling near his Creswell yard for several weeks this fall. He also had a **Barred Owl** in the vicinity on Oct 14th. TH saw a **Barred Owl** in the Sweet Air portion of Gunpowder State Park on Dec 1st. MJ1 reported 5 **Northern Saw-whet Owls** at his banding station at Eden Mill on Nov 9th. They only had 1 there on Nov 16th.

Hummingbirds, Chickadees, Nuthatches, Thrushes

LE hosted a hatch-year male **Rufous Hummingbird** at his Havre de Grace home starting on Nov 8th. It was still present as of Dec 1st. DEZ also had a **Rufous Hummingbird** at their Joppa home Nov 13th-17th. SH had a late **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** at her Fallston home on Oct 19th. DK reported a **Black-capped Chickadee** at his feeder at home in northern Harford County on Nov 12th. SH saw a probable one along Laurel Brook Rd in Fallston on Nov 25th. Many people reported **Red-breasted Nuthatches**. RC had one in his Creswell yard on Sep 30th. KU had one in Bel Air on Oct 20th, and JH saw one on Nov 5th in Churchville. PP found single **Gray-cheeked** and **Swainson's Thrushes** in the banding nets at Harford Glen on Oct 11th. RC saw 3 **Hermit Thrushes** in his Creswell yard on Oct 7th. DK saw a large group of 75-100 **American Pipits** on the Bradenbaugh Flats on Nov 12th.

Warblers, Sparrows, Grosbeaks, Finches

MJ2 saw an **Orange-crowned Warbler** at Perryman Park on Oct 9th. DK saw one at Swan Harbor on Oct 17th. WLS reported a late **Black-and-white Warbler** in Susquehanna State Park on Nov 25th. RC saw an **Ovenbird** at his Creswell home on Oct 14th. MH found a **Connecticut Warbler** at Swan Harbor on Sep 29th. DG also saw a **Wilson's Warbler** near the Havre de Grace Lock House on Oct 8th. MH and KH found a **Clay-colored Sparrow** with a group of **Chipping Sparrows** near their Forest Hill home on Nov 4th. MH and JG saw a **Vesper Sparrow** at Swan Harbor that same day. JG found individual **Lincoln's Sparrows** at Perryman Park and Swan Harbor on Oct 9th. MJ2 also saw 4 at Perryman Park that day. He found a **Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow** at Swan Harbor on Oct 16th. MH and

JG saw one there on Nov 4th. KH spotted a **Snow Bunting** along Jerry's Rd in Northern Harford County on Nov 5th. She saw it there again on Nov 14th.

RC reported 9 **Purple Finches** in Creswell on Oct 7th. Many other observers saw them at their feeders and in the field throughout the reporting period. MH and JG had a flyover **Red Crossbill** at Swan Harbor on Nov 4th. KG saw 8 of them near the intersection of Rt 24 and Rt 1 in Bel Air on Nov 30th. TH had 3 **White-winged Crossbills** at Sweet Air on Dec 1st. DG noted several **Pine Siskins** at Swan Harbor on Oct 8th. Many others also had them at their feeders throughout October and into November, including 5 at DL's feeder in Abingdon. KU had a group of 88 at his Bel Air home on Oct 20th and 21st. MoH had a large group of at least 100 at his feeders in Havre de Grace from Oct 28th through Oct 30th. They were there through the entire hurricane. LE had a female **Evening Grosbeak** at his Havre de Grace home Nov 8th-19th. A second female was there on the 19th.

Contributors

CS- Chris Starling, DEZ- Dave and Eileen Ziolkowski, DG- Dave Gigliotti, DK- Dennis Kirkwood, DL- Dave Larkin, DW- Dave Webb, DZ- Dave Ziolkowski, JG- Jim Green, JH- Johanne Henrickson, JT- John Taylor, KH- Kim Hafner, KU- Kermit Updegrove, LE- Les Eastman, MH- Matt Hafner, MI- Marshall Iliff, MJ1- Mark Johnson (from Baldwin), MJ2- Mark Johnson (from Aberdeen), MoH- Monroe Harden, PP- Phil Powers, RB- Ruth Bergstrom, RC- Rick Cheicante, SH- Susan Hood, TF- Tom Feild, TH- Tim Houghton, WLS- Warren and Lisa Strobel



Photo courtesy of Josh Emm

Field Trip Reports

Hidden Valley November 3

Seven birders gathered on a brisk morning at this north-western section of Rocks State Park. We followed Deer Creek upriver to a beautiful hemlock grove reminiscent of the Pacific Northwest, and we admired the gneiss Wissahickon schist formations. We were surprised to have two separate flybys of a mature and an immature **Bald Eagle**. A **Winter Wren** was cute as usual and even sang a bit in addition to chattering and scolding. Both kinglets were active and a **Golden-crowned** nicely displayed his red-orange crown. **Brown Creeper**, **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** and **Pileated Woodpecker** all "performed" nearby, and we heard this season's popular visitors - **Red-breasted Nuthatch** and **Purple Finch** (who makes a Vireo-like call in the presence of intruders, right around the time we saw **Red-Tailed Hawk** overhead). A "sore-throated" **American Crow** gave us pause, and a flock of **Cedar Waxwings** perched overhead gave us sore necks. Migrant **White-throated Sparrows** and **Dark-eyed Juncos** were in abundance, as well as the regular residents. We tallied 27 species. ~ Susan Hood

Perryman Area November 10

Seven was a lucky number of birders who adventured

out at Perryman. The first stop was very slow. However, Perryman Park produced hundreds of sparrows, the best being a great look at a **Savannah**. Of all the years I have been birding Canning House Road, today produced the most **Horned Larks** I have ever seen. There had to have been between thirty and forty some within ten yards. We also had great views of a group of **American Pipits**. Forest Green Pond had some ducks. Then, a large flock of **Gadwall** landed right in front of us. The last stop had a **Palm Warbler** and a **Sharp-Shinned Hawk** in our scopes. Altogether, forty species were seen on a beautiful sunny day in November. ~Phil Powers

Conowingo Eagle Watch November 24

About a dozen birders from Harford County and beyond visited Conowingo Dam to see if we could find any **Bald Eagles**. We were not disappointed as over 100 of the national birds were there entertaining the birders as well as the hundreds of photographers who have discovered the area's photographic bounty. Also present were hundreds of **Black Vultures**, **Double-crested Cormorants** and gulls of 4 species—**Great Black-backed**, **Herring**, **Ringed-billed** and **Bonaparte's**. A walk down the trail was disappointing with few birds being seen and no ducks on the river. ~ Les Eastman

Harford Bird Club Field Trips

Field trip schedule compiled by Tom Gibson and Lynn Davis

December 29 (Sat.) Christmas Bird Count. Contact Rick Cheicante (410-803-2712; rickcheicante@cs.com).

January 1, 2013 (Tue.) Perryman Area. Celebrate the new year/recover from New Year's Eve by birding the always productive Perryman Area with leader Phil Powers (410-679-4116 or birdsindmd@verizon.net). Meet at the Walmart parking lot at 8:30 AM.

January 12 (Sat.) 2013 – Feeder Tour. Join our annual feeder tour to visit the private homes of a few of our members in the Darlington/Conowingo area to survey avian visitors to their bird feeders (Plus maybe a black bear?). Contact leader Russ Kovach (443-386-4787 or russell.kovach@gmail.com) for details and directions.

January 19 (Sat.) - Conowingo Gull/Eagle Watch. Les Eastman (410-734-6969; les@birdtreks.com) leads this morning survey from Fisherman's Park just below the Conowingo Dam on the Harford County side of the Susquehanna. Meet at 8:00 AM to begin the search for Bald Eagles, some prospect for a Golden Eagle, various gulls and waterfowl.



January 26 (Sat.) – Mid Winter Bird Count. Contact the local compiler, Rick Cheicante (410-803-2712; rickcheicante@cs.com) to participate in this opportunity to measure birdlife abundance in our area. Feeder counters are especially welcome.

January 27 (Sun.) – Wild Card Birding Quest. Contact Matt Hafner (410-971-3203 hafner.matt@gmail.com) to take part in this field trip venture to visit yet to be determined recent birding hot spots!.

February 2 (Sat.) – Cambridge/ Blackwater Wildlife Refuge. Blackwater is one of the most reliable birding locations in the state. Diverse habitat provides a broad variety of species with a focus at this time on wintering waterfowl. We will also check out some other hot spots depending on what is being seen. The leaders are Tom Congersky (410-658-4137; jnitcon@zoominternet.net) and Randy Robertson. Meet at the commuter lot on Route 155 at the intersection with I-95 near Havre de Grace at 7:00 AM.

February 9 (Sat.) – Bradenbaugh Flats. Take a pleasant

tour through NW Harford County's agricultural area to find wintering field birds and waterfowl. Expect Horned larks, Ring-necked Ducks, with a chance for Cackling Goose, Longspurs and Snow Buntings. The trip ends at the leader's house with hot soup. Meet at Jarrettsville Elementary School at 8:00 AM. Contact Dennis Kirkwood (410-692-5905; newarkfarms@gmail.com) for further information.

February 16 (Sat.) – Broad Creek Scout Camp. Explore the diverse habitats of this extensive and beautiful camp for wintering songbirds and possible raptors. Meet at Dublin Elementary School on route 136 north of route 1 at 8:00 AM. The leader is Sue Procell (410-676-6602; suzanne.procell@us.army.mil).

February 23 (Sat.) – Delaware Coast/Ocean City. Meet at the 155/I-95 Park and Ride at 6:30 AM. This trip will visit several hotspots along the Delaware Bay for wintering specialties concluding into Maryland at Ocean City. Contact leader Les Eastman for further details (410-734-6969, les@birdtreks.com)

February 24 (Sun.) - Loch Raven Reservoir. Enjoy the rich habitat of Baltimore's premier watershed for wintering migrant songbirds, waterfowl, and raptors. Meet at the Park-and- Ride on Rt. 152 just north of Rt. 147 near Fallston at 7:30 AM. Co-Leaders are Dave Larkin (410-569-8319 or dlarkin@towson.edu) and Phil Powers (410-679-4116 or birdsindmd@verizon.net).

March 2 (Sat.) – Harford Glen. Meet at the Glen (west end of Wheel Road) at 8:00 AM. Begin this tour with sightings from the parking lot, then proceed to survey the triple riparian habitats of Atkisson Dam, the faster flowing Winter's Run, and tributary Plumtree Run. Add the woodland trails and some open meadow to offer great opportunities for good birding. Co-leaders are Dave Ziolkowski (443-299-8453 or dziolkowski@yahoo.com) and Mark Magnani (410-838-1778 or mmagnani@peoplepc.com)

March 6 (Wed.) – Timberdoodle Search. Meet at 6:00 PM at the commuter lot at Rt.155 and I-95 and proceed to a nearby location that has reliably produced fascinating Woodcock activity as darkness begins to descend. Leading are Tom Gibson (410-734-4135; gibsonlld@aol.com) and Jane Scocca.



On September 24, students from the Early Bird Club at Prospect Mill Elementary School had the privilege of visiting the lab of Dr. Carla Dove, the world's only forensic ornithologist, at the Smithsonian Institute. Dr. Dove explained how she uses bird "snarge" to identify birds that have collided with planes and how she shares her information with the Federal Aviation Administration and airline manufacturers to make flying safer for everyone. She also taught the students how to identify bird species by looking at their feathers under a microscope. The students were given a forensic case file filled with evidence and asked to help solve the mystery of what bird was involved with the crime. Af-

ter the lab experience, Dr. Dove escorted the students behind the scenes into the ornithology archives. There, the students were able to examine specimens of extinct birds like the Passenger Pigeon and the Carolina Parakeet and learn how the Smithsonian stores its bird collection. Dr. Dove also shared a box of specimens collected by John J. Audubon himself and showed the students the evidence from a forensic case that she had helped solve. The PMES birders would like to thank Ms. Amanda Koss from Harford Glen for all her hard work in arranging this trip for them. It was a once in a lifetime experience!



Picture: Front row (l-r) Leadora Lehman, Ellie Hamilton, Joshua Bishop, Danielle Hamrick, Ashley Pelletier, Kayla Adams, Andrew Wright, Nick Spigler, C.J. Polesovsky, Isabelle Wilson. Back row (l-r): Corinne Smith, Ms. Amanda Koss, ChiomaOkereke, Dr. Carla Dove

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Harford Bird Club January Meeting

“South Florida Birding Adventure”

by

Debby Stewart

Friday, Jan 4th, 2013

Meeting Time: 6:45 PM

(If Harford County schools are closed for the day or close early, the meeting will be postponed until Jan 11th.)

Free for all... bring a friend!

Location: Churchville Presbyterian Church

2844 Churchville Road

Churchville, MD 21028



www.harfordbirdclub.org

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