President’s Perch

Living on the Edge

Where do we go to find respite and truth in an era of "Fake News" and "Alternative Facts"? Must we take leave of our senses when authority dictates and insists that what we see and know to be true — is not? Do we shut our eyes, and follow their noise, and if so, --- to what end? Do we dare to hear the truth of scientific facts, and voice reasonable concerns for the environment, or should we remain mute, and allow their Trump-ets blare to render us deaf and dumb? Today, more than ever, it is important to be resolute in our reverence and respect for nature. Our efforts must be focused on protecting the biosphere that nurtures and sustains all life, including our own. Man is the only species on earth with a capacity to study, understand and protect the others. We are therefore, by default, the stewards of this planet, and accordingly, we are responsible for its safe keeping. Unfortunately, man and the agenda of this administration are recklessly predisposed toward exploitation of the environment in ways that threaten habitat destruction, pollution, and destabilization. In the absence of common sense and thoughtful conservation, we will be set adrift with no compass or sextant or knowledge of where we are headed. If there is comfort to be had from this gloomy picture, it is in knowing that challenged avian species often adapt to and survive disruptive forces imposed on their environment. Case in point: in the winter of 1978 and early 1979, my family and I lived in Bristol, England. A pair of Great Tits (Parus major) lived with us taking up residence in a garden nest box at the far end of our backyard. While it does occasionally snow in England, that year summoned a full-blown, awful, landmark winter — the 6th greatest in recorded time. It brought blizzards of sleet and driven snow, howling winds, and bitter cold. In fact, the coldest winter since the "Big Freeze" of 1962 - 63. In early spring, the pair tried over and over to start their nesting only to be disrupted by the next storm. In a normal year, Great Tits will rear 2 clutches of 8-12 eggs in a breeding season. I was certain, however, that this year they would be lucky to complete one. Finally they got going carrying grasses and nest materials to the box, then laying and incubating the eggs. I wasn't very good about keeping close tabs on their daily routine, but after they had started feeding their young, I opened the box and took a peek. What a surprise to find the female had laid an entire second clutch of eggs that were being incubated by her first set of hatchlings leaving her free to feed them. She had defied the odds, and produced 2 successful clutches after all. Her lasting lesson: When living on the edge, "Don't shut your eyes, - - - Improvise!"

Happy Trails,
Bob Werrlein

Visit the Harford Bird Club web site at www.harfordbirdclub.org
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 443-425-3974 or send an email to lovebluebird206@gmail.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!

Katherine Halle of Pikesville
Mark & Clare Miller of Churchville
Fawn Palmer of Abingdon
John & Maya Paul of Churchville
Cynthia & Michael Yashinski of Joppa

Congratulations to Kim and Matt Hafner on the birth of their second child, a son, named Nathaniel Falcon Hafner, who was born on February 6th.

March Meeting Info
Kevin Dodge will speak at March meeting. He will present "Harbingers of Spring" and carry us to the equinox with sights and sounds of wetlands and woodlands, and nature reborn. Kevin is a kindred spirit, and gifted teacher from Garrett College. He enjoys an otherworldly connection to, and appreciation of, all things natural, and has an uncanny knack for inspiring students and audiences of all ages. Reservations are necessary for the dinner. For more information, contact Johanne Henrickson at johen24@gmail.com.

Annual Awards will be presented during a short business meeting to honor members who have distinguished themselves in various areas of our HBC birding community.

Mary Silling Memorial Service
We are saddened by the death of long-time club member Mary Silling, who died on December 27th at 100 years of age. A memorial service will be held on March 25th at 11 a.m. at Grandview Christian Church, 2202 Fallston Road, Fallston, MD.
HARFORD BIRD CLUB EDUCATION NEWS

Highlights of 2016 and upcoming 2017:

~ Harford Bird Club participated in the Ladew Topiary Gardens Children's Day event in September. Kids and parents were treated to a display of birds’ nests and then created their own "nest" to take home.

~ Prospect Mill Elementary School “Early Birds” meet every month on the second Wednesday. Each meeting has a presentation, followed by a binocular trek to look for birds around the school grounds. Topics have included field sketching, accipitors and buteos, and a focus on North American vulture species.

~ Meadowvale Elementary School "Feathered Friends" meet on the third Wednesday of every month. They also have a presentation and bird walk at each meeting. Topics have included bird calls and songs, bird nests, and birding in South Africa.

~ Havre de Grace Elementary School "Green Thumbs" got a presentation on feeding the birds, learned to use binoculars, and had a very successful first bird walk in February. We look forward to continuing to support their Green School efforts as a Community Partner.

~ Harford Bird Club will be represented at Youth’s Benefit Elementary School Earth Day celebration on April 21st. Students will participate in a binocular trek, identifying birds around the school. If you are able to come and help with this event, please let Mary know.

A huge THANK YOU to the HBC members who have graciously shared their passion and knowledge with the kids!

Ruth Bergstrom
Rachel Hebert
Dennis Kirkwood
Amanda Koss

Jane Scocca
Eric Vangrin
Bethany Vangrin
Yvonne Wagner

Binocular Update

I would like to express my thanks to the Harford Bird Club for the 10 Eagle Optic binoculars that were purchased last year for our education program. The binoculars are used several times a month for both HBC education and youth birding programs. To date, more than 100 kids have benefitted from having quality optics to use on birding trips. In order to “hook” kids into birding, it’s so important to have good equipment for them to use.

Nobody has fun if you can't see the birds! Our old binoculars were misaligned and out of focus, but the new ones perfect -- with kid-friendly optics and appropriate weight. I hope that we will be able to allocate funds to purchase additional binoculars in the near future so that we can have a full set to share with the kids in our community. THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT AND GENEROSITY!

~ Mary Murray
Education Coordinator
New Sightings in 2017
By Dennis Kirkwood
(In the December issue of Wrenderings, Dennis Kirkwood announced a “contest” to pick the next first record birds for Harford County. Here are the results.—Editor)

The votes are in; the predictions are made; and the prognosticators have prognosticated. What new birds will be added to the Harford bird list in 2017? Nineteen members and friends decided to put their skills to the test and look into their crystal balls. Some were bold while others more cautious. I limited each participant to 3 votes although several gave me many more. To protect the innocent (and the slightly delusional), no names will be used until a prediction becomes a reality. Then the gifted foreseer will be appropriately identified and bowed down to at a future meeting. On to the predictions ...

The top vote getters were Northern Shrike and Crested Caracara, each with 4 votes. The shrike has made an appearance in many Maryland counties, with the closest being Cromwell Valley Park in Baltimore County in 2008. Look for it in relatively open areas with hedgerows or brushy, treed edges. The caracara has not yet been seen in Maryland but has occurred in all the states that border Maryland and several other New England states. It too is a bird of open country and generally feeds on carrion but is capable of taking live prey. It has rather suddenly taken to wandering far afield from its native haunts in Florida, Texas, and Arizona.

A close second in votes with 3 each are two birds from opposite ends of the checklist — Lark Sparrow and Northern Lapwing. Lark Sparrow occurs almost annually somewhere in Maryland, as close as Patterson Park in Baltimore in 2014, but has yet to be found in our county. It is generally a bird of open country with brushy edge and has, on occasions, been a feeder bird but is more likely to be found in the field. For sparrows, it is a fairly easy identification with its bright facial pattern. Northern Lapwing has occurred in Maryland twice, in Frederick County and Talbot County, and also in Delaware. This European plover is pretty unmistakable and would be found in open fields, similar habitat to our Killdeer.

Three other birds got 2 votes each - Black-necked Stilt, Sedge Wren, and Kirtland’s Warbler. If you have ever been to the marshes of Bombay Hook, the stilt is a familiar bird. It has occurred as close as Hart-Miller Island (within sight of Harford County). The Sedge Wren is being reported as I write this article from Baltimore County. Formerly the Shorted-billed Marsh Wren, it likes the wet short grass areas as opposed to the Marsh Wren that prefers the cattails. Kirtland’s Warbler has one of the most restrictive breeding habitats of all birds, being found in 15-20 year old Jack Pine stands in Central Michigan. Down to around 150 birds in the 60’s and 70’s, with intensive conservation efforts, it is now over 1500 strong and breeding in Wisconsin and Ontario as well. This bird winters in the Bahamas and nearby islands and would be most apt to pass through Harford in the spring and fall migration. There are currently no accepted records for Maryland although one was banded in West Virginia in the fall of 2014.

The remaining species all received one vote each. I have noted if there are currently no accepted records for Maryland which would make it a double listing for those that keep county and state lists. Pink-footed Goose, Cinnamon Teal, Common Eider, King Eider, Reddish Egret, Brown Booby, Atlantic Puffin, Purple Gallinule, Broad-billed Hummingbird (no Maryland record), Allen’s Hummingbird, Anna’s Hummingbird, Mexican Violet-ear, Calliope Hummingbird, Hudsonian Godwit, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, American Magpie (no Maryland record), Violet-green Swallow (no Maryland record), Cave Swallow, Boreal Chickadee, Mountain Bluebird, Varied Thrush, Bohemian Waxwing, Swainson’s Warbler, Townsend’s Warbler, MacGillivray’s Warbler (no Maryland record), Western Tanager, Harris’s Sparrow, Black-headed Grosbeak, Pine Grosbeak, Hoary Redpoll, and Lesser Goldfinch (no Maryland record).

Many of these birds have been found at feeders in other counties or states, especially the hummingbirds. Some have only been recorded as fly-bys. What is interesting is families of birds that were not mentioned. Gulls are notorious for wandering and no one mentioned them. Except for the stilt and lapwing, shorebirds were also neglected and every year, due to our state’s abundance of wetland habitat, something unusual makes an appearance. What happened to all the possible European strays? Well, there’s always next year. Thanks to all for your participation and let’s look forward to some exciting discoveries. You know who to call first.
Harford Bird Club Field Trips

Field trip schedule compiled by Tom Gibson

February 25 (Sat.) – Eastern Neck Wildlife Refuge – Meet at the Havre de Grace Park and Ride (I-95/Rt. 155) at 8:00 AM. Expect to see ducks, swans, waterfowl and maybe pelicans. Leaders are veteran birders Mark Johnson (markjohnson@gmail.com; 410-692-5978) and Tom Congersky (410-658-4137; injtcon@zoominternet.net).

March 5 (Sun.) - Swan Harbor Farm Park - This Harford County gem with three impoundments, a commanding view of the Chesapeake Bay, wooded trails, and open fields has developed into a fine location for a broad spectrum of bird life, including waterfowl, marsh species, raptors and sparrows. Meet at 7:15 AM at the parking lot adjacent to the Agricultural Education Center at the end of the driveway. Leaders are Dave Webb (porzana@comcast.net; 410-939-3537) and Josh Emm (410-937-6790; apistopanxch@gmail.com).

March 8 (Wed.) - Timberdoodle Search – Join this evening watch for one of our most interesting (and elusive) birds, the American Woodcock, as it performs its spring mating sky dance. Meet promptly at 6:00 PM at the gate to Harford Glen (the gate will be open for only a few minutes), located at the end of Wheel Road (502 W. Wheel Rd.). The leaders are Dave Larkin (410-509-8319; larkin3001@comcast.net), Amanda Koss (443-528-4306; amanda-koss01@hotmail.com) and Jane Scocca (410-272-8870; jane@scocca.org).

March 15 (Wed.) - Timberdoodle Search – Join us this evening at 7:00 PM at the Edgewood Home Depot parking lot on the west side at a location that has produced fascinating American Woodcock activity as darkness begins to descend. Our leaders will be Tim Houghton (timhoughton@comcast.net; 410-510-7504) and Elaine Beery (410-272-6037; ehbeery@yahoo.com).

April 1 (Sat.) – Lapidum - Look for gulls, lingering waterfowl and perhaps some early surprises. Additional sites in Susquehanna State Park may be visited. Meet at the Lapidum parking lot at the south end of Susquehanna State Park at 7:30 AM. Leaders are Dennis Kirkwood (410-692-5905; newarkfarms@gmail.com) and Matt Addicks.

April 8 (Sat.) – Rocks State Park – Spend the morning on the beautiful trails of this Deer Creek woodland in search of early spring migrants and woodland birds. Gather at the ranger station parking lot on Rocks Chrome Hill Rd. at 7:30 AM. The leader is Mark Magnani (410-838-1778); mwmagnani@gmail.com).

April 13 (Thurs.) – Birds and Blooms Walk at Ladew Gardens – Meet at 7:30 AM in the Ladew Topiary Gardens main parking lot. Rachel Hebert (HBC member and Ladew staff member) is the leader for this morning stroll through the gardens to look for spring migrants while enjoying the beautiful 22 acres of gardens. Dennis Kirkwood will assist with bird ID. Pre-registration is preferred for this trip. Contact Rachel (rachel.ladew@gmail.com; 410-557-9570, ext. 261) for further information.

April 15 (Sat.) – Harford Glen – This Harford County preserve offers great opportunities for good spring birding. The woodland trails, wetlands and some open meadow entice a wide variety of birds. We will begin the tour with sightings from the parking lot, then proceed to survey the triple riparian habitats of Atkisson Reservoir, the faster flowing Winter’s Run, and the tributary, Plumtree Run. Meet at 8:00 AM at the Glen located at 502 W. Wheel Rd. Ruth Bergstrom (ruthb22@yahoo.com; 443-752-1967) and Dave Larkin (410-509-8319; larkin3001@comcast.net) are the leaders.

April 22 (Sat.) – Feathers and Flowers at Susquehanna State Park – An ideal time to enjoy emerging wildflowers, early migrant songbirds, and lingering winter visitors. Meet at the parking area at the confluence of Deer Creek and the Susquehanna River just north of Rock Run Mill at 8:00 AM. The leaders are Colleen Webster (410-459-4577; cwebster@harford.edu), Eric Vangrin (evangrin@msn.com; 443-417-7219), and Josh Emm.

April 30 (Sun.) – Jerusalem Mill – Visit this appealing stretch of the Little Gunpowder River marking Harford County’s western border. Meet at the parking lot by the mill on Jerusalem Road at 7:00 AM. The leader is Mark Johnson (markjohnson@gmail.com; 410-692-5978).

May 6 (Sat.) - Ninth Annual Epic Birding Challenge at Susquehanna State Park – The previous competitions have been well-attended and a lot of fun, so make room on your calendar to join us. We will meet at the Rock Run Mill at 6:30 AM for team selections and rules review. Counting will begin at 6:45 AM and end at 11:30 AM. Birders of all skill levels are welcome and will be made to feel comfortable. A rally celebration will be held at noon at the Laurrapin in Havre de Grace. Family members and others are welcome to join the contestants for the celebration. The coordinator is Tom Gibson (410-734-4135, gibsonlld@aol.com).

May 13 (Sat.) – Statewide May Count - Help Harford County contribute to this important data collection day and monitor migration throughout our locale. Contact the coordinator, Rick Cheicante (410-803-2712; rickcheicante@cs.com), for assignments.
Harford County hosted a number of nice rarities this winter. I hope everyone got a chance to see them. This report covers the period from December 1st, 2016 through January 31st, 2017.

**Geese, Ducks, Game Birds, Pelicans, Egrets**
JE and MJ reported a Greater White-fronted Goose at a private pond near Martindale Lane on Dec 22nd. DK also had one on Turney’s Pond on Jan 4th. JE and several others chased and saw a Ross’s Goose in Bel Air on Dec 24th. GK had a Cackling Goose on Turney’s Pond on Jan 11th. A number of people reported a male Wood Duck at the Super 8 Motel pond in Edgewood throughout the period. DL and JF found a pair of Northern Shovelers ar a private pond in Forest Hill on Dec 22nd. DL saw 13 Gadwall, 35 Ring-necked Ducks, and 6 Hooded Mergansers at Lakeside Business Park on Dec 4th. JE saw a female Long-tailed Duck at Lapidum on 20 Dec. DA had one there the next day. SMC saw one near the Havre de Grace waterfront on Jan 15th. TH found a Ruddy Duck on Turney’s Pond on Jan 4th. This was unusual for an inland pond like this. MB had a Ring-necked Pheasant land in his Forest Hill yard. The bird then walked away to the east. GJ saw 2 Brown Pelicans flying up the bay from Hart-Miller Island on Dec 5th. He confirmed that they flew north into Harford County waters. JE and several others saw a Great Egret near Tydings Park in Havre de Grace on Dec 2nd and for several days afterward.

**Falcons, Sandpipers, Gulls, Terns**
DW and JF watched a Merlin perch on a fencepost and proceed to eat a small unidentified songbird in Forest Hill on Dec 22nd; CS saw one flying over Tydings Marina on Jan 11th. HM had 4 Dunlin on the flats near there on Dec 3rd. JS and DS also saw 4 there the next day. JoS found 3 late Laughing Gulls near that park on Dec 2nd. MJ saw an Iceland Gull at Mariner Point Park on Jan 7th. This bird was seen there and in nearby locations through Jan 31st. HM counted 74 Forster’s Terns near Tydings Park on Dec 3rd. Smaller numbers were seen in the area through Dec 20th.

**Owls, Woodpeckers, Chickadees, Nuthatches, Kinglets, Pipits**
GF heard an Eastern Screech-Owl near his Joppatowne home on Jan 27th. DK hosted one daily in a box in his yard on Newark Farms. DB got a good look at a Great Horned Owl near her Street home on Dec 28th. GF heard 2 calling in Joppatowne on Jan 31st. CN saw a Red-headed Woodpecker in Havre de Grace on Dec 18th. JE found 2 Black-capped Chickadees at Swan Harbor on Dec 2nd. These were seen through Dec 20th. TH saw one at Tydings Park on Dec 5th. BH saw one there on Dec 26th and TC had one there on Jan 16th. BW had male and female Red-breasted Nuthatches at his feeders in Forest Hill throughout the period. TH saw 2 Brown Creepers, a Golden-crowned Kinglet, and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet at Tydings Park on Dec 5th. DK saw a mixed flock of about 50 American Pipits and Horned Larks on the Bradenbaugh Flats on Jan 6th.

**Warblers, Orioles**
AG found an Orange-crowned Warbler at Tydings Park on Dec 1st. MS and others saw one there on Jan 2nd. CY saw one in Joppatowne several times in January. JM saw a Nashville Warbler there on Dec 3rd. The Black-throated Gray Warbler found by the Fannings in late November in Havre de Grace continued to be seen by many observers through Jan 15th. MAF and JE saw a Pine Warbler at Swan Harbor on Dec 20th. TH found one along Trappe Rd on Dec 31st. JE saw a Palm Warbler at Swan Harbor on Dec 7th. He and MA also saw one there on Dec 20th. MM saw and photographed a female Baltimore Oriole at her feeder in Bel Air on Dec 6th.

**Contributors**
Harford Youth Birding

The Harford Bird Club held their 3rd Annual Christmas Bird Count for Kids on January 7 at Swan Harbor Farm in Havre de Grace. Temperatures were in the low 20’s, snow was falling and the wind was picking up but I kept reminding our birders that the first year it was only 9 degrees! Fifteen youth between the ages of 2 and 13 formed three teams and were led by experienced trip leaders as they counted birds along their specified routes. This year the Faithful Flock led by Dennis Kirkwood tallied the most species at 20. They spotted 130 American Coots and 16 Pied-billed Grebes on the trail to the pier. John Rinker’s Eagle Eyes group saw a total of 15 species on the marsh trail and spotted the only American Goldfinch and Swamp Sparrows. The Harriers led by Phil Powers birding on the upper impoundments tallied 9 species and did in fact spot a harrier and the most White-throated Sparrows. After a refreshing break of hot chocolate and cookies, the group species total of 26 was entered on eBird and everyone watched the submission map for the “dot”.

An event like this can’t be successful without terrific volunteers so I’d like to especially thank the above mentioned trip leaders. Al Conrad did a spectacular job with binocular boot camp which always precedes the walk. Registration was handled by Donna Johnson and Debbie Stewart, Jane Scocca with refreshments, Mary Trotta our official photographer, and Deb Mosely helped with binocular distribution. Harford Bird Club president Bob Werrlein greeted the group and special thanks go to Peggy Eppig for loaning us the meeting room at the Maryland Agricultural Education Center. ~ Ruth Bergstrom

Support Our Sponsors

The following business generously donated prizes for the raffle at the last meeting. Please patronize them and thank them for their support of the club.

The Harford Bird Club Dinner Reservation Form

Please cut and mail the bottom portion of this page to Johanne Henrickson, 2014 Tiffany Terrace, Forest Hill, MD 21050 by Friday, February 24th, 2017 if you plan on attending.

__________ Number of adults (at $14.00 each)

__________ Number of children 16 and under (at $6.00 each)

Please make checks payable to Harford County MOS.

______________________________

Print your name(s) above as you would like it to appear on your name tag!

Include address and phone number if you would like transportation to the meeting.

TEL: __________________________  Address: __________________________

______________________________

______________________________
Harford Bird Club
March Meeting

"Harbingers of Spring"

by

Kevin Dodge

Friday, March 3rd
Dinner — 6:15pm, General Meeting — 7:15pm
Location: Churchville Presbyterian Church
2844 Churchville Road
Churchville, MD 21028

Visit us on the web:
www.harfordbirdclub.org