



# The Whoosletter

**Art Show Issue**

A Quarterly Publication of the Carroll County Bird Club

## Carroll County Bird Club Youth Art Show, Year #2 *by Mary Jewell*

*Carroll County, Maryland. Sixty-two entries for a youth bird art contest and exhibit. Well over 100 folks at the opening reception at Bear Branch Nature Center. More than \$300 raised from donated artworks for Bear Branch. Children asking Bob Ringler questions about birds. Really?*

Yes, really. Our second (annual?) Youth Art Contest was a huge success. It was so good to see what the youth of Carroll County can accomplish and get to meet them as well as their families and art teachers.

The opening reception on Earth Day itself was a lot of fun. The refreshment table was groaning under the weight of the goodies and the room got so full we were worried the fire marshals were going to appear.

A distinguished panel of seven judges had spent over three hours the previous day making decisions. Awards were given out in four age groups for first, second, and third place. Four special awards were given out as well.

Many thanks to the members of the Bird Club who helped make this such a success. CJ and Maureen were instrumental in getting the word personally to each and every school and library. Susan Bollinger and Bowman's Home and Garden donated prizes. CJ, Cori, Sharon, Don, and myself hung the artwork for the exhibit. The judges included our own Bill Ellis, Melinda Byrd, Jerry Dewitt, Erica from Bowman's, Tameka

Shelford, Dawn from Bear Branch, and Ikumi Kayama. Amy, CJ, and Cori provided refreshments. Amy and Matthew handled the silent auction and raffle. Sharon pitched in with setup and cleanup, and made sure every person got a raffle ticket. Craig helped clean up and even vacuumed! (see *The Last Laugh*, page 10)

The follow-up bird drawing class taught by Ikumi Kayama was held April 30th at the Eldersburg branch of the Carroll County Public Library. This class was part of the first place prizes, but was open to all other entrants as well. Fourteen participants spent the afternoon learning the structure of a bird's body and being guided through the drawing process by Ikumi. From the high level of concentration among participants, it was very well received.

The exhibit will remain until May 19th.

If you have suggestions for next year or would like to help please contact Mary Jewell at [jewellmary@hotmail.com](mailto:jewellmary@hotmail.com)

<i>In this issue:</i>	
Art Show.....	1-2
King Ranch.....	3-4
Northern Mockingbird.....	4-5
Survey Results.....	6-7
Mid-Winter Count.....	7-8
Field Trip Reports.....	8-9
Upcoming Events.....	9
The Last Laugh.....	10



*No hasty judgements here!*



*Hardly an empty seat in the house. Photo by Cori Brown*



*C.J. puts some Peeps in the nest.  
Photo by Cori Brown*



*And the winners are! Photo by Cori Brown*



*Members line up to bid. Photo by Cori Brown*



*These students are hard at work. Photo by Mary Jewell*

## God Save the King

by Craig Storti

Regular readers of *The Whoosletter* will know that yours truly is an amateur birder and that once a year I host my British friend, John Boughey, and we go off across America to find new life birds for John. Indeed, our trips have regularly been featured in various issues of this great newsletter. John is a pro, so I am always careful when I am with him in the company of others, usually Don J. and Bob R., to keep a low profile so as not to embarrass anyone.

It is important for you to know about John and me because this article is about the first guided bird tour I ever went on, with John on the King Ranch (Norias division) in southern Texas. John, like Bob and Don, has his reputation to maintain, so I was determined that since we were going to be in the company of other people that day (there were ten of us altogether, in two vans) and since those people, like us, were paying good money for this excursion, they would no doubt be competent birders, so I knew I should be on my best behavior.

I must say I was very worried right from the get go, when the 10 of us assembled at the visitor's center to be assigned to our vans. Five of us looked like regular people, wearing sensible clothes, with modest equipment. We took one look at each other, recognized fellow travelers, and piled into the same van (although John did sit quite far apart from me, in the front seat while I was two rows back; he said he had a bum ankle and needed legroom).

The other five excursionists (two couples and one female relative) looked like they had just come from a photo shoot at a bird fashion & equipment show (or maybe they were extras from an episode of Dallas about birdwatching; don't laugh, some say the King Ranch was the inspiration for the homestead in Dallas). They wore sheik, color-coordinated matching outfits from Patagonia or perhaps L. L. Bean; their hair was perfectly cut; they had perfect tans; and each of them had more equipment than the five of us put together: long scopes, massive telephoto lenses on the latest cameras, very slick tripods, multi-function, state-of-the-art binoculars, very cool water bottles, slick little Velcro pouches holding god knows what (cell phones? remote camera

clickers? tiny inflatable umbrellas?), and very smart gloves. We were equipped for a day of birdwatching; they were heading out to subdue a hostile nation. They got in the other van.

The Big Five target birds at the Norias Division of the King Ranch are: Ferruginous Pygmy-owl, Tropical Parula, Audubon's Oriole, Botteri's Sparrow, and Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet. Things got off to a most auspicious start for me at the very first spot we pulled over, a known nesting place for the Pygmy-owl. It was pre-dawn and the light was dim; everyone was peering through the gloom when I saw a small bird fly up to a dead branch. Not knowing exactly what a pygmy owl looks like but figuring it must be small, I completely forgot my decision to stay low profile and called out "There it is!" And there it was, indeed, to my immense relief!

But I did resolve on the spot not to make that mistake again, figuring my luck would run out sooner rather than later. But then one of the fashionista storm troopers actually said, "Good spotting," and I'm afraid that was my undoing, going straight to my head and causing numerous reckless sightings as the day wore on and my lustre slowly faded. People were still nice to me throughout the trip, but in that way everyone is nice to someone who is very enthusiastic and somewhat slow.

The young couple in our van, visiting from Florida, were very good birders—he worked at some kind of state bird refuge—and she actually spotted a kettle of Mississippi kites that was miles away. The other passenger in our van, however, was something of a pill; she was dressed modestly enough and she actually did have a bum ankle (she walked with a cane). But she announced in the first hour that she was on a county count that day. She'd been collecting Texas birds by county for some years, and today was her day to get as many birds in Kennedy county as she could. When our driver announced early on the target birds for the day—the five birds everyone goes to the King Ranch to get—she was not overly impressed and made it clear she wanted quantity and not just trophy birds. The driver, Jim, was a long-suffering kind of guy and did not react. In her defense, the Kennedy lady was a good birder and when we stopped for lunch, she found a Northern Water-thrush, the first one Jim had ever seen on the ranch.

*Continued on page 4*

Continued from page 3

John was very discreetly correcting my behavior throughout the day, as he had been on this kind of guided tour before and knew the protocols. At one of the early stops, I noticed that the fashion plates from the other van headed off in one direction while the driver and John headed off in another. The two groups had not really interacted that much so far, so I thought I might try to chat the others up and started to walk toward them, when John called out to me. I turned and joined him, and he pointed out that “you always follow the guide.” He explained very patiently that the main idea on such trips is to see new birds not make sure everyone bonded.

The low point (there were many others) was probably when I failed to identify a Vermilion Flycatcher later in the afternoon. This bird is pretty unmistakable, and we had actually gotten views of it earlier in the day; but in my defense, I saw this bird before anyone else (“What’s that?” I called out) and it was the best sighting of the flycatcher of the whole trip. I know that because the zoom-lens faction immediately broke out their tripods and began shooting. One of the ladies even thanked me. John just rolled his eyes.

I am happy to report that we all got four of the Big Five that day, and John actually got the 5th, the Tyrannulet as it zoomed through a clearing. John’s day list, minus the Big Five, included: White-tailed Kite, Mississippi Kite, White-tailed Hawk, Harris’s Hawk, White-tipped Dove, Common Ground Dove, Dickcissel, Common Nighthawk, Black-crested Titmouse, Great Kiskadee, Green Jay, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Couch’s Kingbird, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Bronzed Cowbird, Crested Caracara. and Greater Roadrunner.

And one other bird, quite unexpected and one which no one else got. Jim the driver really took to John (it was the British accent, I am convinced), so at the end of the day, after we had dropped everyone else off back at the visitor’s center, he quietly motioned to us to stay behind. When the others had driven off, we got back in the van and Jim drove us a short way down to a river where he had a spot for an Anhinga: John’s 15th life tick for the day.

## Species Profile

*Northern Mockingbird (Mimus polyglottos)*



*“He rocks in the tree tops all day long.  
Hoppin’ and a-boppin’ and a-singing his song.”*

This song, originally by Bobby Day and later reprised by the Jackson 5 always seemed like it should have been about a mockingbird. But then, without the robin, the alliteration wouldn’t work.

Still, when it comes to local birds that can really rock a song, the Northern Mockingbird has to be number one on the charts. Ornithologist Frank M. Chapman even referred to it as our “national songbird.”

And what a repertoire. How many songs can an American Robin sing? One? Or two? Maybe three or four if you count what are called the “dawn” or “whisper” songs. Some Northern Mockingbirds have song lists in excess of two-hundred!

And what credit does the mockingbird get? The claim has been made that its “song largely consists of multiple plagiarisms”. In other words, the bird copies the songs of other birds.

The Native Americans had a different take on this entirely. According to their legends, it was the mockingbird who taught all the other birds to sing, making

Continued on page 5

them the plagiarists. Unfortunately, this only goes so far and doesn't explain when the mockingbird sounds like squealing car tires or a squeaky gate hinge.

Native Americans may also have given the bird its name. Their "artamoke" was easily translated to "mocker". According to Mark Catesby in his **Natural History of Carolina, Florida, and the Bahama Islands** (1731-1743), the aborigines called it cencontlatolly or four-hundred tongues. That has a nice ring to it too.

Catesby is credited by some as the person who first named the "mock-bird", however, early explorer-naturalist John Lawson was way ahead of him there. The checklist of species published in 1709 as part of his **New Voyage to Carolina** included "mocking-birds, two sorts". One has to wonder about the "two sorts" part. Lawson might have explained later (or complained about Catesby getting all the credit) had he not been burned alive by members of the Tuscarora tribe in 1711.

Mark Catesby was probably the first Englishman to draw the Northern Mockingbird though. Unfortunately, his illustration does not capture the large white wing and tail patches, leaving the bird a rather dull gray. Of course, these patches are mostly visible in flight. Catesby's bird would have been a "collected" specimen. To give him the benefit of the doubt, he does mention the white in his description.

Those white wing patches may help make the Northern Mockingbird a more efficient predator. While feeding on the ground, it spreads its wings, displaying the patches. The sudden flash of white may startle insects into movement, making them easier targets.

Mockingbird diets are made up of about 50% animal and 50% vegetable, although the vegetable may have a slight edge. In Summer, Fall, and Winter, fruits fill the menu card. These may include those of hollies, greenbriers, sumacs, pokeweeds, blackberries, elderberries, grapes, etc. One theory claims that part of the reason for the mockingbird's northern expansion has been that of the Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora*). The birds just followed the plant.

Not only are the Multiflora Rose hips a great source of nourishment, the thorny branches provide protection for nests. Speaking of nests and nesting, this is something most Northern Mockingbirds commence in late April or May. A male will get the ball rolling by staking out a territory of from one to two acres. He then proceeds to

(What else?) sing. He sings loud and clear, putting all his various "voices" into it. Some aerial loop flights are also thrown in for good measure.

The female cannot resist all of this and once the male has roughed out a nest platform as high as ten feet up in a shrub, tree, or vine, she lines it with grasses, plant stems, and rootlets before laying four eggs. These are a nice shade of blue-green with heavy brown spotting. Incubation takes about 12 days. The female is responsible for this. Both parents, however, feed the young birds until they fledge 12 days later.

Northern Mockingbirds are subject to the usual nest predators. These include snakes, raccoons, opossums, Blue Jays, and domestic cats. The Brown-headed Cowbird, however, rarely parasitizes a mockingbird nest.

Nestlings are fed insect material for the first week or so. Once they develop what is known as endothermy or body temperature control they then get an increasing amount of fruit in their diets. Even after the birds fledge, the male will continue topping them off for another month while he and the female build a new nest and start a second brood.

As Fall approaches, the birds become more territorial, staking their claim to a particular fruit bearing tree or shrub. While the male became quiet during the nesting season, both males and females now sing vigorously in defense of their territories. After all, those berries will have to last all Winter and mockingbirds aren't really good at sharing.

In Colonial times, the Northern Mockingbird was primarily a southern species. It has only been since the 1900s that the bird has seriously extended its range north into New England and Canada. Some of those northern birds migrate south in winter, especially the females and juveniles.

On a range map, today it still appears as a year-round resident mainly from Mexico, the Bahamas, and the lower half of the United States. It is one of the most popular State birds, having been proclaimed as such by the legislatures of Arkansas, Florida, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Texas.

Northern Mockingbirds have been known to live in the wild for up to 12 years.

## **CCBC Survey Results**

The results of our first member survey are in. Thanks to those of you who responded. In all, ten of the completed forms were returned. That represents a large portion of our membership. The information gathered will help us understand your interests and plan future events.

### ***Here is a summary of the results:***

Most members became interested in birds by observing on their own, although there were also quite a few who credited their parents or grandparents as providing the spark. No one listed school.

Most members claimed to be able to identify between 75% and over 90% of the birds they observed here in Maryland.

It was split about 50/50 between those who had been club members for over 25 years and those who had been club members for less than 5 years. That seems like a healthy balance.

People joined the club mainly because of a desire to learn more and to find out where the birding hotspots were located. Some also joined in search of fellowship. A smaller number appeared to have done so intending to do something positive for nature.

Birding was listed by most people as the purpose of the club, with conservation coming in second and fellowship third. Education was also specified by two members.

Most people were in favor of there being a membership directory.

### ***As for meetings:***

Almost everyone was satisfied with the time and place of our monthly meeting. One person suggested that the duration of the meetings be shortened.

Birding ID, Travel, and Scientific Studies scored highly when it came to what topics should be covered at meetings, followed closely by Conservation Studies and Photography. A few people were interested in other nature related subjects and some specifically listed Best Practices for Bird Feeding, Bird Behavior, and Birding Locations.

All except one felt that they were made to feel welcome at meetings.

### ***When it came to field trips:***

Most people were in favor of local trips up to four hours in length, with an occasional full day trip farther afield. About half of those responding also liked the idea of an overnight trip or even an extended domestic trip inside the U.S. There was little interest in pelagic adventures, international birding, or non-bird related field trips.

The list of specific places members would like to see the club go on a field trip included C&O Canal, Patuxent Research Refuge, Sandy Point, and Patapsco State Park, and Cape May. Those receiving the most votes were Hawk Mountain and Magee Marsh.

Almost everyone responded that they would be interested in joining a field trip during the summer months or on a weekday. There was also a lot of interest in doing an owl prowl.

*Continued on page 7*

### ***Bird Counts:***

When it came to the counts, most members participated, although it was about 50/50 as to whether or not they attended the tally rallies.

### ***Volunteering:***

Most members appeared to be willing to lead a fieldtrip, represent the CCBC at education or outreach events, provide refreshments for monthly meetings, or write an article or take a photo for **The Whoosletter**. Fewer wanted to host a tally rally or lead/participate in a conservation project. Fewer still thought they might be able to speak at a meeting or serve as a bird count coordinator.

### ***Social Media:***

As far as social media is concerned, most of our members appear to be dinosaurs. Only two confessed to using it. Most people said they would probably not use a Facebook page or website if the club had one. A resounding majority (except for two “maybes”) wanted no part in helping to develop and maintaining a club website or social media page.

### ***CCBC Merchandise:***

There was little interest in purchasing merchandise with the CCBC logo on it.

### ***Long-Term Vision:***

Not everyone replied to this. Of those who did, one hoped that the club would continue as always. Others stressed the importance of conservation and education, providing encouragement to Carroll County residents interested in birds, maintaining contact between birders in the county, and collaborating with other organizations to preserve local and regional bird populations.

## **Mid-Winter Count Results**

The 2017 Carroll County Bird Club Mid-Winter Count was conducted on Saturday, February 21. The weather was less than cooperative. Temperatures were in the 40s, however, it was very overcast and misty in many locations. It would be tempting to look at this as the cause for our only being able to list 80 different species. In fact, this was higher than 77 in 2016 and 79 in 2015. Still, it was a far cry from our best recent year (2013) when we recorded 90 species.

For the first time in many years, we were unable to find any Red-headed Woodpeckers. All of the other woodpecker species predicted for this time of year, however, were counted. The total number of Pileated Woodpeckers was quite high.

The ponds and lakes were not frozen, so we did well on ducks. There were 11 species, including Gadwall, American Wigeon, American Black Duck, Mallard, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Ruddy Duck, and Wood Duck.

We also had a nice variety of raptors. Bald Eagle, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper’s Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, and American Kestrel were all represented. Dave and Maureen even managed to find a Merlin. For the first time that I can remember, the number of Red-shouldered Hawks exceeded that of Red-tailed Hawks. Owl species included Barred, Great Horned, and Screech.

Both Kinglet species were listed. Red-breasted Nuthatches were also recorded from a number of locations. Three Eastern Phoebes were spotted and had to be listed as write-ins as were three Common Grackles. A Common Yellowthroat in the wetlands along Brown Road was another bonus.

In all 30 observers in 16 parties traveled 37.5 miles on foot and 352.1 miles in cars.

Thanks to all those who counted!

Now for the 20 most numerous species:

European Starling	3669
Canada Goose	2945
White-throated Sparrow	626

Continued from page 7

American Crow	535
Dark-eyed Junco	423
Northern Cardinal	354
Carolina Chickadee	312
Rock Pigeon	293
Mourning Dove	289
House Sparrow	271
Cedar Waxwing	236
Common Merganser	218
House Finch	214
American Robin	208
Tufted Titmouse	168
Song Sparrow	164
Mallard	162
American Goldfinch	151
Carolina Wren	146
Blue Jay	137

## Field Trip Report

### *Winter Weekend at the Beach*

February 18 - 20, 2017

*As reported by Bob Ringle*

Five club members journeyed to the Eastern Shore. On Saturday we birded in Delaware, on Sunday in the Ocean City area, and on Monday points on the way home. We enjoyed typical February weather with temperatures in the 60s and 70s, no precipitation, and generally moderate breezes (except Sunday afternoon when the wind picked up).

We started on Saturday at Bombay Hook NWR where we found a good variety of ducks and thousands of Snow Geese. Our only Bonaparte's Gull of the trip was here. At Prime Hook NWR we were entertained by 25 Avocets, and thousands of Snow Geese. Our last stop was at Indian River Inlet where there were two Great Cormorants on the tower at the jetty, our only scoters of the trip, Black Scoter, and a real prize - decent looks at two Razorbills not far offshore.

Sunday at Ocean City we began at the inlet with three female Common Eiders in good view and a large flight of Gannets that I estimated at 600 birds which flew past the jetty very early and began feeding in an area just south of the inlet before streaming north about a half hour later. The usual denizens of the rocks were also there - Purple Sandpipers, Ruddy Turnstones, and Sanderlings.

At Skimmer Island we saw our first Oystercatcher of the day. The West Ocean City pond had its usual assortment of waterfowl including Tundra Swans and Canvasbacks. Herring Creek Nature Park was good for Brown-headed Nuthatches and two Hermit Thrushes. At Castaways we scoped the distant flocks of shorebirds for more Oystercatchers, Black-bellied Plovers, Greater Yellowlegs, and Dunlin.

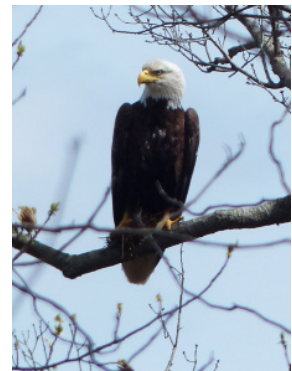
Monday morning we began at the remnant woods from 94th Street to 98th where we saw two Ruby-crowned Kinglets, our only kinglets of the weekend, and a Pine Warbler, our only warbler besides the ubiquitous Yellow-rumped.

We then took off down the road to Blackwater NWR. Thousands of geese remained here, both Canada and Snow. Blackwater was always a center for wintering Blue Geese and this is still true with hundreds of dark morph mixed in with the white Snow Geese. Other excitement was provided by a flock of about 20 White Pelicans, two Tree Swallows, four Forster's Terns - and some Bald Eagles.

A visit to Hooper's Island produced mostly Buffleheads and Horned Grebes \_ and some Bald Eagles. A drive past the Shorters Wharf marshes gave us close views of Greater Yellowlegs and more puddle ducks \_ and some Bald Eagles.

We finished the day at the end of Oakley Street in Cambridge where we finally added some Lesser Scaup to our list and the hybrid Canvasback X Redhead giving us a total of eighteen and a half species of ducks for the weekend!

Thanks again go to Bill Ellis for allowing us the use of the family condo in Ocean City. It is an excellent base for this trip..





## Field Trip Report

### *Morgan Run Woodcock Walk*

March 11, 2017

*As reported by Penny McQuarrie*

We had 10 brave souls arrive at the trail head in 28F breezy weather. The birds were silent for a long time but persistence as we slowly began to freeze paid off. "Neep" "neep" was heard and then another on the other side of the trail and another. Then flight and one was flying. Several were spotted and many more heard as we continued to slowly freeze.

One of the attendees was from Silver Spring. Carla has gone on three Woodcock walks in a variety of places and had yet to see or hear a single one. When she heard the first, her smile, priceless. When she saw the first launch. OMgosh she was delighted and that smile stayed on her face (probably frozen because of the cold).

Things slowed down, not because of the cold but because of the birds and fewer and fewer neeps were heard and it became too dark to see them in flight.

---

## Carroll County Bird Club 2016-2017 Schedule

Saturday, April 29th - 8:00 am, up to all day

**Susquehanna State Park** - Spring migration along the Susquehanna River. All nesting warblers will also be present. Meet at 8 AM at the parking lot on Stafford Road immediately west of Lapidum Road. From I-95 north exit at Route 155 east and in a quarter mile turn left on Lapidum. Follow it to its end at Stafford Road and turn left. Leader Bob Ringler (410-303-2792).

Wednesday, May 3 - 7:00 pm

**Planning Meeting** at Carroll Nonprofit Center in Westminster. Don't miss this meeting. Help elect new officers and plan for the club's future. Contact Don Jewell at [jewelldg@gmail.com](mailto:jewelldg@gmail.com).

Saturday, May 13 - up to all day

**Carroll County May Count** - Parties of counters will set their own schedules in their pre-arranged areas to count resident and migrant bird species throughout the County. Contact Don Jewell to verify your bird counting area ([jewelldg@gmail.com](mailto:jewelldg@gmail.com) or 410-259-4716). The Tally Rally will be hosted by Susan Bollinger at her home. If you will be attending the tally rally, please RSVP to Susan (410-848-2050) no later than Wednesday, May 10th. Plan on bringing a food item or a cash donation (\$5).

Saturday, June 10 - 8:00 am up to all day (Rain date June 17)

**Grassland Birds of Carroll County** - Join Bob Ringler as he leads us across the County in search of grassland birds and whatever else turns up. Meet at the Park and Ride on Route 32 just south of Route 26 in Eldersburg. Contact Bob at 410-303-2792.

Saturday, June 24 - 1:00 pm - until ?

**Summer Picnic at Amy's House** - Amy Hoffman will again be hosting this annual event.

Enjoy good food and good company. Bring your bathing suit if you are so inclined. Amy has a great pool. Contact her (410-549-3598) if you plan on attending and tell her what food item you will be bringing.

## The Last Laugh



We had a great team of members who worked on this year's Youth Art Contest and Reception. From dropping off entry forms at schools to picking up artwork from libraries. From buying prizes to buying refreshments.

When Craig Storti volunteered to help, he said "I'll do the clean-up." And he wasn't kidding. He really got into vacuuming at Bear Branch Nature Center. I wouldn't be surprised if they asked him to come back on a regular basis.

His only request was that I not tell his wife, Charlotte. Evidently, his vacuuming is one skill he has managed to keep secret during their many years of marriage.

Mum's the word, Craig. Thanks!

### **The Whoosletter** *A Publication of the Carroll County Bird Club*

Don Jewell, President, 410-259-4716  
Dave Hudgins, Vice President, 443-791-4250  
Secretary, *Vacant*  
Amy Hoffman, Treasurer, 410-549-3598

To contribute to **The Whoosletter**  
or for further information, contact:

Don Jewell  
4685 Geeting Road  
Westminster, Maryland 21158  
410-259-4716  
jewelldg@gmail.com

*Any uncredited content is the  
product of the editor.*