

**The newsletter of the Baltimore Bird Club**

October/November 2005-- Online Edition

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Deadline for next *CHIP NOTES*: October 25, 2005 (the next issue will be December 2005/January 2006). If possible, please email material to

[cawebb@medquist.com](mailto:cawebb@medquist.com)

Otherwise, Send material to:

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Baltimore, MD 21207  
(410) 486-1217

**Chip Notes Needs Articles!**

As you can see, we haven't been getting much material for *Chip Notes*. Please help *CHIP NOTES* get out on time.

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**Just Another Dull Day at Hart-Miller Island: "Auntie Em!!!"**

By Gene Scarpulla

Saturday, August 27, was an excellent shorebird day at Hart-Miller Island. We had 21 species including all three of the fall specialties.

**Next, the weather:**

Hart-Miller weather always seems to be mentioned in superlatives - extreme heat, extreme humidity, extreme lack of breeze, strong thunderstorms. Saturday added a new dimension to the story.

Carol McCollough, Danny Bystrak, Jeff Shenot, and I were the four observers of the day. The clouds looked threatening before boarding the boat to the island, but we were undeterred. We observed a red fox following the gray, gravel road around 9:00 a.m. This sighting would become more significant later in the morning.

After birding on the island for about three hours, the rain began. Looking at the sky, we were hopeful that it would pass fairly quickly, so we decided not to seek shelter at the State Park buildings, which we had passed about 10 minutes earlier. Jeff was about 50 yards ahead of the remaining three of us when he yelled out "TORNADO" and pointed to the east side of the island. We were all on the North Cell dike on the west side of the island and immediately turned facing east. Out beyond the east dike, we were amazed to see a funnel cloud stretching from the cloud deck down toward the surface of the Chesapeake Bay. My first thought was to yell out "Auntie Em, Auntie Em!" My second thought was to line up the funnel cloud between two stalks of vegetation to see which direction it was moving. It was moving straight toward Hart-Miller Island and us and was growing in size. As it approached closer, the funnel cloud width doubled in size, then tripled in size. When it had quadrupled in size, it had two concentric layers, a very dark inner core and a thin, wispy outer shell. The funnel continued to approach the island and we were coming up with contingency plans in the event that it made landfall. We figured that the State Park buildings were too far away and were not tornado-proof anyway. We decided that the best thing to do would be to run down the west side of the North Cell dike and lay in the ditch at its base if need be.

We were greatly relieved that our contingencies were not called upon. When the waterspout finally reached the east side of the island, it began to dissipate -- first at the base and then further up the funnel, until it eventually disappeared. After thinking that all had passed, a second smaller funnel cloud was spotted behind where the first had been. It was less well organized and eventually dissipated also.

We all stood there in the rain, a bit awestruck. We thought of the "Wizard of Oz" and the similarities of Dorothy and her three companions and Carol McCollough and her three companions. We figured that the red fox following the gray, gravel road must have been "Toto." Someone mentioned that we should keep our eyes open for "flying monkeys" to count and to add to the island species list.

Later in the day when we finally reached the administration building, we paid no attention to the "man behind the curtain."

Every day a new adventure!!!

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**Conservation Corner -- Avian Environmentalism Web-Links**

By Joan Cwi

Last year the BBC Conservation Committee provided the MOS Conservation Committee a [list of websites](#) that conservation-minded birders could use to assist in web-activism. We plan to update this list annually so that the MOS website presents the best possible collection of web-action links for Maryland birdwatchers. \* This list can be accessed on the [MOS website](#).

**New Recommendations**

- [Maryland League of Conservation Voters](#): MLCV serves as the political voice of the state's environmental community by advocating for sound conservation policies, promoting environmentally responsible candidates, and holding elected officials accountable through scorecards and reports. They are currently handling such issues as mercury pollution, endangered native oysters, air pollution, and the Inter County Connector. They have a very proactive program.
- [Partners for Open Space](#): Partners for Open Space is a statewide coalition of groups seeking to secure, save and protect Maryland's land conservation programs. The coalition is comprised of 120+ member groups, such as Nature Conservancy, Chesapeake Bay Foundation and others. By helping promote public outcry, funds were restored to Maryland's Program Open Space, and legislation passed making the sale of public lands more transparent. They continue to work on this agenda.
- [BirdPac](#): This is a fairly new organization founded by two individuals who previously worked in the National Audubon Society's public policy office. Their goal is to start a program focused on electing the right lawmakers who determine environmental policy. They are non-partisan. Recently they have been involved with the New Jersey and Virginia Governor races and are looking at candidates' birding qualifications in House and Senate races in several states--including Maryland--that could have a big impact on our birds and their habitats. Still new and some of the website is not functioning, but the concept is good.
- [National Resources Defense Council](#): NRDC is an environmental action organization that supports online activists in protecting the planet's wildlife and wild places. The website provides information on current environmental issues, as well as tools and sample text to assist you in sending email or fax messages to designated parties involved with decision-making regarding the issue. Current issues include the "Exxpose Exxon" campaign, telling the Navy to stop harming whales with high-intensity sonar, and encouraging Kimberly-Clark to manufacture toilet paper using recycled fiber. The website is easy to use.

**Old Favorites**

- [Action Network Hub](#): ANHub is a broad-based gateway to online activism centers for leading environment, health and population advocacy organizations.
- [American Bird Conservancy-Web Action Link](#): ABC's mission is to conserve wild birds and their habitats throughout the Americas. Their Web Action Link currently focuses on saving the Red Knot and other shorebirds from the effects of horseshoe crab over harvesting.
- [Care2 Environmental Network](#): Care2 partnered with nonprofit organizations and ecofriendly companies to offer products and services with a "green twist." Using their search engine, Care2 provides eco-info (and info on other topics) from many nonprofit organizations. Care2 links back into BirdPac.
- [Environmental Activism Issues Hub](#): People visit Aboutcom for many things, including home repair, decorating ideas as well as a significant section on environmental issues-avian and otherwise. Aboutcom provides content relevant to your interests on any of these topics. If interested in a fuel-efficient car, this is a good place to start.
- [Scorecard](#): Scorecard is an information service provided by Environmental Defense as a resource for information about pollution problems and toxic chemicals in various regions of the U.S. For example, Baltimore City is listed in the top 10% of cities with the worst toxic chemical releases. Baltimore County is in the top 20%. Scorecard provides assistance in taking action.

For additional information, call Joan Cwi at 410-467-5352 or email Bryce Butler at [capitano.bryce@verizon.net](mailto:capitano.bryce@verizon.net)

*\*The views represented by these websites are not necessarily those of the BBC, MOS or the author.*

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**Back Yard Birding and Beyond**

By Gail Frantz



**Old Hanover Road - Something to Consider**

Hummers in our yard this year have shown a propensity for feeders placed 5' and higher. I first noticed this preference at the beginning of the season when one of the two hummers in our cherry tree was emptied with greater frequency than the other. The preferred feeder was 5' 2" above ground; the other, only about 3' above ground. Keeping this in mind, I placed four of our five feeders at 5' and above. With the exception of August, the four high-hanging feeders were emptied first. In late September, passing migrants followed the same behavior. Higher placed feeders were used more frequently than lower ones. Will be interested to see how the height factor works out next summer. (GF)

**Windsor Hills**

From Elise Kreiss, August, 7: Volume II of the Stokes's *Guide to Bird Behavior* writes about a visual display called a "Wingspread." A White-breasted Nuthatch is illustrated with its wings outspread, beak pointed up, tail spread, and is described as swaying from side to side. The behavior is, "Given near a nest or feeder when the bird is in competition with other birds or mammals."

Today our male nuthatch came down a mulberry tree towards a ground feeder. Anchored on the trunk maybe two feet above the occupied feeder, wings and tail spread, head downward, he vibrated his wings and rotated smoothly and slowly; moving like a little mechanical pendulum, back and forth. It was an impressive and decorative display which lasted for several seconds.

**Leakin Park**

Elise and Paul Kreiss, August 20: Paul and I did a short walk Saturday morning in Leakin Park, Baltimore City. It was not a birdy day. We did see two Yellow Warblers, an American Redstart, a Worm-eating Warbler, and a Canada Warbler, however. We also had close looks at a Yellow-billed Cuckoo along the Gwynns Falls. While a second bird called that soft, two-syllable call, our bird clacked softly. We were also pleasantly surprised to find a Solitary Sandpiper in the park dump.

The city has been dumping leaves in the park in an area to one side of the model railroad, screened by a tall row of cedars. They've been dumping them, plastic bags and all. In an interview, I heard this called "recycling." Well, of course, the bags don't biodegrade, and they have created a foundation for a little sludge pond. It is an interesting spot. Squash that I've never seen in the grocery store are growing wild there, cross-fertilizing one another -- Paul and I made two meals out of one and found a few cherry tomatoes to go with them. This is no one's garden -- you have to bushwhack and climb unstable trash bags to get to it. Anyway, the Solitary Sandpiper was perched on one of the plastic bags, and we had a good look. We've also found Canada Geese floating around there on another occasion.

**Cromwell Valley**

Pete Lev, September 5: I visited Cromwell Valley Park in late afternoon, after getting directions from Kevin Graff re the Yellow-bellied Flycatcher seen on Saturday. To my surprise and delight, I was able to re-find this bird. It was further downstream than on Saturday, in a swampy area near the spring. The whole vicinity was loaded with flycatchers: Pewee 12+, Empid sp. 3, Great-crested 1, plus the Yellowbellied. Also seen were Blue Grosbeak (young male), Chestnut-sided Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, White-eyed and Red-eyed Vireo, Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawk.

**Granite**

Keith Costley, September 5: During six-hour walk in the Granite Area of the Patapsco Valley State Park, Wayne Gordon and I counted 45 species. The warblers were well represented with 12 species (including Kentucky, Bay-breasted, and Canada) quietly foraging - most at close range. Only 4 of the warbler species are known to breed in the area; the other 11 decided to hide as we passed. Other highlights included at least 8 Red-breasted Nuthatches, a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher and the singing Yellow-throated Vireos. When I first hear the Red-breasted Nuthatches I thought it was another Wayne Gordon trick, discounted them and moved on. Fortunately, we passed the same location and found six birds. We heard two more in a second stand of conifers.

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*Let us hear about your Back Yard and Maryland Birding too!!!*

Call or write to:

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13955 Old Hanover Rd.  
Reisterstown MD 21136

Tel: 410-833-7135

e-mail: [guineabird@aol.com](mailto:guineabird@aol.com)



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**BBC Merchandise**

The Baltimore Bird Club offers merchandise for sale through its mail order section. The following items are available. All prices include shipping costs.

Baltimore Bird Club's Birding Site Guide - \$12.00  
Baltimore Bird Club T-Shirt - \$18.00 (only XL left)  
MOS Patch - \$3.50  
MOS Decal - \$3.50

Please make your check or money order payable to "The Baltimore Bird Club" and send your order to: Joseph Lewandowski, 3021 Temple Gate, Baltimore, Maryland 21209.

**"CafePress" Web Page:**

Shireen Gonzaga has arranged a new web page on CafePress for the Baltimore Bird Club. The web page sells everything from T-shirts & sweat shirts to mugs, caps, notebooks and tote bags. There are baby clothes, stickers, license plate frames and even underwear! All come with the BBC logo designed by Don Culbertson. The club receives \$3 for each item sold.

You may order online at The Baltimore Bird Club Store, CafePress: <http://www.cafeshops.com/baltbirdclub> or call in toll free orders on Mondays through Fridays between 8:00am -5:00pm (PST) at: **877-809-1659**

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