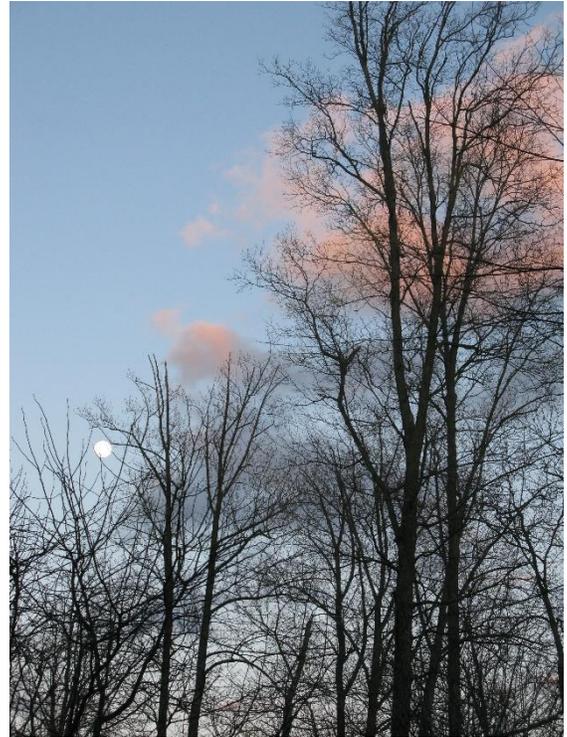


Friends Connecting to Friends

Issue 2, May 29, 2020

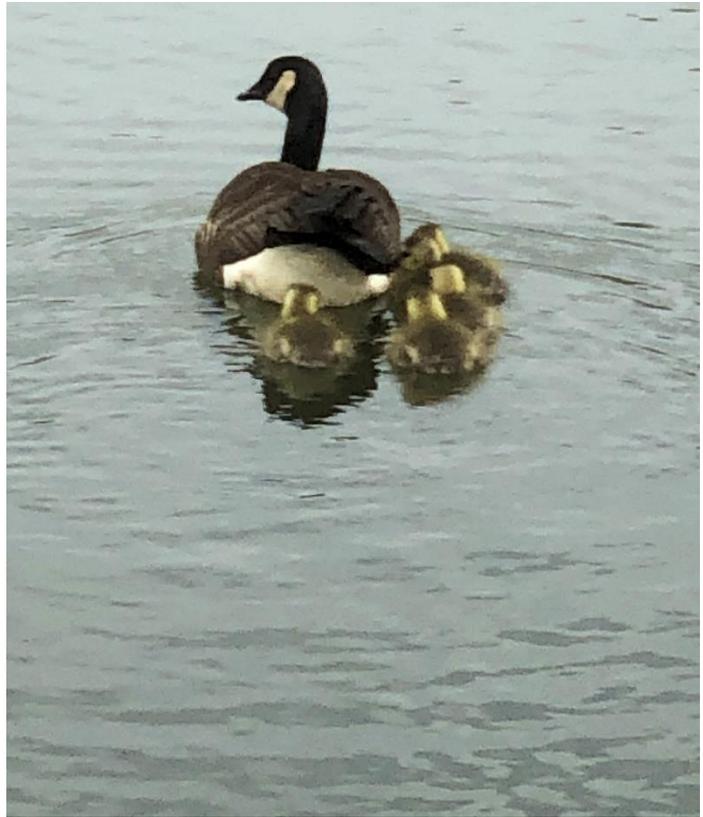
Neighborhood Walk by Mary Beth Mattison

I'm fortunate to live in a somewhat new subdivision in Laurel called Emerson. A few times every week I walk around the neighborhood for exercise, and my rule is that, during the last part of my walk, I get to take photos. There are so many photo ops here that make the trip home even more enjoyable. On one side of the apartment complex is a mini-forest, a retention pond on another, and a mini-prairie on the third. And whoever designed our neighborhood landscaping is to be commended. In March we have flowering plum and pear trees; in April the cherry blossoms burst out; and right now, our white dogwoods are showing their pretty faces. In autumn there are lovely burning bush shrubs down the street that I get to see on every walk. Geese, ducks, and deer frequent our retention pond and we have a shy red-shouldered hawk that sometimes lands on the metal structure in the pond. It's so fun to see it, but when I try to get close for a photo, it flies to the top of a nearby hardwood tree and stares down at me. Nature abounds here in all its glory. And it's even more meaningful to me now during our Stay-At-Home time.



Thanks to Nature Right Now by Robert Brillante

Enjoying nature to the fullest this spring like
no other at Melford pond in Bowie MD.



Patuxent Walk by Lucy Y. Steinitz

Last Sunday (May 11) was one of many glorious days we have had this spring. A friend and I took a walk at Patuxent South Track, dutifully wearing masks and keeping our distance, but enjoying every moment of it!

What I did on my COVID-19 Lockdown by Kenneth A. Cohen

Oh No! The restrictions on unnecessary travel and business closures have eliminated my annual spring migration trips to the Delmarva, Lake Erie, and the Cardin Plain. Time for a new exploration of spring migration. The commencement of Maryland's Breeding Bird Atlas project has given that new exploration a purpose. The new routine is a daily walk around my neighborhood followed by an eBird report to the Maryland Breeding Bird Atlas.

This experience has provided me with a greater appreciation of the migration process. Not only have I been able to record the new arrivals, but have also been able to document the departure of winter residents. I am learning which birds pass through during migration and which birds stay to breed. Almost every day a new bird arrives or passes through the neighborhood. From March 23 - May 14, 2020 ninety-three species have visited the neighborhood! By the end of April Juncos and White-throated Sparrows had departed. By mid April Bluebirds had reclaimed their nest box. By early May Tree Swallows had claimed their nest boxes and Canada Geese were paired. By mid May Catbirds and Great Crested Flycatchers had returned and the first Goslings had hatched. Yellow-rumped Warblers are still moving through. The small ponds even attract Solitary and Spotted Sandpipers. Instead of seeing 100 or more species in a day while traveling the Delmarva, this year I will be seeing 100 or more species in my neighborhood throughout the breeding season.



Participation in the Breeding Bird Atlas forces me to take more time with my observations. The Atlas requests its participants to describe the bird's behavior. It provides options such as "Flyover," "Carrying Food", "Singing Bird," "Pair in Suitable Habitat," "Territorial Defense," "Nest with Young," and many more. The Atlas needs to evaluate the probability of the bird breeding based on its behavior. Participation in the Breeding Bird Atlas forces me to take more time with my observations. The Atlas requests its participants to describe the bird's behavior. It provides options such as "Flyover," "Carrying Food", "Singing Bird," "Pair in Suitable Habitat," "Territorial Defense," "Nest with Young," and many more. The Atlas needs to evaluate the probability of the bird breeding based on its behavior. Now I am recording species and behavior. On the down side have been many observations of Starlings to determine if they are carrying food. On the plus side have been many observations of different Mockingbirds to learn their territory and how they defend that territory. Taking more time to observe a bird's behavior has added to my appreciation of birds and the difficulties they must overcome to survive.

Every year I listen to the bird song CDs. My mantra has always been “learn one, forget two!” The difference daily walking and listening has made to bird song comprehension both for my self and my wife, Diane, has been amazing. Starting without leaves on the trees we were able to observe the songsters. As more foliage appeared we recognized the birds we had heard without the need to observe them. Being familiar with our common bird vocalizations permitted us to recognize new songs and identify the singer. As the months progressed we were able to learn many different vocalizations from the same bird. We have a new respect for the repertoire of Bluejays, Mockingbirds, Crows and Robins.

Another benefit of these daily excursions was the opportunity to discover new and exciting species. Unfortunately, the ebird editors did not accept this finding of the Green Feathered Quencher!



The MOS has made Joining the Atlas project and recording your sightings very easy. The link is <https://ebird.org/atlasmdcc/home>. The web site provides you with all the information required to evaluate and record your sightings. Once you enter your sightings they will also post to your ebird account. When Maryland lifts its restrictions on unnecessary travel, I may even consider becoming a block captain.