

SOAR Recap

January 3 2026

Typical winter weather greeted our group as we gathered at Antietam Meadow Park for our first walk of 2026. With Sharon still recuperating at home and despite the cold, I was joined by Lisa, Dan, Becky and Lee, Jeff, as well as newcomers Terri (who is new to the area and could become a regular) and Genevieve and son Ezra. The first thing we noticed was several black vultures traversing the park overhead from north to south. This was a bit unusual given the lack of a breeze, but they seemed to have a destination in mind.

Before leaving the parking area, we added a Canada goose and a northern flicker. As we proceeded down the path, I noticed that Jeff was lagging behind and intently watching something in the bushes. After he caught up he commented "I spent five minutes trying to identify a bird only to discover it was a house sparrow." Not too exciting but on the list it went.

A little further along we added a Carolina wren, mourning dove and saw several goldfinches and house finches. Further down the path Dan spotted a white-throated sparrow. There was a dark bird perched at the top of a tree in the distance. After much discussion we settled on red-winged blackbird, possibly slightly out of its normal range, however, more would be seen later so apparently not that unusual.

As we neared the far end of the park, we saw a lone robin, also slightly unusual as they are usually in flocks in the winter. There were also some bluebirds. As we continued Lee shouted: "There's a mink!" He had been scanning the ground on the far side of the creek. He then added a caveat that it could have been a black squirrel. He and I walked to the edge of the creek, figuring if it was a squirrel it would run up a tree. There wasn't one. And since a mink had been seen in the stream a year or so earlier, we are fairly confident it was indeed a mink. Nothing to add to our list but nice to know they are around.

As we continued we added a mockingbird and observed probably a dozen goldfinches feeding in a single tree across the creek. That was it for our list until we reached the parking lot, where Dan spotted a white-breasted nuthatch. We also noticed a single tree that we had walked past that now contained at least 10 bluebirds. They must have found something to feed on. Finally a pair of mallards did a flyover, completing our list at a mere 20 species. We hope for a better count when we return to the park on 17 January.

Next SOAR Walk:
January 17 at Antietam Meadow Park



Species List

American goldfinch



American robin

Black vulture

Blue jay

C/BC chickadee

Canada goose

Carolina wren



Downy woodpecker

Eastern bluebird

European Starling

House finch

House sparrow

Mallard

Northern Cardinal

Northern flicker

Northern flicker

Northern harrier

Red-bellied woodpecker

Red-winged blackbird

White-breasted nuthatch

