



Howard County MOS

VOLUME 1 Number 5

April 1973

THE INTRODUCED

A nutria spotted during the field trip last month to Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge started a discussion about "introduced species." What happens when man puts into motion his long held belief that he can improve upon nature by re-arranging its wildlife?

The nutria was brought to this country from South America in 1938 (an earlier introduction in 1899 failed) and multiplied and spread rapidly. Although the original intent was to raise the animal commercially for its fur, in the face of little demand the nutria farmers turned their stock loose. (Recently some trapping in Louisiana for the pelts has had some commercial success.) The nutria is very destructive of crops, undermines levees, and has even been known to come into urban areas searching for food. In Maryland these furry rodents are now established in more than 180,000 acres of marshland, nearly half the state's total coastal wetlands.

The house sparrow and starling are two notable imports from Great Britain that have become pests--destroying plant life and driving away more desirable native birds. One wonders why so much effort was made to bring them to the new world (as with the nutria, earlier introductions failed), when their reputation as pests had already been established in the old world. A wealthy New Yorker brought starlings over for no sounder reason than he wished to import every bird mentioned by Shakespeare in his writings.

The February issue of The Elepaio (newsletter of the Hawaii Audubon Society) in its Christmas Count story states:

"Again we note that over half (30 out of 52) of the species recorded on the Count are not here naturally--but are the result of man's monkeying around with nature in Hawaii. Subjectively attractive as these malihini birds may be in our gardens and parks, we should not ignore the objective implications in their presence and their potential impact on our unique and decreasingly diversified native birds and ecosystems. Perhaps this is the most meaningful and portentous result of our 1972 Christmas Count".

Man continues his great experiments with wildlife manipulation and there are those who will point out that the ring-necked pheasant, gray partridge, and brown trout were introduced. There are a few notable exceptions but for the most part, his sort of transplanting has been disastrous.

A good paperback to read on the subject is, The Alien Animals by George Laycock, Ballantine Books.

GOOD BYE - - WE WILL MISS YOU

Ted and Dee Van Velzen are moving to Oregon in June. Ted has been our program chairman and Dee has been in charge of the bookstore. Each has performed so well, it is going to be difficult for others to follow. Ted and Dee, we do thank you, good luck, good birding, and keep in touch. You will be our first out of state members!

COMING EVENTS EVENTS EVENTS

WORKSHOPS

Photographing Nature: Experienced photographers explain camera equipment and techniques. If you are now a photographer or just interested in knowing more about nature photography before you invest, these informal discussions will be most helpful. Call Bob Herndon - 730-0947 for dates.

Bird Atlas: Two workshops are planned which will be particularly geared to the Bird Atlas Project. The first, "Breeding Warblers" will be April 25, 7:30 p.m. Leader Kathy Klimkiewicz. The second will be "Hawks, Owls, and Night Creatues" with Jay Sheppard and Larry Hood. The date will be May 9, 7:30 p.m. Both meetings at Jo Solem's: 10617 Graeloch Rd., Laurel (725-5037).

PROGRAM

May 10, Thursday, 8 p.m. Swansfield School: Mr. Marvin Meyers of the Maryland State Department of Natural Resources, Game and Inland Fish Division will speak about the Department and its activities in the State and will show a movie, "Birds of Prey of Northeastern North America" an epic film produced by David Smith and narrated by Alexander Scourby.

FIELD TRIPS

April 15 DAWN! This will be a very early morning trip to go look for wild Turkey (you might even get home before breakfast but bring a thermos of coffee anyway!). As you can see, this will be one of the most unusual trips of the season so don't miss it. Further details will be announced at the April 12 program meeting or call the leader Al Geis at 286-2400.

April 28: Bird banding demonstration. Details will be announced at the April 12 program meeting or call leader Danny Bystrak at 674-2965.

April 29, Sunday: Patapsco State Park (Glen Artney Area) for early Spring birding this is one of the best in the area. A beautiful spot for a picnic so bring lunch if you choose. Meet at 7:30 a.m. Swansfield Elementary School parking lot. David Holmes, leader (730-7083).

May 5, Saturday: Annual May Bird Count...Announcement at the program meeting.

DETAILS IN THE NEXT NEWSLETTER: May 13--Evening Woodcock Walk; May 20--Sugarloaf Mt. and New Design Road; June 9--Longwood Gardens, Pa.

BOARD MEETING: April 26, 8 p.m. at home of Martha Chestem, Cove Apts. 10105 Windstream Dr. Apt 6, Columbia.

OFFICERS FOR COMING YEAR

President	Nan Rhineland	286-2427
Vice-President	Bob Herndon	730-0947
Treasurer	Ben Dawson	730-8549
Trustee	John Healy	465-5737

*4:15 AM
Swansfield
Tel 10:00 AM*

TRIP REPORT

March did just about everything to be found in the weather books. Our two field trips fell on two of the really rough days. The Blackwater trip was plagued with early morning fog, clouds and off and on rain showers. We did enjoy the photographs from the wildlife photography contest and the nature movie at the Center--and we did see 34 species at the Refuge.

David Holmes led the local trip a week later. High strong winds and snow flurries--of all things--kept most birders inside but there were four hardy souls who joined David and it turned out to be an interesting few hours. On Lake Kittamaquidi, a couple of male baldpates were seen along with the mallards and an excellent view of a killdeer. Disappointing was the fact a ring-necked duck had left Wilde Lake after having been there all day Saturday. It was fun (granted a bit too windy and cold) tramping around the wooded areas of Columbia which produced such things as a perfect view of a Carolina wren, red-bellied woodpecker, and white breasted nuthatch. We then went to a place on Manor Lane looking for white-crowned sparrows and how rewarding, we found both adult and immature white-crowns. Other sparrows seen during the morning were field, song, and white-throated.

A red-tailed hawk, sparrow hawk, robins, chickadees, redwing blackbirds, towhee (although we could not get either of two we found to come out in the open), meadow larks, mourning doves, ring-billed gull, turkey vulture, juncos, grackles, cowbird, cardinals, tufted titmouse, downy woodpecker were also seen. Then, of course, there were the starlings and pigeons! So don't be discouraged if the sun isn't shining, there is always something to see. Come join us!

SWAN ADOPTION ANYONE?

On our field trips to the Eastern shore, we have enjoyed watching the large beautiful white Whistling Swans and several people have noted the collars worn by some of the swans and have asked about them. Did you know every bird wearing a neck band is a bird that can be adopted--and there are more than 700?

The neck collars have been placed by Dr. Wm. J. L. Sladen or one of his research assistants and is a part of a special study by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and The Johns Hopkins University. The collars have numbers and can easily be read by use of a spotter scope without having to recapture the bird. Most of the collars we see are black which means the banding was done in this area. Other colors mean it was done in a different part of the world (for instance Alaska bands are blue). The bird's migratory path can be traced and Dr. Sladen believes the study of the movement of known swans can be useful in learning of the impact of man made changes in the environment on the wildlife. However, we like the reason Dr. Sladen gave for studying swans that appeared in a recent Baltimore Sun story. When asked that question, Dr. Sladen replied, "To do something to benefit something other than damn industry. Swans are a uniquely magnificent bird."

When people expressed an interest in becoming more involved in this important project and to help with the financial burdens, the adoption program was set up. A Whistling Swan may be adopted at the cost of \$15.00 per year. The "parent" will receive a picture of the bird and its collar number and a summary of its local and migratory movements, together with pertinent information on its mate and family since originally banded. Subsequent information will be sent at the end of the spring migration each year and on its return in winter. For more information and an application, write: The Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Inc., 17 State Circle, Annapolis, Maryland, 21404.