



HOWARD

NEWSLETTER OF HOWARD COUNTY CHAPTER
MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
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FOR BIRDERS AND FRIENDS

PROGRAM

- JANUARY 10 BIRDS OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC Dr. Cameron Kepler from the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center will be the speaker and show slides.
- FEBRUARY 14 THE BREEDING BIRD ATLAS PROJECT IN HOWARD COUNTY Kathy Klimkiewicz will be the speaker to explain this important project.

FIELD TRIPS

- JANUARY 12, SATURDAY: LOCAL FEEDING TRIP. One of the most popular trips last season. Join us again this year and visit bird feeders in Howard County. The trip will begin at 8:30 a.m. at the parking lot at Swansfield Elementary School in Columbia where car pools will be formed. The trip will end around 11 a.m. at the Rhinelanders for coffee and doughnuts. Bob Herndon (730-0942) is the leader and if you know of a yard feeder that is attracting lots of birds and could be included on the trip, please call him.
- JANUARY 19, SATURDAY: OLD CAMP WOODBINE. A hike and nature walk for those who find it difficult to meet for early hour starts. This is a beautiful spot in the area. Meet at 1 p.m. at Swansfield Elementary School parking lot. Wear comfortable clothes for an outdoor hike. Bring a coffee thermos if you wish. Larry Hood is the leader (730-9251).
- JANUARY 26, SATURDAY: EASTERN NECK WILDLIFE REFUGE, Rock Hall, Maryland. Located at the mouth of Chester River on the eastern side of Chesapeake Bay in Kent County. The refuge contains 2,285 acres and is a major feeding and resting place for migratory and wintering waterfowl. Whistling swan, Canada goose, bufflehead, widgeon, mallard, black duck, canvas-back and scaup are always present. Meet at 7:30 a.m. Swansfield Elementary school parking lot to pool cars. Bob Herndon, leader, may be reached at 730-0942 for further information.

VISIT A NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Marylanders are fortunate to have a number of Wildlife Refuges in easy driving distance--most can be fully enjoyed in a one day turn around trip--others are more appreciated if an overnight trip is planned. The Howard County Chapter of MOS took in one of the northern refuges for the November weekend field trip.

Brigantine National Wildlife Refuge is a beautiful spot 11 miles from Atlantic City, New Jersey on U.S. 9. The refuge has 19,233 acres consisting primarily of cordgrass-saltgrass tidal marsh interspersed with tidal bays and channels. The refuge was established in 1939, primarily for the protection and management of waterfowl in the Atlantic Flyway. Many waterfowl, such as Canada goose, pintail, gadwall, and shoveler, which formerly bypassed the vicinity, now stop for visits of varying lengths of time. Wintering populations have increased through the years and now normally surpass 150,000 birds.

The participants of the November field trip enjoyed a most rewarding weekend and left reluctantly with plans for a return trip. The weather was crisp but bright and most of the time excellent for photography. The large numbers of snow geese was the highlight of the trip.

Brants were also seen in quite large numbers. The small brant, like the snow goose, breeds in the far northern regions and winters on a small section of the Atlantic Coast from New Jersey to North Carolina. They feed on eelgrass and on a marine algae known as sea lettuce or bay cabbage which has become extremely important as a winter food for brant.

November and December are the best months at Brigantine to see spectacular concentrations of ducks and geese. A December trip should also produce a bald eagle or two! The auto tour of the refuge covers 8 miles with 14 stops. It is not only that birds are seen in large numbers but that they are seen at such close range that makes the spectacular scenes so memorable. A scope is fun to pick out the various ducks among the geese or to get sharp close-ups but certainly not a necessity to fully enjoy the birds.

Bird check lists and several brochures including a good map of the area and an explanation of the stops on the tour may be secured by writing to the Refuge Manager, Brigantine National Wildlife Refuge, P. O. Box 72, Oceanville, New Jersey 08231. There are six blinds for photographers and permits to reserve one may be obtained on request.

WHERE THE BIRDS ARE

The Audubon Naturalist Society of Washington D. C. sponsors the "Voice of the Naturalist" a tape recording which informs the caller the locations of various birds to be found in the A.N.S. area. The recording is updated weekly and is helpful to anyone planning a birding trip but not committed to a particular spot. It is detailed as to directions and gives hints on how to locate those rare finds. Have a pencil ready before dialing. The number: 652-3295

FIELD REPORT

On a beautiful clear December Saturday morning, Erv Klaas led a field trip along the Little Patuxent. The group had hopes of seeing the Canvasback that has been visiting Wilde Lake recently and a pair of barred owls along the River that has been seen frequently. The canvasback was nowhere in sight but there was a pied-billed grebe feeding on the lake and of course, the resident mute swans and lots of mallards. From the lake, the group moved on to the banks of the river to look for the barred owls. That search was also unsuccessful but a barn owl appeared--first seen in flight, the group followed the flight into the woods hopeful of getting a better look. The big bird was located even though the view at first was not spectacular, the birders moved closer and closer and each got an excellent view. The owl was the high light of the day and 30 species in all were seen. Although in another article in this issue, birders are encouraged to visit Wildlife Refuges, they must be reminded not to neglect the local area. In these days of scarce and expensive gasoline, local trips ought to be planned and can be very rewarding. The Little Patuxent area can be reached by going west on Route 108 off of Route 29. Park in the area blocked off for the damaged bridge and walk southward along the river. The brushy areas are good for sparrows. There are lots of white-throats but search among them for swamp sparrows.

BIRD NOTES

The evening grosbeaks are back! Anne Payne and Mary Jo Twitty reported the sudden arrival on a Sunday afternoon of from 25-30 grosbeaks at their feeder in Ellicott City. There were few males in the group and the stay was brief.

The surprise visitors reported this month were a dickcissel and winter wren seen on the lawn at the Erwin Klaas residence in Columbia. On Wilde Lake one can see a pied-billed grebe at almost any hour of the day. The canvasback is still there--even though he wasn't around for those who came to see him on the field trip. Six whistling swans (including two young ones) were seen there early one morning.

With winter coming, birders are concentrating on their feeders with the usual sunflower seeds and mixed seeds sold commercially being poured into busy feeders. There are other goodies that can be prepared at home that will attract birds and add variety to the menu. Share from your holiday preparations--such foods as berries, nuts, and fruits. Fats of all kinds can be used in mixing these.

Scatter crumbs--bread, cracker, cake or cookie under the feeder for the ground eaters. Catbirds, chickadees, and mockingbirds like cheese. String small chunks of cheese to form a garland for a tree in your yard.

Bird lover Janice McCue of Ellicott City pampers the birds at her feeder with special peanut butter sandwiches she and the children make. With a cookie cutter cut-outs are made from slices of bread (of course this is extra but children enjoy the designs). They spread the bread with a mixture of peanut butter and Wesson oil and sprinkle wild bird seed on top. Janice says the birds go crazy over such a delicacy.

Please call 730-1527 evenings (6 to 11 p.m.) to report sightings and/or your ideas on feeding and attracting birds. We are waiting for your calls!

FEED THE BIRDS THIS WINTER