



NEWSLETTER OF HOWARD COUNTY CHAPTER
MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

JANUARY 1974

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FIELD TRIPS

JANUARY 12, SATURDAY: Local feeder trip. Please note new meeting time-- 8:30 a.m. Swansfield Elementary School parking lot. There will be six stops on this trip visiting feeders ending at the Rhinelanders around 11:30 a.m. for coffee and doughnuts. We will use as few cars as possible so please be on time at the meeting place where cars will be pooled.

JANUARY 19, SATURDAY: Camp Woodbine nature walk. Good news for all of those who cannot make the early morning hour of other trips. Meet at 1 p.m. at Swansfield Elementary School parking lot. Camp Woodbine is one of the most interesting and beautiful spots in the area. Larry Hood (730-9251) will be the leader and although the last newsletter suggested participants bring a thermos of coffee, that wont be necessary; coffee will be served. This will be the first of several seasonal walks in this area. Wear walking shoes and comfortable clothing. The trip will be concluded by 5 p.m.

JANUARY 26, SATURDAY: Eastern Neck Wildlife Refuge, Rock Hall, Md. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Swansfield Elementary School parking lot. Cars will be pooled. Larry Hood is the leader (730-9251). Bring lunch. Trip will be concluded and back home by 6 p.m. Snow--Rescheduled.

FEBRUARY 16-18: WEEKEND-3 DAY: Chincoteague Wildlife Refuge for the second annual trip. This was so successful last February, it is being repeated with Larry Hood as leader again. Because of the necessity of pooling cars and making arrangements to stay overnight at the Irish Grove Sanctuary, Larry must know by February 1 the number of people going. Phone No. 730-9251. If this trip is carefully planned, it can be most enjoyable and inexpensive by car pooling and spending the nights at the sanctuary's comfortable quarters.

Feb. 23. Feeder trip
PATUXENT CHAPTER FIELD TRIPS

JANUARY 19: NASA area. Meet 8 a.m. at 9th and Montgomery in Laurel. Meeting place is beside the ball park between 8th and 9th on Montgomery.

FEBRUARY 2: Hawk and Owl trip. Meet ^{6:00 p.m.}~~8 a.m.~~ at 9th and Montgomery in Laurel.

FEBRUARY 9: Feeder trip. Meet 8 a.m. at 9th and Montgomery in Laurel.

PROGRAM

FEBRUARY 14: Kathy Klimkiewicz will report the results of the Breeding Bird Atlas project in Howard County. She will also talk about some of the lesser known species of Howard County and where and how they may be found.

NOTICE

At the February meeting a change in the by-laws will be an order of business. The change is in Article IV, Section 6 to read: "These officers shall be elected at the annual meeting of the Chapter in March, and shall assume their duties at the regular April meeting, and shall hold office for a term of one year or until their successors are chosen." At the present time officers assume their duties immediately upon election.

IT IS THE LAW

Two illegal trappers were arrested October 15, 1973, but not before they had captured four peregrine falcons on the Texas coast, in Sea Rim State Park in Jefferson County.

Dept. of Parks and Wildlife personnel discovered the illegal trapping on Oct. 11 and reported it to the Beaumont district law enforcement office. Park Superintendent Stan Taft, park biologist Bob Fish, and park rangers Guy Grover, Mike Smith and John Summerland found partially eaten pigeons rigged with leather harnesses covered with monofilament loops. The pigeons are used as bait to attract the falcons, while the raptor's talons become tangled in the monofilament when it swoops to take its prey.

Three wardens and a federal game agent put the park under surveillance for three days and two nights, but the trappers had left with their catch. Fortunately, Taft and his crew took the license plate number of a station wagon they had observed in the area and federal agents traced the number to Maryland. The trappers were arrested by federal game wardens in Chestertown, Md., charged with violation of the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The month of October marks the annual migration of the arctic subspecies of the peregrine over the Texas coast and offers an opportunity for illegal trappers to catch birds as the falcons hunt along the beaches.

The above article is reprinted from Signal Smoke, newsletter of the Travis County Audubon Society, Texas.

GOOD SIGHTINGS

Duncan MacDonald had the sighting of the month. He has twice seen a pileated woodpecker in the wooded area back of his house in Columbia.

Another dickcissel at a feeder, this time Nan Rhineland reported the unusual visitor.

On Wilde Lake this past month duck visitors have included ruddy ducks, five canvasbacks who stay around most of the time, a female goldeneye, and a ring-neck. Early one morning, a great blue heron flew over the lake but displayed no interest in stopping. The ring-billed gulls--at one time 130+ --come and go as they did last winter. For the past month a belted kingfisher can usually be seen on a walk around the lake.

REPORT SIGHTINGS--CALL 730-1527 evenings.

SWAN LAKE ?

A pair of mute swans introduced on Wilde Lake in Columbia recently has aroused curiosity and questions about the beautiful big birds. The pair wear the black neck bands of Dr. William J. L. Sladen who has placed them on the lake (Dr. Sladen bands and tracks whistling swans). They are pinioned (clipped) and the idea is that they will mate and raise a family come Spring. A nesting platform has been placed in the lake for that purpose.

The mute is another of our introduced birds. It is a native of northern Europe and was domesticated very early, raised in captivity first for its meat, later for its beauty. Medieval records show that mute swans were domesticated in Great Britain sometime prior to the 12th Century. Regarded as the property of the Crown, they could be raised only under royal license enforced by a king's swan master and his deputies.

The swan was brought to America as an ornamental park bird and has spread widely in the northeastern states and in Michigan. Now it appears the swans will become well established in Maryland. According to a recent article in the Baltimore Sun, the swans were not wild breeders here before 1962. At that time, two pairs of pinioned birds escaped from an estate along the Miles River and were not recaptured. Their descendants have produced large families and are still growing. They have been sighted in Kent, Queen Annes, Dorchester and Caroline counties on the Eastern Shore and in Anne Arundel County.

It may seem desirable to have so many large beautiful aristocratic swans become well established in Maryland but there is another important issue. Mutes do not migrate as the whistling swans do. They stay all year in their territory and raise their big families. They feed on aquatic vegetation which is winter food for Chesapeake Bay geese and ducks. According to Dickson Preston's article in the Sun, "They tear up more aquatic grasses than they eat. And when water vegetation grows scarce, they head for the farmer's fields."

But even of more immediate concern to residents of Wilde Lake and its many visitors is that mute swans are very aggressive and during breeding season (April until October) will attack almost anything which comes into their territory -- wild ducks, dogs, and children (all plentiful in the Wilde Lake area).

Since the swans are classed as an "exotic species", neither state nor federal agencies are concerned with them. Jan Reese who is monitoring the mute swans of the Talbot County area sees the swan as a menace to other wildlife, fishermen, and farmers if the rapid growth is not checked. He states, "In view of the rapidly growing population and its potential disadvantages, it seems imperative that some federal or state agency concern itself with management of mute swans.

"Someone has got to take responsibility, inform the public of the situation and decide whether they should be protected for esthetic reasons or commercially hunted."