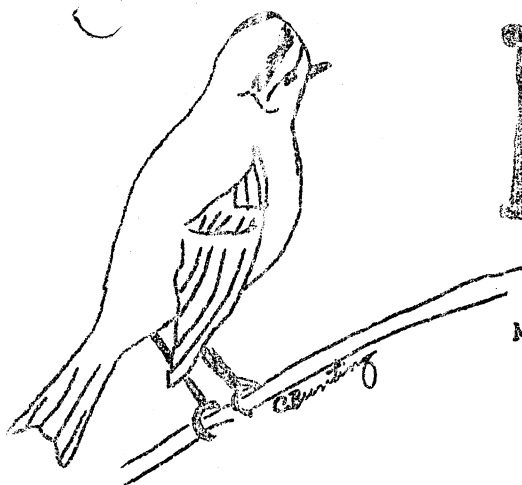


# HOWARD

Maryland Ornithological Society

MAY 1975 VOL III NO 9



## MAY COUNT

Saturday, May 3 is the date for the 28th statewide annual May Count. Each county is canvassed by birders counting species and individuals in an effort to determine what birds are migrating, which winter migrants remain and which residents are here. The results are published in Maryland Birdlife so that it is possible to compare Howard County with other parts of the state. The count was begun in 1948 and now around 400 observers spend some portion of the day counting. Some observers, endowed with special enthusiasm and stamina, put in a day that begins before dawn and ends after dark, but there are also many who simply count the birds they see at their feeders. Both types are equally welcome. Unlike the Christmas counts, there is no fee, normally the weather is an improvement over December and, if, for some strange reason, the birds are few one can always study the wild flowers in bloom.

The chairman for the Howard County portion of the May Count is Erv Klaas. He is trying to expand the coverage this year which has, in the past, focused on the Middle Patuxent River Valley. This is definitely a rich area for migrating and resident birds but it constitutes only one small section of the county. If you have counted in the past, please do so again this year; if you haven't counted before, make this your first year. Sometimes interested people are reticent about counting because they can only recognize the most common species or they know few songs. It is true that there are some excellent field people among us; however, if we all waited to participate until we knew as much as a handful of our best birders there would be very few people counting. Erv urges you to volunteer to count the birds at your feeder or in your yard; go for a walk in your neighborhood and tally what you see. You don't have to spend the whole day at it but the more people there are helping the more complete the coverage can be. Since Erv will be out of town the week prior to the count you are asked to call Tom Moyer (730-0138) evenings; let him know what part of the county you live in and where you can count. Last year 15 observers in Howard County counting from 5:15 a.m. to 9:40 p.m. found 124 species. Can we do better this year?

This year's count will be climaxed by a buffet supper at the Rhinelanders where we will gather around 6:30 p.m. to tally what has been seen. Lucille Peters (465-6293) has volunteered to coordinate the meal. Those planning to join in the fellowship and relaxation are asked to call Lucille after 4:00 p.m.; let her know how many will be coming and what you can bring. We'd like to make this the first annual May Count tally. Directions to the Rhinelanders can be had by calling them at 286-2427. If you can't make the evening meal don't let that deter you from participating. Your count can be phoned to Erv (730-7821) or mailed to him at 10305 Crimson Tree Ct., Columbia, Md., 21044 if that is more convenient. Please call Lucille Peters no later than Thursday, April 11 regarding the tally meal after the count.

## EDITORSHIP CHANGES

Martha Chestem, the founder and editor of this newsletter for the first 2½ years of the chapter's existence has been elected President of the chapter for the coming year. She has appointed Nan Rhinelander and Jo Solem as co-editors. It will be a continuing challenge to maintain the consistent quality and topical variety that Marty established.

The new editors are open to your suggestions for material to be included. We welcome articles, magazines, etc. which may contain newsworthy items for birders. Beginning in September we hope to include an occasional book review. The subjects would not have to be limited to birds but should lie in the natural history field or have some obvious relationship to it. If you read a book that you'd be willing to review let us know (your reactions can be negative as well as positive). We are also interested in the birds you see: early migrants, nestings observed, unusual activity, late dates of departure, etc. Jo - 725-5037; Nan - 286-2427.

## SIGHTINGS

A. Fazakas in Thunder Hill has had 4 pairs of Evening Grosbeaks all winter. She also had a Chickadee building a nest in a bluebird box as of April 9.

L. Peters on Grestleigh Lane had 50-75 Cedar Waxwings the first week in April. They cleaned her juniper tree and her holly tree of berries and were last observed sampling pussy willow buds.

The Rhinelanders had a Mourning Dove incubating eggs on March 29. They saw Tree Swallows over their pond on April 9 and also had 2 Blue-winged Teal there on April 4.

The Havillands just over the Montgomery Co. line have had 2 Red-breasted Nuthatches all winter.

M. Chestem observed 4 Canada Geese on Lake Elkhorn on April 9 and notes that the Mute Swans on that lake are nesting.

R. Munro on Reservoir Rd. still had some of her winter birds well into April. The Evening Grosbeaks were still there on April 17, the Purple Finches on the same date and a Red-breasted Nuthatch on the 22nd of April. She observed the first Woodcock courtship flight on Feb. 8, saw a Palm Warbler April 18, heard a Whip-poor-will April 19. She watched a Pileated Woodpecker April 21 & 22, a Louisiana Waterthrush April 21, and a Pine Warbler April 22.

J. Solem had 7 Pectoral Sandpipers on a pond at the milk plant on Hy. 216 on April 12, a Louisiana Waterthrush on March 25 in Hammond Village and April 20 found a Solitary Sandpiper at the milk plant. April 21 brought the first Solitary Vireo to Graeoch Rd. and the 22nd was the arrival date for the first Ovenbird and Wood Thrush of the season on Kindler Rd.

D. Holmes had a Barn Swallow April 18 near Guilford.

## MARINE LIFE LECTURES

The National Aquarium is sponsoring a lecture series beginning April 23 consisting of 10 lectures by experts entitled "Marine Life." They will be held at the Museum of Natural History, 8:10 p.m. (1½ hrs.) The charge for Smithsonian Associate members and Fish and Wildlife Service employees is \$40. All others \$55. Jo Solem (725-5037) has further information if you are interested.

## JOIN US

Would you like to become a member of the Howard County chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society? For more information call membership chairman Bud Ferrett (730-7546).

## ROSS' GULL

Each winter birders have come to anticipate a certain number of vagrants, strays and unusual birds to add excitement to their watching. Certainly 1975 will be remembered as noteworthy for the first continental U.S. sighting of Ross' Gull. This gull is a small (11") Siberian bird which is rare even in northern Alaska and Canada where it is infrequently seen; naturally, a rarity of such magnitude was news all over the country. Birders from far parts descended on Salisbury Beach near Newburyport, Mass. where the gull had been observed with a flock of Bonaparte's Gulls on an estuary of the Merrimack River. For several unforgettable weeks the bird cooperated by being visible at low tide. The numbers of North American birders who added it to their life lists included David Holmes, a member of the Howard Co. chapter.

David left Baltimore on Saturday, March 15 at 5:00 p.m. with several other Maryland birders. Making good time they arrived at a friend's in New Hampshire, just beyond the Mass. line at about 1:15 a.m. For birders they got a late start the following morning and as fate would have it the gull was seen between 9:00-9:30 a.m.--before they arrived. On their way to the hoped-for rendezvous with the rare gull they did see a number of other interesting species: Red-necked Grebes, Common Eiders, a Snowy Owl, 5-6 Lapland Longspurs and 10-15 Snow Buntings (some of the latter two species were coming into breeding plumage which was a special thrill). There were at least two male Barrow's Goldeneyes on the river at Newburyport and they did see Iceland Gulls and 4-6 Black-head Gulls in various stages of plumage. The day was sunny, in the 40's with little wind so a pleasant day for birding while waiting for the next low tide and, hopefully, Ross' Gull. Clouds rolled in between 4:00-5:00 p.m. and only the most hardcore birders were left at 7:00 p.m. when THE BIRD showed up. David said that he was able to see it in a 20x-30x scope both flying and briefly sitting. He noted the dark underwings, pinkish wash, bill, and had a glimpse of the wedge-shaped tail. The delighted birders left for home; by the time everyone was delivered it was 5:00 a.m. Monday morning. Would he have done it again? Absolutely! He said he would have gone back the following weekend except that the bird was not sighted again for some time. It was definitely "worth the trip."

## F A R E W E L L

It is with considerable regret that we note one of our most active members, Erwin Klaas, will be leaving the area soon. Erv has accepted a position as Assistant Leader, Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit at Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa. It is a faculty position in which he will teach one course a year, advise graduate students and be able to conduct his own research. We rejoice in his new opportunity but the chapter will certainly miss him.

Erv was a charter member of the Howard County chapter, helped work with the youth of the group, participated in the Howard Co. Atlas Project, joined Christmas counts and this year is coordinator for the May Count. For the 1974-75 year he has served as Vice-President and Field Trip Chairman. He and his family plan to leave the area June 10. Our good wishes for success go with you, Erv; we will gratefully remember your responsible leadership and enthusiasm.

## E Y E T O E Y E

Anita Conron had a thrilling experience Sunday, April 20, when she was in the woods. A Pileated Woodpecker flew past her within a few feet. She called it an "eye to eye" encounter which was certainly a rare and memorable treat.

WARBLER WORRIES

During my late winter review of spring warblers it occurred to me that besides reviewing their markings and learning more songs, it might help if I knew when the various warblers came through. In other words, if I knew who was supposed to be around by when I might have better luck finding more and different warblers from last year's essays. The proof will be in the mudding or the listing but here are some generalized dates I have gleaned from Maryland Bird Life, primarily September 1973 issue. These are 10 year median dates given.

March 30	Pine Warbler (Sept. 1971 issue)
April 14	Louisiana Waterthrush
16	Yellow Rumped Warbler
18	Palm warbler
19	Yellow Throated warbler
21	Yellowthroat
22	Black and White warbler
25	Parula warbler
	Prairie warbler
26	Prothonotary warbler
27	Yellow warbler
	Ovenbird
29	American Redstart
30	Hooded Warbler
May 2	Wormeating, Black Throated Blue, Black Throated Green, Northern Waterthrush and Yellow Breasted Chat
3	Blue winged, Nashville, Cerulean, Kentucky
4	Golden Winged, Magnolia, Blackburnian, Canada, May, Chestnut Sided
6	Blackpoll, Canada
7	Tennessee
8	Wilson's
11	Bay Breasted

This list looks very neat on paper but there are several things which are not entirely evident. For one thing the list is cumulative, that is both March and April warblers may be around in May and later if they nest here. Secondly, there are very few Howard Countians out looking and more important reporting early arrival dates to Chan Robbins who has this information compiled for Md. Bird Life. In 1972 the Prothonotary, Yellowthroated, Nashville, Golden Winged, Baybreasted and Pine were not reported for Howard County. I wonder how much of the county is actually covered. Surely if more people from more areas sent in reports the records would be more reliable. The list however does suggest some species which if they are seen would be very exciting reports.

A L E N D A R

F I E L D T R I P S

SATURDAY, MAY 3 - Howard County May Count - All day count of species and individuals in all parts of the county. Tally afterward with meal (dish-topass type) at Rhinelanders around 6:30 p.m. for those finished counting by that time.

FRIDAY, SATURDAY, SUNDAY, MAY 9, 10, 11 - MOS Annual Convention, Ocean City, Md. All members should have received mailing from Baltimore concerning convention accommodations. Field trips morning, noon and night in a wide variety of habitats. Annual meeting of the society held Saturday night. Hard to beat for concentrated birding.

SATURDAY, MAY 24 - Mystery Trip to Frederick Co. Larry Hood, leader. Larry promises an interesting all day trip to a new location. Leave from Swansfield Elementary School parking lot at 7:00 a.m. Bring lunch. We should be back around 5:00 p.m.

SATURDAY, JUNE 14 - Black Rail trip to Elliott's Island marsh. The Howard Co. chapter has decided not to take a separate trip this year for Black Rails. The Audubon Naturalist Society of Washington, D.C. and the Montgomery chapter of MOS are planning a joint trip for this date. Anyone from the Howard chapter may join this group's trip. Jo Solea has information on who to contact if you are interested. (725-5037).

P R O G R A M

THURSDAY, MAY 8, 7:45 p.m. - Howard County Club Slide Show by Club Members - Some of our most active photographers will bring samples of slides taken on field trips or in the county. You see people on every field trip shooting pictures; here's your chance to see if those pictures ever turn out.

B O A R D M E E T I N G

The May Board Meeting will be held at the home of Lucille Peters on Thursday, May 22 at 8:00 p.m.

*May 18 - Warbler trip - Middle Patuxent - jointly with MPVA meet  
7:30 a.m. Swansfield - 1/2 day.  
Elem. School*