

HOWARD



OPERATION MOON WATCH

Grab yourself a telescope, a chair and a full moon and join the ranks of nocturnal bird watchers in Maryland. Thanks to the suggestion of Bob Herndon, the Howard County Chapter of M.O.S. has encouraged a statewide tally of nocturnal bird migration this fall. The initial count was held on September 19 with the cooperation of observers in various parts of the state while a second watch is being planned during the full moon in October.

How does one moon watch for birds and what is the purpose are certainly valid questions if you've never done it before. The purpose is to establish periods of peak migration and possible heavily used routes while the method is quite simple. You station yourself in a comfortable position with a 15X or 20X telescope, a watch, paper and pencil. (A team of at least 2 makes things easier.) Watch continuously and every time you see something fly across the face of the moon you note whether it is a bird, bat or insect. In some respects that is not as easy as it sounds since staring at the moon for many minutes can produce a kind of illusion so that when something does fly across the moon you begin to wonder whether you just saw something or were your eyes playing tricks. At any rate if you are convinced you actually saw something you determine its size in comparison to Tycho a prominent moon crater and jot down the time. A night when little is moving can be very boring but when there is much activity moon watching becomes an interesting pastime.

The initial studies were done in the fall of 1952 by 1400 bird students and astronomers all over the United States under the direction of George Lowry and Robert Newman at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. The results were studied and two primary conclusions were reached: 1. on nights when there is migratory movement it is quite evenly spread over the East and Midwest (there is much more local variation in the Far West) and 2. other than the Great Lakes and the Gulf of Mexico in the East there is little evidence of physical features providing migratory routes. It had been assumed prior to these studies that migrating birds tended to follow the major rivers but the authors found no basis for this assumption based on the data observers provided.

The moon watching date in September was Friday the 19th. Some observers had partly cloudy skies and one station on the Eastern Shore postponed their observations until Sunday. The following list is only a sampling but will give you some idea of the variation within the state. In the hour from 10-11:00 P.M. the party at the Rhinelanders in Howard Co. had 22 birds, Denton on the Eastern Shore had 2 bats and 3 birds, Annapolis had 12 birds and 1 bat, Chan Pobbins in Laurel had 6 birds, Jo Salem in so. Howard Co. had 2 birds and 1 bat. Bob Herndon is hoping to contact all the M.O.S. chapters prior to the October full moon to seek their cooperation in another moon watch. The date will be October 19, Sunday, with cloud dates as the 20th and 21st. If this sounds like something you'd be interested in contact Bob at 730-0942 or at the October 9 meeting so that he can provide you with instruction and a tally sheet.

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C A L E N D A R

P R O G R A M

October 9, Thursday - Tom Newman - Eastern Regional Representative for The Nature Conservancy. Mr. Newman will describe who they are, what they do and what lands they hold in Maryland. The Nature Conservancy tries to identify areas that need to be protected, acquires them if possible or helps other conservation-oriented groups buy or manage them. It is working to protect the nation's natural heritage. Swansfield Elementary School 7:45 P.M.

F I E L D T R I P S

October 11, 12 & 13, Saturday, Sunday & Monday - Cape May, New Jersey and Brigantine National Wildlife Refuge, N.J. - 3 full days. For fall birding in one of the best areas on the East Coast, hawk banding at the Cape May station and the possibility of major flights of other migrating species. Call Bob Herndon 730-0942 as reservations are a must.

October 19, Sunday - Moon Watch, 10-11:00 P.M. Watch and count silhouettes of migratory birds as they pass across the face of the moon. Telescope necessary. Call Bob Herndon if interested, 730-0942.

October 25, Saturday - Local Trip - Columbia Lakes. $\frac{1}{2}$ day. Meet at 8:00 A.M. at Swansfield Elementary School for a trip to spot ducks and other migratory waterfowl on the lakes in Columbia. Back by noon. Tom Moyer 730-0138 and Kris Krishnamoorthy 997-5967, leaders.

November 2, Sunday - Wagoner's Gap, Pa. (or possibly Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge). All day. The destination will be determined on the day of the trip depending on weather conditions. If the day is overcast with a drizzle or a gorgeous day with southerly winds the hawks will not be migrating so the trip destination would then become Blackwater which by that time should have plenty of waterfowl. Either trip should be good. Bob Herndon, leader 730-0942. Meet 7:30 A.M. at Swansfield Elementary School. Bring lunch & warm clothes for mountains. See Sighting on page 5 for what 2 members of the club saw at Wagoner's Gap on a recent Sunday.

November 15, Saturday - Scouting trip to Patuxent River State Park. $\frac{3}{4}$ day. Meet at 7:30 A.M. at Swansfield Elementary. This is a state-owned tract of 6,000 acres in western Howard County which is currently undeveloped. The Howard chapter has been invited to explore the area and help catalogue the birds found there. Bring lunch.

December 6, Saturday - Local Feeder Trip. Meet at Swansfield Elementary at 8:00 A.M. $\frac{1}{2}$ day. Back by noon.

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

The October Board meeting will be held at Larry Hood's at 8:00 P.M. Thursday, October 30. Larry lives at 6734 Pyramid Way; his phone is 730-9251.

P E L A G I C T R I P S

Boat trips out of Ocean City, Md. to spot pelagic birds will be held at regular intervals between October 19 and June. Space is \$20 per person and, naturally, no sightings are guaranteed; on the other hand, you may be fortunate enough to spot a new bird to add to Maryland's state list as birders last year did. The December 6 date is especially recommended as being a good possibility according to the leader Richard Rowlett. Rich lives in Laurel and can be reached evenings at 493-6091 for further information.

Below, our readers will find a quiz concerning the habits of some well-known birds. The quiz has been modified from What Bird is This?: The Birdwatcher's Quiz Book by Henry Hill Collins, Jr., Dover Publications, c. 1961, \$1.50. Our thanks to Kris Krishnamoorthy for this suggestion and his work on the initial quiz. Let us know if you'd like more in future issues. Answers will be found on the last page of this newsletter.

Quiz No. 1 - Identification of Birds by Habits

Many species of birds have distinctive and conspicuous habits which give away the identity of the owner. Match habit on the left with the correct choice from the column on the right. Count five points for each correct answer.

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| ___ 1. Walks on ground with a deliberate stride (long, black tail) | A. Starling |
| ___ 2. Hops and runs across the lawn and cocks its head slightly | B. Spotted Sandpiper |
| ___ 3. Waddles across grass | C. Osprey |
| ___ 4. Testers as it patrols shoreline of stream or pond | D. Mourning Dove |
| ___ 5. Runs in and out at edge of waves | E. American Robin |
| ___ 6. Climbs tree upward in spirals | F. Common Grackle |
| ___ 7. Climbs tree upward in jerks, uses its tail as a brace | G. Great Blue Heron |
| ___ 8. Climbs down tree trunk head first | H. Downy Woodpecker |
| ___ 9. Dives for fish from streamside perch or from midair | I. Turkey Vulture |
| ___ 10. Flies up to attack passing hawk or crow | J. American Woodcock |
| ___ 11. Scratches leaves on forest floor with both feet at once | K. Red-eyed Vireo |
| ___ 12. Flashes from roadside with audible whir | L. Dowitcher |
| ___ 13. Probes the mud like a sewing machine | M. Brown Creeper |
| ___ 14. Soars with its wings angled upward in a "V" | N. Sanderling |
| ___ 15. Soars with its wings flat, like a flying board | O. Belted Kingfisher |
| ___ 16. Sings thru heat of day in trees | P. Eastern Kingbird |
| ___ 17. Catches fish in its talons | Q. Fox Sparrow |
| ___ 18. Noted for its spectacular nuptial flight | R. Bald Eagle |
| ___ 19. Roosts on ground in a circle facing out | S. Bobwhite |
| ___ 20. Stands upright motionless in marsh | T. White-breasted Nuthatch |

FIELD TRIP POINTERS

Since similar pointers were printed in the first issue of this newsletter December 1972, many new people have joined the club and some of the tips may bear repeating. They are hints to help you and the rest of the group obtain the maximum enjoyment from any field trip.

1. Be prompt in arriving at the designated meeting place. Report to the leader.
2. Wear clothing suitable for the weather. Layers of clothing are the most flexible as days that start out cool may become very warm or a pleasant day, especially in the spring and fall, may become chilly in a few hours. If in doubt about what to wear check with the leader. Wear sturdy footwear.
3. Bring binoculars, field guide and small notebook or checklist.
4. Dogs and other pets should be left at home.
5. Let the leader lead the way. Never walk in front of the leader unless requested to. Avoid loud noises and abrupt movements.
6. In this era of energy conservation be prepared to car-pool especially on longer trips. Share gas and toll costs.
7. In a caravan keep the car behind you in your rearview mirror. When stops are made pull well off the road and close doors quietly.

BOOK REVIEW

Last spring we promised our readers an occasional book review. We welcome comments on books you have read on natural history subjects.

Adventures in Birding: Confessions of a Lister. Jean Piatt. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1975. \$7.95.

The author's name, along with his wife Marybelle, appears on the AOU area life lists and with each new list the Piatts move up nearer the top showing they are still listing (now 671 species for each). An accounting of how they accomplished all this should be an entertaining book but, unfortunately, it isn't. Jean Piatt leaves the impression he is interested most of all in the number (no. 601, no. 623, etc.) not the bird itself. The reader doesn't get caught up in the adventure and it is hard to imagine a non-birder, after reading this book, rushing out to buy a pair of binoculars. There are a few good pointers scattered throughout and some interesting observations. One observation should be encouraging to the late-risers; the author claims only a very small number of birds on his list were found at the "crack of dawn" but that most were spotted more comfortably and conveniently much later in the day.

Marty Chestem

M O S S A N C T U A R Y U S E

The following letter was recently received by Marty Chestem, Howard Co. President from Barclay E. Tucker, M.O.S. President.

Our sanctuaries should be used more. Please emphasize this fact to your members.

The Rock Run Sanctuary passed through a period of uncertainty after the death of Mr. Paul from whom it had been rented. It is now leased from the State; the property is part of the Susquehanna State Park. Supervision of our operation is by the Harford and Baltimore Chapters. The Park Rangers police the area. M.O.S. membership cards should be carried by users to identify our members to the rangers, and overnight users should call the Park Office, 939-0643, before 4:00 P.M. to advise that they are staying overnight.

At Irish Grove the capacity for overnight accommodations is 15 people. There is a fee of \$1.00 per night for M.O.S. members, and \$2.00 per night for non-members. Reservations must be made with Mr. Samuel Cimino who will send information to those who make reservations. His address is 704 Park Circle, Salisbury, Md. 21801. His phone number is 749-7852.

At Carey Run the situation is similar to that at Irish Grove. The capacity for overnight is 15. A donation from overnight visitors is requested. Reservations should be made with Mrs. Gordon Taylor, 75 Broadway, Frostburg, Md. 21532. Her phone number is 689-6791. There are two combination locks at Carey Run the combinations of which will be given to users by Mrs. Taylor.

V O I C E O F T H E N A T U R A L I S T

Have you called the Voice of the Naturalist recently? The telephone number is 652-3295. This is a recorded summary of some of the unusual birds seen in the D.C. area and rarities within reasonable driving distances. The recording is changed weekly and is an excellent way to keep up with early arrivals, late departures and what to see at some of the better birding spots in the area. The service is provided by the Audubon Naturalist Society of Washington, D.C.

TRIP REPORT

The September 14 trip to Little Creek and Bombay Hook was a highly successful one. The drawing by Charlotte Bunting Floyd on page 1 of the newsletter indicates what made the trip so exciting: rails. Rails are normally elusive marsh birds which are best seen either at dawn or dusk or during abnormally high tides when they are forced out of their hiding places in the marsh vegetation. Larry Hood, the leader, tallied at least 4 Clapper Rails for his list and there were probably several more seen by other members of the party. The most exciting bird was an immature Virginia Rail at Little Creek which paraded around in full view moving from one clump of grass to another but affording most members of the party a good view. Among other good sightings were a Black-necked Stilt, American Avocets, immature Little Blue Herons, a huge flock of Bobolinks, Ruddy Turnstones, 1 Black Vulture, an excellent view of Seaside Sparrows and several immature Black-crowned Night Herons. Besides the rails, the most interesting and unusual bird of the trip was a White-rumped Sandpiper at Bombay Hook which was tentatively identified by bill length and comparison with other sandpipers but was positively identified when thru Kris Krishnamoorthy's efforts he was able to get the bird to fly so we were able to see the white rump.

SIGHTINGS

Sept. 21 at Blackwater Refuge B. Herndon noted 4 Bald Eagles, 3 of which were immatures. He had an exceptional period of hawk-watching on Sept. 14 when he and Chan Robbins spent an hour at the Galf Mt. overlook on the Blue Ridge Parkway. From 4:00 to 5:00 P.M. they counted 926 Broadwinged Hawks and he said most were in the first half hour.

K. Krishnamoorthy and M. Chesten both joined a field trip to Wagoner's Gap, Pa. Sept. 21. The count for the day was 350 Broad-winged Hawks, 50 Sharpshins, 20 Turkey Vultures, 4 Black Vultures, 7 Ospreys, 10 Kestrels and 2 Red-tailed Hawks.

R. Munro has had Am. Redstarts, Bay-breasted Warbler, Ovenbird and Yellow-rumped Warblers during Sept. She had a White-breasted Nuthatch Sept. 10, a Scarlet Tanager Sept. 25, Rose-breasted Grosbeak Sept. 20 and Swainson's Thrush Sept. 26. She heard her first flock of Canada Geese of the fall on Sept. 26 and had an early Winter Wren on Sept. 30.

M. Chesten watched an Osprey sail over Wilde Lake on Sept. 26 and observed a female Rose-breasted Grosbeak on the same date.

The Rhinelanders were still watching 2 fledgling Mourning Doves being fed by the adults on Oct. 1. They have also been spending the last several weeks nursing a Barn Owl with an injured wing back to health. Watch for the story in a coming newsletter.

J. Solem found warbler watching particularly good the second week in Sept. and hawks moving well in Howard Co. the weekend of Sept. 27-28. The field trip on the 27th was high-lighted by 225 Broad-winged Hawks and she saw another 38 the following morning.

Call Jo Solem 725-5037 or Nan Rhinlander 286-2427 to report your sightings.

CLIP AND SAVE

Meeting nights for the 1975-76 year are as follows:

October 9
 November 13
 December 11
 January 8
 February 12
 March 11
 April 8
 May 13
 June 10

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. F	11. Q
2. E	12. D
3. A	13. L
4. B	14. I
5. N	15. R
6. M	16. K
7. H	17. C
8. T	18. J
9. O	19. S
10. P	20. G

MEMBERSHIP

Would you like to join us? Give Bud Ferrett a call at 730-7546. We need you.