

# HOWARD

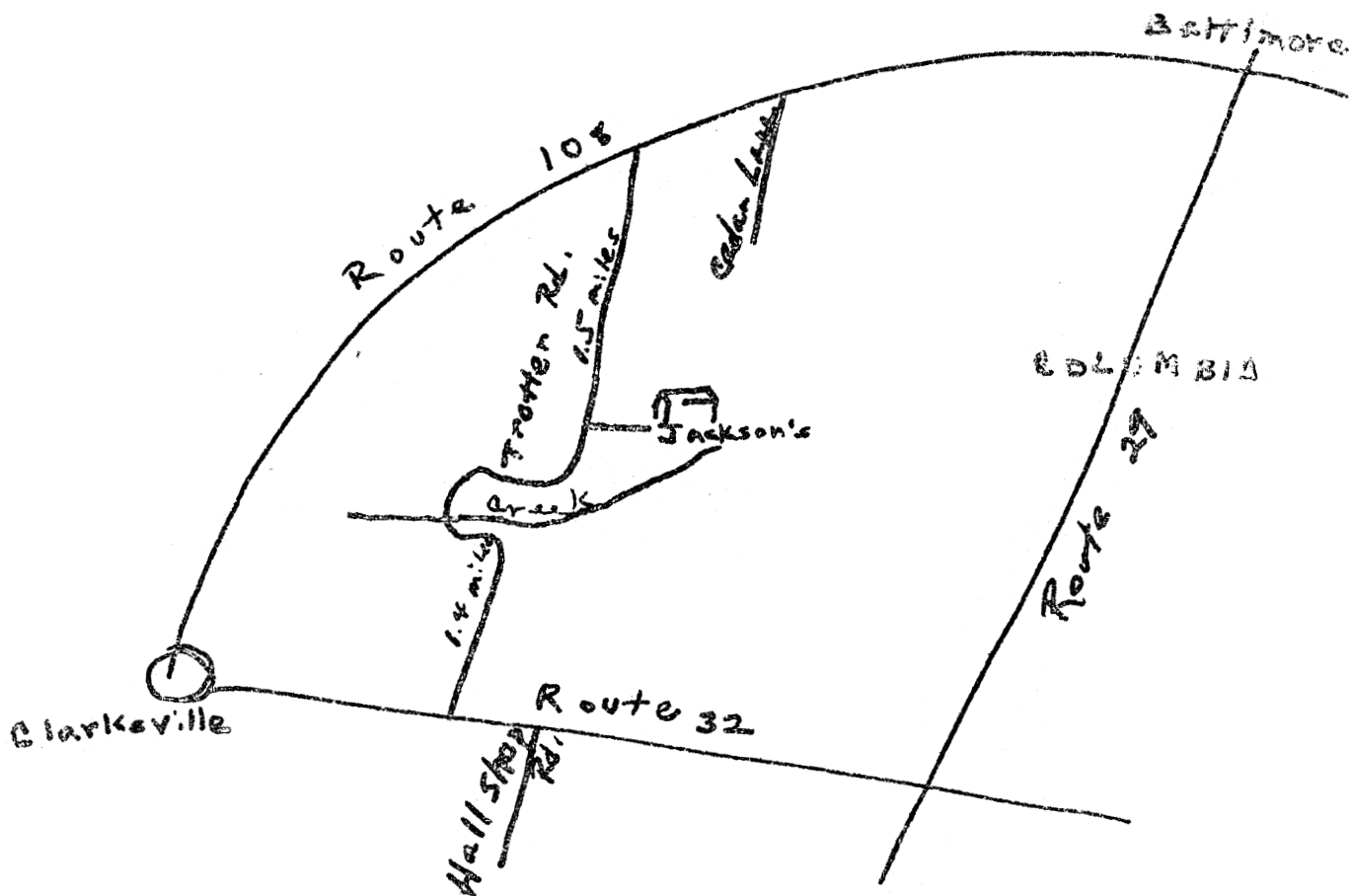
MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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## ANNUAL PICNIC - SATURDAY, JUNE 12

Bring your family and join the Howard birders for their annual picnic to be held at Pat & Dudley Jackson's on Trotter Road. The picnic is a substitute for the regular June meeting; it will be held on Saturday, June 12--rain or shine. This is a great outing for children as well as adults as there is plenty of space to roam. You are welcome to come any time after 4:00 P.M. and discover what the Jacksons have along their trails and on the banks of Cricket Run. They mow nice wide paths which make for easy walking. Grills will be furnished; please bring your own food, drink, utensils and folding chairs or a blanket to sit on. Since vandals insist on destroying the sign at the drive to their property Pat will try to have a temporary sign up; you can also locate them by looking for their mailbox #6121 on the west side of Trotter Road--their drive is directly opposite the box. Most people don't get around to eating till after 6:00 P.M. and the group usually breaks up around dusk. Feel free to drop in even if you can't stay for the whole evening. We'd especially like to encourage those members to come who may have had conflicting responsibilities on our meeting nights, babysitter problems, etc. You can spend the whole evening sitting and chatting or birding, hiking and photography can occupy much of your time. For specific directions see map below. Advance reservations are not needed.



## RARE BIRD ALERT

Would you like to be notified when a rare bird appears in the area? In the last few weeks a White-fronted Goose stopped briefly at Patuxent Research Refuge on Hy. 197 and several unusual species of gulls put in an appearance at Sandy Point State Park near Annapolis. Some of the members who knew people in other chapters were advised of these oddities but there was the nagging question, who else might like to know? No system of calling has been established nor a person named to be responsible for this project but to at least obtain a list of interested birders for this chapter give Jo Solen a call at 725-5037. Being on the list doesn't commit you to going if and when you are called.

## C A L E N D A R

June 12, Saturday - Picnic - see page 1

PLEASE NOTE: The Middle Patuxent wade which was tentatively planned for June 12 will NOT be held then but will be rescheduled probably in July. Those who signed-up for this hike at the May meeting will be telephoned when a date has been arranged. If you did not attend the meeting but are interested in the wade call Cathy or Leroy Williamson 730-0338.

August 15, Sunday - Little Creek & Bombay Hook, Delaware - A leader and departure time have not been determined. If interested contact Cathy or Leroy Williamson our field trip chairmen at 730-0338 and they will let you know when final details have been arranged.

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

The August Board meeting will be held on August 26, Thursday at Marty Chester's. Her address is 10105 Windstream Drive in Columbia; phone is 730-1527.

## L I M E R I C K

Our thanks to Rosemond Munro for another in her series of "birdy" limericks.

An owl who, a lexicon doing,  
Grew thirsty through all his scowling;  
He devoured some pick-ups,  
Developed the hicoughs,  
Which ended research on Who's Whoing.

## B O O K R E V I E W

The Book of Owls by Lewis Wayne Walker. Alfred A. Knopf, New York. 1974. 12.50.

Lewis Walker, a lifelong naturalist with a consuming interest in owls, has produced a book describing the life histories of all of the owls of North America. Much of the material is from his own extensive observation; in a few cases where he has had limited experience he utilizes the notes and material of others (with permission of course). The book is interesting reading without being pompous or overly statistical. Material is divided by chapter into individual species so if you choose to read only about Screech Owls or Saw-whets you need not wade through the entire book. If life histories or diet do not interest you, any bird admirer will find the numerous photographs entertaining and edifying. Unless birds of prey are a particular interest you would probably think seriously about the advisability of purchase but it is well worth a library reserve request.

Jo Solen

## EVOLUTION OF NESTS

The scientific evolution of birds nest patterns is not a simple one. A bird's nest is the place where he lays his egg. This can range from a simple scrape on the ground to a more complicated cup nest placed in a bird-constructed tunnel. The word platform is used because the Emperor Penguin holds its egg on its webbed feet warmed by an abdominal fold. Murres lay their eggs on bare rock ledges while nighthawks lay theirs on the forest floor or atop a flat gravel roof. The Fairy Tern in the Pacific lays its egg in the forked branches of a tree.

The aims in nest site and construction are two fold: protection from predators and inclement weather. This is all the more important since the bird or mated pair must spend about 90 days each year in the nest vicinity. Few birds can move their eggs in the face of danger. Pileated Woodpeckers and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers occasionally take their eggs away from a damaged cavity while nighthawks and other Caprimulgids (nightjars) regularly roll theirs on the leafy forest floor to avoid disturbances.

The evolution of nests is not a clear straightforward arrangement; rather an area where the biological drive is less strong than it is in other bird behavior. There is more flexibility. Birds in the same family have different nesting techniques, and even a particular species may nest differently depending on the locale. The thrushes are an example of family idiosyncrasies. The Hermit Thrush prefers the ground, the Eastern Bluebird tree holes and the Robin tree crotches. The ubiquitous House Sparrow nests in a cavity or builds a domed nest in humid areas, but where it is dry will build a cup nest out of most anything and position it on outer tree branches.

Birds adapt to their environment and competition for nest sites forces them to use different places and build suitable nests for these chosen sites. Because similar types of nests are used by many differing species and closely related birds build dissimilar nests, orderly classification is impossible. There is, however, a probable evolutionary pattern to nests, proceeding from the simplest to the more complex, and largely influenced by the evolution of the possession of a body temperature distinct from the air temperature. Originally birds must have buried their eggs as reptiles do in slightly warm earth. Then as they became more warmblooded, some species hastened the incubation time by using heat from their bodies. This meant sitting for long periods on the eggs and hence different species sought out more protected, less vulnerable nest sites. Some used caves or protected ground areas, others used shrubs, vine thickets and trees to avoid the dangers of predators and bad weather.

The astounding variation and adaptability to the existing habitats is exemplified in the following list which typifies the ten steps in nest evolution.

- 1) The Scrape, a slight depression in the ground or leaf litter. Shorebirds, Terns and Nighthawks are some of the birds using scrapes in open situations.
- 2) A Scrape in a burrow such as used by a Kingfisher or by Petrels.
- 3) Cavity nests excavated by such birds as Woodpeckers--provides good protection, contains very little nesting material.
- 4) Platform nests on ground or in trees built by Cormorants, Herons, Hawks or Doves.
- 5) Platform nests in shallow water - Grebes
- 6) Stratant Nests - cup nest whose rim stands upright with support mainly from below--Robins and many other passerines (perching birds).
- 7) Adherent nests - such as Phoebes and some swallows using mud plaster their nests to a sheltered vertical surface. Chimney Swifts using their saliva glue their cup nests of twigs to the inner vertical surface of a chimney or hollow tree broken off at the top.
- 8) Pencil nests - suspended by the rims from a fork in a tree branch. Vireos.
- 9) Pendulous nests - woven bags holding cup nests that dangle from the tips of branches - Orioles.

...yed cavities... r hour...  
...soil, tunnel as... build a cup nest of feathers... the  
...winged Swallows build their cup nest in... crevices... in old  
...of other birds such as the Belted Kingfisher.

...pted... in Ornithology, Laboratory of Ornithology, Cornell

Below you will find a matching quiz based on the 10 types of nests just described. Match the correct number from the list on the right with the name of the bird on the left. Use as often as you feel necessary--some may not be used at all. An effort has been made to choose nests of birds which are found in Howard County. How many can you do without looking back to the previous page? For answers see bottom of page.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <u>    </u> 1. Mourning Dove           | <u>    </u> 1. Scrape                             |
| <u>    </u> 2. Eastern Phoebe          | <u>    </u> 2. Scrape in burrow                   |
| <u>    </u> 3. Red-eyed Vireo          | <u>    </u> 3. Cavity nests--no interior cup      |
| <u>    </u> 4. Belted Kingfisher       | <u>    </u> 4. Platform nest on ground or in tree |
| <u>    </u> 5. Red-shouldered Hawk     | <u>    </u> 5. Platform nest in shallow water     |
| <u>    </u> 6. Northern (Balt.) Oriole | <u>    </u> 6. Stratant nest                      |
| <u>    </u> 7. Carolina Chickadee      | <u>    </u> 7. Adherent nest                      |
| <u>    </u> 8. Cliff Swallow           | <u>    </u> 8. Pendile nest                       |
| <u>    </u> 9. Killdeer                | <u>    </u> 9. Pendulous nest                     |
| <u>    </u> 10. Eastern Bluebird       | <u>    </u> 10. Cup nest in cavities or burrows   |
| <u>    </u> 11. Woodcock               |   |
| <u>    </u> 12. Common Flicker         |   |
| <u>    </u> 13. Acadian Flycatcher     |   |
| <u>    </u> 14. Screech Owl            |   |
| <u>    </u> 15. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher  |   |

EGG'S CONSERVATION CORNER

For birders and nature enthusiasts who will be traveling this summer it might be worth your while to send for the 1975-76 Nature Guide published by the Tahoma Audubon Society which lists people by states along with their addresses and phone numbers so that they can be contacted prior to your trip. Most of these people list birds as their interest but particularly in the West where this guide is strongest there are those who can provide advice on Trees, Wild Flowers, Butterflies and a number of other topics. For \$1.50 it contains much helpful information. Write to NATURE GUIDE, 34915 4th Ave., So., Federal Way, Washington 98002 for your copy. POSTAGE is included.

If you have a reason to be in downtown D.C. during June try to catch the photography exhibit at the Museum of Natural History, second floor, rotunda entitled "Ethel Floyd, Birder and Photographer. The prints number 40-50, are in color and are on display through June 30.

SCREECH OWL FAMILY

Members of the club were recently invited by a Columbia Hills resident to see a family of Screech Owls which had been roosting in a couple of large maple trees for several days. This proved to be another good reason for a rare bird alert. We tried calling a number of members; if you weren't contacted and are interested in seeing the birds there is still a chance that they are in the vicinity. Call Jeanne Moroney 730-0076. The Moroneys were excited by the enthusiastic response of those birders who turned out to see the four downy young sitting shoulder to shoulder on a branch and the two adults roosting in the tree. At dusk all members of the owl family flew around the area and the adults were kept busy picking up worms and insects from the lawn to feed the greedy young.

Answers to Quiz: 1. 4; 2. 7; 3. 8; 4. 2; 5. 4; 6. 9; 7. 10; 8. 7; 9. 1; 10. 10; 11. 1; 12. 3; 13. 8; 14. 3; 15. 6.