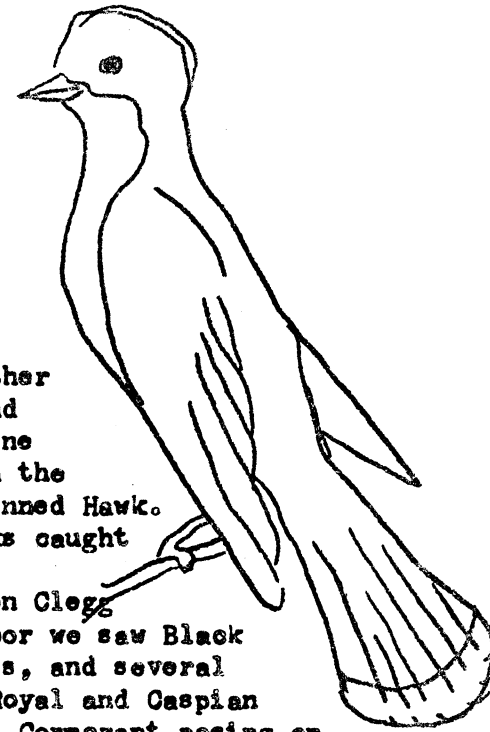


# HOWARD



## 115 SPECIES SEEN ON BRIGANTINE=CAPE MAY TRIP

Beginning with heavy winds but ending with clear cool weather there were 115 species of birds seen from the N.J. sea coast and marshes to the inland brush. Two unusual events were a Peregrine Falcon sitting on the edge of a pond allowing close up views in the scope and an injured Common Snipe being attacked by a Sharp-shinned Hawk. At Cape May, Bill Clark, head of the Observatory showed us hawks caught and banded that day. These included a male and female kestrel, Merlins, Sharp-shinned and Coopers Hawks. That afternoon Eileen Clegg spotted a Pectoral Sandpiper along the roadside. At Stone Harbor we saw Black Crowned Night Herons, flocks of Ruby and Golden Crowned Kinglets, and several species of sparrows and warblers. Along the coast we sighted Royal and Caspian Terns, a Lesser Black-backed Gull, and took pictures of a Great Cormorant posing on a dock piling near the shore. Returning on the Cape May-Lewes ferry there were few sea birds but a whale sounded, an unusual sighting, quite an ending to an exciting weekend!

Cathy Williamson

## CALENDAR

### FIELDS TRIPS - Swansfield Elementary School -

November 7, Sunday - Wagoner's Gap, Pa. Meet at 7:30 am. This is a whole day trip to one of the mountain vantage points to watch migrating hawks, vultures, eagles, etc. It is about 2½ hours to the Gap and it is usually cold and windy so come equipped with warm clothes, thermos, lunch and a cushion or blanket for rock-sitting. Hawks do not migrate if it is raining so the trip is subject to satisfactory weather. If in doubt call the leader, Kris Krishnamoorthy (997-5967) or Cathy Williamson.

November 20, Saturday - Tent Island and Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, leader, G. Klimkiewicz. Meet at 7 am at Swansfield or 8 am at Sandy Point State Park entrance. This is a joint trip with Montgomery and Patuxent MOS Chapters. Take lunch and spend the day enjoying the winter waterfowl.

December 12, Sunday - Local Howard County Feeder Trip - Nan Rhineland. Meet at 8 am to pick up ideas on feeding arrangements and see our wintering birds. Morning only.

December 24, Friday - Christmas Count - Triadelphia - see articles further on in the newsletter. Do contact Jo Selem (725-5037) to volunteer.

### PROGRAM Swansfield Elementary School - Thursdays at 7:45 pm

November 11 - M. Kathleen Klimkiewicz - "Life History of the Purple Martin." Kathy has banded hundreds of purple martins in the last few years. She will have slides and displays to illustrate her presentation. Come early and Christmas shop the Bookstore.

December 9 - To be announced

## BOARD MEETING

December 2 (note date change) at Anita Conron's, 2914 Evergreen Way, (988-9390 for directions)

This year's annual Christmas Count in Howard County is scheduled for—believe it or not—the day before Christmas, Friday, Dec, 24th. Don't groan—you are better off in the woods than in any store that day so plan accordingly!

To join in the count you don't have to be any more than a birding enthusiast. The adventuresome start in the wee hours of the morning before dawn calling up and listening for owls. A more typical bird seeker might start around 7am and bird during the daylight hours. Since this event is a count the numbers of a species are as important as the number of different species found. Thus the backyard and feeder watcher can make important contributions by reporting in what has been seen. If this is a first time for you it is helpful to sign on with an experienced counter. Company makes for conviviality and clues can then be gotten on how to estimate numbers in a flock and other tips to facilitate counting.

Chen Robbins will continue counting his area east of Rt. 108 and the Bird Club will be responsible for the remainder of the Triadelphia Count circle west of Rt. 108. Danny Dyttrak will have maps available at the December Meeting and Jo Solow (725-5037) will hand out the assignments. If possible stake out barn owls and other owls, snipes, woodcock, Savannah sparrows, thrashers, fox sparrows and any winter finches such as grosbeaks and pine siskins should any of these be present. Knowing where to look makes the counting easier.

### WHY BIRD COUNTS

Now, hopefully, you are planning to go out on the Christmas Count and the thought crosses your mind - well, what is it all for? Why should we use now precious gas to go to far places and count birds? Why use our own energy as well? In the crush of reporting each individual count, the reporting of usefulness gets squeezed out. So while it is still in mind, this seemed like prime time for a few thoughts.

Have you heard that Christmas counts are being computerized? The Maryland counts, starting in 1946, are completely entered on tape at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center where we expect to begin statistical analysis of data shortly. There is a school in Colorado which has received a grant for the computerizing of the complete continent-wide accumulation of data and work is now proceeding from it. The possibilities for use really boggle the mind.

American Birds Magazine experimented two years ago with the winter range maps of several species of birds from Christmas count data. They liked the idea enough to persuade the Air Force to send them money to prepare a set of these maps involving species which prefer airport type habitats and could possibly be a menace to planes: e.g. Burrowing Owls.

The rules and procedures are being cleared up, so hopefully, party hours will mean the same thing no matter who turns them in, and so will habitat percentages. At least in our count, our coverage is becoming better standardized and more efficient year by year. The consistency of coverage makes a count really valuable for population comparisons and long-term trends or cycles. The Howard count will be fascinating to watch over the next twenty years as the land usage inside our circle changes.

So - Christmas Bird Counts, besides being marvelous fun, are just now becoming scientifically useful as well. One should think of them as one facet of the whole scheme of environmental studies about which we are finding how little we know.

David Holmes

### TIPS FOR FIELD TRIPS

When driving hold the group together by keeping the car behind you in your rear view mirror. When stopping to observe birds pull well off the road, and turn engine off promptly. Do not get out unless the leader does so; he may have seen something so close that it would fly at the sight of humans.

When the leader gets out be sure all doors are closed quietly.

The leader precedes the group.

Leave dogs at home.

Noisy or restless children should be kept some distance behind the group.

Birders avoid sweeping gestures, undue noises of voices and feet.

Bird listening is as important as bird watching.

Nothing but pictures, leave nothing but your footsteps."

Food, water and cover are the three essentials if you wish to attract numbers and a variety of birds. Our first article dealt with cover and food from the standpoint of attractive berry-bearing shrubs which could be planted near your home. This article will focus on the supplementary feeding that you can do to increase the number of migrants as well as residents who visit your area.

People begin feeding birds for a variety of reasons but once they become involved in watching the daily parade to their feeders they often feed winter after winter. I say "winter" although there are some individuals who feed all year round. For most of us, since feeding can be an expensive proposition, we limit our offerings to that period of the year when birds need it most. From mid-spring until late fall there is usually an abundant food supply so feeding need not be continued. Depending on what you wish to attract you may have a reason to feed at other times. I often put out small amounts of seed on a daily basis until the first part of June and leave the last chunk of suet until it is picked to a nubbin for then I have the pleasure of watching the first Cardinal brood being brought to the feeding area; the adult Downy Woodpeckers bring their young to teach them the delights of suet eating and the C. Chickadee family comes to sample the sunflower seeds. The C. Grackles and Blue Jays arrive with what seem enormous young in tow who still beg with fluttering wings and open mouth when the food is scattered right under their very beaks. Certainly feeding into the nesting season has its rewards but it is definitely not necessary.

Most people begin feeding at least on a small scale during autumn. This enables the resident birds to become used to the presence of another food supply and make it a stop on their daily rounds. Once this activity is established migrants are more easily attracted. Often individuals who put out a new feeder become discouraged because there is no immediate rush to the food. It may take several days or even weeks for the supply to be discovered or frequently used. If you live in a mostly open area you can't expect flocks of chickadees, woodpeckers and titmice which are associated with woods but you may look for D.E. Juncos, Starlings, C. Grackles, Mourning Doves, some of the sparrows and perhaps Horned Larks. I never have E. Meadowlarks which my neighbor a block away does but then she doesn't get Evening Grosbeaks because she lives on the edge of a meadow. Frequently too, people try to discriminate in the types of birds they feed. They don't want House Sparrows, Starlings and C. Grackles but want to feed just the "nice" birds. To some extent one can't be too choosy; there is the plus factor that all the activity is making your feeding known to any visitors passing thru. The only other way to discriminate, other than to discontinue feeding entirely, is to put out little or none of the food which attracts the unwanted species. Unfortunately, Starlings will monopolize suet feeders which are one of the staple attractions at most feeding areas. Go lightly on bread crumbs and products like leftover doughnuts, cake crumbs, etc. for these the House Sparrows and Starlings seem to like. Feed less mixed seed and preferably remove it from the more attractive and expensive seeds. People who begin feeding are most prone to pick up a 5# bag of mixed seed from the local drug store when an equal-sized bag of sunflower seeds would attract more of the desirable species and be completely eaten. A mixed bag of seed is just that--a mixed bag. Generally, by some perverse law, the most frequently eaten seeds are often the most expensive and hence there are fewer of them in the mix. When they're gone you're left with 4# of millet which attracts many fewer species.

What then do you feed? Sunflower seeds should be a staple for anyone who is feeding--if you have just one feeder I would recommend filling it with that. It has the advantage of attracting not only C. Chickadees and T. Titmice but Downy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers and White-breasted and Red-breasted Nuthatches. Quarts of seed will disappear into the oversized beaks of a flock of Evening Grosbeaks. Blue Jays, Cardinals, Purple and House Finches and even Pine Siskins and Goldfinches (despite their smaller bill size) are all sunflower seed freaks. If you're able to supply thistle seed (at a minimum of 75¢ a lb.) the finches will like your area even more but it's hardly essential. If you have the space put your mixed feed in a separate feeder and watch the sparrow species come: Song, Field, Chipping, Tree and Fox Sparrows are all possibilities.

Experienced persons usually do a great deal to buy their quantities as a considerable saving can be obtained but never buy more than you can store where it will be safe from rodents. The other advantage at a feed store is that you can purchase individual feeds in bulk which may fit the type of birds you are feeding. You may find, for instance, that cracked corn is popular at your feeder so you can buy several pounds avoiding the types that are frequently left uneaten. Feeding by spreading food on the ground has several advantages. It's simple since there is nothing to make or buy and there are some species that prefer ground feeding. (You will find that birds spill foods from even the most expensive and elaborate feeders so that you are doing a certain amount of ground feeding whether you plan to or not.) Ground feeding should only be encouraged when you are willing to put out a daily supply which will be eaten before you put out more and where there is a reasonable freedom from predation by prowling cats. Cover, which is so essential, can also be the place from which a cat dashes in among a feeding flock. Since you are creating what is essentially an unnatural concentration of birds you must also be aware of the fact that just as a flock of feeding birds is not going to go unnoticed by the neighborhood cats, you may also be unwittingly providing easy meals for a resident Sharp-shinned Hawk. One additional comment about feeding regards your responsibility. As you begin putting out food in the fall the natural food supply is at its peak and what you provide in some variety is a supplement to the diet. In the middle of winter, especially during a snow storm, when much of the remaining food supply may be covered, the resident birds may have come to depend on your handouts for a specific part of their daily food. Thus if, in February, you decide to take a week's vacation in the Florida sunshine be sure someone else continues to fill your feeders--or do not begin feeding at all!

The various seeds and grains which are available to fill the needs of certain of our song and game birds deal with only part of the birds who may come to feeders. The others are those which are primarily insect eaters and no amount or variety of seeds will entice them for a second visit. If you hope to attract birds like the Carolina Wren, Brown Creeper, Y.R. Warbler, late Brown Thrashers, G. Catbirds, or even keep the various woodpeckers, titmice and chickadees something else is necessary. The two most popular foods for this type of bird are suet and peanut butter. ~~Peanut butter is rather expensive as bird food but if you wish to use it, extend it and reduce the stick-to-the-roof-of-the-bird's-mouth tendency by mixing corn meal, bread crumbs or something similar with it.~~ This can be smeared on a tree trunk where those most interested will pick it out or put it in hanging sticks with holes drilled in them. Suet is always popular. A variety of containers can be built or bought to contain it--I find a mesh bag among the easiest. Rendered suet or fat can be mixed with nuts, seeds, crumbs, oatmeal, peanuts, or what-have-you and then spooned into holes in a stick, a cut-off milk carton, small hanging can, coconut shell, etc. Imagination counts for a good deal in bird feeding. You may not attract any more birds but it can save you money and give you a feeling of accomplishment by recycling some items.

Whenever the subject of bird feeding arises within five minutes someone asks the inevitable, "How do you get rid of squirrels?" One answer is, you don't. I knew one lady who couldn't bear to do anything about them so she fed those that came to her feeders; pretty soon she had 37 squirrels and almost no birds. It is virtually impossible to keep all squirrels from obtaining anything in your feeding area unless you are handfeeding the birds. Squirrels are among the most persistent, intelligent and agile of animals when it comes to pitting their wits against yours--and don't bet they're going to come off second best. Since they are willing to leap from amazing distances to get onto a standing feeder anything mounted on a pole must be well away from trees. It also needs some sort of guard at the bottom so the animals can't climb the pole to the goodies. And if you hang feeder a guard at the top may be necessary--it partly depends on the design of the feeder. You'll find out soon enough. If you can, provide a water supply. The fountain of summer is impractical in the winter but birds still need to drink and bathe and some may come for that rather than the food.

Jo Solem

Lucille Peters first came to the Board two years ago as Secretary. In addition to those responsibilities she organized and ran the very successful Outdoor Workshop of April last year.

Lucille comes from Banner Elk, N.C. where she was orphaned as a tiny girl. Her grandmother cared for her until she was old enough to enter the home, where she joined her brothers and sisters. The Edgar Tufts Association maintained the home, high school, and college, Lees McGraw College through which Lucille progressed. On graduation she became a manager of a New York City Schrafft's lunchroom.

She was first married in 1942. The next year found Lucille, her husband and new baby in Baltimore. Shortly thereafter she was widowed and subsequently took on the support of herself and her three year old daughter as a Baltimore City teacher.

In 1950 Lucille married Jay and began a southerly migration toward Howard County by way of Edmonson Village and Catonsville.

After working for Social Security Lucille went back into teaching which career she has pursued almost continuously to the present time in Baltimore City or Baltimore County. After 17 years at the Relay School teaching 4th, 5th, and 6th grades, Lucille became a special education teacher. She has been twice recognized by her PTA for her devotion and capabilities. She is currently working with slow children at Landsdown in Hammonds Ferry.

Lucille's hands are always busy, sewing, knitting, doing a variety of crafts. She first became interested in birds as a Girl Scout Leader of two troops. In 1971 she won the Thanks Award, the highest adult award given by the Girl Scout Association of America and forthwith received a citation from the Maryland House of Delegates.

In 1968 Lucille won the Helen Miller Scholarship Award given to teachers by AOS which enabled her to attend the Audubon Nature Camp in Maine.

#### Glegg's Conservation Corner

A listing of Maryland's Bicentennial Trees (292 in all) can be obtained from:

Maryland Forest Service  
Taxes Office Building  
Riva Rd.  
Annapolis, Md. 21401

Locations and types of trees are included in a brief description of each species.

Conservation Easements and Gifts of Land - If you or someone you know owns a unique parcel of undeveloped land and wishes to protect it from development then land easements may be the answer. Simply stated, if a landowner gives a conservation easement to a recipient, or donor, he or she retains title to the land minus its development rights; and can use it in any way consistent with the conditions of his or her easement.

Along with preserving undeveloped land or an historic building or area, there are numerous tax advantages for the donor. Consultation with your attorney is necessary to determine the most advantageous plan for you.

A booklet with information about "Conservation Easements" is available from:

The Maryland Environmental Trust  
8 East Mulberry St. 383-4264  
Baltimore, Md. 21202 383-4265

Another organization, The Nature Conservancy, has saved 750,000 acres of forests, swamps, marshes, prairies, mountains, islands, and beaches throughout the U. S. from destruction since 1951. This non-profit group accepts gifts of land that are ecologically unique. However, residential and commercial real estate are accepted, then sold to raise monies for land purchases.

Again, numerous tax advantages are gained by the donor as well as insuring that valuable habitats are guarded against destruction so that future generations may benefit from their forefathers' wise decisions.

Gifts of Land (pamphlet title)  
1800 North Kent St.  
Arlington, Va. 22209

730-524-3151

The Habitat Guide to Birding is an extremely useful book for the novice birder. It clearly suggests how bird identification can be simplified by knowing which birds are likely to be found in whatever habitat one is visiting.

There are chapters devoted to each of the following habitats: hardwood forest, evergreens, fields and meadows, brushy borders, roadsides, ponds and streams, fresh water swamps and marshes, mudflats and salt water marshes, seashores and beaches. In each case McElroy describes how the habitat came to be, the plant life associated with it, and the birds closely associated with it.

As a general guide the book is excellent. For most habitats nesting and wintering birds are listed. In some cases migrants are also listed. Used in conjunction with Robbins and Van Velsen's Birds of Maryland one's list of possible birds in a particular habitat at a particular season becomes more realistic.

The New Handbook of Attracting Birds which is no longer new (1960) but still valid is a book which gives specific information on trees, shrubs, and flowers to plant to attract birds. It also includes such helps as a planting plan for a shrub border, a formal garden, plants for hummingbirds, how to care for wounded birds, how to dig trees from the wild, and complete instructions for building bird houses.

For the homeowner McElroy spells out the requirements for a yard to attract birds throughout the year; for the farmer there are a series of projects to make a large acreage more inviting to all kinds of wildlife. This book is one of the most thorough and useful in that it gives the horticultural requirements for many shrubs as well as their landscaping value. McElroy indicates whether sun or shade is necessary, wet or dry terrain, and if the shrub is noteworthy for its color, berries, flowers or season of food production. Lacking, however, is information on the height and spread of the materials listed which is necessary if one wants to landscape one's own yard. Despite this omission the book is still valuable for the wealth of information it contains.

#### ALMANAC

Fill feeders and put them out. Choose a place where you can watch the activity at your leisure - the breakfast nook, family room or work room.

Shop around for a device to keep water for the birds from freezing. A thermostatically controlled heater such as used by chicken farmers is sold by hardware and grain stores. Alternatively replenish the supply with hot water in the morning after cold nights and several times a day during extremely cold spells.

Ask for something you can enjoy everyday in your letter to Santa: bird plates, or placemats, a bird calendar, or a collection of bird prints to add to each year.

Christmas presents for children might include subscriptions to nature magazines, nature cards and stationary or a bird house for spring and summer pleasure.

Adults will appreciate an addition to the library such as Audubon's The Birds of North America, a Dover publication of a Bent life History, Margaret Nice's Watcher at the Nest, or Wild America by Roger Tory Peterson. For friends in this area Spring in Washington by Louis Halle, or the Potomac Trail Guide listing all the good hiding areas around Washington would be appropriate. For a traveling friend Birdwatcher's America by Pettingill is a must.

Many of these items can be bought at the MCB Bookstore where the profit goes to a sanctuary. With the Christmas Count in mind take a few hours to hunt out birds which may be hard to find on the Count Day. Owls are always needed and so are many of the less common songsters.

Buy a living Christmas Tree which will provide cover and nesting sites for years to come. Be sure to dig the hole before Christmas when the ground is not yet frozen.

Collect used Christmas Trees and put them out staked with guy wires to hold them upright. They make an excellent windbreak to keep bird food from being blown all over and also provide excellent temporary cover for the birds. They will stay green until spring provided they were in good condition when retrieved.