

# HOWARD

MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
January - February 1977 VOL V NO 3

## TRIADELPHIA CHRISTMAS COUNT

The twentieth-ninth annual Triadelphia Christmas Bird Count was held this year on Dec. 24 which reduced the number of participants. Last year an all-time record of 97 species was set; this year was the 4th highest in the history of the count with 87 species. Compiler Danny Bystrak noted that all counts this year are lower than last year which may be due to harsh fall and winter weather and the fact that it is not an invasion year for finches. Twelve record highs were set including Canada Goose (over 1000), Common Crow (7000+), Hermit Thrush 32, Pileated Woodpecker 12 and Fox Sparrow 9. All numbers are tentative since all reports have not been received. Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks remained at last year's level while the Kestrel dropped from 45 to 16. Owls were represented by 4 each of Barred, Screech & Great Horned and 2 Barn. Three Brown Thrashers and 1 Catbird were seen. Bluebirds were down from 100 last year to 47 this year perhaps reflecting the severe weather. Evening Grosbeaks were hard to find with a mere 7 being tallied; nearly 100 Purple Finches and slightly over 100 House Finches were seen but many a Pine Siskin. The major miss on the count was the Horned Lark which is always here in the winter but is hard to find in years lacking snow cover. A Bonaparte's Gull on the reservoir was new to the count and a possible Swainson's Thrush may also be added when verifying material is submitted. Five Common Snipe, 3 Woodcock, 3 Robins, 9 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, 106 Swamp Sparrows, 1 House Wren and 60 Water Pipits along with a lone Yellowthroat were other interesting additions to the count. Next year will be the 30th consecutive count in this area; we will hope for a more convenient day and therefore greater participation from this chapter which will provide the coverage for a possible new record high.

## WORKSHOP APPROACHING

The annual Birding Workshop jointly sponsored by the Howard and Patuxent Chapters of MOS will be held March 19, Saturday at the Glenelg Country School. More information will appear in the next newsletter and at the meetings. This year we are trying something new. We are inviting anyone who has a nature-related art, craft or hobby that he wishes to display or sell to reserve a space in the gymnasium where tables will be available. If you do sell items we ask that you make a small donation to the Sanctuary Fund but our primary aim is to share the arts, crafts and interests of our members and their friends. Do you make bird houses or feeders but don't want a whole table? Marcia Krishnamoorthy will welcome them in the bookstore and will be set up on that day. Call Eileen Glegg (730-4362) or Jo Solem (725-5037) if you have questions or wish to reserve space.

## ORNACROSTIC ANSWER

Were you able to correctly solve the Ornacrostic by Marjorie Mountjoy that was included in our holiday mailing? The selection was taken from "The Birds of Spring" in Wolfert's Roost by Washington Irving. Let Nen or Jo know if you'd like another acrostic.

"Of all the birds of our groves and meadows, the Bobolink was the envy of my boyhood. He crossed my path in the sweetest weather, and the sweetest season of the year, when all nature called to the fields, and the rural feeling throbbed in every bosom; but when I, luckless urchin! was doomed to be mewed up, during the livelong day, in that purgatory of boyhood, a school-room."

As most birders are aware much of the consistently best birding in the continental United States occurs along the borders of this country. Paul has had the singular good fortune to live in several of these excellent birding areas. He began his adysey on the East Coast as a native New Yorker, born and raised in Manhattan. A boyhood friend was responsible for awakening his interest in birds beginning in the seventh grade although he had been interested in nature as long as he can remember. Summer camps in Massachusetts reinforced his interest.

College took him to the University of Chicago where he majored in physics; then he continued with graduate studies at Stanford University, Palo Alto, California. The area is especially good for birds so he went on field trips, took walks, helped on Christmas Counts, etc. around San Francisco Bay. (He remembers a So. California trip for Condors when he saw 2 at one time a a highlight of this period.) After four years of work he received his doctorate, then took a research position at the University of Oregon (and, incidentally, found more good birding). From there he went on to a three year research appointment at the University of Minnesota. While in Minneapolis he was active in a local bird club and speaks glowingly of the hawk migration at Duluth and fantastic waves of warblers in the spring. He has also had opportunities to bird in other areas of the West and briefly in Europe. It was during his stay in Minnesota that he and Gathy were married in 1973. They moved to Maryland in the fall of 1975 where he is now employed by the Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory. Paul says he hasn't been doing as much birding here as he'd like since the arrival of David last June which has temporarily changed his life style. In addition to his intense interest in birds Paul enjoys hiking, swimming and photography and plays the string bass in the Montgomery Community Orchestra.

RARE BIRD ALERT! TELEPHONE NUMBERS FOR TRAVELING BIRDERS

Do you ever travel and bird in other parts of the United States? Below you will find a list of telephone numbers of taped bird information which American Birds published. These tapes are changed on a periodic basis so they can be highly useful to dial if you happen to be in the area. If you have a Washington, D.C. line the Voice of the Naturalist is 652-3295 which is useful for the whole Mid-Atlantic region.

- |   |              |   |              |
|---|--------------|---|--------------|
| 1. Eastern Massachusetts                    | 617-259-8805 | 9. Maryland                               | 301-652-3295 |
| 2. Western Massachusetts                    | 413-566-3590 | 10. Atlanta, Georgia                      | 404-634-5497 |
| 3. Vermont                                  | 802-457-2779 | 11. Western Penn.                         | 412-486-2090 |
| 4. Buffalo, New York                        | 716-896-1271 | 12. Cleveland, Ohio                       | 216-861-2447 |
| 5. Albany - Schnectady,<br>New York         | 518-377-9600 | 13. Columba, Ohio                         | 614-221-9736 |
| 6. New York City                            | 212-832-6523 | 14. Detroit, Michigan-<br>Windsor-Ontario | 313-893-8020 |
| 7. Delaware Valley -<br>Philadelphia, Penn. | 215-236-2473 | 15. Seattle, Wash.                        | 206-455-9722 |
| 8. Washington, D. C.                        | 202-652-3295 | 16. No. California                        | 415-843-2211 |
|   |              | 17. So. California                        | 213-874-1318 |

GLEGG'S CONSERVATION CORNER

A free sample copy of Critical Mass, the newspaper of the citizen's movement to stop nuclear power is available from the following address: Public Citizen, P.O. Box 19404, Washington, D.C. 20036. Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

If you are thinking of purchasing a smoke detector consult the Health Research Group's Report first. Some detectors use a radioactive material known as americium-- similar to plutonium in its ability to cause cancer at extremely low doses. For a copy of the HRG report and lists of manufacturers of smoke detectors, both the ionization and its alternative the photoelectric, write to Health Research Group, 2000 P St., N.W. Washington, D.C. 20036. Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

G.C.G (cont.)

Reynolds Aluminum is now recycling on every other Wednesday 10:30 A.M.-noon in Columbia, Wilde Lake Villages.

Remember to recycle your Christmas tree. Place it outdoors as a bird feeder/shelter and string it with suet or fill pine cones with a peanut butter/bird seed mixture.

#### CALENDAR

#### Field Trips -

January 8, Saturday - Patuxent Research Center - M.K. Klimkiewicz, leader. Meet at 8:15 A.M. at Swansfield Elementary School or at 9:00 A.M. at the main gate of the refuge which is at the junction of Rt. 197 and Powder Mill Rd. near Laurel, Md.  $\frac{1}{2}$  day.

January 23, Sunday. Winter Tree Identification. Colin Munro, leader. Meet at 1:00 P.M. at Swansfield Elementary School. Mr. Munro has identified over 30 species on his land near Fulton but we may not be able to absorb that many--see how many you already recognize.

Unscheduled Owl Trip to National Arboretum. "Kris" Krishnamoorthy, leader.  $\frac{1}{2}$  day. This trip will be taken during late Jan. or early Feb. once the owls have begun to roost in the evergreens at the arboretum and on a day when the weather appears favorable. If you are interested in this trip call Kris (997-5967) before Jan. 20. Give him your name & phone number and he will let you know when the trip has been scheduled.

February 5, Saturday - Columbia Feeder Trip. 8:00 A.M. Nan Rhineland, leader. Feeder trips are always popular. You can see what ideas other people have for feeding and there are usually excellent opportunities for close views & comparisons of species. This type of trip is especially recommended for children or for those who don't like to hike long distances for good views of birds.  $\frac{1}{2}$  day.

February 19, 20, 21 - Chincoteague & Irish Grove. This is our annual winter Eastern Shore 3-day trip. This year the group plans to stay at Irish Grove Sanctuary for \$1.00 per night. Since it is necessary to take sleeping bags and food a definite count is a must. Call Gathy or Leroy Williamson (730-0338) for additional information or to make reservations. The group will leave from Swansfield Elementary at 8:00 A.M. on the 19th.

#### Board Meetings -

Jan. <sup>27</sup>~~28~~, Thursday - Marcia & "Kris" Krishnamoorthy-5840 Alderleaf Place, Columbia. 997-5967  
Feb. 24, Thursday - Jo Solem - 10617 Graveloch Rd., Laurel, 725-5037.

#### Programs -

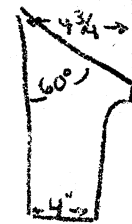
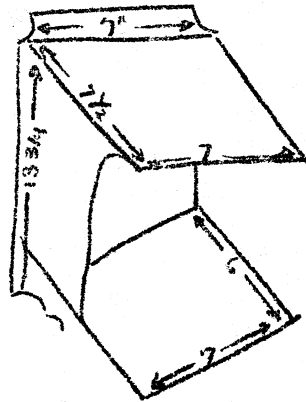
January 13, Thursday - Stephen Simon. "Birds at the Feeder." Steve is a biology instructor at Catonsville Community College and has some interesting movies. Swansfield Elem. 7:45P.M.

February 10, Thursday - Annual Member's Program Night. 6:30 P.M. Any member is invited to bring some of his choice nature slides (maximum 1 dozen) to share. This year this meeting is NOT being held at our usual meeting place but will be a potluck supper at Fred & Nan Rhineland's. Check the membership list which you received last month. If your name is listed between Beck - Frazier bring a salad; Glanz - Mountjoy a main dish; Moyer - Zucker a dessert. Families and guests are most welcome. If you find it inconvenient to cook give Jo Solem a call (725-5037) and we'll make an adjustment. The Rhinelanders are located near the center of the county. Take Homewood Rd. off Rt. 108, as you go west. Continue thru the junction with Sheppard's Lane where the road becomes Folly Quarter. The lane is  $\frac{1}{2}$  on the left beyond the Franciscan Friars (a mailbox on the right side of Folly Quarter with the #12541 is directly across from their lane). Continue straight on the lane; they are the last house. Phone 286-2427 if you have any questions.

During the winter months when only your eyes are out the window with the birds, plan to build a few bird houses to increase the summer nesting population in your back yard or open space. There are three general types of bird houses 1) platforms 2) log houses and 3) boxes.

Platforms or shelves are commonly used by Phoebe's and Barn Swallows and will occasionally be used by Robins. Shelves nailed under eaves will do well, or two-sided and roofed shelves can be built.

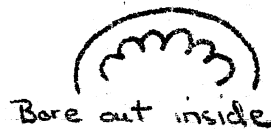
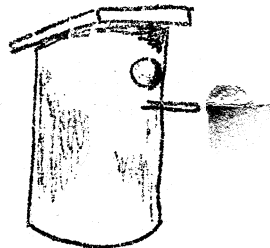
Out all pieces.  
Bevel 60° top  
edge of roof  
Nail back to  
floor  
Nail on side, then  
roof



Back  $1\frac{1}{2}'' \times 7'' \times 13\frac{3}{4}''$   
Side  $1\frac{1}{2}'' \times 4\frac{3}{4}'' \times 9\frac{1}{2}''$   
Floor  $1\frac{1}{2}'' \times 6'' \times 7''$   
Roof  $1\frac{1}{2}'' \times 7\frac{1}{2}'' \times 7''$

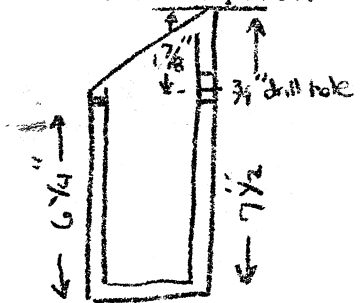
Log houses are best cut from green cedar posts which will not check or crack when drying. To form a  $3\frac{1}{2}''$  nest for a Wren, drill a series of holes around the outside, then drill out the rest of the wood the same way leaving a  $3/4''$  shell. Cut top on a slant and drill the entrance hole and a hole for  $\frac{1}{2}''$  dowel perch. Cut roof & nail it in place.

Materials:  
Cedar log  
 $5''$  in diameter  
 $\times 7\frac{1}{2}''$  in length  
Roof  $1\frac{1}{2}'' \times 6'' \times 7''$   
Dowel for perch  $\frac{1}{2}''$   
in diameter;  
 $3''$  in length

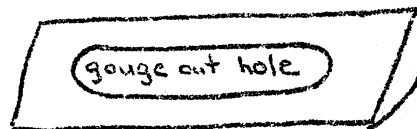
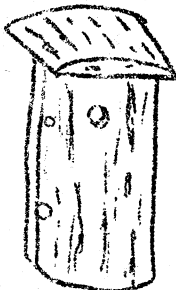


Bore out inside

Mount by cutting a hole in the back opposite from the opening.



A Chickadee log house can be made from any check-free log  $6''$  in diameter and  $12''$  long. Select elm, pine or any soft wood. Split the log in two lengthwise. Gouge out two halves by hand and drill  $1\frac{1}{8}''$  entrance hole in one half and a mounting hole in the other half. Tie the two halves together, drill 4 screw holes, screw two sides together with brass screws. Cut a  $7 \times 7''$  bark slab for the roof and nail it only to the back half so that front can be removed for annual cleaning.



By adding a dowel for perching ( $3/8'' \times 3\frac{1}{2}''$ ) and allowing for  $14''$  in length and an entrance hole of  $1\frac{1}{8}''$  this house will appeal to Downy Woodpeckers as well.

For bird houses the very durable woods such as cypress, western cedar or redwood are suitable. They will weather to a natural color if placed out in the fall or winter and fit more naturally in the landscape. Houses of white pine, white cedar or spruce need to be painted or stained to protect the wood and tone down the color. Linseed oil with a little green paint or brown stain rubbed generously on all the wood surfaces and then allowed to soak in can be wiped off with a cloth and repeated until the wood is well saturated produced a pleasing mottled effect and a long-lasting house. Be sure to use galvanized steel or brass hardware to prevent rusting and loosening of the boards. Your wood should be  $\frac{1}{2}''$  to  $7/8''$  in thickness.

## Dimensions of Birdhouses and Height for Placement Above Ground

Using the Bluebird house plans in the previous issue as a model and the following dimensions as a guide you can make the small variations necessary to house many other birds. (Dimensions are given in inches).

	Inside of House	Depth of House	Entrance Size	Entrance above Floor	Height above ground in feet
Bewick's Wren	4 x 4	6 - 8	1	1 - 6	6 - 10
Carolina Wren	4 x 4	6 - 8	1 1/8	1 - 6	6 - 10
Chickadee	4 x 4	8 - 10	1 1/8	6 - 8	6 - 15
Downy Woodpecker	4 x 4	8 - 10	1 1/4	6 - 8	6 - 20
House Wren	4 x 4	6 - 8	1	1 - 6	6 - 10
Nuthatch	4 x 4	8 - 10	1 1/4	6 - 8	12 - 20
T. Titmouse	4 x 4	8 - 10	1 1/4	6 - 8	6 - 15
Crested Flycatcher	6 x 6	8 - 10	2	6 - 8	8 - 20
Hairy Woodpecker	6 x 6	12 - 15	1 1/2	9 - 12	12 - 20
House Finch	6 x 6	6	2	4	8 - 12
Red-headed Woodpecker	6 x 6	12 - 15	2	9 - 12	12 - 20
Flicker	7 x 7	16 - 18	2 1/2	14 - 16	10 - 30
Screech Owl	8 x 8	12 - 15	3	9 - 12	10 - 30
Kestrel	8 x 8	12 - 15	3	9 - 12	10 - 30

Cavity nesters are the birds who have suffered the greatest inroads in their population densities for two reasons: the insistence on man's part for tidiness in the landscape so that all dead trees are promptly cut up and removed and holes in trees quickly filled to maintain the health of existing trees; second, the competition of Starlings and House Sparrows for whatever cavities are left usually works to the disadvantage of native species.

Many good commercial bird houses are readily available but be sure that the dimensions are correct for whichever bird you want to attract. Check for proper drainage and ventilation holes, an absence of cracks in construction and, of utmost importance, be sure the bird house can be opened and properly cleaned. Birds harbor parasites and it is necessary to empty out the old nests in late winter and dust out the birdhouse with Kotoxone.

A suitable bird house is one which is designed for a specific bird not just birds in general. It is better to place several houses attracting different species in one area as each species resents a too close neighbor of the same species. The exception to this rule are the colony nesters such as Tree Swallows and Purple Martins. In general a bird house will be used if it is sited correctly from the bird's point of view. In general birds like open areas in which to nest. Woodpeckers and Chickadees will nest in deep woods; Flickers and other woodpeckers like a box placed on an old stub of a dead tree. Hedgerows, old apple orchards and semi-open fields are attractive to Crested Flycatcher, Titmouse and Screech Owls. Sparrow Hawks and Red-headed Woodpeckers like a box placed rather high on a telephone pole or tall dead tree. Most birds prefer boxes placed in partial to full sunlight. Dense foliage around seems less safe and tends to be avoided.

If a yard is kept spick and span birds will not be able to find the natural materials they need to build their nests. Suitable materials should be left about in spring about the time the Robins come back. Here are some items you might try:

string	excelmior	knitting yarn	kapok	cotton
rope-raveled	paint brush bristles	thread	dried spaghnum moss	
dental floss	feathers from chickens	raveled burlap	horse hair	
furniture stuffing	bits of fur, hair	wool	plastic fishing line	
	shoemaker's flax			

These can be placed in metal suet feeders or on a clothesline or open branch. Yarns or string should be cut in 8" lengths so the birds don't get tangled in the material. Orioles like lengths of colored knitting yarn; Chipping Sparrows like discarded plastic fishing line and horse hair.

The Complete Family Nature Guide. Jean Reese Worthley. Doubleday & Co., Inc., Garden City, New York. 1976. 7.95.

Mention the name "Miss Jean" to many children and they will immediately identify the author as the hostess of public television's "Hodgepodge Lodge". Though Jean Worthley is a member of MOE and regularly leads field trips for the Baltimore chapter and at the state convention, it would be unfair to describe her as a birder for her interests are much more varied. She is a naturalist--that is someone who finds all living things fascinating. Her guide is addressed to children as well as parents for it is simply written. It is an attempt to take the uninitiated by the hand and introduce them to some of the delights of the natural world. Of necessity she treats topics briefly for they are meant to be a sample only; perhaps some readers will find themselves overwhelmed by the wealth of material despite the slim size of the book. This guide is not to be confused with a field or identification guide for in almost all cases if one wishes to pursue the study of insects, shells, trees, spiders, stars, rocks, birds, lichens or whatever it is necessary to refer to more complete reference materials. Her purpose, as it is on her television program, is to open children's (and adult's) minds to the wonders all around them. Even though she is fortunate in living on a farm she never neglects the person who lives in the city and, though she points out that the natural experiences of urban dwellers may not be as rich or varied as hers, there still exist numerous opportunities for investigation and mind-stretching wherever you live. Her concern for the environment is obvious and her enthusiasm contagious. Besides the chapters on various segments of the natural world she also includes a list of "Books I Use and Like" which should be helpful for the person just becoming interested in nature study and a chapter entitled "Projects and Activities" which may offer some possibilities. The book has been on display in area book stores and would make a useful gift or addition to a family library; examine it first at your local library since it is rather slender for 7.95.

Jo Solem

## ALMANAC

### Indoors - -

Continue building bird boxes. Check suggestions in this newsletter. Also look carefully at your area and consider what boxes may be put out in the spring. Your neighbors may welcome a bluebird box if you have too many trees or a wren house if they are the ones with the brushy undergrowth.

If you have been feeding birds regularly try your hand at photographing them thru a window. This may be the beginning of a whole new interest.

### Outdoors - -

Most tree species have distinctive silhouettes which are easily seen during the winter months. Birders find it helpful to know at least a few basic species as some birds can be easily found on certain foliage. Note our January 23 field trip.

Though this is mid-winter there are always early signs of spring. See how soon you can find Skunk Cabbage ("blooming"); Woodcock will begin courtship flights mid-late February depending on the season; Great Horned Owls will begin nesting in Jan. or Feb. Always take a second look at twiggy nests in main crotches of tall trees in extensive tracts of woods. Bluebirds may be scarce during the coldest portion of the winter but a Feb. thaw should bring some back. Spring Peepers may start calling by late Feb.

Snow cover is almost a certainty at some period of the winter. Take advantage of it to follow bird and animal tracks. You may not always be able to identify them but you can often deduce a story as tracks can lead you to hiding places, give you habitat clues, reveal eating patterns or indicate life and death struggles.

During a warm winter day you may be fortunate enough to see a butterfly which will most likely be brown with a yellow border--the Mourning Cloak which neither migrates nor overwinters in a chrysalis but hibernates in crevices, under bark, etc. emerging on warm days.

Examine the now-exposed nests in trees and shrubs. Remember it is illegal to collect them but they can be examined and photographed. A close examination will reveal an astonishing range of materials, locations and skills used in their construction.