

# HOWARD

MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

May - June 1977 VOL V NO. 5

## MAY COUNT

The first Saturday in May (this year May 7) is designated for birders throughout the state as the day in spring to count all birds seen. This is the 30th consecutive year the count has been held. This time is chosen because there are lingering wintering species and in most years the majority of summer residents and migrants are in evidence. The record high for Howard County was set two years ago when 145 species were found; last year under adverse (I almost said impossible) weather conditions only 125 species were seen. All birders are welcome to help for any or all of the day. If you do not feel confident enough to count an area by yourself "Kris" Krishnamoorthy 997-5967 or Gathy Williamson 730-0338 will help to find someone you can count with. If you can go out for only a portion of the day you are still welcome--count at your feeder or in your neighborhood. The more people counting and the more areas covered the more accurate the total can be.

The day is climaxed by a buffet meal at the Rhinelanders anytime after 6:00 P.M. After eating we tally the species that have been seen that day. It's a great chance to exchange stories and sightings; Chan Robbins usually shows up--it's always fun to chat with one of the nation's leading birders. If you can't make it to the tally phone your total to Kris at the above number. Please contact Gathy or Kris concerning the area you will be able count as well as whether you can make it to the tally. To reach Fred & Nan Rhinelanders take Homewood Rd. off Rt. 108 as you go west. Continue thru the junction with Sheppard's Lane where the road becomes Folly Quarter. Their lane is  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile on the left beyond the Franciscan Friars (a mailbox on the right side of Folly Quarter Rd. with the #12541 is directly across from their lane). Continue straight on the lane; they are the last house. Phone 286-2427 for additional directions if you find it necessary.

## PIEDMONT STUDY BEGINNING

Wayne Klockner of the Maryland Coastal Zone Management Program, a division of the Department of Natural Resources has announced that starting in the late spring they will conduct a survey of the natural resources in Maryland's piedmont. The study was begun in 1975 and for the last two years has concentrated on the coastal areas in the state. He is anxious to receive nominations of areas in Howard, Montgomery, Baltimore, Carroll, Cecil, Frederick, Harford and Washington counties. Any tracts of land which have some special natural significance can be nominated for examination. This might include areas containing unusual wild flower concentrations, habitat for many bird species, rare ferns, etc. If you wish to nominate an area for study this summer write to the department giving 1) name of the area 2) accurate description of the location with at least a rough map 3) reason for the nomination 4) your name and address. This information should be sent to Upland Natural Areas Study, Energy & Coastal Zone Administration, Dept. of Natural Resources, Taxes State Office Building, B-3, Annapolis, Md. 21401.

## INDIAN SITES - INFORMATION WANTED

The Howard Co. Archaeological Society is interested in knowing about sites in the county used by Indian tribes. If you know where artifacts of any type have been found recently or many years ago please call Mark Wallace 725-6370.

## CALENDAR

### Programs:

May 12, Thursday 27:45 P.M. Swansfield Elementary School -- West Virginia Foray with Brooks Bird Club - Dolly Sods Natural Area. Anne Mewellyn. These two films deal with a neighboring state which has a wealth of interesting natural places. The Dolly Sods film features "Miss Jean" Worthley of television's Hodgepodge Lodge."

June 5, Sunday - 4:30 P.M. till dark - Annual Picnic held at Pat & Dudley Jackson's on Trotter Rd. This is in lieu of a June meeting. Our annual picnic is held rain or shine on the Jackson's acres along Cricket Run. Birders are welcome to come before 4:30 to bird. There are interesting plants, relax and chat with friends and their families or this year try your hand at croquet, volleyball or horseshoes. Families and guests are most welcome. Bring your own food, drink, utensils and blanket or lawn chair. Grills are furnished. Usually lasts till dark; feel free to drop in even if you can't stay several hours. The Jacksons are located on Trotter Rd. which is between Hy. 32 & 108. They are on the right side going north. Since their sign is periodically vandalized look for their mailbox #6121 on the west side of the road. Their drive is directly opposite the box. No prior reservations are needed.

### Field Trips:

April 30, Saturday - C & O Canal. "Kris" Krishnamoorthy, leader. Meet at Swansfield Elementary at 6:00 A.M. or at Pennyfield Lock at 7:00 A.M. Bring whatever food & drink you will need to sustain you till early afternoon or later if you wish. The canal is known among area birders as one of the best places to see spring migrants as well as such residents as the Pileated Woodpecker, Prothonotary Warbler and Barred Owl. It's worth getting up early. There may also be some lingering wild flowers. Easy walking on a wide flat path. Any questions? Call Kris 997-5967.

May 7, Saturday - Annual May Count - See page 1.

May 13-15 - Maryland Ornithological Society Convention, Ocean City, Md. Fenwick Inn. Especially good for water and shorebirds, numerous field trips, fine leaders.

May 28, 29, (30) - Sat, Sun (Mon) - Carey Run Sanctuary. Marty Chestem, leader. Leave Swansfield 7:00 A.M. May 28, stay for 1, 2 or 3 days. This is the westernmost MOS Sanctuary and contains interesting mt. flora and fauna. Headquarters are an old pine house where there are cots. Bring linens or sleeping bags and own food. You'll go to sleep and awaken to the sound of Whip-poor-wills, perhaps hear Ruffed Grouse drumming. Check the salamander population as well as resident and migrant warblers. Reservations necessary. Call Marty Chestem 730-1527 or Gathy Williamson 730-0338.

June 5, Sunday - Tree Identification and Ferns at the Munro's. Colin and Rosemond Munro, leaders. 1:00 P.M. Swansfield Elem. This is the second part of our tree identification-- the first was for winter twigs, now the leaves will be on the trees; see if that makes the whole process easier. The Munro's also have a number of species of ferns including the Adder's-tongue which is hard to find and looks most unfernlike.

July 17, Sunday - Middle Patuxent Wade. Bob Herndon, leader. Leave Swansfield 8:30 A.M. and wade the river from Hy. 32 to 108. It will take about 5 hours and is a moderately rugged trip. Children MUST be accompanied by a parent. Bring lunch but leave binoculars at home since there is no reason to risk getting them wet. Wear old clothes and shoes. Some holes are 4' deep but most of the river is much lower. In case of high water, trip will be canceled. For further information call Bob 730-0942.

Planting berrying shrubs and trees, building nest boxes, and putting out special food for the birds are all ways which we can attract them to our backyards. There is however, one more attraction which can be added in a complete program to make these colorful mites happy: water.

The sight of a bird bathing can be comical, as well as instructive. Birds seem to enjoy their baths as much as we. Their thoroughness and organized approach to bathing and preening seems as meticulous as the most finicky among us. From a landscaping point of view the many ways water can be used in the grounds can all provide a focal point in the planting scheme.

Just as birds require food and shelter, so they require water. A bird bath will attract birds even though there is a stream or pond nearby. Where there is natural water the birds even come to depend on this supply to the extent of waiting for fresh water to be renewed at a scheduled time each day.

Expert birders have long known the trick of placing water in a woods, hiding to then watch who comes in to investigate. A leaky bucket hung from a branch dripping into a shallow basin works very well for the sound of the dripping water draws attention to its whereabouts. This is a good deal less intrusive than the playing of tapes and probably a lot less upsetting, too.

Wall fountains ranging in style from abstract to classical in design can be large or small. They take up as little space as is necessary but such fountains need to be planned for while the wall is being constructed. These same styles can be used without plumbing provided electricity is available to run a circulating pump.

Circulating pumps are one of the most useful inventions of the past few decades. As long as electricity can be supplied even quite large fountains can be purchased and placed to enhance a garden or planting. All will need to be refilled periodically as dogs and other animals drink the water and a certain amount is lost to evaporation. When the weather turns cold these pumps must be brought inside, and it is fatal to leave them running without water. The starting price for a small pump is about \$25; the price increases with the size of the pump.

Tucked in beside a clump of evergreens, among foundation plants, or as the central focus of an enclosed garden statues which spray small amounts of water into a shallow shell or basin are attractive to mockingbirds, bluebirds, and many others.

Where it is possible a beautiful naturalistic scene can be created by diverting a stream so that the water drips down rocks, and cascades into occasional shallow pools. Even small artificial waterfalls can be constructed and again using a circulating pump the effect can be more natural than nature.

Another attractive way of using water in the naturalistic planting is to purchase a flat rock which has been scooped out to hold water. The industrious might try this themselves. Softened by low plants backed by shrubs the effect is enchanting. Nearby set aside an open place where those birds addicted to dust baths can frolic.

Although most authorities state that a constant drip is preferred by birds to all other forms of water in areas where aeration is used as part of a water recycling program birds are known to flock to the sprinklers.

Winter care of any concrete bird baths is important as without proper care they can disintegrate in two years. Apparently it is necessary to empty the bath and cover it with plastic to prevent any water collecting and then freezing and thawing.

For water in winter a metal trash can lid or flying saucer can be kept filled. Chicken water heaters and other electrical devices especially designed for songbirds' baths will keep the water available even in coldest winter. In freezing weather one simple method requires more work but is equally effective: pour hot water into the container once or twice a day. In a normal winter (not such as the last one) putting water out daily or twice a day is not too great a burden.

Before deciding to add water to your landscape a warning may be in order. Across the nation thousands of bird baths stand empty, and therefore unused. Somehow being human and therefore sometimes lazy, the job of keeping water supplied all the time becomes too much of a burden. Before making any purchases do consider how much time and effort you are willing to devote to keep water always available. As in winter feeding once the birds have come to rely on the artificial source they will suffer a hardship when man ceases to supply it.

Nan Rhinlander

## MEET YOUR BOARD - Martha Chestem

This year Marty has served as a trustee to the state MOS meetings but that is only one of the many ways in which she has helped the Howard Club since its founding. A past President of this chapter, she founded and edited the newsletter for several years and next year will take over the responsibility for the programs. Although most of us link her with Social Security in Baltimore she has also worked for Braniff Airlines and several regional offices of Social Security. A native Nebraskan, she is a graduate of Hofstra University, Long Island, New York majoring in history and has done graduate work at Denver University and George Washington University specializing in the history of the American West.

Marty has had a long term enthusiasm for birds which she traces to her mother's interest. Although she was not particularly active for some years she got back to it about 10 years ago and now is an avid lister belonging to the American Birding Association and taking some of their trips. She has traveled to Cape Hatteras, Texas and, most recently, Arizona with them. Her life list numbers slightly over 500 species and she is always willing to travel in connection with her job as it frequently provides her a chance to add a new species to her list, though she says it is especially frustrating when a demanding schedule prevents birding or her only free time occurs when the weather is bad. She has traveled in all 50 states and birded in most of them. In her travels she has found that one of her favorite birding areas is the Edwards Plateau near Austin in central Texas. For a number of years she has been able to count on seeing the Golden-cheeked Warbler in the spring but doesn't think she'll be able to manage to be in that area this spring. Although birds and history are her two major interests she is currently taking a course in botany at Howard Community College in order to broaden her understanding of the total natural world. She says she finds it difficult to watch birds without becoming interested in other aspects of the natural world as well.

## CONSERVATION NEWS -- Tom Moyer

On April 18th President Carter's message to Americans was to conserve energy or face the consequences of economic, social and political upheaval. Conservation is no longer a concept that can separate us from them. Preserving, guarding and protecting our natural resources must become a way of life for all of us rather than merely an interesting idea. Aldo Leopold, the great naturalist, wrote that "conservation is a state of harmony between men and land." If we are to live more harmoniously we need to acknowledge and understand our relation to the land and all that's in it, on it and above it.

I encourage everyone who is reading this to decide to take a personal interest in conservation on some level, be it local, state, national or international. A simple way to get started as a conservationist is to recycle your paper, glass and aluminum products. Information on recycling centers can be found in your Vol. 5, No. 1 newsletter. This writer welcomes conservation ideas that you may have. I will be glad to take them to the editors for publication in this newsletter. There are many good books dealing with conservation--one I especially recommend is A Sand County Almanac by Aldo Leopold which can be purchased in a paperback edition. Perhaps the best way to become conservation conscious is to take a walk outside, on the land and observe with all your senses; in fact, you are all invited to do this on one of our field trips.

## EAST COAST SHOREBIRD SURVEY

Call Cathy Williamson 730-0338 if you would like information on a shorebird survey that is being conducted on the East Coast. Volunteers are needed to report sightings which will help to determine migration routes and other important information.

## BOOK REPORT

The Bluebird: How You Can Help Its Fight for Survival. Lawrence Zeleny. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1976. An Audubon Naturalist Library Book. 7.95.

Lawrence Zeleny, a former President of the Maryland Ornithological Society, is a retired Dept. of Agriculture employee who has become nationally linked with the bluebird in the effort to encourage those who love this gentle bird to work to increase its numbers. His own observations go back more than half a century but it is particularly during the last decade that his articles for the Purple Martin News and his efforts through the Audubon Naturalist Society of the Central Atlantic States and the Maryland Ornithological Society have helped to focus national attention on the three species of bluebirds in the United States. The Campfire Girls have joined forces as have many civic organizations to establish "bluebird trails" which are networks of bluebird boxes put out in good habitat and monitored regularly to check the success of the project. The results have been encouraging and in areas where people have put out boxes in the prescribed size and location the bluebird is making a comeback in its fight for suitable nesting space with the two aliens who ordinarily win the "battle of the cavity"--the House Sparrow and Starling.

This book describes the life history of the bluebird, gives detailed instructions for building nesting and roosting boxes, shows where and how to mount the boxes, details the predators with which you must contend as well as how to thwart them and what other desirable species you may find using the nesting boxes. One of the most charming chapters is a description of a foster family of bluebirds which the author and his wife raised. Dr. Zeleny is a gentle naturalist and any bird-lover will find much that interests him in his descriptions of this lovely bird. Unless you are planning to attempt a bluebird trail or have a special interest in this species you may not wish to add this slim volume to your library but borrowing it from a public library will provide an enjoyable evening's reading. It is especially encouraging to read of a species which is being increased by man's concern in an era when habitat destruction and our own carelessness has led so many other species to the very doorstep of extinction.

HELP! HELP!

The education committee is hoping to expand its scope and topics during the next year. Anyone interested in presenting club slide shows or talks about birds to school children, garden clubs, 4-H clubs, scout troops, etc. call Anita Gonron 988-9390 or Jo Solem 725-5037. If you are unable to give the talks but would like to help in the preparation we would welcome your help.

## CONGRATULATIONS

The Howard Club deserves a hand for the tremendous cooperation and interest shown in the recent Birding '77 Workshop and Nature Arts/Crafts Sale. A large percentage of the members participated by selling, presenting portions of the workshop, attending workshop sessions, browsing and buying. Those who attended repeatedly remarked on the high quality of the products available and everyone shared a pleasant afternoon. The following were the winners in the raffle of the bird print framed and donated by Frank Griffin, the other prizes were gull prints. First prize was won by Kathy Klimkiewica; gull prints went to June Horsman, Marjorie Mountjoy, Tom Moyer, Betty Ghasan and Dawn Morris.

BOARD MEETING 8:00 P.M.

April 28- Lucile Peter's, 9013 Crestleigh Rd., Ellicott City - Tel. 465-6293.

## Farewell to a Marsh

The little marsh is gone. It took a small yellow bulldozer just two days to level it. I knew it was inevitable since it was on property slated for development, but the area had won a reprieve years ago because there were no sewer lines and the land was too soggy for septic systems. For eight years I watched the miniscule marsh and the surrounding meadow during all seasons. It was included in my Christmas Count rounds and was one of the first stops on May Count mornings. For three years I censused birds here for the Atlas Project. Never did I find a truly endangered species but the common flora and fauna were sufficiently intriguing to bring me back again and again. Here I annually listened to the Spring Peeper's trills, watched the cattails emerge from the muddy water, enjoyed the Tiger Swallowtail butterflies and Silver-spotted Skippers on the Joe-pye-weed and searched for evidence of bird families successfully raised.

A pair of Red-winged Blackbirds were undisputed monarchs of the air space although by last year the area had expanded sufficiently so that a second pair moved in. There were always Indigo Buntings and Robins and the hangers-on like Mockingbirds and Cardinals around the edges though it was the more unusual species that quickened my interest. There were, of course, Song and Field Sparrows in the summer while during the fall and winter I could always find a Swamp Sparrow or two. One spring I was thrilled to find a Long-billed Marsh Wren; unfortunately, it only stayed a couple of days before moving on. Occasionally a Green Heron would drop in to check the food supply and there was that memorable day a neighbor's cat caught a Common Gallinule there; since it was unhurt, I returned it to its watery haunts. Each year the shrubs grew a bit higher and a few more Black Willows and Black Alders invaded until this past spring the Willow Flycatchers not only stopped to sing but to nest. Sometimes a Kestrel came hovering over the meadow for a meal, and in early spring on a few evenings I watched a stray Woodcock flutter into the chill evening sky. In late summer when the Yellowthroats still skulked in the sedges the immature Purple Martins and Barn Swallows took advantage of the high insect population and criss-crossed the area calling continuously. By fall the sumac's brilliant color accented the withering foliage and the dry weeds of winter had a unique beauty.

Soon there will be houses on the little marsh. The Wilder will fly over screaming and then look elsewhere for a gravelly nest site. In a few years the birds which skulked on the edges will find additional nestings spots in the new yards. The little marsh is not fated to be a desert for there will still be some variety in the wildlife though the rich mix of reptiles, amphibians, birds, flowers, insects and small mammals will no longer exist. No one in particular is to be blamed for the demise of this small marsh--not all such areas can be "saved." Some of my neighbors predictably doubt it a blessing that "finally something is being done with all those weeds."

Houses will rise and families will arrive, their poorly draining yards perhaps being the only clue to the previous existence of the marsh. I mourn a passing friend, but I also rejoice in the memory of the many enjoyable hours spent there; the memories of the challenging and unusual--the outdoor laboratory that it was for me. In a few years there will be no trace of the pools where the tadpoles swam, but I will remember--and be incomparably the richer for it.

Jo Solem

## ATTRACTING BIRDS QUESTIONNAIRE

Many thanks to those who have already returned their questionnaires. If you feed birds and did not get a form call Jo Solem (725-5037). Please try to return them by June 1.