

HOWARD

MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
November - December VOL. VI NO. 2
1977

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH NAMED HOWARD COUNTY BIRD

The executive branch of the Howard County government recently asked the Howard Chapter of MOS to recommend a county bird. The membership present at the September meeting was invited to nominate choices. They were asked to consider only birds which were found throughout the county, lived here all through the year and had a "good reputation". Of those nominated, the two receiving the most votes were the Carolina Chickadee and the American Goldfinch. In a run-off election the goldfinch was the winner. At the October meeting the club voted to purchase a painting by Jo Dye to be hung in the new Howard Office Building in Ellicott City. Presentation will be announced at a later time.

TRIADELPHIA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Once again the Triadelphia Count has been scheduled for the rather awkward date of Saturday, December 24. Yes, we know it's a very bad date with an incredible number of conflicts and prior commitments, but, if you will be around that day and would like to spend part of it counting birds, you will be welcomed. The count circle is 15 miles in diameter and you count every individual of every species you see. Other birders are doing this all over North America during the period of Dec. 17-Jan. 2 and the results are eventually published in a fat but fascinating volume of American Birds. You can count at your feeder or out in the field, from before dawn to after dark or for just a couple of hours. If you have never been on such a count and would like to go with a more experienced individual that can be arranged. The compiler for this count is Danny Bystrak who can be reached at home 674-2965 or at Patuxent Refuge 776-4880 ext. 281. If you counted last year he will contact you.

BIRDS OF MARYLAND REVISED FIELD LIST NOW AVAILABLE FOR 60¢

For genuine bargains you can hardly do better than the pocket-sized "Birds of Maryland" by Robbins and Bystrak now out in a long-overdue second edition. This booklet provides, in succinct form, a list of all bird species in the state, migration and breeding dates as well as habitat and geographic sections where each species can be found. Four pages of choice birding spots are also described. Indispensable-- a handy, compact reference volume certain to get as much use as the previous volume. Make a note to pick one up at the bookstore soon.

TAX DEDUCTIBLE CONTRIBUTIONS

With the end of 1977 approaching some individuals may wish to make charitable contributions during this calendar year. Do think of your local MOS chapter. The Board is considering several projects that might be possible with an enlarged treasury. Checks should be made payable to Howard County--MOS; mail to Kris Krishnamoorthy, 5840 Alderleaf Place, Columbia, Md. 21045. And special thanks to those individuals who chose to become sustaining members this year.

CALENDAR

FIELD TRIPS -

Field trips meet in the parking lot of Swansfield Elementary School on Cedar Lane (near the hospital) in Columbia unless another meeting place is specified. If you have questions about any trip contact Field Trip Chairman Cathy Williamson 730-0338.

November 6, Sunday - EARLYBIRDERS. This is an informal gathering for those who would like to spend a few hours birding in the county. Location chosen when the group meets. Inclement weather cancels. No leader designated. Meet 6:30 A.M.

November 12, Saturday - COLUMBIA BIRDS AND THEIR HABITATS. Learn how to use habitats to locate birds. Ducks and other winter residents in Columbia area. Meet at 8:00 A.M. Swansfield. Leader Nan Rhineland 286-2427. Refreshments follow at the Williamson's. $\frac{1}{2}$ day trip.

November 19, Saturday - SANDY POINT STATE PARK. Winter waterfowl, residents and possibly Horned Larks and Snow Buntings. Bring lunch; we may join Anne Arundel chapter and bird other spots before returning. Meet 8:00 A.M. at Swansfield. All day unless individuals wish to return sooner.

November 19, Saturday - Patuxent Chapter trip to BLACKWATER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE. Leave Bowie fringe parking lot at Rt. 197 and Rt. 50 at 7:30 A.M. Leader Chuck Dupree, 796-1086. All day so bring lunch. Winter waterfowl and residents.

December 4, Sunday - EARLYBIRDERS. Meet 7:30 A.M. (time change, take note).

December 11, Sunday - BALTIMORE ZOO. A great chance for a family outing with close-up views of wintering ducks and glimpses of tropical species in the bird house. Meet at 12:30 P.M. at Swansfield. Leaders Leroy and Cathy Williamson 730-0338.

December 24, Saturday - Triadelphia Christmas Bird Count. All day. At feeders or in the field. See article on page 1 in this issue.

PROGRAMS -

Programs and business meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month at Swansfield Elementary School beginning at 7:45 P.M.

November 10, Thursday - Col. Bodenstein, "What Bird Is That?" One of last year's most popular speakers is back. As President of the Maryland Ornithological Society he will speak briefly about the work of the state organization.

December 8, Thursday - Dr. David Farr, "Fungi." Dr. Farr is the head of the fungi herbarium at Beltsville and is an excellent speaker. He has some truly lovely slides.

BOARD MEETING

The remaining Board meeting for 1977 will be held December 1, Thursday at Jo Solem's, 10617 Grasloch Rd., in Hammond Village. Tel. 725-5037.

BOOK STORE CAN HELP TO SOLVE YOUR HOLIDAY GIFT PROBLEMS

Come to the November and December meetings early so that you have time to shop at the club bookstore for some of those special people on your list. Marcia has Dr. Zeleny's bluebird book in stock as well as some fine gift books at sale prices. There are cloth covers available for field guides at \$2.50 (only a few left). You can also find patches, records, a few bird prints, a variety of field guides and some stationery--and be sure to check the Christmas cards at sale prices.

Early Naturalists in North America: Mark Gatesby

Although John Lawson was not able to live to fulfill his dream of writing a natural history, less than a year after his death another Englishman arrived in this country who would take up his idea and, in two volumes entitled Natural History, set the benchmark by which future works of natural history on this continent were measured.

Born in 1683 in a village forty miles from London, Mark Gatesby was early influenced by Samuel Dale, a neighborhood botanical scholar. In order to increase his knowledge and contacts Gatesby found his way to London where his interest grew. Although he seemed to have an enthusiasm for the natural history of the whole world, he may have been influenced to begin with a study of America by reading Lawson's book, A New Voyage to Carolina. Instead of Carolina, he set out for Virginia where he had relatives, arriving in Jamestown April 23, 1712. His elder sister, Elizabeth, had married Dr. William Cocke who had become the pre-eminent physician in the colony and a member of the Governor's Council. His social position enabled Gatesby to meet the leading members of the colony, some of whom shared his interests and encouraged him. William Byrd issued an invitation to visit Westover less than a month after Gatesby's arrival in America. Byrd notes in his diary on the first day of their visit, "Mr. Gatesby, and I went into the swamp to see the nest of a humming bird and the Doctor following along. However, we found a nest with one young and one egg in it."

During these years in Virginia Gatesby was busy collecting botanical specimens; some he pressed, others he shipped back to England in tubs of earth for his botanist friends. He traveled in the back-country as well as in the more settled areas of the colony collecting and painting. As the quality and quantity of his specimens, letters and paintings increased, his reputation among members of the Royal Society grew so that he returned to London in late 1719 to discuss the possibility of an expedition to central Africa financed by wealthy patrons. The African plan seems to have been dropped, but it was determined that Mark should return to the American colonies--specifically to South Carolina (at that time the southernmost British outpost) as the official naturalist of the Royal Society.

Again it was spring when Gatesby docked in America, May 1722. Unlike his arrival in Virginia, he was no longer a curious traveler learning the tools of his trade; now he was an accepted naturalist and artist with an official position. Most of his collecting and painting was done in three areas of the Carolina colony: the Ashley River region, the sea islands south of the city of Charleston and an area several hundred miles up the Savannah River. Like Lawson, Gatesby found the Indians helpful, indeed often indispensable, in carrying his specimens and helping to keep them dry and safe. He seemed able to surmount the assorted problems of earthquake, hurricane and epidemic whether in a hut erected by Indians in the back-country or in the plantation houses along the Ashley River. The year 1722 may have been an extremely important one for him as it seems the time spent in the plantation homes during that period gave him a chance to make progress on his series of bird paintings depicting them in association with botanical specimens which was a totally innovative concept in ornithology.

Along with his primary interest in botany he also investigated any other aspect of the natural world that he came across. Some slaves in building a rice field dike unearthed four fossil teeth of a large animal which he suggested were "the grinders of an Elephant; and in my opinion they could be no other, I having seen some of the like that are brought from Africa." This is the earliest

reference to an American vertebrate fossil so Gatesby is important to paleontologists. Geologically he also showed insight in believing that the whole Southern coastal plain had once been at the bottom of the sea. Anthropologically he was considerably ahead of his time in believing that the American Indian was probably of Asiatic origin who had crossed "from the easternmost part of the Old World to America." His paintings include butterflies, snakes and frogs as well as birds, wild flowers and trees--his interests were totally eclectic.

When Mark Gatesby left for Carolina in 1722 his London backers expected, in return for their support, that they would receive not only mounted botanical specimens, but plants and seeds with which they could enhance their gardens. Unfortunately for the English gentlemen, Gatesby became increasingly involved with American birds and his shipments of botanical specimens lagged. He received a steady stream of letters from unhappy backers who sought collections that were not forthcoming. By the time he had been in Carolina two years he had more than a hundred bird drawings and was convinced that there were few new species left in the area. He seems to have felt that his mission was largely fulfilled. He and a friend conceived a plan for a dangerous journey of two thousand miles through Indian territory to Mexico. This idea aroused no enthusiasm among Gatesby's backers so he sailed instead for the Bahamas where he spent most of 1725 restoring mind and body--but always collecting and painting.

By 1726 he was back in London where he began to superintend the completion of his Natural History. His drawings were warmly received and praised and he was given much encouragement--everything except the financial backing he needed for publication. Indeed it would be all of twenty years yet before his grand idea of a natural history of the American colonies would be completed. At first he had planned to have his drawings engraved by Parisian engravers. The immense cost forced him to abandon this idea and to teach himself to be an engraver, just as he had taught himself to paint. He planned to release the first volume in groups of twenty plates at a time partly to sustain himself financially and partly to reduce the apparent price. The final section of the first volume was finally completed in 1752. A mere hundred copies of this volume had involved ten thousand engravings from his copper plates; he then hand water-colored every single feather and leaf on each of the ten thousand plates. The second volume took eleven years to complete; in 1743 Peter Collinson was able to write to Linnaeus, the Swedish botanist, "Gatesby's noble work is finished." He died in 1749.

Gatesby received the honor of his fellow scientists in the one way that bestowed esteem above all others--to have species named for him. In this category is a genus of rare West Indian plants named *Gatesbaea*; there is also *Rana gatesbeiana*, the American bullfrog; Gatesby's Oak or the turkey oak; Gatesby's lily, Gatesby's clematis and one of the carnivorous trumpets was called *Sarracenia gatesbaei*.

NEXT ISSUE: John and William Bartram

JOIN US!

If you would like to participate in our activities, programs and field trips on a regular basis call our treasurer "Kris" Krishnamoorthy 997-5967 evenings for more information. Your membership dues include quarterly issues of Maryland Birdlife, regular issues of the Howard newsletter and support chapter activities here in Howard County.

CATS -- CATS -- CATS --- AND DEAD BIRDS

In order to answer a question from one of our readers I recently contacted the Animal Control Shelter of Howard County to inquire whether dogs were the only pets that had to be leashed or under the owner's control. It was heartening to learn that Howard County law requires that CATS as well as dogs and any other domestic animals be restrained and under the owner's control at all times. If a cat is a persistent pest at your feeders or among your nesting birds you may call 997-7760 to have someone come out to pick up the animal which will then be held at the shelter. It will cost the owner \$10.00 to claim the animal or, if unclaimed within a five day period, it will be destroyed. We are not encouraging a vendetta against cats; if a particular animal is bothering you you might apprise the neighbor of the law as a warning as many pet owners are unaware of their responsibilities regarding their animals. Perhaps this will give heart to some of you who spend time, energy and money to make your land attractive to nesting and feeding birds. You do have recourse when bothered by trespassing pets or strays.

THISTLE SEED OUT OF SIGHT

For those of you who feed the birds there is good news and bad news. First the good news. This year's crop of sunflower seeds is a good one and should be coming in soon. No promises of a reduction in price but at least it should stop rising as rapidly as it has for the past several years. Now the bad news. For those who have been feeding thistle (Niger) seed to attract goldfinches, you may have to give it up this year. Virtually all of the supply of this seed comes from Ethiopia which, for political reasons, has embargoed any shipments. The price has risen from last winter's 75¢ a pound to \$1.50 per pound and may not stop there. Goldfinches will eat sunflower seeds but they look for loose seeds or those in which the hull is already cracked. In sorting through the seeds they tend to throw a lot out of the feeder onto the ground but most of it gets eaten by other birds anyway so it is not lost.

DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN?

Do you remember when you could send for bird cards from the Arm & Hammer baking soda people? In the early 1920's Charles Church, an officer of the company, asked Louis Agassiz Fuertes to produce ninety paintings, thirty of songbirds, thirty of gamebirds and thirty of birds of prey to be used in trading card promotions. The songbirds were produced first and then the gamebirds and over a period of almost forty years millions were distributed. The portraits of the birds of prey were never issued because the company decided the bleeding prey in the talons of the birds might offend the sensibilities of the children who were the primary collectors. The thirty choice original water colors have lain for years in a Manhattan vault. Fortunately times change. The birds of prey are now being issued in three sets in honor of the Bicentennial. The first set of ten is now available for 35¢ and a box top or proof of purchase of any Arm & Hammer product. Send your request for Birds of Prey, Series 1 to the following address: Church & Dwight Co., Inc; Two Pennsylvania Plaza; New York, New York 10001. For a sample of some of the fine color paintings and a more complete background of Fuertes, check the March 1977 issue of American Birds, pp. 114-118. The cards are 2" x 3" with a picture of a bird on one side and a brief description of its features and habits on the reverse, along with the message, "FOR THE GOOD OF ALL, DO NOT DESTROY THE BIRDS." For a real nostalgia trip as well as a service to bird lovers it would be nice to see the songbird and gamebird cards reissued.

Meeting Place (unless otherwise specified): Swansfield Elementary School, 5610 Cedar Lane, Columbia, Md. 21044. Field Trip Chairman: Gathy Williamson, 730-0338.

- JAN. 15 (Sun.) WINTER NATURE WALK. A surprise walk in Howard County, location to be announced on Sunday. The trip will last 2-3 hours and we'll observe the signs of winter. Severe cold, rain or hazardous driving conditions will cancel the trip. Wear warm clothes and waterproof, warm footwear.
Time: 1:00 P.M.
Leader: Jo Salem 725-5037
- JAN. 21 (Sat.) FEEDER TRIP - HOWARD COUNTY. For close views of winter birds & new ideas for feeders. There should be grosbeaks, finches, nuthatches, and woodpeckers. Dress warmly; the trip will last most of the morning.
Time: 8:00 A.M.
Leader: Nan Rhinelanders 286-2427
- *FEB. 4 (Sat.) OWL TRIP AND/OR NATIONAL ZOO. We'll try to locate a few species of these elusive owls. There is no guarantee that owls will be at specific locations so our alternative will be a visit to the new bird house and waterfowl ponds of the National Zoo. Dress warmly; bring a lunch or snack. The trip will last as long as the birders do. *Note date change from that announced in the January newsletter.
Time: 8:30 A.M.
Leaders: "Kris" Krishnamoorthy, 997-5967; Gathy Williamson, 730-0338
- FEB. 5 (Sun.) EARLYBIRDERS. A continuation of our early morning bird trips. Meet on the first Sunday of each month (excepting holidays) for several hours of local birding. Inclement weather will cancel trip.
Time: 7:00 A.M.
Leader: Leader & location to be decided monthly by those participating
- FEB. 9 (Thurs.) MONTHLY MEETING. Annual Member's Program Night featuring nature slides taken by members and a petluck dinner. Details in Jan. newsletter.
Time: 6:30 P.M.
Meeting Place: The Rhinelanders, 286-2427
Coordinator: Jo Salem, 725-5037
- FEB. 19 (SUN.) WATERFOWL AT SANDY PT. AND/OR EASTERN SHORE. There will be no overnight trip this weekend. Details of this one day trip will be announced at the February meeting or call Gathy 730-0338 for information.
Time: 8:00 A.M.
Leader: To be announced.
- FEB. 26 (Sun.) FEEDER TRIP - COLUMBIA. There may be some walking in the woods near people's feeders so dress warmly. The trip should last about 3 hours.
Time: 1:00 P.M.
Leader: Marty Cheston 730-1527
- MAR. 5 (Sun.) EARLYBIRDERS. See Feb. 5 listing.
Time: 7:00 A.M.
- MAR. 9 (Thur) MONTHLY MEETING - Swansfield Elementary School
Time: 7:45 P.M.
- MAR. 12 (Sun.) GULLS AT BACK RIVER WASTE TREATMENT PLANT. Possibility of some rare gulls. Also observe a banding station for Benaparte's Gulls. Diverse habitat and fresh water supply make this one of the most unusual but productive birding spots in the Baltimore area.
Time: 12:30 P.M.
Leader: Jim Stasz from the Baltimore club 235-5859

- MAR. 18 (Sat.) BLACKWATER NWR AND MILL CREEK SANCTUARY. To see waterfowl, eagles, herons and a few early migrants and to visit the Annual Photography Competition/Exhibit at Blackwater. We'll also stop at Mill Creek, an MGS Sanctuary to enjoy the nature trails. All day; bring lunch.
Time: 7:00 A.M.
Leader: D. "Chuck" Dupree, a new member of the Howard County chapter and experienced trip leader with ANS. 796-1080
- APR. 2 (Sun.) EARLYBIRDERS. See Feb. 5 listing.
Time: 6:30 A.M.
- APR. 8 (Sat.) HOWARD COUNTY MGS/ PATUXENT BIRD CLUB WORKSHOP AND NATURE CRAFT SHOW. A chance to better your birding skills through classes and discussion and to enjoy and purchase some high quality nature craftwork to benefit MGS Sanctuary Fund. Details in future newsletter. Afternoon at Glenelg Country School on Folly Quarter Road in Howard County.
Coordinators: Jo Salem - 725-5037 - Workshop
Eileen Glegg - 730-4362 - Crafts
- APR. 11 (Tue) DISCOVERY WALK - LAKE ELKHORN. A continuation of our weekday walks for adults and children for six weeks during the spring. Trips will last about two hours observing flora and fauna of Howard County.
Time: 9:30 A.M.
Meeting Place: Lake Elkhorn Landing, Owen Brown, Columbia.
Leader: Marcia Krishnamoorthy
- APR. 13 (Thur) MONTHLY MEETING - Swansfield Elementary School
Time: 7:45 P.M.
- APR. 16 (Sun.) BIKE AND BIRD HIKE - COLUMBIA, WEST. A new type of birding experience for the whole family. Rent or bring your own bike for an easy morning loop trip between Swansfield and the lakes, lasting about 3 hours.
Time: 9:00 A.M.
Leaders: Marjorie Mountjoy 730-5873; John Glegg 730-4362
- APR. 19 (Wed.) DISCOVERY WALK - LAKE KITTAMAQUANDI/WILDE LAKE. See April 11 listing.
Time: 9:30 A.M.
Meeting Place: Cross Keys Inn parking lot.
Leader: Eileen Glegg 730-4362.
- APR. 23 (Sun.) WILD FLOWER WALK. An easy afternoon walk in Howard County to observe some of the lovely flowers that bloom at this time of the year. Wear good hiking shoes; bring magnifying glass or hand lens if you have one.
Time: 1:00 P.M.
Leader: Jo Salem 725-5037
- APR. 27 (Thur) DISCOVERY WALK - SOUTHERN HOWARD COUNTY ALONG MIDDLE PATUXENT RIVER
Time: 9:30 A.M.
Meeting Place: At Goodwill Box, Athelton Shopping Center on Old Columbia Rd. near intersection of Rt. 29 and Rt. 32.
Leader: Jo Salem 725-5037.
- May 1 (Mon.) DISCOVERY WALK - BRIGHTON DAM FOR AZALEAS. See April 11 listing.
Time: 9:30 A.M.
Meeting Place: Brighton Dam parking lot.
Leader: Cathy Williamson 730-0338

- MAY 6 (Sat.) HOWARD COUNTY MAY COUNT AND POTLUCK TALLY DINNER. An exciting time to bird and provide the state with migration records. Everyone is encouraged to participate, whether in the field or in your backyard. Details in the March-April newsletter.
Coordinators: "Kris" Krishnameerthy 997-5967
Gathy Williamson 730-0338
- MAY 9 (Tue) DISCOVERY WALK - PATAPSCO STATE PARK. See April 11 listing.
Time: 9:30 A.M.
Meeting Place: Patapsco State Park/ Hoellefield area on Rt. 40, west of the river
Leader: To be announced. - Jo Solem
- MAY 11 (Thur.) MONTHLY MEETING - Swansfield Elementary School
Time: 7:45 P.M.
- MAY 12-14 MOS STATE CONVENTION. A rigorous schedule of field trips, annual meeting and a chance to meet other birders makes this weekend adventure very enticing. Details will be forthcoming. Reservations a must.
- MAY 14 (Sun.) WARBLERS AT PATUXENT RIVER STATE PARK. This should be close to the peak of migration so review your warbler songs and check over field guides.
Time: 7:00 A.M.
Leader: "Kris" Krishnameerthy 997-5967
- MAY 17 (Wed) DISCOVERY WALK - LONG REACH. See April 11 listing.
Time: 9:30 A.M.
Meeting Place: Stonehouse, Long Reach Village Center.
Leader: Gathy Williamson 730-0338
- MAY 20 (Sat.) ADVENTURE SANCTUARY AND HUGHES HOLLOW. To observe warblers, orioles and other migrants being banded at the sanctuary and along the G & O Canal.
Time: 7:30 A.M. at Swansfield
8:30 at Adventure Sanctuary (for those who may want to bird earlier)
Leaders: The Dennalds at the sanctuary for banding
John Banes, naturalist at the sanctuary
Howard County leader to be announced
- MAY 28 (Sun.) BIKE AND BIRD HIKE - COLUMBIA, EAST. Another family adventure; an easy loop from Long Reach to Lake Elkhorn and back, lasting about 3 hours.
Time: 1:00 P.M.
Meeting Place: Long Reach Village Center parking lot.
Leaders: John and Eileen Glegg 730-4362
- JUNE 11 (Sun) NASA/GODDARD SPACE CENTER. To observe nesting bluebirds and other summer residents who have been attracted to this wild area. We will bird most of the morning, investigate the visitor center and then take advantage of the snackbar on the grounds or bring your own picnic lunch for a final gathering of the season.
Time: 8:00 A.M.
Leader: "Chuck" Dupree, manager of the grounds and experienced naturalist will guide us along the trails. 796-1086

Note: There is a possibility of a canoe trip in the Jug Bay area of the Patapsco River State Park late this spring. Contact Gathy 730-0338 if you would be interested. Details to be announced later.