

# HOWARD

MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
March - April 1978 VOL VI NO 4

## FIFTH ANNUAL WORKSHOP AND NATURE CRAFT SHOW - SATURDAY, APRIL 8

The fifth annual birding workshop sponsored by the Howard County chapter of MOS along with the Patuxent Bird Club will be held the afternoon of Saturday, April 8th, at the Glenelg Country School on Folly Quarter Road in Howard County.

Our featured identification session will be "Sparrows by Sight and Sound" by David Holmes who will help us sort out the "little brown birds." He will also include some of the similar appearing finches for comparison. We will also be privileged to have Lawrence Zeleny talk on the Eastern Bluebird population and how we can help it while M. Kathleen Klimkiewicz will discuss the best methods to use to attract Purple Martins. For those who are interested in plantings on their property Nan Rhinelander will describe how you can "Landscape for the Birds." The newest Howard club slide show "Nesting Birds of the Piedmont" will be presented by John Glegg (there are some lovely bird slides in this show). Eileen Glegg will discuss some of the wild flowers that can be found at this season with emphasis on some of their botanical and medicinal qualities. There will be three sessions with the first beginning at 1:15 P.M., the second at 2:30, and the third at 3:45. During each of the sessions there will be a different presentation especially designed for children. These classes will be led by Dawn Morris & Mary Hall, Sybil Mc Kennon & Sheila Glanz, and Cathy Williamson & Sarah Haviland. Come for one or all of the workshop sessions and bring your friends and neighbors--it is open to the public without charge.

In addition to the workshop we will again feature a nature arts and crafts show set up in the gymnasium from 12:30 - 5:00 P.M. with local individuals exhibiting a wide range of craft items pertaining to nature. If you are interested in exhibiting please call Eileen Glegg 730-4362. A bluebird box, a matted goldfinch print (official Howard County bird), and a bird book will be raffled with the drawing taking place between the second and third sessions. A food booth is being planned. If you would like to make a donation of baked goods call Cathy Williamson 730-0338. Proceeds from the show are donated to the MOS Sanctuary Fund. Do you need directions or have questions? Contact Jo Solem 725-5037. We'll look forward to seeing you.

## MAY COUNT COMING - May 6, Saturday

Reserve Saturday, May 6th, if you would like to spend all or a portion of the day counting lingering wintering species, breeding birds, and migrants. Join with observers all over the state who are tabulating birds on that date. You don't have to be a super birder and especial encouragement is given to those people who may be new and would like to learn. Volunteer to go with an experienced person or just count in your own neighborhood for a few hours listing those birds you are sure of. Any help is welcomed--there is a lot of territory to cover. Give Cathy Williamson 730-0338 a call if you'd be able to help. A tally and potluck is held at the Rhinelanders at the end of the day, but it is not necessary to come in the evening in order to participate in the count during the day. Every pair of eyes and ears is needed. Volunteer!

## SPECIMEN COLLECTION GROWING

During June 1977, the Howard Chapter of MOS received permits from the state and federal governments to salvage nests and specimens for use in our educational programs. Thanks to the cooperation of members and friends we will have some 30 mounted birds by the time the workshop rolls around. The new specimens will be displayed there so be sure to come and take a look. George Cassells, who lives in Carroll County, mounts birds as a hobby and has been very helpful in trading some birds he has to enlarge our collection. Duplicates that we receive are traded. Among those who so far have found dead birds and passed them along to us are the following: Dawn Morris, Frances Ehlers, Cathy Williamson, Marty Chestem, Max Casper, Lucile Peters, Jo Solem, Anne Willis, Edith & Sarah Haviland, Pat Jackson, Ruth Cairns, Bob Herndon, and Frances Nahrgang.

CALENDAR - Field Trips - See Field Trip List mailed in January for more details.

- March 5 - Sun. - EARLYBIRDERS - Meet 7:00 A.M. Swansfield Elementary;  $\frac{1}{2}$  day or less  
March 12 - Sun. - GULLS AT BACK RIVER WASTE TREATMENT PLANT. Meet 12:30 P.M. at Swansfield Elementary - Jim Stasz, leader 235-5859.  
March 18 - Sat. - BLACKWATER NWR AND MILL CREEK SANCTUARY. Meet 7:00 A.M. Swansfield Elementary. All day; bring lunch. Chuck Dupree, leader 796-1086.  
April 2 - Sun. - EARLYBIRDERS - Meet 6:30 A.M. - Swansfield;  $\frac{1}{2}$  day or less  
April 8 - Sat. - HOWARD COUNTY MOS/PATUXENT BIRD CLUB WORKSHOP AND NATURE CRAFT SHOW. Glenelg Country School, Polly Quarter Rd., 12:30-5:00 P.M. See p. 1.  
April 11 - Tues. - DISCOVERY WALK - LAKE ELKHORN. Meet 9:30 A.M. Lake Elkhorn Landing, Owen Brown, Columbia. Marcia Krishnamoorthy, leader 997-5967  
April 16 - Sun. - BIRD AND BIKE HIKE - COLUMBIA, WEST. Meet at 9:00 A.M. Bring your bike.  $\frac{1}{2}$  day. Marjorie Mountjoy 730-5873 & John Clegg 730-4362, leaders.  
April 19 - Wed. - DISCOVERY WALK - LAKE KITTAMAQUANDE/WILDE LAKE. Meet 9:30 A.M. Cross Keys Inn parking lot, Columbia. - Eileen Clegg, leader 730-4362  
April 23 - Sun. - WILD FLOWER WALK - Meet 1:00 P.M. Swansfield Elementary School. Jo Solem, leader 725-5037.  
April 27 - Thurs. - DISCOVERY WALK - SOUTHERN HOWARD COUNTY ALONG MIDDLE PATUXENT RIVER. Meet 9:30 A.M. at Goodwill Box, Atholton Shopping Center on Old Columbia Rd. near intersection of Rt. 29 & 32. Jo Solem, ldr. 725-5037.  
May 1 - Mon. - DISCOVERY WALK - BRIGHTON DAM FOR AZALEAS. Meet 9:30 A.M. Brighton Dam parking lot. Cathy Williamson, leader 730-0338.  
May 6 - Sat. - HOWARD COUNTY MAY COUNT AND POTLUCK TALLY DINNER. Coordinator Cathy Williamson 730-0338. See article in this issue.  
May 9 - Tues. - DISCOVERY WALK - PATAPSCO STATE PARK. Meet 9:30 A.M. Hollofield section of park on Rt. 40, west of river. Jo Solem

Programs - 7:45 P.M. Swansfield Elementary School

- March 9 - Thurs. - Robert Riegler, "Birds of the U.S." featuring his year long trip around the country observing and photographing birds.  
April 13 - Thurs. - Chandler S. Robbins, "Birds of Kenya." It is always a privilege to have someone of Chan's stature speak to us. This is your chance to meet and hear one of the authors of Birds of North America.

## BOARD MEETINGS

- March 23 - Thurs. 7:30 P.M. Cathy Williamson's, 5782 Flagflower Place, Columbia. If you need directions call 730-0338.  
April 27 - Thurs. 7:30 P.M. Lucile Peters' home, 9013 Grestleigh Rd., Ellicott City. 465-6293 - Old and new officers at this meeting.

## RARE BIRD ALERT

The winter of 1977-78 has seen a number of rare birds visit central Maryland. Some of our chapter members were notified but there may have been others who were interested in such sightings. David Holmes is the head of our alert; he calls Marty Chestem 730-1527, Jo Solem 725-5037, or Eileen Olegg 730-4362. They then contact the rest of the individuals. If you are interested in being added to the network, contact one of the above three numbers. Those now on the list who do NOT need to call us again are as follows: Joe Byrnes, Max Casper, Vince Di Pasquale, Chuck Dupree, "Kris" Krishnamoorthy, Sybil Mc Kennon, Marjorie Mountjoy, Stephen Simon, Cathy Williamson, and Paul Zucker. If you spot an unusual bird that you think should be brought to the attention of local birders contact David 730-7083 or if unable to get him call one of the other numbers listed.

## NATURAL HISTORY OF HOWARD COUNTY COURSE BEING OFFERED

Approval has recently been granted to Eileen Olegg and Jo Solem to teach an eight week evening course during the spring session of the Howard Community College Community Education program. The course is entitled "An Introduction to the Natural History of Howard County" and will meet weekly at Dunloggin Middle School beginning on Wednesday, April 19th. Six sessions will be in the classroom using slides, specimens, guides, etc. and two will be field trips. Subjects to be considered are birds, wild flowers, trees, ferns, and herptiles. This will be very basic material with the emphasis on how to use field guides and keys, characteristics of families, and areas of the county which are available for public use. Catalogues are normally mailed to county residents and should be available shortly. If you have questions call Eileen 730-4362; Jo 725-5037.

## PELAGIC BIRD TRIP BY Leroy Williamson

The pelagic birding trips organized by Rich Rowlett might better be called ocean-going adventures than simply birding. John Olegg and I participated in the one conducted in early December and found it exciting and worthwhile. The boat leaves the Ocean City dock at about daybreak. The boat was a 60' commercial fishing "head" boat with about 30 people aboard.

The ride out of the harbor and to the back side of the jetty produced views of Purple Sandpipers, Ruddy Turnstones, scoters, Sanderlings, Dunlins, mergansers, Oldsquaw, and eiders. Turning east we headed for the open ocean. At this time we began "chumming" to attract the birds. "Chumming" involves occasionally throwing a large spoonful of ground beef suet and a slice of old bread off the stern. It works! During the entire ride I don't think we had less than 100 birds trailing the boat and diving for the chum. This created an ideal situation for the photographers aboard. We saw shearwaters, Gannets, Black-legged Kittiwakes, Pomarine Jaegers, Glaucous and Iceland Gulls. At other times you might see storm petrels, fulmars, other jaegers, Skuas, phalaropes, and alcids. We continued due east until about 1:00 P.M. in clear warm weather. At this point we were on the edge of the Continental Shelf about 60-75 miles east of Maryland in the area known as the Baltimore Canyon. We headed back toward Ocean City at about 1:30 P.M. and soon ran into some bad weather with choppy seas. As a result we docked at 11:30 P.M. rather than the scheduled 6:30 P.M. thoroughly exhausted but satisfied.

These trips range in price from \$30-35 per person; the near term scheduled trips are April 15, May 7, 14, and 28. Full details are available from Richard A. Rowlett, 715 Main Street, Apt. #5, Laurel, Maryland 20810, phone: 301-498-6091. Rich provides a fast-filled brochure which we used in making arrangements for lodging, clothing, food, and our birding homework. I recommend the trip on all accounts and hope to be aboard again soon.

## ALEXANDER WILSON

Born in Paisley, Scotland, in July of 1766, Alexander Wilson obtained scanty schooling and after several years as a herdsboy was apprenticed to learn the weaving trade. He served as a peddler to sell his brother-in-law's materials eventually roaming over most of Scotland. While thus engaged he read widely and wrote poetry. His verses got him into trouble with local authorities who were the target of some of his political rhymes so he decided to emigrate to the United States.

In Philadelphia Wilson found work in an engraver's shop but homesickness moved him to find work and a room with a Scotsman north of the city and he was soon peddling cloth again. By the autumn of 1796 he had become the schoolmaster in the village of Milestown north of Philadelphia where he remained for five years. Milestown, located in the Delaware Valley, was the scene of bird migrations which someone with Wilson's sensitivity and inquiring mind could not ignore. A friend owned an island in the Delaware River so he had an opportunity to observe the huge flights of waterfowl as well as that of the songbirds through the region. For reasons not entirely clear, Wilson left Milestown abruptly taking a position as a schoolmaster at Gray's Ferry on the other side of Philadelphia.

He formed a friendship with artist-engraver Alexander Lawson who suggested that Wilson try his hand at drawing; it quickly became an absorbing interest. He now lived only a mile from the Bartram farm and a deep friendship developed between Wilson and William Bartram who shared a love of nature and a romantic turn of mind. It would be hard to overestimate the importance of this relationship in accomplishing the change in Wilson from country schoolmaster to artist-naturalist. He began to draw the birds which lived about his cottage and by the winter of 1804 began to entertain hopes of making a collection of drawings of all the birds in that part of North America.

The next fall found him on a trek to Niagara Falls with two companions. He intended to observe and collect birds as he went as well as keep and illustrate a poetic journal. The journal was called The Foresters and ran to 2100 lines of verse. The three finally reached the falls; cold weather eventually forced them back to Philadelphia. By the following spring Wilson was working on another collection of bird pictures and turned to Bartram for criticism.

Wilson envisioned an illustrated 10 volume ornithology. To produce a set of this size would cost a subscriber about \$120, an almost unimaginable sum in those days, but Wilson did not let the practical aspects of his imagined project deter him. Though he returned to the classroom to provide his subsistence, he began to learn engraving under Lawson's tutelage. He was fortunate at this point (1806) in being offered an editing job in Philadelphia which provided him with a much better salary. The publisher for whom he worked became interested in his vision of a comprehensive American ornithology and committed the company to producing a trial volume. The plan was for 10 volumes over a period of five years with each volume containing 10 plates, each plate picturing one to six different bird species with a descriptive text. Wilson began with the birds in his neighborhood whose specimens were most easily obtained and whose habits were already known to him. This project fused his considerable artistic, literary, and scientific talents. As soon as a sample volume came off the press in the fall of 1808, he headed north to find the needed 200 subscribers for a second volume but met with so little success that he set out in the other direction. He found new birds and drew as he went south and he surpassed his subscription goal. By the spring of 1809 he began work on volume two. The volumes with their descriptions were a combination of scientific observation and entertaining anecdote.

As soon as volume two came off the press Wilson headed to Pittsburgh and the Ohio country to gain specimens and subscribers. He set out alone in a skiff on the ice-choked Ohio River for the 400 mile journey to Cincinnati. Continuing on to Louisville he had no luck selling books though he had a memorable ornithological encounter. He solicited a young merchant, John James Audubon, then 25 years old, who, after examining Wilson's volumes, showed him some of his own bird drawings. This March 1810 chance meeting was the only time these two men ever met. The controversy that swirled around them did not even begin until after Wilson's death and involved much wrangling and bitterness by the followers of each of these artist-naturalists. Audubon's Birds of America was soon to overshadow Wilson's more modest artistic efforts. The bitterness and heat generated by the two camps of supporters tended to obscure the fact that Audubon, though the superior artist, was not the equal of Wilson as an ornithologist.

Wilson continued to Nashville finding two new warblers, the Kentucky and Tennessee, and then followed the Natchez Trace to New Orleans. By August he was back in Philadelphia. Because he wanted to spend so much time working on the next volume of his Ornithology, he and the publisher were soon at odds so Wilson resigned his editorial position in order to try to speed up publication of his series, but it was February, 1811, before the third volume was ready. Wilson was already working with feverish intensity on volume four with only brief collecting trips. By volumes five and six he was getting into the shorebirds which he, like Gatesby, had left until last. He now took what was his last major trip spurred by the necessity to collect money due on the subscriptions. At the time he was suffering from tuberculosis and a heart condition but completed the trip. In declining health he managed to finish volume seven during the winter of 1812-13.

On his return to Philadelphia after a Cape May collecting trip he fell ill and died August 23, 1813, at the age of 47. A friend, George Ord, completed the partially finished eighth volume and prepared a ninth. Although Wilson had not been able to complete his monumental work he had certainly earned his place as the "Father of American Ornithology." His memorials in nomenclature were many. Seven birds were given his name though such things are out of fashion now and the Wilson's Snipe (Common), Wilson's Bluebird (Eastern), Wilson's Tern (Common), and Wilson's Thrush (Veery) have been renamed. Altogether he added almost 40 new species to those then known. Birders still recognize him through Wilson's Phalarope, Wilson's Plover, and Wilson's Warbler.

NEXT ISSUE: John James Audubon

#### FEBRUARY FAMILY NIGHT A GREAT SUCCESS

Many thanks to everyone who helped to make our February potluck at the Rhinelanders so successful. With between 50-60 people participating, maneuvering the snow-covered lane was not easy. The food was delicious and the slides excellent--photographers keep your cameras busy so we'll have an equally good selection next year. A special thanks to Nan and Fred for opening their home to us. We're sorry Fred couldn't make it--being snowed in in Boston was the only excuse he could offer!

#### SPRING WILD FLOWER CHECKLIST BEING CONSIDERED

Those of you who have a particular interest in wild flowers could help in a project which is being considered during the spring blooming period for the next several years. We need dates (beginning and ending) and general locations for flowers you find in the county. If you would be interested in keeping track of such information when you go afield call Chuck Dupree 796-1086 or try Jo Solem 725-5037.