

# HOWARD

MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

SEPTEMBER \* OCTOBER 1980 VOL. 9 NO. 1

## JOIN US

With our September meeting we begin our ninth year as a chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society. Please return the attached membership blank and questionnaire soon. Membership entitles you to quarterly issues of Maryland Birdlife, five Howard newsletters, and the opportunity to participate in a full schedule of programs and field trips with others who share an enthusiasm for birds in particular and natural history in general. Join promptly--it's the best bargain around. Once again, incredible as it may seem in these inflationary times, our dues remain the same!

## WELCOME COLUMBIA WATERFOWLERS

The Howard Bird Club welcomes those members of the Columbia Waterfowl Committee who have decided to join with us. They will retain their identity as a separate committee and are eligible to place a member on the Board of Directors. This group will continue to sponsor walks around Columbia's lakes and welcomes help for their ongoing waterfowl observations. Anyone who desires to help is invited to call Pat Birnie, 730-0178.

## BIRD SEED SALES PLANNED

Eileen Olegg, seed sale chairwoman, reminds new and old members that again this year the club will sponsor two seed sales. The first will be held the first Saturday in November (Nov. 1) and the second is planned for January 10, which is the second Saturday in January. The third Saturday is listed as a snow date. Prices of sunflower seed and thistle are always better than retail. Anyone who has previously purchased seed from the club will automatically receive information by mail. If you would like to be added to the mailing list or want more information, call Eileen, 730-4362. She always welcomes volunteers who can spare an hour to help. (The success of these sales has been one of the factors in keeping dues at their current low level.)

## MAINE AUDUBON CAMP - Bill Eckert

Imagine a summer camp for adults, where you wake up to the sound of lobstermen's foghorns, hear the call of the Herring Gulls, and watch the sun rise over a tidal marsh. This is just a small part of life at the National Audubon Camp in Maine every summer.

The twelve day Maine Audubon Camp was established in 1936 as the first of four Audubon camps in the United States. Surrounded by scores of islands, which were mountain tops during preglacial times, the Maine Audubon Camp itself is situated on Hog Island in remote Muscongus Bay.

Beginning with a shakedown cruise ( $\frac{1}{2}$  day boat trip) on the first day of camp, we visited many habitats including spruce woods, fields, ponds, and intertidal zones. Our explorations took place on Hog Island, the mainland, and many field trips to surrounding islands. Every day brought unexpected surprises. On boat trips to nearby islands, Harbor Seals and dolphins were often sighted in the water. One island that we passed had more than 200 Harbor Seals slouched over lichen-covered rocks. On the same island we sighted the Common Puffin which was recently introduced to the Maine islands from the coast of Newfoundland by Cornell ornithologists under the direction of Dr. Stephen Kress.

Other programs included visiting a Great Blue Heron rookery, dredging the bay for marine animal life, visiting the local lobster pound, and watching the age old predator-prey relationship as illustrated by Great Black-backed and Herring Gulls. ~~The main emphasis of all the programs was the interrelationships among living things in the biotic community.~~ The staff was well-trained and included three ornithologists from the Northeastern area of the United States.

The program and staff created an enjoyable environment which was further accentuated by delicious family style meals. A New England dinner of fisherman's chowder, lobster, salad, and blueberry cake was served the last evening. After a full day of outdoor adventure second or third helpings at mealtimes were not uncommon--even from Howard County's own Marty Chestem who also attended this session of the camp.

The enchantment of living on an island for twelve days surrounded by mystical foggy nights, whitewashed lobster boats, and new friends who have a common appreciation of the environment makes the Audubon Camp in Maine an exciting place to visit during the dog days of summer!

Editor's Note: Bill had been awarded an MOS scholarship to the Audubon camp of his choice. He was sponsored by the Howard Bird Club. Scholarships are awarded each year, usually to individuals who work with young people. If you would like to recommend someone or would like to apply for a scholarship yourself, call President Mike McClure, 531-6170.

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HELP! DREADFUL LOSS! MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF FIELD TRIP BOOK

If any member now has in his possession or knows the whereabouts of the Howard Bird Club's green-covered field trip record book please call Eva Sunell, 995-0029. She is most anxious to locate it.

## C A L E N D A R

Meeting place for programs and field trips is the Grempler Realty Building on Little Patuxent Parkway in Columbia unless otherwise noted. From the south entrance of Columbia, turn left. The building is beyond Symphony Woods and the Fire House, but before you reach Howard Community College on the east side of the street, across from the Wilson Garden Center.

### PROGRAMS - 7:45 p.m.

- Sept. 11 - Thurs. - "Nassawango Creek Preserve" - Steve Hamblin from the Md/Del. field office of The Nature Conservancy. Nassawango Creek is a bald cypress swamp forest in Worcester County on Maryland's Eastern Shore. It is a fascinating area with interesting birds and unusual plants. Among the birds that can be found in the area are the Swainson's and Prothonotary Warblers, Scarlet and Summer Tanagers, and a number of species of waterfowl including Wood Ducks.
- Oct. 9 - Thurs. - "Wildlife Plantings in Urban Areas" - Thomas Franklin of the Urban Wildlife Research Center. Tom will describe the results of some of the Center's research regarding wildlife plantings.

### FIELD TRIPS

Eva Sunell, 995-0029 is in charge of field trips. ~~Severe weather conditions can result in trip cancellation at the leader's discretion. If in doubt call first.~~ Efforts will continue to be made to carpool. Riders are expected to share costs of gas and tolls.

- Sept. 13 - Sat. - LILY PONS and SOUTH MOUNTAIN - 8:00 a.m. Leader: Chuck Dupree, 796-1086. Probable shorebirds, fall migrants, maybe a few migrating Broad-winged Hawks depending on the weather. All day; bring lunch and thermos.
- Sept. 21 - Sun. - FALL WILDFLOWERS - 1:00 p.m. Leaders: Bob & Jo Solem, 725-5057. A level walk along the Patapsco River east from Sykesville. Pale Jewelweed and Turtlehead should be in bloom as well as others.
- Sept. 27 - Sat. - INSECT SEARCH - 12:30-2:30 p.m. Leader: Elizabeth Haviland. Fun for all ages. Bring butterfly net if you have one & a plastic container. In case of rain check with Eva, 995-0029, for the rain date.
- Oct. 19 - Sun. - HABITAT WALK: BENSON BRANCH PARK - Leaders: Bill Eckert, work phone 992-2483, & Helen Miller, 286-2040. Because of the recent interest in this park the seasonal habitat walks this year (which are co-sponsored by Rec & Parks) will be held in the Benson Branch watershed. Meet either at Grempler at 12:30 p.m. or at the entrance to the Glenelg Country School on Folly Quarter Rd. 1:00 p.m.
- Oct. 25 - Sat. - BLACKWATER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE - 7:00 a.m. Leaders: John & Eileen Clegg, 730-4362. All day trip to Eastern Shore. Stops will probably include the Bay Bridge, Blackwater Refuge, and, about 2 or 3:00 p.m. a stop at the Ward Brothers Waterfowl Carving Museum at Salisbury (1.00 per person fee). Bring lunch & thermos.

## C A L E N D A R (cont.)

Nov. 8 - Sat. - PONDS IN WESTERN HOWARD COUNTY - 8:00 a.m.  $\frac{1}{2}$  day. Leader: Mark Wallace. Winter birds and a variety of migrating waterfowl on private land. Fine chance to see migrants without traveling far.

### BOARD MEETING

The next Board meeting will be held at Steve Simon's home 6531 Wingflash Lane, Columbia on Thursday, September 18 at 7:30 p.m. Call 730-4619 for directions.

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### IMMATURE WHITE IBISES VISIT COUNTY

Since White Ibises have been recorded only once before in Howard County during the past 25 years, it was a special treat to receive the recent invasion of this essentially Gulf Coast species. The earliest report in this county was on July 31 by Mark Wallace who spotted a single bird on Waterford Farm in the western part of the county. The same or another bird was discovered on August 10 in Jeffers Hill Creek on the east side of Columbia by nine year old Bryan MacPherson who described it as "between a pelican and a flamingo." John Cullom of the Baltimore Chapter was called. Among others who saw the bird that day were Steve Simon, Joe Byrnes, and John, Steven, and Brenda Bell. Both Brenda and Steve photographed it. Another (or more likely the same bird) was seen by Chris Ludwig and the Cleggs as it flew over the Clegg's parking lot on August 18th. On August 27th the Cleggs once again saw the ibis, this time within sight of their front door.

This listing undoubtedly does not include the names of all club members who have seen this (or these) birds. The one on the east side of Columbia is likely the same bird. Whether the one Mark saw was also the same is more questionable, especially in view of the fact that sightings were made in other counties in central Maryland in the same period. All reported White Ibises in the county were immature birds.

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### OUR SYMPATHY

Club members who know Joanne Moroney and her son John as owl enthusiasts and wildlife habitat gardeners join in extending their sympathy in the sudden death of Joanne's husband and John's father. The Board has made a contribution to the John Edward Moroney Memorial Fund which will be used for tree plantings at the Inter-faith Center in Columbia.

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### CAREY RUN SANCTUARY

Carey Run, the MOS Sanctuary in western Maryland, is a delightful place to visit. For security reasons there are combination locks on the gates. In order to obtain the combinations call or write to Charlotte Folk, 179 Mt. Pleasant St., Frostburg, MD 21543; Tel. 1-689-6587 (after 6:00 p.m.).

With this issue we begin a series of identification articles by one of the club's most experienced birders, Martha Chestem. Marty will treat problem identifications between look-alike species as they can be seen in Howard County. Her initial article deals with the reddish finches which are becoming a common puzzle at feeders in the county.

#### IDENTIFICATION: HOUSE FINCH vs. PURPLE FINCH - Marty Chestem

It will soon be time to dust off your bird feeders and fill them to the brim with sunflower seeds in order to observe fall and winter visitors. Watching birds at a feeder is an amusing and interesting pastime, but it can also provide frustrating identification problems. The reddish finches are a good example. In this part of Maryland during the past few seasons, we have had a dramatic increase in the number of House Finches (Carpodacus mexicanus) and, at least last winter, relatively few Purple Finches (Carpodacus purpureus).

In separating these finches remember that color and size are not to be relied upon as the only field marks. Some observers believe that lots of deep red color identifies a bird as a Purple Finch. That's NOT always so. The Purple Finch is nearly an inch longer (6½ inches) than the House Finch (5½ inches), but comparative length is difficult to judge.

The female House Finch seems to be the most frequently seen reddish finch, at least in Howard County. This is a slim bird with a flattish head and fine light uniform streaking throughout the underparts. The bill is conical and the tail slightly rounded. The female Purple Finch is chunky with a more rounded head, a heavier conical bill, and a notched tail. The streaking underneath is heavier and darker than that of the House Finch while its pale whitish belly contrasts with the flank streaking. Look for the broad light stripe over the eye of the female Purple Finch as an obvious field mark. The female House Finch does not have this line.

The male reddish finches in body and head shape, as well as bill and tail, are the same as the respective females described above. The Purple Finch has the more extensive and richer burgundy coloring. The color tends to cover the head, breast, and rump with no breast stripes (or only faint streaking along the flanks). The male House Finch is more orange to red in color (sometimes even yellow). The color shows in the crown and cheek of the head and on the breast and rump. There are breast stripes present.

You will, no doubt, notice that at a feeder House Finches can be quite belligerent while Purple Finches tend to be more passive. With a little practice you will be able to separate these two finches with speed and accuracy. Remember to look for the general shape of body and tail; then follow through with other field marks.

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#### PEREGRINE FALCON SEEN IN HOWARD COUNTY IN LATE SPRING

A Peregrine Falcon was spotted on three separate occasions in early June on the east side of Columbia. John Glegg first reported the bird in the vicinity of Rt. 175, Earl Strain observed it on the GE plant property, and "Kris" and Anu Krishnamoorthy saw it behind the Long Reach shopping center. The last reported individual of this species was recorded in February of 1978 by Paul Zucker.

## SPRING WILDFLOWER LIST

Most individuals who are participating in the compilation of the blooming dates of the spring wildflowers of Howard County have returned their lists. If you have not, please do so immediately. Compilers Chuck Dupree, Bob & Jo Solem thank the following individuals for their enthusiastic cooperation during 1980: Marty Chestem, Lynne Glary, Sarah Haviland, Pat Jackson, "Kris" & Marcia Krishnamoorthy, Helen Miller, Rosamond Munro, and Eva Sunell. Participants will receive a mailing this fall giving the highlights of the tabulation. We anticipate that next year will be the final one before publishing at least a preliminary list.

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## JUNE PICNIC HELD

A June picnic at Pat & Dudley Jackson's was planned after the May-June newsletter was published so a dedicated group of volunteers telephoned all members to issue an invitation and directions. Thanks to Eileen Olegg, Mike McClure, Marjorie Mountjoy, Fran Nahrgang, Jeanne Nicholson, and Elise Seay who did the contacting. The Jackson's hospitality was much appreciated and the weather cooperated for a fine afternoon.

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## A MUFFIN PUFFIN

The following anonymous poem was passed along by Nan Rhineland for all puffin lovers. Doesn't that include almost everyone?

There once was a puffin  
Just the size of a muffin,  
And he lived on an island  
In the deep blue sea;  
And he ate little fishes  
That were quite delicious,  
And he had them for supper  
And he had them for tea.

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## WATERFOWL NOTES FROM COLUMBIA'S LAKES - Pat Birnie

Wilde Lake - The Whistling Swan which had died of a virus last spring was replaced with a male which had lost a wing tip in a hunting accident. Bill Sladen brought in the new male on July 7. (over)

Editor's Note: As many as five Common Egrets have been reported from this lake during the summer. Egrets have been reported in fewer than half of the last 25 years from Howard County.

Lake Kittamaqundi - A pair of Canada Geese nested and successfully fledged three goslings. This is a first for Columbia's lakes. Wood Ducks nested in the stream feeding into this lake. A pair of Mute Swans nested and fledged four cygnets which were pinioned July 9 by Robin Clifford, Sladen's associate.

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Deadline for the November-December newsletter is Oct. 15. Submit material to Editor Jo Solem, 10617 Graesloch Rd., Laurel, MD 20810. Submissions welcome.