

# HOWARD

MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
SPECIAL EDITION 1982 VOL. 10 No. 7



## MAY COUNT RESULTS ENCLOSED

Howard County May Count compiler, Paul Zucker, has tabulated the results of this year's count. The summarizing letter on page two, written to state compiler, Jim Stass, lists the highlights of the day along with all participants. The complete tally is on page three. There have been verbal reports of other species seen on that Saturday but, unfortunately, individuals either did not submit them to the compiler or details of unusual sightings were not sufficiently documented. The totals were respectable, especially in view of the early date of the count and the generally late migration.

Until this year there had been no reported sightings of the hybrid Brewster's Warbler in Howard County. That is until May 4, 1982, when two sightings were made on the same day. Both are described in this newsletter along with an article by David Holmes detailing what items should be described when substantiating a rare bird.

## FIRST BREWSTER'S WARBLER SEEN NEAR SAVAGE - Paul Leifer

On May 4, 1982, I was birding in the mature woods of a deciduous floodplain adjoining Hammond Branch approximately 200 yards west of Laurel Raceway near Savage in southeastern Howard County when I observed a Brewster's Warbler (Vermivora pinus). It was about 8:00 a.m., the sky was clear and the wind was calm. I heard several Blue-winged Warblers and resolved to try to see one, so I stretched out on my back underneath a Sycamore in order to get a relatively comfortable view into the upper part of the tree.

I spotted a small warbler which was foraging in a slow and deliberate manner about 40 feet up in the tree. Even though I was using 10 power binoculars, at that distance and from that angle, all that seemed apparent was that the bird had light underparts. It gradually worked its way lower and, as it did so, I could see a yellow wash on the upper breast like someone had taken a wide paint brush and splashed it across the bird. I spished occasionally but am not sure whether that had any effect. At any rate, the bird gradually worked its way lower and finally cocked its head so that I could see a very distinct black eyeline which extended only a short distance behind the eye. The bright yellow crown which appeared to meet the black eyeline was also observed at this point. As the bird moved about in the lower branches, I was able to see that the back and wings appeared to be a plain light blue-gray broken only by two faded-yellow wing bars.

(Continued on page 4)

Mr. Jim Stasz  
Irish Grove  
Rt. 1 Box 70  
Marion Station, MD 21838

May 28, 1982

Dear Jim,

Enclosed are the results from the 1982 Howard County May bird count.

There were 21 parties with a total of 33 participants:

Jon Boone, Marty Chestem, Jane Farrell, Alice Fazekas, Ken Hart, Alice Kretz, Anu Krishnamoorthy, Marcia Krishnamoorthy, V. Krishnamoorthy, Mike Leumas, Spud Loomis, Chris Ludwig, Grazina McClure, Mike McClure, Linda McDaniel, Helen Miller, Rosamond Munro, Fran Nahrgang, Dave Pardoe, Elaine Pardoe, Glenda Pollack, Donald Randle, Janet Randle, Chandler Robbins, Eleanor Robbins, Nicholas Short, Jo Solem, Earl Strain, Eva Sunnell, Mark Wallace, Anne Walsh, Leroy Williamson, and Paul Zucker (compiler).

The count was conducted from 3:45 A.M. until 9:00 P.M.

There were a total of 125 party hours on foot and 14 party hours by car.

There were a total of 107 party miles on foot and 214 party miles by car.

A total of 131 species and immature Night Heron sp. were identified, and approximately 10,100 individual birds were counted.

The weather was clear early in the day with increasing cloudiness in the afternoon. Temperatures ranged from about 50 degrees in the morning to the 70's by afternoon. There was a slight breeze throughout the day and a brief sun shower at about 2 PM. Everyone enjoyed the fine weather, but the birds quieted down at about 11 AM.

The unusual sightings for this count--which have been seen no more than three times in the last eight Howard County May counts --are listed below (with the name of the person who made the identification):

Night Heron (C. Ludwig), Green Winged Teal (P. Zucker), Bufflehead (M. Wallace), Cooper's Hawk (R. Munro, N. Short), Great Horned Owl (M. Wallace), Gray Cheeked Thrush (J. Boone), Water Pipit (M. Wallace), Chestnut Sided Warbler (M. Chestem), and Blackpoll Warbler (C. Ludwig, R. Munro).

The following species had more individual birds counted on this count than on any of the previous eight counts (even though some of the other counts had more party hours):

Red Shouldered Hawk, Red Bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Cliff Swallow, Fish Crow, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White and Red Breasted Nuthatches, Blue Gray Gnatcatcher, White Eyed Vireo, Pine Warbler, Cardinal, Purple Finch, and Rufous Sided Towhee.

In addition, there were unusually high counts for Blue Jay, Yellow Rumped Warbler, and Cowbird.

Low counts were obtained for Barn Swallow, Wood Thrush, Yellowthroat, Yellow Breasted Chat, Northern Oriole, and Indigo Bunting. For the first time in nine years no Great Crested Flycatchers were found.

Thanks go to all the participants, who made this a successful count.

Sincerely,

Paul

Maryland Ornithological Society

HOWARD COUNTY

State-Wide May Count, May 1, 1982.

TOTALS

Loon, Common	2	Plover, Blk-bell.		Martin, Purple	34	Ovenbird	50
Grebe, Horned		Yellowlegs, Greater	1	Jay, Blue	1629	Waterthrush, North.	2
Pied-billed		Lesser		Raven, Northern		Louisiana	23
Cormorant, D'ble-c.	4	Sandpiper, Solitary	12	Crow, American	351	Warbler, Kentucky	3
Heron, Gr. Blue	12	Spotted	22	Fish	20	Yellowthroat, Com.	94
Green		Turnstone, Ruddy		Chickadee, Bl.-cap.		Chat, Yellow-br'd	3
Little Blue		Woodcock, American	2	Carolina	247	Warbler, Hooded	11
Egret, Cattle		Snipe, Common		Titmouse, Tufted	219	Wilson's	
Common		Dowitcher, S.-bill.		Nuthatch, White-br.	25	Canada	
Snowy		Sanderling		Red-breasted	13	Redstart, American	27
Heron, Black-cr. Nt		Sandpiper, Semipalm.		Brown-headed		Sparrow, House	245
Yellow-cr. Night		Least		Creepers, Brown		Bobolink	22
Bittern, Least		Pectoral		Wren, House	63	Meadowlark, Eastern	34
American		Dunlin		Carolina	28	Blackbird, Redwing.	260
Ibis, Glossy		Gull, Gr. Bl.-back.		Marsh (L.-b.)		Oriole, Orchard	2
Swan, Mute		Herring		Mockingbird	132	Baltimore	2
Whistling		Ring-billed	2	Catbird	175	Blackbird, Rusty	
Goose, Canada	46	Laughing		Thrasher, Brown	29	Grackle, Common	350
Mallard	157	Bonaparte's		Robin	393	Cowbird, Brown-h'd	233
Duck, Am. Black		Tern, Forster's		Thrush, Wood	62	Tanager, Scarlet	12
Gadwall		Common		Hermit	2	Summer	
Pintail, Common		Least		Swainson's		Cardinal	482
Teal, Green-winged	1	Caspian		Veery	6	Grosbeak, Rose-br.	1
Blue-winged		Dove, Rock	128	Bluebird, Eastern	72	Blue	
Ck, Wood	13	Mourning	241	Gnatcatcher, Bl-gr.	173	Bunting, Indigo	2
Ring-necked		Cuckoo, Yel.-billed		Kinglet, Ruby-cr.	14	Grosbeak, Evening	21
Canvasback		Black-billed		Pipit, Water	90	Finch, Purple	150
Scaup, Lesser		Owl, Barn		Waxwing, Cedar	46	House	27
Bufflehead	1	Screech		Starling	656	Siskin, Pine	16
Duck, Ruddy		Great Horned	1	Vireo, White-eyed	102	Goldfinch, Am.	512
Merganser, Hooded		Barred	8	Yellow-throated	4	Towhee, Rufous-s'd	193
Common		Chuck-will's-widow		Solitary	3	Sparrow, Savannah	6
Red-breasted		Whip-poor-will	3	Red-eyed	28	Grasshopper	13
Vulture, Turkey	84	Nighthawk, Common		Warbling		Vesper	2
Black	9	Swift, Chimney	40	Warbler, Black-&Wh.	30	Junco, Northern	2
Hawk, Sharp-shin.	6	Hummingbird, R.-th.	2	Prothonotary	1	Sparrow, Chipping	60
Cooper's	2	Kingfisher, Belted	11	Worm-eating	4	Field	69
Red-tailed	7	Flicker, Common	68	Golden-winged		White-crowned	2
Red-shouldered	41	Sapsucker, Yel.-bel.		Blue-winged	14	White-throated	256
Broad-winged	14	Woodpecker, Pil.	7	Tennessee		Swamp	5
Eagle, Bald		Red-bellied	132	Nashville		Song	184
Hawk, Marsh	1	Red-headed		Parula	51		
Osprey	3	Hairy	11	Yellow	31	Inn. NIGHT HERON sp.	2
Hawk, Sparrow	4	Downy	103	Magnolia	2	GENY CHECKED THRU	1
Grouse, Ruffed		Kingbird, Eastern	18	Cape' May	2		
Bobwhite	22	Flycatcher, Gr. C'd		Black-th'd Blue	3		
Pheasant, R.-neck.	33	Phoebe, Eastern	32	Myrtle	351		
Turkey		Flycatcher, Acadian	1	Black-th'd Green	5		
Rail, King		Least		Cerulean	1		
Clapper		Pewee, Eastern	5	Blackburnian	2		
Virginia		Lark, Horned		Yellow-throated	2		
Sora		Swallow, Tree	22	Chestnut-sided	1		
Gallinule, Common		Bank	2	Bay-breasted			
Coot, Am.		Rough-winged	13	Blackpoll	2		
Plover, Semipalm.		Barn	163	Pine	13		
Killdeer	16	Cliff	37	Prairie	28		
				Palm	5		

Total species

131 + Night Heron

Total individuals 10,108

## Brewster's Warbler - Leifer (continued from page 1)

During the time I watched it forage, it sang a Blue-wing's song continuously. It remained in view for approximately 20 minutes before it worked its way into another tree and then out of sight. I had previously observed two Brewster's Warblers at close range at Danny Bystrak's banding station at the Patuxent Research Center in Prince George's County in the spring of 1981.

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## BREWSTER'S WARBLER SIGHTED IN COLUMBIA - David Holmes

One lovely afternoon, May 4, 1982, I took my binoculars along on a quick walk to the Wilde Lake Village Center just in case something was going through the woods along the bicycle path. Among the Yellow-rumps (Myrtles) was another warbler of the same size or smaller which gave typical warbler-type views (never a look at its back or top) as it hopped and flitted about in the treetops. I realized quickly that its label wasn't obvious so started mentally compiling the list of its field marks as the bird changed positions. The first item was an unstreaked, very pale breast of indeterminate color but not bright yellow (the sun was at an angle of about 120° on my right). Then, I noticed tail spots and started the deductive process (female Cerulean?), saw wing bars which seemed yellow--and was confused. The only warblers with yellowish wingbars are the Golden-winged and the fall Chestnut-sided. This bird had no obvious facial pattern; could a Chestnut-sided really have its hormones so fouled up that it could migrate without molting? I thought I saw a bit of a breast band, again yellowish, but not dark enough for a Parula. Besides, Parulas are much smaller than Myrtles, have yellow throats and a distinctive eye ring. This bird seemed to have a black eye-line. The only warbler with a black eye-line and no other face pattern is the Blue-winged, but nothing else except the tail spots fit. I did think of hybrids but had never seen one and couldn't remember the patterns. After two to four minutes the bird flew into a more distant tree and I couldn't find it again. It had not said a thing. I went on, looked for it unsuccessfully again on my return, and ran for the bird book when I got home.

By now you may have figured out that I had been looking at a "textbook" Brewster's Warbler. It was a frustrating set of views because I never did get a decent look at the whole bird, the light was wrong, and the bird stayed at an uncomfortable distance. But it did stay long enough to give views at different angles and thus allowed me to puzzle it out.

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## HOWARD BIRD CLUB BEGINS A NATURE LIBRARY

From time to time members have inquired if we have a collection of books for reference use. Recently, Frances Nahrgang donated the book Eagles by Leslie Brown to begin such a collection. At least one other member has indicated the possibility of donations. We anticipate that some day any volumes received will be available in a relatively public location. For now, however, Maud Banks 596-4131, has kindly agreed to serve as librarian. Volumes will be listed in the newsletter as they are received. If you wish to borrow any, give Maud a call. Donations are welcome and tax deductible.



## DOCUMENTING A RARE BIRD SIGHTING - David Holmes

With the increasing emphasis on documentation of rarities (May Count and Christmas Count details, the Howard County official list, the almost operating State Rarities Committee, etc.), it seems useful to print a few comments about what is needed in submitting details. The process does not have to be traumatic. Simply write an account of what you saw (complete sentences are not necessary), preferably before you look in a book and influence yourself. Useful information includes length of time you saw the bird, light quality, your distance from the bird, what the bird was doing, any noises it made, where it was (both specific and general) e.g., in undergrowth of a 50 x 100' woodlot 1-1/2 miles south of Daisy, MD, and what characteristics of shape and plumage you observed. It is also useful to mention the parts of the bird you did not see.

If you carry a field notebook (a good idea), the first thing to list is field marks including size of the whole bird as well as comments on individual parts (short tail). Comparisons are fine. Then go through the anatomy: head, eye and bill shape and color; back, wings, breast, belly, rump, undertail coverts, tail, legs, etc. (Do be careful not to fill in mentally the details you did not see.) A crude sketch may be more efficient. Next, describe the bird's activity. Was it fly-catching, creeping, preening, sleeping, fighting, etc., and then go on to the surroundings. After all, the pond will be there after the bird has flown. And don't get too worried if something doesn't match the picture or text in your field guide. Individual birds differ, book pictures often vary, and a too-perfect description suggests that your mind was made up before you started thinking. So, if something looks unusual, jot down a few notes. Your observational skills will improve as you realize what you are forgetting to see. Just for fun, try practicing on your yard or feeder birds to see if someone else can figure out what you saw.

Now a bit of perspective. Write up anything which is seen less than once a year or is wildly out of season in Howard County. The State May Count compiler put out a list of birds for which details were expected and Christmas Count compilers are doing more of the same. Above all, realize that it is not a personal blow to your integrity to be asked to document your sighting of a bird. When you do "write up" a bird, you are not presenting yourself before God. It is more a matter of making sure all the possibilities have been considered. Ego in birding makes the mind run a bit too hard sometimes (we perceive what we want to). Enjoy being out and consider any bird you see a bonus.

Editor's Note: You may wish to try "testing" the items David lists for documentation against his rather anecdotal Brewster's Warbler account on the preceding page.

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## VOICE OF THE NATURALIST

Our newer members may be unaware of the tape detailing weekly bird sightings in the mid-Atlantic region that is as close as your telephone. The service is provided by the Audubon Naturalist Society. Call 652-1088.

## THANKS TO RECREATION EXPO VOLUNTEERS

Did you stop to admire the club's mounted birds in the Columbia Mall on Saturday, June 5? A rainy Saturday brought crowds of people to the mall which made it highly successful for us--colorful birds are always crowd stoppers. People poured out interesting stories, gobbled up our brochures and almost 100 requested a copy of our first newsletter in the fall. Thanks to Jane and Jack Farrell who set up the exhibit and to the willing workers: Marty Chestem, Alice Kretz, Linda McDaniel, Marjorie Mountjoy, Glenda Pollock, Jan & Don Randle, Elise Seay, Eva Sunell, Bob & Jo Solem, and Roy Trudel. David Pardoe provided the popular National Wildlife Federation brochures "Invite Wildlife to your Backyard" and "Birdwatching with Roger Tory Peterson." Eileen Clegg coordinated this event.

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