



Vol 11, No 3
Nov-Dec 1982

Howard

A Chapter of the
Maryland Ornithological Society



IMPORTANT: If you have not paid your 1982-83 dues, please do so immediately. This is the last newsletter that will be sent on last year's membership. Call Treasurer Don Randle, evenings, 531-6296, if you are unsure whether you have paid.

FIRST BAIRD'S SANDPIPER RECORD FOR HOWARD COUNTY, MARYLAND - Harvey and Marion Mudd

During the afternoon of September 12, 1982, we observed a Baird's Sandpiper in Howard County, Maryland, on the mud-flats at the Greenbridge Road area of Triadelphia Reservoir. Present also were five or six each of Semipalmated and Least Sandpipers, two Pectoral Sandpipers, single Spotted and Solitary Sandpipers, and at least 30 Killdeer. The Baird's was observed through binoculars and spotting telescopes at distances as close as 30 yards, and at up to 50x magnification at intervals over a two hour period. The sky was somewhat hazy. For major portions of the observation period it was possible for the observers to position themselves so that the gentle afternoon sun was directly behind them as they watched the peeps.

The bill and legs of the Baird's were black. The crown and nape were rufous-brown with fine streaking. The upper breast was washed with reddish-brown flecked with small darker spots, terminating rather abruptly at the lower margin on the chest. The lower chest, belly, and flanks were pure white. The mantle and back were darker and less rufous than the crown. The back feathers had dark brown central areas, emarginated with lighter buffy edges, providing the scaly appearance described in most field guides. In flight the bird lacked a striking white wing-stripe; the rump was not white centrally. The posture was horizontal, and the wings clearly extended beyond the tail. The bird fed very actively, almost always with a picking rather than a probing action. On one occasion it flew off alone, unaccompanied by other nearby peeps, emitting a rather prolonged, trilling "treeep" and landed in an area of short, sparse grass near the mud-flats. After a few minutes it returned to where the other peeps were feeding.

In direct side-by-side comparison it was slightly, but definitely, longer than the Semipalmated and, of course, the Least Sandpipers. It could be differentiated from the former by the browner, scallier back, the wash of color and markings on the breast, as well as by the larger size and proportionately longer wings. The color and markings on the breast were more apparent, and more sharply terminated, than those on any Least Sandpiper present. In light in which each Least Sandpiper showed yellowish legs, those of the Baird's appeared dark. The bill-to-head proportions were similar in the Baird's and Least, but the Baird's bill was straight without the slight droop noted on some of the Least. The Baird's lacked any light V-mark on the back. Compared to the Pectorals, the Baird's was smaller, did not stand upright, had dark rather than greenish-yellow legs, had fewer chest markings along with a more rufous-toned breast, and possessed a scaly back. The Baird's had none of the spotting along the flanks expected on a White-rumped Sandpiper.

Books consulted with the birds in view included Robbins, et. al, Birds of North America; Peterson, A Field Guide to the Birds; and Prater, et. al, Guide to the Identification and Ageing of Holarctic Waders. Observers, in addition to Harvey and Marion Mudd, were Martha Chestem, David Holmes, and Joanne and Robert Solem. Photographs were taken by David Holmes and Robert Solem.

GRANT'S FOLLY, Part II - Jon E. Boone, illustrated by the author

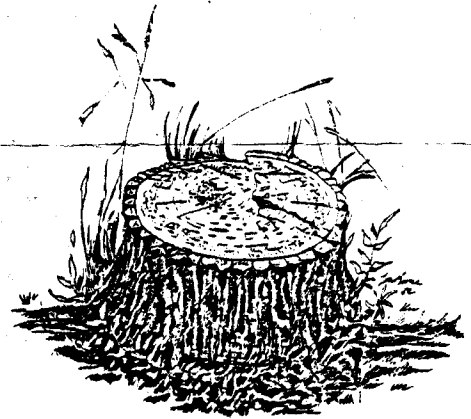
At noon the following Sunday, May 16, I checked the box again. The nest was completed and it contained three bluebird eggs. The parents remained close by in the oaks chattering nervously. I moved away, quickly this time, and did not return until May 24, a Monday evening. At that time the female was incubating five eggs. All seemed normal, although scores of people passed by not far away.

On Memorial Day, May 31, at 1:30 p.m., my son, Jon, and I saw four bluebird young just out of the egg when we peered into the box. One egg was still intact. The parent birds were highly agitated which prompted our hasty retreat. We watched from a distance to ensure that all was well.

A week later, June 6, there were five young bluebirds occupying Grant's Folly. The following week I heard that a House Wren had been seen entering the box which is usually a sign of a problem. I returned to check the box on Saturday, June 12, resigned to be disappointed. To my surprise and delight, five 13-day old bluebirds huddled together flat upon the nesting box floor. Both male and female bluebirds looked down from their perches atop metallic lampposts on the library parking lot. I watched the young being fed before I returned home.

In anticipation that Tuesday, June 15, would be the day of fledging (the young were in their sixteenth day), I visited the library at 9:00 a.m. The adults were at the box feeding the nestling at about five minute intervals. Both male and female shared equally in the task. There was no indication the young would fly this day; however, to make sure, I returned in the evening. But I saw the same pattern of behavior witnessed earlier.

On June 16, much more certain this was departure day, I again called at 9:00 a.m. For much of the ensuing hour the adult birds emitted typically soft "chur-wee" notes. They fed the young with much less frequency. There seemed to be a genuine effort to get the young aroused. To no avail. Later that evening, I watched the female feed the young until 8:50 p.m., a time well after dusk. Only occasionally did I see the male visit the box. At 7:30 p.m. the area became completely silent for a time; even the squirrels were stilled. It was then I noticed a Red-shouldered Hawk, a frequent visitor to the area. It was perched on a favored bluebird lookout post. The hawk held court for 10 minutes, then flew off toward the lake. Five minutes later the squirrels moved again.



The next morning, June 17, the young began to appear at the entrance hole for food. At 10:00 a.m. three Gray Squirrels ventured out to the base of the nesting box post. Both adult bluebirds conspired to drive the intruders away, working the squirrels over with repeated pendulum swings which ended with beak against fur. That evening I returned at a time between two thunderstorms. None of these events seemed to bother the bluebirds. Neither were they troubled by the antics of a wandering House Sparrow which descended to the box top but chose not to enter the cavity.

The following day, June 18, I came upon the site relatively late--1:00 p.m. This was the nineteenth day, somewhat behind the schedule for most bluebird fledgings. But the entire month of June this year was extremely wet and damp, a fact which may have slowed the feeding process and perhaps inhibited the growth of the young. In any event, when I approached the box, I heard and saw no bluebirds.

(Jon's account of bluebirds nesting on the grounds of the Howard County Central Library will be concluded in the next Howard newsletter.)

CALENDAR

PROGRAMS - 7:45 p.m. Longfellow Elementary School, 5470 Hesperus Drive, Columbia, MD.

Nov. 11 - "Encounters with Swans in Maryland, Alaska and Japan" - Dr. William Sladen. Hear an update on Dr. Sladen's swan research as he travels internationally to band and study these majestic birds.

Dec. 9 - "Birds of Mexico" - Doug Cook. Learn about the interesting birds just across our southern border.

FIELD TRIPS - Field trips leave from the Grempler Realty Building parking lot (across from the Flier building) on Little Patuxent Parkway in Columbia unless otherwise indicated. Eva Sunell, 995-0029, heads this committee. Severe weather conditions may result in trip cancellation at the leader's discretion. If in doubt, call. Carpooling continues with riders sharing gas and toll costs. Please make an effort to arrive on time. Dress for field work with stout, reasonably waterproof footgear. Trips do not always follow marked paths.

Nov. 7 - BIRD WALK, DANIELS SECTION OF PATAPSCO STATE PARK. Leaders: Jim & Kathy Marois, 461-4293. Meet 7:30 a.m. at Grempler or 8:00 a.m. at parking lot on the river at the end of Daniels Rd. Winter migrants and residents. 1/2 day.

Nov. 14 - WATERFOWL ON COLUMBIA LAKE(S). Leader: V. Krishnamoorthy, 997-0251. 1:00 p.m. Grempler. Check birds on one or more lakes, note some Mallard courtship.

Nov. 20 - BOMBAY HOOK NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE AND LITTLE CREEK, DEL. Co-sponsored by Howard Co. Rec. & Parks. All day school bus trip at peak of waterfowl migration. Swans, geese, many species of ducks, hawks, along with some lingering migrants. Bring lunch & beverage. Dress warmly. This trip to the Eastern Shore is an easy way to see thousands of waterfowl as well as other species through binoculars and scope. Leaders: Chuck Dupree & Bill Eckert. Bus leaves from parking lot at the Howard Building in Ellicott City at 7:30 a.m. Return by 6:30 p.m. Anyone under 14 must be accompanied by an adult. \$9.00. Register by Nov. 10 by sending check payable to the Director of Finance, Howard County to Howard County Dept. of Recreation & Parks, George Howard Building, 3430 Court House Drive, Ellicott City, MD 21043. Call 992-2483 for more info.



Dec. 4 - FORT McHENRY (other Baltimore harbor spots possible). Leader: Jon E. Boone, 997-0750. 1:00 p.m. at Grempler. Will the Snowy Owl return? The Lesser Black-backed Gull has already been reported. Interesting historical location.

Dec. 11 - FEEDER TRIP, SOUTHWESTERN HOWARD COUNTY. Leader: Eva Sunell, 995-0029. 1:00 p.m. at Grempler. Visit homes of several individuals who feed birds; a short nature walk at one of the stops may be included if weather permits.

Dec. ? TRIADELPHIA CHRISTMAS COUNT. Bob Whitcomb, compiler, 344-2339 (days). Spend a winter day tallying all the birds you see either outside or at a feeder. Counts are done all across North America during the last 10 days of December and the first few days of January. Can't tell an owl from a pussycat or a House Finch from a Purple Finch? Ask to accompany an experienced birder. Call Bob for information or to volunteer. The fee goes toward publication of all results in an extra-fat version of American Birds.



BOARD MEETING - A meeting of the Board (all elected officers and appointed heads of committees) will be held at Eileen Glegg's, 9094 Lambskin Lane, Columbia, MD 21045, at 7:30 p.m. For directions call 730-4362. Thursday, November 18, 1982.

THE DEADLINE FOR THE JANUARY-FEBRUARY ISSUE OF THE NEWSLETTER IS DEC. 1. All submissions are welcome. AUTUMN ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE DATES SHOULD ALSO BE FORWARDED. Send newsletter material or migration dates to Jo Solem, 10617 Graeoch Rd., Laurel, MD 20707. Telephone 725-5037.

The cooler days of autumn are here and the trees are approaching their best foliage color. Many people are putting up and filling their bird feeders in order to get set for backyard bird watching. But, according to the October program by Dr. Geis, there is no reason to ever stop feeding. Feeding all year long extends the pleasure of bird watching and allows the observation of juvenile birds.

The most unusual birds of early autumn in Howard County were the Baird's Sandpiper in late Sept. on the Greenbridge mudflats of Triadelphia Reservoir and the Red Phalarope in early Oct. on Lake Kittamaquundi. (See page 1; phalarope report in next newsletter.)

For me, as for most people, it is satisfying just to see the birds that come to my yard and feeders: cardinals, finches, sparrows, or any other bird.

In late Sept. the Eackers had Mallards and a Great Blue Heron visiting their pond. On 10/16 Helen Clark heard a White-throated Sparrow in her yard. On 10/10 the Clelands saw a Northern Junco near their home. The McClures observed their last Common Nighthawk over Heritage Hill Lane on 9/1. They heard Canada Geese flying over at 10:00 p.m. on 9/29. Two Yellow-rumped Warblers were flitting around their deck on 10/19.

On 9/24 Anne Walsh, Ken Hart and the McClures went to Triadelphia Reservoir looking for the Baird's Sandpiper. They didn't see it but did see a G.B. Heron, a Green Heron, a Belted Kingfisher, an Osprey, many geese, several Pectoral Sandpipers, and a flock of Least Sandpipers.

Anne Walsh's yard seems to have been full of migrating birds this fall. On 9/6 she saw a female and a juvenile Rose-breasted Grosbeak and on 10/2 a Yellow-billed Cuckoo. She saw her last Red-eyed Vireo on 10/3 along with a Black-throated Green Warbler. On 10/19 she spotted a Tennessee Warbler, a Solitary Vireo, and a Swainson's Thrush. Two immature Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers and a Nashville Warbler came on 10/11. Two Ruby-crowned Kinglets, a Golden-crowned Kinglet, and 2 Brown Creepers arrived on 10/16. The first junco was seen on 10/3 while on 10/17 a Black-throated Blue Warbler and a Red-breasted Nuthatch were in the yard.

The Cleggs saw and heard a Barred Owl in their backyard on 10/11. There were 3 Swainson's Thrushes in the Pardoe's birdbath on 9/7. They had a Sol. Vireo on 10/14 and a small flock of R.-c. Kinglets on 10/17.

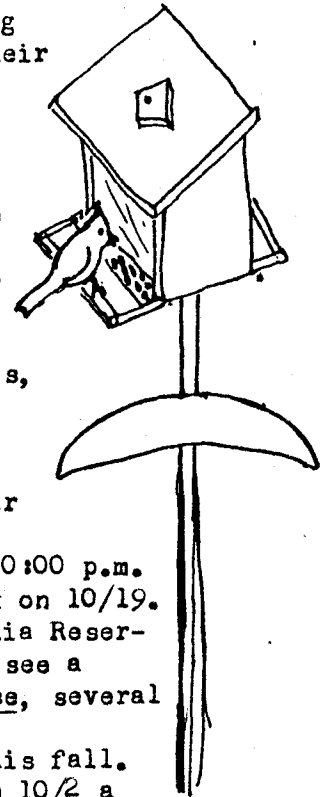
In late Sept. a pair of bluebirds with 3 juveniles came to the bird bath in the Botsai's yard. On 10/12 they had an Eastern Phoebe in their vegetable garden, on 10/19 a Red-winged Blackbird, and on 10/12 a Sharp-shinned Hawk in the yard. On 10/17 an American Kestrel was chasing Blue Jays from the sunflowers standing in the garden.

The Farrels had 6-8 Cedar Waxwings catching insects in a willow near their home and a R.-c. Kinglet in a nearby oak on 10/6. At Homespun Pond on 10/17 they saw a W.-t. Sparrow, an immature Y.-b. Sapsucker, a G.B. Heron, a Swamp Sparrow and many Y.-r. Warblers. On the same day, close to the Little Patuxent River, they saw G. Geese flying overhead and a large flock of robins on the ground. The Homespun Pond held 3 Green-winged Teal on 10/18.

Mike Leumas had 2 Greater Yellowlegs on Rocky Gorge Reservoir (How. Co.) on 10/22 & he spotted a Cooper's Hawk flying over Columbia on 10/9. Paul Zucker had a Semipalmated Plover on 9/19 at the Greenbridge Rd. mudflats. Jane Geuder had an American Redstart on 9/11 while Fred Cowden had a G.B. Heron on Wilde Lake on 9/27. Chuck Dupree saw a hummingbird near Elkridge on 9/30. Jon K. Boone had a Sol. Vireo on 10/21 and a female American Wigeon 10/7 on Lake Kittamaquundi. Seiko Shields had an Osprey over Lake Elkhorn 10/2.

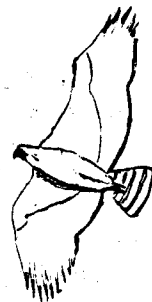
David Holmes spotted an immature Red-headed Woodpecker near Longfellow Elementary School on 10/11 along with an assortment of warblers including Black-and-white, Nashville, No. Parula, Magnolia, B.-th. Green, A. Redstart, and Chestnut-sided. On 10/18 he had a Chimney Swift and Tree Swallows over a pond near Fulton.

Keep watching the birds around your home or anywhere else in Howard County and let me know what you see. Call 531-2780.

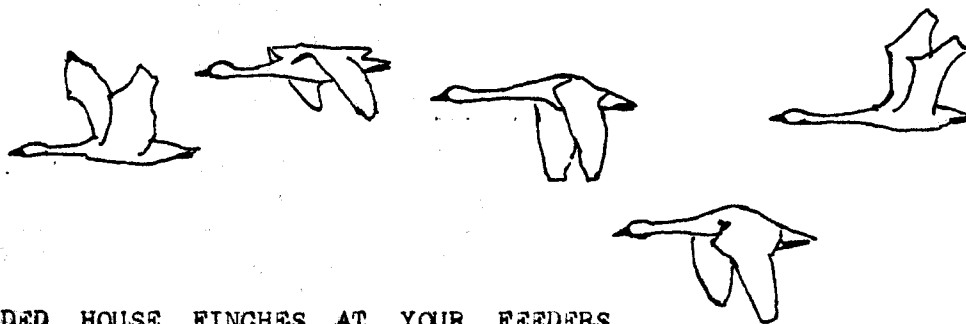


HAWKS AS THICK AS SWARMS OF MOSQUITOES - Martha Chestem

On Friday, September 24, I was driving west on Route 40 returning home from an early morning errand. I approached Rogers Avenue and with a reflex action turned right on it and drove to the Daniels section of Patapsco State Park. I had, rather subconsciously, decided on this gorgeous fall morning that I would rather be out looking for migrating warblers than attending to numerous neglected chores at home.



There were warblers: Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Magnolia, lots of American Redstarts and even a lone Yellow-throated. In a bit of a lull in my pleasant walk along the river I looked skyward: a Sharp-shinned Hawk, then another, and another. I spotted a kettle of 17 Broad-winged Hawks wheeling about at perhaps 200 feet. As I studied them, picking out the matures among the mostly immatures, I realized gradually there were a number of hawks soaring higher (much higher) above the small kettle. Dropping the binoculars I surveyed the sky with the unaided eye. There were hundreds of specks up there. I was reminded of the swarms of mosquitoes I had experienced last summer near Churchill in Canada. I quickly took to the binoculars again because the mosquito image was not one I wanted to recall from what was an otherwise memorable trip. I tried to count the hawks by marking off a hundred and estimating the rest by that group. It was difficult, but I was sure of at least 600 and felt that that figure was conservative. They disappeared finally into the blue yonder and I decided I should return home since it was then 11:30 a.m. and I had spent the morning in a spot where I had not planned to be. As I turned to walk back to the car I looked up over the river and saw more Broad-wings flying at about the height of the original kettle of 17. This time I counted roughly 300 and did not get them all. For the morning I had seen at least 1000 Broad-winged Hawks! I had never seen that many in so short a time before-- neither at Hawk Mountain nor at Cape May nor at any of the other hawk watching "hot spots" which I have visited. There was a special satisfaction in seeing such a dramatic concentration in Howard County. Later, on the Voice of the Naturalist (the birding hot line of the Audubon Naturalist Society), I learned that on that same Friday a thousand Broad-wings had been reported from the northern Virginia piedmont near Sterling. When I checked the South Mountain, MD, figures for that day, they had seen only 50. It is the possibility of seeing the unexpected that drives so many of us. We are always hoping that, like this time, we'll be in the right spot at the right time!

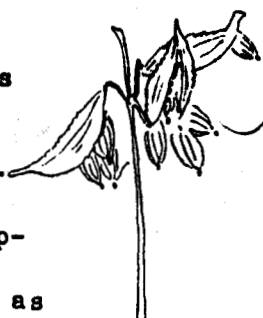


WATCH FOR BANDED HOUSE FINCHES AT YOUR FEEDERS

Watch your feeders for color-banded House Finches this winter. Several projects are in progress including one by Dr. A. Geis on Trotter Road here in Howard County and another by Kathy Klinkiewicz at the Patuxent Research Center. Note date, color of band(s), which leg color-banded, your location, how many birds of the same species you saw at the same time and what percentage (how many) of the total were banded. Red-banded birds are Al's. Brenda Bell on the east side of Columbia has already reported one. Notify Al at 531-2400 if you spot one of his bands or mail him the data: Box 118, Clarksville, MD 21029. Other bands should be reported to Bird Banding Laboratory, Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Laurel, MD 20708.

HOWARD "BOOKSTORE" WELL-STOCKED FOR YOUR NATURAL HISTORY NEEDS

The Howard bookstore is a service provided by the chapter so that members may obtain natural history-related items at attractive prices. Manager Jan Randle brings the stock to each meeting, has items at each of the seed sales and welcomes inquiries by phone (531-6296) or mail (6424 Lochridge Rd., Columbia, MD 21044). A small markup means savings of 10-15% or more over regular retail prices. The newest item available is the Pelican Pouch, a belt bag (optional shoulder strap available), of water-repellent material which holds two field guides along with a checklist. She has a supply of MOS patches as well as field guides, bumper stickers, checklists and records (including the often-requested Ontario Federation of Naturalists' record of warbler songs). For Christmas giving there are a number of beautiful hardback books in stock including one autographed copy of The Audubon Society Handbook for Birders by Stephen Kress, \$13 (regular price \$17.95) and the excellent Reader's Digest North American Wildlife. Jan will also special order for you. Gift certificates are available.



1982 HOWARD COUNTY BIRD LIST TO BE COMPILED BY DAVID HOLMES

Beginning with 1979, the Howard Chapter revived the practice of compiling a master list of every bird species seen in the county during a calendar year. Members submit lists of those species they have seen during the year and the compilation is printed in a newsletter. David Holmes, 5643-A Harpers Farm Rd., Columbia, MD 21044 would appreciate your 1982 sightings by January 15, 1983. It doesn't matter how many or how few species you submit for you may have the only Barn Owl, Bald Eagle, or whatever seen during that year. Check your records and send David your list.



Art work in this issue is the work of Grazina McClure except where noted. The editor welcomes black-and-white line drawings of natural history subjects.

Howard County MOS
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