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May Count Edition

# Howard

A Chapter of the  
Maryland Ornithological Society



MAY COUNT IS SATURDAY, MAY 5, 1984 - Paul Zucker

Every year since 1948 members and friends of the Maryland Ornithological Society have conducted an annual May count. No other state can equal this record of spring migration counts taken on a single day each year. The results of this group effort are compiled and published in Maryland Birdlife.

All members of the Howard County Chapter and interested friends are invited to participate. This is an excellent opportunity to get to know other chapter members at the optional tally rally at the end of the day. Inexperienced birders are encouraged to participate; the compiler will try to team them with more experienced birders. (Personally, I have learned an immense amount about birding from going out on counts like this in a small group with more experienced colleagues.) Participation is also sought from people who will watch their feeders. It is not necessary to spend the entire day counting (although many people do)--part-day participation is also encouraged.

The compiler for the Howard County May Count is

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The areas to be birded and the groupings of observers into parties will be assigned by the compiler although, whenever possible, requests will be honored. There are many parts of the county which are yet to be covered. It is necessary for all participants (including feeder watchers) to contact the compiler during the two weeks prior to the count.

Due to the very early deadline for the compiler's report set by the state organization, ALL tally sheets must be completed and turned in to the compiler at the tally rally following the count. All participants are strongly urged to attend the tally rally, but, if you are unable to attend, please arrange for someone to bring in your completed tally sheet or arrange with the compiler to phone in results. A copy of the official tally sheet is enclosed. All results must be reported on this sheet; both sides must be completed. All verification of unusual sightings should be turned in with the tally sheet.

## SPECIFIC REQUESTS AND HINTS

The following specific requests and hints are offered in an effort to streamline the May Count organization. Your cooperation and suggestions are appreciated.

1. Before starting it is a good idea to develop a strategy for covering the assigned area. Some birders will "scout" the area a few days or a week in advance.
2. On the count day start as early as possible. Picnic lunches are a good idea. One person in each party should be designated as the record keeper. He should start by listing the names, addresses and phone numbers of all participants in his party.

3. When you enter your assigned area, please record STARTING ODOMETER  
and STARTING TIME.

4. It is necessary to keep track of party-hours and party-miles separately for time spent in the car, on foot, or with other means of transportation. Observers within talking or shouting distance of each other are one party. Thus, if a party of three people spends an hour together on foot, then one party-hour should be notated. If, however, one party member is separated from the others for half of that hour, then a total of one and a half party-hours should be tallied. I find it easiest to keep track of the hours spent on foot by making a notation to the nearest quarter hour each time I get back into the car.

5. It is also important to keep track of time off. Time spent on lunch or on travel outside the assigned area is time off. (Such time and mileage are excluded from the reported totals.) Mileage outside the assigned area (odometer readings) also needs to be tallied.

6. Count all birds. Large flocks can be estimated (don't be timid--most people underestimate). Although undue effort should not be spent chasing after common birds, it is important to count all birds seen. Don't ignore House Sparrows and European Starlings.

7. For keeping notes in the field, I like to use a notebook. Final totals, times and miles are then transcribed to the tally sheet which is enclosed. When I see a few birds of a species, I record it using hash marks (#). When I see a large flock, I write the total number and then circle it. It is a good idea to have extra paper along for making notes about unusual sightings. If something unusual is seen, it is useful to make the appropriate notes on the spot. (See the section below entitled UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS for procedures and species to be documented.)

8. When you leave your assigned area please record FINAL ODOMETER.

9. Party-hours by car can be figured by subtracting the total hours on foot (or by other means of transportation) from the total elapsed time. If the party split up at various times, more detailed records are needed as indicated under 4. above. Party-miles on foot can be estimated using an average speed for birders of one mile per hour.

10. If you see birds outside of your assigned area, please make notes on a separate sheet of paper. This information should not be added to your tally but should be given to the person responsible for the area where the birds were seen.

11. At the end of the day, please fill out both sides of the official tally sheet and give it to the compiler. Also, please indicate the assigned area and attach descriptions of unusual sightings. All tally sheets must be received by the compiler the evening of the count in order to be counted.

#### UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS

All unusual sightings need to be documented. Such documentation should include

- Name of person making the identification,
- Names of all others who saw the bird,
- When and where the bird was seen,
- How far away the bird was (approximately),
- What the lighting conditions were,
- What the bird was doing and how long it was observed,
- What field marks and coloration were observed,
- Any other information pertaining to the decision of  
the species of the bird in question.

State-wide May Count, May 5 1984

HOWARD COUNTY  
TOTALS

Loon, Common	2	Sandpiper, Solitary	41	Crow, Am.	426	Ovenbird	116
Grebe, Pied-bill		Spotted	60	Fish	33	Waterthrush, North.	7
Horned		Turnstone, Ruddy		Raven, Common		Louisiana	27
Cormorant, D'ble-c.		Sanderling		Chickadee, Blk.-cap.	2	Warbler, Kentucky	20
Bittern, American	1	Sandpiper, Semipalm.		Carolina	196	Yellowthroat, Com.	300
Least		Western		Titmouse, Tufted	152	Warbler, Hooded	31
Heron, Grt. Blue	4	Least	3	Nuthatch, Red-brst'd.		Wilson's	2
Egret, Great		Pectoral	1	White-brst'd.	16	Canada	3
Snowy		Dunlin		Brown-headed		Chat, Yellow-brst'd.	22
Cattle	1	Dowitcher, Short-bill.		Creepers, Brown	1	Tanager, Summer	
Heron, Green-backed	7	Snipe, Common	8	Wren, Carolina	44	Scarlet	42
Blk. Crwn. Night		Woodcock, American		House	89	Cardinal, North.	485
Yel. Crane Night		Gull, Laughing		Marsh		Grosbeak, Rose-brst'd.	80
Ibis, Glossy		Bonaparte's		Kinglet, Ruby-crown	16	Blue	14
Swan, Tundra		Ring-billed	7	Bluebird, Eastern	100	Bunting, Indigo	66
Mute		Herring		Veery	54	Towhee, Ruf.-side.	148
Goose, Canada	81	Grt. Black-back.		Thrush, Swainson's	14	Sparrow, Chipping	114
Duck, Wood	12	Tern, Caspian		Hermit	7	Field	88
Teal, Green-wing		Common		Wood	199	Vesper	2
Duck, Am. Black		Forster's		Robin, Am.	496	Savannah	34
Mallard	205	Least		Catbird, Gray	629	Crosshopper	59
Pintail, Northern		Dove, Rock	740	Mockingbird, N.	142	Song	251
Teal, Blue-winged	1	Mourning	321	Thrasher, Brown	26	Swamp	13
Gadwall		Cuckoo, Blk.-bill.	1	Pipit, Water		W.-thrt'd.	584
Duck, Ring-necked	1	Yellow-billed	1	Waxwing, Cedar	18	W.crowned	12
Scaup, Lesser		Owl, Common Barn		Starling, Eur.	606	Junco, DE (Slate-color)	2
Bufflehead	4	Eastern Screech		Vireo, White-eyed	171	Blackbird, Redwing	508
Merganser, Hooded		Great Horned	1	Solitary	4	Meadowlark, East.	59
Common		Barred	10	Yellow-thrt'd.	26	Blackbird, Rusty	7
Red-breasted		Nighthawk, Common		Warbling	1	Grackle, Com.	573
Duck, Ruddy	1	Chuck-will's-widow		Red-eyed	60	Cowbird, Br.-hd.	137
Vulture, Black	13	Whip-poor-will	2	Warbler, Blue-winged	37	Oriole, Orchard	5
Turkey	115	Swift, Chimney	609	Golden-winged	3	N. (Baltimore)	41
Osprey	5	Hummingbird, Ruby-t.	22	Tennessee	1	Finch, Purple	82
Eagle, Bald (Ad) (im.)		Kingfisher, Belted	23	Nashville	2	House	108
Harrier, Northern	3	Woodpecker, Red-head.	1	Parula, Northern	92	Siskin, Pine	1
Hawk, Sharp-shinned	3	Red-bellied	123	Warbler, Yellow	177	Goldfinch, Am.	458
Cooper's		Sapsucker, Yel.-bel.		Chestnut-sided	26	Grosbeak, Evening	10
Red-shouldered	44	Woodpecker, Downy	74	Magnolia	17	Sparrow, House	257
Broad-winged	13	Hairy	6	Cape May	2		
Red-tailed	26	Flicker, N. (Yel.-s.)	81	Blk.-thrt'd. Blue	38	***Many write-ins should have written details***	
Kestrel, Am.	5	Woodpecker, Pileated	13	Yel. Rump (Myrtle)	527	American Wigeon	1
Pheasant, RN	30	Wood Pewee, East.	10	Blk.-thrt'd. Green	10	Blue Gray Gnatcatcher	196
Grouse, Ruffed		Flycatcher, Least	1	Blackburnian	7	Cerulean Warbler	4
Turkey, Wild		Acadian	8	Yel.-throated	2	Fox Sparrow	1
Sobwhite, North.	22	Phoebe, Eastern	53	Pine	1	Lincoln's Sparrow	1
Rail, Clapper		Flycatcher, Gt. Crst'd.	9	Prairie	34	Bobolink	750
King		Kingbird, E.	106	Palm	7		
Virginia		Lark, Horned	3	Bay-breasted	4		
Sora		Martin, Purple	37	Blackpoll	2	Also: HYBRID:	
Moorhen, Common		Swallow, Tree	141	Black-white	113	Brewster's Warbler	1
Coot, American		Rough-wing	61	Redstart, Am.	190		
Plover, Blk.-bel.		Bank	59	Warbler, Prothonotary			
Semipalm.		Cliff	10	Worm-eating	6		
Killdeer	36	Barn	349			Total Species	154
Yellowlegs, Gt.	2	Jay, Blue	302			plus 1 Hybrid	
Lesser	22					Total Individuals	14,504

1984 HOWARD COUNTY MAY COUNT SUMMARY - PAUL ZUCKER

The 1984 Howard County May Count was conducted from 3:00 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. on May 5, 1984. There were 59 participants spending a total of 140 party hours on foot and 21 party hours in cars. A total of 120 party miles were covered by foot and 316 by car. All of these totals were higher this year than on any Howard County May Count in the last eleven years (for which I have records). The weather was beautiful with temperatures ranging from about 55° in the morning to near 70° in the afternoon. There was a slight breeze and some clouds.

The unusual species seen on this count are listed below along with the name of the party leader (these are species seen three times or fewer in the previous ten counts): Cattle Egret (Solem), American Bittern (Solem), Blue-winged Teal (Wallace), American Wigeon (Wallace), Ring-necked Duck (Einem), Rufflehead (Wallace), Ruddy Duck (McClure), Pectoral Sandpiper (Robbins), Red-headed Woodpecker (Wallace), Black-capped Chickadee (McClure), Brown Creeper (Hirt), Bay-breasted Warbler (Ochestem, McClure), Wilson's Warbler (Robbins, Ludwig), Rusty Blackbird (Ludwig, McClure), and Lincoln's Sparrow (Holmes). In addition, the hybrid Brewster's Warbler was seen (Ochestem).

Many high records were set (compared to the last ten years): Turkey Vulture, Red-tailed Hawk, Killdeer, Lesser Yellowlegs, Rock Dove, Chimney Swift, Belted Kingfisher, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, Eastern Kingbird, Eastern Phoebe, Bank Swallow, Rough-winged Swallow, Fish Crow, Gray Catbird, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Black-and-white Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Ovenbird, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Bobolink, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, House Finch, and Grasshopper Sparrow. The underlined species had over 50% more individuals seen this year than the highest of the last ten years.

A total of 154 species plus one recognized hybrid (Brewster's Warbler) were seen. Approximately 14,500 individual birds were seen. This ties the species total for 1977 which is the highest for the Howard County May Count.

Thanks go to all the participants, who turned out in record numbers: Jimmy and Robert Bogdan, Jon E. and Jon K. Boone, Monika Botsai, Joe Byrnes, Martha Ochestem, Eileen and John Glegg, John Ditomasso, Florence Donahoo, Chuck Dupree, Georgia Eacker, Virginia Edwards, Jerry Einem, Jane Farrell, Ralph Geuder, Richard Giarnuala, Kathy Glackin, Sandy Goolsby, Alice Grant, Ken Hart, Kevin Heffernan, Pat Hirt, David Holmes, Rick and Sue Hudson, Mary Janetatos, Terry Kretz, Mike Leumas, Spud Loomis, Chris Ludwig, Brigitte Lund, Bill Marquis, Grazina and Mike McClure, Linda McDaniel, Maryjane Mulligan, Rosmond Munro, Fran Nahrgang, Bea Newkirk, Ralph Nichols, Dave Pardo, Don and Janet Randle, Dorothy Rauth, Chan and Eleanor Robbins, Carol Rykaczewski, Jo Solem, Chuck and Linda Stirrat, Mark Wallace, Charles Williams, Alexandra, Cathy, Leroy and Thea Williamson, and Paul Zucker (compiler).

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May Count Results  
1984  
Tied 1977 Record