

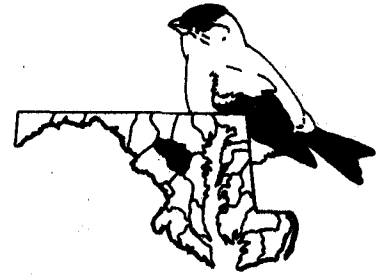


Vol. 13, No. 2

Nov - Dec 1984

# Howard

A Chapter of the  
Maryland Ornithological Society



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## VIRGINIA RAIL TANGLES WITH FENCE - PROVIDES RECORD AND SPECIMEN

Mark Wallace recently passed along a lovely specimen of an adult Virginia Rail. It was found April 27, 1984, with its foot caught in a barbed wire fence near a small marsh by Jackson Cole whose property is at the corner of Bushy Park and Daisy Roads in western Howard County. The rail died soon after discovery. Mr. Cole froze the specimen because his wife was interested in painting it. It turned out to be the third county record and first specimen.

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## MOS RESEARCH GRANTS AVAILABLE

Each year MOS make grants available for ornithological research. If you would like to apply for such a grant, request an application from Margaret Jones, Research Committee Chairman, Rt. 1, Box 325, Golts, MD 21637. Applications must be received by the committee by January 15, 1985.

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## GEORGE CASSELL DIES AFTER SHORT ILLNESS



The Howard County Chapter notes with a deep sense of loss the unexpected death of George R. Cassell who was the taxidermist for our collection of over 100 specimens. George helped us in 1977 when the chapter began its collection and continued to work with us mounting skins at a modest fee. This enabled us to afford an educational outreach that otherwise would have been prohibitively expensive. Taxidermy was a hobby which he exercised for the benefit of many of the MOS chapters besides other groups. Birds of prey were his special interest and his basement workspace contained many he had collected or traded over the years. He leaves a rare legacy for the specimens he mounted will continue to be seen and appreciated for many years to come. Subject to official Board approval at the November meeting, the final bird he mounted for us earlier this year, a Surf Scoter, will be designated by the chapter as a memorial in grateful remembrance of George's skill and generosity.

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## MOS MATCHING GRANT DRIVE STILL NEEDS DONATIONS

MOS President Martha Chestem reports that a little over \$800 has been donated to the matching grant offer detailed in the last newsletter. Although \$1500 is the minimum goal, \$2000 raised by MOS will result in a \$2500 contribution by the anonymous donor. The deadline has been extended to Dec. 31, 1984, so if, between now and the end of the year, you are planning your charitable contributions, consider a tax-deductible donation to the Maryland Ornithological Society. Send checks to Mary Love, Executive Secretary, 10735 Cordage Walk, Columbia, MD 21044.

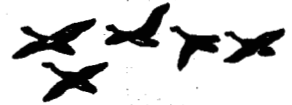
## HAVE YOU VISITED THE RECYCLING CENTER YET?

The Howard Bird Club recently received its first quarterly check in the amount of \$16.00 from the Athelas Institute on Dobbin Road for materials recycled by club members during the quarter ending September 30. Aluminum cans, newsprint, bimetal cans, and glass are accepted. Cash for the aluminum cans can be obtained, but the other items can only be credited toward a group which has registered. We appreciate the efforts of those people who have already made it a habit to save and recycle items. Please separate brown from green glass (clear can go with either group) and remove any metal rings or caps.

To reach the center, drive east from Route 29 on Route 175 for 2½ miles to the light at Dobbin Road. Turn right on Dobbin Rd. and proceed 1 mile. The recycling center is on your left in the building just beyond #6625. Follow the driveway to the third large doorway on the left side of the building where you can back in so that your items can be unloaded. (There are usually signs on both Dobbin Rd. and at the doorway.) Mon.-Sat. 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. Let them know that you would like all or a portion of your material credited to the Howard Bird Club. You will receive a receipt which can be used to verify a donation for tax purposes. Make it a habit to recycle--the landfill will benefit and so will we. Questions? Call 992-4234. *John*

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## YELLOW/BLACK NECK-COLLARED CANADA GEESE BEING SIGHTED



During the autumn migration, several yellow/black coded neck-collared Canada Geese have been reported in Howard County. These collared geese are part of a three year banding project. If you see such a goose, record the band number and call Marty Chestem, 730-1527. Neckband code and color, along with habitat and number of geese seen at the same time should be reported. Marty can also provide observation forms if you are interested in pursuing this as a winter project.

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DEADLINE FOR THE JANUARY-FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER IS DECEMBER 15, 1984. NEWSLETTER ITEMS AS WELL AS AUTUMN MIGRATION DATES (DUE DEC. 15) SHOULD BE MAILED OR PHONED TO JO SOLEM, 10617 GRAELOCK RD., LAUREL, MD 20707; TEL. 725-5037.

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## 1985 JOINT EBBA - NEBBA MEETING IN CHEVY CHASE

The 1985 joint Eastern Bird-Banding Association--Northeastern Bird-Banding Association Annual Meeting will be held at the National 4-H Center in Chevy Chase, MD, April 26-28, 1985. The meeting will offer formal and informal paper sessions, poster displays, workshops on banding, special evening slide presentations, banding demonstrations and bird walks. For registration information and details, contact Peg and John Barber, 803 Glen Allen Drive, Baltimore, MD 21229. This meeting is co-sponsored by the Mid-Atlantic Bird-Banding Group and the Maryland Ornithological Society. Assistance in registering participants is needed. If you can donate time, call Marty Chestem, 730-1527.

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WANT TO SPEND AN HOUR OR TWO PER WEEK OR MONTH DOING VOLUNTEER WORK FOR A NON-PROFIT CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION? CALL THE NORTH AMERICAN BLUEBIRD SOCIETY IN NEARBY NORTH-EASTERN MONTGOMERY COUNTY. LOCAL CALL FOR MANY HOWARD COUNTIANS IN OR NEAR COLUMBIA: (301)-384-2798.

# CALENDAR

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

Note: Meeting is canceled if schools officially close because of inclement weather or for other emergencies.

- Nov. 8 - "BIRDS OF AMERICA: SOME PROSPER, SOME PERISH" Dr. David Thorndill. Dr. Thorndill, who is a member of the biology department at Essex Community College, will discuss some of the species which have thrived and others which have disappeared because of man's presence.
- Dec. 13 - "BIRD REHABILITATION" Jane Zuke. Ministering to the physical problems of birds that are hurt, crippled, or exhausted takes patience, luck, experience, and a rapport with the patient. Jane will share some of her fascinating and sometimes funny experiences. She may bring a live bird of prey with her.

FIELD TRIPS - Trips for the coming year are being planned around the areas of natural history identified in our membership questionnaire completed last fall. If you did not complete the questionnaire and have suggestions for field trips or would be interested in leading a field trip, please call Linda Harsy, Field Trip Chairman at 489-5131. As in the past, carpooling is encouraged with riders sharing the cost of gas and tolls. Leaders may cancel the trip due to inclement weather. If in doubt, call the leader (if phone number is listed) or Linda Harsy. Field trips leave from Grempler Realty parking lot (across from the Flier building on Little Patuxent Parkway in Columbia) unless otherwise indicated. Dress for field work with stout, reasonably water-proof footwear and layers of clothing. Trips do not always follow paths. No pets.

Nov. 3 - PINEY RUN. Leader: Wayne Straight. A  $\frac{1}{2}$  day trip to a natural area in Carroll County. Leave Grempler parking lot at 7:45 a.m. for a 2-3 hour walk. If you have a scope, bring it, better view of lake can be shared. If you have questions, call Linda 489-5131.

Dec. 1 - BOMBAY HOOK NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE BUS TRIP. Leader: Chuck Dupree. Co-sponsored with Howard Co. Rec. & Parks. Annual all day bus trip to observe wintering waterfowl, birds of prey, etc. Fee. For information, consult Rec. & Parks fall circular or call 992-2483.

Dec. 9 - LAKE ELKHORN WALK. Leader: Eva Sunell, 995-0029. Meet at Grempler at 9:15 a.m. or 9:30 a.m. at Lake Elkhorn at the bridge below the dam on Broken Land Parkway.  $\frac{1}{2}$  day. Wintering birds.

Dec. 22 - TRIADELPHIA CHRISTMAS COUNT. Compiler: Bob Whitcomb, 299-5215 evenings or 344-2339 work. Dawn to dark count of all birds seen or heard. Part of the day participants and beginners who wish to go with experienced birders are welcome. Meet for evening meal 6:00 p.m. or later and stay for the tally at the Olney Ale House. Fee goes toward publication of national results.

## BOARD MEETING

Nov. 28 - 7:30 p.m. at Eva Sunell's, 6730 Carlinda Ave. (Allview). Note the Wednesday Wed. rather than Thursday meeting. Call 995-0029 for directions.

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## OWLS IN MY BACKYARD - Eileen Olegg

Ed. Note: For the past two breeding seasons Eileen and John Olegg have had the good fortune to watch a pair of Barred Owls nest in a tree behind their home in the Long Reach area of Columbia. The nest location is such that they are able to set up a telescope in their living room and keep a continuous watch on the nesting owls. Not only is it fascinating to observe the birds, but their presence illustrates most graphically the tolerance for human activity that animals exhibit if the habitat meets their needs. Eileen's brief diary of activity at the nest site during 1984 is reproduced below.

A warm spell early in 1984 encouraged a pair of Barred Owls to begin reproductive activity one month earlier than in 1983. The same cavity in a beech tree was used as a nest site both years. The cavity is approximately 35' above the ground beside a stream in a narrow strip of mature beech forest. The opening is a slit perhaps 3' long but wide enough to admit an adult owl.

Feb. 13 - Heard owls calling, evening.

Feb. 22 - Heard owls calling.

Feb. 23-29 - Saw an owl in the nesting cavity each day.

Feb. 28 - Usually the owl, when inside the cavity, faces the opening so that we can see the face and much of the body. Today, after a rainstorm, I saw that the owl's back faced the opening. Its tail and one wing jutted from the cavity to catch the sun's rays for it appeared to be drying itself. (We later observed this activity several times, always after a rain.)

Mar. 1-17 - Female owl seen daily in cavity.

Mar. 17 - Saw male owl near nest site.

Mar. 23 - An owl seen eating a bird carcass.

Mar. 28 - Owl flew off nest around dusk.

Mar. 31 - Crows drove owl off the nest for 30 minutes or more; looked like there were 2-3 eggs, possibly one young; visibility bad.

Apr. 1 - Owl off nest again around 6:00 p.m., dusk.

Apr. 3 - Owl flew off nest, 2 young? Blue Jay feathers in nest.

Apr. 4 - Owl ate a flicker, feathers in nest; male owl flew up from stream beneath the nest tree about dusk.

Apr. 6 - Owl perched in defensive posture within the cavity but above the nest. With its wings and talons spread it managed to fill the opening protecting itself and the young against the crows that were harassing it.

Apr. 7 - Maybe 3 young; could definitely see 1.

Apr. 19 - It's definite--2 young! Both parents and young sighted.

Apr. 22 - ~~Easter Sunday. Cold, rain, some sleet--nasty weather. One young owl left the nest or was pushed out by sibling at noon. Glided to the ground and took refuge in hollow of nest tree at ground level. Tried repeatedly (and unsuccessfully) to climb nest tree. After several hours the fledged owl climbed a nearby sapling to a height of 15'.~~

Apr. 23 - 6:00 p.m. Second nestling left the nesting cavity; behavior same as the first one.

Apr. 24 - 5-6:00 p.m. Weather conditions nasty--rain and cold. Woody Martin climbed 2 separate trees to band the perched young. (Note that the banding date in 1983 was May 19.) The young owls were 20-25' above the ground. Five birders viewed the banding from below and photographs were taken. A small fish was found between the nest tree and the stream. Woody cut it into pieces and fed it to the young who accepted it greedily. Adult owls watched from a beech tree 75-100' away. They made two passes at us but did not come close enough to cause concern.

Apr. 25 - Young owls were seen branching all day and gliding to lower branches. Early in the morning one young owl was seen on the neighbor's roof.

Apr. 30 - Saw 1 young 200-300' south of nest tree; parents nearby to feed it.

May 1 - Saw 1 young owl and a parent in the same vicinity.

Early May - Young and parents seen and heard intermittently.

Aug. 18 - Today John removed a starling's nest from the exhaust fan of our house as well as that of our neighbor. He discarded the nests at the edge of the woods behind the house. 6:00 p.m. An adult owl swooped down twice to pick up starling nestlings which were only 20' from where we sat with guests on our deck. Very dramatic!

The owls were seen and heard throughout the summer and autumn--as recently as Oct. 13th.

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Unattributed drawings are courtesy of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, U.S. Dept. of the Interior.

KINGLET POWER - Jon E. Boone, illustrated by the author

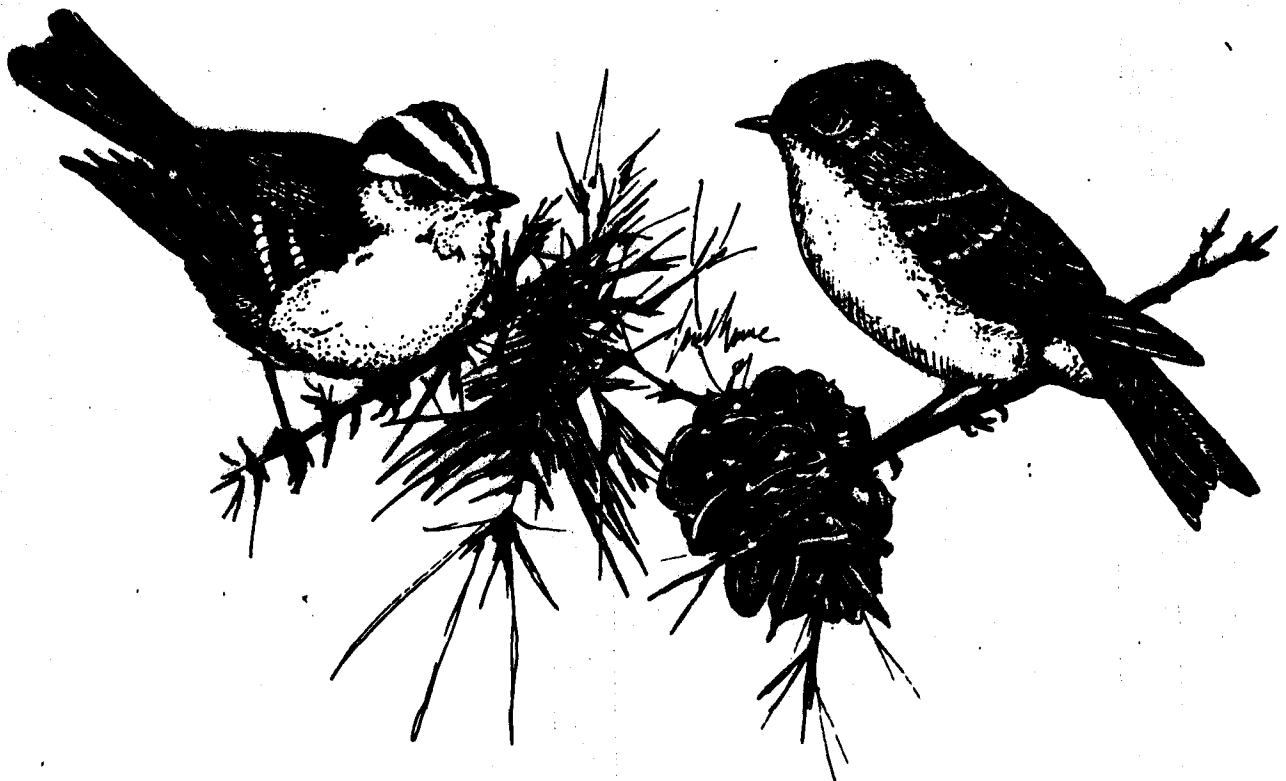
I get a kick out of kinglets. They're among our smallest birds, smaller than warblers and wrens. To see them survive the coldest winter day is to see hope for our own survival.

The flame-like colors of their crowns give such an illusion of warmth that it nearly prevents frostbite. They behave as if they're always late for an appointment, continually on the move, darting, hovering, then streaking away. They prefer conifers, but in migration can be seen in nearly any habitat.

Kinglets do not nest in Howard County. Ruby-crowned Kinglets usually appear around the end of September and are a very common bird through October and most of November. After Thanksgiving, Ruby-crowns usually disappear from the region only to reappear in great numbers on April Fools' Day. By contrast, Golden-crowned Kinglets become abundant in mid-October and stay in our area throughout the winter. They roam in mixed woods in small flocks--from four to twenty birds--often in the company of chickadees, nuthatches, and Downy Woodpeckers.

Kinglets are almost entirely insectivorous. Ruby-crowns have been known to visit feeders for occasional fruit. There is no evidence that Golden-crowns consume quantities of carbohydrates. They are protein connoisseurs. Both kinglets are gleaners; their thin, pointed bills make excellent tools for excavating the smallest crevices in tree bark and conifer needles. These birdlets comb the forests for winter food, hovering like moths at the end of a pine bough just to catch a morsel. Kinglets eat huge amounts of insect larvae. This volume of potential insects taken in the winter by birds like kinglets keep in check the actual number of insects during spring and summer.

For bird watchers, the Ruby-crowned Kinglet is easier to see and approach. Its true signature is a husky, scolding "ja-dit" call note so spish it out, for it responds quickly. Notice how small the bird is. Look for the white eye ring, which gives the bird a wide-eyed appearance. Note the two white wingbars and the dark band



beneath the second wingbar. It will be unusual, particularly in the fall, for the male's brilliant ruby crown patch to be seen. In spring, when two males converge in migration, their crowns are often revealed, first as a small red line, then a tuft, and finally as a swirling fiery fan--all these accompanied by an astonishingly beautiful, powerful song.

You will typically have a more difficult time with the Golden-crown. It stays higher in the trees and is often resistant to spishing. Its distinctive, very high-pitched call note, "zee-zee-zee," almost always delivered rapidly and in triplicate, gives the bird away. In December, when you are in a glade, listen for this call--particularly when you see a chickadee.

Like the Ruby-crown, the Golden-crown is olive-brown above, light colored on the breast. It has the thin bill and white wingbars, but it has a white line through and over the eye. Atop that is a thick black "eyebrow." The female has a lemon-yellow crown which is always visible--when the bird moves into the right position. (Your neck will usually stiffen before that happens.) The male Golden-crown, like his cousin, does not always display his orange-red central crown feathers. Normally, only the yellow shows. Most field guides neglect this fact. Consequently, a lot of bird watchers in this area believe they have seen only female Golden-crowns, but a practiced eye can usually spot some orange. And, much more often than his cousin, the Golden-crown will allow his colors to shine forth. I call him custos flammae, the keeper of the flame. The winds and snows of January authenticate the title of this "Regulus," --this little king.

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HAVE YOU PLACED YOUR SEED SALE ORDER? IF IT HAS SLIPPED YOUR MIND, CALL EILEEN CLEGG AT 730-4362 TODAY! ORDERS MUST BE IN BY NOVEMBER 3RD. PICKUP IS NOVEMBER 10TH.

Howard County Chapter MOS  
10617 Grae Loch Rd.  
Laurel, Maryland 20707

