



Vol 13, No 5, 1985
May Count Edition

Howard

A Chapter of the
Maryland Ornithological Society



MAY COUNT IS SATURDAY, MAY 4, 1985 - 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.

UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS (continued)

The following species are unusual for Howard County May Counts and need to be documented. First, all species not on the official check list (enclosed in this mailing) are considered. Second, all the following species which have been seen on four or fewer Howard County May Counts in the last 10 years are considered unusual and should be documented:

Pied-billed Grebe, Horned Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, American Bittern, Cattle Egret, Black or Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Glossy Ibis, Green-winged Teal, American Black Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Canvasback, Ring-necked Duck, Greater or Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Common Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Merlin, Wild Turkey, Sora, American Coot, Sanderling, Semipalmated Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Short or Long-billed Dowitcher, Wilson's Phalarope, Bonaparte's Gull, Herring Gull, Eastern Screech-Owl, Chuck-will's-widow, Common Nighthawk, Red-headed Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Alder Flycatcher, Willow Flycatcher, Black-capped Chickadee, Brown Creeper, Winter Wren, Marsh Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Water Pipit, Loggerhead Shrike, Philadelphia Vireo, Bay-breasted Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Summer Tanager, Dickcissel, American Tree Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Rusty Blackbird and any other species you suspect may never have been seen on the Howard County May Count.

MAY COUNT TALLY POTLUCK TO BE HELD AT DON & JAN RANDLE'S

Although it is not necessary to attend the tally in order to participate in the May Count, many birders find that the get-together in the evening is a pleasant and satisfying way to end one of the best birding days of the year. It provides an excellent opportunity to share your best sightings, find out what others saw, and perhaps relate the thrill of seeing some species for the very first time. Anyone who participates in the Count is welcome at the tally (including feeder watchers). Call Jan Randle 531-6296 to let her know the number coming and your choice of food to share. Counters begin gathering any time after 5:30 p.m.; dinner usually begins between 6:30-7:00 p.m.

If you are unable to attend the tally, arrange to drop off your results at the tally or arrange with Paul to phone results to him either at the tally or later in the evening at his home. This will enable him to meet the state deadline with his compilation. All participants will receive a copy of the results and highlights.

A map to aid you in locating the Randle's home is printed on the reverse side of this sheet.

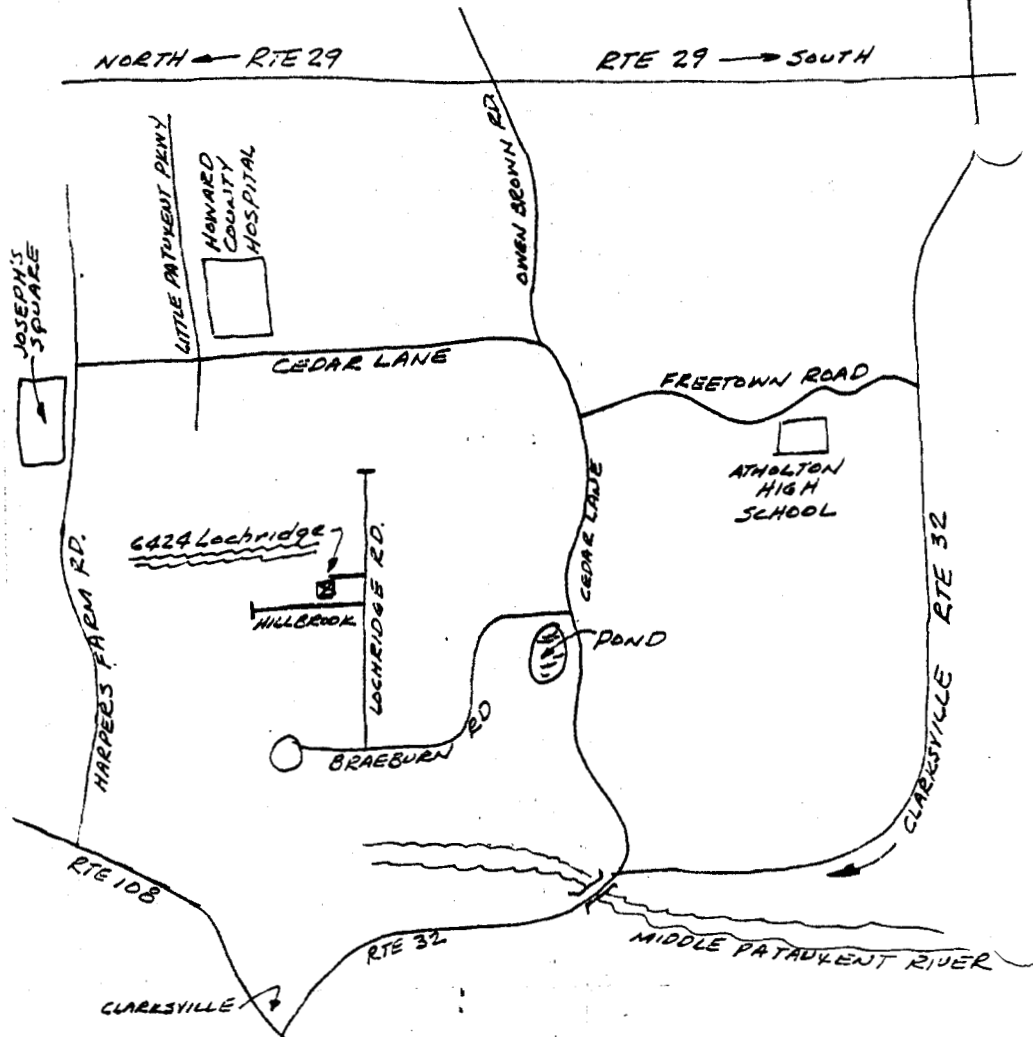
INTERMEDIATE NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY COURSE TO BE OFFERED - Zelda Simon

Anneke Davis will teach a nature photography course meeting at the Florence Bain Senior Center sponsored by Howard County MOS. The course begins May 13 and will meet Mondays and Thursdays from 7:30-9:30 p.m. through June 3 (except for Memorial Day). The three week, six session course will have a fee between \$25-40 depending on the number of students enrolled. The class will operate at an intermediate level; however, if there are beginners who are interested in enrolling, Anneke will arrange a single session prior to May 13 to introduce students to their cameras. Topics covered will be determined by the interests of the group. Out of this class some summer field trips may be arranged. To register, call Zelda Simon at 730-8328 no later than May 5.

Cedar Waxwing by Grazina McClure.

Paul
Randle

Donald & Janet Randle
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 Telephone 531-6296



Howard County Chapter MOS
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 SATURDAY
 MAY 4

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