



Vol 14, No 2
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Howard

A Chapter of the
Maryland Ornithological Society



WILD! MY EXPERIENCE AT AUDUBON ECOLOGY CAMP IN THE WEST - JANE GEUDER

I appreciate the support of my local MOS chapter and the state organization for making possible the best natural history experience I've ever had. The two weeks were well-organized and smoothly run by a serious and qualified staff of environmentalists. It was a "vacation" only in the sense that I was enjoying a change of pace. Who could relax when there were so many new experiences to be had?

There were 50+ campers during the second session which ran from July 7-19 in Wyoming. During the first week we rotated through three-hour sessions with each of the seven instructors. Choices of classes were offered the second week to allow individuals to learn more about particular areas of interest. Disciplines taught were geology, botany, ornithology, entomology as well as terrestrial, aquatic, and human ecology. Classes were held outdoors and included field trips.

A typical day had two three-hour classes and an hour or more evening program. Most of the evening programs were also educational, a few recreational. Most days were not typical! Getting up at 5:30 a.m. to canoe the creek or bird watch was the norm. The free hour following each meal could be spent in learning how to mount butterflies and moths, conduct nest box observations for a research study, view mist-netted birds, or make molds of animal tracks. Ongoing identification games in the resource room provided daily competition.

Most of the campers were attending on scholarships and came from all over the country; only about a third were teachers. Discussions were lively with so many different backgrounds and perspectives. In addition to content, I gained many useful teaching techniques and strategies.

Now to the REAL reason for choosing the camp in the West: the birds! I added the following species to my life list: Green-tailed Towhee, White Pelican, Trumpeter Swan, Barrow's Goldeneye, Swainson's Hawk, Prairie Falcon, Sandhill Crane, Baird's Sandpiper, Wilson's Phalarope, California Gull, Caspian Tern, White-throated Swift, Red-naped Sapsucker (a subspecies of the Yellow-bellied), Dusky Flycatcher, Black-billed Magpie, Clark's Nutcracker, Mountain Chickadee, Dipper, Rock Wren, Townsend's Solitaire, Warbling Vireo, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Black-headed Grosbeak, Cassin's Finch, Vesper Sparrow, and Oregon Junco (a subspecies of the Dark-eyed).

Ed. Note: Jane, a Centennial High School biology teacher, won a Helen Miller scholarship awarded by the state Maryland Ornithological Society. She will describe her experiences at the Howard County Bird Club's meeting on November 14th.

Anyone who works with young people is eligible to apply for a scholarship (you must provide your own transportation to camp). Call President John Clegg, evenings, at 730-4362 for more information. Applications are being accepted for scholarships for the summer of 1986.

BIRDING "HOT SPOTS" IN HOWARD COUNTY - CHRIS LUDWIG - DANIELS, PATAPSCO STATE PARK

The Daniels section of Patapsco State Park offers county birders a secluded yet easily accessible birding locale. Well-known for good warblers, both resident and migratory, it also offers other interesting birds and many uncommon plants. There is no entrance fee in this undeveloped section of the park.

The logistics: There are two gravel parking lots at the bottom of deadend Daniels Road, one on the left and the second a bit farther on the right. From either the birding spots are easily reached. All of the Daniels section is wooded, mostly mature forest; birds can be encountered anywhere. From the parking areas walk back (south) along Daniels Road to the wide path (road) that comes in on your right. This level path runs for several miles within sight of the river. In the spring or after rains it is muddy; some portions are permanently damp. There is at least one narrow path uphill onto the ridge, but it is not marked and is difficult to find. (The driveway on your left about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the entrance leads shortly to a park ranger's home.)

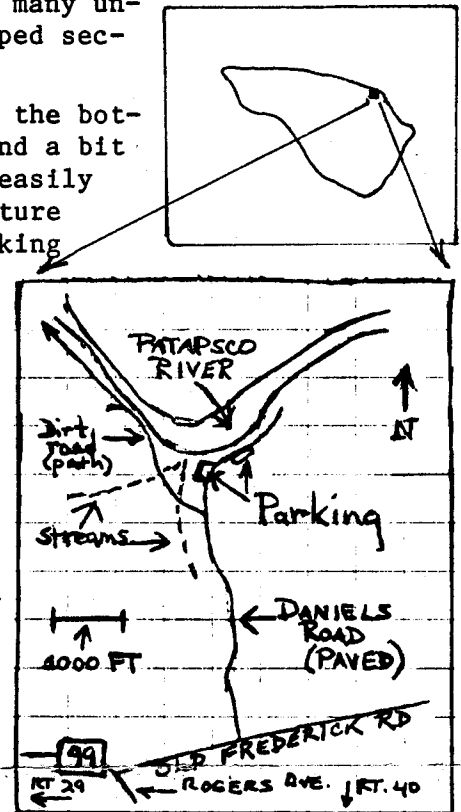
Daniels is best known for the large variety of warblers which can be seen spring, summer, and fall. Your chances of seeing Yellow-throated and Cerulean Warblers are the best in the county here. Look for the birds high in the trees just as they begin to leaf out. It often pays to climb a ridge and look directly out at a singing bird. In the understory, near the ground, listen for a trill similar to a very rapid Chipping Sparrow's and you may find a Worm-eating Warbler darting through the Mountain Laurel.

Raptors also frequent Daniels. Two county birders have seen major Broad-winged Hawk flights in spring and fall; Red-tailed Hawks and Ospreys have also been observed. Several birds of prey nest here. Black and Turkey Vultures roost and hunt in the area. A favorite roosting tree is found about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from the first parking lot. Look on the right side of the dirt path. Also listen for Barred Owls.

Other birds commonly sighted here during appropriate seasons include Pileated Woodpecker, Wood Duck, Solitary and Spotted Sandpipers, Killdeer, Belted Kingfisher, Green-backed and Great Blue Herons.

Other Attractions: In the spring a great variety of wildflowers can be found on the northeast-facing slopes. This orientation means spring flowers can bloom later here than in most other places in the county. Look for Dutchman's Breeches, various species of violets, Trailing Arbutus, as well as many others. Ferns abound in summer. The highlight is the Walking Fern known from only one other county location. Look for it along the rocks bordering the dirt road $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the entrance. For those interested in local archaeology, a small cave used occasionally by Indians can be found to the left of the path on the east side of the stream a hundred yards or so from Daniels Road. A variety of fungi may be in abundance depending on the season and the rainfall. Keep your eyes open for evidence of Beaver to the right of the path wherever there are stands of small-diameter trees not far from the water.

Thanks to Marty Chestem, Eva Sunell, Joe Byrnes, and Jo Solem who all contributed their experience and special insights. Visit Daniels and enjoy!



CALENDAR OF PROGRAMS, FIELD TRIPS, AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Programs are held at Longfellow Elementary School, 5470 Hesperus Dr., Columbia, MD. Meeting is cancelled if schools are closed for any reason. Hospitality session at 7:30 p.m. Meeting/program begins at 8:00 p.m. Club bookstore opens at 7:30 p.m.

Field trips leave from Grempler Realty parking lot (across from the Flier building on Little Patuxent Parkway in Columbia) unless otherwise listed. Car-pooling is encouraged with riders sharing the cost of gas and tolls. Dress for field work with stout, reasonably waterproof footwear and layers of clothes. Trips do not always follow paths. No pets. Leaders may cancel due to inclement weather. If you have questions, contact leaders whose phone numbers are listed or Field Trip Chairman Chris Ludwig at 796-8373 evenings.

NOV. 8 - CHESAPEAKE BAY - PATUXENT RIVER CONNECTION CONFERENCE. Howard Community Friday College Theater. 7:30-11:00 p.m. Exhibits 6:00-7:30 p.m.

NOV. 14 - "A WYOMING EXPERIENCE--AUDUBON NATURE CAMP" and a movie "A SPECIAL PLACE" Thursday Jane Geuder, a biology teacher at Centennial High School, was awarded an MOS scholarship to attend the Western Audubon Camp this past summer. Tonight she shares the highlights of her July adventure through a slide-illustrated talk. The 21-minute movie about Assateague Island will help to explain the value and attraction of the area to those unfamiliar with it.



NOV. 23 - COLUMBIA LAKES. Leader: Jane Farrell, 596-6350. Meet at Grempler at Saturday 1:00 p.m. to check waterfowl and late land migrants.

DEC. 7 - EASTERN NECK NWR AND REMINGTON FARMS. Leaders: Chuck Dupree, 796-1086, Saturday evenings, & Bill Eckert, 992-2464, days. Co-sponsored with Howard Co. Rec. & Parks. Bus trip. \$9.00; pre-registration necessary with Rec.& Pks. The bus leaves from the George Howard Bldg. at 7:30 a.m., returns by 6:00 p.m. Bring hearty lunch & drinks. Dress for inclement weather. Bring binoculars & field guides. Leaders will have telescope. Migratory waterfowl with some winter hawks and land birds.



DEC. 12 - "THE SCARLETT STORY: PEREGRINE FALCONS RETURN" - John Barber. John is Thursday both a birder and bird bander as well as an employee in the USF&G Bldg. in Baltimore, Scarlett's nesting site for six years. No one person was nearer to the events that made this bird a national celebrity and symbol of the nation's efforts to bring back the Peregrine. Slide-illustrated.



DEC. 15 - COLUMBIA FEEDER TRIP. Leader: Chris Ludwig, 796-8373. Meet at Grempler Sunday at 8:00 a.m. to spend a couple of hours checking some local feeders (most from inside the house).

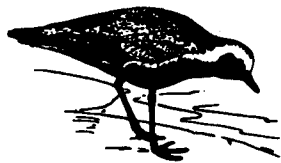
DEC. 19 - TRIADELPHIA CHRISTMAS COUNT. Compiler: Bob Whitcomb, 299-5215 evenings or Thursday 344-2339 days. Dawn to dusk count of all birds seen or heard. Part-of-the-day participants and feeder watchers needed as well. Beginners can ask to go with experienced birders. \$3.00 fee goes toward publication of results in American Birds. The Count circle center is at a point at the north end of Triadelphia Reservoir so that the western half of Howard County and the eastern half of Montgomery County are covered.



NOV. 21 - BOARD MEETING at Don & Jan Randle's, 6424 Lochridge Rd., in Braeburn. Thursday Tel. 531-6296 for directions. All officers and committee chairmen. 7:30 P.m.

DEADLINE FOR JANUARY-FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER IS DECEMBER 10th. NEWSLETTER ITEMS AS WELL AS AUTUMN MIGRATION DATES (DUE DEC. 15) SHOULD BE MAILED OR PHONED TO JO SOLEM, 10617 GRAELOCH RD., LAUREL, MD 20707; TEL. 725-5037.

LESSER GOLDEN PLOVERS A FIRST FOR HOWARD COUNTY - HARVEY MUDD



During the morning of August 31, 1985, I stopped at Green Manor Turf Farm just west of Route 32, and several miles south of Sykesville, to scan the fields. The Killdeer flock had been building up on the large open spaces of this farm for several weeks, and there was some hope that another species of "grass-piper" might drop in for a stopover during southward migration. This hope was fulfilled by the sighting of a plover--larger in the body than the nearby Killdeer, with longer legs, a thinner, longer neck, and a much more upright posture. The underparts, which were clear white, extensively mottled and splotched with areas of deep black, immediately identified the bird as an adult either Black-bellied or Golden Plover molting from alternate into basic plumage. From the access road to the farm it was possible to get as close as 60 to 70 yards to the bird and observe it through a spotting telescope at powers up to 40-50x. The back was dark black-brown with lighter spots of yellowish-white. A dark area extended from the bill back through the eye and over the ear coverts. Above this dark, an area of almost pure white covered the front, extended into a broad supercilium on each side, hooked down behind the ear coverts, and continued along the sides of the neck to its base. Together these white areas separated a dark crown and nape of the neck and gave the bird a strikingly "capped" appearance. Below the dark areas the cheeks were a lighter grey. The foreneck and upper breast were greyish with darker obscure streaking. The bill was dark and thin from top to bottom. The distance from the base to the tip of the bill was about equal to the distance from the base of the bill to the eye. The black splotching on the belly clearly extended to the under tail coverts. Because the bird remained on the ground, neither the upper surface of the spread wings, nor the upper tail coverts, nor the axillary areas could be seen. Nevertheless, the marks noted seemed sufficient to establish with reasonable certainty that the bird was a Golden Plover.

Reference to the Preliminary Checklist of the Birds of Howard County (J. Solem, D. Holmes, and M. Chestem, Howard, Vol. 13, No. 6, May-June 1985) confirmed that there had been no previous reported sightings of Golden Plovers in Howard County. Having with me no camera with which to photograph the bird, I made a hasty trip to the nearest public phone in Sykesville to call the three active Howard County birders whose telephone numbers I happened to have with me. Not surprisingly on a fine Saturday morning the first day of the Labor Day weekend, no one was at home to answer these calls. Deciding that if the bird departed without being seen by anyone else it was important to have checked all possible field marks, I returned to the Turf Farm and obtained permission from the owners to walk to the area in which the bird was located. Upon doing so, a second plover was found, very similar to the first in structure and field marks, except that it was more advanced in molt, having far less black areas on the underparts with the black of the under tail coverts occurring chiefly as barring. The birds were then flushed and circled around me once or twice in the air, affording excellent views which showed that on neither was there white on the upper tail coverts or rump, that the wings had at most very obscure white stripes formed by the light tips of the greater coverts, but lacked extensive white in the shafts of the primaries, and that the axillars were grey, not black. These marks confirmed that both birds were Lesser Golden Plovers (Pluvialis dominica).

Fortunately, the birds did linger on and were seen later that day by Gerry Newton of Eldersburg (Carroll County), by Jo Solem and Jane Farrell. and were refound by many others on ensuing days.

OUR NUT-HACKS: RED-BREASTED AND WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCHES - JON E. BOONE

On September 12, my son Jon saw a small black-crowned bird which had a large white stripe above and a black stripe through its eye. Its back was slate-gray and its breast and sides were a dull white. It was perched face down, a foot from the birdbath along the side of our Shagbark Hickory. We knew at once that it was a Red-breasted Nuthatch, despite the fact that it did not have the expected reddish tinge along the breast. It was, therefore, a female or, more likely, an immature bird which had migrated south a bit early.

Red-breasted Nuthatches don't nest here, but are usually present in small numbers during the winter. In some winter seasons, however, Red-breasts "erupt," invading Howard County in very large numbers. These eruptions often result in many Red-breasts visiting feeders. Perhaps our early visitor presages another invasion year.

Unlike the Red-breast, the larger White-breasted Nuthatch is commonplace here. Its upside-down acrobatics, its nasal "yank yank" call notes, its economical flight pattern, and its natty gray and white attire make this a most welcome bird. White-breasts have a solid black crown with no black eye line. The color tones of the female are relatively muted.

The nuthatches are primarily insect eaters, although they do take a lot of seeds and some suet in season. Their habit of feeding upside-down probably evolved so that they could retrieve insects and larvae from tree crevices that woodpeckers and other bark-climbing birds miss. The word nuthatch derives from the phrase "nut-hack." The birds literally put a nut or seed into a sturdy crevice, then hack away at the shell. When you've seen these birds nut-hacking, you'll know how descriptive the term really is.

When you walk along a pathway through the woods this fall, listen for the call notes. Again, "yank yank" or a very nasal "eh eh, eh eh" will reveal our White-breast. A much higher-pitched, almost squealing "eh eh eh eh" very rapidly given, will allow you to uncover the Red-breast. If you should see a bird walking down the side of a tree, look for the eye striping, or lack of it. Invariably, the bird walking down a tree in late fall and winter will be a nuthatch, most likely a White-breasted Nuthatch, unless it has a white line above and a black line through the eye. If you do encounter a Red-breast, try coaxing it to your hand with a sunflower seed. This bird is so tame it will often come to you.



Friends of the Chesapeake Bay and the Patuxent River are invited to Howard Community College theater on Friday evening, November 8, 1985. Del. Virginia Thomas is convening a distinguished panel to discuss the progress of clean-up and water quality of the Chesapeake Bay and the Patuxent River. The evening begins any time after 6:00 p.m. when more than 20 groups interested in the Bay will have exhibits along the hallway between the theater and the nurse's lounge. Come early and check the Howard County Bird Club's exhibit which will feature birds of the Patuxent River. At 7:30 p.m. a movie, "The Chesapeake Bay" will be shown. Following the movie a panel will discuss a variety of related topics: Bill Eichbaum, "Point Pollution"; Dr. Eugene Cronin, "Living Resources of the Bay"; Sen. James Clark, "Best Management Practices"; and County Councilwoman Ruth Keeton, "Update of the Patuxent River Plan." Tom Horton of the Sun papers will provide a critical analysis of what state and federal people are doing, while Barbara Taylor, President of Save Our Streams will describe means by which citizens can get involved and how they can lobby state officials. Zeke Orlinsky will be the moderator. The hour from 10:00-11:00 p.m. is planned for questions from the audience.



CHINCOTEAGUE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE THREATENED WITH DEVELOPMENT

The Howard County Chapter of MOS recently sent a letter to the Secretary of the Interior asking that Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge be protected from U.S. development plans that may degrade it and may damage the unspoiled natural habitat that has attracted so many of us to visit and revisit the area. Copies of the letter were also sent to Maryland's senators and the three members of the House who represent parts of Howard County. The letter to the Regional Director of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service included a petition with 131 signatures.

Bird club members attending the October meeting were encouraged to state their views by writing letters to any or all of the above individuals. A number of members have already written letters. YOUR support is also needed. (If you did not get the information, call Bob Solem, evenings, 725-5037.) There is still time to write.

Get involved by joining the Committee to Preserve Assateague Island so that you can stay informed (Chincoteague Refuge is on Assateague). This group has led the fight for years; numbers are always important so add your voice to the almost 1,000 who are now working to preserve the Delmarva coastal areas. Send your check to the Committee to Preserve Assateague Island, Inc., 616 Piccadilly Rd., Towson, MD 21204 (individual \$5.00; couple \$10.00; tax deductible).

When you visit Chincoteague, be ready to respond to a user survey. The Department of Interior has set a target of 1,000 interviews a month through November; they will probably resume the survey in February of 1986. You will be asked why you are visiting the refuge. Emphasize your interest in seeing various aspects of nature without commercialization and with minimum human intervention. Obviously, if you preferred the ambiance of Ocean City, you could easily have gone there.

The Board of the Howard County Bird Club is considering donations to the following groups or individuals: Maryland Breeding Bird Atlas Project, Committee to Preserve Assateague Island, Peregrine Fund, and Jane Zuke (bird rehabilitator). In order to take advantage of the MOS matching grant deadline of Nov. 15, \$400 was specified for the Atlas Project. Discussion by the membership will take place at the November 14th meeting.

According to information received from the Committee to Preserve Assateague Island, Mayor Stasio of the town of Chincoteague has enlisted the support of Rep. Herbert Bateman (R-VA, whose district includes the area) who has promised to introduce legislation that would transfer the refuge beach to National Park Service control if the Fish and Wildlife Service's master plan fails to accommodate recreational needs.

CHARLES McC. MATHIAS, JR.
MARYLAND

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 16, 1985

Mr. John C. Clegg
Chapter President
Maryland Ornithological Society
9094 Lambskin Lane
Columbia, Maryland 21045

Dear Mr. Clegg:

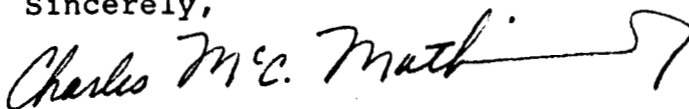
Thank you for your letter expressing your concern over the future of the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge. I appreciate having your views on this matter.

As you pointed out, one of the current proposals affecting the Chincoteague refuge is a plan to transfer land for additional recreational development. Congressman Herbert Bateman, who represents Virginia's Eastern Shore, has suggested an exchange of land between the National Park Service, which operates the National Seashore on Assateague Island, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which operates the wildlife refuge on the northern part of the island.

I have been in touch with both the Park Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service about this idea and expressed my interest in preserving the wildlife refuge. As yet, Congressman Bateman has not introduced any legislation to accomplish the transfer. If he does, however, you can be sure that I will keep your views well in mind.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,



Charles McC. Mathias, Jr.
United States Senator

CM:dm

OCTOBER SEED SALE HAS MANY HELPERS - Eileen Clegg

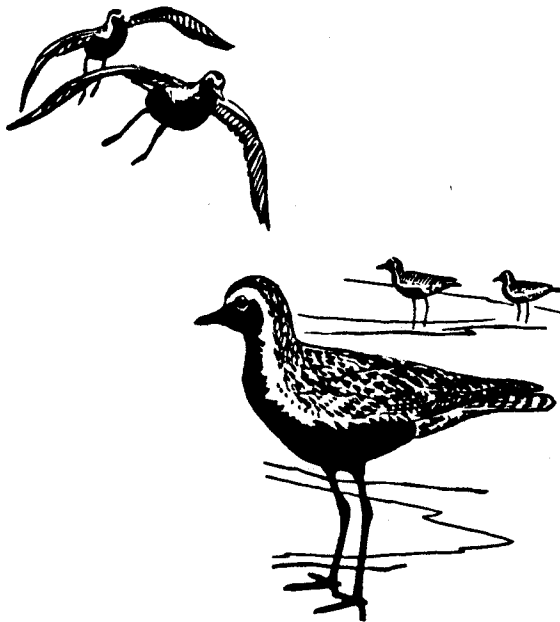
Over 31,000 pounds of seed were moved by the following loaders: Chris Branson, Bob Bogdan, Rod Botsai, John Clegg, Jane Farrell, Donna Lee, Mike McClure, Don Nahr-gang, Holly Obrecht III, Bob Solem, Joe Suess, Don Waugh, and Mark Wallace. Those working inside included Harriet & Frank Baldau, Eileen Clegg, Pearl Seidman, Jo Solem, Joan Varga (who also brought brownies), and Martha Waugh. Monika Botsai baked a cake. Steve & Linda Harsy brought a complete bookstore selection, and Don Randle, as always, provided accurate and timely financial assistance. Thanks to one and all who made our October 26th sale such a success.

TIBER PLACE, ELLICOTT CITY AND COLUMBIA HOMETOWN FAIR EXHIBITS SEEN BY MANY

Two events during September gave the bird club a chance to exhibit specimens and talk to the public. Linda Harsy chaired the Tiber Place September 21st display in cooperation with the Ellicott City Country Fair. The following week Cathy Williamson organized a core of volunteers who worked in the Columbia Mall for the Columbia Hometown Fair. Useful information was obtained about cavity nesting bird locations and items for the Breeding Bird Atlas. Thanks to those members who helped with set-up, take-down, ferrying tables and specimens, and most of all those who graciously offered their time to talk to so many people: Jon E. & Jon K. Boone, Monika Botsai, Lois Carleton, Marty Chestem, Eileen Clegg, Chuck Dupree, Frances Ehlers, Jane & Ralph Geuder, Steve & Linda Harsy, Anna Llewellyn, Mike & Grazina McClure, Don Randle, Bob & Jo Solem, Eva Sunell, Joan Varga, and Cathy Williamson.

SEND 1985 LIST OF BIRD SPECIES YOU HAVE SEEN TO DAVID HOLMES, 5643-A Harpers Farm Rd., Columbia, MD 21044, by January 15, 1986. Don't assume that just because your list is short that someone else will report all your species.

HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB
10617 Graeloch Rd.
Laurel, Maryland 20707



LESSER GOLDEN PLOVER NEW TO COUNTY