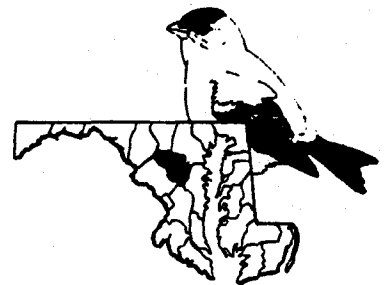




Vol. 15, No 4
Mar-April 1987

Howard

A Chapter of the
Maryland Ornithological Society



1986 CAVITY NESTER REPORT SEES 1100 BLUEBIRD FLEDGED - BOB BOGDAN

Judging from the comments of veteran Eastern Bluebird (EB) monitors, the weather was a major factor in keeping the number of birds fledged below the record (1343) tallied in 1985. Many EBs raised only one brood. Of the 544 boxes monitored, at least 274 were used by EBs, but only 71 held 2 broods and 14 contained 3. There were 1507 eggs laid; of these, 406 eggs and 136 nestlings were lost so 1087 fledged from boxes and 16 from natural cavities for 1103. Infertile eggs were listed as the major cause of nesting failure followed by House Wrens (HWr), snakes, and House Sparrows (HSp).

Bill Eckert, who organizes the "Bluebirds in the Parks" program which the Howard Co. Bird Club co-sponsors, reported fledging 34 EB, 8 Carolina Chickadees (CCh), and 98 HWrs from the 40 boxes in 11 parks. Most gratifying was the news that blowfly parasitism in 1986 was responsible for zero nestlings lost. Because of the 1985 blowfly problem, a piece of hardware cloth was placed in all boxes (see diagram p. 11 in "Boost Bluebirds II" pamphlet). Bill noted that EBs began nesting later this year and finished earlier than last year as well as generally fledging only one brood per box. Monitors in the parks were Marie Battle, Bob Bogdan, Irmira Cameron, Linda Gibson, Suzanne Elliott, the Elliott family, Phil Jacobson, Joyce Kelly, Norma Peterson, Bernd & Lucy Kiekebusch-Steinitz and Nancy Terrill. To volunteer, call Bill days at 992-2464.

In addition to the parks/club trail, I received 43 other reports. We continue to encourage members and friends to erect boxes on private property in the correct habitat. This reduces the chance for vandalism and means that boxes tend to be monitored more regularly.

Mark Wallace continued his outstanding work. He not only puts out boxes and monitors them faithfully (85 of his own plus those of 39 other people), but keeps excellent records, bands hundreds of nestlings (528 in the county), and carries on a running battle with starlings and HSps. He reported that blowflies were up 500% over 1985 in his boxes. While banding, he exchanged clean nests for contaminated ones and occasionally used hardware cloth platforms. He reported that HSps were his smallest problem ever and were responsible for the loss of only one clutch in his control area. This optimistic note comes because he has trapped HSps zealously for several years (over 1000 in 1986). Infertile eggs rose to 10.4% of eggs as compared to 6% in 1985, 8.8% in '84, and 13.4% in '83-- another dry year. His clutches were also smaller than usual: 4.41 (1986), 4.84 ('85) and 4.55 ('84). He was the only monitor reporting Tree Swallows, fledging 5.

Joe Suess monitored 60 boxes of which 37 were used by bluebirds. He listed infertile eggs as the primary cause of egg loss. He had a 62% success rate of young fledged to eggs laid compared to 70% in 1985 and 48% in '84. He observed that many clutches hatched a day early due to heat, but that did not seem to pose a problem. A first for his trail this year was the fledging of 3 EBs from a cavity in a fence post. Joe added that a technique he uses occasionally is to set out extra boxes close together. This provides another box for the EBs to move into in case of a problem, and "it serves to 'entertain' the HSps and allow time for their capture while encouraging the EBs to remain in the territory." Joe also had 5 young fledge from a plastic jug.

Eleanor Robbins had EBs use 17 boxes out of the 25 she monitors; a total of 21 of her boxes were used by native cavity nesters with 2 clutches of Tufted Titmice and 2 of HWrs. Although she listed 79 EB eggs out of 105 hatching and 68 fledging, her major

problem was herbicide sprays. One of her box owners installed a bell on top of a box which was rung whenever a HSp came to it. It was not effective even though it had worked for someone in a previous year. My 18 boxes were used by EBs, HWrs, and CChs. My most interesting experiment was that of using one box with a clear plastic top (shaded at all times). The sparrows wouldn't go near it and when EBs showed an interest, I replaced the plastic top with a wooden one. Bluebirds fledged 3 young from this box. I also hung aluminum foil strips from box tops in heavily infested sparrow areas. Although this technique seemed to work for Bill Eckert, neither EBs nor HSps used any of my boxes with strips inside the roofs. Frances Ehlers monitored 46 boxes of which 25 were used by EBs fledging 125. Her boxes also fledged 16 CChs & 4 HWrs. She reported 4 white EB eggs but those eggs fledged only 1 young. Although she had trouble with blowflies, she did not lose any young for that reason. Major vandalism was reported by Fred Schwaner on Sharp Road. Those losses were especially disappointing because he had great success with 21 of his 27 boxes used by EBs fledging 50; 9 boxes contained 3 nestings.

Some of the Boone's boxes this year were monitored by Ehlers, Suess and Wallace. Two of those erected at historic Waverly fledged HWrs. The 2 boxes at the Central Library held one successful EB brood. Kathy Cahill reported monitoring 2 EB boxes: 1 contained 2 EB nestings and the other fledged 3 CChs. In addition, HWrs in her yard using other boxes fledged 18. In January, on one of the coldest nights after the snowstorms, Tom Cahill was sledding in their front yard. When his sled accidentally hit the tree on which their Williamsburg Bird Bottle was mounted, he watched in surprise as 6 EBs in succession left the bottle where they had been roosting for the night. Alan Cameron monitored 2 boxes fledging 6 CCh. Ceil Casciaro had 4 boxes, 2 of which were used by HWrs and 2 by CChs. Regina Cope checked 12 boxes. Her most interesting report was that of 2 pairs of EBs again using gas ventilator pipes on the line near her home. One pair fledged 5, but the hot weather killed the other brood despite her efforts to cool the pipe by tying grape vines over it. Carolyn Cradler's 4 boxes at the Glenelg Country School fledged 4 EBs; the Cuddeback's 9 boxes fledged 24 EBs and 21 HWrs; Carl Haehner reported 18 EBs from 11 boxes; the Dorsey Hall Garden Club's 4 boxes fledged 4 CChs & 5 EBs; the McClure's 4 boxes yielded 3 CChs, 11 HWrs and 9 EBs; Bea Newkirk's 5 boxes fledged 11 HWrs and 16 EBs; Harold Norwood's 8 boxes had 24 EBs; Belmont's 13 boxes fledged 18 EBs reported by Roy Schilling; and Peter Zerhusen fledged 8 EBs from 4 boxes. His numbers were down with no successful second nestings; he wondered if the unusually dry summer was the reason. Albert Iager collected records from 6 people for 49 EBs fledged.

Bridget Grant's 3 boxes yielded 4 EBs; she says this is the first time in 4 years that they did not have a second brood. Paul Hogue, Rosemary Fisher and others mentioned holes poked in eggs which is normally the mark of a wren. Rosemary says that to keep the HWrs out of the EB boxes, they made houses out of gourds which the wrens used so that the first EB nesting was successful. Punctured eggs surfaced when the EBs attempted a second brood. Realizing that the wren gourds were full, she emptied them. This enabled the EBs to try again and bring off another successful nesting. Judy Proia had a successful bluebird nest in her Purple Martin house!

This summary does not detail the results of every report received, but it provides an idea of results. In addition to those species already mentioned, there were sightings of females with tiny young or known nests of these other cavity nesters: Wood Duck, Barred Owl, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, American Kestrel, Great Crested Flycatcher and Carolina Wren. J. Heller on A.E. Mullinix Road had a nest of Eastern Screech-Owls.

The following individuals submitted reports: K. Ackerman, J. Auguste, M. Battle, B. Bogdan, J. Boone, M. Botsai, M. Brinkley, S. Buswell, K. Cahill, A. Cameron, C. Casciaro, R. Cope, C. Cradler, C. Cuddeback, W. Duell, Bill Eckert, F. Ehlers, R. Fischer, K. Fischer, B. Grant, C. Haehner, R. Hegner, P. Hogue, L. Holley, S. Hudson, M. Johnson, B & L. Kiekebusch-Steinitz, M. Lohr, E. May, G & M. McClure, B. Newkirk, H. Norwood, J. Proia, E. Robbins, H. Rodgers, C. Sarau, R. Schilling, J. Solem, F. Schwaner, J. Suess, H. Thompson, B. Uglow, M. Wallace, P. Zerhusen, A. Iager.

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. Carpooling is encouraged with riders sharing 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 the leader(s) or Field Trip Chairman Roy Trudel 992-7105, evenings.

MARCH 7 - ANNUAL POTLUCK AT FLORENCE BAIN SENIOR CENTER. Call Monika Botsai 465-5758 Saturday or Grazina McClure 531-2780 by Tuesday, March 3rd. Good food, members' slides, door prizes. Social hour at 6:30 p.m.; dinner at 7:00 p.m.

MARCH 12 - "THE GREAT BLUE HERON AND OTHER WILDLIFE OF THE PATUXENT RIVER" - Richard Thursday Dolesh. Visit a heron rookery with MOS V-President Rich and National Geographic photographers.

MARCH 14 - TRIP TO JANE ZUKE'S REHABILITATION CENTER. Leader: Eva Sunell 995-0029. Saturday See and photograph birds of prey. Meet at Grempler 9:30 a.m., 1/2 day.

MARCH 21 - MIGRANT WATERFOWL, HOWARD COUNTY. Leaders: Jo Solem 725-5037 & Jane Farrell Saturday 596-2630. Bird the lakes & reservoirs of the county. Itinerary to be determined by leaders. Meet at Grempler at 8:00 a.m., 1/2 day.

APRIL 9 - "ATLAS: THE FINAL YEAR" - Eirik A. Blom. Rik is the state coordinator for Thursday this ambitious project. Among the questions he'll address: What have we learned? and What are we looking for in this fifth and final year?

APRIL 11 - LITTLE CREEK & BOMBAY HOOK NWR. Leader: Chuck Dupree 796-1086. Meet at Saturday Grempler at 7:00 a.m. for an all day trip to the Eastern Shore. Back 5:00-6:00 p.m. Car-pooling necessary.

WORKSHOP WITH GARDENERS AT HOWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE. Call Marty Chestem 730-1527 to volunteer to help at display table 10:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.

APRIL 17 - WOODCOCK WALK. Leader: Al Geis. Observe the courtship flight of this odd-Friday looking shorebird. Meet at 7:00 p.m. at the small parking lot on the east side of Trotter Rd., .8 mile south of Rt. 108. Wear dark, warm clothing (group sits or lies on ground motionless). No children under 10. Flashlights if not too powerful.

APRIL 25 - C & O CANAL WALK. Leader: Richard Giannola 774-5483. Designed for beginning Saturday birders, others also welcome at well-known birding "hot spot." Level walk at beginning of peak migration. Must contact leader to determine meeting place and time (about 8:00 a.m.)

MAY 2 - MAY COUNT. Compiler Paul Zucker 681-9005. All day compilation of all birds Saturday seen or heard. Call Paul after 15 April to volunteer. Tally in evening. Fun for beginners & experienced birders alike. Don't miss it!

PATUXENT RIVER APPRECIATION DAY. Bob Solem 725-5037 will lead a wildflower walk at Savage Park from 1:00-3:00 p.m. jointly spon. w/How. Co. Rec & Pks. Meet at the park building near the tennis courts.

MARCH 26 - BOARD MEETING. At Marty Chestem's, 10850 Faulkner Ridge Cir., Columbia, Thursday 730-1527 for directions.

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THIRTY-NINTH TRIADDELPHIA CHRISTMAS COUNT LOCATES 92 SPECIES - Bob Whitcomb

A total of 47 observers in 28 parties located 92 species on this December 27th count. Most disappointing was the fact that open water and mild temperatures did not produce the expected lingering waterfowl. Because the count covers parts of both Howard and Montgomery counties, it is not possible to list species totals that apply to Howard. Of the six Long-eared Owls recorded, one was seen in Howard by Dan Audet & Eric Spillman but could not be located the following day.

BIRDING "HOT SPOTS" IN HOWARD COUNTY - CHRIS LUDWIG - HOLLOFIELD.

Normally, we devote this feature to exploring Howard County's birding "hot spots"; however, this month we feature a "hot spot" for wildflowers. Many members of our MOS chapter have an avid interest in the county's botanical riches and the Hollofield region of Patapsco Valley State Park has provided us with a tremendous variety of species blooming throughout the growing season.

Hollofield, like Gaul, can be divided into three areas, each with interesting and rare wildflowers. Parking for all three areas is found at the lot on the south side of Rt. 40 almost at the Baltimore County line. During the summer, a charge of \$3.00 per car is assessed for parking unless you are lucky enough to find space in the tiny (4-5 car) lot on the left just before the gate. Restrooms and picnic areas are available.

Area I includes the open areas and woodlands surrounding the parking lot and river overlook. The soils here have a neutral pH and some serpentine which results in some very rare plant species. In spring look for Small's Ragwort, Violet Wood Sorrel, Lyre-leaved Sage, Four-leaved Milkweed, Wild Pink, Robin's Plantain, Field Chickweed, Leonard's Skullcap, Lyre-leaved Rock Cress, Wild Sarsaparilla, Spiderwort, Mucronate Blue-eyed Grass, Rattlesnake Weed, Seneca Snakeroot, and quite a few other species! Summer brings in Whorled Milkweed, Pointed-leaved Tick Trefoil, Cornel-leaved Aster, Woodland Sunflower, Sweet-scented Boneset, and others. Fall blooms include Smaller White Snakeroot, Gray Goldenrod, and many asters.

Area II is reached by walking under Rt.40 and taking the Fire Tower Trail (FTT) north. Along the trail look for woodland species such as Showy Skullcap, Wild Comfrey and Hairy-jointed Meadow Parsnip in the spring. Summer and autumn are the seasons for botanizing the powerline meadows. There look for Torrey's, Thin-leaved, and Hoary Mountain Mints, Green Milkweed, Lance-leaved Coreopsis, Whorled Rosinweed, and many other species.

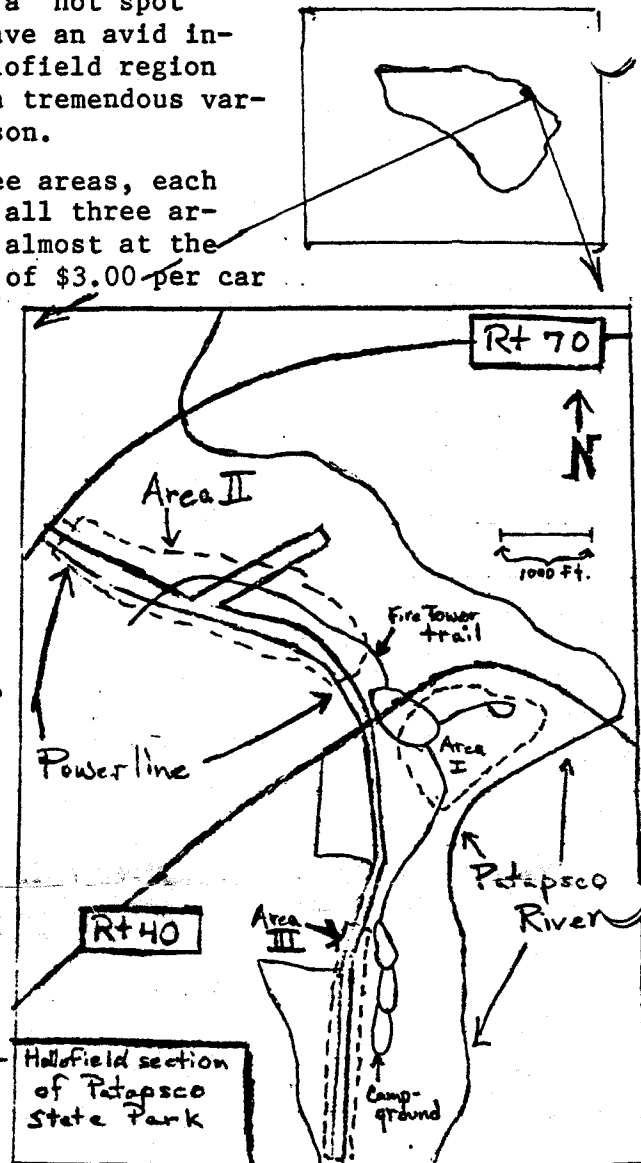
Area III is reached by walking to the campground and ducking out to the powerlines which are very productive from late May to September. Species here include Heart-leaved Alexanders, Culver's Root, Spiked Lobelia, Canada Lily, Soapwort Gentian, Waxy Meadow Rue, Purple Milkweed, Yellow Stargrass and many others.

Here is some idea of the time (in hours) needed to cover each area:

- Area I: .5-2 (depending on how thoroughly the area is covered);
- Area II: .5 for walking to and from area, 1.5-3 to walk powerlines and the FTT;
- Area III: 1 for walking to and from the campground, 1-2 to walk powerlines.

You may want to try different areas on separate trips and during different seasons. If you find time to look up, check for birds such as Blue Grosbeak, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and Eastern Bluebird which have all been spotted here. Whatever your interest, enjoy this section of Patapsco Valley State Park, a botanically fascinating and rewarding area to visit.

For additional information about wildflowers and their locations, contact me evenings at 796-8373 or Bob Solem at 725-5037.





Despite a major snowfall just two days before pickup, an efficient and enthusiastic crew moved orders with the usual dispatch. Working outside on that cold January 24th were Joe Suess, Jim Blanchard, Cleo Karafass, Ken Hart, Tom Strikwerda, Bob Solem, Mark Wallace, Bob Bogdan, Chuck Stirrat, Don Nahrgang, Jane Farrell, Rod Botsai, Don & Martha Waugh. Inside workers included Barbara Merke, Georgia Morris, Linda Holley, Sue Hudson, Helen Zeichner, Linda McDaniel, Anne Hart, Marty Chestem and Jo Solem. Eva Sunell and Fran Schoenberger had the bookstore set up and the Randles provided baffles, feeders and suet cakes from The Nature Nook. Clif Grant provided several dozen small bags of sand which he encouraged people to add to their feeders for grit. Bakery items for the workers were provided by Bob & Wava Skaggs, Monika Botsai, John & Peg Barber and Eileen Clegg.



NEWS - - - - -

At the February meeting members voted to contribute \$2000.00 to The Nature Conservancy to be used toward the purchase of Cherry Creek Glades in Allegeny County. Steve Hamblin of the Maryland-Delaware office will attend the March meeting to receive the check. This amount represents a sizeable share of the profits from the 1986-87 seed sales; your support makes these donations possible. A donation of \$150.00 was also voted to Jane Zuke's raptor rehabilitation (see March 14th field trip). A number of the rehabilitated hawks and owls have been released in western Howard County.

A Piping Plover was reported by Mark Wallace on 27 August 1986 at Green Bridge on Triadelphia Reservoir. His notes have been submitted to the State Records Committee. Because this is now listed as an endangered species, it is a particularly interesting sighting. If accepted, it would constitute a new species for Howard County.

Two issues of Maryland Birdlife were mailed in February by this chapter. Jane Farrell reported that the following individuals lent a hand: Martha & Don Waugh, Don & Jan Randle, Marty Chestem, Marjorie Mountjoy, Elise Seay, Maud Banks, Lois Carleton, Frances Ehlers, Eva Sunell, Jack & Jane Farrell.

Georgia Eacker's home is situated in a wooded area with plenty of glass so she always found a number of dead birds outside her windows, particularly during migration. Hawk silhouettes did not solve the problem. She and Jim tried placing wind socks with trailing streamers at several points on the deck railing, so far it's been successful.

Thanks to Jack Fogarty for advising us that Steve's Columbia Amoco at the junction of Routes 29 and 103 is a used oil drop-off point.

A Nominating Committee consisting of Maud Banks, Zelda Simon and Helen Zeichner has been appointed by President John Clegg. Nominations may also be made at the March meeting.

Joe Suess and Mark Wallace have been named co-chairmen of the Boost Bluebirds (And Other Native Cavity Nesters). They will, undoubtedly, continue the fine work done by Bob Bogdan who resigned for personal reasons but will continue helping with the project.

In cooperation with How. Co. Rec. & Parks, Jo Solem will lead four spring field trips on Saturday mornings to "Howard County Hot Spots." Check R & Ps flyer for details.

On 15 January Bea Newkirk found a dead female cardinal with both a single red and an aluminum band. Information has been forwarded to the banding office at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center. Also, on two dates in January Peter Osenton observed a single male and female House Finch with aluminum bands at his feeders.

Eva Sunell reported an interesting adaptation by the county bird. A child at the nursery school where she works brought in a nest for "show and tell." It was a deep cup and appeared to be an American Goldfinch nest. The birds had shown some ingenuity in lining it with splayed cigarette filters instead of the normal thistle down!

DEADLINE FOR MAY-JUNE NEWSLETTER IS APRIL 5. Mail or phone material to Jo Solem, 10617 Graeloch Rd., Laurel, MD. 20707, Tel. 725-5037.

Walking is often tricky over root systems exposed when the trail becomes a stream bed; moss-covered rocks test high-tech walking shoes. Evidence of timber companies' activities after the Dahles' "hacking" can be clearly discerned as the trail follows the logging railroad bed in sections. An occasional railroad tie is mute testimony to a past era. Several gurgling streams are crossed, all flowing into Red Creek, 1000' below. The water is cold and we remember to chemically treat and filter it before use. The ubiquitous rhododendron, densely thicketed, forms an impassable border along much of the trail shaded by the overhead canopy of spruces. Although many birds typical of northern Red Spruce forests breed here, the intermittent rain and drizzling fog prevent us from seeing Winter Wrens, Purple Finches, Nashville Warblers, Veeries, Hermit and Swainson's Thrushes. The warm rains, in fact, prevented us from seeing a single bird the entire weekend!

Always there is a sense of the remote; we met one fellow backpacker on the first night and only two other parties on the Sunday walk out. Except for our own company we are truly isolated.

Foliage color is usually at its most brilliant about the middle of October, but the drought has taken its toll in the Sods this year. Huge patches of ferns with fronds already browned lie waiting for their fate of reclamation. The autumnal coloration is subdued and limited. The first fallen leaves blanket the forest floor.

I spend part of Saturday afternoon after a rainstorm brushing up on a weak area: clubmosses. Peterson guide in hand, I find whole carpets of these fern allies, the only common living offspring of the ancient clubmoss trees. Tree Clubmoss (Lycopodium obscurum) looks like a tiny pine tree; Stiff or Bristly Clubmoss (Lycopodium annotinum) looks like the bottle washer near the kitchen sink; Staghorn or Wolf's Claw Clubmoss (Lycopodium clavatum) was used for Christmas decorations and is no longer common in most areas; Ground Cedar or Ground Pine (Lycopodium tristachyum) grows like a tiny evergreen tree and is topped by a candelabra of cones; Running Pine, also known as Christmas Green (Lycopodium complanatum) spreads along the ground in creeping, crawling fashion. In a single area on top of a rocky outcropping no larger than a living room, all of these species abound: a living field guide.

In the Sods it seems emotionally hard not to subscribe to the Wilderness Ethic. Low impact campers, all of us by conscious decision, we are careful to take our memories and leave just footprints. The small number of cans and cereal boxes next to refuse containers at the Dolly Sods Picnic Area, our starting and ending point, are painful reminders of carelessness. While open fires are permitted, we find these unnecessary and prepare our meals on backpacker stoves that span several generations of Coleman technology: a World War II predecessor to the Peak I, a later model, and the newest modification. Breakfast is steaming oat bran and granola with powdered milk. Lunch is hurriedly eaten near a rocky overlook wearing ponchos flapping in the wind and rain: cheese bread, cooked chicken, Havarti cheese, Stone Wheat Thins, grapes, oranges, Italian bread and carrotsticks. Dinner is cooked on two Optimus stoves set on a semicircular cooking platform made of flat rocks with a surrounding windbreak of more flat rocks placed, Stonehenge-style, atop one another. Always there are cups of tea, filtered and perked coffee, and the backpacker's special: cowboy coffee, made by boiling water and coffee grounds together.

At night we are able to see glimpses of the banded Milky Way through occasional breaks in the rain clouds drifting overhead. It is like looking at the universe through a straw. Several of us leave "wake-up" calls with adjacent tents so that we will be summoned in case someone discovers during the night that the clouds have moved on and a clear view can be had.

Walking back to the picnic area on Sunday we sidestep an occasional car on FS 75. They are out for a Sunday drive and we are reminded of the outside world. There are only primitive facilities at the Sods, including two privies, a welcome sight after two days of a small spade and a compact roll of "mountain money." The drive down the plateau affords us our first glimpse of bright sunlight in two days and the nearest Pizza Hut, the source of our next meal. One short stop at the Ranger Station in Petersburg to pick up literature; we are planning a return trip in the spring. We want to see the rhododendrons in full bloom.

RARE BIRD ALERT - Bea Newkirk 498-1902. If you cannot reach Bea or wish to have a rarity verified, call Marty Chestem 730-1527, David Holmes 730-7083 or Jo Solem 725-5037. Be prepared to describe field marks seen and to provide accurate directions.

INJURED BIRDS - Eva Sunell 995-0029 (mostly evenings). Eva can provide advice or refer you to more specialized rehabilitators. Jane Zuke 937-6718 in Adelphi specializes in birds of prey.

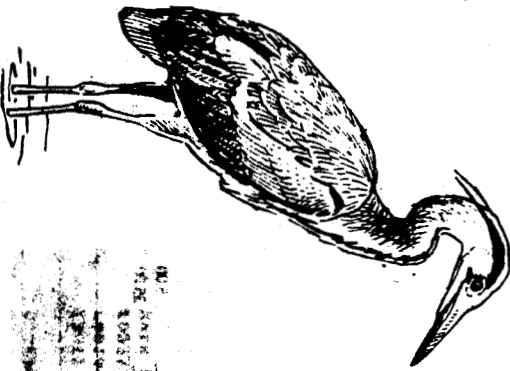
BOOKSTORE - Fran Schoenberger 465-1981 or Eva Sunell 995-0029. Nature guides, records, checklists, etc. at discounted prices.

MOUNTED BIRD SPECIMENS & MIGRATORY RECORDS - Jo Solem 725-5037. To borrow birds or to report sightings for spring or fall migration, call.

BLUEBIRD/CAVITY NESTER INFORMATION - Joe Sness 854-0250 or Mark Wallace 725-6370.

To use this directory as a handy reference, detach the two last pages of the newsletter; fold in half with one sheet inside the other.

HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB
10617 Grae Loch Road
Laurel, Maryland 20707



NO. 1
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1987