

BLUEBIRDS FLEDGE AT RECORD RATE IN 1987 - JOSEPH SUESS AND MARK WALLACE

The fifth year of our countywide cavity nester survey saw the Boost Bluebirds (and Other Native Cavity Nesters) Committee tally a record number of bluebirds fledged. Early spring provided relatively warm and dry conditions which is normally a sign that the bluebird nesting season will be highly successful. The 1987 breeding season was no exception. With the cicadas as an additional food source at mid-season, we anticipated that the 1985 record numbers would be surpassed.

	Boxes Monitored	Boxes Used Successfully	Eggs Laid	Young Fledged	Fledge Rate	Bluebirds Banded	Other Cavity Nesters Banded
1985	500	240	1825	1283*	70%		
1987	480	239	1947	1352	69%	730	12

* The figure 1343 originally published inadvertently included some Montgomery Co. boxes.

The egg and nestling loss data available for 1987 indicate that unknown causes and infertile eggs led the field.

Other cavity nesters fledged in 1987:

Carolina Chickadee	51
Tufted Titmouse	5
Carolina Wren	14
House Wren	208

House Sparrows trapped and/or eggs destroyed approximated 1400-1500.

We extend our thanks to the following individuals who submitted reports for 1987: Bob Bogdan, Jon E. & Jon K. Boone, Monika Botsai, Kathy Cahill, Ceil Casciaro, Regina Cope, Bill Eckert (How. Co. Rec. & Parks), Frances Ehlers, Louise Graham, Paul Hogue, Marie Lohr, Grazina & Mike McClure, Bea Newkirk, Eleanor Robbins, Hilde Rodgers, Jo Solem, Chuck Stirrat, Joe Suess, Vera and André Thomann, Mark Wallace & Albert Yaeger. We also appreciate the kindness of at least 98 property owners in the county who have allowed bird club members to monitor boxes on their land. Some of our regular monitors did not turn in reports. Please resolve to monitor, keep accurate records AND turn in the report in 1988!

We are honored to have been asked to co-chair this committee. Through this newsletter and by direct contact with our fellow birders, we hope to communicate our thoughts to you on several important methods to help our native cavity nesters and to try to measure accurately the success of that help. While both of us maintain large bluebird trails and are very busy during the nesting season, we will make every effort possible to answer questions, to assist with solving problems, and to band your young birds. You will find us to be strong supporters of accurate record keeping, regular monitoring, House Sparrow control and banding. Although occasionally individuals do not want their nestlings banded, one of the major advantages of banding is that the examination of the young birds during the banding process allows blowfly larvae to be removed from the nestlings and, if necessary, allows the infested nest to be replaced.

We would like to share several of our 1987 experiences which demonstrate the importance of routine monitoring.

Five bluebirds in box "Doug #1" were due for banding. As the bander approached the box, a male House Sparrow was seen leaving. The bluebird youngsters had been pecked rather severely and there was some doubt about their survival. The babies were removed from the box immediately, a trap was set, and shortly the male House Sparrow was captured. Through



consultation with a licensed bird rehabilitator, the wounded bluebirds were treated and returned to the box. Unaware of the fate of her mate, the female House Sparrow returned to continue the attack on the young bluebirds. A two hour vigil finally resulted in her demise. Throughout the ordeal, the male bluebird continued to feed his young. It was later learned that he was alone in this task. Apparently, he had lost his mate which may be the reason his young were so vulnerable to the House Sparrows. Fortunately, our efforts met with success and four of the five young bluebirds fledged.

During another routine nest inspection, it was noticed that a young bluebird had swallowed a horsehair which was part of the nesting material. The nestling had become so entangled in the long hair that it could barely move about to reach for food brought by the adults. All the young and the entire nest had to be removed to free the nestling by cutting the horsehair near the bird's beak. Daily checks over the next few days revealed that all was well and this youngster was now getting his share of food. He eventually fledged with his brothers and sisters.

We are especially proud of the efforts being carried on to boost native cavity nesters on "our" trail on county land jointly sponsored by Howard County Rec and Parks and the How. Co. Bird Club. Bill Eckert and his group of monitors reported a "bumper crop" of bluebirds up by 250% over 1986. There are now 69 boxes on 16 pieces of parkland which fledged 145 bluebirds, 105 House Wrens, and 11 chickadees. No young were lost to blowfly larvae this year which Bill credits to the placement of hardware cloth nesting platforms in the boxes. Vandalism was down this year mostly because some boxes were moved away from heavily used areas. It is too bad there are a few destructive individuals because part of the reason for club sponsorship is an educational one. Unfortunately, formerly successful and vandal-free boxes were left standing at Rockburn Branch Park near a softball field. By mid-May all three had been beaten with a baseball bat. Schooley Mill Park had several acres of sumac and pokeberries in the fall which attracted the largest concentration of bluebirds seen in the county in many years. In late November Jo Solem reported seeing 50-75 bluebirds in that area; a few days later George Chase observed 90-100! As Bill put it in his annual report to the monitors: "These large flocks of bluebirds are a good barometer that we are making a valuable contribution to the return of a strong bluebird population in MD."

Parks monitors during the 1987 season were B. Bogdan, M. Battle, L. & V. Elliott, S. Elliott, J. Kelly, B. & L. Kiekebusch-Steinitz, N. Terrill, L. Schiffer, L. Platter, R. Unger, P. & A. Seidman, G. Landes, L. & R. Kennedy, B. Rowe, K. Kuff, G. & L. Katz, C. Gross, C. Kindle, J. Sybert, S. Earp, M. Wright, P. Jacobson, D. Carl and C. Williams. Bill is always looking for monitors and has vacancies at several parks. Call 992-2464 to help.

A couple of comments. Schooley Mill Park not only has a fine food source to attract bluebirds, but it is surrounded by property owners who have been avid bluebird supporters for years. In that area, thanks to their efforts, one might consider a House Sparrow an endangered species. Mark Wallace did not have quite the same excellent results with the hardware cloth platforms that Bill Eckert reported. Mark found that 22 of 61 bluebird nests with young that were more than a week old had blowfly larvae in spite of platforms under 18 larvae-infested nests. He found in these cases that the larvae were concentrated in the center of the nest mass and never dropped through the holes in the platforms.

Your co-chairmen are interested in knowing of individuals who might be interested in checking boxes in their own neighborhoods. Call us at the following numbers if you can help or if we can be of assistance: Joseph Suess 854-0250 (answering machine) or Mark Wallace 725-6370 (call between 11:00 a.m. and noon or leave message evenings). Good luck during the 1988 nesting season. Call us if you need help.

Check the Howard County Recreation and Parks spring flier for two nature-related classes being offered in late April and early May: Spring Wildflower Identification and Habitat Birding. In both cases, the majority of time will be spent in the field.

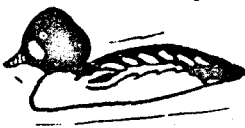
May-June newsletter items due by March 25th; spring migration records by June 7th. Call or mail to Jo Solem, 10617 Grae Loch Rd., Laurel, MD 20707; tel. 725-5037.

CALENDAR OF PROGRAMS, FIELD TRIPS, SPECIAL EVENTS

Programs are held at Longfellow Elementary School, 5470 Hesperus Dr., Columbia. 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, especially spring and fall. Trips do not always follow paths. No pets. Leaders may cancel due to inclement weather. If you have questions, contact leader or Field Trip Chairman Michele Wright 465-6057.

MARCH 5 - PINEY RUN RESERVOIR WATERFOWL TRIP. Leader: Dave Harvey 795-3117. Catch Saturday migrant waterfowl on their northward migration; visit nature center. Leave Grempler at 8:15 a.m. or meet at the park by 8:45 a.m. Take Rt. 32 north, turn left on Rt. 851 (before Patapsco bridge, this is Main St. thru Sykesville); veer left onto O'Brecht Rd., turn right onto Martz Rd. and park outside the gate.



FIFTEENTH ANNIVERSARY POTLUCK. See details in Jan-Feb newsletter. Dinner at 7:00 p.m. Reservations by March 1; Monika 465-5758 or Grazina 531-2780; held at the Florence Bain Senior Center on Beaverkill Road, Columbia.



MARCH 6 - TRIP TO THE NATIONAL ZOO. Leader: Roy Trudel. Details in Jan-Feb. newsletter. Sunday Reservations were due by Feb. 20th with Michele Wright 465-6057.

MARCH 10 - "LITTLE BROWN BIRDS" - David Holmes. One of our most popular speakers will Thursday give us the benefit of many years of field and banding experience to help identify the often frustrating sparrows.



MARCH 12 - WORKSHOP AT MILLER BRANCH LIBRARY. 10:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. Drop in the meeting Saturday room of the library on Frederick Road to check the displays and hear the presentations. Special emphasis in this workshop is twofold: cavity nesting birds and beginning birding. ~~Boost Bluebirds Chairmen Joseph Suess and Mark Wallace~~ will be available to answer questions. The North American Bluebird Society's new cavity nester slide program will be shown at 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. The featured speaker will be David Holmes who will present "An Introduction to Birding" at 2:00 p.m. Don't miss the opportunity to learn some basic aids to help your enjoyment of the flood of birds that will soon be returning or passing through this area. Even if you've been birding for several years, you may well pick up some tips from this excellent teacher. Sue Hudson will also have the bookstore displayed so if you aren't able to make the monthly meetings but need field guides, bluebird boxes, special stationery, MOS pins, checklists, or travel guides at good prices, stop in and check the stock. Special displays.

Features at

11:00 am
1:00 pm
2:00 pm



APRIL 14 - "IDENTIFYING SANDPIPERS" - Robert Ringler. Outstanding field birder and State Thursday MOS President Bob Ringler prepares us for the spring shorebird migration providing identification tips on this fascinating but often confusing group.



APRIL 23 - BEGINNING BIRDERS WALK AT APL. Leader: Richard Giannola 774-5483. You don't Saturday have to be a beginner to enjoy this mature floodplain along the Middle Patuxent River, the trip will be geared, however, to those who are just being introduced to the pleasures of birding. Leave Grempler at 7:30 a.m. for a 1/2 day trip when birds are beginning to migrate but leaves do not yet obscure the view totally.

APRIL 24 - SARAH HAVILAND MEMORIAL WILDFLOWER WALK. Leader: Bob Solem 725-5037. Meet at Sunday Grempler at 1:00 p.m. Sarah was one of our most faithful field trip enthusiasts who helped in wildflower and fern compilations. She eagerly explored whatever areas were scheduled. Bob will take us along an area of the north side of the Middle Patuxent River in King's Contrivance to look for early wildflowers but, as Sarah would have done, we'll look at the ferns and the fungi, the birds and the butterflies and whatever else comes into view. Bring your field guides and magnifying lenses. Come and share your memories.



CALENDAR (cont.)

APRIL 30 - SPRING WILDFLOWERS AND BIRDS AT AVALON, PVSP. Leader: Chris Ludwig 796-8373. Chris is the botanist for the Maryland Natural Heritage Program who will be our May speaker. He leads a trip to a "Hot Spot" in Patapsco Valley State Park which holds choice habitats for spring wildflowers and a variety of birds. (See the "Hot Spot" in Nov/Dec 1987 newsletter). Meet in the parking lot near the building at Rockburn Branch Park at 8:00 a.m. Take Rt. 103 east to Ilchester Rd., turn left on Ilchester, right on Landing Rd. Continue to park entrance on the right. From here we must carpool to a tiny parking lot so participants should plan to stay for the entire 1/2 day. Several miles of walking, some rough.



MAY 6 - WOODCOCK WALK. Leader: Al Geis. Observe courtship flight of this strange-looking bird. Leave Grempier at 7:00 p.m. or meet at 7:15 p.m. at the small parking area on the east side of Trotter Rd., .8 mile south of Rt. 108. No children under 10. Wear dark clothing, long sleeves and long pants. Trip does not go in rain. A rite of spring for many of our members. About 2 hours.



MAY 7 - PATUXENT RIVER DAY. There are activities taking place along the length of the river in several counties. Local events are planned by Howard Co. Rec & Parks including two by the Howard County Bird Club. Enjoy as many as possible. BIRD WALK - Marty Chestem will lead a walk in Savage Park at 1:00 p.m. Meet at the building in the park at the west end of Washington St. WILDFLOWER WALK - Bob Solem will lead this trip along the Savage Mill Trail. Meet at entrance just south of Bollman Truss Bridge on Foundry St. 1:00 p.m.



MAY 14 - MAY COUNT. The annual May Count held statewide by the MD Ornithological Society for 40 years has been moved to the second Saturday in May for 1988. Your reaction after the event will help determine whether it returns to the first weekend or remains on the second. Material will be sent later but compiler Paul Zucker can be contacted at 681-9005 if you have questions.



BOARD MEETINGS are held in the Howard Co. Central Library meeting room at 7:30 p.m.

- MARCH 24 - Thursday
- APRIL 28 - Thursday

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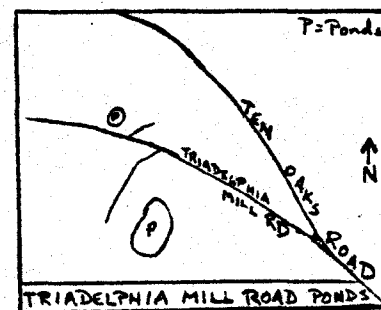
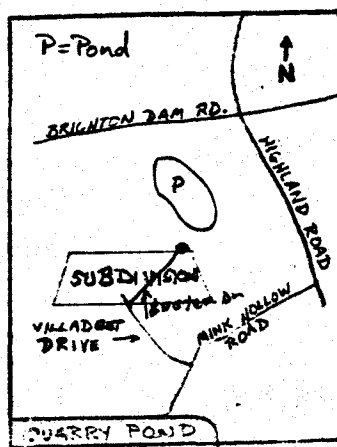
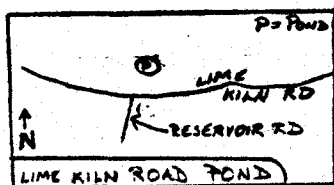
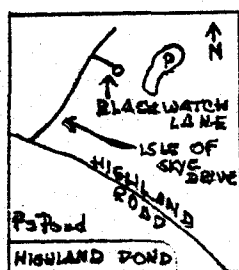
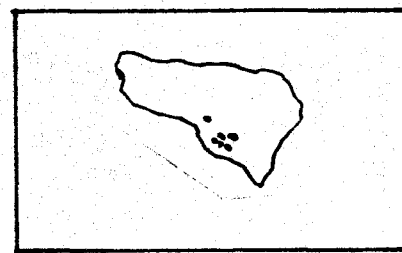
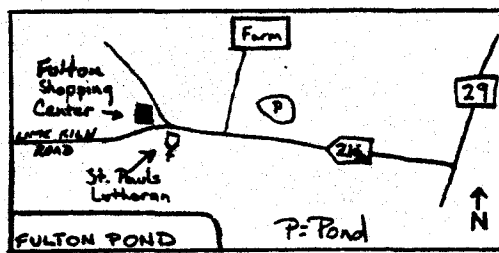
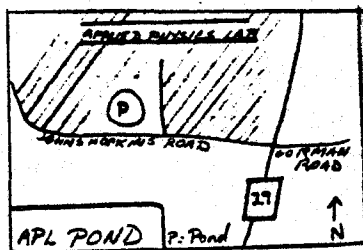
HURRAH FOR SEED SALE HELPERS! The second seed sale of the year on February 6th was held on a clear, cold day. Plenty of loaders meant that they were able to take breaks to stay warm. Coordinator Eileen Clegg reported that the following individuals loaded 27,000 pounds of seed: Don Waugh, Tom Strikwerda, Joseph Suess, Jim Blanchard, John Clegg, Jane Farrell, Bob Solem, Mike Leumas, Thomas Horwath, Mark Wallace, Peter Osenton, Bill Phillips, and Rod Botsai. Providing support inside with the desk, bookstore and displays were Barbara Doarnberger, Margo Garner, Caroline Halliday, Doris Holmes, Linda McDaniels, Sue Hudson, Marty Chestem, Helen Zeichner, Isabel Schum, Martha Waugh, Jo Solem, Eva Sunell, and Georgia Morris. Baked goods were provided by Eileen Clegg and Florence Saito.

PLEASE NOTE--MAY COUNT DATE HAS BEEN CHANGED FOR 1988. Now that MOS no longer holds its annual convention on the second weekend in May, it was decided to try having May Count on the second Saturday this year instead of the first. Since this year the date is as late as the count could possibly be, there should be an excellent representation of neotropical migrants on this count though obviously winter lingerers will be few.

BLUEBIRD BOXES AVAILABLE - Although boxes are best placed by February, spring can still be a successful time for placement. Clif Grant-built boxes are available at the Club bookstore along with monitoring instructions. Call Sue Hudson 442-5788 or see her at a meeting or the March 12th workshop.

BIRDING "HOT SPOTS" IN HOWARD COUNTY - CHRIS LUDWIG - SOUTHWESTERN PONDS

In this feature we will highlight some of the small ponds in the southwestern portion of the county (additional ones will be treated at another time). These ponds have all had interesting birds and can be seen (more or less) from public roads. A telescope can range from useful to absolutely necessary.



APL POND - This pond has a bubbler. As a result the water stays ice-free long after other ponds have frozen. Although this pond has not always been frequently checked, it is worth looking at in the colder months. Check from a small gravel parking area just east of the pond on the north side of Johns Hopkins Road.

FULTON POND - This is the most well-known of our county's farm ponds. Waterfowl, especially geese, are often found in good numbers. In March of 1985 a White-fronted Goose was observed here; Snow Geese are one of the unusual possibilities. When the water level is down in late summer (sometimes also in the spring) shorebirds are seen near the inlet on the west end. Killdeer are the most common but snipe, Pectorals, yellowlegs and Least Sandpipers are also to be looked for. In late winter and early spring large numbers of Ring-billed Gulls can often be found feeding in the fields or resting on the pond. Look them over for Bonaparte's and Laughing Gulls have been observed. Cattle Egrets are to be looked for in the adjoining fields while the manured areas occasionally turn up Horned Larks. To observe the pond and fields, do NOT stop on Rt. 216 or in the farm driveway. Instead park at St. Paul's Lutheran Church (other than Sunday mornings), the Fulton post office or in the small shopping center and walk back along the road.

HIGHLAND LAKE - Many waterfowl frequent this pond, especially during migration. Diving species such as Pied-billed Grebes, Lesser Scaup, Ring-necks and goldeneye have been seen. Observe the birds (a limited view) from Blackwatch Lane.

LIME KILN ROAD POND - This pond, as is true at Fulton, is often full of geese. Other waterfowl are also frequent but sporadic visitors. Killdeer can usually be seen in the warmer months (in late summer over 50 have been counted) and Cattle Egrets are occasional visitors to the surrounding fields. Stop along Lime Kiln Road (a bit hazardous) or park on Reservoir Road facing the pond.

QUARRY POND - This is actually an old stone quarry with deep water which prevents surface freezing except in bitterly cold winters. Subsequently, as at APL, this pond should be checked when others are frozen. In late January of this year scaup and pintails were found. Tundra Swans have also used it. Observe the quarry from Luster Drive off Villadest Drive. New streets are being added in this area so vantage points may change.

TRIADELPHIA MILL ROAD PONDS - The larger pond to the south is used most frequently by waterfowl. From Triadelphia Mill Road look for a newer road which has recently been constructed and allows closer views of the southern pond.

These ponds are in close enough proximity so that they can be checked on one trip. It is fascinating to note population levels at each pond which fluctuate daily and through the seasons. Acknowledgment for the information in this feature to Marty Chestem, Mark Wallace and Jo Solem.

FLOWER FEATURE: SPRING BEAUTY - BOB SOLEM AND GEORGIA MORRIS



Flowers: $\frac{1}{2}$ -1 in.
in a loose cluster

Petals: 5, pink or
white with darker
veins

Stamens 5, pink anthers
Pistil 1, has a 3 cleft
style

Leaves: 2, 2-8 in., slen-
der, midway up stalk

Fruit: small capsule

Height: 6-12 inches

SPRING BEAUTY - Claytonia virginica

HABITAT - Moist woods

HOWARD COUNTY BLOOMING SEASON - March - May

FAMILY - Purslane (Portulacaceae)

HOWARD COUNTY LOCATION - Common in most
woods and openings in a variety of soils
throughout the county

SPECIAL INFORMATION - The Spring Beauty is
one of Nature's early spring treasures. It
grows from an underground bulb-like tuber.
Indians and early settlers ate the starchy,
chestnut-like tubers in salads and stews.
The flower is named for Dr. John Clayton, an

early 18th century American botanist. Another name is "Fairy Spuds." The flowers last a single day (and bloom on sunny days only), then each bends aside and a lateral flower takes its place.

Do not confuse the Spring Beauty with Rue Anemone, another of the lovely early spring flowers of the woods. Note that the Spring Beauty has 5 petals with darker pink veins and pink anthers on the stamens. It also has only 2 slender leaves. Rue Anemone has white to pink "petals" but they are really sepals and there can be 5 to 10. It has numerous yellow stamens and pistils. Its leaves are rounded, three-lobed and occur in a whorl below the flowers. The Spring Beauty is completely dependent on insects for pollination; 71 species have been observed as visitors.

BIRD NOTE: SENSE OF SMELL IN TURKEY VULTURES - Cindi Dunigan on Florence Road recently observed behavior which underscores research evidence that Turkey Vultures locate prey using a sense of smell as well as keen eyesight. Cindi placed some meat that had spoiled and was still in its original wrapping inside a plastic garbage bag which she tied shut. When the bag was set out for trash pickup, several dozen Turkey Vultures congregated and tore the bag open. Unlike the neighborhood crows, the Turkey Vultures do not normally bother the trash bags. Cindi noted that a neighbor had had a similar experience. She called because she had heard on a recent television program that vultures can't smell and use only their eyesight to locate prey. A study that verified that Turkey Vultures can smell (Black Vultures and the California Condor use only eyesight) was published in 1964. Sometimes the results of scientific studies do not find their way into the popular literature.

DEL. VIRGINIA THOMAS SPONSORS PLASTIC "YOKE" BILL AND RECYCLING LEGISLATION IN ASSEMBLY

The Howard County Bird Club's board of directors has been engaged in research regarding the introduction of a bill to outlaw the plastic "yokes" that are found on some beverage six-packs. When discarded carelessly, they often become traps for wildlife. More than one individual has called a club member with the news that a duck, swan or goose has been seen with one of these potentially lethal bits of plastic around its neck. A number of states have outlawed their use. Among the group of environmental bills which Del. Virginia Thomas (13A) is introducing in the current legislative session, is one that would ban these plastic holders (HB 755). Also, she and Del. William Bevan (13B) are co-sponsoring a bill (HB 715) to require at least some recycling. The hearing date on this bill is not available at time of publication. These and several other bills relating to the environment are subjects which the bird club has long supported. We encourage our members to express their support to their delegates. President Martha Chestem plans to testify on behalf of the club on the hearing on the yoke bill before the House Environmental Matters Committee, February 16, 1988. Announcements will be made at meetings regarding the progress of these bills. If the bill succeeds in getting out of committee, additional support will be needed. Marty is interested in hearing from anyone who has observed wildlife entangled in plastic yokes. Call her at 730-1527. If possible, describe approximately when observed, species and location (it need not be local).

SPRING WILDFLOWER OBSERVERS NEEDED TO LOOK FOR COMMON WILDFLOWERS - Bob Solem

In the club's continuing effort to establish the presence of certain species of wildflowers in the county along with the documentation of their blooming times, this year's effort will focus on finding two hundred of the most common wildflowers and weeds in many different sections of the county. Those people indicating an interest in wildflower surveys on the current year's membership questionnaire will receive a checklist of the common wildflowers and weeds of Howard County and will be asked to focus their efforts on one area during the coming blooming season. If you do not receive a checklist by April 1st and are interested in participating in this project, call me evenings at 725-5037 or see me at a meeting. You need a basic field guide, some sort of magnifying glass, and a basic knowledge of how to identify wildflowers. Work will be done by individuals on their own and the list returned at the end of the 1988 blooming season. All parts of the county need to be covered; much information can be gathered just by walking regularly in your own neighborhood.

IN MEMORIAM: Jeanne Nicholson

Although Jeanne was best known in the Columbia area for her civic and arts related activities, she was also a long time bird club member who had a fine variety of birds at her feeders when she lived in the Vantage Point area. She was an occasional host for winter feeder trips and was always a consistent supporter of special events such as workshops, the annual potluck, and seed sales.

BIRD NOTE: Ruby-crowned Kinglet - Ceil Casciaro watched a Ruby-crowned Kinglet on a 20° January 5th at about 11:30 a.m. for more than 20 minutes. The bird sat on a window sill and flew at the reflection repeatedly. The combination of the agitated bird and the brisk wind ruffling its feathers enabled her to get an excellent look at the vivid crimson crown. The bird moved to an American Holly where it picked from the leaves what appeared to be inch long black strings before departing.

THE BLUEBIRDS AND THE SNAKE - SUSAN BRICKELL

It was the end of May 1987 when I noticed that a large hole in a dead portion of the Silver Maple in our yard was being used as the nesting site for a pair of Eastern Bluebirds. I continued to watch the location while the parents fed and tended their babies. They were constantly busy and had my admiration for they reminded me of how much attention little ones require. On June 4, the first nice day after several days of chilly temperatures and rain, I noticed a commotion in the area of the nest tree. Not only were the bluebirds flitting about, but the House Finches, Eastern Kingbirds, several sparrows, the Baltimore Orioles and others. All were making a terrible racket and fluttering about the immediate area of the bluebirds' nest. A look through the binoculars revealed a very large black snake on his way to the nest; there seemed not a thing any of those birds could do to stop it. Even the mockingbird flew about in his aggressive way--but kept a safe distance. What struck me was the way all those various species pulled together for support at such a traumatic time. All seemed to want to stop the snake, but it proceeded unbothered by all the senseless twittering, ate his meal, and went in pursuit of other tasty delights. He must have been hungry after the several days of rain for I watched him roam all through the branches of that tree at his own slow pace. The birds quieted down and seemed to have disappeared, although I knew that they were watching their enemy intently.

The snake continued to slide around the branches in this heavy silence. He seemed to be very cautious in his maneuvers at these heights. He returned to the bluebird nest again and rechecked it. As he left and was sliding along the neighboring branch, he paused and "yawned." With this action I saw how very large his mouth was and exactly why the birds stayed a good distance away.

The bluebirds never did come back, but the orioles seemed to take over and threatened the large reptile. At one point there was a stand-off. The snake went out on a dead branch; the male oriole stood his ground at the end of it making throaty threatening sounds as loud as he could. The snake stopped and wrinkled his entire body up, ~~almost as if he would spring, but instead a staring match ensued.~~ Finally, the snake turned around and continued his search through the branches for more to complete his meal.

It was at this point that I spotted the female oriole feeding her babies. Their nest was not far away hanging in the open at the tip of a branch. It was obviously the male's role to protect the young and from this point on the female stayed out of sight.

As the snake got closer to the oriole nest, once again a number of different bird species emerged to give their support, but not the bluebirds. This time even the Eastern Meadowlark joined in. The snake was now becoming very brave and was going to the end of each branch in his search. It was almost as if he knew that the bird who seemed to be the most concerned had a nest nearby. He had gotten to the area above the oriole nest and was continuing his methodical search of each branch. I was getting worried. Suddenly, he got too brave or careless and found himself floating through the air. It took what seemed like a long time for him to land for he had been as high as a third story building. When he landed, he immediately began to move off in the direction of the tree trunk, unhurt. Some hunger drive this snake seemed to have! I could stand it no more. I picked him up with a very long stick and carried him about twenty feet. He moved off in another direction so all were temporarily safe. Soon all the birds seemed to be back to their usual routine, all that is except the bluebirds.

For two weeks after the loss of the nestlings, one of the parents sat for long periods on the branch in the neighboring tree that had been used as a stopping point before carrying food to the babies. I could walk directly under him or her and no effort would be made to fly away as would be more normal behavior. Now it is fall. I never saw any sign of a new nest or babies, but the adults are still around and will most likely stay for the winter as is their usual practice. I hope they have better luck next spring.

RARE BIRD - RT - Bea Newkirk 498-1902. If you cannot reach Bea or wish to have a rarity verified, call Marty Chester 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 - Sue Hudson 442-5788. Nature guides, checklists, records, local aids, 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 - Joseph Suss 854-0250 or Mark Wallace 725-6370.

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

Maryland Ornithological Society, Inc.
Cylburn Mansion
4915 Greenspring Ave.
Baltimore, MD 21209

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Rob & Jo Solem
18617 Greenleaf Road
Lanver, MD

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