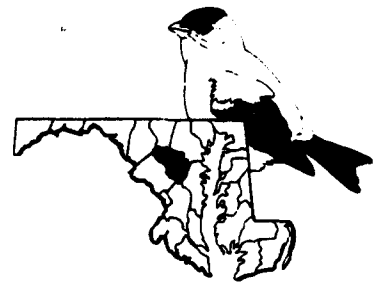




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Howard.

A Chapter of the
Maryland Ornithological Society



FIRST RED KNOT RECORDED FOR HOWARD COUNTY - Nancy Magnusson

On the evening of 27 August, I was scoping the mudflats at the Pigtail Boat Launch on Triadelphia Reservoir when a juvenile Red Knot flew to within 50 feet of me. The bird was about the same length as a Killdeer, but was rounder and chunkier with shorter legs. The upper parts were brownish-gray, the rump was light, and the breast was a pale rusty color. White borders on the wing coverts gave the back a scaly appearance. The knot was feeding in the vicinity of Killdeer, Pectoral and Spotted Sandpipers, but it did not appear to associate with the other birds. I watched the bird for about half an hour before it was flushed by fisherman walking along the shore. [Ed. note: a more detailed description of the bird is being submitted for *Maryland Birdlife* records.]

The knot was found each of the following two evenings and was observed by varying combinations of myself, Marty Chestem, Jane Farrell, and Jo Solem. As far as I know, the bird was last spotted the morning of the 30th by Jo Solem and Connie Bockstie.

~~ACTIVE NEST RECORD FOR RED-HEADED WOODPECKER ESTABLISHED IN COUNTY~~

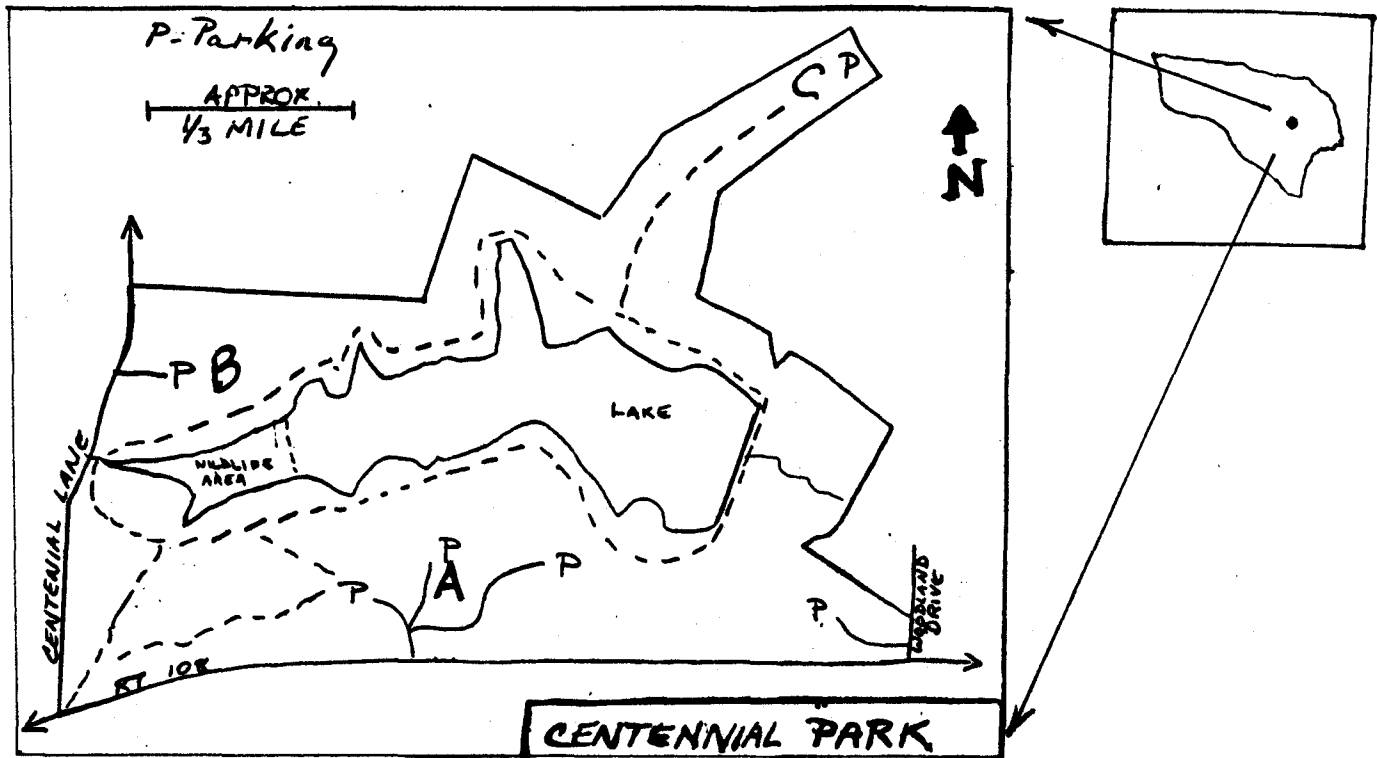


Red-headed Woodpeckers in Howard County are always worthy of mention; almost all birds seen are migrants. There have been occasional summer sightings, but no active nest had ever been recorded. The best previous record was by Jay Sheppard who, in 1980 or 1981, observed several fledged young going in and out of a hole in the stub of a tree near the Patuxent River between Rt. 97 and Howard Chapel Rd.

On the July 4th weekend (1988), Carl Huber and his 14 year old son, Adam, were visiting the farm of a friend in central Howard County when Adam spotted an adult Red-headed Woodpecker. (At the landowner's request the location cannot be pinpointed.) He thought he also saw a second bird but wasn't sure. Carl mentioned the sighting to Jay Sheppard who suggested he contact some Howard birders so that breeding verification could be made. Carl called Jane Farrell whom he knew to be a birder, and Jay called Jo Solem to alert her to the discovery. Over the course of the month of July, a pair of Red-headed Woodpeckers was watched on at least half a dozen occasions feeding, copulating, visiting a probable nest cavity, and appearing to feed young. On 30 July, Carl and Adam saw three young birds as well as the adults. One or more young, along with adults, was seen several times after that by the Hubers (Carl, Carla and Adam), Jane and Jo.

Birds of Maryland by Stewart and Robbins (1958) lists this species as rare or uncommon and local in the Piedmont. Their habitat is described as "woodlots, parks, and open woodland; usually most numerous in open stands of oak trees or in areas with an abundance of dead trees" (p. 193). The area where the Hubers found the woodpeckers breeding contains an unusual number of dead mature deciduous trees. Gypsy moth damage along the Patuxent River resulting in numerous dead and dying trees may provide increasingly attractive habitat in the county for this species.

BIRDING "HOT SPOTS" IN HOWARD COUNTY - Charles Swift - Centennial Park, Part I



Centennial Park has become one of Howard County's best birding "hot spots" though it has been open less than two years. Its 325 acres of diverse habitats have attracted a good number of relatively uncommon birds and birders in search of them. The area is particularly convenient to Columbia residents and is worth the drive from any part of the county in the better months.

To get to the park, go west on Rt. 108 from Rt. 29 and turn right at the second stoplight to reach the South Area (A) or continue to the next light, Centennial Lane, turn right and take another right shortly after crossing the small bridge in order to reach the West Area (B). From either of these areas one can pick up the 2.8 mile pathway-loop around the lake and reach any area of the park. I usually walk the complete loop which brings me close to most of the good birding areas. The North Area (C) can be reached from Old Annapolis Rd. which is an easy hike along a path linked to the main loop.

The best months to look for interesting birds here are April, May, September, and October. The 48 acre lake with its marshy area at the west end has attracted a wide variety of water birds looking for a place to rest. This past April was particularly good with Least Bittern, Oldsquaw, White-winged Scoter, and Black Tern all showing up in a period of about two weeks. Because most of these birds are passing through, they rarely stay for more than a day and often only for a few hours. It is, therefore, necessary to check the park as often as possible during these peak periods to find the best birds.

The rest of the park offers a nice diversity of habitats including open and brushy fields, wet areas, deciduous woods, and shrubby thickets with cedars, scrub pine and willows scattered throughout. These areas attract a wide variety of perching birds in all seasons except winter. In the winter, the park is fairly quiet but is worth checking for sparrows and raptors and, in an invasion year, may be good for finches.

In the next newsletter, I will take you around the park and describe some of the better birding areas. Also, as I am coordinating the county bird list for this park, I would like to invite anybody who birds the area to send or call their sightings to me at 10563 Tolling Clock Way, Columbia, MD 21044; 964-1989.

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 noted. Carpooling is encouraged with riders sharing the cost of gas and tolls. Dress for field work with stout, reasonably waterproof footgear 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 or Field Trip Chair Michele Wright 465-6057.

NOV 5 **WORK DAY AT IRISH GROVE.** Dotty Mumford (301) 849-8336. Annual fall workday at state Eastern Shore sanctuary. Dinner provided. Reservations requested.
Sat

NOV 10 **"BIRDS AT THE WINDOW FEEDER."** Dr. David Thornbill, Essex Community College, discusses those species which we see so frequently outside our windows during the colder months.
Thurs

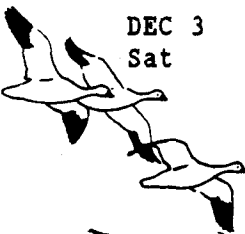


NOV 12 **SMITHSONIAN TRIP TO TWO EXHIBITS:** "The Legacy Endures" (an exhibit featuring the history of the Federal Duck Stamp print program) and "Tropical Rainforests: A Disappearing Treasure." Leaders: Marty Chestem (730-1527) & Jo Solem (725-5037). Possibly all day. Marty has served as a volunteer for the Duck Stamp exhibit and will provide commentary. The rainforest exhibit will aid understanding of an ecosystem used by "our" neotropical migrants. Meet at Grempler at 8:45 a.m. We will drive to Silver Spring and take Metro. Museum cafeterias are available for lunch. After the planned exhibits, you may go elsewhere on the Mall. Return is at your discretion or that of your driver if you choose to carpool to Silver Spring.
Sat



~~NOV 24-27 **CHINCOTEAGUE NW REFUGE.** Chuck Dupree 796-1086. Chuck will be in the area and would be happy to have you join him. Call before the 22nd to arrange meeting. Road to wash flats open to vehicles only this one week during the year. Waterfowl!~~
Thurs-Sun

DEC 3 **BOMBAY HOOK NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE.** Leaders: Bill Eckert 992-2464 (days) & Chuck Dupree 796-1086 (evenings). Annual bus trip jointly sponsored by How. Co. Rec & Parks. Bus leaves George Howard building parking lot in Ellicott City at 7:30 a.m.; returns around 5:00 p.m. Make reservations with Bill at above number. Fee \$15.00. Good views of many species with aid of telescope. Includes refuge entry fee.
Sat



DEC 8 **FOURTH ANNUAL MOVIE NIGHT.** Once a year we feature a fine film. Jane Geuder has obtained "RAINFOREST," a 58 min. film explaining Costa Rica's efforts to protect its unique animals and plants. Jerry Einem introduced MOS to this region some years ago. This movie provides an additional opportunity to gain insights into the value and beauty of rainforests. Popcorn? Certainly!
Thurs



DEC 23 **TRIADELPHIA CHRISTMAS COUNT.** Bob Whitcomb, compiler 344-2339 (O); 299-5215 (H). Dawn to dusk count of all birds seen & heard in Count circle which includes western half of Howard Co. The \$4.00 participant fee helps with publication of *American Birds*.
Tues



BOARD MEETING - December 1 at Jane Farrell's, 6424 Sandchain Road, 596-2630, at 7:30 p.m.
Thursday

PLASTIC YOKE MEETING WITH DELEGATE VIRGINIA THOMAS - Martha Chestem

Delegate Virginia Thomas sponsored a plastic yokes bill in the State Legislature last year which would have restricted the use of nondegradable plastic packaging of beverages. The Howard County Bird Club was among the environmental organizations that testified in favor of the bill which was defeated mainly because of the lobbying of soft drink and plastics manufacturers. This is despite the evidence that plastic packaging is harmful to the environment, litters the highways and parks, fills the landfills, and maims and kills wildlife. Few birders have not seen Canada Geese, gulls or ducks entangled in discarded plastic yokes to the extent that they could not fly or were restricted in their ability to eat.

On September 18, Del. Thomas called together representatives of environmental groups, soft drink companies, and plastics manufacturers to discuss what steps should be taken. She wanted to convince the beverage industry of the importance of using biodegradable packaging as the right thing to do. Her hopes are that they will comply voluntarily making a battle for legislation unnecessary. (Seventeen states already have laws prohibiting the use of nondegradable plastic yokes.)

There were mixed views and comments with a suggestion of an agreement from the opposition that perhaps now the time had come for a change; however, no firm commitment was made and grave concern was expressed about passing the cost on to the consumer as well as concern for the difficulty this may cause small businesses. Del. Thomas concluded that she would study the testimony given by all and make her plans known for further action.

I attended the meeting representing the Howard County Bird Club and the Maryland Ornithological Society and will continue to keep members posted. If anyone has questions or advice, please call me at 730-1527.

FLOWER FEATURE: SILVERROD - Georgia Morris and Bob Solem



1'-4' slender & wand-like

SILVERROD - *Solidago bicolor*

FAMILY - Composite (*Compositae*)

Flowers in terminal spike: tiny, shaggy whitish

HABITAT - Thin dry woods, roadsides

HOWARD COUNTY BLOOMING SEASON - Late August to mid-October.

Leaves: basal are 3"-7" long, toothed; upper gradually diminish in size with smaller teeth near top of stem

HOWARD COUNTY LOCATION - Widespread; all parts of Patapsco River Valley and along Patuxent River

FLOWERS - Small (1/2"-1/3" across) whitish in clusters growing out of leaf axils near top of the stem. Creamy disk flowers are surrounded by 7-9 white ray flowers

LEAVES - Alternate, oblong, stalks almost clasping the stem. Stem and leaves are fuzzy.

SPECIAL INFORMATION - There are 14 different species of goldenrod in Howard County. Silverrod is the only white species. It is called "bicolor" because its rays are white and the center disk flowers are a pale creamy-yellow color.

The Howard County Bird Club gratefully acknowledges several recent donations to the Memorial/Gifts Fund in memory of Anne Clegg, Doris Manson, and Alvin Marks.

HOWARD MOS SUPPORTS LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATION CHANGES - Bob Solem

The Howard County Council will consider changes to the *Subdivision and Land Development Regulations* in November, 1988. Many of the changes will strengthen the standards for treatment of sensitive areas such as steep slopes, stream valleys, wetlands and floodplains; will limit the disturbance of stream valleys and steep slopes by clearing or grading; and will require development plan approval before grading permits are issued. The Howard County Bird Club at the October, 1988, meeting voted to support these changes by circulating a petition and by planning to testify at the November County Council meeting.

You can still help! We will have the petition at the November Bird Club meeting. Would you do more by calling or writing your Council member? Call me for additional information at 725-5037.

The proposed legislation will amend the Howard County *Subdivision and Land Development Regulations* (Subtitle 1 of Title 16 of the Howard County Code). The changes affecting the environment that we support are as follows:

- Eliminate provisions for the floodplain lot adjustment, which allows a density bonus for residential development if the 100-year floodplain area is dedicated to the County. (This provision now allows additional housing on sites least able to accommodate them.)
- Prohibit mass grading prior to approval of a final plan of a site development plan, in order to ensure that mass grading is done in accordance with these detailed plans. Add the Office of Planning and Zoning to the review process for grading plans, so that the plans can be reviewed for consistency with the final plan or site development plan.
- Prohibit grading or removal of vegetative cover on land with existing slopes of 25% or greater. In residential districts, prohibit grading or removal of vegetative cover within 50 feet of a stream bank and prohibit building within 75 feet of a stream bank. These restrictions would protect erodible areas and stream valleys.

TEN YEARS OF HABITAT WALKS IN HOWARD COUNTY PARKS

Did you know that this is the tenth year of Bird Club co-sponsorship of habitat walks in county parks? The first year's walks were held in David Force Park. Among the other areas visited have been Trotter Rd., Benson Branch, Centennial (before the lake), Rockburn Branch, Cypressmede, Savage, and Schooley Mill. Individuals who have served as leaders along with Bill Eckert from Rec and Parks have been Marci Krishnamoorthy, Linda McDaniel, Alice Kretz, Jo & Bob Solem, Eva Sunell, Cathy & Leroy Williamson, Helen Miller, Nan Rhineland, Mike & Grazina McClure and, for the last half dozen years, Chuck Dupree. The walks feature a visit once each season for a year to a designated park. Leaders and participants examine the birds, flowers, trees, mammals, etc. during an easy half day trip. These walks have proven to be a popular and enduring part of the Recreation and Parks program.

SECOND SEED SALE - The second seed sale of the 1988-89 year will be held in early February and will be announced with a mailing. All members and seed purchasers will receive information. If you have questions, contact Eileen at 730-4362.

MATERIAL FOR JAN-FEB NEWSLETTER SHOULD BE PHONED OR MAILED TO JO SOLEM (725-5037), 10617 GRAELOCH RD., LAUREL, MD 20707 BY NOV 20. AUTUMN MIGRATION DATES WELCOME ANY TIME; MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN DEC 7 FOR INCLUSION IN REPORTS FOR MARYLAND BIRDLIFE AND AMERICAN BIRDS.

HOWARD COUNTY FAIR VOLUNTEERS - Mike McClure did an outstanding job of recruiting volunteers during the height of the vacation season. Staffing the exhibit were Ralph & Jane Geuder, Nancy Magnusson, Don & Jan Randle, Marci Krishnamoorthy, Michele Wright, Chuck Stirrat, Dave Harvey, Linda Stirrat, Jane & Jack Farrell, Helen Zeichner, Don & Martha Waugh, Cathy Williamson, Linda McDaniel, Bob & Jo Solem, Tom Strikwerda, Roy & Karen Trudel, Eva Sunell, Martha Chestem, and Mike Leumas. Special thanks to each volunteer for helping during the hot, hot weather!

SEED SALE HELPERS - Eileen Clegg, seed sale coordinator, thanks the following individuals for loading or helping inside during the Autumn Seed Sale which was our most successful ever: Margo Garner, Mildred Fitez, Harriet & Frank Baldau, Martha & Don Waugh, Sheila Glanz, Helen Zeichner, Maud & Harry Banks, Marty Chestem, Tom Strikwerda, Bob & Jo Solem, Michele Wright, Bob Pechacek, Gus & Cleo Karafas, Steve Clarkson, Jim Blanchard, Bob Bogdan, Lynne Young, Joe Suess, Chuck Stirrat, Mike Leumas, Jane Farrell, Don Kyle, and Pam Shaw. Much appreciated baked goods were donated by Barbara Davis, Mrs. Martin, Rosamond Munro, Barbara Doarnberger, Monika Botsai, and Maud Banks.

HOMETOWN FAIR AT THE COLUMBIA MALL - Thanks to those who "manned" the Hometown Fair display Sept. 23-24. Working at the table were Monika Botsai, Zelda Simon, Helen Zeichner, Martha Chestem, Marci Krishnamoorthy, Tom Strikwerda, Eileen Clegg (coordinator), Connie Bockstie, Marjorie Mountjoy, Elise Seay, Florence Saito, Sheila Glanz and Sandy & Mike Meyerhoff.

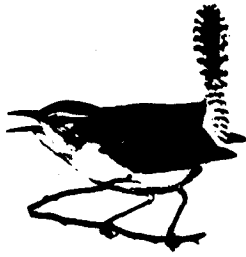
ANNUAL COUNTY BIRD LISTS - Compiler Jane Farrell reminds members to send her by January 15, 1989, the 1988 list of birds they have seen in the county. Individual totals are not published. This is an attempt to track all species seen so send whatever you saw in your yard, your neighborhood or throughout the county to 6324 Sandchain Rd., Columbia, MD 21045. This marks the tenth year the Bird Club has compiled this information. Anyone submitting a 1988 list to the compiler will receive a summary of all species seen in the 1979-1988 decade after the 1988 material has been completed.

FAREWELL NICK AND ELLIE SHORT - Dr. Nicholas Short and his wife, Eleanor, left the area in late summer, when an opportunity to teach on the college level at a school in Pennsylvania came quite suddenly. While a club member, Nick had led a geology field trip, presented a program, served as Program Chairman for two years, and had been elected Vice-President for 1988-1989. We are grateful for his service and wish both Nick and Ellie well in their new home.

RECYCLING CENTER MOVES - The recycling center near the post office in Columbia is moving on or about October 15th to 9250 Rumsey Rd., still on the east side of Columbia. Rumsey Rd. is north of Rt. 108 off Red Branch Rd. in the Oakland Ridge Industrial Center. The recycling center's phone number is 740-9460. In addition to Sat. hours from 9:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m., individuals may drop off aluminum, newspapers, and bottles on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:00 a.m.- 2:00 p.m. The Long Reach Safeway pays for aluminum cans, and newspapers can be left at the Giant in several Howard County locations.

HUNTING SEASON - It is impossible in a limited space to list the dates of all hunting seasons in the county. Although there is no hunting on Sunday, prudence is recommended at all times when birding in the vicinity of Triadelphia Reservoir and in the Hugg-Thomas Wildlife Management Area where some types of hunting are allowed. There are seasons of varying length for rabbit, pheasant, squirrel, raccoon, deer, and quail. During the period from Oct. 5-Jan. 31 there may be several kinds of game legal at any one time.

ANOTHER CASE OF SERENDIPITY - Burton Alexander



My experience that most fits this category happened more than twenty years ago in central Pennsylvania and, since then, has been an example of what can happen when least expected. I was a student at Penn State and, while taking a break from my studies one hot June afternoon, I decided to get on my bicycle and explore some residential streets at the edge of town (State College). I was not watching birds nor even thinking about them, so I had no binoculars or field guide with me.

One street I followed became a dirt road that went toward a wooded area. I decided to enjoy the shade of the woods for a few minutes and continued in that direction. I had proceeded slowly into the woods only a hundred feet or so when I heard a bird song that I did not recognize. I stopped and looked around and less than fifty feet away saw some small birds on the stump of a tree that had broken off a few feet above the ground. Sneaking a little closer, I saw that they were wrens and they had eye stripes. The song was not the Carolina Wren's and the habitat was certainly not the Marsh Wren's. They had to be Bewick's Wrens. This new species for my life list was observed not just as one bird but as two adults and at least two young at their nest!

I watched from behind a tree for a few minutes, then left the woods. My ornithology professor, Merrill Wood, lived within a mile so I rode there and told him what I had just found. He was eager to confirm my identification so we immediately drove back to the area. He recognized the Bewick's at once and said it had not been seen in the county for about ten years.

It was luck that I had decided to go exploring on my bike, chose that area, went down that street, and decided to follow the dirt road into the woods for a while. The result was a life bird when I had not been looking for any birds at all and when I would have least expected a new (or even unusual) species--a hot summer afternoon near a residential area.

[Note: Share your case of birding serendipity by sending it to the editor.]

BARRED OWL NOTECARD CREATED BY SUE PROBST NOW AVAILABLE



A year ago local artist M. Suzanne Probst created a notecard for the Bird Club featuring a female Belted Kingfisher. This year her model was one of the owls that rehabilitator Jane Zuke has cared for. The result is a handsome adult Barred Owl peering from its branch perch. The single fold notecard on linen beige recycled stock with a linen envelope measures 4-3/4 x 6-1/4 inches. It is blank inside to serve as an all-occasion card. This design along with the kingfisher will be available at meetings and seed sales.

The Virginia Society of Ornithology has established Virginia's first rare bird hotline. It will come out of Fredericksburg, the tape will change every Monday, and there will be space at the end of the message for callers to report sightings. Dial 1-703-898-3713. For our newer members a reminder that the hotline for the D.C.-Maryland area is the Voice of the Naturalist. Call 652-1088.



BIRD NOTES: During the month of August, Eva Sunell observed more than a hundred Chimney Swifts using a chimney at the Atholton Elementary School for a roost. Toward dusk if you observe a flock of swifts circling an area, watch closely for they will fly in a swirling mass until it is almost too dark to see them, then within the space of just a few minutes they'll descend into the chimney over which they have been flying.

PLASTIC JUGS, A BLUEBIRD BOX ALTERNATIVE - Joe Suess and Mark Wallace

Over the past few years, we have experimented with a one gallon plastic bleach bottle as an alternative to a wooden box in areas where House Sparrow control is difficult or the House Wren poses major problems. The experiment has met with success. In two areas where the bluebirds were threatened, the plastic jugs have fledged two clutches per year from each jug and the competitor problems were virtually eliminated. In both of these cases, it was necessary to remove all the wooden boxes from the area. Given a choice, the bluebird prefers a wooden box. In similar experiments throughout the country since Dr. Zeleny recommended the jug as an alternative, it has been reported that the House Sparrow and the House Wren, on occasion, have taken to the jug, but we should not be discouraged with these isolated reports. Illustrated designs of the jug are available but basically your design should include these items: four 3/8" drain holes in jug bottom, air vent cut on underside of handle, standard 1-1/2" opening just under tapered area of jug, no fewer than two coats of a light-colored water-base paint to eliminate "greenhouse effect." THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT! (We have noted one jug on a Howard County trail covered with duct tape prior to painting. This could turn out to be an excellent solution to the problem of high internal temperature.)

All other recommendations still apply: locate in open area, clean out after each use to discourage blowfly and mite infestation, and monitor weekly. A new design developed last year includes a removable front for easier cleanout, egg check, access for banding or health checks of nestlings at 11-13 days. We would be pleased to show anyone who is interested a sample. Finally, the use of a 1-1/2 gallon jug is suggested since neither design includes a predator guard. The larger jug provides a little more protection against predators reaching in to molest eggs or young. It has been interesting to note that the nests in some jugs were constructed to lean toward the back thus placing the eggs as far from the entrance hole as possible. Late autumn is a good time to consider placing boxes and jugs for the bluebirds since they are spending some time now looking for winter roosts as well as nesting sites for next year.

We would like to note the fine job Jack Grove has been doing on the VFW property in helping to control starlings, a nemesis of all cavity nesters. When Jack learned from a couple of our members of the threat starlings pose to bluebirds, he carefully closed every opening in a World War II vintage plane which has stood on the property for 25 years thus reducing the future starling population in the area significantly. Connie Bockstie and Ceil Casciaro have faithfully helped Jack monitor the new bluebird trail at the "V" which fledged 19 bluebirds and 5 titmice. All were banded by Joe Suess.

Maryland Ornithological
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Cylburn Mansion
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Baltimore, Maryland 21209

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