

Howard.

A Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society



Figure C

Flower Feature - Winter Wildflowers by Georgia Morris



"dead" winter landscape. Take your copy of <u>Weeds in Winter</u> by Lauren Brown or <u>Pods--Wildflowers in Their Final Beauty</u> by Jane Embertson and enjoy identifying the skeletal remains of our summer wildflowers. Because much of the color is gone, it is helpful to recall the overall silhouette of the plant and the shape of the inflorescence when trying to make identifications.

Don't let winter keep you indoors; there's lots to see in the

Figure A

Did you know that the fragrant Japanese Honeysuckle (Lonicera japonica; Figure A) of spring and summer produces shiny black berries

in the fall? The berries are round with a single point and are surrounded with leaves which have turned maroon and dark green.

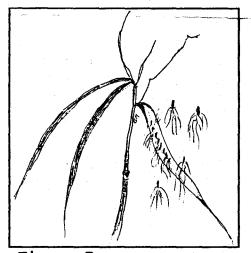


Figure B

Indian Hemp (Apocynum cannabinum; Figure B) has tiny greenish white flowers in summer and long dangling seed pods. In the fall and winter the seed pods dry and split open

dispersing numerous airborne seeds--each with its own silken "parachute."

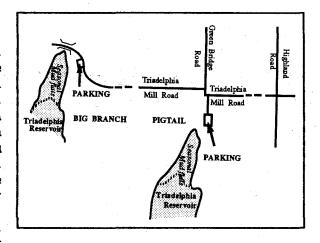
Round-headed Bush Clover (Lespedeza capitata; Figure C) has light-colored flowers that remain on the plant to dry and darken in the fall. They have the appearance of sharp burns but are rather soft to the touch. The leaves that remain on the plant dry into tight corkscrew shapes.

WILD BIRD BILL BECOMES LAW

President Bush signed the <u>Wild Bird Conservation Act of 1992</u> on October 23, 1992. This law will greatly restrict imports of wild birds, some of which have been pushed to the brink of extinction as a result of legal and illegal captures for the pet trade. The Maryland Ornithological Society has strongly supported this legislation. Some Howard members may remember when Martha Chestem of our chapter testified in Annapolis in support of a Maryland bill (which did not pass) before there was hope of obtaining a national law.

BIRDING "HOT SPOTS" IN HOWARD COUNTY Big Branch, Triadelphia Reservoir Joanne Solem

Directions: From the junction of Md. 108 and 216, go north on Highland Road (the extension of Md. 216) 3.2 miles to Triadelphia Mill Road. Turn left on Triadelphia Mill Road 1.6 miles to Green Bridge Road. At this junction, if you wish to visit Pigtail Boat Launching Area, turn left on a dirt road and continue 0.4 mile to where it deadends in a small paved parking lot which is open from March through mid-December from sunrise to sunset. If you are visiting Big Branch, instead of making the left turn onto the dirt road, follow the road in the right turn (where it becomes Green Bridge Road) for less than 0.1 mile. Turn left on Triadelphia Mill Road and go 1.6 miles to the paved parking lot adjoining the left side of the road. The reservoir



can be seen from the parking area or the paved boat launch. Much of this recreation area is open to bow hunters so it is advisable to stay close to the parking lot and picnic area during the hunting season, except on Sundays, when hunting is not allowed.

The Pigtail Area is one of the preeminent Howard County locations for observing birds on this large body of water. (Brighton Dam sometimes offers a better perspective on waterfowl and gulls, but it lacks shorebird and songbird habitat within easy viewing distance.) Pigtail's highlights were detailed in the March-April 1986 issue of this newsletter at which time it was still referred to as "Green Bridge." When making a visit to Pigtail, it is a good idea to take a little additional time to check Big Branch. Although usually less productive than Pigtail, any vantage point on the Triadelphia Reservoir may turn up a variety of species.

Big Branch Recreation Area, owned by the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC), is open to the public. There are picnic tables, charcoal grills, a boat launch, and a portable toilet. Most important to birders, no user fee for shore use is required. Boaters need lake use permits; dogs must be leashed; and no swimming or wading is permitted. Because the small paved parking lot is near the edge of the reservoir, it is possible to make a quick check of the cove without extensive walking.

In late fall and early spring during waterfowl migration, this arm of Triadelphia can be a resting place for a variety of loons, grebes, ducks, and geese. One early March day a flock of nearly 200 Ring-necked Ducks rested out of the wind. Green-winged Teal, Common and Hooded Mergansers, and American Black Ducks are all seen in the course of a year. Wood Ducks with young have been found in the spring. Always sort through the Canada Goose flocks for a stray Snow Goose. Great Blue and Green-backed Herons are frequently seen. Bonaparte's Gulls and Caspian Terns have been observed in migration. Belted Kingfishers are resident, and Pileated Woodpeckers often fly across the cove. Vultures of both species ride the thermals during the warmer months; several species of hawks live in the surrounding woods or migrate through the area. From April to October, look for Ospreys. Bald Eagles are a possibility any time the reservoir is ice-free.

Usually in late summer a drop in the water level exposes mud flats which vary in extent and configuration. Most often Least, Spotted, and Solitary Sandpipers can be found in company with the ubiquitous Killdeer. An occasional yellowlegs may drop in but, for some reason, the shorebird assortment is normally less varied than what one finds at Pigtail. The scrubby vegetation near the parking lot down to the water's edge is worth examining, particularly during migration. The small bridge on Triadelphia Mill Road often harbors nesting Northern Rough-winged and Cliff Swallows. Other swallows are possible during spring and late summer. Adjacent wooded areas are home to a variety of neotropical species in summer; others may pause briefly during migration. At least one Mourning Warbler has been observed at Big Branch.

1992 BREEDING BIRD CENSUS MIDDLE PATUXENT ENVIRONMENTAL AREA Gerald Einem

The breeding birds on a 29.7 acre mature upland forest plot were censused between April 25 and July 6, 1992. The census plot was established in 1971 and was censused each year through 1976 and more recently from 1990 through 1992. The 1992 census is based on 23 visits (17 sunrise, 5 sunset); a total of 63 census hours. The following information compares the current 1992 census results to the average census count from 1971 through 1976 and the average from 1990 through 1992.

	Rumber Territories				Number Territories		
SPECIES	1992	1971/76	1990/92	SPECIES	1992	1971/76	1990/92
Wood Thrush	20.5	7.3	19.3	Yellow-throated Vireo	1.0	0.2	1.3
Red-eyed Vireo	18.0	13.3	18.0	Gray Catbird	1.0	3.5	1.0
Northern Cardinal	14.0	9.2	8.5	American Redstart	1.0	0.4	0.7
Hooded Warbler	11.0	4.4	9.3	Blue Jay	1.0	0.6	1.3
Red-bellied Woodpecker	10.0	1.8	9.0	Northern Flicker	0.5	0.1	0.7
Scarlet Tanager	10.0	3.0	7.7	American Crow	+	+	+
Ovenbird	7.5	1.0	6.1	White-eyed Vireo	+	0.4	+
Acadian Flycatcher	7.0	8.8	8.0	Common Yellowthroat	+	0.0	+
Downy Woodpecker	6.0	2.6	3.8	Mourning Dove	+	1.0	0.8
Tufted Titmouse	4.5	3.1	4.3	Pileated Woodpecker	+	+	+
Kentucky Warbler	4.0	4.0	3.5	Indigo Bunting	+	0.0	+
Veery	3.0	3.2	3.0	Northern Parula	+	1.3	0.3
Brown-headed Cowbird	3.0	1.3	1.5	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	0.0	0.3	0.0
Carolina Chickadee	3.0	2.3	3.0	Black-and-white Warbler	0.0	0.3	0.3
Carolina Wren	3.0	2.3	2.3	Louisiana Waterthrush	0.0	0.3	+
White-breasted Nuthatch	3.0	0.6	2.5	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	0.0	0.6	0.2
Eastern Wood-Pewee	3.0	1.8	2.8	Hairy Woodpecker	0.0	0.5	0.7
Rufous-sided Towhee	2.5	3.9	2.5	Cerulean Warbler	0.0	1.8	0.0
Blue-gray Cnatcatcher	2.5	1.2	0.8	Great Crested Flycatcher	0.0	0.2	0.0
Worm-eating Warbler	1.0	0.2	0.3	Yellow-breasted Chat	0.0	0.3	0.0

Male birds were located by grid markers and counted primarily on the basis of vocalization. To be counted, a male must be heard on his territory on a minimum of three visits. A count of 0.5 means the bird was heard outside and inside the census plot an equal number of times. The columns show the actual or average number of different male birds vocalizing on territory during the period of the birding census. A "+" means < 25% of a species' territory is included within the plot. Breeding birds that visited the area but whose territories were largely outside of the study plot included: Red-shouldered Hawk, Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and Black-and-white Warbler.

A number of forest nesting birds such as the Wood Thrush, Red-bellied Woodpecker, and Scarlet Tanager have more then doubled the average number of territories for 1990-92 when compared to 1971-76. Some of the increase is due to more censusing time over the past three years; however, the increase cannot be accounted for on this basis alone.

Increased numbers of territories may also be due to changes in the structure of the forest. The Ovenbird is a good example of this, showing the greatest increase in territories over the past 22 years. The breeding Ovenbird is a ground-dwelling warbler of moist deciduous forests and mixed woods and is most abundant where there is a closed canopy, a high basal area of medium sized trees, and an open understory with intermediate shrub density. A new (1992) vegetative survey of the plot shows the forest has changed in ways (canopy cover increased from 67 to 98%) favoring an increase in forest interior nesting bird territories, including the Ovenbird, Scarlet Tanager, Wood Thrush, Red-bellied Woodpecker and other birds that show increased population density in mature forests. The increased maturity of the forest structure may also account for fewer territories of birds that prefer forest edge or openings. This is borne out by the decrease for the Rufous-sided Towhee, Grey Catbird, Mourning Dove, Northern Parula, and Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Overall, the breeding bird population of the census plot appears to be evolving in a way that reflects successful changes in the development of the forest structure. Nevertheless, we must be alert to changes that stem from factors beyond the immediate forest environment such as nearby urbanization, cowbird parasitism, or deforestation here or in the tropics.

Many thanks to Phil Norman and Bob Solem for the new vegetative survey of the plot and Charlie Fuller for his assistance with the bird census. A more extensive description of the 1992 census, including the vegetative survey, will be published in the 1993 winter issue of the Journal of Field Ornithology Supplement.

UPPER TEXAS COAST TRIP REPORT, Part I

Phil Davis

Editor's note: From time to time we publish articles by our members who have ventured beyond the boarders of Howard County for birding. This article is one such and we hope it will provide you with thoughts of a wonderful spring migration birding experience as you sit by the fire this winter contemplating your next birding adventure.

April, 1992, was the third time in four years I have ventured to the Upper Texas Coast for spring migration. I almost hesitate to write this report because I don't want to let the secret out. It's a great place !!! Would you believe Blackburnian Warblers as trash birds one day, and Chestnut-sided Warblers as trash birds the next day! Four and one-half days of leisurely birding yielded 176 total species (167 seen and 9 heard only).

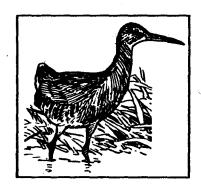
The first stop for Barbara and I, about 35 miles north of Houston, was W. G. Jones State Forest near Conroe, TX for the Red-cockaded Woodpecker. The location is described in Lane's Guide to the Texas Coast (1988). Rangers at the office, provided a map showing the location of the nesting colonies,



with nest trees even marked on the map. In the field, the trees have green painted bands around them. Red-headed and Red-bellied Woodpeckers abound also.

We next headed to the Jessie H. Jones Park, near Houston Intercontinental Airport, to try for the Swainson's Warbler. This location is described in Mike Austin's article "Finding Nesting Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, Swainson's Warblers, and Bachman's Sparrows in East Texas" in the April 1991, <u>Birding</u>. Although we didn't find the Swainson's Warbler, Hooded Warbler was there.

High Island, our next stop, is a well-known migration hot spot on the Upper Texas Coast, just north of Galveston Island. Migrants leave the Yucatan Peninsula at dusk and make the 500 mile trip over the Gulf of Mexico, arriving on the Texas coast around noon the following day. Normally, the birds make landfall and continue over the coast, putting down when they hit the woodlands of inland Texas. Some of them, however, put down as soon as they hit land. The Texas coast is fairly barren, and places that are fortunate enough to possess stands of trees, attract the birds. Weather and winds can drastically influence the bird action, and rain or northeast winds can create "fallout" conditions. Some days at High Island can be slow, some can be great, but usually it is at least "good". Peak periods are from mid-April to mid-May. The Texas coastal plain also features many wetlands and tidal mudflats, which add other dimensions to birding the area. Lane's Guide to Birding the Texas Coast (1988) describes the area well, however some names and route numbers have changed since it was published.



In the wetlands near the intercostal waterway bridge on route 124, many species were seen from the boat launch road: Roseate Spoonbill; Fulvous Whistling-Duck; White-faced Ibis; Great and Snowy Egrets; Black-necked Stilts; Neotropic and Double-crested Cormorants; Tricolored Herons; Caspian Tern; and Pied-billed Grebe. On the north side of the bridge, a pair of King Rails with four chicks was seen right beside the road. Flooded rice fields along Farm Road 1985 yielded both Dowitchers (about 1000), Loggerhead Shrikes; White Ibis; Gull-billed Terns; Pectoral, Semipalmated, and Spotted Sandpipers; and Wilson's Phalaropes.



CALENDAR OF PROGRAMS, SPECIAL EVENTS AND FIELD TRIPS

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

\ Jan 14 Thursday Chesapeake Bay Trust representatives Richard Leader and Edith Thompson will speak on the Maryland State Income Tax check-off program and Backyard Rick was a recent recipient of the Rachel Carson Award in recognition of his work for the environment.

Feb 11 Thursday

"Alaska Wilderness Adventure" - Ralph Geuder. Ralph and Jane Geuder visited Alaska last year and this is an account of the trip including, not only the birds, but the animals and the nature of this wondrous state.

Feb 27 Saturday Annual Pot Luck Dinner at the Florence Bain Senior Center. See article on the next page.

Field Trips meet as described for each trip. Carpooling is encouraged; riders share the cost of gas and tolls. Dress for the field with stout, reasonably waterproof footgear & layers of clothes. Trips do not always follow paths. NO pets. Leaders may cancel due to inclement weather or fewer than three participants. Questions? Call the trip leader or Field Trip Chair, Bonnie Ott (410) 461-3361.

Jan 16

LILY PONS, near New Design Rd., Montgomery County. Meet at 8 am at Grempler Saturday Realty (across from the Flier building on Little Patuxent Parkway in Columbia), half day. Bring lunch & drink. Looking for winter birds, possible shrike. Call Bonnie for additional info. Leader: Jim Wilkenson

Jan 24 Sunday HABITAT WALK AT CEDAR LANE PARK. 1:00-2:30pm. Meet at office off Cedar Lane entrance. Co-sponsored with Howard Co. Rec. & Parks. Call Bonnie for additional information. Bob was them, result to didn't so

Feb 6 Saturday EIGHTH ANNUAL MIDWINTER BIRD COUNT. See details on next page.

Feb 27 Saturday

ALPHA RIDGE LANDFILL GULL TRIP. Meet at 9 am, call trip leader Nancy Magnusson at (410) 461-8912 for location. Possible Lesser Black-Backed Gull.

Board of Directors Meetings: January 28 and February 25, 1993, at 7:30 pm, Longfellow Elementary School.

MARCH-APRIL NEWSLETTER MATERIAL due February 1, 1993. Call or mail to Susan Setterberg, 9445 Clocktower Lane, Columbia, MD 21046; (301) 498-4734.

HOWARD COUNTY ANNUAL LISTS DUE

A list of all the birds seen in the county during the 1992 calendar year is being compiled for the fourteenth consecutive year. Did we break any records this year? Only you can help us decide. Assemble your sightings for the year (even if the list was compiled in your neighborhood or your yard). Mail it to Jane Farrell, 6324 Sandchain Road, Columbia, MD 21045 by January 15, 1993 (or call her at 410-381-7344) to let her know if you'll be a bit late). The length of the list isn't important. All of those submitting material will receive a printout of the fourteen year compilation.

EIGHTH ANNUAL MIDWINTER COUNT SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 1993

Mark Saturday, February 6, 1993 on your new calendar as the date to help with Midwinter Count. Count in the field or at your feeder. New or inexperienced birders can request assignment with a more experienced companion. Field counters are invited to attend the evening tally and meal. Hosts this year are Zelda and Hal Simon. To volunteer for the count, call Jo Solem (301) 725-5037.

MOS OFFERS ECOLOGY AND ORNITHOLOGY SCHOLARSHIPS

The Maryland Ornithological Society is accepting applications from Maryland teachers and youth leaders 18 and over for five ecology and two ornithology scholarships for workshops held in Connecticut, Wyoming and Maine by the National Audubon Society. Applicants need not be MOS members but must be endorsed by an MOS chapter or member.

Each candidate must provide a written statement describing how this experience will be used to help young people develop an appreciation of our wildlife heritage and a sense of responsibility for both the care of our natural resources and the quality of our environment. Due date for applications is January 31, 1993. For further information, contact President Jo Solem (301) 725-5037.

20th YEAR POTLUCK ON FEBRUARY 27, 1993

The annual potluck will be held at the Florence Bain Senior Center on Saturday, February 27, 1993. All of our members and their guests are encouraged to share the fun, the food, and the program. The chapter furnishes beverages, social hour snacks, rolls, and eating utensils. Those attending bring a salad, a main dish, a vegetable, or a dessert. You MUST reserve in advance. You may sign up at either the January or February meetings or call Grazina McClure (410) 531 2760 or Manika Botsai (410) 465 5750 and leave a message. Let them know the number in your party and what food you are bringing. Can't cook? Adjustments can be made. If you wish to be part of the program, bring a maximum of a dozen nature slides. (If you want to bring more, they will be shown if time allows.) Social hour starts at 6:30 p.m. and dinner at 7:00 p.m. Mark dishes and the accompanying serving implements with your name. Let the organizers know if you can come early to help set up. PLEASE RESERVE BY MONDAY, FEBRUARY 22!

The Florence Bain Senior Center is located on the west side of Columbia at 5470 Beaverkill Road (off Harper's Farm Road, one block east of Cedar Lane behind the shopping center). There is ample parking.

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ODDS AND ENDS

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL SEED SALE: Over 40,000 pounds of seed was sold at the Fall Seed Sale, making \$2664.25 for the club to use for conservation efforts. Thank you to all who loaded, helped inside with the bookstore and desk, and donated baked goods. A special thank you to Eileen Clegg who organized the event. Volunteers included Bruce Eberle, Mike & Jean Bandy, Tim Keller, Don & Martha Waugh, G.J. Wilson, Jim Blanchard, Bob & Jo Solem, John & Andrew Clegg, Dave Kubitsky, Tina Glorioso Fiester, Susan Setterberg, Bob Dettner, Mark Marden, Don Kyle, Mark Wallace, Steve Clarkson, David Alexander, Margo Garner, Doris Hall, Marty Chesten, Michele Wright, Mancy Magnusson, Helen Zeichner, Lynn Connors, Pat Hirt, and Susan Buswell.

The Winter Seed Sale will be February 20, 1993. Details and order forms will be mailed separately in February.



OCTOBER HAWK WATCH COUNT: The club's annual Hawk Watch was held on October 24, 1992 at Rockburn Branch Park from 10:00 am until 1:30 pm. The raptors seen migrating included 23 Sharp-shinned Hawks, 1 American Kestrel, and 3 Red-tailed Hawks. Thirty-two other species were seen including a number of migrating palm warblers and American Robins.

MOS COMMITTEE ADDITIONS: The following Howard County Bird Club members have recently volunteered for or accepted appointment to state MOS committees: Ralph Geuder - Investments, Peter Osenton - Sanctuary, and Paul Zucker - Budget. Their willingness to serve is much appreciated!

SINGED BARN OWL FLIES AWAY: About noon on Saturday, November 14, 1992, Larry Saben laid a fire in the fireplace at his home in Oakland Mills. Columbia. He earlier had heard some "scritching" noises in the chimney, so he peered up the flue after opening the damper but before



lighting the fire. Since he could see nothing, he concluded that the squirrel (or whatever) had departed. The fire burned well. Later he replenished the logs, latched the metal screen, and left the room.

About 1:00 p.m. his daughter shouted that there was a bird in the fireplace. What Larry found staring out at him was a large white owl with its spread wings almost touching the sides of the 42"-wide fireplace as the bird stood somewhat off-center from the blaze. He ran to the garage, grabbed a sheet that he had been using to haul leaves, and returned to the fireplace. Although some of the wing feathers had caught fire, the owl seemed docile. Wrapping the sheet around the bird to smother the flames, he carried his bundle outside. When unwrapped, the owl flew off, apparently not a great deal worse for its experience. His neighbor, Duncan MacDonald, furnished books which enabled him to identify the bird as a Barn Owl, a species which is increasingly difficult to locate in Howard County. --Jo Solem

CHESAPEAKE BAY AND ENDANGERED SPECIES FUND: In 1988, the state legislature established the Chesapeake Bay and Endangered Species Fund to be divided equally between the Chesapeake Bay Trust and the Dept. of Natural Resources. On the 1991 state tax returns, 90,111 taxpayers donated \$1,110,178 to this fund. The amount donated has grown each year. Once again, Howard county ranked first

among Maryland counties in percentage of taxpayers participating at 4.3% (5,744).

The Chesapeake Bay Trust gives grants to community groups, schools and non-profit organizations for Bay restoration projects such as beach cleanups, tree planting, marsh restoration and teacher training. The Department of Resources funds support Maryland endangered species and non-game and urban wildlife. Let's keep Howard County first again this year by checking the box at line 63 on your Maryland State Income Tax Return.

CENTENNIAL PARK TRIP LEADERS: A big thank you goes to the trip leaders for the fall Centennial Park walks. They were Burton Alexander, Jane Farrell, Marty Chestam, Bonnie Ott, and Jo Solem. Each trip netted at least 40 species with a few new ones popping up each week.

BIRDER PROFILE - NANCY MAGNUSSON: If you have been to the meetings or many of the field trips, you have probably met Nancy. She has been an active member of the club for five of the 11 years she has been a member. You can often find her in the back of the meeting room, happily collecting membership dues as she is our treasurer. Nancy describes her interest in birds as kismet. It just happened. She is not satisfied with just one favorite species of bird; rather it depends on the season as to what might capture her attention. Kingfishers, Lincoln's Sparrows, and Black-shouldered Kites are among her favorites to watch.

Nancy's favorite birding spot, if you don't know already know it, is Schooley Mill Park. It's a great place to go because there are few people to interfere with your birding concentration. Nancy is a great source of information about what you might see at Schooley Mill. For those who wish to venture farther afield, Nancy suggests Newfoundland. It's a gorgeous, pristine place and not very crowded.

Nancy has been studying the finer points of gull identification for the last year. She will be leading the gull trip in February (see the event schedule). Why does she like birding? For sanity, she says. And don't we all find a little bit of that when we are out in the field or among the trees.

CONSERVATION REPORT Bob Solem

Renewal of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) will be considered by the 103rd Congress. The previous Congress did not pass "The Endangered Species Act Amendments of 1992" (H.R. 4045; introduced by Representative Gerry Studds, D-MA), which had several important improvements that should be considered by Congress this year. (When the bill is reintroduced, it will probably have a different number.)

ESA funding is inadequate for protection of the almost 600 species which should be listed but remain unprotected because of a lack of funds; annual funding should double over the next four years to \$100 million. The current ESA is an important environmental law that establishes a framework for resolving conflicts between government or private development proposals and the needs of species conservation. The current bill requires recovery plans for endangered species, but nearly half of those listed do not have an approved plan. The present bill tends to address problems on a single species basis; it would be more cost-effective to streamline the recovery planning process and protect multiple species by working to conserve entire ecosystems.

The 1992 bill described above has these additional provisions and also calls for steps to facilitate emergency listings and create Habitat Conservation Plans -- conservation methods that balance the needs of commercial developers with those of endangered species. This is an example of the "third wave of environmentalism" that we support.

More about the Endangered Species Act renewal will appear in this column in subsequent newsletters along with information about the ESA and the need to protect entire ecosystems.

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- ♦ 1992 BREEDING BIRD CENSUS
- ♦ HOT SPOT BIG BRANCH
- ♦ ANNUAL POT LUCK DINNER