



Howard

A Chapter of the
Maryland Ornithological Society



March-April 1994, Vol 22, No. 4

Howard County Bird Checklist Published

Recently, the Howard County Bird Club published a *Checklist of the Birds of Howard County 1956-1993*. Although a few historical records are included, the list consists, for the most part, of sightings of the past 38 years. The new compilation replaces the *Preliminary Checklist* which covered 1956-1984. With the increasingly intense coverage during the last decade, this revision includes a number of species new to the county and several new breeding records. Breeding status is shown. Sightings which are currently being considered by the Maryland/DC Records Committee are not included.

To aid birders who wish to see specific county birds, a code is included providing a rough idea of the amount of effort (or luck) required to locate species. The categories were established with a birder of moderate skills in mind.

This revision was completed by Joanne Solem, David Holmes, and Martha Chestem. It was possible to produce because dozens of birders over the last decades faithfully contributed their seasonal sightings. In addition, material from several annual counts was used along with information from the two county breeding bird atlases and personal records. Corrections and additions should be directed to J.K. Solem, 10617 Graeloch Road, Laurel, MD 20723.

A copy of the checklist is enclosed in this newsletter. If you see birds in categories D or E, please notify Jo (301) 752-5037, Bonnie (410) 461-3361, or Marty (410) 730-1527 as soon as possible after sighting the bird so others who might want to see it can be notified and details can be verified.

To obtain an additional copy of this checklist, send a self-addressed business-sized envelope with one ounce postage to the above address or see Jo at a bird club meeting.



CHECKLISTS FOR HOWARD COUNTY AREAS

Gwynn Acres Path, Plum Tree Path, Mt. Pleasant, and David Force Park are easily accessible birding locations with diverse habitats. The Bird Club is working on bird species lists for these areas. To request a current checklist for any of the areas named above, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Bonnie Ott, 8664 Manahan Drive, Ellicott City, MD 21043; or call her at (410) 461-3361 to arrange to have one brought to a meeting. When you visit these locations, please keep track of what you see and provide Bonnie with your sightings.

SEED SALE HELD--FINALLY!

The weather provided an icy mess during the period when our winter seed sale pickup was scheduled. Although postponement appeared to be a daunting task, a crew of callers quickly contacted all but one customer. Hats off to Connie Bockstie, Marty Chestem, Eileen Clegg, Marjorie Mountjoy, Bonnie Ott, Elise Seay, Bob Solem, and Helen Zeichner. We thank customers who were flexible in planning their pickup. Loading on January 29 were Connie & Mike Bockstie, John & Andrew Clegg, Mary Coffey, Mike Courbron, Bob Dettner, Tina Glorioso, Dave Kubitsky, Susan Setterberg, Bob Solem, Tom Strikwerda, Mark Wallace, and Don Waugh. Working inside at the desk, bookstore or at the workshop were Kimberly Gross, Ralph Geuder, Shiras Guion, Suzanne Probst, Zelda Simon, Jo Solem, Michele Wright, Helen & Julie Zeichner. Much appreciated by all helpers were the baked treats which Eileen Clegg, Tina Glorioso, Carol Newman, Romaine Smith, and Eva Sunell provided. It was a real team effort pulled together by Eileen Clegg. The many rainforest donors will be acknowledged at another time.

BIRD WATCHING CLASSES AVAILABLE THROUGH JOHNS HOPKINS

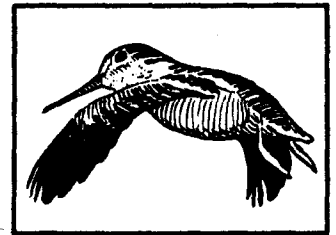
Club member David Holmes will be teaching two classes on bird watching this spring through the Johns Hopkins Adult Education Program. "Bird Watching - An Introduction" is for those who are absolute beginners. This Saturday course is from 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon on April 23, and includes a lecture on finding and using binoculars, what books to use, how to find birds, and information on the more common species found at local feeders. There is a one hour walk around the Homewood campus to complete the course. The course fee is \$40.

The second course is "Spring Bird Watching." It will also be at the Homewood campus. There are two lectures, April 28 and May 5, from 7:30 to 9:15 p.m. David will cover observation skills; how you learn to see, and identification tips for those birds most likely to be seen in the area. In addition, there are three field trips scheduled for Saturdays. The first two are half-day (8:00 a.m. to 12 noon) on April 30 and May 7, and will likely be local to Baltimore or Howard Counties. The third trip is from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Bombay Hook on Saturday, May 14th. The course fee is \$110.

To register, call 410-516-8516. Additional program information is available by calling 410-516-8490.

WOODCOCK WALK in APRIL

Bonnie Ott will be leading an evening walk to see American Woodcock sometime in April. This shy, upland shorebird is found in moist woodlands, mixed forest, and thickets along bogs. They are most easily seen at dusk or dawn in fields adjoining the woods when the males do their elaborate courtship flight. The males will circle high, giving a constant twittering sound then ending in a "falling-leaf," zigzag flight to the ground. The date and site for the field trip are dependent on when and where the woodcocks arrive. If you would like to see these birds, call Bonnie at (410) 461-3361 to reserve a spot on the list.



ODDS AND ENDS

THANK YOU: Several club members donated snacks for the state MOS meeting which our club hosted in December. They included Marty Chestam, Jane Farrell, Norma Petersen, Jo Solem, Don Waugh and Helen Zeichner. Thank you all.

MAY-JUNE 1994 NEWSLETTER MATERIAL is due April 1, 1994. Call or mail to Susan Setterberg, 9445 Clocktower Lane, Columbia, MD 21046; Phone (301)498-4734. Anyone is welcome to contribute articles or ideas which you think will be of interest to other birders.

NEWMAN DRAWING ON COVER OF MARYLAND BIRDLIFE: If the cover of the March 1992 *Maryland Birdlife* looked familiar to you, you're right. The drawing was done by club member Carol Newman. It was featured in our Jan-Feb 1992 newsletter story by Helen Zeichner, which is reprinted on page 29 of the journal. It was the second county record and the first on a county lake, rather than a reservoir.

MANY THANKS! Soon after the holidays Shiras and Bill Guion were host to a crew preparing an issue of *Maryland Birdlife* for mailing. Under the capable direction of Tom Strikwerda and Marty Chestem, the following individuals labeled the issue in under two hours: Joanne & Fred Firman, Shiras Guion, Nancy Magnusson, Bea

Newkirk, Jo Solem, Don & Martha Waugh. If you would like to help occasionally, call Tom at (301) 942-2841 and leave a message.

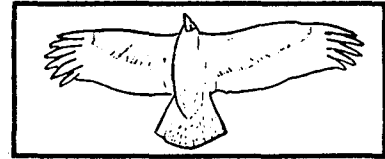
JUNK MAIL: Want to get rid of some of that junk mail that goes from the mail box to the recycling bin? You can get your name removed from rented lists by writing to Mail Preference Service, Direct Marketing Association, 11 West 42nd St., New York, New York 10163-3861.

DID YOU KNOW: Found on the wall in the Brookside Nature Center bathroom - - 22,627 square miles of toilet paper are used in the United States annually. That's enough to cover Maryland and Washington D.C. twice!

CENTENNIAL RING-NECKED PHEASANTS: If you have seen Ring-necked Pheasants at Centennial Park recently these are birds that have been released into the park. They, unfortunately, didn't get there on their own. The tame Northern Bobwhite seen in January was likely also a released bird.

CLUB ELECTIONS IN APRIL: If you are interested in getting more involved in club activities and would consider taking on the duties of one of the officers for the club, contact Tom Strikwerda (301) 942-2841.

Calendar of Programs and Field Trips



Buzzard Day, March 15

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.

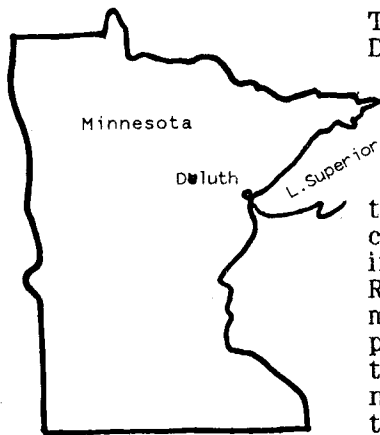
- Mar 10 Thursday **"Rescuing Rattlers"** - Scott Smith. Scott works with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Non-game Division. His work includes studies on rattlesnakes, a candidate for listing as an endangered species in Maryland. His studies are funded from the tax check-off dollars collected by the state.
- April 14 Thursday **"Birding Costa Rica"** - Bob Ringler. Past president of the Maryland Ornithological Society and leader of many birding field trips, Bob will show us the birding possibilities in Costa Rica. He will be just returning from a trip there and have many new slides to add to his earlier collections for us to see.

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 Field Trip Chair Bonnie Ott at (410) 461-3361.

- March 6 Sunday **MOUNT PLEASANT** - Meet at 8:00 am at the Park & Ride on 108 just East of Route 29 for a half day trip. Mt. Pleasant has been acquired by the Howard Conservancy and is now accessible for field trips. Look for winter species in this unique habitat not often available for birding. Leader: David Holmes (410) 730-7083.
- March 8 Tuesday **WEEKDAY WALK at DAVID FORCE PARK** - Meet at 9:00 am at signpost off Pebble Beach Drive (north of US 40 near junction with MD 144).
- March 13 Sunday **HOWARD COUNTY WATERFOWL** - 9:00 a.m., half day trip. Leader: Peter Osenton (301) 776-4118. We will carpool to lakes and ponds for a variety of waterfowl. Call Bonnie for details.
- March 23 Wednesday **WEEKDAY WALK at GWYNN ACRES** - 9:00 a.m. Meet on Old Columbia Road at Rams Horn Row.
- April 3 Sunday **CENTENNIAL PARK: SEARCH FOR SNIPE** (plus Bufflehead and other ducks, hawks, kingfisher, and other migrants) - 8:00 to 11:00 a.m. Co-sponsored with Howard County Rec & Parks (HCRP). Meet at West end parking lot, off Centennial Lane. Leaders: Marty Chestem (410) 730-1527 and Helen Zeichner.
- April 10 Sunday **CENTENNIAL PARK: COULD BE CASPIAN TERNS** - 8:00 to 11:00 a.m. Co-sponsored with HCRP. Sandpipers, loons, and gulls possible. Meet at West end parking lot, off Centennial Lane. Leader: Jane Farrell (410) 381-7344.
- April 13 Wednesday **WEEKDAY WALK: LAKE ELKHORN** - 8:30 a.m. Meet in lot off Broken Land Parkway.
- April 17 Sunday **CENTENNIAL PARK: SIGHTING SWALLOWS** - 8:00 to 11:00 a.m. Meet at West end parking lot off Centennial Lane. Five swallow species possible and early migrant passerines. Leader: Burton Alexander (410) 381-5574.
- April 24 Sunday **CENTENNIAL PARK: WISHING FOR WARBLERS** - 8:00 to 11:00 a.m. Meet at West end parking lot off Centennial Lane. Also, orioles and Chipping Sparrow possible with Prairie Warbler. Leader: Paul Zucker (301) 279-7896.
- April 28 Thursday **WEEKDAY WALK at ROCKBURN BRANCH PARK** - Meet at 8:30 a.m. at park office off Landing Road.
- May 1 Saturday **HUGG-THOMAS WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA** - Meet at Grempler Realty on Little Patuxent Parkway at 7:00 a.m. to form carpools. Possible owls and early migrants. Leaders: Maureen & Dave Harvey (410) 795-3117.

Next Board Meeting: Thursday, March 24, 1994, 7:30 pm at Longfellow Elementary School. There will be no board meeting in April.

BIRDING MINNESOTA..IN FEBRUARY? by Phil Davis



The advertisement said, "It seems to defy rationality to come to Duluth in February for birding ..." and maybe it does, but read on. Last year in February, Barbara and I spent a long weekend in Duluth, Minnesota on a "Wings Weekend" seeking some northern specialties."

Duluth is situated on the western edge of Lake Superior on the southern reaches of the Boreal forest--that wide band of dense coniferous trees that stretches across most of Canada, but only drops into the continental U.S. in Maine, northern Michigan, Minnesota, the Rocky Mountains, and Washington. In addition to normal seasonal movements, lack of prey for raptors and lack of seed and fruit for passerines often drives birds to the southern edges of this forest in the late winter. While we were not anticipating either a large number of species or a large number of individual birds, the ones that we hoped to find were expected to be "quality birds."

The previous winter (1992) was a great "invasion" year for winter owls, but 1993 wasn't providing hopeful reports. Some people suggested that we save our money and go another year. My reply was, "I don't need to see 12 Great Gray Owls; one will do nicely!"

We arrived in Duluth on Thursday, February 4 in the midst of a heat wave--the temperature peaked at 45 degrees that afternoon! We caught a cab to our motel which overlooked Lake Superior and immediately set up the scope before we lost the sunlight and were rewarded with a flock of gulls within sight. Among the Herring Gulls, we spotted several Glaucous Gulls, the only ones of the weekend.

We met our tour leader, Parker Backstrom, a former Duluth resident who now lives in Minneapolis, and the rest of the group at 8 p.m. Parker leads other Wings tours in his spare time and is the voice of the Minnesota rare bird alert. He laid out our plans for the next 2½ days. Parker confirmed what we had already known, namely that it was not like the previous year when the birds were "dripping off the trees." There had been no recent reports of Great Gray, Snowy or Northern Hawk Owls. "Don't despair," Parker assured us. We would check likely spots. Since he had a good network of contacts he would keep in touch with them to see if anything showed up over the weekend. Boreal Owls are not usually seen on this trip. They are present, but are silent this time of year. Because they are so small, they are hard to find. We should listen, however, for any flocks of chickadees scolding for they could possibly tip us off to one. Barbara and I studied our field guides for the birds we hoped to see and dozed off.

Up before dawn on Friday, we drove for about an hour to a favorite spot for Spruce Grouse. Sure enough, a little patience rewarded us with several birds in the trees and along the edge of the road. While driving to our next stop, Parker spotted a Northern Hawk Owl perched in the top of a bare tree. While we were looking at the owl, a flock of Common Redpolls flew overhead and made a brief stop in the trees around us.

Another stop to chase a larger bird that I saw fly over the van. We traipsed through snow about 1½ feet deep and found a Gray Jay. Checking out a popular birding woods, a dark woodpecker flew across the road. It perched on a tree along the side of the road and gave us an excellent look at a beautiful male Three-toed Woodpecker.

On to the town of Isabella, at a higher elevation, where it was snowing heavily. The snow depth was about three feet. In town, where one resident keeps his feeder full, we were treated to a tree full of 200 Pine Siskins all making their rising buzzy calls. Flying in to give us a good look were several Pine Grosbeaks (which are really finches, not grosbeaks).

We headed back to Duluth and checked out several local feeders where Parker had "connections." At one house, we were invited in to watch from the warmth of the family room. Among the Black-capped Chickadees--what's that? Here it comes again, up to the feeder right by the window--a Boreal Chickadee! Ahhh. While we were watching the feeders, someone noticed a Barred Owl perched in the trees just past the feeders.

Back to town, where we checked out a spot where Bohemian Waxwings had been seen several days earlier, as well as an out-of-range more western species, a Townsend's Solitaire. No luck on either. The waxwings were in small numbers this year (only one flock had been reported). They move around so much, it's really hard to pin them down.

Checklist of the Birds of Howard County 1956-1993

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> C Red-throated Loon B Common Loon B Pled-billed Grebe B Horned Grebe D Red-necked Grebe E Western Grebe B Double-crested Cormorant C American Bittern D Least Bittern ■ A Great Blue Heron B Great Egret C Snowy Egret B Little Blue Heron E Tricolored Heron C Cattle Egret ■ A Green Heron □ C Black-crowned Night-Heron D Yellow-crowned Night-Heron D White Ibis C Glossy Ibis B Tundra Swan ■ A Mute Swan E Greater White-fronted Goose B Snow Goose E Brant ■ A Canada Goose ■ B Wood Duck B Green-winged Teal ■ B American Black Duck ■ A Mallard C Northern Pintail B Blue-winged Teal B Northern Shoveler ■ C Gadwall E Eurasian Wigeon A American Wigeon A Canvasback C Redhead A Ring-necked Duck C Greater Scaup B Lesser Scaup C Oldsquaw E Black Scoter D Surf Scoter D White-winged Scoter B Common Goldeneye A Bufflehead □ B Hooded Merganser B Common Merganser C Red-breasted Merganser A Ruddy Duck ■ A Black Vulture ■ A Turkey Vulture B Osprey ■ B Bald Eagle B Northern Harrier | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> B Sharp-shinned Hawk ■ B Cooper's Hawk C Northern Goshawk ■ A Red-shouldered Hawk ■ B Broad-winged Hawk ■ A Red-tailed Hawk C Rough-legged Hawk C Golden Eagle ■ A American Kestrel C Merlin C Peregrine Falcon ■ C Ring-necked Pheasant □ D Ruffed Grouse □ C Wild Turkey ■ C Northern Bobwhite D King Rail □ C Virginia Rail □ C Sora ■ C Common Moorhen B American Coot E Limpkin E Sandhill Crane C Black-bellied Plover C Lesser Golden-Plover C Semipalmated Plover ■ A Killdeer E American Avocet B Greater Yellowlegs B Lesser Yellowlegs B Solitary Sandpiper □ B Spotted Sandpiper C Upland Sandpiper E Red Knot C Sanderling C Semipalmated Sandpiper D Western Sandpiper B Least Sandpiper D White-rumped Sandpiper E Baird's Sandpiper B Pectoral Sandpiper C Dunlin D Buff-breasted Sandpiper C Short-billed Dowitcher E Long-billed Dowitcher B Common Snipe ■ C American Woodcock D Wilson's Phalarope E Red Phalarope B Laughing Gull C Bonaparte's Gull A Ring-billed Gull A Herring Gull C Iceland Gull B Lesser Black-backed Gull D Glaucous Gull B Great Black-backed Gull | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> B Caspian Tern D Common Tern C Forster's Tern C Black Tern ■ A Rock Dove ■ A Mourning Dove B Black-billed Cuckoo ■ A Yellow-billed Cuckoo ■ C Barn Owl ■ B Eastern Screech-Owl ■ B Great Horned Owl E Snowy Owl ■ B Barred Owl D Long-eared Owl D Short-eared Owl C Northern Saw-whet Owl B Common Nighthawk D Chuck-will's-widow □ C Whip-poor-will ■ A Chimney Swift ■ B Ruby-throated Hummingbird ■ A Belted Kingfisher ■ C Red-headed Woodpecker ■ A Red-bellied Woodpecker B Yellow-bellied Sapsucker ■ A Downy Woodpecker ■ A Hairy Woodpecker ■ A Northern Flicker ■ A Pileated Woodpecker C Olive-sided Flycatcher ■ A Eastern Wood-Pewee C Yellow-bellied Flycatcher ■ A Acadian Flycatcher C Alder Flycatcher ■ B Willow Flycatcher ■ B Least Flycatcher ■ A Eastern Phoebe ■ A Great Crested Flycatcher ■ A Eastern Kingbird ■ C Horned Lark ■ A Purple Martin ■ A Tree Swallow ■ A No. Rough-winged Swallow □ B Bank Swallow ■ B Cliff Swallow ■ A Barn Swallow ■ A Blue Jay ■ A American Crow □ A Fish Crow D Black-capped Chickadee ■ A Carolina Chickadee ■ A Tufted Titmouse C Red-breasted Nuthatch ■ A White-breasted Nuthatch A Brown Creeper ■ A Carolina Wren |
|--|--|---|

- D Bewick's Wren
- A House Wren
- B Winter Wren
- D Sedge Wren
- C Marsh Wren
- A Golden-crowned Kinglet
- A Ruby-crowned Kinglet
- A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
- A Eastern Bluebird
- B Veery
- C Gray-cheeked Thrush
- B Swainson's Thrush
- B Hermit Thrush
- A Wood Thrush
- A American Robin
- E Varied Thrush
- A Gray Catbird
- A Northern Mockingbird
- A Brown Thrasher
- C American Pipit
- A Cedar Waxwing
- E Northern Shrike
- D Loggerhead Shrike
- A European Starling
- A White-eyed Vireo
- B Solitary Vireo
- B Yellow-throated Vireo
- B Warbling Vireo
- C Philadelphia Vireo
- A Red-eyed Vireo
- B Blue-winged Warbler
- C Golden-winged Warbler
- B Tennessee Warbler
- C Orange-crowned Warbler
- B Nashville Warbler
- A Northern Parula
- A Yellow Warbler
- A Chestnut-sided Warbler
- A Magnolia Warbler
- B Cape May Warbler
- A Black-throated Blue Warbler
- A Yellow-rumped Warbler
- B Black-throated Green Warbler
- B Blackburnian Warbler
- B Yellow-throated Warbler
- B Pine Warbler
- A Prairie Warbler
- A Palm Warbler
- B Bay-breasted Warbler
- B Blackpoll Warbler
- B Cerulean Warbler
- A Black-and-white Warbler
- A American Redstart
- C Prothonotary Warbler
- B Worm-eating Warbler
- A Ovenbird
- B Northern Waterthrush
- A Louisiana Waterthrush

- A Kentucky Warbler
- C Connecticut Warbler
- C Mourning Warbler
- A Common Yellowthroat
- A Hooded Warbler
- B Wilson's Warbler
- B Canada Warbler
- A Yellow-breasted Chat
- C Summer Tanager
- A Scarlet Tanager
- A Northern Cardinal
- B Rose-breasted Grosbeak
- B Blue Grosbeak
- A Indigo Bunting
- D Dickcissel
- A Rufous-sided Towhee
- E Bachman's Sparrow
- B American Tree Sparrow
- A Chipping Sparrow
- A Field Sparrow
- C Vesper Sparrow
- E Lark Sparrow
- B Savannah Sparrow
- B Grasshopper Sparrow
- D Henslow's Sparrow
- E Sharp-tailed Sparrow
- B Fox Sparrow
- A Song Sparrow
- C Lincoln's Sparrow
- ~~B Swamp Sparrow~~
- A White-throated Sparrow
- B White-crowned Sparrow
- E Harris' Sparrow
- A Dark-eyed Junco
- E Lapland Longspur
- D Snow Bunting
- B Bobolink
- A Red-winged Blackbird
- A Eastern Meadowlark
- E Yellow-headed Blackbird
- B Rusty Blackbird
- A Common Grackle
- A Brown-headed Cowbird
- B Orchard Oriole
- B Northern Oriole
- C Purple Finch
- A House Finch
- D Red Crossbill
- D White-winged Crossbill
- C Common Redpoll
- C Pine Siskin
- A American Goldfinch
- C Evening Grosbeak
- A House Sparrow
- D Brewster's Warbler
- D Lawrence's Warbler

Anhinga specimen 1805

Swallow-tailed Kite specimen 1879

-
- Breeding record established by eggs or young in nest or adult on nest
 - Evidence of breeding, but no active nest found (nest building, distraction display, used nest, recently fledged or downy young, adult bird carrying fecal sac, adult carrying food for young)
 - A Usually can be seen or heard in a single day of birding during the correct season. Many of these birds are year-round residents. Most are widespread; some may be abundant.
 - B Most of these species are seen annually by the most active field birders who are out year-round in a variety of habitats.
 - C These species require extra effort, a dose of patience, specialized knowledge, or luck. Some may be more common than records indicate, but their secretive nature, migration patterns, or limited habitat make them challenging to find. Most irruptive species are included in this category although there may be years in which they are widespread. Written details may be required.
 - D Seen fewer than seven times in the last 38 years or fewer than three times in the last decade. Written details required.
 - E Fewer than three accepted records. Written details required for these or any species not on this checklist.

Records being evaluated by the Maryland/DC Records Committee are not included on this checklist.

J.Solem, D.Holmes, M.Chestem Jan 1994

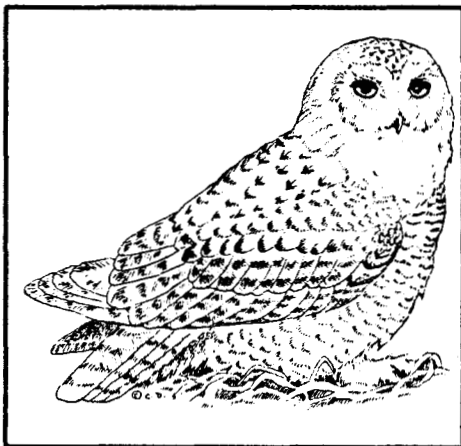
Next, dinner and tally-up of the day's species, discussion of tomorrow's plans and bed. The forecast called for continuously dropping temperatures for the rest of the weekend. This didn't bother us since we were prepared with parkas, Sorrel boots, long johns, hats, and good gloves.

The next morning, up early again and heading west to Aiken County which is to open country. First stop, a good place to find Sharp-tailed Grouse. No luck at first, but we do see our first of about six Northern Shrikes. An adult Bald Eagle flies by. Nice! Perseverance pays off and we spot a grouse way up in the top of a tree, sure enough, a Sharp-tailed. We watch it for a while and see that it is part of a small flock.

We cruise roads of Aiken County looking for some more of the northern specialties. We pass a yard with a feeder. "Whoa!" I called. "I saw something there, let me walk back and check it out. Hey everybody, Evening Grosbeaks!" A small flock of four is patronizing the feeder. It's always great to see grosbeaks.

Even without discussing it, we all knew there was one particular specialty we were really targeting. We searched for an hour or two. We were stopped along the side of the road, checking out a field, when a 4X4 pulled up and stopped. The driver obviously knew Parker and they talked for a short while. Parker came back to the van, somewhat excited. That was Warren Nelson, a friend of his who lives in Aiken County. Warren spends a lot of his time cruising the roads of Aiken County checking out what birds are present. He has a Great Gray Owl staked out! When we got to the spot, the owl was perched in the top of a bare tree and, while we were watching, it flew several times, undoubtedly making passes at prey. After about 45 minutes, we finally left. Who ever heard of getting tired of watching a Great Gray Owl? Boy are they big! Barbara says it was mysterious looking, almost "spooky."

We saw Warren again a little later. He is stopped with his scope set up. He has a Rough-legged Hawk in view, perched in a tree in the distance. Next, a flyby Black-billed Magpie. This is the easternmost edge of their range. We spent the rest of the afternoon continuing to drive the roads of Aiken County, our primary target now being a Snowy Owl. We saw a flock of small birds in a field: Horned Larks and Snow Buntings. Catch dinner, then back to Duluth. We tally up and discuss options for the next day. The two main birds we are missing are the Black-backed Woodpecker and the Snowy Owl. People are more interested in the woodpecker. We agree to start early again and try for it. Temperatures tonight: single digits. That's more like it!



On Sunday, we leave before dawn again. Unfortunately, a mishap occurs. A group following the van slid on the slippery roads and hit the van. Since the car is banged up and not driveable and the passenger was shaken up, we all get into the van and head back to the closest town to get her checked out. This delay keeps us from our date with the woodpecker. We eat lunch and head back to Duluth. Down to the edge of the lake. Herring Gulls. The only waterfowl in unfrozen areas were Mallards, a Common Goldeneye, and a pair of flying Common Mergansers. Scanning the ice, hmmm, a dark (yes, that's right, dark) lump out in the middle of the channel. It's turning; put the scope on it. All right! Snowy Owl! Minnesota birders scan for Snowy Owls by looking for dark lumps in fields and on the ice because usually juveniles are the birds seen this far south. They are actually rather dark (check your field guide), especially against the pure white snow.

In addition to the species listed, we had about ten others, including White and Red-breasted Nuthatches, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, one Blue Jay, American Crow, Northern Raven, and the three common "city" birds. Well, we didn't see twelve each of the northern owls, but we did see at least one each of most of the expected species. We loved the weekend and highly recommend it.

DID YOU KNOW »» The shape and structure of a duck's bill is different for each species reflecting individual food habits. For example, the Canvasback is adapted to digging in the substrate for tubers and roots, the Northern Shoveler filters free-swimming bugs from the water, and the goose-like bill of the American Wigeon is used to pick stems and shoots of green plants.

Autumn Bird Records: Aug 1-Nov 30, 1993 - Joanne Solem

Each season Howard County bird sightings are compiled and submitted to *Maryland Birdlife* and *American Birds*. Because both publications provide overviews for large areas, only a fraction of Howard County sightings are published. The records are not lost, however, for they are the basis for county records. All records are welcomed and appreciated. Any individual who turns in seasonal sightings receives a copy of the county compilation. To request a form on which to log dates, please call (301) 725-5037. The Board has requested that a digest of the seasonal highlights appear in the newsletter. Observers are referred to by their initials (see the list at the end of the article). Locations are written out the first time cited; thereafter, abbreviations are used.

If there are birds mentioned in these summaries which you are particularly anxious to see, call Bonnie Ott (410) 461-3361. She keeps track of special "wants" and has helped several members see desired species in the last few months.

Wandering egrets and herons were widely reported in the county during the autumn 1993 season. An immature **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** flying over Rockburn Branch Park on 10/6 (MC, BO, JS) provided a fourth county and first autumn record. **Tundra Swan** migration was inconspicuous over the county this year. Likewise, there were no major flight days detected for **Canada Geese**. With thousands of resident birds, it becomes increasingly difficult to define migration dates for this species. Duck numbers generally continued at a low level. A **Surf Scoter** was seen on a Centennial Park (CENPK) club walk on 11/1. It soon moved to Lake Elkhorn for 10 days.

Bald Eagles are becoming almost routine, and an increasing number of birders are reporting them. The pair, which nested successfully on WSSC property for the first Howard County record, remained at Triadelphia Reservoir (TRIRS) along with their single offspring. Two different **Golden Eagles** were reported over CENPK (JF & BO). **Accipiter** migration was mediocre at best, but the **Broad-winged Hawk** movement on 9/20 & 9/22 rivaled that at any of the best hawk lookouts. (Refer to article in Nov-Dec 1993 newsletter). A **Merlin** made itself at home much of the fall near B. Ott's home. Three **Peregrines** were reported (RG; JF, NM; BO). A **N. Goshawk** was spotted being harassed by crows over High Ridge Park in southeastern Howard County (CR).

Note that the ~~pheasants being seen at CENPK are pen-raised birds released from an adjoining property.~~

The shorebird migration was extremely poor. TRIRS water levels were not dropped until most of the birds had passed through. When mudflats were eventually exposed, they dried quickly. As a result, the best sightings came from turf farms: **Lesser Golden Plover** (PO) 9/18 and **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** (PO) 9/4, the third county record.

Laughing Gulls are seen regularly in autumn, sometimes in large numbers. On 8/22 PO & JS counted 319 flying west along MD 99 between 8:30 & 9:30 a.m. **Bonaparte's Gulls** were elusive with 11/28 the only date any were seen (PO, BO). A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was at CENPK 11/12 (CB). **Black Terns** were seen twice the first week of Sept (MC, JF, JS; JW). **Forster's Terns** were noted over TRIRS and CENPK in late Aug. and early Sept. (MC; JF; PO; JS).

A migrant **Short-eared Owl** over the Univ. of MD Central Farm (UMDCF) being chased by crows produced the first record since 1985 (BO, MC, MJB). There are fewer than half a dozen county records for this species.

Chimney Swifts massed at CENPK with a high of 250 on 9/23 (SA). **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were widely reported in Sept. and Oct. **Marsh Wrens** were seen from late Sept. to late Oct. with a high of three at UMDCF (SA). Two **Philadelphia Vireos** were reported: 9/19 (JF, PO, JS) along the Middle Patuxent River at Eden Brook (MPRED) and 9/25 (BO) along Plum Tree Path (PLTRP).

Most of the warbler species were detected, though often in low numbers. Two **Orange-crowned Warblers**, one on 9/20 near Ellicott City (BO) and a second on 11/19 at CENPK (W & SE) were especially nice as were two **Mourning**s (SA; BO) during the first half of Sept. The period 9/14-19 brought three **Connecticut** sightings (SA; BO+; JF, PO, JS) including one on a club trip along the Gwynn Acres Path. One week in Sept. produced three **Summer Tanagers** (SA; BO), an unprecedented number for this county.

American Tree Sparrows did not arrive until Dec., while **Chipping Sparrows** lingered into Nov. The 200 acre Howard Conservancy property, Mount Pleasant, on MD 99 is being surveyed regularly by club members. It produced a fine array of sparrows including **Vesper**,

Grasshopper, Savannah, Lincoln's and Fox. On 11/3 at least 100 White-throats and 90 White-crowns were tallied (BO, JS).

Purple Finches, Pine Siskins, and Evening Grosbeaks were all reported from mid to late October to about mid November, although grosbeaks were only detected on 10/27 & 10/28. A single report was received of observers seeing all three species this fall (M & GM).

In addition to the above records, the following three sightings have been submitted to the Maryland/DC Records Committee: possible *Selasphorus* sp. hummingbird 11/14, Bewick's Wren 9/6, and possible Lark Sparrow 11/17. The disposition of rare bird submissions is printed in the *Maryland Yellowthroat*.

Autumn observers cited above: Scott Atkinson (SA), Mary Jo Betts (MJB), Connie Bockstie (CB), Martha Chestem (MC), Wes & Susan Earp (W & SE), Jane Farrell (JF), Ralph Geuder (RG), Mike & Grazina McClure (M & GM), Peter Osenton (PO), Bonnie Ott (BO), Chandler Robbins (CR), Joanne Solem (JS), Jim Wilkinson (JW).

Records for winter sightings (December, January, and February) are due by March 3, 1994. Mail to 10617 Graeoch Road, Laurel, MD 20723. For a taste of what the next months may bring, scan the following paragraphs.

March and April are among the most exciting birding months of the year as waterfowl, hawks, shorebirds, and passerines migrate, and many birds begin courtship and nesting activities.

In March it pays to watch any lake, pond, or reservoir as soon as ice disappears. Birds like Horned Grebes, mergansers, and a good variety of puddle and diving ducks may move in and out quickly. Blackbirds are still visible in mixed flocks. Although cowbirds and grackles may not be appreciated as they muscle aside other species at feeders, it is worth checking for Rusty Blackbirds or even a rare Yellow-headed. Female Red-wings sometimes confuse beginners, especially the older females which have a yellow or even peach-colored throat. The majority of Tundra Swan flights are often concentrated in a few days, most often the second or third weeks in March. American Woodcock courtship is in full swing morning and evening. Owls have been courting and calling. Great Horneds are on nests. Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks are also nest building. Watch woodpeckers as they engage in courtship activity. Fox Sparrows should still be appearing at a few feeders into March, other sparrows are moving, and juncos are trilling. Bluebirds will be checking nest boxes, and chickadees and titmice will be looking at cavities. By the middle of March, goldfinches will be gradually assuming their breeding plumage.

April is a month to watch for rarities as well as the usual species, which, in themselves, are always exciting. Walking along one of the county lakes or in a park on a regular basis will enable you to track new arrivals. Some of the secretive marsh birds like bitterns and rails begin moving through. Gulls and terns may provide tantalizing glimpses as they fly the length of a lake or reservoir, or they may rest on a sandbar for a few hours. As the month passes, bird numbers swell so that every day brings something new. By the end of the month, most of the swallow species may be visible over local lakes along with a sampling of flycatchers, thrushes, vireos, and warblers. Most of these species will come through in larger numbers in May, but don't wait until then. Take advantage of club field trips to investigate new areas, see new birds, or reacquaint yourself with familiar ones. Be sure to save Saturday, May 14 to participate in May Count. Beginners as well as experienced birders are welcome and will enjoy the day.

HOWARD COUNTY ANNUAL LIST FOR 1993

Each year the chapter compiles a list of all bird species seen within the county during the previous year. In 1992 a new high was established of 226 species. If you have not already done so, please send a list of those species seen in 1993 to Jane Farrell, 6324 Sandchain Road, Columbia, MD 21045 by March 15. This can be a list compiled in your own yard, one neighborhood, a park, or throughout the county. Everyone who submits a list will receive a printout of the 15 year compilation.



NEW MEMBERS PACKET TO BE MAILED

The Board of Directors has been working on an informational packet for new members which should be ready for mailing soon. All new members will receive it when they join; any one who has joined within the last three years will also be sent one. They will be available at meetings for any other member who desires one. Further details will appear in the next newsletter.



CONSERVATION REPORT — Bob Solem

You are helping conservation when you check **Line 63** on the Maryland income tax return and contribute to the **Chesapeake Bay and Endangered Species Fund**. In 1992 more than **90,000 Marylanders** contributed over \$1.1 million to meet priority needs for the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay and the protection of Maryland's endangered species and nongame and urban wildlife. The funds are used by **Chesapeake Bay Trust, Maryland Natural Heritage Program, and the Nongame and Urban Wildlife Program.**

One of the projects funded by the Chesapeake Bay Trust and the Maryland Farm Bureau I would like to share with you since we who live in suburban areas seldom find out what is going on in other sectors. The project was a survey to document the stewardship efforts of the farm community in Maryland:

- Maryland farmers are among the highest in the nation (55%) in their use of conservation tillage (which minimizes soil erosion; the national average is 35%). Maryland farmers lead the nation in the percentage of operators with nutrient management plans (18% covering 309,000 acres, less than five years after the start of Maryland's nutrient management program in 1989; nutrient management improves fertilizer use efficiency, saves costs, and keeps nutrients out of the Bay).
- Crop rotation is used on 58% of Maryland cropland. Alternatives to chemical controls for weeds and insects (crop scouting, natural predation, biological controls, cultural practices) are used by 52% of the respondents. Respondents routinely practice soil testing or plant analysis on cropland (60% of the crop acreage; this testing reduces the amount of fertilizer applied, cutting costs and reducing the nutrient runoff).
- More than half (55%) reduced their use of pesticides during the last three years. Forty-five percent said they had reduced their use of fertilizers during the last three years, and about half said their fertilizer use was the same.
- Survey respondents listed more than 140,000 acres of their lands in wetlands, woodlands, streams, lakes, and ponds. The land area per farm set aside for these uses averaged 67 acres.

On the other hand, we in the suburban area faced a series of ice storms during January when we were forced to do something to reduce the chance of falling on the ice and breaking an arm or leg. Many of us wanted to reduce the damage done to the environment and the plants next to the driveways and sidewalks, so we chose not to apply salt. We went to the garden center or hardware store and bought **fertilizer** to use instead. The fertilizer we applied to the sidewalk melted the ice and ran down into the storm drains which carried it into the Chesapeake Bay. These nutrients next summer will promote the algae blooms and oxygen deprivation that we are trying to stop. Remember that the questions we face, even in everyday choices like this, may have unanticipated effects we seldom are aware of.

Printed by Croatoan Publishing, Inc.

© 1994

Recycled Paper



HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB

Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society
6007 Flywheel Court
Columbia, MD 21044

NON-PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Columbia, MD.
Permit No. 452

You Have A Chance To Save
32,654 Lives On April 15th.



Once a year, osprey travel thousands of miles or more to reach the Chesapeake Bay. Shorebirds journey down from the Canadian Arctic. And the great blue heron come from Florida. What attracts them is the area's rich diversity of field and forest, land and water - a phenomenon of nature unlike anyplace else in the world. You can help us keep it that way by checking line 63 on your Maryland State Income Tax Form.

Help Our Wildlife. Back Our Bay.
Chesapeake Bay And Endangered Species Fund

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED