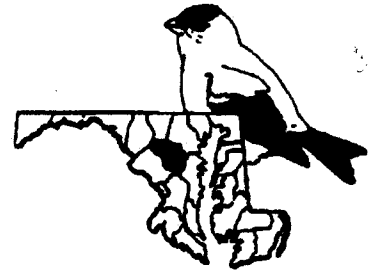




Howard

*A Chapter of the
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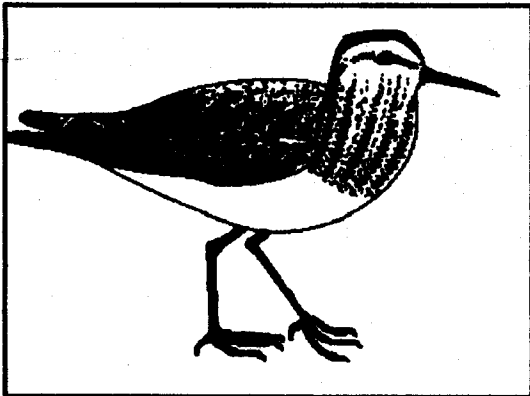
March-April 1995, Volume 23, No. 4

Birding Hot Spots: Turf Farms

by Joanne Solem & Peter Osenton

Although Howard County has turf farms which should be excellent places to find migrant shorebirds that prefer a short grass habitat, no site can be recommended as consistently productive. All locations are privately owned and generally do not welcome visitors. Do not trespass!

The gently rolling hills of western Howard County are typical of the Piedmont. Unfortunately, this makes searching the turf for birds difficult. No matter what the observation point, there are areas that are out of sight. Sod removal is totally unpredictable. Once every few years a field near a road may be stripped at a fortuitous time, or weather conditions such as thunderstorms or heavy rain may cause a Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Black-bellied Plover, American Golden-Plover, or Upland Sandpiper to drop in. During 1993 and 1994 at least 19 trips were made to two or more of the farms during the late July to mid-September period. Only twice were unusual species located, and in only one case were they found even an hour later.



The most consistently productive area has been the Green Manor Turf Farm on the west side of Md. 32 0.5 mile north of Md. 99. Stay on Md. 32 to view the farm with a scope. This road is busy at all times of the day so be sure to pull well off on the wide shoulders. It is most convenient (and safest) to check these fields when you are driving south. The two major advantages of this location are the wide shoulders for parking and the perspective. The fields form an enormous bowl; observers stand along the rim.

Especially in the late summer and early autumn it is worth a stop to scan for shorebirds, hawks, and gulls. Buff-breasted Sandpiper, American Golden-Plover, and Upland Sandpiper are the special species that have been found here, although the odds are long.

breasts were spotted in 1979 and 1989. American Golden-Plovers were seen four years during the decade 1985-1994, and an Upland Sandpiper was located in late April and another in late August 1990. Semipalmated Plovers have been seen twice, Black-bellied Plovers two different years, and in 1990 two Short-billed Dowitchers were spotted. As many as 600 Laughing Gulls have gathered to loaf near the ponds. A careful search may turn up 50 or more Killdeer in late summer.

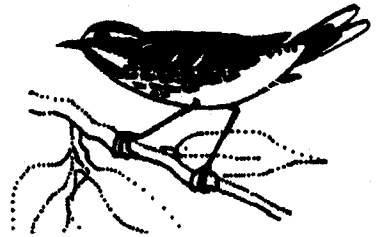
Recent years have reduced this location's attractiveness. The generally damp area not far from the left end of the pond below the house has been drained, while in 1994 several plots of corn broke up the expanse of grass.

Other turf farms in the county are on Triadelphia Road at Howard Road and on Jennings Chapel Road just east of Hipsley Mill Road.

The first produced two Buff-breasted Sandpipers in 1993 and the last a flock of 11 American Golden-Plovers the same year. Both suffer from locations in hilly country on narrow, curving, shoulderless roads with an increasing amount of traffic. There are a few other turf farms or large fields of turf in the county, but no one has ever reported shorebirds (other than Killdeer) on any of them.

Calendar of Programs and Field Trips

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 pm. Meeting/program begins at 8:00 pm. Club bookstore opens at 7:30 pm.



March 9
Thursday

"Neotropicals, their Ecology and Decline," by George Jett. We will be treated to some extraordinary slides and accompanying discussion which come from George's many travels. George is an amateur photographer and birdwatcher specializing in South American birds. He has great concern for the environmental impact on neotropical species and has published in *Birding Magazine*.

April 13
Thursday

"Birds of the Blue Ridge," by Marcus Simpson, MD. This is a return visit to update us on Blue Ridge birds. Marcus was a speaker for the club 20 years ago. He is an expert on birds of the Blue Ridge having numerous publications.

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. FOR INFORMATION, CALL BONNIE OTT, at (410) 461-3361.

Mar 19
Sunday

HOWARD COUNTY WATERFOWL - Meet at Centennial Park concession stand, 8:00 am, for half day trip. Leader - Jane Farrell. Grebes, Bufflehead, Ring-necked Duck, Canvasback and widgeon are likely.

Mar 26
Sunday

BIRDING BY EAR - Meet at Rockburn Park office off Landing Road entrance at 8:00 am for half day trip. Leader - Bonnie Ott. Learn the songs of our resident birds before the migrants arrive. Woodland birds, sparrows, hawks and flyovers possible. Paths may be muddy so be prepared.

Mar 28
Tuesday

WEEKDAY WALK AT GWYNN ACRES - Meet at 8:30 am at Old Columbia Road and Rams Horn Row. Walk for 2-3 hours along paved paths. Leader will be present. Woodland birds, woodpeckers, and waxwings.

April 2,
9, 16, 23
Sundays

APRIL SUNDAYS AT CENTENNIAL PARK - This event is Co-sponsored with Howard County Recreation and Parks. Meet at the west end lot off Centennial Lane at 8:00 am for about a 3 hour walk. Many species of birds are possible including shorebirds, herons, and egrets, waterfowl, hawks, warblers, orioles and sparrows. Various leaders.

April 22
Saturday

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER SEARCH - Meet at 7:00 am at the 29 & 108 Park & Ride to carpool to Henryton Walk for this half day trip. Leaders - Bonnie Ott & Joanne Solem. We will walk along the river to see early warblers, gnatcatcher and kinglets.

April 25
Tuesday

WEEKDAY WALK AT LAKE ELKHORN - Meet at 8:30 am, at Broken Land Parkway parking lot. A leader will be present. Migrants, woodland birds, and waterbirds possible.

April 29
Saturday

SCHOOLEY MILL PARK - Meet at 7:30 am at the upper lot, for this half day trip. Leader - Jim Wilkenson. Many species possible with woods, fields, pond and streams. Paths may be muddy.

April 30
Sunday

WILDFLOWERS AT DANIELS - Meet at 9:00 am at the 29 & 108 Park & Ride for this two hour trip to the Patapsco River. We will look for Miterwort and Dutchman's Breeches among others. Leader - Bob Solem.

April 30
Sunday

EVENING WOODCOCK WALK - Meet at 108 & 29 Park & Ride; call trip leader Bonnie Ott to reserve a spot. We will be listening for displaying woodcock.

Next Board Meeting: Thursday, March 23, 1995, 7:30 pm at Longfellow Elementary School.

MAY-JUNE 1995 NEWSLETTER MATERIAL is due April 1, 1995. Call or mail to Paula and Darius Ecker, 9278 Crazy Quilt Court, Columbia, MD 21045; Phone (410) 995-6279.

JANE FARRELL GETS 300+ MD STATE BIRDS IN ONE YEAR!

Howard County Club member, Jane Farrell says she didn't start the year with the intention of reaching 300 birds. A feat no woman birder had yet claimed. She had spent the year in the company of many well known, highly skilled birders. Focusing much of her birding efforts in Worcester County, she was able to add a significant number of birds to her previous years efforts. Worcester County has a very rich diversity of habitats including the Atlantic Ocean with its pelagic possibilities and Assateague Island; you can imagine the variety of birds you'd see in such habitat which you wouldn't find in Howard County.

Jane spent many of her weekends trekking to the eastern part of Maryland. About May, she really started getting into it, and by July, the birds really picked up. But it wasn't until November, when a fellow birder suggested she should add up her state list, thinking it had to be pretty high. Well, it was 288; a number many of us consider a life list! On November 13th, she got number 289. It started to sink in; maybe a 300 year was possible. Then, as Jane describes it, (well not exactly how she describes it; we won't print that) it got crazy at the end along about Thanksgiving weekend. How could she get to 300? There were a number of "easy" birds which she hadn't seen. Off to western Maryland where she picked up the Raven, Black-capped Chickadee, and a Golden Eagle (not exactly easy, but available).

November 27th, she found the Glaucous Gull in Howard County. Off to eastern Maryland again on December 3rd to find Greater Scaup and Northern Saw-whet Owl followed by a Sandhill Crane on December 7th. After hearing of a Loggerhead Shrike in Frederick County, she was off for another species. Never mind she had a house guest who had driven all the way from Tennessee the day before. She brought them along to find the shrike then headed for Vienna in Dorchester County on the same day to find a Short Eared Owl. Fortunately, her visitor was a birder and a lister so understood perfectly well the need to drive all over the state that day. If you are keeping track, that's 298 and she is in mid-December. On the 20th of December she found an Ash-throated Flycatcher; number 299. (There was one other bird on the list, a Hoary Redpoll, but since this bird would have to be verified, it could be a risk to a 300 bird year achievement for the state.)

At times, desperation would set in, but Jane didn't stop trying. So, on Christmas Eve morning, Jane takes off at 6:00 am with

friend Jo Solem who is along to witness THE EVENT. They head for Allegany County, a mere 130 miles or so one way, for the Rough Grouse. They drive up to a probable spot, park the car, and get out quietly. Then, what strolls up out of the ditch next to them but the treasured Rough Grouse. IT'S BIRD 300!

And Jane didn't stop there. It was good to have some insurance birds. So, on December 26th it was off to Worcester County again where she picked up a Rufous Hummingbird, a Long-eared Owl and an American Bittern. Maryland State birds for the year ended at 304, counting the Hoary Redpoll. For those of you who might find the thought of visiting Worcester County to bird interesting, consider this: Jane's Howard County Life List is 256; her list for Worcester County for 1994 alone was 254.

Jane is the second woman to achieve 300 birds in a year. She shares the honor with Mary Ann Todd, who reached her 300 year days before Jane. When asked exactly how she was able to do it, Jane said there were a number of reasons. She visited places which offered a variety of habitats, thus increasing her chances of getting more species. She spent lots of time birding with expert birders such as Mark Hoffman, Michael O'Brien, Dave Czaplak, George Jett, Jim Stasz and Mary Ann Todd; all of whom gave generously of their time and knowledge. And she received calls, some long distance, from many birders in the state who knew she was searching for a few more species. Congratulations, Jane; what an exciting year. Now, what's next?



NEWSLETTER EDITORS NAMED! -

Darius and Paula Ecker will be taking over the editor role for the club commencing with the May-June newsletter. They have been briefed and are ready to go. Please send all future article ideas and copy the them at 9278 Crazy Quilt Court, Columbia, MD 21045.

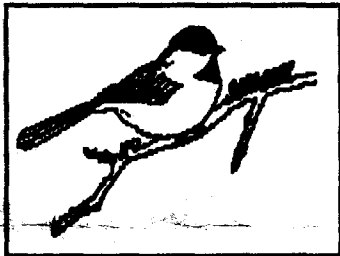
Thanks to all of you who have contributed to the success of the newsletter during my two and a half years of editing. It has been great fun. A special thanks goes to Joanne and Bob Solem for the many articles, odds and ends items, guidance, advice and making and attaching of the mailing stickers. And to Marty Chestem who always sorts the mail and delivers it to the post office. The newsletter is truly a team effort. - Susan Setterberg

SPRING BIRDING IN COLORADO and FINDING BIRD 600

by Peter Osenton

Shortly after college graduation I moved out to Wyoming to work for the U.S. Forest Service. This was at an early stage in my "birding career" so many species were not seen while I was stationed there. I thought it would be fun to go back and try to see some of these "missed" species and interesting areas. Given the type of work I do I was very fortunate to get a week off since this time of year is our busy field season. Knowing the birds I wanted to see, and that many of them were scattered throughout the state, I knew this would be a hard core road warrior-type trip. I figured, to maximize birding time I would drive from late morning to mid-afternoon from one destination to the next. This enabled me to bird at the best times of day and drive during the lesser times of bird activity.

I flew to Denver in mid-May, got a rental car, and was on my way. My first stop was the Comanche National Grassland located in the southeastern part of the state near the small town of Campo.



I arrived in late afternoon with plenty of time to bird the area and find the booming grounds, or lek, of the Lesser Prairie Chicken. Luckily, while viewing a lek area in the early evening, I heard strange sounds similar to the Greater Prairie Chicken I had experienced in Texas. Sure enough, five males appeared and started displaying for about 35 minutes.

The next morning I birded an area called Picture Canyon which is west of Campo. It's an interesting area complete with pictographs on the canyon walls. Birds seen here included Canyon Towhee, Lark Sparrow, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Blue Grosbeak, Bullock's type Oriole, and Rufous Crowned Sparrow. In the open short grass prairie Lark Buntings, Cassin's Sparrows, Western Meadowlarks and Swainson's Hawks were common.

Driving west near the town of Las Animas, along the Cottonwood-lined Arkansas River, I found a Lewis' Woodpecker and several Black-billed Magpie's. In this area I also stopped at Bent's Old Fort National Historical Site, an important fort and trading post during 1800's.

My next destination was Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument about in the center

of the state. The next morning I birded around the facility, photographed the huge petrified Sequoia stumps and even saw my "life" Tassel-eared Squirrel. These mammals are all black with long tufted ears. Birds seen here were Mountain Bluebird, Pygmy Nuthatch, Stellar's Jay, Western Tanager and Clark's Nutcracker. I continued west over Fremont Pass summit with snow flurries, and on to the Grand Junction area with its mesas and colorful rock strata. Late in the afternoon I birded Little Book Cliffs Wild Horse area near the town of Cameo. This location is known for its population of Chukars, a gamebird introduced many years ago. Black-throated Sparrow, Rock Wren, Lazuli Bunting, Black-throated Gray Warbler and Brewer's Sparrow were all found that afternoon, but no Chukar. I still had tomorrow morning though, I thought.

At 6:15 the next morning I was looking at a pair of Chukars feeding in the cheatgrass. I watched them for a long time as this was a new life bird, and second for the trip. Later that morning I was heading north to see Dinosaur National Monument located in extreme northwestern Colorado with a portion of it in Utah. As a kid I read about the famous Dinosaur quarry and had always wanted to see it. The "quarry" is an exposed ridge with a multitude of dinosaur bones that are still being cataloged. In the higher portions of the park the wildflowers were fabulous. I camped at a place within the monument called Deer Lodge, a frequent stopover for many rafting trips along the Yampa River. The following morning I found a beautiful Cottonwood grove which was extremely productive. Birds found in this riparian area included Black-headed Grosbeak, Solitary and Warbling Vireo, Tennessee, Yellow and Orange-crowned Warblers.

As I started driving out of the park I noticed a bird perched on a sagebrush bush. Stopping quickly and checking it, I had found a Sage Thrasher. This wasn't ANY Sage Thrasher, it was a life bird and number 600 on my life list! I was so excited. The bird stayed there for a long time and I was able to photograph it.

I travelled east through the Routt National Forest and found my Dusky Flycatcher in an Aspen grove. That afternoon I visited the Arapaho National Wildlife Refuge near Walden. This is a nice refuge with a good list of breeding waterfowl and other waterbirds. The photo opportunities are great along the auto tour. Before dark I visited one of the leks for the Sage

Grouse. At just about 9 o'clock several showed up on the grounds and began "booming". These are large birds and what a site to see! I went back the following morning and they were there in much larger numbers displaying more intensely.

The next main area was Rocky Mountain National Park, a beautiful place with some incredible scenery. At Lava Cliffs I searched high and low for the Brown-capped Rosy Finch, but to no avail. I did however see White-tailed Ptarmigan, my second time ever. From the park I drove east back into the plains. Here, at the Pawnee National Grassland, I saw my first McCown's

Longspur. The males do an interesting flight song and display. My last stop was in southeastern Wyoming to look for the Sharp-tailed Grouse. North of the town of Burns I located a small lek with about 14 males displaying. These birds were here to display for potential mates similar to the other grouse I had seen on the earlier part of the trip. I found my way back to Denver to finish up an enjoyable and unforgettable trip to the Rocky Mountain area.

Editor's Note: Congratulations to Peter. Getting 600 birds on your "LOWER FORTY-EIGHT" life list is no small feat; and what a great way to do it.

ODDS AND ENDS

CONSERVATION DAY -

On Saturday, April 8, 1995, the second annual Conservation Discovery Day will be held at the Howard County Fair Grounds. Lots of great ideas and information on conservation. This year's event promises to be bigger, better and more fun than last year's.

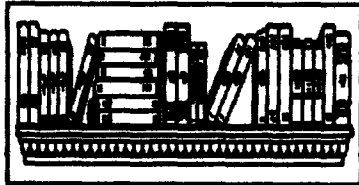
CAN YOU IDENTIFY THESE BIRDS?

Example: Elderly Lady . . . Dowitcher
A wise chicken?
Embarrassed singer?
Soviet survey?
Minimal Change in direction?
Slow mover?
Regal angler?
A church official?
The wife of the late Charles William?
Pale Robert?

(Answers will be published in the next issue.)

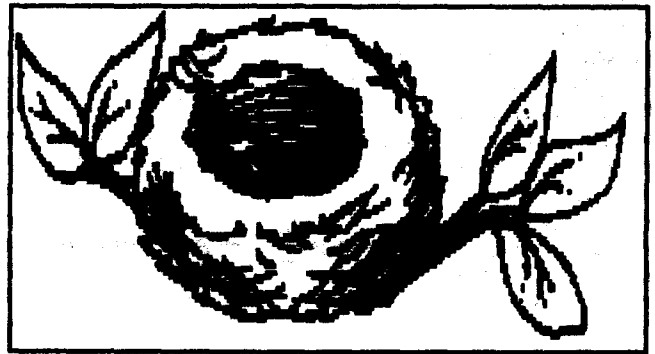
NEW BOOKSTORE MANAGER NEEDED -

We are seeking someone to take over the job of managing the bookstore for the club. As you know, this is an activity which gets lots of attention at the beginning of each club meeting and at the seed sales. Profits from the sale of books help support club activities. At the same time, members get discounts on book purchases. After several years of performing this activity admirably, Michele Wright is ready to turn it over to someone else. There are plenty of helpers available so you won't be on your own; and Michele is available to get you started. If you are interested, please call Dave Harvey at (410) 795-3117.



ANNUAL LISTS DUE -

Your annual bird lists for 1994 are due to Jane Farrell by March 2, 1995. Please mail them to 6324 Sandchain Road, Columbia, MD 21045.



MARYLAND BIRDLIFE MAILED -

Howard County Bird Club takes on the responsibility of mailing the MOS publication *Maryland Birdlife* each time a new one is printed. The last two issues which you received recently were addressed and mailed by the following members: Maud Banks, Marty Chestem, Joy Emerson, Dave and Maureen Harvey, Shiras Guion, Connie Mace, Tom Strikwerda, and Don & Martha Waugh. Thank you for helping.

DID YOU KNOW -

Lesser Scaup can be aged by the color of their eyes. Coots can be aged by the color of their legs. All ducks can be aged during their first year of life by feather characteristics.

Ruddy Duck hens lay more than their own body weight each season. Each hen must consume 5,000 to 8,000 Marsh Flies per hour of feeding time during the height of the breeding season.

