SUMMARY OF THE 1995 HOWARD COUNTY FALL COUNT

BY MIKE MCCULRE AND CHUCK STIRRAT

The second annual Howard County Fall Count was conducted on Sept. 16, 1995. Most amazingly this year's numbers were very similar to last year. There were a total of 54 participants in 27 field parties. The totals for party miles and hours are shown on the accompanying tally sheet, with the party-hours and miles being roughly 10% less than last year primarily due to more miles spent on foot than last year. Our goal for this second year, was to exceed the number of species recorded in the first count held last year. Despite the impressions many had during the day, we did just that, recording a total of 135 species, exceeding last years total of 133 by two species. The total of individual birds tallied of 26,643 was within 10 birds of last year's total, an amazing coincidence. The weather was cooler than last year, with the day basically overcast and high temperatures in the mid-70's. Just as last year, the rain held off until late afternoon, just in time for the tally rally.

The accompanying table presents the count data for the county and the 7 areas that are now used for all three of the county counts. The confusing fall warblers were present in good numbers with 30 species of warbler identified, the same as last year. These again included a Connecticut and a Mourning Warbler. New this year were Cerulean and Louisiana Waterthrush, which replaced a Myrtle and Yellow-breasted Chat seen last year. Other species of note were Least Bittern, Snow Goose, Black-bellied Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Merlin, Least Flycatcher, Summer Tanager, and Orchard Oriole.

This year the individual bird totals were dominated by starlings and Icterid flocks, unlike last year when the landfill and its flocks of gulls dominated the totals, a phenomenon not repeated this year.

The field checklist used this year was a new sheet developed and tailored to Howard County in the Fall, identifying species that require differing levels of support based on the historical database for the frequency of occurrence at this time in the county. As a result some species not normally requiring write-ups were identified for documentation or extra support. Thanks to all those who provided written or additional details for these species. Our hope is to refine this checklist as additional data becomes available. Your feedback on this approach and interest in similar modifications to the lists for May and Winter counts would be appreciated by the authors.

Thanks to all participants and those who acted as area coordinators for the count: Maud Banks, Mary Jo Belts, Bill and Karen Blum (Area 4), Chris Brown, Ellen and Hal Bryson, Jesse Buff, Marty Chestem (Area 6), T. Dennis Coskren, Randy and Richard Crook (Area 3), Greg Dunn, Darlus and Paulette Ecker (Area 2), Jane Ferrall, Kim Groes, Ken Hart, Dave and Maureen Harvey, Emmalyn Holdridge, Cathy Jones, Mike Kerwin, Bob and Brigitte Lund, Nancy Magnusson, Grazina and Mike McClure (County Co-coordinator), Carol Newman, Paul Newman, Doug Odermatt, Peter Osanton, Chris, Nick and Bonnie Ott (Area 6), Joe Piscard, Ann Marie Raterman, Frank Reily, Nanine Rhinlander, Clyde Robinette, Susan Setterberg, Romayne Smith, Bob and Jo Solem, Hank Stanton, Chuck Stirrat (County Co-coordinator), Paul Sturm, Eva Sunell (Area 7), Robin Todd, Laura Van Sauvick, Thelma Veek, Mark Wallace (Area 1), and Martha Waugh, Carol and Jim Wilkinson, Michele Wright, and Helen Zeichner. A very special thanks to Don and Martha Waugh who hosted the evening tally rally.

Last year we had help from Georgia, this year we recruited from Tennessee, in the person of Dennis Coskren. Another welcome out-of-state visitor was Sue Setterberg, an area coordinator last year, who returned from her new home in Pennsylvania. This second Fall count was a great success with many "birding" tales related at the tally rally. Plan now to join us next year when the count will again be held on the third Saturday of September, the 21st, which is the latest date the count can occur, a fact which may provide some interesting insights into the Fall migration.
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<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Speckle Eared Pigeon</th>
<th>Great Egret</th>
<th>Snow Bunting</th>
<th>Northern Roughlegs</th>
<th>Ruffed Grouse</th>
<th>Killdeer</th>
<th>Yellow-rumped Warbler</th>
<th>American Robin</th>
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Supplementary Data:
- **Area Total Birds:** 2,101,745
- **Area Total Species:** 2,358,500
- **Area No.:** 1

**Time Start/Stop:**
- **Time Start:** 07:00
- **Time Stop:** 19:00

**Weather Conditions:**
- **Wind:** 10 mph
- **Humidity:** 70%

**Observations:**
- **Total Observers:** 3
- **Total Parties:** 2
- **Total Hours:** 18
- **Total Hours (Fed)**: 4

**Total Hours (Fed):**
- **Total Hours:** 22
- **Total Hours (Fed):** 8

**Total Hours:**
- **Total Hours:** 20
- **Total Hours (Fed):** 6

**Total Hours (Fed):**
- **Total Hours:** 3
- **Total Hours (Fed):** 1
BEWARE OF BANANA-EATING OWL
BY EVA SUNELL

During the last week of June, I received a call from a friend of Maud Banks describing what she believed was a mother owl with a baby. The mother was calling constantly and had been doing so for four days. It was also sitting on the deck begging for food. The baby was quieter and usually remained in the nearby trees. As a bird rehabilitator, or rehabber, I get many calls that are puzzles and require detective work and development of theories. This was definitely one of those situations.

The friend said she knew they were Barred Owls because of the dark eyes and size. Both birds could fly, so there were no injuries. She felt the larger bird that kept screaming was the mother searching for food to take back to the baby. Oddly, the mother bird had a preference for ripe bananas. The last time the homeowner had offered a banana the owl snatched it out of her hand. She yelled, frightened by the talons.

I decided I needed to see this situation for myself. My husband and I gathered our gloves, a cage, a fishing hoop, meat and, of course, bananas. We traveled to southeast Howard County to a development that backs up on the Middle Patuxent River, and is bordered by a large stand of forest. The birds were now in a neighbor’s yard, so we obtained permission to enter. Once in the yard, I saw one bird fly to a tall pine. The other larger bird sat on top of a bird feeder constantly calling. At that point, I realized we had two immature Barred Owls whose parents had decided it was time for them to learn to fend for themselves. The larger bird had made enough racket that many people in this neighborhood (including the homeowners of the yard we were in) had decided to take pity on them and supplement their feedings.

I placed meat in one location and a banana in another. The larger bird unhesitatingly ate the banana. I asked my husband to see how close he could get to the bird. He approached cautiously, with his gloved hand, and the owl attacked it. Later, my husband was able to touch the bird with both hands.

I definitely felt this was not normal. Any predator, including a large dog, would be able to kill this owl. I wanted to take the bird out of the area because he was coming to decks and being hand fed bananas. Also, there were many young children in the area, and he was as much a danger to them as to himself.

Sometime during this incident the homeowner had called in a friend who is a falconer. When I discussed my concerns with the falconer he insisted the owl did not need rehabbing. The homeowner did not want the bird removed because of her concern that the other bird would miss his sibling. With much doubt, but also respecting the homeowner’s wishes, we decided to leave without the owl. We did coax the owl into some undergrowth where, as we left it was picking at worms in a compost pile. We also requested that the neighbors stop feeding the owls so they could learn to fend for themselves.

Maud called me two days later to tell me the rest of the story. The next day the homeowner stepped out onto the deck, not intending to feed the bird, and within seconds the bird made several frighteningly close fly-bys. Feeling threatened, she called the falconer who captured the owl and released it in PatapSCO State Park.

Maud and I had a good laugh about warning the park rangers to beware of a banana-eating owl.

BIRD CLUB DISPLAY AT HOWARD COUNTY FAIR
BY DARIUS ECKER

The Howard County Bird Club had a display in the vegetable barn at the Howard County Fair during the week of August 12-19. Tom Strickler and coordinated the event with the Fair Board of Directors, and Darius Eckler coordinated prime-time booth coverage with volunteers from the club. Jo Solem, Helen Zeichner, and Darius and Paula Eckler set up the display on Friday night before the fair, and Kimberly Gross and Marty Chestem dismantled the display on the last day of the fair.

Thanks to the following volunteers who worked the booth: Darius and Paula Eckler, Marci Kutsamohr, Tom Strickler, Jane Farrell, Don and Martha Waugh, Richard and Randy Crook, Chuck Sturral, Dave and Maureen Harvey, Jeff and Elayne Metter, Kimberly Gross, and Marty Chestem.

In addition to the club’s trifold display of common Howard County birds, a box of fishing line, hooks, and other fishing materials was displayed.

These items, potentially lethal to birds, had been picked up by bird club members along the shores of local reservoirs and lakes during the past year. If you collect materials of this type, bring them to a meeting and we will add them to the display.

The touchable display, which included an intact box turtle shell was a hit with children. Anyone who has touchable items to grab children’s interest is welcome to contribute them to next year’s display.
Summer Bird Records: June 1 - July 31, 1995

By Joanne Solem

Summer is the shortest reporting season. It produces fewer sightings than other seasons, but there are always birds of note. Although a prolonged period of hot weather reduced observer field time this year, high water levels on both reservoirs were a more critical disadvantage.

One Pied-billed Grebe was reported on Fore Bay Pond (FRBYP), which is the beaver pond at the southeast end of Lake Elkhorn (LKEKLK), 7/8 (JW). What was probably the same bird was seen intermittently from 7/17-31 (JF) at the pond on Stanford Road. The only summer Double-crested Cormorant sighting was on Triadelphia Reservoir (TRIRS) 7/22 (POs). There were 11 Wood Ducks at Centennial (CENPK) 7/30 (JF, JS). Non-resident ducks included 1m & 2f Green-winged Teal (FRBYP) 6/13 (JW), 1f or imm No. Pintail at CENPK 7/17 (CB), and a Ruddy Duck at Lake Kittamaqundi (LKKIT) 7/22 (MC).

As expected, herons and egrets began showing up or were seen in increasing numbers. A high of 18 Great Blue Herons were reported at the upper end of Triadelphia (TRIUP) 7/22 (NM). Great Egret sightings began with 1 at CENPK 7/14 (MC), 3 at LKKIT 7/24 (MC), and 1 at LKEKLK 7/31 (JW). An imm Little Blue Heron was seen by a field trip 7/16 (MC, m.obs.) & again 7/17 (CENPK)(CB). The Green Heron count peaked at 8 (LKEKLK) 7/20 (JW). Also at LKEKLK 7/11 JW had 1 imm Black-crowned Night-Heron; on 7/20 his count had risen to 2 ad, 1 imm. They continued to frequent FRBYP at irregular intervals well into the next reporting season. The resident Canada Goose population continued its spectacular success. Chestem found 114 on LKKIT 6/30; she had counted 33 goslings 6/26.

The water level at TRIRS has not been low enough this year to allow WSSC personnel to re-erect the Osprey platform that ice destroyed; no pair nested locally. The only summer sighting of that species was 7/28 (TRIUP)(NM). Magnusson also had a Wild Turkey calling at the same location 6/18. A Cooper’s Hawk was spotted in the Howard Chapel Road section of Patuxent River State Park 7/30 (JF, JS). Broad-winged Hawks probably nested at Brown’s Bridge (BRNNBR); 1 ad 6/18 (JW); 1 ad & 1 imm 7/29 (JF, JS). A family group of 6 Am. Kestrels was reported from Rockburn Branch Park (RKBPR) 7/6 (BO).

Shorebird species were the expected ones; numbers were low. Arrivals included 1 Greater Yellowlegs (TRIUP) 7/28 (NM), 1 Lesser Yellowlegs on Fulton Pond (FULPD) 7/24 (JW), 3 Solitary Sandpipers (LKEKLK) 7/15 (JW), 2 Spotted Sandpipers (FULPD) 7/15 (JF, JS), 1 Semipalmated Sandpiper (FULPD) 7/24 (JW), and 1 Least Sandpiper (FULPD) 7/29 (JF, JS).

Wilkinson spotted a Laughing Gull near LKEKLK 7/10 & 1 Ring-billed Gull made an appearance at Brighton Dam (BRDAM) 7/15 (JF, JS). The first Caspian Tern of the season was reported from TRIRS 7/22 by both MC & POs. A Black-billed Cuckoo juvenile, which was able to fly, was seen at LKEKLK 7/18 (JW). Though this species has certainly nested in this county in small numbers, an active nest or a fledgling unable to fly has yet to be recorded.

Willow Flycatchers nested at Schooiley Mill Park (SLMPK) where MC watched adults near a nest 7/14. As usual, there were several successful pairs at the west end of CENPK (m.obs.) A Horned Lark was seen 7/15 in a field along A.E. Mullinix Road (JF, JS). A lone Bank Swallow was noted on Shaffer’s Mill Road 7/15 (JW). Osenton counted 42 Cliff Swallows at BRDAM & 20 at Big Branch 7/8. A maximum of 22 Barn Swallows was noted over LKEKLK 7/15 (JW). At least 3 Warbling Vireos were heard and seen on both sides of the Patapsco River west of Hoods Mill Road 6/17 (J&JRS).

Warblers included 1m Prothono-

tary Warbler at Daniels, Patapsco Valley State Park (DANPV) 6/28 (MI); 2 La. Waterthrushes (RKBPR) 7/6 (BO) and 1 at DANPV 7/13 (MC, HZ); 6 Kentucky Warblers (RKBPR) 7/6 (BO), 1 at DANPV 7/18 (MC, HZ); and 1 Yellow-breasted Chat (CENPK) 6/27 (MC). The Marriottsville area along the Patapsco River continues to be productive. Two Cerulean Warblers were seen 7/16 (JF, JS) along with 2 Yellow-throated Warblers. The Ceruleans were still singing as was 1 Yellow-throated; however, the Yellow-throated was observed singing a Cerulean song, not that typical of his own species. In addition to an atypical song, the bird also had extensive white streaking on its back. A hybrid Lawrence’s Warbler was seen along both sides of the Patapsco River one-half mile west of Hoods Mill Road 6/11 (D&MH). An unsuccessful attempt was made to relocate the bird 6/17 (J&S).

Two predictable spots produced Blue Grosbeak sightings: 1 at SLMLP 6/28 (MC) and 4 to 1 at Gateway Business Park (GATWY) during the summer (JW). Two Vesper Sparrows were singing 7/9 along A.E. Mullinix Road. At least 4-5 were seen 7/15 at that location (JF, JS). A maximum of 12 Grasshopper Sparrows were counted at GATWY 7/9 (JW). With the drop in E. Meadowlark habitat and sightings, a report of agitated adults on 6/28 & 7/14 (SLMLP) indicating probable nesting was welcome (MC).

Observers: Connie Boockstie (CB), Martha Chestem (MC), Jane Farrell (JF), Dave & Maureen Harvey (D&MH), Marshall Iff (MJ), Nancy Magnusson (NM), Peter Osenton (POs), Bonnie Ott (BO), Joanne & Robert Solem (J&JRS), Jim Wilkinson (JW), Helen Zeilichner (HZ), many observers (m.obs.).
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.

November 9, Thursday
“Migration and Breeding Habits of Neotropical Birds,” by Peter Stangel. Peter is with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and additionally, he works with the new Partners in Flight Program. This program is a major cooperative international initiative for the conservation of neotropical migratory birds and their habitats. NOTE: The November business meeting will begin 15 minutes early, at 7:45 pm to allow Jay Jones, of the Environmental Fund of Maryland, to explain how MOS can benefit from this fund.

December 14, Thursday
“Black Skimmers: Strikers in the Night,” by David Brinker. David, of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, will share his knowledge about the natural history and ecology of this coastal species.

Field Trips meet as described for each trip. Carpooling is encouraged; riders share the cost of gas and tolls. Dress for the field trip with stout, reasonably waterproof footwear and 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.

November 5, 12, 19, 26
Centennial Park Sunday Walks (co-sponsored with Howard County Recreation and Parks) - Meet at 8:00 am at the west end lot to walk around the lake. Leader will be present. Many different birds - ducks, gulls and woodland species. Call Bonnie if more information needed.

November 11, Saturday
Piney Run (Carroll County) - Meet at 7:00 am at the Route 108 and 29 park and ride. Leader: Burton Alexander. Wide variety of waterfowl possible. Call leader at (410) 381-5574 if more information needed.

November 13, Monday
Weekday Walk at Wilde Lake - Meet at 9:00 am at the boat dock. Leader will be present. Walk along the lake and check the woods for waterfowl and possible Winter Wren. Call Bonnie if more information needed.

November 25, Saturday
Howard County Waterfowl - Meet at 8:00 am at the Centennial Park concession stand. Leader: Jane Farrell. Will carpool to other ponds and lakes to search for ducks, mergansers and grebes. Call leader at (410) 381-7344 if more information needed.

December 16, Saturday
Triadelphia Reservoir Christmas Bird Count - See details elsewhere in this newsletter.

Board of Directors meetings are held the fourth Thursday of the month at 7:30 pm, unless otherwise noted, at the home of the board member listed. If directions are required, please call the hosting board member.

November 30, Thursday
Eileen Clegg, 6007 Flywheel Court, Columbia, MD 21044, phone (410) 730-4362.

December - NONE

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 1996 NEWSLETTER MATERIAL is due NOVEMBER 24, 1995. Anyone is welcome to contribute articles or ideas which you think will be of interest to other birders. Call or mail to Paula and Darius Ecker, 9270 Crazyquilt Court, Columbia, MD 21045, Phone (410) 312-9165.

MOS SCHOLARSHIPS
AVAILABLE

The Maryland Ornithological Society annually awards ecology and ornithology tuition scholarships to Audubon camps. If you work with young people, you may wish to apply for a scholarship. Contact President Dave Harvey (410) 795-3117 for additional information.

NAME OUR NEWSLETTER UPDATE

Thanks to everyone who has taken the time to give such thoughtful consideration to an appropriate name for our newsletter. To date, we have received many good suggestions. There is still plenty of time, however, for more suggestions. So, if you come up with what you believe is the perfect name for our newsletter, let us know.

Send your suggestions to Paula and Darius Ecker, 9270 Crazyquilt Court, Columbia, MD 21045, Phone (410) 312-9165, by February 21, 1996. The new name for the newsletter will be effective with the September - October 1996 issue.
CONSERVATION REPORT by Bob Solem

Maryland has restricted recreational and commercial crabbing to protect the blue crab population. Governor Glendening announced that recreational and commercial crabbing will be prohibited on Wednesdays and Sundays and the season will end on November 15, 1995. Next year, recreational crabbing will be prohibited on one day each week, and the season will end October 31. These restrictions show a commitment to the long-term economic, cultural, and environmental benefits of protecting crabs. Like most policies, this has disappointed nearly everyone—so it probably is the best that could be designed to be acceptable.

More must be done if we are to reduce the amount of pollution entering the Chesapeake Bay as well as to satisfy the many divergent interests affecting the Bay. Each tributary river has its own particular aspects that must be considered; there is no “one solution fits all” answer to the Bay pollution problem. The state had appointed several panels to advise what should be done; two affect Howard County: the Patapsco Back River Tributary Strategy Implementation Team and the Patuxent River Tributary Strategy Implementation Team. You are represented on these teams by the Howard County Department of Planning and Zoning and the Howard Soil Conservation District. As there is information of interest, I will report it in this column.

BINOCULARS FOR SALE

Bushnell, 7X35. Used twice. $40.00, case included. Call Mrs. Florence Coulter Kramer at 410-730-4883 or write to 5350 Brookway, Columbia, MD 21044.

TRIADELPHIA RESERVOIR

Christmas Bird Count by Norm Saunders

The Triadelphia Reservoir Christmas Bird Count is being held from dawn to dusk this year on Saturday, December 16. The count circle straddles the Triadelphia and Rocky Gorge Reservoirs and covers southern Howard County and eastern Montgomery County, as well as small portion of Prince George’s County. We will meet after the count at the Brookside Nature Center (Wheaton Regional Park) for a tally of the birds seen during the day. Birders of all levels of experience are welcome and encouraged to participate. For information on counting in Howard County contact Jo Solem (301) 726-8037 or Mark Wallace (301) 726-6370. For information on this count or on the topic of Christmas Bird Counts, contact the count compiler, Norm Saunders, at (301) 989-9036 (Colesville - Home) or at (202) 606-5723 (DC - Office).

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HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB

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

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED