



Howard

A Chapter of the
Maryland Ornithological Society



MARCH - APRIL 1996

VOLUME 24, NUMBER 4

A ST. NICHOLAS DAY GIFT

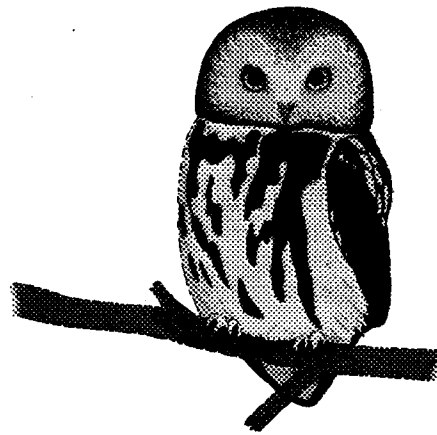
BY CONNIE BOCKSTIE

For some reason, long since forgotten, I told Bonnie Ott, "You owe me BIG!" "What do you want," she asked. Unhesitatingly I responded ... "A SAW-WHET OWL in Howard County." She laughed at that, but I thought ... 'if anyone can find me one, she can!' She had already produced a Long-eared Owl, but that did not quite fit the bill.

So (not too mysteriously) every Christmas there appeared Northern Saw-whet Owls of almost every ilk. Sometimes I found them on the windshield of my car parked at Centennial Park. Other times the letter carrier delivered them with no return address. Of course, I knew from whence they came. Each time I received a card or a figurine I would tell Bonnie, "they have to be REAL!"

So it continued for many years until December 6, 1995. That particular day found me resolutely ensconced on my heating pad to soothe the pain of a recent fall. NOTHING, I thought to myself, could persuade me to move. I was wrong.

The telephone rang and a very excited voice, Bonnie's, announced that Hank Stanton had found a Northern Saw-whet Owl in back of his house. Forgetting the pain I quickly dressed and hurried down to Hank Stanton's house. Now you would imagine that an owl in back of Hank's house meant a little way beyond his backyard. WRONG!!! We slithered down a very steep hill, crawled under a barbed-wire fence, literally waded through a stream (but what are wet feet when there's a saw-whet owl in the



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offing). I laboriously attempted to keep up with Bonnie who by now was a block ahead of me. We trudged about a quarter mile into the woods and finally we were there! Just a few feet before us, half asleep in a rather sparse solitary pine tree, sat our first Howard County Northern Saw-whet Owl.

There is no other word to describe a saw-whet except adorable. He seemed more tiny than I remembered and he stared at us with half-sleepy eyes. Murphy's law reared its ugly head as my battery died while trying to take pictures. I could hardly be so blasé as to say "well ... no matter ... next time." Will there be a next time and if so, how long from now?

The saw-whet arrived on December 6, St. Nicholas Day. We observe the custom of opening one gift on this day and as I opened my daughter Sue's gift to me ... you guessed it ... it contained the book "How to Spot an Owl." Coincidence, you say. Well, maybe.

Anyway, Bonnie is finally off the hook. Let's see now, what can I hit her up for next time?

WINTER SEED SALE

A SUCCESS

BY EILEEN CLEGG

A hearty thank you to those people who volunteered for the winter seed sale. The success of the sale is a direct result of the generous donation of your time. I am, as always, grateful for your support. Volunteer loaders were: *Bill Blum, Connie Bockstie, John Clegg, Mike Courbron, Jane Farrell, Tina Glorioso, Mark Kratz, Dave Kubitsky, Dennis Luck, Bob and Jo Solem, Don Trovinger, and Maria Wilder.* *Robyn Evans, Kim Jubinski, Bea Newkirk and Carol Newman* provided baked goods. *Pamela Etne and Jeffrey Friedhoffer* staffed the bookstore, *Zelda Simon and Helen Zelchner* worked the desk, and *Shiras Gulon* lended her support as treasurer.

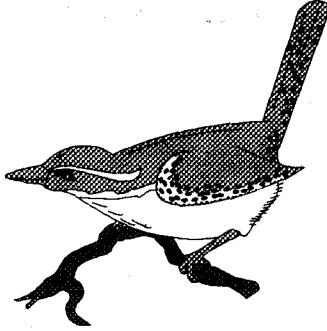
INSIDE THIS ISSUE	PAGE
BIRD BEHAVIOR OBSERVATIONS	2
DELMARVA BIRDING WEEKENDS	2
CARPENTER NEEDED	2
THANKS FOR YOUR DONATIONS	2
PROGRAMS AND FIELD TRIPS	3
ONLINE UPDATE	4
CONSERVATION COLUMN	4

BIRD BEHAVIOR OBSERVATIONS

BY CAROL NEWMAN

As humans vary from their usual eating habits on special occasions or in times of stress, it appears that birds can do the same. During the prolonged, hot drought of last July, a catbird sipped regularly from our hummingbird feeder.

The Blizzard of 1996 afforded us unusual sightings as well. Six foot mounds of snow, shoveled from the roof, made the regular feeders inaccessible so we spread seed on the steps that led from the living room to the deck. The birds flew in quickly, but they dashed themselves against the glass door. Taping waxed paper on the outside of the door eliminated the reflection for the birds and at the same time provided opaque images for us to know when the birds were feeding. As if we were in a blind, we could see around the edges. We observed



the usual juncos, white throats and cardinals. No uncommon visitors, but an opportunity to witness some uncommon behavior: a cardinal fed from the hanging thistle feeder above the door. A Carolina Wren shared the hanging suet simultaneously with the downies and titmice. A Carolina Wren (whether the same suet eater or not, we couldn't tell) perched on the narrow window frame

where ice accumulated, melted and formed a puddle in the groove. The bird pecked away at the ice, creating a larger puddle, and created for itself a reliable and continuous water supply for drinking.

Who else had guests with unusual feeding activities?

Editor's Note: We also had some unusual birding activity at our house during the Blizzard of 1996. Due to snow drifts we were unable to get outside to fill our feeders, so we resorted to throwing scoops of seed out one of our upstairs windows. Attracted by this unique feeding method were the first American Tree Sparrows we have ever had in our yard.

Among the other birds we had were a Red-shouldered Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Sharp-shinned Hawk, a Red-tailed Hawk, and our usual variety of yard birds.

DELMARVA BIRDING WEEKENDS

SPONSORED BY THE MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Did you know there are spectacular birding opportunities found only on the Delmarva Peninsula? The Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Coast are host to quite a diversity of bird species. Black Rails, Swainson's Warblers and Peregrine Falcons are just a few of the birds that can be seen here during spring. In the fall, this area is packed with migrating waterfowl.

The Delmarva Birding Weekends, planned for spring and fall will feature guided trips where participants may see and photograph these species and dozens more. Trips include taking a boat or canoe through the intricate waterways of the Chesapeake Bay tributaries and Atlantic barrier islands to see cypress swamps or salt marshes. Also included are hikes through forests filled with colorful warblers. If you have never seen

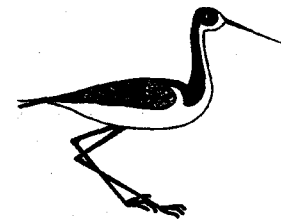
thousands of migrating shorebirds descend on the eggs of masses of horseshoe crabs that inundate the coast, this is the chance to see it with a naturalist guide.

The Delmarva Peninsula supports some of the most important nesting and resting areas for birds on the Eastern Flyway. The Delmarva Birding Weekends celebrate the value of the unique habitats here which attract such a diversity of bird species. All trips and programs will be lead by biologists or naturalists who will offer special insight into the special relationship between these magnificent creatures and the bays, salt-water marshes, wetlands, forests and fields of the Delmarva Peninsula.

Some of the hottest birding spots will be hosting trips, including Assateague Island National Seashore,

Pocomoke State Forest & Park (chance to see a Swainson's Warbler!), and Deal Island Wildlife Management Area (Black-necked Stilts!).

Weekend dates are **April 27 & 28, May 5, May 11 & 12, May 18 & 19, September 21 & 22, and November 2.** For registration information, call **Edith R. Thompson, Watchable Wildlife Coordinator, at (410) 974-3195.** (Sponsored by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources; Fish, Heritage and Wildlife Office.)



CARPENTER NEEDED TO BUILD BIRD SPECIMEN CARRYING CASES

If you would like to show off your carpentry skills, the Howard County Bird Club needs you. We have many bird specimens that need carrying cases in which to be housed when not on display.

Call **Dave Harvey, (410) 795-3117** for more information or to volunteer for this project.

THANKS FOR YOUR DONATIONS

We wish to thank everyone whose donations enabled the club to further worthwhile projects such as rainforest preservation. They include donations from: **Lois Carleton, Pat Jackson, Julla Rizzelo, Jane Farrell, Rita Chelton, Michael Courbron, Ward Ebert, Jeffrey Friedhoffer,**

Patricia Gottmoeller, R. W. Handwork, Bea Newkirk, Suzanne Probst, Rosamond Ridgley, Barbara Schuyler, Peter Schuyler, Richard Smith, Hank Stanton, John Oetting, Monika Botsal, David Kelly, Bryan MacKay, D. V. Nahrgang, Nettie Taylor, Robin Todd, Michele Wright, Betty Meyerhoff, Warren Drell, Dave Harvey, and Peter Osenton.

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 14, Thursday "Sora Rails at Jug Bay," by Greg Kearns. Greg is a naturalist at Patuxent River Park. He will talk about his ongoing research with soras at this location.
- April 18, Thursday "Three Centuries of Birds," by Janet Millenson. Janet is a collector of antique bird books and artwork. She will share her passion for her collection, and show us many interesting and unique slides.

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.

- March 2, Saturday **Deadline for Submission of 1995 Annual Lists** - Please mail as soon as possible to Jane Farrell, 6324 Sandchain Road, Columbia, MD 21045.
- March 10, Sunday **Rockburn Branch Park** - Meet at 8:00 am at the park office off Landing Road for this half day field trip. **Leader: Bonnie Ott.** Fox and tree sparrows are possible. Call Bonnie if more information is needed.
- March 20, Wednesday **Weekday Walk at Centennial Park** - Meet at 9:00 am at the west end parking lot for this 2-3 hour walk. **Leader will be present.** A wide variety of species is possible. Call Bonnie if more information is needed.
- March 24, Sunday **Howard County Waterfowl** - Meet at 8:00 am at the Centennial Park concession stand for this half day trip. **Leader: Jane Farrell.** Grebes, bufflehead, ring-necks, canvasbacks and wigeon likely. Call Bonnie if more information is needed.
- March 30, Saturday **Birding By Ear at Gwynn Acres** - Meet at 9:00 am at Old Columbia Road and Rams Horn Row for this half day field trip. **Leader: Marty Chestem.** Learn the songs of our resident birds before migrants arrive. Call Bonnie if more information is needed.

April 7, 14, 21, 28, Sundays **April Sundays at Centennial Park** - Meet at 8:00 am at the west end parking lot. **Leaders: 4/7 - TBA, 4/14 - Mike Kerwin, 4/21 - Burton Alexander, 4/28 - Paul Zucker.** Many species possible including a variety of waterfowl, egrets, herons, terns, warblers, sparrows and swallows. Call Bonnie if more information is needed.

April 6, Saturday **University of Maryland Central Farm** - Meet at 7:30 am at the Education Building on Route 108 for this half day field trip. **Leader: David Holmes.** Vesper, other sparrows and pipits possible. Call Bonnie if more information is needed.

April 11, Thursday **Weekday Walk at Wilde Lake** - Meet at 9:00 am at the boat dock. **Leader will be present.** Wide variety of species possible. Call Bonnie if more information is needed.

April 13, Saturday **Mount Pleasant** - Meet at 8:00 am at the farm. Parking is limited, carpool if possible. **Leaders: Richard and Randy Crook.** Hoping for eight species of sparrows. Call Bonnie if more information is needed.

April 23, Tuesday **Weekday Walk at Lake Elkhorn** - Meet at 9:00 am at the Broken Land Parkway parking lot. **Leader will be present.** Migrants, woodland birds, and waterfowl possible. Call Bonnie if more information is needed.

April 27, Saturday **Schooley Mill Park** - Meet at 8:00 am at the upper parking lot for this half day field trip. Paths may be muddy. **Leader: Jim Wilkinson.** Many species possible with woods, fields, ponds and streams. Call Bonnie if more information is needed.

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.

March 28, Thursday **Elayne Metter**, 1301 North Rolling Road, Baltimore, MD 21228, phone (410) 788-4877.

April - NONE

MAY - JUNE 1996 NEWSLETTER MATERIAL IS DUE MARCH 29, 1996. 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 or upload to the Electronic Goldfinch at (301) 596-2167.

STOP THE RACE TO THE BOTTOM!

CONSERVATION COLUMN BY BOB SOLEM

Maryland is in dire economic straits. **OK.** Maryland needs to gut all of its regulations for health and the environment to recover from the recession. **HUH?!?**

The Governor and the Legislature want to give YOU—no, make that give BUSINESS—a break starting this year to make Maryland more friendly for business since THEY CLAIM that Marylanders are OVERREGULATED, and Maryland SHOULD NOT REQUIRE HIGHER STANDARDS than the federal government.

Maryland has the Chesapeake Bay, thank you. Maryland has crabs. Maryland has rockfish. Unique features need stricter regulations on a local or regional level. We also have an opportunity to increase the Maryland Wildlands acreage this year. "Wildlands" is Maryland's formal designation for the state's wilderness areas. This protective designation was established by the General Assembly in 1971 and is analogous and complementary with the federal wilderness system.

The General Assembly is still in session. Write to them with this simple message:

- Keep health and environmental standards strong (even if they exceed federal standards) to preserve Maryland's unique heritage.
- Expand Maryland Wildlands program so there is more and better habitat for threatened and endangered species.
- Keep Maryland's regulations and reputation as a state with sensible environmental controls. **Stop the race to the bottom** in a short-sighted attempt to bribe industry to come here.

Write a letter to your Maryland Delegate or State Senator today. The city and ZIP code is Annapolis, MD 21401. Following are Senators for some of this area (all are in the James Senate Building):

District 12: Edward Kasemeyer, Rm. 309
District 13: Martin Madden, Rm. 402-B
District 14: Christopher McCabe, Rm. 404

Following are Delegates for some of this area (all are in the Lowe House Building):

District 12B: Elizabeth Bobo, Rm. 209-B
District 14B: Robert Flanagan, Rm. 226
District 14B: Robert Kittleman, Rm. 411
District 12A: James Malone, Rm. 304
District 13B: John Morgan, Rm. 226
District 12A: Don Murphy, Rm. 304
District 13A: Shane Pendergrass, Rm. 209-C
District 13A: Frank Turner, Rm. 209-A

ONLINE UPDATE BY DARIUS ECKER

If you haven't checked out the Electronic Goldfinch BBS or the Home Page on the Web yet, don't hesitate to do so today. Both have undergone many updates and improvements since first announced. The Electronic Goldfinch has two new mailing lists, the Hawk Migration network and LEPS-L (butterflies). Also, a new butterfly newsgroup has been added. You can report bird sightings to the Voice of the Naturalist on the BBS and from the Internet. Review the bulletins on the BBS for details. Improvements to the Web page include information on insects and wildflowers, and a variety of new birding links to sites all over the country.

<http://www.abs.net/~dariuse/birding.html>

The Electronic Goldfinch - (301) 596-2167

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RECYCLED PAPER

HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB

Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

A ST. NICHOLAS DAY GIFT
WINTER SEED SALE REPORT
BIRD BEHAVIOR OBSERVATIONS
DELMARVA BIRDING WEEKENDS
CARPENTER NEEDED
THANKS FOR YOUR DONATIONS
PROGRAMS AND FIELD TRIPS

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED