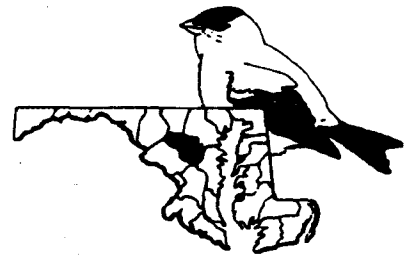




Howard

A Chapter of the
Maryland Ornithological Society



MAY - JUNE 1996

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11TH ANNUAL HOWARD COUNTY MIDWINTER BIRD COUNT - FEBRUARY 10, 1996

BY DAVID HOLMES AND JOANNE SOLEM

Were you all as curious as I was about the effects of so much winter on "our" birds? Our count day did not seriously tax the counters' survival skills (mostly cloudy, temperatures 38 to 45, winds 0 - 15, most water frozen) but our count results should add to our respect for the birds' survival skills (a Phoebe?!). The good news is that we found lots of both species and individuals. Eighty of us counted (not a record) but the good turnout certainly decreased the possibility of low counts. Now, do our few low counts have greater significance?

The surprises were some of the high end counts. Myrtle (Yellow-rumped) Warblers gave us a third high. Blue Jays, Eastern Bluebirds, Hermit Thrushes!, European Starlings, and our species total were all second highs. And just look at how many species appeared in record numbers: Canada Goose, Am. Black Duck, Wild Turkey, Am. Coot, Barred Owl, Long-eared Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, White-breasted Nuthatch, Am. Tree Sparrow (previous high - 78), crow sp. and blackbird sp.

The Rough-legged Hawk was the first since our first count in 1986 and the Glaucous Gull was also a second occurrence. Redheads and the Thayer's Gull made their very first count appearances so our cumulative species total is now 124. All this suggests that snow is not the worst event to befall a bird - at least as long as it melts within the month as ours did this winter.

The small concentrations of mixed-species flocks in the few spots of open water gave us 17 species of

waterfowl even if we did miss Tundra Swan. This is more interesting when we compare our totals with the Triadelphia Christmas Bird Count (CBC) which had only 11 species on a lot of the same water. Our count's species richness has ranged from 9 to 19 over the years with 7 years producing 16 or more. It would be fascinating to see some papers on food selection in wintering ducks so we could find out how so many species which seem to use the same habitats can stay out of each others' soup bowls.

We rejoiced over our record number of owl species and noted proudly that our foot mileage set a new high. Ecologically speaking, it is pleasing to see that we continued a 5 year decline in both hours and miles by car. Walking really is more fun!

Now, our low end results - ? Our gull count almost tied our all time low. Be assured that this probably has very little to do with the quality of our garbage but an awful lot to do with the closing of the Laytonsville Landfill in Montgomery County. Only 140 gulls were reported from Triadelphia Reser-

voir. Once again, we are reminded how artificial our human designed boundaries really are in the life of a bird and how an action in one small area alters ecology far beyond our perception of "local". What will the reduction of fertilizer do to the ecosystem of the reservoir?

We did record only one new low for our history of counts; on Swamp Sparrow, and next to lows on Great Black-backed Gull, Carolina Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Song Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco and House Finch. We missed Meadowlark completely and put together low average but far from disastrous totals for these other ground-grubbing birds: Winter Wren, Rufous-sided Towhee, and White-throated Sparrow.

Let's look at some comparisons with the Triadelphia CBC (our party hours were greater by 5.6%). As expected by now, a number of species either moved on or had a rough time. Carolina Chickadee, Carolina Wren, Winter Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, Cedar Waxwing, Rufous-sided Towhee, Field Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Fox Sparrow and Song Sparrow were all substantially lower in February while Am. Tree Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, and Dark-eyed Junco stayed about the same. Unexpected were the size of increase in Downy Woodpeckers (224 to 300) and until one thinks a minute, Tufted Titmice (439 to 607). Titmice start tuning their vocal chords by the second week in February so they are

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much more obvious than in January or even the first week in February. Our date change skewed those results.

Must we mention the blackbird flyover flock which gave us our record number of individuals seen? Is it good or bad that we did not see that flock eating up Howard County? How does a counter figure out what to do when one of those flocks appears? Do you sit in one place for the half hour or so it can take the flock to fly by? Does that action lower your counts of everything else because of all the places you didn't visit while you counted blackbirds? OR, do you just say "Oh, it's only blackbirds. Who cares!" pick a number out of nowhere, and go on your merry way? How much of significance do we miss by taking that action? What a wonderful tally rally discussion topic! My first ideal solu-

tion would be a Blackbird Day like the Maryland State Gull Day. We should arrange to cover any latilong block which includes even part of the state. We'd need more driving and a smaller person per bush ratio but it might give us worthwhile information.

We need to say lots of "THANK YOU's": to the *Waugh's* for hosting our tally rally, to *Chuck Stirrat* for computerizing the results, to *Mike McClure* for his work with the raptor data, to all people who allowed access to their land, to all areas coordinators; to our feeder people and to all our field counters who managed the best of all possible worlds that day - having fun being useful. See you next year.

Observers: AREA 1 *MARK WAL-LACE & JAY SHEPPARD, Carl O. Brudin III, Charles Gougeon, Paul Jung, Mike Kerwin, Harold Nelson, Daryl Olson, Rick Sussman* AREA 2 *NANCY MAGNUSSON, Ward Ebert, Donald D.*

Henderson, Bill Kidwell, Peter Osen-ton, Tom Strikwerda, Paul & Sherry Zucker, AREA 3 DAVE HARVEY, Ralph Cullison, Paula & Darius Ecker, Mau-reen Harvey, Bill Kulp, Beth Olsen, Norma Petersen, Gene Scarpulla, Kurt Schwarz, AREA 4 MIKE McCLURE, Jim Blanchard, Bill and Karan Blum, Georg-ia Eacker, Shiras Guion, Patsy Ken-nan, Mike Leumas, Grazina McClure, Ann Marie Raterman, Jim Resau, Ro-mayne Smith, Chuck Stirrat, AREA 5 DOUG ODERMATT, Burton Alexander, Hal & Ellen Bryson, Martha Chestem, Wes & Sue Earp, Dennis Luck, Rosamond Munro, Erich Neupert, Carol & Paul Newman, Nanine Rhinelander, Greg Van Nostrand, Michele Wright, Helen Zeichner AREA 6 *BONNIE OTT, Connie Bockstie, Doug Chamblin, Ralph & Jane Geuder, Jane Heim, Dave Kubitsky, Margie Kupiec, Bob & Brigitte Lund, Joe Picard, Henry G. Stanton, Paul Sturm, AREA 7 EVA SUNELL & JIM WILKINSON, Maud Banks, Bob & Mary-Jo Betts, Jane Far-rell, John McKitterick, Bea Newkirk, Bob & Jo Solem, Don Waugh.*

HOWARD COUNTY MIDWINTER COUNT RESULTS - FEBRUARY 10, 1996

SPECIES	COUNT	SPECIES	COUNT	SPECIES	COUNT
PIED-BILLED GREBE	1	GLAUCOUS GULL	1	NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD	420
GREAT BLUE HERON	8	GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL	8	CEDAR WAXWING	280
MUTE SWAN	2	GULL SPECIES	681	EUROPEAN STARLING	10654
SNOW GOOSE	1	ROCK DOVE	1274	YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER	32
CANADA GOOSE	10581	MOURNING DOVE	1248	NORTHERN CARDINAL	1098
WOOD DUCK	3	EASTERN SCREECH OWL	1	RUFOUS-SIDED TOWHEE	25
AMERICAN BLACK DUCK	592	GREAT HORNED OWL	11	AMERICAN TREE SPARROW	205
MALLARD	841	BARRED OWL	23	FIELD SPARROW	77
NORTHERN PINTAIL	3	LONG-EARED OWL	2	SAVANNAH SPARROW	2
AMERICAN WIGEON	11	SAW-WHET OWL	2	FOX SPARROW	4
CANVASBACK	11	BELTED KINGFISHER	16	SONG SPARROW	273
REDHEAD	9	RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER	244	SWAMP SPARROW	2
RING-NECKED DUCK	31	YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER	13	WHITE-THROATED SPARROW	1187
LESSER SCAUP	4	DOWNY WOODPECKER	300	WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW	118
COMMON GOLDENEYE	7	HAIRY WOODPECKER	47	DARK-EYED JUNCO	925
BUFFLEHEAD	2	NORTHERN FLICKER	114	RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD	3113
HOODED MERGANSER	14	PILEATED WOODPECKER	35	RUSTY BLACKBIRD	4
COMMON MERGANSER	35	EASTERN PHOEBE	1	COMMON GRACKLE	9840
BLACK VULTURE	164	HORNED LARK	35	BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD	1474
TURKEY VULTURE	191	BLUE JAY	744	BLACKBIRD SPECIES	100739
BALD EAGLE	2	AMERICAN CROW	2931	PURPLE FINCH	3
NORTHERN HARRIER	3	FISH CROW	137	HOUSE FINCH	837
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK	15	CROW SPECIES	6783	PINE SISKIN	8
COOPER'S HAWK	5	CAROLINA CHICKADEE	827	AMERICAN GOLDFINCH	336
ACCIPITER SPECIES	2	TUFTED TITMOUSE	607	HOUSE SPARROW	638
RED-SHOULDERED HAWK	59	RED-BREADED NUTHATCH	13	SPECIES TOTAL	93
RED-TAILED HAWK	77	WHITE-BREADED NUTHATCH	222	INDIVIDUALS	164940
ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK	1	BROWN CREEPER	34		
AMERICAN KESTREL	27	CAROLINA WREN	92	PARTY HOURS - FOOT	206.1
RING-NECKED PHEASANT	1	WINTER WREN	6	PARTY HOURS - CAR	48.7
WILD TURKEY	14	GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET	24	PARTY HOURS - FEEDERS	20.7
AMERICAN COOT	17	RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET	1	PARTY HOURS - OWLING	10.9
RING-BILLED GULL	1576	EASTERN BLUEBIRD	326	PARTY MILES - FOOT	177.3
HERRING GULL	1317	HERMIT THRUSH	12	PARTY MILES - CAR	644.2
THAYER'S GULL	1	AMERICAN ROBIN	161	PARTY MILES - OWLING	50.6
LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL	1	GRAY CATBIRD	1	PARTY HOURS - TOTAL	254.8

1995 - THE SECOND HIGHEST YEARLY TOTAL

BY JANE H. FARRELL

In 1994 Howard County birders set a record by finding 236 species of birds. We did not surpass that record in 1995, but we did amass the second highest total by identifying 232 species. What is amazing about this number is that it does not include even one new county bird. What we did have were some finds: American Avocet and Lapland Longspur were second county records; Dickcissel and Sharp-tailed Sparrow are hard to find and are skulkers. Thanks for the diligence; they sure helped our totals. Three birds not seen in 1993 and 1994 were found in 1995: Greater Scaup, Dunlin, and Alder Flycatcher.

The 95/96 winter was marked by an invasion of Northern Saw-whet Owls; many of us finally saw one in Howard County. After many years of fruitless searches through pines, we were led to

see one with little effort. What a treat! Black Scoter, King Rail, Virginia Rail, Sora, and Short-eared Owl were also special 1995 birds. We aced on warblers, finding all those that occur in the county, including both Blue-winged Warbler/Golden-winged Warbler hybrids, Brewster's Warbler and Lawrence's Warbler.

Sadly, we again had no Barn Owl, no Whip-poor-will, and, for the time since 1986, no Black Tern.

1996 has already produced some fine birds? Will it be another good year? Get out there and have some fun! Find some birds! Share your finds by activating the Howard County Rare Bird Alert; call *Bea Newkirk* on (301) 498-1902.

ADDENDUM: 1993 Lapland Longspur, new total 224.

Thanks to the following members

who submitted their complete 1995 lists: *Rod Burley, Ward Ebert, Jane Farrell, Dave Harvey, Michael Kerwin, Brigitte Lund, Nancy Magnusson, Carol and Paul Newman, Peter Osen-ton, Jo Solem, Chuck Stirrat, and Helen Zeichner.* Jo Solem's season reports and special counts compiled by *David Holmes and Jo Solem, Paul Zucker, and Mike McClure and Chuck Stirrat* captured species not reported by individual contributors. *Bob Ringler* provided technical advice. *Rick Lux and Bob Solem* provided computer expertise and *Bob Solem* also produced the 17-year compilation. Individuals who submitted their 1995 annual lists will receive this compilation. Others may obtain it by sending a stamped, self-addressed long envelope to Jane Farrell, 6324 Sandchain Road, Columbia, MD 21045.

1995 HOWARD COUNTY LIST

- | | | | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| COMMON LOON | NORTHERN GOSHAWK | SHORT-EARED OWL | GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH | MOURNING WARBLER |
| PIED-BILLED GREBE | RED-SHOULDERED HAWK | NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL | SWAINSON'S THRUSH | COMMON YELLOWTHROAT |
| HORNED GREBE | BROAD-WINGED HAWK | COMMON NIGHTHAWK | HERMIT THRUSH | HOODED WARBLER |
| DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT | RED-TAILED HAWK | CHIMNEY SWIFT | WOOD THRUSH | WILSON'S WARBLER |
| AMERICAN BITTERN | ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK | RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD | AMERICAN ROBIN | CANADA WARBLER |
| LEAST BITTERN | AMERICAN KESTREL | BELTED KINGFISHER | GRAY CATBIRD | YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT |
| GREAT BLUE HERON | MERLIN | RED-HEADED WOODPECKER | NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD | SUMMER TANAGER |
| GREAT EGRET | PEREGRINE FALCON | RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER | BROWN THRASHER | SCARLET TANAGER |
| SNOWY EGRET | RING-NECKED PHEASANT | YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER | AMERICAN PIPIT | NORTHERN CARDINAL |
| LITTLE BLUE HERON | WILD TURKEY | DOWNY WOODPECKER | CEBAR WAXWING | ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK |
| CATTLE EGRET | NORTHERN BOBWHITE | HAIRY WOODPECKER | EUROPEAN STARLING | BLUE GROSBEAK |
| GREEN HERON | KING RAIL | NORTHERN FLICKER | WHITE-EYED VIREO | INDIGO BUNTING |
| BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON | VIRGINIA RAIL | PILEATED WOODPECKER | SOLITARY VIREO | DICKCISSEL |
| YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON | SORA | OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER | YELLOW-THROATED VIREO | RUFOUS-SIDED TOWHEE |
| TUNDRA SWAN | AMERICAN COOT | EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE | WARBLING VIREO | AMERICAN TREE SPARROW |
| MUTE SWAN | BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER | YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER | PHILADELPHIA VIREO | CHIPPING SPARROW |
| SNOW GOOSE | SEMIPALMATED PLOVER | ACADIAN FLYCATCHER | RED-EYED VIREO | FIELD SPARROW |
| CANADA GOOSE | PIPING PLOVER | ALDER FLYCATCHER | BLUE-WINGED WARBLER | VESPER SPARROW |
| WOOD DUCK | KILLDEER | WILLOW FLYCATCHER | GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER | SAVANNAH SPARROW |
| GREEN-WINGED TEAL | AMERICAN AVOCET | LEAST FLYCATCHER | TENNESSEE WARBLER | GRASSHOPPER SPARROW |
| AMERICAN BLACK DUCK | GREATER YELLOWLEGS | EASTERN PHOEBE | ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER | SHARP-TAILED SPARROW |
| MALLARD | LESSER YELLOWLEGS | GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER | NASHVILLE WARBLER | FOX SPARROW |
| NORTHERN PINTAIL | SOLITARY SANDPIPER | EASTERN KINGBIRD | NORTHERN PARULA | SONG SPARROW |
| BLUE-WINGED TEAL | SPOTTED SANDPIPER | HORNED LARK | YELLOW WARBLER | LINCOLN'S SPARROW |
| NORTHERN SHOVELER | SANDERLING | PURPLE MARTIN | CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER | SWAMP SPARROW |
| GADWALL | SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER | TREE SWALLOW | MAGNOLIA WARBLER | WHITE-THROATED SPARROW |
| AMERICAN WIGEON | LEAST SANDPIPER | NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW | CAPE MAY WARBLER | WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW |
| CANVASBACK | PECTORAL SANDPIPER | BANK SWALLOW | BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER | DARK-EYED JUNCO |
| REDHEAD | DUNLIN | CLIFF SWALLOW | YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER | LAPLAND LONGSPUR |
| RING-NECKED DUCK | COMMON SNIFE | BARN SWALLOW | BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER | SNOW BUNTING |
| GREATER SCAUP | AMERICAN WOODCOCK | BLUE JAY | WARBLER | BOBOLINK |
| LESSER SCAUP | LAUGHING GULL | AMERICAN CROW | BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER | RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD |
| OLDSQUAW | BONAPARTE'S GULL | FISH CROW | YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER | EASTERN MEADOWLARK |
| BLACK SCOTER | RING-BILLED GULL | CAROLINA CHICKADEE | PINE WARBLER | RUSTY BLACKBIRD |
| COMMON GOLDENEYE | HERRING GULL | TUFTED TITMOUSE | PAIRIE WARBLER | COMMON GRACKLE |
| BUFFLEHEAD | ICELAND GULL | RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH | PALM WARBLER | BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD |
| HOODED Merganser | LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL | WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH | BAY-BREASTED WARBLER | ORCHARD ORIOLE |
| COMMON Merganser | GLAUCOUS GULL | BROWN CREEPER | BLACKPOLL WARBLER | BALTIMORE ORIOLE |
| RED-BREASTED Merganser | BLACK-BACKED GULL | CAROLINA WREN | CERULEAN WARBLER | PURPLE FINCH |
| RUDY DUCK | CASPIAN TERN | HOUSE WREN | BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER | HOUSE FINCH |
| BLACK VULTURE | FORSTER'S TERN | WINTER WREN | AMERICAN REDSTART | PINE SISKIN |
| TURKEY VULTURE | ROCK DOVE | MARSH WREN | PROTHONOTARY WARBLER | AMERICAN GOLDFINCH |
| OSPREY | MOURNING DOVE | GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET | WORM-EATING WARBLER | EVENING GROSBEAK |
| BALD EAGLE | BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO | RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET | OVENBIRD | HOUSE SPARROW |
| NORTHERN HARRIER | YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO | BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER | NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH | BREWSTER'S WARBLER |
| SHARP-SHINNED HAWK | EASTERN SCREECH-OWL | EASTERN BLUEBIRD | LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH | LAWRENCE'S WARBLER |
| COOPER'S HAWK | GREAT HORNED OWL | VEERY | KENTUCKY WARBLER | |
| | BARRED OWL | | CONNECTICUT WARBLER | |

MAY COUNT IS SATURDAY, MAY 11, 1996

BY PAUL ZUCKER

Since 1948, the Maryland Ornithological Society has conducted an annual May Count. Everyone is urged to join in; no matter your skill level. Identification is only part of being successful; you have to spot the bird first, so every pair of eyes helps. And, it is great fun. The compiler for Howard County is *Paul Zucker*. Call him at (301) 279-7896 (Home) or (410) 792-5000 x4971 (Office) to participate in the count. Paul will pair you up with someone else if you'd like, based on your skill level, and assign you an area to cover. Special requests are honored whenever possible. Or, if you prefer, you may contact one of the following area coordinators: *Mike McClure (410) 531-2780*, *Bonnie Ott (410) 461-3361*, *Jo Solem (301) 725-5037*, or *Chuck Stirrat (410) 531-2417*. If you are interested in being an area coordinator, please contact Paul Zucker.

HOW IT WORKS: The county has been divided into seven areas (as for the Winter Count), each with an area coordinator. The area coordinators will assemble the parties and combine their results after the count. All parties however must make sure their day lists are delivered to the tally rally. Leaders are responsible for tracking party miles and time, names and addresses of the participants, and documentation for unusual sightings. Observers within talking or shouting distance of each other are considered one party. If two or more birders spend an hour together on foot, that constitutes one party hour; however, if one member is separated from the other for ½ hour, then the total is 1½ party hours. All birds (including, ugh, Starlings, and House Sparrows) must be counted. Large flocks can be estimated. If you see something exciting outside your assigned area, make a note of the time, direction of flight, and location. The sighting can



"Identification is only part of being successful; you have to spot the bird first, so every pair of eyes helps."

be reported to the area coordinator for that sector at the tally; and the bird may be added to the count if we are assured double counting did not take place. *Separate tally sheets and hours need to be kept for feeders and for owling.*

UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS: Any species not previously recorded in the county or listed on the checklist needs to be documented. Acceptable documentation includes the name of the person making the identification, names of all others who saw the bird, when and where it was seen, lighting conditions, optics used, behavior of the bird, time period observed, field marks, etc. Sometimes sketches help. Some examples of what is considered unusual are: *Pied-billed Grebe, Horned Grebe, American Bittern, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Glossy Ibis, Tundra Swan, Snow Goose, Green-winged Teal, American Black Duck, Northern*

Pintail, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Canvasback, Ring-necked Duck, Greater or Lesser Scaup, Common Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, Hooded Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Merlin, Wild Turkey, Virginia Rail, Sora, American Coot, Semipalmated Plover, Upland Sandpiper, Sanderling, White-rumped Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, Long-billed Dowitcher, Wilson's Phalarope, Bonaparte's Gull, Herring Gull, Caspian Tern, Forster's Tern, Barn Owl, Chuck-will's-widow, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Alder Flycatcher, Horned Lark, Black-capped Chickadee, Winter Wren, Marsh Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Loggerhead Shrike, Philadelphia Vireo, Golden-winged Warbler, Mourning Warbler, Summer Tanager, Dickcissel, American Tree Sparrow, Henslow's Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, or Rusty Blackbird.

THE TALLY DINNER!!

Everyone who participates in the count is welcome to attend the tally pot luck. If you are unable to attend, please make arrangements with your area leader or the compiler to turn in or phone in results during the count day or early that evening. Call *Jan Randle* at (410) 531-6296 to let her know the number of people coming from your party and your choice of food to share. Non-cooks and all day counters can ask Jan for alternative suggestions. Dinner usually begins between 6:30 and 7:00 pm. The tally will begin at 8 pm. The Randles live in Braeburn which is on the west side of Cedar Lane in the section north of MD 32 and south of the stoplights at Owen Brown and Freetown Roads. The entrance road to the area is Braeburn Road, turn right on Lochridge and continue to first house on left after Hillbrook Drive, 6424 Lochridge Road.

WINTER BIRD RECORDS: DECEMBER 1, 1995 TO FEBRUARY 29, 1996 BY JOANNE SOLEM

A small number of **Great Blue Herons** stayed the winter. The **Triadelphia Christmas Count (TCC)** 12/16 tallied 7 in areas 3 & 4 which cover approximately the southern and western third of the county, the only portion included in the count circle. The **Howard County Midwinter Count (HMC)** 2/10 (postponed by a snowstorm from 2/3) located 8 countywide. Although there were 4 **Tundra Swans** on the Howard Co. portion of TCC, there were none on HMC. By that date most ponds and lakes were ice-covered. Despite the limited open water, some waterfowl wintered in small numbers. **Centennial Lake (CENPK)** was especially productive with **American Black Ducks, Canvasbacks, Redheads, Ring-necked Ducks, and Buffleheads** present almost continuously. **American Wigeons, Greater Scaups, Lesser Scaups, Common Goldeneyes, and Hooded Mergansers** were occasional. **Greater Scaup** at CENPK 2/13 (JF) & **Triadelphia Reservoir (TRIRS)** 2/24-5 (JF), as well as a **Gadwall** at CENPK 2/21 (RB) were especially noteworthy. A handsome blue phase **Snow Goose** was first seen on TRIRS 2/10 (NM) and then at CENPK 2/13 (JF; J&RS) & 2/24 (HS).

A vulture roost in the **Wilde Lake** area of Columbia from mid-December into March allowed MC to monitor their numbers and activities. Her high count was 105 on 1/6 of which 11 were **Black Vultures** and the rest were **Turkey Vultures**. The **Bald Eagles** are again nesting on TRIRS. The only **Northern Harrier** was reported by MW 12/8 on Ten Oaks Road. **Rough-legged Hawks** made a nice showing. Two light phase birds were noted in a field at Ten Oaks & Brighton Dam Roads 12/23 (JSt, MI). On 12/24 another light phase bird was located at U. of Md. Central Farm (UMDCF)(MC, HZ). Another light phase bird was reported in the LKELK area 1/8 (JW) and one was noted at Alpha Ridge landfill (ALRGL) 2/10 (GS, RC). The other notable hawk was an imm. **Northern Goshawk** seen 12/24 in Hopewell on the east side of Columbia (DE); the same or another imm. was seen four times in late Jan. & early Feb. at CENPK (JF).

The HMC turned up **Wild Turkeys** at two locations: 2 in Patuxent River State Park (JSh) and 12 north of MD 99 on Hewitt Drive (D&MH). The same count located one **Ring-necked Pheasant** in the west (POs). **American Coots** wintered at

EACH SEASON HOWARD COUNTY BIRD SIGHTINGS ARE COMPILED AND SUBMITTED TO **MARYLAND BIRDLIFE** AND **FIELD NOTES**. 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.

at Daisy & Bushy Park Roads. This flock continued a L. Longspur which, through description, was established as a different bird from the one at Underwood Road.

There were scattered reports of **Red-breasted Nuthatches**; some were visiting feeders reliably. **Winter Wrens** were rather scarce with none tallied in the eastern half of the county on HMC, 9 countywide. HMC counters saw 326 **Eastern Bluebirds** and 2 **Gray Catbirds** (BO, B&BL). The only **American Pipits** were 7 at the milk plant on TCC (JF, JS). Three **Pine Warblers** at UMDCF 12/23 were a good find (JSt, MI). Most unexpected was a **Wilson's Warbler** 12/10 seen almost eyeball to eyeball (KS). **American Tree Sparrows** were widely reported with a total of 205 on HMC. **Chipping Sparrows** lingered late with 6 on TCC. **Fox Sparrows** stayed in small numbers with 11 on TCC; this number dropped to 4 countywide on HMC. By late February they were migrating again; on 2/29 there were 2 at Talbot's Landing (RG) & 4 south of Ellicott City (HS). **Eastern Meadowlarks** were still around on New Year's Day when a field trip found 18 at UMDCF. The only **Rusty Blackbirds** reported were 4 on HMC (JSh).

LKELK (JW) & CENPK with a high of 30 on 1/26 (JF). The only **Common Snipe** was the usual one at the milk plant in s.e. How. Co. on the TCC (JF, JS). The same two observers had 7 **American Woodcock** displaying at Gateway 2/27.

A lone **Bonaparte's Gull** was recorded at TRIRS 12/10 (POs). HMC also coincided with the statewide gull count. ALRGL was productive with a **Thayer's Gull** (GS), a **Glaucous Gull**, and a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** (GS, RC). A **Lesser Black-backed** was found at TRIRS 2/24 (JF).

This was a special year for **Northern Saw-whet Owls** and **Long-eared Owls**. The first saw-whet was found 12/6 (HS) south of Ellicott City. Previewing on 12/15 for TCC located one on MD 97 (JSh, JS). On 12/16 HS found one at the airport property on Sheppard Lane and a freshly killed bird with a rodent in its talons on Centennial Lane adjacent to the park. Another saw-whet was spotted at the milk plant 1/3 (JS). Stanton continued his owling success by finding two **Long-eareds** at Ellicott Mill M.S. on HMC. Another was found dead outside a window at Johns Hopkins APL 2/28 (Web, PZ). A **Short-eared Owl** was reported in late Dec & early Jan in the Dorsey Hall area (LM).

There were scattered **Eastern Phoebe** records with one lingering through much of the severe weather & found on HMC (POs). This was an excellent winter for **Horned Larks**—or maybe the snow just made them easier to find. Most of the large flocks were reported between mid-Dec. & early Feb always in association with manured fields. HMC turned up only 35 (PJ). On 12/16 MW found 200 **Horned Larks** on Linthicum Road. On 12/25 JSt spotted a flock of 200 on Triadelphia Road that contained one **Snow Bunting** and one **Lapland Longspur**. On 1/28 a flock of 110 **Horned Larks** was scoped by JF, TDC, J&RS; JF found a L. Longspur with them. This flock stayed in the vicinity of Underwood Road & MD 99 several days. On 2/4 J&CW located 41 H. Larks at Triadelphia Mill & Roxbury Roads & 200

There were no major flight of northern finches. The TCC had 26 & HMC 3 (JSh). The only others reported were on the same date—1/21: 1 (HS); 30 (DN). There were just 2 **Pine Siskin** sightings: 2 at CENPK 1/26 (JF) & 8 in the Hedgerow area 2/10 (NM). Two **Evening Grosbeaks** flew over MD 97 near the Patuxent River 12/23 (JSt, MI).

Observers: Rod Burley (RB), Martha Chestem (MC), T. Dennis Coskren (TDC), Ralph Cullison (RC), Darius Ecker (DE), Jane Farrell (JF), Ralph Geuder (RG), Dave & Maureen Harvey (D&MH), Marshall Iiff (MI), Paul Jung (PJ), Nancy Magnusson (NM), Larry Murphy (LM), Diane Nagengast (DN), Peter Osenton (POs), Gene Scarpulla (GS), Kurt Schwarz (KS), Jay Sheppard, (JSh), Joanne & Robert Solem (J&RS), Hank Stanton (HS), Jim Stasz (JSt), Mark Wallace (MW), Jim & Carol Wilkinson (J&CW), Helen Zeichner (HZ)

VOLUNTEER NEEDED TO COORDINATE HOST/HOSTESSES FOR MONTHLY MEETINGS

The Howard County Bird Club needs a volunteer willing to coordinate arranging for hosts and hostesses for the monthly club meetings. Much of the work involved in this is already done, because there is a space on our membership application for those who wish to serve as host or hostess, or provide baked goods for the monthly meeting. Also involved is storing the club's coffee pot and related items between uses at the meetings.

A hearty thank you goes out to *Maud Banks* who has coordinated this function for the monthly meetings for a number of years. She will soon be assuming the responsibilities as President of the club, so she must reluctantly relinquish this responsibility to someone else.

If you would like more information or to volunteer for this project, please call *Paula or Darius Ecker, (410) 312-9165*.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO STAFF THE BIRD CLUB BOOTH AT THE HOWARD COUNTY FAIR

The Howard County Bird Club needs volunteers to staff our booth at the Howard County Fair in August. This is an opportunity to meet and greet many neighbors who stop by our booth to find out what the Howard County Bird Club is all about. You hear many interesting stories from people, and everyone is impressed with our many informative displays.

If you have a few hours during the day or evening that you can donate to this worthy cause, please call *Darius or Paula Ecker, (410) 312-9165* to reserve your favorite time slot.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

If you have a desire to volunteer to help a licensed wildlife rehabilitator, call *Dee Thompson at (301) 498-7148*. She is associated with Wild Bird Rescue, Inc., a non-profit organization. Volunteers are always welcomed, especially during the upcoming breeding season. Transporters (mileage is tax deductible) are needed on an occasional basis. Wild Bird Rescue, Inc., is located near Savage.

DONATION RECEIVED

Thanks to *Eva Sunell* for donating to the club the fee she received for a talk on birds at the Deerfield Adult Day Care center.

CARE OF THE SIGHTINGS BOX AT CENTENNIAL PARK

Since 1991 *Connie Bockstie* faithfully maintained the sightings box at Centennial Park. The club obtained much useful information from that effort and wishes to thank Connie for her diligence expended in this project.

The club also wishes to thank *Norma Petersen* for graciously assuming this responsibility from Connie. We are sure that thanks to Norma the sightings box will continue to provide useful information for many years to come.

WE CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S BEEN A WHOLE YEAR

BY PAULA AND DARIUS ECKER

With this issue, we mark the end of our first year as the editors of your newsletter. It truly has been a rewarding and fun experience. The majority of the work is done by the members of the bird club who regularly and willingly contribute the articles that we simply put together to make the newsletter. Don't tell anyone, but we really do have the easy part.

We are looking forward to our next year as editors of your newsletter, and we will continue to strive to make each issue better than the last.

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL POTLUCK DINNER

As always, the annual potluck dinner was great fun with good food and interesting slides shared by all. A big thank you goes to *Monika and Rod Botsal* for all the efforts they expended to make sure the night was a success. Thanks go to everyone who attended and contributed their favorite food to combine with everyone else's to make a wonderful meal. Thanks also to everyone who contributed their slides and told their story.

GOLDFINCH IS THE NAME FOR OUR NEWSLETTER

After much discussion at the February Board of Director's meeting, our newsletter has an appropriate name. Beginning with the next issue, the Howard County Bird Club newsletter will be called the *Goldfinch*.

Thanks to *Eva Sunell, Carol Newman, Elaine Metter, and Jo Solem* for their creative and thought-provoking suggestions.

1996 MOS CONFERENCE

The Baltimore Bird Club is pleased to host the MOS's 51st Annual Conference. This year's conference will be held June 7-9 on the campus of the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC). Located on 500 acres adjacent to Patapsco State Park, UMBC will allow easy access to the area's top birding sites, including downtown Baltimore for a close-up view of the Peregrine Falcon nest (contingent upon help from the birds and nature); Hart-Miller Island (great for county listers); a bike and bird trip (make sure you bring your bike if you would like to join the fun); and a trip to the Evergreen House to view the original Gould plates.

The keynote speaker at the Friday night program will be *Peter Dunna*, the Director of the the Cape May Bird Observatory and author of many birding books.

A flyer detailing the 1996 conference was mailed to each MOS member in early March. If you have not received yours, please call *Mary Byers, MOS Conference Coordinator, at (410) 686-7294*.

ONLINE UPDATE BY DARIUS ECKER

March was a month of up's and down's for the bird club's online activity. Internet access was down for nearly two weeks while our service provider had problems. I took advantage of the down time and installed the new Windows version of the bulletin board system. This means that the club's home page can be viewed from the internet and a standard dial up telephone line as well. Be sure to download your copy of the "Navigator" software that allows you to view the web page over a telephone line.

We added a new "Local Birding Update" feature to the web page. Click on the picture of the Common Loon to view the latest Howard County sightings. To get your sightings on the local update call me at *(410) 312-9165* or *Jim Wilkinson at (410) 381-9250*

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

The Electronic Goldfinch - (301) 596-2167



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.

May 9, 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.

May 4, Saturday **Spring Wildflowers at Savage** - Meet at 9:00 am at the park office. **Leader: Bob Solem**. We will look for a variety of interesting wildflowers. Call leader at (301) 725-5037 if more information is needed.

May 5, Sunday **Warblers at Daniels** - Meet at 8:00 am at the small parking lot. **Leader: Helen Zeichner**. Prothonotary and Worm-eating Warblers possible. Call leader at (410) 730-3695 if more information is needed.

May 11, Saturday **Migratory Bird and May Count Day** - For additional information, see page 4 of this newsletter.

May 15, Wednesday **Weekday Walk at Gwynn Acres** - Meet at 8:30 am at Old Columbia Road and Rams Horn Row. **Leader will be present.** A wide variety of species is possible. Call Bonnie if more information is needed.

May 18, Saturday **Hugg-Thomas** - Meet at 8:00 am at the parking lot at Hugg-Thomas. **Leader: Dave Harvey**. This field trip is a joint trip with the Carroll County club. Call leader at (410) 795-3117 if more information is needed.

May 25, Saturday **Rock Run at Susquehanna State Park** - This is a joint trip with the Harford County club. **Leader: Mark Johnson**. This location is Harford County's best warbler location. Ceruleans and others possible. Call Bonnie for meeting location and other information.

June 3, Monday **Spring Migration Bird Records Due** - Mail to Jo Solem, 10617 Grae Loch Road, Laurel, MD 20723.

June 4, Tuesday **Weekday Walk at David Force Park** - Meet at 9:00 am at the signpost off Pebble Beach Drive (north of US 40 near junction with MD 144). **Leader will be present.** A variety of species possible in this diverse habitat. Call Bonnie if more information is needed.

June 7, 8, & 9, Friday, Saturday & Sunday **Maryland Ornithological Society 1996 Annual Conference** - For additional information, see page 6 of this newsletter.

June 16, Sunday **Breeding Birds of Rockburn Branch Park** - Meet at 8:00 am at the park office off Landing Road. **Leader: Bonnie Ott**. Hooded and Kentucky Warblers possible. Call Bonnie if more information is needed.

July 21, Sunday **Let's See What's Around** - Meet at 8:30 am at the Route 108 and 29 park and ride. **Leader: Bonnie Ott**. Itinerary to be determined by the birds. Call Bonnie if more information is needed.

August 3, Saturday **Summer Bird Records Due** - Mail to Jane Farrell, 6324 Sandchain Road, Columbia, MD 21045.

August 17, Saturday **Dragonflies and Butterflies at Centennial Park** - Meet at 9:00 am at the west end parking lot. **Leader: Richard Orr**. Bring your binoculars to observe these other things with wings. Call leader at (410) 730-7290 if more information is needed.

September 21, Saturday **Howard County Fall Count** - Reserve this date on your calendar. Details will be in the next issue of the 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.

May 23, Thursday **Jane Farrell**, 6324 Sandchain Road, Columbia, MD 21045, phone (410) 381-7344. This will be a joint meeting of the incoming and outgoing board members.

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 1996 NEWSLETTER MATERIAL IS DUE JULY 26, 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. Also, please visit the club's site on the World Wide Web, at <http://www.abs.net/~dariuse/birding.html>.

OPEN SPACE AND HEDGEROWS -- NATURALLY

CONSERVATION COLUMN BY BOB SOLEM

"Patches, corners and strips of natural diversity—a meadow let go, a wet field bottom, a part of a yard—can achieve a wonderfully rich succession of habitat. As native plants grow up, or are encouraged by deliberate planting, the native songbirds, insects and mammals will return to enjoy the food, shelter and nesting places amid the natural tangle.

"These natural places, spared the obliterating force of mowers and weed-eaters, can create islands of wild beauty on your land. Plan these 'let-go' places with the same care that you give your more manicured areas and you'll find them as rewarding as your mowed lawn and weeded garden. Perhaps more so, as an uncut strip of a lawn or field can offer a natural succession of bloom from spring dogwoods to fall asters."

The Piedmont Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society published a brochure "Hedgerows and Other Corners of Natural Diversity in Our Countryside and Gardens," from which the above two paragraphs are taken. Look around your

own area and places where you bird. You may find areas in your own yard, in your community open space, or in county parks that would benefit from less management so that native plants could reclaim the area and provide better habitat. There are a number of herbaceous plants that will appear on their own if the growing conditions are right. Some mentioned in the brochure are arrowhead, asters, black-eyed Susan, broomsedge, bulrush, butterfly weed, cattail, chickweed, foxtail grasses, jewelweed, little bluestem, milkweed, pokeweed, rice cutgrass, sheepsorrel, switchgrass, violets, and wild bergamot.

The brochure has several good tips to encourage desirable wildlife habitat:

- "Identify Possibilities. Look for fencelines, woodland edges, the corners of a field or garden, wet bottom land, a pond edge or hard-to-mow hillside.
- "Think Corridors. How does wildlife move from one place to another? Hedgerows can be vital highways as well as a place for wild creatures to live

and find food.

- "Mow Less. This saves energy and your time, and helps reduce air and noise pollution. Mow regularly close to houses but cut lawns farther away from dwellings only ever four to six weeks. Mow meadows annually or every two years.
- "Control Your Weedeater. Clean ragged edges selectively and leave native plants whenever possible. The livelihood of natural communities is in your hands.
- "Help Nature Along. Preserve and plant key native species: these shrubs, vines, trees and wildflowers are ideally suited to our climate and will thrive through the years with much less care from you.
- "Talk to Your Neighbors. Spread the word... Cooperate on common borders to allow a hedgerow to thrive. Look for adjoining corners that together will create an oasis for wild plants and animals. Explain the many advantages of 'managed untidiness'."

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RECYCLED PAPER

HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB

Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society

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