



# THE GOLDFINCH



A CHAPTER OF THE MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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## MAY COUNT IS SATURDAY, MAY 8, 1999

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 443-778-4971 (Office), e-mail paul.zucker@hnapl.edu 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 (listed by area, see map in the January Goldfinch): (1) Mike Kerwin 410-461-2408, (2) Paul Zucker 443-778-4971, (3) Chuck Stirat 410-531-2417, (4) Mike McKure 410 531-2780, (5) Doug Odenmatt 410-992-1812, (6) Bonnie Ott 410 461-3381, or (7) Jo Solem 301 725-5037.

**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 1/2 hour, then the total is 1 1/2 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 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 enclosed 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 ex-

amples of what is considered unusual are: *Pied-billed Grebe, Horned Grebe, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Glossy Ibis, Tundra Swan, Snow Goose, Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintail, 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, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, 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, Pine Siskin, 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.

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## BEGINNER'S CORNER

BY BONNIE OTT

This is the beginning of a new series designed to help the novice birder. Topics will range from bird feeding, gardening for birds and basic bird watching skills. The goal of these articles is to help the novice learn the new skills required in birding and facilitate their abilities at identification without the ongoing help of an experienced person's aid.

### BIRD COUNTS

**Q. What is a bird count?**

**A.** The Howard County Bird Club holds three bird counts each year, Midwinter Count, Spring Count and Fall Count. The purpose of sponsoring these counts is to gain information about the distribution and number of bird species during the different seasons. Midwinter count gives us an idea of the number of resident birds in the county. Spring and Fall Counts are held during peak migration times.

**Q. How is the count organized?**

**A.** Howard County is divided into seven areas. Each area has a coordinator who may split their section into smaller segments and assigns an individual or team to count their subarea.

**Q. How is it possible to count ALL the birds around you?**

**A.** You can't! But you can do a reasonable job of finding most of the species in your area.

**Q. How do you know that you aren't counting the same birds over and over?**

**A.** Most birders plan their route so they don't backtrack over the same ground within their subarea and hence don't generally have to be concerned with double counting. However, uncommon species seen within your subarea require special coordination. All unusual sighting should be reported by all observing parties to the county coordinator(s) for final resolution about the number of individual birds reported as well as which location(s) the original sighting(s) were made.

**Q. What is done with all the information?**

**A.** Results of the counts become part of Howard County's permanent bird records and are published in the club's newsletter "The Goldfinch". Each compilation is also forwarded to regional and state compilers. Comparisons of the results over many years may help to pinpoint population trends in certain species. Spring Count totals are collected by the state MOS and published. The results also become part of the

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THE 20TH ANNUAL HOWARD COUNTY LIST - NOT A SPECIAL YEAR  
BY JANE H. COSKREN

Well it happened again for the second year in a row - dismal annual list number 2. The 1997 Howard County List total of 217 was the lowest year total since 1987 in 1998, we found only 218 species - an increase of one. Yet, there were some really good birds found. The highlight of the year was an addition to the Howard County list: Harris's Sparrow, a very classy bird. Other goodies are Glossy Ibis, Cattle Egret, Sora, Black-bellied Plover, Western Sandpiper, Black Tern, Forster's Tern, Sedge Wren, and Red Crossbill.

We had significant misses, however: Snowy Egret, no scoters, no unusual gulls, and no Evening Grosbeak. Oh, it would be so nice to hear some member complaining about being "eaten out of house and home" by Evening Grosbeaks!

Let's hope for a more productive year in 1999. Find some birds and report them! Have fun! Share your finds by activating the Howard County Rare Bird Alert; call Bea Newkirk on 301-498-1902.

Thanks to the following members who submitted their complete 1998 lists: *Mary-Jo Betts, Dennis Coskren, Jane Coskren, Ward Ebert, Nancy Magnusson, Diane Nagengast, Carol Newman, Paul Newman, Doug Odernatt, Bonnie Ott, Kurt Schwarz, Jo Solem, and Chuck Stirrat.* Jo Solem's reports for the seasons captured many sightings not reported on individual lists, as did Jo Solem's, Paul Zucker's, Chuck Stirrat's, and Mike McClure's compilations from special counts. Dennis Coskren helped compile the annual list.

Individuals who submitted their 1998 annual lists will receive the 20-year compilation. Oth-

ers may obtain it by sending a stamped, self-addressed, long envelope to Jane Coskren, 6324 Sandchain Road, Columbia, MD 21045.

ADDENDUM: 1997, add Mourning Warbler for a total of 217.

NOTE: I am aware that this list is not presented in the current AQU order. We will change the order for the 21<sup>st</sup> annual list.



*"The highlight of the year was an addition to the Howard County list: Harris's Sparrow, a very classy bird."*

MEMBERSHIP  
BY DON WAUGH

Over the last few years membership in the Howard County MOS has gradually dropped from a high of 371 to about 270. Since 1992 we have lost more members than we have recruited. This reduction in our ranks is primarily due to our failure to attract a sufficient number of new people to join MOS. Failure to bring in new members will adversely affect our ability to continue many of our programs and activities and our contributions to habitat preservation.

Our goal is to bring in 100 new members each year in order to offset natural losses and return membership to 1990 levels and keep it there. One hundred new members may appear to be a large number but, in both 1989 and 1990 we recruited well over 100 each year. Obviously, it would be a snap to meet our goal if each current member would bring in one new member. And, we should all try to do that.

We think the club is currently very useful, interesting, and friendly and requires very little change in current activities. However, we do need to present the club to potential members in a way that interests them enough to join us. For this reason we need to review our current activities, publications, and programs to eliminate or revise any that hinder recruitment of new members and to add any that will provide focus to our recruitment efforts. We need to work on ways to introduce Howard Countians to the interesting, educational, social, and healthful rewards of enjoying birding.

Several volunteers are needed to work on this initiative. If you are willing to help, please call Don Waugh at 410-381-8841 or e-mail him at FletcherW@msn.com.

1998 HOWARD COUNTY LIST

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

## WINTER BIRD RECORDS: DECEMBER 1, 1998 TO FEBRUARY 28, 1999

BY JOANNE SOLEM

A mild winter meant open water during most of the season, so some birds stayed that might have moved on under more severe weather conditions. This was the second winter without the potential for unusual gulls at Alpha Ridge landfill. There was also a conspicuous lack of northern irruptives. As expected, however, observers did turn up birds of interest. Although some records from the Howard County Midwinter Count (HCMC) 2/6 are included here, a complete summary of those results can be found in a separate article in this issue.

A Red-throated Loon on Triadelphia Reservoir (TRIRS) 1/24 (DE,DOI) was the first seen in the county since the spring of 1991. A Common Loon was reported on 2/21 on Lake Elkhorn (LKEK)(DE).

Pied-billed Grebes wintered in small numbers. Single Horned Grebes put in an appearance at three locations: 1/23 Wilde Lake (WILLK)(HZ), 2/6 LKELK (DW), and 2/6 at Meadowbrook (MDBRK)(BL). A Double-crested Cormorant on 2/6 at WILLK (PN) is one of the few county winter records for this species.

Great Blue Herons returned to the county's only known heronry (VANPT). A heron was observed standing at a nest on 2/22 (MC). This species was observed countywide all winter.

Snow Geese were noted in small numbers. A blue phase bird on 12/19 at Schooley Mill Park (NM) was a new park record; on the same date a white phase bird was seen on Murphy Rd (DE, POs). On 2/27 a blue phase bird was at Fulton Pond (JS). The other five Snows (2w,3b) were reported in the western part of the county on HCMC (MK). The county is home to thousands of Canada Geese. On 1/16 MW counted 1500 along Linthicum Rd, while on 2/21 BO tallied 1400 on the lake at Centennial Park (CENPK). HCMC turned up 9129. Most of those geese were counted while they were down during the morning rain which reduced the potential for double counting.

For the most part duck numbers were not high, but there was good variety. A pair of Wood Ducks 1/30 at VANPT (HZ) and 2 on 2/6 at Cissel's (CISSL) on Jennings Chapel Rd (MW) were the first of the season. American Black Duck numbers were modest with highs of 30 on 12/19 at the quarry (QUARY) on Brighton Dam Rd (MC,HZ) and 31 on HCMC at CISSL's (MW). The new ponds and wetlands at the University of MD Central Farm (UMDCF) hosted a female Bufflehead 1/24 (G&MM) and a female Northern Pintail 1/25 (MN,JS). There is great potential for this area so keep an eye out for waterfowl, gulls, and shorebirds when driving along the north-south section of Folly Quarter Road. A female American Wigeon and a female Gadwall were seen intermittently during the period at CENPK (m.obs.) HCMC turned up 4 Gadwalls in the west (W&SE). American Wigeon totaled 106 on HCMC; more than half that number were in a damp field on the Patrick farm (Daisy Rd & Bushy Park Rd). CS counted 55 at that location 2/7. Winter Canvasback numbers were down with a seasonal high of 8 on 1/18 at CENPK (KS). Redhead sightings and

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.

numbers, on the other hand, have increased the last few winters. The high was at least 23 on 2/13 on the Larriland Farm (LRLDF) ponds on Rt. 94 (KS). Ring-necked Ducks totaled 151 countywide on HCMC. Two male Greater Scaup at LRLDF 2/6 (MK) were nice, since the species is not detected annually. The birds were seen the following day (CS,D&PE) but were not relocated on 2/8. A female Lesser Scaup spent 2/10 to at least 2/27 at LKELK (JC). A female Oldsquaw was spotted at CENPK on 12/18 (HZ,MC). One female Common Goldeneye was noted on 12/19 at the QUARY (MC,HZ); 1 was also seen 1/1 (DE,m.obs.) through 1/3 (KS) at CENPK, and 2 on TRIRS 1/24 (DE,DOI). Buffleheads were reported in all three months in low numbers; a modest 11 on 2/5 at CISSL's (MW) was the high. HCMC turned up 69 Hooded Mergansers, 404 Common Mergansers, and 1 male Red-breasted Merganser. Eleven Ruddy Ducks at WILLK (MC,HZ) on 12/18 was the high count for that species.

The vulture roost in the Wilde Lake village of Columbia received a good deal of publicity—mostly negative. The most interesting aspect of the roost was that Blacks definitely outnumbered Turkeys (106 to 86). Considering that Black Vultures are not seen nearly as often as Turkey Vultures in the eastern part of the county, one wonders where the Blacks spend their days, how far they range, and why Turkey Vultures are so much more conspicuous.

The Bald Eagle pair has returned to nest on TRIRS (DE,DOI;NM,JS). An adult Bald Eagle was perched near the corner of Sanner and Hopkins roads 1/23 (W&SE), and an immature was reported from Belmont on HCMC (DK,SP). Single Northern Harriers were noted in each winter month (CS;NM;BO). Although by Midwinter Count most of our resident Red-shouldered Hawks are paired and courting, it is often difficult to detect this species migrating in late winter. This year 7 were spotted in a kettle over Manahan Dr. (MANHN) on 2/27 (BO). A Rough-legged Hawk at Mt. Pleasant 2/15 (RO) was not far from the landfill, where one was spotted on February dates each of the two previous winters.

Wild Turkeys are alive and well in the county though we receive few reports of these normally wary birds. Two different flocks were reported this season: 15 on 12/18 on Annapolis Rock Rd (IN) and 24 on HCMC at the Hugg-Thomas Wildlife Management Area (BK). Pheasants and bobwhites have suffered dramatic population declines in the last decade; fortunately, both were reported this season. On 12/19, a Ring-necked Pheasant was at the Middle Patuxent Envir. Area (CR), and on 12/27 an individual reported to BO that he had

had one under feeders near his West Friendship home. Three Northern Bobwhites were spotted on HCMC on Howard Chapel Rd. (JSh).

American Coots wintered. The high was 28 reported from CENPK on 2/3 (KS).

Killdeer wintered in modest numbers. The HCMC total was 21. The UMDCF had the county's only 2 Common Snipe on HCMC (M&GM); on 2/20 at that location there were at least 11 (BO,CG). On 2/18, 2 were found at Welling's on Rt. 99, west of Rt. 32 (WE). The only American Woodcock reported was flushed on 2/14 near Annapolis Rock and Hipsley Mill roads (JSh).

Belted Kingfishers wintered in good numbers with 30 found on HCMC. Open water was, of course, the key.

There were scattered reports of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. At four locations two sapsuckers were seen: 12/19 Benson Branch (CS), 1/1 WILLK (HZ), 1/11 west of Burleigh Manor (MK), and 2/23 Hallmark (WEB).

The relatively mild weather enabled a few Eastern Phoebes to winter. The HCMC recorded an unprecedented 5. Horned Larks are hard to detect, except when they're singing. Two were found 2/7 on Shaffer's Mill Rd (D&PE); 6 on the same date were at UMDCF (BO,MJB,HZ).

Of the 14 Winter Wrens on HCMC, 3 were at VANPT (HZ). Carolina Wrens seem to have recovered from the effects of severe winters several years ago for HCMC counters found 310.

Eastern Bluebird numbers were at a record 380 on HCMC. Two Gray Catbirds were reported this season. The catbird on 12/19 near Dayton (MW) is not an unusual date for these semi-hardy lingerers; the one on Old Livestock Rd. on 2/6 (D&MH) is a better measure of winter weather.

American Pipits can be as difficult to locate as Horned Larks unless one catches the call notes as they fly over. One was seen 1/26 at UMDCF (NM) with another single 2/7 (BO,MJB,HZ) at the same location. The flock of 12 on HCMC was discovered while observers were looking at bluebirds on the ground in a field on Shaffersville Rd (B&SW). Notoriously unpredictable Cedar Waxwings were widespread this year on HCMC with 538 tallied.

A lingering Common Yellowthroat was found on 12/19 in pond edge vegetation on Derby Drive (K&BB,SS). HCMC birders grumbled about a shortage of Eastern Towhees. A modest 29 were reported on that count; of these, 12 were at Rockburn Branch Park (BO,CG).

Six American Tree Sparrows were spotted

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on 1/1 at CENPK (DE,m.obs), 18 on 1/23 MDBRK (BO,MJB), 16 on 2/7 UMDCF (BO,MJB,HZ), and 1 on 1/21 MTPLT (RO). HCMC turned up 77. One **Chipping Sparrow** was located in the Patapsco Valley on HCMC (BK). The high count for wintering **Savannah Sparrows** was 75 on 2/27 UMDCF (BO). On 2/6 just 5 wintering **Fox Sparrows** were found countywide, but by 2/12 MANHN (BO) and 2/14 Fulton (RM) probable migrants appeared at feeders. By 2/28, 3 Fox Sparrows were seen in an Oakland Mills yard (MJB). Song Sparrows were found in good numbers on HCMC with a total of 670. On the other hand, wintering **Swamp Sparrows** are never easy to find. MDBRK had 4 on 1/23 (BO,MJB). **White-crowned Sparrows** are usually found most easily in western Howard County. HCMC observers counted 248 of which 120 were at Clark's on Roxbury Rd. (MW). **Dark-eyed Junco** totals of 20 on 12/23 near LKELK (SN) and 27 on 2/28 in Oakland Mills (MJB) were highs for individual yards. On 2/28 the latter observer also had 23 **White-throated Sparrows** at her feeders.

Three **Eastern Meadowlarks** were at UMDCF on 2/28 (BO,MJB,KS). The lone **Rusty Blackbird** sighting consisted of 3 birds on 2/18 MANHN (BO). **American Goldfinch** flocks increased in size in February with 52 goldfinches on 2/7 at Timberleigh (DN) and 51 on 2/26 MANHN (BO). The albinistic **White-throated Sparrow** reported last season at WILLK was still present at least part of the winter.

Thanks to the following observers who provided winter records. Those cited in the above article are identified by initials only. *Mary-Jo Betts (MJB), Martha Chestam (MC), Lisa Colangelo (LS), Jane Coskren (JC), T. Dennis Coskren (TDC), Sue Earp (SE), Wesley Earp (WE), Ward Ebert (WEb), Darius Ecker (DE), Paula Ecker (PE), Carol Garza (CG), Karan & Bill Blum (K&BB), Ralph & Jane Gauder (R&JG), Dave & Maureen Harvey (D&MH), Mike Kerwin (MK), Dave Kubitsky (DK), Bill Kulp, Jr. (BK), Brigitte Lund (BL), Nancy Magnusson (NM), Mike & Grazina McClure (M&GM), Rosamund Munro (RM), Diane Nagengast (DN), Ian Nagengast (IN), Sue Neri (SN), Paul Newman (PN), Doug Odermatt (DOd), Daryl Olson (DO), Richard Orr (RO), Peter Osenton (POs), Bonnie Ott (BO), Suzanne Probst (SP), Chandler Robbins (CR), Kurt Schwarz (KS), Susan Sotterberg (SS), Jay Sheppard (JS), Jo Solem (JS), Robert Solem (RS), Chuck Stirat (CS), Rick Sussman (RS), Mark Wallace (MW), Don Waugh (DW), Bill & Sue Wendell (B&SW), Helen Zeichner (HZ), many observers (m.obs).*

## SECOND CHANCE WILDLIFE CENTER

**S**econd Chance, located at 7101 Barcelona Drive in Gaithersburg, is a very busy wildlife rehabilitation center. They are now entering their most hectic period of the year and can use all of the volunteer help they can get.

Even if you can volunteer only a few hours a week, your help will be appreciated. For birders, this could be an opportunity to expand your knowledge and appreciation of birds. For more information, call 301-926-WILD.

## THIRTEENTH HOWARD COUNTY MIDWINTER COUNT, FEBRUARY 7, 1998

BY JOANNE K. SOLEM

**T**he Thirteenth Howard County Midwinter Count (HCMC), February 7, 1998, was highly successful with counters locating 92 species, just two short of the all-time high of 94 in 1994 and 1997. Cool temperatures (30°F-49°F), open water, light winds (10 mph), overcast to partly cloudy skies, and no precipitation made for almost ideal conditions. Many years the Triadelphia Christmas Count (TCC), which is held in late December, records a higher total number of species than the HCMC. The TCC benefits from late waterfowl migration, lingering passerines, and moderate late autumn temperatures. This season was an exception for the TCC total was 85. Although water was open during both counts, the HCMC observers located 20 species of waterfowl to TCC's 13 which made most of the difference in the totals.

No new species were added to the HCMC cumulative total this year, however, 17 species established or tied (t) high counts: **Pied-billed Grebe**, **Great Blue Heron** (t), **Black Vulture**, **American Wigeon**, **Ring-necked Duck**, **Bufflehead**, **Ruddy Duck**, **Bald Eagle** (t), **Killdeer** (t), **Common Snipe**, **Belted Kingfisher** (t), **Red-bellied Woodpecker**, **Hairy Woodpecker** (t), **Red-breasted Nuthatch**, **Cedar Waxwing**, **Savannah Sparrow**, and **Rusty Blackbird**. (See accompanying chart for totals.)

The 147 **Ring-necked Ducks** were appreciably above the next high of 96 seen in 1994. **Ruddy Ducks** have been recorded on just five counts. The previous high was 4 in three different years; this year the total jumped to 42. It was not a year for most northern irruptives. Unfortunately, Howard County did not benefit from the crossbill invasion; on the other hand, **Red-breasted Nuthatches** arrived in record numbers. The new high of 93 was almost two and a half times the 38 recorded in 1991. Nineteen field parties and feeder watchers in all seven count areas reported them. Anyone who did not see a **Red-breasted Nuthatch** sometime during the winter missed a golden opportunity. **Cedar Waxwing** numbers are unpredictable. We've had as few as 4 in 1991 or as many as this year's record 883. It's the highest count of waxwings since our first year's 792 when there were only 34 birders in the field compared to this year's 80 field observers. **Savannah Sparrow** numbers at 38 were well above the previous high of 21 in 1995. **Eastern Bluebirds** just missed setting a record. The 332 tallied was 3 below the 335 found in 1992.

Fortunately, there were many more record highs than new lows: **Northern Harrier** (t), **American Kestrel**, **Ring-billed Gull**, **Herring Gull**, **Horned Lark**, **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** (t) and **House Finch**. **Northern Harriers** are not present every year; in 6 years besides this one, singles were seen. The kestrel number is the most disturbing. After a peak of 53 in 1989, there has been an irregular but steady decline during the last decade. By 1996, the total was

27; it then plunged to 13 in 1997 and 12 in 1998. Weather conditions and observer coverage could be considered extenuating circumstances, but the count day weather in 1998 was good and the winter mild, the species does not present any particular identification problems, and coverage was better in the last two years when numbers were at a low point than in the initial count year of 1986 when 47 kestrels were tallied by many fewer field birders. In the future, we will continue to monitor this total hoping that the last few years are an aberration. The drop in gull number is easily explained now that most trash is being transferred out of the county. This change occurred since the 1997 HCMC. Because Alpha Ridge landfill no longer attracts the thousands of gulls it formerly did, we no longer can anticipate adding several of the more unusual species to the count total from this location. Gulls are still to be found at reservoirs, major lakes, shopping center parking lots, etc., but they do not gather by the hundreds or thousands at these sites. Never dismiss the possibility of a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** or one of the white-winged species appearing in the smaller flocks, even though the chances are usually much reduced. **Horned Larks** are hard to detect. Generally, we can assume the species is overlooked and undercounted. **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** are always scarce in midwinter. In 1994, they were missed completely. **House Finches** reached a new low of 636, probably still as a result of conjunctivitis, although fewer feeder participants might also be a factor. We had just 12 people watching 11 feeder locations this year compared to 27 on our first count when 820 **House Finches** were seen.

Overall the Thirteenth Howard County Midwinter Count was a superior effort!

Participants during the 1998 Count were as follows: **Area 1:** Mark Wallace\*, Lisa Colangelo, Susan & Wes Earp, Paul Jung, Mike Kerwin, Diane Nagengast (F), Daryl Olson, Bill & Sue Wendell, Marc Young. **Area 2:** Nancy Magnusson\*, Tish Bell (F), Ward Ebert, David Henderson, Helen Lowe Metzner, Peter Osenton, Ron & Susan Polniaszek, Elizabeth Riordon, Skip Skipton (F), Tom Strikwerda, Paul & Sherry Zucker. **Area 3:** Dave\* & Maureen\* Harvey, Ralph Cullison III, Darius & Paula Ecker, Barbara Gaffney, Elliott & Nancy Kirschbaum, Bill Kulp, Jr., Elayne & Jeff Metter, Beth Olsen, Eugene Scarpuia, Kurt Schwarz, Robin & Will Tress, John Tussing. **Area 4:** Mike\* & Grazina McClure, Bill & Karan Blum, Marge Cullison (F), Georgia Ecker (F), Dave Holyoke, Patsy Kennan (F), Beth & Mike Leumas, Jim McGibney, Ann Marie Raterman, James Resau (F), Clyde Robbette, Romayne Smith, Chuck Stirat. **Area 5:** Doug\* & Jeanne Odermatt, Ellen & Hal Bryson (F), Marty Chestam, Jeffrey A. Friedhoffer, Robyn Landry, Dennis Luck (F), Rosamund Munro (F), Erich Neupert, Craig Sholley, Lisa Stevens, Helen Zeichner. **Area 6:** Bonnie Ott\*, Carol Garza, Jane & Ralph Gauder, Dave Kubitsky, Marjorie Kupiec, Bob & Brigitte Lund, Suzanne Probst, Hank Stanton. **Area 7:** Maud Banks\*, Mary-Jo Betts (F), Rod Burley, Jane Coskren, Tina Glorioso, Edwin Gould, John McKittrick, Richard L. Orr, Jo Solem\*\*, Eva Sunell, Don Waugh, Phil Wilder. Martha Waugh served as hostess for the tally rally.

## FOURTEENTH HOWARD COUNTY MIDWINTER COUNT, FEBRUARY 6, 1999

BY JOANNE K. SOLEM

As Saturday, February 6, 1999, the date of the Fourteenth Howard County Midwinter Count (HCMC) approached, birders asked two questions repeatedly. Would the predicted rain hold off, and would a second successive mild winter produce a record number of species? Unfortunately, the answer to both questions was no.

Eighty-five participants found 89 species on a day that began with an overcast sky. The intermittent flying mist and sleet became a light but relatively steady rain during much of the morning in many parts of the county. After birders were cold and wet, the skies began to clear with partly sunny conditions much of the afternoon. Open water enabled observers to locate 20 species of waterfowl. A great effort under less than ideal conditions helped balance the absence of northern irruptives and unusual gulls. (The last year we enjoyed Red-breasted Nuthatches, Purple Finches, Pine Siskins, and Evening Grosbeaks on the same count was 1988, now a dim memory.)

Following last year's pattern, the 87 species seen on the December 19, 1998 Triadelphia Christmas Count (TCC) did not exceed the HCMC's total of 89. TCC found Tundra Swans which HCMC missed for only the second time in 14 years. TCC counters also produced a Ring-necked Pheasant, an American Woodcock, a Brown Thrasher, a Common Yellowthroat, and 2 Purple Finches—all species which were missed on the February count.

The HCMC had a number of highlights. A Double-crested Cormorant at Wilde Lake added a new species to the count's cumulative list.

New high counts were established or tied (t) by the following 14 species: Pied-billed Grebe (t), Great Blue Heron (10 more than the 1998 high), Gadwall (t), American Wigeon, Ring-necked Duck (topped last year's high by 4; it was just the second time more than 100 were recorded), Hooded Merganser (10 more than 1990's 59), Common Merganser (almost double 1998's 213), Bald Eagle (t), Wild Turkey (10 more than 1990's 14), American Coot (more than double 1998's 12), Killdeer, Eastern Phoebe (2 more than the 3 in 1988 and an unusually high number for the Piedmont in winter), Eastern Bluebird (two successive mild winters and a good food supply boosted their numbers well above the 1992 record of 335), and White-crowned Sparrow (almost 100 more than 1995's 154). (See accompanying chart for totals.)

There were no new lows—always a cause for rejoicing.

Fourteen years of data produced some items of interest. Redheads appeared on this count for the fourth successive year in 1999 after being tallied for the first time in 1996. American Kestrel numbers rose slightly to 17 after last year's all-time low of 12. We can only hope the upward trend continues. Gull numbers were slightly above last year's lows, but the numbers are likely to remain at a depressed level now that the majority of waste is trucked out of the county. Carolina Wren numbers have rebounded to 310 (2<sup>nd</sup> high) after crashing to 92 in the winter of 1996. It's strange but

true that counters in both 1998 and 1999 came up with an identical number of White-throated Sparrows—1663! Blackbird numbers were low; let's count our blessings. House Finch numbers climbed to 728 after last year's low of 636. The total of 1203 House Sparrows, the second highest ever, is not one to take pride in, but it is good to know that observers are counting sparrows and starlings which are all too easy to overlook or dismiss. If House Finch numbers continue to rebound, will we again see House Sparrow numbers decline? At the very least, continue to be vigilant in preventing these sparrows from nesting in boxes, vents, soffits, etc. Native cavity nesters can use the help.

Fourteen feeder watchers at 13 locations found a total of 33 species. Their observations contributed substantial numbers to half a dozen species, despite complaints that there was little activity at feeders. For these observers, a snowstorm would have been welcome! Contributing feeder totals requires a minimum commitment of time. Half an hour in the morning when activity is high and an occasional check at some other time of the day is a big help. More time is fine, if possible. We look forward to more individuals providing feeder counts next year.

For the enthusiastic field birder there is plenty of opportunity. Parts of the county are not being covered adequately. Birds in several choice areas this year were not counted at all.

Participants during the 1999 Count were as follows: Area 1: Mark Wallace\*, Anne Bradford (F), Susan and Wes Earp (F), Paul Jung, Mike Korwin, Diane Nagengast (F), Daryl Olson, Denise Sharp, Jay Sheppard, Bill and Sue Wendel, Area 2: Nancy Magnusson\*, Val Barnes, David Henderson, Donald D. Henderson, Bill Kidwell (F), Peter Osernton, Ron and Susan Polinaszak, Skip Siddon (F), Tom Strikwerda, Rick Sussman, Paul and Sherry Zucker, Area 3: Dave\* and Maureen\* Harvey, Ralph Cullison III, Darius and Paula Ecker, Bill Kulp, Jr., Elaine and Jeff Metter, Kurt Schwarz, Will and Robin Tress, Area 4: Mike\* and Grazina McClure, Mary-Jo Betts, Bill and Karan Blum, Marge Cullison (F), Georgia Ecker (F), Mike Leumas, Jim McGiloney, Ann Marie Raterman, James Resau (F), Clyde Robinson, Romayne Smith, Chuck Stirrat, Area 5: Doug\* and Jeanne Odermatt\*, Ellen and Hal Bryson (F), Marty Chestern, Jeffrey A. Friedhofer, Emmalyn Holdrige, Dave Holyoke, Marci Krishnamoorthy, Rosamund Munro (F), Carol and Paul Newman, Nanine Rhineland, Michelle Wright, Helen Zeichner, Area 6: Bonnie Ott\*, Carol Garza, Jane and Ralph Geukler, Jane Helm (F), Dave Kubitsky, Brigitte Lund, Anita Picco, Suzanne Probst, Area 7: Maud Banks\*, Bob Betts (F), Jane Costren, John McKittrick, Sue Neri (F), Richard L. Orr, Chandler Robbins, Bob (F) and Jo Solem\*\*, Eva Sunell, Don Waugh. Martha Waugh served as hostess for the tally rally.

Thanks to the many people who made both the 1998 and 1999 counts possible and successful.

This count is made immeasurably easier thanks to Chuck Stirrat's competence and efficiency in computerizing the results. Since 1992 we have collected hawk/owl data for the Raptor Society. Mike McClure translates the raw data into a useable form. We are accumulating material about wintering raptors which eventually may be of wider interest.

From its inception, the Midwinter Count tally has been a great party. For the last eight years Martha and Don Waugh have been the gracious hosts. They make it look so easy—and

we are all most grateful for their generosity and talent.

The HCMC succeeds through the organizational efforts of the area coordinators (Mark Wallace, Nancy Magnusson, Dave and Maureen Harvey, Mike McClure, Doug Odermatt, Bonnie Ott, and Maud Banks), the dozens of Howard County field and feeder observers, and the essential assistance of birders from Baltimore, Carroll, Prince George's, and Montgomery counties. What a great cooperative effort!

WSSC provides access to lands surrounding the two reservoirs, the county allows us to count at Alpha Ridge landfill, the Howard County Conservancy permits us to survey Mt. Pleasant, and numerous private property owners give us access to their land. (We are always grateful for land permission, preferably of five acres or more. Please contact the compiler at 301-725-5037 if you can help in this regard.)

A special thanks to David Holmes, co-compiler and article author for 12 years, who recently resigned. In 1985, he embraced enthusiastically the idea of an experimental county-wide count during the relatively brief Maryland "true winter" to compare results with those of the Triadelphia Christmas Count. We thank him for memorable tallies, interesting articles, and intriguing insights. Although he will no longer be a count compiler, he has agreed to serve, as needed, as an arbiter of questionable/difficult sightings for all Howard County counts.

I am pleased to announce that Mary-Jo Betts will become co-compiler of the Howard County Midwinter Count. Beginning with the 2000 count, she will take over much of the organizing. She looks forward to encouraging even wider participation. Make a note to reserve Saturday, February 5, 2000 for the Fifteenth Howard County Midwinter Count!

POTLUCK THANKS  
BY MARY-JO BETTS

Once again, our Potluck Dinner was a great success. Thanks to everyone who brought such delicious dishes, as well as those who presented such outstanding slide programs. I want to give a special thank you to several members who every year, volunteer their services to make the dinner so enjoyable for the rest of us. Thanks to Marty Chestern, who every year produces her personalized birdy placemats. This year, she really out did herself with the funny bird cartoons on each one. Thanks also to Monika & Rod Botsal, who always take care of bringing the sodas and ice, Kurt Schwarz, for bringing the slide projector, and Dave Harvey, for running the slide projector. A special thank you to Maud Banks, who brings all the plates, utensils, napkins, etc. Maud was also responsible for reserving the dining room for us at no charge, just as she was able to do last year. Many thanks to the many members who were kind enough to come early and help set up the room including Monika & Rod Botsal, Marty Chestern, Helen Zeichner, Dianne Johns, Bob Betts, Kurt Schwarz, Maud & Harry Banks, Bonnie Ott, Carol Garza, Paula & Darius Ecker. With the great food, fabulous slides, fantastic company and conversation, I will look forward to joining all of you next year for another wonderful time.

(Continued from page 1)

North American Migration Day summary which provides a snapshot of migration across the continent on that particular spring day.

**Q. Who can participate in a count?**

A. Anyone can help. Beginners are especially encouraged to help no matter their skill level. The count coordinators will pair beginners with more experienced birders. Every pair of eyes is helpful! You are also encouraged to state your preference of an area to count. Although you may not know birds by sight and sound, knowledge of an area is also important. For a beginner, spending time in the field with an experienced birder is the easiest way to learn our county birds.

**Q. It sounds fun but what if you don't have much free time on count day?**

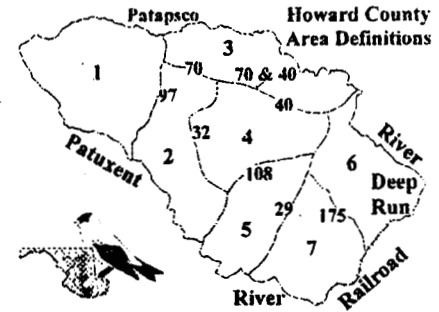
A. There are no set hours for counting. There are some birders that start before dawn and count all day until dark. Others contribute an hour or two in the morning or afternoon. There are also many people that help by counting their birds at home by keeping feeder lists.

**Q. What is the "Tally Rally"?**

A. The tally rally is an opportunity for all the counters to get together and share the day's results. It is a wonderful time for all involved. We share a covered dish dinner and reflect on the day's finds. Then together we compile a total of the species sighted. It is exciting and fun to see what birds were found in Howard County on one day!

Editor's Note: Thanks go to Bonnie for her

initiative in beginning this new column. This column can be whatever you want it to be, but we need your input. We need your questions, ideas and thoughts. We are hoping this column will not be the responsibility of one person, but will be a team effort of everyone. E-mail your ideas to Mike Kerwin at [mjker@erols.com](mailto:mjker@erols.com)



**HOWARD COUNTY MIDWINTER COUNT RESULTS - 1998 AND 1999**

SPECIES	2/7/98	2/6/99	SPECIES	2/7/98	2/6/99	SPECIES	2/7/98	2/6/99
PIED-BILLED GREBE	4	4	COMMON SNIBE	5	2	AMERICAN PIPIT	2	12
HORNED GREBE	0	2	RING-BILLED GULL	868	888	CEDAR WAXWING	883	538
DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT	0	1	HERRING GULL	437	471	YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER	17	35
GREAT BLUE HERON	21	31	GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL	10	30	EASTERN TOWHEE	30	29
BLACK VULTURE	337	193	GULL SPECIES	117	168	AMERICAN TREE SPARROW	42	77
TURKEY VULTURE	429	281	ROCK DOVE	994	1,053	CHIPPING SPARROW	0	1
SNOW GOOSE	2	5	MOURNING DOVE	877	1,294	FIELD SPARROW	126	152
CANADA GOOSE	8,292	9,129	EASTERN SCREECH-OWL	2	3	SAVANNAH SPARROW	38	15
MUTE SWAN	7	2	GREAT HORNED OWL	6	11	FOX SPARROW	2	5
TUNDRA SWAN	44	0	BARRED OWL	6	7	SONG SPARROW	440	670
WOOD DUCK	4	2	BELTED KINGFISHER	36	30	SWAMP SPARROW	26	42
GADWALL	1	4	RED-HEADED WOODPECKER	1	0	WHITE-THROATED SPARROW	1,663	1,663
AMERICAN WIGEON	92	106	RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER	303	217	WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW	116	248
AMERICAN BLACK DUCK	245	161	YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER	9	4	SPARROW SPECIES	0	180
MALLARD	763	835	DOWNY WOODPECKER	240	236	DARK-EYED JUNCO	1,657	1,533
NORTHERN PINTAIL	2	0	HAIRY WOODPECKER	47	38	NORTHERN CARDINAL	1,232	941
CANVASBACK	5	6	NORTHERN FLICKER	114	119	RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD	2,956	890
REDHEAD	2	13	PILEATED WOODPECKER	38	37	EASTERN MEADOWLARK	15	12
RING-NECKED DUCK	147	151	EASTERN PHOEBE	2	5	RUSTY BLACKBIRD	10	0
GREATER SCAUP	0	2	BLUE JAY	632	411	COMMON GRACKLE	5,601	186
LESSER SCAUP	3	0	AMERICAN CROW	1,596	2,758	BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD	336	92
BUFFLEHEAD	20	11	FISH CROW	59	104	BLACKBIRD SPECIES	1,483	613
HOODED MERGANSER	33	69	CROW SPECIES	2,494	1,497	HOUSE FINCH	636	728
COMMON MERGANSER	213	404	HORNED LARK	1	0	AMERICAN GOLDFINCH	411	304
RED-BREASTED MERGANSER	1	1	CAROLINA CHICKADEE	813	742	HOUSE SPARROW	922	1,263
RUDDY DUCK	42	16	TUFTED TITMOUSE	759	640			
BALD EAGLE [AD/IM/UNK]	3	3	RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH	93	0	<b>TOTAL BIRDS:</b>	<b>52,292</b>	<b>40,690</b>
NORTHERN HARRIER	1	0	WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH	211	154	<b>TOTAL SPECIES:</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>89</b>
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK	14	10	BROWN CREEPER	27	26			
COOPER'S HAWK	7	6	CAROLINA WREN	229	310	HOURS ON FOOT:	214.7	192.7
ACCIPITER SPECIES	4	1	WINTER WREN	6	14	HOURS BY CAR:	44.7	51.2
RED-SHOULDERED HAWK	74	53	GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET	37	113	MILES ON FOOT:	185.7	166.7
RED-TAILED HAWK	86	49	RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET	1	4	MILES BY CAR:	648.5	562.6
ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK	1	0	EASTERN BLUEBIRD	332	380	HOURS FEEDER WATCHING:	26.8	33.9
BUTEO SPECIES	0	1	HERMIT THRUSH	10	11	HOURS STATIONARY:	0.0	4.5
AMERICAN KESTREL	12	17	AMERICAN ROBIN	160	192	HOURS "OWLING":	2.6	4.7
WILD TURKEY	0	24	GRAY CATBIRD	0	1	MILES "OWLING":	28.1	35.0
NORTHERN BOBWHITE	0	3	NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD	286	330	TOTAL OBSERVERS:	92	85
AMERICAN COOT	12	28	BROWN THRASHER	2	0	TOTAL PARTIES:	52	51
KILLDEER	20	21	EUROPEAN STARLING	10,865	6,536	TOTAL FEEDERWATCHERS:	13	15

## 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 13, Thursday** "Earthwatch Findings from the Whooping Crane Release Program in Florida," by Michael Kreger.

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 1, Saturday** 1st Annual Howard County Big Day - Meet at 7:00 am at Alpha Ridge Park. Leader: Darius Ecker. Join us for a full day as we find as many species as possible in Howard County. Itinerary to be determined by the birds. Carpooling necessary. Call leader at 410-312-9165 for more information and optional pre-dawn owling schedule.
- **May 8, Saturday** May Count - See article on page 1 of this newsletter.
- **May 14-16, Weekend** Maryland Ornithological Society 1999 Annual Conference - Details were mailed to you by the MOS.
- **May 19, Wednesday** Weekday Walk at Wilde Lake - Meet at 8:30 am at the boat dock. Leader: TBD.
- **May 22, Saturday** Breeding Birds of Mt. Pleasant - Meet at 8:00 am by the shed. Leader: Bonnie Ott.
- **June 3, Thursday** Spring (Mar 1 - May 31) Records Due - Mail as soon as possible to Jo Solem, 10617 Graeoch Rd., Laurel, MD 20723.
- June 5, Saturday** Elliott Island Marshes - Meet at 11:00 am at the Route 32 and Broken Land Parkway park and ride (car parking). Leader: Darius Ecker. Join us for an afternoon and evening of night birding in the marshes of Elliott Island. Rails possible, mosquitoes definite. Overnight optional. Call leader at 410-312-9165 to obtain final details and reserve a spot.
- July 10, Saturday** Owl and Thrush Walk - Meet at 7:00 pm at Old Columbia Rd. and Rams Horn Row. Leader: Bonnie Ott. Walk along Gwynn Acres Path (paved) to listen for Wood Thrush and Barred Owls. Possible later excursion to listen for Screech Owls. Wear dark clothes, bug repellent and bring a flashlight.
- July 24, Saturday** Huntley Meadows, VA - Meet at 7:30 am at the Route 32 and Broken Land Parkway park and ride (car parking). Leader: Darius Ecker. Join us for a morning of birding in this popular Virginia Park. King Rail is possible.
- **August 3, Tuesday** Summer (June 1 - July 31) Records Due - Mail to Jo Solem, 10617 Graeoch Rd., Laurel, MD 20723.
- August 21, Saturday** Dragonflies at Centennial - Meet at 9:00 am the west end parking lot. Leader: Richard Orr.
- September 11, Saturday** Middle Patuxent Environmental Area - Meet at 8:00 am at the Board of Education Building on Route 108. Leader: Jeff Duguay. Moderate walking through fields and second growth woodlands to look for migrants.
- September 18, Saturday** Fall Count - Mark 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 27, Thursday** Bonnie Ott, 8664 Manahan Dr., Ellicott City, MD 21043, phone 410-461-3361. This will be a joint meeting of the incoming and outgoing board members.

**SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 1999 NEWSLETTER MATERIAL IS DUE JULY 23, 1999.** 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 e-mail to [Paulae2156@aol.com](mailto:Paulae2156@aol.com). Also, please visit the club's site on the Web, at <http://www.abs.net/~darius/birding.html>.

### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR 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 **Karla Pearce** at 410-740-8361 or e-mail her at [karlap@altavista.net](mailto:karlap@altavista.net).

### YOUR ASSISTANCE NEEDED BY JUDY HOLZMAN

Hello, my name is Judy Holzman and I am a licensed wildlife rehabilitator located in Columbia. I work with small mammals as well as songbirds, raptors and waterfowl. I have been involved with wildlife rehabilitation for about 8 1/2 years. I have had my state permit for about 4 years and my Federal license for about 2 years. My training includes being a volunteer at Chesapeake Wildlife Sanctuary, Camelot Wildlife Refuge, and Second Chance Wildlife Center. I have also attended seminars offered by the International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council and the Wildlife Center of Virginia.

Each year I receive many songbird babies to care for. As much as I learn about raising orphaned birds, I cannot compete with the parents in their ability to provide proper diet, teach predator awareness and model correct song. For the last two years I have been working with Mark Wallace to re-nest bluebirds in

Howard County. I would like to try this with other species as well. I realize that many factors will have to be addressed in order for such a project to work well. First and foremost, the welfare of the parents and the natural clutch must be considered. Therefore, a careful evaluation of the health of the introduced checks will have to be made, as well as a determination of nest capacity. In addition, for the fostering to be successful, the ages of the natural and introduced birds must be similar. To do this, nests will have to be frequently and closely monitored. I have discussed this project with Marge Gibson, bird bander and president of the International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council, and she has offered to be of assistance as needed. So, if you are currently monitoring nests and would be interested in attempting this project, please contact me at 301-596-0044 or e-mail [jhica@aol.com](mailto:jhica@aol.com).

# HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB

Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society

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## CONSERVATION COLUMN BY BOB SOLEM

The following information from Vivian Newman tells about a proposed Patapsco Heritage Greenway involving manor changes and proposed construction near Ellicott City, Oella, and Elkridge:

The first of three options, the *Recreational River Valley*, would "maximize the greenway setting" with land and river trails and make the Patapsco Valley State Park a regional recreational destination. The second, the *River of History*, would focus on the Patapsco's industrial history and could feature a funicular from the Ellicott City Court House, a major visitor center, and conversion of the mill into a conference center. The third option, the *River Industry Communities*, would require the most community involvement and provide the greatest economic opportunity by featuring shopping, dining, and lodging in Oella and Elkridge, and special events such as ethnic festivals. None would generate more investment in Park acquisition or management, even with the Maryland Program Open Space funds.

*Background:* Early in October 1998 an article appeared in the Baltimore Sun announcing an "open house" in Oella to present plans for the Patapsco Heritage Greenway, described as a trail network linking historic sites along the Patapsco River. For many of the hundred or so people who attended, this was the first introduction to the Patapsco Heritage Greenway Committee (PHGC) and its plans for the Patapsco Valley State Park. The PHGC, a subcommittee of the Ellicott City Restoration Foundation comprised predominantly of developers and merchants, has in fact been at work for

several years funded by Maryland Program Open Space, Howard County, and Baltimore County.

In accordance with the 1996 enabling legislation known as House Bill 1, the Heritage Preservation and Tourism Areas Act, PHGC has been developing a plan intended to be "a catalyst for coordinating investment, promoting cooperation, and developing a comprehensive strategy for using the Patapsco River Valley's heritage resources." *In short, this effort is not about expanding or enhancing green space, natural corridors, or the Patapsco Park, but about state subsidies for financing tourism facilities and promoting economic development.*

A particularly controversial element is a 10-foot wide, 6,250 linear foot paved bicycle path and bridge in the Park, to replace an existing foot trail through a forested buffer zone. The current budget for this project is \$1.325 million, including \$485,000 from Program Open Space (POS) in FY 1999, another \$200,000 from POS and \$200,000 from Howard County in FY 2000 and \$440,000 federal TEA-21 money. Critics have questioned this use of POS money as well as the clearing of a naturally forested riparian zone on state land just at a time when Governor Glendening has announced a goal of planting several hundred miles of buffer by private landowners. Proponents of the path view it as a key element for certification of the Heritage Greenway and eligibility for subsidies.

At stake is a great deal - including tax breaks, loans, and grants over a projected ten to fifteen year period. Certification would make the Heritage Area eligible for matching state grants to local jurisdictions and other entities for

planning, design, interpretation, marketing, and programming as well as broad program support from a wide range of agencies. In addition, benefits for Target Investment Zones within Certified Heritage Areas include matching grants for property acquisition, development, preservation and restoration; loans for economic development; and state income tax credits for rehabilitation of heritage structures (including non-historic structures) and the authority to provide local property tax credits for such rehabilitation.

In mid-January the Maryland Conservation Council (MCC), a statewide coalition of over 20 environmental organizations called on Governor Glendening to place a hold on construction of the paved bicycle path and initiate an in-depth environmental assessment of the entire Patapsco Heritage Greenway project, with full opportunity for public participation. In their cover letter, MCC reminded the Governor that the primary purpose of the Patapsco Valley State Park is to conserve the natural and living resources of the Patapsco River Valley and contribute to the overall effort to improve water quality in the Chesapeake Bay, and continued "Not only are the destruction of riparian buffers and expansion of impermeable surfaces counterproductive to the Tributary Strategy effort to reduce nutrient loadings, these harmful activities are to be underwritten with tax money at the very same time that you have announced the goal of planting many miles of riverside forests." Others have decried the misuse of the term "Greenway" to provide cover for development.

