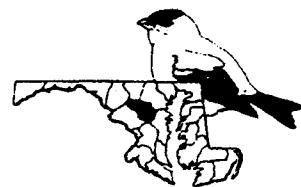




THE GOLDFINCH



A CHAPTER OF THE MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 1999

VOLUME 28, NUMBER 1

WEST TEXAS REFLECTIONS BY DARIUS ECKER

This summer during the week of July fourth Paula and I made our first visit to West Texas for a week of birding. I wasn't quite sure what to expect, but I knew from my reading that the bird life would be somewhat similar to Arizona. While planning the trip the only economical flight was to San Antonio. That would mean a lot of driving anyway, so I also planned to visit the Davis Mountains and the Edwards Plateau along with Big Bend National Park.

After a long drive west, overnight in Fort Stockton, we started early to bird the Davis Mountains. An early morning perched dark raptor was probably Common Black Hawk, but didn't stick around long enough for us to confirm the ID. Cliff Swallows were numerous and a Prairie Falcon made a quick appearance. A scenic "loop" drive takes you around the Davis Mountains area, prime habitat for Montezuma Quail. A stop at Mount Locke to visit the McDonald Observatory breaks up the day. Sometimes the quail can be located in the residential area at the base of the mountain, and another birder we met had seen one there, but we could not find one. We spent the rest of the day trying to find harlequin looking quails to no avail. While waiting at a "sure spot to find the quail" we were treated to a Cassin's Sparrow singing atop a small bush.

Towards the end of the day we focused our search in Davis Mountains State Park. The camp host told me a pair of Montezuma Quails lived in the area above the feeder next to his trailer, so we joined him to watch his feeders, had our evening picnic meal by the feeders and waited. Bronzed Cowbird, Canyon Towhee and Rufous-crowned Sparrow all made an appearance, but no quail. We stayed there until sunset, and then left for our motel. We would find out the next morning that we missed the quails by five minutes.

We got up early the next morning and returned to the park. The camp host had given me another location to look for the

quail, high up on an overlook drive. We were pleasantly distracted by a very close look at a singing Rock Wren, a bird we had seen only once before. As we approached the top we noted a family group of Western Scrub Jays. We drove on to the overlook, turned around and headed back. On the way back I paused to try for some photos of the very active Scrub Jays. Suddenly, I noticed a bird walk out of the brush onto the edge of the road about fifty feet ahead. I drifted the car slowly forward to within 30 feet, stopped and turned off the engine. A male Montezuma Quail strutted out across the road in front of us. The male was very proud, but hesitated in the center of the road when he noticed the car. A female made herself visible when the male was near the road's center, and was only in view a few seconds. When she saw the male hesitate she quickly retreated into cover. We had both given up on seeing the quails, and had turned our attention to just enjoying the day when these birds appeared. This sighting gave us a great way to remember the Davis Mountains, and our "Life Bird" Montezuma Quail.

Big Bend National Park was one of the most beautiful parks we had ever visited, but it was remote and desolate. Birders go to Big Bend to see Colima Warbler and Lucifer Hummingbird. While Lucifer Hummingbird can sometimes be seen in Arizona, there is

no other breeding location for Colima Warbler north of Mexico. To get to where the warblers breed, you must hike eleven miles round trip. The hike takes you up to Laguna Meadow (a lovely place), across the Colima Trail (what else would it be called) to Boot Spring, an area named after a rock formation shaped like an upside down cowboy boot. A shorter but steeper route back (it's okay now because you're going down) rounds out the eleven mile hike.

We planned on the hike taking all day, and we each filled our packs with plenty of food and water to sustain us. I decided against carrying my large heavy camera lens. We started the hike just before dawn. Before we reached Laguna Meadows two small light gray, yellow-rumped birds flew across the canyon. "Colima Warblers", I said. But neither one of us had seen them well enough. We continued to climb up the trail. At Laguna Meadow we paused for a snack. We were surprised by Broad-tailed Hummingbirds while we ate. Just after we turned onto the Colima Trail, we heard a warbler singing off to the right. This difficult little bird finally showed me it's rump, and Paula it's head. We surmised it was indeed a Colima Warbler. A little further down another warbler showed me it's head, and Paula it's rump. Another Colima. Next thing, we arrived at Boot Spring. Since we still had food, we ate again. We were certain we had both seen Colima Warbler, but we were not pleased with the quality of the views we'd received. We began to descend along the Pinnacles Trail beneath Emory Peak and passed the stone cowboy boot. After passing two other birders along the trail we found two more Colima Warblers that were more cooperative in nature. The second one sang on the same perch for nearly fifteen minutes. Now, if I just had that camera lens! Further down we heard one more singing male to bring the final total to seven Colima Warblers for the day. The trail down was much steeper. I'm really

(Continued on page 2)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE	PAGE
SPRING BIRD RECORDS	3
SPRING 1999 TRIP REPORTS	5
FALL COUNT ANNOUNCEMENT	6
MAY COUNT RESULTS	7
PROGRAMS AND FIELD TRIPS	9
CONSERVATION COLUMN	10
FALL COUNT CHECKLIST	
Y2K MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION	

(Continued from page 1)

glad we didn't climb up this way. Back at the Big Bend Lodge each spent time soaking in a hot tub to sooth our aching muscles.

Our second morning at Big Bend was spent hiking the Window Trail. This area had been reported as a good place to search for Lucifer Hummingbirds which feed on the flowering agaves in that area. Agaves have a rounded base with pointy leaves. A tall flowering stalk grows up out of the center to as high as 30 feet. To find the hummingbird, you just look at every flowering agave. We were treated early on in this hike by families of Varied Buntings. The males were vivid beyond description. As we approached the bottom of the canyon I heard a sound in the brush off to the left. I first thought it was another hiker. Then I heard an inhuman sound that could only be a bear. I stopped Paula, who was in front of me by grabbing her pack and saying one word, "bear". I turned left to look for the bear when I saw the cloud of dust behind my wife as she retreated up the path. I made some noise, kicked the dirt and yelled and the bear retreated. After a ten minute walk back I found Paula looking at a Black-chinned Hummingbird feeding on a lone agave. After a short wait, we continued

down the path past the spot where we had encountered the bear. There was plenty of evidence the bear had been there. Nearly every agave was broken in half. One on the hillside was pulled out by the roots. Oh, that's right, bears like sweet things, like honey and nectar. A park ranger later told me the agaves are a common late summer food source for park bears. While we did find a Blue-throated Hummingbird feeding on insects, there were no Lucifer's to be found. The walk back up through the desert was long and hot.

Our afternoon was spent driving to other locations. Rio Grande Village was host to a nesting Common Black Hawk. We saw the young bird on the nest, and a parent flying in from the river. Greater Roadrunner mothers fed their young in the grass, and Painted Buntings and Verdins hopped around in the brush. A stunning male Vermillion Flycatcher hawked for insects below the Black Hawk nest. At Castolon a Tropical Kingbird and a Western Kingbird nested next to each other. The insect like call of the Tropical Kingbird was distinctive. The next morning we visited an abandoned ranch to look for birds. Yellow-breasted Chat and Summer Tanager were common. Crissal Thrasher had been reported in this area but we could not locate one. We ended up not

seeing Lucifer Hummingbird during our Big Bend visit.

We left Big Bend to head east towards the Edwards Plateau. While spending the night in Del Rio, some birding in that area discovered some birds more prevalent in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas. Couch's Kingbird and Great Kiskadee were found near a local stream along with several Yellow-crowned Night Herons and Golden-



"A male Montezuma Quail struttet out across the road in front of us."

fronted Woodpeckers. Lesser Nighthawks were common near the open fields close to sunset.

We had rented a small cabin for two days near Utopia, Texas in the heart of the Edwards Plateau, an area most Texans call "Hill Country". Of course, the hills are the size of Maryland's mountains. This little cabin was so pleasant I didn't want to leave, and I was content to sit on the porch and watch the Summer Tanager feed on the live oak above the house, but we had come to the Edwards Plateau to see Cave Swallow and Black-capped Vireo. A short drive to Lost Maples State Park would get us to an area where the vireo breeds. The people at the park visitors center were very helpful, and marked the vireo breeding locations on a park map for us. We found three of the marked locations supporting singing males and concentrated our efforts at these spots. It did take us nearly ninety minutes to get descent views but it was well worth the effort. This little vireo was the most striking bird of the trip, with most field guide illustrations of it not doing the bird justice. Finally, the tiny vireo perched next to a White-eyed Vireo for comparison. We then left to return to the visitor's center, but we were

disappointed to find there were no Black-capped Vireo tee shirts available. In the evening, we would travel to Concan, Texas to a local cave just recently opened up to the public. Here we could view Cave Swallows returning to roost for the evening, and view bats leaving the cave for the night's feeding. While the Cave Swallows were nice (they can be viewed just as easily under highway bridges) the real treat here was watching the bats exit the cave. This cave is a breeding location for Free-tailed bats and houses millions of bats. The spectacle began at 8:45 pm when the first bats began to exit. Two hours later, the constant stream of bats had not yet stopped. We even got to see a couple of local Red-tailed Hawks grab a "bat snack". The next day, while relaxing around the ranch, I was surprised to see a Groove-billed Ani pause briefly in the field in front of the cabin. We also found some Cave Swallow perched on the wires next to the cabin. As we left to head back to San Antonio, I finally saw a Green Kingfisher perched low below the dam at the park in Utopia, Texas. I had been wanting to photograph this bird all week, but could not locate one. And of course, now I was out of film. The kingfisher seemed to smile as he looked back at me. Maybe next time.



"A park ranger later told me the agaves are a common late summer food source for park bears.."

SPRING BIRD RECORDS: MARCH 1 TO MAY 31, 1999

BY JOANNE SOLEM

The bright plumages and exuberant songs of returning spring migrants are thrilling for beginners and experienced birders alike. For many observers spring 1999 was a distinct improvement over spring 1998. Some excellent sightings were made by one person or a single party: Peregrine Falcon, Virginia Rail, Forster's Tern, Orange-crowned Warbler, and Dickcissel. Unfortunately, few people got satisfactory looks at either the Sedge Wren or the Lincoln's Sparrow which were recorded on an April field trip. There were, however, some special species seen by almost every participant on featured field trips: American Bittern, Sora, Upland Sandpiper, Horned Lark, Prothonotary Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, and Blue Grosbeak.

Common Loons were widely seen, but numbers were low. Pied-billed Grebes were present in small groups. March 19 produced the seasonal high total with 6 on Lake Elkhorn (LKELK) (JC) & 1 at the Univ. of Md Central Farm (UMDCF) (M&GM). The last Horned Grebe was spotted on LKELK on May Count (MAYCT) 5/8 (MB,ES). The latest Double-crested Cormorant, an im., showed up at LKELK on 5/18 (JC,DE) and left 5/21 (DE). Meadowbrook's (MDBRK) wetlands and meadows were productive. An American Bittern was seen there on a field trip on 4/5 (BO+); it was still present on 4/17 when another group observed it. The first Great Egret of the season flew over Manahan Dr. (MANHN) 3/13 (BO). Egrets were reported from five locations with a high of 3 at Centennial Park (CENPK) 5/5 (GA). The latest was 1 at UMDCF 5/26 in the new wetlands (WE). A Snowy Egret at LKELK 5/5 (J&RS) hung around until MAYCT (MB,ES;SN). The calico-plumaged Little Blue Heron at LKELK, also on MAYCT, was a one day wonder (MB,ES;SN). An adult Yellow-crowned Night-Heron at the same location 5/9 (BO,MJB,HZ) was not reported again until 5/21 (J&CW). Both times it was present on the south side of the lake in late afternoon. Adult & im. Black-crowned Night-Herons were noted at three locations between 5/8 LKELK (MB,ES) & 5/13 LKELK (DE).

All Snow Goose reports were between 3/3 MANHN (2-BO) & 3/17 Lime Kiln Pond (LIMKP) (2-MW). There was no question when the Canada Goose migration peaked. On 3/3, mostly between 6:45 & 7:30 a.m., BO had 12,300 Canadas, 2 Snows, & 93 Tundra Swans (MANHN). On that same date in e. Columbia, 10 minutes in the a.m. produced 595 Canadas in 8 flocks (LS). As large as those numbers appear, the flight by no means depleted the county's goose population. On 3/17, 1200 were counted at LIMKP & Fulton Pond (FULPD) combined (MW). Tundra Swans were spotted at county locations throughout the month with the last, an im., seen with Canadas

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 FULPD 3/28 (KS).

Migrating ducks largely bypassed HOWCO. A f. American Wigeon & a f. Gadwall hung around together in the shallow west end of CENPK from 3/1 (JC) to 4/2 (JC,KS). Wood Ducks with young are an annual occurrence for sharp-eyed local birders, though few have been lucky enough to see the young leave the nesting cavity. On 5/15 at DANPV, NM watched 6 ducklings, at their mother's urging, drop from a 40 ft. hole in a sycamore. Contrary to some wildlife television programs, the nestlings did not float like thistledown; instead, they banged off branches and bounced with a noticeable thud when they hit the ground. The high counts of American Black Ducks came in mid-March with 50 at CLARK's on Roxbury Rd. on 3/18 (MW) & 45 at UMDCF 3/20 (BO,JS,HZ). A flock of 9 Blue-winged Teal 4/17 at Belmont was one of the few reports (as well as the last) for that species (SP). On 3/3 HZ found 7 Green-winged Teal at CENPK. One on 4/3 at Vantage Point (VANPT) (HZ,JS) was the latest. Ring-necked Duck numbers peaked at a low 35 (5 f.) on 3/19 LKELK (JC). A pair lingered on Wilde Lake (WILLK) until 4/22 (BO). A m. Lesser Scaup, was the last seen on 3/28 at Big Branch (KS). The latest Buffleheads were 3 (2 f.) on the Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Lab (JHAPL) pond 4/22 (Web). The only Common Goldeneyes were the 5 (3 f.) on 3/25 at Brighton Dam (BRDAM) (HZ,MC). The handful of Hooded Merganser reports were mostly in March, with a low maximum of 6 (3 f.) on 3/10 LKELK (SN). The latest, a f., lingered until 4/8 at Cissel's (CISSL) on Jennings Chapel Rd. (MW). Common Mergansers were scarce. Red-breasted Mergansers were at CENPK periodically from 3/1 (1 m.-JC,HZ) to 4/22 (1 f.-BO). The latter date also marked Ruddy Duck departure CENPK (7-BO).

The first Osprey was noted 3/31 over the David Force Wildlife Mgmt. Area on a field trip. Interestingly, although 8 were seen in different parts of HOWCO on MAYCT, not one was reported after that date. It is pleasant to report that the county's resident Bald Eagle pair nested on Triadelphia Reservoir (TRIRS) again. They fledged one eaglet according to WSSC officers. Eagles were also reported from the eastern part of the county. The single immatures seen on 4/24 Rockburn Branch Park (RKBRP) (BO) & 5/8 Hammond Branch (JC,JS) were probable migrants/wanderers. At least 1 of the 2 seen over Johns Hopkins Rd. 5/11 was an adult (W&SE). Northern Harriers were spotted in

good numbers; in fact, BO had a spring total of 15! She also caught the best county spring raptor movement. On 4/16 for 3 hours in the mid to late afternoon, she counted 17 Ospreys, 3 No. Harriers, 4 Sharp-shinned Hawks, 220 Broad-winged Hawks, 1 Red-tailed Hawk, & 6 American Kestrels (MANHN). The following day at MDBRK observers noted 1 Osprey, 1 No. Harrier, 22 Sharp-shins, 1 Cooper's, & 29 Broad-winged (MJB,JC,DE,BO,JS). One Peregrine Falcon was seen on 4/10 CENPK (J&TDC).

Four Wild Turkeys were reported: 4/17 Henryton, Patapsco Valley St. Pk. (HENPV) (CS), 4/29 Mt. Pleasant (MTPLT) (1 f.-DL), 5/6 a f. along I-70 west of Md 94 (K&RT), & 5/8 Patuxent River St. Pk. (LL). Two Northern Bobwhites on MAYCT were a bonus: Schooley Mill Park (SLMLP) (NM) & TRIRS (P&SZ,Web,SPo).

The wetlands at MDBRK produced a Sora on 4/26 (BO,JS) which stayed until at least 5/1. A lone Virginia Rail called from cattails the morning of 5/12 at Font Hill Wetland Park (FHWLP) (BO). American Coots wintered with the last one noted at CENPK 5/13 (JC).

Shorebird numbers were aided by the wetland project at UMDCF. Until the shallow ponds dried in mid-May, an assortment of species was often present, sometimes in unusually high numbers: 5/8 Semipalmated Plover (7-M&GM,RSm,JT); 4/7 Greater Yellowlegs (11-M&GM); 5/1 Lesser Yellowlegs (9-m.obs.); 4/25 Solitary Sandpiper (42-NM,BO,MJB), a county record for a single party; 5/8 Least Sandpiper (30-M&GM,RSm,JT); 3/30 Pectoral Sandpiper (6-BO,JS). An Upland Sandpiper was seen by the many birders on a field trip 4/10 (BO+). Extensive areas of foot-high grass temporarily flooded with several inches of water created attractive habitat for Common Snipe. The numbers present ranged from 52 on 3/13 (BO) to a HOWCO record 142 on 3/27 (BO,MJB).

Reservoirs did not produce good shorebirds until the flats at Brown's Bridge (BRNBR) were flooded in late May. On 5/20 there were 6 Semipalmated Plovers, 4 Killdeer, 3 Lesser Yellowlegs, 1 Solitary, 3 Spotted & 6 Least Sandpipers (DOI). The following day the Semipalmated Plover count had risen to 13 & 3 Greater Yellowlegs put in an appearance (DOI). Single Semipalmated Sandpipers were reported on 5/8 Gorman Rd. at Rt. 1 (POs) & 5/23 BRNBR (J&TDC). As development of

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

Gateway Business Park proceeds, the American Woodcock courtship sites are shrinking. The species could still be found at dawn & dusk in the field at the corner of Columbia Gateway Dr. & Samuel Morse Dr. 3/31 (3-JS) until at least 5/8 (2-MB,ES). Two woodcock performed flights in a brushy field behind LC's West Friendship home 3/18-3/21.

Bonaparte's Gulls were widely noted during 10 days in April: 4/5 WILLK 140 (HZ) & TRIRS 3 (J&RS) to 4/15 LKELK 1 (DE). The lone Black Tern sighted was 5/18 CENPK (JMS). One Great Black-backed Gull was spotted on WILLK 3/6 (HZ). Caspian Terns showed up on 4/7 WILLK (2-JS;HZ); the last one was over LKELK on 5/11 (KS). The high count was a modest 13 on 4/12 TRIRS (JC,JS). Four Forster's Terns on 4/18 CENPK (JC) were the only ones reported.

Again cuckoo numbers were low with Black-billed Cuckoos appearing on 5/7 Timberleigh (TIMBR) (1-DN) & 7 on MAYCT. The first Yellow-billed Cuckoo was noted at CENPK 5/5 (BO). One Eastern Screech-Owl was seen in a nest box on Hummeister Ct. for several days around 3/21; unfortunately, it did not stay (DN). Whip-poor-wills are now so rarely seen or heard in HOWCO that the two on 4/22 are noteworthy: 1 on Guilford Rd. (KB) & 1 in Beaverbrook (RO). Both were calling at dusk. The first Ruby-throated Hummingbird was seen 4/22 in Hallmark (HALMK) (Web). Three Red-headed Woodpeckers were tallied: 5/16 WILLK (KP), 5/16 TIMBR (DN), & 5/19 Worthington (EM). The last 2 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers appeared at Hugg-Thomas Wildlife Mgmt. Area on a field trip on 4/18. A flight of Northern Flickers was observed 4/4 at MTPLT (30+-BO+).

Eastern Wood-Pewees waited until MAYCT to make an appearance when 18 were found, while 3 Acadian Flycatchers arrived 5/7 at Kinder, Middle Patuxent (KINMP) (JS). Willow Flycatchers were not detected until a late 5/16 when 3 were at MD-BRK (NM). A peak migration day for Willows was 5/25 when 11 were present at MDBRK (BO). Two Least Flycatchers were noted: 1 on the unusually early date of 4/25 SLMLP (DOI) and the other on 5/16 LKELK (DE). One Alder Flycatcher was heard at BRNBR 5/21 (JS). An early Blue-headed Vireo appeared on Sand Chain 4/10 (J&TDC). Warbling Vireos arrived on 4/25 at both SLMLP (1-DOI) & UMDCF (2-NM,BO,MJB).

A pair of Horned Larks was present at the corner of a field adjacent to the wetlands at UMDCF from 3/1 to 5/1 (BO+). Eleven were seen on 3/15 on a farm on Md 99, west of Md 32 (WE). The first 2 Tree Swallows showed up 3/22 at CENPK (HZ); on 4/11 there were 105 at the same location (JC). Once again Bank Swallows were hard to find. An exceedingly early Bank showed up with other swallow species on 4/8 CISSL's (MW). All other reports were between 5/1 CENPK (1-JC) &

5/16 LKELK (2-DE). Despite the major repairs on BRDAM, Cliff Swallows nested there again (KS), while the colony under the Patapsco River bridge at Sykesville on Md 32 continued to thrive (DH).

A Brown Creeper on 4/30 at CENPK (JMS) was the last reported. The season's final Winter Wren was spotted 4/25 at SLMLP (DOI). Sedge Wrens are always noteworthy. One was seen 4/24 at RKBRP (BO+) on a field trip. It was not cooperative. After the leader's brief good look, most participants had to be content with glimpses as the bird buried itself in thick vegetation. The latest Golden-crowned Kinglet lingered until 5/8 at CISSL's (MW), while the last Ruby-crowned Kinglet was seen 5/15 along the Little Patuxent River, not far from Savage (PS).

A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher showed up at WILLK 4/4 (HZ). The first Veery was detected 5/5 KINMP (JS), while the 2 latest migrants were on a lawn on MANHN on 5/19 (BO). One MAYCT group had a Gray-checked Thrush near TRIRS (P&SZ,Web,TS,SPo). Swainson's Thrushes were well reported from 5/7 to 5/22 with a number of observers mentioning singing birds. A Hermit Thrush lingered until an unusually late 5/12 on Mt. Albert Dr. (M&GM). The first Wood Thrush arrived on 4/22 TIMBR (DN). Gray Catbirds were not detected until 4/17 when 2 appeared at SLMLP (NM). Two Brown Thrashers returned to UMDCF 3/30 (BO,JS). A few American Pipits were seen during the season at UMDCF and MTPLT; 10 were reported from Belmont 5/8 (DK,SP). Cedar Waxwings were present throughout the period in good numbers. LKELK was a reliable place to find them with a high of 70 on 4/28 (JC).

Two Golden-winged Warblers were reported: 5/1 HALMK (Web) & 5/8 TIMBR (DN). Tennessee Warblers are hard to find in the spring. The three reports were within a one week period: 5/9 RKBRP (2-DE) to 5/16 LKELK (1-DE). Nashville Warblers were spotted between 4/22 CENPK (BO) & 5/9 LKELK (JC). Following the pattern of recent years, Cape May Warbler sightings were few: 5/8 RKBRP (2-BO) & 5/16 LKELK (1-DE). Black-throated Blue Warblers are one of the most easily observed migrant warblers, for they tend to be present over a long period in good numbers in the understory. One arrived 4/27 WILLK (C&PN), & the last ones were detected 5/20 LKELK (5-DE;1-JC). A year ago Yellow-rumped Warbler totals were low with 30 the maximum number reported by a single observer. The spring of 1999 brought Yellow-rumpeds in profusion. From the middle of April until well into May, one could see dozens at some local lakes. The invasion began with 15 on 4/4 at WILLK (C&PN); the last was heard at Marriottsville, Patuxent Valley St. Pk. (MARPV) 5/22 (BO). Between those extreme dates the following numbers were recorded: 4/11 CENPK 105 (JC), 4/13

LKELK 150 (JC), 4/28 CENPK 175 (JS,JC), 5/8 DANPV 80 (CS) & 5/8 RKBRP 84 (BO). An early Black-throated Green Warbler showed up on 4/18 WILLK (CN). Although the species filtered through until 5/20 at SLMLP (JS), observers complained that they were hard to find. Blackburnian Warblers are a flashy treat. A few were spotted between 5/7 WILLK (HZ) & 5/22 DANPV (J&TDC); KINMP (JS). Yellow-throated Warblers are predictable along the Patapsco River. The first were seen there on 4/4: MARPV (RR), with another on the same date at MTPLT (BO+). The first Pine Warbler was seen 3/18 MANHN (BO). Six were tallied 4/4 at MTPLT where they are not known to nest (BO+). Sometimes Palm Warblers come through the county in extremely large numbers, but not in 1999. Arrival this spring was 4/1 MANHN (BO); high counts were a modest 20 on 4/13 LKELK (JC) & 20 on 4/25 SLMLP (DOI). "Western" Palm Warblers, an identifiable subspecies, lack the yellow eyeline & bright yellow underparts of the "yellow" Palms and normally are later migrants. All "westerns" reported were seen between 4/25 LKELK (JS) & 5/8 RKBRP (BO). Special thanks to the many observers who looked carefully at each Palm Warbler.

The few Bay-breasted Warbler sightings were between 5/9 RKBRP (BO+) & 5/18 DANPV (J&RS). Blackpoll Warblers could be heard nattering in the treetops from 5/4 LKELK (JC) until 5/29 JHAPL (Web). Cerulean Warblers were scarce, detected only in a few favored places along the Patapsco. Prothonotary Warblers are among the most sought-after warblers in HOWCO. This spring they were seen at four locations beginning 4/20 LKELK (DR,SN), 4/23 CENPK (WD), 4/24 RKBRP (BO+) & 5/8 Old Frederick Rd., Patapsco River (CS). Northern Waterthrushes were observed from 4/24 RKBRP (BO+) to 5/22 MARPV (J&TDC) & MTPLT (2-BO+). Louisiana Waterthrushes were detected first along the Patapsco: 4/3 HENPV (J&EM) & DANPV (BO). Wilson's Warblers tend to be elusive. This year there were 3 reports on MAYCT (CB; BO; JC,JS), with the last seen on 5/21 KINMP (JS).

The two most notable warbler species reported were an accommodating Orange-crowned Warbler 4/17 WILLK (HZ) & 2 Mourning Warblers: 5/19 WILLK (1-HZ), 5/23 BRNBR (1-J&TDC).

The best single warbler day in many years was reported by BO on MAYCT at RKBRP. Early morning fog reduced visibility, but the cool, cloudy weather kept the birds active longer than usual. From 7:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. there was little letup as she tabulated 26 species: 6 Blue-winged, 1 Nashville, 27 No. Parulas, 3 Yellows, 2 Chestnut-sideds, 2 Magnolias, 2 Cape Mays, 51 Black-throated Blues, 84 Yellow-rumpeds, 3 Black-throated Greens, 1 Blackburnian, 1 Prairie, 1 "western" Palm, 28

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

Blackpolls, 24 Black-and-whites, 34 American Redstarts, 3 Worm-eating, 12 Ovenbirds, 1 No. Waterthrush, 4 La. Waterthrushes, 15 Kentuckys, 34 C. Yellowthroats, 16 Hoodeds, 1 Wilsons, 2 Canadas, & 1 Yellow-breasted Chat. Truly, a day she will long remember!

Although sparrow migration makes much less of an impact in the spring than in the fall, a search for special species was made. The last 6 American Tree Sparrows were spotted 3/25 at Highland Lakes (MC,HZ). Vesper Sparrows were located at UMDCF 4/8 (3) & 4/10 (2) (BO+). Also at the farm, 100 Savannah Sparrows were a seasonal high on 4/6 (BO), & 2 Grasshopper Sparrows arrived 4/25 (BO,NM). Fox Sparrows were seen from 3/1 Talbot's Landing (RG) & Hammond Village (JS), to 4/12 Cattail Creek C.C. (MW). The high seen by a single observer was 3 on 3/27 SLMLP (DOI). The lone Lincoln's Sparrow reported was 4/24 RKBPR (BO). The latest White-crowned Sparrows were under a feeder in WILLK 5/11 (2-HZ). Dark-eyed Juncos normally leave by early May, most earlier. This spring a lingering junco was spotted on 5/23 near Howard Rd. & Linticum Rd. (MW).

A m. Rose-breasted Grosbeak arrived on the early date of 4/16 on Roxbury Rd. (K&BB); a second put in an appearance at West Friendship just a few days later on 4/20 (RC). Between 5/5 & 5/12 there were numerous reports of this species at feeders. The latest bird was present at a feeder 5/19 WILLK (HZ). Many birders checked off Blue Grosbeak on field trips at either MDBRK on 5/1 or at MTPLT on 5/22 (BO+). The Indigo Bunting was another species that took advantage of feeder offerings. The earliest reported was on 4/25 at a Marriottsville feeder (CF). Two Dickcissels at CISSL's on MAYCT were one of the season's choicest sightings (MW). The first Bobolink was present 4/30 at CLARK's (MW). The total number of Bobolinks countywide on MAYCT was 466. The last one, a f., was sighted at MDBRK 5/25 (BO).

Eastern Meadowlarks were reported from seven locations, most of which were potential nesting sites. Rusty Blackbirds were found at MDBRK, VANPT, Gwynn Acres Path, & SLMLP, with the last 10 sighted on 5/5 VANPT (JS).

Observers: GA-Glenn Austin, MB-Maud Banks, MJB-Mary-Jo Betts, K&BB-Karan & Bill Blum, CB-Carl Brudin, III, MC-Martha Chestern, JC-Jane Coskren, TDC-T.Dennis Coskren, LC-Lisa Colangelo, RC-Ralph Cullison, WD-William Dutch, W&SE-Wes & Sue Earp, WEb-Ward Ebert, DE-Darius Ecker, CF-Cathy Franklin, RG-Ralph Geuder, DH-Dave Harvey, DK-Dave Kubitsky, LL-Larry Line, DL-Dennis Luck, NM-Nancy Magnusson, M&GM-Mike & Grazina McClure, J&EM-Jeff & Elayne Metter, DN-Diane Nagengast, SN-Sue Neri, C&PN-Carol & Paul Newman, DO-Daryl Olson, RO-Richard Orr, POS-Peter Osenton, BO-Bonnie Ott, KP-Karla Pierce, SPO-Susan Polniaszek, SP-Suzanne Probst, RR-Robert Ringler, DR-Danielle Ringer, KS-Kurt Schwarz, LS-Lou Shomette, PS-Phil Smith, RSM-Romayne Smith, JMS-J.M.Snyder, JS-Jo Solem, RS-Robert Solem, CS-Chuck Stirrat, TS-Tom Strikwerda, ES-Eva Sunell, JT-Jackie Telford, K&RT-Kate &

Richard Tufts, MW-Mark Wallace, J&CW-Jim & Carol Wilkinson, HZ-Helen Zeichner, P&SZ-Paul & Sherry Zucker. MAYCT-May Court; HOWCO-Howard County; m.obs-many observers; im-immature; m.-male; f.-female.

SPRING 1999 FIELD TRIP REPORTS BY BONNIE OTT

Last season was filled with many local field trips. They were all well attended and yielded a wide variety of species.



Meadowbrook Park hosted an American Bittern seen by the entire group. Also seen were Savannah, White-crowned and Swamp Sparrows, as well as singing Rusty Blackbirds and nesting Eastern Bluebirds and Tree Swallows.

The University of Maryland Central Farm attracted the largest crowd of birders but that didn't hinder the sightings. An Upland Sandpiper was seen by all. Northern Harriers, American Kestrels, Red-tailed and Red-Shouldered Hawks kept the skies busy. The newly-created wetlands hosted a variety of shorebirds with 40 Common Snipe affording everyone great looks. Horned Larks and American Pipits were easily seen walking through the short grass and on the mudflats. Savannah Sparrows were in good numbers and a couple of highly sought-after Vesper Sparrows turned up.

The four Centennial Park walks yielded such goodies as Tundra Swan, Gadwall, Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Greater Yellowlegs and Pine Warbler.

For those that could make it out on a weekday, David Force Park was alive with flyover hawks: 3 Northern Harriers, Osprey, Sharp-Shinned, Coopers, Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks were seen.

As migration started Rockburn

Branch Park came through with flyover Common Loons and a Barred Owl called and showed himself. A very rare sighting of Sedge Wren and Lincoln's Sparrow occurred. Five Solitary Vireos, Prothonotary Warbler and both Waterthrushes confirmed migration had begun in earnest.

Our first annual Big Day had us scouring the county for every species we could tally. A Sora, Least and Pectoral Sandpipers, Bobolink, both Oriole species, Scarlet Tanager and Yellow-throated Warbler helped push our total near 100 species. American Woodcock finished our day.

Wilde Lake ended migration with a bang on May 19th. Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Great-crested Flycatcher, and large numbers of Black-throated Blue Warblers were present. Blackburnian, Wilson's, and Canada Warblers, Northern Waterthrush and Scarlet Tanager graced us with wonderful views.

1999-2000 CLUB BOARD MEMBERS

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Mike Kerwin

Vice President:
Don Waugh

Secretary:
Chuck Stirrat

Treasurer:
Shiras Guion

Chapter Directors (two year term):
Dave Holyoke (first year)
Kurt Schwarz (second year)

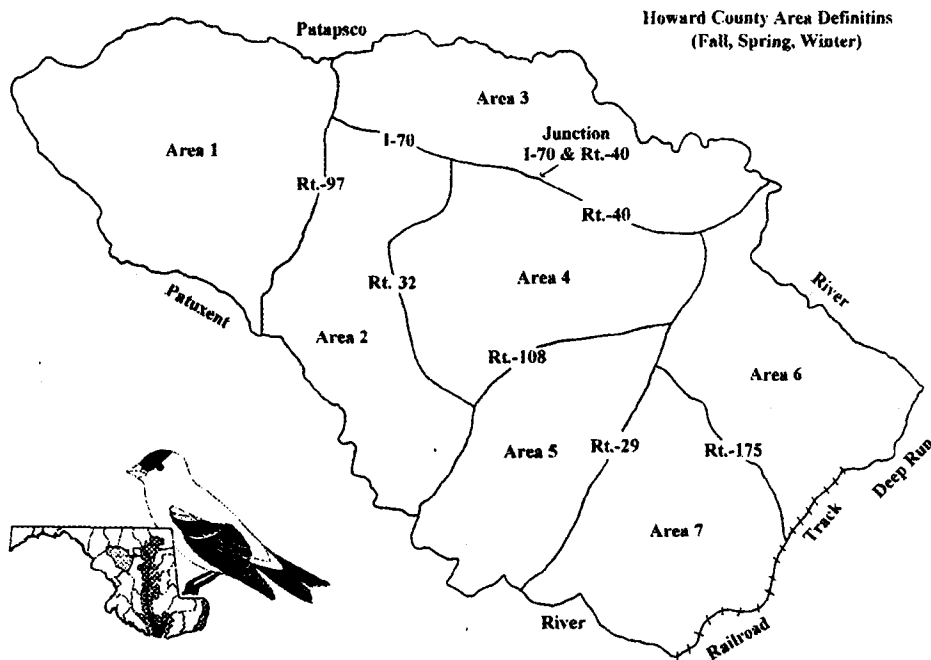
State Directors:
Mary-Jo Betts
Elayne Metter
Darius Ecker

SIXTH ANNUAL FALL COUNT

BY MIKE McCLURE AND CHUCK STIRRAT

The Howard County Bird Club's annual Fall Count, scheduled to be held each year on the third Saturday of September, will be held on September 18. Mike McClure 410-531-2780 and Chuck Stirrat 410-531-2417 are the county co-coordinators. Prior years have set a range of 130-135 species of birds identified on the count. Will this fall count be as good? Spend the day with us and be the first to know! Birders of all skill levels are encouraged to participate. Ask to be put with an experienced individual if you do not wish to have your own territory. Counts are a good way to learn and are great fun. The county is divided into seven areas (shown below) which are used for all annual counts. A fall season tally sheet for Howard County is included in this newsletter. Species that require a write-up include those identified with a double asterisk (**), as well as any write-ins. Others that may require a write-up or oral amplification (*), as well as those that are early or late dates (@), are indicated. Please note that as for the Spring count, a separate sheet is to be used for each type of count, i.e. regular, "owling", feeder, or stationary (e.g. hawk watches).

The following area coordinators have been named: Area 1. Mark Wallace 301-725-6370; Area 2. Paul Zucker (H):301-279-7896, or (W):443-778-4971; Area 3. Darius & Paula Ecker 410-312-9165; Area 4. Bill & Karan



Blum 301-776-8311; Area 5. Doug Odermatt 410-992-1812; Area 6. Mary-Jo Betts 301-596-5859; and Area 7. Eva Sunell 410-995-0029.

You may call an area or county coordinator to volunteer, or check at the September meeting.

Martha and Don Waugh will host the tally rally at 9522 Angelina Circle, Columbia, MD, 410-381-8841. The pot luck dinner will be served at approximately 7:00 pm, call them by Sept. 15, to reserve space, choose a food to bring, and if necessary obtain directions.

(Continued from page 9)

October 10, Sunday. Meadowbrook. Leader: Kurt Schwarz. Meet at 8:00 am (3 hrs) at the park and ride. Boots essential to walk this hilly field and wetland area in search of sparrows and marsh birds. Open view of sky should provide good hawk watching. No facilities. Call 410-461-3361.

➤ **October 16, Saturday. University of Maryland Central Farm. Leader: Bonnie Ott.** Meet at 8:00 am (3 hrs+) at the farm office. Sparrows will be the focus as we walk the fields of this private farm. Many flyovers possible. Bring boots as newly created wetlands may be soggy. No facilities. Call 410-461-3361.

➤ **October 17, Sunday. THE BIG SIT! at Centennial Park.** Meet at 8:00 am (all day) at the wildlife end on the west side where we will draw out our circle. We will join in for the 7th annual Big Sit. This event is sponsored by the New Haven bird club in Connecticut. Last year 17 states and 2 counties in England participated for a total of 336 species. The rules are to count all the birds seen or heard from a 17 foot circle in a single day. Stay for a little while or all day. Bring a chair and sustenance. Call 410-461-3361. Facilities available. Pg. 5.

➤ **October 23, Saturday. Hawk Watch at Rockburn Park. Leader: Ralph Geuder.** Meet at 9:30 am (all day) at the tot lot. Bring a chair and sustenance to sit and watch the hawks fly over. Brief forays into surrounding fields and woods a possibility. Call 410-461-3361. Facilities available. Pg. 9.

➤ **October 24, ~~Saturday~~ ^{Sunday}. Hugg-Thomas WMA. Leader: Chuck Stirrat/Bonnie Ott.** Meet at 8:00 am (3 hrs) at the parking lot. Walk this wildlife management area of woodlands and fields for a variety of late migrants. Moderate walking, no facilities. Call 410-461-3361. Pg. 41.

➤ **October 26, Tuesday. Alpha Ridge Park/Henryton.** Meet at 8:30 am (2 hrs) at the parking lot of Alpha Ridge Park. Walk this field area with option of wooded trail through woods at Henryton. Moderate walking. Facilities available at the park. Call 410-461-3361. Pg. 23.

November 7, - Ralph Cullison; 14 - Maud Banks; 21 - Mike Kerwin; 28 - TBA. Sunday's Centennial Park Walks. Meet at 8:00 am (3 hrs) at the west end lot. Walk the paved path around Centennial Park for migrating waterfowl and other species. Facilities available. Call 410-461-3361. Pg. 5.

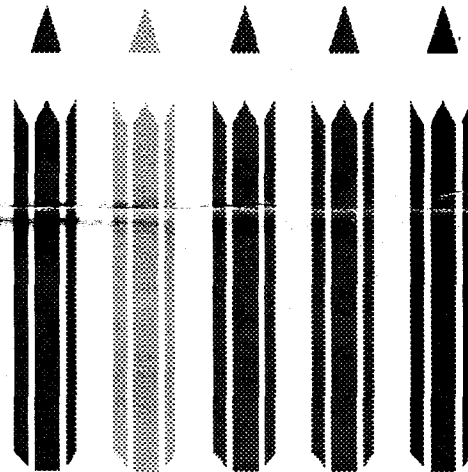
SUMMARY OF 1999 HOWARD COUNTY MAY COUNT BY PAUL A. ZUCKER

The 1999 Howard County May Count was held on May 8, 1999 from 5:30 AM to 8:30 PM. There was a great turnout with 68 observers (just below last year's high number of 69). They split into 37 parties and tallied over 17000 individual birds. The total species count was relatively high at 147, which is the fourth highest total in the last 15 counts and the sixth highest since my records start in 1974. The total party hours (187 by foot and 21 by car) were typical of the last several counts. Notable for this count was the cool weather: fog early followed by clouds, sun only in the afternoon, a few brief showers, and a high temperature barely reaching 80 degrees. The birds remained active all day, and warblers were quite plentiful. During the previous weekend warblers were quite scarce, but a large flight arrived during the preceding couple of days.

The most notable sightings are listed along with number of times seen in the last fifteen counts (including this year): Horned Grebe (1), Snowy Egret (2), Little Blue Heron (1), Wild Turkey (4), Semipalmated Plover (2), Pectoral Sandpiper (1), and Horned Lark (2). Twelve species had high counts compared to the last 15 years: Northern Harrier, Greater Yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Northern Parula, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Black and White Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, and Swamp Sparrow. Thus it was a very good day for shore birds as well as for warblers.

There were also some notable misses and low counts. This was the second year in a row that the Ring-necked Pheasant was not found, but the Northern Bobwhite was seen after a two-year absence. Both species were found regularly before the last few years. The Eastern Meadowlark was tied with last year for a low count, and the Horned Lark was seen for the second time in 15 years but had been seen frequently before that. The Whip-poor-will is another species which is seen rarely now but used to be seen on most counts. These trends are likely due to

decreasing open-country habitat as the county grows in population. The Bay-breasted Warbler was missed for the first time since the May count was shifted to the second Saturday in May. Similarly the Canada Warbler had a low count since the date shift, except that it was missed last year. Since May 8 is the earliest the second Saturday can occur, these counts are consistent with the relatively late arrival of these species. Conversely, the Purple Finch, which was missed this year, has been seen on only one May count since the date was shifted. Another trend, which



is baffling, is that the Gray-checked Thrush has now been seen on four out of the last five May counts, but only on three out of the preceding twenty-one counts.

Special thanks go to the Randles for hosting yet another great tally rally and to Chuck Stirrat for helping with the numerical tabulations and for producing special checklists for use in the field and for the tallies. The efforts of the participants and area coordinators are also appreciated: *Glenn Austin, Maud Banks, Mary Jo Betts, Karan and Bill Blum, Carl Brudin III, Joe Byrnes, Marty Chestem, Jane and Dennis Coskren, Jeff Duguay, Ward Ebert, Paula and*

Darius Ecker, Jeffrey Friedhofer, Carol Garza, Edwin Gould, Shiras Guion, Maureen and Dave Harvey, Kevin Heffernan, Jane Heim, Emmalyn Holdridge, David Holyoke, Diane John, Mike Kerwin (area 1), Dave Kubitisky, Mike Leumas, Nate Levy, Nathaniel Levy, Larry Line, Brigitte Lund, Nancy Magnusson, Grazina and Mike McClure (area 4), Elayne and Jeff Metter, Barry Miller, Sue Neri, Doug Odermatt (area 5), Peter Osenton, Bonnie Ott (area 6), Anita Picco, Susan Polniaszek, Suzanne Probst, Ann Marie Raterman, Nanine Rhineland, Chan Robbins, Stuart Robbins, Carol and Gary Roberts, Susan Setterberg, Philip Smith, Romaine Smith, Jo and Bob Solem (area 7), Pat Stewart, Chuck Stirrat (area 3), Tom Strikwerda, Eva Sunnell, Marilyn Taylor, Jackie Telford, Marilyn Veek, Mark Wallace, Michelle Wright, Helen Zeichner, and Sherry and Paul Zucker (area 2 and county compiler).

HOWARD COUNTY MAY COUNT RESULTS - MAY 8, 1999

SPECIES	TOTAL	SPECIES	TOTAL	SPECIES	TOTAL	SPECIES	TOTAL
COMMON LOON	1	BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO	7	EASTERN BLUEBIRD	145	HOODED WARBLER	34
HORNED GREBE	1	YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO	19	VEERY	65	WILSON'S WARBLER	3
DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT	17	GREAT HORNED OWL	4	GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH	2	CANADA WARBLER	3
GREAT BLUE HERON	56	BARRED OWL	9	SWAINSON'S THRUSH	46	YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT	26
SNOWY EGRET	1	COMMON NIGHTHAWK	2	HERMIT THRUSH	3	SCARLET Tanager	160
LITTLE BLUE HERON	1	CHIMNEY SWIFT	181	WOOD THRUSH	354	EASTERN TOWHEE	197
GREEN HERON	28	RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD	16	AMERICAN ROBIN	426	CHIPPING SPARROW	165
BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON	1	BELTED KINGFISHER	23	GRAY CATBIRD	706	FIELD SPARROW	78
BLACK VULTURE	44	RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER	220	NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD	199	SAVANNAH SPARROW	74
TURKEY VULTURE	145	DOWNY WOODPECKER	84	BROWN THRASHER	23	GRASSHOPPER SPARROW	15
CANADA GOOSE	531	HAIRY WOODPECKER	26	EUROPEAN STARLING	696	SONG SPARROW	202
MUTE SWAN	8	NORTHERN FLICKER	65	AMERICAN PIPIT	10	SWAMP SPARROW	60
WOOD DUCK	28	PILEATED WOODPECKER	30	CEDAR WAXWING	286	WHITE-THROATED SPARROW	340
MALLARD	138	EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE	21	BLUE-WINGED WARBLER	27	WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW	12
OSPREY	10	ACADIAN FLYCATCHER	45	TENNESSEE WARBLER	2	NORTHERN CARDINAL	755
BALD EAGLE	2	EASTERN PHOEBE	70	NASHVILLE WARBLER	1	ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK	38
NORTHERN HARRIER	4	GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER	44	NORTHERN PARULA	231	BLUE GROSBEAK	1
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK	6	EASTERN KINGBIRD	120	YELLOW WARBLER	145	INDIGO BUNTING	147
COOPER'S HAWK	5	WHITE-EYED VIREO	114	CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER	36	BOBOLINK	466
RED-SHOULDERED HAWK	33	BLUE-HEADED VIREO	4	MAGNOLIA WARBLER	41	RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD	696
BROAD-WINGED HAWK	7	YELLOW-THROATED VIREO	36	CAPE MAY WARBLER	3	EASTERN MEADOWLARK	9
RED-TAILED HAWK	15	WARBLING VIREO	4	BLK.-THRTD. BLUE WARBLER	294	COMMON GRACKLE	476
AMERICAN KESTREL	4	RED-EYED VIREO	401	YEL.-RUMPED (MYRTLE) WARBLER	705	BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD	162
WILD TURKEY	1	BLUE JAY	409	BLK.-THRTD. GREEN WARBLER	54	ORCHARD ORIOLE	34
NORTHERN BOBWHITE	2	AMERICAN CROW	478	BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER	3	BALTIMORE ORIOLE	92
AMERICAN COOT	3	FISH CROW	41	YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER	5	HOUSE FINCH	145
SEMPALMATED PLOVER	7	CROW SPECIES	284	PINE WARBLER	5	AMERICAN GOLDFINCH	456
KILLDEER	47	HORNED LARK	2	PRAIRIE WARBLER	65	HOUSE SPARROW	168
GREATER YELLOWLEGS	15	PURPLE MARTIN	60	PALM WARBLER	3		
LESSER YELLOWLEGS	2	TREE SWALLOW	63	BLACKPOLL WARBLER	106	TOTAL	17554
SOLITARY SANDPIPER	97	N. ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW	64	CERULEAN WARBLER	3		
SPOTTED SANDPIPER	49	BARN SWALLOW	305	BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER	182	START	5:30 AM
SEMPALMATED SANDPIPER	1	CLIFF SWALLOW	53	AMERICAN REDSTART	224	STOP	8:30 PM
LEAST SANDPIPER	88	CAROLINA CHICKADEE	245	PROTHONOTARY WARBLER	1	FOOT HOURS	186.9
PECTORAL SANDPIPER	2	TUFTED TITMOUSE	349	WORM-EATING WARBLER	35	CAR HOURS	21.2
COMMON SNIFE	3	WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH	39	OVENBIRD	227	FOOT MILES	141.9
AMERICAN WOODCOCK	2	CAROLINA WREN	206	NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH	19	CAR MILES	238.4
RING-BILLED GULL	21	HOUSE WREN	125	LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH	31	FEEDER HOURS	5
ROCK DOVE	160	RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET	24	KENTUCKY WARBLER	50	PARTICIPANTS	69
MOURNING DOVE	344	BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER	309	COMMON YELLOWTHROAT	553	PARTIES (REG, OWL, FEED)	37

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.

September 9, Thursday "Conserving Birds Using Satellites," by **Blake Henke**, Center for Research Technology, UMBC. A discussion of current and future technologies used to track the migration of raptors and water birds to learn their natural history.

- ✓ **October 14, Thursday "Maryland's Himalayas,"** by **Dennis Coskren**. Habitats are influenced by the geology of an area. This program will also provide background for a club field trip in November to local geological sites.

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. The page numbers refer to the book "Birding Howard County" which gives maps and directions. All trip lengths are approximate. FOR INFORMATION, CALL **BONNIE OTT**, at 410-461-3361.

September 5, Sunday. Butterfly Walk at Centennial Park. Leader: **Richard Smith** Meet at 9:30 am (1.5 hrs) at the west end of Centennial Park. Walk the wildlife area with local expert to learn basics of butterfly identification. Bring binoculars, if possible. Cancelled if raining or overcast. Facilities available. Call 410-997-7439 for info. Pg. 5.

- ✓ **September 11, Saturday. Middle Patuxent Environmental area.** Leader: ^{B. Ott} **Jeff Duguay**. Meet at 8:00 am (3 hrs) at the Board of Education building on Rt. 108 for carpooling to the small parking lot. Walk through a variety of habitats including field, second growth and woodlands bordering the river. Early fall migrants will be moving. Paths may be muddy. No facilities. Call 410-461-3361 for info.

- ✓ **September 14, ^{Tuesday} ~~Wednesday~~.** Habitat Walk at Savage Mill Trail. Leaders: **Bob and Jo Solem**. Meet at 9:00 am (2 hrs) at the entrance to trail. Easy walking on level one mile trail with option of short uphill extension. Walk will encompass all aspects of the natural world. No facilities. Call 301-725-5037 for info. Pg 15.

- ✓ **September 18, Saturday. Fall Count.** See article on Page 6 of this newsletter.

September 19, Sunday. Beginner's Bird Walk at Font Hill. Leader: **Mike Kerwin**. Meet at 9:00 am (1.5 hrs.) on Font Hill Drive at sign. Easy walking on paved paths and boardwalks through this mixed habitat area of wetlands and woods. Learn how to start to observe birds and use binoculars and field guides. No facilities. Call 410-461-3361.

- ✓ **September 25, Saturday. Schooley Mill Park.** Leader: **Daryl Olson**. Meet at 8:00 am (3 hrs) at the upper lot. Moderate walking through mixed woodlands and fields looking for fall migrants. Excellent sparrow area. The possibility of flyover hawks and other migrating species is very promising. Paths may be muddy. Facilities available. Call 410-461-3361 for info. Pg 19.

September 26, Sunday. Confusing Fall Warblers at Rockburn Park. Leader: **David Holmes** Meet at 8:00 am (3 hrs) at the park office. Learn skills on sorting out the wave of migrant warblers. Focus will also include bird sounds. Also expect migrant species of all kinds including thrushes, flycatchers and sparrows. Moderate walking through woods and fields. Paths may be muddy. Facilities available. Call 410-461-4461 for info. Pg 9.

September 29, Wednesday. Weekday Walk at Gwynn Acres. Meet at 9:00 am (1.5 hrs) at Ram's Horn Row and Old Columbia Rd. Walk through the woodlands on paved paths for a variety of woodland birds. Woodpeckers plentiful and barred owls possible. No facilities. Call 410-461-3361 for info. Pg 24.

- ✓ **October 3, Sunday. Sparrow Search at Mount Pleasant.** Leader: **Bonnie Ott**. Meet at 8:00 a.m. (3 hrs) at the shed. Walk this Howard Conservancy property to search for 9+ species of sparrows. Great flyovers possible. Moderate walking through fields. Facilities available. Call 410-461-3361 for info.

- ✓ **October 7, Thursday. Weekday Walk at David Force** Meet at 9:00 am (1.5 hrs) at the sign on Pebble Beach drive. Moderate walking through this county open space that includes fields and woodlands. Great hawk watching views. Paths may be muddy. No facilities. Call 410-461-3361.

October 9, Saturday. Beginner's Walk at Lake Elkhorn. Leader: **TBA** Meet at 9:00 am (2 hrs) at Brokenland Parkway Lot. Walk the paved path around the lake to learn the basics of birding. No facilities. Call 410-461-3361 for info. Pg. 43.

(Continued on page 6)

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.

September 23, Thursday, To be announced. B. Ott

October 28, Thursday. To be announced. M.J. BETHS

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1999 NEWSLETTER MATERIAL IS DUE SEPTEMBER 24, 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**. Also, please visit the club's site on the World Wide Web at <http://www.abs.net/~dariuse/birding.html>.

HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB

Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society

6007 FLYWHEEL COURT
COLUMBIA, MD 21044

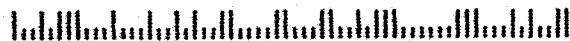
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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

WEST TEXAS REFLECTIONS
SPRING BIRD RECORDS
FALL COUNT ANNOUNCEMENT AND CHECKLIST
Y2K MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION
SPRING 1999 TRIP REPORTS
MAY COUNT RESULTS
PROGRAMS AND FIELD TRIPS

20723-1120 03



CONSERVATION COLUMN

BY BOB SOLEM

For ninety frantic days, the Maryland legislature annually meets to consider the state's laws and budget. For ninety days, people like you and me are wondering how we can find out what the legislature is doing and how we can influence our representatives so that what they support or oppose reflects what we want.

During the Maryland legislative session, volunteers of the Maryland Conservation Council produce a weekly newsletter, called *Conservation Report*, that has several in-depth feature articles on important conservation issues in the state, a listing of committee hearings on legislation involving conservation issues, and a listing of the titles of bills introduced in either the House of Delegates or Senate, which concern the environment. How can you find out more? For now, visit the Maryland Conservation Council Web site at <http://www.jhu.edu/~mcc/mcc.html>. There you can call up the reports produced during the 1998 legislative session and find out how to subscribe.

The Law of Unintended Consequences: Do you like monarch butterflies? Do you like corn? Food crops are susceptible to insect damage while they are growing. In most cases farmers resort to applying chemical insecticides for control. As you know, these chemical insecticides destroy many other insect species

besides the ones which damage the crops. One of the organic controls is *Bacillus thuringiensis* (*B.t.*), a bacteria which produces a toxin fatal to caterpillars (including the corn borer). Seed companies have been able to isolate the gene in the *B.t.* bacteria that produces the protein toxin and have incorporated the gene into the corn plant—so the corn itself is toxic to the corn borer. The *Rachel Carson Council News* (No. 91, spring 1999) has some bad news: The monarch butterflies "have sent a warning of a lethal threat to caterpillars posed by genetically engineered corn containing the *B.t.* toxin. Transgenic *B.t.* corn makes the toxic protein from the *B.t.* bacteria in each plant cell including pollen. Being a grass, corn is pollinated by the wind, which can blow the pollen more than 60 yards from the field. Milkweed [the food of the monarch butterfly caterpillar] grows on the periphery of fields. In a laboratory study at Cornell University, nearly half of the monarch caterpillars died after feeding on milkweed leaves dusted with pollen from the *B.t.* corn, while all the caterpillars fed normal corn pollen survived." There probably are many other butterfly caterpillars that are susceptible to a fatal dose of the *B.t.* toxin that could be ingested from the pollen even if the caterpillars do not directly feed on the transgenic plants.

BANDED BIRDS

BY MONIKA BOTSAL

A colleague at my school recently brought in a dead female cardinal with a band. I removed the band and mailed it to the Banding Laboratory. The bird hatched in 1991 and was banded in October of that year near Darnestown, MD. It was recoved March 1999 in Potomac, MD. If you find a banded bird send the band (please have the letter hand stamped) to : United States Department of the Interior, USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, 12100 Beech Forest Rd. STE 4037, Laurel, MD 20780-4037. You will receive a certificate of appreciation.

HELP WANTED, PART-TIME, VERY FLEXIBLE SCHEDULE

The Wildlife Authority in Ellicott City is looking for one or two people that are interested in working on a part-time basis. For additional information, please call 410-465-5007 or talk to Bonnie Ott.

