



THE GOLDFINCH



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AUTUMN BIRD RECORDS: AUGUST 1 TO NOVEMBER 30, 1999 BY JOANNE SOLEM

The four month autumn season always holds the potential for rarities and irruptives. This year was no exception. Although the drought was finally broken in September, work on Brighton Dam kept Triadelphia Reservoir levels down. Shorebirds, with a few exceptions, found little attractive habitat so numbers and variety were low. A possible new county record was reported as was an unusual sparrow species. Thanks to all observers who submitted sightings—all records are appreciated.

No Common Loon movements were detected. There were just 2 Horned Grebes reported, one, an early sighting on 9/17 at Waterford (WATFD) on Jennings Chapel Rd (MW), and one on 11/28 at Wilde Lake (WILLK) (HZ). The latest Double-crested Cormorant was spotted on 11/19 at Lake Elkhorn (LKELK) (SN). An American Bittern stayed at the University of Maryland Central Farm (UMDCF) from 10/9 (NM,JS) through 11/3 (JS). The last Great Egret was noted at WATFD 11/3 (WE) with a high of 5 on 8/21 at Centennial Park (CENPK) (JC). As detailed in previous summaries, the Vantage Point (VANPT) heronry successfully produced young again. The last date that young Great Blue Herons were seen was 8/3 when three were still in the vicinity of a nest (MC). An immature Little Blue Heron was at CENPK on 8/1 (KS,JS). Black-crowned Night-Herons continued to be reported from WILLK, with the last sighting of the year on 10/11 at LKELK (SN).

There were three Snow Goose reports: 10/24 one blue phase at the Elliott Rd Pond (EH); 10/30 one white at UMDCF (M&GM); and 11/29 one white flying over Meadowbrook (MDBRK) (BO). No single day of major Canada Goose movement was detected. The Fall Count (FALLC) total on 9/18 was 925. A Richardson's Goose was described after being seen at Daniels (DANPV) on 11/1 (J&RS). The earliest flock of Tundra Swans was heard 10/26 flying over Hammond Village (HAMVL) at night (MW). The last were 4 on 11/28 at CENPK (HZ). The flock of 35 American Black Ducks on 11/24 at Clark's on Roxbury Rd was the seasonal high (MW). Two

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.

Blue-winged Teal on 10/6 at Pigtail (PIGTL) were the only ones this season (JS). Three Northern Shovelers were present at CENPK 9/23 to 9/25 (J&TDC); the latest was a female on 11/23 at Clark's (MW). A female Northern Pintail was spotted on 9/22 at CENPK (KS,JC). Four female Green-winged Teal were present at CENPK from 9/22 (BO,MJB) to 10/2 (5) (J&TDC,JS). Canvasbacks made a late appearance this season with 4 arriving 11/28 at WILLK (HZ). Ring-necked Ducks were first detected on 10/1 at CENPK where a female was present (JC). The high was a modest 14 from 11/3-11/30 on LKELK (JC). The only Lesser Scaup was a male on Warfield's Pond 10/26-10/31 (KT+). Scoters are always worth noting in this inland county. On 11/13, one female Black Scoter was reported from LKELK (DP,RB); it was last seen 11/16 (EH,HZ). (Three days is a long stay for a Howard County scoter.) More true to form was a second female at the same location on 11/14 (J&TDC,SN) which was present just a few hours. Two female Hooded Mergansers on 11/6 at CENPK were the first reported (RC). The high was 10 on 11/15 at WATFD (MW). Ruddy Ducks were present all season in good numbers. The earliest one arrived on 8/18 (JC) with a high of 69 on 11/3 at LKELK (JC).

The last Osprey of the season was spotted on 10/9 at LKELK (BO+). Bald Eagles were

reported from many parts of the county with a high of 4 on FALLC. The swale field at the UMDCF attracted Northern Harriers from 9/25 (NM) through 10/28 (BO+). The earliest Sharp-shinned Hawk was seen on 8/11 at WILLK (HZ) with a high of 20 on 10/23 at the Rockburn Branch Park (RKBPR) hawk watch (RG+). Although Cooper's Hawks nest in the county in small numbers, their nests or young are seldom found. The three begging young birds on 8/8 in a yard in HAMVL certainly came from a nearby nest (GC). Broad-winged Hawk migration peaked between 9/18 at RKBPR where BO had 1231 (FALLC total for the day was 2427) and 9/25 on Cavey Lane (CAVEY) near Woodstock where 300-400 were counted (L&LH). The last Broad-winged Hawk was one bird seen in the same thermal with a Red-tailed Hawk on 10/30 at the intersection of Folly Quarter Rd and Carroll Mill Rd (M&GM). A single Rough-legged Hawk was reported on 11/6 in a field at the corner of Rt. 144 and Folly Quarter Rd (M&GM). Merlins were seen throughout much of the season from 8/27 on Manahan Dr (MANHN) near Ellicott City (BO) to 11/18-19 at WILLK (HZ). A Peregrine Falcon put in an appearance on Lakeside Dr near Triadelphia Reservoir on 10/14 (WEB,SP).

Sharp eyes spotted a Sora at the edge of island vegetation at CENPK 10/17 (MK,D&PE,MK) during the Bird Club's first-ever Big Sit. It was the best bird of an overcast, drizzly day. Thirteen participants tallied 46 species from the circle. This annual event is an excellent birding activity for people who do not want a long walk. An immature Common Moorhen created a stir among local birders who had not located one in the county since 1992. The bird was first noted on 9/17 at CENPK (EH) and was last seen 9/22

| INSIDE THIS ISSUE | PAGE |
|---------------------------|------|
| BIRDING WITH CONSERVATION | 3 |
| BEGINNER'S CORNER | 3 |
| CBBT TRIP REPORT | 4 |
| PROGRAMS AND FIELD TRIPS | 5 |
| CONSERVATION COLUMN | 6 |

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

(m.obs). Shorebirds were unusually limited in number and variety except for the report of a **Red-necked Phalarope** by a single observer from a farm pond near Rt. 97 and I-70 on 9/6 (PN). If the description is accepted, it would be a new county record. For the first time in more than 20 years, there were no fall **Greater Yellowlegs** reports, and all **Lesser Yellowlegs** were noted between 8/3 BRNBR (GMa) and 8/17 WATFD (MW). A late **Spotted Sandpiper** was at BRNBR on 11/18 (JW). The 12 **Semipalmated Sandpipers** on 8/14 at BRNBR were a good count (RSu). The same observer, on the same date and location, logged 15 **Least Sandpipers** and 14 **Pectoral Sandpipers**, both seasonal highs. **Common Snipe** were scarce with a high of 3 at UMDCF on 10/9 (NM,JS) and 10/23 (BO+). Historically, autumn **American Woodcock** sightings are few. This year proved an exception. One was flushed on 8/14 at WILLK (HZ); 11/12 one was spotted at dusk flying one-half mile south of Rosemary Lane adjacent to Rt. 32 (D&MH); 11/14 one flushed from a field at Marriottsville Rd and Rt. 144 (TF); and 11/25 one was present in Glenwood (RC).

Thirty **Laughing Gulls** were noted 8/22 at MANHN (BO); the latest were 3 on 10/30 at CENPK (JC). **Caspian Terns** were spotted by two observers: 1 on 8/24 WILLK (HZ) and 2 on 9/5 (CENPK) (RO). A **Black Tern** on 8/22 at BRNBR (DOI;J&TDC) was the only fall bird and one of two reported in 1999. A **Black-billed Cuckoo** was at Timberleigh (TIMBR) 8/2 and 8/11 (DN). **Eastern Screech-Owls** were well noted this season: mid-August on Roxbury Rd (K&BB); 9/8-11 TIMBR (DN); 10/7 Rt. 32 and River Valley Chase (dead) (ES); 10/31 Duvall Rd (KT); 11/11 Gorman Rd & Rt. 29 (MW) and 11/19 Rt. 29N & Rt. 40E (dead) (ES). On 10/22 a **Northern Saw-whet Owl**, which was being attacked by crows, was picked up by a man in western Howard County and taken to the Wildlife Authority store. When the owl proved to be unharmed, it was released the same evening (BO)—a memorable event for the birders present!

The last three **Common Nighthawks** were noticed 9/27 MANHN (BO). An interesting behavioral observation made on 9/8 was described by RO. He watched 9 nighthawks and 6 young adult **Common Green Darner** dragonflies flying in a tight swarm over his house in Beaverbrook about 6:00 p.m. All were feeding busily; neither species appeared to pay any attention to the other. Watching **Chimney Swifts** at dusk as they disappear into a roost site is a special treat. On 9/12, several hundred were noted over Miller Brothers Chevrolet on Rt. 40 (KS); on 9/17 when he went back to the same location at dusk, he counted 2128 plunging into a chimney there! The last **Ruby-throated**

Hummingbird was reported from Hallmark 10/4 (Jeb). **Red-headed Woodpecker** sightings came in two groups: the early period was 8/22 Wynfield (WYNFD) (RC) to 9/11 and 9/15 MANHN (BO); the later period was 11/25 Glenwood (RC) and 11/28 Ellicott City (*vide* BO). The first **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** arrived on 10/2 at WYNFD (RC) and MDBRK (BO,MJB+).

The only **Olive-sided Flycatcher** of the season was unusually early on 8/7 MANHN (BO). The last **Blue-headed Vireo** of the year was found at Hugg-Thomas WMA 10/24 (BO,CS+). Three **Philadelphia Vireos** were nice. The earliest was 9/13 at the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area (BO+); a second was 9/18 at UMDCF (M&GM); and the latest was 10/2 at CENPK (J&TDC). **Red-eyed Vireo** numbers seemed low. The single observer high was 16 on 9/12 at RKBRP (BO). Most swallows departed at expected times; **Tree Swallows** were the latest with five on 10/15 at MTPLT (BO+). **Bank Swallows** were detected in the narrow window between 8/31 (JC) and 9/2 (MW).

Red-breasted Nuthatches arrived extremely early with the first on 8/24 at MANHN (BO); scattered reports continued to 11/15 Alhview (ES)—a few later. **Brown Creepers** arrived on 10/4 in Worthington (EM). The last **House Wren** was seen 10/21 at MTPLT (BO,JS). **Winter Wrens** were early with the first on 9/22 at LKELK (JC). **Marsh Wrens** were found at two locations. The bird on 10/3 at MTPLT allowed good looks by field trip participants (BO+). Three were at UMDCF on 10/9 (NM,JS). Two were still there 10/12 (BO,JS,HZ+). **Golden-crowned Kinglets** arrived at two locations on 10/2: CENPK (JC) and WILLK (HZ). The high was 20 at LKELK 11/1 (JC). **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** put in an appearance 8/28 (August records are few) at WILLK (HZ) and were last seen 11/20 at LKELK (SN). On 10/21 at CENPK (JC) estimated 100.

Thrushes were few and generally hard to find. On 10/21 at MTPLT, six **Hermit Thrushes** were observed high in a tangle eating wild grapes (BO,JS+). A roost of 150 **American Robins** was present in HAMVL 10/31 (J&RS). One **Gray Catbird** lingered at CENPK until 11/14 (BO+). Flyover **American Pipits** were heard at several locations, but the largest group was 80 at UMDCF 10/12 (BO,JS). **Cedar Waxwings** wandered the county in flocks of up to 65 birds, but most interesting was a nesting record at CAVEY between 8/21 and 9/20 (L&LH). Despite the frequency with which waxwings are observed in the county, there are few nesting reports.

One **Golden-winged Warbler** was spotted at WILLK on 9/3 (HZ,BO,MJB). A **Nashville Warbler** on 10/31 on Sheppard

Lane was a new county late date for the species (BO,HZ+). **Cape May Warblers** are hard to come by, but there were some reports: 2 on 9/4 RKBRP (BO,MJB+), 9/25 Hunt Ridge (CS), 10/9 and 10/11 Dunloggin (KS). **Yellow-rumped Warblers** were not detected in large numbers, 20 being the maximum on three dates. **Palm Warblers** moved through from 9/20 at MDBRK (BO,JS) to 11/6 at Alpha Ridge Park (RC). The high of 30+ was tallied at MTPLT 10/15 (BO+). Both eastern and western sub-species were identified during the season. Five of the more unusual western form (out of a total of 8 Palms) were present 10/16 at UMDCF (DO+). One **Connecticut Warbler** was identified at CENPK on 9/20 (JC), and one **Orange-crowned Warbler** was spotted on 9/19 at David Force WMA (BO,MJB,CG).

Sparrow migration is, of course, one of the highlights of this season. **Chipping Sparrows** flocked on 10/9 at WYNFD with 46+ (RC). On 10/22 at least 25 were present at UMDCF (BO,JS). **Field Sparrows** topped out at a rather low 40 on 10/21 at MTPLT (BO). Three different **Vesper Sparrows** were noted: 9/18 WATFD (MW), 10/15 MTPLT (BO), and a bird at UMDCF 10/28 (BO,JS,HZ) which was last seen 10/30 (M&GM). There were **Savannah Sparrows** in numbers at both MTPLT 10/15 (BO+) 100 and UMDCF 10/12 (BO,JS) 200. The last **Grasshopper Sparrow** was spotted at MTPLT on 10/15 (BO,HZ+). The first two **Fox Sparrows** arrived at MDBRK 10/19 (BO,JS). On 11/13, 4 were found at MDBRK (RC), while at least 7 were present at CENPK 11/14 (BO+). **Song Sparrows** peaked in mid-October with 90 on 10/15 at MTPLT (BO+) and 100 on 10/20 at UMDCF (BO). **Lincoln's Sparrows** were present from 9/20 at MDBRK (BO,JS-2) to 10/28 UMDCF (BO+-1). The first half of October was the best time to find numbers of this species. On 10/3 at MTPLT, at least 7 were spotted on a field trip (BO+); on 10/2, 3 were seen at MDBRK (BO,MJB) with another 3 at Font Hill Wetland Park (FHWP) (D&PE) the same day. On 10/16 there were 6 at UMDCF (BO+). Ott had a total of 33 Lincoln's Sparrows in the course of the season, and on 10/15 at MTPLT she enjoyed a 10 sparrow species day. **Swamp Sparrows** peaked between 10/15 when 140 were found at MTPLT (BO+) and 10/22 with 125 at UMDCF (BO,JS). The highlight of the sparrow migration was a **Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow** at UMDCF 10/22 (BO,GF,HZ,DG,JS,EH). Although an elusive bird, it was well-seen by a number of people and even photographed (GJ); it stayed through 10/23 (m.obs).

One of the most intriguing well-verified seasonal records was that of a **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** which appeared at a West Friendship feeder in early November (JMc). The bird was

(Continued on page 4)

COMBINE BIRDING WITH CONSERVATION

BY LOUISA THOMPSON

Fellow bird lovers, are you content to watch and enjoy birds, or are you willing to work on their behalf? Would you like to help protect the habitat of FIDS and river birds? Would you like to contribute to research on the threats to these habitats how they weaken or damage or displace native species and the ecosystem as a whole?

The Conservation Stewardship Project at Patapsco Valley State Park is an all-volunteer project that collects data on the native and exotic species in the Avalon/Orange Grove area of the park, in order to document the current state of the ecosystem and monitor changes over time. We are also authorized to remove invasive non-native plants, and to treat vulnerable herbaceous plants and saplings with deer repellent. In time we will add other types of conservation work. Co-sponsored by Maryland Native Plants Society and Maryland Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners, the project is open to the public, and we seek experienced birders who can identify birds seen or heard in the park. We want to know where the park, which is a riparian corridor, is wide enough to attract forest-interior-dwelling species. Sunlight penetrates wherever there are trails, permitting non-native plants such as Japanese honeysuckle, multiflora rose, Japanese barberry, to germinate and grow. The seeds of these fruit-bearing plants are spread by birds. Does that mean they provide good bird habitat? Or does it mean that some birds, with more specialized diets, suffer at the expense of generalist fruit-eaters such as mockingbirds, which are expanding their range?

Do these shrubs provide good nest sites for the species of birds that would ordinarily nest in these woods? We need to know which birds currently mate and nest successfully in the park, and in which trees, shrubs, or other nest sites they are found. We have a nearly complete inventory of plant species and are in the process of mapping changes in the plant communities, and we want to extend this biotic inventory and map to include all living things.

So far we have identified 15 species of birds: American crow, cardinal, chickadee, blue jay, robin, white-eyed vireo, hermit thrush, wood thrush, Swainson's thrush, white-throated sparrow, red-bellied woodpecker, pileated woodpecker, turkey vulture, great blue heron, and mallard. There must be more I certainly hope there are! But most of our volunteers have been plant lovers, not birders.

We always look for insects and have found some interesting ones. Pawpaw trees are

plentiful, and they are the larval host plants for the zebra swallowtail butterfly, which we saw as adults, and the pawpaw sphinx moth, which we found in the larval stage (a hornworm similar to those that eat tomato plants). Bird club member Dick Smith, whom many of you know as a leader of butterfly field trips, has us hunting for Appalachian azure butterflies and their larval host, black cohosh. We have no experts on Odonates, but did manage to identify a black-winged damselfly. There are many interesting gall-making insects, including one that rolls the tips of Christmas ferns into a ball. Incidentally, there are 12 different species of ferns in this strip of park a mile and a half long and just a few hundred feet wide.

Our day begins with an orientation to the ecology of the river gorge, and the goals and philosophy of the project. Those of you with children in Howard County Schools may be familiar with the concept of service learning. This is service learning for adults. We all share our expertise, and record not only what we find but all the discussion about it. Our field notebooks now weigh several pounds each, filled with photos, anecdotes, explanations, questions, and data. (Did I mention that we always need more photographers?) When we find invasive exotic plants, we stop and pull or cut them, if they are at a vulnerable stage of their life cycle. (We have state-of-the-art information on when and how to control these pest-plants.)

This year, we have been given authorization to use glyphosate on the cut stems of woody plants such as honeysuckle and multiflora, which are too difficult to dig out. We'll keep records on the effectiveness of this method in killing the target plants and bringing back the natives. We also want to record any changes in bird populations in the areas we treat. Because we do not spray, we should not be doing any harm, but we need data to be sure of that.

We have regular field days on the 3rd Saturday of each month. On April 15, we'll work on shrubs and vines, while enjoying the spring wildflowers and early butterflies. We'd like your help in identifying migratory and resident birds. On May 20 we'll declare war on garlic mustard. June 17 we pull wineberry. In July and August we probably will not do any weeding, but may continue to meet in order to collect more data. September and October are stilt grass cutting time, and in

(Continued on page 4)

BEGINNER'S CORNER

BY BONNIE OTT

Starting to Learn the Basics of Bird Identification

Identifying a bird is like solving a mystery, you collect clues that help you in solving the I.D. puzzle. There are a few basic points to look for-

- size and shape
- color
- special habits (flight patterns, body movements, feeding habits)
- habitat and season
- voice (Birding by ear)

Sometimes you only need one clue to figure out your ID. There are other times when every clue must be gathered and really studied to be sure of what bird you've seen. Each of these points will be covered in depth in future columns. However, we need to begin by laying out the very basic techniques of bird observation. Developing these skills will help you to become a more experienced observer and heighten your enjoyment of birding.

When observing a bird the more "clues" you can collect, the easier it will be to make your ID. Spend as much time possible observing each bird. Pretend that each time you look at a bird it will be your last time ever and REALLY study each subject. A common beginner mistake is that you are tempted to stop looking at a bird once you have made your ID. Novices are also tempted to look at their field guides too soon. Don't waste time that could be spent observing the subject, thumbing through your book. It is excellent practice to jot down a few notes about the bird BEFORE you look in your guide. Take time to study how the bird moves, if it flies watch for any interesting patterns. Does it have a certain way of feeding? Did you ever wonder how some birders can tell each bird with a split second glimpse? Experienced birdwatchers have spent many hours studying their subjects and learning every nuance of their behavior. They have become so adept at reading the "clues" they can mentally put together an ID in an instant.

Lets take a male Northern Cardinal for an example. The Cardinal has such obvious clues that it is relatively easy to make an ID. A beginner need only note it's solid red color and medium size, crested head and red bill. There is not much else to confuse it with. After spending time observing Cardinals you no longer have to look at them and then mentally go over all the field marks "medium size, red color, crested head". You are able to glimpse the bird and instantly recognize it as a Cardinal and it all comes together at once! With practice you can begin to recognize more and more species confidently. It is just a matter of gleaning through the clues to solve the ID puzzle.

TRIP TO THE CHESAPEAKE BAY BRIDGE TUNNEL

BY JEFF FRIEDHOFFER

The weekend of Jan 15 saw 19 intrepid birders from the club endure the "hardship" of a winter trip down the eastern shore for 3 wonderful days of birding. On Saturday we started at 8 AM and were birding at the Horsehead Waterfowl Trust by 9 AM. After several wonderful hours, we headed to the Choptank river bridge. On the way we stopped south of Easton and saw the highlight of the trip, a Sandhill Crane hiding in flock of thousands of Canada Geese. Birding on the Chop tank was excellent, no wind and the water was like glass. After all this strenuous work, we ate lunch in Cambridge and then headed to Blackwater. After a few hours, an exhausted group headed for our motel in Exmore. We rose early in the morning on Sunday, heading to the bridge tunnel. We stopped at a location north of the Kiptopeake to look for a Townsends warbler. We met a number of other birders, but never saw the warbler. Next we went searching for a LeConte's sparrow, and Bonnie lead us on a chase through briars and brambles, she was in heaven but the rest of us... We saw hundreds of sparrows but not the LeConte's. Finally we got to the bridge tunnel, with high winds, but fortunately the temperature was in the 50's. We saw a number of water birds, including numerous gannets.

While at our first island the Howard County Bird Club came to the rescue of a boat. A small fishing boat lost power and was drifting toward our island quite rapidly. They set off a flare and then starting waving a red cloth. As intrepid birders we thought they were being friendly and we waved back. Finally realizing they were in trouble we called 911 bringing in the coast guard and bridge police who affected the rescue. Chalk on up for the HCBC.

We had a good day on the islands with the wind dying down. While there, we ran into Phil and Barb Davis, and Stan Arnold who pointed out the black tailed gull. At the end of the day we headed for the Eastern Shore of Virginia Wildlife refuge. We waited in vain to see short eared owls, finally gave up when it got dark. An exhausted group headed back to the motel and the second dinner of the weekend at the Trawler restaurant.

On Monday morning it was cold and windy. We headed to Chincoteague where we saw rafts of ducks, primarily black and shovelers. While there, a pony tried to get into Marge's car. After freezing our butts off, we headed to a great lunch at Bill's and then home. Overall it was a great trip and we were

thankful for the weather, warm the first two days, the last warm days before our encounters with the cold and snow.

List of 110 birds observed: Red-throated Loon, Common Loon, Pied-billed Grebe, Northern Gannet, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Canada Goose, Mute Swan, Tundra Swan, Wood Duck, Gadwall, American Wigeon, American Black Duck, Mallard, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, Ring-necked Duck, Greater Scaup, Lesser Scaup, Harlequin Duck, Surf Scoter, White-winged Scoter, Black Scoter, Oldsquaw, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, Wild Turkey, Northern Bobwhite, Clapper Rail, American Coot, Sandhill Crane, Killdeer, American Oystercatcher, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Willet, Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling, Purple Sandpiper, Dunlin, Common Snipe, American Woodcock, Bonaparte's Gull, Black-tailed Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, Barred Owl, Belted Kingfisher, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Fish Crow, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, Hermit Thrush, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Eastern Towhee, Field Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Common Grackle, Boat-tailed Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, House Finch, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow

Trip participants were: *Carol and Jeff Friedhoffer, Paula and Darlus Ecker, Jeanne and Doug Odermatt, Marg and Ralph Cullison, Susan and Ron Poiniaszek, Bonnie Ott, Carol Garza, Mary Jo Betts, Helen Zeichner, Emy Holdridge, Karen Darcy, Patsy and Kurt Schwarz, and John Makoney*

(Continued from page 3)

November we flag the Norway maples for herbicidal treatment by a special team in March. Those who can, and want to, weed, but there is no requirement or pressure to do that kind of work. Many of us contribute our knowledge or other skills, such as photography.

In addition to these general field days, we can schedule special purpose ones at your convenience. The need for bird data is a high priority, so we'll be glad to accommodate you any day of the week, any time of day.

Speaking personally, this project has been enormously fulfilling. It's fascinating, it's fun, and it makes a real difference. The participants are wonderful, and for me as leader, it's a delight to see folks learning from one another, suddenly seeing things from a new perspective, or putting together a fact from one discipline with a concept from another, discerning a pattern that was invisible until then. The trail rounds a bend, the underlying rock changes, and so does the pH of the soil. Mountain laurel replaces spicebush a dense evergreen shrub instead of an open, deciduous one. Different birds will nest there. A fallen tree attracts pileated woodpeckers; the sunlight that penetrates the gap attracts butterflies. Water is forced upward between tilted layers of rock: a sycamore might be found high up the hillside. Seepage areas are good places to hunt for salamanders, for butterflies "puddling," for craneflies. We look at interrelationships, ecology in action.

Won't you join us this spring? Call me at the Master Gardener Program, (410) 313-2711 (through July), or at (410) 707-2550.

(Continued from page 2)

still being seen regularly into mid-January. At one point in the autumn, the grosbeak was spotted lying on the ground. Upon examination in the hand, telltale purple stains from nearby pokeberries were obvious. The inebriated bird recovered. A family of Blue Grosbeaks was present at BRNBR 8/28 (BO). Six Bobolinks were seen at UMDCF 10/9 (NM,JS) and 2 on 10/12 (BO,HZ,JS). Some species appeared to fledge young rather late—perhaps delayed by the drought? A Northern Cardinal was still feeding a fledged young on 10/7 at LKELK (SN). On FALLC, NM noted seeing the following "really young, begging food, some down, etc.": Eastern Bluebird, Chipping Sparrow, Carolina Wren, House Wren, Northern Cardinal, Indigo Bunting, Eastern Wood-Pewee, and Gray Catbird. Rusty Blackbirds were seen on 10/19 at Plum Tree Path (BO,JS-20), 11/13 CENPK (JC-14), and 11/10 VANPT (HZ-15).

(Continued on page 6)

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.

Thursday, March 9. "A Seasonal Progression of Wildflowers," by Bob Solem. Learn how these harbingers of spring herald the annual migration.

Thursday, April 3. "Timeless Patterns: The Seasons at Churchill," by Bob Mumford, professional photographer from Montgomery County. Framed and matted prints will be available for sale before and after the program.

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 or e-mail bott@erols.com.

March 7, Tuesday. **Weekday Walk at Wilde Lake.** 9:00 a.m. (2 hours) meet at boat dock. Leader: TBA Moderate walking along the lake to view waterfowl and a short woodland walk for forest species. No facilities and paths may be muddy. Page 47. Call Bonnie for info 410-461-3361.

March 12, Sunday. **Flyovers and How to ID Them.** Mount Pleasant 8:00 a.m. (3 hours) meet at the shed. Leader: Bonnie Ott. Moderate to hard walking through the fields of this Howard Conservancy property. We will focus on birds in flight. Also looking for the early signs of spring. Bluebirds and sparrows likely. facilities available. Call Bonnie for info 410-461-3361.

March 18, Saturday. **Tree Identification.** David Force Park 10:00 a.m. (2 hours) meet at sign on Pebble Beach Drive. Leader: Michele Wright. Walk through the diverse habitat of this county open space and increase you knowledge of our area trees. A magnification lens is recommended. No facilities. Call Bonnie for info 410-461-3361.

March 19, Sunday. **Centennial Park** 8:00 a.m. (3 hours) West end parking lot Leader :Jane Coskren. The first of the annual spring walks at Centennial Park. Walk the paved path around the lake of this Howard County hot spot. Facilities available. Pg. 5 Call Jane for info 410-381-7344.

March 23, Thursday. **Weekday Walk at Lake Elkhorn** 8:30 a.m. (2 hours) Broken Land Parkway lot. Easy walking on the paved path around the lake to view waterfowl and woodland species. No facilities. Page 43. Call Bonnie for info 410-461-3361.

March 25, Saturday. **Beginning Birding by Ear.** Gwynn Acres Path 8:00 a.m. (2 hours) Rams Horn Row and Old Columbia Pike. Leader: Bonnie Ott. Easy walking on the paved woodland path to focus on learning the sounds of our resident woodland birds. No facilities. Page 24. Call Bonnie for info 410-461-3361.

March 26, Sunday. **Centennial Park** 8:00 a.m. (3 hours) West end lot. Leader: Mike Kerwin. Focus on waterfowl and the hopes of early migrants. Facilities available Pg. 5. Call Mike for info 410 461 2408.

April 2, Sunday. **Centennial Park** 8:00 a.m. (3 hours) West end lot. Leader TBA. Look for signs of spring, waterfowl and woodland birds likely. Facilities available. Pg. 5. Call Bonnie for info 410-461-4461.

April 5, Wednesday. **Weekday walk at Font Hill** (2 hours) 8:30 a.m. at sign on Font Hill drive. Easy walking on paved paths through this mixed habitat of wetlands, ponds and woods. No facilities. Call Bonnie for info 410-461-3361

April 8, Saturday. **Beginning Birder's Walk at Wilde Lake.** (2 hours) Leader, Mike Kerwin. Meet at boat dock at 9:30 a.m. for this 2 hour walk along the lake. Basics of binoculars and field guides and how to use them plus the basics of bird identification. No facilities. Page 47 Call Mike for info 410-461-2408.

April 9, Sunday. **Vesper Sparrow Search** (1/2 day) University of Md Central Farm. Leader Bonnie Ott. Meet at farm parking lot at 7:00 a.m. Boots necessary for an intensive search of the farm for sparrows focusing on Vesper. Hard walking, no facilities. Call Bonnie for info 410-461-3361.

April 9, Sunday. **Centennial Park** (3 hours) Leader: TBA Meet at 8:00 a.m. at West end lot. Walk around the lake to view early migrants. Facilities available. Page 5. Call Bonnie for info. 410-461-3361.

April 16, ~~Saturday~~ ^{Sunday} **Meadowbrook** (1/2 day) Leader, Kurt Schwarz. Meet at park and ride at 8:00 a.m. to bird this field and wetland area. Boots a must and be prepared for ticks. Sparrows and marsh birds probable. Hard walking, no facilities. Call Kurt for info in the evenings. 410-461-1643.

April 17, Monday. **Celebrate Earth Day Habitat Walk at Gywnn Acres** (2 hours) Meet at Rams Horn Row and Old Columbia 8:30 a.m. Leaders: Bob and Jo Solem. Look for spring wildflowers and birds along the wooded path. Easy walk on paved path. Pg. 24, no facilities Call Bob for info 301-725-5037.

April 22, Saturday. **Horsehead Wetlands Center in Grasonville.** (all day) Leaders Ron and Sue Polniaszek. Meet at 32 and Broken Land Park and Ride (car parking) at 7:00 a.m. We will spend the day at this diverse area that is managed by the Wildfowl Trust of North America. We will break for lunch at a local restaurant and spend the remainder of the afternoon back at the sanctuary or at stops along Kent Island. Moderate walking along paths and boardwalks. Be prepared for insects, facilities available. MOS members have free entrance with membership card, otherwise a small fee is required. Call Ron for info 410-531-6658.

April 30, Sunday. **Beginning Birder's walk for Baltimore Orioles at lake Elkhorn.** Meet at 9:00 a.m. at Cradlerock lot to walk around the lake. (2 hours) Leader: Bonnie Ott. We will focus on common bird ID techniques and search specifically for Baltimore Orioles. Paved paths, easy walking. No facilities. Pg. 32 Call Bonnie for info 410-461-3361.

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

March 23, Thursday. Bonnie Ott, 8664 Manahan Dr., Ellicott City, MD 21045, 410-461-3361

April 27, Thursday. Sue Probst, 5413 Killingworth Way, Columbia, MD 21044, 410-992-3489

MAY-JUNE 2000 NEWSLETTER MATERIAL IS DUE MARCH 24, 2000. 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://pages.prodigy.net/eckerd/birding.htm>.

HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB

Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

AUTUMN BIRD RECORDS
COMBINE BIRDING WITH CONSERVATION
BEGINNER'S CORNER
CHESAPEAKE BAY BRIDGE-TUNNEL TRIP REPORT
PROGRAMS AND FIELD TRIPS

CONSERVATION COLUMN BY BOB SOLEM

Two important bills are before the U.S. Senate this year, and Senators Mikulski and Sarbanes are co-sponsors of both. These bills are the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA) S. 25 and Permanent Protection for America's Resources 2000 (Resources 2000) S. 446. It is vital that these two bills be considered and combined in the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee in a manner similar to the CARA legislation (H.R. 701, as amended) passed by the House Resources Committee this past November.

Title III of CARA and Title VII of Resources 2000 provide for reinvestment of a significant portion of outer-continental shelf revenue in state fish and wildlife programs. Specifically, these programs would help prevent species from becoming threatened and endangered while at the same time provide funds for vital wildlife-related education and recreation.

The Teaming With Wildlife Coalition has been working for many years toward achieving at least \$350 million annually for such programs, which would provide about \$5 million each year for Maryland's fish and wildlife. As it currently stands, H.R. 701 (as amended) could provide up to \$37 million in annual funding for Chesapeake Bay, coastal bay and tributary programs, parks and recreation, and state fish and wildlife programs. Maryland has much to gain from this legislation. State fish and wildlife agencies, which bear the heaviest burden of wildlife conservation and the provision of public wildlife-related programs, are sorely in need of reliable and adequate funds. Private organizations, such as the American Birding Association, the National Wildlife Federation, the Na-

tional Audubon Society, The Wildlife Society, and others are anxious to participate in cooperative wildlife conservation education and recreation programs. These organizations make up the 3000+ Teaming With Wildlife Coalition. In Maryland, there are 114 organizations (including MOS) that make up the state TWW Coalition. Maryland Governor Parris Glendening has also voiced his support for the concepts of CARA and Resources 2000.

How can we help? Contact me at (301) 725-5037 for more information. You will all also be contacted by email later.

IN MEMORIAM: LOIS C. CARLTON

BY JO SOLEM

One of the Howard County Bird Club's most ardent supporters, sustaining member Lois C. Carlton, died in mid-January in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts where she had moved after retirement. Her generosity was felt particularly keenly in establishing the club's mounted bird collection. She sponsored some of the largest specimens including a Red-shouldered Hawk, American Coot, Common Moorhen, Great Egret, Green Heron, and two Sharp-shinned Hawks among others. Lois's consistent support of educational and conservation programs will have a long-term impact. Her mysteriously short life list of "quality" birds was a source of entertainment among her birding friends. Those who knew her will miss her intense loyalty, keen Irish wit, trenchant political observations, and zest for life.

(Continued from page 4)

Purple Finches began to move into the region 10/13 with one at FHWLP (BO,MJB). Pine Siskins were first detected at the same location 10/8 (BO,MJB). Flocks were not large with 14 on 11/7 at WYNFD the largest reported (RC). American Goldfinches were noted in flocks with a county high of 72 at MANHN 11/12 (BO).

Observers: MJB - Mary-Jo Betts, K&BB - Karan & Bill Blum, RB - Rod Burley, GC - George Chase, MC - Martha Chestern, JC - Jane Coskren, TDC - T. Dennis Coskren, RC - Ralph Cullison, DG - Dot Gustafson, WE - Wes Earp, WEb - Ward Ebert, JEb - Jane Ebert, D&PE - Darius & Paula Ecker, TF - Tom Franklin, GF - Gail Franz, CG - Carolina Garza, RG - Ralph Geuder, D&MH - Dave & Maureen Harvey, EH - Emmalyn Holdridge, L&LH - Lynn & Linda Holley, MK - Mike Kerwin, GMA - Gail Mackiegan, NM - Nancy Magnusson, M&GM - Mike & Grazina McClure, JMc - Janet McKegg, EM - Elayne Matter, DN - Diane Nagengast, SN - Sue Neri, PN - Philip Norman, DOI - Daryl Olson, BO - Bonnie Ott, RO - Richard Orr, DP - Dave Perry, SP - Susan Polniaszek, KS - Kurt Schwarz, JS - Jo Solem, RS - Robert Solem, CS - Chuck Stirrat, ES - Eva Sunell, RSu - Rick Sussman, KT - Kate Tufts, MW - Mark Wallace, JW - Jordan Wilkerson, HZ - Helen Zeichner. A + indicates additional observers. Also contributing data not cited by initials were the following: LC - Lisa Colangelo, CN - Carol Newman, HP - Helen Patton, and RP - Ron Polniaszek.

