



THE GOLDFINCH



A CHAPTER OF THE MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2001

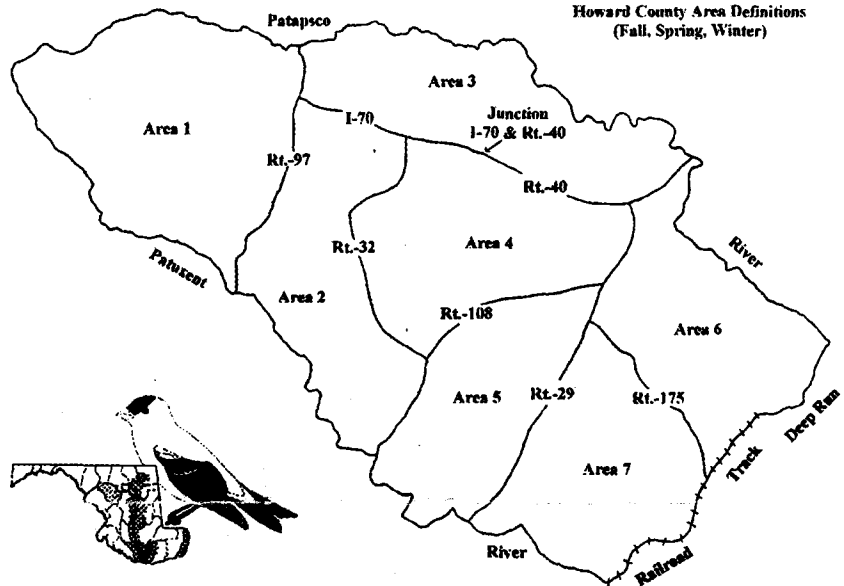
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SIXTEENTH ANNUAL MIDWINTER COUNT BY JO SOLEM AND MARY-JO BETTS

Join the Howard County Bird Club's Sixteenth Annual Midwinter Count on Saturday, February 3, 2001. Jo Solem, 301-725-5037 (email-odenata@msn.com) and Mary-Jo Betts, 301-596-5859 (email-MJBetts@home.com), are the count coordinators. You may volunteer to participate by signing up at a meeting, by calling Jo or Mary-Jo, or by contacting one of the area coordinators: Area 1. Mark Wallace 301-725-6370; Area 2. Nancy Magnusson 410-480-0342; Area 3. Maureen & Dave Harvey 410-795-3117; Area 4. Mike McClure 410-531-2780; Area 5. Doug Odermatt 410-992-1812; Area 6. Bonnie Ott 410-461-3361; and Area 7. Maud Banks 410-381-3240. If you have covered a particular location for many years, call the coordinator of the area and indicate your desire to cover it again. If you wish to be placed with a more experienced birder, be sure to let the coordinator know. Beginning birders are always welcome, as are individuals who may wish to count for part of the day.

Participants in the count will receive a checklist; however, if you wish to count only at your feeder, call Jo or Mary-Jo and request a feeder form.

A fitting and much-anticipated conclusion to the day is the potluck tally held in the evening at Martha and Don Waughs, 9522 Angelina Circle, Columbia 21045; 410-381-8841. It is an opportunity to compare your



special birds with those other people sighted or—to commiserate about your misses. The club furnishes the main dish. Please call by Wednesday, January 31, to reserve space; to sign up for a vegetable, salad, or dessert; and to obtain directions. If you can not make it to the meal, you are welcome to drop in about 7:30 p.m. for the tally.

Unfortunately, a count during this season may coincide with a major snow or ice storm. Safety is more important than counting birds. If there is a question about the weather, we will try to make a decision the night before. Do not hesitate to call your area coordinator, Jo, or Mary-Jo (between 5:00 & 6:30 a.m.) if you are unsure of the status of the count.

HOWARD COUNTY RECREATION & PARKS NEST BOX PROJECT

Howard County's Department of Recreation and Parks Bluebird Nest Box Project had a successful year as reported by coordinator Sue Muller. The total number of boxes was 159. Sixty-nine boxes fledged 384 Eastern Bluebirds. Other cavity nesters fledged included Tree Swallows 64, Tufted Titmice 12, House Wrens 67, Carolinas Wrens 19 and Carolina Chickadees 24. Monitor Dave Terry sighted a Red-headed Woodpecker at Timbers Golf Course for the most notable non-nesting bird sighting. Howard County Bird Club members who monitored boxes in 2000, with their years of service shown in parentheses, were Sue and Wes Earp (10+), Lisa Colangelo (5), Tina and Danielle Katsampis (2), Kate and Richard Tufts (2), and Tim Ray (1). If you wish to volunteer to monitor boxes on county land in 2001, e-mail Sue at smuller@co.ho.md.us. Instruction will be provided. Box monitoring is an especially good family project.

2001 MOS ANNUAL CONFERENCE ANNOUNCED

The 2001 MOS Annual Conference will be held August 10-12, 2001 in Salisbury, MD. The timing and location of this conference will allow birders to take advantage of a variety of interesting locations and habitats. There will be many exciting activities and field trips planned by the conference committee. Detailed information will be mailed to you early in 2001.

HOWARD COUNTY ANNUAL LISTS DUE FEBRUARY 29, 2001

A list of all the birds seen in the county during the 2000 calendar year is being compiled for the 22nd consecutive year. Did we break any records this year? Only you can help us decide. Assemble your sightings for the year (even if the list was compiled in your neighborhood or your yard) and mail to Jane Coskren, 6324 Sandchain Road, Columbia MD 21045 by February 29, 2001. The length of the list isn't important, because your list may contain the bird that will make 2000 a year for the record books.

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2000 Big Sit!

BY KURT SCHWARZ

October 22nd dawned bright and clear on three intrepid Big Sitters at Centennial Park. Prior to dawn we logged Canada Goose (big surprise!), Mallard, Northern Cardinal, and a mysterious raptor flying south with powerful strokes that Ralph and I would really like to make a Peregrine, but, alas, we have ethics. Folks filtered in with the daylight, and we ultimately had 27 people drop by at some point to sit and chat, and look for birds. The species total for the day was 55, with Cedar Waxwings for the last tick. Nothing really remarkable (unless you want to count the puta-

tive Peregrine), but an excellent total. An additional 4-5 species were found by participants outside the circle (White-crowned and Field Sparrow, Catbird, possible Hermit Thrush). Mike Kerwin failed to repeat his performance of Big Sit! 1999 by conjuring up a Sora. Howard County Parks graciously catered the affair with an interesting menu ranging from leg of lamb sandwiches to kettle corn. Everyone had moved on by 5 pm, excepting the leader, who hung on for another half an hour. By then, a killer cold was setting in, and he was getting

chilly and lonely. Since the ducks just refused to appear, he headed for home. A fun time was had by all (I hope), the weather was perfect (unlike last year), and the birds cooperative. Be sure to join us, the New Haven (Connecticut) Bird Club, and participants from at least 3 other countries for Big Sit! 2001. We'll establish a seventeen foot circle and count any bird that can be seen or heard from therein. It's fun and not nearly as strenuous as the two and a half mile walk around Centennial, and we really DO see just as many birds.



REMEMBER HUNTING SEASON DATES!

Be careful when you go out birding during the winter—it's hunting season except on Sundays. Although hunting is now a constitutional right in Virginia, it must also be respected in Maryland. The hunting season extends through the end of January, 2001 for some species (except for eastern cottontail rabbit, which runs through February 10). *Falconry* is permitted through March 31, 2000 (but only for squirrel, Ruffed Grouse, Northern Bobwhite, and Ring-necked Pheasant in February and March). There is also a Turkey season April 18 through May 16, 2001.

Quite a number of species are covered: American Woodcock, Mourning Dove, Clapper Rail, King Rail, Virginia Rail, Sora, Common Snipe, resident Canada Goose, Snow Goose, American Black Duck, Canvasback, Mallard, scaup, scoters, Wood Duck, Redhead, Northern Pintail, and Brant. Crow can be hunted August 15 through March 16—but only Wednesday through Saturday, and only by those who have a valid hunting license. Not to mention Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal—but only east of I-95.

Hunting of gray squirrel, eastern fox squirrel, piney squirrel, coyote, skunk, fisher, raccoon, opossum is permitted during season. You may hunt nutria in season—but only with 22-caliber rim-fire rifle. Bobcat, black bear, and snowshoe hare are safe this year—the season is closed. Trapping of beaver, muskrat, mink, long-tailed weasel, and river otter is O.K.

Don't forget white-tailed deer, for which there are four regions in the state, each of which have separate seasons for bow, muzzleloader, and firearms. Check with your local DNR. Some restrictions apply.

ANNUAL POTLUCK DINNER SATURDAY, MARCH 10, 2001

BY MARY-JO BETTS

The annual potluck dinner will again be held at the Owen Brown Community Center on Saturday, March 10, 2001. All club members and their guests are invited to share the fun, the food, and the program. The club furnishes beverages, social hour snacks, rolls and eating utensils. Those attending may bring a salad, a main dish, a vegetable, or a dessert. You MUST reserve in advance so we can arrange for the proper number of beverages, etc. You may sign up at either the January or February meetings or call Mary-Jo Betts at 301-596-5859 by March 8, 2001. You will need to specify the number of attendees, and what food you are bringing. If you cannot cook, adjustments can be made. If you want to participate in the slide presentation, bring a dozen or so nature slides. (If you bring more, they will be shown if time allows.) Social hour starts at 6:30 pm and dinner at 7:00 pm. Mark your dishes and any accompanying serving

implements with your name so we can get them back to the right person. Let Mary-Jo know if you would like to help in any way or come early at 6:00 PM to help set up. If you are a new member or if you have not attended our dinner before, we strongly encourage you to come and get to know the others that share your mutual love for birding. There will be many delicious dishes, great slide presentations, and prizes. So mark your calendars and come join the fun.

Directions: The Owen Brown Community Center is located on the east side of Columbia at 6800 Cradlerock Way, off Broken Land Parkway from Route 29. There is ample parking available.

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, January 11 "Maryland Coast to Crest: A Look at our State's Diverse Wildlife," by Dr. Charles Stine. *[He didn't show]*
 Thursday, February 8 "The Role of Bird Rehabilitation in Conservation and Education," by Corin Parks of the Carrie Murray Nature Center.

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. Page numbers refer to Birding Howard County, Maryland by Joanne K. Solem

January 1 2001, Monday - New Year's Day - Leader: TBA. Our annual trip to wherever and possibly all over Howard county to tally as many birds as we can to begin the year 2001. A mid-day lunch stop at a local eating establishment and further afternoon birding for the die hards! Call Bonnie for info 410-461-3361.

January 13-15, Saturday - Monday (Martin Luther King 3 day weekend) Ocean City and environs - we are putting together a trip for the eastern shore. Call Bonnie for details and to reserve a spot. **Please note:** Trip may be full prior to publishing of this newsletter.

January 27, Saturday - Piney Run, Carroll County (8:00 a.m. 1/2 day). Leaders: Dave and Maureen Harvey. Meet at the main gates off Martz Rd. Bird this large body of water surrounded by mixed habitat. Wide variety of waterfowl and winter land birds possible. Moderate walking. Scopes recommended. (facilities/unknown). Call Dave for info 410-795-3117.

February 3, Saturday - Midwinter Count. Details included in this newsletter.

February 13, Sunday - Alpha Ridge Landfill (8:00 a.m. 1/2 day). Leader: Ralph Cullison Meet at parking lot at entrance Bird the landfill for possible Rough-legged Hawk, winter sparrows, possible pipit and Horned Lark. Difficult walking over hills and short grass areas. Dress VERY warmly. No facilities. Call Ralph for info 410-442-2181.

February 25, Sunday - Black Hill Regional Park, Montgomery County (7:30 a.m. 1/2 day). Leader: Paul Zucker Meet at the Lisbon park and ride. Bring scopes if possible to bird this large reservoir for waterfowl and the surrounding mixed habitat for winter birds. Possible are loons, Red-necked and other grebes, Goldeneye, Long-tailed Duck, Bald Eagle, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-breasted Nuthatch and American Tree Sparrow. Facilities available. Call Kate for meeting spot questions 410-489-7052 or Paul for trip info 301-279-7896.

March 8, Thursday - Lake Elkhorn Weekday Walk (8:30 a.m. 2 hours) Leader: Bonnie Ott. Meet at Broken Land Parkway lot. Walk the paved path around the lake in search of waterfowl, woodpeckers and, Winter Wren. Great walk for new birders. No facilities. Pg. 43. Call Bonnie for info 410-461-3361.

March 17, Saturday - Waterfowl Search (8:00 a.m. 1/2 day) Leader: Jane Coskren. Meet at the concession stand of Centennial Park. We will carpool to various locations in Howard County to look for migrating waterfowl. Scopes helpful. Pg. 5. Call Jane for info 410-381-7344.

March 18, Sunday - Centennial Lake (8:00 a.m. 3 hours) Leader: John Maloney. Meet at west end lot on Centennial Lane. Walk around the lake on paved path looking for waterfowl. Fox Sparrows expected. Great for beginners! Facilities available. Pg. 5. Call John for info 301-317-4961.

March 20, Tuesday - Wilde Lake First Day of Spring Walk! (8:30 a.m. 2 hours) Leader: Bonnie Ott. Meet at boat dock. Walk along the lake on paved path and possible muddy woodland path. Waterfowl likely and variety of woodland birds. No facilities. Pg. 47. Call Bonnie for info 410-461-3361.

March 24, Saturday - Mount Pleasant Fox Sparrow Search (8:00 a.m. 1/2 day) Leader: Kurt Schwarz. Meet at shed. Moderate to difficult walking over hilly mown grass areas in search of Fox Sparrows and other wintering species. Facilities available. Call Kurt for info 410-461-1643.

March 25, Sunday - Centennial Park (8:00 a.m. 1/2 day) Leader: Mike Kerwin. Meet at west end lot off Centennial Lane. Walk around lake on paved path to view waterfowl and early migrants. Great for new birders. Facilities available. Pg. 5. Call Mike for info 410-461-2408.

March 31, Saturday - Gwynn Acres Birding by Ear for Beginners (8:00 a.m. 3 hours) Leader: Bonnie Ott. Meet on Old Columbia and Rams Horn Row. Learn tips and techniques to identify birds by their voices. Easy walking on paved path through woodlands. No facilities. Pg. 24. 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.

January 25, Thursday Jeff Friedhoffer, 10042 Mending Wall, Columbia, MD 21044, 410-997-5366

February 22, Thursday Bob and Jo Solem, 10617 Graeoch Rd., Laurel, MD 20723, 301-725-5073, *showed out; postponed March 1st*

MARCH - APRIL 2001 NEWSLETTER MATERIAL IS DUE JANUARY 26, 2001. 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.howardbirds.org>.

HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB

Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society

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CONSERVATION COLUMN BY BOB SOLEM

According to a *Bay Journal* article, the Chesapeake Bay Program will meet the year 2000 population goals set for 14 waterfowl species but will fall short of the mark for seven others. Habitat restoration (such as wetland creation and enhancement) are paying off, but the *lack* of improvement in other important habitats (such as underwater grass beds) are holding back the recovery of other species. "For the past 10 years, a variety of groups have developed programs aimed at improving conditions for waterfowl nationwide and internationally," said Doug Forsell, a biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Chesapeake Bay Field Office. "The Chesapeake is a critical wintering ground for migrating waterfowl and increased populations here serve as an excellent barometer of conditions throughout the breeding grounds in the United States and Canada."

The drastic increase in numbers of snow geese is bad news since this population is increasing at the expense of other

PERCENTAGE POPULATION CHANGE FROM 1973-1977	
SNOW GOOSE	3945
CANADA GOOSE (MIGRATORY)	-35
BRANT	432
TUNDRA SWAN	-30
GADWALL	1143
AMERICAN WIGEON	85
AMERICAN BLACK DUCK	-32
MALLARD	32
NORTHERN SHOVELER	140
NORTHERN PINTAIL	86
GREEN-WINGED TEAL	649
CANVASBACK	7
REDHEAD	-55
RING-NECKED DUCK	243
SCAUP	33
SCOTERS	-62
LONG-TAILED DUCK (OLDSQUAW)	-44
BUFFLEHEAD	95
COMMON GOLDENEYE	-13
MERGANSERS	397
RUDDY DUCK	304

more desirable species. The chart does not show the increase in the numbers of non-migratory Mallards and Canada Geese, which cause environmental problems. Mute swans (which are a non-native species) have also increased dramatically but are not shown on the chart.

SUCCESSFUL SEED SALE BY EILEEN CLEGG

Again this fall the Bird Club had a wonderfully successful seed sale. I wish to express my thanks and appreciation to everyone who gave of their time and efforts and contributed to making this day happen.

Most of all, a special thanks goes out to everyone who purchased seed. Your generous purchase will enable the club to make much needed monetary donations to a variety of worthwhile conservation efforts. Again, thank you and I hope to see you at next fall's seed sale.