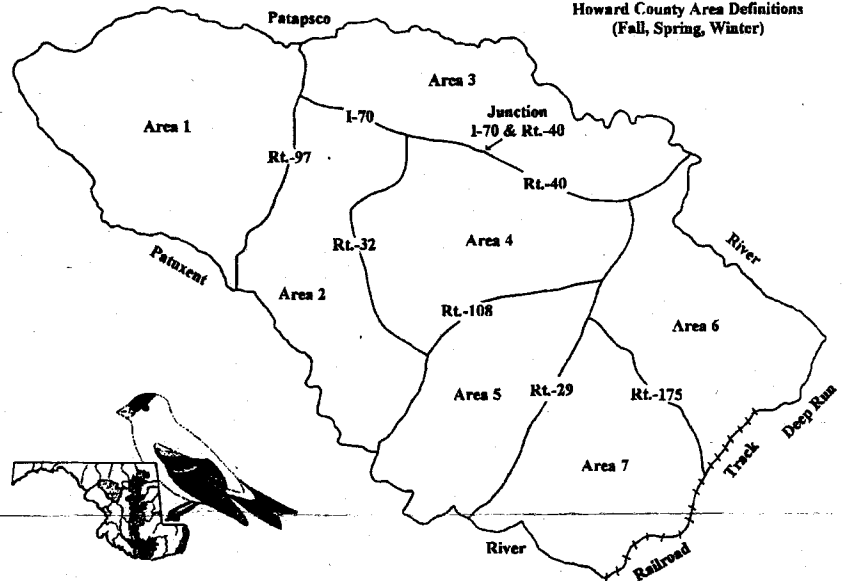


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SECOND MARYLAND BREEDING BIRD ATLAS BEGINS

BY JOANNE SOLEM & BONNIE OTT

The Maryland Ornithological Society begins its second statewide Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA) January 1, 2002. It will continue for five years. Field workers search assigned blocks for evidence of breeding using internationally accepted codes. Atlas areas are created by dividing U.S. Geological Survey 7 1/2 minute topographic maps into six sections called "blocks." In Howard County each of these blocks is further divided into four parts called "quarter-blocks" designed to show more subtle changes than might be possible on the larger grid.

This will be Howard County's third BBA. The Montgomery-Howard BBA prototype in the early 1970s was the first published effort in North America. The initial Maryland atlas ran from 1983-1987 with the results compiled in a handsome book.

Many Howard birders have already volunteered to cover a block for the project. Atlasing provides matchless opportunities to observe and interpret bird behavior. It is a way to learn about breeding activity through direct observation and will likely provide many special memories.

There are still a few unassigned blocks. If you would be interested in being part of this valuable project, contact Jo Solem 301-725-5037 or Bonnie Ott 410-461-3361. This is a project with long-term significance in which amateurs can make a contribution.

You can also provide valuable help without committing to responsibility for a block. In the course of the coming breeding season, if you find nests, fledglings, or adults feeding young birds, call either of the numbers listed above or contact Jo's e-mail at odnata@msn.com. Be sure to provide your name, date, and exact location of the sighting so proper credit can be given. You may also be able to contribute by obtaining or granting permission to bird significant parcels of private land in the county.

THE BIG SIT THAT ALMOST WASN'T

BY KURT SCHWARZ

The sun almost did not rise on the Howard County Bird Club's 2001 Big Sit!

For the uninitiated, the Big Sit! is an international event organized by the New Haven Bird Club. Participants circumscribe a seventeen foot circle, and get 24 hours to tick every bird species seen or heard from within the circle. But now to return to the story.

Howard County bird club had participated in the 1999 and 2000 Big Sits. When it came time to schedule the Big Sit for the Fall 2001 season, going by what the New Haven Bird Club had already indicated in two national publications, 21 October was chosen. Unfortunately, New Haven unexpectedly changed the date to 14 October after the Fall 2001 schedule was published, both in the MARYLAND YELLOWTHROAT as well as the GOLD-FINCH. I filed a strong letter of complaint with New Haven's organizer, who graciously called me with apologies. He was embarrassed that the date had been changed after he had already publicly stated that the 2001 edition would occur on 21 October. It was, however, out of his control. Nor were we the only circle that had already irrevocably set the date for 21 October. He would accept our results from 21 October. The Howard County Bird Club was no longer faced with the prospect of going it alone. Our results would be included with those of circles from the U.S., Canada, United Kingdom, Holland, and this year, South Africa! I was also assured that there would be no further sudden changes in the Big Sit's date, which would be set in January 2002.

21 October dawned with one intrepid birder already in place, myself. An hour later, about 0800, the next circle sitter, Mike Kerwin, arrived. Other Howard County stalwarts wan-

dered in over the course of the morning. A total of 21 Howard County birders took part this year. Howard County Parks catered the affair, as they did last year, by setting up a hamburger/hot dog grill to provide food for Sunday in the Park. Several birders took advantage of the food offerings. The lamb sandwiches of 2000 were missed this year.

The weather was lovely, sunny, quite comfortably warm by afternoon. By 2:00 p.m. the birding action had dropped off precipitously, and birders began to depart. By 4:00 I was alone, but doggedly kept at it. Alas the birds did not cooperate, and the only thing that kept me there until 5:00 p.m. was a birding friend, a non-HowCo member, who dropped by.

The 2001 results were a little disappointing at 49 species. We had 55 species in 2000, and 46 in 1999 (in the rain). Highlights of 2001 were a female Gadwall that was around most of the day, two merlins, and a remarkably cooperative Eastern Towhee.

The date of the 2002 Big Sit has not been set yet. It will probably be either the second or third Sunday of October. Join us this year. It's fun, relaxing, and offers a good chance of seeing just as many species as you would if you walked the entire two and a half miles around the lake. If we're lucky, Howard County Parks and Recreation will arrange catering for us again. If not we can always send Darius out for pizza!

HOWARD COUNTY RECREATION AND PARKS NEST BOX PROGRAM

Despite fewer new boxes and fewer volunteers than last year, the Recreation and Parks Nest Box Program fledged a new high of 404 Eastern Bluebirds in 2001. Carolina Chickadees totaled 53, Tree Swallows 95, Tufted Titmice 12, and Carolina Wrens 11. Some Howard County Bird Club members have been faithful volunteers. Sue and Wes Earp (11 years!), Lisa Colangelo (6), Kate and Dick Tufts (3), and Tim Ray (2). Kate and Dick Tufts fledged the highest number of bluebirds-56. Unfortunately, they also had 7 boxes vandalized at Warfield's Pond Park. One bluebird nest, monitored by volunteer Marie Vance, was built in a mailbox. Because the opening in this unorthodox site was larger than the usual 1 1/2 inch nest box entrance, a Brown-headed Cowbird was able to parasitize the nest. The bluebirds prudently abandoned the nest.

If you would like to volunteer to monitor nest boxes on county land (it's a great summertime family project), contact Sue Muller. Her e-mail address is smuller@co.ho.md.us. She can always use help.

ANNUAL POTLUCK DINNER SATURDAY, MARCH 2, 2002

BY MARY-JO BETTS

The annual potluck dinner will again be held at the Owen Brown Community Center on Saturday, March 2, 2002. 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 1, 2002. 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 10 "Costa Rica in the Year 2000 with MOS," by Darius Ecker.

Thursday, February 13 "Giant Panda Conservation and Management," by Lisa Stevens, Senior Curator National Zoo.

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 bonnie1163@home.com. Page numbers refer to Birding Howard County, Maryland by Joanne K. Solem

Start Your 2002 List January 1, Tuesday. All day. We will visit a variety of locations all within Howard County to find as many species as possible. This will be an all day trip with a break for lunch at a local diner. Meet at the Centennial Park boat dock at 8:00 a.m. Leader: Bonnie Ott, 410-461-3361. Facilities available. Pg. 5

Weekday Walk around Centennial Lake. January 14, Monday. 2-3 hours. Moderate walking on the paved path around the lake in search of waterfowl. Meet at the boat dock 8:30 a.m. Leader: John Maloney, 301-317-4961. Facilities available. Pg. 5

Delaware Weekend. January 19-21. Three day trip to Delaware birding hot spots. Bombay Hook, Fishing Creek and Cape Henlopen included. Some entry fees for parks can be expected. Lodging in the Rehoboth area TBD. Be prepared for cold, wet and wind. Trip limited to 20 participants. For info and to sign up contact: Kate Tufts 410-489-7052 or email: tuftsclaisy@erols.com. *Cancelled - weather*

Midwinter Count. February 2. See article on page 1 of this newsletter.

Wild Goose Chase. February 17, Sunday. Half or whole day. We will go chasing whatever interesting birds are around. Maybe anywhere in the state or a local feeder? Be prepared for anything. Meet at the Rt 100 Park and ride at 8:00 a.m. Leader: Bonnie Ott 410-461-3361

Winter Wonders of Bon Secours February 23, Saturday. 1.5-2 hours. We will walk the grounds of this spiritual retreat to search for winter birds. Moderate walking with some steep slopes. Wear appropriate footwear if snowy. Meet at the visitors parking lot 8:30 a.m. Leader: TBA. Facilities available.

~~Weekday Walk at Lake Elkhorn. February 25, Monday. 2 hours. Moderate walking on the paved path around the lake. Woodland birds and waterfowl abound. Meet at the Broken land Pkwy. Lot at 8:30 a.m. Leader: John Maloney. No facilities. Page 43~~

Pot Luck Dinner. March 2. See article on page 2 of this newsletter.

Centennial Park. March 3, Sunday. 3 hours. Moderate walking around the lake on a paved path. Meet at the west end parking lot 8:00 a.m. Leader: Mike Kerwin 410-461-2408. Facilities available. Pg. 5

Centennial Park. March 10, Sunday. 3 hours. Moderate walking around the lake on a paved path. Meet at the west end parking lot 8:00 a.m. Leader: TBA. Call 410-461-3361. Facilities available. Pg. 5

Triadelphia Reservoir 101. March 16, Saturday. Half day. Confused by where to bird at the dam? Get to know the reservoir hotspots: Greenbridge, Big Branch and Pigtail. Some difficult walking expected. Meet at the main parking lot on the dam at 8:00 a.m. to carpool to various locations. Leader: Jane Coskren, 410-381-7344. Facilities available.

Centennial Park. March 17, Sunday. 3 hours. Moderate walking around the lake on a paved path. Meet at the west end lot at 8:00 a.m. Leader: TBA. Call 410-461-3361. Facilities available. Pg. 5

First Day of Spring Weekday Walk at Font Hill. March 20, Wednesday. 1.5 hours. Easy walking on paved paths and mown grass. Meet at sign on Font Hill drive at 8:30 a.m. leader: Bonnie Ott. Call 410-461-3361. No facilities

Centennial Park. March 24, Sunday. 3 hours. Moderate walking around the lake on a paved path. Meet at the west end lot at 8:00 a.m. Leader: Karen Darcy and Kevin Heffernan. Call 410-461-3361 for info. Facilities available. Page 5

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 24, Thursday Don Waugh, 9522 Angelina Circle, Columbia, MD 21045, 410-381-8841

February 21, Thursday Bob and Jo Solem, 10617 Graeoch Rd., Laurel, MD 20723, 301-725-5073

MARCH - APRIL 2002 NEWSLETTER MATERIAL IS DUE JANUARY 25, 2002. 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>.



THE GOLDFINCH



A CHAPTER OF THE MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2002

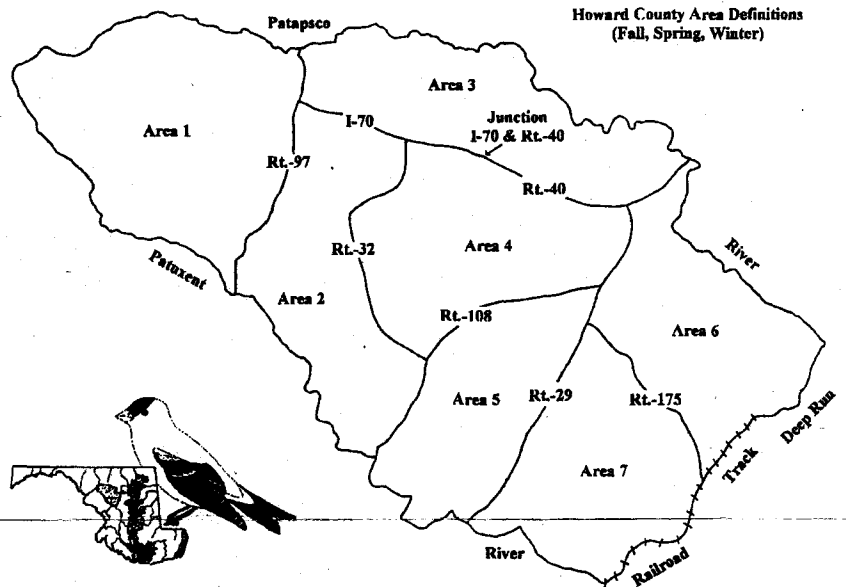
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