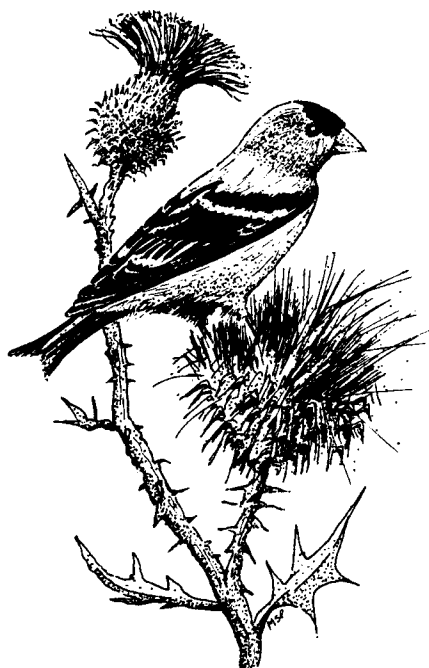


The Goldfinch

Newsletter of the Howard County Bird Club • A Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society



A PRESIDENT'S BELATED WELCOME

BY KURT SCHWARZ

I would like to welcome, belatedly, all members to the Howard Bird Club's 30th Anniversary season. To new members, I hope you will find your membership fun and informative. To renewing members who have braved the precipitous dues increase, thank you for your continued support. The increase will allow us to continue operating at the current level of service, and to hopefully maintain a stable dues structure for years to come.

The State level of the Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) is addressing some of the difficult issues that have arisen over the past year, such as its benefit to the local chapters and sanctuaries. The retreat held on November 9th went a long way toward addressing those concerns. Meanwhile, the Howard Chapter remains vibrant. Membership in the 2001-2002 exceeded 300. This year's membership is well on the way to approaching that number. This is all thanks to your support.

You can help to keep the Howard Chapter vigorous by volunteering your time and skills. We have many opportunities for volunteers at any level of birding skill. So if you have the time and inclination, let someone on the Board know. In the meantime, we have an immediate need for someone to take custody of the audio-visual equipment. This is not a demanding task—you only have to lug the gear to the monthly meetings. The equipment to be lugged consists of the slide projector, a small, collapsible table, and a large storage bin (note that the bin will not fit in the trunk of some compact cars, such

as my Tercel!). You do not have to worry about setting up the equipment, many members are capable of doing that. You only have to bring the equipment. It's a small, but vital contribution to the Club's operation. If interested, please contact me.

Speaking of contact, my e-mail address as published in the directory is incorrect, through no fault on the compiler. My provider played a trick on me and the compiler! The correct address is krschwa1@comcast.net. My home phone number is 410-461-1643. My wife and I ask that you not call later than 9 p.m., as we rise early in the morning. There is an answering machine for calls during the workday.

Wishing you all a fun and bird-filled 30th Anniversary Season!

THANKS TO PAULA ECKER FOR A JOB WELL DONE

BY DAVE HOLYOKE

You always know someone's job is tough when it takes *two* people to replace them. With this issue, Sue Probst and I take over the graphic design and editing of the newsletter. For the past five years, Paula Ecker has excelled at both jobs. Sue and I are quickly learning how much effort Paula put into this, without any complaints (I believe Darius may have heard a complaint or two about the publishing software, but that doesn't count). The club owes her much gratitude. Paula, please consider this article a very big round of applause!

Inside This Issue

18th Midwinter Count	2
Annual Lists Due	2
30 Years HoCo Bird Club	3
The Big Sit!	4
Calling All Atlases	4
Programs and Field Trips	5
Annual Potluck Dinner	5
Conservation Column	6
Midwinter Count Checklist	

The Goldfinch, newsletter of the *Howard County Bird Club*, is published five times per year. Copy deadline for the March/April 2003 issue is January 25, 2003.

Dave Holyoke, *Editor*

Suzanne Probst, *Graphic Artist*

Anyone is welcome to contribute articles or ideas which you think will be of interest to other birders. Copy may be mailed, or e-mailed to: Dave Holyoke
3557 Conchita Drive
Ellicott City, MD 21042
david.holyoke@ssa.gov

Please visit the Club's website at www.howardbirds.org

**Yes,
This is the Howard
County Bird Club
Newsletter**

By Dave Holyoke

I think you will all agree that the Howard County Bird Club is a unique collection of talent. From Nuclear Physicists to Naturalists, from Salespeople to Systems Analysts, we have it all. The club is especially fortunate to have a top notch artist, Sue Probst. I think you will agree that the new look for the newsletter is stunning.

In addition to new artwork, Sue has rearranged and reformatted, to improve both appearance and readability. Please let us know what you like, or don't like, about the changes. Finally, we hope to add new content to the newsletter. Please consider submitting an article, drawing, cartoon or poem (Ode to a Song Sparrow?) for the next newsletter. You can submit them to me at any time at david.holyoke@ssa.gov. If you want your work in the March/April edition, you need to get it to me by 01/25/03. Your submissions must be related to birding or the club and they cannot be copyrighted or commercial. Humorous and anecdotal material is in short supply so I hope to hear from you soon.

**HOWARD COUNTY
ANNUAL LISTS DUE**

A list of all the birds seen in the county during the 2002 calendar year is being compiled for the 23rd 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 28, 2003. The length of the list isn't important, because your list may contain the bird that will make 2002 a year for the record books.

**EIGHTEENTH ANNUAL MIDWINTER COUNT
SATURDAY FEBRUARY 1, 2003**

By MARY-JO BETTS AND JO SOLEM

Join the Howard County Bird Club's Eighteenth Annual Midwinter Count on Saturday, February 1, 2003. **Mary-Jo Betts**, 301-596-5859 (email-mbetts1030@aol.com) and **Jo Solem** 301-725-5037 (email-odenata@msn.com) are the count coordinators. You may volunteer to participate by signing up at a meeting, by calling Mary-Jo, or by contacting one of the area coordinators:

- Area 1 Mark Wallace 301-725-6370
- Area 2 Emy Holdridge 410-964-0196
- Area 3 Maureen & Dave Harvey 410-795-3117
- Area 4 Mike McClure 410-531-2780
- Area 5 Kevin Heffernan 410-418-8731
- Area 6 Bonnie Ott 410-461-3361
- Area 7 Kurt Schwarz 410-461-1643

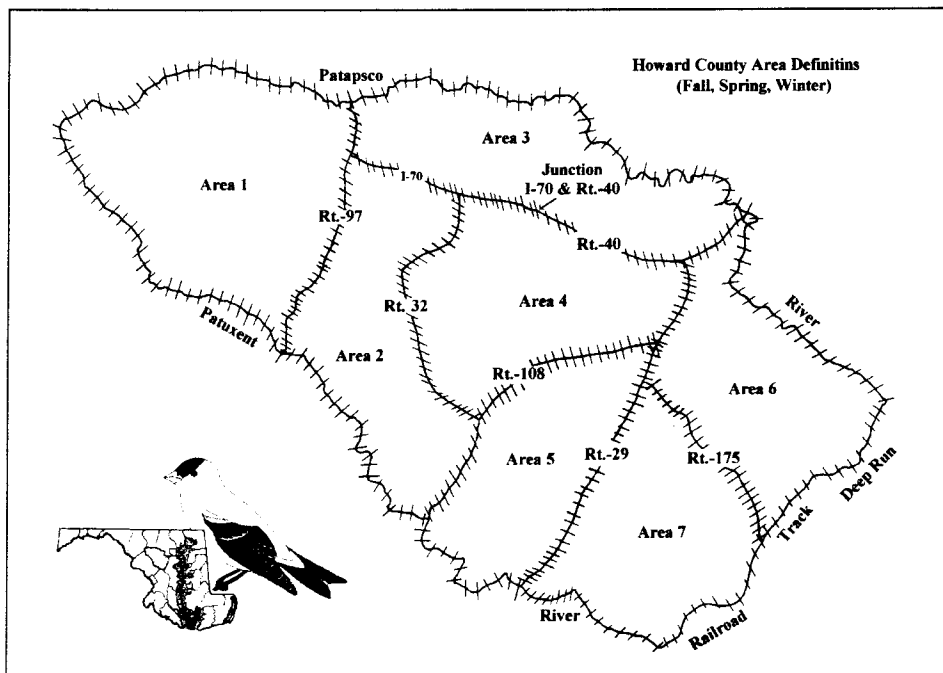
If you have covered a particular location for many years, call the area coordinator to tell them you want to cover it again. If you wish to be placed with a more experienced birder, be sure to let the coordinator know. Beginning birders are always welcome, as are individuals who may wish to count only for part of the day.

A checklist for the count is included in this newsletter. If you need additional checklists your area

coordinators will provide them. If you wish to count only at your feeder, call 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 Waugh's**, 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 29, to reserve space; to sign up for a vegetable, salad, or dessert; and for directions. If you cannot make it to the meal, you are welcome to drop in at 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, Mary-Jo, or Jo (between 5:00 & 6:00a.m.) if you are unsure of the status of the count.



WELCOME TO MIDDLE AGE, HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB!

30 YEARS OF HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB HISTORY—BY BOB SOLEM

Our beloved bird club has a big birthday this year. I think you will note from the list below that we have made a big difference in Howard County over the last 30 years. For those who have been with us since the beginning, thanks for starting a great club! For the newer members, keep up the good work!

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1972 Club founded as a Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society
Bookstore and newsletter established</p> <p>1973 Howard County Breeding Bird Atlas field work begins</p> <p>1974 First annual club potluck dinner held</p> <p>1975 Field work for Breeding Bird Atlas project completed
Birding '75 workshop jointly sponsored with Patuxent Chapter MOS (held annually for 5 years)</p> <p>1976 Howard County Rare Bird Alert organized</p> <p>1977 County Council names American Goldfinch the county bird at the Bird Club's suggestion
Mounted bird collection started</p> <p>1978 Spring wildflower survey of county begins
Club starts habitat walks in county parks with Recreation & Parks Department
"Montgomery/Howard County Breeding Bird Atlas" published in <i>Maryland Birdlife</i> (first published atlas in North America)</p> <p>1979 Seed sales initiated as member and community service and major fundraiser
<i>Attracting Birds in the Maryland Piedmont</i> published
Annual county bird list compilation revived
Seasonal collection of migration records for <i>Maryland Birdlife</i> begins</p> <p>1980 Cavity nesting species emphasis adopted</p> <p>1981 Tenth anniversary fund drive raises \$3650 for The Nature Conservancy's Nassawango Creek sanctuary in Maryland
Special edition of Bird Club newsletter features bird behavior</p> <p>1982 Spring wildflower checklist published; autumn wildflower survey begins
Display at Howard county Fair for first time</p> <p>1983 Bluebirds in the Parks program founded with Recreation and Parks Department
Reception and dinner honors Chandler S. Robbins' publication of revised edition of <i>Birds of North America</i> field guide</p> <p>1985 Maryland Wildlife Conservation Stamp adopted by state legislature (originated by Martha Chestem with chapter and state MOS support)
Preliminary Checklist of Birds of Howard County (1956-1984) published
<i>Boost Bluebirds (And Other Cavity Nesters) Booklet I</i> published
"Birding 'Hot Spots' in Howard County" started in club newsletter</p> | <p>1986 First annual Midwinter Count held (first in the state)
<i>Boost Bluebirds (And Other Cavity Nesters) Booklet II</i> published</p> <p>1987 Maryland Breeding Bird Atlas project field work completed
Chapter Memorial Fund established
Flower Feature inaugurated in newsletter</p> <p>1988 Bird Checklist Project for county parks and Columbia lakes started
Bird Club adopts monetary goal for preserving rare Maryland habitats and Latin American wintering grounds for Neotropical migrants
Boost Bluebird project fledges record high 1563 bluebirds countywide
Maryland Income Tax Checkoff for Chesapeake Bay and Endangered species adopted after years of active chapter and state MOS support</p> <p>1989 <i>Birding Year in Howard County</i> feature in newsletter started
Total of \$6000 donated to The Nature Conservancy's Appalachian Campaign in 1989 and 1990</p> <p>1990 <i>Centennial Park Bird Checklist</i> published
Bird Club provides bulletin board at Centennial Park
Breeding Bird census plot in Middle Patuxent Environmental Area revived</p> <p>1991 \$3600 contributed to Monteverde Cloud Forest in Costa Rica</p> <p>1992 \$5000 given to Sierra De Las Minas in Guatemala
<i>Bluebird Handbook for Howard County Maryland</i> published</p> <p>1993 Revised <i>Bird Checklist for Centennial Park</i> published
\$5000 contributed to Bladen Mountains Nature Reserve (Belize) and Cerro San Gil Ecological Reserve (Guatemala)
<i>The Butterflies of Howard County, Maryland</i> checklist published
First successful Bald Eagle nesting in Howard County reported</p> <p>1994 <i>Howard County Plant</i> list published
<i>Checklist of the Birds of Howard County 1956-1993</i> published
"Seasonal Highlights of Howard County" bird sightings started in club newsletter
Fall Count of birds started in Howard County (statewide in 1995)</p> <p>1995 <i>Rockburn Branch Park Bird Checklist</i> published
<i>Birding Howard County, Maryland</i> site guide book published</p> |
|--|--|

(Continued on page 4.)

30 YEARS OF HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB HISTORY (Continued from page 3.)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1996 Howard County Bird Club Internet page started (includes birds, plants, butterflies, dragonflies)
Club newsletter renamed <i>The Goldfinch</i>
"Local Birding Update" added to club Internet page
Standard boundaries adopted for all three Howard County seasonal bird counts</p> <p>1997 \$2000 to Belt Woods Natural Environmental Area brings Howard County Bird Club contributions to save habitat over \$40,000
Planning for Howard County Bird Club's 25th Anniversary</p> <p>1998 <i>Columbia Lakes Bird Checklist</i> published</p> | <p>25th Year Picnic Brunch held on APL grounds
Howard Bird Club agitates for control of deer population</p> <p>1999 Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel overnight winter trips started
Howard joins <i>The Big Sit!</i>, holding it at Centennial</p> <p>2000 Fifteenth Annual Midwinter Count held
Fifth year of dragonfly/damselfly survey</p> <p>2001 <i>Schooley Mill Park Bird Checklist</i> published
John C. Clegg Memorial Meadow dedicated</p> <p>2002 Five-year MD/DC Breeding Bird Atlas project starts</p> |
|---|--|

2002's Big Sit!

By Kurt Schwarz

The sun came up on October 13, 2002, to illuminate a lone birder on the shore of Centennial Lake. Or that's the way it was supposed to work. In fact, October 13 dawned cloudy with occasional drizzle. I noted a few species as I walked in the dark, such as Canada Goose, Mallard, Carolina Wren. A few more were checked off before the second birder showed up at 9 a.m. A total of 11 people ultimately participated. They were mostly Howard County Bird Club regulars, but two non-members joined in the fun, including someone from the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies!

Participation and the species count were down significantly this year. We only logged 39 species, well below our previous low in 1999 of 46 in the pouring rain. This was due, in part, to the weather. Bad as the clouds and drizzle were, the light south winds were no help either. The raptor total was dismal, only 3 species.

The last fellow birder departed by 3 p.m. I stuck it out for another hour, and finally checked off a Ruby-crowned Kinglet. I was also treated to the amusing sight to two little girls who were trying to puzzle out what that large white bird was. They voiced opinions that it was a Swan or a Flamingo. Their father corrected them, stating it was an Egret, and he looked to me for confirmation. It was a Great Egret, which had been showing itself periodically throughout the day.

The Big Sit! is an international event held the second Sunday of October. It was originated and organized by the New Haven Bird Club in Connecticut. A 17-foot circle is described, and participants have 24 hours to count any and all birds seen or heard from inside the circle. Mark your calendars for 2003. I'll be on the south shore of Centennial before dawn and eager to greet anyone else who cares to relax and check off about as many species as they'd see if they trekked the two and a half miles around the lake. Can we repeat 1999's highlight of a Sora? Be there and find out!

CALLING ALL ATLASERS!

By Jo Solem and Bonnie Ott
Howard County Coordinators

Howard County birders have completed a highly successful initial season as part of the second Maryland Breeding Bird Atlas Project. To help plan for 2003, the coordinators are scheduling two identical winter afternoon meetings to summarize data from 2002, to share field experiences, and to supply suggestions for locating and confirming selected species. Jay Sheppard will be assisting.

If you are a registered Atlaser, please plan to attend one (not both) of the following: Saturday, January 25 or Sunday, February 23, 2003 from 1:15 to 4:00 p.m. The sessions will be held in the meeting room of the Miller Branch library on Frederick Rd. The capacity of the room is 50 so it is necessary to register with Bonnie at 410-461-3361 (leave a message). This will also enable us to reach you in case of weather-caused cancellation. A make-up session will be held in case of cancellation.

If you worked out a favorite technique, designed a spreadsheet, or have ideas to share, bring them along. Anyone new to the area or to the atlas concept is welcome to attend a session to investigate the project. Atlasing is an exciting way to expand birding skills while contributing to a research project.

NOTE DATE CHANGE:

2003 MOS CONFERENCE IN POTOMAC, MARYLAND

The 2003 Annual MOS Conference will be held **May 24-26, 2003 (Saturday-Monday)** in Potomac, Maryland at the William F. Bolger Center. Mark your calendar now to join us for a great weekend of birding during Spring migration. There will be many exciting activities and field trips planned by the conference committee. Detailed information will be mailed at a later date.

CALENDAR OF PROGRAMS AND FIELD TRIPS

PROGRAMS are held at **Longfellow Elementary School**, 5470 Hesperus Drive, Columbia. Meeting is cancelled if schools are closed for any reason. Hospitality session and bookstore begin at 7:30 p.m. Meeting/program begins at 8:00 p.m.

Thursday, January 9 "Whooping Crane Recovery Program," Dr. George Gee, Patuxent Research Center

Thursday, February 13 "Colorado Chicken Trek," Bob Ringler

FIELD TRIPS are a great way to improve birding skills, explore new places and meet other birders. Plan to arrive at the meeting area with enough time to be prepared to begin birding at the designated time. Carpooling is encouraged. Come prepared with appropriate footwear and gear (the trip description will offer advice). The leader has the option to cancel due to inclement weather. Directions for trips not on ADC maps may be found on the howardbirds.org website. If you have questions, call or e-mail the trip leader at the number/address listed in the trip description, or field trip coordinator, **Bonnie Ott**, 410-461-3361 or bonnie1163@comcast.net

To help make trips successful please stay behind the leader, keep talking to a minimum and stay with the group. Don't hesitate to ask questions or alert the leader to something you've spotted. Howard Bird Club members will be given priority on trips that are limited by number of participants. No pets.

START YOUR 2003 BIRD LIST

January 1, Wednesday, half-day.

The one day of the year when every bird you spot is new! Start your year list off with a bang, joining us for a morning of listing. We will visit a variety of locations around the county looking for as many species as possible. Meet at the Centennial park concession stand at 8:00 a.m. Leader; Kurt Schwarz (with scope) 410-461-1643. Moderate walking, facilities available.

ATLAS MEETING

January 25, Saturday. Registered atlasers only. Call Bonnie Ott at 410-461-3361 to register for this meeting, or the meeting on February 23 (not both). See article entitled "Calling All Atlasers!" for more information. 1:15 to 4:00 p.m. at the Miller Branch Library on Frederick Road.

MIDWINTER COUNT AND POTLUCK TALLY

February 1, Saturday. Whether you are a beginner or an experienced birder, you are welcome to join us for a day of counting everything we see in Howard County. See article entitled "Eighteenth Annual Midwinter Count" on page 2 for more information on how to sign up.

WINTER BIRDS AT ALPHA RIDGE PARK AND ENVIRONS

February 8, Saturday, half-day. We will bird the areas around Alpha Ridge with a possible trip into the landfill and/or Mt. Pleasant. Wintering sparrows, pipits, horned larks and hawks. Trip may include difficult walking through bleak habitat. Meet at Alpha Ridge Park at 8:00 a.m. Leader; Ralph Cullison (with scope) 410-442-2181. Facilities available.

ATLAS MEETING (makeup session)

February 23, Sunday. Registered atlasers only. Call Bonnie Ott at 410-461-3361 to register for this meeting, or the meeting on 01/25 (not both). See article entitled "Calling All Atlasers!" for more information. 1:15 to 4:00 p.m. at the Miller Branch Library on Frederick Road.

POTLUCK DINNER

March 8, Saturday. All club members and their guests are invited to enjoy the food and fun at the Owen Brown Community Center. Social hour is at 6:30 p.m. and dinner starts at 7:00. Contact Mary-Jo Betts at 301-596-5859 to sign up and tell her what you are bringing. See article entitled "Annual Potluck Dinner" in next column for more information.

Annual Potluck Dinner Saturday, March 8, 2003

By Mary-Jo Betts

The annual potluck dinner will again be held at the Owen Brown Community Center on Saturday, March 8, 2003. Social hour starts at 6:30 pm and dinner starts at 7:00 pm. 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, main dish, vegetable or 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**, 301-596-5859 or email, mbetts1030@aol.com, by March 5, 2003. You will need to specify the number of attendees and what food you are bringing. Mark your dishes and any accompanying serving implements with your name so we can get them back to the right person. If you cannot cook, adjustments can be made.

Let Mary-Jo know if you would like to help in any way, come early at 6:00 PM to help set up, or help clean up after. If you want to participate in the slide presentation, please bring your nature slides. 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 others who share your passion 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.

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

January 23, Thursday

Kevin Heffernan, 9775 Diversified Ln., Ellicott City, MD 21042

410- 418-8731

March 6 (postponed snow)

February 27, Thursday

Bob and Jo Solem, 10617 Graeoch Rd., Laurel, MD 20723

301-725-5073



HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB
 Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society
 6007 Flywheel Court
 Columbia, MD 21044
 ADDRESS SERVICE SUGGESTED

NON-PROFIT ORG
 U.S. POSTAGE
 PAID
 COLUMBIA, MD
 PERMIT NO. 452

Inside This Issue:
 President's Welcome
 18th Annual Midwinter Count and Checklist
 30 Years of Howard County Bird Club History
 The Big Sit!
 Calling All Atlasers
 Programs, Field Trips, and Annual Potluck Dinner
 Conservation Column

CONSERVATION COLUMN
"LAW OF UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES"
 BY BOB SOLEM

Another of these "who would have thought?" stories, this one from *Natural History* (May, 2002) taken from *Canadian Field-Naturalist* (115, 2001):

"The spotted knapweed is a European invader that, over the last hundred years, has spread throughout the pastures and rangeland of western North America [and eastern N.A.—we have it in Howard County]... To combat it, agricultural agencies began to introduce gall flies in the 1970s. The flies' larvae build galls within the flower buds and steal some of the plant's energy, leading to a reduction in the number of seeds that develop.

"It turns out that the deer mouse views these larvae as yummy snacks and, while foraging for them, may accidentally ingest whole knapweed seeds. Since the seeds can survive

passage through the mouse's digestive system, the little mammal may contribute to knapweed's dispersal. Seeds may travel even farther if an owl catches the mouse and then, at the end of its meal, regurgitates the seeds along with the undigested bones.

"This unexpected seed-dispersal pathway begins, ironically, with the very biological control agent brought in to curtail knapweed's spread. Gall flies may still be worthy allies in the fight against knapweed, but they provide one more example of an important fact: *once introduced, species become part of large ecological webs, with possibly unforeseen consequences.*"

Note from the editor: Just like our own health, our planet will be far better off if we take *preventive*, rather than *curative* measures.

SEED SALE THANKS
 BY EILEEN CLEGG

The Bird Club had another successful seed sale this Fall. 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 to everyone who purchased seed. Your generous purchase will enable the club to make much needed monetary donations to worthwhile conservation efforts. Since our sales were a bit low compared to last year, the Board of Directors and I would appreciate any ideas on how to improve next year's sale. Feel free to give Kurt Schwarz a call at 410-461-1643. Thanks again for your support. I hope to see you at next fall's seed sale.

DO WE HAVE YOUR CORRECT MAILING ADDRESS? Your correct email address? Remember to tell us when you move or change providers. Otherwise you may miss out on some of our exciting news! Send your new mailing address to: Emy Holdridge (Treasurer) 5812 Harness Court Columbia, MD 21044 Send your new email to: odenata@msn.com