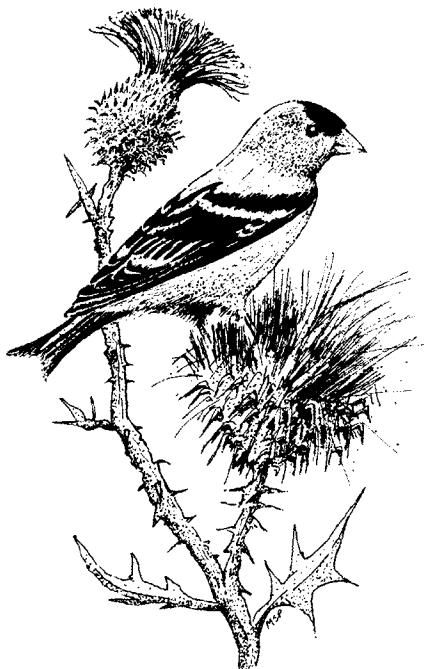


The Goldfinch

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



AUTUMN BIRD RECORDS AUGUST 1 TO NOVEMBER 30, 2002

BY JOANNE SOLEM

Inside This Issue

Autumn Bird Records	1
Braving the Arctic	3
First Year Atlas Results	4
Trails May Be Wet	5
Mystery Warbler in January	5
Chapter's Bird Collection	5
Odonate Survey 2002	6
Thanks to Dr. Gee	6
Programs and Field Trips	7
Conservation Column	8

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

Autumn 2002 did not elicit widespread enthusiasm among local observers. Perhaps expectations had been raised unrealistically by the extraordinary autumn of 2001. That, added to the excellent results of the first year of the Maryland Breeding Bird Atlas and the effects of another year of drought, left many birders feeling let down as the end of the year approached. As always, however, there were bright spots. (See the end of the article for abbreviations for place names and observers.)

Two Pied-billed Grebes arrived on Elkhorn on 8/13 (SN). Lone Horned Grebes were reported twice: 9/29 Triadelphia (KH,KD) and 10/30 Centennial Park (EH).

Double-crested Cormorants continued at local lakes (many observers) with the last one present 11/1 at Centennial (J&RS). A flock of 90 on 10/20 over Manahan was a new county high (BO).

An American Bittern showed up 10/13 at the UMDCF (BO,EH,HH,HF) staying until 10/18 (BO+). The year's last Great Egret was spotted 11/20 (third latest date) at Elliott Rd Pond (EH). Green Herons left on an early 10/7 from Elkhorn (SN). Three Black-crowned Night-Herons (1 adult) were at Elkhorn 9/18 (SN;KS); the latest were 2 at Wilde Lake 10/1 (DOD).

The season's first Snow Goose was seen over UMDCF 10/6 (BO+); the only other white phase reported was 10/9 at Waterford farm (WE). A blue phase was seen 11/13 at APL (JWi). Tundra Swans were scarce with just two reports: 12 on 11/18 at Elkhorn (SN) & about a dozen heard at dusk 11/26 over No. Laurel (JSh).

Fall Count tallied 48 Wood Ducks countywide with a seasonal high for a single location of 25 on 10/3 at Meadowbrook (HH). On 10/31 HH had 17 Gadwalls (a new high) & 8 American Black Ducks at Triadelphia, with 40 the seasonal high there on 11/27 (HH,SAr). Eight Blue-winged Teal dropped onto Elkhorn 10/7 (KS). Northern Pintails were sighted from 9/21 at Elkhorn (D&LS-1 female) to 11/27 on Triadelphia (HH,SAr-3 males). Six Green-winged Teal were seen 11/2 at UMDCF (BO,EH,JS). Canvasbacks were few with a maximum on 11/27 of 3 at Wilde Lake & 1 at Elkhorn (HH,SAr). Fifteen Ring-necked Ducks were present 11/3 at Wilde Lake (CN), an unusually low maximum. Lesser Scaup were detected at two locations on 10/31: Centennial (EH-9) & Triadelphia (HH-1). The first Bufflehead was spotted 10/30 at Centennial (EH) with a high of 45 on 11/27 at Triadelphia (HH,SAr). A male Hooded Merganser was seen 10/30 on Elkhorn (EH) with a high on 11/27 of 18 at Triadelphia & 5 at Centennial (HH, SAr). An early Ruddy Duck appeared 8/6 on Wilde Lake (HZ); the high was 30 on 11/2 at Centennial (HF).

(Continued on page 2.)

All seasonal sightings are welcome. Submit data to odenata@msn.com or to 10617 Graeloch Rd, Laurel, MD 20723. Material is due three days after the end of the season: winter (Dec-Feb), spring (March-May), summer (June-July), autumn (Aug-Nov). Any species that is listed on the Howard County Field Checklist as accidental or hypothetical or is a new county record must be accompanied by documentation. Questions? Contact Jo at the above addresses or at 301-725-5037.

Ospreys were widely reported with a high of 3 over Rockburn on 9/13 (RG) & 10 on Fall Count. As has been the case in recent years, there were numerous autumn reports of Bald Eagles, among them RC+, HH, JMK, E&JMe, KM, KS. An adult was feeding on a deer carcass 11/4 at UMDCF (SPr). The first Northern Harrier was noted 9/21 at the landfill (RC). Broad-winged Hawk flights through the county were mediocre with a modest high of 300+ on 9/18 at UMDCF (BO,EH,JS). A few Merlins were spotted with a high of 3 on 10/19 at Mt. Pleasant (ROr). Single Peregrine Falcons were tallied on 10/12 at Western (BO+) & 10/15 at Schooley (HH).

The first American Coot didn't show up until 10/23 on Elkhorn (SN). They were the only member of the rail family reported.

Locating shorebirds was a problem this season. Normally, dropping water levels expose mudflats at predictable places along the reservoirs in Aug & Sept. This year, most of those areas had been sun-baked for many months and, at several sites, were covered by tall annual vegetation. Water levels at Triadelphia were so low that the Pigtail and Triadelphia Lake entrances were closed all summer which made monitoring the small areas of remaining mud difficult or impossible. Despite these drawbacks, there were a few good reports. Early August was the peak on Triadelphia's north end: 8/5 6 Spotted Sandpipers & 20 to 40 Least Sandpipers (HH); 8/6 6 Semipalmated Plovers, 20 Killdeer, 80 to 100 Semipalmated Sandpipers (a new high), 3 Pectoral Sandpipers & 2 White-rumped Sandpipers, always a choice species (all HH,RH). The last 2 Greater Yellowlegs were noted 11/3 at UMDCF (HF). Two Wilson's Snipe (formerly Common Snipe) flushed on 9/18 at UMDCF (BO,EH,JS), which tied the second earliest date.

A Ring-billed Gull returned to Wilde Lake 8/6 (HZ) & a Herring Gull cruised over Race Rd on 10/7 (BO,JS), but this was a season without a Laughing Gull. What a difference a landfill makes! Just 4 years ago (8/22/98) 1500 were counted at the landfill. A few Caspian Terns were

seen at Triadelphia: 8/11 (HH-2) & 9/14 (EH-1) plus 8/30 at Elkhorn (JW-1). Two Forster's Terns were present 9/14 at Brighton Dam (EH; KH,KD). One was reported at APL 10/30 (KH) which lingered till 10/31 (KH;HH) It established a new late date by a month.

Common Nighthawk passage ran from 1 on 8/12 at Wilde Lake (HZ) to 2 on 9/30 over No. Laurel (JSh) with small groups on 8/27 near Ellicott City (DFa-15) & Rt 32/Cedar Lane (JW-7), as well as 17 over Carroll Mill Rd (K&BB,SS,MV,HF) on 9/21. The last 3 Chimney Swifts passed overhead on cold, showery 10/19 at Mt. Pleasant (RG+), where a tardy Ruby-throated Hummingbird was also seen (BO,EH+).

Red-headed Woodpeckers (mostly immatures) made a nice showing with all reports in mid-September: 9/11 Centennial (BO-1), 9/12 Manahan (BO-1) & Schooley (EH-1), 9/14 Ellicott City (KH-1 adult), 9/21 landfill (RC-1) & Carroll Mill Rd (K&BB,SS,MV,HF-2 adults). The first Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were spotted on 9/29 at Rockburn (KH,KD-1) & Mt. Pleasant (RT+-1). Highs of 3 were reported 10/14 at Dunloggin Ct (KS) & 11/8 at Wilde Lake (SPr).

Olive-sided Flycatchers were few with 1 on 8/27 at Manahan (BO) & another on a new late date of 9/21 in Hobbit's Glen, west Columbia (ES, MWr). A major Eastern Phoebe movement was caught between 9/29 when 15 to 20 were counted in the Old Frederick Rd section of Patapsco (J&TDC) and 10/3 when 30 were tallied at Meadowbrook (HH).

The last Blue-headed Vireo was found 11/7 at Wilde Lake (BO+), the second latest ever. The final Warbling Vireo was seen 9/23 at Elkhorn (JMa+). Philadelphia Vireos were well represented in a two week period: 9/10 Elkhorn (JMa), 9/13 Schooley (HH), 9/15-16 Rockburn (BO+), 9/16 MPEA (HH), & 9/24 Fore Bay (HH; KS). The only Horned Lark reported was 1 on 10/18 at UMDCF (BO,EH). There were still 5 Tree Swallows (RC+,KS) & 1 Northern Rough-winged Swallow (RC,BO) over Centennial 11/3. The Tree was the second latest ever, but the Rough-winged was a new late date by a month!

The lone Red-breasted Nuthatch reported appeared in Swansfield 10/1, 10/10 & 11/10 (JTv). A Brown Creeper & a Winter Wren were detected 10/10 (a rather late arrival date) at Wilde Lake (HZ). Marsh Wrens were spotted at 4 locations: 9/30 Race Rd (JMa), 10/2 to 10/23 UMDCF (BO+), 10/4 Plum Tree (BO,EH), & 10/12 Western (BO+). Both kinglet species arrived 9/6 at WILLK (HZ). This was the second earliest date for the Golden-crowned, but a normal arrival for the Ruby-crowned.

Single Gray-cheeked Thrushes were seen 9/19 at MPEA (HH) & 10/6 at Dunloggin Ct (KS). Fall Count logged 4 Swainson's Thrushes. The last Brown Thrashers of the season were spotted 10/20 on a Schooley trip: 1 by DHy, 1 by KS. An American Pipit flew over the UMDCF 9/18 (BO,EH,JS), the third earliest ever. The seasonal high was a modest 80 at the same location 11/2 (BO,EH,JS).

A flock of 200 Cedar Waxwings 11/14 at Bon Secours (ES) was among the largest number ever recorded in the county.

Most warbler species were tallied, but generally in small numbers. A Magnolia Warbler seen 10/26 at Kittamaquundi was the second latest ever (MJa). Single Cape May Warblers were reported by JMa, WEb, BO & HH, as well as 2 on 10/20 Schooley (D&MH), the third latest on record. Fifteen Black-throated Blue Warblers 9/7 at MPEA was a nice total (BO,EH,JS). Because Yellow-rumped Warblers are one of the most common warbler migrants, the high of 80 on 10/18 at Elkhorn (JC), although nice, was not exceptional. A Black-throated Green Warbler on 10/26 at Wilde Lake was the second latest record (D0d). Blackburnian Warblers are attractive in any plumage. The one at Fore Bay 10/31 (JC,SN) was special because it established a new late date. No single observer count of Palm Warblers exceeded a dozen which is an extremely low maximum. Ten Black-and-white Warblers were present 9/7 in the MPEA, a new high (BO,EH,JS). A Northern Waterthrush 8/27 arrival at Wilde Lake (HZ) & a 10/7 Race Rd departure (BO) were both good dates.

AUTUMN BIRD RECORDS (Continued from page 2.)

A pair of **Hooded Warblers** on 10/6 at UMDCF set a new late date (**BO+**). An 8/23 arrival of a **Wilson's Warbler** on Manahan was the second earliest (**BO**). A **Yellow-breasted Chat** lingered until 11/5 at MPEA (**HMz**). The only **Orange-crowned Warbler** detected was seen on a field trip on 10/12 at Western (**BO+**). A **Connecticut Warbler** was spotted on a new early date of 8/22 at Centennial (**BO**); others were seen on 9/24 at Fore Bay (**KS**) & 10/3 at Meadowbrook (**HH**). **Mourning Warbler** sightings were as follows: 9/15 Rockburn (**BO,KH,KD,RC,JCo,EH,KS**), 9/18 UMDCF (**BO,EH,JS**), & 10/14 Meadowbrook, a new late date (**HH**). All Mournings were females or immature males.

The morning of 9/12 **BO** had a nice warbler fallout on Manahan which included 18 **American Redstarts**, 24 **Magnolias**, 4 **Blackpolls**, 4 **Black-throated Blues**, 8 **Chestnut-sideds**, 2 **Northern Parulas**, & 1 **Wilson's**.

This was not a noteworthy fall for sparrows despite searches of normally productive locations. The high for **Chipping Sparrows** was 20 on 9/25 at Waterford farm (**BO,JS,MW**). Single **Vesper Sparrows** were reported 9/21 at Mt. Pleasant (**KH,KD,MKr**) & 10/15 at Schooley (**HH**). **Savannah Sparrows** reached a peak of 350 on 10/18 at UMDCF (**BO+**), while a **Grasshopper Sparrow** at the same location 10/27 tied the late departure date (**BO,HH,KCo**). The all-day sparrow search on 10/12 turned up 9 species including 16 **Lincoln's Sparrows**, almost half of the 34 **BO** registered for the season, a total she considered average. **Swamp Sparrows** reached a high of 200 on 10/18 at UMDCF (**BO**). The earliest **White-throated Sparrow** was spotted 9/21 at Schooley (**NM**).

A young male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** lingered until 11/30 in Brush Run (east Columbia) breaking the old late date by 5 days (**JW**). The following records are all from UMDCF. A **Blue Grosbeak** & an **Indigo Bunting** were seen 10/23 (**BO**), the second latest date for both species. On 9/13 there were 70-80 Indigo Buntings present (**BO,EH,JS**), a new high. One to two **Dickcissels** were seen 10/2 to 10/18 (**BO+**), & **Bobolinks** from 9/13 (**BO,HH,JS-22**) to 11/2

Intrepid Club Members Brave the Arctic

by Dave Holyoke

Well, it was really Rehoboth, but with a brisk wind and Mary-Jo Betts' thermometer registering single-digits, it felt like the frozen north. A group of 12 of us toured Delaware over the Martin Luther King weekend. We followed an itinerary beautifully crafted by Kate Tufts. Highlights of the trip included great looks at Lapland Longspurs (a life bird for many) and Pipits just outside Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge. We also had great looks at Vespers Sparrows, Short-Eared Owls and lots of waterfowl at other Delaware hot spots. Our quest for the Tufted Duck and other rarities was fruitless; possibly because many of the ponds were frozen, but all agreed that the trip was a big success.



While Kate was the star trip planner, we agreed that Kurt Schwarz did a great job leading the trip. In addition to birding, Kurt led us to Dos Locos, a Mexican seafood place. This excursion got a bit wild, with Ralph Cullison donning a huge sombrero. (The "Margarita table" enjoyed the look on his face when the waiter sneaked the birthday hat on his head.) You should also ask Kevin Heffernan about cactus throwing. Finally, the next night, Kurt led us to the Dogfish Head, where we sampled local beers.

So you see, birders are not as boring as some people might think! Please consider joining us at next year's January birding adventure. Remember to sign up early because numbers have to be limited.

(**BO,EH,JS-1**). A **Rusty Blackbird** was detected 10/27 (**BO+**); with a flock of 20 on 11/7 (**BO+**).

The only **Purple Finch** reported was 10/15 in Worthington (**EMe**). A single **Pine Siskin** was sighted 11/13 in Swansfield (**JTv**). After watching nesting siskins in her parents' yard in northern Minnesota last summer, the bird at her feeder was a cinch to identify.

Observers: **SAR**–Stan Arnold, **K&BB**–Karan & Bill Blum, **JCo**–Joe Corcoran, **JC**–Jane Coskren, **TDC**–T. Dennis Coskren, **KCo**–Keith Costley, **RC**–Ralph Cullison, III, **KD**–Karen Darcy, **WE**–Wes Earp, **WEb**–Ward Ebert, **DFa**–Dave Farner, **HF**–Harry Fink, **RG**–Ralph Geuder, **D&MH**–Dave & Maureen Harvey, **KH**–Kevin Heffernan, **HH**–Hans Holbrook, **RH**–Robert Holbrook, **EH**–Emy Holdridge, **DHy**–Dave Holyoke, **MJa**–Marcus James, **MKr**–Mindy Krupp, **NM**–Nancy Magnusson, **JMa**–John Maloney, **KM**–Kathy Mariano, **JMk**–John McKitterick, **EMe**–Elayne Metter, **JMe**–Jeff Metter, **HMz**–Helen Metzman, **SN**–Sue Neri, **CN**–Carol Newman, **Dod**–Doug Odermatt, **ROR**–Richard Orr, **BO**–Bonnie Ott, **SPr**–Suzanne Probst, **KS**–Kurt Schwarz,

SS–Susan Setterberg, **JSh**–Jay Sheppard, **JS**–Jo Solem, **RS**–Robert Solem, **D&LS**–Dan & Linda Southworth, **ES**–Eva Sunell, **RT**–Robin Todd, **JTv**–June Tveekrem, **MV**–Marilyn Veek, **MW**–Mark Wallace, **JW**–Jim Wilkinson, **JWJ**–Jordan Wilkerson, **MWr**–Michele Wright, **HZ**–Helen Zeichner.

Places:

APL–*Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory*
Bon Secours–*Sisters of Bon Secours Retreat Center*
Centennial–*Centennial Park*
Elkhorn–*Lake Elkhorn*
Fall Count–*Howard County Fall Count, 9/21/02*
Fore Bay–*Fore Bay Pond (adjacent to Lake Elkhorn)*
landfill–*Alpha Ridge landfill*
Kittamaqundi–*Lake Kittamaqundi*
Manahan–*Manahan Drive*
Meadowbrook–*Meadowbrook Park*
MPEA–*Middle Patuxent Environmental Area*
Patapsco–*Patapsco Valley State Park*
Rockburn–*Rockburn Branch Park*
Schooley–*Schooley Mill Park*
Triadelphia–*Triadelphia Reservoir*
UMDCF–*University of Maryland Central Farm*
Western–*Western Regional Park*

WHAT A YEAR! FIRST YEAR ATLAS RESULTS

BY JOANNE SOLEM AND BONNIE OTT

Howard County had a highly successful first year as part of the five-year Maryland Breeding Bird Atlas. All 34 blocks assigned to this county had at least minimum coverage. Total species reported per block ranged from 53 to 94 (Relay-NW) with an average of 74. While a high species total is desirable by the end of the project in 2006, another statistic is just as important and deserves special commendation: *the average number of species Confirmed or Probable in all blocks was 74%*. Clarksville-CW, Damascus-CE, and Woodbine-SW posted better than 90% rates, a truly astonishing number for the initial year. Sykesville-CE, Clarksville-NE, Clarksville-CE, Clarksville-SE, Savage-NW, Savage-CW, Savage-CE, Relay-NW, and Laurel-NW all logged 80% or better in this category. What an outstanding beginning!

Because this county is mapped by quarterblocks, it is necessary to locate each species in every quarterblock. Clarksville-SW and Sykesville-NE led the county with 60% or more of reported species in all four quarterblocks. Woodbine-SW, Clarksville-CW, Relay-NW, and Laurel-NW had at least 50%. Much remains to be done, but the concerted efforts and enthusiasm of dozens of Howard County birders have made this first year a magnificent success. Atlasers can take credit for a job well begun!

Whenever there is intensive effort by numerous observers, whether a one-day count or a multi-year effort, one can expect surprises. Among the highlights of this first year were the Spotted Sandpiper nest with eggs in Sykesville-CE (first county record), a female Hooded Merganser

with five downy young in Relay-CW (one of only a few records), the Bald Eagle nest in Sandy Spring-NE (first time confirmed in an atlas), two adult Northern Bobwhites (with at least three chicks) in Savage-SW, and Prothonotary Warblers confirmed in Relay-NW (nest with eggs) and Relay-CW (feeding young).

Even though just one year of field work has been completed, there are some changes apparent since the 1983–1987 atlas. Canada Goose, Cooper's Hawk, and Tree Swallow have all increased, in some cases dramatically, in the last two decades. It is too soon to be certain that all of the first year's results indicate a pattern, but some of the species found in few county blocks illustrate a decades-long decline: Ring-necked Pheasant, Northern Bobwhite, Barn Owl, Broad-winged Hawk, Vesper Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Eastern Meadowlark. Trends will become clearer in succeeding years.

Howard County's results, including maps, are posted on the Bird Club's website: www.howardbirds.org. (After you bring up the Bird Club web page, click on MD/DC BBA 2002–2006 under Howard County.)

If you would like to participate in data collection or wish to contribute a sighting from your yard/neighborhood, contact **Jo at odenata@msn.com** or **Bonnie at 410-461-3361**. Especially needed are sightings of owls, bobwhites, pheasants, turkeys, whip-poor-wills, and cuckoos, as well as locations of nests of Chimney Swifts, Turkey Vultures, and Black Vultures.

FIELD TRIPS (Continued from page 7.)

CENTENNIAL PARK

April 13, Sunday. 3 hours. 8:00 a.m.

Meet at the west end parking lot. Easy walking on paved path around the lake. Caspian tern, Bonaparte's gulls and thrushes start to appear. Early warblers possible, Louisiana Waterthrush, Northern Parula, Yellow-throated and Palm.


Leader—Kurt Schwarz, 410-461-1643.
Facilities available.

WEEKDAY WALK AT LAKE ELKHORN

April 14, Monday. 2 hours. 8:00 a.m.

Meet at Broken land Parkway lot. Easy walk around the lake on paved path. Woodland and waterbirds possible. Forbay pond may host some herons or shorebirds.

Leader—Bonnie Ott, 410-461-3361
No Facilities.

 =Great for beginning birders

MIDDLE PATUXENT ENVIRONMENTAL AREA

April 19, Saturday. Half day. 7:30 a.m.

Meet at Trotter Rd parking lot. Moderate, vigorous walking on woodland paths and wet grass areas. Woodlands, fields and the river offer a wide variety of habitats. Early warblers and vireos likely. Woodpeckers—possible red-headed, and sparrows.

Leader—Ron Polniaszek, 410-531-6658.
No facilities.

WILDFLOWERS AND BUTTERFLIES AT SAVAGE PARK

April 26, Saturday. 2 hours. 1:00 p.m.

Meet at concession stand in Savage Park. Easy walking though this wooded park. Savage has areas with a good variety of wild flowers and sections that offer flight paths for butterflies. *Directions to Savage Park from MD 32:* At the intersection with US 1, take US 1 south and stay in the right lane. Turn right at the traffic light at

Howard Street. Continue on Howard Street through Savage to the T-intersection at the end and turn right on Fair Street. This goes into Savage Park. There are several parking areas; the concession stand is in the middle.

Leaders—Bob Solem, 301-725-5037 and Dick Smith, 410-997-7439.
Facilities available.

EASTERN HOWARD COUNTY

April 27, Sunday. Half day.

Dual start times (early birders—6:00 a.m./7:00 a.m. for trip) Meet at the McDonalds on US 1 (across from the old drive in theater, just north of Montgomery Rd.) We will explore a variety of birding areas in this corner of the county including Patapsco Valley State Park. We will drive to different locations and visit a range of habitats. Moderate to difficult walking, hiking shoes needed.

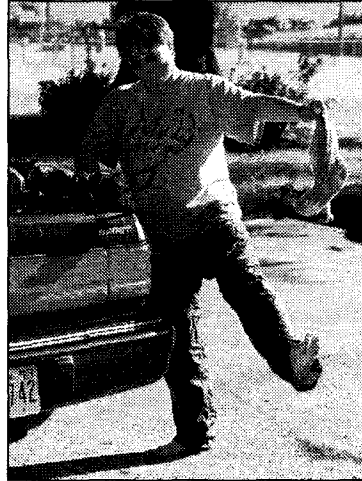
Leader—Stan Arnold, 410-768-0155.
Facilities available.

Trails May be Wet...

Or "If Sparrows Could Swim"

by Harley Quinn

As many of us know, a trip to the University of Maryland Central Farm with Bonnie Ott is an unforgettable experience. In search of our 5,000th Song Sparrow, we gladly follow her through icy, knee-high (or deeper) water. We lose each other in dense vegetation that goes over our heads. We brave the aroma of the waste treatment area and do our best to avoid cleverly concealed potholes. We trudge up and down huge hills, wondering what will become of us if we are left behind (the vultures have to eat, too, of course). In short, we have a great time (only birders and tri-athletes understand this).



Thanks to Bonnie, the elite few (fanatics may be a better word), who *have* identified their 5,000th Song Sparrow know the rewards. They can tell the difference between an "adorable" Sparrow and one that is merely "cute." They instantly recognize the "bark of the tiny dog," the Song Sparrow jizz (GIS—General Impression and Shape) and, of course, the "seet" note (or do I have my sparrows mixed up?).

I am told that, on identifying your 10,000th Song Sparrow, you find the true Gestalt of the bird, becoming "one with the Sparrow." If anyone other than Bonnie has accomplished this, they are keeping it very quiet. Those of us who are a few thousand shy of even the 5,000 mark know that we can only show our true commitment if we show up in waders to the next farm walk. Thank heavens sparrows can't swim, or we might also be carrying masks, fins and snorkels!

Please note, special permission is required to bird the Central Farm. Unless you are going as part of a club-sponsored walk or have a permission letter, contact Bonnie at 410-461-3361 for more information.

Black-throated Green Warbler in January?

by June Tveekrem

January 2003 was one of the coldest in years; many days had high temperatures in the teens and 20's. So imagine my surprise on January 24 around 2:30 p.m., when I went outside to refill the bird feeders, and heard a Black-throated Green Warbler singing! The sound was coming from some evergreens in my backyard. Try as I might, I couldn't see the bird. I was absolutely positive about the song because I had listened to it hundreds of times last summer in northern Minnesota where the warblers were nesting. The Black-throated Green actually has two songs, and this bird sang both. But how could a Black-throated Green Warbler possibly be here in this freezing weather? It would freeze or starve — they eat flying insects, and there probably weren't any flying insects within 200 miles.

After talking to a few people, the best guess is that it was a Mockingbird doing a very convincing imitation. I questioned whether a Mockingbird could sing as high as the high-pitched song of the Black-throated Green. People admitted they hadn't heard a Mockingbird sing that high, but who knows—Mockingbirds do the darnedest things. There were also Starlings around, and they could possibly sing the high pitch, but they couldn't sing the Black-throated Green's other song, which is somewhat buzzy. There were no Catbirds around my neighborhood during January. A female Carolina Wren might produce the buzzy song, but never the high-pitched clear song. And besides, Carolina Wrens aren't known for mimicking.

So I conclude that a Mockingbird with an incredible vocal range gave me a wake-up call. I would be interested in hearing your theory.

Inquiring Minds Want to Know... Status of Chapter's Bird Collection

By Brenda Belensky

Several club members have been inquiring about the status of the Chapter's mounted bird specimen collection. I've attempted to provide the "Reader's Digest" version of events that have brought us to this point. If you have further questions, I can be reached directly at 410-313-4724 or bbelensky@co.ho.md.us.

Why does Howard County Recreation & Parks house the collection?

Due to tighter restrictions brought on by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the Chapter was forced to find alternative storage and display space for the collection. Recreation & Park staff (and chapter members) offered to assist by including the collection on their Federal and state permit, housing the collection, and fulfilling requirements of the possession permit by displaying a portion of the collection in the Recreation & Parks Headquarters building. A Memorandum of Understanding between the Chapter and Recreation & Parks was signed and the collection transferred in 2000. I curate the collection.

How can I access the collection?

One of the conditions of our Federal possession permit is to use the collection for educational purposes. When the permit is renewed (every two years), I submit a list of club member names that might use the collection for these purposes. If your name is not on that list, I cannot loan you the birds. If you are considering, or anticipating the use of the collection, you will need to either pair up with someone currently on the list or submit your name to me by the end of the year. That way I can include you on the list when I submit the renewal request.

What do I do if I find a dead bird?

If you find a fresh specimen in good condition, give me a call (keeping in mind that you must have a permit to legally "possess" a specimen). Although we have an extensive collection, it is far from complete. New species additions or replacement of tattered specimens would be welcomed. Please remember, I will not be able to accept every specimen and there is little to no funding to mount the birds.

Hopefully this clears up those burning questions in your mind concerning the status of the bird collection. If you have any further questions please call or email. And please remember that Jo Solem no longer has the Chapter's possession or salvage permit. All of those activities are under the Department of Recreation & Parks permit.

HOWARD COUNTY ODONATE SURVEY 2002

BY JOANNE AND BOB SOLEM

How time flies! Can it be the seventh year of the Howard County Odonate Survey already? With an increasing number of knowledgeable observers, discoveries continue. County odonate (dragonfly and damselfly) enthusiasts are fortunate that the Mid-Atlantic region has among the highest species diversity in North America. Odonates, besides being strikingly beautiful and highly beneficial, share other similarities with birds. A few dragonflies migrate; most have distinct habitat preferences; species may wander from elsewhere producing rarities; variations in weather may impact their numbers; and there is still much to learn about their habits, life histories, and ranges. The change from ugly water-dependent larvae to adult winged acrobats is as amazing a transformation as that of the more well-known butterflies. Little wonder that more and more birders are pausing to look at odonates *and* butterflies, in addition to birds.

Every season of birding brings surprises; likewise, every year of the odonate survey is different. Unfortunately, drought and heat in 2002 were major negative factors. Weeks of high temperatures not only discouraged field work but also dried ponds and reservoirs. Another year of drought made riverine species especially scarce. Was limited water flow the whole explanation? Did several previous drought years contribute to few individuals of species which may take up to five years to mature? Despite these drawbacks, Stream Cruiser (*Didymops transversa*) and Swamp Spreadwing (*Lestes vigilax*) were added to the Howard County list raising the total to 91. Onward to 100!

No species were added in 2002 to totals for Centennial Park (50 species) and Font Hill Wetland Park (52); both have been monitored since 1996. Meadowbrook Park added two species despite extremely low pond levels bringing that number to 39. The Middle Patuxent Environmental Area's (MPENV) total increased by three species to 47. Both locations have been surveyed since 1999. The two reservoirs were so severely affected by drought that no new species were added to the 41 on that list. In its third year, the University of Maryland Central Farm list reached 33 with one new species. Many pond, lake and river sites were also surveyed.

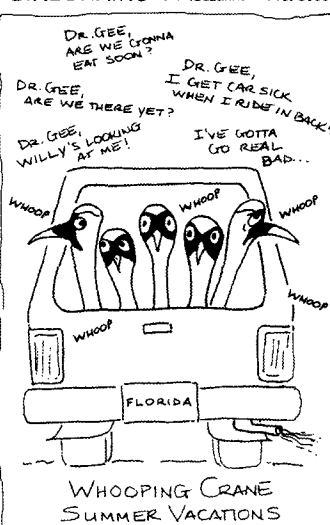
We are indebted to Howard County Dept of Recreation and Parks for land access as well as to WSSC for access to land surrounding the reservoirs. A number of people provided sightings, photographs, cast skins, or assistance. Richard Orr helped, as always, with the identification of puzzling specimens and exuvia (cast skins). Rec and Parks personnel (especially Sue Muller, Brenda Belensky, and Cheryl Farfaras) passed along sightings and habitat possibilities. Sue's enthusiasm grows each year along with the quality of her valuable digital photographs which aid in identification. Last year she provided new early dates for the Familiar Bluet and Variable Dancer. She also reported six Comet Darners over a pond. This huge dragonfly with its green

thorax and flaming red abdomen is an arresting sight—six must have been a real treat. She also added a fourth county record of the Twin-spotted Spiketail.

June Tveekrem was out of the area most of the summer, but she made her mark in the spring by spotting and correctly identifying a Stream Cruiser (new county record) on Kindler Road near the Middle Patuxent River. She also wields a mean camera. Nancy Magnusson and Bonnie Ott found a record early Carolina Saddlebags on 20 April, while Richard Orr's sighting of the same species on 5 October established a new late date. We're grateful to Jen Johnson for access to the Dickey Farm where a bur-reed-ringed pond produced not only a profusion of Swamp Spreadwings (new county record), but a third county location for Vesper Bluet. Kurt Schwarz found a Common Baskettail in the MPENV for an addition to that list. Sue Neri watched Lake Elkhorn and photographed numerous species from March's Common Green Darners to November's meadowhawks. Jay Sheppard spied a female Swamp Darner ovipositing (laying eggs) in a muddy horse trail along Cabin Branch near Hipsley Mill. A Dragonhunter visited Grazina McClure's garden in the Benson Branch watershed. Pamela Franks kept track of odonates on the Shadow Lane pond.

Check the Howard County and Maryland species lists on the Bird Club's web page www.howardbirds.org. From the "Dragonflies and Damselflies of Howard County Checklist" heading, you can download (in Adobe Acrobat format) "*Selected Howard County Odonates: a Pictorial Guide to 24 Common Odonates* [6 pgs, including phenograms]. This is an introductory pamphlet to help you identify some of the county's most common species. Add a new dimension to your time in the field by keeping an eye out for these fascinating creatures. Access to wetland habitats is always appreciated as well as sightings. Telephone or e-mail **Bob or Jo at 301-725-5037** or odenata@msn.com.

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BIRD CLUB SPEAKERS AND OUR THANKS TO DR. GEE

By Jane Geuder

I have appreciated all the leads and suggestions from club members for finding speakers for our meetings. Keep them coming; there is all of next year to fill! I also want to express extra gratitude to one of our presenters. Our January speaker, Dr. George Gee, donated his honorarium to our club to be used for our local conservation efforts. We all enjoyed his wonderful presentation and learned a lot about the current status of the Whooping Crane, and the work that was done at Patuxent.

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. For further information, call Kurt Schwarz at 410-461-1643.

Thursday, March 13 "Identification Tips for Confusing Howard County Birds," David Holmes

Thursday, April 10 "Maryland's Great Outdoors," Middleton Evans, nature photographer and author

Thursday, May 8 "Conserving Maryland's Rare Butterflies," Richard Smith

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.

"BUTTERFLIES AND ORCHIDS" AT THE SMITHSONIAN

March 2, Sunday. Half day. 9:00 a.m.

Meet at Meadowbrook Park and Ride. We will carpool to the Greenbelt Metro to ride to The Arts and Industries Building. Longing for spring? Want a taste of the tropics? Thousands of orchids will be used to create a dazzling display. Hundreds of butterflies will be flitting through the jungle atmosphere. An art exhibit of drawing and carvings should give us plenty to explore. We will plan on eating lunch at a nearby establishment.

Call Bonnie for info 410-461-3361 or check the web at www.smithsonian.org

POTLUCK DINNER

March 8, Saturday

(See the Jan/Feb Newsletter for details.)

"SIGNS OF SPRING" AT BON SECOURS

March 15, Saturday. 2 hours. 8:30 a.m.

Meet in visitor parking lot (off Marriotsville Rd). Enjoy a leisurely stroll through the grounds of the spiritual center. The birds will be gearing up for spring and should be quite vocal. Open fields and woodlands offer a variety of habitats.

Leader—Michele Wright, 410-465-6057. Facilities available.

TRIADELPHIA RESERVOIR

March 22, Saturday. Half day. 7:00 a.m.

Meet at the Brighton Dam Lot. Explore the birding areas of the reservoir. Looking for migrant waterfowl. Bald Eagle and Pine Warbler likely. Moderate walking, some hills. Will be driving to different locations including Greenbridge (Mont. Cnty).

Leader—Stan Arnold, 410-768-0155
Facilities available.

CENTENNIAL PARK

March 23, Sunday. 3 hours. 8:00 a.m.

Meet at the west end parking lot. Easy walking on paved path around the lake. Looking for migrant waterfowl. Early swallows possible and other signs of spring migration.


Leaders—Kevin Heffernan, 410-418-8731 and Karen Darcy, 410-552-9342
Facilities available.

WEEKDAY WALK AT WILDE LAKE

March 26, Wednesday. 1.5 hours. 8:00 a.m.

Meet at the boat dock. Easy walking along the lake and wooded stream. Phoebe, Cedar Waxwings and early migrants possible. Bird feeders along the path may also host interesting species.

Leader—Bonnie Ott, 410-461-3361.
No facilities.

 =Great for beginning birders

FIELD TRIPS (continued)

CENTENNIAL PARK

March 30, Sunday. 3 hours. 8:00 a.m.

Meet at the west end parking lot. Easy walking on paved path around the lake. Many spring birds arriving including Brown Thrashers, Towhees, Chipping Sparrows.

Leader—Harry Fink, 301-642-7024.
Facilities available.

VESPER SPARROW SEARCH

(limit of 12 participants)

April 5, Saturday. Half day. Meeting time TBA (dawn)

Very difficult walking through wet areas and fields in search of sparrows. Horned Lark and Pipit likely. Possible shorebirds and dabbling ducks. High boots a necessity.

Call leader Bonnie Ott to reserve spot 410-461-3361. No facilities.

CENTENNIAL PARK

April 6, Sunday. 3 hours. 8:00 a.m.

Meet at the west end parking lot. Easy walking around the lake on paved path. Time for Blue-winged Teal, Common Loons and Ospreys to arrive. Lingered waterfowl possible.

Leader—Bonnie Ott, 410-461-3361.
Facilities available.

BEGINNER'S BIRDING BY EAR WALK AT GWYNN ACRES

April 12, Saturday. 1.5 hours. 9:00 a.m.

Meet at fence on Old Columbia and Ram's Horn Row. Easy walking on paved path through the woods. Will be concentrating on listening to the spring singing of our residents. Learn tips and techniques on differentiating the songs of our common birds.

Leader—Bonnie Ott, 410-461-3361.
No facilities.

(Field Trips continue on page 4.)

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.

March 27, Thursday

Sue Probst, 5413 Killingworth Way
Columbia, MD 21044 • 410-992-3489

April 24, Thursday

Kurt Schwarz, 9045 Dunloggin Court,
Ellicott City, 21042 • 410-461-1643



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Inside This Issue:

Autumn Bird Records	Braving the Arctic
First Year Atlas Results	Chapter's Bird Collection
Trails May Be Wet	Mystery Warber in January
Odonate Survey 2002	Thanks to Dr. Gee
Programs & Field Trips	Conservation Column

CONSERVATION COLUMN

"WHITHER GOES THE CHESAPEAKE BAY?" BY BOB SOLEM

The following is adapted from Bay Journal (12:7, Oct 2002), pp 12-14. Reducing the amount of nutrients entering the Bay has been the cornerstone of the Bay Program's efforts to clean up the Chesapeake Bay since 1987.

How did nutrients get to be a problem?

Technology developed during World War II was used to produce huge amounts of cheap, chemical fertilizers. These were used in agriculture in increasing amounts. At the same time, industrialization led to the increased burning of fossil fuels, which release large amounts of nitrogen. In the Bay watershed, there is six to eight times as much nitrogen today than in the past. Likewise, the amount of phosphorus has increased from use in fertilizers and cleaning agents in detergents.

Why are nutrients a problem? Excess nutrients over-fertilize the Bay, causing increased algae growth. When algae cloud the water, they prevent underwater grass beds from getting the sunlight they need. As the result, the grass beds—which provide food and habitat—occupy only a fraction of their historic range in the Bay. When the algae die, they sink and are decomposed by bacteria in a process that

rapidly uses up oxygen needed by fish and other water dwellers. Blooms create added problems. Bay recovery will also require major efforts to restore habitats, such as oyster reefs and underwater grass beds, and improved fisheries management to prevent over-fishing. Also, In April 2003, the Bay Program will likely establish some kind of goal for sediments, based on studies that show dirt is a factor in clouding shallow water areas.

Where do nutrients entering the Bay come from? Agricultural runoff is the leading source, accounting for about 40% of the nitrogen and phosphorus entering from the watershed. Discharges from wastewater treatment plants are also a major source, followed by urban and suburban runoff. Finally, air pollution and ammonia escaping livestock operations are big factors.

Who is responsible for fixing the Bay's problems? In 1983, the federal government and the states of Maryland, Virginia and Pennsylvania and the District of Columbia created the Chesapeake Bay Program, a partnership aimed at cleaning up the Bay. In the past two years, New York, Delaware and West Virginia

have signed a pledge to control nutrients in their parts of the watershed.

Is the Bay getting better? There has been no Bay-wide trend over the past decade for key water quality indicators such as dissolved oxygen and acreage of underwater grasses. In places where nutrient reductions have been made, such as small rivers on Maryland's Western Shore and parts of the Potomac, there have been encouraging rebounds for grass beds. Other places have seen little improvement, and a few areas have gotten worse.

Why are water quality improvements taking so long? Water monitoring data have shown few changes in nutrient levels except for areas where wastewater treatment plants have a big influence. In part that's because many of the nutrients (especially nitrogen) enter streams through groundwater. That's a journey that can take years, so the impact of nutrient control actions can be very slow. Also some nutrient control activities, such as planting stream-side forest buffers, can take years to become fully effective. Further, many techniques used to reduce nutrient runoff are relatively new and may not be as effective as thought.