

The Goldfinch

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



WINTER BIRD RECORDS DECEMBER 1, 2002 TO FEBRUARY 28, 2003

BY JOANNE SOLEM

The extended cold and record-breaking snow this winter brought back memories of my Wisconsin childhood. December was almost mild compared to the next two months. By the end of the year, there was some ice on reservoirs and rivers, and lakes were mostly frozen. Much of the ample precipitation fell as rain. That pattern continued for the first 10 days of January after which it turned cold—then colder, with periodic snow. Midwinter Count observers on February 1 battled fog and drizzle early, then cold wind. In retrospect, that was one of the best days of the month! February, of course, included the record-breaking snowstorm of the 16th and 17th. To say that birding during the last half of the month was difficult is an understatement. Howard birders noted enviously that Red-necked Grebes were being seen elsewhere in Maryland, but any open water on the local reservoirs was out of sight.

A Pied-billed Grebe spent 12/2-3 at Kittamaquindi (MJa), and 1 appeared at Centennial 1/18 (JMr). On 12/28, 11 Great Blue Herons lined the Howard shore near Brighton Dam (JS).

A Snow Goose was reported 12/14 on Roxbury Rd (W&SE). Snow Geese made appearances at Centennial 1/22 (2-LN) to 2/12 (2-RC). On 2/1, 7 were spotted over Meadowbrook Park (BLAP). A small race Canada Goose was picked out of a flock of 20 over High Ridge Park 1/26 (CR). The county's lone free-flying Mute Swan continued at Elkhorn through the period (SN). Tundra Swans were few. On 12/6 a flock of 20 mingled

with 20 Canada Geese at Lime Kiln Pond (KM), and 2/1 on Howard County Midwinter Count (HCMC) 4 were seen winging over Hollofield (R&JG,JHf).

One male Wood Duck wintered at Elkhorn (SN+). A Gadwall was picked out of the ducks behind Rocky Gorge dam on HCMC (JC,JS). Six American Wigeon rested at Pigtail on 12/15 (KH,KD), with a dozen counted on HCMC. American Black Ducks winter regularly. The seasonal high was a low 92 on HCMC on Triadelphia (NM). The only Northern Shoveler reported was a female at Pigtail 12/15 (KH,KD). Northern Pintails are one of our most attractive ducks. A male was found at Centennial 12/9 (EH). A male was reported there again 1/12 (KH); later that day a female was also identified (JS;KS). On 12/28 a male was noted at Wilde Lake (SPe), and on 2/3 a pair turned up there (SPe,KBo). The high (second highest ever) was a flock of 29 over a farm on Triadelphia Rd on 12/14 (W&SE). Nine Green-winged Teal were on Duckett Reservoir on HCMC (JC,JS).

A few Canvasbacks wintered with a high of 6 at Centennial 2/9 (KS). A male Redhead was present at a land-fill pond 1/11 (RC). Ring-necked Ducks often winter; the seasonal highs were 29 at Centennial on 1/25 (KS) and 28 at Elkhorn on 1/17 (SN). Four Lesser Scaup were present 12/20 on Lime Kiln Pond (KM), 4 were reported 2/1 on HCMC, and a male appeared at Elkhorn 2/28 (SN). Buffleheads were rather scarce; the largest flock was 13 on Triadelphia

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

WINTER BIRD RECORDS (Continued from page 1.)

on HCMC (D&DvH). On 12/9 there were 6 **Common Goldeneyes** at Brighton Dam and 1 at Centennial (EH). One was seen at Centennial much of January (m.obs) with a high there of 5 on 1/22 (JS) which was the last winter report. **Hooded Mergansers** braved the snow and cold with a high of 5 at Centennial 1/12 and 1/25 (KS). HCMC counters located 46. Hundreds of **Common Mergansers** normally winter on the reservoirs. They arrived at Triadelphia in December, as usual. The two high counts were remarkably close: 440 on 12/28 (JS) and 450 on 1/2 (HZ). Freezeup during January reduced the flock so that on HCMC only 14 remained (NM). At Centennial, a female on 1/1 and a male on 2/9 were uncommon sightings (KS). A few **Red-breasted Mergansers** are usually spotted in the course of the winter. Two females were on Triadelphia 12/13 (HH) and 3 were counted there on 2/1 (D&DvH). **Ruddy Ducks** wintered on Centennial with 7 on 12/29 (KS) building to 25 on 2/9 (KS).

Ospreys in the Piedmont after early November are extremely unusual. One set a new county late date when it hung around Triadelphia until 12/15 (RSu). **Bald Eagle** adults were widely noted with 1 on Carroll Mill Rd 12/11 (M&GMC), 1 over Elkhorn 1/11 (J&CW), and 2 over the Rt 29 bridge on Duckett Reservoir 2/11 (EKr). Four eagles were seen at Brighton Dam on 12/21 (JS). Two were adults which were probably the breeding pair observed at the nest 2/1 (NM). The only **Northern Harrier** reported was seen from the Dam 12/26 (RC). **Sharp-shinned Hawk** numbers seemed low this winter, so it was only moderately surprising that **Cooper's Hawks** outnumbered Sharpies 11 to 8 on HCMC, a reversal of the usual situation. Accipiters capture birds, but 1/1 a Cooper's Hawk was observed killing and eating a squirrel in a west Columbia yard (JHa). A couple of **Red-shouldered Hawks** in Allview ate suet put out for woodpeckers as reported 1/5 (EG). As days lengthen, many birds begin courtship and nesting despite snow and cold. In late January and early

February, the **Red-shoulders** at a nest on Duvall Rd were busily rearranging sticks (KT). HCMC found just 8 **American Kestrels**, an all-time low. A **Peregrine Falcon** northwest of Clarksville 12/24 was a special yard bird (HF).

One **American Coot** wintered at Elkhorn 12/7 (SN;MJa) to 2/28 (SN). Although gulls have been much less common since the landfill closed, 458 **Ring-billed Gulls** were reported countywide on HCMC. An unexpected treat was a second winter **Glaucous Gull** at Brighton Dam in the late afternoon of 1/1 (KS;KH,KD). In the same flock was a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** (KH,KD;KS) still present early the following morning (JS). **Great Black-backed Gulls** show up, albeit sporadically. The season's first was spotted at Brighton Dam 12/15 (KH,KD;EH), others were noted at Wilde Lake 12/29 (HZ) and 1/6 (SPe), the landfill 1/11 (6-RC), and Kittamaqundi 1/12 (MJa).

Owls were well-reported which was especially valuable for the atlas. A **Great Horned Owl** on a nest was located at APL on 2/1 HCMC (J&KWi, WEB). What a rough February for that incubating bird!

Despite mostly frozen streams and rivers, 17 **Belted Kingfishers** were found on HCMC. Thirty-two **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** on HCMC was a new high. Soon after the record-breaking snowfall, two crows were carrying nesting material on 2/19 in Dunloggin (KS). December **Eastern Phoebes** are anticipated; by midwinter there are fewer. One remained in the Elkhorn area 1/12 (SN) and 2/1 (MSw,BM).

A **Horned Lark** was spotted in a Fulton pasture 12/14 (J&TDC); 3 were seen in a field on Jennings Chapel Rd 2/1 (JSh). **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were scarce. The only reports were on 2/1: 2 near Triadelphia (D&DvH) and 1 at Hedgerow (NM). **Winter Wrens** are not a usual feeder bird, but one showed up in a yard south of Ellicott City on 2/16 where it fed on mealworms during the heavy snow (HSt).

This year **American Robins** appeared in unusually large numbers in early February. The HCMC total of 2,033 was significantly more than the previous high of 1,275. Typical were the 200 reported in Hammond Village 2/8 (GM). For several weeks they stripped fruits and berries before departing. The 392 **Eastern Bluebirds** on HCMC was the third highest total continuing the trend of the last three years.

Gray Catbirds do not winter every year. One was noted at Elkhorn 12/21 (MJa), but the real surprise was 5 on HCMC which was a new high (D&DvH;MWr,NR). Three last year during one of the mildest winters in memory was understandable, but five *this* winter? **Brown Thrashers** also winter occasionally. HCWC turned up 2 (D&Jod,GW;Jmk), with another on 2/7 in the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area (HH). A **Yellow-rumped Warbler** visited peanut butter suet 2/20-3/3 in Kings Contrivance, Columbia (TE).

American Tree Sparrow numbers were reasonably good with 25 on 12/14 at UMDCF (BO,EH,HF), 12+ on 12/30 at Bon Secours Retreat Center (RC), and 58 on HCMC. They also made a few brief feeder appearances. **Chipping Sparrows** are scarce in winter. Single birds appeared at feeders: 12/13 Wilde Lake (HZ), 1/6-7 West Friendship (LC) and 2/15-17 Swansfield, Columbia (JTv). One was also reported in southwestern Howard County 12/14 (R&SPo). Ten **Field Sparrows** and 72 **Savannah Sparrows** 12/14 at UMDCF was the winter high for both species (BO,EH,HF). The **Swamp Sparrow** high was 6 on both 12/14 UMDCF (BO,EH,HF) and 2/7 at Western Regional Park (HH). During snow on 1/24, an Allview yard attracted 100-125 **Dark-eyed Juncos** (ES). On 1/26 there were 100+ at a Wynfield Rd feeder (RC).

Snow Buntings are rare. An observer on 12/14 was delighted to find one in a flock of blackbirds in a Fulton pasture (POs). Last year's mild winter

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WINTER BIRD RECORDS (Continued from page 2.)

tallied just one Eastern Meadowlark on HCMC; this year, during one of the most severe winters in the last decade, there was again just one on the Count (KS)—an unfortunate trend. Rusty Blackbird reports were few with 2 on 12/14 at UMDCF (BO,EH,HF) and 1 at a feeder near Clarksville 2/15-16 (HF).

This was not an invasion year for northern species so we had to settle for 1 Purple Finch on 1/17 near APL (HH) and 1 Common Redpoll at a feeder in Timberleigh 12/9 (DN). The House Finch total of 497 on HCMC was the lowest ever.

Correction: The Northern Bobwhite date that appeared in the Spring 2002 compilation was incorrect. The correct date is June 16.

Observers: KBo—Ken Board, LC—Lisa Colangelo, JC—Jane Coskren, TDC—T.Dennis Coskren, RC—Ralph Cullison, III, KD—Karen Darcy, W&SE—Wes & Susan Earp, WEb—Ward Ebert, TE—Tracy Eve, HF—Harry Fink, R&JG—Ralph & Jane Geuder, EG—Edwin Gould, JHa—Joe Hanfman, KH—Kevin Heffernan, D&DvH—Donald & David Henderson, JHf—John Hoffman, HH—Hans Holbrook, EH—Emy Holdridge, MJa—Marcus

James, EKr—Elise Kreiss, BL—Brigitte Lund, NM—Nancy Magnusson, KM—Kathy Mariano, JMr—Joel Martin, M&GMc—Mike & Grazina McClure, JMc—John McKitterick, BMI—Barry Miller, GM—Georgia Morris, DN—Diane Nagengast, SN—Sue Neri, D&Jod—Doug & Jeanne Odermatt, POs—Peter Osonen, BO—Bonnie Ott, SPe—Sherry Peruzzi, AP—Anita Picco, R&SPo—Ron & Susan Polniaszek, NR—Nanine Rhineland, CR—Chandler Robbins, KS—Kurt Schwarz, JSh—Jay Sheppard, JS—Jo Solem, RS—Robert Solem, HSt—Hank Stanton, MSw—Michelle Stewart, ES—Eva Sunell, RSu—Rick Sussman, KT—Kate Tufts, JTv—June Tveekrem, GW—Ginny Walker, CW—Carol Wilkinson, JW—Jim Wilkinson,

J&KWi—Jordan & Karen Wilkerson, MWr—Michele Wright, HZ—Helen Zeichner.

Places:

APL—Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory
Centennial—Centennial Park
Elkhorn—Lake Elkhorn
HCMC—Howard County Midwinter Count, February 1
Kittamaqundi—Lake Kittamaqundi
Landfill—Alpha Ridge landfill
Pigtail—Pigtail boat landing, Triadelphia Reservoir
Triadelphia—Triadelphia Reservoir
UMDCF—University of Maryland Central Farm



Anchors Aweigh!



By Bonnie Ott

There is an ongoing joke that the Howard Bird Club never leaves its home county. We proved that idea wrong when we birded as far away from Howard as possible and still remain in the state of Maryland! A small but brave group ventured onto the *Thelma Dale*. She took us out 60 miles to the Baltimore Canyon. Thanks to Stan Arnold for inspiring us with visions of "pelagic" birds (birds not seen from land). Life, State and Year lists were happily added to by all.

We assembled on the dock in the inky blackness armed with our backpacks filled with saltines, water, ginger ale, ginger snaps, dried ginger and more saltines. A favorable omen was the delightful singing of a Song Sparrow as we double checked our gear. Kurt Schwarz double taped on his seasickness patch and we were ready. We were given the privilege of boarding first (maybe they wanted to get us on quick before anyone chickened out)?

Being one of the most experienced pelagic birders in our group, Nancy Magnusson immediately took up the watch on the upper deck and there she stayed for the full 13 hours of the voyage. Getting a handle on ocean birding was an experience for the rest of us. We all learned to tell "time" very quickly since we soon discovered there are no landmarks at sea (except the occasional floating bottle). A call of "alcid at 9:00!" sent all of us scurrying across the deck to try for a glimpse. Rolling waves and rolling boat made standing upright and holding binoculars a challenge!

The sights were thrilling with fin whales and common dolphins taking top billing. Of course there were birds, and a group of 80 Northern Fulmars feeding on a whale carcass was spectacular. Atlantic Puffin, Razorbills, Common and Thick-Billed Murres, Red Phalaropes and Dovekie were seen. (The first Dovekie of the trip was spotted by Bonnie Ott who remarked on its sparrow-like appearance). A chum line brought in a mass of gulls with Lesser-Black Backed among the more expected.

A sunny day and calm sea made the birding pleasant for almost everyone. Dramamine sent Harry Fink indoors for a lengthy nap and Ralph Cullison noted that his next trip will be one half cheaper since he will probably be going solo. A tired but satisfied group stumbled off the boat that evening. The "peent" of a Woodcock was a fitting end to an experience that we "land-locked" Howard Countians will not soon forget.

A Big Thank You

By Bonnie Ott

The Howard County Bird Club's monthly meetings are always informative and interesting. The social time is a great way to catch up with other members, browse the bookstore and enjoy the displays. It's always a pleasure to have the delicious snacks to enjoy. A big thank you to all of the members who volunteered to bring goodies for the meetings: Joe Byrnes, Marty Chestem, Lisa Colangelo, Karen Darcy, John Finedore, Kevin Heffernan, Emy Holdridge, Brigitte Lund, Elayne Metter, Sue Neri, Carol Newman, and Karla Pearce! Your generosity is greatly appreciated!

MAY COUNT IS SATURDAY, MAY 10, 2003

BY PAUL ZUCKER

Since 1948, the Maryland Ornithological Society has conducted an annual May bird count. Everyone is invited to join in, no matter what your skill level. Identification is only part of the challenge; you have to spot (or hear) the bird first, so every extra pair of eyes and ears helps. This is a great opportunity to meet other bird club members, to learn from more experienced members, and to have a great time.

The county has been divided into the same seven areas as for the winter count (see map below), and each has an area coordinator. If you have a particular preference for an area to count in, please contact the corresponding coordinator. The coordinators for each area are as follows:

Area 1	Kate Tufts	410-489-7052
Area 2	Paul Zucker	443-778-4971
Area 3	Chuck Stirrat	410-531-2417
Area 4	Mike McClure	410-531-2780
Area 5	Doug Odermatt	410-992-1812
Area 6	Bonnie Ott	410-461-3361
Area 7	Jo Solem	301-725-5037

Otherwise, you may call me, the count compiler. My work number is listed above for *Area 2*, my home number is 301-279-7896, or you may send me an e-mail at paul.zucker@jhuapl.edu. Special requests are honored whenever possible.

The leader of each party records the number of all birds seen (even starlings and House Sparrows!), using the checklist included in this issue of the newsletter. Extra copies of this checklist will be given to the area coordinators as well. These are specially constructed lists that show the birds that are normally seen on the count. Any bird that has been found in four or fewer of the last fifteen counts has been excluded. If you are fortunate enough to see a bird not on this list, you need to write it in and (on the back) write a couple of sentences about what you observed and where you found it.

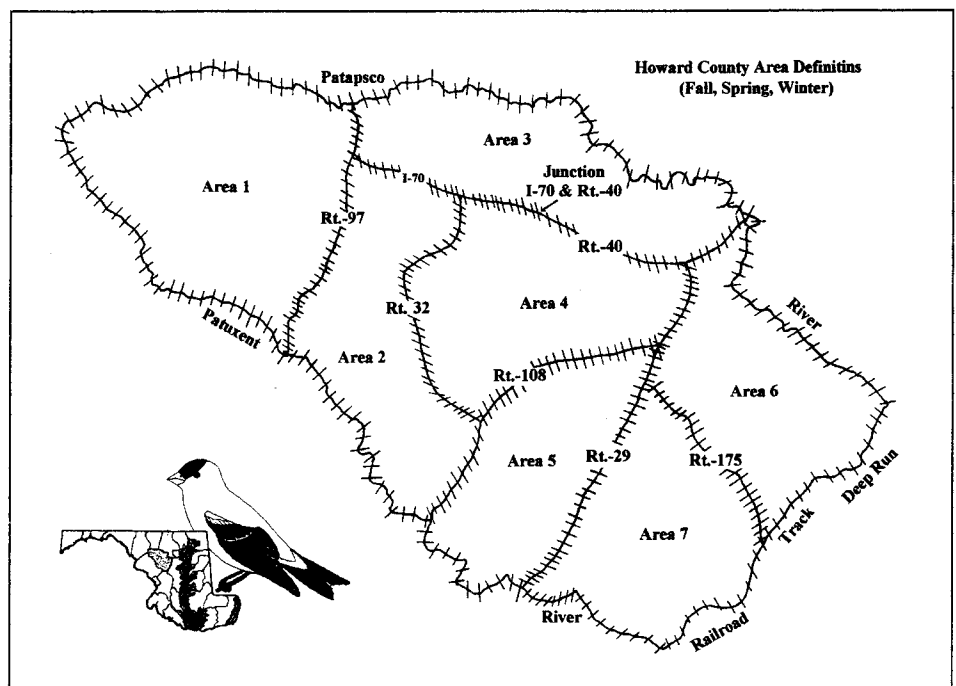
This year is the second season for the Maryland Breeding Bird Atlas. Those species that are within the "safe dates" are shown on the checklist with an asterisk. Even if you do not have an atlas block to survey, you can help by noting any kind of courtship or nesting behavior. Please write down the behavior and carefully note the precise location. All such data, as well as sightings of species that are within the safe dates, are useful for the Atlas. This is an extremely important project for the MOS and for the Howard chapter, and all support provided is immensely appreciated.

On the back of the checklist, the party leader needs to record the start and stop times, total party hours by foot, car, or other means, and the party miles. Observers within talking or shouting distance are considered to be one party. If two or more birders spend an hour together on foot, that constitutes one party hour. If one member is separated from the others for half an hour, then the total is 1.5 party hours. Non-birding hours should not be counted. In addition, the names and addresses of all the party members should be listed on the back of the checklist.

(If you see something outside of your assigned area, please make a separate note of it, as it may be included for the area where you saw it.)

The completed checklist must be turned in to the area coordinators at the tally rally that night! You are strongly urged to attend the tally rally after the count. It is a great opportunity to relax and swap stories of the day. If you cannot make it, be sure that your checklist gets delivered or gets called in to **Jan Randle** (410-531-6296) by 7 p.m.

The tally dinner will again be at the Randle's, continuing a magnificent tradition of hospitality. Call **Jan Randle** (410-531-6296) in advance and let her know how many are coming from your party and your choice of food or beverage to bring. Dinner will begin by 7 p.m. and the tally will start at 8 p.m. The Randles live at 6424 Lochridge Road in the Braeburn neighborhood of Columbia. From Cedar Lane, turn west onto Braeburn Road (the turn is between route 32 and Freetown Road), next turn right onto Lochridge and continue to the first house on the left beyond Hillbrook Drive.



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, 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.

~ **BIG DAY (Limit of 12)**

May 3, Saturday. Dawn to Dusk.

Meeting time and place TBA.

An all day extravaganza of listing to find as many species as possible. We will travel the county and visit a wide variety of habitats. Fast paced and difficult walking involved. Bring food and drink. Call leaders Bonnie Ott 410-461-3361, or Jo Solem 301-725-5037 to reserve a spot. Facilities available.

BIRDS OF SPRING AT MT. PLEASANT

May 4, Sunday. 3 hours. 8:00 a.m.

Meet by shed on entrance road.

Easy walking through the fields and wood edges of the farm. Mown grass and wood chip paths. Wildflowers and butterflies should be abundant. Nesting Grasshopper Sparrows, Yellow-breasted Chats, Eastern Bluebirds and Tree Swallows.

Leader—Robin Todd, 410-313-8154.

Facilities available.

MAY COUNT

May 10, Saturday

WEEKDAY WALK AT DANIELS

May 12, Monday. 2 hours. 8:00 a.m.

Meet at Camel's Den lot.

Easy walking along the river on gravel and dirt trail. Mature woodlands host a number of breeding warblers, tanager, vireos and thrushes.

Leader—Bonnie Ott, 410-461-3361.

No facilities.

MARRIOTSVILLE & HENRYTON ROADS (CERULEAN WARBLER SEARCH)

May 17, Saturday. Half Day.

Dual start times. (Early birders—6:30 a.m.

Meet at Marriottsville Rd. Easy walking along the railroad tracks to the trestle.

Second leg—meet at 8:30 a.m. at the end of Henryton Road for remainder of the trip.)

Easy walk along the river up to the bend.

Yellow-throated, Worm-eating and other warblers possible. Leader—Ralph Cullison, 410-442-2181. No facilities.

SCHOOLEY MILL PARK

May 18, Sunday. Half Day. 7:00 a.m.

Meet in upper parking lot.

Moderate walking through varied habitats of fields, streams and woodlands. A beaver-created wetland may hold some surprises. Paths may be muddy. Late migrants are still moving through.

Leader—Daryl Olson, 301-421-0213.

Facilities available.

MOS CONVENTION

May 24-25-26

WEEKDAY WALK AT DAVID FORCE PARK

May 28, Wednesday. 2 Hours. 8:00 a.m.

Meet at split rail fence on Pebble Beach Dr.

Easy walking through the woodlands and field edges of this county open space. A small pond and a stream vary the habitat and species possibilities.

Leader—Bonnie Ott, 410-461-3361.

No facilities.

FIELD TRIPS (continued)

ROCKBURN BRANCH PARK (ADVANCED BIRDING BY EAR)

May 31, Saturday. Half Day.

Dual start times (early birders—6:00 a.m./8:00 a.m. for trip)

Meet at Rockburn Elementary School parking lot.

Moderate walking through the woodlands and field edges of the park. Will be focusing on learning the more subtle nuances of songs, chip, call notes. Especially helpful for atlasing. *Leader—Bonnie Ott (410-461-3361).* Facilities available.

ATLASING WITH JO AND BONNIE

June 21, Saturday. Half Day 7:30 a.m.

Meet at Rockburn Elementary School.

Spend a morning with Jo and Bonnie as they work in Savage Northeast. See how they plan their morning using maps and lists of target birds. Learn hints and techniques in the field on how to confirm species and upgrade from possible to probable by looking at behavior. Moderate walking involved, also driving to different locations. Carpooling mandatory. Call Bonnie (410-461-3361) or Jo (301-725-5037) for information.

Facilities available. 2 way radios useful.

EVENING SCREECH-OWL SEARCH (Limit of 12)

Saturday evening in July, (approximately 9:00 p.m.) Date to be determined depending on weather. *We will drive to and park at locations in Sykesville Northeast to listen for screech owls.*

Learn tips on how to locate habitat and listen for owl sounds. Call Bonnie to register. 410-461-3361. No facilities. 2 way radios useful.

Carpooling mandatory.

(Field Trips continue on page 6.)

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.

April 24, Thursday

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

May 22, Thursday

Jeff Friedhoffer, 10042 Mending Wall, Columbia, 21044 • 410-997-5366

**MORNING SCREECH-OWL SEARCH
(Limit of 12)**

Sunday morning in July (approximately 4:00 a.m.) Date to be determined depending on weather. *We will drive to and park in different locations in search of screech owls.*

Learn tips on how to locate habitat and listen for owl sounds.

Call Bonnie to register 410-461-3361.

No facilities. 2 way radios useful.

Carpooling mandatory.

**ATLAS BLOCK WOODBINE NORTHWEST
July 6, Sunday. Half Day 7:30 a.m.**

Meet at Glenwood Library parking lot on Rt. 94. Spend the morning atlasing and gain some insight into how Bonnie and Jo work an unfamiliar block. Finding habitats, looking for unusual places that might have interesting species. Moderate to difficult walking involved.

Call Bonnie (410-461-3361) or

Jo (301-725-5037) for information.

No facilities. 2 way radios helpful.

Carpooling mandatory.

SUMMER BIRDS OF MT. PLEASANT

July 19, Saturday. Half Day 8:00 a.m.

Meet at the shed. Walk the grounds of Mt. Pleasant to search for breeding birds. Indigo Buntings, Eastern Bluebirds, chats and orioles likely. 4 species of nesting sparrows possible. Moderate walking on mown grass and wood chip trails.

Leader—Bonnie Ott (410-461-3361)

Facilities available.

DRAGONFLIES THROUGH BINOCULARS

August 2, Saturday. 3 hours 8:00 a.m.

Meet at Centennial Park's west end parking lot.

Very easy walk around the lake on paved paths in search of odonates. Learn how to identify dragonflies and damselflies in the hand and through binoculars with our local expert Richard Orr. Eastern Pondhawk and Blue Dasher expected. Call Richard for information 410-730-7290.

Facilities available.

BOMBAY HOOK /OPTIONAL PELAGIC*

August 15, Friday. All Day 6 a.m.

Meet at Broken Land—Rt. 32 park and ride.

A day of Delaware birding at Bombay

Hook and possible side trips to Woodland Beach, Little Creek, Mispillion Light House and Broadkill Beach Road. This is a good time for phalaropes, godwits, and other less common shorebirds.

Leader—Stan Arnold. Call 410-768-0155 to sign up and arrange for carpooling.

(Bring plenty to drink, sunscreen, hat and bug spray. Trip will include a lunch stop for food and respite from the heat.

Formal trip will end at 4 p.m.)

*Option of staying over and attending the pelagic the next day.

Additional information on paulagics.com

Reservations for pelagic and motel recommended ASAP.

BUTTERFLIES THROUGH BINOCULARS

August 30, Saturday. 3 hours 9:30 a.m.

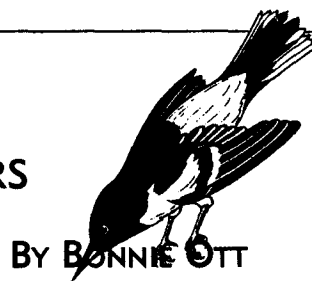
Meet at Centennial Park's west end parking lot.

An easy walk around the wildlife area of Centennial. Learn to identify butterflies on the wing and in the hand with expert Dick Smith. Binoculars recommended.

Call Dick for information 410-997-7439

Facilities available. Cancelled in overcast or raining.

HOWARD HAPPENINGS— UNUSUAL FEEDER VISITORS



Indigo Buntings are common nesters throughout our county. They prefer field edges and open areas. The male is a vivid blue and his mate is a soft brown. They will visit feeders and prefer millet and thistle. A male will often sing all day. His song is a series of double notes often referred to as “Fire-fire, where-where, here-here, put it out, put it out!”

Rose-Breasted Grosbeaks migrate through in spring and fall. They are usually seen at feeders toward the end of April and early May, especially during periods of bad weather. Platform and hopper feeders are their favorites. The male is unmistakable with his splashy rose-colored

throat. The female is less noticeable in her subtle plumage of brown and cream stripes. Although we don't hear their beautiful robin-like song often, they give their presence away by their distinctive call note. It is a sharp and high pitched described as “squeaking Styrofoam”.

The Eastern Towhee (formerly known as rufous-sided) is in the sparrow family. They are usually seen on the ground scratching under feeders for seeds. The male is a striking combination of black, white and brick red. The female has a matching pattern but is primarily rusty brown. They nest in many habitats including suburban backyards. Listen for the

male's distinctive song, translated as “Drink your tea” as he sings from a high perch.

Baltimore Orioles nest in mature woodlands, often near water. They can be enticed into your yard with offerings of fruit, jelly and nectar. Placing feeders in trees helps increase chances of success. Even though the male is a vibrant orange and black, he is often overlooked as he hides in the foliage. The female is even less conspicuous in her soft yellow tones. The male's beautiful whistled song often gives his presence away in the treetops.

EIGHTEENTH HOWARD COUNTY MIDWINTER COUNT, FEBRUARY 1, 2003

BY JOANNE SOLEM AND MARY-JO BETTS

At the end of the Howard County Midwinter Count (HCMC) tally, birders waited expectantly as Jo started around the room asking each of the area leaders for additions to the list. Each responded in the negative. Not one species was added to the initial accounting! Chuck Stirrat, who had been checking off species during the tally, gave us the bad news: 84 species, the third lowest total in 18 years. We had to reach back to 1986 and 1987, the first two years of the count, to find lower totals. Among the missed species, which had been seen on at least 14 previous counts, were Northern Harrier and Great Black-backed Gull, while Killdeer, Wilson's Snipe, and Purple Finch had been seen 13 times.

Despite the lack of special species, observers produced some fine individual species totals. The 2003 count set eight new species all-time highs, some of them surprising: Red-breasted Merganser 3, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 32, Hairy Woodpecker 59, Northern Flicker 179, Carolina Wren 427, American Robin 2,033, Gray Catbird 5, and White-throated Sparrow 1,900. Although the Canada Goose total (second highest ever), as usual, was adjusted to attempt to eliminate duplication, the final number can never be more than a best guess. The depressing fact is there are too many geese. Among the surprises in the highest-ever counts were Carolina Wren, American Robin, and Gray Catbird. These species are expected to be impacted by severe weather, but food availability appears to be equally—or more—important. The fruit crop was excellent and frequent freezing and thawing had softened the late winter food so it was available when needed. The robin total was not quite double the second highest ever. The figure could not be explained away by attributing it to more observers or improved identification skills. Two Brown Thrashers (second highest) and a new high of 5 Gray

Catbirds could scarcely have been predicted. A Great Horned Owl was spotted on a nest—in case atlasers needed proof that this species nests early no matter what the weather.

New low species totals outnumbered highs: Mute Swan 1 (t), Common Goldeneye 1, American Kestrel 8, Ring-billed Gull 458, Herring Gulls 63, Eastern Screech-Owl 1, American Crow 1,166, Eastern Phoebe 1, Eastern Meadowlark 1 (t), and House Finch 497. Kestrel totals continued the long slide that has become most obvious in the last decade. Gull numbers have slipped since most of the county's trash began to be shipped to Virginia. The all-time low for American Crows may be partly a result of West Nile virus, but seldom is there a simple cause for major changes. After all, Fish Crow numbers on this count were within the range of the last three years. Crows, like the gulls, vultures, and blackbirds miss the landfill! The last four years, no matter what the weather, Eastern Meadowlarks have been at either zero or one for the day which is an unfortunate trend. Numbers of House Sparrows and House Finches for the last three years had been similar. This year House Sparrows reached 1,070, their third highest total, and House Finches dropped to a new low of 497 continuing a decade-long decline. Any comparisons involving extremely common species, however, should be viewed with caution since birders are likely to overlook and undercount them.

Twenty-one feeder watchers at 16 feeders spotted 39 species. Numbers from these observers were especially significant in contributing 11% of the Mourning Doves, 9% of the White-breasted Nuthatches, an eye-catching 29% of the American Robins, 23% of the House Finches, 25% of the American Goldfinches, and 12% of the House Sparrows.

One of the original purposes of this count was to compare the presence of species in midwinter with those of the

Triadelphia Christmas Count (TCC) held in late autumn or early winter. The two counts are roughly comparable in area. A year ago in an extremely mild winter, species totals were almost identical: 95 TCC, 94 HCMC. This year reverted to historic norms. The December 14, 2002 TCC total was 93 species; the February 1, 2003 HCMC total was 84. Interestingly, HCMC had more waterfowl species despite the ice cover including Tundra Swan, Lesser Scaup, Canvasback, Wood Duck, and Gadwall not on TCC. TCC, on the other hand, had some species which often show up on both counts but were absent from Howard's this year: Killdeer, Northern Harrier, Wilson's Snipe, Pied-billed Grebe, and Rusty Blackbird. TCC also had a handful of special species such as White-fronted Goose, Long-eared Owl, Lincoln's Sparrow, and Snow Bunting.

Mary-Jo Betts organized the count efficiently and was capably assisted by the seven area coordinators shown in boldface below. Our thanks to Chuck Stirrat who computerized all the data, making Jo Solem's analysis much easier. The dozens of field and feeder counters (some from other counties) earn a resounding thank you. They are the people who make it possible to maintain consistent annual coverage no matter what the weather. Detailed raptor, vulture, and goose information provided by some field people, especially near boundaries, is much appreciated. Counters always anticipate the camaraderie and good food at the tally at Don and Martha Waugh's, our generous hosts.

We gratefully acknowledge access to WSSC land, Alpha Ridge landfill, Mount Pleasant, Belmont, University of Maryland Central Farm, and Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory, as well as county land administered by Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks. Being able to cover these parcels greatly increases the accuracy of the effort.

(Midwinter Count continue on page 8.)

Eighteenth Midwinter Count participants: **Area 1. Mark Wallace**, Daryl Olson, Wes & Susan Earp, Rick Sussman, Jay Sheppard, Robin Todd, Kate Tufts (f); **Area 2. Emy Holdridge**, Peter Osenton, Nancy Magnusson, Paul Zucker, Tom Strikwerda, Ron & Susan Polniaszek, Paul Allocca, Donald & David Henderson, Lisa Colangelo (f); **Area 3. Dave & Maureen Harvey**, Elliot & Nancy Kirschbaum, Darius Ecker, Michael Squatrito, Kurt Schwarz, John Finedore, Ralph Cullison, Will & Robin Tress, Lynn & Linda Holley (f); **Area 4. Mike McClure**, Grazina McClure, Romayne Smith, Chuck Stirrat, Joe Byrnes, Andy & Dianne Aguilera, Mike Leumas, Kate Held, Holly Waddell, Bill & Karan Blum, Jim McGibney, Georgia Eacker (f); **Area 5. Kevin Heffernan**, Karen Darcy, Roberta Sorenson, Richard Pitre, Ward Ebert, Jordan & Karen Wilkerson, Carol Newman, Michele Wright, Nanine

Rhineland, Doug & Jeanne Odermatt, Ginny Walker, Marty Chestem, Helen Zeichner, John Blaisdell (f), Ellen & Hal Bryson (f); **Area 6. Bonnie Ott**, Ralph & Jane Geuder, Brigitte Lund, John Hoffman, Anita Picco, Hank Stanton, Dave Holyoke, David Kubitsky, Sue Probst, John Maloney, Diane Johns, Richard Orr, Susan Buswell (f), Janet Lydon (f), Elayne & Jeff Metter (f), Emily Miller (f); **Area 7. Kurt Schwarz**, Jo & Bob Solem, Jane & T. Dennis Coskren, John McKitterick, Tracy & Erin Eve, Michelle Stewart, Barry Miller, Chan Robbins, Eva Sunell, Sue Neri, June Tveekrem, Paul Woodford, Jim Wilkinson, Scott Buswell (f). *Area coordinators are in boldface; (f) is primarily a feeder watcher. Field observers who also counted their feeders are listed as field only; any observer who counted in more than one area is listed once.*

Don't forget to reserve **Saturday, February 7, 2004** for the Nineteenth Howard County Midwinter Count. Check the Bird Club website www.howardbirds.org for a comparison of all Midwinter Counts with species totals.

	TCC	HCMC
Common Merganser	307	14
Sharp-shinned Hawk	29	8
Cooper's Hawk	11	11
American Kestrel	9	8
Killdeer	16	0
Wilson's Snipe	2	0
American Woodcock	1	0
Eastern Phoebe	6	1
Carolina Wren	341	427
American Robin	418	2,033
Gray Catbird	3	5
Brown Thrasher	6	2
Chipping Sparrow	1	0
Fox Sparrow	20	12

HOWARD COUNTY RECREATION & PARKS JOINS THE BIRDHOUSE NETWORK

BY BRENDA BELENSKY AND SUE MULLER

In an effort to share knowledge on cavity nesting birds here in Howard County, Recreation & Parks Bluebird Nest Box monitors will be sharing data they collect on their nest box sites with the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. The Department's Bluebird Nest Box Monitoring Program, now in its 20th year, will benefit greatly by participating in Cornell's program, mainly because Cornell staff will now oversee the burden of data entry and analysis. Volunteer nest box monitors will be entering their data online through Cornell's website, although Recreation & Parks



will still keep the paper forms just in case. Data submitted from Howard County will become part of Cornell's national database and will help to answer large-scale ecological questions about bird populations. The goals and objectives of both programs are a good match because both strive to involve citizens in conducting research, learn about wildlife and the environment.

If you are interested in learning more about this program, check out Cornell's website <http://birds.cornell.edu> or contact **Sue Muller** at (410) 313-4697.

M.O.S. Needs Your Help

By Kurt Schwarz

The Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) at the state level has quite a few positions available for any member with the talent, skills, and/or motivation. If you have any of the above, and one of these positions appeals to you, or you know a possible candidate, contact MOS President, and Howard County Bird Club member, **Paul Zucker** at 443-778-4971, or paul.zucker@jhuapl.edu. The following positions are currently available:

- Executive Secretary (this includes a \$200/month stipend)
- Conference Committee Chairperson
- Publicity Committee Chairperson
- Seasonal Counts Committee Chairperson
- Gifts Committee Chairperson
- Editor of seasonal reports to MARYLAND BIRDLIFE (this may include a computer, if needed)
- Editor for the YELLOWTHROAT
- Calendar editor for the YELLOWTHROAT
- Merchandise Manager
- World Series of Birding Coordinator

POTLUCK THANKS BY MARY-JO BETTS

Once again, our Potluck Dinner was a great success. Thanks to everyone who brought such delicious dishes, as well as those who presented such outstanding slide programs. I want to give a special thank you to several members who, every year, volunteer their services to make the dinner so enjoyable for the rest of us. Thanks to **Marty Chestem**, who always produces her personalized birdy placemats. Thanks also to **Monika and Rod Botsai**, who take care of bringing the sodas and ice. Many thanks to the many members who were kind enough to come early and help set up the room, as well as helping to clean up after, including **Monika and Rod Botsai, Marty Chestem, Bonnie Ott, the Geuders, the Holyokes, Kurt Schwarz, the Harveys, Chuck Stirrat, Karen Darcy, Kevin Heffernan, the**

Waugh, the Eckers, Zeld Simon, the Zuckers, the Cullisons and the Probsts.

A very special thank you to **Kathy and Tom Franklin**, of the Wildlife Authority, who once again, generously donated their special "Shade Grown Coffee" along with a birdy mug for one of our door prizes. Thanks to all of the members who also donated door prizes, especially to **Eva Sunell** and to her husband **Auggie** who took "The Otter" to bring back to us again next year. Thank you to **Dave Harvey, Chuck Stirrat, Ralph Geuder, and Paul Zucker** for their fabulous slides. The dishes this year, created by our many friends, were as sensational as ever. I will look forward to joining all of you next year for another wonderful time.

Howard County Winter Bird Count - February 1, 2003									
Species / Area No.:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Totals	
Great Blue Heron	A	2	6	3		7	1	9	28
Black Vulture	A	14	7	44			16	81	
Turkey Vulture	A	27	12	76	10	33	8	173	
Snow Goose	B						7	7	
Canada Goose	A	1,726	4,803	232	1,013	436	126	2,143	10,479
Mute Swan	A						1	1	
Tundra Swan	B						4	4	
Wood Duck	B	5		1			1	8	
Gadwall	C						1	1	
American Wigeon	A	4	5		1			2	12
American Black Duck	B	2	97		17			12	128
Mallard	A	69	207	49	130	84	58	131	728
Northern Pintail	C				2	1		1	4
Green-winged Teal	B							9	9
Canvasback	A				2	4		1	7
Ring-necked Duck	A	9	20		8	19		31	87
Lesser Scaup	B			3	1				4
Bufflehead	A		18						18
Common Goldeneye	B		1						1
Hooded Merganser	B	8	12		12	2	6	6	46
Common Merganser	B		14						14
Red-breasted Merganser	C		3						3
Ruddy Duck	A				23				23
Bald Eagle (ad/murk)	B		2						2
Sharp-shinned Hawk	B		1		4		3		8
Cooper's Hawk	B	3		2	2	2	1	1	11
<i>accipiter species</i>					1				1
Red-shouldered Hawk	A	12	2	10	7	4	6	10	51
Red-tailed Hawk	A	18	6	18	5	1	4	6	58
<i>buteo species</i>		2						1	3
American Kestrel	A	2	2	2		1	1		8
Ring-billed Gull	A	6	49	87	93	77	20	126	458
Herring Gull	A		4	57	2				63
<i>gull species</i>		4				1		33	38
Rock Dove	A	95	24	234	468		190	13	1,024
Mourning Dove	A	483	129	241	145	31	107	155	1,291
Eastern Screech-Owl	B		1						1
Great Horned Owl	B	3	3	1		2	2		11
Barred Owl	B	12	2	1		1			16
Belted Kingfisher	A	2	3	3		1	3	5	17
Red-bellied Woodpecker	A	42	35	60	17	37	41	39	271
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	B	5	7	6	3	2	3	6	32
Downy Woodpecker	A	43	15	39	26	36	49	50	258
Hairy Woodpecker	A	16	3	11	3	7	12	7	59
Northern (Yellow-sh'd) Flicker	A	27	14	37	36	17	26	22	179
Pileated Woodpecker	A	10	4	4	4	6	8	5	41
Eastern Phoebe	A							1	1
Blue Jay	A	93	52	101	78	65	85	182	656
American Crow	A	268	101	382	59	59	134	163	1,166
Fish Crow	A	17	5	9		1		10	42
<i>crow species</i>		231	402	327	104	5	27	68	1,164
Horned Lark	C	3							3
Carolina Chickadee	A	111	64	170	67	76	144	155	787
Tufted Titmouse	A	116	39	136	65	77	117	155	705
Red-breasted Nuthatch	C		3						3
White-breasted Nuthatch	A	37	29	25	17	35	30	24	197
Brown Creeper	A	9	1	1		1	2	4	18
Carolina Wren	A	66	81	54	41	37	56	92	427
Area Code:		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Totals

Species / Area No.:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Totals	
Winter Wren	B	3		1		2		2	8
Golden-crowned Kinglet	A	4	20	4	1			1	30
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	A			1	3		1	2	7
Eastern Bluebird	A	94	62	52	46	53	49	36	392
Hermit Thrush	B	3	5			2	2	2	14
American Robin	A	504	139	316	70	208	641	155	2,033
Gray Catbird	A		4			1			5
Northern Mockingbird	A	75	40	89	36	31	43	67	381
Brown Thrasher	A					1			2
European Starling	A	556	308	1,528	696	87	165	324	3,664
Cedar Waxwing	A	27	13	157	25	134	37	174	567
Yel.-rump'd (Myrtle) Warb	A	5		3	7	6		1	22
Eastern Towhee	A	26	2	4	1	4	4	7	48
American Tree Sparrow	B	13		26	16	3			58
Field Sparrow	A	54	10	51	5	20	1	7	148
Savannah Sparrow	B	2		11	23				36
Fox Sparrow	B	3	3	1	3	1		1	12
Song Sparrow	A	182	93	123	112	79	50	64	703
Swamp Sparrow	B	1	4	3	8	1	3	2	22
White-throated Sparrow	A	529	182	365	125	142	325	232	1,900
White-crowned Sparrow	B	11	56	11		1	13		92
<i>sparrow species</i>				25	1		7		33
Dark-eyed Junco	A	202	109	345	164	113	351	313	1,597
Northern Cardinal	A	251	128	242	119	107	139	270	1,256
Red-winged Blackbird	A	17		37			12	57	123
Eastern Meadowlark	A			1					1
Common Grackle	A	856	1	6,856	31	1	105	5	7,855
Brown-headed Cowbird	A			5	40		7	9	61
<i>blackbird species</i>				4,062	483				4,545
House Finch	A	82	43	93	36	42	96	105	497
American Goldfinch	A	43	18	107	27	29	129	88	441
House Sparrow	A	85	71	387	47	114	66	300	1,070
Area Total Birds:		7,230	7,599	17,307	4,615	2,351	3,545	5,912	48,559
Area Total Species:		60	62	59	54	55	54	60	84
Area No.:		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Totals

Supplemental Data									
	6:45 a	7:00 a	7:00 a	7:00 a	6:30 a	7:00 a	7:00 a	6:30 a	
Time Start:	6:45 a	7:00 a	7:00 a	7:00 a	6:30 a	7:00 a	7:00 a	6:30 a	
Time Stop:	6:45 p	5:00 p	5:00 p	5:00 p	3:00 p	5:00 p	5:00 p	6:45 p	
Hours on Foot:	25.0	25.5	27.4	23.2	30.0	18.8	39.2	189.1	
Hours by Car:	8.5	3.5	12.1	5.7	1.8	2.1	6.5	40.2	
Hours Other:	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	
Miles on Foot:	21.0	22.0	26.5	16.2	25.5	15.7	32.5	159.4	
Miles by Car:	117.5	75.7	94.0	60.0	11.0	25.0	60.4	443.6	
Miles Other:	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	
Hours Feeder Watching:	2.0	9.0	5.2	3.6	3.1	18.0	1.3	42.2	
Hours Stationary:	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	
Hours "Owling":	.8	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.8	
Miles "Owling":	.3	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.3	
Area Code:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Totals	
Tot. Field Obs. in Area:	7	10	11	13	15	13	16	85	
Tot. Field Parties in Area:	6	5	6	4	7	7	9	44	
Tot. Feederwatchers:	2	1	4	2	4	6	2	21	
Tot. Feederwatch Parties:	2	1	2	2	3	5	1	16	
Total Observers in Area:	9	11	15	15	19	19	18	100	
Tot. Field Party-Hrs (Reg):	33.5	29.0	39.5	28.9	31.8	20.9	45.7	229.3	
Total Party-Hrs (Feeder):	2.0	9.0	5.2	3.6	3.1	18.0	1.3	42.2	
Total Party-Hrs (Owling):	.8	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.8	
Total Party-Hours:	44.3	27.9	39.0	30.3	40.9	50.7	36.8	269.9	
Area Code:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Totals	



HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB
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CONSERVATION COLUMN
"NATIVE PLANTS SERIES"

BY BOB SOLEM

This will start a new series of articles, to be continued in the autumn, on native plants. This is important for birdwatchers, since birds depend on the surrounding vegetation for food, shelter, and nesting habitat. This first column summarizes an article by Dr. Stanwyn Shetler that appeared in *Marylandica: Journal of the Maryland Native Plant Society* (11:1, Winter/Spring 2003, pp 22-23). The article is a condensation of a talk Dr. Shetler gave at the 2002 annual meeting of the Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society.

Dr. Shetler says, "Few issues have energized the native plant societies in recent years as much as the growing scourge of invasive alien plants in the natural landscape. Thanks to dedicated members, the state organizations and their

local chapters have often led the way in providing public information and guiding local eradication campaigns. Important as this focus is, it must be kept in balance . . .

"Then there is the question, What is a 'native'? A plant from the same continent? Region? State? Part of a state? County? Site? Obviously a species can be native on one level and not on another. If a species is said to be native to an area, does that mean that all individuals of that species are automatically native there also? . . . Deliberate introduction, by definition, makes aliens of otherwise native plants. It is not the distance from the source that determines what is alien, but the act of planting. Thus, *a native plants itself, an alien is planted by someone.*"

**CHANGES TO
 HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB
 DIRECTORY
 2002-2003—revised**

Please make the following changes (changed entry is in **Boldface**):

- p. 2, Tracy Conway
conwayfitness@hotmail.com
- p. 3, Paula & Darius Ecker
darius126@comcast.net
- p. 5, Michele Lilja
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- p. 7, Daryl & Kate Olson
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- p. 7, Peter C. Osenton
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