



THE ORGANIZATION

As Martha Chesten, our newsletter editor is out of town, readers will recognize a change of style -- your president is filling in for this issue. I welcome you all and I am very pleased with the response which the Howard County Chapter of MOS' activities have received. We are growing and as we grow we want very much to reflect your interests and your goals. In order to accomplish these ends we want to hear from you -- criticism, suggestions, offers of help.

The high plonks of the last month were Jerry Longcore who has promised to come back with more slides on bird nests, and Kathy Klemowitz' Breeding Bird Atlas. Joe Solea (725-5037) will be keeping us up to date on the extension of this nesting bird survey into Howard County, and who incidentally needs a few more volunteers to help with the project.

The Bombay Hook Field Trip was capped by the sighting of a bald eagle.

Dr. Al Geis led an adventuresome crew into a splendid area of Trotter Road down to the Middle Patuxent. Strenuous as it was, we learned a great deal historically about the area, and some of the possibilities of safe-guarding it as an open-space area.

The Bookstore has helpful Field Guides, checklists, and gift items for sale. The profits go the MOS Sanctuary Fund. However a sizeable outlay of capital has been invested to furnish the material and a small donation to the Bookstore Starting Fund would help its continuing usefulness to you.

At the February 8th meeting, nominations are accepted for President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and Trustee for a one year term. All paid up members are eligible to vote for these officers at the Annual Meeting on March 8. No nomination can be accepted from the floor unless the nominee has previously agreed to accept the position if elected.

PROGRAMS

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| February 8 | Dr. Erwin Klaas | Motmots, milpas, and Maya |
| March 8 | Dr. Donald Messersmith | Color slides, lecture on Greenland & Iceland |
| April 12 | David Holmes | African Adventure |

FIELD TRIPS

February 10 (Saturday) Local Bird Feeder Trip. This trip will include feeders in different areas in the locale. You will be able to exchange ideas and pick up tips on how and why others feed the way they do. Leader: Ted Van Velsen

February 17, 18, 19 Chicoteague Weekend. The plan is to start Saturday at 7:30 a.m. at Swansfield Elementary School, visit Sandy Point and Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge briefly, arriving at our destination by late afternoon. Sunday will be devoted to Chicoteague, and a visit to Ocean City is planned on the way home. Please call the Leader, Larry Hood by February 10 for motel details (730-9251 after 3:30).

March 11 (Sunday) Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. This will be an all day trip. Bring lunch. Leader: to be announced.

NOTE: Because so many members attending the field trips came from the other side of Columbia we are CHANGING the meeting place from Oakland Mills to Swansfield Elementary School, Cedar Lane, Columbia (where the monthly meetings are held). Time to gather is 7:30 a.m. For information on all field trips contact Ruth Healy (465-5737). You may find, like me, that Field Trips give you a huge appetite -- a thermos of coffee, cheese and crackers, nuts or a candy bar really keep my energy up. On all day trips which are far away please remember that if you don't wish to drive, the leader and others going usually have room for a passenger or two. A short caravan of full cars is also much easier to lead than a dozen or more cars with one to two people in each.

SUMMER ACTIVITIES

Many birding groups shut down their activities in June for the summer. There have been inquiries about the possibility of continuing Field Trips during July and August. If you are in favor of summer trips please let Bob Herndon know (730-0942).

ATTENTION SENIOR MEMBERS

Remember -- you are now eligible for a rebate in your membership dues if you have paid the full price. The new category is \$4.00 for single adult and \$5.00 for husband/wife.

Larry Hood - waterfowl workshop 2/22

BIRD NOTES

Reporting in from the west of Columbia a number of less common birds have been seen at feeders and in yards. On January 9 Virginia Metz, Cookeville, watched a brown creeper spiraling her toes. Annette Hoops, Green Henge, had a bluebird on January 14 and 28. Caroline Compton, Widmark, has had bluebirds on and off all winter. Shirley Hobbs, Bird Notes contact (442-2385), has lots of white-crowned sparrows and two robins wintering near her home in Glenelg.

In the Turf Valley area near the golf course Betsy Blackert has seen red-headed woodpeckers.

ON January 13 at the silted end of Rhinelanders' pond the skaters watched a killdeer bobbing up and down, working across the unfrozen ground.

TRIADELPHIA CHRISTMAS COUNT

December 23 was one of those gray, dribbly days we had so many of back then but it stopped neither birds nor birders. Thirty-seven people (one shy of high) tracked down and chased out 87 species (new record) and 29,000+ individual birds. It was the twenty-fifth year this count has been done and the birds seemed to help us celebrate. Two Barn Owls and 2 Yellow-breasted Chats were brand new species for the count and 20 species from Whistling Swans to Song Sparrows showed up with new high counts. High numbers of woodpeckers, chickadees, tit-mice, and other wood birds showed improved coverage -- especially on foot. A high count on Purple Finches means this is an exceptional year for these wanderers. Another very high count on Carolina Wrens shows rate of increase. These birds operate in cycles though. A hard winter will cause a population crash and the whole business will start all over again. Low counts occurred only on Black Ducks and Tree Sparrows. Probably the mild weather had not pushed them south yet. The most common bird? Common Grackle -- 12,301 of them. In descending order were Starling, Common Crow, White-throated Sparrow, Slate Colored Junco, and Mourning Dove. Single birds were Horned and Pied-billed Grebes, Lesser Scaup, Red-headed Woodpecker, and Loggerhead Shrike.

It was a good time and a good count. We look forward to May Count (on the 5th) and next year.