



Howard County

MOS

MARCH 1973

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* WHERE TO GO * WHAT TO SEE * HOW TO LEARN * PROGRAM

APRIL 12 - AFRICAN ADVENTURE- David Holmes - If you've wanted to go to Africa or if you have been, you will want to make this program. David visited East Africa last summer and has slides to show and lots to tell of Africa's exotic bird and animal life. Program begins at 8 p.m., Swansfield Elementary School, Columbia.

FIELD TRIPS

MARCH 11 - Sunday - Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. This will be an all day trip so bring lunch. Not too much walking involved here. March is the Spring peak of migrant Canada geese and ducks. Ospreys are returning to nest. Of special interest will be the Blackwater contest wildlife photographs on display at the Center. Leader: Martha Chestem 730-1527

MARCH 18 - Sunday - Local field trip. This will be helpful for those of us who would like to know where the best birding is in our own neighborhood. One-half day. Leader: David Holmes 730-7083

REMEMBER meeting place for all field trips is the parking lot of the Swansfield Elementary School and the time is 7:30 a.m.

SPECIAL

MARCH 13 - Tuesday - Bird Photography Workshop. Bob Herndon, an experienced nature photographer specializing in birds, will lead the discussion. We will learn about and exchange ideas on equipment, film, techniques, etc. The workshop will begin at 8 p.m. at the Herndon's residence, 5243 Hesperus, Columbia. If you plan to attend, please call 730-0942.

BOOKS

There are many good books on the market about birds and many are inexpensive paperbacks. The Hungry Bird Book by Robert Arbib and Tony Soper goes into everything you need to know about feeding, watering, housing and protecting birds. (Ballantine: \$.95) The Watcher at the Nest by Margaret Morse Nice is a classic study of bird territory. (Dover: \$1.50)

SPRING WORK

It's time to clean out the bluebird houses or to put up a new one if you do not have one. Nesting boxes may be purchased from Frank Walker, Murphy Road, Fulton, Maryland. Telephone: 725-1278. Price is \$3.00.

Last year, purple martin scouts were reported in Maryland as early as March 21, so it is time to get the martin houses cleaned and ready. New ones may be purchased at Clark's Hardware, Ellicott City. The price is about \$35.00.

OUT THE KITCHEN WINDOW

At a ridiculously early hour for a cold, cold Saturday morning, twenty MOS members and guests went calling on several of their Howard County neighbors and scarcely voicing a proper greeting, asked directions to the kitchen. The best show in town (at that hour anyway) was right outside whichever kitchen window it was at the moment. Don't ever let it be said "if you've seen one bird feeder early in the morning, you've seen them all." The birders were surprised that each backyard presented a different grouping of birds and each one produced one or more new species that hadn't been seen before.

Bob Herndon claims he just doesn't get evening grosbeaks at his feeders but this particular morning they must have heard guests were coming--a good number of males and females showed up and were to be the only ones seen all day.

A fox sparrow was in perfect view at the next stop feeding along with the white throat sparrows, song sparrows and a number of finches (house and purple). At the Ted Van Velsen's, a rufous-sided towhee put in a spectacular, if brief, appearance. A Carolina wren was more cooperative. Here there was only an occasional pine siskin but at the very next stop a short distance away, there were pine siskins in great numbers. The goldfinches at this stop were quite yellow almost as they would be in summer.

the final kitchen of the morning, Nan Rhineland greeted the guests with not coffee and doughnuts which was most welcome as it was by then coffee break time. A red-bellied woodpecker was the new species here.

During the feeder-hopping trip, some of the other species seen included cardinals, blue jays, juncos, downy woodpeckers, flickers, mourning doves, and one lone house sparrow.

It is a great way to watch birds as there is time to view and study at close range the behavior of various species together. Also, an awfully comfortable way to do ones bird watching on a very cold day--all those comfortable warm kitchens!

PICK UP THAT TRASH

Recently in the news was a story of a Canada goose shot on the Eastern shore. The bird had somehow gotten one of those plastic 6-pack ring affairs around his neck and was going to die from strangulation if not starvation. He had two or three of the rings wound so tight that he could neither fly nor eat properly.

A sad comentary on our times.

C O U N T T H E M *** 100!

A red-throated loon diving in and out of choppy waters directly off the end of the jetty in Ocean City at noon on Monday, February 19, remains oblivious to his important contribution to the success of the first week end birding trip of the Howard County MOS. "THAT'S IT, THAT IS NUMBER 100," our leader announced. One hundred species had been checked since the official beginning of the trip at 7:30 a.m. on the preceding cold Saturday morning.

The five car caravan had stopped first at Sandy Point State Park (missed the long-eared owl that has been seen there), then on to Mill Creek Sanctuary (new to most of the members of the group) where we spotted a golden crown kinglet and a winter wren. Mark this sanctuary down as a good bet for spring warblers. Blackwater Refuge was next and always a delight but more so this time since we could stand inside out of the cold winds and low temperature and view the Canada geese, snow geese and variety of ducks from the large clear windows. The staff showed a nature movie for the children but it proved to be as popular with the adults. Moving outdoors we were rewarded by sighting a bald eagle soaring over one of the ponds.

The caravan moved on to Chincoteague and after a minor hassle over motel rooms (we were surprised to find motel rooms a scarcity on such a cold week end), we scouted the area before dinner and located several oystercatchers-- a lifer for some. It was early to bed for tired birders and a prayer for a calm sunny Sunday.

Sunday was calm and was spent covering the National Wildlife Refuge where deer and Chincoteague ponies were seen as well as numerous species of birds--we were beginning to believe we could reach that goal of 100 species for the trip. Among the birds seen here were horned and pied-billed grebes, snowy egret, Brant geese, pintails, shovelers, canvasbacks, buffleheads, oldsquaw, hooded merganser, bobwhite, greater and lesser yellowlegs, Bonaparte's gull, belted kingfisher, horned lark, Ipswich sparrow, and brown-headed nuthatch.

Monday morning was gorgeous--clear, bright sun, and no wind. Although the temperature stayed in the high 20's and low 30's, it didn't seem that cold. We decided to take mainly back roads to Ocean City, birding on the way.

At mid-morning, Larry Hood demonstrated how kestrels (sparrow-hawk) are trapped and banded. The road was long and straight, giving us all an excellent view of the whole show. The cameras were busy clicking for the next ten minutes and although held captive, the unhappy little falcon posed beautifully.

Lunch was outdoors at picnic tables on Assateague and shared with two hungry ponies. We decided it is much more difficult to discourage persistent ponies at picnics than the proverbial ants in summer.

On to Ocean City for number 99 (ruddy turnstone) and the magic moment--the appearance of the great red-throated loon to climax an exciting week end. The success of the trip was due to the nice people who chose to ignore that cold wind on Saturday morning and take a chance that things would get better but to single out one factor all present agreed, the lion's share of credit for the success of the trip has to go to Larry Hood, our knowledgeable, tireless, entertaining leader.