



HOWARD

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Maryland Ornithological Society

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COMING EVENTS

PROGRAM

SEPTEMBER 13, 7:30 p.m. Swansfield Elementary School. Larry Hood will present a program, "HAWKS" which will include their habitats and instruction on identification illustrated with beautiful slides taken locally. This program will be in preparation for the field trips coming up.

FIELD TRIPS

SEPTEMBER 29-30, Cape May Weekend. Migrating hawks and much more. Information on lodging will be announced at September 13 program meeting. Meet 7:30 a.m. at parking lot of Swansfield Elementary School. Leaders are Bob Herndon (730-0942) and Larry Hood (730-9251).

OCTOBER 20, Hawk Mountain, Kempton, Pennsylvania. Leader to be announced and more information on this trip in the October newsletter. Weather date-October 27.

November 11, Bombay Hook and Delaware Shore. Leader to be announced with more details on this trip in future newsletters. Weather date-November 18.

HAWK MOUNTAIN

Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, Kempton, Pennsylvania is undoubtedly the most famous of all the hawk observation points in the country. In 1934, the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association was established to operate the Sanctuary for the purpose of conserving and protecting wildlife and to educate the public in matters concerning wildlife. The Sanctuary consists of 2000 acres and has been designated a Registered Natural Landmark. There are 5043 association members.

In 1972, 35,000 people visited the Sanctuary--the number increases every year. Since counts have been kept (1934) over half a million hawks have been counted from the lookouts. Over the years, Sept. 17 has been considered the "charmed date" because frequently this has been the peak date for broadwings. On this date in 1972, 5266 hawks were seen by 749 guests. While September has quantity, October has quality. If the weather is favorable, during the first part of the month one may see 12 of the species that are regularly seen. All 14 species have never been seen in one day.

For information about the Association and membership write Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association, Route 2, Kempton, Pennsylvania, 19529. Membership includes a magazine published in March each year.

SEASON'S LAST FIELD TRIP

Early last Spring, Larry Hood suggested a good summer field trip would be a hike along the Patuxent River between Routes 32 and 108-- a little tougher and more strenuous than the field trips up to that point. Twelve veterans of that hike will warn you, take Larry Hood at his word. Actually, as it turned out it wasn't so much along the river as in it!

The twelve (and they deserve special mention) were besides Larry, Jenifer, Shirley, and Pamela Courtright; Lenore Holt; Marjorie Mountjoy; Helen Venderburgh; Barbara Wilson; Dick Murray; Steve and Bob Doyle and Martha Chestem. The trip took almost five hours and consisted of wading the river from ankle to high waist deep (a hard rain the night before had its effect), walking the muddy banks and now and then breaking a path through the thick greenery along the banks. There were only brief moments of walking in open clear spaces. However, there were no more serious mishaps than occasional falls caused by slippery muddy banks or unexpected and unseen rocks in the stream. A couple of binoculars were drenched and there were a few soggy sandwiches at lunch (one of the two rest stops).

There were fresh animal tracks along the way (raccoon, deer, muskrat), some box turtles, a few birds (hummingbird, wood thrush, pewee, yellow billed cuckoo and more), and a variety of trees, plants and wild flowers extraordinarily beautiful after the summer rain. But mostly it was the companionship of twelve individuals sharing the experience of becoming veteran river waders that made the trip memorable. Maybe once a year is enough but then--it must be even more beautiful in the fall--all that brilliant color on a blue October morning.

HOWARD COUNTY BIRDING

Do you have a favorite Howard County birding spot? We'd like to hear about it so that we can pass the information on to our readers. Not only is it important that we all learn as much as we possibly can about Howard County birds but also its nice to know about several good close-to-home areas where one can go to spend a few free hours.

There is an interesting area where Mink Hollow Road crosses the Patuxent River. There are several good parking areas on either side of the old creaky bridge and at the pumping station entrance. As you approach the bridge from the North there is an open field on the left with a fairly good walking path quite near the river. In fact the path at the far end of the field has a branch off to the river bank. This area is interesting because of the closeness of the two habitats adding to the variety of species one is apt to see. Last Spring the locale was fairly good for warblers and during the summer a trip any morning could produce excellent views of yellow-breasted chat, numerous indigo buntings, yellowthroats, orchard oriole, chickadees, ruby-throated hummingbird, bobwhite, etc. Taking the path down to the river would usually produce a belted kingfisher and several species of flycatchers. The area on the other side of the road is also good.

It is usually a quiet spot with only an occasional fisherman. Mink Hollow Road can be reached from Highland Road between Route 108 and Brighton Dam Road. Going Southwest on 108 from Clarksville, turn right on Highland Road (at the Village of Highland) and left on Mink Hollow. If taking Brighton Dam Rd. from Clarksville, turn left on Highland Rd. and right at Mink Hollow.

2 AND A ON BIRDING

Q. How do I become a bird watcher?

A. You've started birding when you have noticed a bird and wondered what it was since you knew it wasn't a robin. The next step may be to join an organized group in order to have the advantages of field trips, programs, and association with others with a common interest.

Q. What about field trips--can I go when I know so little?

A. Field trips are organized with a plan to explore a definite area with an experienced leader. They range in time from a few hours to a full weekend depending on the area. Field trips always have beginners and birders are a helpful lot; they like to convert nonbirders.

Q. What do I have to buy to start?

A. You are a birder if you just look and listen but of course, you enjoy the sport more with a few aids--a good field guide and a pair of binoculars are important. But if you have neither by the day of your first field trip, don't let that deter you.

Q. Where do I get a field guide?

A. Field guides are rather numerous and sold in almost all book stores. Howard County MOS also sells them (call Frances Dawson, 730-8549). The two preferred by birders everywhere are: Birds of North America by Robbins, Bruun and Zim and A Field Guide to the Birds by Roger Tory Peterson. Get a paperback for field use, its easier to handle and lighter to carry.

Q. And binoculars--what is recommended?

A. Binoculars are very important and a bit of shopping around and investigating is wise. Talk to other birders and check prices in camera shops, sporting good stores or department stores. The type most frequently recommended by birders is 7 x 35.

Q. What do I wear on field trips?

A. Birders are a motley group. They like to tramp around and get into underbrush or wade a stream if it seems necessary. Old comfortable clothing is a must. Since many trips start early in the morning when its quite cool and break up later when its hot, a light weight warm jacket is best. Remember good walking shoes and check with the leader ahead of time to see if boots might be in order.

Q. Are there any rules to be followed?

A. Just a few--be on time at the meeting place; stay with and behind the leader; don't block the view of others; leave the dog at home, this isn't his day.

Q. May I bring my camera?

A. By all means. Particularly on the Wildlife Refuges there is ample opportunity to get excellent shots.

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