

HOWARD



NEWSLETTER OF HOWARD COUNTY CHAPTER
MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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P I G E O N P L I G H T

The one bird most frequently mentioned by birders and nonbirders as the first bird (for nonbirders may be the only one) they learned to recognize is the pigeon. More properly called the rock dove (*Columba livia*), the bird is another of our introduced species that has caused some serious problems but also won a number of friends. In Maryland a bill is now under consideration that would deny pigeons their protected status and make them fair game for hunters.

The rock dove was domesticated in the Old World and brought to this country from England along with other poultry. As cities were established, many doves left their owners and became feral. They are now as well established in this country as the introduced starling and sparrow but undoubtedly, have won more friends. Many will feed from the hands of those accustomed to feeding them. But pigeons are serious problems for those charged with the responsibility of keeping buildings and statues clean. So much so that much time is spent in devising methods to discourage them from perching where they are not wanted. The Massachusetts Audubon Society publishes a paper with tips on various methods. These include use of effective chemicals, ineffective results of mothballs, and a suggestion that a thin wire about an inch back from the edge of a ledge and about an inch high is an effective deterrent.

A recent article in the Washington Post reported pigeon lovers responded emotionally to the proposed bill and flocked to Annapolis to let their feelings be known. "Pigeons are a way of life to us. We love them, we train them, we breed them and we pray for them", stated Charles W. Frampton, president of the Monumental City Pigeon Fanciers Social Club in Baltimore. At present, pigeons are not on the state's list of unprotected birds so it is unlawful for private citizens to hunt or exterminate them. Complaints from apartment dwellers about pigeons messing up their balconies prompted Del. S. Ruffin Maddox, Jr. to introduce the bill to make pigeons an unprotected bird. Frampton said the bill would harm the state's 500 pigeon racers who regularly hold cross-country meets for the birds. He also stated the racing pigeons are not the same as those birds who cluster in the city and soil streets, park benches and houses.

D U C K S A N D M O R E D U C K S

Good words for local birding and saving gasoline: A recent cold Sunday morning visit to Wilde Lake and Lake Kittamaquidi produced spectacular views of six canvasbacks, four ring-necked ducks, one goldeneye, one gadwall, two black ducks, five female and two male hooded mergansers, two widgeons, numerous mallards and one coot.

FIELD TRIPS

February 16-18 (Sunday-Monday)--Three day trip to Chincoteague. This was a successful trip last year with 100 species listed. Larry Hood is the leader again this year and will answer any questions (call 730-9251). He is making the overnight arrangements so must know very soon if you plan to go. However, you may join the group at any point and leave at any time. Monday is a working day for some and it is expected those birders will leave early. Chincoteague is a beautiful spot and can be full of surprises. Meet at 8 a.m. at Swansfield Elementary School parking lot.

February 23 (Saturday)--Local feeder trip. There will be five stops and the trip will be concluded about noon. Meet at Swansfield Elementary School parking lot at 8 a.m. for car pooling. Martha Chestem, Leader - 730-1527.

March 16, (Saturday)--Second trip to Woodbine camp. The success of the January trip dictated this return visit. This will be an afternoon trip so those who find it difficult to go Saturday mornings can take in this trip. Meet at Swansfield Elementary School parking lot for the 4 hour outing. Wear hiking clothes--good walking shoes!. Larry Hood, leader (730-9251).

March 31 (Sunday)-- Banding demonstration by David Holmes and Kathy Klimkiewicz. There will be more about this in the March newsletter.

CONVENTION TIME

The main event of the Maryland Ornithological Society each year is the State convention. The dates this year are May 10-12 (Friday through Sunday). Trips are planned from predawn to dusk for a large variety of land, shore, marsh and ocean birds. Save those dates and more specific information will be in later newsletters.

JUNIOR PROGRAM

February 23 (Saturday): Meet Erv Klaas at 8 a.m. at Swansfield Elementary School parking lot for one-half day trip to see and learn about barn owls at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center. Trip is timed to coincide with the feeder trip so children can take part in this activity while adults visit the feeders.

PROGRAM

March 14: Al Geis will speak on his Columbia Bird Study. Dr. Geis is a migratory bird specialist with the Dept. of Interior's Migratory Bird Populations Station. He began his study of the effect of concentrated urban development on bird life in 1966, the first year of construction in Columbia. The meeting will be at 8 p.m. at Swansfield Elementary School.

April meeting: Jerry Longcore will continue a popular program of last season. He will show more of his slides in Part II of Avian Architects.

March 2 (Saturday) A complete birders' workshop. A variety of subjects to improve your birding will be discussed. This will include identification, use of tape recorder, photography and many more. Jo Solem (725-5037) will answer questions and give directions to Nan Rhineland's where the meeting will be held. Its a full afternoon from 1:15 to 4:30 p.m. Come and meet fellow-birders.

(NOTE: The pigeon bill referred to in the story on page 1 has been defeated)

GOOD BIRDING

Birders visiting bird feeders on a Saturday morning in January were greeted with wild snow flurries and chilly weather for most of the morning but with the knowledge that hot coffee and doughnuts were waiting at the Rhinelanders and interesting birds to be seen from inside looking out, the birders pushed onward. There were 31 species spotted--not all at feeders since a turkey vulture and a red-shouldered hawk (an excellent view at the Rhinelanders) weren't seen picking out cracked corn bits at backyard feeders.

Surprises at the Al Geis feeder were a brown thrasher (which comes to his feeder regularly) and white-crown sparrows, both mature and immature. Not at a feeder but making his way up a tall tree in the front yard at Duncan MacDonald's was a brown creeper. The Fazekas feeder produced both house and purple finches and quite a number of female redwings. A tree sparrow was a welcome visitor at the Ben Dawson's feeder and a white-breasted nuthatch at the Rhinelanders. Among the other species seen were cardinals, song sparrows, blue jays, many goldfinches, Carolina wrens, titmouse, downy woodpeckers, red-bellied woodpecker, and cowbirds.

The next feeder visiting trip is February 26 (see field trip announcement for details)--so come along and join us.

CALLING OUR MEMBERS

The Howard County Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society now has 65 members and growing. It is satisfying to know the newest chapter in the State is growing and new members are welcome. The attendance at the monthly programs and on the field trips has been disappointing this year and the Chapter Board wonders where those 65 members are. While attendance has been disappointing, the programs and field trips in themselves have not been--it would just be better if everyone who possibly could, would come out for the chapter activities and get full advantage of the membership dollars. Howard County has a lot to offer in its wildlife and natural areas and our goal is to see that it stays with us for a long time. Membership and active participation in the chapter is a pleasant way to enjoy and to help save our wildlife. We welcome every suggestion from our members that will help us to get everyone involved!

BIG "M" AND THE "E" CRISIS

America's fast-food eateries, such as McDonald's, Colonel Sanders and Dairy Queen, are guilty of squandering America's natural resources and are using an inordinate amount of energy, according to Bruce Hannon, a University of Illinois engineering professor. Prof. Hannon has calculated that it takes not only a sustained yield of 315 square miles of forest to keep McDonald's alone supplied with paper products for one year, but the nationwide chain's 1,750 outlets used the energy equivalent of 12.7 million tons of coal last year. He stated that the amount is enough coal to supply all of the power needs of Pittsburgh, Boston, Washington and San Francisco combined for a full year. Hannon says that much of that energy is going into the production of cups, boxes, wrapping papers, napkins, sacks and straws. "My objective is not to pick on McDonald's," Hannon explained, "They're probably no worse than the other big franchisers. All together, they are a symbol of the nationwide waste of material and resources." The energy content of the food served by McDonald's is estimated by Hannon as just one-tenth the energy expended in getting it from farm to consumer. (The above taken from Colorado Outdoors)