

HOWARD

MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
March - April 1979 VOL VII NO 4

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD SEEN AT FEEDER IN COLUMBIA FOR FIRST COUNTY RECORD

Sunday, January 28, 1979, about 11:00 A.M. Alice Kretz and Linda McDaniel noticed a bird with a bright yellow throat and breast among the collection of several hundred Brown-headed Cowbirds, Common Grackles, and Red-winged Blackbirds that were feeding in Alice's yard in the Vantage Point area of Columbia. The yellow was much more extensive than that of a female Red-winged Blackbird so Alice called Marty Cheston. David Holmes was also contacted but was unavailable. Marty examined the bird and suggested a Yellow-headed Blackbird. Jo Solem arrived and agreed with Marty, but since both individuals lacked experience with female and juvenile Yellow-headed Blackbirds, it remained unsubstantiated. The bird disappeared in the late afternoon and was not seen again until the day of the next heavy snowfall. Wednesday, February 7, at 7:30 A. M. Alice spotted the bird again. A call to David brought him quickly to confirm the identification. Steve Simon who had also been alerted arrived to make the necessary photographic record. The bird left late that afternoon and has not been seen since. Because of the heavy snow only those birders from the Columbia area who are on the Rare Bird Alert were called. In addition to those previously mentioned the following Howard birders saw the blackbirds: Joe Byrnes, Eileen Clegg, Terry Kretz, Marcia & "Kris" Krishnamoorthy, and Marjorie Mountjoy.

The illustration in Robbins is not identical to the markings as they were observed. The top of the head, wings, back, and tail were a plain dark brown and the whole bird appeared rather sleek and larger than the cowbirds with whom it closely associated. The face pattern appeared broken with some yellow-brown above and below the eye with the suggestion of a darker line through the eye. The chin, throat, and upper breast were a bright yellow-orange with a broken thin dark line on each side of the throat giving the suggestion of a collar. The lower portion of the breast was white with vertical brown stripes shading into a solid brown belly. It scratched for food on the ground and seemed rather aggressive. When it flew there was no white in the wings.

This fine sighting provides several morals: 1) don't dismiss large flocks of birds without checking them over carefully, and 2) relatively new birders who are careful observers are capable of making exciting discoveries. Thanks are due Terry Kretz who repeatedly trudged through the snow to spread seed and who served as "weed-beater" to move the flock into a more visible position. Last winter a Varied Thrush in the county, this year a Yellow-headed Blackbird, what will turn up at a feeder next year?

TWO NATURE STUDY COURSES AT HOWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE DURING SPRING QUARTER

"An Introduction to the Natural History of Howard County" taught by Eileen Clegg and Jo Solem will again be offered by the continuing education sessions of Howard Community College. The class will meet Wednesday evenings at Dunloggin Middle School and consist of six class meetings and two field trips. Beginning Ornithology is also being offered. This is entirely a field course and is geared to the novice. Registration takes place during March--catalogues should be mailed to all county homes soon. Classes begin the week of April 23.

BIRD SPONSORS

Thanks to all who offered to sponsor a bird to expand our mounted collection. We hope to have the new birds on display at the April meeting. Each mount will be marked with donor's name. The club thanks Joe Byrnes, Marty Chestem, Eileen & John Clegg, Alice & Terry Kretz, Olio & Jerry Leonard, Linda McDaniel, Fran Nahrgang, Nan Rhineland, Elise Seay, and Cathy & Leroy Williamson.

PROGRAM NIGHT POPULAR

The February potluck for the membership continues to be one of our most successful events. This year between 65-70 people braved the aftermath of a major snowstorm to share a social evening. The food, as always, was delicious and the slides seem to improve each year. Thanks to everyone who helped to make the evening so memorable--a special thank you to Nan and Fred Rhineland who graciously host this event.

MALL EXHIBIT

Our club has been asked to participate in an exhibit at the Columbia Mall sponsored by the Howard County Bureau of Environmental Services from April 23-29, from 10:00 A.M. - 9:00 P.M. This provides us with excellent publicity. We will display some of the mounted birds and a selection of nests as well as talk to people who stop to exclaim and ask questions. Volunteers are needed to "man" the exhibit. Any amount of time from an hour or two to half a day or an evening would be appreciated. If you feel you would prefer to work with someone please specify that fact. Please call Eileen Clegg 730-4362 to volunteer.

BUMPER STICKERS - "I'd Rather Be Birding"

For you birders who want to let the world know of your interest, buy a bumper sticker at the next meeting. The idea was conceived by a California birder who was inspired by the sailing enthusiasts who for several years have prominently displayed their sentiments on their cars. The price is \$1.00.

DUCKS AT A DISTANCE: A WATERFOWL IDENTIFICATION GUIDE

Eileen Clegg has obtained copies of this pocket-size identification guide recently published by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. There are enough so that each family may be given one. Some were distributed at the potluck. The rest will be available at the remainder of the meetings this year. Any not picked up by the May meeting will be given to new members as they are enrolled.

TELEPHONE NUMBER CORRECTIONS AND CHANGES

Please correct the telephone number on your membership list for John & Eileen Clegg to 730-4362. Alice & Terry Kretz's number is now 596-0955.

TYPEWRITER ANYONE???????

If any of our members has a typewriter gathering dust that they would be willing to donate to the club, please contact President John Clegg, 730-4362.

CALENDAR - PROGRAMS - Swansfield Elementary School, 7:45 P.M.

MAR. 8, THU. - "Birds, Plants, Amphibians of the Smokies and Southern Appalachians." "Kris" and Marcia Krishnamoorthy. For the naturalist there is no other area quite like it in eastern North America. Come and find out why.

MAR. 19, THU. - "The Courtship of Animals." Mary Leister. Mary has been a columnist for the Baltimore Sun for years. Some of her nature writings for the paper have been collected in a book entitled Wildlings. They reflect her sensitivity to the world around her. No charge to members; small fee for non-members.

CALENDAR - FIELD TRIPS - Meet at Swansfield Elementary School, Cedar Lane, Columbia, unless otherwise indicated.

MAR. 4, SUN. - COLUMBIA LAKES. Especially good for beginning birders. Meet 1:00 P.M. Leader: Cathy Williamson, 730-0338.

MAR. 25, SUN. - BOMBAY HOOK NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE. All day trip to Eastern Shore refuge. Lingering wintering species and early spring migrants. Meet 7:00 A.M. Leader: Marty Chestem, 730-1527. Bring lunch.

MAR. 31, SAT. - AMPHIBIAN WALK. Howard County location; reserve by calling leader. Limit 15 members, age 9 and older. Meet 7:00 P.M. Leader: Jo Solem 725-5037.

APR. 7, SAT. - BLACKWATER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE AND SANDY POINT STATE PARK. All day trip to see waterfowl and marsh birds. Meet 7:00 A.M. Leader: John Olegg, 730-4362. Bring lunch.

APR. 9, MON. - DISCOVERY WALK - FAULKNER RIDGE, COLUMBIA. All Discovery Walks are co-sponsored by Howard Co. Department of Recreation & Parks. Meet 9:30 A.M. at Hesperus Dr. & Iron Pen Pl. Parents with children in strollers are welcome. Leaders: Jo Solem, 725-5037 & Bill Eckert, 992-2484.

APR. 14, SAT. - WILDFLOWER WALK - PATAPSCO STATE PARK, GLEN ARTNEY AREA. Along River Road in Howard Co. Bring a hand lens. Meet 8:00 A.M. for $\frac{1}{2}$ day trip. Leaders: Chuck Dupree 796-1086 & Jo Solem 725-5037.

APR. 17, TUE. - DISCOVERY WALK - LAKE ELKHORN, COLUMBIA. Meet 9:30 A.M. at Boat Dock. Strollers welcome. Leaders: Marcia Krishnamoorthy, 997-5967 & Bill Eckert, 992-2484.

APR. 20, FRI. - WOODCOCK WALK. To observe courtship flight. Wear dark-colored long-sleeved shirt and long pants. Limit 15 members, age 9 and older. Call Linda McDaniel to reserve space, 992-7124. Time 6:15 P.M. promptly! Leader: Al Geis.

APR. 22, SUN. - A CHANGING HABITAT, DAVID FORCE COUNTY PARK. Emphasis for this second trip will be wildflower identification. Bring hand lens. Leaders: Marcia Krishnamoorthy, 997-5967 & Bill Eckert, 992-2484. 1:00 P.M.

APR. 25, WED. - DISCOVERY WALK, SYMPHONY WOODS, COLUMBIA. Meet 9:30 A.M. at Children's Zoo parking lot. Leaders: Alice Kretz, 596-0955 & Bill Eckert, 992-2484.

MAY 3, THU. - DISCOVERY WALK, LONG REACH, COLUMBIA. Meet 9:30 A.M. at Tamar Dr. & Phelps Luck Dr. Strollers welcome. Leaders: Marjorie Mountjoy, 730-5873 & Bill Eckert, 992-2484.

MAY 5, SAT. - HOWARD COUNTY MAY COUNT AND POTLUCK TALLY DINNER. Plan now to participate in May Count this year. On this day birders all over the state count every bird they see and hear in order to census the bird population of Maryland. Some

people start before dawn and count until after dark. Others spend a few hours in their own neighborhood. The Howard County birders gather sometime after 5:30 P.M. at the Rhinelanders to tally their sightings and to share a potluck dinner. If you are a relatively new birder ask to be paired with someone more experienced. It's a day you'll never regret and you are sure to see some new birds--if not for your Life List then for the year. Chan Robbins usually counts in Howard County so this is a good chance to meet one of the authors of Birds of North America. You do not have to come to the tally to count so call Linda McDaniel 992-7124 or John Olegg 730-4362 to volunteer. We need YOUR help! Alice Kretz will be the meal coordinator, 596-0955. Call her for directions and food assignment.

CALENDAR - BOARD MEETING

MAR. 22, THU. - The March Board Meeting will be held at Alice Kretz's, 5435 Ring Dove Lane, Columbia. Tel. 596-0955.

DAVID HOLMES OFFERS TWO FIELD WORKSHOPS

Two Field Workshops are being sponsored by the chapter to provide instruction and experience for members. The sessions will be 3-4 hours in length on March 18 (Sun.) and May 20 (Sun.). Both begin at 7:00 A.M. and will meet at Swansfield Elementary School. Their primary emphasis will be on song with some work on field marks. The March session will emphasize sparrows and late winter residents and will be held at Piney Run Park. The May meeting will focus on warblers and vireos in the Glen Artney area of Patapsco State Park. The sessions will meet no matter what the weather but may be held inside in case of inclement conditions. These workshops are not aimed at the novice. Some basic knowledge of common bird songs is necessary. If in doubt, call David and discuss it with him, 730-7083. The fee for each session is \$2.50. Classes are limited to a maximum of 12 people, first come, first served with a waiting list. To register for one or both sessions contact Eileen Olegg, 730-4362.

SPRING WILDFLOWER SURVEY OF HOWARD COUNTY BEGINS

Do you enjoy walking in the woods in the spring looking for wildflowers? If so, then you may wish to help in a survey of the wildflowers of the county headed by Chuck Dupree and Jo Solem. You don't need to be a trained botanist, but you do need a field guide and know how to use it. Check lists will be available shortly on which you can enter the dates of flowers you observe. An evening of slides to introduce observers to the variety of flowers in Howard County during the spring seasons will be held on March 17, Saturday, at 7:30 P.M. at Jo Solem's. Call her at 725-5037 to indicate attendance and to obtain directions. It is NOT necessary to attend in order to participate in the survey. If you will not be able to attend the March chapter meeting or the wildflower meeting, call Chuck 796-1086 or Jo and request that a form be mailed to you.

JOINT FORAY WITH BROOKS BIRD CLUB

The Brooks Bird Club of West Virginia is holding its annual Harper's Ferry foray this year for perhaps the last time. The weekend originated some years ago as a search for the Sutton's Warbler, a rare hybrid. This year the foray will run from Friday evening, May 18 to Sunday noon, May 20. All day Saturday and Sunday morning are given over to birding and botanizing with knowledgeable people who know the area well. Reservations should be made at the Cliffside Motel, John & June Newcomer, Harper's Ferry, West Virginia 25425. Mention that you are with the Brooks Bird Club and they will group the rooms. Be sure to bring a raincoat as trips go rain or shine. For additional information call Anne Llewellyn 730-5949 who has been a Brooks member for years. We may be able to arrange car pools if there is a need.

Ch. H. 1020
4/20/99

President John Clegg named the following members winners in the adult division--first place, Lilly Griffin; second place, Diana Harter. A special award was made in the student division to Jonathan Blawie. The first place winners will each receive a \$5.00 merchandise credit at the club bookstore and the second place winner \$3.00. Essays will be included in the newsletter as space allows. Lilly's essay is "The Water Visitor" - Lilly Griffin

"The Water Visitor" - Lilly Griffin

He is certainly one of nature's most persistent creatures of the night. He is attractive, and many would compare him with a large cat. His tail is as long and bushy as a cat's; his nose about the same. His fur is rather amorphous and dark. If you haven't already guessed, I am describing an opossum. Actually, I am going to tell you about "Old Possum", which came to our patio every night last winter seeking food and friendship. He always appeared around 10:00 P.M. just as we were getting down to watch the news on TV. His stage was outside our living room, where the rustling of leaves or the crunch of the snow announced his arrival. We always managed to be a good ten feet from him. Dried bread was his favorite. He always came alone, and I always shooed him away with a leafless patch on his backside. There was food aplenty and we could never understand why he didn't bring a companion along, unless each animal has their own territory. After a few nights of joyous snacking, he became less timid and would occasionally wander into the lighted living room. It was fun watching him, and we were sure he was just what we needed. In fact, with a little imagination he was almost handsome!

LAGGED TURKEY VULTURES

Turkey Vultures are being banded at the Miami, Florida, dump. The banding tags contain both letters and numbers and measure 3" x 5". They are fastened to both the top and bottom of the wing. Turkey Vultures are migratory--and many that breed in Florida winter in Miami (smart birds!) If you should spot a lagged vulture with the letters on the band and lettering and read the code, send the information to the Field Banding Laboratory, Office of Migratory Bird Movement, U.S. F. & W. Serv., Laurel, Md. 20812 with a copy to Miss Parness Gaby, 6832 S.W. 68th St., S. Miami, Florida 33143.

MEMBERSHIP TOPS ONE HUNDRED

Slowly but surely we're expanding our membership. For the first time in our seven years the total membership has topped one hundred. There are still many individuals who share our interest in the natural world who are not yet members. Your word of encouragement may be just what is needed.

BIRD RIDDLES - Collected by Jim Solem

- 1. What bird do you always have with you at lunch? 2. What can a goldfish do that an elephant can't? 3. Why is the crow the braver of all birds? 4. What bird has the very red? 5. Why do ducks and geese fly north in the spring? 6. In which state does a cardinal have the most feathers? 7. What bird is low-spirited? 8. What bird is like an icicle? 9. What does a horse always do when he stands on one leg? 10. What geometric figure represents a bird's parrot? (A word is hidden)

- 1. Swallow: 2. Take a bath in a saucer; 3. It never shows a white feather; 4. It has a white patch on its neck; 5. It has a white patch on its neck; 6. It has a white patch on its neck; 7. It has a white patch on its neck; 8. It has a white patch on its neck; 9. It has a white patch on its neck; 10. It has a white patch on its neck.