

HOWARD

MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 1979 VOL VIII NO. 2

BIRD SEED SALE - LAY IN A SUPPLY

The first seed sale ever sponsored by the Howard County Bird Club is taking place NOW. Ads have appeared in the Columbia Flier and the Howard County Times. If you have access to neither paper you can still order. Selection this time is limited to sunflower seed and niger (thistle) seed. Prices are as follows:

- 50 lbs. Sunflower - \$12.50 plus .63 tax
- 25 lbs. Sunflower - \$ 6.75 plus .34 tax
- 50 lbs. Niger (thistle) - \$65.00 plus \$3.25 tax
- 5 lbs. Niger (") - \$ 2.50 " .33 tax

Orders must be received by November 1st accompanied by payment in full. Include your name, address, and telephone number. Make checks payable to Howard County MOS. Send orders to Eileen Clegg, 9094 Lambkin Lane, Columbia, Md. 21045. Pickup is Saturday, November 10 from 10:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. at the First Presbyterian Church on Route 108 just east of Route 29. ~~If you feed Howard County's bird, the American Goldfinch, along with other finches, you may find that it will pay to split a 50 lb. bag of niger seed among several people. Tell your friends and neighbors; keep the birds fed this winter. Please note that sunflower seed is not popular with House Sparrows, Rock Doves, and European Starlings which are pests at many feeders. Bring in the woodpeckers, finches, titmice, chickadees, and grosbeaks with sunflower. Don't delay. Mail your order today.~~

Volunteers are needed to help on November 10th during the pickup. If you can spare an hour or two call Eileen, 730-4362. Can we count on you to help?

MOON WATCH TALLIES MIGRANTS

Until 8:00 P.M. it was questionable whether there would be a moon to view on Friday, October 5. The clouds cleared rapidly, however, and an enormous harvest moon rose for the half dozen counters who gathered at the Rhinelanders. Three telescopes were aimed at the moon so that there were always at least two watchers, a person to tally, and several people resting their eyes. Counting began at 9:15 P.M. and continued until 10:45 P.M., when the increasingly chilly air and the brisk northwest winds called a halt to the activity. When conditions are most pleasant for counters there is likely to be little to see. The cold front coming through may have made for cool temperatures but at least there was plenty of activity. The moon is considered a clock face and sightings are made by calling out to the recorder, "In at eleven, out at five," or whatever is appropriate. Unfortunately, none of the 45 individual birds which were seen in the hour and a half was identifiable. No flocks were noted though once three birds were seen crossing at the same time. By 10:45 P.M. the moon had risen to the point that telescopes were tilted at increasingly acute angles leading one watcher to observe that she was getting "warbler neck." Considering the small portion of the sky that is visible for this kind of activity, one can imagine the enormous numbers of birds that must by flying in a band of even a few miles on a night when a major movement is taking place.

CHANDLER S. ROBBINS AWARDED ARTHUR A. ALLEN MEDAL

At a ceremony on October 6 at Ithaca, New York, Chandler S. Robbins was awarded the prestigious Arthur A. Allen Award given by the Laboratory of Ornithology at Cornell University for outstanding achievement in the field of ornithology. His initiation of the nationwide breeding bird surveys and his role in popularizing ornithology for amateurs through authorship of the popular Birds of North America were both cited as outstanding contributions to the world of birds.

Mention of Chan's name also brings to mind a recent newspaper article detailing his inauguration of Maryland's first bird-a-thon conducted on a late September Saturday. On a dawn to dark odyssey in Somerset and Worcester counties he spotted 114 species beginning pre-dawn with owls and ending after dark when he heard chips of migrating thrushes (Veery & Swainson's) over Rumbly Point. As a result of his long day in the field he earned the sum of \$1,047 for the Point Reyes Bird Observatory in California from the 48 sponsors in 20 states.

MIGRATION DATES NEEDED

If you keep track of arrivals and departures of Howard County birds please see that they get to Jo Solem, 725-5037, by December 15 so she can send them on for inclusion in Maryland Birdlife.

VOICE OF THE NATURALIST

If you can call the 652 exchange in suburban Washington as a local number do dial the taped listing of regional sightings provided by the Audubon Naturalist Society. Any unusual birds seen in the mid-Atlantic area are mentioned. The tapes are changed weekly and directions given to unusual sightings. Call 652-1088.

AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILMS

The Baltimore Chapter of MGS annually sponsors a series of nature films at the Dumbarton Junior High School in Baltimore. Individual tickets are available for \$2.50 for adults and \$1.50 for young people (thru 17). Coming dates are Nov. 30 "Wilderness Alberta", March 7 "Into Australia's Red Centre" and April 18 "Malheur: Marsh, Meadow, and Mountain."

1979 HOWARD COUNTY BIRD LIST TO BE COMPILED

Birders are working on a check list of all bird species ever recorded in Howard County. It is now in the vicinity of 240 species but it will still be some time before it is in final form. As an allied project the club would like to revive a practice of Maryland Birdlife when they used to publish yearly bird lists from each county in the state. During the 1950's and early 60's the Howard total varied from a low of 130 in 1956 to a high of 168 in 1957 which is a sad commentary on the lack of observers in the county rather than an accurate reflection of the number of species likely to be seen in a single year. We would like our members to submit lists for compilation. Go over your records and jot down every species seen within the boundaries of Howard County during the calendar year 1979. Don't worry if your list seems short--you may have the only Gray-cheeked Thrush or Connecticut Warbler seen in the county. Submit lists to David Holmes, 5643-A Harpers Farm Rd., Columbia, Md. 21044 by January 15, 1980. The list will be published in a future newsletter.

CALENDAR

Listed below are the programs and field trips for November and December. Meeting place for programs and field trips is the GREMLER REALTY BUILDING ON LITTLE PATUXENT PARKWAY IN COLUMBIA unless otherwise indicated. The building is located beyond Symphony Woods and the Fire House but before you reach Howard Community College (across from the Wilson Garden Center).

PROGRAMS

- Nov. 8, Thurs. - "The World of Geology" - Nick Short. Nick is both a NASA employee and a teacher and will help to provide a setting as to how Howard County fits in the geological world. Geology is basic to an understanding of many other aspects of natural history including migration and population distribution of plants and animals. Be sure to note the field trip on Nov. 11 (Sun) listed below.
- Dec. 13, Thurs. - ^{Fossils of the Area} "Cliffs of Calvert County" - ^{Rick} ~~Gil~~ Charlton. Do fossils fascinate you? Let Gil tell you about the amazing cliffs that hold countless fossil treasures from ages past.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trip chairman is Chuck Dupree, 796-1086. Severe weather conditions may cause trip cancellation; if in doubt, contact Chuck or trip leader.

- Nov. 3, Sat. - TRIADELPHIA RESERVOIR - 7:30 A.M. Leaders: John & Eileen Clegg. This reservoir is large enough and old enough to be pleasantly unpredictable. ~~Wintering waterfowl should have come in.~~ In the past it has been the location for sightings of lingering shorebirds, birds of prey, and such piedmont oddities as scoters, oldsquaws, and once a Western Grebe!
- Nov. 11, Sun. - THE GEOLOGY OF A SMALL PORTION OF THE WORLD: HOWARD COUNTY. 1:00 P.M. *Cancelled because of rain* Leader: Nick Short. Our speaker for the Nov. meeting has generously offered to lead a field trip illustrating the geological principles he discussed in his talk on the 8th. He plans to follow a part of the Patapsco River Valley and work west during the afternoon by driving and stopping at appropriate places. We have never scheduled a geology field trip before--this is a rare opportunity to find out about yet another aspect of the natural history of the county.
- Nov. 17, Sat. - BOMBAY HOOK & LITTLE CREEK. All day bus trip co-sponsored with Dept. of Recreation & Parks. Energy-efficient way to see wintering waterfowl in one of the mid-Atlantic's choice birding spots. If you haven't already signed up and are interested call Bill Eckert, 465-6882, for information. Meeting place is George Howard Building parking lot in Ellicott City at 7:30 A.M. Plenty of good leaders. *Bob Jo*
- Dec. 1, Sat. - SENECA STATE PARK. - 7:00 A.M. Leaders: Chuck Dupree & Marty Chestem. Waterfowl, residents, winter migrants in a Montgomery County location we have not visited before.
- Dec. 29, Sat. - TRIADELPHIA CHRISTMAS COUNT. Dawn to dusk count of every individual of every species in a fifteen mile diameter circle centered on Triadelphia Reservoir. If you like winter birding you'd love to participate in a Christmas Count. National Audubon Society sponsors these counts and requires a \$1.50 fee from participants to publish all North American counts in a super-size issue of American Birding magazine. For the enthusiast other area counts: Liberty Reservoir, Dec. 22; Bowie, Dec. 23; Annapolis, Dec. 30. Call Danny Bystrak 776-4880.

C A L E N D A R (cont.)

Jan. 6, Sun. - WINTER HABITAT TRIP TO TROTTER ROAD. 1:00 P.M. Leader: Bill Eckert
Co-sponsored by Howard Co. Rec. & Parks. The second of a series of
seasonal trips to this area of the Middle Patuxent River Valley.

BOARD MEETING

A Board meeting will be held on Thursday, November 29, at 7:30 P.M. at Linda
McDaniel's, 5651-D Harpers Farm Rd., Columbia, Md. Phone 992-7124 for directions.

ATTRACTING BIRDS IN THE MARYLAND PIEDMONT

As a member of the Howard County chapter you are entitled to purchase this new
volume at the special price of \$1.90 plus .10 tax. It is available at the club bookstore
during meetings. You may also obtain a copy by mail from Jo Solem, 10617 Grae Loch Rd.,
Laurel, Md. 20810. Add .80 postage and handling for single copies, .40 for each addition
copy. Make checks payable to Howard County MOS.

MOUNTED BIRD SPONSORS

Many thanks to members and friends who recently offered to sponsor a bird for our
collection of mounted specimens. Current sponsors are Ethel Dolnick, Frances Ehlers,
Edith Haviland, Alice & Terry Kretz, Genevieve McCormack, Linda McDaniel, Joanne & John
Moroney & Family, Frances W. Nahrgang, Elise Seay, Eva Sunell, and Mark Wallace. Special
thanks to Marty Chestem who was willing to support some of the "unwanted" species--a
European Starling and a pair of Brown-headed Cowbirds.

BLUEBIRD PROJECTS IN HOWARD COUNTY

If you have seen bluebirds in the county recently you are fortunate. The existence
of these attractive birds is often in direct proportion to the number of boxes that have
been provided for their use. If you have open low-growing habitat consider putting up a
box next year. Mark Wallace has been the most enthusiastic supporter of the species in
the county. In his fourth year of erecting nest boxes on five farms in west central
Howard County 81 bluebirds were fledged from 35 boxes. There were 124 eggs laid. Seventy-
two of the young were banded by David Holmes and Mary Janetatos. Mark plans to add 25
boxes to his trail next year.

A second major effort is being started under the leadership of Mark Ewart as an Eagle
Scout project along with his troop #601. John Clegg has agreed to serve as their advisor.
Because most of the troop members live in and around Columbia they hope to find suitable
locations for approximately 30 boxes in the new town area. Since vandalism is a problem
in public areas, John would appreciate hearing from Columbia-area members who own or know
of good habitat on which to erect one or more nest boxes. The scouts are "scrounging"
materials so donations of scrap lumber, screws, etc. would be appreciated. Call John,
730-4362.

AD HOC LANDSCAPING COMMITTEE FOR THE CENTRAL LIBRARY

When the Ad Hoc Landscaping Committee for the Central Library was appointed before
construction was begun at the library site, the group of four worked diligently with the
landscape architect. Eileen Clegg and Joanne Moroney are members of the Howard Bird Club
and as committee members helped to come up with suggestions for the innovative design that
may well become a standard for public buildings co-existing with a maximum wildlife popu-
lation. The Library Board was so pleased with the results that the ad hoc groups was dis-
solved and the members appointed as voting members of the Building Committee. Joanne has
recently been named to the Library Board of Trustees for a five year term. We know she
will serve well caring for her twin enthusiasms of books and wildlife.

HOUSE FINCHES WELL ESTABLISHED IN HOWARD COUNTY

At least three reports (Cairns, Leonard, Nahrgang) of recently fledged House Finches at feeders during June and July were received. All of these sightings were in central or southern Howard County. In addition, there was a nest with young reported from Fineway Drive which is just north of Rocky Gorge Reservoir. The nest was located in a young Blue Spruce about 6-7' from the ground.

Since there are ever larger numbers of House Finches appearing at feeders summer as well as winter, it is worth noting that not all males have the typical areas of red on the brown-streaked plumage. A puzzling few show orangish or yellowish areas on the head and breast. There is no total agreement as to the reason for this. Some books call this a color phase; others look on it as a plumage limited to immature males. Bent, in his Life Histories series, indicates that banding studies by H. & J. Michener (1931) discovered "that the paler hues were usually replaced by red in subsequent years, and that in some individuals the red areas increased in extent with age, while the reverse changes were of much less frequent occurrence. Their conclusion was that the paler or duller coloration normally represent the first adult plumage of a substantial percentage of individuals." A small percentage of the birds at winter feeders in Howard County exhibit this coloration which is not shown in the field guides. Watch for them and don't be fooled!

BOOKSTORE NOTES by BRENDA ERICSSON

Thanks to Linda McDaniel and Marjorie Mountjoy who took the bookstore in September and October respectively, and to Marielle Risse who was a great help both months.

I'd like to remind you that the bookstore as it comes to the meetings along with the catalog is far from being a complete inventory of books available from MOS. Almost any book on natural history can be ordered at about a 15-20% discount over the retail price. Call Brenda Ericsson, 730-3563 to place an order, ask a question, or volunteer to help with the bookstore at a monthly meeting.

Following are a few of the titles ready for purchase:

A Field Guide to Edible Wild Plants (of Eastern and Central N.A.) by Lee Peterson (\$7.14). A good book to study over the winter to prepare yourself for tasty gatherings next year. Nearly 400 species of wild foods are identified and basic recipes given. Common poisonous plants that might be confused with edible ones are described. Cross-referenced, with drawings and color plates.

A Season of Birds by Dion Henderson (\$5.14). Thirty-six seasonal essays, mostly the author's observations about his backyard birds. Each essay accompanied by an excellent drawing. A gentle little book to curl up with on a dreary night.

A Complete Guide to Bird Feeding by John V. Dennis (\$9.00). Can be used an enrichment for our own Attracting Birds in the Maryland Piedmont. Perfect gift for friends or relatives just starting to attract birds, or as an adjunct to your own nature library. Part one describes how and what to do to feed the birds; part two discusses the birds you may attract.

SPRING WILD FLOWER SURVEY RESULTS - CHUCK DUPREE & JO SOLEM

Although the 1979 flowering season is drawing to a close, we will soon be looking forward to the spring flowers again. To the band of enthusiasts who carefully filled in blooming dates during the spring of 1979, we can only say thank you and we do hope you found it an enjoyable experience. The preliminary list was more than doubled through your efforts from 119 species in 33 families to 248 species in 48 families. Pat Jackson, Rosemond Munro, and Eva Sunell were especially diligent in recording dates and adding species. By late winter we hope to have the expanded list prepared for next spring's blooming period. They will be sent to those who participated last year. If anyone else is interested talk to Chuck or Jo and they will be happy to provide sheets.

BIRD NAMES AND THEIR MEANING

With this issue we begin a series of articles discussing the meaning of the names of birds. We will limit discussion to those species which have been seen in Howard County. The references used are listed below; they will not be repeated in future issues.

Choate, Ernest A. The Dictionary of American Bird Names. Gambit: Boston, 1973.

Gruson, Edward S. Words for Birds: A Lexicon of North American Birds with Biographical notes. Quadrangle Books: New York, 1972.

Pearson, T. Gilbert, editor. Birds of America. Garden City Publishing Co., Inc. Garden City, N.Y., 1936.

Mimic Thrushes - Mimidae

Mimidae - both Latin & Greek forms mean "mimic" or "imitator"

Northern Mockingbird - *Mimus polyglottos*

Mimus - Latin for "mimic"

polyglottos - in Greek means "many-tongued"

Mockingbird - refers to its superb ability to imitate the calls & songs of other birds

Other Common Names - Mock Bird; Mocking Thrush; Mimic Thrush; Mocker

Gray Catbird - *Dumetella carolinensis*

Dumetella - Latin for "little one of the thorn bush" (in reference to its habitat)

carolinensis - Latin - "of Carolina" - reference to the type locality

catbird - for the resemblance of their cry to the mew of a cat

Other Names - Chicken Bird; Cat Flycatcher; Slate-colored Mockingbird; Blk.-capped Thrush

Brown Thrasher - *Toxostoma rufum*

Toxostoma - from Greek meaning "bow-mouthed" (the upper mandible is curved)

rufum - Latin - "rusty red" as is the plumage

Brown - also refers to the color of the bird

Other Common Names - Brown Thrush; Red Thrush; Fox-colored Thrush; Sandy Mocker;

French Mockingbird; Ground Thrush; Mavis; Song Thrush

Howard County Bird Club

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