



Vol 11, No 1
Sept-Oct 1982

Howard

A Chapter of the
Maryland Ornithological Society



WELCOME - JOIN US NOW

Our membership year runs from September 1982 through August 1983. ALL membership fees are now due. A membership blank is enclosed with this issue. Please complete it promptly and return it to the treasurer or bring it to the September meeting. Membership entitles you to all of the following: quarterly issues of Maryland Birdlife (the publication of the state organization), the Maryland Yellowthroat newsletter (a timely update of state activities in all MOS chapters), the Howard newsletter, and the chance to participate in a full schedule of field trips and programs during the 1982-1983 year. Birds are the primary interest of most members, but there are opportunities to learn about other aspects of nature whether you are a complete novice or have years of experience. In these days of high costs our dues remain low and stable. Don't pass up this bargain.

PRESIDENT NAMES COMMITTEE HEADS

President Jane Farrell has named the following individuals to fill committee chairmanships for the 1982-1983 calendar year: Bookstore, Jan Randle; Conservation, Martha Ohestem; Field Trips, Eva Sunell; Hospitality, Thelma Feldman, Marjorie Mountjoy & Elise Seay; Newsletter, Jo Solem; Programs, Nick Short; Publicity, Marydale Mahar; Seed Sale, Eileen Olegg, and Waterfowl Committee, Pat Birnie. These individuals along with the elected officers constitute the Board of Directors.

BIRD SEED SALE COMING SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 1982



For the fourth year the Howard Bird Club will sponsor two seed sales. The first will be November 6, the first Saturday in November so plan your late fall and early winter feeding needs now. Watch for a special edition of the newsletter containing information, order blanks and material about Workshop Weekend at the library which will be mailed to all members in early October. Sunflower seed prices are lower this year than last. This is a service for our members, makes friends for the club, aids the birds, helps us keep dues stable and enables us to support worthy environmental causes. Our speaker at the October 14th meeting will be Dr. Aelred Geis who will discuss his latest findings in regard to the most cost-efficient seed to use. If there are individuals you know that would like to be added to the seed sale list, call Eileen Olegg 730-4362.

NATURE CONSERVANCY CAMPAIGN TO SAVE NASSAWANGO CREEK MEETS GOAL

In mid-May Mike McClure, past President of the Howard Chapter, received a letter from Ms. Russell Train, Chairwoman of the Nassawango Project Committee. She sent the good news that the campaign to raise a total of \$765,000 to save Nassawango Creek had reached its goal. When land negotiations are complete the Eastern Shore sanctuary will contain 2,800 acres. She once again thanked us for our part as a chapter in meeting this goal. Our combined contribution of \$3,650 was one of the larger club donations made to the campaign. It was a significant way to help celebrate our tenth anniversary year. Your support was super!

GRANT'S FOLLY - Jon E. Boone illustrated by the author

Not far from a large shopping mall, in the midst of the planned urban/suburban sprawl which is Columbia, Maryland, Alice Grant put up her bluebird box. She did it as part of a project to beautify the grounds of the new Howard County Central Library. Although the box was meticulously crafted by her husband, Cliff, and although there yet remains a patch of ideal "open space" habitat between the library and a small manmade lake, no one seriously thought Alice would get bluebirds. They told her so.

Last year she got vandals who removed the roof. And she got House Wrens. People knowledgeable about bluebirds were kind enough, but Alice knew they thought her project a bit futile. Grant's Folly. Grant's House Sparrow Box, at worst.

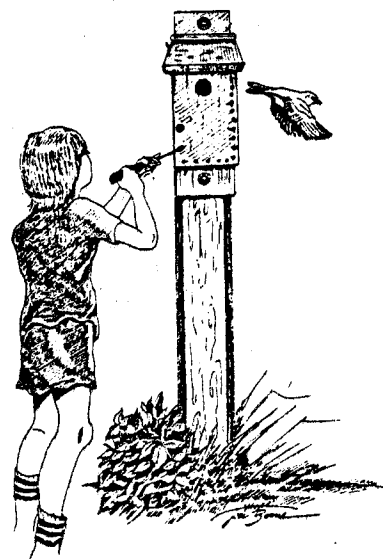
On Sunday, May 9, this year, my son Jon and I returned from checking one of our up-county bluebird trails. On impulse, we decided to visit the library. It was 1:00 p.m. As I looked the car door my eyes, through habit, wandered toward the Grants' wooden obelisk. A familiar silhouette perched atop. With practiced quickness I moved my binoculars for a closer look. While the movement caused the silhouette to disappear, I nonetheless confirmed it was a bluebird, a female--and she was not alone. The bright cobalt now atop the box revealed the splendid male.

Excitedly transfixed Jon and I sat down along a small brick retaining wall adjacent to the parking lot about 90 feet from the box. There were a number of small to medium-sized oak and maple trees between us and the nesting site. We watched to enjoy and learn.

The female flew away, 150 yards distant. Five minutes passed. The male, still on the box, jumped to the ground, snared a small piece of grass and, without hesitation, flew to the entrance hole. He went in, came out, went in again, all the while warbling stridently. The female moved closer, took an insect, seemingly unaware of the male's actions.

Undaunted, the male gave it his best shot. It was a display I had never seen before. The bird shot forth from the entrance hole, flying rapidly but in an upward arc. About 100 yards from take-off, he reenacted the flutter-flight of a Yellow-breasted Chat. He was in full song, wings and tail in a frenzy of movement. And then, as if he were attached to a yo-yo string, the ebullient male retraced his arc back to the box. He continued this display several more times--out, up, flutter, back--each time with feeling.

Eastern Bluebirds in courtship activity, free, in color, at the local library, near Columbia Mall. Our eyes soon found the female at the box, apparently unable to resist any longer. She went in. The male sang confidently on the roof. My son and I left, knowing these birds needed time. We returned that evening. The bluebirds were still there, this time all business-like. I checked the box's interior. The female, urged on by her mate, had completed nearly one-half of the nest.



(GRANT'S FOLLY will be continued in the November-December newsletter)

DEADLINE FOR THE NOVEMBER-DECEMBER Howard newsletter is October 15. Articles, art, and announcements are welcome. Send to Jo Solem, 10617 Graeoch Rd., Laurel, MD 20707. Tel. 725-5037.

C A L E N D A R

PROGRAMS - 7:45 p.m. Longfellow Elementary School, 5470 Hesperus Drive, Columbia, MD.

- Sept. 9 - "Meanders in Maine, Maryland, and Massachusetts" - Jean Worthley. Many of our readers recognize our speaker from her popular television programs. **Thur.** "Miss Jean" not only sparks an interest in nature in young people but is a capable ecologist who teaches adults as well. "On Nature's Trail" with her botanist husband, Elmer, was an adult series by this Baltimore MOS member.
- Oct. 14 - "Bird Feeding: Facts and Fallacies" - Dr. Aelred Geis. This program was snowed out last January. Autumn is an excellent time of the year to review new and old aspects of feeding. Dr. Geis is a biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service whose material is based on studies done largely in Howard County.



FIELD TRIPS - Field trips leave from the Grempler Realty Building parking lot (across from the Flier building) on Little Patuxent Parkway in Columbia unless otherwise indicated. Eva Sunell, 995-0029, heads this committee. Severe weather conditions may result in trip cancellation at the leader's discretion. If in doubt, call. Carpooling continues with riders sharing gas and toll costs. Please make an effort to arrive on time. Dress for field work with stout, reasonably waterproof footgear. Trips do not always follow marked paths.

- Sept. 12 - **FALL WARBLER WALK.** Leader: David Holmes, 730-7083. Search for those confusing fall warblers and other migrants with a highly experienced field man. **Sun.** Meet at Grempler Realty 8:00 a.m. for a ½ day trip to a Howard County location to be decided by the leader.
- Sept. 19 - **FALL WILDFLOWER WALK.** Leaders: Bob & Jo Solem, 725-5037. Meet at Grempler Realty at 1:00 p.m. for ½ day trip to the Marriottsville area of Patapsco Fk. **Sun.**
- Sept. 26 - **ADVENTURE SANCTUARY.** Leaders: Eileen & John Clegg, 730-4362. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at Grempler for ½ day trip to this Montgomery County MOS sanctuary to observe a crew banding fall migrants. Chance for in-hand views of confusing plumages. (Trip is cancelled in case of rain.) **Sun.**
- Oct. 2 - **MUDDY RUN RECREATION PARK, LANCASTER COUNTY, PA.** Leader: Chuck Dupree, 796-1086. Full day; bring lunch. Meet 8:00 a.m. at Grempler, planned return around 6:00 p.m. A chance to combine hawk-watching with views of water birds and some land species. Several lakes in the area; hawk-watching at 1:00 p.m. in an area near the Susquehanna River. **Sat.**
- Oct. 3 - **ROCKBURN PARK HABITAT WALK.** Leaders: Bill Eckert & Chuck Dupree, 796-1086. Co-sponsored by Howard Co. Rec. & Parks. Habitat walks this year will be in this east-central county park. Meet at 12:30 p.m. at Grempler or at 1:00 p.m. in the parking lot at the top of the hill in Rockburn Park (entrance on Landing Rd.) ½ day. **Sun.**
- Oct. 7 - **BALTIMORE CHAPTER MOS TRIP TO SOLDIER'S DELIGHT.** Leader: Jean Worthley. Join this weekday trip to the serpentine barrens in Baltimore County for a look at a fascinating ecology. Jean will show you the Fringed Gentian which is a truly spectacular fall wildflower. Meet at Grempler Realty at 11:45 a.m. to carpool to a Baltimore meeting place. Call Eva, 995-0029, if you have questions. ½ day. Bring lunch if you wish. **Thur.**
- Oct. 16 - **INSECT WALK.** Leader: A professional entomologist. Meet at Grempler at 9:00 a.m. for ½ day trip to central MD location. **Sat.**
- Oct. 23 & 24 - **BIRDING WORKSHOP WEEKEND AT HOWARD COUNTY CENTRAL LIBRARY.** More information will be provided in an October mailing, but plan to stop in the meeting room sometime during the day Saturday or on Sunday afternoon. Slide shows, displays, tours of wildlife plantings on grounds, feeder info and more! Martha Chestem is heading this special event, 730-1527. **Sat. & Sun.**
- Oct. 30 - **BIRD WALK FOR BEGINNING BIRDERS, WILDE LAKE, COLUMBIA.** Leaders: Grazina & Mike McClure, 286-2780. Meet at the dock on Hyla Brook Rd., (off Running Brook on the west side of Columbia) at 9:00 a.m. for ½ day trip. Easy walking. Chance to ask questions and gain experience; land & water birds. **Sat.**



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

Advance Notice - Howard County MOS and Howard County Rec & Parks will be sponsoring an all day bus trip to Pottay Hook Wildlife Refuge on Saturday, November 20. Information will appear in the autumn flier which will soon be available from Rec. & Parks. Further info will also appear in the Nov-Dec. Howard newsletter. A chance to see migrant ducks, geese, and swans in numbers.

Trip Planning - In order to facilitate field trip planning for the remainder of the year Eva Sunell, 995-0029, would like to know of your interest in any of the following trips by the date of the September meeting: 1) Chincoteague Weekend over Washington's birthday weekend in February; 2) Irish Grove Weekend at an MOS Eastern Shore sanctuary (April 9 & 10), and 3) Carey Run Weekend at the MOS' far western sanctuary (either Memorial Day weekend or the first weekend in June).

BOARD MEETING - A meeting of the Board (all elected officers and appointed heads of committees) will be held at Don & Jan Randle's, 6424 Lochridge Rd., Columbia, MD 21044 (off Cedar Lane south of Columbia in the Braeburn development). For more precise directions call 531-6296. 7:30 p.m.

ANTICIPATE THE ARRIVAL OF WINTER BIRD SPECIES - Jo Solem

If you feed birds, early fall is a time of transition. Often wild food crops are at their peak so additional food is not really necessary until the colder weather sets in. Resident birds may begin using seed or suet supplies sporadically whenever you begin feeding, but usually an extended cold snap is required before large numbers and varieties are seen. Migrant birds are moving through Howard County now and will continue to do so for several months. Water is often their primary need so don't neglect keeping a supply of fresh, clean water available.

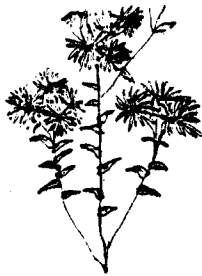
Although not often attracted to feeders, begin yard-watching for Brown Creepers and Winter Wrens the first week in October, kinglets from mid-September to early October, and Rusty Blackbirds in late October. Northern Juncos and White-throated Sparrows may arrive in small numbers in late September or early October, but they usually don't start frequenting feeders until much later. Evening Grosbeaks may be observed on an initial pass through the area in early November and Pine Siskins in late October although they may not be observed at feeders until January or February because of their wandering habits, a plentiful food supply in the wild or their continuing farther south and then appearing toward the end of the season when they are working their way north. Look for Am. Tree Sparrows after mid-November and Purple Finches in October. Cedar Waxwings are, of course, totally unpredictable. Numbers begin arriving in early September but they may not make an appearance in your yard to strip the berries and other fruit from trees and shrubs until late the following winter or even well into the spring. Fox Sparrows usually make a brief appearance in early November before continuing south. If you live near or regularly travel past a lake, watch for the changing migrants you will see on or near the lake. Ducks, geese, swans and mergansers all pass through the county but sometimes they are few in number and, depending on weather conditions, may stay only a few days.

AUTUMN MIGRATION DATES NEEDED

Please mail or phone autumn arrival and departure dates for bird migrants in Howard County to Jo Solem, 10617 Graeoch Rd., Laurel, MD 20707 (725-5037) by December 1, 1982. Forms for keeping these records can be obtained at the September meeting. Extreme dates for migrant species are forwarded to Bob Ringler for inclusion in Maryland Birdlife.

PRELIMINARY HOWARD COUNTY AUTUMN WILDFLOWER CHECKLIST READY

The first preliminary autumn wildflower list for Howard County is ready. The Howard Chapter will begin a survey of the wildflowers that bloom in this county from September 1 to the end of the year. Volunteers are needed. Anyone who would like to be part of this project should call Bob or Jo Solem, 725-5037, to request a checklist by mail or for delivery at the September 9th meeting.



COWBIRD FLEDGLING NOT PLEASED WITH CARDINAL FOOD - Jane Farrell

On Saturday, June 12, 1982, I looked out my kitchen window and on the large stump in my back yard saw a young cowbird. As I watched, a male and female Northern Cardinal alternately flew to the stump and proceeded to feed the fledgling cowbird. This lasted more than thirty minutes.

The odd thing about the feeding (aside from my abhorrence at seeing the lovely cardinals feeding the usurper) was that the proffered food was obviously not to the cowbird's liking. At the arrival of the foster-parent, the cowbird would flutter its wings and beg for food and, in turn, each "parent" would place food (which was red and appeared to be fruit) in the cowbird's mouth. The cowbird would promptly spit out the food and the "parent" would just as promptly retrieve the rejected food and place it in the young bird's mouth again. After this ritual was repeated several times for each offering, the cowbird appeared to eat the food.

Whether the food had not been sufficiently softened or whether young cowbirds do not like the diet appropriate for young cardinals is a question I can't answer.

Editor's Note: In Arthur Cleveland Bent's Life Histories of North American Blackbirds, Orioles, Tanagers, and Allies, pp. 442-443, he quotes a portion of a report by Beal (1900) on the contents of 544 stomachs of the cowbird in which "the following points may be considered as fairly established: (1) Twenty percent of the cowbird's food consists of insects, which are either harmful or annoying. (2) Sixteen percent is grain, the consumption of which may be considered a loss, though it is practically certain that half of this is waste. (3) More than 50 percent consists of the seeds of noxious weeds, whose destruction is a positive benefit to the farmer. (4) Fruit is practically not eaten."

HOWARD COUNTY FAIR DISPLAY SUCCESSFUL



Did we see you at the Howard County Fair in August? For the first time the Howard Bird Club was given exhibit space which allowed us to display some of our bird specimens and chat with interested individuals. Our thanks to the fair committee for making the space available and to President Jane Farrell who made the arrangements. Though this opportunity arose after the end of our regular meetings, Chairman Mike McClure found enough helpers so that the table could be staffed weekends and evenings from August 15-21. Dave & Elaine Pardoe did the initial set up followed by Eileen Olegg, Max Casper, Leroy Williamson, Ed Hart, Anne Walsh (who worked twice), Linda McDaniel, Alice Kretz, Martha & Donald Waugh, Jan & Don Randle, Grazina & Mike McClure, Brenda & John Bell, Eva Sunell, Monica & Rod Botsai, Maud Banks, Bob & Jo Solem, John & Jane Farrell, Anne Llewellyn, Marty Chestem, Roy Trudel, Sheila Glanz, Marjorie Mountjoy & Elise Seay. Thanks to each of you for so generously sharing your time. We have been invited to exhibit at the fair next year. See you there!

The club thanks Jon E. Boone for the new design for the heading on our newsletter. It is also being used for letterhead stationery and publicity releases. Congratulations are due Jon on the discovery of the Golden-crowned Kinglet's nest in Garrett County, a first for Maryland. Details will appear in Maryland Birdlife. Drawings in this issue are the work of Grazina McClure.

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