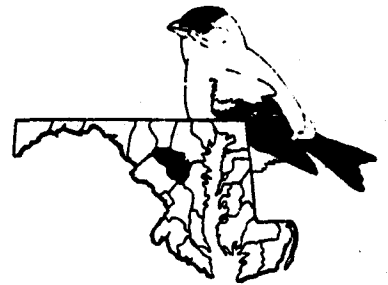




# Howard

*A Chapter of the  
Maryland Ornithological Society*



Vol 14, No 4  
March-April 1986

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## 1985 CAVITY NESTER REPORT SEES BLUEBIRD FLEDGING AT NEW HIGH - BOB BOGDAN

The third year of our cavity nester survey saw another major jump in fledged bluebirds reported. Last year we tallied at least 730; this year 1343 were counted. Approximately 250 of the more than 500 boxes monitored housed at least one nesting attempt. Infertile eggs along with House Sparrows, House Wrens, snakes, and raccoons, in that order, accounted for most of the 550 egg/nestling loss. Unfortunately, in some areas vandals were also a major problem.

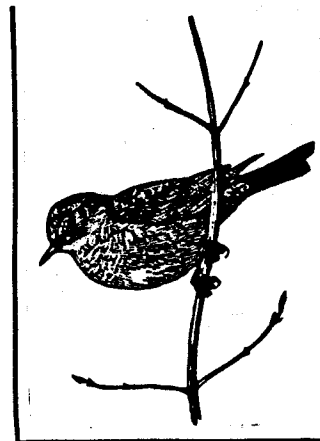
Members and friends reported results of trails and boxes in many parts of the county. Lest we think that interest in assisting cavity nesters is recent, we can point to Eleanor Robbins' trail in the Fulton-High Ridge area which may be the oldest continuous county effort dating to about 1965. Her 25 boxes are located on land belonging to 14 individuals. Marie Battle had a significant return from 4 boxes in the Woodbine area. Forty-one eggs were laid; vandalism reduced the fledging to 22. The Cuddebacks on Trotter Road had bluebirds use 3 of their 9 boxes for a total of 21 fledged. Of the McClure's 2 boxes, bluebirds used 1 for 3 broods fledging 11. Harold Norwood's 9 boxes fledged 36 young in the Rt. 216-I-95 area. Of 4 boxes Monika Botsai monitored, 9 bluebirds fledged from 2 boxes.

Peter Zerhusen reported 65 eggs with 49 bluebirds fledged from 7 boxes in the Sykesville area. He has been conducting a study involving starling competition for nest sites. With a larger than normal box and an enlarged entrance, he trapped 93 starlings in 1985. Frances Ehlers had 15 of her 30 boxes used by bluebirds in the Brighton Dam area. These boxes fledged 106. she also monitored 6 of the Boone's boxes on Shepherd Lane and counted 9 bluebirds fledged. Joe Suess monitored a trail of 68 boxes in the Highland-Clarksville-Fulton area in 1985 of which 36 were used by bluebirds. He's proud of the 222 fledged. He says his success rate of young fledged to eggs laid was up in 1985 to 70% compared to 48% in 1984. The greatest share of this increased success he credits to favorable spring weather. This year for the first time he had 2 boxes with 3 broods and 3 pairs who had initial clutches of 6 eggs! Frances and Joe also reported their results on nest cards for the Laboratory of Ornithology at Cornell University which involved extra record-keeping.

The Belmont Conference Center's 13 boxes in the eastern part of the county fledged 75 bluebirds from 10 boxes. My 15 boxes around Ilchester fledged 34 bluebirds--and 54 House Wrens. The Dorsey Hall Garden Club started a trail this year. Though they had some bad luck with adult bluebirds killed and eggs destroyed, they did fledge 3 successful broods for a total of 9. Slightly incredible is Mark Wallace's effort. He not only monitored 80 boxes on his own trails along with 24 natural cavities, but he turned in excellent records which involved another 98 boxes belonging to 46 other people whose boxes he also checked, mostly in the western and southwestern part of the county. He banded more than 600 bluebird nestlings in 1985, the majority in this county.

The trail jointly operated by Howard County Recreation & Parks, the North American Bluebird Society, and the Howard County Bird Club could have been renamed a wren trail last year. Bill Eckert reported a total of 45 bluebirds fledged from the 48 boxes along with 127 House Wrens. This was one of the few reports to mention blowfly parasitism; 8 young were lost to that cause. He also reported 10 white eggs. Vandalism was a

major problem so several changes will be made in 1986. Monitors on this trail were Marie Battle, Bob Bogdan, the Elliott family, Joyce Kelly, Norma Peterson, Kathy Quade, Chris Smith & Campfire Troop, Roy & Karen Trudel, and Jean Weiss. If you are interested in serving as a monitor on this trail during the coming season, contact Bill Eckert at 465-6882 (days). Jon E. & Jon K. Boone's 59 boxes, mostly in central and north-central Howard Co. fledged a minimum of 150 bluebirds. They plan to add additional boxes along county roads this year; if you are interested in helping to monitor, call them at 997-0750. The Howard County Central Library once again can be listed as one of the few areas in a business district to fledge bluebirds. Although the box had been vandalized, the Boones put up another farther down the slope and replaced the box just beyond the parking lot. Bluebirds fledged 5 from the box nearest Rt. 29 and then moved closer to the library to raise 4. Clif Grant continues to supply boxes in quantity for which the Boones and Bill Eckert are grateful. His boxes are available at the Club bookstore; he generously donates the proceeds. Many thanks, Clif!



Although bluebirds tend to get more of the attention when we speak of native cavity nesting birds, there are other species worthy of our interest and support. The Cleggs reported 4 cavity nesting species including a Barred Owl (the single young was banded), along with a titmouse, Carolina Wren, and flicker. Although the Baltimore-Washington Industrial Park in Jessup is not in this county, we're glad Ken Tracy noted cavity nesters there including chickadees and an American Kestrel. Marty Chestem reported 4 cavity nesters other than bluebirds including a White-breasted Nuthatch. The McClures also reported a nuthatch nest in a snag in the Benson Branch watershed. Nancy Joy had titmice and House Wrens in boxes and Carolina Wrens in a hanging planter. Monika Botsai also reported the latter species in a flower pot while Bob Doyle had House Wrens nesting in a Coke can from which the top had been removed. Bea Newkirk had a Great Crested Flycatcher nesting in her yard.

Species other than bluebirds using boxes or cavities with estimated minimum numbers fledged included House Wrens, 269; Tufted Titmice 9 in 3 broods; Carolina Wrens 9 broods, 13 fledged; Carolina Chickadees, 8 broods, 15 fledged; Tree Swallows 5 fledged. Other species observed in natural cavities only were Great Crested Flycatcher 1 brood; Red-bellied Woodpecker 1 brood; Barred Owl 1 brood; American Kestrel, a minimum of 5 fledged in 2 broods; Northern Flicker 3 broods, and White-breasted Nuthatch 2 broods.

House Sparrows in boxes and European Starlings in natural cavities are major problems--and neither is a protected species. Through nest/egg removal and trapping the following individuals reduced the sparrow/starling population by 853: Battle, Cuddeback, Stirrat, Botsai, Bogdan, Ehlers, Robbins, Wallace, Suess, and Zerhusen. A danger in putting out more and more boxes is that if not monitored regularly trails can harbor numerous House Sparrow nests. Always remove their nests and eggs; do not allow them to use your boxes.


Individuals submitting reports for the 1985 breeding season included Marie Battle, Bob Bogdan, Jon E. & Jon K. Boone, Monika Botsai, Ceil Casciaro, Martha Chestem, Eileen Clegg, Joseph Corliss, John & Chris Cuddeback, Bob Doyle, Frances Ehlers, Alice Grant, Marilyn Johnson (Dorsey Hall Garden Club), Nancy Joy, Mike & Grazina McClure, Bea Newkirk, Harold Norwood, Eleanor Robbins, Roy Shilling (Belmont Conference Center, Am. Chemical Society), Jo Solem, Charles Stirrat, Joe Suess, Ken F. Tracey, Mark Wallace and Peter Zerhusen.

Prepare for the 1986 nesting season. Be sure boxes are clean. Resolve to keep adequate records during the coming breeding season and report the results next fall so that you can be a part of the program to Boost Bluebirds--And Other Native Cavity Nesters.


## CALENDAR OF PROGRAMS, FIELD TRIPS, AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Programs are held at Longfellow Elementary School, 5470 Hesperus Dr., Columbia, MD. Meeting is cancelled if schools are closed for any reason. Hospitality session at 7:30 p.m. Meeting/program begins at 8:00 p.m. Club bookstore opens at 7:30 p.m.


Field trips leave from Grempler Realty parking lot (across from the Flier building on Little Patuxent Parkway in Columbia) unless otherwise listed. Carpooling is encouraged with riders sharing the cost of gas and tolls. Dress for field work with stout, reasonably waterproof footwear and layers of clothes. Trips do not always follow paths. No pets. Leaders may cancel due to inclement weather. If you have questions, contact leaders whose phone numbers are listed or Field Trip Chairman Chris Ludwig at 796-8373, evenings.


MARCH 9 - WATERFOWL TRIP, HOWARD COUNTY - Leaders: Mike & Grazina McClure, 531-2780.  
Sunday  Location to be decided by leaders on basis of where birds have been seen. Waterfowl migration in full swing--good chance to see "sitting ducks" in a telescope. Leave Grempler at 1:00 p.m.


MARCH 13 - OUT OF EAST AFRICA. David Holmes. David brings us some of Africa's intriguing birds based on one of his trips to the area.  
Thursday

MARCH 15 - TRIP TO JANE ZUKE'S REHABILITATION CENTER. Leader: Eva Sunell, 995-0029.  
Saturday  Many members remember Jane's entertaining presentation last year. She is currently caring for more than a dozen raptors. Good chance to photograph and see a variety of birds of prey. Meet at Grempler at 9:15 a.m. for a ½ day trip.

APRIL 10 - TRAILING ARBUTUS AND OTHER BLOOMIN' THINGS. Bob Solem. Bob will take us  
Thursday into the woods and along the streams in search of spring wildflowers.

APRIL 20 - SPRING WILDFLOWER TRIP ALONG THE LITTLE PATUXENT RIVER AT VOLLMERHAUSEN  
Sunday  ROAD. Leader: Bob Solem, 725-5037. A follow-up to our April meeting. If you are anxious to see Bloodroot, hepatica and other flowers that bloom in the spring (tra-la), meet at Grempler at 1:00 p.m. for ½ day.

APRIL 26 - WOODCOCK WALK. Leader: Al Geis. Evening courtship flight of this strange-  
Saturday  looking bird. We'll also see the food plots for wildlife in an area slated to be county parkland. Leave Grempler at 6:15 p.m. or meet at the small Trotter Rd. parking lot .8 mile south of Rt. 108 on the east side of road at 6:30 p.m.

MAY 3 - MAY COUNT - PATUXENT RIVER APPRECIATION DAY. This special birding day is  
Saturday  always held the first Saturday in May. Paul Zucker, 681-9005, is compiler. Additional material will be mailed in April, but he will gladly answer questions. In cooperation with Howard County Dept. of Recreation & Parks, the Howard County Bird Club will also lead two walks on that day to mark the second Patuxent River Appreciation Day. Eva Sunell will lead a BIRD WALK and Bob Solem a FLOWER WALK, both in Savage. Watch for publicity.

POSSIBLE HALLEY'S COMET TRIP - If you would like to make the special effort necessary to see this celestial wonder (most of us will not be around for its return appearance) let Chris Ludwig, 796-8373, know prior to March 10th. He is working on a trip in the vicinity of March 15th which would involve leaving Columbia at approximately 3:00 a.m. to hook up with APL star-gazers.

APRIL 24 - BOARD MEETING. 7:30 p.m. All officers and committee chairmen.

MAY-JUNE DEADLINE FOR NEWSLETTER IS APRIL 15, 1986. SEND OR CALL INFORMATION TO JO SOLEM, 10617 GRAELOCH RD., LAUREL, MD 20707. TEL. 725-5037. CONTRIBUTIONS WELCOME.

## JANUARY SEED SALE SURVIVES PROBLEMS - EILEEN CLEGG

The seed sale on January 25th was the first in which weather has caused major problems. The truck was tied up for several hours behind an accident on the Baltimore Beltway. It meant inconvenience for those picking up their seed early which we certainly regret, but we were grateful for the understanding exhibited by almost everyone. Special thanks to the many helpers on the early shift who stayed longer than scheduled to help us get past the initial bulge when the truck came in. Peanut hearts were offered for the first time and were a popular item. I would be interested in hearing from people about their success in using them. I especially want to thank the outdoor crew on this snowy/rainy day: Jim Blanchard, Bob Bogdan, John Clegg, Jane Farrell, Anne & Ken Hart, Gus Karafaf, Mike McClure, Fran & Don Nahrgang, Bob Solem, Chuck Stirrat, Tom Strikwerda, Mark Wallace, and Don Waugh. Inside helping at the desk, the bookstore, or with the birds were Harriet and Frank Baldau, Barbara Doarnberger, Marty Chestem, Doris Holmes, Cleo Karafaf, Linda McDaniel, Ze'ida Simon, Jo Solem, Martha Waugh, and Helen Zeichner. In addition to general help from Don & Jan Randle, they also brought representative feeders from their shop to supplement the bookstore with the thistle sacks being an especially popular item. Fran Nahrgang and Eileen Clegg donated food for the helpers.



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## 1986 MARYLAND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION STAMP & PRINT TO BE HUMMINGBIRD - MARTHA CHESTEM

The first Maryland Wildlife Conservation Stamp and Print went on public sale in April 1985; as of December 16, 1985, gross sales were \$13,962.04. This money has been released to the State Forest, Park and Wildlife Service to be used in its program for the preservation and management of endangered and nongame birds and mammals. The amount fell short of expectations but considering that it was a new program for the State Division of Natural Resources (DNR) and the late start in the year, it was a commendable showing. The first stamp and print will continue to be sold so collectors unaware of the program can still obtain a complete collection.

The 1986 stamp and print will be introduced in March and will be taken from a new John Taylor (Maryland artist and our speaker last September) painting of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. A competitive contest will be inaugurated later this year for the 1987 stamp. The 1986 program will benefit from the first year's experience. Expanded promotional activities are expected to increase the sales and interest. Please contact me at 730-1527 if you would like to participate as a volunteer in some of these promotional activities. There is a job for you with a chance to learn more about the state's activities while helping to promote this worthy cause. Gene Deems (DNR) who is in charge of the stamp and print sales has often expressed his appreciation for the support he has received from MOS during the first year.



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## SEVERAL BIRD AND WILDFLOWER IDENTIFICATION COURSES AVAILABLE DURING THE SPRING

Several options are available this spring for individuals who may be interested in learning more about local birds and wildflowers. Howard Community College adult education is offering a field ornithology course taught by Bill Bridgeland. Howard County Recreation and Parks is offering introductory and intermediate birding courses by Jo Solem. Bob Solem will be offering an introduction to spring wildflowers also through Rec & Parks with one indoor session and two field trips. Registration times, locations, and course particulars will be available in catalogues and flyers sent to each household soon.

## BIRDING "HOT SPOTS" IN HOWARD COUNTY - CHRIS LUDWIG - GREEN BRIDGE ROAD AREA

Most birding in Howard County takes place in the eastern areas--along the Patapsco River, around feeders, in residential sections, and in the vicinity of Columbia's manmade lakes. Although these can be excellent, western areas of the county provide fine birding as well. One such location is Green Bridge Road from Triadelphia Mill Road to Triadelphia Reservoir and along the shoreline. This area offers excellent spring warblers and night birds, late summer shorebirds, and late fall/early spring waterfowl.

The logistics: Year-round parking from sunrise to sunset near the edge of the reservoir at the end of the dirt road about 1/3 mile south of Triadelphia Mill Road. The area may be crowded with fishermen when the lake is open for fishing from the 15th of March until the water freezes. The biggest crowds are encountered on weekends when the weather is nice. This land is Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) property and is posted for day use fees (\$20 per year, \$2.00 per day). Permits can be obtained at the Brighton Dam office. Many birders take their chances without a permit, but potential users should be aware of the regulations.

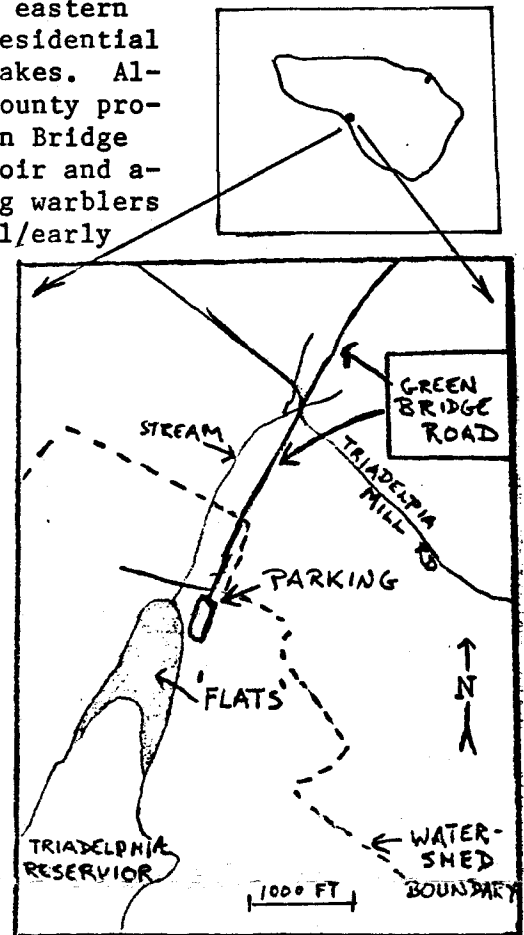
Spring may be the most exciting time for birding here and May Counters visit Green Bridge every year. Warblers can be common. Species seen here include Nashville, Kentucky, Canada, Yellow-throated, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Golden-winged, and others. Woods near the stream and reservoir are good spots to check. Night birds are a highlight at this location. A recent May Count produced Barred, Great Horned and Eastern Screech Owls as well as Whip-poor-wills.

When waters are low in August and September, shorebirds frequent the cove. Species that have been seen include Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Pectoral, Solitary, Spotted, Least, and Semipalmated Sandpipers, and Semipalmated Plovers. A recent highlight was a Baird's Sandpiper which was observed September 12-13, 1982.

When searching for waterfowl at Green Bridge, try to time a visit when the lake isn't frozen and fishermen aren't around (remember the opening date of March 15th). Up to 200 Ring-necked Ducks have been observed in the cove and other species are often sighted. Searching for waterfowl requires a little luck as conditions for a good day are extremely variable. A telescope is almost a necessity for viewing waterfowl and shorebirds. Other species to look for here include Pileated Woodpecker, Black (along with Turkey) Vultures, Osprey, and various buteo hawks.

Also of interest is the shoreline vegetation which occurs during low water periods in late summer and fall. On the drier exposed flats a lush "lawn" forms where plants typical of desiccated soils occur. Species include a low grass Eragrostis hypnoides, and many sedges: Scirpus smithii, Eleocharis obtusa, Fimbristylis autumnalis, and various Cyperus. On higher ground along the reservoir also look for Cardinal Flower (Lobelia cardinalis) in late summer as well as several species of violets and Lance-leaved Coreopsis (Coreopsis lanceolata) at other times.

Thanks to Paul Zucker, Jon K. Boone, and Mark Wallace for providing information showing just how spectacular Green Bridge can be.

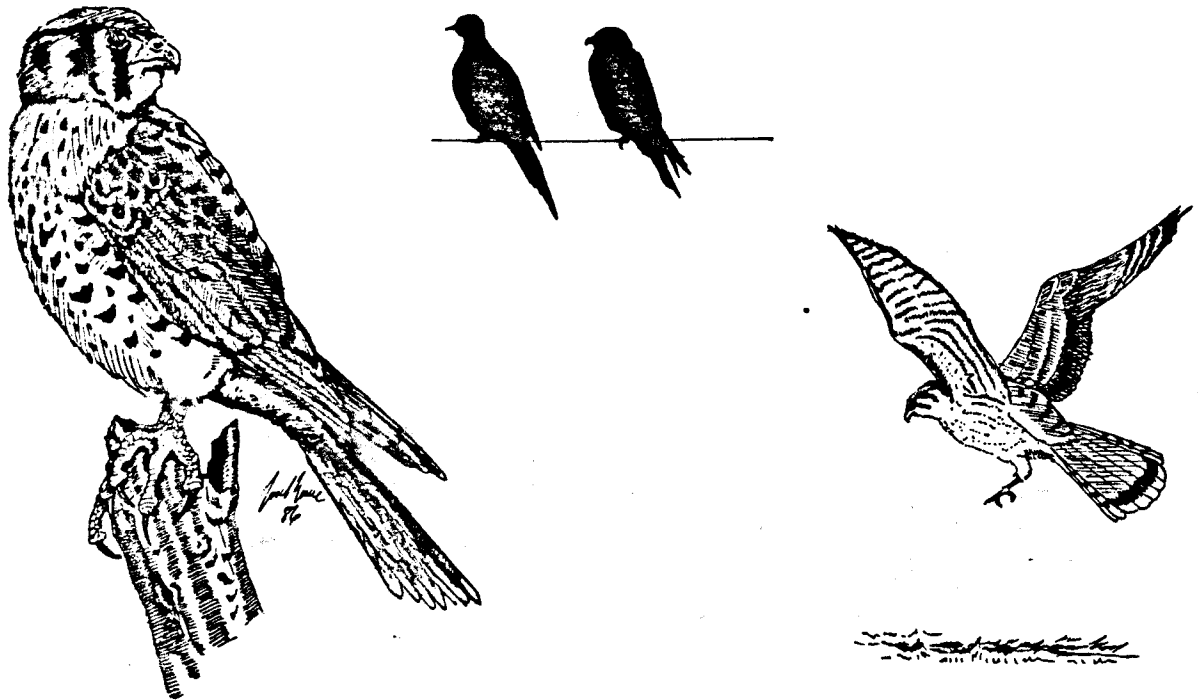


AMERICAN KESTREL - JON E. BOONE, ILLUSTRATED BY THE AUTHOR

Our smallest falcon, the kestrel is a captivating sight as it hovers on manic wings over grassy highway borders. It is a raptor of open country, roadsides, and farmland, and is one of the few birds of prey that has adapted to civilization. Falcons are sleek, with pointed wings and narrow tails. The kestrel is the only falcon with a reddish-brown back. Smaller than Blue Jays, male birds have blue-gray wings and a black and white-tipped rufous tail. Females lack the gray wings, but both sexes have striking mustachioed face patterns. During the Middle Ages, when falconry flourished in England, a person's rank was told by which species of falcon he toted around on his wrist. Royalty carried Gyrfalcons; earls had the Peregrine; yeomen the Goshawks; and the priests could fly the noisy "crecelle," the French word for a noisy bell or leper's cricket. "Crecelle" became kistrell or kastrell in Middle English, and the European Kestrel, because of its ringing voice, was used to protect pigeon roosts.

The first indication of an American Kestrel's presence is its piercing, staccato call of aggression: "killy, killy, killy, killy"--a high-pitched, sharp rattle. Kestrels and other falcons are significantly different from buteos (e.g., Red-shouldered Hawks) by flight alone. Falcons are swift, erratic flyers; only the kestrel hovers. While perched, the kestrel also pumps its tail vigorously. At a distance, it is sometimes easy to confuse the kestrel with the Mourning Dove when both are perched on a power line. Note, however, the tail pump of the kestrel and the thick head. The dove has a small round head, a thin neck, round torso, and long, pointed unmoving tail (see sketch). In winter, Sharp-shinned Hawks are often mistaken for kestrels in flight. Note the long tail of these birds, however.

Kestrels live in Howard County throughout the year, hunting rodents and small birds in winter, turning to mostly grasshoppers, crickets, and cicadas in summer. A bird on the hunt strikes quickly, ensnaring prey with its talons. Kestrels are rather playful raptors and are often seen toying with larger hawks. Nonbreeding territories of a hundred acres are used for hunting and are defended by single birds in fall and winter. Breeding territories are twice this large. Kestrels nest in cavities; they are the only native hawk that will use bird houses. Boxes, with an entrance hole of exactly 3 inches which are placed 10-30 feet above the ground on, say, a utility pole adjacent to open country, will often attract the beautiful "killy hawk"--the American Kestrel.



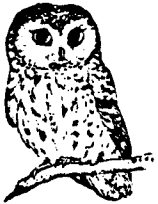
## NEW CLUB BOOKSTORE MANAGERS NAMED

Frances Schoenberger and Eva Sunell were recently named to head the bookstore which is present at meetings and seed sales to provide a service to members by offering discounted books, tapes, and records related to natural history.

Until late January Steve Harsy (with plenty of help from Linda) had handled the bookstore, but other commitments caused his recent resignation. Many thanks Steve and Linda for your major contribution.

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## TRIADELPHIA CHRISTMAS COUNT BREAKS 100 IN ITS THIRTY-EIGHTH YEAR - BOB WHITCOMB



We did it! We not only broke the magic 100 mark, we obliterated it. Although I have listed 104 species in my tally forwarded for publication in American Birds, one species (Black-capped Chickadee) may be removed by the regional editors. It is difficult to identify except under perfect conditions and the editors feel, if this is a non-irruptive year for that species, that exceptional details are required. Of special interest were the Iceland and Lesser Black-backed Gulls at a Montgomery County landfill (C. Wilds, H. Wierenga), Yellow-headed Blackbird (M. Chestem, C. Dupree), No. Saw-whet and Long-eared Owls (J. Sheppard), and the Rough-legged Hawk seen by the MacClintocks. Mild weather until close to the count date allowed somewhat to remain open for lingering waterfowl while some boreal species such as Purple Finches, Pine Siskins, and Evening Grosbeaks were seen, though not in large numbers.

There have been some trends in population numbers over the years of the count that were amplified by this year's results. These include increases in Red-tailed Hawk and House Finch and decreases in Eastern Meadowlark, Eastern Screech-Owl, Brown Creeper, and Winter Wren. The series of recent mild winters (especially early winters) has, in my opinion, been responsible for recent increases in Fox Sparrow, Gray Catbird, and Hermit Thrush. Similarly, a species at the southern end of its wintering range (Am. Tree Sparrow) has been much less abundant the last two years. There are two main possibilities. One is that fall migration is not complete at the time of the count; there may be further movement of some species during late December and early January. The other possibility is that the northern edge of wintering ranges is undergoing continual modification depending on winter's severity.

Editor's Note: The Triadelphia Christmas Count circle is centered on a point on Triadelphia Reservoir so that approximately 40% of the southwestern and central portions of Howard County are included while the remainder of the territory is in Montgomery County. The fact that Howard County is not covered completely as well as the fact that this count does not totally reflect wintering populations (alluded to by the compiler) led the Bird Club to undertake an experimental Winter Count on February 1, 1986. Compiler David Holmes will have the results available for our readers at another time.

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## LENDING POLICY FOR MOUNTED BIRD SPECIMENS ADOPTED

A lending policy for use of the Bird Club-owned mounted bird specimens has been adopted by the Board. It establishes priorities and time use for the birds. Members are encouraged to borrow specimens for presentations for local schools and recreational groups; they can also be used for personal study. For further information, contact Jo Solem, 725-5037. Thanks to Harry Banks for typing the final copy.

MARYLAND BREEDING BIRD ATLAS - CHUCK DUPREE AND JANE FARRELL

The State Atlas Committee reported field work to date has exceeded all expectations with over 90,000 individual records received. We have two more breeding seasons in which to complete this project. The Howard County Breeding Bird Atlas is proceeding on schedule, but we continue to need volunteers both on a regular and occasional basis. In June we will have an all day, countywide survey followed by a potluck dinner. Look for details in the May-June newsletter. If you want to help with this project (which involves watching for nesting, courtship, and other behavioral signs of breeding), call Chuck Dupree 796-1086 or Jane Farrell 596-6350.

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ADDITION. In the Jan-Feb 1986 newsletter, one definition was omitted from the McClure's article, "A Rare Opportunity," p.4: Tail delta - the difference in length between the outer tail feathers and the inner/central tail feathers.

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Wildlife biologist Bill Bridgeland, an MOS member now living in Reisterstown, is working as a free lance biologist. For a fee he will deal with nuisance animals. If you need his services, call him at 1-833-7796.

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CONSERVATION NOTES - BOB SOLEM

The Critical Areas Commission Criteria passed its second of three readings in the Maryland Senate with both Senators Clark and Yeager voting for it. The program will pass--that is not the problem; now we are watching "ripper" bills that would weaken or eviscerate it. We will be asking for your help in defeating these bills.

Sen. Clark introduced SB497-Exotic Bird--Sales into the Maryland Senate. It would protect exotic birds by barring the sale of such birds unless they were hatched and raised in captivity. (My thanks to Lucy Steinitz for bringing the bill to our attention.) The Bird Club voted at its February meeting to support this bill and directed President John Clegg to send a letter to Sen. Clark expressing our position. Marty Chestem of our chapter testified for MOS on February 18 in support of the bill at a hearing of the Senate Economic and Environmental Affairs Committee.

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HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB  
10617 Graeloch Road  
Laurel, Maryland 20707



1985 CAVITY NESTER  
REPORT  
TRIADELPHIA CHRISTMAS  
COUNT BREAKS 100

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