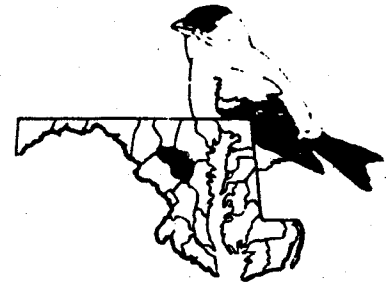




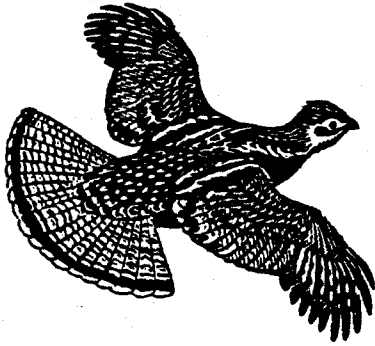
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Howard

A Chapter of the
Maryland Ornithological Society



RUFFED GROUSE AT HIPSLEY MILL ROAD AREA - NICHOLAS M. SHORT



After 37 years of relatively little birding activity, 1987 has seen my return to it on a regular basis, keeping a list and setting goals of what I wish to see. Since 1950 I have learned a new word, "serendipity," which refers to having an unexpected stroke of good fortune. This spring that word took on an enhanced meaning in relation to my birding.

Thursday, April 23rd was a classic spring day soaked with sun. Because nothing was pressing at NASA Goddard and my carpool was inoperative, I decided to bird the morning at a location that had just been written up as a "hot spot" in the Howard County Bird Club newsletter: the part of Patuxent River State Park that is crossed by Hipsley Mill Road.

For the first hour and a half, I birded along the path following the river to the east of the road. Interesting passerines (small perching birds), a few new for the year, but there was nothing unusual. After returning to my car, I decided to move along the river on the west side for a bit before heading for Goddard. Almost immediately, I spotted ~~a female Wood Duck on the water with six ducklings still too young to fly.~~

I walked another 30 yards or so to the west (on the Howard County side) passing into a broad stand of foot-high Mayapples carpeting a large area of floodplain near the river bank. Suddenly, perhaps 60 feet away, a large brown bird rose from the Mayapples, flew about 10 feet just skimming the plants, and then settled into them again becoming almost invisible. The shape of the bird reminded me at once of a gamebird, but which one was not obvious from this quick look. I moved on toward its landing point and, almost immediately, it flew again. This time I got a much better look, but the bird was airborne too short a time for me to train my binoculars on it. It reminded me of both the Ruffed Grouse and the prairie-chickens that I had seen years before: heavy body, longish tail, and chicken-like head. Before moving again, I consulted my handy Peterson and quickly settled on the Ruffed Grouse. My bird was brownish-gray (definitely not the red phase) with a dark tail which had a horizontal band. Another forward movement brought still a third look as the grouse fluttered up and out of the Mayapples for a brief flight. I peered through binoculars at the landing site and saw some motion of the plants, but never could I spot the bird itself while it was on the ground. At that stage I decided to stalk my grouse and slowly approached the point where the bird had last landed. But to no avail. Apparently, the grouse was able to move undetected out of the Mayapples to parts unknown.

This was only the second time in my birding life that I had seen this species and, although I wasn't able to watch the bird carefully while on the ground, I really have nothing to "grouse" about in the looks I did get. The bird was indeed serendipitous and the luck it gave me culminated less than a week later in another all-too-brief look at an even greater rarity--the Yellow Rail, which I saw for about three seconds in a marshland near Baltimore. But that's another story.

BIRDING "HOT SPOTS" IN HOWARD COUNTY - CHRIS LUDWIG - AVALON/RIVER ROAD SECTION, PVSP

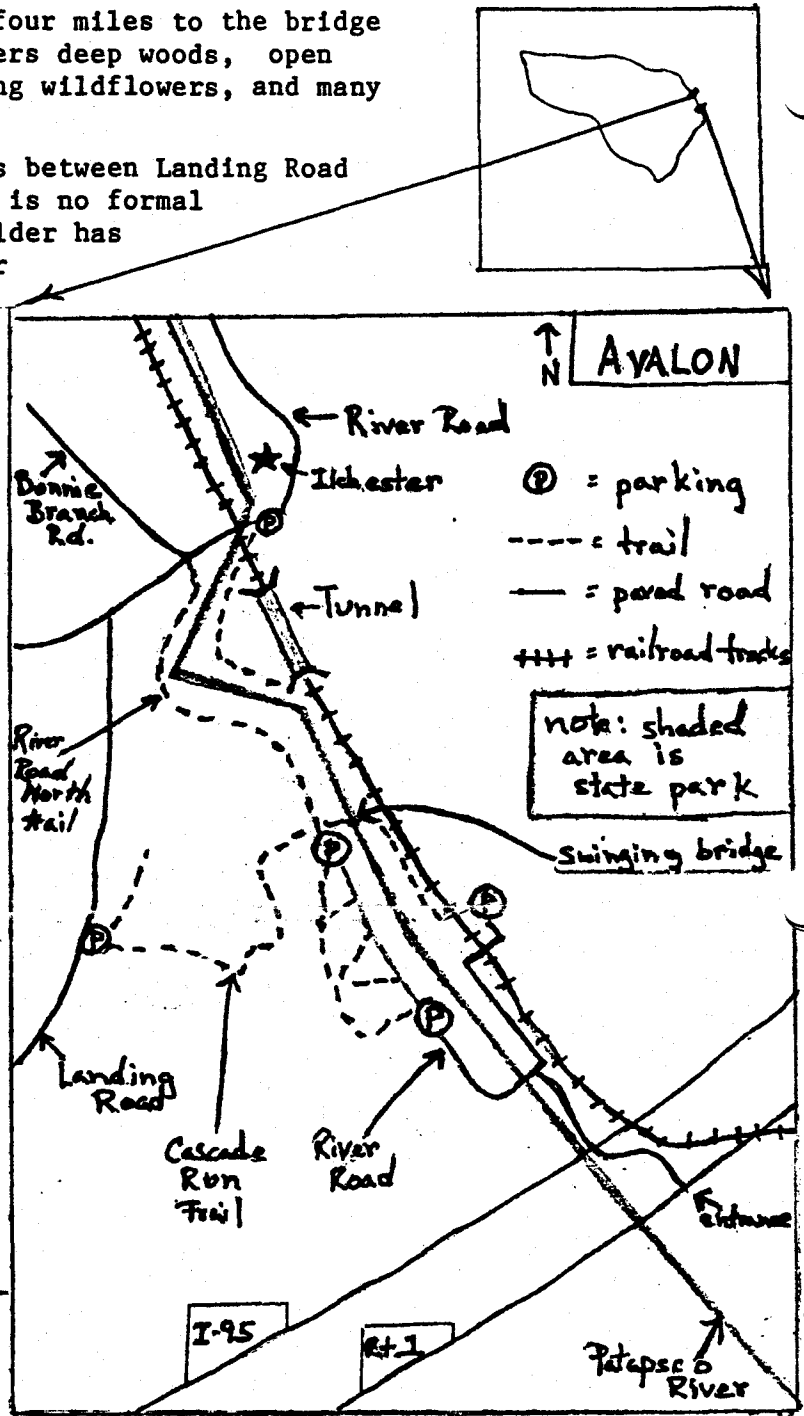
This section of Patapsco Valley State Park extends from the Patapsco River at Rt. 1 upstream almost four miles to the bridge crossing the river at Ilchester. It offers deep woods, open fields, waterfalls, an abundance of spring wildflowers, and many birdwatching opportunities.

The first trail we will take extends between Landing Road and the swinging bridge. Although there is no formal parking lot along Landing Road, the shoulder has been widened and parking is permitted, or park at the swinging bridge parking area and hike toward Landing Road. This trail, paralleling Cascade Run, has some of the deepest woods in the southeastern section of the county. Five to 15 foot waterfalls, many quite scenic, are another highlight of this peaceful, remote trail. Wildflowers are most abundant in April and early May, while birding for mature woods species such as Pileated Woodpeckers, White-breasted Nuthatches and some resident warblers can be rewarding. Occasionally, owls of several species can be heard. Look for salamanders under the rocks of Cascade Run in the warmer months.

The next trail will be labeled River Road North. Again, parking is available at the swinging bridge parking lot, or you can park on the Baltimore Co. side of the river at the Ilchester bridge. Hike on one side of the river or continue to the other side by crossing the swinging bridge and Ilchester bridge. Hiking this loop can be a bit treacherous because the trail is rocky and runs along steep slopes. You may be lucky and see one of the Bald Eagles that were frequently observed along the river during 1986/87. Osprey are another raptor seen during migration. Listen for their loud chirping as they fly above the river.

The last area is River Road South which includes many trails, parking areas, and paved roads. To reach this area (as well as the forementioned swinging bridge parking lot), cross the Patapsco River on Rt. 1 from Howard County into Baltimore County. Almost immediately a sign will direct you to take a left turn to get to the park. Another quick left follows (again there is a sign). The road follows the river and soon you will pass a toll booth. An entry fee is charged during warm weather; weekends and holidays are particularly crowded times. Along this stretch of road you will pass the historic Thomas viaduct. When you come to a stop sign, you can choose to stay on the Baltimore side and park or turn left across a bridge to parking on the Howard side.


In this southern section, watch for Osprey, Spotted and Solitary Sandpipers (in season); migrant warblers, vireos, tanagers and flycatchers during the spring and fall; sparrows along the river and in the fields especially mid-October into spring. Rare plants can be found as well. Look for Drooping Trillium (*Trillium flexipes*) and Leatherwood (*Dirca palustris*). Both of these species are extremely rare in Maryland; please don't disturb!





CALENDAR OF PROGRAMS, FIELD TRIPS, 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.

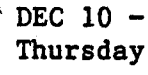
Field trips leave from Gremler Realty parking lot (across from the Flier building on Little Patuxent Parkway in Columbia) unless otherwise listed. Carpooling is encouraged with riders sharing cost of gas and tolls. Dress for field work with stout, reasonably waterproof footgear and layers of clothes. Trips do not always follow paths. No pets. Leaders may cancel due to inclement weather. If you have questions, contact the leader or Field Trip Chairman Michele Wright 465-6057.


 NOV 12 - 15TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION - The Howard County Bird Club inaugurates its 15th Thursday year with a special meeting. An evening of fun and nostalgia; an informative and light-hearted look back as well as forward. Door prizes, favors, displays, surprises, and refreshments. Don't miss it!

 NOV 14 - WEEDS (AND WILDFLOWERS) IN WINTER - Leader: Bob Solem 725-5037. It may not yet be winter, but plants have gone to seed; identifying them in this state presents a real challenge. Spend a half day along the Patapsco River near Marriottsville looking at interesting seed pods and learning what plants look like during their "quiet" season. Meet at Gremler lot at 1:00 p.m.

 NOV 21 - WATERFOWL ON THE LAKES - Leader: Jane Farrell 596-2630. Meet at Gremler at 1:00 Saturday p.m. for a half day checking local lakes for migrant waterfowl. Leader will have a scope. Dress warmly for standing, some walking.

 DEC 5 - BLACKWATER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE - Leaders: Chuck Dupree 796-1086 (evenings) and Bill Eckert 992-2464 (days). Co-sponsored with How. Co. Rec & Parks. See Canada Geese and various duck species on their wintering grounds; Bald Eagles possible. A favorite trip for many years; always a full bus so sign up early. Bus leaves from George Howard building parking lot in Ellicott City at 7:30 a.m.; ~~returns around 6:00 p.m. Take lunch, beverage, layers of clothes.~~ Advance registration required. Call Bill at above number or complete form in Rec & Parks flyer. Fee \$12.00. Especially good trip for beginners.

 DEC 10 - "BIRDS OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO" - Bill Murphy. Bill is a tour leader and author of a book about birds of this region. A former president of the Patuxent Chapter of MOS, he's an outstanding birder (hawks are his specialty), and a good teacher. He'll introduce us to the colorful birds of these islands.

 DEC 26 - TRIADELPHIA CHRISTMAS COUNT. Compiler: Bob Whitcomb 299-5215 evenings or 344-Saturday 2339 days. Dawn to dusk count of all birds heard or seen in the Count circle which includes the western half of Howard County. The \$3.00 fee goes toward publication in American Birds.

BOARD MEETING - NOV 19, Thursday, 7:30 p.m. Howard County Central Library meeting room. All elected board members and committee chairmen should attend.

HABITAT OF RARE PLANTS IS THREATENED BY STATE HIGHWAY PROJECTS

A relocation of Scenic Route 40 within the Green Ridge State Park threatens to destroy a significant portion of the shale barren habitat of Kate's Mountain Clover (Trifolium virginicum) and Alleghany plum (Prunus alleghanensis).

Farther east along Route 40, sedimentation from state highway construction presents an even more serious threat: total destruction of a small population of the endangered harperella (Ptilimnium nodosum) growing in the Siderling Hill Wildlife Management Area. There are only five known sites worldwide for this plant; this site is considered the second best. Harperella is a candidate for federal listing as an endangered species according to the Maryland Natural Heritage Program of MD Dept. of Natural Resources.

At the October meeting the chapter voted to have Pres. Chestem write to Governor Schaefer expressing our concern for these threatened plants. Members are encouraged to also write to Gov. William Donald Schaefer, State House, Annapolis, MD 21401.

A WONDERFUL CONVENTION - JOHN MALCOLM



The Maryland Ornithological Society held its 42nd annual convention in the colonial city of Chestertown over the weekend of August 14-16. The location was Washington College. Over two hundred people attended, and together they saw more than 155 species of birds (very good for Kent County in August). There were the usual field trips, banquets, lectures, along with a nature bookstore and an optical shop.

State officers elected for one-year terms were President Bob Ringler (Baltimore), Vice-President Rich Dolesh (Jug Bay), Secretary Pat Moore (Montgomery), and Treasurer Emily Joyce (Anne Arundel).

Out-going President Tony White presented award pins and certificates to people who had performed outstanding volunteer service to MOS over the years. Those honored were Dottie Mendihall, John Cullom, Marty Chestem, Helen Ford, Anneke Davis, and Larry Zeleny. At the end of the ceremonies President-elect Ringler presented Tony White with a pin and certificate for his work over the years running conventions and serving as president.

NEWS - NEWS - NEWS - NEWS - NEWS - NEWS - NEWS

Have you had a chance to examine the handsome cavity nester display box which Mark Wallace constructed for club use? It is a five-celled portable case with a plexiglass top and front so the nests of the Eastern Bluebird, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Tree Swallow and House Sparrow can be compared. Eventually eggs (or reasonable facsimiles) will be added. The Bird Club is considering sponsoring a cavity nester workshop in late winter. If you would be interested in helping, contact Pres. Marty Chestem 730-1527.

Thanks to the Hometown Fair helpers at the Columbia Mall on Saturday, September 19th. Among the volunteers were John Clegg, Ralph & Jane Geuder, Sheila Glanz, Marjorie Mountjoy, Don & Jan Randle, Elise Seay, Nick Short, and Bob & Jo Solem according to organizer Eileen Clegg.

President Martha Chestem announced in the Sept-Oct newsletter that the Bird Club was undertaking a project for Howard County Rec & Parks to compile bird (and perhaps plant) lists for each of the major parks in the county. Marty is looking for individuals to coordinate or co-coordinate work for each park as well as someone to head the project. To help, call her at 730-1527. Ralph & Jane Geuder led a field trip to Rockburn Park on Sept. 26th. While previewing the park on several dates in the week prior to the trip, they spotted Sharp-shinned Hawks, Osprey, a Northern Harrier and an immature Bald Eagle! On the trip itself Red-tailed, Red-shouldered and Broad-winged Hawks as well as Turkey and Black Vultures were seen--a good collection of raptors for any area of the county. Our local parks can be very productive.

As the year draws to a close, put together a list of all the bird species you have seen in Howard County during 1987. For the past eight years, the chapter has compiled a master list of species seen during the year in the county. The total is always over 200 species. David Holmes has been the compiler and has highlighted the rarities, the misses, and the regulars with thoroughness and humor. Because he has taken on the compilation of Winter Count, he no longer is able to serve as compiler for the annual list although he will continue to serve in a vital advisory capacity. Many thanks, David, for all of your help. Pres. Chestem has named Jane Farrell as compiler. Please send 1987 lists by January 15, 1988, to 6324 Sandchain Rd., Columbia, MD 21045.



Winter Count this year will be held on Saturday, January 30, 1988. Field and feeder watchers are both needed. Save all or part of the day for birding. Co-compilers David Holmes and Jo Solem (725-5037) welcome your help.

FLOWER FEATURE: WHITE ASTERS

- BOB SOLEM AND GEORGIA MORRIS

Heath Aster
fine white rays,
dense yellow disk
flowers

1-5 feet

Leaves numerous
on plume-shaped
branches

Leaves linear
and entire

Calico Aster
White rays (some-
times purple-
tinged); disk
flowers more pur-
plish than yellow,
less dense & rather
shaggy

1-4 feet

Leaves oval,
toothed

HEATH ASTER (or Frost Aster) - Aster pilosus
CALICO ASTER (or Starved Aster) - Aster lateriflorus

HABITAT - Heath: Dry, sandy soil, open meadows, road-
sides; Calico: fields and roadsides

HOWARD COUNTY BLOOMING SEASON - early Sept-early Dec

FAMILY - Composite (Compositae)

HOWARD COUNTY LOCATION - Heath: widespread; found
along most powerlines; almost all county parks with
unmowed meadows including Atholton Park, also Lake
Elkhorn.

Calico: less common; unmowed meadows such as parts of
Cypressmede Park, the Savage Mill Trail, and the
Scott's Cove area of Rocky Gorge Reservoir

SPECIAL INFORMATION - The word aster comes from a
Greek word meaning star. Asters are daisy-like
flowers that brighten roadsides and fields on fall
days. In Howard County it is possible to find 15
species. They can be roughly divided into two cate-
gories: the small white asters and the larger purple
asters. The small white types are reminiscent of the
fleabanes seen during the summer months.



FEE SYSTEM INSTITUTED AT CHINCOTEAGUE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has instituted a fee system at some of the most heavily used national wildlife refuges. Chincoteague NWR now charges \$5.00 per car per visit. Bombay Hook currently does not have a fee while Forsythe NWR (formerly Brigantine NJ) is planning to institute one. Individuals under 16 or those who have a Golden Eagle, Golden Access or Golden Age pass are given unlimited access.



The most sensible option for most birders is to purchase annually a Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp or "Duck Stamp" as it is known for a \$10.00 fee. This provides unlimited access to those refuges with fees. Stamps are available at the refuges as well as at major post offices, i.e. Columbia, Laurel, Clarksville, Ellicott Mills branch (Main St.) and Ellicott City (Ridge Rd.) If you wish to purchase these stamps at post offices, buyers are advised to call ahead to be sure that a clerk is on duty who has some as they are issued only to selected clerks and in limited numbers. Birders have long had a free ride at refuges with hunters funding a large part of the land purchases through purchase of the required hunting stamps. Perhaps as birders begin to pay a proportionately larger share, refuge personnel will become increasingly aware of managing for species other than waterfowl.

Pick up membership cards from Treasurer Eva Sunell at any meeting, seed sale, or special event. Autumn migratory records for Maryland Birdlife should reach Jo Solem, 10617 Graeloch Rd., Laurel, MD 20707, Tel. 725-5037 no later than December 7, 1987.

OUR THANKS AND BEST WISHES, NORIHISA AND JUNKO

Norihisa and Junko Kato have been members while on temporary assignment the past few years and have participated fully in chapter activities in order to learn as much as possible about American birds. The September meeting was the last they attended before their return to Tokyo. At the end of the meeting, they presented Pres. Chestem with a \$500 check. We can only say a humble thank you for this most unexpected and generous gift. Perhaps, someday you can return to bird with us again.

IN MEMORIAM: ANNE DOWLING - SARAH HAVILAND

The Howard County Bird Club marks the passing of two members during the last few months.

Anne Dowling's interest in birds was kindled when she purchased the home of former club member Bob Herndon. The feeders the Herndons left became sources of interest and pleasure for Anne and her husband. The open space behind their Columbia house was home to a pair of Red-shouldered Hawks which they watched. Hummingbirds became a special interest. The chapter received several memorial donations, most from Anne's co-workers at Social Security where she served as liaison with the national medical community.

Sarah Haviland will be remembered by many for her regular attendance and participation in chapter activities for more than a decade. Her special interests were wildflowers and ferns although few branches of natural history escaped her insatiable curiosity. To a meeting within the last year, she brought a display of cecropia moths which she had raised. The land which her family had owned for several generations on Haviland Mill Road harbored a variety of interesting plants whose location she shared eagerly. When she moved to Sandy Spring Friends' Home, she examined the surrounding woods and fields and located a patch of unusual yellow Spring Beauties. She will be especially missed on club outings for her sharp eyes were an aid to any leader; her knowledge and enthusiasm were always welcome. The board is planning to hold a spring wildflower walk in her memory.

Maryland Ornithological
Society, Inc.
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Baltimore, Maryland 21209

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