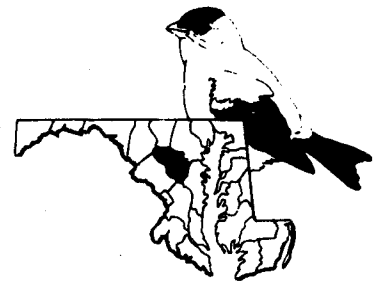




# Howard

A Chapter of the  
Maryland Ornithological Society



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Nov-Dec 1991

## SUCCESSFUL FALL SEED SALE Eileen Clegg

An enthusiastic crew loaded a truckload of seed October 12 marking the thirteenth year of seed sales by the Bird Club. The loaders were Bob Dettner, Mark Marden, Tim Keller, Chuck Stirrat, Steve Clarkson, Tom Strikwerda, Mark Wallace, Dave Kubitsky, G.J. Wilson, Jane Farrell, Bob Solem, Ralph Heimlich, Susan Setterberg, Joe Byrnes, Robin Myjweski, Tina Fiester, Tony Hogsten, David Alexander, Mike Courbron, Peggy Erbe, William Drell, and Steve Dracos. Working at the desk or in the bookstore were Ralph Geuder, Kimberly Gross, Zeldia Simon, Joe Suess, Margo Garner, Jo Solem, Karen Hogsten, Helen Zelchner, Nancy Magnusson, and Maud Banks. Special thanks to Michele Wright for setting up and overseeing the bookstore, as well as Marty Chestem for the attractive displays and table of free conservation items and recycled "birdy" periodicals. Baked goods were provided by Maud Banks, Romaine Smith, Peggy Erbe, Glenda Condon, and Eileen Clegg. There may have been others I missed.

Thanks to one and all for the cooperation, enthusiasm, and hard work which produced another successful seed sale!

## FLOWER FEATURE

### PERFOLIATE TEARTHUMB

Georgia Morris & Bob Solem

PERFOLIATE TEARTHUMB - *Polygonum perfoliatum*

FAMILY - Buckwheat (*Polygonaceae*)

HABITAT - Moist stream banks.

HOWARD COUNTY BLOOMING SEASON - End of June through end of October.

HOWARD COUNTY LOCATION - Savage, Cedar Lane, and Cypressmede Parks; Lake Elkhorn; Patuxent River Park; and all sections of Patapsco Valley State Park.

PLANT - Vine-like, sprawling, weak-stemmed, clinging to other plants by means of hooked prickles on the stem & leaves.

FLOWERS - Small, greenish, five-part. Flowers bloom along the top of the stem.

FRUIT - Bright blue berries that cover a round black achene (seed pod).

LEAVES - Triangular. It is called "perfoliate" because of the disk-like petiole that surrounds the base of each leaf making it appear "pierced."

SPECIAL INFORMATION - Tearthumbs are vine-like, sprawling plants with weak, prickly stems that love to cover and smother other streambank plants. Tearthumbs were introduced to this country from Asia and are gradually increasing their territory. The backs of the leaves and the stems are covered with downward pointing prickles that cling fiercely to everyone and everything. There is little to recommend or endear this obnoxious weedy plant. It does, however, have interesting triangular leaves, unusual orange stems, and, in the fall, a cluster of striking, "electric" blue berries. The fleshy berries cover a round black achene. Arrow-leaved Tearthumb (*Polygonum sagittatum*) is also found in Howard County. Its flowers are in a compact cluster at the top of the stem; its leaves are long and narrow and clasp the stem.

**JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1991 NEWSLETTER MATERIAL** is due December 1. Autumn migration dates covering August through November are due December 7. Mail to Jo Solem, 10617 Grae-loch Road, Laurel, MD 20723; or phone (301) 725-5037.

# 1991 BREEDING BIRD CENSUS

## Middle Patuxent Environmental Area

Gerald Einem



The breeding birds on a 29.7 acre mature upland forest plot were censused between April 20 and July 19, 1991. The census plot was established in 1971 and has been censused each year from 1971 through 1976 and again in 1990. My 1991 census based on 25 visits, a total of 50.5 hours, yielded the following information.

Red-eyed Vireo	19.0	Black-and-white Warbler	1.0
Wood Thrush	19.0	Brown-headed Cowbird	1.0
Acadian Flycatcher	11.0	Hairy Woodpecker	1.0
Red-bellied Woodpecker	9.0	Northern Flicker	1.0
Hooded Warbler	9.0	American Redstart	1.0
Scarlet Tanager	9.0	Mourning Dove	0.5
Ovenbird	8.0	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	0.5
Northern Cardinal	7.5	American Crow	+
Tufted Titmouse	4.5	Gray Catbird	+
Carolina Chickadee	4.0	Louisiana Waterthrush	+
Veery	4.0	Red-shouldered Hawk	+
Carolina Wren	3.0		
Eastern Wood-Pewee	3.0	Breeding birds which visited the area but whose territories were largely outside of the study plot:	
Kentucky Warbler	3.0	Red-tailed Hawk	
Rufous-sided Towhee	3.0	Great Horned Owl	
Downy Woodpecker	2.5	Northern Parula	
White-breasted Nuthatch	2.5	Common Yellowthroat	
Blue Jay	2.0		
Yellow-throated Vireo	2.0		

Male birds were located by grid markers and were counted primarily on the basis of vocalization. To be counted, a male must be heard on his territory on a minimum of three visits. A count of 0.5 means that the bird was heard outside and inside the census plot an equal number of times. The columns show the number of different male birds vocalizing on territory during the period of the birding census.

Possible significant counts during the 1991 summer census included an increase in the number of neotropical migrants. Those that increased the most were

- Ovenbird: (8 birds) previous high count was 3 in 1990, low 0 in 1975;
- Acadian Flycatcher: (11 birds) ~~previous high was 9.5 in 1971, low 7.5 in 1976;~~
- Scarlet Tanager: (9 birds) previous high count was 5 in 1990, low 2 in 1971 and 1972.

The increased counts may be due to the maturation of the forest or the increased census hours during 1990 and 1991 or both.

Some short distance migrants continue to show decreasing or low breeding populations:

- Gray Catbird: (1 bird, less than one-half of a territory) previous low count was 0 in 1971, high count was 5.5 in 1974;
- Rufous-sided Towhee: (3 birds) previous low count was 2.5 in 1974 and 1975, high count was 8 in 1971.

The towhee and catbird are associated with forest openings or forest edge. As the forest has matured, little of this habitat remains.

The Cerulean Warbler has not been heard on territory since 1976 when one bird was counted, a high 2.5 in 1971, 1972, and 1973.

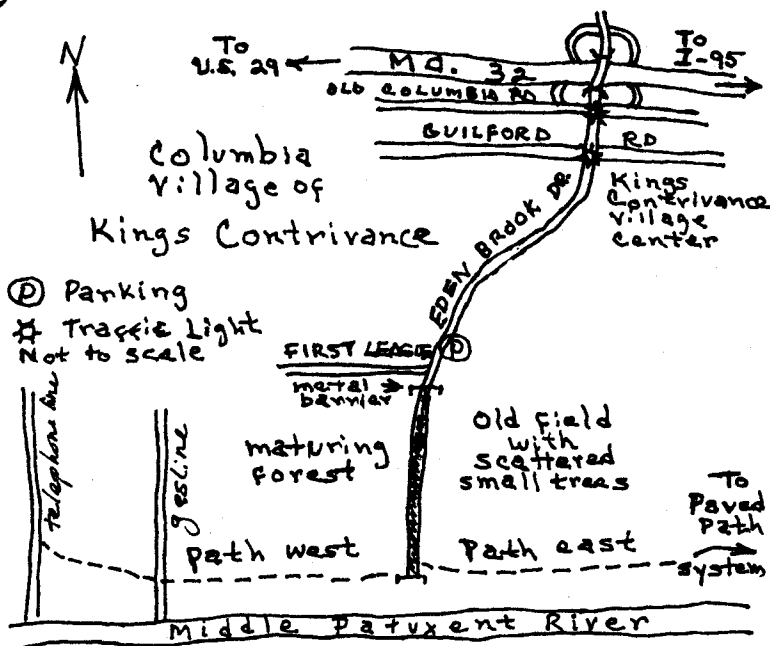
The census plot forest remains relatively undisturbed. It has not been sprayed for gypsy moths due to the small number of preferred trees such as oaks. Gypsy moth damage has been minimal. Flowering dogwoods in the forest interior, away from the forest edge or light gaps, continue to die or decline from anthracnose infection, eliminating some midlevel forest cover.

The parasitic Brown-headed Cowbird population has remained rather constant. During most years there was one bird; one year there were two birds. Cowbirds can severely reduce the population of breeding warblers, vireos, tanagers, and others. During the 1991 census one instance of cowbird parasitism was observed: the nest of a Red-eyed Vireo contained one tiny emaciated vireo nestling, one dead vireo nestling, and one very large cowbird nestling.

I want to thank Charlie Fuller for his valuable assistance in the field. NOTE: The Middle Patuxent census plot has not had a quantitative vegetation survey since 1971. It needs to be resurveyed. If you are willing to work on this, please call Gerry Einem at (410) 730-0877. Also, call if you would like to help with the bird survey.

# BIRDING "HOT SPOTS" IN HOWARD COUNTY

Edenbrook Drive, Middle Patuxent River Joanne K. Solem



Directions: From U.S. 29, go east on Md. 32 1.2 miles to Shaker Drive/Eden Brook Drive exit. Upon exiting, bear right at the top of the ramp to the stoplight at Eden Brook Drive. Turn left and drive 0.4 miles to the stoplight at Guilford Road. Continue straight across the intersection entering Dickinson (Kings Contrivance village center will be on the left). Follow Eden Brook Drive 0.6 miles to where it deadends at the ROAD CLOSED metal barrier just beyond the intersection with First League. Park along the road observing the warning signs.

Those who bird the county regularly have locations to which they return again and again. One of my favorites is situated along the Middle Patuxent River in the Columbia village of Kings Contrivance. Within a mile of my home, it provides quick access although changes in local roads in the last decade have reduced this advantage. It is still, however, the area to which I gravitate early on a balmy spring day after a night with southerly breezes or on a crisp autumn morning after the passage of a cold front.

The metal barrier across the road marks the end of county maintained pavement, but the remnant of old Kinder Road is still in decent condition at this time. The portion from the intersection of Eden Brook Drive with First League to the bottom of the hill is the scene of migrant passerine activity ranging from fair to excellent. The sun rises over the trees on the left. Until it is high enough to shine on the trees on the right side of the road, there is little movement so there is usually no advantage to arriving at dawn. Once the area has begun to warm, birds dart back and forth across the road. The right side contains relatively mature oaks and tulip trees mixed with some Virginia pines, especially near the top of the hill. The left side is lower and brushier with immature black walnut and oak trees along with sassafras, spicebush, sweet gum, and dogwood at the edge of what was once a field. Several of the trees are draped with grape vines. The most intense activity can last from 15 minutes to an hour or more. Meander slowly along the road listening for thrushes in the wooded interior while scanning for warblers, vireos, tanagers, grosbeaks, and kinglets.

Although there is a limited view of the sky, it is worth casting an eye upward now and then. In the spring, loons, Ospreys, and cormorants have been noted overhead, while the autumn can produce various birds of prey. One mid September morning nearly 600 Broad-winged Hawks streamed past in 35 minutes.

Once the most intense activity has died down along the road, walk almost to the bottom of the hill. Paths lead both east and west along the Middle Patuxent River. The path to the east (left) is almost impenetrable during the summer and early autumn. If you are able or willing to thrash along it, you will pass through a fairly open area where migrants or residents can be spotted depending on the season. As you reach the wooded area just after the faint trail crosses a small stream, pause to admire the impressive sycamore on the left, surely one of the largest in the county. Follow the path uphill as it winds behind houses. Eventually it joins a paved path system which, with its unpaved extensions, can be followed (though not easily) to Murray Hill Road. There are some attractive views of the river as it loops below the steep slopes. The paved portion of the path passes a large permanent pond after winding through a stand of pines. There is usually some activity in this vicinity even if it is just feeder birds along spurs leading to Water Lily Way. Although the birding tends to be inconsistent in this easterly direction, at any point it is possible to double back to the original road.

The path to the west (right) is generally a better (though narrow) track. During the growing season, branches of poison ivy may intrude at some points, so long pants are wise. Although some houses on the hilltop are in view of the river, there is still a good variety of wildlife. Early mornings are best, not just to maximize bird activity, but to minimize the sound of mowers and other power equipment. At one time a beaver family took advantage of a downed tree across the river to create an impressive dam. A major storm carried it away and the beavers moved downstream.

(Text continued on next page)

*Edenbrook Drive (continued)*

but they could return again. The trail passes across both a gasline and a telephone right-of-way. The second is generally the more productive with the area near the top of the hill good for migrant thrushes.

There is no easy way to make a loop, but doubling back is never boring. In the spring, there is a fine display of wildflowers on the floodplain, and a dozen species of ferns can be found. Before the leaves are on the trees wood frogs quack from a secluded woodland pond or two. Nesting birds include Barred Owl, Red-shouldered Hawk, Pileated and other Woodpeckers, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Wood Thrush, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, five flycatcher species, three species of vireos, and more than half a dozen species of warblers.

Having birded this area for more than two decades, a period which included two breeding bird atlases and several dozen May, Christmas, and Midwinter Counts, I think it safe to say that, despite major changes in the surrounding land, this location ranks as one of the most consistently productive birding areas in the county.

**1992 MARYLAND NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM CALENDARS AVAILABLE**

Remember the attractive color calendar the Maryland Natural Heritage Program produced in 1990? Although they did not have one available in 1991, they have one for 1992. They should be on sale at the November and December meetings. Price again is \$4 for color photographs of 12 Maryland threatened or endangered species. They make great stocking stuffers or small remembrances. Stop by Longfellow Elementary School between 7:30-8:00 p.m. on Nov. 14 or Dec. 12 to pick up your supply.

**THANKS TO HOWARD COUNTY FAIR VOLUNTEERS**

If you visited the county fair in August, you located the Bird Club's exhibit in the vegetable barn. Thanks to Martha Chestem, who constructed two handsome three-panel displays, the club was able to provide a continuing exhibit. The display included a dozen bird specimens, the multi-celled cavity nest box, and the kestrel nest in a special box with the addition this year of a kestrel which Michele Wright had recently completed.

**OOPS!**

Michele Wright's name was inadvertently omitted from the list of May Count participants in the last newsletter. Sorry, Michele.

With the twin problems of vacations and heat it is not easy to find sufficient personnel; but again, Mike McClure did a fine job of assembling the necessary individuals to staff the table evenings and weekends. He and Grazina hauled the display table and, along with Jo Solem, set up and took down the display. Chatting with passersby on one or more evenings were the following: Dave & Maureen Harvey, Nancy Magnusson, Jane & Ralph Geuder, Chuck Stirrat, Mark Wallace, Don & Jan Randle, Connie Bockstie, Sue Probst, Mike Smith, Marci & Anu Krishnamoorthy, Michele Wright, Tom Strikwerda, Peggy Erbe, Marty Chestem, Don & Martha Waugh, Susan Setterberg, Jo Solem, Jane Farrell, Cathy & Thea Williamson. Thanks to each and every person who assisted!

**BIRDBRAINS**

BY SUE PROBST



**WARBLER GAMES**

**MARYLAND BIRDLIFE MAILED**

The June 1990 issue of the state journal, *Maryland Birdlife*, was mailed in September by a group who met at Bonnie Ott's home. President Ralph Geuder assembled a crew to label the magazine and prepare the issues for mailing. Under Martha Chestem's and Tom Strikwerda's efficient direction, Susan Setterberg, Bonnie Ott, Maud Banks, Jo Solem, Martha Waugh, Peggy Willson, and Brenda Brienza finished in under two hours. If you can provide help (no more than four times a year), give Maud Banks a call at (410) 381-3240.

# CALENDAR OF PROGRAMS, FIELD TRIPS, SPECIAL EVENTS

Programs are held at Longfellow Elementary School, 5470 Hesperus Dr., Columbia. 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.

NOV 14 Thursday "ROSEATE TERNS: CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT IN THE NORTHEAST" - Jeff Spendelow, biologist at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center. What is the future of these graceful birds? What problems do they face?

DEC 12 Thursday "BIRDING IN CHINA" - George Chase. George recently spent 30 days in Hebei Province on an Earthwatch excursion. With this program we're going to try something that has become accepted practice among birders in several other areas. Bring a pair of binoculars to the meeting in order to improve your view of the birds pictured. You may find it adds an exciting dimension to the program. Binoculars are optional, of course; the slides are enjoyable without them.

Field trips meet as described for each trip. Carpooling is encouraged with riders sharing the cost of gas and tolls. Dress for field work with stout, reasonably waterproof footwear & layers of clothes. Trips do not always follow paths. No pets. Leaders may cancel due to inclement weather or fewer than 3 participants. Questions? Call leader or Field Trip Chair Bonnie Ott (410) 461-3361.

NOV 3, 10 Sunday (1-4) CENTENNIAL PARK FALL WEEKLY WALKS. 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. Call Bonnie Ott (410) 461-3361 for info. Meet in West Area parking lot off Centennial Lane in park. Prime time for migrating waterfowl: numbers and species change from week to week. Late migrant hawks also possible depending on weather.

NOV 23 Saturday COLUMBIA LAKES and CENTENNIAL LAKE. 1/2 day. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in West Area parking lot off Centennial Lane, Centennial Park. A chance to sample the waterfowl at four of the county's lakes at the discretion of the leader. Call Bonnie Ott (410) 461-3361 for info. Winds off the lakes are often chilly so dress warmly. Jo Solem

DEC 21 Saturday TRIADELPHIA CHRISTMAS COUNT. \$5 fee. Count for part or all of the day. Areas are assigned in western Howard and eastern Montgomery counties. To volunteer, contact Norm Saunders (301) 989-9035. Results are published in *American Birds*. The fee defrays publication costs.

BOARD MEETING: Thursday, November 21 at 7:30 p.m. Longfellow Elementary School.

## LAST CALL: COLUMBIA LAKES BIRD SIGHTINGS

As announced in the January-February 1991 issue of this newsletter, a bird checklist for the Columbia lakes is being compiled. Please forward sightings for 1991 (or earlier) to the following individuals by December 5: Lake Elkhorn sightings to Kathy Mariano, 9407 Hickory Limb, Columbia, MD 21045; Wilde Lake to Helen Zeichner, 10167 Pasture Gate Lane, Columbia, MD 21044; Lake Kittamaqundi or combined lists of more than one lake to Martha Chestem, 10850 Faulkner Ridge Circle, Columbia, MD 21044. Please indicate season sightings were made: winter December-February, spring March-May, summer June-July, autumn August-November. You don't need numerous sightings to provide valuable data. Even a few records could be helpful.

## FISHING TRASH IS HAZARDOUS

Each year numerous waterbirds are found entangled in monofilament fishing line and in plastic 6-pack rings, or are hurt by hooks remaining on discarded fishing lines. Within the past year a Great Blue Heron was observed on Triadelphia Reservoir enmeshed in hooks and line. Bravos to Nancy Magnusson, Jane Farrell, and Marty Chestem who faithfully pick up lines, hooks, and rings along our reservoirs and lake shores. Join them in removing these dangerous items from the reach of local birds. Be very careful as sometimes a seemingly empty pile of line may contain one or more rusty hooks.

## MIDWINTER COUNT TALLY SITE NEEDED



If you are willing to host the tally for the 1992 Howard County Midwinter Count on Saturday, February 1, please contact Jo Solem (301) 725-5037 by November 20. Hal and Zelda Simon who have been such gracious hosts in the past have a conflict on that date this year. The club and participants provide the meal.

# CONSERVATION REPORT

Bob Solem

The Howard County Department of Education and the Department of Recreation and Parks are close to a land swap agreement allowing an elementary school to be built adjacent to the Montgomery Road entrance of Rockburn Branch Park. The Board of the Howard County Bird Club has communicated its concerns about this arrangement to the two major agencies involved as well as to each of the members of the County Council. Taking of parkland for any other use is a bad precedent. It appears that environmental considerations were not factored into the present decision. We have been assured that this is a one time arrangement and the land taken will be replaced by a larger parcel which adjoins the park. (State law requires that equivalent acreage be purchased to restore parkland purchased with Program Open Space funds.) We will continue to monitor this issue.

Here are some water saving tips published by The Chesapeake Bay Foundation:

- Kitchen**
- Run automatic dishwashers only with full load.
  - If washing dishes in the sink, use one side of sink or a large bowl or tub to hold rinse water, rather than running water.
  - Garbage disposals use a lot of water and put a lot of solids into septic systems if you have one.
- Outdoors**
- Running the hose for one hour uses 375 gallons. Water your lawn (if permitted) during the cool part of the day to reduce evaporation.
  - When washing the car, first give the car a quick rinse, then turn the water off. Wash one section of the car at a time and rinse that section quickly. Turn the water off each time.
- Bathrooms**
- Conventional toilets use 5 to 7 gallons of water each flush. Reduce the amount of water to about 3 gallons by placing two 1/2 gallon plastic bottles filled with water in the tank. Place them where they won't interfere with the flushing mechanisms.
  - Check for leakage. Add some food coloring to your tank and leave it for about 30 minutes without flushing. If color appears, you have a leak. A toilet that leaks for 6 months can waste 45,000 gallons of water.
  - Install a special shower head to cut down on water used in showers. They reduce flow to 3 gallons per minute instead of the usual 5-10.
  - Don't run tap water while brushing teeth or shaving.

**SEND IN YOUR MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL IF YOU HAVE NOT YET DONE SO. THE MEMBERSHIP YEAR RUNS FROM SEPTEMBER 1 - AUGUST 31. RENEW NOW SO YOU DON'T MISS ANY NEWSLETTERS.**

## HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB

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