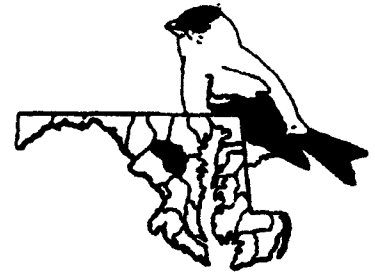




# Howard

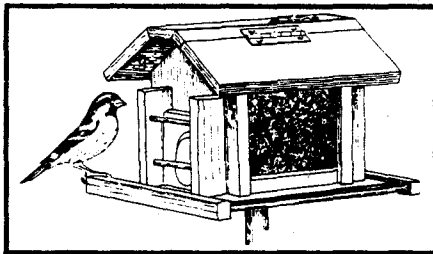
*A Chapter of the  
Maryland Ornithological Society*



November-December 1994, Vol 23, No 2

---

## SETTING A HEALTHY FEEDING TABLE FOR BACKYARD BIRDS



You may have seen some of the numerous articles in the local newspapers last spring, or heard about diseases running through finch populations in the area. You have probably stocked up on seed at the recent club seed sale. All you need now are some tips to help you set a healthy, clean table to enjoy birds at your feeders as we move into winter. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recommends the following eight easy steps you can take to prevent or minimize disease problems at feeders.

- *Give them space* - Provide ample feeder space. Crowding is a key factor in spreading disease. If birds have to jostle each other to reach the food, they are crowded. Crowding also creates stress among the birds which make them more vulnerable to disease.
- *Clean up wastes* - Keep the feeder area clean of waste food and droppings.
- *Make feeders safe* - Make sure your feeders have no sharp points or edges. Even small scratches and cuts allow bacteria and viruses to enter otherwise healthy birds.
- *Keep feeders clean* - Clean and disinfect feeders regularly. Use one part liquid chlorine household bleach in nine parts of tepid water to disinfect. Make enough solution to immerse an empty, cleaned feeder completely for two to three minutes. Allow to air dry. Once or twice a month should do, but weekly could help more if you notice sick birds at your feeder.
- *Use good food* - Discard any food that smells musty, is wet, looks moldy or has fungus growing on it. Disinfect any storage container that holds spoiled food and the scoop used to fill feeders from it.
- *Prevent contamination* - Keep rodents out of stored food. Mice can carry and spread some bird diseases without being affected themselves.
- *Act early* - Don't wait to act until you see sick or dead birds. With good prevention you'll seldom find sick or dead birds at your feeder.
- *Spread the word* - Encourage your neighbors who feed birds to follow the same precautions.

Chlamydiosis, the disease frequently found among House Finches earlier this year, is recognized by lethargy and swollen, runny or crusty eyes. If you find a bird at your feeder exhibiting these symptoms, make sure you are following the steps above. Call the Maryland Department of Natural Resources at 410-974-3987 to report the finding.

*Shop the Club Bookstore for Holiday  
Gifts for Your Favorite Birder!*

# SUMMARY OF THE FIRST ANNUAL HOWARD COUNTY FALL COUNT

by Mike McClure and Chuck Stirrat

The first Howard County Fall Count was conducted on September 17, 1994, from 4:00 AM until 7:30 PM. This was the first of what is expected to be a count held each year on the third Saturday of September, with a state- or nation-wide count expected to be organized next year. There were a total of 52 participants in 30 field parties. The totals for party miles and hours are shown on the accompanying tally sheet. For a first count the number of participants and degree of county coverage was very good. A total of 133 species were identified (exceeding our expectations), and 26,651 individual birds were tallied. The weather was warm and humid for mid-September, with temperatures ranging from the low 60's to a high in the upper 80's. The rain held off until around 6 PM just in time for the tally rally.

The accompanying tally sheet presents the count data for the county and the seven areas that are now used for all three of the county counts (Spring, Fall, and Winter). The confusing fall warblers were present in good numbers with 30 species of warbler identified including both Connecticut and Mourning. Other species of special note were 3 Olive-sided Flycatchers, 6 Philadelphia Vireos, 7 Pectoral Sandpipers, a Merlin, a Gray-cheeked Thrush, a Summer Tanager, and 2 Yellow-bellied Flycatchers.



The individual bird totals were dominated by the large number of gulls counted at the Alpha Ridge Landfill, including what seems to be a very large number of Laughing Gulls (3500). Another large species count of note is the kettle of Broad-winged Hawks with more than 500 individuals observed high above the Alpha Ridge Community Park.

The field checklist used this year was a minimal modification of the state-wide May count sheet. As a result some species on the list will probably require write-ups in future fall counts, the Empidonax flycatchers being one example. All those who provided written details for all "Write-in Species", especially those who wrote up each American Redstart (Oops), are to be commended.

As this count occurs during the early part of hunting season some areas such as the Hugg Thomas WMA, parts of the WSSC property, and the Patuxent River State Park were not surveyed for safety reasons, and will not be on future counts. Other difficulties experienced included Nancy Magnusson's report of being unable to launch her canoe for fear of drowning in the mud getting to the river.

The participation of the following people is greatly appreciated: Area 1: MARK WALLACE, Marty Barron, Rod Burley, Elwood Martin; Area 2: PAUL ZUCKER, Jane and Ward Ebert, Tom Strikwerda, Sherry Zucker; Area 3: RANDY AND RICHARD CROOK, Giff Beaton, Darius and Paula Ecker, Anne and Ken Hart, Dave and Maureen Harvey, Frank Reilly, Chuck Stirrat; Area 4: SUSAN SETTERBERG, Mary Lou Clark, Mary Ellen Gearhart, Rachel Gearhart, Mike Leumas, Grazina and Mike McClure, Marilyn Veek; Area 5: MARTY CHESTEM, Lauren Duff, Peggy Erbe, Nancy Magnusson, Carol and Paul Newman, Doug Odermatt, Chan Robbins, Helen Zeichner; Area 6: BONNIE OTT, Joe Picard, Hank Stanton; Area 7: EVA SUNELL, Maud Banks, Jane Farrell, Sandra Goolsby, Greg Gough, Kathy Jones, Peter Osenton, Jo Solem, Douglas Stinson, James Stinson, Carol and Jim Wilkinson. The Area Coordinators (CAPITALS) are to be commended for arranging for such excellent coverage and for their prompt submittal of records. A very special thanks goes to Don and Martha Waugh who so graciously hosted the tally rally.

Traditionally the Winter count draws participants from outside the county, but for this first fall count the participation of Giff Beaton, who flew in from Marietta, Georgia specifically to participate in the count may have set a new county record for travel effort. (He is Randy Crook's brother, but it certainly appeared as if the birds were by far the attraction and not a family visit.)

As the first annual fall count, the day was a great success with many pleasant birding experiences reported at the tally rally. Plan now to join us next year when the count will be held on Saturday, September 16.

FALL BIRD COUNT - HOWARD COUNTY

Count Date: Sept. 17, 1994

Table with columns: Area No. (1-7), Totals, and bird species names. Rows include Pied-billed Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, etc.

Table with columns: Area No. (1-7), Totals, and bird species names. Rows include Brown Thrasher, Cedar Waxwing, European Starling, etc.

Table with columns: Area No. (1-7), Totals, and Supplemental Data (Hours on Foot, Hours by Car, etc.).

# SUMMARY OF 1994 HOWARD COUNTY MAY COUNT by Paul A. Zucker

The 1994 Howard County May Count was conducted from 4:30 am until 9:00 pm on May 14. This year was the seventh year the count was held on the second Saturday in May, and May 14 is the latest the second Saturday can occur. There were a total of 68 participants in 41 field parties. This is the largest turnout we have ever had, with an increase in party hours of over 20% compared to the previous record. The species tally of 144 is the median value for the last seven years, but is above average for the last twenty years. Consistent with the large turnout, the total number of birds tallied was 20,386 -- also a record. (The totals for party miles and hours are shown at the end of the tally list.) The weather also cooperated with cold, still air in the morning (around 40 degrees typically) rising to the 70's with mostly sunny skies by afternoon.

There were two new records for the count this year: Virginia Rail and Semipalmated Plover. Other unusual sightings were Mourning Warbler (for the third time since at least 1974) and the Evening Grosbeak (first time in the last seven years). The sightings of Willow Flycatchers and Lincoln's Sparrow are becoming so regular (five years each since 1988) that they really belong on the regular checklist. This year had a record high number of Willow Flycatchers. Amazingly, fifty species had record high counts this year! In most cases this is probably due to the large number of counters and the very late date of the count. Those species with high counts are labeled with an H on the tally sheet. There were low counts for White-throated Sparrow and Eastern Meadowlark. Two occasionally found species were missed: Palm Warbler and Vesper Sparrow.

The participation of the following people is greatly appreciated: Burton Alexander, Maud Banks, Tish Bell, Carol Benfer, Bob and Mary-Jo Betts, Karan Blum, Connie Bockstie, George Chase, Marty Chestem, Randy and Richard Crook, Phil Davis, Lauren Dubb, Ward Ebert, Jane Farrell, Jane and Ralph Gauder, Richard Giannola, Sandy Goolsby, Edwin Gould, Maureen and Dave Harvey, Kevin Heffernan, Jane Heim, Gloria Hicks, John Hoffman, Mike Kerwin, Dave Kirkwood, Anu and Marcia Krishnamoorthy, Dave and Julie Kubitsky, Marge Kupiec, Dennis Luck Bob and Brigitte Lund, Nancy Magnusson, Grazina and Mike McClure, Rosamond Munro, Carol and Paul Newman, Doug Odermatt, Peter Osenton, Bonnie Ott, Joe Picard Susan Probst, Ann Raterman, Frank Reilly, Chan Robbins, Susan Setterberg, Michael Smith, Jo Solem, Hank Stanton, Chuck Stirrat, Zack Stough, Tom Strikwerdt, Eva Sorell, Greg Van Nostrand, Mark Wallace, Carol and Jim Wilkinson, Peggy Willson, Michele Wright, Helen Zeichner, Sherry and Paul Zucker (compiler). Thanks also go to the Randles for hosting another great tally rally.

Common Loon	2	gull species	2	Fish Crow	42	Myrtle Warbler	106
Double-crested Cormorant	4	Rock Dove	388	crow species	215	Blk-thrtd Green Warbler	36
Great Blue Heron	47	Mourning Dove	578 H	Carolina Chickadee	323 H	Blackburnian Warbler	13
Green-backed Heron	31	Black-billed Cuckoo	1	Tufted Titmouse	375 H	Yellow-throated Warbler	2
Black-crowned Night-Heron	2	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	12	White-breasted Nuthatch	58 H	Pine Warbler	10
Mute Swan	3	Eastern Screech-Owl	2	Carolina Wren	128	Prairie Warbler	40
Canada Goose	486 H	Great Horned Owl	8 H	House Wren	146	Bay-breasted Warbler	6
Wood Duck	67 H	Barred Owl	12	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	2	Blackpoll Warbler	86
Mallard	244	Common Nighthawk	30 H	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	247	Cerulean Warbler	6
Black Vulture	23	Chimney Swift	388	Eastern Bluebird	148 H	Black-and-white Warbler	55
Turkey Vulture	137 H	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	26	Veery	82 H	American Redstart	140
Osprey	2	Belted Kingfisher	10	Swainson's Thrush	30 H	Prothonotary Warbler	1
Bald Eagle 1 Adult, 1 immature		Red-bellied Woodpecker	307 H	Wood Thrush	496 H	Worm-eating Warbler	16
Sharp-shinned Hawk	7	Downy Woodpecker	89	American Robin	764	Ovenbird	253 H
Cooper's Hawk	2	Hairy Woodpecker	27 H	Gray Catbird	809 H	Northern Waterthrush	15 H
Red-shouldered Hawk	55 H	Northern Flicker	81	Northern Mockingbird	285 H	Louisiana Waterthrush	29
Broad-winged Hawk	1	Pileated Woodpecker	24 H	Brown Thrasher	32	Kentucky Warbler	62
Red-tailed Hawk	31 H	Eastern Wood-Peevee	158 H	Cedar Waxwing	407 H	*Mourning Warbler	1
American Kestrel	14	Acadian Flycatcher	207 H	European Starling	1554 H	Common Yellowthroat	374 H
Ring-necked Pheasant	5	*Willow Flycatcher	7 H	White-eyed Vireo	186	Hooded Warbler	50
Northern Bobwhite	5	Least Flycatcher	4	Solitary Vireo	5	Wilson's Warbler	5
Virginia Rail	1	Eastern Phoebe	63 H	Yellow-throated Vireo	42 H	Canada Warbler	34 H
Semipalmated Plover	2	Great Crested Flycatcher	64 H	Warbling Vireo	7	Yellow-breasted Chat	53 H
Killdeer	52 H	Eastern Kingbird	171 H	Red-eyed Vireo	628 H	Scarlet Tanager	196 H
Greater Yellowlegs	2	flycatcher species	6	Blue-winged Warbler	16	Northern Cardinal	903 H
Lesser Yellowlegs	2	Purple Martin	46	Tennessee Warbler	4	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	38 H
Solitary Sandpiper	52	Tree Swallow	72	Nashville Warbler	1	Blue Grosbeak	13
Spotted Sandpiper	82	N. Rough-winged Swallow	56	Northern Parula	80	Indigo Bunting	257
Least Sandpiper	34 H	Bank Swallow	40	Yellow Warbler	146	Rufous-sided Towhee	224 H
peep species	1	Cliff Swallow	163 H	Chestnut-sided Warbler	23	Chipping Sparrow	124
Common Snipe	1	Barn Swallow	362	Magnolia Warbler	34 H	Field Sparrow	117
American Woodcock	2	Blue Jay	328	Cape May Warbler	5	Savannah Sparrow	8
Ring-billed Gull	7	American Crow	636 H	Blk-thrtd Blue Warbler	61	Grasshopper Sparrow	36

Song Sparrow	219	Bobolink	117	Orchard Oriole	72 H	House Sparrow	356 H
*Lincoln's Sparrow	8	Red-winged Blackbird	653	Northern Oriole	159 H		
Swamp Sparrow	12	Eastern Meadowlark	11	House Finch	621 H	* write in species	
White-throated Sparrow	10	Common Grackle	876 H	American Goldfinch	515		
White-crowned Sparrow	14	Brown-headed Cowbird	272 H	*Evening Grosbeak	1		

Hours on foot:	<u>245.5</u>	Miles on foot:	<u>180.75</u>	Hours feeder watching:	<u>6.0</u>
Hours by car:	<u>24.0</u>	Miles by car:	<u>320.0</u>	Hours "stationary":	<u>0</u>
Hours by boat:	<u>5.5</u>	Miles by boat:	<u>5.0</u>	Hours Owling:	<u>3.25</u>
Hours by bike:	<u>4.5</u>	Miles by bike:	<u>12.0</u>	Miles Owling:	<u>26.0</u>

## SUMMER BIRD RECORDS: JUN 1-JUL 31, 1994 by Joanne Solem

Each season Howard County bird sightings are compiled and submitted to *Maryland Birdlife* and *American Birds*. Because both publications provide overviews for large areas, only a fraction of Howard County sightings are published. The records are not lost, however, for they are the basis for county records. All records are welcomed and appreciated. Any individual who turns in seasonal sightings receives a copy of the county compilation. To request a form on which to log dates, please call (301) 725-5037. The Board has requested that a digest of the seasonal highlights appear in the newsletter. Observers are referred to by their initials (see the list at the end of the article). Locations are written out the first time cited; thereafter, abbreviations are used.

Summer is normally the least exciting season of the birding year in this county. In some ways this year was no exception, though there were some nice surprises. Prolonged high temperatures kept birding to a minimum while the return of Wilde Lake (WILLK) to its normal level reduced the possibility of sighting unusual shorebirds at that location.

As water levels receded, Brown's Bridge (BRNBR) on Duckett (Rocky Gorge) Reservoir proved to be the place to check on a regular basis. It provided the best species of the season when Marshall Iliff located 2 Stilt Sandpipers on the afternoon of 7/21 after a thunderstorm. The birds stayed the rest of the day but flew south at dusk. Fortunately, many people were alerted quickly to this first county sighting. This area of dense willows, mud flats, and deciduous woods proved to be an attractive collecting area for wading birds: **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons**, 1 ad. 6/13 & 7/10 (JW) and 1 imm. 7/16 (JF,JS), the latter seen again till 7/26 (CB) including field trip participants 7/17; **Black-crowned Night-Heron** 1 ad. 6/13 (JW) plus 1 imm. 7/10 (JW) & 7/22 (RB); 3 **Great Egrets** 7/18 (BO) with a high of 7 on 7/30 (JF,JS) & at least 1 thru 7/31; and an imm. **Little Blue Heron** on 7/21 (CB,BO) which stayed thru July (as many as 3 seen).

The flats brought a variety of shorebirds. A lone **Semipalmated Plover** was located by HM in the late afternoon 7/16. A **Greater Yellowlegs** was noted 7/17 which stayed till 7/23 (JS). **Lesser Yellowlegs** came in 7/16 when 1 appeared (JF,JS); the species stayed thru July with a high of 4 on 7/17 (JS) & 7/22 (RB). WILLK produced a lone **Solitary Sandpiper** 6/13 (CN) (presumably an extremely tardy spring migrant); the next one did not appear till 7/16 at BRNBR (JF,JS) with a high of 15 on 7/26 (JF,JS). A late spring **Spotted Sandpiper** was still on Lake Kittamaquundi 6/6 (BO,JS). The first fall **Spotted** was at WILLK 7/7 (BO); their numbers grew at BRNBR to 12-15 on 7/22 (RB). The first **Semipalmated Sandpiper** of the season showed up at BRNBR 7/27 (BO). A **Least Sandpiper** was seen at the same location 7/17 (BO); the high was 11 on 7/22 (RB). **Pectoral Sandpipers** completed the interesting shorebird list with 2 on 7/17 (BO,JS), 1 on 7/19 (CB) and 1 on 7/26 (JF,JS); 1 was on Fulton Pond (FULPD) 7/30 (JF,JS).

Other sightings of note for this season included a late **Pied-billed Grebe** 6/8 at Centennial Park (CENPK)(JF). NM had 6 (2 ad., 4 imm.) **Double-crested Cormorants** on the north end of Triadelphia Reservoir (TRIRS) 6/18. **Wood Ducks** with young were seen at CENPK & BRNBR. Although the nesting platform on TRIRS had fallen over in late winter & high water did not allow it to be re-erected, 1 (poss. 2) **Ospreys** were seen over the reservoirs during July.

A **King Rail** was found by CB 6/22 at the marsh end of CENPK. It was last heard 7/6 (BO,HS). A **Virginia Rail** was still present 6/4 in the marsh at Plum Tree. A **Sora** was heard about 6/10 at Schooley Mill Park (DS). JW had 4 ad. **Laughing Gulls** 7/24 west of FULPD with a small flock of **Ring-billed**. The only terns of the summer were the 2 **Forster's** 6/6 at CENPK (JS). A **Horned Lark** performing territorial flights was located 6/18 (JW) in a cornfield along Mullinix Road. **Tree Swallows** continue to increase in the county with Mark Wallace reporting record numbers of young fledged in 1994. Single **Bank Swallows** were noted at Lime Kiln Pond (LIMKP) 7/10 (JW) and 7/16 at BRNBR (JF,JS). Besides the usual **Cliff Swallow** colonies at the U.S. 29 bridge over Duckett Res., at Brighton Dam, and under Brown's Bridge, JW had 1 pair 6/18 at U.S. 29 & Johns Hopkins Road, 1-2 on 7/10-12 at U.S. 29 & M. Patuxent River and 3 on 7/10 at LIMKP.

(*Summer Bird Records contd.*) The thrush walk 6/11 on Gwynn Acres Path turned up 12 Wood Thrushes (BO). A Blackpoll Warbler lingered at Lake Elkhorn till 6/5 (JW). Two Black-and-white Warblers were heard on territory along the Patapsco River near Frederick Road 6/3 (BO,JS). The singing male Prothonotary Warbler was last reported 6/3 at Daniels (BO,JS) with no evidence it had a mate this year. Blue Grosbeaks were reported in 4 locations by JW during June & July. In June he had 6 Grasshopper Sparrows at Gateway Business Park while JS had 6 on 7/22 along Triadelphia Road & 4 on 7/30 on Michele Drive. NM had a singing White-throated Sparrow 7/14 east of Ellicott City.

Observers: Rick Blom (RB), Connie Bockstie (CB), Jane Farrell (JF), Nancy Magnusson (NM), Harvey Mudd (HM) Carol Newman (CN), Bonnie Ott (BO), Jo Solem (JS), Hank Stanton (HS), Doug Stinson (DS), Jim Wilkinson (JW).

## CALENDAR OF PROGRAMS AND FIELD TRIPS



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 pm. Meeting/program begins at 8:00 pm. Club bookstore opens at 7:30 pm.

- Nov 10  
Thursday "Other Things that Fly - Dragonflies" - Richard Orr. Dr. Orr is an entomologist at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Although some of us might think of dragonflies only as food for our favorite birds, they have a fascinating life history of their own.
- Dec 8  
Thursday "Gull Identification" - Eirik Blom. Tired of listing all those gulls overhead as gull species? This is a great opportunity to sharpen your skills for identification of some of the larger gulls seen inland in winter.

Field Trips meet as described for each trip. Carpooling is encouraged; riders share the cost of gas and tolls. Dress for the field 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 three participants.~~ Questions? Call the trip leader or Field Trip Chair, Bonnie Ott (410) 461-3361.

- Nov 6, 13  
20, & 27  
Sundays CENTENNIAL PARK NOVEMBER SUNDAY BIRD WALKS - Meet at 8:00 am at west end parking lot. Walks around the lake end about 11 am. The leaders for this year's trips will be Burton Alexander, Marty Chestem and Helen Ziechner, Jane Farrell and Maureen and Dave Harvey. Bird life is ever changing with the seasons at Centennial Park. On the 6th, it is possible to see loons, Tundra Swan, grebes and hawks. On the 13th, we will look for migrating waterfowl and woodland birds will be on the move. On the 20th, it is possible to see Horned Grebe, plus gulls and sparrows. By the end of the month, on the 27th, we will be looking for late migrant hawks, gulls, and more waterfowl. Call Bonnie for more information. *Centennial Park walks are co-sponsored with Howard County Recreation and Parks.*
- Nov 8  
Tuesday WEEKDAY WALK AT LAKE ELKHORN - 8:30 am. Meet at lot off Broken Land Parkway. Possible Rusty Blackbirds, Swamp Sparrow, and migrant waterfowl. Leader: Bonnie Ott.
- Nov 12  
Saturday BEGINNERS WALK AT WILDE LAKE - 9:00 am. Meet at boat dock. Bufflehead, Canvasback, and woodland birds. Leaders: Mike and Grazina McClure.
- Nov 23  
Wednesday WEEKDAY WALK AT WILDE LAKE - 8:30 am. Meet at boat dock. Migrant waterfowl, woodland birds. Leader: Bonnie Ott.
- Dec 17  
Saturday TRIADELPHIA CHRISTMAS COUNT - 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 or (202) 606-5723. A small fee is charged which helps defray the cost of publication of the results.

*Next Board Meeting:* Thursday, November 17, 1992, 7:30 pm at Longfellow Elementary School. There will be no board meeting in December.

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1995 NEWSLETTER MATERIAL is due December 1, 1994. Call or mail to Susan Setterberg, 9445 Clocktower Lane, Columbia, MD 21046; (301)498-4734. Anyone is welcome to contribute articles or ideas which you think will be of interest to other birders.

## BIRD CLUB DISPLAY AT HOWARD COUNTY FAIR

The Howard County Bird Club had a display in the vegetable barn at the Howard County Fair during the week of August 13-20. Tom Strikwerda was responsible for making arrangements; Mike McClure and Jo Solem set up the display.

Thanks to the following individuals who worked the booth: Ralph & Jane Geuder, Marty Chestem, Peggy Willson, Maud & Harry Banks, Martha & Don Waugh, Tom Strikwerda, Kim & Michael Gross, Jane Farrell, Shiras Guion, and Dave & Maureen Harvey.

In addition to the club's trifold displays, a box of fishing line, hooks, and other fishing materials was displayed. These items, potentially lethal to birds, had been picked up by Bird Club members along the shores of local reservoirs and lakes during the past year. If you collect materials of this type bring them to a meeting and we will add them to the display.



## ACCESS TO PATUXENT WILDLIFE RESEARCH CENTER

The north tract of the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center is now open daily (except major holidays) to visitors for fishing, wildlife viewing, bird watching, hiking, bicycling, hunting, photography and jogging. This area was transferred from the Department of Defense to the Department of Interior in October 1991 as part of the Base Realignment and Closures Act. The act stipulated continued use of the firing ranges by law enforcement agencies and notification to visitors of the presence of munitions.

Visitors must check in at the Visitor Contact Station on Bald Eagle Drive (on Rte. 198, one mile east of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway). Visitors receive information on what areas are available for public use and sign a form indicating they have been informed of munitions on the property.

The center also offers a lecture series, guided bird and nature walks throughout the year, and special events. Call (410) 674-3304 for event information.

## BIRDING AT PEA ISLAND

by Burton Alexander

If you haven't birded the Outer Banks of North Carolina, you should plan to visit. If you have, you know the best birding is at Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge. This refuge is on Hatteras Island south of Nags Head. From a parking lot on the coastal highway (NC 12), a path extends across the barrier island, passing between wide expanses of shallow brackish water. The main path features two large wooden observation platforms and leads to trails that allow birders to walk around the largest lake. Other habitat includes mud flats, marshes and shrubby areas with scattered small trees.

The refuge is great (in the proper seasons) for seeing waders, shorebirds, gulls, terns, geese and ducks. I have only visited in the summer, but each time I was able to see at least six species of the heron family from one observation stand. During my visit this July, my son and I found a Tri-colored Heron, and a few each of Little Blue Heron, Great Egret and Snowy Egret. In much greater numbers were the Ibises - some Glossy, but mostly White. Flocks of White Ibis shone brilliantly in the morning sun even when hundreds of yards away. Some flocks of White Ibis were feeding in an inch or two of water while others were flying around providing a better view of their black wing tips, red legs, and long red curved bills.

Keeping with the black, white and red scheme, Black Skimmers scratched the surface of the water near the platform while a few oystercatchers stood conspicuously among the more ordinary shorebirds on a strip of mud. A black-necked Stilt flew across the path in front of us, its long, red legs trailing behind. There were a variety of other smaller shorebirds, but they were hard to observe because the wind kept shaking my telescope. The wind, however, minimized the only negative aspect of birding there - plenty of aggressive insects. Be prepared for them.

On the beach side of the barrier island, small flocks of Brown Pelicans, usually in single file, fly along the beach or fly just above the water, sometimes hidden by a wave. Individuals will fly low, then rise about ten to twenty feet and dive into the water for a fish. A variety of gulls and terns are usually present, the Laughing Gull being by far the most abundant. Often an Osprey can be seen above. Walking the beach in this area uninhabited by people, you may find a Whimbrel or other shorebirds to add to a good list for your visit to Pea Island.

**CONSERVATION REPORT**  
by Bob Solem

**PART-TIME, NATURE**

**INTERPRETATION POSITIONS  
AVAILABLE**

Congress has gone home for the season; they have to campaign for the election. They left some important conservation legislation undone. All of these should have been reauthorized and strengthened this year:

- Endangered Species Act
- Clean Water Act
- Safe Drinking Water Act
- Superfund

Congress didn't do it. We will have to tell them to do better next year. THAT'S A PROMISE!

**THANK YOU** - To Bob Bogdan for donating a December 1987 copy of *Maryland Birdlife* to the club. That issue was missing from the chapter's collection.

The Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks is currently seeking qualified individuals to lead parent/child and family nature and science programs at county parks. Programs are primarily scheduled on weekends and weekday mornings and during the summer.

Applicants should have experience leading nature programs with children, knowledge of natural and physical science, be an enthusiastic leader, and communicate well with the public. Hours are flexible. For more information, call Bill Eckert at (410) 313-7254.



Printed by Croatoan Publishing, Inc. © 1994 Recycled Paper

**HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB**

CHAPTER OF THE MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
6007 FLYWHEEL COURT  
COLUMBIA, MD 21044

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Columbia, MD.  
Permit No. 452



- ◆ MAY COUNT RESULTS
- ◆ FIRST ANNUAL FALL COUNT RESULTS
- ◆ SUMMER BIRD RECORDS

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED