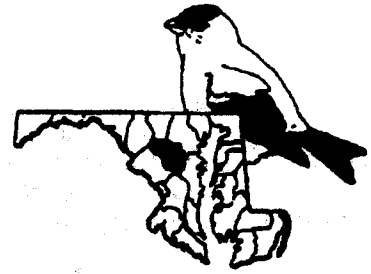




Howard

*A Chapter of the
Maryland Ornithological Society*



January-February 1995, Volume 23, No 3

TOP BIRD CHOICES FOR DESERTED ISLAND LIVING by Dave Harvey

We were asked to name ten species of birds that we would want to have around if we were stranded on a deserted island. First, it was very obvious that none of us wants to be stranded on a deserted island and, second, none of us want to be restricted to only ten species of birds. Answers ranged from the survivalist who asked for two of the oriental trained fishing-cormorants, a rooster and seven hens to the person who insisted on at least four Flamingos to the person who picked five different types of sparrow. Most people, however, did manage to vary their choices to come up with a nice variety of birds to please all our senses. The most popular bird families were thrush, raptor, sparrow and warbler. The particular species that we, as the Howard County Bird club would want to live with, thanks to our democratic voting system, turned out to be:

Eastern Bluebird - not much of a surprise here.
Carolina Chickadee - a common friend.
Belted Kingfisher - a mild surprise.
Rufous-sided Towhee - another mild surprise.
Wood Thrush - for the soothing music, I'm sure.
Common Loon - the symbol of loneliness, of course.
American Swallow-tailed Kite - a major surprise for this non-county bird.
Mountain Bluebird - another outsider, but Oh My, what a beauty.
Northern Cardinal - a close friend that few of us could do without.
Baltimore Oriole - but of course!
American Goldfinch - who would ever have guessed?

That is what we would learn to live with but nobody who voted picked any of the following:

Great Blue Heron - how could this be?
American Robin - life without this guy is hard to imagine.
Rose-breasted Grosbeak - ten is a very small number.
House Finch - Oh well, the silver lining of being stranded, maybe.

By comparison, the bird club of Orillia, Ontario, Canada had the following experience with this exercise. "Although the Loon is our provincial ornithological emblem, the (Black-capped) Chickadee came in as the most popular bird - our little friend, who never leaves us in the winter, always cheery, who might even feed from your hand." Their 15 favorite, including the Black-capped Chickadee, were: Common Loon, Northern Cardinal, Great Blue Heron, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, American Goldfinch, Tree Swallow, Hermit Thrust, Ruffed Grouse, Great Horned Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Whip-poor-will, Red-headed Woodpecker, Blue Jay and White-throated Sparrow.

Thank you all for some real fun answers. I hope you enjoyed your quest to find ten species as much as I enjoyed reading about your birds and your reasons.

DELMARVA BIRDING FESTIVAL, A Watchable Wildlife Weekend

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources is sponsoring, along with the Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art and others, a wildlife weekend on Maryland's Eastern Shore, May 5-7, 1995. Programs in planning include: visit with pelicans, night out with owls, bats & frogs, search for the endangered black rail, birding for migratory warblers, stalking migrating shorebirds, decoy painting for children, canoe trips and more. If this sounds fun to you, you can get more information by calling Edith Thompson at the Maryland Wildlife Division at 410-974-3195, or writing to MD Dept. of Natural Resources, Wildlife Division, Taxes State Office Bldg, E-1, Annapolis, MD 21401-9914. Ask about the Delmarva Birding Weekend.

Autumn Bird Records: Aug 1-Nov 30, 1994 by Joanne Solem

Each season Howard County bird sightings are compiled and submitted to Maryland Birdlife and Field Notes. 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.

Autumn is the longest season in the birding year and often the most unpredictable which makes it interesting. It is an unusual autumn that does not bring at least one rare or elusive species to the county. This year was no exception.

Great Egrets and **Little Blue Herons** were cooperative during much of August at Brown's Bridge (BRNBR). One **Great Egret** made a brief appearance 11/27 at Centennial Park (CENPK) for the latest ever county record (MJB,E&JM). Three **Glossy Ibises** flying over CENPK the afternoon of 11/25 were the first fall record and extremely late for the Piedmont (BO). A blue phase **Snow Goose** was spotted with **Canadas** at Lime Kiln Pond (JF, JS). No loons were reported. Duck numbers were low despite improved breeding conditions in the Midwest. Perhaps mild weather has retarded their migration. The 60 **Hooded Mergansers** seen 11/11 (MW) at a pond on Jennings Chapel Road (JNGCH) matched the number that observer reported at the same location 12/9/93!

An **Osprey** lingered on Triadelphia Reservoir (TRIRS) until 11/27 (JF,JS). The pair of adult **Bald Eagles** on TRIRS repaired their storm-damaged nest and could be seen all season by patient observers. Ott was again host to a **Merlin** 8/30-11/5. It perched in the tops of dead trees near her home. She also observed a **Rough-legged Hawk** 11/25 near the intersection of US 29 & Md. 100. Although we have come to expect **Broad-winged Hawk** flights over the county in mid-September, Earp caught 101 **Red-tailed** and five **Red-shouldered Hawks** 11/11 in about three hours of watching between 10-4 at his Sanner Road home.

The only rail reported was a **Sora** at a pond at Gateway Business Park 9/17 (DS). With the low water at Wilde Lake in late summer and early fall, moist mud flats appeared inviting. The best shorebirds were a **Sanderling** 9/11 (DOD, m.obs.) and a **Short-billed Dowitcher** 10/3 (MK, m.obs.)

Four **Laughing Gulls** at CENPK 8/3 marked the species' seasonal arrival. A single **Bonaparte's Gull** was found loafing at TRIRS 11/24 (JF,JS). A steady rain produced an adult **Glaucous Gull** and an adult **Lesser Black-backed** in a flock of 225 mostly **Herring Gulls** at TRIRS 11/27 (JF,JS). A lone **Black Tern** at Lake Elkhorn 8/29 (JW) was the only one seen in 1994. **Caspians** were few and no **Forster's** were reported.

The single best date for **Common Nighthawk** migration here appeared to be 9/10 with four reports (G&MC; BO,JS; C&PN; S&PP). Phil & Sue Probst had the most exciting experience as an estimated 150 birds filled the sky at CENPK in the late afternoon. Adult **Red-headed Woodpeckers** appeared twice at Ott's (9/14 & 9/24). The second bird was seen by Osenton while waiting for the **Merlin**. **Flycatchers** were well represented with a high of three **Least**s at BNBBR 8/23 (RB,JF). Two **Yellow-bellied**s at separate locations were seen 9/15 (HS; BO) and another two were reported 9/17 (JW; JF,JS). **Olive-sided Flycatchers** were detected in the same few days with one at CENPK 9/15 (JF) and 9/18 (POs) and three on Fall Count 9/17 (2 at Rockburn Branch Park [RKBRP], BO). No major **Blue Jay** flights were observed this fall.

Gray-cheeked Thrushes were seen 9/17-10/15. Henryton proved a reliable place to look for all thrush species. Oct. 4 produced two **Gray-cheeks** and 12 **Swainson's** (BO,JS,HZ). Geuder reported a lingering **Brown Thrasher** from RKBRP 11/3.

Philadelphia Vireo sightings were concentrated in two days. Ott had one at CENPK 9/16 and six were reported on Fall Count 9/17. Warbler numbers were generally low although Ott hit an excellent morning on the wood chip trail at RKBRP which netted 16 **American Redstarts** and 19 **Magnolias** among others. She had an **Orange-crowned** at the same location 10/5. Connecticut reports were higher than usual with two on Fall Count 9/17, one 9/11 (JK), and one 9/18 (JF,JS). **Yellow-rumped Warblers** arrived in early October: 10/7 at Lake Kittamaquidi (HZ) and 10/8 on Hallmark Road (WET). On 10/16 Plum Tree was alive with this species--150 may be too low an estimate (JF,BO,JS). The only **Summer Tanager** reported this season was 9/17 at RKBRP (BO).

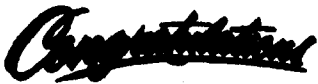
Autumn, especially October, produces sparrows in profusion. **Vespers**, however, were in short

supply. Wallace had three 9/17 at JNGCH, and one was located at the U of Md farm 10/28 (BO,JS). Lincoln's are becoming a county specialty proving that they are probably overlooked by most observers. Nine people found Lincoln's on 14 days in Oct. at 10 locations. The high was five at Mt. Pleasant (MTPLT) 10/7 (BO,JS). This area was also excellent for White-crowns during Oct. & Nov. with 30-60 birds present, many of them singing. The sparrow of the season was a Clay-colored 10/8 at Schooley Mill Park (BO,JS). It was relocated 10/9 (BO,DH,CS,HZ) and 10/10 (POs).

Rusty Blackbirds were scarce as were winter finches. Ott had one Purple Finch 10/5 at RKBRP and Farrell had two Pine Siskins 11/9 at (CENPK).

The summary for the first annual Fall Count appeared in the previous newsletter. The Clay-colored Sparrow sighting has been submitted to the MD/DC Records Committee.

Autumn observers cited above: Robert Behrstock (RB), Mary Jo Betts (MJB), Wesley Earp (WEp), Ward Ebert (WEt), Jane Farrell (JF), Ralph Gauder (RG), Mike Kerwin (MK), Grazina & Mike McClure (GM/Mc), Elyse & Jeff Metter (EM/JM), Carol & Paul Newman (CPN), Doug Odermatt (DOD), Peter Osenton (POs), Bonnie Ott (BO), Suzanne & Phil Probst (S&PP), Jo Solem (JS), Doug Stinson (DS), Mark Wallace (MW), Jim Wilkinson (JW), Helen Zeichner (HZ), many observers (m.obs.).



Club member, Connie Bockstie had an article published in the December/November 1994 issue of *Birdwatcher's Digest*. The article is reprinted here with permission of the BWD Editor, Bill Thompson.

You Can Always Get What You Want

Hope springs eternal in the heart of every birder, and so I posted my Christmas wish list on the fridge: **What Mom Really Wants For Christmas This Year**. In bold, underlined, and hopeful words I wrote: 1. Hip-high Wading Boots, for railing. 2. Starling-Proof Suet Holder. 3. Set of silk Long Johns. My kids read the wish list, and they smiled.

On Christmas morning, as eager as a ten-year-old, I ripped the wrapping paper off my gifts only to find: 1. a pink cashmere sweater; 2. perfume; 3. a silk teddy!!!

There is always Easter, I reasoned. When that day approached, I not only wrote my wish list and posted it on the fridge, I also read it to my family. After all, though college graduates all, maybe they had misunderstood. You hear about things like that. Enunciating as clearly as I could, I led them to the fridge and read the following: 1. Carrying Strap for my tripod. 2. Owl Tapes. 3. New Eye-Cups for my binoculars. They listened to the list, and they smiled.

The Easter bunny left me: 1. an orchid corsage; 2. perfume; 3. a large basket of flowers.

Well, as it would happen, my birthday came up next. Not one to give up easily, I made a plan. I not only wrote down my wish list and posted it on the fridge, I also used visual aids. Borrowing a Supersonic Ear from a friend, I led them all outside, where I demonstrated to each the apparent advantage of owning such a listening device. I also demonstrated the need for a new pair of hiking shoes by sticking three fingers through the toe of one old shoe and flapping the loose sole of the other wildly in the air. And last, I showed them the ad for computer software on which, with the flick of a finger, I could update my local and regional life lists. To reinforce this demonstration I again posted a list: 1. Supersonic Ear. 2. Hiking shoes. 3. Computer Software. They watched the demos, read the list and they smiled.

After blowing out my 61 candles, I opened: 1. a cookbook and wok; 2. perfume (is there a message here?); 3. a pair of gold earrings.

When Mother's Day came, I really wanted a Daisy BB rifle with hairline spotting scope just to scare away the starlings that keep evicting flickers from my nesting boxes and the squirrels that keep chewing up my feeders.

I didn't post this information on the fridge. I didn't read anything to them. I didn't even demonstrate what a crack shot I am (and I am!). I simply marched to the store and bought the rifle myself. *And I smiled.* -- Connie Bockstie, Ellicott City, Maryland.

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.



- Jan 12
Thursday "Birds of Brazil" - Dave Harvey. Dave will present a slide show featuring photos taken on his most recent trip to Brazil. Bring your binoculars to view the screen for those harder to see, more distant species. (It really does work!)
- Feb 9
Thursday "Gone Birding" - Phil Davis. Phil will present his program called "Gone Birding." Bring binoculars and a pencil or pen to record your sightings. This is a great game for birders at all levels of experience; and, unlike most winter birding, will be done in the comparative warmth of the school auditorium.

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 footgear & layers of clothes. Trips do not always follow paths. NO pets. *Leaders may cancel due to inclement weather or fewer than three participants.*

- Jan 21
Saturday OCEAN CITY DAY - Join this all day excursion to Ocean City led by Dave Kubitsky. Possibilities for birds are Purple Sandpiper, gannets, diving ducks, and much, much more. Bring your lunch and drinks, and dress warmly. Call Bonnie Ott at 410-461-3361 to reserve a spot and make arrangements for carpools. The group will leave at 7 am.
- Jan 28
Saturday WINTER SEED SALE - Details and order forms will come to you in a separate mailing.
- Feb 4/11
Saturday ~~MIDWINTER COUNT~~ - Count in the field or at your feeder. New or inexperienced birders can request assignment with a more experienced companion. Field counters are invited to attend the evening tally and meal. To volunteer for the count and get further details, call Jo Solem at 301-725-5037.
*Postponed
to Feb 11*
- Feb 11/18
Saturday ~~GULLS AT ALPHA RIDGE LANDFILL~~ - Leaders Jane Farrell & Nancy Magnusson will take us to the landfill to see Lesser Black-backed Gull (likely) and we're hoping for white-winged gulls among others. We are limited to 16 people who can go into the landfill, so call Bonnie Ott at 410-461-3361 to reserve a place. We will meet at 108/29 park & ride at 10 am. It could be very muddy depending on the weather so be prepared and dress very warmly.
*(cancelled)
postponed*

Next Board Meetings: Thursdays, January 26 and February 23, 1995, 7:30 pm at Longfellow Elementary School.

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

DESPERATELY SEEKING NEWSLETTER EDITOR; Susan is leaving town.

Have you wanted to try out your skills on that new computer? Want to get better acquainted with more members of the bird club? Do you have some hidden creativity you are dying to express in a socially acceptable way? Have we got an opportunity for you. Editor Susan Setterberg is leaving Howard County for a new job opportunity north of here (Philadelphia), so, we need a new editor. This is really a fun job. Most of the newsletter is already set up on WordPerfect 5.1. Graphics are available and many of the submitted articles come to the editor on disc ready to be incorporated. Time commitment is probably about 10-15 hours every two months, depending on the length of the issue (five each year). The next newsletter will need to be edited the first of February. Susan will be available for a short period of time to help get the next person going. If you are interested, call Susan at 301-498-4734 or Club President Dave Harvey at 410-795-3117.

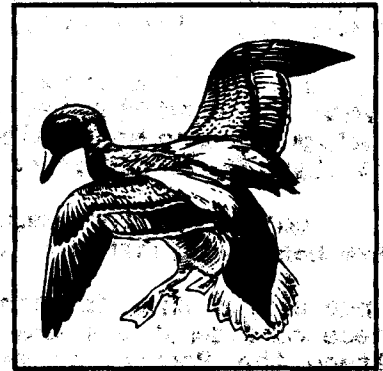
ANNUAL POTLUCK DINNER FEBRUARY 25, 1995

The annual potluck dinner will be at the Florence Bain Senior Center on Saturday, February 25, 1995. Club members and their guests are invited to share the fun, food, and program. Bring a salad, main dish, vegetable, or a dessert. The club furnishes beverages, social hour snacks, rolls, and eating utensils. You MUST reserve in advance so we can arrange for the proper number of beverages, etc. Sign up at the January or February meetings or call Grazina McClure at (410) 351-2780 or Monika Botsai at (410) 465-5758. They will need to know the number in your party and what food you are bringing. Can't cook? No problem, adjustments can be made. If you wish to be part of the slide program, bring a dozen nature slides. (If you want to bring more, they will be shown if time allows.) Social hour starts at 6:30 pm and dinner at 7:00 pm. Mark dishes and any accompanying serving implements with your name so we can get them back to the right person. Let the organizers know if you can come early to help set up. **PLEASE RESERVE BY MONDAY, FEBRUARY 20!**

Directions: The Florence Bain Senior Center is located on the west side of Columbia at 5470 Beaverkill Road, off Harper's Farm Road, one block east of Cedar Lane behind the shopping center. There is ample parking.

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL FALL SEED SALE -

We want to thank the many volunteers who make this event so successful. Making it all possible, of course, by orchestrating everything, was Eileen Clegg. This year's loaders included: Connie Bockstie, Bill Blum, Jack Cameron, John & Andrew Clegg, Mike Courbron, Jane Farrell, Don Kyle, Dave Kubitsky, Mark Marden, Susan Setterberg, Bob Solem, Chuck Stirrat, Tom Strikwerda, Don Trovinger, Mark Wallace, Wick, and Jim Wilson. Providing information was Jo Solem, while at the desk was Karan Blum, Ralph Geuder, Connie Mace, Norma Petersen, and Helen Zeichner. Cakes were provided by Anne Marie Raterman and Eileen Clegg and the bookstore was staffed by Mary Lou Clark, Michele Wright and Helen Zeichner.



MOS SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE -

The Maryland Ornithological Society annually awards ecology and ornithology tuition scholarships to Audubon camps. Last year, Howard County Chapter had two participating members, Michele Wright and Penny Gow Zimring. Penny, a teacher at Dunloggin Middle School, submitted the following account of her experience.

The Audubon Ecology Camp of the West - As the sun rises on the Torrey Valley, a female Osprey and young watch from their nest on high while the male swoops into the river below to catch fish for them. The longhorn rams camouflage themselves along the rock cliffs where petroglyphs expose stories from the past. Indian paintbrush provides a striking color contrast to the lush green wetlands of Torrey Creek, home to species such as the Sandhill Crane who preen their feathers with mud scooped from the river's bottom. The breast of the Rufous Hummingbird glows neon orange in the sunlight as he defends his territory, a feeder in the middle of the camp. As the sunset gives way to a glowing array of stars, each of us reflects on the memories of the day that has passed and the magic of the Torrey Valley of Wyoming, site of the Audubon Ecology Camp of the West.

Although this valley is now snow covered, the summer memories of my experience there linger. Mornings spent birding in the valley or afternoon hikes to an outdoor classroom where lessons focused on bighorn sheep, mountain ecology, local folklore, wetland biology, or geology. Evenings enjoyed among new friends, sharing environmental activism stories, discussing the Endangered Species Act, or just enjoying the panoramic view of a star lit night. In this magical setting, I experienced an educational and spiritual awakening. My goal is to share the magic with my students, as we explore the ecology of the stream and wetland adjacent to our school. -- Penny Gow Zimring.

If you are interested in having a similar experience and want to apply for one of these opportunities, call Eileen Clegg at (410) 730-4362 for more information. Applications are due January 31, 1995, to the Maryland Ornithological Society.

