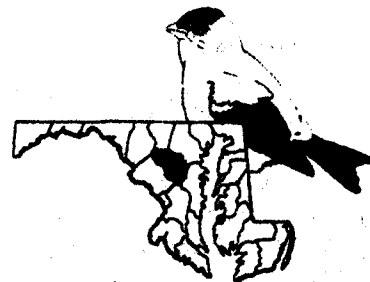




Vol 14, No 5
Special Edition

Howard

A Chapter of the
Maryland Ornithological Society



HOWARD COUNTY: THE LAND OF CONSISTENT BIRDING - DAVID HOLMES

Howard County, for birding, the land of glorious consistency! In this, the seventh year we have compiled an annual list, our total of 205 species fits perfectly within the normal and narrow span of our previous lists. Our low total is 201 and our high is 212. And 178 of these birds have been reported in each of the 7 years while an additional 7 have been missed only once. That leaves us with exactly 20 "bonus birds"-- or does it? How would you describe a bonus bird?

Let's try a couple of different ideas. A bonus bird could be one which doesn't appear often within the county. We have 16 species on this year's list which have been recorded in 9 or fewer years out of the 30 years on which we have based our county checklist. Or, is a bonus bird one which appears only in small numbers? If you are wondering why you never see some of the birds on our annual lists, it could be because they are on that list either as single reports or as single individuals. This year, we have 23 species which fit that category. But, 6 of them have been on every annual list since we have been printing them: Oldsquaw, Whip-poor-will, Red-headed Woodpecker, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Blackburnian and Wilson's Warblers; and the Whip-poor-will and Blackburnian Warbler have been reported in all 30 years for which we have serious records. Is Blackburnian Warbler really a bonus bird? And then what do we do with the 29 Bonaparte's Gulls which appeared in 1985 as a single sighting early one April morning on Lake Elkhorn, lifted off by 8:30 a.m., and were never seen again? Should 29 individuals really count as a bonus bird? Actually, I suspect the proper definition of "bonus bird" for each of you is "any bird I haven't seen before." Did you have any this year?

The Howard County Checklist did! We added White-fronted Goose, Limpkin, and Lesser Golden Plover. The geese were seen well by Mark Wallace and poorly by Marty Chestem. Did anyone who tried actually miss the Limpkin? Such a wonderful bird--and such a crazy location! The plovers? They were just a matter of time. They go through central Maryland in small numbers every year. We and they just had to meet. Notice that all of these birds are associated more or less with water. Bit by bit we are filling in holes in spite of our limited variety of wetland habitat. The two species which appeared for only the second time, Iceland Gull and Yellow-headed Blackbird, nest near water but can winter anywhere (keep that bountiful garbage flowing!) It was hoped that this year the Atlas field work would provide the list with something interesting, but all the interesting Atlas birds were seen in the county at other times as well.

So, we saw some nifty birds. Did we miss any we should have seen? YES! Black-billed Cuckoo. The books do say they are sneaky but this is ridiculous. This was the first year in 30 in which they were not reported. We also missed Double-crested Cormorant (not exactly a surprise) and Mourning Warbler for the first time in our 7 years of annual lists. Mourning Warblers are difficult, but doesn't anyone beat the bushes in late May? Other birds which should appear on our list in greater numbers are Gray-cheeked Thrush and Wilson's Warbler--again these tend to be late migrants. Does everyone stop birding by the 20th of May? I would want written details on the Mourning and the thrush. They are tough to identify and try very hard to stay out of decent light. Do check with Jo Solem regarding the need for details on any unusual sightings.

Two additional species, Sora and Upland Sandpiper, have been reported for 1984 since the publication of that year's list. The 1984 species total is now 211.

Once again, thanks very much to John Blaisdell, Marty Chestem, George Dency, Jane Farrell, Alice Grant, David Pardoe, Jo Solem and Mark Wallace for sending in lists. Enormous thanks go to Jo Solem for collecting and compiling the season reports and supporting details, and for putting them in such easy form to work with. She makes this article possible.

And 1986? Pretty usual so far. Would anyone care to submit a list in advance-- of this year's bonus birds? Do that and then you will just have to get out in the field enough to be sure you see them. Have a good time doing it!

Common Loon	Limpkin	Barn Swallow	Blackpoll Warbler
Pied-billed Grebe	Lesser Golden Plover	Blue Jay	Cerulean Warbler
Horned Grebe	Seapalated Plover	American Crow	Black-b-white Warbler
American Bittern	Killdeer	Fish Crow	American Redstart
Great Blue Heron	Greater Yellowlegs	Black-capped Chickadee	Prothonotary Warbler
Great Egret	Lesser Yellowlegs	Carolina Chickadee	Mora-eating Warbler
Snowy Egret	Solitary Sandpiper	Tufted Titmouse	Ovenbird
Little Blue Heron	Spotted Sandpiper	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Northern Waterthrush
Cattle Egret	Upland Sandpiper	White-breasted Nuthatch	Louisiana Waterthrush
Green-backed Heron	Seapalated Sandpiper	Brown Creeper	Kentucky Warbler
Black-crowned Night-Heron	Least Sandpiper	Carolina Wren	Common Yellowthroat
Tundra Swan	Pectoral Sandpiper	House Wren	Hooded Warbler
Greater White-fronted Goose	Common Snipe	Winter Wren	Wilson's Warbler
Snow Goose	American Woodcock	Golden-crowned Kinglet	Canada Warbler
Canada Goose	Laughing Gull	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Yellow-breasted Chat
Wood Duck	Bonaparte's Gull	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Summer Tanager
Green-winged Teal	Ring-billed Gull	Eastern Bluebird	Scarlet Sparrow
American Black Duck	Herring Gull	Veery	Northern Cardinal
Mallard	Iceland Gull	Gray-cheeked Thrush	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Northern Pintail	Great Black-backed Gull	Swainson's Thrush	Blue Grosbeak
Blue-winged Teal	Rock Dove	Hermit Thrush	Indigo Bunting
Northern Shoveller	Mourning Dove	Wood Thrush	Rufous-sided Towhee
Godwall	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	American Robin	American Tree Sparrow
American Nigeon	Eastern Screech Owl	Gray Catbird	Chipping Sparrow
Canvasback	Great Horned Owl	Northern Mockingbird	Field Sparrow
Redhead	Barred Owl	Brown Thrasher	Vesper Sparrow
Ring-necked Duck	Short-eared Owl	Water Pipit	Savannah Sparrow
Lesser Scaup	Common Nighthawk	Cedar Waxwing	Grasshopper Sparrow
Oldsquaw	Whip-poor-will	European Starling	Fox Sparrow
Common Goldeneye	Chimney Swift	White-eyed Vireo	Song Sparrow
Bufflehead	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	Solitary Vireo	Swamp Sparrow
Hooded Merganser	Belted Kingfisher	Yellow-throated Vireo	White-throated Sparrow
Common Merganser	Red-headed Woodpecker	Warbling Vireo	White-crowned Sparrow
Red-breasted Merganser	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Red-eyed Vireo	Dark-eyed Junco
Ruddy Duck	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Blue-winged Warbler	Bobolink
Black Vulture	Downy Woodpecker	Golden-winged Warbler	Red-winged Blackbird
Turkey Vulture	Hairy Woodpecker	Tennessee Warbler	Eastern Meadowlark
Osprey	Northern Flicker	Nashville Warbler	Yellow-headed Blackbird
Bald Eagle	Pileated Woodpecker	Northern Parula	Rusty Blackbird
Northern Harrier	Eastern Wood-Pewee	Yellow Warbler	Common Grackle
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Acadian Flycatcher	Chestnut-sided Warbler	Brown-headed Cowbird
Cooper's Hawk	Willow Flycatcher	Magnolia Warbler	Orchard Oriole
Red-shouldered Hawk	Least Flycatcher	Cape May Warbler	Baltimore Oriole
Broad-winged Hawk	Eastern Phoebe	Black-throated Blue Warbler	Purple Finch
Red-tailed Hawk	Great Crested Flycatcher	Yellow-rumped Warbler	House Finch
Rough-legged Hawk	Eastern Kingbird	Black-throated Green Warbler	Pine Siskin
American Kestrel	Horned Lark	Blackburnian Warbler	American Goldfinch
Merlin	Purple Martin	Yellow-throated Warbler	Evening Grosbeak
Peregrine Falcon	Tree Swallow	Pine Warbler	House Sparrow
Northern Bobwhite	N. Rough-winged Swallow	Prairie Warbler	
Ring-necked Pheasant	Bank Swallow	Palm Warbler	
American Coot	Cliff Swallow	Bay-breasted Warbler	

MAY COUNT IS SATURDAY, MAY 3, 1986 - PAUL ZUCKER

Every year since 1948 members and friends of the Maryland Ornithological Society have conducted an annual May count. No other state can equal this record of spring migration counts taken on a single day each year. The results of this group effort are compiled and published in Maryland Birdlife.

All members of the Howard County Chapter and interested friends are invited to participate. This is an excellent opportunity to get to know other chapter members at the optional tally rally at the end of the day. Inexperienced birders are encouraged to participate; the compiler will try to team them with more experienced birders. (Personally, I have learned an immense amount about birding from going out on counts like this in a small group with more experienced colleagues.) Participation is also sought from people who will watch their feeders. It is not necessary to spend the entire day counting (although many people do)--part-day participation is also encouraged.

The compiler for the Howard County May Count is

Paul A. Zucker
112 Finale Terrace
Silver Spring, MD 20901
Telephone 681-9005

The areas to be birded and the groupings of observers into parties will be assigned by the compiler although, whenever possible, requests will be honored. There are many parts of the county which are yet to be covered. It is necessary for all participants (including feeder watchers) to contact the compiler during the two weeks prior to the count or at the April chapter meeting.

The county has been divided into 18 regions; a team leader will be assigned for each region. Each leader is responsible for combining all the field notes from that region into one clean, final tally sheet. This tally sheet MUST be turned in to the compiler at the tally rally. This final tally should be neat (no extraneous marks), legible, and on the official form which is enclosed (extras available at rally). The leaders are also responsible for tallying start time and miles, stop time and miles, party-hours by car and by foot, party-miles by car and by foot (and by other means), and the names and addresses of all the participants on the team. (Time out for lunch and time out of the assigned area must be subtracted off the totals.) In addition, the team leaders are responsible for obtaining the write-ups of all unusual sightings for their regions.

Occasionally, people who are birding in Howard County on May Count day, but who are not Count participants, wish to submit observations to the compiler. Such records are welcome but can only be used in those cases when no one else has seen the species in question (otherwise there may be double counting). Such less common species are generally "unusual sightings" as described below which require written documentation.

SOME GENERAL HINTS

It is necessary to keep track of party-hours and party-miles separately for time spent in the car, on foot, or with other means of transportation. Observers within talking or shouting distance of each other are one party. Thus, if a party of three people spends an hour together on foot, then one party-hour should be notated. If, however, one party member is separated from the others for half of that hour, then a total of one and a half party-hours should be tallied. I find it easiest to keep track of the hours spent on foot by making a notation to the nearest quarter-hour each time I get back into the car.

Count all birds. Large flocks can be estimated (don't be timid--most people underestimate). Although undue effort should not be spent chasing after common birds, it is important to count all birds seen. Don't ignore House Sparrows and European Starlings.

For keeping notes in the field, I like to use a notebook. Final totals, times and miles are then transcribed to the tally sheet which is enclosed. When I see a few birds of a species, I record them using hash marks (#). When I see a large flock, I write the total number and then circle it. It is a good idea to have extra paper along for making notes about unusual sightings. If something unusual is seen, it is useful to make the appropriate notes on the spot. (See the section below entitled UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS for procedures and species to be documented.)

If you see birds outside of your assigned area, please make notes on a separate sheet of paper. This information should not be added to your tally but should be given to the person responsible for the area where the birds were seen. If your total for that species in their region is higher than theirs, they can use your total instead. Only if you are both sure that you counted different individual birds can your total be added to theirs.

UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS

All unusual sightings need to be documented. Such documentation should include name of person making the identification, names of all others who saw the bird, when and where the bird was seen, how far away the bird was (approximately), what the lighting conditions were, what the bird was doing and how long it was observed, what field marks and coloration were observed, any other information pertaining to the decision of the species of the bird in question.

The following species are unusual for Howard County May Counts and need to be documented. First, all species not on the official check list (enclosed in this mailing) are considered unusual. Second, all of the following species which have been seen on four or fewer of the last 12 Howard County May Counts are considered unusual and should be documented: Pied-billed Grebe, Horned Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, Cattle Egret, Black or Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Glossy Ibis, Green-winged Teal, American Black Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Canvasback, Ring-necked Duck, Greater or Lesser Scaup, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Common Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Merlin, Wild Turkey, Sora, American Coot, Upland Sandpiper, Sanderling, Semipalmated Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Short or Long-billed Dowitcher, Wilson's Phalarope, Bonaparte's Gull, Herring Gull, Eastern Screech-Owl, Chuck-will's-widow, Common Nighthawk, Red-headed Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Alder Flycatcher, Willow Flycatcher, Black-capped Chickadee, Brown Creeper, Winter Wren, Marsh Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Water Pipit, Loggerhead Shrike, Philadelphia Vireo, Wilson's Warbler, Summer Tanager, Dickcissel, American Tree Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Rusty Blackbird, and any other species you suspect may never have been seen on the Howard County May Count.

MAY COUNT TALLY POTLUCK TO BE HELD AT DON & JAN RANDLE'S, 6424 LOCHRIDGE ROAD, BRAEBURN

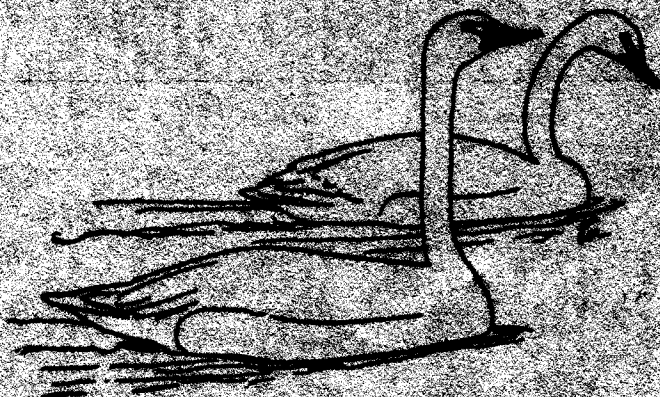
Although it is not necessary to attend the tally in order to participate in the May Count, many birders find that the get-together in the evening is a pleasant and satisfying way to end one of the best birding days of the year. It provides an excellent opportunity to share your best sightings, find out what others saw (and where), and perhaps relate the thrill of seeing some species for the very first time. Anyone who participates in the Count is welcome at the tally (including feeder watchers). Call Jan Randle 531-6296 to let her know the number coming and your choice of food to share. (Non-cooks or all-day counters are not expected to prepare a culinary masterpiece; ask Jan for suggestions.) Counters begin gathering any time after 5:30 p.m.; dinner usually begins between 6:30-7:00 p.m. The Randles live in Braeburn which is on the west side of Cedar Lane (the section north of Rt. 32 and south of the stoplight at Owen Brown Rd.) Entrance road is Braeburn Rd., turn right on Lochridge and continue to first house on left after Hillbrook Dr. (one long block). If unable to attend, make arrangements with area leader or Paul to turn in or phone results sometime during Count Day or evening. All participants will receive a copy of the results and highlights.

SPRING INTO NATURE

APRIL 19, 1986
HOWARD COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY
COLUMBIA, MARYLAND

PROGRAM:

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 10:00 a.m. | Nature and book exhibits open |
| 10:30 - 11:15 a.m. | Basic B's: Birds, Binoculars, and Books
Mike McClure |
| 11:15 - 12 noon | Birding Spots in Howard County
Harty Chestem |
| 1:00 - 2:30 p.m. | Nature Walk - Library grounds and Lake Kittamaqundi
Jane Farrell and Jane Geuder, Leaders |
| 2:30 - 3:15 p.m. | Unusual Birds of Howard County
Jo Solem |
| 3:15 - 4:00 p.m. | Basic Techniques for Wildflower Identifications
Chris Ludwig |
| 4:30 p.m. | Nature and book exhibits close |



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John Clegg, President
Linda Harsy, Vice-president

EVERYONE IS WELCOME. Come for the whole day or for individual sessions.
NO ADMISSION FEE.

RARE BIRD ALERT - Bea Newkirk 498-1902. If you can-
not reach Bea, call Marty Chestem 730-1527, David
Holmes 730-7083, or Jo Solem 725-5037. Be prepared
to describe field marks seen and to provide accurate
directions.

INJURED BIRDS - Eva Sunell 995-0029. Eva has the nec-
essary permits; she can also provide helpful advice
or refer you to more specialized rehabilitators if
that should be necessary.

BOOKSTORE - Fran Schoenberger 465-1981 or Eva Sunell
995-0029. Nature guides, records, checklists, etc.
at discounted prices.

MOUNTED BIRD SPECIMENS & MIGRATORY RECORDS - Jo Solem
725-5037. To borrow birds or to report sightings for
spring and fall migration.

To use this directory as a handy reference, detach
the two pages numbered 1-7; fold in half with one
sheet inside the other.

HOWARD COUNTY BIRD CLUB
10617 Grae Loch Rd.
Laurel, Maryland 20707



WORLD BIRD SOCIETY
1000 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 331-1000