

President's Corner A Volunteer Force

by Marcia Balestria

The other day I was chatting with a friend about the state of the world, and she made the comment that people just don't volunteer for things anymore. At the time, I agreed. We discussed the possible reasons and bemoaned the fact that all the folks who used to volunteer were too burnt out or had moved away. I postulated that younger folks are too busy with their own lives and had not replaced the "older generation" of volunteers. I got to thinking about it when I got home, so I looked up the statistics, just to see if we were right.

To my surprise, we were way off base! According to the latest study, slightly more than 65 million people volunteered in the US during 2005. From 2002 to 2005, the number of volunteers *increased* by about 5.6 million persons. In 2005, persons 35 to 44 years old were the most likely age group to volunteer (34.5%). Having said that, although the number of volunteers has increased each year, the volunteering rate, after increasing from 2002 to 2003, has remained at a constant rate of 28.8% from 2003 to 2005. Still, it hasn't decreased as we had thought.

Interestingly, from 2003 to 2005 Maryland ranked 25th in the nation, with a volunteering rate of 30.3%, but we tied for 3rd in volunteering intensity, with the 3rd highest median hours (60 hours annually). Volunteers in Maryland, reflecting

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The Maryland Yellowthroat

Newsletter of the Maryland Ornithological Society

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IS THERE LIFE AFTER ATLASING? WELCOME TO IBA BIRD BLITZ

BY DAVID CURSON

Now that fieldwork for the Maryland-DC Breeding Bird Atlas project has come to a close, many birders who became hooked on atlasing must be wondering how they might achieve ornithological fulfillment come spring. A new kind of bird count, "Bird Blitz," may hold the answer. Bird Blitz combines a good morning's birding with the fun of putting birds on the map (literally) and helping bird conservation.

The purpose of Bird Blitz is to provide population data on at-risk bird species in order to identify those places that are most critical to protect and manage for these vulnerable birds—Important Bird Areas (IBA). (See the *Yellowthroat*, March-April 2006.) It is surprising how little we know about population levels of even the highest priority at-risk birds at a given site. Breeding bird atlas results simply tell us whether a species is present or absent, and local birders often stop searching for a species after they have seen their first for the day, or year, depending on their listing time frame. It is breeding-season estimates of songbird population that are most lacking from the data available for IBA candidates, so Bird Blitz focuses on these.

The Bird Blitz is designed to provide a minimum estimate of a species population at a site, based on a single visit. This is hardly rocket science, but it works because we identify Important Bird Areas by determining that the actual population of a particular species is greater than a threshold number given in the IBA criteria for site selection.

"Blitzing" involves walking a route through habitats where specific at-risk species are likely to be found, and mapping the locations of individual birds on a large-scale map. The way it works is this:

1. Birders select a site that they know reasonably well and that they believe may qualify as an IBA.
2. Using Table 2 of the IBA criteria, they compile a list of bird species at risk that breed regularly at the site. These are the primary target species.
3. They select a section of the site that can be covered in a morning and plan a route that covers as much as possible of the habitats where the primary target species occur.
4. They walk this route, once, in the morning during the breeding season, tally individuals of primary target species on the Bird Blitz survey form, and plot the locations of all individuals of these species on a large-scale map. They also plot the route walked.

The total number of individuals for each primary target species constitutes the minimum population estimate for the area covered. Most of the birds encountered are likely to be singing males, and it can be assumed that that each of these represents a pair. For this assumption to hold true, only breeding birds, and not migrant individuals, should be counted, so a Bird Blitz should be done within Breeding Bird Atlas safe dates for the

(IBA Bird Blitz continues on page 2)

President's Corner *(continued from page 1)*

the trend across the US, were most likely to serve primarily through religious organizations (30.9%) or through educational or youth service organizations (30.0%).

So, after reading the study, I felt much more optimistic about our openings. I just know you are out there. You are going to call me tomorrow and pledge a little time to serve MOS. You don't have to do it forever, and the time involved is not that great over the course of a year. Think about it, find something you are interested in, and call me in the morning. Or afternoon or evening. I'll be waiting by the phone.

**In case you have forgotten,
the openings are:**

**Research Committee Chair
Membership Chair
Development Chair
Publicity Coordinator
Listserve Administrator**

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Anyone is welcome to contribute articles or ideas that would be of interest to other birders. Copy may be mailed or e-mailed to Lydia Schindler by January 20, 2007 for the March/April 2007 issue.

Illustrations pages 1, 8, and 9

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Photograph page 4 courtesy of George Jett.

IBA BIRD BLITZ *(continued from page 1)*

target species. Each species total can then be compared directly with the threshold number of breeding pairs listed in Table 2 of the IBA criteria. This method does not yield population estimates accurate enough for tracking trends over time, but the data are just what are needed for evaluating likely IBAs!

Several teams of volunteers field-tested the Bird Blitz method in 2006 in the Patapsco River valley west of Baltimore. During late May and June, 23 volunteers participated in 8 different counts covering almost half of this area. The totals they produced for nine at-risk species suggest this forested valley does indeed qualify as an IBA (see table below).

At-risk Species	Grand Total, Bird Blitz 2006	Threshold Breeding Pairs (Table 2, IBA Criteria)
Whip-poor-will	7	10
Willow Flycatcher	5	20
Wood Thrush	77	160
Blue-winged Warbler	6	15
Prairie Warbler	32	30
Cerulean Warbler	5	10
Worm-eating Warbler	12	20
Louisiana Waterthrush	25	20
Kentucky Warbler	2	30

Bird Blitz is an ideal bird survey method for volunteer "citizen scientists" because it can be done in groups and it doesn't require complex training. A regular bird club field trip can be adapted to function as a Bird Blitz. There is no need for distance estimates or timed counts; all it requires is that at least one observer in the team can identify all birds at the site by sight and sound and can read a map well enough to locate their own position and to plot that of a detected bird.

Organize Your Own Bird Blitz in 2007

There are still plenty of sites in Maryland-DC that may well qualify as an Important Bird Area but which so

far lack the right kind of data to fully evaluate this. We hope to identify all remaining IBAs in the state in 2007.

Why not organize a Bird Blitz this spring at a potential IBA near you? It is not necessary (and often not even possible!) to cover an entire site, but if several teams coordinate on a single day, or if one team covers different sections of the site on different days, a significant proportion of a larger site can be "blitzed." Sites for which Bird Blitz data would be particularly useful include:

- Garrett State Forest, Garrett County
- Potomac State Forest, Garrett County
- Mount Nebo Wildlife Management Area, Garrett County
- Dans Mountain Wildlife Management Area, Allegany County
- Warrior Mountain Wildlife Management Area, Allegany County
- Sideling Hill Wildlife Management Area, Washington County
- Indian Springs Wildlife Management Area, Washington County
- South Mountain, Washington/Frederick Counties
- Catoctin Mountain, Frederick County
- Sugarloaf Mountain/Monocacy Natural Resource Management Area, Frederick County
- Little Bennett Regional Park, Montgomery County
- McKee-Beshers Wildlife Management Area/Seneca Creek State Park, Montgomery County
- Patuxent Research Refuge, Prince George's/Anne Arundel Counties
- Mattawoman Natural Environment Area/Myrtle Grove Wildlife Management Area, Charles County
- St. Mary's River State Park, St. Mary's County
- Calvert Cliffs State Park, Calvert County
- Gunpowder Falls State Park, Baltimore County
- Susquchanna State Park, Harford/Cecil Counties
- Elk Neck State Park, Cecil County
- Fair Hill Natural Resource Management Area, Cecil County
- Millington Wildlife Management Area, Kent County
- Idylwild Wildlife Management Area, Caroline County

The Conservation Connection

by Maureen F. Harvey



MD Buys Sensitive Land near Blackwater NWR

Remember previous articles about the controversial Blackwater Resort development, which proposed building thousands of homes, a golf course, hotel, and conference center in Dorchester Co? After hearing public testimony that included objections by local farmers and conservation organizations (MOS wrote, too), the MD Critical Areas Commission denied permits for part of the planned development. In November 2006, MD Dept of Natural Resources announced successful negotiations with the developer to purchase 754 of the 1,080 acres (subject to appraisal and final approval) for up to \$10.4 million. The remaining land may be developed into 675 homes, mostly for older adults. DNR Secretary Ronald Franks said that the purchased acreage, now mostly farmland, will be restored to its natural wooded state. It's hard to imagine a better outcome!

Two-Year Reprieve for Red Knots:

DE Bans Horseshoe Crab Harvest

DE has imposed a two-year ban on the taking of horseshoe crabs effective December 11, 2006. This ban is intended to benefit not only the horseshoe crabs, but also populations of migratory shorebirds, especially the Red

Knot *rufa* subspecies, which scientists believe could go extinct in as soon as five years. The statement of the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control is available at <http://www.dnrec.state.de.us/dnrec2000/admin/press/story1.asp?PRID=2295>.

Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act Renewed

Just before Congress recessed for electioneering, the Senate unanimously passed the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 2006 (NMBCA, H.R. 518) and the Act was signed into law by President George W. Bush on October 17. NMBCA reauthorizes the Act of 2000, which expired last year, and extends federal funding at \$6.5 million per year through 2010. This Act was designed specifically for migratory bird species throughout North America, and it provides the only dedicated source of funds for migratory birds on their wintering grounds in Latin America and the Caribbean.

According to the American Bird Conservancy, "Partners in 42 U.S. states and 30 Latin American and Caribbean countries have been involved in 186 projects supported by the Act. More than \$17.2 million in grants have leveraged some \$89.1 million in total partner contributions to support activities that bring long-term benefits to neotropical migratory birds. Projects involving land conservation have affected some 3.2 million acres of bird habitat, and species that are benefiting include the Cerulean Warbler, Golden-winged Warbler, Bobolink, Red Knot, and Bicknell's Thrush." For information, see <http://www.fws.gov/birdhabitat/Grants/NMBCA/index.shtm>.



Birds of Note

—by Les Roslund



Inca Dove taken by George Jett on November 6, 2006.

- Bird Every Bird! By following this advice, on Oct 29 Matt Hafner and Hans Holbrook spotted an unusual swallow/martin amongst thousands of Tree Swallows swirling in the sky over Assateague Island in Worcester County. Knowing they had something special, they watched persistently for 45 minutes as the birds moved back and forth between the Visitor Center and the island. They were not able to get any photographs on Oct 29, but the bird was found again on Oct 30 and they managed to take a few distant photos. The bird has yet to be positively identified, but Matt and others have visited the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History to examine the martin specimens. They currently consider the "SNOWY-BELLIED" MARTIN complex as the most likely choice. That includes Caribbean, Cuban, and Sinaloa Martins. Females and immatures of that complex are extremely similar, and the museum did not have enough specimens of Cuban and Sinaloa for comparison with Caribbean. If this was indeed a Caribbean Martin, it would be a first North American record.
- On Nov 5 a delicate and beautiful little INCA DOVE showed up beneath Derek Richardson's feeder in Laurel, Prince George's County. It returned to the same feeder on Nov 6, where it was enjoyed—and photographed—by several birders. This bird is normally found in the Southwest, mainly south-central Texas and southern Arizona.
- Another rare bird sighting involved a possible CAPE VERDE SHEARWATER seen and photographed in MD waters during



DNR Reports by Glenn Therres: Peregrine Falcons

When wild animals cause people problems in their houses, offices, or other areas, we call those “nuisance wildlife.” Typical nuisances are squirrels or bats in an attic, snakes in a basement, a songbird in the house, a hawk trapped in a warehouse, or occasionally a deer that has jumped through a storefront window. Some nuisance reports require more than just a phone call.

The Chesapeake Bay Bridge has supported a pair of nesting Peregrine Falcons since 1983. Over the years, the male and female have been replaced several times. Four or five years ago, a female raised in New York City took over as the resident nesting female on the western concrete pier of the westbound bridge. This female is extremely aggressive towards anyone near her nest site. She nests in a special box that we had placed on the ledge of the western channel pier many years ago. The box rests below the road surface, on a ledge that is used by bridge maintenance staff to access the catwalk under the road.

During the nesting season, this peregrine dive bombs anyone who gets on the ledge or even in the vicinity of the western concrete pier. When a toll facilities truck stops on the bridge at the concrete pier, she instantly starts circling and screaming at the workers; she swoops down and tries to hit them. Banding her young is part of our job, but we routinely get bombed by this female; she swoops down and tries to hit our heads. The male also gets agitated and flies and screams nearby. We’ve learned never to turn our backs to her—and always to wear hard hats.

The maintenance crew learned to schedule activities near her nest site at other times of the year to avoid her aggressive behavior. We even had the construction crews that resurfaced most of the westbound bridge avoid the center span during the first two years of the redecking project. However, this year the center portion of the bridge needs to be replaced. Problem is that the peregrine nest is directly under the center span. The female posed a serious safety issue to the construction workers. It’s dangerous

enough working at 250-plus feet above the Chesapeake Bay without a female Peregrine Falcon trying to take your head off.

After consulting with the US Fish & Wildlife Service, we decided the only option was to temporarily remove the territorial female from the bridge. Our plan was to capture the female and hold her until the redecking project was completed in two years. If the male became overly aggressive, we would remove him as well.

In November we scheduled a trip under the bridge to decide how we could catch the falcon. We assumed she would not be very aggressive at that time, since nesting season was still several months away. Boy, were we wrong! As soon as we stopped the vehicles above the concrete pier, she began flying and screaming above us. Maybe we could catch her now instead of waiting. My USFWS partner, Craig Koppie, took his mist net and poles out of the truck and under the bridge we went.

As soon as we got on the ledge, the falcon began dive-bombing us just as if it were nesting season. We decided to erect the mist net on the catwalk under the bridge. While we were getting the net out of the bag, the female landed several times on the railing nearby, and we decided to place the net near the spot she had landed. Once the net was in place, I moved over to her nest box, provoking her to fly, scream, and try to attack us. But as she tore by, she swerved around or over the net. We moved the net closer to the ledge and tried to provoke her again, with both Craig and me standing at the nest box. This time she got so excited she forgot about the net. Success!

Craig and I rushed onto the catwalk to make sure she did not escape from the mist net. She was entangled perfectly. For the next five minutes, Craig worked to peel the net away from her wings and head, all the while securely holding her talons. Then he climbed up the ladder, bird in hand, and placed her in a pet carrier. Off to the Salisbury Zoo she went, where she will get good care out of view of zoo visitors.

Now the westbound span of the Bay Bridge can get its new deck without any harm coming to the construction workers at the hands (I mean talons) of an aggressive female Peregrine Falcon. After all the work is completed, we will bring her back to the bridge to nest again.

Birds of Note *(continued from page 4)*

- a pelagic trip out of Lewes, DE on Oct 21. If the report is accepted, this will be only the second North American record.
- On Oct 14 Paul DeAnna had a brief look at an adult male BULLOCK’S ORIOLE near the ravine in the maintenance yard of Rock Creek Park, NW DC. This bird apparently left the area promptly, for it was not relocated despite intense searching over the next two days.
- An EARED GREBE was found by Jim Morrin Oct 19 on the small sewage pond of the wastewater treatment plant near Easton, Talbot County. This cooperative bird stayed around until Nov 1, providing great views for many visiting birders.
- A NORTHERN SHRIKE found east of Emmitsburg in Frederick County also stayed around to accommodate birders

- who were sufficiently patient and lucky. First reported Nov 10 by Jim Wilkinson, this bird was still being seen on Nov 18.
- Another step in the colonization of Maryland by EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVES was revealed Nov 19 when area newcomer Frode Jacobsen spotted two of these doves on power lines at the southern end of the tiny community on Upper Hooper Island, Dorchester County. Prior MD sightings of the species have involved only single birds.
- Also in Dorchester County, the AMERICAN WHITE PELICANS that wintered at Blackwater NWR last year have returned. First arrival was in early Oct; as of Nov 10 Harry Armistead reported a total of 13. The maximum number last winter was 5.

MINUTES OF THE MOS BOARD MEETING SEPTEMBER 9, 2006

President: Marcia Balestri
Vice-President: Wayne Bell
Treasurer: Emmalyn Holdridge
Secretary: Janet Shields
Past President: Janet Millenson

Atlas: Jane Coskren
Budget: Shiras Guion
Conference: Janet Shields
EFM: Gayle Bach-Watson
Investments: Martha Waugh
Sanctuary: Brent Byers
Scholarship: Tom Strikwerda
Youth Programs: George Radcliffe

Allegany: Charlotte Folk,
Barbara Gaffney

Anne Arundel: Linda Baker,
Susan Zevin

Baltimore: Brent Byers,
Roberta Ross

Caroline: *not represented*

Carroll: *not represented*

Cecil: *not represented*

Frederick: Gayle Bach-Watson,
Helen Horrocks

Harford: *not represented*

Howard: Mary-Jo Betts,
Jane Coskren, Shiras Guion,
Tom Strikwerda, Martha Waugh,
Paul Zucker

Kent: Walter Ellison, Nancy Martin

Montgomery: David Gray,
Helen Gray, Janet Shields

Patuxent: Fred Fallon

Talbot: Wayne Bell, George Radcliffe

Tri-County: *not represented*

Washington: Shirley Ford,
Ann Mitchell

President Marcia Balestri called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. and thanked the Allegany Chapter for hosting the meeting at the LaVale Library, LaVale, MD.

Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

Treasurer's Report: Emmalyn Holdridge said that dues are starting to come in. There were no questions concerning the Treasurer's Report. Emmalyn has financial reports for last year and year-to-date for 2006 for each committee chair.

President's Remarks: Marcia Balestri appointed Helen Patton as Chair of the Nominations Committee and Janet Shields, Mary-Jo Betts, Mike Bowen, Barbara Gaffney, and Peter Mann as committee members; these appointments were approved by the Board. Marcia then appointed all of the other committee chairs; these appointments were approved by the Board. Chapters should please send Marcia copies of their newsletters. MOS Brochures and checklists need to be reprinted, and Marcia asked that chapters e-mail her with how many each would need.

Marcia reported that Helen Horrocks had the MOS insurance reviewed by an impartial insurance company. The recommendation was to increase our umbrella liability from \$1 million to \$2 million to insure that coverage matches our assets value; this will increase our premium by about \$500. The exposure to liability insurance with more youth activities was also discussed; cost of this additional insurance is still being explored. The premium is probably in the \$1,000- to \$2,000-range. In addition, a requirement for parental waivers for youth activities was discussed. Most of the activities already have parental waivers signed, but MOS needs to design an all-purpose form for our youth activities. The Budget Committee needs to discuss which part of the budget the funds should come from and bring their ideas to the Board.

Marcia found from her "Help MOS Be Responsive Survey" that people are interested in training programs of various types. MOS is a member of the MD Association of Nonprofit Organizations, which has many training programs available to our Board members. Marcia will send out their website address, listing these training programs, to the Board. From her survey Marcia also found that better communications was a key issue. One way to solve this would be to have an MOS listserv open to

MOS members to cover the business of the MOS Board and chapters, as distinct from *MDOsprey* bird sightings. Someone will be needed to manage the listserv, and a task force will be formed to investigate costs and operation of the listserv. In discussing the listserv issue, the Executive Council concluded that duties previously performed by the Executive Secretary, and now being managed by several members, need again to be consolidated under one person. The Executive Council envisioned that MOS should advertise for a person who could be the listserv moderator and perform the other duties as assigned. This position, an Office Administrator, will be discussed in the next *Yellowthroat*.

Marcia Balestri mentioned that some of our committee chairs and committee members are not MOS members. According to the bylaws, they must be MOS members, and as such they need to pay their dues. Committee chairs, if they have questions, can check the standing of their committee members with Helen Horrocks. Marcia's survey results also noted dissatisfaction that the World Series of Birding team sent to Cape May by MOS were not members. This is not required by MOS bylaws, but it was felt they should be members. The Board voted that in the future MOS dues should be paid for any members of MOS teams in the World Series of Birding or other MOS-sponsored events.

Marcia is looking for volunteers to work on a Birding Trail. She would like to have Maryland Birding Trail information similar to that of other states available to the public in Visitor Centers, etc. Mary LaMarca has agreed to be point person to check handicapped access. Other people are needed to form a task force to look into this. Chapter presidents should go back to their chapters and ask for volunteers to contact Marcia.

A challenge has been received from George DuBois, Frederick member, that he will donate \$1,500 to the place of our choice, a rainforest preferably, if MOS members will match his \$1,500. The details of the challenge will be published in the next *Yellowthroat* so that this may be completed by 12/31/06. Marcia will check with Chan Robbins and David Curson for location suggestions.

CHAPTER REPORTS – none

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Atlas: Jane Coskren thanked the society for earmarking all the conference profits for the Atlas. Jane's goal is to get the Atlas funded at a level where, if we lose state grants, we can still do an Atlas next time. She will be asking MOS to start a fund for the next Atlas project. Data collection, according to Walter Ellison, is pretty much done. Marcia Balestri commented that Walter, Jane, and Nancy have done a fantastic job putting this together.

Budget: Shiras Guion said that December will be the time for budget input.

Conference: Janet Shields reported that she had a meeting with the University of Salisbury, who should have a contract for us by the end of the month. Sam Dyke, Tri-County, has agreed to coordinate the field trips. Sam is looking into several boat trips. Scott Weidensaul, at the cost of \$1,500, will be the 2007 keynote speaker. The registration fee is being raised from \$45 to \$55. Locations are being investigated for 2008.

Investments: Martha Waugh handed out her report. She noted that we have made money this year and our values are up.

Membership: Linda Keenan was not here but she put together a packet for new members.

Research: Gwen Brewer has resigned as chair. A new chair needs to be found.

Sanctuary: Brent Byers said the new shed has been installed at Carey Run. Irish Grove had two incidents of vandalism this summer. The potential Prince George's Piscataway

Sanctuary has had another appeal filed, and it will be at least another six months before we know the status of it. Brent is looking for committee members. He needs new members in the western part of the state near Carey Run. Dotty Mumford is having a work week at Irish Grove Sept 21-24.

Scholarships: Tom Strikwerda reported 14 scholarships were awarded. One person could not attend and has a rain check for next year. Tom has reports from most of them. The selection process is starting now for next summer's scholarships. Tom needs a contact person for each chapter.

Statewide Education Activities: Mike Bowen was not here but he sent Warbler Workshop CDs. Chapter presidents should pick up their copy.

Youth Programs: George Radcliffe needs contacts throughout the state. There is a group membership offered through the committee. George would like chapters to try to adopt a local youth group and work with them to interest young people in the YMOS program. He is going to try to put together a grant to train teachers how to incorporate birds into their classroom. This would be tied in with YMOS, and they would participate in certain YMOS activities. He would also like to have an MOS-sponsored Youth World Series of Birding team. The YMOS website, <http://www.qacps.k12.md.us/bird/mos/youth.htm>, contains activity information.

EFM: Gayle Bach-Watson indicated that the fundraising season is starting. Gayle needs little sound bites for what donations could provide (e.g., \$50 will buy signs for nature trails) to help encourage donations.

OLD BUSINESS – The motion to confirm all MOS chairs was amended to confirm all chair and committee members who are members of MOS.

NEW BUSINESS – none

ANNOUNCEMENTS – none

NEW ACTION ITEMS

- Executive Council – Draft, review and finalize language for waivers and/or permission slips for youth activities.

- Chapters – Ask for volunteers for new MOS listserv task force (contact Marcia Balestri, mebalestri@adelphia.net).
- Chapters – Ask for volunteers for MD Birding Trail project (contact Marcia Balestri, mebalestri@adelphia.net).
- Chapters – Provide Gayle Bach-Watson (301-831-3874) with information (sound bites for what donations could provide (e.g., \$50 will buy signs for nature trails)).
- Chapters – Provide Tom Strikwerda (tstrik@earthlink.net) with chapter points-of-contact for scholarship information.
- Chapters – Per George Radcliffe, chapters should try to “adopt” a local youth group and work with them to interest young people in YMOS.
- Chapters – Announce Irish Grove work week Sept 21-24.
- Chapters – are needed to host MOS board meeting for the next year (March 3 and June 2)
- President to resend e-mail asking how many brochures and checklists chapters will need and for updates on any changes in change dues.
- President to send out e-mail on available training through MD Association of Nonprofit Organizations.
- President to contact Chan Robbins and David Curson about challenge from George DuBois on fundraising for rainforest project. Challenge to be published in the *Yellowthroat*.
- Committees to e-mail Helen Horrocks to ensure compliance with membership requirements.
- Brent Byers needs Western MD representative on the Sanctuary Committee for Carey Run Sanctuary.
- A Research Chair is needed.
- Still need Publicity Coordinator and Development Chair.

President Marcia Balestri adjourned the meeting at 12:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by
—Janet Shields, Secretary

The Birder's Vest

by Andy Martin



Recording Night Migrants

I got interested in birding in the late 1990s, but it was not until May 2003 that I really became aware of the phenomenon of night migration. In a post to *MDOsprey*, Paul O'Brien described sitting on the deck in his Rockville yard late in the evening and listening to dozens of thrushes (Veery, Wood, Swainson's, and even a few Gray-cheeked) as they passed overhead in the night sky. I found it fascinating that many of those same birds I had trouble finding in the field during the day were probably flying directly over my house at night in the late spring and early fall.

An Internet search for night migration came up with a website called Old Bird.org (<http://www.oldbird.org>). Run by some folks at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Old Bird, Inc. is dedicated to the study and identification of nocturnal migrants. The site contains detailed "do-it-yourself" instructions on how to record and identify night-migrating birds. It carries detailed plans for building your own microphone, free downloadable software for analyzing and sorting flight calls, and an order form for a CD guide, *Flight Calls of Migratory Birds*, authored by Dr. Bill Evans and Paul O'Brien's son Michael.

By the early winter of 2005, birding had taken me in the direction of the study of birdsong, and I purchased a parabolic microphone called DetectEar and a Sony MiniDisc (MD) Recorder to make some recordings in the field. I also realized that this set-up might work to record night migrants.

I tried it for the first time in late April 2006, putting the recorder out on my deck after 11 PM (reduced traffic and jet noise) on a calm, dry night with winds from the south. The next morning, I downloaded the sound files into my computer and used the software from the Old Bird website to search for flight call notes. Amazingly, even in the noisy environment of suburban Gaithersburg, I was able to record some 30 or 40 calls in a 6-hour period. I was hooked!

There was nothing particularly exciting that first night. Many of the calls did not provide signals strong enough to be identified, but some turned out to be good matches for Song and White-throated Sparrows. In May, I worked to refine my technique (adjusting recording levels, using various objects as sound baffles to muffle traffic noise from nearby Rte 28). I was soon able to get identifiable recordings of five species of thrush, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Bobolink, Indigo Bunting, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Killdeer, and Solitary Sandpiper.

This past fall, I added some additional species to my list, including Dickcissel, Greater Yellowlegs, Hermit Thrush, Cape May Warbler, and Savannah and Chipping Sparrows. I have recorded a lot of warbler "zeeps" but unfortunately (and even for most experts) the best you can do is associate them with two or three similar species. One disappointing facet of night migration is the lack of nocturnal flight calls by certain bird groups, including vireos, wrens, and most of the flycatchers.

As mentioned above, I record night migrants using a parabolic mike connected directly to a Sony MD Recorder. The DetectEar parabolic mike is sold through websites catering to the home spy and surveillance market; I purchased mine from a site called Citizen Safe for about \$395. I purchased my MD recorder from Amazon.com. For the MD recorder, I use 1-gigabyte (GB) minidisks and record in 1-hour increments using the unit's Hi-SP compression setting. This provides almost 8 hours of recording time per disc.

The recorded information is then downloaded into my computer via a USB cable, utilizing a program called *Sonicstage* (supplied with the MD recorder). The MD sound file requires one additional manipulation with a software program called *Wavepad* (free from <http://www.nch.com.au/wavepad>). *Wavepad* converts the sound file format (stereo, 44100 sampling rate, 16 bit wav) to the type required for processing by the Old Bird call detector software (mono, 22050 sampling rate, 16 bit wav). If you record directly to a computer (see below), a program like *Wavepad* is not required.

Once the sound file has been downloaded and converted, you are ready to analyze it for calls, using the free detector and sorting software available from Old Bird. The three flight-call-detector programs are called *Thrush*, *Tseep*, and *Dick*. Each program is designed to scan the sound file for flight calls of a particular frequency. *Tseep* detects calls in the 6 to 10 kHz range—mostly warblers and sparrows. *Thrush* detects calls between 2.8 and 5 kHz to help identify thrush species, Bobolink, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, tanagers, Baltimore Orioles and some shorebirds. *Dick* specializes in the flight calls of Dickcissel. All three detector programs can run simultaneously. My Pentium 4 desktop purchased in early 2004 will crunch an hour-long sound file for flight calls in about 8 minutes.

The sorting program, called *Glassofire*, produces a spectrographic image and short sound file of each call found by the detector programs. Additionally, you can scan the sound file visually with a program called *Ravenlite*, a \$25 sound-analysis program available from Cornell (<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/brp/RavenLite/RavenLite.html>). Scanning the file with *Ravenlite* does not require the use of the three call detector programs, nor *Glassofire* or *Wavepad*. *Ravenlite* comes in handy when searching through a sound file for calls—such as those of cuckoos and some herons—where the frequency is too low to get picked up by the detector programs.

Note that the call detection and sorting software from Old Bird will not identify each call as to species, and here is where some detective work comes in. I use the Evans and O'Brien *Flight Call* CD to help me identify the calls I have recorded over my house. For heron and shorebird calls, *Stokes Field Guide to Bird Songs (Eastern Region)* helps me with any call I don't recognize.

One does not necessarily have to go to the trouble of recording the actual calls to enjoy night migration. You might just consider purchasing the *Flight Call* CD and sitting outside your house on a quiet night in late April through late May and listen for thrushes. Thrush flight calls are very distinctive, and with a little practice, one should be able to identify the different species. This is not as easily done in the fall, when insect noise interferes. However, a cool night in late September or early October will quiet the bugs enough to hear thrush calls.

If you want to go a little further, a less expensive approach than my parabolic mike/MD combo would be to build your

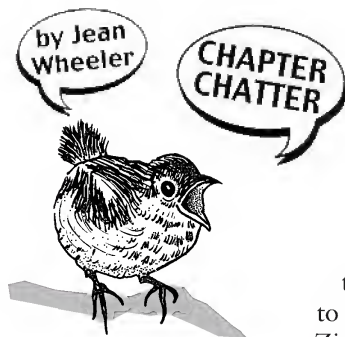
own microphone (using the instructions at Old Bird) or purchase a pre-made pressure-zone (known more commonly as boundary) mike and record directly to your computer. Old Bird actually recommends the pressure zone mike over a parabolic mike. You will need to purchase a length of audio cable long enough to connect the microphone to your computer. A mike preamp is recommended to boost the signal a bit. The Old Bird website provides detailed instruction on how to do this. I have purchased cable and recording supplies from a broadcast product website called Markertek Online Superstore (<http://www.Markertek.com>).

Old Bird also provides plans for mounting a fully automated recording system on top of your roof. A rooftop location can help minimize insect noise (or frog calls in the spring). Since I record mostly to identify species and not to monitor

actual number of migrants, I skipped the roof mount and just set up the mike and recorder on my backyard deck or out front on the driveway on favorable nights for recording (i.e., dry with light winds from south in spring or north in fall).

Besides *Ravenlite*, there are some other programs out there that will help you analyze recorded calls. One such program is called *Syrinx* and can be downloaded for free by contacting <http://www.syrinxpc.com>.

You can contact me at apmartin2@comcast.net if you have more specific questions about recording night migrants. I find it to be a very enjoyable extension of my birding hobby. I have added some birds to my yard list—and, as I have told my wife, I can enjoy birding even while I am sleeping!



Caroline County

Caroline County Bird Club members Joyce and Frank Zeigler spent August and September on trips to Nova Scotia, Wyoming, and Alaska.

For Joyce, an artist, the trips provided an opportunity to paint. In Nova Scotia, the Zieglers enjoyed being near the sea, where the beach was beautiful to walk on at low tide—

staying ever mindful of a tide that rose 28 feet! An area 20 miles away, Joyce notes, had 50-foot tides. In Alaska, the Zieglers especially enjoyed seeing so many eagles.

Harford County

The Harford Bird Club's Executive Board recently enacted several programs to increase the club's presence in the school system—and possibly entice a few younger birders into the “sport” of birding. For starters, the club will sponsor a bird art contest at local elementary schools. The monthly winner of the contest will have his or her artwork displayed on the club's home page. If the format is appropriate, some submissions may be published in the newsletter as well. The school system continues to be a huge part of the Harford Bird Club membership and initiatives. Three public school teachers were winners of the statewide MOS Audubon Camp scholarship this year.

In addition, the Harford Bird Club has made a commitment to increasing advertisement for upcoming meetings through the library and post office public information boards. We will print fliers for upcoming meetings and post them in appropriate places throughout the county. My impression is that many other MOS chapters currently do this, and that the minimal cost of increased advertising will be well justified.

Another project that we hope to complete this year is the “Harford County Birding” brochure, which will describe birding locations throughout the county. These brochures will be placed in park kiosks and tourism outlets. We are also planning to develop an online database of field guides held by our members. It is our hope that this will increase sharing of guides when members take overseas or cross-country trips.

—Russ Kovach

Montgomery County

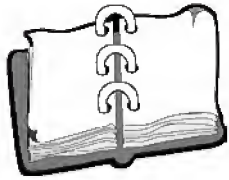
For a sedentary group, Montgomery's Big Sit team—the Sitting Ducks—is really racking up the numbers. Topping last year's total by 12, the fifth Big Sit tallied 67 species, including 10 new to the count: Great Egret, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Swainson's Thrush, Brown Thrasher, Magnolia Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Indigo Bunting, White-crowned Sparrow, and Dark-eyed Junco.

Eighteen birders participated in this year's endeavor, marked by beautiful weather. It was a particularly good day for raptors; Compiler Rick Sussman tallied nine species, including three Bald Eagles. One highlight was watching an immature Cooper's Hawk trying to catch a Belted Kingfisher, driving it right to the water's surface before the kingfisher made its escape. Later the group witnessed more than one Sharpie evading and chasing Blue Jays, crows, and flickers.

The MD/DC Records Committee has recently accepted sightings of six new species in Montgomery County: Townsend's Warbler, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Sabine's Gull, Neotropic Cormorant, Cave Swallow, and Purple Gallinule. Thanks to local sharp-eyed birders for spotting, and recording, these sightings!

Tri-County

The MD Coastal Bays Program awards community-action grants to individuals for projects that inform the public about the natural world and encourage preservation of habitat and clean water. With support from one of these grants, Jean and Larry Fry of Ocean Pines produced an hour-long PowerPoint presentation on the “Birds of Worcester County.” Larry and Jean are presenting their program to local community groups. The program, which includes information about MOS and the Tri-County Bird Club, highlights the more common birds to be found in the county. It also points out the decline in bird populations due to loss of habitat and emphasizes the need for habitat preservation. As Jean says, “Birds are the barometer of our environment, and this is one way to inform the local community.” The Tri-County club is very fortunate to have Jean and Larry among its active outreach members.



MOS Calendar

January-February 2007

Monday, January 1

CHRISTMAS COUNT. **Bowie**. Contact Fred Fallon, 301-249-1518 or fwfallon@earthlink.net.

H **Howard**. Start Your 2006 List. Half day. Plan to carpool to different locations to find as many species as possible. The one day of the year where every bird is new! Meet 8 AM at boat ramp of Centennial Lake. Expect moderate walking. Possibility of lunch stop, depending on the weather. Facilities at some spots. Leader: Bonnie Ott, 410-461-3361.

H **Montgomery**. Earliest Bird Walk: Georgetown Reservoir and DC Hot Spots. Half day. Start the New Year right. Meet 8 AM at Georgetown Reservoir, NW DC, by the gate leading to the dike between the pools. Reservations required. Leader: Mike Bowen, 301-530-5764.

H **Baltimore**. Loch Raven Reservoir. Explore varied habitats, including woods, fields, and water. Likely birds are Red-breasted Nuthatch, Bald Eagle, sparrows, thrushes, and waterfowl. Meet 8:30 AM. From Balt Beltway I-695, take exit 27/ Dulaney Valley Rd north, go several miles, cross large bridge over reservoir, and bear right immediately. Continue to first left, Stone Hill Rd. Go about 100 yards and park on the right. All cars need to park on the same side of the road. Leader: Kevin Graff, 410-557-2456 or ocean_city2001@yahoo.com.

Wednesday, January 3

H **Baltimore**. First Wednesdays at Ft. McHenry. Meet 8 AM at Visitor Center. Monthly survey of bird activity at the wetland. Folding chair and scope useful. Cancelled in bad weather (rain, sleet, snow, fog, etc.). From Balt Beltway I-695 southwest of the city, take exit 11, I-95 north towards the city. Get off at exit 55, Hanover St. Turn east (right) on McComas St, north (left) on Key Hwy. Take first left onto

Lawrence St and turn left onto Fort Ave; continue through gateway into the park. Leader: Mary Chetelat, 410-665-0769.

Thursday & Saturday, January 4 & 6

H **Montgomery**. Gull Workshop and Field Trip. Meet Thurs evening at 7:30 PM at Cyndie Loeper's house for light fare and a gull slide presentation by *Clive Harris*. Then, join Clive for the associated local field trip on Sat. All are welcome for either or both sessions. Call Cyndie, 301-530-8226, for directions, trip details, and required reservations.

Thursday, January 4

MEETING. **Frederick**. *Beth Zang* will present "A Holistic Approach to Bird Conservation in Peru." She will describe her amazing journey to Peru, and how our club's donations are helping bird conservation efforts there. 7 PM at the C. Burr Artz Library, Frederick. Info: Marcia Balestri, 301-473-5098.

Friday, January 5

MEETING. **Anne Arundel**. "Birders, Conservation, and Refuges—Making Better Connections." *Paul J. Baicich* will discuss the linkage between bird conservation, popular birding, and the NWR system. Mr. Baicich is a former editor of ABA's *Birding* magazine, has coauthored a book entitled *A Guide to the Nests, Eggs, and Nestlings of North American Birds*, and has led a number of tours to AK. 8 PM at Arlington Echo Outdoor Education Center, 975 Indian Landing Rd, Millersville.

Saturday, January 6

H **Anne Arundel**. Downs Park. Half day. Wintering waterfowl and landbirds. Meet 8 AM at the Jones Station P&R. Leader: Pat Tate, 410-266-6043.

H **Kent**. Eastern Neck NWR. Half day. Kick off your birding year with a half-day trip for waterfowl and winter landbirds. Meet 8 AM at Dollar General parking lot, Chestertown.

Leaders: Walter Ellison, 410-778-9568 and Peter Mann, 410-648-5205.

MID-WINTER COUNT. **Frederick**. Audrey Carroll. Meet at the sanctuary at 6:30 AM. Dress warmly and wear waterproof boots. Call David Smith, 410-549-7082, for more info.

H **Cecil**. Eastern Neck NWR and Chesapeake Farms. Full day. Meet 7 AM at Big Elk Mall parking lot (corner of Rtes 40 and 213) in Elkton, near the Dunkin' Donuts. Leader: Parke John, Parke@del.net.

ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY. **Carroll**. Once again hosted by Splinter and Sue Yingling. If you've not attended before, now is the time to start. Everyone has a good time. 7:30 PM until? For more info and to coordinate your potluck dish, contact Sue Yingling at 410-876-8211 or syingling@mac.com.

Sunday, January 7

H **Tri-County**. MD and DE Coast. Full day. Search for winter specialties and perhaps a rarity from recent CBCs. Meet 7:30 AM in Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art parking lot. Contact leader Sam Dyke, 410-742-5497, for directions and more details. Bring lunch.

COVERED DISH DINNER. **Baltimore**. Bykota Center, Towson. 7:30 PM. Topic and speaker TBA in BBC newsletter and on club web site. From the Balt Beltway I-695, take exit 266 south, York Rd, to Bosley Ave, and turn right. At third traffic light turn right onto Allegheny Ave. Proceed one block and turn right onto Central Ave and continue to 611 Central Ave, where parking is provided beside and behind the center. (The Bykota center was formerly the Towson ES.) For reservations and food coordination call Shirley Geddes, 410-377-6583.

Tuesday, January 9

MEETING. **Patuxent**. "50 Years of Birding" by *Hank Kaestner*. 7:30 PM at the College Park Airport Annex. Call Fred Shaffer, 410-721-1744, for add'l info.

MEETING. **Allegany**. *Kevin Dodge* will present "A Visitor's Guide to the Natural History of South-Central Alaska (AK)." AK offers the naturalist an

amazing array of habitats to explore: inland forests, coastal forests, meadows, and scrub as well as tidepools, fjords, and tundra. Kevin Dodge, who helped lead nine trips to AK, will introduce listeners to the varied habitats found from Denali NP south to the coast, and the plants and animals that occur in each. 7 PM at the Deep Creek Lake SP Discovery Center. Take I-68 exit 14a (Route 219S) and go 18 miles; turn left onto Glendale Rd and continue for one mile, crossing over the Glendale Bridge. Immediately after crossing the bridge, turn left onto State Park Rd. Continue on State Park Rd for 1 mile until you see the info sign for the SP facilities.

Thursday, January 11

MEETING. Howard. "How a Lady Bird-Watcher Changed the World," by *Hank Kaestner*. A look at the organic food movement started in 1962 by Rachel Carson with her book *Silent Spring*. The talk will honor Carson's 100th birthday and her impact on pesticide use worldwide. Hospitality and club bookstore 7:30 PM: meeting/program 8 PM at Howard Co Rec and Parks, 7210 Oakland Mills Rd, Columbia. Info: Kevin Heffernan, 410-418-8731.

Friday, January 12

MEETING. Harford. *Hank Kaestner* will present "Travels of a Spice Trader." 7 PM at the Churchville Presbyterian Church, Churchville, MD. Contact Russ Kovach, 443-386-4787, for add'l info.

Saturday, January 13

Carroll. Smithsonian Museum of Natural History. Full day. Carla Dove will lead a trip to the Smithsonian for a behind-the-scenes tour of the bird files. Meeting time and place TBD. Limit: 15. Info and reservations: Tammy Schwaab, 410-857-4913.

Baltimore. North Point SP and Ft. Howard. Explore diverse habitat including woods, swamp, fields, and bayfront. Expect to see winter passerines and waterfowl. Meet 8:30 AM at North Point SP parking lot, just past entrance station (fee). Take exit 42 from Balt Beltway I-695 and head south on North Point Rd (follow signs to Ft. Howard). After Millers Island Rd, look for park entrance on left.

Leader: Kevin Graff, 410-557-2456 or ocean_city2001@yahoo.com.

Harford. Harford County Feeder Tour. What better way to start your year off? Join veteran birder Les Eastman as he points out all that beginner birders need to know when looking out their windows. From the meeting location we'll carpool to our first host's home where we'll perch in the warmth and observe their feeder spread for an hour or so before migrating to the next house. Participation is limited. Beginner birders are particularly welcome. Contact Les Eastman, 410-734-6969, to reserve a spot and get meeting location.

Cecil. Ocean City. Full day. Meet 6 AM at Big Elk Mall parking lot (corner of Rtes 40 and 213), Elkton, near the Dunkin' Donuts. Leader: Sean McCandless, Seanmccandless1@comcast.net.

Sunday, January 14

MID-WINTER COUNT. Frederick. Fred Archibald. Meet at the sanctuary at 6:30 AM. Dress warmly and wear waterproof boots. Contact Bob Schaefer, 301-831-5660 or rjs30@erols.com, for more info.

Wednesday, January 17

MEETING. Montgomery. "Evolving Species and Species Concepts (or why the ABA just won't leave your life list alone!)" by *Michael Braun*, Smithsonian Museum of Natural History. 7:30 PM. Potomac Presbyterian Church, 10301 River Rd, Potomac.

Thursday, January 18

MEETING. Caroline. "Fishes of the Choptank River" presented by *Nick Carter*. 7:30 PM. Caroline Co Public Library, 100 Market St, Denton.

Saturday, January 20

C&O CANAL COUNT. Allegany. Again this year the C&O Canal Count will replace our mid-winter bird count. Contact Peter Vankevich, 202-397-5593 or pvank@netacc.net, for a stretch of canal to cover. Each mile of the canal is counted separately.

C&O CANAL COUNT. Washington. Contact Shirley Ford, 301-241-3020, to participate.

Indicates Field Trip

MID-WINTER COUNT. Carroll. Count birds in your backyard, in your neighborhood, or at your favorite birding spot in Carroll Co. All input welcome and important to the bird club. Please coordinate locations with Bill Ellis at 443-402-9033. Tally Rally to be held at the Schwaab's; RSVP to Marc or Tammy Schwaab at 410-857-4913 if you will be attending. Please bring a \$ donation or a food item.

Cecil. Cecil Gulls. Half day. Meet 8 AM at North East Plaza (Wal-Mart). Leader: Gene Scarpulla, ejscarp@comcast.net.

Kent. Ocean City, Worcester Co. Winter specialties including gannet, sea ducks, alcids, gulls, Purple Sandpipers, and wintering passerines. Meet 8 AM at Dollar General parking lot, Chestertown. Leaders: Walter Ellison, 410-778-9568, and Peter Mann, 410-648-5205. Full day. Bring lunch and warm beverages.

Baltimore. Saturday Monitoring Walks at Ft. McHenry. Half day. See Jan 3 for directions. Meet 8 AM at Visitors Center. Cancelled if raining. Leader: Jim Peters, 410-429-0966.

Patuxent. Governor Bridge Park. Meet 7:30 AM at Governor Bridge parking lot. No reservations are required. Park is located on Governor Bridge Rd, approximately 1 mile east of MD 301.

Sunday, January 21

Anne Arundel. Annapolis Neck and Thomas Pt. Waterfowl and soup social. Meet 12 PM. Reservations required by Jan 18. Contact Leader/ Host Gerald Weingrad, 410-280-8956, for meeting location and details.

Montgomery. Occoquan Bay NWR, VA. Full day. Bring lunch and warm drinks. Located at the confluence of the Potomac and Occoquan Rivers. Wetland habitats cover about 50% of the refuge; upland meadows and mature forest are interspersed among the wetlands. Meet 8 AM at the refuge car park. Reservations required. Located in Woodbridge, VA, 20 miles south of DC. From the north, take I-95

MOS Calendar (continued from page 11)

south to exit 161 (Woodbridge), follow Rte 1 south, cross the Occoquan River, turn left at light onto Dawson Beach Rd. Follow road through the entrance to refuge and continue to large parking lot on right. Leader: Mike Bowen, 301-530-5764.

Monday, January 22

MEETING. **Tri-County**. Program TBA. 7 PM at Asbury Methodist Church, Fox Rm, south entrance, Camden Ave, Salisbury.

Tuesday, January 23

POT LUCK DINNER AND MOVIE.

Washington. Pot luck starts at 6 PM. Everyone brings their own plate, utensils, drink, and a dish to share. After dinner, see the film *Flying Casanovas* and be led into the little-known world of avian architecture. 7:30 PM at the Mt. Aetna Nature Center, Hagerstown.

Friday, January 26

H Anne Arundel. Poplar Island Tour, Talbot Co. Winter waterfowl. Reservations required by Jan 22. Bring a lunch and meet 8:30 AM at the Bay 50 Shopping Center parking lot off Rte 50 on White Hall Rd. Contact Tom Bradford, 410-987-6074, for more info and to make reservations.

Saturday, January 27

MID-WINTER COUNT. **Baltimore**. To participate in post-migration bird count in your choice of location in Balt City or Co, contact Pete Webb, 410-486-1217 or pete_webb@juno.com.

MID-WINTER COUNT. **Harford**. Choose your location. Feeders are OK. Contact Mark Johnson at 410-692-5978 for more info.

Sunday, January 28

MID-WINTER COUNT. **Frederick**. Contact David Smith, 410-549-7082, to sign up. Tally Rally at the Smith's.

H Montgomery. Black Hill RP. Half day. Waterfowl and landbirds. Meet 8 AM at Visitor Center. Bring scope and snacks. Reservations required. Leader: Andy Martin, 301-294-4805 or apmartin2@comcast.net.

H Indicates Field Trip

Thursday, February 1

MEETING. **Frederick**. A speaker from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation will give a presentation on "Bay-Friendly Landscaping." 7 PM in the Community Rm, C. Burr Artz Library, Frederick.

Friday, February 2

MEETING. **Anne Arundel**. Dr. Michael Fry will discuss "Pesticides and Birds." 8 PM at Arlington Echo Outdoor Education Center, 975 Indian Landing Rd, Millersville. Hosts: Sue Ricciardi, Lynn Davidson, and Hal Wierenga.

Saturday, February 3

H Baltimore. Draw-in at Cylburn Arboretum. 10 AM-2 PM. Cylburn's natural science collection will be on display for you to draw, sketch, and paint. For artists 10 years and up. Bring your own art supplies and lunch. Artists and naturalists on hand for instruction. Fee \$2. Cylburn Arboretum, 4915 Greenspring Ave. To register, call 410-367-2217.

H Cecil. Winter at Fair Hill. Half day. Meet 7 AM at Fair Hill Nature Center, near covered bridge parking lot (fee). Enter Fair Hill off of Rte 273 and follow signs to the Nature Center. Leader: Richard Donham, donhamr@zoominternet.net.

H Frederick. Hotline Trip. Mike Welch will lead us around MD to look for winter rarities reported on the hotline. Emphasis will be on Frederick Co birds, but we may wander farther, depending on what's out there. Meet 8:30 AM at Baker Park. Call Mike, 301-874-5828 for more info.

H Harford. Bradenbaugh Flats. Another good morning for regulars and beginner birders alike. Bradenbaugh-born and raised, Dennis Kirkwood is the premiere guide to escort us through the bustling hedgerows and large open fields of this winter birding wonderland. The trip consists mostly of drive-and-stop birding, followed by a wrap-up at the Kirkwood's house featuring delicious homemade soup and breads. Meet 8 AM at Jarrettsville ES. Contact Dennis, 410-692-5905, for more info.

H Montgomery. Ocean City to Broadkill Marsh. Full day. Joint trip with ANS. Wintering waterfowl, gulls,

terns, and shorebirds. Meet 8:30 AM at parking lot at Ocean City Inlet. Reservations required. Leader: John Bjerke, 240-401-1643. Leave message.

H Patuxent. Fran Uhler NA. Meet 7:30 AM at the end of Lemon Bridge Rd off MD 197, just north of Bowie State U and the MARC line. No reservations required.

Sunday, February 4

MID-WINTER COUNT. **Anne Arundel**. Take the day off from your usual chores and spend the day at your favorite birding spot hunting down and counting all the birds you can find. Coordinator/Compiler: Tom Bradford, 410-987-0674.

Tuesday, February 6

MEETING. **Baltimore**. Speaker and topic TBA in BBC newsletter and on club web site. 7:30 PM at the Cylburn Arboretum, 4915 Greenspring Ave. Info: Pete Webb, 410-486-1217 or pete_webb@juno.com.

Wednesday, February 7

H Baltimore. First Wednesdays at Ft. McHenry. Meet 8 AM at Visitor Center. See Jan 3 for directions. Leader: Mary Chetelat, 410-665-0769.

MEETING. **Carroll**. Program TBA. 7:30 PM at Senior Center, 125 Stoner Ave, Westminster. Info: Karen Mobley, karenm657@earthlink.net.

Thursday, February 8

H Anne Arundel. Dotty's Choice. Half day. Meet 8 AM. Contact leader, Dotty Mumford, 410-849-8336, for meeting location.

MEETING. **Howard**. "Field Ornithology Workshop," by Sherry Tomlinson. A recipient of the MOS Doris Oakley Scholarship, Sherry attended a week-long workshop at the Audubon Camp on Hog Island, ME last summer. Hospitality and club bookstore 7:30 PM; meeting/program 8 PM at Howard Co Rec and Parks, 7210 Oakland Mills Rd, Columbia. Info: Kevin Heffernan, 410-418-8731.

Saturday, February 10

H Baltimore. Henlopen, DE to Ocean City, MD. Full day. Targeting loons, gannets, sea ducks, Great Cormorants,

and Purple Sandpipers. Razorbill possible. Bundle up; this trip is usually brutally cold and windy. Meet 7:30 AM at Nursery Rd P&R, off Balt Beltway I-695 exit 8 (not 8A). Alternate meeting place about 9 or 9:30 AM at the Lewes-Cape May Ferry passenger lot. Bring lunch. Leader: Pete Webb, 410-486-1217 or pete_webb@juno.com.

MID-WINTER COUNT. Cecil. Contact coordinator, Sean McCandless, seanmccandless1@comcast.net, for more details.

Sunday, February 11

H Baltimore. Marshy Pt. Nature Center. Half day. Waterfowl, raptors, and passerines. Half-mile trail leads to point overlooking Dundee Crk. Boots advisable and scopes useful. Meet 9 AM at Nature Center parking lot. Exit Balt Beltway I-695 at Rte 702 south. Take 2nd exit, Chase/Eastern Blvd. Go 6 miles. Turn right at Marshy Pt. sign. Go 0.25 mile and turn left into parking lot. Leader: Debbie Terry, 410-252-8771 or gt5s@bcpl.net.

MID-WINTER COUNT. Kent. Full day. Join the field crew or count in your neighborhood. Contact one of the leaders, Nancy Martin, 410-778-9568, or Peter Mann, 410-648-5205, for more info.

H Harford. Loch Raven. Join veteran leader Dave Larkin to explore one of Balt Co's most scenic waterscapes. Just six miles north of Towson, this reservoir and its surrounding forest are a magnet for pine-loving songbirds and waterfowl. Ring-necked Duck, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and Fox Sparrow are likely to be seen. Meet 8 AM at the MD 152 and MD 147 P&R. Contact Dave, 410-569-8319 for more details.

Tuesday, February 13

MEETING. Allegany. Speaker and program TBA. 7 PM at the Main Library, 31 Washington St, Cumberland. Located across the street from the Board of Ed. Bldg.

MEETING. Patuxent. "Moths of Maryland" by Bob Patterson. 7:30 PM at the College Park Airport Annex. Call Fred Shaffer at 410-721-1744 for add'l info.

Thursday, February 15

MEETING. Caroline. "Draw What You See Birding: Journaling for Birders" presented by Kurt Plinke. 7:30 PM at the Caroline Co. Public Library, 100 Market St, Denton.

Friday-Monday, February 16-19

H Montgomery. Presidents' Day Weekend on the Eastern Shore. 4 days. Joint trip with ANS. Bombay Hook, DE through Ocean City, MD, then Elliot Is., Choptank River, and Blackwater NWR. Winter songbirds, waterfowl, waterbirds, shorebirds, gulls, and raptors. Meet 7:30 AM at Bombay Hook NWR Visitor Center parking lot. Dress for cold, wind, and rain. Bring lunch and snacks. Make reservations with leader; 6-car limit. Leader will need to carpool, so please indicate your availability when reserving. Accommodations: Fri in Rehoboth Beach, DE, Econolodge, 302-227-0500; Sat in Ocean City, Francis Scott Key Motel, 410-213-0088; Sun in Cambridge, Best Value Inn, 410-221-0800. Optional Thurs night in Dover, DE, Dover Inn, 302-674-4011. Leader: Paul DuMont, 703-931-8994. Leave message after 7 rings.

Saturday-Monday, February 17-19

H Carroll. Presidents' Day Weekend on the Eastern Shore. Contact leader, Bob Ringler, 410-549-6031 for meeting place, time, and trip details.

H Anne Arundel. Annual Winter Birding Weekend. VA Beach area for winter birds. Reservations required by Feb 4. Contact leader, Peter Hanan, 410-672-5672 for reservations and meeting place and time.

H Frederick. Presidents' Day Weekend on the Eastern Shore. Meet 6 AM at Urbana P&R. Call Mike Welch, 301-874-5828, to reserve a spot.

Saturday, February 17

H Baltimore. Saturday Monitoring Walks at Ft. McHenry. Half day. See Jan 3 for directions. Meet 8 AM at Visitor Center. Cancelled if raining. Leader: Jim Peters, 410-429-0966.

H Cecil. Hard-core Owling. Meet 4 AM at Big Elk Mall parking lot (corner of Rtes 40 and 213), Elkton, near the Dunkin' Donuts. Leader: Sean McCandless, seanmccandless1@comcast.net.

H Harford. MD/DE Shore. A perennial favorite of local birders, this full-day adventure visits some of Delmarva's birding hotspots in search of winter waifs and northern strays. Target birds include Northern Gannet, eiders, Harlequin Duck, Purple Sandpiper, Snowy Owl, Great Cormorant, and Brown-headed Nuthatch. Bring lunch and warm, comfortable clothing. Meet 7 AM at the MD 155/I-95 P&R. Contact leader Les Eastman, 410-734-6969, for more info.

H Patuxent. Governor Bridge Park. Meet 7:30 AM at the parking lot for Governor Bridge Park. No reservations are required. Park is located on Governor Bridge Rd, approximately 1 mile east of MD 301.

Wednesday, February 21

MEETING. Montgomery. "Birders, Conservation, and Refuges—Making Better Connections," by Paul Baicich, NWR Association. Birding, bird conservation, and the NWR System have often developed in parallel ways, intersected, or at least moved in the same direction. Paul will discuss trends in the 20th century and the start of the 21st century. 7:30 PM. Potomac Presbyterian Church, 10301 River Rd, Potomac.

Saturday, February 24

H Harford. Perryman. Another great trip for beginners to come out and see what avian activity is all about! This trip will tour local forests and waterways, searching for Wilson's Snipe, Horned Lark, American Pipit, Savannah Sparrow, and a good mix of puddle ducks. Meet 8 AM at the north-east corner of the Aberdeen Wal-Mart adjacent to Rte 7. Leader: Randy Robertson, 410-273-9029.

H Kent. Chesapeake Farms Area. Half day. We will seek late winter waterfowl, raptors, and early spring migrants at this managed farm occupying the headwaters of the West Branch of Langford Crk. Meet 8 AM at Dollar General parking lot, Chestertown. Leaders: Walter Ellison, 410-778-9568, and Peter Mann, 410-648-5205.

MOS Calendar (continued from page 13)

H Anne Arundel. Quiet Waters Park. Winter water and landbirds. Half day. Meet 8 AM at the Parole P&R located off Harry Truman Pkwy. Leader: Pat Tate, 410-266-6043.

Monday, February 26

MEETING. **Tri-County**. Program TBA. 7 PM at Asbury Methodist Church, Fox Rm, south entrance, Camden Ave, Salisbury.

Tuesday, February 27

MEETING. **Washington**. *Dave Weesner* expounds on "Prairie Chickens." 7:30 PM at the Mt. Aetna Nature Center, Hagerstown.

Thursday, March 1

MEETING. **Frederick**. *Kathy Marmet* from Fox Haven reviews "Fox Haven Community Efforts toward Ecologically Responsible Living." Come learn about the wonderful initiatives at this ecological learning center. 7 PM in the Community Rm, C. Burr Artz Library, Frederick.

Saturday, March 3

MOS BOARD MEETING. Location TBA. Hosted by Howard Co Bird Club. Contact Janet Shields at janetbill@prodigy.net for more info.

H Baltimore. Horsehead Wetlands. Winter waterfowl and passerines. Meet 7:30 AM at Nursery Rd P&R off Balt Beltway I-695 exit 8 (not 8a), or 8:30 AM at the Horsehead Visitor Center lot. Leader: Kevin Graff, 410-557-2456 or ocean_city2001@yahoo.com.

H Frederick. Timberdoodles at Audrey Carroll. Doug Parker will lead us on a search for American Woodcocks. Meet 5:30 PM at the Rte 75 P&R just south of I-70. Bring a flashlight. For info, call Doug at 301-663-1909.

H Patuxent. Fran Uhler NA. Meet 7:30 AM at the end of Lemon Bridge Rd off MD 197, just north of Bowie State U and the MARC line. No reservations required.

Sunday, March 4

H Baltimore. Loch Raven Reservoir. Waterfowl and landbirds. Possible Bald Eagles and bluebirds. Two-mile level

walk. Meet 8 AM. Beginning birders welcome. Scopes useful. See Jan 1 listing for directions. Leader: Debbie Terry, 410-252-8771 or gt5s2bcpl.net.

H Anne Arundel. Wooten's Landing. Woodcocks. Breakfast at a location TBA. Meet 4:30 AM at the Parole P&R located off Harry Truman Pkwy. Leader: Katherine Lambert, 410-867-4056.

Tuesday, March 6

MEETING. **Baltimore**. Speaker and topic TBA in BBC newsletter and on club web site. 7:30 PM at the Cylburn Arboretum, 4915 Greenspring Ave. Info: Pete Webb, 410-486-1217 or pete_webb@juno.com.

Wednesday, March 7

H Baltimore. First Wednesdays at Ft. McHenry. Meet 8 AM at Visitor Center. See Jan 3 for directions. Leader: Mary Chetelat, 410-665-0769.

MEETING. **Carroll**. *Dave Smith* will present "Birding Cape Town, South Africa." 7:30 PM at the Senior Center, 125 Stoner Ave, Westminster. Contact Tammy Schwaab, 410-857-4913, for more info.

Thursday, March 8

MEETING. **Anne Arundel**. Richard E. Heise, Jr, Annual Wildlife Lecture. "Discovery of a Lost World." 8 PM. Quiet Waters Park. 600 Quiet Waters Park Rd, Annapolis. Hosts: Sandy Thomas, Linda Smith, and Marilyn Taylor.

Saturday, March 10

H Cecil. Horsehead Wetlands Center. 7 AM at Big Elk Mall parking lot (corner of Rtes 40 and 213) Elkton, near the Dunkin Donuts. Leader: Richard Donham, donhamr@zoominternet.net.

H Harford. John Smith Park, Bush River. Two veteran birders and trip leaders take you in search of waterfowl, eagles, and late winter migrants. Meet 7:30 AM in at the John Smith parking lot on Rte 40 just south of Anita C. Leight Center. Leaders: Dennis Kirkwood, 410-692-5905, and Lynn Davis.

H Patuxent. Fran Uhler NA Cleanup. Check the Prince George's ANS web site for details.

H Anne Arundel. Wye Island NRMA. Waterfowl, shorebirds, and landbirds. Bring a lunch and meet 7:30 AM at the Bay 50 Shopping Center parking lot off Rte 50 on White Hall Rd. Leader: Bobbi Reichwein, 410-798-5940.

Sunday, March 11

H Baltimore. Middle Creek WMA. All-day trip (bring lunch) to visit this major gathering place north of Lancaster, PA for Snow Geese and other waterfowl. There is also an excellent display of mounted birds at the Visitor Center. Note: Trip may go elsewhere if Middle Crk. is frozen over. Meet 8 AM at Timonium P&R on Greenspring Dr/Deereco Rd off Timonium Rd just east of I-83. Leader: Steve Sanford, 410-922-5103 or scartan@verizon.net.

Monday, March 12

H Baltimore. Poplar Island. This is an environmental restoration project similar to Hart-Miller. When completed it will provide approximately 570 acres of wetland and 570 acres of upland habitat. Poplar Is. is reached by a 20-30 minute boat ride from Tilghman Is. Meet 7 AM at Nursery Rd P&R or meet 9 AM at Tilghman Is. Scopes helpful. Facilities available. Bring snacks if desired. Lunch will be at a local restaurant. Reservations required. Leader: Chrissy Albanese. Coordinator: Gail Frantz, 410-833-7135 or guineabird@aol.com.

Tuesday, March 13

MEETING. **Kent**. Speaker TBA. 7:30 PM. Wesley Hall, Heron Point, E Campus Ave, Chestertown. For info, contact Nancy Martin, 410-778-9568, or Peter Mann, 410-648-5205.

MEETING. **Patuxent**. "The Natural History and Preservation of Box Turtles" by *Chris Swarth*. 7:30 PM at the College Park Airport Annex. Call Fred Shaffer at 410-721-1744 for add'l info.

MEETING. **Allegany**. Speaker TBA. 7 PM at the Main Library, 31 Washington St, Cumberland. Located across the street from the Board of Ed. Bldg.

Wednesday, March 14

H Harford. Timberdoodle Watch. An early evening trip designed to take you into the mating arena of one of North

H Indicates Field Trip

America's most bizarre birds, the American Woodcock, a seemingly confused and exceedingly plump little shorebird that prefers wooded fields and forest. Hear woodcocks call and watch them spring into a mating ritual that includes musical twitters and an upward spiraling flight followed by a "falling-leaf-like" descent. Dress warmly and meet 6 PM in the northeast corner of the Aberdeen Wal-Mart parking lot adjacent to Rte 7 and furthest from the bldg. Leader: Colleen Webster, 410-942-0867.

NEW APPOINTMENTS

Helen Horrocks, Frederick Co, has signed on as the new Office Manager for MOS. Helen will serve as central point-of-contact for MOS support activities such as ordering supplies, handling light correspondence, retrieving and distributing mail, assisting with the catalogue of books/journals, and organizing and maintaining the inventory of the storage locker. She will also be the "go-to" for issuing MOS license plate forms and MOS habitat signs; updating nametags, brochures, stationery, and business cards; tracking insurance certificates; and maintaining the MOS display board. Helen's e-mail is hlh_37@yahoo.com.

Marcia Watson has agreed to head up the Birding Trail Task Force. To take part in this project, contact Marcia at mww@udel.edu

Remembering Jay Smith

The Washington County Bird Club members remember with affection and respect their Chapter President Jay Smith, who died on October 24, 2006. He fought a courageous battle against multiple myeloma cancer for the last 16 months.

Jay, who was born in 1944, married Pamela Smith in 1973. He was employed by Montgomery County Government as an Emergency Medical Technician Instructor, serving as the program's coordinator and developer. In addition, he was associated with many professional organizations. He was dedicated to his church; he especially enjoyed teaching youth and served as a Youth Pastor for several years. Jay was a member and Webmaster of the Shenandoah and Potomac Valley Garden Railway Club. His Webmaster skills particularly benefited the Washington County Bird Club, since he was responsible for designing the club's web page and updating and expanding the site's usefulness.

Jay and Pam charted a course through life that she describes as rich and filled with love. They shared many life pleasures, including travel, ballroom dancing, scrap-booking, and outdoor garden trails, as well as bird watching. In fact, the two of them attended the annual MOS conferences before they even joined the local chapter. Despite all that Jay was going through during the time of his illness, he remained engaged in the activities of the club. Determined to attend the conference at Rocky Gap, he did so from his wheelchair. Towards the end of his illness, Jay loved to watch the birds in their backyard, which is a virtual wildlife sanctuary.

Jay said if he described his life in one word, it would be "teacher." He was indeed a teacher of good moral example, generosity, good humor, service, love, and enjoying life's simple pleasures. It was a privilege to have known him, and he will be greatly missed.

—Linda Field

MOS CONFERENCE 2007

Our 2007 Conference, hosted by the Tri-County Bird Club, will take place July 27-29 on the lovely campus of Salisbury University in the heart of Maryland's Eastern Shore.

Field Trips: Sam Dyke, who did an excellent job of arranging field trips for our 2001 Salisbury conference, will do so again for 2007. In addition to scheduling trips to Delmarva's many birding hot spots, Sam is working on several boat trips. If you are willing to lead a field trip, contact Sam at 410-742-5497.

Workshop: Mike Bowen, Statewide Education Activities Chair, is arranging a workshop for us again this year. Appropriately, this will be a Shorebird Workshop, concentrating on the tough ID challenges posed by these species. It will be presented on Friday afternoon by John Bjerke and Cyndie Loeper; John and Cyndie will lead a follow-up, all-day field trip on Saturday to Bombay Hook NWR, DE.

Artists' Exhibit: Dale Johnson will be doing her usual superb job producing the Artists' Exhibit. Dale has already issued invitations to some Delmarva artists, and she would appreciate receiving suggestions for others. Please send names and contact information to Dale at ckadj@juno.com.

Silent Auction and Raffle: Another of our conference mainstays, Maryanne Dolan, is looking for ways to improve the already excellent Silent Auction and Raffle. Anyone with suggestions—or services to donate (a boat trip would be nice!)—should contact Maryanne at maryanne.dolan@gmail.com.

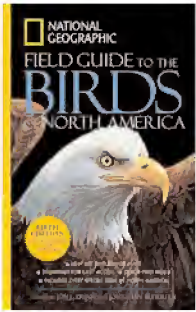
Keynote Speaker: On Friday night the multitalented Scott Weidensaul will recount the cross-country adventure detailed in his new book, *Return to Wild America*. In 1955, naturalists Roger Tory Peterson and James Fisher published their bestselling book, *Wild America*, chronicling a now-legendary 30,000-mile trip across North America. Fifty years later, Scott has retraced their epic journey to see what we've gained and lost, and to catch a glimpse of what the future holds. This should be an outstanding talk, to be followed by a book-signing.

As you can tell, 2007 is shaping up to be an excellent conference. I hope to see you there. If you have suggestions or questions, don't hesitate to contact me.

—Janet Shields, Chair
Conference Committee
janetbill@prodigy.net

BOOK REVIEW

National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America, 5th Edition • National Geographic Society, Washington, D.C., 2006.



More than 20 years have elapsed since National Geographic published in 1983 the first edition of what was then the only bird field guide to cover all regularly occurring species in North America. Numerous reprintings, four subsequent editions, and more than 1.5 million copies later, this is still one hot title!

So what have Editors Jon Dunn and Jonathan Alderfer given us in this new edition that is new and different? The trim size of the book has been expanded by three-eighths of an inch, with the extra space used to enlarge the maps on the left side of each page by a whopping 60 percent. As a result, the maps, updated by Paul Lehman to reflect current knowledge of distribution and migration patterns, are much easier to decipher. The new edition also uses heavy-duty cover stock with flaps front and back that feature, respectively, family and “quick-find” indexes; most birders will find these extremely useful. New thumb-tabs at the edge of text pages allow rapid access to just 7 of the 79 families covered, albeit families that people frequently want to access, such as flycatchers, gulls, and warblers. Some 67 rare species that have appeared in North America a handful of times, along with four extinct species, are featured in short illustrated vignettes in a 14-page section. “Rarities” expected somewhat more frequently (e.g., Blue Mockingbird, Roadside Hawk) are now incorporated into the appropriate section in the main part of the guide.

This new edition recognizes recent AOU and ABA splits; for example, Cackling Goose and Canada Goose are treated

separately, as are Sooty and Dusky Grouse (splits from Blue Grouse). Plates and text are expanded for some species—like Willet—with distinct races (Eastern and Western). A few pages have been completely repainted: small grebes, tyrant flycatchers, titmice and chickadees, pipits, some of the *Aimophila* sparrows. Other individual species have been repainted here and there—I noted juvenile Northern Harrier, Gray Kingbird, and Virginia’s Warbler, and doubtless there are plenty of others. However, many plates are almost identical to those used in the previous four editions. Sometimes the birds are shown larger or smaller than before, sometimes they are merely flipped right to left or vice versa. Lots of species look in Edition #5 pretty much the same as in my worn and crumpled 1983 Edition #1. Except that the bright white paper and scintillating color reproduction in #5 provide superior images for the book’s primary purpose—to help birders nail that ID.

The NGS Guide is still the most practical field guide for birders, novice or experienced. The new 5th Edition has a suggested retail price of \$24, reasonable in itself. You can buy it for much less than that on the Internet. It’s a real bargain. So go for it—take the Fifth!

If you need more details on all species it covers, by all means also purchase the NGS companion volume, *The Complete Birds of North America*, by Jonathan Alderfer and a bevy of other bird gurus. This hefty tome was reviewed by Lydia Schindler in the March/April 2006 *Yellowthroat*. Just don’t expect to take that one into the field.

—Michael Bowen
Montgomery Bird Club

POSTMASTER: TIME-DATED MATERIAL—PLEASE EXPEDITE!

LAST CALL

... for entries in the **Pin Design Contest**, deadline January 15. Check the MOS web site and/or contact John Malcolm, 301-977-5788 or smudgie@comcast.net.

... for **Annual Bird List** submissions, deadline January 20. Get a form at www.mdbirds.org/birds/mdbirds/locality/lstfrm2006.pdf, or contact Norm Saunders at 410-228-5066 or marshhawk@verizon.net.

... for **Scholarship** applications, deadline January 31. Check the web site and/or contact Tom Strikwerda at 301-942-2841 or tom.strikwerda@verizon.net.

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