



Wrenderings



The Newsletter of the Harford Bird Club

Volume 24 Number 4

February, 2011

President's Perch

THUD! The distinctive sound that makes feeder watchers wince – the sound of a window strike. I heard it at work today at about 10:30 AM, and this one was particularly loud. I turned to see a few downy feathers gently floating just outside my window. I went outside fully expecting to see a raptor lying on the ground beneath the window. Sure enough, there she was – an immature Cooper's Hawk sitting on her belly – but at least she was alive! Then I was elated to see that she was perfectly fine, but the grackle in her talons was not. The raptor looked at me and flew a short distance away towards a row of yew bushes with the lifeless grackle dangling in her grasp. A minute later, the hawk flew a few yards farther to the base of a holly tree for more privacy and the chance to finally reap its reward.

I returned inside to tell a co-worker, Rick, of the discovery. Rick enjoys the outdoors also, and so for a few seconds we watched the hungry hawk. We agreed to let the Coop eat in seclusion for a while, then revisit the scene ten minutes later to see what "table scraps" she may have left behind. On this next visit, the predator was still ripping out strips of grackle meat, as she was at 10:55 and again at 11:15. At the one-hour mark, it appeared that the meal was finally over, but the accipiter remained hunkered down beneath the holly tree. Rick and I could appreciate how one feels after consuming a large meal, so we left the hawk to digest in peace and started our own lunch breaks. At the end of our lunch, the Coop still remained.

Finally, three hours after the saga began, Rick and I saw that the Cooper's Hawk had taken off. Now was the moment we'd been waiting for. We pushed aside a couple of small branches and crouched near a scattering of feathers. I used a twig to gently sweep away a few leaves in search of blood evidence and other remains. I eventually found the lower mandible, then searched deeper to discover the upper mandible still attached to a neatly cleaned skull. Grackle eyeballs must be a delicacy to a Cooper's Hawk as they were missing from the large, deep sockets. As macabre as it may sound, Rick and I were fascinated to find these scraps of forensic evidence.

As I've said before, you can spend years upon years studying birds and their behavior, and still experience something new. In this instance, Rick and I noticed that relatively few of the feathers lay atop the leaf litter when we arrived upon the scene. Most of the feathers were covered by leaves. Dare I say that the Cooper's Hawk made a conscious effort to hide her tracks by burying most of the feathers and inedible parts beneath the leaves. If so, who was she hiding the evidence from? Other predators? Other prey? It's not every day that I get to watch the post-meal behavior of accipiters. Maybe someday I'll find out if this is typical behavior.

As winter releases its icy grip, I hope that you venture outdoors in these coming weeks, and see something new, exhilarating, and provoking in the world of birds. When you do, share it with a friend.

~Dave Webb

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Plan Ahead!

- Dinner Meeting: Fri, Mar 4, 6:15 PM @ Churchville Presbyterian Church
- Earth Day: Sat, Apr 16, 11-4 @ Aberdeen Centennial Park
- "Pizza" dinner meeting: Fri, May 6, 6:15 PM @ Harford Glen
- May Count: Sat, May 14
- MOS Conference @ Wisp: May 20-22
- State Board meeting: Sat, Jun 5, 10 AM @ Piney Run

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Dinner Meeting March 4

The club's next gathering will be held on Friday, March 4, at Churchville Presbyterian Church. Sign up now (see page 9) to attend the pre-meeting dinner served by the Presbyterian Women starting at 6:15. The business meeting will start at 7:15, and include the presentation of 2010 club awards and another rousing raffle. The meeting will culminate with a fascinating presentation by club members Jean Wheeler and Lynn Feryus about their recent trip to New Zealand.

New Zealand: Kiwi, Kaka and Takahe

Join Jean Wheeler and Lynn Feryus to view New Zealand birds. For three weeks in November (spring down under) they visited North, South and Stewart Islands. They also boated out to smaller islands established as wildlife refuges to protect endemic birds from introduced mammals. No kangaroos or koalas, it divided off from Australia so early the only native mammals are two bat species. It is an unusual country, lush with tree ferns and spectacular snow-capped peaks where alpine parrots are considered a nuisance. Come see the birds that flew in and even some that were dropped off.

Bird Droppings

Club News?

Have news the club should know about? Births, deaths, marriages, or any other notable events that belong in the newsletter? Please contact Corresponding Secretary Marty Crouse-Farley at 410-557-6786 or email to mhcf@msn.com.

Welcome Back!

A warm Harford Bird Club welcome goes out to **Donna Bumba** of Havre de Grace who has rejoined after several years of absence.

Earth Day

Volunteers are needed to man the club's booth for one or more hours at the Earth Day Celebration in Aberdeen's Centennial Park on Saturday, April 16. Contact Publicity Chair, Donna Yorkston, at donnayorkston@hotmail.com.

MOS Conference

Make your plans now to attend the 2011 MOS Conference at the Wisp Ski Resort in Garrett County on May 20-22. Enjoy a weekend celebration of birds and birding, featuring field trips to prime hotspots of the western Maryland area led by top birders from across the state. A brochure with registration information and more details will be mailed shortly; or visit the MOS website at www.mdbirds.org/activities/conference/annual.html.

MAY COUNT

May Count is scheduled for May 14. If you would like to participate, contact Rick Cheicante at 410-803-2712 or rickcheicante@cs.com.



Harford Birdlife

by: Monroe Harden

Harford County had some excellent rare visitors during this early winter. This month's column covers the period from December 4th, 2010 through January 28th, 2011.

Geese, Swans, Ducks

RC and DK found a **Ross' Goose** in the large flock of **Canada Geese** at Turney's Pond off Harford Creamery Rd on Jan 8th. It was last reported in a nearby field by RK on Jan 11th. Several others saw and photographed the goose during its stay. Several **Cackling Geese** were also seen at Turney's Pond throughout the period. BH reported on near Canning House Rd on Dec 11th. RK saw a large group of about 150 **Snow Geese** flying toward the bay over the Susquehanna River on Jan 16th.



Photo by Rick Cheicante

JH reported a group of about 75 **Tundra Swans** in the bay near Swan Harbor on Dec 22nd. He also saw 10 **Gadwall**, 2 **American Wigeon**, about 450 **Canvasback**, 1 **Greater Scaup**, 48 **Bufflehead**, 1 **Common Goldeneye**, 26 **Hooded Merganser**, and 120 **Ruddy Ducks**. PL and DL saw 3 **Gadwall**, 1 **Northern Pintail**, and 1 **Green-winged Teal** at Perryman on Jan 1st. MJ saw a **Northern Shoveler** at Bynum Run Park on Jan 20th. BH noted 2 **Green-winged Teal** near Chelsea Rd in Perryman on Dec 11th.



Gamebirds, Vultures, Hawks

DB saw a group of about 20 **Wild Turkeys** near Rocks State Park on Jan 4th. FM saw and photographed an all-white **Turkey Vulture** near Rocks State Park on Jan 11th. It was either an albino or leucistic bird. RC reported a possible **Northern Goshawk** near his Creswell home on Dec 23rd. BC also reported a **Northern Goshawk** near the intersection of Rts 22 and 543 on Jan 28th.



Owls, Woodpeckers, Flycatchers, Larks

BH saw an **Eastern Screech Owl** near Chelsea Rd in Perryman on Dec 11th. LE had one land on the road (Craig's Corner Rd) as he drove by at about 6 PM on Jan 18th. It flew away after a

moment, so the bird was apparently in good shape. DB had a pair of **Great Horned Owls** at her Street home on Jan 1st.

EK had a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** at his suet feeder in Jarrettsville on Jan 8th. BH saw a **Hairy Woodpecker** in Perryman on Dec 11th. JW reported an apparent **Western Kingbird** flying over I-95 between exits 74 and 77 on Dec 16th. He saw it from his moving car, so he could only say that it was probably a Western Kingbird.

DK had a group of about 50 **Horned Larks** in the fields off Harford Creamery Rd on Jan 24th.



Chickadees, Wrens, Thrushes

BH found 7 **Black-capped Chickadees** in the Perryman area on Dec 11th. He and his group saw 3 more in Rocks State Park. JH saw one near the pier at Swan Harbor on Dec 22nd. BH also saw a **Brown Creeper** in Perryman on Dec 11th. He saw **Winter Wrens** near Park Beach Rd (2) and at Eden Mill (1) that day. DB saw one in Rocks State Park on Dec 31st, as well as a **Gray Catbird**. BR heard a **Marsh Wren** at Swan Harbor on Dec 11th. RK and his family saw a **Brown Thrasher** at their feeder in Darlington on Jan 17th.



Pipits, Warblers, Sparrows

BR saw several **American Pipits** flying over Swan Harbor on Dec 11th. DB had an **Audubon's Warbler** at her feeder in Street on Dec 4th. It had been visiting daily since Oct 25th. RB had a **Yellow-rumped Warbler** at her Abingdon home from Jan 8th through Jan 27th.

SH saw 3 **American Tree Sparrows** at Mullins Park in Aberdeen on Jan 11th. RC had a **Chipping Sparrow** at his Creswell home on Jan 14th. DB saw a **Fox Sparrow** in Street on Dec 12th. BH and his group counted 98 **Song Sparrows** at Perryman Park on Dec 11th. They also saw 2 **Swamp** and 5 **White-crowned Sparrows** there. DK saw a **Lapland Longspur** in the group of **Horned Larks** near Harford Creamery Rd on Jan 24th and 25th.

Harford Birdlife (continued from page 3)

Grosbeaks, Blackbirds, Orioles, Finches

RC had a female **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** at his Creswell feeder on Dec 17th. BH saw 4 **Rusty Blackbirds** near Chelsea Rd in Perryman on Dec 11th. RC had 1 at his feeder on Jan 9th and 4 (3 males and 1 female) on Jan 14th. This was the second year in a row that he has seen **Rusty Blackbirds** at his home feeders. He also saw a bronzed **Common Grackle** at the feeder on Jan 9th.



DB had a female **Baltimore Oriole** at her feeder in Street from Dec 4th through Jan 4th. MW reported a **Pine Siskin** at a sunflower seed feeder at her Webster Village home on Dec 15th. DW saw one there again on Jan 23rd. RK and his family had one at their Darlington home on Jan 8th.

Contributors

BC- Bill Collins, BH- Bill Hubick, BR- Bob Ringler, DB- Debbie Bowers, DK- Dennis Kirkwood, DL- Dave Larkin, DW- Dave Webb, EK- Ed Koss, FM- Frank Marsden, JH- Joe Hanfman, JW- Jim Wilkinson, LE- Les Eastman, MJ- Mark Johnson, MW- Marsha Webb, PL- Peter Lev, RB- Ruth Bergstrom, SH- Susan Hood, RC- Rick Cheicante, RK- Russ Kovach,

39th Annual Rock Run CBC

The Rock Run Christmas Bird Count was held on Sunday, December 26, 2010 and 39 birders of 13 parties covered the 7.5 mile radius of the Rock Run area. The combination of a snowy forecast and it being the day after Christmas contributed to a loss of some of our "regulars" which resulted in some areas left uncovered or sparsely covered. The weather had been unseasonably cold and below freezing. This resulted in many bird species not observed on this year's count. Examples included Wilson's Snipe, Killdeer, Eastern Phoebe and Gray Catbird. Very few Double-crested Cormorants and relatively few (compared with previous years) White-throated Sparrows were observed. However, with the cold temperatures came increasing numbers of waterfowl species where open water could be found in the Susquehanna River. Waterfowl species and numbers were surprising up this year with a Long-tailed Duck and a Black Scoter (first time) found. In total, 15 duck species were found.

The morning began cold and overcast with snow beginning in the mid-afternoon. Wind picked up in the afternoon making birding particularly difficult. Only two species of owls were found, and gull species were not evident. An infusion of Black-capped Chickadees this year continued with a few isolated observations for the count. In total 99 species were observed.

Party-specific details are provided as follows.

Oakwood: Ruth Bergstrom, Donna and George Yorkston (**34** species) found a Pileated Woodpecker, Savannah Sparrow and three raptor species.

Rowlandsville: Les Eastman, Diane Jones, John, Victoria and Eric Fuller (**45** species) found Yellow-rumped Warblers, White-crowned Sparrows, four raptor species and the high count for Bald Eagle (16).

Colora: Working in his "home" territory Tom Congersky, Rupert Rossetti, and Mary and Kara Procell (**38** species) found Tundra Swans, Eastern Towhee, and four raptor species.

Bainbridge: Matt Hafner worked solo and found Black Scoter (new for the count), Horned Grebe and Black-capped Chickadees (**68** species for the count). He found seven species of sparrows including Chipping, White-crowned, and Fox. He also found the only Rusty Blackbirds (45) and Brown Thrashers (2) for the count. Matt found the most species of the count!

Perry Point: Tom Trafton, Debbie Brown, Mark Daley and John Hughes found (**56** species) Red-breasted Nuthatch, American Kestrel, all three merganser species and over 2,000 Tundra Swans.

Swan Creek: Frank Gallo, Becky Gallo, Vanessa Mickan, Kerry and Callum MacLellan, and the Mosley family (**64** species) counted solo at Swan Creek and found American Tree Sparrow, Lesser Black-backed Gull, five raptor species, fourteen waterfowl species and the only Cedar Waxwing (1) of the count.

Havre de Grace: Rick Cheicante (**66** species) found Black-crowned Night-Heron (1), Black-capped Chickadees (2), five raptor species, and the only Eastern Meadowlark for the count.

Aldino: Phil Powers & John Taylor (**37** species) found Fox Sparrow, Winter Wren and five woodpecker species. They also had most American Tree Sparrows for the count (10).

Field Trip Reports

Susquehanna: Mark Johnson, Joel Donnelly, and Amelie Genovese (**52** species) spotted a Long-tailed Duck (also seen by Matt Hafner from the Bainbridge side), Winter Wren, Black-capped Chickadee (2) and (thanks to Marsha Webb from her feeder) nailed the only Pine Siskin for the count. Thanks, Marsha!



Rolling Green: Dave Webb, Mark Magnani, Ann Helton and Bill Burchett (**48** species) found Purple Finches (5), White-crowned Sparrow, Red-breasted Nuthatch, both kinglets, and Eastern Screech-owl.

Deer Creek: Jay Rubinoff, Steve Getlein, Connie and Tim Alexander (**33** species) birded the Palmer State Park area and found Brown Creeper, Pileated Woodpecker and most of the White-throated Sparrows (111) most of us did not observe.



Darlington: Uncovered this year.



Conowingo Dam: Jay's team and Mark's team took forays into this area separately and combined data (25 species). Red-breasted Nuthatch and American Black Duck were found, along with the usual gull species (excepting Bonaparte's; not seen this year).

Dublin: Dave Farner birded solo this area (**39** species) observing Chipping and Swamp Sparrows, and Horned Grebe above the dam.

River Flats: Dennis & Heather Kirkwood, Peter Jay, Grace Hiter, Phillip McKnight and Dillon Yueng (**42** species) participated nautically on Peter Jay's boat again this year. The water was rough and the boat was full. This crew pulled out Black-crowned Night-Heron (7), Bald Eagle (17), both scaup species and Canvasback (262).



We again thank the warm hospitality Lorna & Adele Wortman for hosting our tally after the count. It was great to get out of the weather for a while! Finally, though Suzanne will remain on to ensure the integrity of the data; Mark has transferred the counts to the capable hands of Rick Cheicante. Mark wishes to thank all of you who have helped out over the years and who have made this a memorable effort.

Mark S. Johnson
Suzanne Procell

Perryman

On Jan 1, six club members celebrated the New Year with a trip to Perryman hoping to get a quick start on their 2001 year lists. The weedy open fields and shrub edges did not disappoint as we found Northern Harrier, Horned Lark and several sparrow species, including Field, Savannah, White-crowned and American Tree. A stray Snow Goose flying over the Bush River was a nice surprise, although frozen waters kept us from finding much else in the way of waterfowl. We closed out the morning with a visit to Mullins Landfill in Aberdeen, where we found more American Tree Sparrows, Swamp Sparrow, Hermit Thrush and Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Our morning tally came to 52 species. ~ Dave Webb

Feeder Tour

Fourteen birders enjoyed a colorful and lively display of avian beauty and diversity from the vantage point of the comfortable homes of three of our club members. Eighteen species were observed at the first stop with 15 at the second and 23 at the third and a total for the day of 32 species. Highlights included Black-capped Chickadee, 3 hawk species, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Purple Finch, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and Eastern Bluebird. However, good birding was only part of the story. All agreed that pleasant conversation, delicious food and drink and the warm hospitality of our three gracious hosts made this a special day. ~Tom Gibson

Blackwater NWR

On Saturday, January 22 with a wind chill of 10 degrees, four brave people joined Randy Robertson and myself for a trip to Cambridge, Blackwater, and Hooper's Island. Beside the usual flock of numerous Bald Eagles, we had a large variety of waterfowl including Tundra Swan, Snow Geese, Canada Geese, Mallard, Am. Wigeon, Canvasback, Surf Scoter, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Long-tailed Duck, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Pied-billed Grebe, Am. Coot and Great Blue Heron. We also got a # 10 look at an American Woodcock walking along the side of the road. On this cold and windy day we saw a total of 41 species. ~Tom Congersky

Field trip schedule compiled by Tom Gibson and Dennis Kirkwood

February 27 (Sun.)- Loch Raven Reservoir. Explore the beautiful surroundings of Baltimore's premier watershed for wintering migrant songbirds, water birds, and raptors. Meet at the 147/152 Park-and- Ride near Fallston at 8:00 am. Leader is Dave Larkin (410-569-8319 or dlarkin@towson.edu).

March 5 (Sat.) – Broad Creek Scout Camp. Explore the diverse habitats of this extensive and beautiful camp for wintering songbirds and possible raptors. Meet at Dublin Elementary School on route 136 north of route 1 at 8:30 am. Leader is Sue Procell (410-676-6602; suzanne.procell@us.army.mil).

March 9 (Wed.) – Timberdoodle Search. Join this evening watch for one of our most interesting (and elusive!) birds, the American Woodcock, as it performs its mating sky dance. Meet at 5:30 PM at the 155/95 Park and Ride. The Leader is Tom Gibson (410-734-4135; gibsonld@aol.com)

March 12-13 (Sat.-Sun.) –New Jersey Coast. A winter waterfowl bonanza along the mid-Jersey Coast. Join leader Dave Ziolkowski for this overnight trip. Limited lodging is available. Contact Dave for departure time and place and for lodging information (443-299-8453; djziolkowski@yahoo.com).

March 16 (Wed.) – Timberdoodle Search. Join this evening watch for one of our most interesting (and elusive!) birds, the American Woodcock, as it performs its mating sky dance. Meet at 6:30 pm at the 155/95 Park and Ride. The Leader is Elaine Beery (410-272-6037; ehbeery@yahoo.com).

March 19 (Sat.) – Harford Waterfowl Tour. Visit several areas in the county to see a variety of waterfowl as they congregate prior to migrating north. Meet at the McDonalds in Edgewood on Route 40 at 7:00 am. Bring a photo ID for admittance to APG. The leader is Dave Webb (410-939-3537 or porzana@comcast.net).

March 26 (Sat.) – Harford Glen. Experience a variety of habitats and a great variety of birds at this neighborhood site. Meet at the Glen (west end of Wheel Road) at 7:30 am. Contact Lynn Davis (410-569-0504; lynnd@iximd.com) or Dave Larkin (410-569-8319; dlarkin@towson.edu).

April 2 (Sat.) – Susquehanna River Gulls. Enjoy birding at Lapidum Boat Landing and other spots along the Susquehanna. This is prime time for unusual gulls (Little and Black-headed Gulls) and grebes, including Red-necked and Horned. Meet at the Lapidum boat launch at the end of Lapidum Road at 8:00 am. The leaders are Dennis Kirkwood (410-692-5905; dkirkw@verizon.net) and Randy Robertson.

April 10 (Sun.) - Perryman Area. Explore the open country of Southern Harford County for sparrows, larks,

and other field birds. Meet at the Aberdeen Walmart in the NE corner of the parking lot at 7:30 am. The leader is Phil Powers (410-679-4116 or birdsinmd@verizon.net).

April 16 (Sat.) – Susquehanna State Park. A beautiful time to take a stroll through wildflowers while looking for early migrant songbirds and lingering winter visitors. Meet at the confluence of Deer Creek and the Susquehanna River just north of Rock Run Mill at 7:30 am. The leaders are Colleen Webster (410-459-4577; cwebster@harford.edu) and Sue Procell.

April 20 (Wed.) – Northern Harford Farmland Tour – Visit some new habitat near Norrisville for sparrows, early warblers, and woodpeckers. Meet at the Norrisville Library on route 23 at 7:30 am. The leader is Dennis Kirkwood (410-692-5905; dkirkw@verizon.net).

April 27 (Wed.) – Northern Ma and Pa Trail. Search for early warblers and other songbirds along this beautiful trail near Fallston. Meet at Annie's Playground off Connelly Road at 7:30 am. The leader is Susan Hood (410-877-0574; susanhood@comcast.net)

April 30 (Sat.) – Calling All Photographers. This outing is designed for all who would like to try their hand at birding photography regardless of experience or equipment. Accomplished to beginning photographers welcome. Meet at the upper parking lot of Harford Glen (west end of Wheel Road) at 8:00 AM with camera in hand. The leaders are Tom Gibson (410-734-4135; gibsonld@aol.com) and Monroe Harden.

May 1 (Sun.) - Eden Mill Park. A bird-banding demonstration will be followed by a walk along Deer Creek to enjoy the bird-rich habitats of this area. This is a great trip for beginners and children. Expect warblers, kingfishers, and wood ducks. Meet at the banding station on Eden Mill Road at 8:00 am. Leader is Mark Johnson (410-692-5978; mark.s.johnson@us.army.mil).

May 7 (Sat.) - Winters Run Road. 7:30 am. Meet at the Park and Ride at Route 24 and I95. Join veteran leaders Dave Larkin and Lynn Davis to enjoy one of Harford's rural landscapes and the spring songbird migration. Contact Lynn Davis (410-569-0504; lynnd@iximd.com) or Dave Larkin (410-569-8319 or dlarkin@towson.edu).

May 8 (Sun.) – Harford Shorebirds. Meet at 7:00 am at Swan Harbor Farm to look for migrant shorebirds as they make their way to the Arctic. Leader is Dave Webb (410-939-3537; porzana@comcast.net).

May 19 (Thur.) – Jerusalem Mill. Take a mid-week break in the Little Gunpowder Valley. Meet at the Mill on Jerusalem Road at 7:00 am. The leader is Phil Powers (410-679-4116 or birdsinmd@verizon.net).

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WILD BIRD MARKETPLACE



The Harford Bird Club Dinner Reservation Form

Please cut and mail the bottom portion of this page to Eileen Nack, 8 Cresmont Drive, Aberdeen MD 21001 by Friday, February 25, 2011 if you plan on attending.

_____ Number of adults (at \$13.00 each)
_____ Number of children 16 and under (at \$5.00 each)

Please make checks payable to Harford County MOS.



Print your name(s) above as you would like it to appear on your name tag!

Include address and phone number if you would like transportation to the meeting.

TEL: _____

Address: _____



Harford Bird Club March Meeting



"New Zealand: Kiwi, Kaka and Takahe"

Presented by:

Jean Wheeler and Lynn Feryus

Friday, March 4th, 2011

Dinner - 6:15pm - General Meeting - 7:15pm

Location: Churchville Presbyterian Church

2844 Churchville Road

Churchville, MD 21028



Mail To:

If unable to deliver, please return to:
Martha Crouse-Farley
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Jarrettsville, MD 21084

