

President's Corner On Vultures and Conservation

by Wayne Bell

Several years ago, too long to remember precisely, I was working in my garden in early spring. That Saturday morning I happened to be wearing headphones, listening to National Public Radio out of Salisbury. I stopped my roto-tilling or compost spreading mid-row when Scott Simon introduced a story about the "Buzzards" returning to Hinckley, Ohio, every year on March 15.

It turns out that Hinckley is a southern suburb of Cleveland, somewhat distant but not so far as to escape the influence of that city's Department of Parks and Recreation. The town's major claim to fame may be Hinckley Lake a mile or two southeast, or perhaps the Hinckley Reservation south of the lake. And then there are the "Buzzards." There is a place in the Reservation named Buzzards' Roost, and every March 15 the citizens of Hinckley gather there to celebrate the return of these birds. In fact, there is an "Official Buzzard Spotter," one Dr. Bob Hinkle, who rises early on that day to lead a group armed with binoculars and cameras to compete for the first sighting. Of course, everyone recognizes that what once passed for "Buzzards" are in fact Turkey Vultures. Even so, for decades a local rock station was known as "The Home of the Buzzards."

Scott Simon's piece focused less on the celebration than on its history. He interviewed an individual whom I recall as being manager

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The Maryland Yellowthroat

Newsletter of the Maryland Ornithological Society

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BIRD BLITZ 2009: A STATEWIDE SUCCESS FOR BIRD CONSERVATION

BY DAVID YEANY AND DAVID CURSON

In its third full year, the statewide Bird Blitz effort was likely the most successful to date. Through generous funding provided by a MOS Research Grant, a State Wildlife Grant from Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and an Innovation Grant from the Audubon/Together Green Partnership, the Bird Blitz profited from several positive changes. Most notably, the program was able to hire an Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program Assistant to conduct and coordinate Bird Blitz surveys. Not only did this ensure adequate coverage at most target sites, we were able to plan and organize survey routes in advance using Geographic Information Systems. Data collection was enhanced even more by using handheld GPS units to record locations of at-risk species.

In 2009, 40 volunteers and two Audubon Maryland-DC staff members conducted 107 Bird Blitz surveys at 13 candidate IBA sites and three already-identified IBAs in 12 counties across Maryland. Surveys at candidate sites recorded breeding-season counts for at-risk bird species; these will be used to determine if a site supports threshold populations of these species and thus qualifies as an IBA. Bird Blitz surveys were held at existing IBAs to determine whether current boundaries should be extended, or if a state IBA might also qualify as a global IBA based on counts of globally vulnerable species (e.g., Saltmarsh Sparrow).

The 2009 results from each site are summarized below. Count totals

for some of the primary target at-risk species are included. We also counted secondary target species belonging to distinct assemblages (e.g., Forest Interior-Dwelling Species or FIDS) for different habitat types; this information will be used to assess the importance of candidate sites to entire species assemblages, in addition to individual at-risk species. For more details, read site-based Bird Blitz summaries online at: www.audubonmddc.org.

Dan's Mountain, Allegany County

Volunteers: 1

Bird counts: 4

Surveys were conducted at Dan's Mountain Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and Dan's Mountain State Park. We recorded a total of 19 Cerulean Warbler, 20 Worm-eating Warbler, 11 Kentucky Warbler, 21 Wood Thrush, and 9 Louisiana Waterthrush. This count of Cerulean Warbler exceeds not only the state threshold but also the global IBA threshold. The area also had a relatively high FIDS diversity, with 22 species recorded for the region. Participants: Mary Huebner and David Yeany.

Allegany & Garrett Grasslands,

Allegany & Garrett Counties

Volunteers: 6

Bird counts: 11

Reclaimed surface mines and agricultural areas along the Allegany/Garrett County line form a complex of grasslands, with adjacent

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President's Corner *continued from page 1*

of Cleveland Metroparks. When asked about the apparent punctuality of vulture return, the manager explained that it was a result of the Great American Hunt that took place annually around Christmastime before 1900. Called the Christmas Side Hunt in other parts of the country, sides or teams competed to outshoot one another at the expense of feathered and furred quarry. A lot of the game not recovered from the field became covered by winter snows. Mid-March, related the manager, was about the time the snows had melted enough to expose the carcasses, and the "Buzzards" converged to feast. (This was a time well before road-kills.) Today a road north of Hinckley Lake is still called the Great Hunt Trail, sadly commemorating an era when our nation's wildlife was considered an expendable resource.

But not by everyone, as the history of American conservation also dates back to those times. Perhaps the most famous conservationist from the turn of the last century was ornithologist Frank M. Chapman, one of the first officers of what became the Audubon Society. Chapman proposed a new holiday activity as an alternative to slaughters like the Great American Hunt,

and on Christmas Day 1900 he and 27 other birders conducted 25 "Christmas Bird Censuses" from New Brunswick and Toronto in Canada to Baldwin, LA and Pueblo, CO. (The nearest counts to MD were along the Delaware River in PA.) They counted a combined total of only 90 species. No matter, the annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was born.

As you read this, the 100th year of the Christmas Bird Count will have passed. I hope you were able to participate in one or more counts around MD and beyond, even if you stayed at home and contributed feeder watch data. CBC trends are finding their way into many field guides and they are telling us a lot about how wintering species are faring. Even if you never get to Hinckley to celebrate the return of the "Buzzards," you will have contributed to a proud moment in bird conservation. And that is celebration enough.

The Yellowthroat, the Postal Service, and the Web Site

Although the November issue of the *Yellowthroat* was mailed on October 26, many if not most MOS members were still waiting to receive their copy six weeks later. It appears that the delay was the result of a restructuring within the US Postal system. There's been some consolidation of postal distribution centers, and it seems that this issue of TMY got caught in the crossfire.

The very good news is that **John Christy** of Frederick Co stepped in to update the MOS web site [www.mdbirds.org]. (Meantime, as a stopgap measure, he and **Howard Lefkowitz** had graciously posted the *Yellowthroat* on their respective county web sites, Frederick and Montgomery.) John has posted not only the *Yellowthroat*—both November and September issues, plus a separate listing for the Calendar and for the Christmas Count information—but a variety of updates and fixes.

"A good way to see what I'm up to," John writes, "is to look at the **What's New** page, where I shall post references to most of what I'm doing, and links to much of it in the style the page has used before."

A Way with Words

In the November/December *Yellowthroat*, President Wayne Bell recalled how, as a boy, he had relished Roger Tory Peterson's small paperback, *How to Know the Birds*. Here are some captivating phrases from that book:

Swifts: "twinkle along."

Wood Duck: "the most beautiful duck in the world."

Hummingbirds: "bills like needles and wings like gauze."

Woodpecker: "the professional aplomb of a telephone lineman using spikes and a belt."

Shrikes: "songbirds with the personality of hawks."

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• Winter Wonders •

• As we launch into 2010, keep •

• in mind those species predicted •

• "most likely to be new to •

• Maryland," especially those •

• with wintertime potential: •

• Golden-crowned Sparrow, •

• Slaty-backed Gull, Pink-footed •

• Goose, Long-billed Murrelet— •

• and even Boreal Owl! •

•

• To enjoy another look at Matt •

• Hafner and Bill Hubick's **Next** •

• **Ten**,* go to [www.mdbirds.org/](http://www.mdbirds.org/birds/mdbirds/nexten/NextTen.pdf) •

• [birds/mdbirds/nexten/NextTen.pdf](http://www.mdbirds.org/birds/mdbirds/nexten/NextTen.pdf). •

•

• *It is now, as you know, the •

• **Next Nine**, Brown Booby •

• having fallen in 2009. Others •

• on the short list: Black-chinned •

• Hummingbird, Little Egret, Bell's •

• Vireo, MacGillivray's Warbler, •

• White-tailed Tropicbird, Sharp- •

• tailed Sandpiper, and White- •

• winged Tern. Runners-up: •

• Kirland's Warbler, Yellow-billed •

• Loon, and Green Violetear. •

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Editor: Lydia Schindler
 lydiaschindler@verizon.net
 301-977-5252

Designer: Suzanne Probst
 msprobst2@verizon.net
 410-992-3489

Calendar Editor: Andy Martin
 apmartin2@comcast.net
 301-294-4805

Chapter Chatter: Jean Wheeler
 jswheeler44@msn.com

Mailing list: Helen Horrocks
 hlh_37@yahoo.com
 301-831-6315

MOS web site: <http://www.mdbirds.org>

Webmaster: John Hays Christy
 SiteMaven@mdbirds.org

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, 2010 for the March/April 2010 issue.

Illustrations pages 1 and 6 ©M. Suzanne Probst. Photograph page 3 ©George Jett. Photograph page 8 ©Bill Hubick.

ROUNDING UP THE RARITIES, 2009

BY BILL HUBICK

Every November, intrepid birders from across the state have gathered in Worcester County to systematically cover Maryland's birdiest county at the height of rarity season. The event is organized much like a Christmas Bird Count, but with a special emphasis on finding state rarities. Teams, which often combine veterans and newcomers, are assigned specific territories. If and when a truly rare species is discovered, participants are encouraged to abandon post and give chase. Over the event's 10-year history, the Worcester County Rarity Roundup has turned up Ash-throated Flycatcher, Cave Swallow, Snowy Owl, Le Conte's Sparrow, and much more.

As should now be fully expected, this year's roundup, on November 14, was full of surprises. The event took place on the heels of a historic nor'easter that raged along the coast, closing roads, confusing plans, and leaving the marshes flooded and largely inaccessible. Yet, somehow, Maryland birders were undeterred. Their addiction was too powerful. Despite plenty of advance warning of the awful conditions, the Rarity Roundup saw an unprecedented 40 participants.

Naturally, such a gathering could not help but turn up great birds. On Friday afternoon, before the event even started, Frode Jacobsen found an immature Black-headed Gull at the Ocean City Inlet, setting a nice tone for the weekend. The big surprise of the main event was an *Empidonax* flycatcher found by J.B. Churchill and David Yeany, which was almost as likely to be a western vagrant as a lingering Eastern bird. After focused documentation efforts, the bird was identified as an adult Least Flycatcher; it ultimately became Maryland's new late date for the species. Another highlight came when a Pomarine Jaeger and a Parasitic Jaeger flew directly past the Assateague Causeway, presenting breathtaking views to Jim Brighton, Dan Small, and Maren Gimpel. Other highlights included American Golden-Plover, Eared Grebe, Spotted Sandpiper, Orange-crowned Warbler, Harlequin Duck, Common Eider, Ross's Goose, Piping Plover (all five MD plover species in November), Western Willet, Marbled Godwit, Red Knot, Long-billed Dowitcher, Black Skimmer, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Nelson's Sparrow, Saltmarsh Sparrow, Snow Bunting, and Pine Siskin.



The quintessential Empidonax flycatcher: What is it? Discovered near Berlin, Worcester County, on November 14 by J. B. Churchill and David Yeany, this little bird generated lively debate. Could it be a Willow? Dusky? Gray? After lots of analysis, and with input from such (currently) out-of-state experts as Matt Hafner, Marshall Iliff, and Michael O'Brien, the verdict was: A very late adult Least Flycatcher. George Jett photographed this bird on November 16.

The tally rally took over a whole section a favorite Mexican restaurant, Plaza Tapatia; we reported our highlights over fajitas and Dos Equis.

Sunday is often as exciting as the event itself, and this year was no exception. Sunday's birds included a Western Kingbird on Assateague Island (Geraldine King/Tom Feild) and an American Avocet at the Assateague Causeway (Jim Moore).

Special thanks to all of the participants, each of whom helped ensure the event's success. Special thanks to Mark Hoffman and Matt Hafner for organizing this delightful madness with me for another year.

Bird Blitz *continued from page 1*

early successional habitats. These grasslands, surveyed this year, support a high diversity of grassland species, and we recorded 8 of them, including Northern Harrier, Bobolink, Savannah Sparrow, and Vesper Sparrow. Counts exceeding thresholds were recorded for Henslow's Sparrow (60), Grasshopper Sparrow (85), and Golden-winged Warbler (8). It is worth noting that the count for Henslow's Sparrow is three times its global threshold, underscoring the significance of this site. Participants: Danny Bystrak, J.B. Churchill, Bill Hubick, Joanna and Mikey Lutmerding, Susan Sires, and David Yeany.

Mattawoman Creek, Charles County

Volunteers: 5

Bird counts: 12

Surveys were conducted in the floodplain forests of the Mattawoman Creek watershed, inclusive of the Mattawoman Natural Environment Area (NEA) and the Myrtle Grove WMA. Surveys recorded 11 Kentucky Warbler, 63 Wood Thrush, 13 Louisiana Waterthrush, and 40 Prothonotary Warbler, the latter exceeding its IBA threshold. This site also supports a high diversity of FIDS, with 18 species recorded during Bird Blitz. Based on its importance to these at-risk species and the FIDS assemblage, this area was recently identified as a **new IBA**. Audubon Maryland-DC has joined the Smarter Growth Alliance for Charles County in campaigning to stop the Cross County Connector, a proposed road project, from bisecting this IBA. Participants: Gwen Brewer, George Jett, Ross Geredien, Dave Gillum, Colin Hebert, and David Yeany.

Smallwood State Park, Charles County

Volunteers: 2

Bird counts: 1

This survey yielded singles of Red-headed Woodpecker, Prothonotary Warbler, Prairie Warbler, and Louisiana Waterthrush, in addition to 6 Wood Thrush. This area was not included with the Mattawoman Creek IBA, but may be included with another site in the future. Participants: Jean Artes and Lynn Wheeler.

Nanjemoy, Charles County

Volunteers: 11

Bird counts: 20

This extensive forested area received excellent coverage, with kayak surveys on Nanjemoy Creek, a nightjar survey during the May Count, and numerous transects throughout The Nature Conservancy's Nanjemoy Preserve and the Nanjemoy Natural Resource Management Area. These surveys resulted in counts exceeding thresholds for Bald Eagle (15), Whip-poor-will (35), and Worm-eating Warbler (30). Significant counts were also recorded for Wood Thrush (84), Prairie Warbler (27), and Prothonotary Warbler (12). Bird Blitz demonstrated that the area supports a high diversity of FIDS, with all 20 regularly breeding species recorded. Based on these Bird Blitz results, this site was recently identified as a **new IBA**. Participants: Gwen Brewer, Bill Hubick, Mikey Lutmerding, Dave Gillum, Warren and Lisa Strobel, Leslie Starr, Joe Turner, Ron Gutberlet, Hans Holbrook, and David Yeany.

Zekiah Swamp, Charles County

Volunteers: 0

Bird counts: 3

One of Maryland's remaining true wilderness areas, Zekiah Swamp was surveyed by Audubon staff during June. Despite covering just a small portion of the vast floodplain forest and shrub wetland, Bird Blitz surveys exceeded the IBA threshold for Prothonotary Warbler with 52 singing males. Other at-risk species included 5 Red-headed Woodpecker, 11 Kentucky Warbler, 24 Wood Thrush, and 8 Louisiana Waterthrush. An **IBA nomination** for this site is in progress. Participants: David Curson and David Yeany.

Southern Dorchester County IBA,

Dorchester County

Volunteers: 1

Bird counts: 1

IBA Technical Review Committee member Lynn Davidson surveyed areas of Fishing Bay WMA along Elliot Island Rd to assess whether or not the site held global threshold numbers of Saltmarsh Sparrow. Her early June survey yielded 24 Saltmarsh Sparrows, giving reason to

believe that this IBA likely supports a globally significant population of this species. Participant: Lynn Davidson.

Monocacy Grasslands IBA, Frederick & Carroll Counties

Volunteers: 5

Bird counts: 6

An area of Frederick County encompassed by MD Routes 194, 550, and 75 and US Rte 15 were surveyed to determine if the existing IBA's boundary should be extended to include this area. IBA Technical Review Committee member David Smith and Jim Wilkinson led these counts, which recorded 139 Grasshopper Sparrow, 11 Red-headed Woodpecker, and 10 Dickcissel, as well as a high diversity of grassland species. These results make a strong case for this area's inclusion in the IBA. Participants: Barbara Gearhart, David Smith, Mike Welch, Carol Wilkinson, and Jim Wilkinson.

Jennings Randolph Lake, Garrett County

Volunteers: 2

Bird counts: 4

Fran Pope led Bird Blitz surveys in the forested and early successional habitats surrounding the Army Corps of Engineers' Jennings Randolph Lake. An unexpectedly high count of 21 Cerulean Warbler exceeded both state and global IBA thresholds. Among other at-risk species tallied were 3 Kentucky Warbler, 1 Golden-winged Warbler, 2 Willow Flycatcher, and 17 Wood Thrush. Participants: Fran Pope and Bill Pope.

New Germany State Park, Garrett County

Volunteers: 1

Bird counts: 3

Bird Blitz surveys covered most of the coniferous and mixed forest in this roughly 400-acre State Park. Threshold population levels were exceeded for Blackburnian Warbler, with 13 singing males recorded, indicating the importance of the park's spruce, hemlock, and pine habitat. Other at-risk species included 1 Canada Warbler and 1 Louisiana Waterthrush. Participants: Colleen Yeany and David Yeany.

Pleasant Valley, Garrett County

Volunteers: 3

Bird counts: 3

Agricultural and adjacent woodland areas near Pleasant Valley were surveyed June through early August. These surveys yielded counts of 51 Red-headed Woodpecker (including 15 juveniles), 3 Willow Flycatcher, and 1 Alder Flycatcher. Further Bird Blitz surveys are planned for this area in 2010. Participants: J.B. Churchill, Fran Pope, and David Yeany.

The Glades, Garrett County

Volunteers: 2

Bird counts: 3

This mountain peatland, which lies on lands owned by The Nature Conservancy and the Rock Lodge Trust, supports the full range of peatland types. In addition to the wetland areas, this site has substantial grassland habitat. Surveys recorded 13 at-risk species, including 16 Alder Flycatcher, 13 Northern Waterthrush, and 8 Henslow's Sparrow, all exceeding their IBA threshold population levels. Other at-risk species with significant counts were 4 Golden-winged Warbler and 4 Nashville Warbler. Adding further evidence to the importance of this area, nearly the complete mountain peatland assemblage (5 of 6 possible species) was recorded during Bird Blitz. Participants: Fran Pope, Bill Pope, and David Yeany.

Youghiogheny Valley, Garrett County

Volunteers: 3

Bird counts: 13

This site received extensive survey coverage, including stretches of the forested Youghiogheny River NEA, Garrett State Forest, Mount Nebo WMA, and Swallow Falls State Park. A total of 9 at-risk species were recorded, including counts of 52 Canada Warbler, 22 Blackburnian Warbler, and 7 Alder Flycatcher, all exceeding IBA thresholds. Among the other at-risk species were 33 Louisiana Waterthrush, 33 Wood Thrush, and 5 Kentucky Warbler. Bird Blitz surveys also demonstrated the significance of this vast area to the FIDS assemblage by recording 30 out of 34 possible species. Participants:

J.B. Churchill, Ross Geredien, Bill Hubick, and David Yeany.

Somerset-Wicomico Marshes IBA,

Somerset & Wicomico Counties

Volunteers: 2

Bird counts: 2

Surveys at this IBA were designed to determine if the marshes along Rumbly Point Rd, near the Irish Grove MOS Sanctuary, supported globally significant numbers of Saltmarsh Sparrow. Audubon staff recorded 49 Saltmarsh Sparrow, exceeding the global threshold for this species and indicating the large-scale significance of this IBA. Participants: David Curson, Greg Butcher, and Linda Fuller.

St. Mary's River, St. Mary's County

Volunteers: 7

Bird counts: 8

Inclusive of St. Mary's River State Park, large forested blocks north and south of Leonardtown were surveyed during Bird Blitz. These surveys yielded counts of 81 Wood Thrush, 24 Prairie Warbler, and 15 Worm-eating Warbler, indicative of much larger populations in the area. An **IBA nomination** for this site is in progress. Other at-risk species included 3 Kentucky Warbler, 3 Louisiana Waterthrush, and 1 Brown-headed Nuthatch. Bird Blitz also found evidence for a high diversity of FIDS, with 18 species recorded. Participants: Patty Craig, John Dennehy, Kevin Graff, Jim Green, Ron Gutherlet, John Hubbell, and Bill Hubick.

Tanyard Wetlands, Talbot & Caroline Counties

Volunteers: 3

Bird counts: 4

Tidal wetlands along the Choptank River and King's Creek were surveyed during late June and early July. At-risk species that were recorded included 10 Bald Eagle, 12 Least Tern, 4 Least Bittern, 2 Northern Bobwhite, 2 American Black Duck, and small numbers of Wood Thrush and Prairie Warbler. This area will be targeted by Bird Blitz again in 2010. Participants: Bill Harris, Karen Harris, and Amanda Spears.

South Mountain, Washington & Frederick Counties

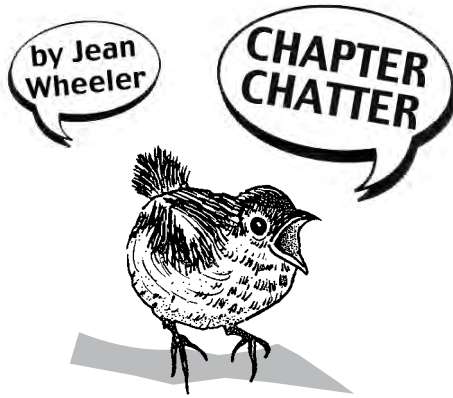
Volunteers: 3

Bird counts: 10

Volunteers achieved great survey coverage, accessing the territory via the ridge-hugging Appalachian Trail as well as Greenbrier, Gathland, Washington Monument, and South Mountain State Parks. These counts recorded 114 Wood Thrush, 22 Worm-eating Warbler, 22 Louisiana Waterthrush, 8 Kentucky Warbler, 4 Red-headed Woodpecker, and 2 Cerulean Warbler. Participants: Mary Ann Beverly, Dave Weesner, and Beth Zang.

The success of Bird Blitz 2009 would not have been possible without the volunteer efforts of MOS members and generous funding provided by MOS, Maryland DNR, and the Toyota/Audubon Together Green Partnership. Data from these surveys have already enabled the identification of two new Maryland IBAs: Nanjemoy IBA and Mattawoman Creek IBA, both in Charles County. At least two additional IBA nominations, for Zekiah Swamp and St. Mary's River, will be reviewed later this year. Previous Bird Blitz surveys (*Yellowthroat*, March/April 2008, and May/June 2009) led to the identification of 8 new IBAs, and this year's Bird Blitz data alone may lead to the identification of 10 or more new IBAs, expanding the Maryland IBA network by more than a third. A full report detailing Bird Blitz 2009 will be submitted to both MOS and Maryland DNR, and now, with digital data for at-risk bird species, Audubon will share this useful information with the DNR's Natural Heritage program to further bird conservation in Maryland. Many thanks go out to all who contributed to Bird Blitz 2009.

Learn more about Bird Blitz and keep up to date with IBA happenings by visiting the Audubon Maryland-DC web site at www.audubonmdcc.org. For more information contact David Yeany, IBA Program Coordinator, at 814-221-4361 or dyeany@audubon.org or David Curson, Director of Bird Conservation, at 410-558-2473 or dcurson@audubon.org.



CAROLINE COUNTY

MOS members, we need your help! Camp Todd Girl Scout Camp wants to build a bird list and is looking for some birders to help out. Bob Foote, the Camp Ranger of this enchanting Girl Scout Camp, is working with some volunteers to update his trail guides, and he wants to include birds as well as trees and other plants and wildlife. He already has some good tree/plant folks on board, including Dave Reinecke and Sylvan Kaufman. Bob can create a basic list of birds that can be seen in various areas of the camp, but for a detailed seasonal list of birds to be looked for on for specific trails, he needs help. Bob invites MOS members to visit the camp to hike and bird, and then send him their lists with dates and locations. He just asks that you contact him ahead of time, either by phone (281-844-6854) or e-mail (BobFoote1@aol.com). And please send a copy of your bird lists to Debby Bennett (firefly5845@hotmail.com). Collecting as many lists as we can throughout the year, we will be able to create a nice bird list for Camp Todd. (The camp is located at 25012 Beauchamp Branch Road, Denton, MD 21629.) Just let me know if you can help at all. Thanks!!!

—Debby Bennett

HARFORD COUNTY

Madeline Lovera and Jean Wheeler traveled to New Mexico in November for the Festival of the Cranes. Bosque del Apache NWR is a special place located in the Rio Grande Valley of central New Mexico. The festival was well organized, with more than 100 events, including birding,

natural history, lectures, classes, and sightseeing trips. Or you could just bird on your own. The sight and sound of thousands of Snow Geese and Sandhill Cranes in the early morning “fly out” was thrilling! We learned some of the cranes’ verbal and body language. We spotted Golden Eagle, Ferruginous Hawk, Prairie Falcon, Aplomado Falcon, Loggerhead Shrike, and lots of Greater Roadrunners among our 90 species. The weather was sunny with freezing temperatures in the morning, warming to 50s to 60s by afternoon. We met some wonderful birders, and New Mexican cuisine was fantastic—especially if you, like us, like spicy green chilies!

—Jean Wheeler

HOWARD COUNTY

Kathie Lillie and her husband have returned from a September trip to Kenya, where they visited a friend and toured various parks. Kathie loved Nairobi’s Fairmont Hotel, surrounded by two acres of exquisite garden and many birds, including Speckled Mousebirds and Black Kites. The garden seemed to have birds everywhere, and one could almost go birding without leaving the hotel room. One highlight of their visit was watching a Secretarybird shuffle through the grass of the Masai Mara, looking for a lizard meal. During his climb of Mt. Kenya, Kathie’s husband was charmed by an attractive brown bird (African Dusky Flycatcher?) that explored fearlessly around his feet. One of their favorite sights, though, was of a Tawny Eagle and an African White-backed Vulture sharing the same tree but coolly looking in opposite directions as if pretending the other were not there. It was an exciting trip, but perhaps not as exciting as the birth of her first granddaughter, Lucille Diana Hoover, in August.

Speaking of new grandchildren, Bonnie Ott also welcomed a new granddaughter, Kaelyn Marie Ott. Rumor has it that the child can already identify the chip notes of five sparrows.

—Kate Tufts

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Member *Chuck Parker* came all the way from West Virginia to lead Montgomery Bird Club’s seventh annual Big Sit at Black Hill Regional Park on October 11. The “Sitting Ducks” set up camp at 7:00 am on a corner of the reservoir with a wooded backdrop and proceeded to count 55 species. Highlights of the day were Lincoln’s Sparrow, American Wigeon, Northern Shoveler, and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. The most impressive sight of the day came when two soaring Red-tailed Hawks locked talons and engaged in a free-fall spin that lasted more than ten seconds.

This summer and fall Club members teamed with the Montgomery County Chapter of the Sierra Club to remove invasive plants at the County’s newest nature preserve, the Blue Mash Nature Trail, located in mid-County on the former Oaks Landfill site. The central area of the old landfill is still fenced off because it contains methane gas vents and a small lake. On Sunday, October 25, volunteers were offered a behind-the-scenes tour of the fenced-in area by an official of the County’s Division of Solid Waste. Along the way, Club President *Jim Nelson* learned that the County was amenable to hosting future birding trips behind the fence, by prior arrangement. Plus, within days the County complied with a request to cut down some small willows that blocked the view of a fenced-off pond. Furthermore, the authorities might consider the construction of a viewing platform.

Several club members have attained remarkable milestones in past few months. *John Hubbell* became the state’s #2 in “county closeouts,” having seen 147 species in each and every one of Maryland’s 23 counties (*Jim Stasz* leads with 182). And the top Maryland lister, *Paul O’Brien*, reached 402 species seen in Maryland when he sighted a Yellow Rail at Rumbley Point in Somerset County in April. *Andy Martin*, who’s been conducting a “Big Year” in

Montgomery County, had reached 218 species by mid-October with a Connecticut Warbler at Hughes Hollow. (The record, 229, was set by Paul O'Brien in the early 1990s.)

Three of Montgomery's most-travelled birders, *Mike and Joy Bowen* and *Helen Patton*, made a 2,500 mile birding trip to Chile in November. Mike's full write-up will appear in the February issue of *The Chat*, the Montgomery Bird Club newsletter (<http://www.montgomerybirdclub.org>). A few morsels from his extensive travelogue will have to suffice here: Crossing the Strait of Magellan to Tierra del Fuego: Despite temps in the 30s, biting winds, and occasional snow flurries, we all stayed on deck...[and] got good looks at Black-browed Albatross, Southern Giant-Petrel, South American Terns, Chilean Skuas, and our first fleeting views of Magellanic Penguins. Torres del Paine National Park: Along the way we saw our first Andean Condors—

a large group feeding on a sheep carcass by the side of the road... Within the park we found a small group of Austral Parakeets feeding unconcernedly in a tree right next to the hotel by Lago Grey, with its floating hunks of blue-green ice. On a storm-tossed pelagic trip from Valparaíso harbor: Numerous Shearwaters, including Sooty and Pink-footed; Westland and White-chinned Petrels; both Southern and Northern Giant-Petrels; lots of Cape (Pintado) Petrels; and five species of Albatross, with a Gray-headed tame and willing to sit on the water by the boat. Lago Chungara, at 15,000 ft the highest lake in the world and part of a Biosphere Reserve. In between each hard-won lungful of oxygen, we found three species of flamingo, Puna Ibis, Andean Avocets, and Giant Coots with enormous floating nests. The fantastic scenery featured two huge inactive (for the present) volcanoes and one that showed signs of imminent activity." The trio returned to Maryland having seen

280 species of birds, of which a full 180 were lifers for Mike and Joy.

—Chris Wright

TRI-COUNTY

Reaching out to the Young

Each year at our annual dinner we have a raffle to earn money for club expenses. This year it was decided to give the proceeds to the Education Department of the Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art here in Salisbury. The gift was used for a scholarship for a needy child to attend the Museum's weeklong Junior Bird Academy for 6- to 10-year-olds. Not only was the child exposed to a whole new world of interest, but so was her single mother, who stayed and helped several days. Afterwards the mother wrote a note of thanks and reported that both she and her daughter were using the new binoculars given during the camp and enjoying the bird book. We at Tri-County are hoping the interest continues.

—Carol Broderick

YMOS News

NEW: Summer Workshops for Educators and Students

In 2010, YMOS is introducing a week-long summer workshop on birds and birding that is designed for educators and students, learning together. The program, to be held at Washington College June 20-25, will offer field experiences, which will be shared by the two groups, as well as classroom exercises, which will be offered separately for the educators and for the students. A pairing of adult and student from each participating school or county is being encouraged.

Each day will consist of a particular field experience and a related

classroom application. The field exercises will include birding by ear, birding by habitat, habitat management, monitoring and mapping nest boxes, determining breeding in the local area, and bird banding. In the classroom, educators will have time to develop a program/project relevant to their situations, while students will develop a research project to be carried out during the following school year.

Additional information and application information can be obtained from George Radcliffe at radclifg@gmail.com or from your local chapter.



YMOS Backpacks

Once again this year each chapter has received a backpack to award to a deserving youth. The backpack contains Eagle Optics Triumph 8x42 binoculars, a copy of Bill Thompson's *Young Birders Guide*, and a lens pen. Each chapter is developing its own criteria for awarding the backpack.

Birds of Note—by Les Roslund



This diminutive first-winter Franklin's Gull, standing alongside a Laughing Gull, was photographed by Bill Hubick October 22 in Dorchester County.

- Sightings of ATLANTIC BRANT along the Chesapeake Bay are not unusual, and this fall several individuals or groups were reported. Sandy Point State Park in Anne Arundel County had reports of one to eight BRANT, with the earliest seen on Oct 7, and some were still present a month later. But a truly unusual BRANT report came from Piney Run Park in Carroll County, where Bob Ringler found one on Oct 28. That bird seemed very tame, and stayed until Nov 8, providing lots of photos and close-up views. This was only the fourth record of BRANT in Carroll County.
- COMMON RAVENS continued to show up at new or unusual locations. On Oct 7 one was spotted by Barry Cooper in Prince George's County at the Beltsville/Cloverly exit of I-95. On Oct 18 Keith Eric Costley of Baltimore found one, calling loudly in the rain near the Serpentine Trail in Soldier's Delight NEA, Baltimore County, and it stayed in the region for at least an hour. On Oct 26, Mike Bowen of Montgomery County encountered a single bird perched at the top of a tall dead tree in Battery Kemble Park, off Chain Bridge Road in Northwest DC; the bird's loud aggrieved croaking drew lots of attention, as it fended off persistent attacks by a Sharp-shinned Hawk.
- A juvenile RED-NECKED PHALAROPE was reported by Walter Ellison on Oct 9 along John Hanson Road (Chestertown Waste Water Treatment Plant) in Kent County. This bird had been first located by "another birder" and Walter, though never leaning the man's identity, repaid him by drawing his attention to a lovely GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE on the same pond. The PHALAROPE remained at this site for the next five days, providing rewarding views for numerous birders of our area. And the identity of "another birder"? Some careful detective work by the birding community soon solved the problem; he turned out to be none other than Matt Hafner, currently a resident of Florida, who had managed to slip unnoticed into the area to again find some nice birds here for the rest of us to enjoy.
- An autumn challenge each year is to search for FRANKLIN'S GULLS amongst the hordes of LAUGHING GULLS that are normally present. This year several searches have been successful. On Oct 6 Carol Broderick of Salisbury found a FRANKLIN'S GULL sitting on a piling at the Wetipquin Bridge, Tyaskin, in Wicomico County. On Oct 31 Bill Hubick of Pasadena found an adult FRANKLIN'S amongst about 450 Laughing Gulls on Hydes Road off Long Green Pike in Baltimore County. And, on Nov 4 Fred Shaffer of Crofton found one in the company of 629 Laughing Gulls during his lunchtime gull-scanning at Schoolhouse Pond in Prince George's County.
- October's "Big Sit" has become a very popular annual event in our region, and with good justification; some great birds are always found somewhere. This year one of the top finds at the Oct 11 event was a hatch-year WHITE-FACED IBIS. The finder was Hans Holbrook of Crofton, who had sauntered away from the Assateague Island count circle in Worcester County and was checking out some of the waders in the nearby campground. A dozen birders promptly abandoned the "Big Sit" site and converged with scopes to check out and help confirm the ibis report. This became the first WHITE-FACED IBIS record for Assateague Island and the first Maryland record for months other than April or May.
- A prolonged period of wind and rain in late October brought great shorebirds to some of the freshwater ponds of Blackwater NWR in Dorchester County. Top find was a HUDSONIAN GODWIT discovered Oct 23 by Levin Willey of Linkwood, Dorchester County. This bird had good company, for other shorebird species of the pond included LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER, BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER, DUNLIN, and both YELLOWLEGS. These birds stayed around through Nov 3, with DOWITCHER numbers growing to 17. A second HUDSONIAN GODWIT showed up and for a couple of days an AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER was also present.

- The rains and winds of late October were like a magnet for a few dedicated birders, leading them to the shores of the Atlantic Ocean to search for special birds blown in by the storms. Jim Stasz of North Beach responded to the challenge and spent two days in the wind and rain. On Oct 25 he visited the Ocean City Inlet, where his scanning of the Atlantic turned up four POMARINE JAEGERs and two PARASITIC JAEGERs; all were immature birds. One unfortunate Royal Tern was seen fending off a simultaneous attack from both jaeger species. Next day, Oct 26, Jim checked out the borrow pit of the Salisbury Landfill in Wicomico County. There he found a juvenile-plumage LITTLE GULL amongst the great numbers of Laughing Gulls. Later attempts by others to relocate the LITTLE GULL were not successful.
- More recently, two additional sightings of LITTLE GULL have been reported. On Nov 17, Frank Marengi of Annapolis, from a working boat, found a second-cycle immature LITTLE GULL in flight above Kent Narrows, in the company of ~ 200 BONAPARTE'S GULLS. On Nov 19, Fred Shaffer of Crofton visited Ocean City Inlet and found an adult LITTLE GULL in the company of several other gull species.
- Weather conditions on the Chesapeake Bay near Kent County did not prevent some late October sailing by

Hans Holbrook. On Oct 24, just west of the cove called Still Pond along the Kent County shore, Hans saw a CAVE SWALLOW; though winds were gusty, Hans was able to get good views of the key field marks. This was the first CAVE SWALLOW report for Maryland this season.

- Ocean City is a reliable site for viewing EARED GREBES, and several have been reported there this season. But an EARED GREBE in Prince George's County is quite a matter for excitement. Mikey Lutmerding of Croom came up with this one, on Piscataway Creek Nov 16. This bird has remained in the area, and the numerous sightings reports suggest it is being watched and enjoyed by local birders nearly all of the time. This bird has been seen daily through Nov 22.

Where credit is due: Thanks to Joe Hanfman of Columbia for pointing out that the credit for discovering the first Brown Booby on Assateague rightfully goes to Frode Jacobson, who saw and photographed a first-year bird July 22, rather than to Joe, as reported in the November/December Birds of Note. Joe and his wife found an older though still immature bird on July 24, then saw it a second time with Barry Cooper and Gail Mackiernan. Apparently at least two Brown Boobies visited Assateague in that two-day time period.



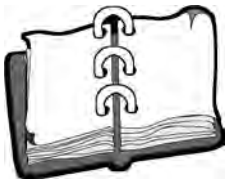
The Conservation Connection

by Kurt Schwarz

The Committee has been busy, filing comments at both federal and state levels. At the federal level this past quarter we have filed comment with the Farm Services Bureau regarding proposed cuts in the Conservation Reserve Program; Bureau of Land Management re putting environs of the Grand Canyon off-limits to uranium mining; the Environmental Protection Agency on the proposed registration of a rodenticide for use against Prairie Dogs; the Forest Service regarding the draft off-highway vehicle (OHV) management plan for Mt. Hood National Forest; U.S. Representative Kratovil regarding off-road regulations at Cape Hatteras National Seashore; the Fish and Wildlife Service regarding Travel

Management Rule implementation for Gila National Forest and Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge. At the state level we have just filed comment with the Maryland Park Service on proposed liberalization of the policy regarding pets in state parks, with a copy to the Governor.

As usual, Committee member George Alderson has done yeoman service, bringing issues to our attention and then drafting the letters. The other Committee members have all provided invaluable input on those letters and, once in a while, slap some sense into me. We have also enjoyed the support and input from Executive Board Members.



MOS Calendar

January-February 2010

Friday, January 1

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

🏠 **Baltimore.** Loch Raven. Start the New Year birding. Varied habitats including woods, fields, and reservoir. Probably also birding other sites for a "Big Day" in Baltimore City and Co. Meet 8:30 AM at Stone Hill Rd. Leader: Kevin Graff, 410-557-2456 or whitemarlin2001@yahoo.com.

🏠 **Harford.** Perryman Area. Start your New Year list off with a visit to the woods and fields of southern Harford Co. Meet leader Dave Webb at 8 AM at the Wal-Mart parking lot in Aberdeen (Rte 40). Contact Dave at 410-939-3537 or porzana@comcast.net for more info.

🏠 **Howard.** Start Your 2010 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 Park. Expect moderate walking. Possibility of lunch stop, depending on the weather. Facilities at some spots. Leader: Bonnie Ott, 410-461-3361.

🏠 **Montgomery.** Earliest Bird Walk, Georgetown Reservoir and DC Hotspots. Half day. Start the New Year right. Meet 8 AM at Georgetown Res., NW DC, by the gate leading to the dike between the pools. Reservations required. Limit: 20. Leader: Mike Bowen, 301-530-5764.

Saturday, January 2

🏠 **Montgomery.** 2010 County Listers' Trip. 3/4 to full day. Let's get a good start on our 2010 Montgomery lists. Weather permitting, we'll start at Violette's Lock with a walk down the canal to Blockhouse Point. From Violette's we'll head up the western

side of county, stopping briefly at Hughes Hollow, another walk at Edward's Ferry Horse Loop, scope the Patton Turf Farm from the road, and finish with a brief stop at the Rte 121 bridge at Black Hill RP before heading back to Violette's. Dress for the weather. Trip may involve a total of 3-4 miles walked by day's end. Reservations required. Contact leader for meeting time and place. Leader: Andy Martin, 301-529-2066 or apmartin2@comcast.net.

Sunday, January 3

☛ **CHRISTMAS COUNT. Annapolis/Gibson Island.** Sue Ricciardi, 410-647-9513, or Lynn Davidson and Hal Wierenga, 410-647-7439.

☛ **CHRISTMAS COUNT. Sugarloaf.** Helen Horrocks (Frederick), 301-831-6315, or Janet Millenson (Montgomery), 301-983-9337.

☛ **CHRISTMAS COUNT. Patuxent River.** Andy Brown, 410-535-5327 or brownaj@co.cal.md.us.

☛ **CHRISTMAS COUNT. Fort Belvoir.** Carol Ghebelian, 301-753-6754.

Wednesday, January 6

🏠 **Baltimore.** First Wednesdays at Fort McHenry. Monthly survey of bird activity at the wetland. Scopes useful. Automatically cancelled in bad weather (rain, sleet, snow, fog, etc.). [From I-695 southwest of the city, take exit 11, I-95, north towards the city. Get off at exit 55, Hanover St. Turn right (east) on McComas St, left (north) on Key Hwy. Take first left onto Lawrence St and turn left onto Fort Ave; continue through gateway into the park.] Meet outside the Visitor Center at 8 AM. Leader: Mary Chetelat, 410-665-0769.

🏠 Indicates Field Trip

MEETING. Cecil. Program TBA. 7 PM at the North East Public Library. For more info, contact President Pat Valdata, pvaldata@zoominternet.net.

Thursday, January 7

MEETING. Frederick. Let's escape for a few hours from our winter weather, kick back, and spend an evening birding on Florida's Gulf Coast with *Jim Green*. Jim will take us to Ding Darling, Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, Fort Myers Beach, and much more. 7 PM at the C. Burr Artz Library, Frederick.

Friday, January 8

MEETING. Anne Arundel. "Exploring the Wildlife and History of Five Remote Tropical Island Refuges" by *Doug Forsell*, Avian Specialist, USFWS. 8 PM at the Arlington Echo Outdoor Education Center, 975 Indian Landing Rd, Millersville. Contact Peter Hanan, 410-672-5672, for more info.

MEETING. Harford. Amateur Photographers' Hour. Photographers from the chapter will share some of their favorite birding experiences through brief, theme-based, 10-photo presentations. 7 PM at Churchville Presbyterian Church, Churchville. Contact Dave Webb at 410-939-3537 for add'l info.

Saturday, January 9

ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY. Carroll. Once again hosted by Splinter and Sue Yingling at 70 Ridge Rd in Westminster. If you've never attended, now's 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 410-857-0902 or syingling@mac.com.

🏠 **Harford.** Annual Winter Feeder Tour. Enjoy birding out of the elements as we watch feeders at 3 of our members' cozy homes. Contact Jean Wheeler, 410-879-7424 or jswheler44@msn.com, for meeting time, routes, and sites.

Sunday, January 10

COVERED DISH DINNER AND LECTURE.

Baltimore. 5 PM at BYKOTA Center in Towson (formerly Towson ES). Annual potluck dinner. Guest speaker TBA. For reservations and food coordination, contact Kevin Graff, 410-557-2456 or Whitemarlin2001@yahoo.com.

✳️ AUDREY CARROLL MID-WINTER COUNT. **Frederick.** Meet at the Sanctuary at 6:30 AM. Dress warmly with waterproof boots. Call David Smith, 410-549-7082, for info.

🏠 **Kent.** Kick off your birding year with a half-day at Eastern Neck NWR for waterfowl and winter landbirds. Meet 8 AM at Dollar General parking lot, Chestertown. Leaders: Walter Ellison and Nancy Martin, 410-778-9568 or rossgull@baybroadband.net.

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

Tuesday, January 12

MEETING. **Allegany/Garrett.** Speakers: *J.B. Churchill and Mikey Lutmerding.* Title: "Birding in Puerto Rico." Join us for a presentation of our recent excursions to Puerto Rico. 7 PM at Compton Hall, Rm 224, Frostburg State U.

Thursday, January 14

MEETING. **Howard.** "Costa Rica, Coast to Coast," by *Ralph Geuder.* This 14-day birdwatching trip included Carara, Cano Negro, Sarapiquí, La Selva, and Severgre as well as a side trip to Rancho Naturalista. Hospitality and club bookstore 7:30 PM; meeting/program 8 PM at Howard Co Rec and Parks, 7210 Oakland Mills Rd, Columbia. Info: Ward Ebert, 301-490-5807.

Friday-Sunday, January 15-17

🏠 **Montgomery.** Introduction to the Winter Shore: Ocean City to Broadkill Marsh. Full day. We'll brave winter's icy blasts for the chance to see some seasonal specialties: scoters, eiders, Harlequin Duck, loons, Bonaparte's Gull, and Purple Sandpiper. New members and new birders are encouraged but all are welcome. Reservations required. Limit: 14. Car pooling strongly encouraged. For reservations, info, and directions, call Mike Bowen at 301-530-5764.

Saturday, January 16

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

✳️ MID-WINTER COUNT. **Carroll.** Parties of counters will set their own schedules in their pre-arranged areas, to count resident and late migrant bird species throughout the County. Tally Rally will be hosted by Pat and Bill Ellis at their home; contact Bill to verify your bird-counting area at billellis@ellislist.com or 443-520-8809, and to say if you will be attending the Tally. Please bring a cash donation or a food item.

🏠 **Harford.** Conowingo Gull and Eagle Watch. Visit the premier spot in the Mid-Atlantic to see our national bird and wintering water birds from farther north. Join leader Les Eastman (les@birdtreks.com or 410-734-6969) at 9 AM at Fisherman's Park at the end of Shure's Landing Rd. This trip is a joint trip with the Harford Land Trust, our local non-profit dedicated to preserving land and habitat in Harford Co.

🏠 **Baltimore.** Saturday Monitoring Walks at Fort McHenry. A continuing survey of bird activity at the Fort. See Jan 6 listing for directions. Meet 8 AM in Visitor Center parking lot. Cancelled in bad weather (high winds, fog, rain, etc). Leader: Jim Peters, 410-429-0966.

🏠 **Cecil.** Ocean City and Beyond. Full Day. Meet 6 AM at Big Elk Mall, Elkton at Dunkin' Donuts parking lot area. Leader: Sean McCandless, seanmccandless1@comcast.net.

✳️ FRED ARCHIBALD MID-WINTER COUNT. **Frederick.** 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.

Sunday, January 17

🏠 **Anne Arundel.** Annapolis Neck and Thomas Pt. Waterfowl and Soup Social. Meet 12 noon. Reservations required by Jan 14. Meet at Bay Ridge Shopping Ctr, across from Quiet Waters Park. Contact leader/host Gerald Weingrad, 410-280-8956, for more info.

Wednesday, January 20

MEETING. **Montgomery.** "Birding in a Changing China," by *Don Messersmith.* 7:30 PM at Potomac Presbyterian Church, 10301 River Rd, Potomac. For more info, contact Steve Pretl at stevep@takomavillage.org.

Thursday, January 21

MEETING. **Caroline.** Movie Night. "The Bald Eagle." 7:30 PM, Caroline Co Library, 100 Market St, Denton.

Saturday, January 23

🌐 C&O CANAL COUNT. **Allegany/Garrett.** Again this year the C&O Canal Count will replace Allegany Co's mid-winter bird count (which has been discontinued). Contact Peter Vankevich at petevankevich@gmail.com for a stretch of the canal to cover. Each mile of the canal is counted separately.

🌐 C&O CANAL COUNT. **Frederick.** Make-up date will be Jan 24 if the weather is bad. Contact Peter Vankevich, PeteVankevich@gmail.com or 202-468-2871, to participate.

🌐 C&O CANAL COUNT. **Washington.** Contact Shirley Ford at 301-241-3020 to help.

Calendar *continued from page 11*

H Anne Arundel. Where the Gulls Are. Local hotspots for common and rare gulls. Location(s) chosen at time of trip. Meet 8 AM at Severna Park P&R, corner of Jones Station Rd and Ritchie Hwy. Leader: Sue Ricciardi, 410-647-9513.

H Harford. Cambridge/Blackwater Waterfowl Trip. Search for unusual wintering waterfowl in the Cambridge harbor area (site of last year's Tufted Duck and Barrow's Goldeneye), Blackwater NWR, and Hooper's Island. Bring snacks if you like. We will stop for a fast food lunch. Meet at the Rte 155/95 P&R at 7 AM. Leaders are Tom Congersky, 410-658-4137, and Tom Gibson, 410-734-4135 or gibsonlld@aol.com.

H Kent. Ocean City, Worcester County. Winter specialties include gannet, sea ducks, alcids, gulls, Purple Sandpiper, and wintering passerines. Full day. Dress warmly, bring lunch and warm beverages. Meet 8 AM at Dollar General parking lot, Chestertown. Leaders: Walter Ellison and Nancy Martin, 410-778-9568 or rossgull@baybroadband.net.

Monday, January 25

MEETING. **Tri-County.** Program: "Pickering Creek Audubon Center." *Mark Scallion.* 7 PM at Asbury Methodist Church, Fox Rm, south entrance, Camden Ave, Salisbury.

Tuesday, January 26

POT LUCK DINNER AND MEETING. **Washington.** Mount Aetna Nature Center. Pot Luck starts at 6:15 PM. Bring a dish to share along with your own drink, plate, and utensils. Meeting follows at 7:30 with the film, "Crash: A Tale of Two Species," a story of the fragile connection between the Red Knot and the horseshoe crab. Call 301-797-8454 for directions.

Saturday, January 30

H Cecil. Gull Watch. Half day. Meet 8 AM at North East Plaza near the Wal-Mart. Leader: Gene Scarpulla, ejscarp@comcast.net.

H Montgomery. Waterfowl for Beginners at Black Hill RP. Learn and review the basics of duck ID at this premier county spot for winter waterfowl. The trip will be geared to new birders but all are welcome. Bring a scope if you have one. Meet 7:30 AM at the pull-off next to the Rte 121 bridge. Half day. No reservations needed. For info, contact leader, Dave Powell, at 301-540-8776.

Sunday, January 31

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

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

Tuesday, February 2

MEETING. **Baltimore.** Tuesday Evening Lecture at Cylburn Mansion, 4915 Greenspring Ave. Program TBA. Doors open at 7 PM for socializing and snacks, show starts about 7:15 PM. For more info, contact Pete Webb at 410-486-1217 or pete_webb@juno.com.

Wednesday, February 3

H Baltimore. First Wednesdays at Fort McHenry. See Jan 6 listing. Meet 8 AM at Visitor Center. Leader: Mary Chetelat, 410-665-0769.

MEETING. **Carroll.** "Birding Belize," by *Kevin Heffernan.* 7:30 PM at Senior Center, 125 Stoner Ave, Westminster. Info: Bill Ellis, 443-520-8809.

Thursday, February 4

MEETING. **Frederick.** *Tom Stephenson,* photographer and bird guide from Ithaca, NY, and member of the Zeiss digiscoping team for the World Series of Birding, will present his photographs and a program on "The Birds and Wildlife of Madagascar, Island of Endemism." 7 PM at the C. Burr Artz Library, Frederick.

Friday, February 5

MEETING. **Anne Arundel.** "Important Bird Areas in Maryland/DC: Prioritizing Sites for Conservation."

Dr. David Curson, NAS Dir. of Bird Conservation. 8 PM at Arlington Echo Outdoor Education Center, 975 Indian Landing Rd, Millersville.

Saturday, February 6

* MID-WINTER COUNT. **Howard.** Contact co-compiler Joe Byrnes at lbroller@verizon.net or 410-730-5329 for more info and to get a territory.

* MID-WINTER COUNT. **Garrett.** Contact compiler Mikey Lutmerding at mikeycerw@yahoo.com or 301-707-7764 for more info and to get a territory.

H Cecil. Winter at Fair Hill. Half day. Meet 8 AM at Fair Hill Nature Center, near covered bridge parking lot (fee required, \$3 MD residents, \$4 out-of-state visitors [bring small bills for honor box]). Enter Fair Hill off of Rte 273 and follow signs to the Nature Center. Leader: Rich Donham, donhamr@zoominternet.net.

H Harford. Bradenbaugh Flats. Enjoy a tour through NW Harford Co's agricultural area to find wintering field birds and waterfowl. Expect Horned Larks, Ring-necked Ducks, possible Cackling Goose, longspurs, and Snow Buntings. The trip ends at the leader's house with hot soup. Contact Dennis Kirkwood, 410-692-5905 or dkirkw@verizon.net for further info.

Sunday, February 7

* 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: David Gillum, 410-266-5672.

* MID-WINTER COUNT. **Kent.** Full day. Join the field crew or count in your neighborhood, anywhere in Kent Co. Contact one of the leaders, Nancy Martin and Walter Ellison, 410-778-9568 or rossgull@baybroadband.net for more info.

H Indicates Field Trip

H Montgomery. Black Hill RP. 3/4 day. We'll focus on identifying winter waterfowl on the lake, but look for land birds, too. Short, easy walks with car jaunts in between. Area can be windy so dress appropriately. Scopes helpful. Reservations required. Limit: 10. Meet 7:30 AM at the pull-off next to the Rte 121 bridge. LEADER: Andy Martin, apmartin2@comcast.net, 301-294-4805 (h) or 301-529-2066 (m).

Tuesday, February 9

MEETING. **Allegany/Garrett.** "IBA Bird Blitz 2009: Results from Western Maryland." Speaker: *David Yeany II*, Audubon MD-DC. During 2009, breeding-season surveys for at-risk bird species were conducted in Garrett, Allegany, and Washington Co's as part of a statewide effort to identify new MD Important Bird Areas. 7 PM at Compton Hall, Rm 224, Frostburg State U.

Thursday, February 11

MEETING. **Howard.** "Birding in New Zealand," by *Tom and Geraldine Feild*. Tom and Geraldine's presentation will cover the country's unique landbirds, pelagic birding, and southern hemisphere arctic migrants as well as some of New Zealand's conservation issues. Hospitality and club bookstore 7:30 PM; meeting/program 8 PM at Howard Co Rec and Parks, 7210 Oakland Mills Rd, Columbia. Info: Ward Ebert, 301-490-5807.

Saturday, February 13

H Baltimore. Henlopen, DE to Ocean City, MD. Full day. Targeting loons, gannets, sea ducks, Great Cormorant, and Purple Sandpiper. Razorbill possible. Bundle up; this trip is usually brutally cold and windy. Meet 7 AM at Nursery Rd P&R, off I-695 exit 8 (not 8A). Alternate meeting place 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.** Full day. For info, contact Sean McCandless, seanmccandless1@comcast.net.

H Harford. Bird Box Workshop. Join club members from 10 AM to noon at the Anita C. Leight Estuary Center (700 Otter Point Rd, Abingdon) in making songbird boxes to put up in your yard or favorite habitat. Bluebird and wren box kits will be available. Box pieces will be pre-cut so only hammers and screwdrivers are needed for easy assembly. This is a great opportunity for families with children or scout/youth organizations. The cost of boxes varies according to the design and will be priced when ordered. Checks should be made out to the Harford Bird Club. All boxes must be pre-ordered no later than Fri, Jan 29 by calling the Leight Center Mon-Fri between 8:30 AM and 5 PM at 410-612-1688.

H Montgomery. Somerset Marshes. New trip! Full day (to dusk). Bring food, water, and warm clothing. Visit the amazingly under-explored wilderness of Somerset Co's marshes. Emphasis will be waterfowl and uncommon wintering species such as Short-eared Owl, Rough-legged Hawk, and American Bittern. Leaders: Bill Hubick and Jim Brighton. Reservations required. Limit: 14. For reservations and directions, contact Bill Hubick bill_hubick@yahoo.com.

Saturday-Monday, February 13-15

H Anne Arundel. Annual Winter Birding Weekend. Ocean City, Chincoteague, and other Eastern Shore locations depending on the birds. Reservations required by Feb 6. Contact leader Peter Hanan, 410-672-5672, for reservations, meeting place, and time.

H Carroll. Presidents' Weekend on the Eastern Shore. Bird great spots such as Bombay Hook, Indian River Inlet, the Ocean City Inlet, and West Ocean City Pond for winter waterfowl and other winter residents. Meet 10 AM at Bombay Hook Visitor Center. Leader: Bob Ringler, 410-549-6031. Contact Bill Ellis at 443-520-8809 to inquire about sleeping space at his house in Ocean City on Sat and Sun nights.

H Frederick. Presidents' Weekend Trip. We haven't done this trip to the Eastern Shore in several years. It's time we pack up our warmest hats and gloves and enjoy a winter birding adventure. Call Mike Welch, 301-685-3561, for details and to reserve a spot.

Sunday, February 14

H Baltimore. Marshy Point 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 S. 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.

Wednesday, February 17

MEETING. **Montgomery.** "Important Bird Areas: Making the Connection between Birders and Bird Conservation," by *David Yeany*. 7:30 PM at Potomac Presbyterian Church, 10301 River Rd, Potomac. For more info, contact Steve Pretl at stevep@takomavillage.org.

Thursday, February 18

MEETING. **Caroline.** "Purple Martins" presented by *Diane Cole*. 7:30 PM, Caroline Co Library, 100 Market St, Denton.

Saturday, February 20

H Cecil. Hardcore Owling. Half day. Meet 4 AM at Big Elk Mall, Elkton at Dunkin' Donuts parking lot area. Leader: Sean McCandless, seanmccandless1@comcast.net.

H Harford. Broad Creek Scout Camp. Explore diverse habitats of this Harford Co treasure for wintering songbirds and possible raptors. Meet at Dublin ES on Rte 136 north of Rte 1 at 8:30 AM. Leaders: Sue Procell, 410-676-6602 or susanne.procell@us.army.mil, and Marjorie Heagy.

Calendar *continued from page 13*

H Frederick. Point Lookout. We'll head all the way down to the state park at the Point in St. Mary's Co, with stops at Battle Creek Cypress Swamp and Flag Ponds Nature Park in Calvert Co. Dress warmly for the bracing wind on the causeway! Call Kathy Calvert at 301-698-1298 if you plan to go.

Sunday, February 21

H Kent. Chesapeake Farms. A search for eagles, other raptors, wintering/early waterfowl. Half day. Meet 8 AM at Dollar General parking lot, Chestertown. Leaders: Walter Ellison and Nancy Martin, 410-778-9568 or rossgull@baybroadband.net.

Tuesday, February 23

MEETING. **Washington.** *Dennis Coskren* will present "Maryland's Himalayas." Call 301-797-8454 for further info. 7:30 PM at the Mount Aetna Nature Center.

Saturday, February 27

H Washington. Bird the Blue Ridge Center with the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy. Meet 7 AM at Rte 66 P&R. Call 301-797-8454 to register for this half-day trip.

Sunday, February 28

H Harford. DE/MD Shore. Cape Henlopen to Ocean City, looking for winter regulars and rarities lurking offshore. This all-day trip will leave from the Rte 155/95 P&R at 6:30 AM. Bring snacks if you like. We will stop for a fast food lunch. The estimated return time is 8 PM. Contact leader Les Eastman at les@birdtreks.com or 410-734-6969 for further info.

H Montgomery. Oaks Landfill, Laytonsville. New trip! Bundle up to explore this now-closed landfill adjacent to the Blue Mash Nature Trail. Should be mostly open terrain with some ponds. Possible wintering sparrows, raptors, and waterfowl. Leader will have scope for distant birds. We have special permission to enter this "closed to the public" landfill so reservations are essential. Limit 16. Meet at 8 AM. Contact

leader for reservations and more information. Leader: Mark England, 240-207-3132 (home) or 240-375-4500 (cell).

Tuesday, March 2

MEETING. **Baltimore.** Tuesday Evening Lecture at Cylburn Mansion, 4915 Greenspring Ave. "Birds and Natural History in Queensland, Australia." *Pierre Henkart*, President of the Anne Arundel Bird Club, describes birds and birding "down under" in the tropical part of Australia. Doors open at 7 PM for socializing and snacks, show starts about 7:15 PM. For more info, contact Pete Webb at 410-486-1217 or pete_webb@juno.com.

H Montgomery. Informal Late Afternoon Walks until Dusk. Joint MBC/ANS trip. Meet "on the bridge" at Riley's Lock at 5 PM. After checking out the river, we will proceed to Hughes Hollow to watch waterfowl flying in to roost. We will try for displaying woodcock if they are in the vicinity. Bring scope and flashlight and wear "muddy conditions" footwear. Reservations not required. For more info, call Jim Green at 301-208-2393.

Wednesday, March 3

H Baltimore. First Wednesdays at Fort McHenry. See Jan 6 listing. Meet 8 AM at Visitor Center. Leader: Mary Chetelat, 410-665-0769.

MEETING. **Carroll.** "Uganda," by *Gail MacKiernan*. 7:30 PM at Senior Center, 125 Stoner Ave, Westminster. Info: Bill Ellis, 443-520-8809.

Thursday, March 4

MEETING. **Frederick.** Members' Night. This is a chance for members to bring in a few slides of a favorite birding activity to share with the group. Collectively, we travel far and wide and do lots of interesting things, so this will be your chance to share with the group. Call Kathy Calvert at 301-698-1298 if you would like to participate. 7 PM at the C. Burr Artz Library, Frederick.

H Montgomery. Informal Late Afternoon Walks until Dusk. See March 2 listing.

Friday, March 5

DINNER MEETING. **Harford.** *George Jett* presents "A Photographic Big Year in Maryland." 6:15 PM dinner; 7 PM program at Churchville Presbyterian Church, MD 22 and MD 136. Contact Dave Webb at 410-939-3537 or porzana@comcast.net for add'l info.

Saturday, March 6

MOS BOARD MEETING. Hosted by Caroline Chapter. 10 AM at Adkins Arboretum. Contact Janet Shields, MOS Secretary, at janetbill@prodigy.net for add'l info.

H Anne Arundel. Edgewater area for waterfowl and other beach birds. Meet at Parole P&R at 8 AM for this half-day trip. Leader: Fred Fallon, 301-249-1518.

H Cecil. Eastern Neck NWR. Full day. Meet 7 AM at Big Elk Mall, Elkton at Dunkin' Donuts parking lot area. Leader: Parke John, parke@del.net.

H Harford. 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 Rte 40 at 7 AM. Bring a photo ID for admittance to APG. Leader Dave Webb, 410-939-3537 or porzana@comcast.net.

H Frederick. Timberdoodles at Audrey Carroll. David Smith will lead us on a search for American Woodcocks. Bring a flashlight. For info, call David at 410-549-7082.

Sunday, March 7

H Baltimore. Loch Raven. Waterfowl and landbirds. Possible Bald Eagles and bluebirds. Scopes useful. Two-mile level walk. Meet 8:30 AM along Stone Hill Rd. Beginning birders welcome. Leader: Debbie Terry, 410-252-8771 or gt5s2bcpl.net.

H Indicates Field Trip

H Howard. Centennial Park. 2-3 hours. Easy walking on paved path around Centennial Lake. Woodlands, fields, and water host a wide variety of species. Great view of the sky for flyovers. Early waterfowl and lingering migrants likely. Meet 8 AM at west end parking lot. Leader: Joe Byrnes, 410-730-5329, LBRoller@verizon.net. Facilities available.

H Kent. Blackwater NWR, Dorchester County. Prime wintering waterfowl and eagle country. Full day, bring lunch. Meet 8 AM at Dollar General parking lot, Chestertown. Leaders: Walter Ellison and Nancy Martin, 410-778-9568 or rossgull@baybroadband.net.

Monday, March 8

H Baltimore. Poplar Island. Poplar I. 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 I. is reached by a 20-30 minute boat ride from Tilghman I. Meet 7 AM at Nursery Rd P&R or meet 9 AM at Tilghman I. Scopes helpful. Facilities available. Bring snacks if desired. Lunch will be at a local restaurant. Reservations required. Limit 24. Leader: Robin Armetta. Coordinator: Kevin Graff, whitemarlin2001@yahoo.com.

Tuesday, March 9

MEETING. **Allegany/Garrett.** *Marie Brady*, a graduate student at Frostburg State U, will discuss "Habitat Selection and Reproductive Success of Grassland Birds in Western Maryland." 7 PM at Compton Hall, Rm 224. Frostburg State U.

MEETING. **Kent.** "Brown-headed Cowbirds," by *David Curson*. 7:30 PM at Wesley Hall, Heron Point, E Campus Ave, Chestertown. For info, contact Nancy Martin, 410-778-9568.

H Montgomery. Informal Late Afternoon Walks until Dusk. See March 2 listing.

Wednesday, March 10

H Harford. Timberdoodle Search. Join this evening watch for one of our most interesting (and elusive!) birds, the American Woodcock, as it performs its mating dance. Meet 6:30 PM at the Rte 155/95 P&R. Leader: Elaine Beery, 410-272-6037.

Thursday, March 11

MEETING. **Anne Arundel.** Richard E. Heise, Jr. Annual Wildlife Lecture. Amazing speaker TBA. 8 PM in the Blue Heron Rm at Quiet Waters Park. 600 Quiet Waters Park Rd, Annapolis. 8 PM Quiet Waters Park, Annapolis.

MEETING. **Howard.** "Birding in the Land of the Thunder Dragon—Bhutan," by *Gail Mackiernan*. Open to tourism only since 1979, the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan is one of the world's premier birding destinations. The country's enlightened environmental policies have protected its forests and wildlife. Hospitality and club bookstore 7:30 PM; meeting/program 8 PM at Howard Co Rec and Parks, 7210 Oakland Mills Rd, Columbia. Info: Ward Ebert, 301-490-5807.

Saturday, March 13

H Anne Arundel. Little Patuxent Oxbow Lake Preserve. Depart 7:30 AM from Parole P&R. Leader: Marcy Stutzman. For more info, contact David Gillum, 410-987-0674.

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 Creek is frozen over. Meet 8 AM at Timonium P&R on Greenspring Dr/Deereco Rd off Timonium Rd just east of I-83. Leader: Kevin Graff, 410-557-2456 or whitemarlin2001@yahoo.com.

H Carroll. Woodcocks at Morgan Run. Meet 6:30 PM at the parking lot for the south area of Morgan Run NEA at the end of Ben Rose

Ln, accessed near the intersection of Bartholow Rd and MD 97. We will try to hear the calls and wing twitter of, and possibly see, American Woodcocks doing their courtship displays. We will bird during dusk until after dark (sunset about 7:15 PM, twilight ends 7:40 PM). Contact Jerry Tarbell at 410-857-1109 for more info.

H Howard. Waterfowl Search. Meet at Broken Land Pkwy P&R (west) at 8 AM. We'll carpool to search Howard Co waterways for ducks, grebes, mergansers, and loons. A chance for early migrants. Leader: Kurt Schwarz, 410-461-1643 or krschwa1@verizon.net.

H Montgomery. Jug Bay, Prince George's County. Half day. Joint trip with ANS. Possible Rusty Blackbirds, migrating Wilson's Snipe, and courtship display of Osprey. Meet 8 AM. Call leader for details and driving instructions. Check ANS *News* for more info. Reservations required. Leader: John Bjerke, 240-401-1643.

Sunday, March 14

H Anne Arundel. Wooten's Landing for Woodcocks and breakfast. Meet 5:30 AM at Parole P&R. Leader: Kathie Lambert, 410-867-4056.

H Harford. Loch Raven Reservoir. Explore the beautiful surroundings of Baltimore's premier watershed for early migrant songbirds, waterbirds, and raptors. Meet at the Rte 147/152 P&R near Fallston at 8:30 AM. Leader is Dave Larkin, 410-569-8319 or dlarkin@towson.edu.

H Howard. Centennial Park. 2-3 hours. Easy walking on paved path around Centennial Lake. Woodlands, fields, and water host a wide variety of species. Great view of the sky for flyovers. Early waterfowl and lingering migrants likely. Meet 8 AM at west end parking lot. Leader: Jeff Culler, 410-465-9006 or cullerfuls@hotmail.com. Facilities available.

LAST CALL

...for the **Pin Contest**, deadline January 15. The design must show a bird appropriate for the site (Chestertown); it must contain the phrases "MOS" and "2010;" the artist must be a member of MOS; and entries must be in hard copy. For further info, contact John Malcolm at 301-977-5788 or smudgie@comcast.net.

MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL
SOCIETY, INC.
Cylburn Mansion
4915 Greenspring Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21290-4698

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2010 CONFERENCE UPDATE

Plans for the 2010 Conference, June 11-13 at Washington College in Chestertown, Kent Co, are coming together nicely. I recently met with our contact at the college; construction had just finished and he gave me a tour of the new and updated facilities we will be using—very impressive.

e-Bird Workshop: I said I wouldn't do it but I just couldn't bear the thought of no workshop. So, I conferred with Marshall Iliff about offering a workshop about e-Bird: "How to Make Your Birding Count." The program will take place on Saturday, with Marshall leading a field trip in the morning and giving the workshop in the afternoon. (As usual, the field trip will be limited to 20 people on a first-come, first-served basis.) Taking sightings from the field trip, Marshall will show how to get started with eBird and convert your records, as well as how eBird data is being put to use. He is particularly eager to share the larger goals and illustrate the WHYS of eBird, not just the HOW. The beauty of being at Washington College is that the facilities can accommodate more than the usual 60-person limit for the workshop. Sign-ups will be on the conference registration form.

Field Trips: Coordinator Kathy Calvert (kathycalvert1@comcast.net) will be gearing up in January; she is planning listers' trips for Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne. Gene Scarpulla and Marcia Watson will be leading an all-day trip to Bombay Hook, and a day-long trip to Blackwater is under

consideration. Plus, Wayne Bell is arranging access to several private estates.

Because the college would like a count of box lunches for all-day trips in advance, I will offer advance sign-ups for those trips via e-mail a few weeks before June 11. (If this works well, we will continue the practice in future years.)

Silent Auction: Maryanne Dolan (Maryanne.dolan@gmail.com) is looking for help with the Silent Auction and Raffle. She particularly needs a hand in lining up donations for the auction and raffle. Anyone willing to help should contact her.

Perk for Volunteers: Remember that volunteers are able to sign up for field trips prior to the conference; this is just a small way to say thank you for your help,

Registration Forms: Look for them in the mail some time in February. (By next year we should be able to register on-line.)

Please contact me with any questions—and make your plans to be at the conference in June.

—Janet Shields, Chair
Conference Committee
301-733-7877
janetbill@prodigy.net