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Cylburn Mansion, 4915 Greenspring Ave., Baltimore, Maryland 21209

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Cover: Pileated Woodpecker, Eldersburg, Carroll Co. by Bob Rasa.



## FIRST BREEDING RECORD OF BROWN CREEPER IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

David S. Czaplak

On May 1, 1982, Bill Hayes and I observed a Brown Creeper (*Certhia americana*) in Rock Creek Park, one-half mile southeast of the Nature Center. The bird was found again the following day. Unfortunately, we did not follow up on these observations, although we felt the bird was on territory.

On April 29, 1983, a creeper was observed for one-half hour, singing steadily, at a site one-half mile south of the 1982 location. Song was noted again on May 18 and June 12, and on June 25 one fledgling was seen. Food calls of one or more additional young were heard, but these birds could not be located because of the dense foliage. The habitat is fairly mature forest, with a mixture of oaks, beech, and scrub pine, on a hillside with dense undergrowth. There are numerous dead trees, but no swampy areas.

This constitutes the first reported nesting for the District of Columbia. It should be noted that Coues 1883 reported Brown Creeper as "resident", without giving any details of nesting, but this seems unlikely in view of the bird's reported distribution in this century. Stewart and Robbins (1958) list Brown Creeper as possibly breeding in the Allegheny Mountain section of Maryland. Since then, breeding has been noted in nearly every section of the state, representing a major range expansion. Of special note is a regular breeding site at Seneca, Montgomery Co., only 20 miles away (Armistead 1982).

In view of this recent advance in breeding range, it is not surprising that Brown Creeper is nesting in the District. Rock Creek is underbirded, and creepers, with their retiring habits, may have gone undetected for years. A search of suitable habitat could possibly turn up more nesting locations.

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## IMMATURE BALD EAGLE RESCUED IN EDGEMERE, BALTIMORE COUNTY

Glenn D. Therres, Gary J. Taylor, Ronald R. Helinski

On the afternoon of Friday, October 21, 1983 Taylor received a telephone call reporting an injured Bald Eagle in Edgemere, Maryland. The bird arrived in the backyard of Mrs. Thelma Evans around 2:00 P.M. that afternoon. Mrs. Evans described it as ... "a large bird, brown and gray, with a silver band on one leg, a blue band on the other leg, and a yellow wing tag with a number '11' on it." She said the bird was much larger than a crow, that it acted very tame, and appeared to be injured. Though suburban Baltimore County is not the most likely part of the state to find an eagle, a decision was made to investigate the report further.

Helinski arrived at the Evans' residence that evening about 6:15 p.m. and confirmed that this bird was in fact an immature Bald Eagle. There was some dried blood on the bird's left foot, but there was no further evidence of injury. The bird was extremely docile and seemed to have little fear of man. In fact, the Evans had been feeding the bird steamed crabs, which it readily ate.

Edgemere is a residential community in eastern Baltimore County, just northeast of Sparrows Point. The Evans' household is located on waterfront property along Back River. A single unit house, garage, scattered shade trees, and open lawn on a 1/4 acre lot describe the property. Friday evening the eagle roosted in a tree overlooking the water.

Because of the peculiar behavior of this bird and the possibility of it being injured, a decision was made to attempt to trap it the next morning. The authors, Cindy Therres, Patrick Nugent, and Barbara Berg arrived at the Evans' property on October 22 at approximately 6:20 a.m. (1 hour before sunrise). The eagle was still in the roost tree.

One No. 2 and three No. 3 steel leghold traps with padded jaws were connected together in a circular arrangement and set on the Evans' lawn. The diameter of the circular set was about 16 inches. The traps were anchored in the ground by an elastic cord, to allow movement but also restraint. All traps were covered lightly with soil, so that no metal was exposed, and then leaves were scattered over the site. A piece of fish was staked in the center of the set as bait.

At 7:05 a.m., 15 minutes after the set was completed, the eagle left the roost tree and walked toward the Evans' house. When the bird neared the house it observed us 25 feet away but showed no response to our presence. It proceeded to the area in which it fed the day before and started picking at the remains of the steamed crabs. The bird "fed" on the remains for approximately 20 minutes, but showed no inclination of moving toward the trap site.

In an attempt to lure the eagle to the trap site, Taylor moved around to the other side of the house approximately 15 feet from the traps and waved a piece of fish at the eagle. After catching the bird's attention, he tossed the fish near the eagle and the bird readily consumed it. Each successive piece of fish was tossed closer to the trap site, thus leading the eagle to it. Once at the trap site, the bird observed the staked bait and began to wander around the set. At 8:05 a.m. the eagle triggered one

of the No. 3 leghold traps, catching itself by one toe. After being trapped the bird did not try to escape, but calmly waited until a net was dropped over it to prevent its escape.

The eagle was taken to Patuxent Wildlife Research Center (PWRC) in Laurel, Maryland for examination. X-rays indicated no broken bones and no shot in the body. Other than severe emaciation, nothing obviously wrong showed up in the examination. However, later laboratory testing documented that the bird was seriously anemic. The eagle was placed in an outdoor cage at the Center and was fed fish (with antibiotics).

The eagle was a first year bird from Alaska that was "hacked-out" in New York as part of that state's Bald Eagle restoration efforts. Prior to release it developed avian pox and was held for veterinary care. It was released on October 7, 1983 by the New York Department of Environmental Conservation Endangered Species Unit. The prolonged stay in captivity and repeated handling probably account for this bird's docility.

The eagle was held at PWRC until November 17, 1983, when it was returned to New York for release. During that time, it regained normal weight and the anemic condition was resolved.

*Maryland Forest, Park and Wildlife Service,  
Tawes State Office Building, Annapolis, MD 21401*

## FIRST WILLET IN THE MARYLAND PIEDMONT

Floyd E. Hayes and William K. Hayes

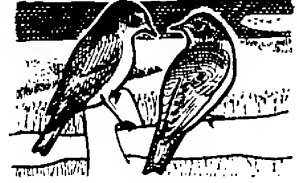
While visiting Lily Pons on August 5, 1978, we observed a Willet (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*) with a mixed flock of shorebirds including both Greater Yellowlegs (*Totanus melanoleucos*) and Lesser Yellowlegs (*T. flavipes*). The birds were feeding in a small muddy pond, and were viewed from 20 meters through 7X binoculars. The Willet was larger, taller, and longer-billed than both species of yellowlegs, and the bold black and white wingstripes and tail pattern were clearly seen when the bird flew away. The Hudsonian Godwit (*Limosa haemastica*) superficially resembles a Willet, and may be mistaken for one. However we have seen Hudsonian Godwits on several occasions, and are certain the bird did not have the thin, bicolored, upturned bill or thin wingstripes of this species.

Although Willets have occurred in Garrett County and regularly occur on both shores of the Chesapeake Bay (Robbins and Bystrak 1977), and have occurred up the Potomac as far west as Washington D.C. (Dave Czaplak, *pers. comm.*), this is apparently the first sighting of a Willet in Frederick County and the Maryland Piedmont.

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## THE SEASON

### BREEDING SEASON - JUNE 1 to JULY 1, 1983

Robert F. Ringler

This is the first year of the Maryland Atlas Project. It is the first time that data for the summer season have come in from all parts of the state. Usually we hear from just a few observers during the summer. This year I have been able to draw extensively from the MAP data. Most of the comments about interesting breeding records come from the verification forms submitted to support these observations. As trends in breeding distribution become apparent, I will pass this news along based on the atlas work being done by hundreds of people.

One of the consistent reporters before the atlas and continuing today is Henry Armistead. Monitoring the colonial breeding birds of the islands in Chesapeake Bay during the summer is a hot, sweaty, and buggy ordeal. Thanks to Henry we have a complete picture of the mid-bay distribution of these species and can see the rise and fall of their populations. His 1983 summary is in Table 1.

**Table 1. Estimated Breeding Pairs of Colonial Waterbirds and Ospreys on Islands of Dorchester County, Maryland during 1983**  
Name of Island

Species	Pone	Bloods- worth	Adam	Holland	Spring	Barren
Great Blue Heron	3	92	5	2	0	65
Great Egret	3	0	0	2	0	40
Snowy Egret	10	0	0	0	0	0
Little Blue Heron	2	0	0	0	0	0
Tricolored Heron	3	0	0	0	0	0
Cattle Egret	20	0	0	0	0	0
Green-backed Heron	2	15	5	5	0	5
Black-crowned Night-Heron	10	0	0	0	0	0
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	1	0	0	10	0	0
Glossy Ibis	0	0	0	0	0	0
Osprey	*	32	4	3	1	5
American Oystercatcher	1	1	1	1	1	3
Herring Gull	0	0	0	5	0	11
Great Black-backed Gull	0	0	0	0	0	1
Common Tern	0	0	0	0	35	361
Forster's Tern	0	0	0	0	145	35
Least Tern	0	0	0	0	0	95
Black Skimmer	0	0	0	0	0	20

\*The Ospreys on Bloodsworth Island include those on Pone Island which is actually just a section of Bloodsworth.

This year we also have a survey done by Bruce Rodgers on some of the islands on the bay side of Assateague Island (Table 2). There are for the most part treeless islands and all the birds are ground nesters. Common Terns and Black Skimmers were active at the Bridge Island site in 1982 but not this year.

**Table 2. Estimated Breeding Pairs of Colonial Waterbirds on Islands of Chincoteague and Sinepuxent Bays Adjacent to Assateague Island, MD in 1983**

	North Middlemoor	Horsehead Tump	Whittington Point	Outward Tump	Bridge Island	Oyster Island
Laughing Gull	0	0	0	0	140	150
Herring Gull	0	0	0	45	0	0
Common Tern	0	20	10	0	0	0
Forster's Tern	15	20	0	0	0	0
Black Skimmer	0	4	0	0	0	0

The weather for the season was warm and dry. Temperatures for most of the state were one to three degrees above normal with western Maryland being closer to average. Washington, DC had its warmest ever overnight low of 84°F on the 16th of July. Most of the state received less than half the normal amount of rain for the season.

Observers-Larry Bonham, Dan Boone, David Czaplak, Steve Dawson, Sam Dyke, Ethel Engle, Jerry and Roberta Fletcher, Inez Glime, Alex and Helene Hammer, Floyd Hayes, Dennis and Jean Kirkwood, Wayne Klockner, Walter Kraus, Warren Kucera, Woody Martin, Paul Nistico, Michael O'Brien, Bob Patterson, Fran Pope, Wilbur Rittenhouse, Bruce Rodgers, Bob Schutsky, Jo Solem, David Wallace, Mark Wallace, John Weske, Steve Westre, Jim Wilkinson, Erika Wilson, Paul Woodward, and many atlas field workers who contributed a great deal of time and effort. Abbreviations-DC = District of Columbia, WMA = Wildlife Management Area, a "+" after an observer's name indicates that there were other observers after the one who is responsible for the sighting.

*Loons, Grebes, Pelagics.* Not among the breeding birds in the state were a Common Loon on Broadford Reservoir on June 19 (Pope) and another flying north low over Assawoman at Ocean City on June 25 (Ringler). The stronghold for nesting Piedbilled Grebes remains at Deal Island WMA in Somerset County where Armistead counted 48 on July 31. Other nesting locations in the state were discovered by atlas observers. Eddie Slaughter found a nest with an incubating adult at the Baltimore Country Club Five Farms Golf Course near Timonium on June 20; 5 of the 6 eggs hatched about July 4-8, and on Aug. 2 there were 5 nearly full-grown young on the pond with one adult. An adult with 3 juveniles was at Lilypons on July 24 and later (Michael Welch +). Other observations of single Pied-billed Grebes, which may indicate local breeding, were on a farm pond in southern Worcester County on July 16 (Ringler) and at Myrtle Grove WMA on July 24 (Ringler, Hammer). Ron Naveen's June 5 pelagic trip from Ocean City found 1 Greater Shearwater, 30 Sooty Shearwaters, 1 Manx Shearwater, and 125 Wilson's Storm-Petrels.

*Pelicans, Cormorants.* Brown Pelicans staged a major northward movement along the east coast this summer. Reported sightings were 28 at Ocean City on June 11 (O'Brien), 7 flying south at Ocean City on June 19 (Bonham), about 50 seen offshore of Ocean City in late June (Daryl Nottingham), 18 at Ocean City on the flats (including 2 immatures) and from Assateague 1 offshore and 2 on the bay (including 1 immature) all on July 9 (O'Brien), and 2 at Broomes Island on the Patuxent River on July 15 (Nathan Copans). Immature Double-crested Cormorants again summered in substantial numbers, particularly in lower Chesapeake Bay where Kyle Rambo

reported birds during the season at West Basin of Patuxent Naval Air Station, Cedar Point Light, and Goose Creek. Armistead and Kucera counted 59 at Bloodworth Island on June 26. Two flew over the marsh at Tanyard on June 24 (Ringler), one was on Broadford Reservoir from June 30 into July (Pope), at Ocean City there were 12 on June 25 and 16 on July 8, and 1 or 2 were on the lower Susquehanna River through the summer (Schutsky).

*Heron, Ibis.* Armistead made a clean sweep of the breeding herons and ibis at Deal Island WMA on July 31 counting 1 American Bittern, 4 Least Bitterns, 35 Great Blue Herons, 30 Great Egrets, 175 Snowy Egrets, 6 Little Blue Herons, 95 Tricolored Herons, 75 Cattle Egrets, 40 Green-backed Herons, 55 Black-crowned Night-Herons, 1 immature Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, and 220 Glossy Ibis. A least Bittern was reported at Hughes Hollow in Montgomery County on July 12 (O'Brien) and July 17 (Bonham). Evidence of the early dispersal of Great Blue Herons from nesting colonies were birds at Cissel's pond in western Howard County on June 18 (M. Wallace), Lilypons on June 23 (D. Wallace), and Hughes Hollow on June 24 (Wilson). Schutsky's high count of Great Blues at Conowingo was 107 on July 25; these birds probably came from the large colony at Aberdeen Proving Ground. Wilkinson found a Snowy Egret and 2 adult Little Blue Herons at Elkton on July 10, typical early dispersals. Gregoire counted 62 Little Blues at Smith Island on July 15. Among the wandering Cattle Egrets were 1 at Beltsville on June 4 (Sumner), 11 at Goldsboro on June 13 (Fletcher), 1 at Meadowbrook Farms north of Columbia in June (Monika Botsai), 7 near Madonna in Harford County on July 4 (Kirkwood), 4 near Elkton on July 10 (Wilkinson), and 4 on St. Jerome's Neck on July 18 (Wilson). Czaplak reported the Black-crowned Night-Heron colony at the National Zoo included fledged young of the year and 30 nests, including 4 with young on June 20. Schutsky's high count of Black-crowns at Conowingo was 198 on June 21; these birds probably come there to feed from colonies in Pennsylvania. An immature Black-crown showed up at Lilypons on July 24 (D. Wallace), and was joined by a second bird in August. On July 16 there were 30 Glossy Ibis flying south very high over Ocean City (Ringler).

*Waterfowl.* A Mute Swan nest with eggs was found in Howard County at the Laurel Race Course on June 12 (Paul Leifer +). A pair of Mute Swans summered on Swan Creek near Fort Washington (Jack Abbott) and the highest total ever for southern Dorchester County was obtained by Armistead and Kucera on June 19 with 19 at Hooper Island. A pair of Canada Geese with 4 downy young were on a farm pond in northwestern Harford County on May 21 (Ringler +). Many farmers keep Canada Geese on their ponds but the wild status of these birds is debatable. Fran Pope found 11 on Broadford Reservoir on June 8 and Armistead estimated 120 at Blackwater on July 30, showing that they now breed from one end of the state to the other. Armistead's duck count at Deal Island WMA on July 31 was 12 *Green-winged Teal*, 200 *American Black Ducks* (including 5 broods), 30 *Mallards*, 35 *Blue-winged Teal* (including 3 broods), and a low of 8 *Gadwalls*. Unusual for mid-summer were a pair of Blue-wings at Piscataway on July 10 and a pair of Gadwalls there on June 4 (Nistico). In both instances there was no evidence of breeding. Among the summering, non-breeding divers were a Canvasback on the Susquehanna River on June 21 and later (Schutsky), a drake Ring-necked Duck on Georgetown Reservoir on June 26 (Czaplak), another drake Ring-neck at Pinto Swamp from spring through mid-July (Teresa Simons), 2 Oldsquaws at the east end of the Bay Bridge with 4 Black Scoters on June 13 (Gruber), a Black Scoter on Pope's Bay at Assateague on June 11 (Dyke), and 4 Red-breasted Mergansers at Assateague on June 12 (Hayes +). A



female with 6 downy young Hooded Mergansers was on Cunningham Lake near Bittinger from May 23 on (Ed Thompson +). Ruddy Ducks present a special problem because they nest in Garrett County but are not known to breed anywhere else in the state. One drake was on Broadford Reservoir from June 8-27 (Pope) and another drake was at Bull Run on Deep Creek Lake from July 8 on (Gordon and Sally Paul). They nested at the latter location in 1979. Among the non-breeding Ruddy Ducks were a breeding-plumage drake at Deal Island WMA in late May (Dawson), a drake on Cissel's pond on June 11-20 (M. Wallace), 1 at the Bay Bridge on June 14 (Gruber), and 1 at Cuckold Point in eastern Baltimore County on July 31 and later (Ringler +).

*Diurnal Raptors.* Schutsky's high counts at Conowingo were 47 Black Vultures on July 25 and 74 Turkey Vultures on June 6. Kirkwood found 2 downy young Turkey Vultures in an abandoned barn near Jarrettsville on July 20. Early-nesting Ospreys are frequent mid-summer wanderers to upland locations, such as the one at Marsh-ton's pond in Howard County on June 22 (M. Wallace) and 1 at Lake Elkhorn in Columbia in mid-July (Maud Banks). Boone saw a Northern Harrier in Garrett County near Avilton this summer, indicating that the species may still breed there. Kyle Rambo saw one at Patuxent Naval Air Station on June 2 where the species nested recently. One at Greensboro on July 22 (Fletchers) was probably an early migrant. Woody Martin reports that Red-shouldered Hawks along the Patuxent River had one of their poorest nesting seasons since he has been studying them in 1971, with fewer pairs nesting and less than one young being fledged per active nest in his area. Broad-winged Hawks are rare breeders on the lower Eastern Shore; there were single sightings in Pocomoke State Forest in Worcester County on June 25 and July 8 (Ringler). One Broad-wing was seen at Salisbury on July 30 (Dyke). Bob Patterson's nesting box colony of American Kestrels near Davidsonville continues successfully. Although no kestrels bred there prior to 1980, there were 7 pairs this year, occupying most of the 9 available boxes. They fledged an average of 4.0 birds per nest, including 4 pairs that nested in one 25-acre field. Kestrels may be rare breeders on the lower Eastern Shore also. Armistead saw one near Bellevue on June 18-19 and one at Blackwater on the latter date. Another was in farm country at Stockton in southeastern Worcester County on June 25 (Ringler). The Peregrine Falcon situation continues to improve. At the USF&G Building in Baltimore Scarlett raised 2 young brought from Cornell and also found a new wild mate. A pair nested unsuccessfully at the Bay Bridge; probably they were not quite mature enough. Two young were raised successfully by a pair of Peregrines at the South Marsh Island hacking tower.

*Gallinaceous Birds, Rails.* Woodward saw 13 young Wild Turkeys at McKee-Beshers WMA on July 1. Armistead found a Northern Bobwhite nest with 6 eggs near Bellevue on June 24. A King Rail was reported at Hughes Hollow on July 12 (O'Brien) and July 24 (Bonham). Boone found a Virginia Rail in a small marsh near Lappans in Washington County on July 5. Tony White found an immature Sora at Lilypons on Aug. 5, possibly the result of local breeding. Czaplak found a Common Moorhen nest with 1 egg near Blue Plains in the District of Columbia on May 31 and observed a single downy young there on July 12. A moorhen was again at Laurel Race Course on June 12 (Leifer +), but no evidence of nesting was found this year. An American Coot seen there the same day also apparently did not nest. An adult moorhen was attending 3 downy young at Deal Island WMA on July 10 (Ringler) where Armistead counted 31 birds including 2 broods on the 31st.

*Plovers, Oystercatchers, Avocet.* At the north end of Assateague O'Brien found 2 Wilson's Plovers on July 9 and Bonham reported 18 Piping Plovers (including 4 immatures) on June 20. The Chesapeake Bay population of American Oystercatchers seems to be doing well. Armistead and others found a nest with 1 egg on Barren Island on June 19, 2 adults with 3 young on Holland Island on June 26, and 2 adults with 1 young on Spring Island the same day. A male American Avocet was at the new Hart-Miller impoundments in the bay off Baltimore County on July 31 (Ringler +).

*Sandpipers.* A Greater Yellowlegs at Pope's Bay on Assateague on June 11 (Dyke) was a late migrant. At Deal Island WMA on July 31 the southbound migration was in full swing as Armistead estimated 115 Lesser Yellowlegs, 225 Least Sandpipers, 6 White-rumped Sandpipers, 5 Stilt Sandpipers, and 89 Short-billed Dowitchers. Wilson noted 2 Willets at Cornfield Harbor in St. Marys County on June 15 and 1 there on July 18. Nesting there is likely. Spotted Sandpipers fledged 3 young near Blue Plains by June 25 (Czaplak), an early nesting. O'Brien saw about 25 Whimbrels at Assateague on July 9. A Sanderling was at Point Lookout on July 18 (Wilson). Late spring migrants at Hooper Island on June 19 were 2 Semipalmated Sandpipers and a Dunlin (Armistead, Kucera). Southbound Least Sandpipers arrived early in good numbers with 10 in DC on June 29 (Czaplak), 1 at Denton on July 8 (Ringler), 150 on Assateague on July 9 (O'Brien), and 10 at Elkton Marshes on July 10 (Wilkinson). A Purple Sandpiper at Ocean City on June 5 (Karl Weber) is the latest spring record for Maryland. There were 8 Short-billed Dowitchers at Ocean City on July 8 (Ringler). O'Brien found 2 Wilson's Phalaropes on Assateague on July 9.

*Gulls.* A Laughing Gull colony in Sinepuxent Bay had 224 nests with eggs or young and 5 Herring Gull nests with eggs on June 12 (Hayes +). A Bonaparte's Gull in first-summer plumage was at Hart-Miller on July 31 (Ringler +). Schutsky counted 199 Ring-billed Gulls at Conowingo on July 25, all non-breeders. Other non-breeding gulls were 35 Laughers and 75 Ring-bills at Kent Narrows on June 11 and 5 Laughers, 460 Ring-bills, 250 Herring Gulls, and 35 Great Black-backed Gulls massed on the flats at Ocean City on June 25 (Ringler), and 154 Herring Gulls at Point Lookout on June 15 (Wilson). Dyke found a Great Black-back nest with 2 eggs on Cedar Island in Chincoteague Bay on June 12. Armistead counted 94 Great Black-backs at Barren Island on June 19. Naveen's pelagic birders spotted an unseasonal adult Black-legged Kittiwake off Ocean City on June 5.

*Terns, Skimmers.* A Caspian Tern was at Popes Creek on the Potomac on July 24 (Ringler, Hammers). There were 5 Royal Terns at Point Lookout on June 15 and 4 there on July 18 (Wilson). Armistead found 51 Royals in the Bloodsworth Island area on June 26 and a bay record of 310 at Barren Island on July 30. John Weske reported that no Royal Terns bred on the coast of Maryland this year. Klockner reported 2 Sandwich Terns on the flats at Ocean City on June 4 and Bonham found an immature on the north end of Assateague on June 20. The Common Terns massed on the flats at Ocean City on July 16 numbered 810 (Ringler). At Hart-Miller the fall build-up of Forster's Terns reached 260 on July 31 (Ringler +). Least Terns nested on the dikes at Hart-Miller for the first time. With 40 + birds present on May 30 at least 9 nests with eggs were seen. On July 31 flying juveniles, downy young, and 3 nests with eggs were found, indicating that there were successful early nestings and re-nestings were in progress. The Black Skimmer nests at Barren Island (Table 1) are the first for the Maryland portion of Chesapeake Bay. Later sightings by Armistead included 15 at Bloodsworth Island on June 26, 2 at Deal Island WMA on July 31, and 12 at Barren Island on July 30.

*Cuckoo, Owls, Kingfisher, Flycatcher.* The Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Great Crested Flycatcher that Armistead saw on Holland Island on June 26 he believes to be wandering birds, as they are not known to nest there. Common Barn-Owls with 5 young were at Patrick's Farm in Howard County (M. Wallace). One or two Northern Saw-whet Owls were calling near Grantsville, May 1-13 (Gary Yoder), and Boone heard one in Wolf Swamp not far from there this summer. A Belted Kingfisher at Cape Isle of Wight in Worcester County on July 16 (Ringler, Pete Webb) was probably an early migrant, as there is no nesting habitat there for kingfishers.

*Larks, Swallows.* Nancy Morgan found a Horned Lark nest with 4 eggs near Denton on June 17. Of the two eggs that hatched, one bird fledged on July 15 and the other died in the nest. Patterson reports that nesting attempts by Purple Martins in the Annapolis-Washington appeared to be down 20-25% from last year. He attributes this to the poor production of 1982 and the late April/early May mortality of the earliest arriving adults this year. Overall production was about normal, but June 19-23 was the poorest part of the season because of heavy rains. He calculated the fledging rate to be 3.5 per nest early in the season, 1.9 - 2.0 per nest during the rainy period, and 2.9 per nest later. Normally production declines as the season advances. He also noted that nesting was rather late (by 4-7 days) owing to the early poor weather and extremely late arrival of younger adults. In the Annapolis area he found that Fish Crows decimated the martin colonies with some houses showing no production at all as a result. Charlie Vaughn reports that the Salisbury roost of Purple Martins had already grown to 20,000 by late July. Armistead notes that the 10 Tree Swallows at Bloodsworth Island on June 26 are a high count there and that this is the only outer island in the lower Chesapeake Bay where they breed. On the same day there was evidence of the early migration of swallows, with 10 Northern Rough-winged Swallows and 15 Bank Swallows at the Denton sewage lagoons (Ringler). Fran Pope found 81 Cliff Swallow nests in a barn south of Oakland this summer.

*Crows, Nuthatches, Creepers.* John Canoles saw a leucistic American Crow near Cockeyville on July 6. Armistead estimated 85 Fish Crows at Bloodsworth Island on June 26. A Fish Crow was carrying nesting material at Kent Narrows on June 11 (Ringler). Dawson noted that Fish Crow production at Deal Island WMA was heavy this year and the predation by this species on waterfowl nests was particularly severe as he found that 20-25 nests of American Black Duck, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, and Gadwall had been destroyed. Fledgling Brown-headed Nuthatches were seen in Pocomoke State Forest in southern Worcester County on June 25 (Ringler). The spread of nesting Brown Creepers is remarkable. The C&O Canal seems to be the highway for their expansion in the state, but other locations are also fruitful for them. A pair at a nest in Battle Creek Cypress Swamp was found on June 5 (Roger Anderson, K.H. Bass) and Czaplak observed fledged young in DC on June 25.

*Wrens, Kinglet, Thrush.* Armistead found 2 Sedge Wrens at Deal Island WMA on July 31. Jean Worthley found Marsh Wrens nesting at the north end of Liberty Reservoir this summer, the first for Carroll County; no doubt the high water level in the lake and the tall lush grass it produced made this possible. Klockner heard a Golden-crowned Kinglet in the Nassawango preserve on July 8. Any nesting there would be extraordinary. A late migrant Swainson's Thrush was in DC on June 12 (Czaplak).

*Waxwings, Shrike, Vireos.* The 4 Cedar Waxwings at Allen's Fresh in southern Charles County on July 24 (Ringler, Hammers) are evidence of successful nesting in that area. Boone observed a Loggerhead Shrike carrying food in Frederick County south of Thurmont this summer. David Wilcove found a Solitary Vireo at Rocky Gorge in June and Ted Banvard found one singing on South Mountain on July 20. Both of these reports are considerably out of the species' normal range in the state and are further proof that the Maryland Atlas Project will contribute significantly to our ornithological knowledge.

*Warblers.* Connie Skipper found a Brewster's hybrid near Oakland on June 4. Boone heard 3 Nashville Warblers singing in Wolf Swamp this summer; they seem to be spreading in Garrett County. Boone also found a male Yellow-rumped Warbler singing and carrying food at Rock Lodge in Garrett County. This is the first modern breeding record for the state. Dave Wallace found Pine Warblers through June 10 on High Knob in Gambrell State Park where they are rare breeders. Joe Glime reported that Prothonotary Warblers were nest-building in a bluebird house in Federalsburg in June but abandoned the site. Later, a nest in a gourd contained 4 eggs from June 18-23 before it too was abandoned. A Worm-eating Warbler was feeding a fledgling Brown-headed Cowbird in Pocomoke State Forest in Worcester County on June 25 (Ringler). Boone heard a Swainson's Warbler singing south of Pocomoke City in late June. An immature Canada Warbler at Largo on July 13 (Dan Audet) may have been an early migrant.

*Tanagers, Dickcissels, Sparrows.* Boone found Summer Tanagers in two locations on dry south-facing slopes along the Potomac in Allegany County west of Little Orleans and east of Oldtown. Dickcissels provided a lot of excitement as 3 nesting locations were found on the Eastern Shore. One was on Thawley Road south of Hillsboro in Caroline County. Two males and a nest-building female were seen near Preston on June 10 (Steve Westre +). Four singing males were near Cordova in Talbot County on June 25 (Ringler). Four singing males and a female were seen near Clear Spring in Washington County on June 6 (Bob Keedy +). In the traditional location in southern Frederick County up to 5 birds were seen through July 24 (D. Wallace). In this same area on Greenfield Road a fledgling Savannah Sparrow was present on Aug. 6 (Ringler). Boone found Henslow's Sparrows in broomsedge north of Flintstone in Allegany County. Armistead noted only 3 Sharp-tailed Sparrows at Deal Island WMA on July 31. He also counted 48 Seaside Sparrows at Bloodsworth Island on June 26. A Swamp Sparrow was singing for several weeks in Cosca Park in Prince Georges County (Sam Lyon). Sallie Thayer found 2 Dark-eyed Juncos feeding 2 fledglings on Backbone Mountain on June 5. She also found juncos carrying food at 2 other locations. The junco that Kyle Rambo saw at Goose Creek Campground in St. Marys County on July 5 was just a summer vagrant.

*Bobolinks and Grackles.* The meanderings of Bobolinks are becoming more difficult to explain. A singing male was at Tuckahoe State Park on June 29 (Wilbur Rittenhouse). O'Brien found 3 at Elliott Island Road on July 9 and there were 5 in southern Frederick County on July 10 (D. Wallace). All of these may have been early fall migrants, as certainly were the 15 at Tanyard on July 31 (Engle) Boat-tailed Grackle nests, 31 with eggs or young, were found on Assateague on June 12 (Hayes +). Wilson saw 2 male Boat-tails at Cornfield Harbor on June 15.

*Cardueline Finches.* Francis Hayman found a House Finch nest with young in ivy in Denton on June 11; the birds fledged the next day. Woodward found the nest of an

American Goldfinch with 1 egg at McKee-Beshers WMA on July 11. This is by far the earliest egg date for Maryland and is evidence that goldfinches are nesting earlier than ever before. This may in part be related to the presence of introduced thistles, which go to seed by the end of June.

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## SECOND NESTING RECORD FOR CEDAR WAXWINGS IN WORCESTER COUNTY, MARYLAND

Roger B. Clapp

In the late afternoon of June 10, 1983, while photographing birds on the grounds of Cook's Long Acre Cottages (1 mile west of Ocean City on the south side of US Route 50 at its junction with Maryland Route 707), I noted a Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) breaking slender twigs 3-4 inches long from the top of a small, partially dead lilac (*Syringa* sp.) as another waxwing watched. The first bird then flew to a 60-foot blue spruce (*Picea pungens*) and went to a nest, about 40 feet above the ground and about 2 feet from the end of a small bough. During the next two hours, I saw one bird or the other repeatedly gathering small twigs from the shrub and continuing to build the nest. Usually one bird perched near the nest in a nearby tree while the other was building. The nest was not easily seen from the ground but, judged from its bulk, it was nearly complete.

Cedar Waxwings breed commonly in the Allegheny Mountains of Maryland but only rarely nest along the Maryland shore (Stewart and Robbins, *Birds of Maryland*, 1958). The only other breeding record for Worcester County is of a pair found nesting on June 11-12, 1980 at Shad Landing State Park on the Pocomoke River (Boone, *Maryland Birdlife* 38:28, 1982), 23 miles to the southwest.

*U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Museum of Natural History, Washington, DC, 20560*

## Documenting Rarities: When and Why

Rick Blom

With the MOS Records Committee in operation, and with increased attention being paid to the occurrence and identification of rare birds, the problem of how to adequately document sightings has become increasingly important. However, many birders remain uncertain about when to provide details of a sighting, how to go about it, and why it is necessary.

This article will deal with why and when. A separate article will provide hints on how easy it is to produce the details that will sail a record past the most microscopic examination by a records committee or local editor. At some point the MOS Records Committee will provide a detailed list of exactly which birds in Maryland require details.

There are two obvious and compelling reasons for making notes on the plumage and identification of unusual birds. The first is for your own pleasure and information. Notes taken at the time of an observation are useful for as long as you continue birding. They form a reference library that is better than any field guide or technical manual. And years later it is a great pleasure to go back and reread the notes you took, remembering the bird and the circumstances. Everyone should keep some sort of field notes; it is one of the most important steps to becoming a better birder.

The other reason to document the occurrence of unusual birds is that it is required by records committees and regional editors. Without documentation they, and future researchers, have no way of determining the validity of published records. With the tremendous increase in the number of sight, as opposed to specimen records, has come a growing concern about the validity of many of the reports.

If it is any comfort, this is an entirely democratic process. *Every* birder, no matter how skilled or accomplished, must submit supporting documentation for rare birds. So it is not a question of believing certain birders and doubting others. It is a question of trying to keep the local ornithological record "clean." It was not long ago that the published records supported the notion that Broad-winged Hawks were rare but regular in winter throughout the eastern United States. We now know that isn't true, and that the overwhelming majority of the records, if not all of them, pertained to Red-shouldered Hawks. If observers during that period had been required to supply careful descriptions of the birds we would not have labored under the misconception for so long. It was not the fault of the observers through. They believed their own reports, and were not challenged.

Birding is evolutionary, however, and attitudes and techniques have changed. We cannot go back and erase all the incorrect records of the past, but we can cut down on the number of incorrect records in the future. I'm not trying to suggest that most old records are questionable. Just like the birders of today, most of the observers back then were diligent, accomplished and careful.

Intelligence and caution are not enough however. Any birder, no matter how good, can make a mistake, and anyone who is really good will be quick to admit that he has goofed, and expect to in the future. No one is perfect. And no good birder wants to publish incorrect records.

Another reason for taking field notes on the appearance of rare birds is that field marks and taxonomy change. Before long it seems likely that the American Ornithologists' Union will separate the Western Grebe into two distinct species. The differences will be subtle, but there are ways of telling the two forms apart. When that happens we will have to review all the old records of Western Grebe to see if they are detailed enough to tell which Western Grebe occurred. As things change in the future similar situations will emerge, and again we will be going back to the field notes of local birders to see if the key features are there.

Despite all the space just used talking about it, most birders are far more interested in the problem of when to take field notes than the issue of why. When is a bird rare enough to justify digging out that old stub of a pencil and the crumpled cocktail napkin and starting a novel that rivals *War and Peace* for length, and a sketch that matches the Mona Lisa in its haunting perfection? Until the MOS Records Committee publishes the list of birds they will not accept without documentation, a few guidelines will answer most questions.

1. Make notes on any bird you cannot identify. The bird may turn out to be a common bird in an unusual plumage, but it could also turn out to be one of those gems birders dream about. There is no way to be certain hours or days later without carefully written notes.

2. Any bird you have never seen before, no matter what its status in the region. In most cases this will serve you more than the Records Committee, but it is an excellent way to really learn a new bird.

3. If you know, or expect the bird has never been recorded in the region before, or has been recorded only a few times. This requires some knowledge of local birds, but only the most recent convertees to the sport won't have a fairly good idea of what should and should not be there. If you aren't sure, check the "little yellow book," the *Field List of the Birds of Maryland* by Robbins and Bystrak. If you don't have one, or if it is at home, check the range maps in your field guide. If you can't decide, take notes anyway. If they turn out not to be needed for a Records Committee, think of it as good practice.

4. If a bird occurs in the wrong season. In general the same rules as number three. Examples would be a Yellow Warbler in January, or a Snowy Owl in July. The little yellow book is the best resource here.

5. Any time a bird, even a very common one, exhibits an obviously aberrant plumage. The most common example would be albinism. Documenting these variations benefit all birders by helping us understand the problems and pitfalls associated with all birds.

This may seem like a lot, but it isn't. The most active birders don't get the opportunity to take field notes more than a couple of times a year. We are, after all, talking about rare birds, and if there were many of them they would not be rare and we would not need to take notes.

The important thing to remember is that this is not a chore, and it is not hard, and it is not a reflection on the talent or judgment of any birder. It is part of birding, it is fairly simple, and it can be both rewarding and fun.

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## PREY OF AN URBAN PEREGRINE FALCON

John C. Barber and Margaret M. Barber

Baltimore, Maryland, was the home of a female Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) from 1978 to 1983. For three years, we worked in the building on which the falcon lived. Here we present a summary of the food habits of this urban-dwelling Peregrine, named "Scarlett" from June 1980 to June 1983.

Nesting habits of urban Peregrine Falcons were described by Groskin (1947; 1952), Culver (1919), and Herbert and Herbert (1965). These authors mentioned only Rock Doves (*Columba livia*) and European Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) as prey of urban Peregrines. Hickey (1942) noted the existence of urban nest sites but gave no prey description.

### HISTORY

The Peregrine Fund Inc., based at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, has been releasing captively hatched Peregrine Falcons since 1975 in an effort to re-establish a breeding population in the eastern United States. One of the birds released in 1977 at Carroll Island on Aberdeen Proving Ground, 21 kilometers east of Baltimore was seen the following winter on the United States Fidelity and Guaranty Insurance Company Building in downtown Baltimore. That building is thirty-seven stories high and is the tallest structure in Baltimore City. It is located in downtown Baltimore, in an area of office buildings, row houses, and dockyards, less than a kilometer from Chesapeake Bay. The building has one-meter-wide ledges around it, and has semi-reflective glass in the windows that prevents birds from seeing inside. The falcon adopted a ledge 33 stories above the ground as a nest site.

The female laid infertile eggs in four of the first five years she lived on the building, using as a scrape a gravel-filled box placed for her by the Peregrine Fund and the USF&G Insurance Company. During her first five years of residence in Baltimore, the Peregrine Fund made five attempts at introducing a male for her. None of these led to successful mating. The falcon did not leave the Baltimore area for longer than two weeks at any one time during the three study years.

### METHODS

From June 1980 to June 1983 we searched the building ledges and the area surrounding the USF&G building 5-7 days each week. The prey search route was the same each day. Although the entire building and its surroundings were checked daily, feeding ledges and cache sites remained fairly constant during the study. A carcass was considered a prey item if it had clearly distinguishable talon marks or if the carcass or pieces of a carcass showed evidence of being preyed upon by something other than rats.

Numerous birds were found dead around the building that were probably window kills rather than Peregrine prey. These were not included in the study. The possibility that Scarlett fed upon window kills was confirmed when J. Barber saw her pick up an American Woodcock (*Philohela minor*) that hit the building minutes earlier. The lone Peregrine was the only large bird of prey consistently living on or around the USF&G building during this study. The introduced males or captive-hatched young fostered by the falcon could have killed some of the prey. However, neither adult males nor recently fledged young remained in the area of the building long enough to contribute significantly to these results. Prey items were discarded after identification.



## RESULTS

During the study period, we found 304 prey items around the USF&G building (Table 1). Of the 304 items, 277, or 91%, were Rock Doves (*Columba livia*). The remaining 27 items were distributed among 11 species of birds and one species of mammal. No prey species other than the Rock Dove was more than 3% of the total.

Table 1. Peregrine Falcon Prey By Month, 1980-1983

Species	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Total	Percent
American Kestrel ( <i>Falco sparverius</i> )				1	1								2	1
Sora ( <i>Porzana carolina</i> )								1					1	1
American Woodcock ( <i>Philohela minor</i> )	1	4											5	1.6
Rock Dove ( <i>Columba livia</i> )	19	20	23	30	22	31	28	33	18	16	18	19	277	90.8
Yellow-billed Cuckoo ( <i>Coccyzus americanus</i> )						1							1	1
Whip-poor-will ( <i>Caprimulgus vociferus</i> )						1							1	1
Belted Kingfisher ( <i>Ceryle alcyon</i> )				1									1	1
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker ( <i>Sphyrapicus varius</i> )				1							1		2	1
Northern Flicker ( <i>Colaptes auratus</i> )	1	1	2						2		2		8	2.6
Blue Jay ( <i>Cyanocitta cristata</i> )					3								3	1
American Crow ( <i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i> )						1							1	1
Brown Thrasher ( <i>Toxostoma rufum</i> )				1									1	1
Big Brown Bat ( <i>Eptesicus fuscus</i> )											1		1	1
Total													304	100%

## DISCUSSION

Our results show that the primary prey of this urban Peregrine was the Rock Dove. The other prey items were both nocturnal and diurnal migrants, caught at their peak migration times for this area (Robbins and Bystrak 1977).

The variety of prey caught by the falcon suggests she was somewhat opportunistic. M. Barber witnessed an attack on an adult Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*) that resulted in a shaken but apparently unharmed gull knocked into Baltimore's Inner Harbor.

There is no conclusive evidence on feeding rates as a result of this study. On several days throughout the year, two Rock Doves were found on the same day. At other times more than a week passed when no prey was found. On several occasions, the female was seen feeding several miles away from the USF&G building, so not all of her prey was found. Other prey items may have been cached on ledges at other sites and not found by the authors.

After the falcon laid infertile eggs each spring, the Peregrine Fund replaced the eggs at hatching time with eyases, and asked the authors to supplement the food by placing additional food on a ledge near the scrape ledge. Table 1 suggests that this additional food did not decrease the amount of food caught by the falcon; rather, this resulted in a dramatic increase in the amount of food cached on ledges around the building.

In July, 1983, a tiercel began flying with the female, and the feeding sites changed. Much of the prey caught by the two falcons was left on surrounding buildings according to maintenance workers in those buildings, and was less readily recordable.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Tom Cade and Jack Barclay of The Peregrine Fund, Inc., offered encouragement for this study and editorial suggestions. Eirik Blom, Bruce Jarvis, and Robert Ringler reviewed various drafts of this note. The USF&G Company employees monitored falcon prey throughout the study. This help is gratefully acknowledged.

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## EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH SEEN IN ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY

Pat Harrelson

A European Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*) was sighted at 7:30 a.m. Sunday April 17, 1983 on a thistle feeder in Cape St. Claire, Annapolis, Md. It was a clear morning with temperature about 45°. The bird fed at the feeder for approximately one hour on and off. Size was slightly larger than the American Goldfinches feeding at the same feeder. (The American Goldfinches have been at the feeder in numbers for several weeks and remained after the European Goldfinch was last seen.) The feeder is about 12 ft. from the house and I was able to observe it closely with field glasses for most of an hour. Color and appearance matched both the Peterson's *A Field Guide to the Birds* (1947) and *Birds of North America* (1966) illustrations. The bird ate thistle seed almost continuously for most of an hour, leaving the feeder only for brief

moments. It seemed less likely to give up a feeder perch to the American Goldfinches than the other American Goldfinches were themselves. The thistle feeder is in a sassafras tree in a residential neighborhood about one block from the Magothy River.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

### **FIFTY COMMON BIRDS OF OKLAHOMA AND THE SOUTHERN GREAT PLAINS**

George Miksch Sutton. 1977. The University of Oklahoma Press, Norman OK., \$7.95

Is there a market in the modern birdwatching world of monographs, treatises dedicated to single families, and high-tech field guides for an old-fashioned book like this? It would be great loss if there were not. First there is the pleasure of Sutton's paintings, which alone make the book well worth the price. He is a master, under-appreciated by many birders because he never had the broad exposure of a major field guide. All fifty portraits are excellent: a few (Yellow-billed Cuckoo, wrens, Lincoln's Sparrow) rival any ever done.

Do not ignore the text however. Yes, these are common birds, most of them familiar to Maryland birders. No, there is little new or critical identification material. But there are things you did not know about Purple Martins, Cedar Waxwings, Red-tailed Hawks, and all the others, and throughout there is a graceful, cultured, intelligent style that is a joy to read. He reminds us, without ever saying it, that for all of us there is, or should be, something more to birdwatching than rare birds or big lists. It is a small book, but it is a tonic for novice and expert alike.

*Rick Blom*

### **BIRDLIFE AT CHINCOTEAGUE AND THE VIRGINIA BARRIER ISLANDS**

Brooke Meanley. 1981. 116pp. 95 black and white photographs, line drawings, maps and charts, Index, Tidewater Publishers, Centerville, Maryland. \$7.50 Paperback.

We are fortunate that Brooke Meanley's long experience studying the birds of the Chesapeake Bay and the Mid-Atlantic Coast has inspired him to write a number of valuable books. This one all about Chincoteague is his latest. And while the best way to approach the subject of Chincoteague is to be there, reading this book would be good preparation for the trip or good follow-up after you get home. It would even be helpful to take along on your next trip there for its interpretation of the habitats and the wildlife you will see. An appendix lists highest numbers of birds found on Christmas counts from 1952 to 1976. Another appendix lists common and scientific names of birds, plants and other animals. The \$7.50 price seems high, but for the amount of valuable material contained in this handily sized book, perhaps not. There is a copy in the MOS Library at Cylburn.

*Joy Wheeler*

**BIRDS—THEIR LATIN NAMES EXPLAINED**

A.F. Gotch. Blandford Press, Poole, Dorset U.K. 1981. 348 p. with index. \$22.50.

The author has chosen 1,850 bird names out of the 8500 + bird names world wide to explore as far as possible the reasons for their naming, relating the characteristics of each bird with the etymology of its Latin name. How birds are classified scientifically is thoroughly explained in the first 5 chapters of the book. Birds from all parts of the world are included in this listing so you may not find every North American bird whose name you are trying to understand. Furthermore, the information on the meanings of bird names is found in the Audubon Encyclopedia of North American Birds. Spending \$22.50 for this book may not be necessary.

*Joy Wheeler*

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