

**The newsletter of the Baltimore Bird Club**

October/November 2004 -- Online Edition

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

1. [Fort McHenry: Highlights of the Five Year Monitoring Program](#) by Jim Peters
2. [MPT Showing Baltimore SwiftWatch Team](#)
3. [Conservation Corner: Avian Environmentalism: Web-Links](#) by Joan Cwi
4. [Portrait of a Conservation Activist by E-mail](#) by Carol Schreter
5. [ANNUAL TREASURER'S REPORT](#)
6. [An Alaskan Adventure](#) by Jim Peters
7. [Back Yard Birding and Beyond](#) by Gail Frantz
8. [BBC Merchandise](#)

Deadline for next *CHIP NOTES*: October 25, 2004 (the next issue will be December/January 2004-2005). If possible, please email material to [guineabird@aol.com](mailto:guineabird@aol.com)

Otherwise, Send material to:

Gail Frantz  
13955 Old Hanover Rd.  
Reisterstown MD 21136  
410) 833-7135

Please help *CHIP NOTES* get out on time.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

**Fort McHenry:  
Highlights of the Five Year Monitoring Program**

Reported by Jim Peters

- A count of 189 in 2003-2004, proved to be the highest number of species in all five years.
- A Western Kingbird, believed to be the same bird, returned each spring for three years in a row from 2002-2004.
- The rarest bird sighting was in September of 2003 - a Black-tailed Gull from Asia.
- A Great White Heron spent several days in the marsh during September of 2001.
- May 4th of 2004 was a good birding day. Both a Philadelphia Vireo and a Spotted Towhee were sighted on the marsh trail.
- Red-necked Grebes were fairly common in the winter of 2003 and 2004.
- It is believed that the first recorded breeding Bald Eagle in Baltimore City was raised directly across from the Fort wetlands in Masonville Cove. In spite of making a boat trip to check out the nest, the foliage was too thick to confirm. At least one Juvenile Bald Eagle was sighted later in the season.
- Total species count for all five years tallied in at 226!

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

**MPT Showing Baltimore SwiftWatch Team**

MPT's "Outdoors Maryland" filmed the Baltimore SwiftWatch Team on September 19, 2004 as 2,723 chimney swifts dropped into the Mill Center chimney in Hampden, at dusk. The count went to Swift Night Out at the Driftwood Wildlife Association in Texas, for a listing on their website. ([See www.concentric.net/~DWA](http://www.concentric.net/~DWA)). For Swift Night Out over the past 3 years, the Hampden chimneys of Baltimore ranked either 2nd or 3rd most active in the nation, with up to 17 states and 50 locations reporting.

The Baltimore SwiftWatch Team includes Alice and David Nelson, Carol Schreter, Joan Cwi and Bryce Butler.

The "Outdoors Maryland" Chimney Swift story, an 8- minute segment expected to air by next Spring, may include an interview with Mark & Buttons, a chimney sweep company based in Owings Mills, MD. They will explain what they do when customers want their chimneys cleaned in mid-summer, and the chimney is occupied by nesting swifts - birds protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Shortly in advance of the TV show, we hope to post the MPT schedule on MDOsprey.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

**Conservation Corner**

**Avian Environmentalism: Web-Links**

By Joan Cwi

From our membership survey, it is clear that our members are interested in and depend on **Chip Notes** for information on avian conservation. Eighty-four percent (84%) of you found out about bird-related conservation issues from **Chip Notes**, and 80% indicated you would like to receive occasional bird conservation updates from BBC via email.

The BBC is dedicated to investigating local, Maryland-based avian conservation issues. In doing so, we become members of a much broader community of avian environmentalists. For members who are interested in exploring this further, we dedicate this article to identifying resources for taking action by email.

The Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) has an active program in the conservation of birds and bird habitats. The MOS website Conservation Page provides a list of other websites that are useful in finding out about issues and making it easy to contact the appropriate officials if you are interested in taking action by email. The MOS website Conservation Page is accessed as follows:

<http://www.mdbirds.org>, then click **Bird Programs**, then **Earth News**

Below we list the websites listed on the MOS Conservation Page, and briefly describe each. The views represented by these websites are not necessarily those of the BBC, MOS or the author.

**Action Network Hub** (<http://actionnetwork.org/>): ANHub is a broad-based gateway to online activism centers for leading environment, health and population advocacy organizations.

**American Bird Conservancy**—Web Action Link (<http://www.albatrossaction.org/>) ABC's mission is to conserve wild birds and their habitats throughout the Americas. This link is to their Web Action Link, currently focused on seabirds killed by the hooks of fishing vessel longlines.

**Care2 Environmental Network** (<http://www.care2.com/>): Care2 partnered with nonprofit organizations and eco-friendly companies to offer products and services with a "green twist." Using their search engine, Care2 provides eco-info (and info on other topics) from many nonprofit organizations.

**Center for Environmental Citizenship** (<http://www.envirocitizen.org/index.asp>): CEC was founded by college students to increase the participation of their peers on environmental issues.

**Environmental Activism Issues Hub** (<http://environment.about.com/od/activism/>): People visit About.com for many things, including home repair, decorating ideas and even environmental activism. About.com provides content relevant to your interests on any of these topics.

**Environmental Defense** (<http://www.environmentaldefense.org/home.cfm>): ED is dedicated to protecting the environmental rights of people, using science and law to bring about national reform.

**League of Conservation Voters** (<http://www.lcv.org/>): LCV is the political voice of the national environmental movement, devoted to shaping a pro-environment Congress and White House. Their Congressional Scorecard rates all Congressional votes (i.e. for the 108th session of Congress, Mikulski gets 79%, Sarbanes gets 84%, Ben Cardin gets 100%, and Elijah Cummings gets a score of 90%)

**MD Eco-System** (<http://mdecosystem.e-actionmax.com/default.asp>): Currently under revision. The MD Eco-System is a collaborative effort among environmental organizations throughout Maryland, working to educate and mobilize their memberships utilizing a state-of-the-art electronic action alert system. This site is most active from December to April, when the state legislature is in session.

**The Petition Site** (<http://www.thepetitionsite.com/>): This site is linked to Care2, and provides easy access to e-mail petitions.

**Scorecard** (<http://www.scorecard.org/>): Scorecard is an information service provided by Environmental Defense as a resource for information about pollution problems and toxic chemicals. Scorecard provides assistance in taking action.

**Youth-led Environmental Activism** (<http://frechild.org/enviro.htm>): This link accesses the Freechild Project. The site lists numerous youth environmental action groups.

For additional information, call Joan Cwi at 410-467-5352 or email Bryce Butler at [CapitanoB@aol.com](mailto:CapitanoB@aol.com).

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

**Portrait of a Conservation  
Activist by E-mail**

By Carol Schreter

I get weekly e-mail messages from two organizations with broad-based environmental interests. Each weekly message may bring to my attention 2-3 timely matters, where a letter from citizens might make a difference.

This week I was urged to write Maryland's Governor Robert Ehrlich, asking him not to approve bear hunting in Maryland. I was also urged to write the U.S. Navy to stop exercises using underwater sonar devices - sonar devices now known to kill whales and other sea creatures.

If I'm interested in the topic presented, I follow a link to another website for more information. If I agree with their position, I sign onto their letter or petition. I usually just have to type in my e-mail address, as the rest of my information is already known to that website or organization, for just this purpose.

In this way, I probably send 20+ letters a month to public officials, from my desk, with a minimum of effort. Okay, a computer generated letter is probably not as powerful as a personal letter. But this is so easy, and then I'm one of 10,000 or 100,000 people protesting the same issue. Timeliness, and our numbers count for something, I hope. This is a new world of eco-activism, by computer.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

**ANNUAL TREASURER'S REPORT**

May 2003 - April 2004

Prepared by Paula Warner\*

<b>INCOME</b>	
DUES	\$ 11,420.00
SALES	768.63
INTEREST:	
Checking	34.81
Savings	49.19
DONATIONS:	
General	215.00
Museum	<u>2,100.00</u>
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$ 14,587.63</b>

<b>EXPENDITURES</b>	
MOS Dues	\$ 5,485.00
Programs	1,103.11
Chip Notes	1,629.12
Museum	843.36
Membership Secretary	503.60
Conservation Committee	101.29
Publicity	75.00
Officers	106.05
Organiz. Memberships	85.00
Scholarship Committee	0
Sales Taxes and Postage	55.96
General Printing	179.13
Miscellaneous	<u>0</u>
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$ 10,166.62</b>

Savings Balance	\$ 14,004.05
Checking Balance	\$ 3,511.84
Museum Self-Insurance Fund	\$ 6,122.84
Martin Fund	\$ 37,445.95

\*NOTE: The current Treasurer is Martha Dunn

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

**An Alaskan Adventure**

By Jim Peters

On Wednesday June 16th a friend and I borrowed a Ford Expedition and drove from Anchorage to Seward, AK to take a boat tour along the shores of Resurrection Bay and the Gulf of Alaska. The weather was overcast with some drizzle and fog. We stopped at Potter Marsh just south of Anchorage, adjacent to Turn-Again Arm. Here we sighted a trophy specimen of a bull moose with huge antlers along with a cow and calf near the parking lot. A Harlan's Hawk soared over the marsh. We watched Arctic Terns and Mew Gulls in large numbers along with a Red-necked Grebe. Black-capped Chickadees and Yellow Warblers were in the willow thickets as well as Savannah sparrows while a Northern Harrier criss-crossed over the marsh. A Lapland Longspur also made an appearance along the boardwalk. If you ever visit Anchorage this is a stop worth making.

Turning south, along the Seward highway, we continued on to Portage Glacier where we made a quick stop. We walked through the drizzle to a short piece of rail and enjoyed the vistas of the fjord, the glacier, and large blue chunks of ice floating in the water.

We arrived in Seward in the early afternoon. After confirming the hotel we had time to explore not only the town but the harbor area as well. We easily found a Northwestern Crow, a Pigeon Guillemot and a large number of Ravens around the fish packing plant. Bald Eagles perched on the jetties. Large numbers of Glaucous-winged and Mew Gulls along with Double-crested Cormorants were everywhere. Black-legged Kittiwakes were couring over the waters of the bay. Tree and Violet-green Swallows perched on phone wires throughout the town.

The next morning we arose at 5:00 a.m. to be ready to leave with our 8:00 boat tour. Unfortunately, a heavy fog had moved in overnight but thankfully, it burned off quickly as the sun rose over the mountains. We had clear skies, good visibility and were able to leave on time.

The boat trip to the Kenai Fjords National Park should be on a must see list when visiting Alaska. The tour covers the entire length of Resurrection Bay, out into the Gulf of Alaska. As we approached the mouth of the bay, we began to see an increasing number of seabirds which included: Common Murre, Horned and Tufted Puffin, Red-faced Cormorant and Pelagic Cormorants accompanied by numerous Bald Eagles flying over us and perched in trees along the shore. We were able to observe Minke and Humpback whales. Dahl porpoises with sea otters were everywhere. We enjoyed seeing harbor seals and Steller's sea lions in groups along the shoreline.

Before entering the Harding ice fields, our boat made a passage between the islands of the Chiswell archipelago. The islands have sheer cliffs that are home to nesting seabirds. Among the breeding birds found there are: Common Murres by the thousands, a few Thick-billed Murres, hundreds of Tufted and Horned Puffins, Fork-tailed Storm Petrels and a variety of Murrelets and Auklets. The numbers and varieties of the birds in this spot is awesome.

The captain took the boat into a cove where he'd spotted a small group of Parakeet Auklets. Everyone had a close look. We saw Marbled Murrelet and a single specimen of Kittlitz's Murrelet which was a life bird for most everyone.

We entered Holgate Arm and made our way into one of several fjords. This enabled us to see the glaciers up close and watch them calve ice into the water. Every once in a while we'd hear what sounded like an echoing rifle shot, then the ice would break off with a roar. Tons of ice cascaded into the waters around us. For more than a mile the water was filled with floating chunks of ice which the boat crew called, "bergy-bits".

This tour, among the longest offered, lasts about nine hours (hot lunch included) and costs \$149.00 per person. In addition to the Chiswell Islands, we visited three different glaciers of the Harding Ice Field.

A number of tours are available from Seward on different sized boats and may last anywhere from four to nine hours. Special arrangements may be made for birding tours with smaller groups (fifteen to twenty people) that covers just the Chiswell Islands.

After the trip ended we had a sea food dinner then drove the four hour trip back to Anchorage. The roads in Alaska are excellent but they pass through rugged terrain. Due to steep grades, curves, lines of slow RV's and "No Passing" zones, it's not possible to make good time.

If you enjoy a pelagic trip with great scenery and a lot of interesting seabirds, exploration of the Kenai peninsula is the tour for you.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

**Back Yard Birding and Beyond**

By Gail Frantz



**Two New Butterfly Species Recorded in Baltimore County**

On August 14, an offering of rotten bananas mixed with drops of beer enticed a White Admiral butterfly (fully-banded "arthemis," form) to our deck railing.

Dick Smith, butterfly expert, reports that Dr. Platt at UMBC has found from his 35 years of genetic studies on the White Admiral-Red-spotted Purple species complex (these two are actually subspecies of the same major species), that each population has about a 0.3% genetic potential to "express" the recessive form, and also various intergrades, within its population. Both butterflies breed in Baltimore County

Just found out about the Zebra Longwing (*Heliconius charitonius*) that Mary and Brent Byers had in their yard last November for 3 days. Brent saw the long and narrow winged butterfly first. He immediately took photos. Next day at about the same time, Mary observed the 'fly looking around', "probably for some tropical plants". After three days a cold snap arrived and the beautiful jet black, lemon-yellow striped butterfly was gone.

The National Audubon Society Butterfly book describes the longwing as: Completely distinctive, does not at all resemble the Zebra Swallowtail...Hammocks and thickets throughout Everglades National Park are good places to see gatherings of these butterflies. Mary speculated that the lovely butterfly might have come in with some fruit.

**Perry Hall**

July 3rd, from Georgia McDonald: While atasing we saw an immature Mississippi Kite mid-day in currently undeveloped Cross Road Park. This is the same place we got our fledgling Red-shouldered Hawks.

Earlier in the season, on May 9th (May Count), we spotted an "unidentified raptor" which we now suspect was also a kite. At that time we were unaware that the Kites were moving in on the Maryland cicadas.

**Nancy & Elliot Kirschbaum in WV**

July 30, although they haven't made the final move yet, Elliot Kirschbaum writes from his and Nancy's new home, "Hicks In The Sticks, Bed & Breakfast": As we now have a yard, we have a yard list. We spent two nights at our WV home and now have 31 species on our list, including a couple of confirmations for the Atlas Project. Yes, our home is located in the West Virginia portion of a Washington County, MD block, so we can Atlas there. We had a Yellow-billed Cuckoo carrying food for young, and heard Cardinal chicks. We also have a butterfly yard list, which includes Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Zebra Swallowtail, Eastern Comma, Hackberry Emperor and Harris's Checkerspot.

**Reisterstown, Old Hanover Road**

The end of July produced a nice array of young birds passing through our backyard. Included were: Scarlet Tanagers, Ovenbirds, two juvenile Red-shouldered Hawks, Redstarts, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Baltimore Oriole, Common Yellowthroat, Pewee, Yellow Warbler, Towhees, White-eyed Vireo, Waxwings.

Juvenile birds at the feeders included: Titmice, Chickadees, White-breasted Nuthatches, Red-bellied & Downy Woodpeckers, Goldfinches, Carolina Wrens, Catbirds, Ruby-throated Hummers.(GF)

Bob Slaterbeck's horse farm has a portion planted in corn and soy beans this year with a woods that surrounds the fields. This habitat is a magnet for a variety of birds and raptors that perch on the fence and regularly hunt in the fields. During August and September, Bob observed a family of five Kestrels, a group of six Red-tailed hawks and a very large Cooper's hawk using the farm's facilities.

In September, Bob shot a groundhog that dug a hole too close to his house. Thinking the dead animal might attract a vulture or two, he left the groundhog lying in the open. Within twenty-four hours two Turkey vultures were investigating the carcass. However, it took a Red-tailed Hawk to begin the process of consuming the animal. Soon as the hawk began tearing apart the animal, the vultures returned and in less than two hours there remained little but bones and skin.

Bob has built eight boxes which he has attached to the white, wooden fence around the seventy-five acre farm. All the boxes were inhabited by Tree Swallows and Bluebirds this summer and he intends to double the boxes for next year's season. For the first time, Barn Swallows had two successful nestings. Bob plans to put up a Kestrel box in the spring of '05 and he's researching plans to erect a Great Horned Owl platform in the woods. So far, no House Sparrows!

**Ducks In Space**

Shreen Gonzaga writes: A few weeks ago (June) at the office, a friend called to tell me that a Mallard mama duck with 6 chicks was wandering about outside a building across the street. There is a stream nearby at Wyman Park. Problem is, there was a road between the ducks and the stream. By the time I got there with a box, my mind racing with relocation strategies, I was greeted by an amazing sight: several co-workers at the Space Telescope Science Institute had "escorted" mama duck and her chicks down a flight of stairs leading to the road, stopped traffic, and were herding mama duck and her 6 trailing chicks across the street. Oh, if only I had my camera to capture that hysterically funny moment! Happily, mama duck and her chicks crossed the street safely and immediately headed to the stream. This is the 4th time Space Telescope has helped a mother duck (possibly the same mother duck?) get her chicks to water, thereby intervening in the evolutionary process called natural selection that would have otherwise halted this new line of ducks with a genetic mutation that makes them nest in dumb places. Previous incidents included chicks being hatched, 2 years in a row, on our 4th floor library balcony, and the day - I believe it was last year - our building facilities staff had to rescue duck chicks that had fallen into a nearby storm drain! I wonder where she'll nest next year?

*Let us hear about your Back Yard and Maryland Birding too!!!*

Call or write to:

Gail Frantz  
13955 Old Hanover Rd.  
Reisterstown MD 21136  
Tel: 410-833-7135  
e-mail: [guineabird@aol.com](mailto:guineabird@aol.com)



[Back to Table of Contents](#)

**BBC Merchandise**

The Baltimore Bird Club offers merchandise for sale through its mail order section. The following items are available. All prices include shipping costs.

- Baltimore Bird Club's Birding Site Guide - \$12.00
- Baltimore Bird Club T-Shirt - \$18.00 (only XL left)
- MOS Patch - \$3.50
- MOS Decal - \$3.50

Please make your check or money order payable to "The Baltimore Bird Club" and send your order to: Joseph Lewandowski, 3021 Temple Gate, Baltimore, Maryland 21209.

**"CafePress" Web Page:**

Shreen Gonzaga has arranged a new web page on CafePress for the Baltimore Bird Club. The web page sells everything from T-shirts & sweat shirts to mugs, caps, notebooks and tote bags. There are baby clothes, stickers, license plate frames and even underwear! All come with the BBC logo designed by Don Culbertson. The club receives \$3 for each item sold.

You may order online at The Baltimore Bird Club Store, CafePress: <http://www.cafeshops.com/haldbirdclub> or call in toll free orders on Mondays through Fridays between 8:00am -5:00pm (PST) at: **877-809-1659**

[Back to Table of Contents](#)