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Deadline for next *CHIP NOTES*: February 25, 2005 (the next issue will be April/May 2005). If possible, please email material to

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.

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Field Trip Changes and Additions

ALL TUESDAY CYLBURN SPRING WALKS ARE MOVED TO LAKE ROLAND Since Lake Roland will now be changed this spring, the Tuesday morning "Cylburn" walks will be moved to Lake Roland. All leaders, beginning times and dates (April 5 - May 31 at 8:30 am) remain the same.

POPULAR ISLAND - Originally scheduled Saturday, March 12. Due to a change in policy, state workers are not allowed to work on Saturdays. Therefore the Poplar Island trip date has been CHANGED to FRIDAY, MARCH 18. Time, meeting place, and required reservations remain the same. (Contact Gail Frantz, (410) 833-7135.)

NOTE: A "new trip" referred to in the paper edition of Chip Notes to Southwest Baltimore County for May 28 is now no longer taking place.

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Conservation Corner

Public Lands in Maryland

By Peter Lev

The most important conservation topic in Maryland for the past few months has been "Land Use." It all started with the revelation that 836 acres of forested land in St. Mary's County, recently acquired by the state, would be resold to contractor Willard Hackerman in a more-or-less secret deal. Even though Hackerman promised to re-donate most of the land to the state, after taking a hefty tax deduction, this was a very bad deal for Maryland. The secrecy, the lack of bids, and the favoritism to a politically connected individual all set bad precedents. When publicized by the Baltimore Sun, the "Hackerman deal" quickly fell apart.

The Sun built on this story by revealing that the Maryland Department of Natural Resources had compiled a list of a few thousand acres of public land that might be sold to private interests or given away to local governments. The DNR quickly published the list, in a more-or-less preliminary. Further, DNR explained that it was good management to get rid of land that was expensive to maintain and/or of little public benefit and/or of greater value to local government. Democrats critical of the Ehrlich Administration were skeptical, given the Hackerman deal, and proposed legislative oversight (not part of current law) for the sale of any state lands.

Maureen Harvey, Conservation Chair of the Maryland Ornithological Society, has sensibly asked that all chapters of MOS present a review of land parcels in their counties that are on DNR's list. When chapter comments are compiled in early 2005 they may show a responsible, conservation-oriented process, in which case the only complaint might be that the DNR's review should have been more open. Or the MOS study may show that some properties of great natural beauty and ecological value have been tentatively slated for sale or transfer. At this point, I would not hazard a guess.

In Baltimore County, there are two parcels on DNR's list. One is 3.7 acres in Arbutus, part of Patapsco Valley State Park but separated from the river valley by a freeway. I had a look at this parcel - a few acres of scrubby woods - and I agree that it does not belong in the state park. This small chunk of land would be more valuable if added to an adjacent county park, which is what DNR suggests.

The second Baltimore County parcel is Pleasure Island, 33.3 acres just off the tip of a peninsula in Eastern Baltimore County. I looked at this parcel from the mainland during the Baltimore Harbor Christmas count - I saw a duck hunter and a row of decoys. Pleasure Island is of ecological value, at least as a connection between the Black Marsh wildlands (on the mainland) and Hart-Miller Island (directly east of Pleasure Island). Claudia Wilds' book *Finding Birds in the National Capital Area* notes that rare shorebirds have been seen on Pleasure Island's beach. However, the state proposes not selling the island but transferring it to local government. This might be all right if the transfer comes with restrictions on development.

Marylanders clearly support land conservation, so it seems odd that the State is exploring land sales. Also, as Tom Horton recently noted on WYPR, the state is committed to buying thousands of acres of land as part of an initiative to protect the Chesapeake Bay. Nevertheless, it may make sense to sell or donate some parcels of state land, especially if any income is re-invested in land of greater conservation value. Stay tuned; this issue is sure to be argued in the 2005 legislative session.

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Board of Directors Meetings

By Carol Schreter, Recording Secretary

The Board met on November 9 and December 14, 2004. Both meetings focused on ways to cut the budget. Not counting the \$20 portion of dues that goes to MOS, the BBC is now charging individual members \$20. We are seeking to reduce the budget in order to set and maintain a \$15 (maximum) membership fee for several years even as costs rise and our membership shrinks. In November and December the Board reviewed the current budget line-by-line, with an eye to how expenditures match member priorities as determined by the Spring 2004 Membership Survey. We hope to vote on budget cuts at the January Board meeting. We plan to put the new budget up for a membership review and vote at the March Annual meeting/Lecture.

Other news:

In November Patsy Perlman, Cylburn Bird Museum Representative, showed us architectural drawings commissioned by the Cylburn Arboretum Association for renovating the Carriage House. The renovation is now expected to cost \$1,079,000, with money raised from private sources.

In December the MOS Conservation Committee asked each chapter to evaluate the importance of state-owned land in their area identified as "disposable" on a list created by the state's Department of Natural Resources. The Board discussed our reactions to the possible sale or transfer of two state-owned properties in Baltimore County. The BBC Conservation Committee will further investigate this matter and report back to MOS. (See related article by Peter Lev, "Public Lands in Maryland.")

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Field Trip Reports

November 13, 1:00 PM - **Flying Harris's Hawk Demonstration** - Joe Platak and his Harris' Hawk gave an exciting demonstration on Bob Slaterbeck's 200 acre horse farm on Old Hanover Road. Participants helped Joe beat the hedge row to dislodge any rabbits, voles or mice that might be hiding there. The bird followed Joe, flying from tree to tree, as he directed it with a series of whistles. The hawk is trained to respond to a "Ho, ho, ho" from the beater when a flushed prey is spotted. Two rabbits and an unidentified small animal were flushed but escaped unharmed. Half a dozen Bluebirds, seven Horned Lark and a Red-tailed Hawk were among the species seen during the afternoon. Leader - Joe Platak. Participants - 14, including 3 children below the age of nine, Species - 7

Nov 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 - **Tuesday Loch Raven Walks** - Paul Noel comments that sightings were down from the previous year with only one Hermit Thrush and two Fox Sparrows for the whole month, and no Tree Sparrows; also few grebes and no teal, pintails, Goldeneye, Red-breasted Mergansers or swans. The weather was generally seasonable and dry. The trips were attended by two to four people. Leaders Elliott Kirschbaum and Paul Noel.

Lectures

Hospitality Chairperson Shirley Geddes reports:

Good Food, Good Friends, Good Time

On Sunday, Jan. 9th over forty members attended our annual covered dish dinner at the comfortable, convenient facilities of BYKOTA which is in the Balto. Co. Dept. of Aging, Central Ave., Towson.

Our speaker was world traveler Hank Kaestner. We were relieved to learn that Hank was not in that area of Asia at the time of the tsunami. His talks are always a vicarious way to travel and see the exotic birds he has encountered as well as learn how our everyday spices and flavorings are obtained.

Mark your calendar for a repeat next January 2006. It is great fun.

GET READY FOR SPRING!!

On Tues. Feb. 1st hear Daryl Durrow, owner of Wildlife Landscapes talk on Plantings for Birds and Wildlife at Cylburn 7:30 PM

On Tues. Mar. 1st learn about rehabilitating wildlife from Kathy Woods at Cylburn 7:30 PM. Fun.

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Baltimore Harbor Christmas Count

December 18, 2004

Compiled by Pete Webb

Canada Goose	1023
Mute Swan	42
Gadwall	62
EURASIAN WIGGON	1
American Wigeon	45
American Black Duck	49
Mallard	775
Northern Shoveler	13
Northern Pintail	9
Green-winged Teal	44
Canvasback	808
Redhead	1
Ring-necked Duck	32
Greater Scaup	15
Lesser Scaup	8160
Scaup sp	650
Bufflehead	378
Common Goldeneye	42
Hooded Merganser	35
Red-br. Merganser	3
Ruddy Duck	1019
Ring-necked Pheasant	5
Red-throated Loon	1
Common Loon	6
Pied-billed Grebe	16
Horned Grebe	2
D-c Cormorant	161
Great Cormorant	1
Great Blue Heron	46
Turkey Vulture	10
OSPREY	1
Bald Eagle (adult)	15
Bald Eagle (immature)	0
Bald Eagle (total)	5
Cooper's	3
Red-should.	2
Red-tailed Hawk	11
American Kestrel	2
Peregrine Falcon	3
Virginia Rail	5
American Coot	363
Killdeer	5
Dunlin	2
BLACK-HEADED GULL	378
Bonaparte's Gull	1004
Ring-billed	2296
Herring Gull	476
Great Black-back	127
Rock Pigeon	692
Mooring Dove	292
Great Horned Owl	2
Red-tailed Kingfisher	5
Red-bellied Woodpecker	16
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	2
Downy Woodpecker	20
Hairy Woodpecker	4
Northern Flicker	23
Pileated Woodpecker	1
Blue Jay	30
American Crow	149
Flab Crow	27
Crow sp.	127
Carolina Chickadee	26
Tufted Titmouse	30
Red-breasted Nuthatch	24
White-br Nuthatch	2
Bon Creeper	6
Carolina Wren	42
Winter Wren	5
Marsh Wren	1
Golden-crowned Kinglet	16
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	12
Hermit Thrush	8
American Robin	180
Gray Catbird	1
Mockingbird	29
Starling	1136
Cedar Waxwing	16
Yellow-rumped Warbler	29
Prairie Warbler	1
Palm Warbler (Western)	2
Eastern Towhee	24
American Tree Sparrow	1
Field Sparrow	3
Fox Sparrow	4
Song Sparrow	147
Swamp Sparrow	11
White-throated Sparrow	343
White-crowned Sparrow	1
Dark-eyed Junco	108
Snow Bunting	93
Cardinal	129
Red-winged Blackbird	287
Common Grackle	40
Brown-headed Cowbird	2
House Finch	69
American Goldfinch	88
House Sparrow	250
SPECIES	94
BIRDS	22325
Observers	13
Fald Obsv.	5
Parties	7
START TIME	630
STOP TIME	1630
Total Hours	35
Foot Hours	42
Car Hours	6
Boat Hours	6
Owling Hours	2
Total Miles	96
Foot Miles	29
Car Miles	25
Boat Miles	6
Owling Miles	6
Min Temp	22
Max Temp	50
Min Wind	
Max Wind	7
Direction	
Sky AM	MS
Sky PM	MS
Snow Cover	
Still Water	PP
Moving Water	open
OBSERVERS	
Stan Arnold	
Keith Eric Costley	
Wayne Gordon	
Kevin Graff	
Bill Ellis	
Peter Lev	
Jim Peters	
Ben Foscover	
Gene Scarpulla	
Gary Steffler	
Debbie Terry	
David Walbeck	
Pete Webb	

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Alaska Adventure Part III: Denali National Park

By Jim Peters

Immediately after returning from Nome, we borrowed a vehicle from Bob Collins for our Denali National Park trip some 240 miles north of Anchorage. We stopped for breakfast at the Talkeetna Inn and Resort.

The Inn is located on a hill overlooking a large lake with snow covered Mt. Denali in the background. The forest surrounding the lake is a mix of aspen, pine and fir. The Lake's surface mirrors the trees and mountain range in the background. What a magnificent location!

At Talkeetna, mountain climbers board bush planes that carry them to the slopes of Denali. There, the ski-equipped planes land on the snow fields where the climbers begin their attempt to reach the peak which is at an elevation of over 20,000 feet.

After breakfast, we continued north towards the park and upon our arrival, rented a cabin for the night. For the rest of the day we hiked trails near the visitor center, confirmed our reservations for the all day wildlife tour we planned to take the following morning, and viewed a demonstration of sled dogs.

We birked early next morning, while waiting for the tour bus to arrive. We saw a Steller's Jay, Gray Jay, and a Boreal Chickadee in the shrubbery. We listened to the Robins carol and the Ravens croaking. White-crowned Sparrows and Juncos were everywhere.

The nine hour, \$23 per person bus trip covered 65 miles and stayed inside the Park. We brought our own lunches and we could determine when and where the bus stopped. Our excellent driver spotted much of the wildlife. Small groups of Dahl sheep grazed on the steep mountain slopes as well as a gray wolf and eleven grizzlies including two sows with cubs. Small herds of caribou roamed about with a particularly stunning trophy specimen bull moose. Mt Denali was visible during most of our tour and we took every opportunity to photograph the spectacular views it offers.

Among the birds we saw were Willow and Rock Ptarmigan, Golden Eagle, Gyrfalcon on their aciries, and Long-tailed Jaegers. Cliff Swallows were nesting in the eaves of the Eilson Visitor's Center while Golden-crowned Sparrows and Gray-checked Thrushes sang in the willows.

Due to the Park's size, moving from one area to another requires using the bus. This bus tour is the only way to see the Park since private cars are not allowed beyond the Savage River Bridge which is some miles from the Visitor Center. Keep in mind that, since the park is so popular, reservations for tours and camping are a necessity. Don't skip the twenty minute orientation film at the Visitor Center which is presented by the Park's personnel. It's well worth the viewing time.

I loved this trip so much that I plan to return. Only next time, instead of accompanying a salmon fishing friend, I'll devote the trip to birding!

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Ruth Culbertson Loses Daughter

We're all saddened to hear that Ruth Culbertson's daughter, Dawn C. Culbertson, was stricken with an apparent heart attack and died unexpectedly.

Dawn played the lute and recorder, sang, composed, and was the overnight disc jockey on the former WJHU-FM, operated by the Johns Hopkins University. She also had a weekly hour-long program, "Exploring Early Music," and was the station's music librarian.

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Back Yard Birding and Beyond

By Gail Frantz



Lake Roland
Mark Ballard: Yesterday 11-27-04 at about 4:00, I spotted a flying, male Bald Eagle perched in a treetop along the inner trail at Lake Roland. It was located where the outer and inner loop converge out past the concrete pad area. I was scanning the treetops looking for Barred Owls when much to my surprise I focused in on this fellow. What was equally surprising was that the bird was perched in the middle of the woods, not in the marsh area where I have previously seen it from the concrete platform.

On birding in general...I've been visiting Cylburn at least once every weekend morning for the last 2 months. Primarily because of it's quick access to me and the solitude it affords. Occasionally there are some pesky humanoids on the upper grounds but the woods are generally peaceful and unharbited.

I've yet to find any one who has enjoyed a few the special viewings. A "lifer" Blue-Headed Vireo was viewed from just a few feet away in early Nov. I'd seen a few very distant fleeting ones in the past but this one was a "keeper". I was able to sneak up on a pair of Wood Ducks that were in the Jones Falls near the Veneqar Factory. What an eye! A single Sharpie, a curious Winter Wren and several Red-tailed Hawks are among the other recent highlights ... and on the slow days the Cardinals, Carolina Wrens and White-throated Sparrows have always picked me up.

Perry Hill
Gail McDonald observed fledged young House Wrens on June 7: I was extremely fortunate to have been in the yard that morning just as the young were beginning to leave the nest. While we knew there were young in the box, we had never seen them. That morning I noticed they were hyperactive, poking their faces into the opening of the box, 2 & 3 at a time, and even perching in the entry. I was worried that they were going to fall out until I realized that the bird on the tree trunk was not one of the adults but a fledgling who was already OUT! I fetched my camera and took a bi-jillion shots, some from as close as 3' from the box. The birds could have cared less. After they were out of the box, they flew around erratically, landing on any vertical surface. I gave the camera to my more coordinated daughter and she managed to get a few shots of the fledglings. -- Until one of them landed on HER! There were at least 4 fledglings, maybe 5. I had hoped we would get to enjoy the family in our yard, but the parents took them off to some other area and we rarely saw them again. Probably just as well since we have at least 3 different cats who include our yard in their travels.

Joppa Town
Mark Miller: I am an avid bird watcher, amateur photographer, and apprentice bander. On November 29, I was out looking for Fox Sparrows to photograph when a pair of Sandhill Cranes caught me off guard. I sighted them for the second time on December 4. Once again they were coming in for a landing. I am quite sure they are landing in Bird River.

Baltimore City
December 13, Bolton Hill, Bryce Butler: This morning I had a very bright Yellow-breasted Chat turn up in my small garden in Bolton Hill which is just northeast of downtown Baltimore. I spotted this warbler five days ago across the commons behind the townhouse complex I live in but was unable to get to the bird for a clear look before it flew off. This morning I observed the bird for about ten minutes at a distance of fifteen feet. What an unexpected delight.

Update, December 20: The Yellow-breasted Chat continues to visit my small garden. For the last several days, I've been putting out water for the Chat since he is drinking the water. However, it's been freezing so fast that I finally got out a water heater for the bird bath. Although I have suet available, the Chat, unlike the Carolina Wren, hasn't found it yet.

According to Kaufman's "Lives of North American Birds" there is a small population that overwinters in the northeast. Hopefully this is one of those. His daily appearances sure make me smile. He's a bright spot in these winter days.

Old Hanover Rd
On December 1, Bob Slaterbeck observed Turkey Vultures on the crest of one of the hills at his horse farm. As the hunters approached with a deer strapped to the motorized cart they use, the birds bobbed about on the ground waiting impatiently for the deer to be dressed at this usual place in the field. After the hunters left with the deer meat, the bones were stripped by the vultures in less than an hour.

Piney Grove Rd: On December 19 Jim Peters enjoyed visits from an immature Red-headed Woodpecker chasing a Red-bellied Woodpecker away from the suet & sunflower seeds he wanted for his own.

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

Call or write to:

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e-mail: guineabird@aol.com



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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.

Shop CafePress® Web Page:

Shireen Gonzalez 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/balbirdclub> or call in toll free orders on Mondays through Fridays between 8:00am - 5:00pm (PST) at: **877-809-1659**

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