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Deadline for next *CHIP NOTES*: December 26, 2005 (the next issue will be February/March 2006). If possible, please email material to

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Please help *CHIP NOTES* get out on time.

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## Audubon Maryland-DC dedicates Blackwater-Fishing Bay Marshes Important Bird Area

By David Curson, Director of Bird Conservation, Audubon Maryland-DC

On October 1, 2005, Audubon Maryland-DC held a ceremony to dedicate Blackwater-Fishing Bay Marshes Important Bird Area. The ceremony took place as part of the annual Open House celebrations of Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. Executive Director of Audubon Maryland-DC, Rick Leader, presented plaques to staff of Blackwater NWR and Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the principal land owners of the site, and the Friends of Blackwater NWR.

Blackwater-Fishing Bay Marshes is the largest Audubon's Important Bird Areas Program is currently developing an inventory of the critical sites for bird conservation in Maryland and DC. Important Bird Areas are the focus of Audubon's bird conservation work and will help guide conservation and outreach initiatives of Audubon Maryland-DC, bird clubs and other interested groups.

How will the Important Bird Areas Program help birds? At Blackwater NWR Audubon Maryland-DC is already working in partnership with refuge managers to combat some of the many threats that face the site. These threats include marsh loss caused by the introduced nutria and sea-level rise, invasive plants, such as Phragmites reeds, and encroaching suburban development to the north. The IBA Program's contributions include assisting the nutria control working group to secure continued funding and nominating a land parcel for purchase as a site for a future education center using federal Land and Water Conservation Funds. We are also helping to draft a section of the refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan to promote monitoring and conservation of the saltmarsh bird community.

For more information about the Important Bird Areas Program contact Audubon Maryland-DC's Director of Bird Conservation, David Curson, at [dcurson@audubon.org](mailto:dcurson@audubon.org) or 410 558 2473. You can also learn more about the IBA Program on the web at: <http://www.audubon.org/bird/iba/>.

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## Board of Directors Meetings

By Carol Schreter, Recording Secretary

The BBC Board met on November 8 and December 13, 2005.

At the November lecture, the proposed BBC By-Laws were adopted by a general vote. From now on, at Board meetings, a quorum will be seven (not ten). The Board then approved the revised Manual of Operations at the November Board meeting.

Our new Chip Notes editor Carolyn Webb created the October/ November 2005 issue. Send future submissions to Carolyn at her new e-mail address, [cawebb1234@yahoo.com](mailto:cawebb1234@yahoo.com).

Field Trip Report forms will no longer be sent to trip leaders by U.S. mail. Trip leaders should access [this form](#) from the [BBC website](#).

As of December 13, BBC had just 233 paid members. Sixty-five members had not yet renewed, according to Membership Secretary Catherine Bishop.

For the Conservation Committee, Carol Schreter distributed a Baltimore *Sun* article describing a proposed development of 6,000 houses in Cambridge, MD., along Egypt Road near Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. (See "Blackwater Preserve's Natural Balancing Act" by Tom Pelton, October 2, 2005.)

The November meeting focused on the Nominations process -- which is now the responsibility of the Board, not a separate committee. The proposed slate of officers listed in the December/ January issue of Chip Notes will be voted upon at the March 2006 lecture, which is also considered our Annual Meeting. To help fill the remaining vacant positions, Corresponding Secretary Roberta Ross may send out an e-mail to all BBC members with known e-mail addresses.

In upcoming meetings the Board hopes to review and trim the BBC budget, making it more in line with other MOS chapters

To view some photographs of this trip, visit: <http://borderland-tours.com/v2/content/view/35/55>

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## Conservation Corner: English Ivy -- Silent Green Killer

By Wendy Olsson, Conservation Committee

Before leaves appear on our deciduous trees this spring, take stock of evergreen plants in your yard, along your commute, and where you frequently stroll. Do you notice there are a lot of vines hanging on trees and a lot of evergreen growth on trees? If you go North on Charles St. at the city/country line, or on a drive through Mt. Washington, Forest Park, or other older local neighborhoods, one evergreen plant you will surely find in abundance both on the ground and covering trees is Hedera Helix, commonly known as English Ivy.

Nurseries frequently sell English Ivy to ground out a slope or fill in a spot with an evergreen groundcover that thrives in both sun and shade and a range of conditions. Don't buy English Ivy! Not all green is good, and English Ivy is downright destructive.

**English Ivy kills trees** - As English Ivy grows up trees (vines can grow up to 90' long), it deprives trees of light, weighs them down, and may kill the tree or cause it to topple much earlier than under normal circumstances.

**Urban woodlands are falling victim to English Ivy** - The city of Portland, Oregon lists English Ivy on its "Prohibited Plant List" because it is so aggressive and requires so much control to ensure it doesn't outcompete native species.

**English Ivy kills forests** - English Ivy's dense mat of groundcover smothers out native tree seedlings, therefore disrupting the natural succession process in the forest.

**English Ivy has an economic impact** -- Large, healthy trees also bring economic value-many home buyers are attracted to neighborhoods with beautiful, established trees. Landscaping can add between 7% and 15% to a home's value. As these trees disappear and aren't replaced, home values and a neighborhood's character are affected. Also, remember getting a tree cut down is expensive, for large jobs you can expect to pay thousands of dollars.

If you have an area infested with English Ivy, or trees covered in English Ivy, get rid of it! Before working with English Ivy, put on protective clothing and sturdy gloves, since it may cause an allergic reaction.

**Target seed-bearing English Ivy first** - This will stop new plants from growing. Ivy begins bearing seeds most frequently when it has reached a high-light area, such as upper parts of a tree. Where Ivy has grown up the apex (trunk and up) of a tree, carefully cut vines at waist height and dig out the roots. This will keep the Ivy above where you have cut from getting water (essentially girdling it as if you had cut a ring around a tree's bark) and will eventually kill it. Don't despair if the Ivy isn't dead in 2 weeks, it will take a few months to die. When cutting the Ivy ensure you don't also cut the bark of the tree. Do not try to pull the live Ivy from the upper areas of the tree, since Ivy roots contain a sticky, gluey substance that may damage tree bark. Visit <http://www.fosc.org/EI-Removing.htm> for more information for efforts to control English Ivy at Silgo Creek Park in Montgomery County.

Try to avoid Ivy reaching the "adult" (seed-bearing) stage - If you know the infested area is free of stones, old tools, branches, etc., mow it to control growth and to keep it away from trees.

**Smother it** - Mt. Washington gardeners, under the direction of Dr. Michael Sherlock, have done tremendous work in eradicating English Ivy in spots around Mt. Washington, especially at the corner of Cross Country Boulevard and Uffington Road. In a patch of woods next to where the two roads meet, trees that used to be absolutely covered in Ivy are getting a new lease on life, and beds of Ivy have been covered by cardboard (biodegradable) and mulch donated by local tree companies.

Don't make it a problem anywhere else - After pulling Ivy, make sure it is dead so that it will not resprout somewhere else. Here are some suggestions on Ivy disposal from [www.noIvyleague.org](http://www.noIvyleague.org):

**Solarisation** - place prunings in a garbage bag. Place in full sunlight for 6 weeks or so and the sun will cook it. Empty contents onto garden beds as mulch. Put prunings into a Hessian (similar to burlap or hemp) bag or the like, then lower them into a bin of water. After 6 weeks or so the Ivy is a harmless mulch, and the liquid can become fertilizer for your garden plot.

Put the garbage bag of prunings straight into the trash. Do not put it out with your green waste or it could be mulched and become millions of plants.

Hang the vines in a tree or lay them out in a sunny area where they can dry out and become mulch.

As with many invasive species, eradication is a slow, iterative process. Most areas will probably require follow-up removal as any roots or vines missed will quickly begin to grow again. For more information on how to eradicate English Ivy, check out [www.noIvyleague.com](http://www.noIvyleague.com), or just Google "[English Ivy Invasive](#)". If you're interested in volunteering to help rid Baltimore City parks of English Ivy, consider joining the Baltimore City Weed Warriors team. More information is available at 410-396-0359.

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## CYLBURN -- FALL -- 2005

By Joe Lewandowski

8-28-05 -- Fall at Cylburn is starting off cloudy and misty as five birders started to walk the trails in this first walk of the season. Twenty-nine birds were seen with such notables as the Baltimore Oriole, Carolina Wren, Cedar Waxwing, and Yellow-billed Cuckoo topping our list before the rains came. Hoping for better weather next Sunday.

9-4-05 -- Weather was warm and sunny with highs in the 70's. Nine birders came out today but only saw eighteen birds. Two warblers, the Black-and-white Warbler, and Chestnut-sided Warbler, were bright spots of the day; along with a great view of a Broad-winged Hawk.

9-11-05 -- This was another beautiful day at the Arboretum and eleven birders joined us to stroll the grounds. Not to be disappointed, forty-six species hit our bird list. Blackburnian Warbler, Yellowthroat, Parula, Magnolia Warbler, Redstart, Ovenbird, Thrasher, Wood Thrush, Yellow Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Canada Warbler, Hummingbird, Chipping Sparrows, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak were the high points of the day. Can anything be more perfect?

9-18-05 -- Sunny with pleasant temperatures greeted the four birders that came out for today's walk. Fifty-two species - another great showing. Ten species of warblers, Osprey, Blackburnian Warbler, Yellowthroat, Parula, Magnolia Warbler, Redstart, Veery, Thrasher, Wood Thrush, Pine Warbler, Black-throated Green and Blue Warblers, Kestrel, Scarlet Tanager, Baltimore Oriole, Chipping Sparrows, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak were our treats for the day.

9-25-05 -- A cloudy day with temperatures in the 60's was what greeted the eight birders at Cylburn today. We only saw thirty-eight species, a good day for Cylburn generally, but not as spectacular as the last two week ends. Sharp-shinned Hawk, Yellowthroat, Pine Warbler, Thrasher, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Black-throated Green Warbler, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Veery, Wood Thrush, Black-throated Blue Warbler, and Magnolia Warbler were the notables.

10-2-05 -- It was still a sunny day at Cylburn Arboretum with temperatures in the 60's, but for the eight birders; Fall has come to the Baltimore area. Twenty-one birds were seen with three warblers: Pine Warbler, Black-and white Warbler, and Black-throated Green Warbler, a Cooper's Hawk, and a Scarlet Tanager. Better luck next time.

10-9-05 -- Overcast and cool best describes this day at the northwest Baltimore park. The five birders must like the outdoors as nineteen birds were seen. A Swainson's Thrush was the only bright spot of the day.

10-16-05 -- Sunny, windy and cool greeted the fourteen birders out and about. A good turn out for the Cylburn walk. Twenty-six species were our top draw today. Ruby and Golden-crowned Kinglets, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Yellowthroat, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Juncos, and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker helped our birders enjoy the day.

10-23-05 -- Temperatures in the 50's with sun light and a cool day was the scene for the last Cylburn walk of the Fall. Four birders came out and tallied forty-five species. Sparrows: Song, Swamp, Chipping, House, White-throated, White-crowned, Blue-headed Vireo, Sapsucker, Kinglets, Hawks (Three Species), Warblers (Four Species), and the usually mix of common birds were a fitting ending to a delightful Fall birding season at Cylburn. While we lost some trees and underbrush at the Arboretum, birding was still good for a place close to home. Till Spring.

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## A CAPE COD CHRISTMAS

By Elise Kreiss

Paul and I visited the Cape Cod Canal, Sandy Neck Beach, Sandwich Boardwalk & Navigation Road, all pretty close together off of Rte. 6A; the more scenic drive down the Cape.

The day we went to Sandy Neck, it was close to 50 degrees & calm. There were tame Sanderlings; also Brant flying back and forth, mumbling to themselves. As usual, there were Common Eider everywhere; also large numbers of Common Mergansers. I had my first close in view of a pair of Black Scotors; also Surf and White-wing.

There were Horned Grebe & at least one Red-necked Grebe, loons, and just a few Long-tailed Duck, although later we had a chorus of them off the Sandwich Boardwalk. We really were looking for land birds on the beach; and may have had one horned lark.

We had lots of gulls all days. Most of them got by unidentified, but we had one Bonaparte's. We arrived at the Sandwich Boardwalk in time to see a departing flock of white and dark colored land birds. Possibly my second look at Snow Buntings. Oh, well.

Back-of-the-dunes by the salt marsh netted three highly plishable American Tree Sparrows, and we had a Harrier - first one I've ever heard calling. In a single rose hip complex, we had Song and Savannah Sparrows, an American Tree Sparrow and a Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow, listed as "rare but regular" in winter in the Audubon guide to Cape Cod. Frustratingly, Paul did not see this characteristically uncooperative species. Its little orange-decorated face winked in and out of the woody stalks, but he didn't stay put or come out.

We saw very little at Navigation Road; but it is so pretty. We were in time to see a hunter make what he later told us was his only kill of the day - a Black Duck. We were too far away to see anything very clearly; but following the shot, we saw a backlit raptor twisting in the air. It remained on the ground even when the orange-clad hunter got close. He told us the hawk, which he thought was a Cooper's, connected with the duck before it hit the ground, and proceeded to eat it as he approached. He admired its spunk and left the duck where it fell. As another hunter remarked, "It is the season of giving."

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## BALTIMORE BIRD CLUB MEMBERS: OPPORTUNITIES TO HELP YOUR CLUB

By Roberta Ross

The Baltimore Bird Club needs help filling some offices. Please let us know if you can help.

We are currently in need of a Treasurer and a Lectures committee chair.

The treasurer receives deposits to our bank accounts, pays the bills, and keeps our financial records. It would be good to have someone who can use a computer spreadsheet program (we've been using Microsoft. Excel) to keep these records, as we have been doing it this way for several years now. The treasurer submits monthly statements to the board and an annual financial statement at the end of the fiscal year and files any required tax statements. The treasurer also participates in the annual budget process with other members of the board.

Our current treasurer Martie Dunn and previous treasurer Anne Brooks can talk with you if you want to know more about doing this job.

The Lectures chair is responsible for scheduling the lectures at our chapter meetings ("Tuesday Evenings at Cylburn"). Debbie Terry has been doing this job for many years, and she would be glad to give you more information on what she has been doing if you are interested in this.

If you think you may be able to fill one of these jobs, please reply to Roberta Ross, Correspondence Secretary, or Pete Webb, President, [pete\\_webb@juno.com](mailto:pete_webb@juno.com).

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## Yucatán Birding

By Joan Cwi

In 1970 I visited the Yucatán Peninsula in Mexico for the first time. I wasn't a bird watcher then, but lasting memories were etched regarding the magnificent Mayan people and ruins and the unique avifauna of the Yucatán Jungle. Recently (December 1-11, 2005) I had the opportunity to return on a bird watching trip sponsored by Borderland Tours—a trip almost cancelled because of the significant damage wrought by Hurricane Wilma (October 19). The following description is excerpted from the trip summary prepared by our tour leader, Rick Taylor, for Mexican Chip Notes. I quote extensively from his report because Rick's twenty years of birding experience in Mexico and Central America provides thoughtful insight into Yucatán birding and Wilma's impact.

The habitat on Isla Cozumel and the northeast coast from Cancún to Playa del Carmen was badly damaged by Wilma. For about 50 miles south of Cancún virtually all trees 15 feet and taller sustained broken limbs and/or trunks, and apparently all were defoliated. Evidence of the storm was obvious for another 50 or so miles south of Playa del Carmen to well below Tulum.

While there is now a prodigious amount of new foliage, especially on vines and shrubs, it seems from a quick, 24 hour visit that most of the birds on Cozumel were either displaced or killed in the storm. In one afternoon and one morning we found no flowers or fruit at all, not even at our hotel. I suspect that a few Cozumel Emeralds survived the cataclysm, but we could not find even one, and it does seem probable that many perished. The recently re-discovered Cozumel Thrasher also seems to have disappeared, although I hope not. Reason tells me that both of these endemics must have adapted over the millennia to even category 5 hurricanes, and certainly the hummingbird bounced back after Gilberto in 1908; nonetheless 3 continuous days of exposure to 100+ mph wind and sheets of rain must have been tough for most species. Among the birds we did find were a few Cozumel and Yucatán Vireos, a lone Bananaquit, a lone Yellow-lored Parrot, as well as several Swainson's and "Golden" Yellow Warblers, and a handful of Black Catbirds. Obviously some birds did endure the holocaust, but—based on previous visits dating back to 1986—the actual numbers of birds on Cozumel were down about 75%, and species diversity was nearly as badly hit (this estimate is based purely on subjective observations and is not scientific whatsoever).

South of Cozumel the first location we visited with good numbers of birds and good species diversity was at Tulum. Here we found our missing Caribbean Elaenia, along with more Black Catbirds and Yucatán Vireos. I've seen all three of these before at Tulum, but the ease with which we found them led me to believe they had been displaced from points north by Wilma.

Thirty miles inland, the ground in the ruins at Cobá was alive with a pulsating carpet of small toads. These were being enthusiastically scarfed up by practically all species of birds, including trogons, motmots, woodcreepers, jays, and Green-backed Sparrows. This "bloom" of terrestrial plankton was apparently a consequence of the unusually heavy rains associated with the 2005 hurricane season. Probably the Cape May Warbler at Cobá and the 2 Black-throated Blue Warblers we found at Punta Laguna were refugees from Wilma's onslaught. Both species are Cozumel Island specialties.

There was no storm damage evident from Valladolid west, including at such birding sites as Chichén Itzá and Uxmal. All of the regular endemics were at these sites, including Yucatan Jay, Gray-throated Chat, and Orange Oriole. As others have speculated with respect to Río Lagartos, Celestín on the northwest coast may actually be hosting unusually large numbers of birds displaced by Wilma this winter. Mexican Shearwaters were almost abundant and Mangrove Vireos were quite common. The estuary mangroves were alive with wintering warblers, and here, too, we found a complacent American Pygmy Kingfisher.

Calakmul (the ruins are located in the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve in the center of the Peninsula) was the highlight of our tour. Trogons, toucans, and other frugivores were common. Other species here included a pair of Yellow-lored Parrots, a couple of Eye-ringed Flatbills, and a Red-capped Manakin. Army Ant swarms were attended by Tawny-winged, Ruddy, and Northern Barred- Woodcreepers, and by pairs of Gray-throated Chats. We saw approximately 100 Ocellated Turkeys, as well as a Great Curassow... On a brief visit to the small, nearby ruins at Chicanná, we had an adult Bicolored Hawk which permitted us to digiscope it for at least 15 minutes.

The tour concluded with a visit to the Sian Ka'an Biosphere on the Vigia Chico and Muyil Roads. Birding is always excellent at these locations... I was slightly surprised that we didn't encounter out-of-place warblers or other oddities that had been driven down the east coast of the Yucatán to Sian Ka'an by Wilma. Some of the birds we did observe in this biosphere included Thicket Tinamou, a group of five Hook-billed Kites (with a spectacular dark morph in the group), and a couple of Rose-throated Tanagers (conspicuous by their absence on Cozumel).

Obviously only a minor portion of the Yucatán Peninsula has been impacted by Hurricane Wilma. Birdwatching opportunities on the mainland of the Yucatán remain excellent. Our group recorded 215 species in 10 days, and many of these were the "quality" endemics and regional specialties. More important, ecotourism provides the economic foundation for many small villages in the Yucatán, and these in turn are the incentive for preserving the biospheres and other wildlife sanctuaries that protect the Yucatán's unique avifauna.

## 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:

Shireen 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/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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