

The newsletter of the Baltimore Bird Club

April-May 2000 -- Online Edition

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Deadline for next *CHIP NOTES* June 25, 2000 (the next issue will be August-September 2000). Send material to:

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Please help *CHIP NOTES* get out on time.

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Beyond the Postcards

Hank Kaestner's "Bird Watching Off the Beaten Track"
Reported by Shirley Geddes

On January 9th the Baltimore Bird Club held its annual covered dish dinner. The food, as usual, was varied, plentiful and delicious. After "all you could eat", the evening's lecture was given by Hank Kaestner. Hank is the BBC's world birder with over 6000 life birds. He regularly tantalizes us with his "Postcards from the Edge" which are published in *Chip Notes*.

On January 9th, we traveled vicariously with Hank to far away places (as the birding with New Britain Island (part of Papua, New Guinea) in the Bismark Sea; next to New Guinea, Darwin Australia, Tasmania, South Island of New Zealand; and finally to Christmas Island and Reunion Island in the Indian Ocean finishing on Mauritius island with their rare Kestrel.

Many of the spectacular birds Hank showed slides of and talked about are endemic to the localities which he visited. These included the Blue-eyed Cuckoo of New Britain Island and Cape Barren Goose of southeast Australia and Tasmania; and the Abbott's Booby and Christmas Island Frigatebird on Christmas Island. Among other birds he described were the Royal Albatross in New Zealand, the gaudy Gouldian Finch south of Darwin in the outback of northern Australia, and the rare Mascarene Paradise Flycatcher on Reunion Island. Of special interest was the success story of the Mauritius Kestrel. In 1972 these falcons numbered only three. However, due to an aggressive breeding and habitat protection program sponsored by the Peregrine Fund, there are now more than five hundred falcons on the island. At least for now, the bird has been retrieved from extinction.

Hank encouraged us to bird off the beaten track away from the usual birding places. His unique experiences in exotic little known localities which host rarely seen birds prove that the extra effort required to visit these areas is well worth the effort.

Hawk Watching in Baltimore

- 1954 and Now -
By Joy Wheeler

Kevin Graff's hawk watching lists continue to amaze us. I was so impressed by the October 20, 1999 *Baltimore Sun* article about him that I posted it on Cyllburn's porch along with an illustrated hawk identification chart from Hawk Mountain Sanctuary. It was there for several months. I hope you saw it. A recent issue of the Cyllburn Arboretum Association's Newsletter carried reports of our late September sighting of 900 Broad-winged Hawks over Cyllburn, thanks to editor, Adelaide Rackemann, also a member of the Baltimore Bird Club.

This "good hawk year" of 1999 reminded me of the late Douglas Hackman's article "Summary of Hawk Flights over White Marsh, Baltimore County, MD" carried in *Maryland Birdlife* Vol. 10, No. 23, June-Sept., 1954. Hackman, a teenager at the time, wrote about the Baltimore area with detailed descriptions of the topography of the location, adding some conjecture about what this showed about fall hawk flight. He interpreted the effect of weather conditions and wind direction, using a circular chart comparing flight density in relation to wind direction. Another chart showed comparisons of the more numerous species of hawks in relation to dates seen. A table compared, on a percentage basis, 13 species of hawks seen at White Marsh with the percentages of those same species seen at Hawk Mountain that year. Hackman chose to represent the comparison in percentages rather than numbers to prevent the data from being overwhelmed by the fact that Hawk Mountain totals were 5 times larger than his White Marsh totals. He reminded us that Hawk Mountain had the advantage of the "Ridge" nights of Pennsylvania over the weaker "Fall Line" nights of Maryland.

An analysis of Hackman's hawk watching activities can also be found in *Chesapeake Science* Vol. 12, no. 3, p. 137-141, Sept. 1971. This article compares the years 1951-1954 and 1958-1961 in the same White Marsh area. Its style is somewhat more scholarly than the *Maryland Birdlife* article though some of its conclusions are obviously outdated by now. I must confess its premise is not very clear or accurate, though it does offer some very interesting points and is well worth reading. (Copies of both articles can be found at Cyllburn.)

Now look at the map of Baltimore City and Baltimore County. Note how close Hackman's White Marsh area is to Graff's area in Northeast Baltimore City. And then read this quote from the list 2 paragraphs of the *Maryland Birdlife* article:

In conclusion, it is an established fact that a hawk migration route passes along the edge of the Piedmont Plateau near White Marsh. It is not known where they originate or exactly what route they travel before and after they pass White Marsh. Within the next few years, through the combined efforts of many observers in the eastern part of Maryland, many of these questions may be answered. It may even be possible that the flights observed over White Marsh are part of a much larger flight that has gone undetected for many years.

Maybe we shall even find a location in Maryland that is comparable with Hawk Mountain in Pennsylvania. If such a place does exist, it will most certainly be found in the next few years. Each year many new observers join the ranks of amateur ornithologists in Maryland who spend many enjoyable hours in the autumn months counting hawks on their southward flight.

It's a long time since Hackman wrote the article, yet we can see from Kevin Graff's current data that the phenomenon continues. I don't know where we could find any intervening data to flesh out the story further. Perhaps we will get some response to that question from this writing.

In Graff's proposal of a permanent facility at his Northeast Baltimore location what Hackman had in mind? If so, perhaps his ideas need to be studied more thoroughly, keeping in mind the practical issues of finances and prospective uses of the facility, as well as the "luring" of the migrating hawks to the "Fall Line."

During a recent conversation, Mike Baker of Baltimore City's Recreation and Parks expressed his belief that Graff's best method of accomplishing the goal of setting aside this very productive hawk-watching area is through the establishment of conservation easements. This would have to be done with the agreement of the present owners of the vacant land along the ridge where Graff has kept his hawks. According to Baker this would keep the area free from development but would free the city from having to acquire and maintain the land, both costly enterprises. Baker seems very agreeable to offer Graff any help he can through his department. He is, after all, a size great hawk watcher himself, but he makes it clear that the department does not want to acquire or maintain the land.

Graff has agreed to accept the responsibility for keeping this site clean. Now it is up to him and his neighbors to facilitate the conservation easements. This seems to me where the Baltimore Bird Club could step in and help. We'd like to hear your opinions on the project.

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Cyllum Lecture -

Chesapeake Bay Waterfowl: Status and Trends

Doag Forsell's presentation at Cyllum on the control of exotic species, the restoration of submerged aquatic vegetation; the inclusion of population trends, habitat requirements, survey waterbirds in offshore waters of the Bay, and problems facing waterfowl. He also presented the Workgroups recommendations for the control of exotic species; the restoration of submerged aquatic vegetation; the preservation and restoration of wetlands; and the establishment of open water sanctuaries.

Doag Forsell has worked a migratory bird research for over 25 years. He received his Masters Degree from California State University - Humboldt, where he studied the predatory ecology and energetics of belted kingfishers. He has worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for 23 years. He spent ten years in Alaska primarily studying the use and abundance of marine birds, but he also worked on their food habits, seabird colony surveys, high seas gillnet mortality of birds, and recovery efforts of the endangered Aleutian Canada Goose. He spent four years as the manager of five remote tropical Pacific islands where he studied breeding biology of 12 species of tropical seabirds, reef fishes, and green sea turtles. Since moving to the Chesapeake Bay area in 1990, he has chaired the Waterfowl Workgroup in the Chesapeake Bay Program. His major activities in the Bay have involved interpretation of waterfowl population trends, identifying marshes for habitat restoration, surveys of water birds in offshore waters of the Bay, and assessing mortality of water birds in anchored waters.

Elliot Kirschbaum

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Field Trip Reports

Compiled by Steve Sanford

January 16 - **Conowingo Dam** - 22 participants from several counties as well as Baltimore enjoyed a great showing of gulls and other specialities. Highlights included 2 adult winter Thayer's Gulls, 2 Lesser Black-backed Gulls, a Great Cormorant, 2 "Blue" Snow Geese, a Peregrine Falcon dining on a Pigeon, and a flying Yellow-headed Blackbird in a huge flock of Grackles. The weather was sunny and mild in the 50's. Leaders: Gene Scarpulla and Rick Blom.

February 5 - **New Design Road** - This trip's primary goal was field birds in southern Frederick Co. After seeing only a few Horned Larks at the first stop, the 7 participants hit the jackpot on Olund Road where a fresh strip of manure had been laid over the snow-covered field. There were hundreds of Horned Larks, some of them on the road itself. It didn't take too long to find two Lupinus Longspurs in the field. One of them was in excellent view for about 10 minutes. This was followed by a visit to Nolan's Ferry and an unsuccessful search for a Northern Shrike on Cap Stine Road. Then, on the way to ponds at Barkittsville, the Blair Witch must have intervened and split the lead car from the followers, ending the trip prematurely. 31 species. Weather: Mostly sunny, windy, 30's-40; less much snow in wind; 4 in. snow cover. Leader: Pete Webb.

February 12 - **Cape Henlopen-Ocean City** - 7 participants braved wind, temperatures about 30°, and snow mounting up to about 112 inches at Ocean City. By far the highlight was the flock of 16 Red Crossbills at Cape Henlopen, including four red birds, one of which had yellow overtones in certain light angles. Didn't get the Harlequin Ducks at the Ocean City Jetty in the heavy snow and wind. Didn't even try for West Ocean City Pond in the inclement weather. 6 species. Leader: Pete Webb.

February 19 - **Patuxent Naval Air Station & vicinity** - Highlights: Excellent, close looks at Savannah Sparrows, decent looks at Snow Buntings, Short-eared Owl, Snipe, Greater White-fronted Goose, a flock of Fox Sparrows, Horned Larks, and a host of waterfowl. We did NOT see Longspurs or the Kelp Gull at Sea Breeze, and ran out of time before we could pursue the Turkey Duck in Washington, D.C. (See "Tuffed Duck in DC" below.) Weather: pleasant, partly sunny, 50's & 60's. 19 participants plus about 60 species. Leaders: host and leader on the base: Kyle Rambo; leading off-base portion of trip, and reporting: Pete Webb.

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Birds Of Halifax

By Tony Bezanson

There are some wonderful birding spots in Halifax, Nova Scotia and the surrounding areas. The many sewer outfalls, in and around the harbour, provide excellent viewing spots in the winter. You might see Bald Eagles or gulls such as Iceland, Glaucous Gannet's, Common Black-headed or our resident Ring-billed, Herring and Great Black-headed Gulls, as well as some *Aklavak* such as Dovekie and Black Guillemot. If you're lucky, you might even catch both Common and Thick-billed Murres.

In some of the outlying bays and coves in winter you often find Red-necked and Horned Grebes, Red-throated and Common Loons, Black Ducks, Gadwall, Lesser and Greater Scaup, all three Scoters, Harlequin Ducks, Oldsquaw, American and Eurasian Wigeons, and Green-winged Teal.

In the city of Dartmouth, on the other side of the harbour, Sullivan's Pond is another great place to visit. As of today (12/5/99) there are 3 Yellow-breasted Chats, two Baltimore Orioles, five Cardinals, one Connecticut Warbler, a pair of Eurasian Wigeon and Tuffed Ducks. In the south end of Halifax near Point Pleasant Park, is Nova Scotia's only breeding population of House Finches.

One of my favorite birding spots is Point Pleasant Park which was originally part of an historic harbor defense system during the first 100 years before Halifax became a village. Homesick Europeans who lived there at the time, decided to bring over some of their plants and trees. They planted Norway spruce, Austrian pine, Scots pine, Norway maple, sycamore maple and European ash, and I can't forget the white poplars. This has since grown into a forest and has become a national historic site. It's also a great place for a jog. Even President Clinton has taken a jog there with an army of secret service agents.)

Due to all of the people going through the park everyday, the birds living there have become used to people, which brings me to my first Point Pleasant Park surprise buck in 1993. I was standing near the woods talking to a friend when all of a sudden a Black-capped Chickadee torpedoes towards me out of the bush. We startled the daylight out of each other and the little bird flew quickly away. I realized that the bird was going for my hand. Next time, rather than pull my hand away, I held it out. This time a Red-breasted Nuthatch flew in and spent at least thirty seconds searching for something. I guessed that he wanted food. We didn't have any seed but we did have the next best thing - bread crumbs. The bird ate some, then flew away.

The Red-breasted Nuthatches returned accompanied by several Boreal and Black-capped Chickadees. They all flew to our hands for the crumbs. We stood there for a bit until the bread was gone. When we turned to go, the birds followed us and continued flying to our hands. It was the best time I had before I went banding in '97 on Briar Island.

Editor's Note: The author, who lives in one of the remoter parts of Greater Baltimore - Halifax, Nova Scotia, is one of the Baltimore Bird Club's newest members. He is 18 years old and connected with us through the Internet. He has visited and banded in Maryland and particularly enjoyed some of the species we take for granted that are rare or non-existent up in Halifax, such as Cardinal, Tuffed Titmouse, and Carolina Chickadee. If you have any questions or would like to correspond with Tom, his email address is: edwards@ns.sympatico.ca

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Baltimore Harbor and Mid-Winter Counts - 1999-2000

Compiled by Pete Webb

The Baltimore Harbor Christmas Bird Count held on Saturday, December 18, 1999, attracted 23 observers who reported 100 species and 18,797 birds. Temperatures were in the 30's and 40's under mostly cloudy skies with north winds of 10 MPH or less and no snow or ice on the ground or the water. Standout birds included 2 Great Cormorants on the rocks west of Ft. Smallwood (previous high count was one), 18 species of waterfowl including a Black Scoter, a Count first, and 13 White-winged Scoters, a new Count high, 4 Bald Eagles, 3 Merins, new for the count, fully 11 Virginia Rails counted at Black Marsh and Hart-Miller Island, 2 Short-eared Owls on Hart-Miller Island, 2 Red-breasted Nuthatches, a Catbird, an Orange-crowned Warbler spotted near the Harbor, Tree, Field, Savannah and Fox Sparrows, 41 Snow Buntings at their usual haunt on Hart-Miller Island, and 3 hard-to-find Purple Finches.

The Baltimore City & County Mid-Winter Count was held Jan. 22, 2000. 24 observers counted 88 species and 29,792 birds. Highlights include: 16 Pine Warblers, a new species for the Count, new high counts for Pied-billed Grebe, Great Blue Heron, Gadwall, Redhead, Bluebird, Hermit Thrush, American Pipit and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, 15 duck species, 5 Bald Eagles, 30 of those "summer" Robins, one Yellowthroat, 66 American Tree Sparrows, 13 Fox Sparrows and one of those hard-to-find Purple Finches.

Many thanks to our observers.

Results of the Baltimore Winter Counts

- * denotes new high for count
- ** denotes new species for count

	Harbor 12/18/99	Mid-Winter 01/22/00
Common Loon	5	
Pied-billed Grebe	18	* 143
Tricolored Heron	115	* 2
D-C Cormorant		19
Great Cormorant	2	
Great Blue Heron	56	* 52
Black-crowned N-Heron	1	
Black Vulture		10
Turkey Vulture	20	* 43
Canada Goose	418	5933
Mute Swan	47	4
Tundra Swan	13	4
Wood Duck		5
Gadwall	56	* 127
American Wigeon	18	149
Black Duck	44	70
Mallard	638	1578
Northern Shoveler		8
Green-winged Teal		5
Canvasback	553	2072
Redhead	2	* 47
Ring-necked Duck	12	300
Greater Scaup		34
Lesser Scaup	322	1510
White-winged Scoter	13	
Black Scoter	1	
Bufflehead	461	165
Common Goldeneye	7	66
Hooded Merganser	11	100
Common Merganser		101
Red-breasted Merganser	4	12
Ruddy Duck	3456	3252
Bald Eagle	4	5
immature	3	
adult	1	
Northern Harrier	6	1
Sharp-shinned Hawk	10	8
Cooper's Hawk	7	2
Red-shouldered Hawk	3	9
Red-tailed Hawk	23	27
American Kestrel	20	10
Merlin	3	1
Peregrine	3	
Ring-necked Pheasant	1	2
Bobwhite	7	
Virginia Rail	11	
American Coot	89	883
Killdeer	9	15
Greater Yellowlegs	4	1
Com. Snipe	1	
Bonaparte's Gull	3	426
Ring-billed Gull	2797	2627
Herring Gull	451	290
Great Black-backed Gull	226	97
Rock "Dove" (Pigeon)	1204	874
Mourning Dove	429	171
Great Horned Owl	3	3
Barred Owl	1	
Short-eared Owl	2	
Belted Kingfisher	17	11
Red-bellied Woodpecker	18	44
Hairy Woodpecker	5	* 20
Downy Woodpecker	50	60
Hairy Woodpecker	6	7
Northern Flicker	35	52
Pileated Woodpecker	1	9
Blue Jay	67	107
American Crow	433	1245
Fish Crow	20	18
Crow sp.	109	282
Horned Lark	2	
Carolina Chickadee	173	137
Tufted Titmouse	53	154
Red-breasted Nuthatch	2	13
White-breasted Nuthatch	27	40
Brown Creeper	7	6
Carolina Wren	108	97
Winter Wren	10	9
Golden-crowned Kinglet	7	1
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	13	2
Eastern Bluebird	10	* 130
Hermit Thrush	9	* 21
American Robin	1022	301
Gray Catbird	1	
Northern Mockingbird	76	108
Brown Thrasher		2
European Starling	2082	1615
American Pipit	2	24
Cedar Waxwing	2	80
Orange-cr. Warbler	1	
Yellow-rumped Warbler	18	46
Pine Warbler		* 16
Common Yellowthroat		1
Eastern Towhee	3	8
American Tree sparrow	26	* 61
Field Sparrow	12	42
Savannah Sparrow	18	* 13
Fox Sparrow	4	
Song Sparrow	425	263
Swamp Sparrow	84	17
White-throated Sparrow	381	644
Dark-eyed Junco	184	559
Snow Bunting	41	
Northern Cardinal	215	281
Red-winged Blackbird	544	423
Chimney Swift	1	
Common Grackle	141	384
Brown-headed Cowbird	27	* 626
Purple Finch	3	
House Finch	208	105
American Goldfinch	106	145
House Sparrow	378	286
SPECIES	100	89
BIRDS	18797	29789

Count Logistics and Observers

HARBOR	MID-WINTER
23 Observers (8 paid)	24 observers
11 Partials	15 partials
Start time 7:00 am	Start time 5:35 am
Stop time 5:30 pm	Stop time 5:15 pm
66.5 party hours	58.5 party hours
50.5 foot hours	45 foot hours
16 car hours	12 car hours
(no feeder hours)	2.5 feeder hours
278.5 party miles	203 party miles
46.5 foot miles	34.5 foot miles
232 car miles	169.5 car miles
Wind 2-15 mph	Wind 0-20 mph from NW
sky mostly sunny	sky mostly cloudy
No snow cover	3 - 4 inches snow cover
Still water open	Still water frozen
Moving water open	Moving water partly open
Observers:	Observers:
Brent Byers	Jean Bowman
Mary Gruver-Byers	Brent Byers
Keith Costley	Mary Byers
Scott Crabtree	Keith E. Costley
Barbara Cupp	Jon Cupp
Jo Cupp	Jon Cupp Jr
Gail Frantz	Gail Frantz
Kevin Graff	Harry Frantz
Hank Kaestner	Helene Gardel
Elliot Kirschbaum	Kevin Graff
Nancy Kirschbaum	Tina Katsampis
Peter Lay	Peter Lev
Taylor McLean Jr.	Jim Myers
Jim Peters	Paul Noell
Bob Rineer	Leanne Pemburn
Barbara Ross	Jim Peters
Terry Ross	Bob Rineer
Sharm Schwemmer	Terry Ross
Susan Shock	Art Rogers
Debbie Terry	Ed Smith
David Walbeck	Sondra Stafford
Pete Webb (compiler)	Debbie Terry
Joy Wheeler	David Walbeck
	Pete Webb (compiler)

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Texas Revisited

By Jim Highaw and Linda Prentice

It's breakfast time at the B-Bar-B Ranch Inn near Kingsville, and the garden area is full of birds - a Vermilion Flycatcher, Green Jays, Bobwhites, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Inca Doves and "Black-crested" Titmice. A morning walk to the ponds produces Great Kiskadee, Loggerhead Shrike, White Ibis, Northern Harrier, Kestrel and Eastern Phoebe. It's great to be back in South Texas after a seven-year absence!

On this seven-day trip in mid-January 2000 we started in Rockport, then headed Hazel Bazemore Park, the Kingsville area and Highway 77 through the King Ranch, visited Santa Ana NWR, Bentsen SP and Anzalduas County Park, headed west to Falcon State Park, then back to the Hartigan area for Laguna Atascosa NWR, and finally north again on Highway 77 to Corpus Christi. Some of the highlights were 25 Whooping Cranes, Roseate Spoonbills and a Peregrine Falcon seen from Captain Ted's *Kimmer*, a nice assortment of birds (including Vermilion Flycatcher and Say's Phoebe) at Hazel Bazemore Park, breakfast with the birds at the B-Bar-B Ranch Inn, Pauraqueas and Altamira Orioles at Santa Ana and Bentsen, a Ringed Kingfisher at Santa Ana, a Hook-billed Kite and a Red-naped Sapsucker at Bentsen, trees full of warblers, kinglets and gnatcatchers at Anzalduas County Park, Long-billed Curlews, Crested Caracaras and White-tailed Kites at Laguna Atascosa, the hawks along Route 77 through the King Ranch, and photographing Green Jays, Loggerhead Shrikes, Pauraqueas, Chachalacas and Roseate Spoonbills. Getting free air tickets on the way home was an added bonus!

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Tuffed Duck In DC

In late January Potomac Park (2000) Tuffed Duck, a life bird for many observers, appeared in the Potomac River waters of Washington DC and briefly in Maryland species which this Eurasian species was seen by the grounds of the elegant Fort McNair in DC and in East Potomac Park (Hanna's Tuffed Duck). For a few tantalizing days it was seen by a few observers down-river in Maryland waters, but it returned to its DC haunts before most birders could tick it off their Maryland lists.

Steve Sanford

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BBC Mail Order

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

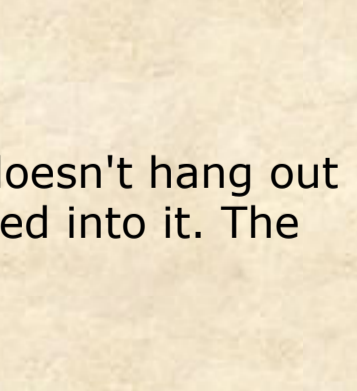
- Baltimore Bird Club's Birding Site Guide - \$12.00
- Baltimore Bird Club T-Shirt - \$18.00 (only XL left)
- MOS Patch - \$3.50
- MOS Decal - \$3.50

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.

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Back Yard Birding

by Gail Frantz



Baltimore City

January 1 - from *Jane White*:
For once I've been seeing a lone female Common Goldeneye padding near the esplanade at the Inner Harbor. I see her when I walk over to her skimming at Rash Field at lunch time. She doesn't hang out with all the mallards, but is always alone. From my backyard: My new little birdwatcher has been a big hit since the weather got cold. The other morning there were seven Robins crowded into it. The whole surface was brown and at first glance I thought some large object had fallen into it.