CHIP NOTES

The newsletter of the Baltimore Bird Club

April-May 2002 -- Online Edition

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Kudos for President Helene Gardell by Anne Brooks, *Treasurer*
Double Western Day by Pete Webb
Judgments on Mute Swans by Amelia Dorch
Thanks for Your Generous Support by Helene Gardell
Messages from the Board
Membership to Vote on Proposed Dues
Field Trip Reports *Compiled by Steve Sanford*
Baltimore Harbor Christmas Count 2001 by Pete Webb
Mid-Winter Count 2002 by Pete Webb
Nine Activities for an Outdoor Schedule
Featured Item Links by Hank Kearney
Conservation Corner by Hank Kearney/Hank Kearney
Hot Bird Sightings by Steve Sanford
Monarch Observations by Joy Wheeler and Patty Perlman
Bird Sightings *Compiled by Pete Wheeler*
BBC Mail Order
Back Yard Birding and Beyond by Gail Fraser

Deadline for next ISSUE (June 25, 2002) (the next issue will be August-September 2002). If possible, please email material to

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Otherwise, Send material to:

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Please help CHIP NOTES get out on time.

Back ▲ Table of Contents

Kudos for President Helene Gardell

by Anne Brooks, Treasurer

As the latest office that some outgoing President Helene Gardell leaves a legacy of renewed enthusiasm for the BBC. Helene began her term with a series of meetings designed to determine the direction the BBC will go in the years ahead. As a track Board member, Helene has been instrumental in keeping the focus on the most important topics in the work the accomplished in getting the BBC's financial house in order. Helene convened committees to assess the financial needs of the BBC as it grows into the future. We all owe a debt of gratitude to her for her vision and resolve.

Back ▲ Table of Contents

Double Western Day

by Pete Webb

It all started January 12 with a scheduled field trip to Hawksbeard Secretary south of Greenville just east of Kent Narrows and the Bay Bridge.

The group of birders included co-leaders Kevin Graff and myself, Pete Webb, checked the Bayside beach overlook (Grace and Bob Bufflebaugh) and the Marsh Point Trail, where we were initially disappointed to find no large raft of ducks creeping so, but we did find Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Ruddy Ducks, and a brief (initially glimpsed at and passed off as a female) Long-tailed Duck. Moving on to a pond bordered by tall weeds (bright, tangle-top and larger than a Horned Grebe. Upon my discovery of it, it disappeared into the weeds.

Seen well enough, see at one basks, to see the red eye in a black cloak, black crown, white cinks to the neck, with the white almost meeting behind the head conveying the black to a very thin vertical stripe there, and the loooooog neck and narrow, long head and bill. The bird, initially in a dull light, was dark, but when it moved into the sunlight, gradually grabbed the overall and further seen, gained enough contrast to conclude that this Bright Bay and not a PIED beak., and eventually, sure enough, there were related PIED Western Grebes, side by side and well into the turn of the bay that had slowly drifting back into the same part of the view. We found the first Bird at 9:00 AM, overall the two were closed enough to get communications out to the rest of the world. About 11:30 AM, we left the Grebes, still there, and headed for the Wye Island NRA where we had a Bald Eagle nest, and a Pileated Woodpecker, and a Brown Creeper.

Leaving Wye Island, we headed for Easton, where we had a Western Kingbird on the Easton Neck NWR a very rare bird, and which had been reported a "Western Kingbird" for several days. We arrived about 1 pm, and there it sat! We wondered if for about a half-hour an and off, then broke up and started for home. Some of us stopped at Bright's Wharf (off in Eastern Neck) to grab over 10,000 diving ducks, mostly Greater and Lesser Scaup, with some Canvasbacks and Bufflehead. The mass in the water stretched from behind land to out left, across a lot of ice, and around land to our right.

So we had TWO Western Grebes and two species of "Western" birds in one fantastic day!

Back ▲ Table of Contents

Conservation Corner

Judgments on Mute Swans

by Amelia Dorch

At this time last year, both the BBC and MOS took an unusual and strong position advocating that Mute Swans in the Chesapeake Bay be controlled by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) by whatever means possible. (See "Too Many Mute Swans," *Chip Notes* April 2001.) As evidence of widespread opinion on this issue, I offer the following: In 1991 (!) the Maryland State Legislature would have authorized DNR to use lethal means to control the growing population of Mute Swans.

Since then, the population has grown from 2,000 birds to 4,000 birds. Mute Swans are not native to North America. They were introduced from Europe in the late 19th century. Since then, they have spread from Maine to Florida. Norton ruled on December 28, 2001 that Mute Swans should be protected under the provisions of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) of 1918. Through conceivable legal "loopholes" in the MBTA, Mute Swans will again be protected. Nationally, the Mute Swan Congress is a member of the family **anatidae**, "a historic fact, with no reference to the basic grade of the Act.

Mute Swans are considered a threat to the biological integrity of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. The original stimulus for this federal legislation was the need to curb the wanton slaughter of birds and to protect species that "live, reproduce or migrate within or across international borders at some period during their annual life cycle." Concerned Citizens. The United States recognized the importance of international consideration of wildlife management agreements with Canada (1916), Mexico (1936), Japan (1972) and the USSR (1976). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is mandated to enforce provisions of these treaties.

The Act articulates three important conservation principles:

- To conserve and manage migratory birds internationally;
- To manage migratory birds internationally;
- To ensure that migratory bird populations are not diminished or endangered by habitat, and
- To ensure adequate management of migratory bird populations.

The problem with using this Act to protect the Mute Swan is that they are not native and non-migratory. They were introduced from Europe in the mid 19th century. In the Maryland Chesapeake Bay region their numbers have increased from 100 birds in the mid 1960s to 4,000 birds today. Mute Swans are aggressive, territorial, and have a voracious appetite for submerged aquatic vegetation. Their aggressive behavior displaces native species such as the Tundra Swan, Canada Goose, and Osprey. Vegetation SAV or an enormous rate, and the Chesapeake Bay's ecosystem is being altered. Populations of fish, crabs, and other aquatic species are being depleted as these grows.

Many bird conservation groups feel that this Appeals Court is mistaken and are urging Gail Norton, Secretary of the Interior, to appeal Bill v Norton, and to examine and clarify the issue of what species are protected under the MBTA, and under what circumstances.

Back ▲ Table of Contents

Message from the President

Thanks for Your Generous Support

Many thanks to all who generously responded to BBC's Membership Appeal. As of mid-February 2002, 80 BBC members donated $2,170. Seventy-eight percent of this $2,000 may be used for general operating expenses – to support basic member services at the lowest cost. Twenty-one percent, specifically, including $247 for education and the Bird Festival, $120 for outreach and publicity, and $21 for conservation.

So that members can better understand how BBC's income is spent, the Board has agreed that our Annual Financial Report will be published in the August-September issue of **Chip Notes** each year. A new process is now in place to allow us to better predict our annual expenses.

Our Treasurer, Anne Brooks, has developed a spreadsheet that allows us to track our expenses against our budget. Our Membership Chairperson, Kathy Kearney, and Membership Committee Chairperson, Ann Sargent, have organized a Membership Committee to work on surveys that the committee and project leads, or both, Anne Brooks, Kathy Kearney, and Ann Sargent, will use to better understand how BBC's members want to be served and what they are willing to pay for these services. Anne's spreadsheet shows that MOS does also being raised by $10, it was felt by board members that a local BBC, these increases of more than $5 would make us seem the kind of "stricter shock" to Club members, we were stayed at that level, with the proposed new dues scheduled coming out like this:

	Before Sep 2002:				Beginning Sep 2002:		
	BBC	MOS	TOTAL		BBC	MOS	TOTAL
Full year membership:							
Individual	$10	$10	$20		$15	$15	$30
Family	$15	$10	$25		$20	$15	$35
Sustaining	$25	$25	$50		$30	$20	$50
Junior	$5	$5	$10		$5	$5	$10
Half year membership:							
Individual	$6	$5	$11		$8	$7.50	$15.50
Life (Status)	$400	$400	$1,000		(Dropped in BBC)		
Fee membership enrolling May 1 - Aug 31:							
Individual	$10	$10	$20		$15	$15	$30
Sustaining	$25	$25	$50		$30	$20	$50
Family	$15	$10	$25		$20	$15	$35

A vote will be held at the general membership meeting, the May Tuesday Evening at 8:15pm, Tuesday May 7, at 7:30 pm, to approve the proposed local dues increase. Note that only the $5 increase in BBC dues is being voted on; the State organization will vote on the $10 increase to State dues at another event.

Back ▲ Table of Contents

Message from the Board

Membership to Vote on Proposed Dues
Increase at May Cyclburn Meeting

As most members now know, the Club has had no dues increase for decades, while costs have been increasing over the years, especially postage increases and printing costs for Chip Notes and the Program Book. Recently a fund-raiser letter went out, and the Club received about 2/3 of the members who responded, with their help, a dues increase will be needed to meet our operating budget deficit spending and have no cost savings for the newsletter and program book, or both. Dues increase will be voted on at the May Cyclburn meeting. Dues increase will be voted on at the May Cyclburn meeting. Dues increase will be voted on at the May Cyclburn meeting