

## The newsletter of the Baltimore Bird Club

April/May 1996 - Online Edition

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Deadline for next CHIP NOTES: June 25, 1996 (the next issue will be August/September 1996)  
Send it to: [chip@bird.aol.com](mailto:chip@bird.aol.com)

Steve Sanford  
8412 Downey Dale Drive  
Randallstown MD 21133

or e-mail to [SanfoBird@aol.com](mailto:SanfoBird@aol.com)  
Please help CHIP NOTES get out on time

### We can help the C&O Canal

Sukon Kanchanaraksa

Baltimore Bird Club  
Cylburn Park Mansion  
4915 Greenwing Ave.  
Baltimore, MD 21209

The checks will be sent en masse to the appropriate agencies under the letterhead of Baltimore Bird Club. If you would rather send the check directly to the agencies, the addresses are below:

The C&O Canal Restoration Fund  
The National Park Foundation  
1101 17th St., N.W., Suite 1102  
Washington, DC 20036

or

Superintendent  
C&O Canal National Historical Park  
Box 4  
Sharpsstown, MD 21782  
(mark check "for canal restoration")

If you'd like further information, check out the [Canal Web Page](#).

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### The Winter Season

Steve Sanford and Leanne Pemburn

The winter season was remarkably cold and snowy. As is often the case in such winters, there were many excellent bird sightings in the area.

The big stars of the season were two [Barrow's Goldeneyes](#) seen beginning February 28 at Patuxent Naval Air Station in St. Mary's County. This was only the second Maryland record for this species. A Harlequin Duck and a Red-necked Grebe were also found there. Many thanks to Kyle Ramirez and Doug Lister for escorting numerous birders onto the restricted area of the base for good looks at these birds, and many thanks to the officials of the base for allowing birders to visit.

Probably the best sighting in Baltimore - certainly the cutest - was a Saw-whet Owl. It was seen well by a number of birders for a few days in late November to early December in a tree by the entrance to a University of Maryland building in downtown Baltimore. Hank Kaestner discovered a Northern Goshawk at a quarry off Warren Road in Cockeysville in late December. It was seen occasionally for several months, although it eluded most searches.

The Baltimore Harbor Christmas Count on Saturday, December 30th returned an average number of species, but a fine day of biriding for many people. Sightings of note include an out-of-season Great Egret at the "Oxygen Pond" near Sparrows Point (for the second year in a row), Purple Finches, Snow Buntings, and American Pipits at Fort Howard, Pine Siskins in Glen Burnie, two immature white-phase Snow Geese and two Orange-crowned Warblers at the Sewage Plant and in northern Anne Arundel County. Also, there was an immature Red-headed Woodpecker at Black Marsh, Rusty Blackbirds at Southwest Area Park, and seven Eastern Meadowlarks and three Short-Eared Owls at Cherry Hill Park in Baltimore City. Mute Swans have moved into the area in a big way, with over half a dozen seen where none have been before. See the [complete species list](#).

The Kaituma Dam hosted several Thayer's Gulls and about half a dozen Iceland Gulls in early January. Two Trumpeter Swans showed up briefly at Black Hills Reservoir in western Montgomery County in February. Four to six Short-eared Owls were again wintering in the fields off Fessier and Stonestree Roads in Carroll County near Taneytown, along with a Rough-legged Hawk. Along the Delaware coast birders found a Painted Bunting, a Varied Thrush, and a Northern Shrike.

If you want to find out about such bird sightings before they're gone, just call our new Baltimore Birdline at (410) 467-0653.

Call the same number to report bird sightings, or e-mail them to [birdr@www.lighthouse.com](mailto:birdr@www.lighthouse.com) (Leanne Pemburn) with the subject line "BBC Birdline Sighting." You can also see an online transcript of the [Birdline report](#). Also, as a reminder to field trip leaders and participants, please use the Birdline to report or learn about any last minute changes in field trips.

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### Baltimore Harbor 1995 Christmas Bird Count

Here are the results of the Baltimore Harbor Christmas Count held December 30, 1995. The average number of each species for the period 1979-95 is shown after the figure for 1995. This includes species not seen in 1995. Unusual species or species with unusually high numbers are marked with an asterisk (\*). Some disappointing misses are marked with an "M".

SPECIES	1995	Average 1979-95	SPECIES	1995	Average 1979-95
Red-throated Loon	1 *	0.2	Mourning Dove	394	560.6
Common Loon	M	1.5	Barn Owl	1	1.0
Pied-billed Grebe	19	8.2	Screech Owl	M	2.3
Horned Grebe	1	4.8	Great Horned Owl	4	3.2
Great Cormorant	-	0.1	Snowy Owl	1	0.1
D-C Cormorant	5	1.6	Barred Owl	2	0.5
Bittern	-	0.1	Short-eared Owl	4	1.4
Great Blue Heron	74	87.9	Saw-whet Owl	-	0.0
Great Egret	1 *	0.1	Belted Kingfisher	14	14.8
B-C Kingfisher	1	21.4	Red-headed Woodpecker	1	0.4
Tundra Swan	M	10.7	Red-bel. Woodpecker	76	38.7
Mute Swan	17 *	2.6	Sapsucker	17	3.5
Brent	-	0.1	Downy Woodpecker	124	79.4
Snow Goose	2	0.3	Hairy Woodpecker	20	10.4
Canada Goose	522	107.5	Pileated	1	0.1
Wood Duck	-	0.5	Pileated Woodpecker	1	0.4
G W Teal	-	60.7	Tree Swallow	3	0.1
Black Duck	185	135.2	Phoebe	3 *	0.7
Mallard	1186	1085.1	Horned Lark	-	2.2
Mallard x Mallard hybrid	-	0.2	Blue Jay	3109	170.0
Pintail	-	23.8	American Crow	421	1146.2
Showbird	-	45.5	Fish Crow	17	63.5
Goshawk	36	38.9	Crow Sp.	156	362.5
Wigeon	52	16.8	Crow Total.	1034	1573.2
Carolinian	4261	3495.5	Black-cap Chickadee	77	52.1
Redhead	-	1.7	Carolina Chickadee	301	250.6
Ring-necked Duck	M	3.4	Titmouse	195	91.1
Greater Scaup	1	393.0	Red-br Nuthatch	1	4.3
Lesser Scaup	803	1395.1	White-br Nuthatch	66 *	24.5
Scaup sp.	802	1416.9	Brown Creeper	14	13.2
Scaup Sp.	1706	3114.9	Carolina Wren	203	149.2
Oldsquaw	-	30.0	House Wren	-	0.2
Buff Sooter	-	0.1	Winter Wren	18 *	5.2
White-winged Scooter	-	0.1	Marsh Wren	1	3.4
Sooter Sp.	-	0.1	Gold-enr Kinglet	37	22.8
Goldeneye	292	196.3	Ruby-cr Kinglet	6	8.2
Bufflehead	417	238.2	Gnatcatcher	-	0.1
Hooded Merganser	66	21.4	Bluebird	25	69.2
Com. Merganser	28	32.1	Hermit Thrush	49 *	16.8
Red-br. Merganser	14	74.4	Robin	257 *	203.6
Merganser Sp.	-	0.2	Catbird	-	0.1
Ruddy Duck	107	3724.4	Mockingbird	166	147.5
Black Vulture	-	0.1	Brown Thrasher	1	0.8
Turkey Vulture	2	4.8	Amer. Pipit	1	9.2
Bald Eagle (adult)	M	1.3	Ondar Waxwing	2	88.2
Harrier (immature)	-	0.4	Loggerhead Shrike	-	0.1
Harrier (TOTAL)	-	1.6	Screech Owl	2696	35863.7
Sharp-shinned Hawk	9	7.1	Vermivora sp.	-	0.1
Cooper's Hawk	8	3.3	Myrtle Warbler	92 *	36.0
Red-shouldered Hawk	18	10.4	Pine Warbler	-	0.1
Red-tailed Hawk	40	31.6	Palm Warbler	-	0.2
Rough-legged Hawk	-	0.4	Yellowthroat	-	1.1
Festina	24	32.2	Pipit's Warbler	-	0.1
Melospiza	-	0.1	Warbler Sp.	-	0.1
Peregrine	5	1.5	Cardinal	291	361.0
Pheasant	11	12.6	R B Grosbeak	-	0.1
Bobwhite	13	57.7	Towhee	46 *	16.8
Virginia Rail	3	4.0	Tree Sparrow	257 *	69.3
King Rail	-	0.1	Chipping Sparrow	-	0.6
Sora	-	0.1	Field Sparrow	-	0.4
Coot	30	35.2	Vesper Sparrow	-	0.2
Killdeer	20	88.1	Savannah Sparrow	8	13.4
Greater Yellowlegs	-	1.1	Fox Sparrow	5	5.1
Lesser Yellowlegs	-	0.4	Song Sparrow	547	515.2
Sanderling	-	0.1	Swamp Sparrow	177 *	84.3
Western Sandpiper	-	0.1	White-throat Sparrow	669	983.6
Least Sandpiper	-	2.9	White-crown Sparrow	M	2.1
Pump Sp.	-	0.1	Snow Bunting	7	88.2
White-rumped Sandpiper	-	0.1	Red-winged Blackbird	2106	24354.8
Dunlin	1	3.2	Yellow-head Blackbird	-	0.1
Snipe	-	2.6	Meadowlark	7	12.7
Woodcock	-	0.8	Rusty Blackbird	7	10.5
Laughing Gull	-	3.6	Renewer's Blackbird	-	0.1
Ring-billed Gull	-	0.2	Common Grackle	739	22945.5
Bonaparte's Gull	1304	657.9	Cowbird	113	1305.2
Ring-billed Gull	4778	6896.3	Purple Finch	2	3.4
Herring Gull	938	4922.6	House Finch	112	196.2
Iceland Gull	-	0.2	Common Redpoll	-	6.1
Lesser Black-bk Gull	-	1.4	Hoary Redpoll	4	0.1
Clayton Gull	-	0.1	Pine Siskin	4	2.6
Great black-bk Gull	157	314.9	Goldfinch	91	121.2
Gull sp.	-	88.9	Dov. Grosbeak	19	9.9
Rock Dove	1817	2143.4	House Sparrow	588	732.0
Ringed Turtle-Dove	-	0.6			

	Dec 30	Average	1995	1979-95
Total Species	100	107.5	100	107.5
Total Birds	2979	18427.2	2979	18427.2
YEAR	1995	Average	1995	Average
DAYS	12/30	12/28	12/30	12/28
Observers	41	34.6	41	34.6
Field Obsv.	27	8.2	27	8.2
Total Hours	117	98.2	117	98.2
Foot. Hours	82.6	72.5	82.6	72.5
Car Hours	34.5	25.1	34.5	25.1
Boat Hours	0	0.6	0	0.6
Owl Hours	2	1.0	2	1.0
Total Miles	350.5	275.2	350.5	275.2
Foot Miles	86	62.6	86	62.6
Car Miles	284.5	212.9	284.5	212.9
Boat Miles	0	0.7	0	0.7
START TIME	7:00	492.6	7:00	492.6
STOP TIME	17:10	1424.4	17:10	1424.4
Min Temp	21	24.7	21	24.7
Max Temp	49	38.2	49	38.2
Min Wind	0	2.8	0	2.8
Max Wind	12	9.9	12	9.9
Direction	NE	SW	NE	SW
Sky AM	HS	HC	HS	HC
Sky PM	HS	HC	HS	HC
Snow Cover	0	0.1	0	0.1

If you would be interested in a spreadsheet showing all the years' results, get in touch with Steve Sanford (E-mail [SanfoBird@aol.com](mailto:SanfoBird@aol.com)), or with Pete Webb, who compiled the count list. We can send you a printed copy, or a Microsoft Excel copy via disk or e-mail.

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### Field Trip Reports

Mark Pemburn

If you should be reading this years after the fact - say you found it in an old stack of mail that slipped over the edge of the desk and wedged against the wall -- let me remind you that this was a winter to remember. On the other hand, if you're reading this in March of 1996, we may not conclude a winter best forgotten.

Mind you, this is coming from a man who loves winter. Birding has shown me the real value of the season. Nothing else gives me the sense of vitality I feel when crunching over frozen grass in the January dawn, breathing air that tastes like cold water. But there's also too much of a good thing.

Jan 13 - Lancaster County: Cancelled due to snow.

Jan 20 - Conowingo Dam: Cancelled due to snow.

Jan 27 - Gull Day: Cancelled due to snow.

Feb 10 - By this date, most (not all) of the worst of the winter of 1996 has subsided. This day is partly to mostly cloudy with temperatures in the 40s. It provides a preview of that 5th season, the one known as "Mid". Jim Wilkinson and 14 others made the annual pilgrimage to New Design Road and Frederick County. A total of 43 species fell within their collective gaze including Lapland Longspurs near Walkersville and a Brown Creeper with some Golden-crowned Kinglets at Noland's Ferry.

March 27 - Cape Henlopen-Ocean City: Cancelled due to snow.

March 28 - In the early dawn, it looked very much as if we had to stamp "Cancelled due to snow" on our trip to Baltimore Harbor, too. By 7:00, however, Leanne and I had received enough calls to warrant making the trip.

Our scouting mission of the week before had demonstrated that there was little point in making the traditional march up Cherry Hill for Short-eared Owls. The one example of the species we found was highly deceased (though in good enough shape to retrieve for the museum). One thing that heightened us was the appearance of around a dozen Pipits.

Thus, at 8:30 AM, we were joined by four others, stomping and clapping in the cold. Cherry Hill offered little. I don't know where Pipits go when it snows but it isn't there. Swann Park was something of a bust as well. You can usually get Hooded Mergansers on the trestle but today there were only Mallards and the three standard gull species. Things started to look up a little when we spotted a Fox Sparrow at Ferry Bar Park. Was he a bit too tough to stick around for all that to see.

The last stop was Southwest Area Park - which I will maintain is the best place to bird in the city (even though it technically in the County). We added Red-shoulders, Red-tails, a Harrier and a Kestrel to the list but the greatest reward for our efforts were eight Snip, flying in formation overhead.

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### May Count

The May Count, a part of International Migratory Bird Day, will take place on Saturday May 11. Call Leanne Pemburn to participate in the count for Baltimore City and County.

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### Nominations for BBC Officers

The Nominating Committee submits its list of nominees for the Board of Directors for 1996-97. All members (except juniors) with dues paid for 1995-96 are eligible to vote. Husband and wife membership entitles each spouse to one vote. Please mark your ballot. Ballots must be received by Brent and Mary Byers by April 24, 1996.

### OFFICERS

- President -- Sukon Kanchanaraksa
- Vice-president -- Debbie Terry
- Recording Secretary -- Alan Bromberg
- Corresponding Secretary -- Dot Clark
- Treasurer -- Bob Wood
- Membership Secretary -- Roberta Ross

### BBC DIRECTORS

- Joseph Lewandowski
- Elliot Kirschbaum
- Gail Frantz

### MOS DIRECTORS

- Karen Morley
- Leanne Pemburn
- Mark Pemburn
- Terry Ross
- Peter Webb

### NOMINATING COMMITTEE

- Graham Egerton
- Shirley Geddes
- Sukon Kanchanaraksa
- Mark Pemburn
- Bob Rincer

Mail ballot by April 24 to

Brent and Mary Byers  
1104 Engleberth Road  
Baltimore MD 21221-2098

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### Book Review

Ben Poscover

Bodsworth, Fred. *Last of the Curlews*. Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 1995. Illustrated by Abigail Rorer, 186 pages.

Counterpoint press has again reissued the excellent book, *Last of the Curlews*. It is a story within a story. It first traces the experience of a lone Eskimo Curlew, responding to its reproductive urge, as it migrates to its breeding ground. The author's descriptions of this long and arduous journey give the reader a sense of being there.

The second story is the life of Bodsworth calls "The Gauntlet." It is entwined throughout the narrative of the first story and is an account of situations that brought about the decline of the Eskimo Curlew's population to its present state.

Knowledge of the life of the Curlew, of bird migration, and of conservation awareness is enhanced. As stated in a recent review in BIRD DIGEST, "It is beautifully written and ornithologically accurate... a must read for birders and bird watchers alike." Reader level is middle school through adult.

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### BBC Homepage Spans the Globe

Terry Ross, webmaster of the BBC Homepage on the Internet received a message from Durban South Africa:

HI TO THE BALTIMORE BIRD CLUB FROM THE NATAL BIRD CLUB IN DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA. WE ARE PLEASED TO MAKE CONTACT WITH YOU, AND HOPE THAT WE CAN ESTABLISH LINKS WHICH WILL BENEFIT MEMBERS OF BOTH CLUBS. WE WILL WRITE TO YOU WITH FURTHER INFORMATION

### REGARDS

TREVOR SNYMAN

We look forward to further communications.

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### Central California: Moss Landing, Los Banos, and Monterey Bay

Jim Highsway and Linda Prentice

In October 1995 we had the opportunity to spend a few days birding in the Monterey, California area. An itinerary which included stops at Moss Landing and Elkhorn Slough on the coast, the San Luis and Merced National Wildlife Refuges near Los Banos in the Central Valley, and a boat trip on Monterey Bay, enabled us to sample different habitats.

The Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve (1,400 acres) has an extensive trawl system and is a very pleasant place to bird; on a weekday there were few visitors. The upland areas contained birds such as Acorn and Nuttall's Woodpecker, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Anna's Hummingbird, California Towhee, Lesser Goldfinch, and Black Phoebe. The main channel of Elkhorn Slough was full of shorebirds, including Avocets, Willets, Long-billed Curlews, Long-billed Dowitchers, and Marbled Godwits. At the Moss Landing area nearby we found more shorebirds as well as a Black-shouldered Kite.

At the San Luis and Merced Refuges, the birding is mostly from the car on the auto tour routes. Both refuges were loaded with sparrows, mostly Red-tailed Hawks and Northern Harriers. We also had great looks at a Black-shouldered Kite at San Luis, as well as our first sighting (and photographs) of Yellow-billed Magpies. Sandhill Cranes were numerous at the Merced Refuge.

The highly touted pelagic trip on Monterey Bay was a disappointment. The boat was rolling so much in the swells that it was difficult to view the Shearwaters and Storm-petrels with binoculars. We hope to visit the area again and bird the coastal areas south of Monterey and Carmel!

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### Membership Reminders

Roberta Ross

Please don't forget to notify us of address changes, so we will be able to send you information about the 1996-97 membership year, which will be applied to the September 1, 1996.

If you don't people who would like to join the Baltimore Bird Club, tell them to join now. If they pay a full year's dues (\$20 for an individual or \$30 for a household) now, this amount will be applied to the 1996-97 year, so their dues will actually cover the period from May 1, 1996 to September 1, 1997.

Address changes or applications for membership should be sent to

Roberta Ross  
4128 Roland Avenue  
Baltimore MD 21221-