

## The newsletter of the Baltimore Bird Club

February/March 2004 -- Online Edition

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Deadline for next *CHIP NOTES*: February 25, 2004 (the next issue will be April/May 2004). If possible, please email material to

[gainebird@aol.com](mailto:gainebird@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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### Update on Lake Roland

By Peter Lev

The main, footbridge entrance to Robert E. Lee Park, more usually known as "Lake Roland," will be closed in February 2004 and will remain closed for approximately 1 year. This action is necessary so that Baltimore City's Department of Recreation and Parks can solve two pressing problems: 1. replace the aging footbridge; and 2. replace the polluted soil on the "Peninsular" (public area with picnic tables) just inside the park. Other areas of the park will remain open while "remediation" occurs around the main entrance.

According to Robert Green, spokesperson for Rec. and Parks, additional changes to the park are still being discussed, with no timetable. For example, a proposal to cut off the path across the Light Rail tracks is under discussion. Mr. Green mentioned that it is extraordinarily difficult to do anything at Robert E. Lee Park because of the complex web of property rights and water rights in and around the park. I suggested that the path over the Light Rail tracks should not be shut down until alternate access can be provided to trails on the west side of the lake.

Given the announced closure of the footbridge entrance, it seems clear that the **Baltimore Bird Club's scheduled Spring walks at Lake Roland will have to be altered. See "Activities Updates" below.**

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### Activities Updates

You will find a complete list of all activities and locations in our BBC Program Booklet or the MOS Yellowthroat or online at Baltimore Bird Club Activities, 2003-2004. <http://www.BaltimoreBirdClub.org/schedule.html>.

#### SUBSTITUTE LOCATIONS FOR SPRING LAKE ROLAND TRIPS

It is most likely that Lake Roland will be closed for the spring walks. At this time we are not sure what Lake Roland's status will be. For this reason, our leaders have picked alternate birding spots.

#### For confirmation, please check with the leader.

**MAR 30 - 9:00 AM Cylburn Arboretum**, Adelaide Rackemann 823-4709

The remaining trips will be at **Cromwell Valley Park**:

- APR 6 - 9:00 AM**, Mary Chetelat, 665-0769
- APR 13 - 8:00 AM**, Mantilla Weiss, 337-2732
- APR 20 - 8:00 AM**, Dot Gustafson, 584-9509
- APR 27 - 8:00 AM**, Debbie Terry, 252-8771
- MAY 4 - 8:00 AM**, Shirley Geddes, 377-6583
- MAY 11 - 8:00 AM**, Raib Culbertson, 825-1379
- MAY 18 - 8:00 AM**, Josie Gray, 922-1837
- MAY 25 - 8:00 AM**, Gail Frantz, 833-7135

- Please note a **switch in the speakers for the MAR 2 and APR 6** lecture dates.

**MAR 2**, (Tues) 7:30 pm Tuesday Evenings at Sherwood. *From Kruger to the Cape - Our South Africa Adventure*, Gail Mackiernan

**APR 6** (Tues) 7:30 pm Tuesday Evenings at Sherwood. *The Brown-headed Cowbird, a Conservation Challenge*, David Curson

- The **April 17** (Sat) 8:00 AM to 12:00 noon **Saturday Monitoring Walks at Fort McHenry** is CANCELED due to an Aquarium Clean-up Day which will necessitate having large numbers of volunteers working in the marsh.

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### Fort McHenry Ash-Throated Flycatcher

By Jim Peters

On December 3rd, the First Wednesday bird walk at Fort McHenry concluded around noon. Mary Chetelat, Mr. Culler and I made our way along the marsh trail, sheltered from the cold NW wind and enjoying the warm sun.

As we reached the end of the trail I happened to look up and saw a flycatcher with a yellow belly and russet tail pass above the tree tops. It landed in a maple tree just beyond the trail shelter. The bird raised the feathers on its head momentarily and then flew away from us down the berm.

We immediately started back down the trail to try and locate the bird. Toward the end of the trail, I heard a "pip, pip" call and did locate the flycatcher on the low branch of a Sycamore tree.

In the sunlight, the belly appeared to be a bright yellow. The face and neck were gray. I immediately identified it as a Great-crested Flycatcher. The bird did seem to be slightly smaller than most other Great-crested I've seen but I attributed that to tail feathers not being fully grown out on the left side of the tail. The tertials were edged with white and the overall plumage appeared fresh and clean. I assumed it was an HY bird (hatch year).

We watched the bird drop into the grass. It returned to its perch with a large grasshopper which it flailed against a branch, then quickly swallowed. During this time the bird repeated the "pip, pip" call then suddenly flew away and we lost sight of it.

Later, I checked my Sibley and the MD Yellowbook. It was confident that I had identified the bird correctly. The colors seemed to match that of a Great-crested and I couldn't recall seeing a pale grayish-white throat. With my poor hearing, I thought the "pip" call note might just as well have been a "kwip" of the Eastern species. The Yellowbook shows a November 18th record for the Great-crested and so I felt comfortable with my ID of the bird. Keith Costley posted the bird sighting at noon on MDOSPREY that same day.

Much to my surprise, during the next few days, the birding community responded with the suggestion that the bird was more likely an Ash-throated Flycatcher. Their reasoning was that in spite of the Yellowbook's November 18 late date, it was simply too late in the season for a Great-crested. Furthermore, several birders pointed out that the "pip" call note I described (though I thought it was my poor hearing) was diagnostic for an Ash-throated. Now it became imperative that the bird be relocated and the field marks studied carefully.

On Thursday morning, December 4, I arrived at dawn to fill the feeders and check the premises for the flycatcher. I found no trace of the bird anywhere on the Fort's grounds. A bit later a group of birders arrived on their way to work. We continued the search until they had to leave.

Finally at 10:30, a birder walking the path around the sea wall located the flycatcher perched in a Honey Locust tree and pointed out its location to me. I found the bird just as it was consuming a Praying Mantis.

In the diffused light of an overcast sky, the yellow of the bird appeared pale and the throat looked grayish white. The tail was mostly rufous with dark brown tips at the outer edges. The bill appeared smaller than that of a Great-crested. I could see pale white bars on the wings. The tertials had a white edging and the primaries were dark with russet edging.

During the rest of Thursday, large numbers of birders descended on the Fort to see the bird. I helped keep track of its movements until the afternoon 5:00 closing time. By this time the light was rapidly failing as a snowstorm approached.

The flycatcher moved all over the Fort grounds in its search for food. It seemed to spend most of its time around the Civil war magazines and the trees on the wetland nature trail. It occasionally moved down the sea wall on to the maintenance yard, the Sycamore grove, the parking lot and back to the wetlands.

On Friday, December 5, the Fort was closed to the public due to the snowstorm. Saturday noon, the Fort reopened. Several birders and myself searched the wetland and Fort grounds but we were unable to find the flycatcher. I can only assume that it was driven away by the storm.

This Ash-throated Flycatcher became the 216th species added to the Fort list over the last four years of the monitoring program.

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### Board of Directors Meetings

By Carol Schreter, Recording Secretary

The BBC Board met on November 11 and December 9, 2003. At the November meeting, the Board authorized three budget requests:

- A \$500 "donation" to MOS for the Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA) project. This will generate federal and state matching funds.
- \$100 to the National Audubon Society (NAS) so that BBC's 2002 Christmas Count numbers will be included in national compilations. In the future, each participant will be expected to pay the NAS-requested \$5 fee.
- \$80 to the Conservation Committee for phone, reproduction and postage.

We learned that Baltimore City may renovate the Cylburn Carriage House into a classroom and meeting room. The Cylburn Nature Museum and BBC Museum of Birds of Maryland could be displayed there, as their space in the Mansion House is now closed to the public. Referred to the BBC Museum Future Committee.

The December meeting involved a wide-ranging discussion about BBC's recent dues increase, BBC finances, BBC's mission, and a decade-long decrease in membership. The Club now has 261 memberships representing 320 individual members.

Juan Cebal of the Conservation Committee distributed a 4-page "Robert E. Lee Park Concept Plan." In Lake Roland, the path across the Light Rail track is slated to be closed. BBC members are invited to respond to this sketchy, problematic plan by contacting Kimberly Amprey Flowers, Director, Baltimore City Dept. of Recreation and Parks

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### Wear the BBC Logo!

Shireen Gonzalez has curated 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! Shireen adapted Don Albers's Oriole logo which is printed on each item.

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**

If you do not have access to a computer and would like a paper copy with pictures of the items, please send a self-addressed stamped envelope to:

Gail Frantz  
13955 Old Hanover Road  
Reisterstown, MD 21136

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### Fourth Annual Worcester County "Rarity Round-up"

By Cathy Carroll

As a non-Marylander, I am always looking for opportunities to visit and bird as many different areas of Maryland as I can. Add to this the fact that I love the Eastern Shore, especially in the non-summer seasons. So when I read Norm Saunders' MDOSPREY post seeking birders to cover Worcester County for the fourth annual "rarity round-up" it didn't take me long to respond. Many Maryland birders agree: Worcester County is the birdiest county in Maryland, and where a vagrant or two is very likely to show up, especially in the autumn of the year. It was on the maiden "rarity round-up" that Maryland's first Ash-throated Flycatcher was recorded. Earlier this autumn, a Western Wood-Peevee and a Black-throated Gray Warbler were seen on Assateague Island. Shortly after that, the most successful Big Sit circle in the country was held near the Bayside Campground on Assateague.

On the evening of November 7th many participants gathered at the West Ocean City home of Norm and Fran Saunders for pizza and strategy. I met my partner for the next day, Paul O'Brien, several experienced Montgomery County birder. Paul and I were assigned to bird Assateague Island State Park and West Ocean City. Paul has participated in all of the rarity round-up counts and keeps a Worcester County list. On Saturday morning, 9:00am, our counters met for breakfast at a diner and waited for daylight. The day began cool and windy. I am often lulled into complacency by Maryland's mild weather and began to worry that I was not wearing enough warm clothing. At least one member of each counting team had a cell phone and if a rarity was found everyone would receive word of it. It is only a short car ride to Assateague Island from the Francis Scott Key Motel and our breakfast diner. Paul parked his car in the parking lot just beyond the bridge and we started off. Almost immediately we heard the "toy tin horn" call of the Red-breasted Nuthatch and moments later they presented themselves on the edges of the loblolly pines. We saw many Yellow-rumped [Myrtle] Warblers and Paul commented to me, "This is the bird we'll see a lot today. Their little chip note is one you'll never mistake again."

As we walked along the empty road between the dunes and the loblolly woods, our list began to grow. The sun was bright and the winds were very mild. I spotted a western Palm Warbler and felt enthralled by this. Moments later we saw a bird sitting quietly out in the open on a loblolly branch. I thought I was looking at a Clay-colored Sparrow. Paul thought it was an immature Chipping Sparrow. As we consulted the Sibley guide and kept our eyes on the bird, Paul cautioned me to study the bird carefully. Suddenly it flew down into a low bush giving the characteristic Chipping Sparrow note. Immature Chipping Sparrow revealed.

At one point, a pair of ponies ambled past. Here and there we saw Sika deer including a well-hidden herd of the little deer that included a buck with a large rack. We looked for Long-eared Owls in an area of the pines where they are often sighted. No luck. We saw flocks after flocks of overhead flying Robins. A Merlin soared easily just above the treetops. We heard the cheerful notes of Greater Yellowlegs. By mid-morning our list was impressive and growing. Next we headed west along the shell trail toward the area where a Western Kingbird had been located on a previous count. I heard and then saw a Carolina Chickadee, which is not a common bird on Assateague Island. We came to an area where a large pickup truck was parked near a wooden dock that led to a blind at the end. I saw some ducks on the water that I thought were American Wigeon. Just as I put my binoculars up to my eyes to count, I heard Paul whisper, "Deer." Indeed, they were. This was opening day for the waterfowl hunting season. After my decoy faux pas, we had one small area remaining to finish up our part of the island before lunch. From a large patch of mostly phragmites we heard a chip note different from all of the hundreds of chips already heard that morning. Through the tall, thick fronds we caught a glimpse of the buffy flanks and fine streaks of a Lincoln's Sparrow - not a common bird for Assateague Island, and a new county bird for Paul.

Lunch was sandwiches at a picnic picnic table on our way toward West Ocean City. Paul knew all of the good search locations including Portin Drive where two LeCote's Sparrows were found by Rick Blom on a previous Christmas count. We took a short detour to South Point directly across Assateague Island's Bayside Campground when we received a call that Matt Halper and Kevin Graff had found a Western Bluebird that had flown across the water. Here we picked up more birds for the count, but no Western Bluebird. We stopped at Eagles Nest Campground where we found hundreds of Dunlin and eight American Oystercatchers - a life bird for me. Late afternoon came and we would shortly run out of daylight, but had time for one last stop at the West Ocean City pond. This little lake was full of all varieties of waterfowl. We picked up many new county species here, but no rarities.

Finally, we were out of daylight and eighteen tired and hungry birders began to gather from their searches at Fran and Norm Saunders' home for salad, lasagna, sodas, dessert, and stories - lots of stories. Mark Hoffman was the count organizer and compiler. We went through the Maryland state list one by one for the day's species tally. As it turned out, Paul and I were the only ones to report Red-breasted Nuthatch and Lincoln's Sparrow.

The official count was over but on Sunday morning many gathered at the Bayside Campground parking lot in the hopes of finding the Western Bluebird or other rarity. It was gray and too cold to just stand around, so I wandered off away from the water to the campground sites. Birding was slow until suddenly I came to a pocket of activity. Lots of good birds, but nothing that had not been seen the day before. But what, what is this bird? Pecking away in the course grass with Juncos, Field and White-throated Sparrows. I saw a large sparrow-like bird. It had a chocolate cap, yellow eye-ring, and magnolia Warbler on an essentially clean breast with some faint flank streaking and sparrow-style mottling on its back. I studied the bird for a long time, yet I had no idea what I was looking at, and could not find it in Sibley. I was ready to leave when I found Mark Hoffman still out beating the bushes. He turned the Sibley guide pages to Dickcissel and asked if this was the bird I had seen. No, definitely not. I looked for the bird again, but could not find it. Finally, I had to leave without being able to identify the bird. A Google web search on Monday morning revealed that my bird was indeed a Dickcissel - in 11/09, a fall record departure date. In the past I had seen Dickcissel only in spring and summer, so I will never forget this fall bird.

By the time Mark Hoffman found a Northern Shrike in the Ocean City 94th Street Woods, I was stuck in bridge traffic well on my way home. I found this to be one of my most enjoyable birding weekends in Maryland so far, and I have enjoyed many great outings in this State. All of the participants were great birders and keen listeners. I learned so much from birding with Paul O'Brien, and we both had a lot of fun. In all, the count yielded 151 species, just shy of the high count of 155 in 2000.

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#### Conservation Corner

### Baltimore Reservoirs & Forest Management

By Anneke Davis

Baltimore City owns three reservoirs that provide water to 1.8 million people: Loch Raven, Prettyboy and Liberty reservoirs. To protect water quality, the City acquired 17,580 acres of forest land surrounding these reservoirs, land located in Baltimore, Carroll and Harford counties.

Some of this forest has been logged in the past: some areas were replanted with pine trees, such as the "pine plantations" on the north side of Loch Raven Reservoir. In the late 1990s, Baltimore City's Dept. of Public Works commissioned forester Robert Northrop of the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to inventory the watershed and prepare a "forest management" plan. The resulting "A Comprehensive Forest Conservation Plan for Long-Term Watershed Protection on the City of Baltimore Reservoirs," a complex 168 page document, was published in January 2003.

Bob DeGroot of the Maryland Alliance for Greenway Improvement and Conservation (MAGIC) is concerned that "forest management" activities will lead to logging. In October 2003, MAGIC invited other organizations to co-sign a letter of protest addressed to the Baltimore City Dept. of Public Works. (See Baltimore Reservoir article at [www.magicalliance.org](http://www.magicalliance.org)). Here is why the Baltimore City Dept is not inclined to protect this plan.

#### WHAT IS POSITIVE ABOUT THIS PLAN?

- This plan proposes to limit public use in the reservoir watershed property, noting the destruction caused by off-road vehicles and excessive use for recreational activities.
- It assumes that some trees will be cut, especially the pine plantations filled with 40- year-old pines near the end of their life span.
- It does not recommend any clear cutting. In areas reserved with pine trees or invasive, non-native species, it recommends periodically clearing strips 100 feet wide and replanting them with a diversity of native trees and shrubs, on sites suited to their specific requirements.

#### OBSTACLES FACING THIS PLAN

- Is it a plan? No, it makes no rigid decisions, no statements about acres or scope of management. Rather, it explains what needs to be done and the reasons for doing it.
- The Department of Public Works will need to hire a knowledgeable forest manager to oversee such forest management. This may take pressure from citizen groups and environmental organizations.
- This plan will require an unusual level of City-County cooperation.
- Success depends on controlling the deer population. Deer are now eating all the underbrush necessary for the survival of song birds, mammals and other species. Deer will eat all seedlings that are planted.

No date has been set for implementing this plan. Citizen oversight of this watershed management plan will be important. One private watchdog group called the Watershed Protection Coalition, Inc. has already surveyed Loch Raven area residents to assess local reactions to controlling the deer population. (Contact Jo Owen, P.O. Box 212, Timonium, MD 21094.)

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### My Top 10

By Mark Linardi

As my first "full-fledged" calendar year of birding came to a close, I began to reflect on the birding highlights of my year. Wading through my many notes, I realized that the majority of my list was marked only through the generosity of others. With that thought in mind, I decided to construct a "Ten Bird List" for the year with a slight twist. As a way of showing my appreciation I've included the names of those individuals who were most instrumental in helping me attain so many wonderful life birds. The vast majority of these endeavors were group efforts with several people usually responsible for fulfilling this birder's quest. I have however, been able to designate a specific moment or action which inextricably ties each person to a particular bird listing. Again my many thanks!

Honorable mention (or my way of sneaking in a #11) Nashville Warbler - Joel Martin

- 10 - Red-necked Grebe - Jim Peters
- 9 - Marbled Godwit - Kevin Graff
- 8 - Dendroica caerulescens - Paul Noell
- 7 - Nighthawks - Keith Eric Costley
- 6 - Black-billed Cuckoo - Nancy Kirschbaum
- 5 - Yellow-bellied Flycatcher - Elliot Kirschbaum
- 4 - Black-bellied Plover - Gail Frantz
- 3 - Clyburnian Owl - Cathy Carroll
- 2 - Summer Tanager - Steve Sanford
- 1 - Lapland Longspur - Pete Webb

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### Cylburn Sundays - Fall 2003

By Joseph M. Lewandowski

**Aug 3** - Today was the start of another Fall at Cylburn. Seven birders came out to see the splendor of the gardens, birds, and good camaraderie. 26 species were seen. Hummingbirds were everywhere, flitting from flower to flower. Blackburnian, Black-and-White, Redstart, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Black-throated Green, Bay Breasted, Nashville, Black-throated Blue, and Golden-winged Warblers were all seen, as well as Baltimore Oriole. A great way to start off the Fall walks at Cylburn.

**Sept 7** - A mild, sunny, blue-skied day allowed seven birders to get some great looks at Cylburn Arboretum. The gardens looked great, with splashes of color all around. Birds were not shy. Hummingbirds were close enough to touch - just ask Steve about his eye encounter. Canada, Redstart, Cape May, Chestnut-sided, and Magnolia Warblers were present. A Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Scarlet Tanager were other species of note for a total of 29 species.

**Sept 21** - This day was cloudy and mild. Seven birders came out and saw only 28 species, but the warblers were great. Common Yellowthroat, Blackpoll, Black-throated Green, Black-throated Blue, Chestnut-sided, Nashville, Black-and-White, Magnolia, and Palm Warblers were all spotted. We also saw a Cooper's Hawk, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Cedar Waxwings, Scarlet Tanager, Red-eyed Vireo, and Hummingbirds along the trails. A Great Cyprian birding day.

**Sept 28** - Cool and overcast again. Eight birders were out to enjoy the gardens and the birds and were not disappointed. Osprey, Great Blue Heron, Red-tailed Hawk, Kestrel, Cooper's Hawk, Scarlet Tanager, Red-eyed Vireo, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Common Yellowthroat, Parula Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Redstart, Black-and-White Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, and the special bird of this day, a Yellow-billed Cuckoo rounded our list of 31 species.

**Oct 5** - Another cool 50°F day greeted the eight birders at the Arboretum. However, birding was another matter. Hummingbirds were still about. Sharp-shinned and Broad-winged Hawks and Osprey hovered overhead. A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was in the Mansion tree and the Scarlet Tanager, Red-eyed and White-eyed Vireo were in the area. Redstart, Parula Warbler, Black-throated Green, Black-throated Blue, and Black-and-White Warblers all hit our list. 33 species were tallied.

**Oct 12** - The day was sunny, with temperatures in the 60's. The gardens were in their wain as eight birders walked along. Scarlet Tanager, Blue-headed Vireo, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Grackle, Junco, and Sharp-shinned Hawk were the key birds sighted today, 24 species.

**Oct 19** - Eight birders came out to see only 15 birds on this cool, sunny day at Cylburn Arboretum. Woodpeckers, Blue Jays, Juncos, and both Kinglets hit our list.

**Oct 26** - This was the last walk of the season for Cylburn. Two birders came out on a cool overcast day to walk the paths for a last time. The gardens had been worked so that bare ground was present. Only eleven birds greeted the two lone interlopers. A Song Sparrow and Flicker were the notables, along with a flock of Canada Geese. We spotted a toad, hopping along, making its way toward hibernation. The Arboretum was quiet, awaiting Spring.

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### Remembering Ilse Kind Koch

*Chan Robbins shares memories of an old friend*

Ilse Kind Koch for many years was one of the Baltimore Bird Club's most active members. She joined MOS in 1946 and served on the Executive Council from 1947 to 1949, then on the Executive Council of the Baltimore Bird Club after Baltimore became a separate chapter of MOS in 1949. Ilse led many field trips, and she and her husband Herman participated in others as well.

Ilse was especially interested in observing behavior at bird nests. She published a note in *Maryland Birdlife* describing a pair of Carolina Wrens roosting in a phoebe nest during the winter.

Ilse and Herman dropped out of MOS activities when they moved to Honey Brook, Pennsylvania, but we continued to keep in touch with Ilse after Herman's death. We received a note from Ilse's niece in December saying that Ilse had died on April 20, 2003 at the age of 99 1/2, having enjoyed life until her last few months.

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### BBC OFFICERS FOR 2004-05

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Mark Linardi	Mary Chetelat
Joel Martin	Helene Gardel
Georgia McDonald	John Landers
Nancy Meiser	Pete Webb
David Thornhill	

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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 and Beyond

By Gail Frantz



**Overlea**  
From Sharon Smith in October: Today at noon, I was in a parking lot on Belair Road just north of the Beltway. When I got out of the car, I noticed this very large grayish bird flying towards the beltway. As it got closer, I could see it was a **Blue Heron!** We had a house on the Eastern Shore and see them pretty frequently there. But I've never seen one around here. It was flying slow and low in the parking lot that I could see it's