

The newsletter of the Baltimore Bird Club

December 1996/January 1997 - Online Edition

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Deadline for next CHIP NOTES: December 23, 1996 (the next issue will be February/March 1997)
Send material to:

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8412 Downey Dale Drive
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or e-mail to manager@mail.bcpl.lib.md.us
Please help CHIP NOTES get out on time

What the wind blew in

by Steve Sanford

Late summer hurricanes often bring in special visitors from the tropics.

On September 6 Gene Scarpulla and Rick Blom hit a hurricane jackpot in Baltimore county. They spotted about 15 Sooty Terns and a Parasitic Jaeger at North Point State Park (Black Marsh) as the remnants of Hurricane Fran blew over Maryland. Two Sooty Terns were also seen far inland in Maryland at Black Hills Reservoir in western Montgomery County.

Sooty Terns are normally found in the Gulf of Mexico, especially in the Dry Tortugas at the end of the Florida Keys. Surprisingly, the new "Yellow Book" (Field List of the Birds of Maryland) shows that there have been a few sightings of Sooty Terns in the past in Maryland, including Baltimore County.

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MOS Wildlife Sanctuary Signs

by Karen Morley

Over the years many Marylanders have taken the opportunity to post MOS Wildlife Sanctuary signs on their property. At the July 10, 1971 Sanctuary Committee meeting in Annapolis, the committee ratified the plan to register property as MOS Wildlife Sanctuaries and provide signs to post these sanctuaries. They sent out notices to all MOS chapters and prepared general news releases. The first signs (five of them) went to Inez Glime for 89 acres in Caroline County on July 17, 1971. The response was much greater than expected and the December 1971 Birdlife reported that by that date 230 properties had been registered encompassing 13,082 acres. While the signs have been generally used to protect private property (from large farms to city backyards), MOS signs also protect subdivisions, schools, humane societies, historical sites, environmental centers, cemeteries, scout camps, and the U.S. Naval Academy. They are used by the Girls Scouts and Boy Scouts for various projects, garden clubs, and the Maryland Site Game & Fish Protection Association, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the Maryland State Highway Authority, and various Maryland counties.

Many thousands of Maryland acres are now registered with MOS - and we want to help protect even more acres. So let's get out the word about the signs; they are especially helpful at this time of year during hunting season. You do not need to be a MOS member to register property, and registering your property does not give MOS any rights over the lands on which they are erected, nor does it place any liability upon the Society with respect to the use of such lands. In posting your property you are agreeing to maintain conservation practices designed to protect the wild plant and animal life which the land contains and to do your best to see that the property is treated strictly as a wildlife sanctuary as long as the MOS signs are used to post it.

The signs cost \$4.00 each plus \$1.00 each for postage (they are heavy!) If you are interested in obtaining signs for your property, or just want more information about the signs, please visit the [MOS Wildlife Sanctuary Signs](#) page, or contact Karen Morley.

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Field Trip Reports

compiled by Mark Pemburn

September 1 - A great, sunny day with temperatures in the 80s. Joe Lewandowski reports that the Cylburn Self-Guided trip on this date was a birding bonus that yielded good looks at Killdeer, Nighthawks and a Ruby-throated Hummingbird. A total of 24 species were listed by the seven who attended.

September 3 - The 80 degree weather continued but the sun was occluded this day as Elliot Kirschbaum led a troupe of 21 'round Lake Roland. Forty-eight species were tallied.

September 7 - You may ask yourself, as I did, "Where the heck is Glen Meadows?" I discovered that it is a retirement community on Glen Arm Road, near Manor Road (in Baltimore County) whose residents have graciously extended a welcome to BBC birders. Steve Simon led 11 folks o'er the wooded hills, fields and nature trails on this partly-cloudy (post Hurricane Fran) day and logged a total of 16 species for the effort.

September 7 - Sorry you missed the trip that Michele Melia led to the Phoenix area. How did I know you weren't there? Michele writes that only herself and Shireen Gonzaga showed up for those great views of a duo of Worm-eating Warblers, numerous Chestnut-sided's and Redstarts, and only their ears heard the singing of the Warbling Vireos. You'll know better next time. Thirty-three species total.

September 8 - Sunny and muggy today. Gail Frantz led the charge on Oregon Ridge with a contingent of twelve. First, they spent 45 minutes chasing a Pileated Woodpecker around a hedge, then, as Gail states, "A twenty minute discussion, \$25 worth bird books and \$2000 worth of optics could not confirm the identity of the two juvenile flycatchers and the adult feeding them . . . until the Pewee spoke!" Thirty-two species all-told.

September 10 - Here's how it goes: you saddle up for a fine day in the out-of-doors, a day of strolling beneath the trees beside a rippling Lake (Roland), and all the darned birds are hanging around the parking lot! Shirley Geddes took her turn at the helm with fourteen crew on this humid, 80-ish day. Not a bad tally, withal - 43 species for the day.

September 15 - The weather was gorgeous, said Joy Wheeler of this autumn Sunday at Cylburn. There was a creditable turnout of both people and birds, with 27 of one and 39 of t'other. Highlights of the day were: a partial-albino Crow with white wing feathers reminiscent of a Pileated Woodpecker, a small flock of migrating Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, a flight of Broad-winged Hawks and Brown Thrasher a'thrashin' around in the mulch.

September 17 - A couple of days later, the clouds rolled in. Ruth Culbertson with nine in tow slogged the muddy trails of Lake Roland. Of the 29 species seen, most notable were a female Rose-breasted Grosbeak, a Cormorant and a Kingfisher perched over the waterfall.

September 21 - Overcast continued to the weekend while dropping temperatures turned "muggy" into "damp" (still a few months to go for "raw"). Despite the gloom, Joe Lewandowski and three others walked Cylburn Self-Guided route, turning up a total of 15 species.

September 21 - "Trip canceled due to good weather" writes Steve Sanford of the Hawk and Warbler Watch scheduled for this date. Those picky birds just won't fly when wind is blowing from the wrong direction.

September 22 - Joy Wheeler may not own the Northampton Furnace trail at Loch Raven, but she might as well. She told me that she has birded there every day for the last several years. This day, four people showed up to share the walk with her. Their efforts turned up 31 species. Among these: two Cuckoos eating a large green bug, a Thrasher and a Black-throated Blue Warbler.

September 24 - It must be a Cuckoo time of year because Bob Wood also reported two of them for his Lake Roland walk. The 20 in attendance were also treated to a Golden-winged Warbler, a true bright spot on this cool, cloudy day. Thirty-four species in toto.

September 28 - An overcast day with a few drops of rain spitting down on Cromwell Valley - that "new" park out in the county near Loch Raven. The weather didn't stop Dot Clark and 28 birders from the BBC and the Wild Bird Center from scouring up 38 species, however.

September 29 - Next day, the sun broke through. Joe Lewandowski says it was spectacular at the Cylburn Self-Guided walk. This time nine birders picked out 33 species including Black-throated Blue and Black-throated Green Warblers, Jays and Wood Thrushes.

October 1 - By this time of year, a lot of the winter residents have returned to the area. One bird that nearly everyone loves to spot is the elusive little Winter Wren, and spot it they did this cool, clear day at Lake Roland with Dot Gustafson. The 19 birders tallied 35 species in sum.

October 3 - This day could be described as cool, sunny and breezy, but not necessarily birdy. The 18 travelers on Jean Worthley's trip to Soldiers Delight spotted only three species, but a walk there is always worthwhile, birds notwithstanding.

October 6 - Another cool one. Perhaps you could say downright cold with temperatures dropping into the 40s. Joe and eight others led themselves around the circuit of the Cylburn Self-Guided tour, spotting a total of 33 species. High points were Thrasher, Palm Warbler and Sapsucker.

October 8 - A day of heavy rain. This didn't stop the seven who showed for Matilda Weiss's Lake Roland walk from garnering 22 species for the somewhat abbreviated trip.

October 13 - The last of the season's Cylburn Self-Guided walks. Joe reports that it was a beautiful fall day for the six birders who accompanied him. Of 29 species counted, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Red-tailed Hawk and close-ups of Carolina Wrens, White-crowned, White-throated and Field Sparrows were the best.

October 15 - A sunny and cool day at Lake Roland. Josie Gray led 20 around and about, ticking of 45 species in the process. The best birds of the day were Nashville and Black-throated Blue Warbler and Solitary Vireo.

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Congratulations to Leanne Pemburn

In September the judges at the "Wings 'n' Water Festival" at the Wetland Institute in New Jersey awarded Leanne *First Place* in the amateur songbird category for her woodcarving of a [Gray Catbird](#). In addition she won third for *Best in Show* for the entire amateur carving competition. Let's hope, Leanne brings her carving to our Show & Tell on Tuesday, December 10.

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Thanks to Shirley Geddes

This past September saw the end of 377-8462, the Baltimore Bird Club Information phone number. Shirley Geddes answered this number for about 15 years. She fielded questions from "how do I join the BBC?" to "What is this bird with the white head and red throat that is coming to my feeder?" Shirley was the friendly voice with the answer, the phone number, or the name of the person who could answer the caller's question. Many thanks, Shirley. You were a great ambassador and source of information for the public.

The new information number is the Baltimore Birdline at 467-0653.

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Membership Dues

by Roberta Ross

Please pay your dues promptly! Notices have been sent to everyone whose 1996-97 dues have not been received. If the expiration date on your mailing label is circled in red, we have not received your dues. If the information on the label is incorrect, or your name or address is wrong, please call Roberta Ross. Unpaid members WILL be dropped from the mailing list effective January 15, 1997. Make checks payable to Baltimore Bird Club. Mail to

Roberta Ross
4128 Roland Ave
Baltimore MD 21211-2034

Our regular dues, which include membership in the state organization, are \$20 for an individual or \$30 for a household. Members of another chapter or life members of MOS who joined after 6/11/90 pay the "chapter only" dues of \$10 for an individual or \$15 for a household membership. (Before 6/11/90, the Baltimore chapter also offered a life membership. If you are a life member of the Baltimore chapter and MOS who joined before 6/11/90, you do not owe anything.)

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Postcard from the Edge

September 16, 1996

I've added another sport to my birdwatching.

It's hurricane dodging. This trip to the Caribbean started in Puerto Rico, with HORTENSE located just a few hundred miles away. I tried to find the endangered Puerto Rican Parrot in the Luquillo Nat'l forest, but failed. After I left Puerto Rico, hurricane HORTENSE hit hard, possibly pushing the parrot closer to extinction. Now I'm on the island of Grenada, where one species, the Grenada Dove, is found only here. There are less than 100 of this species, which is threatened not only by hurricanes, but by the building of vacation homes in its restrictive habitat.

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Homeward Bound: California to Maryland

by Jim Peters

This is the record of the return home from the birding trip from Maryland to California described in the [October-November](#) issue of Chip Notes.

Saturday November 25, 1995 - Early morning finds us at the Red Hill impoundments of the Salton Sea NWR where the waters are covered with Eared and Western Grebes and thousands of other waterfowl. We find six Pink Flamingos feeding in shallow water amongst a large flock of White Pelicans. Avocets are common as are Black-necked Stilts and a variety of other birds including White-faced Ibis feeding in the shallows. Abert's Towhees feed under the salt cedars and thousands of Snow Geese graze in the farm fields. It is sunny and warm, and we linger through the morning hours before heading eastward on Interstate 8 into Arizona.

Sunday November 26 - Today we bird the Sonoran desert in the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument in southern Arizona adjacent to the Mexican border. Curve-billed Thrashers are common in the campground as are Gila Woodpeckers, Pyrrhuloxias and Phainopepla sit atop saguaro and organ pipe cactuses. Chihuahuan Ravens soar overhead, croaking. Gambel's Quail scoot from one campsite to another looking for food that has been dropped.

The weather is pleasant there in November. We experience a sunny day with temperatures in the 80s, a far cry from midsummer when it may be 110-115 degrees. There are not many visitors in the monument this time of year, and we have the tracks to ourselves. The rangers tell us that the best time of year to bird the monument is from late February to early April during spring migration. The temperatures are still comfortable at that time, and the bird population becomes more diversified with the addition of migrants. We are enthralled with the desert and mountain scenery, but we cannot linger.

Monday November 27 - While in Tucson we bird the Tucson Mountain Park and find a wintering pair of Costa's Hummingbirds (lifer #10) at a feeder in a cactus garden. The male is a show-off turning his head this way and that so the sun catches his gorget to best advantage. It is a dazzling show, and we sit enthralled for a half hour before moving on. Later in the day we visit the San Xavier Mission which on this day is celebrating the Feast of Mary. We join the festivities along with hordes of Tohono Oodham Indians from the reservation. A tour of the mission and grounds is a fascinating walk back in history. We study the art work, listen to the music and observe the celebration before setting off to look for Bendire's Thrasher and Burrowing Owls in the surrounding mesquite lands. Alas, we find neither, but we are tracked by an Indian who wants to know what we are doing on reservation land. We politely leave as quickly as the thorn scrub will allow. We do see a variety of birds such as Inca Dove, Curve-billed Thrasher, and Black-throated Sparrow.

Tuesday November 28 - Portal Arizona is sunny but cool. We sit in the Spofford's yard and observe their feeders for an hour and are glad for winter coats. Acorn Woodpeckers, Bridled Titmice, White-breasted Nuthatches, House Finches, a variety of sparrows and a Blue-throated Hummingbird feeding a few feet from our seats make this an entertaining and intimate visit with the birds. The pink and gray cliffs of Cave Creek Canyon contrasting with evergreens beckon us to explore the road to Onion Saddle and Rustler Park at an elevation of 8400 feet. Here we locate Pygmy Nuthatches and several Mexican Chickadees (lifer #7) in spite of the blustery cold winds. Several Forest Service signs at Rustler Park warn us of marauding Black Bears, so as the light fades we opt to get in our vehicle and head for a camp site on Cave Creek near Portal. I try for owls at night but have no luck.

Wednesday November 29 - We are up at first light in near freezing temperatures to bird along State-line Road near Rodeo, NM. Our target bird is Bendire's Thrasher which we have been assured can be found there. Flocks of Lark Buntings in winter dress and a great variety of sparrows feed along the gravel roads.

Curve-billed Thrashers are common and we are growing discouraged when at mid morning I see a thrasher fly up to the top of a Yucca and pose for me in good light. I have time to study it carefully with my scope and have no doubt that I'm looking at lifer #8, a Bendire's Thrasher. For more than two minutes it perches and then drops down into dense mesquite not to be seen again.

Friday December 1 - We leave Laredo, Texas in dense early morning fog and wend our way down the valley of the Rio Grande. The sun burns through and by the time we reach San Ygnacio we have good visibility and begin to bird. Great Kiskadees are everywhere in the town and along the river and are all very vocal. We look for White-collared Seedeater and fail to find it, but we add Caracara, Belted Kingfisher and Orange-crowned Warbler to our trip list. At Falcon Dam Neotropical Cormorants roost on the spillway and a flock of White-fronted Geese passes over.

At Salineño we blunder into a drug deal at the boat landing but find Audubon's Oriole and Brown Jay (lifers #9 and #10). Just down river near Roma we find a pair of wild Muscovy Ducks, our 11th lifer for the trip. We camp at Bentsen-Rio Grande State Park and are mobbed by Green Jays, Chachalacas, White-tipped Doves, Inca Doves, and Altamira Orioles right at our campsite. We celebrate the day with frozen Margaritas and a Mexican dinner at Johnnies in McAllen.

Saturday December 2 - We search Santa Ana NWR for the Golden-crowned Warbler which has been present since November. It was seen yesterday, but in spite of the efforts of many birders, we fail to locate it. Tropical Parula and Hook-billed Kite elude us as well, but we add many birds to our trip list such as Vermillion Flycatcher, Least Grebe, Long-billed Thrasher, and Solitary Vireo. Later in the day a visit to Brownsville dump adds Mexican Crow to the list (lifer #12), and nearby at Sabal Palm Sanctuary we add Buff-bellied Hummingbird to our trip list. In the evening we visit a palm grove in Brownsville and watch dozens of Green Parakeets (lifer #13) coming to roost. It's been a good day in the field and we look forward to the coming day.

Sunday December 3 - We explore Laguna Atascosa NWR and are impressed with the number and varieties of waterfowl, but our target bird is Aplomado Falcon which has been released at the refuge and has recently nested. We have no trouble finding raptors. They are everywhere and we see Peregrines, Caracara, Merlin, Kestrel, Red-tailed Hawks, Rough-legged Hawk, Harris's Hawk, and a number of White-tailed Hawks, but fail to find an Aplomado. We do add Wild Turkey to our trip list as well as Olive Sparrow.

Tuesday December 5 - It is overcast and cool as we board Captain Ted Appel's boat to see the Whooping Cranes in Aransas NWR. We bird our way across Aransas Bay from Fulton with Capt. Ted calling out the mergansers, goldeneyes and cormorants as well as the gulls as we skim by. The cabin attendant is busy serving refreshments to the passengers - anything you want from coffee to winecoolers plus Danish. This is luxury birding ! As we enter the Intra Coastal Waterway we begin to spot family groups of Whooping and Sandhill Cranes along with a great variety of other birds. The boat has an upper deck stable enough for spotting scopes and we are close enough to many birds to see details without optics. We count 50 Whooping Cranes during the half-day trip along with 57 other species of birds including Spoonbills, Reddish Egrets, Brown Pelicans, Long-billed Curlews, American Bittern, Black-crowned Night-Herons, and a variety of sandpipers and plovers. All in all, this is a worthwhile trip and one that should not be missed when visiting Texas between mid-October and mid-April.

It was with reluctance that we packed up and prepared to head home after 17 days of bird-watching across the country. We saw 13 life birds and a total of 220 species for the trip. Our trip list was limited because we went after target life-birds that had been missed on previous trips. The weather cooperated and we experienced mostly sunny, mild days during our month on the road. We look forward to the spring when once again we can use the excuse of our grandchildren in California to do some bird-watching along the way.

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Another Postcard from the Edge

by Hank Kaestner

September 30, 1996

I'm now in Entebbe, Uganda on the shore of Lake Victoria, one of the world's largest lakes. There are many birds here, including African Fish Eagles, Marabou Storks, and crowned cranes. Some of the birds have unusual names like hairy-breasted barbet, double-toothed barbet, black-headed gonolek, black-backed puffback, and pale-breasted illodopsis. The most spectacular species are the sunbirds, bright gems that are the ecological replacements for our hummingbirds.

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Board of Directors Meetings

by Alan Bromberg, Recording Secretary

At the September 9 meeting, the board discussed and approved a change in the by-laws concerning the election of officers. Under the change, the Nominating Committee would no longer be elected by the membership, but would be selected by the Board of Directors. The reason for the vote is that the members of the nominating committee are currently the only officers elected by the membership, but so few members bother to vote that it is not worth the effort to conduct the election. The proposed change will be presented to the membership for a vote at the December 10 meeting. The board heard a report on the most recent MOS board meeting and discussed the possible addition of an extra issue of Chip Notes each year.

At the October 7 meeting, the board further discussed the extra issue of Chip Notes and concluded that it should be published only if there is sufficient material rather than on a regular basis. The board discussed using the newsletter to stimulate member interest in attending the Tuesday meetings and to recognize persons who have performed special activities for the club. A motion was approved to allow the Natural History Society of Maryland, a non-profit organization, to display and offer literature for sale at the Tuesday meetings for the 1996-1997 year.

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Back Yard Birding

by Gail Frantz

To save a bird by volunteering or donating money, contact Gerta Deterer, Wild Bird rescue Inc., 8139 Cornwall Rd., Balto. 21222 TELE: (310)288-4546

Cylburn reports: Josie Gray saw 8 Common Nighthawks on September 3. October 26 yielded an immature White Crown Sparrow and 7 Solitary Vireos.

Kevin Griffin was most excited when he counted over 900 Broadwings flying high over his home in north/east Baltimore on September 18.

The first bird that Jim Meyers noticed as being "different" turned out to be a Kingbird. This first successful ID was all that it took to "hook" him into the world of bird watching. Although Jim has a yard, the variety of species he sees there is limited. When he heard about Cromwell Park he investigated the area and has been birding there ever since. This past July, he found a Blue Grosbeak nest with three young (that successfully fledged). The nest was in a 5 foot scrubby bush about three feet above the ground. The Grosbeaks could often be seen perched on the short wooden stakes that border the parking lot. Jim also observed 6 to 10 grosbeaks in the park during migration in mid September.

Monica Holland and Dwight Morrow, new BBC members, retrieved an injured Common Yellowthroat found near Johns Hopkins Hospital. They called Joy Wheeler and she gave them the phone number of Wild Bird Rescue Inc., a rehab program run by Gerta Deterer. Gerta asked if they would be bringing the bird to Dundalk to be treated. Monica and Dwight did just that, during P.M. traffic! After two days of R&R (the bird had a concussion), Gerta pronounced her well and sprightly enough to continue migration and released her from Oregon Ridge.

You may recall the male Ruby-throated hummingbird that Shirley Geddes and her husband took to Gerta last May. Of the five hummers that Gerta treated this past summer, the Ruby-throated hummer, with its injured wing, was the only one that did not recover. He's able but unable to fly. Gerta feeds him a special powdered food, imported from Germany, that she mixes with water. She supplements this diet with wingless fruit flies. For his nest needs, she places him on a twig and walks from flower to flower in her garden while holding him in a position to feed. Gerta says the little guy is friendly but she's sad that the wing injury ended his free flying days.

Jane Miller of Rogers Forge arrived home from her middle school teaching job. She scanned her yard for birds and immediately spotted a beautiful juvenile Red-tailed Hawk on the ground munching (?) a gray squirrel. When the bird finished, he flew into a large tree close to the house in order to preen and look regal.

Even though Jane's mom was an avid birder, her own interest in birds didn't blossom until adulthood. Finally, she decided to accommodate wildlife in her yard with birds as a focus. Mature trees were left alone and plantings that afford critters cover and cover were added. Recently, she had a 7x5', 3" deep-with waterfall-pond installed. The addition of the pond has increased the number and variety of birds coming to her sanctuary. One of her favorite stories is the time a Black-throated Green warbler landed on a lily pad, skidded, tried again, lost his balance and finally flew away.

Joy Wheeler writes, "On September 27 I was standing in my hummingbird garden, thinking among the flower gill-over the ground, almost nothing is going on. Its nothing is going on was back. My last bird was a gink. I moved to the season? It was before I could, a bright iridescent green shape hummed around me to a lonely lavender bush and inserted its bill for nectar. All thating lasted only a moment before it was gone. Could it have been my last Ruby-Throated Hummingbird for the brush? The yellow book says maybe not."

Steve Sanford writes, "My modest yard was rather interesting on October 20. I had a rare visit from a Brown Thrasher. There was also a late Catbird along with Mockers. That's probably the only time I've had all three mimic thrushes in my yard in one day. I also had a Solitary Vireo, and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and just generally a lot of birds.

"But most interesting was a white-headed woodpecker! Admittedly it also had a white belly, white back, white wings. That is, it was an albino. Probably it was a Red-belly. Could this be the legendary white woodpecker, Moby Peck? (Not to be confused with Gregory Peck who portrayed another mobility-impaired fanatic who also chased after albino animals.)

"Avast! No matter what it costs, I am determined, with my one remaining good hip, to cruise to the remotest corners of my yard, disregarding gales and blizzards, not to mention my neighbors, to see that Great White Woodpecker again. So if you see me harpooned to the side of my house, you'll know what happened."

Let us hear about your Back Yard birding too. Call or write

Gail Frantz
13955 Old Hanover Rd
Reisterstown MD 21136
e-mail: guineabird@aol.com

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