

The newsletter of the Baltimore Bird Club

October–November 2003 -- Online Edition

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. [A Vagrant Returns](#) by Jim Peters
2. [Searching for Lepidoptera and Odonates](#) by Gail Frantz
3. [Birding Hungary and Transylvania](#) by Steve Sanford
4. [Volunteer Spotlight: Jim Peters](#) by Gail Frantz
5. [Changes in Chip Notes Staff](#) by Gail Frantz
6. [Book Review: Flight Maps: Adventures with Nature in Modern America](#) by Ranger Vince Vaise
7. [Those Confusing Hummers!](#) by Gail Frantz
8. [It's Cold Out There!](#) by Paula Warner
9. [BBC Mail Order](#)
10. [Back Yard Birding and Beyond](#) by Gail Frantz

Deadline for next *CHIP NOTES*: October 25, 2003 (the next issue will be December 2003 -- January 2004). If possible, please email material to

guineabird@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.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

A Vagrant Returns

By Jim Peters

A Western Kingbird was found on June 10th sitting on the post and rail fence along the walkway from the visitor center to the star fort at Fort McHenry. It soon became apparent that its favorite perch was atop the flowering crab tree at the first bend in the walkway.

A nest was found on June 23 on one of the branches of the tree with an Eastern Kingbird incubating eggs. Behavior between the two species indicated a pair bond had been formed. The Western incubated whenever the Eastern left the nest. He fed the Eastern on the nest, and he brooded the young when they hatched and fed them as well.

This Western Kingbird may well be the same bird that nested with an Eastern Kingbird last May and built two nests in the sycamore grove on the south side of the fort. Those two nests were destroyed by Fish Crows.

In the early morning of July 3 the female Eastern removed a fecal sac from the nest indicating that a hatching had occurred. The male Western guards the nest tree and surrounding area from predators and has been observed drawing crows and grackles away. The female Eastern assumed 90% of the responsibility for the incubating, feeding, and brooding, which the male Western cares for about 10% of the time.

On July 8 three young were seen raising their heads high above the nest rim with beaks agape seeking food. A week later only two young remained. Perhaps a predator took one of the birds.

By July 16 the young were completely feathered and appeared identical to the Eastern female in coloration. On this date they made their first flight from the nest and returned with the parents flying beside them.

They continue to be seen in the vicinity of the visitor center but are increasingly becoming independent of the parents and are catching insects on their own.

You can see a larger photo of the fledglings, by Elliot Kirschbaum, at: <http://www.bcpj.net/~fanager/FWfly.htm>.



Kingbird Fledglings
Photo by Elliott Kirschbaum

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Searching for Lepidoptera and Odonates

By Gail Frantz

On a hot day in mid-July, Steve Sanford organized an impromptu Baltimore Bird Club butterfly walk. Using email invitations, Steve rounded up seven interested BBC members and one visitor from Pennsylvania. The plan was to begin the walk by following the **Glen Falls Railroad track** which runs along the North Branch of the Patapsco River. Also included were two small fields within a mile or two of the track.

When butterflying, the bad news is that pishing is useless. The good news is that since butterflies need warm sun for maximum movement, you may begin your walk later in the morning. Steve picked 10:00 a.m. A definite plus for slug-a-beds.

We met at the Glen Falls railroad track parking area with our butterfly field guides. Since Elliot Kirschbaum and Paul Noel enjoy Odonates, they each brought dragonfly field guides. We expected to see lovely butterflies and were surprised when the Odonates turned out to be just as interesting.

Netles are quite common throughout the several hundred acres of the flood plain that runs between the track and the river. Since the caterpillar stage of the **Red Admiral, Question Mark** and **Eastern Comma** use nettles for their food source, this area is always reliable for these beauties and we weren't disappointed. As we walked along the track we saw a succession of all three species. Their conditions ranged from faded colors and missing wing parts to colorful, bright, fresh and perfect.

We were busy looking in the wrong direction when Nancy Kirschbaum called our attention to the **Great Spangled Fritillaries** flying quickly by us. Normally, **Tiger Swallowtails** are numerous along the tracks but this morning we saw only one or two. It took us a moment to identify a **Summer Azure**. Back at the parking lot we caught a quick look at a **Spicebush Swallowtail** just before he disappeared into the tree foliage high above us.

In the **Dede Road Field** we enjoyed bright **Orange Sulphurs** often accompanied by pale, yellow **Cloudless Sulphurs**. The road, quick moving **Wild Indigo Duskywings** were difficult to see since they often perched low where they were hidden by flowers and grass. Debbie Terry peered into an evergreen bush and startled what appeared to be a small brown moth but turned out to be the only **Little Wood Satyr** of the day. The Satyr landed on the warm pavement of Dede road for a moment so that we were able to clearly see the small, eye-spots on its wings.

At the **Cliff Swallow Wildflower Field**, several striking **American Ladies** were nesting along with **Common Wood Nymphs, Pearl Crescents, Silver-spotted Skippers, Witches** and a few **Hummingbird Clearwing** moths. Debbie pointed out a **Little Glasswing** with its small golden head. **Monarchs** were flying nearby. **Tiny Eastern Tailed Blues** were numerous but we saw only one or two. **Least Siskins**. Most plentiful were the familiar **Cabbage Butterflies** which were everywhere.

Most of us were slow to appreciate the **Odonate** species we saw. But throughout the day Elliot worked diligently to identify each one and point out their unique differences. In addition to the many shades of body color, their translucent wings were often shaded with an iridescent equal to that of a hummingbird. Gradually we learned to observe carefully. We finally came to appreciate the astounding variety of color and extraordinary beauty of movement of these animals.

Their descriptive names captured our imagination too. **Comet Darner, Halloween Pennant, Eastern Pondhawk, Slaty Skimmer, Widous Skimmer, Common Whitetail, Twelve-spotted Movement, Band-winged Meadowhawk, and Ebony Jewelwing** were all on the list for the day.

Some bird species seen and/or heard were: **Red-shouldered Hawk, Green Heron, Great Blue Heron, Kingfisher, Cliff, Barn, Rough-winged and Tree Swallows, Kingbird, Indigo Bunting, Chat, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, White-eyed Vireo, Wood Thrush, Common Yellowthroat, Eastern Towhee, Scarlet Tanager, and Baltimore Oriole.**

If you're interested in joining impromptu L & O walks, contact Steve Sanford at: (410) 922-5103 or fanager@bcpl.net

For BBC butterfly walks see program booklet Apr 25, 2004. **The Butterflies of Soldiers Delight** with noted butterfly expert Dick Smith as our leader. (Hope you were able to attend **Sep 7, Black Marsh Wildland, Birds and Butterflies** with leaders Brent and Mary Byers.)

Field Guides:

Butterflies Through Binoculars: The East, Jeffrey Glassberg

Dragonflies Through Binoculars: A Field Guide to Dragonflies of North America, Sidney W. Dunkle

Beginner's Guide to Dragonflies, Blair Nikula, Jackie Sones, Donald & Lillian Stokes

Reference Book:

The Butterflies of North America, A Natural History and Field Guide, James A. Scott. 583 pp.

Web sites:

Butterflies of Maryland, <http://www.npsrc.usgs.gov/resource/distr/lepid/bflyusa/md/toc.htm>

Moths of Maryland, <http://www.npsrc.usgs.gov/resource/distr/lepid/mths/md/toc.htm>

Dragonfly and Damselfly Links, with links to several MD websites, <http://www.odenews.net/044.htm#UNITED%20STATES>

Thanks to Keith Costley for supplying butterfly information sources.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Birding Hungary and Transylvania

By Steve Sanford

My interest in European birds was re-awakened by our recent English and Danish birding visitors. My only other European birding had been in Spain in 1997. I decided to go on a tour of Hungary, Slovakia, and Transylvania (Romania) for 2 weeks starting in late May, mainly for birding. European birds are not as colorful and diverse as those of popular tropical destinations, but many are beautiful and spectacular, and it is fascinating to compare and contrast how Nature dealt with habitats much like our own in a different hemisphere.

After a few days of touring in scenic, monumental Budapest, I joined four British birders and our guide for the first four days, mainly around the town of Tokaj in northern Hungary. It is an area of rolling hills and modest mountains somewhat like our Appalachian region. The songbirds were numerous and very vocal, but generally quite shy. I got good looks though at such beauties as Golden Oriole, Chaffinch, Robin, Hawfinch, and my favorite, a pair of Bullfinches on a side trip into the mountains of Slovakia. A stunning photo of one of these beautiful red and black finches was one of the things that lured me into this trip. We also saw two big owls: an amazingly well-camouflaged Eagle Owl, and a Ural Owl, an eastern European specialty. There was a great variety of passerines and raptors, including Imperial Eagle, throughout.

The next four days were in "the Hortobagy" in eastern Hungary, part of a vast plain containing a great many natural and artificial wetlands as well as dry prairie. For me the high point of this part of the trip was a fairly close sighting of about 10 Great Bustards, mainly males in breeding plumage. This species is somewhat like a cross between an ostrich and a grouse. Raptors are numerous there, and many are not found in Western Europe, such as the large Saker Falcon, colorful Red-footed Falcon, Long-legged Buzzard, and Lesser-spotted Eagle.

The wetlands contained great numbers of shorebirds. Two handsome new ones for me were Collared Pratincole, and Dotted. Some colorful new duck species for me were Common and Ferruginous Pochard - both numerous - and Garganey. Various grebes, cormorants (including Pygmy Cormorant), herons, egrets, spoonbills, Common Cranes, and Black Stork were also common. Northern Lapwings were like starlings! Another treat in this area was a cute Scops Owl at a nest box, and four fuzzy young Long-eared Owls. I also got good looks at Bluethroats, Bearded and Penduline Tits, and countless Eurasian Cuckoos, which really do sound like the famous clocks! Incidentally, this area is a major gathering area for the beautiful Red-breasted Goose in the fall.

Throughout the trip I saw 15 species of warblers, most of which are comically dull compared to them. The various marsh warblers are more like our wrens than "warblers." The rarest was Aquatic Warbler in the Hortobagy. I also saw 7 species of woodpecker including all three of the "Spotted" woodpeckers, Syrian, Green, and Black Woodpeckers, and Wryneck.

I spent the last 3 days of the birding tour in Transylvania, now a part of Romania, much to the consternation of many Hungarians. Yes, it's the home of Count Dracula, and we stopped by his birthplace in the wonderful, well-preserved medieval town of Sighisoara. But Transylvania was not a scary place at all. It was beautiful, uncrowded, and relaxing, rather like the Appalachians again, and pleasantly cool compared to Hungary. The first birding highlight was Wallcreeper, a dainty little bird that lives on steep cliffs and flutters across chasms like a butterfly. This was at the dramatic Bicaz Gorge, a place that looks a little more like Dracula country than most of Transylvania. Then we were taken by a friendly local birder named Potsi on an exciting ride in a Land Rover through the mountains at about 4000 feet. Like many Transylvanians, Potsi was Hungarian in culture and language. Our target was Capercaillie, a large bird like our turkey, but good-looking. Unfortunately, it became rather ratsy just as we entered their territory, and the result was that we missed our target.

The next day the weather was great and we decided to make a stab at Capercaillie, without Potsi, before we headed back to Hungary. On the way up we had great looks at a few new species for me, Common Rosefinch, Tree Pipit, and Eurasian Nutcracker. Finally, I spotted a big reddish bird sticking its head and upper breast out above a bush. It was, of course, a female Capercaillie. Soon it flew so we could see the whole bird in flight. We never did see a male, but, hey, I need something to keep looking for, don't I?

Although the birding was great, I was **extremely dissatisfied** with the tour companies: Focus on Nature Tours (FONT), run by Armas Hill, out of Wilmington, Delaware, and the sub-contractor, Saktours, out of Debrecen, Hungary. If you do a birding trip to Hungary, **I recommend avoiding these companies like the plague**. If you want to hear why, feel free to contact me, Steve Sanford, tel. (410) 922-5103, fanager@bcpl.net. There are other tour companies. I wish I had used one.

But, the birds are great. I saw 177 species, of which 70 were life-birds. If you can work out satisfactory travel arrangements, Eastern Europe is the place to go in Europe.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Volunteer Spotlight...

Jim Peters

By Gail Frantz

(Portions of this article have been reprinted from Fort McHenry's Newsletter, The Banner)

Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine recently received national recognition for its volunteer program when Jim Peters was named recipient of the first annual **George B. Hartzog, Jr. Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service**.

Vince Vaise, Fort McHenry's Volunteer-in-Parks coordinator and BBC member, nominated Jim for this honor. The award is named after Mr. Hartzog, a former director of the National Park Service who created the Volunteer-In-Parks program to honor the best volunteers throughout the agency. Jim won the award for his outstanding restoration and maintenance of Fort McHenry's ten acre mitigated tidal wetland.

For the past five years Jim has worked six days a week at the fort. He is always available with enthusiasm and endless ideas. Much of his success as a volunteer is his ability to organize these ideas then find the Aright@ persons to help put the plans into motion. He inspires those who come in contact with him to understand, appreciate and work with the ecosystem.

Working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Jim, along with licensed bird banders Barbara Ross of the Baltimore Bird Club and Sharon Schwemmer of the Carroll County Bird Club, run a bird monitoring and banding station in the marsh. He used his experience as a science teacher to develop a curriculum-based education program that The National Aquarium Education Department. The program is currently being used to teach students about wetland ecology.

Over the years Jim constructed a nature trail, feeding stations, numerous Tree Swallow, Kestrel and Purple Martin boxes and cement stairs to an overlook. He has organized hundreds of donated plants to be placed in the wetland. In one instance he single-handedly collected and stacked over 50,000 pounds of debris later removed by park service equipment without damage to the fragile wetlands. Jim guides the creation of this Awork-in-progress@ wetland then provides visitors the opportunity to observe and appreciate it with over 50 trips and activities he schedules during the year.

In July 2002, Maryland Senator Paul Sarbanes and Congressman Benjamin Cardin held a press conference and tour of the wetland to highlight conservation issues on the Chesapeake Bay. Thanks to Jim's influence and guidance, the Fort McHenry tidal wetland stands as an example of a success in resource conservation that all may witness.

Laura E. Joss, Superintendent of Fort McHenry, expressed her appreciation of Jim's efforts:

Jim has been tireless in his efforts to protect and interpret a fragile wetlands area on Fort McHenry's boundary. Through his efforts this area is serving as a model for other wetland restoration projects in the Chesapeake Bay. At 73, he has the enthusiasm and fortitude of someone half his age, and truly exemplifies the spirit and principles of the National Park Service volunteers.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Changes in Chip Notes Staff

In your BBC booklet you may have noticed that Steve Sanford is no longer *Chip Notes* editor. Steve, who has single-handedly directed *Chip Notes* for the last eleven years, needed a change. Also, he may be leaving the Baltimore area sometime in the near future. Until that time he has agreed to take on the job of production. This consists of organizing the newsletter for printing, which really isn't much different from all the work he's been performing so beautifully all these years. As editor I'll collect articles from members and Cathy Carroll will gather information from field trip leaders.

Chip Notes will continue as it always has by featuring fine writing by our members, disseminating useful information and, thanks to Steve, presenting everything with an outstanding layout.

Keep in mind that your contributions to this newsletter is most important. By sharing your experiences with the birds, our newsletter will remain vital, interesting and informative.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Book Review

By Ranger Vince Vaise

Flight Maps: Adventures with Nature in Modern America

*By Jennifer Price. Basic Books, 1999, 325pp, \$14.00
ISBN 0-465-02486-6*

In spite of the title, **Flight Maps** has little to do with tracing the migration of various bird species across modern America. Rather, readers are treated to a lively if somewhat overly philosophical contemplation of the relationship between nature and popular culture. Jennifer Smith begins her work by asking "What does nature mean to me?" In order to answer this question, she traces specific examples illustrating how the meaning of nature and people's connections to it changed over time. Birds take the limelight in the study with only scant attention being paid to fishes, mammals and insects.

Having a Ph.D. in History from Yale, Smith uses her research to trace the demise of the great flocks of Passenger Pigeons and gives a well-detailed account describing the instrumental role of women in founding Audubon societies to halt the devastation of whole species of birds. The birder/historian will appreciate the detail Smith uses to chronicle these events such as her description of a particular hat in 1890s that had a tern's head "draped over the front brim." More importantly, Smith challenges us to ask ourselves why did such a fashion become popular in the first place? In this regard, her book is more along the lines of American Studies than straight American History. Nor does she leave us wearing corsets and bonnets in the "Age of Innocence." Rather, the bulk of the work is focused on the late Twentieth Century. Yes, it's all there from pink flamingos and other lawn ornaments, to nature at the mall and the greening of television.

Born during the baby boom following the Second World War, Smith is particularly interested in how her generation balances its ideals of conservation with consumerism. Based on research and experience she proposes that mass media fosters a disconnection between people and their environment. According to Smith, advertisements and nature programs almost never take place in a suburb, seldom show people and only partially resemble a true environment. Rather, they show nature as we wish it to be, and far away from where we live. Thus, we don't lose sleep by driving gas-guzzling SUVs because we don't see ourselves as living "in nature."

Overall, Smith has an engaging, witty style - which is a good thing when dealing with a subject of such magnitude. Occasionally the work will slow down with philosophical explanations and theories as to the definitions of "nature" and "artifice." The bird aficionado who is looking for a riveting bird adventure story along the lines of Audubon's Journal or a narrative of Alexander Wilson in the backcountry will be disappointed. However, those who want to think a bit deeper of their own connections to nature - particularly how they relate to birds, will be amply rewarded. And anyway, why did pink flamingos become so popular when the plastics industry went to greater lengths to make sure that their artificial ducks were more anatomically correct?

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Those Confusing Hummers!

By Gail Frantz

Hummer banders Bob Sargent and Nancy L. Newfield, suggest some tips for approximating the age and sex of immature Red-throated Hummers that streak through your yard every summer.

Youngsters will appear mostly cleaner-white on their underparts and exhibit almost no wear on the white tips of their tail feathers. The throat of young males may or may not have any red reflective feathers (gorget) present, but most of these young males WILL have varying degrees of red in the throat that radiate out from the chin down to the lower part of the throat. (Dennis Demccheck from Baton Rouge, LA adds that the bird with the "five o'clock shadow" is a young male. Female Ruby-throats have immaculate or nearly so, throats in all plumages.)

This time of year, most adult females have noticeably worn plumage, especially on the tips of the tail feathers. In fact, adult females will often have a "squared-off" appearance to the tail. The breast band that is often present in breeding-age females this time of year is a result of abraded feathers across parts of the breast, AND extensive staining apparently caused by the effects of the babies pooping over the side of the nest. In cool or wet weather, the adult females will extensively brood the young.

Many young hummers have buffy or grayish edges to the feathers on their napes and rumps. Many young hummers also show a band of wear (broken and abraded feathers) across their upper chests just as adult females do, but their tail feathers (rectrices) will not be significantly worn. It takes a lot of patience to see the details which are able to discover the age and sex of these guys when they're flying about the yard.

Most of the heavy-duty fighting is done by youngsters. Many of the adults are already into the "eat-lets-get-fat-quick-mode" which is their signature for a successful fall migration. It appears to be counter-productive to put on lots of fat and then burn it off during lots of chasing and fighting episodes.

By mid-July, many breeding Ruby-throated have completed their nesting duties and are apparently departing the United States for their winter homes in Central America. A two hour banding session at Bob Sargent's home in Alabama produced 21 new birds, 13 of which were very young immatures (mostly males). Also present in the traps were 11 return birds that were banded in previous years. Several dozen were uncatchable. Nectar consumption is 1.5 gallons daily, much of which is being consumed by bumblebees.

Bill corrugation and primary feather development of the wing are among the methods used by banders to determine age. For a clear explanation of these two techniques both illustrated with close-up photos, visit Allen Chartier's web page:

<http://www.amzilia.net/MH/HammerNet/Agexcs.htm>

Shreen Gonzaga found a fascinating series of photos of an Albino/Leucistic, Ruby-throated Hummer on Bill Hilton's site. He gives a detailed account of his August (2003) banding of this interesting and rare bird, accompanied by a detailed explanation at:

<http://www.hiltonpond.org/ThisWeek030808.html>

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

It's Cold Out There!

By Paula Warner

While watching a Canada Goose gingerly make his way across an ice-slicked lake, I wonder how his feet kept from freezing. How do birds stay warm in winter?

We've all seen birds fluff up their feathers when the weather turns cold. Just like we might fluff up a down quilt, birds increase air spaces among their feathers to increase insulation. Birds will also stand on one leg, pulling the other one up under their body for warmth. They might tuck their bills under the feathers in their shoulder.

To provide sufficient blood flow to the feet of the Canada Goose and other waterfowl and gulls - nature has provided an interesting temperature regulation system. Following is a very simplified description. Blood pumped from the heart through the arteries is warm (body temperature). Blood leaves the feet and legs through the bird through veins - on its way back to the heart. This blood is quite cool. In order to prevent this cooler blood from entering the rest of the body on its way back to the heart, these birds have a "heat exchanger" created by a network of arteries and veins that interdigitate and lie in close proximity with one another. As the cooler (venous) blood passes from the feet and legs to the body, it is warmed by its passage near the warmer blood flowing through adjacent arteries. Conversely, blood flowing to the legs from the arteries has already been cooled by its passage near the adjacent veins.

So through a combination of instinctive behavior and physiological design, birds have a variety of systems to help them keep warm.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

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.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Back Yard Birding and Beyond

By Gail Frantz

Focus on Atlasing

Carol Schreter:

I live on the north edge of Baltimore City, in Mt. Washington. Right next to my house is a 4 or 5 acre woods — which the owner recently put into a conservation easement. Western Run stream is downhill. For some years now I've been improving the habitat, to attract birds closer to the house. For instance, what looks like a pond is really a gradual slope with a sandy beach. I've been planting native trees, shrubs and flowers, and leave one small area as uncut meadow. When a tree was stuck by lightning, I decided to leave the dead trunk standing. Because of the Breeding Bird Atlas, I've spent much more time than usual outside on my deck during June and July. I've seen many more species with young than I expected. For seeds, many young birds are brought to my feeders by their parents. The fruit eaters appeared — with young — when the black mulberry trees bore fruit. I now realize that 30 species of birds are breeding right around my house in Baltimore City. Of these 16 species are year-round residents including the usual suspects such as woodpeckers, Carolina Wren, Cardinal, Blue Jay, Chickadee and Titmouse. Another 14 species are Neotropical migrants here in North America just to raise their young, such as the Wood Thrush, Veery, Pewee, Catbird, Eastern Towhee, Common Yellowthroat and Chimney Swift. My favorite vocalist is the House Wren. City birds!

Georgia McDonald:

Atlasing really changes your perception of the "common" bird when you have to SEARCH for it. Consider the much-maligned Rock Pigeon: I originally expected it would be on my list every time I went out. Wrong. I have had to make a concerted effort in 11 out of the 12 quarterblocks that make up my 3 atlas blocks. I still need Rock Dove for one quarterblock. Some species seem so elusive that you accept you will never get the goods on Species X, but every now and then, the whole thing just drops into your lap (or your binos). In two years of atlasing, I had two isolated sightings of Hairy Woodpecker and figured "possible" would be the best I'd ever get. But on a second visit to a newly discovered patch of woods, I was greeted by an adult male Hairy feeding a fledgling! The whole ball of wax, all at once! I ditto for Great Crested Flycatcher. I often hear their incredible wheeeping, high up in the canopy with nary a visual. But on a first visit to a new contact's property in Kingsville (who maintains his woods for wildlife and surrounds his house with nest boxes), as I was walking his property, I once again hear WHEEEP directly overhead. For once, the bird is easy to see AND has something in his bill! And, with loud wheeeping, flies to a nest box and pokes his head in. He is then joined by the female who also makes a deposit in the box and tiny chirps are heard within!

I've enjoyed watching a pair of Cedar Waxwings flycatching dragonflies. In a metastatic area of palatial estates with enormous lawns, the finding of a pair in the center of it with a large field full of Tree and Barn Swallows and many nest boxes. EASY conversation. And an unexpected surprise: A male & female Peafowl in a cage at the back of the property! Not allowable to be sure, nor acceptable for a May Court, either. But the feathers of the Peacock through binoculars are indeed wondrous!!

As I entered an open pond area, I had a bird with a light edge to its tail fly out to catch a bug. When I flipped up the binoculars, instead of a Kingbird, it turned out to be a Cedar Waxwing!! As I watched, I was treated to a pair of Cedar Waxwings greedily catching dragonflies. They somewhat lacked the finesse of kingbirds and other more traditional flycatchers, sometimes hovering to fly in circles and zigzags as the odonata attempted evasive maneuvers. There was no sign of a nest or carrying food to young. Anything caught was promptly devoured.

Later, I found a female Cardinal, with much chipping, energetically attacking a leaf. It looked to be a maple or tulip poplar type leaf. Figuring this was an insect prey, I inched forward for better looks. There was getting pretty good beak fulls of green stuff. When I flew, I went to look at the remnants of the leaf. With surprise and a tinge of sadness, I found the wings of a Luna Moth! I have only seen one intact flying Luna Moth in all the hours I have spent outdoors.

Next issue we'll hear more from Keith Costley and Cathy Carroll about their Atlasing adventures.

Send in your Atlasing experiences too.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Let us hear about your Back Yard and Maryland Birding too!!!

Call or write to: