

## The newsletter of the Baltimore Bird Club

October–November 2002 -- Online Edition

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Deadline for next *CHIP NOTES*: October 25, 2002 (the next issue will be December 2002-January 2003). If possible, please email material to [anager@bcpl.net](mailto:anager@bcpl.net)

Otherwise, Send material to:  
Steve Sanford  
8412 Downey Dale Drive  
Randallstown MD 21133

Please help *CHIP NOTES* get out on time.

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### Don Culbertson

We are very sorry to learn of the death of BBC member Don Culbertson on August 8.

Even if you never met Don, every time you open *Chip Notes* or look at the BBC website you see his creation, the Baltimore Bird Club logo with its handsome Baltimore Oriole. The logo also appears on the BBC patch and T-shirt, and other materials. He also created the MOS Conference pin for 1999, depicting a stylized Wood Duck. In June Don received a Valued Service Award from MOS for work on the Sales Committee, artwork and staffing tables.

Don was a native of Baltimore and worked as a commercial artist. He taught himself the new art of computer graphics in recent years. He had a very memorable experience while serving with the 103 Infantry Division in World War II. As "point man" for his company he received the surrender of the city of Innsbruck, Austria from a German general.

Don was a frequent participant in Baltimore Bird Club field trips. His wife Ruth, of course, is active on field trips, especially Lake Roland, and has served on the Board of the BBC for many years. We extend our deepest sympathy and appreciation.

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### Website Update

By Anne Brooks

Those of you who frequent the BBC website have already discovered that it has a new address. Searchers are now directed to [www.baltimorebirdclub.org](http://www.baltimorebirdclub.org) if they want to find out what is happening in the world of birds! For those of you who have not checked out the "best birding website in the country" let me entice you by listing a few of its many features. The site includes links to the most recent and past issues of *Chip Notes* back to 1995. There is also a list of all the current activities of the Bird Club; field trips, meetings and so on. No need to worry that you've misplaced your copy of the [Program Guide](#), you can still find out what is coming up. A new addition to our web page is a set of indexes to the online issues of *Chip Notes*. From the indexes you'll be able to go directly to any online article since 1995. By the time you read this article the new indexes should be a reality. There are also links to other websites in the region and beyond which are of interest to birders. Want to know what Rare Birds have been spotted and where? Link up to MD OSPREY or many other Rare Bird Alert and discussion sites. And, most important of all, there is an application for membership so new members will keep our Bird Club growing.

Anyone planning to travel to this area to do some birdwatching and who first visits this website is immediately aware of a vibrant, active birding organization known to us as the BBC. And who do we have to thank for this? None other than our own Terry Ross. Terry set up the website in 1995 and has been managing and updating it all these years with nary a nod of recognition. Even while serving as our president he didn't drop the ball, but kept the page up to date. How many times have you gone to a website and found the most recent entry six months or a year ago? Not so for our site. There you find the latest news available at your fingertips.

**On behalf of all the members of the Baltimore Bird Club I want to say a special "Thank You" to Terry Ross for all he has done, and hope that he will continue to keep our Website alive for years to come.**

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### New Chip Notes Editor Needed!

I have been editing and producing Chip Notes for 10 years. It has been an interesting, instructive and mostly enjoyable experience, but it is time to pass the baton to a new editor. The main reason for this is that I intend to fulfill my dream of many decades to move to the western US. Precisely **where** remains to be determined. Arizona and Montana are pulling at me about equally, causing considerable stress on the shoulders. But I **do** hope to be out there **somewhere** by next summer.



*Chip Notes* is made with a personal computer. The new editor should have a home computer or serious access to one. The basic production program that I use is Microsoft's excellent and simple "Publisher" program. I could pass a version of it to a new editor if necessary. It is also helpful, but not necessary, to have Microsoft Word and Excel, or equivalent programs. Internet access for e-mail and web pages is virtually mandatory. Most of the material now comes via e-mail, which saves you to type it up.

Having to do a reasonable confidence about basic grammar, spelling, and style, and about judging the appropriateness of material. I usually find the material submitted is appropriate and well-written, and rarely feel compelled to reject contributions, or even to edit or correct them to a great extent. Active involvement in BBC activities and/or Baltimore birding, or a willingness to get more involved, is preferable.

To some extent the duties might be divided between someone who was mainly seeking, selecting, and editing the content, and someone who was mainly formatting it for the computer. However, the biggest technical challenge is getting things to fit into an even number of pages. That often requires some serious shortening of material or finding something to add in at the last minute.

If altruism does not motivate you, being *Chip Notes'* editor could be a nice addition to your resume. I can personally attest you **will** learn a **lot** about using the computer if you don't already know everything. I found the knowledge of MS Word and Excel that I gained mainly from editing Chip Notes was quite useful at work (when I had the misfortune of having to work. Ughhh!).

Even after I move out west, I will be happy to assist our future editor as necessary by e-mail or phone. If you want to discuss the duties and pleasures of being *Chip Notes* editor further, feel free to call me at 410-92-5103, or e-mail me at [anager@bcpl.net](mailto:anager@bcpl.net). If you can't get through by phone, send me an e-mail and tell me to get off the Internet!

#### And then how could I miss Paull

In the list of names of participants in the May Count in The August-September issue of *Chip Notes* somehow I missed listing our old faithful Paul Noell. Paul did indeed count in the Prettyboy area as he has done for years. His sightings were recorded. Hope I didn't omit anyone else.

Just goes to show how much we need a new editor!

Steve Sanford - Editor

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### Field Trip Reports

*Compiled by Steve Sanford*

August 24 - **Bombay Hook & vicinity** - Leader Pete Webb reports the highlight was a Common Black-headed Gull (a stacked out hotline bird) among gulls & terns at Bear Swamp Pool in Bombay Hook. Other than that the sightings were fairly routine with some goodies such as Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, and Upland Sandpiper **not** being seen. 70 species total. Weather: partly cloudy in the 70's and 80's.

August 25, 2002 - **Cylburn Sunday** - With the hot summer season almost behind us, the first Cylburn walk of the fall was a beautiful walk in balmy 70°F weather, with blue skies and sun. The gardens were in full bloom for the ten birders on this day. Unfortunately, the birds did not cooperate. Only 19 species were seen. Kingbird, Peewee, Carolina Wren, and Indigo Bunting were the special species seen today. We hope for better luck next week. (Joseph Lewandowski)

August 25, 2002 - **Cylburn Sunday** - Alas, it was rained out, but we certainly **did** need the rain.

September 3 and 10 - **Lake Roland** - Although these trips were accidentally left out of the schedule, word was spread among the regulars and impromptu walks were held with about 15 participants each. Warblers were not abundant but there were enough to stave off despair, with about 7 or 8 warbler species on each trip. On September 3 there were some Baltimore Orioles, and both Night-Herons and 3 aggressive Green Herons at the dam. The weather was mostly sunny and seasonably comfortable.

September 7 - **Warblers at Milford Mill Park** - There was no "fallout" but the warbler presence was acceptable. Warblers included: Blue-winged (male and female), Parula, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Black-and-White, Redstart, and Yellowthroat. Most were near where the trail turns 180 degrees. There was also a juvenile Yellow-crowned Night-Heron in this area where they breed. 10 observers attended. There were 34 species, with 7 warbler species. Weather: mostly sunny in the 70's - 80's.

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### The Race is to the Swift

On September 7 & 8, 2002, we counted approximately 5,000 Swifts each night going into the Hampden chimney at the Mill Center in Baltimore City. A "Swift Night Out" project in Texas collects nation-wide data about migrating Swifts over a single weekend in September. As of the Sept. 12 results, only one other site in the nation (Staunton, VA) reported more Swifts than Baltimore did. See results on their web site: <http://www.concentric.net/~Dwa/page74.htm>

Carol Schreter

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### Red-Tail in Distress

By Jeanne Bowman

Saturday, July 27. I was still half-asleep at 6 AM when the phone rang. I assured myself that it was Saturday and did not have to go to work, then got up to quiet the ringing. A country neighbor (about 4 miles away) was calling to say that on his morning walk he actually saw a big bird fall out of a tree, and would I come up to help. He said he had walked over to it, and identified it as a Red-tail Hawk. It spread its wings and hopped away several feet but made no attempt to fly. I told him I would be up to his house in about 15 minutes.

When I got to the field, he walked me down past a large cornfield to an open field where the hawk was just standing. Walking up to within 3 feet of the bird, it just looked at me, blinked his eyes and raised his shoulders in alarm, but never made a move to fly. Yes, this bird needed help. I called Helene Gardel and asked, if she would be willing to help. I also placed a call to John, a friend in Hampstead who works with animals.

As both volunteers arrived in very short time, we prepared to cover/capture the Hawk. We gathered round and tossed a blanket over the bird. John carefully reached under the blanket as Helene and I held the bird, tucking in his wings and tail feathers. John got a good hold on the bird's legs to prevent the bird from sinking his talons into him. Once secure we then checked what parts we could see. It appeared as if he just could not get the thinker going, eyes very clear, good size and all feathers seemed in place.

Helene and I were both aware of the Phoenix Center for Raptor Rehab and decided he needed help from someone special. John held the bird, I drove, and Helene made sure the bird's head stayed covered. About half way there a swarm of what looked similar to deer flies started to emerge from under the blanket. They indeed started to land on us and bite. As we automatically started to swat at them the bird got very frightened, John held on with only one talon wrapping around his finger. Helene began speaking in a gentle, quiet voice. That seemed to calm the bird and to John's relief, it released its tight grip on his finger.

We arrived at the Phoenix Center, Kathleen Woods the rehab lady, examined the hawk. She said, that at first glance, legs and wings seemed fine, nothing broken, NOT West Nile, but seemed as though it may be a neurological problem. I explained the flies and she said she would check for parasites and if any major problems were discovered she would transport it to the Vet that works with her.

The Red-tail Hawk sat in the infirmary under special care for four days. Finally, on the fifth, he started to move around eating a good portion of food and working his wings a little. Day six he was flitting around the pen eating well and seemed to have regained his strength. Day seven, blood test back and all looked normal. Kathleen took him to the Prettyboy watershed area to test his willingness to fly. The bird set his wings to work and had instant liftoff, never looking back.

This raptor recovered thanks to the landowner's call for help.

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### Visits to Point Pelee

By Cathy Carroll

This spring and summer I had the pleasure of two visits to Point Pelee National Park, Ontario. If you feel that you could never see too many Yellow Warblers, Baltimore Orioles, Orchard Orioles, Common Yellowthroats, Scarlet Tanagers and Tree Swallows in addition to all the other species you'll see, then Point Pelee in May is a great birding spot for you. My second annual visit on May 26th was just past Point Pelee's peak migration but I still saw 12 warbler species including Mourning Warblers. In the afternoon, I saw a gentleman on the Tilden Woods Trail wearing a Maryland sweatshirt, and had the fun coincidence of meeting BBC members Steve and Cathy Hoag. We spent the rest of the afternoon and evening birding together. Steve and Cathy saw Black-bellied Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling and Dunlin on the East Beach. Early in the morning they saw an Orange-crowned Warbler make a semi-crash landing in the sand after flying across Lake Erie. We also got boardwalk seats for a long close-up of Tree Swallows mating on the Delaurier Trail. Steve caught much of it on video without the birds showing even the slightest concern or interest in our presence. As dusk came, we met at a local restaurant for dinner and compared lists. In all I saw 56 species and Steve and Cathy about the same - not bad for mostly solitary efforts by semi-nest birders without scopes, etc. Steve and Cathy were staying the night in Leamington for another day of birding on Point Pelee. Following this, they were driving the long [birding] way through Michigan across the Mackinaw Bridge and Upper Peninsula to Wisconsin. When I was able to direct them to Mio, Michigan where they saw the Kirtland's Warbler and were also eaten alive by the deer flies.

On August 25th I returned to Point Pelee with the hope of seeing fall migrants. I arrived about 7am planning to start my day on the Woodland Nature Trail. Near the visitor center, I met a large group of birders with name tags from places like California and Texas on an ABA sponsored fall warbler trip. I ticked off Magnolia Warbler and Bobolinks flying overhead with them. I asked one of the leaders if I could tag along, but, alas, I had not paid and so could not join. Additionally, I noted something about the dress of these birders - they were all wearing long trousers with socks pulled up over the trouser legs. I was wearing shorts. I was warned by the leader, who, incidentally, was well acquainted with the MOS, that I would not be able to go to "the tip" dressed as I was because of the stable flies. He was so correct. After walking a very quiet Woodland Trail without insect repellent where I did see an immature Canada Warbler, I took the 10:00am shuttle to the tip. The tip is much sandier and the trees and flora are not as dense as on the other trails. I started down one side of the path and my legs were immediately attacked by the stable flies. I gave myself a good dosage of insect repellent, but this actually seemed to appeal to the flies. I persisted and began walking on the path. I saw "Yellowstarts," Black and White Warblers, flycatchers, Eastern Pewee, a Baltimore Oriole, and then looked down to see a dozen stable flies on each leg. I surrendered and began walking back to the shuttle. Unfortunately, this is where I met the ABA group again and had to admit defeat because of short pants.

In all, I saw only about 30 some species, including a very close observation of three Barn Swallow nestlings being fed by their parents on the Marsh Boardwalk, but I still had a terrific day. In the spring, the numerous bird songs and calls are so loud and omnipresent that they are almost cacophonous. In the fall, the quiet that surrounded me was haunting in a lovely way. In the spring, the parking lots are full, and there are hundreds of other birders. In the fall, I saw only a handful of others with binoculars. Of course, my visit was early in the fall migration and I went on a Tuesday. In a couple of weeks the hawk migration would begin. For those who have not been there and are interested, Point Pelee is listed in this October's issue of *Birder's World* magazine as one of the top fifteen birding spots in the country. You can find addresses and phone numbers at the bottom of the description. You might guess, correctly, that it is also a hotspot for butterflies. Additionally, I am well-acquainted with the Detroit-Windsor-Ontario area and would be pleased to speak with anyone who would like to visit.

Finally, I left the park around 2pm, but had to make one final stop before leaving the hawk. I found my way to the Pelee Island Winery and bought a case of wine. I did not intend to buy a case of wine, but the labels had such lovely drawings of birds and other wildlife that I could not resist. And, the wine is as lovely as the birds.

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### San Francisco

By Mary Chetelat

I am happy to report that a recent visit to San Francisco was very rewarding, bird-wise.

San Francisco is a great city. An incredibly convenient public transport system, wonderful parks in and around the city, and a great coastal location all make for great birding.

In our first few hours there I saw Heermann's Gulls, Western Gulls, Western Grebes, Brown Pelicans, Brandt's Cormorants, Brewer's Blackbirds, Redwings, and Cowbirds. On day 2, walking around the city I encountered White-crowned Sparrows, Bushtits, "Oregon" Juncos, and an Anna's Hummingbird. On a day trip to Sonoma I saw an Oak Titmouse.

On our visit to the San Francisco Zoo, besides the exotic birds on exhibit, there were numerous wild birds - several hummingbirds (probably Anna's), a family of Red-tailed Hawks, whose nest was in a tall pine, a Black Phoebe, juvenile Black-crowned Night-Herons, American Coots, and a Sharp-shinned Hawk. Two resident White Pelicans, and two resident Bald Eagles (injured and not able to be released into the wild) could be viewed really close up. The zoo is right by the ocean, and a walk to the beach yielded a Willet and a Short-billed Dowitcher hanging out together.

The highlight of our trip was our day trip to Ano Nuevo State Reserve with a naturalist, Alvin Kernan of Nature Treks. The ride down the coast was spectacular - saw Pigeon Guillemots and a Black Oystercatcher at a lighthouse stop. And at the reserve, beside the marine animals (elephant seals, sea otter, sea lions, harbor seals), the birding was fantastic! White-tailed Kite, Northern Harrier, Scrub Jays, Snowy Egret, Wren-tit, Ruddy Duck, Cliff, Barn and Tree Swallows, American Coots, Pied-billed Grebe, Black-capped Chickadee, and my "target bird," the California Quail sitting high up on a shrub.

On our last day I took a solitary trek around the city to revisit a few areas I especially liked. In Lincoln Park I found Pygmy Nuthatches, Chestnut-backed Chickadees, a Brown Creeper, California and Spotted Towhees, more Black Oystercatchers, a Willet, some more Pigeon Guillemots, and other birds I couldn't identify for sure.

San Francisco is so easy to bird. I truly look forward to returning there to ID all those birds I wasn't sure of. Anybody want to come along? There are sure some great restaurants too!

P.S. Even though my husband is not a birder (I can always hope...), he wanted me to be sure I mentioned several other well-known birds we saw - the Maltese Falcon at John's Grill, and the Saint Louis Cardinals at Giants stadium.

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### Taking on an Atlas Block

By Helene Gardel

I feel I am being very courageous to accept an atlas quarter block. Everyone tells me, one, that even a fair birder can do a good job, and secondly, there are so many better birders willing to help. So far I am finding that is true and I thank my personal helpers. I have traveled my atlas area by car so many times to get the borders clear in my mind.

One of the best places is of course not in my block, and after two hours there Sondra Stafford found a Baltimore Oriole yearning to be fed. Oh well. To date I have seen over three quarters of the birds seen in my block previously. The ones I have not seen are also ones I wouldn't know if I saw them. With the help of Sondra Stafford (often co-pilot), Josie Gray, Ruth Culbertson, Gail Frantz and Denise Bayuszik, I have a few of the common birds with young and many of the birds I am too unsure of as being in my block.

My particular block will need contact with owners to get permission to bird on their land. There just are not many places to safely pull off and birding from the roads is so noisy and constantly with traffic. That will be interesting. One neighborhood has invited me to talk to their neighborhood association.

I am looking forward to the next four springs and summers to explore my atlas quarter block and can improve my skills with the wonderful help of my friends. Thank you and expect calls as soon as the safe dates begin.

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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

#### Reisterstown

- From Joan Justice, July 14: I saw a **mature Bald Eagle** at Liberty reservoir while walking on the bridle trail off Ivy Mill. I follow the bridle path about half a mile, and then take a deer path about another quarter to half a mile, then I get to the water. I had walked another half a mile or so when I saw the eagle flying over the reservoir. I love this walk, I never see anyone there.

#### Old Hanover Road

- Bob Slatersbeck reports two **Kestrels** hunting his pastures during the first week of August. Also **Ovenbird**, **Hooded Warbler** and several immature **Rufous-sided Towhees** skulking on the edge and the woods. Aug 31: Bob noticed birds mobbing what he thought was a Kestrel perched on one's his fence posts. A closer look revealed a **Peregrine** with a freshly caught **Buebird!** After a few short moments the bird charged away from the post and quickly disappeared.

#### Overlea

- Sharon Murk reports either female or juvenile **Baltimore Oriole** on the Fourth of July and a male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** in April in the same Dogwood tree. Sharon was thrilled to take photographs of both life birds.

#### Upper Pretty Boy Dam Watershed

- From Jeanne Bowman: Sunday morning, July 20th, I was sitting in my living room talking with my daughter in Allentown, Pa.. My attention kept being drawn away from the conversation by the two **Catbirds** outside the opened window. I explained their troubled sounds to her, and said, I wondered what had them so stirred up when I then noticed that several **Cardinals** had joined in the ruckus and then the house finches chimed in. My curiosity got the best of me, so I told my daughter I would call her back. I walked out on the back porch then around to the front yard. All this time more birds joined in. As I looked around I spotted what they considered an intruder. Curled around and winding down the TV antenna was a beautiful snake at least 5 foot in length. I determined that it was a Black Rat Snake also called a Pilot Black Snake\*. The snake must have been up on the roof sunning itself or possibly looking for breakfast. As it moved slowly down the pole each of the Catbirds and Cardinals were taking their turn flying n just close enough to take a peck at the snake's tail section, while about a dozen **House Finches** were lined up on the rain-spot acting as the cheerleaders. This action by the birds did not seem to affect the snake as he slithered down and under some bushes and all went back to normal.

\*A call to Paul Noell added to the drama as he explained that there were two different types of black snakes in this area. (a) Both are constrictors and very active in pursuit of prey. (b) Both rattle the tail a la the rattlesnake when alarmed; and (c) Both will readily strike when initially confronted. The difference on an individual basis is (1) The Black Northern Racer is graceful, round bodied, averaging 4 ft., with smooth, satiny, blue-black flat scales, white chin and throat. The Black Rat Snake/Pilot Black Snake has a cross section like a loaf of bread: is shiny black with weakly keeled scales and a creamy white throat and chin. It is an excellent climber. It times quickly to the touch, whereas the former Racer remains pugnacious and ill tempered

- From Elise Kreiss: Something of amusement -- you know how hummingbirds will sometimes face off, helicopter fashion in the air? I've seen a hummingbird and a large bee (bee/wasp, whatever) doing the same territorial thing at the feeder. And the bee often wins!

- From Susan Timmons: For the past few weeks a flock of **Grackles** has been visiting our feeders and the seed we put on the patio. One of them has learned to get seed from a weighted squirrel proof feeder.

He puts one foot on the weighted wooden bar that would normally sink under his weight, closing the feeder, and the other foot on the lip of the feeder, where the seed is. By distributing his weight between the two places, he keeps the feeder open and helps himself to food. He is a generous bird (perhaps he or she is actually a parent). For every bite he takes, he spills several times that amount to other members of the flock waiting beneath the feeder. The spilling appears intentional.

Yesterday, he was absent so several other Grackles tried to use that feeder. Their cries sounded very frustrated and angry when the bar repeatedly sank and they had to resort to eating the seed on the patio. I can't help wondering how the clever Grackle learned to operate the feeder. I hope he doesn't teach the squirrels!

- From Jeanne Bowman, Sept 5: Yesterday I adopted 15 - 3 month old quail (**Bob White**) and released them next to a small stream that is overgrown with brambles for good cover, in the fields on my Mothers farm in north Baltimore County. She has placed 37 acres of her farm in Conservation so they should do well.

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

Call or write to:

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