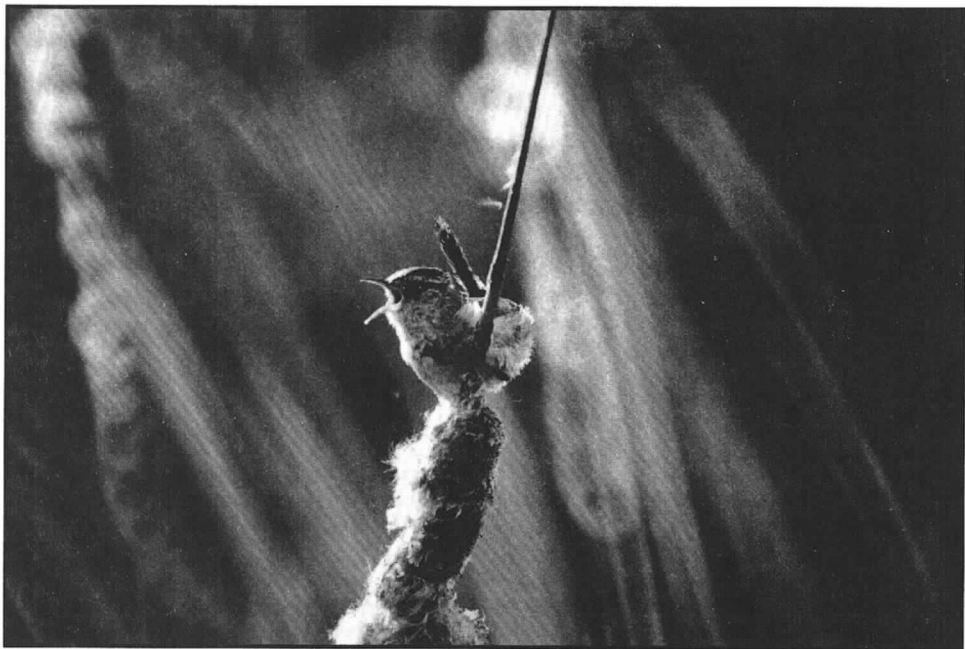


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# MARYLAND BIRDLIFE

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# MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY, INC.

Cylburn Mansion, 4915 Greenspring Ave., Baltimore, Maryland 21209

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**Cover:** Marsh Wren at Upper Newport Bay, California, June 14, 1992. Photo by Paul Nistico.



## YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS ATTEMPT NESTING IN TAKOMA PARK

LOLA OBERMAN

On 14 April 1995, I received a telephone call from a Mr. Allen Talbert of Takoma Park who had been referred to me by the Audubon Naturalist Society. Mr. Talbert wanted to establish the identity of a pair of birds he had seen on a nest in front of his home at 110 Parkside. His description of the birds convinced me that they were Yellow-crowned Night-Herons (*Nycticorax violaceus*), but in order to verify the identification, my husband Ted and I made a quick trip to Takoma Park, arriving at Mr. Talbert's home at dusk.

It was on a quiet residential street adjacent to Sligo Creek. Neighbors came out to watch as we trained our binoculars on the two birds, about 35 feet up on a slender branch of a sycamore. Several of them spoke to us and said they had been aware of the birds' presence for about two weeks. Mr. Talbert told us that they had built a nest that fell to the ground about a week earlier.

The birds were indeed Yellow-crowned Night-Herons. One was perched on the branch and the other was sitting on what appeared to be a minimal nest, not at all comparable to the substantial nests we had observed in the heronry at Tom's Cove at Chincoteague, Virginia. It was hard to believe that this flimsy structure of sticks could hold eggs, or that the slender, swaying branch on which it was built could provide adequate support. It was not surprising to us that the first nest (which Mr. Talbert said was sturdier) landed on the ground. Even a minor gust of wind would have blown the new nest down.

Holding little hope for a successful nesting, we asked Mr. Talbert to keep us informed of the herons' activities.

Three days later, on 17 April, I had a call from Mr. Terence Gastelle who lived on Sligo Creek Parkway, only three or four blocks from Mr. Talbert, although the two of them had never met. Mr. Gastelle had been seeing a strange bird in his yard, sometimes in a tree, sometimes walking around among the bushes. The bird he described was clearly a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, no doubt one of the pair we had seen earlier. Meanwhile, Mr. Talbert reported that he had not seen his birds for a day or two.

The next evening, on 18 April, came yet another call from Takoma Park from a woman who lived on Hudson Avenue across Sligo Creek from Mr. Talbert. Katie Britton reported that she had been seeing a strange bird that flew into a tree opposite her upstairs window at dusk every evening. It uttered an odd croaking noise and made bowing gestures while fluffing out its feathers and erecting a plume on its head. It looked to her like mating behavior, but she saw no other bird. Under poor lighting

conditions, she could not observe all its field marks accurately, but she believed it was the same bird she sometimes saw sitting on a rock in Sligo Creek. She also believed that the bird was beginning a nest, which she pointed out to me when I arrived on the scene as darkness was falling.

Again I saw a haphazard collection of sticks that could have been the beginning of a nest—and saw the night-heron fly into the tree and perch, without engaging in any of the peculiar activity Ms. Britton had described. We did not see its mate.

I put the three Takoma Park residents in touch with one another and asked them all to report further sightings to me, but I got only disappointed reports that the birds seemed to have disappeared from the area.

*6606 Melody Lane, Bethesda, MD 20817*

## BOOK REVIEW

### CAPTURING NATURE

#### The Writings and Art of John James Audubon

Edited by Peter and Connie Roop; illustrations by Audubon and by Rick Farley. 1993. Walker and Co., New York. No index. 48 pp., 7x10. \$16.95.

This is a brief selection of quotations from Audubon's writings as collected in 1986 by his granddaughter, Maria Audubon. It should give young people of about 17 or 18 an idea of the heavy forests that once clothed our nation. Audubon recounts his young life in France, his financial failures, his determination to paint our birds in life-like poses and in the habitat they frequented.

The book is illustrated by Audubon's paintings of Green Heron, Yellow-crowned [Night] Heron, [Black-crowned] Night Heron, Wood Duck, White-headed [Bald] Eagle, Marsh Hawk, Black-headed [Laughing] Gull, Herring Gull, Snowy Owl, Belted Kingfisher, American Crow, and Mockingbird. Rick Farley contributed several paintings of Audubon at work.

*Eleanor C. Robbins*

## SEPTEMBER SIGHTING OF NORTHERN GOSHAWK IN ALLEGANY COUNTY

JIM PAULUS

On 19 September 1995 at 12:43 p.m. I observed an immature Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) soaring about 60 meters (200 feet) directly overhead. I was doing my fall hawk count at Scenic US40 Overlook on Town Hill. This was my 25th day there this fall and a major flight of Broad-winged Hawks (*Buteo platypterus*) was going by the overlook in fairly large kettles and strings.

The temperature at daybreak was 6.6°C (46°F) and at the time of the sighting it was about 20°C (68°F). Cloud cover was about 30%, and wind out of the southeast between 7 and 12 m.p.h. (11-19 k.p.h.). The sun was behind me, front-lighting the bird as I made the following observations.

When I first saw the bird soaring with tail spread, I thought it was a Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*) as it appeared to be of the same size, but after going through a brief mental list of field marks, I knew the bird was definitely not a buteo and now suspected that it was a "Gos," my earliest fall sighting for this species in Allegany County. Prior to this sighting, my earliest fall record for this species was on 16 October 1990 and 1991.

I did not see the upperparts, but the underparts were as follows: The coverts were light tan with somewhat darker streaks. The flight feathers were light brown barred with darker brown. The body was medium brown and covered with very wide and heavy dark brown streaks that completely covered the breast and belly, going back as far as the feet and continuing onto the tail coverts. The tail was banded with light and dark bands that appeared to be of equal widths. The terminal band was clear white. The head and legs were not remembered.

After making about three soaring circles, the bird closed its tail (equal bands now plainly visible), made a series of powerful flaps, and glided down the east side of the ridge, heading southwestward. As the bird flew it gave me a rear side view and it looked very much now like a falcon with its wings swept back and very pointed.

I was looking at the bird at the exact moment that it closed its tail exposing a very wide tail appearing as wide as the lower belly. The end of the tail was somewhere between being slightly rounded or moreover somewhat pointed.

No voice was heard and total time of viewing was about 90 seconds. I ended the day with a total of 504 raptors of which 462 were Broad-wings. Other raptors seen that day were: Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus*), Cooper's Hawk (*A. cooperii*), Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*), Red-tailed Hawk (*B. jamaicensis*), American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), and Merlin (*F. columbarius*).

*P. O. Box 1883, Cumberland, MD 21501*

## A JULY VISIT TO THE COASTAL PLAIN BY A PINE SISKIN

BY PHIL DAVIS

On 3 July 1995, we had a most interesting visitor to our home bird feeders in Davidsonville, Anne Arundel County...a Pine Siskin (*Carduelis pinus*)!

My wife, Barbara, and I were eating breakfast at our dinette table when something unusual caught my attention at one of our feeders. A bird was on our platform feeder (about 10 feet away from us) that normally might have been dismissed as a female or immature House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*). What first caught my attention was the high contrast of the bird's dark streaks on its light underbody. I immediately commented to Barbara on the unusual contrast. The bird flew from the platform feeder to one of our thistle (niger seed) feeders, only about 12 feet from us, where it landed on one of the perches, facing us. We could see its bill and immediately saw that it was not a House Finch. I remember saying "long straight bill...looks like a siskin" (but not really expecting it to be one since this was, after all, early July!). We also noted its notched tail and waited for it to turn around or turn sideways so we could see if it had any yellow on the base of its wing or tail feathers (even though we know that the yellow is not always apparent in siskins). Eventually it did turn and we could see that indeed it was a well yellow-marked, adult Pine Siskin.

While on the thistle feeder, we had good opportunities to compare the siskin to the much larger, more blunt-billed House Finches and the slightly larger male American Goldfinches (*Carduelis tristis*) that were present (even though there was no possible confusion since the goldfinches were in alternate (breeding) plumage).

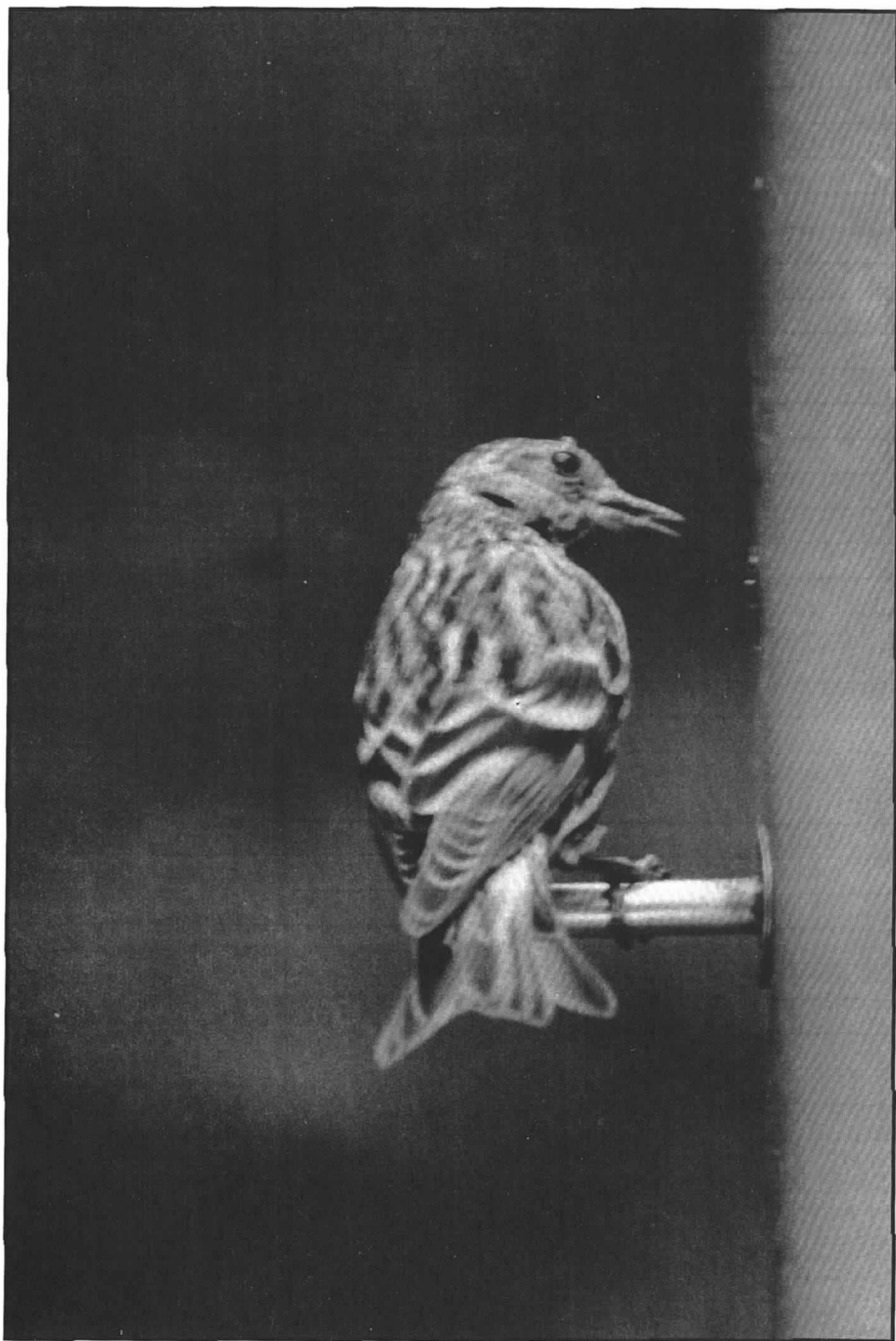
We observed and photographed the bird for about 45 minutes, before we had to leave. We noted that this sighting was only two days after the passage of a strong westerly storm front that brought very high winds thorough Anne Arundel County. According to the data from the upcoming new *Field List of the Birds of Maryland* (in preparation, Stasz, et al.), Pine Siskins have been reported in July in Maryland, but very infrequently.

An interesting, related anecdote was relayed to me by a Virginia birder. It seems that during the survey work for the Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas one summer in Northern Virginia, a nestling fell to the ground. Being a young nestling with few feathers, it was unidentifiable at the time. However, the bird was nursed until it was larger and was identified as a Pine Siskin (!). I understand that this was the first Pine Siskin nesting record for the state of Virginia.

At our home in Davidsonville, we have very good luck with Pine Siskins (and particularly Purple Finches) most winters. We often seem to have these species at our bird feeders when there are few, if any, other reports in the coastal plain or the piedmont. Barbara and I have seen many siskins and have plenty of experience with the species.

It is ironic, however, that this past winter (1994-1995) was extremely mild and for the first time in almost ten years, we did not have any "winter finches" visit us...so we get one in July!

2549 Vale Court, Davidsonville, MD 21035



*Pine Siskin, Davidsonville, Maryland, July 3, 1995. Photo by Phil Davis.*



## THE SEASON

### BREEDING SEASON, JUNE 1, 1994 - JULY 31, 1994

DANIEL R. SOUTHWORTH and LINDA SOUTHWORTH

Following a cool and rainy spring, the summer season seemed about typical for the state, with some hot and dry periods interrupted occasionally with brief cooler and wetter spells.

*Observers:* Henry Armistead, Anne Bishop, John Bjerke, Rick Blom, Connie Bockstie, Larry Bonham, Bob Boxwell, David Brinker, Patty Craig, David Czaplak, Lynn Davidson, Bill Dobbins, Sam Dyke, Roberta Fletcher (reporting for Caroline County), Ethel Engle, Jane Farrell, Mark Hoffman, George Jett, Nancy Magnusson, Paul Nistico, Peter Osenton, Bonnie Ott, Elizabeth Pitney (reporting for the Wicomico Bird Club), Kyle Rambo, Jan Reese, Sue Ricciardi, Robert Ringler, Gene Scarpulla, Stephen Simon, Connie Skipper, Jo Solem (reporting for Howard County), Jim Stasz, Mary Ann Todd, Dave Webb, Dave Weesner, Hal Wierenga, Jim Wilkinson, Helen Zeichner.

*Abbreviations:* DC - District of Columbia, NWR - National Wildlife Refuge, PRNAS - Patuxent River Naval Air Station (St. Mary's County), PWRC - Patuxent Wildlife Research Center (Prince George's County), SP - State Park, WMA - Wildlife Management Area.

*Locations:* Place names (with counties in parentheses) not in the index of the State highway map: Assateague Island (Worcester), Back River Waste Water Treatment Plant (Baltimore), Black Hill Park (Montgomery), Blackwater NWR (Dorchester), Bloodsworth Island (Dorchester), Brown's Bridge (Howard), Deep Creek Lake (Garrett), E. A. Vaughn WMA (Worcester), Hains Point (DC), Holland Island (Dorchester), Hughes Hollow (Montgomery), Lake Elkhorn (Howard), Liberty Lake (Carroll unless noted otherwise), Little Seneca Lake (Montgomery), Loch Raven (Baltimore), Patuxent River Park (Prince George's), Pennyfield (Montgomery), Piney Run Park (Carroll), Rockburn Branch Park (Howard), Rock Creek Park (DC), Sandy Point SP (Anne Arundel), Spring Island (Dorchester), Swallow Falls SP (Garrett), Triadelphia Reservoir (Howard unless noted otherwise), Truitts Landing (Worcester), Violettes Lock (Montgomery), Washington Monument SP (Washington unless noted otherwise).

*Loons, Grebes, Storm-Petrels, Pelicans, Cormorants.* Summering **Common Loons** were few this season with 1 at Assateague, July 9 through Aug. 6 (Hoffman, Jett+), and another at Loch Raven on July 29 (Simon). A single **Pied-billed Grebe** was at Centennial on June 8 (Farrell), 1 was at Allens Fresh on July 16 (Jett), and another was at Violettes Lock on July 27 (Bonham). No evidence of breeding was seen, and the July birds could be early fall migrants. Fifteen **Wilson's Storm-Petrels** were listed off of Ocean City on June 4 (Hoffman, Stasz, Jett), and 17 were noted there on July 30



(Hoffman). **Brown Pelicans** included 5 at PRNAS on June 23 (Rambo), 70 at Assateague on July 16 (Hoffman, Czaplak, Todd), at least 4 at Smith Island and 4 at Cedar Island WMA south of Crisfield on July 26 (Armistead), and an adult and immature at Point Lookout on July 30 (Craig). David Brinker reported that 6 pairs of Brown Pelicans bred at South Point, Worcester County, fewer than the last couple of years. **Double-crested Cormorants** included 1 at Pennyfield on June 10 (Bonham), 1 at Loch Raven on June 13-14 (Simon), 2 adults and 4 immatures at Triadelphia on June 18 (Magnusson), and 40 at Ocean City on June 25 (Hoffman, Jett, Farrell). Harry Armistead counted 60 at Bloodsworth Island, 40 at Holland Island and 52 on the other islands in the vicinity on July 9 (Armistead), and Dave Brinker reported 350 Double-crested pairs on Poplar Island this season.

*Hérons, Ibises, Wood Storks.* An adult **Least Bittern** with 5 young was reported at Lilypons on June 22 and 25 (Jim McConnell). Four **Great Blue Herons** were at Piney Run on June 25 (Ringler), and on July 9 Harry Armistead counted 121 active Great Blue nests on Bloodsworth Island. **Great Egret** sightings included 1 at Middle Branch, Baltimore Harbor on June 2 (Wilkinson), a migrant at Piney Run on June 25 and 7 birds there on July 23 (Ringler), 22 at Nanjemoy Creek in Charles County on July 24 (Jett), and 7 at Brown's Bridge on July 30 (Farrell, Solem). About 115 **Snowy Egrets** were tallied at Assateague on July 10 (Hoffman, Farrell), and 2-3 Snowy nests were found at Soller's Point in Baltimore County for the northernmost breeding record in the Bay and the first for the county (Brinker). An immature **Little Blue Heron** was at the Charlestown Shopping Center on July 10 (Jett), 55 Little Blues were checked off at Assateague the same day (Hoffman, Farrell), and 3 immatures were at Brown's Bridge on July 30 (Farrell, Solem). **Tricolored Herons** were 30 at Assateague on July 10 (Hoffman, Farrell), and 1 at Point Lookout on July 30 (Craig). A new colony at Battery Island on the Susquehanna Flats contained about 40 **Cattle Egret** and 35 **Black-crowned Night-Heron** nests, both first breeding records for Harford County (Brinker). Three Black-crowns were discovered at Roosevelt Island, DC on June 15 (Dobbins), and **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** were 1 on Roosevelt Island on June 9 (David Abbott), 1 at Point of Rocks on June 18 (Jim McConnell), an adult at Pennyfield on June 27 (Dobbins), and 1 on North Pone Island, Dorchester County on July 9 (Armistead). At Brown's Bridge in Howard County there was 1 adult on July 10 (Wilkinson), and an immature from July 16-26 (Farrell, Solem, Zeichner, Bockstie+). An immature **White Ibis** was at West Ocean City on July 9 (Hoffman, Farrell), and 210 **Glossy Ibises** were found at Assateague on July 10 (Hoffman, Farrell). Fifty-three Glossies were at Deal Island WMA on July 14 (Armistead). Three adult **Wood Storks** were identified flying north over Wicomico County near Fruitland on July 4th (Jim Biggs, Sam Dyke).

*Waterfowl.* Several birders reported a swan of unknown parentage throughout the period at Lilypons. Speculation ran to a **Trumpeter Swan** or **Tundra X Trumpeter Swan**. George Jett observed a **Tundra Swan** at Allens Fresh on June 17 and Melanie Mitchell reported another at Gaithersburg on July 15. Harry Armistead noted 61 **Mute Swans**, the most he's seen in the greater Bloodsworth Island area, on July 9. Forty-five of the birds were on Adam Island and a pair was found on Spring Island with 1 downy young, for the southernmost Bay breeding record. Jan Reese checked off a **Brant** at Grasonville on June 7. Harry Armistead reported 230 **Canada Geese** with 4 broods of young at Blackwater on June 3rd, a female **Mallard** with 5 young at southeast Bloodsworth Island on July 9th, 40 **Blue-winged Teals** at Deal Island WMA on July 14th, 1 Blue-winged at Cedar Island WMA on July 26th, a pair of **Gadwall** with 5 downy young at Holland Island on July 9th, and 65 Gadwalls at Deal Island WMA on July 14th including broods of 2, 7, 4, 4, and 5 young. Five adult and eight tiny young **Wood Ducks** were at Centennial on July 2 (Farrell, Solem). Bob Ringler reported that 2 drake **Ring-necked Ducks** were at Piney Run through June 7. A drake **White-winged**

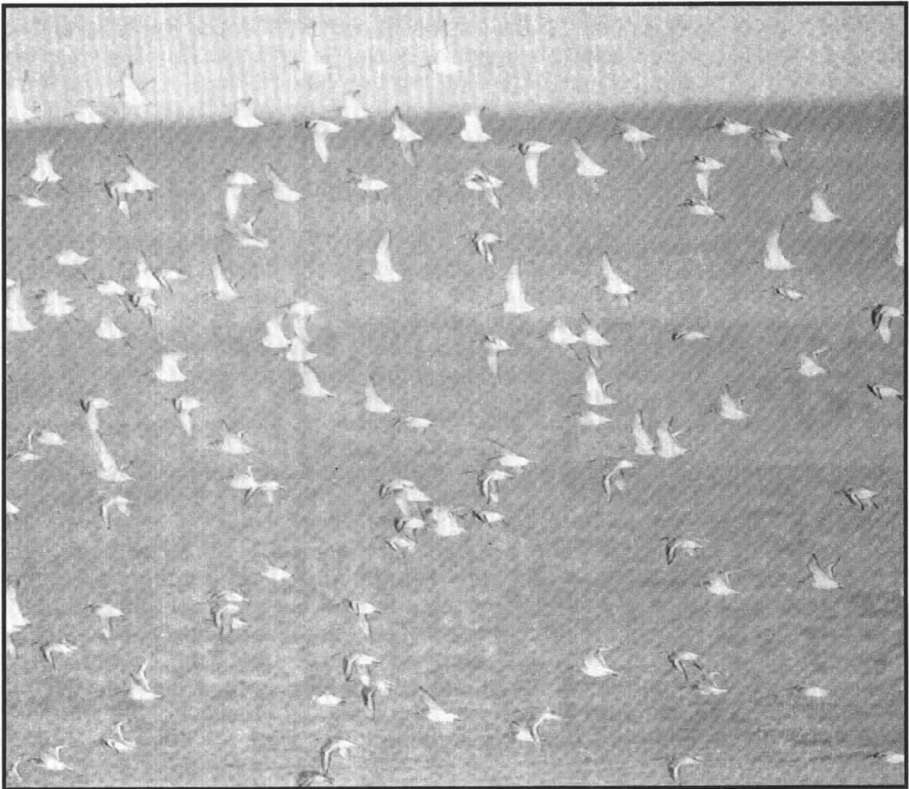
**Scoter** flew by Point Lookout on June 12 (Ringler, Stasz), and a **Common Goldeneye** was at Tilghman Island on June 18 (Reese). A breeding record for the **Hooded Merganser** was confirmed at Lilypons with 6 juveniles seen in early July (Cooper, Mackiernan).

*Diurnal Raptors.* Ethel Engle counted at least 63 **Black Vultures** in a kettle at Tanyard on June 5. **Ospreys** included 1 on a nest on the Frederick side of Little Pipe Creek above Simpson's Mill on May 30 (Ringler, Bill Kulp, Jr.), 1 hunting over the Monocacy River near Keysville on June 18, about 6 miles from where the nest was found in May (Ringler), 1 at Loch Raven on June 9 (Simon), and 1 at Triadelphia on July 16 (Solem). A subadult **Mississippi Kite** was reported at Fort Smallwood on June 7 (Ricciardi), and an immature **Bald Eagle** was at the Harney Road pond near Emmitsburg on July 17 (Weesner). Kyle Rambo spied a male **Northern Harrier** hunting over an airfield at PRNAS on July 16, and **Sharp-shinned Hawks** included 1 in eastern Allegany County on July 9 (Ringler, Wierenga, Davidson), and an adult eating a sparrow in a yard in Charles County on July 17 (Nistico). Paul Fritz reported several migrating **Broad-winged Hawks** over Fort Smallwood on June 7.

*Gallinaceous Birds, Rails.* Jan Reese checked off 2 **Ring-necked Pheasants** at Drawbridge in Dorchester County on June 15 and June 22, as well as a **Wild Turkey** with 4 young there on July 1. Twenty-three turkeys including 3 hens and 20 young were at the Prettyboy Reservoir on July 8 (Carroll Hetrick). A **Northern Bobwhite** was seen along Mayhew Inn Road in Garrett County on July 13 and 1 was found dead on July 16 about a half mile away (Skipper). Harry Armistead totaled 31 **Clapper Rails** at Deal Island WMA on July 14, and Connie Bockstie found a **King Rail** at Centennial on June 22, that was noted again on June 23 (Farrell, Solem) and July 6 (Ott, Hank Stanton). A **Virginia Rail** was at Plum Tree Path on June 4 (Solem, Farrell, Osenton) in the same area of a marsh where one was in May. Doug Stinson heard a **Sora** at Schooley Mill Park in Howard County about June 10 and only 8 **Common Moorhens** were found at Deal Island WMA on July 14 (Armistead).

*Shorebirds.* **Black-bellied Plovers** were seen throughout the season at Assateague with 13 on June 26 and 25 on July 22 (Hoffman, Farrell). A **Semipalmated Plover** was at Assateague on July 4 (Hoffman, Czaplak, Todd), and 110 were there on July 29 along with 15 of the endangered **Piping Plovers** (Hoffman). A **Killdeer** was observed incubating 4 eggs at St. Michaels on July 6 (Reese), and 3 breeding pairs of **American Oystercatchers** were on Spring Island, now part of the Blackwater NWR, on July 9 (Armistead). Deal Island WMA yielded 18 **Black-necked Stilts** including 3 young on July 14 (Armistead), and **Greater Yellowlegs** included 8 at Assateague on the late date of June 5 (Hoffman), 3 at Drawbridge in Dorchester County on June 15 (Reese), 1 at Bellevue on June 30 (H. Armistead), and 35 at Assateague on July 17 (Hoffman, Czaplak, Todd). There were 130 **Lesser Yellowlegs** at Assateague on July 24 (Hoffman+). A nice count of 15 **Solitary Sandpipers** was made inland at Brown's Bridge on July 26 (Farrell, Solem). **Willetts** included a western race bird at Assateague on June 26 (Hoffman), 4 breeding pairs on Spring Island on July 9 (Armistead), and 100 at Assateague on July 10 (Hoffman, Farrell). A **Spotted Sandpiper** was at Lake Kittimaquindi in Howard County on June 6 (Ott, Solem), and at least 12 were at Brown's Bridge on July 22 (Rick Blom). **Upland Sandpiper** reports were numerous with 2 at Trout Run, Garrett County on June 4 (Bjerke), 3 near Snow Hill on July 16th & 22nd and 6 there on July 30 (Hoffman+), 1 at the Shady Oaks Turf Farm in Anne Arundel County on July 16 (Lola Oberman) and July 17 (Chuck Welborn), 1 at PRNAS on July 29 (Rambo), and a pair at Bradenbaugh in Harford County on July 29 (Webb). The first 3 **Whimbrels** at Assateague were on July 4; 35 were there on July 31 (Hoffman, Czaplak, Todd). A **Marbled Godwit** was found this season, a solitary bird at Assateague on June 26 and

July 22 (Hoffman, Farrell). The high for **Ruddy Turnstones** was 66 at Assateague on June 5 (Hoffman), 1 was at Ocean City on June 18 and July 16 (Hoffman+), and 5 were at Point Lookout on July 23 (Boxwell, Craig, Bishop). A **Red Knot** was at Ocean City on June 12, and 20 were at Assateague and 9 were at Ocean City on July 24 (Hoffman+). High counts for **Sanderlings** were 350 at Assateague on June 5 (Hoffman), and 2000 there on July 17 (Hoffman, Czaplak, Todd). About 500 **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were at Assateague on July 22 (Hoffman, Farrell), where 1 **Western Sandpiper** was located on June 5 (Hoffman), increasing to about 300 on July 16 (Hoffman, Czaplak, Todd). **Least Sandpipers** were 20 at Point Lookout on July 13-14 (Craig, Boxwell, Bishop), 200 at Assateague on July 16 (Hoffman, Czaplak, Todd), and 11 at Brown's Bridge on July 22 (Blom). Mark Hoffman notched 7 **White-rumped Sandpipers** at Assateague on June 5, and Dave Weesner discovered 1 near Emmitsburg on June 8. Twenty-one **Pectoral Sandpipers** were tallied at Assateague on July 31 (Hoffman, Czaplak, Todd), and 65 **Dunlins** were at Blackwater on June 3 (Armistead). Reports of **Stilt Sandpipers** were 2 at Deal Island WMA on July 22 (Hoffman, Farrell), 15 at Assateague on July 24 (Hoffman+), and 2 at Brown's Bridge on July 21 (Marshall Iliff+), for the first Howard County record. A **Ruff** was identified at Assateague on July 17 (Hoffman, Czaplak, Todd), and **Short-billed Dowitchers** at Assateague included 1 on



*Dunlins at Assateague, Nov. 25, 1991. Photo by Mark L. Hoffman.*

June 5 (Hoffman), 12 on July 4 (Hoffman, Czaplak, Todd), and 370 on July 29 (Hoffman). A Short-billed was at Point Lookout on July 12 (Craig), and another was at Queenstown on July 23 (Reese). **Long-billed Dowitchers** were 2 at Assateague on July 22 (Hoffman, Farrell); 1 was there on July 29 (Hoffman). Two **Red-necked Phalaropes** were seen offshore from Ocean City on July 30 (Hoffman).

*Gulls, Terns, Skimmers.* Jim Wilkinson noticed 4 adult **Laughing Gulls** with a small flock of Ring-bills near Fulton Pond on July 24, and 5 breeding pairs were found on Spring Island on July 9 for the third Dorchester County breeding record (Armistead). **Ring-billed Gulls** included 75 at Egypt Road near Blackwater on June 3 (Armistead), 1 at St. Michaels on June 21 (Reese), and 1 at Seneca on July 27 (Bonham). Armistead noted 275 breeding pairs of **Herring Gulls** on Spring Island on July 9. A first-summer **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was at Ocean City on June 19 (Hoffman), and 15 breeding pairs of **Great Black-backed Gulls** were on Spring Island on July 9 (Armistead). Hart-Miller yielded 2 **Gull-billed Terns** on June 2 (Hoffman, Robert Dixon); 3 more were notched at E.A. Vaughn WMA on July 3rd and 9th (Hoffman, Farrell). **Caspian Terns** noted this summer were 3 at Blackwater on June 3 (H. Armistead), 1 at Ocean City on June 19 (Hoffman), and 2 at Loch Raven on July 19 (Simon). High counts of **Royal Terns** were 500 at Ocean City on June 19 (Hoffman), and 7 at North Pone Island and 9 at South Pone Island on July 9 (Armistead). Dave Brinker reported 450 pairs of Royal Terns on Skimmer Island in Ocean City this season. A nice tally of 7 **Sandwich Terns** was made at Ocean City on June 7 (Dyke), where David Brinker reported 2 nesting pairs for the season, with one successful. Single sightings of Sandwich Terns were made at Point Lookout on June 12 (Ringler, Stasz), and at PRNAS on June 23 (Rambo). **Roseate Terns** appeared again this season at Ocean City with 2 on June 18 and up to 6 on June 19 (Hoffman), 1 on June 23 (Dyke), and 1 on June 25 (Jett). **Common Terns** included 100 breeding pairs on Spring Island on July 9 (Armistead), and about 1000 at Ocean City on July 16 (Hoffman, Czaplak, Todd). Two **Forster's Terns** were inland at Centennial on June 6 (Solem), 250 breeding pairs were discovered on Spring Island on July 9 (Armistead), and 1 was at Loch Raven on July 31 (Simon). David Brinker reported 400-450 **Least Tern** nests statewide, 100 at Assateague and the rest roof nesters. About 80% of all Least Tern nests in Maryland are found on building roofs. Please report all nest sites to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources at 410-974-3195. Once again **Black Terns** were found with a first-summer at Assateague on June 26 (Hoffman); 15 birds were there on July 31 (Hoffman, Czaplak, Todd). Another Black Tern was noted at Point Lookout on July 23 (Craig, Bishop, Boxwell). The high for **Black Skimmers** was 400 at Ocean City on July 9 (Hoffman, Farrell), and 25 were at Deal Island WMA on July 14 (Armistead).

*Cuckoos, Nightjars, Swifts, Flycatchers.* A **Black-billed Cuckoo** was heard on July 26 at American Corner (Engle), and a **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** was found incubating 2 eggs in a nest 6 feet above ground in Tolchester on June 27 (Reese). Sue Ricciardi discovered a **Chuck-will's-widow** pair with a fledgling in Pasadena on June 2, and a **Chimney Swift** with 3 large young was found in a chimney in St. Michaels on July 6 (Reese). An **Alder Flycatcher** was seen and heard at Alesia bog in northeastern Carroll County from June 4 through July 4, but there was no evidence of a second bird (Ringler). A **Willow Flycatcher**, clearly nesting, was seen at Assateague on June 26 and again on July 17 (Hoffman, Czaplak, Todd). John Bjerke checked off 10 singing **Least Flycatchers** in Garrett County on June 3, and an **Eastern Phoebe** was found nesting inside a Howard County railroad tunnel near Sykesville on May 28 (Ringler+). Jim Wilkinson reported a migrant **Eastern Kingbird** in Baltimore on July 25.

*Swallows, Corvids, Wrens, Kinglets.* Ethel Engle had a nice count of at least 180 **Purple Martins** on a power line in the shelter of a tree during a downpour in Tanyard

on July 27. A **Tree Swallow**, probably nesting locally, was found at Keysville on May 30 (Ringler). Dobbins found 3 pairs of **Cliff Swallows** probably nesting at Roosevelt Island on June 26. Three **Common Ravens** were noted at Washington Monument SP on July 6 (Weesner). Harry Armistead tallied 85 **Marsh Wrens** at Deal Island WMA on July 14. Connie Skipper checked off 2 immature **Golden-crowned Kinglets** in some hemlocks by a stream along Kempton Road in Garrett County on July 6.

*Thrushes, Mimids, Waxwings, Starlings.* Jan Reese found an **American Robin** nest with 4 eggs and another nest with 2 young at St. Michaels on July 6. Bob Ringler saw 7 Robins that appeared to be migrating at Liberty Lake on July 10. Jan Reese discovered a **Gray Catbird** with 2 young in a nest at St. Michaels on July 6, and Harry Armistead found a **Cedar Waxwing** nest near Hooper Island on June 11. A flock of about 150 juvenile **European Starlings** was observed at Piney Run on June 7 (Ringler).

*Vireos, Warblers.* A **Solitary Vireo** was found sitting on a nest with 1 singing nearby along Table Rock Road in Garrett County on July 6 (Skipper). Notable sightings of warblers were few and far between with a **Blackpoll Warbler** at Lake Elkhorn on June 5 (Wilkinson), an **Ovenbird** in Baltimore on June 2 (Wilkinson), a **Northern Waterthrush** at Angler's Inn, Montgomery County on June 13 (Dobbins), all late spring migrants, and a **Mourning Warbler** at Backbone Mountain on June 11 (Jett). Gene Scarpulla noted an immature male **Summer Tanager** at Liberty Reservoir in Carroll County on June 3, and Larry Bonham found another at a turf farm in Montgomery County on June 10.

*Dickcissels, Sparrows.* **Dickcissels** were noted this season with 2-3 males at Scotland from June 7-July 3 (Craig, Boxwell+), and 1 near Lilypons on June 26 (Jett). A **Henslow's Sparrow** was in Garrett County near Peat Bog and Rock Lodge Roads on July 17 (Jett). Connie Skipper spent a total of 13 days between June 29 and August 6 on about 200 acres of reclaimed strip mine in Garrett County near McHenry and identified about 15 male Henslow's singing on territory. She banded 16, including 8 juveniles at Rock Lodge Road in the general vicinity, and also found 2 at Combination Road in Garrett County on June 15. Harry Armistead tallied 18 **Sharp-tailed Sparrows** and 228 **Seaside Sparrows** at Deal Island WMA on July 14. A male **White-throated Sparrow** was singing at Ellicott City on June 14 (Magnusson), and another was singing in a yard in Easton on June 16 (Bob Sharp).

*Grackles, Finches, Siskins.* Patty Craig reported a female **Boat-tailed Grackle** at St. Georges Island on June 21 and another at Point Lookout on July 30. Dave Weesner noted 2 **Purple Finches** at Washington Monument SP on June 28, and **Pine Siskins** included 4 at Swallow Falls SP on June 4 (Bjerke), 1 there on June 11 (Jett), and 1 at a feeder in Garrett County near Oakland on June 9 and June 18 (Skipper).

9763 Early Spring Way, Columbia, MD 21046

## PILEATED WOODPECKERS BATTLE TO THE DEATH

LOLA OBERMAN

On 10 May 1995, my husband Ted and I set out for a walk along the C&O Canal at Pennyfield Lock in Montgomery County. Finding the towpath teeming with bicycles, we opted for a little-used trail on the opposite side of the canal leading through woods and wetland to an open meadow. To our right was a creek, barely visible through the trees and shrubs lining its bank.

From that direction came harsh persistent squawking noises. Moving closer to investigate, we saw a Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*) flopping around on the ground under the trees. With the view partially obscured by the undercover, our first impression was that this was a young bird in trouble, but as we continued to watch, we discovered that there were two birds, both adult males, engaged in a mighty battle.

Suddenly a female appeared, flying in from across the creek and landing about three feet up on a tree-trunk, only 20 feet from us and just a few feet from the battle scene. She from her vantage point and we from ours watched intently as the two males rolled over and over, wings outspread and flapping, beaks stabbing. Occasionally one of the two would withdraw and perch low down on a tree trunk, apparently to rest before dropping back down to the battlefield.

Between those brief times-out, their raucous cries filled the air and were noticed by a couple who had come to the clearing to walk their dog. Fearing that the dog might attack the two birds, Ted went over to urge the couple to keep their dog leashed.

Meanwhile, keeping watch at the edge of the woods, I saw the female Pileated depart and fly across the creek. Shortly afterward there was a lull in the struggle and one of the males hopped up onto a tree trunk, clung there for a moment, then gave a loud call and flew off across the creek.

When I turned to report to Ted, he was on his way back, accompanied by the young man, who had left his wife holding the dog. The man had never seen a Pileated Woodpecker and Ted had promised to show him one at close range.

They stepped cautiously into the woods ahead of me and had gone only a few feet when they found the remaining male woodpecker on the ground—dead. Its body, still warm, bore few signs of the battle. There was a small hole in the middle of its back and another, deeper, hole, oozing blood, just back of the eye. Otherwise the body was in remarkably good condition, so we took it to Margaret Donald, who delivers good specimens to the Smithsonian for study.

Margaret Donald remarked that she had seen fierce battles between Pileated males competing over territory or over females, and so had I, but never this late into the nesting season, and never one with such a violent ending.

6606 Melody Lane, Bethesda, MD 20817

## BOOK REVIEW

### WOODPECKERS

#### An Identification Guide to the Woodpeckers of the World

Hans Winkler, David A. Christie, and David Nurney. 1995. Houghton Mifflin, Boston. Bibliography, index. 406 pp., 7x9.5. \$40.

At last we have a reasonably priced book on the woodpeckers of the world—all 214 species. This is too big and heavy to be a field guide. And it is much more than an identification guide. The brief introduction reviews the taxonomy, morphology, molts, behavior, and world distribution of woodpeckers. This family is absent from many of the small islands of the world and also from large islands such as Australia, New Zealand, New Guinea, Madagascar, Greenland, Iceland, and Ireland.

A third of the volume is devoted to 64 colored plates that illustrate all species and the most distinctive subspecies of woodpeckers. The facing pages identify the species and plumages, indicate very briefly the range, habitat, and field marks, and refer the reader to the page where the detailed range map and plumage description will be found in the main body of the book.

The poses are mostly stereotyped side views designed for distinguishing similar species rather than for showing all the field marks. The white rump of the flickers, for example, is concealed on all species. Typically the adult male is shown in full and the adult female is illustrated with only a head. Juveniles are illustrated for only a dozen species, five of which are North American: Downy, Lewis', Red-headed, and two sapsuckers.

The species accounts vary from barely half a page for poorly known species to about two and a half pages for species such as the Hairy and Great Spotted Woodpeckers that have more than a dozen subspecies. The identification paragraph in conjunction with the cross-indexed color plate is more than sufficient to confirm species identification. It is followed by a helpful paragraph on similar species. A concise distribution section supplements the map, which shows major rivers but not international boundaries. Sections on movements and habitat are brief but informative; elevational range is included for most species. The adult male is described in detail. Distinguishing characteristics of the adult female and juvenile are limited to a sentence or two and for many species are only marginally helpful. This book was not designed to help banders age and sex woodpeckers.

Characteristics and general ranges of subspecies are described very briefly after their Latin names. No English names are given for subspecies. All measurements are in metric. Banders should be warned that wing measurements are of the arc (erroneously called the "flattened wing chord") rather than the chord which is the standard among North American banders. The paragraphs on voice (including drumming activity) are sufficiently detailed to be really helpful. The sections on habits and breeding are variable, depending on how well the species is known. The food paragraph, when included, is brief and general. For each species one or more important references are given.

This is a fascinating book every birder should examine, whether you travel to distant parts of the globe or just enjoy woodpeckers at your suet. Where else can you find paintings of five subspecies of Hairy Woodpeckers or seven subspecies of Golden-olive Woodpeckers from Latin America? The three European authors have done an excellent job of researching information and summarizing it for easy retrieval. I just wish I could slip the book into a pocket and have it with me on my travels.

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