

# CHIP



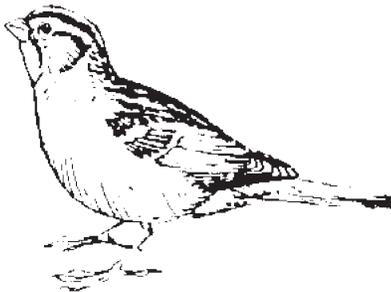
# NOTES

No 372

NOV — DEC 2009

## Sorry for the delay

Computer software incompatibility has been a complete nightmare. I will be leaving as editor after the May-June issue. If the position interests you please contact me. Bryce Butler  
capitano.bryce@verizon.net



## ANNUAL COVERED-DISH DINNER JANUARY 10

BYKOTA CENTER IN TOWSON

Wine and Cheese Social — 5PM,  
Dinner — 5:30, Lecture — 7PM

David Brinker will talk about sea level rise and marshbirds for our annual dinner. In 1985, while at the University of Maryland's Appalachian Environmental Laboratory David worked on a survey and census of Maryland's colonial nesting waterbird species. He was the first, and to date probably the only, person to radio track Black Skimmers. In 1987 he discovered Maryland's first Brown Pelican nest. Since then he has continued to monitor the expansion of breeding pelicans into the Chesapeake Bay and has coordinated the banding of over 13,500 Brown Pelicans. Since 1990, David has worked for the Maryland Department of Natu-

ral Resources where he established their colonial nesting waterbird project and is currently a regional ecologist for the MD DNR's Natural Heritage Program. David chaired the Maryland Ornithological Society's Research Committee for 10 years.

Please RSVP Kevin Graff with your dishes and numbers. (ASAP: Kevin requests you don't wait until the last minute)  
(410) 557-2456  
WhiteMarlin2001@yahoo.com

### Directions to BYKOTA CENTER

From the Baltimore Beltway (I-695) take exit 26 south, York Road. Turn right onto Bosley Avenue. At the third traffic light turn right onto Allegheny Ave. Proceed one block and turn right onto Central Ave, continue to 611 on your right, where parking is provided beside and behind the center.



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**A Voice in the Wilderness**

Speaking Out about Avian Mortality at Windows

By Joan Cwi and Wendy Olsson

Many people walked away from the September 1st 2009 Baltimore Bird Club lecture astonished at how many birds are killed annually from bird-glass collisions, and wondering how a problem of this magnitude this can still be going on in our conservation-minded world. We had just heard Dr. Daniel Klem, a professor of Ornithology and Conservation Biology at Muhlenberg College, present his research over the past 30 years and discuss his frustration at trying to bring this issue to the forefront of public discussion, and to persuade architects to build bird-friendly buildings and glass manufacturers to conduct more research on producing glass that birds can see.

So what exactly is the problem, and what are the solutions? Dr. Klem showed us evidence that avian mortality at windows is the second largest human source of bird mortality on earth (second to habitat destruction). Birds are oblivious to sheet glass and plastic and act as if these surfaces are invisible to them. Injured birds may die from head trauma after leaving a perch from as little as one meter away as they try to get to habitat seen through, or reflected in, clear and tinted panes. This is not just an urban problem. Birds strike windows of all sizes and buildings of all types, regardless of the season or weather. Almost everyone has heard that heart-stopping “thunk” as a bird strikes a nearby windowpane. And collisions affect birds in any health condition, thus taking healthy birds out of the breeding pool.

Based on thirty years of extensive observation, controlled experiments and statistical analyses, Dr. Klem concludes that from 100 million to 1 billion birds are killed annually from window strikes. The lower limit is the equivalent of bird losses from 333 Exxon Valdez oil spills every year! Compare

this to other human-associated sources of avian mortality: 120 million from hunting, 60 – 80 million from vehicle road-kills, and 100-500 million from domestic and feral cats.

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**ANNUAL ESTIMATES OF HUMAN-ASSOCIATED AVIAN MORTALITY IN THE UNITED STATES**

	Low	High
Glass collisions*	97	976
Domestic and feral cats **	100	500
Hunting***		120
Vehicles***	60	80
Electric transmission lines**		174
Pesticides**		72
Communication towers**	5	50

(Millions of Birds)

\* Daniel Klem, Baltimore Bird Club Lecture 9/1/2009

\*\* Sibley Guides ([www.sibleyguides.com/mortality](http://www.sibleyguides.com/mortality))

\*\*\*U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

.....  
There are many short-term solutions that can help mitigate the problem, as detailed in the table below. But a long-term solution depends primarily on one thing—creating glass that birds can see that will also fulfill the aesthetic needs of humans. Dr. Klem noted that a promising and hopeful solution to bird collision prevention involved UV reflecting and absorbing elements to create a window covering pattern, using films to retrofit existing structures and as a standard of manufactured glass for new construction.

Dr. Klem has been working with several film and glass manufacturers, but they have not yet been

willing to invest the capital to thoroughly research UV impregnated film and glass as a bird collision deterrent. (A possible exception is the German-manufactured ORNILUX glass. Despite bird-safe claims, Dr. Klem hasn't been able to obtain samples to test and compare to ORNILUX test data.) This is where we as consumers and bird lovers come in – we need to help create that market by raising concerns with the window manufacturers and asking why solutions aren't available for the issue.

**AVIAN GLASS COLLISION MITIGATION TECHNIQUES**

- Cover windows with netting
- Move bird feeder to within 1 yard or less of glass surface (even attach it to the window!)
- Place decals or hang strings such that they uniformly cover surface of windows with no more than a hand's width of clear glass between them
- Use one-way films to provide a minimally obstructed view from inside while appearing opaque from outside
- Reduce the proportion of glass to other building materials in new construction
- Use ceramic frit glass in new or for remodeling existing structures
- When available, use UV-reflecting glass or tape in stripe or grid patterns
- Angle windows 20 to 40 degrees from vertical in new or remodeled construction

Dr. Klem also discussed the conservation movement within the building industry promoting the construction of so-called “green buildings.” He emphasized the need to continue pressuring the U.S. Green Building Council to incorporate more significant bird-safe glass and architectural and landscape practices into their evaluation points in their building rating system called Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED). Planners use their LEED ratings to demonstrate that their buildings are environmentally friendly, but Dr. Klem contends (and we agree) that no matter how many recyclable materials, energy conserv-

ing features or erosion controls in a building, it should not be considered “green” if birds are dying by flying into its windows.

Despite the magnitude of the problem, we are only just beginning to see this issue addressed by the conservation community in a serious way. Many cities have started Lights Out! Programs that encourage building managers to turn off building lights at night, especially during migration. While these programs do not address the core problem of glass construction, they do try to reduce the amount of nighttime light (that attracts birds to buildings) and tracks bird strikes on urban buildings to encourage remedial action from properties with heavy tolls. As you probably know, the BBC sponsors a Lights Out! Program in Baltimore. We are one of many, including Toronto, Chicago, New York, Indianapolis, San Francisco, and Houston that have such programs. Over the past couple of years, the American Bird Conservancy has dedicated a staff member (Christine Sheppard) to promote bird collisions awareness at the national level and promote resolution to this problem.

At the end of the lecture, Dr. Klem drew attention to the fact that avian conservationists have worked hard at addressing bird kills from communication towers, power lines and wind turbines, and to a lesser degree fatalities due to domestic and feral cats, but we fall behind on addressing glass strikes, and glass strikes ironically take a significantly higher toll. He expressed his frustration that after years of bringing strong scientific evidence about the extent of this problem, it still does not get the attention it deserves from the avian conservation community nor from glass and film manufacturers.

Consumers and birders also must step up and play a larger role and demand a solution from window manufacturers, local and national green building councils, and those who enforce the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. He extended his hand out to each of us to make our voices known so

this carnage could come to an end before we lose even more bird species for future generations.

A few popular links that reference Dr. Klem and his research: <http://www.muhenberg.edu/depts/biology/faculty/klem/ACO/Popular%20Links.htm>



**Field Trip Reports**

Compiled by Kevin Graff

Aug 25 - Lake Roland - First day with little activity, mainly at the old house across the dam from our viewing point with few common birds plus a pair of flyover redstarts. Things got better at the trail above the dam that leads to small marsh area, where we got blue-headed and red-eyed vireos, lots of wrens and catbirds, wood thrush, and a few warblers. 40 species. 7 participants. Leader: Kevin Graff

Sep 1 - Cromwell Valley Park - Great view of 3 cuckoos near Lime Kiln. Lots of migrants including pewee, acadian and least flycatchers, white-eyed, warbling and red-eyed vireos, blue-winged, parula, chestnut-sided, magnolia, black-throated blue warblers, redstarts and yellowthroats. 2 Veery seen. Few hawks including 2 broadwings. 56 species. 8 participants. Leader: Debbie Terry.

Sep 8 - Cromwell Valley Park - Along the Minebank Trail we saw 5 species of warblers. At one point we had a lot of warbler activity with everyone seeing American Redstarts, magnolias, Chestnut-sided and Black-and-white Warblers. Later in the morning, as we walked north, we saw and heard a Veery and Wood Thrush. 52 species. 14 participants. Leader: Debbie Terry.

Sep 13 - Swift Night Out - Beautiful night - about 75 degrees and balmy. The swifts put on a powerful show - taunting us at first by having only a few pass over, then rapidly accumulating and pouring into the Bookbindey Chimney in a 20-minute finale. First in at 724pm, last in at 745pm. Total: 3190. Also 7 nighthawks. 2 species. 44 participants.

Leaders: Cwi/Schreter/Nelson.

Sep 15 - Cromwell Valley Park - A beautiful day for a bird walk but almost no sound, however as we walked the path towards the old house - bird on ground. It was walking, but had a perky tail posture like a wren. Couldn't be a wren, too big. It was an Ovenbird and we all got to see it. Joanne informed us that she had found a stunned Ovenbird downtown that morning, but it rallied and she had released it here at the park near our path. Altogether 6 warbler species were seen. Lots of Goldfinch youngs being fed, they like the tall mullein stalks. One Cedar Waxwing which seemed unused. As we walked on the path towards Sherwood Farm, a hawk flew low to the ground ahead of us. Three species of Buteos seen overhead, Broadwings, Redtails and Red-shouldered plus a Cooper's. 60 species. 14 participants. Leader: Ruth Culbertson.

Sep 22 - Cromwell Valley Park - Not much sound as we headed left towards the Lime Kiln, but Goldfinches and House Finches were on the Mullein in that area and then 2 young Redtails appeared flying around and chasing each other, then landing and perching low in the trees for all to see. At the top of the Lime Kiln two of our members, Kevin G. & John L. saw a Mourning Warbler low in the grasses, but try as we might no one else saw it. As we walked on the path to the right of the road, a real flurry of bird activity - Common Yellowthroats, Bluebirds, Chipping Sparrows and a beautiful Prairie Warbler - this time seen by all. Later 2 Palm Warblers appeared bringing the total of warblers to 9 species. 50 species. 15 participants. Leaders: Ruth Culbertson/Dot Gustafson.

Sep 26 - Soras at Jug Bay - Pleasant boat ride; heard both sora and VA Rails, but water was high, no exposed mudflats or margins, rails stayed deep in the reed beds. Nice showing of herons, egrets, harriers, blooming yellow marsh marigolds. 47 species. 5 participants. Leader: Pete Webb.

Sep 29 - Cromwell Valley Park - Very nice looks at Black-throated Green Warbler and young Indigo Buntings. Lincoln Sparrow seen by few. After the walk, Kevin and I wanders around the park and managed to get additional 10 species not seen during the walk including Ovenbird and an adult Red-headed Woodpecker became 7th woodpecker species here at the park. 68 Species. 11 Participants. Leader: John Landers.



Conservation Corner

Chimney Swift Watch Update 2009

By Joan Cwi

The Swift Night Out team has grown wiser about posting information on the Chimney Swifts' chimney of choice, and now require interested participants to check the BBC website a few days in advance regarding which chimney is being used. This year the chosen site was the Bookbindery chimney in Hampden. On Sunday evening, September 13th, forty-four people joined us to watch about 3,200 swifts descend at dusk. This was just slightly more than were observed last Fall at the same chimney.

For the weekend of September 13th, the Driftwood Wildlife Association's website ([www.chimneyswifts.org](http://www.chimneyswifts.org)), an organization that keeps nationwide reports on swift migration and chimney use, had reports from 22 states and Nova Scotia. Baltimore had the second highest count in the country! At 4,440 swifts, only Tullahoma, TN reported more.

It is interesting to see the increasing number of people who are attending Swift Night Out—almost twice as many this Fall as last. People are hearing about the event from Chesapeake Audubon Society, Nature Conservancy and word-of-

mouth.

An increasing number of people are reporting to us other chimneys where they have seen a considerable number of swifts entering. They include two in Patterson Park (Baptist Church and St. Elizabeth's Charter School), the American Legion in Perry Hall, Friends School on Charles Street, and Jane's and Lynn's Tire Service on Howard Street. And perhaps most astoundingly, only a couple of days after Swift Night Out, the swifts at the Bookbindery decided to change to the Florence Crittenton Services chimney, a much smaller chimney directly behind you as you face the Bookbindery.

Swifts have gotten a lot of positive press this year. On August 10th the Baltimore Sun wrote a front-page article titled "Migrating Birds Make Temporary Homes inside Baltimore Chimneys" in large bold letters (<http://www.baltimoresun.com/features/bal-md.gr.chimney10aug10,0,2019063.story>). The author, Meredith Cohn, was alerted to nesting Chimney Swifts in her neighbor's chimney and wrote this article with a little help from her Swift Watch friends at BBC. In addition, WYPR (radio 88.1) recorded a delightful, 5-minute segment about Chimney Swifts that aired on their "Environmental Focus" program September 30th. Tom Pelton from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation interviewed Alice Nelson and myself at the Bookbindery chimney, using the swift chattering sounds as a background. If you want to hear this segment, go to <http://www.wypr.org/Environment-Focus.html> and click The Flight of the Swifts segment dated 9-30-09.

Finally, a mention of Spring count. Although not as impressive as Fall, this year we had 250 Chimney Swifts use the Druid Hill Conservatory chimney on April 26th. This count is a lot lower than previous Springs, but our elusive swifts were probably using another chimney that we have not yet discovered.



## **BACKYARD BIRDING AND BEYOND**

AUSTRALIA ON A BUDGET & ON OUR OWN

by

Georgia McDonald

Some ten years or so ago, my Christmas list included a request for an Australian field guide. It was just a desire for some avian "eye-candy"; the likelihood of traveling halfway around the globe was right out there with the likelihood of winning a big lottery. But, as time went on, the birding wanderlust began to take hold. After using the internet to plan various self-guided trips around the US, the concept of going outside the country began to feel doable. And Australia is a civilized country with no language barrier and LOTS of wonderful birds. Some critical, age-defining birthdays came & went, saying "What are you waiting for?" So we decided to take the plunge.

Over the course of 9 months, I made 98% of our trip arrangements via the internet: ordering reference books, looking at guided tour itineraries & trip reports, making accommodation reservations, getting an electronic visa, subscribing to birding-Aus listserv, obtaining checklist info for various areas, etc, etc, etc.

Pre-trip bird study was much enhanced by the internet: running a slideshow through multiple photos of "species X" on Flickr can give one an excellent feel for a bird, much more effective than studying the field guides.

Our itinerary gave us three weeks on the ground, with half our time being spent in Far North Queensland (Cairns, Julatten & the Atherton Tablelands) and the other half in southeastern Queensland (Brisbane, Toowoomba, Stanthorpe) with a 4-day foray across the border into New South Wales (Woodenbong).

There is a myth out there that one needs a guide to bird Australia: not true. Australian birds are no more difficult to ID than our birds here at home.

Identifying honeyeaters is similar to identifying warblers--- not so hard if they will just sit still long enough to get a good look. There was, however, a definite loss due to being unable to bird by ear. I learn bird calls primarily from exposure in the field. Trying to learn a few hundred calls in advance was not even worth considering.

We did decide to hire a local guide for one day. We also took a few morning walks & night spotlighting walks offered at some accommodations, a morning river cruise, and a boat trip to the Great Barrier Reef. At our last accommodation, the owner took us out on an additional impromptu full-day field trip. Other than these, the rest of our 21 days in-country were self-guided.

And the birds? They were FABULOUS!!! I am in love with fairy-wrens, pardalotes & rosellas. Black-fronted Dotterels were too cute for words and Masked Lapwing faces were fascinating to look at. Instead of vultures, Black Kites rose early in the morning to clear the roadkill. We had 14 different parrot species, all of them lovely. Sun-lit kingfishers and Rainbow Bee-eaters glowed in jewel-like tones. Emerald doves with bright green wings could still blend in with the leaf litter on the rain forest floor. If we were willing to walk



far enough, a **Beach Stone-Curlew** waited (and posed) for us at Wonga Beach, just as the reference book said. A pair of Pacific Baza gave us



multiple views from various angles, all that one could wish for in a life-bird. At Cassowary House, the **male Southern Cassowary & his chick** came daily for breakfast and tea; occasionally, the female also deigned to make an appearance. At Kingfisher Park, Kookaburras sometimes laughed through the night, accompanied by screeching Sooty Owls. At Mt. Clunie, the Superb Fairy-wren was making her nest in a bush next to the verandah while we sat & watched the male declare his territory & visit the verandah itself to show off his gorgeous colors. Also at Mt. Clunie one night, we heard Boobook owls calling from all around us, beneath the most incredible big-sky canopy of stars.

All told, we had 240+ species, depending upon how rigorous a "sighting" definition is applied. I tend to be inclined to record close encounters just for the memory, even if they were not entirely satisfactory enough to be granted life-bird status.

The bottom line? Dan & I flew to Australia and spent 21 days birding for less than the single person cost of a 10-day guided tour. So look at your budget, pick your destination and see what you can manage, birding

(Photos: Georgia McDonald)

### **Ventriloquist Birds Call to Warn Friends and Enemies**

Yellow-rumped warbler. Birds' alarm calls serve both to alert other birds to danger and to warn off preda-

tors. And some birds can pull a ventriloquist's trick, singing from the side of their mouths. (Credit: iStockphoto/Frank Leung)

ScienceDaily (Dec. 7, 2009) — Birds' alarm calls serve both to alert other birds to danger and to warn off predators. And some birds can pull a ventriloquist's trick, singing from the side of their mouths, according to a UC Davis study.

Many animals respond vocally when they detect predators, but it's not clear to whom they are signaling, said Jessica Yorzinski, a graduate student in animal behavior at UC Davis who conducted the study with Gail Patricelli, professor of evolution and ecology. They might be warning others of the threat, but they might also be telling the predator, "I've seen you."

Yorzinski used a ring of directional microphones around a birdcage to record the songs of dark-eyed juncos, yellow-rumped warblers, house finches and other birds as they were shown a stuffed owl. All the birds were captured in the wild, tested, banded and released within 24 hours.

Overall, the birds' alarm calls were relatively omnidirectional, suggesting that they were given to warn other birds in the vicinity. However, the main species tested -- juncos, warblers and finches -- all showed an ability to focus their calls in the direction of the owl, so these calls could also function to warn off a predator.

House finches were the least directional in their calls. They are also the most social of the species tested, Yorzinski noted.

Some of the birds were able to project a call in one direction while their beak was pointed in another.

"It's like talking out of the corner of their mouths," Yorzinski said. In some cases the birds may see better sideways than forwards, although Yorzinski did record evidence of birds projecting calls both forward and to either side.

"It's not clear how they're accomplishing this," Yorzinski said.

The study was published Nov. 18 in the journal Proceedings of the Royal Society B and was funded by the National Science Foundation.

CALENDAR

**DEC 19** (Sat) dawn to DUSK BALTIMORE HARBOR CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 2007 Count of all birds seen or heard in the count circle. Count totals submitted to National Audubon Society for nationwide publication. Birders of all experience levels urged to participate. For area assignment call compiler: Pete Webb, (410) 486-1217 or [pete\\_webb@juno.com](mailto:pete_webb@juno.com). \$5 donation per observer requested to help defray cost of compilation and publication of data results by National Audubon Society.

**DEC 19** (Sat) 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon SATURDAY MONITORING WALKS AT FORT McHENRY A continuing survey of bird activity at the Fort. Park in the Visitors Center parking lot. Meet at the Visitors Center. Automatically cancelled in bad weather. Leader: Jim Peters, (410) 429-0966. Meet at the main gate.

January 2010.

**JAN 1** (Fri) 8:30 a.m. LOCH RAVEN RESERVOIR Start the New Year birding. Varied habitats including woods, fields and the reservoir. Probably also birding other sites for a "Big Day" in Baltimore City & County. Leader: Kevin Graff, email [whitemarlin2001@yahoo.com](mailto:whitemarlin2001@yahoo.com) or call (410) 557-2456.

**JAN 6** (Wed) 8:00 a.m. FIRST WEDNESDAYS AT FORT McHENRY Monthly morning survey of bird activity at the wetland. Telescope can be useful. Automatically cancelled in bad weather (rain, sleet, snow, fog, etc.). Meet in the Park, outside the Visitor Center. Leader: Mary Chetelat, (410) 665-0769.

**JAN 10** (Sun) 5:00 p.m. COVERED DISH DINNER AND LECTURE AT BYKOTA CENTER IN TOWSON "Marsh-birds: Will they survive sea-level rise?" David Brinker of Maryland Department of Natural Resources will discuss the challenges faced by the birds that inhabit Maryland's coastal marshes. For reservations and food dish coordination contact Kevin Graff at [WhiteMarlin2001@yahoo.com](mailto:WhiteMarlin2001@yahoo.com) or (410) 557-2456.

**JAN 16** (Sat) BALTIMORE MID-WINTER BIRD COUNT To participate in post-migration bird count in your choice of location in Baltimore City or County, call Pete Webb, (410) 486-1217 or [pete\\_webb@juno.com](mailto:pete_webb@juno.com)

**JAN 16** (Sat) 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon SATURDAY MONITORING WALKS AT FORT McHENRY Meet at the Visitors Center. Cancelled in rain, snow, sleet, fog. Leader: Jim Peters, (410) 429-0966.

BALTIMORE BIRD CLUB  
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