

**The Maryland/District of Columbia Records Committee Presents the First
Richard A. Rowlett Field Excellence Award
to Richard A. Rowlett**

Phillip C. Davis

2549 Vale Court, Davidsonville, Maryland 21035; pdavis@ix.netcom.com

[*Editor's note: This article is a shortened summary of a much, much larger document. The full document can be found on the Maryland/District of Columbia Records Committee blog at <https://tinyurl.com/RARowlett>.]*

Abstract: This article documents the genesis and first issuance of an award by the Maryland/District of Columbia Records Committee (MD/DCRC) to recognize and express deep appreciation for regional field work and documentation, by a Maryland/District of Columbia field birder. This first award is presented to Richard A. Rowlett, for whom the award will be permanently named. Rowlett's bird-related history, his records, publications, and accomplishments while in the Middle Atlantic region are compiled and chronicled. Also summarized are Rowlett's ornithological experiences before he moved to the Maryland area and his ensuing ornithological career after leaving Maryland. Rowlett's ornithological observations and publications were extensive; this paper compiles references from many varied sources and integrates them into this compendium.

BACKGROUND

The Maryland/District of Columbia Records Committee (MD/DCRC) is a standing committee of the Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS). The *Birds of Maryland and the District of Columbia* (Stewart and Robbins 1958) was used as a baseline document for rare and unusual species. In the period between 1958 and 1982 the responsibility to approve and publish rarity records fell on the editors of the regional seasonal reports in MOS's *Maryland Birdlife*, the Audubon Naturalist Society's *Atlantic Naturalist*, and the National Audubon Society's *American Birds*. After the MD/DCRC was established, the committee began to identify and conduct reviews of "historical" observational reports to include the pre-1983 period.

THE MOS MD/DCRC FIELD EXCELLENCE AWARD

Historical Perspective

Numerous field birders have contributed to the observation and identification of rare and unusual avian species in Maryland and the District of Columbia since regional ornithological records were first documented. Notable in the very early history of Maryland and the District of Columbia records, beginning with John James Audubon, and continuing to the era of Robert E. Stewart and Chandler S. Robbins, were individuals such as Elliot Coues, Robert Ridgway, Frank Kirkwood, Hervey Brackbill, and many others. From the time of the publication of Stewart and Robbins (1958) to the present, hundreds of field birders have provided invaluable support to the mission of the MD/DCRC by describing, photographing, and collecting rare and unusual taxa in our region; however, a small number of these observers are especially notable for the quality and quantity of the documentation they ultimately provided to the committee and for their documented observations and educational activities to further our understanding the avifauna of our region. These people deserve special recognition.

Purpose

The purpose of the MD/DCRC Field Excellence Award is to publicly acknowledge and extend the appreciation of the MOS and the MD/DCRC to birders who have materially and significantly supported furtherance of the MD/DCRC mission by documenting rare and unusual taxa. The documentation considered include photographs and written submissions directly to the MD/DCRC and articles published in *Maryland Birdlife* and other regional ornithological journals. Additional criteria include community education and State-wide contributions. A secondary objective of this award is to encourage similar levels of support from current and emerging birders.

This award is envisioned to be issued only occasionally. This award can recognize active birders as well as those who are no longer active in the field and the award may be issued posthumously.

Process

Candidates may be nominated by the members of the MD/DCRC prior to an MD/DCRC Annual Meeting. If multiple candidates are nominated, the committee will select only a single recipient. Selectees must receive at least two-thirds of the votes of eligible voting committee members at an MD/DCRC Annual Meeting. The committee will attempt to present the award at the next MOS Conference, MOS Board of Directors meeting, or a local MOS chapter meeting.

Award Name

The permanent name of this award will be taken from the first recipient. This award is now perpetually named the “Richard A. Rowlett Maryland Ornithological Society - Maryland/District of Columbia Records Committee Field Excellence Award.”

THE FIRST AWARDEE (2018): RICHARD A. ROWLETT

The committee is pleased to announce that the initial awardee of the Maryland Ornithological Society - Maryland/District of Columbia Records Committee Field Excellence Award is Richard A. Rowlett (Figure 1). Unless actively birding in the region in the 1970s, few current MOS birders will personally know “Rich” and many others will probably not even know of him since he moved from our area in 1980; however, Rowlett had a profound impact on the knowledge of the avifauna of Maryland and the entire Middle Atlantic region. Rowlett was an extremely avid and productive birder who searched out and documented rarities, both in writing and photographically, and published his findings. Although primarily well-known for his pioneering seabird-related activities, he was also an avid land birder throughout Maryland and the Mid-Atlantic region. There was not a Maryland records committee in the 1970s therefore, Rowlett never interfaced directly with the MD/DCRC until afterwards. However, Rowlett contributed many key regional records and published many articles in *Maryland Birdlife* and other regional journals. Some of his not previously published documentation was subsequently acquired and reviewed by the MD/DCRC in the late 1990s. Although living out-of-state in the 1990s, at the committee’s request, he kindly searched his personal archives, located, and provided many unpublished historical photographic slides to the committee.

The inscription for this first award reads:

**“The First Richard A. Rowlett Maryland Ornithological Society -
Maryland/District of Columbia Records Committee Field
Excellence Award**

“This award is presented to Richard A. Rowlett to acknowledge his outstanding field work and to extend the appreciation of the Maryland Ornithological Society’s Maryland/District of Columbia Records Committee for his excellent contributions to the committee’s mission by broadening our knowledge of rare and unusual regional bird species during the decade of the 1970s. His considerable contributions include extensive written and photographic rarity documentation, research articles published on regional species identification and range limits, many educational contributions, and, especially, his pioneering of

Maryland Atlantic Ocean pelagic waters birding. This award is hereby perpetually named in honor of its first recipient, Richard A. Rowlett.

“Maryland Ornithological Society, Barbara Johnson, President, 2018
Matt Hafner, Maryland/District of Columbia Records Committee,
Chair, 2018”



Figure 1. Richard A Rowlett. Photo from Scientists at Sea: Richard Rowlett – Senior Marine Mammal Observer (Rowlett 2014).

RICHARD A. ROWLETT’S CONTRIBUTIONS TO MARYLAND BIRDING

Rowlett’s contributions to our Mid-Atlantic regional knowledge of avifauna, and especially that of Maryland, are considerable and diverse.

There are over 500 references to “Rowlett” in fifteen volumes of *Maryland Birdlife*, primarily between 1971 and 1980, attesting to his dedication to birding the entire state of Maryland and as an indicator of his time spent in the field. Rowlett’s name also appears in 56 references in *The Raven*, the journal of the Virginia Society of Ornithology between 1971 and 1982. Rowlett references also appear in 37 separate issues of *The Chat*, the journal of the Carolina Bird Club, mostly between 1972 and 1980. Rowlett’s observations were also recorded in more than 70 seasonal reports, compiled by various editors, from the Middle Atlantic Coast (Maryland and Virginia), Southern Atlantic Coast (North Carolina), Appalachian (western Maryland), and Hudson-Delaware (Delaware

and New Jersey) regions between 1972 and 1979 in *American Birds*, the journal of the National Audubon Society.

Rowlett was a contributing observer to 78 MD/DCRC rarity reports and records from 1970 through 1980. At least thirteen of these were first state records for Maryland, including Maryland's first Sage Thrasher, Limpkin, American Flamingo, Atlantic Puffin, Yellow-nosed Albatross, Common Murre, Northern Fulmar, as well as many state second and third records, seasonal records (e.g., first for winter), and state geographic records (e.g., first for the Allegheny Plateau). Rowlett also found or provided initial documentation for state firsts in Virginia (e.g., Arctic Tern, Gray Kingbird, Bridled Tern, and White-faced Storm-Petrel) and Delaware (Band-rumped Storm-Petrel and Garganey).

Many Rowlett photographs were published in ornithological publications. Notably, Finch et al. (1978) in *American Birds* featured several of Rowlett's photos of Maryland's 1975 Yellow-nosed Albatross, among others. Rowlett is also credited with photos in *Birds of the Carolinas* (Potter et al. 1980) as reviewed by Robbins (1979). Rowlett also published nine *Maryland Birdlife* cover photos, an average of one per year. One issue of *American Birds* included three Rowlett rarity photos within one single regional report (Scott 1978).

Rowlett also quickly made an indelible mark in pelagic exploration. The first page of the advertising flier for Rowlett's first Ocean City pelagic trip (1973) is shown in Figure 2.

Harding and Harding (1980) referred to Rowlett as "the dean of pelagic birding in the east." They quoted from one of his brochures,

"These trips provide the rare opportunity for those of us, who have idolized the exploits of early explorers in American Ornithology and Cetology, to be a part of our own modern day pioneering efforts to explore one of the last and long neglected frontiers of North America field biology, that of observing and establishing spatial and temporal distribution and habits of the pelagic birds and cetaceans living in the ocean waters off the middle-Atlantic States."

As one of the original "pioneers" of North American and Maryland pelagic birding, Rowlett's culminating 87-page 1980 United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) publication, *Observations of Marine Birds and Mammals in the Northern Chesapeake Bight* (Rowlett 1980b), was key to understanding and documenting Maryland and western Atlantic Ocean seabirds. At the time of publication, Rowlett was associated with the National Fish and Wildlife Laboratory, National Museum of Natural History; the National Coastal Ecosystems Team, USFWS; and the Biological Services Program, USFWS. This monograph has subsequently been cited by many state seabird authorities.

A MID-ATLANTIC REGIONAL FIRST!

The WINTER

SPECIAL TRIP *****

***** SPECIAL TRIP

OCEAN CITY PELAGIC

February 3 or 4, 1973

Leader: RICHARD A. ROWLETT, 715 Main St., Apt 5, Laurel, Md. 20810.
phone: 301--498-6091.

In a series of recent birding trips this winter aboard Cod fishing headboats, 10 to 20 miles out of Ocean City, some interesting new data is being learned about the status of the long neglected seabirds wintering off the Maryland coast. Species such as the Black-legged kittiwake, long considered rare at the Maryland latitude and represented only by a scattering of isolated records along the coast, has been found to be common, and often, the most abundant species only a few miles off shore. Razorbills, represented only by two or three isolated hypothetical coastal records have been encountered twice, once with three at one time, and a Skua, a first record for Maryland, was seen on January 13.

The potential in penetrating this unexplored aspect of Maryland Birdlife is indeed wide open, and you can be a part. Offered now is an opportunity to be a pioneer on a team that can make an important ornithological contribution, and perhaps too, find such new Maryland species as the Fulmar or one of the rarer alcids, as well as gain new information and insights toward offshore winter birdlore.

On Feb. 3, we are chartering a headboat out of Ocean City, strictly for the search of sea birds. We will (hopefully) go where the birds are, leaving promptly at 6:29 am (that means be on the dock or on board at 6:14 am or before) aboard the "TAURUS," from the Mast Restaurant in West Ocean City. We will steam as far as possible out to sea, hopefully 30 to 40 miles (the closer we get to the Gulf Stream, the better our odds for number and species). We should return no later than 5:00 pm. We will be chumming in an effort to attract desirable species close to the boat like Gannets, Kittiwakes, white-winged gulls, and who knows what else.

If the seas are unreasonably rough or weather is fowl, the trip will be post-poned until Feb. 4, and we will bird the Ocean City area for the Harlequin Ducks, Little and Black-headed Gulls, Ipswich Sparrow, etc., or what ever the group elects to do.

There are a number of people expressing strong interest in this trip. The cost is \$10.00 per head, and space will be limited to about the first 40. Reservations must be accompanied with \$10.00, and sent promptly to Richard A. Rowlett (address above), and should reach me no later than Jan 30. A minimum head count will be 20, which means that cancellations can be refunded only if this minimum can be met.

The "TAURUS" is equipped with an observation deck with seats above the stern, which is extremely beneficial as an excellent vantage point for observation for a large number of people, and for the sake of staying dry from the constant spray which may wash over the bow. Restrooms and a heated cabin are available. Several experienced "sea-birders," including Chandler Robbins and Paul DuMont, will be on board to help point out helpful field marks for those less experienced.

Winter boat trips at sea are often rigorous and require an excess of hardcore desire and stamina to endure the grueling hours. There are often long boring periods between birds, but the good fellowship accompanied by the often amazing close looks at Gannets and Kittiwakes squelches boredom.

Figure 2. Richard A. Rowlett's first Ocean City, Maryland, pelagic trip advertising flier for 3 or 4 February 1973.

While in the Atlantic area, Rowlett published 16 articles in *Maryland Birdlife* and other Mid-Atlantic regional journals, many dealing with first state records. His regional bibliography is presented herein.

In addition to his numerous articles, Rowlett gave presentations and workshops on various regional birding topics, notably on seabirds and shorebirds, to many local MOS chapters and other regional organizations.

In addition to rarity-focused activities, Rowlett contributed his time to various MOS causes and survey projects including May Counts, Christmas Bird Counts, Breeding Bird Atlases. He also served a term on the MOS Board of Directors as a Trustee/State Director from the Montgomery County Chapter. During the 1970s, the MOS annual conventions were mostly held in Ocean City and Rowlett organized pelagic trips for conference attendees. He also contributed money for the MOS Sanctuary Fund, raised from a portion of his pelagic trip fees.

Rowlett contributed over 50 pelagic and land bird study skin specimens to the Smithsonian Institution's Division of Birds from 1969 through 1983, with three from Maryland, one from Virginia, five from North Carolina, and four from New Jersey. His Maryland specimens are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Richard A. Rowlett's Maryland specimens donated to the Division of Birds, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

USNM#	Scientific Name	Common Name	Date Collected	Location	County	Preparation
574947	<i>Spinus pinus pinus</i>	Pine Siskin	7 Mar 1974	Laurel	Prince George's	whole skin
575650	<i>Ardenna gravis</i>	Great Shearwater	18 Jun 1978	unrecorded	unrecorded	whole skin
553853	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	Northern Gannet	5 Apr 1979	Assateague Island	Worcester	skeleton

Rowlett's MD/DCRC Maryland Reports and Records

A summary of Rowlett's MD/DCRC reports and records contributions (captured in the MD/DCRC database) is provided in Table 2.

Table 2. MD/DCRC Maryland reports and records documented by Richard Rowlett (in chronological order). (Legend: State “first” reports are bolded. Record # = MD/DCRC accession number; Decision/Status = MD/DCRC database decision or status [Accepted and Not Accepted - self-explanatory; Non-Review Species - the species is no longer reviewable; Ready - the report is ready to be scheduled for a review; Reviewable - there still may be a chance of locating detailed documentation; Unreviewable - no detailed documentation exists.]

Record #	Species	Start Date	County	Location	Photo?	Decision/Status
2011-123	Audubon’s Shearwater	08/01/1970	WORC	Assateague Island	√	Non-Review Species
1990-013	Rufous Hummingbird	05/01/1971	FRDK	Lily Pons Water Gardens		Accepted
1995-014	Limpkin	05/25/1971	FRDK	Lily Pons Water Gardens	√	Accepted
1995-015	Sage Thrasher	10/24/1971	WORC	Assateague Island	√	Accepted
1997-307	“Oregon” Junco	01/27/1972	MONT	Rockville	√	Ready
2004-086	Hoary Redpoll	03/02/1972	MONT	Rockville	√	Reviewable
2007-110	Common Redpoll	03/03/1972	MONT	Rockville	√	Non-Review Species
2003-482	Eared Grebe	03/14/1972	WORC	Ocean City		Not Accepted
1997-234	Painted Bunting	04/18/1972	MONT	Kensington	√	Accepted
2008-143	Bewick’s Wren	06/04/1972	WASH	??		Reviewable
2008-144	Bewick’s Wren	06/04/1972	ALGY	??		Reviewable
2008-145	Bewick’s Wren	06/08/1972	ALGY	Little Orleans		Reviewable
2011-022	Bewick’s Wren	06/16/1972	ALGY	Little Orleans		Reviewable
2001-088	American Flamingo	08/08/1972	WORC	Assateague Island	√	Accepted
2007-086	“Oregon” Junco	12/17/1972	GRTT	Garrett County CBC circle		Reviewable
2008-016	Great Skua	01/13/1973	WORC	Atlantic Ocean		Non-Review Species
2006-147	Northern Fulmar	02/03/1973	WORC	Atlantic Ocean		Non-Review Species
1997-411	Pine Grosbeak	02/10/1973	GRTT	Big Savage Mountain	√	Accepted
1997-546	Thick-billed Murre	03/03/1973	WORC	Atlantic Ocean		Unreviewable
2003-486	Ruff	05/06/1973	SMST	Deal Island WMA		Reviewable
1997-575	Pine Grosbeak	12/17/1973	GRTT	Friendsville		Unreviewable
1997-404	Great Skua	02/02/1974	WORC	Atlantic Ocean	√	Non-Review Species

Record #	Species	Start Date	County	Location	Photo?	Decision/Status
2008-015	Manx Shearwater	06/01/1974	WORC	Pelagic Zone	√	Non-Review Species
1999-027	European Storm-Petrel	08/08/1974	WORC	Atlantic Ocean		Unreviewable
1997-531	Long-tailed Jaeger	08/08/1974	WORC	Atlantic Ocean		Unreviewable
2006-151	Northern Fulmar	10/19/1974	WORC	Atlantic Ocean		Non-Review Species
1997-412	Atlantic Puffin	02/01/1975	WORC	Atlantic Ocean	√	Non-Review Species
2006-149	murre species	02/01/1975	WORC	Atlantic Ocean		Unreviewable
2006-150	skua species	02/01/1975	WORC	Atlantic Ocean		Unreviewable
1990-006	Yellow-nosed Albatross	02/01/1975	WORC	Atlantic Ocean	√	Accepted
1990-007	Atlantic Puffin	03/16/1975	WORC	Atlantic Ocean	√	Accepted
1997-522	Purple Gallinule	06/19/1975	MONT	Seneca-C&O Canal		Unreviewable
2104-074	Black-capped Petrel	09/07/1975	WORC	Atlantic Ocean		Reviewable
1997-645	Long-tailed Jaeger	12/06/1975	WORC	Atlantic Ocean		Unreviewable
2003-493	Thayer's Gull	02/08/1976	WORC	Ocean City		Reviewable
2006-145	skua species	04/11/1976	WORC	Atlantic Ocean		Unreviewable
2004-161	Magnificent Frigatebird	04/14/1976	WORC	Ocean City		Reviewable
1997-515	Yellow Rail	04/24/1976	DORC	Elliott Island		Unreviewable
2008-034	South Polar Skua	05/09/1976	WORC	Atlantic Ocean		Accepted
1997-409	Northern Fulmar	05/09/1976	WORC	Atlantic Ocean	√	Non-Review Species
1986-017	Sabine's Gull	05/09/1976	WORC	Atlantic Ocean		Accepted
1997-721	skua species	05/09/1976	WORC	Atlantic Ocean		Unreviewable
1986-020	Arctic Tern	05/16/1976	WORC	Atlantic Ocean		Not Accepted
1997-255	Bridled Tern	09/26/1976	WORC	Atlantic Ocean	√	Accepted
2003-498	Clay-colored Sparrow	10/22/1976	WORC	Assateague Island		Reviewable
1996-028	Smith's Longspur	11/27/1976	WORC	Assateague Island	√	Accepted
1997-407	Northern Fulmar	12/04/1976	WORC	Atlantic Ocean	√	Non-Review Species
1995-013	Common Murre	12/29/1976	WORC	Ocean City Inlet		Accepted
1997-237	Thick-billed Murre	01/09/1977	WORC	Assateague Island	√	Accepted
1997-236	Common Murre	01/16/1977	WORC	Atlantic Ocean	√	Accepted
1997-528	Ruff	09/21/1977	FRDK	Lily Pons Water Gardens		Reviewable

Record #	Species	Start Date	County	Location	Photo?	Decision/Status
1997-328	Fulvous Whistling-Duck	09/21/1977	MONT	Violette's Lock		Unreviewable
1983-007	Le Conte's Sparrow	10/23/1977	WORC	Ocean City		Accepted
1997-335	Northern Shrike	11/09/1977	ANAR	Sandy Point State Park	√	Accepted
1997-306	Common Ground-Dove	11/10/1977	ANAR	Sandy Point State Park	√	Accepted
1997-315	Lark Bunting	11/18/1977	KENT	Galena	√	Accepted
1997-567	Pine Grosbeak	11/19/1977	ALGY	Dan's Rock		Unreviewable
1997-232	Clay-colored Sparrow	01/15/1978	HARF	Churchville	√	Reviewable
1997-326	"Pink-sided" Junco	01/19/1978	PGEO	Laurel		Unreviewable
1997-348	Hoary Redpoll	02/11/1978	MONT	Spencerville	√	Ready
1997-298	Western Tanager	04/22/1978	MONT	Takoma Park	√	Accepted
2004-166	Arctic Tern	05/06/1978	WORC	Atlantic Ocean		Unreviewable
1997-536	Arctic Tern	05/06/1978	WORC	Atlantic Ocean		Unreviewable
1997-403	Atlantic Puffin	05/07/1978	WORC	Atlantic Ocean	√	Non-Review Species
1997-408	Northern Fulmar	05/07/1978	WORC	Atlantic Ocean	√	Non-Review Species
2004-167	Arctic Tern	05/07/1978	WORC	Atlantic Ocean	√	Unreviewable
2004-168	Arctic Tern	05/07/1978	WORC	Atlantic Ocean		Unreviewable
1998-001	Purple Gallinule	05/28/1978	PGEO	Upper Marlboro	√	Accepted
1997-413	South Polar Skua	06/18/1978	WORC	Atlantic Ocean	√	Accepted
1997-256	South Polar Skua	06/18/1978	WORC	Atlantic Ocean	√	Accepted
1997-406	Great Skua	12/30/1978	WORC	Atlantic Ocean	√	Non-Review Species
1997-405	Great Skua	12/30/1978	WORC	Atlantic Ocean	√	Non-Review Species
1997-500	Black-capped Petrel	07/18/1979	WORC	Atlantic Ocean		Accepted
1997-301	South Polar Skua	07/20/1979	WORC	Atlantic Ocean	√	Accepted
2008-020	Yellow-nosed Albatross	12/03/1979	WORC	Atlantic Ocean	√	Accepted
1997-518	Yellow Rail	12/25/1979	WORC	Assateague Island		Unreviewable
1996-022	Magnificent Frigatebird	04/28/1980	WORC	Ocean City	√	Accepted

RICHARD A. ROWLETT: BIBLIOGRAPHY

Rowlett's regional ornithological publications are summarized in the bibliography below. The bibliography is organized into three sections. First, are publications from his younger years in Missouri and from early western travels, which demonstrate the background that prepared him for his ten years in Maryland. Second, are his regional Middle Atlantic publications of the 1970s and 1980s. Third, are Rowlett's publications, presentations, and key blogs after he left Maryland and became a professional seabird and marine mammal observer, mostly in the Pacific Ocean.

In the Rowlett bibliography, I provided, in brackets, extensive field observation year annotations for many of Rowlett's observations to aid in following the chronology since, in many cases, papers were not published until many years after the field work was complete.

Early Years – Missouri and Western United States

This section presents a bibliography of Rowlett's nature and science work as a young man in Missouri and from trips to the western United States.

Rowlett R.A. 1969a. Bird reports from southeast Missouri. *The Bluebird* 36(3):2.

Rowlett, R.A. 1969b. Mortality at 400-foot tower [Spring 1966, Spring 1967]. *The Bluebird* 36(1):17–20.

Rowlett R. A. 1972a. First Records of *Eumops perotis* and *Microtus ochrogaster* in New Mexico [June 1968; August 1969]. *Journal of Mammalogy* 53(3):640.

Middle Years – Middle Atlantic Region

This section summarizes Rowlett's regional ornithological publications during his time in the Middle Atlantic region, focusing primarily on Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, and North Carolina. *Maryland Birdlife* cover photographs are noted.

Lee, D.S., and R.A. Rowlett. 1979. Additions to the seabird fauna of North Carolina. *The Chat* 43(1):1–9.

Rowlett, R.A. 1971a. First Maryland record for the Sage Thrasher [24 October 1971]. *Maryland Birdlife* 27(4):171–172.

Rowlett, R.A. 1971b. Rufous Hummingbird at Lily Pons, Maryland [1 May 1971]. *Atlantic Naturalist* 26(3):125–126.

- Rowlett, R.A. 1972b. A “wild” flamingo in Maryland? [8 August 1972]. *Maryland Birdlife* 28(4):148–149.
- Rowlett, R.A. 1972c. First records of the Limpkin in the Mid-Atlantic states (Maryland and Virginia) [25 May 1971]. *Maryland Birdlife* 28(1):3–6. Cover photo: “Tributary of the Monocacy River, flowing along the edge of Lily Ponds, where the Limpkin was feeding on fresh water mussels. Photo by Richard A. Rowlett.”
- Rowlett, R.A. 1972d. Third Maryland record of the Painted Bunting [18 April 1972]. *Maryland Birdlife* 28(4):146.
- Rowlett, R.A. 1973a. First Maryland specimen of Audubon’s Shearwater [1 August 1970]. *Maryland Birdlife* 29(1):13–14.
- Rowlett, R.A. 1973b. Sea birds wintering off Maryland shores, 1972–73 [19 November 1972–25 March 1973]. *Maryland Birdlife* 29(3):88–102. Cover photo: “Adult Gannet off Ocean City, Dec. 23, 1972. Photo by Richard A. Rowlett.”
- Rowlett, R.A. 1973c. Status of the Sandwich Tern in Maryland [25 July 1972]. *Maryland Birdlife* 29(2):81–82. Cover photo: “Sandwich Tern photographed 5 mi. south of Ocean City on July 25, 1972 by Richard A. Rowlett. Yellow bill tip is visible in original Kodachrome.”
- Rowlett, R.A. 1973d. Special charter pelagic trips from Ocean City [Advertisement]. *Maryland Birdlife* 29(3):134.
- Rowlett, R.A. 1974a. A White Ibis in the Appalachian region of Virginia [1 September 1973]. *The Raven* 45(3):72.
- Rowlett, R.A. 1974b. Additional sighting of skuas in Maryland and Virginia ocean waters [2–3 February 1974, 27 April 1974]. *Maryland Birdlife* 30(2):51–55. Cover photo: “Skua, probably immature, 35 miles SE of Ocean City, Feb. 2 1974. Photo by Richard A. Rowlett.”
- Rowlett, R.A. 1975. First records of Atlantic Puffin and Yellow-nosed Albatross off Maryland [1 February 1973]. *Maryland Birdlife* 31(2):51–56. Cover photo: “Sub to near-adult Yellow-nosed Albatross (*Diomedea chlororhynchos*) in flight, 60 miles east of Ocean City, on February 1, 1975. Photo by Richard A. Rowlett.”
- Rowlett, R.A. 1976a. Maryland records of the Manx Shearwater [6 December 1975]. *Maryland Birdlife* 32(1):27–28.

- Rowlett, R.A. 1976b. Sabine's Gull and Arctic Terns off Ocean City [9 May, 16 May 1976]. *Maryland Birdlife* 32(4):107. Cover photo: "Northern Fulmar photographed 65 miles east of Ocean City, Md., on May 9, 1976 by Richard A. Rowlett."
- Rowlett, R.A. 1977a. A non-storm-blown Bridled Tern and other observations from a late September pelagic trip off Maryland [26 September 1976]. *Maryland Birdlife* 33(1):31-33.
- Rowlett, R.A. 1977b. A sight record of the Black-capped Petrel off Virginia [7 September 1977]. *The Raven* 48(1):26-27. [Due to changes in the Maryland and Virginia pelagic boundaries, this Virginia record is now a Maryland report/record awaiting review.]
- Rowlett, R.A. 1977c. Accurate recording of seabird positions at sea. *American Birds* 31(6):1101.
- Rowlett, R.A. 1977d. First records for the Thin-billed Murre in Maryland, with a summary of alcid observations for the winter of 1976-1977 [29 December 1976, 9 January 1977]. *Maryland Birdlife* 33(2):105-107. Cover photo: "Thin-billed Murre photographed at Ocean City, Md., on Dec. 29, 1976 by Richard A. Rowlett."
- Rowlett, R.A. 1978a. A massive flight of Cory's Shearwaters at Cape Hatteras [28 October 1974]. *The Chat* 42(3):45-46.
- Rowlett, R.A. 1978b. [Cover photo] "Common Redpoll at Laurel, Md., Feb. 23, 1978. Photo by Richard A. Rowlett." *Maryland Birdlife* 34(2):69.
- Rowlett, R.A. 1978c. Second record of the Le Conte's Sparrow in Maryland [23 October 1977]. *Maryland Birdlife* 34(3):164-165.
- Rowlett, R.A. 1979. A first record of the Bridled Tern at sea off Virginia [24 August 1977]. *The Raven* 50(1):11-12.
- Rowlett, R.A. 1980a. Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*) in Delaware: "an unprecedented comparison of Little Stint and Semipalmated in spring plumage..." [23 May 1979]. *American Birds* 34(6):850-851.
- Rowlett, R.A. 1980b. *Observations of Marine Birds and Mammals in the Northern Chesapeake Bight* [1971-1977]. FWS/OBS-80/04. Biological Services Program, Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Department of the Interior. 87 pp.

Rowlett, R.A. 1981. Yellow-nosed Albatross off Virginia and Maryland [3 December 1979]. *The Raven* 52(1):13–14. [Note: This was previously a Virginia record, now, with the change of pelagic boundaries, this is an accepted Maryland record – MD/2014-073.]

Later Years – Western Pelagic Observations and Land-based Birding

Rowlett continued to publish ornithological and marine mammal accounts and presentations after he left the Maryland area. Subsequently in 1988, he followed a career in marine biology.

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RICHARD A. ROWLETT: BIOGRAPHY

Biographical Sketch

Rowlett was born in 1947, and while at Northwest Missouri State University majoring in Meteorology, he transferred to Southeast Missouri State University, graduating with a degree in Zoology in 1970. Drafted by the United States Army the same year, he chose the option of going to Washington, DC over Vietnam and served two years in the Honor Guard at Arlington National Cemetery as a sentinel at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, afterwards, remaining in the DC area as a Biological Technician assisting professional staff with pesticide studies on upland game and water birds at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, Maryland.

Rowlett honed his skills for finding rarities in his early years. He was cited several times for observations of unusual sightings in Missouri: Easterla (1966) reported on the winter 1965–1967 winter finch invasion into northwestern

Missouri. Reports included a 20 November 1965 sighting by Rowlett, Watkins, and Easterla of a pair of White-winged Crossbills in a pine grove 10 miles west of Maryville, Missouri, and an observation by Rowlett and Easterla of at least six Common Redpolls in the same area on 18 December 1965 and 15 January 1966.

Rowlett (1969b) published an article in *The Bluebird*, the journal of the Audubon Society of Missouri, titled “Mortality at 400-foot Tower.” The paper presented the results of Rowlett’s daily surveys, a hand drawn plot of the kill locations relative to the tower and guy wires, and a discussion of the broader topic of tower kills.

While a student at Southeast Missouri State College in Cape Girardeau, Rowlett (1969a) published a detailed account and analysis of his 1968–1969 winter and spring bird sightings in southeast Missouri, his first exposure to the avifauna of the opposite corner of his home state.

Rowlett contributed a Black Rail specimen (USNM 564977) to the Smithsonian Institution that was collected in Missouri on 23 September 1969.

Interestingly, also in 1969, Rowlett’s brother, Roger, published a note in the same state journal titled, “Why Study Ornithology?” (Rowlett [Roger] 1969)

In the winter of 1968–1969, Rowlett was credited with many reports in the winter bird surveys and also in the spring and summer surveys (Anderson 1971a, 1971b, 1971c). Regional birds of note reported by Rowlett include Western Meadowlarks, Evening Grosbeaks, and Red Crossbills in winter; Eared Grebe, White-rumped Sandpiper, 34 Fish Crows, Red-breasted Nuthatches, and continuing Evening Grosbeaks into the spring; and an adult Louisiana [Tricolored] Heron and a Glossy Ibis in the summer.

New Mexico

During the summers of 1968, 1969, and 1970, Rowlett spent time in the mountains of northeastern New Mexico with his father, Ray L. Rowlett, where he became familiar with many western species. He referenced his New Mexico experience in several of his later articles (Rowlett 1971a, 1971b). He published records of Western Mastiff-bats (*Eumops perotis*) and Prairie Voles (*Microtus ochrogaster*) observed and collected in New Mexico (Rowlett 1972a).

Early Christmas Bird Counts

Rowlett began participating in Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) in 1965, having been credited as an observer in two Missouri CBCs according to Hanselmann (1966). In 1969 and 1970, Rowlett was listed as a participant in the Maryville CBC (Dawson 1970, 1971).

In 1975, Rowlett [presumably Richard] reported White-winged Crossbills and a Lincoln Sparrow on the 1975 Maryville CBC (Jones 1976).

During the 1977 Squaw Creek [Missouri] CBC, Rowlett and Barksdale reported and submitted a detailed sight report of a Gyrfalcon, seen in flight for about five minutes (Goodge 1978). This sighting was called the “find of the season” by Robbins [M.] (1978) and later referred to as the only “reliable sighting” of this species, prior to the first photographed Missouri record of a bird caught in a falconer’s trap in 2000 (Easterla and Scarbrough 2001).

In 1978, Rowlett is credited with having reported two Common Yellowthroats (unusual) on the Squaw Creek CBC (Goodge 1979).

Rowlett Interview

In her “Interesting Member Profile” newsletter interview for the East Lake Washington Audubon Society, McQuade (2005) wrote of Rowlett:

“After Patuxent, he assisted the Smithsonian Institution National Fish & Wildlife Lab Division of Mammals by trapping, mist-netting and preparing specimens for display, adding them to the museum collection; even donating his own collection of 2000 specimens to the museum in 1982. From 1978 to 81, as Regional Cruise Leader he conducted and supervised field research for the University of Rhode Island Marine Science Consortium, Wallops Island, Virginia. Next, he worked seven seasons as a Naturalist Guide & Lecturer on board Society Expeditions luxury cruise ships, visiting Chilean fjords to the Antarctic Islands, Falklands, Shetlands, South Georgia, with a focus on wildlife ecology and history.

“Following that, as a senior scientist and cruise leader, he organized and supervised multi-year, multi-ship seabird and cetacean surveys for the International Whaling Commission, Cambridge, England. And from 1981 to 1988 he was responsible, as Field Supervisor, for National Marine Mammal Laboratories, Seattle, for studying impacts on North Pacific and Alaskan Dall’s Porpoise, other sea mammals, and seabirds while assigned to the 176 Japanese vessel fleet engaged in high seas drift net salmon fishing.

“From then until the present [2005] he has been associated with NOAA/NMFS [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration/ National Marine Fisheries Service], including Southwest Fisheries Science Center, La Jolla, California on term appointments and contracts, working out of Sand Point, Seattle, and La Jolla. This involves numerous seasonal, multi-year-at-sea marine mammal, seabird

and turtle projects as well as whale/dolphin and tuna population recovery issues worldwide. He considers his terrestrial field research of mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians throughout Central, North America, Peru and Alaska of secondary importance in his biological work around the world.”

Rowlett Professional Update

Earlier, in 2011, Rowlett was at Palmyra Atoll (North Pacific Ocean, between Hawaii and American Samoa) working the seas within the 200 nmi [nautical mile] EEZ [Exclusive Economic Zone] around Palmyra. He remarked that observations of seabirds along the standard survey lines at sea were excellent, especially for *Pterodromas* where he logged 16 species. He noted that the North Equatorial Counter Current at the tropical mid-North Pacific (2–9° N) provided an endless bounty of *Pterodroma* gadfly petrels and perhaps the richest region on Earth for diversity with this genus.

Rowlett’s (2014) self-described NOAA web page profile follows:

“I started as a recreational birder which evolved into a decade of organizing and running seabird and whale watching trips off the East Coast (Ocean City, MD and Cape Hatteras, NC) through the 1970’s while my “day job” was with the Museum of Natural History (Smithsonian, Washington, DC). These first ever pioneering efforts into previously and amazingly “uncharted” waters led to a significant data base simply through self-teaching and growing experience, that I moved on to the first ever marine mammal, turtle, and seabird surveys in the NW Atlantic off US East Coast (University of Rhode Island project acronym CETAP) and from there these ‘dangling carrots’ just kept escalating and expanding to a decade (1980’s) of marine mammal surveys circumnavigating Antarctica (southern summers) and North Pacific Alaska/Aleutian/Bering Sea (northern summers) with the National Marine Mammal Laboratory, Seattle, WA, working with Dall’s porpoise and the Japanese high seas drift net salmon fishery. Foreign fisheries work filled some gaps in between until coming on with NOAA Fisheries and Southwest Fisheries Science Center (La Jolla, CA) in 1989 as a marine mammal observer in annual marine mammal surveys including Eastern Tropical Pacific, U.S. West Coast, Alaska, and Hawaii projects in addition to 15 seasons monitoring gray whale calf migration along the central California coast at an extraordinarily unique shore based study site, Pt. Piedras Blancas Light Station near San Simeon, CA.”

SUMMARY

Richard A. Rowlett's contributions to the knowledge of the avifauna of Maryland and the Middle Atlantic region are legion. His indefatigable efforts to seek out rare and unusual avian sightings, on both land and sea, during the decade of the 1970s are preserved by numerous published scholarly articles and his photographs. His influence persists, even if many contemporary birders did not know him personally, or even know of his renowned reputation. The MD/DCRC is pleased to have this opportunity to acknowledge his ornithological contributions to our region and to educate the birding public on his significant accomplishments.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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