

The Osprey

Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society

President's Perch, April 2013



Greater Roadrunner
Photo by: Tyler Bell

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SAVE THE DATE!

*Osprey Banding Trip
June 18th - 10:30am*



<http://somdaudubon.org/>

I can't believe it has been a year since the last Earth Day! As a kid I always looked forward to this time of year not only because Spring was here and we got to play outside more, but it also meant celebrating April 22 aka Earth Day.

Last weekend I visited the town where I grew up and drove down my old block. My how things have changed, yet still remained the same! The houses seemed much smaller than I remember, but not everything was smaller. That drive down memory lane, well actually 40th Street, brought back memories of Earth Day 40 years ago. The pine tree seedling my brother and I planted as Cub Scouts that couldn't have been more than eight inches tall and was dwarfed by the house now dwarfed the house. The tree was a symbol of the holiday in its early days.

The existence of Earth Day came to be as a byproduct of the Environmental Movement and the anti-war student protests of the late 1960s. The history of SMAS is parallel to it because that same movement led to the beginning of so many conservation and environmental organizations including SMAS. Founded by U.S. Senator from Wisconsin, Gaylord Nelson who thought if he could just harness the energy of the student movement toward the recent rising conscience of air and water pollution it might be able to force environmental protection onto the national political agenda. So Nelson talked Republican Congressman Pete McCloskey to serve as his Co-chair and Earth Day was born. Wow, it was founded by a joint effort of both a Democrat and Republican which would be doubtful in our current political climate. But thanks to bipartisan teamwork, we have come a long way toward saving our planet. The first Earth Day was an environmental "teach in".

We have come a long way toward protecting the planet and conserving our natural resources but we still have quite a way to go. I was recently reminded of this at an environmental education conference where I took a workshop on climate change to learn more about the subject. What an eye opener it was!

It was surprising, but it shouldn't have been, that the reason some people don't believe in global warming is because the propaganda put out by the energy industry, particularly the oil industry. This industry pays their own researchers to paint a picture that favors their message that it doesn't exist over peer reviewed scientific research. After all, if your industry is one of the major contributors to greenhouse gases you may try to minimize the impact of that fact, too. This belief just contributes to already heated partisan debates. Whether you believe it or not, try telling the people of Norfolk, VA it is not real, for they have already seen the affects of sea level rise in their city. By 2100, scientists believe the Norfolk, Hampton & Virginia Beach area will be under water. They have already started planning for it with serious changes in the way the government plans things.

So what will you do to celebrate Earth Day 2013? Will you plant a tree? Will you participate in a community based environmental event? Will you learn what global warming, oops, that's known as climate change now, and what it really is? How about introducing a child to nature? Whatever it is, make a pledge to do something to help the Earth this year. It will feel great and you will be rewarding yourself, your family, and the world. So as I wrap up this message I challenge you to do something special on or for Earth Day this year. Whatever it is, no matter how large or small, remember we only have one planet to live on and once its natural resources are gone so too will we. So go ahead, make a pledge and help make a difference. After all, every vote counts and so does every action.

Naturally,
President Mike Callahan

2013 SMAS Yard Sale

A yard sale is scheduled for **Saturday, May 25th from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.** at Will and Julie Daniel's house located at 6622 Leonardtown Road in Bryantown, MD. If you have donations or can help on the day of the yard sale please contact Julie at 240-518-8006 or by e-mail at juliemdaniel@hotmail.com Please make sure that all donations are in good working order and are clean. Help is always needed on the day of the sale from setting up to cleaning up; it is a busy day but lots of fun! We truly appreciate your help in raising money for our education fund by supporting the yard sale. Over \$800 was raised last year and we hope to have another great day this year!

Directions to the Daniel's house from St. Mary's county: Take Route 5 or Route 235 north to Charles County. Continue on Route 5 past Hughesville. About 3.5 miles north of Hughesville watch for their house on the north side of the road, 1/4 mile north of Ted Bowling Drive. If you get to the intersection at Oliver Shop Road you have gone too far. The house is an old white farm house with a white board fence around the property.

From Calvert County take Route 231 west to Charles County. Follow directions above from Hughesville.

From Charles County go through Waldorf and then take Route 5 south towards Bryantown and Hughesville. In Bryantown, one half a mile past the intersection at Oliver Shop Road do a u-turn and go back north on Route 5, their house is 1/4 mile north of the U-turn. The house is an old white farm house with a white board fence around all of the property.

Flea Market/Yard Sale Committee

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

William Bowen, Prince Frederick
Kathleen Chaney, Accokeek
Amy Davis, Callaway
P. J. Doyle, La Plata
Ruby Marshall, Brandywine
John Micklus, La Plata
Ralph Miller, Lusby
Mrs. W. G. Norris, White Plains
Margery Patten, Owings
Bob Rerecich, Accokeek
Edward Robeson, Lusby
Joan Straub, California
Amaraporn Thongcumshum, North Beach
Jeanne L. Torrence, Leonardtown
Craig Turner, Waldorf

SMAS Offers Beginner's Birdwatching Class At The College Of Southern Maryland

Members of SMAS are teaching this class for the second year! The Life of Birds, PEP-8370 will be offered at the La Plata, Leonardtown Campuses on Thursday nights from April 11 to May 2 from 7-8:30pm. Mike Callahan is teaching at La Plata and Ernie Willoughby is teaching at Leonardtown. The Prince Frederick class is on Friday nights from April 5 – 26 and will be taught by Bob Boxwell. The class ends with a joint birding field trip on Saturday, May 4. To register for the class go to www.csmd.edu/Go/Register

Potomac River Cleanup

It is again the time of the year for the Potomac River Cleanup. This year's cleanup will be on March April 6th from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon, rain or shine.

The site at Marshall Hall Park is again being sponsored by our Southern Maryland Audubon Society. SMAS will furnish drinks and snacks. Representatives will be at the sign-in table and through the park to help with what ever is needed.

Gloves and trash bags are furnished through the Alice Furguson Foundation and Charles County Public Works.

In previous years, many volunteers participated in the cleanup including: students working on their community service requirements, scout troops, church groups, and businesses, as well as residents of all ages interested in the environment in which we live. Every year after the volunteers are done there is such a great difference in the appearance, safety, and usefulness of the shoreline. SMAS hopes that concerned residents will again show up to help heal the Potomac.

If you want further information please contact me.

Site Coordinator - Bob Lukinic - Phone 301-283-6317
[E-mail rlukinic@peoplepc.com](mailto:rlukinic@peoplepc.com)

Bullack's Oriole
Photo by: George Jett



© George Jett

Prince Georges County Council Ignores Slaughter of Wildlife – Chooses Protection of Feral Cats

MEDIA RELEASE

Contact: Robert Johns, 202-234-7181 ext.210, bjohns@abcbirds.org

(Washington, D.C., November 21, 2012) American Bird Conservancy (ABC), one of the nation's leading bird conservation groups, has denounced a Prince George's County, Maryland "Ear-Tipped Cats" bill that was passed by the county Council yesterday. The bill will result in increased wildlife mortality at the hands of ever increasing numbers of free-roaming, predatory, ownerless cats. Despite the fact that opponents of the bill outnumbered supporters in both of the two hearings that were held, the bill – CB-41-2012 – passed by a 7:1 majority.

Ear-tipped cats are feral cats that have been trapped, neutered, and then re-released. The Prince George's County Bill, which was introduced by Council Member Mary Lehman, essentially requires that any ear-tipped cats collected by animal control officers be released as soon as possible back to the areas where they were captured.

In urging rejection of the bill, ABC conservation biologist and Prince Georges County resident Benjamin Skolnik said at one of the hearings that "Cat overpopulation is largely a human-caused tragedy that affects the health and well-being of cats, our native wildlife, and the public. Numerous peer-reviewed, published, scientific studies have shown that outdoor cats, even well-fed ones, kill hundreds of millions of wild birds and other animals each year in the U.S., including endangered species. Birds that nest or feed on the ground are especially vulnerable to cat attacks."

Skolnik cited a peer-reviewed paper authored by Dr. Peter Marra, a research scientist at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute. In his study, conducted in Takoma Park, Prince George's County, he attached radio transmitters to fledgling Gray Catbirds, a common bird species, tracking the factors that led to their mortality or survival. He found that predators were responsible for nearly 80 percent of the bird deaths, and nearly half of those predators were domestic cats. In areas with fewer cats, the fledglings had a survival rate of roughly 50 percent, while only roughly 20 percent survived in areas with more cats.

"In addition to the dramatic effects domestic cats can have on bird populations in urban and suburban areas, TNR is also simply not humane to the cats or people," Skolnik said. "Free-roaming cats are in constant danger of being hit by cars, contracting diseases and parasites, or being attacked by other animals or people. Cats can transmit diseases such as rabies, toxoplasmosis, and cat scratch fever to humans. In fact, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has declared that cats are the top carrier of rabies in domestic animals."

For even the best run TNR colony, practitioners will admit that not all of the cats are trapped for vaccination, and

the cat food left out for them attracts more cats. Colonies often become dumping grounds for unwanted pets, thus continuing the inhumane cycle. This is why feral cats have about one-third to one-fifth of the life span of indoor, owned cats. Perhaps that is why the National Association of Public Health Veterinarians, The Wildlife Society, and the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals have joined ABC in opposing TNR programs.

"Furthermore, an ear-tipped cat is simply not proof that it has been vaccinated. And even if vaccinated against a whole host of zoonotic diseases transmissible to humans, it is highly unlikely these cats receive the necessary booster shots to remain inoculated," Skolnik testified.

Most troubling, there is nothing in the new Prince George's County regulation that says the cats brought in by animal control must be vaccinated before being re-released.

Skolnik also cautioned the Council that federal, state, and local governments have responsibilities to uphold the federal Endangered Species Act and Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and must also carry out their paramount responsibility of protecting public health. Failing to do so can result in legal penalties and civil liability. There have also been numerous reports in the press of a young girl contracting rabies from a feral cat. Transmission via feral cats is a particular public health concern as demonstrated by the large proportion of rabies treatment for human exposures associated with cats. Each year between 30,000-38,000 people are estimated to receive rabies post-exposure vaccination due to a potential exposure.

ABC had suggested that Prince Georges County enact mandatory licensing programs, whereby the fees collected could fund programs to help find homes for the stray and abandoned pets, and educate pet owners about keeping their cats indoors.

Through its Cats Indoors! Campaign, ABC and its many partners encourage people to keep their cats indoors, train them to go outside on a harness and leash, or build outdoor cat enclosures. Cats should never be abandoned. Abandoning cats is illegal in many areas, is extremely cruel to cats, and is detrimental to birds and other wildlife. Further, the sanctioning of cat colonies by local officials only serves to encourage cat owners to dump more unwanted cats at these sites.

"As a society we do not expect to solve dog overpopulation problems by simply turning unwanted dogs loose onto the streets; the same should be true for cats. Ensuring responsible pet ownership is at the core of any long-term solution to the cat overpopulation problem," Skolnik said.

Albuquerque in February by Tyler Bell

Jane Kostenko and I were volunteers at the recent American Birding Association Bird Rally in Albuquerque, NM in late February. We flew into Denver then boarded a regional jet to ABQ, hopping over the Rockies. As we approached Albuquerque, we could see that the mountains east of the city were virtually snow free. We had been there in January, 2004 and it snowed like gangbusters while we were there. Bad for driving, good for rosy-finches.

In '04, we made the mistake of driving to the top of Sandia Crest, elevation 10,678 feet from basically sea level in St. Mary's. We saw Black Rosy-Finches and Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches with throbbing heads from the altitude. We decided to tour Old Town Albuquerque and acclimate this time. We did go there on the first field trip day knowing the forecast was for high winds the second and third days. When we arrived, the bird banders had just arrived and had only seen a single rosy-finch. Knowing that two vanloads of participants would be arriving soon after, this didn't bode well. They arrived but the birds were reluctant. When they finally did come, they flew up from the west face and circled several times before alighting in some trees above the feeders. In a few minutes, they descended en masse to the feeders where everyone enjoyed scope views of all three species (Brown-capped Rosy-Finch was the third of the trifecta). Then, as quickly as they came, they flew off not to be seen again while the vans were there.

We had a couple of target species but the only realistic lifer was Juniper Titmouse, a species that we had missed in all four of the four corners states, even heard them in Utah and New Mexico. This time, we found a relatively cooperative bird at Elena Gallegos Open Space which has extensive pinyon-juniper habitat. We were able to see another bird at the Tijeras Ranger's Station. A nemesis bird finally banished!

On our last day, we ventured west of town to Petroglyph National Monument. We walked to the head of Rinconada Canyon which is edged with black volcanic rocks with many very interesting petroglyphs. We saw several dozen petroglyphs some of which were truly bizarre. Oddly, the area was virtually bird free. The only species we saw there was Sage Sparrow. A very strange sparrow with an amazingly long tail. Because it was so quiet in the canyon, we were able to hear one do a whisper song as it foraged for seeds only a few feet from us.

Rinconada Canyon
Petroglyph National Monument
Photo by: Tyler Bell



Since this was a trip to work and not a destination of choice, we worked more than birded. Our trip list was only 40 species. Still, to see all three rosy-finch species together in a flock of about 80 birds was quite impressive! With Bosque del Apache NWR just to the south of Albuquerque, a visitor could rack up a much more impressive bird list with little difficulty. The moderate temps in late winter were quite welcome and the local birders were extremely helpful and friendly. I'd recommend Albuquerque in the winter any time!

Rosy-Finches
Photo by: Tyler Bell



Rarity Roundup

Common Redpolls have been reported at various locations around Maryland this winter but Kings Landing Park in Calvert has been hosting three birds since January. They've been seen at the feeders at the Chespax office, the gray building immediately past the large building you encounter first when entering the park. Better see them soon before they head back north! First chaseable birds in Calvert, to my knowledge.

A male **Harlequin Duck** was found earlier this winter at Herrington Harbor, in Anne Arundel County. On February 3, the bird was seen from the North Beach pier. This is the first report from Calvert County since 1990. The bird seems to favor an area with a large scaup flock just north of the pier straddling the Anne Arundel/Calvert County line.

An immature **Bullock's Oriole** was found at a private feeder in Harford County on February 11. This constitutes the third record for Maryland and the first to be photographed. Hundreds of birders have seen this cooperative bird which persisted as of press time.

Red, and **White-winged Crossbills** irrupted into Maryland this winter. Southern Maryland was largely bypassed during this event though both species did move through in late November and early December. Some species will be heading back north soon so pay attention to your feeders and particularly sweet gum trees with seed balls as these have been a favorite of both species.

And finally, **Rufous Hummingbirds** were reported in record numbers across the mid-Atlantic this winter. Currently, there are several still visiting feeders in the area. One is in La Plata, one is at Jim Stasz's house in North Beach, and two are at a feeder in Cape St. Claire near the Chesapeake Bay Bridge. Surprisingly, no Allen's Hummingbirds were reported this winter though an Anna's Hummingbird is still visiting a feeder in northern Delaware, a first state record!

“Extinct” Seabird Discovered Breeding 50 Km From Auckland

Researchers are elated to find the sparrow-sized New Zealand storm petrel, thought extinct until 2003, is breeding on Little Barrier Island Hauturu in the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park. The team of researchers is led by Chris Gaskin and Dr. Matt Rayner from the University of Auckland.

The seabird is listed as critically endangered by the International Union of the Conservation of Nature and finding the breeding site is vital for their conservation.

Three specimens of the diminutive 35g seabirds were collected off New Zealand in the 1800s and are held by museums overseas. Since its rediscovery, there has been speculation as to where this seabird breeds.

The team camped on the Poor Knights Islands, Mokohinau Islands and Little Barrier Island using radio receivers to zero in on the breeding site.

“It’s like looking for a needle in the haystack,” said Chris Gaskin. A critical breakthrough came last year when the project team found brood (incubation) patches on birds caught at sea. This determined the timing of incubation in New Zealand storm petrel, the best time to find breeding birds on land.

This year, 24 birds were caught at sea using specially designed net guns and small 1g radio transmitters were fitted to each bird. Automated receivers narrowed down the search. Team members, based at a remote camp on the north coast of the Little Barrier Island, using handheld receivers and spotlights, confirmed that birds were coming ashore under the cover of darkness and moving inland. This prompted moving the search area. Then, when a signal was picked up of a bird stationary in forest at night, team members were able to get a clear fix on where that site was.

Dr. Rayner says: “The site being monitored is very fragile and with birds at a delicate stage in their breeding cycle. We are using automated equipment for the most part and maintaining a hands-off approach, although team members visiting the vicinity have also been keeping watch.”

“On Friday morning a bird was discovered on the ground, possibly having just left its burrow. At the same time team members detected another bird, this one most probably on a nest,” said Chris Gaskin. “It’s an amazing result for our enthusiastic and dedicated team.”

Members of the research team will remain on the island over the coming weeks. Aerial surveys are also being used to try and establish the distribution and size of the population.

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FOSTER PARENTS NEEDED



Southern Maryland Audubon Society sponsors the banding of nestling birds of prey, or raptors, with serially numbered aluminum bands in cooperation with the Bird Banding Laboratory of the U. S. Department of the Interior, as part of our bird research and conservation activities in Southern Maryland. Limited numbers of Osprey and Barn Owl nestlings become available each year for adoption. The gift of \$10 for an Osprey adoption, or of \$25 for a Barn Owl adoption, contributes to a special fund for the support of raptor research and raptor conservation projects. The foster parent receives:

- A certificate of adoption with the number of the U. S. Department of the Interior band, and the location and date of the banding.
- Information on the ecology and migration patterns of the species, photo of a fledgling, and any other information on whereabouts or fate of the bird that may be available.

Interested?

Here’s how to become a foster parent of an Osprey or a Barn Owl. Send \$10.00 for each Osprey, \$25 for each Barn Owl, \$35 for each American Kestrel or \$30 for each Northern Saw-whet Owl to:

Melissa Boyle
10455 Point Lookout Road
Scotland, MD 20687



ADOPT A RAPTOR

Name: _____

Address: _____

I wish to adopt (check one):

- _____ (# of) Osprey, \$10.00 each
_____ (# of) Barn Owl, \$25.00 each
_____ (# of) American Kestrel, \$35.00 each
_____ (# of) Northern Saw-whet Owl, \$30.00 each

Amount Enclosed: _____

Make checks payable to:
Southern Maryland Audubon Society

UPCOMING EVENTS

APRIL 3 – WEDNESDAY – 7:30 p.m.

**Charlotte Hall Library, St. Mary's County
37600 New Market Road (Rt. 6 at Rt. 5), Charlotte Hall, MD
"George's Ethiopia Adventure"**

GEORGE JETT, Photographer and Naturalist

In May 2012 George Jett traveled to Ethiopia in search of wildlife to photograph. His focus was endemic birds and mammals. George decided to ignore the agenda and shoot away at anything that would hold still, and some that did not! Come and see digital photo shots of over 250 species of birds, reptiles, and mammals, including the Ethiopian Wolf. George will also show shots of African landscapes, a glimpse of the culture, and we are sure a humorous discussion of the many experiences he enjoyed and endured.

April 13 - SATURDAY - 8 a.m. – 12 noon – Field Trip

**Maxwell Hall Park, Charles County
"SPRING ALONG THE PATUXENT"**

Leader: Gwen Brewer (301-843-3524, glbrewer@comcast.net)

Come explore the trails in two sections of this county park along the Patuxent River. We will observe birds of the forests, fields, ravines, and marshes, including spring migrants. We will also enjoy lovely views of the river and hopefully some lingering waterfowl. Take Route 231 to Maxwell Drive, just west of Benedict. Follow Maxwell Drive to its end, continuing to the right at the corner with Teagues Point Road. At the end of the road, park along the left side, outside of the gate for Maxwell Hall Equestrian Park. We will meet at the entrance gate. No facilities, no fee. RSVP required- limit 12.

April 27- SATURDAY- 8 a.m. - noon – Field Trip

**Smallwood State Park, Charles County
Youths especially welcome!**

2750 Sweden Point Rd. Marbury, MD 20658

"MULTI-HABITAT BIRDING"

Leaders: Lynne Wheeler (301-751-8097, comstockel@aol.com) and Jean Artes. A favorite park for its varied habitats! The walk will offer you forest interior species, field/meadow species, raptors, wading birds, and gulls. Previous trips have revealed Prothonotary, Hooded and Kentucky Warblers. No reservations required, so you can make a last minute decision! The park meeting location will be posted at the entrance gate. A \$3 per vehicle fee may be required. From Rt. 225/Rt. 224 intersection take Rt. 224 approximately 3 miles to park entrance on the right.

MAY 1 – WEDNESDAY – 7:30 p.m.

**Prince Frederick Library, Calvert County
850 Costley Way, Prince Frederick, MD 20678
"The Miracle Pond"**

MIDDLETON EVANS, Photographer

SMAS is always thrilled to feature renowned photographer Middleton Evans. He has been photographing Maryland scenery and people for over twenty years. Middleton will give a presentation and have available his newly released oversized coffee table book which features nearly 400 photographs taken at Patterson Park's Boat Lake in Baltimore. Beginning in the fall of 1998, and for the following three years, he documented numerous aspects of the Wood Duck's life cycle, waterbirds,

migrating Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, songbirds, and raptors. Nearly seventy species were discovered, an astonishing total for an urban park. Come and enjoy these compelling portraits and dramatic action shots. "The Miracle Pond" would make a great Mother's Day gift!!

May 11 – Saturday – All Day

COUNTY MAY COUNTS

Calvert, Charles, Prince George's, and St. Mary's County
See the other side for details.

JUNE 2 – SUNDAY - 1:30 p.m.

Wolfe's Farm, Charles County

10705 Allens Fresh Road, Charlotte Hall, MD 20622

ANNUAL MEETING

Potluck Lunch.....1:30 – 3:00

Host's Welcome.....3:00 – 3:15

Meeting.....3:15 – 4:00

Bird Walk.....4:00 – 5:00

SMAS is very excited to have the annual picnic meeting at the Wolfe's family farm in Allens Fresh. This is a private farm, not open to the public. Come and appreciate the varied habitats of open meadows, tidal marsh, forest and cultivated fields. The farm is home-managed for wildlife, and you can expect to see Eastern Meadowlark, Grasshopper Sparrow, tanagers, Orchard Oriole, raptors, and woodpeckers. This location is also one of the best spots for Barn Owls. The owner, Nancy Wolfe, was one of our first Raptor Conservation Award winners in 2011 for her partnership with SMAS in raptor habitat protection.

JUNE 18 – TUESDAY - 10:30 a.m. – Field Trip

**Patuxent River Park – Jug Bay, Prince George's County
"OSPREY BANDING TRIP"**

Leaders: Melissa Boyle (443-340-3035, melissaboyle3@gmail.com) and Greg Kearns.

The annual Southern Maryland Audubon Society Osprey Banding Trip is now scheduled for Tuesday, June 18 at Patuxent River Park - Jug Bay. We will meet at 10:30 AM and spend several hours working with Naturalist Greg Kearns on the Patuxent River banding ospreys. This opportunity is limited to 15 participants! Cost is \$12 per person payable the day of the trip. Contact Melissa Boyle (melissaboyle3@gmail.com or 443-340-3035) to register for this trip.

EDITOR: Tyler Bell E-mail: jtylerbell@yahoo.com

The deadline for the Osprey is the fifth of each month. Please send all short articles, reports, unique sightings, conservation updates, calendar items, etc. to the above address.