

The Osprey

Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society

President's Perch, December 2012 –January 2013



*Eastern Towhee
Photo by: George Jett*

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SMAS FALL MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

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<http://somdaudubon.org/>

Happy Holidays fellow SMAS Members! I hope this issue finds you preparing to celebrate the Holiday Season and that you are getting ready to participate in an Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC). If you have never volunteered for a CBC before I hope you will consider it this year. It is a great way to go birding with a purpose. If you are not the most experienced birder, don't worry, it is a great way to learn birds and birding in a fun citizen scientist atmosphere. By now you have hopefully recovered from last month's barrage of negative TV and radio negative political ads of the recent election season. I also hope that the candidates who were elected to office will work together to do what is right for America and not just for their own personal, party or political agenda and that they will be better stewards of the land and its natural resources.

Unlike our U.S. Congress of the past few years, your Board of Directors (BOD) has been working together as a team and has been forging partnerships as an important part of our organization. Working as a team player among our BOD, each of its members not only brings something to the table to share, they also work with other organizations, corporations, government agencies, and as many other partners as possible to further the mission of SMAS with promoting conservation of native bird species and our disappearing natural resources.

With this in mind I would like to ask you to consider being an active part of our organization. There are many ways in which you can contribute to SMAS other than just being a card carrying member. Following are just a few ways you can contribute to be an integral part of our fun team of conservation minded individuals: by being appointed to the position of Secretary, participate in one of our existing active committees, help our new Fund Raising committee by suggesting fund raising opportunities and/or helping implement them, help us prepare for both the spring yard sale and our first native plant sale partnership with the Charles County Master Gardeners. If you would consider taking on our recently vacated secretary position, your duties include taking minutes at our monthly BOD Meetings and then distributing them for our ten meetings each year.

On October 23 we held our first Chick-fil-A Spirit Night fundraiser at the California Chic-fil-A Restaurant in St. Mary's County. We raised \$240 during the 2 hour period. SMAS is starting a new partnership with Dee's Wild Bird Lovers (DWBL) birdseed store in Waldorf. In addition to the 10% discount SMAS Members get on their purchases, we are also starting a birdseed fundraiser with DWBL Owner Mary Ann Scott, too. For every 20 or 25 pound bag of bird seed you purchase, \$2.00 is donated to SMAS. Also Mary Ann has agreed to take on our Book Store. She will set up the store at our monthly meetings as well as sell the merchandise in her retail store. But wait there's more! Mary Ann has also agreed take orders for bird seed and deliver them to you at our monthly meeting. Thank you for all of your support Mary Ann!

So much is happening with SMAS lately. I hope you will decide to be an active part of it. So in the spirit of November's elections, the upcoming Presidential Inauguration, and civic action, I leave you with these words: "My fellow Auduboners, ask not what your Audubon Chapter can do for you; ask what you can do for your Audubon Chapter."

President Mike Callahan

Christmas Bird Count Need Volunteers

The Southern Maryland Audubon Society conducts three Christmas Bird Counts and contributes to a fourth each year under rules established by the National Audubon Society. Since 1901, Audubon Christmas Bird Counts throughout North America have documented changes in numbers of individuals and distributions of species, as land use practices and climate have changed. This year's 113th Audubon Christmas Bird Count will contribute new data to the longest uninterrupted series of bird counts in America, a series that has contributed much to our understanding of how our birds and the environments that they depend on have changed over the decades. Volunteer observers may join field parties, or they may report counts made at their bird feeders. This year, consider joining us December 14 through January 4 to contribute to the counts in southern Maryland. See below for details.

Port Tobacco Christmas Count December 16

by Gwen Brewer

This year, the Port Tobacco Christmas Count will take place on Sunday December 16, 2012. Gwen Brewer will compile the count and host the tally again this year. Please consider helping with the count as you have in the past or as a new participant! We need help both from birders covering sections of the circle and from feeder watchers. Even if you can only spend a few hours, your data from a feeder in the count circle or from a section of the count circle can really help us to better document the birds in our area. The area covered by this count comprises a 15-mile diameter circle centered on Fourth Point on the Port Tobacco River. Myrtle Grove Wildlife Management Area and La Plata are in the northern section of the circle, which extends to Blossom Point, Pope's Creek, and Mathias Point in Virginia to the south. On the west, the count circle includes the Ironsides and Nanjemoy areas, and to the east, Allen's Fresh. Several miles of the Potomac River are included in the count, as well as Nanjemoy Creek and the Port Tobacco River. We have a lot of great habitat areas to cover on this count, and we need your help to do a good job! If you would like to help with the Port Tobacco Christmas Count or have any questions about it, please contact Gwen Brewer at glbrewer@comcast.net or telephone 301-843-3524.

Point Lookout CBC, December 23

by Bob Boxwell

It is hard to believe that it's nearly time for Christmas Bird Counts. So no snow this Halloween instead half of the Jersey shore was underwater. We got a lot of wind and rain out of Superstorm Sandy and cold weather to follow. The fall migrants are here (since I bird by ear mostly). The usual sparrows and kinglets provide interest, while reports of a winter irruption of seed eating novelties is possible.

We have chosen Sunday December 23 as our date for holding the Point Lookout Christmas Bird Count. Still too close to Christmas for some, but better than last year. I

am happy to report that I have already heard from several people new to this count. We can always use more. The area sectors are Point Lookout, Elms, Point No Point, Kitts Point, St. George's Island, and St. Mary's City. Please contact me at bobboxwell@hotmail.com or by phone at 443-404-5549 (h) if you are interested. I would like to nail down assignments by December 19 so please contact me no later than December 16. There will be a tally rally after the count. It's a potluck where we provide spaghetti and meatballs. The location is 49960 Cedar Lane in Dameron (301-872-5998) and we will be there by 5 p.m. Thank you and hope to see you over the holidays.

Patuxent River Christmas Count, December 30

by Andy Brown

The Patuxent River Christmas Bird Count will be held Dec 30, 2012. All volunteers are welcome. The count circle encompasses the lower third of Calvert County and the upper portion of St. Mary's. Varying habitats and ample water access has helped this count average over 100 species on a regular basis. The end of the day tally is held at Boomerangs Restaurant in Solomon's at 5:30 p.m.

To volunteer, contact Andy Brown, telephone 410-535-5327, e-mail: brownaj@co.cal.md.us.

Christmas Bird Count, Fort Belvoir, Maryland Sector, December 30

This year SMAS will be counting each Sunday of the period, with our Fort Belvoir count on the last Sunday, December 30. Come join us as we again survey the Maryland Sector of Virginia's Fort Belvoir count circle. Our territory runs from Fort Washington, south to Naval Surface Weapons Center, Indian Head, including the environs. We cover lots of Potomac River shoreline and its tributaries, as well as woods, fields, and some developed areas. The territory also includes Piscataway National Park, Ferguson Farm, Ruth Swann Park, Chapman State Park, part of the Mattawoman Natural Environment Area and Mattawoman Wildlands, and part of the Indian Head Rail Trail. We always need help, including backyard feeder counters. Reach sector leader, Carol Ghebelian, at 301-753-6754 or ghebelian@comcast.net. And join us for the evening tally rally at our home in Indian Head.

Cool Article And Diagram On Bird Evolution

First ever family tree for all living birds reveals evolution and diversification:

<http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/news/nr/family-tree-birds-evolution-sheffield-university-1.220940?utm>

or

<http://tinyurl.com/birdfamilytree>

Southern Maryland Audubon Society

FALL MEMBERSHIP DRIVE



WIN A CITADEL SQUIRREL PROOF TRIPLE TUBE BIRD FEEDER!!!

Please forward this email to family, friends, or co-workers. The SMAS member who enlists the most new members will receive a new triple-tube bird feeder. (\$30 value)

Forward this email to your fellow bird or conservation lovers. Add your name and contact information (email or phone) to the top of your email. New member, **MAIL YOUR NEW MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION BY NOVEMBER 26TH. Make sure to include the current SMAS member name and contact information.** The final count will be tallied November 30st, the winner will be contacted December 1st and presented with their new feeder at our December 5th "Holiday Round Robin" meeting at the Charlotte Hall Library.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please enroll me as a member of the National Audubon Society. My membership will include membership in the Southern Maryland Audubon Society, the Audubon Magazine, our local chapter Osprey newsletter, and support national and local environmental causes. A fraction of my dues will be returned to the local chapter. Make check payable to National Audubon Society, note chapter code #C9ZL000Z.

Introductory Offer – 1 year \$20
 Senior/Student \$15

Please enroll me as a local member of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society. All of my dues will support environmental efforts in Southern Maryland. I will receive the local chapter Osprey newsletter. Make check payable to Southern Maryland Audubon Society.

Individual/Family 1 yr \$20 2 yr \$38 3 yr \$56
 Senior/Student 1 yr \$15 2 yr \$28 3 yr \$42

Mail to:

Southern Maryland Audubon Society, P.O. Box 181
Bryans Road, MD 20616

Do You Teachers Need To Re-Charge Your Batteries? by Paula Batzer

It will be 10 years ago that I attended the "Field Ornithology Workshop" on Hog Island. Having just completed my 16th year in the classroom as a middle school science teacher, I knew I needed the good jolt that only an adventure can provide. Excitedly, I made my way from Maryland to Maine, more than a bit nervous since I did not consider myself a birder. A gentleman named Scott took our bags and called all of the campers to the boat that would carry us to Hog Island. After welcoming us, he said, "This week will change your life." I felt pretty confident that the statement was an exaggeration. Boy was I wrong! That experience rocked my world, along with everyone else who attended. Only the next day did I learn that our "bell hop" was none other than Scott Weidensaul, author and naturalist extraordinaire. He was one of many, many talented instructors that week.

Rather than tell you the rest of my story, I encourage you to apply for a scholarship and perhaps experience your own adventure to Hog Island. SMAS is now accepting scholarship applications from Southern Maryland teachers, naturalists and environmental educators to attend a summer educational program on Hog Island in Maine. This scholarship will cover tuition, room and board. The recipient is responsible for travel expenses. One scholarship will be awarded for either the "Field Ornithology Workshop" to be held June 16 - 21, 2013 or the "Sharing Nature: Educators Week" to be held July 18 - 23, 2013. For more information see <http://projectpuffin.org/OrnithCamps.html>

To apply, you must be presently teaching in Southern Maryland. Please send a one page letter explaining your reasons for wanting the scholarship and how the workshop experience will be used in your teaching to support the SMAS mission. Your letter must contain your mailing address, email address, phone number and signature. Attach a signed letter of recommendation from your immediate supervisor describing your interests, abilities, and how the experience will benefit your organization and audience. Scholarship recipients will be required to submit the story or report of their experiences within a month of their return. The deadline for applications is February 15, 2013.

Please send applications to:
Paula Batzer
5300 Turkey Tayac Place
Nanjemoy MD 20662

Questions? Email_baxmd@yahoo.com

Cove Point Marsh and Beach, October 14, 2012

by Bob Boxwell

After five days of mostly chilly damp weather I was ready for another cool morning on the beach. Fortunately the weatherman hit it on the head this time and we ended up with a mild slightly breezy morning. My group was several familiar birders and a couple new to me but not to Tyler Bell who had a field trip last weekend to Calvert Cliffs State Park. After a stop for the security check at Dominion's green building we were on our way, having already added Eastern Phoebe and Savannah Sparrow to the list. We had our first two winter migrants when we heard both kinglets and quickly found Yellow-rumped Warblers were everywhere. White-throated Sparrows and a small flock of Pine Siskins also were heard. We walked from the parking area through a shrubby sandy area, where once a titanium mining operation stood, adding Gray Catbird and hearing the first of several Bald Eagles. It is always amusing to inform people that the weak crackling vocalization is really what our nation's symbol sounds like. The scopes came out when we emerged from the clearing and saw the Bay. The water was mostly empty with a lone Ruddy Duck as our early waterfowl. The LNG platform provided lots of roosting spots for cormorants and gulls. We managed to find all the common species but no Peregrine Falcon (known to have nested on the platform) and no Great Cormorants. We walked along the shore looking for a place to peek into the marsh and checking out the chips and chirps in the phragmites. Meanwhile as we tallied Song Sparrow, Palm Warbler, Northern Cardinal, Belted Kingfisher, Canada Goose, Mallards, Black Ducks, Wood Duck, Green-winged Teal, Pied-billed Grebe, a sharpie and an American Kestrel, the call of "Bald Eagle!" rang out every five minutes or so.

We finally got a look at the open water on the marsh and found a small raft of ruddies and unfortunately two Mute Swans. (They will be reported). By this time we had been through some of the marsh grasses planted as part of the Living Shoreline project that Dominion has put in. Walking along the rows an excited shout stopped me "SPARROW!" And sure enough sitting twenty feet away just below the tops of several strands of marsh grass is our target bird, Nelson's Sparrow. Unlike most sparrows you bother to look at this was a pretty bird and even better in the scope. Tyler got a couple of pictures and we had a good five minutes to observe. Since its recent split from the Saltmarsh Sparrow, this was a lifer for more than one of us.

The walk along the boardwalk produced a few other birds, the most noticeable being a grounded Red-tailed Hawk. There must have been something tasty nearby. Retracing our steps back to the beach we added Royal and Forster's Terns and spotted a group of four Northern Shovelers in the marsh. This has been a bugaboo for me in Southern Maryland for decades. Our last species was a lone Common Loon. We finished with fifty three species for the day.

Cove Point Marsh is a very special place. DNR has designated it as a natural heritage area with many rare plant species. A storm had opened a breach in the sand dunes and this unique fresh water marsh was in danger of becoming another salt water embayment. Taking advantage of dredge spoils and some deep corporate pockets, Dominion Cove Point LNG put in a Living Shoreline that is living up to its promise. The grasses and marsh plants put in over the past two years are thriving. The beach is building back up, the marsh is reverting to its fresh water status and we are seeing renewed variety in the bird species that visit this gem. Thank you to the people at Dominion who allowed me permission to lead this trip and to the security staff for their cooperation the day of the trip. It was a pleasant experience all around and one worth repeating.



Alvaro's Suggestions

In the most recent issue of BIRD WATCHER'S DIGEST (November-December), there was an excellent article by Alvaro Jaramillo on what to pack and how to pack when traveling as a birder. The article included some very practical and useful suggestions, and E-bulletin readers are encouraged to obtain a copy of the magazine and read the article for themselves. However, because it is such useful information, we here shamelessly summarize one of Alvaro's recommendations when it comes to traveling with a tripod and telescope.

When flying, pack your tripod with your checked luggage. On many airlines TSA regards a tripod as a potential weapon, in the category of "sporting goods," and as such are not allowed as carry-on luggage. If you use a 45-degree-angled scope, you will also use a shorter, lighter, and smaller tripod. If you pack your scope in your luggage, place it next to your tripod. The tripod will serve as further protection for the scope, and you can wrap the pair with heavy clothing, pants or sweater and even secure the combination with a light bungee cord. Using a TSA-approved lock on your checked baggage is also advisable.

Alvaro's suggestions make good sense.

Birding Community E-bulletin
Paul J. Baicich 410-992-9736
paul.baicich@verizon.net

You can access past E-bulletins on the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) website:
www.refugenet.org/birding/birding5.html

Conowingo Dam Second Annual Bald Eagle Photo Contest!

The Conowingo Dam is holding its second annual Bald Eagle photo contest. It is for amateur and professional photographers alike. The prizes include gift certificates and framing of your work. Submissions must be received by December 31. Photos will be on exhibit in the Conowingo and Muddy Run Visitors Centers.

Here is the link: www.exeloncorp.com/conowingo

Good luck and Happy Holidays!

Kathy Resch - Receptionist
Conowingo Visitors Center
4948 Conowingo Rd.
Darlington, MD 21034
Office: 410-457-2426 | Fax: 410-457-2517
Kathy.Resch@exeloncorp.com
www.exeloncorp.com



Hey! Peck this out :

Wednesday - December 5th

"Holiday Round Robin Social"

Spread your wings and fly to our Holiday Social! Come meet chapter officers, committee chairs, and peck on holiday treats. We will be featuring our new SMAS Gift Store, so come and shop for your human and avian friends!

Charlotte Hall Library 7:30 p.m.

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

November 24- SATURDAY- 8AM-12 Noon – Field Trip Mattawoman Natural Environment Area, Charles County

“EARLY WATERFOWL FROM THE GEORGE WILMOT TRAIL”

Leader: Gwen Brewer (301-843-3524, glbrewer@comcast.net) Come search for migrating waterfowl and songbirds in this prime habitat! Up to 5,000 individuals and 13 different species of waterfowl have been present, including Eurasian Wigeon. On Rt. 224 (Chicamuxen Rd.) off Rt. 225 between LaPlata and Indian Head. Meet in the Lower (2nd) Parking Lot at Lackey High School (left side of Rt 224). Bring a spotting scope if you have one and be prepared for a moderate walk. No facilities and no fee. This is joint trip with the Audubon Naturalist Society. RSVP required.

DECEMBER 5 – WEDNESDAY – 7:30 p.m.

Charlotte Hall Library, St. Mary’s County

37600 New Market Road (Rt. 6 at Rt. 5), Charlotte Hall, MD 20622

“Holiday Round Robin Social”

Come fly to this event and meet your chapter officers and committee chairs, peck on holiday goodies, and if you are still in need of a gift for that hard to buy for person come and see our offerings for your fine feathered friends. Throw in a SMAS t-shirt featuring our “rapturous” soaring Osprey’s and/or purchase an adoption of an Osprey, Barn Owl or Kestrel with our Adopt-a-Raptor program and your bird loving friend or family member will be thrilled!

December 7 AND 14- FRIDAY- 8 p.m. - 9 p.m. – Field Trip

Myrtle Point Park, St. Mary’s County - *Youths especially welcome!*

“WINTER OWL PROWL”

Leader: Bob Boxwell (410-610-5124, bobboxwell@hotmail.com).

Co-sponsored with the Friends of Myrtle Point Park. This annual event attempts to “call out” the resident owls at a local park. Owls are nocturnal and therefore not easy to spot. We will meet in front of the park gates and attempt to attract owls by having them respond to recorded calls. Please dress for the weather, but avoid “noisy” clothing (please no snowsuits!). This event is weather dependent. Rain or high winds will result in cancellation. To find Myrtle Point Park take Rt. 4 in St. Mary’s County to Patuxent Boulevard and follow to the end.

December 14 – January 5

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

See the other side of this program for a description of this event. Please check The Osprey newsletter or go to the SMAS website at www.somdaudubon.org for additional information.

JANUARY 2 – WEDNESDAY – 7:30 p.m.

Battle Creek Cypress Swamp Center, Calvert County

Gray’s Road off of Sixes Road (Rt. 506), Prince Frederick, MD

“Bird Conservation at Southern Maryland IBA’s: An Update”

DAVID CURSON, Director of Bird Conservation, Audubon MD-DC Southern Maryland is home to seven Important Bird Areas (IBA’S), supporting rare and declining species such as Prothonotary Warbler, Red-headed Woodpecker and Whip-poor-will. David Curson, Audubon Maryland-DC’s Director of Bird Conservation, will provide an update on the conservation status and actions in these critical places for birds.

January 6 – SUNDAY – 8 a.m. – 12 noon – Field Trip

Patuxent River Naval Air Station, St. Mary’s County

“WINTER BIRDS AT PAX”

Leader: Kyle Rambo (301-757-0005, kyle.rambo@navy.mil). Trip will feature the typical winter airfield birds such as Snow Buntings, Lapland

Longspurs, Short-eared owls, Horned Larks, Savannah Sparrows, and possibly Wilson’s Snipe and Peregrine Falcon. Pre-registration is required and open to U.S. citizens only. Trip is limited to 10 people. All attendees must bring a photo ID. Meet in the parking lot on the left, just south of NAS Gate 2 (by the Credit Union).

January – 27 - SUNDAY- 8 a.m. – 12 noon – Field Trip

Piscataway Park & Hard Bargain Farm, Prince George’s County

“WINTER WATERFOWL & RESIDENT BIRDS”

Leader: Chris Ordiway (301-203-8014, olebuck@strixvaria.org)

Email communication preferred. This is a prime area for wintering waterfowl. The varied habitat of woods, farm fields, and edges provides a great variety of birds. Take Rt. 210 (Indian Head Highway) to Livingston Rd. (south of Farmington Rd. and north of Rt. 228). Take Livingston Rd. east and meet at Burger King in the Bloom shopping center (15785 Livingston Rd. Accokeek, MD 20607). No facilities and no fee. Limit of 20 participants. This is a joint trip with the Audubon Naturalist Society. RSVP required.

February 2- SATURDAY- 8 a.m. – 12 noon – Field Trip

Jefferson Patterson Park, Calvert County

“WINTER WATERFOWL TRIP”

Leader: Tyler Bell (301-862-4623, jtylerbell@yahoo.com). Open fields and wooded areas can provide good land birding and the river frontage for close views of winter waterfowl. Call or email the leader for directions to the meeting location. RSVP required.

FEBRUARY 6 – WEDNESDAY – 7:30 p.m.

La Plata Volunteer Fire Department, Charles County

911 Washington Avenue, La Plata, MD 20646

“The Four Seasons of Southern Maryland Wild Mushrooms”

RANGER PATRICK BRIGHT, *Manager of the Southern Maryland Recreation Complex, Maryland Department of Natural Resources* Beginning with the spring and moving through winter, we will touch upon a number of the more prominent edible wild mushrooms that can be found in our area. Identification, habitat, “lookalikes”, and cooking and storage recommendations will be addressed. Finally, we will review the extreme need for caution when collecting and consuming mushrooms.

February 16- SATURDAY- 8 a.m. – 12 noon – Field Trip

St. Mary’s County Backyard’s – The Great Backyard Bird Count

“BACKYARD BIRDING & BRUNCH”

Leader: Melissa Boyle (443-340-3035

melissaboyle3@gmail.com)

Join us during the Great Backyard Bird Count as we visit several SMAS member’s homes and backyards to look for birds and have brunch. We will collect data for the count at each location while enjoying a progressive brunch. RSVP required. Directions and locations will be provided upon registration. Carpooling and caravanning is encouraged if possible.

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.