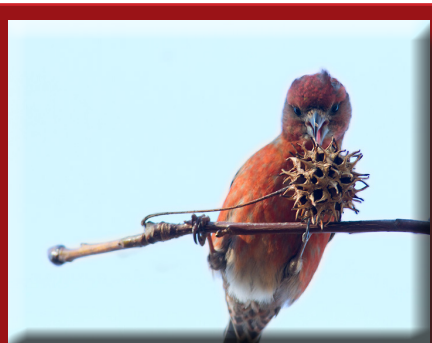


The Osprey

Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society

President's Perch, February 2013



Red Crossbill
Photo by: Bill Hubick

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<http://somdaudubon.org/>

The Holiday Season is over and the New Year is well under way. The embarrassment of the partisan bickering of the "Fiscal Cliff" negotiations is still fresh on our minds. Members of our Congress could not work together to do what was right for America and what we the people elected them to do. Similarly, for the past two years the Charles County Planning Commission hosted a process including design charettes where people from all over the County made comments and shared in vision they saw as the direction of development. This process really seemed like the county was moving in the right direction and our suggestions and voices were being listened to. Then suddenly last year some members of the Planning Commission pushed for a plan that would disregard the citizen input and outcome of those early meetings. It was a plan that was not recommended by the county staff and other professionals based on those public meetings. Instead it was a plan that would fragment so much of the existing green parts of the County. This plan is the one that has recently been suggested by a developer's interest group that even claims their membership includes environmentalists. I hope that by the time you read this, the Commissioners will have listened to the voice of reason, and the people who participated in the design charettes, and will have done the right thing by our environment rather than destroyed it. If not, birds, wildlife and the environment will be worse off.

Unlike Congress and the Charles County government, 2013 will continue to be a year of real partnerships for SMAS. On Wednesday, February 6, 2013, our new fundraising efforts for the year will kick off. New Fundraising Committee Chair Diana Gyuras will host a fundraiser at the Texas Roadhouse restaurant in La Plata prior to the monthly meeting at the La Plata Fire House. A percent of the sales will go to SMAS. See the flyer elsewhere in this edition and take it with you to the restaurant on the 6th. Thank you Diana for taking on this new job! Also on that same night at the meeting our guest speaker Patrick Bright, who will be speaking on mushrooms of Southern Maryland, has informed me that he may bring a chef to the meeting with him who will share how to prepare mushrooms.

Additionally, in the spirit of partnering, two members have considered being an active part of the Chapter and answered the call to serve. Let me introduce you to the newest members of your SMAS Board of Directors. They are Ann Bodling and Mary Ann Scott.

Ann Bodling works for the Alice Ferguson Foundation at Hard Bargain Farm as an interpreter and the coordinator of their children's garden. She was an active Audubon member in a chapter in Pennsylvania before she moved to Southern Maryland. Ann will be speaking at our March meeting and will also introduce you to an exciting new project of SMAS.

Mary Ann Scott is the owner of Dee's Wild Bird Lovers store in Waldorf. She is an active member of the business community in Southern Maryland and speaks regularly at other clubs on bird feeding and has created a program called "Squirrel Wars" which will help you minimize squirrel feeding at your feeder station. If you stop by her shop, ask her to show you the squirrel program. Mary Ann has taken on the responsibility of our book store and has been setting it up at our monthly meetings. The book store is also set up in her shop so you can drop in during store hours and check out the books too.

2013 will continue to be a year of partners and community building for the benefit of birds and wildlife by SMAS. I hope you will consider being a more active partner with us this year. There are so many ways you can contribute to this vital organization, which is Southern Maryland's oldest conservation organization, with 816 members. Don't just be a member on paper, take a step forward and become an active part of our great organization. If you do you will be taking an active role in protecting the natural environment in Southern Maryland and helping ensure our precious natural resources are preserved for future generations of Southern Marylanders.

Naturally, President Mike Callahan

Great Backyard Bird Count Goes Global in 2013

Bird watchers worldwide can take part for the first time

After 15 years of success in North America, the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) will open up to the entire world for the first time in 2013. Anyone, from anywhere on earth, can participate by visiting www.birdcount.org and reporting the kinds and numbers of birds they see during the 16th annual count, February 15–18, 2013.

A joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, with partner Bird Studies Canada, the four-day count typically receives sightings from tens of thousands of people reporting more than 600 bird species in the United States and Canada alone.

“This year’s count will give us a whole new perspective as sightings pour in from around the globe in real time,” said Marshall Iliff at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. “Millions of people encounter birds every day all over the world. Imagine what scientists will learn if each one of us shares observations from our own area!”

During the 2012 count, participants reported 17.4 million bird observations on 104,000 checklists. Snowy Owls thrilled many participants when these striking birds-of-prey ventured south from the Arctic in record numbers. In 2013, scientists predict that U.S. and Canadian bird watchers will see an influx of Red-breasted Nuthatches and winter finches (such as Pine Siskins) because of scarce food supplies on their northern wintering grounds.

“The GBBC is an ideal opportunity for young and old to connect with nature by discovering birds and to participate in a huge science project,” said Gary Langham, Audubon’s Chief Scientist. “This year, we hope people on all seven continents, oceans, and islands, will head out into their neighborhoods, rural areas, parks, and wilderness to further our understanding of birds across the hemispheres.”

Participating is easy. Simply watch birds for at least 15 minutes at the location of your choice on one or more of the count days. Estimate the number of birds you see for each species you can identify. You’ll select your location on a map, answer a few questions, enter your tallies, and then submit your data to share your sightings with others around the world.

The global capacity for the count will be powered by eBird, an online checklist program for all of the world’s 10,240 bird species. Participants will be able to view what others are seeing on interactive maps, keep their own records, and have their tallies recorded for perpetuity.

“The popularity of the Great Backyard Bird Count grows each year,” said Dick Cannings, Senior Projects Officer at Bird Studies Canada, “and with the new features, participation will be even more exciting.”

The Great Backyard Bird Count is sponsored in part by Wild Birds Unlimited.

Deadline Approaches For Hog Island Scholarship For Educators

by Paula Batzer

SMAS is now accepting applications from Southern Maryland teachers, naturalists and environmental educators for a scholarship to attend a summer educational program on Hog Island in Maine. This scholarship valued at nearly \$1,000, 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.

SMAS has a long history of raising funds in order to award these types of scholarships to local educators. Past winners have returned from their experience truly appreciative of the chance to learn from such knowledgeable staff in a unique environment. For more information about these experiences, visit <http://projectpuffin.org/OrnithCamps.html>

Applicants must be educators currently teaching in Southern Maryland. To apply, please send a one page letter outlining your reasons for wanting the scholarship and how the workshop experience will be used in your teaching to support the SMAS mission. Your signed letter must contain your mailing address, email address and phone number. Along with this letter, please include 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 a written 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

New England Crows

They just recently found over 200 dead crows near Boston, and there was concern that they may have died from West Nile Virus. A Bird Pathologist examined the remains of all the crows, and he determined the problem was definitely NOT West Nile Virus, to everyone’s relief. However, he was also able to determine that 98% of the crows had been killed by impact with large trucks, and only 2% were killed by car impact. The State of Massachusetts hired an Ornithological Behaviorist to determine the reason for the disproportionate percentages for the large truck versus car kills. The Ornithological Behaviorist determined the cause in short order. When crows eat road kill they always set up a lookout crow in a nearby tree to warn of impending danger. His conclusion was that the lookout crow could say “Cah”, but he could not say “Truck.”

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

Marilyn S. Baggett, Leonardtown
Eric Bargar, Mechanicsville
Thomas Beeman, Hollywood
Joann Bostic, Chesapeake Beach
Ethel Carlow, Lusby
Horace Carmichael, Lusby
Deborah S. Clair, Piney Point
Chloe Cline, Leonardtown
Daniel Coleman, California
Lorraine Coleman, Temple Hills
Carl Dalton, Hollywood
Elaine W. Darby, Huntingtown
M. Donovan, North Beach
Doris Dunn, La Plata
George C. Dyson, La Plata
Jeanette J. Dyson, Suitland
Deloris Ellison, White Plains
Janice M. Fields, Bryans Road
Mrs. Mary K. Grafton, Clinton
D. J. Griffin, Lusby
Thomas Gunning, Waldorf
Annette Jackson, Fort Washington
Margaret Jacobs, Solomons
Nancy Joseph, Lexington Park
Betty Klug, Park Hall
Edward D. Koskie, Huntingtown
Michael Langton, La Plata
James P Long, Accokeek
Sally Mack, Cobb Island
Craig Makufka, Accokeek
Gordon Miller, Temple Hills
April Mills, Owings
Theresa Montgomery, Chesapeake Beach
Karola E. Nelson, Fort Washington
Caitlin & Riley O'Leary, Huntingtown
Richard Pardo, Fort Washington
Liz Rand, Waldorf
Ms. Nancy S. Reid, Accokeek
Sally M. Rowland, Solomons
Karen Russell, Leonardtown
Maureen Schriber, Prince Frederick
Dorothea Smart, Huntingtown
Estella Thomas, Huntingtown
Janet Tolbert, Fort Washington
Lesley Urgo, St. Mary's City
Judy Wallace, Lexington Park
Linda Welch, Port Tobacco
Gisela Whalen, Waldorf
Kenneth J. Wilson, Hollywood
Sarah Yeats, Lusby

Going with the Drift of Things *by Jane Klemer*

Feet disengaged,
Sidewheeler geese
Float single file before the West wind.

SAVE THE DATE!

OSPREY BANDING TRIP - June 18, 2012- 2:00 PM

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 2:00 PM and spend several hours working with Naturalist Greg Kearns on the Patuxent River banding ospreys. This opportunity is limited to 15 participants! Cost is \$10 per person payable the day of the trip. Contact Melissa Boyle (melissaboyle3@gmail.com or 443-340-3035) to register for this trip.

Landscaping for Wildlife with Native Shrubs *by Ann Bodling*

Whenever people ask for help in creating a yard that supports wildlife, I often suggest planting a variety of native shrubs that will serve as food, cover and nesting sites for birds and nectar and pollen sources for bees, butterflies and moths. Most of our native shrubs bear fruit in the form of berries and if we pay attention to ripening times, we can have berries as food sources from June through most of the winter. As an added bonus, the shrubs listed below are lovely in the landscape, boasting showy flowers in the spring and vibrant colors in the fall. Keep in mind that, though we naturally think of berries as food for birds, because these shrubs are native to this area, they will attract and support the insects that many of our songbirds feed upon during the summer.

First to flower and to fruit are the serviceberries, with billows of white flowers in the spring followed by deep purple berries in mid to late June. Elderberry berries ripen later in the summer and are wonderful for pollinators and birds as well as people, followed by the rest of our fruiting shrubs: red-twig dogwood, red and black chokeberry, dogwood, spicebush, our native viburnums (arrowwood, blackhaw, American cranberry bush, and possum haw) all of which have berries that ripen from late summer into fall. Shrubs holding berries into and through the winter include our native hollies, winterberry and the various sumacs, as well as American holly trees.

The more room we have in our landscape, the greater our choices about which and how many shrubs we may be able to plant and sometimes we may have places to plant that we had not recognized as such before. Planting along property lines can become a hedgerow- a corridor for safe movement among the shrubs and a literal feast of insects and fruit. Planting beneath existing trees allows for a natural relationship between canopy and understory, mimicking conditions found in the wild and planting in groups is preferable to scattering specimen plants here and there. When we plant for wildlife in mind, we are rewarded many times over in the beauty of the birds and pollinators, but also in the beauty of the plants themselves.

If you are interested in learning more about the joys of planting for wildlife, please come to our March meeting, entitled Habitat for All.

Adventures with Saw-whets at Point Lookout by Melissa Boyle

For about six weeks this past fall, as most folks were sitting down to dinner and going about other evening activities, a team of volunteers went to work “saw-whetting” at Point Lookout. As the sun went down, the mist nets were opened and the audio lure started “tooting” out the distinct call of the Northern Saw-whet Owl. The newly established Saw-whet Owl Banding Station at Point Lookout is one of several stations across the state, all part of Project OwlNet (www.projectowl.net.org). The Point Lookout Station is the newest, opening for the first time in 2012, and the only Saw-whet Station in Southern MD; however the stations at Assateague and Garrett County have been operating since the early 1990’s.

As planning began for the station during the summer, there was much work to be done, clearing an area for nets, gathering necessary supplies, all while wondering if we would really find any Saw-whets here at Point Lookout. Northern Saw-whet Owls are migrants and will pass through Maryland during their fall migration. If they were found in far Western Maryland and on the Eastern Shore, then surely they passed through Southern Maryland, too.

On October 16th, only the second night of opening nets at Point Lookout, we were able to confirm that yes, Point Lookout (and Southern MD) is part of the Northern Saw-whet Owl’s migration path! That night, Point Lookout’s first three Saw-whets were given their tiny, shiny metal numbered bands and set on their way. By the end of the season, we had been open 25 nights and logged 139 hours of open nets between October 15th and November 29th, with a brief interruption for Hurricane Sandy. Those nights yielded a total of 52 Northern Saw-whet Owls! Two of those owls were foreign recaptures, meaning they had previously been banded somewhere else. After reporting those band numbers, we found one had been banded in 2011 in Massachusetts and the other had been banded just weeks before in Pennsylvania, by Scott Weidensaul’s group. As of yet, none of the owls banded at Point Lookout have been reported to have been found by any other stations south of us, but there’s always next year!

Northern Saw-Whet Owl
Photo by: Melissa Boyle



And speaking of next year, we hope to get new nets before the fall, as the nets used in 2012 were old nets borrowed from another station. The net array at Point Lookout included 4 nets in 2012, but could be expanded to 5 or 6 nets next fall. Each net costs about \$100, so we are looking

for grants, donations and sponsors in order to purchase the new nets. You can also support this project, as well as other Raptor Conservation Projects in Southern MD by “Adopting a Raptor” with the Southern Maryland Audubon Society.

If you would like more information, or to volunteer or assist with the Saw-whet Banding Station, please contact Melissa Boyle at melissaboyle3@gmail.com.



Northern Saw-Whet Owl
Photo by: Melissa Boyle

Fort Belvoir, Maryland Sector, CBC, December 30, 2012

The wind howled between 20 and 50 mph and George Harrington could hardly keep his scope and tripod upright as he counted waterfowl overlooking Mattawoman Creek at the Wilmot Trail. He sent his partner, Angela Marlow, back into the woods to escape the harsh winds. All the 25 field counters (in 8 parties) fought the wind and cold but at least it was a clear day and the sun was warming. Birds were smart enough to hide from us much of the day. We still found 81 species, a low from our 85 average, and counted 13,209 individuals. Best birds of the day were an out of range Swallow-tailed Kite and a late Blue-winged Teal.

Despite the weather, twenty-four species of waterfowl were found. Gwen Brewer and George Jett again found a late Blue-winged Teal in Piscataway Creek as they did in 2010. They also excelled in getting our only Rock Pigeons! George Harrington spied the only Horned Grebe and American Coot of our count. Ted Baker with Ghebelian-Wheeler at Mattawoman Park found the lone Great Egret. American Black Ducks (242) seemed to be making a recovery.

Raptors shied from the winds but we are reporting 39 Bald Eagles, to be further screened by Kurt Gaskill, the Virginia circle compiler. Lynne Wheeler and Carol Ghebelian were astonished and delighted to have a Swallow-tailed Kite cross Mattawoman Creek during their watch, thanks to Lynne’s sharp eyes. This is the first Kite sighting in the Ft. Belvoir count, according to Gaskill. Owls were quiet in the morning winds. Bob Lukinic found the Screech-Owl in his yard box, again for nearly 20 years now. Mike Callahan donned his marsh boots to check the Wood Duck boxes

continued on page 5

in Chapman State Park's marsh and found a sleeping Screech-Owl amidst Blue Jay feathers. Bob also spotted a Great Horned Owl near the park at the close of the day. Red-headed Woodpeckers were found by Chris Ordiway's party at Hard Bargain Farm and at the Indian Head Rail Trail. The rail trail was counted late in the day so numbers were down from early morning counts of past 2 years; 11 were totaled.

Cedar Waxwings (44) were found by only 2 parties; a casualty of the paltry berry crop this season no doubt. Both our Virginia friends counting at Fort Washington and Brewer/Jett found a lone American Tree Sparrow. Northern winter finches were represented by a flock of Pine Siskins that the Callahan team found eating gum ball seeds on Jenkins Drive, and one of the pair of Red-breasted Nuthatches freeloading at the Ghebelian feeder for many weeks now. Among misses were Eastern Phoebe, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Rusty Blackbird, and alas Northern Bobwhite last seen by us in 2004.

Thanks to all for the good participation, including the 2 warm and toasty 2 feeder watchers, and for the food and fellowship at the tally rally.

Carol Ghebelian, MD Sector Leader

Calvert County Master Naturalist Program

Our Mission: To engage citizens as stewards of Maryland's natural ecosystems and resources through science-based education and volunteer service in their communities.

Would you like to learn about Maryland natural history and the environment? Meet others who share your enjoyment of the outdoors? Learn and share your knowledge through volunteer service? Become a better steward of Maryland's resources? The please take a look at the Maryland Master Naturalist Program (<http://masternaturalist.umd.edu/>).

Based on the successful Master Gardener program, Calvert County is offering its first training to be a Master Naturalist. Supported by the county Extension Service, Battle Creek Cypress Swamp Nature Center, American Chestnut Land Trust, and Cove Point Natural Heritage Trust registration is now open for classes beginning in February.

Starting with the basics of ecosystems and science the course builds your knowledge of local nature through classes on insects, birds, weather, mammals, fish, herps, and invasive species. Field trip and hands on learning help facilitate your understanding (and enjoyment) of the process.

Individuals accepted into the Master Naturalist training course receive 52 hours of classroom instruction and 8 hours of hands-on experience outdoors (60 hours total training) specific to Maryland's Coastal Plain. The course fee is \$250 per person. For more information please go to <http://masternaturalist.umd.edu/coastal%20plain.cfm>.

Bob Boxwell

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

January – 27 - SUNDAY- 8 AM – 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 AM – 12 noon – Field Trip
Jefferson Patterson Park & Museum, 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 PM
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 AM – 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.

March 2- SATURDAY- 8 AM – 12 noon – Field Trip
Patuxent River Naval Air Station, St. Mary’s County
“LATE WINTER LAND BIRDS & WATERFOWL”

Leader: Dean Newman (240-895-7321, dean.newman@verizon.net)
Meet at the Park and Ride lot across the street from the Lexington Park Post Office on Tulagi Place. This trip has produced Lapland Longspurs, Snow Buntings, Short-eared Owls and waterfowl in the past. Facilities and no fee. You must pre-register for this trip in advance. Call the leader for reservations and security details. RSVP required.

MARCH 6 – WEDNESDAY – 7:30 PM
Waldorf West Branch Library, Charles County
10405 O’Donnell Place, Waldorf, MD 20603
“A Habitat for All: Landscaping for Birds, Pollinators and You”
ANN BODLING, Hard Bargain Farm Children’s Gardener and Farm Hand

SMAS is very pleased to have this follow-up to Ann’s April 2011 program on planting with native plants. Ann will now take us further along in educating us that home landscapes can be refuges for people and creatures both. Come and learn how to landscape using pollinator plants, plants for birds, and other valuable plant species.

March 8- FRIDAY- 8 PM – Field Trip
Private Farm, Charles County Youths especially welcome!
“OWL PROWL”

Leader: Mike Callahan (240-765-5192, raptorsrule@juno.com)
On this night hike we will listen and look for owls in Charles County. A great family night outing! Due to the sensitivity of possible nesting owls, the meeting location will be given upon registration. RSVP required.



Fundraising Night!

February 6, 2013 4PM - 10PM

Bring this flyer and
TEXAS ROADHOUSE in LA PLATA

Will donate **10%** of sales to
SOUTHERN MARYLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY



So come eat at your favorite restaurant
and support a great cause!



301-392-9471
103 Drury Drive
La Plata MD, 20646

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.