

The Osprey

Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society



Cedar Waxwing
Photo by: Bill Hubick

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<http://somdaudubon.org/>

A Pine Warbler In My Hand by Donna Shoemaker

About the middle of December, I noticed a yellow bird in my yard. I have American Goldfinches in the spring and summer and knew it was not the same bird. I have Eastern Bluebirds wintering over and I feed them mealworms. This Pine Warbler kept flying near me every day very unafraid. Every day I put mealworms out for the bluebirds. The Warbler followed me. Four days ago I decided to hold out my hand with the mealworms, camera ready with the other hand and waited. In less than five minutes this little guy swooped down and grabbed a mealworm. The next day, I held up my hand and he landed on my hand, grabbed a mealworm and flew off only to come back for four more. The third day, he actually sat on my hand and ate five mealworms without leaving my hand. He did the same thing today. I identified him by looking in the Stan Tekiello Birds of Maryland and Delaware book. I knew immediately he was a Pine Warbler. I belong to the Anne Arundel Birding Facebook group and asked for anyone to tell me what bird he was. Pine Warbler on all responses.

This morning, January 10, I went outside, freezing rain going on, I opened the back door took one step out, and the Pine Warbler flew up to the gutter overhead and waited. I held out my hand with mealworms and he flew right down. He sat there and ate five mealworms this time. I had four dogs outside with me. He is a brave and hungry little fellow.

Well I learned something today (January 11). My Pine Warbler that feeds out of my hand does not like a white sweater. He wanted so badly to land on my hand but was scared and I couldn't figure out why. Well, I went in and put on my black coat, held out my hand and he flew right down. I guess from now on I need to make sure I wear all black when I want to hand feed this little guy. He doesn't mind the wild hair...but he does mind a white sweater. LOL



Pine Warbler
Photo by: Donna Shoemaker

See this video! <https://www.youtube.com/embed/xqodm7Rh3O0?list=UUDnFinHwU2kZpvXTmAN9tYw>

Field Trip Report for Mattawoman Natural Environmental Area, Charles County

On November 23, 2013, our joint Audubon Naturalists Society/Southern Maryland Audubon Society group of about 20 set out on the George Wilmot Trail to enjoy this beautiful area. We were fairly lucky on the weather, although the temperature had taken a drop compared to the day before and the wind was blowing from the northwest. The water levels were up and so far there had not been the truly cold weather we have had of late, so there were not as many ducks present as in some years for this trip. Still a great day to get out and we did have a good variety of ducks! In all we had 13 species of waterfowl, including Canada Goose, a few Tundra Swans, American Black Duck, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Northern Pintail, Mallard, Hooded Merganser, and Ruddy Duck. The wide section of the Mattawoman at the end of the trail was not so busy today except along the western edge, perhaps because of the wind and water level. Hundreds of pintails and flocks of teal were loafing or feeding along the northern edge across the way from our vantage point, mixed in mostly with Mallards, American Black Ducks, and Canada Geese. We were rewarded with Gadwall, wigeon, ring-necks, a few Ruddy Ducks, Lesser Scaup, and "hoodies" along the far end of the section to the east, still a challenge to reach due to the greenbriar growth and also some downed trees. Other water-associated birds included Great Blue Herons, Pied-billed Grebes, American Coot, and a single Double-crested Cormorant. We were pleased to see a Northern Harrier cruising low over the marsh to the north and also had Killdeer in the exposed mud edges. Bonaparte's Gulls flew by soon after we arrived at the water's edge, and Ring-billed and Herring Gulls also passed by. Bald Eagles were active in the area but did not disturb the ducks much today, and a Belted Kingfisher made a few flights by us as we worked our way through the ducks.

On our walk to the Wilmot Trail and on the trail itself, we picked up a few of our winter visitors: Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Dark-eyed Junco, White-throated Sparrow, Hermit Thrush, and Winter Wren. It was a good day for woodpeckers, with all seven "possibles" seen, including several Red-headed Woodpeckers closer to the water. White-breasted nuthatch, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Eastern Bluebirds, American Robins, Northern Cardinals, and Song Sparrows were also seen and/or heard as we walked through the woods or along the road edge. A Sharp-shinned Hawk made a swift flight past as we worked our way back to our cars.

We ended the morning with 51 species and some delicious bread brought by Carol Gheblian. Thanks to all who came on the trip and to Carol for organizing the joint trip! Don't forget to check this area out next November!

Gwen Brewer, trip leader

A Special Thanks!!

Southern Maryland Audubon Society would like to chirp in a special thanks to Cut Sheets, LLC of Owings, MD. Their generosity and timely response in providing SMAS with the printing of our seasonal Programs has been greatly appreciated. Please support this wonderful small business.

Cut Sheets, LLC
665 Keith Lane
Owings, MD 20736
(301) 576-4279



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Have you seen a Snowy Owl this winter? A major irruption doesn't happen that often in our lifetimes so now is the time to see one! Please read the accompanying article about the irruption by Paul Baicich. Community involvement is needed for this project!

Project SNOWstorm* is a collaborative research effort by Project OwlNet, the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art and many independent researchers, agency and organizational partners. We are working together to learn more about the historic snowy owl irruption of 2013-14.

*SNOW is the four-letter code that bird banders and birders use for the Snowy Owl.

<http://www.projectsnowstorm.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/projectsnowstorm13>



Snowy Owl at Wildwood Crest, NJ

Photo by: Sam Galick

Have A Green New Year! Tyler Bell

Wondering how to turn over a new, green leaf for 2014? Here are some tips. You know the conservation mantra, Reduce, Re-use, Recycle? Did you know that they're ranked in order of importance? If all you're doing is recycling, you can do more!

Car

The easiest way to reduce fuel consumption is to make sure your tires are properly inflated. You can be wasting as much as 10% more. To put it simply, if gas is \$3 per gallon, it's like you're paying \$3.30 per gallon. It adds up.

Second, slow down. Drag coefficients increase exponentially as a car increases speed over about 55 to 60 mile per hour (mph). Most traffic lights are set at 55 mph so going over the speed limit gets you to a red light faster. The speed limit in most of Maryland is 55. How can you justify speeds in excess of 55? Because everyone else is doing it? If everyone else didn't, think of the fuel savings! The driver's handbook states that exceeding the speed limit by 20 mph constitutes reckless driving and carries a stiff penalty. I challenge you to set your cruise control near the speed limit. Another way to save fuel!

Idling. Don't. Most people think idling is zero miles per gallon (mpg). It's actually negative mpg because any positive mileage is being eroded by burning fuel and not moving. Modern cars use very little gas upon startup so that if you are going to be idling for more than 15 to 30 seconds, you will save money by turning off your car. First thing you should do when you put the car in park is turn off the ignition.

Never accelerate to a stop. Coast. When you start doing this, you will become better about predicting when you can coast then resume accelerating once traffic starts moving again. Wasting momentum costs gas.

Fog lights aren't necessary when it's not foggy. Turn them off. Headlights or any kind can use about 1% of a car's energy.

Roof racks create drag and can reduce efficiency by about 2%. If you're not hauling your bike, luggage or kayak, take the rack off the roof.

If you drive a Prius and you're not getting at least 50 mpg, you're doing it wrong.

Home

The most energy intensive thing in your house is heating and cooling. If you have a programmable thermostat, and I believe you can get them free from SMECO (<http://www.smecocoolsentry.com/>), make sure to set it back while you are away at work. Leave it set back when you're on vacation. Every degree you turn the thermostat down (in winter) and up (in summer) will save you 2% on your electric bill! Also, set it back overnight. Use an extra blanket to compensate. The recommended winter temperature setting is 68. If you go lower, you will recognize even more savings. Summer temperature is 78. Set it higher during the day while you're gone.

The next energy hog is the water heater. If the water is too hot to the touch on full hot, it's set too high. Usually the lowest temperature setting of about 125°F is more than adequate. When you go on vacation, you can turn off your electric water heater entirely, flipping it back on once you return. Also, wrap your water heater to keep the heat inside.

Lighting is the third big energy user in your home. Replace incandescent bulbs with either compact fluorescent bulbs, or CFLs or better LED lights. LED lights can last up to 25,000 hours and use less than 10% of equivalent incandescent bulbs. For more info, go to this link: http://www.energystar.gov/certified-products/detail/light_bulbs

You can practice one simple conservation rule in the home: No Light Left Behind. An empty room doesn't need to be lit so turn off the lights when you leave unless you are using a CFL and will be back in less than 2 minutes.

Also, do you use flood lights for outdoor lighting? Typically, these are dual 250 watt incandescent lights. Leaving them burn all night long uses a lot of electricity. Put a motion sensor on them to reduce consumption dramatically.

Vampires! Yes, they're in your home. The power adapters that are ubiquitous for charging phone, laptops, etc. If you touch them, even when they're not charging their designated appliance, they're warm. That means they're using electricity. Unplug them when not in use.

Finally, your computer. There are many ways to cut down on electricity consumption by your computer. First, turn it off at night. Turn off printer, speakers and monitor when not in use. Use power settings to automatically turn off the monitor after a few minutes of inactivity. Some computers have a hibernate button for longer periods of inactivity. Run a browser window with www.blackle.com to darken your screen. White uses more, black uses less. You can achieve this also by setting the background to black.

Recycling

If you live in Charles or St. Mary's County, you're in luck with regard to comingled recycling. You can basically recycle everything except Styrofoam, or polystyrene. Calvert is a little less accepting but has an excellent recycling program. If you have quantities of metal or car batteries, there might be a scrap metal recycling facility near you that will give you cash! When we go to our transfer station, we typically have one grocery bag of trash and several bins of recycling, per week. Composting will reduce your trash load as well.

We can all pitch in to reduce our carbon footprint one way or another and doing any of the above will go a long way!

hearts pump wings beat hearts
cry vibrato honks chorale
their nature in joy

by Dale Louise Rancy
Jul 13, 2012

2014 Great Backyard Bird Count

The 2014 GBBC will take place Friday, February 14, through Monday, February 17. Please join us for the 17th annual count!

<http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/whycount.html>

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are. GBBC checklists can be accepted from anywhere in the world!

Everyone is welcome—from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event. It's free, fun, and easy—and it helps the birds. Participants tally the number of individual birds of each species they see during their count period. They enter these numbers on the GBBC website.

New participants must set up a free GBBC account to submit their checklists or use login information from an existing account for any other Cornell Lab citizen-science project. You'll only need to do this once to participate in all future GBBC events. Click "Submit Your Bird Checklist" at the top of this page or see "How to Participate" for more details.

As the count progresses, anyone with Internet access can explore what is being reported. Participants may also send in photographs of the birds they see for the GBBC photo contest. A selection of images is posted in the online photo gallery.

Why count birds?

Scientists and bird enthusiasts can learn a lot by knowing where the birds are. Bird populations are dynamic; they are constantly in flux. No single scientist or team of scientists could hope to document and understand the complex distribution and movements of so many species in such a short time.

Scientists use the GBBC information, along with observations from other citizen-science projects, such as the Christmas Bird Count, Project FeederWatch, and eBird, to get the "big picture" about what is happening to bird populations. The longer these data are collected, the more meaningful they become in helping scientists investigate far-reaching questions, like these:

- How will the weather influence bird populations?
- Where are winter finches and other "irruptive" species that appear in large numbers during some years but not others?
- How will the timing of birds' migrations compare with past years?
- How are bird diseases, such as West Nile virus, affecting birds in different regions?

- What kinds of differences in bird diversity are apparent in cities versus suburban, rural, and natural areas?

For highlights of past results, visit the Summaries section of this website.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is led by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, with Canadian partner Bird Studies Canada and sponsorship from Wild Birds Unlimited.

snow cake pagoda,
memories pancaked, iced cold
birds fly through silence

by Dale Louise Rancey
Jul 13, 2012

Remarkable Snowy Owl Invasion

An invasion of Snowy Owls first began to be noticed in late November, and it has been in motion ever since. By now birders, conservationists, and the general public are practically all aware that an epic irruption of Snowy Owls is currently in progress. . The event has been most obvious in southeastern Canada, the northeastern U.S., and the Midwest. This is possibly the largest event of its kind in recent memory.

Right now, the tail end of the 2013-2014 Christmas Bird Counts is likely uncovering many of these birds, some of which have been truly remarkable in terms of the numbers present or the locations where they have been found. Some birds have been spotted as far south as the Carolinas and Missouri, and others have been even more astounding.

Here's a report and photo of one on Bermuda:

<http://bernews.com/2013/11/snowy-owl-spotted-on-bermuda-roof/>

Early on, hundreds, yes hundreds, were found on the Avalon Peninsula on one weekend in southeastern Newfoundland, south of St. John's:

<http://brucemactavish1.blogspot.com/2013/12/300-snowy-owls-in-newfoundland-weekend.html>

The overall phenomenon was explained and illustrated well (with a helpful map) by the eBird crew at the Cornell Lab in mid-December:

<http://ebird.org/content/ebird/news/gotsnowies2013/>

But what probably gripped national attention most vividly was the recent controversy at JFK airport in New York City.

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There, in early December, Snowy Owls, that were attracted to the tundra-like landscape of the airport were shot in the interests of maintaining air traffic safety.

On 10 December, the popular Today Show on NBC broadcast this story, along with thoughtful comments by John Fitzpatrick of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and a video of the release of a Snowy Owl that had been caught by Mass Audubon's Norman Smith at Logan International Airport in Boston and released at Parker River National Wildlife Refuge. This highly effective relocation program has been in place in Boston for over 30 years. You can view this TV broadcast at:

www.today.com/video/today/53788217/#53788217

Apparently, the complaints - in the form of letters, phone calls, and petitions - were significant enough that the Port Authority in the NYC area responded with a commitment to develop a plan to trap and relocate Snowy Owls that could potentially pose a threat to aircraft at JFK and LaGuardia airports. The Logan International Airport experience clearly represents a viable protocol:

<http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2013/12/09/report-port-authority-targeting-snowy-owls-at-jfk/>

The outcome has been encouraging, since the concern over the shooting "solution" went far beyond the birding community, into the general public.

The Snowy Owl experience at airports is quite different from bird-strike incidents involving Canada Geese, European Starlings, and gulls, most of which are flocking species that represent proven and potential hazards to aircraft and passenger safety. One only need recall the dramatic "Miracle on the Hudson" with US Airways flight 1549 in 2009 involving a flock of Canada Geese to envision the consequences.

Snowy Owls represent potentially different problems at airports, primarily because the owls typically involve solitary individuals, certainly not flocks.

The encouraging resolution of the recent Snowy Owl experience in the NYC area is a start at resolving the issue, but is by no means an end. What should be considered next is a taskforce - perhaps involving the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the current Bird Strike Committee USA - to move toward an enforceable nationwide policy. Addressing the impact of Snowy Owl occurrences at airports, and then incorporating the successful model pioneered at Logan International Airport, is long overdue.

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

Southern Maryland Audubon Society **ADOPT-A-RAPTOR**

Foster Parents Needed!!



The Southern Maryland Audubon Society supports raptor conservation and research projects in the Southern Maryland area through the "Adopt-A-Raptor" Program. The program currently includes four species: **Osprey, Barn Owl, American Kestrel and Northern Saw-whet Owl.** Each bird is banded by a licensed bander with a serially numbered metal band, in cooperation with the U.S. Bird Banding Laboratory. A limited number of birds are available for adoption each year!

NEW FOR 2013!! "Adopt-A-Nest" now available for Osprey, Barn Owl & Kestrels!

Adoptive "parents" will receive:

A certificate of adoption with the bird's band number, and location and date of banding.

Information on the ecology and migration patterns of the species

Any other pertinent information that may become available

Your support helps provide:

- Barn Owl Nest Boxes
- Osprey Nesting Platforms
- Kestrel Nest Boxes
- Mist Nets or Banding Supplies

Complete the form below to "Adopt-A-Raptor" with the Southern Maryland Audubon Society

Mail completed form to: *Melissa Boyle, Adopt-a-Raptor, 10455 Point Lookout Rd. Scotland, MD 20687*

Name: _____
as it should appear on Adoption Certificate

Address: _____

I wish to adopt:

- _____ (# of) Osprey, \$10 each / \$25 per nest
_____ (# of) Barn Owl, \$25 each / \$50 per nest
_____ (# of) Northern Saw-whet Owl, \$30 each
_____ (# of) American Kestrel, \$35 each / \$75 per nest

Amount Enclosed: _____

Make checks payable to: Southern Maryland Audubon Society

UPCOMING EVENTS

January 26 – SUNDAY – 8:00 a.m. – Noon

Field Trip

Piscataway Park & Hard Bargain Farm

Prince George's County

“WINTER WATERFOWL AND RESIDENT BIRDS”

Joint trip with the Audubon Naturalist Society!

Leaders: Mike Callahan (raptorsrulemc@gmail.com, 240-765-5192),

Michael Patterson (301-752-5763)

This is a prime area for wintering waterfowl. The varied habitats of woods, farm fields, and edges also provide great variety of birds. Take Rt. 210 (Indian Head Highway) to Livingston Road. Take Livingston Road east and meet at the Burger King in the Food Lion Shopping Center (15785 Livingston Road, Accokeek, Maryland 20607). No facilities. No fee. Limit of 20 participants. RSVP Required. This is a joint trip with the Audubon Naturalist Society.

February 5 – WEDNESDAY – 7:30 p.m.

Monthly Meeting Program

Battle Creek Cypress Swamp Center, Calvert County

Gray's Road off of Sixes Road (Rt. 506),

Prince Frederick, MD

“A NIGHT IN BELIZE”

Andy Brown, Naturalist

Andy Brown is the Senior Naturalist for Calvert County, and founder of Caretta Nature Tours. In June, he led a trip to Belize to assist biologists from the Gales Point Wildlife Sanctuary to collect data on the largest nesting beach in Belize for endangered Hawksbill Sea Turtles. Andy's slides will offer a glimpse of the tropical flora and fauna of this beautiful Central American country.

February 9 – SUNDAY - 8:00 a.m. - Noon

Field Trip

Jefferson Patterson Park, Calvert County

“WINTER WATERFOWL TRIP”

Leader: Tyler Bell (jtylerbell@yahoo.com, 301-862-4623)

Open fields and wood areas provide good land birding, while the river front provides for great close views of winter waterfowl. Call or email the leader for directions to the meeting spot. RSVP required.

February 15 – SATURDAY – 7:00 p.m.

Field Trip

Private Farm, Charles County – Youth Welcome!

“OWL PROWL”

Leader: Mike Callahan (raptorsrulemc@gmail.com or 240-765-5192)

On this night hike, we will look for and listen for owls in Charles County. A great family night outing! Due to the sensitivity of possible nesting owls, the location will be given upon registration. RSVP required. Suggested donation of \$5.00 per person.

March 1 – SATURDAY - 8:00 a.m. – Noon

Field Trip

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

“LATE WINTER LAND BIRDS AND WATERFOWL”

Leader: Dean Newman (dean.newman@verizon.net, 240-895-7321)

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 and Short-Eared Owls in the past. Facilities are available. No fee. You must pre-register for this trip in advance due to security details. Call the leader to register. RSVP required.

March 5 – WEDNESDAY – 7:30 p.m.

Monthly Meeting Program

La Plata Volunteer Fire Department, Charles County

911 Washington Avenue, La Plata, MD 20646

“Gull I.D.”

Clive Harris, Enthusiastic Guller

“To the Sea, To the Sea! The white gulls are crying” or maybe to the parking lot or dump! Come and enjoy an evening learning how to identify gull species that are expected in our area, both common and rare. Clive will review plumage transition, breeding plumages, plumage variation, hybrid combinations, and other approaches in what is one of the most challenging and subjective puzzles in bird identification.

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

John M. Bidne, Huntingtown
Rasheeda Brown, Lusby
Clifford Burdette, Hollywood
Alan Christian, Dunkirk
James Corby, Cobb Island
Elizabeth Czarra-Haskell, St. Mary's City
Shauna Dominguez, Charlotte Hall
Warren J. Krug, Dunkirk
Potomac Branch Library, Indian Head
Jessice Lante, Hillcrest Heights
Deborah Liedbetter, St. Inigoes
Richard P. Mc Coy, Fort Washington
Ann Miller, Lusby
Jeffrey Moore, Hollywood
Rose Pflaum, La Plata
Joanne Simmons, Lusby
Ford Sine, Morningside
Lisa Sperka, Pomfret
Shawn Tagg, Waldorf
Pat Tyndall, North Beach
Rosemary Ury, Lusby
Andrea Watters, Great Mills
John Zimmerman, St. Leonard

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.

2013-2014 Officers

President, Mike Callahan (240-765-5192)
Vice-President, Michael Patterson (301-752-5763)
Secretary, Lynne Wheeler (301-743-3236)
Treasurer, Will Daniel (301-274-5756)