

# The Osprey

*Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society*

## NORTHERN PLAINS FLOODING

*by Tyler Bell*



**Osprey**  
photo by Bill Hubick

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<http://somdaudubon.org/>

Jane Kostenko and I flew into Minneapolis in early April planning on visiting some of her family on our return trip from North Dakota. Fields near Minneapolis looked fairly normal but as we got further west, we began to notice larger and larger snow banks. When we crossed the Red River into North Dakota, it became apparent that this was an exceptional snowfall winter. Jane's family in Minot, ND, had been telling us about the huge snow drifts that they had been dealing with all winter. There were piles of snow so high that regular cars had a hard time seeing safely around corners at intersections. While we were there, the snow melted a couple of feet due to combined higher temperatures and periodic rainfall.

We decided to cut the hypotenuse of the triangle formed by Jamestown, Bismarck and Minot to save miles. This was a series of roads that I had never been on before. Water was dangerously close to some of the two lane roads and there were occasional barriers in place along the edges of the road to keep the water from encroaching further. During our stay, we read about some of the towns that we drove through having flooding issues. Ice dams suddenly gave way due to tremendous water pressure built up behind them causing flash floods. Houses pedestaled in the middle of rising waters. Two hunters swept away in rushing water. It was truly incredible to see how much water was standing in fields and in creeks and rivers that usually run at a sedate pace.

One of the benefits to us as birders was that all of the snow had held up waterfowl migration. As we drove from Jamestown to Minot, we saw incredible flocks of geese. Here in Maryland Ross's Goose and Cackling Goose are somewhat of a rarity (see George Jett's photo of Charles County's first Ross's Goose!) but in the central flyway, Ross's Geese constitute about 10% of the white goose flocks. Cackling Goose is also about 10% of the Canada-type geese. As we drove west, we saw probably 250,000 geese in constant strings often stretching across the entire panorama of vision. At one location, we witnessed a white goose tornado. A huge cloud of Snow and Ross's Geese were swirling down out of the sky to land in a stubble field. I bet it even showed up on Doppler radar!

We were about a week early for the Greater White-fronted Goose migration, though. As we headed back east, we saw a couple of flocks of dark geese that were almost assuredly white-fronts (speckle bellies to the local hunters) but traffic and rain made it unsafe to pull over on the interstate to get a closer look. One of our birder friends in Minot says that starting around the second week of April you can usually find pure flocks of 75 to 100 white-fronts at a time when most of the Snow/Ross's and

*continued* .....➔

Canada/Cackling Goose flocks have moved north. Some other time I suppose.

Due to our scheduled meeting with Jane's family in Minneapolis, we drove east on Sunday, April 10. Monday April 11, they closed I-94 due to flooding from the Red River. We barely squeaked by on that one. I'm not sure exactly how we would have gotten back to Minneapolis to catch our flight but I suspect it would have been a lengthy detour.

## REPORT FROM THE BOARD

The following are highlights from the March 30, 2011 board meeting held at the Charlotte Hall Library.

The newly designed Osprey Tee-shirts will make their first appearance in Leonardtown at Earth Day scheduled for April 17. Fly to the SMAS booth and snatch one up!

The board was presented with additional information regarding the Mid-Atlantic Power Pathway. Focus was on the project's true environmental impact to wetlands and loss of forest. SMAS agreed to continue to monitor the project and continue to seek information.

The remainder of the board meeting concentrated on the following:

- Advertisement for the Tailgate Bird Count fund raiser scheduled for April 29, April 30 and May 1. Sign up your team now and download your Circle Captain's Start-Up Kit at <http://www.somdaudubon.org/tailgate.html>
- Speakers and locations for the 2011-2012 Programs.
- The Raptor Committee presented its final list of recipients for a Certificate of Appreciation.
- The board chose the SMAS Conservation Award recipient which will be presented at the annual meeting in June.
- The need for new nominees to the board for the upcoming 2011-2012 calendar. The board has openings for Directors and Officers (Vice-President and/or Secretary). Please let us know if you are interested in becoming a more active participant in SMAS by coming to our upcoming board meeting.

The next board meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 27 at the Charlotte Hall Library at 7 p.m.

*Enjoy the Spring Migration!*

## ROSS'S GOOSE IN MORGANTOWN, CHARLES COUNTY

*by Tyler Bell*

On March 19, Joe Turner and Leslie Starr were birding in Morgantown, Charles County and reported a Snow Goose to MDOsprey, the Maryland bird discussion email group. Ron Gutberlet and Jim Green were birding the same area on March 26 when Ron noted:

"The bird of the day came in the afternoon, in Morgantown in Charles County. The flock of Canada Geese by the small pond here contained a single, adult Ross's Goose! We got photos of what may be the first record of this species in Charles Co. We called George Jett, and he and Gwen [Brewer] were able to come down to see the bird. George got additional photos, which are surely an upgrade from the documentation shots that I took."

In a follow-up email Ron said, "I should mention that [Joe and Leslie's] MDOsprey report was on my mind when Jim and I approached Morgantown. I thought I saw something white among the Canada Geese out of the corner of my eye as we drove into town and knew that we'd want to have a look based on your report. Jim and I scoped the water and only then drove down the dirt road to check out the geese. Believe it or not, I joked with Jim on our way down the road: "What if it's a Ross's Goose?" This was just some delirious talk after too many hours of birding; so imagine our surprise! We were more than a little excited."

George Jett verified that this is indeed the first county record for Charles! Interestingly, the Maryland/DC Records Committee had just voted to delist Ross's Goose in Maryland. George was excited that the Morgantown bird was still reviewable because the meeting minutes haven't been made public yet. Snuck that one in under the wire!



**Ross's Goose**  
photo by George Jett

# NEW REPORT ANALYZES THE IMPACT OF FERAL CAT PREDATION ON BIRDS AND OTHER WILDLIFE

Steve Holmer

bcalist@lists.abcbirds.org  
Bird Conservation Alliance

A new, peer-reviewed study titled *Feral Cats and Their Management* by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, analyzes existing research on management of the burgeoning U.S. feral cat population – over 60 million and counting – including the controversial practice of Trap, Neuter, Release (TNR).

“This report is a must-read for any community or government official wondering what to do about feral cats. It encapsulates the extensive research on this subject and draws conclusions based on that data. Not surprisingly, the report validates everything American Bird Conservancy has been saying about the feral cat issue for many years, namely that TNR doesn’t work in controlling feral cat populations,” said Darin Schroeder, Vice President for Conservation Advocacy for ABC.

“Communities seeking a solution to their feral cat problems need to consider the science on the issue and the full humane picture. Birds and other native animals don’t deserve to die at the hands of a predator introduced into their environment by irresponsible pet owners. A humane decision-making process on this issue must also recognize that feral cats live short, miserable lives because of disease, other predators, severe weather and traffic hazards. Their life expectancy is less than one third that of owned cats,” Schroeder added.

As a result of these findings, the report authors stated that they do not recommend TNR as a method to control feral cats. In their extensive research, they were unable to find a single real-world example of TNR succeeding in eliminating a feral cat colony.

Some of the many findings of the report include:

- Feral cats are invasive and pose a threat to native fauna and public health.
- Three separate studies showed that 62 to 80 percent of feral cats carry the parasite responsible for toxoplasmosis – a condition of special concern to pregnant women.
- Feral cats impacts to birds can be calculated at 17 billion dollars per year.
- Feeding feral cats increases the chances of diseases being transmitted.
- Cats are responsible for the extinction of at least 33 species of birds.
- Feral cats kill an estimated 480 million birds in the U.S. each year.
- Cats kill far more native wildlife species than invasive species.
- Cats will kill wildlife no matter how well they are fed.
- The life expectancy of a feral cat is 3-5 years as opposed to 15 years for owned cats.

American Goldfinch  
photo by Bill Hubick



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## Mellow Yellow

by Jane Klemer

Goldfinches in spring plumage  
Mimic the brilliance  
Of my daffodils.

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Green Heron  
photo by Bill Hubick



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## Double Occupancy

by Jane Klemer

Green Heron claims the penthouse  
At the beaver lodge –  
And sits for a spell.

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## GROUPS TELL CONGRESS: GET TOGETHER AND GET GULF RESTORATION DONE

Port Sulphur, LA - On BP Oil Disaster Anniversary, Groups Tell Congress: Get Together and Get Gulf Restoration Done

BP fines should be used to restore Gulf environment and economy

(Port Sulphur, La.—Apr. 20, 2011) On the first anniversary of the BP oil well blowout, regional and national leaders urged Congress to hold BP accountable by passing legislation to dedicate BP's Clean Water Act (CWA) fines to restoring the Gulf's damaged environment and economy.

Under current law, fines paid by BP and others responsible for the spill automatically will be deposited into the Federal Treasury, instead of being used to help restore the Gulf region.

U.S. Senators Mary Landrieu (D-La.) and David Vitter (R-La.), Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.), U.S. Rep. Steve Scalise (R-La.) and U.S. Rep. Kathy Castor (D-Fla.) have introduced four separate bills that would dedicate 80 percent of Clean Water Act fines to restore the Gulf Coast's environment and economy.

"These members of Congress deserve credit for recognizing that BP's fines for the oil spill should be invested in restoring the Gulf, where the damage was done, not in the Federal Treasury," said Larry Schweiger, president and CEO of the National Wildlife Federation. "The environment and economy of the Gulf region rely on each other to be strong and vibrant. We're calling on leaders in Congress, particularly from the Gulf region, to get together and get restoration done for the Gulf."

The anniversary event featured a boat tour to show oil spill damage in Barataria Bay and Bay Jimmy and aerial tours of Wax Lake Delta, which shows that rebuilding wetlands is possible. The Wax Lake Delta is the unexpected creation of a 1941 flood control project in which the Army Corps of Engineers dug a canal to Atchafalaya Bay from the Atchafalaya River. As a result, the Atchafalaya River sediment built 25 square miles of new land in the Wax Lake Outlet.

"The Gulf is injured certainly, and will be for some time, but it is not without the possibility of recovery in the long term" said Chris Canfield, vice president of Gulf Coast Conservation and the Mississippi Flyway for the National Audubon Society. "If we can marshal the energy of fear and concern we all felt a year ago and turn it into resolve – into a Congressional mandate for Gulf restoration – we can do wonders."

Nearly nine out of 10 poll respondents (87%) across the five Gulf states agree that the environmental health of the

Gulf Coast region affects their state's economy very much or somewhat. (Lake Research Partners and Bellwether Research and Consulting)

"Without a strong and shared vision by our regional congressional delegations to dedicate fines to the Gulf Coast states, fine monies will wash away into the Federal Treasury," said Anne Milling, founder of Women of the Storm. said Anne Milling, founder of Women of the Storm. "We thank Representatives Scalise and Castor and Senators Landrieu, Vitter and Nelson for their bipartisan unity on this crucial issue, and we encourage other members of Congress to follow their example."

Environmental degradation has caused tremendous damage to the Gulf ecosystems in recent decades. The region has lost nearly 50 percent of its wetlands, 60 percent of its sea grass beds, 50 percent of its oyster reefs, and more than 32 percent of its mangrove forests. (The Nature Conservancy)

"Given our huge budget deficit, Clean Water Act fines are the most viable, short-term funding mechanism for the long-term restoration of the Gulf Coast that President Obama promised ten months ago 'to restore the unique beauty and bounty of this region'," said Paul Harrison, senior director of Mississippi River Delta Restoration Project for Environmental Defense Fund. "Congress must hold BP accountable for the environmental and economic damage it caused from the worst oil spill in U.S. history by dedicating the Clean Water Act fines to Gulf Coast restoration and ensuring BP pays the bill for the Natural Resources Damage Assessment."

This BP oil disaster could cost the Gulf region's tourism industry alone \$23 billion in lost revenues, according to a study by Oxford Economics.

The Gulf region is a vital part of the nation's economy, and critical Gulf industries rely on environmental restoration:

The Gulf currently supports a \$34 billion per year tourism industry, and its fisheries support an estimated \$22.6 billion dollars in seafood and commercial and recreational fishing-related activity. (Oxfam America/Center for American Progress)

The Gulf produces roughly 40 percent of all the seafood in the lower 48 states.(National Marine Fisheries Service)

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## TSUNAMI EFFECT ON MIDWAY ATOLL

by Tyler Bell

Derek Richardson or Laurel, MD, noted on MDOsprey an online news article that he had seen which relates to a well known SMAS luminary, Chan Robbins.

"A news story with a local connection appeared on Yahoo (and possibly elsewhere) describing the incredible longevity of a Laysan Albatross that our very own Chan Robbins (ornithologist with the U.S. Geological Survey) banded back in the \*fifties\* on Midway Atoll (North Pacific):

[http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20110308/ap\\_on\\_fe\\_st/us\\_oldest\\_bird\\_5](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20110308/ap_on_fe_st/us_oldest_bird_5)

Chan wrote me to say that both this bird (named Wisdom) and her chick survived the nighttime tsunami on Sand Island from the Japan earthquake, but sadly several thousand other chicks were washed away. However, the first U.S. nesting of Short-tailed Albatross this winter on Eastern Island did survive (adults and chick), so that at least is good news."

Another email from a coworker of mine had a link to a blog from someone working on Midway Atoll before, during and after the tsunami. He has lots of photos of the carnage but the good news, if you can call it that, is that the nestling from the first nest of Short-tailed Albatross away from Japan, and a globally endangered species, survived the wash-over. A word of caution, nature is cruel. Add to that human debris, and some of the photos are quite gruesome. Start at the bottom of the blog and scroll upward as the newest posts are at the top. Or start at the top then work your way back in time if you so choose!

<http://peteatmidway.blogspot.com/>



**Acadian Flycatcher**  
photo by Bill Hubick

## FOSTER PARENTS NEEDED



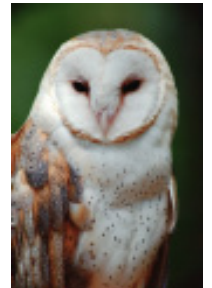
Southern Maryland Audubon Society sponsors the banding of nestling birds of prey, or raptors, with serially numbered aluminum bands in cooperation with the Bird Banding Laboratory of the U. S. Department of the Interior, as part of our bird research and conservation activities in Southern Maryland. Limited 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, or \$35 for each American Kestrel to:

**Melissa Boyle**  
**10144 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

Amount Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Make checks payable to:**  
**Southern Maryland Audubon Society**

## MAY EVENTS

April 23 – Saturday – 8 AM (2/3 day)  
Western Charles County – Field Trip  
“CHASE!”

Leader: George Jett (301-843-3524, gmjett@comcast.net). Starting from Pt. Tobacco, and cruising around the lower western side of Charles County. Will meet for car-pooling in La Plata. Contact leader for details. Possibility of 100 species in April! Bring lunch, drinks. Bathrooms along the way. No fee. Limit 10, RSVP required.

May 4 – WEDNESDAY - 7:30 p.m.

La Plata Volunteer Fire Department, Charles County  
911 Washington Avenue, La Plata, MD 20646  
“Birds, Bats and Other Treats of Trinidad”

GWEN BREWER and GEORGE JETT, Southern Maryland Audubon Society Members

Explore the biodiversity of Trinidad through beautiful photographs and discussion from a 10-day visit to this tropical island. The speakers traveled with Bat Conservation International founder Dr. Merlin Tuttle and utilized the world famous Asa Wright Nature Center as their base. With the help of mammal expert and author Fiona Reid, ably assisted by local guide Jeffrey Gomes, many delights were seen and much was learned about the natural history of Trinidad. The list of birds, bats, and other animal and plant groups is astounding for such a small place. Come join us for a snapshot of what this lovely and safe island has to offer.

May 7 – Saturday – 8 AM - noon

Battle Creek Cypress Swamp, Calvert County – Field Trip  
Gray’s Road off Sixes Road (Rt. 506), Pr. Frederick, MD  
“BARRED OWLS AND PROTHONOTARY WARBLERS”

Leader: Andy Brown (410-535-5327, brownaj@co.cal.md.us) Target species include Prothonotary, Hooded and Kentucky Warblers, as well as other notable spring migrants. Particular emphasis will be on identification by song. From Prince Frederick, Rt. 2/4, 2 miles, right onto Sixes Rd. 2 miles, left onto Gray’s Rd. Nature Center entrance on the right. Facilities, no fee. RSVP required.

May 14 – Saturday - All Day

COUNTY MAY COUNTS

Calvert, Charles, Prince George’s, St. Mary’s Counties  
Help needed from all: backyard birders, beginners, team leaders. This data helps save our birds! County coordinators are as follows:

Calvert: Sue Hamilton (410-586-1494,  
seal10n2002@yahoo.com);

Charles: George Jett (301-843-3524,  
gmjett@comcast.net);

Prince George’s: Fred Fallon (301-249-1518,  
fwfallon@earthlink.net);

St. Mary’s: Bob Boxwell (401-394-1300),  
bobboxwell@hotmail.com.

May 21 – Saturday – 8 AM - noon

Smallwood State Park, Charles County – Field Trip Youths especially welcome!

2750 Sweden Point Rd, Marbury, MD 20658

“LATE MIGRANTS”

Leaders: Jean Artes and Lynne Wheeler (301-743-3236,  
fidsruschic@aol.com)

Visit one of our favorite parks. Especially good for forest interior birds but also Red-headed Woodpecker, late waterfowl, shorebirds, and late neotropical migrants. From Rt. 225 at Mason Springs, go south on Rt. 224 (Chicamuxen Road) about 3 miles to park entrance on right. Facilities, \$3 per vehicle fee. RSVP required.

May 28 – Saturday – 8 AM - noon

Cove Point Marsh, Calvert County – Field Trip

“SHARP-TAILED SPARROWS”

Leader: Bob Boxwell (443-404-5549, bobboxwell@hotmail.com)

Cove Point beach and marsh were a unique habitat on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay. A Living Shoreline project is attempting to restore the fresh water marsh after a massive breach and salt water incursion. We are targeting sparrows and other marsh inhabitants and migrants. This is a restricted area and we are limited to ten guests. Reservations are required at least one week prior to the trip.

JUNE 5 – SUNDAY – 1:30 p.m.

The Elms Environmental Education Center,  
St. Mary’s County

49300 St. James Church Road, Dameron, MD 20628

ANNUAL MEETING

Potluck Lunch 1:30-3:00

Host’s Briefing 3:00-3:30

Business Meeting/Elections 3:30-4:00

Bird Walk 4:00-5:00

Bring your family, friends, and a favorite food dish and join us at this wonderful environmental center along the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay. Directions: From the North: Take Rt. 235 south, turn left on St. James Church Rd. (2 miles beyond Spring Ridge Middle School) and continue straight until St. James Church Rd. ends.

June 29 – Wednesday – 1 PM –?

“OSPREY BANDING BOAT TRIP”

Leader: Greg Kearns

We will meet at Patuxent River Park no later than 1p.m. Bring a lunch, water, camera, hat, and sunscreen. Contact Melissa Boyle (melissaboyle3@gmail.com) to sign up. Spaces are limited. Reservations taken on a first-come, first-served basis. Ages 12-Adult. Fee.

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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.

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