

The Osprey

Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society



American Toad
Photo by: George Jett

In This Issue

2013 Scholarship Winners

Bird Blitz at Cove Point

Help the Herps

Owl Prowl

Rarity Roundup

Upcoming Events

SPRING NATIVE PLANT SALE

May 11, 2013

See page 5 for details



<http://somdaudubon.org/>

President's Perch, May 2013

Another SMAS year has passed and it is time for our Annual Meeting again. This is when we hold our annual picnic and meeting somewhere in Southern Maryland. It is also when we elect out new Officers and Board of Directors. We also award our conservationist of the year and raptor conservation awards. We also hold a bird and nature hike during the event. Have you ever attended this annual event? If not you have been missing out on a great time! Members from all our region come together to celebrate the season and the friendships they have made over the years through SMAS with a potluck meal. If you have never attended I hope you will consider being there. In fact this year it will be held on a beautiful private farm an Allen's Fresh. It is a scenic natural place with a front seat to marshes, fields and open water, Ospreys, Bald Eagles, Great Blue Herons and the beauty of Southern Maryland.

So what have you got planned this summer? Are you taking a vacation out of town or hanging locally on a stay-cation? Well as you plan your summer I would like you to start thinking what you will be doing and how you will do things. Will you be thinking greener this year? Not only thinking about reducing, reusing and recycling like we all do when we think of being green. Well I have a summer homework assignment for you and I am going to take the challenge too. I would like you to consider it means to be "truly green"! What can we do in our daily lives to make a real difference for the planet. Over the summer find out as much as you can about the true meaning or "Green", and in my September Presidents Perch I will share with you what I learned. You can compare notes with me and see how similar what we learned was. I hope that you will also share with me what you have learned.

So now you have your assignment! Go to it, learn and then tell others what you have learned. Don't be surprised at what you learn for there is a lot of information out there. Who knows, perhaps our results will be rather eye opening.

Naturally,
Mike



Great Blue Heron
Photo by: Bill Hubick

2013 SMAS Yard Sale

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

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

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

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

Flea Market/Yard Sale Committee

News of the Weird

Kyle Rambo (Conservation Director) reports that a domestic Swan-Goose has been hanging around on the beach at Fishing Point at the Patuxent River Naval Air Station. It is exhibiting what appears to be mating behavior and may be imprinted on a plastic park bench that washed up on the beach there. It's in love with a piece of furniture! Ah, spring is in the air.

2013 SMAS Scholarship Winner

Congratulations to Craig Makufka, winner of the 2013 SMAS scholarship to one of the National Audubon Society's weeklong camps on Hog Island, Maine. Craig, an educator at Hard Bargain Farm Environmental Center in Accokeek, MD, will attend the "Field Ornithology Workshop".

"I am very pleased to have been chosen for this amazing scholarship opportunity," Craig said of the honor. Since 2011, he has worked as a Naturalist at Hard Bargain Farm, which operates under the Alice Ferguson Foundation. Craig interprets ecosystems, food, water, and energy cycles for elementary-aged children through engaging and hands-on activities in the outdoors.

Craig moved here from his home state of Pennsylvania for the opportunity to become a Naturalist at the Alice Ferguson Foundation. He loves educating the children that come to Hard Bargain Farm and feels fortunate to work at a place that provides an opportunity for kids to learn and get up close and personal with farm animals and the natural environment. Craig enjoys making the outdoors a fun and exciting place for kids to visit.

Craig attended Clarion University in western Pennsylvania, where he graduated with a B.S. in Biology, with wildlife biology as his area of interest. He has been involved in three bird research projects that have developed his passion for birding. Craig has helped research population density and breeding success of grassland sparrows (including Grasshopper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, and Henslow's Sparrow) at a recently resurfaced strip mine. He has participated in similar studies of Seaside and Saltmarsh Sparrows in marsh habitat at Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. Locally, Craig has performed extensive research focusing on West Nile Virus at various locations throughout the Baltimore and DC metro areas. Habitats ranged from completely urban (The National Mall) to completely forested (Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary). The species under investigation ranged from Neotropical migrants to year-round residents. He mist-netted, drew blood samples, and leg banded every bird caught in the project's mist-nets (1100 individuals from 70 different species).

Craig is constantly trying to develop his skills as a naturalist and educator. The experience at the Hog Island Ornithology Workshop will make a difference as he influences a great number of children. Craig takes great personal pride in giving kids an exciting outdoor experience, which he hopes will have a lasting positive effect on them.

Bird Blitz at Cove Point, Summer 2013

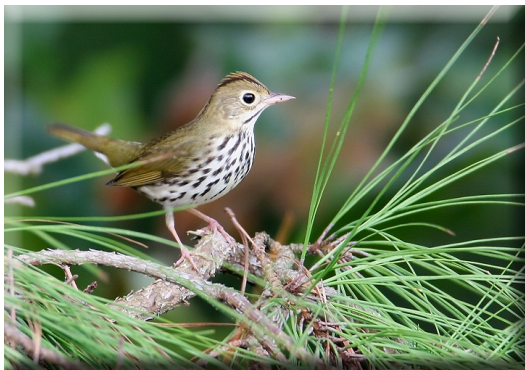
By David Curson

This summer, Audubon Maryland-DC and Cove Point Natural Heritage Trust will be partnering to conduct Bird Blitz surveys at the Cove Point LNG terminal property and Calvert Cliffs State Park, and Southern Maryland Audubon Society members are invited to participate. The purpose of the bird Blitz surveys is to determine whether the forests in the Cove Point vicinity, which total more than 2,000 acres, qualify as an Important Bird Area (IBA). To read more about Important Bird Areas in Maryland see the Audubon Maryland-DC website at <http://md.audubon.org/important-bird-areas-2>

Bird Blitz is a citizen science-based breeding season count of targeted at-risk bird species which is used to determine whether an area supports the minimum populations necessary to be an IBA. Audubon Maryland-DC has identified 42 IBAs in Maryland so far, and the network is almost complete. Many of these sites have been identified using Bird Blitz data, and SMAS members have helped with Bird Blitz surveys across Maryland in recent years.

At Cove Point, Bird Blitz surveys will target forest bird species such as Wood Thrush, Kentucky Warbler, and Worm-eating Warbler during May and June. David Curson, Director of Bird Conservation at Audubon Maryland-DC and Bob Boxwell, Director of Cove Point Natural Heritage Trust, will design a number of survey routes and then run these routes once during early mornings in the peak breeding season. The Bird Blitz surveys at Cove Point are made possible by a generous grant to Audubon Maryland-DC from the Cove Point Natural Heritage Trust. Audubon will use the data to assess the site in a statewide bird conservation context and then compile an IBA nomination if the data suggest that the site may qualify.

Anyone is very welcome to join us to help with the surveys and learn about the birds of this forest site. Survey dates and meeting places will be announced on the MD-SMAS listserv. If you are interested in taking part in this year's Bird Blitz at Cove Point contact David Curson at: dcurson@audubon.org or 410-558-2473



Ovenbird
Photo by: Bill Hubick

Rarity Roundup

A **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was found at the Jacob's Farm section of Pt. Lookout State Park on March 31. This is a bird that is typically not site specific and stayed true to reputation and was only seen that day. This is the third report for the species in St. Mary's County in the last three years!

Mikey Lutmerding was birding along Camp Brown Road, about a mile north of the Yellow-headed Blackbird location, on March 24. There is a muddy farm field there that historically attracts large numbers of snipe. Common Snipe was split by the AOU many years ago in a long overdue decision. The Old World species remained Common Snipe while the American version became Wilson's Snipe. Mikey photographed a candidate for Common Snipe. His bird displayed the very pale underwing that is not characteristic of Wilson's Snipe. Despite extensive searching by multiple people, the bird was not relocated.

On April 3, Elaine Hendricks was birding at the Elms public beach and noted 3 **American White Pelicans** on the pond nets to the north of the Elms Environmental Education Center. Other observers noted up to eight birds there the next day. Efforts over the weekend found Brown Pelicans there. Jacob Williams, a ranger at Pt. Lookout State Park, noted American White Pelicans on the Potomac side of the park on April 6. Apparently they are wandering and hard to pin down!

Hummingbirds at Home to Launch April 10

Audubon's newest Citizen Science program, Hummingbirds at Home, will be launching April 10! This accessible and family-friendly new program seeks to gather data documenting hummingbird migration and feeding habits nationwide.

A toolkit to help Chapter leaders explain and publicize the new program is available at <http://bit.ly/WNN151>

Photo resources are available online at <http://bit.ly/WVM8Z5> and we will be creating an online press kit that we will share closer to launch.

And, as part of the promotion, all Centers and Chapters are welcome to host screenings of the NATURE film "Hummingbirds: Magic in the Air" at no charge. We will be making copies of the film that includes a welcome from David Yarnold available beginning April 10 – copies can be requested from Lynne Hoppe, lhoppe@audubon.org.

Note that this program will be the focus of the May 1 SMAS meeting at Battle Creek Cypress Swamp!

Help the Herps

The Natural History Society of Maryland (NHSM) and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) are conducting a five-year atlas of the amphibians and reptiles of Maryland. The study began in 2010 and runs through 2014. The project is called the Maryland Reptile And Amphibian Atlas (MARA) Project.

Amphibians and reptiles, collectively known as “herpetofauna” or “herps,” have roamed the earth for over 300 million years. Herps to you and me are turtles, lizards, snakes, salamanders, frogs and toads. Sorry the dinosaurs are gone.

While today’s collection of herps pales in comparison to the diversity and abundance of these creatures during their heyday, their persistence to the present day is a testament to their overall success. However, the increasing challenges that amphibians and reptiles face – in no small part resulting from human-induced causes such as habitat loss, introduced species, over harvesting or collecting, and environmental pollution- raise concerns for their continued success and even survival. Worldwide declines in amphibian and reptile populations have been occurring at an accelerated rate over the past twenty years, threatening many species with extinction.

This atlas is an effort to get a snapshot of the reptile and amphibian populations across Maryland. The current project is mapping the distribution of all amphibians and reptiles within the state, using mostly volunteer help to search for the roughly 93 species found in Maryland.

An easy way to help is to report herps on your property. If you find any frog, turtle, lizard, salamander, or snake on your property you could email your county coordinator (email address below) about the record you see or hear. The best evidence of the record is a photograph or recording (in the case of frogs). Your phone works for pictures so you don’t even need a camera.

If you are more interested, the way you can get involved is to contact the coordinator for the county in which you live, and volunteer to search a specific area.

Incidental findings can also be reported. For example, if you are driving along Mill Swamp Road in Charles County and see a Snapping Turtle, note the date, take a picture if possible, and send the information to the appropriate county coordinator.

Much more detail about the atlas including training manuals, data sheets, recordings, etc., can be found at: <http://marylandnature.org/mararesources/> . Other resources that can be useful include the best time to look for particular amphibian and reptile species, identification help, and frog and toad recordings to help identify that group of animals. Much other useful and fun information can be found on the MARA Resources page. If you are having trouble figuring out where you are you can also use the Google Earth tool to show you what block you are in.

When to look? Now, and through October normally. Some animals to be on the watch for this month in our region include Red-spotted Newt, Spotted Salamander-adults and egg masses, Eastern Red-backed Salamander, and Four-toed Salamander. Frogs and toads to watch and listen for are Upland Chorus Frog, Spring Peeper, Wood Frog, and Southern Leopard Frog. Shortly, Pickerel Frog, Northern Green Frog, and American Bullfrog may move or sing on rainy nights. As the weather warms, turtles and snakes become active. Turtles to look out for now are Painted, Box, and Snapping Turtles. If you don’t have a field guide for the herps, do a Google search, or look at my website www.georgejett.net under the herp folder for photos. My website is not complete but is a work in progress. Many other sites exist and are helpful.

A few words about snakes in our region. Early snakes to be watching for are Smooth Earthsnake, Gartersnake, Ribbonsnake, and Eastern Ratsnakes. None of these snakes are poisonous. The only poisonous snake in southern Maryland is Northern Copperhead, and these are hard to find in suburban areas. Most reports I get of Copperhead are misidentified young Black Racers or Northern Watersnakes.



Northern Copperhead
Photo by: George Jett

Regardless of the species, please keep a healthy distance from any snake so as not to hurt the animal. Also, please do not kill any snake. It is illegal, and snakes are very beneficial animals. Some snakes act aggressively (Black Racer, Northern Watersnake), especially when cornered, but if you give them a chance they will go on their way.

All reptiles and amphibians are cold-blooded animals, and you will see snakes basking on hot roads to warm. Frogs and toads are on the move across roads on rainy nights in particular, and turtles are also frequently sighted crossing roads.

continued on page 5

Please try to avoid hitting any animals while driving.

The Southern Maryland Audubon Society (SMAS) membership covers four Maryland counties. The county coordinators can be contacted at their emails:

Calvert: Andy Brown (brownaj@co.cal.md.us)
Charles: George Jett (gmjett@comcast.net)
Prince George's: George Middendorf (gmiddendorf@howard.edu)
Mike Quinlan (mikemq41@verizon.net)
St. Mary's: Kyle Rambo (kyle.rambo@navy.mil)

If you want to get involved or have questions, please contact your county coordinator.

As one who loves nature, this has proven to be an exciting and educational study. Great fun for both adults and kids.

Come join us.

Thanks in advance.
George Jett
gmjett@omcast.net
www.georgejett.net

The Southern Maryland Audubon Society is having a

Sprint Native Plant Sale

WHEN: Saturday, May 11, 2013
8 am - 1 pm

WHERE: The La Plata Farmers' Market
La Plata Courthouse Parking Lot

Come help support our educational scholarships and learn about the importance, beauty and benefits of planting with native plants. We will be side-by-side with the Charles County Master Gardeners of the University of Maryland Extension spring plant sale and will feature native plants exclusively.

The plant sale will include species such as Jacob's Ladder, Foamflower, multiple Phlox varieties, White Turtlehead, Wild Ginger, and many more!

Come meet our new Habitat Stewardship Committee Chair Ann Bodling. Make your yard a natural community, Go Native!!!

Just in time for a Mother's Day gift for Mom!!!



FOSTER PARENTS NEEDED



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

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

Interested?

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

Melissa Boyle
10455 Point Lookout Road
Scotland, MD 20687



ADOPT A RAPTOR

Name: _____

Address: _____

I wish to adopt (check one):

_____ (# of) Osprey, \$10.00 each

_____ (# of) Barn Owl, \$25.00 each

_____ (# of) American Kestrel, \$35.00 each

_____ (# of) Northern Saw-whet Owl, \$30.00 each

Amount Enclosed: _____

Make checks payable to:
Southern Maryland Audubon Society

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 27- SATURDAY- 8 a.m. - noon – Field Trip
Smallwood State Park, Charles County Youths especially welcome!

2750 Sweden Point Rd. Marbury, MD 20658

“MULTI-HABITAT BIRDING”

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

May 1 - WEDNESDAY - 7:30 p.m.

*****NOTE NEW LOCATION AND TOPIC!!!*****

Battle Creek Cypress Swamp Center, Calvert County
Gray’s Road off of Sixes Road (Rt. 506), Prince Frederick, MD
“Hummingbirds: Feathered Jewels and Backyard Treasures”

MIKE CALLAHAN, Southern Maryland Audubon Society SMAS president and local environmental educator Mike Callahan will present on this backyard favorite feathered friend. His emphasis will be on our most prevalent visitor, the Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Learn about the lifestyle of our smallest neotropical migrant. This program will also feature a newly produced film provided to us from the National Audubon Society titled: “Hummingbirds: Magic in the Air”. Our first Feathered Friend Film release!

May 11 – Saturday – All Day

COUNTY MAY COUNTS

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

JUNE 2 – SUNDAY - 1:30 p.m.

Wolfe’s Farm, Charles County

10705 Allens Fresh Road, Charlotte Hall, MD 20622

ANNUAL MEETING

Potluck Lunch.....1:30 – 3:00
Host’s Welcome.....3:00 – 3:15
Meeting.....3:15 – 4:00
Bird Walk.....4:00 – 5:00

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

Bring your lawn chair. No seating will be provided.
Bring food that does not need to be heated or chilled.
Bring your binoculars.

Lost and need directions? Call Mike Callahan: 240-765-5192.

JUNE 18 – TUESDAY - 10:30 a.m. – Field Trip
Patuxent River Park – Jug Bay, Prince George’s County
“OSPREY BANDING TRIP”

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

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

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

Rich Adams, Owings
Amy Brown, Chesapeake Beach
Joan Crownover, La Plata
Christopher Donavin, Owings
Richard Fortgang, Accokeek
Cheryl S. Freeman, Oxon Hill
Geri Gatley, Mechanicsville
Howard F. Hammack, Dunkirk
Theresa Jackson, Temple Hills
Stephen Jones, Saint Leonard
Tina M. Kemper, La Plata
Barbara Lorton, Hollywood
Nancy A. McClintock, Port Republic
Colleen Morgan, Indian Head
Alvin A. Perkins, Suitland
Virginia Sanchez, Lexington Park
Nikita Scott, Accokeek
Linda Segal, White Plains
Fay Shaefer, Charlotte Hall
Sara Therres, Hughesville
Sara Young, Indian Head

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.