

The Osprey

Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society



**Nancy Wolfe,
Millie Kriemelmeyer &
Mike Callahan
SMAS 2013 Annual Picnic
Photo by: George Jett**

In This Issue

**SMAS Annual Meeting &
Picnic**

SMAS Yard Sale

Brazil with Gwen & George

Hog Island Camp

Rarity Focus

Scotland and England



<http://somdaudubon.org/>

SMAS Annual Meeting and Picnic ~ June 2, 2013

by Mike Callahan

If you have never come to our annual picnic you are missing out. The Wolfe's Farm, off of Allens Fresh Road, was a wonderful location for our event. The hostess, Nancy Wolfe, provided us a cottage with a large covered porch, picnic tables, and farm view on the Wicomico River tributary Allens Fresh Run. It was a perfect Southern Maryland venue for the Southern Maryland Audubon Society!

With the addition of tables, chairs and food brought by approximately 25 members, we enjoyed delicious food (you missed fried chicken and a myriad of salads and desserts!), huge shade trees, river breeze, and a gorgeous waterfront location. The highlight was the presentation of the Conservationist of the Year Award to Nancy Wolfe, which surprised her. Nancy has been a previous recipient of SMAS awards, last year receiving our Raptor Conservationist Award. This year the SMAS board believed that Nancy should receive our highest conservation award and be recognized and thanked for purchasing this wonderful farm, saving it from builders and preserving it for wildlife and human enjoyment. The award included a certificate and watercolor print of Allens Fresh Run by local artist Mary Lou Troutman. Nancy appeared to be surprised and delighted.

SMAS was also delighted to recognize and present two separate Raptor Conservation Awards. One went to Christopher Peterson, the Eagle Scout who built Osprey nest platforms for us, the other to Carolyn and Steve Hendricks, who helped monitor boxes and trained so they can monitor in Calvert County next season.

A surprise Certificate of Appreciation was presented by SMAS officers to Harry and Millie Kriemelmeyer. Harry and Millie are retiring from their positions on the SMAS board of directors. Their 30 plus years of faithful time and service deserved big fanfare and recognition. They will be greatly missed at our monthly board meetings.

The picnic continued with the election of officers for the upcoming 2013-2014 year. Our president for the last two years, Mike Callahan, was voted to continue for a remaining year. The Vice-President position is now filled by a new board member and Education Committee chair Michael Patterson. The Secretary position goes to the past Vice-President Lynne Wheeler. The Treasurer position continues with Will Daniel. We are looking forward to doing our best service for the upcoming year.

The picnic meeting ended with true Audubon flourish. Mike Callahan gave us a sneak peak at the baby Barn Owls, which were roosting just forty feet away. Many members got the pleasure of holding one of the new family members of the Wolfe farm. Some members tried to brave the deer flies to take a bird walk, but the flies won! It was a very short walk. The farm contains fallow grassy fields that support many grassland species. Grasshopper Sparrows were spotted by many of us. With its varied habitats, birders can spot waterfowl, shorebirds, FIDS (forest interior dwelling species), and raptors. So, if you didn't join us, look what you missed! Please join us next year, the annual picnic is always a birder's treat.

Hog Island Camp by Craig Makufka

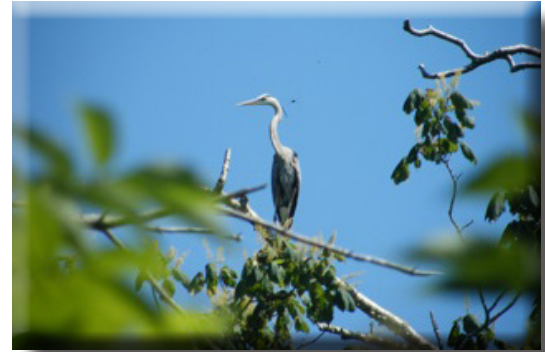
It is 1:30 pm on a Sunday afternoon in June, as I stand on a dirt road facing a vast body of water. About a half mile into the bay sits a 330-acre island with two buildings visible on the front side. As I continue down the dirt road toward the dock, I start to hear and see other people that have gathered around a small shed-like structure. All of them are staring into the bay with binoculars up to their eyes. One puts his binoculars down and sets up a spotting scope. I saunter over, dragging my suitcase on wheels towards the crowd. I hear the man looking through his spotting scope say "It's a Black Guillemot." So, naturally I walk up to the man and ask, "Can I take a look?" "Sure thing" says the man and allows me a glance into his expensive scope. Now I have never seen a Black Guillemot before, so I was not sure what I was looking for but hoping the man had focused it on the correct bird. I gaze upon a football shaped bird all black with white wing patches floating on the water. Its blazing red legs were not visible (but I would see this later in my trip). I step back and say, "Thanks, you just gave me a life bird!" I get a couple congratulations and introductions then ensued. More people start to arrive, all with luggage and binoculars hanging from their necks. Amidst the introductions, there would be call outs like "Two Herring Gulls flying over" or "Osprey hunting." We all assemble down on the dock as our boat ride has arrived. We pile in, everyone anxiously awaiting the quick two-minute ride over the water to the island. I get off the boat and start walking up the dock ramp, I stop at the top and look overhead where a sign straddles the opening, it reads "Welcome to the Hog Island Audubon Camp," I smile, my week of a lifetime has begun.



Sunrise from Hog Island
Photo by: Craig Makufka

What a week it was on Hog Island. It was filled with morning bird walks, boat trips to other islands, mainland field trips, and amazing food. The island itself is beautiful, with habitat that I have never seen let alone hiked through. There were classes from the instructors on everything birds from evolution to feathers and molts. Speaking of the instructors, they were prominent professors and experts in all things avian. We took boat cruises to two islands out in the bay. One was a breeding ground for three species of terns, Black Guillemots, Laughing Gulls, and what everyone came to see, Atlantic Puffins! There were interns staying on the island compiling breeding research on the puffins and tern species. Our other boat trip was to another breeding island, this one home to Great Blue Herons. Stepping onto this island was almost like stepping back in time. Heron

calls are prehistoric-like then amplify that by 30 or more breeding pairs was acoustically deafening. I happened to stay back just to soak up the moment a little longer and was pleasantly rewarded when an adult heron came back to the nest and proceeded to feed the three nestlings. What made the trip even better was the camaraderie between everyone. It enhanced the experiences when you can share them with people who have the same passions and interests, and birds were that shared interest. It was an incredible week, I not only learned more in that time than I did in a whole semester course on Ornithology, I grew as a person, as a birder.



Adult Great Blue Heron
Photo by: Craig Makufka

It is 7:00 a.m. Friday morning and I reluctantly board the boat that is going to take us back to the mainland. I don't dare take my eyes off the island as we leave. This time on the dirt road I am slowly dragging my suitcase back to my car. I get in, sit in the driver's seat and place the key in the ignition but I don't turn it. I want to absorb the last little bit of experience before I drive away. I finally bring myself to turn the key; I back out of the parking area and head home. I ended up with 18 life birds, brain stuffed with knowledge, stories from decorated Ornithologists, always a full stomach, and experiences I will never forget.



Lynne Wheeler artwork
Photo by: George Jett

Scotland and England

by Tyler Bell

The 2013 International Conference on Mercury as a Global Pollutant was held in Edinburgh (pronounced ED in burra), Scotland in late July to early August. Three of us from the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center in Edgewater were attending, including yours truly, so Jane Kostenko, my wife, came along and we piggybacked a tourist trip to London afterward. Knowing that the first week was primarily business and the second week was being a tourist, we had low expectations of finding life birds.

Birding in the UK was a challenge. First, there were very few birds other than the gulls and waterfowl which were found in abundance (habitat loss is likely a big part of this). Lesser Black-backed Gulls and Black-headed Gulls were virtual trash birds. Graylag Geese and Tufted Ducks could be found in small manmade park ponds. Common Wood-Pigeons, which were fairly timid in Scotland, were very tame in London mixing in with the Rock Pigeons begging for handouts. In St. James Park, just to the east of Buckingham Palace, Eurasian Moorhens and Eurasian Coots stood on the edge of the pond inches away from pedestrian walkways.

Black-headed Gulls, Edinburgh
Photo by: Jane Kostenko



But, the passerines that we had hoped for were very secretive. There was a Eurasian Robin that sang in the shrubs outside our Edinburgh hotel room every morning and we only caught glimpses of it on a few occasions. Their chip note sounded remarkably like a Northern Cardinal so whenever we thought we were hearing a cardinal, it was actually a robin. We were lucky one morning and ran into a mixed flock of Eurasian Robins and Eurasian Blue Tits in the Royal Terrace Gardens in Edinburgh. Otherwise, we heard tits calling and singing in Edinburgh and London and only got fleeting glimpses of them.

Other birds, like the Barn Swallow (very different subspecies from ours) and Common House-Martins could be found in decent numbers foraging over the grasslands around Holyrood Park. Common Swifts were often seen in downtown Edinburgh.

The birdiest part of our trip was clearly the boat trip from North Berwick (pronounced BEAR ick) east of Edinburgh. There are a couple of rocky islands very close to the coast that host large seabird colonies. One was Craighleith and was the primary site for Atlantic Puffins. Jane and I had seen puffins nesting east of Bangor, Maine but the numbers at Craighleith were astounding. They could be seen flying around the hills, sitting on the water and perched near the top close to their nest burrows.

Bass Rock, the ultimate destination for the boat trip, has an estimated 120,000 Northern Gannets in residence. When we first saw the island, we assumed the white covering was guano. No, it was gannets! The numbers were unbelievable. So was the smell! Mixed in amongst the gannets were Common Murres, European Shags, and Black-legged Kittiwakes.

As for scenery, Scotland won hands down over England. The bus trip to the highlands and Loch Ness went through some stunning, desolate landscapes. If you've seen the James Bond movie "Skyfall", some of the scenes at the end of the movie were filmed near Ben Nevis, the highest peak in the UK. They had recently had some dry, hot weather (well, 80s is considered hot in Scotland!) but recent rains created waterfalls all along the roads and the purple wash of blooming heather could be seen everywhere!

In all, we only saw 58 species during our stay of which 27 were life birds. Not too bad considering we were in conference talks most of the first week and walking to all of the major tourist attractions in London the next four days!



Bass Rock, Scotland
Photo by: Jane Kostenko

Rarity Focus

The rarity focus for this month is further proof that you just never know what can turn up when you're looking for birds.

To illustrate this point, on 7 July, Matt Daw, a member of the Bureau of Reclamation's Southwestern Willow Flycatcher survey team, was birding at Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge near the Marsh Overlook Trail when an apparent Rufous-necked Wood-Rail simply walked through the viewfinder of his cameral while he was getting video of a cooperative Least Bittern. Go figure!

The Rufous-necked Wood-Rail is a bird often found in coastal mangroves from Mexico southward, into Central and South America. The closest this species normally occurs to the United States is in Sinaloa, on the Pacific coast of Mexico. Until Daw's fortuitous discovery, this species had never been seen in the United States.

continued on page 4

You can watch Matt Daw's original video of the Least Bittern and see for yourself the Rufous-necked Wood-Rail walking into the background. Daw was so startled that he turned off the camera after a few seconds:

www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=4445940767046&set=o.444762565584392&type=2&theater

From the moment of Daw's discovery the event became a birding phenomenon. Birders near and far came to Bosque to see this bird, and fortunately hundreds were rewarded. Visiting birders stationed themselves by an opening in the willows, on the boardwalk, or anywhere in the general vicinity of the original sightings. The Rufous-necked Wood-Rail sometimes worked the muddy shore on the west side of the pond, and occasionally would come out even further. Early or late in the day seemed to provide the best viewing, although some days the rail was active even in the mid-afternoon.

The bird and some of the birders were even featured on TV, radio, and in the newspapers. The refuge staff was wonderfully accommodating, and the town of nearby Socorro clearly noticed the boost in traffic and increased occupancy at local motels and restaurants. It was a win-win situation.

Amazingly, this same refuge hosted another phenomenal first-record bird in November 2008 when a Sungrebe appeared there. It was reported in the December 2008 E-bulletin:

<http://refugeassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/sbc-dec08.pdf>

Fortunately, the Rufous-necked Wood-Rail was far more cooperative and stayed longer than the 2008 Sungrebe did. The wood-rail was last reported on 19 July. At that time, evaporating water in the pond area may have caused the bird to move on.

To view photos by Matt Baumann from the day of Matt Daw's discovery see:

www.flickr.com/photos/abqjaeger/9233545179/in/photostream/ (Preview)

State Endangered Northern Goshawk Returns to Maryland - July 22, 2013

by kking

Wildlife biologists with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) have discovered Northern Goshawks successfully breeding in the State for the first time since 2006. This encouraging news follows the senseless killing of a nesting female goshawk in 2011, whose chicks also died as a result of her death. The shooter was never found.

Following up on a lead provided by two Garrett County residents last month, DNR biologists found an active goshawk nest with two healthy chicks and confirmed last week that the young birds had successfully fledged. DNR suspects that the pair — the only known Northern Goshawks

in western Maryland — consists of the male from the 2011 nest and a new mate.

Northern Goshawks are a shy but spectacular hawk of wild, mature forests. They are sensitive to disturbance and human activity, so their presence is indicative that some western Maryland forests are reaching the mature conditions required for breeding habitat.

Nearly 100 years ago aggressive timber harvesting in the mountains of Maryland caused deep forest species, such as goshawks, to disappear. Due to DNR's current forest and habitat conservation efforts, many of these once rare or absent species are returning. State biologists are optimistic that sustainable conservation of forests and Natural Areas will support continued recovery and expansion of the Northern Goshawk in western Maryland.

Keep up to date with DNR's Wildlife & Heritage Service on Facebook and Twitter @MDDNRWildlife.

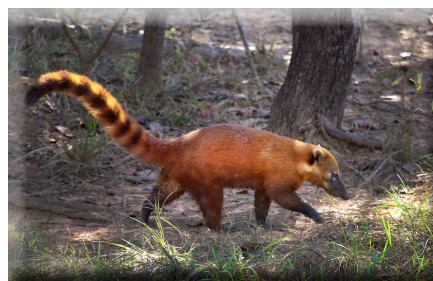
<http://news.maryland.gov/dnr/2013/07/22/3956/>

Brazil with George and Gwen

by Gwen Brewer

In early July, George Jett and Gwen Brewer journeyed to the Northern Pantanal and Cerrado region of Brazil for two weeks with a small group of like-minded nature geeks on a tour organized by Fiona Reid. Between the early morning walks, boat rides, and truck rides along the Transpantaneira Highway (both day and night), over 240 species of birds, 29 mammals, and an as-yet undetermined number of amphibians, reptiles, butterflies, dragonflies, and plants were seen. George photographed about 150 species of birds, as well as jaguars, giant anteaters, giant river otters, Brazilian tapirs, crab-eating foxes, 3 species of deer, 3 species of monkeys, and several bats. Highlights on the bird front included a mix of Pantanal and Cerrado specialties: Hyacinth Macaw, Red-shouldered Macaw, Red-legged Seriema, Bare-faced Curassow, Tataupa Tinamou, Jabiru, Scissor-tailed Nighthawk, Matto Grosso Antbird, Red-billed Scythebill, Planalto Slaty Antshrike, Helmeted Manakin, Scarlet-headed Blackbird, Black-faced Tanager, and hundreds of Snail Kites coming to roost. One of the many memorable scenes was a group of 10 Red-and-green Macaws perched in a tree next to a beautiful waterfall. One of the many memorable moments was when the back wheel of the truck went through on one of the many wooden bridges that we crossed! Images from the trip will be appearing on George's website, www.georgejett.net

Brazil Pantanal Coaitimundi
Photo by: George Jett



CHAPTER-ONLY DUES DUE

Chapter-only dues run from fiscal year July - June. If you have not renewed, please use attached form and send in NOW to avoid a postage stamped snail mail reminder. If you are unsure of your renewal status contact Lynne Wheeler (301-743-3236, comstockel@aol.com) or Carol Ghebelian (301-753-6754, ghebelian@comcast.net). Thanks for your continued support of SMAS.

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

David Alman, Huntingtown
Paul Amos, Prince Frederick
Kristen Burke, Chaptico
John Bubser, Dunkirk
Joy Bartholomew, Port Republic
Bertha R. Coates, La Plata
Kathy Chance, Owings
Virginia Detrick, Leonardtown
Emily Drobenak, Indian Head
Gisela Davis, Clinton
Mark Errin, Charlotte Hall
Gale Euchner, La Plata
Jon S Frank & Associates, Inc, Prince Frederick
C. Goddard, Prince Frederick
Patricia W. Gillis, Fort Washington
Sue Garner, Dowell
Marcia Hildreth, La Plata
Marjean Hager, Fort Washington
Emily Imhof, Great Mills
Sylvia Jacobs, Hollywood
Sandra Janke, La Plata
Roberta M. Jones, Dunkirk
Stephanie Jones, Lexington Park
Doris Kyser, Solomons
Earl Kidwell, Waldorf
Barbara Kable, Lexington Park
Robert Linnemann, Waldorf
Donald E. Langley, Charlotte Hall
Victorio C. Lalangan, Oxon Hill
Sage Muffley, Huntingtown
J. A. Mattingly, Leonardtown
Judith & Roger Merrick, La Plata
Joyce Miller, Temple Hills
Mildred Nelson, La Plata
Suzanne B. Norton, Leonardtown
Alfredo Pardo, Lexington Park
Susan S. Parish, Lusby
Bonnie Plastow, Owings
Susan Palik, Fort Washington
Jamie Parham, Bushwood
Rohan Raman, Huntingtown
Esther Ann Ritchie, Huntingtown
Naziha Rouse, Fort Washington
Patti & Ned Shields, Owings
A. W. Sullivan, Cobb Island
Warren F. Sengstack, Huntingtown
Malane Silver, Dunkirk
Diane Shaw, Huntingtown
Edna Troiano, Waldorf
Charles A. Williams, Accokeek
Emma L. Weaver, California
Charles F. Wilson Jr, Solomons
Mark Woodside, Hollywood

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

September 4 – WEDNESDAY – 7:30 p.m.

Monthly Meeting Program

Charlotte Hall Library, St. Mary's County
37600 New Market Rd. (Rt. 6 at Rt. 5), Charlotte Hall, MD 20622
"The Gambia and Senegal – George and Gwen in West Africa"
Gwen Brewer, Ornithologist and George Jett, Naturalist & Photographer

In November 2012, our favorite local Audubon pair travelled for three weeks to The Gambia and Senegal, their focus on its wildlife, landscape and culture. The varied habitats of the area host abundant indigenous plants and animals, in addition to migrant species and newly planted species. The birdlife in the Gambia is colorful and rich, with 560 species inhabiting coastal saltwater, freshwater wetlands, savanna, woodlands and forests, agricultural lands, towns and villages. A known hot spot for ornithologists! Our presenters saw over 300 species and captured over 200 images including Egyptian Plover, reptiles, mammals, and some near endemic birds. They will also offer us a peek into the area's culture and African landscapes, peppered and spiced with their usual humorous discussion.

September 15 – SUNDAY – 8:00 a.m. – Noon

Field Trip

Patuxent River Naval Air Station, St. Mary's County
"GRASSPIPERS"
Leader: Kyle Rambo (301-757-0005, kyle.rambo@navy.mil)

This trip will visit some excellent grassland habitat on restricted access runways. Target species include Buff-breasted Sandpiper and American Golden-Plover. Meet in the parking lot at NAS Gate #1. We are limited to 10 participants, and pre-registration is mandatory (call 301-757-0005). Open only to US citizens. Must bring a photo ID.

September 21 – SATURDAY – 8:00 a.m. – Noon

Field Trip

Smallwood State Park, Charles County
"MULTI-HABITAT BIRDING"
Leaders: Michael Patterson and Lynne Wheeler (301-751-8097, comstockel@aol.com)

Join us for the wonderful multi-habitats that this state park provides – water, forest, and fields. This should be a great time for migrant warblers! Previous walks have easily offered us close views of Red-headed Woodpeckers, Osprey, Eagles, waterfowl, terns and Gull species. The meeting location will be posted at the park entrance. A \$3.00 per vehicle fee may be required. From Rt. 225 (Hawthorne Road)/Rt. 224 (Chicamuxen Road) intersection, take Rt. 224 approximately three miles to park entrance on the right.

September 29 – SUNDAY – 8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Field Trip

Sotterly Plantation, St. Mary's County
"BIRDING THE FIELDS AND TRAILS OF SOTTERLY"
Leaders: Michael Patterson and David Moulton (240-278-4473, moulton.davidh@gmail.com)

Join us for a bird-filled exploration of this scenic and historic Patuxent River property. Beginners welcome! Several new trails and new habitats have added to Sotterly's extensive natural areas and agricultural acreage. Sparrows, raptors, woodpeckers and waterbirds on the river should keep things lively. From Rt. 235, go north on Sotterly Road, turn right through gates to the gravel parking lot on the Sotterly historic property.

October 2 – WEDNESDAY – 7:30 p.m.

Monthly Meeting Program

Leonardtown Library, St. Mary's County
23250 Hollywood Road (Rt. 245), Leonardtown, MD 20650
"The Northern Saw-whet Owl in Southern Maryland"
Melissa Boyle, Naturalist

Join Melissa Boyle to learn more about the elusive Northern Saw-whet Owl, Maryland's smallest owl species. Once thought to be a rare visitor to our area, it is now known to frequent Southern Maryland, if you know where and when to look! Come and find out when and where this species is most likely to be found. Research on this species has been ongoing in Maryland for almost twenty years, but only recently has begun in Southern Maryland. Learn all about this fascinating little owl and how you can contribute to the research and conservation of the Northern Saw-whet Owl in our area.

October 2 – WEDNESDAY – 4:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Fundraiser

Texas Roadhouse, Lexington Park

Please take a break looking for migrants in trees and support SMAS by joining us at the Texas Roadhouse restaurant prior to the monthly meeting program listed above. See the Osprey newsletter or our website at www.somdaudubon.org for the Texas Roadhouse flyer that you must bring in order for SMAS to get credit. PLEASE SUPPORT OUR SOCIETY!

October 5 - SATURDAY – 8:00 a.m. – Noon

Field Trip

Cove Point Beach and Marsh, Calvert County
"SPARROWS AND SHOREBIRDS"
Leader: Bob Boxwell (410-610-5124, bobboxwell@hotmail.com)

We will visit beach and marsh habitat that attract many interesting sparrows and shorebirds. A Living Shoreline project has established breakwaters and vegetation to protect the interior marsh and return it to its fresh-water status. Meet at the Giant parking lot off Route 2/4 at the Lusby Town Center (Rousby Hall Road) at 8:00 a.m. We will carpool to the locale as there is limited parking. Limited to only ten people and reservations are required, RSVP by October 1.

October 12 - SATURDAY - 8:00 a.m. – Noon

Field Trip

Indian Head Rail Trail, Charles County
"RED-HEADS ON THE RAIL TRAIL"
Leaders: Michael Patterson, Lynne Wheeler (301-751-8097, comstockel@aol.com)

There are a few hot spots on the Indian Head Rail Trail that provide good wintering habitat for Red-headed Woodpeckers, yielding high numbers of individuals. One of the hot spots has revealed up to 23 birds! Join us for a leisurely morning of birding along the trail in search of woodpeckers, sparrows and other land birds. Meet and park at MD Rt. 224 IHRT Parking Lot, located just east of MD Rt. 225.

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.
