

# The Osprey

Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society



Yellow-throated Vireo  
Photo by: Bill Hubick

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<http://somdaudubon.org/>

## President's Perch

I was reminded that May and June are excellent months for birding anywhere when I recently went to Pisgah Park in Marbury for an early morning run. During my 3 times around the 0.8 mile loop, some notable birds present were Brown Thrasher, White-eyed Vireo, Black-and-white Warbler, and Killdeer. Along the exit road, I stopped to listen for birds and heard Orchard Orioles, and a Yellow Warbler who was very cooperative and sang in the open. I decided to walk around a bit and was rewarded with Yellow-throated Vireos and "The Blues Brothers"—a Blue Grosbeak and Indigo Bunting who perched close enough to be seen through binoculars at the same time. It's a good idea to always keep binoculars in the car—you never know when a good birding opportunity will arise.

Sadly, at Pisgah Park, which has several baseball and soccer fields, no Eastern Bluebirds were present. Usually several birds can be found perching on fence posts, but it appears the harsh winter reduced their numbers. For the first time in eight years, the nest boxes in my yard have only chickadees—no bluebirds. I plan to put up a third nest box in case a pair is searching for a nesting cavity—maybe the chickadees were just too quick and got there first. Bluebird populations should rebound, but they would appreciate any help they can get from us.

Hummingbirds have returned and are already performing courtship displays and establishing territories. They arrived the same day I put a feeder out and at least 12 hummingbirds were competing for feeder space within a week. I added a second feeder and will soon put out a third to keep up with their consumption. Don't be concerned if your hummingbirds disappear for a while. They will favor some natural nectar sources, such as Tulip Poplar flowers, when they become available and will be busy caring for young, but eventually they will return to nectar feeders.

SMAS has some unique activities planned for June. At 'Barn Owls and Breakfast', we will serve breakfast at a private farm in Charles County and afterward, our Raptor Conservation Committee Chair Mike Callahan will check a Barn Owl nest box and band the nestling owls. The event helps to support our raptor conservation efforts in Southern Maryland and is a rare opportunity to see Barn Owls up close. We are also leading a nighttime Horseshoe Crab adventure at Flag Ponds Park in Calvert County and Osprey banding along the Patuxent River in Prince George's County. Details can be found on the web site ([somdaudubon.org](http://somdaudubon.org)) under the programs tab.

On June 7, we're excited to have our annual picnic and meeting under the Riverside Pavilion at historic Sotterley Plantation in St. Mary's County. We'll have scenic views of Sotterley Creek and the Patuxent River with great habitat for birding after the picnic. We're looking for new members to join the Board as we select who will serve as officers and directors for SMAS next year. One important opening we need to fill is Field Trip Coordinator. Melissa Boyle has been doing a great job finding leaders and planning interesting birding trips, but it's time for her to step aside. Melissa and the rest of the board will be happy to help her replacement. I hope to see you in June and maybe welcome some new faces to our Board.

For the Birds,  
Michael Patterson



## April 26 Sotterley Field Trip report By David Moulton

While we are on our summer hiatus, fellow birders and creature fans, please remember to Like us on [www.facebook.com/somdaudubon](http://www.facebook.com/somdaudubon) and to share your pictures and adventures with us there as well. We'd love to hear from you!

### Goodbye for the Summer!

Goodbye for the Summer!

This concludes another year of *The Osprey*. Hope you've enjoyed it. I rarely get any feedback and I'd love to know what you think of it. If you have any suggestions, please let me know! I'm always looking for content in the form of articles, photos, poetry, and/or jokes. The September issue will come along a lot faster than any of will expect and I have a folder already created for it so please send things along! Hope you all have an enjoyable summer. If you do anything interesting, share it!

Tyler Bell  
Editor of *The Osprey*  
[jtylerbell@yahoo.com](mailto:jtylerbell@yahoo.com)

### Tip of the Month: Spring Home Checkup

If you are engaged in springtime garden and home fix-up activities, it's time to put window concerns on your checklist of things to consider.

The Fatal Light Awareness Program (FLAP), based in Toronto, has initiated some excellent reminders for homeowners looking for suggestions to make their windows bird safe. This particular project was premiered at The Cottage Life trade show in Toronto (27-29 March). And it was extremely well received by attendees at the show.

The brochure can be downloaded from the FLAP web-site in both English and French versions:  
[http://www.flap.org/residential\\_new.php](http://www.flap.org/residential_new.php)

It's also available here (English) directly:  
[http://www.flap.org/pdfs/FLAP\\_HomeOwnerBrochureE\\_2.pdf](http://www.flap.org/pdfs/FLAP_HomeOwnerBrochureE_2.pdf)

Birding Community E-bulletin  
Paul J. Baicich  
410-992-9736  
[paul.baicich@verizon.net](mailto:paul.baicich@verizon.net)

Michael Patterson and I led the spring field trip to Sotterley Plantation, a lovely St. Mary's County Historic Trust property with open fields, wooded trails and wide water vistas directly across the Patuxent River from Jefferson Patterson Park. Rain was falling and the temps were in the 40s at the start, but our hardy band of nine braved the storm and with the help of parting clouds and peeks of sunshine, checked off 44 species. While we failed to stumble onto a migrant warbler flock, Northern Parulas, Common Yellowthroats and Prairie Warblers were in full song, preparing to breed. A late lingering flock of 6 or more Purple Finches were feeding high in the sycamores, and a Great Northern Diver (Common Loon) in full breeding plumage showed well in the cove, gearing up for the flight north to the lakes of the Canadian Shield. This continues to be a reliable place for Eastern Meadowlarks, calling from fenceposts and field grasses in the cattle pasture.

Bald Eagles were soaring, but several years of successful nesting near the mansion house were broken this year. A pair was active on the nest in February and much of March, but they gave up at some point for reasons unknown – weather? predation? The cold winter of sleet and ice seems also to have taken its toll on the Eastern Bluebird population – on last year's walk we tallied 8 Bluebirds, but this year none – a trend that has been noticed elsewhere in the Mid-Atlantic birding area.

Sotterley Plantation ([www.sotterley.org](http://www.sotterley.org)) is the site of this year's SMAS Annual Meeting and picnic on June 7, by which time the Bluebirds should be bouncing back, the Grasshopper Sparrows should be trilling and the Summer Tanagers pita-tucking. See you then.



Grasshopper Sparrow

These small sparrows measure 3.9–5.5" length, span about 6.9" across the wings and weigh from 0.49 to 1.00 oz, with an average of 0.60 oz. Adults have upperparts streaked with brown, grey, black and white; they have a light brown breast, a white belly and a short brown tail. Their face is light brown with an eye ring and a dark brown crown with a central narrow light stripe. There are regional variations in the appearance of this bird.

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## The Problem with 'Saving the Bees'

By Sheila Colla

I've been researching pollinator declines over the past decade. It has been encouraging and inspiring to see my chosen subject matter go from completely off the general public's radar to one of the most important environmental issues of our time. These days, it would be difficult to go a full week without seeing something alarming about pollinator declines in a newspaper or social media headline.

In general, it is great that the public and policy makers are starting to appreciate the insect pollinators and the ecosystem service they provide. Heck, even Obama himself wants to help! These little creatures feed on nectar and pollen and move pollen grains from flower to flower while foraging. This behaviour allows gene flow to occur among plants, which then leads to the production of seeds and fruit. Given the estimates that over 3/4 of flowering plant species rely or benefit from pollination services, these oft-neglected insects are critical components to maintaining ecosystem and agricultural sustainability.

Public support for bee-saving initiatives has been overwhelming. People are constantly looking for ways they can help declining bee populations. For example, a record-breaking 50,000 Ontarians recently commented on a proposed pollinator policy, the large majority in support of their government's plans. And the Indiegogo project, "Flow Hive," which proposes a gentler way to extract honey that's easier on beekeepers and bees, has already raised \$6 million US (more on this later).

However, as a biologist actively working on this issue from a scientific, data-driven, and wildlife conservation perspective, it is increasingly apparent to me that rampant misinformation on a popular topic is leading to misplaced support. One of the key issues is that when people think of bees, they think of the European Honey Bee. But increasing scientific evidence indicates that our hundreds of native bee species are likely doing much of the pollination attributed to honey bees (see here, here and here for a few examples). And our native pollinators (including some bees and butterflies) are also in decline. The causes of their declines are complex and include a combination of environmental stressors such as habitat loss, pesticide use, introduced competitors, climate change, and pathogen spillover from managed bees. There is no single smoking gun.

While the European Honey Bee does produce honey and is useful in that we can move colonies from crop to crop across the continent to where pollination is needed, it is not native to North America. Correct me if I'm wrong, but when European Honey Bees decline in Canada, beekeepers can order more! (I understand that there would be a monetary cost to this, but I'm taking the perspective of a wildlife biologist, not a business owner.) This is not the case with our native pollinators, particularly those on the brink of extinction. Once they are gone, they are gone forever. And there could be cascading effects on plant populations, which

require them for pollination, and on birds and mammals, which rely on the resulting seeds and fruit.

Directing resources and policy to one introduced species might actually have the opposite of the intended "conservation" effect. Case in point, remember the \$6 million dollars donated to the "Flow Hive" initiative? Well it turns out that those bees are stressed by having their honeycombs ripped open and by making it easier for the urban beekeeper, we could be ramping up introductions of non-native bees and their diseases (some known to be transferrable to native pollinators). In the end, this and other 'Save the Bees' initiatives could have significant negative impacts on native pollinator populations.

A recent scientific paper by one of my Packer lab siblings, Scott MacIvor, shows that even bee condos (which are sold widely to support wild bee populations) are not having the desired effect and require further study before we can promote them as a conservation tool.

Going forward, I encourage you all to redirect this growing enthusiasm and love for bees to include native pollinators and their diverse threats. If you'd like to help wild bee populations, join citizen science programs (such as [www.bumblebeewatch.org](http://www.bumblebeewatch.org)), encourage your governments to work with scientists to develop policy, and create/preserve native habitat wherever you can. Be wary of single issues, which claim to be the sole threat to bees, and items for purchase, which claim to solve the problem. We are dealing with a complicated issue and are actively trying to gather the data required to move forward.

Scientifically informed policy and conservation management of our most vulnerable native pollinators is the right way to truly 'Save the Bees', in my (expert) opinion.

March 19, 2015 by infoliberero

<https://libereroblog.wordpress.com/2015/03/19/the-problem-with-saving-the-bees/>



A native bumble bee  
Photo By: Sheila Colla

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## Access Matters: Maryland's Poplar Island

Poplar Island, located in the mid-Chesapeake, was once (c.1850) estimated to be 1,140 acres, supporting over 100 human residents and diverse wildlife. Extensive erosion and other processes reduced the island to a mere five acres by 1993.

It has since become a model of environmental restoration, where a creative solution for dredged material (e.g., leading to Baltimore harbor) is resulting in the restoration of this once vanishing island.

Starting in 1994, a team of federal and state environmental agencies, including the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Maryland Port Administration, and Maryland Environmental Service, launched plans to restore the island to its historic size. Today, Poplar Island - through the Paul S. Sarbanes Ecosystem Restoration Project - is a showcase for the beneficial use of dredged material.

Poplar Island and other islands in the Chesapeake Bay historically offered safe, relatively predator-free habitat to many of the bay's wildlife and bird species, as well as a safe harbor for the bay's fish and shellfish resources.

For us, the birds are highly attractive, and, depending on the season, the birding fare can include a fine selection of waterfowl, shorebirds, gulls, terns, and other species. Also, for us, the opportunity to access the island is vital.

For about a dozen years, visitation between March and October has been made available through Maryland Environmental Service. In fact, there are about eight birding trips a year to Poplar Island, or about one or two a month. These involve boat transportation to the island and a bus to circuit the island.

The Poplar Island story is not only important in terms of island restoration using dredge materials, but it is also a birding access experience worthy of emulation. It is one example of potential engagement in the future with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at other bird-attracting dredge operations (e.g., the 40+ Confined Disposal Facilities [CDFs] in the Great Lakes).

See here for Poplar Island background:

<http://www.nab.usace.army.mil/Missions/Environmental/PoplarIsland.aspx>

And here for some tour information:

<http://www.menv.com/pages/outreach/poplar.html>

Birding Community E-bulletin

Paul J. Baicich

410-992-9736

[paul.baicich@verizon.net](mailto:paul.baicich@verizon.net)



Birders Tally Half the World's Bird Species in 24 Hours

Ithaca, N.Y.—The first Global Big Day for bird conservation is wrapping up with participants from more than 110 countries having already tallied more than 5,700 species seen or heard in just 24 hours—more than half the world's bird species. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology invited bird watchers everywhere to go birding on May 9 and report their sightings to eBird.org to raise awareness for conservation.

"No one knew what to expect," says Chris Wood, captain of the Cornell Lab's birding team, the Sapsuckers, and co-leader of the eBird online checklist program. "The results have exceeded all our expectations!"

The numbers are still going up as participants continue to enter their lists into eBird through May 12. [See current results.](#)

Wood and four others on Team Sapsucker tallied 320 species while participating from Panama—a country with an amazing diversity of bird species and of vital importance to migrants throughout the Western Hemisphere. Read a detailed summary of Global Big Day: <http://bit.ly/1G2QNNF>

The Big Day spirit of cooperation was also evident at the 32nd annual World Series of Birding in New Jersey where three teams of Cornell University students competed. Teams were allowed to share information for the first time and it served everyone well as they all struggled with persistent fog, a bit of rain, and migrant species that vanished overnight.

Cornell's Team Redhead defended their last year's championship state title, tallying 208 species. Their Big Stay team, which did its birding in one location, won its division reporting 71 species.

For decades, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Big Day has raised funds to advance bird research and conservation. Thanks to the generosity of donors, nearly \$300,000 has been raised so far. To donate toward the \$500,000 goal, visit <http://birds.cornell.edu/bigday>

Media Contact:

Pat Leonard, Cornell Lab, (607) 254-2137,  
[pel27@cornell.edu](mailto:pel27@cornell.edu)

## Cool Internet Links

### Hummingbird Migration Myths

On the wings of a goose?

<http://birdnote.org/show/hummingbird-migration-myths>

### Four Videos Of Chile Calbuco Volcano: Time Lapse, Lightning, Pyroclastic Plume

For the first time in 42 years, the Calbuco volcano in southern Chile erupted with fury. This 6,572 foot mountain spewed a pyroclastic plume into the air and it was captured on video. In fact many videos, and the link below shows a few. The best one is from Rodrigo Barrera that shows a time lapse at sunset with a fiery glow. Look closely and see the push of the ash cloud more than 50,000 feet into the air. The higher clouds are capped at the top of the troposphere, and embedded you can see occasional lightning bolts. Often erupting volcanos can trigger thunderstorms mixed with toxic ash. This is considered among the top three most dangerous of Chile's 90 volcanos.

<http://tinyurl.com/timelapse-pyroclastic-plume>

### Amazing Timelapse Of Volcanic Sunset In Zimbabwe

You'll love this timelapse of Sunday night's sunset over Zimbabwe, in Africa, made spectacular by volcanic aerosols carried across the Atlantic from Chile's Calbuco volcano.

<http://tinyurl.com/volcano-timelapse>

### Art fakes and ornithology

We don't often find an intersection between the world's of art forgery and ornithology, but here is one. We may have to do some rethinking about the historical migratory paths of Palaearctic geese if this story turns out to be true.

<http://m.livescience.com/50309-egyptian-mona-lisa-may-be-fake.html>



Common Gallinule  
Photo by: Bill Hubick

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 bird 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!

**"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

Barn Owls & Breakfast, Charles County

Youths especially welcome!

Mid-May to early June. The exact date to be determined, it all depends on the owls! Watch our Osprey newsletter and website for date and details.

Leader: Mike Callahan (240-765-5192, [raptorsrulemc@gmail.com](mailto:raptorsrulemc@gmail.com) )

A different kind of B&B! Come and enjoy breakfast before helping our Raptor Conservation Committee chair Mike check a Barn Owl nest box, and hopefully band nestling owls. This trip takes place on private property in southern Charles County. The location and directions will be given when you contact Mike to register and reserve your spot. This event fills up rapidly. There is a small fee involved to cover the cost of food. Please bring your own reusable plate, mug, and utensils.

June 7 – SUNDAY – 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

ANNUAL MEETING

Sotterley Plantation, St. Mary's County

44300 Sotterley Lane, Hollywood, Maryland 20636

Potluck Lunch. . . . . 1:00 – 2:15

Welcome . . . . . 2:15 – 2:30

Award Presentations . . . . . 2:30 – 3:00

Bird Walk. . . . . 3:00 – 4:00

We are very excited to be able to have our annual meeting at this beautiful historic St. Mary's County location. The meeting will be located at the open air Riverside Pavilion. Secluded and located on a bluff overlooking Sotterley Creek and the Patuxent River, the Pavilion is surrounded by majestic trees and water views. This will be one of our loveliest meeting venues and best bird walk due to the habitat and nature trails this location provides.

Directions: From Maryland Route 235 go north onto Maryland 245, Sotterley Road. Turn right onto Sotterley Lane. Follow signs to the Riverside Pavilion, parking is available.

June 11 – THURSDAY – 9:00 p.m.-11:00 p.m. FREE

EVENTS

FIELD TRIP

Flag Ponds, Calvert County

“NIGHTIME HORSESHOE CRAB ADVENTURE AT FLAG PONDS”

Leader(s): Andy Brown and Melissa Boyle ([melissaboyle3@gmail.com](mailto:melissaboyle3@gmail.com) , 443-340-3035)

The horseshoe crab is one of nature's miracles, and their eggs fuel the amazing migration of shorebirds! Want to see

horseshoe crabs spawning on the beach by moonlight? Join us for this unique chance at water's edge. Bring flashlights, and wear comfortable walking shoes that can get wet. Meet at the gate to Flag Ponds. RSVP to Melissa (see above) by June 8.

June 23 – TUESDAY – 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

FIELD TRIP

Patuxent River Park – Jug Bay, Prince George's County  
“OSPREY BANDING TRIP”

Leader(s): Melissa Boyle ([melissaboyle3@gmail.com](mailto:melissaboyle3@gmail.com) , 443-340-3035) and Greg Kearns.

Join us for our annual Southern Maryland Audubon Society Osprey Banding Trip at Jug Bay. Do not hesitate to sign up for this event if you have never been lucky to experience this truly beautiful park and see Osprey chicks up close and personal. The parks naturalist, Greg Kearns, is one of the best in his field and provides a very entertaining, fact-filled and fun outing. This opportunity is limited to 15 participants! Youths Welcome (younger than 12 with adult). Cost is \$18/person, payable the day of the trip. RSVP to Melissa (see above) by June 19.

## WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

Joseph H. Gardiner, Hughesville  
Mary Hicks, Hollywood  
Katie Mathis, La Plata  
Joe Nemecek, Accokeek  
William M. Newman, Dunkirk  
Austin Platt, Port Republic  
Liz Sanders, Hughesville  
A. B. Siebert, Scotland  
Truitt Stone, California  
J. G. Williamson, St. Mary's City  
Joseph H. Gardiner, Hughesville  
Mary Hicks, Hollywood  
Katie Mathis, La Plata

**EDITOR:** Tyler Bell **E-mail:** [jtylerbell@yahoo.com](mailto: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, Michael Patterson (301-752-5763)**  
**Vice-President, Bob Lukinic (301-283-6317)**  
**Secretary, Lynne Wheeler (301-743-3236)**  
**Treasurer, Will Daniel (240-518-8006)**