## The Osprey

Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society



Sleepy Orange Photo by: Carrie Staples

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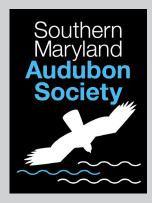
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http://somdaudubon.org/

#### President's Perch

As I write this column, it is Labor Day weekend and I have just heard a repeated "chick-burr" of what could be my last Scarlet Tanager. Is it a migrant or one of the pair I witnessed raising young? Either way, I think to myself: I might not hear another until next spring—a fact that makes me savor tonight's calls more profoundly. I know the same is true of the remaining hummingbirds, all females and juveniles now that the resident male has left. Any day they will migrate southward also.

Once again I am struck by the poignancy of fall. The pace of change, the season's fleeting, transitional character impresses upon us the ephemeral cycle of life. Of course, autumn migrants briefly relieve an inevitable sense of loss. Monarch butterflies, too, offer a splash of hope for renewal. What heartens me is that juvenile birds instinctively know to fly to their wintering grounds—and where those are! One of the great marvels of nature.

Similarly, in our world at large, I take solace in the gifts and optimism of young people. Southern Maryland Audubon Society has long focused on youth birders—with owl banding programs, Scouting projects, educational events for home schoolers, and, just last year, a grant to support White-throated Sparrow research at St. Mary's College of Maryland. However, we have recently expanded those efforts. On our new website, we added links to activities for kids learning at home during the pandemic (<a href="https://www.somdaudubon.org/learn-about-birds/birding-for-kids/">https://www.somdaudubon.org/learn-about-birds/birding-for-kids/</a>). We are also very excited to announce that we are starting a new club, Southern Maryland Youth Birders—a project run by teen birders for other kids. Please contact them at <a href="mailto:southernmarylandyouthbirders@gmail.com">southernmarylandyouthbirders@gmail.com</a> if you know a young person who wants to join!

To boost students and diversity in the conservation field, SMAS has just donated \$500 to the new Black and Latinx Birders Annual Scholarship fund. Run by the Maryland Bird Conservation Partnership, the scholarship is open to birders who identify as Black and/ or Latinx in Maryland and the District who are studying Environmental Sciences or Biological Sciences. Please help spread the word about this exciting opportunity! Maybe you know someone who would like to apply? Or maybe you'd like to donate to the fund? For more information, please check the following links: <a href="https://marylandbirds.org/black-latinx-birders-scholarship-esp">https://marylandbirds.org/black-latinx-birders-scholarship-esp</a> (English) and <a href="https://marylandbirds.org/black-latinx-birders-scholarship-esp">https://marylandbirds.org/black-latinx-birders-scholarship-esp</a> (Español).

SMAS wholeheartedly supports equity, diversity, and inclusion. We believe that we—as a nation, as conservationists, and as a community—are stronger when everyone feels empowered and works together. Environmental sustainability needs all of our voices—including Black, Latinx, Native American, Asian, LGBTQ—working in concert. That's why we lower barriers with loaner binoculars and free programs.

This philosophy continues despite the pandemic. This fall SMAS is holding its free lecture programs online via Zoom (see details inside). We are also recording and posting the sessions at <a href="https://www.somdaudubon.org/our-work/program-archive/">https://www.somdaudubon.org/our-work/program-archive/</a>. Preserving our educational programs online broadens our reach over the long haul. Please suggest more ways we can help underserved communities! I want to hear from you.

In solidarity for the birds!

Tiffany Farrell

somdaudubon.president@gmail.com

#### Administration Relaxes Rules for Oil and Gas Drilling in National Forests

Proposed rule cuts the public out of oil and gas leasing decisions for National Forests. By National Audubon Society August 31, 2020



Prairie Warbler. Photo: Christopher Ciccone/Audubon Photography Awards

WASHINGTON - On September 1, the administration will release its plan to make it easier for companies to drill for oil and gas on U.S. Forest Service lands. The proposed rule is scheduled to be published in the Federal Register on Tuesday.

National forest lands serve a vital role in the climate solution by storing carbon. Under this new rule, the administration would escalate oil and gas development, increase carbon emissions and exacerbate the climate crisis, putting human as well as the forests' health at risk at a time when public health is the nation's top concern.

The proposed rule would cut the public out of the process used to decide whether and which lands will be opened to oil and gas drilling. It would also give excessive leeway to companies that don't follow US Forest Service (USFS) laws and weaken that agency's ability to protect public land from development and degradation.

By adopting this dramatic departure from its long-standing role, Forest Service would give away its right to serve as a check on leasing in those places that need protections.

"The administration really outdid itself with a proposal that has the Forest Service walking away from its responsibilities for managing our national forests and grassland while closing the door on public oversight," said Nada Culver, vice president of public lands and senior counsel for the National Audubon Society. "This is not just a conservation issue, it's putting our communities at risk. Replacing forested areas and grasslands with drill pads and access roads not only means fewer birds like Mallards and Prairie Warblers, but also degrades our lands and natural spaces, and threatens water supplies for millions of people."

"By undermining the public participation and environmental review required by the National Environmental Policy Act, this proposed rule puts the interests of the fossil fuel industry ahead of the public interest," said Will Fadely, senior government relations representative, The Wilderness Society. "Our national forests and grasslands have never been more important for preserving and passing a healthy world forward to future generations."

"National forests are treasured by the American people for their recreation, watershed and wildlife values," said Pete Nelson, federal lands director for Defenders of Wildlife. "Accelerating oil and gas drilling on national forests will hasten the extinction and climate crises at a time when we need to be moving in the exact opposite direction."

"Tens of millions of Americans hike, camp, fish, hunt, bike, and run in our national forests each year," said Sharon Buccino, senior director of lands for the Nature Program at NRDC (Natural Resources Defense Council). "This rule would sideline their voices in favor of the fossil fuel industry. We won't allow the Trump administration to shut down public review of drilling in our national forests that the American people don't want and that the climate can't afford."

Specifically, the rule would:

- Reduce public input and transparency by removing the requirement that a Forest Service office give public notice of the decision to approve a Surface Use Plan of Operations, the specific plan for development.
- Allow the Forest Service to skip important and necessary environmental reviews for leasing decisions. This, together with other administration roll backs of NEPA regulations, undermines that law's role in good forest management.
- Make it more difficult for the Forest Service to stop bad lease sales by removing explicit confirmation of USFS consent as a standard step in the leasing process.
- Remove environmental considerations as criteria for decisions to approve plans.
- Loosen the rules by giving developers unbounded discretion to extend deadlines and comply with operating standards. Currently, compliance deadlines can only be extended if the operator cannot meet them due to factors out of their control.
- Limit the Forest Service to only protect specific, named natural resources and ignore opportunities to address climate change or protect vital wild places.

By filtering air and water, lands managed by the USFS provide clean drinking water and clean air for millions of people and serve an essential role in tackling the climate and the extinction crises. Currently, if US public lands and waters were constituted a country, they would rank as the fifth largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the world, ahead of Japan, Brazil and Germany.

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#### Birding Across the US and Europe by Jeff Manor

Most of you don't know me. You may have seen my name on the email list imploring the more knowledgeable members to help with an identification of a feathered friend that had graced me with its presence at my bird feeder. I've been on several organized birding trips in Southern Maryland with some of you and tried to learn as much as I could on those trips. I certainly wish I had the ear that many of you have. The knowledge you shared was immensely helpful when birding around SoMD. I have been traveling since early July 2019, first across the U.S. to Washington and in Europe since September 2019. Who knew that 7 months into our travel that a pandemic would hit. When the opportunity arises, I try to increase my life list. However, my expeditions devoted strictly for birding have been limited. When I do, my tools have been my Nikon Coolpix, which has a digital zoom equivalent to a 1200mm zoom, and Cornell University's wonderful app, Merlin. I forewent binoculars because of weight, but have often lamented that choice.

When I have had the occasion to bird in the various locales, I am often reminded of how lucky I am to be birding in 2020. I have long had an interest in birds, but only very recently have started to maintain a life list via eBird. Without the tools available to me on my trip, I can't imagine being very effective. Because of the weight restrictions, I wasn't keen on the idea of carrying bird guides. Besides, I think you have to be smarter than I to use them, particularly in the winter when the birds do not have their breeding plumage. I really don't know how you birders were able to identify strange birds with just a fleeting glance in the binoculars and a bird guide. My hat is off to all of you.

My list was 151 when I left Maryland. It would have been larger had I maintained a list when I first started birding with you folks. I increased it to 182 on my road trip across the U.S. with the highlights for me being the Yellow-throated Loon, Burrowing Owl, and American Avocet in South Dakota. Only one day in SD was devoted to birding on a two month drive and it netted 14 species.

My 11 months in Europe has provided me with an additional 84. The aforementioned tools have been very helpful on those rare occasions I actually get to devote a period to birding. In addition, the explore function in eBird.org is a great help. It has provided me with a list of birds I might expect to see along with photographs to assist in identification. The ability to view what hotspots that might be teeming with different species is also a wonderful feature. Because of that feature, my wife and I took an hour drive to Pennington Marsh Nature Reserve to see a Pied Avocet and a Common Cuckoo (along with 6 other new species).

I didn't always have to rely on taking a picture to identify later. As is often the case wherever I've been, I have encountered several fellow birders who were happy to assist me. Before COVID hit, I spent a few days at Titchfield Haven which has 6 wonderful hides (blinds). One birder allowed me to tag along to each hide where he patiently answered my simple questions and suggested other sites to explore. An experienced birder is worth so much more than all my technological tools.

While an experienced guide is greatly beneficial, for most of my trip I have not encountered any. So, for this amateur, my camera and iPad have enabled me to make the most of any birding opportunities, even if it's a quick stop along the side of the road because we spotted something. I know there's a downside. Birders who have not learned how to be good stewards of private and public land while birding certainly give the community a bad name. However, I think of all of you back in SoMD when I'm out and about and how my actions reflect on the birding community. The bottom line is that as a "Lone Ranger" birder, I'm happy to be birding in the 21st century.

#### White-throated Sparrow Songs

White-throated Sparrows in British Columbia are singing a new tune, and the song has been sweeping across Canada. What began as a minor change to a common song has now morphed into a continent-wide phenomenon.

"As far as we know, it's unprecedented," says biologist Ken Otter from the University of Northern British Columbia, Canada. "We don't know of any other study that has ever seen this sort of spread through cultural evolution of a song type."

First noticed in the late 1990s, Otter started hearing white-throats singing an unusual song. Instead of sticking to the species' usual three-note finish, local sparrow populations were ending their tune on two notes.

Now, between 2000 and 2019, this minor change has travelled over 1,800 miles, from British Columbia to central Ontario, virtually wiping out a historic song-ending that's been around since the 1950s at least.

No one knows what's so addictive about this new ending, or why it can't last alongside the three-note variant, but scientists are trying to figure it out.

Exactly why male white-throats end up adopting this novel ending is still unclear. Otter says the ending might simply be compelling because it's unusual and unique. Like many other bird songs, however, it could be related to female preferences.

"In White-throated Sparrows, we might find a situation in which the females actually like songs that aren't typical in their environment. If that's the case, there's a big advantage to any male who can sing a new song type."

For more, including a sound-video of the songs, see here: <a href="https://www.sciencealert.com/this-sparrow-song-went-viral-across-canada-and-it-s-unlike-anything-we-ve-heard-before">https://www.sciencealert.com/this-sparrow-song-went-viral-across-canada-and-it-s-unlike-anything-we-ve-heard-before</a>



#### Tip Of The Month: Watch For Hummers!

Shame on us! We should have reminded you last month, but it's still not too late.

This month, and for the next few months, can be a great time to concentrate on watching for hummingbirds. If you're not traveling far from home, and most of us are not, this season is the perfect one to check out your neighborhood and local region for hummer-feeders. (And if you have hummingbird feeders of your own, keep them up... and even add another!)

Indeed, this suggestion is good for the next few months, and arguably is good advice no matter where you live in the lower-48 states or southern Canada: You'll be looking for "something different."

In much of the East, late-season hummingbirds are possibly western species. Often these outliers are Rufous Hummingbirds, but other possibilities might include Black-chinned, Anna's, Allen's, Broad-tailed, Calliope, Blue-throated, or Mexican Violetear. For those readers living in the eastern U.S., all of these species have appeared in this region, so don't assume that a late season hummingbird is necessarily a Ruby-throated Hummingbird.

Surprises could occur almost anywhere: West Coast, Rockies, Arizona-New Mexico, Texas, Gulf Coast, Florida, Great Lakes, anywhere along the East Coast, and everywhere in between!

It's hard to have advice covering all geographic areas, but, in general, for hummer-feeder-watchers well into the colder months, we have some suggestions:

- Place your hummer-feeder up near some areas of good cover if available. As weather gets cooler, hummingbirds will seek these areas for roosting.
- If cold weather is forecasted, rig up a small heatersystem for the feeders (small light bulbs can help).
- If you have any late-season flowers, those can assist in attracting late hummingbirds.
- Several websites discuss hummingbird plantings, and some can recommend which plants are hardy enough in your area to last in cold weather.



You can access all the past E-bulletins on the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) website: http://refugeassociation.org/news/birding-bulletin/

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#### The 2020 Audubon Photography Awards: Top 100

Take a scroll through this year's spectacular, artistic, and playful avian images, while reading the story behind each.

By The Editors Summer 2020

This year nearly 1,800 photographers from across the United States and Canada submitted more than 6,000 images to the 11th annual Audubon Photography Awards. Our expert judging panel had the difficult task of choosing just six winners and four honorable mentions from the pool, but with so many aweinspiring submissions, we always enjoy picking some favorites that didn't make the final cut.

As usual, we've selected 100 additional photographs, shown here in no particular order. During this year of collective tragedy and canceled plans, we are especially grateful to share a gallery that displays even a small slice of global birdlife in all of its stunning and joyous variety, from acrobatic Ospreys to hungry hummingbirds to busy woodpeckers.

We hope these shots inspire you to appreciate and perhaps try to capture the beauty of birds yourself. Our photography section has everything you need to get started, including tips and howto's, gear recommendations, and Audubon's ethical guidelines for wildlife photography. With skill, patience, and maybe a little luck, you could find your shot at taking top honors in our 2021 awards.

[To read the rest of the article and to see the award winning photos, click here: <a href="https://tinyurl.com/y2sygpqe">https://tinyurl.com/y2sygpqe</a>]

National Audubon Society 225 Varick St New York, NY 10014 212-979-3196

#### **WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!**

Diane Clark, Mechanicsville Gloria Elston-Hill, Fort Washington Wendy Francisco, Charlotte Hall Judy Gross, Owings Dayna Lane, Lusby Ellen McCormack-Ament, Port Republic Marsha Misenhimer, Valley Lee Dann Morris, Leonardtown Richard Peel, Alexandria, VA Rose Poole, Clinton Marcie Robinson, Indian Head Lilimar Ruhlmann, Waldorf Alexander Sidlowski, Tall Timbers John Smith, Lexington Park Nettie Trimbath, Mechanicsville Marcia Watson, Bowie Elizabeth Young, La Plata

#### The Myth of John James Audubon

The National Audubon Society's namesake looms large, like his celebrated bird paintings. But he also enslaved people and held white supremacist views, reflecting ethical failings that it is time to bring to the fore.

By Gregory Nobles Contributor, Audubon Magazine July 31, 2020

This piece, written by a historian and biographer of John James Audubon, is the first in a series of pieces on Audubon.org and in Audubon magazine that will reexamine the life and legacy of the organization's namesake as we chart a course toward racial equity.

John James Audubon was a man of many identities: artist, naturalist, woodsman, adventurer, storyteller, myth maker. A now-legendary painter who traveled North America in the early 19th century, in an epic quest to document all of the continent's avian life, he is above all known as a champion of birds. Today we see that legacy preserved in the National Audubon Society, but also in the cities, streets, and even birds that bear his name.

Audubon was also a slaveholder, a point that many people don't know or, if they do, tend to ignore or excuse. "He was a man of his time," so the argument goes. That's never been a good argument, even about Audubon's time—and certainly not in this one—because many men and women in the antebellum era took a strong and outspoken stand for the abolition of slavery.

Audubon didn't. Instead, he dismissed the abolitionist movement on both sides of the Atlantic. In 1834, he wrote to his wife, Lucy Bakewell Audubon, that the British government had "acted imprudently and too precipitously" in emancipating enslaved people in its West Indian possessions. It was with remarkable understatement that one of Audubon's earlier biographers wrote that "Lucy and John Audubon took no stand against the institution of slavery."

They took a stand for slavery by choosing to own slaves. In the 18-teens, when the Audubons lived in Henderson, Kentucky, they had nine enslaved people working for them in their household, but by the end of the decade, when faced with financial difficulties, they had sold them. In early 1819, for instance, Audubon took two enslaved men with him down the Mississippi to New Orleans on a skiff, and when he got there, he put the boat and the men up for sale. The Audubons then acquired several more enslaved people during the 1820s, but again sold them in 1830, when they moved to England, where Audubon was overseeing the production of what he called his "Great Work," The Birds of America, the massive, four-volume compendium of avian art that made him famous.

The Birds of America was a tremendous artistic and ornithological achievement, a product of personal passion and sacrifice. Audubon thought big from the beginning, making his work ambitious in its reach, with 435 engraved images of some 490 species, and impressive in its scale, with each bird depicted

"size of life." Audubon's avian images can seem more real than reality itself, allowing the viewer to study each bird closer and longer than would ever be possible in the field. The visual impact proved stunning at the time, and it continues to be so today. Even though Audubon found Black and Indigenous people scientifically useful, he never accepted them as socially or racially equal.

Although never fully acknowledged, people of color—African Americans and Native Americans—had a part in making that massive project possible. Audubon occasionally relied on these local observers for assistance in collecting specimens, and he sometimes accepted their information about birds and incorporated it into his writings. But even though Audubon found Black and Indigenous people scientifically useful, he never accepted them as socially or racially equal. He took pains to distinguish himself from them. In writing about an expedition in Florida in December 1831, Audubon noted that he set out in a boat with six enslaved Black men—"hands," as he called them—and "three white men," his emphasis clearly underscoring the racial divide in the boat and his place on the white side of it.

Audubon also, through his writing, manipulated racial tensions to enhance his notoriety. The tale of "The Runaway"—one of the "Episodes" about American life he inserted into his 3,000-page, five-volume Ornithological Biography, a companion to Birds of America—spins the tale of an encounter with a Black man in a Louisiana swamp. Audubon, who had been hunting Wood Storks with his dog, Plato, had a gun, but so did the Black man; after a brief face-off both men put down their weapons. Even as he described the tension easing, Audubon had already hooked into the fears of his readers. Published three years after Nat Turner's slave rebellion in 1831, "The Runaway" presented the most menacing image imaginable for many white people—the sudden specter of an armed Black man. Audubon knew how to get people's attention.

He also knew how to put himself in the most favorable light. The man and his family had escaped slavery and were living in the swamp, and as the tale unfolds, Audubon spent the night at the family's encampment—companionably but also "quite at their mercy." It was the fugitives, however, who were really most vulnerable. The next morning, Audubon took them back to "the plantation of their first master" and convinced the planter to buy the enslaved people back from the masters to which the family had been divided and sold. And that was that: Reunited but still enslaved, the Black family was "rendered as happy as slaves generally are in that country." (Exactly what "happy" meant, Audubon did not say.) In the span of a single story—true or not, and many of Audubon's "Episodes" were not—Audubon portrayed himself as both a savior of a fugitive family and a defender of slaveholders' claims to human property rights.

Click on link for the rest of the article.

https://www.audubon.org/news/the-myth-john-james-audubon



# **Monthly Meeting Program Upcoming Zoom Lectures**

#### Covid-19 Friendly!

Instead of in-person meetings this fall, SMAS is launching virtual lectures using Zoom. We will send invitations via email which will have information and a link for joining the meetings. If you do not get our Osprey newsletter via email you need to sign up. Please go to our website SoMdAudubon.org and sign up at the bottom of the homepage.



FARMLAND RAPTOR PROGRAM
KESTRELS, BARN OWLS & CHIMNEY
SWIFTS

#### October 7 @ 7:00 p.m.

Chris Eberly, executive director of the Maryland Bird Conservation Partnership (MBCP), will discuss this exciting new program which focuses on stabilizing and increasing the population of the American Kestrel, Barn Owl, and Chimney Swift, three of the 143 species of Greatest Conservation Need in Maryland's State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP)



CLIMATE CHANGE IN AUTUMN FRUIT AVAILABILTY FOR MIGRANT BIRDS

#### November 4 @ 7:00 p.m.

Dr. Amanda Gallinat is an ecologist who studies how environmental change affects plants, birds, and their interactions. Her recent research focuses on the effects of climate change on the timing of seasonal biological events in the northeast, including fruit ripening and bird migration, and how these climate-driven changes alter food availability for birds in autumn.

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please enroll me as a member of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society. All of my membership dollars will help support local conservation initiatives and enable us to provide southern Maryland teacher education scholarships to attend Hog Island, Audubon Camp in Maine.

Individual/Family:	1year \$20	2year \$35	3year \$45
Lifatima Mambarahin:	<b>\$500</b>		

☐ Lifetime Membership: \_\_\_\$500

Introductory Offers

City:

Please enroll me as a first time member of the National Audubon Society. You will automatically become a member of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society. You will receive six issues of National's award winning Audubon Magazine. A fraction of my dues will be received to our chapter. Your renewal information will come directly from the National Audubon Society.

- introduc	tory Offer.	i year \$20	,	
Name:				
Address:				

 Please enroll me for electronic delivery of our monthly newsletter The Osprey:

State:

Email me a link to download the pdf,

 $\underline{\phantom{a}}$  Email me a notice it is available on the website. My email address is:

\_\_No thank you, please mail me a paper copy.

Please make your check payable to Southern Maryland Audubon Society **or** National Audubon Society.

Mail to: Southern Maryland Audubon Society, P.O. Box 181, Bryans Road, MD 20616.

GREAT NEWS!! You can now go online and join SMAS via PayPal.
Go to our website at somdaudubon.org for this new option.



Osprey Photo by Bill Hubick

**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.

#### 2020-2021 Officers

President, Tiffany Farrell - somdaudubon.president@gmail.com Vice-President, Margarita Rochow - margarita@usa.net Treasurer, Julie Daniel - juliemdaniel@hotmail.com Secretary, Julie Simpson - jsimps@runbox.com



### Southern Maryland Audubon Society Adopt-a-Raptor

Foster Parents Needed!

Southern Maryland Audubon Society sponsors the banding of nesting 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. Limited numbers of Osprey, Barn Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl and American Kestrels become available each year for adoption. Your donation will be specifically utilized for raptor research and raptor conservation projects such as:

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

Please indicate which raptor you wish to adopt. You may adopt more than one:

Osprey, \$10 each	Total Amount:
Barn Owl, \$25 each	Total Amount:
Northern Saw-whet Owl, \$30 each	Total Amount:
American Kestrel, \$35 each	Total Amount:

☐ General Donation to Raptor Fund Donation Amount:\_\_\_

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.
- A photo of a fledgling and any other available information on the whereabouts or fate of the bird.

Name:
Street Address:
State, Zip Code:
City:
Email:
Phone:
If this is a gift, please include the recipient's name for the
certificate:

Mail To: Southern Maryland Audubon Society
Carole Schnitzler
3595 Silk Tree Court, Waldorf, MD 20602