

The Osprey

Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society



Whooper Swan at Beauvue Ponds
St. Mary's County
Photo by Steve Arthur

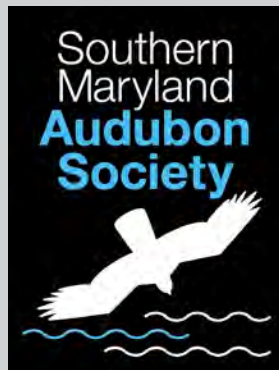
In This Issue

**Birding - the Perfect Pandemic
Pastime!**

**Flight Risk: Reducing Bird and
Building Collisions**

**Good News For a
Healthier Community!**

**Help Monarchs by Planting the
RIGHT Native Plants**



<http://somdaudubon.org/>

President's Perch

Happy spring, everyone! This wondrous season excites any naturalist, especially us birders. Who doesn't love watching migrants return or pass through in their bright breeding finery? Even some of our year-round species dramatically transform. As I write, American Goldfinch males are molting into their dapper top hats. Plus, listening to birds brings everyone joy. Soon the forest will echo with so much song that it will become overwhelming at times. Every year I try to record it and realize my cell phone simply cannot suffice. Focusing on sounds close by, it loses the breadth of the chorus. Does anyone have recommendations for good tools to record bird song? Please write if you do!

The other gift of springtime is that the birds *come to us*. While it is possible to spot a life bird at home, winter isn't the most auspicious time. Recently I drove in search of irrupting Evening Grosbeaks—to no avail. Of course, I looked out my window by happenstance and saw my first Fox Sparrow! But that's the addicting aspect of birding, isn't it? Blessings can come when we aren't expecting them. In April, though, nature's spigot is turned wide open. The Atlantic flyway hums and you needn't go far for some remarkable bird sightings

Even without SMAS field trips, I do hope you are heading outside to catch a bit of nature's show. For those who want structure, there is still much work to do for the [Maryland/DC Breeding Bird Atlas](#). If watching courtship, nesting, and feeding sounds fun, please join our Zoom meeting on April 7. Atlas Coordinator Gabriel Foley will tell us how to recognize and report breeding behavior, and, for those already participating, how to focus your efforts.

Speaking of the breeding season, very soon the Bald Eagle pair at Port Tobacco River Park will have a chick or two! Check out our streaming nest cam on [SoMdAudubon.org](#), or join our experts for Bald Eagle chat sessions at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uP19mWmmc7M>. Live chat is held on Mondays and Fridays from 5:00 to 7:00 pm and on Wednesday mornings from 9:00 to 11:00.

Meanwhile, keep sharing your birding news and excitement on our [SMAS Group page on Facebook](#). Your photos are amazing, and we enjoy interacting with all of you there!

Stay safe and well,
Tiffany Farrell
somdaudubon.president@gmail.com



Fox Sparrow
Photo by Bill Hubick

Birding - the Perfect Pandemic Pastime!

We've got to admit to a considerable amount of "guilty pleasure." For any birders, the pleasure part is easy to understand as birding is always a pleasure. The guilty part of "guilty pleasure" is due to having so much fun during the worst pandemic of our lifetime! But, there you go... it's been a blast. What better way is there to escape the restrictions of being cooped up for a year while trying your best to stay sane!

My wife, Betty, and I get outside almost every day for a walk. In addition to birding in our neighborhood while walking, we make special trips at least 3-4 times a week to go birding outside our immediate neighborhood. It's been a perfect hobby, as most of the time we're automatically socially distancing as there are rarely many folks out in the areas we've chosen to go birding. We always have our masks with us (*just in case*), but generally it's been safe. Now that we've both had our Pfizer vaccinations (*both shots*), we're feeling even safer. For instance, we just returned from a great 4-day birding trip to Ocean City, a trip we would not have taken just 3-4 months ago due to Covid (*and added Purple Sandpiper to our life list*).

For most of this past year we've been birding locally within St. Mary's, Calvert and Charles Counties. Our favorite locations have been Point Lookout State Park (*at least once each week*), Naval Air Station, PAX River (*fortunate to have access as a Navy veteran*), Historic Sotterley, Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary, Beauvue Ponds, Piscataway Park, Calvert Cliffs and Jefferson Patterson Parks. While Point Lookout State Park has been our favorite location, I'd be negligent if I didn't mention all the other great areas within a few miles of the Park - Long Neck Road, Cornfield Harbor, and Webster Field (*part of NAS PAX River*).

We got into birding about 3 years ago when Bev & Warren Walker, kayaking friends, suggested we go with them to a Southern Maryland Audubon Society (SMAS) meeting. We have always been interested in birds, with bird feeders up around our home in most places we've lived, but never dipped seriously into it. After a few months of SMAS meetings and several field trips with Lynn Wheeler, Kyle Rambo, David Moulton, Bob Boxwell and others, we were hooked.

Perhaps two years ago, we signed up for an eBird account and we haven't looked back since. At this point in our late blooming birding career (*we're old*), we have 221 birds on our "life list." And while this is a paltry number for some of you avid birders, we're ecstatic that we've been able to get this far this fast. Our list is not just the usual robins, crows and vultures - we've been lucky to see some real rarities, especially during this pandemic year.

Our first really rare sighting came last April, while visiting Beauvue Ponds. As we were standing by the side of the road, Betty had her binoculars and I had my camera. All the sudden something swooped down over our heads and landed in the pond, not 50' away. It was a swan and I took quite a few photos. At the time, we thought nothing of it. We've seen swans. However, when we got home and I processed my photographs, it was apparent this was not a Tundra or Trumpeter or Mute Swan...

this was a Whooper Swan! This was the first time a Whooper Swan had been seen in Maryland in many years.

The Whooper Swan sighting was followed with other rarities - some rare in the state and some just rare in St. Mary's County: the Eurasian Collared-Dove (*on Long Neck Rd*); a Lapland Longspur (*Point Lookout State Park*); Western Grebe (*Loch Raven Reservoir*); White Ibis (*on Long Neck Rd*); Sabine's Gull (*Piscataway Park*); Barrow's Goldeneye (*Point Lookout State Park*); and yesterday, March 4, we drove to Lake Whittier in Frederick, MD, to see two Greater White-Fronted Geese!

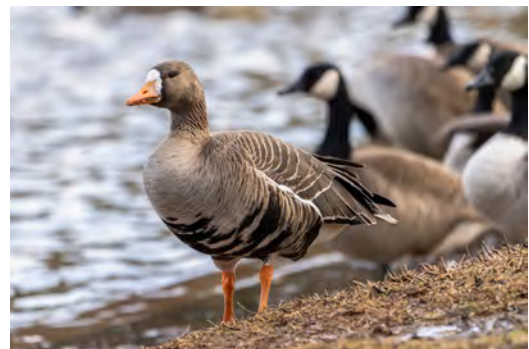
As with the Whooper Swan, we often have no idea what we're seeing while in the field. I just take a lot of photographs. When we get home, we work to identify the birds with various apps. I've found our Merlin and Sibley apps to be among the best. Being able to marry my photography hobby with birding has been an especially gratifying experience. I love attempting to get good, detailed, sharp photos of the birds we see. Of our 221 life birds, I have photographs of 204. Not all are award winning photos, but most are clear enough to aid in our identification of the species.

Our thanks go out to all who've helped make this so much fun, encouraging us along the way and helping with identifications. Thanks to Bev & Warren for getting us started and special thanks to Kyle Rambo and Tyler Bell for putting up with our seemingly endless questions. It's been a great year for birding, in the midst of a really tough year for many, many people - a real guilty pleasure.

Steve & Betty Arthur



Steve and Betty at Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary,
Lothian, MD
Photo by Steve Arthur



Greater White-fronted Goose, Whittier Lake,
Frederick, MD
Photo by Steve Arthur

Flight Risk: Reducing Bird and Building Collisions

Glass collisions are one of the leading causes of bird mortality. According to researchers, as many as a billion birds die each year in the United States (see Loss, Will, Loss and Marra). We're living in the midst of a biodiversity crisis and many bird populations are plummeting owing to window collisions, outdoor cats, habitat loss, pesticides, climate change threats, and more. If we want there to be birds to enjoy, continue in ecological roles, and simply exist in their own right, we need to help them. Making our buildings safer is a start.

Songbirds migrate at night to avoid predators, the heat of the day, and turbulence. They navigate using constellations, landmarks, and the earth's electromagnetic field. Our overpowering and ever-increasing light pollution throws them off course and has an attracting quality. Birds get pulled into dangerous human built environments full of glass. They tire and settle, but when dawn comes, they seek food. The tree they fly toward is usually a reflection of a tree or what seems a clear pathway but is really a cruel ruse of glass. Most collisions happen during the day when birds are refueling.

Contrary to popular belief, the buildings that kill the most birds are low-rise structures and residences at 56.3% and 43.6% respectively, not high-rises which only account for 0.1% of collision deaths. The most dangerous area of the glass is from the ground up to the height of the surrounding trees—the reflection zone.

Glass architecture is predominant right now. If we treat the first forty feet of a building with bird-safe glass or window film, we'd avert most collisions. Assessing the reflection height of the greenery on a particular building is the safest and most cost-effective method. It's also much cheaper to create bird-safe design in a building's planning stages than to try and retrofit windows later.

There are bird-safe glass products for corporate buildings. You can compare products and glass solutions on the American Bird Conservancy's website which includes glass with fritted, printed, etched, and UV patterns.

And what makes a bird-safe pattern? The treatment has to be on the outside of the glass to break up reflections. It has to follow the 2x4 rule. Flight tunnel testing reveals that most birds will not attempt to fly between horizontal spaces less than two inches high or vertical spaces four inches wide or less.

In addition to buildings, we also need to stop designing killer glass pedestrian walkways and various glass railings especially that overlook gardens, or habitat. See through lobbies are particularly dangerous.

What's the solution for homes? If you have a problem window, and most homes do, there are less expensive alternatives. BirdSavers are simply segments of parachute cord hung vertically every four inches from the window's top to bottom. Feather Friendly tape and window film are small dots easily seen through. CollidEscape is a perforated window film that creates an opaque pattern on the

outside but can be seen through from the inside. You can print any design on it. Want to get creative? Paint a scene on your window with tempera paint or make your own decals using the 2x4 rule, a single decal is ineffective. People quickly adjust to bird-friendly design. After a time, you don't notice it.

Think about houses. You might think one house isn't much of a problem, but when you add up a hundred and twenty-three million residences killing two to ten birds each, it's a big number. Another helpful tip? Keep bird feeders closer to windows. Birds are really adept at finding the feeder, but when they fly away, if the glass is close, they merely brush against it. They aren't flying fast enough to hit hard.

You might find a stunned bird and think it's ok if it flies away, but the sad truth is that it's likely suffering from a head injury or damage to bill, wings, or eyes. They fly away but die later. Fifty-four to seventy-six percent of window strike victims die without treatment. They are also at greater risk of predation. Stunned birds get picked off by scavengers.

If you find a bird injured from a window collision, put it in a paper bag (or box or animal carrier if it's large) and get it to a wildlife rehabilitator. It will usually need treatment to reduce brain swelling but any issues will be addressed. This is its best chance at survival even if you have to keep it overnight. Do not hold the bird in your hands. The bird perceives you as a predator and this stresses it further. Do not give it food or water. In Maryland, you can find a rehabber at mwrawildlife.org

What else can you do? Turn off nonessential lighting at night during migration. Use timers and motion sensors. Downshield light fixtures so the light isn't directed upward creating a skyglow. If you know of a problem building, contact facilities to offer solutions. Talk to building management and owners. Create local ordinances and support bird-safe building legislation.

If we can reduce collisions significantly, we'll help birds dramatically. You can see window treatments at the National Aquarium, the National Wildlife Visitor Center at Patuxent, Irvine Nature Center, CCBC Dundalk, and more.

— by Lynne Parks, Outreach Coordinator for Lights Out Baltimore, a special committee of the Baltimore Bird Club, Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society

Glass solutions at American Bird Conservancy abcbirds.org
Wildlife rehabilitators at Animal Help Now! ahnow.org
(also an app)



Photo by Lynne Parks

Good News For a Healthier Community!



PRESS RELEASE

[Clean Air Prince George's.org](http://CleanAirPrinceGeorge.org)

Panda Energy International, of Dallas, TX, formally withdrew its approved permit (CPCN 2015) from the Public Service Commission (case #9330) to construct the Panda/Mattawoman Energy Center and pipeline, which would have been the fifth power plant proposed for the Brandywine region in Prince George's County, MD. See the February 5th announcement from the MD Public Service Commission on the Clean Air Prince George's (CAPG) [website](http://www.CleanAirPrinceGeorge.org).

The Brandywine area overlaps the [Mattawoman, Piscataway and Patuxent River watersheds](#). The power plant was proposed to be sited in the headwaters of Mattawoman Creek, which are located in the village of Brandywine next to the community activities Fire Hall. The community in and around the village of Brandywine is relieved to know that this additional power plant will not be polluting our area and beyond, adding to our climate woes for the next 30+ years and generations to come.

In 2013, citizens were shocked to learn that two power plants were being proposed within a mile of each other at the same time in Brandywine (Panda/Mattawoman and Keys Energy, which is now in operation). Pollution from the Panda/Mattawoman power plant would have compounded effects from an existing EPA Superfund site; the Chalk Point toxic ash landfill; mining, concrete, and rubble fill operations; and diesel truck traffic; along with the four existing power plants—Panda Cedarville, Chalk Point, Keys Energy, and St Charles.

Power plants are in direct conflict with the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission's (MNP&PC) 2012 [Brandywine Revitalization and Preservation Study](#). Local residents requested and actively participated in the development of this plan. It was revealed in this study that the site, later proposed for the Panda/Mattawoman power plant, was inappropriately zoned as Heavy Industrial, which would lead to undesirable and problematic development proposals near residential communities.

By way of environmental reparations, we request Prince George's County update the zoning on this property for public use and benefit. We propose a forested park to help mitigate the air quality in the community. Brandywine citizens deserve a

park with walking paths, one that connects with the contiguous, county-owned lily pond property.

Despite strong citizen opposition over 25 years ago, the Texas-based company built the Panda Cedarville gas power plant in our community. That plant has been polluting ever since. Brandywine is second only to Baltimore in having the worst air quality in the state. For economic and environmental justice reparations to the lands and people of Brandywine, Panda should donate this industrial parcel to MNP&PC to help alleviate its long history of polluting our community. This donation would honor the community that has had to invest time, treasure, and energy on lawsuits, activism, and agitation for over seven years. This mitigation donation to the county would be a good step in furthering the implementation of a Brandywine Conservation Corridor envisioned by the Committee for the Revitalization and Preservation of Brandywine.

It is unconscionable that our local elected Prince George's County officials did not stand up to, represent, include, or protect our community from these fracked gas power plant proposals. At the time of Mattawoman Energy's recent cancellation, Clean Air Prince George's was upscaling its campaign to stop Prince George's County from giving tax break incentives (PILOT) to this polluting fossil fuel company, as was done with Keys Energy Center in 2014. We need elected officials who represent the residents of Prince George's and work to protect the health, safety, and wellbeing of their constituents.

It is equally unreasonable in 2021, as Earth has entered a global climate emergency, for the State of Maryland to have permitted and planned to allow a new fossil fuel power plant and pipeline to proceed with no consideration of the cumulative impacts on a community, no recognition of the state's goals for transition to renewable energy, no acknowledgment of the affront presented to a primarily African-American community that is already burdened with an oversized pollution load, and seemingly no awareness of the state's tremendous accomplishment in Banning Fracking in Maryland (2017). We request the state re-evaluate their rationale for allowing any additional fossil fuel power plants, pipelines, compressor stations or, indeed, any new fossil fuel infrastructure. We must focus on phasing out fossil fuel reliance and on a just transition now and into the future.

Much thanks to the many individuals, organizations, news reporters and all who worked with and partnered along with the community to help bring this cause to light.

Contacts for further information:

Caryl Henry carylhenryalexander@gmail.com
Joyce Dowling joyce@joycedowling.com 301-580-7439
Henry S. Cole Ph.D, hcole@hcole-environmental.com
Joanne Flynn, jflynn111@me.com 301-502-3261

<https://cleanairprincegeorges.org/>

PO Box 14
Brandywine Md. 20613

Help Monarchs by Planting the RIGHT Native Plants

Many are anxious to get our native plants growing, and butterfly and bee lovers are especially wanting to help them by purchasing pollinator seed packs. Please be careful! Read your seed packet carefully, you may be dismayed to find that many of them include Tropical Milkweed, *Asclepias curassavica*. Tropical milkweed is pretty, easy to grow, and monarchs love it. But it is tropical and does not belong in our ecoregion.

One theory is that tropical milkweed doesn't die back as quickly as our native milkweed. Tropical milkweed may be trapping the butterflies in our area from migrating to their winter breeding sites. But what is even worse, this milkweed hosts a protozoan parasite called *Ophryocystis elektroscirrha* (OE). As caterpillars, monarchs ingest the parasite along with their normal milkweed meals, and when they hatch from their chrysalises they are covered in spores. It is a debilitating parasite. Infected monarchs are much weaker than their healthy counterparts and don't live nearly as long. And sadly, if an OE-infected monarch tries to migrate, it will probably die long before it arrives in central Mexico. Migration is vital to keeping OE under control in the North American monarch population. Migrating weeds out some of the sick monarchs every year, preventing them from passing the parasite along to their offspring. What's more, it gives the monarchs a chance to leave behind contaminated milkweed plants, which then die off during the winter. When butterflies return in the spring they start over fresh with new, clean milkweed. But if the monarchs aren't migrating, and the tropical milkweed isn't dying off, OE never goes away.



Tropical Milkweed with Monarch in S MD, November

Researchers report that monarchs who stayed in the southern United States for the winter were five to nine times more likely to be infected with OE than migrating butterflies were. Luckily, nearly all tropical milkweed in the southern United States is in gardens. So, if everyone who planted it hoping to help the butterflies can be convinced to replace it with a native milkweed species, they could quickly put a stop to the destructive winter-breeding trend. Bad news is this parasite can affect other butterfly species too – not just monarchs.

Another concern with Tropical Milkweed is no one has tested them for impact on our native milkweed population. If it hybridizes with our native milkweed there is a small but distinct

possibility of harm to our native milkweed populations. And that could be devastating!

Please note, in Maryland *two* plant species have been found to host the OE parasite, Tropical Milkweed and Balloon Plant, *Gomphocarpus physocarpus*. Avoid growing Balloon Plant too! For the health of our butterflies, please plant only milkweed native to our ecoregion: Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*), and Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*). These species are much better choices for plants and insects alike.

Besides choosing the right milkweed, there are other ways to help monarchs. Try planting native goldenrods and asters! According to Sara Tangren (Ph.D., Sr. Agent Associate, Sustainable Horticulture and Native Plants), and Christa Carignan (Coordinator, University of Maryland Extension, Home & Garden Information Center):

Recent studies suggest that the cause of monarch decline is not a lack of milkweeds at all, but a shortage of goldenrods and asters to provide nectar to fuel the adult butterflies' return journey to Mexico (Agrawal, 2017). Tall White Aster can be a bit aggressive, but not awful. It spreads by short rhizomes. It is tolerant of compact soils and de-icing salts. If you would like to prevent these asters from reaching full height of about 6 feet, you can trim them back to about 3 feet in early July. Trimming some but not others prolong the bloom season. And it is a favorite by monarchs and all of our butterflies!

In short, we encourage native plant gardening, but please be careful in choosing your seeds and plants. Want to learn more about natives? Join us on Wednesday, May 5 for our Monthly Meeting. Dr. Christopher Puttock, Executive Director for Chesapeake Natives, will discuss native plants for birds and caterpillars.

Lynne Wheeler

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

Doris Sawyerr-Guest, Waldorf
Barbara Keyton, Waldorf
Michael Christ, Accokeek
Kathleen Boyd, Barstow
Barbara Robinson, Cobb Island
Clarence Cohen, Hughesville
Joyce Dean, Port Tobacco
Jennifer Smolek, Saint Mary's City
David Newton, Solomons
Elfreda Mathis, Valley Lee
Anthony Ferrell, Temple Hills
Daniel T. Dickey, Hollywood
Miriam Klapka, Tall Timbers



*Happy 100th
Birthday Cora!*



Our very special member
Cora Fulton is turning 100!
Her contribution to our
chapter and our feathered
friends has helped us all
soar to new heights. Thank
you Cora, and happy
birthday!



Photo by Carrie Staples



UPCOMING ZOOM LECTURES

Please join us for these upcoming virtual lectures using Zoom. If you are on our mailing list, you will receive an email with the link to join the lecture. If you do not get our Osprey newsletter via email, please sign up. Go to our website SoMdAudubon.org and sign up at the bottom of the homepage.

April 7 @ 7 p.m.

MD/DC Breeding Bird Atlas Year One Review



The MD/DC Breeding Bird Atlas project had an extremely successful year in 2020. Please join us for this presentation from the coordinator, Gabriel Foley, who will provide an overview and update on the Atlas. This is an excellent opportunity to learn how to identify breeding behaviors and hone your skills.

May 5 @ 7 p.m.

Native Plants for Birds and Butterflies



Native plant gardens are quite literally for the birds. While many of us like songbirds, it's a different story when it comes to insects. But backyard species like caterpillars play a crucial role in supporting our most beloved bird species. When you create native plant gardens you support insect diversity - more bugs for birds! Join Dr. Chris Puttock as he explains the importance of native plants. Chris has three decades' experience in conservation and restoration. He is the chair of ESRAG (Environmental Sustainability Rotarian Action Group) and is the executive director of Chesapeake Natives, Inc., a native plant nursery producing plants to sustain the ecology of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

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
 Lifetime Membership: ___ \$500
 Donation: _____

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.

Introductory Offer: ___1 year \$20

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

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

___ Email me a link to download the pdf,
 ___ 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.

2019-2020 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:

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Osprey, \$10 each | Total Amount: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Barn Owl, \$25 each | Total Amount: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Northern Saw-whet Owl, \$30 each | Total Amount: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 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