

The Osprey

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHERN MARYLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY



Virginia Bluebells

Photo by Carrie Staples

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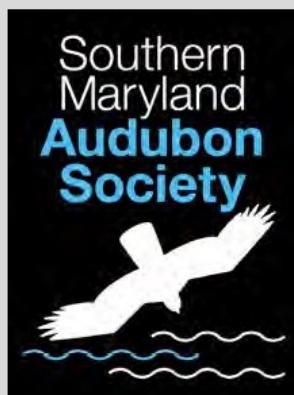
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<http://somdaudubon.org/>

President's Perch

As the Southern Maryland Audubon Society wraps up a challenging program year, I hope all of you are seeing light at the end of the tunnel. Many of us already have our Covid-19 vaccines or are in the process. Assuming this optimistic trend continues, we are planning to hold our annual meeting, an in-person event, on July 10 at Smallwood State Park. We chose this location to celebrate our newly launched Osprey nest cam in partnership with the park and JES Avanti Foundation. (To see the live-action feed, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ymyNgBdlQHQ>) This year also marks an important anniversary: the founding of SMAS in 1971, fifty years ago! What better way to celebrate than with our mascot bird and a new nest cam? More details on the event will be posted on our Facebook pages and our website, so please stay in touch.

Heads Up! The July 10 annual picnic also features our elections. Our nominating committee has been formed, and it will be official as of the May 26 board meeting. In the meantime, if you have any nominations for the positions of secretary, vice president, or director, please email me at somdaudubon.president@gmail.com.

Given our cool spring weather, I'm sure most of you have been venturing out to your favorite birding patches. Recent migration has been spectacular—with different warblers passing through almost daily. I was especially surprised to see a Canada Warbler and several Magnolia Warblers in my yard! I am also thrilled to hear our returning nesting birds like the Scarlet Tanager, Great Crested Flycatcher, and the enchanting Indigo Bunting. Just last weekend I conducted the May Count solo, which was a big challenge. Despite some delightful sightings—a female Wood Duck with ten ducklings and Downy Woodpecker chicks peering and calling from their cavity—what I missed most was sharing that joy with others. Fingers crossed, SMAS hopes to restart our field trips next program year.

Until then, I hope everyone has an enjoyable summer and can begin some social activities. I have missed seeing you folks and look forward to “more normal” birding in the months ahead.

Take care & stay safe,
Tiffany Farrell
SMAS President



Osprey Family

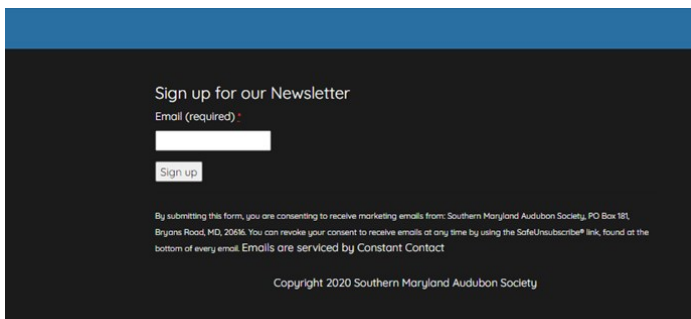
Photo by Bill Hubick

***The Osprey* Newsletter Goes 100% Digital**

by Julie Daniel

In recent years, new issues of *The Osprey* newsletter have been announced via e-mail to most Southern Maryland Audubon Society (SMAS) members. But about fifty members have elected to receive a hard copy of the newsletter via the USPS. The layout, printing, and postage costs for these paper copies cost SMAS over \$700 annually. For many years we had a reasonably affordable contract with a local printer, but we are sad to say that contract has ended. Research showed that costs would increase considerably with a new printer, so the SMAS Board of Directors unanimously agreed at the March 2021 board meeting that *The Osprey* become a digital-only publication. This decision also supports SMAS's mission to be environmentally conscientious. It is very easy to sign up for an electronic copy of *The Osprey*. Simply go to the SMAS website at [somdaudubon.org](https://www.somdaudubon.org) and then scroll to the bottom of the page for the "Sign up for our Newsletter" form (see the graphic below). Simply enter your e-mail and then click on the "Sign up" button to be added to our digital mailing list. If you don't see the newsletter after you sign up, be sure to check your spam/junk folders. You may also visit our website and download any issue at:

<https://www.somdaudubon.org/about-us/osprey-newsletter-2/>



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DuPont Nature Center to Reopen May 1

Visitors will be welcomed at the DuPont Nature Center at Mispillion Harbor Reserve when it reopens for the season Saturday, May 1. The Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control facility will be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday and is closed Mondays.

COVID-19 safety protocols will be in place, including an indoor visitor capacity of 15 individuals in addition to social distancing requirements. All visitors age kindergarten and above will be required to wear a face covering while in the center or enjoying the center's deck.

In the spring, the center's large deck overlooking the harbor offers wildlife watchers an unparalleled view of the spectacle of spawning horseshoe crabs and migrating shorebirds, including federally-listed threatened red knots that depend on horseshoe crab eggs to help fuel their 9,000-mile journey. More information on horseshoe crab and shorebird viewing can be found on the DuPont Nature Center website. Indoor freshwater and saltwater tanks allow a close-up look at a variety of aquatic species, from horseshoe crabs to diamondback terrapins.

The center also offers live views of nesting osprey and wildlife visiting the area through its osprey cam and Mispillion Harbor cam. The live cams can be viewed on the DuPont Nature Center website.

Managed by the DNREC Division of Fish and Wildlife, the DuPont Nature Center is located in the heart of Delaware's Bayshore Region at 2992 Lighthouse Road, near Slaughter Beach, east of Milford. Admission to the center is free and open to the public. For general information about the center, please call 302-422-1329 or visit DuPont Nature Center. For inquiries about the center's programs and operations, please email lynne.pusey@delaware.gov or call 302-422-1329.

About DNREC

The Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control protects and manages the state's natural resources, protects public health, provides outdoor recreational opportunities, and educates Delawareans about the environment. The DNREC Division of Fish and Wildlife conserves and manages Delaware's fish and wildlife and their habitats, and provides fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing and boating access on nearly 65,000 acres of public land. For more information, visit the website and connect with @DelawareDNREC on Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn.

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Wins and Losses for Birds in Maryland This Legislative Session

Thanks to your letters, phone calls, and testimony, bird-saving legislation prioritized by Audubon Mid-Atlantic (formerly Audubon Maryland-DC) will become law with the governor's signature. As with every session, there were disappointments too.

PASSED

Intentional balloon releases

Your work banned intentional balloon releases (HB0391/SB0716) in the state, potentially saving thousands of seabirds, sea turtles, whales, and dolphins in the coming decades.

Tree planting and forest protection

You passed a wonky but significant State Revolving Loan Aggregation bill (HB0094) that will modify state clean water grants to allow tree planting and forest protection as a way to improve water quality.

Environmental enforcement

You made law a bill requiring transparency and public reporting on state environmental enforcement (SB0324/HB0204). Such enforcement has declined by 85% over the past six years.

Bird-friendly gardens and habitat

Your outreach to legislators passed a bill prohibiting Home Owners Associations from restricting bird-friendly gardens and habitat (HB0322) with rigid yard-sterilizing prohibitions.

Program Open Space

You stopped efforts to water down, borrow, and forgive payback provisions for the state's premier land conservation fund, Program Open Space. More than 250 of you sent letters.

FAILED

But there were disappointments too. Despite passing in the House, the Sustainable Buildings Act (HB0236) failed to get a vote in its Senate Committee. The bill would have required state-owned and funded buildings to have bird safe windows.

After many of the bill's provisions were weakened in the House, leadership in both chambers could not reconcile their differences in conference committee so

the Climate Solutions Now Act (SB0414/HB0583) failed despite passing both chambers. In its original form, the bill would have cut statewide greenhouse gas emissions by 60% by 2030 and planted 5 million trees.

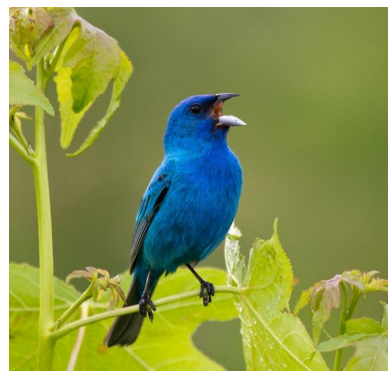
Other failures included a Plastic Bag Ban (HB0314/SB0223) that flew through the House but got stalled in the Senate Finance Committee and a ban on the storage of the toxic pesticide Carbofuran (HB1025) that died in committee after opposition from the Maryland Farm Bureau. A bill incentivizing private investment in preservation and restoration (SB0737) passed in the Senate but didn't get a vote in its House committee. And a bid to override Governor Hogan's veto of the ban on chlorpyrifos failed when it didn't get to the floor. Many of these failed bills will return next year, and Audubon will keep fighting to get them passed into law!

OTHER SUCCESSES

Still, in addition to our Audubon Mid-Atlantic priority bills, many other good environmental bills passed including several to fix failing septic systems, incentivize green energy, improve environmental justice, and prioritize public transportation over highway construction. Successes also included bills to ban the sale of all neonicotinoid pesticides (HB0208/SB0375), allow citizens to intervene in state Clean Water Act enforcement cases (HB0076/SB0334), improve stormwater regulations (HB0295/SB0227), establish a state goal of protecting over 1 million acres of farmland by 2030 (HB0860/SB0692), and prohibit the state from purchasing or planting invasive plants (HB0092). Overall, 54 pro-environment bills passed this session.

Without support from citizens like you, all of the good legislation passed for birds and wildlife would not be possible. Thank you!

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(610) 990-3431 | audubon.org



Indigo Bunting
Photo by Frode
Jacobsen

Analysis: Birds vs. Bacteria. Who's Winning?

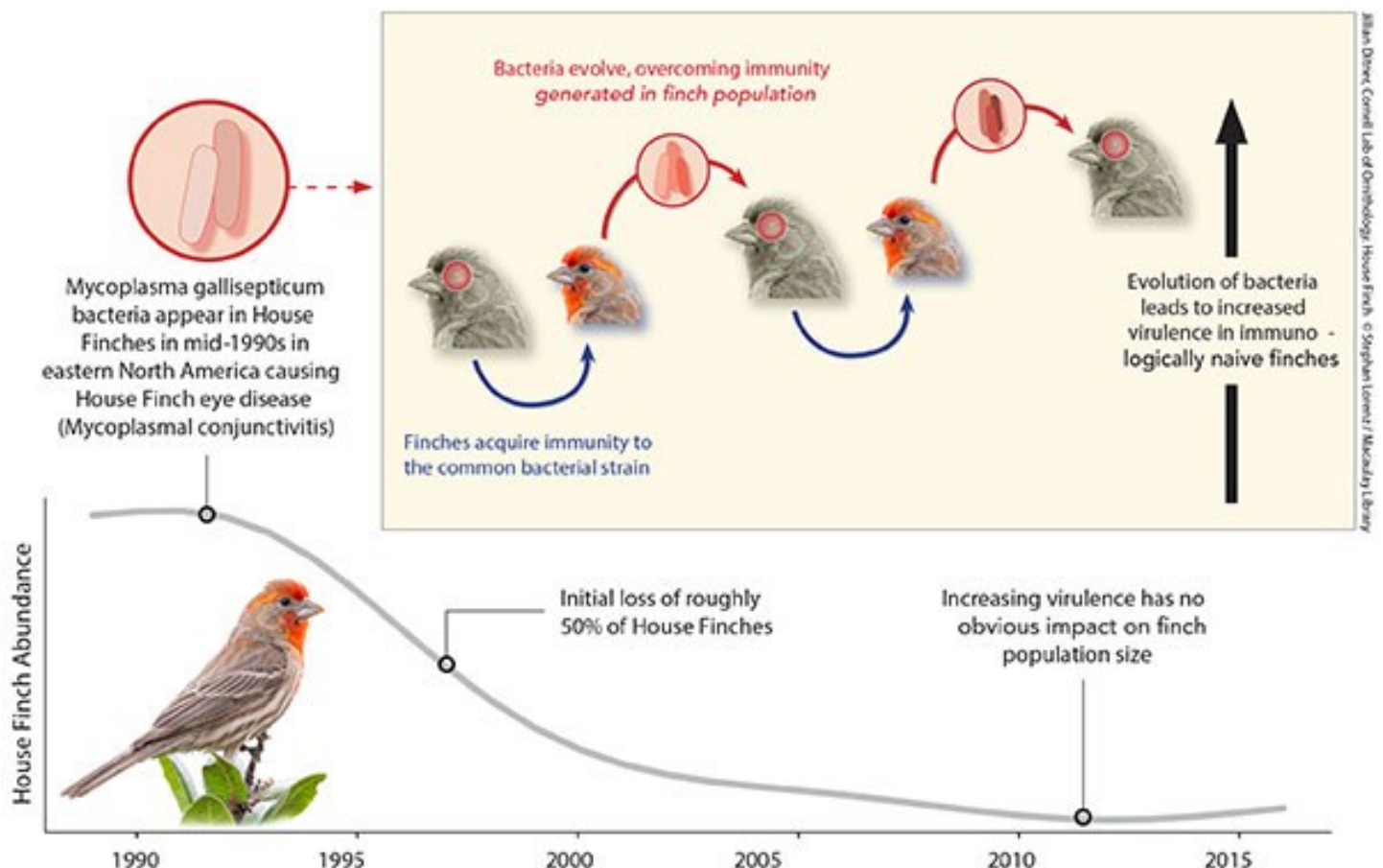
Ithaca, NY—Cornell Lab of Ornithology scientists have been tracking the effects House Finch eye disease for more than 25 years. The disease causes red, swollen, watery, or crusty eyes. Afflicted birds can recover but may die because they cannot see well enough to find food or avoid predators. The latest analyses, based on the observations of Project FeederWatch participants from eight Northeast states, addresses the long-term impact of the disease on House Finch populations and points to the role of the finch immune system in the bird vs. bacteria battle. The findings are published in the *Journal of Animal Ecology*.

"We have an escalating arms race," says Cornell Lab researcher and lead author Wesley Hochachka. "Finches who become infected but survive acquire some immunity to that version of the bacteria and its predecessors. The bacteria evolve to get around the strengthened finch immunity. Then birds acquire immunity to the latest strain, and the cycle keeps repeating."

The study's authors believe that acquired immunity—when the immune system creates antibodies in response to an infection—is actually driving the arms race between the birds and the bacteria. They say imperfect acquired immunity, just like imperfect vaccines against human pathogens, creates the conditions needed to favor the proliferation of new strains of the bacteria that can overcome immunity acquired against existing strains of bacteria.

Immunity can also develop through genetic changes to the House Finches, but this would be a relatively slow process, requiring multiple years for genetically novel and resistant finches to become widespread. In contrast, genetic changes to the bacteria can proliferate within hours—so fast that populations of House Finches can't possibly evolve a defense quickly enough.

"We should really pay more attention to the role that acquired immunity can play in the dynamics of disease in any animal," said Hochachka. "Interactions can be much more complicated when both the host and the disease are able to change rapidly."



Graphic by Jillian Dittner, Cornell Lab of Ornithology.
House Finch photo by Stephan Lorenz, Macaulay Library.



The overall House Finch population was cut in half during the initial outbreak when the bacteria jumped to finches from poultry in 1994. House Finch populations now are mostly stable at their current, lower level.

Male House Finch with eye disease. Errol Taskin, Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Hochachka says that's surprising because in other tracked animal diseases, the typical patterns are either that the animal populations rebound or fluctuate widely following the initial disease outbreak. But he thinks the finch population is not likely to return to pre-disease levels.

The finch eye disease dynamic has parallels to human health and the use of vaccines to give people acquired immunity to diseases. Here also, imperfect immunity—vaccines that do not provide perfect protection—are believed to accelerate the spread of new strains of pathogens against which vaccines are ineffective.

"The emergence of new diseases is going to keep happening," Hochachka said. "We just have to develop methods and systems for dealing with it as best we can when a lethal disease appears."

In the House Finch vs. bacteria arms race, so far it's a draw—and the battle rages on.

Click here for a link to the original article:

<https://tinyurl.com/9anmv4tb>

In case you're interested in linking to additional information about House Finch eye disease, see a previous article:

<https://tinyurl.com/arp5wm2k>

Reference:

Wesley M. Hochachka, Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Andrew P. Dobson, Princeton University; Dana M. Hawley, Virginia Tech; André A. Dhondt, Cornell Lab (2021). Host Population Dynamics in the Face of an Evolving Pathogen. *Journal of Animal Ecology*.

Media Contact:

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Maryland Park Quest Takes Flight for 2021 Season

April 26, 2021

Annual Adventure Runs May 1 through Oct. 31

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources announces the annual [Maryland Park Quest](#) returns for 2021, running from May 1 through Oct. 31. In this beloved annual tradition, more than 25 [Maryland State Parks](#), will offer opportunities to engage families in outdoor activities to experience Maryland's vast cultural, historical, and natural resources on public lands and parks.

The 2021 Park Quest theme is "Spread Your Wings to Explore Maryland's State Parks," and many of the quests will help participants learn more about Maryland's birds.

As one of many adjustments to the COVID-19 pandemic, Maryland State Parks adapted the ranger-led group activities of Park Quest into "Do-it-Yourself" programs, many of which will continue in 2021 with new ones added. Participants can download and print Park Quest worksheets on the Maryland Park Service website.

Additionally, there is no longer a Park Quest Passport or registration required, so this program is accessible to everyone! Participants will need to pay the appropriate day-use service charges at certain participating state parks.

Teams can take advantage of [cabin and campsite reservations](#) and spend a night or two under the stars as they explore the state's network of parks.

Additional information for this year's program, including the quest locations, can be accessed at the [Park Quest webpage](#).

The Beautiful Community of Butterflies, Birds, Bees and Me

by Lynne Wheeler

In February 2020, the Town of La Plata earned the distinction of becoming the first Bird City in the state of Maryland. As part of that ongoing effort, the town must continue to enhance habitat for birds and promote community education. When the new Dorchester Community Center (DCC) opened, our chapter leadership recognized a great opportunity to meet the goals of both Bird City Maryland and SMAS. Our Bird-Friendly Communities committee decided to beautify the front yard of the DCC by landscaping with natives. With that, the seed was planted in many of our hearts: not only will we beautify, but the center will offer space to share our knowledge and passion about how native plants help wildlife ---and humans.

To make that dream a reality, last fall SMAS applied for and was awarded a \$5,000 Community Engagement Mini Grant from Chesapeake Bay Trust. The goal of this grant program is to reach communities that have traditionally been under-engaged with environmental activities. It supports projects that benefit those communities and their natural resources, such as native wildlife (birds, pollinators, and other species), greenery in local parks, rural or urban forests, streams, rivers, and other natural spaces. The DCC is located near the center of the Town of La Plata and serves the grant's target audience. Chesapeake Bay Trust offered a flight path to our shared goals!

SMAS designed the garden to span two sections of the DCC front yard, and coordinated programming with the Dorchester Community Center Alliance. We then got a quote from a reputable native plant landscaper, The Outdoor Living Company, and received our grant check.

After much planning, on Thursday, April 1, we grabbed our shovels and broke ground at the community center with Mayor Jeannine James, Town Clerk Danielle Mandley, several representative partners from the Dorchester Community Center Alliance, and our landscaper, The Outdoor Living Company. The planting part of our project was completed April 9.

Now the fun can begin! We can start to plan community events with neighborhood youth and watch the many plant species grow and bloom. Our garden incorporates six types of native shrubs, one native tree, and eight different species of host plants to benefit pollinators and other insects. In the near future we hope to replace the fencing. We can then install the colorful nature-themed panels that youth from the community already painted. We also plan to install an informative sign and a bird house.



Left Garden

Please drop by 400 Dorchester Avenue and watch our Butterfly Weed, Spotted Beebalm, Blue Mist, Wild Bergamot, Purple Coneflower, Joe Pye Weed, Orange Coneflower, and New England Aster grow! And perhaps you will spy a butterfly, bird, and bee!



Right Garden

Rarity Focus

Since last April, with the clear onset of the pandemic, we have shied away from showcasing a single, monthly, rare bird. Instead, we have emphasized the wonder of local birding, backyard activity, or simply studying or appreciating birds more intently. And this month, we will just highlight one simple outcome of carefully examining a common, yet interesting bird and the potential surprising outcome.

It was a Ring-billed Gull, just one among hundreds of thousands on the shores of Lake Erie. But as birder/photographer Chuck Slusarczyk scanned the blizzard of gulls by the Coast Guard Station in Cleveland, this bird caught his eye.

What Slusarczyk found was a Ring-billed Gull with a metal leg band, clearly a bird that had been part of a banding project. Chuck figured that if he could read the tiny numbers on the band, he could discover more about this gull. He took multiple photos of the bird's leg-band, piecing together the sequence of numbers to read them all. After a total of five different attempts to photograph the numbers, he succeeded.

When he sent his results to the USGS Bird Banding Lab, he was surprised. The bird had been banded as a chick in Toronto. This was no big deal, but the date was. This bird was banded on 18 June 1992, which makes this Ring-billed Gull the oldest one on record. Yes, according to the U.S Geological Survey and Canadian Wildlife Service, the banded Ring-billed Gull Chuck Slusarczyk documented was 28 years and 9 months old.

This is proof that you never know what you're going to discover while birding. Just apply some curiosity... and persistence!

You can find more details on this story here, from WKYC-TV:

<https://www.wkyc.com/mobile/article/sports/outdoors/cleveland-discovery-birding-hike/95-1f20921d-fc5b-4b77-9ffc-b75b6fe9bc77>



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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Welcome, New Members!

Charles Andrews, Lusby
Annette R Cook, Mechanicsville
B. Halloran, Owings
Sandra Irwin, Waldorf
Louis Leresche, Leonardtown
Milton Mitchell, Fort Washington
Sharon Thorstensen, Lexington Park

Birds Eating Cicadas

The cicadas have arrived! As a Canadian, I've always been too far north to experience a periodical cicada emergence, and I am ecstatic to get to see Brood X emerge this spring! Of course, I had to read up on cicadas and learn as much as I could about them--and I realized that there are surprisingly few bird species documented eating periodical cicadas.

To help remedy that, Gene Scarpulla and I put together a short survey that you can access here: <https://bit.ly/BirdsEatingCicadas>. If you see birds eating cicadas or feeding them to their young, please upload the sightings to our survey form, and we'll summarize the observations in Maryland Birdlife.

I can't wait to hear what you see!

Thanks,
Gabriel Foley
North Bethesda
mddcbba3@mdbirds.org



Magicicada sp.
Photo by Bill Hubick

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: __1 year \$20 __2 year \$35 __3 year \$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 your dues will be received by 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

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

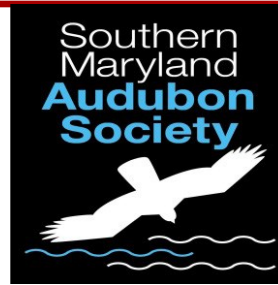
Photo by Bill Hubick

Editor: Tyler Bell Email: 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:

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| <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: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 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: _____

City: _____

State, Zip Code: _____

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