

The Osprey

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHERN MARYLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY



Osprey chick from
Smallwood State Park
Osprey cam

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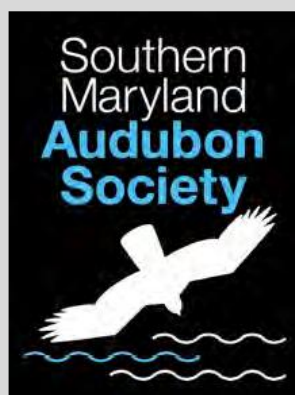
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<http://somdaudubon.org/>

President's Perch

Welcome back, Southern Maryland Audubon Society friends, to a new program year. Let's begin by asking that dreaded back-to-school question: What did you do over the summer? I hope you kept birdwatching for the Maryland/DC Breeding Bird Atlas. A few of my memorable sightings included spying on parents feeding fledglings, especially Blue-gray Gnatcatchers and Hairy Woodpeckers. Hearing begging calls and watching the youngsters shake their wings is heartwarming. It's also fun to see feisty Northern Cardinal juveniles. They learn their assertive calls early! If you have photographs of breeding behaviors or young fledglings, please send them to somdaudubon.president@gmail.com. We would like to feature some in the next issue of *The Osprey*.

As I look ahead to fall migration, I will have to continue birding solo for a few more months, unfortunately. While our field trip coordinator David Moulton was finalizing a great lineup, the latest Covid-19 variant (Delta), which is more transmissible than earlier forms, was spreading quickly. Then we heard about an imminent spike in case numbers and full hospitals, and the board grew increasingly concerned. It was decided unanimously to cancel our in-person programs for the fall and revisit the question in December. We are all very disappointed, but we hope you will continue to join our Zoom-based monthly lectures (list inside). First up, on Wednesday, September 1, David Ziolkowski from the U.S. Geological Survey will talk about the North American Breeding Bird Survey and trends in bird populations in our region.

In retrospect, we were extremely lucky to gather in person in July for our 50th Anniversary meeting and picnic. During the festivities at Smallwood State Park, we elected new officers and directors. We are tremendously grateful for their willingness to serve. We also presented the SMAS Conservationist of the Year award to the Town of La Plata, so the mayor and two council members were honorary guests. (See story on page 2 for details.) A week later, on July 18th, the nestling we watched hatch and grow on the new Smallwood Osprey nest cam fledged. I take that as a sign of hope.

Please get vaccinated
and stay safe,
Tiffany Farrell
President, SMAS



An Osprey nest beside the Whitehaven
Ferry, between Somerset and Wicomico
Counties, Maryland (7/27/2007).

Photo by Bill Hubick

SMAS Celebrates 50-Year Anniversary

by Tiffany Farrell

After fifteen long months without in-person programs, Southern Maryland Audubon Society held its annual meeting and picnic on July 10, 2021. What a delight to see everyone in person again! For reasons beyond that, it was an extra special gathering. This one marked the fifty-year anniversary of the 1971 founding of our Audubon chapter!

By some miracle the weather was superb—sunny, breezy, low humidity, and temps in the mid-80s. The mild day helped drive record attendance. Fifty folks joined us at Smallwood State Park, where we recently helped install an Osprey nest cam. (That project was funded by our fantastic supporters at JES Avanti Foundation.) We were especially grateful that former SMAS presidents and longtime board members Carol Ghebelian, Dr. Ernest Willoughby, and Dr. Gwen Brewer joined us.

Representatives for the Town of La Plata also shared in our celebrations: Mayor Jeannine James and town council members David M. Jenkins and James Goldsmith. Chair of the SMAS Conservation Committee, Bob Lukinic, presented them with the Conservationist of the Year Award. The committee recognized their commitment to protecting and enhancing the natural resources of our community. In particular, the Town of La Plata was the first to be named Bird City in the state of Maryland. It has also won funding for an urban tree canopy project and pursued many other conservation initiatives. Congratulations and thank you, La Plata, for all you do for birds and the environment! Mayor James surprised us and presented SMAS with a special commendation for our fifty-year anniversary as well.

As many of you know, the annual meeting allows members to vote for officers and board members for the upcoming year. By unanimous consent, the members elected the following leaders for 2021–2022: Tiffany Farrell, president (continuing); Elena Gilroy, vice president (new); Julie Daniel, treasurer (continuing); and Barbara Hill, secretary (new). Remaining on the board are directors Tom Seaton, Tracey Stuller, and Greg Klesch. We are thrilled to welcome new board members Molly Moore and Karolína Popovičová. Kudos to our SMAS nominating committee for recruiting and retaining these great board members!

Because Covid-19 upended all our usual activities, last year demanded Herculean effort by all of our volunteers. I wish I could have afforded prizes for everyone. Instead, I settled on three President's Awards. The first honored Elena Gilroy for cutting through Maryland's red tape—a feat that allowed the installation of the new Osprey cam in time for the spring 2021 nesting season. (As we picnicked, the chick was flapping its wings in preparation for fledging!) Next we recognized Tyler Bell for his longtime dedication as the newsletter editor and his quick adaptation to layout, too. Lynne Wheeler earned the final award for her Covid-friendly grant & project that created native plant gardens at the Dorchester Community Center in downtown La Plata. "Huzzah!" for all.

Those who did not attend might appreciate a quick scene description. To mark a half century, we displayed lists of our founding board members, the presidents, our milestone achievements, and other archival documents. In addition to plentiful food, we enjoyed first-class dining with tablecloths, flower centerpieces, a bird-themed cake, and a groovy 1971 play list. The folks who planned this splendid event deserve a shout-out: Tracey Stuller, Mike Callahan, Robbi Ross, Lynne Wheeler, and all those who brought food, drinks, and supplies.

As usual, after the meal and official business, Mike Callahan led a great bird walk in the park. Not content to perform for the birders, a Hooded Warbler serenaded those of us on clean up duty. No better blessing for our picnic!



Bob Lukinic presents the Conservationist of the Year Award to Town of La Plata representatives (left to right), Councilman James Goldsmith, Mayor Jeannine James, and (far right) Councilman David M. Jenkins. Photo by Barbara Hill

**SMAS Celebrates 50-Year Anniversary
continued**



Town of La Plata Mayor Jeannine James gives SMAS a special commendation, with President Tiffany Farrell accepting on SMAS's behalf.
Photo by Barbara Hill



A very special 50th Anniversary cake with edible bird nest, made by Peace of Cake.
Photo by Barbara Hill



CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION
HONORING
SOUTHERN MARYLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY
50TH ANNIVERSARY

WHEREAS, the members of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society are celebrating their 50th Anniversary; and

WHEREAS, Southern Maryland Audubon Society was founded in 1971 as a nonprofit organization whose primary purpose is to study nature and natural resource conservation issues in Calvert, Charles, St. Mary's, and Southern Prince George's Counties; and

WHEREAS, Southern Maryland Audubon Society supports programs that focus on educational and environmental outreach through the awarding of scholarships for teachers and youths to attend the National Audubon's environmental camp in Hogg Island, Maine, and offering hands-on classes to homeschoolers, 4-H groups, and other youth-led organizations; and


WHEREAS, Southern Maryland Audubon Society supports initiatives that study and protect birds of prey in Southern Maryland, such as the American Kestrels, Barn Owls, and Ospreys; and

WHEREAS, Southern Maryland Audubon Society supports plans that focus on our community, such as educating Southern Marylanders on how to create and maintain bird-friendly habitats, and partnering with the Town of La Plata, the Maryland Bird Conservation Partnership, Port Tobacco River Conservancy, and the Conservancy for Charles County to earn the Town of La Plata the designation of becoming the first Bird City in the State of Maryland; and

NOW, THEREFORE, WE, THE COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF LA PLATA, do hereby commend Southern Maryland Audubon Society on their 50th Anniversary and thank them for their many years of conservation, advocacy, and education.



**GIVEN THIS 10TH DAY OF
JULY TWO THOUSAND
AND TWENTY-ONE**


JEANNINE E. JAMES
MAYOR

A Wood Stork Visits Calvert County

by Tyler Bell

I'm one of the statewide reviewers for eBird. Uncommon birds that are reported get "flagged" and must be reviewed and a determination is made to either validate or invalidate the report based on field notes or photos/video/audio. I also have almost all of my bird sightings entered into eBird and have alerts set up for statewide, Calvert and St. Mary's County needs. On July 15, around 3:30 PM, I logged on to review the queue. I immediately noticed a Wood Stork reported near Flag Ponds at 2:45 PM. There were no photos and only some brief field notes. I sent off a request for information and told my wife, Jane Kostenko, about it. When there was no immediate response from the observer, we bit the bullet and loaded up optics and headed out the door.

Late afternoon on a weekday, heading north on Rt. 4 from St. Mary's County is a gamble. There is considerable traffic leaving St. Mary's into Calvert from Pax NAS, the largest employer in St. Mary's. We slogged along in heavy traffic until we crossed the Solomons bridge, where the two-lane bottleneck disappears. Still, we were able to arrive at the location by 5:00 PM.

The checklist location was between Rt. 4 and the entrance road into Flag Ponds noting that the bird was in a rain puddle. As we approached the turn, I began to slow down and suddenly, a large white bird was visible on the side of the road about a half mile short of the pinned location. A bit of hard braking, praying we didn't get rear ended and swerving off onto the shoulder then turning into an access pull off for a cell tower, happened very quickly. The Wood Stork was standing at the edge of the grass next to the paved pull off lane, a very precarious spot. We tried to keep our distance so as not to alarm the bird forcing it to flush into traffic. I called Andy Brown, naturalist for Calvert County, and got a phone number for a rehabber who said they would be there as soon as they could.

In the meantime, Jim Stasz was heading south from North Beach. Traffic heading south on Rt. 4 through Prince Frederick is almost as bad as what we faced getting there. Eventually, Jim showed up and pulled in next to us. He asked where the bird was, and we pointed to it now standing a bit further away from the road against the guard rail. I got the feeling he thought it was going to be a bit more difficult to see! Having babysat in the blazing sun, and after some friendly chit chat, we left Jim to his task of helping in the rescue.

Little did we know, another birder, Mikey Lutmerding who also lives near North Beach, was on his way. Mikey arrived just in time to help the rehabber and Jim catch the Wood Stork with a net and get it into a box for relocation to nearby Flag Ponds. Incidentally, Mikey said that the Wood Stork bit him on the neck, and if it leaves a scar, it'll be great fodder for stories in the future. The trio met with Gene Groshon, another naturalist for Calvert County, who escorted everyone down to one of the ponds near the beach to release the bird. It immediately started foraging and drinking water in a much more appropriate (and safe!) habitat.

The next day, quite a few birders showed up at Flag Ponds as soon as they opened and were able to relocate the bird in the same pond. It was not relocated on subsequent days. This constitutes only the second record of Wood Stork in Calvert County, the first in late July to early August 1989. Kudos to Alvah Scribner, the 10-year-old birder who first found the 2021 bird. He wrote:

My mom was driving me back from summer camp at 2:30 PM. Standing on the side of the road up ahead, there was a white wading bird that I was pretty sure had black wing tips. I thought to myself, "Is it an ibis? A Wood Stork?" I saw that it was a young Wood Stork. I showed my mom and we celebrated for one minute. "Should we turn around?" asked my mom. "Sure!" I said. We went back and watched it stand around and eat bugs for fifteen minutes. It was a stupendous birding experience. However, this was not an ideal spot for a stork, given that it was a puddle and some grass. My mom thought it might be hurt. Personally, I did not. Now we think it was so tired that it stopped there although Flag Ponds Nature Park was just across the trees.

Another good thing gained from this experience was it has made me a celebrity amongst birders. It was amazing.

Alvah Scribner, age 10
Port Republic, MD



Juvenile Wood Stork on the side of Rt. 4 just south of the entrance to Flag Ponds Nature Park.

Photos by Alvah Scribner

Statement on Unidentified Songbird Illness Reported from Eastern United States

July 14, 2021

A joint statement of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine.

Many people are concerned about the emergence of a new illness causing crusty eyes, tremors, and paralysis among songbirds in several eastern states, including Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, and District of Columbia. This illness and the uncertainty around it are upsetting, and we share your concern.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology does not have experts studying the situation. We have prepared this statement with the help of the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine to summarize the state of knowledge of experts in state and federal agencies who are working to understand this event. For a detailed summary of the situation, please see the statement from the U.S. Geological Survey: <https://www.usgs.gov/news/updated-interagency-statement-usgs-and-partners-continue-investigating-dc-area-bird-mortality>

The Main Points to Know

- Please follow your own state's guidelines on whether to take down bird feeders. The Maryland advisory is at <https://news.maryland.gov/dnr/2021/07/02/bird-illness-investigation-continues-in-several-states/>.
- Although little is known yet about the cause, as of mid-July, it appears that the incidence of the illness may be waning.
- No human health or domestic livestock/poultry issues have been reported.
- The illness is not caused by any of the major known bird diseases such as West Nile, salmonella, avian influenza, House Finch eye disease, Trichomonas parasites, etc.
- The species most frequently affected are fledgling (juvenile) Blue Jays, Common Grackles, European Starlings, and American Robins, along with a few other species. Symptoms include crusty eyes and neurological signs such as tremors or partial paralysis.
- We don't yet know if the illness is caused by a disease organism (i.e., virus, bacteria, or parasite), or if it's the result of a toxic substance in the landscape.
- If it's a disease, we don't know how it's transmitted. It might be directly transmissible from bird to bird (like a cold or the flu), or might require a vector (such as with malaria, where a mosquito transmits the illness).

What to Do If You Find a Sick or Dead Bird

- Avoid handling birds unless necessary. If you must handle them wear disposable gloves, or use an inverted plastic bag over your hand to pick up a dead bird.
- Keep pets (including pet birds) away from sick or dead wild birds as a standard precaution.
- Report the sick or dead bird to your state wildlife conservation agency for further instructions and to help them track this event. Maryland residents can contact the DNR/ USDA Wildlife hotline at 877-463-6497.

What to Do about Bird Feeders

- Please follow your own state's recommendations on whether to take down bird feeders. See below for links to state advisories.
- In states without specific guidance on feeders, the Cornell Lab does not currently recommend taking them down, given the lack of confirmed cases and uncertainty about how the disease is transmitted. However, it is fine to take down feeders as an extra precaution if you prefer, since there is plenty of natural food for birds at this time of year.
- It's always a good idea to keep feeders clean by washing with a dilute bleach solution. For more about how to clean feeders, see <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/how-to-clean-your-bird-feeder/>



A young Blue Jay admitted to the Blue Ridge Wildlife Center in Virginia with an unknown illness. Photo courtesy of Blue Ridge Wildlife Center

2021 September – December Monthly Meeting Programs

September 1 – Wednesday – 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Virtual Zoom Meeting

“USGS North American Breeding Bird Survey”

DAVE ZIOLKOWSKI, Program Biologist, USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center

The United States Geological Survey’s Breeding Bird Survey is considered the primary source of trend information for North American birdlife and is active in tracking Maryland birds. Dave Ziolkowski will discuss how the survey works and what it has revealed about changes in bird numbers and ranges, including those in southern Maryland. Don’t miss this program!



Prairie Warbler by Michael Stubblefield

October 6 – Wednesday – 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Virtual Zoom Meeting

“Why Diversity Matters: Gender Biases and the Study of Female Bird Song”

DR. KEVIN OMLAND, Professor Biological Sciences, U of Maryland, Baltimore County

Female birds have historically been neglected or ignored in studies of coloration and song. Fortunately, now that researchers of diverse backgrounds participate, this prejudice is changing. Studies are indicating female song is much more common than previously thought, and their role in bird song evolution may be significant. Please join us for what promises to be a fascinating discussion!



Eastern Bluebird by Cindy Thompson

November 3 – Wednesday – 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Virtual Zoom Meeting

“Let’s Talk Turkey!”

BOB LONG, MD DNR, Wildlife & Heritage Service Upland Game Bird Project Manager

Wild Turkeys, one of the world’s great game birds, are front and center in November. Turkeys were abundant when colonists arrived in North America, but their numbers were dangerously low by the 1930s. Conservation efforts have since helped them rebound. The leader of Maryland’s Upland Game Bird Project for twenty years, Bob Long will provide an overview of this magnificent bird, its habits and behavior, and our state’s game bird program. Learn some new information to share over your Thanksgiving meal!



Wild Turkey by Clark Peterson

December 1 – Wednesday – 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Virtual Zoom Meeting

“Birds and Cold Weather Adaptation”

DR. SAHAS BARVE, Evolutionary Ecologist, Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History

Most bird species enjoy warmer climates, but many have adapted to frigid conditions. How and why has this occurred? Dr. Barve will answer these and other questions about cold weather adaptation, with an emphasis on Himalayan birds. Amongst other degrees, Dr. Barve has a Ph.D. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from Cornell University and is currently a Peter Buck Fellow at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History.



Suniti Bhushan Datta

Monarchs & Milkweed at Merkle

Merkle Wildlife Sanctuary
Saturday, September 25
10 a.m. – 2 p.m.



Welcome, New Members!

Kathy Daniel, Solomons

Janet Cannon, Waldorf

Paul R Fletcher, Waldorf

Shelby J Hicks, Leonardtown

David Johnson, Cobb Island

Linda Jones, Lexington Park

Sarah Joyce, Huntingtown

David Keyser, Lexington Park

Tricia Kocka, California

Patricia Malatesta, Suitland

Neighborhood Creative Arts Center, La Plata

Marilyn Owen, La Plata

Debra Payne, Pomfret

Susan Polsky, Bethesda

Karolina Popovicova, Lexington Park

Martha Pride, Leonardtown

Angela Puryear, Cobb Island

Danielle Sanchez, Benedict

Barbara Sapienza, Port Republic

George Satterthwaite, Lexington Park

Stephanie Scribner, Suitland

Margaret L Stewart, Saint Leonard

Florence Taylor, Fort Washington

Margaret Thomas, Fort Washington

Caroline J Zimmerman, Hollywood

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 join SMAS via **PayPal**. Go to our website at somdaudubon.org for this new option.



Osprey

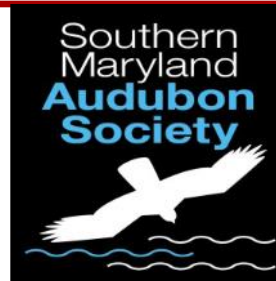
Photo by Bill Hubick

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.

2021–2022 Officers

President, Tiffany Farrell - somdaudubon.president@gmail.com
Vice President, Elena Gilroy—elenabode@yahoo.com
Treasurer, Julie Daniel—juliedaniel@hotmail.com
Secretary, Barbara Hill —tytito@verizon.net



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: _____

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*