

The Osprey

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHERN MARYLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY



Prothonotary Warbler
Photo by Steve Arthur

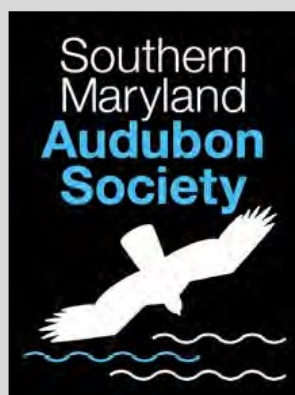
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<http://somdaudubon.org/>

President's Perch

Dear friends,

How often do birds surprise you? For beginning birders, almost every outing presents something exciting and new. As I spend more time in the field I learn more, but I also become more humble. That is partly because birding rarely goes as planned. Even with data from eBird, I was foiled in several attempts to find a Kentucky Warbler this season. I just went to a marsh in coastal North Carolina, where I hoped to find a Seaside or Salt-marsh Sparrow, both recently recorded. The sparrows eluded me, but I did find Black Skimmers, which were not reported! I came away with a life bird after all. Disappointment can quickly turn to elation or vice versa.

Beside the addictive quality of these emotional highs and lows, birding teaches us many life skills—not just observation, but also patience and persistence. Amid the continuing pandemic, our volunteers have modeled ways that those traits pay off. With patience they have cultivated partnerships, both old and new, which have inspired creative programs in these trying times. For an example, please see the enclosed article about our recent youth event at the Dorchester Community Center's native plant garden. Through such projects we continue our educational mission and reach new people. Add in August heat and a thunderstorm and you see persistence in action!

If you pass through the town of La Plata during October, please look for the SMAS-sponsored entry in the Scarecrow Festival near the town hall. In this venture, we collaborate with our allies in the Town of La Plata to spread the word about birds and conservation in a lighthearted way. Please share your ideas for more outreach options!

Our Zoom lecture on September 1 featured a super guest speaker, Dave Ziolkowski, who shared findings from the North American Breeding Bird Survey. Check out the program recording at <https://www.somdaudubon.org/our-work/program-archive/>. That survey relies on volunteers who are expert in identifying birds by their songs and calls. To give back to Dave's project, we held a raffle after the program, wherein two folks won copies of Larkwire, a software program that teaches birding by ear. Many thanks to Dave for suggesting that awesome idea! I hope we will see you at our next Zoom lecture on October 6th. Check the schedule inside for details.

And, please, keep birding!
Tiffany Farrell
President
Southern Maryland Audubon Society
somdaudubon.president@gmail.com



Black Skimmer
Photo by Richard Higgins

Nature Rocks at Dorchester Community Center

by
Lynne Wheeler

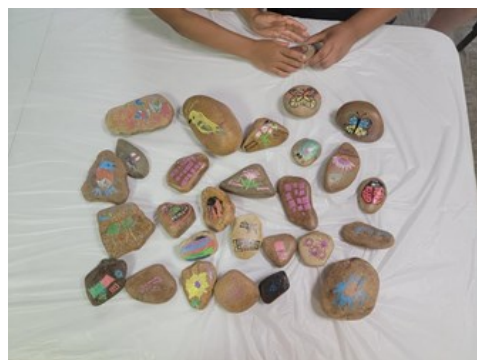
What could be better than getting together outdoors and combining our love of nature with art? That is exactly what we did on Thursday, August 26, at the Dorchester Community Center; we painted rocks with scenes from nature. For those not in the know, the Southern Maryland Audubon Society (SMAS) received a grant from Chesapeake Bay Trust this spring for native plant landscaping for the front of the community center. And, boy, did our plants bloom! They provided us with a spectacular canvas.

The incorporation of native plants in our landscape is one of many of Audubon's passions, and teaching kids about why native plants are so important is not only a passion, but a mission. We love to educate about the many species of butterflies, moths, and birds that rely on native plants for their rich nectar and pollen – and to teach about how our caterpillars need their leaves as a food source! But wait! We're not done! Native plants also require less water and care, and protect the quality of water, land, and air. They truly are the gift that keeps on giving!

While the weather sputtered a bit with light rain, we really had fun talking about butterflies like the Monarch, and even got to look at Monarch caterpillars feasting on our Butterfly Weed milkweed in the garden! We were also able to point out how other plants have gone to seed, and now our birds are enjoying them.



Soon fall will be here. We will weed and mulch our garden for the winter, and now is a good time to for you to make your home garden friendly for our natural world. Leave your flower heads intact; the heads contain nutritious seed for our birds. And, please do not cut down your dried stems! Many native plant stems like Beebalm provide winter habitat for our native bees. Be patient, trim down your plants in the spring. Help us keep southern Maryland beautiful and healthy for the insects and birds!!



Welcome, New Members!

Georgia Bonney, La Plata

Margaret Cook, Dunkirk

Shu Crenshaw, Suitland

Lynn Ferris, Chesapeake Beach

Kathy Frye, Indian Head

Jack Gregor, North Beach

Ina Lucas, Bryans Road

Charles W Stamm, Lexington Park

Howard Wentworth, Leonardtown

Fred White, Clinton

Can Ospreys And Humans Live In Harmony?

By Steve Adams

Chesapeake Bay Media's Bay Bulletin

chesapeakebaymagazine.com

Most Marylanders are familiar with the Osprey. We track their arrivals and departures, we watch them on webcams, we marvel at their nest engineering.

But once in a while, Ospreys end up somewhere humans don't want them, usually an inconvenient nesting site, occasionally dropping their seafood dinner on your car or lawn. A recent incident had a lot of Chesapeake Country talking—not about the dangers of a nest atop a pole, but for what happened to the young birds inside.

News broke last week that two juvenile Ospreys had been euthanized after their nest was removed from a light pole at a baseball field in Calvert County's Cove Point Park in Lusby.

The county had contacted the U.S. Department of Agriculture for help removing the birds so that a light pole could be replaced. USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection (APHIS) Wildlife Services is the federal agency that resolves "conflicts to allow people and wildlife to coexist". The organization "uses an integrated approach to solving conflicts, such as those associated with Osprey, and considers a wide range of lethal and non-lethal methods".

According to Tanya Espinosa, public affairs specialist for APHIS, the county parks department requested the removal of the nest at the ball field "due to human health and safety and property maintenance concerns."

Espinosa says personnel subsequently removed the nest and euthanized two immature birds, "estimated to be 30 days of age and not close to fledging," under the authority of a depredation permit issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

"WS works closely with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services to ensure sound management decisions," she added. "Osprey population recovery has been a conservation success in this region. Once nearly extirpated before the 1970s due to use of certain pesticides, the Chesapeake Bay area is now home to more than 2,000 nesting pairs. As trained and dedicated wildlife management professionals, WS carefully considers the decision to remove individual birds and lethal removal is done with consideration for the population of the species as a whole."

Despite the authority of the USDA to undertake these actions at Cove Point Park, many citizens were clearly disturbed to learn of the outcome and quickly took to social media to proclaim their shock and horror.

Hundreds of members of the MD Birding Facebook group, which totals about 16,500 members, said neither the USDA nor Calvert County did the right thing. "Why couldn't they just wait a few weeks?" asked one commenter. "Seriously ... how can they do this?", wrote another. "There is no acceptable reason for it all. So sad and such disregard for wildlife. Anyone that signed off on this should be ashamed of themselves."

One member expressed frustration at the darker side of managing wildlife. "Argghh – I guess their excuse is we have enough Osprey already so disposing of a few 'inconvenient' babies makes perfect sense. I'm heartbroken for the two babies who didn't get a chance to live out their lives, the parents who spent a season nest-building, incubating eggs, and successfully raising their young, just so some selfish, cruel humans can kill them according to a senseless narrative. People who prefer to kill wildlife instead of choosing a non-lethal relocation should get another profession. They should NOT be in charge of our natural resources, period."

When a citizen shared photos of the Ospreys' removal on Facebook (in a post that has since been deleted), they were under the impression that the birds would be "taken to a rehabilitation center in Annapolis and will (be) in very good hands and will be released back in the Park when they are ready next season."

But that's not what happened.

Residents and wildlife enthusiasts turned their ire to the Calvert Board of County Commissioners, asking why the nest couldn't have been removed after the Ospreys had fledged or why the birds were euthanized without contacting one of the nine licensed wildlife rehabilitators in Calvert County—including two right in Lusby.

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See **Ospreys**



Osprey

Photo by Bill Hubick

Ospreys continued

BOCC issued the following statement:

“We have received a number of comments and questions regarding the removal of an Osprey nest from a light pole at Cove Point Park.

“Because the nest was located in an area adjacent to a ball field, the nest posed a risk to the safety of the public; the light pole at Cove Point Park is not equipped to accommodate the presence of Ospreys. The presence of the nest could endanger visitors to Cove Point Park with the risk of falling sticks or other nesting material.

“Calvert County Government enlisted the services of U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Wildlife Services, through a cooperative services agreement, to remove the nest. Due to the nature of this agreement, Calvert County Government was not consulted or informed as to why or how the decision was made to euthanize the juveniles in the nest rather than relocate. For the safety of the birds, we often enlist the services of USDA.

“Moving forward we will work to ensure that any Ospreys removed from county property will be relocated and will communicate this position with USDA. We appreciate and value the outpouring of concern for our county’s natural resources. The county is in the process of installing lights equipped to safely accommodate the presence of Ospreys at our parks, to enable wildlife to coexist in our recreation spaces.”

There have been precedents for Ospreys being successfully relocated or rehabilitated when they move into human territory—stories with happier endings.

In April, three Natural Resources Police officers made the news after constructing a new nest on a piling for two Ospreys after removing their nest from an abandoned boat at Goodhands Creek Landing in Chester.

And just last week, a juvenile female Osprey that had been seen hanging upside down from her nest in Shady Side with twine wrapped around one leg took flight and returned to the nest after being taken to and rehabilitated at the Owl Moon Raptor Center in Boyds, a state and federally licensed wildlife rehabilitation center specializing in birds of prey.

Naturally, the outcry surrounding what occurred at Cove

Point might make you wonder what you can do, or should do, when you see an Osprey nest somewhere too close to humans.

According to David F. Brinker, regional ecologist with the Maryland DNR’s Wildlife and Heritage Service, it’s not about where, but rather when and in what condition, you see the nest.

While Brinker withheld comment on the situation in Cove Point, given his lack of personal involvement in the matter, he says it’s common to see nests on all sorts of manmade structures akin to Ospreys’ most natural nest location, dead trees. “We see nests on channel markers, power poles, telecommunication towers, barges, abandoned and unused boats, roadside billboards, and specially-designed platforms that landowners put in place to entice Ospreys to nest on their property or in a location where people can easily watch the nesting process from start to finish.”

Wherever their nests are, Ospreys are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), which “prohibits the purposeful take or attempting to purposefully take any migratory bird, nest, and eggs or parts thereof, unless permitted by USFWS,” and USFWS’s Chesapeake Bay Field Office (CBFO) is responsible for evaluating impacts of projects or activities on migratory birds in Maryland, Delaware, and D.C.

CBFO states that in the Chesapeake region, nests can be removed without a migratory board permit or permission from September through February, when they are deemed inactive due to Ospreys being at their wintering grounds in Central and South America, or at any time if there are no eggs or young present in the nest or if the eggs fail to hatch by July 15.

However, CBFO notes that “A nest should only be removed if it threatens human health or safety, poses potential risk of injury to the Osprey parents or their offspring, or conflicts with normal use or function of property or equipment.” It also states that “once removal of a nest has begun, you must be vigilant and continue to remove sticks. Ospreys are persistent nest builders and will do so for several weeks to follow. If Ospreys lay eggs while you are actively trying to remove the nest, you must cease all activities.”

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Ospreys Conclusion

CBFO also makes it clear that the public can do much to avoid and minimize its disturbance to Ospreys, like retrofitting problematic nest sites during the non-nesting season (September through February) or constructing artificial nest poles or platforms above undesired nest locations. Use common sense to limit disturbing the Ospreys. For example, avoid parking directly under a nest like the one I recently spotted atop a light in the Westfield Annapolis Mall parking lot.

Finally, and most importantly, if and when you think an occupied nest may need to be removed during nesting season (March through August), CBFO states that you must contact the USDA Wildlife Services hotline at 1-877-463-6497. It also states that if maintenance on structures with active Osprey nests, which “should not occur between April 1 and August 15,” is potentially necessary, you must call the same number for assessment and evaluation—something that happened at Cove Point but didn’t result in the conclusion that many would have hoped for.

To see the full color article, with photos, follow this link: <https://bayweekly.com/sharing-spaces/>

Bird Conservation Groups File Lawsuit To Improve New York Renewable Energy Regulation

Law to accelerate renewable energy development needlessly puts birds at risk

(Washington, D.C., June 29, 2021) American Bird Conservancy (ABC) today filed suit (Case 905502-21), along with other bird conservation groups and other stakeholders, against the New York Office of Renewable Energy Siting (ORES) for failure to comply with the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) during development of regulations to enforce the Accelerated Renewable Energy Growth and Community Benefit Act. The Act, or Section 94-c, has the laudable goal of rapidly expanding renewable energy production in the state to combat climate change. In the rush to implement the Act, however, critical shortcuts were taken in the environmental and public review processes, resulting in regulations that provide far too little protection for at-risk birds.

“The Act and associated regulations had the potential to provide a model for rapid, yet environmentally responsible, wind energy project development,” says Joel Merriman, ABC’s Bird-Smart Wind Energy Campaign Director. “Instead, unrealistic timelines were entrenched, too few wildlife species were offered protection, and many industry best practices were ignored.”

During a public comment period, bird conservation groups provided extensive recommendations for minimizing avoidable impacts to birds. These were overwhelmingly ignored.

While they provide clean, carbon-free energy, wind turbines in the U.S. kill more than a half-million birds

each year. Turbines constructed in remote areas often require new transmission lines to be added to the energy grid, causing additional bird mortality from collisions and electrocution. And, for some bird species, the construction of wind facilities renders otherwise suitable habitat unusable.

“The situation with Section 94-c demonstrates why environmental laws are so crucial,” says Steve Holmer, ABC’s Vice President for Policy. “Well-established best practices exist for wind energy development. The Section 94-c regulations did not take these into account and need to be improved to ensure bird populations are not harmed. This is especially important given the loss of nearly 3 billion birds, or almost 30 percent, from North America’s bird populations over the past 50 years.”

New York has rich birdlife. Large tracts of forest in the Adirondack Mountains host uncommon species like the Bicknell’s Thrush. The state’s remaining grasslands support rarities like the Henslow’s Sparrow and the rapidly declining Grasshopper Sparrow, populations of which have dropped by more than 97 percent. The eastern population of the Golden Eagle funnels through the state’s mountains during migration. And coastal areas host threatened birds such as Roseate Terns, Piping Plovers, and Red Knots.

“New York has been a champion for birds in many arenas,” says Merriman. “We would hope to see that leadership continue with the state’s approach to renewable energy development. But with Section 94-c, the pendulum has swung too far.”

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See **Renewable Energy**

Renewable Energy continued

The first wind project being considered under Section 94-c is Heritage Wind in Orleans County. The proposed site is in a major migratory pathway for birds and adjacent to a wetland complex that supports nesting Bald Eagles and many uncommon species, including the state-listed Short-eared Owl and Black Tern.

“The developer of the Heritage Wind project conducted inadequate field studies to inform project planning and offers far too little in the way of minimizing impacts,” says Merriman. “It’s unclear if changes can or will be made to the project under the new regulations.”

“We need renewable energy to combat climate change,” says Merriman. “At the same time, it’s vital that this

development be done in a way that minimizes environmental impacts.”

ABC and other litigants, including Delaware-Otsego Audubon, Genesee Valley Audubon, and the Rochester Birding Association, are being represented by The Zoghlin Group, PLLC. ABC thanks the Leon Levy Foundation for its support of ABC’s Bird-Smart Wind Energy Campaign.

Media Contact: Jordan Rutter, ABC Director of Public Relations | jerutter@abcbirds.org | @JERutter

American Bird Conservancy is a nonprofit organization dedicated to conserving wild birds and their habitats throughout the Americas. With an emphasis on achieving results and working in partnership, we take on the greatest problems facing birds today, innovating and building on rapid advancements in science to halt extinctions, protect habitats, eliminate threats, and build capacity for bird conservation. Find us on abcbirds.org

2021 October – December Monthly Meeting Programs

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, University 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, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, 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

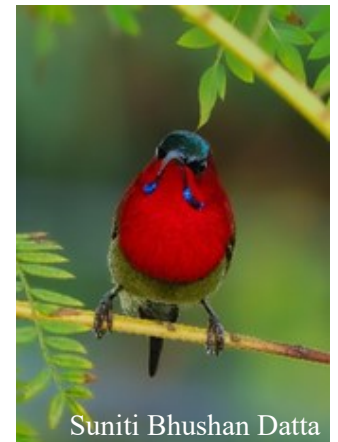
December 1 – Wednesday – 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

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

Bird Illness Investigation Continues in Several States

July 2, 2021, update as of August 17, 2021

In late May, wildlife managers in the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, and other states began receiving reports of sick and dying birds. Several passerine bird species have been affected. No human health or domestic animal (pets, livestock and poultry) issues have been documented. As of mid-August, reports have decreased in many jurisdictions and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources is lifting its previous recommendation to cease feeding birds.

The natural resource management agencies in the affected states and the District of Columbia, along with the National Park Service, continue to work with diagnostic laboratories to investigate the cause(s) of this event. Those laboratories include the USGS National Wildlife Health Center, the University of Georgia Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study, the University of Pennsylvania Wildlife Futures Program, the Indiana Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory and multiple state laboratories.

While no definitive cause(s) of illness or death have been determined, the following pathogens have not been detected, based on results received to date: Salmonella and Chlamydia (bacterial pathogens); avian influenza virus, West Nile virus and other flaviviruses, Newcastle disease virus and other paramyxoviruses, herpesviruses and poxviruses; and Trichomonas parasites. Transmission electron microscopy, metagenomics work, and additional diagnostic tests are ongoing.

Residents who choose to resume feeding birds and providing water in bird baths should remain vigilant and consider the following standard guidelines:

- Clean feeders and bird baths with soap and water at least once a week, then disinfect with a 10% bleach solution to prevent potential infectious disease spread between birds and other wildlife. After cleaning, rinse well with water and allow to air-dry. When handling bird feeders and baths be sure to wear disposable gloves and wash your hands when finished.
- When feeding birds follow expert recommendations such as those listed in the Audubon International Guide to Bird Feeding.
- Avoid handling birds unless necessary. Dispose of dead birds in a plastic bag, seal, and discard with household trash, or alternatively, bury them deeper than 3 feet to prevent disease transmission to other animals. If handling is necessary, wear disposable gloves or use plastic bags on your hands to avoid contact with carcasses.
- Keep pets away from sick or dead wildlife.
- Report sick or dying birds to the Maryland DNR / USDA Wildlife Services Call Center at 1-877-463-6497 (410-349-8130 for out-of-state phone numbers). Licensed wildlife rehabilitators can be found on the DNR website.
- Maryland DNR greatly appreciates the assistance of the public and wildlife rehabilitation facilities during this outbreak. Wildlife disease investigations take time and can be inherently challenging. Additional information and guidance will be shared as more results are confirmed.

<https://news.maryland.gov/dnr/2021/07/02/bird-illness-investigation-continues-in-several-states/>



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

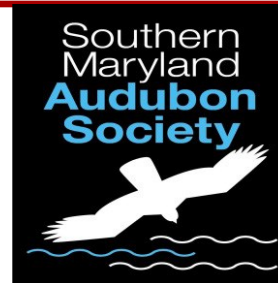
Photo by Bill Hubick

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
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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