

The Osprey

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHERN MARYLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY



The sun sets on another volume
of *The Osprey*.

Photo by Carrie Staples

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<http://smdaudubon.org/>

President's Perch

Hello, my birding friends. Writing this final column of the season is bittersweet, since it marks the end of my term as SMAS president. And what a rollercoaster it has been! In the bleak isolation of Covid-19, the natural world became a source of healing and comfort. Life slowed and allowed many newcomers to appreciate the wonder of birds. SMAS outreach grew in ways we would not have imagined—installing an Osprey nest cam, building a new website, and hosting and recording lectures remotely—without the trials of a pandemic. We are thankful for your support and patience as we experimented with these new technologies.

In contrast, returning to in-person field trips, meetings, and festivals in 2022 has been liberating and revitalizing. With luck you have been able to join some of these events, many listed inside. If not, you still have one more chance to enjoy the fun at our annual meeting and picnic on June 5 (p. 7). After a pot-luck lunch, we will elect new officers and directors and vote on a revision of the society's Constitution and Bylaws (p. 3). We will close with a bird walk around beautiful Kings Landing Park. All are welcome.

If you plan to travel this summer, please consider sending a trip report to Osprey editor, Tyler Bell (p. 4). I recently went to North Carolina and happened upon great views of a Mississippi Kite, both perched and in flight. Even at home this spring, I am continually surprised by new “yard birds,” such as Yellow Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler, and American Kestrel. Indeed, birds are constant companions, no matter where you find yourself.

Six and a half years ago, I joined SMAS field trips as a complete novice. Among the many birding experts in SMAS, I still consider myself a beginner, though I feel deep gratitude to our chapter friends who shared kindness, enthusiasm, and knowledge. I remain humbled by the generous people dedicated to birds in southern Maryland. What a blessing to be among the flock of birders and conservationists SMAS has cultivated over fifty-one years.

Wishing you good birding!
Tiffany Farrell



Yellow Warbler.
Photo by Bill Hubick

Prothonotary Warblers at Battle Creek Cypress Swamp

By Gene Groshon

We had a wonderful hike on May 1 exploring the swamp and woodlands of Battle Creek Cypress Swamp. Our goal was to try and find any of the Prothonotary Warblers (PROW) that I had fitted with color bands last summer. We were fortunate enough to get excellent views of two previously banded Prothonotaries. The Red and Yellow banded PROW was a male that I had originally banded on 6/23/2021 and had returned from its overwintering location. The Red banded PROW was a male that I color banded on 5/20/2021 and originally banded with its USGS band on 6/24/2020! This was a wonderful sighting that proves this bird has returned to Battle Creek at least twice now from its wintering grounds. Prothonotary Warblers overwinter in Central America and northern South America, which is roughly 2000–3000 miles away from Battle Creek. It's amazing these tiny birds that only weigh as much as 14 jellybeans can make such a long journey year after year!

We also saw a female PROW and another male PROW, but it was too high in the trees to see if it was banded. Hopefully we will continue to see more and more of our banded birds return. In addition to all the excitement with the Prothonotaries, we encountered 39 other species including Northern Waterthrush, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Hooded Warbler, and Ovenbird. It's always a great time hiking through the park during spring migration, as you never know what you will find!

If you are interested in helping look for color banded Prothonotary Warblers, email Gene Groshon at gene.groshon@Calvertcountymd.gov.



Gene Groshon, second from right, tracking down warblers.
Photo by Steve Arthur



Louisiana Waterthrush.
Photo by Steve Arthur



Prothonotary Warbler, Red over Yellow bands.
Photo by Steve Arthur



Prothonotary Warbler, Red band.
Photo by Steve Arthur

SMAS Field Trip Review Did You Miss Out?

Smallwood State Park, April 30

A gem of a park for birding! Marisa Rositol led a party of nine, and they were a lucky party because Marisa is one of our top notch birders in southern MD. A great list of 50 species was submitted. Highlights were Green Heron, Blue-winged Warbler, Cape May Warbler, Red-headed Woodpecker, and Louisiana Waterthrush. Smallwood is one of the best spots to see these waterthrushes!



Celebrate La Plata Day, April 30

SMAS helped the Town of La Plata celebrate at this wonderful spring festival at the Town Hall. We supported our state's FIRST Bird City by providing information about this great initiative and highlighting this year's World Migratory Bird Day (Saturday, May 14) theme, **Dim the Lights for Birds**. Kids loved coloring different bird species featured this year, and we gave parents Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*) seeds to spark discussion about the importance of native plants.

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Attention members, in accordance with the SMAS Bylaws, a nominating committee has been formed for the upcoming elections, which will be held June 5 at the annual picnic. This is a notice to all members. If you would like to submit a nomination for a position of Officer or Director on our board, please submit your nomination via email to our nominating committee chair Lynne Wheeler: comstockel@aol.com

Also at the June 5 meeting, the Southern Maryland Audubon Society board of directors will present for vote to general membership amendments to our existing Constitution and Bylaws. As of May 7, the proposed changes are posted on our website at <https://www.somdaudubon.org/2022/05/07/smas-annual-meeting-picnic-new-bylaws-proposed/>. These amendments update our 1971 draft. In particular, they reflect how business is currently conducted and add gender-neutral language. Note: Due to poor mail delivery we are notifying members by Osprey newsletter and on the SMAS website. This method of notification is one of the updates to the bylaws.

Barn Owls and BBQ

The Barn Owls and BBQ trip on April 25, was a wonderful experience for all participants. The food and company were Owlsome! Following the BBQ dinner donated by Steve and Janet Sumner of Tavern Founders and Grille in Pasadena, MD, founderstavernandgrille.com/mobi/ and owl cupcakes donated by Terri Tarbox of Simply Cakelicious simplycakelicious.com in Waldorf, everyone got to see eight Barn Owlets!

The Barn Owl is a species of concern in Maryland, so it was a treat for everyone to see the birds close up at an undisclosed location in Charles County. Participants who adopted owls received a certificate.

A special thank you from the Raptor Conservation Committee for your donations that support raptor conservation in Southern Maryland.

Mike Callahan



Melissa Boyle (left) and Mike Callahan (right) with Barn Owlets.
Photo by Steve Arthur



Owl Cupcakes and Barn Owlet.
Photos by Steve Arthur

Final Issue until September!

Got plans for some nature travel this summer? Let the editor know what you did on your summer vacation anytime between now and early August, when work will begin on the next issue. Have fun and email the editor at itylerbell@yahoo.com.



Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. Photo by Steve Arthur

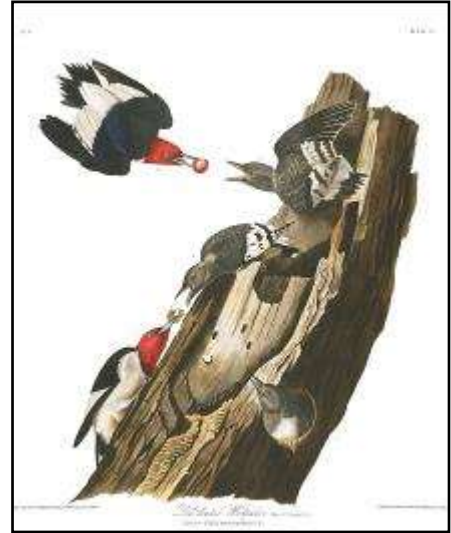
SMAS Takes Lt. Governor Boyd Rutherford on a Bird Walk!

by Lynne Wheeler

Sometimes we get asked to do really neat things! Our Lt. Governor has been dashing all over Maryland visiting state parks and wildlife management areas. On April 21, Bob Lukinic and I were the lucky ones to escort the Lt. Governor, the honorable Boyd Rutherford, the Secretary of Natural Resources Jeannine Hadaway-Riccio, and many others from their office. They asked to visit the Mattawoman Natural Environmental Area on the George Wilmot Trail. Best bird? The Red-headed Woodpeckers popping in and out of a nest.



Gretchen Heinze Hardman, Bob Lukinic, Lynne Wheeler, Lt . Governor Boyd Rutherford, Secretary of DNR Jeannine Hadaway-Riccio, and Smallwood State Park ranger Andy Ogle (left to right).



The Lt. Governor with Lynne Wheeler and Bob Lukinic pointing to a Red-headed Woodpecker and its nest.

SMAS member Brenda Nairn-Davies shares her knowledge of and passion for Bald Eagles on May 5 with the Daisies – Girl Scout Troop 12088 – at the Port Tobacco River Park.



SMAS Celebrates and Educates at the College of Southern Maryland

by Lynne Wheeler

The Southern Maryland Audubon Society hosted a unique monthly lecture program at the La Plata campus of the College of Southern Maryland on Wednesday, May 4. We combined an indoor lecture about Eastern Bluebirds with a walk around the campus, where we visited wonderful native plant gardens and bluebird houses, and celebrated the campus becoming a Maryland Bird Campus.

Barb Whipkey, owner of two Wild Birds Unlimited stores in southern Maryland, is not only a highly successful business owner, she is also the St. Mary's County coordinator for the Maryland Bluebird Society. She shared her knowledge of and passion for Eastern Bluebirds with forty attendees. Many of us learned about bluebird behavior, the best types of houses for our birds, and how to monitor them.

Our event also congratulated CSM for its achievement in becoming the first Maryland Bird Campus. SMAS board member Tracey Stuller championed the effort to make this designation happen. Combining her board position with her job as a CSM professor and her love of nature, she had the skills and drive to achieve this lofty goal. Moreover, CSM is also a Bee Campus. If it flies, CSM is there to support it! Way to go CSM! Participants were also informed about this year's theme for World Migratory Bird Day (Saturday, May 14), "Dim the Lights for Birds at Night."

After Barb's lecture, the fun continued as we visited four native plant gardens and four bluebird houses, and we even installed a new bluebird house provided by Wild Birds Unlimited. And, if we didn't have enough to crow about, we capped the evening with a view of an active American Crow's nest!



Barb Whipkey takes a picture of Bluebird chicks.
Lynne Wheeler points out native plant species.

May 2022—June 2022 Events

SATURDAY, May 14 – All Day

COUNTY MAY COUNTS

Calvert, Charles, Prince George's, St. Mary's Counties

Note: Help is always appreciated from all: backyard birders, beginners, new members. This is a great way to learn! Data and information help save our birds. The county coordinators for you to contact are as follows:

CALVERT: Sherman Suter (401-586-1073), sjsuter29@verizon.net

CHARLES: Lynne Wheeler (301-751-8097), somdaudubon@yahoo.com

ST. MARY'S: Tyler Bell (301-862-4623), itylerbell@yahoo.com

June 5 – SUNDAY – 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Annual Meeting and Picnic

Kings Landing Park Pavilion, Calvert County

3255 Kings Landing Road, Huntingtown, MD 20639

Potluck Lunch	1:00 – 2:15 p.m.
Welcome	2:15 – 2:30 p.m.
Business Meeting: Elections and Award Presentations	2:30 – 3:00 p.m.
Bird Walk	3:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Come and join us as we appreciate this Calvert County Park with 265 acres of natural area on the Patuxent River, including 4,000 feet of river shoreline and 50 acres of marshland. Our picnic meeting will be held at a picnic pavilion, enabling us to immerse ourselves easily into the parks wonderful nature filled environment. Directions: From Rt 4 at Huntingtown turn onto Old Town Road (Rt. 524). Proceed to Bowen's Grocery Store and turn on Huntingtown Road (Rt. 521). At the 4-way stop intersection, continue straight, and you will be on Kings Landing Road. The road dead ends at the park. The pavilion is on the right approximately 75 feet past the park entrance.



WHAT'S HATCHING?

The logo features the text "BBA3" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Below the text is a green silhouette of the state of Missouri. Two birds are perched on the silhouette: a yellow-orange bird on the left and a black and orange bird on the right.

Three Tips for Using the Merlin App Better

[Merlin](#) is a tremendously impressive resource for identifying bird sounds, but like anything, it is not perfect. Here are some [tips from eBird](#) to help make the most of this new tool and avoid common mistakes.

1. **Verify each identification Merlin provides.** Try to see the bird, if possible. Always consider the suggested ID and how likely it is before reporting it.
2. **Set your location.** Enable location services or enter the location manually so that Merlin's suggestions are more accurate.
3. **Include the recording in your checklist.** This simultaneously provides documentation for your sighting, helps improve Merlin, and contributes to the sound library for that species. Win-win-win!

If you can't verify Merlin's identification, you should treat it like any other bird you can't identify and either omit it from the checklist or report it at the family level. If you include a recording as documentation, include timestamps of the relevant sounds in the comment box.

There are also techniques for improving the quality of your recordings. Trimming the ends of the recording, normalizing it, and adding comments vastly improve your recording's value. It might sound complicated, but it's a lot like cropping or brightening a photo. Read [eBird's article on preparing audio](#) for more details.



Merlin by [Mark R Johnson/Macaulay Library](#)

If you haven't heard of Merlin before, it's a bird identification app created by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. While recording sounds, the app suggests identifications for any bird songs or calls it detects. These suggestions are impressively accurate, but they are not always correct. Verify any identification before reporting it to eBird, especially if it seems unusual. You can [download Merlin](#) from the Apple Store or from Google Play.

[Read the Merlin Sound ID Best Practices help article](#)

Welcome, New Members!

Janet Benish, Owings

Edward A Chermansky, Mechanicsville

Bonita Crawford, White Plains

Carl Dyson, Leonardtown

Jennifer Edwards, Lexington Park

Ralph E Eshelman, Lusby

Elizabeth Fall, Lusby

William A Greene, La Plata

Donald Hall, Brandywine

Laura Hawley Jarvis, Lexington Park

Janet McGrane, Newburg

William Morton, Great Mills

Jean Smith-Shelton, Temple Hills

Jerry Wood, Huntingtown



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SoMdAudubon

Nonprofit organization

Promoting, protecting and appreciating birds and the wildlife and habitats that support them in Southern Maryland

somdaudubon.org

We are now officially on Instagram!

Please follow us [@southernmarylandaudubon](https://www.instagram.com/southernmarylandaudubon)

You might see other similar account names, but our official Instagram account is [@southernmarylandaudubon](https://www.instagram.com/southernmarylandaudubon).

You'll find our latest event updates, tantalizing tidbits of bird lore, how-tos on attracting more birds to your yard, and updates on how you can pitch in to help protect birds and their habitat in Southern Maryland and elsewhere. And of course, there will always be awesome bird photos!

Follow [@southernmarylandaudubon](https://www.instagram.com/southernmarylandaudubon) and please invite all your friends to join our flock!

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