

# The Osprey

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHERN MARYLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY



Audubon's Oriole photo by Steve Arthur. Just one of many bird names under consideration for change.

## IN THIS ISSUE

**Pax NAS Field Trip Report**

**Hog Island Winners!**

**Congrats, Eaton!**

**Central Europe**

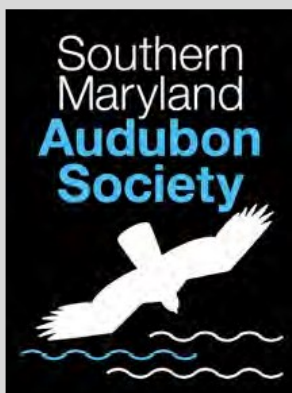
**A Transatlantic Flight**

**NAS Statement**

**Welcome New Members!**

**Farm Bill**

**Upcoming Events**



<http://somdaudubon.org/>

## President's Perch

Now is absolutely the best time for birding in Southern Maryland. The birds are feathered in their most vivid and elegant flirtation finery. They are singing their hearts out. And even those hard-to-see warblers stand out in tree tops that have yet to leaf out.

I hope you'll take a moment, a day or a weekend to get out and enjoy the birds and nature. Southern Maryland Audubon has some great bird walks and is participating in local spring festivals throughout the region that you can check out in our events list below.

This spring, Audubon chapters across the country are engaged in deep discussions reexamining the name of our organization in light of the personal history of its namesake, John James Audubon.

Audubon did not found our national organization, it was named for him 50 years after he died, in recognition of his ground-breaking art and research as a naturalist. But there was another side of Audubon. He was an enslaver. He held racist views and spoke out against emancipation. His own writings describe his poor treatment of Black and Indigenous people.

After months of internal debate, the National Audubon Society recently decided to keep the Audubon name for the national organization. You can read National Audubon Chief Executive Officer Elizabeth Gray's explanation in her letter to members that we have reprinted in full below on page 9.

That decision did not end the discussion, however, because local chapters have the authority to name themselves. Many of Audubon's 450 chapters — including the Southern Maryland Audubon Society — are examining how we wish to be known and identified going forward.

A growing number of chapters around the country are eliminating the Audubon name, including the Audubon Naturalist Society in Montgomery County, MD, the D.C. Audubon Society and chapters in Chicago, Seattle and elsewhere.

Members of our own Southern Maryland Board of Directors have differing views on the question of our name. We are engaged in ongoing discussions. We greatly value the opinions of our members and supporters. What do you think? Send me an email at [president.somdaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:president.somdaudubon@gmail.com).

One thing will not change: Our commitment to protecting the birds of Southern Maryland — and beyond — and the habitat they need to survive and thrive. Birds are facing threats as never before from climate change, rapid development and other challenges. They need us — and you.

Sincerely,  
Molly Moore

## Pax NAS Field Trip

by Dean Newman and Jim Swift

Attitudes matter. Nothing proves that statement more than the field trip Jim Swift and I led to Naval Air Station (NAS) Patuxent River on Saturday morning, March 4. As any well-prepared trip leaders should do, Jim and I had scouted on the Thursday and Friday prior and both came up with zilch, nada, zero with anything notable. How do you lead a field trip to a fabled “exclusive” location when all you can show participants are Savannah Sparrows and American Robins? The scouting forays were so bad I even sent an email Thursday night “adjusting” attendee’s expectations and subtly suggesting they’d be better off sleeping in.

It only got worse with the weather forecast for Saturday; strong north winds gusting to 45 miles per hour, sunny, high temps in the low 60s. I guess it could have been worse, rain and temps in the low 30s, but, still, I was regretting deeply ever volunteering to lead this trip and vowing to never, ever, volunteer to lead another one again. That was Friday night.

Saturday morning, early, I checked my email secretly hoping everyone had reconsidered and decided, like me, it was going to be a busted day of birding. Yet, there was one email, only one, and it re-adjusted my tone for the day. I won’t name the sender but it read, “I’ll be there, Dean.” In spite of all the negativity and cautionary notes about not expecting too much out of the day, this person reminded me it didn’t matter. In those four words, they conveyed birding was more to them, and it should be more to me, than just racking up numbers or finding exotic species. You know who you are. You changed my day!

That morning, sixteen participants promptly arrived to meet Jim and me at the agreed-upon spot, everyone with a smile, projecting an attitude that said, “Bring it on!” I never wanted to hug a group more than I did that morning even as the winds were beginning to pick up.

The humbling of my attitude was even about to take another kick. The van for the fabled runway tour only held fifteen people. There were sixteen participants plus Jim and myself—a total of eighteen. Even if I sat out, still there were two people that were going to miss the most exclusive part of the trip. I had assigned the van seats on a first-come-first-served basis and these two knew they were alternates.

What they didn’t know was the graciousness of another couple who were among the first to sign up. In advance of the trip, this couple had said they would give up their seats, if necessary, for other, first-timers, to get in the van. Because of their attitude, one of the alternates, a new birder, picked up eight life birds.

Away Jim Swift went to the aircraft runways with the van stuffed to the max with fifteen, eager, smiling, happy

birders. The cramped transportation seemed not to matter.

Whatever you attribute it to, the day I would have written off as a waste of time turned into the most productive NAS Pax field trip I’ve ever led. The highlights were a Lapland Longspur and very cooperative Short-eared Owl that sat motionless while participants viewed it with a spotting scope. Also of note was the nearly 150 Killdeer seen on the airfield. They were in two separate and very loose flocks. In addition to the small rafts of Lesser Scaup, Long-tailed Ducks and Horned Grebes, we found two Northern Gannets and even picked a Bonaparte’s Gull out of a flock of Ring-bills.

As for the gracious couple who gave up their seat in the van and myself, as we scouted fresh-water ponds for Wood Ducks, we were rewarded with a curious River Otter that stayed with us for over twenty minutes. We re-joined the runway group and enjoyed the rest of the morning scoping waterfowl in three-foot waves with white caps. The wind howled making us hold tightly to our tripods and hats but, in spite of the discomfort, enjoying the camaraderie of being with others of the same mind.

This may not be the typical field report detailing the long list of species seen or optics used but it does document something I think is even more important. The old adage is the only thing you can change is your attitude. Couple that to another famous saying, you miss 100% of the shots you don’t take. If this group had followed my inclination and stayed home, we’d have missed a whole lot more than the owl, longspur, gull, gannets and otter. We’d have missed the synergy of a group fighting the wind and cold, laughing, learning and enjoying nature and each other. Even though I was supposed to be the one leading and teaching, I learned a lot from this group that day. In the end, attitudes really do matter.



Short-eared Owl  
Photo by Bill Hubick

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## And the winners are...

Southern Maryland Audubon announces the winners of its three annual scholarships to the famed Hog Island Audubon Camp for birding and nature programs off the coast of Maine.

Each of the scholarship winners will spend a week at the camp this summer, focusing on bird and nature studies, and exploring the extraordinary wildlife habitat of the island with other participants from across the country. Southern Maryland Audubon scholarships cover the full cost of the week of programs, room and board.

Melissa Eckloff, an interpretation and naturalist assistant for Maryland State Parks, was awarded the educator's scholarship. She is responsible for supporting more than 70 state parks across Maryland in training staff, developing exhibits and hosting public outreach events.

"My travel plans always include detours for the chance to see a new-to-me bird," wrote Melissa, who lives in Lusby in Calvert County.

Kaelyn Stewart, winner of the teen scholarship, is a student at North Point High School for Science, Technology and Industry in Waldorf. She has amassed 40 veterinary service hours, volunteers at the Humane Society of Charles County and spent part of last summer studying birds at the Texas Zoo caring for their cockatoo, Tia, and other exotic birds.

"I have always been captivated by the thought of becoming a conservation biologist or a wildlife veterinarian working all around the world," Kaelyn wrote in her application.

Jan de Regt was named winner of the field ornithology scholarship for avid adult birders. Jan is a tutor for the Charles County Literacy Council which provides free one-on-one adult literacy tutoring to adult residents of Charles County.

"I have always been fascinated by the birds around me, and I fill my gardens with local flora specifically to support local pollinators and birds," Jan said.





## Congratulations Eaton!

Southern Maryland Audubon Youth Birder Eaton Ekarintaragun's oil painting of a Northern Shoveler drake was selected "Best of Show" in the Maryland 2023 Federal Junior Duck Stamp Design Contest.

Eaton, 16, is a junior at Huntingtown High School in Calvert County. His evocative painting, titled "An Evening in the Shadows," was one of 144 entries in the statewide competition.

His entry will now advance to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service national competition to be judged April 21. The Federal Duck Stamp program has saved thousands of acres of waterfowl habitat, and hosts one of the premier wildlife art contests in the country.



Eaton was a speaker at our Southern Maryland Audubon "Youth Takeover Night" presentation where he displayed his art and described what inspires him. You can watch Eaton and our other star youth birders at:

<https://www.somdaudubon.org/our-work/program-archive/>

## Hummingbirds!

Do you have your hummingbird feeders up yet? As of this writing, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds have been reported widely across the state in small numbers. Typically by the end of April, they should be back on their home turf. If you've never fed hummers before, it's pretty simple. First, you need a feeder. If you have questions, our local Wild Birds Unlimited employees are knowledgeable and can help you. Second, it's cheap and easy to make your own nectar. Please don't buy pre-made nectar and don't use red food coloring. Most feeders have red on them and that's all that's needed to attract the hummers.

The best (and least expensive) solution for your feeder is a 1:4 solution of refined white sugar to tap water. That's  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of sugar in 1 cup of water. Bring the solution to a boil, then let it cool before filling the feeder. A less energy intensive way is to boil the water in a microwave then add the sugar after heating.

<https://www.audubon.org/news/hummingbird-feeding-faqs>



Female Ruby-throated Hummingbird, left, photo by Barry Jerald.  
Male Ruby-throated Hummingbird, right, photo by Will Stuart

## NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Attention members, in accordance with the SMAS By-Laws, a nominating committee has been formed for the upcoming elections, which will be held June 4 at the annual picnic. This is a notice to all members. If you would like to submit a nomination for a position of Vice-President or Director on our board, please submit your nomination via email to our nominating committee chair Elena Gilroy:

[elenabode@yahoo.com](mailto:elenabode@yahoo.com)

**SATURDAY, May 13 OR SUNDAY, May 14 (rain date)– All Day**

### **COUNTY MAY COUNTS**

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

Maryland birders have conducted this survey of the bird populations in the state in the first half of May for over five decades. By the second week in May, many of the species that nest in Maryland have returned to their breeding grounds and they are temporarily joined by an array of warblers, vireos, and other migrating species whose numbers peak in the state around this time.

The Southern Maryland Audubon Society area includes a lot of ground! If you are interested in spending some time counting the birds you see and hear in a specific area, that would be great! Help is always appreciated from all: backyard birders (counting what comes to your feeders or in your own yard), beginners, new members. This is a great way to learn! Data and information help save our birds.

To be assigned an area or just to find out how to report what you see in your own yard, reach out to the county coordinators in your area:

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

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

PRINCE GEORGE'S: Kevin Bennett, [kevinfpbennett@gmail.com](mailto:kevinfpbennett@gmail.com)

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

## Central Europe

by Tyler Bell

My wife, Jane Kostenko, and I went on a guided tour of Budapest, Vienna, and Prague in February. There was little free time and birding was not our primary goal on this trip. But, when you're away, always carry binoculars! In tourist situations, they often come in handy when trying to read distant street signs or, obviously, looking at birds.



Hungarian Parliament, Budapest Photo by Tyler Bell

In Budapest, we dedicated an afternoon/evening to a walk from the hotel to the west bank of the Danube to watch the sun set on the Parliament building. It's quite a spectacle in the golden hour then as the sky darkens and when it gets dark enough, the building is lit from the grounds. As we waited on the river bank, hundreds of Black-headed Gulls flew in to roost on river boats and buildings near the water, stopping to catch one final tasty morsel before settling in for the night. Also, a large group of perhaps 75 Hooded Crows flew in to roost in trees surrounding the Parliament building.

Vienna was far less bird friendly than Budapest. But, Stadtpark, a postage stamp sized green space, lay in between our hotel and the historic downtown. We picked up one of two lifers here: Eurasian Nuthatch. Again, wherever there was water, there were Black-headed Gulls.

Finally, in Prague, we had an afternoon to walk the historic district. eBird reports showed that there were some Little Grebes, our second lifer, near the Charles Bridge on the Vitava River. Sure enough, we found them easily. There was also a large flock of Tufted Ducks there and the rarest bird of the trip, a female Long-tailed Duck! Living near the Potomac and the Chesapeake in St. Mary's County, these are easily found in the winter but was quite unusual for them.



Jackdaws, Prague Photo by Tyler Bell

Unfortunately, we were never able to venture out further away from the city centers to larger expanses of green space. Surely the bird diversity there would have been higher. At this point, any woodpecker in Europe would be a lifer. That would have made our day. Another trip, perhaps!



Eurasian Moorhen, left, Little Grebes, right, Vitava River, Prague Photos by Jane Kostenko



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## A Transatlantic Flight

March 24, 2023

Ospreys have been colour-ringed [banded] in the UK since the early days of the Scottish recovery in the late sixties. This has provided a wealth of valuable data on natal and breeding dispersal, longevity and, perhaps most excitingly, migratory movements. As someone who is privileged to ring Osprey chicks every year, I know what a thrill it is when a bird you have known as a nestling is seen on its wintering grounds having completed its first migration. Each winter we receive numerous reports of UK Ospreys from wintering sites in West Africa and Iberia, and as the organisation responsible for coordinating the UK colour ringing project, it is always pleasing to be able to pass these sightings onto the relevant ringer. We have received some very interesting re-sightings over the years, from a bird that returns to winter on the Canary Islands each year, to others which have migrated as far south as the Ivory Coast and Ghana. However earlier this month we received what is undoubtedly the most remarkable record of all.

A few weeks ago Michael St John got in touch with photos that he had taken on 9th March of a first-winter female Osprey with a blue-colour ring on its left leg. Nothing unusual there until I noticed where he had seen it – Bawdens Irrigation Pond in the north of Barbados in the Caribbean! The ring number was clearly visible – KW0, which indicated it was a bird from Scotland. Michael had actually first observed the bird six miles away at Fosters private wetland on 25th October 2022, but on that occasion had not been able to read the colour ring. He did, however, take some excellent photos. With an increasing number of Ospreys colour-ringed in the UK each year, and an ever-growing number of Osprey ringers, it can sometimes take a while to track down who ringed a particular bird, but thanks to David Jardine and Hayley Douglas we now know that KW0 is definitely Scottish. It was one of two chicks ringed on 23rd June 2022 at a nest in Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park which lies in Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and North Ayrshire, by the Clyde Ringing Group (Iain and Madonna Livingstone, Kevin Sinclair and Paul Baker). They were assisted by staff from Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park who have supported Osprey conservation and monitoring efforts in the area, which are led by Clyde Ringing Group. Roy Dennis visited in 2010 to advise on the location of artificial nests and the first nesting attempt took place in 2017, and successfully in 2018. Last year the two chicks went on to fledge around 29th July, and likely departed on migration in late August/early September.

As far as we are aware, this is the first time that a UK Osprey has been observed in the Americas. It is 4124 miles from Clyde Muirshiel to Barbados. This is the kind of distance that many Ospreys from northern Europe will migrate each year – some Finnish Ospreys are known to winter in South Africa, which is considerably further – but of course what makes this record amazing is the fact that the vast majority of the journey is across the Atlantic Ocean. We know from satellite tracking studies that Ospreys are able to make much longer sea crossings than most other raptors. Their long narrow wings reduce drag and make active flapping flight, which is usually necessary over the open ocean, less energetically costly compared to larger, heavier species. Juvenile Ospreys, which migrate alone, and rely on a process known as vector summation (an inherited programme of distance and direction) to migrate to distant wintering grounds, are particularly likely to make long ocean crossings because, unlike adult Ospreys, they are usually unable to correct for displacement by crosswinds. In other words, if a juvenile Osprey, which is instinctively migrating south-west, encounters strong easterly winds it will drift further to the south-west. This coupled with the UK's position on the edge of Western Europe means that juvenile Ospreys often fly direct across the Bay of Biscay from southern Ireland or South-West England to northern Spain during their first autumn migration. Others also make long flights from South-West Portugal to North-West Africa. In one exceptional case a juvenile male Osprey, known as Stan, which was satellite-tagged by Roy Dennis in northern Scotland in 2012, completed an amazing eight-day migration to the Cape Verde Islands, situated in the Atlantic, approximately 400 miles off the West Africa coast. Stan's flight included a 620 mile crossing from Portugal to Lanzarote in the Canary Islands, and then a non-stop 930 mile flight to the island of São Nicolau in Cape Verde. Unfortunately, Stan's transmitter stopped working eight days later, and we speculated at the time that this may have been due to the fact that he tried to continue on the same south-westerly course and then drowned at sea.

Even Stan's remarkable migration pales into insignificance compared to that of KW0 who is likely to have flown 3800 miles (6114km) across the Atlantic from South-West Ireland to Barbados. It is highly unlikely that even an Osprey could have completed this in a single flight, even with strong tailwinds, and so it is probable that she took the opportunity to rest on boats, which may themselves have been travelling to the Caribbean from the UK.

Continued on page 8. See **Transatlantic**

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## Transatlantic continued

Other satellite-tagged Ospreys are known to have interrupted their journey in this way in the past. In fact, a satellite-tagged juvenile known as Chip almost made it to the Azores from New Hampshire in this way. It could be that KW0 stopped-off on the Azores en route to Barbados. One thing we can be certain of is that KW0 must have departed on migration in exceptional condition in order to have survived this remarkable transatlantic crossing.

Having spent at least four-and-a-half months in Barbados, KW0 is clearly very settled at present, and, in fact, may well remain there for the foreseeable future. Young Ospreys usually remain on the wintering grounds for the whole of their second calendar year, meaning that KW0 could linger in Barbados until spring 2024. Quite what happens then remains to be seen. Most Ospreys fly north back towards their natal area during their third calendar year, but clearly that is unlikely to be an option for KW0, who may instead choose to remain on the other side of the Atlantic. Let's hope we receive further sightings of this remarkable young Osprey in the months ahead.



Osprey KW0 (above) was first observed in Barbados on October 22, 2022  
Photo by Michael St. John



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**Dear Flock,**

This past year, the National Audubon Society embarked on a process to reexamine the name of our organization, in light of the personal history of the organization's namesake, John James Audubon.

Our organization was named after John James Audubon, a naturalist and illustrator, more than 50 years after his death. His work was an important contribution to the field of ornithology in the mid-19th century and there can be no doubt of the impact of his life's work and passion for birds. And yet—he was also an enslaver whose racist views and treatment of Black and Indigenous people must be reckoned with. Read more about John James Audubon [here](#).

Early last year, the Board of Directors of the National Audubon Society began an evaluation process to determine whether our organization should move forward bearing his name. This process was thorough, spanning more than a year and involving extensive feedback from stakeholders within and outside the organization.

This is an issue that elicits strong views. I personally heard from many voices across our network with differing opinions on the right path forward, as did the Board, which was factored into their decision-making.

In March 2023, the Board of Directors voted to retain the organization's current name—the National Audubon Society. Read more about the Board's decision [here](#).

We are at a pivotal moment as an organization and as a conservation movement more broadly. The urgency of our climate and biodiversity crises compels us to marshal our resources toward the areas of greatest impact for birds and people. This means centering equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging (EDIB) values in our programmatic work, as well as our internal operations, and implementing our new five-year Strategic Plan—core to which is our EDIB commitment. Regardless of the name we use, this organization must and will address the inequalities and injustices that have historically existed within the conservation movement.

I understand people may be wondering how that is possible if Audubon remains in our name. That is a question the Board has grappled with, and ultimately, they decided that the organization transcends one person's name. "Audubon"

has come to symbolize our mission and significant achievements that this organization has made in its long history.

As we move forward, we will mindfully craft a new future and strategically marshal resources to maximize impact. In doing so, it is critical to empower and resource work to fully realize our values of equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging. We have therefore announced a new \$25 million commitment to fund the expansion of EDIB-specific work in both internal and conservation initiatives over the next five years.

Our conservation work to protect birds also impacts people and communities as well. We must ensure that our influence is felt in those communities who have historically been excluded by the conservation movement and those who are most affected by the threats of climate change. Our commitment to expanding our funding for our EDIB work will enable the organization to build on its success co-developing solutions with communities of color, as we did with the Little Calumet Marsh Restoration Project, and grow educational programs designed to reach students of color, as we did in our Native Plants program in the Delta region. We will expand our efforts to partner with Indigenous communities, like we have with our Boreal Conservation program.

The National Audubon Society has taken many forms throughout its long and storied history: from the founding women of the Audubon movement who rallied against the bird trade, to activists who helped advocate for the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency, to today's expansive and diverse network of more than 450 local chapters and 160 campus chapters across the country.

Today, Audubon is committed to uniting people from all walks of life who share a love of birds and a commitment to protecting their environments. As we move forward, we will build on the exceptional accomplishments in conservation that this organization has made since its founding by bringing together communities across the Americas to protect birds and the places they need.

Signed,  
Elizabeth Gray  
Chief Executive Officer  
and Ex Officio Board Director  
National Audubon Society

## Welcome, New Members!

Elizabeth Berrio, California

Mary Jane Bishop, Suitland

Shirley Cornell, White Plains

Elizabeth Curtz, Silver Spring

Jay Lancaster, St. Mary's City

Jean Malsack, Hughesville

Chris M Pappas, Saint Leonard

Laura Ross, Lexington Park

Timothy Scheirer, Lusby

Patricia M Smith, Temple Hills

Richard A Thorne, Fort Washington

Merry Whelan, Hughesville

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**Southern Maryland Audubon Society (SMAS)**

@somdaudubon · ★ 5 4 reviews ⓘ · Nonprofit organization

Please follow us on Instagram @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 and please invite all your friends to join our flock!

Visit us at [www.somdaudubon.org](http://www.somdaudubon.org)

### Dear Readers:

If you have any observations, announcements, articles, etc. that you'd like to see in the newsletter, send them in! The deadline for submissions for The Osprey is the 5th of each month. Since this winter is shaping up to be a winter finch irruption, perhaps you have some photos that you'd like to share? Did you travel over the holiday break? Go on a birding/nature outing that you recently enjoyed? We're always looking for member contributed content!

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## This Year's Farm Bill Could Be a Game-Changer for the Most Imperiled U.S. Land Birds

*Conservation measures written into previous Farm Bills temporarily reversed population declines in grassland species like the Bobolink. American Bird Conservancy has recommendations to build on that past success.*

North America's grassland birds are disappearing at an alarming rate, with many considered to be at a conservation “tipping point.” One of the surest ways to turn the tide in their favor could be a sweeping piece of agricultural legislation known as the Farm Bill, which happens to be the single-biggest source of conservation funding in the world. The current Farm Bill expires in September 2023, opening the door for new and stronger conservation measures in the next iteration of the bill.

American Bird Conservancy (ABC) is advocating for measures to be included that have the best chance of saving U.S. grassland bird species from extinction. The recommendations included in ABC's “[Bird Saver](#)” platform, outlined below, would help the Farm Bill channel funds designated for conservation to the programs that would make the biggest difference for grasslands.

### A Grim Time for Grasslands

Once, grasslands including tallgrass, mixed-grass, and shortgrass prairie stretched across most of the central United States, covering hundreds of millions of acres. These grassland ecosystems supported an incredible diversity of life. Now, after years of agricultural expansion that has seen grasslands replaced by farming and other uses, these precious habitats are in danger of disappearing.

The tallgrass prairies that covered states like Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri have been hit hardest. In these wetter and more lush prairies, plants support a wide range of pollinators and birds like the Bobolink and Eastern Meadowlark, while their extensive root systems stabilize the soil and store huge amounts of carbon.

Today, most tallgrass prairies have been converted into crops like corn and soy, which support just a tiny fraction of the species that once lived there. Things have gotten so dire that this kind of grassland is considered one of the most endangered ecosystems on the planet, with just 4 percent remaining.

“There's still this pervasive notion that grasslands are wasteland and should be converted to cropland, but the truth is, not much lives in a cropland. By design, nothing

else can thrive there,” said Steve Riley, ABC's Director of Farm Bill Policy.

The shortgrass prairie of the western U.S., which is dryer and better suited to rangeland than cropland, have fared better. About half of these grasslands remain. Working rangelands can still provide excellent habitat for grassland birds and other wildlife when they use management strategies like planting native grasses and using rotational grazing.

But in recent years, many ranches in the West have been converted to croplands due to economic pressures. In 2021 alone, an area of grassland equivalent to the size of Yellowstone National Park was replaced with row crops. The situation is disastrous for grassland species.

Studies have shown that as grasslands have disappeared, birds have as well. Since 1970, more than half of all grassland birds have been lost. For birds that historically relied on tallgrass prairie, the situation is even more severe — Eastern Meadowlarks are down to just one quarter of their 1970 population.

That's why ABC is focusing on advocating for measures in the upcoming Farm Bill that would keep as much native grassland around as possible, including keeping rangelands as rangelands out West. In the Midwest, measures that incentivize setting aside some acres of cropland for native plants could be a promising way to ensure tallgrass prairies don't disappear.

### The Farm Bill's Role in Grassland Conservation

The Farm Bill's history goes back to the Dust Bowl of the 1930s, which was a devastating time for the nation's farmers. It was also a wake-up call regarding the ecological consequences of plowing up the country's prairies, with their thick root systems that kept the soil in place. Since its early days, the Farm Bill has included some kind of conservation provision, originally to help rebuild depleted cropland, though the conservation aspect has changed over time.

In its current iteration the Farm Bill has twelve “titles,” each acting like their own separate bill. Title II deals with conservation measures. Conservation is only a small part of the overall Farm Bill, but it still receives billions of dollars in funding collectively each year, much of which is funneled towards farmland. Conservation measures have typically involved incentivising farmers and ranchers to set aside parts of their land to “rest” for certain periods of time.

Continued on page 12. See **Farm Bill**



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## Farm Bill continued

Congress passes an updated version of the agricultural-related legislation package every five years or so, and each time it comes up for a vote is a new opportunity to improve upon the last version of the bill.

### ABC's Bird Saver Platform: Strengthen Programs Known to Make a Difference

ABC has three key recommendations to strengthen the conservation section of this year's Farm Bill. One of these involves expanding one of the Farm Bill's most historically effective conservation efforts, called the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Biologists know that CRP works when properly implemented and enforced, because it has had a measurable impact on certain bird populations in the past.

CRP is a program that was written into the 1985 Farm Bill due to concerns about erosion, largely in the Great Plains. Then as now, farmers agreed to set aside ecologically sensitive land and plant native grasses and other groundcover in exchange for a financial incentive. The end result is a benefit for wildlife benefits and decent income for farmers.

Between the mid-90s and early 2000s, the focus of CRP switched more to the cornbelt — the historic home of tallgrass prairies — and the total number of acres enrolled in the program peaked.

During that same time, grassland bird populations that were declining began to noticeably recover. Henslow's Sparrow and Bobolink numbers both increased as more acres were set aside. For Henslow's Sparrows, about 15 years' worth of declines were reversed in just a third of that time.

Sadly, since 2006, the number of acres of farmland enrolled in CRP has shrunk, and both species are declining again. The good news is that investing in CRP is a tried-and-true solution, and Congress could expand the program once again this year.

ABC recommends increasing CRP enrollment to 70 million acres — more than doubling its current size, providing habitat for ground nesting birds to safely lay their eggs and a source of food and cover for a wide variety of grassland species. The Inflation Reduction Act was unable to grow CRP as it did with other conservation programs, but the Farm Bill could make this a reality.

Going hand in hand with expanding CRP, ABC also recommends expanding funds for technical assistance to farmers looking to implement conservation strategies. NGOs can work with farmers to maximize the benefit of CRP and other programs involving native habitat, and the new Farm Bill can make it easier to connect the two groups.

### ABC's Bird Saver Platform: Add a New Program Dedicated to Resting Land

The organization is also advocating for a brand-new addition to the conservation section of the Farm Bill, called Rest-Restore-

Recapture. This would be targeted specifically at ranchers, incentivizing them to let parts of their grazing lands rest for a period of time, rather than continuously grazing cattle on all of their land. Since rest can also be achieved under current Farm Bill authorities, ABC is also calling for stepping up efforts within those programs. Either or both of these solutions can provide a boon for birds.

Approximately 30 percent of the U.S. is rangeland, mostly in the West, which still contains hundreds of thousands of acres of shortgrass prairie. Rangelands are highly diverse and provide livestock foraging areas and habitat for many wildlife species. Healthy rangelands provide conservation services, including carbon storage, water filtration, erosion control, and nutrient cycling. They are vital to recovering grassland bird populations in the West.

Periodic rest has a number of benefits, for ranchers and birds alike. It improves plant species diversity, soil stability, and resilience to extreme weather. It also increases the land's stored carbon and soil health, and helps grass grow back fuller and richer for cattle. Incentivising a rotational grazing system would be a win-win situation for western grasslands and the ranchers who manage these lands.

"We've got lots of land in the West that's never been plowed and still has a basic natural soil structure and native plants," Riley said. "A lot of making that work better for wildlife is just being nicer to it. If we take some of the pressure off of it, it'll heal itself."

### Grassland Birds Need Our Help

Nearly 3 billion birds have disappeared from the U.S. and Canada since 1970. Of those, 720 million have been grassland species. Most of these birds' remaining habitat exists on working lands across the central and Western United States. This year's Farm Bill will be a prime opportunity to reward landowners for practices that stop the decline of grasslands and restore habitat that these birds need to thrive.

You can speak up for a stronger Farm Bill by signing ABC's [Farm Bill Action Alert](#)

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](http://abcbirds.org), Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (@ABCbirds).

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[@JERutter](https://twitter.com/JERutter)

## April — June 2023 Events

**April 22- SATURDAY - 9 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.**

### **FIELD TRIP - EARTH DAY BIRDS IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD WALK**

**Cobb Island, Charles County**

13201 Main Avenue, Cobb Island, MD 20625

#### **“BIRDS OF COBB ISLAND”**

Leader: Molly Moore

What better way to celebrate Earth Day than learning the birds that frequent one of the most unique communities in Southern Maryland. This walk is family friendly and open to first time birders and experienced birders of all ages from Cobb Island and beyond. We will walk through the wooded neighborhoods of the island, spotting songbirds migrating through the area as well as those settling in for nest-building. We'll explore the waterfront and wetlands edges for shore birds, Osprey, and Bald Eagles. This will be an easy walk along quiet paved streets and paths. DIRECTIONS: Meet in the parking lot of the Cobb Island Citizens Association, 13201 Main Ave, Cobb Island, MD 20625, white building one block from the bridge. RSVP to Molly Moore at [president.somdaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:president.somdaudubon@gmail.com)

**April 23 – SUNDAY – 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.**

### **FIELD TRIP – EARTH DAY WEEKEND!**

**Historic Sotterley, St. Mary's County**

44300 Sotterley Plantation, Hollywood, MD 20636

#### **“WHAT'S SOARING AT SOTTERLEY”**

Leader(s): David Moulton

Celebrate Earth Day weekend with a bird walk at this scenic and historic Patuxent River property as the annual surge of bird migration begins. Nesting Bald Eagles, migrating warblers, meadowlarks, woodpeckers and waterfowl can all be found on Sotterley's farm roads and trails. DIRECTIONS: From Rt. 235 go north on Sotterley Road, turn right through the gates into Sotterley, proceed to the gravel parking lot. 15-person maximum; Covid rules apply. RSVP at 240-278-4473 or [moulton.davidh@gmail.com](mailto:moulton.davidh@gmail.com)



Eastern Meadowlark  
Photo by Bill Hubick

**April 29 – SATURDAY – 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.**

### **FIELD TRIP**

**FIELD TRIP - Accokeek Marsh and Piscataway Park, Prince George's County**

2832 Bryan Point Road, Accokeek

#### **“MARSHLAND AND TRAILS OF ACCOKEEK”**

Leader: Marisa Rositol

Spend a spring morning in Piscataway Park along the Potomac River. We will begin on the Accokeek Creek Marsh Boardwalk, which traverses marshland and offers spectacular views of the river and the Virginia shoreline, including George Washington's Mount Vernon estate. Ducks, marsh birds and raptors all possible. Boardwalk continues to fields and woods where we will search for migrants and nesting land birds. Time permitting, we will explore other nearby trails of Piscataway Park for upland species. DIRECTIONS: Meet at Marsh Boardwalk parking lot: From Rt 210 in Accokeek, turn east on Livingston Road. Turn right on Biddle Rd and left on Bryan Point Road. In about 3 miles, take right on entrance road to the Boardwalk lot. RSVP to Marisa at 301-672-7664 or [MKRositol@yahoo.com](mailto:MKRositol@yahoo.com)

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## April — June 2023 Events

**April 30 - SUNDAY – 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.**

### FIELD TRIP

**Battle Creek Cypress Swamp Sanctuary, Calvert County**

2880 Grays Road, Prince Frederick, MD 20678

#### **“CELEBRATE THE RETURN OF THE PROTHONOTARY WARBLER”**

Leader: Gene Groshon

Visit this unique swampland where one of Southern Maryland's most eye-popping warblers makes its home. The Prothonotary Warbler will be in full song, setting up its breeding territories. Our leader has been banding Prothonotaries in this location for several years. Our goal will be to identify individual warblers that have just returned from Venezuela, Colombia or Mexico to the Cypress Swamp to nest again. The Sanctuary includes a boardwalk through the swamp, so the birding should be excellent at the height of spring migration. DIRECTIONS: About 2 miles south of Prince Frederick, MD on Rt. 4, turn south on Sixes Road (Rt 506). In 2 miles turn left on Grays Road. Proceed for about a quarter mile to Sanctuary entrance on the right. Online registration information [here](#) or on our [website](#).

**May 6 – SATURDAY – 7:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. (note early start!)**

### FIELD TRIP

**American Chestnut Land Trust, Calvert County**

676 Double Oak Road, Prince Frederick, MD 20678

#### **“WARBLERS AND SPRING MIGRATION ON THE HOLLY HILL TRAIL”**

Leader: Sherman Suter

Join us for one of our dazzling nature gems in Calvert County. The American Chestnut Land Trust has 22 miles of natural trails, including the recently established Holly Hill Trail. Explore this spectacular property in search of warblers and other neotropical songbirds. Bird migration will be strong, as well as the singing of the local breeding birds establishing nesting territories. Trails are well-maintained but rough in spots, so wear appropriate footwear. Meet at the parking lot just beyond the Land Trust Office. DIRECTIONS: From Route 4 in Prince Frederick, turn east onto Dares Beach Road/MD 402. Continue 2.4 miles to right turn at Double Oak Road. Continue 1.5 miles to a signed gate and a dirt road on the left. Take the dirt road to the left and continue to parking lot between office and barn. RSVP to Sherman at 410-586-1073 or [ShermanSuter@gmail.com](mailto:ShermanSuter@gmail.com)

**May 3, 2023, WEDNESDAY- 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.**

### MONTHLY MEETING PROGRAM-VIRTUAL ZOOM MEETING

#### **“TROUBLE ON THE HALF SHELL”**

Kerry Wixted, Amphibian & Reptile and Invasive Species Program Manager, Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies.

Turtles serve many roles in our ecosystems and cultures, but many species are in decline. Learn some basic turtle biology as well as information about a few species found in Maryland, their reasons for decline, and how you can help turtles thrive in the wild. Kerry Wixted is a Maryland naturalist with over 15 years' experience studying flora and fauna of Maryland. She is currently Amphibian & Reptile and Invasive Species Program Manager with the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies. She has previously worked for the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and has taught classes for Audubon's Natural History Field Studies Program.

**June 4 – SUNDAY - 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

### ANNUAL MEETING AND PICNIC

**Historic Sotterley, St. Mary's County**

Details in the June issue!



## 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](http://somdaudubon.org) for this new option.



**Osprey**

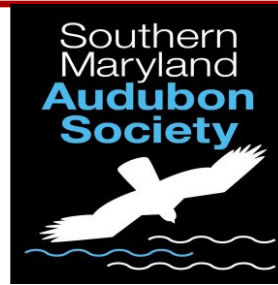
**Photo by Bill Hubick**

**Editor: Tyler Bell Email: [jtylerbell@yahoo.com](mailto: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.**

### 2022—2023 Officers

**President, Molly Moore - [president.somdaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:president.somdaudubon@gmail.com)**  
**Vice President, Elena Gilroy—[elenabode@yahoo.com](mailto:elenabode@yahoo.com)**  
**Treasurer, Julie Daniel—[juliedaniel@hotmail.com](mailto:juliedaniel@hotmail.com)**  
**Secretary, Barbara Hill —[tytito@verizon.net](mailto: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*