

# The Osprey

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHERN MARYLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY



Phainopepla  
Photo by Steve Arthur

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<http://smdaudubon.org/>

## President's Perch

Greetings from your new president. My name is Dean Newman and I've been an Audubon member for over 30 years. My wife, Sandy, and I were dropped off in Southern Maryland when I retired from the Navy in 2003. Joining the service was my ticket off the peanut farm in the Panhandle of Florida where I grew up. After the Navy I taught for Civil Service until 2019 and am now fully retired and enjoying an active life.

As I step into this role, I first want to thank our previous president, Molly Moore, for three years of outstanding leadership. If our bylaws permitted it, I'd be the lead campaigner for her reelection. Without false modesty, I hope, with her and your help, I can be half as effective. Building on all our previous president's efforts, I want to share a few guiding priorities that will shape our path forward:

### Strengthening Our Conservation Impact

We will continue to build on our science-based approach to protecting birds and their habitats. This means expanding our efforts in climate resilience, coastal conservation, and migratory bird protection, while deepening our partnerships with local communities.

### Growing Our Community and Inclusivity

Birds connect us all, and our movement must reflect the diversity of the people who cherish them. We will work to make Southern Maryland Audubon Society more inclusive, welcoming, and representative—ensuring that everyone has a place in our community and a voice in our mission.

### Inspiring the Next Generation

Education and engagement are key to sustaining our work. We will invest in programs that inspire young people, support citizen science, and empower grassroots advocacy—because the future of conservation depends on the leaders we nurture today.

### Advocating for Bold Policy Solutions

From local ordinances to federal legislation, Audubon will continue to be a powerful voice for birds and the environment. We will advocate for policies that protect critical habitats, address climate change, and promote sustainable land and water use.

I am humbled by the opportunity to serve and energized by the possibilities ahead. Together, we will continue to protect the birds we love and the places they—and we—depend on.

Thank you in advance for your unwavering support and commitment. I look forward to working with you, learning from you, and celebrating our shared successes in the months and years to come.

With gratitude,  
Dean Newman

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## Roseate Spoonbills at Allen's Fresh? Are You Kidding Me?

Story and photos by Robert Ramos

Twenty-five years ago we moved from Waldorf to a place near Allen's Fresh. The community has a gated access dirt road that leads back to Allen's Fresh.

Over the years we have had four English Springer Spaniels. A very loving but high energy breed. The road back to Allen's Fresh proved to be a wonderful way for Sabrina, Libby, Lottie and now Abby to run and burn off all that energy. We go for a walk every Saturday and Sunday morning, weather permitting.

I bought my first camera during Libby's time with us. I could take pictures while she chased anything that caught her eye or played in the water.

One day, our assistant told us we should do an annual calendar with my pictures in it for our clients. It was a wonderful idea, but I had to step up my game. I now use a Cannon R6 Mark II with a 200-800 zoom lens attached. I can really reach out now to get pictures I could not get in the past.

That first camera led to an upgrade camera...that led to a bigger lens...that led to a new camera...that led to an even bigger lens. I started posting my pictures on my Facebook page and on the Southern Maryland Audubon Society's page as well.

Fast forward to Saturday, June 21, which just happened to be my 60th birthday. A group of us were going to DC to catch the afternoon showing of *Les Miserables* at the Kennedy Center. Since it was a pretty morning, Abby was wound up and ready for her walk.

As we pulled off the road to where we park, a bunny was sitting there. Usually the bunnies spook, but this one just stayed there. I slipped my camera out the driver's side window and snapped a few pics.

As we got closer to the water, a male and female Eastern Bluebird pair were flitting between the trees:



**See Spoonbills, continued on Page 3**



## Spoonbills, continued

As we resumed our walk, we were getting close to the boat ramp and the water. I could see some larger, white-breasted birds on the other shore. Being 60, my eyesight isn't as sharp as it once was. They didn't look like geese, but the Canada Goose is the only white breasted bird of that size I could recall. They were too big to be Osprey.

Once we got to the boat ramp, I knew the birds on the far shore weren't geese! But what were they?

I turned the camera on...put it up to my eye and was floored. They were pink! I was looking at five to six Roseate Spoonbills in the view finder!! I could not believe my eyes. What were they doing here?!

I rushed home, developed the pics and posted them to the SMAS Facebook page around 10:30am. Note: we were leaving for the play at 11am, so I was getting grief about fussing with my camera!!

By the time we got back home, the picture I posted had caused quite a stir. Tyler Bell reached out to me for more information and asked me to post it to eBird. Apparently, this was the first ever sighting of the spoonbills in Charles County and the largest grouping ever spotted in Maryland!! Wow!

I saw some other posts from Maryland-related birding Facebook pages that were blowing up about the spoonbills. News about the spoonbills was posted on the Maryland Biodiversity Project Facebook page on June 23. A month later that post had almost 1,100 reactions! The post even mentioned me as the first person to see them. My mom got a kick out of that when I sent it to her.

I was amazed at the number of people who were stopped on Rt . 234 looking at the spoonbills! Cars were lining up both sides of the road.

Even this morning (7/24) a month later, I counted seven people with cameras and binoculars on the bridge over Allen's Fresh as I headed into the office.

I am thrilled so many people have come down to enjoy looking at these beautiful birds. They are quite a sight!!

Work, weather and other plans have prevented me from getting over to look at the spoonbills as much as I would have liked. I finally managed to get my kayak out and take some shots in mid-July. It was a cloudy day so the pictures were not great.

Congratulations to Mike Hillman and Tim Magnus for the wonderful shots they have captured over the past month. They have done a magnificent job of recording these wayward travelers!

**[Editor's Note:** On May 15, the SMAS Facebook group had 1044 members. As of July 23, that number is 2232!]



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## Wings of Belonging: Sandhill Cranes Adopt a Gosling

Story and photos by Alan Ginsberg

The Wetlands Drama continues to grow. The story was featured on ABC TV (Channel 27).

[https://www.wkow.com/news/top-stories/avian-drama-gosling-imprints-on-family-of-cranes/article\\_e825c7b4-306d-4919-aed7-9bd9e6097658.html](https://www.wkow.com/news/top-stories/avian-drama-gosling-imprints-on-family-of-cranes/article_e825c7b4-306d-4919-aed7-9bd9e6097658.html)

Wetlands Drama: How One Goose Egg Crashed the Crane Party and Created the Cutest Custody Battle Ever

On May 5, I shared a wild little story from our local pond on Facebook. I thought a few bird lovers might enjoy it. Next thing I know—nearly 1,000 likes, media outlets knocking, and a flood (pun intended) of people asking, “What happened to the goose baby!?” So here’s the original tale, now with bonus drama and a heartwarming update. Buckle up—this is one feathered soap opera you didn’t know you needed.

### When Cranes Go Nest-Hopping

Every spring, a loyal pair of Sandhill Cranes returns to our pond like clockwork. It’s our own little National Geographic special — eggs, hatching, fuzzy-legged colts teetering around like drunk toddlers. Classic. Beautiful. Predictable. This year? Not so much.

A torrential downpour destroyed their once idyllic nesting spot. Their carefully built nest now submerged under the murky waters of the pond. Chick? Newly hatched. FEMA? Nowhere in sight. So, like any good parents in crisis, they pivoted. They found an unoccupied Canada Goose nest (read: timeshare) and moved in with their baby crane in tow. Mom settled in. All was calm.

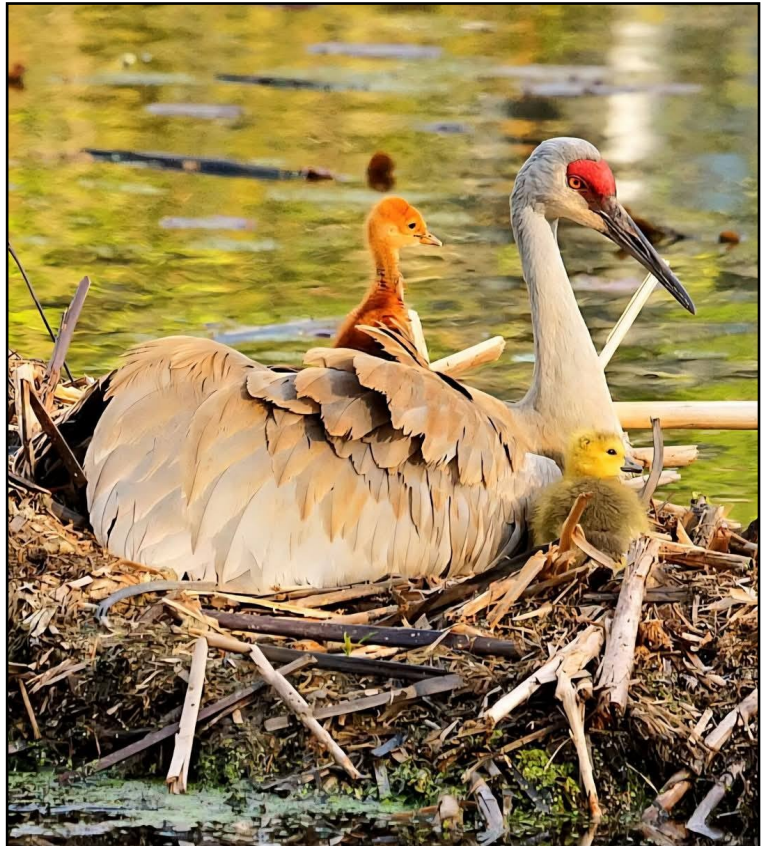
Cue the plot twist.

Turns out, that goose nest wasn’t completely empty. Nestled inside was one last goose egg, just hanging out like it missed the moving truck. A few days later — surprise! — a gosling popped out... and promptly bonded with the first large, warm object in sight: Mama Crane. And just like that, we had ourselves a brand-new family unit: two crane parents, one lanky brown crane chick, and one very confused, very fluffy yellow gosling who thought he, too, was a crane.

### The Geese Want a Word

Things got awkward fast. From the cattails emerged the original goose parents—late to the party and not thrilled about the unauthorized adoption. For over an hour, they circled the family like feathered spies, throwing some serious side-eye.

The gosling, meanwhile, snuggled up to its new mom like, “I don’t know them.” The male crane wasn’t having it. With the protective energy of a dad whose kid just got insulted on the soccer field, he squared up and charged the geese like, “Back off. He’s ours now.”



**See Wings of Belonging, continued on page 5**



## Wings of Belonging, continued

Nature is weird, wild, and wonderful. Who knew a mislaid goose egg could lead to such a touching tale of unexpected family, resilience, and unconditional acceptance? We keep watching and reporting from the marsh — because in a world full of division, it's nice to remember that sometimes, even birds can figure out how to raise each other's kids with love, patience, and the occasional goose-standoff.

Just when we thought the drama had peaked — enter stage left: two rogue Red-winged Blackbirds dive-bombing everyone like chaotic neutral agents of chaos. At this point, even the pond frogs were probably grabbing popcorn.



### Love Wins (and Also, Legs)

We've been visiting regularly, and I'm happy to report: the crane-goose family is thriving. The gosling has fully committed to its new life and struts through the marsh alongside its crane sibling like it was born for this. The original goose parents? They've given up custody and vanished from the neighborhood. Possibly in therapy. Both kids are growing fast—the colt nearly an inch a day, the gosling about half that. Which is adorable... until it's time for the family to go on a neighborhood stroll.

Yes, they've taken their show on the road. Quite literally. They now wander into nearby backyards, casually inspecting bird feeders like VIP guests. They even cross the street in perfect Abbey Road formation. Cranes in front, gosling trailing behind like Ringo Starr in a yellow feather boa. The little guy does his best to keep up, but those crane legs are long. He takes frequent snack breaks and power naps mid-waddle. And Mama Crane? She always waits for him. Every single time. Tell me that's not love.

Recently, two additional Sandhill Cranes have shown up at the pond. They don't seem interested in parenting, but they linger nearby like quirky sitcom uncles who bring snacks and bad advice. We've affectionately dubbed them "The Bachelor Uncles." So far, no drama... but this is a wetland. Anything can happen.

Sets of photo notecards featuring this tale are available. They can email me at [alkgi@tds.net](mailto:alkgi@tds.net) for further information. Profits of the sale of these blank photo notecards will go to the [International Crane Foundation](https://www.internationalcrane.org/). This organization partners with governments, local communities, scientists, and donors worldwide to conserve crane habitats, develop sustainable solutions, and inspire positive change. By focusing on community-based conservation, education, and effective communication, they are not just saving cranes, they are improving livelihoods, fostering biodiversity, and tackling global ecological challenges.





## SE Arizona!

Story and photos by Steve Arthur

What an adventure! Betty and I traveled for a little over four weeks (April 18 - May 21, 2025) and we saw a total of 266 species, including 83 lifers and completed 35 eBird checklists. Of those 83 new birds, I was fortunately able to photograph 80 of them!

For the last three to four years, birding friends had suggested to us that SE Arizona was one of the “go to” places if we wanted to add a substantial number of new birds to our meager “life list.” So, in the fall of last year, I started planning for this trip. I’d been told previously by Dean Newman that when birding in new, unfamiliar areas, we should always consider hiring a bird guide. With that in mind, one of the first things I did was call Tyler Bell to see if he had any suggestions for bird guides in Arizona. He suggested Melody Kehl in Tucson as a possibility and that turned out to be a great choice.

Several things went into the decisions about when, where and how long this trip would be. Knowing we wanted to be in SE Arizona during spring migration, I narrowed the most appropriate dates to April-May. Additionally, although our birding focus would be mostly in Arizona, we also wanted to extend our trip to visit some of the national parks in Utah, Colorado and New Mexico. Given those goals, our second major decision was to drive our own vehicle to Arizona. As we are in the “really old generation,” we generally limit our long distance driving to no more than six- to eight-hour days per day, but by opting to drive we opened up other birding opportunities that would have otherwise been unavailable - a two-day stop along the Gulf Coast near Port Arthur, TX, and a one-day stop at Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico, plus some of the national parks and other cultural sites in Utah and Colorado.

In summary, here’s our trip itinerary (sans driving days - a lot of them): two days on the Gulf Coast (Sea Rim State Park & Sabine Forest); one day at Bosque del Apache NWR, five days around Tucson, AZ (Madera Canyon, Ash Canyon Bird Sanctuary, Empire Ranch, Paton Center for Hummingbirds, Mt. Lemmon); two days in Sedona, AZ; three days in Utah/Colorado visiting Arches National Park, Hovenweep National Monument and Mesa Verde National Park; and lastly, four days in Taos, NM.

As mentioned above, the decision to hire bird guides was crucial to obtaining the numbers of birds observed during this trip. In addition to 3 half days with Melody Kehl in Tucson, we also hired guides for 2 half days on the Gulf Coast of Texas, 1 half day at Bosque del Apache in New Mexico, and 2 half days in Sedona, AZ. All our guides were excellent.

**See Arizona, continued on page 7**



Above: Piping Plover at Sea Rim State Park, Port Arthur, TX  
Below: Broad-billed Hummingbird, Cottonwood Pond, Patagonia, AZ





## Arizona, continued

If anyone is interested in seeing the full trip report on eBird, email me at [jstevesgenes@gmail.com](mailto:jstevesgenes@gmail.com) and I'd be happy to provide you with the link. With that link, you will be able to see photos of all birds observed during our 30+ day trip. If you've never birded in SE Arizona, I'd highly encourage you to add it to your "birding bucket list."

### Clockwise from top right.

Black-chinned Hummingbird on nest, Sedona, AZ  
Rivoli's Hummingbird (left) and Berylline Hummingbird (right),  
Madera Canyon, AZ  
Steller's Jay, Mt. Lemmon, AZ  
Red-faced Warbler, Mt. Lemmon, AZ  
Olive Warbler, Mt. Lemmon, AZ  
Scott's Oriole, Sedona, AZ  
Vermilion Flycatcher, Bosque del Apache, NM





## Annual SMAS Meeting and Picnic

Story and photos by Molly Moore

Thank you to all the Southern Maryland Audubon Society members and guests who participated in our annual meeting and native plant sale at beautiful Maxwell Hall Park in Hughesville. in June. The food was amazing, exceeded only by the excellent company of old and new friends.

We are most grateful to Charles County Recreation and Parks and Friends of Maxwell Hall for sharing this special facility with us. And a shoutout to the pair of brilliant Summer Tanagers that provided a flyover and caught everyone's attention!

### **The annual meeting and picnic is also the venue for serious business.**

Members elected a new officer slate that includes both new faces and returning leaders. Dean Newman was named president, Ben Springer, vice president, Julie Daniel, treasurer and Lynne Wheeler, secretary. The board of directors now includes new members Jan de Regt and Pamela Brumbley, returning members Annette Cook and Phin Rouland and president emerita Molly Moore who has been serving as chapter president for the past three years.

### **SMAS honors Calvert County educator with top conservation award**

SMAS named Matthew Neff of the Calvert Marine Museum as “2025 Conservationist of the Year” for his exceptional work as a researcher, educator and leader in support of the Chesapeake Bay region. Neff, who is the curator of estuarine biology at CMM in Solomons, works tirelessly to educate the public on the flora and fauna of the Chesapeake Bay and conservation issues threatening the bay area.

He heads FrogWatch USA for Southern Maryland and surrounding counties in a citizen science program that tracks frog populations suffering from habitat loss, disease and other threats.

“Matt forges that critical connection between people and wildlife —yes, including snakes— and the importance of protecting the habitat our wild creatures need to survive now and in the future,” said Robert Lukinik, conservation chair for SMAS.

Neff also manages a staff responsible for the care of over 500 individuals representing 75 species.

Prior to his work at CMM, Neff was a herpetology animal keeper at the Smithsonian National Zoological Park in Washington, DC, implementing conservation programs to protect amphibians and reptiles.

The award, now in its 32nd year, was presented at SMAS’s annual meeting and potluck picnic at Maxwell Hall in Hughesville in June.

**See SMAS Picnic, continued on page 9**



Above, left to right: Molly Moore, Annette Cook, Jan de Regt, Dean Newman, Ben Springer, Julie Daniel, Pam Brumbley, Lynne Wheeler

Below: Matt Neff





## SMAS Picnic, continued

### Presidential Awards

Fishing for catfish to feed a rescued eagle. Outstanding youth leadership. Building nest boxes for birds. Five of our members have been honored with “2025 President’s Awards” for their exceptional service to birds and conservation.

Aurora Huhmann was recognized for her passionate support for birds, catching catfish to feed a rescued Bald Eagle at Nanjemoy Creek Environmental Education Center and writing state lawmakers to save parks and green spaces threatened by budget cuts.

Two of our young leaders were honored for their skills and dedication as the new generation of conservation leaders in Southern Maryland and wherever they may go in the future: our vice president Ben Springer and field trip chair Phin Rouland. Ben graduated from St. Mary’s College of Maryland last year and serves as a park ranger at Newtowne Neck State Park. Phin is a rising senior at the college working on a senior project helping farmers use bird-friendly practices in their harvests.

John and Shelly Posey were honored for their tireless bird conservation work erecting Eastern Screech-Owl boxes and Eastern Bluebird nest boxes across Southern Maryland. John builds the boxes, baffles and poles from scratch in his workshop and they work as a team putting them up in even the most difficult locations.

Congratulations to each of our most deserving 2025 President’s Award winners!



### Upcoming Events

September 3 - WEDNESDAY – 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

#### **MONTHLY MEETING PROGRAM – ZOOM MEETING**

#### ***“MY SUMMER WITH OSPREYS: A THERAPIST’S JOURNEY TOWARD HOPE, COMMUNITY, AND HEALING OUR PLANET”***

Speaker: Pamela Lowell

Bio: MSW, LICSW, Therapist, NYT Best Selling Author, Naturalist, Artist and Avid Birder

Contact information: email [palwrites@aol.com](mailto:palwrites@aol.com)

Description: As a trauma specialist, Pamela Lowell expertly guides us to the connections between therapy, the life of an artist, and the natural world as a place of healing. Lowell, an avid birder, jumped at the chance to accompany Massachusetts Audubon in their weekly Osprey nest monitoring project on the Westport River. She hoped to get some photos of cute Osprey chicks that she could use in her paintings. But what happened next was nothing short of transformation. In journal format, Lowell weaves together a deeply personal and exciting narrative as a passenger on the Lucky Me--along with a cast of dedicated staff and volunteers. Nature enthusiasts will enjoy descriptions of the nest monitoring process, banding, and translocation of Osprey chicks. Pamela perfectly captures our dilemma of being poised between desperate worry and the urgent need to do something specific to help our planet. With her original illustrations throughout, this book inspires us all to be better stewards and healers of our ever-changing world.

**See Upcoming Events, continued on page 10**

## Upcoming Events, continued

September 13 – SATURDAY – 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

### FIELD TRIP

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

44300 Sotterley Lane, Hollywood, MD 20636

#### ***"BIRDING THE FIELDS AND TRAILS OF SOTTERLEY"***

Leader: Dean Newman

Join us for a fall excursion to this scenic and historic Patuxent River property, sponsored jointly by SMAS and Historic Sotterley. Bald Eagles, migrant songbirds and lingering meadowlarks and sparrows can be found via Sotterley's trails and river views. Directions: From Rt. 235, go north on Sotterley Road; turn right through gates to the visitors' center parking lot. Easy walking and very gentle slopes. Contact Dean Newman [dnewman.somdaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:dnewman.somdaudubon@gmail.com)

September 27 - SATURDAY – 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

### FIELD TRIP

Point Lookout State Park, St. Mary's County 11175 Point Lookout Road, Scotland, MD 20687

#### ***"MIGRATION ON THE POINT"***

Leader: Tyler Bell

Join us at one of Southern Maryland's birding hotspots as fall migrants funnel south to cross the Chesapeake Bay and the Potomac River. Loblolly pines, mixed hardwoods, beaches, marshes and broad water views regularly deliver a wide variety of species and occasional rarities. From Lexington Park drive south on Rte. 235 for 13 miles. Go left on Rte. 5 for 0.7 miles then left into the Ridge Post Office parking lot. We will arrange carpooling from there. Pt. Lookout State Park is a fee area. Bathroom facilities available. Flat, easy terrain. Mosquitos can be problematic, so bring bug spray. Sunscreen recommended. Maximum of 15 participants. RSVP to Tyler at [tylerbell@yahoo.com](mailto:tylerbell@yahoo.com) or 301-862-4623.

October 1 - WEDNESDAY – 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

### MONTHLY MEETING PROGRAM – ZOOM MEETING

#### ***"YOU CAN AID AND ABET MOTHER NATURE'S HIT-SQUAD TO KEEP INSECT PESTS AT BAY"***

Speaker: Dr. Michael J. Raupp, aka The Bug Guy!

Bio: A Professor Emeritus and Extension Specialist at the University of Maryland, Mike is a Fellow of the Entomological Society of America.

Description: Your landscape and garden can be a refuge for beneficial insects that provide the vital ecosystem service of biological control, the natural system of putting a beatdown on plant-damaging pests. Meet wicked wasps, bodacious beetles, fierce flies, and other arthropod allies as they provide vital functions and enhance the sustainability of landscapes and gardens. Learn simple steps to enhance the abundance and contributions of beneficial insects and ways to conserve them in gardens. Explore organic approaches to managing key insect and mite pests including the use of ORMI (Organic Materials Review Institute) listed insecticides.



Cicada Killer *Sphecius speciosus*  
Photo by Michael J. Raupp

October 11 – SATURDAY – 8:00 a.m. – 11:00 p.m. (rain date 10/12)

### FIELD TRIP

#### Chapman State Park – Mt. Aventine Historic Mansion

3452 Ferry Place, Indian Head, MD 20640

#### ***"A LAZY BIRD WALK FOR LATE MIGRANTS"***

Leader(s): Lynne Wheeler, Pam Brumbley

Bring your eyes, ears and lazy bones as we leisurely walk along the road and trails of Chapmans State Park, one of Charles County's birding "Hot Spots". This officially designated Important Bird Area offers biodiversity of great significance and interest, as well as beauty. Maximum 12. Difficulty level low – medium. RSVP to Lynne at 301-751-8097 at [somdaudubon@yahoo.com](mailto:somdaudubon@yahoo.com).



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## Looming Federal Cuts Threaten the Bird Banding Lab, a Cornerstone of Avian Science

*For more than a century, the USGS program has revealed crucial insights about where birds go, how they're faring, and what we can do to help them. Its budget and staff are now on the chopping block.*

by Sarah Trent

Reporter, Audubon Magazine

*Update: On July 8, 2025, the Supreme Court cleared the way for the Trump administration to move forward with layoffs at federal agencies. The justices overrode a lower court order that had blocked plans to fire more than 100,000 workers, including at USGS.*

For 105 years, a small team of biologists near Washington, D.C., has honed and supported the single most foundational tool of avian science: crimping metal ID bands around birds' legs to track where they turn up. Simple as it sounds, banding and the data collection that comes with it have revealed vital insights into how birds behave, which habitats they most depend on, and how their populations are faring. "Banding is the essential key to all the research I do, and that a lot of ornithologists do across North America," says José Ramírez-Garofalo, a New York City-based ecologist and vice chair of the Ornithological Council representing bird researchers.

But the Bird Banding Lab, a program of the U.S. Geological Survey's biological research arm, may not survive to reach 106. The Trump administration has ordered massive "reduction in force" layoffs that could fire all or most of its staff, and has asked Congress to approve sweeping cuts that would erase the lab's budget. If implemented, either move could soon close the lab outright.

The barebones office of around a dozen people, based at the federal Patuxent Research Refuge in Maryland, is the linchpin for all bird banding and related research in the United States. Its workers are responsible for distributing every permanent band used in the country, totaling more than a million uniquely numbered aluminum and steel rings each year. In partnership with Canadian officials, they maintain a complex database that documents the more than 79 million bands deployed in North America since the early 1900s and records the roughly 87,000 times per year that scientists, hunters, or others report finding a banded bird. They also issue the only permits that allow scientists to conduct banding and bird-in-hand research; handling live wild birds is otherwise forbidden by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

During banding, biologists collect multitudes of data: While briefly capturing a bird, they record measures like its weight, sex, and age; take blood or tissue samples to assess its health; and track how many of any given species are captured. This information—plus any future encounters with a band across the world via resighting, recapture, or harvest—enables biologists to understand population trends, migration behavior, disease spread, habitat preferences, and more.

For example, public land managers use banding records to assess whether environmental hazards are affecting birds' survival by comparing data from different sites. Conservationists decide where to target habitat protections by tracking where banded birds spend different parts of their life cycles. Game agencies set seasonal hunting regulations in part based on how many banded birds hunters shoot.

"And it's not just deep scientific research questions that this is good for," says Melanie Smith, Audubon's director of digital science and data products. She and colleagues relied primarily on banding lab data to develop the Bird Migration Explorer, an interactive migration visualization platform. Banding, she says, reveals for anyone the incredible journeys birds take and their cross-continental connections.

Without the Bird Banding Lab, all of the programs and projects dependent on its data would grind to a halt or be severely hampered—something that would be detrimental to bird research across the hemisphere.

**See Banding Lab, continued on page 12**

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## Banding Lab, continued

The program has already faced disruptions amid broad cuts to the federal government, including spending freezes that have interrupted USGS projects and buyouts that have left the lab understaffed. In May, following a Trump executive order, USGS reportedly planned to start firing up to 80 percent of staff across its Ecosystems Mission Area (EMA). This biology division—which makes up \$307 million of the research agency’s \$1.6 billion budget—houses the banding lab along with programs that survey native and invasive species, monitor toxic chemicals in drinking water, track wildlife disease outbreaks, and much more.

A U.S. District Court in California has so far blocked these layoffs, ordering 22 federal agencies and departments to pause plans to fire more than 100,000 workers. After an appeals court upheld the injunction, the administration asked the Supreme Court to intervene. But even if the high court doesn’t clear the way for cuts, Congress could: Trump, in his 2026 budget request, has asked them to eliminate EMA entirely, in part to stop work on climate change.

Certainly, climate change is among the unprecedented threats facing wildlife today—but losing the banding lab could unravel decades of progress on myriad other threats, too, and at a critical time for birds, says Stuart Mackenzie, who directs the international migration tracking systems run by conservation nonprofit Birds Canada. “The ripple effects would be felt far beyond science: They’d impact policy, education, and community-based conservation from the Arctic to the Andes.”

Biologists, resource managers, hunting advocates, conservationists, and governments that rely on the lab are bracing for the worst. Ramírez-Garofalo says he stockpiled bands this winter to make sure he can monitor birds and supply information that, for example, city parks use to manage recreation. (This spring, the lab emailed banders, begging them to stop panic-ordering.)

Banders are also re-upping their permits, which are often good for several years, but no one is sure the permits will remain valid if the lab shuts down. If they don’t, banding stations will immediately close. Other work that requires handling wild birds—like outfitting them with geolocators, GPS trackers, or Motus tags—would also be put on hold, says David Aborn, an avian ecologist at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. Aborn says he’s been warning his students that they may have to change their research focus.

Still more biologists have dedicated hundreds of gigabytes on hard drives to privately store the records they’ll need if the database disappears. Canadian environmental officials say they’ve backed up all data from bands deployed in the country or re-encountered there, and are working on measures to ensure their future record-keeping isn’t interrupted. The American banding lab runs the online portal that banders in both countries use to upload and access their data, as well as the public website where anyone can report finding a band. But even with these preservation efforts, some parts of the massive database may never be recovered in the public sphere, says the director of a bird banding nonprofit who requested anonymity for fear of retribution.

Ironically, placing the banding lab at USGS was meant to shield its science from political pressures. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service housed the lab for decades and still relies on its data to manage species, but in the ’90s, swaths of biological research were removed from the agency in an attempt to separate researchers and regulators. Today, some think returning the lab to its former home may be the best hope for saving it. Yet if the Trump administration plans another such move, it has given no indication; meanwhile, it has made deep cuts at USFWS.

Now, bird researchers, managers, and advocates are watching what unfolds in the courts and Congress. Many worry that what’s most at stake, beyond the birds themselves, is public trust. “Having these monitoring programs going all the way back gives confidence that we’re managing on the best available science,” says a hunting nonprofit executive who asked not to be identified. This year, for example, hunters will abide by a shortened Blue-winged Teal season, because banding and survey data show their population has dipped, and will be able to shoot more Pintails, because research shows their population can take it. Hunters trust that these changes are protecting species because they’re backed by sound data.

The same kind of trust is required of all Americans when the government manages public lands or other resources to protect birds. If banding comes to a halt, wildlife managers will still have to make decisions about the landscapes that people and birds share. But without the science to guide them, such choices may be less effective for conservation and less accepted by the public.

“We can’t afford to lose the foundation on which so much of North America’s bird conservation has been built,” says Mackenzie at Birds Canada. “If we do, the recovery will take years, if not decades. The costs to birds and biodiversity may be irreversible.”



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## YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE. JOIN OUR FLOCK OF VOLUNTEERS!

Southern Maryland Audubon Society's primary missions are education, public outreach, and environmental advocacy to support birds and the habitat they need to thrive in Southern Maryland and beyond.

SMAS's robust activity calendar includes:

- Bird Walks
- Workshops
- Presentations
- Youth & Public Outreach
- Festival Exhibits
- Community Science

Volunteers of all ages, levels of birding expertise, and availability are needed to help support our programs and activities. Even small actions make a difference!

Act Now! Contact [acook.somdaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:acook.somdaudubon@gmail.com) for more information about volunteering with SMAS.



Ross's and Snow Geese

Photo by Mick Thompson

## Welcome, New Members!

Justine Bedard, Glen Burnie  
Pamela Buter, Waldorf  
April Crowley, La Plata  
Jackson Crowley, La Plata  
Phoenix Y Choi, Fort Washington  
Jo Ann Gough, Leonardtown  
Denise Grote, Port Tobacco  
Frances Hallmon, White Plains  
Jessica Holland, Accokeek  
Ronald Humphreys, Lusby  
Colette Koustenis, Waldorf  
Heather and Greg Larsen, Owings  
Kate Lewis, Chesapeake Beach  
Janie Marvin, King George, VA  
William McClean, Charlotte Hall

Nancy McGuire, Port Tobacco  
Warren Melrose, Hollywood  
Patsy Moyer, White Plains  
David Paulk, Leonardtown  
Sophie Penix, Prince Frederick  
Glenn Perryman, Hollywood  
Beverly Pfleiderer, Huntingtown  
Patrick Pruitt, La Plata  
Lindsey Ricker, Lusby  
Sandra Raviv, North Beach  
George E Still, Temple Hills  
Jackie Urow, Reston, VA  
Laura Wallace, Piney Point  
Margaret M. Weir, Lexington Park  
Alexander White, Lexington Park

### 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.

Follow us on Facebook @somdaudubon



**Southern Maryland Audubon Society  
(SMAS)**

1.8K likes • 2K followers



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)



## 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  
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.

### 2025—2026 Officers

President, Dean Newman - [president.somdaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:president.somdaudubon@gmail.com)

Vice President, Ben Springer — [ben.springer@comcast.net](mailto:ben.springer@comcast.net)

Treasurer, Julie Daniel — [juliemdaniel@hotmail.com](mailto:juliemdaniel@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: \_\_\_\_\_

*Southern Maryland Audubon Society*

*Carole Schnitzler*

*3595 Silk Tree Court, Waldorf, MD 20602*