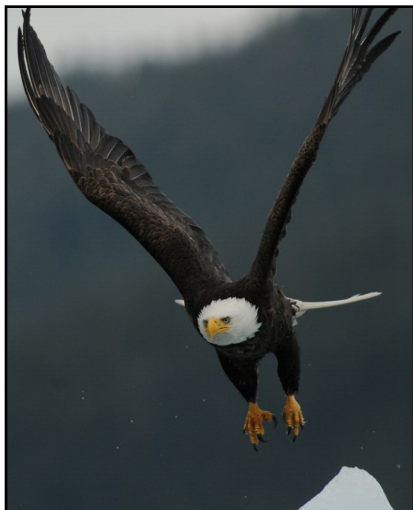


The Osprey

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHERN MARYLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY

President's Perch

You Can Stay Warm and Toasty and Still Enjoy Birds!



Bald Eagle
Photo by Lewis Scharpf

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<http://somdaudubon.org/>

The New Year is in full swing, and boy it has been cold! As we all hunker down in our warm homes, you can still enjoy the magic of watching birds. January and February offer two bird watching options that enable you to stay warm and toasty: the Port Tobacco River Park Bald Eagle nest cam – a gift to us bird lovers from Charles County Parks that keeps on giving! – and the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC).

It is hard to believe we are into our 8th nesting season watching online the nesting habits, breeding, egg laying, hatching, eaglet rearing, and fledging of our renowned Port Tobacco River Park Bald Eagle pair Chandler and Hope. Hopefully you watched and enjoyed our January 7 Monthly Program about our local raptors, as well as details from the Maryland Bird Conservation Partnership (MBCP) – our partners – about the Bald Eagle Nest Monitoring Program that they spearhead. If you missed it, check out our website for the recording of the lecture. You can access the Bald Eagle nest camera from our website front page. Nesting behavior is happening now, and egg laying begins the end of January to early February. As our Bald Eagle nest monitor Brenda excitedly says SQUEEE!!! You can join us for moderated chat sessions too on YouTube! See our website for chat times.

Once we enter into February, the fun continues with the GBBC. It is a free, fun, and easy event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of bird populations. Participants are asked to count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the four-day event and report their sightings online at birdcount.org. Anyone can take part in the GBBC, from beginning bird watchers to experts, and you can participate from your backyard, stay inside and watch your feeders and backyard while you stay warm, or bundle up and go to one of your favorite nature areas. The 29th annual GBBC will be held Friday, February 13, through Monday, February 16, 2026. Please visit the official website at birdcount.org for more information.

And as a final suggestion, keep your eagle eyes trained on the [Events](#) section on our website for upcoming bird walks and monthly online lectures. We have fabulous committee chairs and volunteers that make this all happen; don't miss out!! Either bundle up and get out, or stay inside all warm and toasty.

Lynne Wheeler
Interim President

YES, SHE'S BACK!

If you have been wondering about the status of "Wisdom," a Laysan Albatross and the world's oldest known wild bird, she made her return last month to Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge in time for the 2026 nesting season.

Wisdom is at least 75 years old, and she has successfully fledged as many as 30 chicks in her lifetime.

This year's return marks a somewhat early arrival for Wisdom compared to previous years. Her mate - banded as "EX25" - arrived later in the month, on 26 November.

Read more about this remarkable seabird here:

<https://friendsofmidway.org/wisdom-returns-the-worlds-oldest-known-wild-bird-touches-down-at-kuaihelani-midway-atoll/>

[Editor's Note: It was SMAS's beloved Chandler Robbins, who originally banded Wisdom as an adult in 1956!]

CHAN ROBBINS MURAL - FINISHED AND DEDICATED

Regular readers will remember that in June we highlighted a proposed mural project in Laurel, Maryland, honoring the late Chandler Robbins. You can find that coverage on the project, located at the corner of Fifth and Main Streets in Laurel, including the many partners involved here:

<https://conta.cc/3FFlcJv>

Chan Robbins worked for well over a half century at the nearby Patuxent Research Center and his profound work was recognized in a short obit in our April 2017 issue here:

<https://conta.cc/3GYrTXs>

Laurel for the Patuxent commissioned artist Jeff Huntington, aka Jahru, to create the mural. Seventy-seven donors from over half a dozen states made contributions to finish the work.

The impressive work - celebrating Chan's dedication and our own collective desire to protect and celebrate nature - was recently finished, and the event was celebrated on the afternoon of 25 October.

You can enjoy sequential images of the developing mural over some two weeks of work, plus the finished product, here: <https://www.laurelforthepatuxent.org/main-st-mural>



You can access all the past E-bulletins on the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) website:

<http://refugeassociation.org/news/birding-bulletin/>

Paul J. Baicich

410-992-9736

paul.baicich@verizon.net

A Soaring Success: Maryland's Bald Eagle Population Recovery

July 3, 2025

The Chesapeake Bay is now home to one of the largest populations of the bird in the U.S.

For 18 years, Glenn Therres watched the recovery of Maryland's bald eagles from the window of a four-seater plane. The long-time bald eagle biologist for the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Therres had counted nests for the department's annual bald eagle survey since 1985, when there were only 62 breeding pairs in the state. Every year, he would cross the watery parts of Maryland from 200 feet above in a Cessna, scanning the treetops for bald eagle nests. A few months later, he would come back to count the nestlings.

"Every year we would find additional nests and map the new locations," said Therres, who retired from DNR in 2021. For a while, a few more active nests would appear each year, but by 1990 they found 123 breeding pairs, and 200 only six years later.

"In the early days, we flew three days, then another three [for the young eagles]," he said. "By the end, we were flying nine or 10 days each survey period just to cover all the nests."

By 2004, DNR found 390 breeding pairs of bald eagles in Maryland. Therres ended the department's survey after that—the species had well surpassed its recovery goals in the Chesapeake Bay region. In 2025, the Maryland Bird Conservation Partnership estimates there are over 1,400 breeding pairs in Maryland.

It was a long way to come for a bird of prey that had struggled for decades in the state and throughout the country. Across much of their range, bald eagles had fallen to near-extinction levels due to the effects of pesticides, as well as other factors like habitat loss and illegal shooting. In 1963, only 417 nesting pairs had been documented in the lower 48 states.

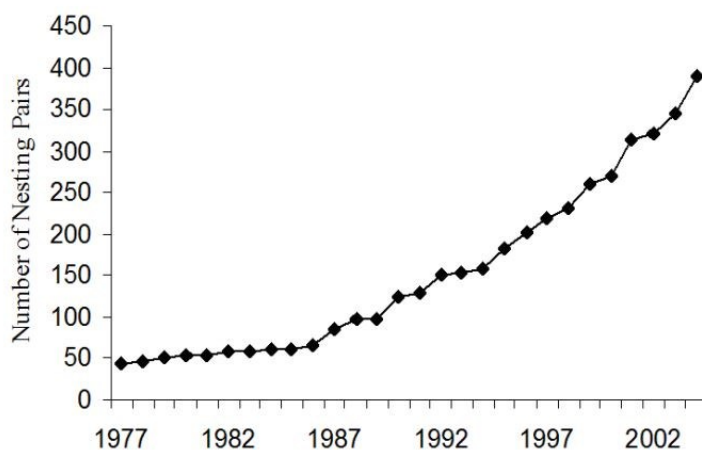
Scientists have attributed the large part of the recovery of bald eagles to the banning of DDT, a common pesticide that built up in the bodies of many birds and resulted in reproductive failure and the thinning of eggshells. The amounts of pesticide in the eggs of Chesapeake Bay area eagles were some of the highest in the country. In 1972, after decades of advocacy and debate, the Environmental Protection Agency banned DDT from most uses, and the populations of bald eagles, ospreys, and other birds slowly began to bounce back.

Bald eagles and other raptors are often considered a success story of protections like the Endangered Species Act, as well as an example of society collectively taking action to address a pressing problem.

"Bald eagles are a very good example of what happens when you find the solutions and take action, and now you can look at how they've come back," said Dave Brinker, a DNR conservation ecologist. "If we could do the same thing with something like climate change, we could start to see changes. But we're in denial. We were in denial about eagles for a long time."

Gwen Brewer, a DNR science program manager, said the recovery of the iconic bird of prey is a testament to changes people were willing to make across broad sectors of society.

See Eagle Recovery continued on page 4



Bald eagles increased substantially over time, until they were considered recovered in the Chesapeake Bay area. Now many more eagles are estimated to live here. Glenn Therres, originally published in Maryland Birdlife.

Eagle Recovery continued

“To recover a species that is so widely distributed and that declined to such a serious level—that is something to celebrate,” Brewer said. She also noted the symbolic importance of taking action for a bird that holds a lot of cultural significance, both to the United States and to many Native American traditions.

Aside from pesticide restrictions, actions to restore the Chesapeake Bay and protect nest sites helped the eagles in Maryland. The Chesapeake Bay Protection Act of 1984 established protections for “critical areas” within 1,000 feet of tidal waters, which safeguarded bald eagle nest sites from development and disturbances. DNR biologists and staff like Therres assisted both in on-the-ground nest protection and in collecting the data to track how the population was adjusting.

The department began its aerial surveys in 1977, taking over from earlier surveys conducted by the Audubon Naturalist Society (now Nature Forward). That year, scientists found only 44 breeding pairs—the lowest on record.

The survey ran for nearly 30 years, with one biologist and one pilot on each flight. They patrolled the areas within a few miles from large bodies of water, including the Bay, major tributaries, and reservoirs.

“It took a strong stomach and inner ear because we were flying donuts around the nests,” Therres said. The biologists would rely on their eyesight to see the nests—binoculars in the small moving plane would only increase the chances of making yourself sick. Luckily the nests were large, and the planes had high wings to increase visibility. The pilot was always someone skilled in flying low.

After an initial run in February or March, they would come back in May or early June to count the young eagles, when they were almost the size of adults but not yet flying. That made it “a little easier to see than when they’re a puffball the size of a grapefruit in a nest,” Therres said.

Bald eagles now nest in every county in Maryland and in Baltimore City. Nationally, bald eagles had been reclassified as “threatened” rather than “endangered” in 1995, and they were delisted in 2007.

Since DNR’s aerial surveys ended, the Maryland Bird Conservation Partnership (MBCP) has coordinated a nest monitoring program for bald eagles in the state. Volunteers submit nest locations and can act as nest monitors, providing valuable information into the regional status of the species.

“MBCP’s Bald Eagle Nest Monitoring Program is a great example of how anyone can help make sure eagles remain a common sight in Maryland,” said Gabriel Foley, executive director of the partnership. “The data our nest monitors provide help us understand nest success, population trends, and any potential threats to eagles. This information helps ensure effective conservation efforts.”

Though bald eagles face continued challenges, including avian flu’s still unclear effect on regional populations, bald eagle chicks across Maryland are leaving their nests this June and July. The Chesapeake Bay area is home to the highest concentration of bald eagles in the United States outside of Alaska, with its food system sustaining eagles from far and wide.

“Through the year, we have three pretty unique populations of bald eagles,” Brinker said. “There are local birds that are here all year long. Then southern breeding eagles disperse to the Chesapeake Bay to spend summer here because food resources are so good. And in the winter, northern populations that need a warmer place, they come down to the Chesapeake Bay.”

By Joe Zimmermann, science writer with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources
<https://news.maryland.gov/dnr/2025/07/03/a-soaring-success-marylands-bald-eagle-population-recovery/>



Bald Eagle Nest Cam Fun is Happening Now!

Go to our website to access the
Port Tobacco River Park Bald Eagle Nest Cam.



Since 2019 this nest has laid 3 eggs 6 out of 7 times!

What will happen this season?

Egg laying can begin as early as 1/31.

<https://www.somdaudubon.org/learn-about-birds/nest-cams/>

Podcast Corner

Stay warm and toasty and still enjoy birds and the wonderful world of nature. Watch a podcast! See this month's podcast recommendation—Scott Harris @NaturallyScott. Scott was our guest speaker November 5, his lecture titled *RaptorQuest*. I decided to check out his podcasts. He is very entertaining, engaging, and makes me laugh. So worth spending your time with! You can watch his shows on your favorite podcast feed. My recent favorite was Episode 34 so far was with Michael Goergen — Saving the American Chestnut, Genetics, Hope & the Future of America's Forests. Enjoy!

Lynne Wheeler

Twice a week I'll bring you the very best of America's spectacular world of nature—from birds to mammals, to reptiles and amphibians. From soaring mountains to endless plains, from rugged coastlines to rivers and streams. Each episode will feature an expert guest - a ranger, a researcher, a birder, or an adventurer-someone who has seen what we want to see and been where we want to go. Please subscribe on [YouTube](#)!



MOS Convention Solomons

Save the Date! Join in for the 78th annual MOS Convention, which will be hosted in Solomons, MD during May 15-17, 2026. The host hotel will be the [Solomons Inn Resort + Marina](#). We tallied [130 species](#) in Solomons during the 74th annual MOS Convention in May 2022. This [website](#) will be updated soon with more information about the 2026 convention.

If you have any questions about the convention, please email Jim Rapp at jim.rapp@mdbirds.org. We look forward to seeing you in Solomons!

2026 Convention Dates and Deadlines

[Click here](#) to reserve your room at the Solomons Inn. Room reservations close on April 15.

Please note: Field trips will begin on Friday morning, May 15. Field trips will depart from the parking lot of the Solomons Inn. If you plan to participate in Friday morning field trips, you should begin your room reservation on Thursday, May 14.

The Southern Maryland Audubon Society is a lead sponsor of the convention!

The Great Backyard Bird Count



Art by Charley Harper

2026 Great Backyard Bird Count

The 2026 GBBC will take place Friday, February 13, through Monday, February 16. Please join us for the 29th annual count!

<https://www.birdcount.org/about/>

Spend time in your favorite places watching birds—then tell us about them! In as little as 15 minutes notice the birds around you. Identify them, count them, and submit them to help scientists better understand and protect birds around the world. If you already use eBird or Merlin, your submissions over the 4-days count towards GBBC.

Connect to Birds, to Nature, and with Each Other

Birds are everywhere, all the time, doing fascinating things. Join us, February 13–16, 2026, when the world comes together for the love of birds.

[How to Participate](#)

Be Part of a Global Event

Watch observations roll in from around the world. Each submitted checklist becomes a glowing light on our bird sightings map. Results from 2025 are inspiring.

[Watch the World Map Light-Up](#)

[Explore 2025 Data](#)

Showcase Your Photos from the Count

We enjoy seeing your pictures from the count. Share pictures of birds, yourself, and others birdwatching in your yards or at your favorite birding spots.

[Learn How to Share Photos](#)



Map Your Community Birding Event

Are you birding for GBBC as a part of a community event? Add it to the map so others can join you and so we have a better sense of how the world comes together to celebrate birds.

[Add to the Map](#)



Upcoming Events



Left: Eastern Screech-Owl photo by Caroline Prevost

Center: Barred Owl photo by Shirley Donald

Right: Great Horned Owl photo by Patrick Dennen

January 10 – SATURDAY – 7:00 p.m.

FIELD TRIP

Exact Location to Be Determined, Charles County

"OWL PROWL" Note: This is not a Barn Owl Prowl as previously described.

Leader: Mike Callahan

Join us for a night hike as we listen and look for owls! This is a great family outing for everyone who gives a hoot! RSVP to Mike at 240-765-5192 or raptorsrulemc@gmail.com

January 24 – SATURDAY – 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

FIELD TRIP– Don't miss out, this trip fills up quickly!

Patuxent River Naval Air Station, St. Mary's County

21866 Cedar Point, Bldg. 2189, NAS Patuxent River, MD 20670. Gate #2, pass office parking lot.

"WINTER BIRDS AND TUNDRA SPECIALISTS AT PAX RIVER AIRFIELD"

Leader: Dean Newman

We are fortunate to have access to sections of the navy base fronting on the confluence of the Patuxent River and the Chesapeake Bay, which hosts airfields that provide tundra-like habitat. Previous trips have turned up winter birds such as Snow Bunting, Lapland Longspur, Short-eared Owl, Horned Lark, Savannah Sparrow, Wilson's Snipe and Peregrine Falcon. Preregistration is required and open to U.S. citizens only. Must bring photo I.D. We will be escorted and traveling together in a van; participant size is limited. No restrooms. RSVP to Dean Newman at deannewman03@gmail.com

February 4 – WEDNESDAY - 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

MONTHLY MEETING PROGRAM – ZOOM LECTURE

"FROGS - LEARN WHO'S CALLING AND HOW TO GET INVOLVED"

Speaker: Matthew Neff

Matt Neff is in his third year as Curator of Estuarine Biology at the Calvert Marine Museum. Since joining the museum, he has launched several new exhibits, including one focused on the Eastern Hellbender, an endangered salamander once found in the Bay. Matt is also starting his 14th season with FrogWatch, a citizen science program that trains individuals to listen for and record frog calls during the breeding season. Last year, over 1,263 observations of 14 different frog species were submitted across the Southern Maryland and surrounding DMV area. Prior to his work at the museum, Matt spent 12 years as a zookeeper in the Department of Herpetology at the Smithsonian National Zoo. With a lifelong passion for animals and environmental education, Matt is excited to continue sharing his love for the natural world, particularly the native species of Southern Maryland. Did you know you can find 16 species of frogs and toads in Southern Maryland? Learn about who's calling, how to get involved, and what the Calvert Marine Museum is doing. A zoom link to attend this meeting will be sent out prior to the meeting.

Upcoming Events continued

February 7 – SATURDAY – 8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. (rain date Sunday 2/8)

FIELD TRIP

Jefferson Patterson Park, Calvert County

10515 Mackall Road, St Leonard, MD 20685

“WINTER WATERFOWL TRIP”

Leader: Tyler Bell

Open fields, edge habitat, and wooded areas offer a variety of both resident and winter bird species. Additionally, the river frontage provides close views of waterfowl including Horned Grebe, Long-tailed Duck, Ruddy Ducks, both scaup, Common Goldeneye, and lots more! Flat with occasional hills and largely paved. No fee. Restrooms available.

Maximum of 12 participants. RSVP required to Tyler Bell for directions to the meeting spot by calling 301-862-4623 or emailing jtylerbell@yahoo.com

February 14 – SATURDAY – 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

FIELD TRIP

Point Lookout State Park, St Mary’s County

10444 Point Lookout Road, Scotland, MD 20687

“SEA DUCKS AT THE POINT”

Leader: Phin Rouland

We will meet at the picnic area parking before walking to the Chesapeake Bay side of the point to scan for sea ducks including all three scoter species, Common Goldeneye, Greater Scaup, Bufflehead, and Long-tailed Ducks. Other species of note could include horned grebe, two loon species, and Northern Gannet. The remainder of the time will be used walking the picnic area and trails around Fort Lincoln and could include Brown-headed Nuthatch, Pine Warbler, and Fox Sparrow. Flat but unpaved. Fee area. Restrooms available. RSVP to phin.rouland@gmail.com

March 4, 2026 - WEDNESDAY – 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

MONTHLY MEETING PROGRAM – ZOOM MEETING

“FROM MOUNTAINS TO SALTMARSH – REDISCOVERING THE MOS SANCTUARIES”

Speaker: MARCIA WATSON

BIO: Marcia Watson, Maryland Ornithological Society.

The Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) owns ten wildlife sanctuaries, totaling almost 3,000 acres and spanning the state from Garrett County in the western part of the state, to Somerset County on the lower Eastern Shore. All of the sanctuaries are open to the public every day of the year, at no charge, and represent a microcosm of the habitats for birds in Maryland. Many people have heard of the Carey Run and Irish Grove Sanctuaries, where sanctuary houses provide an opportunity for overnight visits, but the other sanctuaries have been seldom visited. Marcia will review the history of the MOS Sanctuary Program, provide profiles and show maps and photos of all the sanctuaries, discuss the birds and habitats found there, and will cover some of the challenges that MOS faces in managing the properties. Marcia will conclude with an overview of some of the research being conducted at the sanctuaries as well as their conservation value, and why it’s important to preserve these lands.

March 28 - SATURDAY – 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m (Multiple Activities)

Bird Walks 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. by Lynne Wheeler

FIELD TRIP – SPECIAL STATE PARK EVENT

Smallwood State Park, Charles County

2750 Sweden Point Road, Marbury, MD 20658

“MARCH ON THE MATTAWOMAN”

Family fun! Come and welcome back our Osprey, family fishing activities, hands-on kids activities, explore the Discovery Center, food truck, demonstrations, and a bird walk. Park entrance fee \$5/vehicle. Pre-registration is required and will be shared soon when the link becomes available.

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 somdaudubon@yahoo.com for more information about volunteering with SMAS.



JOIN THE FLOCK!

Ross's and Snow Geese

Photo by Mick Thompson

Welcome, New Members!

Michelle Davis, La Plata
Deborah Dean, Hollywood
Stephen Harris, Brandywine
Randy Hummel, North Beach
Samantha Keiter, Mechanicsville
Frances MacDonald, Chesapeake Beach
Kristen Matheny, Lusby
Richard Noonan, Solomons
Michele Nugent, Newburg

Joan Richardson, La Plata
Sharon Robertson, Hughesville
Shane Ross, Piney Point
Anita Stacey, Nanjemoy
Mike Stum, Port Republic
Tamale Walton, Bryans Road
Norma Woodburn, Millersville
Joseph Young, Owings

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



Southern Maryland Audubon Society

Adopt-a-Raptor

Southern Maryland Audubon Society sponsors the banding of nesting birds of prey with serially numbered aluminum bands in co-operation with the Bird Banding Laboratory of the U.S. Department of the Interior. Limited numbers of raptors to sponsor 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, American Kestrel Nest Boxes, Eastern Screech Owl Nest Boxes, and Mist Nets or Banding Supplies.*

Please indicate which raptor you wish to adopt. You may adopt more than one:

- ☐ Osprey, \$10 each
- ☐ Barn Owl, \$25 each
- ☐ General Donation to Raptor Fund

Total Amount: _____

Total Amount: _____

Amount: _____

When you adopt, 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, and a photo of a fledgling and any other available information on the whereabouts or fate of the bird.

Name: _____

Email: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____

State, Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____

If this is a gift, please include the recipient's name for the certificate:

For online purchase go to: <https://www.somdaudubon.org/support-us/adopt-a-raptor/>

To purchase by check and mail via USPS, send this form to:

Carole Schnitzler, 3595 Silk Tree Court, Waldorf, MD 20602



Barn Owl photo by Stacy Howell



Southern Maryland Audubon Society Membership Application to our Local Audubon Chapter

Please enroll me as a member of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society. Southern Maryland Audubon Society is an all-volunteer nonprofit organization, so 100% of your membership, renewal, or donation supports our bird conservation, education, and advocacy programs. With a chapter-only membership, ALL of your dues support Southern Maryland Audubon and our work protecting birds and the places they need to survive in Southern Maryland. To purchase online go to <https://www.somdaudubon.org/support-us/join-somd/>
Please select the type of membership from our list below:

Individual/Family: ☐ 1 year \$20 ☐ 2 year \$35 ☐ 3 year \$45
Lifetime Membership: ☐ \$500
Donation: \$ _____

To purchase by check and mail via USPS, send this form to:
Southern Maryland Audubon Society, P.O. Box 181, Bryans Road, MD 20616

Membership to the National Audubon Society

Please consider supporting the National Audubon Society by becoming a member. Your membership automatically enrolls you as a member of Southern Maryland Audubon Society. You will support their avian conservation efforts, and receive four issues of National's award-winning *Audubon* magazine. To join the National Audubon Society, go to:
<http://www.audubon.org/membership>



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.

2025–2026 Officers

Interim President, Lynne Wheeler — somdaudubon@yahoo.com

Vice President, Ben Springer — ben.springer@comcast.net

Treasurer, Julie Daniel — juliemdaniel@hotmail.com

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