

# The Osprey

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHERN MARYLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY

## President's Perch



Bullock's (front) and Baltimore Orioles  
Photo by Steve Arthur

Hello, bird lovers of southern Maryland! This is the last issue of the Osprey newsletter for this season. Our Audubon chapter hopes you have enjoyed our many field trips, monthly zoom lectures (our Program Chair Barbara Hill has done an amazing job!), and events. We put a lot of effort and pride into planning everything, and aim to meet and exceed your expectations!

This is my final President's Perch column as well! I have enjoyed serving as Interim president for the past eight months, and am grateful to our board for their help. I am very pleased that we have added numerous new directors to the Board of Directors who will help us fulfill our mission to promote appreciation, conservation, and protection of birds, other wildlife, and their natural habitats through education, research, and outreach. In our next program year, we will have a new President who will have a full board to help us accomplish great things! I send a huge thank-you to our board members who have truly risen to the challenge this year.

As we conclude this program year, please come out to our Annual Picnic & Meeting June 7 at Historic Maxwell Hall in Benedict, Maryland. It is a really fun event, at a beautiful location. We love gathering everyone to eat, drink and be merry! We will offer our usual fried chicken, and you are welcome to bring a dish, so expect tons of food! This year we will also display a new SMAS member's photography and art work, the results of her quest to document endangered species around the world. And don't forget to bring your binoculars for the bird walk from 3 to 4 p.m., always a treat! Our picnic is open to all – so don't be an "endangered" member – come!!

But wait! Before the picnic we still have a few new events to share. See the flyer in this newsletter. How cool is Birding by Kayak on the Mattawoman Creek?! Our board member Gabi Zabel is offering this May 16 trip spearheaded by our friends at Atlantic Kayak Company. Paddle over to their website at [www.atlantickayak.com](http://www.atlantickayak.com) and book now.

Also – a late-breaking addition: Mike Callahan will host a Barn Owls Banding & Barbeque event on May 21 at 6 p.m. Space is limited so RSVP now! This event fills up fast and is always one of our most popular. See the flyer in this newsletter.

And don't forget NatureFest on May 30 at the College of Southern Maryland La Plata Campus. I have enjoyed helping to plan this event that reaches more attendees every year. Come and meet over 50 exhibitors and presenters, displaying everything from live raptors, insects, native plants, conservation groups, programs, crafts, artwork, and...of course SMAS!

In closing, please support vital conservation initiatives and environmental organizations, and most of all, enjoy the beauty of nature every day. I hope to see you all soon!

Lynne Wheeler

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<http://smdaudubon.org/>

## DolphinWatch

Understanding why dolphins visit the Chesapeake Bay

How often do bottlenose dolphins come into Chesapeake Bay? How long do they spend here? What areas of the Bay are they using and why? The Chesapeake DolphinWatch app engages the public to help answer these questions surrounding dolphins in the Chesapeake Bay. Developed by a team at University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science's Chesapeake Biological Laboratory in 2017, the app has now surpassed over 14,600 registered users, all members of the community helping UMCES scientists learn more about these incredible Chesapeake Bay mammals. Members of the public can report dolphin sightings in real time. This observation network provides information on dolphin distribution and local residents are encouraged to learn about these animals and their environment through participating in this research project.

### Report your dolphin sightings

Join 14,600 DolphinWatchers in and around Chesapeake Bay by signing up and logging into the app via [iPhone](#), [Android](#), or the [ChesapeakeDolphinWatch website](#). View the locations of recent and past dolphin sightings on a map, as well as images DolphinWatchers have submitted. By tracking the occurrence of dolphins and their movements, we'll gain a better understanding of how bottlenose dolphins use the Bay and how to protect them in our local waters.

### Learn more about Chesapeake DolphinWatch

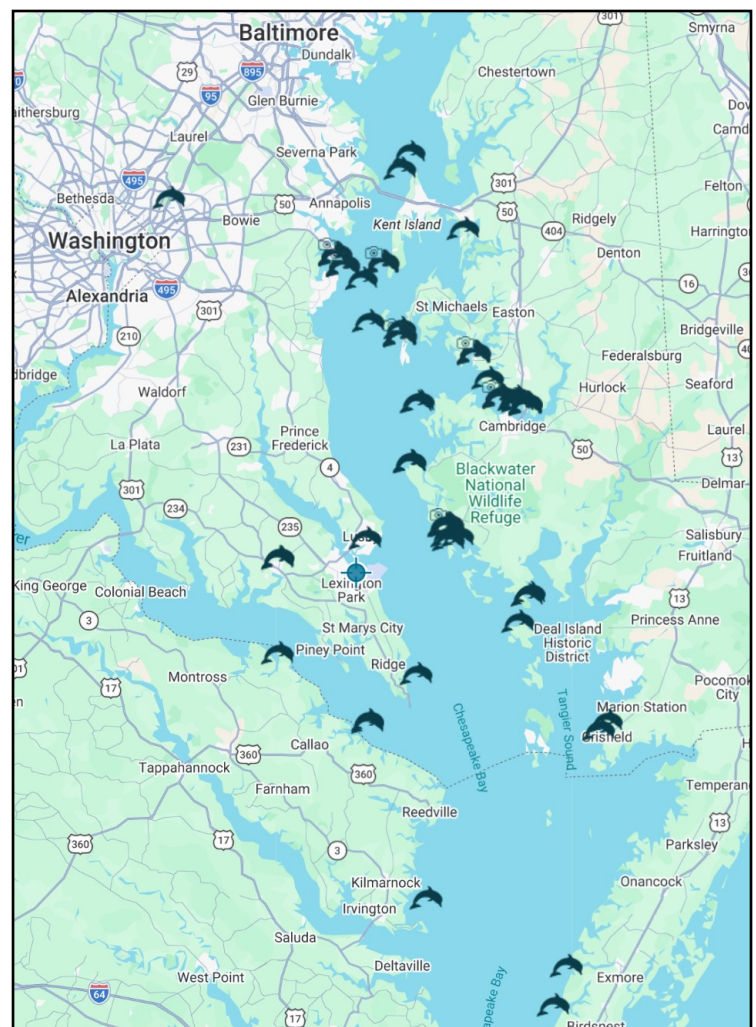
Watch DolphinWatch founder [Helen Bailey's presentation](#) about the program during the Chesapeake Biological Laboratory's Science for Citizens series, and [listen as she discusses](#) the first summer of the project.

Check out a [summary of what we have learned](#) from dolphin sightings.

### Fifth anniversary Chesapeake DolphinWatch book

As a thank you to DolphinWatchers and a celebration of what we have learned about dolphins in the Chesapeake Bay from sighting reports, we created a [Chesapeake DolphinWatch - Dolphins of the Chesapeake Bay](#) photo book. We do not receive any commission from the sale of the book, but all donations go towards our dolphin research and providing copies of the book to schools and public libraries around the Chesapeake Bay.

University of Maryland  
Center for Environmental Science  
2020 Horns Point Road  
Cambridge, MD 21613



Reported sightings for 2026!

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## A Tale of Two Rarities!

by Tyler Bell

On March 7, someone posted photos of an oriole on the Wild Birds Unlimited Birds of Southern Maryland by WBU Facebook group. They noted that the bird had been there for at least a few days and they thought it might be a Bullock's Oriole but knew that was a very rare sighting. People commented in agreement. The house is in Lexington Park. Doesn't get much better than that unless it was in our Wildewood development. So, after a flurry of messages with the observer, Jane Kostenko and I were off to try and see it. Oddly, the bird was being seen with a female Baltimore Oriole (see photo on Page 1), uncommon by itself in the winter.

Per the homeowners instructions, we watched from outside a tall wooden fence so as not to bother their dogs. After a fairly brief wait, the Bullock's Oriole flew down and began feeding at a meal worm feeder. Unfortunately, it was on the back side so we could only see the head and shoulders but the black chin is enough to distinguish it from a Baltimore Oriole. With photos to back up our sighting, we were happy and about to leave when the homeowners came out unaware that we were there. That's a compliment that we were that unobtrusive. They thought that the bird might have been present for a few days but had only been able to get photos on March 7 because both birds were so skittish at the feeders. We arranged for a small number of other observers to watch from the same side yard during a two hour window either in the morning or afternoon. Several happy birders were able to see the first St. Mary's County record of Bullock's Oriole, also quite rare statewide with only six records.

The bird was last seen on April 13. Prior to both orioles' departure, they had been interacting as a possible mating pair with the male Bullock's feeding the female Baltimore. If they do stay together as they migrate, there's a potential for hybrids. One of the other Maryland records was a male Bullock's that came back to the same house the next winter as an adult. If this bird comes back, he'll be a lot sportier looking!

On March 15, Tim Carney was making his way down to Lexington Park for his 10 a.m. to noon time slot. He stopped along the way to scope waterfowl from the fishing pier at the Thomas Johnson Bridge, commonly known as the Solomons Bridge. Red-necked Grebes had started their northward migration and there were several present. Also present we quite a few loons, both Common and Red-necked. There was an oddly pale-billed bird there that Tim photographed. That night, he sent photos out for review and it was Maryland's first record of a [Yellow-billed Loon](#)! This is a bird that is incredibly rare this far east. Aside from their nesting areas in the high arctic, and their winter range along the Pacific coast of the US, there is only a shotgun splatter of reports across the US and only a handful of reports east of the Mississippi River.

When the loon was relocated a couple of days later, it presented an access problem. The best viewing potential was all private property. Or, when it moved upriver a few days later, either no possible access due to distance or Navy property. Being such a rarity, it drew attention from a several state radius. Unfortunately, the bird was last seen on March 25. But, before departing, there were about 260 eBird checklists submitted. On the plus side, because the Calvert/St. Mary's County line runs down the middle of the Patuxent River, if you were lucky, you could observe the bird in both counties. The lister in me approves.



Common Loon, top  
Yellow-billed Loon, bottom.  
Photo by Jeff Shenot

## NEW NIGHT-TIME ID TECHNIQUES

Each Spring and Fall, many millions of migratory birds migrate in darkness through our night skies. Now researchers have developed a new way to see and identify many of them for the first time.

Until now, researchers have had to rely on weather radar and/or acoustic monitoring to track nocturnal migration. Unfortunately, radar can detect broad movements of birds but cannot distinguish individual species and can't identify those flying low to the ground. At the same time, acoustic monitoring only records birds that call while they are migrating.

Aside from a few highly vocal families - primarily thrushes, sparrows, and wood-warblers - the vast majority of nocturnally migrating birds pass overhead silently or inaudibly. (With acoustic-only monitoring, all of these individuals and nearly two-thirds of the families could be missed.)

In a published study appearing last month in *Ornithology*, "Seeing in the dark: Using thermal imaging to directly observe nocturnal migration," researchers described how they used thermal imaging optics, flashlights, and high-speed photography to detect and photograph migrating birds in flight after dark. The approach allowed them to identify low-flying species across three fall seasons at Cape May, New Jersey.

Thermal imaging - a technology that has become far more affordable and accessible in recent years - makes this possible. Because birds are warm-blooded, they radiate heat that stands out against the cold night sky. The late Tom Johnson, a Cornell graduate, skilled birder, and photographer, pioneered this approach, detecting birds, briefly illuminating them, photographing them, and identifying the species in flight.

It took a group of dedicated volunteers who met regularly at night to test and improve the approach - a gathering they called "Night Club" - to make this study a reality.

Because this is a very labor-intensive technique, it does not lend itself to broad-scale migration monitoring. Still, when integrated with acoustic monitoring, this local data can serve to complement and groundtruth both radar and acoustic studies. The fact that this hands-on technique cannot yet be automated does not mean that it won't be in the future!

You can find this work described here:

[https://phys.org/news/2026-03-reveals-technique-individual-night-flying.html#google\\_vignette](https://phys.org/news/2026-03-reveals-technique-individual-night-flying.html#google_vignette)

And find the actual study - with its 10 authors credited - here:

<https://academic.oup.com/auk/advance-article/doi/10.1093/ornithology/ukaf074/8506565?searchresult=1&login=false>



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

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

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## La Plata's Bird City Achievements – A High Flyer!

April 14, 2026

Bird City Maryland is pleased to announce that the Town of La Plata has completed its 3rd Bird City renewal which occurs every 2 years. As part of the renewal all actions are updated and new actions can be added. As our first recognized Bird City, La Plata has renewed more times than any other community. The Bird City Maryland program started in 2019 as a way to encourage communities in Maryland to enhance the environment for birds and educate the public about the contributions birds make to a healthy community. The application is divided into four categories: Habitat, Threats to Birds, Education and Engagement and Sustainability. Each category has multiple possible actions that cities can complete. Communities must complete 3 actions in the Habitat category and at least 1 action each in the other 3 categories as well as passing a resolution committing to becoming a Bird City. La Plata is recognized at the High Flyer level with over 20 points.

Bird City Maryland is an initiative of the Maryland Bird Conservation Partnership. In 2023 Bird City Maryland joined the National Bird City Network, a joint venture of the **American Bird Conservancy** and **Environment for the Americas**. The Network unites and connects independent Bird City programs throughout the hemisphere who work directly with local communities to envision and complete bird-friendly actions. Together we form a powerful collaborative force – connecting people and helping birds across the hemisphere.

In addition to the required actions Bird Cities must also annually recognize World Migratory Bird Day which The Town of La Plata does at multiple events. World Migratory Bird Day has an annual conservation action theme and is sponsored by the Environment for the Americas, a Western Hemispheric organization that connects diverse people to birds and nature. This year's theme is "Every Bird Counts: Your Observation Matters".

### Highlights from the Town of La Plata's renewal include:

In 2025 the Town organized a new event at the Bird City Pocket Park called "Paint the Town with Pollinators". Multiple partners participated and provided free native plants, native plant seed, and information about the importance of native plants and providing for our pollinators. The partners were S MD Audubon Society, Wild Ones Chesapeake Bay, Port Tobacco River Conservancy, and College of Southern Maryland (a Bird Campus) Seed Library. As part of this event 150 free native plant seedlings were distributed.

La Plata continues to embrace its Bird City status with a new and unique action: the Town of La Plata Bird City License Plate! The art work is fabulous - it has a Purple Martin on it which is La Plata's Signature Bird. Signature Birds educate and engage Bird City communities. To see all of La Plata's Bird City achievements visit their webpage:

<https://birdcity.org/maryland/laplata>



## Ben Springer Lands Bird Conservation Gig

April 14, 2026

Ben Springer, vice president of Southern Maryland Audubon Society (SMAS), soon joins Audubon Mid-Atlantic as a Marsh Bird Technician. He will survey birds and plants on Maryland's Eastern Shore, in important areas for marsh-nesting species such as the endangered Saltmarsh Sparrow. His work will also help the Seaside Sparrow, American Black Duck, and Black Rail. People benefit too; healthy saltmarshes buffer storm surges, capture carbon, and filter pollutants before they reach local waterways.

A lifelong naturalist with a passion for birds, Ben was born and raised in Calvert County and earned his BA in Environmental Studies, with a minor in Biology, from St. Mary's College of Maryland. Most recently, he worked as a Park Technician at Kings Landing Park in Calvert County. Those who have joined Ben on his delightful birding trips will be pleased to know that he will continue volunteering with SMAS in the fall. Meanwhile, he said, "I'm really excited to get back out in the marsh!"



### Podcast Corner

Destination Nature is a three-episode pilot podcast series by [The Nature Conservancy](#). Follow the story links below and hear directly from our scientists, program managers, and partners about why the work you help us achieve is so important for nature.

[Episode One: Restoring the Reef](#)

[Episode Two: A Path for Mountain Lions](#)

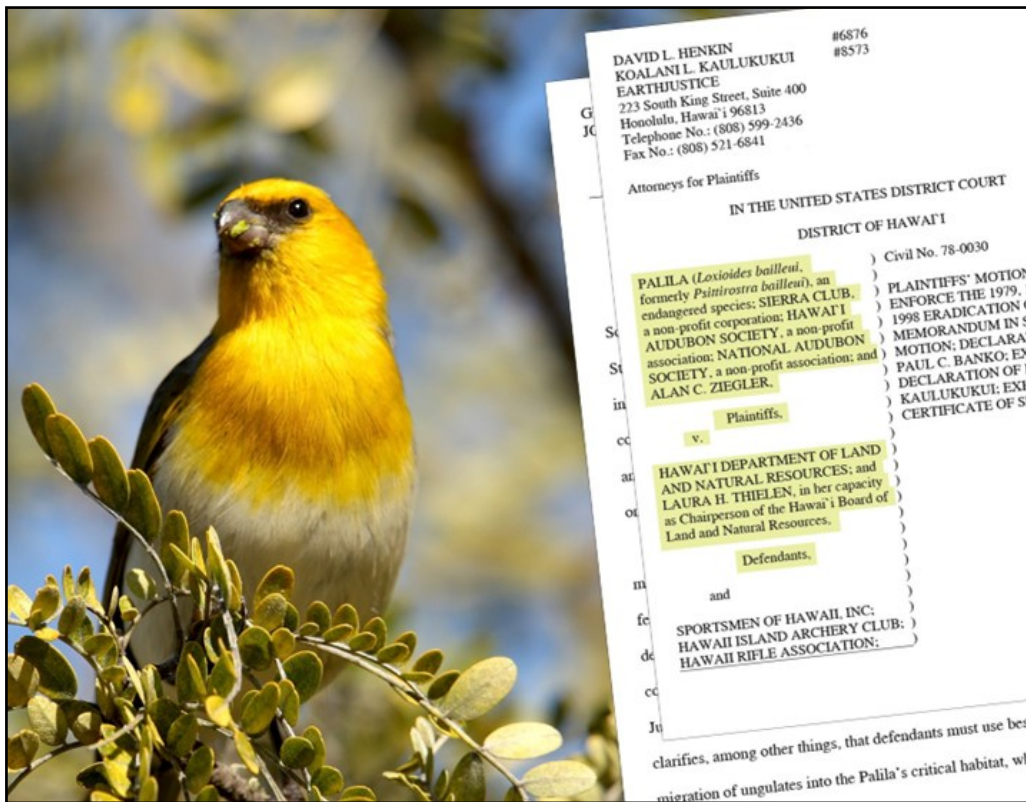
[Episode Three: Soaking Up Stormwater](#)



## The Earth Needs Your Help, and a Good Lawyer!

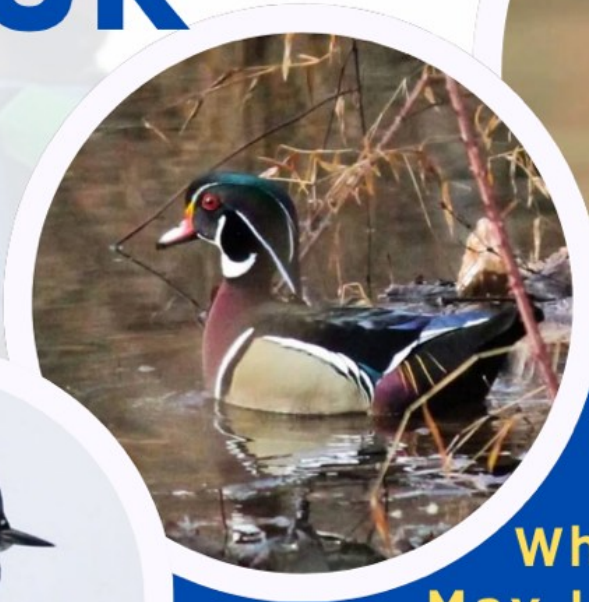
The Southern Maryland Audubon Society had a very informative monthly zoom lecture presented by our former Senator Gerald Winegrad May 6. Please see our website for the recording of his presentation about his 55 years fighting for the conservation of birds and other wildlife. He is a true environmental champion!

How can we also be champions? The Senator states to please donate to [Earthjustice](https://earthjustice.org). They wield the power of the law and use the strength of partnership to protect people's health, to preserve magnificent places and wildlife, to advance clean energy, and to combat climate change. I know many of you have major concerns about the attack on our environmental protection laws. We must fight! The law is the most powerful tool to use, and the earth needs a good lawyer! Behind every major environmental win, you will find [Earthjustice](https://earthjustice.org). Donate today, see their website at [earthjustice.org](https://earthjustice.org).



Palila (*Loxioides bailleui*) in Waimea, Hawai'i. (Aaron Maizlish / CC BY-NC 2.0)

# KAYAK BIRDING TOUR



**When: Saturday,  
May 16 7:00-10:00 AM**

**Where: Mattawomen Creek  
108 Mattingly Ave  
Indian Head, MD**

About: Whether you're new to birding or a seasoned expert, enjoy spotting birds from the unique vantage point of a kayak. Bring your own binoculars, bird guides, and curiosity—we'll provide the kayaks and the expertise of Master Naturalist Gabi Zabel.



**BOOK ONLINE**

[www.atlantickayak.com](http://www.atlantickayak.com)

(301) 292-6455

# **Barn Owls & Barbeque**

## **Thursday, May 21, 2026**

### **6:00 - 7:30 PM**



**Join**  
**Southern Maryland Audubon Society**  
**for the banding of Barn Owl**  
**nestlings and enjoy a barbeque**  
**dinner. Proceeds benefit raptor**  
**conservation in Southern Maryland.**  
**Space limited! \$30 per person**  
**To register, contact Mike Callahan at**  
**[raptorsrulemc@gmail.com](mailto:raptorsrulemc@gmail.com) or**  
**(240) 765-5192 by the 4:30 PM by May 19**

# FREE SPRING BIRD WALKS!



## Piscataway MOS Sanctuary @ Hardy Tavern Drive

Come on out and enjoy a morning of learning about birds at your local Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) Sanctuary at Piscataway (14300 Hardy Tavern Dr, Accokeek)!

This event is completely free, and the walk will be led by an MOS Bird Guide. Anyone who wants to learn about birds is strongly encouraged to come, and no experience is necessary! The walk is open to folks of all ages, so bring the whole family, and binoculars can be provided upon request!

**Sunday, May 3rd &  
Saturday, May 23rd  
7:30am - 10:30am**

Please scan the QR code to RSVP for a walk!

For more details and to ask any questions, please contact Alex at [piscatawaysanctuary@gmail.com](mailto:piscatawaysanctuary@gmail.com)



## Upcoming Events

May 30 – SATURDAY – 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Nature Fest at College of Southern Maryland La Plata Campus

8730 Mitchell Road, La Plata, MD 20646

### SPECIAL EVENT

SMAS is an official partner. This is a great family event that began in 2021 with the purpose to encourage families to get outside, enjoy nature, and think more intentionally about caring for our world. The event hosts over 50 mission-aligned environmentally focused companies and organizations and last year welcomed over 800 attendees. Come and enjoy live raptor shows, engaging exhibits, demonstrations, and hands-on activities. SMAS will have a booth next to the CSM/Town of La Plata booth – helping kids to learn about observing and counting birds.



COLLEGE of  
**SOUTHERN  
MARYLAND**



Save the date for NCAC's 6<sup>th</sup> annual

# Nature Fest

10 AM–3 PM | Saturday, May 30, 2026

College of Southern Maryland, La Plata Campus

### Partners



### Sponsors



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## Upcoming Events

June 7 – SUNDAY – 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

### Annual Picnic and Meeting

Historic Maxwell Hall Park, Charles County

17388 Teagues Point Road, Hughesville, MD 20637

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

**Everyone is welcome!!**

We would appreciate an RSVP to assist us in planning for the picnic. Please go to:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0B4DA4A82AA2F5C34-64053904-smdaudubon>



Photo by Friends of Maxwell Hall

<https://www.friendsofmh.com/>

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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 [somdaudubon@yahoo.com](mailto:somdaudubon@yahoo.com) for more information about volunteering with SMAS.



Ross's and Snow Geese

Photo by Mick Thompson

# Welcome, New Members!

Whitney Blakeley, Waldorf  
Nancy Booth, Lexington Park  
Debbie and Bill Brumbley, Waldorf  
John Cusack, Owings  
Sidney Daniels, Prince Frederick  
Ericka Fultz, Bryantown  
Helen Hall, Waldorf  
Susie Kozlovsky Husk, Clinton

Kimberly De Jesus, Indian Head  
Kara Laney, Prince Frederick  
Rita Metro, Owings  
Rafe Taylor, Temple Hills  
Mark Todd, Sunderland  
Doris Turner, California  
Paula Wolf, La Plata

## 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



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)



## 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 cooperation 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:

- |  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Osprey, \$10 each               | Total Amount: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Barn Owl, \$25 each             | Total Amount: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> General Donation to Raptor Fund | 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](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**  
Interim President, Lynne Wheeler — [somdaudubon@yahoo.com](mailto:somdaudubon@yahoo.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)