



Readers:

The Osprey is now being built using Microsoft PowerPoint. Previous issues used Microsoft Publisher, much more powerful software. If you notice anything amiss, please let the editor know. Sadly, Publisher is being discontinued on October 1.

Osprey Editor:

itylerbell@yahoo.com

The Osprey

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHERN MARYLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY

President's Perch



Saltmarsh Sparrow
Photo by Ben Springer

IN THIS ISSUE

Protect Menhaden!

Saltmarsh Sparrows

Marsh Blueprint

Hog Island Reflections

What's This Big White Bird?

Hummingbird Evolution

More!



<http://somdaudubon.org/>

Greetings! We held our first board meeting of the term and approved our committee chairs for the year. I want to note a few additions/changes to our committees. Education/Scholarship will be co-chaired by Susan Burch and Toni Kruszka. Having been our most recent Hog Island award recipients, they will be perfect to identify and nominate the next candidates for SMAS to sponsor. Ben Springer, our VP, will join the conservation committee as co-chair with Bob Lukinich, Gabi Zabel will co-chair field trips with Matt Ichniowski, and Tracey Stuller will be our fundraising chair heading up our Craft Fair at Thomas Stone High School in Waldorf on December 6...more on that below.

Our first program of the year was all about Purple Martins, presented by Mercedes Leofsky, Research Manager of the Purple Martin Conservation Association. It was a wonderful educational presentation, and timely with the beginning of fall migration. Purple Martins winter in Brazil and will congregate in masses in the hundreds of thousands if not millions. Prior to migrating, they will gather in massive groups which can be seen on radar, including an area in Elk Neck, Maryland. They are fascinating birds and their survival depends on us to provide housing for them. It is a unique symbiotic relationship we have and one we need to support. I encourage everyone to visit PMCA's website -- <https://www.purplemartin.org>.

As fall approaches we enter the migration season which will see not only Purple Martins but every other species that prefers to head south for the winter. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology has a great website to monitor the migration southward. I encourage everyone who has not visited their site to do so -- <https://birdcast.org/>. You can filter the data by State or by County and it is very interesting and educational. And just in case you have not downloaded the Merlin App from the Cornell Lab, please check it out. It turns your phone into a bird call genius, and it really can inspire young or novice birders to want to see and hear more.

Up next, the Maryland Osprey & Nature Festival organization is screening "The Last Osprey" at the Drum Point Club (465 Overlook Drive, Lusby) on September 24, from 6:30 to 8:30 pm. The environmental pressure on Ospreys is significant and something of a barometer on the health of a larger ecosystem. The film and presentation are a great opportunity for education regarding the situation. We are co-sponsoring this event with a few other like-minded organizations, and we encourage you to attend.

And last but not least, SMAS is sponsoring a Craft Fair at Thomas Stone High School in Waldorf on December 6, from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. The craft fair has been held annually for more than 33 years and has a strong following and is something of a tradition kicking off the holiday season in Southern Maryland. We were fortunate to be asked to sponsor this event, and it offers us a unique opportunity to reach a broader audience to spread awareness of our goals of environmental conservation and education in SOMD. I encourage everyone to come out, and if you know any crafty folks, let them know. Our website has a link to accept registrations, and we had over 20 spots reserved on the first day of open registration.

Will Daniel
SMAS President

Tell ASMFC: We Must Protect Menhaden! Adopt Addendum II!



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION
Saving a National Treasure

Menhaden are small, silvery, nutrient-packed fish that play a vital role in the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem. They are also the target of a colossal foreign-owned industry with outsized political influence. The Bay is—and has been—sending out an unmistakable call for help:

- Osprey chicks that rely on menhaden for critical food are starving to death;
- Bait catches for Bay watermen are plummeting;
- Chesapeake Menhaden science remains woefully inadequate.

We must act before it's too late!

Fortunately, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) is considering changes to Menhaden management in the Bay through a document called Draft Addendum II. Stand with CBF and call on the ASMFC to approve conservation-minded reforms that better protect Menhaden and support a healthy Chesapeake Bay ecosystem, including reducing the Bay Cap by 50 percent in 2027 and implementing quota periods to more effectively distribute reduction fishing pressure throughout the season. Specifically, CBF supports the following options in Draft Addendum II:

- 3.1 Chesapeake Bay Reduction Fishery Cap Amount: Support option C1e that would reduce the Bay Cap by 50 percent and limits it to 13.6 percent of the Coastwide Catch Limit (TAC). Also, support option C2a which sets an upper limit of 51,000mt for the Bay Cap, which is the current level.
- 3.2 Chesapeake Bay Cap Distribution: Support option B2 which establishes three even length quota periods for the Bay Cap, but distributes harvest 25 percent in period 1, 25 percent in period 2, and 50 percent into period 3. Also, support option B which establishes quota period overage payback and rollover of unused quota within a fishing year.
- 3.3 Chesapeake Bay Reduction Fishery Cap Revisit Provision: Support option B Revisit Provision to reassess the efficacy of these new management tools every 3 years.

ASMFC is currently accepting public comment on these options that would protect this vital fish and the ecosystem that depends on it—and they need to hear from you! Stand with CBF in supporting these strong conservation-minded reforms by signing on to our comment letter before the October 9 deadline!

[Click here to sign!](#)

By completing our alert, your signature will be added to CBF's comment letter which will be delivered to ASMFC by our Menhaden Campaign Manager.

School of Menhaden
Photo by Nathan Kensinger



Saltmarsh Sparrow Monitoring

by Ben Springer

I have officially returned to Southern Maryland after an incredible field season working on the Eastern Shore for the [Marshes for Tomorrow](#) project! (For background on Ben's summer gig, see the [June issue of The Osprey](#), page 6.) It was an action-packed summer filled with early morning SHARP (Saltmarsh Habitat and Avian Research Program) point counts (documenting every observable bird from a fixed point in the marsh while playing a standardized 12-minute audio track with the calls of target marsh bird species playing at one-minute intervals), Saltmarsh Sparrow nest searching/monitoring, and many surveys of marsh vegetation.

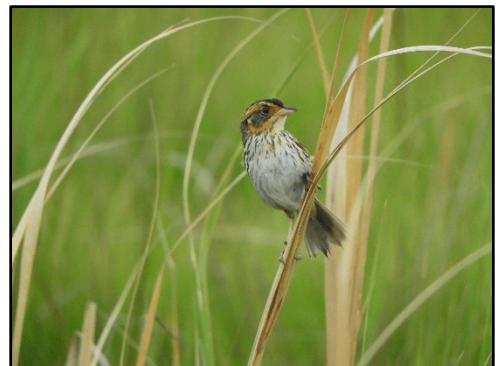
Our team finished the season with 39 nests in total at the Irish Grove Sanctuary, 14 of which were our target species the Saltmarsh Sparrow. We also documented an additional two Willet nests and 23 Seaside Sparrow nests. Of the 14 Saltmarsh Sparrow nests this year, I am excited to report that six nests fledged chicks, making our success rate approximately 43%. This is on the high end of success rates seen in other states. This result brings me hope for their future in Maryland, although flooding and sea level rise remain a major threat to their continued survival. Marsh restoration remains critical to the continued success of Saltmarsh Sparrows at Irish Grove.

The good news is, beginning in the fall of 2026, the Irish Grove Sanctuary will be receiving restoration in the form of shallow, human-dug channels called runnels. These structures are designed to connect stagnant water in pools to tidal creeks to allow marsh plants to revegetate in areas where excessive water has caused the vegetation to drown. With restoration efforts like this project at Irish Grove underway in Maryland's eastern shore, I am hopeful that we can have a future where the emblematic Saltmarsh Sparrow remains a part of Maryland's unique high marsh ecosystem.

In addition to our extensive work in the field, two other members of the field team and I spent our free time making a [music video about our beloved Saltmarsh Sparrows](#)! (Ben Springer on banjo, percussion, and vocals; Duncan Zona on guitar; Evan Powers vocals and video editor). We hope you enjoy it!

Saltmarsh Sparrow nest with eggs, featherless hatchlings, hatchling with pin feathers, and adult. Note the pointy tail feathers which is why they used to be called Sharp-tailed Sparrows before they were split into Saltmarsh and Nelson's Sparrows.

Photos by Ben Springer



A Blueprint for Saving Salt Marshes

Across Maryland's Chesapeake Bay, Audubon is leading a landscape-scale effort to reverse marsh loss for birds and people.

by Marshall Johnson
Chief Conservation Officer
Audubon Mid-Atlantic

The fight to save Maryland's salt marshes will be won in places like Irish Grove Sanctuary on the state's Eastern Shore. Last month, I stood on a sandy road that runs through the heart of the sanctuary, from the forest edge down to the open water of the Chesapeake Bay.

It is a postcard-worthy landscape of crabbing boats and lush marsh grass that extends to the horizon. But take a closer look, as I did with Audubon Mid-Atlantic Coastal Program Director Dave Curson, and the landscape tells a more nuanced story, one that is both troubling and hopeful.

From my vantage point, I could see bright green meadows of healthy salt hay, also known as *Spartina patens*, and the tiny flags that Audubon field staff had planted to mark nearby Saltmarsh Sparrow nests. This furtive species is rapidly declining—scientists predict it could go extinct in the coming decades—and a quarter of the global population nests right here on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

On the other side of the road, I could see where flooded marsh had visibly deteriorated into shallow ponds. Without intervention, the ponds grow and convert marsh into open water.

Across the Chesapeake Bay, salt marshes are collapsing and eroding in similar fashion, battered by rising seas and land subsidence. If we do nothing, Maryland stands to lose this habitat in the coming decades.

This is bad news for more than just birds. Marshes serve as critical nursery habitat for blue crabs, the state's most iconic and important fishery, all while providing communities with protection from flooding and erosion.

That is why Audubon is committed to advancing salt marsh conservation across Maryland and our hemispheric network, recognizing these ecosystems as essential habitat for birds and an important natural defense for coastal communities. Marshes also serve as one of nature's most effective carbon sinks, trapping "blue carbon" in waterlogged soils and helping to slow the impacts of climate change.

In Maryland, Audubon's mid-Atlantic coastal team are leading an effort to turn the tide on marsh loss through the Audubon-led Marshes for Tomorrow initiative. Working alongside many partners, Audubon scientists mapped Maryland's remaining 172,000 acres of salt marsh, identifying the highest-quality habitat that will benefit from conservation action. As a result, we know what it will take to give this critical ecosystem a chance: the restoration of 7,000 acres of marsh over the next ten years.

The fight to save Maryland's salt marshes will be won in places like Irish Grove Sanctuary on the state's Eastern Shore. Last month, I stood on a sandy road that runs through the heart of the sanctuary, from the forest edge down to the open water of the Chesapeake Bay.

It is a postcard-worthy landscape of crabbing boats and lush marsh grass that extends to the horizon. But take a closer look, as I did with Audubon Mid-Atlantic Coastal Program Director Dave Curson, and the landscape tells a more nuanced story, one that is both troubling and hopeful.

Continued on Page 5. See Blueprint.



Salt marsh on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Without conservation action, the state could lose much of its existing saltmarsh in the coming decades.
Photo by Sydney Walsh/Audubon.

Blueprint continued

From my vantage point, I could see bright green meadows of healthy salt hay, also known as *Spartina patens*, and the tiny flags that Audubon field staff had planted to mark nearby Saltmarsh Sparrow nests. This furtive species is rapidly declining—scientists predict it could go extinct in the coming decades—and a quarter of the global population nests right here on Maryland’s Eastern Shore.

On the other side of the road, I could see where flooded marsh had visibly deteriorated into shallow ponds. Without intervention, the ponds grow and convert marsh into open water.

A researcher prepares to release a banded Saltmarsh Sparrow. Photo: Sydney Walsh/Audubon

Across the Chesapeake Bay, salt marshes are collapsing and eroding in similar fashion, battered by rising seas and land subsidence. If we do nothing, Maryland stands to lose this habitat in the coming decades.

This is bad news for more than just birds. Marshes serve as critical nursery habitat for blue crabs, the state’s most iconic and important fishery, all while providing communities with protection from flooding and erosion.

That is why Audubon is committed to advancing salt marsh conservation across Maryland and our hemispheric network, recognizing these ecosystems as essential habitat for birds and an important natural defense for coastal communities. Marshes also serve as one of nature’s most effective carbon sinks, trapping “blue carbon” in waterlogged soils and helping to slow the impacts of climate change.

In Maryland, Audubon’s mid-Atlantic coastal team are leading an effort to turn the tide on marsh loss through the Audubon-led Marshes for Tomorrow initiative. Working alongside many partners, Audubon scientists mapped Maryland’s remaining 172,000 acres of salt marsh, identifying the highest-quality habitat that will benefit from conservation action. As a result, we know what it will take to give this critical ecosystem a chance: the restoration of 7,000 acres of marsh over the next ten years.

Now it is time to roll up our sleeves and do the work. We hit a significant milestone last month, when Audubon received a \$13.2 million grant through a partnership with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and its Roots for Resilience program. Total investment in Marshes for Tomorrow now tops \$18 million. This is a great start, but the opportunities and the need are enormous.

I was reminded of this during a visit with Maryland Secretary of the Environment Serena McIlwain and Department of Natural Resources Secretary Josh Kurtz. Both are deeply invested in stewarding Maryland’s natural landscapes and are vital partners in Marshes for Tomorrow.

We all agreed that healthy marshes are critical for birds and much more. They sustain vital fisheries like the blue crab, all while supporting communities by reducing flooding, filtering pollution, sequestering carbon, and protecting homes and farmland from storm surge.

The first Marshes for Tomorrow project will break ground at Irish Grove later this year in partnership with the landowner, the Maryland Ornithological Society. In the coming years, Audubon and partners will use different restoration techniques over many thousands of acres, from traditional approaches like sediment placement and ditch clearing to low-tech, cost-effective solutions like runneling, which involves digging shallow channels to drain water and regenerate vegetation.

We need every tool in the toolbox, and the sooner we act, the less costly restoration becomes.

Despite the stakes, I left Maryland’s Eastern Shore with a sense of optimism. At Audubon, we’re committed to “bending the bird curve” and reversing the decline of bird species across the hemisphere. The bold, collaborative effort underway in Maryland to save the Saltmarsh Sparrow is exactly what this looks like in action and will strengthen a marsh ecosystem that supports birds and people.

Read the article online at: <https://www.audubon.org/mid-atlantic/news/blueprint-saving-salt-marshes>

Reflections from Audubon Field Ornithology Camp

Story and photos by Toni Kruszka

Imagine spending a week surrounded by birds, nature, scientists, and people who understand why spotting a new species can make your entire day. That was my experience at Audubon Field Ornithology Camp in Bremen, Maine, this summer. I arrived as an enthusiastic birder who still has plenty to learn, especially when it comes to those fast-moving, sometimes frustrating warblers. Over the course of the week, I became a more observant birder and gained a deeper appreciation for the connections between birds, their habitats, and the people dedicated to studying and protecting them.

Improving My Bird Identification Skills

My favorite classroom session at camp was led by scientist Dr. Sara Morris. She taught us how to use field marks to identify species and distinguish between males and females within a species. We looked closely at details such as plumage, wing bars, coloration, shape, and behavior. Her presentation encouraged me to slow down and really study a bird rather than rushing to identify it.



The time we spent in the field was just as rewarding as the classroom sessions. Putting what we learned into practice helped everything come alive. Instead of simply hearing about field marks, I was looking for them in real time, comparing birds, asking questions, and learning from both my successes and my mistakes. I quickly learned that sometimes the most rewarding part of birding is not getting the identification right away, but taking the time to observe, think, and figure it out.

Understanding Conservation and Habitat

Another highlight of camp was learning from naturalist and author Scott Weidensaul about bird conservation and the history of efforts to protect birds. His presentation connected the work of scientists, birders, and conservation organizations over the years. It reinforced an important lesson: protecting birds means protecting their habitat, supporting research, and making sure future generations can experience and appreciate the birds around us.

The camp helped me understand that birding is about much more than adding species to a life list. It is also about recognizing the connections among birds, plants, insects, water, and land. When one part of an ecosystem is damaged, the other parts can be affected as well. Learning about these relationships strengthened my commitment to becoming a better steward of the places birds depend on.

Learning Through Hands-On Experiences and Community

One of the most exciting hands-on activities was participating in the capture, recording, and banding of birds. Bird banding plays an important role in bird conservation, research, and education by providing scientists with valuable information about migration, survival, population trends, and environmental health.

A bonus was having the opportunity to get up close and personal to an American Redstart (pictured) and hold and release a Black-throated Green Warbler and back into the wild. My endorphins went into overdrive! The experience gave me an even greater appreciation for the care and responsibility involved in studying wild birds. Each bird was handled gently, examined carefully, recorded, and released as quickly as possible. It was exciting, humbling, and a privilege to take part in the process.

Perhaps the best part of camp was being surrounded by people who shared my curiosity and enthusiasm. Some participants were experienced ornithologists, while others, like me, were still learning. We shared sightings, asked questions, learned from one another, and enjoyed the biodiversity around us. There was no pressure to know everything. Instead, there was a shared excitement about discovering something new.

Continued on page 7. See Hog Island.

Hog Island continued

A Journey I Will Always Remember

Getting to Maine was an adventure in itself. The journey involved a plane, a few Ubers, a coach bus, and a boat, but every mile was worth it. From the moment I arrived, I was immersed in a landscape that felt very different from home.

I loved experiencing Maine's plants and wildlife as much as birding. The rugged shoreline of Hog Island was free of trash, and everywhere I looked, the ecosystem seemed to be overflowing with life. Harbor seals, red squirrels, seabirds, insects, and plants, including carnivorous ones, all played their part in this incredible environment. Even the mosquitoes made an impression. They were, without question, the largest mosquitoes I have ever battled! Our mosquitoes at home are nothing compared with those in Maine.

And, of course, there were the birds. I added some truly awesome species to my life list. A few favorites include Red Crossbills, Atlantic Puffins, Black Guillemots, Broad-winged Hawks, and Olive-sided Flycatchers.

Conclusion

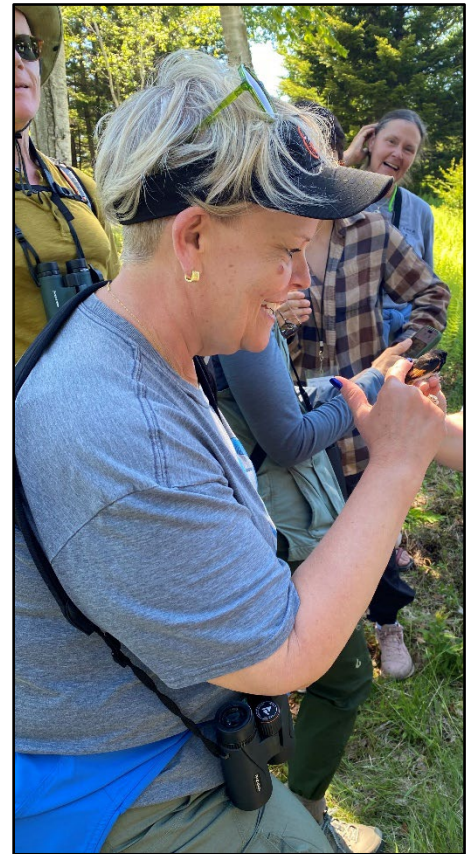
Attending Audubon Field Ornithology Camp changed the way I think about birding. I returned home with new skills in the field, a deeper appreciation for conservation and habitat, and a renewed sense of wonder about the natural world.

The week reminded me why I started birding in the first place: there is always something new to discover. Now familiar habitats make me wonder what else might be living there. And when I hear a bird I cannot immediately identify, I no longer see that as a failure; I see it as an invitation to learn.

Perhaps the greatest lesson I took from Audubon Field Ornithology Camp was that birding is not about having all the answers. It is about staying curious, looking a little closer, and always being ready to learn something new.

Puffin haiku by Gilda Castillo

Bright colored beaks
Nesting in rocky cliffs
Parrots of the sea



Toni with an American Redstart, above,
Atlantic Puffin wood carving, below



What's This Big White Bird?

by Tyler Bell

Photos and captions (right side) by George Armistead and Brian Sullivan

In Maryland, the choices of large white waders is extensive.

Immature Little Blue Herons are the same size and shape as Snowy Egrets but are almost all white except the tips of the primaries are dark, often seen only in flight. Their legs are a dull greenish gray. The bicolored bill is also a good clue.

Snowy Egrets are always white. Look for dark legs with yellow feet and yellow lores (the area between the eye and bill). The tips of their primaries are all white. Little Egret, very similar to Snowy Egret, is incredibly rare anywhere in the US. Adults have two tubular head plumes in breeding plumage but gray lores in late summer.

Cattle Egrets are small, like Little Blues and Snowies but have a stubby yellow bill. In breeding finery, they are tinged in rust on the crown, chest and back and their bills might appear reddish. Juveniles have dark stubby bills.

Reddish Egret, like Little Egret, is hugely rare this far north. There is a pattern of vagrancy along the east coast near the Atlantic but none so far on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay. They come in two color morphs: dark and white. The white morph is uncommon even in Florida. First spring birds look remarkably like Snowy Egret but with bluish-gray lores and a thick bill. Maryland's second record was found in Somerset County in May 2020. The first record, seen in September and October 2015, was a dark morph.

Great Egret is a much larger bird compared to Little Blue Heron or Snowy Egret. They have dark legs and a yellow bill.

That's a lot of white waders but there's one more! The oddball Great White Heron, a subspecies of Great Blue Heron. This bird is usually found in Florida. It looks very similar to a Great Egret but the bill is a dull yellow with grayish lores. They are uncommon anywhere in Maryland but, for some reason, they seem to favor the area between Flag Ponds and Scientist Cliffs in Calvert County. Sure, there are a few other records scattered across the state but this stretch is currently hosting one which may be a returning bird from September 2020 through January 2021. There was also one there from September to November 2006.

To read more, click here: [How to Identify White Herons](#)

by George L. Armistead and Brian L. Sullivan



Great White Heron
Flag Ponds Nature Park, September 1, 2026.
Photo by Ben Springer



Little Blue Heron
(immature). Bill is slightly
stout and droopy, and
usually bicolored.
Photo by Kevin Karlson



Snowy Egret. Note slim, dark
bill.
Photo by Brian Sullivan



Cattle Egret. Unlike other
white herons, these egrets
have short, stout bills.
Photo by George
Armistead



Reddish Egret (immature). Rather
long bill; hint of pink at base.
Adults have drastically bicolored
bill with pink base and dark tip.
Photo by Brian Sullivan



Great Egret. Note the mostly
yellow, heavier bill compared
to Snowy.
Photo by Brian Sullivan



Great White Herons have the largest, heaviest bills,
unmistakably hefty and yellow; compare with slimmer-
billed Great Egret.
Photo by Brian Sullivan

Bird Feeders Have Caused A Dramatic Evolution Of California Hummingbirds

Beaks have grown longer and larger, and ranges have expanded to follow the feeders

by Rachel Nuwer

Hummingbird feeders are a beloved pastime for millions of backyard birders and a convenient dining spot for the birds. But for the Anna's hummingbird, a common species in the western United States, feeders have become a major evolutionary force. According to research published this week in *Global Change Biology*, artificial feeders have allowed the birds to expand their range out of Southern California up to the state's northern end. They have also driven a transformation of the birds themselves. Over just a few generations, their beaks have dramatically changed in size and shape.

"They seem to be moving where we go and changing quite rapidly to succeed in their new environments," says co-lead author Nicolas Alexandre, who conducted the work when he was a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley and is now a geneticist at Colossal Biosciences, a biotechnology company based in Dallas. "We can think of Anna's hummingbird as a commensal species, similar to pigeons."

Carleton University animal behaviorist Roslyn Dakin, who wasn't involved with the study, adds that the new paper beautifully shows "evolution in action."

It's unclear when the earliest hummingbird feeders appeared. A 1928 *National Geographic* article provided instructions for DIY feeders to observe hummingbirds, but the technology likely existed earlier. What is clear, though, is that hummingbird feeders took off after World War II. When Alexandre and his colleagues mined the text of newspaper archives dating back to 1880, they found that ads for feeders proliferated after the first patented one appeared in 1947.

To test how Anna's hummingbirds responded to the uptick in feeders, the researchers turned to the Audubon Christmas Bird Count, an annual birding survey. Data from the survey showed which of California's 58 counties the bird inhabited from 1938 to 2019. U.S. Census records indicated human population density in these same areas, while newspaper ads for feeders served as a proxy for feeder density. In addition, the team analyzed hummingbird museum specimens in 2D and 3D to quantify changes to their beaks over time. Finally, they built a model for predicting hummingbird range expansion that incorporated not just artificial feeders, but also other factors, including the locations of introduced eucalyptus trees, which can provide nectar throughout the year.

The researchers' findings suggest eucalyptus trees—which were planted en masse in California in the late 1800s—might have served as the first steppingstone for some populations of Anna's hummingbirds to expand their ranges. But hummingbird feeders played the biggest role in driving the hummingbird's northward population growth. "The feeders are what really make the difference here," says senior author Alejandro Rico-Guevara, an evolutionary biologist at the University of Washington.

The northward expansion of Anna's hummingbird was already known, says Catherine Graham, an ecologist at the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research, but the exact mechanisms driving it weren't. She says the new paper stands out as "impressive" because of the detailed explanation it offers.

The researchers also found that as feeders proliferated, Anna's hummingbird beaks got longer and larger, which may reflect an adaptation to slurp up far more nectar than flowers can naturally provide. Developing a bigger beak to access feeders "is like having a large spoon to eat with," Rico-Guevara says.

This change was more pronounced in areas where feeders were dense. But in birds that lived in colder regions north of the species' historical range, the researchers spotted the opposite trend: Their beaks became shorter and smaller. This finding also makes sense: The researchers used an infrared camera to show for the first time that hummingbirds use their beaks to thermoregulate, by dissipating heat while they are perched. A smaller beak has less surface area—and would therefore help conserve heat.

Continued on Page 11. See Hummingbirds

Hummingbirds continued

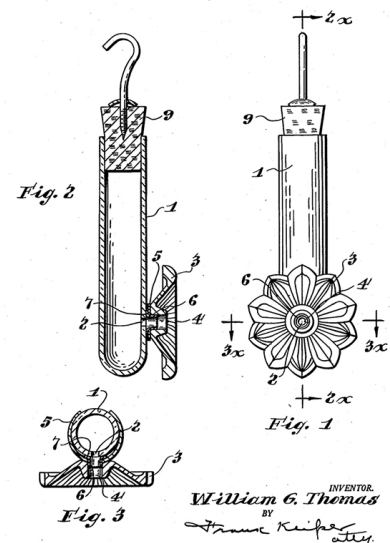
It wasn't just the size and shape of beaks that changed. In areas where feeders are dense, male hummingbirds have also developed beaks that are pointier and sharper than usual. Pointy beaks in hummingbird species often indicate aggressiveness, and the researchers think male skirmishes over feeder control may have made these birds feistier. "Anyone who has a feeder knows that hummingbirds fight like crazy," Rico-Guevara says.

The most surprising finding, though, was how quickly these changes took place. By the 1950s, hummingbirds were noticeably different from those of the 1930s: a time span of only about 10 generations of birds, Alexandre says.

Dakin says the study adds nuance to our conception of humans as an evolutionary force. Often, researchers think of humans as exerting selective pressures through environmental damage or deliberate domestication. But as with Anna's Hummingbird, "I think we're going to find more and more examples of contemporary and subtle changes," she says, "that we're shaping, indirectly, in many more species."

<https://www.science.org/content/article/bird-feeders-have-caused-dramatic-evolution-california-hummingbirds>

© 2026 American Association for the Advancement of Science. All rights reserved.



It's unclear when the first hummingbird feeders were developed, but after the first patent appeared in 1947, sales began to soar. U.S. Patent Office



Tide's Out

by Jane Klemer

Someone's pulled the plug in the marsh.
Gulls, pipers, and blues
Tread the mud flats.

Gone Fishin'

by Jane Klemer

Great Blue atop the beaver lodge
Surveys the marsh
From its vantage point.

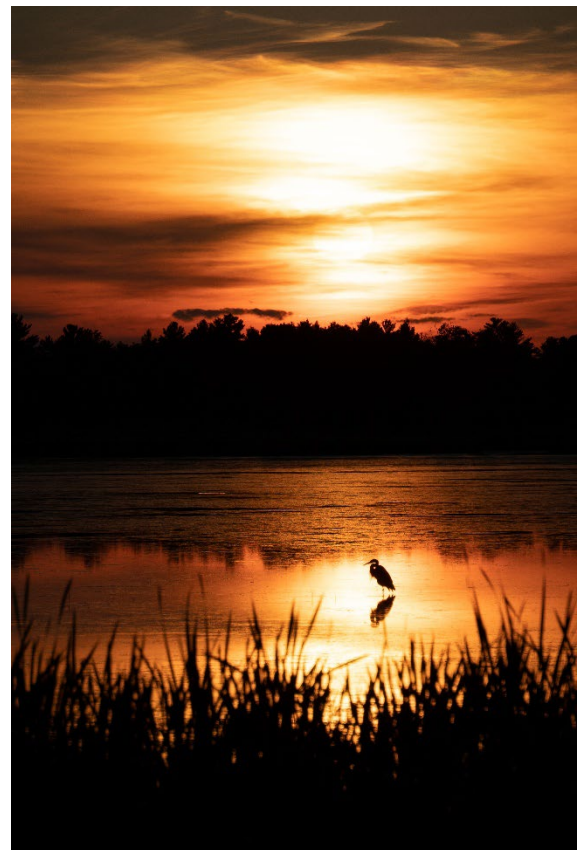


Photo by Chelsea Sorbo

Upcoming Events

September 17 and 24th – THURSDAY – 4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

FIELD TRIP – Calvert Nature Society Bird Walk

Kings Landing Park, Calvert County

3255 Kings Landing Road, Huntingtown, MD 20639

“AFTERNOON WALK AT KINGS LANDING PARK – A CALVERT NATURE SOCIETY BIRD WALK”

Leader: Ben Springer, SMAS Vice-President, Kings Landing Park staff

Join our SMAS VP and Kings Landing Park staff member and birder extraordinaire at Kings Landing Park to experience the magic of fall bird migration! Ben will lead you as you hike the park's many trails watching for warblers, vireos, orioles, flycatchers and much more as they travel through Maryland on their way to their tropical and subtropical wintering grounds of Central and South America. **All levels welcome.** Bring your camera and/or binoculars. Birding with Ben is always a treat, one of our best leaders; you don't want to miss this! Note: This is a free event from the Calvert Nature Society that SMAS is supporting.

Register directly to the following links:

9/17: <https://www.calvertparks.org/event-6829369>

9/24: <https://www.calvertparks.org/event-6829370>

September 19 – SATURDAY – 8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

FIELD TRIP – Easy Terrain Birding

Indian Head Rail Trail, Mason Springs, Charles County

Livingston Road Parking Area (38.591650, -77.112758) Near 4980 Livingston Road, Indian Head, 20640

“MIGRATION ON THE TRAIL”

Leader(s): Lynne Wheeler, Pam Brumbley

This is a great bird walk to look for fall warblers and migrating birds that is easy to walk because the rail trail is paved. The trail provides a unique opportunity to view undeveloped natural areas of forest, wetlands, and the Mattawoman Creek. Originally built in 1918 as a supply route for the Navy's Indian Head Powder Factory, this elevated rail bed passes through the Mattawoman Creek stream valley and is an eBird Hot Spot with 151 species year to date. It has many years since SMAS has offered a field trip here and we are excited to provide this opportunity again. Maximum participants 15. RSVP to Lynne at somdaudubon@yahoo.com or text 301-751-8097.

September 24 – THURSDAY – 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

MOVIE NIGHT AT DRUM POINT CLUB – Hosted by the Maryland Osprey & Nature Festival Organization

“THE LAST OSPREY”

Drum Point Club, Lusby, Calvert County

465 Overlook Drive, Lusby, MD (take Rousby Hall Road to Barreda Boulevard to Overlook Drive)

Join us for a premiere of the documentary film "The Last Osprey", directed and produced by William McKeever. McKeever also produced the "Biggest Little Fish That You Have Never Seen", a film previously shown at Drum Point Club. This event is hosted by the Maryland Osprey & Nature Festival organization, and supported by Cove Point Natural Heritage Trust, Calvert Nature Society, Drum Point Club, and the Southern Maryland Audubon Society. We will provide drinks & snacks! The event will include the 30-minute documentary followed by a presentation and discussion by Greg Kearns on the current status of the Chesapeake Bay Ospreys". Cautionary note: The film contains graphic images of sick and deceased Ospreys, including nestlings.

September 26 – SATURDAY – 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

FIELD TRIP – Easy Terrain Birding

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 Southern Maryland's premier birding hotspot 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 or 301-862-4623.

Upcoming Events continued

October 3 – SATURDAY – 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.

FIELD TRIP

Newtowne Neck State Park, St Mary's County

21308 Newtowne Neck Rd, Leonardtown, MD 20650

"AUTUMN AT NEWTOWNE NECK"

Leader: Alex Donley

Catch the tail end of fall migration along the Potomac at this great park. Pine, mixed forests, and fields allow for a host of possible species including late warblers along with the possibility of newly arriving winter species. Meet at the first parking lot on the right after the park entrance. No fee. Level, maintained dirt/gravel trails, may encounter mud, so wear appropriate shoes. Porta-john available at the beach parking lot a brief drive further down the road. RSVP to Alex at ajdonley212@gmail.com.

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

MONTHLY MEETING PROGRAM – ZOOM MEETING

"HISTORY & LESSONS OF BIRD FEEDING"

Speaker: Paul Baicich

Join us as Paul presents a story of avian culture, commerce, and conservation, emphasizing why bird feeding matters. Learn about the motives and methods from the 1890's to present day, how three common foods and methods came to be (for example, sunflower and Nyjer seeds and tube feeders), as well as five ways to feeding success and the ten basic foods. Paul is a former employee of the American Birding Association; he edited 14 of their "ABA Birdfinding Guides," edited *Birding*, ABA's bi-monthly magazine, and served as ABA's Director of Conservation and Public Policy. In addition, Paul co-edits (with Wayne Petersen) the popular monthly *Birding Community E-bulletin*. Paul is also one of the co-authors (with Margaret Barker and Carrol Henderson) of a book on the historic development of backyard bird feeding, *Feeding Wild Birds in America: Culture, Commerce, and Conservation* (Texas A&M University Press, 2015). **A zoom link to attend this meeting will be sent out prior to the meeting.**

October 10 – SATURDAY – 8 a.m. – 12 p.m.

FIELD TRIP

Calvert Cliffs State Park

Calvert County 10540 H.G. Trueman Road, Lusby, MD 20657

"FALL MIGRATION"

Leader: Alex Donley

The wooded habitat and wetland at Calvert Cliffs attract a variety of songbirds. Expect to see resident birds as well as immature and adult Neotropical migrants. Great spot for warblers. Wide trail through forest adjacent to creek and wetland. Take Rt. 2/4 south of Prince Frederick for about 14 miles. Follow signs to the park. Meet leaders in parking lot. Facilities and fee, 3-mile round trip. RSVP to Alex at ajdonley212@gmail.com

October 11 – SUNDAY – 8 a.m. – 11 a.m.

FIELD TRIP – Easy Terrain Birding

Port Tobacco River Park, Charles County

7740 Chapel Point Road, Port Tobacco, MD 20677

"KNOCK, KNOCK, WHO'S THERE?"

Leader(s): Lynne Wheeler, Pam Brumbley

Join Lynne and Pam as we hunt for what birds might be passing through, are still there, or have just arrived - as well as our favorite and infamous resident Bald Eagles Chandler and Hope. This park offers several trails along the Port Tobacco River, as well as meadow and hedgerow habitat. Flat, easy terrain, and overlook platforms. This is an eBird.org HotSpot that has documented 150 species. Maximum of 15 participants. RSVP to Lynne at somdaudubon@yahoo.com or text 301-751-8097.

Upcoming Events continued

October 17 - 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

"AUTUMN AT PLSP"

Leader: Alex Donley

Join us at Southern Maryland's premier birding hotspot 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 Alex at ajdonley212@gmail.com

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

FIELD TRIP – Birding by Kayak. A SMAS and Atlantic Kayak Company Partnering Event

Atlantic Kayak Company at Mattingly Park, Charles County

108-A Mattingly Avenue, Indian Head, MD 20640.

"BIRDING BY KAYAK WITH GABI"

Leader: Gabi Zabel

If you missed our August trip at Mallows Bay you have another chance to do birding by kayak with Gabi – this time at Mattawoman Creek. This is a habitat you should not miss. You can get up close and personal with a myriad of bird species who flit and fly along this gorgeous meandering creek and at the edges of the riparian forest. Numerous Bald Eagles nest here, and it is a great location for waterfowl, and forest interior dwelling species. Bring your own binoculars, bird guides and a sense of adventure. Gabi is a Master Naturalist, SMAS board member, and employee of Atlantic Kayak Company. All reservations are for tandem kayaking provided by Atlantic Kayak Company for a fee. Book online at www.atlantickayak.com

October 31 – SATURDAY – 12:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

FIELD TRIP – Family Birding and History Walk

Mallows Bay Park, Mallows Bay – Potomac River National Marine Sanctuary, Charles County

1440 Wilson Landing Road, Nanjemoy, MD 20662

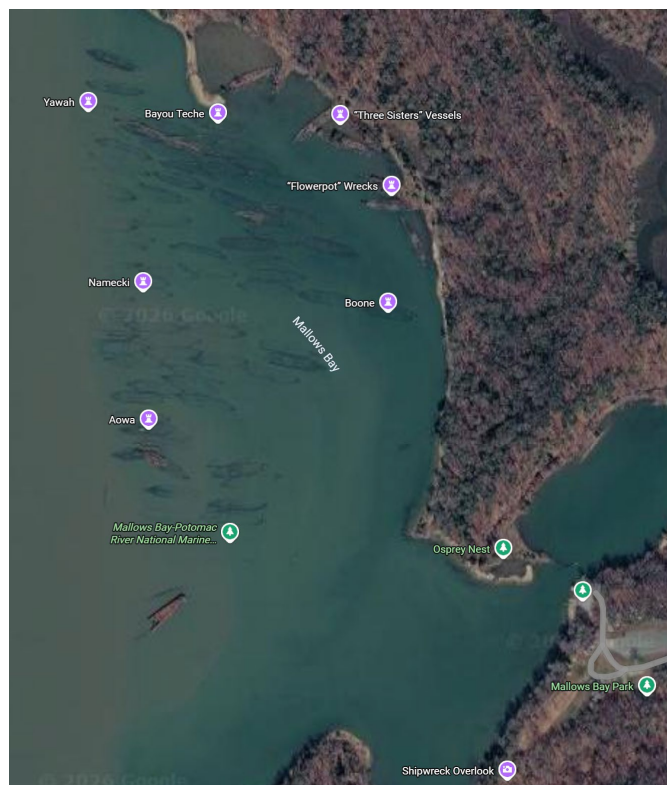
"BOO!! THE GHOSTS OF MALLOWS BAY"

Leader: Lynne Wheeler, Atlantic Kayak Company

What better way to enjoy Halloween than to visit the "Ghost Fleet" of Mallows Bay and scare up some birds! Walk with the Southern Maryland Audubon Society at Mallows Bay Park and learn about shipwrecks, archaeological sites, and wildlife all situated in a unique wetland, woodland and aquatic habitat which includes an evolving ecosystem. Atlantic Kayak will join us and share the history of this marine sanctuary. This is an easy bird walk along a one-mile trail where we will look for migrants, snatch final peeks at our summer friends, and welcome in our winter residents. Maximum participants 15. Loaner binoculars available.

RSVP to Lynne at somdaudubon@yahoo.com

or text 301-751-8097.



Welcome, New Members!

Michele Carrion, Patuxent River
Karin Coleman, Waldorf
Donnie Grate, Fort Washington
Kris Lewis, Lexington Park
Benjamin McKay, Saint Inigoes
Felicia Shingler, Clinton
Terry Watts, Suitland
Sandra Wildes, Hollywood

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

The 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 | Total Amount: _____ |
| ☐ Barn Owl, \$25 each | Total Amount: _____ |
| ☐ 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](http://www.audubon.org/membership) 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.

2026—2027 Officers

President, Will Daniel — wdaniel.somdaudubon@yahoo.com

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

Treasurer, Julie Daniel — juliemdaniel@hotmail.com

Secretary, Barbara Hill — tytito@verizon.net