

The Osprey

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<http://somdaudubon.org/>

Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society

CALEDON NATURAL AREA FIELD TRIP October 11, 2009

After meeting at the Maryland Visitor Center we left for the Caledon Natural Area (CNA) in King George Virginia. CNA, a Virginia State Park is made of 2,579 acres of forest, streams, swamps, meadows, marshes and riverfront habitats. The park is designated as an eagle sanctuary and parts of the park are only open to the public at certain times of the year.

After arriving in the park, the 15 people in attendance birded around the visitor center in the cool morning air. Thanks to the eyes of Gwen Brewer we were treated to a Bay-breasted Warbler. Of course the first raptor of the day was sighted by Mike Callahan. It was a roosting Osprey being harassed by crows. While our leader Mike left to get the park vehicle to take us through the forest to Boyd's Hole on the Potomac, Alder Flats and Jones Pond Gwen led the group. Riverside, MD can be seen directly across the Potomac from Jones Pond and the pond is just north of Mathias Point.

By the end of the morning our first SMAS trip to Caledon yielded 47 species of birds and included: Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Turkey Vulture, Canada Goose, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Wild Turkey, Laughing Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Forster's Tern, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Red-Headed, Red-bellied, Downy, Hairy and Pileated Woodpeckers, Northern Flicker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Eastern Phoebe, Blue-headed Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, House Wren, Golden- and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Eastern Kingbird, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Cedar Waxwing, Palm Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Eastern Towhee, Chipping and Song Sparrows, Northern Cardinal, Common Grackle, House Finch, American Goldfinch. Thanks go out to Gwen for helping act as co-leader while Mike moved the vehicle from place to place. One third of the attendees were first time SMAS trip attendees and we all had a great time birding.

The Washington Post recently published an interesting story about Brown Pelicans, in St. Mary's County, being impacted by the cold. Here is the link:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/01/08/AR2010010803717.html>

You may need to create an account, which is free, to view this article.

Puttin' on the Ritz by Jane Klemer

Bowl-shaped feeders
Wear fluffy white tophats.
Snowstorm masks reality.

CLEAN ENERGY JOBS AND AMERICAN POWER ACT ADVANCES IN U.S. SENATE

Audubon thanks Chairman Boxer, Senator Kerry, and members of the Environment and Public Works Committee for their leadership

Washington, DC, November 5, 2009 - The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee today passed the Clean Energy Jobs and American Power Act, S. 1733, sponsored by Senator John Kerry (D-MA) and EPW Committee Chairman Barbara Boxer (D-CA). The bill passed by a vote of 11-1, with no Republican Committee members voting.

Statement of Mike Daulton, Audubon Legislative Director

"Today's action in the Environment and Public Works Committee marks another step forward for clean energy legislation and sets the stage for full the Senate to pass a comprehensive plan that will help repower America with clean energy, create new jobs, cut our dangerous dependence on oil, reduce harmful global warming pollution, and protect our environment.

"The Clean Energy Jobs and American Power Act provides a strong foundation for success by requiring dirty power plants to clean up their acts and by establishing strong short-term emission reduction targets. Make no mistake, the momentum is building and support is growing for the passage of strong and meaningful clean energy plan.

"Audubon thanks Chairman Boxer, Senator Kerry, and the members of the Environment and Public Works Committee for their leadership and tireless efforts to advance the Clean Energy Jobs Act. Audubon looks forward to working with members of the full Senate in the coming months to pass comprehensive clean energy legislation."

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Senior Communications Manager
dwillis@audubon.org

SCIENCE REVEALS THE MESSAGE FROM THE BIRDS

Each year for more than a century, dedicated volunteers have braved snow, wind, rain and ice to record the number and location of North American birds. The carefully organized and compiled observations of tens of thousands of Citizen Scientists participating in Audubon's annual Christmas Bird Count have grown to form the world's longest uninterrupted repository of bird population information. Analyses of its data have time after time revealed important trends, alerting America to perils and opportunities with implications far beyond avian well-being. Birds are well-known barometers of environmental health. Changes in their condition can warn of threats to habitats and natural systems critical to all life on earth. Like canaries in a coal mine, they can alert us to danger. And, if we heed their warnings, caring for the birds can help us protect ourselves and the future of the world we share.

Amid mounting concerns over accelerating global climate change, Audubon looked to the birds to determine if and how these sensitive creatures might be responding to changes here in the continental U.S. Birders have long reported surprising sightings of species far north of expected ranges. But are the reports significant? If so, are they connected to documented changes in our climate? Analyses of four decades of Christmas Bird Count data provide some answers. The results confirm what bird lovers have long suspected. Findings summarized in the pages that follow offer a look at forty years of change, a peek at what the future likely holds in one part of our nation, and an urgent message.

Birds On The Move Show Significant Changes Underway

Analysis of four decades of Christmas Bird Count observations reveal that birds seen in North America during the first weeks of winter have moved dramatically northward—toward colder latitudes—over the past four decades. Significant northward movement occurred among 58% of the observed species—177 of 305. More than 60 moved in excess of 100 miles north, while the average distance moved by all studied species—including those that did not reflect the trend—was 35 miles northward.

There was also movement inland, from warmer coastal states into areas not long accustomed to winter temperatures suitable for their new arrivals.

The analysis found these trends among nearly every type of species; their sheer numbers and variety pointing to a powerful common force contributing to the movements.

For the rest of the report as well as associated graphics, please go to the following web link:

<http://tinyurl.com/a9unsg>

or if you want to try the long link:

<http://www.audubon.org/news/pressroom/bacc/pdfs/Birds%20and%20Climate%20Report.pdf>

SECOND BREEDING SEASON FOR SOME MIGRATORY SONGBIRDS

from the Bird Studies Canada Newsletter

26 October 2009 – Researchers studying migratory songbirds on stopover in the lowland thorn forests of coastal western Mexico in three consecutive summers (2005-2007) have documented a second breeding season during these birds' annual cycle. This discovery – a first for New World migrants on southward migration – was observed in five species [editor's note, birds in bold are of local interest]: the **Yellow-billed Cuckoo**, **Orchard Oriole**, Hooded Oriole, **Yellow-breasted Chat**, and Cassin's Vireo. There was evidence that the birds had already bred earlier in the year at their known breeding territories farther north in Canada and the U.S., before breeding again in Mexico on their way to their southern wintering grounds in Central and South America.

The paper "Migratory Double Breeding in Neotropical Migrant Birds" was co-authored by the University of Washington's Sievert Rohwer and Vanya Rohwer, and Keith Hobson of Environment Canada (and Chair of Bird Studies Canada's National Science Advisory Council). The article provides evidence of dual breeding ranges for these birds, and considers implications for the conservation of these species.

For more information, view the abstract on the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences website

(<http://www.pnas.org/content/106/45/19050.abstract?sid=02ad6d52-1fdc-400d-b4a4-86b68ce6d442> or <http://tinyurl.com/yap56ml>),

or read a more detailed release about the article on the ScienceDaily website

(<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/10/091026152806.htm> or <http://tinyurl.com/ygrsswx>).

Seasonal Work
by Jane Klemmer

Scarecrow in snowtime
Hangs forlorn, alone, unemployed.
This, too, will pass.

POINT LOOKOUT CBC 2009

by Bob Boxwell

It was not an auspicious start to the 2009 Christmas Bird Count season. The previous Sunday's count had been cancelled due to the blizzard and rescheduled to the 27th. Unfortunately some of the people who count for PLO would not be available, several others were on vacation (I HATE being the count stuck with the second weekend) and a last minute sick call, left us with a mere dozen birders. To top things off, we birded in the fog for most of the day.

All of this led to one of the quieter counts with 82 species and under 12,000 individuals. After a good variety of waterfowl on 2008 we were back to the more typical pattern with most of the puddle ducks missing (we almost missed Mallards!) and the diving ducks were pretty scarce in variety and numbers. Due to the frozen turf shorebirds and long-legged waders were nearly nonexistent (Sanderlings and a few Killdeer and Great Blue Herons). The hawks and owls were few with both species and numbers way down. The conditions were not conducive to sparrows viewing either. Four of the eight species tallied were represented by single digits. Last year was a bonanza of rare and unusual finds. Karma came around and we were pretty much skunked on all of the goodies from 2008.

But still it's a delight to see Common Goldeneye, scaup, Surf Scoters, and Bufflehead out of your car window. Finding Ruddy ducks and Hooded Mergansers and seeing an American Kestrel work the field make the day worthwhile. I would like to thank all the people who went out and did the hard work of finding all our birds. Please come back and join us for 2010 and bring some friends! Thank you to my parents for proving the location for our tally rally once again. And everybody's special thanks go to my wife for another delicious spaghetti and meatball dinner. Please, please, please, please, please, please, consider helping the Point Lookout count for 2010. We have great territories, great birds, a great dinner, and way too few counters!

This year's Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is scheduled for Presidents' Day Weekend (February 12 – 15).

Please save these dates!

For those of you not familiar with the GBBC, it's led by the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and it provides an opportunity for people of all ages to learn about birds and the environment we share. Visit www.birdcount.org for more information.

PARTICIPATE IN THE SECOND ANNUAL RUSTY BLACKBIRD BLITZ!

Populations of Rusty Blackbirds are crashing! Their numbers have plummeted by as much as 88-98% over the last few decades, according to data gathered between 1966 and 2006 for the North American Breeding Bird Survey and Christmas Bird Count. A species that was once considered to be abundant is rapidly disappearing before our eyes. Your observations can help save this species by arming scientists with critical information about its ecology. The Rusty Blackbird Working Group has developed the Rusty Blackbird Blitz, a winter survey whose goal is to count Rusty Blackbirds range-wide just prior to spring migration. From 30 January - 15 February, search for Rusty Blackbirds in your area and report your observations to eBird.

When?

30 January - 15 February, 2010. This is when Rusty Blackbirds become easier to find (males sing!) and the population is relatively sedentary.

What?

During a single 17-day period, volunteers will search for Rusty Blackbirds (particularly flocks or concentrations) in any potentially suitable locations or habitats. We will revisit areas of concentration in the future to determine if they are indeed Rusty Blackbird hotspots.

Why?

Rusty blackbird populations have fallen steeply, with estimates of an 85-99% population drop over the past 40 years. Although no one knows the cause for this alarming decline, winter habitat loss and degradation are likely candidates. Rusties are getting scarce and patchy in their winter distribution, making it difficult to focus the research and management we need to save the species.

Once you've collected the data, visit eBird (www.eBird.org) to submit your observations, and choose "Rusty Blackbird Blitz" as the protocol choice on the data entry pages. Note: **It's important to submit your observations even if you didn't find rusty blackbirds!** Negative data are incredibly valuable and tell us a lot if you specifically went out searching for Rusty Blackbirds and did not find any.



Credit: Robin Corcoran/USFWS

Truce/Strange Bedfellows
by Jane Klemer

This sleety day
All species feed together.
Adversity breeds trust.

WELCOME, NEW LIFE CHAPTER MEMBER!

June Jones, Accokeek

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

Kathy Babiak, Port Tobacco
Suzin Bailey, La Plata
Clint Berry, Waldorf
Lynne Blake-Hedges, Port Tobacco
Jerry & Cheri Brady, Pt Tobacco
Martin Burless Jr, Dunkirk
Faye Cales, Waldorf
James Cleaveland, Fort Washington
Lawrence Cooke, Hollywood
Janet Dunn, California
Mr. & Mrs. J. Edwards, Leonardtown
Cassandra Egloff, Oxon Hill
Joyce Ferguson, Waldorf
Janet Garlick, Waldorf
Andre Gerard, Bel Alton
Scott Hangey, Waldorf
Terry Hedrick, Cobb Island
Sharon Hulett, Huntingtown
Katie Kangas, California
Joseph Kernan, Prince Frederick
Edward McDevitt, Solomons
Betty Miller, Temple Hills
Fred Millhiser, Avenue
Mark Mueller, Lexington Park
Shirley Nowottnick, Prince Frederick
John Pugh, Chesapeake Beach
Harrison & Ann Robrecht, Ridge
Mary Rolape, Bushwood
Sue Roth, Waldorf
Betty Lou Ryan, Bryans Road
Sharon Stanley, Lexington Park
Jane Strnad, Clinton
Margaret Schmid, Accokeek
Bill Upton, Huntingtown
Paul Warren, Lusby
Richard Walsh, North Beach
Judy Watkins-Hope, Fort Washington
Casey Wojnar, Waldorf
Ryan Wolfe, Leonardtown
Ed & Gail Yatty, La Plata

FOSTER PARENTS NEEDED



Southern Maryland Audubon Society sponsors the banding of nestling birds of prey, or raptors, with serially numbered aluminum bands in cooperation with the Bird Banding Laboratory of the U. S. Department of the Interior, as part of our bird research and conservation activities in Southern Maryland. Limited numbers of Osprey and Barn Owl nestlings become available each year for adoption. The gift of \$10 for an Osprey adoption, or of \$25 for a Barn Owl adoption, contributes to a special fund for the support of raptor research and raptor conservation projects. 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, photo of a fledgling, and any other information on whereabouts or fate of the bird that may be available.

Interested? Here's how to become a foster parent of an Osprey or a Barn Owl. Send \$10.00 for each Osprey, or \$25 for each Barn Owl to:

Southern Maryland Audubon Society
ATTN: Adoption Program
c/o Heather Burk
11885 Provident Drive
La Plata, MD 20646-5416



ADOPT A RAPTOR

Name: _____

Address: _____

I wish to adopt (check one):

_____ (number of) Osprey, \$10.00 each

_____ (number of) Barn Owl, \$25.00 each

Amount Enclosed: _____

(Make checks payable to:
Southern Maryland Audubon Society)

FEBRUARY EVENTS

NEW!

For Beginners Only. Custom one-on-one (or two) trips in PG, Charles and St. Mary's Counties. If you feel that you would benefit from some individual attention to ease you up the learning curve of bird identification, we have three leaders who will help you. Contact leaders to make arrangements:

Charles - Jean Artes (301-743-2288, pojartes@aol.com).
Southern PG and Northern Charles - Chris Ordiway (301-203-8014, BirdRamble@strixvaria.org (email use preferred)).
St. Mary's - Patty Craig (eyrie@hughes.net (email only)).

FEBRUARY 3 - Wednesday - 7:30 p.m.

Spring Dell Center, Charles County
6040 Radio Station Road, La Plata, MD
"Raptors Rule! A Live Bird of Prey Program"
MIKE CALLAHAN, *Naturalist, Nanjemoy Environmental Education Center*

Eastern Screech Owl, Barred Owl, Red-tailed Hawk, and Bald Eagle are expected to be in attendance for this always popular program. Meet and learn about these magnificent predators and hear about various raptor adventures. Mike, also our SMAS Raptor Conservation Chair, hopes that other co-presenters will share in this evening. Photographing of the birds is welcome, as is sharing your own raptor stories and tales.

FEBRUARY 6 - Sunday - 8 a.m. - noon

Jefferson Patterson Park, Calvert County. Field Trip
"WINTER WATERFOWL TRIP"
Leader: Tyler Bell (301-862-4623, jtylerbell@yahoo.com). Open fields and wooded areas can provide good land birding. River frontage for

close views of waterfowl in winter. Contact the leader for directions to the meeting location. RSVP required.

MARCH 3 - Wednesday - 7:30 p.m.

La Plata United Methodist Church, Charles County. Monthly Meeting
3 Port Tobacco Road (Rt. 6 at Rt. 301), La Plata, MD

"Designing with Plants for Wildlife"

JOEL M. LERNER, *"Washington Post" and syndicated landscape garden columnist*

Come learn of this noted landscape consultant's theory of having good outdoor design while using plants that are beneficial to birds and other wildlife. A noted author, consultant, and lecturer, Mr. Lerner is also founder of the firm Environmental Design and the creator of "Lernscaping", a unique system of design that matches personalities to properties. Please bring a canned donation for the church's food pantry!

Continued on page 5

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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.

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