

The Osprey

Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society



Yellow-headed Blackbird
photo by Patricia Rose

In This Issue

CBC Ft. Belvoir, MD

2010 Port Tobacco CBC

Osprey Newsletter Report

**Yellow-Headed Blackbird
in Callaway**

Please join us!

The 2011 GBBC will take place
Friday, February 18, through
Monday, February 21.



<http://somdaudubon.org/>

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT FT. BELVOIR MD SECTOR, JANUARY 2, 2011

by Carol Gheblian, Coordinator

Showers, rain, icy waterways greeted participants in the 2010 Maryland sector of the Ft. Belvoir Christmas Bird Count held on Jan. 2. But, undaunted, the 20 field counters and 5 at their feeders found 82 species (down from our usual 90) and 12,946 individuals.

Our keen-eyed waterfront teams found 20 species of waterfowl despite the ice cover. Best bird of the day was the male Blue-winged Teal found by Gwen Brewer and George Jett. Bald Eagles were found in good numbers and even though screened heavily from the parties' careful notations, our 35 total will no doubt be further pared by the Ft. Belvoir compiler. The 12 immature found on an ice floe by Jean Artes and Mike Callahan canceled out most of the other sub-adult eagles noted that day. Not a good morning for owls, Bob Lukinic had to practically go yank an Eastern Screech-Owl from his box to add to the species count! Best encounters of the day were no doubt the 23 Red-headed Woodpeckers found in a swamp from the Indian Head Rail Trail by Beth and Jason Groth—the only sighting for the entire count circle. They also counted an amazing flock of 10 Brown Creepers in Chapman State Park, South. Both of these sites are in Audubon designated Important Bird Areas. Weather made it hard to note any population trends, but we need to observe a moment of silence for the still missing Northern Bobwhites. Nor were Rusty Blackbirds, a species of concern, found. Winter finches were also missing.

We ended the day with good food and fellowship at the tally rally.

2010 PORT TOBACCO CHRISTMAS COUNT

On December 19, 2010, 24 people ventured out for this Charles County count. Our number included 3 helpers from Virginia with Mike Callahan at Matthias Point, 3 helpers from other Maryland areas (Bill Hubick from Pasadena and Geraldine and Tom Feild [editor's note: no, it's not a typo!] from Laurel), and those faithful folks in sectors that some have covered for many years. The 12 groups (1-4 people in a group) covered in total 47 miles on foot and 298 miles by car, and logged an impressive 100 hours. In addition, four groups spent time listening for owls in the early morning hours, with great results for Dave Henderson and his sons Dylan and Daniel, who had 9 Eastern Screech-Owls and both Barred and Great Horned Owls. A thrilling find this year was Short-eared Owl at Allen's Fresh, seen at dusk by our "northern" helpers.

This year we found a total of 91 species in the count circle and about 17,000 individual birds - both very good numbers for this count compared to recent

continued▶

years. Temperatures were quite pleasant, the wind was light, and the sun came out in the afternoon. A colder than normal December, however, led to most water bodies except the Potomac River being frozen. Although this made finding waterfowl more of a challenge this year, 14 species were seen on the count. Numbers were low for Tundra Swan (27), Lesser Scaup (25), and Hooded Merganser (4), but good finds were Wood Ducks by Tom Seaton, Northern Pintails by Bob Lukinic and Carol Ghebelian, Greater Scaup and Common Goldeneyes by the Hendersons, Northern Shovelers by Gwen Brewer, and 152 American Black Ducks by Jean Artes and Lynne Wheeler.

Black and Turkey Vultures were seen in good numbers (164 and 148, respectively), and an unprecedented 367 Double-crested Cormorants were spotted (350 by the Hendersons) - perhaps a reflection of the increased numbers breeding in this region. Raptors were also seen in good numbers, with 8 species and high counts of Bald Eagles (65), Northern Harriers (9), and Red-tailed (34) and Red-shouldered Hawks (22). A highlight for the second year for Mike Callahan and his VA crew was Peregrine Falcon.

Those elusive Rock Pigeons were seen by both George Harrington and Tom Seaton this year - can they be increasing? A greater highlight for George H. certainly was American Tree Sparrow; Bill Hubick also had some at Allen's Fresh. Woodpecker numbers were on the high side, with a large number of Red-headed (179) and Pileated Woodpeckers (27) and five other species. Beth and Jason Groth did particularly well with woodpeckers, nuthatches, and creepers in Myrtle Grove, Bumpy Oak, and the Indian Head Rail Trail, with 34 Red-bellied Woodpeckers, 24 Downy Woodpeckers, 28 White-breasted Nuthatches, and 6 Brown Creepers. The teams of George Harrington, Peter Blank, and Pradip Sahdev and Maggie and Joe Tieger had a total of 42 Horned Larks; single American Pipits were spotted by Mike Callahan's team and by Bill Hubick; and a few Killdeer were scattered here and there despite the snow-covered fields.

Northern irruptive species were in very small numbers or absent entirely, with 4 Purple Finches (Artes and Wheeler, and the Tieggers), no Pine Siskins, and 8 Red-breasted Nuthatches (various sectors). The number of Carolina Wrens was down markedly - only 47, which is less than half of totals for recent years. This cold winter has been giving them a tough time, and we may be seeing the effects of last year's winter as well.

It was, however, a good year for sparrows. As mentioned above, two people had American Tree Sparrows and another great find was 29 White-crowned Sparrows at Allen's Fresh (Hubick and the Feilds). A large number of Savannah Sparrows was also counted (117). Other sparrows present in good number were Eastern Towhee, Dark-eyed Junco, and Chipping, Field, Fox, Song, Swamp, and White-throated Sparrow. Rusty Blackbirds were seen at three locations but in small numbers (1 or 2 individuals): Gwen Brewer in

Nanjemoy and George Jett at Port Tobacco Court House and Windmill Point (Cedar Point WMA). On the single observation list (only one individual noted) was Horned Grebe, Wild Turkey, American Woodcock, Eastern Phoebe, Winter Wren, and Gray Catbird. Thanks to the great help this year, we really did not miss any species that we might expect to see and we had several great finds. And it is not just birds that one can enjoy doing a Christmas Count - one of the highlights for the compiler included seeing beaver tracks in the snow at Bluff Point!

Thanks again to all who participated!
Gwen Brewer, Compiler

**THE 2011 GBBC WILL TAKE PLACE
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 18, THROUGH
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 21.**

Please join us!

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent. Anyone can participate, from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event. It's free, fun, and easy—and it helps the birds. We'll be adding updated GBBC materials for the next count as they become available.

<http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/>

BEAUVUE PONDS, JANUARY 23, 2011

by Sigrid Stiles

Two people showed up for the Beavue Ponds walk, Elaine Stonebreaker (not a SMAS member) and Bill Moody who I had seen the day before and convinced he wanted to join me. When I checked the ponds on Friday they were mostly ice-free and there were a fair amount of waterfowl. Over the weekend the frigid weather took care of that. Sunday one pond had some open water and most of the birds had fled elsewhere. It was cold, windy and overcast. Both Tundra and Mute swans were there, a few Ring-necked Ducks remained, a lone Ruddy Duck, some Gadwall, a possible American Wigeon, and some Mallards. All the other ponds were frozen as was the creek at the end of Abell's Wharf Road. No American Kestrel and no Eastern Meadowlarks, both of which had been there on Friday. A few crows and a handful of flyover Canada Geese. All-in-all, not a very productive day. We were out for about 45 minutes before we called it quits and headed home to warm up.

START YOUR YEAR OFF BIRDING!

by *Sigrid Stiles*

The St. Mary's Chase was not much of a chase this year. Sue Hamilton was the only one to join me at Point Lookout SP and we spent the whole morning in the park. The weather was lovely as was the birding. Early on we saw what was surely the best bird of the day, a female Harlequin Duck, which was pointed out to us by another group of birders who had far younger eyes than we. Loons were in short supply and Northern Gannets were absent. A huge raft of Ruddy Ducks north of Tanner's Creek inlet was a surprise. We saw both Surf and Black Scoters and the rest of the usual suspects, not huge numbers, but not bad either.

The neatest encounter of the day was a surprise fly-over Great Horned Owl being pursued by a single crow! We watched as it flew through the woods heading right for us. It then landed in a tree right over our heads making it almost impossible for us to see its 'horns'. It flew off shortly, but we did see it again later as it tried to shake off the persistent crow.

Nice sightings were the three mimids: Gray Catbird, Northern Mockingbird and Brown Thrasher. And no trip to Pt. Lookout would be complete without a sighting of Brown-headed Nuthatches and the beautiful pair of Bald Eagles at Lake Conoy.

[Editor's note: Marty Cribb was initially scheduled to lead this trip but had to cancel at the last minute due to illness in the family. Sigrid stepped up to the plate to lead this for which I am eternally grateful!]

Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep

by *Jane Klemer*

Drowsing Canadas
Drift with the wind and current
On their waterbed.

THE OSPREY NEWSLETTER

REPORT FROM THE BOARD

FEB 3, 2011

The following are highlights from the last two month's actions by the board.

Sign-on Agreements:

The board voted to support the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service/Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuges Draft Predator Management Plan Environmental Assessment.

Fundraising:

Note the name of our new 2011 fund raising effort is going to be "Tailgate Bird Count". It is scheduled for April 30/ May 1st. Watch for additional information on the SMAS website.

As mentioned previously new T-Shirts are being designed. They will be available early 2011. The shirts are for sale by the SMAS bookstore which is featured at all Audubon program meetings and various local events.

The results are in from our holiday fundraising efforts. Between the gift wrapping at Wild Bird Lovers in Waldorf and the Lenox figurine raffle we added \$260.00 to the coffers. Many thanks to Millie Kriemelmeyer for all of her hard work.

Come Fly with Us:

New or old members, if you have not signed up to join SMAS on our YahooGroups email list, we recommend you do so. Join our flock and stay informed of upcoming programs, field trips and interesting local bird sightings. Send your full name, as you'd like it to appear, and your email address to Tyler Bell, the listowner, at jtylerbell@yahoo.com and he can add you directly.

Don't forget to place our new website as a favorite internet site. If you do not receive our monthly newsletter electronically or via the USPS, you can access it at our website:

www.somdaudubon.org



Male Red-bellied Woodpecker at Allen's Fresh, Charles County.
Photo by Bill Hubick

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD IN CALLAWAY, ST. MARY'S COUNTY

By Patricia Rose

On Saturday, January 22, 2011 at 11:01 a.m. I looked out my kitchen window looking for birds to add to my daily list and I saw a brown bird with a yellow vent near the burn barrel eating cracked corn in my back yard. As I tried to figure out what the bird was it turned and I could see yellow on its face and breast. Oh my gosh, oh my gosh, I think it is a Yellow-headed Blackbird (YHBL). I had seen the mature male in October 2010 that Patty Craig had located in Scotland, St. Mary's County, Maryland and this bird looked a lot like her bird.

I then reached for my two bird books I keep on the kitchen counter, first the Peterson and then the Stokes and there in the Stokes was a first year male and this young male with a brown head still looked a lot like the bird in the photo. Time to tell the birding world, MDOSPNEY [editor's note: Maryland bird discussion listserv], well after I get a few photos for proof in case he flies away.

Immediately people started calling and showing up from Anne Arundel, St. Mary's, Fort Washington, Calvert, Baltimore, Montgomery, Annapolis, Bel Air, Greenbelt, Charles, Laurel, Ellicott City, Gaithersburg, Columbia, Salisbury, and many other locations, wanting to see the YHBL. I decided to open my home to all that came, so from January 22-31 I had 42 plus birding visitors in my kitchen and several other birders who stayed outside to observe the guest of honor. During this time several people came back more than once to see this lovely bird.

The YHBL came in exactly at 7:46 a.m. three days in a row (1/23, 1/24 and 1/25) with a flock of Common Grackles, Red-winged Blackbirds and Brown-headed Cowbirds. They would arrive first in a couple trees across the street and then fly over to the maple tree in my backyard. After sitting for a few minutes then the YHBL with the other birds would drop to the ground behind my kitchen windows, I'm talking within 25 feet of my windows and they would eat until flushed by the squirrels, a vehicle on the side road or the breeze. The YHBL was noticeably bigger than the Red-winged Blackbirds which made it easier to find him in the large flock of birds.

Only a couple people did not see the YHBL while it visited but I believe they still enjoyed coming and seeing the hawks, Bald Eagles, Fox Sparrows, Cedar Waxwings, Pine Siskins, Brown Creeper, Rusty Blackbird, Red-, and White-breasted Nuthatches and up to 37 species of birds. Those that did get to enjoy the YHBL, got to observe it close up, take pictures, tell stories of other birding adventures and share locations of other wonderful birds with the group that was in my kitchen that day.

My son Chris on the 2nd day suggested me getting all the visitors signatures and taking group pictures of all the

birders, which I did. My 2nd Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Maryland and the District of Columbia now besides being a great resource also acts as a record of those who came to visit the YHBL.

Even though the YHBL has not returned since February 1st (landed across the street and then the flock flew not to return again) I have wonderful memories of this rarity and of the many knowledge filled birders who shared my kitchen with me during the visit of our guest of honor.

The local newspaper, The Enterprise, also ran an article on Friday, February 4th which helped to get the word out about the bird now that it has left my home but hopefully those that read the article and see the picture will recognize the bird and others will still get to see it at someone else's home.

I would like to thank Tyrone Harris (my partner), MDOSPNEY, and all the kind, caring, fun loving, unique 42 plus birders that came to my home. Thank you all for your stories, jokes, Field List of Birds of Maryland, pictures, donuts, candy and wonderful emails and calls. When my next rarity arrives you are all welcome to come join me in my kitchen once again.

Patricia Viola Rose
240-256-5423 cell

Patricia Rose and her birding friends after watching the Yellow-Headed Blackbird in her backyard.



From left to right, Brad Cernohorsky, John Dennehy, Patricia Rose, Jim Green, Stan Arnold, Dave Brenneman and Jim Stasz.
Photo by Joe Hanfman

SHORT-TAILED ALBATROSS: BLESSED EVENT

Last month, we reported on the first U.S. Pacific nesting of Short-tailed Albatross, with a nest of questionable viability on Kure Atoll, and another more likely productive nest on Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge:

www.refugenet.org/birding/JanSBC11.html#TOC02

The great news is that the Midway egg hatched in mid-January. You can read the announcement here:

www.fws.gov/pacific/news/news.cfm?id=2144374679

There are also photos. The Midway chick is sometimes difficult to see, but is visible directly under the male parent:

www.fws.gov/pacific/t/?id=320

Unfortunately, the Kure Atoll eggs failed, but this was not a surprise, since they were thought to be the product of a suspected female-female pair:

www.acap.aq/latest-news/the-short-tailed-albatross-nest-fails-on-kure-atoll-hawaii

Taken in part from the most recent E-bulletin on the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) website:

www.refugenet.org/birding/birding5.html

Paul J. Baicich
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The Sentries *by Jane Klemer*

Crows shriek their alarm,
Though I come in peace
Their message is loud and clear.

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, \$25 for each Barn Owl, or \$35 for each American Kestrel to:

Melissa Boyle
10144 Point Lookout Road
Scotland, MD 20687



ADOPT A RAPTOR

Name: _____

Address: _____

I wish to adopt (check one):

_____ (# of) Osprey, \$10.00 each

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

_____ (# of) American Kestrel, \$35.00 each

Amount Enclosed: _____

Make checks payable to:
Southern Maryland Audubon Society

MARCH EVENTS

MARCH 2 – WEDNESDAY – 7:30 p.m.
Leonardtwn Library, St. Mary's County
23250 Hollywood Road (Rt. 245), Leonardtown, MD
20650

“Osprey of Southern Maryland”

GREG KEARNS, Maryland-National Capital Park and
Planning Commission, Patuxent River Park

Greg has been observing and banding osprey on the
Patuxent River for over 20 years and has witnessed popu-
lation changes and trends since he started working at the
Patuxent River Park at Jug Bay in the late 1970's. You will
be on the edge of your seat as Greg talks about this spe-
cies of raptor that is on our SMAS logo and is part of our
Adopt-a Raptor program.

March 5 – Saturday - 8 AM - noon
Patuxent River Naval Air Station, St. Mary's County –
Field Trip

“LATE WINTER LAND BIRDS, WATERFOWL”

Leader: Dean Newman (240-895-7321,
dean.newman@verizon.net).

This trip has produced Lapland Longspur, Snow Bunting,
Short-eared Owl, and waterfowl in the past. Previous at-
tendees raved about this field trip. You must sign up for
this trip before February 28 due to security requirements;
social security number required. Meet at the Park & Ride
lot across from the Lexington Park Post Office on Tulagi
Place. RSVP required by February 28!!!

APRIL 6 – WEDNESDAY – 7:30 p.m.
Faith United Methodist Church, Prince George's County
15769 Livingston Road, Accokeek, MD 20607

“Landscaping with Native Plants- Enhancing Biodiversity”

ANN BODLING, Hard Bargain Farm Naturalist
Ann has been involved in conservation and horticultural
pursuits all of her adult life. Come and hear a discussion
of why native plants matter, advantages of landscaping
with natives, and how to get started planting natives in your
backyard. The program will include a visual tour of mid-
Atlantic native plants and native plant gardens.

April 23 – Saturday – 8 AM (2/3 day)
Western Charles County – Field Trip

“CHASE!”

Leader: George Jett (301-843-3524, gmjett@comcast.net).
Starting from Pt. Tobacco, and cruising around the lower
western side of Charles County. Will meet for carpooling in
La Plata. Contact leader for details. Possibility of 100 spe-
cies in April! Bring lunch, drinks. Bathrooms along the way.
No fee. Limit 10, RSVP required.

MAY 13, 14, 15 – Friday, Saturday and Sunday
Dover, Delaware Area Hotspots – Field Trip
“Migrating Shorebirds and Spawning Horseshoe Crabs”
Leader: Millie Kriemelmeyer
(301-372-8766; milliek@radix.net).

Dover, Delaware area hotspots will be visited: Bombay
Hook National Wildlife Refuge, DuPont Nature Center, and
Delaware Bay beaches. Early (now) hotel reservation at
the Dover Comfort Inn is recommended. Reservations with
trip leader are required.

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

April Bailey - Waldorf
Sharon Bickel - Port Republic
Abby Bookhultz - Huntingtown
Michelle Bradshaw - Bel Alton
Virginia Decesaris - Owings
Moise Devillier - Saint Leonard
David Fitzgerald - Chesapeake Beach
Vicki Gernhardt - La Plata
Marcellus Hunter - Charlotte Hall
Earle Hunter - Park Hall
John Lewis - Oxon Hill
June McComas - Solomons
Wayne McBain - Indian Head
Thao Nguyen - Leonardtown
Janice O'Rear - Hollywood
Kay Parris - Owings
Michael Payne - Leonardtown
Edward Raymond - Lusby
Rand Rensvold - Brandywine
Mary Rohland - Oxon Hill
William Thompson - Hughesville
Felicia Tippet - Dunkirk
Nancy Travis - Lusby
Julie Vanderslice - Cobb Island
Katalin Vogelsang - Waldorf

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The deadline for the Osprey is the fifth of each month.
Please send all short articles, reports, unique sight-
ings, conservation updates, calendar items, etc. to
the above address.