

# The Osprey

Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society



**Common Redpoll**  
Photo by: George Jett

## In This Issue

**Fort Belvoir CBC Report**

**Report From The Board**

**Red Knots & Horseshoe  
Crabs**

**Jefferson Patterson Park  
and Museum**

**Upcoming Events**

**College of Southern MD & SMAS  
Offering a Course on Birds in April**

*see page 2 for more details*



<http://somdaudubon.org/>

## FORT BELVOIR, MARYLAND SECTOR, 2011 CBC, JANUARY 1, 2012 by Carol Ghebelian

Would you believe that we had 23 dedicated field counters and 4 feeder counters spend New Year's Day counting birds! We lucked out with good weather, little wind, and open water, as opposed to rain and icy waterways for the 2010 count. However, the warmer fall season affected our individuals count numbers, especially the waterfowl in general.

We tallied **85** species (about our average number) and 12,913 individual birds. The warmer weather probably did account, however, for one new species added to our total sector count begun in the 1980's. Gwen Brewer and the Groth team each found Common Yellowthroats (3) bringing our total historical species number for this sector to 129. (Actually we were surprised that we had not found in earlier years this often lingering warbler but searched back through the records to confirm!)

The usual number of waterfowl species were found by teams covering the Potomac River, Piscataway, Pomonkey, and Mattawoman Creeks, and the ponds of the Piscataway Wastewater Treatment Plant - the latter always reliable for Northern Shovelers (135 found by George Jett and Gwen Brewer, doing their circling feeding frenzy). George Harrington at Mattawoman Creek found the only American Wigeons, Green-winged Teal, and both Pied-billed and Horned Grebes. Most of the Tundra Swans and the historical raft of Scaup were seen on the Potomac Virginia side of the count circle this year, thus not countable by us. Bald Eagles reported were screened down to 31 (23 adult; 8 immature), but will be further pared when our details are compared with those seen from Virginia--as no doubt will our high vulture totals also. Beth and Jason Groth again found a bonanza of Red-headed Woodpeckers in the swamps of the Indian Head Rail Trail (36) - many immature, but 3 other teams also found these spectacular birds for a total of 44. The Groths tallied a Pied-billed Grebe in a pond at the rail trail - also excitedly reported to another party by SMAS walkers on the trail, Mary Burton and Cynthia Bravo. One Northern Harrier, not often found, was spotted over Mattawoman Creek. Bob Lukinic can be relied upon to find the American Kestrel at Marshall Hall and the Eastern Screech-Owl roosting in his box. Great Horned Owls were heard by three parties; Gwen Brewer spotted a daytime roosting Barred Owl. Chris Ordiway's team found the only Wild Turkey. Land birds were seen in good numbers but the warmer season made it hard to note any remarkable population trends. Sadly, Northern Bobwhite have been missing on this count since 2004. Nor were Rusty Blackbirds, a species of concern, found.

We were pleased to again have our Fort Washington area covered by Virginians, Hal Day and Charlene Sellner, and welcomed to the count Chris Ordiway's Mother, Pat Rose and new SMAS member, Angela Marlowe. Art Krueger and Pat Biles and her young daughters, Isabella and Charlotte, counted at their feeders. Many thanks to each for their participation and for the fine food and fellowship at the tally rally.

---

## REPORT FROM THE BOARD JANUARY 25, 2012

The following are highlights from the January 25, 2012 board meeting held at the United Way building in La Plata, Maryland.

The board discussed a new event which SMAS is interested in, a Monarch Butterfly Festival. This event, slated for next year's activities, will be held in Cobb Island in conjunction with the towns' citizens association. Linda Riggs, Cobb Island resident and business owner, attended the board meeting. Questions and ideas arose with follow-up scheduled for our next meeting.

A new fundraising initiative, a Chic-fil-a "Spirit Night", continues to be fine tuned. Additional locations are being contacted to broaden this exciting new idea.

Continuing with new initiatives and ideas the board discussed the need to advertise to our membership the upcoming birding classes that three of our SMAS member and educators are teaching for the College of Southern Maryland (CSM) Continuing Education Community Education offerings this spring. The class syllabuses were designed by current board member, past president, and retired St. Mary's College professor Dr. Ernie Willoughby. Watch out for additional details or check the recently mailed CSM Continuing Education class schedule.

The remainder of the board meeting consisted with discussions of the following:

- Repair of the Mattawoman Natural Environmental Area Wildlands-George Wilmot Trail.
- Request from the Charles County Garden Club for SMAS to provide a lecture on Butterflies and Birds.
- Committee chair reports.

The next board meeting will be held at 7 p.m., Wednesday, February 29 at the Charlotte Hall Library. All are welcome. Please migrate on over!

### WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

A. Boehm, Saint Leonard, MD  
Linda Carlson, Leonardtown, MD  
Deborah Emerson, North Beach, MD  
Mark Fondren, California, MD  
David Frazer, Chesapeake Beach, MD  
Stacy Hendrix, Lexington Park, MD  
Caroline Matricciani, Lexington Park, MD  
Kate M. Roff, Fort Washington, MD  
Ella M. Russell, Abell, MD  
Nancy Swenson, Waldorf, MD

## COLLEGE OF SOUTHERN MARYLAND AND SMAS OFFERING A COURSE ON BIRDS IN APRIL

The College of Southern Maryland is offering a course titled "The Life of Birds" at three Southern Maryland Campuses in April. The course has been developed in consultation with the Southern Maryland Audubon Society, and is offered in the Personal Enrichment Department. It is open to anyone interested in learning about the birdlife of southern Maryland.

The course description in the catalog reads: The Life of Birds, PEP-8370. Conducted by educators from the Southern Maryland Audubon Society, and designed for anyone wishing to better appreciate the birds living around us. Anatomical and physiological adaptations for flight, behavior and ecology, and classification and field identification will be covered. A 4-hour Saturday field trip is planned to local birding spots.

The course is offered at the La Plata, and Leonardtown, campuses on Thursdays, April 5 through April 26, from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m., with a field trip on Saturday morning, April 28; and at the Prince Frederick campus on Fridays, April 13 to May 4, with a Saturday morning field trip April 14. The instructors, all long-time members of SMAS, are Bob Boxwell, Mike Callahan, and Ernie Willoughby. Tuition is \$10, and fees \$88.

To learn more about this course and how to register for it contact Shaunda Holt, Personal Enrichment Program Coordinator at 301-934-7652, [srholt@csm.edu](mailto:srholt@csm.edu)

### BIRDS WIN IN HISTORIC CHANGE OF MENHADEN HARVEST LIMITS

On 9 November the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) adopted a new limit reference point (i.e., threshold) that is substantially more conservative than the present one: 15% Maximum Spawning Potential (up from 8% MSP). They also adopted the most conservative target option (40%MSP). This regulatory change means that catches will be reduced by about 28% compared to the average catch for the past 5 years, leaving approximately 60,000 metric tons of additional menhaden for the broader ecosystem. This change represents a win for Osprey, Common Loons, Northern Gannets, Brown Pelicans, Royal Terns and the many other birds that depend on these fish in the Chesapeake Bay.

Nearly 100,000 comments were submitted to the Commission on menhaden as of November 2. Of these, the overwhelming majority of comments (approximately 90%) supported the most conservative option for a new threshold. For those of you who expressed your support for a change in regulations on behalf of birds, your voice was heard. Thank you.

Bryan D. Watts, Director, Center for Conservation Biology,  
College of William and Mary and Virginia Commonwealth  
University

---

## MIDWAY ISLAND ATOLL NWR ALBATROSS NEWS!

She's Back! (December 2, 2011)

On December 1, the world's oldest Laysan Albatross, a female named "Wisdom", was sighted by a Fish and Wildlife Service biologist for the first time this breeding season nesting on Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge. Having survived the tsunami generated by Japan's earthquakes last March, Wisdom has returned along with her mate. She was observed in her normal location behind the Bravo Barracks and was proudly incubating an egg. Wisdom is at least 61 years old. She was banded as a nesting adult in the same location by Chan Robbins in December 1956. Robbins estimated that the bird was a minimum of 5 years old at the time.

The oldest albatross in the world appears to be a Northern Royal Albatross which was located on the South Island of New Zealand and was named "Grandma." She reached a banded age of 51.5 years and probable actual age of 61+ years.



**Short-tailed Albatross**  
Photo credit - Pete Leary/USFWS

The Short-tailed Albatross Couple Has Returned to Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge! (Nov. 15, 2011)

The same Short-tailed Albatross couple that reared the first documented chick on Midway Atoll last year, has just returned for an encore performance. Staff biologists were ecstatic to see them both, first the male - then the female. They soon observed preening activity and then subsequently the female laid an egg on November 9. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service has expended much effort to attract this endangered species to once again nest on Midway Atoll. At one time Short-tailed Albatross ruled the Pacific Ocean, however turn of the century feather hunting activity decreased their numbers. While decoys are positioned in the background the "real" male short-tailed albatross, a.k.a. golden gooney, cares for his egg on Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge.

Pacific Islands External Affairs Office  
300 Ala Moana Boulevard, Room 5-311  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96850  
808.792.9481  
<http://www.fws.gov/pacificislands>

## AFTER LEAN ACORN CROP IN NORTHEAST, EVEN PEOPLE MAY FEEL THE EFFECTS

NYTimes, Dec 2, 2011

Here's a link to an article in the New York Times about the side effects of the acorn crop failure in the northeast this fall: <http://tinyurl.com/79uvjqg>

The DC area had a similar acorn crop failure the previous fall and it sure seemed like spring 2011 was awful for ticks!

## RED KNOTS AND HORSESHOE CRABS

by Millie Kriemelmeyer

May 18 to 20 is the field trip to Delaware beaches to see migrating Red Knots and other shorebirds feasting and fattening on horseshoe crab eggs. Join the SMAS group to witness the annual spectacle of horseshoe crabs spawning in the sand and shorebirds jostling at the nests for the protein-rich eggs, which will fuel the last leg of their migration to northern Canada.

The Comfort Inn at 222 S. DuPont Hwy in Dover provides our overnight accommodations for the trip. I recommend that you call Choice Hotels or the Dover Comfort Inn now and reserve your room. Several major events occur in Dover on this weekend, and hotels are filling now.

All ages are welcome on this trip.

Contact me for more information about the trip.

Choice Hotels: 800-424-6423  
Comfort Inn Dover: 302-674-3300

Millie Kriemelmeyer, 301-372-8766  
[mkriemelmeyer@me.com](mailto:mkriemelmeyer@me.com)



**Red Knot**  
Photo by: Bill Hubick

---

## FIELD TRIP REPORT FOR MATTAWOMAN NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL AREA, CHARLES COUNTY

On November 19, 2011, our joint Audubon Naturalist Society/Southern Maryland Audubon Society group set out on the George Wilmot Trail to enjoy this beautiful area. The nine participants were lucky once again this year that a cold wind was not blasting us along the waterfront views of Mattawoman Creek - the biggest challenge this year was following the trail! The white blazes are really few and far between, and the greenbrier has taken over the portion of the trail that travels along Mattawoman Creek before turning back into the woods. Hopefully this will be remedied by SMAS volunteers this spring with the blessing of the Maryland Park Service. If you go, remember those breadcrumbs!

After picking up a few common species in the parking lot at Lackey High School, we proceeded to the trailhead off of Route 224 and began our trek towards the creek. We also said goodbye to Carol Ghebelian, who had delivered not only the ANS participants to the meeting location, but a loaf of Cora Fulton's good bread to enjoy later!

The warm late fall weather this year made us wonder what waterfowl and other winter birds might be present. On our walk along the Wilmot Trail, we did pick up a few of our winter visitors: Brown Creeper, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Dark-eyed Junco, White-throated Sparrow, Hermit Thrush, and Winter Wren. Several Red-headed Woodpeckers were present as we got closer to the water, and they were busy fussing at one another with their rattling commentary. White-breasted nuthatch, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Northern Flicker and Downy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers were also seen and/or heard as we walked through the woods. Before we came to the small streambed on our way to Mattawoman Creek, we heard the wonderful music of Tundra Swans calling! In all, about 150 swans were present- what a treat. Also present in the wide section of Mattawoman Creek were Canada Goose, American Black Duck, Green-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Ring-necked Duck, Northern Pintail, Mallard, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Hooded Merganser, Ruddy Duck, and American Coot. Pintails, shovelers, geese, wigeon, and ring-necks were in particularly good numbers. Dr. Pete Blank's sharp eyes spotted a lone female Canvasback, giving us a total of 13 waterfowl species! Hooded Merganser, Mallard, and Gadwall were busy at times with group social display bouts, in which males perform courtship displays to attract a female mate. Our northern ducks are unusual among birds in that they have social courtship in the fall and winter, selecting mates and forming pair bonds months before the breeding season.

After a scouting trip to find a way through the greenbrier by the leader, a few brave souls followed and worked their way to another vantage point on the Mattawoman. There we

primarily saw Canada Geese, Mallards, and Ring-necked Ducks. A Killdeer was flushed along the way, but no snipe or other shorebirds were found. Other water-associated birds were a good number of Great Blue Herons, several Great Egrets, Pied-billed Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, and Ring-billed Gull. We had looks at adult and immature Bald Eagles along the river and Northern Harrier over the marsh. We ended the morning with 45 species and mouthfuls of Cora's delicious bread. Thanks to all who came on the trip, to Carol for organizing the joint trip, and to Cora for providing a welcome treat at the end of a lovely morning.

Gwen Brewer, trip leader

[http://www.abcbirds.org/newsandreports/  
BirdFriendlyBuildingDesign.pdf](http://www.abcbirds.org/newsandreports/BirdFriendlyBuildingDesign.pdf)



Yellow-rumped Warbler  
Photo by: Bill Hubick

### NEW HEADWATERS WILDLIFE REFUGE AND CONSERVATION AREA WILL HELP SUSTAIN RANCHING, INCREASE HUNTING, FISHING OPPORTUNITIES IN EVERGLADES

WASHINGTON, D.C. - "The Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area exemplifies how conservation should be done," said Evan Hirsche, president of the National Wildlife Refuge Association. "The partnership announced today by Secretary Salazar is landscape-scale, collaborative by design, resilient to the effects of climate change, and benefits sportsmen, ranchers, the U.S. military, 8 million South Florida water users, the charismatic wildlife of the Everglades, and visitors from around the world."

Hirsche's statement refers to U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar's announcement earlier today of the formal establishment of the Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area in the northern Everglades, just south of Orlando. The Everglades Headwaters Refuge and Conservation Area will use a combination of conservation easements, that leaves land in private ownership and on the tax rolls, as well

*continued on page 5*

as some land acquisition. Lands acquired as part of the new national wildlife refuge will be co-managed as State Wildlife Management Areas through a unique state-federal partnership.

Restoring natural wetlands and maintaining open lands north of Lake Okeechobee is by far the least costly method of storing water for South Florida. Ranching and agriculture in this region employs thousands of Floridians and contributes to our national food security. In addition, through use by sportsmen, birdwatchers and wildlife tourism, refuges and conservation areas generate an average of \$4 to the local economy for every \$1 invested.

“While securing habitat for more than 30 threatened and endangered species, the new initiative also assures expanded hunting and fishing opportunities on future refuge lands and will help sustain Florida’s ranching economy,” Houghton said. “This refuge was born from a diverse partnership that includes the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the State of Florida, and numerous public agencies and private landowners.”

Hunting and fishing are considered priority public uses on national wildlife refuges, along with wildlife observation, photography, interpretation and education. In response to concerns voiced about public access for hunting and fishing, hunting programs on refuge lands will be co-managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission as State Wildlife Management Areas, with particular interest in developing youth outdoor and sporting education programs.

“Secretary Salazar’s announcement establishes six focus areas where the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is now authorized to acquire up to 50,000 acres as national wildlife refuge lands,” Houghton said. It also allows the Service to acquire up to another 100,000 acres in conservation easements. The Service would only proceed with willing sellers inside the new boundary, and areas outside of the boundary would not be eligible for purchase by the Service.

Additional information about the new wildlife refuge, including a map and further details on NWRA’s Everglades conservation program can be found on the NWRA website – [www.refugeassociation.org](http://www.refugeassociation.org).

Read this press release online here: <http://refugeassociation.org/2012/01/new-headwaters-refuge/>

Contact: David Houghton, (603) 831-0920, [dhoughton@refugeassociation.org](mailto:dhoughton@refugeassociation.org)

---

**Port in a Storm**  
*by Jane Klemer*

Feeding frenzy.  
Robins on the firethorn.  
Out of place, out of season.

---

## 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**



## JEFFERSON PATTERSON PARK AND MUSEUM, FEBRUARY 4, 2012

by Tyler Bell

By 8 a.m., there were eight of us standing in the parking lot in the drizzle. We jumped into 3 cars and started the trip at the southern end of the park at Peterson Point. Waterfowl are a rarity this winter so we had to work to get looks at Common Loons, Buffleheads, Long-tailed Ducks and Common Goldeneyes, among others. Probably the best bird of the day was a single Cackling Goose that flew downriver directly in front of us calling the whole while. The vocalization is quite distinctive compared to the many Canada Geese that were flying around just across St. Leonard's Creek. Perhaps it joined them along Turner Road?

Next stop was near the old Academy of Natural Sciences pier where there was a very small flock of scaup containing a single male Lesser and 5 Greater Scaup. Although the Lesser Scaup had his head tucked, you could clearly see the dingy flanks and the pointy head. Our only Great Black-backed Gull was on the pilings of the seawater intake. George Harrington dug out a Brown Thrasher which we all got to see interact with a Northern Mockingbird who was asserting his claim to the territory.

We parked near the larger of the two farm ponds and watched several hundred Canada Geese take flight spooking a dozen or so Mallards. Thankfully no other ducks were there so we didn't miss decent looks at what didn't exist! There was a male American Kestrel hunting from the power line along the road. The sparrows were elusive with only Song Sparrows deigning to show themselves.

Last stop in the park was at the end of the farm road where we saw large rafts of Ruddy Ducks and a flyover juvenile Bald Eagle.

Final stop on the tour was at the end of Lloyd Bowen Road, the most reliable spot in Calvert County for Brown-headed Nuthatch. While we were scanning the river for more non-existent waterfowl, there was a bird hammering on a pine tree nearby. Assuming it was a woodpecker, we didn't look right away but when we figured out where it was I got the scope on it and it was a nuthatch excavating what appeared to be a nest hole. It stayed long enough for everyone to get scope looks before it and another nuthatch flew off to the east. We heard them beeping periodically but never got good looks again.

Despite the drizzle which faded to be replaced by wind, I think we all had a good time. The Cackling Goose was a highlight for me as I don't see them often in Calvert County and the Brown-headed Nuthatch working on a nest cavity is inspiring as I'll try and keep up with their nesting progress later this year. Maybe the weather will be more cooperative next year? Come find out!

## UPCOMING EVENTS

MARCH 7 – WEDNESDAY – 7:30 p.m.

Charlotte Hall Library, St. Mary's County

**\*\*\*NOTE CHANGED LOCATION\*\*\***

37600 New Market Rd (Rt 6 at Rt 5), Charlotte Hall, MD 20662

"Saw-whet Owls in Maryland"

MELISSA BOYLE & DAVE BRINKER, Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

Although seldom seen or heard, the Northern Saw-whet Owl is relatively common throughout Maryland, if you know when and where to look. The smallest of all owls in Maryland, this species is found from the Eastern Shore to the mountains. Learn about ongoing research, what we have learned so far, and what we still don't know about this little elusive owl. This program is sure to whet your appetite for "S-whets!"

March 9 – Friday – 8 PM – Field Trip

Owl Prowl, Charles County

Youths especially welcome

Leader: Mike Callahan (240-765-5192, raptorsrule@juno.com).

On this night hike we will listen and look for owls in Charles County. Due to the sensitivity of possible nesting owls, the meeting location will be given when you call leader Mike Callahan at 240-765-5192 to sign up.

March 17 – Saturday - 8 AM - noon – Field Trip

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

"LATE WINTER LAND BIRDS, WATERFOWL"

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

Meet at the Park & Ride lot across the street from the Lexington Park Post Office on Tulagi Place. This trip has produced Lapland Longspur, Snow Bunting, Short-eared Owl, and waterfowl in the past. Facilities, no fee. You must sign up for this trip in advance. Call the leader for reservations and security details before February 28. RSVP required.

APRIL 4 – WEDNESDAY – 7:30 p.m.

Battle Creek Cypress Swamp Center, Calvert County

Gray's Road off of Sixes Road (Rt. 506), Prince Frederick, MD

Call 410-535-5327 for additional information or visit

[www.calvertparks.org](http://www.calvertparks.org)

"Out of South Africa, A Naturalist's Adventure"

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

Go on a safari with naturalist Greg Kearns to see the cultural & natural beauty South Africa's Capetown and Kruger National Park. This multimedia presentation will highlight the large mammals, mega fauna of the region and some notable birds. You know how electrifying Greg's talks can be, so imagine joining him step by step on an African safari!

**EDITOR:** Tyler Bell  
**E-mail:** [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.