

The Osprey



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Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

Mattawoman Natural Environmental Area
by George Jett

Calvert Cliffs State Park, 26 September 2009
by Tyler Bell

On September 12 **four** SMAS members gathered at the Mattawoman Natural Environmental Area (NEA) just off Rt. 224 in Mason Spring, Charles County, MD. This location has been excellent in the past for waterfowl during fall and spring, but we were exploring for songbird migrants. Thanks to those **three** supportive members who helped the leader along the way. I am regularly baffled as to why few of the over 600 members of SMAS do not participate in either the fieldtrips or programs. Why did they join? It is a bird club and a good one.

The morning was good weather, and as often happens when you have good weather the songbirds were not cooperative. They continue to migrate south this time of year. We did have a nice early sampling of waterfowl with both Wood Duck, Black Duck, Blue-winged, and Green-winged Teal, and the usual suspects (Mallards and Canada Geese). Osprey and Bald Eagle were our only raptors. We also have several migrant Laughing Gulls and one Forster's Tern. Waders were better represented with Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, and one Snowy Egret. Snowies are the harder one of the three to find in Charles. Songbirds were poorly represented, and mostly by resident species like Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, and White-breasted Nuthatch. We did have one Indigo Bunting along the way.

After the Mattawoman NEA excursion the group of **four** went to Reeder Run and found about two dozen **Carolina Satyrs (*Hermeuptychia sosybius*)**. This butterfly is rare in Maryland and listed. It should be looked at in the area. It represents the third population I have found in Charles County, which may represent the northern most distribution of this species. See attached image. Thanks to Lynne Wheeler for letting us explore her property. It was not until we went there that we found any neotropical migrants. We had Black-and-white, and Northern Parula warblers at that location. Our day total concluded with **38 species**, but the satyr made it all worthwhile.



An even dozen participants showed up for the field trip to Calvert Cliffs State Park. We almost didn't leave the parking lot! There is a nice patch of Jewel Weed growing along the edge of the pond there and there were two latish Ruby-throated Hummingbirds feeding there. The trees between the pond and the parking lot had several warblers and a flock of about 35 Cedar Waxwings including several juveniles sporting their streaky plumage and lacking full crests. We ticked a few raptors off the list while waiting for folks to arrive or return from the restroom. A semi-cooperative Northern Harrier was a county bird for one of the participants.

We started down the Red Trail and ran into another mixed flock of warblers. People were calling out different species and the birds were moving quickly feeding the flitting to another branch. The birding was fast and furious then they moved off just as quickly as we encountered them. This happen yet again further down the trail. When I see this kind of mixed flock of birds it makes me wonder what it must have been like 300-400 years ago before habitat loss and species decline. I imagine that a poor day of birding would blow our minds.

Eventually, we got down to the large open area caused by an extensive beaver dam. This is the best spot that I know of in Calvert County for Red-headed Woodpecker. Unfortunately, only a few of the participants got to see them before they flew off to the back of the swamp and vanished. However, we all got decent looks at a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, a first of the season for all of us, as well as a nice look at a Pileated Woodpecker in the swamp. A Hairy Woodpecker presented itself nicely for all to see and we discussed the bill ratio and lack of tail spots that differentiate this bird from the very similar Downy Woodpecker. Northern Flickers were all over the place as were Red-bellied Woodpeckers. In all, we saw all seven of the expected woodpecker species in Maryland (Red-cockaded Woodpecker is on the official state list but has been extirpated).

When we arrived at the Bay, the wind was howling and the water was quite high covering what little beach there is. I scoped out the liquid natural gas platform for the Peregrine Falcon that is suspected to nest there but wasn't able to find one. The wind made scoping difficult because of the vibration. Most of us did get to see a single Brown Pelican which is not an easy bird in Calvert. Almost a trash bird down at Point Lookout in St. Mary's but noteworthy in Calvert. The trip tally ended up being 53 species. I was hoping for a bit more variety of warblers but we managed 8 species plus 6 raptors. Who knows what next year will bring?

MIKE DAULTON TESTIFIES FOR THE NEOTROPICAL MIGRATORY BIRD ACT

Audubon Urges Help for 127 Bird Species in Serious Decline
Washington, DC, September 22, 2009 - On September 22, Mike Daulton, Audubon's Legislative Director, testified before Congress about the urgent need to reauthorize The Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA)

Lawmakers in the House of Representatives and the Senate have proposed an early reauthorization of the NMBCA. "This is such a wonderful opportunity for Congress to expand and build upon successful, cost-effective efforts to conserve migratory birds," said Daulton, who previously testified in favor of the Act in 2005.

The Act provides grants to organizations in the U.S., Canada, Latin America, and the Caribbean to conserve neotropical migrants, and has been enormously successful, protecting more than 3 million acres of habitat. Neotropical migratory birds include well known birds, such as the Mourning Dove, and endangered birds, including the Red Knot and Piping Plover. Among the 341 species that fall into this category, 127 are in serious decline. Several species on Audubon's WatchList have benefited from conservation efforts initiated under this Act, first passed into law in 2000.

"Birds are sending us a wake-up call that habitat destruction is taking a serious toll on the environment that sustains us all," Daulton said. "The Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act has a proven track record of reversing habitat loss and advancing conservation strategies. It's a smart investment."

The program leverages private investment in bird conservation. For every \$1 spent by the government, \$5 is spent on conservation. "That is a good deal for the American taxpayer," Daulton said. "Birds also provide a return on our investment by helping the US economy in many ways. They contribute as pollinators, help control insects and rodents, and disperse seeds. They also attract birdwatchers, and inspire backyard feeding, the buying of binoculars and other equipment, and birding trips."

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, bird watching and other wildlife-related recreation generates \$122 billion in spending every year. Their surveys also suggest that one in five Americans watches birds. Neotropical species include some of the most popular birds, such as the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds now winging their way to Mexico and Central America.

"Neotropical" is a biological realm that includes South and Central America, the West Indies, and tropical Mexico. Neotropical birds represent more than half of the breeding birds of the United States, and they are spending eight months of every year south of the border, where they are being exposed to significant and serious threats. "If we want

to conserve these birds, we have to invest not only in conservation in the United States but also in protecting the areas they need as they migrate south and return," Daulton said.

PIPING PLOVER SEASON WRAPS WITH NEAR-RECORD 13 CHICKS FLEDGED

The Piping Plovers have flown south for the winter and the final numbers are in for 2009. Cape Henlopen State Park hosted 10 pairs of nesting plovers this summer, tying last year's record high, and the tiny endangered shorebirds raised 13 chicks that successfully fledged, one shy of the 2003 record of 14.

Calling this year's fledgling number is "a vast improvement" over just three fledglings in 2008, Wildlife Biologist Matthew Bailey also noted that as in recent years, Cape Henlopen remained the only place the plovers nested in Delaware this year.

Bailey added he hopes next year will be even better. "There is plenty of good habitat at Cape Henlopen State Park that could support more pairs of nesting plovers as the years progress. There are also other sites that have suitable habitat for plover nesting. These sites will continue to be monitored. Also, in 2009, productivity for the plovers was fairly good, although an increase in numbers of chicks fledged is a reasonably attainable goal for future seasons," Bailey said.

News from the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, October 2, 2009, Vol. 39, No. 398

For more information on beachnesters and monitoring efforts, please contact Wildlife Biologist Matthew Bailey at 302-382-4151, or email matthew.bailey@state.de.us.



VERY IMPORTANT WEBSITE CHANGES

The Board of Directors has been notified that the company that hosts our website is closing down near the end of October. A new company has been chosen to host our website and the website has been duplicated at the new location. As of the end of October the current website address will CEASE TO WORK. The new website address is www.somdaudubon.org and can be visited now. Please change your bookmark in your web browser as soon as possible. Also keep your eyes on the new website for a redesign and beautification project that is already in the works.

WINTER FINCH FORECAST 2009-2010

by Ron Pittaway
Ontario Field Ornithologists

[Editor's note - the article below appeared widely on the internet and is abbreviated for our more southerly location, keeping in mind that birds that leave Ontario may end up in Maryland as did the White-winged Crossbills in the winter of 2008-2009. For the full-length article, please go to the following URL: <http://tinyurl.com/y8so9mk>]

General Forecast: The theme this winter is there will be no major finch irruptions outside their normal ranges. Finch numbers will be low and thinly distributed or absent in southern and northeastern Ontario and Quebec, where seed crops are poor. Higher numbers of finches should be attracted to much better cone crops in northwestern Ontario and west into northern Saskatchewan, the Maritime Provinces and Newfoundland, and northern New England States.

INDIVIDUAL FINCH FORECASTS

Individual finch forecasts below apply mainly to Ontario, but neighboring provinces and states may find the forecast applies to them.

Purple Finch: Most Purple Finches should migrate south out of the province this fall because many seed crops are poor in the north.

Red Crossbill: This crossbill comprises at least 10 "call types" in North America. Each type has its cone preferences related to bill size and shape. The types are exceedingly difficult to identify in the field. Types 2 and 3 and probably 4 occur regularly in Ontario. Most Red Crossbills prefer pines, but the smallest-billed Hemlock Type 3 (= subspecies *sitkensis* of AOU Check-list 1957) prefers the small soft cones of hemlock and white spruce when bumper in Ontario. White pine Type 2 is the most frequently encountered Red Crossbill in the province. Since white pine crops are low in most of the province, it should be rare to absent this winter.

White-winged Crossbill: Many White-winged Crossbills left the province this past summer after last winter's irruption. Some went into northern Ontario attracted to the good spruce cone crops and were singing and presumably nested. White-winged Crossbills should appear this winter in Newfoundland and the Maritime Provinces and the northern New England States, where spruce cone crops are good to heavy.

Common and Hoary Redpolls: Redpolls are a birch seed specialist in winter. Since the birch crop is poor in northeastern Ontario and Quebec, a few Common Redpolls should move south into southern Ontario and farther east and south. However, most redpolls may be drawn to good birch crops in northwestern Ontario and westward in the boreal forest into Saskatchewan.

Pine Siskin: Most siskins departed the province early this past summer and appear to have gone mainly to western Canada. If siskins find good conifer crops in the Northwest, such as the interior of British Columbia, they will stay to winter and breed.

Evening Grosbeak: A very few grosbeaks may move south from northeastern Ontario and Quebec where coniferous and deciduous seed supplies are generally poor.

MORE IRRUPTIVE SPECIES

Northern Goshawk: A good flight is very possible this fall or next.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: There has not been a noticeable southward movement along Lakes Ontario and Erie, indicating this is not an irruption year for it and associated winter finches such as White-winged Crossbills and Pine Siskins.

FINCHES AND TREES: A good knowledge of trees is essential to understanding winter finch habitats, food preferences and distributions. By coincidence, the finch forecast comes out the same week as the new "The Sibley Guide to Trees". In a recent interview with *Birder's World*, David Sibley said, "I wanted it to be a tree guide for birdwatchers".

Previous finch forecasts archived at OFO website.

<http://www.ofo.ca/reportsandarticles/pastwinterfinches.php>



NUMBER TWO – PAPER OR ELECTRONIC?

Hopefully everyone saw the article in last month's newsletter regarding the future electronic Osprey distribution. This is the second notice and warning. In the next issue of *The Osprey* there will be a small form that needs to be filled out and returned to the listed address so we know how you would like to receive future copies of the Osprey. Options will be a continuation of the paper copy, an electronic version emailed to you, or an email notifying you that the electronic version is available for download from the chapter website. There will also be an email address you can send this information to instead of returning the paper form. If you choose not to answer this request you could possibly NOT RECEIVE future issues of the Osprey. We are also trying to update everyone's contact information at the same time to make sure our membership database is current and efficient. The Board of Directors thanks all the chapter members for helping us with this leap into the electronic age and appreciate your patience with these changes.

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

Karen Anderson, Saint Inigoes
Michael Bonanno, Owings
Cheri Brady, Port Tobacco
Richard Bryan, Nanjemoy
Mildred Chamberlain, Waldorf
Joseph Chojnacki, Lusby
Michael Christoff, Indian Head
William Dunkin, Tall Timbers
Carol A. Dunlap, Port Republic
Caroline Dwynter, Avenue
William Ferro, Chesapeake Beach
Janet Fulcher, Mechanicsville
Thomas Hausmann, Owings
Judith Henry, Fort Washington
Marcia Hubbard, Lusby
Patricia Joseph, Fort Washington
Kenneth Kan, Waldorf
Genevieve Kennett, Avenue
Helen Ledford, Clements
John Leskinen, Leonardtown
Gary Martin, Prince Frederick
Rosann Mason, Port Republic
Dianne Miffleton, Saint Leonard
Benda Mosrie, Newburg
Peter Murphy, Bryans Road
Robin Murray, Leonardtown
Kathleen Nilles, Fort Washington
Kathryn Perkins, Dunkirk
Bruce and Patty Renaux, Great Mills
Michael Rickett, Mechanicsville
C.T.Rybka, Port Tobacco
Carla Torres, Chaptico
Janice Spotz, La Plata

CHAPTER-ONLY MEMBERS PLEASE RENEW!

If your mailing label reads 6/09, you need to renew your chapter membership. Please use the membership form in this *Osprey* and return to

SMAS
Attn: Membership
P.O. Box 181
Bryans Road, MD 20616

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)

NOVEMBER EVENTS

NEW!

Field Trip - 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)).

NOVEMBER 4 – WEDNESDAY – 7:30 p.m.

Monthly Meeting Leonardtown Library, St. Mary's County

23250 Hollywood Road (Rt. 245), Leonardtown, MD

"Living Shorelines: Reducing Erosion While Enhancing Habitat"

KEVIN SMITH, *Chief, Restoration Services, Department of Natural Resources*

What are "living shorelines" and how do they contribute to the health of the Chesapeake Bay? In this talk, Kevin will discuss natural shoreline processes and the role of sediment (from erosion and littoral movement) in the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem. He will also discuss shoreline habitat enhancement techniques which are designed to reduce erosion rates but still provide for these natural processes and habitat improvement.

November 15 - Sunday 8 AM - 11 AM

Myrtle Grove WMA, Charles County. Field Trip

"BIRDING FOR ALL LEVELS"

Leader: Fred Burggraf (301-934-8042, fburggraf@aol.com). Diverse habitat for hawks, sparrows, woodpeckers, and early waterfowl. Great for beginning birders! From Rt. 301 in La Plata, take Rt. 225 west about 4.5 miles to the WMA on the right. From Rt. 210 take Rt. 225 east about 4 miles to the WMA. Follow the dirt road to the end (about a mile) and meet in the parking lot near the lake. RSVP required.

DECEMBER 2 - WEDNESDAY – 7:30 p.m.

Monthly Meeting Charlotte Hall Library, St Mary's County

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

LOCAL PHOTOGRAPHERS' NIGHT

Come see what others have photographed on trips or in their own yards over the years. And bring your own photos to show. Slides, videos and electronic images may be presented. If you would like to contribute call Bob Lukinic (301-283-6317) by November 15, to coordinate presentations and plan for equipment needs. We urge you to either participate or come enjoy the artistry of fellow members.

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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.

Southern Maryland Audubon Society
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