

# The Osprey

November 2010 VOLUME 41, ISSUE 3



<http://somdaudubon.org/>

*Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society*

## ACTIVITIES FROM THE BOARD

The following are highlights from the September 29<sup>th</sup> board meeting held at the Leonardtown Library.

**SMAS Scholarships:** The board approved \$200 to reserve two Hog Island Audubon Center training camp spots for next summer.

**Feathers and Friends:** The board approved an additional \$100, now totaling \$200 in matching funds for this wildlife rehabilitation initiative.

**Fund raising:** Board member Millie Kriemelmeyer has donated a Lenox Holiday Figurine titled "Bird Watcher" to be raffled at the upcoming November and December program meetings. A skating snowman looking through binoculars is surrounded by familiar birds! Millie will also lead holiday gift wrapping at our December meeting and at Wild Bird 2 weeks before Christmas.

**New Committee Chair:** The board would like to welcome our new committee chair Melissa Boyle. Melissa will chair the Adopt-a-Raptor program. She returns to Southern Maryland mid-October as a naturalist at Point Lookout State Park.

**Outreach:** SMAS board members Bev and Warren Walker reported on the success of their representing SMAS at the recent St. Mary's RiverFest 2010 event. The Willoughbys assisted. They will set up a SMAS table for Patuxent River Appreciation Days October 9-10 at the Calvert Marine Museum, Solomons.

## SCHOLARSHIPS TO HOG ISLAND

*By Millie Kriemelmeyer*

Southern Maryland Audubon Society will offer two scholarships to 2011 Audubon summer programs at the Hog Island, Maine, camp. Applicants should be teachers, naturalists, and environmental educators at facilities in Southern Maryland. "Sharing Nature: An Educator's Week" will be held from July 14 to 19, 2011. Apply now – it will fill early.

More information is available at [projectpuffin.org](http://projectpuffin.org). The scholarship covers the cost of the camp. Travel expenses are not paid by SMAS. Send a one page application letter explaining why you want to go and how you will use the knowledge in your teaching. A letter of recommendation from your supervisor should be sent, also. Deadline for applications is February 21, 2011. Mail, fax or email to Millie Kriemelmeyer, 16900 Mattawoman Lane, Waldorf MD 20601. Fax: 301-782-7615; email: [milliek@radix.net](mailto:milliek@radix.net).

The 2010 Hog Island program enjoyed a successful reawakening after not operating last year. It was operated by Project Puffin, the science division of National Audubon Society. (<http://projectpuffin.org.html>)

The two SMAS scholarship winners attended the Field Ornithology session and returned with glowing appreciation for the educational experience, knowledgeable instructors, and the unique magic, beauty, and complexity of Hog Island and surrounding islands.

Hog Island programs hosted 165 participants in four sessions from 32 states and New Brunswick. Audubon Chapters, garden clubs, and ornithology groups sponsored 32 participants. Instructors were notable ornithologists, such as, Pete Dunne, Peter Vickery, Chris Lewey, Kenn and Kim Kaufman, Scott Wiedensaul, Sara Morris, and Lang Elliott. Campers, staff and volunteers were fortunate to have Chef Janii Laberge working his culinary magic.

Hog Island could not have happened without the support of Friends of Hog Island, who donated 1,300 hours of work. Staff from Camp Kieve volunteered their boat, Snow Goose, to transport campers to various sites.

SMAS has awarded scholarships to Hog Island for about 25 years. With fundraising support from SMAS members and friends, our classroom teachers, naturalists, and environmental educators working in Southern Maryland are, again, offered scholarships to next summer's Hog Island experience.

## ZINO'S PETREL, MADEIRA, NATURAL PARK OF MADEIRA AUGUST 2010

*By Nikolas Haass*

A massive forest fire on Madeira has killed several breeding adults and 65% of this year's chicks of Endangered Zino's Petrel. Funds are urgently needed for emergency conservation work before the winter sets in. See:

[www.justgiving.com/zinos-petrel-disaster](http://www.justgiving.com/zinos-petrel-disaster)

More information and images on BirdLife website

For those who don't know about this great little Pterodroma - it is like a Fea's Petrel. It is a summer breeder on Maderia and there are less than 50 pairs left in the World!

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## CALVERT CLIFFS STATE PARK 25 SEPTEMBER 2010

*By Tyler Bell*

Several years ago, Bill Hubick led this same trip. We instituted a death march on the return because of a reported first state record Say's Phoebe in Seneca. On this trip, we didn't even have that dangling carrot as a reward for the death march. The promised cold front didn't arrive and temps soared into the low 90s by the time we returned to the parking lot.

However, seven intrepid souls participated in this field trip. George Harrington was already in the parking lot when I arrived around 7:45 and we walked up toward the park entrance where the trees were alive with Pine Warblers and Chipping Sparrows. Joe and Maggie Tieger, and Susan and Dick Westin arrived shortly afterwards. We began the trip standing near the parked cars. Jay Hurry and Nita Sylvester showed up shortly after 8 to fill out the roster. A cooperative male Summer Tanager, getting a bit late for the area, flew to the top of a sunlit tree and called his "picky-tuck-tuck" letting us know he wasn't a scarlet.

We walked north and around the back side of the pond. George pointed out an LBJ and I got my bins on it just as it flew to the north side of the lake and away. It was a Catharus thrush. Based on the fleeting glimpse and the lack of warmth in the back color, I'd go out on a limb and say it was likely a Gray-cheeked Thrush. Oh well, the one that got away!

Once we entered the forest, the diversity plummeted. I would guess that we didn't actually see a single bird for the first quarter mile, maybe more. When we did finally encounter a Black-and-white Warbler spotted by Nita, it took several minutes before we all finally got on the bird. That was typical of the rest of the march. We'd hear a bird, try and dig it out and with luck, several of us saw it.

Finally, we arrived in the flooded area with standing dead trees that is the home of the Red-headed Woodpeckers. They were cooperative, unlike last year, and we got great scope views of the first bird plucking bugs from a tree and working his way to the sunlit crest where he posed. As we walked further down the trail, we noted several more. On the return trip, we noted one juvenile Red-head with the brown hood typical of juveniles.

When we arrived at the water, it appeared that they were getting the liquid natural gas dock ready for the arrival of a freighter. Lots of workers on the dock means few birds. There were the regular Laughing, Ring-billed, Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls and a scattering of Double-crested Cormorants but no sign of the resident Peregrine Falcon. A scan of the Chesapeake did not reveal any Brown Pelicans. Though uncommon in Calvert waters, we often find at least a single bird somewhere. Several adult and one juvenile Bald Eagle could be seen flying around the cliffs to the north complementing the two that we had seen earlier over

the marsh. A perched American Kestrel near the woodpeckers and a flyover Northern Harrier while we were still in the parking lot, plus Bald Eagle, were the sum total of raptors unless you include Turkey Vultures and the single Black Vulture that we saw at the bitter end of the trip while almost to the parking lot.

Kudos to the participants for sticking it out on this hot and humid day! The grand total of species seen was 40. Actually not a bad showing compared to trip in 2007, 2008 and 2009 where we had 50, 43 and 55 species, respectively. A couple of bird misses like any species of flycatcher or Common Yellowthroat and we could have easily been within the range of the other trips. Let's hope that next year is a bit cooler.

## SOUTHERN PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY FIELD TRIP SUMMARY

*By Fred Shaffer*

The annual joint field trip of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society, Prince George's Audubon Society and Patuxent Bird Club was held on the morning of Saturday, September 18<sup>th</sup>. Several locations along the Patuxent River were visited that highlighted the diversity of habitat and birdlife along the river. Attendees were few, but the birds showed up in big numbers as we birded different sites along the corridor on a spectacular, crisp fall morning. The highlight was undoubtedly three calling American Golden Plovers at the observation platform at Jug Bay (on the Prince George's side). These birds are discussed in more detail below, but the full trip summary follows.

**Mount Calvert:** The first stop of the day was at Mt. Calvert, which overlooks the marsh and northern end of Jug Bay. The gate was locked when we arrived, so we had to make the short walk in to the boat ramp. But, it was well worth it as there were birds the whole way. Most numerous were the many, many Eastern Bluebirds in the trees and on the wires. Also present were many Chipping Sparrows, including some streaked juvenile birds. Other birds foraging in the trees included White-breasted Nuthatch, Downy Woodpecker, Flickers, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, American Redstart, Red-eyed Vireo, White-eyed Vireo, Gray Catbirds, Northern Mockingbirds, Tufted Titmice, Common Yellowthroat, and American Goldfinch. When we made it down to the water, we watched small numbers of Laughing Gulls flying downriver, as well as an occasional Ring-billed Gull. One juvenile Herring Gull flew over as well. Other birds present along or near the river included two calling Soras, a Red-tailed Hawk, and a Red-shouldered Hawk. Also seen were several Great Blue Herons and four flyover Great Egrets. When returning to the cars, we got good views of a juvenile Broad-winged Hawk as it soared lazily overhead.

**Jug Bay:** The next stop was Jug Bay. We parked at Jackson Landing and then walked down the trail to the

Continued on page 3

observation platform overlooking the nearby mudflats, marsh and river. Birds seen en route included several Carolina Chickadees, a brilliant Hooded Warbler, Northern Parula, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Pileated Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Northern Cardinal and a White-eyed Vireo. Perhaps most unusual during our walk in was an early White-throated Sparrow calling in the undergrowth. The area around the observation platform was active with birds as well. We scanned the river and mudflat, seeing several Great Blue Herons, six or seven Greater Yellowlegs, 1 Least Sandpiper, and a few Forster's Terns. A few Caspian Terns loafed on the mudflat with the more numerous Laughing and Ring-billed Gulls. Several Double-crested Cormorants also flew over the river and at least two Soras were calling from very close by.

As we stood on the platform, a call was heard overhead that we didn't immediately recognize: a somewhat high pitched, repeated, mournful "quee-deee"! We looked up, saw a group of Wood Ducks and then spotted three American Golden Plovers flying parallel to the Woodies, but slightly higher up. The birds called repeatedly as they flew over, heading north. The all gray underwing of the birds was evident as they passed overhead. They continued to fly north, calling as they went before disappearing to the north along the river.

**Merkle Wildlife Management Area:** The birding was much slower at our next stop at Merkle, perhaps owing to the later hour of the morning. Only one Lesser Yellowlegs was present at the pond behind the visitors' center. Songbirds included several House Finches and more Eastern Bluebirds, which were abundant throughout the day. A group of Canada Geese was standing on one side of the pond. And, indicative of the changing seasons and the approach of fall, there were also had several flyover groups of migrating Canada Geese well overhead during the day.

**Milltown Landing Management Area:** This was another good stop as the group explored the open field and meadow habitat of Milltown Landing. A flock of 20 - 25 Bobolinks flushed from the field immediately next to the parking area. Also present in this area were two flyover accipiters, several Gray Catbirds, and a Red-bellied Woodpecker. We saw one Ovenbird foraging on the forest floor as we walk down the hill towards the fields and river. Along the river were several flyby Laughing Gulls, Double-crested Cormorants, Great Blue Herons, and a Bald Eagle. Also present, soaring with a group of vultures, was a Red-tailed Hawk. A Northern Mockingbird and Pileated Woodpecker were also seen or heard nearby.

The field trip ended at Milltown Landing, but it had been a very fun and productive morning of birding. The weather was truly spectacular and the birds were cooperative and seen in good numbers at most stops. Although the American Golden Plovers and Broad-winged Hawk were the highlight of the day, the numerous other migrants and resident birds seen during the day also added excitement to the trip. Other birds seen at one or more of the stops included

Song Sparrows, Red-winged Blackbirds, a pair of Barn Owls (!), one Northern Harrier, several Eastern Phoebe, numerous Turkey and Black Vultures, Osprey, Mourning Dove, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Blue Jay, American Crows, Fish Crows, European Starlings, Indigo Bunting, and an Eastern Towhee.

## CALEDON TRIP REPORT

*By Mike Callahan*

This morning, Saturday October 9, the SMAS trip to the Caledon Natural Area was attended by George Harrington, Mary Sokol, Dick Westin, Lynne Wheeler and Leader Mike Callahan. We started birding around the park visitor center and then moved onto the hay wagon to head into the interior of this limited use natural area. At "The Triangle" we found Dark-eyed Juncos, woodpeckers, both Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets were present, and the warblers included Yellow-rumped, Black-and-white, and Black-throated Blue.

From there we went to Boyd's Hole on the Potomac and saw American Goldfinch on the beach and a pair of Bald Eagles talon locking. With hopes of spotting the Wood Storks, that had been present for several weeks, we headed to Alder Flats and Jones Pond. Unfortunately we did not see a stork, but did see a flock of Wild Turkeys fly from the sandy berm between the river and pond, over the pond and into the wood. It was unusual to see turkeys flying over water. The Great Egrets were on Jones Pond but after looking closer at them still no stork.

With the exception of Hairy woodpecker we saw all resident and migratory woodpecker species. All were treated to several good sightings of Red-headed Woodpecker and were also able to hear their chattering enough to learn how to identify them by call. Be sure to ask George, Mary, Dick and Lynne to point them out by call on the next bird walk you take with them. Alder Flats provided us with a good view of an Alder Flycatcher.

We missed many common species including American Robin, Mourning Dove, Mallard, Great Blue Heron and European Starling. I can't remember the last time I didn't see a starling on a trip! By the end of the trip we found a total of 37 species. A good time was had by all and George even got a life bird in the Alder Flycatcher.

I hope you had a great Saturday morning. We sure did!



Bald Eagle. Photo by: George Jett



## STATE BOARD VOTES ON ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY GRAD REQUIREMENT

The Maryland State Board of Education has voted unanimously to require that all Maryland public school students must now have access to environmental education and graduate environmentally literate!

This is a huge step forward to ensuring that our high school graduates are environmentally literate. We applaud Superintendent Grasmick and the State Board for their action. However, as we celebrate this victory, please know it is only a partial victory, as the state board rejected language to strengthen and clarify it as a high school graduation requirement. This still needs to be done, and we look forward to working with the Maryland State Department of Education and the State Board of Education in the coming months to do so, so that counties have clear expectations as they begin implementation. So for now, let's celebrate an historic win!

### What this means

Every local public school system must now provide a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary environmental education program aligned with the Maryland Environmental Literacy Curriculum. Each local school system can design its own program which will be reviewed by MSDE every five years. The requirement does *not* require an additional course or specific number of environmental education experiences. Each local school system can implement its environmental literacy plan based on the resources unique to their system. This decision is expected to provide the opportunity for *all* public school students to participate in quality, integrated environmental education programs

### What happens next to ensure schools have support for effective implementation?

The next steps involve clarification of the requirement and the development of solid implementation recommendations. There will be an Environmental Literacy Summit co-hosted by the MDCLI Coalition and the Chesapeake Bay Trust on October 20<sup>th</sup> in Annapolis. We look forward to working one-on-one with MSDE, the Maryland Partnership for Children in Nature, County Environmental Education Coordinators, MDNCLI members, educators, and all other interested parties to begin to discuss recommendations for the effective systemic implementation of the environmental literacy graduation requirement.

Julie Dieguez  
Coordinator Maryland No Child Left Inside Coalition  
[www.mdncli.org](http://www.mdncli.org)  
[jdieguez@cbf.org](mailto:jdieguez@cbf.org)

## FOSTER PARENTS NEEDED



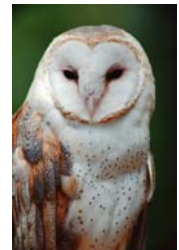
Southern Maryland Audubon Society sponsors the banding of nestling birds of prey, or raptors, with serially numbered aluminum bands in cooperation with the Bird Banding Laboratory of the U. S. Department of the Interior, as part of our bird research and conservation activities in Southern Maryland. Limited 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:

SMAS  
P.O. Box 181  
Bryans Road, MD 20616



## 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)



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## NOVEMBER EVENTS

### OCTOBER 16

Saturday – 8 AM – Noon

Chapman State Park, Mt. Aventine, Charles Co. – Field Trip  
3452 Ferry Place, Indian Head, MD 20640  
"LAND BIRDS, EARLY WATERFOWL"

Leader: Lynne Wheeler (301) 743-3236 [fidruschic@aol.com](mailto:fidruschic@aol.com)

Youths especially welcome!

This newly preserved historic and environmentally rich state park was dedicated as an Audubon Important Bird Area in 2009. Come and enjoy its forest, fields and extensive marsh along the Potomac River, a wonderful habitat for hawks, sparrows, woodpeckers, and early waterfowl. The historic home (not open to the public) dates from 1840. Take Rt. 210 to Chapman's Landing Road between Bryans Road and Indian Head. Meet at park gate. RSVP required.

### NOVEMBER 3 – WEDNESDAY – 7:30 p.m.

Spring Dell Center, Charles County  
6040 Radio Station Road, La Plata, MD 20646

#### *"Rhapsody in Blue"*

MIDDLETON EVAN, *Photographer*

Renowned Maryland Photographer Middleton Evans has been photographing Maryland scenery and people for over twenty years. In 1998 he began an extraordinary 10-day Florida bird marathon that served as the genesis of *Rhapsody in Blue*, an epic five-year adventure including 33 trips all over North America in search of miraculous encounters with native waterbirds.

This talk is based on the wonderful photographs and stories included in his book.

### NOVEMBER 14

Sunday - 8 AM - Noon

Myrtle Grove WMA, Charles County – Field Trip  
5625 Myrtle Grove Rd. La Plata, MD 20646  
"BIRDING FOR ALL LEVELS"

Leader: Fred Burggraf (301) 934-8042 [fburggraf@aol.com](mailto:fburggraf@aol.com)

Youths especially welcome!

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

Events 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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