

# The Osprey



October 2008 VOLUME 39, ISSUE 2

[www.geocities.com/smdaudubon](http://www.geocities.com/smdaudubon)

*Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society*

## REPORT ON THE ANNUAL MEETING 2008

by Gwen Brewer

On the first day of June, Bob Boxwell and his wife Joanne graciously hosted the SMAS annual meeting at their home in the Cove Point Natural Heritage Trust. About 40 people enjoyed this lovely location in Calvert County on a very pleasant afternoon. After the usual feast of delicious food, our host briefed us on the Cove Point Natural Heritage Trust and its activities. Members then elected Officers and Directors for the next year (Bob Lukinic, President; Mike Callahan, Vice President; Will Daniel, Treasurer; George Jett, Secretary; Jean Artes, Ernie Willoughby, and Harry Kriemelmeyer, Directors). Outgoing President (Gwen Brewer) and Secretary (Matt Dement) received thanks for their service to SMAS. Gwen Brewer expressed her appreciation for the work and assistance of the Board during her tenure as President, and for their generous thank-you gift. Dudley Lindsley received the Conservationist of the Year award, including a framed Richard Sloane print of Purple Martins, in recognition of her years of service in southern Maryland, as described in the June 2008 Osprey newsletter. A letter was read thanking Lee Duer for his support in obtaining a donation of binoculars from Alpen Optics for youth birding.

One of the highlights of the meeting was the presentation of the "Birding in Southern Maryland" brochure, produced through the efforts of Jean Artes, George Jett, Patty Craig, and Sue Hamilton with the support of the Olive Sorzano Fund. We were very pleased and honored to have Olive Sorzano's daughter-in-law and three grandchildren in attendance to present to them this tribute to a wonderful woman and keen birder. Attendees shared stories of Mrs. Sorzano and her love of birding, which everyone enjoyed. Be sure and see this very well-done and useful brochure at the SMAS bookstore, and get a few for family and friends! After dessert, Bob Boxwell led a bird walk to Hellen Creek, where we enjoyed close looks at a Bald Eagle, Osprey, Great Blue Heron, Great-crested Flycatcher, Belted Kingfisher, and other denizens of the creek. Thank you to our hosts, the Boxwells, Cora Fulton and Shirley Wood for dining support, Bev and Warren Walker for bookstore, and Carol Gheblian for silent auction. Our afternoon ended with a few raindrops just as everything was being put away and the last guests were leaving. I hope everyone will be back next June when we meet in Charles County!

### WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

Rosemary Ury, Frostburg  
Curtis Womack, Clinton

## DIRECTORS CONSIDER HOW TO DELIVER THE OSPREY TO MEMBERS ELECTRONICALLY

At their meeting of August 27, the Board of Directors began discussing plans to deliver *The Osprey* to its members by e-mail in order to save the expense of printing and mailing.

Currently, printing and mailing 670 issues of the newsletter nine times a year costs Southern Maryland Audubon Society \$2850. Membership dues received from National Audubon Society and Chapter Only members total about \$3100. Our expenses have been increasing faster than have membership dues. In preliminary discussions the BOD considered ways to provide access to the newsletter for those members who do not have internet access, while identifying those who do and managing to distribute electronic copies instead of paper to them.

The Directors ask for your thoughts and suggestions on this matter. Please contact Chris Ordiway with your concerns and suggestions at this address:  
Chris Ordiway, Southern Maryland Audubon Society, P. O. Box 181, Bryans Road, MD 20616, or e-mail him at: [olebuck@strixvaria.org](mailto:olebuck@strixvaria.org).

## LAME DUCK WHITE HOUSE LAUNCHES ASSAULT ON ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT *STATEMENT OF BETSY LOYLESS, NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY*

*Washington, DC, August 12, 2008* - "Science and sound decision-making have never been the hallmark of the Bush administration. Today's proposal to gut the Endangered Species Act is the latest in a sad list of serial offenses against the environment. In fact, it's likely to be one of many attacks on the environment the American public can expect as this administration limps out the door. We will fight this proposal in every way possible and can say with all sincerity that we look forward to January."

**MORE INFORMATION** —The Bush administration announced plans today to propose a change in the regulations under Endangered Species Act to eliminate the requirement for consultation with federal biologists on projects that could affect imperiled animals and plants. The proposal would allow action agencies to decide for themselves whether projects they permit or license might harm endangered species.

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While details are sketchy, Audubon expects the proposal will be the most significant, detrimental change to the ESA program in years. According to news reports, the proposal will be subject to a very short, 30-day comment period, after it is published in the Federal Register. Audubon's activists are mobilizing to resist the change.

The strongest federal safeguard against the extinction of bird species in the United States is the ESA. Enacted in 1973, the ESA has helped save some of America's most critically imperiled birds and wildlife, including species like the Bald Eagle, the Peregrine Falcon, the Gray Wolf, the Grizzly Bear, and the Whooping Crane.

## REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

### Rare Black-headed Gull in P. G. County, by George Jett.

On August 11, Fred Shaffer went kayaking in the Patuxent River. He put in at Trueman's Landing in Eagle Harbor in southern Prince George's County. While out in his kayak, Fred found an adult, winter plumage Black-headed Gull (BHGU). Fred also found a hybrid gull that may have BHGU and Ring-billed (RBGU) parentage. The hybrid may be the more interesting bird for some of us. The BHGU was still being seen on September 1. Go look if you have time.

BHGU is a rare bird in Maryland but has been seen in 14 counties. It is normally found here only in winter from late November thru early April. This bird may be the first summer record for Maryland. Although BHGU has a black or dark brown head in breeding, as the name implies, key field features for winter (basic) plumage are reddish bill and legs, a pale mantle (back), black wing tips, white underparts, a black spot behind the eye. In flight, a bold white wedge in the upper primaries, similar to Bonaparte's Gull, is notable. All of these features can be seen in the photo below, taken on August 30, 2008. BHGU (16 inches) is slightly smaller than RBGU (17 1/2 inches).

Looking at the image of the putative hybrid below, you can see characteristics of both BHGU and RBGU. The hybrid has a faint hood pattern, and white and black wing pattern similar to BHGU, but the bill and legs are yellowish. The bird was similar in size to RBGU, but this can't be seen in the image. Most gull experts that viewed this image agreed on the suspected parentage of BHGU X RBGU. Further discussion is for the more initiated, and generally would bore most Osprey readers, so I have spared you - this time. Gulls and ducks often hybridize, but I don't know of another example of hybridization of these two species.

For potential gull geeks, I refer you to two of the better references on gulls. They are:  
*Gulls of North America, Europe, and Asia* by Klaus Malling Olsen and Hans Larsson; Princeton University Press.

*Gulls of the Americas* by Steve N.G. Howell and Jon Dunn, Houghton Mifflin Company.

I suggest doing a Google search if you are interested in furthering your studies on this very complex and interesting groups of birds.

I thank Fred for his keen interest in gulls, and for sharing this great find with us.



Black-headed Gull in winter plumage photographed by George Jett 30 August, 2008 on Patuxent River near Eagle Harbor. This and other photos may be viewed in color in this issue of *The Osprey* at [www.geocities.com/smdaudubon](http://www.geocities.com/smdaudubon).

### Black-headed Gull on the Patuxent by Tyler Bell.

Fred Shaffer, an active birder in Anne Arundel and Prince George's Counties, was kayaking August 11 on the Patuxent River near Eagle Harbor on the PG side of the river. There are several piers in this area and in sorting out the loafing gulls there, he was rewarded with an adult, winter plumaged Black-headed Gull as well as some sort of hybrid gull that people speculate is a Black-headed Gull X Ring-billed Gull.

Jane Kostenko and I drove to Eagle Harbor on August 17. The hybrid gull was sitting on a piling behind a private residence. We checked out the field marks and were under the false impression that this bird was the Black-headed Gull. George Jett and Gwen Brewer arrived shortly thereafter. George was skeptical because the underwing pattern was much too pale for Black-headed Gull, but fired off several gigabytes worth of images anyway. There was

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some discussion about George's photos and several people concluded that we had seen the hybrid.

So, on August 22, Jane and I went back and this time the actual Black-headed Gull was preening in the water. Compared to the hybrid gull, which was also still present, the Black-headed Gull was quite obvious. The bird had the typical bright red legs and feet and bright red bill with a black tip. The underwing was mostly black with the outermost primaries being extensively white. The upperwing is very pale gray with extensive white on the leading edge of the wing with black apical tips to the primaries.

We were happy to see the real McCoy as Black-headed Gull was a new bird for us in Maryland. We've seen them before, twice, in Delaware (once on a SMAS trip we were leading) but they had escaped us in Maryland. We took many photos using a 300mm lens which wasn't nearly enough magnification. Jane suggested putting the camera up to the lens of our Leica spotting scope. The results were much better than either of us imagined. However, one must be careful to clean the eyepiece before attempting this as every dust mote shows clearly in the photos!



Possibly a hybrid Black-headed X Ring-billed Gull, photographed by George Jett 17 August near Eagle Harbor.

## **GOP DRILL BILL IS WRONG PRESCRIPTION FOR THE U.S.**

*STATEMENT OF BETSY LOYLESS, AUDUBON'S  
DONAL O'BRIEN CHAIR FOR POLICY AND  
ADVOCACY*

*Washington, DC, July 23, 2008* - "After millions of acres have been surrendered to oil companies by the Bush administration in recent years, with no positive impact for consumers, must we really now sacrifice the safety of our beaches and our last wild places?"

"The U.S. has an energy crisis on its hands. It's disappointing that Big Oil is dictating the GOP leadership's response in the face of this crisis. It's stunning that rather than putting consumers first, the response from the industry's allies in Congress is to pursue the same tired policies that have lucratively served the oil industry while running up gas prices.

"The energy crisis is profoundly painful, but it is also an opportunity. We have an opportunity to truly get off of oil and reinvent our economy with clean renewables that will end our addiction, clean up our skies, create jobs and solve global warming."

**MORE INFORMATION.** Audubon believes today's announcement is emblematic of the oil industry's strategy to leverage high gas prices to gain ever more drilling rights. This bill introduced by some of the industry's chief allies in Congress comes just days before second quarter profits are announced by the industry. The heart of the GOP bill calls for expanded drilling offshore and in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Millions of acres have been made available already for oil development by the Bush administration in recent years, and that activity has only padded industry profits as gasoline prices have doubled for consumers. Audubon is recommending policies that lessen the nation's addiction to dirty fossil fuels, such as rapid expansion of renewable energy development in areas like wind and solar.

Recent studies by the Bush Administration's own Energy Information Administration (EIA) have shown that expanded drilling offshore and in the Arctic Refuge would have little impact on supply before 2030 and an "insignificant" impact on prices at the pump. For example, in a May 2008 study, "Analysis of Crude Oil Production in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge," the EIA found that if Congress authorized drilling this year, no oil would be available before 2018. What's more, the price impact translates to just a penny or two at the gas pump. As the study concludes, Arctic Refuge "oil production is not projected to have a large impact on world oil prices." The report also notes that even this extremely minor price impact could be neutralized by OPEC reducing its oil exports by an equal amount.

**Now in its second century, Audubon connects people with birds, nature and the environment that supports us all. Our national network of community-based nature centers, chapters, scientific, education, and advocacy programs engages millions of people from all walks of life in conservation action to protect and restore the natural world.**



## ALASKA'S TESHEKPUK LAKE SAVED!

AUDUBON CAMPAIGN BRINGS VICTORY FOR  
UNIQUE ALASKA HABITAT

Washington, DC, July 22, 2008 --The Interior Department recently announced its "Record of Decision" regarding leasing parts of Alaska for oil and gas development in the Northeast National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPRA) for at least 10 years. According to the ROD, drilling would be deferred around Teshekpuk Lake for a decade. The decision came after a lawsuit filed by Audubon blocked a controversial September 2006 lease sale in that area.



According to Stan Senner, executive director of Audubon Alaska, "This decision acknowledges the international importance of the Teshekpuk wetlands. Audubon believes that the wildlife habitats north and east of the lake deserve permanent protection- and this decision falls short of that goal- but we are pleased that B.L.M. [the Bureau of Land Management, an agency of the Interior Department] has removed any immediate threat of oil and gas leasing."

Eleanor Huffines, Alaska Regional Director for The Wilderness Society, said, "We thank Secretary Kempthorne for responding to the outpouring of public opposition to oil and gas leasing in the Teshekpuk wetlands. This decision lifts the immediate threat of leasing so that conservationists, subsistence users, scientists, sportsmen and others can work to secure permanent protection, which is part of a balanced approach to oil and gas development in the larger NPRA."

Conservationists have strongly advocated that the Teshekpuk wetlands should be closed to leasing, while the Secretary's decision only defers leasing in that area.

"The 10-year deferral of leasing in the Teshekpuk wetlands is only an administrative action, which can be changed by a future administration. Ultimately, it is our hope and goal that Congress will provide permanent protection for this unique, globally significant wildlife area," said Cindy

## FOSTER PARENTS NEEDED

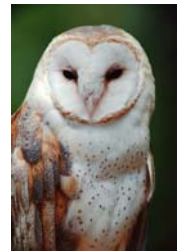


Southern Maryland Audubon Society sponsors the banding of nestling birds of prey, or raptors, with serially numbered aluminum bands in cooperation with the Bird Banding Laboratory of the U. S. Department of the Interior, as part of our bird research and conservation activities in Southern Maryland. Limited 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**  
**11350 Budds Creek Rd.**  
**Charlotte Hall, Maryland 20622**



### 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)

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## OCTOBER EVENTS

September 28—**Sunday**—8 AM – noon. **Field Trip**  
Calvert Cliffs State Park, Calvert County. **Fall Migration.**  
Leader: Tyler Bell (301-862-4623, jtylerbell@yahoo.com).  
Neotropical migrants should be near their peak. Warblers,  
tanagers, grosbeaks, and other songbirds. Good trails  
through wooded habitat & along the creek. Take Rt. 2/4  
south of Prince Frederick for about 14 miles. Follow signs  
to the park. Meet leader in parking lot. Facilities and fee. 3  
miles round trip. RSVP required. (NOTE This field trip was  
rescheduled from October too late to make it into the earlier  
issue.)

October 1—**Wednesday**—7:30 PM. **Monthly Meeting**  
Memorial Library, Leonardtown, St. Mary's County, 23250  
Hollywood Road (Rte. 245), Leonardtown. **Offshore**  
**Windpower in Maryland** by Dave Blazer, MD Project  
Director, Bluewater Wind. Mr. Blazer will speak about the  
potential for offshore windpower in Maryland. He will discuss  
the economic, environmental, and societal issues  
surrounding the siting of wind turbines off Maryland's shores.

### CHAPTER-ONLY MEMBERS PLEASE RENEW!

If your mailing label reads 6/08, 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

October 11—**Saturday**—8:00 AM to noon. **Field Trip**  
Jug Bay—Merkle Wildlife Management Area, Prince  
George's County. **Fall Migrants and Resident Birds**  
Searching for marsh birds, hawks, woodpeckers, and  
sparrows at this prime location. Leader: Mike Quinlan  
(301-805-4278, mikemq@aol.com). Take Rte. 301 to Rte.  
382 (Croom Rd.). Go east to St. Thomas Church Road,  
turn at the church and follow to Fenno Road, which leads  
to the entrance to Merkle. Follow the signs to the Visitor  
Center.

October 22—**Wednesday**—7:00 PM. **Board of Directors**  
**Meeting**  
Memorial Library, Charlotte Hall, intersection of Rte. 6 with  
Rte. 5 south, St. Mary's County. Members are welcome  
to attend meetings of the Directors.

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

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