

The Osprey



October 2010 VOLUME 41, ISSUE 2

<http://somdaudubon.org/>

Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society

2010 MAY COUNT IN CHARLES COUNTY

Our totals this year were lower than usual since we were without a few regulars, and most of the hotshots that owe me favors were not available. The total was **129** species with **6099** individual birds. For comparative purposes, last year was **145** species and **8356** individual birds - our best year. These numbers reflect the number of volunteers, hours and miles surveyed, the coverage of the county, and the lack of ringers from 2009. If anyone reviewing this data finds any errors, please let me know. All errors are of my making and I apologize ahead of time.

We did have one ringer working on his county list before he went off to Louisiana to go to school. Hans Holbrook is his name, and he found the better bird of the count. He had a single **Mississippi Kite**, maybe the sixth county record, at Allen's Fresh. Hans also picked up a Broad-winged Hawk, normally rare during the count, a single Black-crowned Night-Heron, a single Pectoral Sandpiper, our only Horned Lark (a declining species in Maryland due to habitat loss), and a late American Pipit. Thank you, Hans.

We also missed coverage at Morgantown where most of the terns and gulls hang out and Pomonkey Creek which can produce good shorebirds and waterfowl, so we came up short on those scores. No Forster's or Royal Terns were observed, which is an incredible miss. Thanks to Mike Callahan, who had a handful of gulls and a single Caspian Tern on Cobb Neck, so gulls and terns were not a complete washout.

On top of less volunteers, and some of the better habitat not being covered, a number of the bird groups did not cooperate. Waterfowl - only one species of non-breeding found (Common Merganser) by Beth and Jason Groth, and one Common Loon from Mike Callahan at Cobb Neck. We did OK on Wild Turkey with eleven found across six of the ten sectors, and the ever declining Northern Bobwhite was found in only one sector. Double-crested Cormorants continue to show their presence at 155 (no one counted the 1000 on the Harry Nice Bridge), Great Blue Heron are continuing to decline with only 52 reported, three Great Egrets are a good number, but four Green Herons is very low for this nesting species.

On the raptor front we found 185 Osprey which demonstrates this species is doing very well in coming back from near extirpation forty years ago. Bald Eagle, another species to benefit from the ban of DDT, were also well represented with 93. Plenty of shoreline in Charles should help both of these species continue to produce. A few late migrant hawks were reported: two Northern Harriers, and three Sharp-shinned Hawk (SSHA). Northern Harriers often linger, but Sharp-shinned generally are gone from our region by May Count. The odd statistic is that only one Cooper's

Hawk was reported. Cooper's nest in Charles, and SSHA don't (egg date for SSHA is May 12), so I encourage observers to be careful with these two species as they can be confusing. Mike Callahan located two American Kestrels which is great. He subsequently found a nesting pair in the county which is even greater news. The nest box program continues to be productive.

We got killed on shorebirds with only six species being reported. Hans' Pectoral was the highlight, but we normally get a dozen or more species of shorebirds. Maybe high tide where you were, critical areas were not covered, no rain pools or muddy fields, they don't like us - I don't have a clue. Next year. Gulls and terns as mentioned above were under-represented with 17 individuals, and only five species. Next year my strategy will change for this group so we have more representative data.

Gwen and I had two Chuck-will's-widows in Nanjemoy but got no Whips which are more common there. No other nightjars were reported, and this is sad since Chucks nest in good numbers on Cobb Neck. It is always a crap shoot with night birds. We did OK on the owls with three of our four nesting species found. Barn Owls lead the count with 17, again because of the successful nest box program. Only Great Horned was not found. No Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were found, but all six of our nesting woodpeckers were found with a high count of 59 Red-bellies being located.

All six nesting flycatchers were reported and one unidentified empidonax. The empids are one of the hardest groups to identify by sight and are most reliable by sound, so please learn your songs and calls of these animals. Least, Willow, and Alder have all been found in the county during migration. If you are obsessed, try learning the subtle plumage difference of these three. The three locally breeding vireos were found, and one Blue-headed heading to Garrett County I suppose.

Purple Martin, Tree and Barn Swallow were well represented, and a handful of Northern Rough-wings were located, but no Cliff or Cave Swallow were reported. Only five Marsh Wrens were reported, no kinglets this year, and no migrant thrushes. All the breeders of these groups were documented.

The good news (there was some to report) is we found all 15 breeding warblers including a high count of 135 Northern Parulas, 117 Ovenbirds, 86 Common Yellowthroats, 74 Hooded, and 29 Yellow-breasted Chats. On the migrant warbler front we also did well with seven species being reported including one Cerulean Warbler heard by the bionic ears of Dr. Brewer. We also found Chestnut-sided (1), Magnolia (2), Black-throated Blue (7), Blackpoll (12), Northern

Continued on page 2

Waterthrush (2), and one Canada. If only the ducks, shorebirds and a few others had cooperated!

On the sparrow front we had all nesting sparrows located with Chipping leading the score with 150, followed by 60 Eastern Towhee, 17 Song Sparrow, 11 Field Sparrow (low), and 6 Grasshopper (low). Late migrant sparrows were only represented by 4 Savannah sparrows at Allen's Fresh. No Swamp Sparrows were reported this year. Northern Cardinals put in a strong showing with 159, followed by 193 Indigo Buntings, and 26 Blue Grosbeaks. Both Tanagers reported in good numbers, as well as the blackbirds including a good count of seven Eastern Meadowlarks in four sectors.

With a bit of a change in the strategy for next year I am hopeful we will do better. Thank you all for once again helping on this important count. If you have any suggestions or questions, please send them to me. I will address all.

For a breakdown of species seen by each counter, go to this web link:

www.somdaudubon.org/files/charlescountymaycount2010results.xls

George
gmjett@comcast.net www.georgejett.net

COURT VICTORY GREETSS RETURNING PLOVERS!

*Judge upholds critical habitat designation for
wintering shorebirds*

Summary:

A federal judge today ruled in favor of designating critical habitat areas for the wintering Piping Plover in North Carolina in compliance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Defenders of Wildlife and the National Audubon Society, represented by the Southern Environmental Law Center, intervened in the case on behalf of the Interior Department and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Piping Plover has been listed as a threatened species under the ESA since 1986. The beaches of North Carolina play a vital role in all stages of their life cycle.

WASHINGTON (August 17, 2010) – The following are statements from Defenders of Wildlife, the National Audubon Society and the Southern Environmental Law Center:

"Cape Hatteras is unique. It's one of the few places on the east coast that hosts Piping Plover activity all year round," said Jason Rylander, staff attorney for Defenders of Wildlife. "Critical habitat designation will provide a crucial, additional layer of protection throughout the year."

"This is a great victory for Piping Plovers and reaffirms the importance of Cape Hatteras National Seashore for this threatened species." said Walker Golder, deputy director of Audubon North Carolina.

"The decision completely affirms the Fish and Wildlife Service's efforts to designate habitat necessary for recovery of the Piping Plover," said Julie Youngman, senior attorney at the Southern Environmental Law Center. "The additional legal protection for this threatened species comes at a critical time for its survival."

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Defenders of Wildlife is dedicated to the protection of all native animals and plants in their natural communities. With more than 1 million members, supporters and subscribers, Defenders of Wildlife is a leading advocate for innovative solutions to safeguard our wildlife heritage for generations to come. www.defenders.org

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Walker Golder, Audubon North Carolina, (910) 686-7527,
wgolder@audubon.org

BUY A DUCK STAMP "CACHET" TO SUPPORT GULF COAST RESTORATION

*(from The Flyer, the newsletter of the
National Wildlife Refuge Association)*

Last month, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar unveiled a special envelope to be sold with the newest Federal Duck Stamp, with the proceeds to be used to benefit Gulf Coast restoration.

The "cachet" features a stunning silk-rendered image of St. Marks NWR on the Gulf Coast of Florida, taken by NWR Photo Contest runner-up David Moynahan. The Federal Duck Stamp itself features an American Wigeon by Maryland artist Robert Bealle. The special envelope was unveiled at an event in Memphis, with attendees including Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, CEO of Ducks Unlimited and former Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Dale Hall, and NWR President Evan Hirsche, and included a field trip to nearby Wapanocca NWR.

The Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, also known as the "Duck Stamp," was established in 1934 during the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt as a federal waterfowl-hunting license whose proceeds went to buy wetlands for duck conservation on national wildlife refuges. Today, the Duck Stamp still protects waterfowl habitat but also serves a much larger purpose and is one of the most successful conservation programs in America. Ninety-eight cents out of every dollar generated by the sale of these stamps goes directly to acquire wetland habitat for the National Wildlife Refuge System. Since it started, over \$750 million has been raised to protect over 5.3 million acres of wetland and grassland habitat!

The Federal Duck Stamp and Limited Edition Cachet can be purchased for \$25 at <http://www.duckstamp.com>.

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATED IN DECLINE OF HORSESHOE CRABS DECLINE MAY AFFECT AT-RISK SHOREBIRDS

Catherine Puckett 352-264-3532 cpuckett@usgs.gov
Tim King 304-724-4450 tking@usgs.gov

LEETOWN, W. Va. — A distinct decline in horseshoe crab numbers has occurred that parallels climate change associated with the end of the last Ice Age, according to a study that used genomics to assess historical trends in population sizes.

The new research also indicates that horseshoe crab numbers may continue to decline in the future because of predicted climate change, said Tim King, a scientist with the U.S. Geological Survey and a lead author on the new study published in *Molecular Ecology*.

While the current decline in horseshoe crabs is attributed in great part to overharvest for fishing bait and for the pharmaceutical industry, the new research indicates that climate change also appears to have historically played a role in altering the numbers of successfully reproducing horseshoe crabs. More importantly, said King, predicted future climate change, with its accompanying sea-level rise and water temperature fluctuations, may well limit horseshoe crab distribution and interbreeding, resulting in distributional changes and localized and regional population declines, such as happened after the last Ice Age.

“Using genetic variation, we determined the trends between past and present population sizes of horseshoe crabs and found that a clear decline in the number of horseshoe crabs has occurred that parallels climate change associated with the end of the last Ice Age,” said King.

The research substantiated recent significant declines in all areas where horseshoe crabs occur along the West Atlantic Coast from Maine to Florida and the eastern Gulf of Mexico, with the possible exception of a distinct population along the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico

These findings, combined with the results of a 2005 study by King and colleagues, have important implications for the welfare of wildlife that rely on nutrient-rich horseshoe crab eggs for food each spring.

For example, Atlantic loggerhead sea turtles, which used to feed mainly on adult horseshoe crabs and blue crabs in Chesapeake Bay, already have been forced to find other less suitable sources of food, perhaps contributing to declines in Virginia’s sea turtle abundance. Additionally, horseshoe crab eggs are an important source of food for millions of migrating shorebirds. This is particularly true for the red knot, an at-risk shorebird that uses horseshoe crab eggs at Delaware Bay to refuel during its marathon migration of some 10,000 miles. Since the late 1990s, both horseshoe crabs and red knot populations in the Dela-

ware Bay area have declined, although census numbers for horseshoe crabs have increased incrementally recently.

“Population size decreases of these ancient mariners have implications beyond the obvious,” King said. “Genetic diversity is the most fundamental level of biodiversity, providing the raw material for evolutionary processes to act upon and affording populations the opportunity to adapt to their surroundings. For this reason, the low effective population sizes indicated in the new study give one pause.”

These studies should help conservation managers make better-informed decisions about protecting horseshoe crabs and other species with a similar evolutionary history. For example, the 2005 study indicated males moved between bays but females did not, suggesting management efforts may best be targeted at local populations instead of regional ones since an absence of enough females may result in local extinctions.

“Consequently, harvest limitations on females in populations with low numbers may be a useful management strategy, as well as relocating females from adjacent bays to help restore certain populations,” King said. “Both studies highlight the importance of considering both climatic change and other human-caused factors such as overharvest in understanding the population dynamics of this and other species.”

Background on Horseshoe Crabs

Horseshoe crabs are not crabs at all – in fact, they are more closely related to spiders, ticks and scorpions. While historically horseshoe crabs have been used in fertilizer, most horseshoe crab harvest today comes from the fishing industry, which uses the crab as bait, and the pharmaceutical industry, which collects their blood for its clotting properties. While the crabs are returned after their blood is taken, the estimated mortality rate for bled horseshoe crabs can be as high as 30 percent.

The research, *Population dynamics of American horseshoe crabs—historic climatic events and recent anthropogenic pressures*, was published in the June issue of *Molecular Ecology* and was authored by Søren Faurby (Aarhus University, Denmark), Tim King, Matthias Obst (University of Gothenburg, Sweden) and others.

The 2005 study, *Regional differentiation and sex-biased dispersal among populations of the horseshoe crab* (*Limulus polyphemus*), was published in the *Transactions of the American Fisheries Society* and authored by Tim King, Mike Eackles Adrian Spidle (USGS) and Jane Brockman (University of Florida).

Photos for this release:

Visit: http://gallery.usgs.gov/tags/NR2010_08_30 for all available photos.



WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

Adams, Valley Lee
 Gail Anderson, Dunkirk
 Barbara Barrett, Lusby
 Jane Beard, Dunkirk
 Jennifer Bignell, Lusby
 Gloria Bilinski, Waldorf
 Kenneth Bowen, Prince Frederick
 Michelle Carns, Waldorf
 Diana Clark, Dunkirk
 Shirley Cobb, Hollywood
 Rose Curtis, Solomons
 Gordon Dewey, Lusby
 Lauren Dwyer, Fort Washington
 Brenda Foley, Prince Frederick
 Patricia Gronert, Lexington Pk
 Joan Hunt, Waldorf
 Romaine Johnson, Mechanicsville
 Marguerite Kates, Dunkirk
 Sylvia Laurie, Owings
 Rose Long, Clinton
 Muehlfeld Family, Waldorf
 Lillian Niederer, Solomons
 Robert Pepper, La Plata
 Christine Perkins, Leonardtown
 Janet Perryman, Hollywood
 Susan Pinales, Dunkirk
 Charles Pinto, Lexington Park
 Amy Plummer, Huntingtown
 Eileen Pumphrey, Chesapeake Beach
 Mary Reeves, Port Tobacco
 Shelley Robinson, Leonardtown
 Dorothea Saine, La Plata
 Kate Samworth, Accokeek
 Ronald Shaffer, Oxon Hill
 Sheila Smith, Port Tobacco
 Kathryn Todd, Waldorf
 Gail Walker, Waldorf
 Kay Wirth, Lusby
 Deborah Wisniewski, Huntingtown
 Judy Wondoloski, Dunkirk
 Diane Zeagler, California

THANKS TO A COMMITTED VOLUNTEER

I want to extend thanks to Heather Burk, Director and our Adopt-A-Raptor Chairperson, for her years spent helping decide the business of our group and heading the important fundraiser for SMAS.

Heather is relocating soon and will have to resign from her positions. She provided helpful input SMAS at the board meetings, planned to lead field trips, manned our information booth, updated the Adopt-A-Raptor system and fine-tuned our adoption certificates into a very professional document.

So thanks again to Heather. We hope someone will want to step up and replace her in one or both of the vacant positions.

Bob Lukinic, President

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:

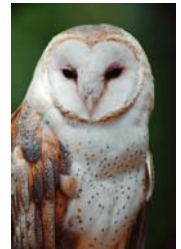
- A certificate of adoption with the number of the U. S. Department of the Interior band, and the location and date of the banding.
- Information on the ecology and migration patterns of the species, photo of a fledgling, and any other information on whereabouts or fate of the bird that may be available.

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)

AUDUBON GULF RECOVERY EFFORT TO RECEIVE \$200K FROM MEMBERS PROJECT®

New York, NY, August 30, 2010 - Thanks to our committed supporters, Audubon has been voted the winning charity in the environment and wildlife category in the latest round of the Members Project® program. The \$200,000 in funding we will receive will help Audubon fulfill its conservation mission and make a difference for the birds, ecosystem and communities affected by the Gulf Oil Spill. Thank you for casting your votes and making it possible for us to win this vital support.

You can still help us in other ways. Get involved by volunteering or making a donation through Members Project. Your time and contribution can make a big impact for us.

We're proud to be a part of Members Project, a partnership between American Express and TakePart to help people everywhere support charitable organizations. Everyone can make a difference. It takes just a small step to begin.



Brown Pelican
Photo by Bill Hubick

For more information on Members Project, go to:
<http://www.takepart.com/membersproject>
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Events continued from page 6

October 16 - Saturday 8 AM – noon *Youths especially welcome!*
Chapman's Landing, Mt. Aventine Area, Charles Co. - Field Trip
"Birding for All Levels"

Leader: Heather Burk (870-562-1004, hburk2000@yahoo.com).
Half-day trip for hawks, sparrows, woodpeckers, and early waterfowl. Great for beginning birders! This is the newly preserved historic and environmentally rich state park. Forests, fields and extensive marsh on the Potomac shoreline. Historic home (not open to the public) dates from 1830. Take Rt. 210 to Chapman's Landing Road between Bryans Road and Indian Head. At the Mt. Aventine site, park outside the 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.

RENEW CHAPTER-ONLY MEMBERSHIP

If your Program mailing label had 6/10 after your name, it is time to renew your SMAS Chapter-Only Membership. Please use the form in the Osprey. We hope to avoid having to send a reminder by snail mail!

Thanks for your continued support.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

- Please enroll me as a member of the Audubon Family and **the Southern Maryland Audubon Society**. I will receive the chapter newsletter, *The Osprey*, and all my dues will support environmental efforts in Southern Maryland.
- Please enroll me as a member of **the National Audubon Society**. My membership will also include membership in the Southern Maryland Audubon Society. I will receive National's *Audubon Magazine*, the chapter newsletter, and support national and local environmental causes. A fraction of my dues will be returned to the local chapter.

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

I **DO** do **NOT** wish to receive *The Osprey* electronically. My e-mail address is: _____
(electronic delivery saves SMAS printing and mailing costs.)

Chapter-Only Dues (new/renewal)
Make check payable to **Southern Maryland Audubon Society**

- Individual/Family __1yr \$20 __2yr \$38 __3yr \$56
- Senior/Student __1yr \$15 __2yr \$28 __3yr \$42
- Individual Lifetime Membership _____ \$500
Senior (over 62) _____ \$250

National Dues, Make check payable to
National Audubon Society -- Chapter code #C9ZL000Z

- Introductory Offer - 1 year \$20
- Senior/Student \$15

Mail to: Southern Maryland Audubon Society, Attn: Membership
P.O. Box 181
Bryans Road, MD 20616

OCTOBER EVENTS

OCTOBER 6-WEDNESDAY-7:30 p.m.

Calvert County Library-Fairview Branch
8120 Southern Maryland Boulevard, Owings, MD 20736

"Marylanders Grow Oysters"

BILL BARGER, *DNR Program Volunteer* "Marylanders Grow Oysters" is a volunteer program where waterfront property owners are growing millions of young oysters in cages suspended from private piers. Their goal is to protect young oysters during their vulnerable first year of life, so they may be planted on local sanctuaries where the oysters enrich the ecosystem and our oyster population. Bill will explain this new State of Maryland initiative and tell us about the newly established oyster sanctuaries in Southern Maryland.

September 18- Saturday - 8 AM - 2 PM

Southern Prince George's County - Field Trip

"EARLY FALL MIGRANT BIRDS"

Leader: Fred Shaffer (410-721-1744, glaucoosgull@verizon.net).

Visit a variety of habitats along the Patuxent River in Southern Prince George's County. This section of the County includes some of the best habitat. We will check for shorebirds, gulls and terns along the Patuxent, and grassland birds and maybe early sparrows at Milltown Landing and Merkle, and visit a variety of other locations along the river depending upon conditions. Call the leader for reservations or additional information at 410-721-1744. This will be a 3/4 day trip finishing by mid-afternoon. From Rts. 4 and 301, go south on 301, left onto Croom Station Rd., left on Croom Rd. then left on Mt. Calvert Rd. Meet in the parking lot near the boat ramp on the Patuxent River. RSVP required.

September 25- Saturday - 8 AM - noon

Calvert Cliffs State Park, Calvert County - Field Trip

"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.

October 9 - Saturday - 8 AM - noon

Caledon Natural Area, King George, VA - Field Trip

"FALL MIGRANTS AND RESIDENT BIRDS"

Leader: Mike Callahan (301-259-2162, raptorsrule@juno.com).

The Caledon Natural Area is a Virginia State Park on the Potomac River on the opposite shore from Nanjemoy. \$3 per vehicle fee, meadow and river bottom habitat, known for Bald Eagles (at least 15 in one spot!), Red-headed Woodpeckers too. On the Potomac River. Meet at MD 301 visitor center just north of Harry Nice Bridge. Toll southbound for bridge. Contact leader for more info. Limited to 12 participants due to space in the park van. RSVP required.

Events continued on page 5

EDITOR: Tyler Bell

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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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