

The Osprey

Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society



Photo by:
Hester Burch

In This Issue

Hog Island Visit

**Black-tailed Godwit
in Delaware**

**New Bird Species
Discovered in Peru**

**The Seabird Trip to
Die For**



<http://somdaudubon.org/>

My Visit to Hog Island: A Place of Learning and Fun

Thank you to the Southern Maryland Audubon Society for funding my tuition to the Audubon camp on Hog Island (July, 2012); it was fantastic! I was lucky enough to attend a four day workshop for environmental educators. We were treated to inspiring and knowledgeable guest speakers, fun and helpful staff, exciting field trips and peaceful and rejuvenating time to explore on our own. One of the guest speakers was Dr. Steve Kress (National Audubon's vice president for Bird Conservation). I learned a lot about the plight of puffins and the efforts to restore these and other birds to islands they formerly inhabited. I also learned a lot from the camp's accomplished staff. They shared their many talents with us: birds, insects, sea life, and geology to name a few. The only drawback was having to choose from so many good lesson options. In addition, it was great to be with such a knowledgeable group of campers. We shared teaching techniques and content. We inspired each other to do more for children; to inspire our students, to get them outside, to open their world. During my time alone, exploring this gorgeous island, I discovered many new plants, insects, and of course, birds. On the boat trips, I was delighted to see several birds that I had never seen before, such as, Atlantic Puffins and Black Guillemots. I was also thrilled in seeing Harbor Seals for the first time.

While on the island, I had the opportunity to further my knowledge of native plants as well as their connection to insects, birds and the rest of the natural world. I hope to similarly share this knowledge with students, teachers and chaperones visiting the Elms Environmental Education Center where I work. Pre-K through high school students visit the Elms for day long environmental field trips. I teach a variety of programs, but I currently work primarily with seventh grade students. During their visit, seventh graders learn about native plants and their importance in our local eco-systems.

An unexpected bonus of the trip was the great food. If you go, perhaps you too will be lucky enough to be served puffin pastries!

The Hog Island Audubon Camp is a place worth supporting. This camp is an important place fulfilling its role of environmental education. They offer other camps on ornithology, seabird conservation, and even have a family camp. Hog Island is the perfect location for such workshops and it is a place of learning and fun.

Hester Burch
Environmental Educator
Elms Environmental Education Center
Dameron, MD

Black-tailed Godwit in Delaware

by Tyler Bell

Jane was off for the day and I had taken the day off on Friday, July 20. I was on the computer when an email arrived from DE-Birds relaying that Bruce Peterjohn had found a Black-tailed Godwit at Prime Hook Beach Road. We threw a bunch of optics into the car and ran out the door without checking the exact location. Another Black-tailed Godwit had been found at Prime Hook NWR in 1994 while we were working our first American Birding Association convention in Minot, ND and it was gone by the time we returned.

We arrived at Broadkill Marsh on the south end of Prime Hook NWR and were surprised to find no birders. We called a friend who told us we were at the wrong location. By the time we got to Prime Hook Beach Road, we had missed the bird by 30 minutes. D'oh! We had set a deadline of 7 pm to leave and when it was obvious that rain was moving in around 6:30, we decided to leave. We saw Ron and Carol Gutberlet coming in the other direction and when we tried to stop to chat, the car kept going before it finally slowed. We backed up and chatted then went very slowly down the road to a safe spot and parked. I checked the brake fluid reservoir and it was empty. I poured brake fluid into the reservoir and pumped the pedal and felt resistance. When I looked under the car, you could see fluid dripping. Uh oh. At that hour on a Friday it was going to be almost impossible to find a repair shop open. We drove as safely as we could down the coastal highway and noted all auto repair shops were closed. We pulled into Walmart and asked for a phone book at customer service and found a hotel nearby at "only" \$100 a night. Most are almost double that on beach weekends in the summer.

First thing Saturday morning, we were at the auto repair place and the brake line between the rear wheels had

rotted through. They fixed it in no time and since we were only 10 miles from the Godwit spot, we went back. Lots of birders there this time then suddenly people were jumping into cars. The bird was at Fowler's Beach Road! By then we knew a shortcut which most people were unaware of. We arrived before most and were able to find one of the few remaining parking spots. Our friend Dan, who we had called the day before, was already there with the bird in his scope. Success! After a few minutes, it lifted up and flew across the road to the south side giving us much closer views. Then, it took off flying to the south never to be seen again.

So, a rotten brake line that broke turned out to be an inconvenience but had we seen the bird the day before, we would have been on the way home on Rt. 50 in heavy traffic when our brakes would have failed. It could have ended so much worse. Nobody got hurt and we got a lifer!



Black-tailed Godwit
Photo by: Andreas Trepte

Help Support Scholarships

The SMAS Board of Directors recently made a difficult decision. We find that we can only fund one educator scholarship this year. Though difficult, we found it to be a fiscally responsible decision. Please help support the SMAS fundraising efforts this year so that we may once again offer this important opportunity to two Southern Maryland educators next year. Watch for opportunities to support our education and conservation efforts in *The Osprey*. If you have any ideas for fundraising or are interested in a fundraising committee position, please contact Mike Callahan, SMAS President, at raptorsrulemc@gmail.com

HELP SMAS PROVIDE SCHOLARSHIPS FOR EDUCATORS ON HOG ISLAND, MAINE

DONATION FOR THE SCHOLARSHIP FUND (tax deductible)

Your name: _____ Amount: _____

Your address: _____

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

Thanks to everyone who came out for the Texas Roadhouse fundraiser night on September 5th. It was great to see so many SMAS members. Although we are still awaiting the final total, our first fundraiser of this type was a great success! Don't miss our next fundraiser night at Chick-fil-a on October 23rd!

The Southern Maryland Audubon Society
is hosting a



SPIRIT NIGHT
FUNDRAISER

TUESDAY, October 23rd

5-7 PM

CHICK-FIL-A

at First Colony Center
45150 First Colony Way
California, MD

*Southern Maryland Audubon Society
will receive 10% of all sales from these two hours!*

New Bird Species Discovered in Peru The Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Ithaca, NY—A colorful, fruit-eating bird with a black mask, pale belly, and scarlet breast—never before described by science—has been discovered and named by Cornell University graduates following an expedition to the remote Peruvian Andes. The Sira Barbet (*Capito fitzpatricki*) is described in a paper published in the July 2012 issue of *The Auk*, the official publication of the American Ornithologists' Union.

Download a PDF of the paper: <http://tinyurl.com/sirabarbet>

The new species was discovered during a 2008 expedition led by Michael G. Harvey, Glenn Seeholzer, and Ben Winger, young ornithologists who had recently graduated from Cornell at the time. They were accompanied by co-author Daniel Cáceres, a graduate of the Universidad Nacional de San Agustín in Arequipa, Peru, and local Ashéninka guides.

The team discovered the barbet on a ridge of montane cloud forest in the Cerros del Sira range in the eastern Andes. Steep ridges and deep river gorges in the Andes produce many isolated habitats and microclimates that

give rise to uniquely evolved species. Mike Harvey was first to see the new species on October 8, 2008: "It was sitting about 60 feet up on a bare branch," says Harvey. "At first we thought it was the Scarlet-banded Barbet (*Capito wallacei*), but the more we looked at it, the more we saw obvious differences in its plumage."

Though clearly a sister species of the Scarlet-banded Barbet, the Sira Barbet is readily distinguished by differences in color on the bird's flanks, lower back, and thighs and a wider, darker scarlet breast band. By comparing mitochondrial DNA sequences of the new barbet to DNA sequences of its close relatives in the genus *Capito*, the team secured genetic evidence that this is indeed a new species in the barbet family (Capitonidae). The genetic work was done by co-author Jason Weckstein at The Field Museum in Chicago.

The team chose the scientific name of the new species, *Capito fitzpatricki*, in honor of Cornell Lab of Ornithology executive director Dr. John W. Fitzpatrick, who discovered and named 7 new bird species in Peru during the 1970s and '80s. "Fitz has inspired generations of young ornithologists in scientific discovery and conservation," says Ben Winger. "He was behind us all the way when we presented our plan for this expedition."

Note: Michael G. Harvey is currently pursuing a PhD at Louisiana State University, Glenn Seeholzer is in the PhD program at Louisiana State University, and Ben Winger is in the PhD program at the University of Chicago.

Media Contact:

Pat Leonard, (607) 254-2137, pel27@cornell.edu



Sira Barbet
Photo by: Michael G. Harvey

The Seabird Trip to Die For ₁

Normally when I think about pelagic birding (birding out at sea) I conjure up horrible scenes of rolling rough seas, cold weather, poor visibility, vomiting, and just a bad time. Even so, I have gone on pelagic trips since 1978 looking for the group of birds that spend most of their time at sea. The birders that do this are a strange breed. We suffer all kinds of discomforts for just a poor view of storm-petrels, shearwaters, alcids, rare gulls and terns, jaegers, or even better, an albatross. It's a tough way to bird, expensive, and hard on the body, but if you want to see some of these sea-dwelling animals you have to pay the price.

On Friday August 24 at 11 PM, a group of about 40 pelagic birders boarded the 105 foot boat, The Thelma Dale IV, in Lewes, Delaware and prepared to head out to the Gulf Stream about 60 miles offshore in Maryland waters. The gulfstream is warm, deep water that attracts much marine wildlife including these pelagic birds. The trip out was a bit rough with 5 to 7 foot seas. A few of the inexperienced began to chum (vomit) before dawn. Just before dawn, the leader, Paul Guris and his crew, began to put down an animal oil slick. The pungent odor of this oily substance attracts the Storm-Petrels, normally Wilson's Storm-Petrels, which then lures other birds toward the slick. Wilson's is one of the most abundant bird species in the world even though most land birders have never seen one.

As the day began, the lazy ones began to take up their binoculars, and now, more common than in the past, cameras and lenses. We headed out from our sleeping benches to see what the day would bring. You need to get up early to see some of the more uncommon to rare storm-petrels like Leach's and Band-rumped. Much to our delight, just before the sun broke the horizon, calls came from the several spotters that Paul had hired, that Band-rumps were present. We rushed to the bow (the front of the boat), quickly aiming binos and camera lenses at the flying critters. Poor light and overcast skies required pushing the digital cameras beyond what would produce good quality images, but we could get identifiable images that were not too blurry. Remember you are on a boat that is moving, the bird is flying, and you are trying to stand still in 5 to 7 foot waves. Some of the images from the day are attached.

The Band-rumps were soon followed by Leach's, my nemesis pelagic bird for photos. I got reasonable images of both species and began to think this is a great trip so far. As the daylight began to make faster shutter speeds possible, Great, Audubon's, and Cory's Shearwaters showed up to munch on the chum. I became more hopeful. At about 7:13 AM a shout rang out. Jaeger on the port (left) side! With poor light and my ailing eyesight, I could not see a jaeger (mostly a dark bird). Shortly thereafter, Paul Guris began to scream. When Paul screams, you pay attention. Last time I heard Paul scream he said Cape Verde Shearwater (which was the second North American record and first Maryland record). This time - Herald Petrel !!!!

The electricity shot through the seasoned sailors since we knew this was a first record for Maryland. Cameras fired

away as the dark Herald Petrel continued to fly toward the boat. This petrel, sometimes called Trinidad Petrel, is more often found in the south Atlantic. The bird, as the picture shows, is mostly dark, like a Sooty Shearwater, with light patches on the underside of the primaries. The bird stayed around long enough for all those not too sick to see it on its brief visit. To our pleasure, the bird turned and returned to the slick, bringing on more looks, images, and high fives.

I have 393 species on my Maryland life list, and new species are few and far between. A new state record was very satisfying. How could this get better? Well, wait a few minutes, and listen for Paul to scream again – Black-capped Petrel!!!! What, two new state birds on the same day, in the same hour? The fact that this was perhaps the third state record did not lessen the electricity. Binoculars and staring, lenses/cameras firing away once again. Soon a second Black-capped Petrel flew by the boat, and all got good looks, many images, and there were more high fives.

What's next? Shortly after 8 AM someone yelled "Tern on the starboard (right) side." (I don't know why it is called starboard.) Close inspection of this sadly distant bird proved it to be an immature Arctic Tern. The bird was flying directly at the boat at 2 O'Clock – imagine the boat as a clock and the bow is 12. The few shots I got were not adequate to identify the bird to species as the bird evaporated into the clouds.

After an incredibly productive morning in Maryland waters we started heading north to the Delaware boundary. Mostly exhausted and heading for the evil empire of Delaware (which some don't list in), we went inside for food, drink, and to look at our images. I had not come to a full rest when the screams went out again - White-faced Storm-Petrel. Ed Boyd, and a few hardy sailors, had refused to come in from the elements. They stood watch at the bow while we were inside and had a great find. When the alarm rang, a mad rush ensued as most of the birders were crushing each other in the front trying to see this dainty gray and white bird that does not fly, but dances on the water. Paul spent much effort to his credit to help me and my bad eyes see this animal. Eventually I got shots and saw the bird (thank you Paul). Since this was Ed's first in the state, he was very much pleased to have found it and shared it with his fellow sailors.

Why so many rare seabirds on this trip? Michael O'Brien, a professional birder I know, had remarked recently that the Gulf Stream was closer to shore this year than in many years. Maybe the serious drought, global warming, who knows, but these species feed in the Gulf Stream and we got lucky. Something caused these animals to wander much further north that day much to our delight. I wondered aloud if we were in North Carolina where these species are more common than in Maryland, but Paul and the GPS unit assured me I was in Maryland.

continued on page 5

I took the opportunity to needle Paul since my target bird, South Polar Skua, had yet to be seen, and it was now after 8:30 AM. Paul shot back – “Never satisfied, are you Jett”. We never did find a South Polar Skua, so I guess I will have to sail again next August with See-life Paulagics. Maybe on the next trip I will find my elusive Skua.

We did find some other good seabirds after we passed into Delaware like Long-tailed Jaeger, Bridled Tern, and Manx Shearwater, but I went to sleep. What an incredible trip.

Good birding.
George Jett
gmjett@comcast.net
www.georgejett.net

1. A reference that will be useful and cheap to study these species is The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America by David Allen Sibley, Alfred A Knopf, Inc.; 2003.



Herald (Trinidad) Petrel
Photo by: George Jett

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

Eileen Beitzell, Mechanicsville
L. A. Condle, Lexington Park
Linda Davis, Fort Washington
Jerome Kuehne, Drayden
Raymond A. Lepesqueu, Fort Washington
Ms. Mamie P. Marable, Clinton
Julie Pearson, Waldorf
Anna Peck, Waldorf

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
10455 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

UPCOMING EVENTS



Submitted by Melissa Boyle
Many thanks to Charles County's Sheriff's Office and
Emergency Services for assisting SMAS with Osprey Banding
on the Port Tobacco River.



Notice the very light colored Osprey on the far right, very
interesting! Photo by Melissa Boyle



What is an Osprey doing in a kayak?? Osprey transport system
for banding...Photo by Melissa Boyle

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

September 22 - SATURDAY- 8 a.m. – 12 noon – Field Trip

*****NOTE DATE CHANGE FROM PROGRAM*****

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 should be in great
number. This trip offers good trails through wooded habitat and
along the creek. Take Rt. 2/4 South of Prince Frederick about
14 miles. Follow signs to the park. Meet leader in parking lot.
Facilities and fee. 3 miles round trip. RSVP required.

October 3 – WEDNESDAY – 7:30 p.m.

Leonardtown Library, St. Mary's County

23250 Hollywood Road (Rt. 245), Leonardtown, MD 20650

"Bird the Bering Sea: Alaska Specialties and Asian Vagrants"

PHIL DAVIS, Secretary, MD/DC Records Committee

Phil has journeyed 13 times to Western Alaska and has compiled
a multimedia presentation on the birding locations and the
key target species of the region. His presentation introduces
the Western Alaska birding locations of Attu, Shemya, Adak,
Dutch Harbor, **Pribilof** Islands, Gambell, and Nome. He also
summarizes Western Alaskan and Asian subspecies that are
candidates for future AOU splits. All ABA listers should really
benefit from this program as sooner or later you must trek to
these locations.

October 13- SATURDAY- 8 a.m. – 12 noon – Field Trip

Indian Head Rail Trail, Charles County

"RED-HEADS ON THE RAIL TRAIL"

Leaders: Gwen Brewer (301-843-3524, glbrewer@comcast.net)
and Lynne Wheeler. There are a few hot spots on the Indian Head
Rail Trail that provide good wintering habitat for Red-headed
Woodpeckers, yielding high numbers of individuals. One of
the hot spots has revealed up to 23 birds! Join us for a leisurely
morning of birding along the trail in search of woodpeckers,
sparrows and other land birds. Meet and park at MD Rt. 224
IHRT Parking Lot, located just east of MD Rt. 225.

October 14- SUNDAY- 8 a.m. – 12 noon – Field Trip

Cove Point Beach and Marsh, Calvert County

"SPARROWS AND SHOREBIRDS"

Leader: Bob Boxwell (bobboxwell@hotmail.com, 410-610-
5124 cell) We will visit beach and marsh habitat that attract many
interesting sparrows and shorebirds. A Living Shoreline project
has established breakwaters and vegetation to protect the interior
marsh and return it to its fresh-water status. Meet at the Giant
Parking lot off of Route 2/4 at the Lusby Town Center (Rousby
Hall Road) at 8 a.m. We will carpool to the locale as there is
limited parking. Limited to only ten people and reservations are
required, RSVP by October 5th.

November 7 – WEDNESDAY – 7:30 p.m.

Accokeek Library, Prince George's County

15773 Livingston Road, Accokeek, MD 20607

"The Surprising History of Bird Feeding"

PAUL BAICICH, co-editor Birding Community E-bulletin, Author
For many of us cold weather means it's time to feed our backyard
birds. But this popular hobby is much more than 21st century
squirrel-proof feeders and sunflower seeds. Local writer and
educator Paul Baicich will share the conservation beginnings of
today's billion-dollar bird feeding business.