

# The Osprey

September 2009 VOLUME 40, ISSUE 1



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

*Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society*

## SMAS ANNUAL MEETING AND CHAPMAN STATE PARK IBA DEDICATION

On June 7<sup>th</sup> SMAS had their annual meeting and potluck lunch at Chapman State Park. The meeting this year was in conjunction with an important event in Southern Maryland, the dedication of the park as an Important Bird Area (IBA).

The day started out with a bird walk of 15-20 attendees at 10:30 am, lead by Dr. Dave Curson. A nice walk was had and several species identified. It lasted about an hour.

Next was the IBA Dedication for the property. The IBA title is one more distinction the property has been shown to have. Chapman's is the second IBA to be designated in Southern Maryland, according to Dr. Curson, Director of Bird Conservation for Audubon Maryland – DC. The other Southern Maryland IBA is at Parker's Creek near Prince Frederick.

Chapman's is a 2254-acre park home to 18 species of forest interior dwelling bird species (FIDS), including several species that are on the National Audubon Society's watch list. Starting in 1987 and until 1998, developers wanted to turn this irreplaceable natural asset into a new city of over 5000 dwelling units. Newly formed citizen's groups knew the development would degrade the circa 1840 manor house and destroy the contiguous forests (FIDS habitat). In response to over a decade of the groups' efforts the property was rescued by then Governor Parris Glendening because of its unique natural resources. At the time, its destruction had been approved by the Charles County Government and the developer was ready to proceed. The State of Maryland purchased the land in 1998. In late 2002, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources named the land Chapman State Park.

Those receiving IBA awards for their outstanding work to protect this natural resource are pictured. From left to right are: Southern Maryland Audubon Society member George Wilmot; Pat Bright, assistant manager with the Maryland Park Service (receiving the award for the park service); Dr. Dave Curson; Bob Lukinic, president of SMAS who was standing in for Cora Fulton; Delegate Peter F. Murphy, (congratulating the others in the photo on behalf of the Md. General Assembly) and SMAS member Carol Gheblian were recognized for their contributions to having Chapman State Park, in Indian Head, dedicated as an Important Bird Area.

We then all sat down to enjoy our buffet meal. The weather was great for an outdoor event and we had a very good lunch provided by some of the local eateries and SMAS members. I want to thank those who helped provide the many items needed to make the picnic a success. I want to acknowledge the key hospitality organizers for this event:

Lynn Wheeler, SMAS director; Carol Gheblian, Archives Chairperson; and Dottie Lukinic for all the work they put into this special day to make it a delightful event to attend.

Next was a historic overview by local Historian Elmer Biles. He covered over 150 years of Chapman residents and the significance of the property. All this was condensed into approximately 30 minutes. We thank you Elmer.

Upon completion of Elmer's talk our annual business meeting proceeded with the presentation of SMAS's annual Conservationist of the Year Award to Dr. Curson for his dedication and continuing expansion of the IBA program. The IBA designation has helped with the protection of the wooded tracts needed for our forest interior dwelling bird species' survival. We had elections for this year's board members.

Those elected were:  
Bob Lukinic, President  
Mike Callahan, Vice-President  
Lynn Wheeler, Secretary  
Will Daniel, Treasurer  
Ernie Willoughby, Director  
Heather Burk, Director

Thanks to our 2 first-time board members, Lynn Wheeler and Heather Burk, for stepping up and volunteering to help run our organization.

Over 60 people arrived to share the day. We were pleased to have State Delegate Peter Murphy attend, along with Dick Meyers, Field Representative for US Senator Barbara Mikulski; and Jacqui Bonomo, Director of Audubon MD-DC.

Next year our annual meeting and picnic will be at Hard Bargain Farm in Accokeek. I hope you can all attend.

Bob Lukinic, President



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## 2009 SMAS Bird-A-Thon

by Kyle Rambo

SMAS members Patty Craig and Kyle Rambo joined up once again in 2009 to form a St. Mary's County team and participate in the Bird-A-Thon fundraiser. The team chose Monday, May 4<sup>th</sup> for their big day, starting at around 5:00 AM – hoping to hear some night birds in the pre-dawn hour. Things were pretty quiet, however, until the dawn chorus began. We greeted the sun at a known warbler and migrant hot spot on the Patuxent River Naval Air Station. The weather was uncharacteristically nice for a St. Mary's Big Day event, but we were still a little worried about a possible shortage of migrants, since the spring migration pulse appeared (once again) to have moved through Southern Maryland earlier than in past years. (Historically, the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of May was considered the peak of spring migration in Maryland. It likely now falls between the last week of April and the first week of May.) Breaking our own Big Day record of 144 species was going to be difficult, and required us to re-think our previous years' game plan.

We altered our strategy this year, passing on the more northerly Hollywood start of years past – choosing to focus instead on the mid- to southerly part of the county and not birding any farther to the north. Early on, that decision appeared to be a good one. We stayed on the Naval Air Station through the entire morning and into early afternoon. With small numbers of migrants, but fortunately decent diversity, we tallied 111 species by 11:30 AM, including a respectable 20 warbler species. One highlight included a productive stop at the Hog Island marsh, where we were afforded great looks at Marsh Wren, Seaside Sparrow, and both species of Sharp-tailed Sparrow (Nelson's and Saltmarsh). The plan may have worked even better had we moved on before noon. Instead, we spent a couple of precious hours birding a few specialty habitats (including the airfield), and left the Base at 1:30 PM with only a few additional species.

Getting ourselves back on track proved even more difficult, as we decided to chase a few "stakeout" birds to the west and north (towards Callaway and Redgate). We picked up a few good birds that we needed, including Pileated Woodpecker and Broad-winged Hawk, but we whiffed at reported locations for Pine Siskin and Great Horned Owl. We obviously did too much driving and spent too much time for too few species, leaving very little time for hotspots in Dameron, Scotland, and Point Lookout State Park. Passing up the stop in Dameron, we probably sacrificed Baltimore Oriole, House Wren, and Barred Owl. We pressed on to Scotland just before dusk, tallying Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Brown Pelican, and Red-breasted Merganser. Our last stop at Point Lookout yielded Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Caspian Tern, Ruddy Duck, and finally Black-crowned Night-Heron, for the last bird of the day. While shuttling vehicles back to Pax River, we made a couple of wish-

ful stops for Barred Owl, Chuck-wills-widow, and Whip-poor-will, but struck out on all three. It was dead quiet.

Overall, we tallied 138 species, including 20 species of warblers (my personal goal for the day), a well-deserved 10 species of shorebirds, 4 species each of gulls & terns, only 2 species of vireos, 8 species of thrushes (including the mimid thrushes), all 6 expected species of woodpeckers, only 6 species of waterfowl and 4 species of wading birds (herons, egrets & ibises), 5 species each of flycatchers and swallows, 9 species of raptors (including only 2 owls – Eastern Screech and Barn), 7 species of blackbirds, and a nice total of 12 sparrow species (including Lincoln's and White-crowned). We were close to last year's total of 144 species, but came up 6 birds short. In order to improve upon that tally and possibly eclipse the 150 species mark in the future, we'll need to do much better on wading birds, waterfowl, shorebirds, vireos, terns, and owls. Throw in a few bonus flycatchers, warblers, and wrens, and who knows! To quote the rallying cry of the Big Day Birder, "Maybe next year!" We had a lot of fun and managed to raise a little money for the Youth Binocular Fund. With 21 pledges, totaling \$1,352.70, we exceeded our goal. Thanks to all who supported the effort. If you would like to receive a copy of our full Bird-A-Thon Big Day species list, please contact either Patty Craig (eyrie@hughes.net) or Kyle Rambo (kyle.rambo@navy.mil).

## Bird Freak

by George Jett

Kids - Listen up! I said listen up!! Are you a Bird Freak? Bird Freak is something I recently learned about. The Southern Maryland Audubon Society (SMAS) Board of Directors has for several years been trying to lure young birders into the organization. We have tried a few approaches. We first had the youth bird camp. It had moderate success the first few years, but soon fell off the radar because of lack of participation. We next tried young birder field trips. They seem to have limited success but we continue to offer them on our annual programs. We have been working with the Girl Scouts of America and we will see where that goes. Recently I learned of another option.

It is called Bird Freak and located at [www.BirdFreak.com](http://www.BirdFreak.com). The Google search I did shows "Bird Freak - The Bird Conservation Blog". Conservation is one component of the site, but it offers much more, and the primary population group it focuses on is you kids. It is the brain child of Birdfreak, aka, Eddie Callaway, sister Jennifer Outcalt, and their extended family. The website is updated weekly and does remain current. The primary objective seems to be to promote birding and conservation for young people, but it is equally useful to anyone interested in birds and conservation.

Continued on page 3

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The website has useful links to excellent websites like Cornell University, eBird, and other bird-oriented resources. It does a good job for kids and adults alike. The links to Cornell point you directly to information on specific bird species like Orchard Orioles, a common breeding bird in our region, and gives you accurate information. The headers at the top of the home page tell much about the site.

The **Home** page has had interesting articles on the new birder experience and is geared toward young people as is most of the website. Sometimes it seems a little amateurish to this old man, but it is not aimed at me. I already go birding and don't care what others think about that. This website is aiming at young people that might, as some of us did when we were young, feel a little shy about sharing our interests in birding with our peers. This week's lead story on the home page is "The Greatest Bird Conservationist That Could Have Been – Ted Parker". Learn about someone we as conservationists and birders can admire. The home page also has a myriad of useful links to all kinds of subjects like bird sounds, banding, blogging, photography, new birder experiences, etc.

**About** explains what the site is all about and how it came to be. This is useful to understanding why it exists.

**Birdlinks** are hundreds of useful internet links created to link to many birding blogs out there, and focuses on birding and bird conservation. The collection literally covers the world. You can share your experiences with hundreds of bloggers and learn about theirs. I'm am not into blogging, but this is a useful component for younger people to stay in touch and share with like-minded individuals. Some are specifically marked for birders 9 to 18 years old. The links are organized geographically, which can be very useful if you are intending to explore outside of our region.

**Photo Lifelist** can be used to keep track of species you have photographed, and share them with others. It is pretty much the same as a life list of what species you have seen or heard, except it is a list of what you have photographed. You can post your photos here and review comments from those that look at your images. This can be very useful to birders trying to learn how to improve their photographs, learn how to identify the images in the photograph, and just fun to share with your peers what you have captured on memory cards (film is extinct). With young people having access to digital cameras, and the desire and skills to post images, this may be one of the stronger components to get kids engaged.

**Recommended Books** are broken into categories: must read, young birders, field guides, scientific, essays, etc. The list is short and some may not be useful to young birders. The one reference that got my attention the most was *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder*. Looking at the index was a bit scary. Are we heading toward a day when children won't be allowed to go into the woods? If this day comes we will lose our natural history for sure. Parents and children should consider read-

ing this book. Many of the standard field guides listed and their categories point young and old in good directions. I wonder what the *Birds of East Asia: China, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, and Russia* (Princeton Field Guides) is doing on the list, and why the Sibley Guide to Birds is not? Sibley is currently divided into Eastern and Western North American birds, and has some of the best illustrations amongst all the guides available, plus the text is direct and keyed to identification.

**Downloads:** Some useful information includes Birdfreak Guide to Taking Kids Birding pdfs. The website has one for 6-12 year olds, the 13-19 age group, and one on why we need bird conservation. These three articles are free downloads, so take a look. These are very informative and should prove helpful for adults trying to interest kids in birding, and kids interested in sharing the experiences of birding. Check it out parents, grandparents, etc.

Under **Policies** they explain their advertising and review policies. The website is primarily sponsored by Swarovski Optik, a German optics company that sells high-end optics. They make some of the best quality binoculars and spotting scopes in the world, and have been in business since 1949. With support from Swarovski, The BirdFreak website is likely to be around for a long time.

Lastly, there is a **Contact** link. You can communicate with the website folks on any matter that relates to birds and conservation.

I think it is a great tool for helping young people feel more comfortable with birding, and can teach them many of the helpful things they need to be good birders and conservationists. It is also a great tool for parents trying to engage kids with the outdoors. Used in concert with field trips, attendance to lectures and programs can help young people find other young people to explore the outdoors. Bird Freak should be in our toolbox to promote outdoor studies for young people.

George Jett  
gmjett@comcast.net

## **WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!**

Christine Banks, Hollywood  
Jonathan Barnett, La Plata  
Kevin Brennan, Swan Point  
Stephanie Evans, Leonardtown  
Pam Kaplan, Solomons  
Bernard/Nancy Matus, Leonardtown  
Cathy Partusch, Piney Point  
Brenda Sorgy, Leonardtown  
Lynn Wheeler, Indian Head  
Faye Wolfgang, Nanjemoy

## The Cellist And Her Nightingales

by Dennis Brezina <alumanon@EARTHLINK.NET>

Consider the fascinating anecdote of British cellist Beatrice Harrison, who "moved to the Surrey countryside in the 1920's and began practicing outdoors in the spring. Nightingales (*Luscinia megarhynchos*) began to join along with her, and she heard them matching her arpeggios with carefully timed trills. After getting used to her they would burst into song whenever she began to play." In 1924 she managed to convince Lord Reith, Director General of the BBC, that a performance of cello together with wild Nightingales in her garden would be the perfect subject for the world's first outdoor radio broadcast. Reith was initially hesitant: "Surely this would be too frivolous a use of our latest technology. What if the birds refuse to cooperate when we're all set to go?" But he agreed to Harrison's unique idea of broadcasting interspecies "music" in her backyard.

The engineers and sound technicians set up the microphones near the Nightingales usual singing post and Harrison sat with her cello in a muddy ditch nearby so that one microphone could pick up both of them. "For over an hour Harrison played and no bird sang. Suddenly, just after 10:45 P.M., fifteen minutes before the broadcast was set to end, the Nightingales began to sing along with Dvorak's 'Songs My Mother Taught Me.'"

Never before had a bird's song or any other sound from the wild been sent over the airwaves. The program was heard as far away as Paris, Barcelona and Budapest, and many who had read about the famous Nightingale tales now heard one for the first time. Harrison received 50,000 letters of appreciation. After this late-night triumph she became one of the most sought after cellists of her time.

### 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  
Thanks!

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



### 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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## SEPTEMBER EVENTS

September 2 – Wednesday – 7:30 p.m.  
Charlotte Hall Library, St. Mary's County  
37600 New Market Rd. (Rt. 6 at Rt. 5), Charlotte Hall, MD  
**"BAT ZEN"**

Dana Limpert, Biodiversity Analyst, Maryland Department of Natural Resources

Come and learn about the bats of Maryland, a critical yet widely misunderstood group of our native fauna. Dana will bust bat myths and discuss stresses affecting bat populations in the northeast such as wind farms and white nose syndrome. You can also learn how to help these important insect predators by installing bat boxes and learning how to monitor them.

September 12 – Saturday - 8 AM - noon  
Mattawoman Natural Environment Area, Wildlands,  
Charles County

### **"EARLY MIGRANTS"**

Leaders: George Jett & Gwen Brewer (301-843-3524; gmjett@comcast.net). Expect migrant songbirds including confusing fall warblers, woodpeckers, and if tide is low possible shorebirds, waders, and early waterfowl. Some walking required - about two miles roundtrip. Meet in Lackey High School parking lot at the top of the hill. From Indian Head, take Rt. 225 ( Hawthorne Road ) for about 1 mile,

turn right onto Rt. 224 (Chicamuxen Road ). Go about 1/2 mile on Rt. 224, and turn into the third left (entrance) into Lackey High School. Drive to the top of the hill and meet group at 8AM. Reservation required by Sept. 10; limit 12. No facilities, no fee.

September 26– Saturday – 8 AM - noon  
Calvert Cliffs State Park, Calvert County  
**"FALL MIGRATION"**

Leader: Tyler Bell (301-862-4623, [jtylerbell@yahoo.com](mailto: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.

**EDITOR:** Tyler Bell  
23035 Forest Way, California, MD 20619  
**Telephone:** (301) 862-4623  
**E-mail:** [jtylerbell@yahoo.com](mailto: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.

**Southern Maryland Audubon Society**  
**P.O. Box 181 Bryans Road, MD 20616**

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### **In This Issue**

- **SMAS Picnic/IBA Dedication**
- **Birdathon**
- **Bird Freak!**
- **The Cellist & Her Nightingales**
- **Help Wanted**