

The Osprey



March 2009 VOLUME 40, ISSUE 2

www.geocities.com/smdaudubon

Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society



IN MEMORY OF ONE OF OUR BIRD LOVERS

by Pat Middleton

A devoted Christian and fun loving individual who enjoyed entertaining family and friends as well as traveling, Alma Roberta Haywood (May 29, 1916 to December 8, 2008) was always fascinated with birds. She grew up in southern Prince Georges County, graduated from Virginia State University; worked 30 year for the Federal Government, married and raised a daughter, Hope Henson Lee. Recently close girl friends of Hope Lee made a donation of \$300 to the Southern Maryland Audubon Society Binocular Fund for Youth in memory of Mrs. Haywood. Below are words from Hope, describing her mother's love of birds.

"As long as I can remember, my Mom has been a lover of all birds except what we called the 'chicken hawk.' That bird got no love from my mother because her sister raised chickens and my mother had many encounters with 'chicken hawks.' However, Mom's feelings for that bird grew when, in later years, a pair of hawks nested somewhere near our home and she could watch them sitting in the cherry tree waiting for a field mouse or some other small animal to go scurrying across the field. Mom had a pair of binoculars and she knew most of the birds by sight and sound. Among her favorites were the redheaded woodpecker and a pair of eagles who came by once in a while, and 'Judy,' a mockingbird who sat on the telephone pole and with whom my Mom had long conversations. For many years, my Mom's Christmas tree was decorated entirely with bird ornaments that she collected from everywhere she went. She read and collected books about North American birds and the family frequently received updates on which birds she had seen."

PRESIDENT OBAMA TAKES BOLD ACTION ON GLOBAL WARMING

STATEMENT OF BETSY LOYLESS, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT

AND DONAL O'BRIEN CHAIR FOR ADVOCACY AND POLICY, NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Washington, DC, January 26, 2009—After only a few days in the Oval Office, President Obama has sent a clear signal that the U.S. is ready to lead the world toward a clean energy future. The President's decisive action puts our nation on a course that will reempower America with clean

sources of energy that reduce global warming, stimulate green jobs, and make us less dependent on fossil fuels.

President Obama is quickly establishing himself as a champion of conservation who is mindful that to restore American prosperity, we must change the ways we produce, import and consume fuel.

MORE INFORMATION

In a White House ceremony today, President Obama ordered the Environmental Protection Agency to reconsider granting California a waiver allowing it to set an auto emissions standard, setting the stage for other states to follow suit.

The President also called for the government to begin issuing regulations that will implement auto fuel efficiency standards enacted by Congress in 2007 and he directed the federal government to make its buildings more energy efficient and to find new ways for federal agencies to reduce energy consumption.

2008-09 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Port Tobacco Christmas Count December 14, by Gwen Brewer, Compiler.

On December 14, 2008, 20 people ventured out on one of our more pleasant weather days for this count, with temperatures above freezing, no precipitation, and a light wind. Our number included two first-time participants in this count (Chris Ordiway and Mike Callahan), and it was great to have them in addition to our wonderful "regulars"! The 19 parties (1-4 people per party) covered 34 miles on foot and 356 miles by car. In addition, three parties spent time listening for owls in the early morning hours, with David Henderson out there at 4 am!

The day ended for most at about 4:30-5 pm, when we gathered for good food and stories of birds seen and birds missed during the day. This year we found a total of 85 species in the count circle and almost 18,000 individual birds. Large groups of Ruddy Ducks on the Potomac by Mike Callahan and Mary Sokol, and more than 4000 Common Grackles (most of which by Bob Boxwell and Tom Seaton) were the major contributors to the total number of birds. Waterfowl species were quite well represented, with a total of 14 species that this year did not include any Mute Swan. A high number of Bald Eagle, 36 adult and 22 immature, reflects the welcome recovery of this species.

Continued on page 2

Six other raptor species were included Red-tailed, Red-shouldered, Cooper's, and Sharp-shinned Hawks, Northern Harrier, and American Kestrel. Barred, Great Horned, and Eastern Screech Owl were counted, thanks largely to the early-morning owling efforts of David Henderson and Stan and Elaine Arnold. Gull numbers were low in comparison to recent years, but numbers were high of Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (47), Eastern Bluebird (255), Hermit Thrush (111), Gray Catbird (9), Eastern Towhee (62), Chipping Sparrow (37), and Savannah Sparrow (53; 51 counted by Bob Lukinic, Chris Ordiway, Shirley Wood, and Peter Blank at Allen's Fresh). Good finds included two Pine Warblers by George Harrington and April Solitro, Purple Finch (total 8) by three teams (Beth and Jason Groth; Jean Artes, Maggie and Joe Tieger; Stan and Elaine Arnold) and four Pine Siskins by George Jett and Gwen Brewer. Species that we might expect to see but did not include Pied-billed Grebe, Wood Duck, Common and Red-breasted Merganser, and Wild Turkey.

Thanks again to all the participants.

Patuxent River Christmas Count December 28 by Andy Brown, Coordinator

Despite having the fewest observers in the history of the count, we were able to obtain fairly good results for the day. Many areas in the circle were not covered and had there been more birders, I'm sure it would have been a very good year. Even so, with only half the party-hours of coverage as last year, we tallied 93 species and 20,440 individuals, which was the same as last year's totals. Not too shabby considering the number of observers.

As a result we did post record low numbers for several species. These included: Ruddy Duck, Common Loon, Common Golden-eye, Hooded Merganser, Red-tailed Hawk, Ring-billed Gull, Greater Black-backed Gull, Downy Woodpecker, Tufted Titmouse, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Field Sparrow, House Finch and House Sparrow. Only 2 Kestrels were observed for the day. Four species were missed totally for the first time in count history. These were Ring-necked Duck, Great Horned Owl, Horned Lark and Red-breasted Nuthatch.

On the up-side, we did have record high numbers for Brown Pelican at 37 and American Robin at 5,180.

Craig Jeschke at Calvert Cliffs State Park was the only one to get Gannet, Black Duck and American Widgeon. He also picked up 8 Red-headed Woodpeckers. These had not been seen on the count since 2003. Sigrid and Bill Styles recorded the only Brown Pelicans, Red-breasted Mergansers, Harrier and Peregrine for the count on the Naval Air Station. They also picked up a Laughing Gull and 2 Forster's Terns. Both of which were only the second records for these species in this count. Steve Ferrell and Steve Smith at Jefferson Patterson Park got our only Gadwall, Phoebe, Thrasher and Pipits. Patty Craig and Anne Bishop saw the

only Common Mergansers for the count at Sandgates, and Dale Johnson in Broomes Island got the second record of Osprey for us. We were also fortunate to add Pine Siskin for the first time in count history.

All in all, it was a very good day. This is a very nice count with a great diversity of habitats and it is a shame to see it not being covered to its full potential. Please keep us in mind for next year when planning your count schedule.

Ft. Belvoir, Maryland Sector CBC, Jan. 4, 2009 by Carol Ghebelian, Coordinator.

Our Maryland sector of the 2008 Virginia Ft Belvoir circle again reached our high species list of 91, with 49,628 individual birds counted on Jan. 4, 2009. We had 23 counters afield in 8 parties and 2 feeder counters. The later January date may have accounted for a higher than usual number of waterfowl found on our Piscataway, Mattawoman, Pomonkey, and Broad creeks, and on the Potomac River. Notable were Tundra Swan (231), Gadwall (1541), Canvasback (607), Redhead (90), Common Merganser (254), American Coot (2928). The large wintering Potomac raft of scaup was again found in our sector this year (6000). Two huge flocks of Common Grackle (22018) also swelled our individuals count. Special species found were Pine Siskin, Rusty Blackbird, Bonaparte Gull, Great Egret, the Eurasian Wigeon at Piscataway Boardwalk (found by birder recruited into our party!), Bob Lukinic's feeder immature Baltimore Oriole, and the Ghebelian Yellow-throated Warbler returning to our feeder for the fourth winter. Count week included a Red-necked Grebe at Piscataway Creek and American Kestrel at Marshall Hall. We counted twenty Bald Eagles, mostly adult. Red-bellied Woodpeckers (114) and Eastern Bluebirds (113) were found in higher than usual numbers. We missed Red-headed Woodpecker, Wood Duck, and the disappearing Northern Bobwhite. This count enjoys help from several non-SMAS'ers from neighboring areas, and was pleased to have help this year from some of our members who normally work the Patuxent CBC, held earlier this year. Long distance award goes to member Melissa Boyle who comes from Gettysburg!

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

Field trip to Piscataway National Park, January 24, 2009 by Carol Ghebelian.

Ice covered most of the Potomac and Piscataway Creek for our field trip on Saturday, Jan. 24,2009. The many waterfowl found earlier had scattered and most were not to be found. In scouting out the trip the day before, I did find an area of the creek partially open, off Farmington Creek Road (near Wharf Road). So our joint party of 4 SMAS members (including the leader) and 5 from the Audubon Naturalist Society (ANS) headed for the private

neighborhood park at the end of that road. We were rewarded with small numbers each of Tundra Swan, Common and Hooded Merganser, Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked Ducks, and Mallard. Ring-billed Gulls and 1 Great Black-backed Gull were seen on the ice and in the little open water. A lone Great Blue Heron was also spotted. The Piscataway Creek boardwalk (called Accokeek Creek by NPS) yielded nothing for us but high winds. The Eurasian Wigeon had departed with the rafts of waterfowl seen there only a few days earlier. We headed for National Colonial Farm where ice fishermen were seen at the pier the day before. The high winds had even driven them out this day. Ducks could be seen at the Mount Vernon shoreline but were too distant for us to identify. Two lone male Common Mergansers bounced in the waters within out view. We walked some of the farm fields where we found some usual land birds. Many Bald Eagles were seen throughout the morning-much to the delight of us all, but especially the ANS city folk-and we even witnessed mating rituals of one pair. We totaled 36 species for the day. Marta Wagner, ANS, co-led.

Jefferson Patterson Park, February 1, 2009, by Tyler Bell.

My past luck with weather and field trips has been iffy. Those that were on the St. Mary's Chase will remember the 15°F temps with winds in our face at 15-20 mph. We got lucky this time and despite the wind, it was actually fairly comfortable. However, the focus of the field trip was supposed to be waterfowl and there just weren't many around. Usually there is a flock of mixed scaup that is around 1000 birds but the flock was solely Greater Scaup and only about 250 were present. But, they lined up nicely facing southwest with the sun shining square on so their green iridescence was quite obvious. It would have been nice to have a few Lesser Scaup to compare side by side head shape and color which isn't always a good field mark.

The larger pond on the north side of the park was remarkably mostly ice-free. We had nice looks at several Ring-necked Ducks and a couple of female Hooded Mergansers which, unfortunately, flushed before we could scope them. The oddity *du jour* was a Muscovy Duck which, instead of flushing when we approached, came waddling toward us apparently looking for a handout! Clearly a domestic bird since the only wild Muscovy Ducks in the US are along the Rio Grande in south Texas.

By the time the trip was almost over, the wind was really ripping. We stopped at the end of Lloyd Bowen Road to look for Brown-headed Nuthatches in the only fairly reliable spot in Calvert County. They have a fairly weak squeaky toy call and they would have had to have been very close for any of us to hear them. We did not.

A couple of folks new to Calvert County followed me out the back way through Cage Farm where we found two small

flocks of Gadwall in a couple of farm ponds there. The final bird on the trip was a small flock of Horned Lark at the intersection of Cage and Mackall Roads. This spot is quite reliable in spring and summer for Horned Lark, Eastern Meadowlark, Grasshopper Sparrow and, in alfalfa fields in May, Bobolinks.

In all, I counted 49 species. It was a nice small group this time with seven attendees and one leader!

POTOMAC RIVER CLEANUP CALLS FOR VOLUNTEERS

by Bob Lukinic

It is nearly that time of the year for the Potomac River Watershed Cleanup. This year's cleanup will be on April 4th from 9:00 AM to 12:00 noon, rain or shine.

The site at Marshall Hall Park is again sponsored by our Southern Maryland Audubon Society. SMAS will furnish drinks and snacks. Representatives will be at the sign-in table and through the park to help with whatever is needed. Gloves and trash bags are furnished through the Alice Ferguson Foundation and Charles County Public Works.

In previous years, many volunteers participated in the cleanup including: students working on their community service requirements, scout troops, church groups, and businesses, as well as residents of all ages interested in the environment in which we live. Every year after the volunteers are done there is such a great difference in the appearance, safety, and usefulness of the shoreline. SMAS hopes that concerned residents will again show up to help heal the Potomac.

If you want further information please contact me, Site Coordinator Bob Lukinic
Phone 301-283-6317
E-mail rlukinic@peoplepc.com

APPRECIATION FROM THE EDITOR

Owing to adverse reactions to certain doctor's prescriptions in December, the editor found himself in intensive care in hospital through the time that the February issue of *The Osprey* was to be assembled and printed. Thanks to Tyler Bell, our SMAS Listowner and member of the Publications Committee, who stepped into the breach, the February issue came out in good order. Our hearty thanks go to Tyler for his excellent work. (The editor is now well on the way to recovery.)

WINTER FUNDRAISERS ADD MONEY TO EDUCATION FUND

by Millie Kriemelmeyer, Education Committee

The gift-wrapping fundraiser in December at the Wild Bird Center in Waldorf and related donations produced \$422 for the Education fund. For more money, Millie Kriemelmeyer ran a contest in which she donated \$1 for every special bird or bird behavior reported by a member of the SMAS between Christmas and the January 28 meeting of the Directors. Carol Gheblian entered the contest by donating \$2 for every \$1 donated by Millie. The following special birds and bird observations were reported:

Allen's Hummingbird by George Jett
 Barrow's Goldendeye by George Jett
 Eurasian Widgeon by George Jett
 Tufted Duck by George Jett
 Fox Sparrow by George Jett
 Cooper's Hawk swooping onto Blue Jay (a miss) by Millie
 Hermit Thrush eating dried pokeweed berries by Millie (Hermit Thrush also reported by Carol and Mike Rudy)
 Yellow-throated Warbler by Carol
 Pine Siskin by Carol
 Bald Eagle at the Charles County landfill, by Julie and Elizabeth Daniel
 Yellow-rumped Warbler at the Charlotte Hall Library by Julie and Elizabeth
 Red-necked Grebe by Jim Stasz
 Pileated Woodpecker by Mike Rudy

These 13 species with the two for one matching donations added \$39 to the \$422 in gift-wrapping donations, for a total of \$461.



The population of the Bald Eagle, *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*, in Maryland has made a remarkable comeback since the widespread use of DDT was discontinued in the early 1970s.

FOSTER PARENTS NEEDED



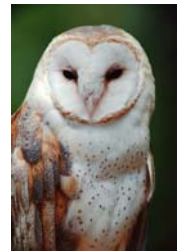
Southern Maryland Audubon Society sponsors the banding of nestling birds of prey, or raptors, with serially numbered aluminum bands in cooperation with the Bird Banding Laboratory of the U. S. Department of the Interior, as part of our bird research and conservation activities in Southern Maryland. Limited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

MARCH EVENTS

March 4—**Wednesday**—7:30 PM. **Monthly Meeting.** La Plata United Methodist Church, 3 Port Tobacco Road (Route 6 at Route 301). La Plata, Charles County. **Eagles of Southern Maryland**, by Kaylen Beach (student) and Mike Callahan, Naturalist, Nanjemoy Environmental Education Center. Eagles are the topic of this tag team presentation. Mike and Kaylen reprise their owl talk from last season, with this overview of the Bald Eagle's comeback in Maryland. See a live eagle up close.

March 6—**Friday**—8:00 PM. **Field Trip. Owl Prowl, Charles County.** Leader: Mike Callahan (301-259-2162, raporsrule@juno.com). On this night listen and look for owls in Charles County. Owing to the sensitivity of possibly nesting owls, the meeting location will be given when you sign up for the trip by contacting Mike Callahan as noted above. *Youths especially welcome. Note the change of date for this field trip.*

March 7—**Saturday**—8:00 AM to noon. **Field Trip.** Patuxent River Naval Air Station, St. Mary's County. **Late Winter Landbirds and Waterfowl.** Leader: Dean Newman (240-895-7321, dean.newman@verizon.net). Meet at the Park & Ride lot across the street from the Lexington Park Post Office on Tulagi Place. This trip has produced Lapland Longspur, Snow Bunting, Short-eared Owl, and

waterfowl in the past. **Call the leader for reservations and security details before February 28.** You must sign up for this trip in advance and provide your social security number. Facilities and no fee.

March 25—**Wednesday**—7:00 PM. **Board of Directors' Meeting.** SMECO Building, White Plains, Charles County. Directors' meetings are open to any member.

Continued on page 5

EDITOR: Ernest Willoughby
18335 Hartman Drive, Lexington Park, MD 20653
Telephone: (301) 862-9631
E-mail: ejwilloughby@aol.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

US POSTAGE
PAID
Non-profit
Standard Mail
#646174

In This Issue:

- **Christmas Bird Counts**
- **Reports from the Field**
- **Potomac Cleanup**