

The Osprey



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www.geocities.com/smdaudubon

Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

*By Carol Ghebelian
Membership Chair*

In December 2001, National Audubon initiated a new policy to permit a Chapter-Only Membership (COM) option for those wishing to support Southern Maryland activities exclusively and not join or renew in National Audubon. To date we have 62 COM members. A few of these have elected to retain National membership and also further support SMAS by paying the COM dues. Our National Audubon Society membership (determined by members in our zip code territory) has dropped from about 750 to 600 within the past year. This decline is partially due to the national members who have elected to become chapter-only members, but also to a decrease in recruiting by National Audubon.

Please note that your membership expiration date appears in the upper right hand corner of your *Osprey* label. (The National membership expiration date is preceded by L00, our chapter code) When pertinent, we also stamp your newsletter with an "expired" notice and urge you to use the newsletter form to renew. To save reminder notice postage for the COM's we appreciate your prompt renewal.

Income from our COM's is helping offset the diminishing dues-share we get from National memberships. Under current policy, SMAS may receive no dues share at all in 2004. It is incumbent upon each of us to work to increase our membership and help maintain the active, viable chapter we have here in Southern Maryland.

Although a very small percentage of our National members are active in our local chapter, we do appreciate the support of all in furthering the Audubon Cause both locally and nationally.

Please contact me when you have questions regarding your membership, change of address, etc. (301-753-6754, gheb@bellatlantic.net)

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Mary C. Walker, Dunkirk
Tom and Paul Batzer, La Plata
Dianne Lyon, Issue
Mary M. Ridgell, St. Mary's City

IS YOUR BIRD BATH FOR THE BIRDS?

*By Jerry W. Davis, Forest Wildlife Program Manager
Ouachita National Forest, Hot Springs, AR*

Birds need water every day of the year for drinking and bathing. A few years ago on Christmas Day at 5:40 p.m., with the sun setting in a winter sky, the wind was blowing at 10 mph and it was 36 degrees. I found it insightful to watch a group of White-throated Sparrows bathing.

We are probably more aware of birds' need for water in the summer when we see them trying to get a drink in the streets where a sprinkler system has made puddles. Being aware that birds need water all year long for drinking and bathing may be something in our minds, but knowing this and acting to provide the water is where the process breaks down, even with some of the most ardent birds supporters.

A few years ago I was interested in why people bought bird baths. I had been naïve in thinking that they bought them for the birds. I found out that most of the bird baths were not for the birds. Yes, the intentions may have been good, and people might have spent several hundred dollars for a bird bath with a pump, multiple tiers, and even nude cherubs on top. But I found bird baths being used for flower pots, plant stands, ash trays at businesses, decorations, artistic expressions, and as status symbols, to mention a few. Some were turned upside down in winter. Some were in the middle of the yard in the hot sun away from shade and cover, with water too hot. Some were deep enough to drown a Great Blue Heron. The most critical feature is that most did not contain water.

Evaluate your bird bath(s). Is the water about one inch (2.5 cm) deep around the edge, and about two inches (5 cm) deep in the center (knee deep to an American Robin)? Does it have perches within 10 to 12 feet (3 meters)? Is it shaded at least part of the day, to keep the water cooler in summer? Is water available every day of the year? Does it have a reduced exposure to predators such as cats?

My surveys indicated that only two percent of bird baths were properly constructed, correctly placed, and contained water. So, every time you take a drink, ask yourself whether your bird bath has water. Do not let your bird baths be a wasted resource and lost opportunity to improve habitat for birds. Is your bird bath for the birds? Ninety-eight percent are not, but they all need to be.

CHAPTER FINANCIAL REPORT, 2002-2003

To inform our members, we summarize the balance sheet and statement of revenues and expenditures of Southern Maryland Audubon Society for the 12-month period from July 1, 2002 to June 30, 2003. This is the accounting we submitted in our Annual Report to National Audubon Society through Audubon MD-DC. All numbers are in U.S. Dollars.

REVENUES

National Audubon Net Dues Payment	2334.25
Bequests	1301.55
Grants/Contributions	713.00
Educational Events	0.00
Fundraising Events	2120.50
Interest and Investments	224.08
Bookstore and Flea Market Sales	2889.13
Chapter-Only Membership dues	845.00
Total Income	10427.51

EXPENDITURE

Administration	2262.52
Newsletter printing and distribution	3221.40
Education Programs and Events	2522.21
Fundraising	72.50
Regional/State Offices/State Council	0.00
Grants/Contributions to Others (Chesapeake Bay Trust)	100.65
Bookstore Operations	1313.42
Total Expenditure	9492.70

NET INCOME (OR DEFICIT) IN OPERATING FUNDS
934.81

BEGINNING BALANCE
17426.72

ENDING BALANCE
18361.53



These assets (whole dollars) are divided as follows: 8616 is in checking and savings accounts; 9746 is in Certificates of Deposit. There are no liabilities. Of the total of 18362, 5484 is committed to specific programs, such as education, and raptor conservation, and 12878 is unreserved.

We thank our Treasurer Larry Brown for his excellent work during the past year, making it possible for the Board of Directors to keep the Society in a positive balance.

BACKGROUND OF THE TAKE BACK AUDUBON PROXY CHALLENGE

*By Darrel Whipple,
Willapa Hills Audubon Society (OR/WA)*

(Editors Note: In June, 2003 the Board of Directors decided to have SMAS sign on to the Take Back Audubon movement in order to protect the interests of our chapter in relation to the National Audubon Society. This article provides some background about the Take Back Audubon movement and its objectives.)

Three years ago about 130 Chapter leaders from around the country responded to Chuck Bragg's offer to host an email discussion of "What is a Chapter?" and what should be the relationship between a Chapter and National Audubon Society (NAS). That list continues today and is called the NAS-Chapter discussion list.

That was in the spring of 2000. Chuck was on the NAS Board as the Director representing the Western Region. Dozens of topics of concern to Chapters were discussed, but one of the hottest was NAS's proposal to abandon the \$5.50 payment to the Chapter for each member joining NAS or renewing. The replacement was to be the "net

dues share," a payment consisting of whatever is left over (if anything) after expenses in the Magazine/Membership account at the end of the fiscal year.

After much input and discussion, the list participants decided they should organize to dissuade the NAS Board from adopting the net dues share proposal. The participants got their Chapter boards to sign on to a letter detailing the faults of the proposal and volunteers appeared at the Board meeting to speak against the proposal if permitted. This was in September of 2000, and the Board decided to adopt the net dues share proposal (after a three-year trial period with a "safety net") in spite of the protest from 44 Chapters, and overriding the dissenting votes of Chuck Bragg and Helen Engle.

That was Round One. The participants went back to the list discussion licking their wounds and fussing about the next major offensive by National, which was the impending revision of the Chapter Policy. Changes were being proposed on several fronts affecting Chapters, and participants complained that none of them could be evaluated without knowing the combined impacts (we needed something like an EIS!).

At any rate, in the fall of 2001 participants presented to the Board a sign-on letter from 74 Chapters, one State Council, and 88 Chapter leaders objecting to the revised Chapter Policy and the proposed requirement that the relationship between NAS and the Chapters be governed by the Chapter Policy, which could be modified unilaterally by NAS. The letter also requested that Chapter congresses be convened to discuss the relationship between National and the Chapters. Additionally, a number of Chapters submitted their own critiques of the "Essential Elements of a Chapter." But the proposed Chapter Policy was approved basically as conceived, with but minor influence from the Chapters.

That was Round Two. The list participants did not feel that NAS was honoring their concerns. They attempted to contact other Chapters not already represented on the list, but found that NAS would not release the addresses of the 500 Chapters (though we might find some of them one at a time by linking to their web pages through Audubon.org!).

It was about this time that NAS reversed its practice of hosting Chapter web pages, and forced the Chapters to fend for themselves in cyberspace. Likewise, many email discussion lists, including NAS-Chapter, were de-funded, and had to go elsewhere (like yahoo) to survive.

Participants conducted a symbolic proxy challenge at the Annual Meeting in Phoenix on December 7, 2002, to voice again the concerns of the Chapters. I attended that event with five others from around the country and helped draft and present the four "democracy resolutions," which were

voted down by senior management using the thousands of proxies sent in by loyal, trusting Audubon members.

That was Round Three. My account of what happened is on the Take Back Audubon web page. Find my "Phoenix Report" at www.smbas.org/tba/phoneix_report.htm

Now we are engaged in a well-organized, coordinated proxy challenge that has great promise to succeed. We are getting the message out to all the chapters, encouraging input to our platform and involvement in soliciting proxy votes from chapter members. We have a slate of eight responsible director-at-large candidates, including me, from across the country, whose biographies you can find on the TBA web page.

We have a platform that includes important democratic guarantees now lacking in NAS (the right to basic information, the right to initiate measures before the NAS Board, competitive elections, grass-roots congresses of chapters, and reinstatement of dues share). Please join us.

2003 MAY COUNT IN CHARLES COUNTY

by George Wilmot

On Saturday, May 10, 2003, 16 birders in 8 teams did the annual Maryland Ornithological Society's May Count in Charles County. Despite the cloudy, windy day with light morning and afternoon rain, the count yielded 142 species and a total of 5724 birds. For the 2002 Charles County May Count, the numbers were 141 species and 6667 birds. The species and bird totals for both of these counts are a little above the averages for the past five years.

Some of the less common birds found this year were 2 Common Loons, 3 American Woodcocks and 9 Barn Owls including some young owls. The Osprey population seems stable with 77 seen this year, 84 in 2002, 77 in 2001 and 69 in 2000. The number of Bald Eagles counted was 29 compared to 13 in 2002, 23 in 2001 and 14 in 2000.

Because of the snowy and cold winter, there have been concerns that the populations of some of our permanent resident bird species might be lower this year. The May Count data did show that some of these populations were significantly lower this year. The May Count numbers for Red-bellied Woodpeckers are: 35 in 2003, 70 in 2002, 58 in 2001 and 75 in 2000; for Carolina Chickadees 47 in 2003, 66 in 2002, 72 in 2001, and 54 in 2000; for Carolina Wrens 38 in 2003, 103 in 2002, 96 in 2001 and 67 in 2000; for Eastern Bluebirds 30 in 2003, 115 in 2002, 95 in 2001 and 84 in 2000. So it looks like this winter was hard on some of our winter birds especially the Carolina Wrens and the Bluebirds. We hope that next year's May Count will show some recovery in these populations. My thanks to all the May Count participators for their good work on this year's Charles County May Count despite the rainy weather.

'TAKE BACK AUDUBON' GROUP SEEKS PROXIES

As many Auduboners are aware, the National Audubon Society has made changes in its relationship with local Chapters that have significantly impacted Chapter finances, and the role of the Audubon grassroots in our organization.

In 2000, the NAS Board of Directors changed the long-standing policy of sharing membership dues with Chapters. Under the new policy that will be fully implemented this year, the dues share will drop to near zero for most Chapters. This loss of revenue has forced Chapters to cut back on newsletters and to reduce their conservation and education activities—the most effective activism in all of Audubon.

In 2001, the NAS Board enacted a new Chapter Policy over the written objections of 74 Chapters and over 88 Chapter leaders who signed on to a letter urging the Board to reconsider this policy. The letter asked NAS to engage in a true dialogue over this document and to seek a policy “that meets the needs of ALL of Audubon, including Chapters”.

At the 2002 Annual Meeting, the NAS leadership voted down resolutions brought by Chapter members to reform the governance of NAS by providing for access to information, competitive elections, and a greater voice for Audubon members and Chapters.

In addition, National Audubon has embarked on a major effort to establish hundreds of Audubon Centers, which many Chapter leaders fear will ultimately replace Chapters by draining funds and volunteers from local conservation work. A number of Chapters have already had serious conflicts with NAS over this issue.

In response to these actions by NAS, a grassroots organization, 'Take Back Audubon' (TBA) has sprung up, whose mission is “to restore a true partnership between the independent Chapters and the National Audubon Society through a real voice in the NAS organization and in all decisions that affect Chapters”. To date, 37 Audubon Chapters, and over 100 Chapter leaders have endorsed Take Back Audubon.

Presently, TBA is engaged in an effort to elect an alternate slate of candidates to the NAS Board of Directors at this year's Annual Meeting on Dec. 6, 2003. They are seeking proxies from Audubon members to bring to the meeting to vote for this slate, and to support resolutions that will be presented to democratize Audubon and to restore the Chapter dues share.

The TBA slate is made up of Chapter leaders that will give Audubon members a choice, by offering candidates that will stand up for the interests of local Chapters. The candidates are:

- Charles Bragg, Santa Monica Bay Audubon Soc. (CA); 310-454-9662; cgbraggjr@worldnet.att.net
- Marsha Cannon, Madison Audubon Soc. (WI); 608-251-1276; mpcannon@charter.net
- John Gallagher, Clark County Audubon Soc. (OH); 937-323-0782; jfg4@msn.com
- Andrew Mason, Delaware-Otsego Audubon Soc. (NY); 607-652-2162; AndyMason@earthling.net
- Cary Meister, Yuma Audubon Soc. (AZ); 928-782-3552; cwm4@mindspring.com
- Pat Rasmussen, Leavenworth Audubon Adopt-a-Forest (WA); 509-548-7640; patr@crcwnet.com
- Tony Wagner, Buffalo Audubon Society (NY); 716-754-4231; twagner@adelphia.net
- Darrel Whipple, Willapa Hills Audubon Soc. (OR); 503-556-9838; dwhipple@columbia-center.org
- Jennifer Wilson-Pines, North Shore Audubon Soc. (NY); 516-767-3454; jwpines@juno.com

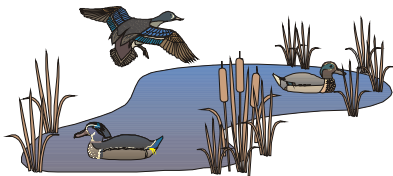
In addition, TBA is endorsing this year's regionally-nominated Chapter candidates:

- Lone Werthman, Audubon Soc. of Omaha (NE)
- John Whittle, Golden Triangle Audubon Soc. (TX)
- Steven Zimmerman, Juneau Audubon Society (AK)

Biographies of the candidates, copies of the proposed resolutions, and background information on Take Back Audubon can be found at www.smbas.org/tba.

A Take Back Audubon proxy form can be found elsewhere in this newsletter. To support this Audubon Chapter effort, complete the form and return to the address listed by **November 30, 2003**. Members are also asked to *not* return the NAS proxy that will be arriving in a few weeks.

For further information, please visit the TBA web site (above), or contact any of the TBA candidates.



PROXY

KNOW ALL PERSONS BY THESE PRESENTS, that I, the undersigned, a member of NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC., do hereby constitute and appoint Marsha Cannon, John F. Gallagher, Andrew L. Mason, and Darrel K. Whipple, and each of them, with full power of substitution, my attorneys and agents for me and in my name, place and stead, to vote as my proxy the number of votes I should be able to cast if then personally present at the Annual Meeting of NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC., to be held in Cincinnati, Ohio, on Saturday, December 6, 2003, or at such other place and time as said Annual Meeting may be held, and at any adjourned meeting thereof as follows:

- (a.) For the election of directors for the terms expiring in 2006, or until their successors are elected; and
(b.) In their discretion, for the transaction of such other business as may properly come before the meeting.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this ____ day of ____ Two Thousand and Three.

Signed _____ Address _____
(must be signed to be valid)

Name _____
(please print name)

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING PROXY

- 1. Insert date of signing.
2. Print name exactly as membership is carried and shown on your magazine label. You must be a National Audubon Soc. member in good standing, as of Oct. 17, 2003 in order to vote.
3. Proxy to be signed by person in whose name membership is carried. If carried in two names or as Mr. & Mrs., either party can sign.
4. Show current address and zip code.
5. SIGN ONLY ONE PROXY FORM. DO NOT SIGN ANY OTHER PROXY FORM YOU MIGHT RECEIVE. HOWEVER, IF YOU HAVE ALREADY SIGNED A PROXY FORM, THIS FORM WILL SUPERSEDE ANY EARLIER FORM.
6. Return signed proxy form by NOVEMBER 30 to: John F. Gallagher, 121 Larchmont Road, Springfield, Ohio 45503.

NEW OR RENEWAL 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. Make check payable to Southern Maryland Audubon Society.
Please enroll me as a member of the National Audubon Society and the local chapter, the Southern Maryland Audubon Society, at the Introductory Offer. I will receive the Audubon magazine, the chapter newsletter, The Osprey, and support National and local environmental causes. Make check payable to National Audubon Society.
Please renew my membership in the National Audubon Society and the local chapter, the Southern Maryland Audubon Society. Make check payable to National Audubon Society.

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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

Chapter-Only Dues (new/renewal)

- Individual/Family \$20
Senior/Student \$15

National Dues

- Introductory Offer - 1 year \$20
Introductory Offer - 2 year \$30
Senior/Student \$15
Renewal Rate \$35

OCTOBER EVENTS

October 1 – Wednesday – 7:30 p.m. **Monthly Meeting**
Potomac Branch Library, Charles County, Bryans Road
Program: Impacts of the El Niño cycle on Migratory
Songbirds, by Scott Sillett, Smithsonian Migratory Bird
Center.

The phenomenon known as El Niño Southern Oscillation periodically affects weather patterns across a large part of the earth's surface. Dr. Scott Sillett, researcher with the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, will present the results of his research on Black-throated Blue Warblers to examine how events in the global climate cycle can affect migratory songbirds.

October 4 – Saturday – 8 a.m. **Field Trip**
Point Lookout State Park, St. Mary's County
Fall Migrants

Leader: Bob Boxwell. (301-872-5998). Half day trip. Located at the confluence of the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay, Point Lookout can be a migration hotspot. Meet in the parking lot at the end of Route 5.

October 18 – Saturday – 8:00 a.m. **Field Trip**
Camp Merrick, Charles County
Migrants and Winter Birds

Leader: George Wilmot (301-375-8552). Located at Maryland Point, Camp Merrick, a youth camp owned and managed by the Waldorf Lions Club, has many miles of trails through its forests and fields and along its marshes

and the Potomac shoreline. A variety of winter and migrant water, marsh, and land birds is expected. **Note: directions to site in program brochure are incorrect.** From Route 6, about a mile from its end at the Potomac River, turn right (west) onto Route 224. Go west on Rte. 224 about three miles and turn left into the camp entrance road, Rick Hamilton Place. Go to the end of the road and park off the road just before the camp office.

November 1 – Saturday – 9:00 a.m. **Field Trip**
Piscataway National Park and Hard Bargain Farm, Prince
George's County

Winter Land Birds and Waterfowl

Leader: Cora Fulton (301-375-7823). Half day trip. From Route 210 in Accokeek, take Bryan Point Road down past the community center and pool. Continue about 0.4 miles to the Piscataway park entrance on the right. Enter and go to the parking lot at the end. Expect to see waterfowl and field, marsh, and forest birds.

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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
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