

The Osprey

Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society



*Pileated Woodpecker
Photo By: Bill Hubick*

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<http://somdaudubon.org/>

President's Perch

What sparked your love of birds? Was it a single bird encounter like Roger Tory Peterson's experience with a Northern Flicker at the age of 11 in Jamestown, New York. He touched the sleeping woodpecker and it flew away in a burst of color. The event kindled a fascination with birds that lasted a lifetime for Peterson and led to an extraordinary career as a naturalist and pioneer in bird identification and conservation. When I was growing up in Pennsylvania, I watched our backyard birds with my mother and enjoyed identifying Northern Cardinals, Mourning Doves, and Blue Jays with Chandler Robbins' field guide. No single bird stimulated my interest—the love of birds grew from someone taking the time to teach me about plumage differences, field marks, and the difference between some males and females. Although I paid less attention to birds as a teenager and in college, the love of birds was always there, waiting to be rekindled.

When I moved to Maryland, my mom purchased a bird feeder for my small wooded backyard. At first I saw cardinals, chickadees, titmice, and other common birds. When I started offering different foods, I was thrilled to attract a Pine Warbler and Golden-crowned Kinglet one winter. American Goldfinches visited even though I was told they wouldn't come to my Nyjer feeder. After I added a hummingbird feeder and had my first close encounter with a male Ruby-throated, I was hooked. With the help of some good friends, I started to go birding in the field to find more warblers, along with vireos, thrushes and many other birds. The Wood Thrush song became one of my favorites and I would let my mother listen over the phone to its song in my back yard. I don't know if I would have been drawn back into enjoying birds if not for my experience as a child. It's surprising that many kids today know about animals from around the world, but are not familiar with our local birds. As bird lovers, we need to change that if there's going to be any hope for some bird populations.

In its 2014 State of the Birds, the U.S. Committee of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative warns that 230 species of birds are currently endangered or at risk of becoming endangered without significant conservation. Climate change, loss of habitat, and the impact of invasive species are some of the major causes. One way to ensure future generations continue the conservation efforts we promote is to get kids interested in birds. By helping a child learn about birds, we not only spark an interest in nature but also ensure the next generation will care about saving at-risk species. I always try to point out birds to kids when I'm birding in the field. Young minds are very impressionable and curious. Offering a child a scope view of a Scarlet Tanager could provide the same spark Peterson felt from seeing a flicker. Giving field guide or binocular advice (or even donating old equipment or books) might produce a birder and conservationist for life. Environmentalist Baba Dioum said in a famous speech, "In the end, we will conserve only what we love; we will love only what we understand and we will understand only what we are taught." Let's be teachers for the next generation.

Michael Patterson

Hog Island Scholarship

The Southern Maryland Audubon Society is now accepting applications from Southern Maryland teachers, naturalists, and environmental educators for scholarships to attend summer educational programs on Hog Island in Maine. We are pleased to announce that for 2015, we will be giving two awards to attend these camps. The scholarships, which are valued at nearly \$1,000 each, will cover tuition, room, and board. Travel expenses are the responsibility of the educator. Recipients will be able to choose either the "Field Ornithology" workshop to be held June 14-19, 2015 or the "Sharing Nature: An Educator's Week" workshop to be held July 19-24, 2015.

SMAS has a long history of raising funds in order to award these types of scholarships to local educators. Past winners have returned from their experience truly appreciative of the chance to learn from knowledgeable staff in a unique environment. For more information about these experiences, visit <http://projectpuffin.org/OrnithCamps.html>

Applicants must be educators currently teaching in Southern Maryland. To apply, please send a one page letter explaining:

- 1) How you will benefit from the Hog Island opportunity
- 2) How you will use the workshop experience in your teaching to support the SMAS mission.

Your signed letter must contain your mailing address, email address, and phone number. Along with this letter, please include a signed letter of recommendation from your immediate supervisor describing your interests, abilities, and how the experience will benefit your organization and audience. Scholarship recipients will be required to submit a written report of their experiences within a month of their return. The deadline for applications is February 13, 2015. Please send application documents as attachments to:

Michael Patterson, Education Committee Chair, SMAS
smaseducationchair@gmail.com

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

Marjorie J. Beaudwin, Hollywood
Gloria Bryan, Indian Head
Nancy Cain, Waldorf
Bennett Frankel, Prince Frederick
Toni Kruszka, Mechanicsville
Evan & Savannah Mitchell, La Plata
Brenda Sewell, Fort Washington

Calvert Cliffs State Park

By Tyler Bell

The morning started off with a nice, cool breeze and temps in the upper 60s. Oh wait, that was the next day! No, it was hot and humid already before 8 when we gathered in the parking lot and by the time we dragged back to the parking lot at the end of the trip, the heat index was well into the 90s. Ugh, why does this trip always end up being a death march?!

So, one of the better birds, at least for me, was two Baltimore Orioles chasing each other in the top of a pine before the group had arrived. The low angle of the sun made them almost glow. Sadly, they were gone before anyone could see them.

This was a trip of firsts for me. The largest group I've ever had on a SMAS trip (16 including myself) and two young boys (8 and 9 years old). Zach is a very enthusiastic 8 year old who surprised me with his knowledge of birds. His grasp of distribution was pretty amazing. If he keeps at it, he'll be one of the super birders who started when their brains were like sponges.

Our trip listed ended up being a paltry 36 species. This is the lowest total in all the years that I've led this trip. Certainly the heat had something to do with it. Thankfully, Jim and Judy Ferris, and Jan Degeneffe found a mixed feeding flock of warblers, chickadees and titmice. There were two American Redstarts and a Black-throated Green Warbler in the mix though they were high up in the trees and difficult to get on. The flock moved off uphill and out of sight.

Further down the trail, we heard the distinctive "queeer!" call of the Red-headed Woodpecker. This is a bird that is very restricted in distribution in southern Maryland and Calvert Cliffs State Park is one of the strongholds for this declining species. I set up the scope low enough for Zach and Andrew to see. The rest of us had to kneel to get looks until I raised the scope. We watched at least five birds flying around the stand of dead trees. We didn't see any juvenile birds, though.

Finally, we made it to the water. The blazing sun made it uncomfortable to scope on the beach and most of the group sat on the picnic tables in the shade drinking water and enjoying the breeze. Bald Eagles put on a good show, as always, and several adults and juveniles were seen flying around the cliffs and perching in trees.

I was very proud of the group for being such troopers considering the conditions. Will next year be another slog or will the temps cooperate? Tune in and find out!

Cove Point Field Trip: You should have told me we needed waders! By Bob Boxwell

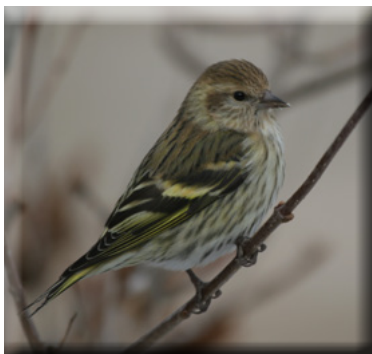
After threats of overnight rain going into the morning, Saturday, October 4's dawn was bright and almost clear. Eight birdwatchers including a dad and his young son were the guests. Billed as a trip to the beach and marsh at Cove Point, we quickly discovered the beach portion was mostly underwater. Nonetheless, we decided to give it a go and proceeded down the beach and into the poison ivy infested "highland".

We did not find many migrating warblers with Yellow-throated, Yellow-rumped, and maybe an American Redstart. The Bay had its usual assortment of gulls and cormorants and one Royal Tern. No shorebirds on the beach (unless they had scuba gear) but we did hear a Killdeer and saw a flock of peeps fly over the marsh.

The marsh was the best place to find things. The resident Canada Geese and a couple of American Black Ducks were on the water and a flock of a dozen Northern Shovelers did a fly by. [Editor's Note: Northern Shovelers are uncommon in Calvert County. This represents the highest tally reported on eBird!] The main activity was figuring out if all the birds of prey were Bald Eagles or not. Two perched birds were most likely Red-tailed Hawks, but the lighting and distance made a 100% ID a little difficult. One species, Mute Swan, was AWOL which was a good thing.

After climbing over several downed trees and ducking under vine laden cedars we emerged on the largest flat area that wasn't underwater. Within ten minutes of achieving this goal, the wind, which had been placid to this point, whipped up to a frenzy approaching a Camden Yards playoff crowd in the eighth inning. With darkening skies and the realization that we wouldn't have much luck hearing or seeing either of our target sparrows, the decision was reached to turn back before we got blown off the beach.

The return trip was much quicker than the outgoing with much less beach to use on returning. So our third SMAS to Cove Point was not the success that the last two were, but it was still a great morning. I would like to thank Dominion LNG for allowing us access to this location. While we could see much beach and we never reached the living shoreline area, it was evident that this project is still doing its job and the fresh water marsh remains intact.



Pine Siskin
Photo by: Tyler Bell

Winter Finch Forecast 2014-2015 by Ron Pittaway Ontario Field Ornithologists = Toronto, Ontario

GENERAL FORECAST: This winter's theme is a "mixed bag" of finch movements. For example, some species such as Purple Finch will go south while White-winged Crossbills will likely stay in the boreal forest in widely separated areas where spruces are laden with cones. Common Redpolls should move into southern Canada and the northern states because birch seed crops are thin to average across the north. See individual finch forecasts below for details.

TREE SEED CROPS: Key trees affecting finch movements in the boreal forest are spruces, birches and mountain-ashes. Spruce cone crops are variable in Ontario. Crops are excellent around southern James Bay and very good to excellent west of Lake Superior. Crops are mostly poor elsewhere in the province such as Algonquin Park in central Ontario. The heavy spruce cone crop around James Bay extends east in a broad deep band across north-central Quebec into the Gaspé Peninsula. East of Ontario cone crops are generally poor in the Atlantic Provinces, New York State, New Hampshire and other northern New England States. West of Ontario cone crops are poor in the boreal forest in Manitoba and Saskatchewan but improve westward with average crops in southern Yukon and excellent crops in Alaska. Birch seed crops are poor to average in the boreal forest. Mountain-ash berry crops are very good to bumper across the boreal forest, but crops are low in northeastern Ontario and poor in Newfoundland.

INDIVIDUAL FINCH FORECASTS: Forecasts apply mainly to Ontario and adjacent provinces and states. Three irruptive non-finch passerines whose movements are linked to finches are also discussed. There will be local exceptions to individual forecasts. You can follow the movements of winter finches this fall and winter on eBird.

PINE GROSBEAK: Pine Grosbeaks should make a small flight into central Ontario because mountain-ash berry crops are low in northeastern Ontario. However, mountain-ash crops are excellent in north-central Quebec and in northwestern Ontario with excellent crops extending west across the boreal forest to Alaska so grosbeaks there may not move far from these areas. At feeders they prefer sunflower seeds, and also watch for them feeding on European mountain-ash berries and ornamental crabapples.

PURPLE FINCH: Last winter many Purple Finches stayed in the boreal forest because of bumper seed crops there. This fall most Purple Finches should migrate south of Ontario because many coniferous and deciduous tree seed crops are much lower in central and northeastern Ontario. When Purple Finches leave Ontario in October and November, they return in mid-April to mid-May to breed. At feeders Purples prefer sunflower seeds. Old-timers re-

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member when Purple Finches were much commoner than they are today. The principal cause of the decline may be the absence of large outbreaks of spruce budworm.

RED CROSSBILL: Red Crossbills will be scattered in the Northeast this winter because cone crops are generally poor. Expect some in Ontario where red and/or white pines have locally good cone crops. A few Red Crossbills were reported this past summer north of Lake Huron. Red Crossbills comprise at least 10 “call types” in North America. However, the types are usually impossible to identify without recordings of their flight calls. Matt Young (may6 at cornell.edu) at The Cornell Lab of Ornithology will identify types if you send him your recordings and this will help with his ongoing research. Matt reports that Type 10s have been moving around the Great Lakes and Northeast for a few months and Pascal Cote of the Tadoussac Bird Observatory in Quebec reports a small movement of Type 3s.

WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL: This crossbill will be mostly absent this winter from central Ontario such as in Algonquin Park because spruce and hemlock cone crops are very poor there. White-winged Crossbills move east and west like a pendulum across North America searching for bumper cone crops. In the Northeast they should winter in numbers around James Bay and east across north/central Quebec into the Gaspé Peninsula where spruce crops are heavy. Pascal Cote reports that White-winged Crossbills are currently abundant in boreal areas of Quebec such as Charlevoix and Chibougamau. They are unlikely to irrupt south in numbers because the excellent spruce cone crops in Quebec, northwestern Canada and Alaska should keep this crossbill within the boreal forest.

COMMON REDPOLL: Expect a moderate to good flight south this fall and winter because birch seed crops are variably poor to average in the boreal forest. At bird feeders redpolls prefer nyger seeds in silo feeders. Watch for “Greater” Common Redpolls (subspecies *rostrata*) from Baffin Island and Greenland in flocks of “Southern” Common Redpolls (nominate subspecies *flammea*). Greaters are larger, browner, longer tailed, and bigger billed in direct comparison with “Southerns”. For photos of “Greater” Common Redpolls see links #5 and 6 below. Watch for redpolls in weedy fields.

HOARY REDPOLL: Watch for Hoaries this winter mixed in with flocks of Common Redpolls. The “Southern” Hoary Redpoll (nominate subspecies *exilipes*) which breeds south to northern Ontario is the usual subspecies encountered. It is rare but regular in redpoll flocks. “Hornemann’s” Hoary Redpoll (subspecies *hornemanni*) was once considered a great rarity south of the tundra, but it has been documented with photos in recent years with four records accepted to date by the Ontario Bird Records Committee. For photos of Hornemann’s see link #6 below.

PINE SISKIN: Siskins were observed in numbers this summer around southern James Bay and in southern Yukon. They will move east and west this fall searching for areas

with excellent spruce cone crops. Siskins should winter in Alaska and north-central Quebec where spruce crops are excellent. However, those that fail to find adequate cone crops will probably wander south where they will frequent bird feeders with nyger seeds in silo feeders. Siskins are often detected by their wheezy clee-ip call, which is the best way to identify them in flight.

EVENING GROSBEAK: Very small numbers of Evening Grosbeaks should move south this winter into southern Ontario and the Northeast because tree seed crops are generally poor farther north. This past summer, Tyler Hoar reports the lowest number of Evening Grosbeaks that he has seen around Lake Superior and in Quebec’s Laurentians in four years. Breeding populations are now much reduced from the population peak during the 1940s to 1980s linked to large outbreaks of spruce budworm. The feeders at the Visitor Centre in Algonquin Park should have some grosbeaks this winter. At feeders Evening Grosbeaks prefer black oil sunflower seeds.

For more information, check out this link:
<http://www.jeaniron.ca/2014/forecast14.htm>

How High Birds Fly, Part II

Written by Frances Wood

Right now a flock of Bar-headed Geese could be flying over Mt. Everest. These champions of high-altitude migration leave their nesting grounds in Tibet and scale the Himalayan range on their way to wintering grounds in the lowlands of India. With the help of tailwinds, they can cover the thousand-mile trip in a single day.

How do these gray-bodied, five-pound geese with zebra-striped heads breathe at such high altitudes, since pilots and many mountain climbers need oxygen at half that altitude? Like other birds, the geese have a unique breathing structure adapted to extract oxygen from thin air, even at 30,000 feet. After inhaled air passes through the lungs, it’s temporarily stored in several sacs, then circulated back through the lungs extracting still more oxygen.

The Bar-headed Geese also have a special type of hemoglobin, which helps their bodies absorb oxygen quickly at high altitudes. And the capillaries in their breast muscles are more numerous than in other birds, providing the muscles with a greater supply of oxygen.

Scientists are studying the physiology of these high-flying Bar-headed Geese to look for ways to help people cope with altitude and respiratory diseases.

BirdNote thanks all donors who keep it aloft and on the air. Learn more at BirdNote.org.
<http://birdnote.org/show/how-high-birds-fly-ii>

Pacific Marine Reserve

President Obama signed a proclamation in late September designating the largest marine reserve in the world, and one that is completely off limits to commercial resource extraction including commercial fishing. The proclamation expands the existing Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument, created by President George W. Bush, to six times its current size, resulting in 370,000 square nautical miles (490,000 square miles) of protected area around a series of tropical islands and atolls in the south-central Pacific Ocean.

The designation is a scaled-back version of a more ambitious plan the administration had originally floated in June, and a plan we reported on in the July E-bulletin:

<http://refugeassociation.org/?p=9787/#remote>

Last month's decision will allow for fishing around roughly half the area's islands and atolls, thereby aiming to limit economic impact on the U.S. fishing interests.

Besides the treasure of under-sea life in the monument, the area is also home to millions of seabirds that regularly forage over hundreds of miles and bring food back to their young on nesting sites on the monument's islands and atolls.

The expanded monument will continue to be managed by the Departments of the Interior and Commerce through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration respectively.

You can view a map with the old and new Monument boundaries here:

<http://apps.washingtonpost.com/g/page/national/proposed-expansion-of-a-marine-monument/1101/>

Birding Community E-bulletin
Paul J. Baicich - 410-992-9736
paul.baicich@verizon.net

You can access past E-bulletins on the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) website:
www.refugenet.org/birding/birding5.html



Brown-browed albatross
Photo By: JJ Harrison

Southern Maryland Audubon Society

ADOPT-A-RAPTOR

Foster Parents Needed!!



The Southern Maryland Audubon Society supports raptor conservation and research projects in the Southern Maryland area through the "Adopt-A-Raptor" Program. The program currently includes four species: **Osprey, Barn Owl, American Kestrel and Northern Saw-whet Owl.** Each bird is banded by a licensed bird bander with a serially numbered metal band, in cooperation with the U.S. Bird Banding Laboratory. A limited number of birds are available for adoption each year!

NEW FOR 2013!! "Adopt-A-Nest" now available for Osprey, Barn Owl & Kestrels!

Adoptive "parents" will receive:

A certificate of adoption with the bird's band number, and location and date of banding.

Information on the ecology and migration patterns of the species

Any other pertinent information that may become available

Your support helps provide:

- Barn Owl Nest Boxes
- Osprey Nesting Platforms
- Kestrel Nest Boxes
- Mist Nets or Banding Supplies

Complete the form below to "Adopt-A-Raptor" with the Southern Maryland Audubon Society

Mail completed form to: *Melissa Boyle, Adopt-a-Raptor, 10455 Point Lookout Rd. Scotland, MD 20687*

Name: _____
as it should appear on Adoption Certificate

Address: _____

I wish to adopt:

- _____ (# of) Osprey, \$10 each / \$25 per nest
_____ (# of) Barn Owl, \$25 each / \$50 per nest
_____ (# of) Northern Saw-whet Owl, \$30 each
_____ (# of) American Kestrel, \$35 each / \$75 per nest

Amount Enclosed: _____

Make checks payable to: Southern Maryland Audubon Society

November 5 – WEDNESDAY – 7:15 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

MONTHLY MEETING PROGRAM

Charlotte Hall Library, St. Mary's County
37600 New Market Road (Rt. 6 at Rt. 5), Charlotte Hall,
MD 20622

**“Ordinary Extraordinary Junco: Remarkable Biology
from a Backyard Bird”**

Come and enjoy this film developed for both the general avian lover and science students and educators. The film highlights past and present biological research on one of the most common and abundant – yet amazing and diverse – groups of songbirds in North America, the Juncos. It explores key themes in animal behavior, ecology, or evolution, and conveys the process of scientific research with high school and college science standards in mind. *Note start time of 7:15 as the film is 88 minutes long.

November 16 – SUNDAY – 8:00 a.m. – 12 Noon

FIELD TRIP

Mattawoman Wildlands, Marbury, Charles County

“EARLY WATERFOWL AND LATE MIGRANTS ON THE
GEORGE WILMOT TRAIL”

Leader(s): Gwen Brewer and Carol Ghebelian

This is a joint trip with the Audubon Naturalist Society and the Southern MD Audubon Society. We usually expect large concentrations of waterfowl on the Mattawoman Creek, along with songbirds, woodpeckers (some red-headed), and raptors. Dr. Gwen Brewer is one of our top waterfowl identifiers with great eagle eyes! **Meet time/place:** 7:30 am at Burger King (3165 Marshall Hall Rd, Bryans Road, MD 20616), on right at MD 210/227. Bring waterproof shoes or low boots, and dress for possible wind. Be prepared for a one mile walk to and from the head of the trail, and then a half-mile walk on uneven forest trail. **Make reservation** with co-leader Carol Ghebelian at 301-753-6754, ghebelian@comcast.net.

December 3 – WEDNESDAY – 7:30-9:00 p.m.

MONTHLY MEETING PROGRAM

Charlotte Hall Library, St. Mary's County
37600 New Market Road (Rt. 6 at Rt. 5), Charlotte Hall,
MD 20622

**Book presentation-“Birds of a Feather: Seasonal
Change on Both Sides of the Atlantic” by Colin Rees
and Derek Thomas**

We are so pleased to have Colin Rees present to our guests and members an illustrated talk based on this wonderful new book. This informative and beautiful book will appeal to anyone with an interest in birds and their future in North America and the UK. Proceeds from the book sales go to conservation. The presentation starts at 7:30 p.m., refreshments at 7:00 p.m.

Christmas Bird Counts

Dec. 14 - Port Tobacco, MD.
Compiler, Gwen Brewer, 301-752-9239 or
Glbrewer@comcast.net

Dec. 21 - Point Lookout, MD.
Compiler: Bob Boxwell, 410-394-1300 or 410-610-5124 (m)
or bobboxwell@hotmail.com

Dec. 28 Patuxent River, MD.
Compiler: Andy Brown, 410-535-5327 or
brownaj@co.cal.md.us

Jan 4, 2015 Fort Belvoir, VA and MD.
Compiler: Kurt Gaskill, 703-768-2172 or
kurtcapt87@verizon.net.
MD Sector Leader: Lynne Wheeler, 301-743-3236 or
comstockel@aol.com



The Maryland Biodiversity Project (MBP) is cataloging all the living things of Maryland. Their goal is to promote education and conservation by helping to build a vibrant general nature study community.

How to get involved:

- . Enjoy the MBP web site and learn about nature
- . Get involved on Facebook and Flickr
- . Share photos
- . Collect data
- . Tell people about the project
- . Support local and regional conservation efforts

Maryland Biodiversity Project:
<http://www.marylandbiodiversity.com/>

Read our daily Maryland nature posts on Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/MarylandBiodiversity/>

Share photos in the MBP Flickr group:
<http://www.flickr.com/groups/marylandbiodiversityproject/>

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.

2013-2014 Officers

President, Michael Patterson (301-752-5763)
Vice-President, Bob Lukinic (301-283-6317)
Secretary, Lynne Wheeler (301-743-3236)
Treasurer, Will Daniel (240-518-8006)