

The Osprey

Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society

President's Perch

SMAS held its Annual Meeting and Picnic at Historic Sotterley Plantation in Hollywood, Maryland on June 7, 2015. The weather was perfect as we enjoyed great food and company, views of the Patuxent from the Riverside Pavilion, and some birdwatching on the grounds of Sotterley, a vibrant part of the nation's rich cultural heritage. Sotterley is comprised of an 18th century plantation house and Smokehouse as well as a 19th century Slave Cabin and more than 20 other out-buildings that express the Plantation's 300-year evolution. Historic Sotterley, Inc., the steward of the plantation, serves to preserve, research, and interpret Sotterley Plantation's diverse cultures and environments and to serve as a public education and cultural resource. SMAS would like to express our sincere gratitude to the organization for allowing us to host our picnic on the property.

After enjoying a potluck meal, we conducted our last chapter business before taking some time off in the summer. During the meeting, Ernie Willoughby received the Conservationist of the Year award. Ernie has been an active chapter member since 1972 and has served on the Board in nearly every capacity, including President from 2003-2006. Mr. Willoughby was a Biology Professor for 28 years at St. Mary's College, St. Mary's City, MD and is nationally known and published as a specialist in songbird molts and plumages. He has been a modest and scholarly mentor to many current and former members of SMAS. We concluded chapter business by voting for the officers from 2014-2015 to continue in their current positions. I would like to thank Mike Callahan for helping to mentor me through my first Annual Meeting, Lynne Wheeler for bringing some native plants to offer for sale, and all of our members for joining us in beautiful St. Mary's County. Next year's meeting will be in Calvert County at a location to be announced.

The annual picnic marked the end of our season of programs, field trips, and board meetings. It was nice to have a break for the last couple months. It's been a great summer with amazing numbers of hummingbirds in Charles County. I hope you're enjoying something just as special where you live. At our house, we started with a single 8 ounce feeder. The hummingbirds arrived and successfully raised their young in May and June. Since late June, over 100 hummingbirds have been visiting 6 feeders and drinking over a half-gallon of nectar each day. It's been a lot of work, but I've enjoyed watching them over the last couple of months.

The hummingbirds have already started to migrate to their wintering grounds in Central America. SMAS will be moving into a new fall season of programs and field trips. Some highlights will include the movie *The Lost Bird Project*—which documents some gone and almost forgotten species—and the biodiversity of Sri Lanka seen through the eyes of George Jett and Gwen Brewer. Just before the holidays, we'll get a glimpse into the photography of Middleton Evans in Miracle Pond to see some amazing photography from Patterson Park [Editor's note: not to be confused with Jefferson Patterson Park & Museum]. We will lead field trips to some familiar destinations, but also have some surprises. Visit www.somdaudubon.org to view complete details on our fall trips and programs. We look forward to some great birding trips and educational programs and hope to see you.

For the Birds,
Michael Patterson



Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
Photo by: Bill Hubick

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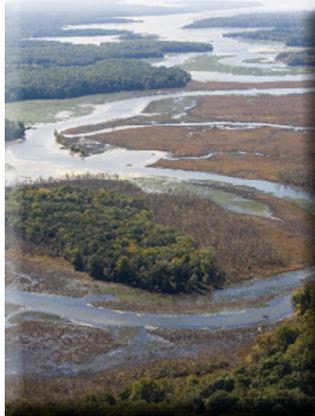
<http://somdaudubon.org/>

Possible Increased Protection For Charles County's Sensitive Wetland Areas!

[Listen to a 3-minute radio interview](#) with David Jenkins, President of Conservatives for Responsible Stewardship. In the interview, Jenkins makes the case for why taxpayers should support the EPA rule, which reasserts the scope of the Clean Water Act and the protection of wetlands.

Predictably, development interests are howling in opposition to the change.

Here's more information to help put this story into context for Charles County residents:



Wetlands protect against drought, replenish underground water supplies, and maintain water quality; however, when they are destroyed, taxpayers like YOU must help foot the bill to fund new infrastructure. This includes replacing services – such as stormwater-diversion channels, sewer systems and dams – that wetlands provide for FREE all over the United States.

This means that Charles County's 26,686 acres of tidal and nontidal wetlands continually contribute to the county's bottom line – although there are talking heads in the pro-sprawl development lobby who want you to believe otherwise.

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), as one example, estimates that it will cost nearly \$2 trillion to adequately maintain the nation's existing flood-control measures and waste-water and drinking-water infrastructure over the next two decades. So therefore, keeping wetlands intact benefits communities.

For more information about Conservatives For Responsible Stewardship, visit: <http://www.conservativestewards.org/>

SMAS Conservationist Award of the Year 2015 to DR. ERNEST J. WILLOUGHBY June 7, 2015

Southern Maryland Audubon Society is honored to present its 2015 Conservationist Award to Dr. Ernest J. Willoughby, a founding member of SMAS and active participant to this day.

Our "Ernie" was privileged to grow up in a family who were members of the National Audubon Society and very aware of the natural world. He is no doubt our only current member

who joined the long defunct Junior Audubon Club. This was a national network formed in 1910 by NAS President T. Gilbert Pearson to educate the younger generation to the value of birds and other wildlife. Thus began his lifelong interest and study of flora and fauna, especially ornithology. He taught for 28 years as Professor of Biology at St. Mary's College of Maryland, St. Mary's City, MD. He influenced the lives of many young, including some current members of SMAS and our Board of Directors. He is now honored as Professor of Biology, Emeritus at St. Mary's College of Maryland. He is internationally known and published in his field as a specialist in songbird molts and plumages. His papers include research on molts in Lesser Goldfinch, Lawrence's Goldfinch, Sparrow Hawk, Skylark, 6 species of larks in South West Africa, monographs in numerous Wilson Bulletins, The Auk, The Condor, many others, and includes American Kestrel sounds for Cornell University. For the Wilson Ornithology Society, he recently contributed data on migration behavior for exercises to be used as aids in teaching ornithology. These exercises have been translated into Spanish for furthering knowledge abroad.

Joining SMAS in 1972, through National membership, he soon came to the Board as Secretary and has been a stalwart active chapter member ever since. He has held nearly every office on the board, refusing presidency until his home and work demands lessened and finally served as President, 2003-2006. Ernie then took on the important editorship of our newsletter, The Osprey, for several years, and continued on the Board until June 2014. He has mentored us during the years in too many ways to recount. He has given many SMAS programs, led field trips, coordinated Christmas counts, participated in all the Maryland bird studies, began our Barn Owl box program through student Melissa Boyle, was liaison with National and state Audubon offices, helped preserve Myrtle Point, works with the St. Mary's River Watershed Association, kept the Board alerted to St. Mary's many conservation concerns, and on and on. His current volunteerism also includes being a St. Maries City Militiaman where he and lovely wife Paula muster for war "defending the Colony of Maryland". They wear Ernie's hand sewn outfits!

Ernie is a quiet, modest, unassuming giant among us. His scholarly, instructive comments at our membership meetings and elsewhere are never in a demeaning way, and we recognize how fortunate and blessed we are to have him in our presence. Southern Maryland Audubon Society is humbled and proud to name Dr. Ernest J. Willoughby our Conservationist of the Year 2015.

When Birds Squawk, Other Species

Seem to Listen

by Christopher Solomon

May 18, 2015



With a robotic owl, above, researchers in Montana are trying to understand the secret language of the forest. Credit Jeremy Roberts for The New York Times

MISSOULA, Mont. — In the backyard of a woodsy home outside this college town, small birds — Black-capped Chickadees, Mountain Chickadees, Red-breasted Nuthatches — flitted to and from the yard's feeder. They were oblivious to a curious stand nearby, topped by a curtain that was painted to resemble bark.

Erick Greene, a professor of biology at the University of Montana, stepped away from the stand and stood by the home's backdoor. He pressed the fob of a modified garage-door opener. The curtain dropped, unveiling a taxidermied Northern Pygmy Owl. Its robotic head moved from side to side, as if scanning for its next meal.

The yard hushed, then erupted in sound. Soon birds arrived from throughout the neighborhood to ornament the branches of a hawthorn above the mobbed owl and call out yank-yank and chick-a-dee.

As a recorder captured the ruckus, its instigator grinned with delight. "For birds, this is like a riot," Dr. Greene said afterward, adding that he heard "a whole set of acoustic stuff going on that's just associated with predators." The distinctions are subtle — "even good naturalists and birders can miss this stuff," he added.

When Steller's Jays spot a robot of a northern goshawk left by researchers, they begin making an intense mobbing call to warn other birds.

Studies in recent years by many researchers, including Dr. Greene, have shown that animals such as birds, mammals and even fish recognize the alarm signals of other species. Some can even eavesdrop on one another across classes. Red-breasted Nuthatches listen to chickadees. Dozens of birds listen to tufted titmice, who act like the forest's crossing guards. Squirrels and chipmunks eavesdrop on birds, sometimes adding their own thoughts. In Africa, vervet monkeys recognize predator alarm calls by superb starlings.

Dr. Greene says he wants to better understand the nuances of these bird alarms. His hunch is that birds are saying much more than we ever suspected, and that species have evolved to decode and understand the signals. He acknowledged the obvious Dr. Dolittle comparison: "We're trying to understand this sort of 'language' of the forest."

[Editor's Note: to read the rest of the article, go to this link - <http://tinyurl.com/sqauwk>]

Alaska Bird/Mammal Images

By Paul Nistico

July 4

Dear Friends,

On June 21, I returned from a three-week commercial birding tour of coastal Alaska. The itinerary included stops in Anchorage, Nome, Gambell (on St. Lawrence Island) and St. Paul (in the Pribilof Islands). I began the trip with an ABA list total of 687 species and got 27 life birds. My list is attached. Lifers are highlighted in bold. Red text indicates a "near-lifer" - a bird of great interest or one that I've not seen for many years.

I've now completed the selection and editing of my bird and mammal images and have posted them on the Web. As always, some are good; some not so good. Some were taken through the van windows. Some were taken at too great a distance to permit any kind of photographic quality, but if the bird is a good one, I've included it in the mix anyway.

Selecting the link below will take you to my folder on MS OneDrive. The birds/mammals are in approximate alphabetical order. Click on the first one (American Golden-Plover) and then navigate with the on-screen arrows or with your keyboard arrows. You should see a caption at the bottom of the screen that identifies the species and location, though it goes away quickly and you must move your mouse to see it again. I have given you permission to download any image that you wish to have by clicking the "Download" button at the top of the screen. When I've finished my selection of scenic and other nature shots I'll pass those images along in this same manner.

I hope you enjoy them.

Paul Nistico - The Villages, Florida
nistico2@gmail.com <http://1drv.ms/1HB4VOz>

So what is a Large Twayblade? Glad you asked. by George Jett

Large Twayblade is a rare orchid found in Maryland. In mid-May, Gwen and I were lucky to find this small plant with light purple flowers in our new front yard in Lothian. Also known as *Liparis lilifolia*, the orchid has a state conservation rank of S2, state rare. We found the leaves of the plants in last fall, but flowers really make identification to species possible. Come mid-May, the plants flowered and Gwen went to her handy Newcomb's Wildflower Guide to try to figure out the identity of the plant. We wanted to learn more so went to the Maryland Biodiversity Project (MBP) website at www.marylandbiodiversity.com

From that powerful resource we were able to determine where else it had been found in Maryland. Our record was the first for Anne Arundel County. It has also been found in eleven other counties in Maryland, but not on the Eastern Shore yet. Newcomb says found from New England south, but not much else.

The MBP has much more than plant information. MBP is focused on cataloging all the living things of Maryland. Their goal is to promote education and conservation by helping to build a vibrant nature study community. The project was started in June 2012 and, since it began, many new species of plants and animals have been documented on the site for the state.

Imagine any plant or animal that might be in Maryland, and you are likely to find information and color photographs at this site. The MBP includes birds, insects, reptiles, amphibians, snails, puppy dog tails, etc. I am kidding about the puppy dog tails, but so far the two folks that started the project, Bill Hubick and Jim Brighton, have done an amazing job of cataloging nearly 16,000 species, including over 6,000 species with photographs, which features the work of more than 400 naturalists and photographers. The project also has easy to use range maps so you can see where your plant or animal has been documented in Maryland.

I am unaware of another state with a project like this. With the collaboration of many individuals, this site has quickly been recognized as a valuable resource- so valuable the Internal Revenue Service recently granted the Maryland Biodiversity Project 501(c)3 non-profit status at the state and federal level. What this means to me and others is you can donate money to the project, and deduct it from your income tax. Tax-exempt donations will be applied to on-line resources and outreach, events like BioBlitzes, equipment, and ultimately assistance with managing the huge volume of photos and data these two guys are now processing. Their public charity status is also a key step in allowing them to partner formally with state agencies and academia.

If you want to contribute your sightings and photographs

please contact the site gurus: Bill Hubick at bill_hubick@yahoo.com or Jim Brighton at jimbrighton3@gmail.com. Since both of these people have day jobs, please be patient if you do want to contribute.

If you wish to help further this valuable resource you can click the Donate button in the top-right of any page at MBP. As soon as I could I donated \$100. I hope some of you will find this resource supportable at whatever level you can afford. I know this sounds like a public radio beg-a-thon, but if you want to use it you should support the resource. If you think this is a valuable natural history website I hope you will join me in helping to promote the project.



Large Twayblade
Photo By: George Jett

Raptor Research Committee Update

This nesting season was rather disappointing for Barn Owls. No nest were reported in Calvert or Prince Georges Counties and the two known nesting sites in Charles County both failed to fledge any young. This may be attributed to a loss of prey due to the hard winter we experienced. Hopes are high however that next year will be better. More nest boxes will be installed over the fall and winter months in all counties.

On a more positive note, Osprey numbers continue to be strong. Additionally, 2 fledgling American Kestrels fledged in a Calvert County nest box and were banded.

Please consider adopting an Osprey, Barn Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl or American Kestrel. Proceeds go directly to the ongoing research on these important raptors of Southern Maryland.

eBird News!
Coming Soon: Rich Media Upload!

Did you ever wish you could easily upload your photos and sounds into eBird and have them permanently archived? We have!!! And now we are collaborating with the Macaulay Library to upload photos and sounds directly into eBird and have them archived at the [Macaulay Library](#). These “digital specimens” will join Macaulay’s existing global resources for photos, sounds, and eventually videos. We are in the early stages of testing now, but you can see one of the first checklists [here](#). Want to help us test this amazing new process? Become an [eBird Partner](#) and we’ll send you an invitation in September.



eBird iOS is here and free

Download our new eBird iOS app for entering your sightings. The app can be used anywhere in the world. French, German, Mandarin (Traditional), Portuguese and Spanish are being tested and will be available before the end of August. eBird Android and additional languages also coming soon. Find out more [here](#) about eBird iOS.

Cool Internet Links!

A Feast for Hummingbirds!
<https://www.facebook.com/BobAnderson23/videos/2675341286076/>

Tube Feeding Baby Hummers:
https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1195979697085516&id=1357191138

Crow Solves Puzzle:
<http://viralfury.com/wild-crow-shows-incredible-intelligence-during-complex-test/>

Special Thanks to our Feathered Friend Mark Hayes for his donation of the Osprey Print

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CALL: 240-346-8320

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!

“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

Upcoming Events

September 19 - SATURDAY – 8 a.m. – 12 noon

FIELD TRIP

Point Lookout State Park, St. Mary's County
“MIGRATION ON THE POINT”

Leader: Tyler Bell

Join us at Southern Maryland's premier birding hotspot as fall migrants funnel south to cross the Chesapeake Bay and the Potomac River. Loblolly pines, mixed hardwoods, beaches, marshes and broad water views regularly deliver a wide variety of species and occasional rarities. From Lexington Park drive south on Rte. 235 for 13 miles. Go left on Rte. 5 for 5 miles to the end. Meet leader at park entrance parking lot. Fee area. RSVP to Tyler at 301-862-4623 or jtylerbell@yahoo.com.

September 26 - SATURDAY – 8 a.m. – 12 noon

FIELD TRIP

Calvert Cliffs State Park, Calvert County
10540 H G Trueman Road, Lusby, MD 20657
“FALL MIGRATION”

Leader: Judy Ferris and Jan Degeneffe

Neotropical migrants should be near their peak. Warblers, tanagers, grosbeaks, and other songbirds. Good trails through wooded habitat and along the creek. Take Rt. 2/4 south of Prince Frederick for about 14 miles. Follow signs to the park. Meet leaders in parking lot. Facilities and fee, 3 mile round trip. RSVP by the September 25 to [Judy at jfferris11@gmail.com](mailto:judyatjfferris11@gmail.com) or 410-326-1965.

September 27 – SUNDAY – 8:00 a.m. – 11 a.m.

FIELD TRIP

Sotterley Plantation, St. Mary's County
44300 Sotterley Plantation, Hollywood, MD 20636
“BIRDING THE FIELDS AND TRAILS OF SOTTERLEY”

Leaders: David Moulton and Michael Patterson

Join us for a fall excursion to this scenic and historic Patuxent River property. Bald Eagles, migrant songbirds and lingering meadowlarks and sparrows can be found via Sotterley's trails and river views. Directions: From Rt. 235, go north on Sotterley Road, turn right through gates to the Sotterley Plantation visitors' center parking lot. RSVP by the 26th to David at moulton.davidh@gmail.com or 240-278-4473.

October 3 – SATURDAY – 8:00 a.m. – 12 Noon

FIELD TRIP

Cove Point Beach and Marsh, Calvert County
“SHARP-TAILED SPARROWS AND MIGRANTS”

Leader: Bob Boxwell

Cove Point beach and marsh is a unique habitat on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay. A living shoreline project is helping to restore the fresh water marsh from salt water incursion. We will target sparrows, marsh inhabitants and migrants. This is a restricted area; directions will be given upon reservation, limited to ten guests. RSVP by September 30 to Bob at bobboxwell@hotmail.com or 443-404-5549.

October 7 – WEDNESDAY – 7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

MONTHLY MEETING PROGRAM

Calvert County Fairview Branch Library, Calvert County
8120 Southern Maryland Boulevard, Owings, MD 20736
“Sri Lanka – Exploration of a Biodiversity Hotspot”
Dr. Gwen Brewer, Ecologist, and George Jett, Naturalist/
Photographer

Lying within the Indomalaya ecozone, Sri Lanka is one of 25 biodiversity hotspots in the world. Although the country is relatively small in size, it has the highest biodiversity density in Asia. Come and enjoy our favorite local Audubon pair as they present their latest travel finds. Come early at 7 p.m. for refreshments and mingling. Presentation begins at 7:30 p.m.

October 10 – SATURDAY – 8:00 a.m. – 12 Noon

FIELD TRIP

Indian Head Rail Trail, Charles County
“RED-HEADS AND MIGRANTS”

Leader(s): Michael Patterson and Lynne Wheeler

There are areas on the Indian Head Rail Trail (IHRT) that provide us with one of the best hot spots in the region for Red-headed Woodpeckers. This fall trip enables you to enjoy hearing the chatter of Red-headed juveniles and of course the fun of fall warbler identification. Meet/park at the parking lot off of MD Rt. 224 and the IHRT (just east of MD Rt. 225). NO RSVP. This is an open field trip to enable last minute joining. Inquiries to Lynne at comstockel@aol.com.

October 31 – SATURDAY – 12:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

FIELD TRIP

Mallows Bay Park, Charles County
1440 Wilson Landing Road, Nanjemoy, MD 20662
“BOO!! THE GHOSTS OF MALLOWS BAY” - Youths
Welcome

Leader(s): Lynne Wheeler

What better way to enjoy Halloween then to visit the “Ghost Fleet” of Mallows Bay and scare up some birds! Walk with the Southern Maryland Audubon Society at Mallows Bay Park and learn about shipwrecks, archaeological sites, and wildlife all situated in a unique wetland, woodland and aquatic habitat which includes an evolving ecosystem. Come and enjoy the numerous Osprey and Bald Eagles soaring above along with a discussion of the history of the fleet. The trip will include a bird walk on the parks one mile trail where we will look for migrants, final peaks of our summer friends, and welcome in our winter residents. RSVP to Lynne up to 10 a.m. Saturday at comstockel@aol.com or 301-751-8097.

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)