

The Osprey



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www.geocities.com/smdaudubon

Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society

THE SUMMER OF THE HOG

By Chris Ordiway, Naturalist – Point Lookout State Park, Naturalist/Educator – Hard Bargain Farm

(Editor's note: This and the following article by Kurt Reitz report on summer Ecology Camp experiences supported by scholarships from SMAS.)

My intention had been to come right home after my weeklong adventure on Hog Island and write this report while everything was fresh in my mind. Week after week has gone by and now summer is coming to a close, yet my report still waits to be written. At first I thought I was too busy with so many grand things that were happening all summer, or that work left me mentally exhausted at the end of the day, or that I just couldn't find the time. The truth is that I can't imagine how to express how Hog Island changed me in a mere page or two. I've put the report off because I don't know where to start and don't know how I'll be able to have an ending to my story. I have a long journal of my trip, over 400 pictures of my time on the Island and more memories than I could ever find the time to write down. But to show my intense gratitude for the opportunity to visit Hog Island I'll do my best, at the twilight of September, to finally tell my tale.

The summer of 2004 turned out to be one adventure after another for me but it all began an amazing two scholarships to visit Hog Island. First, a week at Ornithology camp followed by another week at their Educator's Workshop after a week's stay back in Maryland. My scholarships were funded by the Maryland Ornithological Society and the Southern Maryland Audubon Society and were no doubt received largely due to the great reference letters written for me. I arrived in Maine a night early and camped at a local campsite where I met Maine's silliest creature, the little Red Squirrel, which we don't have in my part of Maryland. They amused me constantly on the Island even though they are apparently the top predator of the Island and are pretty hard on the young bird population. After winding down what seemed to be the wrong curvy, bumpy desolate road, I suddenly found myself looking down at Muscongus Bay from the driveway of the Todd Wildlife Sanctuary. It was a breathtaking sight and reminded me of my time in Alaska as a kid. I met some of the Staff at the shoreline, donned my red pipe cleaners (for Guillemot Appreciation Day!) and soon was ferried over to Hog Island with a bunch of strangers.

The Staff was my first clue at how great this trip would be. They were enthusiastic, knowledgeable, entertaining and just plain fun. And while you may think that it's their job to be that way that was definitely not the case. They were just naturally super people, from the first day to the last! From

Tom's sunrise bird walks every day, to Janii's never ending smile and mouth-watering food to the distant laughing of the student interns during their less than frequent downtime, the people make the Hog Island experience unforgettable. And speaking of the people, how can I properly express what a joy it was to bird with Ken Kaufmann, or become lost in the stories of Jatun Sacha with Bonnie Bochan, or to experience the sounds of a heron rookery on Wreck Island with the help of Greg Budney and his audio equipment? Not to mention the fascinating tale of the reintroduction of Puffins with Steve Kress! And these are just the instructors from my Ornithology trip! Hog Island, it's Staff and the guest instructors have more to offer than any one person could possibly absorb in just one week. There were several campers who had been returning to Hog Island, for the same camps, for many years. Some were on scholarship and some were paying their own way just to come back! You could easily come to the same camp year after year and walk away with new knowledge, new ideas, new friends and new life changing experiences every single time.

As a relatively new birder and speaking from a purely birding viewpoint Hog Island and the workshops during the Ornithology week were flat out fantastic. I learned more about birds, how to bird, how to share my passion for birds and how to fully appreciate the lives of our feathered friends in a week than I could have learned in a year on my own. We kept a running tally of our bird sightings and at the end of the week had about 100 species. I had almost 20 Life Birds myself! I was impressed at the variety of birds and the variations of the birds (some have northern accents!) that I thought I should have recognized with ease. The thing I learned the most was just how much I have to learn still!

In our quest to learn all we could the campers began bonding from the very first day. Many, many new friendships were created on Hog Island that week, as they must every week at each camp. Many of us spent our downtime birding on our own, battling the mosquitoes for owl-prowls each night, relaxing on the rocky shoreline with a copy of *Kingbird Highway* or playing a little Frisbee on the beach at low tide. Various beachfront seats were the favorite spot for many of us and offered quiet, reflective, soul-soothing places to reenergize and escape, even briefly, from the "real world" back home. But don't get the idea that Hog Island is a luxury resort! Our schedule began with a 6 a.m. bird walk and usually ended somewhere around 9 p.m. after our evening program. It was a vigorous, fast-paced schedule with well-planned moments of rest just when you needed them most. And the food, seemingly sparse at first, was beyond description. The cook, along with his student assistant's, created well-rounded, healthy and interesting food at every meal. Nothing went to waste, not because

there wasn't enough to go around, but because it was too good to leave anything on your plate!

The most important thing about my time at Hog Island, and most difficult to express, were the friendships created. I had the great fortune to meet some like minded people who also call Maryland home and have enjoyed their company, online and in person, in the months following our trip. Adam Smith has clued me in on job opportunities at his park and Melissa Boyle thought enough of me to ask me to help with a youth camping expedition when she was short on staff (an adventure worthy of it's own tale someday!). Wende Pearson, who hitched a ride back to Maryland with me and kept me awake on the road, had enough nice things to say about me to help me get a part-time job at the youth oriented environmental education farm where she works. I've become a better birder, a better educator and a better person because of my time on Hog Island. Colleagues who had been to Hog Island told me that it would be an incredible experience, that it would change me and that I would have the time of my life. As I near the end of my two pages I can think of only one good way to end, with a quote from my journal upon my return:

Sunday: I'm home at last. Or more correctly, I'm back to the place I live. The term "home" may never be the same now that I've been to Hog Island.

HOG ISLAND

By Kurt Reitz, Elms Environmental Education Center

The summertime coast of Maine is a place of stark, dramatic and ever-changing beauty. Gone are the marshes, gentle slopes and muddy bottoms of the Chesapeake, in its place are steep narrow fjords with rocky shorelines plunging into deep clear water. Marine life abounds at the waters edge, in tide pools, under the deep underwater rocky overhangs, on the surface and in the sky. Trees cling perilously to the rocks close to shore but quickly gain a more secure foothold further inland, creating a dense and dark forest of spruce and fir. Further inland, homesteaders of a hundred years past have cleared the land to farm or to harvest lumber. On higher ground meadows of native blueberry have been kept and harvested by American Indians and settlers for generations. From the high ground one can look out over the water, over the small harbors tucked into the shore's nooks, over the fields of red, purple, orange and blue lobster buoys to glimpse the offshore islands, clusters of land dotting the water, scattered like fallen leaves in a farm pond.

From high above the shore where I stood at the Audubon Center, I could see much of Muscongus Bay with our Island resting close offshore, bathed in haphazard light filtering through the trees, fighting to penetrate the early morning mist. Today was "Guillemot Appreciation Day," and the first day of the Field Ornithology Workshop at Maine Audubon's Hog Island camp. (www.maineaudubon.org/) As we waited for others to arrive we watched the ever-present Black Guillemots with their crimson feet flashing as they flew short

distances, scouring the shoreline for gunnels, their favorite fish. Overhead the Ospreys and Bald Eagles were having the same old struggle we see so often over the shores of the Chesapeake. (In this instance the osprey came out ahead.) We all sat there looking over the water, watching the lobster boats work their way back to the harbor at Breman, wondering what the week had in store.

The Field Ornithology workshop consisted of daily outings, great meals, and an evening presentation. Our guides included Ken Kaufmann (who apparently showers with a pair of binoculars), Tom Leckey, Bonnie Bochan, and Greg Budney. All were very knowledgeable and contributed greatly to the week's events.

We visited many islands looking for Long-tailed Duck, Common Eider, Surf Scoter and mergansers. It was interesting to see many of our common winter waterfowl in their summer breeding habitat. On the way to the more distant islands (rocks really) we spotted Northern Gannet, Wilson's Storm Petrel, Razorbill, and terns of every description. For most, the highlight of the island trips was a visit to Eastern Egg Island – a quarter acre rock outcropping about one-half mile off of Monhegan Island. Here Steven Kress and Maine Audubon have struggled for decades to return the Atlantic Puffin to its traditional nesting grounds. In the process they pioneered techniques to both attract puffins and encourage them to nest. True to its name, Eastern Egg Island was crowded with puffin and tern nests, a chaotic scene of territorial disputes and defense against the ever-opportunistic and always hungry Herring Gull. (For more information about Steven Kress and Maine Audubon's Puffin Project visit www.projectpuffin.org/.) Today there are active puffin colonies on 4 out of the six traditional breeding islands in Muscongus bay. Notable among the island tours was a visit to a heronry, crowded and noisy with white washed understory and the remains of young birds, hanging from tree limbs or fallen from the tenuously built nests above.

The inshore excursions included visits to tall grass meadows and bogs where we saw American Bitterns, Savannah Sparrows and one quick flying, just passing Merlin. In the blueberry fields we spent considerable time searching for the Vesper Sparrow and the Upland Sandpiper. On the mainland and Hog Island the primary interest was the many neo-tropical migrants that nest in the northern US and Canada, notably wood warblers. Around the Chesapeake we see many of the same species passing through on their way to and from the rainforests of South America, only present here for a few weeks during the year. Some species we never see as they follow the Appalachian Mountains, avoiding the coastal plains of Maryland. If you are interested in warblers Maine is the place to be, for here they are settled in, raising young. We found Blackburnian, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Pine, Northern Parula, and other warblers.

Warblers were the focus of at least one memorable evening presentation led by Bonnie Bochan, who has compiled the

only field guide to bird life in Ecuador from her many years of research. Her passion and concern for the declining numbers of these small long-distance flyers transferred to all the participants. Presentations by Ken Kaufmann (Nine Points to remember when looking for birds) and Steven Kress (Project Puffin) were well received. I was particularly impressed with the work of Greg Budney from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology (www.birds.cornell.edu/) who is actively compiling the lab's library (<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/MacaulayLibrary/>) of bird song and calls. (Many of the bird sounds heard in film, TV and radio were collected by the Cornell Lab.) Using parabolic microphones we were exposed to a world where our eyes were irrelevant and sounds were paramount.

All told the week was a non-stop encounter with birds and people who love them (including a group of young birders from around the country who put the Field Ornithology participants to shame.) I feel privileged to have been able spend a week in such a beautiful place, surrounded by hope and life.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS, DEC 19-JAN 2

Port Tobacco, December 19

by Gwen Brewer

This year, the Port Tobacco Christmas Count will take place on Sunday December 19, 2004. Gwen Brewer is the new compiler this year, so please thank George Wilmot for his 20 years of service as the compiler. Please consider helping with the count as you have in the past or as a new participant! We need help both from birders covering sections of the circle and from feeder watchers. Even if you can only spend a few hours, your data from a feeder in the count circle or from a section of the count circle can really help us to better document the birds in our area. The area covered by this count is found in a 15-mile diameter circle centered on Fourth Point on the Port Tobacco River. Myrtle Grove Wildlife Management Area and La Plata are in the northern section of the circle, which extends to Blossom Point, Popes Creek, and Mathias Point in Virginia to the south. On the west, the count circle includes the Ironsides and Nanjemoy areas, and to the east, Allens Fresh. Several miles of the Potomac River are included in the count, as well as Nanjemoy Creek and the Port Tobacco River. In 2003, 15 participants found over 16,000 individuals and 84 species of birds on the count. As many as 95 species have been found on this count. If you would like to help with the Port Tobacco Christmas Count or have any questions about it, please contact Gwen Brewer at glbrewer@comcast.net or 301-843-3524.

Point Lookout, December 27

by Bob Boxwell

The Point Lookout Christmas Bird Count will be held Monday December 27, 2004. The count area includes St. George's Island, Point Lookout, Elms Property, St. Mary's City, and

St. Jerome's Neck. Counters needed. Please contact count coordinator Bob Boxwell at 410-414-3311 or 410-610-5124 (c) or by e-mail at bobboxwell@hotmail.com to participate or for more information.

Fort Belvoir, Maryland, January 2

by Carol Ghebelian, Coordinator

SMAS will once again census the Maryland Side of the Virginia Ft. Belvoir CBC on Sunday, Jan. 2. This area offers opportunity to find a variety of land birds and waterfowl throughout its woodlands, fields, Potomac River and estuaries, and developed communities. The potluck tally rally at the end of the day at our house in Indian Head has been a festive end to the holiday season. We can always use help so contact me at 301-753-6754 or ghebelian@msn.com.

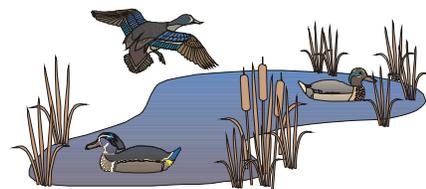
Patuxent River, January 2

by Doug Lister

The Patuxent River CBC will be held on Sunday January 2nd. St Mary's county coordinators will be Doug Lister until 12/21/04, (W) 301-757-0003, (H) 301-994-2582. As the Listers will be out of town this year for the count, Bob Boxwell will handle any last minute coordinating for the count, 410-414-3311 or 410-610-5124, email at bobboxwell@hotmail.com. Andy Brown will coordinate efforts on the Calvert County side - (W) 410-535-5327.

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

Helen Ansell, Suitland
Theresa Barnard, Waldorf
Sharon Boyer, Lusby
Patricia Cashin, Chaptico
Elaine Compton, Clinton
Mark Crosby, Solomons
Ann Dunn, Clinton
Marianne Frankhauser, Sunderland
Patricia B. Haynie, Chesapeake Beach
Linda Jeffries, Waldorf
Isabelle Kuhl, Bryans Road
Tereze Marks, North Beach
Lynford Rowland, Solomons
Gary Scherer, Waldorf
Louise Sexton, Waldorf
Joseph Wilbourne, Bryans Road



APPLY NOW FOR AUDUBON CAMP SCHOLARSHIP

Are you a naturalist or environmental educator working in Southern Maryland? If so, you are eligible to apply to Southern Maryland Audubon Society for a scholarship to attend a one-week Audubon camp on Hog Island, Maine.

2005 scholarships are offered for the following camps:

Field Ornithology, June 26 – July 2
Natural History of the Maine Coast, July 3 – 9
Educators Workshop, July 17 -23

Maine Audubon proudly describes the experience: "Something beyond the ordinary happens when campers cross the channel to the Audubon Camp at Hog Island."

For more information, visit the Maine Audubon website at www.maineaudubon.org.

If you wish to apply for a scholarship, you must send a letter asking for the scholarship and describing how you believe the experience will affect your knowledge and teaching. You also must send a letter of recommendation from your principal or supervisor.

DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF APPLICATIONS IS
MARCH 15, 2005.

Application and recommendation letters should be sent to:

Millie Kriemelmeyer
Education Chair
Southern Maryland Audubon Society
16900 Mattawoman Lane
Waldorf, MD 20601
Phone: 301-372-8766 Fax: 301-782-7615
Email: milliek@radix.net

HOLIDAY SALE AT THE BOOKSTORE



Do you want to save yourself some time and money? Then plan to do some of your holiday shopping at the December SMAS meeting in Leonardtown. The Bookstore is planning an unprecedented pre-holiday sale this year. Almost everything in our inventory will be offered at 25% off our usual prices. (The only exception will be our shade-grown coffee, which is already sold at a very low price.) So bring along your gift list. We have an assortment of books, pins, long and short-sleeved t-shirts and other items that are sure to please almost everyone.

FOSTER PARENTS NEEDED

The gift of an osprey adoption becomes part of a special fund for the support of osprey research and raptor conservation projects in Southern Maryland. The foster parent receives:

- 1) A certificate of adoption of an osprey fledgling banded with a numbered U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service leg band. The certificate gives the location and date the osprey was banded.
- 2) Information on osprey ecology and migration patterns, a 5"x7" photo of a fledgling and information that Steve receives on the whereabouts or fate of the bird.

Interested? Here's how to become an Osprey parent. Send \$10.00, with the form, for each fledgling to be adopted to:

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

ADOPT AN OSPREY

Name: _____

Address: _____

Amount Enclosed: _____



**CAMP SCHOLARSHIP FUNDRAISER:
GIFT WRAPPING AT WILD BIRD CENTER**

December 2004/January 2005 Events
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The Wild Bird Center again will be gift wrapping central during December. Lee and Dee Duer generously have offered their store and supplies for our holiday fundraiser. If we keep the wrapping table manned, we should raise funds for at least one scholarship for a naturalist or environmental educator to attend Audubon camp on Hog Island, Maine.

Gift wrapping hours will follow the store hours:
Dec. 15 – 23 (10 AM – 9 PM)
Dec. 24 (10 AM – 5 PM)

Your help is needed. Neither experience nor expertise is required – just a willing heart. If you can spare some time during this busy season, please sign up or show up.

Contact me to volunteer:
Millie Kriemelmeyer, 301-372-8766, milliek@radix.net.



From Rt. 301 South, before Waldorf, turn left onto Rt. 5 South and go 2.7 mi. to Poplar Hill Road. Turn left onto Poplar Hill Rd. and continue 1.3 mi. to Gardiner Rd. Turn right onto Gardiner and go 1.3 mi. to the Izaak Walton League property. From Rt. 301 North in Waldorf, turn right onto Rt. 5 Business/Leonardtown Road, go 2 mi. and turn left onto Mattawoman Beantown Road. Go 0.3 mi. and turn right onto Poplar Hill Rd. Follow directions above from there.

January, Board of Directors Meeting

Location and Date to be determined. Ask your county representative or any officer or director for the date and location if you wish to attend.

February 2—Wednesday—7:30 p.m. Monthly Meeting

Calvert Library, Prince Frederick, Calvert County Bald Eagles of Maryland, by Glenn Therres, Maryland Department of Natural Resources. Glen Therres, Associate Director of the Wildlife and Heritage Service and Director of the Maryland Natural Heritage Program, has monitored the success of Maryland's breeding Bald Eagles for a number of years, using aerial surveys and other methods. He will update us on the status of this bird in Southern Maryland, and statewide. This is an encouraging comeback story!

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.
- 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. A fraction of my dues will be returned to the local chapter.
- Please **renew** my membership in the National Audubon Society and the local chapter, the Southern Maryland Audubon Society. A fraction of my dues will be returned to the local chapter.

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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

Chapter-Only Dues (new/renewal)
Make check payable to
Southern Maryland Audubon Society

- Individual/Family __1yr \$20 __2yr \$38 __3yr \$56
- Senior/Student __1yr \$15 __2yr \$28 __3yr \$42
- Optional Donation \$ _____

National Dues, Make check payable to
National Audubon Society

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

DECEMBER 2004/JANUARY 2005 EVENTS

December 1—Wednesday—7:30 p.m. Monthly Meeting
St. Mary's Memorial Library, Leonardtown, St. Mary's County.

Local Photographers' Night, by SMAS Members. Every year we look forward to the night when our members share their best images of nature from near and far. Slides, videos, and digital images may all be presented. Individuals who wish to present should contact Gwen Brewer (301-843-3524, email glbrewer@comcast.net) by November 15 to coordinate presentations and plan for equipment needs.

December 5—Sunday—8 a.m. Field Trip
Myrtle Point and Solomons, St. Mary's and Calvert Counties.

Waterfowl and what not. Leader: Bob Boxwell (410-610-5124, robertjohnboxwell@yahoo.com). Half-day trip. Diverse habitat should make for an interesting morning. From Calvert County, take Rt. 4 across the Thomas Johnson Bridge and turn right onto Patuxent Blvd. about 2.25 mi. west of the bridge. From St. Mary's County, take Rt. 4 toward Solomon's and turn left onto Patuxent Blvd. Follow to the end and meet in the parking lot on the left.

December 14-January 5—Christmas Bird Counts
See the articles on page 3 for details.

January 5—Wednesday—7:30 p.m. Monthly Meeting
Izaak Walton League, Southern Maryland Chapter, Outdoor Education Center, Waldorf, Charles County. The Important Bird Areas Program in Maryland and DC, by David Curson, Audubon Maryland-DC. The Important Bird Areas (IBA) program is part of a global initiative to identify the sites that are essential to the conservation of viable bird populations. In the United States, National Audubon is responsible for implementing the IBA program, and has now identified IBAs in most states. David Curson, Director of Bird Conservation for Audubon Maryland-DC, will talk about the IBA program in Maryland and DC, and how you can help with the current search for new sites. Directions:

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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
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