

The Osprey



December 2010 - January 2011 VOLUME 41, ISSUE 4

<http://somdaudubon.org/>

Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS NEED VOLUNTEERS

The Southern Maryland Audubon Society conducts three Christmas Bird Counts and contributes to a fourth each year under rules established by the National Audubon Society. Since 1901, Audubon Christmas Bird Counts throughout North America have documented changes in numbers of individuals and distributions of species, as land use practices and climate have changed. This year's 111th Audubon Christmas Bird Count will contribute new data to the longest uninterrupted series of bird counts in America, a series that has contributed much to our understanding of how our birds and the environments that they depend on have changed over the decades. Volunteer observers may join field parties, or they may report counts made at their bird feeders. This year, consider joining us December 14 through January 4 to contribute to the counts in southern Maryland. See below for details.

Port Tobacco Christmas Count December 19,
by Gwen Brewer

This year, the Port Tobacco Christmas Count will take place on Sunday December 19, 2010. Gwen Brewer will compile the count and host the tally again this year. 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 comprises 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, Pope's 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, Allen's Fresh. Several miles of the Potomac River are included in the count, as well as Nanjemoy Creek and the Port Tobacco River. We have a lot of great habitat areas to cover on this count, and we need your help to do a good job! 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 telephone 301-843-3524.

Point Lookout Christmas Count December 26,
by Bob Boxwell

December 26, 2010 will be the date for the Point Lookout Christmas Bird Count this year. After three years of less

than ideal conditions we are hopeful for some fair weather birding this count. While I will be contacting all the usual suspects we are looking for additional help. If we have any bird feeding SMAS members within the Ridge, St. Inigoes, Scotland, Dameron area, consider contacting me so we can get you in on the feeder count action. If you are interested in more active participation give me a call (410-394-1300) or drop an e-mail to bobboxwell@hotmail.com. All I ask is that you contact me before December 21st. That way we can coordinate the team leaders and their crews. A spaghetti dinner will be provided by Joanne Boxwell at the tally rally. Please contact me for more details. Thanks and good birding.

Patuxent River Christmas Count, January 2,
by Andy Brown

To volunteer, contact Andy Brown,
telephone 410-535-5327,
e-mail: brownaj@co.cal.md.us.

Fort Belvoir, Maryland Sector, Christmas Count,
January 2, by Carol Gheblian

The Fort Belvoir count will be on the last Sunday, January 2. Come join us as we again survey the Maryland Sector of Virginia's Fort Belvoir count circle. Our territory runs from Fort Washington, south to Naval Surface Weapons Center, Indian Head, including the environs. We cover lots of Potomac River shoreline and its tributaries, as well as woods, fields, and some developed areas. The territory also includes Piscataway National Park, Ferguson Farm, Ruth Swann Park, Chapman State Park, Mattawoman Natural Environment Area, and Mattawoman Wildlands. We always need help, including backyard feeder counters. Reach sector leader, Carol Gheblian, at 301-753-6754 or gheblian@comcast.net. And join us for the tally rally at place TBA.

CHAPTER ONLY MEMBERS: DUES REMINDER

Many have not yet paid their 2010-2011 chapter dues. All memberships expire June 30th—so for those whose memberships expired 6/10, please forward for the current year. Multiple-year memberships save this annual payment. See the membership form in the Osprey for rates and address to forward. Thanks for your continuing support. For membership information contact Carol Gheblian gheblian@comcast.net; 301-753-6754.

PIKE'S PEAK

by Tyler Bell

My wife, Jane Kostenko, and I flew to Denver in early November. Jane went to present a talk at a conference and I went to play. One day while she was attending the conference, I drove up Pike's Peak. They have all sorts of warnings, particularly about needing a half tank of gas to make sure you can get up and down. The base elevation, where you pay \$12 per person, is around 6000 feet. It's a 19 mile drive to the top which maxxes out at 14,110. Jane and I flew into Albuquerque years ago and drove basically from sea level right to the top of Sandia Crest which is something like 10,700 feet and we suffered from altitude sickness with headaches and lethargy so I at least had one day to acclimate to the 6000 foot elevation around Denver. That made all the difference.

Anyway, they have elevation markers every 1000 feet and around 12,000 feet you are at the timberline. If you don't know what that is, it's where the trees stop growing. You can see it on the 14ers. There are lots of 14,000 plus mountains in Colorado. There's green at the lower elevations then bare rock above. Also, once you get above the timberline, the height is much more obvious. There are very few guard rails and going up, the edge of the road tended to be on the right. I'm not terribly afraid of heights but when you look down off the edge of the road and there's a vertical drop of at least several hundred feet, you tend to crowd the center line a bit!

I arrived at the gate shortly after 9 not realizing that they only opened at 9. There was a blue Dodge that came in behind me and we alternated stopping to enjoy the scenery and passing each other all the way to the crest. They were a couple and took turns taking pix at the sign showing 14,110 so I asked if they wanted one of them together if they'd take one of me. It was cold and windy up there and you can really feel the altitude so your head feels doofy. There's not much to do up there but snap lots of pix at everything far, far below. Jane and I have an assortment of pix of warning/danger signs and this place was a goldmine. Right away on the descent it warns of using low gear and how hot brakes fail and you could see the guard rails, where there were any, had been run into repeatedly. Jane said it was from the snow plows. Right.

I was disappointed that there weren't any mammals. Usually there are marmots, pika, ground squirrels, etc. on mountain tops. I suppose they're all burrowed in for the winter. I did run into a nice flock of Red Crossbills and Mountain Chickadees once I got back into the timbered elevations.

When I got to the top, I had pulled on my neck gater, heavy hat, gloves and winter coat. I still had on some of that when I got to the bottom and it was in the 70s. Needless to say, I shed the arctic wear as soon as possible. The weather forecast, at the summit, for the day of my drive was mostly sunny with winds 15-20 then becoming overcast in the afternoon. The day after, it was supposed to be 25-30 with gusts over 50 and snow. I'm very glad I did it on the nice weather day.

Oh, at the trinket shop at the top, I saw a bumper sticker that said, "Real Men Don't Need Guard Rails". The drive up is not for the faint of heart, that's for sure! They also had some t-shirts that said "Got Oxygen?". No, not really!!!

CAPE MAY FALL WEEKEND

by Tyler Bell

My wife, Jane Kostenko, and I get over to Cape May once a year in October to participate in a work weekend closing up the Victorian hotel The Chalfonte. It's basically an inexpensive way to get to Cape May during some prime birding. We hopped on the internet before we left on Friday morning and saw David LaPuma's email about "flight of a decade? lifetime? go birding." and eagerly anticipated our arrival. To see David's radar imagery from October 29, go to <http://www.woodcreeper.com/> and scroll down to 10/29.

and also see <http://tinyurl.com/32msop>

We arrived at the state park in time to miss the Common Ground Dove by minutes. We're not avid NJ listers so it wasn't as crushing as it would be to others but it was fun to be in on the excitement of a mega. As others have noted, Yellow-rumped Warblers were everywhere. We didn't see the huge numbers of Hermit Thrushes others noted but I'd guesstimate that the second most numerous bird, besides YRWA, was Song Sparrows. At the hawk watch, butter butts were all over the grass wherever there was any and SOSPs were there alongside.

Saturday morning, we were headed to the Cape May Meadows before sunrise and there were birds in the streets, on the edges of the roads and in the hedges and any growth along the road, visible in the headlights. We drove at 25 mph or less to avoid running them over. Fortunately, at those speeds, they are able to get up and out of the way. We saw many others that were less fortunate :(

The annual Cape May Fall Weekend could not have been timed more fortuitously. Pete Dunne was at the meadows waiting for field trip participants to arrive. We ran into him there again on Sunday morning. He commented on how this was the biggest fallout since 1999 though that one was apparently a one day wonder. This spectacle continued all day Friday and Saturday and presumably Sunday though we had to hit the road by 11:30. Jane and I were lucky to hit an April fallout at High Island, Texas right after a cold, rainy front passed through. The birds were exhausted and landed in the nearest tree, bush, grass clump to rest and feed and the diversity was impressive. The fallout at Cape May rivaled that in sheer volume though the diversity was less so. Still, to be at the meadows at dawn and to look up and see hundreds of American Robins raining down from the sky and to look up and through them and see thousands of specks above also raining down is a sight that I hope to repeat in my lifetime but may not. I can only wonder what it must have been like to be in a similar weather pattern in pre-Columbian days...

GIFT WRAPPING FOR SCHOLARSHIPS

by Millie Kriemelmeyer

Dee's Wild Bird Lovers in Waldorf will host the annual SMAS Christmas gift wrapping fundraiser. Volunteers are needed to wrap gifts. Can you spare a little time before the holidays? All help is appreciated and adds to the scholarship fund. Be an ambassador for SMAS! Sign up to wrap gifts! Times are 10 AM to 5 PM. Dates are:

Fri. Dec. 10, Sat. Dec. 11, Fri. Dec. 17,
Sat. Dec. 18, Mon. Dec. 20, Tue. Dec. 21,
Wed. 22, Thur. Dec. 23, Fri. Dec. 24.

Contact Millie to sign up: 301-372-8766
milliek@radix.net



ACTIVITIES FROM THE BOARD

The following are highlights from the October 27th board meeting held at the Charlotte Hall Library.

Fundraising: The board has decided to move ahead with the idea to replace the Bird-a-thon with "The Big Sit". Members may be aware of this fundraising idea as featured in Bird Watchers Digest. All board members will research this fund raising idea and present their planning ideas at our next meeting.

Sign-On Agreement: The board voted to place SMAS as a supporter to the redesignation of the Coastal Plain of the Alaska Arctic Refuge as a Wilderness. This is a letter going to President Obama for executive order and if successful will provide the strongest protection available.

T-Shirts: The board is researching new designs and pricing for new T-shirts to sell at events.

Bird Supply Discounts. The board would like to remind members that by showing your Audubon membership card 10% discounts are available from the following retail stores to SMAS members:

Wild Bird Lovers, 2214 Crain Hwy, Waldorf
Pups-N-Stuff, St. Charles Town Plaza, Waldorf
The Greenery, Hollywood
Denison Nursery & Landscape, Oxon Hill Rd, Fort Washington

The meeting adjourned 25 minutes early due to the tornado watch. Our next board meeting will be held at 7:00 p.m. Tuesday, November 23rd at the Charlotte Hall Library. All members are invited to attend!!! We love new ideas and committee assistance.

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS

by Millie Kriemelmeyer

SMAS will award two scholarships to "Sharing Nature: Educators Workshop", July 14-19, 2011, an Audubon week-long educational summer program on Hog Island, Muscongus Bay, Maine. Find information at <http://projectpuffin.org/OrnithCamps>. Two reservations were made for the camp. SMAS pays the camp fees, while the scholarship winners pay travel expenses.

The 2010 SMAS scholarship winners attended the Field Ornithology session and returned with glowing appreciation for the educational experience, knowledgeable instructors, and the unique magic, beauty, and complexity of Hog Island and surrounding islands.

SMAS has awarded scholarships to Hog Island for about 25 years. Thanks to fundraising support from SMAS members and friends, our classroom teachers, naturalists, and environmental educators working in Southern Maryland are, again, offered scholarships to next summer's Hog Island experience.

February 21, 2011 is the deadline for applications to be received. Applicants should send a one-page letter describing why you want the scholarship and how you will use the knowledge gained in your teaching. The signed letter should contain all your contact information. A signed letter of recommendation from your immediate supervisor also should be sent.

Send applications to:
Millie Kriemelmeyer

16900 Mattawoman Lane, Waldorf, MD 20601
fax to 301-782-7615 email to milliek@radix.net
Questions?: 301-372-8766

LOOK FOR EGRETS WITH MARKINGS

by Paul Baicich



In the past decade, over 1,200 young Great Egrets have been banded with readable red leg-bands marked with white alpha-numeric (number-number-letter) in the Great Lakes region and southward. This year, over 100

egrets were marked with very obvious orange wing-tags with similar alpha-numeric. If you see any marked egrets bearing red leg-bands or with bright orange wing-tags, please try to accurately read the number-letter combinations and report the details (where and when observed and by whom). Send any observations to: chip.weseloh@ec.gc.ca

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

Erica Auerbach, Waldorf
Anne & Harry Baker, Waldorf
Barbara Brown, Dunkirk
Shahla Butler, Huntingtown
C. Hamm, Waldorf
Sally Jones, Waldorf
Susie Logan, Mechanicsville
Ruby Marshall, Brandywine
Jimmy Scoggins, La Plata
Amy L. Tarleton, Fort Washington
Karen Turner, Owings

SIGNS OF A CHRONIC FEMALE BIRDER

by Lynne Wheeler

- You dream at night regarding new species of birds you saw and named.
- When you watch the Red-tailed Hawk you wonder if L’Oreal Hair Color scientists can duplicate that red.
- Flocks of American Goldfinches keep on reminding you that they should be renamed in the fall as “The Motley Crew”.
- Why are Palm Warblers late migrants? Shouldn’t they be down south first to the palms?
- When sporting events show the crowd doing “The Wave” it reminds you of a flock of Grackles taking off.
- Your girlfriend groans and rolls her eyes at you when you stop the car because you think you see something interesting.
- Can Revlon make me a shade of pink lipstick like the Junco’s bill?
- Duck, Duck, Goose has been replaced with Leaf, Leaf, Bird!

BIRDWATCHER FIGURINE FUNDRAISER

by Millie Kriemelmeyer

“Birdwatcher,” is a colorful Lenox figurine featuring a snowman with binoculars raised to his eyes watching birds in a Christmas tree. This charming scene was donated to SMAS to raise money for the scholarship fund. Raffle tickets for the figurine at \$5 each will be sold at the November 3 and December 1 SMAS meetings and the winning ticket will be picked at the December meeting. Come to the meetings and get your tickets. You may be the winner!

FOSTER PARENTS NEEDED



Southern Maryland Audubon Society sponsors the banding of nestling birds of prey, or raptors, with serially numbered aluminum bands in cooperation with the Bird Banding Laboratory of the U. S. Department of the Interior, as part of our bird research and conservation activities in Southern Maryland. Limited numbers of Osprey and Barn Owl nestlings become available each year for adoption. The gift of \$10 for an Osprey adoption, or of \$25 for a Barn Owl adoption, contributes to a special fund for the support of raptor research and raptor conservation projects. The foster parent receives:

- A certificate of adoption with the number of the U. S. Department of the Interior band, and the location and date of the banding.
- Information on the ecology and migration patterns of the species, photo of a fledgling, and any other information on whereabouts or fate of the bird that may be available.

Interested?

Here’s how to become a foster parent of an Osprey or a Barn Owl. Send \$10.00 for each Osprey, \$25 for each Barn Owl, or \$35 for each American Kestrel to:

Melissa Boyle
10144 Point Lookout Road
Scotland, MD 20687



ADOPT A RAPTOR

Name: _____

Address: _____

I wish to adopt (check one):

_____ (# of) Osprey, \$10.00 each

_____ (# of) Barn Owl, \$25.00 each

_____ (# of) American Kestrel, \$35.00 each

Amount Enclosed: _____

(Make checks payable to:
Southern Maryland Audubon Society)

Events continued from page 6

JANUARY 5 – WEDNESDAY – 7:30 p.m.
Battle Creek Cypress Swamp Nature Center, Calvert County
Gray's Road off Sixes Road (Rt. 506), Prince Frederick, MD
Call 410-535-5327 for additional information or visit www.calvertparks.org
'Maryland Amphibian and Reptile Atlas Project (MARA)'
SCOTT A. SMITH, Wildlife Diversity Ecologist,
MD DNR-Wildlife & Heritage Service

DNR and the Maryland Natural History Society are partnering on a 5-yr effort to catalogue and map all the reptiles and amphibians of the state. MARA is a volunteer-based project that will increase our understanding for these species. Come learn about this project and some of the unique herp species found in southern MD such as the state endangered rainbow snake and eastern narrow-mouthed toad. We are still recruiting volunteers, so if you have a thirst to learn, regardless of your level of knowledge, this is an opportunity not to be missed.

January 23 – Sunday – 10 AM – 2 PM
NOTE: NEW LATER START TIME

Beauvue Ponds, St. Mary's County – Field Trip
'WINTER WATERFOWL AT BEAUVUE'
Leaders: Sigrid Stiles. (301-872-4053, sigstiles@aol.com).
View wintering waterfowl at the ponds at Beauvue. We'll also search for land birds such as Northern Harrier, American Kestrel, Short-eared Owl and Eastern Meadowlark. No facilities, no fees. Meet at Leonardtown Middle School parking lot. Drive south from Leonardtown on Rt. 5. Turn right at the light at Medley's Neck Rd then immediately left into the parking lot. RSVP required.

January 30 – Sunday - 8 AM - noon
Piscataway Park & Hard Bargain Farm, Prince George's County – Field Trip
'WINTER WATERFOWL AND RESIDENT BIRDS'
Leader: Chris Ordiway (301-203-8014, BirdRamble@strixvaria.org, email use preferred).

Prime area for wintering waterfowl. Woods, farm fields, and edges also provide good variety of land birds. Take Rt. 210, Indian Head Highway to Livingston Rd (South of Farmington Rd and North of Rt. 228). Take Livingston Rd. east and meet at Burger King in the shopping center, located at 15785 Livingston Rd. Accokeek, MD 20607. No facilities or fee. Limit of 20. This is a joint trip with Audubon Naturalist Society. RSVP required.

FEBRUARY 2 – WEDNESDAY – 7:30 p.m.
Hughesville Fire Dept, Charles County
15245 Prince Frederick Road, Hughesville, MD 20637
2010 Audubon Scholarship Winners Presentation
MICHELLE DAUBON and DIANA GUYRASSMAS 2010 Scholarship winners Michelle Daubon of CHESPAX, Calvert County and Diana Guyras of T.C. Martin Elementary School, Charles County will present results from their learning adventure last summer at the Audubon Ornithology Camp at Hog Island, Maine. Scholarship winners enjoy a week filled with fun and adventure, island hopping off the coast of Maine on Muscongus Bay. Come learn about seabirds and get acquainted with this educational scholarship that SMAS offers to our local teachers, an initiative we are most proud of!

February 6 – Sunday – 8 AM - noon
Jefferson Patterson Park, Calvert County – Field Trip
'WINTER WATERFOWL TRIP'
Leader: Tyler Bell (301-862-4623, tylerbell@yahoo.com).
Open fields and wooded areas can provide good land birding. The river frontage enables close views of waterfowl in winter. Call or email the leader for directions to the meeting location. RSVP required.



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. My membership will also include membership in the Southern Maryland Audubon Society. I will receive National's Audubon Magazine, the chapter newsletter, and support national and local environmental causes. A fraction of my dues will be returned to the local chapter.

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

I DO [] do NOT [] wish to receive The Osprey electronically. My e-mail address is: _____
(electronic delivery saves SMAS printing and mailing costs.)

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
Individual Lifetime Membership _____\$500
Senior (over 62) _____\$250

National Dues, Make check payable to
National Audubon Society -- Chapter code #C9ZL000Z

- Introductory Offer - 1 year \$20
Senior/Student \$15

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

DECEMBER - JANUARY EVENTS

November 20 – Saturday – 8AM - noon

Mattawoman Natural Environmental Area Wildlands, Charles County – Field Trip
“EARLY WATERFOWL ON THE GEORGE WILMOT TRAIL”

Leader: Gwen Brewer (301-843-3524, gibrewer@comcast.net). Come search for migrating waterfowl on the Mattawoman Creek, and songbirds along the trail in this prime natural area. As many as 5000 individuals and 13 species of waterfowl have been present, including Eurasian Wigeon. Located on Rt. 224 (Chicamuxen Rd) off Rt. 225, between La Plata & Indian Head. Meet in lower (2nd) parking lot at Lackey High School (left side of Rt. 224). Bring a spotting scope if you have one and be prepared for a moderate level walk. No facilities and no fees. This is a joint trip with Audubon Naturalist Society. RSVP required.

DECEMBER 1 – WEDNESDAY – 7:30 p.m.

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

Local Photographers Night and Holiday Gift Sale

Come see what others have photographed on trips, backyards, and local birding hot spots and feel free to bring your own photos to show. Contact Bob Lukinich by November 15 at 301-283-6317 or rlukinich@peoplepc.com to coordinate electronic viewing equipment. We are also highlighting our SMAS book and gift store to help with your hard to find holiday gift shopping. Gift wrapping included!

December 12 – Sunday - 8AM - noon

King's Landing Park, Calvert County – Field Trip
“EARLY WINTER BIRDS”

Leader: Tom Harten (301-780-6196, tomharten@verizon.net)

King's Landing Park, located in Huntingtown, offers a variety of habitats attractive to wintering birds including forest, open fields, freshwater wetlands and the Patuxent

River. We'll meet next to the CHESPAX office near the main parking lot of the park. King's Landing is located 5 miles north of Prince Frederick following Route 4. Turn left onto Old Town Rd. (MD 524). Turn left at Bowen's Grocery Store and continue straight for about 3 miles to park entrance. RSVP required.

December 14 - January 5

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

See accompanying article or go to the website

<http://www.somdaudubon.org/> for additional information.

January 1 – Saturday - 8 AM - 2 PM

St. Mary's Winter Chase, St. Mary's County – Field Trip
“START YOUR YEAR OFF BIRDING”

Leader: Marty Cribb (301-872-9464, pauraque@tqci.net).

Two-thirds day. Search for winter specialties in a very productive area. Expect stops at Beauvue, Point Lookout, St. George's Island, and other hotspots. Meet at entrance to Point Lookout State Park on Rt. 5. Be prepared for cold and dress warmly. Bring scopes if you have them. Facilities along the way, but no fee, except Point Lookout. RSVP required

Events continued on page 5

EDITOR: Tyler Bell

23035 Forest Way, California, MD 20619

Telephone: (301) 862-4623

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.

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

In This Issue

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