



## 2003 Birdathon, Calvert County The Purple Martins

by Tyler Bell

The SMAS birdathon is loosely modeled after a Big Day in that it runs for 24 hours. A true Big Day runs from midnight to midnight on a given day and 95 percent of the birds must be seen by all team members. The Purple Martins (Sue Hamilton, Arlene Ripley and yours truly) decided that we would run from 4 pm Friday to 4 pm Saturday. We met the 95% rule without trying.

We started at the end of Leitches Wharf Rd. near Prince Frederick where Arlene had found a singing Vesper Sparrow on Thursday. Unfortunately, neither it, nor the Horned Larks, were there. A farmer was plowing nearby and we thought that may have disturbed them. Still, no matter where you start, you pick up an easy 10 to 15 birds.

Shorebirds are always tough to find on the western shore of the Chesapeake so we headed to one of the best locations in Calvert, North Beach. The wind and tide were against us and there was very little exposed mud. However, we still picked up both Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Spotted Sandpiper, Solitary Sandpiper and, near the beach, a Seaside Sparrow.

Next stop was Flag Ponds. We drove down to the parking area at the beach and were soon inundated with no-sees. Well, it was a trade-off of no wind for bugs. Despite the annoyance, we found a skulking Marsh Wren, several more Seaside Sparrows and the best bird of the Friday segment, a singing Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow. In the fading afternoon light, it was absolutely gorgeous. And, at one point both the Seaside and the Salty were in the same field of view!

After a quick bite for dinner, we headed out to Warriors Rest for night birds. Well, we finally had a Barred Owl calling and a Sora gave one quick note but other than that, it was just a deafening chorus of frogs. And now it was time for bed.

We met again shortly after 6 am at Calvert Cliffs State Park. At that hour of the day, there are no other people around and you often have the place to yourself for hours. Again, that was the case as we ran into a lone hiker after we had reached the beach. CCSP is usually one of the best places in the county to find warblers. That assumes that the warblers have arrived. Apparently they hadn't and we had to work hard to find 12 species. Some of the biggest misses of the day were among the warblers and included Chestnut-

sided, Magnolia, Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Green, Prothonotary and Kentucky. Finally, as we were about to reach the parking lot, a gaggle of Girl Scouts came shouting down the path. Good timing for us!

We made another attempt at the Peregrine Falcon at the Solomons Bridge. When we tried on Friday, it was too dark. This time, we were successful. The bird was crouched down in the nest. We headed north now for field birds. Turner Rd. for Grasshopper Sparrow, Horned Lark, and an unexpected Northern Harrier, Soller's Wharf Rd. for Eastern Meadowlark and Bobolink. A quick trip through Jefferson Patterson Park for a staked out Eastern Phoebe on a nest and an American Kestrel.

A long drive north for the best birds of Saturday: a pair of Barn Owls. We happened across a small foraging flock which contained the only Blackpoll Warblers of the day and a sparrow that flushed up off the road turned out to not be the almost ubiquitous White-throated but a White-crowned Sparrow! Not an easy bird in Calvert at best and a real tough bird this late in the season.

Time was running out so we decided for one last try at North Beach. Well, the tide was out and there were some more shorebirds on the mud. Semi-palmated and Least Sandpipers, about 6 or 7 Dunlin in their breeding finery rounded out the day with 117 species.

It turned out that there were only two species seen by two team members: a Northern Gannet way out on the Bay, and a Swamp Sparrow that was lurking in dense brush. The biggest misses, beside the aforementioned warblers and lack of night birds, were Red-shouldered Hawk, Northern Flicker and House Wren. Given good weather and a decent day of warblers, it is possible to get over 130 species in a day. Maybe next year?!



### Don't Forget

· Chances to win any of five deluxe Richard Sloan prints are still for sale. Tickets are available from directors, officers and at monthly meetings for \$1.00 each or 6 for \$5.00. The raffle will be held June 1 and proceeds benefit the Ecology Camp Scholarship fund. See the November 2002 Osprey for more details.

· If you'd rather receive *The Osprey* electronically, contact Bob Boxwell at [bobboxwell@hotmail.com](mailto:bobboxwell@hotmail.com).

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## 2003 Camp Scholarship Winners

by Millie Kriemelmeyer, Education Chair

The Board of Directors selected two naturalists to receive full scholarships to attend one-week workshops at the Audubon camp on Hog Island, Maine. Paula McNeil, naturalist at Clearwater Nature Center in Clinton in Prince George's County, will attend the Ecology Workshop for Educators in July. Jack Lewnes, naturalist at Battle Creek Cypress Swamp Nature Center near Prince Frederick in Calvert County, will attend the Field Ornithology Workshop in June.

The funds to send these educators to camp were raised by Southern Maryland Audubon Society members at three major events - Birdathon, Flea Market, and Gift Wrapping FUNraiser at Wild Bird Center. I hope everyone will join us in this year's upcoming fundraising activities and help earn the money to give scholarships next year.

### BIRD-A-THON Wandering Tattlers Charles County Team

by Jean Artes

We (Carol Ghebelian, Gwyn Brewer, Julie Daniel and Jean Artes) began on Friday at 6 pm in Bryans Road in the Burger King parking lot where we were "treated" to a Cowbird—plus a Goldfinch, Killdeer and a Song Sparrow. We covered the Marshall Hall Road area where we picked up a House Wren, an Orchard Oriole and several not-so-rare fare. When we were covering Chapman's Landing Road when we were confronted with a sound from the thickets unlike any we had ever heard (some of us thought it was a possum). It turned out to be a very small, loud, orange kitten which traveled with us the rest of the night. At the time of this writing, it is residing with one of us **me**. We also covered Myrtle Grove, where not a lot was happening. We finished our evening in George Jett's wonderful yard where we picked up Whip-poor-wills. (Actually, two of us got a great look at it in silhouette in a tree and all of us saw it in silhouette in flight.) We parted company around 9:30 and met again around 5:15 am at Bumpy Oak Swamp where a Barred Owl did not hesitate to let us know it was there.

Among our other tallies throughout the day were Yellow, Yellow-Throated, Yellow-Rumped, Common Yellowthroat, Black-throated Green, Black-and-white, Prothonotary, Prairie, Worm-eating, Hooded and Pine Warblers as well as Redstart, Ovenbird, chat, both Orioles and both Tanagers.

Allen's Fresh was rich, as usual, with a Snowy Egret, Dunlin, both Yellowlegs (alas, no Harrier), and hot and cold running Eagles. A Kestrel was found at a nearby farm.

We had Solitary Sandpiper on Swan Point Road and Spotted Sandpiper on Chapel Point Road. The highlight of our trip was a Red-necked Grebe spotted on the Potomac side of

the Cobb Island Bridge late in the day. It was in breeding plumage, which was a real treat for this birder. Cobb Island also yielded Common Loons and Laughing Gulls. Sadly, Bluebirds were scarce throughout the day. Green Herons were plentiful, though. And, praise the Lord, this year we had a Rock Dove!

As the clock went bong! at 6 pm on Saturday, we picked up our 115<sup>th</sup> bird, a Flicker, calling at Gilbert Run Park, giving us a complete set of woodpeckers unless someone thought we should have had a sapsucker. —Jean Artes



## 2003 Science Fair Winners

### Calvert County

Judges: Sue Noble and Leslie Bridgett

#### Junior Level Winner:

Alexandra Roberts  
Plum Point Middle School  
Project Title: Oyster Grazing Habits

#### Senior Level Winner:

Emily Brownlee  
Calvert High School  
Project Title: Settling One Settling Problem

### Charles County

Judges: Jean Artes, Art Krueger, and George Wilmot

#### Elementary Level Winner

Erin Brown  
Berry Elementary School  
Project Title: Amphibian Habitats in Subdivision  
Ponds and Streams

#### Junior Level Winner

Evelyn Brooke  
Piccowaxen Middle School  
Project Title: Who's the Real Early Bird?

#### Senior Level Winner

Jessica Galanti  
Lackey High School  
Project Title: The Scoop on Riparian Buffers

### Prince George's County

Judge: Millie Kriemelmeyer

#### Senior Level Winner

Iyen Acosta  
Oxon Hill High school  
Project Title: Bioluminescence: The Role of ATP  
in Detection of Biocontamination

Each Science Fair winner received a certificate of award and a one-year membership in National Audubon Society and Southern Maryland Audubon Society including one-year subscription to AUDUBON Magazine.

## 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**  
**Bryan's Road, Maryland 20616**

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## Birding by ear at Patterson Park

*by Tyler Bell*

Nine people showed up on the morning of April 12 despite the threat of rain. There was a bit of a breeze but the rain never materialized. Unfortunately, the birds, though singing, were not to be seen for almost the first half of the trip. So, it became an exercise in identifying birds by song. It was almost comical when we finally actually saw a Northern Cardinal and a Carolina Chickadee. One bird that had proved elusive earlier was a Louisiana Waterthrush. It was singing heartily along a creek bed and we finally tracked it down when the trail looped back to its location. We actually had scope views of this bird as it threw its head back in song.

Moving away from the woodland trail to a knoll overlooking the show barn, we had a couple of Eastern Phoebes in the process of nest building, a Field Sparrow singing in a cedar tree and to add a bit of color, a Pine Warbler and a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher.

We made a pit stop at the Academy of Natural Sciences lab and snacked on some luscious pumpkin nut bread made by Carmen Anderson. Then, we ventured into a restricted area (permission granted in advance) to look for lingering waterbirds. Common Loons, in full breeding plumage, were streaming north individually. We must have seen several dozen over the half hour or so that we were there. We also had close looks at Horned Grebes in various stages of molting from winter to breeding plumage. A confusing raptor turned out to be a Cooper's Hawk that was powering across the river at eye level headed straight for us. It's not often that you see a hawk in flight from that angle.

Finally, we headed to another restricted area, which is mostly agricultural fields but has a pond and often proves to be a migrant trap. When we got out of our cars, I spied a sparrow, which I assumed would be a Savannah Sparrow. When I got the scope on it, the first thing I noticed was the rufous wing patch. A much better bird, a Vesper Sparrow! This was a life bird for some participants and only my second one seen at Patterson Park. An excellent way to wrap up the trip.

In all, we had a total of 55 species including 7 raptors and 8 sparrows. A bit early for warblers but a good tally for a few hours in mid-April!

## WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

Elin Quigley, Lusby  
John Rohrer, Dunkirk  
Michael Ayers, Lusby

Barbara Hartstock, Owings  
Cathann Kress, Huntingtown

### Science Fair Winners:

Alexandra Roberts, Pr Frederick  
Emily Brownlee, Pr Frederick  
Evelyn Brooke, Bel Alton  
Jessica Galanti, White Plains  
Iyen Acosta, Fr Washington

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## Directors Announce 2003 Conservation Award

Since 1993, the Southern Maryland Audubon Society has given its annual Conservationist of the year Award to individuals who have made significant contributions to protecting and conserving the natural resources of Southern Maryland. This year, the Directors make the award to two individuals who have contributed substantially to the protection of the resource values of the St. Mary's River, Dr. Robert Paul, and Dr. Christopher Tanner.

Chris Tanner and Bob Paul are both Professors of Biology at St. Mary's College of Maryland, and are Co-Directors of the St. Mary's River Project, a federally funded program administered through the College, and now completing its third year of study. During those years, Drs. Paul and Tanner have directed the research by many students at the College to measure the ecological health of the St. Mary's River. By assessing water quality and the health of the aquatic organisms in this watershed, which drains the rapidly growing Lexington Park area, and is therefore in danger of serious ecological degradation, their work is providing essential data needed to guide land use planning, mitigation, and restoration efforts needed to conserve the resource values of the St. Mary's River, and of the lower Potomac River into which it flows. The information they are generating is also helping the Chesapeake Bay Program to meet its goals of protecting and restoring the Chesapeake Bay.

Bob Paul holds the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Zoology from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. He specializes in aquatic ecology, especially of aquatic insects. Chris Tanner holds the Doctor of Philosophy in Botany from the University of British Columbia. He specializes in marine plants, including seaweeds and submerged aquatic vegetation. Both have taught at St. Mary's College of Maryland since 1977, and with their students both have been studying the ecology of the St. Mary's River since they first arrived in Southern Maryland.

The Directors will present the award at the Annual Meeting on June 1, at Greenwell State Park. To learn more about the St. Mary's River Project, visit [www.smcm.edu/smrp/](http://www.smcm.edu/smrp/).

### Just About Birds: CMM Elderhostel *by Bob Boxwell*

Sue Hamilton and I just finished leading the first bird Elderhostel for the Calvert Marine Museum. Our flock of elders (55 minimum age) arrived from near and far, Wyoming, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, D.C., and Prince Frederick. Each morning we started at 6:30 loading up the van and heading out for the morning field trip. Monday saw us on Patuxent River Naval Air Station where Doug Lister played host. Pax River has always been birder friendly and this was true again. A couple of lingering water birds (Red-breasted Merganser and Pied-billed Grebe) added to the Catbirds, Gnatcatchers, and Yellowthroats that seemed in good numbers. Indigo Bunting, White-eyed Vireo, Scarlet

Tanager, Red-eyed Vireo were some other early migrants singing their arrival.

Our evening speaker was Chandler Robbins a noted ornithologist with Patuxent Wildlife Research Center. Chan covered a year in the life of a neotropical migrant with the Wood Thrush as the example. At the end of the program very few questions were asked because Chan had done such a complete job of covering the topic.

Tuesday's destination was Point Lookout. I had high hopes and they were well met. We started by crossing the causeway; where there was a loon up close on the right and a breeding plumage Horned Grebe on the left. Next was the two displaying male Blue Grosbeaks and their object of affection, a pretty brown female. The Fort Lincoln area was hopping too. Redstarts, Black-and-whites, Ovenbird, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow, Pine, were some of the warblers. Other birds of interest included Baltimore Oriole, Red-eyed Vireo, White-eyed Vireo, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Swamp Sparrow, and lots of Catbirds. During our walk through the woods around Fort Lincoln, Fish Crows and Ospreys serenaded us while Cormorants flew overhead.

We heard several Brown-headed Nuthatches but had no luck finding them until we hit the campgrounds. And even then we needed the help of the camp host. Within minutes of the sunflower seed hitting the feeder, the nuthatches were hitting the seed. A bonus was the Ruby-throated Hummingbird coming in to its feeder.

Tuesday afternoon found us back at the Museum. DNR sent a nice young lady with her beau (a Turkey Vulture) and three other birds. We had some second graders around that day so they got a little bonus and joined us for the program. Christi did a nice job explaining what each bird was and what it did. My favorite was the Peregrine Falcon, but the Screech and Barred Owls were very cool too. I couldn't resist imitating the owls while they were out. Not too loud, but loud enough that a student across the aisle from me kept looking around. Later that afternoon was my opportunity to use the study skins on loan from my alma mater St. Mary's College. The bird id workshop is always fun, because I have the answer key and made up the questions. It is much nicer that way I think.

The evening program featured Greg Kearns and his research on Sora Rails. I have seen Greg's program several times and I always learn something new. This bird along with the previous evening's Wood Thrush became must see birds for the elders. I'm going to have to think about that for next year's program (because Soras aren't easy to find).

Wednesday saw us staying on the Calvert side of the river and heading to Calvert Cliffs. We added Hooded Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, Worm-eating Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Northern Parula, White-breasted Nuthatch, most of our woodpeckers including an impressive drum solo by the Pileated, and lovely views of the red-headed. A Green Heron worked the edge

of the pond allowing use a few nice views and chance to see its take off on a short flight. Kingfishers and Great Blues were also around, but unfortunately we missed both Wood Duck and Prothonotary Warblers. Maybe next time.

Our afternoon put the elders in the hands of Tom Lewis, an award-winning carver who happens to work in the education department at CMM. Tom had prepared a Least Tern for each of them to work on. After way too much sanding (their words not mine) and painting, each went a way with a unique reminder of their time here at Solomons.

Our final day started at Greenwell Sate Park where we visited Ron Runkels banding station. We got in hand looks at yellow throats, white throats, chats, cardinal, field sparrow, and catbird. The Prairie Warbler was a special treat. Both tan and white striped versions of the White-throated Sparrow were shown simultaneously for a new lesson in sparrow identification. While Ron was banding, an Eastern Phoebe was perched atop a roof singing for all he was worth.

We pushed on to Trent Hall where Shirley Wood joined us. Bud Verts (former Maryland Secretary of Agriculture) has a large farm with several ponds. For the last several years he has allowed SMAS to hold field trips here. We started off with a lingering flock of Ruddy Ducks and a lone Black Duck. The shorebirds were few in number this morning,

but what we had was nice. Both Yellowlegs together for a great comparison of features and size was instructive. Up close views of Least and Semi-palmated sandpipers were also good. But the Black-necked Stilts were superb. Other birds saw through a spotting scope included Grey Catbird, Song Sparrow, Green Heron, Brown Thrasher, and Eastern Kingbird. Northern Bobwhites called but were never seen, but the natural Osprey nest drew much comment.

This day ended with a boat trip on the *Wm B. Tennison*. We expected a lot of Ospreys and gulls, but got some bonus birds as well. Cormorants and loons were out, and the Ospreys seem to occupy every available nesting site. But the cap to the trip was an unexpected Red-necked Grebe.

We finished the week's trips and programs at that point. Our guest had their passports stamped and we said goodbye. Our tally for the week was 111 species. Not bad for our first year. Our goal will be to top it next spring. Care to join?



**NEW OR RENEWAL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

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

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- Introductory Offer - 1 year \$20
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## JUNE EVENTS

June 1 - Sunday - 1:30 p.m.

### **Annual Meeting**

Greenwell State Park, St. Mary's County,  
Hollywood, Maryland

#### Schedule of Events:

Potluck Lunch	1:30 –3:00
Election and Business Meeting	3:00- 3:30
Bird Walks and Canoe Trip	3:30-5:30

Bring your family, friends and a favorite dish, and join us at scenic Greenwell State Park in St. Mary's County, where we will enjoy views of the Patuxent River and access to the beach for wading and fishing. There is a canoe/kayak launch, so bring your canoe or kayak and plan to explore the river after our business meeting. Directions: From Route 235 turn east onto Rt. 245 (Sotterley Road) and travel 2.5 miles to Steer Horn Neck Road. Turn right and drive 0.8 miles to the park entrance. Follow the 'SMAS' signs to the covered pavilion.

June 7 - Saturday - 8 a.m.

### **Field Trip**

St. Mary's City, St. Mary's County

#### *"NESTING BIRDS"*

Ernie Willoughby (301-862-9631). Half day trip. Lots of trails along open fields, tidal shorelines and wooded areas. Meet the leader in the visitor center parking lot off Rosecroft Road south of the college.

#### **EDITOR: Dean Newman**

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The deadline for the Osprey is normally the 5th of each month. Please send all short articles, reports, unique sightings, conservation updates, calendar items, etc., to the above address. If time is a problem, call the number above.

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