

The Osprey

Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society

The CBC is now FREE!

Important and Exciting news for the Christmas Bird Count program

After nearly two years of internal discussions, budget modeling, head-scratching, and intense decision-making, two major changes will come to the Christmas Bird Count program effective with the upcoming 113th Count in December, 2012.

First, the CBC is now a free program. Audubon will no longer charge the \$5.00 fee of field participants.

Second, to minimize the effects of the loss of fee income, American Birds will no longer be printed on paper and mailed to participants, and Audubon will move to an online delivery of the summary results of the CBC.

To help Audubon make these important decisions regarding the Christmas Bird Count program, we invited people involved with the count to participate in an online survey earlier this year. The results of the online survey last spring were very enlightening, and are summarized in the upcoming 112th CBC summary issue of American Birds—the last one to appear in print. The 130 pages of written comments were the most telling aspects of the survey feedback. Some people understand the fee and don't mind paying it, but the main thrust of written comments was that the fee is a major obstacle to the program, and the strong message was that more people would be involved, more counts would be included in the CBC database, and more accurate effort data would be collected if the fee was dropped.

Also highly informative were peoples' comments regarding American Birds. While a few folks commented that they enjoyed the information it contains and enjoy reading at least parts of it each year, the primary sentiment expressed was that recipients do not value American Birds in its current format, that they do not read most of it. Many survey respondents felt that an interactive, online version of the magazine would better suit their needs—especially if the participation fee was dropped.

In order to continue to fund the Christmas Bird Count program in the long term, Audubon will be moving to a voluntary donation model for the CBC.

With the online delivery of American Birds via a new interactive web presence including photos, summaries, and features, content can now be presented online as they are completed. Most critically, a new Citizen Science gateway will enable Audubon to be in touch directly with those participants who elect to take part and directly service the needs of participants as well as compilers.

While the integrity of the CBC is crucial to maintain for its bird trend data, it has become equally important for the ability to engage people in other citizen science projects. Toward that end Audubon will be expanding its Citizen Science projects, and the CBC will, of course, be a cornerstone program.

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Brown Creeper
Photo by: Bill Hubick

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<http://somdaudubon.org/>

The Audubon Science team looks forward to working with chapters to increase participation both by including more participants on existing Christmas Bird Counts and by creating new counts in areas where coverage is lacking. We also look forward to further engaging CBC participants and other chapter members in the other seasonal citizen science programs that will be available in the future.

We thank you for your work in making the CBC the continued success that it is.

Thanks very much, and have a wonderful ...FREE ... Christmas Bird Count season.

Good birding!

Geoff LeBaron
Director, Christmas Bird Count
National Audubon Society

Gary Langham
Vice-President & Chief Scientist
National Audubon Society

North Dakota in September by Tyler Bell

My boss scheduled a last minute work trip to the Experimental Lakes Area in NW Ontario. The Premier of Canada, Steve Harper, a George W. Bush clone, decided that the \$2 million annual operating cost of ELA was too much burden on the economy and has decided to close this world class research facility at the end of March, 2013. So, with that shocking announcement, we planned one final sampling trip there. Additionally, a post-doctoral student in our lab recently landed a position at a liberal arts college in Iowa and my boss opted to pass off to him some large equipment at ELA. A convenient halfway point is Fargo, North Dakota.

Birding at ELA was a bit disappointing. We only saw three grouse total, 2 female Spruce and one female Ruffed. Best birds were a Black-backed Woodpecker that we watched quietly flaking bark off of a Black Spruce (they don't hammer like most woodpeckers but look for bugs under bark) and a group of 10 Red Crossbills that flew over us while we were sampling on the lake.

Due to a need to ship samples overnight and be sure that they would arrive by Saturday of the Labor Day Weekend (FedEx doesn't deliver on Sunday and not on that Monday), we got to Fargo on Thursday night. We went out birding on Friday morning before meeting the post-doc. A nemesis bird for us in ND is Northern Cardinal. Yes, they're dirt common in southern Maryland and we have them nesting in our yard. So when we finally located one in Trefoil Park, it was very odd sensation to be so happy to see a bird that is seen daily at our feeders.

When we first arrived at the park, there was some passerine activity in the trees as it warmed from the upper 40s. I spied

a bird feeding amongst the leaves and after a while pieced together that it was a Blue-headed Vireo, another state bird for us. Jane only got to see a glimpse of it before it flew off but within the next 15 minutes, we must have seen at least 5 more. It was hard to tell if it was the same birds or different ones. There were almost assuredly more than that.

Just as we were headed back to our car, we heard a laughing call. I said to Jane that it sounded like a Pileated but when it called again, it sounded more like a flicker. Then we saw it, a nice male Pileated Woodpecker hammering away at a tree. Three state birds in one hour, pretty astounding.

The next morning, after successfully unloading equipment destined for Iowa, we met a birding friend who, through a weird set of circumstances, had a key to the Fargo sewage lagoons. Despite what you might think, they rarely smell and in this case, only one of the lagoons had any hint of septic odor. As we drove down the edge of one of the lagoons, Keith mentioned the Greater White-fronted Goose that had been around for part of the summer. We glanced at it then it sank in that that would be a state bird so we backed up and got better looks at it to feel more comfortable with the ID. Shortly after we move on from the goose, we kicked up a small flock of Buff-breasted Sandpipers, state bird #5.

We parted ways with Keith and swapped my work rental vehicle for a personal rental and drove from Fargo to Minot where Jane's family lives. A short stop along the way to look for a family of Least Bitterns was futile as the winds were howling. If there were there, they were hunkered down out of sight. Again, sewage lagoons figured prominently in our birding. We stopped at the Minot lagoons and picked up our sixth and final state bird for the trip: Peregrine Falcon. There were actually two of them. One was sitting on a levee between lagoons and the other was soaring.

We've been birding extensively in North Dakota since we first started birding back in 1990. Adding to the 6 state birds from an earlier trip to the SW part of ND back in early June, we added a neat dozen for the year. Pretty unusual and totally unexpected! I just wish we could add a dozen state birds in Maryland in one year.



Northern Cardinal
Photo by: Bill Hubick

Birding on the Internet

If you are a subscriber to the Maryland or Southern Maryland Audubon Society bird discussion group, then you may want to skip this. If you are not an MD-SMAS subscriber or you were on MDOsprey and were left floundering when the listowner pulled the plug this summer, read on.

MD-SMAS is a YahooGroup sponsored by SMAS. It mostly serves for distributing information about upcoming field trips and meetings but is also for interesting bird sightings or general natural history-type discussions (i.e. the Maryland Amphibian and Reptile Atlas). If you'd like to subscribe, send me an email with your email address and your full name and I can add you directly. The group also allows files to be uploaded since attachments are not allowed. If you want to use this functionality, you will need to create a Yahoo Profile which can include as little information as you wish to share. Mine says that I'm a male. No age, phone number, address, etc. There is very little traffic on this list so no need to worry about it clogging your inbox. Here's a link if you're interested:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/md-smas/>

MDOsprey was a longstanding listserv unfortunately operated outside the purview of the Maryland Ornithological Society. The owner suddenly decided that he was no longer willing to pay for the list and unsubscribed everyone abruptly this summer. This left the Maryland birding community floundering and a Google Group was hastily put together. The new group allows photo attachments which the listserv did not (most lists don't allow attachments of any sort because viruses can be attached to emails). The traffic on MDBirding is substantial though you can set the list to digest which will deliver one email summary every 24 hours unless there are more than 25 when it will send another email. Topics on this list are mostly bird related but can range to herps, leps and odonata. Here's a link:

<https://groups.google.com/forum/?hl=en#!forum/mdbirding>

Those of you who used Jack Siler's birdingonthe.net page will notice a redirect if you go to the old page. The American Birding Association has taken over the pages and revamped them. You can use the old link for now but to go directly to this incredibly useful collection of bird discussion groups, use this link instead:

<http://birding.aba.org/>

Finally, SMAS itself has a web presence as well as a Facebook page. They can be found at the following:

<http://somdaudubon.org/>
<http://www.facebook.com/somdaudubon?ref=ts&fref=ts>

Tyler Bell
MD-SMAS Listowner
jtylerbell@yahoo.com

Comment Period Extended for Midwest Wind Energy Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan

The comment period on the proposed "Midwest Wind Energy Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan Within Eight-State Planning Area" is being re-opened for 60 days, and comments are now due December 3. The Federal Register notice is available at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-10-03/pdf/2012-24401.pdf> Our thanks to all those who requested an extension of the comment period.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is asking for the public to provide input identifying the sensitive areas that should be excluded from this major planning effort, as well as information on the species of conservation concern that need to be considered. The boundaries of the proposed eight-state planning area have not been finalized and will cover all or part of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin. Areas included in the final plan will be eligible for Incidental Take Permits for species covered by the Plan.

Endangered bird species within the planning area include Piping Plover, Interior Least Tern, and Kirtland's Warbler. The rufa [subspecies of] Red Knot, Sprague's Pipit, and Golden-winged Warbler, which are candidates for listing, are also found in the region. The Bald Eagle is being considered, and there are also a large number of birds of conservation concern that should be considered by the planning process because they could become candidates for ESA listing over the HCP's lifetime. In addition, Golden Eagles occur in the planning area.

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Getting Ready for Winter Finches

In preparing for the upcoming season's CBC, birders may want to review their familiarity with "winter finch" field marks.

Ron Pittaway of the Ontario Field Ornithologists has once again presented an annual Winter Finch Forecast. Cooperation on the part of the staff of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR) and the observations of regional birders allow Pittaway to make annual predictions about the seasonal abundance of winter finches. We have discussed these helpful annual predictions in previous E-bulletins going back as far as October 2007.

Although the focus of Pittaway's forecasts is Ontario, they have implications for a much broader region. Pittaway writes, "This winter's theme is that a fair number of species - especially Red and White-winged Crossbills, redpolls, Pine Grosbeaks, and Evening Grosbeaks - are likely to be on the move this year due to widespread crop failure of fruiting and cone-bearing trees in Canada."

His forecasts also include species such as Purple Finch, Pine Siskin, Blue Jay, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and Bohemian Waxwing.

The Cornell Lab's eBird program has posted Pittaway's forecast, and you can read it in its entirety at: <http://ebird.org/content/ebird/news/ff2012>

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

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



Red Crossbill - female
Photo by: George Jett

SMAS Volunteer of the Month!

Many thanks go to our member Erin Rouland of Lexington Park. Erin is helping SMAS every month by picking up the hard copy Osprey newsletters from the printer. She labels, stamps and mails approximately 60 copies to the SMAS members that elected to not receive the Osprey newsletter electronically. THANKS ERIN!! YOUR HELP IS GREATLY APPRECIATED!!

Want to help SMAS? We are in need of volunteers for our upcoming Spirit Night fundraiser at the Chick-fil-A in California, MD on October 23, 5-7 p.m. Please contact Melissa Boyle at melissaboyle3@gmail.com or call 443-340-3035.

Scotts Decision

In March, we reported on the news that Scotts Miracle-Gro agreed to plead guilty to federal court charges and pay significant fines in connection with bird-seed incidents dating back a number of years ago. See our report here: <http://refugeassociation.org/?p=5126#seed>

Scotts is the world's largest marketer of branded consumer lawn and garden products. This case deals in part with the recall of seed for wild birds that had been coated with pesticides that were toxic to birds.

After a plea-hearing on 7 September in Ohio federal court, the Scotts Miracle-Gro Company will pay \$12.5 million in criminal fines and civil penalties for violating federal pesticide laws. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said in a press release that this was the largest criminal penalty and the largest civil settlement ever under FIFRA, the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act. This final figure includes \$4 million in fines, \$6 million in penalties, and \$2 million on environmental projects to resolve additional civil pesticide violations.

Part of the fine imposed on Scotts - \$500,000 - will be split equally among five groups and agencies to fund efforts to protect birds, mostly based in Ohio: Audubon Ohio (for the IBA program), the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (Urban Forestry Program), Columbus Metro Parks (Bird Habitat Enhancement Program), the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and The Nature Conservancy of Ohio.

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Enrichment Opportunity for Educators

SMAS is now accepting applications from Southern Maryland teachers, naturalists and environmental educators for a scholarship to attend a summer educational program on Hog Island in Maine. This scholarship is valued at nearly \$1,000, will cover tuition, room and board. The recipient is responsible for travel expenses. One scholarship will be awarded for either the "Field Ornithology Workshop" to be held June 16 - 21, 2013 or the "Sharing Nature: Educators Week" to be held July 18 - 23, 2013.

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

Applicants must be educators currently teaching in Southern Maryland. To apply, please send a one page letter outlining your reasons for wanting the scholarship and how the workshop experience will be used in your teaching to support the SMAS mission. Your signed letter must contain your mailing address, email address and phone number. Along with this letter, please include a signed letter of recommendation from your immediate supervisor describing your interests, abilities, and how the experience will benefit your organization and audience. Scholarship recipients will be required to submit a written report of their experiences within a month of their return. The deadline for applications is February 15, 2013.

Please send applications to:
Paula Batzer
5300 Turkey Tayac Place
Nanjemoy, MD 20662
Questions? Email baxmd@yahoo.com

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

Ms. Deborah L. Beckner, Bryans Road
Jon Deemerwhite, Brandywine
Nolan Dinsmore, Brandywine
Charlotte Dove, Benedict
Virginia Hammer, Hughesville
Robert Hardin, Park Hall
Don Pobst, Mechanicsville
William M. Kernozek, Lusby
Carroll Savage, Fort Washington
Mary Ann Scott, Mechanicsville
Lois Tayman, White Plains
Jen Taylor, Prince Frederick
Gene Tudor, Chesapeake Beach
Nancy Zinn, Saint Leonard

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
10455 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

UPCOMING EVENTS

November 7 – Wednesday – 7:30 p.m.

Accokeek Library, Prince George's County

15773 Livingston Road, Accokeek, MD 20607

"The Surprising History of Bird Feeding"

PAUL BAICICH, *co-editor Birding Community E-bulletin, Author*

For many of us cold weather means it's time to feed our backyard birds. But this popular hobby is much more than 21st century squirrel-proof feeders and sunflower seeds. Local writer and educator Paul Baicich will share the conservation beginnings of today's billion-dollar bird feeding business.

November 24

Saturday – 8 AM - Noon – Field Trip

Mattawoman Natural Environment Area, Charles County

"EARLY WATERFOWL FROM THE GEORGE WILMOT TRAIL"

Leader: Gwen Brewer 301-843-3524 glbrewer@comcast.net

Come search for migrating waterfowl and songbirds in this prime habitat! Up to 5,000 individuals and 13 different species of waterfowl have been present, including Eurasian Wigeon. On Rt. 224 (Chicamuxen Rd.) off Rt. 225 between LaPlata and Indian Head. Meet in the 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 walk. No facilities and no fee. This is joint trip with the Audubon Naturalist Society. RSVP required.

December 5 – 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

"Holiday Round Robin Social"

Come fly to this event and meet your chapter officers and committee chairs, peck on holiday goodies, and if you are still in need of a gift for that hard to buy for person come and see our offerings for your fine feathered friends. Throw in a SMAS t-shirt featuring our "rapturous" soaring Ospreys and/or purchase an adoption of an Osprey, Barn Owl or Kestrel with our Adopt-a-Raptor program and your bird loving friend or family member will be thrilled!

December 7 AND December 14

Friday – 8 PM - 9 PM – Field Trip

Myrtle Point Park, St. Mary's County

"WINTER OWL PROWLs"

Leader: Bob Boxwell 410-610-5124

bobboxwell@hotmail.com

Youths especially welcome!

Co-sponsored with the Friends of Myrtle Point Park. This annual event attempts to "call out" the resident owls at a local park. Owls are nocturnal and therefore not easy to spot. We will meet in front of the park gates and attempt to attract owls by having them respond to recorded calls. Please dress for the weather, but avoid "noisy" clothing (please no snowsuits!). This event is weather dependent. Rain or high winds will result in cancellation. To find Myrtle Point Park take Rt. 4 in St. Mary's County to Patuxent Boulevard and follow to the end.

A vulture carrying two dead raccoons boards an airplane. The flight attendant looks at him and says, "I'm sorry, sir, only one carrion allowed per passenger."

Two statisticians went duck hunting. A mallard flew overhead and one statistician fired just to the right of the bird. The other statistician fired just to the left of the bird. They turned to each other in glee, and congratulated each other... "On average, he's dead!", they cried! The mallard continued his migration.

Two vultures were in the desert eating a dead clown. The first vulture asks the second vulture: "Does this taste funny to you?"

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.