

The Osprey

December 2009 VOLUME 40, ISSUE 4



<http://somdaudubon.org/>

Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society

BIRDING IN THE CENTRAL VALLEY OF CALIFORNIA

by Ron Runkles

Most birders, if they had their druthers would prefer to bird early in the morning or in the late afternoon. But, I'm an opportunistic birder, defined here as one who birds whenever the opportunity presents itself. One such occasion found me in the Central Valley of California in the middle of the day when the temperature was topping 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Could this really be an opportunity to bird?

After a morning meeting at the University of California, Davis, on August 17th of this year, I traveled to Sacramento and south on I-5 to the Consumnes Nature Preserve, near Galt, Sacramento County, California. This nature preserve is situated in the Consumnes River flood plain, the only remaining free-flowing river coming from the west side of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. It encompasses over 52,000 acres of Nature Conservancy and privately owned land, bound together to form the preserve. The preserve was established in 1987 with a modest 1,400 plus acres of property.

The area open to the public has a very nice nature center focusing on the plants and animals of the preserve and several well-established trails. One trail goes down to Willow Slough where visitors may put in canoes and kayaks; another meanders toward the river along riparian forest and tidal wetlands, and the third winds its way around two ponds and wetlands that are flooded three-quarters of the year. For more details about the preserve and a bird checklist, go to www.consumnes.org. The preserve claims that over 240 species of birds have been recorded there.

On this particular day, most of the wetlands were completely dry. The only water remained in the ponds and slough. I found several Western Scrub-Jays in the trees by the slough and a Western Kingbird. There was the ever-present Black Phoebe by one of the ponds and a Green Heron hiding in the vegetation at the shallow end. A small scattered flock of Bushtits gradually moved by me in the trees along the side of the other pond. But, what made the trip worthwhile for me was the slight movement in the trees off to my left as I rested on a well-placed bench. The movement was caused by the foraging of a Pacific-slope Flycatcher, once lumped with Cordilleran Flycatcher as Western Flycatcher, which I had never before seen.

Sweating profusely as I approached my car in the visitor's parking lot, I scanned the sky one last time. Rising in circles above the visitor's center was a large, long-winged hawk with dark-colored flight feathers and contrasting light

wing-linings. It had a white throat, dark upper breast, light-colored flanks and belly, and its tail had numerous dark bands. For as much birding as I have done in the West, this was the first time I could nail a Swainson's Hawk, which is a very rare visitor to the preserve.

I've birded the preserve for several years now, and it's my favorite place in the Central Valley. In the appropriate seasons, it's a great place to look for waterfowl, shorebirds, and even warblers. Other areas I occasionally check are in the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge complex, north of Sacramento. But, the Consumnes Nature Preserve never seems to disappoint, no matter how bad the time or lousy the weather. Something interesting always manages to turn up. In the spring of this year, I was surprised to find three Long-billed Dowitchers, which one of the expert staff members confirmed for me. I had not expected the Long-billed Dowitchers this far inland. On another occasion peregrine falcons outfitted with radio tagging equipment were being tracked through the preserve.

If you go to the preserve, plan on spending at least two hours there to visit the nature center and walk the trails. Because my primary purpose for travel is business, I pack a compact binocular, on this occasion a Swarovski 8 x 20, which has always been quite adequate for my travel birding. I would recommend that visitors check the weather in the Sacramento area before going, which is easy to do in this age of the Internet, as I have found that the weather at the preserve can at times in the summer be blazing hot or in the winter be cold, raw, and on the verge of snowing. Do heed the warnings along the river trail about mountain lions. Because the preserve includes a large wilderness area, mountain lions have been seen in the area and along this particular trail.

Great Holiday Gift For The Bird Lover In You And Your Family

Southern Maryland Audubon Adopt-a-Raptor Program would like to remind you of a great holiday gift idea for the bird lover in you and your family. There are many Barn Owls and Ospreys that would love to be adopted this holiday season. As our way to say 'thank you' you will receive a certificate with the bird's band number, its nest site and information about the species. The money from donations and adoptions will go to the Raptor Conservation Project and into Southern Maryland Audubon. This money will help to pay for nest box material and hire a boat to help us put up and take down Osprey platforms. If you would like to Adopt a Barn Owl (\$25.00) or Osprey (\$10.00) please visit our website at <http://www.somdaudubon.org/>

*Heather Burk
Adopt-a-Raptor
Chairperson*



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 110th 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. Last year, 59,813 observers throughout North America, Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Pacific Islands tallied 65.6 million individual birds. And for the first time ever, three participants on the first CBC in Antarctica! 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 5 to contribute to the counts in southern Maryland. See below for details.

Port Tobacco Christmas Count Dec. 20,
by Gwen Brewer

This year, the Port Tobacco Christmas Count will take place on Sunday December 20, 2009. 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, 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. 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 Dec. 27,
by Bob Boxwell.

December 27, 2009 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 22nd. 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, Jan. 3,
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,
Jan. 3, by Carol Ghebelian

This year SMAS will be counting on every Sunday of the official count period, with our Ft Belvoir count on the last day, Jan. 3. Please join us as we again survey the Maryland Sector of Virginia's Ft. 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 watchers. Reach sector leader, Carol Ghebelian, at 301-753-6754 or ghebelian@comcast.net. And do join us for the potluck tally rally at the Ghebelian's in Indian Head.

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

Rachel Dove, Huntingtown
Linda Finamore, Waldorf
Lorene Garner, La Plata
Catherine Goldman, Pr Frederick
Leslie Hasegawa, Clinton
Evelyn May Hezlep, North Beach
Robin Mabie, Valley Lee
Sharon Maldonado, Lusby
Margaret Menkart, Leonardtown
Linda Singleton, Brandywine
Thiana Suarez, Leonardtown
Irene White, Charlotte Hall



This may be your
LAST OSPREY NEWSLETTER
if you don't respond to the following request.

The day has finally arrived for the Osprey newsletter to take the leap into the electronic age by offering a digital format option for Southern Maryland Audubon members. The Board of Directors asks that you please, please fill out the form below and return it to the email or snail-mail address provided. By NOT returning this form you risk missing out on future issues of the Osprey newsletter! We tried to keep it short, sweet and to the point so please fill it out and send it in as soon as you can. We hope to have everything in place to begin the electronic distribution option in the new year. See the bottom of this page for instructions on sending in the form.

NAME:

MAILING ADDRESS:

EMAIL ADDRESS:

PLEASE CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING OPTIONS:

Paper copy of Osprey

Email with notice that new
Osprey is online for download

Email with Osprey
attached as PDF file

If you would like to email your information please send a message to the following email address:

OSPREY@SOMDAUDUBON.ORG

Be sure to include your name, mailing address (so we can keep our database up-to-date), email address and how you would like to receive your future Ospreys.

ANYONE can email their information, even if you prefer to keep getting paper copies of the Osprey.

If you would like to mail in your form please remove this page after filling in your information, put it in an envelope and send it to the address below. And don't forget the stamp!

Osprey Newsletter
C/O Chris Ordiway
2305 Bryan Point Road
Accokeek, Maryland 20607

We'd like to extend a special 'Thank You' to those who responded to last year's request for member's thoughts on the electronic Osprey. It helped to make the Board of Directors job easier knowing members were in favor of the idea.

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS

by Millie Kriemelmeyer

Workshops for Educators are being offered for summer 2010 at the Audubon Hog Island Center in Maine. At the weeklong camp, educators learn about birds, wildlife and seashore habitats, identification, and tricks of the trade to teach in the outdoors.

Dates for the workshops will be available soon. Please go to the Southern Maryland Audubon Society website, somdaudubon.org, for updated information.

Southern Maryland Audubon Society is accepting applications for scholarships to the Hog Island educator workshops. Naturalists, environmental educators, and classroom teachers whose jobs are in Southern Maryland are invited to apply.

Write a one-page application letter stating why you want

the scholarship and how the knowledge gained at the camp will help you in your teaching. Include all your contact information.

Provide a one-page letter of recommendation from your immediate supervisor.

Deadline for applications and recommendations to be received is Monday, March 22, 2010.

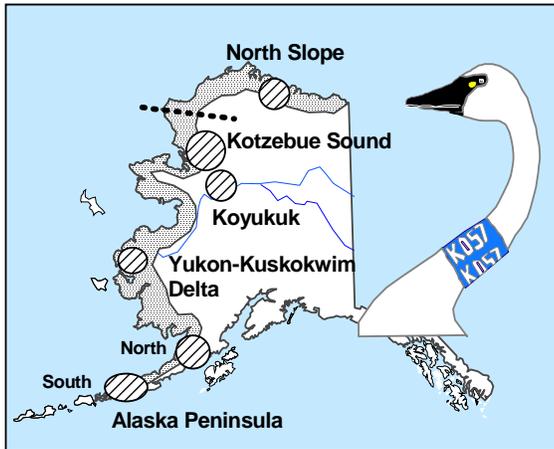
Send to:

Millie Kriemelmeyer
SMAS Education Chair
16900 Mattawoman Lane
Waldorf MD 20601

Questions? Call me at 301-372-8766 or email me at milliek@radix.net.

TUNDRA SWANS WITH BLUE NECK BANDS FROM ALASKA

Tundra swans were marked in western and northern Alaska in the summers of 2006-2009 with coded neck bands as part of an effort to learn more about the timing of migration and movements of swans relative to breeding area. Neck bands have a four-digit code that begins with a letter. Codes are read from bottom to top. Bands are blue with white digits, except codes T3##, which are white with black digits.



Marking Location	Codes	Number Collared		
		2006-2008	2009	Total
Yukon Delta	K###	227	100	327
Alaska Peninsula (North)	P###	148	105	253
Alaska Peninsula (South)	T4###	155	---	155
Koyukuk Drainage	T213-228, U075-U120, U390-U399	66	---	66
North Slope	T201-212, T3##	58	---	58
Kotzebue Sound	U###	<u>390</u>	<u>197</u>	<u>587</u>
Totals		1045	402	1446

In 2008, 50 swans were implanted with satellite transmitters, many of which are still functioning. Birds with transmitters were not collared, but have a black antenna exiting near the base of the tail. The movements of these swans can be followed at our web site: http://alaska.usgs.gov/science/biology/avian_influenza/TUSW/index.html

PLEASE REPORT ANY OBSERVATIONS TO YOUR LOCAL CONSERVATION OFFICER, OR TO:

Craig Ely, Alaska Science Center, 4210 University Drive
Anchorage, AK 99508. Phone: (907) 786-7182
EM: cely@usgs.gov

We will provide all observers with a brief history of the banded swan they observed.

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, or \$25 for each Barn Owl to:

Southern Maryland Audubon Society
ATTN: Adoption Program
c/o Heather Burk
11885 Provident Drive
La Plata, MD 20646-5416



ADOPT A RAPTOR

Name: _____

Address: _____

I wish to adopt (check one):

_____ (number of) Osprey, \$10.00 each

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

Amount Enclosed: _____

(Make checks payable to:

Southern Maryland Audubon Society)

DECEMBER EVENTS

NEW!

Field Trip - **For Beginners Only**. Custom one-on-one (or two) trips in PG, Charles and St. Mary's Counties. If you feel that you would benefit from some individual attention to ease you up the learning curve of bird identification, we have three leaders who will help you. Contact leaders to make arrangements:

Charles - Jean Artes (301-743-2288, pojartes@aol.com).

Southern PG and Northern Charles - Chris Ordiway (301-203-8014, BirdRamble@strixvaria.org (email use preferred)).

St. Mary's - Patty Craig (eyrie@hughes.net (email only)).

DECEMBER 2 - WEDNESDAY - 7:30 p.m. Monthly Meeting - Charlotte Hall Library, St Mary's County 37600 New Market Road (Rt 6 at Rt 5), Charlotte Hall, MD

LOCAL PHOTOGRAPHERS' NIGHT

Come see what others have photographed on trips or in their own yards over the years. And bring your own photos to show. Slides, videos and electronic images may be presented. If you would like to contribute call Bob Lukinic (301-283-6317) by November 15, to coordinate presentations and plan for equipment needs. We urge you to either participate or come enjoy the artistry of fellow members.

December 14 - January 5

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

See other side for details on our Southern Maryland Christmas Bird Counts. Also check *The Osprey* or go to the website www.somdaudubon.org for additional information.

January 1 - Thursday - 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, pauraque2008@yahoo.com).

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.

JANUARY 6 - WEDNESDAY - 7:30 p.m.

La Plata Volunteer Fire Department, Charles County. Monthly Meeting 911 Washington Avenue, La Plata, MD "IBA Program in Maryland/DC: Prioritizing Sites for Conservation" DAVID CURSON, Director of Bird Conservation, Audubon Maryland/DC

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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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