

The Osprey



May 2004 VOLUME 34, ISSUE 9

www.geocities.com/smdaudubon

Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society

BIRDATHON TO RAISE FUNDS FOR SMAS PROGRAMS

Birdathon is one of Southern Maryland Audubon Society's most important fundraising programs, budgeted to raise \$1000 for support of our educational and scientific programs to protect birds and their habitats. This year, Birdathon will be held on May 1.

Here is how a Birdathon works: teams assigned to each Southern Maryland county collect pledges from sponsors based on the number of species they see. The teams then spend a 24-hour period, sunset to sunset identifying as many species as possible in their assigned county. The money collected from the sponsors becomes part of the income that supports the Society's work.

For contact information on how to participate in a team, or to make a pledge, contact your County Coordinator: Calvert County, Sue Hamilton (410-586-1494); Charles County, George Wilmot (301-375-8552); Prince George's County, Millie Kriemelmeyer (301-372-8766); St. Mary's County, Ernest Willoughby (301-862-9631).

Of course, individuals are welcome to conduct Birdathons on their own. Send proceeds to SMAS Treasurer, Larry Brown, 6241 Wolverine Place, Waldorf, MD 20603.

CHAPTER PRESENTS FIRST HONORARY MEMBERSHIP

Lee and Dee Duer, owners of Wild Bird Center, Waldorf, have been strong supporters of our chapter for many years. In addition to the 10% percent discount they offer SMAS members on all products in their store, they have supported our Birdathon; given prizes to special contest we have run, most recently the new logo competition; encouraged SMAS membership in the store's newsletter and donated free seed to responders; and for the past two years invited us to do Christmas gift wrapping in their store as a fund-raiser for our camp scholarship. Not only did they provide the space to wrap gifts but supplied all the materials needed for the gift wrapping. They also continually ask us for other ways they can support our work.

In seeking a means to show our appreciation to the Wild Bird owners, the Board of Directors decided to present them with our first Honorary Lifetime Chapter Membership in Southern Maryland Audubon. On March 19, Anne

Wearmouth, SMAS President, joined by nine other members for the occasion, read a letter of appreciation to Mr. and Mrs. Duer, and presented them with a Lifetime Honorary Chapter Membership framed certificate, numbered 001. George Jett took photos for our archives and for a press release that appeared in the Maryland Independent on March 31. Stop in at Wild Bird Center, Shoppers World, Waldorf, and see the certificate and photo proudly displayed on the wall of the Duer's store. You can also express your personal appreciation to them for their strong support of the Audubon Cause in Southern Maryland.

2004 SCIENCE FAIR AWARDS

Southern Maryland Audubon Society sends judges to each county's school science fair and makes awards of recognition for the best projects relating to bird study, or protection of natural resources and habitats. Here are the winners for 2004:

Calvert County - Judges: Sue Noble & Leslie Bridgett.
In the Senior Division: Sarah Brownlee, Calvert High School, "The Role of Phosphorus in Controlling the Distribution of Submerged Aquatic Vegetation", and Emily Brownlee, Calvert High School, "Friend or Foe to the Chesapeake Bay."

In the Junior Division: Alexandra Roberts, Plum Point Middle School, "Oyster Immigration Dilemma", and Emma Miller, Mill Creek Middle School, "Can Murky Water Stop Photosynthesis?"

Charles County - Judges: Jean Artes & Art Krueger.
In the Senior Division: Ally Rose, La Plata High School "Water Quality in the Lower Potomac."

In the Junior Division: Emily Gore, Piccowaxen Middle School, "SAVs – Why Are They Disappearing?"

In the Elementary Division: Taylor Seagle, 3rd grade, Berry Elementary School, "Wild Bird Feeder Observations."

St. Mary's County - Judges: Ann Wearmouth & Beverly Walker.

In the Senior Division: Sarah Morgan, Leonardtown High School, "Effects of Landscaping on pH Levels"

In the Junior Division: Kelly Turner, Leonardtown Middle School, "Pollution Affecting Our Environment."

TIMBER HARVESTING IN MARYLAND STATE FORESTS AN ISSUE IN ANNAPOLIS

Two bills designed to promote the enhancement of Maryland's state forests for wildlife and biodiversity through regulation of their use for timber harvesting were introduced in the Maryland Senate and House of Delegates this year. HB867 and SB771, **Natural Resources – Logging Impact Report** would require the Department of Natural Resources to prepare a report on the environmental impacts of logging in state forests over the past 30 years and then report every three years on the environmental impacts of logging activities during the prior three years. HB868 and SB 789, **Forest or Park Reserve Fund – Use of Revenues from Timber Harvesting**, would require that the state's share of income from timber harvesting in state forests be placed in the Forest or Park Reserve Funds and be used for forest restoration, invasive species removal and for the acquisition and protection of forests on which timber harvesting would not be allowed.

While only 15% of Maryland's forests are state-owned, these state forests, if properly managed, can make significant contributions to the protection and conservation of many plant and animal species. State forests should be managed to become old-growth forests with a natural diversity of tree species. With intensive timber harvesting in privately owned forests and the loss of forest land due to commercial and residential development, it is becoming increasingly important that our publicly owned forests be managed for old growth and biodiversity.

If passed by the General Assembly, these bills would have provided the information, guidance, and some of the money needed to achieve these goals. The Board of Southern Maryland Audubon Society voted to support these bills and submitted letters of support requesting that the House Environmental Matters Committee and Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee approve these bills and work to get them passed by the General Assembly. The Department of Natural Resources testified in opposition to these bills at both the Senate and House environmental committee hearings. Unfortunately, both these House and Senate environmental committees gave these bills unfavorable reports. Because of these unfavorable reports, it is unlikely that the House or the Senate will vote these bills. It is our hope that DNR will reconsider its opposition to management of state forests for wildlife and old growth and realize the need to protect and preserve forests for wildlife and other natural values.

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

Allens Fresh and Cobb Island,
March 20, by George Jett.

The SMAS vernal equinox bird trip took place on March 20, 2004. Twelve intrepid birders worked from Allen's Fresh to Cobb Island in southern Charles County. The focus of the trip was a search for waterfowl, raptors, woodpeckers, and sparrows. A number of county listers joined Gwen and me on this foray. The weather was windy but cooperative. We finished with 65 species for the six hours of birding. Highlights were Surf and Black Scoter at Cobb Island, three Northern Shovelers and 1600 Ruddy Duck on the Wicomico River, 60 Green-winged Teal and eight yellowlegs (7 Greater and 1 Lesser) at Allen's Fresh, Wilson's Snipe at the Breeze Wood Sewage Treatment Plant (STP), one Forster's Tern at the rock jetty on Cobb Island, Tree Swallow at three locations (Allen's Fresh, Swan Point Road, and the STP), and two White-crowned Sparrow on a farm road near Allen's Fresh.

Other birds of note were two Common Loon, 30 Horned Grebe, 50+ Long-tailed Duck, and three Common Goldeneye at Cobb Island. (We birded from the pumping station on Cobb Island). Other highlights at the STP were both scaup species, and a brief visit from a female Cooper's Hawk. We also had a single Mute Swan at the end of Hatton Creek Road.

In the raptor department we saw six Bald Eagle at various locations, one Kestrel on Rt. 257 on Cobb Neck, a single Red-tailed Hawk at Allen's Fresh, and about 16 Osprey scattered around the various waterways. We saw both Black and Turkey Vulture along the way.

We did not do much land birding, but did manage to find one female Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at Allen's Fresh (on the state property), and Northern Flicker, Hairy, and Downy Woodpecker along Hatton Creek Road. Had we tried, we could easily have found all seven Maryland woodpeckers at this time of the year.

Other sparrows of note were two Field Sparrows singing on territory at Allen's Fresh, Eastern Towhee at various locations, Song Sparrow at most stops, Swamp Sparrow at the STP and Swann Point Road wetlands, and a Dark-eyed Junco along the way.

Bluebirds are continuing to be scarce locally after the past two colder than normal winters. We only found two at Allen's Fresh. It is also time to clean out the bluebird boxes and let the birds start to nest. Bluebirds don't generally use dirty nest boxes.

Pine Warblers are back on the breeding grounds, and we located singing birds along Hatton Creek Road. We found

Yellow-rumped “Myrtle” Warblers at Swann Point Road wetland. The boat ramp at the end of this road provides another viewing spot for the Wicomico River, and is worth checking on a regular basis. There is a parking lot and, when the dog stops barking, it is pretty quiet. Another of Charles County’s hidden treasures.

After the foray broke up and on our way home, Gwen and I observed a very dark, small falcon - likely a Merlin - hunting American Robin along Mt. Victoria Rd. This falcon flushed the wintering American Kestrel.

Thanks to the three birders for bringing the bake goods. They were delicious.

All in all, not a bad day birding, but even a bad day birding is generally better than a good day in the office.

Cove Point and Hellen Creek, March 27, by Sue Hamilton

On Saturday March 27th ten birders met me in the parking lot of the Calvert Marine Museum for a tour of local hot spots in the museum’s van.

In order to avoid the weekend crowds, we visited Solomons Island first, stopping first to view the female White-winged Scoter which had been hanging out in Back Creek near Mol’s Leg Island all week. Everyone got a close look at this locally rare species out of habitat before we moved on to the tip of the island to scan the river. A raft of Long-tailed Ducks sat well off-shore, two pairs of Ospreys displayed on their nests and a Common Loon dove nearby. Everyone got a glimpse of Mute Swans on the Dowell side of the river, before we checked out the boardwalk area, where American Coots were close in, and a flock of Lesser Scaup floated just offshore.

Everyone wanted to see the Peregrine Falcon which has been using the Thomas Johnson Bridge as its winter perch, so we drove to the boat launch area to set up scopes. Arlene Ripley found the bird almost immediately on a middle stanchion, and all were able to see it.

It began to rain as we headed for Cove Point Lighthouse, on the Chesapeake Bay. This fenced property is managed by The Calvert Marine Museum; tours must be arranged through them, with museum vehicles used for access to protect the small community within which the lighthouse sits.

From the viewing platform we were able to see one solitary Sanderling on the beach, many Horned Grebes, Surf Scoters and Common Loons. Most of the Horned Grebes were already sporting the handsome golden ‘horns’ of their breeding plumage. The rain intensified, but those who persisted in scanning the Bay were able to see several distant Gannets diving.

In the steady rain we headed hopefully for Turner Road to find open country birds. Two American Kestrels showed off, and two Eastern Bluebirds (scarce this year) sat on the wires.

Luckily, rain had stopped when we arrived at the entrance to the Cove Point Natural Heritage Trust property. (Our visit was prearranged; the area is not presently open without permission.) A pleasant trail through the mixed hardwood-deciduous woods led us to Hellen Creek, where a Kingfisher rattled and numerous Yellow-rumped Warblers chipped. Arlene pointed out the old Hemlocks which are an unusual tree for this area. We added several common species to our daily list before hiking back to the van. Everyone found the scenery striking.

Back at the museum we quickly tallied our list of 42 species before disbanding.

NEWS FROM NATIONAL AUDUBON

Audubon Applauds Measure To Restrict Harvest of Horseshoe Crabs—Policy Will Help Protect Migratory Shorebirds Dependent On Crabs’ Eggs-

Washington, D.C., Monday, March 22, 2004—On Wednesday, March 10, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s Horseshoe Crab Management Board agreed to adopt new conservation measures for the horseshoe crab—a “living fossil” whose population has been declining due to overfishing.

With a vote of 12-3, the Board passed the Audubon-supported measure that restricts the harvest of horseshoe crabs, prohibits harvest and landings during May 1-June 7, and encourages bait-saving techniques. These new restrictions will go into effect in New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland. Additionally, New York is adopting similar measures, but not under the ASMFC umbrella.

“These actions will go a very long way to not only protect the horseshoe crab, but the migratory shorebirds that depend on them, particularly the Red Knot—an Audubon WatchList species that has seen a significant decline in recent years,” said Greg Butcher, National Audubon Society’s director of bird conservation. For more information, please visit http://www.audubon.org/news/press_releases/Crabs_3-23-04.html#TopOfPage

Fighting Invasive Species-

Congress has taken the first steps to tackling the issue of invasive species — seemingly harmless, non-native plants or small animals that ravage native flora and fauna. Since more than one-third of WatchList birds are threatened by invasive species, Audubon launched a major new campaign this year to stop invasives with an acclaimed report, *Cooling*

the Hot Spots. In May, Congress responded by passing the Nutria Eradication and Control Act, to minimize the impact of this introduced rodent, and the Noxious Weed Control Act, providing up to \$100 million per year to combat and control invasive weeds on public and private lands. To learn more, visit <<http://www.stopinvasives.org/>>

Migratory Bird Protection-

For many years, Neotropical migratory bird populations have been dwindling, in large part owing to destruction of their wintering habitats. In 2000, Congress passed the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act – a 5-year, first-of-it's-kind law that directly impacts songbirds, conserving and enhancing their habitats to help ensure these birds survive. For each of the last two years, Congress has only secured \$3 million for this program. This year, however, Audubon stepped up its efforts, and Congress increased funding by 33% for fiscal year 2004 -it's first major increase. FY'05 is the program's last year. Audubon is leading the effort to reauthorize the program at a higher level of funding

Agencies Drop Plans to Remove Clean Water Act Protections from Wetlands-On December 16, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) announced that they were dropping their plans to remove federal protection for many streams, wetlands, ponds and other waters protected by the Clean Water Act. This is in direct response to the people's opinion, heard during public comment period held earlier this year. Audubon activists called for the protection of so-called "isolated" waters — wetlands that have no direct hydrologic connection to navigable interstate rivers. By EPA's own estimates, this would have removed protection from over 20% of the nation's waters and millions of acres of wetlands.

Audubon Seeks A Balanced Approach To Federal Oil And Gas Leasing In The National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska- *Anchorage, AK, Tuesday, February 17* - Citing a lack of balance in the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) plans for energy development in western Arctic Alaska, Audubon joined other conservation organizations today to challenge in court a plan to open 8.8 million acres in the northwestern National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (the "Reserve") to oil and gas leasing. Audubon challenges a January 22, 2004, decision by Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton because that decision did not consider any alternatives that balanced oil development and wildlife protection, nor did the decision give permanent protection to any of the Reserve's most important wildlife habitats.

In joining the lawsuit, Audubon President John Flicker said, "Audubon does not oppose prudent oil and gas exploration and development in the Reserve, but the Secretary of the Interior has the responsibility to balance energy development with protection of critical fish and wildlife habitats.

"The Secretary's decision failed to give permanent protection to even one acre of wildlife habitat in the Reserve and failed to evaluate any reasonable alternatives that would have done so," he continued. For more information, visit www.audubon.org <http://www.audubon.org> .

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: _____



You can choose to either adopt an Osprey from

Patuxent River

Potomac River



**WELCOME,
NEW MEMBERS!!**

Bill Gross, Easton
John/Carrie Staples, Bryans Road
Flo/Roger Stone, Hollywood
William B. Clarke, Lusby

**HELP SMAS PROVIDE BINOCULARS
FOR SCHOOL AND YOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**



DONATION FOR BINOCULAR FUND

Your name: _____ Amount donated \$ _____

Your address: _____

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

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

MAY EVENTS

May 1—Saturday—All Day. **Birdathon**

Calvert, Charles, Prince George's, St. Mary's Counties. Sponsor a team or join one in this all-day event to tally as many species as possible within 24 hours. This is a great and fun way to raise money for SMAS. Call your county representative for details.

May 5—Wednesday—7:30 p.m. **Monthly Meeting**

St. Mary's County Memorial Library, Leonardtown, St. Mary's County.

"After 17 Years, the party Begins: Life of a Periodic Cicada" by John Zyla, Naturalist. John Zyla has studied cicadas in southern Maryland for many years, and will share his knowledge of a fascinating natural phenomenon: the emergence of periodic cicadas. In fact, a brood of the 17-year cicadas is scheduled to emerge in the Baltimore/Washington area this spring! Mr. Zyla will also tell about the life cycles of the annual cicada species that we see every year.

May 8—Saturday—All Day. **County May Counts**

Help needed from all backyard birders, beginners, and team leaders. These observations help save our birds! County coordinators are as follows: Calvert: Arlene Ripley, 410-257-6105, <aripley@nestbox.com>, Charles: George Wilmot, 301-373-8552, <gwilmot@radix.net>, St. Mary's: Bob Boxwell, 301-872-5998 (home), 410-414-3311 (work), <robertjohnboxwell@yahoo.com>.

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

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May 15—Saturday—8 a.m. **Field Trip**

Mrytle Grove WMA, Charles County.

Spring Migrants and Woodpeckers. Leader: Fred Burggraf (310-934-8042). Half day trip. From Route 301 in La Plata, take Rt. 225 west about 4.5 miles to the WMA on the right. From Rt. 210 take Rt. 225 east about 4 miles to the WMA. Follow the dirt road to the end and meet in the parking lot near the pond. Especially recommended for beginning birders.

May 22—Saturday—7 a.m. **Field Trip**

Point Lookout State Park, St. Mary's County.

Late Spring Migrants. Leader: Bob Boxwell, (301-872-5998). Half day trip. A repeat of our October 4 trip. We will try to find the late migrating warblers and other songbirds. Meet in the parking lot at the end of Rt. 5. Park entrance fee applies.

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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.

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