

# The Osprey



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*Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society*

## TARGETED BIRD CONSERVATION IN SOUTHERN MARYLAND: BIRD BLITZ 2009

*by David Yeany and David Curson*

This marks the third year in which the Audubon MD-DC Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program will use Bird Blitz surveys in an effort to identify areas throughout the state that provide critical habitat for birds of conservation concern. Bird Blitz is a breeding season count of targeted at-risk bird species, which is used to determine whether an area supports the minimum populations necessary to be an IBA. Data from Blitz surveys in 2008 led to the identification of two new IBAs in Maryland, Nanticoke IBA and Monocacy Grasslands IBA. Twenty-seven volunteers conducted 33 counts at 10 sites across the state. Southern Maryland participated with Bird Blitzes at the following locations:

**Mattawoman Creek**, Charles County:

During late June, Jean Artes and Dan Haas surveyed Smallwood State Park, counting several Kentucky Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Wood Thrush, and 1 Bald Eagle.

**Zekiah Swamp**, Charles County:

Leslie Starr and Joe Turner kayaked Allen's Fresh in late June, recording 7 Bald Eagle, 4 Prothonotary Warbler, and small numbers of Wood Thrush and Louisiana Waterthrush.

With generous financial support from the Maryland Ornithological Society, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and the Toyota/Audubon Together Green partnership, Audubon Maryland-DC has hired David Yeany II as Bird Blitz Coordinator for 2009. David comes to the IBA Program fresh from completing his Masters in Applied Ecology and Conservation Biology at Frostburg State University, where he conducted thesis research on the bird community of Finzel Swamp in Garrett County.

This year Bird Blitz will target areas in western and southern Maryland. Southern Maryland has ecologically important forest habitats and is vital for a number of at-risk bird species in the state. Primary target species in this region include Red-headed Woodpecker, Kentucky Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Chuck-will's-widow, and Whip-poor-will. Bird Blitz surveys are being planned for the following areas, which are of high priority for these species and contain large acreages of forest habitat:

- **Nanjemoy Area**, Charles County
- **Mattawoman Creek Area**, Charles County
- **Zekiah Swamp**, Charles County
- **St. Mary's River**, St. Mary's County
- **Piscataway Park**, Prince George's County
- **Battle Creek Area**, Calvert County

Bird Blitz surveys will comprise a person or a team of observers who walk routes through these areas while

counting and mapping individual birds of the target species., Routes for Bird Blitz, changed from surveys of previous years, are being developed in these target areas by the Bird Blitz Coordinator so as to ensure adequate coverage for each candidate IBA. Most of these routes can be easily covered in a 3-4 hour morning of birding, and the Bird Blitz Coordinator will provide volunteers with field maps prepared for their Bird Blitz routes. Also new this year will be the integration of GPS technology with the goal of providing GPS units for volunteers to use for mapping primary target species. These changes should improve the quality of Bird Blitz data while allowing for easier execution of the survey methods. Volunteers need no prior GPS or Bird Blitz experience to participate. There will be a Bird Blitz training session held in southern Maryland in early May for anyone interested in conducting surveys this year. Complete Bird Blitz instructions and survey forms are available at: <http://mddc.audubon.org>.

We are poised and ready to make huge strides in bird conservation in southern Maryland with Bird Blitz 2009. All we need now is help from you – the birders! You can make a significant contribution toward conserving the birds you love and the habitats important to them by volunteering for even one Bird Blitz route. Go birding with a purpose, and be part of Bird Blitz 2009!

If you want to find out more about the IBA Program and Bird Blitz please visit the Audubon MD-DC website at: <http://mddc.audubon.org>.

For more information or if you would like to participate in Bird Blitzes in any of the priority areas, please contact David Yeany, IBA Program Assistant at 814-221-4361 or at [dyeany2@gmail.com](mailto:dyeany2@gmail.com).

## IBA HELPS CURB SPRAWL IN WICOMICO COUNTY, MARYLAND

Audubon Maryland-DC's project to incorporate IBAs into the land use planning process met with success recently when Wicomico County's Planning and Zoning Appeals Board denied an appeal by developers proposing a 147-dwelling residential cluster in forestland 10 miles from the nearest town. The site of the proposed "Woodlands at Whiton" development lies in the heart of the 180,000-acre Pocomoke-Nassawango IBA, the largest forest block, and premier site for forest-interior birds, on the Delmarva peninsula. This IBA supports large populations of Prothonotary Warbler and Worm-eating Warbler, as well as 10 other at-risk species, including Chuck-will's widow, Whip-poor-will, and Red-headed Woodpecker.

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The Appeals Board's deliberations included discussion of the area's IBA status and Audubon's assertion that fragmentation resulting from the proposed development would erode one of the area's prime ecological qualities - habitat contiguity. "Partnerships with Wicomico Environmental Trust, Chesapeake Bay Foundation and other local groups were key to this success," according to Dave Curson, Director of Bird Conservation, Audubon MD-DC; "Audubon is also working to overturn a cluster zoning provision that allows new residential developments in Wicomico County's agricultural-rural zone."

## REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

**Calvert County Waterfowl Trip, February 15, by Bob Boxwell.** It was a cold blustery morning that greeted us as we awaited arrivals at the Park and Ride. The six of us piled into three cars and took off for Jefferson Patterson Park to see if we could find the Barrow's Goldeneye spotted during the previous week's Patuxent waterbird count. Jim Stasz was in the parking lot having already seen the bird when we arrived. Quite naturally the one goldeneye still in view was not the one we were after.

The wind was such that a lot of chop was on the river and not that many birds. We did pick up Bufflehead, Oldsquaw (oops, that is now called Long-tailed Duck), Ruddy Duck, Common Loon, Horned Grebe, and a few scaup. We walked quite a way along the river spotting a few land birds and the occasional hawk (red tails) circling overhead.

A jaunt over to the boat pier got us few kinglets, sparrows, and waxwings, but nothing in the way of waterfowl except some Canada Geese. The next spot in the park was a fresh water pond which was more productive. Here we had Gadwall, Ring-necked Duck, Mallard and a lot of Eastern Bluebirds. I tried to sneak up through the brush at the end of the pond and got a Yellow Rumped Warbler to alight about two feet from me. They really are a pretty bird.

Our last stop was down on the Solomons Island to see if we could find the other local rarity, a White-fronted Goose. The bird had been hanging out in Glascock's field with a flock of Canada Geese. By the time we arrived we saw geese in flight from a distance, but nothing out of the ordinary. Just a matter of timing on this one, but we whiffed again.

Still I can't say I am disappointed in the results. We had nice company, some good birds, a lot of sun and exercise, and I learned a few new places to visit in Calvert County.

**The Owl Prowl, March 13, by Mike Callahan.** On Friday March 13, 2009 we held our Owl Prowl field trip that was rescheduled from the previous Friday due to bad weather.

We started meeting at the private farm at 7:30 PM while rain and some sleet was spitting from the sky. It did not look like we were off to a good start, but once we got out of the vehicles we could see and hear an American Woodcock displaying. As 8pm arrived we did our introductions and

found out that we had participants that were both members and non-members of SMAS. Our youngest person on the trip was a four year old and we had a 5 and 6 year old as well. These youngsters came very well prepared to hear and see owls and were ready to be quiet for the occasion. I have never seen youngsters of this age on a birding trip before and was I surprised at how quiet they were. They were quieter than some of the participants who were several decades older than them. We also had about 5 teenagers and several adults. 24 people attended and one couple even traveled from Bethesda to see the owls. I started calling Eastern Screech Owl but only got the reply of a Barn Owl. We then tried for Barred Owl further down the farm road but again no luck. Then another scream came across the field and it was another Barn Owl calling. I called back with my best barn owl call and sure enough one called back. I am not sure what I said, but it came in to check out the new bird in town. After one more call the owl came very close with a fly over and everyone got to see it. For the young and many of the young at heart on the trip it was a life bird. After a few more attempts, two owls checked us out.

By now it was starting to get late, so the youngsters left with their families but a few hard core owlers stayed. We tried one more place on the farm for Great Horned Owl and had no luck, but again barn owls called. We even heard a call that is only heard when a barn owl is dancing or displaying for it's prospective mate. In fact it is a call I have only heard in captivity before. It sounds like a metallic clucking sound and is usually accompanied by a dance by the male who stamps his feet on a hard surface which makes additional noise.

If you missed this trip you missed the great time had by all. You will have one more opportunity this season to see a barn owl that is part of our Project R.A.P.T.O.R. Sign up for the Barn Owls and Breakfast trip on May 24 and you will see the young getting banded or as the youngsters say see them wear their new bling bling.

I hope you can join us next year for another owl prowl. Until then have a great birding season and don't forget to adopt a barn owl from SMAS.

## JOIN BIRDATHON OR MAKE A PLEDGE TO RAISE FUNDS FOR SMAS YOUTH BINOCULAR FUND

*by George Jett*

SMAS holds an annual birdathon to raise money for particular chapter projects. This year the Board of Directors selected the youth binocular fund, which is running low because we have donated binoculars to several worthy youth groups. Our goal is to raise \$1000 this year. So far we have pledges of over \$400 from members and we have not done the birdathon yet.

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You say you are a birder and you don't know what a birdathon is? A birdathon is where groups of crazy birders try to identify as many species as possible in a 24 hour period. The winner is the team that identifies the most species, by both sight and sound, in a day. (Who has time to look if you already know what species it is from its voice?) A birdathon is a numbers game. So far we have teams from Calvert, St. Mary's, and Charles County participating. This is an annual event on the SMAS calendar.

How does it work? You can donate a flat fee, say \$100, or donate per species identified. For example, 25 cents per species times 100 species identified means you donate \$25.00. You can also pick the team you wish to support. You can support your home county team (Go Team!), or the combined teams' effort. This is a friendly competition. The team that identifies the most species takes bragging rights for one year as the best team. Sorry no trophies yet. The real winners are the children that get to use the binoculars we donate to their educational programs as a result of the pledges the teams receive.

**Donations:** Sign up sheets will be available at the May 6 monthly meeting, and since it is never too late to donate, also at the June 7 Annual Meeting. You don't have to support any specific team, but can also give a general donation. All pledges of support for the Birdathon, payable to Southern Maryland Audubon Society, may be sent to Will Daniel, SMAS Treasurer, P.O. Box 181, Bryans Road, Maryland 20616. SMAS is a 501(C)(3), non-profit, registered organization under the IRS code, so all donations are 100 percent tax deductible.

If you have questions, wish to participate with a team, lead one, or register your pledge with a particular team, contact me at: [gmjett@comcast.net](mailto:gmjett@comcast.net). The results will be announced at the Annual Meeting on June 7 at Chapman's State Park. See the June issue of *The Osprey*, the SMAS program brochure, or our website <http://www.geocities.com/smdaudubon/> for more details of the Annual Meeting. Come to the annual meeting to see which county team can brag of finding the most species.

### **WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!**

Lukman Bazarah, Leonardtown  
Jennifer Bryan, Lusby  
Heather Burk, La Plata  
Elizabeth Burnett, Solomons  
Judith Butler-Kowalik, Hollywood  
Ann Chab, La Plata  
Jim Fairfax, Great Mills  
Eric Gofreed, Ft Washington  
Lisa Goldman, North Beach  
Beverly Halton, Dunkirk  
Diana Henderson, Hollywood  
Mary Humphreys, Brandywine  
Cynthia Hunter, Temple Hills  
Kathryn Lapolla, White Plains  
John Van Wie, Lusby  
Julie Working, Lexington Park  
Anna Zimmerman, Avenue

## **BIRDS AND CLIMATE CHANGE: ECOLOGICAL DISRUPTION IN MOTION**

Audubon recently released a new study using Christmas Bird Count Data. These analyses would not have been possible without the hard work of CBC participants and the many chapters that organize and lead counts. We thank all that have participated over the years for their effort. The study explored if birds had shown significant shifts in their winter distribution over the last 40 years. As we all know, birds are good indicators of the environment. We think birds provide important information to people on changes in the environment and human quality of life. Audubon has a goal of working bird indicators into regular reviews of how the environment in the US is doing and hopefully helping drive policy and funding that benefits the environment and birds. These analyses of the CBC dataset on winter distribution are part of that effort.

The report, *Birds and Climate Change*, is available on Audubon's web site and provides more details on the analyses and results. To download the report from [www.audubon.org/bird/bacc/index.html](http://www.audubon.org/bird/bacc/index.html), click on the "Download Report" link on the left side of the page or on the image of the report cover.

National Audubon Society will continue to undertake scientific analyses of these data to learn more about the status of birds and conservation needs. Please consider donating through the web site to help us continue using the CBC data to move a conservation agenda.

### **SMAS MEMBERS**

#### **BELL & KOSTENKO HONORED**

*by George Jett*

Tyler Bell and Jane Kostenko, from California, Maryland (in St. Mary's County), have been awarded the American Birding Association (ABA) Claudia Wilds Award for distinguished service.

The ABA Claudia Wilds Distinguished Service Award is given to members who have given outstanding service to the organization, either as paid staff or as volunteers. This is a way for ABA to honor those individuals who have devoted many hours and considerable energy to the good of the organization. The name of this award was selected to honor the memory of the late Claudia Wilds for her many contributions to ornithology and to ABA. Tyler and Jane have assisted ABA for 14 consecutive conventions, as well as six conferences not including the latest one in Minot, ND in June. They clearly have earned this prestigious award for outstanding service to ABA.

Congratulations to Jane and Tyler. The award will be presented to them in late April at the ABA convention in Corpus Christi, TX.

## SCHOOL SCIENCE FAIR AWARDS

by Millie Kriemelmeyer

SMAS members judged the science fairs in Calvert, Charles and St. Mary's Counties and presented the SMAS awards. The winners received a certificate, \$50, and one year membership in National Audubon Society and SMAS. Congratulations to the winning students and thanks to the judges.

Calvert County: Judges: Sue Noble and Leslie Bridgett  
**Courtney Mattson**

7th grade, Calvert Middle School

"Which Pesticides have an Effect on Chesapeake Bay  
Creatures?"

**Connor McCarthy**

8th grade, Our Lady Star of the Sea  
"Daphnia's Fight for Life"

Charles County. Judges: Jean Artes, Bob Lukinic

**Tyler Fini**

La Plata High School

"Polluted Waters"

**Jonathan Barnett**

La Plata High School

"Phyto Remediation of Bifenthrin"

**John Radke**

Milton Somers

"Disposal of Greenhouse Gases"

**Cameron Williams**

J. C. Parks Elementary School

"Conservation of Drinking Water"

St. Mary's County. Judges: Will Daniel and Bev Walker

**Shefali Shah**

Great Mills High School

"The Big, the Bad, and the Small - Part II"

**Kathryn Jahn**

Spring Ridge Middle School

"Think Big, Good Small Alternative Energy"

## GOOD TURNOUT AT

### POTOMAC RIVER CLEANUP

by Bob Lukinic, President, SMAS

Site Coordinator, Potomac River Watershed Cleanup

The Potomac River Watershed Cleanup was held on Saturday the 4<sup>th</sup> of April. SMAS again sponsored the site at Marshall Hall Park. We had a record turnout of 78 volunteers. Hardworking groups and individuals did a very thorough job.

This year's groups included the Southern Maryland Junior Bassmasters, Boy Scout Troop #483, Boy Scout troop #1709, Members of the US Navy, and SMAS.

I wish to thank all those who came and helped clean our waterway. We can thank long-time member Cora Fulton, Dottie Lukinic, and Trixie the unofficial mascot for manning the sign-in table and distributing the supplies, drinks, and snacks. Again, a job well done.

## FOSTER PARENTS NEEDED

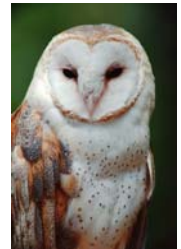


Southern Maryland Audubon Society sponsors the banding of nestling birds of prey, or raptors, with serially numbered aluminum bands in cooperation with the Bird Banding Laboratory of the U. S. Department of the Interior, as part of our bird research and conservation activities in Southern Maryland. Limited 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**  
**11350 Budds Creek Rd.**  
**Charlotte Hall, Maryland 20622**



## 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)



## MAY EVENTS

May 2—**Saturday**—All day. **Field Trip/Birdathon.** Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's Counties. **Birdathon Fundraiser.** Help raise money for SMAS in this annual competitive "fun raiser!" Sponsor a team or join in on this all-day event to tally as many species as possible within 24 hours. Contact your county representative for details. Calvert: Tyler Bell (301-862-4623, [jtylerbell@yahoo.com](mailto:jtylerbell@yahoo.com)); Charles: George Jett (301-843-3524, [gmjett@comcast.net](mailto:gmjett@comcast.net)); St. Mary's: Kyle Rambo (301-373-5057, [kyle.rambo@navy.mil](mailto:kyle.rambo@navy.mil)). See the article on page 2 for more information.

May 6—**Wednesday**—7:30 PM. **Monthly Meeting.** Clearwater Nature Center, 11000 Thrift Road, Clinton, Prince George's County.

**300 Bird Photo Challenge** by George M. Jett, Southern Maryland Audubon Society. Many hotshot birders have tried to see 300 species in Maryland in a single year—a difficult task to be sure. George's goal, however, was to photograph 300 species in a single year. He has been called nuts by birder friends. As of June 2008 he had reached 262 species. See if George is really nuts or was successful in this lofty goal. Come share in the adventure and see some of the resulting shots in color.

May 9—**Saturday**—All day. **Field Trip.** Calvert, Charles, Prince George's, and St. Mary's Counties. **County May Counts.** Help needed from everyone: backyard birders, beginners, team leaders. These data and information help save our

birds! County coordinators are as follows: Calvert: Sue Hamilton (410-586-1491, [seal10n@yahoo.com](mailto:seal10n@yahoo.com)); Charles: George Jett (301-843-3524, [gmjett@comcast.net](mailto:gmjett@comcast.net)); Prince George's: Fred Fallon (301-249-1518, [fwfallon@earthlink.net](mailto:fwfallon@earthlink.net)); St. Mary's: Bob Boxwell (401-394-1300, [bobboxwell@hotmail.com](mailto:bobboxwell@hotmail.com)). To help, contact your county coordinator for information and assignments.

May 16—**Saturday**—8:00 AM to noon. **Field Trip.** Battle Creek Cypress Swamp, Gray's Road off Sixes Road, Prince Frederick, Calvert County. **Barred Owls and Prothonotary Warblers.** Leader: Andy Brown (410-535-5327, [brownaj@co.cal.md.us](mailto:brownaj@co.cal.md.us)). Target species include Prothonotary, Hooded, and Kentucky warblers, as well as other notable spring migrants. Particular emphasis will be on identification by song. From Prince Frederick, Rte. 2/4 south two miles, right onto Sixes Road two miles, then left onto Gray's Road. Nature Center entrance on the right. Facilities, no fee.

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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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