

Birdathon 2003

by Bob Boxwell

Looking out my window it is a bit hard to concentrate. The weather is nice for a change, warm and sunny. During a walk at lunchtime I enjoyed the birds flying about and the songs of the Red-winged Blackbird and Song Sparrow. Spring must be just around the corner. And of course you know what that means... migration!

With the big influx of species this is the perfect time of year to find all kinds of things that normally aren't around. So the first two Saturdays in May are devoted to long days of bird watching. May 3 this year marks our annual birdathon. Once again this year we will be fielding three county teams. The Wandering Tattlers for Charles County, the Bobolinks in St. Mary's, and the Purple Martins in Calvert. This effort although lots of fun has a serious side to it, it is a major fundraiser for our annual ecology camp scholarships. Each team will be out there soliciting donations for their team. You can pledge per species or donate a lump sum. Over the past three years we have raised over \$3,000 toward the scholarship fund.

The competition is fierce and the honors from the last two years have gone to the Calvert team. Can they "threepeat"? Sue and Arlene aren't quite Kobe and Shaq but their performance over the past two years approximates the winning ways of the L.A. Lakers. So the other teams are gearing up to try and meet the challenge. Why don't you help by filling out the pledge sheet below.

Maryland Breeding Bird Atlas Project Help Needed

By George Wilmot

The Maryland Breeding Bird Atlas Project is a five-year project to do breeding bird surveys throughout Maryland and the District of Columbia. The project started January 1, 2002 and will continue until the end of the breeding season in 2006. This is the second atlas project, the first was done from 1983 to 1987. The present atlas project is being done under the leadership of the Maryland Ornithological Society. Just as was done for the first atlas project, the state is divided into blocks, each about 10 square miles in area, and bird surveys are to be done in each block during the nesting seasons. While the nesting season for many of Maryland's breeding birds is late May to mid-August, the nesting season for some species such as owls starts much earlier. Great Horned Owls start their nesting activities in late December. The nesting season for many of our year round resident species starts in March or April.

There are many blocks to be surveyed during this five-year project in our southern Maryland area, more than 60 in Charles County alone. Help is needed both from experienced birders and from those who see nesting evidence in their yards or during their local travels. For those who wish to be the leader for one or more blocks, packets containing a block map, a bird list for the block from the last atlas project, instructions and reporting forms are now available from the county coordinators. Block leaders do the bird surveys, keep the records and report to the county coordinator each year at the end of the breeding season. The block leaders can also recruit and assign additional birders to help with the field surveys.

This is the second year for the current atlas project. Last year in Charles County 20 blocks of the county's total of 63 were surveyed. Of these 20, 9 block counts yielded more than 60 species. For this year's Charles County effort the emphasis will be on continuing with the counts in the other 11 blocks and doing several new blocks.

If you are interested in helping with this important project or need more information, please contact the county coordinator for your county. The county coordinators are: Calvert County: Arlene Ripley, 301-855-2848; Charles County, George Wilmot, 301-375-8552; Prince George's County, Fred Fallon, 301-249-1518 and St. Mary's County, Kyle Rambo, 301-757-0005 (w).



DON'T FORGET:

- Chances to win any of five deluxe Richard Sloan prints are still for sale. Tickets are available from directors and officers, and at monthly meetings, for \$1.00 each or six for \$5.00. Proceeds from the raffle benefit the Ecology Camp Scholarship Fund. See the November 2002 Osprey for more details.
- The deadline for submission of entries for the SMAS logo contest is May 1st. The Directors have received several entries. Do not miss a chance for recognition and prizes. See the December/January Osprey, or visit our website for details.
- The annual Potomac River Cleanup is scheduled for, Saturday, April 5th from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. See Bob Lukinic's article later in this issue for details or call him at 301-283-6317.
- If you'd rather receive *The Osprey* electronically, contact Bob Boxwell at 'bobboxwell@hotmail.com'.

The Third Annual Celebration of Earth Day on the Square in Leonardtown

by Bob Boxwell

As I write this article in March, April seems but a dream. Ahhhh.... warm bright days, the landscape blushing green. SPRING! Flowers in bloom, trees in leaf, birds atwitter (yes it really is a word) all the things that make me smile. And way back in 1970 somebody (Gaylord Nelson) figured out how important April is to the spirit and that connection manifest itself in the celebration know as Earth Day.

This year we celebrate this special day on the square in Leonardtown on Sunday, April 13. The town blocks the square to vehicular traffic and for four hours (noon till 4:00 p.m.) you can breathe the clean air and enjoy the diversity that is Southern Maryland.

Some of this year's planned activities include a petting zoo, children's arts and craft projects, free art raffles, tree seedling giveaways, yoga and tai-chi demonstrations. Come learn about organic farming, the new hybrid cars from Toyota, oyster farming, sheep shearing and weaving, along with displays from Audubon, Sierra, Potomac River Association, and a new group the Friends of Myrtle Point Park. Enjoy live music and a wide variety of food available as well.

Good food and music, nice people, free raffles, activities for children and adults alike. Where else would you rather be? So please come out and join us to celebrate the mother of us all, the Planet Earth.

More Alaska Wildlands Under Threat

by Tyler Bell



The federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is looking to open another 8.8 million acres of the National Petroleum Reserve -Alaska (the "Reserve") to oil exploration and development, and the public has two ways to let BLM know what they think about it! First, by attending a free public hearing right in Washington, DC on March 13th, and second by sending a comment into the BLM by April 2nd, 2003.

Originally established in 1923 as a secure source of oil for the U.S. Navy, President Gerald Ford moved authority of the Reserve from the Navy to the BLM in 1976 to allow for oil exploration, but production and development were prohibited until authorized by Congress. In 1980, Congress gave that authorization and allowed BLM to lease portions of the reserve for development purposes. To date, leases have been granted to nearly a dozen oil companies on more than 1.3 million acres, and operational drilling is expected to begin shortly. The BLM is now looking to lease another 8.8 million acres in the Northwest portion of the Reserve.

Unlike our fight to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from oil and gas drilling, the decision to drill or not drill is not a practical option on this Reserve - it's open for business. Audubon does not oppose additional oil leasing in the reserve's 8.8-million-acre Northwest Planning Area, so long as the area's special places and values are protected and all oil and gas activities are carried out with high environmental standards.

Winter Bird Workshop

by Bob Boxwell

After all the snow and cold weather, I was wondering if any people would show up for the morning workshop, much less whether any birds would appear. Getting there early to scout the area is no problem though, just open up the door. My first greeting was the *cherink* of an Eastern Towhee, followed quickly by the first of many flocks of Common (well named in this case) Grackles. A woodpecker flew into the hickory tree and I hear a Blue Jay scolding something off in the distance. A singing House Finch was in the same tree I recalled from a trip in the fall of 2001.

So it was looking good. I just hoped the birds would hang around. By 9 a.m. the group was here and most but not all of the birds (Brown Thrasher) remained on the premises. A walk around the parking lot picked up some common species like chickadee, titmouse, cardinal, junco, and white-throat. The real treat came when we headed for the boat basin. Earlier I had only found a lone Greater Scaup floating around. We found this one, some Mallards, a lone Common Goldeneye, and then off in the distance a flock of something and they were moving pretty quickly. As they moved closer it became evident they were mergansers and with a moment identified as red-breasted. There were about 30 of them and what was remarkable was they were all diving in unison. It was like the synchronized swimming competition in the Olympics. They kept this up for a couple of minutes before chasing whatever their prey was out of our vision.

We ended up with a total of 27 species and got very close to some of them. Several of the trees and shrubs that still

had fruit or berries were being jealously guarded by their "owners". This is my holly tree and I'm not leaving it!

We finished up by heading inside for 45 minutes of instruction. With the variety of bones, wings, skulls, feet, and study skins I have available, teaching about birds is just a matter of picking and choosing for my topic. Today was beaks and feet, followed by an identification worksheets for sparrows and woodpeckers.

I hope to be able to offer two quarterly programs to cover the four seasons. As we work the kinks out, I will be reporting back to you. In the mean time, you can check either the SMAS web page (www.geocities.com/smdaudubon) or the museum's site (www.calvertmarinemuseum.com).

Potomac River Cleanup, April 5th

by Bob Lukinic, Site Coordinator

It is time again for our membership to come to the help of our waterways. The annual Potomac River Cleanup will be on Saturday, April 5th from 9: a.m. to 12 noon rain or shine. The Southern Maryland Audubon Society, as in many previous years, is sponsoring the cleanup at Marshall Hall. The site is located at the westernmost end of Rt. 227 approximately 5 miles from Rt. 210 at Bryans Road, Charles County.

Every year after the volunteers are done there is such a great difference in the appearance, safety, and usefulness of the shoreline. The waterfront at Marshall Hall has progressively become less littered from the cumulative effect of the yearly cleanup. SMAS members, along with volunteers from the community, can take pride that this one-day-a-year effort has helped heal the river.

Gloves, trash bags, drinks, and snacks will be provided. So remember April 5th and we hope to see you there. For more information call Bob Lukinic at 301-283-6317.

Donate Your Old Optics to Birders' Exchange

by Jane Kostenko and the American Birding Association

Researchers, educators, and conservationists in Latin America and the Caribbean are striving to protect birds and their habitats, but many are working without the most basic equipment, such as binoculars and field guides.

The American Birding Association's Birders' Exchange program collects donated new and used equipment and distributes it, free of charge, to associates in these countries.

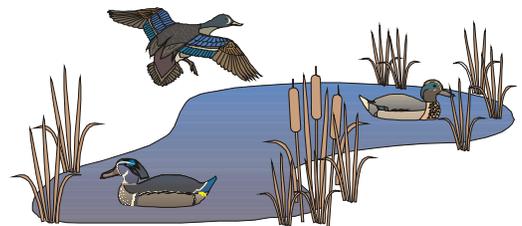
You can help by bringing donated equipment to Southern Maryland Audubon monthly meetings in March, April, and May. Equipment, which must be in good working order (for example, binoculars must be in proper alignment, the focus wheel in operation, and the glass without flaws), includes optics, field guides, cameras, sound equipment, backpacks, laptops, etc.

Audubon members Tyler Bell and Jane Kostenko will act as couriers to take the donated equipment to the ABA convention in Eugene, Oregon, in late May. From there, ABA will arrange for the donations to be distributed to appropriate associates.

Donations are tax-deductible and will be acknowledged by a letter of receipt; include your name and mailing address with your donation to receive a receipt.

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

Lee Duer, Waldorf
Brian Linville, Indian Head
Carole Purcell, Lusby
Michael Ayers, Lusby
Phillip Yeats, Lusby
Heidi & Rick Granholm, Waldorf
Kenny Cole, La Plata
Jodi Johnson, Accokeek
Christian Renner, La Plata
Cami Schmidt, St Leonard
Jan Shadday, Waldorf
Norah Newberg, Piney Point
Michael & Jane Picot, St. Inigoes
Joan C. Brunton, Lusby
Gloria Heisserman, Nanjemoy
The Paul Jensen Family, Oxon Hill
Richard Nowak, Clinton
Jean Patente, Ft Washington
Brian C. Powers, Chesapeake Beach
Gordon & Lisa Rugh, Hollywood
Linda Western, Broomes Island
Joann Fischer, St Inigoes
Linda A. Martin, Brandywine
Alfred Thomas, La Plata
Paul Waxman, Great Mills
Christopher Cochran, Solomons



Birders' Exchange Books Make More Friends

Birders are increasingly familiar with the American Birding Association's successes in supporting colleagues in Latin America with new and used field equipment and books through Birders' Exchange. While a real need exists for field guides for locales in the neotropics, lots of people don't realize that "North American" field guides are greatly needed, too!

Birders' Exchange particularly needs "Eastern Petersons" (for Cuban and other Caribbean distribution) and "National Geographics" (mainly for Mexico). Fortunately, both these volumes have recently been updated, making your older copy ideal for contribution to Birders' Exchange!

Jane Kostenko and Tyler Bell of California, Maryland, will serve as couriers of any donated items to the ABA convention in Eugene, OR, in early June. Bring your donations (books, backpacks, working binoculars and scopes, tripods) to the April and May SMAS meetings. You may also call Jane and Tyler at 301-862-4623, to arrange a drop-off of your donation any time prior to mid-May. Please include your name and mailing address with your items, so Birders' Exchange can acknowledge your tax-deductible donation with a receipt.

Of course, you may always send any birding equipment to Birders' Exchange, ABA, P.O. Box 6599 Colorado Springs CO 80934. You will receive a receipt for tax purposes.

For more details on Birders' Exchange see:
<http://www.americanbirding.org/bex/>



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

ADOPT AN OSPREY

Name: _____

Address: _____

Amount Enclosed: _____



You can choose to either adopt an Osprey from

Patuxent River

Potomac River

Subscribe to Conservation Report

Conservation Report is the environmental legislative newsletter published each week during the Maryland General Assembly's legislative session by the Maryland Conservation Council. *Conservation Report* is an essential resource for anyone who wants to keep up with Maryland environmental issues and features bill synopses, hearing schedules, background information, and in depth articles on the activities of the legislature and environmental organizations.

A subscription to *Conservation Report* is \$30. You are encouraged to subscribe for your legislators and other elected officials at \$15 each. Since subscription fees do not cover the entire cost of publishing the newsletter, additional contributions are welcome. You may underwrite a weekly issue for a gift of \$300. Your gift will be acknowledged on the front page.

Make your check payable to Maryland Conservation Council, mark it for *Conservation Report*, and mail it, with the below information, to: Maryland Conservation Council, 1825 North Forest Park Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21207-6506. Contact George Tyson, 410-448-2362 or geotyson@qis.net.

Name _____ Home phone _____
Address _____ Work phone _____
City and State _____ Zip _____ + _____

For legislators, list title and election district.
Please give information for all subscriptions.

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.**

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Mail to: Southern Maryland Society
Attn: Membership
P.O.Box 181
Bryans Road, MD 20616

Chapter-Only Dues
(new/renewal)

- Individual/Family \$20
- Senior/Student \$15

National Dues

- Introductory Offer - 1 year \$20
- Introductory Offer - 2 year \$30
- Senior/Student \$15
- Renewal Rate \$35

APRIL EVENTS

APRIL 2 - WEDNESDAY – 7:30 p.m.

Monthly Meeting

Battle Creek Cypress Swamp Nature Center,
Calvert County, Prince Frederick, Maryland
“Research at Jug Bay”

Chris Swarth, *Director, Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary*
Chris Swarth will present an overview of some of the ecological research projects undertaken by volunteers and staff at this special Anne Arundel County sanctuary. In particular, he will update us on the results of the yearly Patuxent River Waterbird Count which many of us enjoy participating in. Note that this program will be followed up by a Saturday field trip at Jug Bay led by volunteer Arlene Ripley.

APRIL 5 - SATURDAY - 8 a.m.

Field Trip

Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary, Anne Arundel County
“EARLY SPRING MIGRANTS”

Leader: Arlene Ripley (410-257-6105). Half day trip. The park has good birding opportunities with a variety of interesting habitats. From the north, take Rt. 4 southeast into Anne Arundel County, exit right onto Plummer Lane and go ½ mile to Wrighton Rd., turn right onto Wrighton Rd. and go to the Sanctuary entrance on the left. From Calvert County, take Rt. 4 north and exit at Rt. 258. At the stop sign go left over Rt. 4 and continue to the stop sign at Wrighton Rd., turn right onto Wrighton Rd. and go 1.5 miles to the entrance on the left. Meet in the Sanctuary parking lot. An entrance fee applies.

APRIL 12 - SATURDAY - 8 a.m.

Field Trip

Jefferson-Patterson Park, Calvert County
“EARLY SPRING MIGRANTS”

Leader: Tyler Bell (301-862-4623). Half day trip. Open fields and wooded areas can provide good birds in migration. From Rt. 2/4 take Rt. 264 to Rt. 265. Follow Rt. 265 to the park. Meet the leader in the visitor center parking lot.

APRIL 26 - SATURDAY - 8 a.m.

Field Trip

Trent Hall, St. Mary's County
“SPRING MIGRANTS AND SHOREBIRDS”

Leader: Shirley Wood (301-884-0594). Half day trip. This new birding spot in St. Mary's County has an attractive mix of farm fields and ponds. Meet at the Charlotte Hall Library to carpool.

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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.

Southern Maryland Audubon Society
P.O. Box 181 Bryan's Road, MD 20616

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