

The Osprey

Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society



Northern Saw-Whet Owl
Photo by: George Jett

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<http://somdaudubon.org/>

The Birdbrains of Hard Bargain Farm

by Chris Ordiway

Hard Bargain Farm, located in Accokeek and owned by the Alice Ferguson Foundation, has a long history of birdbrains. Are you one of them? I am, and happily so. To help further that tradition of birdiness (yes, I just invented that!) I recently led a mixed flock of birders around the farm and Piscataway Park. The hike was hosted by both Southern Maryland Audubon Society and the Audubon Naturalist Society and consisted of 11 friendly folks, some were familiar faces and some hadn't been to, or probably even heard of, Accokeek before. After a short visit to the Wharf Road boat launch we spent the remainder of our morning walking around Piscataway Park and Hard Bargain Farm. Considering it was the third week of January we had delightful weather, with no more to deal with than a chilly breeze. A few of our troop were rewarded with Life birds and we were all tickled to see numerous Red-Headed woodpeckers and Bald eagles. The big find of the day was four American Pipits foraging in the lower farm fields. The last time I saw one was three or four years ago in the same field on another SMAS/ANS hike I was leading. The day ended with a traditional snack made by a fellow birder, this year's treat was delicious pumpkin bread. If you'd like to become a Birdbrain you can check out the Southern Maryland Audubon Society website (www.somdaudubon.org) for future hikes and meetings. We'd love to see you!

Potomac River Cleanup

I am writing to request the help of residents for the upcoming Potomac River Cleanup. The Cleanup will be held on April 14th from 9:00 am until noon at Marshall Hall Park (rain or shine). Marshall Hall Park is located at the western end of Marshall Hall Road (RT. 227), 4 miles from Rt. 210. Once again this site is being sponsored by the Southern Maryland Audubon Society. Several other cleanups are being held on the same day at other sites along the Potomac River Watershed.

In previous years, many volunteers participated in the cleanup. They have included school students working on their community service requirements, scout troops, church groups, businesses, and residents of all ages who are concerned about the environment in which we live. Every year, after the volunteers have completed their site cleanup, there is such a great difference in the appearance, safety, and usefulness of the shoreline. SMAS hopes that concerned residents will again show up to help heal the Potomac.

Gloves, trash bags, drinks and snacks will be provided. So mark your calendar for April 14th and we hope to see you there. Just show up at the boat ramp and a representative from Audubon will be there to assist. If you want more information, please call 301-283-6317 or e-mail at rlukinic@peoplepc.com

Bob Lukinic, site coordinator
5850 River Road - Bryans Road, MD 20616 - 301-283-6317

BREAKING!

Senate Advances RESTORE the Gulf Legislation

After months of work, fits and starts, and some late hours last night, Audubon has achieved two huge wins for birds and habitat. The Senate has voted to direct BP Clean Water Act penalty money towards Gulf restoration, and beefed up funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The billions that will go to habitat and restoration will mean more birds and wildlife conservation.

It's been almost two years since the horrific BP blowout that dumped millions of gallons of oil into the Gulf of Mexico. Getting BP penalty money to the Gulf—where it is needed most—has been an obvious but difficult road. Without Congressional action, that penalty money goes to the U.S. Treasury. Today we have that action in the Senate.

The second win means good things for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, newly reauthorized through 2022 and with a strong infusion of much-needed funding—\$1.4 billion over two years—for this benchmark habitat conservation/acquisition program, also a long-standing priority for Audubon.

And to pile on even more good news, a handful of bad amendments — including two that would have fast-tracked the Keystone tarsands pipeline — were defeated. Attacks on EPA and the Clean Air Act and an amendment to push more offshore drilling could not muster enough votes to win either.

Audubon members and activists lit up the Senate switchboard with calls in support of the Gulf/LWCF amendment. The Transportation bill will go to a final vote soon. Look for a breaking alert early next week—our emails and calls can help win that critical vote.

This is an incredibly exciting, pinnacle moment for Audubon and comes from the hard work by loads of people—our wonderful members, activists and chapters among them. Thanks for all you've done to get us here; next week we hope to take the next step to seal the deal for the Gulf and a lot of other critical habitat through passage of the Senate Transportation bill!

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WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

Michael Avillion, Lexington Park, MD
Jerry Forbes, Port Tobacco, MD
Thomas Gresinger, Fort Washington, MD
Louane Moy, Waldorf, MD
Sarah Ontko, Lusby, MD
Gwynette Piper, Prince Frederick, MD
Alan Rich, La Plata, MD
Mary Shook, La Plata, MD
Cotty Smith, Clinton, MD
Margaret Waranowitz, Owings, MD

Special Thanks!

Special thanks to our new member Kimberly Fehrs of California, MD. Every new SMAS member receives a New Member packet that includes a questionnaire. Kimberly soared to our request for help by returning her questionnaire and volunteering to assist SMAS with "The Osprey" newsletter mailings. Each month Kimberly picks up the newsletters, labels, stamps and then mails sixty plus Osprey newsletters to members that elected to not receive the newsletter electronically. THANKS KIMBERLY! YOUR HELP IS GREATLY APPRECIATED!!

Note to all members: If you just did not get a chance to fill out your new members questionnaire and would like to become more involved please send an email to Lynne Wheeler at comstockel@aol.com



Today, LCV is releasing the 2011 National Environmental Scorecard, which for more than 40 years has been the nationally accepted yardstick used to rate members of Congress on environmental issues. Unfortunately, this year's Scorecard is a sad testament to the radical nature of the first session of the 112th Congress in the House of Representatives.

In 2011, the Republican leadership in the House unleashed a truly breathtaking and unprecedented assault on the environment and public health, the breadth and depth of which have made the current House the most anti-environment in our nation's history.

But that's why we must work together to hold our elected officials accountable for their votes and actions on the nation's most pressing environmental issues.

Get the facts. Learn your representative and senators' 2011 LCV score:

<http://www.lcv.org/scorecard/>

Representative	Hoyer - 97%
Senators	Cardin - 100%
	Mikulski - 100%



Painted Turtles
Photo by: George Jett

Just When You Thought It Was Safe: Scotts Fined On Bird Seed

Last May we reported on bird seed testing and safety issues that showed that inspected seed was either free from pesticides or fell below levels that would threaten avian health. See the third story on the posting here: <http://refugeassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/sbc-may11.pdf>

In late January, however, Scotts Miracle-Gro Co., based in Marysville, Ohio, agreed to plead guilty to charges in federal court and agreed to pay fines in connection with bird-seed incidents dating back a number of years. The plea agreement is waiting the judge's approval, and may not be resolved for another 60 days, but fines for this case and for another related Scotts case (on falsified pesticide registration numbers) add up to \$4.5 million.

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

It seems that Scotts had distributed 73 million units of birdseed coated with the insecticides Storcide II and/or Actellic 5E between November 2005 and March 2008. The chemicals were used to keep insects from eating the seed during storage. Storcide II is labeled as "Toxic to birds. Toxic to wildlife," and that "Exposed treated seed may be hazardous to birds." And the EPA regards pirimphos-methyl, an active ingredient in Actellic 5E, as highly toxic to birds and fish.

Documents filed with the court indicate that Scotts continued to sell the products, despite warnings from two employees, a pesticide chemist and an ornithologist, in the summer and fall of 2007.

Finally, in the spring of 2008 the company initiated its own recall of all bird seed that might be harmful with the intent of replacing the contaminated product with bird seed that had been treated with Diacon II. (Just about every major bird seed company uses Diacon II in their products to prevent insect infestation.) The Scotts recall announcement drew attention to their original inappropriate use of Storcide II and Actellic 5E, and the legal actions were launched with punitive results.

A few days before the plea agreement, Scotts and the National Wildlife Federation had announced a nationwide cause marketing program to address songbird declines, a partnership which would include a \$1 donation per bag sold of "Songbirds Selections NutriThrive" bird food to the National Wildlife Federation. Three days later, NWF announced that the partnership was "not viable" and that the parties would work to end the relationship in a "friendly and mutually beneficial way."

Part of the fine imposed on Scotts - \$500,000 - will be split among a number of groups and agencies to fund efforts to protect birds, mostly based in Ohio. They are 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.

The issue highlights the need for ongoing monitoring of the quality and safety of the nation's bird seed supply.

More details can be found here:

www.dispatch.com/content/stories/business/2012/01/27/scotts-to-pay-4-5m-in-fines.html

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

Maryland Reptile And Amphibian Atlas (Mara) Project

The Natural History Society of Maryland (NHSM) and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) are conducting a five-year atlas of the amphibians and reptiles of Maryland. We started in January 2010, and will finish the study in 2014. Even though the first two years were a great success, in many regards we still have much to do to meet our targets. We are starting our third year of the project and need your help.

Amphibians and reptiles, collectively known as "herpetofauna" or "herps," have roamed the earth for over 300 million years. Herps to you and me are turtles, lizards, snakes, salamanders, frogs and toads.

While today's collection of herps pales in comparison to the diversity and abundance of these creatures during their heyday, their persistence to the present day is a testament to their overall success. However, the increasing challenges that amphibians and reptiles face – in no small part resulting from human-induced causes such as habitat loss, introduced species, over harvesting or collecting, and environmental pollution– raise concerns for their continued success and even survival. Worldwide declines in amphibian and reptile populations have been occurring at an accelerated rate over the past twenty years, threatening many species with extinction.

This atlas is an effort to get a snapshot of the herp populations across Maryland. The current project is mapping the distribution of all amphibians and reptiles within the state, using mostly volunteer help to search for the roughly 93 species found in Maryland. Each county is divided up in quadrants (quads), and each quad is divided into six blocks. As a SMAS member you likely live in one of these blocks, so herps around your property count. An easy way to help is to report herps on your property. If you find any herp on your property you could email your county coordinator (email address below) about the record you see or hear. If you are more interested, the way you can get involved is to contact the coordinator for the county in which you live, and volunteer to search a specific area (block). Incidental find-

ings can also be reported. For example, if you are driving along Mill Swamp Road in Charles County and see a Snapping Turtle, note the date, take a picture if possible, and send the information to the appropriate county coordinator.

Much more detail about the atlas including training manuals, data sheets, recordings, etc., can be found at: <http://marylandnature.org/mararesources/>. Other resources that can be useful include the best time to look for particular amphibian and reptile species, identification help, and frog and toad recordings to help identify that group of animals. The Maryland Frog Calling Calendar and Turtle & Lizard Activity Calendar have been a great help to me. Both can be downloaded from the MARA Resources page. If you are having trouble figuring out where you are you can also use the Google Earth tool to show you what block you are in. This technology is great not only for the herp atlas, but for many other uses like finding a friend's house where that party is going to take place.

When to look? Now, and through October normally. Besides using the calendars mentioned above to see normal activity, first the salamanders and frogs become active. Some animals to be on the watch for this month in our region include Red-spotted Newt, Spotted Salamander-adults (image attached) and eggs, Eastern Red-backed Salamander, and Four-toed Salamander. Frogs and toads to watch and listen for are Upland Chorus Frog, Spring Peeper, Wood Frog, and Southern Leopard Frog. Shortly, Pickerel Frog, Northern Green Frog, and American Bullfrog (image attached) may move or sing on rainy nights. As the weather warms, turtles and snakes become active. Turtles to look out for now are Painted (image attached), Box, and Snapping Turtles. If you don't have a field guide for the herps, do a Google search, or look at my website www.georgejett.net under the herp folder for photos. My website is not complete but is a work in progress. Many other sites exist and are helpful.

A few words about snakes in our region. Early snakes to be watching for are Smooth Earthsnake, Gartersnake, Ribbonsnake, and Eastern Ratsnakes. None of these snakes are poisonous. The only poisonous snake in southern Maryland is Northern Copperhead (image attached), and these are hard to find in suburban areas. Most reports I get of Copperhead are misidentified young Black Racers or Northern Watersnakes. Also, contrary to the local misconception, there are absolutely no Cottonmouths in Maryland. The closest Cottonmouths (sometimes called water moccasins) are in southern Virginia, many miles away. If anyone tells you they have seen a Cottonmouth or a water moccasin in Maryland they are wrong. What is normally mistaken for Cottonmouth is Northern Watersnake. Northern Watersnakes are not poisonous. They are aggressive and have white skin inside of their mouth which leads to the misidentification. There also are no rattlesnakes in Southern Maryland.

Regardless of the species, please keep a healthy distance from any snake so as not to hurt them. Also, please do not kill any snake. It is illegal, and snakes are very beneficial animals. Some snakes act aggressively (Black Racer, Northern Watersnake), especially when cornered, but if you give them a chance they will go on their way. All herps are cold-blooded animals, and you will see snakes basking

on hot roads to warm. Frogs and toads are on the move across roads on rainy nights in particular and turtles are also frequently sighted crossing roads. Please try to avoid hitting any animals while driving.

The Southern Maryland Audubon Society (SMAS) membership covers four Maryland counties. The county coordinators can be contacted at their emails:

Calvert: Andy Brown (brownaj@co.cal.md.us)
Charles: George Jett (gmjett@comcast.net)
Prince George's: George Middendorf (gmiddendorf@howard.edu)
Mike Quinlan (mikemq41@verizon.net)
St. Mary's: Kyle Rambo (kyle.rambo@navy.mil)

If you want to get involved or have questions, please contact your county coordinator.

As one who loves nature, this has proven to be an exciting and educational study. Great fun for both adults and kids. Come join us.

Thanks in advance.
George Jett / gmjett@comcast.net / www.georgejett.net

New Window Tape Can Significantly Reduce Bird Collisions at Homes

A new, translucent adhesive tape, which tests show can significantly reduce bird collisions with glass windows and doors, is now available to the public. The product is being sold by American Bird Conservancy (ABC) and production of ABC; BirdTape is made possible through the generous support of the Rusinow Family Foundation.

Birds can't see glass and don't understand the architectural cues, such as window frames, mullions, and handles, that alert people to the hazard. Experts estimate that up to one billion birds may die each year from resulting collisions. Unlike some sources of bird mortality that predominantly kill weaker individuals, there is no distinction among victims of glass. Because glass is equally dangerous for strong, healthy, breeding adults, it can have a particularly serious impact on populations. Studies have shown that even small windows can be dangerous to birds that are accustomed to flying through gaps between trees and shrubs.



ABC's BirdTape being applied.
Photo: Steve Holmer, ABC

To learn more about ABC Bird Tape, go to: www.abcbirdtape.org. ABC has produced a [video](#) that demonstrates how to install the bird tape.

2012 Science Fair and Expo Winners

Congratulations to this year's SMAS award winners and many thanks to the judges for their donation of time and expertise.

Calvert County Science and Engineering Expo

Judged by Sue Hamilton

Junior Award: Abigail Moller, Northern Middle School
Nathan Scherer, Southern Middle School

Charles County Science Fair

Judged by Bob Lukinic and Lynne Wheeler

Elementary Award: Madison Livingston,
Dr. Craik Elementary School

Junior Award: Anna Radtke, Milton Somers Middle School
Varanika Sharma, Mattawoman Middle School

Senior Award: Taylor Stark, Thomas Stone High School

St. Mary's County Science and Engineering Fair

Judged by Will Daniels and Bev Walker

Junior Award: Alyssa Brookhart,
Spring Ridge Middle School

All winners were presented with certificates of award. Junior and senior division winners received one-year memberships in the National Audubon Society and Southern Maryland Audubon Society as well as a cash award.

SMAS Spring Outreach Events

The SMAS Bookstore will be exhibiting at two events soon, both in St. Mary's County. On Sunday, April 22 (12:30-4:30 pm) we will be at Earth Day on the Square in Leonardtown. The weekend of May 4-6 will find us at the Southern Maryland Spring Festival, held at the St. Mary's Country Fairgrounds, also in Leonardtown.

We will be selling books, bluebird boxes, SMAS T-shirts, shade-grown coffee and other items, and also offering helpful information and free literature to visitors. Both events are popular spring outings, with many community groups participating.

Please stop by our booth to say hello – or better yet, consider volunteering to help out for an hour or two! BREAKING! Senate Advances RESTORE the Gulf Legislation

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
10144 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

March 17 – Saturday - 8 AM - noon – Field Trip
Patuxent River Naval Air Station, St. Mary's County
"LATE WINTER LAND BIRDS, WATERFOWL"
Leader: Dean Newman (240-895-7321, dean.newman@verizon.net).
Meet at the Park & Ride lot across the street from the Lexington Park Post Office on Tulagi Place. This trip has produced Lapland Longspur, Snow Bunting, Short-eared Owl, and waterfowl in the past. Facilities, no fee. You must sign up for this trip in advance. Call the leader for reservations and security details before February 28. RSVP required.

APRIL 4 – WEDNESDAY – 7:30 p.m.
Battle Creek Cypress Swamp Center, Calvert County
Gray's Road off of Sixes Road (Rt. 506), Prince Frederick, MD
Call 410-535-5327 for additional information or visit www.calvertparks.org
"Out of South Africa, A Naturalist's Adventure"
GREG KEARNS, MD-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Patuxent River Park
Go on a safari with naturalist Greg Kearns to see the cultural & natural beauty South Africa's Capetown and Kruger National Park. This multimedia presentation will highlight the large mammals, mega fauna of the region and some notable birds. You know how electrifying Greg's talks can be, so imagine joining him step by step on an African safari!

April 21– Saturday – half day – Field Trip
Jug Bay area, Prince George's County
"BIRDING HOTSPOTS ALONG THE PATUXENT RIVER"
Leader: Fred Shaffer (410-721-1744, glaucousgull@verizon.net).
This mid-spring trip will visit several parks along the Patuxent River in southern Prince George's County in search of migrant sparrows and waterfowl, as well as other birds in the fields and forests lining the Patuxent River. Possible stops include Jug Bay, Milltown Landing, and Aquasco Farms. Meet at Mt. Calvert Park at 8:10 AM to begin the trip. Contact Fred Shaffer at 410-721-1744 for additional information.

MAY 2 – WEDNESDAY – 6:45 p.m. (field trip); 8:00 (lecture)
Hard Bargain Farm, 2301 Bryan Point Road, Accokeek, Prince George's County and Faith United Methodist Church, 15769 Livingston Road, Accokeek
"Living Shoreline at Piscataway Park"
KAREN JENSEN MILES, Program Director, Alice Ferguson Foundation
With several factors causing increased erosion along the Potomac River shoreline, a stabilized "Living Shoreline" was constructed in 2010. Funded by NOAA through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the project restored 2,800 feet of shoreline. Come walk along the Potomac River to see how this project is monitored, and observe the many flora and fauna and bird species. Enjoy a great view of Mount Vernon against the magical sunset. Meet at 6:45 p.m. at the Hard Bargain Farm parking lot to carpool to the shore. After our one hour walk we will return to the parking lot and drive to the Faith United Methodist Church for Q&A and refreshments, estimate time 8:00. This is a special treat for SMAS. Feel free to meet us wherever you can. (In case of rain, meet at 7:30 at the church)

May 5 – Saturday – 8 AM - noon – Field Trip
Battle Creek Cypress Swamp, Calvert County
"BARRED OWLS AND PROTHONOTARY WARBLERS"
Leader: Andy Brown (410-535-5327, 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, Rt. 2/4, 2 miles, right onto Sixes Rd. 2 miles, left onto Gray's Rd. Nature Center entrance on the right. Facilities, no fee. RSVP required.

May 12 – Saturday - All Day
COUNTY MAY COUNTS
Calvert, Charles, Prince George's, St. Mary's Counties
Help needed from all: backyard birders, beginners, team leaders. Data and information help save our birds! County coordinators are as follows:

Calvert: Sue Hamilton (410-586-1494, seal10n2002@yahoo.com);
Charles: George Jett (301-843-3524, gmjett@comcast.net);
Prince George's: Fred Fallon (301-249-1518, fwfallon@earthlink.net);
St. Mary's: Patty Craig (301-872-5670), eyrie@hughes.net.

See the May issue of The Osprey or the SMAS website for additional information.

May 18, 19, 20 – Friday, Saturday & Sunday – Field Trip
Delaware Bay
"MIGRATING SHOREBIRDS & SPAWNING HORSESHOE CRABS"
Leader: Millie Kriemelmeyer (301-372-8766, milliek@radix.net).
The trip is timed for the peak migration of Red Knots, Ruddy Turnstones and other shorebirds who stop at the Delaware Bay to fatten on horseshoe crab eggs before resuming their journey to northern Canada. Dover, Delaware area hotspots will be visited: Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge, DuPont Nature Center, and Delaware Bay beaches. Early hotel reservations at Dover Comfort Inn are recommended; RSVP with the trip leader is required. Come for one day or the whole trip. All ages are welcome. Contact leader for details.



Bull Frog
Photo by: George Jett

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.