

# The Osprey



December 2008 - January 2009 VOLUME 39, ISSUE 4

[www.geocities.com/smdaudubon](http://www.geocities.com/smdaudubon)

*Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society*

## MATTAWOMAN NATURAL AREA'S WILMOT TRAIL CLEARED FOR BIRDING

*by George Jett (gmjett@comcast.net)*

On Sunday, November 2, Chainsaw Bob Lukinic and I spent the morning clearing the trail at the Mattawoman Natural Environmental Area in preparation for a SMAS fieldtrip on November 22. We called our outing the Charles County Chainsaw Massacre. It was a bring-your-own chainsaw kind of party. Bob, our SMAS president, also brought a few other useful tools and the trail cleaning went pretty well.



Chainsaw Bob Lukinic, photo by George Jett.

Bob pointed out, it is hard to get members to help on projects like this, but they are necessary if we are going to have a successful fieldtrip program. Had the trail clearing exercise not been done the November fieldtrip would have been more a foray into an obstacle course. Many large trees were blocking the path and lots of other vegetation had grown up around the path. We cleared the path all the way to the creek and beyond. At some point we need to go back and try to find the other half of the loop trail that has grown up. Perhaps some other members might come along for clearing the extension during the spring.

We now hope that many birders will attend future fieldtrips there. The highlight at this location is the large variety of waterfowl. This protected area attracts birds because hunting is not permitted along this section of the Mattawoman. One year, besides 600 American Wigeon, Gwen Brewer found an Eurasian Wigeon. This was only the third county record for this species. I heard wigeons calling from the distance during a quiet moment of our clearing activity. We also saw good numbers of Northern

Shovelers flying around when a Bald Eagle passed over head. Gwen will co-lead the November 22 field trip there with Carol Ghebelian.

Come on Saturday, November 22, and share with Gwen Brewer and Carol Ghebelian this lovely habitat, now with a walkable trail. To make reservations contact Carol at 301-753-6754. The trip starts at 8:00 AM and ends about noon. Some walking is required, if you have a scope bring it, but potty first. There is no fee but there are no facilities along the trail.

## NORTHERN NORTH DAKOTA IN JUNE

*by Tyler Bell*

In June, 2008, owing to staff changes at the American Birding Association, my wife, Jane agreed to step in as conference manager for the Young Birders' Conference in her home town of Minot, North Dakota. We decided that I would come along mostly for moral support though the role ended up being much more than that. The kids needed to be up and ready to roll by 5 a.m. which meant that breakfast fixings had to be laid out around 4. Oh well, no rest for the weary!

Since Jane is from Minot and her parents and two sisters live nearby, we visit frequently and have birded most of the locations that the kids would be visiting. So, once they were off in the vans, we'd take a quick nap then spend time with family. However, there was one trip destination that we hadn't visited, the Turtle Mountains, so we spent the day there with the kids and the leaders. The Turtle Mountains abut the border with Canada. In fact, the entrance to the first stop on the tour was within about 1/10<sup>th</sup> mile from a border crossing. The habitat there is a mix of spruce/pine and birch/aspen which is typical of the edge of the boreal forest. Many of the kids were from the coasts and North Dakota has a mix of both eastern and western species so life birds were plentiful. One of the target species was Mourning Warbler. Both Mourning and Connecticut Warblers, in June, are prolific singers. However, finding one in your binoculars is a different matter. They tend to skulk and will often sing, motionless, from a low branch. This day though, they were being cooperative, and people got good looks at them.

Another target species was Ruffed Grouse. In late May, the males are drumming trying to attract females. This unique sound is produced by quickly flapping the wings against the body. The sound is more likely to be felt rather than heard unless the observer is fairly close to the bird. Grouse

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were drumming less in early June but were still present in several locations along the trail.

Our final stop with the group was at Lake Metigoshe State Park. A very cooperative Red-necked Grebe swam near a pier and several of the boys took advantage of the photo op. After the leaders departed with their charges, Jane and I walked one of the trails and managed to locate a singing Philadelphia Vireo. This would have been a lifer for most of the rest of the group and was a state bird for us. After listening to literally hundreds of Red-eyed Vireos to hear something different, this one really stood out. Its song is less variable and has only a couple of phrases compared to the multiple variation of the Red-eyed relative.

As always, we were impressed by the diversity of birds throughout North Dakota. The misconception that it is a dead flat prairie crusted eternally in snow or sod will be immediately dispelled by a visit to almost any part of the state. All the more reason to go back in early June when the birds are singing their little hearts out! So, if you're tempted, ABA is having a Regional Conference in Minot, ND 14-19 June 2009. Here's a web link if you're interested: <http://www.americanbirding.org/mtgs/upcoming.html>

## **CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS NEED VOLUNTEERS**

Southern Maryland Audubon Society conducts three Christmas Bird Counts and contributes to a fourth each year under rules established by the National Audubon Society. Since 1901, Audubon Christmas Bird Counts throughout North America have documented changes in numbers of individuals and distributions of species, as land use practices and climate have changed. This year's 109<sup>th</sup> Audubon Christmas Bird Count will contribute new data to the longest uninterrupted series of bird counts in America, a series that has contributed much to our understanding of how our birds and the environments that they depend on have changed over the decades. Last year, 59,918 observers throughout North America, Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Pacific Islands tallied 58.5 million individual birds. Volunteer observers may join field parties, or they may report counts made at their bird feeders. This year, consider joining us December 14 through January 4 to contribute to the counts in southern Maryland. See below for details.

### **Port Tobacco Christmas Count Dec. 14, by Gwen Brewer**

This year, the Port Tobacco Christmas Count will take place on Sunday December 14, 2008. Gwen Brewer will compile the count and host the tally again this year. Please consider helping with the count as you have in the past or as a new participant! We need help both from birders covering sections of the circle and from feeder watchers. Even if you can only spend a few hours, your data from a feeder in the count circle or from a section of the count circle can

really help us to better document the birds in our area. The area covered by this count comprises a 15-mile diameter circle centered on Fourth Point on the Port Tobacco River. Myrtle Grove Wildlife Management Area and La Plata are in the northern section of the circle, which extends to Blossom Point, Popes Creek, and Mathias Point in Virginia to the south. On the west, the count circle includes the Ironsides and Nanjemoy areas, and to the east, Allens Fresh. Several miles of the Potomac River are included in the count, as well as Nanjemoy Creek and the Port Tobacco River. In 2007, 22 participants found over 16,000 individuals and 86 species of birds on the count (high count is 95 species). Merlin, Baltimore Oriole, and late Osprey and Tree Swallows were a few of the highlights from 2007. We have a lot of great habitat areas to cover on this count, and we need your help to do a good job! If you would like to help with the Port Tobacco Christmas Count or have any questions about it, please contact Gwen Brewer at [glbrewer@comcast.net](mailto:glbrewer@comcast.net) or telephone 301-843-3524.

### **Point Lookout Christmas Count Dec. 21, 2008, by Bob Boxwell.**

After two years of dropping waterfowl numbers I am curious as to what this year will bring us. While I will be contacting all the usual volunteers, we need additional help. If we have any bird feeding SMAS members within the Ridge, St. Inigoes, Scotland, Dameron area, consider contacting me so we can get you in on the feeder count action. If you are interested in more active participation telephone me (410-394-1300) or email [bobboxwell@hotmail.com](mailto:bobboxwell@hotmail.com). All I ask is that you contact me before December 16<sup>th</sup>. That way we can coordinate the team leaders and their crews. Joanne and I will provide a spaghetti dinner at the tally rally. Please contact me for more details. Thanks and good birding.

### **Patuxent River Christmas Count, Dec. 28, by Andy Brown.**

To volunteer, contact Andy Brown, telephone 410-535-5327, e-mail: [brownaj@co.cal.md.us](mailto:brownaj@co.cal.md.us).

### **Fort Belvoir, Maryland Sector, Christmas Count, Jan. 4, by Carol Gheblian**

This year SMAS will be counting on every Sunday of the official count period, with our Ft Belvoir count on the last day, Jan. 4. Please join us as we again survey the Maryland Sector of Virginia's Ft. Belvoir count circle. Our territory runs from Fort Washington, south to Naval Surface Weapons Center, Indian Head, including the environs. We cover lots of Potomac River shoreline and its tributaries, as well as woods, fields, and some developed areas. The territory also includes Piscataway National Park, Ferguson Farm, Ruth Swann Park, Chapman State Park, Mattawoman Natural Environment Area, and Mattawoman Wildlands. We always need help, including backyard feeder watchers. Reach sector leader, Carol Gheblian, at 301-753-6754 or [gheblian@comcast.net](mailto:gheblian@comcast.net). And do join us for the potluck tally rally at the Gheblian's in Indian Head.

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## ELECTION RESULTS BRING CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITY AND NEED FOR ACTION

STATEMENT OF AUDUBON PRESIDENT AND CEO  
JOHN FLICKER FOLLOWING THE ELECTION OF  
PRESIDENT-ELECT OBAMA AND THE NEW  
CONGRESS.

New York, NY, November 5, 2008, —“Voters in this historic election cast their ballots not only for change, but for a new era of hope for our environment, and the people, birds, and other wildlife that depend on it. Washington has been ignoring critical environmental issues for too long. President-elect Barack Obama and a more environmentally aware Congress offer the promise of leadership and fundamental change that could usher in new protections for America’s great natural heritage, and a new lease on life for species in decline.

“Despite real reason for optimism, we cannot take conservation gains for granted. Audubon is committed to helping the new Administration and Congress to live up to their great promise; and to make conservation, clean energy and green jobs part of America’s path to a brighter tomorrow.

“Through our local Chapters, state offices and national grass roots efforts, Audubon will join with others in the environmental community to ensure that our newly elected leaders lead the way on issues vital to our environment, our economy and diversity of life on Earth.”

Issues demanding prompt attention include:

### Presidential Appointments:

- President-elect Obama should start by appointing to key environmental positions within his Administration qualified leaders who will defend our clean air and water, protect habitat and endangered species, aggressively address global warming, and steward our great natural heritage for future generations.

### Scientific Integrity:

- The Department of the Interior should systematically review and reverse decisions made by the past Administration under the Endangered Species Act that were influenced by political considerations and not based on sound science.
- President-elect Obama should send a clear signal to everyone in his administration to restore and respect scientific integrity in all environmental decisions.

### Global Warming and Renewable Energy:

- President-elect Obama has said that: “We cannot afford more of the same timid politics when the future of our planet is at stake.” He’s right. We welcome the opportunity to help him deliver his promised \$150

billion plan for clean energy technologies that would protect our environment and stimulate the economy, creating up to 5 million new green jobs.

- The Congress should pass legislation providing significant incentives for development of renewable energy such as a strong Renewables Portfolio Standard and a long-term extension of the Production Tax Credit, and pass significant legislation to address global warming with a comprehensive cap-and-trade program.
- The new Administration and Congress must lead a transformation in American energy production and use through investments in energy efficiency and clean energy technologies. This can minimize the fluctuation of gas prices while protecting our beaches, coastal ecosystems and the Alaskan landscape from the threats of oil and gas drilling.

### Endangered Species Conservation:

- We’ll work with the Administration to secure reversal of the Bush administration’s weakening of the Endangered Species Act, such as the controversial decision to allow agencies to self-consult regarding the impacts of federally-approved projects on endangered species.
- Congress should pass new tax incentives to encourage private landowners to work toward recovery of endangered species.

### Bird and Habitat Conservation:

- The Administration and the Congress should reinvest in the National Wildlife Refuge System and address the unacceptable \$3.5 billion maintenance backlog crippling this critical tool for conservation.
- The Congress should pass legislation to conserve neotropical migratory birds and address the steep declines in America’s common birds that are disappearing from parks, farms, and backyards across the country.

### Ecosystem Restoration:

- The Administration and the Congress should fund significant new restoration projects to improve the status of America’s great natural ecosystems: The Mississippi River, the Everglades, Long Island Sound, and the Great Lakes.

## NEW BOOKSTORE MERCHANDISE

Just in time for your holiday shopping, the bookstore offers a fine assortment of new items. We have items made by the Women of the Cloud Forest, including hand-embroidered field guide bags and seed jewelry. The 2009 Sibley calendar is in stock – the desk, engagement and wall versions. A new book on Ospreys is one of the children’s books available. Many other items, too. Browse through our inventory at the December meeting.



## CHRISTMAS PRESENTS!

by Mary Sokol

Buy your Christmas presents now with a \$10.00 Osprey or \$25.00 Barn Owl adoption. The adoption certificate, information on the osprey or barn owl habits and photo of a fledgling can be sent directly to the person receiving the gift or to the purchaser of the gift - whichever you prefer! Just fill in the Adopt a Raptor coupon. Your adoption donation is tax deductible.



## GIFT WRAPPING FUNDRAISER AT WILD BIRD CENTER

by Millie Kriemelmeyer

Christmas is coming and that means I will be stationed at the Wild Bird Center in Waldorf wrapping gifts to raise funds for SMAS scholarships.

Please help by signing up to wrap during the evening hours from 4:00 to 9:00 PM. I no longer drive at night. Help will be needed on some days when I have other activities.

Contact me at 301-372-8766, e-mail [milliek@radix.net](mailto:milliek@radix.net), and let me know when you can help wrap gifts or stop in at the store and relieve me (or keep me company for a few minutes). You will find some unique and interesting Christmas gifts at the Wild Bird Center.

Dates are December 13 through 24.

## HOG ISLAND AUDUBON CAMP IS CLOSED

by Millie Kriemelmeyer

Maine Audubon has closed their Hog Island Camp for the 2009 season while they decide its future. For about 20 years, Southern Maryland Audubon Society has offered scholarships to teachers, naturalists and environmentalists to attend various summer workshops offered at Hog Island. Only glowing reports were ever received, with most attendees calling it a "life-changing experience."

Now, we are looking for an environmental education summer workshop nearby in the Chesapeake Bay area. If any readers have one to recommend, please let me know.

Meanwhile, we will continue raising funds for the scholarships, so we can enrich the lives of more Southern Marylanders who influence young minds.

## 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)



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## DECEMBER AND JANUARY EVENTS

December 3—**Wednesday**—7:30 PM. **Monthly Meeting.** Potomac Library, 3225 Ruth B. Swann Drive, Bryan's Road, Charles County. **Local Photographers' Night.** Come and see what others have photographed on trips or in their own yards over the years. And bring your own photos to show. Slides, videos, and digital images may be presented. If you would like to contribute, call Ann Wearmouth (410-867-0347) by November 15, to coordinate presentations and plan for equipment needs. We urge you either to present your work or to come and enjoy the artistry of fellow members.

December 6—**Saturday**—8:00 AM to noon. **Field Trip.** Point Lookout State Park, St. Mary's County. **Late Fall Birding—From the Point to the Blinking Light.** Leader: Marty Cribb (301-872-9464, e-mail [pauraque@tqci.net](mailto:pauraque@tqci.net)). Half-day trip plus. Waterfowl to sparrows, including Great Cormorant, grebes, Brown Pelican, all three scoters, and Brown-headed Nuthatch. Time permitting, we will visit local farms and fields for raptors and puddle ducks. Reservations required, limited to 15 participants. Limited facilities. Fee possible (bring your passes to the State Park). Contact the leader for more information. Meet at the entrance to the park on Rte. 5.

December 14 to January 4. **Audubon Christmas Bird Counts.** Volunteers needed!

December 14—**Sunday**—all day. **Port Tobacco CBC.** Coordinator: Gwen Brewer (301-843-3524).

December 21—**Sunday**—all day. **Point Lookout CBC.** Coordinator: Bob Boxwell (410-394-1300).

December 28—**Sunday**—all day. **Patuxent River CBC.** Coordinator: Andy Brown (410-535-5327).

January 4—**Sunday**—all day. **Fort Belvoir CBC.** Maryland area coordinator: Carol Ghebelian (301-753-6754).

See article on page 2 for more details about these counts.

January 1—**Thursday**—8:00 AM to 2:00 PM. **Field Trip.** St. Mary's Winter Chase, St. Mary's County. **Start Your Year Off Birding.** Leader: Marty Cribb (301-872-9464, e-mail [pauraque@tqci.net](mailto:pauraque@tqci.net)). A 2/3-day trip. Search for winter specialties in a very productive area. Expect stops at Point Lookout, Beauvue, St. George's Island, and other hotspots. Meet at entrance to Point Lookout State park on Rte. 5. Be prepared for cold and dress warmly. Bring scopes if you have them. Facilities along the way, but no fee except at Point Lookout State Park.

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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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