

The Osprey

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Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society

MATTAWOMAN CREEK IMPORTANT BIRD AREA: AN IMPERILED SITE FOR FOREST INTERIOR BIRDS

*David Yeany II, IBA Program Coordinator
Audubon Maryland-DC*

On August 21, 2010 Audubon Maryland-DC dedicated Mattawoman Creek and its forests as an Important Bird Area (IBA) during a ceremony held at Mattingly Park in Indian Head. The dedication was part of the Lotus Blossom Festival organized by the Smarter Growth Alliance for Charles County. At the ceremony, Audubon Maryland-DC recognized the conservation efforts of Southern Maryland Audubon Society (SMAS) over several decades at Mattawoman Creek with the presentation of an IBA plaque to SMAS president Bob Lukinic. In the 1970s, SMAS, led by George Wilmot, played an important role in bringing about the protection of Mattawoman Creek Natural Environment Area, now owned and managed by Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR). In the 1990s, SMAS conducted bird surveys which revealed the value of the Mattawoman watershed to forest interior birds, and in 2009 SMAS members assisted with surveys which demonstrated that the site qualifies as an Important Bird Area.

Other organizations recognized at the IBA dedication ceremony were the Maryland DNR Park Service, which manages Mattawoman Natural Environment Area, Maryland DNR Wildlife and Heritage Service, which manages Myrtle Grove Wildlife Management Area, and the Mattawoman Watershed Society, which has worked hard in recent years to promote habitat protection at the site. Dr. Greg Butcher, National Audubon Society's Director of Bird Conservation, and David Yeany, Audubon Maryland-DC's IBA Program Coordinator, spoke at the dedication, emphasizing the value of Mattawoman Creek's forests to nationally declining birds.

Mattawoman Creek was identified as an IBA based on its significant state-level populations of Prothonotary Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, and Wood Thrush – all of which are Audubon/American Bird Conservancy Watchlist species. The area also boasts a diversity of Forest Interior-Dwelling Species (FIDS) of bird among the highest 12% of Maryland's Coastal Plain forests with 20 FIDS regularly breeding at the site. FIDS are birds listed by Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) as requiring large tracts of intact forest for breeding. The ornithological value of the site was determined by surveys conducted by citizen-scientists in 2009 targeting vulnerable bird species at Mattawoman Creek as part of Audubon Maryland-DC's statewide Bird Blitz efforts. The IBA includes nearly all forested lands draining into Mattawoman Creek and covers 15,167 acres from Waldorf to Indian Head.

However, this haven for forest birds is threatened by the proposed construction of a new four-lane highway, the Cross

County Connector, which would cut across Mattawoman Creek near the middle of the Important Bird Area. The road's construction would directly destroy 73.8 acres of forest and fragment this contiguous forest block into two smaller blocks. Even more damaging to the birds and their habitat will be the future impacts of new development resulting from the Cross County Connector (CCC). The new road will facilitate new commercial and residential sprawl that will carve away at these ecologically-rich forests, cutting them into small fragments and causing increased pollution in Mattawoman Creek and the Chesapeake Bay. Prothonotary Warbler and Louisiana Waterthrush, two at-risk forest interior birds which specialize in forest habitat directly adjacent to streams for foraging and nesting, could be especially vulnerable to impaired water quality. Increased forest fragmentation from associated development at Mattawoman Creek IBA will convert forest interior to edge habitat, and along with it could come adverse edge effects like increased temperature fluctuations, invasive plant species, increased nest predation, and increased brood parasitism from Brown-headed Cowbird.

Speakers at the IBA dedication ceremony highlighted this major threat. With nearly 80 people in attendance, the dedication of Mattawoman Creek IBA raised the awareness of the ecological value of this site and the threats facing it. Plans for the CCC highway are currently on hold pending decisions to be made in December 2010 on the federal and state permit required to impact wetlands along the highway's path. However, the fight for Mattawoman Creek is not yet over, and ongoing advocacy for forest land protection in the IBA is needed. Audubon Maryland-DC and other environmental groups comprising the Smarter Growth Alliance for Charles County have urged denial of these permits. With only a small portion of this IBA under permanent protection, continued efforts of local conservation organizations like Southern Maryland Audubon Society and Mattawoman Watershed Society are more critical than ever.

To learn more about the significance of Mattawoman Creek IBA and the threats it faces, visit the site profile online: <http://iba.audubon.org/iba/viewSiteProfile.do?siteId=375&navSite=state>.

To take action for the protection of Mattawoman Creek IBA, send a letter to Maryland Department of Environment requesting the denial of the wetlands permit for the new highway by going to this link at Environment Maryland: <http://www.environmentmaryland.org/action/clean-water>.

To send a letter to Gov. Martin O'Malley urging the protection of Mattawoman Creek, visit this Sierra Club link: <http://tinyurl.com/2g3pgkd>

**THE 2011 GBBC WILL TAKE PLACE
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 18, THROUGH MON-
DAY, FEBRUARY 21. PLEASE JOIN US!**

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent. Anyone can participate, from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event. It's free, fun, and easy—and it helps the birds. We'll be adding updated GBBC materials for the next count as they become available.

<http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/>

PAX RIVER CBC RESULTS

by Andy Brown

Sunday, January 2nd marked the date for the Patuxent River count. Temperatures in the upper 40's and moderate to heavy rain left all 17 participants disappointed in the day's outcome. However, upon review of the results, we did quite well actually. The count total was 96 species which wasn't our best year by far, but it also wasn't our worst. 27,158 individuals were tallied which was the highest total since 1996.

Easily the top bird was an American Tree Sparrow picked up by Craig Jeschke at Calvert Cliffs State Park. This bird has not been reported on the count in the last 7 years. Secondly, David Henderson found an American Woodcock in Broome's Island. This bird had not appeared in the last 6 years. Pine Siskins were checked off in 2 sectors for only the second time in the count history. Also Black Scoter was seen for the first time in 4 years.

Many species turned up in all time low numbers for the count. Common Loon, Horned Grebe, Killdeer and both Kinglets were among those. Eastern Phoebe was absent for the first time in count history and Snow Bunting was not reported for the 4th year in a row.

Sigrid and Bill Stiles had the only Northern Harrier along with Jim Swift's Wilson's Snipe and Short-eared Owl on the Base. Craig Jeschke got the Red-headed Woodpeckers at Calvert Cliffs SP and Tom Harten was able to locate the Brown-headed Nuthatches on Lloyd Bowen Road. Mike Rudy got the only Purple Finches and Chipping Sparrows at the Navy Rec Center in Solomons, and Bob Boxwell had the only Gray Catbirds at Cove Point.

Thanks to all who endured the uncomfortable conditions. We'll keep our fingers crossed for better weather next year.

POINT LOOKOUT CBC

by Bob Boxwell

The Point Lookout Christmas Bird Count was held on Sunday December 26 in the midst of swirling snow. One could hear faint echoes of the frozen tundra music they play for NFL Films, but not much else. The morning began with a dark gray shadowless dawn. And viewing conditions deteriorated from there. Still five groups ventured forth and did battle with the elements to report on their sector. I want to thank the Willoughbys, the Stiles, Tyler Bell, Anne Bishop and Matt Tillett for putting forth the effort. I was out for a few hours myself and can attest to how uncomfortable it was. In retrospect I should have cancelled and rescheduled, but here are the hard earned results.

Our waterfowl numbers have been an interesting part of the count for me. This year reduced visibility and frozen waters lowered both our species and numeric count. Less than 800 Canada Geese topped the species high and only Black Scoter, Bufflehead, and Common Goldeneye also reached three digits. No puddle ducks, but hey no puddles. Some good finds along the water were Tyler's flock of Sanderlings and a lone Northern Gannet.

Land bird numbers were down and none of the usual hanger's-on suspects made an appearance. We barely found any American Robins or Mourning Doves, if that gives you an idea of the day. Sparrows did make a good showing with a few hundred White-throated Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos to accompany lesser numbers of Savannah, Chipping, Swamp, Song, Fox and a single White-crowned. We whiffed on owls, just proving they are smarter than we are (although come to think of it I don't think anyone actually tried to owl).

Our total species count was 70. The number of individuals was 3,225. Both of these I am sure are lows for this count. No doubt we will bounce back in 2011, but thank you for all the hard work on this snowy day.

If you'd like to see the data from the Pax River and Pt.

Lookout CBCs, go to this link:

www.somdaudubon.org/files/SouthernMarylandCBC2010-2011totals.xls

The Waiting Game

by Jane Klemmer

Great Blue hunches on the ice.
Hunger is no respecter
Of terrain.

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS

by Millie Kriemelmeyer

SMAS will award two scholarships to "Sharing Nature: Educators Workshop", July 14-19, 2011, an Audubon week-long educational summer program on Hog Island, Muscongus Bay, Maine. Find information at <http://projectpuffin.org/OrnithCamps>. Two reservations were made for the camp. SMAS pays the camp fees, while the scholarship winners pay travel expenses.

The 2010 SMAS scholarship winners attended the Field Ornithology session and returned with glowing appreciation for the educational experience, knowledgeable instructors, and the unique magic, beauty, and complexity of Hog Island and surrounding islands.

SMAS has awarded scholarships to Hog Island for about 25 years. Thanks to fundraising support from SMAS members and friends, our classroom teachers, naturalists, and environmental educators working in Southern Maryland are, again, offered scholarships to next summer's Hog Island experience.

February 21, 2011 is the deadline for applications to be received. Applicants should send a one-page letter describing why you want the scholarship and how you will use the knowledge gained in your teaching. The signed letter should contain all your contact information. A signed letter of recommendation from your immediate supervisor also should be sent.

Send applications to: Millie Kriemelmeyer
16900 Mattawoman Lane, Waldorf, MD 20601
fax to 301-782-7615 email to milliek@radix.net
Questions?: 301-372-8766

SMAS MEMBERS:

Our organization is now accepting nominations for the Board of Directors. Some of our current officers are going to be changing designations because of term limits. There will be openings for officers and directors. These positions can have nominees presented by the upcoming nomination committee or from the floor at our annual meeting.

We are continually looking for those interested in managing SMAS. It is a great help to have new persons coming on to the Board with their new ideas and perspectives. This has helped SMAS to continue to provide the best we can for our members and the surrounding community.

Anyone interested please call me at 301-283-6317 or email at rlukinic@peoplepc.com. The positions will be voted on at our annual meeting on June 6th.

Happy Birding, Bob Lukinic, President



REFUGE ASSOCIATION PRAISES SALAZAR FOR EVERGLADES INITIATIVE

Interior Secretary Announces Plan for New Refuge, Conservation Area in Central Florida

Washington, D.C.— The National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) today praised Interior Secretary Ken Salazar's announcement of an ambitious new public-private partnership to conserve critical wildlife habitat in the northern Everglades, while also sustaining the traditional agricultural and ranching economies of central Florida. Secretary Salazar announced the plan at the annual conference of the Everglades Coalition in Weston, Florida. The Greater Everglades Partnership Initiative includes creating a new refuge, the Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge, and further study of a collaborative landscape conservation effort encompassing an area stretching from the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes to Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge.

"The Everglades plan announced today is an important initiative that will protect Florida's ranching way of life, help provide safe drinking water to millions of Floridians and conserve our nation's remarkable wildlife heritage," said Evan Hirsche, President of the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA). "This initiative serves as a vibrant model for how we can achieve conservation results that benefit wildlife and people across the nation."

The Greater Everglades Partnership Initiative will:

Conserve biodiversity in areas that provide habitat to threatened and endangered species like Florida panthers, crested caracara and the Everglades snail kite;

Protect a land base of sufficient mass and continuity to enable wildlife to migrate and adapt in response to climate change and other natural and man-made threats;

Restore and protect water quality and quantity; and

Prevent further landscape fragmentation by integrating the economic interests of private landowners with the best conservation practices to support traditional large-ownership land uses such as ranching and environmental tourism.

"We are a proud partner in the development and implementation of this bold conservation plan, and we applaud Interior Secretary Salazar and the Fish and Wildlife Service for making it a priority," said David Houghton, NWRA's Vice President of Conservation. "We're eager to work with the Secretary, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and a variety of partners to conserve this critical ecosystem for the people who depend on it and the wildlife that call the Everglades home."

Contacts:

Evan Hirsche, President, NWRA, (301) 675-0949,
ehirsche@refugeassociation.org
David Houghton, VP of Conservation, NWRA,
(603) 831-0920, dhoughton@refugeassociation.org
Kathy Westra, Communications, NWRA, (301) 754-0711,
westrake@rcn.com

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

Sally Balenger, Colton's Point
 Larue Bowen, Hollywood
 Iris Briscoe, Fort Washington
 Marvin Brooks, Leonardtown
 Donna Chaney, Owings
 Roseann Ciccarello, Waldorf
 S.D. Cox, Waldorf
 Karen De Paulo, Dunkirk
 Lionel Driscoll, Dunkirk
 Barron Freeburger, Prince Frederick
 Karen Garner, Drayden
 Melody Garrett, Fort Washington
 Theresa Gilbert, Broome's Island
 Gloria Groeger, La Plata
 Diana Gyruras, La Plata
 Sarah Maple, Saint Leonard
 B. Mesler, Waldorf
 Tommy Murphy, White Plains
 Frances Norton, Owings
 Michael Palmer, Charlotte Hall
 Linda Prochaska, Waldorf
 Edward Raymond, Lusby
 Deborah Reece, Waldorf
 Evelyne Ritondale, Solomons,
 Sylvia Rivers, Lexington Park
 Sandy Robbins, Great Mills
 Margaret Rose, Bushwood
 Patricia Rose, Callaway
 Roberta Scoggins, Suitland
 Ben Shelak, Waldorf
 James Shimmel, Clinton
 Joan Wohlgemuth, Lusby
 Laura White, Prince Frederick
 Tom & Barrie Zucal, Waldorf



Maryland's first record of Golden-crowned Sparrow. Found by Bruce Peterjohn on the Lower Kent County Christmas Bird Count Sunday on December 19. Photo by George Jett (December 25)

FOSTER PARENTS NEEDED



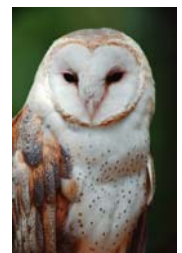
Southern Maryland Audubon Society sponsors the banding of nestling birds of prey, or raptors, with serially numbered aluminum bands in cooperation with the Bird Banding Laboratory of the U. S. Department of the Interior, as part of our bird research and conservation activities in Southern Maryland. Limited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

FEBRUARY EVENTS

January 23

Sunday – 10 AM – 2 PM

*****NOTE: NEW LATER START TIME*****

Beauvue Ponds, St. Mary's County – Field Trip

"WINTER WATERFOWL AT BEAUVUE"

Leader: Sigrid Stiles. (301-872-4053, sigstiles@aol.com).

View wintering waterfowl at the ponds at Beauvue. We'll also search for land birds such as Northern Harrier, American Kestrel, Short-eared Owl and Eastern Meadowlark. No facilities, no fees. Meet at Leonardtown Middle School parking lot. Drive south from Leonardtown on Rt. 5. Turn right at the light at Medley's Neck Rd then immediately left into the parking lot. RSVP required.

January 30

Sunday - 8 AM - noon

Piscataway Park & Hard Bargain Farm, Prince George's County – Field Trip

"WINTER WATERFOWL AND RESIDENT BIRDS"

Leader: Chris Ordiway (301-203-8014, BirdRamble@strixvaria.org, email use preferred).

Prime area for wintering waterfowl. Woods, farm fields, and edges also provide good variety of land birds. Take Rt. 210, Indian Head Highway to Livingston Rd (South of Farmington Rd and North of Rt. 228). Take Livingston Rd. east and meet at Burger King in the shopping center, located at 15785 Livingston Rd. Accokeek, MD 20607. No facilities or fee. Limit of 20. This is a joint trip with the Audubon Naturalist Society. RSVP required.

FEBRUARY 2

WEDNESDAY – 7:30 p.m.

Hughesville Fire Dept, Charles County

15245 Prince Frederick Road, Hughesville, MD 20637

2010 Audubon Scholarship Winners Presentation

MICHELLE DAUBON and DIANA GUYRAS

SMAS 2010 Scholarship winners Michelle Daubon of CHESPAX, Calvert County and Diana Guyras of T.C. Martin Elementary School, Charles County will present results from their learning adventure last summer at the Audubon Ornithology Camp at Hog Island, Maine. Scholarship winners enjoy a week filled with fun and adventure, island hopping off the coast of Maine on Muscongus Bay. Come learn about seabirds and get acquainted with this educational scholarship that SMAS offers to our local teachers, an initiative we are most proud of!

Events continued on page 5

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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.

Southern Maryland Audubon Society
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