Hello fellow members! I would like to thank you for electing me President of this well respected volunteer conservation organization. Before I tell you about myself, I would like to take this opportunity to thank a few of our members. First, special thanks go to our former President, Bob Lukinic, for serving as president for the past three years. Along with advice from you the members, I will be leaning on Bob for guidance as I assume the new role. There are also a few thanks due to others including our new Vice-President, Lynne Wheeler, for serving as Secretary for the past few years, and Millie Kriemelmeyer who has served as Education Chair for several years is retiring from that role and will now serve on the Board of Directors (BOD). Also new to our BOD are Diana Gyuras as Secretary and Paula Batzer as Education Chair. Thanks also go out to everyone who has served on the BOD or our organization in any capacity the past year.

I am very honored and excited about taking my new role as your President of Southern Maryland’s premiere conservation organization. It is because of people like you that SMAS has this reputation. Some of you may know me since I have served in the capacity of Vice President, Program Chair and Raptor Conservation Committee Chair in recent years. In the past I have served as president of both another Audubon chapter in Maryland and a Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society. I have been involved in birding, and wildlife and environmental conservation and education since my middle school days. I received a Bachelor of Science in Natural Resources Management with an Area of Concentration in Environmental Education and Park Management from the University of Maryland at College Park. Next time you see Millie K ask her about us attending college together. I work for Charles County Public Schools as an environmental education instructor at Nanjemy Creek Environmental Education Center. As you can see my hobbies and career are so closely related.

By the time you read this the BOD will have already taken their perch with SMAS for a new year of service to your organization and dedication to birds and conservation in Southern Maryland. You would not be a member of SMAS if you too didn’t have an interest in nature. So I ask you over the next month to think about your current role in our organization and how that might change. Consider how you can use your skills or expertise to serve our organization, in a way you haven’t yet, whether it is to come to a monthly Program/meeting, if you haven’t attended one before, or the same for a field trip, serve on a committee or sign up to bring refreshments to one of the monthly meetings. Our BOD meetings are held on the last Wednesday of the month and we would enjoy seeing you at one of those on occasion. There are so many ways you can help us take SMAS into the future so I hope you will fly with us into a successful one. Please feel free to talk to one of our BOD members to discuss how you might take even just a little active role in the coming months.

I look forward to serving you over the next year and hope to work closer with many of you in the months to come. Thanks for being a member and for your support of SMAS and I look forward to hearing from you!

Naturally,
Mike
Scott Weidensaul once said, “Hog Island takes hold of you. There are many beautiful places, but this one will change your life.” Scott was right on the money. Hog Island is a magical place. It’s a place where Ospreys fly overhead and the cool crisp air tickles your nose with the scent of Cinnamon Ferns. It’s a place where you awake to the call of the loon on the water, where you fall asleep under the Milky Way.

My Hog Island experience began with an early morning hike, during which I saw my very first Merlin. He was sitting high on a tree observing us in return and protecting his nest. The rest of the day was spent getting acquainted with the island, including a great boat ride around the entire island. The cruise wouldn’t have been complete without a beautiful Bald Eagle sitting serenely in a treetop.

Day two was spent in a fresh water sphagnum bog. This was a very muddy, amazing trip. We were able to find two different species of carnivorous plants, including flowering Pitcher Plants.

On the third day, my dreams came true. We were taking a trip to Eastern Egg Rock, home of the Atlantic Puffin! These little birds have so much spirit. Their little wings beat so quickly and their comical mooring made us all smile. It was such an amazing moment in my life. The trip produced Common Eiders, puffins, Common and Roseate Terns, Black Guillemots, and Double-crested Cormorants, just to name a few.

The boat then dropped us off to explore another island. The island had a beautiful beach on one side and amazing rock features on the other side. This island had several Ospreys flying overhead and butterflies dancing among the flowers. It was the end to a perfect day.

Day four was a nice, easy, calm day. Many different sessions were offered. I chose to attend a photography session with a real wildlife photographer and a fun, silly music session before enjoying a leisurely hike around the island.

On the last day we awoke early to catch the low tide and investigate the intertidal zones. We found starfish, lumpfish, a few small lobsters and so much more! It was a great learning experience. Later that day we talked about activities to bring back to our classrooms. We played a few games and really connected with each other. In the evening we had some social time followed by a mouth-watering lobster dinner and square dancing. What a great way to end a fabulous week!

I want to thank the Southern Maryland Audubon Society for the chance to visit Hog Island. The island grabbed hold of me and I hope that I never lose that feeling. It remains the most beautiful and magical place that I have ever had the opportunity to visit.

On August 20, Audubon’s Hog Island Camp in Maine will mark its 75th anniversary as a national treasure of wildlife conservation. Roger Tory Peterson was among the first teachers. His experiences helped ignite bird watching in the U.S., where it has become the nation’s second fastest growing hobby, after gardening. Rachel Carson, a pivotal force behind the environmental movement and creation of the EPA, describes her visit to Hog Island in her landmark book Silent Spring. It was also here that Audubon’s Dr. Stephen Kress developed Project Puffin, the successful seabird restoration program now recognized internationally. Students young and old continue to learn at the camp every summer. Read more about the legacy of Hog Island: http://projectpuffin.org/OrnithCampsLegacyHistory.html

BATTLE CREEK CYPRESS SWAMP SANCTUARY – MAY 7

by Judy Ferris

Saturday, May 7 dawned cool, breezy, and unapologetically sunny. A perfect day for birding! Five of us met at Battle Creek Cypress Swamp to see what the morning had to offer in the way of birds. It’s always a good omen when the first bird spotted with binoculars is an unusual bird – for us, a Louisiana Waterthrush, seen bopping along the edge of the pond near headquarters.
In the swamp itself, the calls of songbirds rang from the trees above. We’re talking way above! In the tall trees towering overhead, warblers, vireos, titmice, and chickadees vied for our attention, giving us all a case of “warbler neck” and mostly offering silhouettes of birds disappearing into the forest. The swampy forest floor proved more productive with more Louisiana Waterthrushes and migrating Veerys. It was a treat to hear the skreeing song of the latter, echoing beneath the high tree canopy overhead.

A primary objective of our visit was to see the bird that is the very definition of bright yellow - the Prothonotary Warbler. In the perfect habitat of Cypress Swamp, these birds normally nest each year. In fact, the park staff has put up nest boxes for them in hopes of making their stay in Calvert County more comfortable. Getting those nest boxes just right is no simple task! It took considerable experimentation to determine the perfect height, the perfect direction to face the front door, and the perfect exposure to sun or shade. Talk about picky! Prothonotary Warblers could drive a Real Estate agent to distraction! The nest box we viewed is a cozy little affair, perched on a stick only a foot or so above the water. It is nicely shaded, with a front door opening away from the boardwalk. The warbler itself led us on a merry chase. You would think that a bright yellow bird singing its heart out in a dark, gloomy swamp would be a cinch to spot. As many birders have discovered to their chagrin, this is not always the case! A yellow bird sitting still just beneath a high, sun-dappled, breeze-rippled tree canopy can be diabolically difficult to spot. But spot it we did! We were rewarded for our efforts with great looks and a passionate Prothonotary serenade.

Another highlight of our trip was a stare-down with a singing male Hooded Warbler. From his “hidden” spot in a tree only 15 feet away, he enjoyed checking us out just as much as we enjoyed checking him out! In the end, we blinks first and moved on to leave him in peace.

In addition to the Cypress swamp itself, the park also has a large meadow – a great place to spot recently-arrived Indigo Buntings who stridently sing at one another across the field. A variety of birds pass across the meadow, pausing in small trees to see and be seen. This rainbow coalition of species included Orchard Oriole, Common Yellowthroat, Northern Cardinal, Indigo Bunting, House Finch, Gray Catbird, and Blue Grosbeak.

The abandoned house on the property, with its second story windows agape, would seem to be a perfect spot for Barn Owls. But we were unable to spot any. No doubt any resident owls know where to roost in order to avoid prying eyes. Our closest encounter with owls was hearing a pair of Barred Owls booming off in the forest.

In short, we five birders shared a perfect morning to be outside enjoying nature. Close encounters with a few special birds was icing on the cake!

Saturday May 28 turned out to be a lovely day, the best of the Memorial Day weekend in fact. We had intermittent clouds and an on again off again breeze, but a really pleasant morning. The target bird was of course nowhere to be found, but with a nice beach, marsh, and mudflat we had birds. Jim and Judy Ferris, Tyler Bell and Jane Kostenko, and Sue Hamilton joined me for the trip. Cove Point north of the lighthouse has restricted access. Recently the owners of the LNG terminal (great for finding gulls and cormorants by the way) started a large living shoreline project. This attempt to build a salt-water marsh to protect an interior fresh-water marsh is still a work in progress, but even incomplete it provides lots of habitat. We had five species of shorebirds numbering over one hundred birds.

Without Tyler’s telescope and his strong back to carry it, we would not have been able to get the IDs or the excellent looks at all of them. The Dunlin was the star, but it was great to see shorebirds anywhere south of North Beach in any numbers. The marsh provided the long legs with a few Green Herons and Great Blues, with many more Great Egrets and even a Snowy Egret. Canada Geese, Mallards, and Black Ducks were the waterfowl we found here. No Mute Swans (thank you DNR) this year. Swallows included Barn, Tree, Rough-winged and Purple Martins. Bugs weren’t bad so I guess they are doing their jobs.

We had an assortment of our spring and summer migrants that like shrubby habitat. These included Common Yellowthroat, Yellow-throated Warbler, and Northern Parula, White-eyed Vireo, Brown Thrasher, Indigo Bunting, Blue Grosbeak, and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. On the boardwalk in the marsh we spotted a Red-winged Blackbird nest with young in it. It was only ten feet off the boardwalk. Shades of Huntley Meadows.

As noon approached the temperature began to rise and we returned to our cars. We totaled 60 species for the day. Everyone agreed this was a great place to find birds and the number and variety of shorebirds deserves some attention. We are planning a return trip on October 15. Thanks to my fellow birders for a great day and to Dominion LNG for granting access.
At the annual meeting on June 5th, Southern Maryland Audubon presented its 2011 Conservation Award to Cora D. Fulton. She was recognized as one of our longest serving members, having joined our Chapter in 1972, and was appropriately awarded at our 40th anniversary celebration on that day.

Cora has always said she would not join any group unless she could become active and participate. Shortly after she joined, the Society sent out its first questionnaire calling for volunteers. George Wilmot still recalls that she was the only one to reply. And she has been volunteering ever since!

Until recent years, Cora and her close friend, the late Olive Sorzano, attended every membership meeting and attended every field trip, regardless of where in Southern Maryland they were held. She helped Olive carry and staff the first chapter bookstore. She mailed out The Osprey. She then became Membership Chair until 1986, when she was elected President of the Chapter from 1986-1989. She continued to serve on the Board, and took over the Adopt-an-Osprey program that Steve Cardano initiated in 1991. When the chapter treasury was down to $200 in 1983, she and Olive and several others began the annual yard sale to supplement chapter funds. She continued to help with that effort through the years. She participated in many chapter special displays and events providing handouts, lending a helping hand wherever needed. As she did on June 5th, she helped organize the food for our annual meeting for nearly all of our 40 annual picnics.

Already knowledgeable in wildflowers, Cora was mentored in birding skills by Olive, our excellent field trip leaders, and through special study. She honed her knowledge by going on many organized birding trips both in the US and internationally, enjoying the companionship of her friend, Shirley Wood. She continues to participate in the chapter’s Christmas Bird Count and May Count, and assisted with the first Maryland Breeding Bird Atlas in the 1980’s and the Forest Interior Dwelling Bird studies conducted at Chapman State Park and Mattawoman Wildlands. She became a field trip leader herself. Cora could make an early spring trip a special joy as she drew attention to not only the birds but the wildflowers, whether blanketing sunny spots or barely emerging from the forest floor. We studied the vernal pools and rejoiced in hearing spring peepers anew. After a long hike, and all were tired, Cora served the birders on every trip a gourmet treat of her delicious breads. They became legendary.

Cora is loved for her genial personality and warm smile. She is as fun-loving as she is hard working. Her energy and dedication to the chapter are a role model for all our younger members and have been an inspiration to those who have known her during our 40-year history. We look forward to many more years of Cora’s faithful service within Southern Maryland Audubon and to her continued stewardship of the natural world.

STATE BOARD VOTES UNANIMOUSLY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY!

We are thrilled to announce that after years of hard work and passionate effort by hundreds of organizations and thousands of individuals, this morning the State Board of Education voted unanimously in favor of language establishing a strong, clear environmental literacy graduation requirement to ensure all public school students receive a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary environmental education. This vote cements Maryland as the first state in the nation to approve such a requirement, a credit to Governor O’Malley, the Partnership for Children in Nature, the MDNCLI Coalition, state board members, and State Superintendent Nancy Grasmick.

Today’s historic vote took place at the last state board meeting Dr. Nancy Grasmick attended as State Superintendent of Schools before she retires after 20 years of service. Following the vote, Congressman John Sarbanes, Chesapeake Bay Foundation president Will Baker, and MD Department of Natural Resources Deputy Secretary Joe Gill thanked Dr. Grasmick and board members for their unwavering commitment to students and for their support of this groundbreaking environmental literacy initiative.

“I am so excited, I can hardly stay in my seat,” commented CBF President and MDNCLI Coalition representative Will
Baker. “To say this is a historic moment for Maryland is an understatement -- this is a historic moment for the nation.”

A diehard advocate of federal No Child Left Inside legislation, Congressman Sarbanes noted the significance of today’s vote, which positions Maryland to potentially receive federal funding. “The No Child Left Inside Act would increase opportunities for robust environmental education for students across the country. Such opportunities are essential to grow the next generation of scientists, promote environmental stewardship, and encourage Americans to live healthier lifestyles.”

Today’s vote is cause for great celebration and marks the beginning of a remarkable and beneficial change for Maryland students. “Today’s vote is the first summit of the climb toward implementation,” commented MD-DNR Deputy Secretary Joe Gill. “The Maryland Partnership, the Coalition and others will work hard to make this a reality.”

We would have never made it this far without the continued, active, vocal support of Coalition members. As the language was introduced to the state board for a vote this morning, MSDE specifically pointed to the “tremendous support for this language from a wide variety of stakeholders across the state.” We are so grateful for your support and so happy to share this long-awaited news with you. We very much look forward to working with all of you on the implementation of effective environmental literacy plans and programs in the coming months...but today, take some time to celebrate!

Julie Dieguez
Coordinator, Maryland No Child Left Inside Coalition
www.mdncli.org

OSPREY BANDING FIELD TRIP

Members of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society assisted Naturalist Greg Kearns in banding seven juvenile Osprey on the Patuxent River near Jug Bay at high tide on June 29th.

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.

☐ Please enroll me as a member of the National Audubon Society. My membership will also include membership in the Southern Maryland Audubon Society. I will receive National’s Audubon Magazine, the chapter newsletter, and support national and local environmental causes. A fraction of my dues will be returned to the local chapter.

Name_______________________________________  Address______________________________________________
City_______________________ State__________ Zip_______

I DO ______ do NOT ______ wish to receive The Osprey electronically. My e-mail address is:______________________________________________________________

(electronic delivery saves SMAS printing and mailing costs.)

Chapter-Only Dues (new/renewal)
Make check payable to Southern Maryland Audubon Society

☐ Individual/Family  __1yr $20  __2yr $38  __3yr $56
☐ Senior/Student  __1yr $15  __2yr $28  __3yr $42
☐ Individual Lifetime Membership $500
  Senior (over 62) $250

National Dues, Make check payable to National Audubon Society -- Chapter code #C9ZL000Z

☐ Introductory Offer - 1 year $20
☐ Senior/Student $15

Mail to: Southern Maryland Audubon Society, Attn: Membership
P.O. Box 181  Bryans Road, MD  20616
ELECTRONIC OSPREY SAVINGS!
by Will Daniel, SMAS Treasurer

The conversion of The Osprey to an electronic newsletter has not only helped the environment but has also saved a significant amount of money for SMAS. Although, a number of our members elected to receive the traditional hard copy mailings, most opted for the electronic option. From a cost perspective, in our 2009-2010 fiscal year (7/1/2009 - 6/30/2010) we spent over $2,700 to print and mail The Osprey. This was our single largest budget transaction and thus a significant portion of our operating expenses. Fast forward to our most recently closed fiscal year, 2010-2011, and our expenses for the newsletter have dropped almost 60% to just $1,111. This is a great move economically as it allows SMAS the budget flexibility to focus on our core conservation and education programs. We owe everyone involved in the transition to the electronic Osprey a strong round of applause!

AUDUBON WELCOMES GOOD NEWS FROM WASHINGTON, D.C. HOUSE VOTES TO PROTECT THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT
Gerry Ellis, National Audubon Society, Washington, D.C.

The U.S. House of Representatives voted yesterday afternoon to protect wildlife on the brink of extinction by supporting an amendment in the Interior and Environment spending bill to uphold safeguards for endangered species.

Mike Daulton, Vice President of Government Relations for Audubon, said, “In the midst of an historic assault on the environment in the House of Representatives, we were reminded of the value and power of the Endangered Species Act. The Endangered Species Act is one of America’s most successful conservation laws, which has been a critical safety net for species on the brink of extinction and recovered America’s symbol the Bald Eagle.”

“This historic vote demonstrates the strong support that exists for protecting our nation’s most imperiled wildlife. We applaud the 224 members of Congress who supported the amendment sponsored by Representatives Norm Dicks (D-WA), Mike Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Mike Thompson (D-CA), and Colleen Hanabusa (D-HI) striking language from the Interior and Environment bill that would have dismantled endangered species protections.

“Without the amendment, this bill would have crippled the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and driven imperiled plants and animals to extinction. Passage of the amendment brings hope that both parties ultimately will reject extremist assaults on America’s great natural heritage.”

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

SEPTEMBER 7 – WEDNESDAY – 7:30 p.m.
Charlotte Hall Library, St. Mary’s County
37600 New Market Road (Rt. 6 at Rt. 5), Charlotte Hall, MD 20622
“The Status of the Eastern Coyote”
JIM BENNETT, Habitat Manager, DNR-Wildlife and Heritage Service, Myrtle Grove WMA.
This presentation will cover how coyotes arrived in Maryland over the past several decades, where this species is present today and the relative numbers across the state. Some of the impacts seen will also be discussed. You’ll want to learn about this recent addition to our Maryland wildlife.

September 11 – Sunday – 8 AM – noon – Field Trip
Patuxent River Naval Air Station, St. Mary’s County
“GRASSPIPERS”
Leader: Kyle Rambo (301-757-0005, kyle.rambo@navy.mil)
This trip will visit some excellent grassland habitat on restricted access runways. Target species include Buff-breasted Sandpiper and American Golden Plover. Meet in the parking lot at NAS Gate #1. Limited to 10 participants. Pre-registration is mandatory (call 301-757-0005). Open only to US citizens. You must bring a photo ID.

September 24 – Saturday – 8 AM - noon– Field Trip
Calvert Cliffs State Park, Calvert County
“FALL MIGRATION”
Leader: Tyler Bell (301-862-4623, jtylerbell@yahoo.com)
Neotropical migrants should be near their peak. Warblers, tanagers, grosbeaks, and other songbirds. Good trails through wooded habitat & along the creek. Take Rt. 2/4 south of Prince Frederick for about 14 miles. Follow signs to the park. Meet leader in parking lot. Facilities and fee. 3 miles round trip. RSVP required.

OCTOBER 5 – WEDNESDAY - 7:30 p.m.
La Plata Volunteer Fire Department, Charles County
911 Washington Avenue, La Plata, MD 20646
“Michael L. Smith – The Mad Bluebird, Wildlife Photographer”
MICHAEL L. SMITH, International Wildlife Photographer
Everyone knows the Mad Bluebird picture!! Come and meet the extraordinary photographer, Michael L Smith, and enjoy his world of wildlife photography. He offers revealing glimpses into the lives and behavior of his subjects, as well as their breathtaking beauty. Michael will also explain the photography set-up of many of his photographs. Come and enjoy this wonderful presentation that we are so fortunate to offer.

October 15 – Saturday – 8 AM - noon– Field Trip
Cove Point Marsh, Calvert County
“SHARP-TAILED SPARROWS”
Leader: Bob Boxwell (443-404-5549, bobboxwell@hotmail.com)
Cove Point beach and marsh were a unique habitat on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay. A Living Shoreline project is attempting to restore the fresh water marsh after a massive breach and salt water incursion. We are targeting sparrows, marsh inhabitants and migrants. This is a restricted area and we are limited to ten guests. Reservations are required at least one week prior to the trip.

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!
Sally Davis, Huntingtown
Robert Ellis, Oxon Hill
Winifred Fajen, Oxon Hill
Jacqueline A. Fournier, Lexington Park
Robert Francis, Fort Washington
Joyce E. Gray, Accokeek
Bonnie B. Kennedy, Mechanicsville
Patricia King, Camp Springs
Eunice Lin, Chesapeake Beach
Linda C. McGee, Newburg
Jackie Murray, Waldorf
Robert Newman, California
John S. Polen, Charlotte Hall
Donna Price, Indian Head
Edward Schlotterbeck, Mechanicsville
Bonnie Tabick, Hughesville
Dorothy Wallace, Chesapeake Beach
Mary Louise Webb, Waldorf
D. Williams, Piney Point
Henrietta Williams, Suitland
Kathryn Wood, Lusby
Betty Woodburn, Hollywood

WHITE IBIS RANGE EXPANSION
by Tyler Bell

Every summer around late July to early August, colonial nesters like herons, egrets and ibises start post-nesting dispersal in the Chesapeake. Gradually, over the last decade, White Ibises have been increasing in the southern Chesapeake in Virginia and are nesting there in larger and larger numbers. When the numbers increase and they start wandering, the result is that we Marylanders get to see them! This year has been a banner year for Charles and St. Mary’s Counties. Two birds were found in Port Tobacco in Charles County, and four birds as the Beauvue Ponds in St. Mary’s County. I believe that the two Charles County birds are the first seen there since 1996 and the St. Mary’s birds the first since 1997! Calvert County, I believe, does not have ANY records so we need them to move a bit further east, please.

White Ibises at Beauvue Ponds
Photo by: Tyler Bell

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.