President’s Perch

Welcome back to a new SMAS year full of great new program topics and speakers as well as exciting field trips. I hope you will join us at the September meeting on Monarch Butterfly Migration at the Southern Maryland Higher Education Center in California, MD. You can also help us out by going to dinner beforehand at the Texas Roadhouse restaurant, also in California, for our first fundraiser of this type where a percentage of the sales go to SMAS. Don’t forget to take the flyer coupon you can get on our website to give your wait staff. Here’s a link to the flyer:  http://somdaudubon.org/files/TexasRoadhouseFlyer.pdf

It is hard to believe it has been a year since my first President’s Perch article. So many things have happened over the past year. A core group of active volunteers have been busy ensuring that we have a year of field trips and monthly program meeting speakers set up, that we are made aware of local, state, national and international conservation issues, that we publicize our activities, do public outreach, and keep up our financial records, just to name a few.

Keeping an active organization like SMAS going is all done by member volunteers. They are people like you who have an interest in birds, wildlife, nature, the outdoors and want to connect with other people while sharing and learning at the same time. Look at our program guide and you will see what committees we have and activities we sponsor. It will give you an idea of where you may be able to contribute your skills or interest or just to learn something new and have fun. One place we could use help is with a chair for our newly formed Fund Raising Committee. Two fundraisers at restaurants are scheduled this fall, and we will need ideas and assistance in planning other activities to help keep us in good financial shape. The Conservation Committee is looking for a Calvert County representative as well as making them aware of issues in Southern Maryland. We are also in need of someone to take charge of our bookstore. I hope you will consider participating in a way you never have before this year. Just like with voting, one person can make a difference. Will it be you? With over 700 members we are one of the largest conservation organizations in the region. People come to us as a resource and we would love to have you be an active part of that resource. Think of it this way, your planet is calling! Are you going to take the call or let the answering machine take it? I hope you will take the call, Earth needs you!

Fall migration is just starting and I hope you take time to enjoy the gift of this annual event. Get outside this fall to enjoy the birds and Monarch Butterflies as they head south for the winter. If you are on Facebook please check our FB page out. Make comments and share your joy of birds and nature there. http://www.facebook.com/somdaudubon

I look forward to seeing each and every one of you this coming year and for helping make SMAS an even bigger and better force for serving the people and birds of Southern Maryland. And since that last sentence sounded like a campaign, don't forget to get out and vote for the issues and candidates of your choice. Don’t be afraid to ask candidates tough questions and where they stand on protecting and conserving our great American natural resources.

Naturally Your President,
Mike Callahan
Hog Island Field Ornithology Week

My week stay on Hog Island was over far too quickly. The schedule kept us on the go from pre-dawn to almost dark, and the week seemed to end as it was just getting started. I had the rocky shore to myself on the last morning, and as I sat enjoying the sunrise and the dawn chorus, a word came to the surface that easily summed up my experiences for the week – connections. John Muir wrote that “when we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe”. The Field Ornithology week at Hog Island, Maine renewed and recreated many connections for me.

Upon landing on the island, there was a brief welcome and a chance to move into quarters, but soon I was spending my free afternoon connecting with the landscape and its inhabitants. How wonderful it was to spot Black-throated Green Warblers on their home turf again as opposed to the brief listen I get for a few days each spring as they pass through my yard at home. A chance as well to squish around a spruce and sphagnum bog, although to someone from northern Minnesota it was odd to smell the ocean while looking for sundews.

Soon, however, it was back to the main camp and the jam-packed week of learning and discovery. I had taken Ornithology in college, and although the information hadn’t really changed, the way it is interpreted has shifted. We did a lot with bird song and communication studies and the information and experiences from lectures and field trips helped me to make the connection of “seeing” with my ears. I am looking forward to the spring to be able to see with new ears.

Besides making connections with well known experts in the field, it was equally nice to meet folks who are experts in their own backyards. Many of the other participants were educators back on their home turf and it was quite fun exchanging stories of students past as well as ideas for lessons and activities. It was also fun to connect on a more personal level, one gentleman had brought along his accordion (which he had been playing for 71 years since he was 4 years old) and we had “polka” dancing on the lawn after dinner as well as a Hog Island rendition of “Take Me Out to the Ballgame” on the final evening.

It was quite humbling to make the connections between the past, present and future. To walk the same paths, and bird the same forests as past heroes Roger Tory Peterson and Rachel Carson, was amazing. To think that despite all the changes we have wrought on the landscape around us, I was watching the same species of warblers building their nests in the same trees that these giants in the field had, was awe inspiring. Today and in the recent past I have been one of the younger folks in groups I have birded with, which made it quite refreshing and inspiring to also be able to bird with the next generation of birders to come. The teen week shared the island and several trips with the “adults” and I feel that their knowledge and enthusiasm had many of us wishing that we had been turned on to the wonders of birding at an earlier age.

And so it is this idea and experience of connections that I most want to offer to my students. Scott Weidensaul ended the week with a quote from Louis Agassiz Fuertes written on a trip to Glacier Bay in which he wrote home to his family about the experience – all I can say is wow and gee whiz! Thanks to the generous scholarship from the Southern Maryland Audubon Society, I’m looking forward to having the birds help me leave the students with their own wow and gee whiz moments in connecting with the nature that is in their own backyards.

Meagan Keefe, Naturalist
Nanjemoy Creek Environmental Education Center

Chapter-Only Membership Renewals

This is a reminder that dues for Chapter-only Memberships (COM) run from July-June, SMAS fiscal year. If your dues expired July 2012, please use the newsletter form and send in your renewal. Some dues may be several years overdue. If you wish to remain a Chapter-only Member please send in the appropriate amount. Multiple year renewals save us all work and are encouraged.

The label on your land mail 2012-2013 SMAS PROGRAM will remind you if your membership is expired. National Audubon Society members are automatically a SMAS member, but COM dues help to further fund our chapter work. Thanks for your continued support.

Membership Committee: Carol Ghebelian (301-753-6754); Lynne Wheeler (301-743-3236)

SMAS Yard Sale
by Julie Daniel

The SMAS yard sale held at the Daniel’s residence in Bryantown on June 16 was a great success. Over $800 was raised. Thanks to all those who came out to help: George Harrington, Carol Ghebelian, George Jett, Gwen Brewer, Warren and Bev Walker, Ted and Linda Daniel, and Paula Batzer. Thanks also to all those that donated items for the sale. The next time you clean out your closets remember to save some things for our next yard sale!

Photo by: George Jett
National Wildlife Refuge Association Applauds Northern Everglades Funding

July 13, 2012– Kissimmee, FL The National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) praised Department of Agriculture and Interior Secretaries Vilsack and Salazar for their announcement today directing more than $80 million toward purchasing conservation easements in the recently-established Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area.

“Secretary Vilsack and Secretary Salazar have been consistent champions of Everglades restoration and there is no better way to demonstrate their commitment than by providing funds that will help accomplish results on the ground,” said David Houghton, Executive Vice-President of the NWRA. “Today’s announcement shows how federal agencies can work together to focus resources on important places and provide opportunities for private landowners to conserve their land for public benefit. Florida ranchers, farmers, conservationists and outdoor enthusiasts have all made it clear that protecting the Northern Everglades for future generations is a top priority in the state.”

The Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area exemplifies a collaborative approach to conservation that relies on cooperation among many public agencies and private landowners. Conservation easements offer protection for wildlife and water resources, while allowing land to stay in private ownership and on the tax rolls. Today’s announced funding will help support wetlands restoration and habitat management that will increase Central Florida’s resilience to the effects of climate change, while benefiting sportsmen, ranchers, 8 million South Florida water users, the charismatic wildlife of the Everglades, and visitors from around the world.

Secretary Salazar’s announcement of $1.5 million to support land conservation at the Everglades Headwaters Refuge and Conservation Area marks the first new appropriation of funds dedicated to the refuge. With this funding, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be able to proceed with its first acquisitions of land and conservation easements. Lands that become part of the national wildlife refuge will be accessible for hunting programs which the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will administer in partnership with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission through a unique state-federal partnership.

The Administration also announced the beginning of a public dialogue and planning process to explore the creation of two additional collaborative conservation areas in the Fisheating Creek watershed and including a network of lands reaching toward the existing Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge. As in the Everglades Headwaters region, the new conservation areas would be pursued as public-private partnerships that strike a balance for wildlife, ranching, economic development, water management, and recreation.

The three Northern Everglades Conservation Areas are also a smart investment in Florida’s economy. Restoring natural wetlands and maintaining open lands north of Lake Okeechobee is by far the least costly method of storing water for South Florida. Ranching and agriculture in this region employs thousands of Floridians and contributes to our national food security. In addition, through use by sportsmen, birdwatchers and wildlife tourism, refuges and conservation areas generate an average of $4 to the local economy for every $1 invested. Learn more about the National Wildlife Refuge Association’s Everglades conservation program

http://refugeassociation.org/2012/07/nwra-applauds-everglades-funding/

David Houghton
(603) 831-0920

Buy Your Stamp

And now that it’s July, it’s time to buy your new Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation [Duck] Stamp. As you may know, the lion’s share of the funds collected from Stamp sales go to secure wetland and grassland habitat in the Refuge System, and the Stamp also serves as a pass for all NWRs that charge for entry. You may want to check out the new website from the Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp:

www.friendsofthestamp.org

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
Red-cockaded Woodpecker 2012 Breeding

Virginia now supports the largest number of Red-cockaded Woodpecker (RCWO) breeding pairs since the 1980s. Center for Conservation Biology biologists documented 10 breeding pairs on The Nature Conservancy's Piney Grove Preserve during the breeding season of 2012. This is a modern-day high and represents a five-fold increase from the low of 2 breeding pairs in the spring of 2000. Breeders produced 26 young narrowly surpassing the recent record of 25 in 2011. Along with 45 total adults, the population has reached its highest level in more than 20 years. After 11 years of intensive population and habitat management the Virginia RCWO population is showing a dramatic response.

However, the long road of recovery for RCWOs in our region has not ended. The overall national recovery plan for RCWOs is divided into several regional units. Each of these units must reach their individual population goals before delisting of the species from the Threatened and Endangered status. Virginia and northeast North Carolina combine to form an Essential Support population in the Mid-Atlantic that has an ultimate goal of 100 breeding pairs. Significant properties in this sub-region include the Piney Grove Preserve in Virginia, and in North Carolina include the Alligator River NWR, Dare County Bombing Range, Palmetto-Peartree Preserve, and Poscosin Lakes NWR. Together, these properties currently support less than 50 pairs. However, in Virginia there is continued hope for recovery with the addition of 4,500 acres of forest known as the Big Woods that will be managed by the state for Red-cockaded Woodpeckers and other wildlife.

We will continue to monitor the Piney Grove population to determine the fate of the 2012 young and maintain regular updates on Red-cockaded Woodpecker status. Funds for monitoring RCWOs in Virginia are provided by the Center for Conservation Biology, the Nature Conservancy, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

Michael D. Wilson - Center for Conservation Biology
The College of William and Mary

Even More Tower Power

Last month, we wrote about long-overdue advances in the area of lighting standards on communication towers under the purview of the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) in order to decrease bird mortality. The public has now been given specific input and review opportunities for new FCC tower applications. See last month's story here: http://refugeassociation.org/?p=5795#Tower

This month, we report on somewhat parallel, but different, advances concerning FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) jurisdiction. Research has shown that flashing lights on towers are safer for night-migrating songbirds than steady-burning lights. But until recently, the FAA actually required steady-burning lights on some towers (specifically on the sides of towers). These steady-burning lights are particularly deadly to birds, so the FAA was asked to investigate.

Fortunately, the FAA agreed to pursue the issue and determined that while steady burning side-marker lights needed to remain for smaller towers (up to 350 feet), they could safely be eliminated on taller towers, as long as quick-flashing lights on the tower tops were working. The FAA found that these “rapid discharge” lights were more attention-getting to aircraft pilots than traditional incandescent lights.

Based on these studies, the FAA is now proposing to make changes to its “Operational Lighting Standards,” including the cessation of the use of red/steady-burning lights. Although studies have suggested that green lights might further reduce avian impacts, the FAA has not gone that far. Nonetheless, this new FAA standard might require nothing more than allowing existing red/steady-burning lights to burn out, or allow new towers to be built without the damaging lights.

This shift in policy will allow tower operators to change their lighting systems in order to minimize bird collisions and save energy and maintenance costs.

The persistent bird conservationists who have been working on these lighting issues, as well as government and industry people, are owed a debt of gratitude for their efforts. Every step toward increasing bird safety adds up to make a real difference.

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
Charlotte Allison, Chesapeake Beach  
Robert V. Asuncion, Fort Washington  
Teresa Beck, Port Republic  
Mary A. Beining, Great Mills  
Mrs. Judith Brice, Owings  
John F. Cowles, Valley Lee  
John C. Davis, Fort Washington  
Louis & Constance Demas, Newburg  
Jacqueline Dorsey, Waldorf  
Mrs. Arthur E. Engman, Leonardtown  
Mcleod Farr, Chapito  
Selma Gheen, Mechanicsville  
Mildred Hamman, Nanjemoy  
Mr. Bruce A. Linker, Waldorf  
Betty McCurry, Prince Frederick  
Murna J. McFarlan, Mechanicsville  
David Moulton, Bethesda  
Bozena Pait, St. Mary's City  
Pat Piorkowski, Brandywine  
Lynne Rademacher, Port Republic  
Erin Rouland, Lexington Park  
Jamie Rowder, St. Leonard  
Jolene Sanders, Dunkirk  
Elaine Strong, Huntingtown  
Mary Teal, North Beach  
Ms. Linda A. Thompson, Leonardtown  
Charles Underwood, Fort Washington  
Jane Williams, White Plains  
Felicidad Young, Oxon Hill

Southwest North Dakota, June 2 - 3  
by Tyler Bell

Jane Kostenko and I made a trip to the southwest part of North Dakota back in August, 2007 but whiffed on all of the statewide specialties there. We assume that we cashed in our karma with the female Broad-tailed Hummingbird, the second state record, that we identified coming to Jane’s sister’s hummingbird feeder at their farm in Ross.

We left Minot on Saturday at 4:45 am and headed south on 83 then west on I-94. Rumors of horrible road conditions in the Watford City to Dickinson area were substantiated while we drove around the roads between Stanley, Ross and New Town. Oil exploration has destroyed the countryside of western ND. Playing it safe, we stuck to major highways.

First stop was to look for Long-billed Curlews along the east-west stretch of Rt. 85 near Amidon. Having no luck at various stops, mostly because it’s dangerous with heavy traffic at high speeds, Jane suggested we take a gravel road. We missed one opportunity east of Amidon but decided to take Main Street north through Amidon and hit paydirt. Main Street passes through the “urban” part of Amidon in about 100 yards then there are ag fields on the east and west sides of the road. Main Street splits into a “Y”

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after about a mile. In the field on the west side of the street, between the houses and the “Y”, we counted 4 LBCUs, some of them doing aerial displays and singing their “cur-lee!” song.

We blasted along noting large numbers of Lark Buntings on about every 4th fence post (once we got south of Belfield) and decided to go into Marmarth then head south on Camp Crook Road in lieu of following the torturous path detailed in the ND bird finding guide. We had done this route in 2007 without getting lost but the new cement bridge/ford across the Little Missouri River just west of the Hestekin’s and Rhame Prairie area make it virtually impossible to get lost.

We stopped at a couple of sage scrub locations and found a singing Brewer’s Sparrow in the Big Gumbo area about 15 miles south of Rt. 12 and several miles north of the turn east to cross the river. Basically this is a bird that looks remarkably like a Clay-colored Sparrow that sings a very different song.

Next, we went to sign in at the Hestekin’s. They were getting ready to leave for their granddaughter’s birthday party so we just squeaked in in time. They said there were a couple of guys already at the Rhame Prairie site and when we arrived Bob Neugebauer, and his friend from MN, were coming back west from the hill in the middle of the property. Bob gave us some excellent pointers that helped us narrow down the search area. He said to go up vertically through the zone of Chestnut-collared Longspurs then when you are about 50-100 feet down from the top of the hill, look for the McCown’s Longspurs. We first found them by their diagnostic tail pattern which is more of an inverted black “T” compared to the black triangle of Chestnut-collareds. Eventually we got some excellent looks at probably 4 different individuals before the 92° heat sent us packing. Wear boots and/or gaters as there are rattlesnakes being reported there. If you’re planning on looking for the McCown’s Longspurs at Rhame Prairie, make sure to call in advance: 701-279-5744.

We headed back across the river then into Marmarth where we ran into Larry Igl and his fellow worker where we all searched in vain for Bullock’s Oriole or Western Wood-Pewee in the city park on the south side of Rt. 12. As we headed across the Little Missouri eastbound, we saw a bird with a bold white flash in the wing. We spun around and found another perched on the north side of the bridge. Two Red-headed Woodpeckers. Gorgeous!

We got to Medora/Teddy Roosevelt NP around 7 and got a camp site up near the center of the two loops at the Cottonwood Campground. In no time, several Bullock’s Orioles arrived almost directly over our site! Then we heard a Western Wood-Pewee and found it flycatching from dead branches on several trees near the pay station. The bird was there again for the bird walk on the same dead branches.

Toward dusk, we drove up to Buck Hill to listen for Common Poorwills. A wall of thunderstorms moved very slowly across the park starting around 8:15 and continued to rain heavily until about 2 am. No Poorwills We did have a Great

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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
Horned Owl calling in the campground and an annoying Yellow-breasted Chat singing off and on all night long.

There was such a tremendous crowd for the bird walk that they split into four groups. We went with Corey Ellingson’s group and had killer looks at an adult Golden Eagle flying quite low over the group. After an excellent breakfast of pancakes with honey-rhubarb syrup, sausages and cowboy coffee, based on some detailed tips from Jack Lefor, another group leader, we headed up to the Wind Canyon overlook where we found several Violet-green Swallows including one bird that flew into a hole in the canyon wall across from us but behind a cedar so we couldn’t see the nest site. One obliging bird flew slowly into the wind and slightly below us giving amazing looks at the white rump patches and the violet and green colors on the back.

Blasting eastbound past Bismarck on I-94, we diverted our course to Minot in favor of McKenzie Slough where we easily found the reported pair of Black-necked Stilts. We didn’t see any evidence of nesting but we didn’t stay long.

In all, we ended up with 7 state birds and cleared off quite a few birds from our ND bird life list that we couldn’t find site/date information to input into eBird. We also racked up a nice list of ND-Birders who we knew from the list but now we know their faces, too!

Upcoming Events

SEPTEMBER 5 – WEDNESDAY – 7:30 p.m.
Southern MD Higher Education Center, St. Mary’s County
44219 Airport Road, California, MD 20619
“The Monarch Butterfly: Migration Mania”
MIKE CALLAHAN AND MELISSA BOYLE, SMAS
Southern Maryland Audubon naturalists, Mike Callahan (President) and Melissa Boyle (Director) will present on how the Monarch butterfly migrates from the U.S. and Canada to the mountains of Mexico every fall. Learn how you can attract these winged jewels to your yard all summer and during their southern migration. They will also discuss how you can participate in citizen science projects involving these beautiful black and orange butterflies, including tagging them as they head south.

September 22-SATURDAY- 8 a.m.–12 noon – Field Trip
***NOTE DATE CHANGE FROM PROGRAM***
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 should be in great number. This trip offers good trails through wooded habitat and along the creek. Take Rt. 2/4 South of Prince Frederick about 14 miles. Follow signs to the park. Meet leader in parking lot. Facilities and fee. 3 miles round trip. RSVP required.

OCTOBER 3 – WEDNESDAY – 7:30 p.m.
Leonardtown Library, St. Mary’s County
23250 Hollywood Road (Rt. 245), Leonardtown, MD 20650
“Bird the Bering Sea: Alaska Specialties and Asian Variants”
PHIL DAVIS, Secretary, MD/DC Records Committee
Phil has journeyed 13 times to Western Alaska and has compiled a multimedia presentation on the birding locations and the key target species of the region. His presentation introduces the Western Alaska birding locations of Attu, Shemya, Adak, Dutch Harbor, Pribilof Islands, Gambell, and Nome. He also summarizes Western Alaskan and Asian subspecies that are candidates for future AOU splits. All ABA listers should really benefit from this program as sooner or later you must trek to these locations.

October 13- SATURDAY- 8 a.m. – 12 noon – Field Trip
Indian Head Rail Trail, Charles County
“RED-HEADS ON THE RAIL TRAIL”
Leaders: Gwen Brewer (301-843-3524, gilbrewer@comcast.net) and Lynne Wheeler. There are a few hot spots on the Indian Head Rail Trail that provide good wintering habitat for Red-headed Woodpeckers, yielding high numbers of individuals. One of the hot spots has revealed up to 23 birds! Join us for a leisurely morning of birding along the trail in search of woodpeckers, sparrows and other land birds. Meet and park at MD Rt. 224 IHRT Parking Lot, located just east of MD Rt. 225.

October 14- SUNDAY- 8 a.m. – 12 noon – Field Trip
Cove Point Beach and Marsh, Calvert County
“SPARROWS AND SHOREBIRDS”
Leader: Bob Boxwell (bobboxwell@hotmail.com, 410-610-5124 cell) We will visit beach and marsh habitat that attract many interesting sparrows and shorebirds. A Living Shoreline project has established breakwaters and vegetation to protect the interior marsh and return it to its freshwater status. Meet at the Giant Parking lot off of Route 2/4 at the Lusby Town Center (Rousby Hall Road) at 8 a.m. We will carpool to the locale as there is limited parking. Limited to only ten people and reservations are required, RSVP by October 5.

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.