

# The Osprey



March 2006 VOLUME 36, ISSUE 6

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*Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society*

## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS

**Port Tobacco CBC, December 18, 2005**

**by Gwen Brewer**

This year, we were very fortunate to have several expert out-of-county helpers, as well as participation by most of our usual volunteers. In all, 10 parties (23 people) ventured into the Port Tobacco count circle. These parties found a whopping 91 species and over 16,400 individuals under overcast to mostly sunny skies with little wind. The most unusual birds of the count were a Pine Warbler and not one, but two, Baltimore Orioles in the Nanjemoy area, and a Rusty Blackbird on Blossom Point Rd. American Pipits (27), American Woodcock (3), Wilson's Snipe (8), and Purple Finches (2) were other good finds. Although the number of Common Loons was high for this count (13), the number of Double-crested Cormorants was low again this year (14). Waterfowl put in a fairly good showing, with 17 species sighted, including Greater Scaup and all three mergansers. Thirty-eight Bald Eagles were spotted on count day, the third highest count in over 20 years, and Red-shouldered Hawk numbers were also high (22). Owls were also in good numbers (7 Great Horned Owls, 8 Eastern Screech-Owls, and 9 Barred Owls), thanks to an increase in hours spent owling by the participants. All 7 expected woodpecker species were found, and some in high numbers: 13 Red-headed Woodpeckers, 31 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, 21 Hairy Woodpeckers, and 96 Northern Flickers. Eastern Bluebird counts have been increasing since 2002, and were up to 137 this year. The 68 Hermit Thrushes tallied represent the second highest count of this species since 1984. Eastern Meadowlark (53) and Brown-headed Cowbird (204) were also numerous compared to previous counts. Notable misses were Wild Turkeys, accipiters, Fox Sparrows, and White-crowned Sparrows. Many thanks to all who participated!

**Point Lookout CBC, December 27, 2005**

**by Bob Boxwell**

I missed my first Christmas Bird Count in 1988 due to illness. That was not a big deal as I was a novice and would not be missed. This time I'm compiler and coordinator and was sick to my stomach. Fortunately my team leaders came through and made things easy for me. We tallied 87 species, and 8780 individual birds.

Starting from the north Tyler Bell and Terry Jordan covered the Elms Property. They had the only Great Cormorant, Winter Wrens, and catbird for the count. There was a decent array of waterfowl on the Bay and a good flock of Bonaparte's Gull. Numbers were not high for the diving ducks, but they

were almost non-existent for puddle ducks. The nicest showing, in my view, was the 32 Hooded Mergansers.

Jim Boxwell and Patty Craig covered Point No Point, their traditional territory. There were low numbers for Bay ducks here as well with 71 Ruddy Ducks being the high. Five species of sparrows and a nice flock of waxwings and 33 bluebirds brightened this area.

Kyle Rambo drew Point Lookout as his assignment this year. His crew came up with a number of good species. Tops would be the two Barn Owls. This group also had the lone puddle ducks ( three Gadwall) our only shorebirds (excluding Killdeer) a lone Sanderling, plus a Snow Bunting, a Pied-billed Grebe, the only Sharp-shinned Hawk, and Great Horned Owl.

I usually cover Kitts Point but Jane and Michael Picot pinch-hit for me. Not many waterfowl here either, but I would have appreciated the Ruddy Ducks. Good numbers were recorded for bluebirds and robins in this area of mixed residential and farm fields. American Tree Sparrows were a good find.

Moving up the river the Willoughby's and Price's had a very good day. There were lots of birds and some good diversity. Their luck with the thrush family leaned heavily to the robin side, with a count of over 700. They also found a good number of Cedar Waxwings. Their six species of sparrows included the only chippies on the count.

Carol Gheblian and George Wilmot worked their traditional area over on St. George's Island. Here too the waterfowl numbers were low. The exception was the Canada Goose. This area yielded over 1100 of the 2700 geese recorded for the count. Tundra Swans (40) outnumbered Mute Swan (17) this year, but the total is not that exciting.

The weather for this year's count was fairly good without the wind and rain issues of past years. Our species count of 87 was low for a count that shoots for 100 species each year. The almost total lack of puddle ducks and shorebirds was compounded by a complete whiff on lingering songbirds. When catbird, thrashers, and phoebe top your list, you know the count will be low. The low number of waterfowl may be owing to weather, but it seems numbers are down everywhere. So where were the large flocks of scaup (fewer than 25), scoters (fewer than 150), goldeneyes (61), and long-tailed ducks (90)?

Other observations are the good numbers for American Robin, Eastern Bluebird, and Cedar Waxwing (all in the hundreds). We whiffed on some species like American

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Pipit and Horned Lark, Hairy and Red-headed Woodpeckers. Finally, a comment on corvids. With all the talk about avian flu, West Nile Virus has lost much attention. However, recent reports for the metro area discuss thinning or disappearance of flocks. Our count was 233 American Crows, 1 Fish Crow, and 15 Blue Jays.

Thanks again to all the participants. I plan on joining you next year in the field.

**Fort Belvoir CBC, MD Sector, December 31, 2005,  
by Carol Ghebelian**

The 2005 Fort Belvoir Christmas Bird Count, Maryland Side, had 23 observers in 8 parties afield, with 2 feeder watchers also participating. Despite the duck hunters on the water, we were still able to find our average count of 88 species and add 2 new species to our cumulative list for this count. Harold Day and Charlene Sellner, helpers from Virginia, found our first Merlin in the Fort Washington area, and Gwen Brewer and George Jett spotted an immature Baltimore Oriole at National Colonial Farm. That brings our cumulative list to 127 species tallied in the years since 1981 that SMAS has been a team of the Ft Belvoir circle. Other birds of note were Eastern Meadowlarks seen in Hard Bargain fields, and a Bonaparte's Gull at Piscataway Wastewater Treatment Plant. Our total individuals count was a whopping 37,663—three times that of last year. This is owing to a huge flock of Common Grackles (15,000) found by Bob Lukinic at the Barry's Hill Rd. swamp, and to unusually high numbers of Canada Geese, Gadwall, Lesser Scaup, and American Coot tallied by Chris Ordiway's team at Piscataway Creek. Northern Bobwhite, Rusty Blackbird, Gray Catbird, American Tree and Chipping Sparrow, and winter finches were not to be found again this year; nor, surprisingly, Double-crested Cormorant. Eastern Bluebird populations remain low after the cold winter of 2003; American and Fish Crows are making a very slow recovery from apparent West Nile Virus. Anecdotes of the day included a Screech Owl that insisted on being counted when it slammed into Bob Lukinic's car on River Road, but thankfully flew off! His group also saw a Sharp-shinned Hawk take a Cedar Waxwing in a pear tree at the local Food Lion.

**Patuxent River CBC, January 1, 2006  
by Doug Lister**

The stalwart 19 who participated in the 2005 - 2006 Patuxent River Count experienced a glorious lack of waterfowl, broke the magic 100 species mark for our 6<sup>th</sup> time in 11 years, and got wonderful suntans for good measure. What better way to spend New Year's Day than outside on a beautiful 50-degree day? Arlene Ripley quipped at the tally rally that anybody concerned about the lack of birds should keep in mind that 50 and sunny beats the heck out of 25 with clouds and wind (not to mention ice, snow or rain) any January day. So was there really a lack of birds? Not as to species. We tallied 101 species adding two new ones to the count –

Forster's Tern and Tree Swallow (for an 11 year species total of 146). However, we did record our third lowest individual total at 17,817. Just to give and an idea of how light that number is, we almost doubled that individual count last year and have gone over 42,000.

I'm guessing this large void in our species total, formally known as waterfowl, was caused by our Anseriformes friends concentrating mostly up river and enjoying lovely spring-like conditions sipping one of those phoofy mai-tai drinks sporting a little umbrella in the glass. But I digress. — We saw most of the species one could expect in Southern Maryland this time of year with some of our highlights including all three scoter and merganser species, a female Merlin, Snow Buntings and Lapland Longspurs at NAS Pax River, lots of Northern Flickers, Killdeer, Sharp-shinned Hawks, Barred Owls (at least lots for us at 4), White-breasted Nuthatches and Carolina Wrens. Normally we have a pretty stiff Ruddy Duck competition every year, but this year it fell way short producing only a paltry 1266 (our 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest (barely) in 11 years) compared to over 11,000 for the last two years. I think our Ruddy Duckers had their Ruddy Duck filters on this year.

Here's a challenge for all CBC counters for next year – everyone take a kid out counting with you (I'm talking a youngster, not an adult who refuses to grow up, although that would be challenging in its own right as my wife, Lisa, will attest). Talk about a way to put the whole thing into a wonderfully new perspective and to get kids interested in our obsessive-compulsive disorder. Thanks to all the folks that counted this year. It was a fun adventure.

**IN MEMORIAM  
Calvert R. Posey - 1924-2006**

Cal Posey, a member of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society since it's founding in 1971, died on January 9. A long-time resident of the Nanjemoy area, Cal Posey made outstanding contributions to the protection of the natural resources of the Nanjemoy area, to environmental education for school children and to the public's understanding and appreciation of the historic and natural features of that area.

He inherited about 400 acres in the Tayloes Neck area of Nanjemoy and placed conservation easements, held by the Maryland Environmental Trust, on much of it. In 1971, he offered to sell what is now SMAS's Nanjemoy Marsh Sanctuary, a 58 acre marsh and shoreline area along the tidal section of Nanjemoy Creek, to the National Audubon Society at a low price. NAS acquired it in 1972, appointed SMAS the manager of the property, and sold it to SMAS 1991 for \$10.

In 1993, Cal Posey received SMAS's first Environmentalist of the Year Award. Millie Kriemelmeyer nominated him for

that award. In her letter of nomination, she noted that Cal was a scientist who could teach biology, botany, ornithology, and much about the wildlife in and around Nanjemoy Creek. One of his major achievements, working with Steve Cardano, was to establish in 1988 the Nanjemoy Creek Environmental Education Center (NCEEC), which is under the Charles County Board of Education. NCEEC is located off Tayloes Neck Road on a piece of Posey's property. Cal leased that property to the Board of Education for a dollar a year. NCEEC educates school children on the environment. Cal taught there from 1988 until his retirement in 1998. He would also meet with the school children at NCEEC in the evening to entertain them with stories about the history and the natural features of the Nanjemoy area.

Cal worked to get the Nanjemoy Great Blue Heronry protected. The heronry and the area surrounding it was purchased by the Nature Conservancy. Cal was manager of the heronry for several years. He also studied the history of Native Americans in the Nanjemoy area and made some important archeological discoveries on their ancient dwelling sites.

In summary, Cal Posey contributed in many ways to the protection of the natural values of the Nanjemoy area, to our understanding of the history and natural resources of the area, and to education of us and our children about the environment and the history of the Nanjemoy area.

### **AUDUBON CAMP SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION DEADLINE IS MARCH 27**

Southern Maryland Audubon Society is accepting scholarship applications for summer workshops at the Hog Island camps of Maine Audubon. Teachers, naturalists and environmental educators working in Calvert, Charles, southern Prince George's and St. Mary's Counties are eligible to apply for the scholarship.

Go to [MaineAudubon.org](http://MaineAudubon.org) to see the many summer workshops available. For a brochure, call Millie Kriemelmeyer at 301-372-8766 or email her at [milliek@radix.net](mailto:milliek@radix.net).

A one page application should state applicant's name, home and work addresses, phone numbers, email address, and which workshop is preferred. Include a statement of how the camp experience would enhance applicant's knowledge and teaching.

The applicant's supervisor or principal must provide a letter of recommendation.

Mail application to: Millie Kreimelmeyer, SMAS Education Chair, 16900 Mattawoman Lane, Waldorf MD 20601. Fax: 301-782-7615.

## **ASSISTANCE NEEDED WITH BIRD SURVEYS AND HABITAT ENHANCEMENT**

One of our newer members, Michael Benedict, is working with his family and John Sites of Somerset Homes to create a development plan for the family property that will be as "wildlife-friendly" and "eco-friendly" as possible. In order to assist with the planning phase, he is seeking people to do bird surveys on the property this winter, during spring and fall migration periods, and during the upcoming breeding season. He is also interested in advice on enhancing habitat for wildlife and creative ideas on how to achieve these objectives. The 129 acre property is located in southern Charles County, and contains a mix of forest, field, and ravines along a small creek. Can you spare some time to help with bird surveys or share some ideas? If you can help, please contact him at [michaelbenedict@msn.com](mailto:michaelbenedict@msn.com).

### **WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!**

T. Anderson, Leonardtown  
Warren Ashworth, Huntingtown  
Michael Benedict, Newburg  
Elizabeth Black, Owings  
Pete Brown, Leonardtown  
Mary Christensen, St Leonard  
B.A.Conklin, Leonardtown  
Grace Cook, Solomons  
Tuti/Ruben Dangins, Tilghman  
Chuck/Carolyn Debolt, Pr Frederick  
John Ehman, La Plata  
Hal Elliott, Leonardtown  
Carl Fuller, Mechanicsville  
Mary Graf, Lusby  
Bob Guite, Waldorf  
Joseph Hardy, Clinton  
Cailin Heinze, Brandywine  
Brad Hierstetter, Callaway  
Chris Hocker, Cobb Island  
Michael/Diana Kidder, Lexington Pk  
Kerry Casey Lane, Lusby  
Joseph Lukas, Ft Washington  
Marion Marbray, Accokeek  
Catherine Murray, Waldorf  
Dorothy Rodgers, Ft Washington  
Edith Rogers, Avenue  
Lois Rose, Tall Timbers  
Helen Schaefer, Pt Tobacco  
R. Mason/D Sheftz, Pt Republic  
Jack Duane Warren III, La Plata  
Alice Wild, Solomons

## ANNUAL POTOMAC RIVER CLEANUP SEEKS VOLUNTEERS

Mark your calendar for April 8

The annual Potomac River Cleanup is to be held April 8, from 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m., rain or shine. This is a request to the members of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society for help to heal this watershed. Volunteers are to meet in the parking lot at the west end of Rte. 227 (Marshall Hall Road). A representative of SMAS will be at the sign-in table. SMAS has sponsored this site for many years. Drinks, snacks, gloves, and trash bags are provided for the volunteers. Several other cleanups are being held on the same day at other sites along the Potomac River Basin.

Those who volunteer every year include member of SMAS, students working on their community service requirements, church groups, scouts, and residents of all ages concerned about the environment in which we live. Their work makes great improvements in the appearance, safety, and usefulness of the shoreline. We hope many concerned citizens will again show up to clean the shores. For information contact Bob Lukinic at 301-283-6317, e-mail: rlukinic@peoplepc.com.

Bob Lukinic, site coordinator

### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Do you know what the SMAS Board does? What happens at those monthly Board meetings, held the last Wednesday of most months? For starters, we read and accept the Minutes of the last meeting, and make any announcements of upcoming events. A treasurer's report is given so that we can see how we stand relative to our approximately \$10,000 budget. This budget covers things like speaker honoraria, insurance, Audubon camp scholarship, and newsletter, and receives income from member dues, bookstore sales, and fund-raisers like Christmas gift wrapping, yard sales, and birdathon. During the Board meeting, committee chairs give reports on committee activities, like adopt-an-osprey, conservation, education, membership, sanctuary, bookstore, field trips, hospitality, archives, and raptor conservation. These meetings are also where all other aspects of SMAS business are handled. At our last meeting on Jan. 25, we heard about the progress by Jean Artes and others on a new banner and display board for use at fund-raising and educational events like Earth Day. Jean also presented a first draft of a brochure on birding in southern Maryland. We discussed increasing member activity and involvement of young birders through special field trips for children and parents, and reaching out to scout groups and school environmental clubs. Members have also presented programs and led trips for home-schooled children. School science fairs are coming up, with some of our members

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## FOSTER PARENTS NEEDED

*The gift of an osprey adoption becomes part of a special fund for the support of osprey research and raptor conservation projects in Southern Maryland. The foster parent receives:*

- 1) A certificate of adoption of an osprey fledgling banded with a numbered U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service leg band. The certificate gives the location and date the osprey was banded.
- 2) Information on osprey ecology and migration patterns, a 5"x7" photo of a fledgling and information that Steve receives on the whereabouts or fate of the bird.

Interested? Here's how to become an Osprey parent. Send \$10.00, with the form, for each fledgling to be adopted to:

**Southern Maryland Audubon Society  
ATTN: Adoption Program  
P.O. Box 181  
Bryans Road, Maryland 20616**

### ADOPT AN OSPREY

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Amount Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_



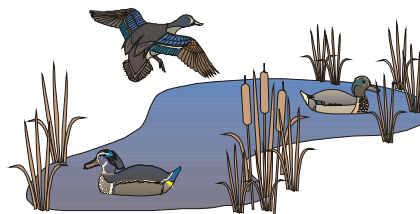


serving as judges, and SMAS will contribute to a professional day for teachers next fall. Plans are underway for a youth birding camp at Nanjemoy Environmental Education Center next summer, under the direction of Mike Callahan, with the support of SMAS volunteers and in partnership with the Charles County Public Schools Gifted Education program. The Board agreed to cover the stipends for two volunteers, one scholarship for a needy child, and field guides for each participant.

This summary only touches on the many things that SMAS is doing. We always need help on these special projects, and even on the more routine business of the society. If you would like to help with any of these projects, join a committee, or fill an upcoming opening on the Board, please contact me, a Board member, or a committee chair. Their names and contact information are listed in the green SMAS 2005-2006 program brochure, and on the website (<http://www.geocities.com/smdaudubon/>). The next Board meeting will be held on Wed. Feb. 22, 7-9 pm, at the White Plains SMECO office. Members are always welcome to attend, and agenda items for the Board can be sent to me. With almost 600 members, including over 100 chapter only members, we can achieve great things--but only if more members participate! — Gwen Brewer, President, [glbrewer@comcast.net](mailto:glbrewer@comcast.net), 301-843-3524

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**April 5—Wednesday—7:30 p.m. Monthly Meeting** Clearwater Nature Center, Cosca Regional Park, Clinton, Prince George's County. **Shade-grown Coffee: The migratory Bird Connection** by Russ Greenberg, Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center. Shade-grown coffee plantations play a key role in the conservation of migratory birds that have found a sanctuary in these forest-like environments. The Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center has been at the forefront of research into shade-grown coffee conservation issues, and encourages the production of shade-grown coffee through its Bird Friendly coffee program. Dr. Greenberg, Director of the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, has published extensively on this topic. He will discuss his efforts and those of the Center to conserve migratory birds in coffee plantations. You can even do your part by purchasing shade-grown coffee from the SMAS bookstore!



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## NEW OR RENEWAL 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 at the Introductory Offer. My membership will also include membership in the Southern Maryland Audubon Society. I will receive National's *Audubon* magazine, the chapter newsletter, *The Osprey*, and support National and local environmental causes. A fraction of my dues will be returned to the local chapter.
- Please **renew** my membership in the National Audubon Society and the local chapter, the Southern Maryland Audubon Society. A fraction of my dues will be returned to the local chapter.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail to: Southern Maryland Audubon Society**  
**Attn: Membership**  
**P.O.Box 181**  
**Bryans Road, MD 20616**

**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
- Optional Donation     \$\_\_\_\_\_

**National Dues, Make check payable to**  
**National Audubon Society**

- Introductory Offer - 1 year    \$20
- Introductory Offer – 2 year    \$30
- Senior/Student                    \$15
- Renewal Rate                        \$35

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## MARCH EVENTS

**March 1**—Wednesday—7:30 p.m. **Monthly Meeting.** Battle Creek Cypress Swamp Nature Center, Prince Frederick, Calvert County. *Birds and Plants of the Nanjemoy Natural Resources Management Area* by Ashley Traut and Kate Kricher, Maryland Department of Natural Resources. Douglas Point and the Nanjemoy Natural Resources Management Area make up part of the largest tract of intact forest in southern Maryland. In 2005, Ashley studied the birds of this area, with a focus on forest interior birds. At the same time, Kate investigated the plants of the forests, old fields, and wetlands of this stunning property. They will discuss their findings and the uniqueness of this beautiful gem in western Charles County.

**March 4**—Saturday—8:00 a.m. **Field Trip** Patuxent River Naval Air Station (NAS), St. Mary's County. **Late Winter Land Birds, Waterfowl.** Leader: Dean Newman (240-895-7321, dean.newman@verizon.net). Half-day trip. Meet at the Park N Ride lot across the street from the Lexington Park Post Office on Tulagi Place. This trip has produced Lapland Longspur, Snow Bunting, Short-eared Owl, and waterfowl in the past. Call the leader for reservations and security details **before February 28**. You must sign up for this trip in advance and provide your social security number. Facilities and no fee.

**March 26**—Sunday—8:00 a.m. **Field Trip** Myrtle Grove WMA, Charles County. **Birding for all Levels.** Leader: Fred Burggraf (301-934-8042, fburggraf@aol.com). Three-hour trip looking for hawks, sparrows, woodpeckers, and waterfowl. Great for beginning birders! From Rte. 301 in La Plata take Rte. 225 west about 4.5 miles to the WMA on the right. From Rte. 210 take Rte 225 east about 4 miles to the WMA. Follow the dirt road to the end (about a mile) and meet in the parking lot near the lake. No facilities, no fees.

**March 29**—Wednesday—7:00 p.m. **Board of Directors Meeting.** St. Mary's County Library, Charlotte Hall. Directors meetings are open to any member.

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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**  
P.O. Box 181 Bryans Road, MD 20616

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