

The Osprey



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www.geocities.com/smdaudubon

Newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society

PROTECT MARYLAND OPEN SPACE FOR OUR FUTURE

VOTE YES FOR QUESTION 1 ON NOVEMBER 7TH

Since 1969 more than 800,000 acres of land have been saved from development, and more than 4350 parks and recreation areas have been designated, such as Watkins State Park (Prince George's County), Quiet Waters Park (Anne Arundel County), and St. Mary's River State park (St. Mary's County).

In October, 2004, the public learned that the State of Maryland proposed to sell more than 800 acres in Southern Maryland, including sensitive wetlands, to a politically influential developer named Willard Hackerman. This land, purchased with dedicated tax money by Program Open Space, was to be sold below market price without a guarantee of preservation, according to documents obtained by the press. Hackerman planned to develop luxury homes on the property.

This November voters have the opportunity to assure that conservation land held by the state is better protected from being sold off to politically influential private interests. A constitutional amendment was passed in the General Assembly this year, which requires the General Assembly to approve sales of state owned conservation lands. Question 1 on the ballot asks voters to approve this amendment.

Vote for Question 1 on the November 7th ballot to keep the State from selling any preserved state park, conservation, or recreational land without approval from the General Assembly. Urge your friends and acquaintances to do likewise.

SMAS CHAPTER-ONLY LIFE MEMBERSHIP OFFERED

The Board of Directors has established a Life Membership option for Chapter-Only Members. Individual members under age 62 may enroll as a life member for \$500; dues for senior members age 62 and over are \$250. Lifetime dues will be invested in a CD or other prudent long-term investment. The interest or dividend will be drawn off to cover the individual's normal annual chapter-only membership dues, while the lifetime dues remain invested.

You may wish to consider this opportunity to further support the future of SMAS and also relieve paperwork involved in renewals. All Chapter-Only dues are fully tax-deductible as we are a non-profit 501(c)3 organization.

SMAS SEPTEMBER YARD SALE A GREAT SUCCESS

by Julie Daniel, Flea Market/Yard Sale Committee

The SMAS yard sale held on September 23rd was a tremendous success. Total sales for the day were \$900.00. Thanks go to the following members who generously donated items to sell at the yard sale (without items we wouldn't be able to have one): The Ferralls, The Andersons, The Kriemelmeyer's, The Willoughby's, The Walkers, The Sokol's, The Piotrowski's, the Burton's, The Upton's, The Ghebelian's, Ted and Linda Daniel, Hayward Swisher, Pradip Sahdev, Delores McLean, Isobel Bryant, Shirley Wood, George Jett, Gwen Brewer, Cora Fulton, and Mike Callahan. Many thanks also to those who volunteered the day of the yard sale: Oscar and Carol Ghebelian, Beverly and Warren Walker, Gwen Brewer, George Jett, Paula and Ernie Willoughby, Cora Fulton, Shirley Wood, Delores McLean, and Hayward Swisher. The last group of people to thank is all the customers, and a great thing about yard sales is that a significant percent of the sales were made by people that are not members of SMAS – it even attracted the attention of a man driving a Food Lion 18-wheeler! There were several customers who saw so many things they wanted to buy that they ran out of money and then came back a second time after going to an ATM! Thanks again to everyone who helped make the yard sale a success (apologies to anyone inadvertently left off the lists above). If you donated items and would like a receipt for taxes please e-mail your home address to juliemdaniel@hotmail.com.



"Do I hear two dollars?" Will Daniel (right) and Gwen Brewer (center) assist patrons at the yard sale.
(Photo by George Jett)

BIRDING OFF THE COAST OF MAINE IN JUNE

By Tyler Bell

For those of you keeping score, this was the 11th American Birding Association convention (June 19-25, 2006) that my wife, Jane Kostenko, and I have worked since our first one in 1994. Owing to the constraints of field trip bus departures and returns, we are usually not able to venture far from the convention site. This was also true for Bangor. So, with the little time we did have, we were granted two seats on the pelagic trip to Petit Manan Island on June 22.

The Gulf of Maine is well north of the Gulf Stream which diverges from the east coast at Cape Hatteras, NC. The further north you go, the colder the water becomes. The average surface water temperature between Bar Harbor and Petit Manan in June is 45° F. Knowing this in advance allowed us to pack the appropriate outer wear. We warned people who were going on the boat to pack their woolies but some either didn't listen or didn't think we were being truthful. We wore blue jeans, wool socks, t-shirt, sweat shirt, fleece jacket and winter coat, gloves, ski cap and a fleece neck gaiter. And we were still cold!

The Ship, *Friendship V*, is a jet propelled catamaran. This combination of features gives it incredible speed, up to 45 mph, and a strange motion on the ocean. Long-time pelagic attendees became ill while others prone to sea sickness were fine.

We sailed from Bar Harbor and immediately began seeing Black Guillemots. These birds are often quite easy to see from shore and one could even be seen from the stern of the ship while we were still at anchor. As we moved away from the coast, the swells started rocking the boat and weeding people out within 15 minutes of first encounter. Thankfully Jane and I know our limitations and use transdermal scopolamine. That and nibbling frequently on ginger snaps and crackers and drinking water and ginger ale helped keep our food in our stomachs.

The closer to the island, the better the birding became. We began to find tubenoses. First were Wilson's Storm-Petrels. These birds nest near Antarctica and spend the austral winter in the northern hemisphere. Then we began seeing Leach's Storm-Petrels which nest in burrows on nearby islands. These are nocturnal birds so seeing them during daylight is always iffy. Then Greater and Sooty Shearwaters with the occasional Manx Shearwater and Northern Fulmar. It is amazing to watch these birds skimming inches above the water at tremendous speed.

Finally, we arrived at the island. As we slowed for our approach, the water was covered with small groups of Black Guillemots, Razorbills, Common Murres and Atlantic Puffins. The puffins were our target bird. We had caught a less than satisfying look at one on a pelagic trip from Maryland several years ago but now they were at very close range. The island

itself was a cacophony of gulls and terns. Ring-billed, Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls were probably the dominant species but there were hundreds of Common and Arctic Terns wheeling overhead. One of the leaders spotted a pair of Roseate Terns sitting on the shore and with a lot of coaching, most of us got poor looks at them. The ship was having a mechanical issue and couldn't approach the shore as closely as usual which was a great disappointment, especially those who had never seen a Roseate Tern before!

All good things must come to an end so we headed for shore. When we arrived at the dock, another group of whale watching tourists was lined up to board. They were mostly wearing shorts and t-shirts. It was quite interesting to see their jaws drop when they saw us leaving dressed in full arctic wear. I suspect they mostly stayed in the cabin wishing for the trip to end!

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

Chapman State Park, Sept. 16, by Carol Ghebelian

The light was low over historic Mount Aventine and the Potomac River as our group of 10 birders began our field trip on Sept. 16 at Chapman State Park. It was not a good day for migrant fallouts and other birds were hunkered down, but nonetheless our expert leader, Gwen Brewer, found about 40 species of birds during the morning walk. Common Yellowthroat, Scarlet Tanager, Indigo Buntings, Red-shouldered Hawk, and resident birds were tallied in the parking lot. The park supports a high population of breeding Wood Thrushes, and several lingerers or migrants greeted us as we began the road to the river. The river yielded Double-crested Cormorants, Canada Geese, Wood Duck, Ring-billed and Great Black-backed Gulls, Forster's Terns, Osprey, Great Blue Heron, and Belted Kingfisher. At least 2 mature and 2 immature Bald Eagles and both vultures were seen throughout the day. Heading for the marsh walking path we encountered a host of gnats, but enjoyed watching a Ruby-throated Hummingbird hawking for the critters, and 2 Yellow-bellied Flycatchers taking advantage of the easy meal. The marsh was quiet but we boosted our species of resident birds and added American Redstart, Acadian Flycatcher, Eastern Wood-Pewee, and Red-eyed Vireo. Malingering at the shoreline with his camera, George Jett lost us when we left the river and ended up in the Chapman Family Cemetery! Very much still alive, however, he phoned in a Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Scarlet Tanager. We retraced our steps to the manor house and enjoyed the spectacular Potomac view from Mount Aventine. Co-leader Carol Ghebelian produced a loaf of Cora Fulton's famous banana bread baked especially for the group. She even carries out her tradition *in absentia*! Back at the parking lot we were working the forest edge and had just added a Black and White Warbler when *Maryland Independent's* photographer, Gary Smith, caught up with us to take our photograph. This was a follow-up to the reporter who attended the Sept. 6th monthly meeting

and is writing a feature article on birding in southern Maryland to appear in October. Gary and George Jett (*in absentia*) finished the banana bread! As a drizzle began we headed for our cars with thanks to Gwen and to the 2 guests she brought from MOS and Audubon DC. The park is beautiful in all seasons and always open on a walk-in basis.

Sabine's Gull at Conowingo Dam October 1, by Tyler Bell and Jane Kostenko On Sunday morning, October 1, Jane asked if we should check email, so we booted up the 'puter. Jane receives a digest form of the Maryland bird discussion list, MDOsprey, and buried in the Saturday digest was a post about the Sabine's Gull being seen again at Conowingo Dam. Grabbing our copy of the "Field List of the Birds of Maryland" (known as the Yellow Book) by Iliff, Ringler and Stasz, we noticed that there had been one previous Sabine's Gull seen in Anne Arundel County and on several past pelagic trips but that it was still extremely rare in Maryland. So, we chucked our work responsibilities around the house and yard, loaded up optics and munchies, and headed north.

For those not familiar with Conowingo Dam, it is located on the Susquehanna River just north of Havre de Grace and just south of the Pennsylvania border. It has now hosted 17 species of gulls. Jane and I have been fortunate to see several rare gulls there.

When we arrived at 12:30 p.m., we were disappointed to hear that the gull had been seen at 8:30 that morning but not since. There was a nice crowd of Maryland's top listers and other birders so there was lots of talk of rare birds that people had seen over the years. People had started to spread out when a woman drove up around 2:30 pm and said that some people down river from our location had just seen the gull. We all moved en masse only to find the bird had landed somewhere. Then someone found it on a rock in the middle of the river. Being an immature bird, it looked very similar in coloration to the rock it was perched on and blended in so well it was easy to overlook. The gull sat still and on a couple of occasions flexed its wings to show the characteristic white triangular wing patch. You could tell when this happened as there was a chorus of "oohs" and "aahs" from the assembled birders. Then the bird took off and flew directly over the gathered crowd, then downstream and out of sight. Just about that time it started to rain so we took it as a sign to head to our cars. Soon after we got into the car it cut loose in a torrent putting a decisive end to our field trip! (The gull did make another appearance later that same day for the birders who arrived after the bird flew over us, but not in the following days.)

One thing we noticed was that the large group of birders made for some curiosity among other human visitors to the

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FOSTER PARENTS NEEDED



Southern Maryland Audubon Society sponsors the banding of nestling birds of prey, or raptors, with serially numbered aluminum bands in cooperation with the Bird Banding Laboratory of the U. S. Department of the Interior, as part of our bird research and conservation activities in Southern Maryland. Limited numbers of Osprey and Barn Owl nestlings become available each year for adoption. The gift of \$10 for an Osprey adoption, or of \$25 for a Barn Owl adoption, contributes to a special fund for the support of raptor research and raptor conservation projects. The foster parent receives:

- A certificate of adoption with the number of the U. S. Department of the Interior band, and the location and date of the banding.
- Information on the ecology and migration patterns of the species, photo of a fledgling, and any other information on whereabouts or fate of the bird that may be available.

Interested? Here's how to become a foster parent of an Osprey or a Barn Owl. Send \$10.00 for each Osprey, or \$25 for each Barn Owl to:

Southern Maryland Audubon Society
ATTN: Adoption Program
11350 Budds Creek Rd.
Charlotte Hall, Maryland 20622



ADOPT A RAPTOR

Name: _____

Address: _____

I wish to adopt (check one):

_____ (number of) Osprey, \$10.00 each

_____ (number of) Barn Owl, \$25.00 each

Amount Enclosed: _____

(Make checks payable to:

Southern Maryland Audubon Society)

dam. We talked with several folks who asked what we were looking for. Whipping out a field guide with a color photo and the bird's range map went a long way toward impressing people. One of the most unlikely sets of folks we talked with was a couple of bikers in full leather-riding outfits. They had run over the dam to see what birds were hanging around and found all of us instead. We invited them to look at the gull (still resting on the rock at this point) through our scope. They surprised us by pulling out a pair of small binoculars of their own! We spent a good while with these two, talking about the gull, its rarity status in Maryland, what other birds are around the dam, and about various kinds of optics. The rain put an end to our public relations efforts, but it just goes to show you that we shouldn't judge someone else's interest by the motorcycle they drive!

JUDGE HALTS DRILLING NEAR TESHEKPUK LAKE IN AUDUBON LEGAL VICTORY

Statement of Betsy Loyless, Senior Vice President,
National Audubon Society

Washington, DC, September 26, 2006 – “By canceling a massive oil lease sale a federal court sent a decisive message to the Bush Administration that it must obey environmental laws. The court's decision gives a reprieve to some of the most sensitive habitat in Alaska, particularly the invaluable wetlands around Teshekpuk Lake.”

MORE INFORMATION

A US District Court Judge yesterday issued a ruling in the case, National Audubon Society v. Kempthorne, stopping a proposed oil lease sale opening nine million acres for drilling including near Alaska's Teshekpuk Lake. Interior had scheduled the lease sale for September 27.

Audubon, the lead plaintiff in the case, and its members campaigned for months to implore the Interior Department to consider irreparable environmental damage that would be caused in vital caribou and bird habitat.

AUDUBON HOPEFUL THAT EVIDENCE OF IVORY-BILLED WOODPECKERS IN FLORIDA WILL LEAD TO CONFIRMATION

New York, NY, September 26, 2006 – National Audubon Society today joins other conservationists around the globe in hoping that evidence compiled in the Florida panhandle will lead to the confirmation of an Ivory-billed Woodpecker population.

The sightings have been reported by an Auburn University research team, led by Professor Geoff Hill, Ph.D.

“It would be wonderful to confirm that a viable population of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers exists, and we hope the search by the Auburn research team will lead to that,” says Greg Butcher, Director of Bird Conservation for the National Audubon Society. “This announcement is a reminder of why it is so essential that we protect bottomland forests, wetlands and coastal habitats across the Southeast, and these new sightings should reinvigorate efforts to find the bird in other portions of its historic range.”

The evidence was published today in *Avian Conservation and Ecology* (<http://www.ace-eco.org/>).

Recent sightings of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker in eastern Arkansas were announced in 2005 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, The Nature Conservancy, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Arkansas Department of Fish and Game. The National Audubon Society and its state field office in Arkansas assisted in the search to confirm the bird's existence, hiring a Volunteer Coordinator who supervised and trained volunteers to search for the bird, use equipment, and collect data. While search efforts in the Big Woods of Arkansas concluded without definitive visual documentation of the bird, it did reveal the critical importance of the preservation and protection of the floodplain forests of the Southeast, which are vital habitat for many bird species.

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Your name: _____ Amount donated \$ _____

Your address: _____

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

NOVEMBER EVENTS

November 1-**Wednesday**-7:30 p.m. **Monthly Meeting**
Battle Creek Cypress Swamp Nature Center, Gray's Road
off Sixes Road, Prince Frederick, Calvert County. NOTE
CHANGE OF LOCATION SINCE PREVIOUS
ANNOUNCEMENTS.

Birds of Australia by Susan and Jack Leighty, Southern
Maryland Audubon Society. Travel with Jack and Susan
through Australia's Lamington, Kakadu, Cairns, and Daintree
National Parks. See the beautiful and interesting birds that
are unique to this fascinating country. They have captured
images of Kookaburra, Little Kingfisher, Magpie Goose,
Rainbow Lorikeet, Australian Pelican, Eastern Yellow Robin,
and many more. A sampling of their photos at last year's
Photographers' Night made us clamor for more! (The change
in location from the Calvert Co. Library was necessary since
the library will be in the process of moving to a new location.)

November 11-**Saturday**-8 a.m. to Noon. **Field Trip**
Point Lookout State Park, St. Mary's County.

Fall migrant birding: from the Point to the blinking light.
Leader: Marty Cribb (301-872-9464, pauraque@tgci.net). A
half-day trip plus. Waterfowl to sparrows, including Great
Cormorant, grebes, Brown Pelican, all three scoters, and
Brown-headed Nuthatch. Time permitting, we will visit local

farms and fields for raptors and puddle ducks. Reservations
required, limited to 15 participants. Limited facilities,
entrance fee to park possible (bring your park passes).
Contact leader for more information. Meet at entrance to
the park on Rte. 5.

November 29-**Wednesday**-7:00 to 9:00 p.m. **Board of
Directors Meeting**
SMECO in White Plains. 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
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