Spring arrives in the northern hemisphere at 5:45 PM on March 20. But those of us looking forward to warmer weather can look to March 1 as the beginning of meteorological spring. Meteorologists define the seasons by average temperature. Since the period from December to February is the coldest time of the year, they view March as the beginning of spring. This makes sense when you consider the activity of birds in our area. Osprey will start to return in late February and early March. Bald Eagles and Great Horned Owls are already nesting and will have hatchlings in February or March. There's a Bald Eagle nest within a Great Blue Heron colony in Clinton. The nest, which stands out as a larger structure than the neighboring heron nests, has two lively parents keeping watch. An active Great Horned Owl nest in Savannah, Georgia can be viewed through a live nest cam. Using the link, provided by Cornell Labs, you can see the nesting activity in real time at http://cams.allaboutbirds.org/channel/46/Great_Horned_Owls/. The first egg hatched on February 3 and the camera has captured prey being brought back to the nest.

It’s amazing how birds of prey can manage to incubate their eggs and feed nestlings when it’s still too cold for most birds to raise their young. The March program for SMAS will feature live birds of prey and naturalist Mike Callahan. Join us on March 4 at the Charlotte Hall library for our Raptors Rule! program to meet some birds of prey and learn more about their behaviors and adaptations. This is one of our most popular programs and a rare opportunity to see a Bald Eagle and other birds of prey.

Purple Martins will return to occupy their colonies in March. Their migration has already brought them into Georgia and can be followed at http://www.purplemartin.org/scoutreport/. Although it’s too early for them to start nesting, bluebirds and other songbirds will start to investigate potential nest boxes. Now is the time to clean out boxes or install new ones to prepare for birds nesting in your yard. In addition to Eastern Bluebirds, other birds that appreciate nest boxes are Carolina Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, House Wrens, and (rarely) Carolina Wrens. Interestingly, Carolina Wrens will nest almost anywhere. They have nested in a cardboard box on my porch, in an air conditioner, and just about anywhere in an unused car. Having birds nest in your yard is a gratifying experience and a way to appreciate the hard-working parents. SMAS will be offering a Bluebird nest box workshop on March 7 at Battle Creek Cypress Swamp in Prince Frederick. Information on this workshop and the Raptors Rule! program can be found at the SMAS website: http://somdaudubon.org/.

As we move into spring, SMAS will be more active with conservation work, fundraising, and community outreach programs. These are some of our most rewarding efforts and the kinds of activities that attracted me to conservation work as a member of the Board of SMAS. If you’re already participating in our field trips or monthly programs and would like to give more of your time, we would welcome you join our board. There are many opportunities we can talk to you about at one of our upcoming field trips or at a meeting.

Michael Patterson
Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum Field Trip, January 31, 2015 by David Moulton

First, there was the wind. A screaming gale brought down a mighty tree on leader Tyler Bell’s house in the middle of the night, piercing his attic and forcing him to scramble for a substitute leader for the long-planned field trip. Thus, at 7 AM, I took the reins from Tyler while he set aside his binoculars for a chain saw.

Second, there was the wind. Ten of us gathered at the Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum parking lot, holding our hats and stomping our feet and marveling at the size of the waves and white caps out on Patuxent River. A scattered flock of Cedar Waxwings blew by. A Bald Eagle soared defiantly in the northerly gale, heedless of 20 degree temperatures and the arctic wind-chill.

The plucky ten then carpooled down to Peterson Point where St. Leonard Creek joins the main river, hoping for waterfowl despite the foul weather. In the cove north of the cabin, we found a hen Red-Breasted Merganser amidst a small flock of Ruddy Ducks, and the rolling waters of the Patuxent provided glimpses of Common Goldeneyes and Buffleheads. But boy, was it cold on that point!

Back in the cars, we moved to the dilapidated pier opposite the old Academy of Natural Sciences Lab. Sheltered somewhat by the brush and trees, we scoped the river, finding larger groupings of Common Goldeneyes and Buffleheads, but failing to turn up any Long-tailed Ducks in the waves and foam. A large flock of White-throated Sparrows had sought shelter here as well, with a mix of Song Sparrows, Cardinals and Mockers thrown in.

Our final stop on the Park grounds included more scoping of the river. A Horned Grebe popped up amidst several huge rafts of Ruddy Ducks. On the way out, we discovered 5 Gadwall in an unfrozen farm pond, riding out the bad weather.

Leaving Patterson, we proceeded to Lloyd Bowen Road, where we hoped to find the resident Brown-headed Nuthatch clan despite the wind whistling through the loblollies. Success! This population remains one of the most northerly groupings of this fabulous little pinecone acrobat on all of Maryland’s Western Shore. Their distinctive squeaking high in the canopy eventually gave them away. Even though we could not feel our toes, finding this target species helped warm our hearts and provided a nice ending to a challenging day of bird-finding. We had only 31 species for the morning, but even the poets know it’s hard to find birds when the winter wind tips the trees like dominoes:

“When great trees fall in forests, small things recoil into silence, their senses eroded beyond fear.” Maya Angelou

The end.

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

Thomas Baummer, Mechanicsville
Linda M. Bednarski, Huntingtown
Debra Bingman, California
Julie A. Bizzell, Lusby
Sandra Burress, Mechanicsville
Mary Burton, Dunkirk
Phyllis Chisholm, La Plata
Margaret Dunlap, La Plata
Glenn Eanes, Owings
Mr. James C. Egan, Fort Washington
Justin Hoffman, La Plata
Mary L. Kramer, Leonardtown
Janice C. Orr, Ridge
Stephanie Paul, La Plata
Susan A. Polsky, Lexington Park
Mark Rositol, Fort Washington
Ms. Billie Seaton, North Beach
Mr. Paul Sierpinski, Waldorf
Violet Simmons, Indian Head

See it. Soar it. Save it.

Imagine soaring through the Grand Canyon on the wings of an eagle. Now, you can — with FlightMap. Visit places you’ve only heard about, fly through vivid three-dimensional landscapes, and learn about conservation work in the area — all with a single click. Take flight.

http://flightmap.audubon.org/
Potomac River Cleanup

It is again the time of the year for the Potomac River Cleanup. This year's cleanup will be on April 11th from 9:00 AM to 12:00 noon, rain or shine.

The site at Marshall Hall Park is again being sponsored by our Southern Maryland Audubon Society. SMAS will furnish drinks and snacks. Representatives will be at the sign-in table and through the park to help with whatever is needed.

Gloves and trash bags are furnished through the Alice Furgeson Foundation and Charles County Public Works.

Previously it had not been established which of the many different fingerprint powders available would work and there was always a risk of damaging the evidence. The results of the latest research showed that red and green magnetic fluorescent powders were the most successful at recovering fingerprints from feathers. Black magnetic powder was the most successful at recovering fingermarks from eggs.

Ian Thomson, head of investigations at RSPB Scotland, welcomed the research. He said: “Since 1994, almost 750 protected birds of prey have been confirmed as being the victims of illegal poisoning, shooting or trapping in Scotland. “This has included some of our rarest breeding species like Golden Eagles, Hen Harriers and Red Kites whose populations continue to be threatened by illegal killing.

“While government laboratory testing has made it relatively straightforward to identify the cause of death of the victims in many cases, identifying the perpetrator of offences that often take place in some of the remotest areas of our countryside continues to be very difficult.

Full details of the methods used have been recorded in a research paper, which has been published in the journal Science & Justice and is available online.

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In previous years, many volunteers participated in the cleanup including: students working on their community service requirements, scout troops, church groups, and businesses, as well as residents of all ages interested in the environment in which we live. Every year after the volunteers are done there is such a great difference in the appearance, safety, and usefulness of the shoreline. SMAS hopes that concerned residents will again show up to help heal the Potomac.

If you want further information please contact me.

Site Coordinator
Bob Lukinic
Phone 301-283-6317
E-mail rdlukinic@gmail.com
Southern Maryland Audubon Society
ADOPT-A-RAPTOR
Foster Parents Needed!!

The Southern Maryland Audubon Society supports raptor conservation and research projects in the Southern Maryland area through the “Adopt-A-Raptor” Program. The program currently includes four species: Osprey, Barn Owl, American Kestrel and Northern Saw-whet Owl. Each bird is banded by a licensed bird bander with a serially numbered metal band, in cooperation with the U.S. Bird Banding Laboratory. A limited number of birds are available for adoption each year!

“Adopt-A-Nest” now available for Osprey, Barn Owl & Kestrels!

Adoptive “parents” will receive:
- A certificate of adoption with the bird’s band number, and location and date of banding.
- Information on the ecology and migration patterns of the species
- Any other pertinent information that may become available

Your support helps provide:
- Barn Owl Nest Boxes
- Osprey Nesting Platforms
- Kestrel Nest Boxes
- Mist Nets or Banding Supplies

Complete the form below to “Adopt-A-Raptor” with the Southern Maryland Audubon Society

Mail completed form to: Melissa Boyle, Adopt-a-Raptor, 10455 Point Lookout Rd. Scotland, MD 20687

Name:_______________________________________
Address:_____________________________________
____________________________________________
I wish to adopt:
_______(# of) Osprey, $10 each / $25 per nest
_______(# of) Barn Owl, $25 each / $50 per nest
_______(# of) Northern Saw-whet Owl, $30 each
_______(# of) American Kestrel, $35 each / $75 per nest
Amount Enclosed:______________________

Make checks payable to: Southern Maryland Audubon Society

See Acopian BirdSavers FAQs

Acopian BirdSavers need to be installed on the outside of the window. This is so that birds flying towards the window will see the cords, avoid them, and therefore not fly into the glass. Acopian BirdSavers consist of 1/8 inch diameter nylon cords (olive drab colored parachute cord [paracord]) hanging four and one quarter inches (4-1/4”) apart. We have been using olive drab colored parachute cord for many years and it has proven very effective. The results of tests conducted by Dr. Dan Klem, confirm our own conclusions that Acopian BirdSavers with olive colored parachute cord are very effective in preventing bird-window collisions. We are fairly certain though, that any dark color, or for that matter probably any color or any type of cord, will be just as effective as the olive drab color paracord. Any method you use to hang cord in front of the glass will significantly decrease the number of birds that are hitting a problem window. The cord can be spaced closer together than 4-1/4” if you are concerned about the possibility of any smaller birds trying to fly between the cords although this very rarely happens. 4-1/4” spacing seems to be a very good balance between the visual aesthetics of the cord on the window and the protection of the birds. Birds sometimes do fly into even solid objects! (See FAQ – “Why do BirdSavers prevent birds from flying into windows?”)

Below is one example of various ways to attach the BirdSavers cords to a window. What you will use to support the vertical “hanging cords” depends upon your particular window’s situation.

To see the full link, click here:
http://www.birdsavers.com/buildyourown.html

Acopian BirdSavers - PO Box 638 - Easton, PA 18044
dizzybird@birdsavers.com

See Acopian BirdSavers FAQs

‘Quick Guide’ to make your own Acopian BirdSavers
- Use 1/8” diameter, dark colored, paracord (parachute cord).
- Attach the paracord on the outside of the window, above the glass.
- Space the vertical hanging paracord anywhere from 3.5” to 4.25” apart.
- If you are concerned about wind blowing the cords, the bottoms of the cords can be attached below the glass, although many people like the effect when the cords stop about 2” above the bottom of the glass.

Acopian BirdSavers FAQs

Any method you use to hang cord in front of the glass will significantly decrease the number of birds that are hitting a problem window. The cord can be spaced closer together than 4-1/4” if you are concerned about the possibility of any smaller birds trying to fly between the cords although this very rarely happens. 4-1/4” spacing seems to be a very good balance between the visual aesthetics of the cord on the window and the protection of the birds. Birds sometimes do fly into even solid objects!

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Forest Plan To Help Golden-Winged Warbler

In mid-January, a large forest management and habitat conservation effort was announced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture that will target improvements on approximately 64,000 acres of key habitat in the Great Lake states of Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. One of the key anticipated outcomes should be avoiding the necessity of listing the imperiled Golden-winged Warbler under the Endangered Species Act.

This tri-state project is scheduled to begin later this year with funding available through 2019. The project will be managed in partnership between the Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the American Bird Conservancy. It is complemented by work being conducted on lands by these and other partners with support from the Minnesota’s Outdoor Heritage Fund.

The Golden-winged Warbler, which depends on the conservation of key habitat - early successional, or "young," forest habitat - for breeding, has suffered one of the steepest population declines of any North American songbird species. This warbler has shown a decline of more than three percent annually over the last 40 years. Beyond the early-successional issue, other factors contributing to the decline may be suburban sprawl, competition from and hybridization with Blue-winged Warblers, cowbird parasitism, and the loss of wintering habitat in Central and South America.

Basically, however, “this is the poster-bird for recovery of early successional forest habitat,” according to George Fenwick, President of the American Bird Conservancy. The new project is expected to create breeding habitat for 1,180 pairs of Golden-winged Warblers and potentially result in an increase of 16,000 individuals within four years.

This will be achieved by providing technical support to private landowners whose properties lie within designated focal areas, helping landowners develop and implement conservation management plans for their properties. Similar to other NRCS programs, financial assistance will be available to qualifying landowners.

In addition to benefiting the warbler, the restoration effort is expected to aid preservation of other bird species such as American Woodcock, Ruffed Grouse, and Black-billed Cuckoo.

Find out more details here:
and here:
http://www.abcbirds.org/newsandreports/releases/150114.html

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

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President’s Budget Calls for Increases for Migratory Bird Conservation

Citing a growing economy, a low unemployment rate, and a greatly reduced annual federal deficit, President Obama has for the first time in four years proposed significant increases to Interior Department programs essential to bird conservation and the maintenance and restoration of important habitats on federal lands. Migratory birds would benefit from proposed funding increases to the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, the Joint Ventures Partnerships, and expansions to National Wildlife Refuges. Endangered species programs are increased, and the Greater Sage-Grouse planning process receives a major boost to $78 million, up from $19 million this year.

Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell outlined the administration’s budget on an outreach call with conservationists. She noted an 8% overall proposed increase for the Interior budget, and that reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund with permanent and full funding was a top legislative priority. Landscape planning and master leasing plans to ensure more sustainable energy development on public lands will also receive additional funds. However, it remains unclear if Congress will support these proposed spending increases.

“The President’s budget recognizes that supporting bird conservation and public lands is a smart investment, benefitting the economy today, and ensuring that future generations of Americans will also enjoy the same bounty,” said Steve Holmer, senior policy advisor with ABC.

One area of concern is the $850 million in proposed cuts over five years in Agriculture Department conservation programs including reducing the Conservation Stewardship Program by 3 million acres and a $373 million cut from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), which offers technical and financial assistance to landowners looking to improve management practices. One bright note in the Agriculture budget is $330 million for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, which provides grants to benefit species of conservation concerning including the Golden-winged and Cerulean Warbler.

Steve Holmer - Senior Policy Advisor
American Bird Conservancy &
Director, Bird Conservation Alliance
202-888-7490 sholmer@abcbirds.org
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

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Pet Hair: It’s for the Birds!
By Jane Kostenko

As I write this article, snow is falling and it’s hard to think about spring, nesting birds, and budding daffodils. But this is the time of year when many local birds do start to check out nesting boxes and/or build one or more nests.

For many years now, Tyler Bell and I have given our yard birds a boost in nesting materials by collecting cat hair when we comb our indoor cats. We have a metal coffee can that holds the fur all year long. Around this time of year, we take out wads of the combed fur and stuff it into an empty suet cage, which we hang in the back yard off of an unused shepherd’s hook. We’ve seen references to putting hair on twigs, in bushes, snagged along fences—put it in a variety of places so different types of birds can easily get at it. (But always keep in mind outdoor cats and raise the fur up high enough that a marauding cat won’t get at your birds when their minds are elsewhere!)

Every year, we delight in seeing chickadees and titmice pulling out huge tufts of fur from the cage, barely able to see around it as they fly off to their nests. We’ve never actually seen a nest with our tiger or orange cats’ fur woven in it, but we assume the birds are using it, since they come back again and again.

Dog hair could certainly also be used. If you don’t have pets of your own, ask your friends! I doubt anyone would begrudge you a sackful of fur!

One caution: Never use dryer lint!

[Link to humane society article: http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/resources/tips/nest_building.html#id=album-144&num=content-2737]
Upcoming Events

February 20 – FRIDAY – 8:00 p.m.
FIELD TRIP
Private Farm, Charles County
“BARN OWL PROWL”
Leader: Mike Callahan
Join us on this night hike to look and listen for the rare, year round resident owl of Southern Maryland, the Barn Owl. The farm is owned by the newly founded Wicomico Valley Federation of Southern Maryland. This is a great family outing! Bring a reusable mug for hot chocolate. The exact meeting location will be given at registration. Suggested donation of $5.00 per person. RSVP to Mike at 240-765-5192, or raptorsrulemc@gmail.com

March 7 – SATURDAY – 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOP EVENT
Battle Creek Cypress Swamp Nature Center, Calvert County
“BLUEBIRD BOX WORKSHOP”
Leader(s): Andy Brown and Melissa Boyle
Attention gardeners, birders, and nature lovers!! Learn to build your own Bluebird nest box and help the Eastern Bluebird. The workshop will also instruct you about the installation, placement, maintenance, and habitat requirements to assist this beautiful bird; then enjoy your efforts at home this spring! All tools and materials will be supplied. Participants will make a bluebird box to take home to place in a suitable habitat and monitor in their own yard.
Fee: $15/box. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Recommended for ages 8 to adult. Pre-registration by March 1. Email Melissa Boyle to register: melissaboyle3@gmail.com

March 14 – SATURDAY – 8:00 a.m. – 12 noon
FIELD TRIP
Ward Road Park, Calvert County
“WINTER BIRD LIST”
Leader: Dean Newman
This trip has produced Lapland Longspurs, Snow Buntings and Short-eared Owls. Facilities are available. No fee.
Meet at the Park and Ride lot across the street from the Lexington Park Post Office on Tulagi Place. Mandatory pre-registration due to security details. Call or email Dean to register: dean.newman@dau.mil or 301-672-5464.

March 14 – SATURDAY- 8 a.m.
FIELD TRIP
Indian Head area, Charles County
“INDIAN HEAD RAIL TRAIL AND SMALLWOOD STATE PARK”
Leader(s): Andy Brown and Melissa Boyle
This is a joint trip with the Audubon Naturalist Society.
Come and see the Red-heads and help us find migrants who are heading north!! Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Burger King, 3165 Marshall Hall Rd, Bryans Rd, MD 20616. RSVP to Carol or Lynne.

March 1 – WEDNESDAY – 7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
MONTHLY MEETING PROGRAM
Charlotte Hall Library, St. Mary’s County
“RAPTORS RULE! A LIVE BIRD OF PREY PROGRAM”
MIKE CALLAHAN, Naturalist and Educator, Nanjemoy Creek Environmental Education Center
We are happy to bring back one of our most popular programs. Meet up close and personal these magnificent avian predators, the birds of prey also known as raptors. Expected visitors include owls, hawks, and eagles. Mike is the Raptor Conservation Committee Chairman for SMAS and a raptor bander. This program is great for both children and adults.

March 7 – SATURDAY – 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOP EVENT
Battle Creek Cypress Swamp Nature Center, Calvert County
“FLYING WILD”
Leader: Kerry Wixted, Biologist 11, Maryland DNR Wildlife and Heritage Division
Calling all teachers, non-formal educators, scout leaders and camp leaders! Learn how to teach elementary and middle school aged students about the importance of birds with the Flying Wild curriculum. Flying Wild is a fun, hands-on set of lessons designed to teach about birds, their migration, and what people can do to help birds and their habitats. Workshop participants will explore several Flying Wild lessons while learning about local birds and educational resources. At the end of the workshop all participants will receive the Flying Wild guide. For additional information visit http://www.dnr.stste.md.us/wildlife/Education/ProjectWild/FlyingWild.asp

Pre-registration is required by March 1st. No fee! Registration will be online at www.somdaudubon.org or contact Melissa Boyle at melissaboyle3@gmail.com for the online registration link.

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.

2013-2014 Officers
President, Michael Patterson (301-752-5763)
Vice-President, Bob Lukinic (301-283-6317)
Secretary, Lynne Wheeler (301-743-3236)
Treasurer, Will Daniel (240-518-8006)