President’s Perch

It’s hard to imagine that the 2015-2016 season of activities for SMAS is nearing an end. This year has taken us down a challenging road. The blizzard of 2016 affected several of our field trips. The blizzard and tornado warnings postponed two of our board meetings. But I was fortunate to have a lot of support from some very talented and dedicated volunteers. I would like to thank our board and all SMAS members for a great year of programs, field trips, and conservation efforts.

Mike Callahan, Past President and Raptor Conservation Committee Chair, continues to champion our raptor conservation efforts (particularly with Barn Owls) in southern Maryland. Bob Lukinic, Vice President and Conservation Chair, has signed SMAS on to numerous conservation efforts and represented our chapter at the Charles County Planning Commission Public Meeting on October 5, 2015. Lynne Wheeler—Secretary, Membership Chair, and Program Chair—has done incredible work for the chapter. I honestly don’t know how she does it all. This President wouldn’t be able to function without her. David Moulton, SMAS Field Trip Coordinator, has done great work organizing field trips and filing reports on interesting finds during each of our excursions. Tyler Bell, Osprey Newsletter Editor, continues to produce a high-quality newsletter and seamlessly handles posting it to website and distributing it via Constant Contact. Nicole Patterson took over the responsibilities of Education Committee Chair to handle administering Audubon scholarships to local educators. Nancy Megas, who manages Publicity efforts for our chapter, has done an excellent job getting the word out about our programs and field trips.

We are all very grateful to SMAS Treasurer Will Daniel for the excellent work he does managing the chapter’s finances. Robbi Ross, Hospitality Chair, coordinates the delicious refreshments for our monthly program meetings. Andy Brown, Carole Schnitzler, and Margarita Rochow are extremely conscientious members of the board who contribute generously with their time and ideas. Melissa Boyle retired as Field Trip Coordinator and recently had to step down from the Board because she has moved out of southern Maryland. She made many significant contributions to our chapter and her presence will be greatly missed. The year couldn’t have been a success without everyone mentioned. Thank you!

Thanks to our members who attended field trips and monthly programs. We have enjoyed seeing you and talking about birds and nature. We are hoping some of you would like to volunteer to fill some of our open board of director positions. We also hope many of our members will join us at Kings Landing Park in Calvert County for our Annual Meeting and Potluck Picnic on June 5. You can spend time with other bird lovers and enjoy this park’s 265 acres of natural area on the Patuxent River, including 4,000 feet of river shoreline and 50 acres of marshland. Our potluck picnic and meeting will be held at a pavilion, enabling us to immerse ourselves easily into the park’s wonderful nature-filled environment. To get to Kings Landing Park from Route 4 at Huntingtown, turn onto Old Town Road (Route 524). Proceed to Bowen’s Grocery Store and turn on Huntingtown Road (Route 521). At the 4-way stop intersection, continue straight, and you will be on Kings Landing Road. Take the road to its end to find the park. We hope to see you there!

For the Birds,
Michael Patterson
Articles for the September Osprey

Are you planning on doing any interesting travel this summer? Feel free to send me an article or photos at any time during the summer. I save files in a folder for the next issue so there’s no need to wait until August. Enjoy your summer!

Great-horned Owl Tops Sotterley Field Trip – April 24, 2016
by David Moulton

‘Twas a gorgeous late April day in St. Mary’s County for our annual spring field trip to Sotterley Plantation, a National Historic Landmark with an abundance and variety of birds to go with its 300-year old story farming, slavery and war. On the Patuxent we found a Common Loon in breeding plumage pointing north. We stared deep into the yellow eye of a Brown Thrasher sitting tight on her nest. Two Orchard Orioles were singing near the barn, and the Bald Eagle nest held an enormous eaglet waiting eagerly for the adults to return with fresh sushi. The hayfields and pastures were abuzz with Grasshopper and Savannah Sparrows, Meadowlarks and Bluebirds, and the woods held Parulas and Common (Maryland!) Yellowthroats. But the big surprise of the morning was a Great Horned Owl, which, once flushed, glided to a nearby perch and turned to face us with its ear tufts standing tall. When an owl stares through your own telescope, it gives you the shivers! Our species total for the walk itself was 46. First-of-year Gray Catbirds and Scarlet Tanagers were also seen the same day. Bring on the warblers.

David H. Moulton
Bethesda, MD

Cool Internet Links!

Bird Head Feathers

Great Gray Owl Nest-Cam
https://www.facebook.com/824404154354762/videos/834176153377562/

Falcon Dive

Man Made Fire Tornado

Bald Eagle Catches Salmon in Slo-Mo
https://www.facebook.com/579053842248067/videos/586231918196926/

What Does An Ant Hill Really Look Like?
https://www.facebook.com/4epicv/videos/1582654652060329/

Banded Condor Released
https://www.facebook.com/angela.woodside/posts/10102422466329987

Butterfly Flight in Slo-Mo
https://www.facebook.com/ScienceMagazine/videos/10153801858485589/

Northern Goshawk Video
https://www.facebook.com/1664991100422462/videos/1673432449578327/

Slo-Mo Cardinal at Window
https://www.facebook.com/BirdsofCincinnati/videos/1670114019918854/

Satin Bowerbird

Stuck Deer Saved
https://www.facebook.com/nativevideos2016/videos/1704799393135039/

Rainbow Wasp Nests
http://www.thisiscolossal.com/2016/04/rainbow-wasps/

How Deep Is The Ocean?
https://www.facebook.com/ThinkingHumanity/videos/1067889766605245/

Baby Armadillos!
https://www.facebook.com/PlanetPawsPetEssentials/videos/1052799054794976/
What Are You Doing On May 22?

Why Not Join The “Birding Blitz” Of Newtowne Neck State Park In Southern Maryland?

The Southern Maryland Audubon Society is looking for volunteer birders to take part in a Birding Blitz of one of Maryland’s newest state parks – Newtowne Neck, on the Potomac River near Leonardtown. This area promises to become one of the great new birding destinations of Southern Maryland. It has great habitat in a beautiful setting with bays, river, forests and fields, right on the Potomac River migration route.

Goal: Increase the bird species count of this under-birded peninsula.
How: Assign sectors to volunteers to bird intensively for an hour or more.
When: Sunday, May 22, time of your choosing.
Pleasing RSVP for coordination and assigned area.

David Moulton
moulton.davidh@gmail.com
240-278-4473

Calvert Cliffs State Park Trip Report
Sunday, May 15, 2016
by Judy Ferris and Jan Degeneffe

With the cessation of the spring monsoon of 2016, birds and birders [12 including the leaders] enjoyed a breezy and (finally!) sunny day at Calvert Cliffs State Park. Strong, cold winds quickly drove us and the birds out of the parking lot. Sheltered pockets in the forest, however, harbored a variety of songbirds. At our first stop, we were treated to a short concert and excellent views of a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak, as well as Red-eyed Vireos, and both male and female Summer Tanagers. Continuing on the red trail, we heard a variety of warbler songs and spotted multiple American Redstarts, Black-and-white Warblers, and of course, more Red-eyed Vireos! Warblers can be hard to spot on a calm day. On a blustery day, finding tiny birds amidst wildly tossing leaves is even harder. The group worked together to spot a variety of songbirds, including hard-to-find Canada, Worm-eating, and Magnolia Warblers. At the swamp, the Red-headed Woodpecker population has slowly declined as, year by year, ancient dead trees crumble and fall into the water. Only a few trees suitable for nesting remain. We did not see woodpeckers of any species in the windswept swamp area. The air above the swamp, however, teemed with 3 different swallow species, some of whom cooperatively perched nearby for a swallow mini-tutorial.

Those of us who had not recently visited Calvert Cliffs State Park noted that the lower area adjacent to the swamp has changed dramatically in the past few years. Beavers have constructed several new dams upstream, vastly increasing the flooded area and significantly changing the habitat. Park personnel valiantly wage a constant battle with the beavers; pulling out the lower beaver dam when the water level gets too high. Nevertheless, regular visitors to the park have noticed an increase in the number of Wood Ducks, herons, and egrets as the waters expand. The park recently completed a project to install wooden decking over the muddiest sections of the trail where the swamp encroaches.

Calvert Cliffs State Park, with its variety of habitats extending from the Chesapeake Bay shore to the upland forests, remains an excellent place to bird. We saw and heard 43 bird species for the morning - mostly songbirds. The group agreed that warblers - colorful and frenetic - were the highlight of the trip.

Don’t forget join us for our Annual Meeting at

King's Landing Park

Sunday June 5, 1 PM - 4 PM

The Southern Maryland Audubon Society annual meeting and potluck picnic will be at the picnic pavilion. Come and enjoy this beautiful 265 acre Calvert County Park.

Bring a dish to share.

3255 Kings Landing Road, Huntingtown, MD 20639
Osprey Relocation!

I had a busy April; an Osprey pair decided to make their nest on our boat cabin roof. After several attempts to shoo them away I decided to give them a new home and had an osprey platform installed a few yards offshore from our waterfront. I had to get a permit from the Maryland DNR but the love birds took the hint and are busy building their nest on the platform. I cut back a few bushes to give us a clear view from our sun porch. See the photo of the beginning of their nest.

Cheers,
Mike Rudy
President, Cove Point Natural Heritage Trust Board of Trustees

Where Do Hummingbirds Get All That Energy?

Ever wonder how hummingbirds keep up with their high-octave lifestyles? With their fight-jet acrobatics and ability to fly every which way, hummingbirds are unique in the world of birds. But the same physics that sets them apart also exacts a hefty price and a huge appetite. Their metabolisms, when scaled to the size of a human, translate to about 155,000 calories a day! Learn more about the fascinating science behind hummingbirds’ energy here.

By adding nectar-rich plants or a hummingbird feeder to your yard, you can provide much-needed fuel. Once the hummers come to feed, record your sightings on Hummingbirds at Home!

Rose-breasted Grosbeak Invasion
by Tyler Bell

The recent cool wet weather created a bit of a log jam for northbound migrants. There have been widespread reports of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks at feeder stations in unprecedented numbers. Jane Kostenko and I were lucky to have as many as four birds at our black oil sunflower feeders for a stretch between April 28 and May 10, a run of 13 days! Typically, we get one or two birds for a day or two. I hope others were as fortunate to have these lovely birds grace your yards.

Request For Assistance - Recordings Of Migrating Mourning Warbler Songs

I am writing once again to post an opportunity to participate in a Citizens Science Project that involves recording migrating Mourning Warbler songs. I am interested in whether different song populations of Mourning Warblers (Western, Eastern, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland) migrate together or separately to their respective areas of the species’ breeding range. All you need is a smartphone with a voice recording app and some luck. The web page link below describes the project and how to make recordings on your Smartphone in more detail. There is also a link to the map with last year’s results based on recordings from many volunteers.

http://www.anselm.edu/homepage/jpitocch/ornithology/MOWAmapper/MOWASongmapper.html

Please send song recordings to the Mourning Warbler Sound Lab jpitocch@anselm.edu

I would really appreciate your help and contributions to this Citizens Science Project.

Dr. Jay Pitocchelli
Biology Department - Saint Anselm College
Manchester, NH 03102

Rose-breasted Grosbeaks (immature male, female)
Photo by Mike Rudy

Rose-breasted Grosbeak (mature male)
Photo by Mike Rudy

Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Photo by Jane Kostenko
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: Carole Schnitzler, Adopt-a-Raptor, 3595 Silk Tree Court, Waldorf, MD 20602

Name:_________________________ as it should appear on Adoption Certificate
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

Louisiana Whooping Crane Success

In our May 2015 issue, we suggested that nesting success for the experiment involving Whooping Cranes in Louisiana might be favorable in 2016: http://refugeassociation.org/?p=11839/#louisiana

And now we can report on further optimism for the cranes in Louisiana.

On 11 April, there was a historic hatch in Jeff Davis Parish, in southwest Louisiana. For the first time in more than 75 years, a wild Whooping Crane was hatched in the state. A second colt - what a young crane is called - hatched from the same nest two days later.

A flock of Whooping Cranes centered at White Lake Conservation Area in Gueydan was reintroduced into Louisiana in 2011. There are just over 40 wild Whooping Cranes in Louisiana, but none of them has ever successfully reproduced - until now. The birds were originally hatched in incubators and raised by people dressed in crane costumes. Researchers were worried that these locally-grown cranes would not know how to function as nesters and parents. But, apparently, parenting came naturally.

While there were crane eggs at nests in 2014 and 2015, none of them hatched. Some were infertile and one nest was lost to flooding.

After three nesting failures this year, there was a fourth attempt that was successful.

Sara Zimorski, a biologist at the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, added: “This couldn't have been done without the assistance of private landowners. The support and cooperation of the many landowners and farmers on whose property the birds spend time is critical to the success of the project.’’ In fact, this successful nesting actually took place at a private crawfish farm. (Curiously, crawfish farms have been attractive this year, with multiple crane nests built on these “working wetlands.”)

A fifth pair also laid eggs in late March. Researchers are still waiting for results at that nest. And other crane pairs are apparently building nests!

This sort of activity offers hope that Whooping Cranes may once again sustain a population in the state.

For an announcement on the blessed event from Louisiana’s Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, see here: http://www.wlf.la.gov/news/40095

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: http://refugeassociation.org/news/birding-bulletin/
America’s Newest Security Threat...Greater Sage-Grouse?

Greater Sage-Grouse
(Photo: Vida Ward/Audubon Photography Awards)

In a repeat of a tactic we saw last year, anti-conservation special interests have added amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act that will undermine the historic efforts underway to protect Greater Sage-Grouse under the guise of national security.

The National Defense Authorization Act is the primary legislation that Congress must vote on annually to set defense policy and authorize defense spending. In recent years, it has become an avenue to push pet priorities in the form of unrelated amendments known as “riders.” After a markup in which more than 300 riders were attached, the entire $610 billion bill passed the House Armed Services Committee in a 60-2 vote on April 28. The bill included language to allow states to block the historic federal sage-grouse plans announced last year and would prevent the Department of Interior from changing the species’ conservation status until September 30, 2026, regardless of biological merit.

The bill now moves on to the Senate. Audubon’s Brian Rutledge and a fellow member of the Wyoming Sage-Grouse Implementation Team, rancher Dave Pellatz, are in Washington, DC, this week visiting with Senate leadership. In their meetings, they are sharing letters from military officials, which explicitly state that sage-grouse will not impact military readiness.

http://www.audubonaction.org/

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

- Please enroll me as a member of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society. All of my membership dollars will help support local conservation initiatives and enable us to provide southern Maryland teacher education scholarships to attend Hog Island, Audubon Camp in Maine.
  - Individual/Family: ___1 year $20 ___2 year $35 ___3 year $45
  - Lifetime Membership: ___$500
  - Donation: ______

- Please enroll me as a first time member of the National Audubon Society. You will automatically become a member of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society. You will receive six issues of National’s award winning Audubon Magazine. A fraction of my dues will be received by our chapter.
  - Introductory Offer: ___1 year $20

Name: ___________________________________________
Address: _________________________________________
City: __________________________ State: _______ Zip:_____

- Please enroll me for electronic delivery of our monthly newsletter The Osprey: ___Email me a link to download the pdf, ___Email me a notice it is available on the website. My email address is: ______________________________. ___No thank you, please mail me a paper copy.

Please make your check payable to Southern Maryland Audubon Society or National Audubon Society.

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

GREAT NEWS!! You can now go online and join SMAS via PayPal. Go to our website at somdaudubon.org for this new option.
May 14 – SATURDAY – All Day
COUNTY MAY COUNTS
Calvert, Charles, Prince George’s, St. Mary’s Counties
Help is always appreciated from all: backyard birders, beginners, new members. This is a great way to learn! Data and information help save our birds. The county coordinators for you to contact are as follows:
CALVERT: Sherman Suter (sjsuter29@verizon.net)
CHARLES: Michael Patterson
(301-752-5763, bigbuteo1@yahoo.com)
PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY: Fred Fallon
(410-286-8152, fwfallon@gmail.com)
ST. MARY’S COUNTY: Tyler Bell
(301-862-4623, jtylerbell@yahoo.com)

May 15 – SUNDAY – 8 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
FIELD TRIP
Calvert Cliffs State Park, Calvert County
10540 H.G.Trueman Road, Lusby, MD  20657
“WARBLERS AND SPRING MIGRATION”
Leader: Judy Ferris and Jan Degeneffe
Neotropical migrants should be near their peak. Expect warblers, tanagers, grosbeaks, Red-headed Woodpeckers, and other songbirds. Good trails through wooded habitat and along a creek and swamp. Take Rt. 2/4 south of Prince Frederick for about 14 miles. Follow signs to the park. Meet leaders in parking lot. Facilities and fee ($5), 3-4 mile round trip walk. RSVP to Judy at 410-326-1965 or jferris11@gmail.com

May 22 – SUNDAY – Dawn to Dusk or parts thereof
BIRD COUNT
Newtowne Neck State Park, St. Mary’s County
MD 243, Compton, MD 20627
“NEWTOWNE NECK BIRDING BLITZ”
Organizer: David Moulton
Come for an hour or the day. This will be a concentrated effort to build up the species list at this magnificent but under-birded state park, a former military training site along the Potomac River. Participants will be assigned sectors to ensure broad coverage. Habitat ranges from marshland to fields to deep woods and river beaches. Take Rt. 5 north through Leonardtown. Turn south (left) onto Rte. 243 (Newtowne Neck Road) for 4.5 miles to parking lot just beyond St. Francis Xavier Church. RSVP to David Moulton at 240-278-4473 or moulton.davidh@gmail.com

Mid-May – Early June
Barn Owls & Breakfast
Southern Charles County
Youths especially welcome! The exact date to be determined, it all depends on the owls! Watch our Osprey newsletter and website for exact date and details.
Leader: Mike Callahan
A different kind of B&B! Come and enjoy breakfast before helping our Raptor Conservation Committee chair Mike check a Barn Owl nest box, and hopefully band nestling owls. This trip takes place on private property in southern Charles County. The location and directions will be given when you contact Mike to register and reserve your spot. This event fills up rapidly. There is a small fee involved to cover the cost of food. Please bring your own reusable plate, mug, and utensils. RSVP to Mike at 240-765-5192 or raptorsrulemc@gmail.com

June 5 – SUNDAY – 1:00 P.M. – 4:00 P.M.
ANNUAL MEETING
Kings Landing Park, Calvert County
3255 Kings Landing Road, Huntingtown, MD 20639
Potluck Lunch………………… 1:00 – 2:15 p.m.
Welcome …………………….. 2:15 – 2:30 p.m.
Award Presentations ………… 2:30 – 3:00 p.m.
Bird Walk …………………..3:00 – 4:00 p.m.
Come and join us appreciate this parks 265 acres of natural area on the Patuxent River including 4,000 feet of river shoreline and 50 acres of marshland. Our picnic meeting will be held at a picnic pavilion, enabling us to immerse ourselves easily into the parks wonderful nature filled environment. Directions: From Rt. 4 at Huntingtown turn onto Old Town Road (Rt. 524). Proceed to Bowen’s Grocery Store and turn on Huntingtown Road (Rt. 521). At the 4-way stop intersection, continue straight, and you will be on Kings Landing Road. The road dead ends at the park.

June 12 – SUNDAY – 9:00 p.m. - 11:00 p.m.
FIELD TRIP
Flag Ponds, Calvert County
1525 Flag Ponds Parkway, Lusby, MD 20657
“NIGHTTIME HORSESHOE CRAB ADVENTURE AT FLAG PONDS”
Leader(s): Andy Brown and Melissa Boyle Acuti
The horseshoe crab is one of nature’s miracles, and their eggs fuel the amazing migration of shorebirds! Want to see horseshoe crabs spawning on the beach by moonlight? Join us for this unique chance at water’s edge. Bring flashlights, wear comfortable walking shoes that can get wet. Meet at the gate to Flag Ponds. RSVP to Melissa at 443-340-3035 or melissaboyle3@gmail.com by June 6.

June 17 – FRIDAY – 1:00 p.m.
FIELD TRIP
Patuxent River Park – Jug Bay, Prince George’s County
16000 Croom Airport Road, Upper Marlboro, MD 20772
“OSPREY BANDING TRIP”
Leader(s): Melissa Boyle Acuti and Greg Kearns
If you have never been lucky enough to experience this beautiful park and see Osprey chicks up close and personal do not hesitate now! Greg Kearns, park naturalist, is one of the best in his field and provides a very entertaining, fact-filled fun outing. Feel free to come early to have a picnic lunch. Ages: 12 to adult, under 18 must be accompanied by an adult. Maximum of 14 people. Cost: $18/person, payable the day of, in cash. Pre-register with Melissa at 443-340-3035 or melissaboyle3@gmail.com (email preferred).