Summertime can be a crazy time for birders. It is too hot for bird walks, and fledglings make my head spin. “What’s that sound?” “What’s that bird?” Recently I spent 30 minutes trying to identify what ended up being a Scarlet Tanager fledgling, and it all started out with unusual call notes. Thank goodness the mother bird popped up in the area or I may have never figured it out!

Not only are avian species leaving the nest, but many human families are sending off their children to college and might experience empty nest syndrome. Don’t fret! Come out and enjoy one of our monthly lecture programs or a bird walk. Now that you are free, go spread your wings!

Unfortunately, sometimes a friend leaves the nest never be seen again, but whom we will never forget. This summer a long-time founding member, and two time president, George Wilmot passed away. His passion and dedication to protecting our natural resources not only succeeded in protecting critical forest in the Mattawoman Creek watershed, he also never failed to support and guide others in their path to becoming active conservationists and champions for a better community. He was a scientist, father, mentor, conservationist, leader, and someone who truly did not just talk the talk - he walked the walk. He helped make ours a thriving chapter of the National Audubon Society and his efforts will be forever felt, remembered, and appreciated.

While we still enjoy the great weather, and sunlight into the evening hours, come out and learn about the Chesapeake Bay dolphins! We launch our monthly meeting lecture programs September 5 at Asbury Solomons Island and are thrilled to have Dr. Helen Bailey talk about the Dolphin Watch project. Learn about how you can participate in this fascinating research effort. We have a diverse line up of fall topics to enjoy ranging from dolphins, raptors, female songbirds, to the Maryland Biodiversity Project. Our field trips cover all of southern Maryland, with fabulous habitats and birds to see. Fall migration is right around the corner. There ought to be something in this offering to convince you to fledge and leave your home nest. Come out and join us! Follow the example of George --- be a lover of the great outdoors.

Lynne Wheeler, President
Little Bird Fires Big Dreams of Big Bend
By David Moulton

“Ever been to Big Bend?”

Ask a birder that question and you are likely to hear “No, but I’ve always dreamed about it!”

Why do birders dream about Big Bend National Park?

Because it is so hard to get to? Partly.

Because the heart of the park is a spectacular mountainous caldera with a break in the southwest wall, framing killer sunsets every evening as the spring sun sets over the Chihuahuan desert 100 miles to the west? Partly.

Because of a little gray-brown bird of indistinct plumage and limited vocal repertoire which only breeds in several small canyons that sit at the top of an hours-long trek up a very steep mountainside with temperatures in the 90’s? YES. YES. That’s it!

The Colima Warbler is a fixation in every birder’s mind from the first time he or she opens a field guide and begins to imagine what it would take to see most of the warbler species in North America. You soon learn that most of North America’s 50 warbler species are within reach during spring migration along the East Coast, and the ones you miss can be found with a few well-timed visits to places like Ohio’s Magee Marsh or Ontario’s Point Pelee. That leaves about 10 warbler species that are restricted to the West. You can find most of the remaining western species by traveling to Arizona and the Pacific coastal ranges.

But the Colima Warbler is a tough one. It will remain unseen unless and until a birder commits to visiting Big Bend National Park in breeding season. The range map makes that pretty clear. The Colima Warbler is a Mexican species with a breeding range almost entirely restricted to the Sierra Madre mountains southeast of the US border. A tiny exception shows up on the maps as a little dot just north of the border in the Chisos Mountains of Big Bend.

This spring I finally confronted this challenge with my non-birding brother in tow. (He likes to hike anywhere – no birds necessary – and I knew we had to hike!) Flights to El Paso, a 6-hour drive south to Big Bend, a room at the lodge, our backpacks full of Gatorade and peanut-butter crackers, we arose before sunrise and began the climbing in the dark, headed up to Boot Spring gulch, the legendary North American springtime hangout of the Colima Warbler.

One thing became clear right away – this trail did not attract a lot of early morning hikers. If we were to find this bird, we would have to do it without the help of fellow birders. The trail was well-marked and maintained, but it took us 2 ½ hours of steady climbing to ascend to the rim of the caldera. We rested there, rehydrating and fighting off leg cramps, and then headed along the wall of the small ravine leading to Boot Spring.

Our ears were primed for the song of a breeding male Colima– a trill similar to something between a Chipping Sparrow and a Pine Warbler. Our eyes were searching for warbler activity in the small oak trees that filled the ravine, yearning to see this rare bird with the gray face and distinct eye-ring and apricot-colored rump. As the minutes passed, dread began to rise. Did we fly this far, drive this far, and climb this far, only to fail in our quest. Would we be willing to make this hike again tomorrow if we didn’t find this bird today?

“I hear it”, I exclaimed. “Just a little ways ahead.” And within seconds we were treated to a show I’ll never forget. This little warbler was working a small area in the top of an oak with open view through the foliage. Every time we lost him, he would pop back up. My camera was clicking. We could see him sing, we could see his apricot rump and undertail coverts, we could see all we came to see and more.

So this small dream was fulfilled. We saw another Colima and heard another while hiking through Boot Spring and along the rim. Our dread of failure was replaced with the joy of success. And after a long hike back down to the lodge, there was that incredible sunset framed by the Chisos, to fire up future birding dreams.
Southwest winds overnight had led to high hopes for the morning, compounded by dawn rain in the area. Our first stop had been fruitless, with a handful of warblers moving, but nothing notable. We decided to head for the Tadoussac dunes anyway. On our arrival at 5:45 am, it was raining. A few warblers passed here and there, and we got excited about groups of 5 to 10 birds. Shortly before 6:30 am, there was a break in the showers, and things were never the same.

For the next 9 hours, we counted a nonstop flight of warblers, at times covering the entire visible sky from horizon to horizon. The volume of flight calls was so vast that it often faded into a constant background buzz. There were times where there were so many birds, so close, that naked eyes were better than binoculars to count and identify. Three species of warbler flew between my legs throughout the day (Tennessee Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler). For hours at a time, a single binocular scan would give you hundreds or low thousands of warblers below eye level.

The flight line(s) varied depending on wind direction and speed. All birds were heading southwest. When calm, birds were high, often inland or farther out over the river. High winds (especially from the W, or SW), brought birds down low, sometimes feet from the ground and water. Rain also lowered birds, and the most intimate experiences with migrants occurred during a rain squall and strong wind period. Hundreds of birds stopped to feed and rest on the bare sand, or in the small shrubs.

Counting birds and estimating species composition was the biggest challenge of the day—balancing the need to document what was happening with the desire to just bask in the greatest avian spectacle I’ve ever witnessed. A significant effort was made to estimate movement rates throughout the day, and those rates combined with species-specific movement estimates were used for the below totals. See the full checklist for species-specific notes.

Movement rate estimates were made by looking through binoculars at a flight line, and counting the number of individuals passing a vertical line in that field of view, per second. This was repeated multiple times for each bin view, and repeated throughout the sky so that all flight at that moment was accounted for. The average birds/second was then used for that time period, until another rate estimate showed a different volume of movement. Non-warblers were counted separately. I took a couple attempts at video, which are listed below under ‘warbler sp.’ These videos only hint at the magnitude of the spectacle.

These were my warbler rate estimates:

- 7:03-7:14 15/s — 9900
- 7:15-8:02 30/s — 84600
- 8:03-8:27 10/s — 14400
- 8:28-9:12 15/s — 48600
- 9:13-9:31 12/s — 12960
- 9:32-9:48 15/s — 14400
- 9:49-10:38 25/s — 73500
- 10:39-11:03 40/s — 57600 (during and after a rain squall)
- 11:04-11:52 30/s — 86400
- 11:53-12:17 20/s — 28800
- 12:18-12:37 15/s — 17100
- 12:38-12:48 25/s — 15000
- 12:49-1:13 50/s — 72000 (winds switch to strong WSW)
- 1:14-2:36 30/s — 147600
- 2:37-2:56 20/s — 22800
- 2:57-3:04 10/s — 4200
- 3:05-3:14 3/s — 1620
- 3:15-3:18 1/s — 180

Total number of warblers: 721,620

To our knowledge, the previous warbler high for a single day in the region was around 200,000, which was the highest tally anywhere in the world. Other observers in the area today had multiple hundreds of thousands, so there were likely more than a million warblers moving through the region on 28 May 2018. Thank you to the Observatoire d’Oiseaux de Tadoussac (http://www.explosnature.ca/oot/) for monitoring these movements for decades, and sharing the wonder of this place with the global birding community.

https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S46116491

There’s no place like Tadoussac.

Submitted from eBird for iOS, version 1.7.4

[Editor’s Note: Tadoussac is in Quebec Province, Canada, on the St. Lawrence River just north of the northernmost tip of Maine]
"Tip Of The Month: Feeders"

You can access all the past E-bulletins on the National Association of Compost Barkers website. For more information, please visit http://refugeassociation.org/news/birding-bulletin/.

Move some of the feeders around. Replace any broken or missing parts and clean the area around them. This is a very good time to remember to clean the feeders, especially the tube-feeders, and clean the area on the ground below the larger feeders.

Since we are on the subject of feeding birds, it is a very a good time to remember to clean the units, particularly old and broken feeder. Think about initiating bird watching with the chance to get intimate with the local bird population. Feeders are also a perfect way to encourage newcomers to bird watching, and to bring birds closer to us and our homes. Enjoy the "neighborliness" of bird feeders and the opportunity to bring birds closer to us and our homes.

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"Autumnal Equinox - Fall Bird Migration Road Rally"

Leader: Lynne Wheeler

Something new! A hunt for fall migrants road rally! Let’s see how many migrants our group can find. We will meet and car pool at the Port Tobacco Marina at 7:45 am. Take off at 8 am: first location Cedar Point Wildlife Management Area, Welcome, MD. This location situated on a peninsula of the Nanjemoy Creek and Potomac River, offers a mix of forested and upland habitats as well as tidal marsh, non-tidal ponds and wetlands, and agricultural fields. After two hours here, we will head further west to Friendship Farm Park, Nanjemoy, MD. This county park offers seven miles of recreational trail that provides access to 382 acres of forest and agricultural fields surrounding Nanjemoy Creek. We will finalize our day with a relaxing water view tally - up lunch at the Port Tobacco Restaurant & Marina. To register contact Lynne Wheeler at somdaudubon@yahoo.com, or 301-751-8097 (prefer text).

"Dolphin Watch: Dolphins in the Chesapeake Bay"

Dr. Helen Bailey, Research Associate Professor, Chesapeake Biological Laboratory

Little is known about how often dolphins come into the Chesapeake Bay, how long they spend there, what areas they are using and why. Dr. Bailey and her team have been frequently detecting dolphin calls in the Bay and citizen scientists have reported hundreds of dolphin sightings on Dr. Bailey’s Chesapeake Dolphin Watch mobile app and website. Dr. Bailey will present what she has learned about the Bay’s dolphins so far, describe upgrades to the sighting app, and explain how you can participate in this research effort. Auditorium is located in the Community Center. Note signs for event parking. Light refreshments and mingling start at 7 p.m. Public invited. Inquiries to Lynne Wheeler, somdaudubon@yahoo.com or 301-751-8097 (prefer text).

September 5 – Wednesday – 7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

MONTHLY MEETING PROGRAM

Asbury Solomons Island Community Center Auditorium, Calvert County

11100 Asbury Circle, Solomons, MD 20688

“Dolphin Watch: Dolphins in the Chesapeake Bay”

Dr. Helen Bailey, Research Associate Professor, Chesapeake Biological Laboratory

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September 8 – Saturday – 8:00 a.m. – 12 noon

FIELD TRIP

Calvert Cliffs State Park, Calvert County

9500 H.G. Trueman Parkway, Lusby, MD 20657

“Fall Migration”

Leaders: Judy Ferris and Jan Degeneffe

Wooded habitat and wetland attracts a variety of songbirds. Expect to see resident birds as well as immature and adult Neotropical migrants. Great spot for warblers. Wide trail through forest adjacent to creek and wetland. 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, 3 mile round trip. RSVP to Judy at jferris11@gmail.com or 410-326-1965.

September 9 – Sunday – 8:00 a.m. – 12 noon

FIELD TRIP

Patuxent River Naval Air Station, St. Mary’s County

21866 Cedar Point, Patuxent River, MD 20670

“Grasspipers”

Leader: Kyle Rambo

This trip will visit some excellent grassland habitat on restricted access runways. Target species include Buff-breasted Sandpiper and American Golden-Plover. Meet in the parking lot at NAS Gate #1. Open only to US citizens. Must bring a photo ID. We are limited to 10 participants, and PRE-REGISTRATION IS MANDATORY – contact kyle.rambo@navy.mil or 301-757-0005.

September 15 - Saturday – 8:00 a.m. – 12 noon

FIELD TRIP

Point Lookout State Park, St. Mary’s County

11175 Point Lookout Road, Scotland, MD 20687

“Migration on the Point”

Leader: Tyler Bell

Join us at Southern Maryland’s premier birding hotspot as fall migrants funnel south to cross the Chesapeake Bay and the Potomac River. Loblolly pines, mixed hardwoods, beaches, marshes and broad water views regularly deliver a wide variety of species and occasional rarities. From Lexington Park drive south on Rte. 235 for 13 miles. Go left on Rte. 5 for 5 miles to the end (don’t forget to turn right past the Confederate Soldier’s Memorial). Meet leader at park entrance parking lot. Fee area. RSVP to Tyler at or jtylerbell@yahoo.com or 301-862-4473.

September 22 – Saturday – 8:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

FIELD TRIP

Port Tobacco Restaurant & Marina, Western Charles County

7536 Shirley Blvd., Port Tobacco, MD 20677

“Autumnal Equinox - Fall Bird Migration Road Rally”

Leader: Lynne Wheeler

Something new! A hunt – for – fall - migrants road rally! Let’s see how many migrants our group can find. We will meet and car pool at the Port Tobacco Marina at 7:45 am. Take off at 8 am: first location Cedar Point Wildlife Management Area, Welcome, MD. This location situated on a peninsula of the Nanjemoy Creek and Potomac River, offers a mix of forested and upland habitats as well as tidal marsh, non-tidal ponds and wetlands, and agricultural fields. After two hours here, we will head further west to Friendship Farm Park, Nanjemoy, MD. This county park offers seven miles of recreational trail that provides access to 382 acres of forest and agricultural fields surrounding Nanjemoy Creek. We will finalize our day with a relaxing water view tally - up lunch at the Port Tobacco Restaurant & Marina. To register contact Lynne Wheeler at somdaudubon@yahoo.com, or 301-751-8097 (prefer text).

September 23 – Sunday – 8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

FIELD TRIP

Sotterley Plantation, St. Mary’s County

44300 Sotterley Lane, Hollywood, MD 20636

“Birding The Fields And Trails Of Sotterley”

Leaders: David Moulton and Michael Patterson

Join us for a fall excursion to this scenic and historic Patuxent River property. Bald Eagles, migrant songbirds and lingering meadowlarks and sparrows can be found via Sotterley’s trails and river views. Directions: From Rt. 235, go north on Sotterley Road; turn right through gates to the Sotterley Plantation visitors’ center parking lot. RSVP to David at moulton.davidh@gmail.com or 240-278-4473.

September 29 – Saturday – 8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

FIELD TRIP & EXHIBITION

Annmarie Sculpture Garden & Arts Center, Calvert County

13480 Dowell Rd, Dowell, MD 20629

“Fly Away! The Migration of Birds and Butterflies”

Check out the Nature Nook gallery exhibit from September 22 – November 11 and explore the seasonal migration patterns of birds and butterflies. SMAS members Bev and Warren Walker are leading a bird walk on Saturday, September 29 to promote such a wonderful idea at one of our most beautiful locations in southern Maryland. For full details check out their website at https://www.annmariegarden.org/

continued on page 5
October 3 – WEDNESDAY – 7:30 pm – 9:00 pm
MONTHLY MEETING PROGRAM
Accokeek Foundation at
Piscataway Park Education Center,
Prince Georges County
3400 Bryan Point Rd, Accokeek, 20607
“THE CAPE MAY RAPTOR
BANDING PROJECT”
PAUL NAPIER, President, Cape May Raptor
Banding Project
Paul Napier will present “The Cape May Raptor
Banding Project”, which will cover a brief history,
some impressive Project statistics, an overview of the
intern program, how the project contributes to science,
and portraits and facts about the raptors banded. There
will be lots of great close-up photographs. Light
refreshments and mingling start at 7 p.m. Public
invited. Inquiries to Lynne Wheeler, somdaudubon@
yahoo.com or 301-751-8097 (prefer text). Directions:
see accokeekfoundation.org >Visit >Location >Hours
& Directions

October 7 – SUNDAY – 8:00 a.m. – 12 noon
FIELD TRIP
Cove Point Beach and Marsh, Calvert County
Exact location and directions given upon reservation
“SHARP-TAILED SPARROWS AND MIGRANTS”
Leader: Bob Boxwell
Cove Point beach and marsh is a unique habitat on
the Western shore of the Chesapeake Bay. A living
shoreline project is helping to restore the fresh water
marsh from salt water incursion. We will target
sparrows, marsh inhabitants, and migrants. This is a
restricted area, and we are limited to ten guests. RSVP
by September 28th to Bob at bobboxwell@hotmail.
com or 443-404-5549.

October 13 – SATURDAY – 8:00 a.m. – 12 noon
FIELD TRIP
Elms Environmental Education Center, St.
Mary’s County
49300 St. James Road, Dameron, MD 20628
“BIRDING 101”
Leader(s): Bob Boxwell and Margarita Rochow
Calling on all wannabe birders!! Youths Welcome!!
Are you tired of wondering, “What bird is that?” Do
you want to get better at knowing what birds you are
seeing? Birding 101 is the field trip for you! The more
you walk the walk, the better you become! The location
at the Elms Environmental Education Center offers a
great habitat for birds. Bob and Margarita will point
out helpful identification points, such as bird bill and
facial markings, plumage details, field marks, flight
patterns, sound, behavior, and habitat and seasonal
expectation. Learn about birding apps too. Directions:
49300 St James Road, Dameron, MD 20628. Take
Rte. 235 south, then left onto St. James Church road
(opposite Mattapany Road). You will see the sign for
the Elms Environmental Education Center. We will
meet in the “hunter’s parking lot” on the right about
100 yards before the gate. RSVP to Bob Boxwell at
Bobboxwell@hotmail.com or 410-610-5124.

SAVE THE DATE - October 20 – SATURDAY -
FALL FUNDRAISER
“Earth, Wine & Fire” See website for details

Welcome to the Board!

I am pleased to announce we have three
exciting changes to our board of directors. They were voted in at our June 3 Annual
Meeting & Picnic!

We hope they have a fun time helping our
society continue to achieve its mission and
objectives. We sure are glad to have them!

Margarita Rochow  Vice-President
Greg Klesch    Director
Tom Seaton    Director
Lynne Wheeler
President and Chair
WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

John R. Camero, Piney Point
Mary Canter, Leonardtown
Connie Cornelsen, La Plata
Dena Cruz, Accokeek
James K Dashiell, Waldorf
Valerie Deptula, Leonardtown
Diane Dilling, Lusby
Teri Dimsey, Hollywood
Kathleen Falls, North Beach
H James Ferris, Lusby
De Graves, Piney Point
Shirley Gromen & John Gasper, Ridge
Dwaine M. Harness, Lusby
John A Hugg, Solomons
Theresa Hunter, Hollywood
Denise Lagrange, North Beach
Diane Leason, Huntingtown
Eduardo S Mendoza, Fort Washington
Eugene Northrop, Waldorf
Noreen Dobson, Solomons
Aaron Perry, Callaway
Tom Seaton, Waldorf
Wendy M Shirer, Fort Washington
Louise K Snell, Leonardtown
Rebecca L Specht, La Plata
Elizabeth Wyatt, La Plata
Dale West, Accokeek
Robert Worthy, Oxon Hill
Walter D Wynn, La Plata
Helen B Zudrell, Newburg
Vila Zverina, La Plata

Lighting is Everything
From “The Birding Wire”
by Swarovski Optik

When people ask “What is the essential element for taking a good bird photo,” I always reply “Lighting”; but a better answer might be “the direction of the sunlight.” A simple rule to follow is to keep the bird in front of you, and the sun behind you. That way the sunlight will illuminate the elusive bird before you.

Let your own shadow point the way: If you look in front of you and your shadow is pointing at that exciting bird, you’re in the right spot. If not, reposition so your shadow points the way to your subject with the sun at your back (without disturbing your subject).

Why is good lighting important? It provides accurate color and feather detail, and it allows you to photograph with a faster shutter speed to stop action and make sharper images. Direct light will also allow you to utilize a broader depth of field, if needed.

The angle of the sun will also make a difference. The best periods of the day to photograph are when the sun is positioned at a 45- to 30-degree angle, usually in the morning and late afternoon. Then too, during the period from late fall through early spring, the sun is positioned at a good angle to the south for most of the day for great outdoor photography. Just let your shadow point the way.

Do you have a photo tip? Share it with us at editorstbw2@gmail.com
http://www.birdingwire.com/releases/a45dd3e7-120e-4be8-9e93-70dcad438c6e/

Hummingbird by Carrie Staples
Roseate Spoonbill
Photo by George Jett

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Hummingbird by Carrie Staples
Southern Maryland Audubon Society
Adopt-a-Raptor

Foster Parents Needed!

Southern Maryland Audubon Society sponsors the banding of nesting 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. Limited numbers of Osprey, Barn Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl and American Kestrels become available each year for adoption. Your donation will be specifically utilized for raptor research and raptor conservation projects such as:

- Barn Owl Nest Boxes
- Osprey Nesting Platforms
- Kestrel Nest Boxes
- Mist Nets or Banding Supplies

Please indicate which raptor you wish to adopt. You may adopt more than one:

- Osprey, $10 each  
- Barn Owl, $25 each  
- Northern Saw-whet Owl, $30 each  
- American Kestrel, $35 each  

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.