President’s Perch
Gratitude and the Joy of Giving

In the spirit of the season, I have been contemplating things for which I am grateful: Canada Geese landing in harvested cornfields, Hermit Thrushes’ warning “weeps,” and the returning “kyeer” of the Northern Flicker. Learning about birds has helped me attune more fully to nature—its rhythm and reassuring patterns. These are gifts beyond measure.

I would not have discovered them without my mentors at SMAS—Lynne Wheeler, David Moulton, Andy Brown, Jean Artes, Mike Callahan, Julie Daniel, Bob Lukinic, Carole Schnitzler, Robbi Ross, and so many others. With the expertise and enthusiasm of our generous friends, we all continue to learn and grow.

Our year-end newsletter is a double edition that allows our dedicated editor, Tyler Bell, and our fantastic designer, Erin Speakman, a brief respite. Their excellent work allows us to catalogue our accomplishments and inform our members. The SMAS board continues to share ideas, institutional knowledge, and sound advice. Not just I, but all members, benefit from their strong leadership.

Hiking amid bluebells at Mt. Aventine inspired me to join our local Audubon chapter and get more involved. If birding with us has touched your heart, please consider volunteering. We especially need help with Christmas Bird Counts on December 15, 22 and 29 (see inside for areas and coordinators). Over the last year, we have been asked to exhibit at an increasing number of festivals. Please let us know if you can help staff the SMAS booth sometime.

Although volunteers are the backbone of our chapter, SMAS does incur costs in programming and outreach. We pay for speakers, venues, educational materials, exhibition displays, raptor nest boxes, plus printing, mailing, and so forth. Our scholarship program—sending two teachers, and now youth, to attend Audubon’s Hog Island Camp—is our biggest expense each year. To support these ongoing activities, please consider SMAS in your year-end charitable plans. Giving is easy at our website; go to SomAudubon.org and click on the “Join SMAS” link. Every donation, no matter how small, helps birds and birders.

With gratitude,
Tiffany Farrell
SMAS President
Ruby-throated Hummingbirds and Vagrant Hummingbirds

by George Jett

As we’ve passed the autumnal equinox (September 23) most of us have observed our breeding Ruby-throated Hummingbird (RTHU) leave the area. They are heading south to winter in Florida, southern Mexico and Central America as far south as extreme western Panama and the West Indies. This is a long and stressful migration, but RTHU have been doing it for thousands of years. In order to assist this species make sure your feeders have an extra dose of sugar in the water.

Why migrate now? RTHU are pollen and insect eaters. As winter approaches this food source is depleted, and the birds would starve if they stayed. Also, during the equinox the daylight and night periods are the same. This equal light darkness situation stimulates chemicals in the RTHU brain that tells them it is time to go south if you want to survive. They will go regardless of the fact that the feeder is still out, but they do have some latitude. If the weather is bad they wait. Southerly breezes are good to migrate with since it requires less energy to reach the wintering grounds.

My experience is that adult males leave first, followed by adult females, then the hatch year birds. If you see an adult male after the local breeders leave it is likely a northern migrant looking for food. Also, the old wives tail that if you leave the feeder out the birds will not migrate is not true. It is that brain-chemical thing that promotes migration - not food source.

The breeders may have gone but please leave out the feeders. Northerly migrants are heading your way, and the extra feeding along the way is helpful. I leave my feeders out until at least December. If we have a hard freeze I bring them at night. I return the feeders predawn since hummingbirds tend to feed early. Leave air space in the feeder so the food can expand if very cold and the feeder does not break. RTHU have been documented into November.

The better reason for leaving the feeders out until December is that is when historically out-of-range hummingbirds arrive. Maryland has six hummingbird species on the state list. I have photographed all six species – Allen’s, Anna’s, Calliope, Green Violetear, Rufous, as well as the RTHU. These out-of-range hummers normally show up from late October to late December. The District of Columbia has a Black-chinned record, and that could be possible in Maryland. Who knows what other species might visit us. These birds tend to be sub-adults, but adult out-of-range hummingbirds have also been recorded. Rufous is an annual visitor, but the other four species have only one or a handful of records.

If you encounter a late hummingbird (after October 15) please contact me (or the editor!). It is important that the bird be identified to species in order to demonstrate range expansion of the non-breeders. Also, place your feeder so it is easy to see from inside the house. Kitchen and dining room windows are a good location. This way you have a better chance of seeing any late visitors.

If you would like to see some of the out-of-range hummingbird species documented in Maryland, take a look at my website: https://georgejett.net/index.php/Rare-MD-Birds?page=10
There are also some on page 11. I used bander’s codes for the website: Allen’s = ALHU; Anna’s = ANHU; Calliope = CAHU; Rufous = RUHU.

120th Christmas Bird Count
Please Sign Up Now!! Birds Count!!

Dec 15 – Port Tobacco, MD
Compiler: Mike Callahan, 240-765-5192 or raptorsrulemc@gmail.com

Dec 22 – Point Lookout, MD
Compiler: Bob Boxwell, 410-610-5124 or bobboxwell@hotmail.com

Dec 29 – Fort Belvoir, VA and MD
Compiler: Kurt Gaskill, 703-768-2172 or kurtcapt87@verizon.net
MD Sector Leader: Lynne Wheeler, 301-751-8097 or somaudubon@yahoo.com

Dec 29 – Patuxent River, MD
Compiler: Andy Brown, 410-535-5327 or Andrew.Brown@calvertcountymd.gov
Hog Island Life
by Holly Fallica

On the first day of Hog Island we got used to “Island Life.” We visited the shore and explored the intertidal marshes. It was great learning about the different types of sea grasses that live in the cold, cold water and I even had the opportunity to try some fire roasted periwinkle snails! They were delicious! On our hike back to camp we observed some Ospreys, Mourning Doves, a songbird fledgling, and even a hummingbird.

The next day we had the fantastic opportunity of visiting Egg Rock Island where we got to see some Atlantic Puffins! We met Steve Kress and Derrick Jackson who helped introduce the puffins back to Egg Rock after they abandoned the island many years ago. The Puffin Project is still being run by a few scientists and many interns today to keep track of the puffin habits and health. To think that this project went from 0 to hundreds of puffins over the course of 10+ years is fascinating! The puffins were much smaller in person, but cuter than ever! We also saw many porpoises, Common Loons, and harbor seals!

On the way back we stopped at Bay Harbor for lunch where we did a birding hike. We saw juvenile Bald Eagles, Cedar Waxwings, and many more magnificent birds on our hike. This day was one of my favorite days out of the entire summer!

The following day we had many educational sessions including how to make Japanese notebooks, seaweed pressing, squid dissecting, and pond exploring. I cannot wait to make the notebooks with my students! On Thursday we did a hike around the entire island which was rewarding in not just the amount of exercise, but in getting the big picture of topography and wildlife around the island. We also visited the artist residence where a local writer told us about the book he is writing and photography he has been studying after living on the island for 3 weeks. I really enjoyed the people that I was able to meet and connect with through this wonderful experience and we still keep in contact every day.

I also enjoyed learning more about how educators can make such a big impact on our students and influence young minds to protect our environment and the importance of getting outside! I also loved learning about the Maine landscape and wildlife, since I had never visited the great state before. In my own classroom, we study the Ospreys of the Bay by using a live webcam on the Patuxent River, so I was excited to find out that there was a live webcam feed of the Ospreys on Hog Island! I plan on comparing/contrasting the two when the Ospreys return this spring.

I was so fortunate to have this experience over the past summer and the memories that were made will surely not be forgotten anytime soon!
Town of La Plata Flying High
First Bird City Maryland!!
by Lynne Wheeler

After many months of work, the Town of La Plata submitted their application to become the first Bird City Maryland. The Southern Maryland Audubon Society helped to guide them along the way, suggesting how to fulfill the application requirements and how we can together achieve a wonderful goal - making communities healthier for birds and people.

What is Bird City Maryland? This is a great result coming from the Maryland Bird Conservation Partnership (MBCP) which the Southern Maryland Audubon Society is a partner. It is a science driven, partner-based initiative that was formed a few years ago to create a collaborative effort to conserve Maryland birds and their habitat.

Modeled after the North American Bird Conservation Initiative, bird conservation initiatives are coalitions of government agencies, nonprofits, and citizen stakeholders that combine efforts to ensure long-term health of native bird populations. The Partnership is supported by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources through the federal funds from the federal Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program, and matched by the Maryland Ornithological Society. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service provides in-kind support by the donation of office space and resources. MBCP is led by its Director and a Steering Committee made up of individuals from government agencies and non-governmental groups.

There are many initiatives that MBCP has formed, some that you may be familiar with such as monitoring of Audubon Important Bird Areas and the Bald Eagle Nest Monitoring Project. The mission of the Maryland Bird Conservation Partnership (MBCP) is to provide a unifying point of focus for bird conservation, research, and monitoring and we are grateful to be a part of such important work. Bird City Maryland is one of the latest great ideas to come from this great group.

Why is the Town of La Plata becoming a Bird City Maryland a big deal? **Bird City Maryland provides highly visible public recognition** to municipalities that understand that healthy communities are the sum of many parts, including birds. We support our communities in their efforts to protect and manage green space, educate their citizens, build and erect nesting structures, landscape with native plants, reduce threats to birds like collisions and outdoor cats, and generally make urban areas both friendlier for birds, and places where people want to live and work.

We have other caring partners that will help the Town of La Plata fulfill their commitment to accomplishing their objectives, the Port Tobacco River Conservancy (the town is in the Port Tobacco watershed) and the Conservancy for Charles County (land trusts help us protect habitat). All three of us should be able to have a great time helping to promote and educate everyone about birds and bird conservation.

What is the Town of La Plata committing to? What’s the plan? The application process involved multiple categories and criteria such as habitat creation, protection and monitoring, community forest management, limiting or removing threats to birds, public education, and annually recognizing World Migratory Bird Day. One really fun part of this is the town has an official bird of recognition, the Purple Martin! Many may not realize that the center of the town has two roosting sites that faithfully provide a haven for the Purple Martins that religiously arrive around April 17th. Mr. Winkler at La Plata Mill & Supply marks the date of their arrival and will be an avid promoter of the town bird. We look forward to involving the youth of La Plata in educating them about our town bird, and special events will be planned.

Native plants are also a focus, and the towns’ new Keep La Plata Beautiful committee will promote the use of native plants in home and business landscapes through information and mini-grants. They are also working towards the goal of becoming Tree City USA and Bee City USA! You just got to love this town! What else? So many things to come – but one mandatory requirement as mentioned above are that they recognize annually World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD), and recognize they already did! On October 28 the town council adopted resolution 19-21 urging all citizens to celebrate the observance of WMBD. We even jumped the gun on this one and helped the town celebrate October 13 at the Town of La Plata Fall Festival. This year’s theme was Protect Birds: Be the Solution to Plastic Pollution. Our booth was manned by Southern Maryland Audubon Society members as well as from the Port Tobacco River Conservancy. The booth was frequently visited as kids got to color various migratory birds templates and everyone got to learn about the hazards of plastic pollution to the avian species. Visitors also received free metal reusable straws donated by our brand new town store, Wild Birds Unlimited (WBU). They too will be a great partner in all of the fun! Thanks WBU!

So - stay tuned for updates. We are going to have lots to report. In the meantime check out the town website to see they really are flying high with being Bird City Maryland. We have been added to the town website at townoflaplata.org/ go to Quick Links > Continued on page 5
Bird City Maryland. They even added our Charles County Port Tobacco Bald Eagle Cam!! Want your town to join in the fun? Send us an email at somdaudubon@yahoo.com and we will help map out your migratory path to join the fun and become a high flyer.

**Homemade suet: A bird-pleasing DIY**

Mmmm…suet. Okay, so we might not think it’s exactly a treat, but to an insect-eating bird, it’s scrumptious. Packed with protein and rich with lipids that help birds keep warm, it serves as a welcome food source through fall and winter.

Make it at home with this easy DIY recipe. It’s fast, inexpensive, and easy to make from grocery store ingredients. Watch and learn, and whip some up for your backyard birds today.

With this vegetarian version of suet (traditionally it’s made from rendered animal fat) you can provide the perfect winter substitute for birds that normally feast on insects. This lipid-rich treat can help prepare year-round residents for the long winter and is quite the draw for birds such as woodpeckers, wrens, chickadees, nuthatches, and titmice. Check out this recipe, inspired by “The Misfit Baker” blog.

**Materials:**
- 1 1/2 cups shortening (look for palm oil free options)
- 3/4 cups nut butter (any kind)
- 3 1/2 cups wild bird seed
- 1 cup quick oats
- 1/2 cup corn meal
- Ice cube tray

**Steps:**
1. Mix the dry ingredients of bird seed, oats, and corn meal together and set aside.
2. Combine the shortening and nut butter in a separate bowl and melt. Stir until completely combined.
3. Pour the melted mixture into the dry ingredients and stir until combined.
4. Spoon mixture into the ice cube tray.
5. Freeze for one to two hours and place in your suet feeder!

Note: Not recommended for outdoor temperatures above 50 degrees.

To see the article and video, click on this link: [https://tinyurl.com/veggie-suet](https://tinyurl.com/veggie-suet)

---

**2019 - 2020 Field Trips and Programs**

**November 29 - FRIDAY – 8 p.m. - 9 p.m.**
**FIELD TRIP – YOUTHS WELCOME!**
Myrtle Point Park, St. Mary’s County
**“WINTER OWL PROWL ON MYRTLE POINT”**
Leader: Bob Boxwell
This trip is co-sponsored with the Friends of Myrtle Point Park and is an annual event which attempts to “call out” the resident owls of the park. Owls are nocturnal, and therefore, not easy to spot. We will meet in front of the park gates and attempt to attract owls by having them respond to recorded calls. Please dress for the weather, but avoid “noisy” clothing (please no snowsuits!). This event is weather dependent. Rain or high winds will result in cancellation, so please RSVP with good phone/email address. To find Myrtle Point Park, take Rt. 4 in St. Mary’s County to Patuxent Boulevard, and follow to the end. RSVP to Bob at Bobboxwell@hotmail.com or 410-610-5124.

**December 4 – WEDNESDAY – 7:30 p.m. – 9 p.m.**
**MONTHLY MEETING PROGRAM**
Flag Ponds Nature Center
1525 Flag Ponds Pkwy, Lusby, MD 20657
**“2020 BREEDING BIRD ATLAS PROJECT”**
BBA3 COORDINATOR
The Maryland Ornithological Society’s 3rd MD/DC Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA3) launches January 2020. Come learn how you can help us achieve the best breeding bird data for our third atlas. In our changing environment, breeding data is critical. Awareness of population and nesting changes early can help us take action before it is too late. Come meet your county coordinator, and hear from our BBA3 coordinator the how and the why of such an important project. Light refreshments and mingling start at 7 p.m. Public invited. Free event. Inquiries to Tiffany Farrell at somdaudubon@yahoo.com or 301-609-1345.

**January 1 - WEDNESDAY – Noon – 2 p.m.**
**FIELD TRIP – GREAT FAMILY OUTING!**
Chapman State Park, Charles County
3452 Ferry Pl, Indian Head, MD 20640
**“FIRST DAY HIKE AT CHAPMAN STATE PARK: EAGLES AND WAXWINGS AND DUCKS OH MY!”**
3452 Ferry Pl, Indian Head, MD 20640
Leader: Lynne Wheeler
Something new! Join us in a popular New Year’s Day tradition by our Maryland State Parks – a First Day Hike! We will hike at one of our favorite Audubon Important Bird Areas and look for winter birds. Wear appropriate footwear and clothing. Bring binoculars if you have them, some will be provided! Difficulty mild – moderate. Check out other First Day Hikes that may be scheduled in your area at [https://dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands/Pages/firstdayhikes.aspx](https://dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands/Pages/firstdayhikes.aspx). RSVP to Lynne at somdaudubon@yahoo.com or 301-751-8097 (prefer text).
**January 2 – THURSDAY – 7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.**

*Note Date!

**MONTHLY MEETING PROGRAM**

La Plata Volunteer Fire Department
911 Washington Ave, La Plata, MD 20646

**“THE BARN OWLS OF SOUTHERN MARYLAND”**

MIKE CALLAHAN, SMAS Raptor Conservation Chair, Environmental Educator

Come learn about Barn Owls in Southern Maryland. Barn Owls are endangered in Southern Maryland, but Mike Callahan is leading the effort to re-establish a sustainable breeding program. Mike will discuss the current status of these magnificent and interesting birds, and recent success fledging numerous owlets in Charles County. Light refreshments and mingling starts at 7 p.m. Public is invited. Free event. Inquiries to Tiffany Farrell at somdaudubon@yahoo.com or 301-609-1345.

---

**January 12 – SUNDAY – 9 a.m. – 12 noon**

**FIELD TRIP**

Jefferson Patterson Park & Museum, Calvert County

**“WINTER WATERFOWL TRIP”**

Leader: Tyler Bell

Open fields and wooded areas provide good land birding and the river frontage offers close views of waterfowl. Loons, mergansers, seaducks and dabblers are likely, often in great numbers. Call or email Tyler for directions to the meeting location. RSVP to Tyler Bell at jtylerbell@yahoo.com or 301-862-4623.

---

**January 17 – FRIDAY – 7:00 p.m.**

**FIELD TRIP – GREAT FAMILY OWTING!!**

Elms Environmental Center, St. Mary’s County

49300 St. James Road, Dameron, MD 20628

**“OWL PROWL AT THE ELMS”**

Leader(s): Bob Boxwell and Margarita Rochow

Come “call out” the owls!! Owls are nocturnal, and therefore not easy to spot. A great Friday night family outing at The Elms. Dress appropriately for the weather, and avoid noisy clothing. This event is weather dependent. Rain or high winds will result in cancellation. Directions: Take Rt 235 south, left onto St. James Church Road (opposite Mattapany Rd). You will see the sign for The Elms Environmental Education Center. We will meet in the hunter’s dirt parking lot on the right 100 yards before the gate. (Do not drive past the gate!) RSVP to Bob Boxwell at Bobboxwell@hotmail.com or 410-610-5124.

---

**January 19 – SUNDAY – 9:00 a.m. – 12 noon**

**FIELD TRIP**

Piscataway Park & Hard Bargain Farm, Prince George’s County

2301 Bryan Point Road, Accokeek, MD 20607

**“WINTER WATERFOWL AND RESIDENT BIRDS”**

Leader(s): Lynne Wheeler and Bill Townsend

This is a joint trip with the Audubon Naturalist Society. The varied habitat of water, woods, farm fields and edges provide for a great variety of birds. See fergusonfoundation.org for directions. Bill Townsend, HBF Educator Associate will meet you at the entrance (red Chevy). No fee. Limit to 20 participants. RSVP to Lynne Wheeler at somdaudubon@yahoo.com or 301-751-8097 (prefer text).

---

**February 12, 2020 – WEDNESDAY – 7:30-9:00 pm**

*Note date!

**MONTHLY MEETING PROGRAM**

North Point High School, Charles County

2500 Davis Road, Waldorf, MD 20603

**“SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS PRESENT THEIR HOG ISLAND, MAINE EXPERIENCES”**

Every year the Southern Maryland Audubon Society gives a scholarship to teachers, environmental educators and students from our community to attend National Audubon's Camp in Hog Island, Maine. The camp offers many environmental and wildlife programs to choose from. Come and hear our 2019 scholarship winners: Kristin Bourgeosis, Holly Fallica, and Scott Clark share their experiences. This is a great time for any teachers who are considering applying for our 2020 scholarship to get in depth knowledge about this wonderful opportunity. Light refreshments and mingling starts at 7 p.m. Public invited. Free event. Inquiries to Tiffany Farrell at somdaudubon@yahoo.com or 301-609-1345.

---

**Great Backyard Bird Count**

The 23rd annual GBBC will be held Friday, February 14, through Monday, February 17, 2020. Please visit the official website at gbcbirdcount.org for more information and be sure to check out the latest educational and promotional resources. Bird populations are always shifting and changing. Want to host an event? Send us an email to somdaudubon@yahoo.com we will help you make it happen!

---

**WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!**

Diane Ammann, Leonardtown
Kathleen Boyles, Leonardtown
Rosemary Dawley, Lusby
Patricia Edwards, Charlotte Hall
Angela English, White Plains
Patricia Erly, Owings
Gordon Hackley, Suitland
Christine Hill, Huntingtown
Patricia Lauterborn, Oxon Hill
Carolyn Melius, Waldorf
Molly Moore, Silver Spring
Marie Pickett, Port Tobacco
Linda Wilson, Lexington Park
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
- General Donation to Raptor Fund

Total Amount:

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.
- A photo of a fledgling and any other available information on the whereabouts or fate of the bird.

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.