

Chesupioc

Summer-Fall 2009 Newsletter

A local Chapter of National Audubon Society



Consequences

By Christine Holzmüller

I enjoyed the spring and early summer months watching a Red-headed Woodpecker visit my bird feeder and zip around the edge of the forest up the road from our house. I was elated. A species not commonly sighted was flitting around just 30 feet from our front window. Then, in a matter of seconds that beautiful bright red-headed woodpecker turned commando and dove for the enemy, which ended up being his reflection in the windshield of a truck.

Incidents such as this remind us that everything we do has consequences on the land, water, and wildlife. This is a daily tragedy in downtown cities, as birds hit windows either thinking they can pass through or from being attracted by the light. The Lights Out program that started in Toronto as the Fatal Light Awareness Program (FLAP) is being carried out here by tireless volunteers who patrol the sidewalks of downtown Baltimore every morning during both Spring and Fall migration. If you are interested in more about this program, contact save-birds@verizon.net to help make Baltimore a bird-friendly city!

In the case of the truck driver, walking instead of driving is not a logical solution. But, we can consciously step through this world and make green choices to reduce or reverse the impact we have on this earth. Composting for example, is easy, requires little space, produces rich soil for planting, and helps the environment. Food waste needs oxygen to decompose naturally. When buried in a landfill devoid of oxygen, kitchen scraps emit methane gas that each year produces about 70 million metric tons of greenhouse gases. To find out more about composting visit <http://www.mde.maryland.gov/Programs/LandPrograms/Recycling/Education/compostinfo.asp>.

Trashing wisely is just another way we can help. Recycling reduces the volume of trash that we incinerate or dump in landfills. Burning trash produces toxin-laden ash residue that leaches into the ground and water. Amazingly, about 86 percent of America's trash can be recycled or composted. Paper and food waste each make up 30 percent of trash, glass and metals 10 percent each, and plastic 6 percent. So, think before you toss your trash to the curb. Eye glasses, cell phones, tires, computers, paint, clothes and other items can be donated or repurposed. Maryland has an impressive recycling program and places where you can take electronics, compact fluorescent bulbs and more; visit <http://www.mde.maryland.gov/Programs/LandPrograms/Recycling/index.asp>.

Continued on page 5

Baby Owl's Rescue

Book Review by Kathy Woods



"Join Maddie and Max as they learn a valuable lesson from a little lost owl. What if you found a baby owl in your back yard? Would you know what to do? Where would you go to find help? Join young Maddie and Max in *Baby Owl's Rescue* by Jennifer Keats Curtis. The brother and sister pair just wanted to play baseball one day. They never expected to come face-to-face with a wild animal! Lush illustrations by Laura Jacques accompany this story and demonstrate the proper treatment of wildlife. This story reminds all of us that we live in a world surrounded by wild animals, and those wild animals deserve our caution and our respect!"

The delightful book being published by Sylvan Dell is the perfect example of what a children's book should be. There are many lessons in this book: do not disturb wildlife, call an adult for help before you touch wildlife, and teaching children (and adults) that there are wildlife rehabilitators who are professionals in reuniting baby birds with their parents. Based on the work of one of our local wildlife rehabilitators it reinforces leaving the baby alone so that the parent can take care of it.

Written by Jennifer Keats Curtis (*Turtles in My Sandbox*), a local author, and with perfect illustrations by Laura Jacques, this warm and fuzzy story will hopefully teach all readers how they can help with wildlife.

Look for it in bookstores around September 20th, and at local book signings around Maryland. Royalties will help to support the work of the Phoenix Wildlife Center in Phoenix, Maryland.

Newsletter Contents:	Page
Field Trips	2
Kid's Corner.....	4
Friends of the Red Knot	5
Annual Chili Dinner	6
Birdathon Results	7

Field Trips and Programs:

Some of the dates provide an opportunity to choose a trip or double up and participate in two; see asterisks**. Beginner birders welcome and encouraged to attend our walks!

September date & time to be determined A SWIFT NIGHT OUT with Ruth Bergstrom

This is a yearly event to raise awareness and interest in Chimney Swifts. As summer ends, these birds congregate in communal roosts prior to their migration in the fall and we may witness hundreds of birds diving into their favored chimney at dusk. Last year the site was near the Baltimore Conservatory. If you would like to be a part of this exciting event, please e-mail the trip leader at (ruthb22@yahoo.com) to be informed of the meeting date and time.

Saturday, September 26, 8AM - Best Month for Migration at Baltimore's Patterson Park

Please join us for our monthly Bird Walk during the month when we see our greatest variety of southbound migrants. Meet at the fountain, no need to register! Walk runs from 8 to 9:30AM. We have binoculars for you to use if you need them. It is a fun family activity! Call 410-558-2473 with any questions.

Sunday, September 27, 8AM Ladew Gardens with Tim Houghton

Tim will lead us in search of migrating songbirds in this beautiful Harford County location. Ladew management has waived the entrance fee for the bird walk as long as we remain on the nature trail and that's where the birds are! Afterwards, we could eat at the little cafe on the grounds, which opens at 11:00AM. (There would be an additional fee to view the gardens should you choose to do that on your own after the bird walk.) Register with Tim by either e-mail (thoughton@loyola.edu) or phone 410-510-7504.

Saturday, October 10, 8 AM Oregon Ridge Nature Center with Ruth Bergstrom

Oregon Ridge was the location of a mining operation during the mid 19th century. Now we can enjoy its many nature trails while searching for birds. Last year we came across dozens of Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and we'll search again for the Winter Wren. Be sure to spend time in the Nature Center after the walk. Please let Ruth know you're coming by e-mailing her at (ruthb22@yahoo.com), or calling her at 443-752-1967.

Saturday, October 17, 8AM Pickering Creek Audubon Center Bird Search

Hike around Pickering Creek's diverse habitat in search of fall birds species. Learn the difference between a turkey and a black vulture, and how to identify an eagle from a vulture in flight. We'll also look through the woods and gardens for FeederWatch species, and search the waterway for early waterfowl. Binoculars available. Cost: \$2/Audubon members, \$4/general public. Call 410-822-4903 or register at <http://www.pickeringcreek.org/register/index.html>

Saturday, October 24 – Day / Evening Events – Join us for both!

◆ Daytrip to the NATIONAL ARBORETUM with Bryan McKay

Come to the National Arboretum! One of the District of Columbia's best-kept secrets, the 444-acre National Arboretum is a wonderful place to visit. We'll stroll along a short wildflower trail, see the National Bonsai Collection and the Capitol Columns, and visit the East Asian collection's trails overlooking the Anacostia River. Of course, bring your binoculars in case any birds pop up, but this will mostly be a walk to enjoy the fall color and autumn plants. Expect to hike about two miles over roads and paths with some small hills. You'll find lots to photograph. The Arboretum is only about a 30-minute drive from the Baltimore Beltway, where it intersects with the BW Parkway. To register, please call Bryan McKay, 410 747 7132, between 6 and 10 PM by October 22.



◆ Annual Chili Dinner at Saint Bartholomew's

Dinner starts at 6 PM; pre-registration guarantees you a seat. (We've run out of room before; this is extraordinarily delicious chili.) See complete details elsewhere in newsletter.

Saturday, October 31, 8AM Late Fall Migration Walk at Patterson Park

Don't be surprised! There are still interesting birds around. In fact, late October migration flights have brought woodcocks to the park. We meet at the fountain, no need to register! Walk runs from 8 to 9:30AM. We have binoculars for you to use if you need them. It is a fun family activity! Call 410-558-2473 with any questions.

Thursday, November 5, 7PM Catonsville Library On Silent Wings: Predators of the Night with Kathy Woods

Join Chesapeake Audubon at their lecture series for this informative talk on the owls of Maryland. Why are they called silent fliers? What is their favorite food? How can you attract them to your area? Given by Kathleen Woods, Maryland DNR and US Fish and Wildlife Master Wildlife Rehabilitator, this lecture will introduce you to our most common owls and how to identify them. The work of this dedicated expert is also the basis of a new children's book, **Baby Owl's Rescue**, written by Jennifer Keats Curtis and illustrated by Laura Jacques released September 2009. The fascinating tale features a brother and sister and their wildlife rehabilitator mom who know just what to do when they find a baby owl that has fallen out of its nest. Books, signed by the author, will be available at a special price.

At the end of the lecture, Kathy will introduce you to several live owls to illustrate the distinct characteristics of these magnificent hunters.

Continued on page 3

Field Trips and Programs continued...

Saturday, November 7 and 21 Cromwell Valley Park with Jim Meyers

Cromwell Valley Park is a great and convenient birding location just off the Baltimore beltway. Join Jim on one of his bi-weekly walks around this amazing park. No registration required; participants should meet in the parking lot at the end of the second entrance road off Cromwell Valley Road. Contact Jim at 410-665-2440 for start times and information on other biweekly bird walks.

Saturday, November 28 – Out-of-State / In-State Events

◆ Annual Fall Day Trip to Bombay Hook with Hugh Simmons

CAS President Hugh Simmons will lead us through this wonderful refuge by car and on foot (weather permitting) so we don't miss anything interesting. The gathering of thousands of Snow Geese is always an amazing sight; watching them as we drive into the refuge will take your breath away. Please register by November 21st. Contact Hugh Simmons at 410-628-4246; call before 9:00PM please or you can send e-mail to (hughsimmons@comcast.net).

◆ Patterson Park Monthly Walk, 8AM

November is often a quiet month in the park but Hermit thrush and Fox sparrow are possible visitors. Meet the group at the fountain, no need to register! The walk runs from 8 to 9:30AM. We have binoculars for you to use if you need them. Fun for the whole family!! Call 410-558-2473 with any questions.

Sunday, December 6, 8AM Eagles at Conowingo Dam/Warm Up with The Argentinos

Eagles, eagles everywhere and then hot cider to drink! We'll meet at the base of the dam at 8 AM to see how many eagles will be visiting the area this year. Last year's count was well over 100. There is usually a large gathering of Great Blue Herons stoically braving the cold! After a short walk to look for wintering birds along the river path (another Winter Wren or Golden Crowned Kinglet, perhaps?), we'll gather at the Argentino house – a short 5 miles away - and feast on Harry's homemade soups and whatever other goodies show up on the table! Please register early so that there is enough to go around. Call Marian Argentino at 410-752-9913 or e-mail her at (ChesAudubonInfo@aol.com).

Saturday, December 19, 8AM – Monthly Bird Walk at Patterson Park

Take a refreshing break from the holiday rush and enjoy both the regular winter residents and perhaps find an interesting duck or two. The group meets at the fountain; there's no need to register! Fun for the whole family!! The walk runs from 8 to 9:30AM. We have binoculars for you to use if you need them. Call 410-558-2473 with any questions.

Sunday, January 10 Winter Birding at Loch Raven with Hugh Simmons

Come visit this Baltimore winter birding spot where we'll search for winter residents, especially the ducks that make this spot so

popular. If the weather is cold, dress warmly in layers and bring something warm to drink. To register, call Hugh Simmons at 410-628-4246; call before 9:00PM please or you can send e-mail to (hughsimmons@comcast.net).

Sunday, January 17, 10 AM Chesapeake Audubon Meet and Eat with Robin Schless

Weather permitting, come and meet other Chesapeake Audubon members. Talk about bird feeding, President's Weekend Great Backyard Bird Count, Chesapeake Audubon's projects, anything at all!! We'll drink coffee, eat something sweet and learn from each other! Gather at my house in Windsor Mill MD--call or write for directions. Robin Schless, 410-277-9213 (rjschless@yahoo.com).

Saturday, January 31, 9 AM - Marshy Point Nature Center with Ruth Bergstrom

We'll look for winter waterfowl as we walk along the many paths and overlooks at this 500 acre waterfront nature center on one of the gateways to the Chesapeake Bay. Bring a scope if you have one. Warm up afterwards as you watch the feeder birds at the nature center. Please email Ruth Bergstrom at (ruthb22@yahoo.com), or call her at 443-752-1967 to tell her you're coming.



Be A Volunteer!

Saturday, Oct. 3, 8-10AM

Patterson Park Boat Lake Cleanup, Canton Maryland

Chesapeake Audubon will join Patterson Park Audubon and Friends of Patterson Park volunteers for the monthly clean up of the Boat Lake. Meet on the east side of the lake at 8:00am for coffee and donuts and then we'll get to work picking up trash in and around the lake and weeding the native butterfly garden. We have all the necessary supplies -- we just NEED YOU! Please e-mail Ruth Bergstrom at ruthb22@yahoo.com, or call 443-752-1967 to let her know you are coming and to get directions. See you by the Lake!

Sunday, October 11, 11AM to 4PM

Harvest Hoedown at Pickering Creek, Easton Maryland

Pickering Creek Audubon Center is looking for volunteers for their annual Harvest Hoedown. It is always hay-bales of fun with foot-stompin' fun live music, delicious food, fun crafts, vendors, and more. You can donate an hour or less of your time and play the rest of the day. Contact Mark Scallion at mcallion@pickeringcreek.org or call 410-822-4903 for details, directions, and to sign-up.

Volunteering is an excellent opportunity for school students to complete community service. Chesapeake Audubon projects will provide loads of fun for children while at the same time teaching them about the benefits of protecting our environment and wildlife. Of course, adults are always welcome and encouraged to join in the fun with their children.



Make a Bark Rubbing

The bark on a tree is very important because it protects the softer wood inside. Look closely and you might see insects or insect eggs. You might even see holes in the bark made by birds, or twists and slits caused by the weather.

Although leaves give us a clue about what type of tree we're looking at, bark patterns are also different for each type of tree. Making bark rubbings is not only fun, but it will help you discover how unusual bark can be.

What do I need?

- Thin drawing or copy paper
- Tape (optional)
- Crayons in different colors with the wrappers peeled off
- Trees – older trees work the best

Then what do I do?

- Carefully place the paper against the tree and tape (or hold) in place.
- Gently rub the flat side of the crayon back and forth on the paper. The pattern of the bark will appear on the paper.
- Try using different colors on the same or different trees.



You can make a tree ID book by labeling the drawings. Then you can identify your trees after the leaves have fallen in the fall!

The National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Trees, Eastern Region is an excellent resource to help you identify trees.

Write down the trees you find below.



Can you find any leaves that look like these?

Friends of the Red Knot

My name is *Mike Hudson* and I am 13 years old. My friends and I have been working for over 2 years to protect an endangered shorebird called the Red Knot *rufa* (*Calidris canutus rufa*). It really started in May of 2006 when I heard some fellow-birders talking about endangered migrants. One of the birds was the Red Knot. After hearing that migrating numbers had dropped from 100,000 to 12,375 in around 20 years, I decided to help. In the same week, I read a newspaper article about the Red Knot's symbiotic relationship to the Horseshoe Crab. This reiterated the conversation on the bird walk in a less dramatic but still ominous tone. I gathered some friends and we planned our campaign. The following February 2007 we gave a presentation at school and the next month a group of dedicated kids ranging in age from 7 to 13 started the Friends of the Red Knot club. Our club drafted a letter to former Secretary of the Interior, Dirk Kempthorne, presented it to our school during Earth Week, and got almost every student, teacher, and parent to sign a copy of the letter.

Since that fateful day we have been to hearings, city council meetings, bird bandings, nature center openings, and other places to present our educational display and share our enthusiasm. We have collected signatures on hundreds of postcards to Interior Secretaries Kempthorne and Salazar and to Governor O'Malley.



Ruddy Turnstone feeds on Horseshoe Crab eggs on the Delaware Bay
Photograph courtesy of Hugh Simmons

Moreover, our Web site helps to spread the word about the plight of the Red Knot and encourage people across the country to print, sign, and send letters (<http://www.friendsoftheredknot.org>). This past spring we were busy at the Delaware Bird-a-Thon. This is an event where birders go anywhere in Delaware and count as many bird species as possible in 24 hours. They collect sponsors, and all the money raised goes to buying shorebird habitat. This year we identified 117 species and raised \$1,274.00. And, of course, we went to the Delaware Bay to watch the Red Knots and Horseshoe Crabs come!

To read an article written by Hugh Simmons on the Red Knot, visit <http://www.naturescapes.net/122005/hs1205.htm>. ■■

Consequences continued

Audubon has a plethora of ideas and programs from Healthy Yards under their Audubon at Home program to a relatively new initiative funded by Toyota called Together Green. Healthy Yards describes ways to create the best habitat for birds and other critters. If you live close to a wooded area, you may also be lucky enough to attract a Red-headed Woodpecker. Together Green funds conservation projects, supports environmental leaders, and draws people outdoors and into their communities to volunteer on clean-up and other environmental projects. One project describes planting a rain garden by directing water from down spouts into a low area with native wetlands plants. Rain gardens divert water away from driveways and roads that harbor pollutants and into the ground. To find out more about Audubon programs visit <http://www.audubonathome.org>; Together Green is under the Education tab.

On a chapter level, Chesapeake Audubon is always looking for active volunteers to support their environmental and educational activities and also suggest future efforts. In October we are helping Audubon staff from the Patterson Park center and Friends of Patterson Park volunteers clean-up the boat lake in Patterson Park. Come join the fun! This beautiful park is located in Baltimore City adjacent to Canton and several minutes from Fells Point. Go to page 3 to find out more information about this important activity. ■■

Important Notices

Interested in volunteering? Chesapeake Audubon will have several opportunities in 2009 in which you can volunteer your time toward habitat restoration projects, including invasive plant removal, throughout the Baltimore metropolitan and Eastern Shore areas. **This is an excellent opportunity for students looking for projects to complete community service work.** Please send an email to CAS.volunteers@yahoo.com to be kept informed of upcoming projects.

A **CPA or accountant** is needed to serve as Treasurer for Chesapeake Audubon. Please contact Hugh Simmons at 410-628-4246 or hughsimmons@comcast.net for more information.

Go Green! Send us your e-mail address and we will e-mail newsletters instead of cluttering up your mailbox and your countertop with more paper. We will also e-mail field trip reminders.

Chesapeake Audubon Society



Photo from National Zoo eNewsletter

Annual Chili Dinner
6:00 p.m., Saturday October 24, 2009

Featuring

Bob Reitsma
Research Technician
Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, National Zoological Park

Neighborhood Nestwatch--Citizen Science in Your Own Backyard

The Smithsonian's Neighborhood Nestwatch program provides an opportunity for anyone to be a biologist in their own backyard. Bob Reitsma will discuss this innovative program and explain how participants learn more about the birds in their neighborhood and also help scientists solve critical questions regarding the survival of backyard bird populations.

Neighborhood Nestwatch volunteers work with scientists to find backyard bird nests and record and report their observations. Scientists from the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center band birds with unique combinations of colors so volunteers can easily identify "their" birds and report sightings to scientists throughout the year. Scientists are especially interested in comparing how successful nests are in urban, suburban, and rural backyards. Participants have learned a tremendous amount about the lives and habits of birds, and many have involved their children in a hands-on learning experience.

Bob will discuss some of the findings of the Neighborhood Nestwatch program, now in its tenth season, and how "citizen scientists" can play an important role in fostering an appreciation of birds and other wildlife in our own backyards, while providing critical scientific data on the impact of urbanization on bird populations.

Bob received his Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from Calvin College and his Master of Science degree in Biology from George Mason University. Among other duties at the National Zoo, Bob administers the ***Neighborhood Nestwatch program***. His initial research interests involved habitat selection of wintering neotropical migratory birds. These activities took place in southern Mexico, Guatemala, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico, and culminated in Master's thesis work on bird diversity of Costa Rican cocoa plantations. Bob's current research focuses on the impact of urbanization on mid-Atlantic bird communities.

Where: St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church, 4713 Edmondson Avenue, Baltimore, MD

Cost: \$8.00 per person for dinner and the program, \$11.00 if you would like a glass of wine or a beer with dinner.

Reservations: Call (410) 203-1819; specify if you prefer vegetarian sauce. Please send checks payable to The Chesapeake Audubon Society PO Box 3173, Baltimore, MD 21228 or call (410) 203-1819 and leave a message with your name, telephone number and number of people you will be bringing.

Directions: Take Baltimore beltway to exit 15A (Rte. 40, Baltimore National Pike east, towards Baltimore.) Take Rte. 40 about 2 miles, just past the convergence of Rte. 40 and Edmondson Ave. The Church is on the right.

Please note: we ask that you reserve your meal ticket in advance. As always, walk-ins are welcome, but we can't guarantee there will be enough food for them.

Birdathon 2009 Results

Ruth Bergstrom, Event Leader

Thanks to all who participated in and supported the 2009 Birdathon. Nearly \$1,000 was raised to support environmental education programs at Pickering Creek Audubon Center and the Patterson Park Audubon Center. Three teams competed to see how many species they could find in Maryland in one 24-hour period on May 9, 2009. In all, 119 species were observed by the three teams. The Chesapeake Audubon team and the Pickering Creek team tied with 80 species each. Patterson Park tallied 75 species. Some notables were Wild Turkey, Northern Bobwhite, Virginia Rail, Franklin's Gull, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Eastern Screech Owl, Common Nighthawk, Warbling Vireo, 21 warbler species, Scarlet and Summer Tanagers, Grasshopper Sparrow, Rose-breasted and Blue Grosbeaks, Orchard and Baltimore Orioles. Not a bad day!

We will do it again next year and I hope even more of you will participate either by getting out there and finding birds yourself or by giving generously to support one of our three teams. And the teams will work on their strategies and on upping their species counts.

Search and Find:

Find the bird species bolded and underlined that the Birdathoners found! Note: some will be partial names only (for example, 'Scarlet').

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