

Chesupioc

Winter–Spring 2011 Newsletter

A local Chapter of National Audubon Society



Deepwater Horizon Debacle was no Isolated Instance Caused by Rogue Operators

Op Ed by David Yarnold, President, NAS

The report released Tuesday on the Deepwater Horizon debacle uses two words the drillers didn't want to hear: "systemic failure." Make no mistake: The report says the oil and gas industry is unprepared for disasters like the Gulf of Mexico oil disaster of 2010.

Despite the deaths of 11 workers, sinking the region's economy and again fouling its own Gulf Coast nest, the industry spent the day spinning the findings as an isolated instance caused by rogue operators. That's an insult to every American, especially the families who suffered in the disaster this year, and it ignores the commission's clear, hard-hitting findings.

This summer we all watched in horror as an undersea volcano of oil spewed into the Gulf for 91 days. But this is a rare instance where something good can come from tragedy. For starters, we can use BP's fines to restore a way of life to the region that has suffered the worst environmental and economic harm. The commission recommends devoting at least 80 percent of BP's guilt money to restoration and that requires an act of Congress.

The report's recommendation to fund coastal restoration in the Gulf is a critical first step toward rebuilding an ecosystem that has been shattered by an unfettered energy industry and well-intentioned but terrifically destructive Mississippi River management.

We know that the natural buffers, the wetlands and the forests can re-grow. It's just a question of political will and

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What I'm Reading

The Singing Life of Birds: The Art and Science of Listening to Birdsong - by Donald Kroodsma

Review by *Michael Stahl*

The *Singing Life of Birds* is more than a book. It is packaged with an audio CD and instructional appendices for

the CD and for recording bird songs. I learned of this author through references in other books I was reading.

The CD-ROM contains mostly birds songs (mingled with other sounds such as a new born baby's goo-goo sounds). Throughout the book, Kroodsma refers to the CD so the reader can hear the song of the bird being described. Some may like to stop and use that media. I was not one of them. I listen occasionally to the CD for the pure enjoyment of hearing the different birds singing and plan to study it using the appendices.

Appendix I reviews the details of the CD. After leafing through the appendix, I feel confident that when I do sit down and combine the audio and visual text, it will be a pleasant listening and learning experience. Another appendix describes what it takes to really record bird sounds. Technology is a big part of this process, but technique is also invaluable. With much more modest equipment, I do an annual early Spring recording series of my own as sort of a birthday celebration. Kroodsma's instructions provided some insight regarding methods to more skillfully record birds and, thus, learn more from my efforts. Until now, I've randomly collected songs that can be heard and enjoyed but are not particularly educational.

Kroodsma's documentation and his taxonomic list are great reference tools. This is a book I will not be giving away, because I plan to use it as a reference for many years. I have also copied the CD onto several computers scattered about my house so I can watch birds from different windows.

Now comes the hard part, critiquing the book. It really is a difficult one to read. I think this has less to do with an over use of highly specific jargon requiring a PhD to understand, and more to do with author not understanding the audience. The book seems to be written for three audiences, and this reviewer could not be all three. I do not

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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 are welcome and encouraged to attend our walks!

New! FEBRUARY/MARCH Sunday Bird Walk n' Talk Series

Sunday, February 6, 1-3 PM, Geese and Swans

Sunday, March 13, 2-4 PM, Ducks

Pickering Creek Audubon Center

The new **Bird Walk n' Talk** series introduces birds along the Delmarva Peninsula to beginning birders of all ages. Each month, participants will explore the habitat, modes of identification, and calls of different bird groups. Naturalists will briefly talk about the bird groups, then adults and children will split up for specialized hikes. Adults will learn some in-depth identification skills and bird/habitat connections. Children will look for birds, then have fun making birds using arts & crafts materials. Hot beverages and homemade treats await us on our return to ease the winter chills. Please register in advance by calling 410/822-4903. Pre-registration is required. Children are considered ages 15 and under. Cost: \$10/adult; \$5/child

Saturday, February 26, 8-10:30 AM, Winter Birds, Patterson Park Monthly Walk

See what birds battle the winter temperatures in an east Baltimore City park in Canton. Meet at the Patterson Park Fountain (just inside the Park close to where Lombard Street meets South Patterson Park Avenue) for a morning stroll through the Park searching for visiting birds. Bring binoculars if you have them, although we will have extras for sharing if you need them. All ages welcome. No need to register. We'll see you by the Fountain at 8am!

Saturday, March 5, 8 AM, Middle Creek WMA PA (w/Baltimore Bird Club)

Ruth Bergstrom

We'll join the Baltimore Bird club for an all-day trip to a 6,254-acre public area located between the Lancaster/Lebanon County's line. This spot hosts thousands of geese, ducks, and other waterfowl this time of year. Be sure to bring a lunch and dress warmly. E-mail Ruth at ruthb22@yahoo.com, or call her at 443-752-1967 for directions to the Maryland park-n-ride location.

Saturday, March 12, Gunpowder Amphibian Walk

Field Trip Leaders: Hugh Simmons and Tom Scollins

Early spring rains fill vernal pools, which are a breeding ground for frogs and salamanders. Around dusk, trip leaders Hugh Simmons and Tom Scollins (a reptile and amphibian expert) will explore areas along the Gunpowder River near Phoenix



Pond for these amphibians and hopefully experience a chorus of singing frogs. Come with us! Waterproof shoes are highly recommended; high boots are better and hip waders are best if you have them. For more information and to register call Hugh Simmons before 9pm at 410-628-4246 or e-mail at lensonnature@gmail.com.

Saturday, March 26, 8-10:30 AM, Spring Migrants, Patterson Park Monthly Walk

Warming temperatures are prompting birds to migrate north again. Let's see what birds are stopping over in Patterson Park. Meet at the Fountain (just inside the Park close to where Lombard Street meets South Patterson Park Avenue) for a morning stroll in search of visiting birds. Bring binoculars if you have them, although we will have extras for sharing if you need them. All ages welcome. No need to register. We'll see you by the Fountain at 8am!

Saturday, April 2, 800 AM, Harford Glen

Trip Leader: Ruth Bergstrom

Take a bird and nature hike through the Environmental Education Center of Harford County. There's always something new to see along Winter's Run or in the numerous ponds and meadows along the hiking trails. Please e-mail Ruth at ruthb22@yahoo.com or call her at 443-752-1967 to register.

Saturday, April 16

Birds and Blooms in Susquehanna State Park

Trip Leaders Bryan MacKay and Hugh Simmons will lead the group along the Susquehanna State Park trails, which are rich with life in early spring. Wildflowers abound

and birds are fluttering everywhere. For more information and to register, contact Bryan at 410-747-7132 or mac-kay@umbc.edu, or Hugh at 410-628-4246 or lensonnature@gmail.com.



Artist: Kirsten Munson

Sunday, April 17, 8:30 AM, Adkins Arboretum (Native Plant Opening Weekend)

Trip Leader: Ruth Bergstrom

The 400-acre native plant garden and preserve on the Eastern Shore has miles of paths along streams, meadows, and forests and is also an Audubon MD-DC important bird area. This is also the weekend of their native plant nursery opening so bring your plant wish list! Please register for this walk with Ruth at ruthb22@yahoo.com or call her at 443-752-1967.

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Are you receiving our weekly emails? Send a request to information@chesapeakeaudubon.org for field trip and volunteer updates.

Friend us on 

More Field Trips & Programs!

Monday, April 18, 7:30 AM, Hike Up Old Rag Mountain, Shenandoah National Park Trip

Leaders: John Love and Kevin McCahill

Join us to celebrate the 41st anniversary of Earth Day (a few days early) and enjoy the beauty of nature on the premier day hike in the Washington area. We will meet at 7:30 AM at the Park-n-Ride at I-70 and Route 32 (located just north of I-70). The climb is strenuous but not technically difficult. It is 7.5 miles round-trip and takes 6-7 hours, including time for lunch at the top. You will need well broken-in walking shoes or boots with hiking socks, lunch, at least a quart of water, warm clothing, rain gear, and a pack to carry it all in. After the hike, we will stop for dinner in Warrenton, VA (for anyone interested). We usually arrive back home around 8 PM. Although the trip leaders may have lost a step or two in recent years, between them, they have made the hike up Old Rag more than 50 times! To register for the hike or for more information call John Love at 301-498-1978, or Kevin McCahill at 443-831-3111.

Saturday, April 23, Ft. Smallwood Hawk Watch

Trip Leader: Hugh Simmons

This small park in Anne Arundel County is an Important Bird Area because it is a prime spring migration spot for counting hawks. In late April, hundreds of raptors can be counted on a good day. The pond and paths around the park also provide a great opportunity for a wide variety of other species. For more information and to register call Hugh Simmons before 9pm at 410-628-4246 or email at lensonnature@gmail.com.

Saturday, April 30, 8-10:30 AM, More Spring Migrants, Patterson Park Monthly Walk

Warm temperatures encourage birds to migrate north again-this time in a hurry! Let's see what birds stop over in Patterson Park. Meet at the Patterson Park Fountain (just inside the Park close to where Lombard Street meets South Patterson Park Avenue) for a morning stroll through the Park in search of birds. Bring binoculars if you have them, although we will have extras for sharing if you need them. All ages welcome. No need to register. We'll see you by the Fountain at 8am!

Saturday, April 30, 9 AM-12 PM, National Arboretum

Trip Leader: Bryan MacKay

Join Bryan MacKay for a walking tour through the National Arboretum to see tens of thousands of azaleas at peak bloom time. We'll also visit the wildflower trail, hopefully catch the last of the dogwoods in flower, and occasionally look up for spring migrant birds! The

Arboretum is closer than you think - only a 30-minute drive down the BW Parkway from the Baltimore Beltway. Please register by April 28 by calling Bryan at 410 747 7132 or emailing mackay@umbc.edu.

Saturday, April 30, 6 PM, Chesapeake Audubon Society Annual Spaghetti Dinner, See information elsewhere in this newsletter!

Sunday, May 1, 8 AM, Milford Mill (Villa Nova Park) Trip Leader: Tim Houghton

It is always great to add a new location to our schedule and Milford Mill has long been known to Baltimore birders as a great migrant spot. Our trip leader loves warblers, and there should be plenty to see and hear at this time of year. To sign up and find out details about meeting place and parking, e-mail Tim at thoughton@loyola.edu, or call him at 410-510-7504.

Saturday, May 7, Chesapeake Audubon's Third Annual Birdathon

Please join us, support us, or form your own team! For more information, contact Ruth Bergstrom at ruthb22@yahoo.com or call her at 443-752-1967.

Sunday, May 8, 8 AM, Susquehanna State Park Trip Leader: Tim Houghton

Will this be the year that Tim scopes out Cerulean Warblers building their nest? How many Great Blue Herons will be fishing in the stream? This spectacular Harford County park has a little bit of everything and if anyone can find it Tim can. To sign up and find out details about meeting place and parking, e-mail Tim at thoughton@loyola.edu, or call him at 410-510-7504.

Saturday, May 14, Spring Migration at Bombay Hook Trip Leader: Hugh Simmons

Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge has been dubbed the second best birding place on the East Coast and early May is a great time to visit. Migrating songbirds, horseshoe crabs, and shorebirds make for a full day of great birding. For more information and to register call Hugh Simmons before 9pm at 410-628-4246 or e-mail at lensonnature@gmail.com.

















Saturday, May 28, 10:00 AM, Canoe Trip, Marshy Point Trip Leader: Ruth Bergstrom

Begin your Memorial Day Weekend on the water! Marshy Point Nature Center and its 500-acres are part of the Chesapeake Gateways Network. Beginning and experienced canoeists are welcome to paddle around the shallow waters as we search for birds, reptiles, and plant life. All equipment will be provided; a \$10 donation is requested. Register with Ruth at ruthb22@yahoo.com or



Winter Treasure Hunt

Think there's nothing to see outside in the winter? Have a treasure hunt! While hiking, try and find the items on this game sheet or invent your own. If you're in an area where you can collect leaves, twigs, and seeds, glue them together as a nature collage on a paper plate or piece of construction paper. A cup of hot chocolate is the perfect way to end your adventure!

Items on this game card:

Row 1: Songbird, snowflakes, berries, vine

Row 2: Grasses, deer, evergreen tree, tree with no leaves

Row 3: Acorns, nest, squirrel, gull

Row 4: Chipmunk, duck, seeds, leaf

Chesapeake Audubon Society

Annual Spaghetti Dinner
6:00 p.m., Saturday April 30, 2011



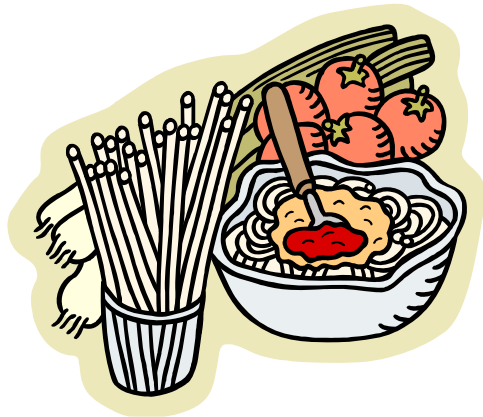
Speaker and Topic to be Announced

Dinner music by the Ten Directions Jazz Quartet

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

Cost: \$9.00 per person for dinner and the program, \$12.00 if you would like a glass of wine or a beer with dinner.

Reservations: Please call 410-203-1819 and leave a message with your name, telephone number, and number of people you will be bringing, and whether you prefer vegetarian spaghetti sauce. Please send checks payable to The Chesapeake Audubon Society PO Box 3173, Baltimore, MD 21228. It is best to reserve your meal ticket in advance. While we welcome walk-ins, we can't guarantee there will be enough food if we don't have advance notice.



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



Frigid Facts

Birds do have down coats that insulate them from the cold, and they puff up their feathers to stay warm. But, they also shiver to produce heat, and compress the flow of warm blood through legs and feet to prevent about 90% of heat loss in these exposed extremities.

Donate

Do you have any unused field guides from past birding trips to Mexico, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, Panama, Ecuador or other locations in Latin America or the Caribbean? Baltimore Bird Club, in conjunction

with the American Birding Association (ABA) is collecting used field guides for Latin America or the Caribbean for their Birder's Exchange program and passing them on to students, researchers or teachers from that country or location.

If you have a guide to contribute, please **bring it** to the Audubon Office in Patterson Park: 2901 E. Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD., by Feb. 1st. The office phone is 410-558-2473. You can also **mail** your books directly to: Birder's Exchange, c/o ABA, 4945 N. 30th St., Ste. 200, Colorado Springs, CO 80919.

Messages from the President

SOLD: Audubon Sanctuary

Many of you read last July that the National Audubon Society sold the Jean Ellen DuPont Shehan Audubon property, a 950-acre wildlife sanctuary on the Chesapeake Bay. The unique property was donated to Audubon in 1997 with the understanding that funds would be provided to maintain the roads, trails, buildings and to pay the taxes. Trusts were formed for this purpose, but the availability of funds had been vastly overstated and the cash needed to take care of the property never fully materialized.

The necessary and unfortunate need to sell this Audubon sanctuary was complicated by the current challenges from the U.S. economy and the difficult structure of the holding company. Although sale of the property was presented to various organizations, including the state of Maryland and other government and private agencies, Audubon ultimately found a buyer in Talbot County businessman Robert Pascal in July, 2010. Mr. Pascal intends to preserve the estate and keep it from being developed; at last, a perfect match. We look forward to hearing and reporting on the restoration of the estate, and hope that the public will once again be invited to take advantage of its beauty.

■ ■

Volunteer

It's a brand new year. Make a resolution to do something special

for nature and your community! Chesapeake Audubon could use more volunteers. For us to expand and get more involved in local issues, we need you! No experience is necessary, and the time invested is up to you. Depending on your interests, we can always use help in the following areas:

Conservation Committee - identify environmental issues and take action

Events - help with dinners, cleanups, or other events

Field Trips - lead a field trip (birds, butterflies, plants, etc.), or host a location you are familiar with

Communication - contribute to our newsletter, Facebook page, or website

Please email us at information@chesapeakeaudubon.org for more information. Thank you and have a Happy New Year!

Ruth Bergstrom
President, Chesapeake Audubon Society



Deepwater Horizon Op Ed *continued...*

money. The commission says we should bring both to bear, and Congress can make that happen.

The commission also called for a new generation of robust scientific studies and long-term monitoring efforts to understand and mitigate the spill's effects and to guide and evaluate restoration efforts.

The report is clear; the Interior Department was outgunned by drillers and needs the people and the dollars to police the industry. Regulatory agencies need funding, staff and support to enable development and enforcement of regulatory standards.

Even now, the Obama administration is considering Shell Oil's proposal to drill in the Beaufort Sea in Alaska next summer, despite the lack of a credible oil spill response plan. This is the definition of insanity: repeat the behavior, hope for a different outcome. Think of what we witnessed in the Gulf this summer, and imagine the challenges of cleaning up a large oil spill in severe weather and broken ice conditions in the Arctic Ocean, perhaps during the perpetual darkness of winter.

A uniquely fragile marine environment, Beaufort is a crucial migratory route for endangered whales and it was also recently designated as critical habitat for the threatened polar bear. With no basic infrastructure, no roads, hotels or port facilities, recovery vessels would face a thousand mile journey from the nearest Coast Guard base, at Kodiak. We must heed the clear warning laid out by the commission. It's time for a "timeout" for drilling in America's Arctic Ocean.

Co-Chairs Sen. Bob Graham and William Reilly and all the members of the Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling have shown a willingness to face hard and unpopular truths, and given us a pivotal opportunity.

Can this Congress empower the drilling police? Can the oil and gas industry balance lives, nature and profitability? Can the people of the Gulf Coast dare to hope that their fractured landscape can be put back together again? All of that is possible, the commission said. And they're right. ■ ■

**DON'T MISS THE...
GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT!
SEE DETAILS ON PAGE 8**

Book Review *continued*

have the interest nor the background and skill to grapple with the sonograms and the routine references to singing patterns. Many times he ruined pretty good prose by rattling off mind-numbing symbols to display his recognition of the many different songs a bird could sing in a short spurt of time. He helps us visualize the conditions of the forest he is in, including the time of day and the season, but he lessens the impact by telling us that a bird has sung AXAXXAXXXXXXX, for example.

For those of us who are not audiologists, his countless displays of sonogram results are simply clutter, getting in the reader's way. Sonograms are vital to the researcher studying the exciting parts of nature such as bird song and how the brain works. There are plenty of places for the transmission of this sort of information and most typically this place would be in an academic research journal not a popular natural history book being sold at Barnes and Nobles.

The actual prose was pretty worthwhile as Kroodmsma reflected on his passion for birds and the many places it has taken him. He described his excitement about new findings really well and they mirror emotions I have felt in similar conditions. Sometimes the patience and the endurance while in intemperate climates and conditions pay off with the "Aha" moment when a curiosity is answered. That occurs even when the empirical revelation is not what one imagines.

Kroodmsma displays that he is a good scientist relying on scientific method rather than the emotions that

can well up when we really want to believe something is happening. He would agree that here in the Western Hemisphere when the sound of pounding hoofs comes about, we should imagine horses and not zebras. This applies in the avian world as well.

He is very generous throughout the book in naming compatriots in his field studies and in the ivied halls to credit those about him. He speaks fondly of his allies, and I suspect there were many thrilled to see their name in print.

The book was inexpensive with the luxury of a CD-ROM, so the publishers did imagine a popular audience. There are quite a number of amateur ornithologists, such as me, with peculiar areas of interest. Kroodmsma only partially accommodated us. In my opinion, this book was idiosyncratic and short of meeting its goal. ■■



Important Information

Chesapeake Audubon's third annual Birdathon is coming up in May. The goal is to identify as many bird species as possible during a 24-hour period to raise money for children's environmental education programs. Last year we saw over 100 species! Please think about forming your own team, join one of ours, or sponsor a team. You do not have to be an expert birder! A special mailing will be sent out closer to the event.

Want a good reason to leave garden clean-up until spring? Many butterflies and insects in the mid-Atlantic spend the winter in pupal or egg form in leaf litter or inside flower stalks. Here they safely wait out the cold weather and emerge in the spring. It also provides food for many invertebrates who break down the leaves, which in turn enriches the soil and provides food for wildlife.

Do you know how to report banded birds? Here are three ways:

Online: www.reportbank.gov

Phone: 1-800-327-BAND

Write: Bird Banding Laboratory, 12100 Beech Forest Rd., Laurel, MD 20708

Join the Great Backyard Bird Count!

Great Backyard Bird Count February 18-21

Take part in a four day annual event sponsored by National Audubon and Cornell Lab of Ornithology for as little as 15 minutes a day! Be a citizen scientist and count birds to help document species distribution in your area. There's no need to be a bird expert and kids are encouraged to help. Visit this website for all the details: <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc>

Great Backyard Bird Count February 19, 8am- 2pm

Pickering Creek Audubon Center is holding a Great Backyard Bird Count Day on Saturday, February 19 at the Center office from 8am-2pm. This event is free and open to our volunteers and the public. Participation by all is welcomed for any length of time during the event. Experienced birders will be on hand throughout the day to lead the participants in bird identification and counting. Bird guides, and binoculars will be available for use. Learn about Project FeederWatch and other bird monitoring programs at Pickering Creek. Free kids activities will also be provided. This event is supported by Together Green, a joint initiative between the National Audubon Society and Toyota Foundation fund conservation projects, train environmental leaders, and offer volunteer opportunities that significantly benefit the environment. Please call or email the Volunteer Coordinator spitts@audubon.org or 410/822-4903 for more information or registration.

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