

Chesupioc



Spring 2016 Newsletter

President's Message

You are getting this newsletter because you are a member of Audubon. Whether you are a long time member and volunteer or a new member who has just received their first issue of Audubon magazine, you are part of a highly effective bird conservation organization with hemispheric reach. Audubon is the only organization of its kind with the grass roots strength of 465 local chapters nationwide. Whether protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, saving birds and rebuilding habitat in the Gulf, or protecting shorebird habitat on the North Carolina coast, Audubon chapters are involved. Chesapeake Audubon is your local chapter. I hope you will go to our website and read about the work we are doing here in Maryland, at the Pickering Creek Audubon Center, and on our 700+ acre salt marsh in Dorchester County where Audubon is conducting important research on how to save the marshes and the birds that depend on them from sea level rise. But local chapters do not receive significant funding from National Audubon. Please consider supporting us financially or by volunteering your time. There is information in this newsletter on both.

We publish several newsletters a year electronically. This is our annual mailed issue. I hope you will continue to access them on line. If you would like to receive email notification when our electronic newsletters are published, please send an email to info@chesapeakeaudubon.org. Good birding and I hope to see you on a field trip.

Hugh Simmons

Is Losing the Scarlet Tanager in Maryland Worth a Shorter Commute?

by Tom Schmidt

In light of the recent events at the Malheur Wildlife Refuge in Oregon, many people around the country have asked themselves, "What is the purpose of these wildlife refuges?" To answer this question one can simply look to the National Wildlife Refuge System mission which is "... to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans."¹ Malheur Wildlife Refuge is a refuge for many important species of insects, animals, plants, and more importantly to us, birds. As a great expanse of land on the Pacific Flyway, many species call Malheur either their home or simply a pit stop to refuel while undergoing their herculean task of migrating to the opposing hemisphere.

Being out on the east coast, we have one of the most important

national wildlife refuges in the entire country, Patuxent National Wildlife Research Refuge, only a short drive along the Baltimore-Washington Parkway from either city. Not only does this refuge play an important role in providing over 12,000 acres² of habitat for an abundant biodiversity of birds, from your backyard Blue Jay to your deep forest Scarlet Tanager, it also is the only national wildlife refuge to support wildlife research. The mission of Patuxent since its inception in 1936 has been to conserve and protect the nation's wildlife and habitat through research and wildlife management techniques².

Currently, this 80-year mission is under attack as the North Eastern Corridor (NEC) is planning to cut off 60 acres³ of this refuge to put in a rail line to improve mass transit along the East Coast⁴.

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Male Scarlet Tanager with winter plumage
© Hugh Simmons Photography

A breeding male Scarlet Tanager has a brilliant red head and body with jet black wings and tail. Tanagers live in the forest canopy and are hard to find unless you key in on their *chick-burr* call. They eat insects and fruit, and migrate to northern South America in fall.

Wild About City Life

By Vicki Dodson

I am a bicycle commuter—more specifically, a *Baltimore City* bicycle commuter. Although, this takes nerves of steel at times, it is not without its rewards. A little exercise, a slightly smaller carbon footprint, and a lot less road rage add more charm to Charm City for me. But what I enjoy most about my ride is the wildlife I see. Yes, you read that right: Wildlife.

Part of my commute traces the Jones Falls Trail. Starting as a stream in Baltimore County, the Jones Falls graduates to river status near the city border. It is then hemmed in at intervals by concrete, boulders, and old fencing before finally—and ignominiously—being covered over by the Jones Falls Expressway.

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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. Beginner birders are welcome and encouraged to attend our walks!

Saturday, April 2, 9:00am-noon Leader: Bryan MacKay Signs of Spring Walk at Patapsco Valley State Park

Join naturalist Bryan MacKay for a 2 mile stroll along the paved Grist Mill Trail as buds begin to swell and birds begin to sing. Learn about early season plants and the history of the valley; we may even see a few birds!

To register, please contact Bryan at mackay@umbc.edu or at 410-747-7132 at least a day in advance.

Sunday, April 3, 8:00am Leader: Brad Phoebus Marshy Point Nature Center (near Edgewood)

Join Brad for a morning of birding through varied habitats for feeder birds, marsh birds, songbirds, hawks, and waterfowl. Boots may be a good idea. Marshy Point is a little south of Edgewood near Hwy. 40. Meet at the big Visitor Center.

For more information and to register, please contact Brad at bradphoebus@gmail.com or 443-415-9776.

Saturday, April 9, 9:00am Leaders: Fred Brundick and John Landers Photographing Nature at Cromwell Valley Park

Bring your camera and binoculars. John Landers and photographer and CAS board member, Fred Brundick, will take you around wonderful Cromwell Valley Park. This will be a great way to get into practice just as the flowers, butterflies, and birds are beginning to show their stuff.

To register, contact Fred at gpferd@gmail.com or 443-752-5607.

Thursday, April 21, 7:00am Leader: Kevin McCahill Earth Day Hike up Old Rag Mountain (all day) Shenandoah National Park

Join us to celebrate Earth Day and enjoy the beauty of nature on the premier day hike in the Washington area. We will meet at 7:00am at the Park-n-Ride at I-70 and RT-32 (located just north of I-70). The climb is strenuous but not technically difficult. It is about an 8 mile circuit hike, and takes 6-7 hours, including time for lunch at the top where your efforts are rewarded with stunning views of the Shenandoah Valley below. You will need well-broken-in walking/trail shoes or boots with hiking socks, lunch, at least a quart of water, warm clothing and rain gear, and a day pack to carry it all in. We usually arrive back home around 7 pm.

To register for the hike or for more information call Kevin McCahill at 443-831-3111, or email at mamie.gdad@verizon.net.

Saturday, April 23, 8:30am Leader: Colleen Webster Warblers and Wildflowers at Susquehanna State Park

Enjoy a pleasant stroll among the emerging spring wildflowers of beautiful Susquehanna State Park while also looking for early migrant songbirds and lingering winter visitors. Meet at the parking area at the confluence of Deer Creek and the Susquehanna River, just north of Rock Run Mill.

For more information, contact Colleen at 410-459-4577 or cwebster@harford.edu.

Would you like to know what we find on our field trips? Visit our blog at <http://chesapeakeaudubon.blogspot.com/>



Follow us on MeetUp and Facebook for field trips that may be added after publication.

Friend us on

facebook

Saturday, April 30, 6:00pm – Annual Spaghetti Dinner

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

See details about reservations and cost on page 4.

Saturday, May 7, 2-5:00pm Leader: Bryan Mackay Wildflower Hike at Patapsco Valley State Park

We will be hiking about 3-4 miles of backcountry trails in search of spring wildflowers. With luck, we may even see some orchid species! Bring your binoculars too; how can we ignore peak warbler migration?!

To register, please contact Bryan MacKay at mackay@umbc.edu or at 410 747 7132 at least a day in advance.

Saturday, May 14, 7:30am Leader: Tim Houghton Susquehanna State Park

Susquehanna State Park is Harford County's (and maybe the state's) best place to find Cerulean Warblers and many other warbler and songbird species. What birds will the river, creek, woods, and fields reveal for our list? This great park has a little bit of everything. Meeting place will be at Rock Run Mill (corner of Stafford Rd. and Rock Run Rd.).

For information and to register, email Tim at timhoughton@comcast.net or call 410-510-7504. LIMIT OF 15 PEOPLE!

Sunday, May 15, 8:00am Leader: Brad Phoebus Double Rock Park (near 695 and Harford Rd.)

This new trip location for Audubon has shown itself to be a productive area for migrating warblers, thrush, and other songbirds. Join Brad for a morning of birding through a variety of habitats, after meeting at the entrance parking lot (near Glen and Texas). For more information and to register, please contact Brad at bradphoebus@gmail.com or 443-415-9776.

Saturday, May 21, 9:00am Leader: Colleen Webster Kayak Trip, Perryville Town Park

Paddle the usually serene waters of the well protected Mill Creek and historic Furnace Bay. Eagles and Osprey are often seen soaring overhead, songbirds and woodland birds frequent the shoreline, and heron and waterfowl are common sightings. You will need to bring a kayak; no rental boats available. Meet at the launch at Stump Point.

For more information, contact Colleen at 410-459-4577 or cwebster@harford.edu.

Sunday May 22, 8:30-11:00am Leader: Ruth Bergstrom Spring Migration for Youth Birders (8-15 years old with parents) at North Point State Park (Edgemere, MD)

North Point is a 1,310 acre park on the shores of the Chesapeake Bay. We will search for spring migrants and resident birds on the Marsh Trail and bay front. Park entrance fee is \$3/vehicle.

Contact Ruth at ruthb22@yahoo.com or 443-752-1967 to register and for meeting instructions.

Kids Tweens and Teens

GET OUTSIDE! SPARK YOUR BIRDING INTEREST

"Spark and Flame...when ordinary birds become extraordinary", Kenn Kaufman

by Susan Hutson; Cardinal family illustration by Eve



Spark! What bird first sparked your interest in bird-watching? For 12-year old Eve, and 4-year-old Ivy, it was a female cardinal. The female cardinal's soft olive-brown feathers, red crest, and orange beak were simply too beautiful to ignore. Once the female built a nest in the apple tree outside their kitchen window, their "spark" bird also became their favorite bird.

Flame! The pair of cardinals made a strong case for Eve and Ivy's affection. The male cardinal fed the female as she sat on her eggs, and she in turn sang to the male. After about 12 days, 3 eggs hatched. After 10 days the hatchlings fledged. The male tended to the newly fledged-feeding them and flying with them-while the female began incubating the next clutch of eggs.

The art of raising a family!



Male with hatchlings

Backyard birding, hiking, or really any opportunity to get outside, fanned the birdwatching flame. Over time, Eve and Ivy's must-watch list grew to include the goldfinch, yellow-bellied sapsucker, robin, red-tailed hawk, and osprey. What else has the spark ignited? Eve and Ivy's favorite app is one for bird sounds.



Female

Activities: Learn About Your "SPARK" Bird

Download Free [National Audubon Society app](http://www.audubonguides.com/field-guides/bird-identification-app.html). Listen to your "spark" bird. (Visit <http://www.audubonguides.com/field-guides/bird-identification-app.html>)

Watch [Cornell Lab of Ornithology videos and sounds](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/Page.aspx?pid=1642&q=bird%20call%20videos). (visit <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/Page.aspx?pid=1642&q=bird%20call%20videos>)

Check out [Male and female cardinal songs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C9LNexIoCW0). (visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C9LNexIoCW0>). Most famously, Cheer, cheer, cheer. Other sounds: Wheet, wheet, wheet. Chew chew, chew, chew. Chee-dle, cheedle, cheedle.

CAS Annual Spaghetti Dinner Sat., April 30, 2016, 6:00 p.m.

Featuring: David Curson

"Saving the Chesapeake Bay's Salt Marshes – Audubon's role"

In 2014 Audubon and partners were awarded a \$3.5 million grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to carry out projects to increase the resilience of tidal marshes at Blackwater NWR and Farm Creek Marsh. David Curson will provide an update on how these projects are going, how they will benefit the unique assemblage of salt marsh birds in Southern Dorchester County Important Bird Area, and how this work fits into Audubon's climate adaptation plan for the marshes of the Chesapeake Bay.

David Curson has worked as Director of Bird Conservation for Audubon Maryland-DC since 2004, overseeing the Maryland-DC Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program and designing and implementing conservation projects for birds and their habitats in Maryland and DC. Recently, Dave's work has focused on tidal marsh conservation in the Chesapeake Bay, and he is implementing a number of projects to increase marsh resilience to climate change and sea level rise.

Dave grew up in London, England. In 1985 he received his BSc in Ecology at the University of East Anglia and began working as a Habitat Survey Ecologist for local government and NGOs in London. He came to the U.S. in 1993 to begin graduate studies and received MS and PhD degrees in the Department of Wildlife Ecology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

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

Cost: \$10.00 per person for dinner and the program, \$13.00 if you would like a glass of wine or a beer with dinner.

Reservations required for food planning: Please call 443-423-1847—leave your name, telephone number, and number of people. Send checks payable to the Chesapeake Audubon Society, PO Box 3173, Baltimore, MD 21228. **Specify if you are vegetarian.**

Directions: Baltimore Beltway to exit 15A (Rte. 40, Baltimore National Pike east, towards Baltimore), drive about 2 miles on Rte. 40, just past the convergence of Rte. 40 & Edmondson Ave.; the Church is on the right.

We are again extremely fortunate to have local guitarist and songwriter, Sean McCahill, perform for your listening pleasure during dinner.

Scarlet Tanager vs Shorter Commute continued.

You may find yourself thinking, "60 acres is not that much land to take from this refuge," but it is setting a dangerous precedent that makes this plan so disturbing. Our national wildlife refuge system is not to be looked at as land for future development or for resource extraction, rather these refuges must remain areas dedicated to the "conservation, management, and restoration¹" of our environment. Many species of birds that call this place home are important not only for our enjoyment of the outdoors but to our ecosystem and its success. If these 60 acres are lost to the NEC project, what will come next? Further fragmentation of our forests will undoubtedly lead to a decline in biodiversity and continued declines of precious bird species that rely upon the mature forests of this refuge. Unfortunately, the public comment period for the Environmental Impact Survey came to an end this past February, but it is never too late to focus our efforts to give a voice to the Scarlet Tanager and our other magnificent creatures.

1. "About: Mission | National Wildlife Refuge System." *About: Mission | National Wildlife Refuge System*. Web. 29 Feb. 2016.
2. "Home - Patuxent - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service." *Home - Patuxent - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*. Web. 29 Feb. 2016.
3. "Important Bird Areas." *Audubon Maryland-DC*. 2015. Web. 29 Feb. 2016.
4. "NEC FUTURE: A Rail Investment Plan for the Northeast Corridor: About the Plan." *NEC FUTURE: A Rail Investment Plan for the Northeast Corridor: About the Plan*. Web. 29 Feb. 2016. ■ ■

Wild About City Life continued

Yet, while it is allowed to breathe and see the sun, there remain clues that the Jones Falls is a real River with a capital "R". To the eyes of a pessimist, it is a degraded waterway. Polluted. Doleful. But like the city itself, on a bright morning, it is vital, captivating, charming. And to wildlife, the Falls serve as an odd oasis in the heart of industry, transportation, and housing.

Among the invasive plants, there are native mulberry trees that attract Catbirds. Cicadas grind out their summer songs and American Robins crisscross the path. A resident Woodchuck ventures out to a small, grassy streetcar roundabout during the mornings and late afternoons. One summer evening, I moved a Dekay's Brown Snake out of harm's way that had been basking on the warm, busy asphalt. A Northern Brown Water Snake and Black Rat Snake were, unfortunately, not so lucky and were run over by automobiles. Those sad snakes serve as a reminder though, that these species are, at least, *present* in Baltimore City. And this is good.

But, the wild stars of the Jones Falls are the Yellow-crowned Night Herons that nest in sycamores over the river. These strikingly handsome birds with their bright blue eggs and awkward, fast-growing chicks draw admirers and photographers from around the community. And this is another charm of the trail: The "regulars." The folks who share "good morning" greetings and ask each other what birds they've seen. These encounters, too, add more charm to Charm City.

Coasting southward, the River and I eventually arrive downtown. I cycle into the office garage and even though I have passed a fair chunk of urban decay, by the time I lock my bike, I feel surprisingly rejuvenated. From my bicycle saddle, I've observed migrating Canada Geese, a family of four Ospreys fishing over the inner harbor, a Cooper's Hawk perched behind a warehouse, and a Peregrine Falcon zooming between skyscrapers.

I remind myself not to be blinded by what appears to be an urban wasteland. Sometimes I just have to look harder. Like a blade of grass springing through a crack in the sidewalk, nature endures, creeps back in at the edges, and is just waiting to reclaim these areas. If we give it a chance, it will. ■ ■

Donate to CAS today and be part of environmental research, education and conservation.

Your contribution will support several programs that are important for all of us. One is research on our 700+ acre Farm Creek Salt Marsh Sanctuary in Dorchester County. This research is a pioneer in efforts to determine how to mitigate the effects of sea level rise on critical salt marsh habitat and the birds like Saltmarsh Sparrow and Black Rail that depend on it. We have owned and protected this property since 1977 and scientists have pronounced it one of the most environmentally/ecologically valuable pieces of salt marsh in the entire area. Your contribution will help assure continuation of this important work by Dr. David Curson, Director of Bird Conservation for Audubon MD/DC.

Your contribution also supports environmental education programs for our next generation, coaxing them outside and away from electronic devices. Our Pickering Creek Audubon Center sees 9,000 children a year and its programs have been incorporated into the curriculum of Talbot County Schools. At the Patterson Park Audubon Center white, black and Latino children learn through bi-lingual programming that they are connected by the birds that migrate from Central and South America to Baltimore's backyards. Your contribution will help train our future decision makers in the proper care and respect for our natural environment, helping protect and preserve birds and other wildlife now and for future generations.

You are what hope looks like to a bird. **Thank you for being a member of Audubon and for your support!**



Patterson Park Urban Bird Watching Walks

More than 190 bird species visit Patterson Park and more than 40 are permanent residents. Stroll and search for resident and migrant birds with Audubon. The park is an urban oasis, with 44 native plant species in Audubon-maintained habitat gardens, and 50 species of trees. Friday walks are led in partnership with Chesapeake Audubon Society and Saturday walks are led by Audubon MD-DC's conservation director.

Walks are from 8:00am to 9:30am and all ages are welcome. Free. No registration required. Meet at the fountain in the northwest corner of the park (close to the intersection of E. Lombard St. and S. Patterson Park Ave.). No need to RSVP but contact Patterson Park Audubon if you need to borrow binoculars; either email ppaudubon@gmail.com or call 410-558-2473. Walks are scheduled on the following dates:

	Friday	Saturday
April	8	30
May	13	28

Volunteer!

Chesapeake Audubon Society: Do you enjoy working on bird conservation projects, getting down and dirty in stream or other clean-ups, writing content for our newsletter or website, leading or helping lead hikes, or do you have an idea for a field trip or workshop? Chesapeake Audubon is always looking for volunteers or new committee members. Please e-mail info@chesapeakeaudubon.org if you'd like to become more involved with our chapter. To see more volunteer opportunities and for more information, visit our website - <http://www.chesapeakeaudubon.org/>

Patterson Park Audubon Center: If you enjoy digging in the dirt, planting, pulling weeds, and whatever else park-related, join the Habitat Team in Patterson Park on the first Saturday of each month, starting April 2nd, from 9:00 to 10:30am, at the Boat Lake. Patterson Park is located in the East Baltimore neighborhood of Canton; the Boat Lake is close to the Eastern Avenue side of the park (for details: e-mail ppaudubon@gmail.com or call 410-559-2473). Visit <http://pattersonpark.audubon.org/about-audubon> for a map of the park.

Pickering Creek Audubon Center: Need a reason to travel to Easton on the Eastern Shore? Pickering Creek has planned and ongoing volunteer opportunities. To learn about these opportunities visit <http://pickeringcreek.audubon.org/get-involved/upcoming-volunteer-opportunities>

Chesapeake Audubon Society
P.O. Box 3173
Baltimore, MD 21228
www.chesapeakeaudubon.org.

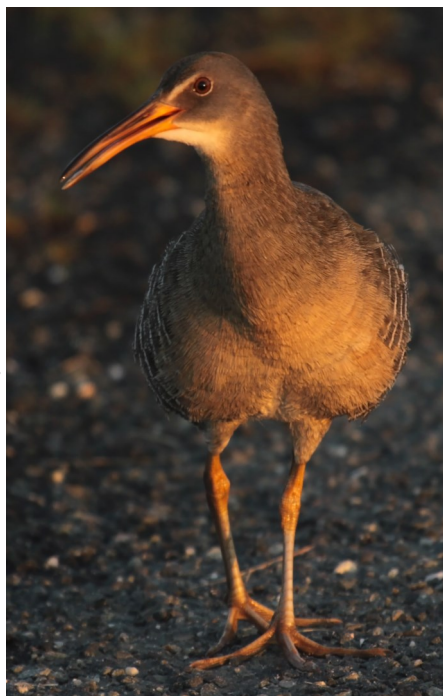


No Services Requested

Or Current Resident

Dave Curson describes the Clapper Rail as a "salt marsh specialist."

This crustacean eating bird lives along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts in salt marsh regions and in shallow mangrove swamps in Florida. You can sometimes spot it strutting along the marsh edge, its short tail twitching, foraging for other delectable favorites like insects, small fish, worms, and frogs. Where development has replaced habitat, populations of Clapper Rail have seriously declined. Visit <https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/clapper-rail> and learn more about this long-legged bird.



Clapper Rail
Photograph Complements of David Curson

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Henry Aguirre

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Wildlife Rehabilitator: Kathy Woods
phone: 410-628-9736; phoenixcenter@comcast.net

www.chesapeakeaudubon.org; phone: (443) 423-1847

CAS e-mail: info@chesapeakeaudubon.org