

LIGHTS OUT BALTIMORE UPDATE

by
Wendy Olsson

Excellent news! Baltimore City has added a Lights Out Policy to their Sustainability plan! Thank you to everyone who has helped by donating their time, publicity space, beautiful photos, and talents to make Baltimore safer for birds and to lower energy use in the city. This is a great first step.

Here's the pertinent section:

“Strategy G: Implement a “Lights Out” policy for appropriate areas of Baltimore City

Turning off non-essential lighting between approximately 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. can drastically reduce energy use. In addition to the financial and environmental costs of energy use, unnecessary lighting produces light pollution which obscures views of the night sky and negatively impacts migratory birds, especially during their spring and fall migration. Lights Out programs have been implemented in cities nationwide including Boston, San Francisco and New York.

Timeframe: Short-term

Type: Legislative, Advocacy

Funding Source: Cost Neutral

Lead Partners: BOS, BEO, Downtown Partnership, Real Estate Community, Local Institutions”

If you would like to send a note of thanks to the Sustainability Office, please thank them at sustainability@baltimorecity.gov, or write to the Manager of the Office of Sustainability of Baltimore, beth.strommen@baltimorecity.gov. The mayor's email address is: mayor@baltimorecity.gov if you would like to email the mayor.

After two and a half months of early mornings surveying Baltimore buildings for bird injuries and mortalities, Lights Out Baltimore has attracted new volunteers, discovered many bird danger spots in the harbor area, and have also identified valuable spots that provide weary migrants with places to forage for food and rest in the shelter of hedge rows or small pockets of trees. In many cases, though, these valuable habitat pockets

lie next to deadly glass buildings that frequently trick birds into thinking they are flying into a tree or grass, where they are killed instantly upon impact. Clearly the biggest threat facing migratory birds is glass buildings and windows, which are deadly 365 days a year.

Our team of dedicated volunteers patrolled areas



along Pratt and Baltimore Streets between Charles and S. President Streets from 5:30 a.m. until 6:30 a.m. Volunteers were faked out (definitely a good thing) from time to time by the occasional discarded sandwich, cigar butt, lost glove, or plastic bag lying on the sidewalk. Along our route we found more dead than live birds, with a total of 89 dead birds and 20 live birds. Most live birds were released later in Patterson Park after a bit of quiet time. Birds in need of care or evaluation went to Kathy Woods of Phoenix Wildlife Center in Phoenix, MD. Kathy was also kind enough to provide our team with information on the types of injuries birds sustain when injured in window strikes and how to transport them with minimal stress and impact.

Our next steps include building a website, obtaining publicity, engaging Baltimore City, building managers and security guards, and other conservation/environmental organizations. This is a conservation issue that impacts not only birds but biodiversity as a whole, and human health. Studies have shown that areas with healthy bird populations have taller trees (birds keep tree pests in check), and lower incidences of West Nile Virus. The Nov/Dec issue of Audubon magazine features an article on the issue of birds and glass and how Swarthmore College made one of their buildings more bird-friendly. This is an issue that requires immediate attention by conservation organizations, the government, and those developing green building standards. A building can't be green if it kills birds!

Bryce,

How depressing to see these dead birds in the newsletter! (Although I know one was a rarity.)

Thought I would submit three photos of my own that were SAVED and RELEASED after being found downtown. It shows what "we" can accomplish! Kathy Woods - The Phoenix Center



Test your birding skills: are you able to identify the three birds, from these admittedly small black and white photos? Answers are on page 4.

CONSERVATION CORNER

POPULATION GROWTH AND BIRDING?

By Dixie Mullineaux

The destruction of the natural world we see across the globe today is "fallout" from the human population explosion that has occurred over the course of the last 50 years. As bad as things are now, they are likely to get worse in the years ahead. At current fertility rates we will add more people to the planet in the next 50 years than we have in the previous 500,000 years.

The United Nations estimates that by the year 2050, world population will increase to 9.1 billion people. In terms of environmental impact, there are many major areas of concern around this issue. One is the over-consumption of resources in the places where people can afford to consume, and the carbon footprint of that consumption. Another is habitat destruction for increasing population concentrations.

The U.S. has converted more than 10 million acres from forest to suburb since 1980. Fairfax, Virginia alone has lost 69% of its forest to homes and businesses between 1980 and 1995.

90% of population growth is in the poorest developing countries, where many of the last wild places exist. The local governments are unable to respond to rapid changes due to migration to these biologically rich and sensitive areas.

More than 50% of neotropical migrant species of birds monitored in the eastern U.S. and prairie states have been in decline for the last 30 years. In Central America where population doubling times range from 25-30 years, over 80% of the original forest canopy is gone. This has a direct affect on the fact that we as birders

see fewer and fewer Cerulean, Kentucky and Prothonotary warblers every year. Scientists believe this is due to habitat destruction caused by rapid population growth both in the U.S. and abroad.

There are major initiatives underway by Audubon, World Wildlife Fund, Sierra Club and the Izaak Walton League that are based on the awareness of the crucial connection between overpopulation and environmental issues. The basic platform of these groups is that the root causes of overconsumption of natural resources are poverty and population growth.

In terms of addressing concerns in developing countries, all of the above mentioned environmental organizations are doing brilliant work with population control. They use non-coercive, culturally sensitive education aimed at populations in sensitive areas. The people targeted are given choices and engage in a voluntary educational decision. They are receptive to the ideas of family planning and are taught how its use can positively affect their future.

An example of a productive way this problem is approached is this: World Wildlife Fund (WWF) goes to Coastal East Africa to educate on population growth and how it directly affects how many fish men in the community bring in to feed their families. They have conversations with the fishermen about how many fish they catch compared with their fathers and grandfathers. The numbers are lower, due to increases in population. Then WWF asks how many sons they have, and how many grandsons they will have. WWF explains that with that many more sons and grandsons, the numbers of fish will be much lower in the future...how will families be fed? The men are very receptive to this, and birth control is available to those women who choose it and is dispensed from clinics set up by the World Wildlife Fund.

It has become obvious, that in every part of the world, all of the environmental successes may be short lived if they do not include efforts to address population growth.

Answers to page 3: top - Rose-breasted Grosbeak, middle - Virginia Rail, bottom - Red-eyed Vireo

BIRDBRAINS

Songbirds Fly Three Times Faster !

ScienceDaily (Feb. 16, 2009) — A York University researcher has tracked the migration of songbirds by outfitting them with tiny geolocator backpacks – a world first – revealing that scientists have underestimated their flight performance dramatically.

“Never before has anyone been able to track songbirds for their entire migratory trip,” said study author Bridget Stutchbury, a professor of biology in York’s Faculty of Science & Engineering. “We’re excited to achieve this scientific first.” Songbirds, the most common type of bird in our skies, are too small for conventional satellite tracking.

Stutchbury and her team mounted miniaturized geolocators on 14 wood thrushes and 20 purple martins, breeding in Pennsylvania during 2007, tracking the birds’ fall takeoff, migration to South America, and journey back to North America. In the summer of 2008, they retrieved the geolocators from five wood thrushes and two purple martins and reconstructed individual migration routes and wintering locations.

Data from the geolocators indicated that songbirds can fly in excess of 500 km (311 miles) per day. Previous studies estimated their flight performance at roughly 150 km (93 miles) per day.

The study found that songbirds’ overall migration rate was two to six times more rapid in spring than in fall. For example, one purple martin took 43 days to reach Brazil during fall migration, but in spring returned to its breeding colony in only 13 days. Rapid long-distance movement occurred in both species, said Stutchbury.

“We were flabbergasted by the birds’ spring re-

turn times. To have a bird leave Brazil on April 12 and be home by the end of the month was just astounding. We always assumed they left sometime in March," she said.

Researchers also found that prolonged stopovers were common during fall migration. The purple martins, which are members of the swallow family, had a stopover of three to four weeks in the Yucatan before continuing to Brazil. Four wood thrushes spent one to two weeks in the southeastern United States in late October, before crossing the Gulf of Mexico, and two other individuals stopped on the Yucatan Peninsula for two to four weeks before continuing migration.

The geolocators, which are smaller than a dime, detect light, allowing researchers to estimate birds' latitude and longitude by recording sunrise and sunset times. The devices are mounted on birds' backs by looping thin straps around their legs. The weight of the geocator rests at the base of the bird's spine, so as not to interfere with its balance.

Stutchbury credits researchers with the British Antarctic Survey for miniaturizing the geolocators. "They hadn't really been thinking of [attaching them to] songbirds, but when I saw the technology, I knew we could do this," she said.

The study also uncovered evidence that wood thrushes from a single breeding population did not scatter over their tropical wintering grounds. All five wood thrushes wintered in a narrow band in eastern Honduras or Nicaragua.

"This region is clearly important for the overall conservation of wood thrushes, a species that has declined by 30 percent since 1966," said Stutchbury. "Songbird populations have been declining around the world for 30 or 40 years, so there is a lot of concern about them."

She emphasized the importance of this research not only to protect at-risk species of songbirds, but also to gauge environmental concerns.

"Tracking birds to their wintering areas is also essential for predicting the impact of tropical habitat loss and climate change," she said.

"Until now, our hands have been tied in many ways, because we didn't know where the birds

were going. They would just disappear and then come back in the spring. It's wonderful to now have a window into their journey."

This study was funded in part by the National Geographic Society.

Journal reference:

Tyler Done, Elizabeth Gow, Patrick Kramer, John Tautin, James Fox and Vsevolod Afanasyev. Tracking long-distance songbird migration using geolocators. *Science*, Feb 13, 2009

Backyard Birding and Beyond

MERRITT ISLAND - THIRD TIME AROUND

by Jim Highsaw and Linda Prentice

We enjoyed our two previous Florida trips to Merritt Island and the Titusville area so much that we decided to repeat the trip during January 19 - 22, 2009. Gas prices were low and motel rooms were cheap, so it was a good time to go. Our goals were to spend most of our time on the Wildlife Drive at the National Wildlife Refuge, visit two other areas that we missed in 2007 and 2008, and photograph as many birds as possible.

As before, the Wildlife Drive was terrific, with plenty of Roseate Spoonbills, Wood Storks, four heron species, three egret species, Anhingas, Ibis, Avocets, Kingfishers, and a variety of ducks and raptors. Other birders got us onto a Clapper Rail on the first day and a Sora on the last day. We also saw two River Otters crossing a road. An early morning walk on the trail at the visitors center was not very productive, nor was a walk on the Oak Hammock Trail.

Probably the best day was the third day, when we drove south to Melbourne and visited the Viera Wetlands. Here we found and photographed our first-ever Least Bittern, and got a good look at a Crested Caracara. Other highlights were Loggerhead Shrikes, Sandhill Cranes,

and a Red-shouldered Hawk as well as numerous wading birds.

On the last day we drove to the north end of the Canaveral Seashore and walked on the Turtle Mound, Eldora and Castle Windy Trails and the trail to the historic house. We enjoyed the panoramic view from the top of the 40-foot high Turtle Mound and spotted a Common Loon in Mosquito Lagoon. The other trails weren't very productive, but we did find Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Yellow-rumped Warbler in the woods, and saw five Bald Eagles soaring over Mosquito Lagoon.

We also found that Fox Lake Park and Astronaut Park in Titusville were good for birds that we didn't find anywhere else. These included Pine Warbler, Downy Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker and Eurasian Collared-Dove.

Seeing a Bobcat on the Wildlife Drive at 5 p.m. on the last day was a nice way to end the trip.

Submitted by Kevin Graff

whitemarlin2001@yahoo.com

Glendale, Baltimore County

Ruth Culbertson, January 24: Enjoying the usual, bright Cardinals in the trees and on the feeder then a Brown Creeper showed up for several days. About 3 weeks ago Pine Siskins on the thistle feeder among the Goldfinches. There seem to be 6 of them, fiesty little birds as they jockey for positions on the feeder, costantly chasing each other and often flaring out their wings so that you can see the lovely yellow pattern. I missed them for several days, but they are back and that is good. because I went out and bought more thistle seed.

Jarrettsville, Harford County

Kevin Graff, January 28: Early am, I had a young male White-winged Crossbill landed on a spruce tree for a short time beacue of starlings flushed the bird and was last seen headed E. Other good birds in yard: Red-shouldered Hawk, Yellow-bel-

lied Sapsucker, Winter Wren, Purple Finch and Pine Siskin.

Let us hear about your Back Yard and Maryland Birding too!!!

Mar-Apr Calendar

MARCH 2009.

MAR 3 (Tue) 7:30 p.m. TUESDAY EVENING LECTURE AT CYLBURN. Continuing a series of monthly feature presentations and slide shows. Tonight: "Birds and Natural History in Queensland, Australia". Pierre Henkart, President of the Anne Arundel Bird Club, describes birds and birding "down under" in the tropical part of Australia.

MAR 4 (Wed) 8:00 a.m. FIRST WEDNESDAYS AT FORT MCHENRY Monthly survey of bird activity at the wetland. Telescope can be useful. Automatically cancelled in bad weather (rain, sleet, snow, fog, etc.). Meet outside the Visitor Center. Leader: Mary Chetelat, (410) 665-0769

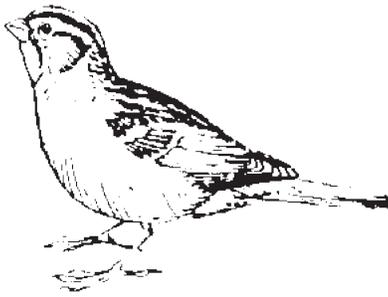
MAR 7 (Sat) 8:00 a.m. MIDDLE CREEK WMA Bring lunch for an all-day trip to visit this major gathering place north of Lancaster, PA., for Snow Geese and other waterfowl. Note: Trip may go elsewhere if Middle Creek is frozen over. Leader: Kevin Graff, (410) 557-2456 or whitemarlin2001@yahoo.com. Meet at Timonium Park & Ride on Greenspring Drive/Deereco Road off Timonium Road just east of I-83.

MAR 8 (Sun) 8:30 a.m. LOCH RAVEN Waterfowl and land birds. Possible Bald Eagles and Bluebirds. Telescopes useful. Two mile level walk. Beginning Birders Welcome. Leader: Debbie Terry, (410) 252-8771 or gt5s2bcpl.net

MAR 9 (Mon) 7:00/9:00 a.m. POPLAR ISLAND Meet at Nursery Road Park & Ride for Carpool OR meet at Tilghman Island at 9:00 am. Habitat similar to Hart-Miller Island. Boat ride from Tilghman Island. 2 hour bus ride around Poplar Island, stopping wherever birding looks good. Scopes are very helpful. Facilities are available. Bring snacks if desired. Lunch will be at a local restaurant. RESERVATIONS REQUIRED. Limit 8 to 24 people. Leader: Robin Armetta. Coordinator: Kevin Graff, whitemarlin2001@yahoo.com Meet at Nursery Road/Hammonds Ferry Road Park & Ride.

MAR 14 (Sat) 7:30 a.m./8:30 a.m. HORSEHEAD WETLANDS CENTER. Meet at Nursery Road Park & Ride at 7:30 am OR 8:30 am at Horsehead visitors center lot. Varied habitats for winter waterfowl and passerines. Leader: Kevin Graff, (410) 557-2456 or whitemarlin2001@yahoo.com

MAR 14 (Sat) 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon. SATURDAY MONITORING WALKS AT FORT MCHENRY A continuing survey of bird activity at the Fort. Cancelled in bad weather (high winds, fog, rain). Leader: Jim Peters, (410) 429-0966



MAR 25 (Wed)
9:30 a.m. LOUDON
PARK CEMETERY,
LOCATED AT 3801
FREDERICK AVE .

This is our second cemetery birding trip. Leader: Joy Wheeler, (410) 825-1204

MAR 28 (Sat) 7:30 a.m. ALL-DAY SEA WATCH AT OCEAN CITY INLET, WITH OPTIONAL EXTENSION TO MAR 30 Join us in the inlet parking lot for full day watch for Gannets galore and other seabirds headed north. Stay over Fri night for early start on Sat. DRESS WARMLY for cold wind can be. Bring lawn chair, spotting scope, warm drinks. Leader will provide snacks. Bring lunch or buy it at nearby shops. Dinner/Tally Sat evening at local restaurant. Optional stay over Sat night for birding the Inlet Sun AM, then birding stops on way home. Contact leader for motel reservations, meeting place, additional information. Leader: Kevin Graff, 410-557-2456, whitemarlin@yahoo.com

APRIL 2009.

APR 1 (Wed) 8:00 a.m. FIRST WEDNESDAYS AT FORT McHENRY Monthly survey of bird activity at the wetland. Telescope can be useful. Automatically cancelled in bad weather (rain, sleet, snow, fog, etc.). Meet outside the Visitor Center. Leader: Mary Chetelat, (410) 665-0769

APR 4 (Sat) 8:00 a.m. CROMWELL VALLEY PARK Diverse habitat that includes stream, woods and fields. Expect to see a variety of resident and migrant birds. Leader: Kevin Graff, (410) 557-2456 or whitemarlin2001@yahoo.com

APR 5 (Sun) 8:30 a.m. CYLBURN SELF-GUIDED WALK. First in a series of casual spring walks. Meet at the Mansion's front porch on Sunday mornings for easy birding in Cylburn's gardens and urban forest. Beginning Birders Welcome. Expect to find a variety of migrant and resident birds. No designated leader. Coordinator: Joe Lewandowski, (410) 358-7834 or ilenel@juno.com

APR 7 (Tue) 8:30 a.m. LAKE ROLAND (ROBERT E. LEE PARK). First in a series of weekly walks to follow the progress of Spring Migration. Habitats include woods, lake, streams and marsh. This park has an impressive bird list, including songbirds, herons, shorebirds and raptors. Leader: Mary Chetelat, (410) 665-0769

APR 7 (Tue) 7:30 p.m. TUESDAY EVENING LECTURE AT CYLBURN. Continuing a series of monthly feature presentations and slide shows. Tonight: "Warblers of Maryland." Linda Friedland and Mike Bowen, of the Montgomery Bird Club, present a streamlined version of the popular identification workshop that debuted at the June 2006 MOS conference. The presentation provides visual and aural pointers for 34 of the 37

warbler species that regularly occur in Maryland. Doors open at Cylburn at 7:30 pm for socializing and snacks, show starts about 7:45 or 8:00 p.m.

APR 12 (Sun) 8:30 a.m. CYLBURN SELF-GUIDED WALK. Meet at Mansion's front porch on Sunday mornings for easy birding in Cylburn's gardens and urban forest. Beginning Birders Welcome. Coordinator: Joe Lewandowski, (410) 358-7834 or ilenel@juno.com

APR 14 (Tue) 8:30 a.m. LAKE ROLAND (ROBERT E. LEE PARK). One in a series of weekly walks to follow the progress of Fall Migration. Habitats include woods, lake, streams and marsh. . Leader: Joan Cwi, (410) 467-5352 or jafjsc@verizon.net

APR 15 (Wed) 6:00 - 8:00p.m. EVENING WALKS AT FORT McHENRY Cancelled in rain, snow, sleet, fog, etc. Park on Wallace St (left just before the gate). Meet at the main gate. Leader: Jim Peters, (410) 429-0966.

APR 18 (Sat) 7:00 a.m./9:30 a.m. SMITH ISLAND All-day trip to see the herons, egrets and other birds on the island, plus waterfowl and gannets up close during the boat rides to and from the island. Bring lunch, snacks, beverages and extra cash; the General Store on the island may be open, offering sandwiches, drinks and snacks, cash only. Rental bicycles and golf cart are available on the island. Car pool from Nursery Park & Ride 7:00 a.m. or meet at the Point Lookout boat dock at 9 am. The boat leaves at 9:30, arrives at the island about 11 am, and can pick us up about 2:30 pm (negotiable) for the hour-and-a-half ride back to Point Lookout. As a precaution, motion sickness medicine is advised (take it an hour before the boat ride). RESERVATIONS REQUIRED, deadline Wed. Apr 15. Limit 25-45, waiting list of 5. If we don't fill the trip by midnight Wednesday, the trip will be CANCELLED. Contact Pete Webb, pete_webb@juno.com or 410 486-1217, for reservations, and again Thursday or Friday to learn if the trip is go or no-go. \$25-\$45 CASH required to get on the boat, paid when boarding. No checks or credit cards.

APR 18 (Sat) 8:00 a.m. SATURDAY MONITORING WALKS AT FORT McHENRY A continuing survey of bird activity at the Fort. Leader: Jim Peters, (410) 429-0966

APR 19 (Sun) 7:30 a.m. PATAPSCO VALLEY STATE PARK - GRANITE AREA Join the search for early migrants along the Patapsco River and neighboring forest. Boots recommended; part of the hiking loop may be muddy. Leader, Keith Eric Costley, (443) 985-6489 or oriolekec1@comcast.net

APR 19 (Sun) 8:30 a.m. CYLBURN SELF-GUIDED WALK. Meet at Mansion's front porch on Sunday mornings. Beginning Birders Welcome. Coordinator: Joe Lewandowski, (410) 358-7834 or ilenel@juno.com

APR 21 (Tue) 8:30 a.m. LAKE ROLAND (ROBERT E. LEE PARK). One in a series of weekly walks to follow the progress of Spring Migration. and raptors. Leader: Debbie Terry (410) 252-8771 or gt5s@bcpl.net

APR 22 (Wed) 6:00 - 8:00p.m. EVENING WALKS AT FORT McHENRY Automatically cancelled in rain, fog, etc. Park on Wallace Street. Meet at the main gate. Leader: Jim Peters, (410) 429-0966

APR 25 (Sat) 7:30 a.m. HUNTLEY MEADOWS Bring picnic lunch for 3/4-day trip to northern Virginia woods and freshwater marsh with boardwalk trail for resident wildlife and early spring migrants. Coots, Canada Geese on nests, turtles, water snakes and other water wildlife allowing close approach and good views. American Bittern, Rusty Blackbird, King Rail all possible. Two or three hour (and miles) level walk on paved paths and boardwalks. Optional extension, after picnic lunch, for Prothonotary and Prairie Warblers singing on territory in Maryland. Meet at Nursery Road Park & Ride. Leader: Pete Webb (410) 486-1217 or pete_webb@juno.com

APR 26 (Sun) 8:00 a.m. MARRIOTSVILLE WARBLERS Resident warblers include Prothonotary, Worm-eating and other species. Yellow-throated warbler and Barred Owl also possible. Leader: Paul Noell, (410) 243-2652 or myconut@verizon.net

APR 26 (Sun) 8:00 a.m. DRUID HILL PARK Just about anything could show up in this large, urban park with varied habitats. Leader: Bryce Butler, (410) 728-0646 or capitano.bryce@verizon.net

APR 26 (Sun) 8:30 a.m. CYLBURN SELF-GUIDED WALK. Meet at Mansion's front porch on Sunday mornings for easy birding in Cylburn's gardens and urban forest. Beginning Birders Welcome. Coordinator: Joe Lewandowski, (410) 358-7834 or ilenel@juno.com

APR 26 (Sun) 7:00 - 8:00 p.m. CHIMNEY SWIFTS AT DUSK, DRUID HILL PARK CONSERVATORY (GREENHOUSE) See migrating Chimney Swifts as they pour into the Conservatory chimney. Come at 6:45 if the weather is cloudy or gray. Rain date April 29. Directions: The Conservatory is located at Auchentoroly Terrace and Gwynns Falls Parkway. Co-leaders: Joan Cwi, jafjsc@verizon.net, and Carol Schreter, (410) 664-5151 Co-leaders: Joan Cwi, jafjsc@verizon.net, and Carol Schreter, (410) 664-5151

APR 28 (Tue) 8:30 a.m. LAKE ROLAND (ROBERT E. LEE PARK). One in a series of weekly walks to follow the progress of Spring Migration. Habitats include woods, lake, streams and marsh. This park has an impressive bird list, including song-birds, herons, shorebirds and raptors. Leader: Ruth Culbertson, (410) 825-1379 APR 28 (Tue) RAIN DATE FOR CHIMNEY SWIFTS AT DUSK, DRUID HILL PARK CONSERVATORY (GREENHOUSE) See April 26, above.

APR 29 (Wed) 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. EVENING WALKS AT FORT MCHENRY Automatically cancelled in rain, fog, etc. Park on Wallace Street. Leader: Jim Peters, (410) 429-0966

BALTIMORE BIRD CLUB
<http://baltimorebirdclub.org>
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