

# *The Bluebird*

Newsletter of the Prince George's Audubon Society

PGAS is a local chapter of the National Audubon Society

March/April 2012



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## President's Perch

Carolyn Sturtevant  
President, PGAS

It starts with the birds around us. Colors, songs, movement attract us and draw us into the pursuit of birds. When we meet friends who share our fascination, the pleasure multiplies. Kenn Kaufman, a regular contributor to *Bird Watcher's Digest*, captures such stories in his column "After the Spark."

You are reading this column because you have caught the spark—you're chasing birds, and you're doing so as a member of at least one birding group, the Prince George's Audubon Society, and maybe the Patuxent Bird Club of the Maryland Ornithological Society also. These two elements—our love of birds and our enjoyment of birding in a social context—are themes that David Yarnold, President of National Audubon Society (NAS), identified in a January webinar for Audubon chapter leaders. NAS includes 450,000 members in 465 chapters, and many other centers, state offices, and international partnerships. The National Audubon Society wants to promote the vision of "One Audubon" among all of its members.

In the NAS strategic plan for the next five years, they will coordinate conservation and outreach efforts around the major flyways used by birds as they migrate up and down the North American continent. PGAS is in the Atlantic Flyway, where birds depend on eastern forests, grasslands, shrublands, coastal beaches, and salt marshes. Long Island Sound and the Everglades are already designated as Important Bird Areas in the Atlantic Flyway. NAS plans to connect chapters to Flyway Chapter Coordinators, and will once again hold a national Audubon Convention.

What part does PGAS play in One Audubon? We align with the Flyway vision so that local action contributes to large scale hemispheric impact. We continue to represent the trusted Audubon brand in our community, promoting the appreciation of birds and their habitats, and the rewards of chapter engagement. We've each caught the spark—Audubon will shine brighter if we work together!

**Audubon's Mission Statement:** To conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

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## Upcoming Monthly Meetings

### *“Who’s Your Daddy? Extra-Pair Mating in Birds: How We Document it and Why They Do It”*

Presented by Rob Fleischer

Tuesday, March 13, 7:30 pm  
College Park Aviation Museum  
1985 Cpl. Frank Scott Drive, College Park, MD

With the advent of powerful DNA methods some 20 years ago came an incredible ability for scientists to look within the "private" lives of animals. One outcome of the studies was that many songbirds, considered a paragon of monogamy, often had a remarkably high level of extra-pair paternity. The amount of extra-pair mating varies with taxonomy, colonial breeding, and migratory status. A number of ecological and behavioral factors also play a role. How do we study these behaviors both in the field and in the DNA laboratory? Dr. Fleischer, head of the Center for Conservation and Evolutionary Genetics in the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute, will discuss some interesting case histories, mostly from research at his laboratory at the National Zoological Park. These include some bird species like Phainopepla, Humboldt Penguin, and Carolina Wren that are more monogamous than we might expect based on their behavior; as well as House Wren, whose extra-pair mating varies by latitude; and the strange behaviors of the brood parasitic Brown-headed Cowbird.

### *“East Pacific Odyssey or...If It’s Tuesday, It Must be Ecuador”*

Presented by Gail Mackiernan

Tuesday, April 10, 7:30 pm  
College Park Aviation Museum  
1985 Cpl. Frank Scott Drive, College Park, MD

In autumn of 2009, Gail Mackiernan, her husband, and two friends took a cruise from California to Chile. Their primary targets were seabirds, but the cruise’s 12 port stops in Mexico, Central and South America also yielded a wonderful array of land birds. Gail’s presentation follows their “odyssey” from the California deserts to the mist-filled beech forests of Chile, and everything in-between!

Gail is by training a marine biologist, or more accurately, a biological oceanographer. Her area of expertise is the Chesapeake Bay, and she worked throughout her professional life on this estuary. While with the EPA Chesapeake Bay Program she co-authored the two definitive reports on the health of the Bay and necessary management actions. Later, as research director for the University of Maryland Sea Grant College, she oversaw studies in a wide range of disciplines from fisheries to biotechnology, all directed towards the Bay and its ecology. She retired from the University in 1997.

Gail started birdwatching seriously in high school, then, took a “break” during grad school, only to revive her interest about 25 years ago. Since then, along with her husband Barry Cooper, she has traveled to all 7 continents in search of birds. Most recently returned from Ecuador, she and Barry are now planning a third trip to Australia this year.

*You are invited to join members of the PG Audubon Society and Patuxent Bird Club for these fascinating topics. Our programs are open free of charge to all who are interested – invite a friend! The auditorium is open at 7:00 pm. Feel free to come early to mingle and enjoy refreshments. Call 301-262-5148 for more information.*

# The Bluebird

## Upcoming Field Trips

PGAS-sponsors Saturday morning bird walks to two areas of Patuxent River Park co-managed by PGAS and the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission:

### Fran Uhler Natural Area

Lemons Bridge Road, Bowie, MD

This park features miles of trails through mature woodlands and open water wetland that can host migrant warblers, Barred Owls, and the occasional Yellow-crowned Night Heron.

**Dates:** First Saturdays monthly (March 3, April 7, May 5, June 2, July 7, August 4, September 1)

**Time:** Meet in the parking area at the end of Lemons Bridge Road (off of 197) at 7:30 am.

No reservations are needed.

**Leader:** Bill Sefton (kiwisuits@msn.com)

### Governor Bridge Natural Area

Governor Bridge Road, Bowie, MD

This park offers a wide variety of habitats along the Patuxent River – mature riparian woodlands, second growth scrub, open grassy fields, and small ponds and creeks.

**Dates:** Third Saturdays monthly (March 17, April 21, May 19, June 16, July 21, August 18, September 15)

**Time:** Meet in the parking lot at 7:30 am. This is about 1 mile east of Route 301. No reservations are needed.

**Leader:** Bill Sefton (kiwisuits@msn.com)

### Luther Goldman Birding Trail

### Lake Artemesia Natural Area

Berwyn Heights, MD

The 2.2-mile paved birding trail loops around the 38-acre lake and alongside Indian Creek. Open water, wetlands, wood edge, riparian forest, and meadow offer opportunities to see a wide variety of resident and migrating songbirds, waterfowl, and raptor flyovers in different seasons. For beginners and experts. Binoculars recommended.

**Dates/Times:** PGAS and members of the Patuxent Bird Club invite you to join us on 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays monthly (March 1 and 15 at 3:00 pm; April 5 and 19, May 3 and 17, June 7 and 21, July 5 and 19 at 6:00 pm.) Meet at the parking lot at Berwyn Road and Balew Avenue. No reservations needed.

**Contact:** 301-459-3375 for more information.

## Patuxent River Sites in

### Southern Prince George's County

Possible stops include Jug Bay, Milltown Landing, and Aquasco Farms. This mid-spring trip will visit several parks along the Patuxent River in search of migrant sparrows and waterfowl, as well as other birds in the fields and forests lining the River.

**Date/Time:** Saturday, April 21. Meet at Mt. Calvert Park by 8:10 am to begin the trip.

**Leader:** Fred Shaffer (410-721-1744). RSVP required.

### Delaware Bay

An all day trip to the Delaware Bay to experience the great concentrations of shorebirds feeding on horseshoe crab eggs. **Date/Time:** Sunday, May 27. Meet at the Bowie Park and Ride to carpool. RSVP Required.

**Contact:** Check [www.pgaudubon.org](http://www.pgaudubon.org) for updates.

Later, on Saturday, August 4 join us for another all day trip to the refuges along the Delaware Bay in search of early fall migrant shorebirds. This early in the season, there are fewer migrants but the birds that are present are predominantly adults making identification easier. And early in the season is a good time for rare strays.

### Monthly Bird Walks

Sponsored by Old Bowie Wild Bird & Nature

**Dates/Time:** Second Sundays monthly. Meet at the store (8700 Chestnut Ave, Bowie) by 7:00 am to carpool. You will return to the store by 12:00 noon. You may also meet at the sites.

March 11 ~ Downs Park, Pasadena, MD

April 8 ~ Piney Orchard Nature Preserve, Odenton, MD

May 13 ~ Governor Bridge Natural Area, Bowie, MD

June 10 ~ Jug Bay Natural Area, Upper Marlboro, MD

**Contact:** Meghan First (301-464-2663)

## PGAS Volunteer Need

The Prince George's Audubon Society has an opening for a Membership Chair. This person would receive chapter-recruited applications from new members and mail them to the National Audubon Society. At meetings, the Membership Chair would circulate the clipboard that members and visitors sign, and would add new names to a list after a meeting to enable email notices in between gatherings. We all have fun when we see new birds, and our fun is multiplied when new members join. If you want to learn more, please contact Carolyn Sturtevant, [crstur@aol.com](mailto:crstur@aol.com).



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### Online Birding Sites

What's your favorite online birding site? Prince George's Audubon Society is on Facebook. You can post your observations there, or share your favorite online links. The National Audubon Society is on Facebook as well.

Our webmaster, Beth Kantrowitz, lists our programs and field trips on the Prince George's Audubon Society website at: <http://www.pgaudubon.org/>

Mike Sampson posts sightings from our PGAS/MOS field trips to eBird, adding to the birds in Maryland data: <http://ebird.org/content/ebird/>

Want to follow the northward migration of Purple Martins? Check out their Scout Arrival Study at: <http://www.purplemartin.org/scoutreport/>

You can also follow Ruby-throated Hummingbirds as they migrate north at: <http://www.hummingbirds.net/map.html>

Have Chimney Swifts in your community? You can report your sightings in the fall to their "Swift Night Out" program at: <http://www.chimneyswifts.org/>

Next time you're online, do a little birding!

### Membership Application

Join the National Audubon Society for an introductory rate of \$20.00 and receive these benefits:

- Four issues of *Audubon* magazine
- Membership in the local chapter (PGAS)
- The PGAS newsletter, *The Bluebird*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to National Audubon Society and mail to:  
PGAS, P.O. Box 1658, Greenbelt, MD 20768-1658

Prince George's Audubon Society Chapter L01 7XCH

