

# *The Bluebird*

Newsletter of the Prince George's Audubon Society

PGAS is a local chapter of the National Audubon Society

February-March 2014



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## President's Perch

It's hard to believe I've already flipped through more than one month on my 2014 calendar! Holidays and Christmas Bird Counts came and went, and winter is flexing its muscles. For birders and lovers of nature, it's been a time for stocking our larders with bird seed and suet to keep feeders full for our feathered friends, keeping water sources unfrozen, and perhaps adding a brush pile or discarded evergreen tree for winter shelter from snow and predators. The beauty of this season is also always an opportunity for up-close enjoyment of both familiar and new visitors to our backyards from the inside comfort of our homes.

A new year is often a time we reflect on the past and look to the future. Your board has been looking ahead, too, with new ideas and plans for our chapter to make a difference in the lives of birds and our communities. We invite you to be part of our conversation, goals and activities. Join us at our monthly programs for armchair travels and birding news, as well as feet-on-the-ground trips to the varied habitats of local bird walk sites and places further afield, for the young and old, beginners and more experienced alike. You'll be sure to enhance your birding skills. Visit us - or join us - at our chapter's table at community events to share chapter activities, answer questions, and offer information and handouts on our natural world and how we can help achieve our mission. Would you be willing to give a few hours on one Saturday to judge student environmental/bird science fair projects and encourage young people via awards and Audubon membership for their interest? Like hands-on activities? Would you like to help at local natural and watershed areas with trash clean-ups?

Please contact any of our officers or board members to share thoughts, ask questions, or just talk. We look forward to informing you of opportunities, working together, and serving you in the year ahead.

Maureen  
301-262-5148; [mblades@comcast.net](mailto:mblades@comcast.net)

**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**

College Park Airport Annex, 1909 Cpl. Frank Scott Drive, College Park, MD 20740  
Doors open at 7:00 pm. Call 301-262-5148 for more information.

### ***Monitoring the Recovery of Bald Eagles in the Lower 48***

with

John R. Sauer and Mark C. Otto

7:30 pm - Tuesday, February 11, 2014

Bald eagles play an iconic role in American political and environmental history. Rachel Carson highlighted eagle population declines in *Silent Spring*, linking their fate to the presence of organochlorine pesticides, a connection that was later confirmed in laboratory studies on eggshell thinning. The species was formally listed as endangered in 1967, and after DDT was banned in 1972, the species began to come back in many parts of the U.S. By counting numbers of eagle nests, state biologists recorded a remarkable 5 to 8% per year rate of population increase during the 1990s. The species was delisted in 2007, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service developed a nationwide monitoring plan that uses those nest lists, along with an additional aerial survey, to get an estimate of all nesting pairs of eagles in the lower 48 states. John and Mark will talk about how they did the survey and what it shows about the population status of bald eagles today.

John Sauer is a Wildlife Biologist/Senior Scientist at the USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center whose research involves the design and analysis of biological surveys. John has worked with the North American Breeding Bird Survey for over 25 years and he assisted with the development of the Bald Eagle monitoring program. He also works on a variety of scientific studies involving songbirds, ducks, eagles, and bats. Mark Otto is a statistician. Emily Bjerre is a wildlife biologist who works for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the Division of Migratory Bird Management, Branch of Population and Habitat Assessment at Patuxent. Both Mark and Emily work on a variety of projects related to eagle management and monitoring, and Mark is the primary organizer and analyst of the post-delisting Bald Eagle survey recently conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

### ***Seabird Conservation Program and Opportunities at Hog Island, Maine***

with

Christopher Garrett and Lisa Bierer-Garrett

7:30 pm – Tuesday, March 11, 2014

Join Christopher Garrett, Park Ranger and 2013 Audubon scholarship winner, as and his wife, Naturalist Lisa Bierer-Garrett, share the learning and birding opportunities they enjoyed this year at National Audubon Society's Hog Island Camp in Maine through stories and photos. Hog Island offers a variety of weeklong sessions each year for birdwatchers, educators, families and teens on everything from *Field Ornithology* and *Raptor Rapture* to *Coastal Maine Bird Studies for Teens* and *Fall Migration and Monhegan Island*. Chris, on a scholarship through the Prince George's Audubon Society, attended *Seabird Biology and Conservation*, a program offered in conjunction with Road Scholars.

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Not that long ago, many of Maine's seabird colonies had collapsed due to hunting pressures and predation. Through the pioneering efforts of Dr. Stephen Kress and Project Puffin, several of the Eider, Tern, Gull, and Puffin colonies have rebounded. There are still many pressures facing these colonies, but with the help of Project Puffin, National Audubon Society, and volunteer programs like Spring Seabird Biology and Conservation, these colonies are surviving and thriving. Lisa, a previous PGAS scholarship attendee, returned as a weeklong volunteer through the Friends of Hog Island, and was also able to participate in many of the camp activities. As part of his session, Chris built eider and tern shelters, removed over 20 lobster traps off Stratton Island, where the traps wash up and catch and kill many seabirds when they get stuck inside, built wooden platforms to help the eider duck population survive heat, wind and predation, worked alongside Audubon biologists to census a nesting colony of eiders by counting nests and eggs, assisted with banding migrating songbirds, went on 4 boat trips to Audubon island bird sanctuaries, and much more. Lisa participated in many of the same activities as Chris, and also helped build a new roof for the Intern Camp, cleaned cabins daily, and was kitchen assistant for meals most days; but it isn't all work. Every day has options for bird hikes on beautiful Hog Island, bird ID, optics demos, or exploring and relaxing on your own. Many camp instructors are renowned in their field and eager to share their knowledge.

Great photos and stories of the work that was done and the places visited will have you ready to apply for this year's sessions!



<http://hogisland.audubon.org/spring-seabird-biology-and-conservation>

<http://hogisland.audubon.org/scholarships>

**Stay Tuned....**

**April 8 – *Birding Cuba*  
with  
Don Messersmith**

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## Upcoming Bird/Nature Walks

PGAS sponsors the Saturday morning bird walks to two natural areas of the Patuxent River Park co-managed by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and PGAS, and twice monthly mid-week Thursday walks at Lake Artemesia Natural Area highlighted below. For complete details and directions, go to [www.pgaudubon.org](http://www.pgaudubon.org).

### **Fran Uhler Natural Area**

**Time/Dates: 7:30 am, 1st Saturdays monthly.**

Lemons Bridge Rd, Bowie, MD. No reservations needed. Contact: Bill Sefton ([kiwisuits@msn.com](mailto:kiwisuits@msn.com))

### **Governor Bridge Natural Area**

**Time/Dates: 7:30 am, 3rd Saturdays monthly.** Meet parking lot, Governor Bridge Rd. Bowie, MD. No reservations needed. Contact: Bill Sefton ([kiwisuits@msn.com](mailto:kiwisuits@msn.com))

### **Luther Goldman Birding Trail at Lake Artemesia Natural Area**

**Dates/Times: 3 pm, 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays Sep.-Mar. & 6 pm April-August.** Meet parking lot, Berwyn Heights, MD. No reservations needed. Contact: David Mozurkewich, Patuxent Bird Club, 301-509-2212 or [mozurk@bellatlantic.net](mailto:mozurk@bellatlantic.net)

**Fri., Feb 14-Mon, Feb. 17 – The Great Backyard Bird Count!** See page 5...

**Sat, Feb 15, 7:30 am - Governor Bridge NA**

**Thurs, Feb 20, 3 pm - Luther Goldman Birding Trail at Lake Artemesia**

**Sun, Feb 23, 7:30 - North Beach and nearby sites for waterfowl** followed by hot soup & cocoa at the Fallons'. Meet at Bowie P & R to carpool. Contact Fred Fallon, Patuxent Bird Club (PBC), at 410-286-8152 for more info and reservations.

**Sat, Mar 1, 7:30 am - Fran Uhler Natural Area**

**Sat – Sun Mar 1-2. Ocean City, MD Weekend Trip.** Join the PBC for an overnight trip to Ocean City. Target birds: gulls, grebes, loons, winter duck specialties such as scoters, eiders & harlequin, and

seabirds such as gannet & razorbills. Stops at O.C. Inlet, Fourth Street Mudflats (aka Skimmer Island), West O.C. ponds, Assateague; other sites possible as warranted. Dress for extreme cold & wind. Suggested hotel: Holiday Inn-Ocean City at 67<sup>th</sup> and Coastal Hwy./6600 Coastal Hwy. Rooms start at \$70/night. (Hotel Reservations:1-800-315-2621. Hotel Front Desk:1-410-524-1600) Can opt to drive to O.C. on either Fri., Feb 28 or the morning of Sat., Mar 1; leaders will arrange a meeting place & time for both cases. Advance reservations necessary; contact Marcia by email to [mww@udel.edu](mailto:mww@udel.edu) and she will provide additional details and logistics.

**Thurs, Mar 6, 3 pm - Luther Goldman Birding Trail at Lake Artemesia**

**Sat, Mar 15, 7:30 am - Governor Bridge NA**

**Thurs, Mar 20, 3 pm -Luther Goldman Birding Trail at Lake Artemesia**

**Thurs, Apr 3, 6 pm - Luther Goldman Birding Trail at Lake Artemesia. NOTE LATER TIME CHANGE.**

**Sat, Apr 5, 7:30 am - Governor Bridge NA**

**Thurs, Apr 17, 6 pm - Luther Goldman Birding Trail at Lake Artemesia. NOTE LATER TIME CHANGE.**

**Sat, Apr 19, 7:30 am - Governor Bridge NA**

**Sun, Apr 27, 7 am - Points along the Patuxent River for migrant waders and songbirds.** Meet at Bowie P&R. Contact David Mozurkewich, PBC, 301-509-2212 or [mozurk@bellatlantic.net](mailto:mozurk@bellatlantic.net) for more info.

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## Opportunity Knocks! Newsletter Editor Wanted

*The Bluebird* is looking for a new editor. Help included! We thank Meghan First for her efforts these last years. Work restraints, motherhood, and time preclude Meghan's continuance as our newsletter editor, which brings us to you. At its most basic level (read: Maureen's) - if you can type and cut-and-paste into an already-created format, you can cobble together this newsletter. Of course, if you have more advanced computer and/or graphic skills, you can adjust and create the format and produce a more attractive newsletter with more ease. The newsletter is sent to the printer electronically, along with the mailing list from the National Audubon Society, where it is printed, folded, sorted and delivered to the P.O. For details, contact: Meghan, 301-464-2663 (w), 202-247-6974 (c) or [polyxenes@verizon.net](mailto:polyxenes@verizon.net) or Maureen, 301-262-5148 or [mblades@comcast.net](mailto:mblades@comcast.net)

## The Great Backyard Bird Count

February 14 - 17, 2014

The 17th annual (GBBC) is a citizen science project of the National Audubon Society, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and Bird Studies Canada for all ages and skill levels. You count birds in 15 min. increments for as long you like on 1 or more days and report your findings with others from the world over. You can count in your yard, at your school, local park - anywhere you find birds. Check out [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org) (official website) and [www.birds.audubon.org](http://www.birds.audubon.org) for easy instructions, why this count is important, tally sheets and videos. Learn about free smart phone apps for reporting to eBird, how to submit photos for the contest - and a whole lot more!

## Project SNOWstorm

A Google search for Snowy Owls in Maryland revealed a Jan.10 WAMU radio piece quoting Dave Brinker, ecologist for MD DNR and past PGAS speaker. Dave and other wildlife researchers/groups have launched Project SNOWstorm, a crowd-funded upstart taking advantage of the rare irruption of "lifetime proportions" of 1000s of Snowy Owls migrating south from the Arctic since fall. Their goal: attach sophisticated \$3000

solar-powered GPS-GSM transmitters to as many Snowy Owls as possible to unlock the mysteries of their movements, hunting areas, and more. Researchers were instantly tracking *Assateague's* movements up and down the Mid-Atlantic Coast, garnering data in ways never before accomplished. Watch the video by noted author Scott Weidensaul to learn more and the ways you can help them understand this beautiful bird better at [www.projectsnowstorm.org](http://www.projectsnowstorm.org).

## Update on Newsletter Receipt

In our last issue, PGAS discussed trying to send fewer newsletters via U.S. mail, while also cutting the chapter's biggest expense, the printing and mailing of *The Bluebird*. 21 people responded: 13 wished future issues emailed, 2 wished to continue receiving a paper copy, 1 said they would read it at [www.pgaudubon.org](http://www.pgaudubon.org), and 5 requested removal from the mailing list. With our next issue, we will remove from our mailing list those who have requested we do so. Contact Maureen at 301-262-5148 or [mblades@comcast.net](mailto:mblades@comcast.net) if you wish other than a paper copy. Be sure to give your name, address, phone number, email and NAS label ID# if possible.

## In Memoriam: Helen E. Meleney

We are sad to report that long-time PGAS member Helen Meleney died Dec. 24, 2013, at age 81. Helen was born in Washington, D.C., raised in Bethesda. A graduate of Sidwell Friends School, she attended the U. of Wisconsin, and received her MA at the U. of California at Berkeley before teaching physical education in county elementary schools for 30 years, mostly at Langley Park-McCormick. She lived in Greenbelt, MD, from 1976 until her death. A memorial service was held Feb. 1<sup>st</sup> at Greenbelt Community Church, where she was an active member, followed by a walk around Greenbelt Lake, a fitting celebration of her love of the outdoors. A regular presence at our monthly programs, bird walks, field trips and holiday parties at Watkins Nature Center over the years, her enthusiasm for the natural world will be missed.



**Prince George's Audubon Society**  
 P.O. Box 1658  
 Greenbelt, MD 20768-1658

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The Prince George's Audubon Society (PGAS) was established 42 years ago as a chapter of the National Audubon Society to serve northern Prince George's County. In those ensuing years, PGAS was instrumental in the clean-up and creation of the Fran Uhler Natural Area (FUNA), the creation of the Luther Goldman Birding Trail at Lake Artemesia, expanding bluebird nest box trails, and providing free nature/bird walks, field trips, highway clean-ups and countless programs to its membership and the general public. In cooperation with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, PGAS has led bird walks at FUNA for 27 years and at the Governor Bridge Natural Area (GBNA) for 11 years. Incorporated in the State of Maryland, PGAS is a non-profit 501(c) 3 organization of about 800 members with officers elected by the general membership. Membership in PGAS comes from joining the National Audubon Society. Members from northern P.G. County automatically become members of PGAS and receive *The Bluebird*, the official newsletter of this chapter, keeping them informed of bird walks, field trips, monthly programs and other news of interest. In 2001, the PGAS and the Patuxent Bird Club, a chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society, began meeting jointly to plan programs and field trips. See activities and news inside and come join us to learn more about birds, the natural world, their challenges and what we can all do to help.

**New Membership Application**

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

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

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

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

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

**Email Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

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