

FRIENDS OF PATUXENT

U.S. Secret Service Honors Refuge Employees

Brad Knudsen, Refuge Manager



Refuge Manager Brad Knudsen and Refuge Biologist Sandy Spencer accept awards from U.S. Secret Service.

Recently, staff from the U.S. Secret Service's Safety, Health & Environmental Programs Division honored Refuge Manager Brad Knudsen and Senior Biologist Sandy Spencer for their partnership efforts with their agency's James T. Rowley Training Center, a 500 acre facility along Powder Mill Road, and adjacent to the refuge. Special Agent in Charge (SAIC) James Armiger presented the certificates, and was accompanied by Thomas Franklin, Environmental Protection Specialist, and David Brown, Occupational Safety & Health Specialist for the Secret Service.

Refuge Manager Knudsen was recognized for allowing various training exercises for incoming agents to occur in and around the National Wildlife Visitor Center for the past 12 years. These are



typically physical security and/or surveillance scenarios, often portraying a visit to a public facility such as a museum, by a visiting dignitary. The proximity of the Visitor Center to their training center makes for an ideal lo-

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Project BudBurst

By Ken Lavish,
Patuxent Volunteer

You may have seen Project BudBurst signs around the refuge and thought that it might have something to do with monitoring plants. Well, it does have something to do with observing plant development through the seasons and so much more. It is a long-term nationwide program that involves citizen scientists in the

Project BudBurst
Timing is everything!

collection of data on the timing of leafing, flowering, fruiting, etc. (i.e. phenophases) of over 250 plants. BudBurst data are being used to advance scientific understanding of how plant phenology is changing (or not changing) with changes in climate.

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Masonville Cove Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership with Patuxent Research Refuge

USFWS Staff

Located near the Patapsco River, Masonville Cove serves as a dredging material containment facility. This facility is a repository for material dredged from the Baltimore Harbor. To mitigate impacts from the construction of this facility, the Maryland Port Administration and its local community, implemented a plan with three core elements: to restore Masonville Cove's natural area, to establish an environmental education center on site, and to secure seed funding for environmental education. Also, incorporated into this plan, is to remove or recycle more than 60,000 tons of debris from the area.

In May 2013, Masonville Cove competed nationally to be designated as an Urban Wildlife Refuge through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). The Service and Patuxent Research Refuge has been working with Masonville Cove partners (the Maryland Port Administration, the National Aquarium, Living Classrooms, the

Chesapeake Bay Field Office and the local community) for nearly two years to provide assistance with visitors services and wildlife management on the site. One of the main goals of the Urban Wildlife Refuge Initiative is to make the outdoors more meaningful and accessible to urban audiences. The partnership is developing innovative ways to enable urban audiences to learn more about the Refuge system, wildlife conservation, and to gain a greater appreciation for the outdoors.

The on-site Masonville Cove staff offers a wide variety of educational activities and field trip opportunities for K-12 audiences. Topics for activities revolve around the Chesapeake Bay and range from human impacts, rockfish populations in the Bay, land and sea explorations, to Chesapeake Bay wetland studies.

Youth visiting the Patuxent Research Refuge also have the opportunity to be involved with Masonville Cove's edu-

cational programs. Recently, two outreach programs, conducted by Masonville Cove's staff member Beth Lenker, offered up-close and interactive programs focusing on the Chesapeake Bay. One of the program activities included oyster dissection and study for ages 8-10, which also included an oyster-themed craft. Another program for Patuxent's Nature Tots introduced toddlers to Bay critters through interaction with live animals, stories, songs, and crafts. By participating in these programs, children, and parents alike, had the chance to learn about the Chesapeake Bay, develop an awareness of what lives in the Bay, and learn about some of the problems the Bay faces due to human impact.

With the combined efforts of Masonville Cove, Patuxent Research Refuge and various partners, this Urban Wildlife Refuge Initiative will provide a gateway for urban audiences to learn about natural resources and become environmental stewards. ■

Friends of Patuxent is published quarterly and can be read online or mailed to our Friends upon request.

Many of the newsletter contributors and other assistants are volunteers. There are regular contributors, however, we welcome and encourage all volunteers and Friends to submit items for the newsletter by sending or bringing them to:

Editor, Friends of Patuxent Newsletter
National Wildlife Visitor Center
10901 Scarlet Tanager Loop
Laurel, MD 20708-4011

Or email to Diana_Ogilvie@fws.gov

To become a member of the Friends of Patuxent or send a donation, please see "Membership Application" in the reverse side of the address page of the newsletter.

We invite you to join!

**Your membership/
contribution helps
support the mission and
programs at Patuxent**



Patuxent's Winter Bird Counts—2014

Dr. Chandler S. Robbins, (Emeritus)
USGS-Patuxent Wildlife Research Center

Every winter since 1995 Patuxent biologists have devoted two days to obtaining a representative count of winter bird populations on this refuge. First is the Christmas Bird Count sponsored by National Audubon where all of Patuxent's central and south tracts are within the Bowie 15-mile circle. Second is the Prince George's County Midwinter Bird Count in late January sponsored by the Maryland Ornithological Society which includes exactly the same Patuxent tracts.

Last year I compared 2012 and 2013 results of the Patuxent Christmas Counts. This year I am comparing the 2014 results of the Christmas Count on Jan. 1 with the Midwinter Count taken on Jan. 25 of the same year. The Christmas Count was taken on a beautiful clear day with bare ground, open ponds, light winds and temperatures between 30 and 42 degrees. The Midwinter count was on a cold windy day, 17 to 24 degrees with 3 to 6 inches of snow on the ground and the ponds almost completely frozen. Thirteen observers spent 42 party-hours on foot on Jan. 1; eight observers spent 24 party-hours on foot on Jan. 25.

The birds are listed in taxonomic sequence, Jan. 1, then Jan. 25, followed by comments where appropriate.

Cackling Goose 1,1 (new midwinter species); Canada Goose 668, 1601; Tundra Swan 1,2; Wood Duck 5, 0; Gadwall 2,0; Black Duck 27, 0; Mallard 83, 0 (first time we have missed it); Pintail 1, 0 (new species); Ring-necked Duck 174, 5; Hooded Merganser 20, 0; Common Merganser 3 (new high count), 0; Great Blue Heron 2, 0; Sandhill Crane 2,2.

Black Vulture 13 (tied previous high), 2; Turkey Vulture 8,3; Bald Eagle 7, 2; Cooper's Hawk 1, 0; Sharp-shinned

Hawk 0, 1; unidentified accipiter 2, 0; Red-shouldered Hawk 3, 2; Red-tailed Hawk 7,7; Killdeer 5, 0; Woodcock 1, 0; Wilson's Snipe 0, 2; Ring-billed Gull 7, 1; unidentified gull 0,1; Mourning Dove 41, 62; Great Horned Owl 0, 1; Barred Owl 1, 0; Belted Kingfisher 8, 1.

Red-bellied Woodpecker 53, 32; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 5, 4; Downy Woodpecker 44, 24; Hairy Woodpecker 15, 4; Flicker 66, 32; Pileated Woodpecker 16, 2; Phoebe 2, 1; Blue Jay 89; 42; Am. Crow 131, 35; Fish Crow 4, 0; unidentified crows 55, 7; Chickadee 97; 30; Titmouse 92, 40; White-breasted Nuthatch 34, 14; Brown Creeper 10, 1; Carolina Wren 85 (tied highest), 20; Winter Wren 40, 11; Golden-crowned Kinglet 61, 9; Ruby-crowned Kinglet 3, 0.



Eastern Bluebird 80; 15; Hermit Thrush 17, 15; Robin 282, 340; Catbird 1, 1; Mockingbird 30, 13; Brown Thrasher 2, 3; Starling 547, 461; Yellow-rumped Warbler 4, 4; Pine Warbler 1, 0; Common Yellowthroat 1(new species), 0; Towhee 26, 18; Tree Sparrow 4, 17; Chipping Sparrow 1, 42; Field Sparrow 31, 32; Savannah Sparrow 1, 8; Fox Sparrow 3, 8; Song Sparrow 135, 68; Swamp Sparrow 63, 25; White-throated Sparrow 444, 157; Junco 306, 285; Cardinal 74, 41; Red-winged Blackbird 84, 34; Rusty Blackbird 2, 0; Grackle 50, 5; House Finch 11, 12; Goldfinch 54, 7.

Total species, 70 on Jan. 1, 55 on Jan. 25.

I thank the following observers for their participation [on January 25]: Daniel Boone, Vincent Bryant, Jane and Mark Chandler, Barbara Dowell, Janet Evander, M. Kwak, Mikey Lutmerding, Heather Martley, Ariell Mohr, Elaine Nakash, Claire Nemes, Bruce Peterjohn, Chandler Robbins, Jane Robbins, John Sauer, and Mark Wimer. ■

Patuxent Research Refuge Upcoming Events for 2014

Magnificent Whooping Crane Month

May 1st-31st, 2014

National Wildlife Visitor Center

Volunteer Appreciation Picnic

Sunday, May 18, 2014

4:30 pm

North Tract Wildlife Viewing Area

You may sign up at North Tract or South Tract, or by calling or emailing Diana_Ogilvie@fws.gov

Kids' Fishing Day

Saturday, June 7th, 2014

8:30 am - 12:00 pm

National Wildlife Visitor Center

FREE; Call 301-497-5887 to register starting May 1st at 9:15am. <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/patuxent/>

Wildlife Conservation and Recreation Day

Saturday, August 16th, 2014

10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Patuxent North Tract Entrance

FREE; 301-497- 5770

<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/patuxent/>

Honey Harvest Festival

Saturday, September 20, 2014

9:00 am - 3:30 pm

National Wildlife Visitor Center

FREE; 301-497-5763

<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/patuxent/>

Event participants with special needs should contact the Refuge at 301-497-5763 at least two weeks prior to an event to request special accommodations

Upcoming Friends Members Programs

Special Friends-Sponsored Program

April 5, 2014- Impact of Climate Change on Wildlife



Join us for an exciting presentation by Doug Inkley, Ph.D., Senior Scientist at the National Wildlife Federation. He will be speaking about the impact of climate change on wildlife and wildlife habitat.

Dr. Inkley is a certified wildlife biologist with expertise in ecology and wildlife management. He has worked on a broad range of wildlife issues including endangered species conservation, state wildlife funding, national wildlife refuge legislation, waterfowl conservation and wetlands conservation. Among his many distinctive achievements, Dr. Inkley received the 2005 Conservation Education Award from The Wildlife Society as the lead author of the 2004 report Global Climate Change and Wildlife in North America. He also received the 2007 Communications Award from Ducks Unlimited for work on publicizing climate change impacts on wildlife.

When: Saturday, April 5, 2014 from 1:30 PM to 2:30 PM

Where: National Wildlife Visitor Center, Patuxent Research Refuge, Laurel, MD

No registration required.

Photography Workshop Discounted for Friends Members

May 10, 2014- Nature Images Photography Workshop

This one-day workshop will be presented by photographer Sol Levine. Are you interested in expanding your capabilities with your digital or film camera?



Learn about equipment, f-stop, shutter speed, metering, composition, and more. The workshop addresses everything from disposables to top-of-the-line cameras.

Advanced registration and payment required. Fee is \$60.00 per person; \$50.00 for Members of Friends of Patuxent.

Send checks payable to Friends of Patuxent, National Wildlife Visitor Center, 10901 Scarlet Tanager Loop, Laurel, MD 20708; Attn. Photo Class. Please include your name, address and phone number.

When: Saturday, May 10, 2014, 9 AM to 4 PM

Where: National Wildlife Visitor Center, Patuxent Research Refuge, Laurel, MD

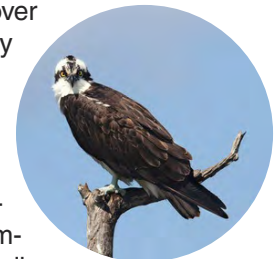
For more information, call 301-497-5887



June Friends Members Program

June 7, 2014- Ospreys on the Patuxent

Meet Greg Kearns, a M-NCPPC Park Naturalist for over 30 years at Patuxent River Park in Croom, MD, who will talk about Ospreys, the often-seen "fish hawk" of local rivers and the Chesapeake Bay, with photos and video by Greg Kearns. He will share some of his experiences from over 30 years of observing ospreys. His program will cover osprey biology on the Patuxent River, the provision of nesting platforms, efforts to increase their numbers, his banding program with the public, and more.



Greg Kearns, is an accomplished photographer, worldwide traveler, leader of eco-tours both here and abroad, expert birder, licensed bird-bander, as well as a renowned authority on Ospreys, Sora Rails (an elusive bird of the marshes), and wetland ecology at Jug Bay on the Patuxent River.

When: Saturday, June 7, 2014; 12:30-2 PM

Where: National Wildlife Visitor Center, Patuxent Research Refuge, Laurel, MD

Registration is required. Please call 301-497-5887 to sign up; you'll be asked for your membership number.



Visit us on Facebook and Twitter

<https://www.facebook.com/PatuxentResearchRefuge>
<https://twitter.com/USFWSNortheast/status/78546358377783296>



USGS News

Article submitted by Jenn Hill, PRR Staff

Recently Sam Droege, of USGS, and his “*Intimate Portrait of Bees*” was featured on the National Geographic Web site. In the article (by Jane J. Lee), several of “Sam’s bees” are shown in stunning detail. Sam and fellow researchers utilize technology developed by the U.S. Army to capture intimate detailing of a variety of bee species.

Follow the link below to learn more about pollinators and to see these beautiful pictures:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/features/140114-bee-native-macro-photography-insects-science/#.UyH6uoUI3NX>



The pictures are all public domain. There are about 1500 or so at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usgsbiml/>

You can search the site and look for any Patuxent specimens. Use any that you like in any way that you like.

- All pictures are public domain
- No need to ask our permission to use in any way
- Feel free to let others know
- Useful for displays, posters, etc.
- Pictures are very high resolution and can be printed at 4 X 5 feet without losing detail

Instructions for downloading USGS Bee Inventory and Monitoring Program Pictures from the Flickr site.

Go to the Flickr site

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/usgsbiml/>

You can then search our site for the pictures you want or go to one of the pre-existing “sets.”

Click on the picture you are interested in. The picture’s own web page will show up with that picture’s details and comments.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/usgsbiml/8136793861/in/photostream>

CCP Up-date

In the last newsletter Refuge Manager Brad Knudsen referenced the completion of Patuxent’s CCP which is available on-line or via compact disc. For more information regarding the CCP, or to view the document, please visit the link below. If you have any questions or need help accessing the file, contact Brad Knudsen at 301.497.5582 or Jennifer Hill at 240.882.0360.

<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/planning/patuxent/finalccp.html> ■

Summary of 2013 Patuxent Waterbird Census

By Frank McGilvrey - Volunteer/Biologist

Surveys of waterbird species on the Patuxent Research Refuge have been conducted weekly since 1997. Surveys cover about 50 wetland areas encompassing approximately 500 acres, plus approximately 3/4 mile segments each of the Patuxent and Little Patuxent Rivers. The amount of wetland habitat has varied considerably over the years due to drought, beaver activity and artificial drawdowns. The purposes of the census are to identify waterbird species, their distribution on the refuge, and most important, their long-term population trends.

Weather is one of the most important factors impacting waterbird numbers. Precipitation in 2013 was below normal most of the year, but severe enough to have serious impacts. Water levels remained adequate until late summer.

Waterfowl - Four of the five nesting species; Canada goose, mallard, black duck and hooded merganser are here year around. Resident populations are supplemented by spring and fall migrants. Wood ducks arrive in late February and are usually gone by the end of October. Canada goose numbers were about the same as 2012, but still well below the long-term average (1996-present). Mallard and black duck numbers have crashed. Neither were present this summer. Black ducks were at record lows. Hooded mergansers have also been in a steep decline, and were not present this summer. Numbers were slightly above last year's record low. Wood duck numbers were the same as 2012, and at the long-term average. Ring-neck ducks are by far the most common migrant/wintering duck. They are present from the end of October until mid-April. Numbers were at a record high in 2013; much higher



Photo by Ross Feldner

than any previous year. The only other common migrant duck is the green-wing teal. Numbers fluctuate considerably from year to year. Numbers this year were considerably above the long-term average. A number of other species of ducks occur in spring and fall. We recorded the first surf scoter seen on the Refuge.

Common wading birds include great blue heron, green heron, and great egret. The great blue is a year around resident. Green herons arrive in March and depart by the end of October. Great egrets are usually only present after the nesting season in late summer and early fall. We get a few American bitterns in spring and little blue herons (primarily juveniles) in late summer. Our blue heron nesting colony was

abandoned. Numbers for the year fell to the second lowest on record. Green herons maintained their numbers at the long-term average. Great egrets were uncommon this year, and no little blue herons were recorded.

Common shorebirds include killdeer, Wilson snipe, solitary and spotted sandpiper and yellowlegs. Only killdeer are present year around. All others are spring and fall migrants. Numbers are heavily affected by waterlevels on the impoundments. Except for killdeer and snipe, shorebirds are most abundant when there is an abundance of bare ground in the impoundments created by natural or artificial drawdowns. For the first time in a number of years, we drew down several Central Tract impoundments. In addition to the common species, several uncommon species were attracted including least sandpipers, semi-palmated sandpipers and both yellowlegs. Killdeer and snipe numbers were well above the long-term average.

Other waterbird species include belted kingfisher and pied-billed grebe. The kingfisher is present year around.

Grebes are primarily migrants with a very small breeding population. They are not present during the winter. Kingfisher numbers were at the long-term average. Grebes were well below last year's near record, but still at the long-term average.

We also track bald eagles and ospreys. Eagles are present year around. Ospreys are present from March to October. Eagles have increased every year until 2011 and then leveled off. Ospreys peaked in 2005 and then turned downward. ■



Blast From the Past - Reprinted from the March 2001 Friends Newsletter

The Night of the Owl Prowl

By Jerry Persall

Going on an Owl Prowl might not come up immediately as one of your first choices for a mid-winter Sunday evening outing but it did for me recently. In the past couple of months, I'd finished the fifteen-hour long program of volunteer training to qualify as a volunteer naturalist at the Patuxent Research Refuge. Prowling for owls at night with a seasoned naturalist came up on the list of January activities and piqued my interest. I sometimes have odd interests and they are diverse if nothing else.

What does one do on an owl prowl? One practices the naturalist shuffle. After an informal owl briefing by Rod, the leader, in the warm North Tract Visitor Contact Station, we head out into the almost dark night. The key is to walk silently. The shuffle goes like this: walk a ways down the road, stop, stand still, and listen for the night sounds. After several minutes of silence among a group of fifteen adults and very well behaved children Rod tries out his owl vocalizations: *Hoo, hoo-oo, hoo, hoo*. Rod has been guiding monthly owl prowls for nine years. He's good. If I were a Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*), I would answer Rod, maybe even venturing closer to investigate as we all hoped.

Listening to the silence is the key to owl prowling. After no response, we do the naturalist shuffle a little further down the road. Woodland habitat flanks the asphalt. Another trick is to scan the tree line looking for movement; usually lateral movement of an owl flitting from a dark tree branch outlined against the not quite dark night sky. No reply from the Great Horned so Rod tries for the Barred Owl (*Strix varia*): *hohoo-hohoo, hohoo-hohooaw*. The *aw* at the end is characteristic.



Nature walks, either solitary or with groups, are mostly about listening and seeing, learning to quiet the inner self and blending in with the habitat so that you master that difficult art of experiencing things from the point of view of the flora and fauna. As such, it is a sort of practiced *gestalt* and the great naturalists learn to do it instinctively with experience. It is the reason amateur astronomers brave winter nights to star gaze and it is the motivating factor for fishermen, birders, and deer hunters. It is the "being there in the now" that draws us out to wilderness anytime of the year.

Owls are nocturnal birds of prey with extraordinary night vision and keen hearing. Often called silent killers or flying tigers, they have modified feathering that makes their swooping flight soundless, almost moth-like. The last thing a prey animal such as a vole, mouse, or frog knows is the instant killing impact of extended talons. More often than not, it is final; there is no escape.

Tonight there is no answer from the Barred Owl either, in spite of Rod's professional entreaties. It is a windless and still 38 degrees. The continuous cloud cover is low and a passing commercial

airliner's flashing strobe lights barely penetrate to the forest below. A fine mist is suspended in the night air. It is not cold. I have learned through the years that it is not cold until I have to put on gloves and they are stuffed inside my fleece jacket. It is the kind of night where even the animals have decided to hunker down. Not even deer snorts are heard, all of which may explain why in our hour-long owl prowl we discover no owls.

Except for one. Before the 7:00 pm start time I volunteer to drive back down to the refuge's electronic entrance gate to make sure the visitors know they must approach closely to the gate for it to open. Halfway down the mile-long road a huge bird of prey swoops across the road in the front of my headlights. It is a Great Horned Owl or a Barred Owl (my guess); I'm not that skilled at discerning owl field marks in night flight yet. But it *is* an owl and instantly there is that rush of adrenaline inside of me. Only a two-second sighting and my primitive reptilian brainstem involuntarily moves me to gasp with fear. I am immediately elated and only later disappointed that the rest of the group didn't get to see a single owl.

Nature doesn't always display its mysteries on demand. It takes going out from time to time and meeting it more than halfway. You have to make the effort. But I'm something of a budding owler and perhaps many of the people in the group are not. I studied owls a couple of years ago in the USDA graduate school on my progress towards the Certificate of Accomplishment in Natural History Field Studies. I've seen every kind of owl that prowls the local region. Maybe that's why I alone got the solitary owl sighting: as some kind of reward for taking serious interest in them recently!

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Project BudBurst

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Phenology is the study of the relationships between biological phenomena such as flowering, seed production, and migration, in relation to season and climate. It can be thought of as the science of appearance.

Why is phenology important? Many plants, animals, and other organisms have evolved together. Some of the organisms form beneficial relationships based on the synchronized timing of their phenophases to serve as pollinators, seed dispersers, food providers, etc. The organisms may use different prompts to trigger their respective phenophases. The three common triggers of phenophases are temperature, day length, and rainfall. It is possible that climate change will cause the tim-



Ken Lavish examining buds

ing to become out of sync, which may in turn cause some species' populations to decline. Phenological data provide value for understanding the interactions between organisms and their environment and for assessing the impacts of climate change.

Project BudBurst is co-managed by National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON) and the Chicago Botanic Garden. The venture receives its primary funding from the National Science Foundation.

The project started in 2007. It is expected to run for at least 30 years, which is the life span of the National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON). NEON, itself, is a continental-



Virginia bluebells

scale observatory that is charged with measuring the causes and effects of climate change, land use change and invasive species on U.S. ecosystems. Data, educational resources and scientific infrastructure for research are freely provided to anyone interested in studying these issues. Patuxent first became involved with Project BudBurst in 2012.

The goal of Project BudBurst is to enable a widespread audience to: **Understand** the impacts of changing climates on plants and their phenology, **Engage** in and understand the scientific process, **Observe** plants, and **Contribute** phenological data to educational and scientific communities for learning and research.

Patuxent Research Refuge is one of 14 wildlife refuges, six botanical gardens, three national parks, 10 community partners, and thousands of individuals that contribute to the project.

Anyone can participate in Project BudBurst. Participants are individuals from all walks of life, including teachers and their students, volunteers, gardeners, amateur naturalists, families, and more. Individuals can take part in Project BudBurst at home, at work, in the schoolyard, at a local botanic garden, on vacation, at Patuxent or wherever they find plants that interest them. Even one time observations are welcomed. Project BudBurst is always looking for more individuals and organizations to participate and contribute their observations of plants.



Black-eyed Susan

Patuxent's BudBurst volunteers track the phenophases of 10 plants over their growing seasons. Monitored plants are located in both the North Tract and the South Tract.

North Tract Plants:

Black-eyed Susan
New England aster
Pawpaw
Southern arrowwood
Virginia bluebells

South Tract Plants:

Common milkweed
Mountain laurel
Red columbine
Skunk cabbage
Spaddeedock

All of this talk about climate change brings up a question: What will happen when worms take over the world? Global Warming!

A haiku found on their website summarizes the essence of Project BudBurst:

Engage in science
Discover phenology
Observe changing plants

More information on Project BudBurst and NEON can be found at <http://budburst.org/index.php> and <http://neon-inc.org/>, respectively. ■

Pruning Program for Friends Gets Us Ready for Spring!



For 14 attendees, Joe DiGiovanni, Master Gardener, Friends member and Refuge volunteer, spelled out do's and don'ts of pruning shrubs and trees in his fascinating presentation "Pruning for the Health of It" on March 1. Joe pointed out that it helps to have the right equipment to do a good job and there are lots of choices out there. By trimming and pruning in the right places, you'll end up with an attractive tree or shrub that catches the eye of your family, friends and neighbors. Pruning not only gets your plants in shape, but can get you in shape - it can be a good work-out. So, get pruning for the health of it!

Thank you Joe, for taking time to do this program for Friends members and their guests.

Dating Season for Owls - What?!

We got a real treat on February 22. Rod Burley, volunteer and Friends Board Member, provided a special presentation and guided walk for Friends members called "Owls Are a Hoot" at North Tract that evening. Friends Members and one guest listened to Rod as he shared owl facts and cool calls. Then we walked along Wildlife Loop and listened for owls. After calling for a barred owl, we finally heard two barred owls hoot back at us. What a thrill. Rod described their communication as: "We know you're there but we're not interested. We're "dating" and going to build a nest for our family, so go away." And they didn't hoot any more.

Thanks Rod for sharing your knowledge and this terrific opportunity to witness nature in action.



U.S. Secret Service Honors Refuge Employees

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cation, and saves valuable time in their jam-packed training modules.

Biologist Spencer was recognized for her assistance with a recent bird survey on the Training Center grounds. Her expertise in survey protocols, as well as in bird ID were paramount to the survey being successful. The survey resulted in 37 species being identified on the Secret Service's site, with Acadian Flycatcher, Blue-Grey Gnatcatcher, and Pine Warbler being the most numerous.

SAIC Armiger expressed his appreciation for the refuge's assistance in helping them meet their mission requirements, as well as helping them learn more about, and becoming better stewards of, the natural resources that occur on their property. He stated they would like to achieve more in the natural resource arena on their lands, and looked forward to additional opportunities to work together. ■

The Night of the Owl Prowl

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But still, I wish it had been a shared group experience, at least so the children could have felt the thrill of discovery. Nonetheless, we had the shared experience of shuffling down the road, stopping to silently listen, and hearing a grown man imitate owl calls in the dark. It is, in fact, an odd experience to hear a human voice call for owls. We were disciplined amateurs, attentive, serious, carrying no flashlights to spoil the *gestalt* and alert those nocturnal hunters, the flying tigers that evidently were settling in for the evening. And that overwhelming silence of the night, with naked woodland branches silhouetted against the dying of the light, just may have made up for their disappointing absence. It may even be definitive proof that, with a good group leader and interested persons out for an owl prowling, owls are sometimes optional. ■

Calling for Your Articles and Photos Please

We're looking for articles—your articles—and cool photos for future Friends newsletters. You don't have to be a professional writer. Just jot down a paragraph or two about a nature topic dear to your heart. Or send us a photo or two of a beautiful plant, cute wild critter, or people at a Refuge or Friends event. And if you will, please include a caption for your photos.

Please consider sending us your article and/or your photos for your next newsletter. Make sure to title your article and include your name and volunteer position. When you send it, put Newsletter Article in the Subject Line of your email. We'd like to hear from YOU. Here's where to send them: Diana_ogilvie@fws.gov or jelatham@verizon.net . Thank you so much!

A Dozen Birds for Spring

Helen Alexander, Patuxent Volunteer

Since so many migrants return to Patuxent in the Spring it was thought best to give you a **'baker's dozen.'**

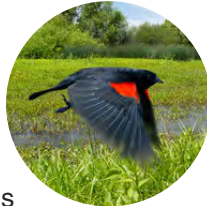
1. American Robin

Known across America as the harbinger of spring, his loud "Cheer-up, cheer-up, cheer-up" is especially loud and often repeated in the spring. The Robin also has characteristic chuckling and harsh "chip" calls that you will soon come to recognize as you observe them here and in your own neighborhood.



2. Red-winged Blackbird

Another characteristic sound of spring at Patuxent is the musical, often repeated burble of the Red-winged Blackbird. "Purple-dee, purple-dee, purple-dee" he sings over and over again, flashing his bright red wing patches in synch with his song.



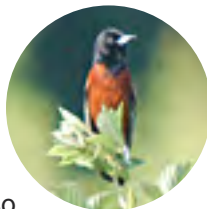
3. Baltimore Oriole

One of the most musical of bird songs, listen for a clear whistled melody coming down from high in the trees on the refuge. Sibley renders this song, "pideo tewdi tewdi, yewdi, tew tidew," which is about as good as one can do given the high-pitched whistling tone of the real song.



4. Orchard Oriole

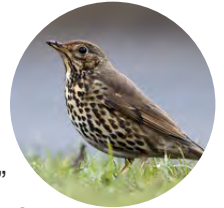
The song of the Orchard Oriole sounds like a shortened, slightly less musical version of the Baltimore Oriole. With time one will come to recognize the tonality of the 'Oriole' sound. The Orchard Oriole also sings from high in a tree but it likes younger trees better than the Baltimore Oriole which tends to prefer tall, mature trees.



5. Wood Thrush

Many consider the Wood Thrush the premier songster of the forest. In truth the song has several phrases only the third of which is the musical "ee-o-lay" fluted whistle for which the bird is so famous.

The song can be rendered, 'wheet' (rising whistle), pause, "churr", (not very musical), pause, "ee-o-lay", pause, and finally two or three short whistled notes ending with a final twangy "churr." The song is somewhat varied depending on location (local accents!) and may abruptly end mid-way as interruptions in the environment dictate-predator, especially a juicy bug, encroachment of another Wood Thrush in its territory, etc. Look for the Wood Thrush in the understory in edge habitat, although it may occasionally sing from the top of a tree or in the middle of the forest.



6. Northern Parula Warbler

Listen for a persistent, but not very loud, "b-r-r-r-r-zip" the first part a buzzy trill, followed by a pronounced 'chip' sound at the end. This is repeated over and over again when it arrives at Patuxent, but ends abruptly by the end of May or early June when he has established his territory and attracted a mate.



7. Prairie Warbler

The song of the Prairie Warbler may be rendered, "zoo, zoo zo zozozozo, zeet, indicating the slightly buzzy quality to its ascending, whistled vocalization.



8. Palm Warbler

The song of the Palm Warbler is easy to confuse with the Chipping Sparrow, but while the cadence for both is a fast trill, that of the Palm Warbler is rather musical, whereas the song of the Chipping Sparrow is a dry fast rattle.



WE SALUTE AND APPLAUD OUR VOLUNTEERS

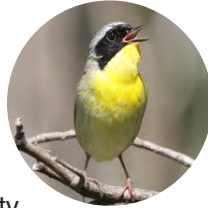
9. Black-throated Blue Warbler

Somewhat raspy, the song of the Black-throated Blue Warbler often has just three distinct phrases, which may be thought of as, “zoo-zo-zhee”. The first two notes are descending and the final note tends to be ascending and louder. This is one of the easier Warblers to spot as it prefers the understory.



10. Common Yellowthroat

One of the most persistent and common birdsongs you will hear on the refuge in spring (and through the summer as well) is that of the Common Yellowthroat. Its song is often rendered, “witchety, witchety, witchety,” which it repeats over and over again often from a Willow tree. It likes low-lying wet areas where you are sure to hear it singing even on overcast days.



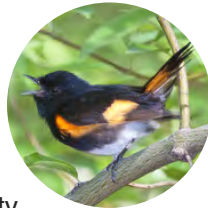
11. Yellow Warbler

The song of the Yellow Warbler may be thought of as, “sweet-sweet, I’m so sweet.” It likes wet areas and willows as does the Yellowthroat.



12. American Redstart

Another common Warbler of Patuxent, the song of the Redstart can be heard often in the spring. Sibley renders it, “tsee, tsee tsee tsee tzirr” indicating that the last note is slurred and rising in tonality. Look for it, too, in the understory.



13. Ovenbird

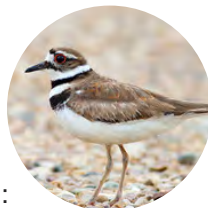
Along the Laurel Trail beginning in mid-April, you will hear the persistent, “Teacher, teacher, teacher, teacher” song of the Ovenbird. Look for him singing from a low branch or from a log on the forest floor.



14. Killdeer

(okay, one more than a baker’s dozen!)

The Killdeer, calls its name in high, piercing tones as it flies over the Visitor’s Center and Lake Redington in the spring: “Kill-deer, Killdeer, Killdeer.”



Friends Membership Contest Winner-Mike Goldberg



Join us in congratulating Mike Goldberg, Friends member for 3 1/2 years, who has won the Friends Membership Contest, which ended on February 28. You may know that among other volunteer work, Mike assists Dennis Hartnett with school groups, works at North Tract, helps out with Friends and Refuge events, and staffs the front desk at the Visitor Center. Mike is great at chatting up the Refuge to visitors, and encouraging people to join the Friends organization. As the winner of the Friends Membership Contest, Mike selected a \$50 gift certificate from Homestead Gardens in Davidsonville, Maryland. Congratulations Mike!!!

We invite you to join!

Your membership/contribution helps support the mission and programs at Patuxent. You also receive the following benefits:

- Quarterly newsletter (mailed on request or go to www.friendsofpatuxent.org)
- 10% discount in our Wildlife Images bookstore and other area refuge bookstores
- Attendance at member functions
- Participation in on-site educational programs
- Sense of accomplishment in providing many opportunities for wildlife-related recreation, education and research

Spring 2014 Exhibits in the Hollingsworth Gallery

Faith Leahy-Thielke, Patuxent Research Refuge Volunteer

Spring in the Hollingsworth Gallery will bring interesting variety to our exhibit hall. In April, we'll see intarsia from Russell Lehman of Beltsville; in May, scratchboard art from Marilu Tousignaut of New Market; and in June, stunning photo images from Wil and Donna Hershberger of Hedgesville, West Virginia.

We've all seen intarsia, but I had never heard the term before. It is a woodworking craft that assembles cut pieces of different varieties of wood, chosen for grain and color, to create an image. Finish is applied to the completed work. "Russ" Lehman states that though his method is inspired by intarsia, it's not "true" intarsia. The Beltsville artist crafts his work from a single piece of wood. He cuts and shapes pieces, and then, adds wood stain or ink to each before he glues them back together on the "host piece." Lehman writes that he had no prior experience in woodworking until his retirement in 2010. He then "reconnected" with a "hardly-ever used scroll saw" purchased 20 years earlier, and experimented with "simple" scroll patterns like puzzles, crosses and dragons. His daughter-in-law had given him a piece of intarsia as a Christmas present. Intrigued, he set out to try his hand - and has hardly looked back! Many of his pieces were inspired by a love of nature fostered by summers in childhood on his grandparents' farm near Annapolis. These works range in size from 4"x6" to 12"x16" and many were prepared for his Hollingsworth exhibit.

May introduces us to scratchboard and Marilu Tousignaut. Scratchboard is a medium that replaced bulkier engraving materials and enabled quality reproductions for illustrations (in the pre-digital age). A stiff backing is finely coated

with clay and one or more layers of watercolor, airbrush, ink, color pencil or acrylics. A sharp angled tool "scratches" away surface layers to create a drawing. Colored inks can be used to retouch and enhance it. Tousignaut begins with a photo or sketch of her subject. She uses Ampersand Black Clayboard because she has found this gives the "smoothest and most easily-incised marks." She sprays a finished piece with several light coats of a fixative. Tousignaut writes that images of animals and birds are the subjects of most of her artwork - that their ability to adapt and their beauty continue to amaze her. She hopes her attempts to portray them on paper, canvas, and scratchboard might meet with their approval. Recently, her work was juried and accepted into the International Society of Scratchboard Artists. It is interesting that after extensive bicoastal experiences, she's settled in the rolling hills of central Maryland with a studio at the edge of the woods. She looks forward to the Hollingsworth exhibit as well as those of the Scratchboard Society.

June's photographers, Wil and Donna Hershberger are repeat exhibitors - and later, we hope, at least threepeat. From their base in Hedgesville, West Virginia, the Hershbergers have

ranged far and wide with cameras and recording equipment. Their online photo gallery comprises images of birds in their "natural setting" exhibiting "natural behaviors" as well as insects, wildflowers and "scenics." One of Wil's "scenics" is a spectacular image caught in the Grand Tetons in early fall. At sunrise, he shot Mt. Moral flanked by water and vegetation and backed by an orange-gold cloud. He writes that printed as it was, the image looked contrived - adding blue made it look believable. At the Easton Waterfowl Festival, a jury of his peers gave Hershberger a "Best in Show" for this photo. An adjunct to Hershberger's efforts to reproduce a "natural essence" is the recording of nearly 2000 bird and insect vocalizations archived at Cornell University's Macaulay Library.

In addition to their own work, Wil and Donna also offer weekend and daylong nature photography workshops for beginners and intermediates. Helping others "that want to capture their own vision on film or digital is a passion for this team."

It's really pleasant (writing from the dead of winter) to "think spring," and look forward to our wonderful spring exhibits... ■

CALLING FOR YOUR ARTICLES AND PHOTOS

We're looking for articles—your articles—and cool photos for future Friends newsletters. You don't have to be a professional writer. Just jot down a paragraph or two about a nature topic dear to your heart. Or send us a photo or two of a beautiful plant, cute wild critter, or people at a Refuge or Friends event. And if you will, please include a caption for your photos.

Here's where to send them: Diana_ogilvie@fws.gov or jelatham@verizon.net
Thank you so much!

Winter Bird Count for Kids

Jessica Helmbold, Winter Bird Count for Kids Coordinator

On January 11, 2014, Patuxent Research Refuge hosted its third annual Winter Bird Count for Kids event, an event patterned after the Audubon Christmas Bird Count. This year we expanded the age range to include 5 - 7 year olds. This allowed more families to bring more of their children to share in the experience. This year the children also spent time learning about and labeling the parts of a bird; drawing the birds they saw and then sharing their artwork during the Tally Rally.

The weather was not really on our side that day; it rained all morning and was also very foggy. The eight participants who attended the event did get a little wet and our lists of birds were short, but they all seemed to have a good time. As nature education advocate Richard Louv once said "There is no such thing as bad weather, just the wrong clothing." We went with that spirit in mind and set out to enjoy the wildlife that would inevitably be present, rain or shine. Between the two groups we saw a few Canada geese, crows, ring-necked ducks, tufted titmouse, mockingbirds and others and heard lots of blue jay alarm calls. Our 5-7 year old group was led by Dave Burgevin and Amy. I joined them on part of their hike around the



All the young birders that took part in the 3rd Annual Winter Bird Count For Kids received certificates of participation.

Conservation Loop Trail, Schoolyard Habitat and Lake Redington. We did see some birds and while many were very common, they had not been seen previously by our budding 5-7 year old birders. Our older group of 8-9 year olds enjoyed the expertise of Ross Feldner and Diane Buckley-Maidt. Behind the scenes Pauline Chvilicek and I put together the displays, entered the results

into the computer and wrote up the certificates, among many other things.

Our event usually starts with an instructional session from 8:30-9:30 where the participants learn how to use binoculars and identify birds. Then our seasoned birding volunteers and educators take them out on the trails to count birds. They return from the outdoors to spend time doing other fun activities related to birding. Then they have lunch and finish the day wrapping up and sharing their results. At the end of the day, the kids all receive certificates of participation and hopefully go away with more of a passion for bird watching.

None of this would be possible without the help of our amazingly passionate volunteers and staff. Here is to another great year of inspiring a passion for birding in our young ones and to hopefully successive years of Winter Bird Count for Kids programs. Please feel free to contact me if you have more questions about this wonderful program or would like more information on getting involved in the future. ■



Friends of Patuxent Wildlife Holiday Bazaar



Thank you so much to everyone that supported the 2013 Wildlife Holiday Bazaar by donating items and baked goods, and helping with set up on Friday. Special thanks go to the volunteers and staff who helped on the Saturday of the event. You were wonderful, as usual. The Bazaar Committee appreciated your efforts, and the vendors loved you. We raised about \$1,700 for Friends of Patuxent to be used in support of the Refuge and Research Center. And we had so much fun that we're going to do it again in 2014

The 2014 Holiday Bazaar has a new, earlier date - **November 15**. The deadline for donations is November 7. It's not too early to start looking for those forgotten treasures. When you drop them at the Visitor Center,

PLEASE remember to fill out a donation form and make a copy for yourself. This year we will *NOT* be accepting posters, flat art or large frames.



New this year - **Handmade by Friends** - an area dedicated to new items handmade by Friends (and friends of Friends.) We already have scarves, hats, and wooden ornaments. If you are a hand crafter please consider donating one or more of your creations.



The Holiday Bazaar committee is looking for help with marketing and publicity. We are looking for one or more people to take on the following projects:



- Create a press packet
- Research options for advertising in the Washington Post and Baltimore Sun
- Make sure the Bazaar is listed in local newspapers
- Submit listings to event web sites



**For more information contact
Brenda Stone at stonesoop@comcast.net or 301-490-0384.**

We're always looking for new and different vendors, preferably folks who have nature or wildlife related merchandise. Contact Jeanne Latham at jelatham@verizon.net or 410-212-2280 regarding vendors.



Visit us on Facebook and Twitter

<https://www.facebook.com/PatuxentResearchRefuge>

<https://twitter.com/USFWSNortheast/status/78546358377783296>



Friends Membership Committee Reports Significant Increase in Paid Members

Dan Messier, Patuxent Volunteer

Early in 2013 the Friends Board of Directors decided to increase financial support for the Friends and the refuge by adopting a policy to ask members to pay dues. This policy was adopted following research that was conducted by the Membership Committee. One major research effort was a survey of over 200 Friends groups across the country. The survey was conducted with the help of the National Wildlife Refuge Association. The survey got an impressive response from 70 Friends organizations. The results showed that over 80% of the Friends groups had some form of paid memberships.

As of September the Membership Committee had a 43% increase in paid members.

The number of paid members rose from 55 in January to 97 in September. The most significant increase was in the category of "Contributors," whose numbers increased from 4 to 14.

With funding for the NFWS and refuges across the country facing a very uncertain future, this increase in financial support is welcome news. Funding for environmental groups across the country is becoming more challenging. The Membership Committee recently concluded a membership drive and is developing special monthly programs for Friends members. The committee hopes to continue increasing its support for the refuge. If you have any ideas for future Members programs please contact a member of the committee with your suggestions.

If you haven't done so, please join over 200 others who are members of Friends and help support our refuge and the research center.

JOIN TODAY!

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-mail: _____

(E-mail address will not be sold or shared. It will be used for Friends and Refuge announcements only.)

Phone: (opt.) _____

- New Renewal Individual (\$15/yr) Family (\$20/yr) Contributor (\$50/yr)
- Sponsor (\$100/yr) Life (\$500) Donation _____

Make check to "Friends of Patuxent" and mail to address on reverse side of this page.

Check here if you would like save a tree by reading our quarterly newsletter online.



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WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN!

Friends of the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center and Patuxent Research Refuge, Inc is a designated Section 501(c)(3) public charity. It is a membership organization whose mission is to financially support the research of the PWRC and the environmental education, outreach and recreational missions at the PRR. All contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Our Maryland Charitable Organization Registration-2348.

Your membership/contribution helps support the mission and programs at Patuxent. You also receive the following benefits:

- Quarterly newsletter (mailed on request or go to www.friendsofpatuxent.org)
- 10% discount in our Wildlife Images bookstore and other area refuge bookstores
- Attendance at member functions
- Participation in on-site educational programs
- Sense of accomplishment in providing many opportunities for wildlife-related recreation, education and research

(Application on reverse side)