Bird Photography for the Budget-Conscious
by Bryan MacKay

Many loyal Audubon members have enjoyed the superb photographs of birds in Audubon and other wildlife-oriented magazines, on calendars, and more recently, on the web. However, in the past, it was almost impossible to take such photos yourself. Decent photos of birds that filled the frame required far more magnification than was possible with most cameras, even SLR’s with a decent zoom lens.

In the past few years, however, wildlife and bird photography has become possible using a camera that costs less than $500. With what are generally referred to as “compact ultrazooms,” it’s possible to take decent photos of birds. There are caveats, but most casual photographers will be happy with the results.

First, let’s get the caveats out of the way. The images taken by such cameras will look good on your computer screen and on a web page, and as prints up to 5 x 7 inches (perhaps 8 x 10). You need good light to take decent photos with such cameras: a sunny day, or bright haze or high thin clouds, but not shade or cloudy days. You need to support the camera with a tripod to get consistently decent images. And, you need to know how to use the camera.

For a recent trip to the Everglades with my wife, Debi, we bought a Canon SX30 (now superseded by the slightly upgraded SX40). It zooms 35X, which would be equivalent to an 840 mm lens on a SLR, a lens that would be several feet long, heavy enough to give you a hernia, and cost more than $10,000. Sure, the SX30 won’t give you a professional-quality image, but for many uses it is perfectly acceptable for a lot less money. And it’s fun to use! Other ultrazooms include the Nikon Coolpix 500 (36X) and Sony HX100V (30X), among others.

Debi photographed the black-crowned night heron with my Canon SX30. The bird was about 20 feet away, hunting for small crabs, and oblivious to us. The photo is tack-sharp on the computer, the exposure right on, and the details clearer than seen through binoculars (like the rugosities in the beak). Photo by Debi MacKay.

So if you are interested in delving into bird photography for not too much money, you might want to consider a compact ultrazoom camera. It’ll open up a whole new world and a new hobby for you.

What Can a Neonicotinoid Do?
by Christine Holzmueller

Several Newsletters ago I wrote a piece on the detriments of pesticides to our environment. I don’t mean to belabor the issue, but Spring is the perfect time of year to remind homeowners to use insecticides sparingly, if at all.

In the early 1990s neonicotinoid insecticides were introduced and have become a widely used crop and homeowner pesticide around the world. These pesticides affect the central nervous system of insects and also spread to the nectar and pollen of flowering crops. Neonicotinoids can remain in the soil for years after one application, allowing plants growing in the same soil subsequent years to also absorb these deadly toxins.

Now let’s go back to the neonicotinoid-laced nectar and pollen – what bees consume. Researchers have been studying the whole Colony Collapse Disorder of honeybee populations and neonicotinoids are one type of insecticide they have been studying. They have found that this type of pesticide reduces colony growth and queen production among bumblebees, and inhibits both the bumblebee’s and honeybee’s homing abilities.

Bees have an extraordinary ability to forage great distances and navigate back to their hives with food for the colony. When a bee cannot find their way home, there is less food, causing smaller colonies and fewer queens.
Field Trips and Programs:

Some of the dates provide an opportunity to choose a trip or double up and participate in two. Beginner birders are welcome and encouraged to attend our walks!

**Wednesday, June 13th, 8:00-10:00 AM**

**Cylburn Arboretum (Baltimore City)**  
Leader: Ruth Bergstrom  
Enjoy a midweek bird walk through Cylburn’s many gardens and along woodland trails. A slow pace will allow us to identify and study the behaviors of the birds we come across and their habitats. Contact Ruth to register: 410-767-1967 (phone), or ruthb22@yahoo.com (e-mail).

**Saturday, June 16 Two great events on the same day!**

**8:30-11:00 AM**  
**Patapsco Valley State Park, McKeldin Area (Howard County)**  
Leader: Bryan MacKay  
The intersecting point where the North and South Branches of the Patapsco meet is a special place for birds and wildflowers. In fact, it’s an Audubon Maryland-DC Important Bird Area. We’ll hike about 3 miles over rocky, hilly, muddy trail during the time of year when many birds are fledging and summer wildflowers are blooming. Contact Bryan to register: mackay@umbc.edu (e-mail), or 410-747-7132 (phone evenings 6-10 pm).

**8:30-11:00 AM**  
**Bird Banding for Kids, Patterson Park Audubon Center (Baltimore City—Canton)**  
Children ages 6 to 12 are invited to join Audubon and the Smithsonian for science in action in this Baltimore City Park. Experts will carefully catch, band, and release birds for a scientific study of urban species. Come join in and contribute to real scientific data about birds in cities. Activities include fun, educational games. It’s a team effort to study and save birds. This program is free but registration is required in advance. Contact Patterson Park Audubon Center: 410-558-2473 (phone), or ppaudubon@gmail.com (e-mail). Meeting point will be mailed to residents.

**Saturday, June 16, 5:30pm Tour, Toast & Taste at Pickering Creek Audubon Center (Easton, Maryland)**  
Pickering Creek will host their 5th annual Tour, Toast & Taste at Lombardy on the shores of the Miles River in Easton, Maryland. Pickering Creek is celebrating 30 years as an Audubon Center! Come help them celebrate. Tickets are $125 per person and can be purchased online or through the mail. For information call 410-822-4903 or visit http://www.pickeringcreek.org/tt/.  

**Saturday, June 23, 8:00—9:30 AM**  
**Urban Bird Watching Walk, Patterson Park Audubon Center (Baltimore City—Canton)**  
Leader: Mike Hudson  
Did you know that more than 175 bird species visit Patterson Park each year? Stroll among gardens and around wetlands and the Boat Lake with Audubon volunteer and bird expert, Mike Hudson. If you want to borrow binoculars, send us an email—we have plenty to share. There is no need to RSVP, just arrive ready to explore! Meet at the fountain in Patterson Park, closest to E. Lombard St. and S. Patterson Park Ave. For questions or a map of the park, contact Patterson Park Audubon Center: 410-558-2473 (phone), or ppaudubon@gmail.com (e-mail).

**Saturday, July 21, 10:00 AM**  
**Canoe Trip Pickering Creek Audubon Center (Easton, Maryland)**  
Paddle with us on Pickering Creek, on the eastern shore, as we look for birds and other wildlife. Equipment will be provided for a $10 donation (children 8 -16 free) or bring your own. Bring your lunch for a picnic on the grounds, optional bird walk afterward. Contact Ruth Bergstrom to register: 443-752-1967 (phone), or ruthb22@yahoo.com (e-mail).

**Saturday, July 28, 8:00—9:30 AM**  
**Urban Bird Watching Walk at Patterson Park Audubon Center, Baltimore City (Canton)**  
Leader: Dave Curson  
Come see what birding action abounds amid the varied habitats of this city park. Avian residents will be raising their second or maybe third clutch of young, migrants will be fattening up for the long flight home. Stroll among gardens and around wetlands and the Boat Lake with Audubon’s Conservation Director, Dave Curson. Need to borrow binoculars, drop us an email—we have plenty to share. There is no need to RSVP, just meet at the fountain in Patterson Park, closest to E. Lombard St. and S. Patterson Park Ave. For questions or a map of the park, contact Patterson Park Audubon Center: 410-558-2473 (phone), or ppaudubon@gmail.com (e-mail).

**Sunday, July 29, 8:00 AM**  
**Swan Harbor (Harford County)**  
Leader: Tim Houghton  
Just south of Havre de Grace on the Chesapeake Bay you’ll find the beautiful grounds of Swan Harbor Park full of colorful butterflies and shore and land birds for your enjoyment. It’s a favorite hang-out for Bald Eagles, Ospreys, and Northern Harriers. The park features a bay-front pier and gazebo, magnificent gardens, a fountain, a mansion, impoundments, boardwalk trails, and fields of wildflowers. The trees and air are filled with songbirds. Contact Tim for meeting location and directions: 410-510-7504 (phone), or thoughton@loyola.edu (e-mail).

**Saturday, August 25, 8:00—9:30 AM**  
**Urban Bird Watching Walk, Patterson Park Audubon Center, Baltimore City (Canton)**  
Did you know that more than 175 bird species visit urban Patterson Park each year? Stroll among gardens, wetlands, and the Boat Lake with leading bird expert, Dave Curson, Audubon’s conservation director. Need like to borrow binoculars, drop us an email—we have plenty to share. There is no need to RSVP, just arrive ready to explore! Meet at the fountain in Patterson Park, closest to E. Lombard St. and S. Patterson Park Ave. For questions or a map park, contact Patterson Park Audubon Center: 410-558-2473 (phone), ppaudubon@gmail.com (e-mail).

Visit us at [Meetup](https://www.meetup.com)
More Field Trips & Programs!

Saturday, September 8, 8:00-10 AM  Beginning Birding at Oregon Ridge Nature Center (Baltimore County) Leader: Ruth Bergstrom
Fledgling birders and families are especially welcome on this walk as we concentrate on the basics of birding and how to identify our feathered friends. We'll take an easy walk around the meadow and near the lake in this Baltimore County Park. Contact Ruth to register: 443-752-1967 (phone), ruthb22@yahoo.com (e-mail).

Saturday, September 15, 8:00 AM, Ladew Gardens (Harford County) Leader: Tim Houghton
Tim will lead us in search of southbound migrating songbirds in this nearby beautiful Harford County location. Ladew management has waived the entrance fee as long as we remain on the nature trail. Should you care for lunch, we could eat at the little cafe on the grounds, which opens at 11:00. Register with Tim: thoughton@loyola.edu (e-mail), or 410-510-7504 (phone). **There is an additional fee to view the gardens should you choose to do that on your own after the bird walk.

Sunday, September 23, 8:00 AM, Cromwell Valley State Park (Baltimore County) Leader: Tim Houghton
The 426-acre Baltimore County location has a stream and a park comprised of pasture, cultivated gardens, open fields, woods, hedgerows, orchards and wooded piedmont hills. The diversity of this habitat makes it an excellent area for wildlife. There are many species of raptors. In fact, there is an official hawk watch site on location. Songbird populations include the Baltimore Oriole, Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark, Indigo Bunting, Eastern Bluebird, and many others. Belted Kingfishers and Great Blue Herons are often seen around Minebank stream. Register with Tim: thoughton@loyola.edu (e-mail), or 410-510-7504 (phone).

Saturday, September 29, 8:00–9:30 AM  Urban Bird Watching Walk, Patterson Park Audubon Center, Baltimore City (Canton) Leader: Dave Curson
Great migrant birding action abounds amid the varied habitats of this city park at this time of year. Stroll among gardens and around wetlands, and the Boat Lake with Audubon's Conservation Director, Dave Curson. Need to borrow binoculars, drop us an email—we have plenty to share. Need like to borrow binoculars, drop us an email—we have plenty to share. There is no need to RSVP, just arrive ready to explore! Meet at the fountain in Patterson Park, closest to E. Lombard St. and S. Patterson Park Ave. For questions or a map of the park, contact Patterson Park Audubon Center at ppaudubon@gmail.com or 410-558-2473.

Past But Not Forgotten
Read about some of the trips you attended or missed!

Marshy Point Canoe Trip
Chesapeake Audubon’s May 26th canoe trip at Marshy Point honored the birthday of scientist and ecologist Rachel Carson (see page 4 to read more about Rachel Carson). Young and old paddled their way around the dense marshlands of Dundee Creek on a sunny day, while experienced naturalists Brandy and Bill taught us about the plants and wildlife we were seeing. Pickerelweed, Arrow Arum, and Marsh Mallow were plentiful, and we spotted some Blue Flag as we returned to the dock. Killifish swam below us, and Brandy threw a net into the water and caught some beautiful Pumpkinseed, which we were able to see up close. An immature Bald Eagle caught a fish and perched nearby to devour it. Other birds spotted were Least Tern, Osprey, Great Blue Heron, Barn Swallow, Tree Swallow, Red-tailed Hawk, and Red-winged Blackbird. This was our third annual Marshy Point canoe trip. Please join us next time, kids are welcome and it's a great way to begin the Memorial Day weekend!

30th Annual Spaghetti Dinner
The Dinner was well attended – over 100 guests! Chefs Robin, Bryan, and John did not disappoint us as we feasted on their famous spaghetti and meatballs. Pat and Clay Sutton journeyed from their home in New Jersey to speak about planting a bird-, butterfly-, and dragonfly-friendly garden. Did you know that planting a native oak tree in your yard can support over 500 lepidoptera species? If you plant an "alien" Crepe Myrtle, only three species can be supported. To attract butterflies, do NOT plant a butterfly bush, plant the butterfly’s host plant, which will encourage them to stay and lay their eggs. Read more at http://www.patandclaysutton.com. Proceeds from the dinner, raffle, and silent auction benefited the environmental programs at Patterson Park Audubon Center. Check our Web site for the date of our next Chili Dinner.

More on page 4!
Past But Not Forgotten continued

Oriole Day at Cromwell Valley Park

Chesapeake Audubon hosted another Oriole Day on May 19th and seems to have been a great success. The children learned how to make binoculars (out of toilet paper rolls) and a bird’s nest, and had fun playing the bird migration game. There was a puppet show, a garden club presentation, a photography display, oriole bird nest sightings, bird watching hikes, a five senses hike, and other nature hikes. Cromwell Valley Park is a beautiful 426-acre stream valley park with a diverse habitat, which attracts a variety of wildlife. Visit their website for more information: http://www.cromwellvalleypark.org/mapAndDirections.html

Honoring Rachel Carson

The canoe trip not only honored Rachel Carson’s birthday weekend, but it is also the 50th anniversary of Silent Spring’s publication. Some of us know about the book that challenged the chemical industry and government about the misuse of chemicals and their long-term effects on the natural world. Ms. Carson has been described as launching the environmental movement with this book. She also wrote Under the Sea-wind (1941), and a prize-winning book The Sea Around Us (1952), and then The Edge of the Sea (1955)?

Carson grew up simply in the rural river town of Springdale, Pennsylvania. Her mother bequeathed to her a lifelong love of nature and the living world that Rachel expressed first as a writer and later as a student of marine biology. Carson graduated from Pennsylvania College for Women (now Chatham College) in 1929, studied at the Woods Hole Marine Biological Laboratory, and received her MA in zoology from Johns Hopkins University in 1932.

She worked for the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries writing radio scripts during the Depression and freelanced writing feature articles on natural history for the Baltimore Sun. She began a 15-year career in the federal service as a scientist and editor in 1936 and rose to become Editor-in-Chief of all publications for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Carson was attacked by the chemical industry and some in government as an alarmist, but courageously spoke out to remind us that we are a vulnerable part of the natural world, subject to the same damage as the rest of the ecosystem. Testifying before Congress in 1963, Carson called for new policies to protect human health and the environment. Carson died in 1964 after a long battle against breast cancer.


Patterson Park Audubon Center

To participate in programs, please RSVP at 410-558-2473 or PPAudubon@gmail.com

Family Programming

Garden Team Volunteer Opportunities. Come help out in native gardens in the park. Meet at the Audubon pollinator garden that is just west of the boat Lake. No need to register, just show up at 9:00 AM, we’ll work until 10:30AM.
Saturdays: June 2, July 7, August 4, September 1

Just for Kids

Tiny Tots Programs are an hour of fun and education for ages 2 to 5 year olds, accompanied by an adult. Please register at least 2 days before the program. Meet at the northeast side of the Boat Lake. A $5 donation is suggested.

June 22, 2012 10:00-11:00 AM A Bug’s Life
Join the bug hunt in Patterson Park to learn how many legs an insect has, whether a spider is an insect, how bugs behave, and where these creepy crawlers live.

Summer Adventure Camps
We have partnered with the Baltimore City Recreation and Parks to bring a summer camp program to city residents. Children spend the morning learning to fish in the Boat Lake, and learning to scope out and identify birds. This is a catch and release Program.

Did you know that Patterson Park?
♦ hosts 160 bird species throughout the year, from the Great Blue Heron to the Baltimore Oriole.
♦ has 55 reptile and amphibian species.
♦ Has 55 tree species.

Visit http://pattersonpark.audubon.org/events/2298 to find out more about these programs, the Center and the park.
Life on a Fallen Log

A fallen tree or limb is a great place to find a rich variety of life. Although you may be tempted to remove a fallen tree, many living things depend on it. Lichen and mosses are breaking down the log into soil, and many animals use it for shelter. Lichen grows in many shapes and colors, some look like tiny plants, some like algae (go to http://www.lichen.com/sampler.html to see some pictures of lichen).

Take a field trip in the woods with your parents and search for a fallen log or rotting tree stump. Look for signs of animals and insects in, on, or around the logs. What plants do you see? Use a camera or sketchbook to identify them later. Be careful not to disturb the surroundings as you observe.

What did you discover? Search and find the names of things that live in or around fallen logs.

Recommended readings:

Search and Find these living things in the puzzle.

ANTS
BEETLE
CHIPMUNK
CRICKET
FERN
LICHEN
MILLIPEDE
MOSS
MUSHROOM
SALAMANDER
SLUG
SNAKE
SOWBUG
SPIDER

Noteworthy Information

Volunteer! Do you enjoy helping out at special events, like to write letters, or have an idea for a field trip or workshop? Chesapeake Audubon is always looking for volunteers or new committee members. Please e-mail information@chesapeakeaudubon.org if you’d like to become more involved with our chapter.
What are neonicotinoids continued...

In a United Kingdom study, queen bee production was reduced by 85%, a reduction that directly translates to 85% fewer nests in the following year. Bees exposed to neonicotinoids are 2 to 3 times more likely to die before returning to their nests.

Although studies have not directly linked Colony Collapse Disorder to neonicotinoids, they have found that these pesticides weaken the honeybee and make them susceptible to parasites and bacteria or viruses that do cause colonies to collapse.

What is astonishing is the manufacturer-recommended application rate for homeowner-approved insecticides, rates that are up to 120 times higher than approved rates for agricultural crops. What is worse, most manufacturers don’t even caution homebuyers about the toxic risk to bees, honeybees and bumblebees that pollinate our flowers, and our fruit and vegetable plants.

I do understand the need to control crop-eating insects. There are organic methods that every farmer could use to control insects, such as attracting beneficial insects or creating an agroecosystem that does not attract damaging insects. My issue is less about farmers at the moment and more about homeowners. I do not understand the homeowner that sprays, and sprays, and sprays to keep insects and weeds, or sprays to keep a bug or weed from invading their immaculately groomed lawn.

I do understand that neonicotinoid insecticides are killing our pollinators and have likely contributed to the disappearance of several bumblebee species in North America. The millions of homeowners using insecticides far outnumber the relatively few farmers that use them to grow the food we eat. I am not a scientist, but if our pollinators die off so will our fruits and vegetables.

I suggest we shelf the pesticide use and turn to nontoxic measures: pull your weeds, spray a vinegar mixture (1 part vinegar, 3 parts water, 1 tsp liquid detergent) on vegetable and fruit plants to ward off moths and grubs, refrain from putting ant-attracting mulch up against the foundation of your house. To learn about other organic pest control options, visit http://www.no-dig-vegetablegarden.com/organic-garden-pest-control.html.

Once we have changed our pest and weed management practices at home, we should push for more stringent regulations on pesticide manufacturing and use, particularly neonicotinoids. Manufacturers are only required to ensure that recommended doses for agriculture do not instantly kill bees. There are no requirements or even mention of what lesser doses of neonicotinoid insecticides can do to indirectly kill bees. Visit Science News at the link below for more about the bee and pesticide studies mentioned in this article http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/03/120329141912.htm#.T4RJvAV1shM.email.

Happenings at the Annual Birdathon

This year our Birdathon team began the search for birds at Bombay Hook in Delaware. We spotted beautiful species, including the Black-necked Stilt, Avocet, Semipalmated Plover, Black-bellied Plover, and Black-crowned Night Heron. A Seaside Sparrow was a nice bonus and many Great Egrets were found. We then headed over to Port Mahon and came across hundreds of Ruddy Turnstones and some Red Knots. We hoped to sight a Sabine’s Gull at Dupont Nature Center but it was a no show. We did see an American Oystercatcher. Out next stop was Fair Hill Nature Center (Cecil County, MD) and saw a Yellow-throated Warbler, Orioles, and many Redstarts. Harford Glen Environmental Education Center (Harford County) was our last stop; we spotted a Least Tern, Wood Duck, and Rough-winged Swallows. Our final tally was 102 species. A bit less than last year, but an enjoyable day and a great way to earn money for Chesapeake Audubon, Pickering Creek Audubon Center, and Patterson Park Audubon Center. See the list on our blog: http://chesapeakeaudubon.blogspot.com/2012/05/birdathon-2012.html

Pledges and contributions will be matched by a challenge through National Audubon. If you pledged a per species amount, you will receive a follow-up email. Specific dollar amount donations can be mailed to Chesapeake Audubon, P.O. Box 3173, Baltimore, MD 21228.

Ruth Bergstrom, President
Hugh Simmons, South Atlantic Flyway Regional Director, National Audubon Society
Karen Meadow, Finance Chair
Welcome New Members!  Welcome to the Chesapeake Audubon Society (CAS)!  We are your local Chapter of the National Audubon Society. We are dedicated to carrying out the Audubon mission 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. As a member of Chesapeake Audubon, you are invited to participate in our numerous field trips and member events. EVERYONE, regardless of knowledge, skill level, or age is welcome and encouraged to come have some fun on one of these field trips. We hope you’ll join us at some of our events and meet like-minded people who all share an interest in, respect for, and awe of nature. Welcome!

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Welcome New Members!
Continued....

Gary Colbourne
Nancy H. Dutton
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