



HOLD A WILD BIRD

CONTINUING EDUCATION HIKE & BIRD BANDING

FAIRFAX MASTER NATURALISTS

Occoquan Bay NWR, Woodbridge, VA
Hike Leaders: Barbara Saffir (Barb22030@yahoo.com) & Janet Quinn (bandito8@verizon.net)



WHAT: Rare bird-banding opportunity and continuing education hike at the Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge. First, we'll attend a migratory bird banding where we can hold a wild bird and release it after the experts band it. Even if there aren't enough birds to go around, we'll still learn why sunshine-yellow warblers, indigo buntings, woodpeckers, and other perching migratory and resident birds are banded and how they capture them and band their teeny legs. After the banding, we'll hike up to 4 miles at a moderate pace with many stops on some of the 642-acre refuge's flat, dirt trails along Occoquan and Belmont bays, pausing for critters, plants, and birds, including eagles, ospreys, turtles, and snakes. We'll learn about our discoveries by posting to iNaturalist, a handy citizen-science database tool. *(Note: Due to Covid requirements, we'll split into two five-person groups for the bird banding but stay together as one group for the remainder of the hike.)*

WHEN/WHERE: Sunday, 4/24/22, 7:30 am-noon. (We'll likely end earlier, depending on discoveries during our hike.) Meet at the covered pavilion in the main parking lot INSIDE Occoquan Bay NWR, 14050 Dawson Beach Rd., Woodbridge, VA. (Marked with red star on our map.) Copy these GPS coordinates into Google Maps: 38.644977, -77.237674 or just click here: <https://goo.gl/maps/vc1To78khSsRSTkXA>

BRING: Mask, water, snack, and fully charged cell phone. Wear shoes suitable for muddy or rocky trails. Optional: bug spray for many TICKS at the refuge, sunblock, hand wipes, hat, binoculars, and camera. (Tip: learn to use "slo-mo" and burst modes on your iPhone for the banding.)

INATURALIST: Before 4/23, (1) please download the free iNaturalist app to your phone; (2) experiment with it; and (3) add three projects to your app: FMNceHIKES, Jim Waggener's Wildlife Surveys, and Biodiversity of Virginia. <https://www.inaturalist.org>

OBNWR HOTSPOT ON EBIRD: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L718641>

OBNWR BROCHURE & MAP: https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/FINAL_OccoquanGenBrochure2018_0.pdf

MISCELLANEOUS: Restrooms are available at the start and at the banding, but NOT on the far side of the refuge. MASKS MAY BE REQUIRED DURING THE BANDING. https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/nppt/topics/respirators/disp_part/n95list1.html

RECORD C.E. HOURS: After the hike, add your continuing education hours on Better Impact. Members earn one hour of CE for each hour of participation. <https://app.betterimpact.com/>



BIRD BANDING: To "identify and keep track of individual birds, scientists put aluminum or colored bands on birds' legs. Similar to the license plate on a car, each aluminum band is engraved with a unique set of numbers. Bird banding is one of the oldest and most important techniques used for studying and identifying individual birds. In the early 1800s, John James Audubon tied threads to birds' legs to identify individuals that were visiting his farm. In 1902, the first scientific study to use bird banding took place in the United States: Smithsonian scientists attached bands to the legs of black-crowned night herons at the Smithsonian's National Zoo in Washington, D.C." <https://nationalzoo.si.edu/migratory-birds/what-bird-banding>

BANDING PROCESS: Trained volunteer supervised by a federally licensed bander retrieves bird carefully from a mist net and places it in a little bag. Back at the banding station, bander holds the bird in a "bander's grip" (to prevent injuries) and identifies the bird species (to match proper band size), sex, age (a complicated assessment), feather condition, and growth. Bander blows on belly to see if bird has a bare brood patch from nesting, checks fat stores, weighs the bird, and more. All data is recorded. Bander gives bird to a visitor, who holds it in a "photographer's grip" to release it.

REPORT BANDED BIRDS: If you find a banded bird in the future, please report it to USGS's Bird Banding Laboratory, "an integrated scientific program established in 1920 to support the collection, curation, archiving, and dissemination of information from banded and marked birds in North America." <https://www.reportband.gov>

MASSIVE BIRD LOSSES: Since 1970, bird populations in the U.S. and Canada have sunk by 29 %, or almost 3 BILLION birds. "Citizen-science participants contributed critical scientific data to show the international scale of losses of birds." <https://nationalzoo.si.edu/news/new-study-finds-us-and-canada-have-lost-more-one-four-birds-past-50-years>

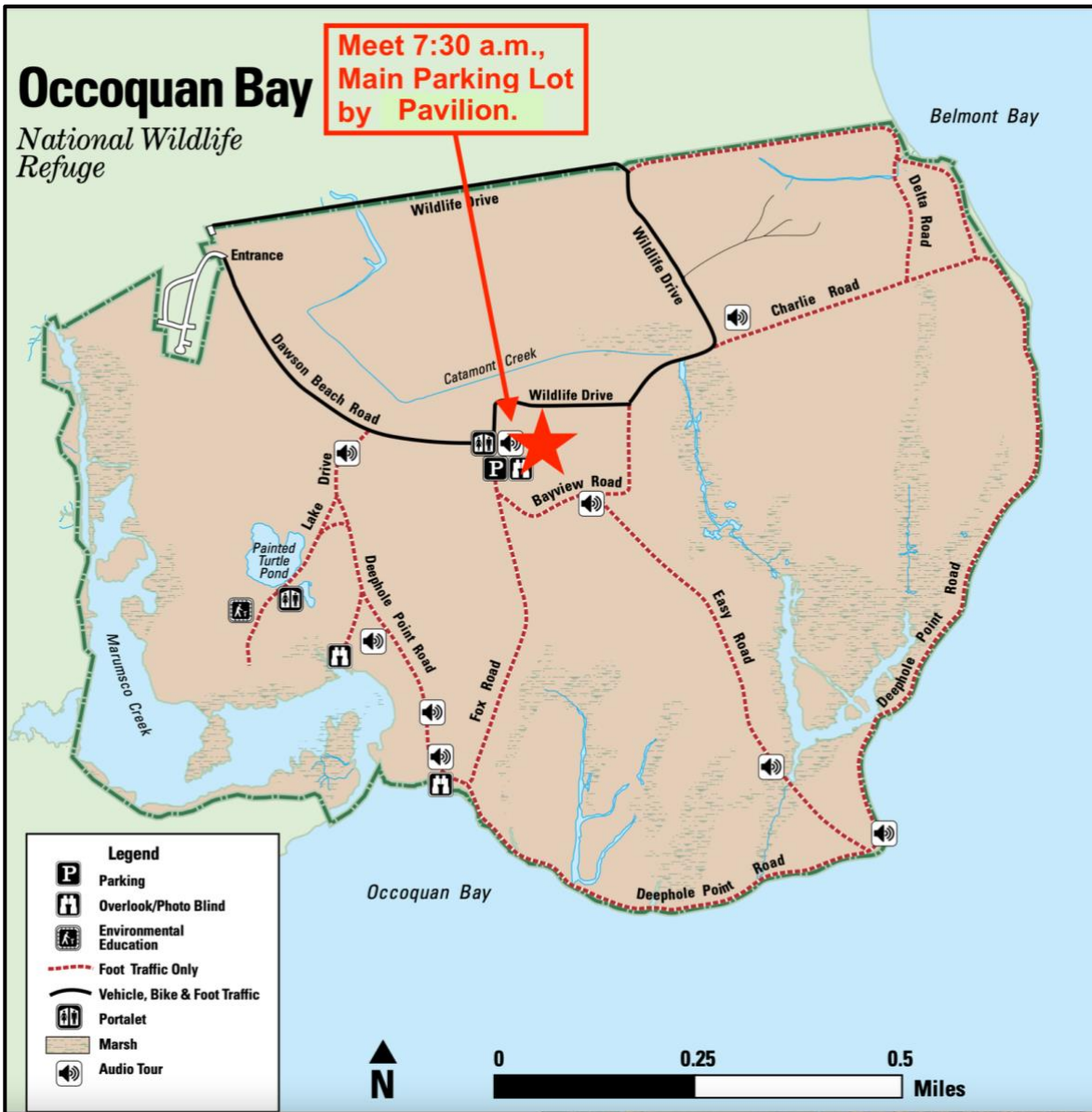
BIRD-FRIENDLY HOMES & YARDS: <https://www.audubon.org/news/how-make-your-yard-bird-friendly-0>
https://www.birdconservancy.org/get-involved/live-bird-friendly/7_simple_ways/

JEWELS WE COULD DISCOVER ON 4/24/22 INCLUDE:

Ospreys flying sticks to build nests, Northern Watersnakes looking for love, baby Great Horned Owls, and Prothonotary Warblers



OBNWR'S OFFICIAL MAP



OUR HIKE ROUTE

