



# Audubon News

A publication of the Mecklenburg County Audubon Society  
volume 7, number 8 April 2002

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## Monthly Meeting

**"The Wandering Birder: Costa Rica"**  
Thursday, April 4, 7:30 p.m.

Once again it's time to lean back, relax and take a virtual trip. **George Goolsby** will be sharing slides from his trip to Costa Rica. If you haven't

been there yet, it will be a great way to find out what to expect. If you have been there, it will be a great time to reminisce. Don't miss this relaxing program, Thursday, April 4th at 7:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall of the Sharon Seventh Day Adventist Church located at 920 Sharon Amity Road.



## International Migratory Bird Day

May 11th

We will again be celebrating International Migratory Bird Day in the Mecklenburg County Nature Preserves. Details will appear in the May newsletters but mark

Keep up-to-date on issues!  
[HTTP://MECKBIRDS.ORG](http://MECKBIRDS.ORG)

## Frantic but Fun

I want to take this opportunity to thank six brave souls who helped out with the Feathered Frenzy event for the Science Olympiad: **Susan Ellerman, Lucy Qui', Dave Frech, Pam Popovich, Diane and Rob Bierregaard**. They braved jungle like heat and middle school students to help conduct a very successful Science Olympiad event. The folks who ran the Olympiad were thrilled with our event and want us to come back next year. Hopefully, we will be able to provide more help to the teachers and students before the event so the students can learn even more about birds and their natural histories. These folks deserve a pat on the back from everyone!!!!!!!!!!

## MAS Calendar of Events!

April

- 4 Meeting - Costa Rica
- 13 Field Trip - McMullen Creek Greenway
- 27 Field Trip - Evergreen Forest

May

- 2 Meeting
- 3-5 Carolina Bird Club Spring Meeting
- 11 International Migratory Bird Day
- 18 Field Trip - Landsford Canal State Park



Don't forget to check out the Carolina Raptor Center

web site

<http://www.birdsofprey.org> to see how Ms. Charlotte, the osprey from Mountain Island Lake, is doing on her spring journey.

## Great Backyard Bird Count

Congratulations! Charlotte was third in the country for participation, with 244! And we saw the greatest number of species in North Carolina. Check out Great Backyard Bird Count <http://www.birdsource.com/gbbc/results.htm> for details.

HELP US SAVE MONEY \* RECEIVE the monthly Mecklenburg Audubon Newsletter electronically. If you are interested send an email message to Judy Walker at [birdwalker@mac.com](mailto:birdwalker@mac.com) with your name and email address.

## Field Trips

### "McMullen Creek Greenway"

Saturday, April 13, 7:15 a.m.

This greenway is fast becoming one of the county's birding hot spots. The trail now leads into an interesting wet area that has already produced some interesting

sightings. And this should be the weekend that our neotropical friends arrive from their southern haunts, weather permitting of course. We will meet at the greenway parking lot on Rt. 51 at 7:15 a.m. and should finish up by noon. If you plan on joining the group please contact **Judy Walker** at 704-531-8181 or [birdwalker@mac.com](mailto:birdwalker@mac.com). Directions to the Greenway can be found at

### "Evergreen Forest"

Saturday, April 27, 7:15 a.m.

Evergreen Forest, another local hot spot located on the east side of Charlotte, should be hopping with migrants! This will be

the first spring trip to this area in a very long time. **Larry and Louise Barden** have documented quite a diversity of warblers over the last few years so lets see what we can turn up this spring! We will meet in the Windsor Elementary School parking lot at 7:15 a.m. If you plan to go contact Larry Barden at 704-535-6385 or [lsbarden@email.uncc.edu](mailto:lsbarden@email.uncc.edu).

### "Landsford Canal State Park"

Near Lancaster, SC

Saturday, May 18 7:00 a.m.

This should be the height of the spider lily bloom at Landsford Canal State Park and the chances of seeing an active Bald Eagle's nest are pretty good as well. We will

also be looking for the late migrants and local breeding birds. We will meet at the Bojangles on Carowinds Boulevard at 7:00 a.m. to carpool the 40 min drive to the park. There will be an entrance fee and bring a lunch for a meal along the banks of the canal. If you are interested in going contact **Judy Walker** at 704-537-8181 or [birdwalker@mac.com](mailto:birdwalker@mac.com).

### Carolina Bird Club Spring Meeting

Black Mountain, North Carolina  
Friday-Sunday, May 3-5, 2002

There is nothing like being in the mountains for spring migration. The Carolina Bird Club folks have organized what looks like a great weekend just up the road a piece from us. If you are interested in going either contact Judy Walker at 704-537-8181 or check out the Carolina Bird Club web site for

**FYI - CLIMATE CHANGE DISPLACES BIRD:** A new study by the American Bird Conservancy and National Wildlife Federation finds that "global warming could shift the ranges of many songbirds" depriving ecosystems they currently occupy of valuable "economic benefits" such as "insect and rodent control, seed dispersal and pollination" says ENS 3/11. "As many as 11% of the world's bird species could disappear from parts of their current range and the U.S. "ranks among the top 10 countries in terms of total number of vulnerable bird species."

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Take them one at a time. This will help you avoid spending a lot of time 'chasing' a song thinking it is a new bird. Songs and calls are also the first indication there are birds in the area.

All these questions may seem a little daunting but they really aren't. If you start with what you know and eliminate those species it can't possibly be, you have a better chance of correctly identifying a bird. But don't stop there. BIRD WATCHING does include being able to identify a BIRD, but the active word in the phrase is WATCHING. That's when the fun really begins!

## Presidents Perch



Judy Walker

**N**ow that spring has sprung and we are more aware of the birds around us, how do we go about correctly identifying them? Learning to identify anything is like solving a mystery. Every good detective works systematically to solve the case. They do background checks, ask a lot of questions, analyze data and then make a decision. Science in general and birding; specifically is just detective work on the fly.

Like all detectives you will need some tools to help you solve the puzzle. To begin your work you should have a pair of binoculars, a field guide and a tape recorder to listen to bird songs. Study your field guide and listen to tapes before you go outside. What you learn about size, shape, markings, habits and habitats before you look at birds will allow you to spend more time looking at the bird and less time rummaging through the book. Use the guide in the field as a reference only after you have observed the bird very closely and for as long as possible.

Because birds are living creatures adapted to specific life styles they exhibit a wide range of characteristics that aid in identification. Since people are very visual creatures most try to identify birds by visual characteristics such as color alone which can lead to incorrect identification. However, if you are willing to spend a little time studying, learning to identify and enjoy the birds around you is simply a matter of asking the right questions. If you can answer these basic questions about a bird, you should be able to identify it correctly.

The questions are basic and may sound a little familiar.

**1. What does the bird look like?** Most people will focus in on the color of a bird but this can be misleading. Lighting and the time of year can greatly change the color of a bird. An Indigo Bunting appears completely black if it is sitting in the shade. But when it darts out into the sunlight for a tasty morsel it will instantly and magically turn a bright indigo blue like a neon sign. Hummingbirds are the same way. You can't see the color on the male if the light isn't right. Then there is the Goldfinch which is bright yellow in the spring and

summer but the rest of the year is a drab green. So you can't rely solely on color. Look at the bird as a whole and ask:

How big is it? Relate the size to something you already know. It's a good idea to memorize three or four birds of different sizes such as a sparrow, robin, crow and/or turkey. Then you can note how the size of the bird compares to them.

What shape is it? Is it tall and skinny, short and plump, etc.? Often a bird's silhouette is all you can see. Fortunately, that's the only clue necessary to identify some birds like a dove - tiny head on a very large, plump body. Learning the overall shape of birds is important. Knowing the shape should help you narrow down your possibilities. Then look more closely at things like the beak, tail, wings, color, etc.

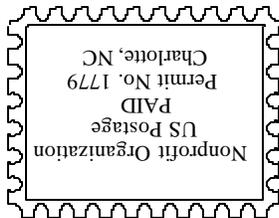
**2. Where is the bird located?** As you spend more time observing birds you will discover many of them seem to look alike. A sparrow has a certain look about it small and brown but several finches, wrens and warblers are also small and brown. Now what? Stop and take a look around you. What type of habitat are you standing in? Are you mowing the lawn, hiking a mountain trail, wading at the beach? Even during migration birds prefer certain habitats and seldom deviate from them. You are not going to find a Great Blue Heron in the desert or a Roadrunner in a forest. Knowing what birds will be in what habitat will also help you eliminate species. So do your homework. Learn when and if a bird is suppose to be in the habitat and area of the country you are in.

**3. What is the bird doing?** Is it soaring, hovering, or gliding? Is it wading in the water or perched high in a tree? Even something as subtle as the bobbing of the tail could be a determining factor between one bird and another.

**4. What does the bird sound like?** You can birds apart by their voices just like you can your friends. In fact some birds can only be identified by their voice. Birds such as the Whip-poor-will are seldom if ever seen but very often heard. Other birds like some of the flycatchers look identical and can only be identified by their voice. Learn the songs and calls of the common birds around you first.

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The Mecklenburg Audubon Society is a chapter of the National Audubon Society. *Audubon News* is published nine times a year, September - May by the Mecklenburg Audubon Society. Meetings are held the first Thursday of each month, September - May at 7:30 p.m. The meeting site is the Sharon Seventh Day Adventist Church, 920 N. Sharon Amity Road.



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*Audubon News*

**IMPORTANT:** Please use this form or add our chapter code (R50 7XCH) to a renewal form you may receive in the mail. This will ensure that our chapter receives membership dues reimbursement from National Audubon!

**National Audubon Society**



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Please make all checks payable to and mail to:

**New North Carolina Birding Guide**

I'm delighted to announce a new book, "Birding in North Carolina State Parks," produced by Audubon North Carolina, is now available. Using the same basic format as Wake Audubon's "A Birdwatcher's Guide to the Triangle," the 164-page book describes 34 state parks. The 35 contributors and authors are park superintendents, park rangers, and birders, including several Audubon members. There are also map and bird illustrations. Proceeds from the sale of "Birding in North Carolina State Parks" will benefit joint projects between Audubon North Carolina and the NC Division of Parks and Recreation. "Birding in North Carolina State Parks" costs \$15 and will be available at Mecklenburg Audubon meetings and eventually several local bird stores and nature centers. If you can't make to the meeting and are interested in buying a copy contact Danny Swicegood at 704-892-9482 or [pamanddanny@earthlink.net](mailto:pamanddanny@earthlink.net).

