

Audubon News

December 2002

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From the President's Perch

It's that time of year that folks want to spread their joy of birds and birding. Being the good librarian that I am here are a few titles that might pique ones interest in birds:

Beyond Field Guides:

**The Birder's Handbook: A Field Guide to the Natural History of North American Birds*, by Paul R. Erlich. Simon and Schuster, 1988.

**The Complete Birder*, by Jack Connor. Houghton Mifflin, 1988.

For the Hard Core Birder:

A Guide to Bird Behavior (3 vols.), by Donald W. Stokes, Little, Brown, 1979.
Life Histories of North American Birds, by A. C. Bent, 20+ volumes first published in the 1920's - 1950 or so, the whole set republished by Dover Publications, NY in early '60's.

For the Backyard Watcher:

**The Bird Feeder Book*, by Donald and Lillian Stokes, (1987) Little, Brown.

**The Bird Garden*, by Stephen W. Kress. Dorling Kindersley, 1995.

**Creating Your Backyard Bird Garden*, by David B. Donnelly. Bird Watcher's Digest Press, 1998.

For the Young:

**Crinkleroot's 25 Birds Every Child Should Know*, by Jim Arnosky, (1993) Bradbury Press.

**On the Wing: Bird Poems and Paintings*, by Douglas Florian. Harcourt, Brace, 1996.

**Feathers*, by D.H. Patent. Cobblehill Books/Dutton, 1992.

And just for fun!!

**A field Guide to Little-known & Seldom-seen Birds of North America*, by Ben, Cathryn, and John Sill. Peachtree Publishers. 1988.

**Another Field Guide to Little-known & Seldom-seen Birds of North America*, by Ben, Cathryn, and John Sill. Peachtree, 1990.

Monthly Meeting

Wildlife in Mecklenburg County

Recoveries, Extirpations, and Reintroductions

In a county where 41 acres of open space are developed each day, it may seem like wildlife doesn't stand a chance. Although that has been true for some species, Mecklenburg County is far from void of natural habitats and the plants and animals those areas support. In fact, the county harbors a diversity of wildlife from beavers and bobcats to salamanders and skinks.

Join Charles Yelton, Environmental Education Specialist with Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department's Division of Natural Resources, for an informative talk on the status of Mecklenburg County's

wildlife species. From species we've lost and are currently losing, to successful reintroductions and range expansions, we'll cover the current breath of knowledge on our wild neighbors. We'll even look at what the Division of Natural Resources is doing to keep "common species common" and how you can join the effort.

Don't miss this exciting program, sure to cover a species for everyone, on Thursday, December 5th at 7:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall of Sharon Seventh Day Adventist Church on 920 N. Sharon Amity Road.



ACTIVITIES CALENDAR

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- Thu. 12/5 - Urban Wildlife [Monthly Meeting]
 - Sat. 12/7 - Wintering Waterfowl [1/2 Day Field Trip]
 - Sun. 12/15 - Lake Norman Christmas Count [Full Day]
 - Sat. 12/21 - Gaston County Christmas Count [Full Day]
 - Sat. 12/28 - Charlotte Christmas Count [Full Day]
 - Sat. 1/4 - Pee Dee NWR Christmas Count [Full Day]
 - Thu. 1/2 - Birding the World - Belize [Monthly Meeting]
 - Sat. 1/11 - Winter at the Coast, Huntington Beach, NC
 - Sat. 1/25 - Local Field Trip [tentative]
 - Thu. 2/6 - Beidler Forest Sanctuary [Monthly Meeting]
 - Sat. 2/8 - Local Field Trip [tentative]
 - Sat. 2/22 - Swamp Stomp, Four Holes Swamp, SC

For additional activities and information go to <http://meckbirds.org>



FIELD TRIPS

Saturday, December 7: Wintering Waterfowl

Lake Howell has become the place to see waterfowl in the Charlotte area. Although there are several other spots we will check as well. Hopefully, the weather up north will be co-operative this year and push the ducks our way. This trip will be a warm up for the numerous Christmas counts that will follow. We will meet at 8 AM at the McDonalds at University Place and will return about 12:30 PM. If you would like to join the group contact Judy Walker at 704-537-8181 or birdwalker@mac.com.

Sunday, December 15: Lake Norman Christmas Count

Now in its seventh year, this is the best count circle in the Piedmont. Because of the wide variety of habitat & shy; open fields, large lake, small ponds and wetlands, mixed hardwood forest, old farms the potential for unusual birds is great. In some ways this count is like a tour through Peterson's guide with a smattering of species from loons all the way through to the sparrows with representatives of almost everything in between. Groups will start before dawn to catch the owls and woodcocks. Others will meet at 7:00 AM. There are fast food places in the count circle (in Cornelius) but you may want to bring food to munch on for energy and warmth. Although you might spend a fair amount of time in the car, warm clothes and sturdy shoes are a must. A tally up dinner



will be held at 5:30 PM. Contact Taylor Piephoff at 704-532-6336 for specific assignments.

Saturday, December 21: Gaston County Christmas Count

For many animals the Catabaw River can act as a barrier. Only the heartiest mammal will attempt to swim across the river. Birds, however, are not as easily intimidated. And birders shouldn't be phased by the river either. That's why we are teaming up with the birders from the Gastonia area to conduct the Gaston County Christmas Count. This will be a great opportunity to get to know our neighbors and explore new birding hotspots. All the details haven't been worked out yet but plan to spend at least a morning if not the entire day getting to know Gaston County. If you are interested in starting a new tradition contact Judy Walker at 704-537-8181 or birdwalker@mac.com.

Saturday, December 28: Charlotte Christmas Count

The granddaddy of the counts, this circle still encompasses a surprising variety of habitat considering suburban sprawl which has taken over much of the area. There are still patches of woods, ponds, lakes, streams and open fields which turn up a interesting variety of resident and wintering species. In the last 5 years we have averaged around 85 species. A remarkable number considering the wholesale loss of habitat over the past 20 years which just proves the tenacity of the birds. Although this is an all day event if you can only participate in the morning or afternoon you are more than welcome. Since fast food establishments (and warmth) will be just around the corner packing a lunch is optional although a thermos of coffee never hurt. There will be a tally up dinner at Wing Haven 5:30 PM [directions]. Just bring your appetites and good birding stories. Too assure even and complete coverage of the area those who wish to participate should contact Wayne Covington at 704-362-1774.

Saturday, January 4: Pee Dee NWR Christmas Count

The Pee Dee Christmas Count is a great way to start the year birding. Every year it produces surprises. Last year one group had the pleasure of hearing several Fox Sparrows singing - a rare treat for this area. Another sight to behold is seeing the ducks take off in the morning or watching them come back in at dusk. Because of the wide variety of habitat and its central location we usually have a pretty good list of birds including Bald Eagles, Tundra Swans, and lots and lots of sparrows and ducks. If the weather remains warm there could be some unusual songbirds wintering over. If you want to carpool, meet at the McDonalds on Independence and Idlewild at 6 AM. Otherwise meet at the Pee Dee Maintenance Building [at the main entrance off Rt. 52] at 7 AM. If you want to be part of this exciting count contact Judy Walker at 704-537-8181.



DOCENTS NEEDED!

Wing Haven Garden and Bird Sanctuary

With a renewed focus on our feathered friends, Wing Haven is looking for knowledgeable birders to volunteer as Docents. As a docent you will get to share the story of Wing Haven - our history, the habitat and of course the BIRDS! Docents are needed to lead group tours on weekday mornings: Tuesday, Thursdays and Fridays at either 9:15 or 10:30 AM. Group size ranges between 8-15 adults or children. And, we've recently developed a program designed specifically for kindergartners' - and - it's all about birds!

If you are interested in becoming a docent, please contact Dia Steiger or Susan Wall at 704 331-0664.

Welcome to eBird

Many birders keep excellent records. They faithfully count the birds they identify and record their sightings along with locations and dates. What's more, each of these sightings is important, because each one is a vital piece of information in the quest to better understand birds. Where do different species breed or winter? When do they migrate? Are their numbers increasing or decreasing? Are their geographic ranges shifting? These important questions can be answered, but only if the millions of sightings made by bird watchers each year can be collected into one place where they can be stored, accessed, and used by other birders, scientists, and conservationists who are helping to solve the puzzle of North American bird populations.

That's why the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society are pleased to introduce eBird. This online checklist project allows you to enter all your bird sightings into a powerful database that you can use to keep track of all your North American birding information, and that other birders and scientists can use to study and protect bird populations. Whether you are a backyard birder, student, teacher, or scientist, you are welcome to explore the eBird database, discover what birds are being seen at different locations, and add your own observations to the growing database.

You'll have fun keeping track of your bird sightings with eBird. You can easily determine your life list, your yard list, your year list, or any other list in which you may be interested. Along with keeping count of what, where, and when you saw the species, you can look to see how populations of "your" birds may be changing. eBird data, collected and archived over decades and even centuries, will thus play an enormous role in detecting and explaining

changes in bird populations and aiding in bird conservation efforts. Discover when the flycatchers return to your favorite woodlot, when the wintering birds reappear in your backyard, or when the shorebirds pass through your region. Find out what others are seeing at specific locations across North America. When should you visit coastal Texas to see the Whooping Cranes? Have the Kirtland's Warblers returned to Michigan yet? What are your chances of finding a Varied Thrush near Seattle this weekend? Find out with eBird!

The long-term importance of bird survey projects, such as the Breeding Bird Survey and Christmas Bird Count, is already well established. These counts provide our most reliable records of population trends at both regional and continental scales. eBird takes bird counting one step further, because with the eBird project, each individual can develop his or her own bird-monitoring routes, and every sanctuary, preserve, or Audubon center can develop its own protocol for measuring long-term changes in its own bird populations. eBird data, collected and archived over decades and even centuries, will thus play an enormous role in detecting and explaining changes in bird populations and aiding in bird conservation efforts.

Your interest in birds may be to mount a single feeder to your window, or you may landscape your yard to attract a variety of species. You may prefer watching the playful antics of birds in your backyard, or chasing rarities across the continent. You may protect habitat for at-risk species in your neighborhood, or you might accumulate large numbers of species on your year list, county list, or life list.

We welcome any and all birders! All that matters is that, each time you identify a bird, you submit your observation to the project where it can

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Mecklenburg Audubon is a chapter of National Audubon. Meetings are held at Sharon Seventh Day Adventist Church, 920 N. Sharon Amity Rd. on the first Thursday of each month, September – May at 7:30 PM.

help in scientific and conservation efforts.

We view eBird as a living, community-based effort, and we seek your continual input as improve the ways that you can submit, view, and explore your observations. Join eBird by contributing your observations, and then keep watching as pieces to the puzzles fall together.



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