



Audubon News

A publication of the Mecklenburg County Audubon Society
volume 7, number 6 February 2002

BOARD MEMBERS

Judy Walker - President
704-537-8181
jwalker@email.uncc.edu

Rob Bierregaard - Vice President
704-333-2405
rbierreg@email.uncc.edu

Larry Barden - Secretary
704-547-4059
lsbarden@email.uncc.edu

Lucy Quintilliano - Treasurer
704-364-9028
LucyAQ@aol.com

Deb Sue Griffin - Education
704-544-9806
zakegriff@aol.com

Don Seriff - Conservation
704-545-1391
serifdw@co.mecklenburg.nc.us

Taylor Piephoff - Field Trips
704-532-6336
PiephoffT@aol.com

Wayne Covington - Bird Count
704-362-1774
jacoving@bellsouth.net

Marek Smith - Membership
704-875-1391
maresmit@aol.com

Danny Swicegood - Member At Large
704-892-9482
uubirder@adelphia.net

Louise Barden - Publicity
704-535-6385
LouiseB919@aol.com

Pam Popovich - Program
704-535-8398
ppopovich@hotmail.com

Kim Garrett - Newsletter
704-545-1391
garreks@co.mecklenburg.nc.us

Monthly Meeting

**Tarheels Move Over...
The Heelsplitters A'Coming!"**
Thursday, February 7, 6:30 p.m.

Carolina Heelsplitters would have appreciated the pre-Christmas spread in The Charlotte Observer on environmental woes in N.C. - dirty water, dirty air, habitat loss - if they could read. But they can't read, so these endangered mussels and their environmental problems are left to humans to read and learn about....their fate in our hands.

Carolina Heelsplitters are small, five inches across at the most. Once found throughout the Carolinas in the Pee Dee,

Catawba, and Saluda River systems, today this mussel species exists in only six small populations, two of which are in Union County, specifically Goose and Waxhaw Creeks.

Tonya Moore, Education and Outreach Specialist for the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, will discuss the federally endangered Carolina Heelsplitter with us at our February meeting. She will also talk generally about mussels, their life history, natural predators, past uses by humans, and current threats. North America has the largest variety of freshwater mussel species, nearly 300.

Join us on Thursday, February 7th at 7:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall of the Sharon Seventh Day Adventist Church located at 920 Sharon Amity Road.



HAPPY VALENTINES DAY!

Great Backyard Bird Count

On February 15-18, you are invited to participate in the 5th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count, a continent-wide effort designed to help define bird ranges, populations, migration pathways, and habitat needs. Just spend as much or as little time as you like during the four days counting birds at your feeders and in backyards, local parks, or other outdoor locations. Then report your findings on-line through the Internet at <http://www.birdsource.org>. For those without Internet access or for those who would like to count birds in our county nature preserves, you can stop by Latta Plantation Nature Center, McDowell Nature Center or

MAS Calendar of Events!

February

- 2 Field Trip - Lincoln County
- 7 Meeting - Carolina Heelsplitter
- 15-18 Great Backyard Bird Count
- 23 Field Trip - Carolina Sandhills NWR

March

- 7 Meeting

continued on page 3.



Field Trips

"Sparrows Revisited"

Saturday, February 2, 7:30 a.m.

Since our November sparrow walk was so incredibly warm and there was a lack sparrows we will try again. However, we will

travel out of the county to check out a few sites in Lincoln and Gaston counties along the river. So we will meet at the McDonalds at Exit 16B (Sunset Road) at 7:30 a.m. and then car pool over to the sites. If you want to join this excursion contact **Judy Walker** at 704-537-8181 or birdwalker@mac.com.



"In Search of Woodpeckers"

Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge, SC

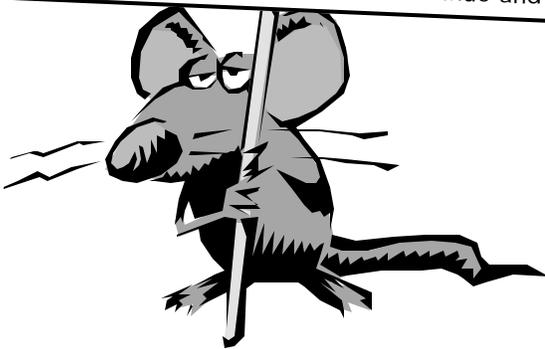
Saturday, February 23, 7:15 a.m.

This always an interesting trip since we never know what we will encounter. If you have not spent any time in the Carolina Sandhills this trip will introduce you to a unique

ecosystem only an hour away from Charlotte in McBee SC. One of the target birds will be the red-cockaded woodpecker. Sandhills NWR is the nearest site from Charlotte to see this endangered species. The wood abound with many other woodpeckers as well. We will meet at 7:15 a.m. at the McDonalds at Windsor Square (Rt. 74). If you are planning to go contact **Taylor Piephoff** at 704-532-6226 or PiephoffT@aol.com.

"In Support of Environmental Education!"

Mecklenburg Audubon annually supports 35 Audubon Adventures classrooms in Mecklenburg County at a cost of \$40 per classroom. In the past we have supported this project via sales at our gift table and direct solicitation from members. This year we are going to try two new events. In March we are offering a BASIC BIRDING CLASS [see below) and in April we will have a BIRDATHON. Please consider participating in one or both of these activities so the chapter can continue and hopefully expand our support for Audubon Adventures classrooms!



Bird Identification: Building on the Basics

Reedy Creek Nature Center

This 7-hour workshop offered cooperatively with Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department is designed for the backyard bird-watcher who wants to broaden their skills and delve deeper into the sometimes intimidating, yet truly rewarding pastime of birding. Topics to be covered in the two evening sessions will include: field marks and the "jizz" of bird id, songs and calls, essential natural history, and bird behavior. The workshop will culminate with a morning bird hike in Reedy Creek Nature Preserve to practice our new skills. National Audubon Society members receive a \$10 discount. Ages 15 and under must be accompanied by an adult. Space is limited and pre-registration is required. Call 704-598-8857 for more information or to register.

Program Fee: Ages 12+ * \$30/member, \$40/non-member

March 19 * 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

March 21 * 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

March 23 * 7:30 - 10:30 a.m.

CHECK OUT PAGE 4 FOR OUR
MONTHLY CONTEST -
TEST YOUR BIRD TRIVIA!

Presidents Perch



Judy Walker

“HUD for the Birds”

Late winter is the perfect time to be thinking about cleaning out and installing new bird houses around your yard (Bluebirds are already house hunting). Remember ... there are four basic needs that birds have – food, water, shelter and a place to raise a family - We'll call it a Housing and Urban Development Plan for the Birds. Here are a few things you need to consider when choosing birdhouses.

Size - A birdhouse should be the right dimensions to admit the bird, hold nesting material, and be deep enough so there are several inches between the top of the nest and the entrance hole. The entrance hole should be just big enough to accommodate the bird but small enough to keep out predators (1 1/2 inches is a good size for most common birdhouse users like chickadees, wrens, titmice, swallows and bluebirds).

Materials - Wooden nest boxes constructed of cedar (insect resistant) or pine insulate birds/nestlings from excessive cold or heat. Choose wood that is 5/8 to 3/4 inches thick. Don't construct the box of, or stain it with materials that could be harmful to the birds like lead-based paint, creosote, or pressure treated lumber and avoid metal or ceramic boxes. Do not paint the inside of the box.

Proper Ventilation - There should be ventilation holes or a slit made near the top of the sides of the birdhouse.

Drainage - Drill holes in the bottom of the box so any water that gets in will drain out.

Opening - The box should be easily opened from the front or side in order to check on the progress of the chicks and clean out old nesting material.

Color - Birds perceive color and this may influence their choice of houses. Many birds will accept birdhouses that have bright colors or patterns, but it is best to provide houses with muted colors or natural wood.

Inside Grooves - Inside the box under the entrance hole there should be horizontal grooves or slits, like a ladder, to help the young birds climb up to the entrance.

Perches: Perches are not needed!

Overhang: There should be a 1-2 inches roof overhang above the entrance hole to keep out rain and provide shade.

Mounting: There should be a way to hang or mount the box.

Where? Place the house in the right habitat for the bird you are trying to attract. For example, chickadees, titmice, and wrens nest in wooded areas and bluebirds and tree swallows nest in open areas. If you are trying to attract some of the woodland species, try to place the box within ten to fifteen feet of a shrub that can serve as a perch for the birds as they come to and go from the house.

When? The best time of year to put up a birdhouse is late winter or early spring.

How? Attach birdhouses to a post or pole. Place a length of PVC pipe (4" in diameter) from the bottom of the birdhouse to the ground to keep predators like raccoons from climbing the pole. Stovepipe or a wide metal cone can also be used below the box as a predator guard. Suspending the birdhouse from a wire can work well for the smaller birdhouses, such as a wren house (Hang it from two wires secured to different ends of the house to prevent it from twirling around). For birds that are particularly tolerant of humans, such as wrens, the birdhouse may be mounted on your house, garage, shed etc.

How High? Most birds will accept birdhouses placed from 5 to 50 feet high - but its best to place it at a height that you can reach for cleaning/monitoring purposes.

What Direction? Place the birdhouse away from the prevailing winds, to prevent rain from blowing into the house. Generally this means facing the box to the South or East.

When Will Birds Use It? If a birdhouse is put up prior to or just at the start of the breeding season, there is a good chance it will be used. However, since there are a myriad of factors that affect this, if a house is not used within two years, change its location.

How Many Birdhouses? The number of birds that might nest on your property at any one time depends on the number of species in the area, how many cavities or birdhouses there are, and the number of habitats available on your property. Bear in mind that birds are also territorial when breeding. They will keep birds of their own species out of their territory, but will tolerate birds of different species nesting close by.

For more information check out the Mecklenburg Audubon website [<http://meckbirds.org>].

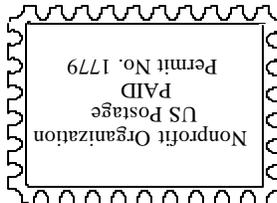
continued from page 1. Reedy Creek Nature Center. There, you can pick up a checklist, count birds in that nature preserve, and turn the sheets back in for us to report the results for you. Sponsored by the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, last year's Backyard Bird Count enlisted 53,343 observers (only 64 from Charlotte)! For more information call Reedy Creek Nature Center at 704-598-8857

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.

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

Published by the Mecklenburg Audubon Society
 A Chapter of the National Audubon Society
 P.O. Box 221093

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



Membership

- New 1 YR/\$20 Senior/\$15 (age 62 & over)
- Student/\$15 (full-time status)
- Optional Gift _____(Tax Deductable)

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____

Please make all checks payable to and mail to:
 National Audubon Society
 Membership Department

R50
7XCH

"Name that Bird!"

If you're the type of birder who can't say "titmouse" or "booby" without snickering, don't worry. We humans have coined some strange names for the birds we pursue. As if the official name of some birds isn't cryptic enough, many birds have colloquial names that are rarely used today. For example, Timber Doodle is a frequently heard informal name for the American Woodcock as it "doodles" around in thick woods, and many old-timers know American Widgeons as Bald Pates for the bald appearance of their head. Do you know which bird is called...

Big Cranky and Poor Joe
 If you know...email or call Danny Swicegood at 704-892-9482 or (uubirder@adelphia.net) The first person with the correct answer wins a great T-shirt from Mecklenburg Audubon.