

Audubon News

April 2003

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Serving Cabarrus, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg and Union Counties in NC and York County SC.

URBAN WILDLIFE:

DO YOU KNOW WHAT'S LIVING IN YOUR BACKYARD??



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, April 3rd at 7:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall of Sharon Seventh Day Adventist Church on 920 N. Sharon Amity Road.**

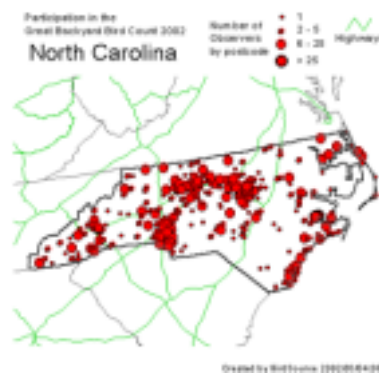
Test Your Skills: Do you know these tracks belong to? They all live in Mecklenburg County. Hint: They are not in proportion. [Check the web site for answers.]



The Results are In: WE DID IT!!!

Charlotte area birdwatchers out paced the entire country in February's Great Backyard Bird Count. An even 500 checklists were submitted from the Charlotte zip code area [282] to top the nation. Cincinnati was a distant second with about 300 checklists. Unfortunately the Charlotte number doesn't include all the hard work of the folks in Huntersville, Cornelius, Mooresville, Davidson, Gastonia, Harrisburg, Monroe, Kannapolis, Concord, Fort Mill and Rock Hill. My guess if we included those areas as well we would have submitted nearly 1,000 checklist if not more.

Of course because of the large number of checklists we managed to count the most Northern Cardinals - 2,249. We topped the list with other expected species



such as Mourning Doves, Carolina Chickadees, White-throated sparrows, etc. One of the species of concern was the Brown-headed Nuthatch of which we counted 326 the most in the nation. One

interesting note as far as specific species was the Fox Sparrow. Charlotteans recorded 57 birds which also topped the national list.

There were several species recorded for the count that are of particular interest to the Mecklenburg County records committee. If you recorded any of the following birds please contact Judy Walker at 704-537-8181 or birdwalker@mac.com so we can get the details for our records. The birds are - Red-breasted Nuthatch, Blue-grey Gnatcatcher, Boat-tailed Grackle, Common Raven and Tree Swallow. Thanks.

For complete results go to: <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/results.htm>

The Birdathon is Back!!!

Bigger and Better than Ever!

**Saturday
April 19th**

This is the event of the year for those birders with a higher than average competitive spirit. You may have read in one of your bird magazines about the World Series of Birding which takes place in New Jersey in May. Folks from all over the country descend upon the state to see how many bird species they can find in a 24-hour period. They race around the entire state looking for anything with feathers. In doing so they raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for bird conservation efforts. And that is what the Birdathon is all about raising funds for conservation and environmental education programs.

The MAS Birdathon won't be as grandiose but will be a fun and challenging way to raise funds for our environmental education and conservation projects.

The basic idea is to have folks sponsor you so much money [10 cents, a dollar, etc.] for each species of bird you see on April 19th. How involved you get is up to you. You can just count the species in your yard, which for some folks can be a pretty substantial number. Or you can go out to different habitats to really rack up the numbers. It is possible to see as many as 100 birds in the Charlotte area at this time of the year if you plan it right and the weather cooperates.

The rules are pretty simple. Birds can be identified by sight or sound. However, if you are in a group everyone in the group has to see or hear it. If you are by yourself, your sponsors are at the mercy of your honesty! You can go as far afield as you want but we ask that you stay in North Carolina. So if you are in the mountains for the weekend you can count there.

To add a little more competition to the effort. Taylor Piephoff has offered to lead a group in the Southport/Sunset Beach area. If you are planning to be on the coast for the Easter weekend this would be a great way to see new birding spots and help the cause. If you want to be in Taylor's group contact him at 704-

We will, of course, have prizes!!! Categories will include but be limited to [we may dream up a few more before the 19th] individual and group seeing the most species, individual and group raising the most money, backyard with the most species, person with the most sponsors, group and/or individual with the most unusual bird, and probably more.

Below is a form you can use to register for the event. Please let Rita Leonard know you plan to participate by contacting her at 704-569-9622 or mailing the registration to Mecklenburg Audubon, P. O. Box 22109, Charlotte, NC 28222. This will give us an idea of how many prizes, etc. we will need. A sponsorship form can be found on the Mecklenburg Audubon web site [meckbirds.org].

Although this is a competitive event, everyone in the end will be a winner especially the birds and children of the area.

I look forward to competing with the best of you. May the best birder[s] prevail!!



Name: _____
Primary contact if a group.

Phone No: _____ **Email:** _____

plan to count in my backyard only.

Additional members of group [no more than five in group]

1. _____ 2. _____

3. _____ 4. _____

Please contact Rita Leonard at 704-569-9622 [rl18bec5@email.cpc.edu] or send this form to her at: Mecklenburg Audubon, P.O. Box 221093, Charlotte, NC 28222 by Wednesday, April 16th.



FIELD TRIPS

SATURDAY, APRIL 5TH: EVERGREEN PRESERVE [1/2 DAY]

It's spring and there is no place better to be than at the Evergreen Preserve. Larry and Louise Barden will once again lead us into the wilds of east Charlotte for a pleasant morning of birding. Be prepared to do a lot of walking although not at any great speed. Migrants should be moving through so who knows what we might find.

We will meet at the Winterfield Elementary School parking lot at 7:30 AM. If you plan to attend contact Louise Barden at 704-535-6385 or louise@lbarden.com.

SATURDAY, MAY 3RD: LATTA PARK [1/2 DAY]

In the heart of Dilworth there is a tiny gem of a birding spot - Latta Park. This small city park with its mature oak trees is one of the hottest birding spots in the county during spring migration. One might say it's a miniature Central Park. If you hit it right warblers can be dripping off the trees or walking along the path. It is a great place to see veerys and ovenbirds which are extremely difficult to see once they are on their breeding territory. Orioles and tanagers should be abundant. And Red-headed Woodpeckers nest in the area.

Rob Bierregaard will be leading this trip so he will probably call up one of his owls for you. If things get slow at the park he has a few other places to show you tucked away in the Dilworth/Myers Park area.

We will meet at the park at 7 AM [for directions go to <http://meckbirds.org/birdingspots/lattapark.htm> for directions]. There is a small parking area near the field house. If you are interested in going contact Rob Bierregaard at 704-333-2405 or rbierreg@email.uncc.edu.

AUDUBON Summer Camps are for Everyone

Register Now To Secure Your Place At An Audubon Camp In 2003

With spring around the corner, Audubon naturalists are preparing to hit the trails and head into the field to initiate the 2003 season of Audubon Camps. Registration for this summer's Audubon Camp programs has already begun. Those interested are advised to act now – openings tend to fill up rapidly.

Care and dedication go into every aspect of Audubon's programs to ensure that campers, whether adults or children, get the most out of their summer vacations with Audubon.

With new programs in store and traditional ones that give Audubon Camps their outstanding reputation, a wide variety of offerings are available to better suit each camper's personal interests. Audubon encourages campers to join them this summer and explore tidal pools along the coast of Maine, take a hike in the Green Mountains or the Rockies, seek out the natural treasures of Chesapeake Bay, or paddle a glacial lake while osprey soar overhead and the enchanted call of the loon can be heard in the distance.

Audubon invites campers of all ages to awaken their sense of wonder in a unique setting at one of Audubon's signature camps for youth, teens, families, teachers and adults. Audubon's guests will learn more about themselves while developing a deeper connection with the world around them. Audubon camps get you back to nature where you'll make memories and friendships that will last a lifetime.

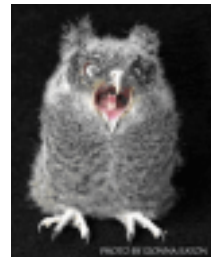
To get more information and to sign up, please refer to the Audubon Camps contact page - <http://www.audubon.org/educate/cw/>



Earth Day Celebration

The Charlotte Nature Museum invites you the Queen City's largest Earth Day celebration. Earth Day Festival 2003 will take place **Saturday, April 19, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.** This full-scale event will include demonstrations, entertainment, crafts, refreshments, and informational exhibits. Festivities are being hosted by the Charlotte Nature Museum at 1658 Sterling Drive, next to Freedom Park.

Wildlife Photo Shoot



Join Carolina Raptor Center and The Light Factory as we focus on photographing wildlife! Take a class, make a scrapbook or simply point and click!

What? CRC's annual photo shoot is open to the public and offers serious and amateur photographers the chance to get amazing shots of a variety of birds of prey in natural settings.

When? April 5, 12, 19th from 8 a.m.-noon. Join us at 7 a.m. for breakfast snacks

Who? Everyone is welcome.

Where? Carolina Raptor Center is located in Latta Plantation Nature Preserve about 20 minutes north of Charlotte. Click here for directions to CRC.

For more information go to: <http://www.birdsofprey.org/>

FYI -

Periodically I get blurb from a variety of sources on bird related items. These two came via e-mail and I thought you all might be interested. I have not personally reviewed either of these but they sound interesting.

In Print

The Verb 'To Bird' By Peter Cashwell. Paul Dry Books, 2003.

All around the world, birds are the subject of intense, even spiritual, fascination, but relatively few people see the word bird as a verb. Peter Cashwell is one who does, and with good reason: He birds (because he can't help it), and he teaches grammar (because he's paid to). An English teacher by profession and an avid birder by inner calling, Cashwell has written a whimsical and critical book about his many obsessions—birds, birders, language, literature, parenting, pop culture, and the human race.

For more info go to: http://www.pauldrybooks.com/complete_catalog/verb_to_bird/index.html

On the Big Screen

Sony Pictures Classics is proud to present *Winged Migration*, an Oscar nominated documentary directed by Jacques Perrin. To get a glimpse of this breathtakingly beautiful film you can view the trailer here: http://www.apple.com/trailers/sony/winged_migration.html

For more information on the unique production of this film along with beautiful wallpapers, an interactive map charting the migratory patterns of various birds and more, check out the official web site here: <http://www.sonyclassics.com/wingedmigration/home.html>

This movie is a must see for birding enthusiasts and lovers of nature!

From the Presidents Perch

Something to Think About...

As the weather warms our thoughts not only turn to birds but to our yards which harbor our feathered friends. As you plan your garden this year please keep this in mind - what you are planting may be having a detrimental effect on the environment! How can that be?

Many of the plants sold in local nurseries and garden store [i.e. Home Depot and Lowe's] are not native to the area. Most are not even native to North America! Even worse many of these plants are invasive alien plants. Here is what the Plant Conservation Alliance has to say about invasive species.

*Invasive non-native plants are one of the greatest threats to the natural ecosystems of the U.S. and are destroying America's natural history and identity. These unwelcome plants are disrupting the ecology of natural ecosystems, displacing native plant species, and degrading our nation's unique and diverse biological resources. Aggressive invaders reduce the amount of light, water, nutrients and space available to native species, alter hydrological patterns, soil chemistry, moisture-holding capacity, and erodibility. Some exotics are capable of hybridizing with native plant relatives, resulting in unnatural changes to a plant's genetic makeup; others have been found to harbor plant pathogens, such as bacterial leaf scorch (*Xylella fastidiosa*) that can affect both native and non-native plants, including ornamentals. Still others contain toxins that may be lethal to certain animals. For example, garlic mustard has been found to contain compounds that are lethal to a native butterfly species.*

Exotic organisms have been referred to as biological pollution. In some cases, exotic plant invaders are driving our rarest species closer to extinction. According to the U.S. Fish



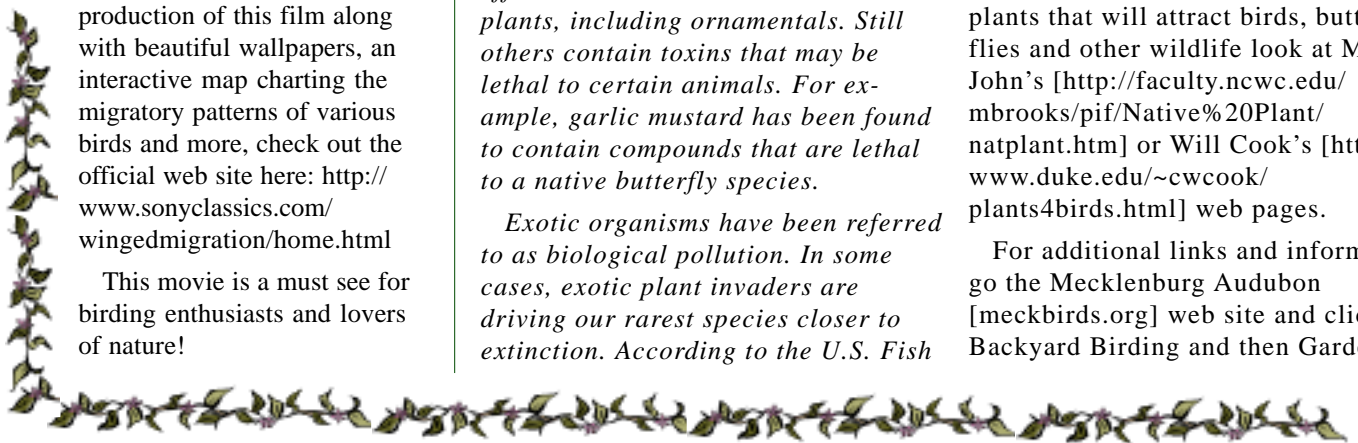
and Wildlife Service, an estimated 42% of the nation's endangered and threatened species have declined as a result of encroaching exotic plants.

You don't have to go very far to see proof of these statements. Kudzu, Japanese Honeysuckle and English Ivy are perfect examples of the problems that can result from planting non-native plants in our yards. Interestingly enough many of the plants gardeners refer to as 'weeds' are actually our native plant species just trying to survive!

So please think very carefully about what you plant in your yard this spring. Check out the list of invasive plants on the National Park Service's web site [<http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/factmain.htm#p1lists>] or the list of *Invasive Exotic Plants to Avoid in the Southeastern United States* on the North Carolina Botanical Garden web site [<http://www.ncbg.unc.edu/plants-to-avoid-SEUS.htm>]. You might be very surprised to see what is listed.

Then for suggestions on native plants that will attract birds, butterflies and other wildlife look at Mark John's [<http://faculty.ncwc.edu/mbrooks/pif/Native%20Plant/natplant.htm>] or Will Cook's [<http://www.duke.edu/~cwcook/plants4birds.html>] web pages.

For additional links and information go the Mecklenburg Audubon [meckbirds.org] web site and click on Backyard Birding and then Gardening.



Have a Cup of Coffee for the Birds!

Coffee -- it is perhaps surprising that something so commonplace in our everyday lives, so ubiquitous throughout culture, plays such an important role in the lives of our migratory birds. Facing devastating habitat loss and degradation on their breeding grounds in the United States and Canada, and on their wintering grounds in Central and South America, migratory birds have found refuge in the lush forest-like environments of traditional coffee plantations. In fact, researchers at the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center have revealed that of all agricultural systems in the tropics, traditionally-managed coffee plantations support more species of birds -- over 150 -- than any other type of agriculture.

Yet coffee farming in Latin America is changing. Traditionally, coffee was

grown under a canopy of shade trees, providing critical wintering habitat critical to many species of migratory birds and preserving the rich biodiversity inherent in tropical rainforests. Increasingly, however, industrial coffee farms, where land is cleared of its lush vegetation to grow coffee in full sun, are replacing traditional coffee farms. With this conversion from traditional shade-grown to industrial sun-grown coffee comes a corresponding decrease in migratory bird species, and this decrease in species diversity is dramatic -- over 90% fewer bird species are found on sun-grown coffee farms than on shade-grown coffee farms.

By choosing shade-grown coffee, coffee drinkers not only help common birds that use shade-coffee plantations



during the winter like the Baltimore Oriole and Ruby-throated Hummingbird, but also a host of at risk WatchList species [<http://www.audubon.org/bird/watch/>].

Look for shade grown coffee at wild bird stores and health food stores or check out these sites:

Thanksgiving Coffee Company --

<http://www.songbirdcoffee.com/>

Java Forest Shade Grown Coffee --

<http://www.javaforest.org/>

Songbird Foundation -- http://www.songbird.org/index_main.htm

Cafe Man -- [http://](http://www.cafemam.com/cafemam.html)

www.cafemam.com/cafemam.html



Don't Forget!!

If you want to stay abreast of local Audubon activities -- meetings, field trips, conservation issues, etc. -- you need to become a local Mecklenburg Audubon Member. Fill out the form below and return it TODAY!!!

Mecklenburg Audubon Membership Form

Name _____

Address _____

City, ST Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Membership through June 30, 2004 is \$10.

Please do not share my name with National Audubon Society.

*Return form with check payable to Mecklenburg Audubon to:
Lucy Quintilliano, P.O. Box 221093, Charlotte, NC 28222.*

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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.

Did You Know?

Some birds have local or 'common' names. Here are a few that might interest you.

American Goldfinch – Wild Canary	Scaup – Bluebill
Anhinga – Snakebird	White-throated Sparrow – Peabody Bird
Common Nighthawk - Bullbat	Northern Flicker – Yellow-hammer
Common Tern – Sea Swallow	Ovenbird – Teacher Bird
Barn Owl – Monkey-faced Owl	Baltimore Oriole – Hang-nest Bird
Green Heron – Fly-up-the-creek	Cuckoo – Rain Bird
Pileated Woodpecker – Log Cock	

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ACTIVITIES CALENDAR

Thu. 4/3 – Mecklenburg Wild [December's Meeting Rescheduled]
Sat. 4/5 – Evergreen Nature Preserve [1/2 day field trip]
– Garringer Earth Day Celebration
Sat. 4/19 – Mecklenburg Birdathon
– Nature Center Earth Day Celebration
Thu. 5/1 – MAPS [Monthly Meeting]
Sat. 5/3 – Latta Park [1/2 day field trip]
Sat. 5/10 – International Migratory Bird Day [variety of activities]
Sat. 5/31 – Mountain Birding [Full day field trip]



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