

Audubon News



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THE DIMINUTIVE BOG TURTLE

The Bog Turtle is one of North Carolina's rarest species as well as North America's smallest turtle. Very few people have ever seen a bog turtle outside of a zoo. Their habitat consists of small isolated wetlands in the Blue Ridge Mountains and upper Piedmont in the western part of North Carolina.



However, this small turtle is rapidly disappearing from its North Carolina range. Its decline is due primarily to loss of habitat and collection for the pet trade. Because of its decreasing numbers, the bog turtle was placed on North Carolina's threatened list in 1989. This outlawed all bog turtle trade in the state.

Project Bog Turtle is a conservation initiative of the NC Herpetological Society that began in the mid-1970s with a bog turtle distribution study in North Carolina. The objectives of this project focus on educating the public and landowners about bog turtle conservation, surveying for bog turtle populations and monitoring them for illegal collections, and protecting and restoring suitable bog turtle habitat in our state. Many different conservation organizations and individuals are involved in Project Bog Turtle including the NC Museum of Natural Sciences, the Three Lakes Nature Center and the NC Wildlife Resources Commission.

Jim Green is one of the individuals involved in this project. He will share with us what he has learned about this diminutive reptile that has a small population in Gaston County. He'll also inform us about what we can do to help preserve its habitat.



So crawl out of your shell and join us in the fellowship hall of the **Sharon Seventh Day Adventist Church at 7:30 PM on Thursday, October 5th.**

Field Trips

All Mecklenburg Audubon Field Trips are free and open to the public. Directions for all trips can be found on the Mecklenburg Audubon website - meckbirds.org. Click on Field Trips. Please remember to contact the trip leaders several days before the trip. If you don't, you may not receive information about last minute changes or cancellations. Also, if they don't know you are coming they might leave without you.

Sunday - October 8, 2006

1st Annual Big Sit

Many years ago the New Haven, CT bird club started a birding event called the "BIG SIT", which has gained quite a bit in popularity over the years.

The object of this event is to pick a location and within 17 ft of this location, see how many species of birds can be seen or heard in a 24 hour period.

On Sunday, 10/8 we will do our first "BIG SIT" from the platform at Cowan's Ford Refuge, our closest IBA. The event will go from dawn to dusk and we will keep a running tally of what we see.

Bring a picnic lunch, or dinner and a lawn chair, joining your fellow birders - 'ON THE PLATFORM'. Since this event runs all day, you can come and go anytime during the day and stay as long as your schedule will permit. But we need YOUR help to make this a success. For more information the day's logistics contact Dave Lovett at 704-507-7677 or birdsalot@webtv.net. For more information on the national event go to <http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/site/funbirds/bigsit/bigsit.aspx>



Saturday - October 14, 2006

Huntington Beach State Park, Murrell's Inlet, SC - Full Day Field Trip.

This is our fall sojourn to a South Carolina birding hot spot. Fall migrants – hawks and warblers – will still be moving through, wintering shorebirds will have settled in and a few ducks may also have begun arriving. This is probably one of the best times of the year to Peregrine Falcons and Merlins, and I am sure we will be delighted with spectacle views of hundreds if not thousands of tree swallows. Best of all, most of the people have moved out! It is a wonderful time of year to be on the beach.

We will meet in the parking lot on the eastside of the causeway at 7:30 AM. It can get pretty hot so remember a hat, sunscreen and plenty of water. We will eat lunch in the park so you will need to bring food. Since most participants stay for the weekend, we usually go out to dinner on Saturday night. At dinner we will plan where we will go on Sunday.

If you plan to go, contact Judy Walker at 704-537-8181 or birdwalker@mac.com.



Tree Swallows

Thursday - October 19, 2006

Huntingtowne Farms Greenway - 1/2 Day Field Trip

Longtime MAS members Dean and Vivian Sprehe will be hosting a walk at their favorite neighborhood park this autumn day. Huntingtowne Farms Park, runs beside Little Sugar Creek, and is part of the county greenway system. With a great blend of habitats, anything could turn up during Fall migration.

Meet in the parking lot at the end of Huntingtowne Farms Road off of Park road at 8:30 AM. Contact the Sprehe's at if you can come at vsprehe@carolina.rr.com or 704-552-1864.



Female Eastern Towhee

Field Trips Continued

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Saturday - October 21, 2006 Evergreen Nature Preserve - 1/2 day Field Trip

The walk at Evergreen Nature Preserve, hosted by MAS board members Larry and Louise Barden, is a favorite annual event during fall migration.

Located close to downtown Charlotte, this urban birding “gem,” is a must-see for any new members and a return favorite for many. Come see why the Bardens went to such great lengths to help establish this safe haven, protected from developers and well-intentioned multiple-use advocates. And why the preserve has been “adopted” by our chapter, including installing benches at birding hotspots.

We will spend a 1/2 day exploring the preserve. This late in the fall, we should be able to see some late migrants as well as some early winter-resident arrivals. Meet at 8 AM in the Winterfield Elementary School parking lot, in front of the new school playground, located at the end of Winterfield road off Central Ave. Let Larry Barden know you are coming.

Thursday - October 26, 2006 Boyce Park - 1/2 Day Field Trip

On this fall morning we will search for migrants among the large hardwood trees of the park following a trail that winds downward to the McAlpine Nature Trail at its base. As the trail winds along the adjoining creek, the excellent habitat should yield some good finds.

Meet in the Boise Park parking lot next to the soccer fields at 8:30 AM. The entrance to the park is off of Boise Road which is off Sardis road about 1/4 mile north of the intersection of Sardis Rd & Sardis Road North.

If going, contact Dave Lovett 704-507-7677 or birdsalot@webtv.net.

Saturday - October 28, 2006 Owl Prowl - Evening Field Trip

Now a well-established tradition, this year’s owl prowl should be a sure thing. Rob Bierregaard has been tracking barred owls in the Myers Park area for several years now, so he knows where they live! Which should guarantee us at least one sighting.

We will meet at Charlotte Nature Museum parking area at 6:30 PM. Costumes are optional but if you are planning on coming please contact Rob Bierregaard at 704-333-2405 or rbierregaard@carolina.rr.com.

For a full list of field trips through December and directions to sights go to the Mecklenburg Audubon Web site at meckbirds.org.



Green Heron



Hairy Woodpecker



Barred Owl



Most North Carolinians will see a bog turtle only when visiting a zoo, for this rare and secretive turtle lives in small, isolated wetlands in the western part of our state. It is one of our most beautiful turtles and can survive close to civilization as long as it has ample wetland habitat.

History and Status

Unfortunately this little turtle is disappearing from its North Carolina range. Two circumstances are causing its decline—loss of habitat and collection for the pet trade. Many of the turtle's wetland habitats have been drained over the years to grow crops like hay or corn, or they have been filled to construct roads, buildings and golf courses. In addition, bog turtles have a high market value and are avidly sought by collectors. The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission outlawed all trade of bog turtles in 1989. The bog turtle is a threatened species under North Carolina law. It is also a candidate for special protection under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Description

One may easily recognize the diminutive bog turtle by the orange, yellow-orange or redorange blotches on either side of its neck. The turtle reveals these colorful skin markings

Bog Turtle (*Clemmys muhlenbergii*)

whenever it stretches its neck. Another characteristic that adds to the beauty of this turtle is its shell. Small ridges on each scale (scute) occur in geometric designs on the back shell (carapace) and give the turtle a sculpted look. Adult bog turtles are small, often only 3 to 3 1/2 inches long.

Large specimens may grow over 4 inches long. Adult bog turtles weigh about 4 ounces.

Habitat and Habits

The bog turtle doesn't live in just any wetland, nor is it restricted to bogs as its name implies. It lives in sphagnum, or mossy, bogs and marshy meadows where springs create deep mineral or organic mud "soups." One can find the bog turtle in small wetlands because it will travel along creeks, or even over land, in search of a new home. This turtle spends much of its day in the mud, but it climbs out onto clumps of grass or moss to sit in the morning sun. One may see the bog turtle most readily in spring and early summer before wetland vegetation grows thick.

The bog turtle leaves its hibernation burrow in early spring. It may come to the surface in April on sunny and warm days. By late April and early May the turtles are very active, moving about in search of food and mates. Following mating, the female lays one to six eggs in an open area of the wetland. The turtle hides her eggs in a clump of moss or sedges, but close enough to the surface to receive warmth from the sun. Raccoons like turtle eggs and will eat all they can find.

The eggs hatch in about 50 days, usually in August. Young turtles often stay in or around the nest over the winter.

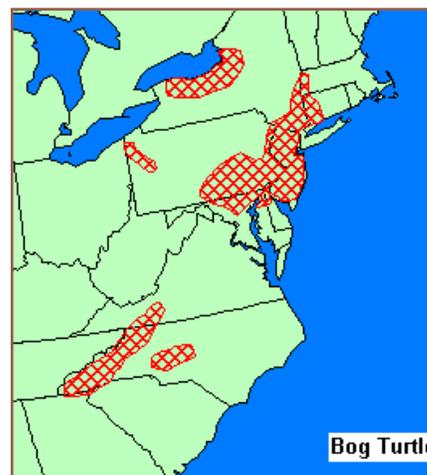
As winter approaches, the turtles become less active. Eventually they choose a hibernation burrow that receives a constant supply of fresh water from underground springs. This hibernation site may be up to 20 inches down in the mud. The turtles' metabolism slows, but they still require oxygen which they absorb through their cloaca.

Range and Distribution

The bog turtle inhabits only eastern North America and is most abundant in areas with muddy wetlands. Eastern Pennsylvania, northeastern Maryland, northern Delaware and New Jersey have the largest undivided area of range. Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York and western Pennsylvania contain smaller areas of range.

The bog turtle's range in the southern Appalachian mountains and foothills is much restricted compared to its northern range. The

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Bog Turtles

largest southern populations occur in western North Carolina and southwestern Virginia. South Carolina, Georgia and Tennessee also have small bog turtle populations.

In North Carolina, the bog turtle may live in small wetlands west of Stokes, Forsyth, Davidson, Rowan, Iredell, Lincoln and Gaston counties. Some of these wetlands are bogs with sphagnum moss. Saturated sphagnum moss forms a perfect organic "soup" for this turtle.

People Interactions

Wetlands in the mountains and foothills of North Carolina were rare even before settlers first began to farm. Thus the bog turtle has had a restricted range here for many years. Now the draining or filling of these scarce wetlands has reduced habitat even further for bog turtles.

Not all farming activities are detrimental to bog turtles. Some meadow wetlands that are grazed have thriving populations of bog turtles. Livestock grazing retards the growth of trees. Growing trees tend to dry wetlands because they transpire a lot of water. Trees also shade wetlands and eliminate bog turtle nest sites.

By illegally collecting bog turtles, poachers put further pressures on turtle populations already declining because of loss of habitat. Fortunately, every state harboring bog turtle populations has outlawed their commercial use. Animal dealers who carry illegally obtained bog turtles across state lines violate the Lacey Act, which may result in a fine of \$20,000, a prison sentence of 5 years, or both.

References

- Behler, J. L., and F. W. King. *The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Reptiles and Amphibians* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979).
- Conant, Roger and Joseph Collins. *A Field Guide to Reptiles And Amphibians of Eastern and Central North America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1991).
- Ernst, C. H., and R. W. Barbour. *Turtles of the United States* (Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1972).
- Herman, Dennis. "Tracking the Rare Bog Turtle," in *Wildlife in North Carolina* (October 1989).

Credits

Written by Allen Boynton.
Produced January 1994 by the Division of Conservation Education, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission.

Just the Facts

Classification

Class: Reptilia
Order: Testudines

Average Size

Length: 3 to 3 1/2 inches
Weight: 4 ounces

Food

Insects, worms, slugs, crayfish, amphibian larvae, snails and other small invertebrates; also fruits.

Breeding

Lays clutch of 3 or 4 (1 to 6) eggs in June or early July. Eggs hatch in 7 to 9 weeks, late July to early September. Sexually mature in 5 to 8 years.

Young

The young are 1 in. to 1 1/4 in. long at hatching. Hatchlings may over winter in nest in north.

Life Expectancy

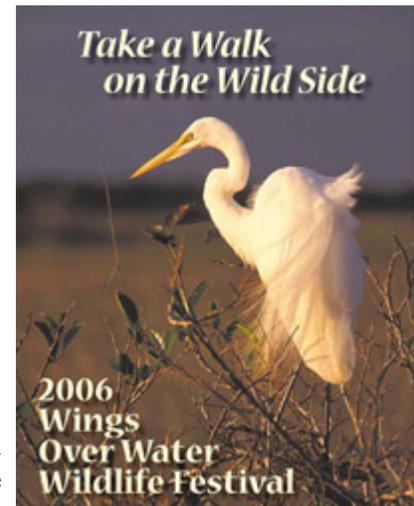
Bog turtles often live well past 20 years. Scientists are able to count growth rings on the bottom shell (plastron) of a turtle. Each ring represents growth during one year. These rings are hard to see on turtles after they reach about 20 years old. This is because mud wears away the growth rings as the turtle moves from place to place.

Take a Walk on the Wild Side at this 10th annual Wings Over Water (WOW) birding/wildlife festival November 7-12, 2006. WOW offers programs for the amateur-to-serious birder, nature enthusiast, wildlife photographer, paddler, angler, and others who enjoy being up close with nature.

Autumn is a special time in Eastern North Carolina.

The frantic summer tourist season is well past, and the land and water are left to those who wish to blend with nature. Wings Over Water will be your opportunity to enter this land of wildlife enchantment.

Through field trips, workshops and interpretive programs, you will explore one of the most fascinating ecological settings in the United States.



Bird Moms Manipulate Birth Order to Protect Sons

Hormonal changes affect egg laying and development

According to a new study by scientists at the University of Arizona, female house finches are able to change their hormonal makeup to ensure male birds hatch later, grow faster and spend less time in the nest than their sisters. The strategy is nature's way of protecting vulnerable male hatchlings that appear to be more sensitive to nest-marauding mites than their female siblings are.

Once breeding female finches are exposed to mites, their bodies make hormonal changes that affect the order of egg laying and accelerate development of their sons while they're still in the egg. The scientists say that helps make sure male chicks are exposed to mites for a shorter period and allows both the sons and daughters to survive long enough to leave the nest.

And not to worry, the researchers say, the male chicks that grow up during mite season end up just as big as ones from the mite-free time of the year.

The work, which was published in the early online edition of the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences the week of Sept. 18, was funded by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the National Science Foundation and the Silliman Memorial Research Awards. To read the University of Arizona news release go to - uanews.org.



Shedding New Light on Conservation



There is a small amount of mercury in compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs). It is a concern because mercury is a persistent bioaccumulative toxin (PBT) that does not break down and remains in the environment indefinitely. Should we still use CFLs?

Yes. Studies have shown that the amount of mercury contained in a CFL is less than the amount of mercury released by coal burning power plants when powering an incandescent light bulb. CFLs last from 8 to 10 times longer, use about 75 percent less energy, and produce 90 percent less heat while delivering more light per watt. An important aspect of the lower power requirements of CFLs is less use of fossil fuel. Replacing a single incandescent bulb with a CFL

will keep at least a half-ton of CO₂ out of the atmosphere over the life of the bulb (two to three years), which will help to slow global warming. In addition to doing something positive for the environment, you will save money on your electric bill.

At the end of the life span of the CFL, proper disposal is important. Some cities and municipalities have regulations about CFL disposal. Even if your area does not have specific rules about this, you can do the right thing by bringing spent bulbs to an appropriate waste facility. The website www.earth911.org will let you search for disposal and/or recycling facilities by zip code. Since CFLs only have to be changed every few years you will not have to worry about disposal very often.



A Spoonful of Pink

Most of us get pretty excited when we see a Great Blue Heron or Great Egret visiting our yards. Imagine Mecklenburg Audubon member and relatively new birder Donna Helms' surprise and puzzlement when she saw a pink, dumpy looking bird with a really funny looking bill wading around in the lake where she lives. It took her 2 weeks to convince her neighbor Eleanor O'Neill, a long time member and birder, that the bird was actually in their backyard.

Once the word was out birders from around the area so-journed to Lake Twitty in Monroe to see this beautiful but obviously lost bird. It is probably the most inland record of this bird for North Carolina.

How and/or why the bird wandered this far inland we will never know. But we sure hope s/he gets the hint from the other herons that are using the lake as a way station that s/he needs to move further south before the cold weather moves in.



Old Names for New

How long have you really been birding? Take this little quiz to see if you know any of these old names for birds you see on a regular basis.

Baldpate
 Marsh Hawk
 Linnet
 Chewink
 Dabchick
 Brewster's Egret
 Greenlet
 Cooper's Buzzard
 Log-cock
 Mudhen
 Poke
 Rain Crow
 Sprigtail
 Lomita
 Tree Mouse
 Scrapper
 Chattering Plover

Bring your answers to the meeting to win a prize.

Coffee Lovers - Name That Brew!!

Grown under a lush canopy of trees as nature intended, Audubon Premium Shade Grown Coffee not only tastes great, it is good for birds and the environment as well. Coffee this unique deserves an equally distinctive name.



That's why we're asking coffee drinkers and fans of birds and wildlife everywhere to help us create a new name for Audubon French Roast coffee. We're looking for names as enticing as our coffee's tantalizing aroma and as colorful as the birds whose habitat you protect by choosing shade grown, organic coffee.

Submit your suggestions for new names from September 15, 2006 until December 31, 2006. One grand prize collection will be awarded for the best name submitted. No purchase is necessary to enter, and you may submit as many names as you would like.

For more information on prizes and how to enter go to:
www.auduboncoffeeclub.com

Audubon News

A Publication of Mecklenburg Audubon

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WHO'S NEW??

Joan Glickman

Greg Hays

Bennett Hollenberg

Angelia Salerno

ACTIVITIES CALENDAR



Oct. 5th	Bog Turtles [Monthly Meeting]
Oct. 8th	1st Annual Big Sit - Cowan's Ford Refuge
Oct. 14th	Huntington Beach St. Park, SC [Full day Field Trip]
Oct. 17th	Huntingtowne Farms Greenway [1/2 day Field Trip]
Oct. 21st	Evergreen Nature Preserve [1/2 day Field Trip]
Oct. 26th	Boyce Park [1/2 day Field Trip]
Oct. 28th	Owl Prowl [Evening Outing]
Nov. 2nd	Hawk Identification [Monthly Meeting]
Nov. 4th	Six Mile Creek Greenway [1/2 day Field Trip]
Nov. 7-12th	Wings Over Water Festival
Nov. 9th	Landsford Canal [1/2 day Field Trip]
Nov. 12th	Pee Dee NWR [Full day Field Trip]
Nov. 18th	Reedy Creek Nature Preserve [1/2 day Field Trip]
Nov. 25th	Ft. Fisher/Brunswick Co. Beaches [Full day Field Trip]