



# Audubon News

Volume 17, Issue 4

P.O. Box 221093 Charlotte, NC 28222

December 2011

Monthly Meeting: Thursday, December 1, 2011 • 7:30 PM

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*The birding season begins on January 1st and ends on December 31st! - Anonymous*



## Happy Holidays!!!

## Upcoming Events

- 12/01 Golden-winged Warblers (Mtg.)
- 12/03 Wintering Waterfowl (FT)
- 12/07 McAlpine Creek Grnwy (FT)
- 12/10 McDowell Praire (FT)
- 12/15 Four-mile Creek Grnwy (FT)
- 12/17 Gaston CBC
- 12/18 S. Lake Norman CBC
- 12/26 Charlotte CBC
- 12/31 Pee Dee CBC
- 01/05 Pot Luck Dinner (Mtg.)
- 01/07 Cowan's Ford (FT)
- 01/14 Huntington Beach (FT)
- 01/28 Carolina Bird Club Mtg.

Well fall migration is over and we already miss our colorful feathered friends that have left for warmer climes. It's interesting that we think of them as 'our' birds when in reality they really spend most of their lives in Central and South America, not in our neck of the woods. What do they do when they aren't here in North Carolina? What is it like where they flitter off to?



Curtis Smalling, Important Bird Areas Coordinator and Mountain Program Manager for Audubon of North Carolina, wanted answers to these questions. He particularly wanted to know what his beloved Golden-winged Warblers did when they weren't defending territory and raising young in the mountains of North Carolina. So he went chasing the birds and wound up in Nicaragua. And at the December meeting he will share what he discovered there and how you can become involved in

Golden-wing and Cerulean Warbler conservation efforts in both the northern and southern hemispheres.

So fasten your seat belts as we venture south of the border at the Thursday, December 1st meeting. This will be our last meeting in the Fellowship Hall of the Seventh Day Adventist Church (920 Sharon Amity). Refreshments start around 7:15 PM with the meeting beginning at 7:35 PM. See you all there.



## We're Moving!!!



After many years at the Sharon Seventh Day Adventist Church we have finally outgrown the facility. So starting

## January 5, 2012

we will be meeting at the

### Tyvola Senior Center

2225 Tyvola Road Charlotte

Of course that doesn't mean only seniors can come. Anyone regardless of age who loves birds is welcome.

# 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](http://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!!

## Saturday, December 3rd - Wintering Waterfowl

1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Judy Walker ([birdwalker@me.com](mailto:birdwalker@me.com))

By now most of the wintering waterfowl should have arrived at Coddle Creek Reservoir and the surrounding area. We will meet at Panera Bread across from Concord Mills Mall at 9 AM to first check out the wetland behind HH Greg and then car pool up to the reservoir. Depending on time we may even swing by Moss Creek Greenway to see what's there.

## Wednesday, December 7th - McAlpine Creek Park/Greenway

1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Dave Lovett ([birdsallot@webtv.net](mailto:birdsallot@webtv.net))

This park on Monroe Rd. in SE Charlotte features open fields, beaver pond, lake and woods. Meet in the parking lot at 8:30 AM.

## Saturday, December 10th - McDowell Prairie & Copperhead Island

1/2 Day • Medium • Contact: Ron Clark ([waxwing@bellsouth.net](mailto:waxwing@bellsouth.net))

We'll start at the prairie and bird it until around 11:00 AM. Then we'll go over to Cooperhead Island and check the river and nearby woods. Because of the limited parking at the prairie, we will meet in the Harris Teeter parking lot at the intersection of Hwy 49 (south) and Hwy 160 at 8:30 AM.

## Thursday, December 15th - Four-mile Creek Greenway

1/2 Day • Medium • Contact: Ron Clark ([waxwing@bellsouth.net](mailto:waxwing@bellsouth.net))

We'll meet at the Johnston Rd. parking lot at 8:30 AM for this two mile walk through a variety of habitats.

## Saturday, December 17th: Gaston Co. Christmas Bird Count

Full Day • Contact: Steve Tracy [[stevepath1@aol.com](mailto:stevepath1@aol.com)]

For many animals the Catawba 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 the river shouldn't be a deterrent birders either. That's why we team up with birders from the Gaston area to conduct the Gaston County Christmas Count. This will be a great opportunity to get to know our neighbors and explore new birding hot spots.

## Sunday, December 18th: South Lake Norman Christmas Count

Full Day • Contact: Taylor Piephoff [[piephofft@aol.com](mailto:piephofft@aol.com)]

This is hands down the best count circle in the Piedmont. Because of the wide variety of habitat — open fields, large lake, small ponds, 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.

Some 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 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.

## Monday, December 26th: Charlotte Christmas Count

Full Day • Contact: Ken Kneidel [[kendel2@earthlink.net](mailto:kendel2@earthlink.net)]

The granddaddy of the counts, going all the back to 1941, 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.

### KEY TO PHYSICAL DIFFICULTY

**Easy** - Trails are level to slight grades usually paved. .5-1.5 miles of walking;

**Moderate** - Trails can be uneven with some hills. 1-2.5 miles of walking;

**Strenuous** - Trails vary greatly. 2.5+ miles of walking;

\* - Trails are handicapped accessible.

Maps to meeting spots can be found at

[meckbirds.org/trips/trips.html](http://meckbirds.org/trips/trips.html)



Ring-necked Duck  
[alaska.fws.gov](http://alaska.fws.gov)



Blue Jay  
©Brad Kuntz



Brown Creeper

# Field Trips



Purple Finch



Red-headed Woodpecker



Northern Gannet



In the last 5 years we have averaged around 85-90 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 to join a group. If you can't get away to join a team and you live within the circle, you can count birds in your yard. Contact Ken for details on how to do this.

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. Just bring your appetites and good birding stories. To ensure even and complete coverage of the area those who wish to participate should contact Ken Kneidel.

## Saturday, December 31st: Pee Dee National Wildlife Count

Full Day • Contact: Judy Walker [birdwalker@mac.com]

The Pee Dee Christmas Count is a great way to end a year of birding. It produces surprises almost every year. One year it was turkey tracks in the snow and lots of sparrows. 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 you want to carpool, meet at the McDonalds at Windsor Square Shopping Center at 5:45 AM [on Independence]. Otherwise meet at the Pee Dee Maintenance Building [main entrance off Rt. 52] at 7 AM. Lunch will be provided but you will want to wear lots of layers and bring snack foods and something hot to drink while you are out in the field.

## Saturday, Jan 7th. Cowan' Ford Refuge.

1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: John Bonestell (jmcblake@aol.com)

John will take us through sections of the refuge. This area is accessible by permit only, so this is an opportunity to go "behind the fence". Meet at the viewing stand at 8:00 AM.

## Saturday/Sunday, Jan. 14-15: Huntington Beach State Park

Weekend • Moderate • Contact: Judy Walker (birdwalker@me.com)

Our winter excursion to Huntington Beach State Park is an annual favorite offering some different bird species than our fall trip. Waterfowl - both freshwater and saltwater- have arrived in good numbers including loons, grebes, and ducks. Gannets are numerous offshore along with shorebirds along the quiet beaches.

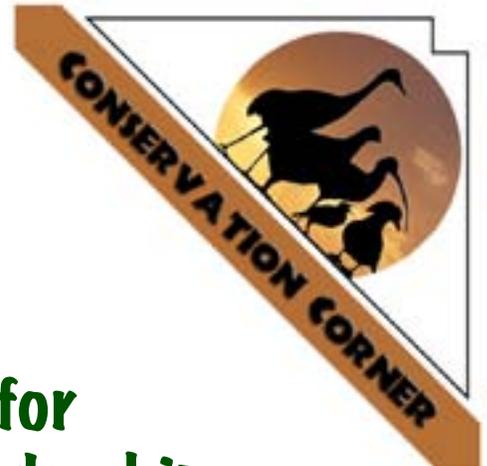
We will meet at 8 AM in the causeway parking lot. Be sure to dress warmly as the winds off the ocean can be chilling and bring a lunch for a midday break.

For those staying the weekend, Saturday evening we gather at a local restaurant for dinner to decide on where we will bird Sunday morning for half a day before heading home. Local hotels with off-season rates include: Litchfield Inn [843-237-4211], Comfort Inn Surfside [843-233-8585], Days Inn Surfside [843-238-4444], Brookwood Inn [843-651-2550].

Curtis Smalling with Audubon North Carolina is the recipient of a national conservation fellowship that will allow him to engage private landowners in the protection of important nesting habitat. Curtis, the Coordinator of the NC Important Bird Area (IBA) Program and Mountain Program Manager, is one of 40

more inclined to make better choices for their property and for the birds.

Since joining Audubon North Carolina a decade ago, Smalling has helped North Carolina add three new chapters, unheard of growth at the time. He also serves and advises on several working groups as well as regional and state partnerships, including the



## Smalling receives Fellowship for innovative environmental leadership

individuals nationwide selected as a 2011 TogetherGreen Fellow. Each Fellow receives \$10,000 towards a community-focused project to engage local residents in conserving land, water and energy, and contributing to greater environmental health.

As the statewide IBA Coordinator, Curtis understands the challenge of trying to protect bird's nesting and wintering habitats on private property. His Fellowship will help expand these efforts, enabling him to communicate more efficiently with landowners and to show them how their priorities can be accomplished while still helping birds and other wildlife. Two thirds of the state's forests are in private ownership, and over 90% of the land in the priority IBAs where Curtis will be working is privately held.

The project will include recruiting and training Audubon chapter mentors, working with communities and connecting more landowners to under-utilized programs through better technical guidance, active management, and financial incentives. As a result of increased outreach, improved communications, and better incentives, Curtis aims to keep landowners more informed about their options, and therefore

North Carolina State Scientific Counsel for Birds and the Atlantic Flyway Initiative. He is a key player in incorporating IBA data into North Carolina's State-wide Comprehensive Conservation Planning Process, a major tool in citing issues and threats to natural resources across the state, as well as engaging local partners for conservation.

"Curtis has the passion and the skills to inspire others, exactly the kind of person the environmental community needs to tackle the huge challenges and opportunities confronting us," said Audubon President David Yarnold. "Our TogetherGreen Fellows represent a talented and diverse group; each a proven leader with a commitment to both the environment and his/her community."

"This TogetherGreen Fellowship is an honor to receive and will enable me to keep landowners more informed about the options available to them to reach their goals and priorities while at the same time working with us to make better choices for birds and other wildlife," said Smalling.

Curtis credits his grandfather, an avid birder, for inspiring his love of nature and teaching him the value of conservation. He converted this passion into a career, studying Biology

and Appalachian Studies at Appalachian State University before joining Audubon North Carolina.

Fellowship recipients were chosen from a large pool of highly qualified individuals. All were required to have at least six years of experience in conservation, environmental education, policy, or related issues; a demonstrated passion for conservation and a proven track record of reaching previously underserved audiences. Applicants also need to express a desire to learn and grow. Supported by a conservation alliance between Audubon and Toyota, the TogetherGreen Fellowship offers specialized training in conservation planning and execution, the chance to work and share best practices with gifted conservation professionals, and assistance with project outreach and evaluation.



# Winter Birrrding

Now that the temperatures have finally decided it is winter, it's time to talk about winter birding. However, I am not talking about identifying our winter visitors. I am referring to how to keep warm while trying to ID that duck in the middle of the pond or the sparrow flying through the brambles. New birders are always amazed at how chilly it can get even on a beautifully clear day, especially early in the morning when the birds are most active. So here are a few tips on how to stay warm this winter birding season.

The most important clothing items are a coat, pants, boots, hat, and gloves that are windproof and/or waterproof. Remember, do not buy clothing that is too tight -- it will bind or cut off circulation making you colder. And layering is the key!

## LEG WARMERS

Long underwear is a must for winter birding. Check the information on the item for temperature and activity ratings (if you're walking you will be much warmer than just standing) and the percent of shrinkage.

Windpants are fantastic! Those that zip from the bottom are easiest to take off and on over boots. If you wear long underwear with a pair of fleece pants or heavy sweatpants over the underwear and the windpants over both, it keeps you cozy and warm while allowing easy movement.

## THE BASICS

Here are five good rules to remember when winter birding.

1. Always plan for it to be colder than what has been forecast.
2. Bird watching next to water usually feels at least 10 degrees colder than in surrounding areas.
3. Remember the wind chill factor; exposed skin is especially at risk.
5. Learn to dress in layers. Don't put all your layers on until you reach your destination, as you may get too hot while traveling.
4. It's always better to have too many clothes on than to have too few. You can always take clothes off if you are too hot. Carry a daypack to stuff things into that you don't need, or to carry layers to add.

## BODY ARMOR

A windproof coat usually has a flap over the zipper (lots of cold wind can come in through a zipper) and fitted cuffs or Velcro tabs at the wrists to keep cold air from going up the sleeves. A hood is helpful to reduce cold air on the head or back of the neck.

Layered fashions (a windproof/waterproof coat with fleece jacket or vest underneath) are good for spring and fall as well as winter. Layers can easily be changed. A turtleneck with a warm sweater over it plus the fleece can keep you nice and toasty in even subzero weather. Any kind of warm clothing under the coat works.

## KEEP A LID ON IT

There is an old saying, if your feet are cold, put on a hat. That's because we lose a lot of body heat through the top of the head and neck. A lined waterproof hat with a bill to shield your eyes or glasses from the elements is highly recommended. Earflaps add extra coverage if needed. Add a neck scarf of made of knitted fabric or fleece that can be pulled over the chin, nose, and even the ears. This will protect you from wind and rain.

## WARM HANDS, HAPPY BIRDER

Take good care of your body's extremities. Wrists, hands, and ankles are bony and have blood vessels close to the



surface, which allows the blood to be cooled if you are not properly protected. Wind goes right through even the best of knitted wool gloves. The most effective gloves are windproof and waterproof and have cuffs or Velcro fasteners to keep wind from cooling your wrists and hands. Glove liners can add extra warmth. Several of the knitted stretchy type are comfortable and can be worn in fall and spring without a heavier glove over them. Remember that you're going to have to focus your binoculars, so try all layers on to see if you can still move your fingers easily.

## TOASTY TOES

Waterproof, insulated boots are a must to keep your feet warm and dry. Buy a boot that is a little big, this will allow room to wear extra-heavy socks. Heavy felt insoles can be added to the bottom of the boot under the boot liner or bootie. A lightweight wool insole can be put on top of the bootie to keep toes warm from above. Take socks, liners, and insoles with you when you try on boots. If you can't afford a pair of expensive boots right away, rubber galoshes worn over shoes with layered socks and insoles are good alternatives.

Sock liners are definitely worth purchasing. Socks that wick moisture away from your feet help keep your feet warm; layer socks as well. You must be

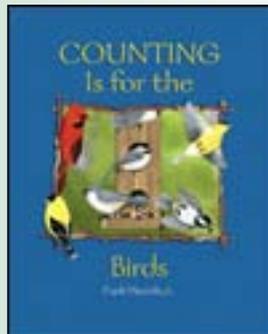
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# The Birder's Book Nook

## For the Future Birder

### **Counting Is for the Birds** by Frank Mazzola

Striking digital paintings coupled with lighthearted verse and engaging facts make this the perfect book for bird lovers old and young. Readers count 20 colorful backyard birds as they gather at the feeder.



### **Thunder Birds: Nature's Flying Predators** by Jim Arnosky

Acclaimed naturalist and illustrator Jim Arnosky helps birds and imaginations take glorious flight in this breathtaking nonfiction picture book with six giant gatefolds. Arnosky will draw out kids' inner explorer as he explains why there are no feathers on a vulture's head, which bird is the deep-diving champ, what makes an owl's wings perfectly silent in flight, and much more.

### **What Makes a Bird a Bird?** by May Garelick

What is the one special thing that makes a bird a bird? Is it flying, or building a nest, or laying eggs? In this beautifully illustrated book, May Garelick poses many questions that lead the reader on an exciting search to find out what makes a bird a bird.

### **The Boy Who Drew Birds: A Story of John James Audubon** by Jacqueline Davies

This book reveals how the youthful Audubon pioneered a technique essential to our understanding of birds. Capturing the early passion of America's greatest painter of birds, this story will leave young readers listening intently for the call of birds large and small near their own homes.

### **Letter Birds: ABC bird book** by Pam Spremulli

Enjoy learning the alphabet and the natural world of birds via simple and colorful graphic illustrations. Each letter has a corresponding bird from the well-known C for Cardinal to the more exotic L for Lapwing. Children and parents will discover a wondrous array of birds from A to Z (yes, including X and U!).

### **Birds** by Kevin Henkes

Birds come in all sizes, shapes, and colors. Birds are magic. Birds are everywhere. If you listen very carefully you will hear them, no matter where you live. And if you look very closely you will see them, no matter where you are. And if you can't go outside right this minute, you can always read this book!

## For the Budding Ornithologist



### **Bird Feathers: A Guide to North American Species** by S. David Scott

This guide teaches birders to use the characteristics of wing types and feather morphology to identify feathers - not only by species but also by their place on the bird's body. The introductory chapters give a detailed overview of the feather - how feathers developed, the parts of a single feather, and the variety of types of feathers on a bird. In the feather identification section, over 400 color photographs show feather samples from 379 bird species from all over North America.

### **On Feathered Wings: Birds in Flight** by Richard Ettlinger

When we imagine birds, we think of them soaring through the sky, high above our heads—yet photographs of birds in the air are surprisingly rare. On Feathered Wings features the work of seven photographers who have spent their lives camping out, donning waders, and lying in wait for the greatest shots of birds doing what they do best: flying!

With the holidays right around the corner here are a few suggestions that may help you with your shopping. All titles were available on Amazon at the time of writing.

### **Birds in Flight: The Art and Science of How Birds Fly** by Carrol L. Henderson

They soar and they glide, they flap and they flutter, they swoop and they plummet. Solo or en masse, in formation or pas de deux, birds in flight are in their element, their airborne behavior as varied and distinctive as their plumage. In this book, wildlife biologist Carrol Henderson, a twenty-year veteran of bird-watching around the globe, offers his insights into spotting and identifying birds in flight.

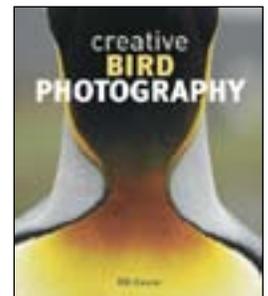
### **Peterson Reference Guide to Molt in North American Birds** by Steve N.G. Howell

For those whose interest goes beyond simply identifying birds, questions such as What triggers molt to start? How fast do feathers grow? and How long do they last? offer a fascinating window into the lives of birds. Put plainly, molt relates in some way to everything a bird does, including where it lives, what it eats, and how far it migrates. Here, for the first time, molt is presented for the nonscientist. Molt is very orderly and built on only four underlying strategies: simple basic, complex basic, simple alternate, and complex alternate. This book clearly lays out these strategies, relates them to aspects of life history, such as habitat and migration, and makes this important subject accessible.

## For the Amateur Photographer

### **Creative Bird Photography: Essential Tips and Techniques** by Bill Coster

The author shares the secrets of creating memorable images of the birds one meets, going about their often complex and fascinating lives, plus shows how to photograph specific aspects of birds' lives, such as eating and drinking, courtship and flight.



### **The Bird Photography Field Guide:**

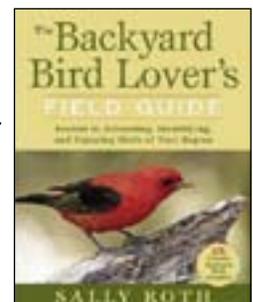
#### **The essential handbook for capturing birds with your digital SLR** by David Tipling

Although small enough to fit in a jacket pocket or camera bag, the Bird Watcher's Photography Field Guide introduces and instructs on each stage of the digital photography process, describing all the necessary equipment, discussing specialist field-craft techniques, and showing you how to manipulate and enhance your photos.

## For the Backyard Birder

### **The Backyard Bird Lover's Field Guide: Secrets to Attracting, Identifying, and Enjoying Birds of Your Region** by Sally Roth

A stunning full-color guide to one of America's most popular hobbies, with a region-by-region approach that unlocks the key to quick and easy bird identification.



### **The Audubon Backyard Birdwatcher: Birdfeeders and Bird Gardens** by Robert Burton

Learn how to create a bird-friendly environment in your own backyard. Whether situated in a city or in the countryside, you'll get the practical information you need on using gardens, food, water, and nesting sites to entice birds to visit.

# Book Nook



### For the History Buffs

#### **Birdwatcher: The Life of Roger Tory Peterson** by Elizabeth J. Rosenthal

Birdwatcher is a comprehensive, illustrated biography of Roger Tory Peterson—a hero in the conservation world—including interviews with friends, family, and protégés.

#### **Of a Feather: A Brief History of American Birding** by Scott Weidensaul

Of a Feather traces the colorful origins of American birding: the frontier ornithologists who collected eggs between border skirmishes; the society matrons who organized the first effective conservation movement; and the luminaries with checkered pasts, such as Alexander Wilson

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## Winter Birrding!!

able to wiggle your toes comfortably inside your boots with whatever insoles and socks you will be wearing, otherwise your circulation will be im- paired.

### A HELPFUL ADDITION

Chemical warmers for hands and toes are available in most sporting goods shops, usually in the hunt- ing or skiing section. Try to find the ones that biode- grade. They can really help you warm up. Remem- ber always to follow the directions for use.

### KEEP THE FIRE BURNING

Remember, a snack of nuts, seeds, dried fruits, candy bars, or cookies can help maintain body temperature. A

(a convicted blackmailer) and the endlessly self-mythologizing John James Audubon. The author also recounts the explosive growth of modern birding that began when an awkward schoolteacher named Roger Tory Peterson published A Field Guide to the Birds in 1934.

### For the Would-be Competitive Birders

#### **Extreme Birder: One Woman's Big Year** by Lynn E. Barber

In 2008, Lynn Barber's passion for birding led her to drive, fly, sail, walk, stalk, and sit in search of birds in twenty-five states and three provinces. Traveling more than 175,000 miles, she set a twenty-first century record at the time, second to only one other person in history.

#### **Big Twitch: One Man, One Continent, a Race Against Time-A True Story about Birdwatching** by Sean Dooley

As a self-proclaimed twitcher—a birdwatching extremist who travels around the country trying to catch a glimpse of as many species of birds as possible—the author took a year off in 2002 with the goal of seeing 700 birds in one year. Populated by unusual characters and interesting species of birds, this part confessional—part travelogue for both bird nerds and the general population follows the author as he works out what it means to be normal despite his unusually avid compulsion toward twitching.

### For those Who like to Ponder

#### **Bayshore Summer: Finding Eden in a Most Unlikely Place** by Pete Dunne

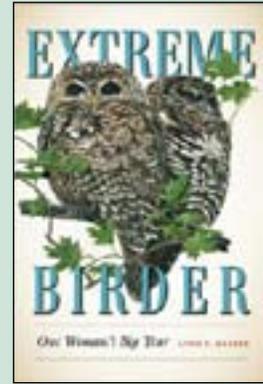
Bayshore Summer is at once an expansive and intimate portrait of a special place, a secret Eden, and a glimpse into a world as rich as summer and enduring as a whispered promise.



thermos with a good hot drink can warm your insides.

### THE REWARD

Winter birds are worth getting out to see! With a little thoughtful preparation, you, too, can see the beautiful birds of winter in comfort and safety.



### Zen Birding by David M. White

Zen Birding is the art of being in the moment with birds as sentient beings. Discover an enhanced appreciation of place and being in the moment along with ways to communicate and engage with birds and their families all of which open us up to our oneness with nature.

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Audubon News is published monthly from September through May by the Mecklenburg Audubon Society, a chapter of National Audubon. Local members receive the newsletter via postal mail and/or electronic mail. It is also posted on the Mecklenburg Audubon web site - meckbirds.org.