

Audubon News

Volume 16, Issue 9

P.O. Box 221093 Charlotte, NC 28222

May 2011

Monthly Meeting: Thursday, May 5th • 7:30 PM

Avian Communications:

How do they make those sounds and what are they saying?

Spring is an incredible time of year. Flowers blooming, trees budding, bee buzzing and much more. One thing that even the most unobservant person notices is all the new sounds. Most of them are being created by lively bundles of feathers getting ready to raise a family. What is all the noise about and how do these tiny creatures make it will be the subject of our May meeting.

Rob Bierregaard, resident ornithologist at UNC Charlotte for another month, will regale us with sweet tunes of many of our local birds and explain how and why they make all those different sounds.

Don't miss this fascinating program, on **Thursday, May 5th** in the fellow-



ship hall of the **Sharlon Seventh Day Adventist Church** (920 Sharon Amity) at **7:30 PM**. Refreshments available around 7:15 PM. I am sure we will be in for a real tweet!

Annual Elections

The following members have agreed to run for positions on the MAS board. The membership will vote them into office at the May meeting.

Jan Fowler	<input type="radio"/>
Bob Haussler	<input type="radio"/>
Christy Hill	<input type="radio"/>
Ken Kneidel	<input type="radio"/>



Annual Picnic June 9th

Latta Park Pavillion
6 PM til ????



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Who's New?

KARYL GABRIEL
VICTORIA MCCASLAND
KATHLEEN SINCLAIR
MATTHEW & JESSICA SMEDLEY
MICHAEL TRESMOTT

Upcoming Events

5/1	Latta Park (FT)
5/5	Monthly Mtg.
5/6-8	CBC Spring Weekend
5/8	Latta Park (FT)
5/10	Latta Prairie (FT)
5/11	Latta Park (FT)
5/14	UNCC area (FT)
5/17	Little Sugar Creek (FT)
5/18	Six Mile Creek (FT)
5/20-2	ANC Annual Meeting
5/21	Beginning Bird Walk
6/4-5	Charleston Area (FT)
6/9	Annual Picnic

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!!

Latta Park (Dilworth)

1/2 Day (Easy)*

Sunday, May 1st - Contact: Ron Clark [waxwing@bellsouth.net]

Sunday, May 8th - Contact: Dennis Lankford [harecubed2@carolina.rr.com]

Wednesay, May 11th - Contact: Dave Lovett

Latta Park in Dilworth is a real gem in spring migration. It is possible to have a 15 warbler day, with surprises like Wilson's or Nashville. Add to this 4 or 5 thrushes, 3 or 4 vireos, scarlet tanager, rose-breasted grosbeak, both orioles and many others, and it's hard to stay away. We will have many trips to this birdy park in April and May. You will find birders there almost every day from mid-April to mid-May. We will be leading 'official' walks which will meet at 8:30 AM on the dates listed above. The meeting spot will be at the parking lot on East Park Ave. between Winthrop Ave. and Springfield Ave.

Tuesday, May 10th: Latta Plantation Prairie (Huntersville)

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

This is a two-mile walk on a dirt road. It is a great area for yellow-breasted chat, indigo bunting, blue grosbeak, summer tanager, and prairie warbler. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot at the Nature Center in Latta Nature Preserve.

Saturday, May 14th: University City Area

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

We will check out a couple of sections of Mallard Creek and Toby Creek Greenways for lingering migrants and breeding resident birds. Meet at 8 AM at the McDonald's across from the Univerisy Hospital on Rt. 29 (a.k.a. North Tryon) just north of W. T. Harris.

Tuesday, May 17th: Little Sugar Creek Greenway

1/2 Day (Easy) • Contact: Vivian & Dean Sprehe [vsprehe@carolina.rr.com]

Join Dean and Vivian Sprehe in their "backyard" as we bird this flat greenway off Park Rd extension. We'll start at 8:30 in the parking lot.

Wednesday, May 18th: Six-Mile Creek Greenway

1/2 Day Easy • Contact: Dave Lovett

Dave Lovett will lead this trip. If Kentucky and Swainson's warblers are going to be at this site this year, they will have arrived by now. We'll meet at 8:30 in the parking lot on Marvin Rd.

Saturday, May 21st: Beginning Bird Walk

1/2 Day (Easy) • Contact: Sally Miller [sallyart@bellsouth.net]

Designed for folks just getting acquainted with birds and bird watching this walk will focus on identifying common local birds and tips for using binoculars and field guides as well as just finding the bird in the bush.

Sally Miller will be leading this trip at McApline Creek Greenway (Monroe Rd. Entrance). We will meet at 8:30 AM.

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.



Summer Tanager



Prairie Warbler



Indigo Bunting

Detailed directions to meeting spots can be found at meckbirds.org/trips

Field Trips



June 4th-5th. - Charleston Area birding

Weekend Trip (Moderate) • Contact: Ron Clark [waxwing@bellsouth.net]

We'll cover Bear Island and Donnelley Wildlife Management Areas, Caw Caw Interpretive Center and another area which has no name. Two years ago, we had 104 species, including black-bellied whistling duck, least bittern (about a dozen), king rail for 10 minutes, Mississippi kite and a swallow-tailed kite that flew within 30' of us. The highlight was a 5-second look at a black rail about 20' away. The trip will start on Saturday morning, but if anyone gets there Friday afternoon, we'll go to Botany Bay Wildlife Management Area, near Edisto Beach. More details as we get closer.



Frustrated by those little irritating songs and chips emanating from an early morning avian orchestra? Or are you just trying to improve your birding skills by adding bird song identification to your already complicated life?

As a novice birder matures, it quickly becomes apparent that ninety percent of birding is half listening. An experienced birder rarely relies solely on sight when either casually birding or seriously conducting surveys and counts. In fact, since some species frequently forage and skulk entirely hidden from view and other species look nearly identical to one another, song recognition is imperative if you wish to raise your birding skills to a higher level.

How do you go about learning these songs and chip notes? First, forget everything you have ever heard or wished about bird song identification being easy and quickly learned. Only extremely gifted people can master birding by ear quickly. Birders who point out and label a faint "zipp" from a brushy field half a mile away without even pausing in their conversation have been at this a long, long time, in fact, probably too long.

How To Learn Bird Songs

by Georgann Schmalz, President - Atlanta Audubon Society

Learning bird songs takes patience, perseverance, and persistence, along with a good ear, a good tutor, and a good deal of practice. The best method is to bravely venture out with a patient teacher who never tires of endlessly telling you, "that's a Carolina Wren; that's a Carolina Wren, that's a Carolina Wren." And just when you think it's safe, this same saintly person will devilishly throw out, "that's a Carolina Wren's aggressive chip note, but the one before that was its contact trill note" so on and so on as the bird goes through its repertoire of 700 million noises.

Nothing, absolutely nothing, is better than watching a bird sing. It always seems like the more effort you put into finding a bird and watching those beautiful notes pour out of its little throat, the better you will learn that song. After all, who wants to go through that effort of finding the little guy again?

The next best method is watching a video of a bird singing. Cold, snowy winter days are perfect for plunking yourself down in front of the computer and spending time with one of the birding CD-ROMs. New technology such as an iPod can also provide you a real boost up the learning curve. An iPod can organize all your bird tunes into playlists by families, habitat, sound-alikes, or any other convenient system you desire for learning bird songs.

Visit your local birding store or browse through any birding magazine or website to find details on CD ROMs, tapes and CDs, or iPods for bird songs. Some of the recordings are tutorial, teaching you how to listen and what to listen for. Others simply play the birds' songs in phylogenetic order. Once you have secured a source of songs, try to incorporate a few of these hints to birding by ear:

Learn your common birds first.

Train yourself to listen for each song, not the entire chorus. This is probably the most difficult part of hearing bird songs because some are quieter than others, or farther away, higher pitched, shorter in duration, or sung only once every three minutes. Try to hear and identify the closest, loudest, most obvious songs first. Then ignore them and listen in between for farther away, softer songs.

Use gimmicks. If a bird sounds like squeaky brakes, make a note of it. If another one sounds like your mother-in-law, write that down. You can make up your own voice gimmicks or you can use the widely accepted ones that even the best birders in the world use. There gimmicks are called mnemonics or memory hints for bird songs. Keep this list handy or commit it to memory and you will be surprised how much these little birds have to say to you.



The Cerulean Warbler (*Dendroica cerulea*) is a migratory bird whose fate depends on actions taken towards its conservation in the Andean regions, where coffee is produced, and in the northeastern United States, where coal is extracted. This brings two enormous challenges: first, we need to identify and take measures to adapt coffee-

ible productive systems and remnant ecosystems throughout their distribution range, while protecting those plants and animals that share their habitats.

There have also been advances in the formation of alliances and partnerships to work towards their conservation, including representatives from both regions, and a variety of actors

THE CERULEAN WARBLER: A Species Suspended between COFFEE and COAL

growing and coal-exploiting regions so that instead of threatening this species, they promote its conservation; second, we need cooperation among people working towards its conservation throughout the whole hemisphere.

Even with significant advances in knowledge about its distribution and preferred habitats, information gaps remain regarding migratory behavior and ecology during its stay in South America. In the coming years we need to identify areas with a high conservation priority and high densities of individuals, in order to implement continuous monitoring programs that teach us which habitats and landscapes can be used successfully by these birds. This research must result in tools and strategies to promote compat-

interested both in the protection of migrant birds, and in the agricultural productivity of the regions they inhabit. Because of the economic and social importance of coffee in Colombia, to help the Cerulean Warbler we must find incentives for coffee-growers to take charge of their conservation process, and markets for biodiversity friendly coffee provide such opportunity. Being a migrant and vulnerable species, the Cerulean Warbler helps us get the attention of the international community, and the support to strive for environmental sustainability in Colombia's coffee industry.

These beautiful birds deserve all the attention and care of people living along their migratory routes; in this Biocarta we describe some details of its natural history, what we know about its stay in Colombia's coffee-growing regions, conservation stories and the partnerships needed to achieve its protection in a successful manner.

A Natural History of the Cerulean Warbler

• *They are migratory birds.* They breed in the NE United States during summer (May-August), travel south during fall (September-October) to spend the winter (November-February) in the Andes of Venezuela,

Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia, and in spring (March-April) they travel back to complete the cycle. It is likely that they make these journeys over sea, non-stop or with just one stop in Central America.

• *They are forest birds.* In North America, they live in broad areas of various types of broadleaf, deciduous forests, feeding on insects that they capture in the canopy. In South America they are found in mid-elevation mountain forests and in some of the crops that replaced them. They are very selective of habitat characteristics; they prefer sites with arboreal vegetation everywhere.

• *They are vulnerable birds.* According to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Cerulean Warblers are vulnerable to extinction. Habitat destruction and fragmentation along its residence and transitory grounds have led to a rapid decrease in the species total number of individuals.

• *In South America they like to keep company.* They are frequently observed as part of mixed flocks, or groups made up of several migrant and resident species that get together to gather food and protect each other from predators. This strategy, along with high winter site fidelity, seems to favor their survival.

• *Migration is a continuous process.* The habitat occupied and the resources found by the warblers during



their stay in South America, will have a direct effect on their capacity to survive migration, and to reproduce when they get back to North America. For this reason, researchers throughout their range need to work together to understand their complete annual cycles.

• *Their conservation depends on coffee and coal industries.* In South America, their preferred habitats coincide with coffee-growing regions where they concentrate on small forest patches, and coffee crops with diverse and complex amounts of shade that resemble a forest canopy. In North America their preferred woods are affected by coal mining and wood extraction activities. In Central America they are associated with primary forests, and they concentrate during a short season in a very small region.

What do We know about Cerulean Warblers in Coffee-growing regions?

We have more sightings than expected. Despite their small population size, Cerulean Warbler is a relatively common migrant in the coffee-growing areas, which makes us think that they have a high affinity towards this region.

They like diverse and complex shade. Most of our observations took place in Santander (San Vicente de Chucurí, San Gil, Pinchote, Páramo, Socorro and Valle de San José), a department characterized by coffee crops grown under dense shade, with a high diversity of native species in the canopy.

They like forest remnants. Other sightings took place in natural vegetation remnants, that are also important for the conservation of watersheds and other endemic and threatened species. This is the case of oak forests



in Acevedo (Huila), the Santa Librada forest reserve in Libano (Tolima), Planalto forest reserve in Manizales (Caldas, headquarters to Cenicafé), and forest fragments in Salento (Quindío).

• *They like landscapes with a high tree cover.* The site where we have more records is Tamesis (Antioquia); even though shade in this region is not as dense and diverse, the landscape has a high proportion of tree cover supplied by forest remnants in higher areas, scrub vegetation along creeks, live fences, and pastures with scattered trees.

They have a narrow altitudinal range. Cerulean Warblers prefer mountains: there are records between 800 and 2700 m, although the highest concentration is in the coffee-production belt (1000-2000 m).

They may stay with us for long periods of time. Even though our records go from September to April, in other places of Colombia it has been recorded from August to May, being present for more than 200 days a year.

Their habitat is in danger. Most of the original habitat for forest species is lost or in danger due to deforestation and overexploitation of forests, replacement of diverse shade with shade composed of few or introduced species, and transformation into sun coffee and pastures. These changes in land-use diminish both the quantity and quality of habitat available for these warblers.



Shade-Grown Coffee

The coffee plant evolved in Africa under the rainforest canopy and grows best in the shade. A traditional coffee farm can provide habitat to exuberantly varied birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians, insects, trees and flowering plants. The amazing thing about coffee farming is that it can be done in harmony with tropical forest conservation - and for many centuries, it was. Unfortunately, many coffee farms were converted to tree-free and bird-barren monocultures in recent years in a misguided attempt to increase production.

This transition, which has affected more than half the coffee farms in some countries and hundreds of thousands of acres, caught the attention of Audubon and other conservationists, leading to calls for a return to traditional shade-grown coffee production. Birders have been especially interest-

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Better for Birds and Birders

Birders and travelers in the tropics quickly see the connection between wildlife and coffee. In many tropical countries, coffee farming occupies much of the land, especially in the highland hills and valleys that were once cloaked in wildly diverse forests. Unfortunately, many of these coffee farms are monotonous rows and rows of intensely managed shrubs - monocultures - that are devastating to wildlife. But others are a mix of coffee bushes and trees - agro forestry - so wonderfully jungly that they are barely recognizable as farms at all. Birders often mistake them at first sight for wildlife refuges. These are shade-grown coffee farms.

Shade Grown Coffee



ed, since these farms are the winter homes to hundreds of species of long distance migrants. Many of our familiar warblers, tanagers, orioles and thrushes benefit from habitat provided by shade-grown coffee plantations, as do rainforest icons including parrots, toucans, motmots, and hummingbirds. These farms also provide habitat for a multitude of organisms, from mammals and amphibians to plants, fungi, and invertebrates.

Vital Habitat for Migrants

About 200 different species of birds are known as neotropical migrants, breeding in the habitat and backyards of North America and migrating south to Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean islands for the winter. There, the multi-layered vegetation of shade-grown coffee plantations provides abundant food and cover. In many areas, coffee farms offer the only good habitat amid deforested pastures and stark monocultures.

The migrants pack into the farms every fall, feasting on insects and fruits and often changing their feeding and flocking behavior considerably from that familiar to birders in the north. Some of them stop and stay put, often on the same farm as the year before; others linger and then move on, farther south. Both songbirds and birds of prey make the twice-yearly migration; some arrive after journeys of thousands of miles and open-ocean flights. A list

of familiar North American birds that are known to over winter or migrate through Latin American shade-grown coffee plantations is available in the "To Learn More" section below.

Consumers and Coffee

How can we coffee lovers know if the beans we drink come from farms that are environmentally friendly and socially responsible? How can we reward farmers that are trying to grow a great tasting coffee while protecting wildlife and the environment? The only way to know for sure is to seek out credible labels such as Rainforest Alliance Certified, which guarantees that farms are on the path toward true sustainability, and qualified organic labels, which guarantee that farms are not using harmful pesticides and fertilizers.

An estimated 25 million people grow coffee, most of them on small plots of land. Many, perhaps most, smallholders are organic farmers by tradition, in part because they could never afford to purchase agrochemicals. With the downturn of prices paid to farmers in recent years, pesticides and fertilizers are out of their reach. With organic farming techniques - some learned from their grandparents and some

from modern agronomy - coffee producers can maintain production and conserve healthy soils, which are their primary inheritance and asset. A sustainable farm management system is based on a holistic view of agriculture that includes conservation of natural resources, rights and benefits for farm workers, equitable trading, and the farm's relationship with nearby natural and human communities. Shade-grown and certified sustainable coffee is rapidly gaining popularity, because it is a product that anyone and everyone can support, and because of its excellent quality and taste.

Savoring a cup of certified sustainable coffee can improve livelihoods for farm families and conserve wildlife and tropical ecosystems - a rare "win-win" opportunity. So the next time you see a Baltimore Oriole, Sharp-shinned Hawk or other Neotropical migrant, raise a mug of shade-grown joe and celebrate the at-home contribution you've made to their survival.

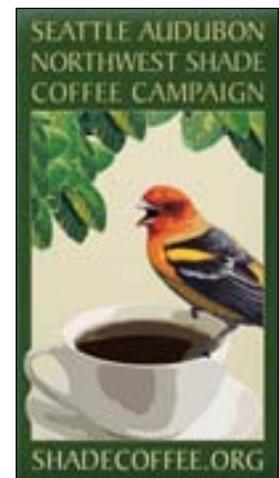
For More Information

- [Rainforest Alliance](#)
- [Northwest Shade Coffee Campaign](#)
- [Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center's Coffee Corner](#)
- [Audubon Shade Grown Coffee Club](#)

Where to Buy

- [Audubon Premium](#)
- [Birds and Beans Inc.](#)
- [Cafe Canopy](#)
- [Caffe Ibis](#)
- [Caribou Coffee Company](#)
- [Counter Culture Coffee \[Durham, NC\]](#)
- [Equal Exchange \[Ten Thousand Villages\]](#)
- [Green Mountain Coffee Roasters](#)

- [Grounds for Change](#)
- [Higher Ground Roasters](#)
- [Montana Coffee Traders](#)
- [Peace Coffee](#)
- [Poverty Bay Coffee Company](#)
- [Sacred Grounds](#)
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Books for Birders

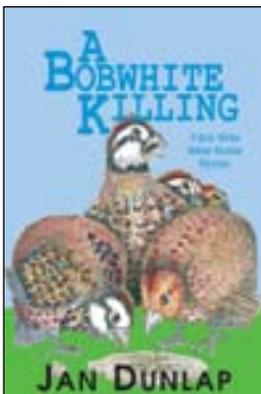
While these will probably never garner the literary acclaim of Margaret Atwood or Dan Brown, they sound like they could be a good, quick read by the pool or at the beach.

Author: Jan Dunlap

Murder on Warbler Weekend - For birder Bob White, May in Minnesota means three things: counseling high school students with spring fever, coaching the girls' tenth grade softball team and finding every warbler species during spring migration. But when his mother discovers a body in the midst of a morning of birding, disturbing items get added to Bob's seasonal list: murder, gambling addictions, shady politics, and controversial land deals, not to mention the possibility of wearing an orange jumpsuit while making license plates.

Boreal Owl Murder - Birding, the gentle pastime of watching birds, can at times become a competitive sport. Even at its worst, though, when birders don't give out information of their sightings and try to sidetrack other birders, it seldom rises to the level of serious harm. . . as a rule. But when Bob White, mild mannered school counselor and dedicated weekend birder, finds a body on a birding trip, the fact that there's an exception to every rule gets hammered home.

Bobwhite Killing - Birders always hope for a rarity when they go on a Birding Weekend, but when Bob White finds the weekend leader sporting bullet holes in his chest, he realizes that more than an unusual bird is at stake. To make matters worse,



Bob must contend with a lost love, big cats, ATV enthusiasts, and small-town intrigue as he sets out to find a killer, along with an elusive Northern Bobwhite, in Minnesota's Fillmore County. In this third Birder Murder mystery, Bob discovers that the past and present can collide in surprising ways to shape the future...assuming he'll survive the weekend and still be around to see it.

Author: Digby MacLaughlin

A Bird of a Different Color - Patrick McCluskey is a contented man, planning to spend the winter walking the white sandy beaches of Florida's Gulf Coast with his new partner, Judith, a beautiful and exceptionally talented illustrator of birds. A former Cleveland detective, McCluskey has put his son's tragic death, a messy divorce, a battle with booze and a career-ending bullet from a Saturday night special behind him. He is totally in love with Judith, and happily learning to know and love her birds. Then Lieutenant Bobby Baer of the Cypress Bay Police Department calls to tell him that Martha Axworthy, the fifty-something president of the local branch of the North American Ornithological Society, has been found dead, face-down in the mud of the Corkscrew Nature Reserve, and McCluskey is back in the sleuthing business.

A Bird to Die For - Retired American detective Patrick McCluskey's only ambition is to live happily ever after with his beautiful English partner, Judith, a famous and exceptionally talented illustrator of birds. McCluskey has put his son's tragic death, a messy divorce, a battle with booze and a career-ending bullet from a Saturday night special behind him. He is totally in love with Judith, and happily learning to know and love her birds. But when the battered body of one of England's most aggressive twitchers is found at the bottom a sea wall on North Norfolk's windswept coast, McCluskey knows he's back in the sleuthing business and in need of Judith's expertise to lead him through

the tangle of intense and often bitter rivalries that afflict the competitive birding scene. "There aren't many natural, born killers in birding," Judith says. "But jealousy, petty and otherwise, is quite common. And -- oh dear, yes -- the grievances are often nursed for a very long time."

Waiting for Godwits - Waiting for Godwits is one of series of murder mysteries written for birders in

which the vital clue that leads to the solving of the mystery is always to be found among the featured birds. Readers with the



greatest knowledge of birds and birding will be most likely to spot the clues, but the clues are not so obscure as to be impossible for someone whose experience does not go much beyond the garden bird table. And there's plenty for the non-birder as well.

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