



# Audubon News

Volume 17, Issue 3

P.O. Box 221093 Charlotte, NC 28222

November 2011

Monthly Meeting: Thursday, November 3, 2011 • 7:30 PM

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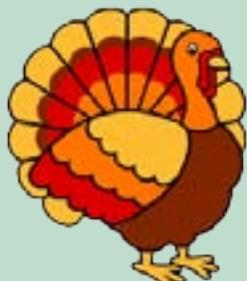


## Who's New?

Elizabeth Cook  
 Josh Sims  
 Jo Singer

## Upcoming Events

- 11/03 A Real Big Year (Monthly Mtg.)
- 11/05 Latta Prairie (FT)
- 11/10 Four-mile Creek Grnwy (FT)
- 11/12 Ribbon Walk NP (FT)
- 11/12 Beginning Bird Walk (FT)
- 11/16 Six-mile Creek Grnwy (FT)
- 11/20 Pee Dee NWR (FT)
- 11/26 Sunset Beach (FT)
- 12/01 Blue 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



## A Real Big Year

Many of us can only dream of being able to spend every hour of every day watching birds in their natural habitat. But that's pretty much what Bob Ake, our November speaker, and a friend, John Spahr, did in 2010 when they spent the year combing the North America trying to see as many birds as they could during their Big Year.

Bob tells the tale of the year from the beginning when a well-considered itinerary was followed, trying to keep costs under control, until the end, when every rarity was chased. In the process they drove personal cars, rented cars, took commercial flights, went on lots of pelagic trips, hiked, and ATVs. Along the way they saw some great scenery, were involved in some minor difficulties, had some really exciting times, and soared to many terrific highs.

Finishing the year with 731 species, Bob now ranks second all-time among those completing an ABA Annual list. His illustrated talk, in addition to



detailing his travels, describes the planning and the execution, gives a summary of the costs and miles traveled, and offers suggestions for anyone interested in trying an ABA Big Year. You can gain a taste of his Big Year by logging onto his blog <http://bobsbirds.blogspot.com>, to which he posted daily during his travels.

Don't miss reliving this real life adventure occurring on **Thursday, November 3rd at 7:30 PM** in the fellowship hall of the Sharon 7th Day Adventist Church (920 Sharon Amity).

## We're Moving!!!



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

### January 5, 2012

we will be meeting at the

### Tyvola Senior Center

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, November 5th - Latta Prairie.

1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Tom Sanders ([tsanders1993@msn.com](mailto:tsanders1993@msn.com))

Join Tom Sanders to bird this prairie and woods in Latta Nature Preserve. It's a two-mile walk on a dirt/gravel road. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot of the Nature Center in the preserve.

## Thursday, November 10th - Four-Mile Creek Greenway.

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

This is a two-mile boardwalk that is always good in the winter. We'll meet at 8:30 AM in the Johnston Rd. parking lot, and carpool to the other end.

## Saturday, November 12th - Ribbonwalk Nature Preserve.

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

This beautiful preserve on the north side of Charlotte is mostly woods, with one open field. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot on Hoyt Hinson Rd.

## Saturday, November 12th - Beginner's Bird Walk

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

This is designed for new birders, but anyone can come. Sally Miller will cover the basics for looking at birds, as we go through McAlpine Creek Greenway. If you need binoculars, let her know. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot on Monroe Road.

## Wednesday, November 16th - Six-mile Creek Greenway

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

We'll meet at 8:30 in the parking lot on Marvin Rd.

## Sunday, November 20th - Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge

Full Day • Moderate • Contact: Judy Walker ([birdwalker@mac.com](mailto:birdwalker@mac.com))

Wintering passerines will have settled in to the refuge and ducks should start arriving. This is always an interesting trip. We are never sure what we will find.

If you want to car pool we will meet at 7 AM in the parking area adjacent to the McDonald's at Windsor Square on Independence Blvd. You can also meet us at the bathrooms at the main entrance to the refuge on Rt. 52 at 8:15 AM. Please indicate whether you are planning to carpool or drive down directly when you contact the leader.

## November 26th-27th. Sunset Beach Area

Weekend Trip • Moderate • Contact: Taylor Piephoff ([piephofft@aol.com](mailto:piephofft@aol.com))

Taylor Piephoff will lead us on this coastal trip. Sunday the 27th will be a 1/2 day. Meet at the east end of Ocean Isle Beach at the public parking area for Ferry Landing Park with the gazebo. This is different from where we have met in the past. There is a sign that says Ferry Landing Park now. Plan to meet at 8:00 AM.

Places we will cover will be the east end of Ocean Isle Beach (including a beach walk and scrub boardwalk); OIB wastewater treatment plant, Twin Lakes and some undeveloped residential areas. We will never be very far from rest-rooms and food stops. Approximately 1.5 miles of walking, mostly in the morning beach walk. Make sure you contact Taylor by November 20th if you plan on joining the group.

### 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.



Bobwhite Quail



Brown Pelican  
©Jeff Lemons

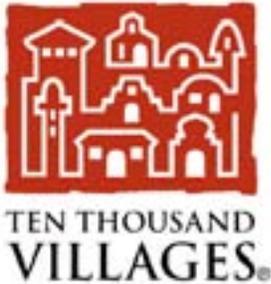
# Field Trips



King-necked Duck  
alaska.fws.gov



Loggerhead Shrike  
©Brad Kuntz



Are you looking for holiday gifts that are unique, tasteful and have a social/conservation impact? Then plan on doing your holiday shopping at Ten Thousand Villages, a non-profit store at Cotswold Shopping Center that sells fairly-traded gifts from around the world. **If you make a purchase between November 6th and November 12th and indicate you are a member of Mecklenburg Audubon, ten percent of the value of your purchase will be donated back to MAS by the Charlotte Ten Thousand Villages store.** The store has lots of inter-

## Saturday, December 3rd - Wintering Waterfowl

1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Judy Walker (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 (birdsalot@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)

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)

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

## MAS Sponsored Christmas Bird Counts

- Saturday, Dec. 17th • Gaston CBC • Contact: Steve Tracy (stevepath1@aol.com)
- Sunday, Dec. 18th • Lake Norman CBC • Contact: Taylor Piephoff (piephofft@aol.com)
- Monday, Dec. 26th • Charlotte CBC • Contact: Ken Kneidel (kendel2@earthlink.net)
- Saturday, Dec. 31st • Pee Dee CBC • Contact: Judy Walker (birdwalker@me.com)

## Early Bird Holiday Shopping

### November 6th -12th

esting and unique gifts, priced from \$2-\$200, with the large majority of gifts being less than \$25.

**There will be a wine and cheese reception especially for MAS members at the store on Friday, November 11th from 5:30-8:00 PM.** Bill Duston, a Ten Thousand Villages volunteer and a MAS member, will be on hand that night at the store to assist you with your purchases. Last year, we tallied about \$1400 in sales which meant about \$140 for MAS. Your purchases will support MAS's education and conservation efforts plus help developing economies stay green. So

consider doing your Holiday shopping there and help support conservation effort here and abroad!

Ten Thousand Villages is located at Cotswold Shopping Center (corner of Sharon Amity and Randolph Roads) in the pedestrian walkway behind Books-a-Million and David's Jewelry Store. For further directions, you can call the store directly at 704 365-0010 or contact Bill at bduston@carolina.rr.com.

For more info about the organization's mission visit - [www.tenthousandvillages.com](http://www.tenthousandvillages.com)

When the explorers first set foot upon the continent of North America, the skies, marshes and lands teemed with an astonishing variety of wildlife. Native Americans had been wise stewards of these precious natural resources. Unfortunately, it took the explorers and the settlers who followed only a few decades to decimate these resources. Millions of waterfowl were destroyed, some

Stamp. The very first Federal Duck Stamp was designed by J. N. "Ding" Darling, a political cartoonist from Des Moines, Iowa, who at that time was appointed by Franklin Roosevelt as Director of the Bureau of Biological Survey, the predecessor to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Hunters willingly pay the stamp price to insure the survival of our natural resources.



## Put Your Stamp on Conservation Buy a Duck Stamp

species to the point of extinction, at the hands of market hunters and a handful of overly ambitious sportsmen. Millions of acres of wetlands were drained to feed and house the ever increasing populations, greatly reducing waterfowl breeding and nesting habitat.

Not to be outdone by man, Mother Nature periodically takes her toll with devastating droughts and floods. During these periods, migration rest areas and wintering grounds are severely impacted. As recent as 1993, record-breaking floods ravaged the fertile Midwest, leaving more devastation in their wake. A large part of this catastrophe could have been avoided had many of the natural wetlands of that area not been drained and filled in for farming and housing and industrial development. Many people do not realize that wetlands help to maintain ground water supplies, act as a filtration system for pollutants, store floodwaters, protect shorelines from erosion, and modify climatic changes.

In 1934, with the passage of the Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act, an increasingly concerned Nation took firm action to stop the destruction of migratory waterfowl and the wetlands so vital to their survival. Under this Act, all waterfowl hunters 16 years of age and over must annually purchase and carry a Federal Duck

Stamp. Approximately 98 cents of every duck stamp dollar goes directly into the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund to purchase wetlands and wildlife habitat for inclusion into the National Wildlife Refuge System—a fact that ensures this land will be protected and available for all generations to come. Since 1934, better than half a billion dollars has gone into that Fund to purchase more than 5 million acres of habitat. Little wonder the Federal Duck Stamp Program has been called one of the most successful conservation programs ever initiated.

In coming years, with the number of hunters dwindling, three groups of Americans will need to assume an increasing role in filling the gap in the purchase of Federal Duck Stamps—collectors, art enthusiasts and conservationists.

Collectors and art enthusiasts consider these stamps "miniature pieces of art" and have been great supporters of the program. The collection of duck stamps is a growing and constantly evolving phenomenon. A collector who had purchased each of the current stamps, at issue price, would have spent around \$400. This investment today would be worth well over \$5,000.

It the third group, the other conservationists, which includes the bird watching community, that we hope will take a more active role in purchas-

ing duck stamps. Increasingly, birders are using the National Wildlife Refuges to pursue their hobby and grow their list of "life birds". Other conservationists buy the stamps as a way of ensuring that these wild places will be around for all generations. And, possession of the most recent Federal Duck Stamp provides free admission into all National Wildlife Refuges.

The purchase of a Federal Duck Stamp provides an opportunity for every United States citizen to take a stand in the preservation of our natural heritage. All of us, working together, can and have made a difference.

### Carolina Refuges Funded in Part by Federal Duck Stamps

- Currituck NWR
- Cedar Island NWR
- Great Dismal Swamp NWR
- Mackay NWR
- Mattahuskeet NWR
- Pea Island NWR
- Pee Dee NWR
- Pocosin Lakes NWR
- Roanoke NWR
- Swanquarter NWR
- Savanna NWR
- Cape Romain NWR
- Carolina Sandhills NWR
- Santee NWR

# How to Choose a Scope That's Right for You

It's the time of year that we start thinking about what Santa might bring us for Christmas. For avid birders that often includes visions of birding scopes. With a scope you can see more birds and see much more of the bird. The question is which is the scope is best for you.

Scopes can range in price from \$200 to \$2,000. So what's the difference between a cheap scope and an expensive one? Let's start with the basics and then define and compare the different features of spotting scopes to help you decide on a purchase.

## Features to consider:

**Magnification** - In general, a good magnification range for your bird watching spotting scope is between 15-60x. Below 15x, you might as well use your binoculars. Above 60x, the field of view becomes too narrow and image brightness begins to dim, especially a problem in low light conditions. Most often, 20-40x gives both the best field of view and image brightness for bird watching.

A point to remember: The higher the magnification, the larger the objective lens is needed to maintain image quality. Additionally, any distortions (heat waves) or scope movement (tripod tremors) will be intensified at higher magnifications.

If you do want more magnification, remember that the quality of the lenses and prisms (which affects transmittance) become increasingly important. Low quality lenses and

prisms will produce low quality images, especially above 45x. The highest useful magnification of your scope depends on the quality of the lenses and prisms, the objective lens size (discussed below), and outside conditions (low or bright light, haze, heat waves, etc.)

**Objective Lens (Aperture)** - The size of the objective lens determines the light-gathering capacity of a spotting scope. More light = more clarity and detail which = a brighter, clearer image. Aperture is defined as the diameter of the objective lens, usually measured in millimeters. Bird watching objective lenses normally range between 50-80mm.

In general, a larger objective lens equals more weight and more \$\$\$. When deciding on the objective size for your scope, get the largest objective you're willing to pay for, but also willing to carry. If you're willing to carry a little extra weight, an 80mm objective lens will give you good images in nearly all light conditions, especially at higher magnifications.

Think about where and when you will be doing most of your birding. If you live in Seattle (many cloudy days), go for the bigger objective lens. If you live in a dry, sunny location, i.e. Arizona desert, and do most of your birding during the day (not dusk or dawn) and you want to carry something lighter, perhaps you could consider going a little smaller.

**Exit Pupil** - Along with objective lens size, the exit pupil is the best measure of image brightness. The exit pupil is the diameter of light in millimeters visible through the eyepiece. To calculate the exit pupil divide the objective lens size by magnification. So the higher the magnification, the larger the objective lens needed to maintain image brightness.

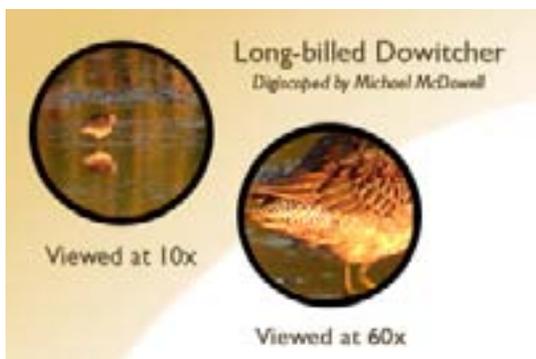


As a general rule of thumb, try to get a scope where the exit pupil does not go below 1.33mm. Because in conditions besides optimal (bright, calm), an exit pupil below this will be insufficient, especially at higher magnifications.

So if you had a scope with a 20-60x zoom eyepiece, an 80mm objective lens would be suitable for all magnification ranges.  $80\text{mm}(\text{objective lens size})/60$  (highest magnification) = 1.33mm (exit pupil size). However, a 50mm objective lens at 60x would give you an exit pupil of .83 mm ( $50/60=.83$ ). Not as good, especially in lower light conditions.

**Eyepieces** - The eyepiece is what determines the magnification of your scope. It is also a factor in determining field of view, exit pupil size, and eye relief. Eyepieces sometimes are included with your scope but more often are sold separately. Most scopes have interchangeable eyepieces, specific to manufacturer and line, allowing you to choose one or more that fits your preferences. You can get either interchangeable fixed or single zoom (variable) eyepieces for your scope. There are some spotting scopes, usually zooms or waterproof scopes, which have eyepieces that are non-interchangeable.

Zoom eyepieces have a range of magnification levels from low to high, usually 15-45x or 20-60x. Bird-



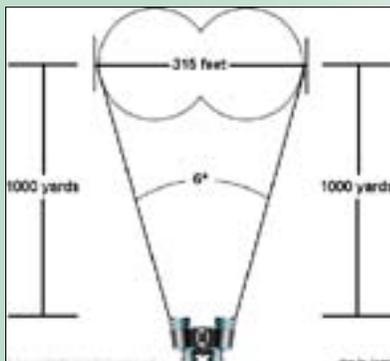
# Scopes

ers find these very useful because they can scan at the lower magnification (wider field of view) to find the bird, then use the higher magnification to see details.

Just remember to get a scope with an objective lens size that will be able to provide you with good images at all magnification ranges (review objective lens size and exit pupil size). The quality of the eyepiece glass and design affects image quality as well. So selecting an eyepiece is just as important as selecting the scope body.

Note that manufacturers may have eyepieces that can only be used on one design line while other may be used on multiple lines. You may want to consider this and see what eyepieces can be used on your scope if you plan on getting more than one.

**Field of View** - The linear field of view (FOV) is measured as the width of area visible at 1,000 yards (or meters) from the observer. It can also be expressed in degrees



as the angular field of view. Normally as magnification increases, field of view decreases.

In general, a wide field of view is better for following fast-moving objects or for scanning and finding birds in the scope. As discussed earlier in the eyepieces section, if most of your birding is done in wide open spaces, i.e. ocean seabird watching, hawk mountain ridges, then you may want to get a fixed wide-angle eyepiece that will provide you with a wider FOV.

You will notice that when comparing a 20x fixed eyepiece with a 20-60x eyepiece that the fixed 20x will have a wider field of view than the zoom at 20x. That is the result of its design.

**Optical Design** - The 2 basic optical designs of scopes are refractive and catadioptric. Nearly all birding scopes are refractive. The reason being that even though catadioptric scopes provide clearer images at higher magnification (of same weight of refractor), they cost significantly more than refractive scopes and are not as strong and durable for field use as refractive scopes. If you want that extra bit of edge for better images, have the cash, and think your scope won't get bumped around too much, then go for the catadioptric. Otherwise, a refractive scope is what you want. But remember, catadioptric scopes may have images that are vertically correct, but reverse the image left and right.

**Body Design: Angled or Straight** - There are two basic body designs of refractor spotting scopes: straight and angled. Straight scopes have the barrel and eyepiece aligned with each other, angled scopes have the eyepiece offset 45° or 90° from the barrel. There are pros and cons for both.

It's easier to follow birds that are moving with a straight design. Also if you use your spotting scope from inside the car with a window mount, a straight scope is not a problem. Many people find the straight line of sight is easier for accurate aiming. A straight design is also easier to use from an elevated position. For example, viewing your backyard birds from a second-story deck.

On the other hand, if you are tall or do a lot of birding with groups, or most of your viewing is above the horizon (looking at cliffs, viewing soaring raptors, birds on tree-tops) than perhaps an angled design would be a better choice. It all depends how you want to use your spotting scope. An angled scope can be shared easier than a straight scope because more people of different heights can comfortably look into the scope without adjusting



the height.

Think about how you will most often be using your spotting scope. This will help you decide which design best suits your needs.

**Focus Mechanism** - There are 3 basic focusing mechanism designs: single knob, double knob, and helical. If you can, try different mechanisms and see which one works best for you. If you can't, then choose a knob focuser, which is generally preferred for bird watching and nature viewing.

**Glass Composition/Coatings** - Color aberration is sometimes noticeable with refractor scopes. This can be eliminated with the right kind of glass and coatings. Look for scopes with ED (extra low dispersion); FL (Fluorite); HD (High Density); and/or APO (apochromatic) glass. These elements will provide you with an image of higher clarity, detail, and sharpness, which in turn will reduce eyestrain.

Of course scopes with these extras add extra cost and weight, but you'll be paying the cost in frustration when you can't see those details on that special bird on an overcast (low-light) day.

Spend the extra money on your spotting scope, save by making coffee at home, renting movies, or skipping the fast-food. Not eating french-fries for a month may buy you the feathered look of a lifetime!

**Weather Proofing/Protection** - Unless your scope is going to reside inside your home, weather-proofing is not an option. You never know

# Scopes

when that rain cloud will just pop-up out of nowhere. Look for scopes with waterproof and fog-proof (nitrogen/dry gas filled) designations. Rubber armoring is also a nice addition. It provides protection against abrasive materials, corrosion and helps cushion the scope against unexpected impacts (oops!). It also makes it easier and more comfortable to handle in cold, wet weather.

**Eye Relief** - This is an important feature on for eyeglass wearers. It is the distance in millimeters between the eyepiece of the spotting scope and your eye that still allows you to

see a complete field of view image in focus.

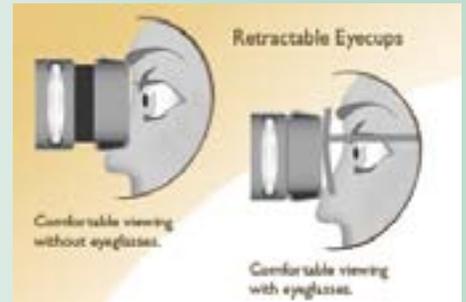
When someone is wearing eyeglasses their eye is further away from the spotting scope eyepiece, which means a longer eye relief is needed in order to see the entire field of view. For most eyeglass wearers, an eye relief between 12-15mm will be adequate. Without adequate eye relief, you won't get a complete field of view and you'll need to remove your glasses in order to see the image properly. So long eye relief promises full field viewing with eyeglasses. As mentioned previously in the eyepiece section, there are eyepieces specifically made with long eye relief. You may also want to select eyepieces that have folding or rollback eyecups so you can get your eyes closer.

**Close focus** - Close or near focus is the distance between the scope and the nearest object you can focus on, while maintaining a good image and sharp focus. In general, as magnification increases, the minimum close focal distance also increases. So scopes will typically have longer close focus ranges than binoculars. For bird watching, a short close focus is beneficial for seeing details of a bird that has landed up-close to your scope. It is also better for taking photographs. So if this is important to you, selecting a scope with a close distance of 15 ft. or less would be optimal.

## Summary

Get a lightweight, strong & sturdy scope. If it's not lightweight, it will be uncomfortable to carry around. And if it's not well built with strong housing, the first time it gets bumped when you're frantically grabbing it from your back seat to see that lifetime peep (a.k.a sandpiper), you may be very disappointed when the focus doesn't focus. You get what you pay for so don't go cheap.

As with anything else, weigh the cost against the benefits, and get the best spotting cope you can afford. If you can't afford a Swarovski, Leica or Zeiss (top-end, most expensive manufacturers) then look at others such as



Kowa, Nikon or Pentax, which can have just as good designs but are significantly loser in price. And don't forget to leave money in your budget for a sturdy tripod to support your scope otherwise it's like putting a Mercedes on golf cart tires.

*Adapted from BirdWatchingBliss.com*



## Where to Buy Duck Stamps

At most National Wildlife Refuges

**United States Postal Service**  
(Phone: 1-800 STAMP-24 (1-800-782-6724))

Online: The Postal Store

(Note: Once at the website enter search text "Duck Stamps" in upper right hand corner. Or call your local post office to check Duck Stamp availability.)

**Amplex Corporation**  
(the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service distributor)  
Phone: 1-800-852-4897  
Online: [www.duckstamp.com](http://www.duckstamp.com)

Duck Stamps can also be purchased at most major sporting goods stores that sell hunting and fishing licenses.

## MAS Board

**President - Ron Clark**

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**Vice President - Tom Sander**

[tsanders1993@msn.com]

**Secretary - Ken Kneidel**

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**Newsletter - Judy Walker**

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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](http://meckbirds.org).