



Audubon News

Volume 17, Issue 2

P.O. Box 221093 Charlotte, NC 28222

October 2011

Monthly Meeting: Thursday, October 6, 2011 • 7:30 PM

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Who's New?

LYNNE & PAUL DILLON
 JIM GUYTON
 AMANDA LYLE
 JIM & FAYE PUGH
 HEATHER REED
 JOSH SIMS
 JO SINGER

Upcoming Events

09/28	Lower McAlpine Grnwy (FT)
10/01	Cowan's Ford (FT)
10/04	Latta Park (FT)
10/06	Campbell Creek Grnwy (FT)
10/06	Egrets (Monthly Mtg.)
10/09	Big Sit
10/12	Nations Ford Grnwy (FT)
10/15	Holly Bend NP (FT)
10/15	Beginning Bird Walk
10/20	Evergreen NP (FT)
10/22	Huntington Beach (FT)
11/03	A Real Big Year (Monthly Mtg.)
11/05	Latta Prairie
11/10	Four-mile Creek Grnwy (FT)
11/12	Ribbon Walk NP (FT)
11/20	Pee Dee NWR (FT)
11/26	Sunset Beach (FT)
12/01	Blue Winged Warblers (Mtg.)
12/03	Wintering Waterfowl (FT)
12/17	Gaston CBC
12/18	S. Lake Norman CBC
12/26	Charlotte CBC

Elegant Egrets

"Daily Movements of Snowy and Great Egrets at a Mid-Western Colony"

Dr. John Brzorad, Director, Reese Institute for the Conservation of Natural Resources and Assistant Professor at Lenoir-Rhyne University will enlighten us on the daily movements of Snowy and Great Egrets, one of our infrequent Mecklenburg County migratory birds.

Dr. Brzorad has been studying foraging behavior and energetics of Great egrets and Snowy egrets at marshes, interior rivers and weirs since the 1990's. He has been involved in numerous projects researching and consulting on shore bird habitat restoration, even surveying animals in Mecklenburg County in 1996-1997 for the Habitat and Restoration Program for the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program. Dr. Brzorad has traveled the county studying, researching and writing on the environmental impact to wading birds. Over the course of those years he has observed some very interesting behavior of Snowy and Great Egrets he is excited to share with us.



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. 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!!

Wednesday, September 28th - Lower McAlpine Creek Greenway.

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

This is the section of greenway next to Four-Mile Creek. It is very good for migrants in the fall. We'll meet at the Johnston Road parking area at 8:30 AM.

Saturday, October 1st - Cowan' Ford Refuge.

1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: John Bonestel (jmclake@aol.com)

John Bonestell 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 8:30 AM.

Tuesday, October 4th - Latta Park (Dilworth)

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

This inner city park is always good in migration. We'll start at 8:30 AM at the shelter on East Park Ave.

Thursday, October 6th - Campbell Creek Greenway.

1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Tom Sanders (tsanders1993@msn.com)

This is a flat, paved three-mile roundtrip walk on the east side of town, led by Tom Sanders. Meet in the parking lot on Margaret Wallace Rd at 8:30 AM.

Sunday, October 9th - Big Sit

This is a fun-filled day of birding with minimal walking. It takes place in the viewing stand at Cowan's Ford Refuge. It will start before daybreak and end around 5-6, whenever the last folks leave. You can come for an hour or all day. Bring a chair, snacks and your binoculars. This is a great way to meet folks, and one of the few outings where talking is okay. Dave Lovett heads it up, and will be cooking hot dogs and whatever else he brings. Sign-up isn't necessary. If you have questions, contact Dave Lovett at birdsalot@webtv.net

Wednesday, October 12th - Nations Ford Greenway.

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

This trail has not been manicured yet, so it doesn't get many visitors. It does get some great birds though. There are a couple of small hills. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot of Bloom's at the corner of Regent Parkway & US 21. (Take a left at the Carowinds exit from I-77 south. Go one mile. Bloom's is on the left.)

Saturday, October 15th - Holly Bend Nature Preserve.

1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: John Bonestel (jmclake@aol.com)

This area is part of Cowan's Ford Refuge, recently acquired by the county. It comprises 250 acres, surrounding the old house on the right before the refuge. John Bonestell will lead us on our first trip to this area. Meet at 8:30 AM in front of the house.

Saturday, October 15th - Beginning Bird walk.

1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Sally Miller (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 though McAlpine Creek Greenway. If you need binoculars, let her know. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot on Monroe Road.

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

KEY TO PHYSICAL DIFFICULTY

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

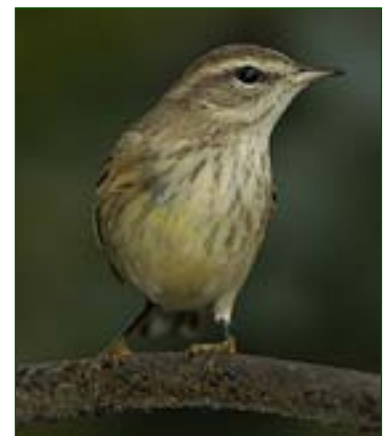
Moderate - Trails can be uneven with some hills. 1-2.5 miles of walking;

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

* - Trails are handicapped accessible.



Rose-breasted Grosbeak



Palm Warbler

Field Trips



Thursday, October 20th - Evergreen Nature Preserve.

1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Tom Sanders (tsanders1993@msn.com)

Tom Sanders will lead this trip through woods, pond, and open field. Meet at 8:30 AM in the bus lot at Winterfield School.

October 22nd - 23rd. Huntington Beach State Park.

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

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 the best time of the year to see Peregrine Falcons and Merlins, and I am sure we will be delighted with spectacular views of thousands of tree swallows.

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 also need to bring food.

Since many 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.

Saturday, November 5th - Latta Prairie.

1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Tom Sanders (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)

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)

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 20th - Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge

Full Day • Moderate • Contact: Judy Walker (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

Taylor Piephoff will lead us on this coastal trip. Sunday the 27th will be a 1/2 day. Details will be furnished later.



Loggerhead Shrike
©Brad Kuntz



Bobwhite Quail





What is Project FeederWatch?

Project FeederWatch is a winter-long survey of birds that visit feeders at backyards, nature centers, community areas, and other locales in North America. FeederWatchers periodically count the birds they see at their feeders from November through early April and send their counts to Project FeederWatch. FeederWatch data help scientists track broadscale movements of winter bird populations and long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance.

Project FeederWatch is operated by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Bird Studies Canada.

Who can participate?

Anyone with an interest in birds! FeederWatch is conducted by people of all skill levels and backgrounds, including children, families, individuals, classrooms, retired persons, youth groups, nature centers, and bird clubs.

What do I need to do?

Count birds that appear in your count site because of something that you have provided (plantings, food, or water). For each species, you will report only the highest number of individuals that you see in view at one time. By following this procedure, you are certain to avoid counting the same bird more than once. You will report your bird counts to scientists at the Lab of Ornithology either over



our web site or on paper data forms. Learn more about how to count birds for FeederWatch in the instructions section of this website.

Does it cost money?

There is a \$15 annual participation fee (\$12 for Lab members, CAN\$35

Project FeederWatch

Do Field Work from the Comfort of You Living Room!

for Canadian participants), which covers materials, staff support, web design, data analysis, and a year-end report (Winter Bird Highlights). Project FeederWatch is supported almost entirely by participation fees. Without the support of our participants, this project wouldn't be possible.

What will I get?

Participants receive a Research Kit, which contains instructions, a bird identification poster, a wall calendar, a resource guide to bird feeding, and a tally sheet—everything you need to start counting your birds. U.S. participants receive a subscription to the Lab of Ornithology's newsletter, BirdScope. Canadian participants, receive Bird Studies Canada's quarterly publication, BirdWatch Canada. Kits are shipped in the fall (or about 2 weeks after you sign up when you sign up during the FeederWatch season). You provide the feeder(s) and seed.

Where do I count the birds?

You designate an area that you can consistently observe throughout your count days. Participants are advised to choose obvious boundaries, such as the border of a yard or the area within a courtyard. Learn more about setting up a count site in the instructions section of this website.

When does the season start?

The survey is conducted each winter starting on the second Saturday of November and runs for 21 weeks, through the first Friday of April. You

may join at any time of year. The last day to sign up for any given season is Feb. 28 or 29. On Mar. 1 we begin taking sign-ups for the following season. Kits are shipped in the fall or, if you sign up during the season, about 2 weeks after you sign up.

How much time does it take?

It's up to you! Select your own bird-count days—two consecutive days once every two weeks (or every week if you enter data online and you choose to count that often). Count during all or part of those days. Learn more about selecting count days in the instructions section of this website.

Why should I participate?

FeederWatch results are regularly published in scientific journals and are shared with ornithologists and bird lovers nationwide. The counts you submit will make sure that your birds (or lack of birds) are represented in our papers and in the results found in the Explore Data section of this website.

As a FeederWatcher, you will learn more about winter birds and how their populations are faring. Read what participants say. You will also contribute to the science and conservation of North American feeder birds.

For a local perspective on this great project contact Steve Tracy at stevepath1@aol.com.



Early Bird Holiday Shopping

November 6th -12th

lenburg 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 interesting 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

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 Meck-**

Sunday, October 9th: The Big Sit Is On!!!

It's time again to get out your lawn chair and SIT! That's right you can sit and watch birds ALL day with birding colleagues. What more could you ask for?

The Big Sit! is an annual, international, noncompetitive birding event hosted by Bird Watcher's Digest and founded by the New Haven (CT) Bird Club. Every team that observes this year's "Golden Bird" has a chance to win \$500. We hope bird watchers from around the globe will unite on this special day by participating in this event (it's FREE!).

The 17th annual Big Sit! will take place on Sunday, October 9, 2011. It's a fun bird-watching event open to everyone. A real or imaginary circle of 17 feet in diameter is created and we will sit inside it for 24 hours (well not quite, we'll go from pre-dawn till dusk), counting all the bird species we see or hear. It's that simple!

Now you may think bird watching events like this are attuned to "more serious" birders, but here are the top 5 reasons that everyone should participate in the Big Sit!

5. It's free and anyone can participate. Even if your birding travel is hindered by physical limitations, a busy workweek schedule, or budget constraints, you can get the most out of this location which you CAN reach.

4. Exotic rarities not required. Will you see eared quetzals? Probably not. But you'll be surprised at the sheer number of supposedly "common" birds that will pass by our location in a day's time.

3. It's an excuse to join a part. The Big Sit! has been called a tailgate party for bird watchers. Dave Lovett can cook up some pretty mean hot dogs and the brownies are always divine.

2. Fall migrants. October is when fall migration is in full swing.

This is the perfect opportunity to see migrants that only pass briefly through the area.

1. You're participating in citizen science. Taking time to count as many birds as possible will help catalog the species in our area.

So join us for all or part of day at the viewing stand at Cowan's Ford Wildlife Refuge along the shores Mountain Island Lake. The count starts at dawn and goes until dusk. Bring a chair, lunch and some good stories!



Bird Seed Basics



Every fall about this time I get questions from people asking what is the best birdseed to use to attract birds to the yard. The first thing I do is remind the person asking that birds are individuals and as individuals they have different preferences and needs. However, that doesn't mean you have to go out and poll every bird in the yard to find out what they need. Here is a quick summary of what the literature says about birds and birdseed in the southeast:

Sunflower: Probably the most widely preferred and eaten type of seed. Nearly fifty different species of birds are known to eat this premium grade fuel. It comes in several forms and varieties. Although the larger striped sunflower seed is enjoyed by a large number of birds, the smaller black-oiled seeds are easier for chickadee-size birds to handle. If you don't like all the mess under the feeder try hulled seeds often called sunflower hearts. These are more expensive and tend to spoil more quickly but are great patios and apartment balconies. Providing primarily sunflower seeds also attracts fewer house sparrows and starlings.

Millet: This small whitish seed is preferred by ground eating birds such as mourning doves, juncos, sparrows, etc. White proso millet is preferred over the red variety. Yes, house sparrows and starlings do like this seed too.

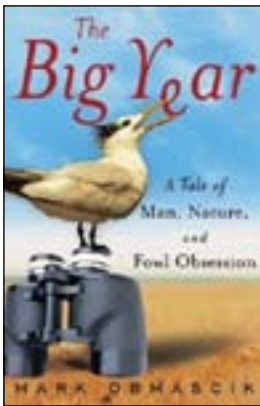
Niger: Although most of us refer to this seed as thistle, it is unrelated to the native thistles found in southern fields and byways. It is actually grown in Africa. Usually used to attract goldfinches other finches and pine siskens love these tiny seeds. To keep the house finches from gobbling down this somewhat expensive seed use a tube feeder with the feeding holes below the perches. Goldfinches and siskens are small and agile enough to feed upside down from the perch. House finches can't!

Peanuts: Loved by people and birds alike. Titmice, chickadees, nuthatches, woodpeckers, cardinals, many sparrows and even the Carolina wrens love it. Although unshelled peanuts are easier for the smaller birds to handle, I once put whole shelled peanuts out on a platform feeder and watched a titmouse abscond with most of them in less than ten minutes. He just stabbed the shells with his beak and they flew off to stash them someplace safe and sound. Stay away from 'peanut hearts', the hard little piece that fall out when the peanut is split in half. These are not as appealing as the meaty peanuts.

Safflower: Related to the sunflower, it will be eaten [but not necessarily preferred] by cardinals, titmice, doves, finches, grosbeaks and a few sparrows. It is not as messy as sunflower seeds but is more expensive. I tried it for a while because I read somewhere that squirrels won't eat it, which just goes to prove that not everything in print is true. My squirrels didn't hesitate a second.

Corn: Cracked corn attracts many of the same species that millet does - sparrows, juncos, and doves. Whole kernels are attractive to jays, some woodpeckers and what would be considered game birds which are hard to find in Mecklenburg county -- quail and turkey. It will also attract waterfowl including Canada Geese. Cornmeal can be mixed with suet or peanut butter to add energy. The downside of corn is that it attracts cowbirds, grackles, starling, rock doves and house sparrows.

Seeds to avoid: Milo (large reddish round seeds in birdseed mix), canary seed, buckwheat, wheat, rice, oats, flax and rape seed. Birds will eat this if nothing else is available but you know someone down the street will have the good stuff. They also attract cowbirds, starlings and grackles.



The Big Year - GOES HOLLYWOOD

By Mark Obmascik -
Simon & Schuster (2005)

If you have ever done a big year, you know first hand the triumphs, struggles, along with the utter frustration,

of trying to see as many species of birds in one year over a particular area. Whether it be your local patch, a province/state or, as in "The Big Year", all across North America, a big year is a BIG DEAL!!

Big years started to become a reality to the everyday birder when Roger Tory Peterson and James Fisher travelled across North America during 1953, publishing their adventures in "Wild America" with Roger having a total of 572 species by the end of the year. This total set the bar for North American birders to reach, and quickly break!

The Big Year, by Mark Obmascik, is about three birders; Sandy Kimoto, Al Levantin and Greg Miller, who set out across North America in 1998 to achieve the new big year record. The three birders begin their year without knowledge the others is even in competition with them, but this soon changes and it becomes a cross-country mad dash to December 31st!

The birders hit many hotspots, along with areas that are key to clinch the victory. This includes the Ruby Mountains in Nevada for Himalayan Snowcock, on pelagics, and out to Attu island which is the furthest west you can go (until the year 2000) in the ABA area for those sweet Asian vagrants that can hold the key to victory for a big year!

To get more acquainted with our trio, there is a brief chapter near the beginning of the book looks into their personal live including their childhood, their obsessiveness in birding, and how the attempt at a big year affects their personal lives, their

family life, their health, and of course, there financial life! As you may have guessed, doing a big year across the continent is not cheap!

As you may have guessed, the book features all the hilarity (and sometimes insanity) that makes it such a page-turner. From huge swarms of mosquitoes at the Snake Bite Trail in Florida to see Greater Flamingo, sea sickness on pelagics, Cougar confrontations in parks, to chasing Himalayan Snowcocks in a helicopter!.....Sounds like movie material doesn't it? That is exactly what 20th Century Fox thinks as well. The release date for The Big Year the movie is coming out on October 14th, starring Jack Black, Steve Martin, and Owen Wilson.

So birding is going Hollywood. Not sure if this is a good thing or not, but if it gets more individuals into birding and breaks the common stereotype of "the birder" (mostly middle-aged with a tilly hat etc. etc.) then that is great!... not that there is anything wrong with being middle-aged and wearing a tilly hat...

So, back to the book. I highly recommend this book to birders and non birders alike. If you have read The Feather Quest by Pete Dunne, and Kingbird Highway by Ken Kaufman, you will probably like The Big Year. Unlike The Feather Quest and Kingbird Highway, The Big Year is not read in first person by the author. Instead, the author takes all the bits and pieces from the three birders, their family members, and any other birders that have witnessed their big year including Debi Shearwater (who is also in the movie played by Anjelica Huston), Ken Kaufman, and Michael Austin to name a few. I personally read the book in a couple of days and never wanted to put it down, or for it to end actually! I can't wait to see it in the theatre this fall!



POSTED BY MARIANNE BALKWILL
<http://peleechickadee.blogspot.com/2011/06/book-review-big-year.html>

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