



Audubon News

Volume 17, Issue 1

P.O. Box 221093 Charlotte, NC 28222

September 2011

Monthly Meeting: Thursday, September 8, 2011 • 7:30 PM

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Who's New?

Karyl Gabriel
 Victoria McCasland
 Kathleen Sinclair
 Melanie & Roy Skinner
 Matthew & Jessica Smedley
 Michael Trescott

Upcoming Events

8/28	Orangeburg Sod Farm (FT)
9/8	Latta Park (FT)
9/8	Swifts (Monthly Mtg.)
9/10	Beginning Bird Walk (FT)
9/11	Butterfly Bird Walk (FT)
9/14	Ann Spring Close (FT)
9/17	Jackson Park (FT)
9/18	Toby Creek Grnwy (FT)
9/22	Latta Park (FT)
9/24	McAlpine Grnwy (FT)
9/25	Ribbon Walk (FT)
9/28	Lower McAlpine Grnwy (FT)
10/1	Cowan's Ford (FT)
10/4	Latta Park (FT)
10/6	Campbell Creek Grnwy (FT)
10/6	Egrets (Monthly Mtg.)
10/9	Big Sit
10/12	Nations Ford Grnwy (FT)
10/15	Holly Bend NP (FT)
10/15	Beginning Bird Walk
10/22	Huntington Beach (FT)

Chimney Swifts and People: Past, Present and Future

In 1682 a swift was found nesting for the first time in a chimney at a colonist's cabin in Maine. This event forever changed the relationship between this species and people.

From the journals of early explorers through the efforts of the largest all-volunteer research project to study the migration path of a single species of bird, to Jesuit missionaries in a far off land, it's a remarkable story.

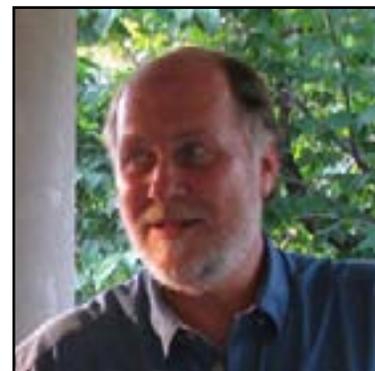
And it's not over. It's a story whose next chapter will be written by us. John Connor, Coordinator of The Naturalist Center at NC Museum of Natural Sciences since 1997, will help us understand how we can make sure that the future for this bird is a positive one.

So don't miss our first program of the 2011 season on Thursday, September 8th in the fellowship hall of the the Sharon Seventh Day Adventist Church (920 Sharon Amity). Refreshments will begin around 7:15 PM with the meeting starting at 7:35. Hope to see you all there.



New Leadership for MAS

At their annual summer planning dinner meeting the MAS board unanimously chose Ron Clark to lead the chapter for the coming year. He has some pretty impressive shoes to fill with Rob Bierregaards departure. But we know that Ron is up to the task and will great job in his new position. A complete list of board members and their responsibilities for this year can be found on page 7.



Field Trips

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

Sunday, August 28 - Orangeburg Sod Farms, SC

Full Day • Easy • Contact: Judy Walker (birdwalker@me.com)

This is our annual trek to the coastal in search of hard to find, migrating shorebirds like Upland and Buff-bellied Sandpipers. Since it can be hot pretty quickly in these open fields with no shade we try to get down there as early as possible. We will meet in the Shoney's parking at the Carowinds exit (#90) off of I77 at 5:45 AM in an attempt to leave by 6 AM. Bring plenty of water, a hat, bug spray and sun screen. Snacks and lunch are recommended.

Thursday, September 8th - Latta Park (Dilworth)

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

Migrants will have started coming in, so we'll check this park and see what's there. Meet at 8:30 AM in the shelter on East Park Ave.

Saturday, September 10th - 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 through McAlpine Creek Greenway. If you need binoculars, let her know. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot on Monroe Road.

Sunday, September 11th - Butterfly Walk

Afternoon 1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Taylor Piephoff (piephofft@aol.com)

Taylor Piephoff will lead us on a section of Mallard Creek Greenway to look for butterflies and, of course, birds. We'll meet at 1:30 PM at the Governor Hunt Road access.

Wednesday, September 14th - Anne Springs Close Greenway

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

We'll join Dave to walk this wooded area looking for fall migrants and others. There are a few 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. Knowing Dave, he'll have a great lunch spot picked out for any who have worked up an appetite.

Saturday, September 17th - Jackson Park, Hendersonville, NC

Full Day • Moderate • Contact: Ron Clark (waxwing@bellsouth.net)

This Hendersonville city park is the fall equivalent of Latta Park in the spring, with a 20-warbler day possible. This is an all-day trip, so bring a lunch. We'll meet at 7:30 AM at the McDonald's on Hwy 64 (Exit 49-A on Interstate 26) in Hendersonville. It's about two blocks on the right after you cross the interstate.

Sunday, September 18th - Toby Creek Greenway

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

This greenway, meandering through the UNCC campus, continues to surprise us with interesting birds. If there is time we may also check out the Van Landingham Glen. Meet at 8:30 AM in the Town Center parking lot across the entrance road from the Hardee's.

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.



Red Spotted Purple



Tennessee Warbler

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

Field Trips



Rose-breasted Grosbeak



Scarlet Tanager



Thursday, September 22nd - Latta Park (Dilworth)

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

We'll meet at 8:30 AM at the shelter on East Park Ave.

Saturday, September 24th - McAlpine Creek Greenway.

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

Tom Sanders will take us through this area of fields, woods and beaver pond. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot on Monroe Rd.

Sunday, September 25th - Ribbonwalk Nature Preserve.

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

Ron Clark will lead us through this beautiful wooded preserve, covering about two miles. The trails could be a bit muddy if it has been raining. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot on Hoyt Hinson Rd off Nevins Rd.

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 (jmcblake@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

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For the Traveling Birder

Florida Keys Birding and Wildlife Festival

September 21st - 25th • <http://www.keysbirdingfest.org/>

Eastern Shore Birding & Wildlife Festival

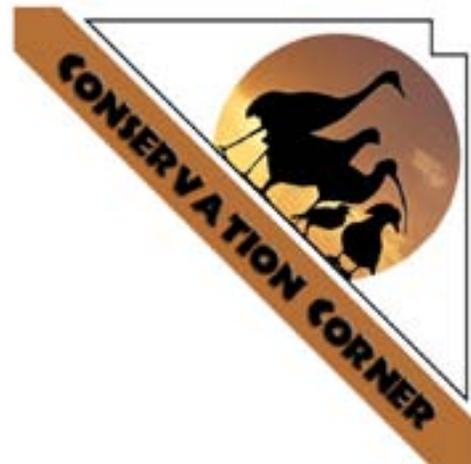
October 7th- 9th • <http://www.esvafestivals.com/>

Wings Over Water (Outer Banks)

November 8th - 13th • <http://www.wingsoverwater.org/>

A Swift Night Out

September 9th - 11th



A SWIFT NIGHT OUT is a continent-wide effort to raise awareness about and encourage interest in Chimney Swifts and Vaux's Swifts. The project was originally inspired by John Connors with the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences in Raleigh, North Carolina. In 2001 Paul and Georgean Kyle took John's suggestion and developed the program for the Driftwood Wildlife Association that has become a favorite late summer event for professional and amateur birdwatchers alike.

As summer draws to a close and the swifts have finished raising their young, these fascinating aerial acrobats begin to congregate in com-

munal roosts prior to their migration in the fall. Some roosts may consist of an extended family group of a half a dozen birds or so, but the larger sites can host hundreds or even thousands of swifts!

Here is how it works: Keep your eyes to the skies at dusk in late July and watch for areas where swifts are feeding. Look for a tall shaft, chimney or similar structure to locate where Chimney Swifts go to roost in your area.

This year, on one night over the weekend of September 9, 10, 11 observe the roost starting about 30 minutes before dusk and estimate the number of swifts that enter. When you

have your number, email

DWA@austin.rr.com. That's all there is to it!

We ask that you include the following information: 1) Number of swifts counted; 2) Time; 3) Date; 4) Location and 5) a broad description of the site, e.g. school, warehouse, residence, Chimney Swift Tower, etc. Weather conditions may also be reported.

WHY SHOULD I CARE ABOUT CHIMNEY SWIFTS?

- Chimney Swifts eat nearly one third of their own weight in flying insect pests such as mosquitoes, biting flies and termites every day.
- Chimney Swifts historically used large, hollow trees for nests and roosts. As the ancient forests were cut down, they learned to use chimneys and other structures instead.
- Today, just like Purple Martins, Chimney Swifts rely almost entirely on man-made structures for nest sites.
- Because they cannot perch like songbirds, Chimney Swifts must have deep shafts in which to raise their families and roost at night.
- Chimney Swifts are protected by State Wildlife Codes and Federal law under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1916.
- Like all Neotropical Migrants, Chimney Swifts are declining in numbers and need our assistance.
- Like watching a beautiful sunset, the aesthetic value of observing Chimney Swifts' aerial acrobatics and interactions is a simple pleasure that nature has to offer.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP CHIMNEY SWIFTS?

- If you have a masonry or clay flue-tile chimney, keep the top open and the damper closed from March through October to provide a nest site for these insect-eaters. Metal chimneys should be permanently capped to prevent birds and other wildlife from being trapped.
- Have your chimney cleaned in early March before the Chimney Swifts return from their winter home in South America.
- Work with local conservation groups to construct Chimney Swift Towers and educate your friends and neighbors about Chimney Swifts.
- Join the North American Chimney Swift Nest Site Research Project as a Research Associate!

Life History of Chimney Swifts

The Chimney Swift is one of four regularly occurring species of swifts found in North America, and the most common one found east of the Rocky Mountains. As their name implies, they are accustomed to building their nests in chimneys as well as abandoned buildings and occasionally stone wells.

Adult Chimney Swifts are most commonly seen in flight -- usually in groups. When soaring, their long, scythe-shaped wings span about 12.5 inches supporting a proportionally short body with a squared-off tail. The flickering, bat-like flight when flapping is due to short, massive wing bones. Chimney Swifts' flight is accompanied by a sharp "chipping" or "ticking" call.

At rest, an average 5 inch, 22 gram adult is sooty-gray to black with the throat silvery-gray in color. Both sexes are identical in appearance. The long wings cross by an inch or more over the tail feathers, which are tipped by pointed bristles. The claws and tail bristles are used to cling to rough vertical surfaces. Swifts are unable to perch or stand upright in passerine fashion.

Chimney Swifts winter in the Amazon Basin of Peru. They arrive in the continental United States in late March and are gone by early November. Nesting begins in May, and has been known to continue into August. Chimney Swifts are usually single-brooded, and there

will be only one active nest in any structure regardless of the size of the site.

The female normally lays three to five white eggs in a nest of twigs which are broken from the tips of tree branches, glued together with saliva and attached to a vertical surface.

Both sexes are involved in nest construction. The eggs are incubated by alternating adults for eighteen to nineteen days. Chimney Swifts catch flying insects on the wing. Baby Chimney Swifts are fed by both

Newly hatched Chimney Swifts are naked and completely helpless

Five day old Chimney Swifts have pin feathers on their heads and bodies parents. The feeding continues until the birds fledge from the chimney about 30 days after hatching.

The hatchlings are pink, altricial and completely naked at birth. They have sharp claws which enable them to cling to textured surfaces. Within a few days, black pin feathers begin to appear. The young are able to climb, and they exhibit preening behavior even before their feathers emerge.

By the time they are eight to ten



days of age, the babies' feathers begin to unfurl. By fifteen to seventeen days of age, their eyes begin to open.

Shortly after their eyes open, most of the flight and body feathers will

be unfurled. However, the feathers around the face and head will stay in sheath for several days -- giving the birds a "frosty-faced" appearance.

By the time Chimney Swifts are 21 days old, they will cling tightly to the nest or chimney wall, rear back and flap their wings furiously until they are panting and out of breath. Twenty-eight to thirty days after hatching, young Chimney Swifts will leave the safety of the chimney for their first flight.

Once an entire brood has fledged, they will fly with their parents in slow, noisy parades around the area of the nest site. The young will return frequently to the roost during the first few days, but may soon begin to visit other roosts in the area.

At the end of the breeding season, the swifts' communal instincts peak prior to fall migration. They congregate in flocks of hundreds and even thousands at suitable roost sites.

Although Chimney Swifts can withstand a few early cool snaps, they will usually ride south on the first major cold-front that blows through in the fall.

This is an edited excerpt from Rehabilitation and Conservation of Chimney Swifts, Fourth Edition by Paul and Georgan Kyle. Copyright, 2004



Birding Tricks & Tips

Where to bird?

You can bird anywhere and everywhere, but certainly some places are much better than others. Although a myriad of habitat types attract different species. The following general situations apply to most parts of the country.

•**Edges:** Carefully observe habitat edges, which often hold a greater variety of birdlife and activity than areas of uniform habitat. Boundaries between forest and field, hedgerows, watery edges, and coastlines are attractive to many species because they tend to offer a greater variety of food items as well as nearby cover. During migration these edge habitats are particularly favored as feeding and resting areas. In the morning, look for forest edges that catch the first warming rays of the sun. Insects become active earlier in these areas and hungry birds gravitate to them. The same holds true in the evening, so check those areas that catch the last light.

•**Sheltered Areas** Birds are rarely bothered by light winds, but they seek shelter from strong winds when possible. In open situations, birds shelter by getting on the lee side of any ground irregularity or structure. In vegetated areas the lee side of a windbreak of trees offers shelter and stays warmer. These small, temporary microclimates are worth checking carefully.

•**Water** Water is a magnet for various birds. The attraction level increases when there is movement in or sound from the water. Any water feature or damp spot, natural or artificial, is worth investigating, especially around its edges. The more arid the surrounding countryside, the more attractive any available water is to resident and migrants alike.

•**Sewage ponds** Sewage ponds can be great places to bird. Be sure

both that the facility is open to birders and that it's the right type of facility. You want a two-stage sewage treatment plant, found in many small to midsize communities, which has settling and aeration ponds. The ponds are incredibly attractive to many species of birds, especially in arid parts of the West where they are often the only bodies of water for miles around. Ducks, shorebirds, gulls, terns, and aerial-feeding swallows are frequent visitors. Just make sure you get permission before you go in.

When to Bird?

Dedicated birders, always vigilant, try to make smart decisions about when to bird and how to maximize the chances of seeing more birds or particular species. Timing visits to coastal locations often depends on knowing the local tides; timing a search for migrants is affected by large-scale weather patterns like the passage of a warm or cold front. Local weather conditions can have as great an effect on birding as the changing seasons do.

•**First Light** Land bird activity usually peaks during the hour or two just after sunrise. Songbirds have high metabolisms and need to feed in the morning. Most migrate at night, which can further deplete their energy stores. Note, though, that adverse weather conditions and low temperatures can curtail early morning activity.

•**Tides and Coastal Birds** Many coastal species synchronize their feeding activity with the stage of the tide. Birds feeding on mudflats are particularly attuned to tidal activity. Some of the best shorebirding is done on an incoming tide, when the rising water pushes feeding flocks closer to dry land. If you're positioned correctly, the birds will be pushed closer and closer to you. Low tide is prime feeding time, and birds tend to spread out over a large area; you need a scope in these situations. During high tide



look for resting and roosting flocks in sheltered areas of dry beach. In complex waterways with numerous bays and inlets, the tidal stages arrive at different times, so you'll need to check a local tide table.

•**Weather Fronts & Migration** Weather affects the movement of migratory birds profoundly. Like climate (which is the average pattern of a region, not the local weather), the seasonal movement of migrants is predictable and regular - on average, that is - but whether there are any birds to see in your area has more to do with the weather that day and few previous days. If you want to optimize your birding during migration, pay attention to the weather and learn to interpret it. The best conditions for spring migrants in the East seem to be on the back side of a high where the temperature is elevated and the winds are from the southwest. A warm front with warm temperatures, low clouds, and light rain or drizzle is best. In the fall, cold fronts with northwest winds seem to bring about the best migration conditions throughout eastern North America, especially along the Atlantic Coast. A number of species have long offshore, trans-Atlantic flights to South America that are assisted by northwest winds. Catching a major fallout of migratory birds is one of the most exciting birding events on the continent.

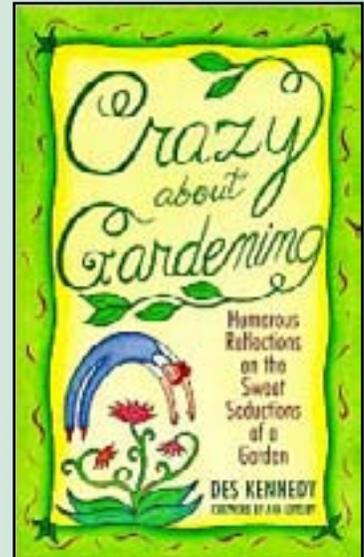
Adapted from *National Geographic Birding Essentials* by Jonathan Alderfer and Jon L. Dun.

Book Nook

Crazy About Gardening by Des Kennedy

Des Keannedy's wit, coupled with sarcasm, made this book incredibly enjoyable. As a gardener, I felt as though Kennedy had somehow entered my most secret thoughts about gardening, and told all my tales of this passion. Because Kennedy himself is a gardener, he was able to deliver humorous insight into the thinking and actions of this unique breed. Intermingled within the humor, are the names of familiar and unfamiliar plants, futher

evoking an already crazed gardener to become even more insane. Laced with episodes from his own gardening incidents, Kennedy makes the avid gardener feel right at home, and not so out of the ordinary. Rich language and word choice enable the reader to vividly visualize a walk through fabled gardens of old, English manor and simple country cottage gardens. This book is a must-read for anyone with a passion for gardens, whether they be city or country folk.



Continued from page 3

Field Trips

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 (jmcblake@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.

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.

MAS Board

President - Ron Clark

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Vice President - Tom Sander

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