



Audubon News

Volume 17, Issue 6

P.O. Box 221093 Charlotte, NC 28222

February 2012

Monthly Meeting: Thursday, February 2, 2012 • 7:30 PM

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DON'T FORGET

We've Moved!!

we will be meeting at the

Tyvola Senior Center

2225 Tyvola Road, Charlotte



Upcoming Events

- 02/02 Birds & Plants (Monthly Mtg.)
- 02/11 Evergreen NP (FT)
- 02/12 Woodcock Walk (FT)
- 02/15 Four-mile Creek Grnwy. (FT)
- 02/17-20 Great Backyard Bird Count
- 02/18 Beginner's Bird Walk (FT)
- 02/18 Pee Dee NWR (FT)
- 02/25 Cowan's Ford (FT)
- 02/29 Six-mile Creek Grnwy. (FT)
- 03/01 Breeding Bird Survey (Mtg.)
- 03/17 Audubon NC Chapter Day

An Omnivore's Dilemma: What Should a Bird Eat?

Most birdwatchers provide some type of seed through feeding stations in their backyards. But there is a better, more environmentally sound, and probably more economical way to feed birds. That is by creating a backyard buffet of food plants for the birds. Spring is quickly approaching, so now is the time to think seriously about what you can plant in your yard to attract and nourish your feathered companions.

But what should you plant? Well that is topic of the February meeting. Dr. Carrie DeJaco, assistant professor of biology at Queens University, will help you sort out the wheat from the chaff. Her presentation will discuss the relationships between birds and plants. Some plants are very beneficial for birds, providing both food supplies and nesting sites. Other plants are just plain useless from a bird's point of view. Dr. DeJaco will talk about these relationships -- the good, the bad, and the ugly, and will discuss the pros, cons, needs



Northern Mockingbird
©Will Stuart

and usefulness of various plants as far as birds are concerned.

So join your fellow birdwatchers turned gardeners at our monthly meeting, Thursday, February 2nd at 7:30 PM. Remember, our meeting place changed. We are now meeting at the Tyvola Senior Center (2225 Tyvola Road, Charlotte, NC <http://g.co/maps/muajw>). Come and discover what your yard looks like from the bird's point of view.



Dr. Carrie DeJaco is an assistant professor in the Biology Department of Queens University, Charlotte. In the community, she has played a large part in the formation of the Council on Locally Invasive Plants and Pests (CLIPP), our local invasive species task force. Dr. DeJaco also teaches Ecology for the UNCC Botanical Gardens Native Plant Certificate Program and serves on its planning committees. She is also an active member of the North Carolina Native Plant Society. Through these groups and her community involvement, Dr. DeJaco has made it her mission to introduce as many people as she can to the benefits and beauty of native plants in the home landscape.

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!!

Saturday, February 11th: Evergreen Nature Preserve

1/2 Day • Moderater • Contact: Louise Barden (louise@lbarden.com)

Larry and Louise Barden will lead us on this walk, mostly through woods. We'll meet in the bus parking lot of Winterfield School at 8:30 AM. louise@lbarden.com

Sunday, February 12th: Sherman Branch Woodcock Walk

Evening • Easy • Contact: Taylor Piephoff (piephofft@aol.com)

Join Taylor Piephoff as we look at American Woodcocks, and other birds, in this nature preserve. The birds are almost guaranteed. Meet at 5:00 PM in the parking lot off Rocky River Rd. piephofft@aol.com

Wednesday, February 15th: 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, February 18th: Pee Dee NWR

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

Something interesting always shows up on this trip. Ducks and sparrows should still be abundant and there may be some early spring migrants considering the weather this year. We are fortunate to have such a wonderful national wildlife refuge in our own backyard.

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.

Saturday, February 18th: Beginner's 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.

Saturday, February 25th: Cowan's Ford Wildlife Refuge

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

Tom will take us through sections of the refuge that are accessible by permit only, so this is an opportunity to go "behind the fence". Meet at the viewing stand at 8:30 AM.

Wednesday, February 29th: Six-mile Creek Greenway

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

Spend part of this "extra day" strolling through a bottomland hardwood forest that almost always turns up some surprises. Spring is on its way and some early migrants should be showing up.

KEY TO PHYSICAL DIFFICULTY

Easy - Trails are level to slight grades usually paved. .5-1.5 miles of walking;
Moderate - Trails can be uneven with some hills. 1-2.5 miles of walking;
Strenuous - Trails vary greatly. 2.5+ miles of walking;
* - Trails are handicapped accessible.

Maps to meeting spots can be found at

meckbirds.org/trips/trips.html



American Woodcock



Bald Eagle - Adult and Juvenile



American Robin



It's as easy as 1, 2, 3!

1. Plan to count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count. You can count for longer than that if you wish! Count birds in as many places and on as many days as you like—one day, two days, or all four days. Submit a separate checklist for each new day. You can also submit more than one checklist per day if you count in other locations on that day. 2. Count the greatest number of individuals of each species that you see together at any one time. You may find it helpful to print out your regional bird checklist to get an idea of the kinds of birds you're likely to see in your area in February. You could take note of the highest number of each species you see on this checklist.

3. When you're finished, enter your results through our web page. You'll see a button marked "Enter Your Checklists!" on the website home page beginning on the first day of the count. It will remain active until the deadline for data submission. (We'll let you know when that is for 2012.)

Special Note: As the Great Backyard Bird Count has grown, more and more bird clubs, nature centers, and local parks are conducting special bird walks or hikes during the GBBC and having participants enter their tallies afterward. How you conduct a traveling count versus a stationary count is slightly different although you will enter your online tallies the same way.

Stationary Count: This is a count made in one area, such as your backyard, where you remain in one place. In this case, simply report the highest number of each species seen together at one time, as usual.

Traveling Count: This is a count made over a distance, such as birding on a trail. In this case you will count new birds of each species as you move along, but only if you can be relatively certain you did not count them previously. You'll add the numbers for each species at the end of your walk.

For detailed information go to - <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/howto.html>

As movie-goers watched the stars of *The Big Year* in their quest to count birds, some may have been motivated to try the hobby for the first time. The annual Great Backyard Bird Count is the perfect opportunity. The event is hosted by Audubon, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and Canadian partner Bird Studies Canada. The results provide a snapshot of the whereabouts of more than 600 bird species.

Anyone can participate in this free event and no registration is needed. Watch and count birds for at least 15 minutes on any day of the count, February 17-20, 2012. Enter your results at www.birdcount.org, where you can watch as the tallies grow across the continent. The four-day count typically records more than 10 million observations.

"When thousands of people all tell us what they're seeing, we can detect patterns in how birds are faring from year to year," said Janis Dickinson, director of Citizen Science at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. "

The Great Backyard Bird Count is a perfect example of Citizen Science," says Audubon Chief Scientist, Gary Langham. "Like Audubon's Christmas Bird Count, volunteers help us with data year after year, providing scientific support that is the envy of many institutions. It's also a lot of fun."

"We're finding that more people are taking part in our bird count programs every year--and the more that take part, the better it is for the birds," says Richard Cannings, Senior Projects Officer for Bird Studies Canada.

The 2011 GBBC brought in more than 92,000 bird checklists submitted by participants from across the United States and Canada. Altogether, bird watchers identified 596 species with 11.4 million bird observations. Results from the 2011 GBBC included:

- Increased reports of Evening Grosbeaks, a species that has been declining;
- A modest seasonal movement of winter finches farther south in their search for food;
- The Eurasian Collared-Dove was reported from Alaska for the first time, more evidence of an introduced species rapidly expanding its range.

Although it's called the Great "Backyard" Bird Count, the count extends well beyond backyards. Lots of participants choose to head for national parks, nature centers, urban parks, nature trails, or nearby sanctuaries. For more information, including bird-ID tips, instructions, and past results, visit www.birdcount.org.

The count also includes a photo contest and a prize drawing for participants who enter their bird checklists online.

The GBBC is made possible in part by sponsor Wild Birds Unlimited.

Recently WSOC-TV published an article about a new invasive vine that is threatening North Carolina habitats called bushkiller (*Cayratia japonica*). The population described in the article was discovered during construction of a stream restoration project by Charlotte-Mecklenburg Storm Water Services. Since that time, CLIPP (Council on Locally Invasive Plants and Pests) has been working with NC



the plant is found. Bushkiller could be confused with Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), as both plants have five leaflets, but the middle leaflet on Virginia creeper does not contain its own stem.

Habitat: Bushkiller tends to invade disturbed areas such as fallow fields, residential areas, overgrazed pastures and harvested forests. Also thrives in moist river bottoms, and forest margins.

However, it has shown aggression where escaped and could be a serious invader at least in the southern United States. In cooler climates, plants may freeze to the ground and re-grow from underground roots in the spring.

Control: This plant can be hand-pulled, but all root material must be removed for the treatment to be successful. DO NOT compost vines as this



Move Over Kudzu, There's a New Thug in Town

State researchers and herbicide manufacturers to determine the best way to eradicate this vine. The complete article can be found at <http://www.wsoc-TV.com/news/16634281/detail.html>

Here is some basic information about the plant.

Origin: Bushkiller (*Cayratia japonica*) originates from the forests of Japan, Malaysia, Taiwan, India and Australia. Currently it is found in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi and North Carolina.

Description: Bushkiller is a perennial herbaceous vine in the grape family (Vitaceae) that will climb up trees and other supports. Vines can be somewhat fleshy. Roots are also fleshy and can produce many adventitious shoots especially when cut or disturbed. Leaves are compound with five leaflets and alternate leaf arrangement, with the middle leaflet on its own stem. The smooth, shiny leaflets are ovate and pointed with serrate leaf margins. The lower surfaces have a silvery-white coloration. They can be up to 3 inches wide and 3 inches long, and usually no smaller than 1/2 inch wide and 1 inch long. Clusters of very small white, orange and yellow flowers appear in the late summer and produce round, grape-like berries with 2-4 seeds. It can reproduce by seed or rhizome, but seeds are less likely to be viable the further north

Reproduction/Dispersal: Rapidly reproduces via sprouting from roots. It is able to reproduce by seed; however, flowers usually fall off, and fruit does not set in the southeast region. It is spread primarily by humans and possibly certain natural events such as flooding. After sprouting, bushkiller is a rapid grower, quickly forming smothering mats of vegetation.

Ecological, Economic, or Social Impact: Very difficult to remove once established. Climbs trees and may act as a ladder for forest fire in which flames reach higher and do more damage.

This fast-growing vine can climb trees and other structures by tendrils, becoming quite large in the absence of severe cold weather. The weight of the fleshy vines can break tree branches. Foliage can be dense and block out sunlight from plants it grows on. It can also compete for other resources, such as water. It can also act as a "ladder" in forest fires, letting the fire climb higher than normal, causing more damage.

It is not clear what eco-communities or plant species are at the greatest risk due to bushkiller in the United States.

will propagate the plant. A cut-stem application of a Glyphosate herbicide such as Roundup or Campaign can be used to control large vines. Treatment is best at 70°F or above, while plants are actively metabolizing. Unwrap vine from supporting vegetation and spread out away from non-target vegetation prior to spraying. Mercer Arboretum in Humble, Texas has had some success in controlling this vine using a non-selective, fermented-vinegar and citric acid-based natural herbicide known by the name of BlackJack 21 Weed Stomper. Mercer has also found that plants will go dormant if



Photo courtesy of Robert J. Richardson, North Carolina State University, www.forestryimages.org

Tips for the Novice Birder: Finding Birds

Move Quietly: Birds are not necessarily disturbed by noises, but you may be distracted by them. Often the first clue to a bird's presence is some small rustling of leaves or soft call notes. Any noise or distraction, such as conversation or swishing clothing, can prevent you from noticing these signs.

Travel Gently: Birds are extremely sensitive to abrupt movements. A sudden wave of the hand, such as that made when raising binoculars or pointing a finger, can scare off a bird more surely than almost any other action.

Travel Slowly: One can often see more birds by standing in one spot than by moving quickly and covering a lot of ground.

Watch for movement: This requires holding still and looking with a 'wide field' – not focusing on a particular spot. Once you detect a movement, even if you're not sure what caused it, you may find it useful to aim your binoculars at the spot and try to find a bird.

Follow Sounds: The expert finds many birds by knowing their songs and calls. You don't have to be able to identify the species to take advantage of one of the basic benefits of this. Simply listening to sounds will give you a clue to where the birds are in a given area, and then you will be able to walk toward them. This will maximize your chances of seeing birds, and you will see more of them than if you simply wandered around randomly. This is also a very important first step toward learning the vocalizations of the birds.

Pay Attention to Behavior: Watch the edges of a flock and pay special attention to outlying birds or those that act differently; these may be different species. Behavior offers clues that can be a great help in finding and identifying birds, and noticing behavior is the way to learn these clues.

Let the Birds Find Predators: Bird's extraordinary alertness and eyesight can aid a birder. The scolding calls of chickadees, jays, or crows are often your first clue to the presence of a hawk or

owl. Learn these sounds and track them down. Similarly, the alarm calls and evasive actions of small birds may also signal the presence of a hawk or owl. If all the birds at your feeder suddenly take off in a flurry of wing-beats and urgent high-pitched call notes, leaving the scene deserted and silent, you can be pretty sure that a hawk or other predator has just visited. A careful search of the ground or of nearby perches might reveal it, and the habit of looking out quickly when these sounds are heard will help you see a hawk in the future. Take note when you see a shorebird cock its head to study something in the sky above. Look for whatever has caught the bird's attention and you may discover a high-flying raptor.

Watch Flock Behavior: The takeoff of a flock of birds, or the coordinated movements of a flock of sandpipers in the air, takes on a certain urgency in the presence of a hawk. Many small birds react to an aerial predator by forming a tight flock and swerving back and forth around it, not allowing it to get above them or to single out one member of the flock. Starlings do this more dramatically and more persistently than other birds. The sight of a distant 'starling ball' is often the first clue to the presence of a hawk.

- from *Sibley's Birding Basics* (Knopf, 2002)

New Thug in Town

covered with heavy mulch; however, the plants will persist and are able to regenerate.

Bushkiller is not sold in the nursery industry; however, if you are interested in planting a woody vine you may want to consider the following native species:

- Crossvine (*Bignonia capreolata*)
- Trumpet vine (*Campsis radicans*)
- Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*)



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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.