



# Audubon News

Volume 17, Issue 5

P.O. Box 221093 Charlotte, NC 28222

January 2012

Monthly Meeting: Thursday, January 5, 2011 • 6:30 PM

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## DON'T FORGET We've Moved!!

Starting

### January 5, 2012

we will be meeting at the

### Tyvola Senior Center

2225 Tyvola Road, Charlotte

*The birding season begins on January 1st and ends on December 31st!  
- Anonymous*

## Upcoming Events

|       |                            |
|-------|----------------------------|
| 12/31 | Pee Dee CBC                |
| 01/05 | Pot Luck Dinner (Mtg.)     |
| 01/07 | Cowan's Ford (FT)          |
| 01/14 | Huntington Beach (FT)      |
| 01/19 | Four-mile Creek Grnwy (FT) |
| 01/21 | Beginner's Bird Walk (FT)  |
| 01/21 | McDowell Prairie (FT)      |
| 01/25 | Anne Springs Grnwy (FT)    |
| 01/28 | Latta Plantation (FT)      |
| 01/28 | Carolina Bird Club Mtg.    |
| 02/02 | Ecology (Monthly Meeting)  |
| 02/11 | Evergreen NP (FT)          |
| 02/12 | Woodcock Walk (FT)         |
| 02/18 | Beginner's Bird Walk (FT)  |

## Bring in the New Year with Food, Fun and Fellowship

As the New Year begins we all tend to take a few minutes to review the past year. For nature lovers that means reliving the year's outdoor adventures. Why not take this opportunity to not only reminisce about them but also share your experiences with others?

That's what happens at the January meeting. It's like the old kindergarten 'Show & Tell', except for adults it's more like 'Brag & Tell'. It doesn't matter, bring your pictures in print or on CD, thumb drive, or whatever to share with everyone. Some of us don't get to travel as much as others so this provides us an opportunity to travel vicariously through your experiences

This meeting is also our annual POTLUCK dinner which means we meet at 6:30 PM and you can bring your leftovers from you New Year's bashes. Please also bring a place setting (plate, utensiles, cup/



mug) for each person coming. The club will provide coffee & other beverages.

So don't forget to bring your pictures, videos, food and friends to **OUR NEW MEETIN PLACE the TYVOLA SENIOR CENTER** (2225 Tyvola Road, Charlotte, NC <http://g.co/maps/muajw>) at **6:30 PM** for dinner (the program will start around 7:30 PM) on **Thursday, January 5, 2012** for food, fun & fellowship.



Once again as part of our New Year Potluck we will be conducting a silent auction. The MAS board has been working with local merchants to secure some very nice donations. Members have also donated a variety of useful items including a host of informative books. And of course our intrepid Big Dayers have once again agreed to usher folks around the county to see as many birds as possible in one

day. It's a great way to find out about all the 'secret' birding spots in the area.

Funds raised at past auctions have been used to purchase native plants for restoration work at Latta Park, children's nature books for a reading program at Winterfield Elementary School, summer camp scholarships for disadvantaged students, and much more. So remember to pack your wallet along with all of the other goodies that you will be bringing to the first meeting of 2012!



# 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, December 31st: Pee Dee National Wildlife Count

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

The Pee Dee Christmas Count is a great way to end a year of birding. It produces surprises almost every year. One year it was turkey tracks in the snow and lots of sparrows. Another sight to behold is seeing the ducks take off in the morning or watching them come back in at dusk. Because of the wide variety of habitat and its central location we usually have a pretty good list of birds including Bald Eagles, Tundra Swans, and lots and lots of sparrows and ducks.

If you want to carpool, meet at the McDonalds at Windsor Square Shopping Center at 5:45 AM [on Independence]. Otherwise meet at the Pee Dee Maintenance Building [main entrance off Rt. 52] at 7 AM. Lunch will be provided but you will want to wear lots of layers and bring snack foods and something hot to drink while you are out in the field.

## Saturday, Jan 7th: Cowan' Ford Refuge.

1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: John Bonestell [[jmclake@aol.com](mailto:jmclake@aol.com)]

John 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 8:00 AM.

## Saturday/Sunday, Jan. 14-15: Huntington Beach State Park

Weekend • Moderate • Contact: Judy Walker [[birdwalker@me.com](mailto:birdwalker@me.com)]

Our winter excursion to Huntington Beach State Park is an annual favorite offering some different bird species than our fall trip. Waterfowl - both freshwater and saltwater- have arrived in good numbers including loons, grebes, and ducks. Gannets are numerous offshore along with shorebirds along the quiet beaches.

We will meet at 8 AM in the causeway parking lot. Be sure to dress warmly as the winds off the ocean can be chilling and bring a lunch for a midday break.

For those staying the weekend, Saturday evening we gather at a local restaurant for dinner to decide on where we will bird Sunday morning for half a day before heading home. Local hotels with off-season rates include: Litchfield Inn [843-237-4211], Comfort Inn Surfside [843-233-8585], Days Inn Surfside [843-238-4444], Brookwood Inn [843-651-2550].

## Thursday, January 19th: 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. Ron Clark [waxwing@bellsouth.net](mailto:waxwing@bellsouth.net)

## Saturday, January 21st: - 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.

## Saturday, January 21st: McDowell Prairie and Copperhead Island

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

We'll start at the prairie and bird until around 11:00. Then we'll go to nearby Copperhead Island for woods and open water. There is limited parking at the prairie so we'll meet at 8:30, in the Harris-Teeter parking lot at the intersection of Hwy. 49 and Hwy 160.

### KEY TO PHYSICAL DIFFICULTY

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

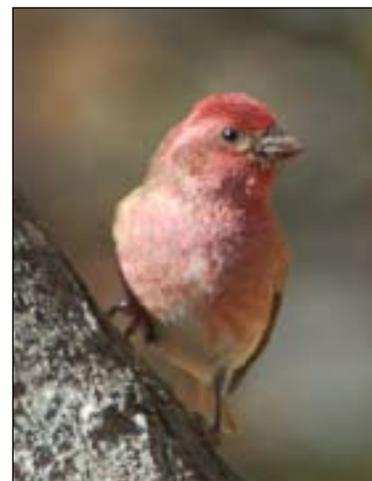
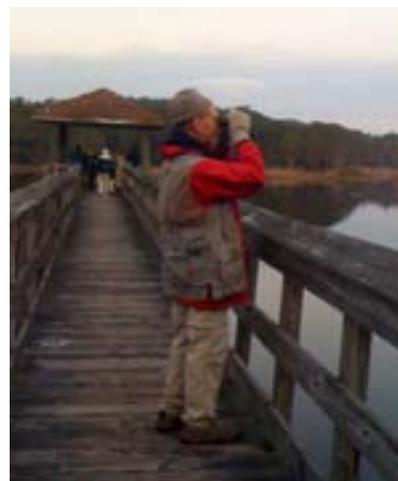
**Moderate** - Trails can be uneven with some hills. 1-2.5 miles of walking;

**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](http://meckbirds.org/trips/trips.html)



Purple Finch

# Field Trips



Brown Creeper

## Wednesday, January 25th: Anne Springs Greenway

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

Dave Lovett will lead this trip to this greenway south of Charlotte in South Carolina. Meet at 8:30 AM out in front of the Food Lion on Hwy 21. Turn left on Carowinds Blvd from I-77 south. The Food Lion is about one mile, on the left.

## Saturday, January 28th - Latta Prairie and Nature Preserve

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

This will be a walk to the prairie, and then we'll check the water access points in the preserve for winter ducks, etc. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot in Latta Nature Preserve.

## Saturday, February 11th: Evergreen Nature Preserve

1/2 Day • Moderate • 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](mailto: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](mailto:piephofft@aol.com)

## 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.



American Woodcock

## Looking Ahead • Making Plans



### Great Backyard Bird Count - February 17-20, 2012

This citizen science 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. Watch and count birds for at least 15 minutes on any day of the count. Enter your results at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org), where you can watch as the tallies grow across the continent.

### Bird Islands Cruise - May 6, 2012

Time: 1:00 – 5:00 PM • Price: \$35 adults, \$25 children 12 and under

The Cape Fear Garden Club sponsors this cruise out of Carolina Beach to see the pelican, wading bird, and tern colonies on Audubon-managed islands along the lower Cape Fear River.

To buy tickets, mail a check payable to "Cape Fear Garden Club" to Lower Cape Fear Cruise, c/o Stewart, 5084 Edinboro Lane, Wilmington, NC 28409. For more information, visit [www.capefeargardenclub.org](http://www.capefeargardenclub.org). Tickets available February 1st.

### Audubon North Carolina 2012 Annual Meeting

Stay tuned!

The state office is finalizing details for the annual meeting, which will be hosted by Cape Fear Audubon Society. They will mail a postcard to supporters this winter with more information and post updates on [www.ncaudubon.org](http://www.ncaudubon.org).





To date, 30 North Carolina IBAs have been approved by BirdLife International as globally significant, including the Amphibolite Mountains, which provide habitat for Golden-winged Warblers; the Sandhills, which sustain Red-cockaded Woodpeckers; and Lea-Hutaff Island, which is inhabited by Piping Plovers.

Each IBA account in the book includes a detailed site description, a map (except for sensitive waterbird islands that are not open to the public), and a table showing key bird species and abundance. The state's IBAs vary in size from just a few acres, as in the case of several small



## New Edition of Important Bird Areas of NC

Audubon North Carolina has released a new edition of Important Bird Areas of North Carolina, a full-color publication (available online at the Audubon NC blog) with detailed descriptions of North Carolina's most critical bird habitats. The book features 96 sites comprising nearly 4.9 million acres. Important Bird Areas, or IBAs, are places that provide essential habitat for one or more species of birds at some time during their annual cycle, including breeding, migration, and wintering periods.

Well-known North Carolina IBAs include iconic landmarks such as Grandfather Mountain and Cape Lookout National Seashore. Nearly all of the state's IBAs include a state, federal, or nongovernmental conservation lands component, but many also contain a high percentage of privately owned and managed land.

"The IBA program is a wonderful tool for highlighting North Carolina's ecologically significant habitats and locations," said Curtis Smalling, IBA Coordinator and Mountain Program Manager for Audubon North Carolina. "IBAs provide so much more than just prime bird habitat. These special landscapes also provide clean drinking water, healthy populations of other species, and in many cases, special opportunities for people to connect to nature through recreation, education, and engagement."

waterbird nesting islands on the coast, to coastal plain sites covering more than 300,000 acres. And some IBAs, like the Outer Continental Shelf, are completely water-based.

To raise awareness about the state's IBAs, Audubon North Carolina will design a social media campaign around an IBA every month, beginning with the Pungo-Pocosin Lakes IBA in December.

Hundreds of dedicated volunteer birders and Audubon chapter members assisted with gathering data for the new edition, by surveying Important Bird Areas, conducting species specific surveys and research, and participating in long-standing censuses like the Christmas Bird Count. Whether they are recording Cerulean Warbler songs to map territories, using playback to survey for Golden-winged Warblers, canoeing the quiet waters of the Lumber River, building observation platforms, or leading field trips, volunteers and agency staff across the state lead the way in working to conserve and share these Important Bird Areas.

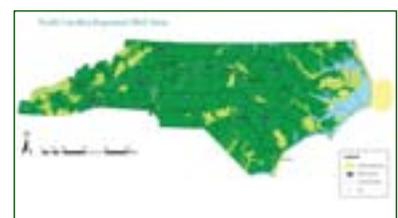
Audubon North Carolina is distributing the publication in book and CD form to North Carolina land conservation agencies so they can utilize the information as they set priorities for public and private land conservation projects. The IBA program is not a regulatory initiative and places no restriction on land use or activities. Audubon staff works with managers of IBAs to

support bird and habitat monitoring, habitat management, and education and advocacy efforts focused on birds. Virtually every conservation planning entity in the state recognizes IBAs as priority sites for long-term protection. The IBA program has become a dynamic "blueprint for conservation" in North Carolina.

IBA data (including GIS data) is constantly updated and can be found at our blog and on the U.S. IBA website.

The IBA program was created in Europe in 1981 as a program of BirdLife International. The National Audubon Society, as the U.S. partner of BirdLife International, launched the U.S. IBA program in 1995. State IBA programs are underway in approximately 47 states, with programs in all 50 states expected in the next few years.

Local IBA's include Mountain Island Lake/Cowan's Ford, which was the first IBA designated in NC. Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge is also considered an IBA. Mecklenburg Audubon had adopted both of these IBAs and conducts bird surveys and nestbox monitoring on both sites.



# Fascinating Feathers

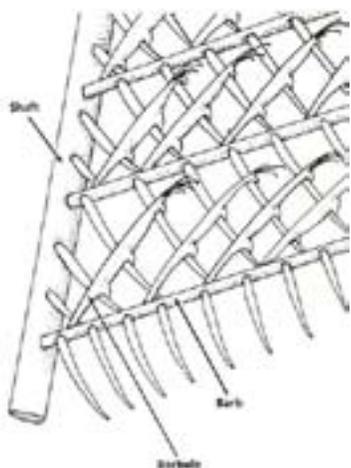
Many people when asked what makes a bird a bird will reply - wings, because they allow them to fly. But think about it. Some birds like ostriches and kiwis don't fly. And a lot of other things do have wings and fly but aren't birds such as insects, bats, and maple seeds. Some things with wings, like airplanes, aren't even alive!

So what is so unique about birds? It's their feathers that distinguish birds from any other living things. There are numerous other unseen physical characteristics also unique to birds but feathers are what most people notice.

Obviously feathers are essential for flight but they also keep the bird warm in the cold and cool in the heat. Did you know, primary feathers are aerodynamically shaped to provide the best lift and control? Where do you think aeronautical engineers learned everything they know? It didn't start with the Wright Brothers.

Man didn't invent velcro either. Take a close look at a feather under a magnifying glass or microscope. There are minuscule hooks and loops that hook together to keep the feather smooth and in one piece, which is important for flying. It also creates a strong 'seal' that protects the bird from water reaching their skin.

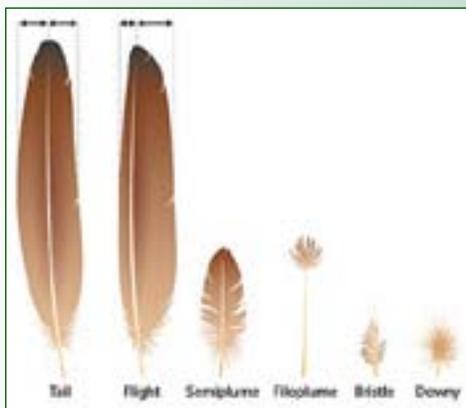
Birds do not grow feathers all over their body (except for the ostrich). Instead the feathers grow in what are called feather tracks. The feath-



ers extend out from the tracks and cover most if not all of the body. This probably makes it easier for the bird to move its wings. Imagine what it would be like to have to move your arm if you had feathers growing out of your armpits! In addition every feather has its own tiny muscle so it can be moved. This how the bird can puff itself up to get warm or make itself real skinny to cool off.

Just like people have different clothes for different occasions, birds have different types of feather on their bodies. Tail and primary wing feathers are the strongest feathers because they do the most work when it comes to flying. If you find one of these feathers on the ground, you should be able to tell if it's from the tail or wing. A tail feather will look balanced with feathering equal on both sides of the feather vane.

A primary wing feather looks lopsided with feather vane off-center. They are also often more curved. Most of the other feathers are body feathers protecting the bird from the elements.



One very specialized small feather called the "filoplume", which is actually a sensory organ. They occur around the breast and other strategic areas of the body and gather information about air pressure. The bird then uses the information to make adjustments while flying. Although flying may look effortless to us, the birds are constantly making feather adjustments to maintain position and altitude. And they do it without computers.

For some birds the feathers actually weight more than its skeleton. There are over 25,000 feathers on a swan. Over 20,000 of them are found on the head and neck. Ducks and other waterfowl tend to have more feathers, which helps protect against the cold, water temperatures.



The color of a feather is usually caused by pigments. However, the iridescence of indigo buntings and hummingbirds are created by the structure of the feather. That's why the indigo bunting is brilliant in the sun but hard to find in the shade and the hummingbird's throat changes color depending on which way it is facing.

Since feathers are so important to the bird's livelihood, they spend a lot of time keeping them in good condition. You will often see birds running feathers through their beaks. If you watch carefully, you will see the bird appear to 'scratch' the base of their tail and then run a feather through their beak. What are actually doing is oiling their feathers. They have an

oil gland at the base of their tail. They take some of that oil apply it to their feathers much like we apply wax to our cars or floors to protect them again water damage. If the feathers get waterlogged the bird can't fly and their body temperature will drop dramatically.

As you can see, feathers are fascinating. So the next time you pick up a feather take a closer look at makes a bird a bird.

For more information about feathers, plumages and molts check out this site at CornellLab's All About Birds - <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/studying/feathers/feathers>

# Why Do Birders Bird??

I've often wondered about that. What do we see in birds that others miss? I stumbled across this poem by Wendell Berry that gave me my answer. Could it be said any better?  
— Ken Kneidel

Poem XVI

I am hardly an ornithologist,  
nevertheless I live among the birds  
and on the best days my mind  
is with them, partaking of their nature  
which is earthly and airy.

I live with the heavenly swallows  
who fly for joy (to live, yes, but also for joy)  
as they pass again and again over  
the river, feeding, drinking, bathing  
joyfully as they fly.

Sometimes my thoughts are up there  
with the yellow-throated warbler, high  
among the white branches and gray-green  
foliage of the sycamores, singing  
as he feeds among the lights and shadows.

A ringing in my ears from hearing  
too many of the wrong things  
surrounds my head some days  
like a helmet, and yet I hear the birds  
singing; the song sparrow by the water,  
the mockingbird, whose song so beautiful  
flings him into the air.

Song comes from a source unseen  
as if from a stirring leaf, but I know  
the note before I see the bird.  
It is a Carolina wren whose good cheer  
never falters all year long.

Into the heat, into the smells  
of horse sweat, man sweat, wilting  
foliage, stirred earth,  
the song of the wood thrush flows  
cool from the dark woods.

I hear the sounds of wings.  
What man can abide the rule  
of "the market" when he hears,  
in his waking, in his sleep,  
the sound of wings?

In the night I hear the owls  
trilling near and far;  
it is my dream that calls,  
my dream that answers.



Sometimes as I sit quiet  
on my porch above the river  
a warbler will present himself,  
parula or yellow-throated or prothonotary,  
perfect beauty in finest detail,  
seeming as unaware  
of me as I am aware of him.

Or, one never knows quite when,  
the waxwings suddenly appear,  
numerous and quiet, not there  
it seems until one looks,  
as though called forth, like angels,  
by one's willingness for them to be.

Or it has come to be September  
and the blackbirds are flocking.  
They pass through the riverbank trees  
in one direction erratically  
like leaves in the wind.

Or it is June. The martins are nesting.  
The he-bird has the fiercest  
countenance I have ever seen. He drops out  
of the sky as a stone falls  
and then he breaks his fall and alights  
light on the housetop  
as though gravity were not.

Think of it! To fly  
by mere gift, without the clamor  
and stain of our inert metal,  
in perfect trust.

It is the Sabbath of the birds  
that so moves me. They belong  
in their ever-returning song, in their flight,  
in their faith in the upholding air,  
to the Original World. They are above us  
and yet of us, for those who fly  
fall, like those who walk.

From *Leavings: poems* by Wendell Berry, 2010  
Counterpoint Press, pp. 50-53

# Take a Look at a Real Snowbird!



**"Slate-colored" Dark-eyed Junco**

Dark-eyed Juncos are neat, even flashy little sparrows that flit about forest floors of the western mountains and Canada, then flood the rest of North America for winter. Although they come in several distinctly different looking forms, they're easy to recognize by their crisp (though extremely variable) markings and the bright white tail feathers they habitually flash in flight.

One of the most abundant forest birds of North America, you'll see juncos on woodland walks as well as in flocks at your feeders or on the ground beneath them. They are birds of the ground hopping around the bases of trees and shrubs in forests or venturing out onto lawns looking for fallen seeds. You'll often hear their high chip notes, given almost absent-mindedly while foraging, or intensifying as they take short, low flights through cover.

Juncos are the "snowbirds" of the middle latitudes. In the eastern United States, they appear in all but the most northern states only in the winter, and then retreat each spring. Some juncos in the Appalachian Mountains remain there all year round, breeding at the higher elevations. These residents have shorter wings than the migrants that join them each winter. Longer wings help the migrants fly long distances.

The Dark-eyed Junco includes five forms that were once considered separate species. The "slate-colored junco" is the grayest, found from Alaska to Texas and eastward. The "Oregon junco" is boldly marked blackish and brown, with a distinct dark hood, and is found in the

western half of the continent. The "gray-headed junco" has a brown back and gray sides and lives in the central Rocky Mountains. The "white-winged junco" is all gray with white wingbars, and breeds only near the Black Hills of South Dakota. The "Guadalupe junco" of Baja California is dull and brownish. Two other forms may be distinguishable: the "pink-sided junco," a pale version of the Oregon junco, living in the northern Rocky Mountains, and the "red-backed junco," a gray-headed junco with a dark upper bill, found in mountains near the Mexican border.

The Dark-eyed Junco is a common bird at winter bird feeders across North America. Data from Project FeederWatch shows that it is often the most common feeder bird in an area, and it is on the top-ten lists of all regions except the Southeast and South-Central, although it ranked 6th in North Carolina last year. To view the top-25 lists of feeder birds from across the continent, go to the Project FeederWatch <http://watch.birds.cornell.edu/PFW/ExploreData?cmd=topSpecies>.



**"Oregon" Dark-eyed Junco**



**"Grey-headed" Dark-eyed Junco**

## Who's New?



Jo Conte  
Heidi Frankson  
Elaine Long  
Kevin Metcalf  
Frank & Robin Tingley  
Carol Buie Jackson  
Jay Jackson

## MAS Board

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**Vice President - Tom Sanders**  
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