



Audubon News

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March 2012

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DON'T FORGET
We've Moved!!

we will be meeting at the

Tyvola Senior Center

2225 Tyvola Road, Charlotte



Who's New?

- Lynn Baker
- Robert Gilson
- Robert Shoestock
- Rose Shoestock
- Leslie Strawn

Upcoming Events

- 02/29 Six-mile Creek Grnwy. (FT)
- 03/01 Early Birders (Mtg.)
- 03/03 McDowell Prairie (FT)
- 03/10 Ribbon Walk (FT)
- 03/13 Lower McAlpine (FT)
- 03/17 Audubon NC Chapter Day
- 03/17 Beginner's Walk
- 03/24 Toby Creek Grnwy (FT)
- 03/31 6-mile Creek Grnwy (FT)
- 04/05 Breeding Bird Atlas (Mtg.)
- 04/07 Congaree Swamp (FT)

Monthly Meeting: Thursday, March 1, 2012 • 7:30 PM

Early Birders of the Greater Charlotte Region

Part I - 1870-World War II

Some of folks who are relatively new birding in the Charlotte area probably have heard some of the 'old geezers' comment about how much the birding scene has changed over the 25-30 years. But I doubt if any of us can imagine what it must have been like birding in this area 50, 100 or much less 150 years ago. Well Don Seriff, Natural Resources Coordinator/Supervisor for the Mecklenburg County Division of Nature Preserves and Natural Resources, will take us on a journey back in time to discover the riches of the region's ornithological heritage and the early birder's who paved the way for us. Along the way we will find out how The Cosby Show - the motion picture Fame - the great San Francisco earthquake of 1906 - the establishment of the NC Audubon Society - the suicide of prominent state senator - the Salisbury YMCA - the founding of Covenant Presbyterian Church - an unusual 1920's radio show - 1960's Freedom Riders - the state bird of North Carolina and more, relate to this area's birding history.



Myers Park

Charlotte Map - 1919



So come prepared for a whirl-wind tour of Charlotte's exciting birding past as we gather at the **Tyvola Senior Center** on **Thursday, March 1st** for our monthly meeting. Refreshments & chit-chat begin around 7:15 PM. Meeting begins at 7:35 PM.

The Club Needs



YOU!!!

The MAS board is looking for a good men and/or women who would serve on the Mecklenburg Audubon board. It's a great opportunity to get to know folks and contribute to the continued growth and health of the chapter. The board works as a team sharing responsibilities. Please consider joining this dedicated group of people who work hard to provide great programs, field trips and conservation efforts for everyone. If you are interested and/or have additional questions, don't hesitate to talk with any current board member.

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, 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.

Saturday, March 3rd: McDowell Prairie and Copperhead Island.

¾ Day • Moderate • Contact: Ron Clark (waxwing@bellsouth.net)

We'll start at the prairie and bird until around 11:00 AM. 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 AM, in the Harris-Teeter parking lot at the intersection of Hwy. 49 and Hwy 160.

Saturday, March 10th: Ribbonwalk Nature Preserve.

½ Day • Moderate • Contact: Tom Sanders (tsanders1993@msn.com)

Tom Sanders will lead this two-mile walk, mostly wooded. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot on Hoyt Hinson Road.

Tuesday, March 13th: Lower McAlpine Creek Greenway

½ Day • Easy • Contact: Judy Walker (birdwalker@me.com)

This is the section of greenway next to Four-Mile Creek. Some early spring migrants should be arriving. We'll meet at the Johnston Road parking area at 8:30 AM.

Saturday, March 17th: Beginner Bird – McAlpine Creek Greenway Park

½ Day • Easy • Contact: Sally Miller (sallyart@bellsouth.net)

We'll meet at 8:30 AM at McAlpine Creek Greenway Park to learn the basics of birding. Binoculars will be provided if you need them.

Saturday, March 24th: Toby Creek Greenway

½ Day • Easy • Contact: Judy Walker (birdwalker@me.com)

This greenway through UNC Charlotte's campus offers a variety of habitats. Depending on time we may also go over to the Van Landingham Gardens which should be beginning to bloom. Meet in the parking lot area across from O'Charley's. You will turn into the shopping center at the light (University Blvd. & W. T. Harris interchange) and then take the first left into the parking lot. Park up near the light. We will meet at 8:30 AM.

Saturday, March 31st: Six-Mile Creek Greenway.

½ Day • Easy • Contact: Ron Clark (waxwing@bellsouth.net)

We'll hope to get some early migrants on this walk, such as Louisiana Waterthrush, Northern Parula and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot on Marvin Road.

Saturday, April 7th: Congaree National Park.

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

We'll walk the two-mile boardwalk, and should see and hear quite a few migrants. This is an all-day trip, so bring lunch and insect repellent – it's a swamp. Afterwards, we'll check out the nearby White House Road loop and the wetlands beside I-77. We should be back in Charlotte before 5:00 PM. Meet at 6:30 AM in the parking lot of Food Lion at the corner of Regent Parkway & US 21. (Take a left at the Carowinds exit from I-77 south. Go one mile and the Food Lion is on the left.)

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



Blue-gray Gnatcatcher



Louisiana Waterthrush



Northern Parula

How To Attract Bluebirds

The following is a brief description of the five basic steps needed to attract bluebirds to your yard and properly care for them.

Nest boxes

Put up safe, comfortable, and durable bluebird nest boxes in suitable spots around the yard. Bluebirds generally prefer open grassy areas near a suitable vantage point (power line, tree, gutter, roof top, etc.) on which they can perch. Avoid placing nest boxes in tree cover or near large bushes, shrubs, and thickets because these spots attract house wrens. Although not a hard rule, try to orient the entrance of nest boxes facing in a southeasterly direction. Ensure nest boxes have adequate ventilation. Be sure to mount the nest boxes on metal poles equipped with a predator guard/baffle. The predator guards will deter climbing varmints such as raccoons and rat snakes from invading the nest boxes and harming the bluebirds. If the nest boxes are in direct line of sight of one another be sure to allow a minimum of 100 yards between them.

Keep the ground around the poles weeded and check frequently for anthills especially fire ant hills. You can spray the mounting poles with PAM cooking spray to deter ants. Destroy all anthills in the immediate vicinity of your nest boxes. Either physically destroy the nests by digging them up or spray them with an organic pesticide such as Pyrethrin, which is available at hardware stores. If you use the spray, immediately cover up the anthills with



dirt to prevent ant-eating birds from ingesting the poisoned ants. You can find plans for safe, comfortable, and durable nest boxes at [help-for-blue-birds \(http://help-for-blue-birds.tripod.com/id18.html\)](http://help-for-blue-birds.tripod.com/id18.html). You also can buy acceptable bluebird nest boxes from your local N. C. State Employees' Credit Union branch for \$10 each. You do not have to be a member to buy nest boxes but you will have to pay cash if you are not a member. You can buy mounting poles, brackets, and predator guard/baffles from hardware stores, Lowes, Home Depot, Wal-Mart, etc. Ace Hardware sells an excellent 18" diameter cone-shaped predator guard/baffle for about \$20.

Buy some bars of unscented ivory soap and rub a good coat of soap on the interior of each nest box (roof, sides, and door). This will help deter paper wasp infestations, which discourage and often prevent bluebirds from nesting in the box. If you find a wasp nest in a box, immediately destroy the wasps, remove, and destroy the wasp nest including the stem. Do not spray the interior of nest boxes with pesticides. Be sure to check under nest boxes and predator guards/baffles for wasp nests.

Use molded wood fiber nest cups in all of your wood nest boxes. The cups will facilitate nest building for the birds and monitoring activities for you. Cleaning the nest box will also be easier if you use a nest cup. Always clean nest boxes thoroughly and dispose of old nests after each nesting cycle during the nesting season. You can buy molded wood fiber nest cups at wild songbird supply stores.

Feeding Stations

Establish several feeding stations around the yard. Bluebirds and other wild songs will feed at the stations. Bluebirds will be attracted to feeders containing cracked sunflower seeds, suet, peanut suet nuggets, and meal worms especially when they are feeding nestlings or their



normal diet (~68%) of insects is hard to find. You probably want to use squirrel proof feeders that can be adjusted to close when a certain amount of weight is sensed. You can buy the seed supplies at Wal-Mart, Lowes, Home Depot, and other stores that sell supplies for wild songbirds. Mealworms can be purchased via the Internet or at wild songbird supply stores like Wild Birds Unlimited. There are also a number of recipes for making your own suet to feed bluebirds. Use the Google search engine to search for bluebird suet recipes.

You can make your own wild bird seed mix using: sunflower seed combo (black oil & striped), safflower seeds, cracked sunflower seeds, peanuts, and Nut n' Berry mix.

Be sure to feed suet year round. In the heat of summer, switch to the non-melt type of suet cakes. Be sure to keep the area around your feeders free of weeds that could hide cats and other lurking predators. Remove discarded seed from the ground around the feeders that might mold and sicken the birds who eat it.

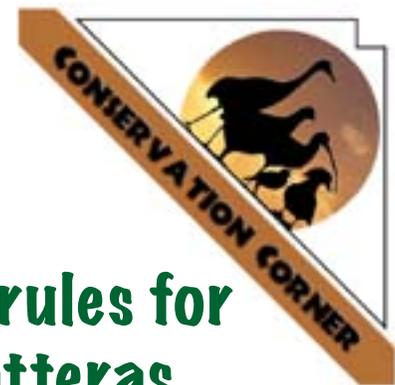
Fresh Water

Provide shallow birdbaths containing fresh water near the feeding stations. Change the water daily and keep the birdbaths clean and free of mold. Avoid

Continued on page 5

January 20, 2012, Chapel Hill, NC— The National Park Service today announced new rules to manage off-road vehicle traffic on beaches so nesting and baby sea turtles and birds as well as pedestrians are protected in Cape Hatteras National Seashore, accord-

“With both the number of hatchlings and visitors to the beach climbing, the success of responsible beach management is clear,” said Jason Rylander, senior attorney for Defenders of Wildlife. “The new rules will ensure that Cape Hatteras continues to provide enjoyment to beach



National Park Service finally issues rules for responsible beach driving in Cape Hatteras

ing to conservation groups. In 2007, the groups—Audubon North Carolina, Defenders of Wildlife and Southern Environmental Law Center— turned to the courts for help in getting the NPS to implement long overdue safeguards for pedestrians and beach-nesting wildlife on park beaches overrun by off-road vehicles.

“The park service’s rules are a compromise that provides protections for both pedestrians and wildlife while still allowing responsible beach driving,” said Julie Youngman, senior attorney, Southern Environmental Law Center.

The long-awaited rules are the final step in a process agreed to by all parties concerned about beach driving in the national seashore. During an interim management period prior to today’s rulemaking, rare bird and sea turtle populations showed signs of recovery, park visitation held steady or increased annually, and tourism remained strong in Dare County, NC, where much of the seashore is located, despite a recession.

users while protecting the unique wildlife that call the seashore home.”

Tourism flourished in Dare County during the period when interim protections were in place. Rental occupancy receipts in Dare County increased by millions over the previous decade as recorded by the Outer Banks Visitors Bureau. Park visitation and gross occupancy in Dare County during peak breeding and nesting season under interim management held steady or increased compared to the three preceding years. According to a state report on tourism for 2009-2010, Dare County experienced an 8.8 percent growth in tourism—making it among the top growth counties in the state during a recession. The county’s strong tourism industry employed 11,260 people with \$172 million in payroll and generated \$44.55 million in tax receipts for the state and \$39.78 million in local tax receipts.

As a unit of the National Park System, Cape Hatteras National Seashore has been required under federal law since 1972 to establish guidelines that

minimize harm from the use of off-road vehicles to the natural resources of the seashore in accordance with the best available science for present and future generations. The new rules bring the NPS into compliance with that requirement.

The park service’s rules allow ORV use on the majority of the seashore. Twenty-eight of the seashore’s 67 miles are set aside as year-round ORV routes, with only 26 miles designated as year-round vehicle-free areas for pedestrians, families, and wildlife. The remaining 13 miles of seashore are seasonally open to ORVs. The plan also proposes new parking facilities, ORV ramps, and water shuttles to increase visitor access to beaches.

“Under the reasonable, science-based management of the past few years, beach-nesting birds and sea turtles are rebounding at Cape Hatteras National Seashore and visitors continue to flock to this national treasure,” said Heather Starck, executive director of Audubon North Carolina. “The new rules appear to give the National Park Service the guidance to protect and manage the natural resources while allowing for responsible ORV use.”

With temporary beach driving rules implemented in April 2008, beach-nesting birds and sea turtles within the national seashore showed signs of recovery after reaching alarming lows under unmanaged beach driving. Only 44 sea turtle nests were recorded in 2004, but a record-breaking 153 sea turtle nests were recorded in 2010 and 147 sea turtle nests were recorded in 2011. No piping plover chicks survived to fledge (learn to fly) in 2002 and 2004, but 15 chicks fledged in 2010 and ten fledged in 2011.



Attracting Bluebirds

deep birdbaths because very young birds are not quite ready to fend for themselves and may drown if their parents are not around to save them. You can buy an acceptable birdbath from Wal-Mart for about \$10. Be sure to keep the area under birdbaths clear of weeds that can hide lurking cats and other predators.

Plant berry-bearing trees and shrubs

There are a number of berry-bearing trees and shrubs that bluebirds favor as food sources. Downey Serviceberry, Hackberry, Silky and Flowering Dogwood, Bunchberry, Highbush Blueberry and Virginia Creeper are among their favorites and relatively easy to grow.

(Adapted from <http://ncbluebirdsociety.wordpress.com>)



As long as there are bluebirds, there will be miracles and a way to find happiness.

- Shirl Brunnel, I Hear Bluebirds, 1984



Santee Birding and Nature Festival

Every year birders and naturalists flock to Santee and the surrounding areas to take part in one of the only nature festivals in the state of South Carolina. With over fifty field trips throughout the midlands of South Carolina, the festival is a great opportunity to spend the day or the whole weekend learning about wonderful natural places and their inhabitants. Trips include Francis Beidler Forest, ACE Basin NWR, Carolina Bays, Botany Bay WMA, and many more great sites. There will be canoe and kayak trips as well as photography sessions. This year's keynote speakers will be Bill Thompson III of Bird Watcher's Digest and Ruth Miller and Alan Davies author's of the Biggest Twitch: Around the World in 4,000 Birds. For information go to http://www.fws.gov/santee/bird_fest.html.



All Audubon NC chapter members, and those interested in joining a chapter, are invited to our annual Chapter Day. This year the meeting will focus on chapter projects that support National Audubon's new strategic vision, particularly as it relates to the Atlantic Flyway. Each chapter will have an opportunity to discuss one of their key projects and then brainstorm with other chapters about the initiative and how it might be replicated by other chapters. Audubon NC staff will participate in this discussion and will also give brief talks about some of their initiatives that have a strong chapter connection.

The meeting will be held at the NC Zoo in Asheboro. For more information go to <http://nc.audubon.org/join-us-audubon-nc-chapter-day>

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