

Audubon News

December 2015

Volume 21 (4)

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Upcoming Events

12/3	Monthly Mtg.
12/5	Waterfowl
12/12	McDowell NP
12/13	Freedom Pk.
12/15	Four-mile Creek Grnwy
12/19	Gaston CBC
12/20	Lake Norman CBC
12/26	Charlotte CBC
01/2	Pee Dee NWR CBC
01/23	Huntington Beach SP

Who's New?

- Craig and Carolyn Chaney
- Laura and David Domingo
- Vincent Lindgren
- Barbara Taylor
- Jim Wimmer

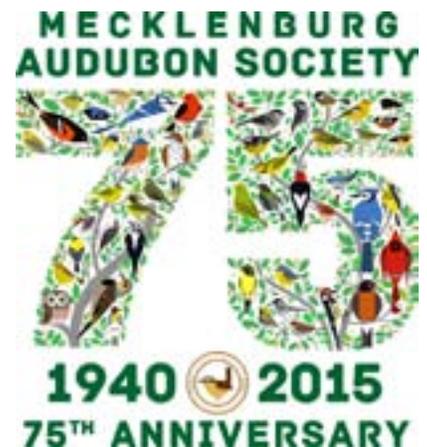
Gopher Frogs & Longleaf Pines

Thurs., December 3rd • 7:15 PM • Tyvola Senior Center

The longleaf pine ecosystem is one of the most imperiled and most fascinating ecosystems in North America. In North Carolina we are lucky to have some of the best remaining examples of the longleaf ecosystem. It is a forest shaped by fire. The high frequency, low intensity fires favor some unique species adapted to this forest, and in the absence of fire the forest becomes degraded and many of the iconic longleaf-associated species disappear. Jeff Marcus, the NC Longleaf Pine Restoration Director for The Nature Conservancy will talk about the role of fire in shaping the forest and will be presented looking through the eyes of a Carolina gopher frog undertaking its annual migration. Starting deep in an ancient stump hole, the frog senses it is time to breed and sets off through the longleaf forest, headed toward an unique, grassy wetland miles away. Along the way he will encounter many

of the fascinating plants and critters that call this forest home.

Join us Thursday, December 3rd at the Tyvola Senior Center (2225 Tyvola Road.) at 7:15 PM. Refreshments and fellowship from 6:45 PM. Although we offer disposable cups, if you think of it beforehand, please consider bringing your own cup or mug to ease the burden on the environment. Ice will be provided. Birds and Beans Bird Friendly coffee will be available too!



Field Trips

All Mecklenburg Audubon Field Trips are free and open to the public. Directions can be found on the Mecklenburg Audubon website - meckbirds.org/trips/trips.html.

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!!

KEY TO PHYSICAL DIFFICULTY

Easy - Trails are level to slight grades usually paved - .5-3 miles of walking

Moderate - Trails can be uneven with some hills. 2-4 miles of walking.

Strenuous - Trails vary greatly. 4+ miles of walking.

* - Trails are handicapped accessible.



Sat., Dec. 5th • 9:00 AM • Wintering Waterfowl

1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Judy Walker [birdwalker@me.com]

By now wintering waterfowl should have arrived at Coddle Creek Reservoir and the surrounding area. We will meet at Panera Bread across from Concord Mills Mall at 9 AM to first check out the wetland behind HH Greg and then car pool up to the reservoir. Depending on time we may even swing by Moss Creek Greenway to see what's there.

Sat., Dec. 12th • 8:30 AM • McDowell Prairie/Copperhead Island

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

We will try again for this prairie walk looking for winter migrants include waterfowl at Copperhead Island. Brief directions: Turn right on Shopton Road off Hwy 49. In 0.7 miles, turn left on Four Horse Road. Follow it about 3/4 mile to the green gate on the right.

Sun., Dec. 13th • 8:00 AM • Freedom Park

1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Judy Walker [birdwalker@me.com]

This walk is a joint venture with the Charlotte Nature Museum. Investigate the nooks and crannies of the park which have revealed some interesting finds on past Christmas and spring counts. We will meet in the Nature Museum parking lot at 8:00 AM (note this is earlier than our usual start time).

Tue., Dec. 15th • 8:30 AM • Four-Mile Creek Greenway

1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Ron Clark [waxwing@bellsouth.net]

This two-mile stretch walking through a variety of habitats always produces interesting birds. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot on Johnston Rd.

Saturday, December 19th - Gaston Christmas Bird Count

Contact: Steve Tracy [stevepath1@aol.com]

For many animals the Catabaw River can act as a barrier. Only the heartiest mammal will attempt to swim across the river. Birds, however, are not as easily intimidated. And birders shouldn't be phased by the river either. That's why we team up with the birders from the Gastonia area to conduct the Gaston County Christmas Count. This is a great opportunity to get to know our neighbors and explore new birding hot spots. If you are interested in join the counting flock contact Steve Tracy.

Sunday, December 20th - Lake Norman Christmas Bird Count

Contact: Taylor Piephoff [piephofft@aol.com]

This is by far the best count circle in the Piedmont. Because of the wide variety of habitat open fields, large lake, small ponds and wetlands, mixed hardwood forest, old farms the potential for unusual birds is great. In some ways this count is like a tour through Peterson's guide with a smattering of species from loons all the way through to the sparrows with representatives of almost everything in between. Groups will start before dawn to catch the owls and woodcocks. Others will meet at 7:00 AM. There are fast food places in the count circle but you may want to bring food to munch on for energy and warmth. Although you might spend a fair amount of time in the car, warm clothes and sturdy shoes are a must. A tally up dinner will be held at 5:30 PM. Contact Taylor Piephoff for specific assignments.



Gadwall © Jeff Lemons



White-throated Sparrow



Herring Gull ©Jeff Lemons

Field Trips

Saturday, December 26th • Charlotte Christmas Bird Count

Contact: Ken Kneidel [kenkneidel@gmail.com]

The granddaddy of the counts, this circle still encompasses a surprising variety of habitat considering suburban sprawl which has taken over much of the area. There are still patches of woods, ponds, lakes, streams and open fields which turn up a interesting variety of resident and wintering species. In the last 5 years we have averaged around 90 species. A remarkable number considering the wholesale lost of habitat over the past 20 years which just proves the tenacity of the birds. Although this is an all day event if you can only participate in the morning or afternoon you are more than welcome. Since fast food establishments (and warmth) will be just around the corner packing a lunch is optional although a thermos of coffee never hurt. There will be a tally up dinner at Wing Haven [248 Ridgewood Ave.] at 5:30 PM. Just bring your appetites and good birding stories. Too assure even and complete coverage of the area those who wish to participate should contact Ken Kneidel.

Saturday, January 3rd • Pee Dee NWR Christmas Bird Count

Contact: Judy Walker [birdwalker@me.com]

There is nothing quite like knowing you maybe the only one wandering the paths of a wildlife refuge. That's what it is like at the Pee Dee Count. We have the refuge to ourselves and its a wonderful opportunity to see a wide variety of birds and other animals in a truly wild environment. Habitats include open fields, mixed woodlands and small lakes and ponds. Red-headed woodpeckers and ducks abound and if we are lucky a few Tundra Swans might grace the landscape. If you want to car pool or follow some to the refuge, we will meet at 5:45 AM at the McDonald's in the Windsor Square Shopping Center on Independence. We will be out in the field all day so remember to dress warmly as things can get pretty cold out in the fields. Waterproof shoes would also be helpful but not necessary. There will be a hot lunch to warm our inners and energize us for an afternoon of more birding. If you plan to attend contact Judy Walker.

Saturday/Sunday, Jan. 23-24: Huntington Beach State Park

Weekend • Moderate • Contact: Judy Walker [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.

Hog Island Audubon Camp

Join us in 2016! Hog Island Audubon Camp celebrates its 80th anniversary with a full summer line-up of camp sessions including Educator's Week, Breaking Into Birding, Family Camp, and Field Ornithology, to name a few. Registration is opened and spaces are going fast! Sign up at <http://hogisland.audubon.org>.



Eastern Towhee (Female)
©Jim Guyton



Red-winged Blackbird flock

Field Trip Etiquette

To ensure everyone on the field trip has a productive and enjoyable outing here are a few things to keep in mind.

- Contact the leader.
- Turn cell phones off or to vibrate.
- Be on time.
- Stay with the group.
- Carpool whenever possible.
- Stay behind the leader.
- Offer to chip-in for gas if you rode with someone.
- Don't monopolize someone else's scope.
- Wear muted colors.
- Avoid blocking other people's view.
- Silence is golden.
- Help the leader make sure everyone gets to see a bird.

So, the next time you are out birding with a group, whether it's an MAS field trip or not, keep these things in mind. They will help you see more birds and be more relaxed which is exactly what we want.



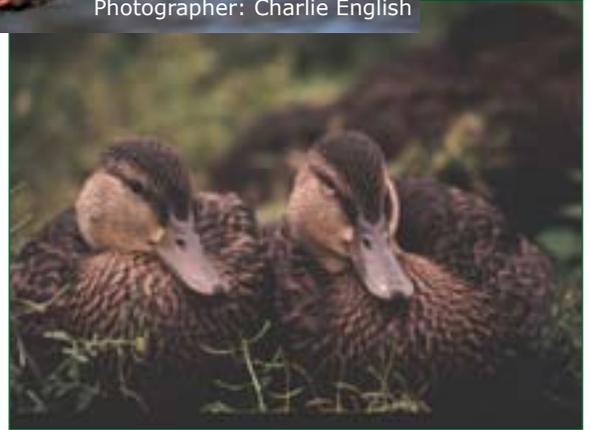
NC Priority Bird



Photographer: Charlie English

American Black Duck

This sleek duck of the northeastern forest lakes and coastal marshes has suffered a long, persistent decline for over a century, which was largely owed to its close relative, the Mallard. Mallards spread into the northeast following the clearing of forest, interbreeding with the American Black Duck and replacing it in many locations. The model shows a future for the species that looks positive, with areas of potentially suitable climate increasing slightly in the breeding season and moreso in winter. However, the model shows much of the potential new area opening up in the far west, where the Black Duck does not occur. It's doubtful that the species would make that westward leap, especially if pressure from the Mallard continues, so prospects for this species may be worse than predicted by the model.



Species Range Change from 2000 to 2080

- 37% of summer 2000 range is stable
- 3% increase in summer 2080 from 2000 range
- 37% of winter 2000 range is stable
- 25% increase in winter 2080 from 2000 range

About This Bird

According to Audubon's climate models, the American Black Duck is projected to lose 63 percent of its summer and winter ranges by 2080. In North Carolina, the American Black Duck is found among our coastal wetlands and marshes from the Cape Fear River to Currituck Sound.

The greatest climate change threat to Atlantic coast marshes is from accelerated sea level rise. Sea level rise is predicted to inundate huge areas of marsh in the coming decades, posing serious threats to birds that depend completely on this habitat for resting and wintering.

What You Can Do

Visit the Donal C. O'Brien, Jr. Sanctuary and Audubon Center website [<http://pineisland.audubon.org>] to learn about volunteer opportunities to survey the animal and plant life on the property, participate in our programs to learn more about this unique ecosystem, and educate yourself about the importance of marshes to our coastal communities.

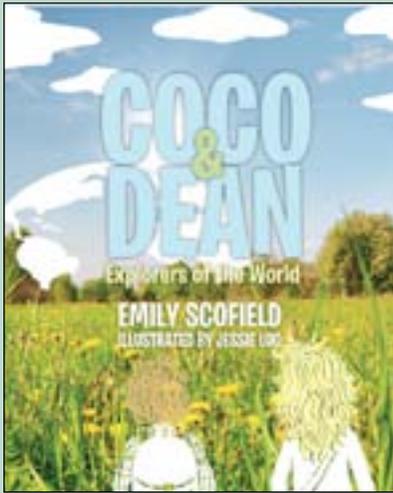
More information - climate.nc.audubon.org/birds/ambduc/american-black-duck

Leaf Litter: Let It Lie

One of the great joys of fall is jumping into a huge pile of leaves—and one of the great aches and pains is bagging those leaves and throwing them out. But that doesn't have to be—it's often a better idea to let leaves stay on the ground. They'll fertilize your yard, offer snug spots for caterpillars to spend the winter, and help fill your yard with life next spring. Our YardMap project has tons of great ideas on how to make yards friendly to birds and other wildlife—read more leaf-litter tips at <http://content.yard-map.org/?p=5190>



A rich bed of leaf litter is an important resource for many backyard species. Photo by Bill Bunn via Birdshare.



Coco & Dean: Explorers of the World

by Emily Scofield, Illustrated by Jessie Luo (Warren Publishing, 2015)

NOTE: Emily Scofield is a local author and very active in environmental education in the Charlotte area.

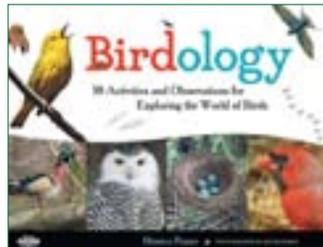
Coco & Dean Explorers of the World takes young readers on three amazing adventures, from your own backyard to exotic destinations. While the characters discover the world around them, they also learn to be aware of environmental issues. Think Like a Cardinal teaches children to be aware of their carbon footprint. "Take only what we need and use what we take..." Conquering Rabbit Hill sheds light on the topic of trash and encourages us all to reduce, reuse and recycle. In Vacation Vortex the characters discover the effects of pollution in our oceans. The Explore with Coco & Dean section at the end of each story provides helpful resources for kids (and adults) to learn more about the environmental topics discussed and to take action. Coco & Dean is a well-crafted and thought provoking read for the next generation of environmentalists! (Goodreads review)

Nuturing the Young Birder

As promised in last month's newsletter here is a list of recent children's books about birds and/or birding that you may want to share with a special young friend or two. I've also put together an additional list of some of my favorite titles. The list can be found at <http://uncc.worldcat.org/profiles/jawalker/lists/3608547>.

Birdology : 30 activities and observations for exploring the world of birds

by Monica Russo & Kevin Byron (Chicago Review Press, 2015)



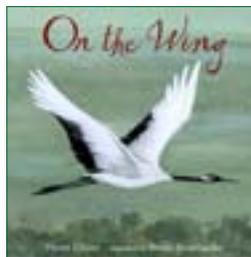
Provides thirty activities that encourage bird watching

and observation in parks, zoos, farms, and backyards, and includes discussions on migration, nesting, food, territories, and wildlife preservation.

On the wing

by David Elliott, illustrated by Becca Stadlander (Candlewick Press, 2014)

Concise, witty verse and gorgeous illustrations allow readers to marvel up close at more than fifteen birds and make for a book that is sure to be beloved by birders of all ages.



Feathers: not just for flying

by Melissa Stewart, illustrated by Sarah S Brannen

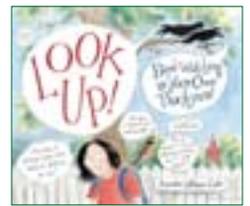


Young naturalists meet sixteen birds in this elegant introduction to the many uses of feathers.

Look up! bird-watching in your own backyard.

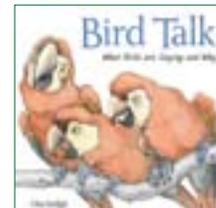
by Annette Cate (Candlewick Press, 2013)

A conversational, humorous introduction to bird-watching featuring quirky full-color illustrations portray dozens of birds chatting about their distinctive characteristics, including color, shape, plumage, and beak and foot types.



Bird talk: what birds are saying and why.

by Lita Judge (Roaring Brook Press, 2012)



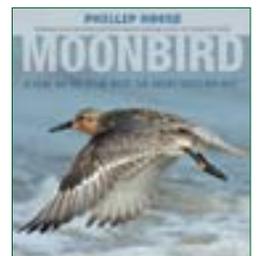
Birds have lots of ways of communicating: They sing and talk, dance and drum, cuddle and fight. But what does all of

the bird talk mean? Take a look at the secret life of birds in a child-friendly format that is sure to appeal to readers of all ages - whether they're die-hard bird-watchers or just curious about the creatures in their own backyards.

Moonbird: a year on the wind with the great survivor B95

by Phillip M Hoose (Farrar Straus Giroux, 2012)

Documents the survival tale of an intrepid shorebird who has



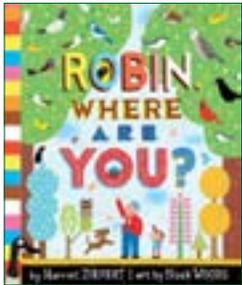
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Nurturing the Young Birder

endured annual migrations between Argentina and the Canadian Arctic throughout the course of a long lifetime while his species continues to decline.

Robin, where are you?

by Harriet Ziefert, illustrated by Noah Woods (Blue Apple Books, 2012)



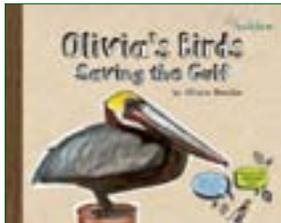
Lucy and her Grandpa go birdwatching together, but although he teaches her about many different birds that they see in the woods and

near the pond, what Lucy really wants to see is a red-breasted robin. Includes facts about more than a dozen kinds of birds.

Olivia's birds: saving the Gulf.

by Olivia Bouler (Sterling Children's Books, 2011)

Eleven-year-old Olivia Bouler has drawn and illustrated a brief guide



to endangered birds in an effort use book sales to contribute to the clean-up expenses for the oil contamination of the Gulf of Mexico.

For the birds: the life of Roger Tory Peterson

by Peggy Thomas, illustrated by Laura Jacques

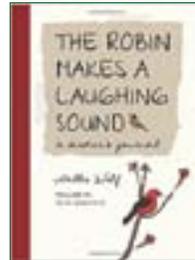
To some, he was "Professor Nuts Peterson," but to the world he was Roger Tory Peterson.



For the birds: the life of Roger Tory Peterson tracks this American artist, activist, and passionate bird lover from his days as a child, to art student, to creator of the Peterson Field Guides, to global environmentalist. Peterson's guides were revolutionary--simply written and drawn for everyone to enjoy the birds, animals, and plants of the outdoors.

The robin makes a laughing sound: a birder's journal

by Sallie Wolf, illustrated by Micah Bornstein (Charlesbridge, 2010)



Presents observations made through every season of the year of different birds and their behavior, from robins taking a bath, to cardinals searching for food in the snow, to an owl perched on a tree at night.

Citizen scientists: be a part of scientific discovery from your own backyard

by Loree Griffin Burns, photographs by Ellen Harasimowicz (Holt, 2012)

Shows young readers how a citizen scientist learns about butterflies, birds, frogs, and ladybugs.



National Wildlife Federation's world of birds: a beginner's guide

by Kim Kurkim, (Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 2014)

A colorful almanac of over one hundred birds, arranged by habitat



How to Use a Field Guide

Use a field guide with restraint. Stopping to consult the field guide is always dangerous when chasing a bird. If the bird is still in sight, you're spending time you could be using to get a better look – and giving the bird a better chase to escape. Try to keep your eyes on the bird as long as possible and use the field guide as a last resort, not your first one. When you do open your book, always try to guess the identity of the birds first, and then look only at the illustration of that particular species. If your guess is wrong, look back at the bird in the field, take another guess, and look only at the illustration for that species. This technique requires self-discipline, but it forces you to realize which species give you problems, and it helps you develop your identification skills.

Unfortunately, opening the field guide after an unidentified bird has flown away creates another problem. Each glance at the field guide's pretty closeups interferes with the memory of the real bird. Every flip of a page blurs it further. After a few minutes of page turning, the real vision can evaporate entirely. A notebook and sketchpad are helpful, but the only real solution is doing your homework – preparing yourself so well you know what field marks to look for before the birds appear.

From *The Complete Birder: A Guide to Better Birding* by Jack Connor



Tips for Novice Birders

Locating the Bird

Where's the Bird???

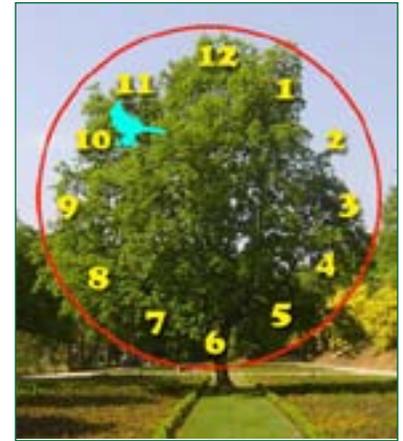
Probably the hardest thing about bird watching is not identifying the bird, but telling someone else where it is. My favorite response to the question "where is it?" is "in the tree". It does help if you know what kind of tree or shrub the bird is in but in the winter that's sometimes hard because the trees don't have leaves. Here's a tip about how to describe the location of a bird to someone else. Try visualizing a clock superimposed over the tree or shrub where the bird is located, like the picture to the left. Put the center of the clock in the center of the

tree/bush and then determine where the bird is by telling its position on the clock. So the bird in the sample picture is between 10 and 11 so it's at 10:30. If the bird isn't at the outer edge of the tree you should then indicate how far from the edge the bird is like one or two feet in from the edge.

Another way to describe the bird's location is to look for some unique identifying 'landmark' near the bird like a curved branch, different colored leaves, opening in the leaves, etc.

Using Binoculars

Finding a bird with your binoculars can be challenging when you first begin bird watching. Here's a little hint – keep your eyes on the bird and just bring the binoculars up to your eyes without



moving them. At first this feels funny, but it will become automatic after you've done it a number of times. If you need to, practice doing this in your backyard while focusing on a tree or your feeder. It really does work.

Bird Geography 101

Everyone knows it is helpful to have a map when traveling to new places [or at least some of us do]. Well the same thing holds true for birding. It is important to understand the geography of a bird to identify it correctly. The bird identification books tend to use terms referring to different parts of the bird's body to describe the bird such as - the bird has two white wing-bars or the eye-ring is broken. While looking at the picture in the book it seems obvious. But when you are in the field it will be important to know if the yellow on that warbler is on the breast or the belly.

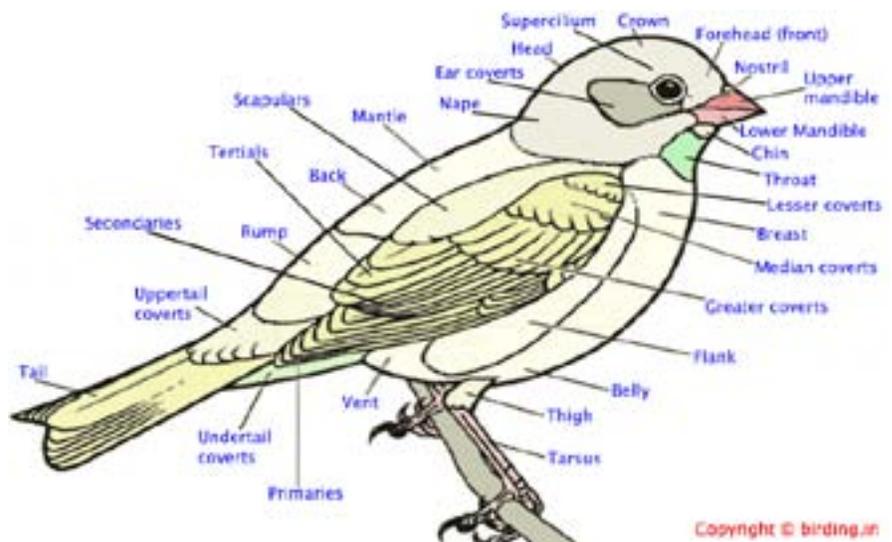
Where exactly does the breast stop and the belly begin anyway???

Here is a bird map that might help you begin to learn the parts

of a bird's body. As you can see it's a composite but I think it still does a good job of showing what's where. And you are more likely to remember this picture than

some of the 'official' ones in the ID books.

Study hard. There will be a quiz next newsletter!



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Native Plant of the Month

Plant a native birdfeeder

Threadleaf Coreopsis (*Coreopsis verticillata*) can fit into your garden just about anywhere. Because its natural habitat is dry woodlands, it is a natural for the often droughty Piedmont. Typically blooming May through July, this easy and undemanding perennial may rebloom if pruned after flowering.

Landscape Uses

Threadleaf Coreopsis prefers a sunny garden, forming 1-2 feet tall mounding clumps of foliage topped by a profusion of bright yellow/ gold, daisy-like flowers. The finely divided foliage creates a nice contrast to broader leaved perennials like Purple Coneflower, Black-eyed Susan, Baptisia and

Mountain Mint and is a welcomed addition to many a border. Threadleaf Coreopsis grows in moist to moderately dry soil, but needs good drainage to really thrive. It will tolerate part shade to part sun.

Common cultivars include 'Golden Gain,' 'Golden Showers,' 'Moonbeam,' and 'Zagreb.'

Seeds taste great

The Coreopsis seeds that appear after flowering are often eaten by:

- Blue Grosbeak

- Indigo Bunting
- Painted Bunting
- Northern Cardinal
- American Goldfinch • House Finch

Find out More

If you would like to learn more about bird friendly native plants that will be happy in Piedmont gardens consider the following sources:

- North Carolina Native Plant Society-ncwildflower.org
- Audubon North Carolina -- ncaudubonblog.org/tag/native-plant-profile
- Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center - wildflower.org/plants

Bird Friendly Native Plant of the Month is a joint effort of the NC Native Plant Society and Audubon North Carolina



Adopt a Bird!

Adopt a bird today. Better yet, adopt a flock of them.

Each adoption includes a lifelike plush and a certificate of adoption. Best of all, proceeds from your adoptions support Audubon's bird-saving work from coast to coast.

Audubon bird adoptions make perfect holiday gifts and stocking stuffers. Plus you get to dodge the crush of holiday shoppers. Everybody wins!

To adopt go to <https://goo.gl/2qQGZL>



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