

# Audubon News

Mecklenburg Audubon Society | P.O. Box 221093, Charlotte, NC 28223

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## Upcoming Events

- .....
- 2/26 Four-mile Creek Grnwy.
  - 2/28 Ribbonwalk NP
  - 3/1 Beginner Bird Walk
  - 3/5 Monthly Meeting
  - 3/7 Latta Plantation Prairie
  - 3/12 Four-mile Creek Grnwy.
  - 3/15 McDowell Prairie
  - 3/17 Pee Dee NWR
  - 3/21 Beginner Bird Walk
  - 3/24 Beatty Park
  - 3/28 Six-mile Creek Grnwy.
  - 4/2 Monthly Meeting
  - 4/4 Congaree Swamp

## Who's New?

- .....
- Amy Busby
  - Shep Foley
  - Cynthia & Jim Griffith
  - Michele Szukala

## Bird Habitat & Mitigating Climate Change

Thursday, March 5 · 7:15 PM



The mission of The Nature Conservancy is "to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends". Fred Annand, Associate Director of the NC Chapter of The Nature Conservancy will share some conservation achievements which have been of great benefit to bird habitat with an emphasis on how mitigating climate change enters into future planning.

Mr. Annand has been with The Nature Conservancy's North Carolina Chapter for more than thirty years. As the individual who holds much of the responsibility for the real estate transactions of the North Carolina Chapter, Fred has contributed directly to the preservation of nearly two-thirds of the 700,000 acres the Conservancy has protected in North Carolina. Mr. Annand has implemented the protection in areas such as the Jocassee Gorges along the Blue Ridge Escarpment, Grandfather Mountain's backcountry, Panther-town Valley in Jackson, Macon and Transylvania Counties and the lower Roanoke River flood-plain in Bertie, Martin and Washington Counties.

Please join us for the March meeting to learn more about the efforts and achievements of The Nature Conservancy, **Thursday March 5th, 7:15 PM**. Come early for snacks and refreshments including Birds & Beans Bird Friendly® coffee!

Join us and tell others you think may be interested to come too!

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Following are some of the best examples of their work in the state.

### Mountains

Panther-town Valley; Plott Balsams Preserve; Stone Mountain State Park; Bluff Mountain Preserve; Three Top Mountain Game Land; Green River Game Land; Silver Run Preserve; Bat Cave Preserve; Rumbling Bald Preserve; Big Yellow Mt. Preserve

### Piedmont

Occoneechee Mt. State Natrual Area; South Mt. Game Land

### Coastal Plain

Chowan Swamp Game Land; Nags Head Woods Ecological Preserve; Calloway Forest Preserve; Carvers Creek State Park; Sandhills Game Land; Boiling Spring Lakes; Green Swamp Preserve; Shaken Creek Savanna Preserve; Black River Preserve

# 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](http://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!!



Winter Wren



Hermit Thrush  
©Jeff Lemons



Red-headed Woodpecker  
©Jeff Lemons

## Thursday, February 26th: Four-mile Creek Greenway

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

We'll cover a two-mile stretch walking through a variety of habitats. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot on Johnston Rd.

## Saturday, February 28th: Ribbonwalk Nature Preserve

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

This area is mostly wooded, and includes three ponds and a large field. We'll cover about 1 1/2 miles. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot on Hoyt Hinson Rd.

## Sunday March 1st: Beginner Bird Walk - Four-mile Creek Grnwy

1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: The Blakesleys [[clemons@mindspring.com](mailto:clemons@mindspring.com)]

This walk is designed for new birders, but anyone can come. Binoculars will be provided, if needed. Meet at 8:30 AM in the Johnston Road Parking Lot.

## Saturday, March 7th: Latta Prairie/Nature Preserve

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

After the prairie, we'll check some of the open lake in the preserve for any waterfowl. Meet at 8:30 AM in parking lot at the Visitor Center.

## Thursday, March 12th: Four-mile Creek Greenway

1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Tom Ledford [[iledford1207@gmail.com](mailto:iledford1207@gmail.com)]

This two-mile walk includes a boardwalk over an extensive wetland area that is always good. We'll meet at 8:30 AM in the Johnston Rd. parking lot, and carpool to the other end.

## Sunday, March 15th: McDowell Prairie/Copperhead Island

1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Matt Janson [[m.janson.geolover@gmail.com](mailto:m.janson.geolover@gmail.com)]

The prairie is a 2-mile walk through fields and woods edges. Sturdy shoes are suggested. Then we'll go to nearby Copperhead Island to scope Lake Wylie for waterfowl. We'll meet at 8:30 AM in a new spot. 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.

## Tuesday, March 17th: Pee Dee NWR

Full Day • Moderate • Contact: Tom Ledford [[iledford1207@gmail.com](mailto:iledford1207@gmail.com)]

Wintering passerines will still be around but early spring migrants should be arriving at the refuge. This is always an interesting trip. We are never sure what we will find. Since folks come from all corners of the Charlotte area, we will meet at 8:30 AM at the bathrooms (main entrance off of Rt. 52) instead of trying to car pool.

*Continued on page 4*



# Have Used Equipment? Want to Sell?



Do you have old birding equipment that you no longer use, but don't want to bother trying to sell on Craig's list or E-Bay? Rather than letting it gather dust, why don't you sell it at the April meeting. We have many new birders and young birders in the club who need equipment but don't have the money or the commitment to birding yet to pay for new stuff. Or, perhaps you want to buy a new scope, but feel like you should sell your old one first. This is an excellent time to clean out those closets!

If you have any items to sell, send the description and price to Anne Clark at [anneliseclark@bellsouth.net](mailto:anneliseclark@bellsouth.net) **by March 15th**. Include your name and phone # in case she has questions. The week before the April meeting, she will send out a list of items for sell to MAS-L so attendees will know what to expect. (Your name and phone # will not be included in the emails.) We will also publish the list in the April newsletter.

At the meeting, sellers must stay with their items, negotiate with potential buyers, and handle the transaction.

10% of each sale will go to Mecklenburg Audubon as a fundraiser.

Stay tuned to the MAS-L for additional information.

## Rules of the sale:

The items for sale are limited to birding equipment, bird feeders, guides and other bird-related stuff. In addition, since we have a lot of photographers in the club, we have decided to include photography equipment as well.



Brown Thrasher  
© Jim Guyton

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## Saturday, March 21st: Beginner Bird Walk (Latta Prairie)

1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Marcia Howden [[howden32@aol.com](mailto:howden32@aol.com)]

This will be a two-mile walk on dirt and gravel roads. We'll have power line right-of-way, woods and prairie/field. We'll start at 8:30 AM in the parking lot to the right just inside the gate of Latta Nature Preserve.

## Tuesday, March 24th: Colonel Francis Beatty Park

1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Tom Ledford [[tledford1207@gmail.com](mailto:tledford1207@gmail.com)]

This under birded park in Matthews has woods, open areas and a large lake. Meet at 8:30 AM at the lake at the end of the main park road.



Prothonotary Warbler  
© Will Stuart

## Saturday, March 28th: Six-Mile Creek

1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Ron Clark [[waxwing@bellsouth.net](mailto: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 4th: Congaree NP

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

We'll head south to meet the migrants in this national park near Columbia, SC. We'll be on a boardwalk for about 1 1/2 miles. Bring lunch. After we eat, we'll check the wetlands near the interstate. We'll meet at 6:30 AM in the Food Lion parking lot on U.S. 21. Take a left at the Carowinds exit on I-77 south. Go one mile and the Food Lion will be on your left. We should be back in Charlotte by 5:00 PM.



# From the President's Perch

I want to share with you a bit of information from the National Audubon 2014 Chapter Annual Report. This report is issued every year as a result of annual chapter reports of activities. It was very exciting this year to find that our Chapter's Brown-headed Nuthatch nest box project made the report. At the time of the report (reporting period July-June) we had deployed 800 boxes. Currently we are over 1,080 boxes within our chapter territory, not counting what our local bird stores have done. My garage is nearly empty as well as our storage area and we are ready to take delivery on another 200 or more boxes.

We have been very fortunate to be working with Mecklenburg County Natural Resources and the Master Naturalist program. They have assisted us in deploying over 200 boxes and provid-

ing monitoring and education on Brown-headed Nuthatches. Dr Mark Stanback of Davidson College has provided support for us in education and materials for accompanying the boxes we either sell or deploy. Renfrow's Hardware in Matthews has been out number one retailer for sales of boxes. Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation Nature Centers-McDowell, Reedy Creek and Latta have assisted in getting the word out and helping get boxes to the public. Our local bird stores-Wild Birds Unlimited, Backyard Birds in Matthews, Birdhouse on the Greenway and Wild Birdmart in Denver have all embraced the project and assisted us. Several other small local stores have carried our houses and got the word out. Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops as well as the HAWK chapter and North Carolina Wildlife Federation have built and/or helped install boxes in local parks, schools and churches.

The Eastern Bluebird Rescue Group in Warrenton NC is the builder of our boxes, having built over 5,000 boxes for our chapters in NC. Support them. They are a non-profit as we are.

A special thanks to some MAS board members and membership for traveling to pick up boxes, storing boxes or helping deploy boxes-Jim Guyton, Jan Fowler, Bill Rowse, Ron Clark, Ken Kneidel, Nancy Pelligrini, Judy Walker and Will Stuart. If I missed you I apologize.

This has been a team effort and together we have made a difference. Thank you to all our partners-visit them and support them. We could not have done this without them.

We are not done yet. We need to do for the Brown-headed Nuthatch what we did a number of years ago for the Eastern Bluebird - so if you have any ideas email me and let me know and we will pursue.

Jill Palmer, President  
Mecklenburg Audubon

## MAS Executive Board

- President:**  
Jill Palmer [jpalmer53@earthlink.net]
- Vice President:**  
Leslie Wieser [lesliewieser@yahoo.com]
- Treasurer:**  
Dave Hooten [dehooten60@gmail.com]
- Secretary:**  
Ken Kneidel [kenkneidel@gmail.com]
- Field Trips:**  
Jim Guyton [guytonj@att.net]
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Lauren Schexnider [lauren.schexnider@gmail.com]
- Communications:**  
Christy Hill [chill2k5@hotmail.com]
- Membership:**  
Jan Fowler [janmfowler@gmail.com]
- Hospitality:**  
Chris Hanna [chrlthanna@aol.com]
- Conservation:**  
Bill Duston [bduston@carolina.rr.com]
- Members at Large:**  
Jim Pugh [jimfayepugh@gmail.com]  
Bill Rowse [birderpa@att.net]
- Newsletter/Web:**  
Judy Walker [birdwalker@me.com]

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 website - meckbirds.org.

It's that time of the year again. Ken Kneidel, Ron Clark and Jan Fowler are looking for a few good members who would like to serve on the MAS board for three years. The board works as a group to plan meetings, projects and other assorted activities. If you would like to know more about the responsibilities of a board member, please contact one of the above mentioned folks. They will fill you in on the details. Being on the board is a great way to get to know folks and develop lasting friendships.

## MAS Needs YOU!!!



# Meet a Migrant - Blue-gray Gnatcatcher

A very small woodland bird with a long tail, usually seen flitting about in the treetops, giving a short whining callnote. Often it darts out in a short, quick flight to snap up a tiny insect in mid-air. It is one of our area's earliest and abundant neo-tropic migrants. Widespread in summer, its breeding range is still expanding toward the north.

## Identification:

Blue-gray Gnatcatchers are pale blue-gray birds with grayish-white underparts and a mostly black tail with white edges. The underside of the tail is mostly white. The face is highlighted by a thin but obvious white eyering. In summer, male Blue-gray Gnatcatchers sport a black 'V' on their foreheads extending above their eyes.

## Habitat:

Open woods, oaks, pines, thickets. Breeding habitat varies with region. In east, mostly in deciduous forest dominated by oak, ash, or maple, or in southern pine woods with understory of oak. In west, often in more scrubby habitat, including pinyon-juniper woods, chaparral, streamside trees, oak forest. Winters in wooded or brushy areas, often near water.

## Breeding:

It has expanded its breeding range through much of the northeast during the 20th century, and expansion may be continuing. Current population probably stable or increasing.

The male arrives first in breeding areas and sings to defend territory and attract a mate. Courtship involves male leading female around to potential nest sites. Nest site is in tree, more

often deciduous. Nest saddled on top of horizontal limb of tree, less often in fork of horizontal limb; height above ground is quite variable, 2-80' up, but 20-40' may be typical. Nest (built by both sexes) is a compact open cup of grass, weeds, plant fibers, strips of bark, lined with plant down, animal hair, feathers. Outside of nest coated with spiderwebs and decorated with pieces of lichen, making nest well camouflaged.

The female lays 4-5, sometimes 3-6. Bluish white, dotted with reddish brown. Incubation is by both parents and lasts 11-15 days, usually 13. The female broods the young much of time at first, while male brings food. When the young are bigger they both feed nestlings. Young leave nest about 10-15 days after hatching. They usually have 1-2 broods per year.

## Behavior:

The energetic Blue-gray Gnatcatcher rarely slows down, fluttering after small insects among shrubs and trees with its tail cocked at a jaunty angle. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers often take food from spiderwebs and also abscond with strands of webbing for their tiny nests, which are shaped like tree knots. They also search for insects among leafy outer twigs of deciduous trees and on branches and trunk in pines taking most food while perched. They can hover to pick items from surface, and often fly out to catch insects that it flushes from foliage. Large insects are beaten against a branch before being eaten.

Their diet consists mostly of a wide variety of small insects, including leafhoppers, treehoppers, plant bugs, leaf beetles, caterpillars, flies, small wasps, and many others. Also eats many spiders.



## Cool Facts

The Blue-gray Gnatcatcher's grayish coloring and long tail, as well as the way it mixes snippets of other birds' repertoires into its own high, nasal songs, have earned it the nickname "Little Mockingbird."

The Blue-gray Gnatcatcher is the northernmost-occurring species of gnatcatcher, and the only truly migratory one. Most members of its genus are resident in Central and South America.

A pair of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers can build up to seven nests in a breeding season. They often re-use nest material from previous nests, which speeds re-nesting. This can be essential to breeding success, since predation, nest parasitism, or mite infestations frequently cause nest loss and brood failure.

In spite of their name, gnats do not form a significant part of the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher's diet.

Fiercely territorial Blue-gray Gnatcatchers may use vocal displays and postures to chase a rival as far as 70 feet. Further resistance by an intruder may provoke midair confrontations, with the two birds climbing steeply, breast-to-breast, snapping at each other.

Adapted from All About Birds ([www.allaboutbirds.org](http://www.allaboutbirds.org)) and Audubon's online Field Guide ([www.audubon.org/field-guide](http://www.audubon.org/field-guide))