

Audubon News

May 2015

Volume 20 (9)

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Upcoming Events

- 05/3 Latta Park
- 05/7 Pee Dee NWR
- 05/10 Latta Park
- 05/12 Landsford Canal, SC
- 05/13 Latta Plantation Prairie
- 05/16 Blue Ridge Parkway
- 05/23 Beginner Bird Walk
- 05/24 Sandhills NWR
- 06/7-9 Charleston, SC area

Who's New?

- Janis Behr
- Amy Franklin
- Nannette Ghanatzian
- Ed & Mildred Harris
- Kenneth Horn
- Thomas & Diane Kindlick
- Richard J. Kline
- Susie Lake
- Chris Pruitt
- Susan Tarnower
- Dottie Unger



"But these are flowers that fly and all but sing..." ~ Robert Frost

Miracle of Monarch Migration

Thursday, May 7th • 7:15 PM
Tyvola Senior Cntr. (2225 Tyvola Rd.)

There are few undertakings on earth that amaze and inspire us more than the epic annual migration of the Monarch Butterfly across eastern America. Join us at our May meeting as John Connors from Wake Audubon Society shares a peek into the life cycle of this species including their autumn journey, one that is fraught with peril but buoyed by optimism, and join millions of them at their winter destination in Mexico.

John I. Connors is recently retired as Coordinator of The Naturalist Center at NC Museum of Natural Sciences since 1997. Prior to 1997, he was the Naturalist and Adventure Program leader for Raleigh Parks and Recreation for 17 years. Currently he is Adjunct Instructor for NCSU Recreation, Parks & Tourism since 1987 teaching classes in Outdoor

Recreation Management and Interpretation of Natural Resources. He is also a board member with Wake Audubon Society; Member, NC Nongame Advisory Board with NC Wildlife Resources Commission; Board WakeNature Preserve Partnership; Stewardship Committee for Triangle Land Conservancy; Compiler: Raleigh Christmas Bird Count, Spring Bird Count and Wake County Butterfly Counts.

Flutter by early (6:45 PM) for snacks and refreshments including Birds & Beans Bird Friendly® coffee!

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.

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!!



Working on Warbler Neck at Latta

Sunday, May 3rd: Latta Park (Dilworth)

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

Migrants are easy to spot as they come into the creek for a drink and/or bath. But be prepared to get warbler neck as well since some of them like to high in the tops of the trees. We will meet at the gazebo near the kids play ground at 8:30 AM.

Thursday, May 7th: Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge

Full day • Moderate • Contact: Tom Ledford [tledford1207@gmail.com]

This refuge is great just about any time of the year. Resident and neotropical migrants should be well established and beginning to raise young. We will meet at 8:30 AM at the refuge office parking area. DON'T FORGET insect repellent! Water, snacks, lunch, sunscreen and hats are also highly recommended.

Sunday, May 10th: Latta Park (Dilworth)

1/2 Day • Easy • Matt Janson [m.janson.geolover@gmail.com]

Migrants are easy to spot as they come into the creek for a drink and/or bath. But be prepared to get warbler neck as well since some of them like to high in the tops of the trees. We will meet at the gazebo near the kids play ground at 8:30 AM.



Bald Eagle at Nest
©Jeff Lemons

Tuesday, May 12th: Lansford Canal State Park

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

Tom Ledford will lead us to this park just below Rock Hill, and abuts the Catawba River. It is wooded with creek side, and is very good for prothonotary warbler and Acadian flycatcher. It usually has an active bald eagle nest. We will meet in the parking lot of the park at 9 AM. There is \$2 per person entry fee.

Wednesday, May 13th: Latta Plantation Prairie

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

This area of Latta Plantation is great for open, scrub/prairie birds such as Indigo Buntings, Yellow-breasted Chats, Prairie Warblers and much more. Bird should be well established and raising young. We will meet in the Nature Center parking lot just inside the main gate at 8:30 AM. Don't forget to bring a hat, sunscreen and water as it can get a bit toasty out in the sun.



Golden-winged Warbler

Saturday, May 16th: Blue Ridge Parkway (Blowing Rock area)

Full Day • Moderate • Contact: Judy Walker [birdwalker@me.com]

We will explore a variety of habitats along the BRP as well as take a stroll around the Valle Cruses municipal park. We will be looking for nesting warblers, a variety of flycatchers and other birds unique to this environment. We will meet at 7:30 AM at the Bojangles in Boone (1141 Blowing Rock Rd.). You will need to pack a lunch. There are a number of local hotels if you want to come up on Friday night. Other-

Field Trips

wise it is about a 2 hr. drive from Charlotte. Warning - temperatures can vary greatly as we go up and down in elevation so bring a jacket just in case. Last year we started out in the 30s in the middle of May!

Saturday, May 23rd: Beginner Bird Walk (Latta Plantation NP)

1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Marsha Howden [howden32@aol.com]

This walk is designed for new birders, but anyone can come. Binoculars will be provided, if needed. We'll start at 8:30 AM in the parking lot to the right just inside the gate of Latta Nature Preserve.

Sunday May 24th, Carolina Sandhills NWR (McBee, SC)

Full Day • Moderate • Contact: Will Stuart [willstuart2001@earthlink.net]

Target birds for this trip will be Red-cockaded Woodpeckers and Bachman's Sparrows but you get to a host of other species as well. This will also be a great trip to observe wildflowers and learn from our very knowledgeable leader. Meet at 7 AM at the McDonalds on the corner of Sam Newell Rd. & Independence Blvd. (9607 E. Independence Blvd. Matthews, NC 282105). We will car pool from there. Pack a lunch, bring snacks and plenty of water as well as a hat, sunscreen and insect repellent.

June 5th - 7th: Charleston Area

Weekend • Moderate • Contact: Ron Clark [waxwing@bellsouth.net]

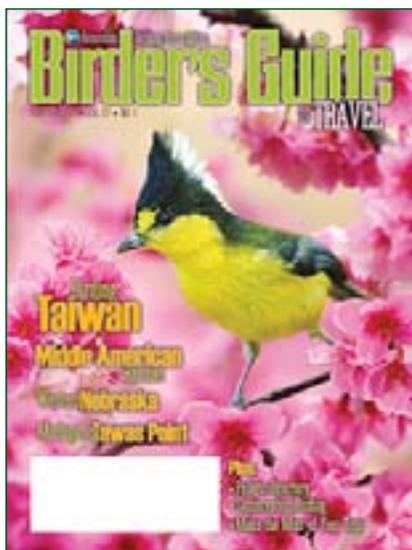
Starting on Friday afternoon for those who get there by then, we'll go to Botany Bay Plantation Wildlife Management Area. Saturday morning we'll bird Bear Island WMA and then Donnelley WMA in the afternoon. On Sunday morning, we'll go to Caw Caw County Park. It will likely be hot with a chance of mosquitos. We'll stay in Walterboro to avoid the Charleston traffic. More details coming about lodging and the birds we'll be looking for.



Red-cockaded Woodpecker at Nest
©Will Stuart

Put a Bird On It

Decorate your computer, tablet, or smartphone with the best photos from past Audubon Photography Awards. Download images of your favorite birds with a single click. Take a look - <http://google.com/1nwfoF>



For the traveling birder

The hotly anticipated ABA 2015 *Birder's Guide to Travel* can be found in its entirety and completely free on the ABA website [<http://aba.org/birdersguide/>]. So if you haven't seen it yet there's no excuse to miss it!

This issue features articles from ABA members on locations both close to home and far abroad, and your urge to travel will undoubtedly be stoked by images of the fantastic birds of Taiwan or hard-to-find species in Middle America, as well as opportunities for great birding in Michigan and

Nebraska.

Learn how to get the most out of an inclusive bird tour and plan your own expedition offshore on either side of the continent using our annual pelagic directory.

Additional open access (free) ABA guides include:

Birder's Guide to Gear

Birder's Guide to Listing & Taxonomy

Birder's Guide to Conservation & Community

Top 10 Ways to Help Nesting Birds



Spring is the start of the breeding season for most of our North American birds. They pair up with mates, build nests, lay eggs, raise young, and then some of them repeat the cycle — as many as three times. There are some things that you can do to assist your backyard birds at this busy time of year. Here they are, in the time-honored Top Ten format.

10. Keep your cat inside (and ask your neighbors to do the same). Cats take an incredible toll on songbirds, but low-nesting species and their young are especially vulnerable to cat predation. Do the birds a favor and keep this unnatural predator away from places where birds nest.

9. Provide nest boxes. It may seem obvious, but a well-placed nest box can mean the difference between nesting success and failure for a cavity-nesting bird. It's hard for many species to compete with starlings and house sparrows, which can take all the best cavities. For great advice on being a landlord to the birds, read *A Guide to Bird Homes*, published by BWD Press (1-800-879-2473).

8. Hold off trimming hedges and shrubs. Lots of species use small hedges and shrubs for nesting. If you see a bird build-

ing a nest in such a place on your property, you've got a great excuse to avoid this bit of yard work for the next month or two.

7. Put out short pieces of fiber, string, and yarn. For birds that build woven nests (orioles, some sparrows, robins, and

others), a few short pieces of yarn can come in mighty handy during building time. Offer the pieces in an onion bag or in a small basket. Keep the pieces shorter than two inches to reduce the risk of birds getting tangled in them.

6. Offer pet or human hair in onion bags or put in obvious places. If you looked at a hundred bird nests, chances are that most of them would have some animal hair in them. It's soft, insulating, and easy to gather. When you groom your pet (or when you yourself are groomed), save the hair to spread around your backyard for the birds to use.

5. Put out eggshells for birds. Eggshells help female birds replace calcium lost during egg production and laying. Save your eggshells, dry them out in the oven (10-30 minutes at 250 degrees), crumble them into small pieces, and spread the pieces on an open spot on the ground.

4. Continue to feed high-protein foods such as mealworms, peanuts, and suet. Don't stop feeding your birds, unless you want to miss out on some fabulous behavior watching. Energy-packed foods such as those listed above will lure your backyard

birds (and their young) to your feeders. These young birds will learn at an early age where your feeders are.

3. Don't mow meadows or brushy areas between late April and mid-August. We keep our farm fields long and grassy all summer long, mowing only a few paths that we keep short all year. This means that field sparrows, prairie warblers, meadowlarks, and other birds can nest in peace. And our box turtles, butterflies, rabbits, deer, foxes, and other creatures appreciate our "farming" style, too.

2. If you find a nest — stay away. If you happen upon a bird's nest, don't linger, and don't make a return visit. We human beings leave scent trails wherever we go, and these scent trails can mean an easy meal to a hungry raccoon, opossum, fox, or other predator (We leave the same trails leading to our outdoor pet-food dishes, garbage cans, and compost piles). These predators are smart enough to follow these trails to see if they might lead to a snack. For the birds' sake, don't help to blow a nest's cover by visiting it repeatedly.

1. Provide water for bathing and drinking on hot days. Actually, provide water all year long, if you can — but make sure to keep it clean. Your birdbath may be the first place in your backyard a parent bird takes its offspring. Lots of family-style bathing takes place at summer birdbaths, and young birds can be dependent upon the only water source they know. So keep your bath filled and clean. Make sure the average water depth is less than three inches. Birds appreciate shallow water.

Taken from Bill's Top Ten at Bird Watcher's Digest - <http://goo.gl/rOuv3>

Meet the Migrant: Blue-winged Warbler

The simple buzzy song of the Blue-winged Warbler is often heard in brushy overgrown fields and thickets in the East during the summer. Although the bird is not especially shy, it can be a challenge to observe as it forages actively in the dense brush. In recent decades this species has been expanding its range northward, encroaching on the territory of its close relative, the Golden-winged Warbler. The two species often interbreed.

Identification

Male and female blue-winged warblers are the same color, although females tend to be drabber. Their forehead, crown, chin, throat, breast, flanks and belly are bright yellow year round. Their wing coverts are blue-grey with white bars on their tail and flight feathers, although females tend to have thinner white bars. The color of their bill changes seasonally for males, it is black in spring and summer, and pinkish to light brown in the fall and winter. Blue-winged warblers can be identified by the black stripe through their eye and white wing bars. Towards the end of the breeding season, typically late June to early August, adults molt.

Range

Blue-winged warblers (*Vermivora pinus*) are native to North America and migrate between North and South America. During their breeding season, they can be found in the Midwest, as well as the northeastern and southeastern United States, as far west as Nebraska and as far south as northern Georgia and northern Alabama. More recently, their range has expanded further north, to southern Maine. During the winter, they migrate south, where they can be found in Mexico, throughout Central America, and northern Colombia.

While their wintering range seems large, they are mostly found between Honduras and the Yucatán Peninsula. Their North American range is steadily expanding northward. Populations reached Ohio in the early 1900s, Michigan by the 1920s, and New York between 1950 to 1971. Migrates mostly at night. Tends to arrive a little earlier in spring than the Golden-winged Warbler.

Habitat

Brushy hillsides, bogs, overgrown pastures, stream and woodland edges. Breeds in dry uplands in low shrubbery, brier patches, weed-grown fencerows, and bushy thickets; often in neglected fields or at the border of woods. Occasionally in deep swamp woods.

Feeding Behavior

Forages by moving about in shrubs and trees, often fairly low. Preferred method of foraging is by probing with bill into curled leaves. Also searches rather deliberately on outer tips of branches, perhaps probing into buds and flowers. Details of diet not well known; probably feeds mostly on small insects, including beetles, ants, caterpillars, and grasshoppers, also spiders.

Breeding/Nesting

They usually lay 5 eggs, sometimes 4-7. White, with fine brown spots on larger end. Female incubates, 10-11 days. Young: Both parents feed nestlings. Young leave nest 8-11 days after hatching. Both parents feed nestlings. Young leave nest 8-11 days after hatching.

Hybridizes with Golden-winged Warbler. Hybrids, known as "Brewster's Warblers," are fertile, and they backcross with the parent species and with each other; second-generation hybrids include



a rare type known as "Lawrence's Warbler." Males sing two types of songs, one in territorial interactions and one in courting a mate. Nest site is well concealed in grass or blackberry vines, sometimes under a bush or sapling, close to or on the ground. Attached to upright stems of grass or weeds, especially goldenrod. The bulky nest is a narrow, deep, inverted cone, usually built by the female alone. Constructed of dead leaves, grass, and beech or grapevine bark, and lined with plant fibers or animal hair.

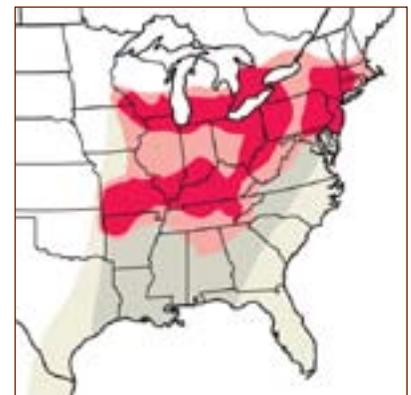
Song:

Insect-like buzzy song, which sounds like a tired sigh, seee-bzzz, the bzzz pitched lower.

Conservation status

Despite being parasitized often by cowbirds, seems to be holding up well in numbers. May be gradually outcompeting and replacing the Golden-winged Warbler.

Adapted from: Audubon Online Field Guide [<http://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/blue-winged-warbler>] and BioKIDS [http://www.biokids.umich.edu/critters/Vermivora_pinus/]



Summer School for Birders

Birding opportunities during the summer in the south can be very hot, buggy and very discouraging. Those of us who don't have the ability to travel to cooler climates have to settle with birding through windows in our air conditioned kitchens or family rooms. But we can still learn a lot during the dog days of a Carolina summer. Here are a few options. Some are free, others have fees associated with them. None are as expensive as some of the trips we would like to take but can't.

Whether it's an intensive 5-week online course, a self-paced, comprehensive college-level study of bird biology, or a live one-hour webinar about how to identify waterfowl, the Cornell Lab offers many ways to take your learning to the next level. Check them out at - <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/courses/home/>

Tutorials

These online tutorials are designed to help beginning birders learn how to identify birds on their own time at their own pace. These sessions help build skills introduced in the "Inside Birding" video series. The tutorials feature: interactive exercises, engaging media, self-paced learning, unlimited access for each user. Part I: Be a Better Birder-Size & Shape Need; Part II: Be a Better Birder-Color & Pattern.

Webinars

Each of our one-hour webinars consists of a live interactive presentation using photographs, videos, sounds, and audience feedback, and is followed by a question and answer period. Each session highlights a specific group of birds. These webinars have been written, developed, and presented by Dr. Kevin McGowan, and are designed to help beginning birders with their identification skills or to enhance understanding about bird behavior.

Series titles include: Waterfowl ID; Shorebird ID; Raptor ID; American Crows; and Bird Behavior.

Home Study Course

Learn about bird behavior, migration, ecology, conservation, and many other subjects in your own home, at your own pace. This comprehensive course was written by 12 leading ornithologists, edited by Cornell Lab staff, and illustrated by acclaimed artist John Schmitt.

The course was produced at an introductory college level and includes all basic topics in ornithology. It is suitable for anyone with a serious interest in birds.

Here are a few other ways you can enhance your understanding of birds and hone your bird watching skills.

Watch some videos

LabofOrnithology on YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/user/LabofOrnithology>

National Audubon - <https://www.youtube.com/user/NationalAudubon>

ABC Birds - <https://www.youtube.com/user/abcbirds>

Read some blogs

Out There with the Birds - <http://otwtb.birdwatchersdigest.com>

aba blog - <http://blog.aba.org>

Sibley guides- <http://www.sibleyguides.com>

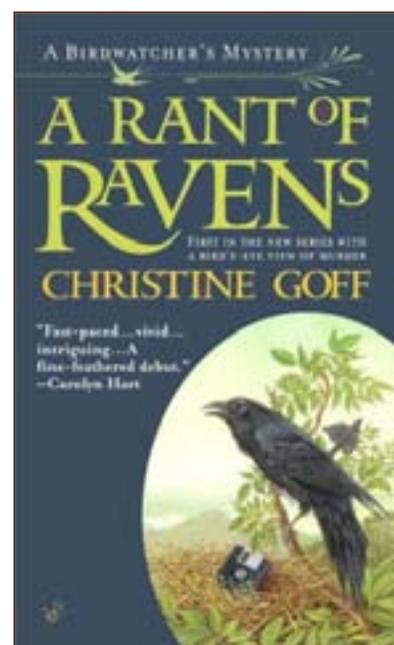
Laura's Birds - <http://blog.laurerickson.com>

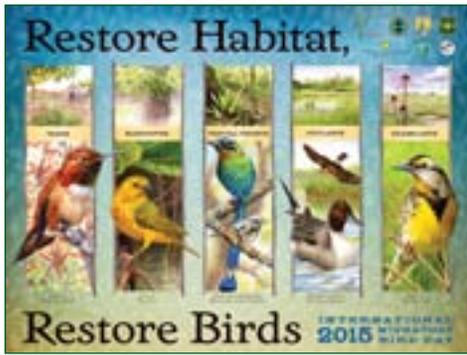
All About Birds - <http://blog.allaboutbirds.org>



For those of you who want a bit of light reading, try the Birdwatcher's Mysteries which focus on environmental themes with a birdwatching bent. Titles include: A Rant of Ravens, Death of a Songbird, A Nest in the Ashes, Death Takes a Gander and Death Shoots a Birdie.

Here's a link - <http://goo.gl/m6WT4Y> - to an additional list of fictional books featuring characters that are naturalists - studying nature, animals, plants, birds, wolves, animal behavior, ecology, botany, conservation of endangered species, the environment, ethology, marine biology, field biology, field research, etc. Can be a professional with a degree or just an enthusiast. FICTION ONLY! No memoirs, no biographies, and no nonfiction.





VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

On May 9th Mecklenbrug Audubon will be partnering with Reedy Creek Nature Center to celebrate International Migratory Bird Day. The focus will be on migration using this years theme of Habitat Restoration. There will be fun events for children and adults.

May 9th • Reedy Creek NP

International Migratory Bird Day, coordinated by Environment for the Americas, celebrates and brings attention to one of the most important and spectacular events in the Americas - bird migration. IMBD is celebrated in Canada, the United States, Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean at protected areas, refuges, parks, museums, schools, zoos, and more. More than 600 events and programs hosted annually introduce the public to migratory birds and ways to conserve them.

Using the theme of Habitat Restoration we will also join county staff and volunteers to remove some invasive stilt grass on the nature preserve. Stilt grass is very easy to pull and requires no tools, just a real dislike for invasive plant species. Bring some gloves and come out to Reedy to help in this project. The hours are from 10-2.

We could also use some hands on for facilitating activities with the children.

If you are interested in helping out contact Jill Palmer <jpalmer53@earthlink.net>



Saturday October 10th

**We're having a PARTY!!!!
to celebrate our**

75th anniversary

All of the details haven't been worked out yet but there will be food, fun and lots of fellowship and reminiscing.



As the MAS activities wind down for the summer, it's a reminder that it's time to Renew your membership. Don't worry if you recently joined you are good until June 2016. But the rest of us have to dig into our piggy banks to find some funds to renew our memberships for another year.

Local membership dues help cover administration costs such as the website, programs, printing display materials and much more. In contrast, all of the monies we raise through coffee sales, raffles, auctions, etc. are used for conservation and education efforts.

Take a fews minutes to fill out the form below and send it to our illustrious treasurer. Or go to the website (meckbirds.org/membership.html) and pay with a credit or debit card.

Mecklenburg Audubon Society

Join now and your membership will be effective until June 2016.

Local Membership covers the cost of the newsletter, web site, meetings and other administrative commitments.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Return to: Treasurer, Mecklenburg Audubon Society, P. O. Box 221093, Charlotte, NC 28222

- Individual Membership [\$10]
- Family Membership [\$15]
- Additional Donation \$ _____

Volunteer Opportunities

- Lead field trips
- Do a program
- Help at events



As we prepare for a summer reprieve for MAS activities, we would be remiss in extending a sincere thanks to three members of the Board of Directors who will be rotating off the board. Chris Hannah has done an outstanding job as the hostess with the mostess over the past six years. Bill Duston, coffee vendor extraordinaire will also be moving on to bigger and better things, maybe even being able to enjoy retirement a little bit more.

Finally, Jill Palmer is stepping down as President of the club, after serving six years on the board. She has brought our club to new heights and hundreds of nuthatch boxes to the Charlotte are literally. Although she will not longer be on the board, I am sure she will be setting an example for us all on how to be an active member/volunteer.

So went you see these folks at the next meeting and/or the picnic make sure you let them know how much you appreciate all of their hard work and dedication to the mission of MAS.



**Thursday, June 4th • 6 PM •
Marion Diehl Pavillion**

2015 Board Slate

Masha Howden	<input type="radio"/>
Matt Janson	<input type="radio"/>
Tom Ledford	<input type="radio"/>
	<input type="radio"/>

The above folks have been nominated to replace outgoing members of the MAS Board. Members will vote on this slate at the May 2015 meeting.

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]

Education:

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.