The Allure & Benefits of Falconry

With a history that dates back over 4000 years and geographical span that includes all continents except Australia and Antarctica, falconry has influenced many cultures and is today practiced in societies worldwide. As with the practitioners of other hunting sports, falconers have become organized in order to embrace stewardship and conservation challenges affecting the resources they treasure. Although the first such effort was in response to the decline of a species highly prized for falconry, the peregrine falcon, many current efforts seek to restore and maintain populations of species with little utilitarian value as falconry birds thanks to the techniques that were derived from the days of peregrine recovery.

Eric Harold, preserve stewardship technician for the southwest region of the Virginia Natural Heritage Program and long time falconer, will join us at our May to discuss the fruits of labor of the falconry community as seen in recovery projects in places like Madagascar, Panama, Africa, and the Philippines thanks to The Peregrine Fund and World Center For Birds Of Prey. When no other group or organizations stepped forward or had the essential knowledge and techniques, these folks became involved due to passion that has its roots in the practice of falconry. The future of biodiversity preservation will be brighter if impassioned stewards like those in the falconry community have the opportunity continue to lead the way when similar challenges arise.

Swoop into our May meeting and see what we’ll be hawking! Thursday, May 5th at the Tyvola Senior Center (2225 Tyvola Road) at 7:15 PM.
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/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!!

Tuesday April 26: Latta Park (Dilworth)
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Ron Clark [waxwing@bellsouth.net]
Another opportunity to stroll through this small urban park and be amazed at the number of migrants that use it as a stop over. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot adjacent to the play area.

Saturday May 7: New Girl Scout Camp
3/4 Day • Easy • Contact: Jill Palmer [jpalmer53@earthlink.net]
Come explore this new trail reported to be a birding hotspot by the Catawba Lands Conservancy. The trail is to the north in Iredell County. This 2.2 mile one-way (4.4 round trip) trail was completed in 2013. The trail runs through the Girl Scouts, Hornets’ Nest Council’s Dale Earnhardt Environmental Leadership Campus at Oak Springs located on Highway 21 in Iredell County. 358 acres of the camp were put into permanent land protection with Catawba Lands Conservancy. Bring a lunch to enjoy after our hike or plan to stop on the way back.
It is about an hours’ drive from Charlotte. We will meet at North Lake Mall (I-77 & Harris Blvd.) parking lot across from the Drury Inn and Suites, far front of Macy’s entry at 7:30 AM and carpool. We should arrive at 8:30 and hike for 2-3 hours on a dirt trail - easy walking.

Sunday May 8: Latta Plantation Prairie
1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Ron Clark [waxwing@bellsouth.net]
This prairie restoration area attracts a number of open field species that can’t be easily found else where in the county such as chats, indigo buntings, prairie warblers and blue grosbeaks. Meet in the parking lot of the Nature Center just inside the gate to the preserve at 8:30 AM.

Wednesday May 11: Latta Park (Dilworth)
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Ron Clark [waxwing@bellsouth.net]
Migration will be winding down but there should still be good birds moving through like the Blackpoll Warbler and thrushes. Meet Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot adjacent to the play area.

Saturday, May 21: Beginner Bird Walk (Latta Plantation Prairie)
1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Marcia Howden [howden32@aol.com]
Designed for beginners, we will take things nice and slow, although it will be a two-mile walk on dirt and gravel roads. We’ll have power line right-of-way, woods and field. Local resident birds should have begone their breeding rituals while a few early migrants may also have arrived. Meet in the Latta Plantation Nature Preserve parking lot at 8:00 AM.

Saturday, May 28th: Evergreen Nature Preserve
1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Ken Kneidel [kenkneidel@gmail.com]
It’s been a while since have been to this preserve. We will be looking for late migrants and how the resident birds are doing with raising their young. We will meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot of Winterfield Elementary School (3100 Winterfield Place Charlotte, NC).
NC Priority Bird: **Wood Thrush** (*Hylocichla mustelina*)

Seemingly not as shy as the other brown thrushes, but not as bold as the Robin, the Wood Thrush seems intermediate between these two related groups. It sometimes nests in suburbs and city parks, and it is still common in many eastern woodlands, where its flutelike songs add music to summer mornings. However, numbers of Wood Thrushes have declined seriously in recent decades, focusing the attention of conservationists on the problems facing our migratory birds.

**Habitat:**
Mainly deciduous woodlands. Breeds in the understory of woodlands, mostly deciduous but sometimes mixed, in areas with tall trees. More numerous in damp forest and near streams than in drier woods; will nest in suburban areas where there are enough large trees. In migration, found in various kinds of woodland. Winters in understory of lowland tropical forest.

**Migration**
Migrates mostly at night. Many migrate across Gulf of Mexico in spring and fall.

**Feeding Behavior & Diet**
Wood thrushes forages mostly on ground, usually in the forest undergrowth but occasionally on open lawns. They will use their bill to flip leaf-litter aside as it seeks insects. Also feeds on berries up in shrubs and trees. Feeds on many insects, especially in breeding season, including beetles, caterpillars, ants, crickets, moths, and many others; also spiders, earthworms, and snails. Berries and small fruits are eaten at all seasons. Young are fed mostly insects but also some berries.

**Breeding Behavior**
Males arrive first on breeding grounds, establishing a territory, and then defends it by singing. He often reacts aggressively to other thrushes in territory, such as Robins or Veerys. In courtship, the male may chase female in fast circular flights among the trees. The nest is placed in vertical fork of tree (usually deciduous) or saddled on horizontal branch, usually about 10-15' above the ground, sometimes lower, rarely as high as 50'. The nest (built by female) is rather like Robin’s nest, an open cup of grass, leaves, moss, weeds, bark strips, mixed with mud; has lining of soft material such as rootlets. Often adds pieces of white paper or other trash to nest.

The female usually lays 3-4 pale greenish blue, unmarked. Incubation is by female only and lasts 13-14 days. Both parents feed nestlings. The young leave the nest about 12 days after hatching.

Wood thrushes usually have 1-2 broods per year.

**Conservation**
In the late 20th century, the Wood Thrush was one of the most potent symbols of Eastern forests under siege. Numbers have declined seriously in recent decades. Cowbirds lay many eggs in their nests, so the thrushes often raise mainly cowbirds, with few young of their own. As forests are cut into smaller fragments, it apparently becomes easier for cowbirds to penetrate these small woodlots and find more of the thrush nests. It is probably also losing wintering habitat in the tropics.

A new challenge is climate change. Audubon’s climate model projects an 82 percent loss of current summer range by 2080, with a substantial shift in the offing, as new range could become available across much of what is today the boreal forest.

Read how scientists are learning about where the Wood Thrush lives half of its life at [https://www.audubon.org/node/51206](https://www.audubon.org/node/51206)
What could be more entertaining in the summer than a large patch of *Salvia coccinea* attracting hummingbirds, bees and all manner of pollinators for your viewing pleasure? As an annual, Scarlet Sage blooms bountifully for you (and your pollinator friends) until fall frosts. Notice the Salvia blossom, the expanded lower lip serves as a landing pad for bees. When the larger bees land on the outstretched petal, the stamens are pulled out and down, allowing the anthers to release their pollen onto the bee’s back. Then the pollen is available to the next flower the bee visits.

**How to keep Salvia happy**

Scarlet Sage is a coastal species, and to have a successful patch of Salvia in your garden be sure the soil is well drained and plants are located in full sun. The Mellichamp Native Terrace at the UNCC Botanical Garden places their Salvia bed on a slope to promote drainage. As an annual the plants will die with frost, but *Salvia coccinea* does reseed easily if the seeds are allowed to fall on exposed soil. Seedlings will emerge the next spring as the weather warms. Feel free to deadhead or cut back your Salvia to encourage branching and keep the plants looking attractive to encourage bloom.

**So many Salvia...**

If you’re trying to be true to natives from the Carolinas or the Southeast US, the Salvia question can get quite confusing. *Salvia coccinea* is native to coastal areas of South Carolina, Florida and Texas. Other Salvias native to North Carolina include:

- Blue Sage (*Salvia azurea*) — taller, 2-6 feet tall, light blue flowers
- Lyreleaf Sage (*Salvia lyrata*)— purple flowers, evergreen basal rosette makes this an option in a no-grass lawn mix

Many other varieties you find in nurseries often come from Texas, western US and Mexico.
What should I do if I find an injured or orphaned bird?

- If the bird has little or no feathers and you can find the nest, return the bird to its nest.
- If the young bird is hopping and running away from you, let it be. Its parents will find it.
- If the bird is in danger of becoming lunch for a cat or dog, scoop it up and place it in a nearby bush or shrub out of harm’s way. Since most birds have no significant sense of smell, moving the baby bird to safety or returning it to the nest will not cause the parents to abandon it.
- If the baby/fledgling is cold to the touch, take it inside to warm before returning to the nest. Nestle the bird in a warm towel or use a hot water bottle (with a towel between the bird and the bottle). Place the bird in a warm, dark, quiet room away from children and pets.
- If the nest has been destroyed, you can create a makeshift nest using a small basket or a Cool Whip container. Line the container with material from the old nest or with dry grass and leaves. Wire your nest to a branch or place it securely in a branch fork near the old nest. Be sure there are holes in the bottom of the container to allow drainage.
- Call a rehabilitator for further instructions.
- Do not offer food or water until you’ve spoken with a rehabilitator.
- Do not check on the animal or bird for 30 minutes.

Helpful Local Numbers: Carolina Raptor Center - 704-875-6521 • Carolina Waterfowl Rescue - 704-668-9486

Is it Legal? The Migratory Bird Treaty Act Clarified

Every year, the public has questions about nesting birds, particularly those that are conspicuous or somehow compromised. Below, we recap some of these common questions and clarify which seemingly helpful interactions run afoul of the law.

I found an abandoned baby bird and took it home to raise it. It’s illegal, unless that baby bird is a House Sparrow, European Starling, or Rock Pigeon (can you really tell them apart as nestlings?). If the bird is unable to sit up or get around, and you can’t locate the original nest to put it back, it’s better to take it to a wildlife rehabilitator. If it can hop or walk, leave it alone; it’s parents are probably nearby.

A bird laid its eggs in an inconvenient place. Can I move the nest? It’s illegal to move a nest just because it’s inconvenient to you. If the nest is truly in a life-threatening place (e.g., in your car’s exhaust pipe), or it is damaged as a result of being somewhere inappropriate, please call the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for advice.

Continued on page 7
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 building 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.

Read more at: [http://goo.gl/txiVLc](http://goo.gl/txiVLc)
Is it Legal?

A bird is starting to build a nest in an inconvenient place. Can I discourage it? Yes, you can discourage a bird that has just started building a nest, before it lays any eggs. The distinction from the previous question is that an inactive nest (no eggs or young) can be removed, but an active one cannot.

A nest in one of my boxes got wet, so I replaced it with a dry nest. This is technically illegal. A better solution would be to repair the nest box at your earliest opportunity so that it doesn’t leak. Use duct tape for a quick fix along a leaky seam.

I want to measure/weigh/mark birds in a nest. This is only legal if you have been granted a permit for scientific research.

This information is meant to help you understand the law. It should not be construed as legal advice. Some activities may require a permit, which can be obtained by contacting your regional U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service office.

Bird Academy: Bird Song Hero

The new, visual way to learn bird songs. Train your brain to recognize over 50 bird songs with the Bird Song Hero matching game.

Listen closely to featured songs and match each with the correct spectrogram visualization. You’ll be harnessing the power of the visual brain to help you identify the unique qualities of each song and commit sound patterns to memory.

Bird Song Hero is a fun way to practice the key skills you need to ID all the bird songs you’re curious about.

Oology is the study of bird eggs, and it has a fascinating history in the United States. In Oology and Ralph’s Talking Eggs, author Carrol Henderson describes the history of one private egg collection, and situates it within the context of the larger field of study. The book tells the story of Iowa farmer Ralph Handsaker, an amateur oologist. As the author documents the massive collection for a museum, stories are revealed about each of the 800 egg sets.

In a period when the credibility of a bird enthusiast was judged by the size of his egg collection and the number of rarities it contained, the book is at times poignant (e.g., the collection of Iowa’s last Marbled Godwit nest). However, some might call egg collecting the origins of modern bird watching, as it marked a transition from commercial interest to naturalist pursuit. Others might go so far as to deem it a precursor to citizen science, as most collections ended up in museums where they contributed to research. One thing is certain: every egg has a story to tell, and this book will have you listening.
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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.

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 2017. 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.

Looking for Birds in North Carolina??

Take a look at Birds of North Carolina [http://goo.gl/ZjZxjR]. This website aims to provide a list of all of the bird species recorded (i.e., accepted to either the Definitive List or the Provisional List) in North Carolina, with general information about their distribution in the state -- by regions, their relative abundance in each region, their periods of occurrence in the state, and information about finding each species in the state. County maps of occurrence are provided for each species; in addition, breeding season maps, showing abundance by county, & much more.

Mecklenburg Audubon Society Membership

Join now and your membership will be effective until June 2017.

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

Name: ________________________________
Address: ________________________________
Phone: __________________ Email: __________________

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

Individual Membership [$10]
Family Membership [$15]
Additional Donation $ _______

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Lead field trips
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Help at events