As fall rolls in and the weather gets cooler (well, slightly) it is a great time to get out and look for migrating birds. If you want to find migrants your best bet is to go to habitat that offers them food, water, and shelter as they make their journey south. Our October meeting will focus on bird-friendly plants that are so important for providing food and shelter for migrants (and our local birds as well.) and one of the best places to see migrants in Charlotte, Latta Park.

No one knows better than we at Mecklenburg Audubon about the importance of Latta Park in supporting birds. It’s great habitat for an inner city park, but it needs work to stay that way. To maintain and improve the park for both birds and people, the Dilworth Community Association has partnered with Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation to create a five-year renovation plan. Their awareness of the connection between plants and birds was inspired in part by conversations with local native-plant expert and enthusiast Beth Henry. Beth will speak at our meeting about the importance of gardening with natives, at Latta or anywhere else, explaining the crucial and irreplaceable role of native plants in the lives of songbirds and their necessary diet. Nancy Nicholson of the Dilworth Initiative planning committee will be on hand to answer questions about what’s in store specifically for Latta Park.

The meeting will also give us an opportunity to highlight the actions of Mecklenburg Audubon in supporting the promotion of gardening with native plants. MAS is in the middle of administering a generous grant from Audubon NC and Wells Fargo directed towards helping the Charlotte Nature Museum remove non native plants in favor of bird friendly local alternatives.

As always we will have Birds and Beans Coffee available for purchase.

Continued on page 7
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, Sep. 27th: Latta Park (Dilworth)
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Ron Clark [waxwing@bellsouth.net]
Although not as active in the fall migration this park close to the city center always produces interesting birds. Meet in the parking area near the gazebo at 8:30 AM.

Saturday, Oct. 1st: RibbonWalk Nature Preserve
1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Ron Clark [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.

Saturday, Oct. 8th: Six-mile Creek Greenway (Beginner’s walk)
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Bill & Laura Blakesley [lclemons@mindspring.com]
Designed for beginner birdwatchers, we will concentrate on the basics on this leisurely walk along this relatively short greenway (1 mile) on the NC/SC border. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot on Marvin Road.

Sunday, Oct. 9th: Big Sit (Cowan’s Ford Refuge)
All Day • Easy
This is a fun-filled day of birding with minimal walking. It takes place in the viewing stand at Cowan’s Ford Refuge. It will start before daybreak and end around 5-6, whenever the last folks leave. You can come for an hour or all day. Bring a chair, snacks and your binoculars. This is a great way to meet folks, and one of the few outings where talking is okay. We will have grill for some hot dogs around noon. Sign-up isn’t necessary, just come and enjoy.

Saturday/Sunday, Oct. 15/16th: Huntington Beach St. Park, SC
Weekend • Strenuous • Contact: Judy Walker [birdwalker@me.com]
This is our fall sojourn to a South Carolina birding hot spot. Fall migrants – hawks and warblers – will still be moving through, wintering shorebirds will have settled in and a few ducks may also have begun arriving. This is probably the best time of the year to see Peregrine Falcons and Merlins, and I am sure we will be delighted with spectacular views of thou- sands of tree swallows.

We will meet in the parking lot on the east side of the causeway at 7:30 AM. It can get pretty hot so remember a hat, sunscreen and plenty of water. We will eat lunch in the park so you will also need to bring food. Since many participants stay for the weekend, we usually go out to dinner on Saturday night. At dinner we will plan where we will go on Sunday.

KEY TO PHYSICAL DIFFICULTY

Easy - Trails are level to slight grades usually paved; .5-3 miles walking
Moderate - Trails can be uneven with some hills; 2-4 miles walking.
Strenuous - Trails vary greatly; 3+ miles of walking.
* Trails are handicapped accessible.
Field Trips (cont.)

Saturday, Oct. 15th: McDowell Prairie
1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Jeff Lemons [birdsalto@gmail.com] • MAP
For those who can’t venture down to the coast Jeff will lead a walk at McDowell Prairie looking for early & late migrants including the elusive common ground dove. We will meet 8:00 AM. 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.

Thursday, Oct. 20th: Four Mile Creek Greenway
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Ron Clark [waxwing@bellsouth.net]
This greenway has a variety of habitats that always provide good birds regardless of season. Meet at the Johnson Rd. parking lot at 8:30 AM.

Saturday, Oct 22nd: West Branch Greenway/Nature Preserve
1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Judy Walker [birdwalker@me.com]
We will be looking for arriving winter migrants in this under birded nature preserve. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot at the corner of Shearer Rd. & June Washam Rd.

Saturday, Nov. 5th: McDowell Prairie/Copperhead Island
1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Ron Clark [waxwing@bellsouth.net]
Our first prairie walk of the season. We will be looking for early winter migrants including 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.

Wednesday, Nov. 9th: Toby Creek Greenway
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Judy Walker [birdwalker@me.com]
A late fall stroll the UNCC campus should provide some early winter migrants as well as a variety of local residents. We’ll meet in the parking lot of Town Center on University City Blvd. in the corner by the light at 8:30 AM.

Saturday, Nov. 12th: Latta Plantation Prairie (Beginner Bird Walk)
1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Marcia Howden [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. Fall migration could produce a variety of migrants. We’ll start at 8:30 AM in the parking lot to the right just inside the gate of Latta Nature Preserve.

Saturday Nov. 19th: Clark’s Creek Greenway
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Judy Walker [birdwalker@me.com]
This heavily wooded greenway provides a surprising variety of birds. All five woodpeckers are possible as well as winter wrens. Meet in the greenway parking lot adjacent to Mallard Creek Elementary School on Mallard Creek Rd. at 8:30 AM.

Sunday, Nov. 20th: Pee Dee NWR
Full Day • Moderate • Contact: Matt Janson [m.janson.geolover@gmail.com]
Winter migrants should be arriving at this gem of a refuge hidden in the NC piedmont. Maximum 15 participants as we will be entering the sensitive waterfowl habitat. Also, please carpool to bring as few intrusive vehicles as possible. Bring lunch, water and snacks. Meet at the kiosk/ bathroom area at 8 AM.
NC Priority Bird: **Sanderling**

Familiar to most Carolina beachgoers, this is the little sandpiper that runs up and down the beach “like a clockwork toy,” chasing the receding waves. Plumper and more active than most small sandpipers, and quite pale at most times of year, a good match for dry sand. Sanderlings nest only in limited areas of the far north, but during migration and winter they are familiar sights on coastal beaches all over the world.

**Habitat:** During most seasons it can be found on sandy beaches washed by waves. It can also sometimes be found on rocky shorelines, less often on mudflats. Although typically coastal, a few stop over on lake shores inland. It breeds far above Arctic Circle on rather dry, rocky tundra with growth of moss, lichens, low plants, generally close to lakes or ponds.

**Diet/Feeding Behavior:** The sanderling chases the waves mostly to find sand crabs, which lie buried in intertidal zone and are easiest to spot just after a wave retreats. Sanderlings also probe in sand and mud for other creatures, and move rapidly while picking items from surface. They feed on a wide variety of small creatures on beach, including sand crabs, amphipods, isopods, insects, marine worms, small mollusks; also may eat some carrion. Wintering birds on southern coasts may eat corn chips and other junk food left by people. In spring, they may feed heavily on eggs of horseshoe crab. On tundra, they feed mostly on flies and other insects, also some seeds, algae, and leaves.

**Breeding/Nesting:** In breeding season, unmated male performs low display flight, alternately fluttering and gliding, while giving harsh chirring song. On the ground, male runs up to female with feathers ruffled, head hunched down on shoulders. Nest site is on ground, usually in an open and rather barren spot which may be higher than its surroundings. Nest is shallow scrape, often lined with small leaves.

They lay 3-4 olive-green to pale brown eggs, sparsely spotted with brown and black. Incubation is by both sexes for 24-31 days. Sometimes female lays 2 clutches in separate nests and male incubates one set, female the other. At other times, female may have two mates, leaving each male to care for a set of eggs and young, while female departs. The downy young leave nest shortly after hatching, are tended by one or both parents. If both parents are present at first, female may leave within a few days. The young can feed themselves and take their first flight at about the age of 17 days.

**Migration:** Much of its migration is accomplished in long nonstop flights between key stopover points. Studies show that many individuals return year after year to same wintering sites. One-year-old birds may remain through summer on the southern wintering grounds.

**Conservation:** Although the Sanderling is still a common bird, Gulf Coast Christmas Bird Count data show a slow but steady decline since the 1960s. Some surveys show an 80% drop in numbers in the Americas since early 1970s. During migration it relies heavily on a few staging areas, and is vulnerable to destruction of those sites. Like other birds that feed on beaches, Sanderlings are threatened by contaminated prey or reduced prey abundance, lingering oil, disturbance, and reduced habitat quality.

**Cool Facts**
- When threatened by a Peregrine Falcon, Sanderlings fly in a compact flock that maneuvers erratically over the ocean. Whenever you see a flock of shorebirds abruptly take flight all at once, scan the skies to see if a falcon is the cause of the sudden alarm. In their escapes, individual Sanderlings may occasionally dive right into the water.
- After foraging on the beach, Sanderlings often regurgitate sand pellets studded with fragments of mollusk and crustacean shells.
- The oldest Sanderling on record was at least 13 years, 1 month old. It lived in Nova Scotia.

Adapted from the National Audubon and Cornell’s All About Birds websites. For more information visit [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Sanderling/id](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Sanderling/id) and [http://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/sanderling](http://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/sanderling).
In Memory of David Wright

by Taylor Piephoff

David Wright, a veteran local birder well known to many of the long time birders in both Carolinas, passed away September 6. David was very active in Mecklenburg Audubon in the 70’s, 80’s, and the early 90’s, until tremendous health issues slowed his activity. A series of medical procedures allowed David to rally for another decade, so until fairly recently he was able to chase staked out rarities all over North America.

David was the foremost authority on the birds of Charlotte and surrounding areas dating back to the early 1970’s. And why shouldn’t he be; he found most of the hot spots that area birders frequent today and found many of the rarities that we marvel about to this day.

As good and as dedicated a birder that David was, his expertise was surpassed by his willingness to mentor and help others in the field, including this raw birder some thirty-five years ago. His welcoming nature was a major influence on the development of the current birding community in Mecklenburg County.

David certainly had a conversational gift, one that more than once turned suspicious and belligerent land owners into friendly and supportive allies of the local birding community.

Even though his activity was slowed by his recurring health issues, David contributed to the local birding scene by taking folks out on his pontoon boat to explore and chase Lake Norman’s rarities during the migrations and the Southern Lake Norman Christmas Bird Counts. For years he and his wife Marcia opened their lake home up to the participants of that Christmas Count for a tally-up meal.

David’s passing leaves a void in Mecklenburg County birding that will never be filled. He will be sorely missed.

by Matt Janson, Carolina Young Birders Club

As a current young birder, much as Taylor was “some thirty-five years ago”, I would like to add that David continued his mentoring and support of our local young birders through this year. Last December, he and Marcia invited me to his sector of the Charlotte Christmas Bird Count, which includes a visit to the McAlpine Wastewater Treatment Plant (otherwise off-limits to birders), and I was fortunate enough to be invited (along with other young birders) by David onto his boat for several tours of Lake Norman in the winter, most recently in February of this year, and of course to participate in the camaraderie of the local birding community at the Southern Lake Norman Christmas Count tally-ups, where we, as Taylor mentioned, were welcomed into his lakeside home.

David will continue to be a true inspiration for us all and will be remembered as one who genuinely enjoyed cultivating the birding hobby in future generations - from Taylor’s to my own.
Audubon News

Bird Friendly Native Plants

"It's simple: By gardening with native plants, no matter where you live or how small or large your space is, you can help sustain wildlife." - Doug Tallamy, Bringing Nature Home

Your yard -- and the kinds of plants in it -- matters more than you may know. Native plants play a very important role in providing the food birds need to survive and thrive in a way that non-native plants cannot do.

GOING NATIVE

Native plants are those that occur naturally in an area. North Carolina, with its diverse geography, is home to thousands of native plant species! Our natural wildlife - including birds - have adapted to the resources provided by North Carolina’s native plant population. These plants and trees are, in a real sense, home for our birds.

The current population of native plants is becoming displaced by non-native, exotic and often vigorously growing species. These invasive exotic plants encroach on natural habitats and do not provide the nutrients many birds need to survive.

WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

In a word: insects. Almost all land birds require insects to feed their young. Even seed-eating birds often must feed their babies insects to ensure their survival. Insects cannot adapt to eating non-native plants. Less native plants means less insects, which in turn means fewer bird babies growing to adulthood.

WHERE TO FIND NATIVE PLANTS?

Below, you will find a list of recommended and approved nurseries in the Charlotte area that specialize in selling native seeds and plants. These retailers are all participating partners of Audubon North Carolina’s Bird-Friendly Native Plants of the Year program.

Garden Grove Nursery
16008 Old Statesville Rd, Huntersville, NC 28078

Dearness Gardens
13501 S Old Statesville Rd, Huntersville, NC 28078

Pike Nurseries
12630 N Community House Rd, Charlotte, NC 28277

Southern Styles Nursery & Garden Center
4245 Rea Rd, Charlotte, NC 28226

Carolina Heritage Nursery
6607 Sadler Rd, Waxhaw, NC 28173

Taylor Family Greenhouse
2405 Corinth Church Rd, Monroe, NC 28112

Panoramic Farm
3110 Tarlton Mill Rd, Marshville, NC 28103

Native Plants are also available at the following fall and spring plant sales:

UNCC Botanical Gardens
Wing Haven Gardens

More information about retailers throughout the state can be found at http://nc.audubon.org-conservation/find-bird-friendly-native-plants-retailers

Winterberry

Growing Tips:
Thrives in the mountains, piedmont & coastal plain
Grows 6’-15’ tall
Spreads 6’-10’ wide
Full to part sun
Moist to average well-drained soil
Needs a male & female plant
Flowers April-June
Berries August-December

Birds That Love It:
Wood Thrush
Gray Catbird
Eastern Bluebird
American Robin
Cedar Waxwing
Woodpecker

More information about Winterberry can be found at http://nc.audubon.org/news/winterberry—irresistible-birds-and-people
**Birding 10 Commandments**

1. Thou shall have no other interest before birding. If thou does, thou shall not discuss it with other birders.

2. Thou shall not take unto thee any graven image of the birds that are in heaven above without giving photo credit to the photographer. Thou shall not capture and cage the wild birds, nor shall thou visit birds in zoos (unless the birds are endangered and part of a breeding release program), nor shall thou respect and cherish any introduced species.

3. Thou shall not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: not when thou just missed seeing that rare bird, nor when the potential life bird doth not sit still for an identification, nor when thou droppeth thy binoculars in the middle of the lake.

4. Remember all thy birding days, and keep them special. Six days shall thou labor and do all thy work: but the seventh day is to renew thy spirit with the avian flock. Work is the curse of the birding classes.

5. Honor those who introduced thee to birding and taught thee about birds that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. If thou should dishonor those experts, thy days may be short. Honor those who own the private property where birds congregate that they may allow thee to come back the next time.

6. Thou shall not kill any bird (nor any bird hunters - no matter how strong the provocation). Thou shall labor to protect and keep them for all the days of thy life (well, maybe not the hunters...).

7. Thou shall not take any thing that belongs to another birder with out asking: not his place in the hide, nor his field guide, nor his birding partner, nor his lunch.

8. Thou shall not steal a bird’s eggs or, more importantly, a bird’s habitat if thou wish to see the bird long on this earth.

9. Thou shall not bear false witness about birds thou hast identified or heard, nor shall thou exaggerate or brag about birds thou hast seen. Thy word is thy bond, especially on Birding Big Days.

10. Thou shall not covet thy neighbor’s life list, but must create thine own. Thou shall not covet thy neighbor’s birding scope, nor his identification skills, nor his bird photography ability, nor his ability to travel to see more birds than thou, nor any other thing that is thy birder neighbor’s.

Remember these commandments, and keep them holy, in the name of the Father (John James Audubon), and the Son (Roger Tory Peterson) and the Holy Ghost (Charles Sibley).

(Adapted from Tina’s Ten Commandments of Birding)
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 few 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.

Plants & Latta Park

The meeting will also give us an opportunity to highlight the actions of Mecklenburg Audubon in supporting the promotion of gardening with native plants. MAS is in the middle of administering a generous grant from Audubon NC and Wells Fargo directed towards helping the Charlotte Nature Museum remove non native plants in favor of bird friendly local alternatives.

As always we will have Birds and Beans Coffee available for purchase.

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: ___________________________

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

Volunteer Opportunities
Lead field trips
Do a program
Help at events

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

As always we will have Birds and Beans Coffee available for purchase.