Soon it will be that time again. Folks will be calling me about baby birds. Every spring when babies are in the nest many of them will find themselves out of it sooner than they should. Here are some tips on what to do if you find a baby/injured bird this spring.

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 bird has little or no feathers and you can find the nest, return the bird to its nest. 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.

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 you cannot find the nest or if the bird appears to be sick, injured, or needs feeding, call Carolina Wild Care 704.399.9668 [9 AM to 9 PM, 7 days a week, 365 days per year].

Place bird in a small box with a soft cloth on the bottom. Secure the lid. Do not check on the bird for 30 minutes.

Do not offer food or water until you have spoken with CWC.

---

Carolina Wild Care needs Your Help

Carolina Wild Care is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization that cares for wildlife. Donations are never required, but are very much appreciated. Since they receive no funding from state, city or county agencies, they depend on the kindness of people like us that care about wildlife. Since CWC’s work will be picking up very soon let’s see what we can do to help out. Below is a list of things that you can bring to the March meeting to help them out. We’ll make sure they get to Carolina Wild Care to the birds.

Suet cakes
Bird seed (without red millet)
Cheerios
Clorox (unscented)
Cotton Balls
White paper towels
Hill’s Science Diet Kitten Original Liquid sanitizer
Paper tape
Pedialyte (plain and grape)
Q-tips
Spoon-sized shredded wheat (plain)

Triple-antibiotic ointment
Unsalted nuts in shell (pecans, walnuts, hazel nuts, almonds, acorns)
Baby food (ONLY chicken & chicken gravy or chicken & chicken broth)
Disinfectant (Nolvasan or Chlorhexadine)
Kaytee hand-feed formula for baby birds
Tissues/toilet paper (soft 2 ply, high quality for tender loving care)

---

Monthly Meeting

Brazil

This month take a trip south of the equator. Rob Bierregaard worked for 15 years in Brazil and now he leads trips back to some of his favorite places. Now he’s going to take us on a virtual tour of this spectacular country.

So bring you passport and let yourself be transported to the rainforest of Brazil. See you there at 7:30 PM in the fellowship hall of the Sharon Seventh Day Adventist Church at 920 Sharon Amity.
FieldTrips

Please, remember to contact the trip leader several days before the trip. If you don’t receive information about last minute changes or cancellations. Also, if we don’t know you are coming we might leave without you!!

Saturday, March 3rd:
Latta Plantation Nature Preserve [1/2 day]

Continuing our tour of the County nature preserves and refuges, we will once again assemble in the northern end of the county at Latta Plantation Nature Preserve. We visited the prairie last fall but there are a lot of other trails in the preserve that are not frequented by birders or hikers. Although we will mainly encounter our local getting geared up for their spring activities, there may be a few ducks still hanging around and who knows what might show up early.

Meet at the Nature Center parking lot just inside the gate at 7:30 AM. We will be doing a fair amount of walking so wear sturdy shoes and you might want to bring some water. We should be done by noon.

Saturday, March 19th:
Weymouth Woods Nature Preserve [Full day]

Last fall we heard wonderful presentation on the red-cockaded woodpecker so we thought we would take a trip to see some up close and personal. We will be joined by Scott Hartley, a preserve staff member, who will give us an overview of the sandhills ecology and up-date us on the preservation work being done there. In the afternoon we will go to the Sandhills Gamelands in search of Bachman’s sparrows and other grassland species.

We will meet at 8 AM at the Preserve’s visitor center [directions are available on the web site]. The center is about 2.5 hours drive from the Matthews area. Below is a list of hotels close to the Preserve for those who want to go down the night before.

- Fairway Motel (910) 692-2711
  1410 US Highway 1 S
  Southern Pines, NC 28387

- Holiday Inn (910) 692-8858
  1420 US Highway 1 S
  Southern Pines, NC 28387

- Microtel Inn of S. Pines (910) 693-3737
  205 Windstar Pl
  Southern Pines, NC 28387

- Hampton Inn (910) 692-9266
  1675 US Highway 1 S
  Southern Pines, NC 28387

- Residence Inn by Marriott (910) 693-3400
  105 Brucewood Rd
  Southern Pines, NC 28387

- Best Western Pinehurst Inn (910) 944-2367
  1500 N Sandhills Blvd.
  Aberdeen, NC 28315

- Motel 6 (910) 944-5633
  1408 N Sandhills Blvd
  Aberdeen, NC 28315

If you are planning on going on this trip please contact Lucy Quintilliano at 704-364-9028 or lucyq@carolina.rr.com

Saturday, April 9th:
Congaree Swamp NP Columbia, SC [Full day]

Spring in a southern swamp can be a magical time. The Congaree Swamp is a great place to see that magic. Located southeast of Columbia, only about 1.5 hours from Charlotte the swamp is situated along the meandering Congaree River. It is home to champion trees, primeval forest landscapes, and diverse plant and animal life. This 22,200-acre park protects the largest contiguous tract of old-growth bottomland hardwood forest remaining in the United States. Known for its giant hardwoods and towering pines, the park’s floodplain forest includes one of the highest canopies in the world and some of the tallest trees in the eastern United States.

Many neotropic migrants -hooded and prothonotary warblers, tanagers, etc. - should have begun to arrive. Pileated woodpeckers and barred owls will be target residents birds. We will probably encounter some other interesting critters - butterflies and amphibians - as we stroll along the boardwalk. This is always a great trip.

We will meet at the Bojangles on Carowinds Blvd. at 6:00 AM. That should get us to the swamp around 8 AM. We will be doing a lot of walking but it will be on board walk. Remember to bring snacks, water and lunch. If you are interested in joining the group contact Judy Walker at 704-537-8181 or birdwalker@mac.com

---

Extra Binoculars?

Here’s a good use for your old bins - Birders’ Exchange, a bird conservation program of the American Birding Association, collects used and new birding equipment and redistributes it, free of charge, to researchers, conservationists, and educators working to conserve birds and habitats in the Neotropics.

For more information visit the Birders’ Exchange website at: http://www.americanbirding.org/programs/consbex.htm; phone 719-578-9703; or email Betty Peterson at bpetersen@aba.org.

---
The Sandhills region is characterized by a series of flat-topped, sandy ridges and relatively broad, flat valleys. This landscape is the result of large quantities of clay, sand and gravel being transported by streams and rivers flowing eastward from the Piedmont. These materials were deposited as sediment in and along the margin of an ancient sea that covered much of the region millions of years ago. After the sea retreated, weather and erosion shaped the land into the ridges and valleys seen today.

Early settlers called this area the “pine barrens” because it was covered with extensive open forests of longleaf pines. Today, the Weymouth Woods Sandhills Nature Preserve protects a remnant of the plant and animal communities reminiscent of the pine barrens of long ago.

Natural areas became a part of the state parks system when Weymouth Woods was established in 1963. These areas, more suitable for education and conservation than recreation, are set aside in their natural states. The purpose of natural areas is to preserve and protect lands of outstanding scientific and scenic value for the enrichment of present and future generations. Environmental education and conservation research are important emphases in all state natural areas.

The early settlers who named the Sandhills region the “pine barrens” must not have appreciated the diversity of plant life carpeting the land. The region is anything but barren! More than 1,000 species have been found in the Sandhills region, and more than 500 species are present at Weymouth Woods. On sandy slopes and ridges, turkey and blackjack oaks grow along with wiregrass and longleaf pines. These give way in the bottomlands and swamp thickets to various hardwoods, including dogwood, red and white oaks, American holly, sourwood, black tili, bay, gum, hickory, yellow poplar, persimmon and red maple. Conifers such as loblolly and pond pines are also present.

As in other parts of the Sandhills, longleaf pines form the dominant plant community. Their shiny needles, which grow up to 18 inches long, produce a canopy of sparkling green atop massive, straight trunks. In the spring, small purplish male cones appear in clusters at the ends of the branches and dust the woodlands with yellow pollen before dropping to the ground. The female cones measure 6 to 10 inches in length at maturity and remain on the trees for nearly two years before releasing their seeds and dropping to the ground to become part of the forest litter that blankets the sandy soil.

Longleaf pine forests are plant communities that adapted long ago to periodic burning, and their survival depends upon fire. The original forests were maintained by natural fires that usually were caused by lightning. As settlement and land development increased, the longleaf forests became increasingly fragmented. This fragmentation, coupled with the firefighting practices of the 20th century, prohibited natural fires from running their course. As a result, competing plant species thrived and inhibited longleaf regeneration. The small old-growth forest on the Boyd tract and scattered old longleaves elsewhere at Weymouth Woods are a mere vestige of the vast forests that once covered the region.

Prescribed fires, which simulate natural fires, are periodically set at the preserve in order to maintain the longleaf pine community through resource management. These fires remove or control competing hardwoods, provide open areas where longleaf seedlings can germinate and grow, and return nutrients to the soil. A prescribed burn will only occur when weather and site conditions are favorable and adequate personnel is available.

A rich diversity of small plants ranging from lichens, mushrooms, mosses and ferns to grasses, wildflowers and woody shrubs nestsles beneath the forest understory. From February to November, the park blooms with a diversity of flowering plants—some spectacular and some loved only by specialists. Species include Indian pipe, dwarf locust, trailing arbutus, birdfoot violet, wild azaleas, dwarf iris, pine barrens gentian, wild orchids and asters. One of the most interesting plants is the insectivorius purple pitcher plant, which grows in the moist areas of Bower’s Bog and James Creek.

Many animals find shelter in Weymouth Woods. More than 160 species of birds make the preserve a birdwatcher’s haven. Species associated with mature longleaf pine forests, including red-cockaded woodpeckers, pine warblers, Bachmans sparrow and brown-headed nuthatches, are commonly seen during all seasons. Several birds that migrate from the tropics breed at Weymouth Woods including summer tanager, great-crested flycatcher, prarie warbler and Kentucky warbler. The great horned, barred and screech owl also enjoy the forests of the preserve.

Among amphibians are slimy salamanders and many species of frogs and toads, including the rare pine barrens tree frog. Because of its specific habitat requirements, this rare tree frog lives only in southern New Jersey, southeastern North Carolina and several other locations in the southeast United States.

Reptiles characteristic of the Sandhills also find homes in the park. Scarlet and hognose snakes, skinks, six-lined racersruners and fence lizards thrive in the preserve’s habitats.

Most of the mammals that live in Weymouth Woods are secretive or nocturnal, so they are seldom encountered. Fox squirrels, however, are occasionally seen scampering across trails. A relative of the more common
What’s that I Hear Now...?!

There are many signs of spring around us now but one that birders seem to zero in on is bird song. And there are two questions I get on a regular basis this time of the year that involve this phenomenon – one from the non-birder and one from birders. The one from non-birders usually revolves around – why are those birds making all that noise before sunrise? They keep waking me up. In fact I had a friend who mentioned that her child would wake up crying because of the noise the birds were making in the morning! The other question from birders has to do with the ‘funny sounding’ birds in their backyards. In fact some on a recent field trip someone noted she had a towhee in her yard that wasn’t singing a right towhee song. Well, this is my attempt to answer these questions.

Let’s start with the bird that can’t seem to sing the right song. The fact is most birds make sounds that help them defend territory, attract a mate and/or warn of damage. But not all birds are ‘songbirds’. Scientifically, songbirds comprise the bulk of the order Passeriformes (about 60% of all species fall into this order). Within this order there are 18 families found in North America. This order is further divided into suborders – oscine and suboscine. All but one of the passerine families, the tyrannidae [flycatchers, kingbirds and phoebes], are part of the oscine suborder which are considered true songbirds. Another way of putting it is they are the group of birds in which singing is the most highly developed. We should also keep in mind the song the bird may ‘sing’ may or may not sound musical to us. Crows are songbirds whether we like their songs or not!

Some ornithologists also believe the distinction between oscines and suboscines [and for that matter the rest of the avian community] is that the oscines learn their songs and all other birds acquire their song through ‘hard wiring’ innate capabilities. But if nothing else recent studies in the area of birdsong have indicated the entire process is much more complicated than was previously thought. What these studies have shown is that songbirds develop their songs in stages. Young birds hear their species song (or songs) while still nestlings and begin memorizing them early in life although they don’t make any immediate attempts to vocalize. They seem to know instinctively which sound to key in on through some innate species song template. For example, studies have shown that the heartbeat of young song sparrows will increase when they hear their species song for the first time, but it remains unaffected by the presence of other sparrow songs.

Birds first attempt to produce songs shortly after they have fledged. These first attempts at singing amount what we might think of as babble. This subsong, as it is called, contains many of the proper sounds but they are jumbled and incomplete. Just like a young child beginning to learn to talk. The birds will continue with this subsong through the summer of their first year, but in the fall the young birds typically enter a silent period that will last until late winter, which is the season we are in now. As the days grow longer, the young birds will resume singing their subsong and within a few weeks begin to produce rough versions of their species song. By spring the birds have usually perfected their ‘full song’. Some songbirds continue to learn variations on the species song for a few weeks longer, incorporating elements from the birds they encounter. Other species stop learning after they are only a few weeks old. Mimics, like the mockingbird and thrasher, of course go on learning new song elements throughout their live.

Singing behavior varies greatly between species and often from one individual to the next. Two types of variation that have been studies by scientists are the bird’s repertoire (the number of different songs it sings) and geographic variation that occurs among individuals of the same species referred to as dialects. Many sparrow species, as well as buntings, chickadees, yellowthroats, ovenbirds and veeries only have one song. At the other extreme is the brown thrash, which has been recorded with as many as 2,000 songs.

Geographic variations and dialects occur in nearly all songbird species that have been studied so far. This is a sharp contrast from the suboscines and other birds whose innate songs are the same from one area to the next. For example, in North America elder flycatcher’s song is the same from the Atlantic to the Pacific, while the white-crowned sparrows in California less than a mile apart may sing different versions of their song. A short walk in the appropriate habitat will take a person from one dialect to another. The difference is clear and immediate. Dialects are a consequence of young birds learning elements of their songs from birds in the area where they have established their territory. Although a bird may have learned the basics of its song from its father when it moves to a new area it makes adjustments to the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>No. of Songs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blue-winged warblers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American redstarts</td>
<td>1-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swamp sparrow</td>
<td>3-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swainson’s thrush</td>
<td>3-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern towhee</td>
<td>3-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red-winged blackbird</td>
<td>2-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western meadowlark</td>
<td>5-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardinal</td>
<td>8-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bewick’s wren</td>
<td>10-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood thrush</td>
<td>20+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starling</td>
<td>21-67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red-eyed vireo</td>
<td>12-117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robin</td>
<td>70+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern meadowlark</td>
<td>50-90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carolina wren</td>
<td>40+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western marsh wren</td>
<td>150-200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sedge wren</td>
<td>300-400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mockingbirds</td>
<td>250+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown thrasher</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
gray squirrel, the fox squirrel is larger and has variable amounts of black on its head, body and tail. The range of this mammal is more restricted than that of its cousin’s, but the mature stands of longleaf pine are one of the fox squirrel’s strongholds. The white-tailed deer is the largest mammal seen in the preserve.

Other animals encountered include the raccoon, gray fox, bat, opossum and cottontail rabbit.

The red-cockaded woodpecker, which became an endangered species in 1970, is a native of the longleaf pine forest at Weymouth Woods. Unlike other woodpeckers that roost and nest in the softer wood of dead trees, the red-cockaded woodpecker digs cavities in the heartwood of living, mature pine trees.

The red-cockaded woodpecker is a social woodpecker that lives in clans of two to nine birds. A clan consists of a breeding pair and its “helpers,” usually non-breeding adult males. The helpers assist in incubating eggs, searching for food, defending the territory and digging new cavities. The clan roosts and rears its young in a colony, a group of two to twelve trees with cavities. Cavities are usually located 20 to 50 feet above the ground and beneath the lowest live branches of the trees.

The excavation of a cavity takes months and often years. Excavation begins with a shallow hole that is extended through sapwood as an upwardly sloped tunnel of six or more inches. After reaching heartwood, which lacks flowing resin, the birds excavate downward to form a roosting chamber, typically typically six to 10 inches deep and three to five inches wide. To deter predators from the cavity, the birds chip bark from around the entrance to induce the flow of clear, sticky sap. Numerous other animals, including southern flying squirrels, eastern bluebirds and other species of woodpeckers, compete for the use of completed cavities.

The range and population of the red-cockaded woodpecker have been reduced in recent years, primarily due to the loss of habitat. Growth of the hardwood understory above 15 feet inhibits the excavation of cavities at otherwise suitable sites, and colonies may be abandoned when the understory grows too tall. Prescribed burning helps maintain a suitable habitat for this endangered woodpecker as fire removes ground litter & undesirable undergrowth.

Park history
In the mid-1700s, when Scottish Highlanders settled in the Sandhills region, the vast forest consisted of original growth longleaf pines that reached heights of 100 to 120 feet. Merchants cut the forests for timber and cultivated choice stands for use as masts for the Royal Navy ships. Merchants also harvested resin from the longleaf pines for the naval stores industry. Resin from longleaf pine yielded four basic products: tar, pitch, turpentine and rosin.

By 1850, North Carolina’s pine forests were producing one-third of the world’s supply of naval stores. Resin collected from elongated, inverted V-shaped cuts in the tree trunks was distilled into turpentine. Turpentine was used as a solvent and illuminant. Tar, pitch and rosin were used for sealing the hulls, decks, masts, ropes and riggings of sailing vessels.

When railroads arrived in the Sandhills in the 1870s, large-scale logging and lumbering began. As a result of logging and naval stores operations, most of the virgin growth of longleaf pines had disappeared from the Sandhills by 1900. Many of the older trees that survive today bear prominent scars of this human exploitation.

Early in the 20th century, the grandfather of James Boyd, a well-known North Carolina author, purchased a substantial tract of land east of Southern Pines to save the longleaf pines from logging. He named the estate Weymouth because the pines reminded him of trees in Weymouth, England. In April 1963, Boyd’s widow, Katharine, donated 403 acres of land to the state, establishing the first natural area in the North Carolina state parks system. Additional land has been acquired, including a satellite area of 153 acres known as the Boyd Round Timber Tract, which was added in 1977.

Bird Song
Song after listening to the adult birds its new home. As a result, neighbors will often have similar songs.

So that towhee in your backyard that doesn’t seem to know its song is still a youngster learning. It is probably not a bird that was born in your backyard last summer since most birds tend to disperse from their place of origin. It may be a bird that was born in a yard two blocks away and is now trying to carve out a niche for itself in your yard. Another phenomenon you might encounter that would indicate the bird is a young bird is a bird singing the right song but singing very softly almost like he’s singing under his breath.

I think the most exciting thing about spring is the dawn chorus although it can be quite loud during the peak courting time. It is one of the marvels of nature that occurs all over the world, from your backyard to the depths of a tropical rainforest. Why the birds perform so lustfully at dawn is not clearly understood though. One reason may be that dawn is the best time for sound to travel, because there is little wind and less other noise and disturbance. Songs broadcast at dawn can be 20 times as effective as those broadcast at midday. And this is a time when birds can’t do much else. Light intensity is low, making it difficult for them to hunt and forage. Low temperatures keep their insect prey on the ground. By singing at dawn, when their energy reserves are low after the night, male birds may be telling females that they are nevertheless still fit for breeding. A male singing lustily is demonstrating that he has spare energy in abundance.
**Audubon News**

Published by Mecklenburg Audubon  
A Chapter of National Audubon  
P. O. Box 221093, Charlotte, NC 28222  
meckbirds.org

### Board Members

*Judy Walker - President*
704-537-8181  
birdwalker@mac.com

*Rob Bierregaard - Vice President*
704-333-2405  
rbierreg@email.uncc.edu

*Larry Barden - Secretary*
704-547-4059  
larry@lbarden.com

*Lucy Quintilliano - Treasurer*
704-364-9028  
lucyq@carolina.rr.com

*Taylor Piephoff - Field Trips*
704-532-6336  
piephoffT@aol.com

*Wayne Covington - Bird Count*
704-362-1774

*Marek Smith - Membership*
704-875-1391  
maresmit@aol.com

*Louise Barden - Publicity*
704-535-6385  
louise@barden.com

*Chris Hanna - Hospitality*
704-362-1635

---

**ACTIVITIES CALENDAR**

3/3 - Birds of Brazil [Monthly Meeting]  
3/5 - Latta Plantation Nature Preserve [1/2 day Field Trip]  
3/19 - Weymouth Woods Nature Preserve, Pinehurst, NC [Full Day Field Trip]  
4/7 - Bird Song [Monthly Meeting]  
4/9 - Congaree Swamp National Park [Full Day Field Trip]  
4/16 - Reedy Creek Nature Preserve [1/2 day Field Trip]

---

**Local Membership**

*Join now and your membership will be effective until June 2006.*

Because of changes in National Audubon membership structure, Mecklenburg Audubon now must offer a local Chapter Membership to cover the cost of the newsletter, web site and cost of meetings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Phone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address [Street, City, ST, and Zip]</th>
<th>E-mail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

|----------------------------------|------------------------------|

| ____ Please, save trees and send me[us] the newsletter electronically. | |
| ____ I[we] would be willing to lead a field trip. | |
| ____ I[we] would be interested in participating in a work day at one of the local preserves. | |
| ____ I[we] would be willing to do a program. | |

---

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