Hurricane Birds

Several years ago, a reporter covering one of the hurricanes that hit Wilmington, I believe it was Fran, was heard saying as the eye passed over, “What the #@%& are all these birds doing flying around?” These were just the words birders in the area were waiting for. The storm was going to ‘dump’ pelagic birds in their laps. Assuming they could get out to see them!

We are at the peak of the hurricane season. We should know how to protect ourselves, loved ones, and property. But once that is taken care of, many of us want to have some idea of what types of birds could show up unexpectedly.

For us, there is a good possibility of seeing a ‘fallout’ of seabirds on Lake Norman and Lake Wylie after a storm has passed near by since seabirds blown inland typically look for refuge on large bodies of water.

At our September 8th program, Taylor Piephoff will share some of his exciting finds after various hurricanes and other weather-related events and explain how these rare and unusual birds find their way into our backyards. He’ll also give us some hints on where to look for these birds.

So blow on in to the first Mecklenburg Audubon Meeting of the season on Thursday, September 8th at 7:30 PM in the fellowship hall of the Sharon Seventh Day Adventist Church.

For the 5th year, the Driftwood Wildlife Association will be hosting

Swift Night Out

As summer draws to a close and the swifts finish raising their young, these fascinating aerial acrobats begin to congregate in communal roosts prior to their migration in the fall. Some roosts may consist of an extended family group of a half a dozen birds or so, but the larger sites can host hundreds or even thousands of swifts! We encourage you to become involved in this exhilarating spectacle.

Here is how it works: Keep your eyes to the skies at dusk and watch for areas where swifts are feeding. Look for a tall shaft, chimney or similar structure to locate where Chimney Swifts go to roost in your area.

On one night over the weekend of September 9, 10, 11 observe the roost starting about 30 minutes before dusk and estimate the number of swifts that enter. When you have your number, contact the Driftwood Wildlife Association with your results. That’s all there is to it!

For more information, please visit our web site:
www.chimneyswifts.org and click on “Swift Night Out”.

Board Members
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Rob Bierregaard - Vice President
704-333-2405
rberreg@email.uncc.edu
Larry Barden - Secretary
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Taylor Piephoff - Field Trips
704-532-6336
piephoffT@aol.com
Wayne Covington - Bird Count
704-362-1774

Meetings are held at Sharon Seventh Day Adventist Church, 920 N. Sharon Amity Rd. on the first Thursdays of each month, September through May at 7:30 PM.

Audubon News is published monthly from September through May. Local members receive the newsletter via postal mail and/or electronic mail. It is also posted on the Mecklenburg Audubon web site - meckbirds.org.
FIELD TRIPS AND EVENTS

Please remember to confirm dates or cancellations. Also, if we don’t know you are coming we might leave without you!!

**Sunday, September 11:**
**Butterfly Walk**

*Half Day.* Birds are not the only beautiful winged creatures found in the Charlotte area. Butterflies are at their peak in September when a wide variety can be found. The Mecklenburg Park and Recreation Department has created wonderful habitat for butterflies at McAlpine Greenway. We will take a leisurely Sunday afternoon stroll around the greenway to see what we can find.

We will meet at 1:30 PM at the Monroe Rd. entrance to McAlpine Greenway. If you are interested in participating contact Taylor Piephoff [532-6336 or piephoffT@aol.com].

**Saturday, September 17:**
**Jumpin’ Jackson Park**

*All Day.* You may have heard about how fabulous spring migration is in Central Park, NY. Well, Jackson Park in Hendersonville, NC is a close rival, especially in the fall. Hopefully, we will hit one of its wonderful waves of warblers. In past years birds were dripping off the trees.

We will meet at the McDonalds on Four Seasons Blvd. (Exit 18 of I-26) at 7:30 AM. It’s on the right as you are heading into Hendersonville. Rt. 74 makes this a quick 2 hour drive from Charlotte if you plan to drive out in the Saturday AM.

If you are interested in this trip contact Judy Walker [704-537-8181 or birdwalker@mac.com].

**Saturday, September 24:**
**RibbonWalk Urban Forest**

*Half Day.* To celebrate the addition of RibbonWalk Urban Forest to the county preserve system, we will take a look at this little birder area. It’s been about 5 years since we had a field trip here. It was very productive. Fall migrants should be moving through and the habitat is varied enough which could produce some interesting birds.

We will meet at 7:30 AM at the entrance to the preserve. If you plan to join the group contact Judy Walker at 704-537-8181 (leave a message) or birdwalker@mac.com.

**Saturday, October 1:**
**Evergreen Big Sweep Workday**

*Half Day.* Mecklenburg Audubon has officially adopted Evergreen Preserve and now is committed to having several workdays a year. We still have several benches to place. But since Oct. 1 is Big Sweep we will also spend some time cleaning the settling pond and creek. We will do the same thing we did for the spring workday - meet at 7:00 AM, bird for about 2 hours then get to work. If you don’t want to get up early you can join us at 9 AM. Contact Larry Barden at 704-535-6385 or larry@lbarden.com. He’ll let you know where to park since they are renovating Winterfield Elem. School. Bring water and tools.

**Saturday, October 8th:**
**Huntington Beach, SC**

*All Day.* This is our fall sojourn to a South Carolina birding mecca. 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 one of the best times of the year to see peregrine falcons and merlins. And I am sure we will be delighted with the annual spectacle of hundreds if not thousands of tree swallows. Best of all most of the people have moved out! It is a wonderful time of year to be on the beach.

We will meet in the parking lot on the eastside of the causeway at 7:30 AM. It can be pretty hot so remember a hat, sunscreen and plenty of water. We will eat lunch in the park so you will need to bring food.

Since most participants stay for the weekend, we will plan to go out to dinner Saturday night. At dinner we’ll plan where to go on Sunday. A favorite, inexpensive Mom & Pop motel in Murrel’s Inlet is the Brookwood Inn [843-651-2550]. If you are planning to go contact Judy Walker at 704-537-8181 or birdwalker@mac.com.

The Big Sweep

Saturday - October 1, 2005

North Carolina Big Sweep was founded as Beach Sweep in 1987 by Dr. Lundie Spence of the North Carolina Sea Grant College Program.

In that seminal year, the Sweep was nothing more than a hastily planned coastal cleanup. However, the success that year, attracting over 1,000 volunteers and collecting over 14 tons of debris, allowed the Sweep to grow and rapidly expand inland. In 1989, the public-private partnership officially became Big Sweep, the nation’s first statewide waterway cleanup. Since it’s founding, North Carolina Big Sweep has had more than 200,000 volunteers and collected over seven million pounds of trash from North Carolina watersheds.

For information about local activities contact Meredith Moore, Mecklenburg County Big Sweep Coordinator at 704-432-1383, or send an email to: moorems@co.mecklenburg.nc.us.
The fight over the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is heating up -- YOUR HELP NEEDED IN SEPTEMBER!

Audubon is making a big push to save the pristine wilderness in Alaska from destructive oil drilling, and you can help!

After 25 years of fighting, our last best chance to protect the refuge will be in the House of Representatives on a vote quickly approaching in September. In August, members of Congress who will be casting deciding votes will be back home talking with their constituents – like you! All Audubon chapters and Audubon members around the country will be using this opportunity to weigh in with their members of Congress and fight at this critical time for one of the most pristine places left in America!

Critically important targets in the House of Representatives include: Bradley (NH), Ehlers (MI), Frelighyksen (NJ), Ferguson (NJ), Smith (NJ), LoBiondo (NJ), Gilchrest (MD), Kelly (NY), Kennedy (MN), Kirk (IL), Gerlach (PA), Reichert (WA), Schwarz (MI), Ramstad (MN), Castle (DE), Bass (NH), Boehlert (NY), Johnson (IL), Shays (CT), Simmons (CT), Johnson (CT), Leach (IA), Saxton (NJ), Fitzpatrick (PA), Walsh (NY), Bartlett (MD), and Inglis (SC).

Even if your lawmaker is not represented above, please make a point to call, write or e-mail your elected officials today! Every member of Congress will be voting on this measure and right now, it’s too close to call.

Log on to Audubon’s special “Protect the Arctic” website – accessed via www.audubon.org, or contact Desiree Groves in Audubon’s public policy office in Washington, DC at 202-861-2242, x. 3038 (dgroves@audubon.org) to find out more about how you can help!

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This is a wonderful, thoughtful book about the meaning of birding: how it changes us and our relationships with others. Levine is a sophisticated thinker and a clear writer, and discovers facets to our hobby that most of us never dreamed existed. Each chapter is organized around a particular, memorable bird in the author’s experience. Although the author admits he’s not a particularly skilled birder, he is certainly an accomplished writer. His descriptions of the surprise of birding—finding a Carolina Wren on a snowy day at Montauk when he thought he’d be looking for seabirds, or hearing the witchity-witchity of the first Common Yellothroat of spring—resonated perfectly. A gem of a book!


The long-awaited guide to birding sites in the state, has just been published. Edited by Marshall Brooks and Mark Johns, this book features the best birding sites in North Carolina as chosen and described by the members of the Carolina Bird Club. The book is available from Globe Pequot Press. **Birding North Carolina** was undertaken by the Carolina Bird Club for two purposes: to promote birding in North Carolina and to make birding more accessible to all skill levels of birders by providing information regarding the wonderful birding opportunities that we have in our state; and to further bird conservation by dedicating the income from the guide to bird conservation projects. Proceeds will go into a special account of the Carolina Bird Club to be used to support and further bird conservation projects in the state.

There are so many birding locations in North Carolina that not all of them could be included in the printed book. Descriptions of an additional 44 locations can be found at - http://www.carolinabirdclub.org/birdingnc/index.html
How Did That Bird Get HERE?!?!

A day or two after a hurricane strikes the Atlantic or Gulf coast, unusual and rare birds often appear in odd places. For those who enjoy seeing birds that almost never appear in their area, a hurricane can be a bonanza.

Many of these are pelagic birds that have largely cut their ties with the land and spend their lives in the open ocean. They return to land only to breed. Most of their lives are spent in the Atlantic Ocean, east of South America or the Caribbean. Their pictures appear in the field guide, but they are normally never seen unless you are in a boat far out at sea. They include shearwaters, fulmars, petrels, and storm petrels. Very rare ones would be albatross, boobies, frigate birds or tropicbirds. But how do these birds wind up high and dry?

It is important to know hurricane winds are not steady winds from one direction. The storm is circular and like a huge whirlpool, 500-700 miles across, it draws the winds and the birds trying to fly away in a spiral path towards the center in a counter-clockwise direction. While the storm is over the ocean, the whirlpool begins to form a small area in the center of the storm where the winds are gentle and the sky may be clear. This is called the “eye” of the hurricane. The eye can be as much as 50 miles in diameter. After a time, thunderstorms form around the eye and before long the eye is ringed by a wall of storms about 7 miles thick. This is called the ‘eye wall’. The highest winds in the storm are just outside the eye.

When the storm forms over the ocean, pelagic birds are swept into the hurricane from all points of the compass like swimmers going downstream in a strong current. Since mid-to-late August and September is the most active time for hurricane formation, many land birds are migrating and passing over the ocean heading for South America when hurricane develops. They too can be drawn into the storm and end up in the eye along with the pelagic birds.

The birds in the eye are in a dubious sanctuary for there is almost no wind and it may even be sunny. But the waters below the thunderstorms in the eye wall are turbulent, producing 40 to 50 foot waves. These waves move into the calm area of the eye, so while the air is quiet in the eye, huge waves are commonplace.

Because of the waves pelagic birds can no longer rest on the surface of the water or find food there. They must keep flying. Land birds in the eye must keep flying too. Hurricane hunter aircraft have reported huge flocks of birds in the eyes of some storms. Ships that have been in the eye of storms have also reported many pelagic birds flying around and many land birds taking refuge on the ships’ rigging.

When a hurricane makes landfall, pelagic birds are carried away from their life at sea. They are unable to land to rest or to feed unless a large body of water appears below them as the storm moves along. If the land birds in the eye can see the ground, they will fly down to rest. However, over the land, the eye fills up with clouds and the visibility is poor, so many birds continue flying. As a birds become exhausted, they can become so weak they drop down through storm and end up in someone’s backyard.

The picture to the left shows how the strong winds of a hurricane are arranged around the center of the storm. As the eye of the hurricane with its bird passengers, moves over land, winds on the south side of the storm sweep birds flying there back out over the ocean. But those on the north side of the storm are pushed toward the west and are forced further inland. Also, migrating birds that ‘see’ the storm ahead try to avoid the storm by flying to the west of the storm and appear much further inland than usual.

As the storm continues to move over land the winds diminish and the surviving trapped birds are able to break free and land on water or in the shelter of trees. Most are exhausted and weak from hunger. Pelagic birds that find large lakes will land and feed for a short while and then make a beeline back to the ocean. Shorebirds and other passersines will remain longer, recharging their bodies for the long journey that still lay before them.

How many birds are killed in a storm? We will never know. But birds have been dealing with hurricanes for millennia indicating that the strong do survive.

For those birders who have an opportunity to get out shortly after a hurricane blows by, there could be some amazing life birds waiting for them on the local lake or in the open fields.
Two Good Terns Associated with Hurricanes

The **Bridled Tern** is a strictly marine species with a large, nearly worldwide range across tropical and subtropical latitudes. Prior to the 1970s, it was considered a rare vagrant to North America, associated primarily with tropical storms. Pelagic bird study has shown it to be a relatively common seabird off the southeastern United States. Bridled Terns are uncommon but regular in the Gulf of Mexico and seasonally common in waters from Florida north to Virginia.

At sea, the Bridled Tern seldom feeds in large flocks, instead it exploits a marine niche defined by a close association with marine flotsam, particularly pelagic Sargassum. Bridled Terns are highly unusual among terns (indeed most seabirds) in that some populations have synchronous, subannual breeding cycles that coincide with molt.

The specific name of Bridled Tern, *anaethetus*, is derived from a Greek root meaning senseless or stupid, a reference to its tameness and ease of capture by hungry sailors. In the West Indies, it shares the names Egg Bird and Booby with Sooty Tern. Other common names from outside the Western Hemisphere include Brown-winged Tern, Panayan Tern, Dog Tern, and Smaller Sooty Tern.

The **Sooty Tern** inhabits tropical and subtropical oceans around the world, nesting on remote islands. It is common throughout the Caribbean Sea. It generally nests in areas little visited by humans, making accurate determination of its status difficult.

This species lives on the wing—well known for its ability to stay airborne for years at a time between fledging and first breeding, never coming to land during the nonbreeding season, and essentially never seen resting on the water. At sea, the Sooty Tern may perch on flotsam or the backs of surfaced sea turtles, and it is able to alight on a calm sea surface briefly and take wing again. But Sooty Tern plumage apparently has little waterproofing; individuals quickly become waterlogged when held on the water.

Most terns feed by plunge-diving, but this species feeds either by “dipping” (often merely brushing the water surface) or by snatching small fish in midair as they are escaping from predatory fish below. It feeds in flocks, often with other species.

Adapted from *Birds of North America*

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**Hurricanes and Birds**

**What to Do**

Before a hurricane, tropical storm, or other bad storm, there are things you can do to prepare. First of all, secure any feeders to buildings or structures that you feel will be standing after the storm. Put feeders on the side of the house or structure on the opposite side (leeward side), away from the wind. Hang them and then use duct tape to really super tape the feeder to the side of the house, tree, etc. If you live in an area with hummingbirds, duct tape those feeders to a sturdy structure on the leeward side also.

Put out high-energy food prior to the storm as well as after. This will give the birds and other wildlife extra energy while the storm is raging. After the storm has left and it’s safe to venture outside again, put out lots of suet, seed, mealworms, cracked corn, and cooked eggs.

During a storm, birds and other animals know instinctively to take shelter and “hunker down.” They will find many possible places out of the wind, hail, rain. Also remember that birds’ feet work differently than our hands. When birds’ feet relax, the muscles tighten around the branch on which they are perched, holding them tightly when they sleep. Therefore, during a storm, the birds do not necessarily need to “hang on” tighter in order to not be blown off their perch.

After the hurricane or storm, many trees, bushes and other types of shelter and cover may be gone. If there is no cover left after a serious storm, you can drag downed tree limbs, branches, lumber, etc. to make a brush pile to provide shelter and safety from predators. You may need to make numerous piles depending on the degree of destruction.

Also remember, that the wildlife may be more dependent upon you for food for a while until the natural resources appear again.

Adapted from About.com [http://birding.about.com/library/weekly/iaa091600a.htm](http://birding.about.com/library/weekly/iaa091600a.htm)
Recently at a state Audubon meeting, other leaders were lamenting about how hard it was to get their parks and recreation folks to understand how to manage their properties for wildlife. That’s when I realized how lucky we are here in Mecklenburg county to have such a responsive and environmentally responsible department. And we need to take advantage of what they have to offer. So here is a summary of what will be going on this fall in our parks, preserves and greenways. For details go to: http://www.co.mecklenburg.nc.us/Departments/Park+and+Rec/Inside+The+Department/Divisions/Natural+Resources/Home.htm

Family Programs
- Natural History at Night
- Fall Birding
- Bodacious Beavers
- Wildflowers of the Piedmont Prairie
- Explore Nature After Dark
- All That Slithers!

Youth Programs [Eco-Trekkers]
- Fall Frenzy
- Nocturnal Creatures

Preschool Naturalist Series
- Fall Frenzy
- Nocturnal Creatures

P.L.A.N.T. CLUB (Ages 3-5) Series
- Radical Roots
- The Art Garden
- Composting

Adult Naturalist Series
- Invaders In Your Backyard!
- Prairie Ecology
- Hike Series: Linville Gorge
- Carolina Hike Series: Pink Beds

Senior Naturalist Series
- Senior: Prairie Ecology

Environmental Education Series
- It’s Our Water!
- Leopold Education Project
- Advanced Project Wild - Bears

Special offerings
- Habitat Stewards Training
- Landscaping/Naturescaping
- Wilderness First Aid

Greenway Programs
- Sights & Sounds of the Greenway
- Bodacious Beavers
- Birding For Beginners

Outdoor Recreation Programs
- Basic Camping
- Basic Geocaching
- Basic Paddling

Volunteers Needed

Are you looking for a good excuse to get outdoors or brush up on your naturalist skills while providing a valuable service to the community? Reedy Creek, Latta Plantation and McDowell Nature Centers are currently looking for responsible, creative and energetic people to help with various aspects of all three nature centers. Volunteers receive a quarterly newsletter, discounts on gift shop purchases and program registrations, admission to special naturalist workshops, an invitation to their annual picnic, and much more! Volunteers must be at least 13 years old to volunteer during the week and 18 years old to volunteer on weekends. Call your nearest nature center to find out when the next volunteer orientation is scheduled for those specifically interested in helping out with the gardens, animal care, and center programming.

Upcoming Orientations
- 10/8 Latta Plantation Nature Center
- 10/29 Reedy Creek Nature Center
- 11/5 McDowell Nature Center

Reduce
Reuse
Recycle
Fair & Yard Sale

Join us for our annual Reduce, Reuse, Recycle Fair and Yard Sale. We will have agencies from across the county that will lead hands-on demonstrations along with arts-n-crafts to make and take. There will be crafters and vendors selling their art with recycled materials. We will also be hosting a multi-family yard sale. So bring your reusable items such as eyeglasses, books, clothes, and building materials to donate to local agencies while enjoying a day of fun and learning! Call McDowell Nature Center at 704-588-5224 for more information.
Charlotte's Newest Nature Preserve

RibbonWalk Urban Forest

Over 192 acres of natural woodlands, comprising the southern end of Nevin Park lies largely untouched and unnoticed just minutes away from downtown Charlotte, NC. Entrance to the Forest is free.

RibbonWalk Urban Forest is woodland oasis in the heart of the city of Charlotte. The forest includes 192-acres of woodland and wetland habitat with several miles of nature trails and a variety of native flora and fauna. An extraordinary grove of old-age beech trees designated as a “treasure tree grove” stands out as one of the most impressive features of the forest. There are also picturesque mature pines, flowering trees and other native hardwoods. Wetland features include several ponds and meandering streams. Native wildflowers dot the forest floor. Take a walk and discover wildlife or signs of wildlife. You may see mammal tracks, hear frogs or spot one of more than 60 birds that have been seen in the forest by birdwatchers. There are many natural wonders to behold.

Trail Talks: On the second Saturday of every month a biologist and Forest Master lead trail talks at 10am and again at 2pm. The nature topics include trees, rocks, birds, wetlands, butterflies, mammals, evergreen plants, and insects. Trail talks is $2 for individuals, $5 for families and free to RibbonWalk Conservancy members. Call 704-599-2600 for information about upcoming talks.

Recreational Hiking: RibbonWalk has several hiking trails. Enjoy some exercise or relax on a forest bench. Self-guided trail maps are available. Trails are marked by colored ribbons tied to trees.

Field Trips: Local school children and scout troops are invited to take field trips and learn more about our natural resources. Many of them have never experienced a forest habitat. Call and make an appointment for a tour and or nature program for your group at 704-599-2600.

Research: Professors from local colleges and universities like Johnson C. Smith, Queens, and Central Piedmont, and local K-12th grade teachers bring their science classes out to research a variety of ecosystems within the forest.

Picnicking: There is a large open field with several picnic tables. This large open space at the entrance to the forest is great for events and lawn games.

Volunteering: Volunteer support is critical to RibbonWalk’s on-going ability to preserve and enhance this extraordinary forest. To invest some of your time in this effort call 704-599-2600 for opportunities.

Facilities: Facilities include a Barn, Porta-Jon (includes water, soap & towels). The White house on Nevin Road is the conservancy office and is not open to the public.

RibbonWalk Urban Forest is located on Nevin Rd. between Statesville Ave.(Rd.) and West Sugar Creek.

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Calendar of Activities

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<tr>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>Orangeburg Sod Farms [All Day Field Trip]</td>
<td>Sun. 8/28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hurricane Birds [Monthly Meeting]</td>
<td>Thu. 9/8</td>
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<td>Butterfly Walk - McAlpine Greenway [1:30 PM]</td>
<td>Sun. 9/11</td>
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<td>Jackson Park, Hendersonville - All Day Field Trip</td>
<td>Sat. 9/17</td>
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<tr>
<td>RibbonWalk Urban Forest [1/2 day Field Trip]</td>
<td>Sat. 9/24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carolina Bird Club Fall Weekend [Charleston, SC]</td>
<td>Fri.-Sun. 9/30-10/2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evergreen Preserve Workday [1/2 day Field Trip]</td>
<td>Sat. 10/1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Butterflies [Monthly Meeting]</td>
<td>Thu. 10/6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Huntington Beach, SC [All Day Field Trip]</td>
<td>Sat. 10/8</td>
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<tr>
<td>McMullen Greenway [1/2 day Field Trip]</td>
<td>Sat. 10/22</td>
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Time to Renew Your Local Membership

If you want to receive the MAS monthly newsletter, you need to be a local member. Check the expiration date on your address label. If your membership has lapsed, this is the only newsletter you will receive for the year. Contact Lucy Quintilliano if you have a question.

Mecklenburg Audubon Society

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

Because National Audubon has reduced the chapter share of the national membership, Mecklenburg Audubon now must offer a Local Membership to cover the cost of the newsletter, website, and cost of meetings.

Name ________________________________ Phone ________________________________

Address [Street, City, ST, and Zip] ________________________________ E-mail ________________________________


☐ Please, save trees and send me[us] the newsletter electronically.

☐ Please, add me to Meckbirds, the local electronic discussion list about birds and the environment.

☐ 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