Monthly Meeting

Beautiful, Beautiful Bluebirds

The eastern bluebird is one of the most beloved songbirds of birders and non-birders alike. The bird’s bright blue color and melodious song make it a welcome visitor to backyards. The history of the bluebird spans a series of struggles and successes and only recently, through active wildlife management, has its future been considered secure.

Dr. Mark Stanback, biology professor at Davidson College, has been working very hard to make life easier for the bluebird. He has been monitoring bluebird nestboxes in the Charlotte metropolitan area for a number of years. At our April meeting he will share with us what he has learned about these fascinating creatures.

Join us for this informative presentation in the fellowship hall of the Sharon Seventh Day Adventist Church (920 Sharon Amity) at 7:30 PM on Thursday, April 6th.

Providing a Bluebird Banquet

Although bluebirds are not traditionally considered ‘feeder birds’ – since their main food is berries or insects and not seeds – they have been known to come to feeders under certain conditions, such as in early spring when insects are not yet available and berries are scarce.

In recent years there have been more frequent attempts to design feeders specifically for bluebirds. Folks who feed bluebirds have tried various ways to feed the birds but there is still a lot of room to develop new feeder designs and try new foods. So experiment and see which feeder designs and what kinds of food work for your bluebirds.

What Type of Feeder?
A bluebird feeder can be as simple as a plastic coffee can lid filled with food and nailed on top of a stake or attached to the roof of a bluebird house. Bluebirds also have been attracted to logs with holes drilled in them and filled with suet-type mixtures. The logs can be hung vertically, or placed horizontally.

There are more sophisticated feeders being sold in stores today. The common denominator of these feeders is a roofed box with entry holes in the sides; the food is placed inside. For the eastern bluebird the holes need to be 1.5 inches in diameter. This size helps exclude potential competitors, such as starling or mockingbirds.

The feeder box can be all wood, or have two sides made of Plexiglas, enabling the birds to see the food. Some people put the food in a removable tray inside the feeder, for ease of filling and cleaning. Use a small glass custard cup of mealworms, it will contain the mealworms and make them visible to the bluebirds. Mount the feeder on a sturdy post or pole out in the open, near where bluebirds perch or frequent.

What Kind of Food?
For food, try small pieces of suet, currants, sunflower hearts, mealworms, or berries such as those from dogwood, multiflora rose, or sumac. Raisins, especially those that have been softened by soaking briefly in boiling water, are appealing to bluebirds. Some people mix wild berries with the raisins at first on the theory that bluebirds will be more easily attracted to the wild berries and then will learn to recognize the raisins as food. Bluebirds also seem fond of suet-peanut butter mixtures.

How to Train Bluebirds to Use a Feeder
How soon bluebirds recognize and learn to use a feeder varies consider-
**Saturday, April 1st:**

**Congaree Swamp NP**

Spring in a southern swamp can be a magical time and the Congaree Swamp is a great place to see that magic. Located SE of Columbia, only 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 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 6:30 AM. That should get us to the swamp around 8 AM. We will be doing a lot of walking but it will be on a board walk. Bring snacks, water and lunch. If you are want to go contact Judy Walker at 704-537-8181 or birdwalker@mac.com.

**Saturday, April 8th:**

**Landsford Canal**

We have offered a few field trips to this wonderful state park recently during the week, and this will be your chance to participate on the weekend. The park has three miles of trails that skirt the Catawba River rapids and follow an old towpath canal. Set among huge old trees and wonderful wildflowers, birding is excellent in the spring as migrants follow the river corridors inland. Prothonotary Warblers love this park as much as I do.

Take I-77 south from Charlotte to Exit 77- [US 21 & Rt. 5]. Go south on US 21 about 15 miles to road 321, watch for sign on left. Turn left on 321; go 1.3 miles to park entrance on the left; proceed to parking area. There is a small park use fee with envelopes provided. If going, contact Dave Lovett at birdsalot@webtv.net or call 704-622-2770.

Meet in the main parking lot at 8:30 AM. We should be done by 1 PM. This is a great place to picnic, so bring a lunch and hang around if you like.

**Saturday, April 15th:**

**Latta Plantation Preserve**

Celebrate Tax Day by getting away from it all for a little while. We often pass up this wonderful nature preserve for Cowan’s Ford Refuge, but in the middle of April this place really hops with arrival of the neotropics. We’ll check out the prairie area and a couple of the trails along the water. Although we’ll finish around 1 PM, but if you have time, bring a lunch and then take in the Carolina Raptor Center in the afternoon.

We’ll meet at the Nature Center parking lot at 7:30 AM. If you want to join the group, contact Judy Walker at 704-537-8181 or birdwalker@mac.com.

**Thursday, April 20th:**

**Anne Springs Close Greenway**

After the last trip to Anne springs, we planned to meet again for a picnic and walk at this lovely park during spring migration. This is your chance to explore some more of the trails at the main park area, culminating with a picnic lunch at the dairy barn. Meet at 9 AM at the main parking area off Hwy 521 just south of Charlotte. There is a $2 fee for the park. Bring a lunch if you want to picnic by the dairy barn after birding. Contact Dave Lovett at birdsalot@webtv.net or 704-622-2770 if you plan on coming.
Field Trips Con’t.

Saturday, April 22nd: Evergreen Preserve Walk & Workday

Combine business with pleasure. We still have another bench to install at Everygreen Nature Preserve. So what we will do is meet at 7:00 AM on the road in front of Winterfield Elementary School for 2.5 hours of spring birding. Then around 9:30 we will break up into groups to install the bench. Of course if you want to take a peek at a few birds at the same time it’s okay. With enough birder power, it shouldn’t take very long to finish this job.

If you are interested in helping out contact Larry Barden at 704-547-4059 or larry@lbarden.com. Don’t forget to bring work gloves, shovels, a post hole digger if you have one, and plenty of water.

Sunday, April 23rd: Kings Mt. State Park

Crowder’s Mountain State Park in NC & Kings Mt. State Park in SC along with Kings Mt. National Battlefield near Gastonia, allow for some wonderful spring birding just a short drive from Charlotte.

Join fellow MAS member Ron Clark, as we explore these rural settings on this Sunday. We should wrap up around 1 PM so bring a snack if you want lunch before then. If you would like to join this trip contact Ron Clark at waxwing@bellsouth.net or 704-866-0811. Once he knows who all is coming he will decide on the details.

Tuesday, April 25th: Boyce Park & Mc Alpine Greenway Nature Trails

Bird migration should be ratcheting up as we explore the woods of Boyce Park and the adjoining Mc Alpine Nature Trail. Action can be fast and furious, so warm up your warbler “neck muscles” ahead of time. We will wrap up at 1 PM, but if need be, you can always leave early. Meet at the end of the park parking lot off Boyce Rd. which runs East off of Sardis Rd. at 9 AM. Contact Dave Lovett at birdsalot@webtv.net or 704-622-2770, if you are coming.

April 29th: Anne Spring Close Greenway

For those who are not attending the Asheville CBC meeting, back by popular demand is MAS member Dennis Lankford’s spring walk at Anne Springs Close Greenway just south of Ft. Mill, S.C. An accomplished “birder-by-ear”, Dennis will help you sort out the complex songs and calls of the spring migrants at this popular birding spot. Last year’s trip led by Dennis was a real hit, so don’t miss out on this one. Meet at the main parking area off Hwy 521 at 8 AM.

There is a $2 use fee for the park. We should finish up by 1 PM. Contact Dennis at 704-541-6909 or harecubed2@carolina.rr.com, if you plan to go.

Bluebird Banquet Con’t.

Bluebird feeders have been used successfully through the year in southern states.

When to use Feeders

One of the best things about bluebird feeders is they can help birds get through temporary shortages of food caused by unfavorable weather early in the breeding season. They can also be a big help to an incubating female who might have to desert her eggs if the weather is cold and insects and berries are scarce. Feeders can also help bluebirds in the nestling and fledgling stages when the demands for food are great.

Bluebird feeders have been used successfully through the year in southern states.

Adapted from Don & Lillian Stokes’ Bluebird Book (Little, Brown, 1991).
Do you hear the birds calling? They are winging their way to the coast, and Audubon North Carolina hopes you will join them May 5-7 for a weekend of camaraderie and great birding in the unique habitats of southeastern North Carolina.

The Audubon Coastal Office is hosting this year’s meeting with a focus on the spectacular birds that inhabit southeastern North Carolina’s marvelous habitats, including bottomland hardwood swamps, long leaf pine savanna and pocosin, and barrier islands that fringe our coastal plain. Field trips will carry participants by car, van, boat, kayak and foot to look for Prothonotary Warblers, Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, Painted Buntings, American Oystercatchers and many more avian treasures.

And for non-birders, Wilmington offers many attractions including 31 miles of beautiful island beaches, and a historic riverfront town featuring a Riverwalk and National Register Historic District with more than 200 shops, restaurants and downtown attractions within easy walking distance. Other attractions include the Battleship North Carolina, the NC Aquarium at Fort Fisher, and Fort Fisher State Historic Site, history and specialty museums, walking/riding tours of the Historic District, a movie studio, fine golf courses, water sports, and much more.

In addition to awesome field trips, the 2006 Annual Meeting will offer a symposium on coastal bird science and conservation. And in keeping with tradition, this annual birders’ get-together will close with a sumptuous banquet and Audubon Awards Ceremony.

This year’s meeting will be held May 5-7, 2006. Registration is $50 per person and includes the Saturday night banquet, mini-symposium and land-based field trips. Please use the form in this newsletter to register for the meeting; sign up for field trips; secure transportation and optional box lunch. Registration deadline is April 21st.

Early May on the North Carolina coast promises mild weather, gorgeous wildflowers and almost unmatched birding. Audubon North Carolina looks forward to seeing you on the coast this May!

**Lodging Information**

The host hotel for the 2006 meeting is the Comfort Inn Executive Center, located near the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. A block of single and double rooms has been set aside for meeting attendees at a special rate of $99.00 each. **The rooms will be held open through April 1, 2006.** Participants must make their own lodging arrangements by calling the Comfort Inn directly:

- **Comfort Inn Executive Center**
  - 151 South College Road
  - Wilmington, NC 28403
  - Phone: (910) 791-4841 • Fax: (910) 790-9100
  - Toll Free: (877) 424-6423 -- For Reservations
  - www.comfortinnwilmington.com

  Additional lodging can be found at the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce Web Site: http://www.cape-fear.nc.us/
Field Trips and Symposium

All Saturday Field Trips leave the hotel at 8:00 AM and return by 1:00 PM. A box lunch can be arranged with registration. Guests at the host hotel get complimentary continental breakfast. Most field trips include van transportation, snacks and bottled water. See trip descriptions for more details.

Trip #1
Swamp Warblers to Shoreline Waterbirds
Participants: 15

This trip begins with a spectacular bird hike along the Northeast Cape Fear River to see many different swamp-nesting songbirds including Prothonotary and Yellow-throated Warblers. From there we travel to the Mason Inlet Waterbird Management Area located on the north end of Wrightsville Beach to see and hear colonial beach-nesting waterbirds including American Oystercatchers, Black Skimmers, and Least Terns, along with other beach-dwelling birds.

Trip #2
Birding New Hanover Hotspots
Participants: 15

This four-hour trek begins at the Mason Inlet Waterbird Sanctuary at the north end of Wrightsville Beach to see nesting Least Terns, Wilson’s Plovers, American Oystercatchers and much more. From there we head south to Carolina Beach State Park in search of Painted Buntings and other coastal fringe forest treats. Then it is on to the Fort Fisher State Recreation Area for waders, shorebirds, pelicans and osprey.

Trip #3
Holly Shelter Game Land
Participants: 15

This four-hour guided tour of the Holly Shelter Game Land is a State-owned, limited-access 100-square-mile natural area in the heart of rural Pender County. This trip explores grand expanses of long leaf pine savanna, pocosin, and cypress rimmed pocket pond habitats. Birding highlights usually include Red-cockaded Woodpecker and Henslow’s Sparrow, along with our very own Venus fly trap and other unique pine savanna species.

Trip #4
Birding Burgaw Creek Nursery
Participants: 15

Burgaw Creek Nursery is a renowned 500-acre nursery specializing in native plants for the landscape industry. From fields of sod grass to rows of native shrubs and large trees, this expansive nursery offers a range of habitats to raptors and songbirds, including many grassland species. In addition, the field-side ditches are attractive to various waders and small warblers. This is a one of a kind birding experience because it demonstrates the benefits of native landscape plants to many kinds of birds. This trip also visits the birding trail located along the Northeast Cape Fear River.

Trip #5
Birding Lea-Hutaff Island Pontoon Boat
[Fee: $25.00]  
Participants: 20 (minimum 12)

Lea Island, an Important Bird Area, is an uninhabited barrier island located between Figure Eight and Topsail Island. This five-hour trek explores a birder’s paradise of marshes and sandy beaches that make this area valuable to many kinds of waterbirds including Black Skimmer, Least Tern, Wilson’s and Piping Plover and American Oystercatcher. Many herons and egrets also use this area for foraging and resting.

Trip #6
Shelter Creek Paddle Tour
[Fee: $75.00 - Kayaks Provided]  
Participants: 12 (Minimum 6)

Shelter Creek is a gently flowing black water stream that meanders through bottomland hardwood swamps harboring majestic Bald Cypress and other old growth trees that once supported Ivory-billed Woodpeckers and Carolina Parakeets. Highlight birds today include Pileated Woodpeckers and numerous neo-tropical songbirds, including Northern Parula and Prothonotary Warbler. Contact Salt Marsh Kayak Company to register for this trip - 910-509-2989.

Sunday, May 7
Masonboro Island Paddle Tour
[Fee: $55.00; Kayaks Provided; 4 hrs]  
Participants: 12 (Minimum 6)

Masonboro Island and its associated marshes is an IBA primarily for shorebirds, but the meandering tidal creeks we paddle are alive with wading birds, terns, skimmers, and the small marsh denizens that make this place such a treasure to explore, including shrimp, crabs and small fishes. Contact Salt Marsh Kayak Company to register for this trip - 910-509-2989.

Avian Symposium
Saturday 3:00-4:30 PM
Participants: Open

Conserving birds and their habitats requires a comprehensive approach that incorporates on the ground science, outreach education programs, and citizen buy in. This symposium will feature a panel discussion of on-going bird-related research and conservation efforts underway along the NC Coast, including opportunities for avi-tourism, education and citizen involvement.

Panel members: Walker Golder, Audubon NC Deputy Director; Sidney Maddock, ANC Biological Technician; Salinda Daley, NC Birding Trail Coordinator; Jamie Rotenberg, UNCW Adjunct Professor.

Additional Field Trip Information

- Scheduled field trips are available until they are full. Additional trips may be added as rosters fill.
- Each trip will accommodate ten to twenty participants.
- Associated trip fees are per person and include transportation to and from host hotel.
- Meeting location and additional information will be given with registration.
- Outdoor safety and awareness are important in all Audubon programs. Trips are contingent upon the weather. Thunderstorms and severe weather may result in cancellation or time change. Refunds will be made for Audubon-canceled programs. No-shows cannot be refunded without 24-hour prior notification.
The U.S. Forest Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is proposing to sell up to 300,000 acres of national forest in order to raise $800 million to help fund the 2007 federal budget. The lands include almost 10,000 acres in North Carolina and 5,000 acres in South Carolina. A complete list of specific properties and maps can be found at www.fs.fed.us/land/staff/rural_schools.shtml. While the Forest Service is always buying, selling or swapping small parcels of land, this is the largest sale of public forestlands in decades and will require congressional approval.

The funds will go to temporarily pay for roads and schools in rural counties, which have previously been funded by sales of timber from nearby national forests. In recent years those timber sales have declined, leaving a shortfall. The administration plans to end the program (The Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act) after the money from the land sales runs out. (Although it does beg the question as to whether another land sale would be proposed if this one goes through.)

Presumably, the properties would be purchased by companies and individuals for residential and commercial development. The Forest Service claims that these tracts are essentially odds and ends on the edges of the forests, which are isolated, hard to manage and already impacted by adjacent development. Others claim that some of these properties have great conservation and water quality value, such as the “pristine watershed and rare plant communities of the Little River, abutting the Uwharrie Birkhead Mountains Wilderness”, according to Dr. David Jones, director of the NC Zoo in nearby Asheboro. (Charlotte Observer, February 15, 2006). Almost 5% of the Uwharrie National Forest could be sold off.

The timing of this plan is ironic for North Carolina, which in recent years has set a goal of trying to preserve an additional one million acres of open space in this decade and is considering an ambitious five-year plan to preserve even more open space in a program called Land For Tomorrow. Over the past 10 years one million acres of North Carolina land has been developed.

The Forest Service is accepting public comments until March 30. While they are looking for specific comments about specific parcels of land, it wouldn’t hurt to voice your comments about the program as a whole at SRS_Land_Sales@fs.fed.us.

As with most controversial issues, these days, this one will likely get fought out in the U.S. Congress, which will have to approve the plan. Therefore, it would be very helpful to contact your U.S. Senators and Representatives to express your thoughts.

Senator Elizabeth Dole - http://dole.senate.gov
Representative Sue Myrick - http://myrick.house.gov

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Bluebird Info Bits
from the NC Bluebird Society

Prior to the 1930s, the Eastern Bluebird was one of North Carolina’s most common songbirds. By 1979, bluebirds were declared rare and uncommon by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Man’s activities and severe winters resulted in a 90% decline in our bluebird population. The continuing loss of natural nesting sites and other problems faced by bluebirds indicate that this beloved bird will always need man’s help to survive.

REASONS FOR DECLINE
• DDT chemicals killed the insects bluebirds fed on and even killed the birds themselves.
• Nesting sites were lost when wooden fence posts were replaced with metal posts, and dead trees and limbs were cut for firewood.
• Many small farms were combined into large operations with huge fields that destroyed the mixed habitat needed by bluebirds.
• Cities spread into rural areas further reducing preferred habitat.
• Heavy snow or ice covered their food.
• Winter food supply (berries) was reduced by civilization’s spread.
• The introduction of the European Starling and House (English) Sparrow upset the balance of nature forever. These non-native birds are so adaptable and aggressive that they spread across the continent, taking nesting sites and even killing our native birds and destroying their eggs.

HOW YOU CAN HELP
• Install nest boxes with a 1 1/2” entry hole.
• Monitor your nest boxes weekly, removing only starling and house sparrow nests.
• Plant berry producing plants/shrubs.
• Supply fresh, clean water all year.
• Erect a bluebird feeder with dogwood berries, raisins, currants, and mealworms.
• Join the North Carolina Bluebird Society, and become an active member or county coordinator.

Registration for Audubon North Carolina Annual Meeting
Registration Deadline is April 21st 2006.

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Registration

Name(s) ____________________________________________________________
Address ____________________________________________________________
City/State/Zip ______________________________________________________
Day Phone __________________________ Evening Phone __________________________
Email _____________________________________________________________
Audubon Chapter ___________________________________________________

Payment

Number of Participants ____ @ $50 each ______
Lea/Huttaf Pontoon Trip ____ @$25 each ______
Include payment with registration
*Number of Box Lunches ____ @$8 each ______
Vegetarian ____ Sliced Turkey ______
*Be sure to check Box Lunch choice
Total ______

Field Trip Preferences and Symposium

Name _____________________________________________________________
Saturday Trip # ______ Alternative Trip # ______
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Avian Symposium ______ # Attending
Note: Shelter Creek & Masonboro Island Kayak trip participants must register and pay Salt Marsh Kayak.

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Trip # 3 Holly Shelter Game Land
Trip # 4 Birding Burgaw Creek Nursery
Trip # 5 Birding Lea-Huttaf Island by Pontoon Boat ($25)
Trip # 6 Shelter Creek Paddle Tour*
Trip # 7 (Sunday) Masonboro Kayak Trip*
*Must register with Salt Marsh Kayak Company 910-509-2989

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### Board Members

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Address [Street, City, ST, and Zip]</th>
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### Calendar of Activities

- **4/1**: Congaree Swamp [Full day Field Trip]
- **4/6**: Beautiful Bluebirds [Monthly Meeting]
- **4/6**: McDowell Nature Preserve [1/2 day Field Trip]
- **4/8**: Landsford Canal St. Park [1/2 day Field Trip]
- **4/11**: Latta Park [1/2 day Field Trip]
- **4/15**: Latta Plantation Preserve [1/2 day Field Trip]
- **4/20**: Anne Springs Close Greenway [1/2 day Field Trip]
- **4/22**: Evergreen Nature Preserve [1/2 day Field Trip & Work Day]
- **4/23**: Crowder's Mt/Kings Mt. Area [Full day Field Trip]
- **4/25**: Boyce Park/McAlping Greenway [1/2 day Field Trip]
- **4/28-29**: CBC Spring Weekend [Asheville, NC]
- **4/29**: Anne Springs Close Greenway [1/2 day Field Trip]
- **5/4**: Wandering Warblers [Monthly Meeting]
- **5/4**: McDowell Nature Preserve [1/2 day Field Trip]
- **5/5-7**: Audubon NC Annual Mtg. [Wilmington, NC]
- **5/6**: Latta Park [1/2 day Field Trip]

### Who’s New?

- Alice Mai Arzani
- Donald Brown
- Tom & Nancy DeVries
- John Ghent
- Alice & Eugene Kavadlo
- Alisa Simgley
- Joseph Williams

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**Mecklenburg Audubon Society**

Join now and your membership will be effective until June 2007.

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.

- **Individual Membership** [$10]
- **Family Membership** [$15]

**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
  - participate in a work day
  - do a program
  - serve on the board

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