It’s said that you know you are birder when someone yells DUCK! and you look up and say - WHERE? But would you know what kind it is as it goes flying by?? If not you better bone up on their ID since they’re back floating on area ponds and lakes. To help you sort the teals from the gadwads from the scoters our December meeting will be Ducks 101.

So waddle on over to the fellowship hall of the Sharon Seventh Day Adventist Church (920 Sharon Amity) at 7:30 PM on Thursday, December 7th to bone up on your hawk identification skills.

When the explorers first set foot upon the continent of North America, the skies, marshes and lands teemed with an astonishing variety of wildlife. Native Americans had been wise stewards of these precious natural resources. Unfortunately, it took the explorers and the settlers who followed only a few decades to decimate these resources. Millions of waterfowl were destroyed, some species to the point of extinction, at the hands of market hunters and a handful of overly ambitious sportsmen. Millions of acres of wetlands were drained to feed and house the ever-increasing populations, greatly reducing waterfowl breeding and nesting habitat.

Not to be outdone by man, Mother Nature periodically takes her toll with devastating droughts and floods. During these periods, migration rest areas and wintering grounds are severely impacted. As recent as 1993, record-breaking floods ravaged the fertile Midwest, leaving more devastation in their wake. A large part of this catastrophe could have been avoided had many of the natural wetlands of that area not been drained and filled in for farming and housing and industrial development. Many people do not realize wetlands help maintain ground water supplies, act as a filtration system for pollutants, store flood waters, protect shorelines from erosion, and modify climatic changes.

In 1934, with the passage of the Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act, an increasingly concerned Nation took firm action to stop the destruction of migratory waterfowl and the wetlands so vital to their survival. Under this Act, all waterfowl hunters 16 years of age and over must annually purchase and carry a Federal Duck Stamp. The
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. Click on Field Trips. 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 you out!!

Saturday - December 9th:
Wintering Waterfowl [1/2 Day Field Trip]

Coddle Creek Reservoir has become the place to see waterfowl in the Charlotte area. Not to far from the reservoir is a newly discovered wetland area behind H.H. Greg's new store at Concord Mills that could hold some surprises for us. So we will meet at Panera's Bread at the mall at 8 PM and will return about 1 PM.

Hopefully, the weather up north will be co-operative this year and push the ducks our way. This trip will be a warm up for the numerous Christmas counts later this month. If you would like to join the group contact Judy Walker.

Saturday - December 16th:
Gaston County Christmas Bird Count

For many animals the Catawba River can act as a barrier. Only the heartiest mammal will attempt to swim across the river. Birds, however, are not as easily intimated. And birders shouldn’t be phased by the river either. That’s why we are teaming up with the birders from the Gastonia area to conduct the Gaston County Christmas Count. This will be a great opportunity to get to know our neighbors and explore new birding hotspots. All the details haven’t been worked out yet but plan to spend at least a morning if not the entire day getting to know Gaston County. If you are interested in starting a new tradition contact Judy Walker at 704-537-8181 or birdwalker@macl.com.

Sunday - December 17th:
Lake Norman Christmas Bird Count

This is hands down the best count circle in the Piedmont. Because of the wide variety of habitat — open fields, large lake, small ponds, wetlands, mixed hardwood forest, old farms — the potential for unusual birds is great. In some ways this count is like a tour through Peterson’s guide with a smattering of species from loons all the way through to the sparrows with representatives of almost everything in between.

Some groups will start before dawn to catch the owls and woodcocks. Others will meet at 7:00 AM. There are fast food places in the count circle (in Cornelius) but you may want to bring food to munch on for energy and warmth. Although you might spend a fair amount of time in the car, warm clothes and sturdy shoes are a must. A tally up dinner will be held at 5:30 PM. Contact Taylor Piephoff at PiephoffT@aol.com for specific assignments.

Saturday - December 23rd:
Charlotte Christmas Bird Count

The granddaddy of the counts, going all the back to 1941, this circle still encompasses a surprising variety of habitat considering suburban sprawl which has taken over much of the area. There are still patches of woods, ponds, lakes, streams and open fields which turn up a interesting variety of resident and wintering species.
In the last 5 years we have averaged around 85-90 species. A remarkable number considering the wholesale lost of habitat over the past 20 years which just proves the tenacity of the birds.

Since fast food establishments (and warmth) will be just around the corner packing a lunch is optional although a thermos of coffee never hurt. There will be a tally up dinner at Wing Haven 5:30 PM [directions]. Just bring your appetites and good birding stories. Too assure even and complete coverage of the area those who wish to participate should contact Wayne Covington at 704-362-1774.

Saturday - December 30th:
Pee Dee NWR Christmas Bird Count

The Pee Dee Christmas Count is a great way to start the new year birding. Every year it produces surprises. One year it was turkey tracks in the snow and lots of sparrows. Another sight to behold is seeing the ducks take off in the morning or watching them come back in at dusk. Because of the wide variety of habitat and its central location we usually have a pretty good list of birds including Bald Eagles, Tundra Swans, and lots and lots of sparrows and ducks.

If you want to carpool, meet at the McDonalds at Windsor Square Shopping Center at 5:45 AM [on Independence]. Otherwise meet at the Pee Dee Maintenance Building [main entrance off Rt. 52] at 7 AM. Lunch will be provided but you will want to wear lots of layers and bring snack foods and something hot to drive while you are out in the field. If you want to be part of this exciting count contact Judy Walker at 704-537-8181 or birdwalker@macl.com.

Saturday, January 13:
Huntington Beach State Park, SC [Full Day]

Although January is often cold and dreary, Mecklenburg Audubon Society’s annual field trip to Huntington Beach State Park in South Carolina is always well worth braving the elements! A walk down the beach to the jetty can be cold and windy but you'll most likely get to see gannets, piping plovers and sometimes a flock of snow buntings! We can expect to see lots of ducks, shore birds and hopefully a few rare species like longspurs, eiders or long-tailed ducks.

Warm clothes and lunch are a must. The walk out to the jetty is about 3 miles round trip. Since most participants stay for the weekend, we will plan to go out to dinner on Saturday night. At dinner we will plan where we will go on Sunday.

Hotels: Comfort Inn [1-843-238-4233]; Days Inn [1-843-238-4444] in Surfside Beach and Litchfield Inn [1-800-637-4211] have good winter rates. If you have questions or plan to go contact Dave Lovet at birdsalot@webtv.net or 704-507-7677.

For detailed directions and maps go to meckbirds.org
As most of our active members know, we serve shade-grown coffee at our monthly meetings. Finding coffee that has the words “shade-grown” on the package is not as easy as it sounds. Several members have told me they buy it at Harris Teeter, but what I’ve seen at HT is labeled “organic” and “free trade”, not “shade-grown”. An article by Paul J Baicich in the Nov/Dec issue of BirdWatcher’s Digest explains these terms and much more.

Shade-grown coffee is grown under large shade trees using no pesticides or chemical fertilizers. This growing technique involves complex insect use and the accumulation of leaf litter. Research has shown that this type of agriculture provides as much avian biodiversity as do natural forests.

Organic coffee simply means coffee grown without the use of pesticides or chemical fertilizers. The good news is that any coffee that is organic is probably bird friendly because it is hard to produce coffee outside a shade environment without the use of some chemicals. In fact, organic is a far stricter designation than shade-grown.

Fair-trade coffee brings a fair return to those who pick and process the beans. Although there is nothing about the fair-trade designation that implies the coffee is shade-grown and/or organic, an estimated 80% of fair-trade coffee is de facto shade grown.

Meanwhile, production of “un-shaded monoculture” (or “sun coffee”) is spreading. More than 40% of the coffee areas of Columbia, Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean now produce this way. Several factors contribute to the spread of this technique, but a steady demand for shade-grown coffee would go a long way toward stemming this tide.

But buying bird friendly coffee is not as easy as it would seem, because false labeling is a problem. Thankfully, the article in BWD provides guidelines to help with this dilemma. Most local bird specialty stores currently stock bird compatible shade coffee. The ABA’s “Song Bird Coffee” (produced through the Thanksgiving Coffee Company) and the Thanksgiving Coffee Company’s own brands are sold through their respective websites. Two leading reliable certification sources named in the BWD article are The Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center and the Rainforest Alliance. We serve Starbucks Organic Shade Grown MEXICO at our meetings.

If you are reading this article, you are a person who will enjoy your coffee even more knowing that the beans were picked from plants shaded by trees full of birds. Now you know all about the birds and the beans!

Where to Buy
Audubon Premium Organic Coffee Co.
1933 Davis St., Suite 308
San Leandro, CA 94577
1-800-829-1300
http://www.auduboncoffeeclub.com/

Birds and Beans Inc.
2415-B Lake Shore Blvd. West
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M8V 1C5
416-913-9221 FAX: 416-913-6453
http://www.birdsandbeans.ca/

Counter Culture Coffee
4823 Meadow Dr., Suite 112
Durham, NC 27713
888-238-JAVA(5282)
www.counterculturecoffee.com

Green Mountain Coffee Roasters
33 Coffee Lane, P.O. Box 657
Waterbury, VT 05676
800-223-6768
http://www.greenmountaincoffee.com

THE BIRDS AND THE BEANS

The hillside in this image is quite steep. The forest cover provided by the shade coffee system upslope from the road greatly aids in soil protection. The sun coffee farm downslope from the road exposes the fragile mountain soil to wind and rain erosion.

This seal is found on every bag of Bird Friendly® coffee.
• The American Black Duck occasionally strays from its normal range. One female banded in New Brunswick, Canada turned up in France.

• Buffleheads nest almost exclusively in holes excavated by Northern Flickers and, on occasion, by Pileated Woodpeckers.

• American Wigeon’s short bill enables it to exert more force at the bill tip than other dabbling ducks, thus permitting efficient dislodging & plucking of vegetation.

• Blue-winged Teal is among the latest ducks to migrate northward in spring, and one of the first to migrate southward in fall. It also migrates over long distances. One bird banded in Alberta was shot in Venezuela a month later.

• The species name of the Canvasback, Aythya valisineria, comes from Vallisneria americana, or wild celery, whose winter buds and rhizomes are its preferred food during the nonbreeding period.

• Snow Geese parents stay with their young through the first winter. Families travel together on both the southbound and northbound migrations, separating only after they return to the arctic breeding grounds. Family groups can easily be seen in migrating and wintering flocks.

• The downy young of the Ross’s Goose come in two colors: yellow & gray. The two forms look identical once they get real feathers.

• At least 11 subspecies of Canada Goose have been recognized, although only a couple are distinctive.

In general, the geese get smaller as you move northward, and darker as you go westward.

• Wood Ducks pair up in January, and most birds arriving at the breeding grounds in the spring are already paired. The Wood Duck is the only North American duck that regularly produces two broods in one year.

• Compared to other species of ducks, Mallard pair formation occurs early, with nearly 80% of all individuals paired by November.

Breeding starts in January, continuing through to July and usually peaking in March and April.

• When flushed off the nest, a female Shoveler often defecates on its eggs, apparently to deter predators.

• The Redhead is known to lay eggs in the nests of other Redheads, at least 10 other duck species, and even nests of the American Bittern and Northern Harrier. Many parasitically laid eggs fail to hatch.

• Rarely visible in the field, the chestnut collar on the black neck of the Ring-necked Duck is noticeable when the bird is in the hand. Such subtle characters would have been obvious to the people first describing the duck from dead specimens.

• Once incubation begins, the male Greater Scaup leaves the female and goes to molt on some relatively large, isolated lake. These lakes are used year after year during molt, and may be in the immediate vicinity of the breeding wetlands or many miles away. They are relatively shallow and contain abundant food and suitable cover.

• Lesser Scaup chicks are capable of diving under water on their hatching day, but they are too buoyant to stay under for more than just a moment. By the time they are 5 to 7 weeks old they are able to dive for 2-25 seconds and swim underwater for 15-18 meters (50-60 ft).

Continued on page 6
Duck Stamps

The very first Federal Duck Stamp was designed by J. N. “Ding” Darling, a political cartoonist from Des Moines, Iowa, who at that time was appointed by Franklin Roosevelt as Director of the Bureau of Biological Survey, the predecessor to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Hunters willingly pay the stamp price to insure the survival of our natural resources.

Each year the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service sponsors the only Federally - mandated art competition. Wildlife artists, both professional and amateur, all across the United States vie for the coveted title of Federal Duck Stamp Artist. The wildlife artist who wins this competition knows that his or her career and fortunes will take wing! This winning design graces the next annual Federal Duck Stamp. The Top 20 entries from each competition are enthusiastically exhibited around the country at various museums, festivals and expositions during the next year.

In 1984 Congress granted an amendment to the 1934 Act authorizing the Secretary of the Interior to license reproductions of the Federal Duck Stamp on products manufactured and sold by private sector enterprises. Royalties from the sale of these products are also deposited into the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund for wetlands acquisition. For a list of Federal Duck Stamp product licensees, visit duckstamps.fws.gov.

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Cool Duck Facts

- Accidental exchanges of young among Surf Scoter broods are frequent on crowded lakes. Because the mother provides no parental care other than guarding the chicks, evolutionary selection to prevent such mixups may not be very strong.
- The White-winged Scoter often nests in association with gull breeding colonies. Although the gulls would happily eat the eggs and chicks of the scoter, the dense vegetation where the scoter nests keeps them safe.
- The Black Scoter is among the most vocal of waterfowl. Groups of Black Scoters often can be located by the constant mellow, plaintive whistling sound of the males.
- Although up to 44 Common Merganser eggs have been found in one nest, one female probably does not lay more than about 13. Larger clutches result when more than one female lays eggs in a nest.
- The Hooded Merganser finds its prey underwater by sight. The merganser can actually change the refractive properties of its eyes to enhance its underwater vision. In addition, the nictating membrane (third eyelid) is very transparent and probably acts to protect the eye during swimming, just like a pair of goggles.
- The Red-breasted Merganser breeds farther north and winters farther south than the other American mergansers.

In coming years, with the number of hunters dwindling, three groups of Americans will need to assume an increasing role in filling the gap in the purchase of Federal Duck Stamps — collectors, art enthusiasts and other conservationists including bird watchers.

Collectors and art enthusiasts consider these stamps “miniature pieces of art” and have been great supporters of the program. It is the third group, the other conservationists, which includes the bird watching community, that we hope will take a more active role in purchasing duck stamps. Increasingly, birders are using the National Wildlife Refuges to pursue their hobby and grow their list of “life birds”. Possession of the most recent Federal Duck Stamp provides free admission into all National Wildlife Refuges.

The purchase of a Federal Duck Stamp at a local post office, wildlife refuges or www.duckstamp.com provides an opportunity for every United States citizen to take a stand in the preservation of our natural heritage. All of us, working together, can and have made a difference.
McAlpine Greenway Needs Your Help!!!

A Park and Rec sign on the greenway states: “The surrounding area is one of the best bottomland hardwood forests remaining in Mecklenburg County”. Please make plans to attend a series of public meetings at which Charlotte Mecklenburg Utilities Department (CMUD) will present its proposal to run a new sewer line across the Lower McAlpine Creek Greenway, disturbing the wetlands and removing approximately 6 acres of mature bottomland hardwoods – a 100 foot clear cut, which will intersect the greenway in two places. As recently as September 2004, the proposed line was to go on the other side of the creek, along an area that was already developed – the Shops of Toringdon. At that time the city purchased an easement from the developer of Toringdon for that very purpose. Last April CMUD changed its mind and decided to run the line on the greenway side of the creek.

The wonderful greenways in Charlotte have surely given us much enjoyment. Now a greenway needs something in return - our interest and attention. The following meetings are all open to the public and to public comment:

**Wednesday, November 29, 2006 6:30 PM**
South Park District Advisory Council
William R. Davie Conference Center
4635 Pineville-Matthews Road
(Hwy 51 between Rea and Providence Rds.)
Charlotte, NC 28226

**Monday, December 4, 2006 6:00 PM**
Greenway Advisory Council
Betty Rae Thomas Recreation Center
2921 Tuckaseegee Rd
Charlotte, NC 28208

**Tuesday, January 9, 2007 6:00 PM**
Park and Recreation Commission
Administrative Office Building
5841 Brookshire Blvd
Charlotte, NC 28216

For more information contact Jack Meckler (jmmeck@aol.com) or 704-540-1573.

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, web site & cost of meetings.*

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

12/7 ‘Em R Ducks [Monthly Meeting]
12/9 Wintering Waterfowl [1/2 Day Field Trip]
12/16 Gaston County Christmas Count
12/17 Lake Norman Christmas Count
12/23 Charlotte Christmas Count
12/30 Pee Dee NWR Christmas Count
1/4 Feast and Fotos [Monthly Meeting]
1/13 Huntington Beach St. Pk., SC [Full Day Field Trip]

Have a Safe and Joyful Holiday!!

Who's New?
Barbara Hearn
Peggy Donovan