What mid-winter activity is fun, easy, free, and helps bird conservation? What can parents and teachers do with children that will connect them to a whole new world of natural wonders? This February, the tenth annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), sponsored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, will give everyone a chance to discover the birds in their neighborhood and “Count for the Record.” During February 16–19, 2007, people of all ages, from beginners to experts, are invited to join this event, which spans the entire United States and Canada. Participants can take part wherever they are – at home, in... 

Monthly Meeting
Thursday, February 1st

“Teaching children about the natural world should be treated as one of the most important events in their lives.”
Thomas Berry, Dream of the Earth.

Mecklenburg Audubon does take this challenge seriously, but since most of the groups members have day jobs and aren’t environmental educators we depend on and support those who are through a program called Audubon Adventures. For several years now, we have provided environmental educational materials to teachers at Providence Spring Elementary School. We thought it was time for you all learn why and how they use these materials with students and the impact they have.

Continued on page 3
Field Trips

Tuesday, February 6: McAlpine Greenway [1/2 Day]

We will explore the main park area on this walk including the lake, adjoining wetlands, playing fields and wooded areas seeking wintering species. Water Pipits were a surprising find last year in this location. Fox sparrows are a good possibility.

Meet in main parking lot off Monroe Road at 8:30 AM. Call Dave 704-507-7677 or EMAIL Birdsalot@webtv.net if you are coming.

Saturday/Sunday, February 10th/11th: Charleston/MT Pleasant [Weekend trip]

Break out of the Winter doldrums and join fellow MAS members for a weekend of birding near historic Charleston on the SC coast.

On Saturday morning we will participate in an environmentalist led birdwalk [$5 fee] at Caw Caw Interpretive Center, a Charleston County Park in Ravenel, SC. One of my favorite birding spots, this 654 acre park has a great variety of habitats including old rice fields, marshy wetlands, hardwood forests and grassy fields. This park consistently offers great birding opportunities.

After a “bring you own” picnic lunch at the park, we will head to Folly Beach for some seaside birding to improve our species count and enjoy some salt air.

Saturdays get together dinner at a local restaurant is optional but the fellowship is not to be missed!

Sunday morning we will check out and head for Mt. Pleasant where we will bird Patriot’s Point and Pitt Street Causeway before reluctantly heading north to Charlotte .

We will meet Saturday AM in the parking lot of the Caw Caw center [5200 Savannah Hwy., 843-889-8898] located about 20 minutes south of the motels on US 17S. Watch for the large sign on the right. Enter the open gate and proceed to the parking and the main building.

If you plan on going, contact Dave Lovett at 704-507-7677 or Birdsalot@webtv.net. Local hotels: Sleep Inn 212- 843-556-6959, Holiday Inn Express-843-402-8300, or Best Western Sweetgrass Inn 843-571-6100.

Saturday, February 24th: Cowans Ford/ Rural Hill [1/2 Day]

Another opportunity to explore the fields of Charlotte’s own Important Bird Area. At Cowan’s Ford we will look for wintering waterfowl on the ponds and search for grassland species on the adjoining fields. Later in the morning we will go over to Rural Hill Preserve for some time to wander the fields, grasslands, and adjoining woodlands for additional species.

We will meet in the viewing platform parking lot at 8:00 AM. Contact Judy Walker if plan on going birdwalker@mac.com or 704-537-8181.

For detailed directions and maps go to meckbirds.org
Saturday, March 3rd:
Draper WMA/Lake Oliphant, SC [Full Day]

Located just east of Rock Hill and south of York, SC, Draper WMA and Lake Oliphant combine to offer a lovely morning of late winter birding. Nestled in rolling farmland, this idyllic setting seems miles away from the hustle and bustle of Charlotte.

Starting at Draper, we will bird old farm ponds and cultivated “wildlife focused” fields, searching for wintering birds including the ever more elusive northern bobwhite. Raptors on electrical towers and hunting the fields should be plentiful and easily observed.

From Draper we will drive a short distance south through the farmlands to Lake Oliphant, which always harbors a ruddy duck or two along with other surprises.

We will meet at 8 AM in the Crossroads Mall parking lot located on the right hand side of the main entrance drive into Carowinds Theme park off HWY21. We should get back to Charlotte in the early afternoon but pack a snack just in case. Call Dave Lovett 704-507-7677 or email birdsalot@webtv.net if coming.

Monthly Meeting Continued

Audubon Adventures

A child’s world is fresh and new and beautiful, full of wonder and excitement. It is our misfortune that for most of us that clear-eyed vision, that true instinct for what is beautiful and awe-inspiring, is dimmed and even lost before we reach adulthood. ~Rachel Carson

Steve Houser is the Talent Development Teacher at Providence Spring Elementary School. His goal for students is for them to be happy, stimulated, learning, and to be lifelong learners. One of the main ways he accomplishes this goal is by using the natural world as a gateway for instruction in all curricular topics. He is a certified Environmental Educator and has received The Governor’s Award as North Carolina’s Environmental Educator of the Year. As Talent Development Teacher he mentors all the teachers in the school and helps them incorporate the Audubon Adventures materials into their classrooms.

Steve would like us to know how important having such aids available to educators. He’ll also talk about “No Child In the Woods”, the reality that children don’t go outdoors like many of the us did when we were children, and what we need to do to change this. Teachers at PSE are making a concerted effort to use the outdoors for learning in all curriculum areas an integral part of our curriculum, and Steve is encouraging other schools to do the same. His presentation will give examples of what is going on at PSE. Steve also want to hear what you have to say on the topic.

Steve is a master storyteller, so his presentation will be lively and engaging. Don’t miss this informative program. Become a child again on Thursday, Feb. 1st at 7:30 PM in the Fellowship Hall of the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

We have a Winner

Matthew Daw, a 13-year-old member of Wake Audubon, won first prize in the 2007 American Birding Association Young Birder of the Year contest for his age group. As winner Matthew will attend an ornithology camp in west Texas - the Big Bend area. Matthew wrote up a field trip he participated in and submitted a drawing of the Rufous Hummingbird he saw at the Governor’s Mansion this winter.

The contest requirements are quite extensive. Matthew won first prize in all the modules except photography. You can read about them at http://www.americanbirding.org/yb/yby/index.html.

Lena Gallitano, past president of Wake Audubon highly praises Matthew’s expertise, “I’m certainly impressed with this young man and I know he has some excellent birding skills.”
GBBC Continued

schoolyards, at local parks or wildlife refuges. Observers simply count the highest number of each species they see during an outing or a sitting, and enter their tally on the Great Backyard Bird Count web site at www.birdsource.org/gbbc.

Visitors to the web site can also compare their sightings with results from other participants, as checklists pour in from throughout the U.S. and Canada. Together, these counts offer a real-time snapshot of the numbers and kinds of birds that people are finding, from Boreal Chickadees in Alaska to Anhingas in Florida.

“The Great Backyard Bird Count is a community celebration of birds, birding, and nature,” said Janis Dickinson, director of Citizen Science at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. “We often fail to notice how rich our surroundings are, but counting birds, even for just 15 minutes, is not only educational—it can provide a lasting source of enjoyment, turning a daily walk into a treasure hunt.”

“We are encouraging people to go outside and count birds for the first time this year,” said Paul Green, Audubon’s director of Citizen Science. “By submitting their counts online, bird-watchers can quickly see how the dots they put on the map form new patterns that tell new stories about the birds that share the world in which we live, including our own backyards and parks.”

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the GBBC, and Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology are challenging people everywhere to “Count for the Record,” by participating in greater numbers than ever before. Greater participation, with more checklists submitted, provides more information about bird population trends — and helps to better inform conservation efforts.

Last year, participants submitted more than 60,000 checklists — and reported 7.5 million birds overall and 623 different species. The count helped chronicle the early spring migratory routes of Sandhill Cranes, documented lingering migrants such as Orange-crowned Warblers and Tree Swallows, revealed the ongoing range expansion of introduced Eurasian Collared-Doves, and recorded declining numbers of American Crows.

Participants who want to hone their bird watching skills can learn more from the Great Backyard Bird Count web site, which offers identification tips and access to photos, sounds, maps, and natural history information on more than 500 bird species. People can also submit photos to an online gallery showcasing the dazzling array of winter birds found during the GBBC. Competitions add another element of fun, including a photo contest, rankings for most numerous birds, and the coveted “checklist champ” title for towns, states, and provinces with the highest participation.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is a free event, sponsored in part by Wild Birds Unlimited. For detailed information about how to participate go to: Birdsource.org/gbbc

Sad but Sincere Thanks

On October 18th, Ida Jean Sandlin Revell passed away at her home. She was a lover of wildlife, her favorite being songbirds. In keeping with Ida Jean’s love of birds, her family requested memorials be made to Mecklenburg Audubon in lieu of flowers.

The board has decided to use the funds provided by this unexpected gesture of kindness to purchase additional Audubon Adventure kits for teachers in our area.

Ms Revell will live on in the hearts of school children who will be introduced to the wonderful world of nature and wildlife through this highly successful teaching tool. Our heartfelt sympathy and thanks to Ms Revell’s family.
Christmas Count Reports

Lake Norman CBC
It appears that the Southern Lake Norman CBC on 12/17/06 tallied a total of 92 species. This number is slightly below the 13 year average of 94 species. The high number was 103 in 1996, and the low 85 in 1994.

We have hit the 100 species mark twice; in 1996 and last year.

Lingering passerines were clearly down this year, while duck numbers were surprisingly good. Loggerhead shrike and northern harriers are still hanging on, but pileated woodpecker, eastern screech owl, and northern bobwhite continue to be missed though all three are certainly in the circle somewhere. Winter finches are almost completely absent from the state this year, so accordingly (and to my relief) none were reported on the Lake Norman Count. I wonder when red-breasted nuthatches will have another strong winter showing in the piedmont.

The highest temperature was easily this year with a high of 67° F. The lowest recorded temp was 17° F in 2003. The average high temp has been 55° F and the average low 33° F; almost spot on for normal high-lows.

In 13 years precipitation has only occurred on only 3 counts; heavy precipitation has never occurred. We even recorded a trace of snow one year.

The western grebe found by Judy Walker’s party was certainly the highlight this year. Other notable finds include marsh wren, common yellowthroat, loggerhead shrike, and northern harrier.

Thanks to everyone who gave all or part of their day to participate in the count. I look forward to having everyone re-up for next year’s count on December 16, 2007. — Taylor Piephoff

Charlotte CBC
For those who missed the January meeting, below are some highlights of the 12/23/06 Charlotte Christmas Count.

We logged high counts for 12 species: Cooper’s hawk (11), red-bellied woodpecker (80), tufted titmouse (124), carolina wren (333), eastern bluebird (147), pine warbler (37), rufous hummingbird (3), carolina chickadee (333), brown headed nuthatch (80), golden crowned kinglet (84), blue headed vireo (3), and white throated sparrow (437).

Three new species were added to our list - peregrine falcon, yellow throated vireo, and great egret. Other good finds of note - northern oriole, blue gray gnatcatcher, least sandpiper(4) and common loon. Notable miss - loggerhead shrike which last seen 12/19/06 just outside the count week.

Over all total species count was 85 which is about average. Total number of birds counted was 8,111.

Thanks to the 24 participants who took part. — Dave Lovett

Pee Dee
Preliminary results from Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge count include a total of 90 species and 40,263 individual birds including 30,521 blackbirds.

Highlights this year were a Ross’s goose at Gaddy’s Pond; seven horned grebes on Lake Tillery; and 2 common loons also on Lake Tillery.

Thanks again for all your help. I’ll send you complete results soon. — Don Fink

What the Odd Ones Looked Like
These are not the birds that were seen.
For the neophyte bird watching terminology used by more experienced birders and/or ornithologists can be confusing and sometimes frustrating. Here are a few basic terms Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Audubon thinks beginning bird watchers should be come familiar with -

**Natural History Words**

- **Adaptation:** A special physical or behavioral ability that has allowed a species adjust to a particular way of life.
- **Distribution:** The geographic area(s) where a given species of bird can be found.
- **Niche:** The role a bird plays in the ecosystem, including what it eats and where it lives (habitat).
- **Non-native Species:** Birds that have been released from or have escaped captivity. In some cases (House Sparrows, Rock Doves, and others), such species have become established in North America.
- **Population:** The total number of individuals of a single species inhabiting a given area.
- **Taxonomy:** The way bird scientists classify bird species based on their similarities to or differences from one another.

**Behavior Words**

- **Diurnal:** Used to describe birds that are active during the day. Most birds are diurnal.
- **Dominance:** The ability of one bird to control the actions of another.

- **Flock:** A group of birds made up of either the same or different species.

**Food and Feeding Words**

- **Carnivorous:** Flesh-eating birds (usually fresh or live as opposed to carrion). Raptors (hawks and owls) are carnivorous birds.
- **Crop:** A sac inside a bird where its neck meets the body. It holds food before digestion.
- **Frugivorous:** Birds that feed primarily on fruit. Cedar Waxwings are frugivorous birds.
- **Granivorous:** Birds that eat grains or seeds, such as the Rock Pigeon.
- **Grit:** Small pieces of rock, shell, or other hard substances that birds eat to help them digest other foods. Grit helps grind up coarse vegetable matter.
- **Herbivorous:** Birds that eat mainly plants. Swallows are a good example.
- **Insectivorous:** Birds that eat mainly insects. Swallows are a good example.
- **Nectivorous:** Birds that feed largely on the nectar of flowers or the juices of fruit, such as hummingbirds.

**Feather Words**

- **Camouflage:** Having a color and/or pattern that allows a bird to blend with its habitat.
- **Crest:** A tuft of feathers on the top of a bird’s head.
- **Field Mark:** A characteristic or combination of characteristics such as color, shape, or specific marking (eye rings, wing bars, breast stripes), by which a species of bird can be distinguished from other species.
- **Molt:** The process by which a bird renews part or all of its plumage by shedding old, worn feathers and growing new ones.
- **Plumage:** The feathers that cover a bird’s body.
- **Preening:** The process by which a bird cleans, arranges, and cares for its feathers, usually by using its bill to adjust and smooth feathers.
- **Sexual Dimorphism:** When male and female birds differ in plumage.

**Habitat:** The environment where a particular species of bird lives. Forests and wetlands are both examples of habitats.

**Home Territory:** The total area a bird inhabits while living in a given place.

**Hovering:** A technique a bird uses for various reasons, including to search for food. To hover, a bird remains stationary in mid-air, usually by rapidly flapping its wings.

**Migration:** An extended journey a bird makes from one place to another (for example, when a bird flies from its wintering areas in South America to its breeding area in North America.)

**Nocturnal:** Used to describe birds that are active at night. Most owls are nocturnal.

**Permanent Resident:** A species of bird that does not migrate and so spends the entire year in the same region.

**Roost:** A place where a bird sleeps, sometimes in groups.

**Omnivorous:** Birds that eat anything that is considered digestible/edible. American Crows are a common example.

**Piscivorous:** Fish-eating birds. The Osprey is piscivorous.

**Predation:** When one animal kills another for food. The animal that is taken is the prey, and the animal doing the taking is the predator.

**Raptors:** Generally hawks, eagles, falcons, and owls. These birds prey upon mammals, smaller birds, and other animals.
Feeding Young Naturalists

A bibliography of Children’s Books

Children Ages 6-12.
Bliss, Corinne. Matthew’s Meadow.
Burnett, Frances. The Secret Garden.
Cherry, Lynne. A River Ran Wild.
Cornell, Joseph. Journey to the Heart of Nature.
Curwood, James Oliver. The Bear.
Ekert, Allan W. Incident at Hawk’s Hill.
George, Jean Craighead. Julie of the Wolves.
My Side of the Mountain.
The Tarantula in My Purse.
Kipling, Rudyard. The Jungle Books.
Lewis, Paul Owen. Grasper.
Locke, Thomas. Where the River Begins.
Mowatt, Farley. Owls in the Family.
Parker, Nancy Winslow. Bugs.
Rand, Gloria. Prince William.
Rose, Deborah Lee. The People Who Hugged the Trees.
Swamp Chief Jake. Giving Thanks: A Native American Good Morning Message.

Cherry, Lynne. Flute’s Journey: Life of a Wood Thrush.
The Great Kapok Tree.
Cooney, Barbara. Miss Rumphius.
Curtis, Chara M. All I See Is Part Of Me.
Daly, Niki. The Boy on the Beach.
Dragonwagon, Crescent. Half a Moon and One Whole Star.

Ehlert, Lois.
Feathers for Lunch.
Growing Vegetables Soup.
Planting a Rainbow.
Red Leaf, Yellow Leaf.

Frasier, Debra. On the Day You Were Born.
Grimes, Nikki. From a Child’s Heart: Poems.
Highwater, Jamke. Moonsong Lullaby.
Howe, James. I Wish I Were A Butterfly.
Joose, Barbara. Mama, Do You Love Me?

Bunting, Eve. Someday A Tree.
Cannon, Janell. Stellaluna.
Cannon, Janell. Verdi.
The Very Busy Spider.
The Very Quiet Cricket.

Carlstrom, Nancy White.
Northern Lullaby.


Keats, Ezra Jack. The Snowy Day.
Lesser, Carolyn. Dig Hole Soft Mole.

MacLachlan, Patricia. All The Places To Love.


Marzollo, Jean. Sun Song.

Mazer, Anne. The Salamander Room.

Pirotta, Savior. Turtle Bay.

Stolz, Mary. Storm in the Night.

Suess, Dr. The Lorax.

Tresselt, Alvin. The Gift Of The Tree.
Thornhill, Jan. Wild In The City.

Van Allsburg, Chris. Just a Dream.

Winters, Kay. Wolf Watch Ages.

Yoshima, Taro. Seashore Story.

Yolen, Jane. Ring of Earth.

Welcome To The Greenhouse.
Welcome to the Sea of Sand.
Welcome to the Ice House.

Yoshima, Taro. Seashore Story.

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.

Name

Address [Street, City, ST, and Zip]

Phone

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
Save this Date!! April 28th

This is the day the rest of North Carolina is coming to Charlotte to see how we take care of our environment. It's the annual Audubon of North Carolina meeting, right here in the Queen City. There will be field trips, workshops and a gala picnic in the great outdoors. Detailed information in the next newsletter.

NC Birding Trail Update

Site descriptions and group maps for the coastal plain region are now available on our website (www.ncbirdingtrail.org). Look under Trails/Coast for links to the coastal region map, group maps (PDF format), and site descriptions (PDF format). Be sure to read the 3-page Introduction for important safety and travel information. And as you plan trips along the NC Birding Trail, use the Travel Resources page to search for county-specific accommodations or other travel information.

Activities Calendar

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