Food, Friends, and Fotos!!

Eating and shopping! What would be a better way to spend an evening, but eating and shopping with a bunch of birders? The December meeting is Mecklenburg Audubon’s Annual POT LUCK Dinner and Silent Auction on Thursday December 6th at 6:30pm (note the earlier time). Please bring a covered potluck dish and your tableware (plate, utensils, napkin and a cup). Coffee and other beverages with ice will be provided. This is a great time to share any photos on CD, thumb drive, or in print along with your best stories from this past year!

We have moved our biggest fundraiser of the year to the December meeting to help you do some last minute holiday shopping. There are some great items donated by local merchants and members. The proceeds from the auction will be used to support Audubon Adventures for classrooms, scholarships to the Carolina Raptor Center camp for children, conservation at our parks and to support Lights Out Charlotte. Raffle tickets will be available at the door: 1 for $1; 6 for $5; 15 for $10; or 40 tickets for $25. Some of this year’s Silent Auction treasures are:

- Camping and Backpacking for 4 people for 4 days valued at over $400. (REI);
- A beautiful decorative birdhouse (Blackhawk Hardware);
- A one-day North Carolina bird walk with Simon Thompson;
- Books, books, books – field guides, travel books, warbler guides, good reads, fun bird stuff and lots more.

Food, Fun, and Birds, Birds, Birds, all for a great cause! Hope to see you Thursday December 6th!

Everybody wake up! Open your eyes! Stand up!
Be children of the light – strong, swift, and sure-of-foot.
Hurry, clouds, from the four quarters of the universe.
All hearts be glad!

From a Pueblo song
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 without you!!

Wednesday, November 28th - Four-mile Creek Greenway
1/2 Day • Easy* • Contact: Ron Clark (waxwing@bellsouth.net)
This is a two-mile flat walk through a variety of habitats, from deciduous and coniferous stands, to flooded woods and wetlands. We'll meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot on Johnston Road.

Saturday, Dec. 1st - McDowell Prairie/Copperhead Island
1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Ron Clark (waxwing@bellsouth.net)
We'll start at the prairie and bird until around 11 AM, covering 1 1/2 miles. We may get off the gravel road so wear sturdy shoes. Then we'll go to nearby Copperhead Island for woods and open water. Parking is limited at the prairie so we'll meet in the parking lot of Harris-Teeter at the corner of Hwys 49 and 160, at 8:30 AM.

Saturday, December 8th - Wintering Waterfowl
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Judy Walker (birdwalker@me.com)
By now most of the wintering waterfowl should have arrived at Coddle Creek Reservoir and the surrounding area. We will meet at Panera Bread across from Concord Mills Mall at 9 AM to first check out the wetland behind HH Greg and then car pool up to the reservoir. Depending on time we may even swing by Moss Creek Greenway to see what’s there.

Saturday, Dec. 15th - Gaston CBC
Contact: Steve Tracy (stevepath1@aol.com)
For many animals the Catabaw River can act as a barrier. Only the heartiest mammal will attempt to swim across the river. Birds, however, are not as easily intimidated. 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 hots. 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.

Sunday, Dec. 16th - Lake Norman CBC
Contact: Taylor Piephoff (piephofft@aol.com)
This is by far the best count circle in the Piedmont. Because of the wide variety of habitat open fields, large lake, small ponds and 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. There are fast food places in the count circle 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.

Saturday, Dec. 22nd - Charlotte CBC
Contact: Ken Kneidel (kendel2@earthlink.net)
The granddaddy of the counts, 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 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 at 5:30 PM. Just bring your appetites and good birding stories.

**Saturday, Dec. 29th - Pee Dee CBC**  
**Contact: Judy Walker (birdwalker@me.com)**  
There is nothing quite like knowing you are the only one wandering the paths of a wildlife refuge. That’s what it is like at the Pee Dee Count. We have the refuge to ourselves. Habitats include open fields, mixed woodlands and small lakes and ponds. Red-headed woodpeckers and ducks abound and if we are lucky a few Tundra Swans might grace the landscape. We will be out in the field all day so remember to dress warmly as things can get pretty cold out in the fields. There will be a hot lunch to warm our inners and energize us for an afternoon of more birding.

For those wishing to car pool, we will meet at 5:45 AM at the McDonald's at the Windsor Square Shopping Center on Independence.

**Saturday/Sunday, Jan. 18-20 - Huntington Beach State Park**  
**Weekend • Moderate • Contact: Judy Walker (birdwalker@me.com)**  
Our winter excursion to Huntington Beach State Park is an annual favorite offering some different bird species than our fall trip. Waterfowl - both freshwater and saltwater- have arrived in good numbers including loons, grebes, and ducks. Gannets are numerous offshore along with shorebirds along the quiet beaches. We will meet at 8 AM in the causeway parking lot. Be sure to dress warmly as the winds off the ocean can be chilling and bring a lunch for a midday break.

For those staying the weekend, Saturday evening we gather at a local restaurant for dinner to decide on where we will bird Sunday morning for half a day before heading home. Local hotels with off-season rates include: Litchfield In [843-237-4211], Comfort Inn Surfside [843-233-8585], Days Inn Surfside [843-238-4444], Brookwood Inn [843-651-2550].

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**Field Trips**

**Backyard Feeding Tip**

Birds can become ill from leftover bits of seeds and hulls that become moldy, as well as from bird droppings that accumulate on feeder trays. Therefore, you should clean your feeders about once every two weeks, more often during times of heavy use. For best results wash your feeder thoroughly in soapy water, then soak or rinse it in a solution of one part bleach to nine parts water. Dry the feeder thoroughly before refilling. Hummingbird feeders should be cleaned evverytime you refill the nectar, which should be every three to five days.

Also remember to rake the ground below your feeder to prevent accumulation of waste. Moldy or spoiled food is unhealthy not only for birds but for your outside pets. Bird food scattered on the ground also can attract rodents. Consider moving your feeders periodically to limit the accumulation of waste.
The data collected by observers over the past century allow researchers, conservation biologists, and other interested individuals to study the long-term health and status of bird populations across North America. When combined with other surveys such as the Breeding Bird Survey, it provides a picture of how the continent’s bird populations have changed in time and space over the past hundred years.

The long term perspective made possible by the Christmas Bird Count is vital for conservationists. It informs strategies to protect birds and their habitat - and helps identify environmental issues with implications for people as well. For example, local trends in bird populations can indicate habitat fragmentation or signal an immediate environmental threat, such as groundwater contamination or poisoning from improper use of pesticides.

In the 1980’s CBC data documented the decline of wintering populations of the American Black Duck, after which conservation measures were put into effect to reduce hunting pressure on this species. More recently, in 2009, the data were instrumental in Audubon’s Birds & Climate Change analysis, which documented range shifts of bird species over time. Also in 2009 CBC data were instrumental in the collaborative report by the North American Bird Conservation Initiative, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service - State of the Birds 2009.

In 2007, the data were instrumental in the development of two Audubon State of the Birds Reports - Common Birds in Decline, which revealed that some of America’s most beloved and familiar birds have taken a nosedive over the past forty years, and WatchList 2007, which identified 178 rarer species in the continental U.S. and 39 in Hawaii that are imperiled. These three reports helped scientists and policy-makers to both identify threats to birds and habitat, and promote broad awareness of the need to address them.

Below are some things we are learning about through Christmas Bird Count Data.

• The Hooded Merganser: A Preliminary Look at Growth in Numbers in the United States as Demonstrated in the Christmas Bird Count Database by Steve Davis and Peter Capobianco, American Birds, Summary of the 106th CBC
• Using Christmas Bird Count Data to Assess Population Dynamics and Trends of Waterbirds by Gregory S. Butcher, Daniel K. Niven, John R. Sauer, American Birds, Summary of the 105th CBC
• Christmas Bird Count Provides Insights Into Population Change in Land Birds That Breed in the Boreal Forest by Daniel K. Niven, John R. Sauer, Gregory S. Butcher, and William A. Link, American Birds, Summary of the 104th CBC
• Statistical Analyses Make the Christmas Bird Count Relevant for Conservation by John R. Sauer, Daniel K. Niven, and William A. Link, American Birds, Summary of the 104th CBC
• Christmas Bird Count Data Suggest West Nile Virus May Not Be A Conservation Issue in Northeastern United States by Carolee Caffrey and Charles C. Peterson, American Birds, Summary of the 103rd CBC
• Combined Data of Project Feeder-Watch and the Christmas Bird Count Indicate Declines of Chickadees and Corvids: Possible Impacts of West Nile Virus by David N. Bonter and Wesley M. Hochachka, American Birds, Summary of the 103rd CBC

10 Things Learned from the Christmas Bird Count
1. Birds are not climate skeptics, having spoken with their wings.
2. The Bald Eagle is back; the Endangered Species Act works!
3. Many of America’s most familiar and beloved birds are in serious decline.
5. Peregrine Falcons are no longer in trouble.
6. Sage-grouse are in deep trouble.
7. More and more hummingbirds are staying in the USA and Canada for the winter.
8. “Eastern” House Finches have been moving west for 60 years.
9. How fast and how far West Nile virus spread
10. Birds are early indicators of environmental problems that can affect people.

Read more here http://birds.audubon.org/how-christmas-bird-count-helps-birds
Good News for Ducks!

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) reports North American duck numbers are at a record high, with an estimate of 48.6 million compared to last year’s 45.6 million. Conducted by FWS and Candian Wildlife Service biologists, the annual count samples more than 2 million square miles of waterfowl habitat. Estimates for the north-central U.S., Alaska and south-central and northern Canada indicate that mallards, gadwall, green-winged teal, canvasbacks and lesser and great scap are up more than 10% from 2011. The news isn’t all good, however: the northern pintail, at 3.5 million birds, is down 22% from last year. The survey of the northeastern U.S. and eastern Canada shows mallards, goldeneyes and ring-necked ducks declined. (National Wildlife, 2012, V50 No. 6 p. 10)

This is indeed great news and you can help make sure this trend continues by purchasing a US FWS Duck Stamp. It would be a great present for the birder/wildlife watcher who has everything!

What is a Duck Stamp?

Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps, commonly known as “Duck Stamps,” are pictorial stamps produced by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. They are not valid for postage. Originally created in 1934 as federal licenses required for hunting migratory waterfowl, Federal Duck Stamps have a much larger purpose today.

Federal Duck Stamps are a vital tool for wetland conservation. Ninety-eight cents out of every dollar generated by the sale of Federal Duck Stamps goes directly to purchase or lease wetland habitat for protection in the National Wildlife Refuge System. Understandably, the Federal Duck Stamp has been called one of the most successful conservation programs ever initiated and is a highly effective way to conserve America’s natural resources.

Besides serving as a hunting license and a conservation tool, a current year’s Federal Duck Stamp also serves as an entrance pass for national wildlife refuges where admission is charged. Duck Stamps and products that bear stamp images are also popular collector items.

In 1989, the first Junior Duck Stamps were produced. Junior Duck Stamps are now the capstone of the Fish and Wildlife Service’s Junior Duck Stamp environmental education program, teaching students across the nation “conservation through the arts.” Revenue generated by the sales of Junior Duck Stamps funds environmental education programs in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and several territories.

Download our brochure, The Federal Duck Stamp Story, for a brief history of both Federal and Junior Duck Stamps. Note: this is a PDF document. You will need to download the free Adobe Acrobat Reader software to view this document.

How do They benefit wildlife?

Since 1934, sales of Federal Duck Stamps have generated more than $750 million, which has been used to purchase or lease over 6 million acres of wetlands habitat in the United States. These lands are protected in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s National Wildlife Refuge System.

Waterfowl are not the only wildlife to benefit from the sale of Federal Duck Stamps. Numerous other bird, mammal, fish, reptile and amphibian species that rely on wetlands have prospered. Further, an estimated one-third of the nation’s endangered and threatened species find food or shelter in refuges established using Federal Duck Stamp funds.

People, too, have benefited from the Federal Duck Stamp. Hunters have places to enjoy their sport and other outdoor enthusiasts have places to hike, watch birds, photograph and explore. Moreover, these protected wetlands help purify water supplies, store flood water, reduce soil erosion and sedimentation, and provide spawning areas for fish important to sport and commercial fishermen.

See how your Duck Stamp dollars have benefited your state by visiting our “conservation” page.

Why should I buy duck stamps?

There are many reasons to buy Duck Stamps. Hunters over the age of 16 must purchase a Federal Duck Stamp each year if they want to hunt migratory waterfowl. Birders and other frequenters of national wildlife refuges purchase a $15 Federal Duck Stamp each year to gain free admission to refuges. Conservationists buy Duck Stamps because they know that the stamps are, dollar for dollar, one of the best investments one can make in the future of America’s wetlands. Collectors buy Federal and Junior Duck Stamps because the beautiful stamps can gain value over the years and are an important part of America’s outdoor culture.

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They’re those little rectangular icons lined up on your favorite gourmet coffee bags—a tree, a flower, a frog, a harvester, each trying to tell you something about how the coffee was grown. But what does each one mean, and how do they differ? Here’s a list of common labels and their benefits for birds. For more specifics, see the list of links below.

**Bird Friendly.**
Certified by scientists from the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, this coffee is organic and meets strict requirements for both the amount of shade and the type of forest in which the coffee is grown. Bird Friendly coffee farms are unique places where forest canopy and working farm merge into a single habitat. By paying a little extra and insisting on Bird Friendly coffee, you can help farmers hold out against economic pressures and continue preserving these valuable lands. The good news is that there’s more Bird Friendly coffee out there than many people realize—we just need to let retailers know we want it (see below).

**Organic.**
As with other organic crops, certified organic coffee is grown without most synthetic pesticides and fertilizers and is fairly sustainable—although there are no criteria for shade cover. Because of coffee’s growth requirements, it’s likely that organic coffee has been grown under some kind of shade. However, many farmers shade their coffee using other crops or nonnative, heavily pruned trees that provide substantially less habitat for birds, and the organic label offers no information about this.

**Rainforest Alliance.**
The most popular environmentally friendly certification for coffee as well as tea, cocoa, and fruits, Rainforest Alliance requires alternatives to chemical and pesticide use (though they stop short of organic certification), erosion control, restricted water use, and ecosystem management efforts. Because Rainforest Alliance develops standards for a wide range of farms, their shade-cover requirements are not as demanding as Bird Friendly coffee. Also, Rainforest Alliance allows coffee blends to be sold with the Rainforest Alliance label even if only a percentage of the beans (currently only 30 percent, with plans to scale up to 90 percent) carry the certification. Rainforest Alliance has a laudable goal to make a difference on a fairly large scale (they certified 540 million pounds of coffee in 2011), but there is no guarantee their certified coffee farms meet the wintering needs of migrant songbirds.

**Fair Trade.**
Inspired by humanitarian concerns, Fair Trade labeling helps to ensure that the workers on coffee farms get paid fairly for the work they do. The higher prices that Fair Trade products earn help to provide an alternative to the price leverage that large coffee buyers can wield. However, a Fair Trade label does not automatically indicate that any environmentally friendly practices were followed.

**Shade-grown.**
“Shade-grown” labels often appear on specialty coffees, but unfortunately this designation is not regulated and doesn’t tell you much about the growing conditions at the farm. When the idea for Bird Friendly coffee was hatched by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center in 1996, plans for the certification process faltered while coffee companies quickly adopted the term “shade-grown” as a marketing buzzword. Unfortunately, this...
Sustainable Coffee
Continued from page 6

Type of coffee can be grown among sparse trees on farms that lack diverse forest structure. Some shade-grown coffee is even grown under only the flimsy cover of banana trees fed artificial fertilizers and pesticides.

Bird Friendly Farmers Offer Half a Solution—We Can Be the Other Half

Bird Friendly certified coffee can be hard to find on store shelves and in coffee shops. One reason is that the standards for certification are so rigorous that only a small fraction of coffee farms can qualify. The total amount of Bird Friendly coffee certified in the past 12 years amounts to less than 2 percent of the Rainforest Alliance-certified coffee in 2011 alone.

But there’s another, paradoxical reason: coffee sellers don’t always advertise that their coffee is Bird Friendly. “Probably about only 10 percent of coffee from Bird Friendly certified farms carries the Bird Friendly stamp on the package,” said Robert Rice, a research scientist at the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center.

Duck Stamps
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Finally, educators, conservationists, hunters, parents and students buy $5 Junior Duck Stamps to support conservation education programs.

Where can I buy Duck Stamps?

Both Federal Duck Stamps ($15) and Junior Duck Stamps ($5) are sold in many post offices across the country. You can also buy both stamps on the internet, and at many sporting goods and outdoor stores. Visit our “Stamps” page to learn where you can purchase Federal and Junior Duck Stamps.

You can buy Federal Duck Stamps from the following vendors:

United States Postal Service

Phone: 1-800 STAMP-24 (1-800-782-6724)

Online: The Postal Store

Note: Once at the website enter search text “Duck Stamps” in upper right hand corner.

Select Post Office Locations: Call your local post office to check Duck Stamp availability.

Amplex Corporation

(phone U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s distributor)

Phone: 1-800-852-4897

Online: www.duckstamp.com

Duck Stamps can also be purchased at most major sporting goods stores and large chain stores that sell hunting and fishing licenses.

You may also buy Duck Stamps at many national wildlife refuges.

To learn more about the program and see all the stamps and many additional entries go to www.fws.gov/duckstamps/