Amazing Acorn Woodpeckers

With the Holidays upon us, are would consider eating light? Well, an Acorn Woodpecker’s diet might have some of us wanting to have another plate full of Holiday fare. To say that Acorn Woodpeckers are unusual would be an understatement. They are flashy, they are noisy. They don’t eat proper woodpecker food in a proper woodpecker way. Groups maintain a communal acorn storage tree where they store thousands of acorns every fall. And group life is downright bizarre, with grown kids staying home to help out and with multiple breeders of both sexes all sharing parenting duties at a single nest. But it all comes back to the acorns. Dr. Mark Stanback of Davidson College will walk us through the unusual social system of this unusual woodpecker at our December membership meeting.

So join local bird enthusiasts and learn about the amazing Acorn Woodpecker on Thursday, December 5th at 7:30 Tyvola Senior Center (2225 Tyvola Road.). Light refreshments will be available at 7:15 PM.

Still Looking for the Perfect Gift?

Still looking for the perfect gift the birder in your life? Is there a child with whom you would like to share your love of birds? Well here are a few suggestions that may help. The books can all be found online at Amazon and Barnes & Noble. Not sure if the Barnes & Noble store will have them in stock. There are also some suggestions for the bird nerd as well. Hope this helps!

For The Young Birder

The Young Birder’s Guide to Birds of North America (Peterson Field Guides)

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!!

Tuesday, December 3rd: McAlpine Creek Park
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Tom Ledford [tledford1207@gmail.com]
The park has a variety of habitat with lakes, beaver pond, woods and open fields. We’ll meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot on Monroe Road.

Saturday, December 7th - 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.

Sunday, December 8th: Beginner Bird Walk
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Bill & Laura Blakesley [lclemons@mindspring.com]
Bill & Laure Blakesley will lead this walk geared toward new birders, although all are welcome. Birding techniques, use of binoculars and ID tips will be covered. We’ll meet in the parking lot of Pike’s Nursery at 8:30 AM and walk the Lower McAlpine Creek Greenway.

Tuesday, December 10th: Lower McAlpine Greenway
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Dave Lovett [birdsalot1@gmail.com]
Dave Lovett will lead us on this flat greenway that connects to Four-Mile Creek Greenway. It goes through hardwoods, brush and wetlands. Meet at 8:30 in the parking lot on Johnston Rd.

Saturday, December 14th - Gaston County CBC
Details on Page 3.

Sunday, December 15th - Lake Norman CBC
Details on Page 3.

Saturday, December 21st - Charlotte CBC
Details on Page 3.

Saturday, December 28th - Pee Dee NWR CBC
Details on Page 3.

Saturday/Sunday, Jan. 17-19 - 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].
Basic Duck ID

Winter is duck season around the Carolinas. Most of the year we have only one or two species of ducks paddling around on out ponds — mallards and wood ducks when you can find them.

But the cold north winds push ducks from their northern breeding territory to our neck of the woods. Here are a couple of things to keep in mind when identifying ducks. Of course doing your homework before you go out is most important.

Differences in size, shape, plumage patterns and colors, wing beat, flocking behavior, voice, and habitat - all help to distinguish one species from another.

Flock maneuvers in the air are clues. Mallards, pintails, and wigeon form loose groups; teal and shovelers flash by in small, compact bunches; at a distance canvasbacks shift from waving lines to temporary V's.

Closer up, individual silhouettes are important. Variations of head shapes and sizes, lengths of wings and tails, and fat bodies or slim can be seen.

Within binocular range, color areas can be important. Light conditions might make them look different, but their size and location are positive keys.

The sound of their wings can help as much as their calls. Flying goldeneyes make a whistling sound; wood ducks move with a swish; canvasbacks make a steady rushing sound. Not all ducks quack; many whistle, squeal, or grunt.

Although not a hard and fast rule, different species tend to use different types of habitat. Puddle ducks like shallow marshes and creeks while divers prefer larger, deeper, and more open waters.

Excerpted from Ducks at a Distance (http://www.npwr.usgs.gov/resource/birds/duckdist/index.htm)

Field Trips

Saturday, December 14th: Gaston CBC
All Day • Easy • Contact: Steve Tracy [stevepath1@aol.com]
For many animals the Catabaw River can act as a barrier. Only the heartiest mamal will attempt to swim across the river. Birds, however, are not as easily intimat-ed. 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 is a great opportunity to get to know our neighbors and explore new birding spots. So plan to spend at least a morning if not the entire day getting to know Gaston County.

Sunday, December 15th: Lake Norman CBC
All Day • Moderate • 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. 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 for specific assignments.

Saturday, December 21st: Charlotte CBC
All Day • Easy • Contact: Ken Kneidel [kenkneidel@gmail.com]
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 an interesting variety of resident and wintering species. In the last 5 years we have averaged around 90 species. A remarkable number considering the whole-sale lost of habitat over the past 20 years which just proves the tenacity of the birds. Although this is an all day event if you can only participate in the morning or afternoon you are more than welcome.

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 bird stories. Too ensure even and complete coverage of the area those who wish to participate should contact Ken Kneidel.

Saturday, December 28th: Pee Dee NWR CBC
All Day • Moderate • Contact: Judy Walker [birdwalker@me.com]
There is nothing quite like knowing you are the only one wandering the paths of a wildlife refuge. We will have the refuge to ourselves and its a wonderful op-portunity to see a wide variety of birds and hopefully other animals in a truly wild environment. Habitats include open fields, mixed woodlands and small lakes and ponds. Red-headed woodpeckers and ducks abound.

We will meet at 5:45 AM at the McDonald’s at the Windsor Square Shopping Center on Independence. We will be out in the field all day so remember to dress warmly as things can get pretty cold out in the fields. Waterproof shoes would also be helpful but not necessary. There will be a hot lunch to warm our inners and energize us for an afternoon of more birding.
Prior to the turn of the century, people engaged in a holiday tradition known as the Christmas “Side Hunt”: They would choose sides and go afield with their guns; whoever brought in the biggest pile of feathered (and furred) quarry won.

Conservation was in its beginning stages around the turn of the 20th century, and many observers and scientists were becoming concerned about declining bird populations. Beginning on Christmas Day 1900, ornithologist Frank Chapman, an early officer in the then budding Audubon Society, proposed a new holiday tradition—a “Christmas Bird Census”-that would count birds in the holidays rather than hunt them.

So began the Christmas Bird Count. Thanks to the inspiration of Frank M. Chapman and the enthusiasm of twenty-seven dedicated birders, twenty-five Christmas Bird Counts were held that day. The locations ranged from Toronto, Ontario to Pacific Grove, California with most counts in or near the population centers of northeastern North America. Those original 27 Christmas Bird Counters tallied around 90 species on all the counts combined.

How Christmas Bird Count Helps Protect Species and Their Habitat

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. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has included Audubon’s climate change work from CBC data as one of 26 indicators of climate change in their 2012 report.

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.

10 Things We Learned from Audubon’s 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.
4. Eurasian Collared-Doves invaded America
5. Peregrine Falcons are no longer in trouble
6. Sage-grouse are in deep trouble WatchList
7. More and more hummingbirds are staying in the USA and Canada for winter
8. “Eastern” House Finches having 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

See more here http://birds.audubon.org/how-christmas-bird-count-helps-birds
Winter Birrrding

Now that the temperatures have finally decided it is winter, it’s time to talk about winter birding. However, I am not talking about identifying our winter visitors. I am referring to how to keep warm while trying to ID that duck in the middle of the pond or the sparrow flying through the brambles. New birders are always amazed at how chilly it can get even on a beautifully clear day, especially early in the morning when the birds are most active. So here are a few tips on how to stay warm this winter birding season.

The most important clothing items are a coat, pants, boots, hat, and gloves that are windproof and/or waterproof. Remember, do not buy clothing that is too tight — it will bind or cut off circulation making you colder. And layering is the key!

**LEG WARMERS**

Long underwear is a must for winter birding. Check the information on the item for temperature and activity ratings (if you’re walking you will be much warmer than just standing) and the percent of shrinkage.

Windpants are fantastic! Those that zip from the bottom are easiest to take on and off over boots. If you wear long underwear with a pair of fleece pants or heavy sweatpants over the underwear and the windpants over both, it keeps you cozy and warm while allowing easy movement.

**BODY ARMOR**

A windproof coat usually has a flap over the zipper (lots of cold wind can come in through a zipper) and fitted cuffs or Velcro tabs at the wrists to keep cold air from going up the sleeves. A hood is helpful to reduce cold air on the head or back of the neck.

Layered fashions (a windproof/waterproof coat with a fleece jacket or vest underneath) are good for spring and fall as well as winter. Layers can easily be changed. A turtleneck with a warm sweater over it plus the fleece can keep you nice and toasty in even subzero weather. Any kind of warm clothing under the coat works.

**KEEP A LID ON IT**

There is an old saying, if your feet are cold, put on a hat. That’s because we lose a lot of body heat through the top of the head and neck. A lined waterproof hat with a bill to shield your eyes or glasses from the elements is highly recommended. Earflaps add extra coverage if needed. Add a neck scarf of made of knitted wool or fleece that can be pulled over the chin, nose, and even the ears. This will protect you from wind and rain.

**WARM HANDS, HAPPY BIRDER**

Take good care of your body’s extremities. Wrists, hands, and ankles are bony and have blood vessels close to the surface, which allows the blood to be cooled if you are not properly protected. Wind goes right through even the best of knitted wool gloves. The most effective gloves are windproof and waterproof and have cuffs or Velcro fasteners to keep wind from cooling your wrists and hands. Glove liners can add extra warmth. Several of the knitted stretchy type are comfortable and can be worn in fall and spring without a heavier glove over them. Remember that you’re going to have to focus your binoculars, so try all layers on to see if you can still move your fingers easily.

**TOASTY TOES**

Waterproof, insulated boots are a must to keep your feet warm and dry. Buy a boot that is a little big, This will allow room to wear extra-heavy socks. Heavy felt insoles can be added to the bottom of the boot under the boot liner or bootie. A lightweight wool insole can be put on top of the bootie to keep toes warm from above. Take socks, liners, and insoles with you when you try on boots. If you can’t afford a pair of expensive boots right away, rubber galoshes worn over shoes with layered socks and insoles are good alternatives.

Sock liners are definitely worth purchasing. Socks that wick moisture away from your feet help keep your feet warm; layer socks as well. You must be able to wiggle your toes comfortably inside your boots with whatever insoles and socks you will be wearing, otherwise your circulation will be impaired.

**THE BASICS**

Here are five good rules to remember when winter birding.

1. Always plan for it to be colder than what has been forecast.
2. Bird watching next to water usually feels at least 10 degrees colder than in surrounding areas.
3. Remember the wind chill factor; exposed skin is especially at risk.
4. Learn to dress in layers. Don’t put all your layers on until you reach your destination, as you may get too hot while traveling.
5. It’s always better to have too many clothes on than to have too few. You can always take clothes off if you are too hot. Carry a daypack to stuff things into that you don’t need, or to carry layers to add.

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10 Reasons to Be Thankful for Birds

1. They provide pest control.
Modern history is filled with stories of birds saving potato fields, fruit orchards, and cranberry bogs from insect devastation. Now researchers are studying the phenomenon more formally, trying to quantify birds' value as living pest controllers.

2. They’re money makers.
Birds stimulate economies just by being the beautiful, fascinating creatures they are. In an economic analysis released in 2009, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service calculated that, based on a 2006 survey, birders spend $12 billion annually on travel and an additional $24 billion on equipment including binoculars, camping gear, and nest boxes. That money ripples out, generating $82 billion in economic output, employing 671,000 people, and enriching state and federal governments by $10 billion.

3. They clean up.
Perhaps the least sexy service birds provide is eating dead bodies. They clean up enormous amounts of roadkill all over the world. Unfortunately, vulture populations everywhere have suffered major declines. In many cases, the cause can be traced to indirect poisonings that are the result of drugs given to the animals the vultures feed on. When vulture numbers plunged in India, feral dogs took over carcass disposal. This led to a growing canine population, which made more fatal dog attacks, as well as an increase in rabies and bites.

4. They spread seeds.
In the high mountains of the American West, the future of a tree called the whitebark pine hangs in the beak of a particular bird. The tree’s seeds are dispersed only by the Clark’s nutcracker, a black-and-white-winged cousin to the crow. The nutcracker’s long, sturdy bill opens the pinecones to pluck out the seeds, which it eats or stores inside its throat. It then buries the uneaten seeds at the depth and location that the trees often need to reproduce. Without the nutcracker, it’s unlikely that the whitebark pine could sustain itself.

Researchers with the U.S. Forest Service have done some experiments that help quantify the value of the nutcracker’s dispersal service. They figure its worth at between $800 and $1,000 per acre, based on what it would cost to plant the pines by hand. Multiply that by about 14.3 million acres of whitebark pine forest, and you get savings of more than $11 billion in the United States alone.

5. They announce danger.
Most of us are familiar with Silent Spring, Rachel Carson’s 1962 book, which chronicled the lethal effects of the DDT. Carson’s robins—along with bald eagles exposed to the pesticides— signaled to many Americans that birds could serve as “winged sentinels” of environmental degradation. More than 50 years later scientists routinely use birds to gauge the health of ecosystems—and not just for purely biological reasons.

6. They pollinate.
Pollination is the recognized realm of bees, bugs, and butterflies. But more than 900 bird species worldwide pollinate, too, and their sophisticated sense of geography suits them well to the task. The durian munjit, a wild fruit that is collected and eaten in northern Borneo, relies exclusively on spiderhunters, members of the sunbird family.

7. They help farmers.
After California farmers harvest their rice crops, they need to get rid of the leftover rice straw. Burning it is cheap, but it pollutes and is therefore illegal. An alternative, till ing the straw into the soil, is expensive.

Fortunately, farmers can enlist help from wintering waterfowl that travel along the Pacific Flyway. By foraging for leftover grain, weeds, and bugs in flooded rice fields, mallards and other birds help decompose the straw. This reduces the need to till the fields, providing considerable savings to growers, concluded a 2000 study from the University of California-Davis. Farmers would be well advised, the report noted, to flood their fields and create wetlands for these avian wayfarers.

8. They poop.
Seabird guano—rich in nitrogen, phosphorus, and other nutrients—provides an important source of fertilizer and income to many people living near seabird colonies. This has been true for centuries: Guano was considered essential to the Incas’ agriculture, “upon which their civilization was based,” wrote Edward How Forbush in 1922. Two years earlier ornithologist Robert Cushman Murphy determined that the best Peruvian guano was 33 times as effective as barnyard manure based on its nitrogen content.

Unfortunately, guano production is one of the most threatened avian ecosystem services, due to the rapid decline of seabirds worldwide, say scientists. Among the culprits are fishing longlines, which lure and then drown such birds as brown pelicans and black-browed albatrosses.

9. They are heroes.
Birds possess skills that historically made them useful to militaries. During World War I pheasants detected incoming hostile aircraft at long distances and “gave the alarm by their insistent cries,”

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Perfect Gift?
photographs, drawings showing typical behaviors, range maps, an easy-to-use checklist, fun facts, and authoritative information about each bird, its vocalizations, and its habitat.

by Cathryn and John Sill • Peachtree, 2013. ISBN 9781561456888 - Text and illustrations introduce the world of birds from eggs to flight, from songs to nests.

Charley Harper ABCs.

Look Up! Bird-Watching in Your Own Backyard.
by Annette LeBlanc Cate • Candlewick, 2013. ISBN 9780763645618 - This conversational, humorous introduction to bird-watching encourages kids to get outdoors with a sketchbook and really look around. Quirky full-color illustrations portray dozens of birds chatting about their distinctive characteristics, including color, shape, plumage, and beak and foot types, while tongue-in-cheek cartoons feature banter between birds, characters, and the reader. Interactive and enjoyable tips bring an age-old hobby to new life for the next generation of bird-watchers.

For the Beginning Birder
National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America, Sixth Edition
by Jon L. Dunn and Jonathan Alderfer • National Geographic, 2011. ISBN 9781426208287 - National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America, 6th Edition contains the most all-new material since the first edition was published more than 25 years ago. The latest edition will include 300 new art figures; unique subspecies maps never before seen in a field guide; extensive migration information overlaid on species maps; field-mark labels on all artwork; text updates to include new species; reorganization reflecting taxonomic changes in the bird community; organization, readability, and increased page count with a fresh new design.

The New Stokes Field Guide to Birds: Eastern Region.
by Donald and Lillian Stokes • Little, Brown, 2013. ISBN 9780316213936 - This easy-to-use guide features 545 North American bird species and more than 2,000 stunning color photographs. And yet it’s portable enough to fit in your pocket! The photographs cover all significant plumages, including male, female, summer, winter, immature, morphs, important subspecies, and birds in flight.


Compact Guide to North Carolina Birds.
by Curtis G. Smalling and Gregory Kennedy • Lone Pine Publishing, 2006. ISBN 9789768200037 - This easy-to-use field guide will help even the novice birder identify the species encountered in backyards and along wilderness trails across North Carolina. Over 80 different birds are featured, complete with color illustrations, photographs of eggs, and extensive natural history. The author is the mountain area biologist for the Audubon Society in North Carolina and a life-long birder.

For the Next-Step Birder
The Warbler Guide.

Sparrows of the United States and Canada: The Photographic Guide.
by David Beadle and James D. Rising • Princeton University Press, 2001. ISBN 9780691117478 - The authors have gathered a stunning selection of over 350 photographs as a basis for the identification of all 64 taxa of emberizine sparrows found in the region. Never before has such a comprehensive collection of sparrow photos been presented together in a single guide.

The Shorebird Guide.
by Michael O’Brien, Richard Crossley and Kevin Karlson • Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2006. ISBN 9780679451204 - Now birders at all levels can learn how to identify shorebirds quickly and simply. This guide includes more than 870 stunning color photographs, starting with a general impression of the species and progressing to more detailed images of the bird throughout its life cycle. Quiz questions in the captions will engage and challenge all birders and help them benefit from this simplified, commonsense approach to identification.

Hawks at a Distance: Identification of Migrant Raptors
by Jerry Liguori • Princeton University Press, 2011. ISBN 9780691135595 - The ultimate must-have guide for identifying migrant raptors, Hawks at a Distance is the first volume to focus on distant raptors as they are truly seen in the field.

A Digital Goodie
Cornell Guide to Bird Sounds: Essential Set for North America
Great for beginners. This set includes the most common sounds for 737 species available as downloadable MP3 files or on a pre-loaded USB flash drive. http://goo.gl/5vjxjV

Essential Apps!
- iBird Pro
- Sibley Guide
- NG Guide
- Audubon Guide
- BirdLog
- BirdsEye
- Chirp: Bird Song
- Twitch: ID Game
Win Binoculars in Contest About Feathers! Share your photos and stories

Rumpled or resplendent, how a bird’s feathers are displayed can be an indication of how its day is going. The Celebrate Urban Birds citizen-science project is looking for entries to its “Fascinating Feathers” challenge—entries may be photos, artwork, videos, poems, or stories and must be submitted to www.CelebrateUrbanBirds.org by January 15, 2014.

To learn more about the Fascinating Feathers challenge and contest rules, visit http://celebrateurbanbirds.org/?p=9292. Winners will be posted on the Celebrate Urban Birds website. Prizes include Pennington bird feeders, Opticron binoculars, bird sound CDs, and much more.

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Birrdding

KEEP THE FIRE BURNING

Remember, a snack of nuts, seeds, dried fruits, candy bars, or cookies can help maintain body temperature. A thermos with a good hot drink can warm your insides.

THE REWARD

Winter birds are worth getting out to see! With a little thoughtful preparation, you, too, can see the beautiful birds of winter in comfort and safety.

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Thankful for Birds

says one account; canaries, of course, offered early warnings of poison gas; gulls followed submarines in search of garbage. Carrier pigeons successfully navigated through shellfire (and past bullets aimed at them). They carried messages that helped the Allies capture German submarines, and that saved the crews of downed seaplanes and a sunken mine sweeper.

10. They just are.

We have all been transported by simply watching a flying bird. We have been lifted out of ourselves; we have felt our hearts race when the wings flash by.

Every one of us has seen what really matters—seen it in the blistering stoop of a peregrine, heard it in the richly harmonic dawn song of a thrush, caught its essence in the slow undulations of white pelicans against a blue sky.

And we’ve realized that for those moments, we were privileged to experience something beyond ourselves—that older, greater, glorious world that a wild bird inhabits, and which through its very existence embodies and makes vivid to us.

Adapted from “Follow the Money,” by Barry Yeoman, and “Beyond Measure,” by Scott Weidensaul, in Audubon magazine’s special “Why Birds Matter” issue (March-April 2013). For the complete article - http://goo.gl/RDHOMS.

Thankful for Birds

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Audubon News is published monthly from September through May by the Mecklenburg Audubon Society, a chapter of National Audubon. Local members receive the newsletter via postal mail and/or electronic mail. It is also posted on the Mecklenburg Audubon web site - meckbirds.org.