The Magic of Moths

Over the past few years, local naturalists and biologists have been working to document the diversity of moth species found within Mecklenburg County. Through casual observations at a porch light to the placement of black lights and sheets deep in the darkness of a nature preserve, hundreds of moth species have been documented so far; with hundreds more still to be discovered.

Lenny Lempel, Natural Resources Coordinator/Supervisor with Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation’s Division of Nature Preserves and Natural Resources, will provide an introduction into this diverse group of insects and to the important roles they play in the environment. Discover some of the challenges to identification and the growing number of resources that make learning about these insects possible. From “Moth Nights” to “National Moth Week events”, an increasing number of people are getting interested in “mothing”.

This will be your chance to experience these magical & mysterious creatures - Thursday, October 3rd at 7:30 PM at the Tyvola Senior Center (2225 Tyvola Road.) at 7:30 PM. Refreshments and fellowship from 7:15 PM.

Time to Relax & Bird at the Big Sit!
Sunday, October 13th • Cowan’s Ford

Many years ago the New Haven, CT bird club started a birding event called the “BIG SIT”, which has gained quite a bit in popularity over the years. The object of this event is to pick a location and from within 17 ft of this location, see how many species of birds can be seen or heard in a 24-hour period.

Come join us on the platform any time from dawn to dusk for as long as you can. We will keep a running tally of what we see. Although this is an all day event, you don’t have to be there all day. If you can great! If not drop in for several hours during the day to help us count.

If we are really lucky we might win the Golden Bird prize, which is $500 from Swarovski Optik. For more information on the National Big Sit and previous year stats check out the Big Sit page on the Bird Watcher’s Digest web site.

What’s Inside

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Magic Moths</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Sit</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Trips</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sparrow Workshop</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project FeederWatch</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter Finch Forecast</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figuring out Finches</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Grouse</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birding Commandments</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Up Coming Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09/28</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/03</td>
<td>Campbell Creek Grnwy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/03</td>
<td>Monthly Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/05</td>
<td>Ribbon Walk NP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/06</td>
<td>Beginner Bird Walk</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/09</td>
<td>Latta Park (Dilworth)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/13</td>
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<td>10/22</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>10/29</td>
<td>4-mile Creek Grnwy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>McDowell Prairie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/3</td>
<td>Beginner Bird Walk</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/5</td>
<td>Little Sugar Creek</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/7</td>
<td>Monthly Meetin</td>
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<tr>
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<td>11/9</td>
<td>Sparrow Workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/16</td>
<td>Latta Plantation Prairie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/19</td>
<td>McMullen Creek</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/23</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/26</td>
<td>Four-mile Creek Grnwy.</td>
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<td>Fort Fisher</td>
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Who’s New?

Jessica & Derrick Faulkner
Marsha Gaspari
Laurie Horne
Donna & Larry Leamy
Paula Rose
Gail & Mark Sanders
Beverly & James Seiferheld

Continued on page 1
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!!

Thursday, October 3rd – Campbell Creek Greenway.
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Ron Clark (waxwing@bellsouth.net)
This 1 1/4 mile greenway follows the creek through woods. It’s a great spot for fall warblers, and other migrants. We’ll start at 8:30 AM in the parking lot on Margaret Wallace Road. Ron Clark waxwing@bellsouth.net

Saturday, October 5th – Ribbonwalk Nature Preserve
1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Ron Clark (waxwing@bellsouth.net)
This area is mostly wooded, and has one of the best fall thrush trails around. Also included are three ponds and a large field. We’ll cover about 1 1/2 miles. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot on Hoyt Hinson Rd.

Sunday, October 6th – Beginner Bird Walk.
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Laura & Bill Blakesley (lclemons@mindspring.com)
McAlpine Greenway is the location for this month’s walk for beginners, and more experienced folks, starting at 8:30 AM. Laura and Bill Blakesley are the leaders. They’ll be demonstrating birding techniques and other aspects. Binoculars will be provided, if needed.

Wednesday, October 9th – Latta Park.
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Ron Clark (waxwing@bellsouth.net)
Meet at 8:30 to look for migrants in this Dilworth park. We’ll start at the pavilion on East park Avenue.

Saturday, October 12th – Evergreen Nature Preserve.
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Ken Kneidel (kenkneidel@gmail.com)
Ken will lead this easy walk through woodlands and open habitat. Meet at 8:30 AM in the bus lot of Winterfield Elementary School.

Tuesday, October 15th – Six-Mile Creek Greenway.
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Dave Lovett (birdsalot@webtv.net)
Dave Lovett will lead us along this southern Mecklenburg greenway. It’s about 2 1/4 miles total, and follows the creek, with brushy areas and woods. We’ll start at 8:30 AM in the parking lot on Marvin Road.

Weekend, October 19th-20th – Huntington Beach State Park
1.5 Days • Strenuous • Contact: Judy Walker (birdwalker@me.com)
This is our fall sojourn to a South Carolina birding hot spot. Fall migrants – hawks and warblers – will still be moving through, wintering shorebirds will have settled in and a few ducks may also have begun arriving. This is probably the best time of the year to see Peregrine Falcons and Merlins, and I am sure we will be delighted with spectacular views of thousands of tree swallows.

We will meet in the parking lot on the eastside of the causeway at 7:30 AM. It can get pretty hot so remember a hat, sunscreen and plenty of water. We will eat lunch in the park so you will also need to bring food.

Since many participants stay for the weekend, we usually go out to dinner on Saturday night. At dinner we will plan where we will go on Sunday.

Big Sit • Oct. 13th

We’ll have hot coffee and tea and a grill for hot dogs or you can bring your own picnic lunch. Bring some folding chairs if you plan to be around for a while. This is a great way to get to know some of your birding colleagues. During the counting lulls there will be time to swap birding adventure stories. You don’t have to tell us you’re coming, just show up when you can.

For more information contact Dave Lovett at birdsalot@webtv.net.
**Tuesday, October 22nd – Anne Springs Greenway.**
1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Dave Lovett (birdsalot@webtv.net)
This area, just into South Carolina, has woods, lake and fields for a variety of birds. Join Dave Lovett at 8:30 AM as we look for migrants. There is a $3 fee for the greenway.

**Sunday, October 27th – Mallard Creek Greenway (change of date)**
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Judy Walker (birdwalker@me.com)
This greenway is tucked away in the University City Research Park off of W. T. Harris Blvd. and has produced some interesting birds. We will be looking for early winter migrants sparrow and sapsuckers. Park at the entrance to this greenway located at the corner of Gov. Hunt Rd. and David Taylor Rd. at 8:30 AM.

**Tuesday, October 29th – Four-Mile Creek Greenway.**
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Tom Ledford (tledford1207@gmail.com)
This two-mile walk goes through a variety of habitat; mixed woods, creekside, marsh and field. Tom Ledford will lead, starting at 8:30 AM in the parking lot on Johnston Road.

**Saturday, November 2nd – McDowell Prairie/Copperhead Island.**
1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Ron Clark (waxwing@bellsouth.net)
The prairie is a 2-mile loop through fields and woods edges. Sturdy shoes are suggested. Then we’ll go to nearby Copperhead Island to scope Lake Wylie for early waterfowl. We’ll meet at 8:30 AM. Turn right on Shopton Road off Hwy 49. In 0.7 miles, turn left on Four Horse Road. Follow it about 3/4 mile to the green gate on the right. This is where the road makes a 90 degree turn to the left.

**Sunday, November 3rd – Beginner’s Bird Walk.**
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Marcia Howden (howden32@aol.com)
Marsha will lead this month’s walk for beginners, and more experienced folks, starting at 8:30 at Latta Prairie in Latta Nature Preserve. She will be demonstrating birding techniques and other aspects. Binoculars will be provided, if needed.

**Tuesday, November 5th – Little Sugar Creek Greenway.**
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Dave Lovett (birdsalot@webtv.net)
This runs about a mile along the creek in Huntingtowne Farms sub-division in the Southpark area, with open grass, woods and fields. Dave Lovett will lead it. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot at the end of Huntingtowne Farms Lane off Park Road. birdsalot1@gmail.com

**Thursday 7th – Ribbonwalk Nature Preserve**
1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Tom Ledford (tledford1207@gmail.com)
This preserve is mostly wooded. Sturdy shoes are recommended. Trails could be muddy if it has been raining. Also included are three ponds and a large field. We’ll cover about 1 1/2 miles. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot on Hoyt Hinson Rd.

**Sunday, November 10th – Toby Creek Greenway.**
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Judy Walker (birdwalker@me.com)
Although not strictly a beginner bird walk, this greenway does avail itself to close observation of common local birds with a few oddities thrown in. We’ll be looking for winter migrants. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot adjacent to the Hardies and O’Charlies on University City Blvd.

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**Sparrow Workshop**

**Saturday, November 9th**

Reedy Creek Nature Preserve
9 AM to 4 PM

We’ll have our second workshop on November 9th. This one will be on Sparrows, also frustratingly known as LBJ’s or Little Brown Jobs. Taylor Piephoff will teach this class, limited to 15 participants. We’ll start at 9:00 at the Reedy Creek Nature Center, at 2900 Reedy Creek Road, for one to two hours, and then go to Harrisburg Sports Complex, a very good sparrow area. After lunch, he’ll take the group to Kirk Farm Fields. All walking is on flat ground. Kirk Farm is a boardwalk. The cost is $20. Make checks out to MAS and send them to PO Box 221093 Charlotte 28222. Also, email Taylor and let him know you’ll be attending. piephofft@aol.com. Checks will be held until the class.
As days shorten and cooler temperatures descend into North America, it’s time for one of our favorite features of the Autumn – Ron Pittaway’s Winter Finch Forecast. Here it is: This is not an irruption (flight) year for winter finches, but there will be some southward movement of most species into their normal winter ranges. Ontario’s cone crops (except white pine) and deciduous seed/berry crops are generally above average to excellent. Very good to bumper spruce cone crops extend across Canada’s boreal forest from Yukon (bumper) east to Atlantic Canada, with rare exceptions. Cone crops are good to excellent (poor on white pine) in central Ontario and Laurentian Mountains in southern Quebec with heavy crops extending east through the Adirondack Mountains of New York and northern New England States.

For more information go to http://ebird.org/content/ebird/news/wf1314/
Figuring out Finches

The identification of the two eastern red finches of the Carpodacus genus can be extremely difficult. Each species is about the same size and shape, each is colored red with varying degrees of brown streaking, and each is common to feeder areas. What’s more, the ranges of these birds overlap quite a bit, primarily owing to the ubiquitous distribution of the House Finch. In certain areas of the West, it is possible to encounter all three species! Here are some tips from Cornell Lab of Ornithology Lab [http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/learning/trickyIds/redfinches.html/] that will help you make an accurate ID.

House Finch

- Slimmer body with short, stubby bill with curved culmen; long tail faintly notched.
- intensity of red color varies in males from yellow to orange to red; observer should rely on pattern of color rather than hue;
- “headband” of red with brown cap and brown cheek patch;
- red chin, upper throat, and breast fades into conspicuously streaked sides;
- brown wings and back, sometimes lightly washed with red, fades into red rump; brown tail

Female

- very plain face; lacks the strong facial pattern of Purple Finch;
- dull white underparts have longer, less sharply defined streaks;
- undertail coverts have broad dark streaks

COOL FACT:

Male House Finches display extreme color variation, ranging from pale yellow to bright red. The depth of red coloring in each male depends on the amount of carotenoid pigments in the bird’s food sources during the molting period. Studies show that females prefer the brightest and reddest males; presumably the hue and intensity of color are indications of the male’s fitness.

Purple Finch

- Plumper body with short, conical beak; short-er, deeply notched tail
- deep raspberry color on most of head (including nape, face, and throat) is underlain by darker ear coverts, nape, and malar stripe, making the head appear contrasted at a distance; light stripe over eye; may have peaked crown;
- raspberry carries onto hindneck
- reddish color of throat and breast diffuses into a variably but usually faintly streaked lower breast and belly;
- extensive red color on back in eastern birds,
- less red in Pacific birds

Female

- strong face pattern: dark auricular patch separates a bold white “eyebrow” and a white moustache;
- underparts show heavy broad streaks;
- back and scapulars are brown and streaked; -undertail coverts usually white with no streaks

COOL FACT:

Declines in northeastern Purple Finch populations, especially in suburban areas, may be correlated to competition with expanding intro-duced populations of the closely related House Finch. Similar declines in suburban Purple Finch populations in the first decade of this century were attributed to expansion of the House Sparrow, another introduced species.
The South’s Grouse: Bobwhite

The bobwhite quail has long been considered a symbol of the South. Quail populations have increased, then declined as man and civilization have altered the environment. People still listen for the first “bobwhite” whistle of the quail to signal the coming of summer.

Before the arrival of European settlers, quail populations were probably relatively low, at least in the large unbroken forest that covered much of North America. Early pioneer settlements and family farms provided ideal quail habitat because quail thrived in small fields and forest openings. Quail populations increased until around 1900 and remained high into the mid-1940s. Since then, quail populations have declined because of habitat loss. Quail populations will likely continue to decline as modern agricultural and forestry practices and urban sprawl continue to alter the bobwhite quail’s preferred habitat.

Quail appear to be drab and rather ordinary, but a close look will reveal color combinations and contrasts. Throat, chin and stripe are white on the cock, buff on the hen. Underparts are tawny and white, Bobwhite Quail blending with chestnut, black and gray. Each breast feather sports a black chevron. Upper parts are a mixture of warm brown, a tinge of deep yellow and shadings of black. The birds can achieve invisibility by merely “freezing” in light cover. They weigh from 6 to 8 ounces and are about 10 inches long.

Bobwhite quail prefer edge cover, or the types of vegetation found around fields, hedgerows and forest openings. The bobwhite quail feeds primarily around fields and forest openings. Ideal habitat consists of a low canopy of weeds and grasses with sparse to moderate ground cover.

Quail are gallinaceous birds, that is they dwell on the ground, scratch for their food and have crops and gizzards. Weed seeds, waste grain and insects constitute the backbone of their intake. Quail are gleaners and seed scavengers, never disturbing grain or fruits until they have fallen to the ground.

Food habits vary considerably according to season and type of land use they inhabit. Those living in heavily cultivated areas consume more waste grain, while those around woodland fringes take more seeds falling from vines, trees and shrubs. Quail lean heavily on corn, sassafras seeds, lespedeza, ragweed, wheat, foxtail, shattered acorns, insects, ash seeds and soybeans. A tough gizzard and grit are employed to grind the flinty coverings from rough fare. Bits of greenery provide vitamins, minerals and moisture.

The first ‘bobwhite’ whistle is usually heard in early to mid-April and is produced by the male to attract a mate, or to stake claim on a territory, or both. Once the male and female are paired, they usually remain together throughout the breeding season. The paired quail will build a nest on the ground that is typically surrounded by grass and other cover vegetation. When the nest is complete, the hen will lay 12-18 eggs, usually at the rate of one a day. Incubation takes about 23 days. Although nesting usually begins in May, hens will renest if the first attempt fails or until the breeding season ends. It is not a rarity for one hen to successfully produce two broods of young during one summer. Newly hatched chicks leave the nest immediately to begin feeding on their own.

From late summer through winter to breeding season, quail are found in groups of 10-20 birds called coveys. Quail are gregarious social birds, and coveys are formed for protection and warmth. Quail in a covey roost with their tails together and their heads facing out.

Bobwhite quail range includes Wyoming, Minnesota, Ontario, Massachusetts, south to Florida and Mexico. The birds are most abundant in the Southeast and lower Midwest. Today, bobwhite quail are found throughout North Carolina, though they are uncommon in high elevations of the mountains.

Predators and adverse weather are easily observed factors affecting quail. Less obvious, but more critical, are the effects of competition for living space presented by creeping concrete, housing developments and intensive agriculture. Roaming dogs of every breed destroy nests, as do raccoons, skunks and snakes. Predators and assorted problems do not normally affect quail abundance if their living conditions are adequate, but these losses may assume greater importance if the balance of food and cover is below that required for production and survival.

Bobwhite quail populations thrive best in areas in which plant communities are frequently disturbed. Bobwhite populations can be increased through habitat improvement. This can be achieved by disking strips in the idle fields during late winter, planting food plots, thinning forested land, and prescribed burning. Thinning woodlands along with prescribed burning stimulates food-producing plants and maintains an open timber stand. Thinning and prescribed burning should always be done under the guidance of a trained professional.

Quail hunting is a revered tradition in the South. With good habitat, properly regulated hunting does not hurt quail populations because about 80 percent of all quail die within one year or less. Regulated hunting simply takes those birds that would die from other causes through the year. Through private hunter/conservation groups like Quail Unlimited, many hunters are attempting to improve quail habitat to increase populations of the is popular gamebird. The habitat work they perform also helps other wildlife species like rabbits and songbirds.
Field Trips

Saturday, November 16th – Latta Plantation Prairie
1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Judy Walker (birdwalker@me.com)

We’ll see what wintering sparrows have moved into the area and maybe take a peek at the lake as well for any early waterfowl. Meet at the Nature Center at 8:30 AM.

Tuesday, November 19th – McMullen Creek Greenway.
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Dave Lovett (birds-lot@webtv.net)

Dave will lead this flat walk through woods, fields and wetlands. We’ll meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot on Highway 51.

Saturday, November 23rd – Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge.
Full Day • Moderate • Contact: Ron Clark (waxwing@bellsouth.net)

We’ll cover different sections of the refuge, with fields, ponds, coniferous and deciduous woods, and wetlands. Low Grounds will still be open so we should see a few ducks. In the afternoon, we’ll go to Lake Tillery and see what waterfowl ma have shown up. This is an all-day trip, so bring lunch and water. We’ll meet at the McDonald’s in Windsor Square Shopping Center out Independence Blvd. at 6:30 AM.

Tuesday, November 26th – Four-Mile Creek Greenway.
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Tom Ledford (tledford1207@gmail.com)

This two-mile stretch covers woods, wetlands, brush and open habitat. We’ll meet at 8:30 in the parking lot on Johnston Rd. Tom Ledford tledford1207@gmail.com

Saturday, November 30th – Fort Fisher, NC
Full Day • Moderate • Contact: Taylor Piephoff (piephofft@aol.com)

Taylor will lead his annual coastal trip to Fort Fisher, south of Carolina Beach, and other spots. More details in the next issue.

Ten Commandments of Birding

1. Thou shall have no other interest before birding. If thou does, thou shall not discuss it with other birders.

2. Thou shall not take unto thee any graven image of the birds that are in heaven above without giving photo credit to the photographer. Thou shall not capture and cage the wild birds, nor shall thou visit birds in zoos (unless the birds are endangered and part of a breeding release program), nor shall thou respect and cherish any introduced species.

3. Thou shall not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: not when thou just missed seeing that rare bird, nor when the potential life bird doth not sit still for an identification, nor when thou droppeth thy binoculars in the middle of the lake.

4. Remember all thy birding days, and keep them special. Six days shall thou labor and do all thy work: but the seventh day is to renew thy spirit with the avian flock. Work is the curse of the birding classes.

5. Honor those who introduced thee to birding and taught thee about birds that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. If thou should dishonor those experts, thy days may be short. Honor those who own the private property where birds congregate that they may allow thee to come back the next time.

6. Thou shall not kill any bird (nor any bird hunters - no matter how strong the provocation). Thou shall labor to protect and keep them for all the days of thy life (well, maybe not the hunters...).

7. Thou shall not take any thing that belongs to another birder without asking: not his place in the hide, nor his field guide, nor his birding partner, nor his lunch.

8. Thou shall not steal a bird’s eggs or, more importantly, a bird’s habitat if thou wish to see the bird long on this earth.

9. Thou shall not bear false witness about birds thou hast identified or heard, nor shall thou exaggerate or brag about birds thou hast seen. Thy word is thy bond, especially on Birding Big Days.

10. Thou shall not covet thy neighbor’s life list, but must create thine own. Thou shall not covet thy neighbor’s birding scope, nor his identification skills, nor his bird photography ability, nor his ability to travel to see more birds than thou, nor any other thing that is thy birder neighbor’s.

Remember these commandments, and keep them holy, in the name of the father (John James Audubon), and the son (Roger Tory Peterson) and the holy ghost (Charles Sibley).

(Adapted from Tina’s Ten Commandments of Birding at http://www.camacdonald.com/birding/ 10commandments.htm)
**Don’t Forget the Coffee!**

Order your coffee by the 15th of the month so you pick it up at the next meeting! Send orders to Bill Duston [bduston@carolina.rr.com] and include the type of roast, bag size, and type of grind. For more information about the coffee visit www.birdsandbeans.com.

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Choice of:
- Whole beans or coarse, extra fine, fine, medium grind
  - [Coarse = French Press; Medium = Drip; Extra Fine & Fine = Espresso]