Monthly Meeting: Thursday, September 5, 2013

Travelogue to far, far and away!

Welcome back to birding with a new season of programs with MAS! Travel with us through pictures from Iceland to Alaska and tropical Honduras as several members of MAS share their recent birding and wildlife adventures. Ron and Anne Clark will be sharing their trip to Iceland. They spent 10 days in May and June circling the island filled with glaciers, waterfalls, geysers, geothermal areas, lava fields from its many volcanoes and lots of good birds. Then Jim Guyton will share his trip to Alaska from June and July where he visited Nome, Denali National Park, the Kenai Peninsula and many central state areas with more good birds and a moose or two. Finally we’ll warm up with John and Chris Hanna’s photos from tropical Honduras, including Pico Bonito Lodge and surrounding parks.

So join us Thursday September 5th at 7:30pm at the Tyvola Road Senior Center (2225 Tyvola Road, Charlotte, NC 28210). Parkas and bug repellent won’t be necessary!

Volunteers NEEDED!!

Mecklenburg County Audubon is seeking volunteers for Lights Out Charlotte. Volunteers are needed to survey a designated route in Uptown Charlotte for dead and injured birds that have seen their fate by striking lighted buildings the prior night. Surveying will need to be just at pre-dawn or as soon after dawn as possible to prevent the birds from being swept up by janitorial staff. All collected specimens will be sent to the Raleigh Science Museum. Data will be collected locally and sent on to a national data base on bird collisions. Surveying will be done daily from August 24 through October 31. If it is determined migration activity is still high we may extend to November 15. A designated route to follow has been established. You will be instructed on how to find birds around the fronts and sides of buildings in Uptown. The distance of the route is 1.3 miles for one side of the street, 2.6 miles for both sides. If you walk with a buddy you can split up and cover both sides in about an hour.

We would like to have 20-25 volunteers so the burden does not fall on a small number of volunteers. You can volunteer as many days as you’d like and set your schedule. If you work Uptown you may want to survey prior to starting your workday. It’s a great opportunity to get some exercise, make some new friends and most importantly see how lighting affects migrating birds.

Continued on page 8
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!!

Saturday, September 7th: Latta Plantation Prairie & NP
1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Judy Walker (birdwalker@me.com)
We take some time to see what is still hanging around the prairie and also look for migrants along the lake shore. Meet at the Nature Center just inside the at 8:00 AM.

Saturday, September 14th: Fall Warbler Workshop
[See separate write-up.]

Sunday, September 15th: Beginner Bird Walk.
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Bill Rowse (birderpa@att.net)
Bill Rowse will lead this walk geared toward new birders, although all are welcome. Birding techniques, use of binoculars and ID tips will be covered. Meet at 8:30 at the Visitor Center in Latta Plantation Nature Preserve. Binoculars will be provided, if needed.

Tuesday, September 17th: Lansford Canal State Park
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Tom Ledford (tledford1207@gmail.com)
Tom Ledford will take us to this park located below Rock Hill. It is mostly wooded, with a creek, and abuts the Catawba River. Migrant should be moving through so be prepared for those confusing fall warblers! We’ll meet at 8:30 AM in the Food Lion parking lot on Hwy. 21 just south of Carowinds.

Saturday, September 21st: Jackson Park
Full Day • Moderate • Contact: Judy Walker (birdwalker@me.com)
This Hendersonville city park is the fall equivalent of Latta Park in the spring, with a 20-warbler day possible. This is an all-day trip, so bring a lunch. We’ll meet at 7:30 AM at the McDonald’s on Hwy 64 ( Exit 49 on Interstate 26 ) in Hendersonville. It’s about two blocks from the interstate on the right.

Tuesday, September 24th: Boyce Park.
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Dave Lovett (birdsalot@gmail.com)
Located off Sardis Road, this wooded park is great for migrants, with large trees and creeks. Join Dave Lovett at 8:30 AM in the parking lot on Boyce Road.

Saturday, September 28th: Hinson Lake
Full Day • Moderate • Contact: Tom Ledford (tledford1207@gmail.com)
Located near Rockingham, this beautiful lake looks more like a beaver pond, full of marsh growth and dead trees. A trail encircles it for two miles. Habitat also includes woods and field. Meet at 7:00 AM in the Walmart parking lot in Indian Trail. Park out near the highway. This is about 3 miles past I-485 on Independence Blvd.

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)
McApline 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.

Sunday, October 13th: Big Sit
(Save the date. More info to come)

Tuesday, October 15th: Six-Mile Creek Greenway.
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Dave Lovett (birdsalot@gmail.com)
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 Sat-
ursday night. At dinner we will plan where we will go on Sunday.

Tuesday, October 22nd: Anne Springs Greenway.
1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Dave Lovett (birdsalot@gmail.com)
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.

Saturday, October 26th: Mallard Creek Greenway
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.
Why Should You Drink Bird-Friendly Coffee?

By Phil & Jan Fowler

If you drink coffee and care about the welfare of songbirds, you should be drinking Bird-Friendly coffee. In her excellent article in the February 2013 issue of Bird Watching magazine, “The True Cost of Coffee”, Supervisor of Avian Research at the Rouge River Bird Observatory of the University of Michigan, Julie Craves writes: “I cannot state it any plainer than this: If you are buying inexpensive grocery store or fast-food coffee, you are contributing to the destruction of bird habitat and the decline of migratory songbirds. It is one of the worst things you can do for the environment on a daily basis – and one of the easiest things for you to change.” So, if this description fits you, please read more.

Most commercial coffees available today are known as “sun coffees”. These coffees were developed for high yields and low production costs with no consideration of ecological impact. They are grown on large farms in full sun on land that has been cleared of native vegetation, is heavily fertilized, and is subjected to pesticides and herbicides. This is most likely what you are drinking every day as your morning pick-me-up. If you think buying a name brand coffee is safe, here are some of the most popular brands which are “sun coffees”: Nescafe, Taster’s Choice, Folgers, Millstone, Dunkin’ Donuts, Maxwell House, Sanka, Chock full o’Nuts, and Chase & Sanborn. This list is not comprehensive, so do not think that if your favorite brand is not listed that you are in the clear.

Nearly all of our migrating song birds are negatively affected by “sun coffee” production. All such farms are nearly devoid of animal life, especially birds. By contrast, as Julie Craves found in her bird banding projects in Central and South America, and noted author Scott Weidensaul, found in his surveys, Bird-Friendly coffee farms (shade grown using organic practices) are biologically diverse and “dripping” with song birds. Please see Scott’s remarks at: http://birdsandbeans.com/weidensaul.html

By now you want to be part of the solution, not the problem, but how do you know the difference? Many coffees will be labeled shade grown, which sounds good, but there is no agreed-upon or legal definition of shade grown. Shade grown can mean anything from the rustic method of planting coffee in existing forests of native trees to growing coffee in a large cleared field “shaded” by a few non-native eucalyptus trees. The most reliable way to know is to look for certification and these are the most common:

Bird-Friendly
This is the only true “shade grown” certification. This certification was developed by ecologists at the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center and has the strictest habitat requirements of any coffee certification. Bird-Friendly coffee not only has to be shade grown, using rustic practices, it also has to be organic. Only coffee certified by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center can be called Bird-Friendly. Dozens of migratory songbirds take refuge in heavily shaded coffee farms, including species that have declined steeply over the past decades such as Baltimore Oriole, Canada Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Wood Thrush, and Olive-sided Flycatcher.

Organic
To be certified organic in the United States, coffee must be produced under standards established by the Department of Agriculture, even if it is grown in another country.

Rainforest Alliance
The Rainforest Alliance is a non-profit organization that promotes sustainable agriculture and its certification program covers many crops, including coffee. Neither shade management nor organic farming is required. It is not as strict as Bird-Friendly, but helpful in areas where lots of shade is not possible and for those farms which cannot meet all organic requirements. I know that Caribou Coffee uses Rainforest Alliance certified coffee.

Fair Trade
This certification is primarily concerned with lessening poverty among coffee farmers and improving their overall standard of living. While this is certainly a worthwhile cause, it also does not address how the coffee is grown and does not help the birds.

If you are buying inexpensive grocery store or fast-food coffee, you are contributing to the destruction of bird habitat and the decline of migratory songbirds. - Julie Craves
Mecklenburg Audubon Society believes in the conservation of the wintering grounds of our songbirds and offers Bird-Friendly Birds & Beans coffee for sale. Birds & Beans is the only company that sells exclusively Bird Friendly coffee. Other companies sell “sun coffee” and one or two Bird-Friendly coffees. Also, 20% of Birds & Beans profits go to their conservation partners (including The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, sanctuaries, and preserves).

You may purchase your coffee from us by pre-ordering and picking it up at a monthly meeting (saving you shipping) or you can purchase Birds & Beans via the internet at: www.birdsandbeans.com. We just hope you will help the birds by giving it try and see how tasty and easy conservation-minded coffee can be. The prices and coffee available from Mecklenburg Audubon Society for Birds & Beans coffee are -

**Regular:** 12 oz. bag - $11.70 / 32 oz. bag - $20.85
- Breakfast Roast • Wood Thrush • Scarlet Tanager
- Medium Roast • Chestnut-sided Warbler • Dark Roast

**Decaf:** 12 oz. bag - $12.65 / 32 oz. bag - $22.85
- French Roast • Baltimore Oriole

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

To order coffee for pick up at the September 5th chapter meeting, please email your request to Bill Duston by August 26th.

Please contact Jan Fowler [janmfowler@gmail.com] or Bill Duston [bduston@carolina.rr.com] for more information about obtaining Bird-Friendly coffee.

Obviously, finding any of these certifications on coffee makes it a better choice than mass-produced “sun coffee”. However, the Smithsonian Bird-Friendly certification is the only one which guarantees sustainably grown coffee and improved bird habitat.

Bird-Friendly coffee is a “specialty coffee” and when you find it, it will cost more than “standard” name brand coffee. Bird-Friendly coffee farming practices necessarily have lower yields because other plants, which are providing the shade for the coffee and habitat for song birds, take up space. Organic farming practices require more labor to keep down weeds and pests than simply spraying with herbicides and pesticides. Bird-Friendly coffee needs to cost more not only to cover the inherently higher expense of growing the coffee, but to encourage more farmers to adopt sustainable practices and allow those farmers already using sustainable practices to stay in business. On the positive side, economics shows that increased demand in a market where consumers are willing to pay more will inevitably lead to more supply and possibly lower prices.

The bottom line on Bird-Friendly coffee is that it costs more, tastes better, is better for you and the environment, and should be the only choice for coffee drinkers who are also serious about conservation and increasing migratory bird populations.

Thanks for taking time to read and consider your impact on the welfare of migrating birds.

[NOTE: This article owes a great debt to Julie Craves and Scott Weidensaul for information and inspiration.]
Bird Words

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 to 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, such as the Canada Goose, that primarily eat plants.

**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.

**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.

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.
Birds, being creatures of the air, have long been considered omens of the weather— and often with good reason, because meteorological changes obviously have the greatest impact on flying animals. The old saying that low-flying geese mean rain is firmly founded in the principle of barometric pressure.

In the days when every farm had a flock of geese, fall was the traditional butchering season, since the fowl would be a burden to feed over the winter. The color of the breastbone was said to forecast the coming winter—cold if the bone is cloudy, mild if it is pale, but bitter and snowy if it is red. In ancient Rome, a thick wing bone meant a hard winter, a thin one, mild.

The autumn migration was watched with interest, since an early flight of geese meant a hard winter, but flocks going north might mean a mild, open season ahead. In the shorter term, songbirds feeding close to the house, or feeding with unusual intensity, were taken as a sign of an approaching snowstorm—a good guess because the lowering air pressure ahead of a front usually triggers a feeding frenzy among many kinds of wild animals.

Bird sounds have always been taken as clues to weather. Geese honk before storms, bobwhite quail were said to call to the approaching rain, and the yellow-billed cuckoo was long known as the “storm crow” because it often calls monotonously before a rain.

Maine lobstermen, in the days before radar-assisted forecasting, relied on the flight of gulls. If the gulls headed out to sea at daybreak, then it was considered safe for men to do so, but if they gulls stayed close to shore, bad weather was coming.

Bird-related
Weather Folklore

- If chickens run for shelter when it rains, the shower will be brief. If they stay outside, it will last a long time.
- Low-flying swallows mean rain, high-flying ones mean fair weather.
- A rooster crowing at dusk foretells rain.
- A large flock of crows is a sign of impending rain.
- If a European skylark flies high & sings loudly, fair weather is at hand.
- Ruffled feathers on a turkey, pigeons staying in the roost, and screaming guinea fowl mean rain.
- Heavy toe fringes on ruffed grouse mean a bad winter (grouse grow such fringes each winter to keep from sinking in the snow).
- Swallows nesting in a barn protects it from lightning.

We are all familiar with phrases like a kettle of hawks and a covey of quail to describe a group of birds. Well the readers of Wild Bird News a while back added a few more to the list.

...a ladle of dippers
...a dash of bitterns
...a gallon of petrels
...a Rockefeller of oystercatchers
...a pack of Larks
...a U of terns
...a marathon of roadrunners
...a family of partridge
...a spread of eagles
...a civilization of Inca Doves
...an inferno of Lucifer Hummingbirds
...a liturgy of Vesper Sparrows
...a depression of Blue Grouse
...a revenge of Montezuma Quail
...a hogey of Sandwich Terns
...a grumbling of grouse
...a scaffold of Ladder-backed Woodpeckers
...a reel of Virginia Rails
...a cushion of Pintails
...a hobbling of Limpkin
...a trap of boobys
...a ballet of nutcrackers
...an illusion of Merlin
...a statutory of mynas
...a bushel of Acorn Woodpeckers
...a gulp of swallows
...a construction of cranes
...a bunch of Olive Sparrows
...a tintintabulation of Bell’s Vireos
**Flock to the Rock**

**September 21-22**

Chimney Rock State Park is hosting its 5th Annual Flock to the Rock at 9am-2pm on Saturday and Sunday, September 21-22. The Park is an official site on the NC Birding Trail and a spectacular, scenic destination for birding in WNC. Chimney Rock is home to more than 130 species of birds throughout the year, including over 25 warblers, vireos, tanagers, woodpeckers, thrushes, owls and a wide selection of birds of prey, including the Peregrine Falcon.

As the region’s premier fall migration birding event, Flock to the Rock will offer guided birding walks and specialty workshops ranging from bird photography to hummingbirds – lead by experts like you. Attendees can view and learn about rehabilitating non-releasable Birds of Prey with programs including a Red-tailed Hawk and Great Horned Owl. Kids and families can get in on the fun too, with activities like family nature walks and owl pellet dissections. This prime birding weekend coincides with the annual hawk migration when dozens, sometimes hundreds, of hawks can be seen flying over the Park on their way to southern wintering grounds. There is no additional charge with paid park admission for these activities. However, for optimal bird watching birders can join us Sunday for a 7:30 AM “Early Bird” Migration Watch on a 2+ hour walk for extra--only $20 for Adults (includes Park admission); call (800) 277-9611 to register. More event information at: http://goo.gl/UUauqo.

**Confused by Binoculars?**

Over the past year, the pages of Bird Watcher’s Digest have included several in-depth, useful articles about birding optics. Now the folks at Bird Watcher’s Digest have compiled them all in one place: The Optics Annual. This digital book includes information on selecting and buying optics, tips on traveling with optics, and the results of their field test of the best 8x42 binoculars on the market today. This is very valuable content and it’s your FREE. Go to http://goo.gl/gIk5td

**Confused by Warblers?**

Warblers are among the most challenging birds to identify. They exhibit an array of seasonal plumages and have distinctive yet oft-confused calls and songs. The Warbler Guide enables you to quickly identify any of the 56 species of warblers in the United States and Canada. This groundbreaking guide features more than 1,000 stunning color photos, extensive species accounts with multiple viewing angles, and an entirely new system of vocalization analysis that helps you effectively learn songs and calls.

The Warbler Guide revolutionizes birdwatching, making warbler identification easier than ever before. For more information, please see the author videos on the Princeton University Press website - http://www.thewarblerguide.com

---

At this time I do not plan to hold a volunteer training but will train new recruits on their first day of monitoring or have an on-site training on select weekend days. Supplies will be distributed on your first day of training. You will also be given the protocol sheet and I am always a phone call or email away.

Surveying is quicker and more fun with teams of two. You can cover both sides of the street quicker and have someone to talk with while you survey.

For more information on Lights Out Charlotte please check the website – www.meckbirds.org. If you have specific questions please email me at - jpalmer53@earthlink.net.

---

**Mecklenburg Audubon Executive Board**

**President:**
Jill Palmer [jpalmer53@earthlink.net]

**Vice President:**
Ken Kneidel [kenkneidel@gmail.com]

**Secretary:**
Christy Hill [chill2k5@hotmail.com]

**Treasurer:**
Bob Haussler [bob_haussler@sil.org]

**Field Trips:**
Ron Clark [waxwing@bellsouth.net]

**Conservation:**
Bill Duston [bduston@carolina.rr.com]

**Membership:**
Jan Fowler [janmfowler@gmail.com]

**Publicity:**
Christy Hill [chill2k5@hotmail.com]

**Education:**
Lauren Schexnider [lauren.schexnider@gmail.com]

**Hospitality:**
Chris Hanna [chrittisanna@aol.com]

**Members at Large:**
Jim Guyton [guytonj@att.net]
Jim Pugh [jepugh@pol.net]
Bill Rowe [birderpa@att.net]

**Newsletter:**
Judy Walker [birdwalker@me.com]

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.