Monthly Meeting: Thursday, April 3, 2014

Birds are capable of amazing feats of navigation in their annual migratory flights, as well as cunning exploitation of a wide range of habitats. Some have complex social activities, cooperating in location of food sources, in hunting, and even in communal raising of their young. How do they accomplish all of this with such tiny brains? Dr. Jim Pugh, a Charlotte neurologist and Mecklenburg Audubon member, taught neuroanatomy at the University of Michigan prior to moving to North Carolina in the 1980’s. In the last thirty years, the new technologies used to improve our understanding of human brain anatomy and function have been exploited by bird scientists as well. The result has been a completely new picture of the circuitry of the avian brain and a new appreciation for avian intelligence. Jim will explain absolute and relative brain sizes versus intelligence, the basic design of the human brain, the basic design of the avian brain, the relative intelligence of different bird groups, and the evolutionary forces that shape large brains. There will even be a few brains to pass around, along with some comic relief from an intelligent feathered friend! Come join us for Human Brains and Bird Brains, Thursday, April 3rd at 7:30 PM in the Tyvola Senior Center (2225 Tyvola Road.).

Visit our merchandise table for a nice selection of T-shirts. Brown-headed Nut-hatch boxes will still be available at the meeting for $15 each. Be sure to sample some Bird Friendly Birds & Beans coffee during the meeting then purchase a bag to take home or share at the office. Pre-orders will also be placed for pick-up at next month’s meeting. Help the birds by drinking great tasting Bird Friendly coffee!

As sure as the birds will migrate back to Charlotte, so too is our annual nomination and election process. The MAS Board has put together a list of nominees to fill spots on the Board. If you would like to add your name or the name of some one close to you (make sure they agree!), please let any member of the current board know.

What’s Inside

- Human/Bird Brains 1
- MAS Elections 1
- Field Trips 2-3
- Bird Friendly Plants 4
- Native Wildflower Meadow 5
- Feather Forecasting 6
- Birduko 7

Up Coming Events

03/29 Six-mile Creek Grnwy.
04/03 Monthly Meeting
04/05 Francis Beatty Park
04/08 McDowell NP
04/12 Congaree Swamp NP
04/13 Beginner Bird Walk
04/19 Hinson Lake
04/26 Spring Count
04/27 Latta Park
04/29 Ribbonwalk NP
05/01 Ann Springs Grnwy.
05/03 Beginner Bird Walk
05/04 Latta Park
05/06 Lower McAlpine
05/08 Latta Park
05/08 Monthly Mtg.
06/10 Latta Park
05/13 Landsford Canal
05/17-18 Blue Ridge Parkway
05/20 Ann Spring Grnwy
06/04 Annual Picnic

Who’s New?

- Bao Do
- Ray Owens
- Michael Trescott
- Lanny Waterson
- Evan Wunder

Q: What kind of dove is likely to be found in a southern garden?

A: The Eurasian Collard dove.
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, March 29th: Six-Mile Creek Greenway.
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Ron Clark [waxwing@bellsouth.net]
This 1 1/4-mile greenway is good for early spring migrants, such as Louisiana Waterthrush, Northern Parula and Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher. We’ll start at 8:30 AM in the parking lot on Marvin Road.

Saturday, April 5th: Francis Beatty Park.
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Tom Ledford [tledford1207@gmail.com]
Tom Ledford will lead, in this park near Matthews. It has woods, open areas and a large lake. Meet at 8:30 AM at the ball fields at the end of the main park road.

Tuesday, April 8th: McDowell Nature Preserve
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Dave Lovett [birdsalot1@gmail.com]
This wooded preserve is located on Lake Wylie and is mostly deciduous woods with creeks, and power line right-of-way. Dave Lovett will lead. Meet at 9:00 AM at the Nature Center in the preserve.

Saturday, April 12th: Congaree National Park.
Full Day • Moderate • Ron Clark [waxwing@bellsouth.net]
We’ll head south to meet the migrants in this park near Columbia, SC. We’ll be on a boardwalk for about 1 1/2 miles. Bring lunch. After we eat, we’ll check the wetlands near the interstate. We’ll meet at 6:30 AM in the Food Lion parking lot on U.S. 21. Take a left at the Carowinds exit on I-77 south. Go one mile and the Food Lion will be on your left. We should be back in Charlotte by 5:00 PM.

Sunday, April 13th: Beginner’s Bird Walk.
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Bill & Laura Blakesley [lclemons@mindspring.com]
This month’s walk for beginners, and more experienced folks will be at Six-Mile Creek Greenway, starting at 8:30 AM. Birding techniques and other aspects of our pastime will be demonstrated by Bill and Laura Blakesley. Binoculars will be provided, if needed.

Saturday, April 19th: Hinson Lake.
2/3 Day • Easy • Contact: Tom Ledford [tledford1207@gmail.com]
This is a half-day trip to this 300-acre wildlife conservation area near Rockingham, NC. There are 2 1/2 miles of trails through mixed woods, marsh, open pond, meadow and beaver pond. Meet at 7:30 AM at the Bojangles in Marshville, at the intersection of Hwy. 74 and Hwy. 205.

Sunday, April 27th: Latta Park.
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Ron Clark [waxwing@bellsouth.net]
This small park in Dilworth is one of the best migrant traps around. It’s an easy walk along a creek. We’ll start at 8:30 AM in the gazebo on East Park Avenue.

Tuesday, April 29th: Ribbonwalk Nature Preserve.
1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Ron Clark [waxwing@bellsouth.net]
This area is mostly wooded, and includes 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.

Thursday, May 1st: Anne Springs Greenway.
1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Dave Lovett [birdsalot1@gmail.com]
This area, just into South Carolina, has woods, lake and fields for a good variety of birds. Join Dave Lovett at 8:30 as we look for migrants. There is a $3 fee. Meet at 8:30 AM in the Food Lion parking lot on Hwy. 21. Take a left at the Carowinds exit from I-77. The Food Lion will be on your left in one mile.

Spring Count
Saturday, April 27th
Contact: Jeff Lemons (birdsalot@gmail.com)

It’s time to count again. Join a team for the day or just a couple of hours to help conduct the annual spring census of birds in Charlotte. We will cover the same areas that we do during the Christmas Count but the weather should be substantially better. If you are interested in participating contact Jeff and he will assign you to a team.

Summer Tanager
©Will Stuart
Field Trips

Saturday, May 3rd: Beginners Bird Walk (Six-mile Creek).
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Bill & Laura Blakesley [lclemons@mindspring.com]
This month’s walk for beginners, and more experienced folks, will be at Six-Mile Creek Greenway, starting at 8:30 AM. Birding techniques and other aspects of our pastime will be demonstrated by Bill and Laura Blakesley. Binoculars will be provided, if needed.

Sunday, May 4th: Latta Park (Dilworth).
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Judy Walker [birdwalker@me.com]
This small park in Dilworth is one of the best migrant traps around. It’s an easy walk along a creek. We’ll start at 8:30 AM in the gazebo on East Park Avenue.

Tuesday, May 6th: Lower McAlpine Greenway
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Dave Lovett [birdsalot1@gmail.com]
Dave Lovett will lead this walk through a varied habitat of woods, wetlands and brush. Terrain is flat, on a paved greenway. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot on Johnston Road.

Thursday, May 8th: Latta Park (Dilworth).
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Ron Clark [waxwing@bellsouth.net]
This small park in Dilworth is one of the best migrant traps around. It’s an easy walk along a creek. We’ll start at 8:30 AM in the gazebo on East Park Avenue.

Saturday, May 10th: Latta Park (Dilworth).
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Matt Janson [m.janson.geolover@gmail.com]
Matt Janson will lead this walk through one of the best migrant areas we have. Tall trees and creek-side brush make for excellent habitat. We’ll meet at 8:30 AM at the gazebo on East Park Avenue.

Tuesday, May 13th: Lansford Canal State Park
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Tom Ledford [tledford1207@gmail.com]
Tom Ledford will lead us to this park, located just south of Rock Hill. Abutting the Catawba River, it is wooded, with a creek, and is very good for Prothonotary Warbler and Acadian Flycatcher. It usually has an active Bald Eagle nest. $2 entry fee. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot of Food Lion on Hwy. 21. Take a left at the Carowinds exit from I-77 south and go one mile. Store is on your left.

Saturday, May 17th: Blue Ridge Parkway (Blowing Rock Area)
Full Day • Moderate • Contact: Judy Walker [birdwalker@me.com]
We will explore a variety of habitats along the BRP as well as take a stroll around the Vallecruces municipal park. We will be looking for nesting warblers, a variety of flycatchers and other birds unique to this environment. Further details will be in the May newsletter.

Tuesday, May 20th: Anne Springs Greenway
1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Dave Lovett [birdsalot1@gmail.com]
We’ll bird a different area of the greenway on this walk. This has two ponds, fields and woods, with a stop for Meadowlarks on the way. There is a $3 fee. Meet at 8:30 AM in the Food Lion parking lot on Hwy. 21. Take a left at the Carowinds exit from I-77. The Food Lion will be on your left in one mile.

On March 9th a group of folks braving the elements in a boat managed to uncover an Iceland Gull from among thousands of gulls in the roost on Lake Norman. This was the first record of this bird on the lake.
“It’s simple: By gardening with native plants, no matter where you live or how small or large your space is, you can help sustain wildlife.” - Doug Tallamy, Bringing Nature Home

Bird Friendly Communities: The Yard

Your yard (regardless of size) -- and the kinds of plants in it -- matters more than you may know. Native plants play a very important role in providing the food birds need to survive and thrive in a way that non-native plants cannot do.

Going Native
Native plants are those that occur naturally in an area. North Carolina, with its diverse geography, is home to thousands of native plant species! Our natural wildlife - including birds - have adapted to the resources provided by North Carolina’s native plant population. These plants and trees are, in a real sense, home for our birds.

The current population of native plants is becoming displaced by non-native, exotic and often vigorously growing species. These invasive exotic plants encroach on natural habitats and do not provide the nutrients many birds need to survive.

Why are native plants important?
In a word: insects... Almost all land birds require insects to feed their young. Even seed-eating birds often must feed their babies insects to ensure their survival. Insects cannot adapt to eating non-native plants. Less native plants means less insects, which in turn means fewer bird babies growing to adulthood.

Are nonnative plants bad for birds?
Though often pretty, nonnatives ultimately do not provide enough resources, particularly insects, to feed baby birds and sustain healthy bird populations.

“But birds love my Privet hedge!”
Adult birds are adaptable and will readily eat the fruits of nonnative plants. Most insects, however, are not as flexible and do not feed on nonnative plants. With fewer insects, baby birds starve – and bird populations plummet.

What are invasive plants?
Invasive plants, like kudzu and Chinese privet, are nonnative species that have escaped cultivation and now overrun native vegetation. This has dire consequences for birds: less food (especially for nestlings), fewer nesting sites, and increased predation.

Online resources for native plants
• NC Native Plant Society – www.ncwildflower.org
• NC Botanical Garden – www.ncbg.unc.edu/plants-and-gardening/
• Audubon North Carolina – www.ncaudubon.org

Additional resources regarding invasive plants are available at www.ncwildflower.org/invasives/invasives.htm

Invasive plants – avoid these!
Some of the most common – or, in a few cases, “up-and-coming” – invasive species in the Piedmont of North Carolina are listed below.

English ivy (Hedera helix)
Privets (Ligustrum spp.)
Autumn olive, thorny olive (Elaeagnus umbellata, pungens)
Exotic Wisterias (Wisteria sinensis, W. floribunda)
Japanese honeysuckle (Lonicera japonica)
Mimosa, silktree (Albizia julibrissin)
Periwinkle, Vinca (Vinca spp.)
Japanese Spiraea (Spiraea japonica)
Leatherleaf Mahonia (Mahonia bealei)
Bradford pear (Pyrus calleryana)
Pampas grass (Cortaderia selloana)
Chinese silvergrass (Miscanthus sinensis)
Japanese stiltgrass (Microstegium vimineum)
Sacred bamboo (Nandina domestica)
Tree-of-Heaven (Ailanthus altissima)
Multiflora rose (Rosa multiflora)
Sericea, bushclover (Lespedeza cuneata)
Berry-producing plants
Nature’s energy-packed treats:
Flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*)
Winterberry holly (*Ilex verticillata*)
American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*)
Black cherry (*Prunus serotina*)
Viburnums (*Viburnum nudum, V. dentatum, V. acerifolium*)
Red chokeberry (*Photinia (Aronia) pyrifolia*)
Black gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*)

Seed/nut-producing plants
Nutrient-rich and long-lasting:
Maples (*Acer rubrum, A. floridanum, A. leucoderme* (native))
Purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)
Swamp sunflower (*Helianthus angustifolius*)
Joe-Pye weed (*Eutrochium fistulosum*)
Bluestem (*Andropogon spp.*)
Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia spp.*)
Shortleaf pine (*Pinus echinata*)
Virginia pine (*Pinus virginiana*)

Nectar-producing plants
The sweetest things around:
Wild bergamot (*Monarda didyma*)
Bee balm (*Monarda fistulosa*)
Cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*)
Ironweed (*Vernonia noveboracensis*)
Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)
Sweet pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*)
Stokes aster (*Stokesia laevis*)
Red buckeye (*Aesculus pavia*)

Larval host plants
Plant these – and feed baby birds:
Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*)
Native plums (*Prunus americana, angustifolia*)
Oaks (*Quercus alba, Q. phellos, Q. shumardii*)
Wild indigos (*Baptisia spp., Thermopsis villosa*)
Native blueberries (*Vaccinium arboreum, V. stamineum*)
Pawpaw, dwarfpawpaw (*Asiminatriloba, A.parviflora*)
River oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*)

How to Create A Native Wildflower Meadow
Taking on the task of creating a native wildflower meadow is a fun, simple, and sustainable way to not only enjoy the aesthetics that wildflowers offer, but also allows for one to enjoy the abundant wildlife species that are often drawn to these sort of habitats for things such as food and shelter. Hummingbirds and butterflies are known frequenters of these spaces, and can benefit substantially from the inclusion of such a habitat in one’s backyard.

Here are some simple instructions on how to create a basic wildflower garden “meadow” in your very own garden.

**Choose a plot in your garden, yard or property—any size will do!**

Be thoughtful when deciding on an area of land/ground to transform into your wildflower meadow. It’s important to choose a space that is most suitable to sustain wildlife growth and development! For instance, wildflower meadows actually do quite well in nutrient poor soil, so consider taking this into account when selecting an area in which to begin your project.

**Clear the area of any debris lying around.**

Thoroughly rake the ground and make sure to disturb the soil. Sprinkle a generous amount of wildflower seeds on the ground.

It’s that easy!

**NOTE:** Take time to research what species of wildflowers you are planting to ensure that they are native to the region/area you live and won’t pose any ecosystem hazard once introduced to the space you have designated as your wildflower meadow.

From NWF Wildlife Promise Blog (http://blog.nwf.org/?p=90299)
Timing is everything, in birding as well as in life. Some characteristics of avian behavior lend themselves to getting the timing just right, such as the predictable patterns of migration and distribution.

Although it is critical to learn about the field identification of birds, it is also extremely important to learn as much as you can about bird distribution, seasonal status, and habitat requirements. Understanding what is expected in a given region and at a given time of year makes a birder more aware of what would be unusual. If you believe you have found a species that is well out of range or out of season, you can make extra efforts to study it thoroughly, noting as many field marks as possible and making sure to rule out similar species.

I have seen people misidentify birds not because they didn’t know the birds’ field marks but because of their unfamiliarity with status and distribution. A birder may know how a Swainson’s Thrush is supposed to differ from a Hermit Thrush, and both species may be regular breeders or migrants where he lives or is visiting. On the one hand, if this same person is unaware that Swainson’s Thrush is almost unknown in the United States and Canada after the first few days of November, he might be tempted to report one erroneously, for example, on a Christmas Bird Count. On the other hand, if he appreciates the nuances of avian status and distribution and truly believes he has found a Swainson’s in winter, then he will know at the time that the bird needs to be thoroughly documented and photographed if possible, and news of its presence quickly spread among the birding community so that others may corroborate the sighting. Yes, some birds do wander way out of their normal range and occur at unusual seasons – finding such birds is a major allure for many a birder. We need to be prepared, beforehand, for what would be unusual and treat these occurrences as such.

So how does one learn about avian status and distribution? Look at the range maps in your field guides. Buy books dealing with bird distribution: most states and provinces, and many smaller regions, have volumes dealing with just this topic. Also, read state or provincial magazines and journals that include seasonal summaries, perhaps subscribe to *North American Birds* magazine, and read as many of the regional seasonal reports as you can.

Last, travel! Go birding in many regions of North America and not only in those where you can find a number of life birds. Learn the field marks of species that are potential rarities in your home region by studying good numbers of that species where it is found more commonly. There really is no better way to gain an appreciation of the status, distribution, and habitat requirements of our continent’s birds.

There is a wild card, however, when it comes to birds: weather. Understanding and closely following the weather is a crucial component of successful birding. Heading out into the field without first checking the weather forecast one or two days ahead of time, particularly during the spring and fall migration seasons, may well hinder your success.

It is important to keep up-to-date on meteorological happenings for two reasons. First, there is the question of personal comfort and safety. For land birding, you probably will wish to avoid 50 mph winds; such conditions may be just the ticket, though, if you are seawatching or chasing down the remnants of a tropical storm or hurricane, hoping to find some storm-blown avian waifs. Second is the more germane issue of the profound effects of the weather on the normal movements of birds. A successful day in the field during migration will probably depend on when and where you decide to go birding and what types of birds you are looking for – of which are affected by the weather that day and the previous day.

It is important to remember that the weather usually does not ‘cause’ avian migration. Migration is caused by factors such as changes in day length and variation in food supply. However, weather does affect the short-term timing, direction, and magnitude of the movement of birds. The calendar might say that it is the peak of the hawk or warbler migration, but if the weather is not conducive to such movements, there won’t be very many birds to see.

**Tips for Novice Birders**

*Feather Forecasting: Learn about Distribution and Weather*

By Paul Lehman (Adapted from *Good Birder’s Don’t Wear White*, Houghton Mifflin, 2007.)
Mecklenburg Audubon Society Membership

Please Print Clearly!

Name: _____________________________________________ Phone: __________________________

Address: _____________________________________________________________________________

Email: _____________________________________________

- Individual Membership [$10]
- Family Membership [$15]

- Please, add me to Meckbirds, the local listserv about birds and the environment.
- [we] would be willing to lead a field trip.
- [we] would be interested in helping at events
- [we] would be interested in helping with education programs

Return to:
Treasurer, Mecklenburg Audubon Society,
P. O. Box 221093, Charlotte, NC 28222

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.

MAS Executive Board

President:
Jill Palmer [jpalmer53@earthlink.net]

Secretary:
Ken Kneidel [kenkneidel@gmail.com]

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

Conservation:
Bill Duston [bduston@carolina.rr.com]
Bob Haussler [bob_haussler@sil.org]

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

Hospitality:
Chris Hanna [chrltthanna@aol.com]

Publicity:
Christy Hill [chill2k5@hotmail.com]

Membership:
Jan Fowler [janmfowler@gmail.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]