When Snakes Invade

Thursday, November 5th • 7:15 PM

What is your comfort level around snakes? What about giant snakes weighing over two hundred pounds with lengths reaching over twenty feet? What if this species invaded your backyard, your living area, your habitat? This is the challenge for the natural habitat in southern Florida with a pit of Burmese pythons snaking about. Native wildlife such as wading birds, bobcats, white-tailed deer, and even alligators are falling prey to this voracious predator. Although native to Asia, pythons are now common in areas such as the Everglades since they have been introduced as escaped or presumably released pets. Dr. Mike Dorcas the Nancy and Erwin Maddrey Professor in the Department of Biology at Davidson College, Davidson, NC will talk more about his extensive research on what is happening to the ecosystem since this species has invaded our country. Be prepared! He will be bringing and we will be hosting an extra-large, extra special guest.

Come join us and experience something extra special, Thursday, November 5th in the Tyvola Senior Center (2225 Tyvola Road.) at 7:15 PM. Refreshments and fellowship from 6:45 PM. Our guest will have already eaten. Although we offer disposable cups, if you think of it beforehand, please consider bringing your own cup or mug to ease the burden on the environment. Ice will be provided. Birds and Beans Bird Friendly coffee will be available too!
All Mecklenburg Audubon Field Trips are free and open to the public. Directions can be found on the Mecklenburg Audubon website - meckbirds.org/trips/trips.html.

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!!

**KEY TO PHYSICAL DIFFICULTY**

**Easy** - Trails are level to slight grades usually paved - 0.5-3 miles of walking  
**Moderate** - Trails can be uneven with some hills. 2-4 miles of walking.  
**Strenuous** - Trails vary greatly. 4+ miles of walking.  
* - Trails are handicapped accessible.

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**Tue., Nov. 3rd • 8:30 AM • Latta Prairie Nature Preserve**  
1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Ron Clark [waxwing@bellsouth.net]

As the temperature cool off, winter migrants will begin arriving in the area. This preserve provides access to a wide variety of habitats but is especially good for birds that like grasslands and early succession areas. Meet in the parking lot next to the nature center just inside the main gate at 8:30 AM.

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**Thur., Nov. 5th • 8:30 AM • McAlpine Greenway Park [Monroe Rd.]**  
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Tom Ledford [tledford1207@gmail.com]

This park off Monroe Road has a variety of habitats; woods, lake, beaver pond, short grass and brush. This is about a 1 1/2 mile flat walk on gravel trails. Meet in the Monroe Rd. parking lot at 8:30 AM.

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**Sat. Nov. 7th • 8:30 AM • McDowell Prairie/Copperhead Is.**  
1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Ron Clark [waxwing@bellsouth.net]

Yet another prairie walk looking for early winter migrants include waterfowl at Copperhead Island. Brief directions: 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.

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**Sun., Nov. 8th • 8:00 AM • Freedom Park**  
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Matt Janson [m.janson.geolover@gmail.com]

This walk is a joint venture with the Charlotte Nature Museum. Investigate the nooks and crannies of the park which have revealed some interesting finds on past Christmas and spring counts. We will meet in the Nature Museum parking lot at 8:00 AM (note this is earlier than our usual start time).

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**Thur., Nov 12th • 8:30 AM • Lower McAlpine Greenway**  
1/2 Day • Easy* • Contact: Tom Ledford [tledford1207@gmail.com]

For something a bit different we will investigate the other greenway that can be accessed from the Johnston Rd. parking lot. Meet in the Johnston Rd. parking lot at 8:30 AM.

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**Sat., Nov. 14th • 8:30 AM • Beginner Bird Walk**  
1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Marcia Howden [howden32@aol.com]

This will be a two-mile walk on dirt and gravel roads. We’ll have power line right-of-way, woods and /field. Good spot for yellow-breasted chat, indigo bunting, blue grosbeak and prairie warbler. We’ll start at 8:30 AM in the parking lot to the right just inside the gate of Latta Nature Preserve.

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**Sat., Nov. 21st • 8:30 AM • West Branch Rocky River Grnwy/NP**  
1/2 day • Moderate • Contact: Judy Walker [birdwalker@me.com]

We’ll venture to the northern end of the county to see what’s hiding in the Davidson area. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot at the corner of Shearer Rd. & June Washam Rd.
Field Trips

Sun., Nov. 22nd • 8:30 AM • Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge
Full Day • Moderate • Contact: Tom Ledford [tledford1207@gmail.]

Wintering passerines will have settled in to the refuge and ducks should start arriving. This is always an interesting trip. We are never sure what we will find. Since folks come from all corners of the Charlotte area, we will meet at 8:30 AM at the bathrooms (main entrance off of Rt. 52) instead of trying to car pool. Bring a lunch as well.

Sat., Nov. 28th • 8:00 AM • Ocean Isle, NC Area
Full Day • Moderate • Contact: Taylor Piephoff [piephofft@aol.com]

Areas to cover will be east end of Ocean Isle Beach, mudflats of Ocean Isle Beach, Ocean Isle Wastewater Treatment Plant, Twin Lakes, and any rarities that might be staked out. This is an all day birding experience but we will never be far from food and facilities. Habitats covered will be salt marsh, ocean, salt ponds, fresh water ponds and lakes, inlets, and coastal scrub.

Meet at the east end of Ocean Isle at the public parking at Ferry Landing Park at 8:00 AM. If you are interested, please let Taylor know by Nov. 20.

Sat., Dec. 5th • 9:00 AM • Wintering Waterfowl
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Judy Walker [birdwalker@me.com]

By now 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.

Sun., Dec. 13th • 8:00 AM • Freedom Park
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Judy Walker [birdwalker@me.com]

This walk is a joint venture with the Charlotte Nature Museum. Investigate the nooks and crannies of the park which have revealed some interesting finds on past Christmas and spring counts. We will meet in the Nature Museum parking lot at 8:00 AM (note this is earlier than our usual start time).

Saturday, December 19th – Gaston Christmas Bird Count
Contact: Steve Tracy [stevepath1@aol.com]

For many animals the Catawba River can act as a barrier. Only the heartiest mammal will attempt to swim across the river. Birds, however, are not as easily intimidated. And birders shouldn’t be phased by the river either. That’s why we team 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 hot spots. If you are interested in join the counting flock contact Steve Tracy.

Sunday, December 20th – Lake Norman Christmas Bird Count
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 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 26th • Charlotte Christmas Bird Count
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 wholesale loss 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 [248 Ridgewood Ave.] at 5:30 PM. Just bring your appetites and good birding stories. Too assure even and complete coverage of the area those who wish to participate should contact Ken Kneidel.
NC Priority Bird
Wild Turkey

The Wild Turkey was domesticated in Mexico, where it still lives today. It’s currently much hotter and drier in much of the Mexican interior than it will likely be in the eastern US in 2080. In light of that, the model is probably wrong in projecting that most areas of the eastern states will have unsuitable winter climate in the future. The projected general stability of the species' breeding range may be a better indicator of what the future has in store for the Wild Turkey: a small shift in range and an overall increase in available habitat.

Species Range Changes

- 52% of summer 2000 range is stable
- 64% increase in summer 2080 from 2000 range
- 13% of winter 2000 range is stable
- 23% decrease in winter 2080 from 2000 range

What You Can Do

A turkey can gobble up more than 200 acorns in a single meal. Plant native oaks to help provide food for turkeys. Visit the Audubon website to find a retailer carrying native oaks near you.

Audubon News

Let’s Talk Turkey

Impress your friends and relatives around the table with these turkey tidbits.

- Between 5,000 and 6,000 feathers cover the body of an adult turkey. The head and upper part of the neck are featherless.
- The gobbler, or male turkey, is more colorful, while the hen is drab brown to camouflage her with her surroundings.
- Gobblers have beards - tufts of filaments, or modified feathers - growing out from the chest. It can grow to an average of nine inches with some growing much longer.
- Wild turkeys have excellent vision during the day but don’t see as well at night.
- Turkeys can run at speeds up to 25 mph, and they can fly up to 55 mph.
- Newly-hatched turkeys must be ready to leave the nest within 12 to 24 hours to feed.
- Poultts eat insects, berries and seeds, while adults will eat anything from acorns and berries to insects and small reptiles.
- Wild turkeys like open areas for feeding, mating and habitat. They use forested areas as cover from predators and for roosting in trees at night. A varied habitat of both open and covered area is essential for wild turkey survival.
A Great Day of Celebration

In spite of heavy rains, some sporadic breezes and a bit of a nip in the air, over 50 folks celebrated the 75th anniversary of the Mecklenburg Audubon Club. The food and music were great. Don Seriff entertained us with a challenging MAS Jeopardy game. Many former members of the club found their way to the pavillion, including Irene Kittinger who came from Cary. Irene was the first president of the club when it became an official National Audubon Chapter in 1975. Flo Cobey was on that first board with Irene. So it was like old home week for the two of them.

Here are just a few of the sights from the afternoon. If you want to hear one of the sounds go to https://youtu.be/ssihi6zoHDK8 and sing along with an anniversary song especially created for the occasion.

Irene Kittinger & Flo Cobey
Arguably the most important tool for a bird watcher, a good binocular is what allows us to see birds more closely and clearly, making it possible to watch and enjoy these feathered creatures from a distance. Chances are that you own a binocular or two or three, but how well do you know them? Here are five things you might not know about your binoculars, from the inner workings of the optics to the practical aspects of cleaning and focusing. Enjoy!

1. You’re actually looking at a reflection of reality.

When you look through binoculars, you’re not really looking straight through them, but at a reflection of a reflection of a reflection... as many as six reflections! Each barrel of your binocular contains two or more convex lenses: the smaller eyepiece lens held near the eyes, and the larger objective lens, which is closest to the object being viewed. These lenses magnify objects, but when used to view objects at a distance, invert the image. If your binoculars were simply two magnifying lenses, you’d be looking straight through your binoculars, but seeing everything upside down! Inside your binoculars are two prisms that invert the reflections of objects that pass through them. Light from the object you are looking at bounces off the surfaces of the prisms before exiting the eyepiece—right-side up!

2. Focusing is a multi-step process.

The central focus wheel of your binoculars controls both barrels of your binocular simultaneously. It’s how you focus on objects far and near. The diopter is a knob that controls the focus of just one barrel—usually the right. The diopter is usually located near the eyepiece. If vision in your eyes is not identical—and it is a rare individual who has the same vision in both eyes—you’ll need to set up your binocular for your unique eyes, a process you need to do only once (unless someone else uses them and adjusts them for their asymmetric vision).

3. Many binoculars have adjustable eyecups.

They can be made of hard plastic and twist to open or close, or flexible plastic that can be folded or open. If you wear glasses when you use binoculars, your binoculars will be most comfortable for you with the eyecups in the lowest position; if you don’t wear glasses, you’ll probably want to raise your eye cups, which allows you rest the binocular against your eye socket without having your eyeball against the glass of the eyepiece!

4. You should not be seeing double.

Some people have eyes that are very close together; others have close-set eyes. Binoculars allow you to adjust for the distance between your pupils by pulling the barrels far apart for wide-set eyes, or pushing them close together for those with close-set eyes. When you look through your binoculars, you shouldn’t see the familiar double circles so often used in movies and TV to indicate that the view is through binoculars, but rather, a single circle of light. As you look through your binoculars, if you see dark areas on the sides, your binocular is not adjusted properly for your interpupillary distance.

5. No need to live with neck pain.

Even though your binocular came with a neck strap, you can replace the strap with a harness. Most people find a binocular harness much more comfortable than a neck strap, since the weight of the binoculars is spread over the shoulders and back rather than pulling across the back of the neck. Binocular harnesses attach to the strap holders. Remove the strap and install the harness. It’s that simple! Then adjust the harness to the height and weight distribution that suits you best.

For more tips on focusing, cleaning, finding birds, harnesses, etc. go to - http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/birdwire/oct2015-2.html
Sharing Nature with Children

At our October meeting Steve Houser mentioned a number of great books on how to share nature with children. Below is information on two of his favorites. In addition I have listed two other books on the same topic. Next month, just in time for holiday shopping I will include a list of some great children’s books.

Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder
By Richard Louv

In his groundbreaking work about the staggering divide between children and the outdoors, journalist and child advocate Richard Louv directly links the absence of nature in the lives of today’s wired generation to some of the most disturbing childhood trends: the rise in obesity, attention disorders, and depression. This is the first book to bring together a body of research indicating that direct exposure to nature is essential for healthy childhood development and for the physical and emotional health of children and adults. More than just raising an alarm, Louv offers practical solutions to heal the broken bond.

Sharing Nature with Children
[20th Anniversary Edition]
By Joseph Cornell

As Joseph Cornell’s classic book reached its 20th anniversary, Cornell drew upon a wealth of experience in nature education to significantly revise and expand his book. New nature games—favorites from the field—and Cornell’s typically insightful commentary makes the second edition of this special classic even more valuable to nature lovers world-wide. The Sharing Nature movement that Cornell pioneered has now expanded to countries all over the globe. Recommended by Boy Scouts of America, American Camping Association, National Audubon Society and many others.

How to Raise a Wild Child: The Art and Science of Falling in Love with Nature
By Scott D. Sampson

Teachers, parents, and other caregivers lack a basic understanding of how to engender a meaningful, lasting connection between children and the natural world. How to Raise a Wild Child offers a timely and engaging antidote, showing how kids’ connection to nature changes as they mature.

Distilling the latest research in multiple disciplines, Sampson reveals how adults can help kids fall in love with nature—enlisting technology as an ally, taking advantage of urban nature, and instilling a sense of place along the way.

Teaching children about the natural world should be treated as one of the most important events in their lives.
~Thomas Berry~

I Love Dirt!: 52 Activities to Help You & Your Kids Discover the Wonders of Nature
By Jennifer Ward

I Love Dirt! presents 52 open-ended activities to help you engage your child in the outdoors. No matter what your location—from a small patch of green in the city to the wide-open meadows of the country—each activity is meant to promote exploration, stimulate imagination, and heighten a child’s sense of wonder.

Audubon News
Showcase the beauty and diversity found on America’s national wildlife refuges

The National Wildlife Refuge System has no equal when it comes to conserving our nation’s rich wildlife heritage. The more than 560 refuges are home to more than 700 bird species, 220 mammal species, 250 reptile and amphibian species, and over 1000 species of fish. The Refuge System contains everything from southwest desert to arctic tundra and welcomes more than 47 million visitors each year.

Enter the 2015 Refuge Photo Contest and help highlight the natural beauty found on our national wildlife refuges. Images can feature the array of species and scenes found on wildlife refuges—including birds, mammals, insects, fish, people and landscapes.

Grand Prize: $1,000 cash prize. Photo submissions will be accepted from September 15 to November 15. For complete details go to - http://refugeassociation.org/people/photo-contest-2015/

As the MAS activities gear up for the fall, it’s a reminder that it’s time to Renew your membership. Don’t worry if you recently joined you are good until June 2016. But the rest of us have to dig into our piggy banks to find some funds to renew our memberships for another year.

Local membership dues help cover administration costs such as the website, programs, printing display materials and much more. In contrast, all of the monies raise through coffee sales, raffles, auctions, etc. are used for conservation & education efforts.

Take a few minutes to fill out the form below and send it to our illustrious treasurer. Or go to the website (meckbirds.org/membership.html) and pay with a credit or debit card.

Buy Your Duck Stamp from the American Birding Association (ABA)!

The ABA is once again selling Duck Stamps for birders looking to purchase one to support conservation efforts in the US’s extensive system of National Wildlife Refuges (NWR). Buying your Duck Stamp through the ABA is a way that you can make sure birders are counted!

ABA wants to make sure birders have an opportunity to vote, as it were, for how they want their voices to be heard as consumers of Wildlife Refuges. With little fanfare, and an even smaller marketing budget, they managed to sell well over 1000 stamps (1041 to be exact, or about 8.6% of their membership) thereby raising more than $15,600 for habitat conservation. And most importantly, that was entirely from birders.

Help them beat that figure this year by purchasing your Duck Stamp today! - http://goo.gl/a3Jyh5

For more information about the NWR’s duck stamp program go to - http://www.fws.gov/birds/get-involved/duck-stamp.php

Mecklenburg Audubon Society

Join now and your membership will be effective until June 2016.

Local Membership covers the cost of the newsletter, website, meetings and other administrative commitments.

| Name: | | |
| Address: | | |
| Phone: | E-mail: | |

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

- Individual Membership [$10]
- Family Membership [$15]
- Additional Donation $ _______

Volunteer Opportunities

- Lead field trips
- Do a program
- Help at events