Listen to the Birdies Sing...
...and Sing and Sing and Sing!!!

Thursday, March 2nd
7:15 PM
Tyvola Senior Center

It’s that time of year when the birds are pairing up and defending territory. Birds can’t send love notes or post ‘no trespassing’ signs, instead they use their lungs. They woo mates by serenading them. And ward off interlopers by blasting them with warning songs. That means it will be getting noisier around your neighborhood over the next few weeks. To most of our human ears it’s more like a cacophony of sound but our feathered friends know exactly what is being said.

This month Ken Kneidel, our fearless leader, will introduce us to some of the sounds (songs & calls) you will be hearing more over the next couple of months. He’ll take us through a typical day of sound, from the energetic dawn chorus to the soothing sounds of nightfall. We’ll hear some of our old friends but also be introduced to some new ones from south of the border. To keep us on our toes, Ken will have a few challenges for us as well.

So put on your listening caps and prepare your ears for learning a few new songs. As usual, refreshments will begin at 6:45 PM with the program starting at 7:15 PM sharp.

MAS NEEDS YOU!!!

It’s that me of the year again. We are looking for a few good members who would like to serve on the MAS for three years. The board works as a group to plan meetings, projects and other assorted activities. If you would like to know more about the responsibilities of a board member please contact one of the current board. They will fill you in on the details. Being on the board is a great way to get to know folks and develop lasting friendships.
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/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!!

Saturday, March 4th: Owl Prowl
Evening • Moderate • Contact: Judy Walker [birdwalker@me.com]
This is a unique opportunity to visit a Catawba Land Conservancy property that straddles the Gaston & Lincoln county line near the Catawba River. Obviously we will be looking/listening for owls, all three are a possibility. But we will also have the opportunity to see other species as they settle in for the night. The property is on Killian Rd. just west of the river off of Rt. 73. There will be a bit of walking over uneven terrain and a flashlight is a must. We will meet at 5:30 PM on the Killian property (1617 Killian Farm Rd.).

Saturday, March 4th: Latta Plantation Prairie, Beginners 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 prairie/field. We will be looking for winter migrants as well as resident birds. We’ll start at 8:30 AM in the parking lot to the right just inside the gate of Latta Nature Preserve.

Saturday, March 11th: Ribbon Walk Nature Preserve
1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Ron Clark [waxwing@bellsouth.net]
We will be looking for early migrants. 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, March 16th: Toby Creek Greenway
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Judy Walker [birdwalker@me.com]
They have opened a new section of this greenway which hasn’t really been explored yet. There is a small wet area and lots of trees. Come see what we might unearth. We will meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot of the Town Center Shopping Center in the corner closest to the traffic light.

Saturday, March 18th: West Branch Greenway/Nature Preserve
1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Judy Walker [birdwalker@me.com]
We haven’t birded this greenway in the spring so it will be interesting to see what migrants will be arriving and who is still hanging around. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot at the corner of Shearer Rd. & June Washam Rd.

Tuesday, March 21st: McAlpine Creek Greenway (Monroe Rd.)
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Ron Clark [waxwing@bellsouth.net]
We haven’t birded this park/greenway in a while due to the construction at the park. Early migrants should be arriving and the beaver pond can produce some surprises. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot on Monroe Rd.

Saturday, March 25th: Six-mile Creek Greenway
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Ron Clark [waxwing@bellsouth.net]
This is the best place in the county and time of the season to see migrating Lousiana Waterthrushes plus other early migrants. Meet in the parking lot at 8:30 AM.

Physical Difficulty Key

Easy - Trails are level to slight grades usually paved; .5-3 miles walking
Moderate - Trails can be uneven with some hills; 2-4 miles walking.
Strenuous - Trails vary greatly; 4+ miles of walking.
* Trails are handicapped accessible.
At the end of April, local birding teams will be conducting our annual spring bird count. The teams work hard to find as many species & individual birds as possible. The data collected during the count is submitted to eBird and becomes part of a national/international database to help scientists determine the effects of habitat loss and climate change on bird and the environment. The data also helps us locally to determine what areas of our ever-growing county needs protection from development.

This year the MAS Board would like to add another dimension this important annual event – a BIRDATHON! What is a bird-a-thon? It’s a way to raise funds for conservation efforts (locally, nationally and/or internationally). It works much like any other ‘athon’ but in this scenario folks pledge a certain amount for each species seen by a specific team. Knowing they are being supported by other folks will also provide each team another incentive knowing their efforts will benefit a conservation project as well as support citizen science.

Who benefits?

The board has decided to donate the funds from this first Bird-a-thon to the Catawba Lands Conservancy (CLC) in honor of David Wright. The MAS board believes contributing these funds to CLC will deliver the most immediate local impact to local habitat for birds and other wildlife. Many great birding areas in the Charlotte area are being protected by CLC, so it only makes sense to collaborate with them to help continue and possibility expand this protection.

When?
Since this bird-a-thon is being paired with our annual spring count it will be a one day affair on Sunday, April 23.

Who’s involved?
Each team has a designated area within the spring count circle for which they are responsible. The areas vary in habitat quality, so team leaders have been asked to state a species goal for their area based on their experience. These goals will help donors decide which team they may want to support and what amount they’d like to pledge per bird species. Listed elsewhere on this page is a list of the teams, a brief description of their area, and their goal.

How to support
There are several ways to support this project.
1. You can volunteer to be on a team and participate physically in the count. As member of a team you can solicit donations from friends and family.
2. If you can’t join a team, you can support a team by donating a certain amount for each species seen by the team or by making a one-time donation. Instructions for doing this are below.

What you need to do.
First complete a ‘pledge/donation’ form found on page 4. Or you can fill it out the online at https://goo.gl/forms/Os3Z4ay-GhIquLbSp1. This will give us an idea of who is pledging and how much is being pledged. If you print out the form you can bring it to our monthly meeting or send it to the address mentioned below.

After the Bird-a-thon has taken place, we will post the results in the newsletter and on this website. Plus we will announce them at the May meeting. Once the results are in you can submit your donation using one of the following methods.
• Mail a check payable to Mecklenburg Audubon Society to: P.O. Treasurer, Mecklenburg Audubon, Box 221093, Charlotte, NC 28222. A copy of your original form would be helpful. If that’s not possible please indicate the money is for the Bird-a-thon.
• Bring your check/cash to the May or June meeting.
• Use our PayPal Donation button located on our website - meckbirds.org. You DO NOT need a PayPal account to submit a donation. Click on the Donate with a Card button at the bottom of the box.

The Teams
1. The David’s Wright Here With Us’s (David’s old area) McAlpine Wastewater Treatment Plant, McMullen Greenway, and Pineville. Goal: 75
2. City Flickers: Latta Park, Elmwood Cemetery, Stewart Creek Greenway, Marshall Park, CPCC, Bright Walk. Goal: 60
3. Airport Wrecking-ball Cranes: From the airport to Lake Wylie and south to Shopton Rd. Goal: 85
4. Steel Creek Waders: West of Pineville to Lake Wylie. Goal: 85
6. McAlpine Birding Beavers: Southcentral Charlotte, including McAlpine and Briars Creek Greenways, Veteran’s and Chantilly Parks. Goal: 75
Help Mecklenburg Audubon raise funds to conserve vital habitat in the Charlotte region by supporting the 2017 Spring Count Bird-a-thon. The data collected will be used to make decisions about habitat preservation. The funds raised will be given to Catawba Lands Conservancy as a memorial to David Wright.

You can donate to a team of your choice and choose either a “per species seen” pledge or simply send a check in now with your donation.

Check a box to sponsor a team:

☐ The David’s Wright Here With Us’s: (David’s old area) McAlpine Wastewater Treatment Plant, McMullen Greenway, and Pineville. Goal: 75
☐ City Flickers: Latta Park, Elmwood Cemetery, Stewart Creek Greenway, Marshall Park, CPCC, Bright Walk. Goal: 60
☐ Airport Wrecking-ball Cranes: From the airport to Lake Wylie and south to Shopton Rd. Goal: 85
☐ Steel Creek Waders: West of Pineville to Lake Wylie. Goal: 85
☐ Evergreen-winged Teals: East Charlotte, including Evergreen Nature Preserve and the Mint Museum. Goal: 60
☐ McAlpine Birding Beavers: Southcentral Charlotte, including McAlpine and Briars Creek Greenways, Veteran’s and Chantilly Parks. Goal: 75
☐ Wandering Taylorbirds: Various spots in central and southwest Charlotte. Goal: 80
☐ Myers Park Warbler Warriors: Freedom, Edgehill and Park Road Parks, and stops in between. Goal: 75

☐ I pledge __________ for each species seen. (25¢, 50¢, $1, $2, etc.)
☐ Instead of a pledge, I have enclosed a donation of:

   _____ $25   _____ $50   _____ $75   _____ Other

Mail this form to: Treasurer, Mecklenburg Audubon, P.O. Box 221093, Charlotte, NC 28222 (or give it to a board member)

Name: __________________________________ Email: _________________________________

Address: _________________________________________________________________________

City, St. & Zip: _____________________________________________________________________

All contributions are tax deductible.
Please make check payable to Mecklenburg Audubon and send by May 31.
In southeastern swamps in summer, this bright golden warbler sings from high in the trees. It is unique among eastern warblers in its habit of nesting in holes in trees, rather than in the open; it will sometimes nest in birdhouses placed close to the water. The name “Prothonotary” originally referred to a group of official scribes in the Catholic Church who wore bright yellow hoods, as this bird appears to do.

**HABITAT:** Wooded swamps. Prothonotary warblers breed in flooded river bottom hardwoods including black willow, ash, buttonbush, sweetgum, red maple, hackberry, river birch, and elm; or wetlands with bay trees surrounded by cypress swamp. They also nest near borders of lakes, rivers and ponds, normally only in areas with slow moving or standing water. Wintering in the tropics they prefer lowland woods and mangrove swamps.

**FEEDING BEHAVIOR:** They feed by gleaning insects among foliage, normally low down among thickets, and usually above water. Sometimes they hop about on floating drift wood and mossy logs, peeping into crevices. They may occasionally forage by winding their way up the trunks of trees like a nuthatch.

Their diet consists adult insects and larvae (especially aquatic insects), ants, caterpillars, mayflies, beetles, and other insects. They will also eat snails and other small mollusks, spiders, and some seeds.

**BREEDING BEHAVIOR:** Males arrive on nesting grounds in early April, about a week before females. Males establish territories by singing, vigorous displays, bill snapping, chases, and fighting. Females may enter into bill-snapping disputes with other females as well.

When courting, the male flies close to the female and both birds chip softly. Males display intensively to the female during courtship by fluffing plumage, and spreading wings and tail. He shows off possible nest cavities by entering and exiting them. Males place small amounts of moss into the nest cavity, building dummy nests, but only female builds real nest. Once a pair forms, the male guards the female while she is building the nest and laying eggs.

Prothonotary Warblers place their nests in low cavities such as old Downy Woodpecker holes. The nest site is usually 5-10 feet up (sometimes 3-30' up), above standing water in hole in tree or stump. Bald cypress, willows, and sweet gum are regular trees used for nesting and cavities tend to be in trees located near or over standing water. They sometimes excavate their own hole in very rotten stumps. They will also use bird boxes, gourds, and cypress knees for nesting.

Males select at least one cavity and place moss inside prior to attracting a mate. Females then build the remainder of the nest with a foundation of mosses or liverwort. The nest cup is made of rootlets, plant down, grape plants, or cypress bark lined with grasses, sedges, tendrils, rootlets, leaves, petioles, poison ivy, and even fishing line. The nest cup is about 2 inches wide.

Prothonotary warblers usually lay 4-6 eggs, sometimes 3-8. The eggs are creamy or pink, with spots of brown. Incubation is by female over 12-14 days. The young are fed by both parents and leave the nest 10-11 days after hatching. Supposedly they can swim at fledging. They usually have 2 broods per year.

**MIGRATION:** These birds migrate relatively early in both spring and fall, with peaks in many areas during April and August. A very rare stray in the west, mostly in fall.

**CONSERVATION STATUS:** The Prothonotary Warbler populations declined by 42% across their range between 1966 and 2014, according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey. Partners in Flight estimates a global breeding population of 1.6 million with 100% spending part of the year in the U.S., and 26% wintering in Mexico. They rate the species a 14 out of 20 on the Continental Concern Score. Prothonotary Warbler is a U.S.-Canada Stewardship species, and is on the 2014 State of the Birds Watch List, which lists bird species that are at risk of becoming threatened or endangered without conservation action. The species is considered endangered in Canada.

Undoubtedly the decline is related to the clearing of southern swamp forests. Breeding populations of these warblers are highly localized because of the extreme habitat specificity needed by these birds. They are still fairly common in

**Sources:** All about Birds (https://www.allaboutbirds.org) and Audubon Online Field Guide (http://www.audubon.org)
The coral honeysuckle (also known as Trumpet Honeysuckle) is an excellent plant for natural, low-maintenance areas. It is a common semi-evergreen woody vine found throughout the Piedmont and Coastal Plain of North Carolina. Its botanical name is Lonicera sempervirens which translates to the evergreen honeysuckle but it seems to only remain evergreen in the southern most portions of its range.

Coral honeysuckle is widely known for its ability to attract butterflies and hummingbirds. In fact, the combination of its bright-red tubular flowers with abundant nectar and little floral odor typifies the usual pattern for hummingbird-pollinated species. The bright-red fruits are also attractive to other birds. Quail, Purple finches, Goldfinches, Hermit Thrushes, and American Robins have all been documented eating the fruit. Further, the plant is host to larvae of spring azure butterflies and snowberry clearwing moths. As an added bonus, it tolerates clay and is not attractive to deer.

The most common time to plant coral honeysuckle is during early spring, such as March or April. Mild temperatures and longer sunlit days provide a good combination for growing success. As long as your garden soil drains well, coral honeysuckle acclimates to many soil types. It likes sun to partial shade, so choose a site that has at least half sun and half shade (preferably 8 hours or more) during a typical day. As with many woody vines, coral honeysuckle can take 5 years or more to reach their full potential but by 3 it should already be putting on a good show.

Native American traditions include several uses for coral honeysuckle. Leaves, either dried and smoked or steeped in warm water as a tea, were used to treat asthma, sore throats, and coughs. Chewed leaves applied to bee stings alleviate swelling. Berries will induce nausea or vomiting in humans.

Given appropriate growing conditions coral honeysuckle will bring any one who plants it many seasons of enjoyment in flowers and feathered visitors. It is not hard to grow but it does have a preference for sunlight and should do well in most average, well-drained garden soils. Given a support it will climb, show it where you want it to go and it will follow until it can’t anymore and then it’ll just build on itself and flower till the hummingbirds come to quiet it down.

Adapted from Almost Eden (https://goo.gl/DNbnFZ) and Virginia Native Plant Society (http://wp.me/P725yp-tV).

Additional information can be found at:

- NCSU – https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/all/lonicera-sempervirens/
- University of Florida Extension – http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fp354

Enter your zip code into Audubon’s new native plants database (http://www.audubon.org/native-plants) and view a list of the best plants for birds in your area, as well as local resources and links to more information. By entering your email address, you’ll receive an emailed list of the native plants you’ve selected, get additional tips on creating your bird-friendly habitat, and help us keep track of your contributions to our efforts to get 1 million native plants for birds in the ground.
The Fun of Learning Bird Songs

by Ron Clark

There are many CDs of bird songs on the market. Most are in taxonomic order, where the person states the bird’s name, and several songs and calls are played. It moves through the entire list of eastern or western birds. They are useful and excellent, but not for someone starting to learn songs. With these, where do you begin? The first birds taxonomically are waterfowl, not a good group of birds to start with.

The one I think is very good for beginners is Peterson’s “Eastern/Central - Birding By Ear” by Richard Walton and Robert Lawson. It is not done taxonomically, but rather in 17 groups. It has songs and calls of 86 species. Instead of just saying the bird’s name, he talks about it, telling you about its behavior and in what habitat it’s likely to be found. Then he gives you a “handle”, like a specific note or slurring of a note, or a mnemonic phrase to listen for, so you can more easily identify it. For example, a House Finch has a jumble of notes, but usually ends in a slurred raspy note. Pine Siskin has a rising, buzzy “zweeeet” in the song. Picking these out help you identify the singer. At the end of each group, he replays the songs as a review. Then at the very end of them all, he regroups the songs into habitats; forests, wetlands, thickets, fields, etc. The booklet has the habitat and song description with the species name. At the end is a list of mnemonic phrases like “who cooks for you” for Barred Owl and ‘spring of the year” for Eastern Meadowlark.

Name-sayers has eight birds that, as implied, say their name; Carolina Chickadee, Eastern Phoebe and Kill-deer, for example. Commoners includes Canada Goose, Blue Jay and American Crow. Most birders know the songs of these two groups, so you realize you know 15 or so already. Woodpeckers is done in pairs; Red-headed with Red-bellied, Hairy with Downy, and Northern Flicker with Pileated. These pairs sound similar. For example, the call notes of the Hairy and Downy can sound similar. He explains how to tell them apart. Mimics includes Northern Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher and Gray Catbird. The first two can be separated by the number of repetitions. The third is identified by the lack of repetitions, and the “meow” for which it’s named.

Wood Warblers and a Warbling Wren has nine warblers. Carolina Wren is included as it can sound similar to Common Yellowthroat or Kentucky Warbler. Sing-songers starts with the American Robin. Once you have that, you move to the two tanagers, that sound like a “robin with a sore throat”, more raspy, but a very similar ow of notes. Rose-breasted Grosbeak sounds like a robin that’s “had voice lessons”. The same pattern, but a beautiful whistle. While you’re not likely to hear one sing around here, you will in the mountains where they breed. More likely for us is the call note, which he likens to “the squeak of a sneaker on a gym floor”.

Two important things he stresses in the introduction. The first is to take it one group at a time. Study and learn it before moving on. Unless you have the brain of Einstein, listening to it all at once will be confusing and non-productive. The second is that no recording can take the place of the real thing. Once you start learning these, go out and listen. That’s when you’ll start recognizing bird songs, and realize how many different songs and calls some birds have. Carolina Wren has over twenty, but learning the basic ones will help you sort them out.

When you have learned this CD, there’s “More Birding By Ear”, with 96 more species. It adds 25 more warblers, which are in groups; buzzy, simple, two-noted and complex. The “frustrating four” Empidonax flycatchers, Acadian, Willow, Alder and Least, are included, which can usually be identified only when they sing or call, until they get on breeding grounds. Others include the six rails and both cuckoos. Both CD’s are excellent for learning, supplemented by the other taxonomic ones. Learning bird songs is fun and puts you closer to those feathery creatures that constantly hold our attention.
Set Sail on a Cape Fear Cruise with Audubon!

Before They Fly Away, Buy Your Birding Tickets Today

Make plans to board the Bird Islands of the Lower Cape Fear Cruise on Sunday, May 21. All profits from the cruise are donated to Audubon NC. An annual favorite, this afternoon cruise celebrates the natural beauty of the Cape Fear River, the wonders of bird migration and the unique, important nesting colonies in our area with the community. Bring your camera and binoculars to view nesting areas of many coastal water birds including pelicans, white ibis, great egrets and herons. Pack a picnic lunch if you would like. Soft drinks, water and snacks will be sold aboard ship. Our guides for this narrated event include area experts Dr. James Parnell retired Professor Emeritus of Biology from UNC Wilmington and North Carolina’s top ornithologist. Walker Golder, National Audubon Society’s Director of Eastern Flyway Coasts (which includes the NC program and programs in eight Atlantic Coast states), is to speak as well. Lindsay Addison, Audubon North Carolina’s Coastal Biologist, will also discuss her work monitoring the nesting colonies on the specific bird islands we will be viewing, and speakers from the North Carolina Audubon Society.

Tickets are $40 for adults and $25 for children ages 12 and under. To buy tickets, email Birdislandscruise@capefargarden-club.org.

For detailed information about the cruise go to http://nc.audubon.org/news/set-sail-cape-fear-cruise-audubon

For more information about the Bird Islands go to http://nc.audubon.org/news/cape-fear-river-nesting-update

In the end, our society will be defined not only by what we create but by what we refuse to destroy.

- John Sawhill

**COOL FACTS**

- The Prothonotary Warbler is one of only two warbler species that nest in cavities. (Lucy’s Warbler is the other.)
- The name “Prothonotary” refers to clerks in the Roman Catholic church, whose robes were bright yellow.
- In flight they tend to stay below the canopy, but some birds also fly above trees when singing a lengthy song.
- The oldest recorded Prothonotary Warbler was a male, and at least 8 years, 1 month old when he was identified by his band in Ontario.
- They have been helped in some areas by conservationists putting up birdhouses.

**Prothonotary Warbler**

remaining habitat but remain vulnerable to habitat destruction.

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 website - meckbirds.org.