November 2017 Volume 23(3)

Audubon News

Mecklenburg Audubon Society | P. O. Box 221093, Charlotte, NC 28222 | meckbirds.org

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Coming Events

10/28 McDowell Prairie
11/02 Monthly Mtg.
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11/11 Beginner Bird Walk
11/18 West Branch NP
11/21 Pee Dee NWR
11/25 McDowell Prairie
12/02 Wintering Waterfowl
12/07 Potluck/Photos Mtg.
12/09 Beginner Bird Walk
12/16 Gaston CBC
12/17 Lake Norman CBC
12/23 Charlotte CBC
12/30 Pee Dee CBC
01/04 Monthly Mtg.
01/06 Lake Jocassee Field Trip
01/20-21 Huntington Beach SC

Who's New?

Linda Dassenko
Carolyn Seaton
Shannon Wright
Cindy Cowan
Dylan McDonald
Tracy Kremer
Sally Duffy

Audubon News

Bulls Island

Thursday, Nov. 2nd
Refreshments - 6:45 PM
Program - 7:15 PM
Tyvola Senior Center

Bulls Island lies three miles off the mainland of South Carolina between McClellanville and Mt. Pleasant and is the largest of four barrier islands found within the Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge. The island is 5,000 acres consisting of maritime forest, fresh and brackish water impoundments, salt marsh and white sandy beaches. Over 290 species of birds have been recorded on the refuge with most being found on or near Bulls. Gadwall, Scaup, Ring-necked, Canvasback and Teal can be found in the impoundments. Yellowlegs, plovers, Dunlins and Sanderlings are best viewed on the mud flats and beaches. Warblers, sparrows, woodpeckers and raptors abound in the lush forest of Bulls Island.

Refuge managers must manage wildlife habitat for the main or prevalent species found there. To assist managers with their decision making, volunteer birders have conducted an ongoing, semi-monthly waterfowl/shorebird survey on the island since 2008 to address the basic question of exactly what avian species use Bulls, and when. David McLean, a life-long birder who has been birding Bulls since the mid 1970s, joined that survey effort in December 2011 and quickly assumed coordinating oversight of the ongoing survey. David’s presentation will be a first look at the overall data collected from the waterfowl/shorebird survey. It will include a look at possible short-term (i.e. weeks to months) and long-term (i.e. years) trends, and will showcase a little show-and-tell about some of the rarities seen on the survey.

So, join us on Thursday, November 2nd at the Tyvola Senior Center (2225 Tyvola Rd.) to learn more about this fascinating island off the coast of South Carolina. Come early, 6:45 PM, to enjoy some bird friendly coffee (decaf of course!). Bring a mug and take some coffee for the drive home. Program will begin at 7:15 PM.

If you can’t make the meeting, you can find out more about the birds of Bulls Island reading David McLean’s blog posts at - https://birdingbulls.blogspot.com
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, Oct. 28th: McDowell Prairie
1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Jeff Lemons [birdsalot@gmail.com]

This carefully maintained piedmont prairie has produced some interesting birds in the fall. We will be looking for early winter migrants. 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. We will meet at 8:00 AM.

Saturday, Nov. 4th: Latta Plantation Prairie
½ Day • Moderate • Contact: Ron Clark [waxwing@bellsouth.net]

We will be looking for arriving winter migrants (sparrows, sapsuckers, etc.) as well as local resident prairie birds. We’ll also check out the lake to see if any waterfowl have arrived. Meet in the Nature Center parking just inside the main gate at 8:30 AM.

Saturday, Nov. 11th: Beginner Bird Walk
½ Day • Easy* • Contact: Bill & Laura Blakesley [lclemons@mindspring.com]

This month’s beginner bird walk will occur at Six-mile Creek Greenway in south Charlotte. The short (1-mile) paved greenway usually produces a good variety of local resident birds. The walk is geared to those who are just beginning to learn about birds and will concentrate on tips of finding and identifying birds. Meet in the greenway parking lot at 8:30 AM.

Saturday, Nov. 18th: West Branch Nature Preserve
½ Day • Easy • Contact: Judy Walker [birdwalker@me.com]

We will be looking for arriving winter migrants in this under birded nature preserve. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot at the corner of Shearer Rd. & June Washam Rd.

Tuesday, Nov. 21st: Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge
Full Day • Moderate • Contact: Matt Janson [m.janson.geolover@gmail.com]

We are lucky to have this wonderful wildlife refuge so close to the Charlotte area. It provides a wide variety of habitat for both wintering waterfowl and songbirds – especially sparrows. This is last week the entire refuge is open to the public. Maximum 15 participants as we will be entering the sensitive waterfowl habitat. Also, once at the refuge we will carpool to bring as few intrusive vehicles as possible. Bring lunch, water and snacks. Meet at the kiosk/bathroom area at the main entrance off Rt. 52 at 8:30 AM.

Saturday, Nov. 25th: McDowell Prairie/Copperhead Island
½ Day • Moderate • Contact: Ron Clark [waxwing@bellsouth.net]

We will be looking for winter migrants including 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. We will meet at 8:30 AM.

* Trails are handicapped accessible.

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.
Normally we have our annual Potluck & Photos meeting in January. This year we are moving it to December because we are excited to have Dr. Jim Paruk for our monthly January meeting (01/04/18). Dr. Paruk is one of the country’s leading researchers in the study of common loons. He will be talking about his research at Lake Jocassee in SC.

As a follow-up to his presentation we have arranged for a guided boat tour on the Lake Jocassee to see the loons up-close and personal on Saturday, 01/06/17. The cost will be $35 per person for the tour.

The tour will originate in Devils Fork State Park outside of Salem, SC. It is about 3.5 hours from Charlotte, depending on where you live in Charlotte. The boat will depart at 11 AM sharp and last about 2 hours. You will need to be at the boat dock by 10:30 AM. I you want to make it an overnight, it about 1.5 hrs. from Spartanburg and about 1 hr from Greenville.

Please sign up with our PayPal link (https://goo.gl/F9Jued) as we need to give a preliminary count by Dec 11th. We need a minimum of 10 participants with a maximum of 35 participants.

Field Trips

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

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.

Saturday, Dec. 9th • 8:30 AM • Beginner Bird Walk
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Judy Walker [birdwalker@me.com] • MAP

This month’s beginner bird walk will take place on a new section of Toby Creek Greenway in northeast Charlotte near UNC Charlotte. It has a variety of habitats that should produce some interesting birds. The walk is gear to those who are just beginning to learn about birds and will concentrate on tips of finding and identifying birds. We will meet in the Lowe’s parking lot on Chancellor Dr., across the street the Boston Market at 8:30 AM.

Save these Dates! Plan on joining a Christmas Bird Count

Saturday, December 16th • Gaston CBC
Contact: Steve Tracy [stevepath1@aol.com]

Sunday, December 17th • Lake Norman CBC
Contact: Taylor Piephoff [PiephoffT@aol.com]

Saturday, December 23rd • Charlotte CBC
Contact: Ken Kneidel [kenkneidel@gmail.com]

Saturday, December 30th • Pee Dee NWR CBC
Contact: Judy Walker [birdwalker@me.com]

Loons on the Lake

Saturday, January 6th • Lake Jocassee, SC

Common Loon ©Ron Clark
The little Green-winged Teal (Anas crecca) is the smallest dabbling duck in North America. The dapper male has a cinnamon-colored head with a gleaming green crescent that extends from the eye to the back of the head. In flight, both sexes flash deep-green wing patches (specula).

They are common and widespread, remaining through the winter farther north than other teal. They often rest out of the water, even standing on low snags or branches. Green-wings typically travels in small flocks, but in winter or at migration stopovers, may gather in concentrations of up to 50,000. Look for them on shallow ponds and in flooded fields, and listen for the male’s decidedly non-ducklike whistle.

Green-winged Teal are fast, agile, buoyant flyers. Flocks in flight appear very fast because of small size, with rapid twisting and turning in unison. They can take off straight from the water without running across the surface. Though they are dabbling ducks that usually tip up to feed, they occasionally dive for food and to avoid predators.

HABITAT: Green-winged Teal breed mostly in isolated river deltas, forest wetlands, and mixed prairie regions across northern North America—they occur in the prairie pothole region, but they are not as restricted to it as many other dabbling ducks. Nesting sites include grasslands or sedge meadows that provide brush thickets of sedge or cattail for cover, and weedy or burned areas. They also favor beaver ponds in wooded areas, and nest along streams, potholes, lakes, and human-made wetlands. Migrating birds can be found in shallow wetlands, coastal marshes, and flooded fields. Wintering birds typically flock to shallow wetlands, including coastal marshes and bayous, estuaries, the playa lakes of Texas’s southern high plains, riparian sloughs, and agricultural areas such as rice fields.

FEEDING BEHAVIOR: Green-winged Teal eat mainly aquatic invertebrates and seeds and may be seen feeding during night or day. They feed in shallow water, near shorelines, on mudflats, and in agricultural fields, taking advantage of whatever foods are most abundant. Migrating and wintering birds may feed at night or during the day. On the water, they dabble along the surface where they pluck or strain seeds and invertebrates, and dip their head and neck or tip up to reach submerged food. They also probe mudflats for invertebrates and eat worms, seed shrimp, and copepods living just above the sediment. Depending on where they’re feeding, plant foods may include sedge fruit, seeds of pondweeds, grasses, smartweeds, sea purslane, bulrush, dwarf spikerush, swamp timothy, and agricultural crops including corn and rice. Animal prey includes midges, tadpoles, mollusks, and crustaceans. Ducklings up to 2 weeks old eat mainly insect larvae.

BREEDING BEHAVIOR: Courtship starts in the fall and peaks in January and February. They choose new partners each year. Males try to secure a mate using an elaborate set of movements and vocal displays, with groups of up to 25 males courting females both on the water and in courtship flights. In one courtship display, male rears up out of water, arching head forward and downward to shake bill very rapidly in water while giving a sharp whistle. Although most pairs form on the wintering grounds, pair formation continues during spring migration and on the breeding grounds. The male defends its mate from copulation attempts by other males.

With the male following behind, the female chooses a well-concealed site on the ground, usually within about 200 yards of water. Nests are typically built in sedge meadows, grasslands, brush thickets, or in woods near a pond. The female chooses a spot that offers dense cover that may form a complete canopy over the nest. The nest (built by female) is a shallow depression filled with grasses, twigs, and leaves, lined with down. The female uses her feet to scrape a nest bowl where she lays the first egg, then adds plant material such as grasses, sedges, and leaves from around the nest site, using a sideways motion of her bill to build up a nest measuring 6–7 inches across and 2–6 inches deep. After laying her last egg, the female adds her down feathers to the nest bowl before beginning to incubate.
Once the female has laid 6-11 cream to pale buff eggs and begins incubating the male deserts the female. She will incubate the eggs between 20-24 days. The precocial chicks hatch with eyes open, covered in yellow and dark olive-brown down. A few hours after they hatch the chicks can swim, dive, walk, and forage for themselves, although the female continues to brood them at night and to protect them when the weather turns cold. They usually are completely self-sufficient at about 35 days.

**CONSERVATION:** Green-winged Teal are numerous and their population has increased over recent decades, according to waterfowl surveys by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. They estimated the North American breeding population in 2015 was at least 4 million, almost double the long-term average. Most of the population breeds in Canada and Alaska, where relatively remote and inaccessible nesting areas buffer this species from habitat losses farther south caused by agricultural and urban development.

**MIGRATION:** Green-wing Teal are resident to medium-distance migrant. They migrate through northern North America along all major flyways—Pacific, Central, Mississippi, and Atlantic—to reach wintering grounds from coastal British Columbia to as far south as Central America.

**HOW TO FIND THIS BIRD:** A good time to look for Green-winged Teal across most of the continent is during spring and fall migration, when the birds land in shallow wetlands, sometimes foraging in little more than puddles in flooded agricultural fields. They occur with other species of dabbling ducks, but they’ll stand out if you pay attention to their size and shape. Even the fairly uniform brown females are distinctive by silhouette: small and compact, sitting high in the water, with a fairly small bill. A small brown duck near a group of larger dabblers is probably not a young Mallard—and it could be a female Green-winged Teal. Look for the buffy yellow stripe along the tail for extra confirmation.

**COOL FACTS**
- Green-winged Teals have closely spaced, comblike projections called lamellae around the inner edge of the bill. They use them to filter tiny invertebrates from the water, allowing the birds to capture smaller food items than other dabbling ducks.
- The oldest known Green-winged Teal was at least 20 years 3 months, based on banding data. It was a female banded in 1941 in Oklahoma, & recovered in 1960 in Missouri.

**Bottoms Up**

The most common profile of dabbling ducks isn’t one you’ll find in a field guide. Luckily, you can learn to identify them while they’re feeding—simply by getting to know their butts.

**GREEN-WINGED TEAL**
Two gold patches flash beneath the male’s tail. (They’re visible when the bird is upright, too.)

**MALLARD**
For the telltale sign of a male mallard, find two black curls sticking up like the ends of a well-twirled mustache.

**NORTHERN PINTAIL**
The four-inch tail feathers on the male are key. They’re longer than any other dabbling species.
Riches in the ditches

Goldenrod is a welcome sign of fall with those sweeps of gold along the side of the road. If you think about it, roadsides must be the poorest growing conditions imaginable, and yet the Goldenrods bloom summer to fall in a sea of yellow.

One Goldenrod that is truly worthy of featuring in your home garden is Solidago odora, Sweet, Anise or Licorice Goldenrod. Crush a few leaves in your hand, inhale, and you’ll know you have the right one. In fact, a ‘Liberty tea’ was brewed from the leaves. It has been used historically for digestive and cough medicines and the essential oil in the leaves used to make astringents and washes.

Think Meadow

Licorice Goldenrod is perfectly sized at 2-3 feet tall, and adaptable to dry to moist soils. The bloom season of July-September mixes well with late summer purple standouts such as fall Asters or New York Ironweed. Plant in full sun as part of a pollinator meadow or partial sun at the sunny edges of a woodland garden. Goldenrods in general are not appreciated in America, but are much loved and cultivated throughout the world. This is the perfect plant to stabilize a home meadow (no matter how small) because some have a basal rosette which act as a ground cover over the winter. Licorice Goldenrod is not a spreader and the erect green clumps can provide structure all summer, serving as a backdrop for summer’s more showy flowers. And thankfully, once established, Licorice Goldenrod is fairly drought tolerant.

Additionally, it does not appear to be a deer favorite, another plus.

Be a friend to birds

Finches, wrens, warblers, chickadees and tufted titmice enjoy the small seeds in the fall. And if your garden or meadow is casual in style, try to leave the herbaceous vegetation standing as a home to insects that feed over wintering birds. Goldenrod attracts butterflies, bees, ladybugs, lacewings and other friendly insects.

No, not hay fever!

Goldenrods are often confused with Ragweed, because they bloom at the same time. But remember, Goldenrods are insect pollinated, whereas Ragweed is wind pollinated. Those airborne pollen grains (along with fall grasses) are the source of your hay fever. So celebrate Goldenrod each fall!

For more Eco and Bird Friendly pages visit: ncwildflower.org ncnpssouthernpiedmont.wordpress.com ©2017 North Carolina Native Plant Society
Strycker (The Thing with Feathers), a birder and adventurer, chronicles the record-setting year he spent trekking the globe, succeeding in his aim “to see 5,000 species of birds—about half the birds on Earth—in the ultimate round-the-world journey.” He begins in Antarctica on Jan. 1, 2015, and ends on December 31 in Australia, traveling to every continent and spotting more than 6,000 species. Strycker traces his lifelong interest in ornithology to his Pacific Northwest childhood and a fortuitous set of bird-related events that took place in his life at age 10. In this volume Strycker tracks what he saw during his “big year” and describes his planning process and the ground rules he established. Every bird he counted, for example, would need to be “seen by at least one other person.” His companions had to be local, too, “living in the same country where we went birding together.” This would prevent loneliness on his solo trip and help to give him the inside scoop. Even readers who wouldn’t know a marvellous spatuletail from a southern ground hornbill will be awed by Strycker’s achievement and appreciate the passion with which he pursues his interest.


Also check Noah’s website - http://www.audubon.org/features/birding-without-borders

What is Project FeederWatch?

Project FeederWatch is a winter-long survey of birds that visit feeders sponsored by The Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You simply identify and count the birds outside your window. You can count every week between November and April, or you can count once all season — the time you spend is up to you. Using the easy online data entry, you can see all of your counts and view colorful tables, graphs, and summaries.

Who can participate?

Anyone interested in birds can participate; you don’t have to be an expert. If you attract birds to your yard with food or habitat, then you just need a window to watch and an interest in who shows up. We’ll send you all that you need to get started identifying the visitors.

Why participate?

You will learn about your backyard birds and contribute to a 30-year-and-running dataset of bird population changes. With FeederWatch, you become a scientist in your own backyard.

Participants will receive:

- FeederWatch Handbook & Instructions
- Full-color poster of common feeder birds
- Bird-Watching Days Calendar
- Our annual report, Winter Bird Highlights
- Digital access to Living Bird magazine

For more information and to sign up go to https://feederwatch.org.

Bird Brain Teasers

How well do you know your bird phrases?

FILL IN THE BLANKS

The early bird gets the ____________.
Get your _________ in a row.
She’s no spring _________________.
I will take you under my ____________.
A little _________ told me.
Don’t get your _____________ ruffled.

The ______ has flown the ________.
He has _______ eyes.
Soar like an ________.
Birds of a ________ flock together.
His writing looks like __________ scratch.
I’m happy as a _____________.

Audubon News
As the MAS activities begin to ramp up for the fall, it’s time to renew your membership if you haven’t already. Don’t worry if you recently joined as a new member you are good until June 2018. 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 we raise through coffee sales, raffles, auctions, etc. are used for conservation and 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.

Name(s): __________________________________________________________
Address: __________________________________________________________
Phone: ______________________ E-mail(s): ____________________________

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

Renewal Additional Donation $ _______

Volunteer Opportunities
Lead field trips
Do a program
Help at events

Audubon News