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Coming Events

10/27 Beginner Bird Walk
11/01 Four-mile Creek Grnwy.
11/01 Bird Photography (Mtg.)
11/03 Ribbon Walk NP
11/07 Mallard Creek Grnwy.
11/13 Wing Haven Sr. Walk
11/14 Francis Beatty Park
11/17 Beginner Bird Walk
11/20 Pee Dee NWR
11/24 Ocean Isle, NC
11/28 Clark’s Creek NP
12/1 McDowell Prairie
12/4 Wing Haven Sr. Walk
12/5 McAlpine Creek Park
12/6 Urban Birds (Mtg.)
12/8 Wintering Waterfowl
12/12 Four-mile Creek Grnwy.
12/15 Gaston Co. CBC
12/16 Lake Norman CBC
12/22 Charlotte CBC
12/29 Pee Dee NWR CBC

Who’s New?

Mark Antoszyk
Nancy Duncan
Sara Gagne
Mae Gilleland
Julia Hanson
Suzi Rosen

Have you ever been looking through your binoculars at a bird and thought, ‘Wow, what a great picture this would make!’ Then when you try to capture that same moment with a camera, it doesn’t look nearly as good. Well help is on the way.

Larry Pellegrini, member of Elisha Mitchell Audubon (and former member of MAS), will travel down the mountain to help us out. He and his wife, Nancy, have been birding about 15 years. Shortly after they were bitten with the birding bug, Larry became interested in photographing the birds they were seeing. Since then he has traveled to numerous U.S. birding hot spots and has taken at least a dozen trips to Central and South America. While still living in Charlotte, he would wow us with amazing photos during our annual Potluck & Photo meeting in January. This month he will share with us what he has learned over the years. Things like when is the best time to photograph birds, how to compose a shot, where to focus, and other dos and don’ts that will help you get the best shot. Even if you aren’t trying to take pictures of birds, you will be impressed with Larry’s photographs, great sense of humor and storytelling capabilities.

So, don’t be camera shy, join fellow bird watching enthusiasts for another great, informative evening on Thursday, November 1st at the Tyvola Senior Center (2225 Tyvola Rd.). Refreshments will begin around 6:45 PM with the program starting at 7:15 PM. Come prepared to say CHEESE!
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, October 27th - Beginner Bird Walk
1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Marcia Howden [howden32@aol.com]

Latta Plantation is a great place to begin learning about birds and birding. Although folks of all levels are welcome, we will concentrate on helping folks new to birding learn the basics of using binoculars, spotting a bird, and identification. This will be a two-mile walk on dirt/gravel roads including several moderately steep hills and some uneven terrain. We’ll have power line right-of-way, woods and prairie/field. Winter migrants should be arriving. We’ll start at 8:30 AM in the parking lot to the right just inside the gate of Latta Nature Preserve (6211 Sample Rd, Huntersville, NC). There are bathrooms at the Nature Center.

Thursday, Nov 1st: Four-mile Creek Greenway
1/2 Day • Easy* • Contact: Ron Clark [waxwing@bellsouth.net]

Hopefully we will find some winter migrant treats and not left over tricks on this greenway, which has a variety of habitats that always provide good birds regardless of season. We’ll walk 2.5 - 3 miles on paved, flat walkway. There is a bathroom at the parking lot. Meet at the Johnson Rd. parking lot at 8:00 AM.

Saturday, Nov 3rd: Ribbon Walk Nature Preserve
1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Ron Clark [waxwing@bellsouth.net]

Fall migration is petering out and is a good spot to look for early winter migrants. This 187-acre preserve lies just 6.5 miles northeast of uptown Charlotte. An American beech (Fagus grandifolia) grove in the northern portion of the preserve has been designated a Mecklenburg County Treasure Tree site because of the number of large, old trees and its overall natural integrity. We will walk 2-3 miles on narrow, dirt trails that can be steep in places and muddy after a rain. We will meet at 8:00 AM in the parking lot on Hoyt Hinson Rd. Port-a-john in parking lot.

Wednesday, Nov 7th: Mallard Creek/Toby Creek Grnwys
1/2 Day • Easy* • Contact: Judy Walker [birdwalker@me.com]

First we will check out the wetland adjacent to the Kirk Farm Soccer fields and then walk either the Toby Creek or Mallard Creek Greenway. This wet area is good for sparrows which should be starting to come in for the winter. The trail is wide, flat and paved with a boardwalk over the wetland. We will meet at 8:00 AM in the parking lot at the Kirk Farms Soccer Fields.

Tuesday, Nov 13th: Wing Haven (Senior MAS members Only)
10-11:15 AM • Easy* • Contact: Patty Masten [pmasten31@gmail.com]

Do you love nature and birds? Whether you are a novice or bird expert, you are sure to find delight in this special bird walk experience led by Mecklenburg Audubon Society volunteers. MAS has partnered with Wing Haven to offer these special, guided bird walks for Mecklenburg Audubon members. Wing Haven has many benches to sit and observe the birds, brick pathways to stroll and seek, as well as wooded areas to explore. A number of the pathways are ADA compliant and conducive to walkers and wheelchairs. The entire property is about 3 acres. Bring your binoculars and meet/pay at 10:00 am at the main Garden Gate! The cost is $5/person - seniors only! To register, call 703.331.0664 or register online.

SEE BIRDS. SHARE BIRDS. SAVE BIRDS.
Field Trips

Wednesday, Nov. 14th: Colonel Francis Beatty Park
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Judy Walker [birdwalker@me.com]

Wintering sparrows should be arriving and the area behind the ball fields at this park looks like good habitat for them. We’ll also check out the lake for early waterfowl and the adjacent woods for other winter visitors. The trails are natural and basically flat, but the area behind the ball fields although flat can be a bit uneven. Meet at 8:30 AM in the baseball fields parking lot. There are bathroom available at the park.

Saturday, November 17th: Beginner Bird Walk
1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Marcia Howden [howden32@aol.com]

Latta Plantation is a great place to begin learning about birds and birding. Although folks of all levels are welcome, we will concentrate on helping folk new to birding learn their basics of using binoculars, spotting a bird, and identification. This will be a two-mile walk on dirt/gravel roads including several moderately steep hills. We’ll have power line right-of-way, woods and prairie/field. Fall migration could produce a variety of migrants. We’ll start at 8:30 AM in the parking lot to the right just inside the gate of Latta Nature Preserve. There are bathrooms at the Nature Center.

Tuesday, November 20th: Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge
Full Day • Moderate • Contact: Judy Walker [birdwalker@me.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. The day will include several short walks on sometimes uneven trails, plus birding from the road as we drive through the refuge. There are bathrooms at the main entrance and visitor center. Meet at the kiosk/bathroom area at the main entrance off Rt. 52 at 8:00 AM.

Sat., Nov. 24th: Ocean Isle, NC Area
Full Day • Moderate • Contact: Taylor Piephoff [piephoff@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. 16th.

Wednesday, Nov. 28th: Clark’s Creek Nature Preserve
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Judy Walker [birdwalker@me.com]

The fields of this preserve provide great habitat for wintering sparrows as well as meadowlarks. Other winter visitors should also be around. We will be walking about 1.5 miles on mostly flat, smooth, dirt trails. Meet in the parking lot on Hucks Rd. at 8:30 AM. There is a port-a-john.

Saturday, December 1st: McDowell Prairie/Copperhead Island
1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Ron Clark [waxwing@bellsouth.net]

We will be looking for winter migrants including waterfowl at Copperhead Island. We will be walk 2-3 miles on trails that can be uneven at times. There are no facilities. 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.
Field Trips

Tuesday, Dec 4th: Wing Haven (Senior MAS members Only)
10-11:15 AM • Easy • Contact: Patty Masten [pmosten31@gmail.com]

Do you love nature and birds? Whether you are a novice or bird expert, you are sure to find delight in this special bird walk experience led by Mecklenburg Audubon Society volunteers. MAS has partnered with Wing Haven to offer these special, guided bird walks for Mecklenburg Audubon members. Wing Haven has many benches to sit and observe the birds, brick pathways to stroll and seek, as well as wooded areas to explore. A number of the pathways are ADA compliant and conducive to walkers and wheelchairs. The entire property is about 3 acres. Bring your binoculars and meet/pay at 10:00 am at the main Garden Gate! The cost is $5/person - seniors only! To register, call 703.331.0664 or register online.

Wednesday, December 5th: McAlpine Creek Park/Greenway
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Judy Walker [birdwalker@me.com]

This park/greenway doesn’t get birded as much as it use to. The Cottonwood Trail has a wetland created by beavers that can produce some interesting birds. Fields and edges are great for sparrows. We’ll walk 2-3 miles on mostly flat, wide, dirt/gravel trails. There are not facilities. Meet at 8:00 AM in the main parking lot off of Monroe Rd.

Saturday, December 8th: 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 8:45 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. There is very little walking but a fair amount of driving. We will car pool.

Wednesday, December 12th: Four-mile Creek Greenway
1/2 Day • Easy • Contact: Ron Clark [waxwing@bellsouth.net]

This greenway with its variety of habitats always provides good birds regardless of season. We’ll walk 2.5 - 3 miles on paved, flat walkway. There is a bathroom at the parking lot. Meet at the Johnson Rd. parking lot at 8:00 AM.

Christmas Bird Counts

Saturday, Dec. 15th • Gaston CBC
Contact: Steve Tracy [stevepath1@aol.com]

Sunday, Dec 16th • Lake Norman CBC
Contact: Taylor Piephoff [PiephoffT@aol.com]

Saturday, December 22nd • Charlotte CBC
Contact: Ken Kneidel [kenkneidel@gmail.com]

Saturday, December 29th • Pee Dee NWR CBC
Contact: Judy Walker [birdwalker@me.com]
A recent survey by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife asked folks about outdoor activities. The survey revealed bird watching was the second most popular activity after gardening. Wildlife photography was another big winner. With the proliferation of digital cameras in just about everyone’s pocket, it only makes sense that birders, both neophytes and experienced, are trying their hand at photographing birds they encounter. This month’s Year of the Bird challenge is to Share YOUR Shot. So if you take picture of a bird, share it with someone either individually, via social media or contribute to eBirds collection. It’s a great way to get others interested in birds.

10 Incredible Bird Photography Tips for Beginners


Imagine you are at the beach and see a magnificent Bald Eagle. You have your camera. Everything seems perfect! But is it? It’s not if you do not know what makes a good bird photograph. What is the most important factor in getting good bird photographs? Is it the camera; the lens; or the bird? Do you think just by shooting a burst of photographs will give you the best photographs?

Getting a great bird photograph you do need: knowledge of the bird and its activities; knowledge about the gear you are using (proper settings, exposure, etc.); good light, composition, and background; and 3 + 1 Ps (Patience, Perseverance, Practice + Passion).

1. You Don’t Need Expensive Lenses for Great Bird Photography

It is important to realize that bird photography is much more than just the camera or the lens. There is no denial of the fact that the longer the lens, the easier it is to photograph birds which are skittish. But, the lens itself cannot make a great bird photograph.

But, if you do not have a longer telephoto lens, nothing stops you from taking a great photograph of birds like Mallard ducks, geese, gulls, and herons that are easily approachable. If you cannot take a close-up of a Bald Eagle, nothing stops you from taking a unique photograph of a Bald Eagle in its habitat.

2. Light and Composition Photography is all about light.

Early morning and late afternoon light are usually the best time for bird photography. The light during these times is soft. As a bonus, the birds are usually active as well. Soft light has some wonderful characteristics like: not casting harsh shadows on the bird; it brings out a glow to the bird’s plumage; and it gives the catch light in bird’s eye.

Composing a bird photograph helps you to convey a message in the best possible way. Bird photography composition is generally very simple. Following a few basic composition principles will help you make a difference: use rule of thirds composition to place the bird off-center; use color contrast by aiming for complementary background; fill the frame with the bird; and try to use a clean background.

3. Transport the Viewer into the Bird’s World

We see our world at 5 to 6 feet high, but birds see the world in few inches to few feet. To get a feeling of the bird’s world, then you need to get down to their level!

Go Low and Go Slow. Always try to photograph the birds from their eye level, except the birds in flight of course. It creates a more intimate photograph of bird and will transport the viewer into the bird’s world. The bird will be less scared since you can hardly move if you are on the ground.

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10 Photo Tips

4. It’s all in the Eye Take a look at any photograph of a bird. What is the first thing you want to see? It’s the eye…right? We tend to make an eye connection with any living being. It is no different with birds. The eyes are the windows to the soul. If there is no light in the eyes, then they lack dull or lifeless. Birds look lively when there is light in their eye. This light in the eye is called a catch light. To catch it always keep the bird’s eye in sharp focus.

5. Fill the Frame Most bird photography is of an individual bird.

While photographing individual birds, it is always a good idea to fill the frame with the bird. If you fill the frame with the bird, it is easy to focus on the bird, achieve a pleasing blur effect in the background; properly expose the bird, and compose the field.

6. Tell a Story Storytelling in bird photography should not be confused with the stories that run for pages.

Storytelling is a way to express the time of the day, mood, place or activity of the bird in one photograph. Viewers should be able to picture themselves in the scene. Simply put, a photograph with bird and its surrounding will give a better sense of story than just the bird filling the frame. Though, it may not always be true. Ways of conveying a story include; making the bird an integral part of the photograph by including its natural habitat; showing interaction between birds if there is more than one in the photograph; indicating weather conditions by including either snow, rain or mist; taking photographs during sunrise and sunset; and showing the season by including flowers in bloom, autumn colors, etc.

7. Capture their Action & Behavior

Birds are always in action. They hardly sit idle. Capturing birds in action involves more effort and patience compared to photographing perched birds. Here are few tips to capturing birds in action: photograph early in the morning or late in the afternoon when birds are very active; use burst shot mode to take several photographs during the action; track the bird until focus is locked before pressing the shutter; and learn to anticipate the action either by observing or reading about them.

Capturing bird’s behavior is much tougher because birds become alert the moment you are in their sight. The alert bird will always try to fly away. The bird needs to feel comfortable for you to observe their behavior. There are few ways to make the bird comfortable: use a natural place to hide, like a bush or tree or something that obscures you; wait patiently until the bird ignores you; visit the location several days in a row, until the bird becomes comfortable with your presence or you get the right opportunity.

Remember to research and learn everything about the bird you are photographing. This will definitely make you a better bird photographer and also you will enjoy knowing about the bird.

8. Capture their Magnificent Flight

The most interesting part of bird photography is capturing their magnificent flight. This is a very tricky aspect for beginners and pros alike. It is not easy to take flight photographs that will wow viewers. To take good flight photographs learn the bird’s flight patterns and know their landing and taking off patterns. Track the bird for a while and let the camera achieve focus before pressing the shutter. Use Aperture Priority so that you do not have to worry much about changing light conditions.

9. The Background Makes the Picture

Go through all your favorite bird photographs and see it for yourself. The most interesting part of bird photography is capturing their magnificent flight. This is a very tricky aspect for beginners and pros alike. It is not easy to take flight photographs that will wow viewers. To take good flight photographs learn the bird’s flight patterns and know their landing and taking off patterns. Track the bird for a while and let the camera achieve focus before pressing the shutter. Use Aperture Priority so that you do not have to worry much about changing light conditions.

9. The Background Makes the Picture

Go through all your favorite bird photographs and see it for yourself.

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self. Except for extreme close-up portraits of birds, every other type of bird photograph will look great when the background is clean and complementing the bird. Avoid taking bird photographs when the background is too distracting, too plain and/or boring. Wait for the bird to assume a good position or change your position to get an interesting background. Choose maximum aperture values to throw the background completely, or slightly out of focus.

10. Practice with Common Birds

Spend most of your time photographing common birds. Challenge yourself to make some unique photographs of them before you tackle the rarer ones.

Focus your time and energy in learning all the core principles outlined above. Remember proper techniques will always outsmart equipment. Make every attempt to make amazing photographs of the common birds. Enjoy photographing birds. That is the secret to success.

For more Bird Photography Tips
What to do With Fallen Leaves?

You shouldn’t feel obligated to rake up every last leaf in your yard this fall. Leave leaves on the ground — they have a lot of benefit to wildlife and your garden. Below are some tips on how to minimize the time you spend raking and maximize the benefit to wildlife and the greater environment that fallen leaves offer.

• Just let leaves stay where they fall. A leaf layer several inches deep is a natural thing in any area where trees naturally grow. The leaf layer is its own mini ecosystem! Many wildlife species live in or rely on the leaf layer to find food and other habitat, including salamanders, chipmunks, box turtles, toads, shrews, earthworms, many insect species.

• Many butterfly and moth species overwinter as pupae in leaf litter. If you rake up and throw away all of your leaves this fall, you’ll be getting rid of these beneficial and often beautiful insects too. Remember, butterfly and moth caterpillars are a critically important food source for birds in the spring when they are feeding their babies. If you remove of all the pupae with your leaves in the fall, there will be fewer of these insects in and around your yard in in spring.

• From a gardening perspective, fallen leaves offer a double benefit. Leaves form a natural mulch that helps suppress weeds and at the same time fertilize the soil as they break down. Why spend money on mulch and fertilizer when you can make your own?

• If you must rake your leaves, don’t throw them in the trash. Compost them or drop them off at a municipal recycling center so they can be turned into compost that you and other members of your community can use in the spring. Some communities even offer curb side pick-up of leaves specifically for municipal composting operations.

• Avoid leaf blowers. They are loud and create noise pollution and rely on fossil fuels which pollute our air and contribute to global climate change. Use a rake instead. You’ll be able to hear the chirping of birds and other natural sounds while you’re working, plus you’ll get some good exercise!

• If you just want a tidy look in your yard or need to maintain one to comply with Home Owners Association rules, you can rake leaves off the lawn but still use them as mulch in your planting beds. Put them in a big trash can and then shred them with a weed whacker to break them down into a finer textured mulch.

Remember, the less time you have to spend doing the back-breaking work of raking up your leaves, the more time you have to enjoy the gorgeous fall weather outside and the wildlife visiting your garden!

Autumn is a fantastic time to make your yard wildlife-friendly by adding food, water, cover and a place for animals to raise their young!

Image from https://pngtree.com/

Hog Island Audubon Teen Scholarship Available

Hog Island Audubon Camp, located in picturesque Muscongus Bay in Bremen, Maine, is the perfect place to develop and improve bird-watching skills while having the opportunity to view an amazing array of species. Every summer the camp for adults, teens, and families offers various programs that will educate, entertain, and generally inspire bird watchers that enroll. Programs vary in subject matter and include everything from seabird biology and conservation to a program incorporating Arts and Birding. For more information check out all the programs, including a family week at Hog Island Audubon Camp [http://bit.ly/2ReV756]

Several weeks in June have been set aside for teens 14-17 years old. Mecklenburg Audubon is offering a scholarship to any teenager interested in birds and conservation to attend one of these weeks. If you know of a teen who would be interested in this scholarship, please contact Rich McCracken [richard.mccracken@gmail.com] ASPA as the registration deadline is quickly approaching. For more information about these camps go to Mountains to Sea Birding for Teens [http://bit.ly/2RiUlN] and/or Coastal Marine Bird Studies for Teens [http://bit.ly/2RhYaJL].
New NC Plant List

Audubon North Carolina is proud to provide this list of 700 (okay, 692) recommended bird-friendly native plants to serve as a guide for native plant enthusiasts across North Carolina.

The list now includes every North Carolina species that appears in Dr. Larry Mellichamp’s “Native Plants of the Southeast: A Comprehensive Guide to the Best 460 Species for the Garden,” as well as all North Carolina Botanical Garden “Wildflower of the Year” plants!

Species in bird-friendly genera that are becoming more widely available and popular, such as sedges (Carex), Coreopsis, goldrod (Solidago), and Viburnum, have been added, plus even more pollinator-friendly plants. Those making their debut include three new milkweed species, four ironweed species, and Rattlesnake Master.

Habitats, from upland forests and woodland borders to roadsides, old fields, bogs, and maritime forests, are now included to help you group species following the communities in which they occur in nature.

What the List IS

- Plants native to North Carolina (according to Weakley 2015: Flora of the Southern and Mid-Atlantic States)
- Plants that can be cultivated in North Carolina
- Plants that benefit birds or other wildlife, especially pollinators
- Plants that vary in availability from widely available at retail nurseries to available only as passalongs from gardeners

What the List IS NOT

This is not a comprehensive list of all native plants in North Carolina.

The absence of a plant on the list does not mean it isn’t native to our state, nor does it mean the plant does not benefit birds or other wildlife (though we’ve made every effort to include plants with a documented benefit to wildlife, especially birds and other pollinators).

To download this list in an excel spreadsheet go [700 Bird-Friendly Native Plants for North Carolina](http://bit.ly/2RjIu96) the link is at the bottom of the page.

What MASers were doing in October

**Global Big Day (10/6)**
15 participants - 9 hrs - 72 species

**Cowan’s Ford Big Sit (10/14)**
36 participants - 10 hrs - 56 Species

**HBSP (10/20) A soggy walk from the jetty

**Tyvola Seniors at Wing Haven (10/2)**
Meet Your Board Member:

**Malia Kline, Field Trips**

New board member Malia Kline has worked as a writer/producer at WBTV and as an ad agency copywriter. She describes her life’s work as “trying to sell worthless products to an unsuspecting public.” Just kidding.

Her claims to fame are 1) writing a toilet training video that Siskel and Ebert voted a “KidVid of the Year” in the 1990s and 2) winning $113,000 in a season tournament on the game show “The Pyramid.” She recently co-authored a book with her sister (SisterlySnooze.com).

Malia has only been birding for three years, and says you should feel free to share your birding knowledge with her at any and every opportunity. Her favorite birds are Roseate Spoonbill, Barn Owl and Black Skimmer. Malia’s favorite birding spots are both in the Carolinas: Huntington Beach State Park and Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge.