Imagine you are a Great Horned owlet and you find yourself stranded on the ground unable to defend yourself from predators or hunt for your own food. Pretty frightening! Now, imagine that you (as a human) come across two such owlets. What do you do? Well that’s what was the question Cheryl Aguilar had to answer when she was faced with two such owlets. With the help of her husband, Cheryl attempted to relocate the owlets and provide the entire family with a new nest site. At September meeting we meet Cheryl and she will share with us how this dangerous experiment turned out.

Cheryl is a first-time author, self-employed salon owner and self-taught photographer who lives in the small New England town of Westport, MA. Her true passion is her love for nature and wildlife. Her devotion and determination to help the family of owls turned out to be one of the most life changing and gratifying decisions she has ever made. She shares her experience in the book Great Horned Owlets Rescue: Where There’s a Will, There’s a Way… But she will also share those experiences in person at the first meeting of our 2018-19 season. (Her book will be available at the meeting.)

So, if you give a hoot about what happened to these owlets, join us at our nest site – the Tyvola Senior Center (2225 Tyvola Rd.) on Thursday, September 6th. Come early (6:15 PM) for refreshments and to catch up with friends after the summer break. Program will begin at 7:15 PM. See you there.
**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!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Difficulty Key</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saturday, Sept. 1st: Ribbon Walk Nature Preserve</strong></td>
<td>1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Ron Clark [<a href="mailto:waxwing@bellsouth.net">waxwing@bellsouth.net</a>]</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fall migration has begun and is a good spot to look for early 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 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. which is off Nevin Rd. There are no facilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Saturday, Sept. 8th: Beginner Bird Walk</strong></td>
<td>1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Marcia Howden [<a href="mailto:howden32@aol.com">howden32@aol.com</a>]</td>
<td></td>
<td>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 Plantation Nature Preserve (6211 Sample Rd, Huntersville, NC). There are bathrooms at the Nature Center.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday, Sept. 12th: Clark’s Creek Nature Preserve</strong></td>
<td>1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Judy Walker [<a href="mailto:birdwalker@me.com">birdwalker@me.com</a>]</td>
<td></td>
<td>The 109-acres of this preserve is primarily grassy/brushy fields (old agriculture fields), edges and forest. We will be walking about 1.5 miles on mostly flat, smooth, dirt trails. Meet in the parking lot on Hucks Rd. (5542 Hucks Rd, Charlotte, NC) at 8:00 AM. There is a port-a-john at the site.</td>
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<td><strong>Saturday, Sept. 15th: Six-mile Creek Greenway</strong></td>
<td>1/2 Day • Easy* • Contact: Judy Walker [<a href="mailto:birdwalker@me.com">birdwalker@me.com</a>]</td>
<td></td>
<td>Located in the southern part of the county on the South Carolina border near the Union County line, this short greenway (1-mile one way) always provides interesting birds. The trail is flat, paved handicapped accessible. No facilities. Meet at 8:00 AM in the parking lot which is at the corner of Patterson Rd. and Marvin Rd.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday, Sept. 18th: McAlpine Creek Park/Greenway</strong></td>
<td>1/2 Day • Moderate* • Contact: Ron Clark [<a href="mailto:waxwing@bellsouth.net">waxwing@bellsouth.net</a>]</td>
<td></td>
<td>McAlpine Creek Park and Greenway have an amazing variety of habitat: fishing pond, open grassy areas, edges, woods, creeks and even a beaver pond. Over the years it has produced some pretty amazing birds, including this past May two Black-bellied Whistling Ducks. The walk will be on wide dirt/gravel paths. Depending on what trails we take it will be predominately on flat terrain. The hill trail near the beaver pond is steep. We will meet at 8:00 AM in the parking lot off of Monroe Rd (8711 Monroe Rd, Charlotte, NC 28212).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sunday, Sept. 23rd: Hawk Watch (BRP MP 235)</strong></td>
<td>All Day • Easy* • Contact: Judy Walker [<a href="mailto:birdwalker@me.com">birdwalker@me.com</a>]</td>
<td></td>
<td>We going to head up to the Blue Ridge Parkway to a well-established hawk watch, Mahogany Rock Overlook at milepost 235. We will plan on arriving around 8:30 AM at the overlook. Since the hawks probably won’t start moving until around 10 AM, we will walk an adjacent trail looking for migrating war-</td>
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**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.
bblers. Then we will gather on the lawn at the overlook around 10 AM and start scanning the sky for hawks. Bring something to sit on (lawn chair, blanket, etc.), lunch, snacks, and water. There are no facilities at the overlook except bushes. Doughton Park which does have facilities is at milepost 240.

If you would like to car pool, meet at 6:15 AM at the Bojangles on Sam Furr Rd. in Huntersville (9145 Sam Furr Rd, Huntersville, NC 28078). Please let Judy know if you are planning on carpooling. Otherwise, plan on being at the overlook by 8:30 AM for the warbler walk or 10 AM for Hawk Watching, but still let Judy know you will be joining the group.

**Wednesday, Sept. 26th: Little Sugar Creek Greenway**

1/2 Day • Moderate* • Contact: Judy Walker [birdwalker@me.com]

It has been a long time since we have had an official walk on Huntingtowne Farms section of the Little Sugar Creek Greenway, which has been productive during migration in the past. The county has been working on restoring the creek bed and developing more of the greenway itself. So let’s take a look at what they have been doing and seeing how the habitat has changed. The bulk of this 2-mile, flat walk will be paved but a portion may be on dirt. We will meet at 8:00 AM in the parking lot at the end of Huntingtowne Farms Lane (adjacent to the South Park Swim & Tennis Club). There are no facilities.

**Tuesday, Oct. 2nd: Wing Haven (Senior MAS Only)**

1.5 Hrs. • 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 (248 Ridgewood Ave.) 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.

**Saturday, October 13th: Six-mile Creek Greenway**

1/2 Day • Easy* • Contact: The Blakesley [jclemons@mindspring.com]

Located in the southern part of the county on the South Carolina border near the Union County line, this short greenway (1-mile one way) always provides interesting birds. The trail is flat, paved handicapped accessible. No facilities. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot lot which is at the corner of Patterson Rd. and Marvin Rd.

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**Special Event**

**Saturday, October 6th:**

All Day • Moderate

Last spring, we participated in Cornell’s Global Big Day by conducting our Spring Count on that day. The project was so successful for Cornell they have decided to do it again for the fall migration. We have come up with a unique way to participate with our very own Big Day.

Not familiar with what a Big Day is? Well imagine trying to see as many different bird species in one 24-hr. period as you could. That’s a Big Day. We’re not going to make you do 24-hours, but we are going to help you to see how many species can be seen in the county in one 8-hour day.

To do this we won’t spend a lot of time at any one birding spot but try to hit as many different habitats as possible. Since the county is pretty large and we will be trying to do this on in the midst of Saturday traffic, we are going to split into two groups. One group will cover spots in the northern part of the county, the other will visit spots in the southern portion. Ron and Judy will be group leaders.

We are still working out all the details, so mark your calendar and check back later in September.

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**Wednesday, Sept. 26th: Little Sugar Creek Greenway**

1/2 Day • Moderate* • Contact: Judy Walker [birdwalker@me.com]

It has been a long time since we have had an official walk on Huntingtowne Farms section of the Little Sugar Creek Greenway, which has been productive during migration in the past. The county has been working on restoring the creek bed and developing more of the greenway itself. So let’s take a look at what they have been doing and seeing how the habitat has changed. The bulk of this 2-mile, flat walk will be paved but a portion may be on dirt. We will meet at 8:00 AM in the parking lot at the end of Huntingtowne Farms Lane (adjacent to the South Park Swim & Tennis Club). There are no facilities.
Field Trips

Sunday, October 14th - The Big Sit (Cowan’s Ford Refuge)
All Day • Easy*

This is a fun-filled day of birding with minimal walking. It takes place in the viewing stand at Cowan’s Ford Refuge, which is at the end of Neck Rd. off of Beatties Ford Rd. It will start at daybreak and end around 5 PM, whenever the last folks leave. You can come for an hour or all day. Bring a chair, snacks and your binoculars. This is a great way to meet folks, and one of the few outings where talking is okay. We will have grill for some hot dogs around noon. Sign-up isn’t necessary, just come and enjoy.

Saturday, October 20th: McDowell Prairie
1/2 Day • Moderate • Contact: Jim Guyton [guytonj@att.net]

This carefully managed piedmont prairie has produced some interesting birds in the fall. Target birds will be early winter migrants. We will walk 2-2.5 miles on dirt trails with moderate hills. There are no facilities. We will meet at 8:30 AM. 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.

Saturday, October 20-21 - Huntington Beach State Park
Weekend Trip • Strenuous • Contact: Judy Walker [birdwalker@me.com]

This is our fall sojourn to a South Carolina birding hot spot. Fall migrants – hawks and warblers – will still be moving through, wintering shorebirds will have settled in and a few ducks may also have begun arriving. This is probably the best time of the year to see Peregrine Falcons and Merlins, and I am sure we will be delighted with spectacular views of thousands of tree swallows and clapper rails up close and personal.

We will meet in the parking lot on the eastside of the causeway at 7:30 AM. It can get pretty hot so remember a hat, sunscreen and plenty of water. We will eat lunch in the park, so you will also need to bring food.

Since many participants stay for the weekend, we usually go out to dinner on Saturday night. At dinner we will plan where we will go on Sunday.

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.
The September Year of the Bird challenge is to help migrating birds on their way to wintering ground. And even though we took a few months off, there is still time to meet the challenges for July and August. The July challenge was to introduce a child birding. August’s challenge is to visit public lands such as local, state and national parks, nature preserves, and wild life refuges.

On one hand, kids are spending less and less time in nature. According to a Nature Conservancy survey (http://bit.ly/2nsQEiY), only about 10 percent of kids spend some time outside every day, and a similar poll by the British TV channel Eden (http://bit.ly/2nu3lcI) revealed 64 percent of children in Britain play outdoors less than once a week. There are a lot of reasons behind this drop in outdoor activity—lack of access to natural areas, too-cautious parents, funny cat memes on the internet—but the result is clear: a decreasing interest in nature as kids grow up.

On the other, birds need more human friends—especially young people. Helping a child forge a connection with nature is possibly the most meaningful thing anyone can do to help create a brighter future for birds. The trouble is, most children don’t even know birding exists or understand what it really is. They may have a vague notion old people like to look at birds, but that’s about all.

Children are curious, imaginative, and resourceful. By nurturing those traits, you can turn them into young birders. Helping the next generation learn the joys of birding is important, but first you have to make it fun. This may sound obvious, but fun for kids is different than what we as adult think of as fun. Birding requires patience and attentiveness, a skill often lacking in children. But children like to collect things. Birds can be the real-life channel for this collective obsession. Here are some tips and ideals on how you can engage kids’ innate curiosity and help them enjoy nature, especially birds.

**Start with a Library:** There is a wealth of children’s literature about birds and nature. Sharing these books with kids will introduce them to a fascinating world outside their door. They will also begin to develop vocabulary about nature that makes going outside more familiar to them. Kid friendly bird guides to include: The Young Birder’s Guide to North America, ages 9-12; National Audubon Society First Field Guide: Birds, ages 9-12; Stokes Beginner’s Guide to Birds, all ages; National Geographic Kids Bird Guide of North America, ages 8-10. The library should also include activity books such as Bird Watching for Kids: Bite-sized learning and Backyard Projects (George Harrison).

**Make It a Game:** Even for adults birding is essentially a game with a goal. Children love looking for things, so turn a bird walk into a scavenger hunt. Don’t limit the walk to just birds, since they can at times be very elusive, have the children investigate under logs, look at flowers, hug a tree. Start kids out with careful observation first—what happens when you melt into the background and let the animals go about their business?

Continued on page 6
everyday lives? Later, you could challenge older kids to follow a single bird for a set time to see what they can learn about it.

**EXPLORE THE SENSES:** Screen time gives kids lots of stimulation, but it’s mostly visual. Once outside, encourage your kids to close their eyes and focus on what they can hear, the smell of the fresh air, or the feel of the sunshine and breeze. Chances are, this will lead to questions and next steps.

Let Them Lead. Another way to make birding more enjoyable for kids is to give them a little taste of autonomy. Birds can be found pretty much anywhere, in all kinds of habitats. So, let the kid pick where to go!

**SET EXPECTATIONS—POSITIVELY:** Expectations are crucial for you and for kids. Take some time to plan your outing so you know how far you want to go and how long you want to spend on activities. Depending on age, a half-hour could be a good target, and make sure it’s an adventure, not a forced march. Set some ground rules—but try to keep them from starting with “no.” For instance, “No yelling” could become “Explore quietly.”

**GET THEM USING THE GEAR:** Fancy scopes, binoculars, and cameras are a birder’s toys, and they’re just as fun for kids as they are for adults. They are like magic glasses. For a child who’s only seen birds with their bare eyes, seeing the details of a bird’s feathers and other features through a lens can be life changing. Give the kid ample time with binoculars or at the scope, and they really get into the experience.

It can be difficult for kids to use binoculars, though, and frustrating if they can’t see what they’re looking for. As a good beginner exercise, getting them to read the words on some sign in the distance will help them learn to use the focus and hold the binoculars steady. When looking at birds, the same advice that works for adults works for kids: lock onto the bird with your bare eyes, slowly raise the binoculars up without moving, and you will be looking in the right place. Success.

**GIVE THE KID A CAMERA:** A photo of a bird, with a smartphone or a relatively inexpensive point-and-shoot, will give the kid something concrete to remember their experience. Photographs will help with them learn identification, too, as they review their images from the day.

**KEEP IT SIMPLE:** The fewer things a kid has to carry into the field, the more they can concentrate on observing. Because binoculars can be difficult for young children to use and may fragment their attention. For kids, stick with lower-magnification binoculars (8x or less); they provide a wider field of view and will be easier to focus & hold steady.

**EMBRACE EVERYDAY BIRDS:** While they often seem invisible to adults, everyday birds can be magic for children. Watching a sparrow give itself a dust bath is a joy that, to kids, is as thrilling as any rare sighting. And it’s not just sparrows: The avian population in cities is as diverse as the people.

**INVEST IN A FEEDER:** No yard? No problem. Anyone can hang a bird feeder on the back patio or balcony. Suction-cup window feeders can also do the trick. Seeing birds up-close-and-personal at window is a great way to introduce children to birds.

**KNOW WHEN TO USE TECHNOLOGY:** Technology and nature aren’t incompatible, especially for kids born into a device-dominated world. A smartphone with Cornell’s Merlin Bird ID app (http://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/) can help you and your kids identify birds and pull up song recordings to help you find out what you’re hearing. You can also load plant or bug ID apps, and take photos, video, or audio recordings of memorable or puzzling sights and sounds. The rest of the time, it’s tucked inconspicuously in your pocket.

**SHARE ENTHUSIASM—IT’S CONTAGIOUS:** Almost by definition, the first bugs, birds, or plants your kids see when they step outside will be the common ones. Even so, crows, jays, ducks, etc., are still likely to be brand-new to the kids, so look at them with new eyes. Ask the kids to imagine what the birds are doing and why—and get them to tell you what they find exciting, beautiful, or intriguing. You might be amazed at how insightful their ideas are.

**DON’T FORCE IT:** Play it cool. Just making kids aware of what birding is, can provide a basic foundation that they can return when they’re older and looking for a new activity.
Most people think of our national parks as remote destinations requiring a long trip, but there are national parks close to wherever you live. The national park system is composed of 417 distinct sites, covering all 50 states and most of our island territories. Collectively called our national park system, these protected places range from important historical and cultural sites to some of the country’s most stunning and important habitat. And yet, many people have only visited a handful of these parks, and oftentimes they are the most famous ones: Acadia, Yellowstone, Zion, to name a few. There is great birding to be found in most of them, and where there aren’t a lot of birds, you’ll learn something new about our culture or history, so it’s still worth a visit.

First, it helps to know what exactly our national park system entails. While the most famous and popular sites are often the ones designated “National Park”—see: Yosemite or Yellowstone—the majority have other designations. The national park system also includes military Parks, battlefields, lakeshores, seashores, monuments, and a host of other places. Though lots of people intuit that the sites officially called national parks are somehow “better” than those with other designations, it’s not really true—the reason for different designations is complicated, sometimes reflecting slightly different management for the site or just the politics involved.

No matter what designation, each site is managed by the National Park Service with a mandate to “conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and wildlife therein, and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.” (http://bit.ly/2nt5K7F)

This mandate is important, because it separates national parks from other public lands. For example, lands run by the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management are managed partly for public enjoyment, but also for agricultural harvest and mineral development. On the other end of the spectrum, lands in our National Wilderness Preservation System, which spans multiple agencies, are meant to remain “untrammeled by man” rather than for public enjoyment. That makes national parks the best of both worlds for a birder: an area that is managed to protect the natural environment while also providing access to the public.

Many of these national parks are world-famous for their wildlife. For birders, however, the most popular national parks aren’t always the areas with the largest bird diversity.

A big plot of land does not guarantee a big list of birds. Features like high habitat diversity, whether a park is a migrant trap, and the “Central Park” oasis effect can all lead to a large number of different birds. The same goes for national parks, where sometimes the parks with the most bird species aren’t the biggest or most famous—or even set aside to conserve nature in the first place.

Nicholas Lund, author of The Birdist blog and writer for Audubon, combed through eBird hotspots and determined how many different bird species have been seen in all 417 of America’s national parks (http://bit.ly/2w0qpnz). The parks at the top of the list aren’t necessarily the ones you’d expect. Here are 10 of the most surprisingly bird-rich parks in the country.

10. NATIONAL MALL, WASHINGTON DC—260 SPECIES

Most people visit the National Mall to see its famous monuments, statues, and memorials. Others visit this green expanse in the center of our nation’s capital to seek wildlife. The Potomac River flows along the western edge of the Mall and is home to waterfowl in all seasons. Parts of the Mall with extensive vegetation, especially Hains Point, act as migration traps in spring and fall. In all, at least 260 different bird species have been recorded in this patriotic urban oasis.

9. CABRILLO NATIONAL MONUMENT, CA—262 SPECIES

Nature isn’t the primary purpose of this small site near San Diego. Rather, Cabrillo National Monument commemorates the site of the first European expedition to reach what became America’s Pacific Coast. Still, the location is a nature-lover’s dream. Visitors can explore tide pools along the rocks, watch the passage of migrating whales in the right seasons, and of course scan the waves for seabirds. Plus, as a peninsula sticking out into the Pacific, Cabrillo is a perfect trap for vagrants migrating up and down the coast.

8. FORT MCHENRY NATIONAL MONUMENT, MD—265 SPECIES

O say, can you see. . . lots of different birds? The sight of the bedraggled American flag over this Baltimore fortress inspired Francis Scott Key to write what became the National Anthem in 1814. Nowadays this historic site inspires birders to scour the grounds and look out over the Chesapeake Bay. The fort juts out into the Bay, acting as a perfect migrant trap and an urban oasis for birds flying over Baltimore City. At least 265 different species have been spotted at Fort McHenry, despite it being the smallest national park on this list at just 43 acres.
YOUR National Parks

7. Lake Mead National Recreation Area, AR/NV—268 species
A man-made lake in the middle of the Mojave Desert might not seem like a birder's dream, but truth is, the National Recreation Area is an actual oasis for birds, providing a vital water source in a parched landscape. At least 268 different birds have been spotted in the park, including dozens of species of ducks, geese, and other waterfowl that don’t have many options for resting and refueling in the desert. Most of the best birding is on the western shore of the park, just upriver from the Hoover Dam and less than an hour's drive from Las Vegas.

6. Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, IN—285 species
Spring and fall birding is superb at Indiana Dunes, where migrants stop on their way north and south. Situated along the otherwise industrialized Lake Michigan shoreline east of Gary, Indiana, this National Lakeshore protects 15 miles of dunes, wetlands, forests, and prairies. The park is a haven for the federally endangered Karner blue butterfly and has hosted at least 285 bird species. The park is especially hopping during spring and fall migrations, when thousands of birds pause along the shorelines before continuing to their breeding or wintering grounds.

5. Carlsbad Caverns National Park, NM—310 species
Birders have recorded at least 311 bird species at Carlsbad Caverns—not bad for a park most famous for what's happening underground. In fact, all 311 species have been reported at just one hotspot: Rattlesnake Springs, just a few miles east of the main body of the park. Rattlesnake is another true oasis in the desert, and an officially recognized Important Bird Area. The place is a magnet for eastern vagrants, and just about every Eastern warbler—including Cape May, Prothonotary, and Kentucky—has been seen in spring or fall.

4. Death Valley National Park, CA/NV—357 species
Who knew that a place named Death would contain so much life? Indeed, the hottest, driest, and lowest national park in the country—and the largest national park in the lower 48—is also one of the birdiest. Find the water in Death Valley, and you'll find lots of birdlife. As with some other desert parks on this list, birders should look for water to find wildlife. At Death Valley, the best spot is the Furnace Creek area, which has hosted more than 330 different species.

3. Big Bend National Park, TX—360 species
The lower Rio Grande Valley might get all the accolades as a national birding destination, but this national park, located far north along the river, is just as much of a goldmine. Here, habitat diversity is key; Big Bend protects desert, river edges, desert springs, oak-pinyon woods, and the high-elevation woodlands of the Chisos Mountains. The result is an incredible diversity of birdlife, highlighted perhaps by the only known American breeding location of the Colima Warbler.

2. Gateway National Recreation Area, NY/NJ—375 species
Gateway National Recreation Area is composed of a few bits of greenery clinging like barnacles to the hull of New York City, but those bits make up some incredibly important bird habitat. Jamaica Bay is a world-famous wetland complex where birders have spotted all manner of shorebirds and waterfowl. The Sandy Hook unit, on the other side of Lower New York Bay in New Jersey, is a classic migrant trap. The 356 species seen at Sandy Hook make it one of the birdiest single spots in the nation.

1. Point Reyes National Seashore, CA—444 species
Point Reyes National Seashore has recorded more species of birds than any other national park in the nation. The seashore, on the California coast just above San Francisco, hits all the requirements for a birdy park: great diversity of habitat that includes coastline, forest, wetland, and open fields; a jutting peninsula serving as a migrant trap; seawatch promontories; and proximity to a big city (with lots of birders). Point Reyes perhaps isn’t as famous as Yosemite or Zion, but to a birder, it’s absolute heaven.

Adapted from:

National Parks in the Carolinas

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<td>Fort Sumter National Monument</td>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>102</td>
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<td>199</td>
<td>Kings Mountain National Military Park</td>
<td>South Carolina</td>
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When most of us think about migrating birds we think about the neotropical migrants – warblers, grosbeaks, tanagers, hummingbirds – that arrive in the spring and leave in the fall. We don’t think of the birds that arrive in the fall – sparrows, juncos, siskins, creepers – and leave in the spring as migrants, but they are. Your garden is one piece (albeit small) of the migratory highway important to both groups of migrants.

Gardens are alive. No matter what time of year, if you quietly listen and watch, you will notice the plethora of activity. From budding flowers in the spring to the rustle of withered seedheads in the fall, our gardens are supporting animals of all shapes and sizes. Here’s a secret not all gardeners know—if you choose to be a messy gardener in the fall and winter—the wildlife value of your garden soars.

Seedheads left on dried flowering plants are a bird’s paradise. Numerous North American songbirds eat seeds—finches, sparrows, chickadees, buntings, jays, nut-hatches, blackbirds, grosbeaks, etc. One stop in a messy garden packed with dead, seed-filled, native flowers equals a smorgåsbord for resident and migratory birds.

Several native shrubs and trees produce carbohydrate-fat-fiber-rich fruits that small mammals and especially, birds rely on in the fall and winter. These resources have been found to be essential for migrating birds attempting to keep up their energy reserves for long flights. According to an article in ScienceDaily (http://bit.ly/2ntODm7), the conditions of winter habitat for migrating birds, it turns out, are a crucial to their survival and reproductive success in the spring. Savannah Sparrows were studied in their wintering grounds of the southern United States. The birds turned out to be very sensitive to climatic changes in their wintering habitats. In particular, their ability to access reliable food resources essential during long periods of cold or unusual weather influenced their breeding success in the spring. Gardens rich in shriveled fruits and abundant seedheads help these migratory birds survive not only winter, but spring breeding.

The same is true for our year-round-seed-eating birds. Bird feeders, especially those that are well-maintained, are a popular hang-out spot for birds in their wintering habitat; but, a messy garden can provide a comparable, more natural foraging habitat. Some native flowers that provide an abundance of seeds in the fall and winter are goldenrod (Solidago), asters (Asteraceae), cone flowers (Echinacea), sunflowers (Helianthus), Coreopsis, and Black-eyed Susan (Rudbeckia). These species are native to our region. If they are not in your garden, consider adding them.

Spiders, reptiles, amphibians, rodents, and 96% of all terrestrial birds depend on insects for food (Doug Tallamy). An overgrown end of the season garden is great habitat for insect meals. Vital pollinators, such as native bees, may overwinter in your messy garden. Cellophane bees (Colletes inaequalis), will create burrows in the ground to reproduce and ride-out the cold winter months. There are around 12,000 different kinds of moths and 865 butterfly species in North America. Many of these lepidoptera such as the mourning cloak (Nymphalis antiopa) may take refuge in your messy garden overwinter. All of these animals are important sources for migrating birds.

**HOW TO ENCOURAGE A MESSY GARDEN**

- Leave your leaves on the property
- Allow the gorgeous dried flower heads to stay standing in your garden
- Let the grass grow tall and seed
- Build a brush pile with fallen branches instead of removing them
- Forget the chemicals
- Leave snags on your property
- Delay garden clean-up until spring, after several 50˚ days, which allows overwintering pollinators to “wake-up” for spring and move on.

Adapted from The Wildlife Value of a Messy Garden, by Becca Rodomsky-Bish (http://bit.ly/2nu7CNI)
Seven Great Reasons to Love The Migratory Bird Stamp

Among the U.S.’s many spectacular federal and state lands, it pays to remember the wildlife havens that are the National Wildlife Refuge system, administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This system of more than 500 areas is managed primarily for the benefit of wildlife, and they are great places to see birds of all kinds, including waterfowl, shorebirds, and songbirds. Buying a Migratory Bird Stamp (http://bit.ly/2nucphJ) is a simple and direct way for birders to contribute to grassland and wetland conservation.

1. **Over $1 Billion for Conservation and Counting.** By law, the funds raised go directly to habitat acquisition in the lower 48 states. Stamp sales have surpassed $1 billion and helped to protect 6.5 million acres of wetland and grassland habitat.

2. **A Bargain at $25.** Ninety-eight cents of each dollar spent on a stamp goes directly to land conservation for the National Wildlife Refuge System (https://www.fws.gov/refuges/). This $25 purchase is perhaps the single simplest thing you can do to support a legacy of wetland and grassland conservation for birds.

3. **It’s Much More Than Ducks.** Waterfowl hunters have long been the main supporters for the program—the stamps are a requirement for anyone 16 or older who wants to hunt. But the funds benefit scores of other bird species, including shorebirds, herons, raptors, and songbirds, not to mention reptiles, amphibians, fish, butterflies, native plants, and more.

4. **Save Wetlands; Save Grasslands.** Since 1958, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has used stamp revenues to protect “waterfowl production areas”—over 3 million acres—within the critical Prairie Pothole Region. The same program also protects declining prairie-nesting birds in the face of increasing loss of grasslands. As a result, refuges are among the best places to find grassland specialties such as Bobolinks, Grasshopper Sparrows, Clay-colored Sparrows, Sedge Wrens, etc.

5. **The Benefits Are Gorgeous.** Some of the most diverse and wildlife-rich refuges across the Lower 48 have been acquired with stamp funds.

6. **It’s Your Free Pass to Refuges.** A migratory bird stamp is a free pass for an entire year to all refuges that charge for admission—so your $25 could even save you money.

7. **As Bird Watchers, Let’s Get in on the Secret.** Though it’s long been a fixture in hunting circles, the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp is one of the best-kept secrets in all of bird conservation. It’s time to buy and show your stamp!

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**Birding with Kids**

At the same time, some kids are just into other stuff. If kids don’t take up birding right away, try something else. In the end, if you can just get kids outside somehow, they’ll be alright.

**Additional Resources:** Cornell Lab of Ornithology sponsors two education programs that include activities you can use with children and teenagers. BirdSleuth K-12 project (http://www.birdsleuth.org/) is packed with great ideas, from fun activities like outdoor scavenger hunts and bird bingo cards to full curriculum plans. Celebrate Urban Birds (https://celebrateurbanbirds.org/) is a fun and interactive project that aims to reach diverse birders from preschool age on up. It offers species-ID tools and supports local art, gardening, and science events.

This article was adapted from the following sources:

- How to Feed Your Kid’s Urge to Bird, By Linda McCarthy (https://www.audubon.org/news/how-feed-your-kids-urge-bird)
- Birdist Rule #7: Take a Kid Birding, Tips from Nicholas Lund (http://bit.ly/2w0u44u)
Carolina Wren

I heard you’re back in town.
From a hidden perch in the leafy balcony
Your distinctive “tweedled, tweedled”
Penetrates the forest foliage.

Neighboring titmice and towhees
Must marvel the big sound
That projects from your tiny body
Clear and musical above the woodland choir.

Today I saw you strutting atop the wood pile
Dapper in cinnamon dress-jacket
Over a buff waistcoat
Tail cocked at a jaunty angle.

Pausing in the dance occasionally
To throw back your head in song
Throat bulging like a bagpipe
Coaxing some chick to mate.
Through a side door
You will lure her into my garage
Like it’s some cheap motel
To build a love nest.

But you’re a sloppy builder
Leaving pine straw and twigs
Strewn across the floor
And white bombs splashed on my windshield
So, again this year I’ll close the door
Hang fern-pots under the porch eaves
Where you can raise your family
And I will savor your sweet southern song.

BirdGroups

We are all familiar with phrases like a kettle of hawks
and a covey of quail to describe a group of birds. Well
the readers of Wild Bird News a while back added a
few more to the list.

...a ladle of dippers
...a dash of bitterns
...a gallon of petrels
...a Rockefeller of oystercatchers
...a pack of Larks
...a U of terns
...a marathon of roadrunners
...a family of partridge
...a spread of eagles
...a civilization of Inca Doves

...an inferno of Lucifer Hummingbirds
...a liturgy of Vesper Sparrows
...a depression of Blue Grouse
...a revenge of Montezuma Quail
...a hogey of Sandwich Terns
...a grumbling of grouse
...a reel of Virginia Rails
...a cushion of pintails
...a hobbling of Limpkins
...a trap of boobys

...a ballet of nutcrackers
...an illusion of Merlins
...a statutory of mynas
...a bushel of Acorn Woodpeckers
...a gulp of swallows
...a construction of cranes
...a bunch of Olive Sparrows
...a tintintabulation of Bell’s Vireos
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Meet Your Board Member:
Rich McCracken, Vice President

Rich McCracken is the MAS Board Vice President. Rich grew up in Lancaster, PA and graduated from University of Maryland. He has been in finance most of his working life traveling the country and world. He worked for Alcoa for 31 years. Rich lived in Charleston for many years and got interested in birds when his neighbor took him on a bird walk and he was hooked. Rich enjoys birding in SC at Bear Island, Bull Island, and Donnelly NWR. He enjoys making a yearly trip in Jan/Feb to Santee National Wildlife Refuge and seeing the flock of Sandhill Cranes. Rich’s loves to travel, work in his yard, and tend to his vegetable garden. He loves seeing raptors and he and his wife Susan are taking a trip to Panama in January where he is hoping to see the elusive Harpy Eagle. He was especially excited to see this Red-crowned Crane in Japan this past February, it is on the endangered species list.

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Renew now and your membership will be effective until June 2019.

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

Name: ______________________________________________________________
Address: ____________________________________________________________
Phone: ______________________ E-mail: _________________________________

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

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- Do a program
- Help at events

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