

TRILLIUM CUNEATUM

Most lowcountry soils are decidedly acid, a pH of about 4.5, but there are swaths which are nearer to neutral. The latter may be recognized by the presence of beech trees, one of the noblest and most easily distinguished of our forest trees. It is on these sites, but only a few of them, that one now can find the first signs of Trillium cuneatum.

This Trillium bears maroon to wine-red petals; although rarely one finds yellow-petaled specimens. Almost always they occur in colonies, often growing in extensive stands. They are perennials, arising from short rootstocks and appearing in late winter, when they can take advantage of the unobstructed sunlight reaching the floor of the deciduous forests. By late spring most of them have withered in the heat and returned to the dormant stage.

One plant brought in to the garden will, in a few years, produce hundreds of seedlings, providing, of course, that they are afforded a loamy, woodland setting with a sprinkling of basic slag or agricultural limestone. The name Trillium stems from the Latin word for three, alluding to the three leaves that each plant bears.

Edmund R. Cuthbert, Jr.

THE LESSER SQUAWK
116 Presidents Circle
Summerville, S.C. 29483

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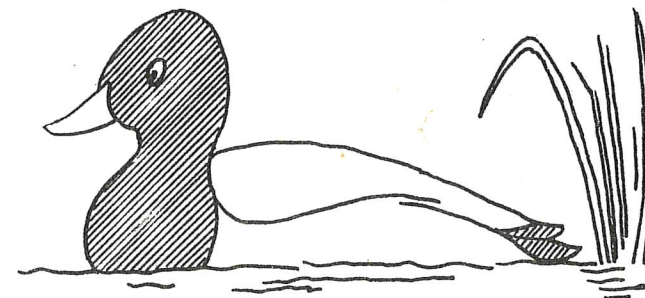


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FEBRUARY ACTIVITIES

Tuesday, February 13, 1973 - 8:00 PM
REGULAR MEETING AT CHARLESTON MUSEUM

FIELD TRIP - ALL DAY - FEBRUARY 18, 1973
THE WEDGE PLANTATION, McCLELLANVILLE

SKYWATCHERS' FIELD TRIP - CALL 723-0856
AFTER 5:00 PM FOR FURTHER DETAILS

The regular monthly meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 13, 1973 at 8:00 PM in the Charleston Museum lecture room. This month's program promises to be unique. Dr. Norman Chamberlain, a professor of biology at the College of Charleston, and a CNHS member, will present a program on his recent trip to the Sargasso Sea. Don't miss it!

The regular field trip will be an all day trip to the Wedge Plantation, home of Dr. Richard Dominick, the world famous lepidopterist. Those wishing to take part should meet at the Charleston Museum at 6:30 AM or at the Mt. Pleasant Piggly Wiggly parking lot at 6:45 AM. The leader will be Richard D. Porcher, Jr. Bring a lunch and be prepared for a very interesting trip.

CHARLESTON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Our annual Christmas bird count was held on December 30, 1972 under the direction of Julian Harrison. There were 31 members and guests participating. The weather was warm and overcast with a threat of rain and this probably contributed to the lack of bird movement. A total of 147 species, one less than last year, and approximately 11,400 individual birds were observed.

An unusual number (500-600) of Pine Warblers were observed, including one flock of about 400 seen by Pat Probst's group. Two unusual observations were made: an adult, male Summer Tanager was seen by Robert Wilcox; a Lincoln's Sparrow was observed and a Long-eared Owl was heard by Perry Nugent.

THE LITCHFIELD BIRD COUNT

Again this year members of CNHS were invited to join a group of birders in North Litchfield for their Christmas Count. As usual, Pat and Renee Probst provided us with a nice day, and although no unusual birds were seen, 128 species were recorded. Because of the small number of birders, the area was divided up so that each party had an inland section in the morning and a marsh-coastal section in the afternoon. This wide range of habitats enabled some groups to see more than 100 species during the day. If you are interested in some exciting birding, try the Litchfield-Pawley's Island area.

BELLEFIELD BIRD CENSUS RESULTS

The annual Bellefield Bird count was held on November 19th. A total of 46 people in nine parties were in the field from 8:00 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. 136 species and 8567 birds were sighted. Some of the less common birds seen were 8 turkeys, 2 Black Rails, 1 Virginia Rail, 1 Black Headed Gull, 1 Henslow's sparrow and 1 Grasshopper sparrow.

We were the guests of Miss Ella Severin for a wonderful breakfast and lunch at the Holiday Inn.

NOTICE TO AUDUBON MEMBERS

National Audubon has computerized its membership renewal system to provide better service to its members. Two months before your present membership expires, you will receive a computer card and return envelope from National Audubon. Please return only the card and your remittance in the envelope provided. Should your renewal notice be misplaced, Audubon will be sending a reminder one month prior to expiration.

THE SKY-WATCHERS' GUIDE

The February skies over Charleston are the most sparkling of the year, presenting to the observer the greatest number of first magnitude stars.

Before it is completely dark, at the beginning of the second week, two planets may be visible. Not far above the horizon where the sun has set, Mercury will be poised, white in appearance, and twinkling in a starlike manner. This is due to the fact that the light reflected from the planet is struggling through the dense atmosphere that is closest to the earth's surface. By the twenty-fifth of the month, Mercury will reach its greatest eastern elongation, at which time it will not set until nearly 7:30 P.M. High in the east, Saturn shines with a steady, yellow light, not far from red Aldebaran. By month's end, Saturn will be west of the meridian. The viewing distance between the two planets at that time will be short enough for study and comparison. A good telescope will reveal the appearance of the surface of Mercury to be similar to that of the moon, with light and dark areas. Saturn, surrounded by its rings, is always a thrilling sight, whether viewed through the telescope for the first, or the one hundred and first time!

On the fifteenth, at 8:00 P.M., brilliant Sirius will be directly on the meridian, with the constellations Orion and Auriga just west and east of the meridian, respectively.

Under favorable circumstances, we who live in the latitude of Charleston should be able to see something that is not visible farther north. This is Canopus, the second-brightest star in the heavens as viewed from earth. Canopus is located in one of the constellations of the southern hemisphere. Since Canopus describes a low arc along the horizon, much of its brilliance is absorbed by the earth's dense atmosphere, and thus to an observer at this latitude it appears no brighter than Polaris. By following a line directly south of Sirius when it is on the meridian, Canopus may be detected at the highest point of its arc. It is orange in color.

Polaris, the North Star, may now be seen almost equi-distant between Cassiopeia in the northwest, and the Big Dipper in the northeast.

For the "Nighthawks" among us, as well as the "Early Birds", there is much to be seen in February, from dusk to dawn. Saturn, which is high in the east at dark, sets at 3:00 A.M. at the beginning of the month, and an hour earlier at the end. About 4:00 A.M., Mars rises south of east, and it may be recognized by its reddish color. Jupiter rises about an hour before the sun during the first week, followed by Venus about a half-hour later. As the month advances, the distance between the two increases, as Jupiter continues to rise earlier each day, and Venus becomes lost in the glare of the rising sun.

Elizabeth D. Simons

ATTENTION, SKY-WATCHERS!

A Sky-watchers' Group has been formed for the benefit of those desiring a little help in locating some of the constellations which may be seen over Charleston. The first meeting was held on January 26, at the home of Mrs. J.L. Griffin on the Citadel campus, with the writer directing the observations. As noted in the SKY-WATCHERS' GUIDE, the viewing this month is especially promising. At the invitation of Mrs. G.T. Wichmann, the February meeting will be held at her home on Sullivans Island, weather permitting, where an opportunity may be afforded for the "discovery" of Canopus. Information concerning the newly formed group may be obtained by phoning Mrs. Griffin, 723-0856, after 5:00 PM.

Elizabeth D. Simons

OBSERVATIONS

Dec. 23 & 27, 1972	Solitary Vireo	James Island	Ted Holloway
Dec. 29, 1972	Dickcissel	Mt. Pleasant	Francis B. Taylor
Jan. 2, 1973	Black and White Warbler	Hwy. 17 South	Perry Nugent
Jan. 13-14	Scaup (5000)	Bull's Island	Burkett Neely & Dan Doshier
Jan. 14-20	Fox Sparrows (2)	Quail Arbor, Summerville	Roger D. Lambert
Jan. 21	Immature Black-headed Gull	Hampton Park	Dennis Forsythe
Jan. 23-24	Baltimore Oriole	Charleston Museum	Margaret Harrison & John Henry Dick

Several reports have been received of Evening Grosbeak sightings: G. Townsend, R. D. Lambert, Beth McIntosh, Perry Nugent, and Ted Beckett.

Purple Finches seem to have invaded the area in large numbers. Julian Harrison, Roger Lambert, and Perry Nugent report seeing large flocks, in their yards.

A Red-throated Loon was captured on land at the USDA Agricultural Research Station. It was apparently unharmed and was released into a creek nearby.

BIRD MOVEMENT IN FEBRUARY

The following birds normally arrive in the Charleston area this month:

Purple Martin	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Rough-winged Swallow
White-tailed Kite	Yellow-breasted Chat	Evening Grosbeak

The following birds normally leave this area during the month:

White-fronted Goose	Cinnamon Teal	Golden Eagle
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The following birds have been sighted in this area on occasion, but are not normally seen here during this month:

Harlequin Duck	Parula Warbler	Common Redpoll
Long-tailed Jaeger		

EDITOR'S NOTE

You will note that this issue is crammed full of birding information. This is because the birders are the only ones who contribute observations. Where are all of the other Naturalists? Let's see if we can get some more variety in this newsletter.

MAGNOLIA GARDENS FIELD TRIP

It was 6:45 A.M. as I turned off Highway 61 and drove into Magnolia Gardens. There was frost nearly everywhere and ice on the wooded pond to the right of the drive, giving everything an eery glow as the sun began to rise and brighten things up, the only movement was the silent glide of a Great Horned Owl as it slowly flew across a field and into the woods.

Shortly after 7:00 A.M. about 20 enthusiastic birders, led by Ted Beckett, began the morning hike. The first stop was along the dikes to the right of the entrance road. As we walked along the dike many Wood Ducks flew in all directions, filling the air with a sound that helped us forget the cool morning. Further along were Myrtle Warblers and many sparrows busy searching for their breakfast. At the intersection of two dikes we could see open water next to a corn field and several Mallards and Blue Winged Teal as they took off for parts unknown.

Next we rode toward the duck pond parking lot and stopped to watch two Pied-billed Grebes swimming in a hole in the ice of a little pond. Suddenly an American Bittern flew across the ice and disappeared in some brush on the far side. Arriving at the parking lot we discovered that the gun shots we had heard earlier, did indeed come from hunters out on the pond. After Mr. Drayton Hastie assured us our presence on the dikes would not disturb either the frozen ducks or hunters we started out to find the birds that had got away. The open pond on the left had many coots, 3 tame geese, and one female shoveler. The pond to the right has large clumps of grass that give excellent cover for many water fowl, which on this beautiful day were concentrated along the dike that borders the Ashley River. There were many Ruddy Ducks, some Mallards, Black Ducks, at least 2 Canvasbacks, 1 Ring Necked Duck, and possibly 1 or 2 Gad walls among the hundred of coots. Some of the male Ruddy Ducks were already thinking of spring or the mating season and were beginning to change to breeding plumage.

The tide was going out and along the river banks were numerous herons, including Great Blue, Little Blue, Louisiana, Yellow Crowned Night and both Egrets.

The shrubs and trees on the dike were the haunts of Ruby Crowned Kinglets, Myrtle Warblers and at least 1 Phoebe. Several members at the head of the pack had the pleasure of seeing an Orange Crowned Warbler as it flitted among the Bayberries searching for insects.

About mid-morning we were treated to delicious coffee and donuts at Ted Beckett's home. This was a welcomed chance to warm up, which we all greatly appreciated. As usual, Ted's windowsill feeder was full of activity with a constant parade of little feathered friends. Among the titmice, chickadees, sparrows and woodpeckers, was one female Baltimore Oriole.

On my way home I stopped to walk along the first dike Ted showed us. There were many Song, Swamp, White Throat, Fox and Field Sparrows offering a good chance to study the differences between them. The cornfield had about 20 common Snipe poking holes in the ground. Two Northern Yellow Throats and one Winter Wren could be seen scolding from some near by brush. Many black birds were flying through the swamp and the 3 Rusty Blackbirds were species number 69 on my list for a wonderful morning at Magnolia Gardens.

Perry Nugent