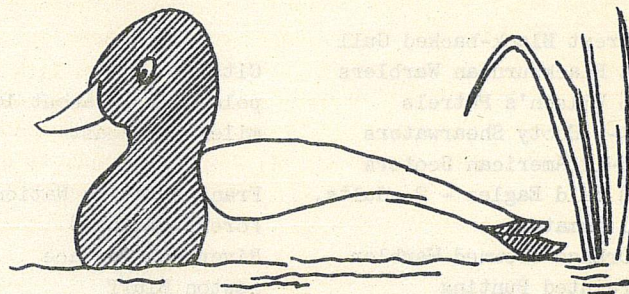


the lesser Squawk



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JANUARY ACTIVITIES

Tuesday, January 9, 1973 - 8:00 PM

REGULAR MEETING AT CHARLESTON MUSEUM

FIELD TRIP - HALF DAY - JANUARY 14, 1973

MAGNOLIA GARDENS

The program for this month was to have been presented last October. Mr. Bruce Stebbins, biologist with the River Basin Studies Division of the Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife, will discuss dredging and marsh destruction along the North and South Carolina Coasts. With the current interest and controversy over the Tidelands Bill in the South Carolina House of Representatives, this program should be a must for those interested in this area.

The field trip this month will be a short one to Magnolia Gardens. Those wishing to participate should meet at the Charleston Museum at 6:30 AM on January 14, or, if you should desire to go directly to Magnolia Gardens (on S.C. Highway 61), please be there at about 7:00 AM.

It is interesting to note that the word Lupine stems from the Latin lupus, meaning wolf, this denomination being given in the belief that these plants robbed the fertility of the soil. In fact, some of the 200 odd species are used as a green manure to be plowed into poor soil for its enrichment.

Edmund R. Cuthbert, Jr.

THE SKY-WATCHERS' GUIDE

Since the Winter Solstice, which occurred on December 21, Sky-Watchers may have noticed that the lengthening of daylight is proceeding with more perceptible rapidity than was the shortening of the days after the Summer Solstice in June. This phenomenon is explained by the fact that the earth's orbit is slightly elliptical, and that in winter our home planet is about a million and a half miles nearer to the sun than it is in summer. The earth's closest approach, this year, will occur on January 2. Because of the tremendous pull of the sun's gravity, the speed of the earth automatically increases as the distance between the two bodies decreases, thus averting the catastrophe of a plunge into the fiery body of the sun. There is no need for anxiety that there may be such a possibility; this will not occur before at least two more billion years! The mean distance between the earth and the sun is approximately 93 million miles, and not many of us will experience, in a lifetime, as many as 100 revolutions of the earth around the sun.

Only one planet will be visible when the evening twilight ends. Well above the eastern horizon, Saturn may be located in Taurus, not far from Aldeberan, "the red, angry eye of the bull", and it will remain in view until it sets at dawn.

The sky, in January, presents a display of dramatic splendor. From the time it is completely dark, six stars of the first magnitude, (two of which are even brighter), sparkle overhead, and as the evening advances, a seventh comes into view. Aldeberan, already mentioned, is one of them. A little to the southeast of Taurus is Orion, described last month. The orange-red star in the right shoulder of the Hunter is called Betelgeuse, "armpit of the Giant", and the blue-white star in his left heel is Rigel. Brilliant Sirius follows Orion, about ten degrees to the southeast. This is also called the "Dog Star", because it is the brightest star in Canis major, "the Great Dog". About 15 degrees northeast of Betelgeuse is Procyon, the only bright star in Canis minor. The tips of the horns of Taurus appear poised threateningly above Orion's head. The more northerly of the horns serves also to help form another constellation, - the five-sided figure of Auriga, "the Charioteer". A brilliant, yellow star indicates the left shoulder of Auriga. This is Capella.

The Milky Way may be seen, now, extending from northwest to southeast. Each of the constellations mentioned, this month, lies at least partly in the Milky Way. In its path, to the west of Auriga, the observer may also locate Perseus, and Cassiopeia (the crooked W).

In the early morning sky, two of the planets may be seen. Mars rises about 4:00 o'clock, and Venus, between 5:30 and 6:00. Shortly before sunrise, in the middle of the month, they will be joined by Jupiter.

Elizabeth D. Simons

BIRDING IN CHESTER DEPOT, VERMONT

The location was my sister's home, overlooking a small brook, beaverpond and marsh. Behind the house is a small lawn, with a well, several trees, and a wild flower covered slope that rises to a stone wall and a White Pine, Aspen and Maple woods.

It was a foggy morning, September 14, 1972, as we sat down at the breakfast table in front of a large bay window with a nice view of the backyard. Soon a Black-capped Chickadee lit on the window sill feeder, pushed sunflower seeds around, selected one and carried it into the trees. Perhaps some signal was sounded; for more chickadees arrived followed by a parade of Red and White-breasted Nuthatches, one or two Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers, Blue Jays, and Tree Sparrows unloading the tray and paying little attention to the excited audience inside. There were fluttering wings all around filling the air with a warm and joyful sound. The slope was alive as several Tree, Chipping, Song, Savannah, and at least one Lincoln Sparrows scratched the ground looking for the ingredients of a gourmet dinner. Suddenly, many yellow birds joined the sparrows and some lit in a hawthorn about 30 feet from the window giving an excellent view and chance to identify them. On examination with binoculars, Solitary and Philadelphia Vireos, Tennessee, Orange-crowned, Nashville, Magnolia, Black-throated Green and Myrtle Warblers were identified. One Scarlet Tanager in yellow with black wing, fall plumage was in the mixed flock. After flitting around the yard for about 10 minutes, these beautiful birds flew away toward the marsh, signalling the end to an enjoyable breakfast.

With the sun coming out and warming the day, it was decided to walk along the road toward the beaver pond in the hope of seeing more birds. There were many of them singing a cheerful song that seemed to say "it's going to be a nice day". One clump of Black Cherries was full of activity. Robins, Goldfinches, and Cedar Waxwings could be easily seen, while careful study revealed more Scarlet Tanagers, Myrtle, Bay-breasted, Chestnut-sided and Black-throated Green Warblers, Purple Finches, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Redwing Blackbirds, and Purple Grackles. Farther down the road alder brush on both sides was full of Redstarts, Northern Yellowthroats, and Solitary Vireos. Rounding the bend to the pond, we saw several Black Ducks swimming away through the brush and one Marsh Hawk was slowly gliding over the grassy upper reaches of the swamp. Continuing along the pond's edge we were startled as an American Bittern flew up from the grass 5 feet ahead of us, went across the pond and disappeared among the dead trees on the far shore. Two beavers were swimming around between their house and the dam, keeping close watch on us, ready to sound an alarm should our movements become suspect.

Regretfully, lunchtime was approaching, so the return trip was begun, stopping at a large Beech tree where nuts were falling like rain, to watch several Eastern Chipmunks, Gray and Red Squirrels, and Blue Jays busily harvesting their winter food supply.

To save time a short cut was taken through the woods toward home. While crossing the brook, several small birds were observed in the top of a hemlock tree. Among the Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Myrtle Warblers was one Cape May Warbler.

This Cape May Warbler is a new bird on my life list and a fitting end to an exciting morning in Vermont.

Perry E. Nugent

OBSERVATIONS

Nov. 10	Purple Sandpiper	Sullivan's Island	Dennis Forsythe
Nov. 11	3 Gannets	Bulls Island	Burkett Neely & Dan Doshier
"	Great Black-backed Gull		Ted Metcalf
Nov. 12	3 Blackburnian Warblers	Citadel	John & Mary Reed
Nov. 13	6 Wilson's Petrels	pelagic trip about 10 miles off coast	Dennis Forsythe
	1-3 Sooty Shearwaters		
	6-12 American Scoters		
Nov. 18	3 Bald Eagles - 2 adults, 1 immature	Francis Marion National Forest (Wambaw)	Thomas Dodd
Dec. 2	Orange-crowned Warbler	Riverland Terrace	Francis Barrington
Dec. 4	*Painted Bunting	Lawton Bluff	Mrs. R.H. Coleman
Dec. 7	Lincoln Sparrow	Dallerton Circle	Perry E. Nugent
Dec. 9	Purple Sandpiper	Sullivan's Island	Dennis Forsythe
Dec. 10	Sharp-tailed Sparrow	Mt. Pleasant Causeway	"
Dec. 13	Fox Sparrow	Dallerton Circle	Perry E. Nugent

Nelson Taylor has reported two new Osprey nests in the Francis Marion National Forest. Dennis Forsythe has observed two or three Parakeets around St. Marks Lutheran Church on Sullivan's Island.

Ted Beckett has reported that there are two immature Bald Eagles at Magnolia Gardens. Burkett Neely has reported that there are 13 Whistling Swans on the Upper Summerhouse pond on Bulls Island; also, there are about 1500 Canvasbacks on Moccasin Pond in front of the photography blind on Bulls Island.

*This may be a late record for this area.

LUPINES

The Lowcountry is variously banded and mottled with the sandy remains of the Ice Age's comings and goings, and on such dry sites, lightly shaded by long-leaf pines, scrub oaks and sparkleberry bushes, one may now find the tender beginnings of some of Spring's most beautiful flowers.

The lupines, native to South Carolina, prefer our wet winters, when their sandy beds hold sufficient moisture to support the bold display of foliage that precedes the showy racemes of flowers.

Lupinus diffusus produces large washpan-sized clusters of leaves above which the richest blue, cream-spotted flowers are borne. Particularly good stands of this species can be seen south of Columbia and on the High Hills of the Santee. Closely resembling the above in foliage characteristics is L. villosus, but its flowers are a deep pink or roseate with a purple spot on each standard. Colonies of this plant can be found in the Francis Marion National Forest. The third species is L. perennis which produces palmate leaves in contrast to the lanceolate foliage of the first two. Its blooms are smaller and more of a sky blue, but they are borne in much greater profusion and often turn favored sites, such as near Forty Acre Rock, into great splashes of blue.

BIRD MOVEMENT IN JANUARY

The following bird normally arrives in the Charleston area during this month:
White Pelican

The following birds normally depart from this area during January:

Fulvous Tree Duck	Snowy Owl	Western Kingbird
Brant		

The following birds have been seen in this area on occasion and are therefore classed as casuals and accidentals:

Eared Grebe	Great Crested Flycatcher	Blue-faced Booby
Vermilion Flycatcher	Reddish Egret	Purple Martin
Cinnamon Teal	Northern Waterthrush	Harlequin Duck
Dickcissel	Harlan's Hawk	Green-tailed Towhee
Snow Bunting		

PLANT COURSE AT THE CITADEL

The Citadel will offer the course "The Vascular Flora of South Carolina" in the evening program starting January 22, 1973. Lecture is tentatively scheduled for 6:45 - 8:45 PM on Wednesday with a weekly field trip on Saturday from 8:00 AM to 12:00 noon. The course will be taught by Richard D. Porcher, JR., a member of CNHS and assistant professor of biology at The Citadel.

Field trips are planned to include Four Holes Swamp, Lake Guillard, The Battery Historic Area on the Santee River, Bulls Island, and selected "Carolina Bays" in the Francis Marion National Forest. Lecture work will consist of learning to use standard taxonomic keys to identify plants. Four hours graduate or undergraduate credit can be earned, or the course may be audited at a reduced fee.

Additional information may be obtained by calling 723-0611, the director of the Evening Program, extension 286, or the biology department, extension 416.