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THE LESSER SQUAWK
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The Charleston Natural History Society is a chapter of the National Audubon Society. Members of Audubon who live in the Charleston area automatically become members of CNHS. A portion of the annual dues paid to Audubon are returned to CNHS to cover operating expenses.

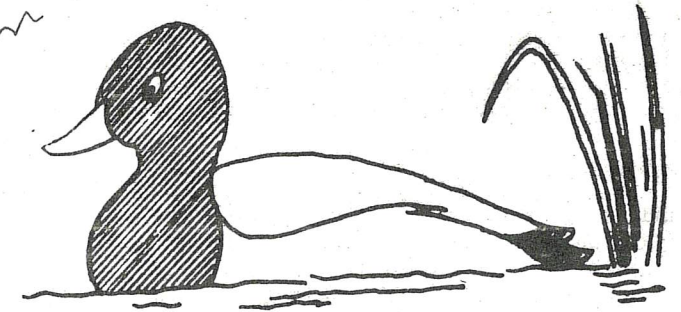
CNHS normally meets on the second Tuesday of each month (except June, July, August, and December) at 8:00 P.M. in Baruch Auditorium.

One field trip a month is scheduled on a Saturday or Sunday to any of a variety of local natural areas.

THE LESSER SQUAWK welcomes any written contributions from the membership. The deadline for each issue is the 20th day of the preceeding month.

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the lesser Squawk



STATE PARK

BIRD COUNTS

The South Carolina Division of State Parks will sponsor a Mid-Winter Bird Count February 5, 1977. The program is to be held at fourteen parks across the state, selected to allow the greatest geographic diversity. Seven of the parks will be covered on each day with the counts tentatively beginning at 8:00 a.m. and concluding at 5:00 p.m.

On Saturday, Feb. 5, counts will be held at Huntington Beach, Kings Mountain, Lynches River, Rivers Bridge, Sadlers Creek, Sesquicentennial and Table Rock State Parks.

Birders are needed to assist in these counts. All interested birders should contact Brian E. Cassie or John Reid Clonts; Division of State Parks; S. C. P. R. T., Suite 113; 1205 Pendleton St.; Columbia, S. C. 29201; telephone 803/758-3622.

FEBRUARY FIELD TRIP: 20th

GUILLIARD LAKE

The field trip for February will be to Guilliard Lake and the Battery Historic Area in the Francis Marion National Forest near Jamestown.

To visit this typical southern river bottom swamp along the Santee River, CNHS members and guests should be at the Charleston Museum at 7:30 A.M. Bring your lunch.

BIRD STUDY GROUP

In February we will go back to I'on Swamp in search of red-breasted, white-breasted, and brown-headed nuthatches, brown creepers, short-billed marsh wrens, gold and purple finches, pine siskins, and Bachman's sparrow. All of these species were seen there during the last month and, with a little luck, we should have a good opportunity to learn some more about each one.

Meet at the Charleston Museum at 7:00 A.M. Saturday, February 12 for a half day of interesting birding.

PERRY NUGENT

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Seven years ago, I was a volunteer reporter, draftsman, paste-up person and sometimes delivery boy for an inauspicious publication called "The Foggy Bottom News", named for a Washington, D. C. neighborhood just above the Water-gate complex.

A couple of nights every month, the handful of staff members got together to try to pull together information and ads we had managed to gather to fit into a four-page newspaper. Often, those nights I didn't get home until 1 or 2 in the morning, but somehow I didn't mind.

To produce the paper, we depended almost entirely on input from community members and businesses in the community. Likewise, I'll be counting on members of the society to share news and natural history observations.

As well as the usual field trip and program reports, bird observations and arrival and departure dates, we will have a new column called "Birding" by Pete Laurie, a piece by Julian Harrison on some Lowcountry reptile or amphibian and a column on bird behavior by Susan Roche. Also featured will be Elizabeth Simons "Sky-Watchers Guide" and Maggi Yergin's "Shell Shocked".

I'd also like to take this opportunity to recognize Perry Nugent and his wife Chris for their faithful years of work in putting out the Squawk and Pete Laurie, who served as his assistant editor and has given me invaluable help in getting started. Perry will continue to compile bird observations, which should be sent to him in writing each month.

BOBBIN HUFF

BULLS ISLAND CAMPOUT

Jan. 15 and 16 fifty members of the society visited Bulls Island and 34 of them camped there. I can remember with

regret the poor weather of last year's trip and the low turnout which resulted, but this year's was a trip worthy of a prince on vacation. The weather was just cold enough to make a fire enjoyable and the result at night was a song-fest by the campfire. The fellowship that comes from such a primitive situation is well worth the effort in sore muscles and tired bodies.

The only drawback to the trip was the overwhelming lack of ducks -- no pintails and only a few other species. There were, however, reports of a pair of swans in Jack's Creek Pond and one osprey on the sea nest on Boneyard Beach.

I've really enjoyed this trip and I hope the next field trips chairman will repeat it. Meanwhile, keep in mind that some time in the spring we'll have a camp and float trip out of Elmwood on Wambaw Creek. Elmwood is accessible by road which means members won't have to carry their gear any distance, making for an easier trip. See you there!

DAVID HUFF

Field Trips Chairman

SPEAKERS BUREAU

The conservation committee is working to create a speakers' bureau. CNHS members who are interested in any aspect of natural history or environmental problems are encouraged to submit their names.

It is not necessary for you to be an authority, but is important that you have some information or appreciation to share.

The list of names will be sent to civic groups and schools in the area. This pooling and sharing of information could be a great source of environmental education. Please contact Anne Craig at 723-0608 (school) or 577-9719 (home), 4-B Michel Place, Charleston, 29401, if you are interested.

OBSERVATIONS

Date	Observation	Location	Observer
Nov. 22	Pigeon Hawk	Breach Inlet	Edmund Farrar
Dec. 4	Black & White Warbler	Charlestowne Landing	Charles Geilfuss, III
Dec. 16	Orange Crowned Warbler	2260 Dallerton Circle	Perry Nugent
	Prairie Warbler	"	"
18	Pigeon Hawk	Magnolia Gardens	E. Farrar & C. Geilfuss
	3 Brewers Blackbirds	"	"
22	2 Red-breasted Nuthatches	Bluebird Drive	Dr. Harry Freeman
		Mt. Pleasant	
27	Harlegun Duck	Bulls Island	Holland Mills
28	Scarlet tanager	Magnolia Gardens	"
30	Pigeon Hawk	U.S. Veg. Lab	Perry Nugent
Jan. 1	6 Purple finches	Downtown Chas.	Susan & Avery Burns
2	Red-breasted Nuthatches	I'On Swamp	" " "
8	Henslow's Sparrow	Cottage Road	Pete Laurie
	4 Pine Siskins	I'On Swamp	Perry Nugent
	7 Short billed Marsh Wrens	"	"
15	32 Blue Geese	Santee NWR	"
	6 Snow Geese	"	"
	7 Brown Creepers	"	"
	1 Solitary Vireo	"	"
	1 Hermit Thrush	Downtown Chas.	Susan & Avery Burns
16	2 White ibis	"	" " "
18	2 Purple finches	2260 Dallerton Cr.	Perry Nugent
23	Horned Owls	"	"
23	Several hundred gannets	Off pier at Isle of Palms	"
	10,000 lesser scamps	"	"
	Several hundred loons	"	"
	Purple sandpipers	Fort Moultrie	"

There seems to be some confusion on how to report observations for The Lesser Squawk. Any unusual or rare plant or animal that you feel maybe of interest to other members of CNHS should be reported in writing to Perry Nugent, 2260 Dallerton Circle, Charleston, S. C. 29407. Be sure to include the date and location of the sighting, as well as, the names of all observers, and any other information that might be of interest to our readers.

BIRD COUNTS TALLIED

Winter is the season for bird counts and birders braved freezing temperatures and cold winds this year to take stock of the population.

The Charleston Christmas Bird Count took place on Jan. 2, a cold, overcast day. "With certain exceptions, numbers of individuals were generally down in comparison to last year, particularly among the ducks," noted Julian R. Harrison. "An unusually high number of hermit thrushes were concentrated mainly in the I'On Swamp area, where groups of up to 10 individuals were noted."

In all, 153 species and around 19,731 individual birds were sighted.

A total of 150 species were recorded on the Christmas Bird Count at McClellanville Dec. 26, also a cold, windy day.

"Nothing very unusual was seen," said compiler Jay Shuler, "except for a grasshopper sparrow observed by Perry Nugent and a northern oriole spotted by Brian Cassie and Chuck Whitney."

After the count, members visited Jay's house where they were treated to a feast of homemade goodies and lively conversation.

Audubon members from Charleston and Columbia were entertained prior to and during the Pawley's Island Bird Count Dec. 19 by Pat and Renee Probst at their home in North Litchfield Beach.

As usual, Renee provided lunch and their tiny Manchester terrier entertained us with his antics.

As of press date, I wasn't able to get a total for the count.

Although not a Christmas Count, the Bellefield Bird Count took place Nov. 21. There was a good showing of birders and the weather behaved itself better than it did last year. Totals of 129 species and 11,610 individuals were seen.

PAY DUES NOW

Society members who are not members of National Audubon should pay their dues now for the calendar year of 1977. Send your \$5.00 to the Charleston Natural History Society, P. O. Box 504, Charleston, S. C. 29402

AUDUBON CONVENTION

Audubon members and officers are invited to attend the National Audubon Society Convention Family-Style June 9-12 at the YMCA of the Rockies, Estes Park, Colorado, adjacent to Rocky Mountain National Park and about 70 miles northwest of Denver.

Field trips will include visits to the park, Big Thompson Canyon, alpine tundra and Pawnee grasslands. Participants will have the opportunity to bird before sunset, observe beavers at work after dark, prairie flowers, golden eagles, pronghorns, badgers and prairie dogs. Several star-gazing trips are planned. And, bird species there include white-faced ibis, prairie falcons, McCown's and chestnut-collared longspurs, lark buntings, and mountain plovers.

For full information on the convention and travel arrangements for travel and accommodations, write Convention, National Audubon Society, P. O. Box 786, Charleston, S. C. 29402.

Rates are very reasonable, but reservations MUST be made before March 9.

BIRDING

Beginning bird watchers often complain that if only they could get a good look at a bird, they might be able to identify it. Sometimes, though, a bird can be tough to identify even when you get a good look.

On a recent Saturday morning, while watching an active flock of perhaps two dozen white-throated sparrows at my feeder, I thought I noticed a sparrow that looked smaller than the white throats. I almost had forgotten it when about an hour later I spotted a small dark sparrow sitting quietly at the base of the feeder about six feet from the window.

It obviously was smaller than the white throats and much darker on the back with large russet wing patches. As it darted suddenly into some tall weeds I could see some faint streakings on the sides of the breast and a light stripe across the top of the head. The head was lighter colored than the back, sort of an olive-gray, and a distinct line separated the two colors at the shoulder. The tail was short and narrow.

The bird's size, short tail, and flat-headed profile immediately suggested either a Henslow's sparrow or a grasshopper sparrow. I had never seen either of these birds and would not expect these species at a feeder so I reached for my field guides.

With field guides at hand and the bird only a few feet in front of my nose, I spent several hours that weekend watching it carefully. After a while I became convinced that it was a Henslow's sparrow.

Henslow's, I knew, are seldom reported, not because there aren't many around, but simply because they normally are so hard to see.

Secretive, ground-dwelling little birds of heavy grass cover, these sparrows are difficult to flush and seldom appear in the open for more than an instant.

The Henslow's sparrow belongs to that elusive, frustrating group of small, sharp-tailed sparrows which, here in the East would include Savannah, grasshopper, Le Conte's, sharp-tailed, and seaside sparrows. Collectively they probably cause as many problems for both beginners and experienced field observers as does any group of birds.

To watch a Henslow's sparrow at your leisure from the comfort of your study is a unique opportunity. I think now if I saw one in the field I could identify it, but certainly this is a tricky little sparrow unless you get a very good look.

I watched the bird on three successive days but haven't seen it since.

PETE LAURIE

WILDLIFE PRINTS AVAILABLE

The following wildlife prints are available on a first come, first served basis at the office of Carlyle Blakeney, Jr., Southeast Regional Representative, National Audubon Society.

Ray Harm - Screech Owl
- Calif. Ground Squirrel
- Calif. Quail
- Road Runner
- Wood Thrush
Cohelach-Grizzly Bear
- Egret

Eckleberry - Palm Tanager
Roger Tory Peterson - Boblink

All prints are signed. Prices range from \$35 to \$80 except for the Peterson print which is considerably more. All proceeds will go to the National Audubon Society.

best over an open fire. Enough oysters and clams were consumed to keep everyone happy.

We all compared our finds and decided what we wanted to keep and what to put back. Everyone seemed happy at their treasures. As we loaded up the boat with all the shells there was some talk as to whether the boat would hold all of us plus all of the shells. We arrived on the island by 10:00 and left around 4:00, with all of us vowing to return, and I'm sure we will.

I want to thank those who went and tell them I enjoyed being able to share some of my world with them.

Two incidents have taken place in my aquarium recently that might interest some of you. First, I had a Eupleura caudata (thick-lipped drill) lay eggs on a rock in the aquarium. It was only a small cluster but it's the first of the hard-shell mollusks that we have had reproduce in the aquarium.

Second, my Cypraea cervus (Atlantic deer cowry), which I have raised for over a year, attacked and ate a sea anemone for no apparent reason. The cowries rarely show an aggression toward one another and this is only the second time that this cowry has

attacked another creature. If any of you have any thoughts or experiences on either incidents, please let me know.

Well, until next time, Happy Shelling!

MAGGI YERGIN

SOUTH CAROLINA CHECKLIST

NOW ON SALE

A new checklist of South Carolina birds, prepared by Perry E. Nugent, now is available for CNHS members.

The new checklists contain a variety of useful information on the status of each species, including early and late dates of arrival and departure for migrants. As such they are valuable additions to standard field guides. Many experienced birders use checklists to keep a permanent record of each day afield.

To defray printing costs the checklists will be sold for 10 cents each with a minimum mail order of 10. To order checklists send a personal check to Pete Laurie, 1153 Cottage Rd., Charleston, SC 29412. Make checks payable to the Charleston Natural History Society.

BIRD MOVEMENTS IN FEBRUARY

ARRIVALS					
Date	Species	Date	Species	Date	Species
1	Purple Martin	6	Painted Bunting	10	Roughwinged Swallow
3	Cattle Egret	8	White-tailed Kite	11	Yellowbreasted Chat
DEPARTURES					
3	White-fronted Goose	15	Golden Eagle	?	Dovekie
13	Cinnamon teal	23	Snow Goose	?	Saw whet owl

The following have been seen at least once during February:

Harlequin Duck
Great Black backgull
Orange-crowned Warbler
Yellow-headed Blackbird
Snowy Owl
Parula Warbler
Longtailed Jager
Common Red Poll

Two planets are now in the morning sky, but since they will not rise until just about an hour before the sun, it will probably be difficult to see them. If conditions are completely favorable, it may be possible to discover Mars and Mercury in conjunction on February 12.

ELIZABETH D. SIMONS



Shell Shocked

by

Maggi Yergin

In response to this column I had received some interest by a few members of the Natural History Club to go on a shell collecting trip. After talking it over with my husband, Jim, we decided that Sandy Point was the place to go for such an outing. He offered us the use of his boat to take us out to the island if enough people wanted to go. We set the date for Nov. 20, 1976.

It had rained for the entire week of the 20th and didn't look promising for that day either. Everyone met at the Sea Island Shopping Center in Mt. Pleasant at eight in the morning with plenty of clothes for protection if needed. Those who went on the trip were Stella Kearse, Mary Armstrong, Dr. Charles Andrus and his son Fred, Mr. Charles Andrus, Bonnie and George Hentzler and their son, and Jim and myself.

The ride to Sandy Point takes about fifteen minutes from the McClellanville boat launch and there was plenty of conversation and scenery to keep us occupied. Most everyone along were "first timers" to Sandy Point and I tried to tell them what to expect.

I always explain that it is best not to collect in the area where we set up camp, unless there is an unusual find, as we can come back and get these shells.

The reason is that, the front beach has a better selection of shells in better condition.

The first reaction by most visitors to Sandy Point is to the quantity of shells lying on the beach. It is hard to imagine so many shells in one area. Mary Armstrong's reaction was that it was like money lying all over and she didn't know which to pick up first.

Once camp was set up we all headed toward the front beach. On our way up Mr. Andrus found a Phalium granulatum (Scotch Bonnet) in fairly good shape. I came across two Tonna galea (Giant Tun) almost immediately. Most of what is found are the types of Busycon whelks and the more common species. It seems odd, though, this is the only place that I have found the Cassidina madagascarensis (Nemitee conch), Pleoroplaca gigantea (Horse Conch), Tonna galea (Giant Tun), and the Phalium granulatum (Scotch Bonnet) in any abundance. Even at that they are a rare find. By the end of the day I was fortunate enough to find a C. madagascarensis about three inches long. This may show that the Helmit conch may be reproducing in our offshore waters. I am currently investigating this possibility.

In no time at all everyone was loaded down with shells and driftwood. We headed back to camp to eat our lunches and while we were gone, Jim had collected oysters and clams and had a fire going on which to roast them. What a treat. Shellfish taste their

THE SKY-WATCHERS' GUIDE

Clear skies in February hold great reward for Sky-watchers intrepid enough to brave the cold weather. From the time it is dark until as late as one cares to observe, unparalleled beauty spans the heavens, and those possessing field glasses or telescopes may discover even richer fields to explore.

Venus, growing brighter each evening, commands the attention high above the western horizon, and remains in view until almost 9:30 o'clock. The increasing brilliance is due to the fact that at this time, the distance between Venus and the earth is diminishing, and as it advances, more of its face is reflecting sunlight. Through a small telescope, the appearance of Venus resembles that of the moon between First Quarter and Full.

By 8:00 P.M. on the 15th, Sirius will be on the meridian, making it easier to trace the entire figure of Canis Major, as described in the January issue of the Lesser Squawk. Just past the meridian, northwest of Canis Major, Orion stands upright, defending himself against the angry Bull that is charging him with lowered horns above his head. The Seven Sisters, or Pleiades, may be seen huddled the other side of Taurus, hiding behind the protecting Bull.

Capella, in Auriga, shines brightly overhead, and Castor and Pollux in Gemini, the Twins, are approaching the meridian southeast of Capella.

In the east, Leo the Lion is coming into full view. At this time, the sickle, or "backwards question-mark", may be clearly seen following the Twins at a distance of about twenty-five degrees.

Through three of the constellations mentioned, (Taurus, Gemini, and Leo), the ecliptic runs. This is the imaginary path along which the sun appears to travel during the course of the year. (If the brilliance of sunlight diffused by the atmosphere were not an obstruction of our vision during the day, we could see the sun, at this time, located in Capricornus, the Sea-goat, a summer constellation). It is near the ecliptic

that the moon and planets are always located. Jupiter may be seen near Taurus, just south of the Pleiades, and Saturn shines near the sickle of Leo. These two planets are now in excellent positions for telescopic viewing of the moons of Jupiter and the rings of Saturn.

There are twelve constellations through which the ecliptic runs during the course of the year. They were outlined and named by astrologers of ancient times, whose imagination attributed to these constellations and the planets that moved through them, great powers of influence on the dwellers of Earth. Because so many of them were named for animals, the continuous band, 18 degrees in width in which they are located is called the Zodiac. Beginning with Aries, the Ram, the constellations follow in this order: Taurus, the Bull; Gemini, the Twins; Cancer, the Crab; Leo, the Lion; Virgo, the Virgin; Libra, the Scales; Scorpius, the Scorpion; Sagittarius, the Archer; Capricornus, the Goat; Aquarius, the Water bearer; and Pisces, the Fishes. Some of these are so faint that viewing conditions have to be perfect for an observer to be able to perceive them. Thus, this writer usually avoids mentioning them in order not to confuse or discourage beginning Sky-watchers. Between 8:00 and 9:00 o'clock during this month, Aries is located in the western sky which is dominated by the brilliance of Venus. It is obvious, then, that his faint constellation is not visible to most of us. However, good field glasses will enable the viewer to discover Cancer, located between Gemini and Leo. A faint blur of light will be resolved into a sparkling cluster of stars, which is the most conspicuous part of this constellation. The cluster, containing some 500 stars, is 450 light-years away.

When the observer faces north, he will see that the Big Dipper is once more coming into view in the northeast. At present, it is balanced on the tip of its handle, while as always, the pointers in the bowl are indicating the location of Polaris.