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THE LESSER SQUAWK
Charleston Natural History Society
21 Chalmers St.
Charleston, South Carolina 29401

Address Correction Requested

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.

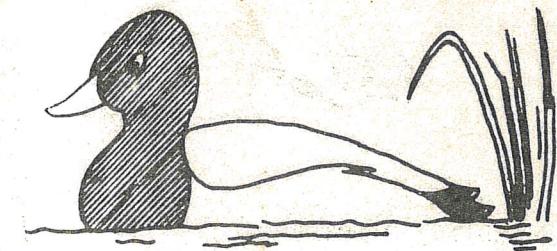
CNHS normally meets on the second Tuesday of each month (except June, July, August, and December) at 8:00 P.M. in Baruch Auditorium.

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 15th day of the preceeding month.

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Squawk**



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April 1978

SPRING COUNT

The Charleston Natural History Society-Carolina Bird Club Spring Count will be May 7.

Participants should meet at 6:30 a.m. at Gregorie's Texaco, Highway 17 and 41. Bring a lunch.

If you plan to attend, call Julian Harrison at 795-1694.

BIGGEST SLIDE SHOW
ON EARTH

The CNHS photography group will "dazzle" other members and guests with a show set to music April 11 at 8 p.m. in Baruch Auditorium, Calhoun and Gadsden Streets.

The show will consist of approximately 200 slides from different habitats of the Low-country, including Bull's Island, I'on Swamp, Four Holes Swamp (Francis Beidler Forest), Santee National Wildlife Refuge, Brookgreen Gardens and other wildlife haunts. Please come and bring a guest.

Parking is available in a new location, half a block west and across the street from the auditorium in a lot which is vacant at night. There is a traffic light right next to the lot, making it easier to cross the street there.

BIRD STUDY GROUP

There will be a bird study group Sunday April 9. Participants will meet at 2 p.m. at East Cooper Plaza, Mt. Pleasant, in front of Edwards Store. We will look for Swallow tail Kites, spring warblers and hope to see some more owls. The field trip will last until 6 or 7, when the light begins to fade.



EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

I was very curious when I saw a small package in my mailbox a few weeks ago. The return address said "Edisto Beach". I racked my brain to see if I knew or had talked with someone there lately. But, I hadn't.

As soon as I got inside, I opened it. Enclosed was a letter and a pill bottle. The letter was from Henrietta McWillie who proceeded to tell me about a discovery of hers.

On a rainy day, Ms. McWillie found what looked like a dead flower blossom in her beach-side yard. She brought it inside and set it down. Many days later, she spotted the "flower" which had dried out and was all curled up into a hard tight ball.

She wondered and asked friends what it might be, but nobody knew. So, she remembered the rainy day she had found it and put one dried ball in a saucer containing a little water. "I watched it open up so that it looked just as it had when I first picked it up."

But, she still didn't know what it was. However, when she was visiting her daughter and

family in Rowayton, Conn., she was handed a book about Fire Island which had been written and published by friends, with the suggestion that something like that should be done for Edisto Beach. "When what to my wondering eye should appear on page 36 but my mysterious 'flower'."

Since then, she found it listed in the American Heritage Dictionary called Earth Stars and described as a fungus of the genus *Gastrum*, related to and resembling puff balls and having an outer covering that splits open in a star-like form.

She says she had found no other reference to them and no other specimens until a few weeks ago when Madeline Hackett spotted a yard on the beach that is almost littered with them.

"Now I know what they are and have an almost unlimited source. I still cannot understand how, in my 54 years of prodding around with all of Mother Nature's wonders, I have never seen Earth Stars before."

When I received the letter, I had just bought the Golden Guide to Nonflowering Plants. And, earth stars are included, along with a picture. I have to admit I have never seen one in real life before now. I'll be looking for them on the Isle of Palms beach. I'll have to thank Ms. McWillie for sending them.

BOBBIN HUFF

BIRD MOVEMENTS IN APRIL

Arrivals

Date	Species	Date	Species
1	Solitary Sandpiper	13	Gray-Cheeked Thrush
	Swainson's Warbler	15	Cape May Warbler
	Yellow Warbler		American Red Start
	Black polled Warbler	17	Magnolia Warbler
3	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	18	Blue-winged Warbler
4	Cliff Swallow	19	Gray Kingbird
	Indigo Bunting	21	Swainson's Thrush
6	Blue Grosbeak	22	Red Phalarope
7	Wormeating Warbler	23	Black-billed Cuckoo
	Kentucky Warbler	24	Chestnut-sided Warbler
8	Sandwich Tern	25	Kirkland's Warbler
10	Purple Gallinule	28	Bank Swallow
	Bobolink		early Scarlet Tanager
12	Black-throated Blue Warbler		mid Gull-billed Tern

Departures

2	Whistling Swan	22	Water Pipet
3	Old Squaw	24	Bufflehead
5	Virginia Rail		Winter Wren
6	Glaucous Gull	26	Blue Goose
7	Roughlegged Hawk		Parasitic Jaeger
8	Ipswich Sparrow		Louisiana Waterthrush
9	Golden-Crowned Kinglet	27	Broad-winged Hawk
11	Northern Oriole		Solitary Vireo
13	Henslow's Sparrow		Purple Finch
14	Brown Creeper	28	Whip-poor-will
	Phoebe		Red-breasted Nuthatch
16	Common Merganser		Palm Warbler
	Robin	29	Rusty Blackbird
17	Raven	30	Pintail
18	Canvasback		Blue-winged Warbler
20	Common Goldeneye		early- Greater Scaup
21	Pine Siskins		late - Shorteared Owl
	Brown-headed Cowbird		

Unusual birds seen in April: White-tailed Kite, Blacknecked Stilt, Golden-winged Warbler, Baybreasted Warbler, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Dicksissel, Lark Bunting, and Lapland Longspur.

15	3 Blue gray Gnatcatchers	Magnolia Gardens	"	"
	2 Horned Owls	2260 Dallerton Cir.	"	"
	1 Green Heron	"	"	"
	1 Downy Woodpecker	Lower Meeting St.	"	"
	1 Yellowshasted Flicker	"	"	"
17	Redheaded Woodpecker	Walterboro	Mary Hickman	
	50 + Purple finches	"	"	"
	100 + Evenine Grosbeaks	"	"	"

I appreciate the large number of sightings received the past 2 months, although no one reported the arrival of Purple Martins. Your cards and letters were very interesting and even though all your observations were not used in this column, they still are important. There is a problem of how to handle the rarer observations. In the last few months I have received reports of 25-30 Ravens at Magnolia Gardens, 4 Longbilled Curlews at the U. S. Vegetable Lab, Bobolinks at Camp Seewee, and a white rumped Sandpiper at Snee Farm. Each of these observations are unusual enough that more information, in the form of a paragraph describing in detail exactly what was seen, is needed. This paragraph will be printed in the Lesser Squawk as soon as received. There are several ways to tell if your observation requires more than the usual information in this column. The first is to consult the 1968 revision of South Carolina Bird Life to learn how rare it is. The second is to look at the Bird Movement Column for that month and report your sightings if close to the date given. If the bird is not on the list and you feel it is rare in our area report as much detail of the sighting, including habitat, what the bird was doing, date, names of observers and any other interesting details as you can. If you need more information, give me a call.

Send your sightings to me at 2260 Dallerton Circle, Charleston, S. C. 29407

PERRY NUGENT

SPEAKERS NEEDED

CNHS is attempting to provide informative talks to groups in the community.

In order to do this we need volunteers who would be willing to give just a little time to educate people about birds, plants, conservation or any other wildlife topic.

Please, you don't have to be a professional to qualify -- just an interested person with a little knowledge. If you'd like to join our speakers' bureau call Polly Holden at the Southeastern Regional Office, National Audubon Society.

FOUR HOLES COUNT

A new count has been added this year at Four Holes Swamp in the Francis Beidler Forest.

Birders will meet at 5:30 a.m. at the Four Holes Information Center. Participants will be limited to 35. If you would like to come, call David Huff at 886-6911.

BEAR'S BLUFF COUNT

The spring count at Bear's Bluff Laboratory is scheduled for May 14. Participants will meet at 6 a.m. for a half-day count. A light lunch will be served. If you are interested in participating, contact Alston Badger at 559-0371 (day) or 795-1875 (night).

BIRD STUDY GROUP

It is possible to see an owl. Several excited birders got a terrific view on a delightful sunny Sunday afternoon as 20 persons joined Perry Nugent for the March bird study group.

We went to the Francis Marion Forest, turning onto I'on Swamp Road. Finding few birds there, we drove on to Maurant's Reserve, where the Bachman's warbler has been spotted in the past. We saw many birds, including goldfinches, Yellow Throated and Black and White Warblers, and a red-headed Woodpecker. While we were there, another birding party from New England came up. Seems they were there to look for Bachman's warbler. Having found no vacancies at a Charleston

motel, they had camped out the night before at a spot near the reserve.

From there, as afternoon shadows lengthened, we drove down Old Fort Road, where we observed red bellied, and downy woodpeckers busily making the most of the day's remaining hours. Pine warblers and a pair of wood ducks flew as we trained our eyes on the sky and tree tops. Every so often, Perry would play owl tapes, in hopes of attracting an owl. He had promised us a good view of an owl.

It was on our way out on I'on Swamp Road, that Perry's owl finally showed himself. He flew right over the road, at a location where members of the other group had said they'd seen some barred owls the night before. Better than that, the barred owl alighted on a branch about 200 feet from us and sat nicely while we trained binoculars, the scope and, even a camera with a telephoto lens, on him. Never before, in eight years of birding, have I seen a more magnificent view of an owl.

We played tapes, and called to our subject, until he started answering back. At that point, his mate flew to him from over our heads and they had a conversation about us. After that, the birds parted and the male sat for a few more minutes to get a look at that curious group who had invaded his swamp. Then, the woods swallowed him up, too. But, not before every person in the group had a chance to get a very good look at him.

Thanks, Perry.

BOBBIN HUFF

WILDFLOWER WEEKENDS

The Programs Section of the S. C. Division of State Parks will present its third annual South Carolina Spring Wildflower Weekends this month.

The Lowlands Wildflower Weekend will take place April 8 and 9 and the Highlands Wildflower Weekend is scheduled for April 22 and 23.

Places visited April 8 will include the Congaree Swamp, Hitchcock Woods, Poinsett State Park, Rivers Bridge State Park and Woods Bay State Park.

April 9, participants will explore the Carolina Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge, Congaree Swamp, Francis Beidler Forest (Four Holes Swamp), Francis Marion National Forest and Huntington Beach State Park.

April 22, trips will be made to Harmon Creek, Landsford Canal State Park, Paris Mountain State Park, Station Falls and Stevens Creek Natural Area.

April 23, participants will visit the Chattooga River, Champion-International Nature Trail, Croft State Park, Table Rock State Park and Trotters Shoals.

The Program is designed for persons 13 years of age and older, and the registration fee is \$2.50 per person per weekend. For registration blanks, write The Naturalists, Programs Section, Division of State Parks, 1205 Pendleton St., Columbia, S.C. 29201

WAXWINGS "O.D." ON BERRIES

Arthur Wilcox reported an unusual event to me last month. Seems cedar waxwings devoured berries in his yard, as is their habit in the spring. But, there is a different ending.

Some of the birds ate so much that they died. Wilcox says he brought a few birds, who were still alive, into the house. When he rubbed their bellies for them they sat up and seemed to get better. And, after they had stayed in a cage all night, the next morning they were well enough to fly off.

Wilcox and I are curious to know if anyone else has ever observed such an incident.

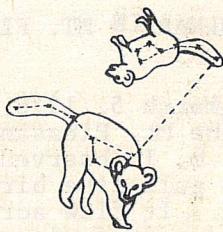
BOBBIN HUFF

NEW AUDUBON MEMBERS

William Aldrich, Charleston
 J. B. Alexander, Isle of Palms
 David M. Bartles, Charleston
 Robert O. Buckley, Charleston
 Carl Chop Jr. North Charleston
 S. Danneman, Charleston
 George A. Fletcher, Chas. Hgts.
 Mrs. H. F. Frierson, Jr., Chas.
 Mary E. Gilbert, Charleston
 Stephen T. Gore, Charleston
 Dr. & Mrs. Robert M. Haugh, Chas.
 Robert W. Higgins, Chas. Hgts.
 Willis L. Jolly, Jr., St. George
 Joyce Kaufman, Charleston
 Mr. & Mrs. John M. LeCato, Jr., Chas.
 Mr. & Mrs. John D. MacMurphy,
 Mt. Pleasant
 Lehan Marcus, Hanahan
 Mr. & Mrs. Stephen H. Norman, Chas.
 Marcia Roberts, Charleston
 H. J. Scholz, Jr., Summerville
 Joseph R. Wilkinson, Charleston

Date	Observation	Location	Observer
Feb. 8	1 Canvasback 1 Merlin 1 Brown Pelican	Snee Farm	Goldi Levine
9	27 Lesser Scaup	" "	" "
12	1 Red tail Hawk	" "	" "
13	1 Red tail Hawk	" "	" "
14	2 Black crowned Night Heron	" "	" "
15	4 Evening Grosbeak 1 Pine Siskin 1 American Woodcock 3 Canvasbacks	I'on Swamp	Tom Reeves
	200 + Robins	" "	Goldi Levine
19	1 Wood Stork 1 Bald Eagle	Snee Farm	" "
	1 Osprey 100 American Woodcock	Bear Island	Tom Reeves
	2 Red tailed Hawks	Magnolia Gardens	Wilber Garner & Peter Gudaitis
20	1 Perigree Falcon	Trident Tec	" "
March 5	1 Red necked Grebe	Mt. Pleasant	C. & P. Nugent
8	1 Harbor Seal	Causeway	David Huff
9	2 Bald Eagles 500 Cedar Waxwings Rosebreasted Grosbeaks (flock)	Deweese I	David Huff
	4 Gannets	Citadel	Susan Reardon
		Quail Arbor, Summerville	Mrs. Joseph McRea
11		2C Buoy	Mr. & Mrs. Arthur Wilcox, Robert Wilcox, John Horlbeck
	1 Parasitic Jaeger	" "	" "
	1 Common Loon	Chas. Harbor	" "
	1 Bonapartes Gull	Macedonia, Berkeley Co.	Karen & Roger Lambert
12	12 Evening Grosbeaks	Pepperhill	Nada Carroll
13	10 Purple Finches 12 Evening Grosbeaks 4 Ospreys	" U.S. Veg. Lab	" Perry Nugent

*WAXWINGS
By Perry Nugent*



THE SKY-WATCHERS' GUIDE

During the first few days of April, it may be possible to catch a final glimpse of Mercury before it becomes lost in the sun's glare. Venus, on the other hand, will increase in brightness, and remain in view until after the evening twilight gives way to darkness.

By that time, both Jupiter and Mars will be located in the western half of the sky. Jupiter will set near midnight on the 15th and Mars will follow about two hours later.

When these two also have set, one other planet will still be in view. Excepting for the waxing Moon, which will become Full on the 22nd, Saturn then will be the brightest object in the sky, rivaled only by Sirius, now approaching the southwestern horizon. Located near Regulus, the first magnitude star in Leo, Saturn may be seen just west of the meridian.

April is a pleasant month for sky-watching. The "bone-chilling" winter weather is over, and the heat of summer is still a number of weeks away. On such nights as are clear, one may be able to observe the winter constellations retreating toward the western horizon; the stars of spring in their most favorable positions; and the stellar vanguards of summer appearing in the east.

At this time, both the Big and Little Dippers may be seen to the best advantage. To the observer facing north, the Big Dipper will appear to be upside-down, with the handle pointing toward the east. The two outer stars of the bowl, (known also as the "Pointers"), direct the eye to Polaris, the North Star, which is the tip of the handle of the Little Dipper. The Pointer Stars are about five degrees apart; thus they may be used as a convenient "yardstick" for measuring apparent distances between other celestial objects. About 11 or 12 degrees to the right of Polaris, two stars of the same magnitude, approximately 3 degrees apart represent the outer stars in the bowl of the Little Dipper. If the observer is in an area free of "light pollution", he may, by looking back and forth between Polaris and this pair, discern the very faint stars that form the rest of the bowl, and the "bent" handle.

Since at least 500 B.C., Polaris has been known and used as a dependable guide for establishing directions. The early Phoenecian sailors, intrepid adventurers who dared to travel into unfamiliar waters at a time when the earth was believed to be flat, were the first to make this discovery. To them, the Little Dipper was known as "The Dog", and Polaris was "Cynosura", which means "the Tail of the Dog". From this name is derived the word, "cynosure", meaning anything that is the center of attraction.

What the Phoenecian sailors could not possibly know was that this star is in reality an enormous sun, 465 light-years distant from our Solar System!

Again assuming that the observer is under a clear, dark sky, he may be able to see the Big Dipper for what it is. Good eyesight must be accompanied by good imagination for this achievement, because the Big Dipper is actually a part of a much larger constellation, - the Great Bear. Unlike any terrestrial bear, this one has a long tail, as evidenced by the handle of the Dipper. The haunches of the animal are represented by the bowl of the Dipper. The rest of the body and the head are made up of very faint stars, rather difficult to outline, but three of the paws are distinctly indicated by three pairs of faint stars lined up equidistantly from northwest to southeast, as though the Bear were on its back with its feet held up! The fourth paw is, somehow, not in view! Binoculars will reveal that the star next to the end of the handle of the Big Dipper is not just a single star. Apparently very close to it is a fainter star. The ancient Arabs were able to see these two quite clearly through the dry desert atmosphere. They called them Alcor and Mizar, meaning "Horse and Rider". Modern astronomical instruments have discovered that the actual distance between them is 1600 times that which is between the earth and the sun! Furthermore, Mizar is itself a double star, of which the two components revolve around a common center of gravity.

Next month, we shall begin to watch the approach of the summer constellations as they advance to take the place of those that have dropped from view below the western horizon.

ELIZABETH D. SIMONS

A FULMAR IN MT. PLEASANT,

On March 5, 1978, while birding the Mt. Pleasant Causeway, at 5:00 p.m. I observed a gray and white gull-like bird with a tube nose. It flew across the end of the causeway from my right to left at a distance of about 100 feet. The first and most obvious characteristic observed was a thick yellow bill with a bump on top. The bird's head and body seemed too large for its wings. The back and wings were gray, the wing tips slightly darker. As I watched with 9x binoculars, the bird glided without flapping its wings and gradually disappeared over the Ben Sawyer Bridge. The weather was bright, cool and windy and the tide was extremely high. This bird was very cooperative and allowed me to observe it with the afternoon sun coming over my shoulders toward him. After consulting my field guides, I concluded this bird had to be a light phase Fulmar.

In reading what literature I have, there were no references to a Fulmar in South Carolina, however there have been several seen during the winters of 1975-76 in Virginia. Also, many writers seemed to think the winter range of this and other pelagic species is not well known, especially in the southern Atlantic area.

PERRY NUGENT

