

# THE lesser SQUAWK

charleston natural history society



your national audubon chapter



*John J. Audubon*

1785 — Bicentennial Anniversary — 1985

by cheryl phillips

John James Audubon, the man behind the name, was a wanderer, often concerning his parents and, later, his wife with his long country side and wilderness excursions for which he would neglect school lessons as a boy and gainful work as a husband and father.

Until recently, his birthdate and place were unknown. Now, through information from Francis H. Herrick, we have learned that John James Audubon was born on April 26, 1785 at Les Cayes, Santo Domingo (now Haiti) to French sea captain and plantation owner Jean Audubon and a French servant girl, Jeanne Rabine. Audubon's mother died within a year of his birth and he went to live with his father and stepmother in Coveron, France.

It was in the French country side that, much to his father's dismay, Audubon first began his "love affair" with nature.

In 1803, Jean Audubon sent his son to America to escape conscription in Napoleon's army and to manage Mill Grove, a farm that the elder Audubon had purchased outside Philadelphia. Here, as always, Audubon neglected his management duties in favor of exploring the nature around him. After Mill Grove's inevitable decline in 1806 and his marriage to Lucy Bakewell in 1808, he

pursued one unsuccessful business venture after another. By age 35, Audubon had filed for bankruptcy and, with the exception of his drawings, lost almost everything he ever owned.

He loved his art but knew he couldn't be content to pursue a career as a portraitist, an occupation in which he suddenly found himself caught. In 1820 while working as a taxidermist at the Western Museum in Cincinnati, Ohio, he must have formulated what he later called his "Great Idea". Audubon wanted to combine his love of birds with his love of painting to produce a book containing every species of birds in America in life size, exciting, accurate detail.

He launched the first of several expeditions down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers in search of his subject matter. Four years and 200 drawings later, he arrived in Philadelphia only to find the scientific community fervently devoted to Alexander Wilson (1766-1813), the leading ornithologist of the day.

Despite much rejection, Audubon made friends in the right places. Charles Lucien Bonapart (nephew of Napoleon) and established artist-naturalist Thomas Sully encouraged Audubon to search for patrons in Europe.

Within a month of his arrival in Liverpool, the

Royal Institute was exhibiting 225 of his watercolors. He became an "overnight success" and struck a deal with William H. Lizars who agreed to engrave his works. So began Audubon's folio series. Audubon promised subscribers a total of 400 prints in this first folio. He actually printed 435 at a cost of \$1000 per folio; incredibly expensive but very exciting and popular for Audubon's day.

Because of several conflicts, in 1827 Audubon sought the engraving services of Havell and Son. It was not long afterwards that Audubon's engravings began to enjoy a wide popularity. Being pressed for time to execute his works, to travel, sell his folios, make speaking engagements and collect bills, Audubon enlisted the aid of assistants. Among these were Joseph Mason, a former student, and George Lehman both hired to complete backgrounds for some of the prints. On his journeys through Charleston, it was George Lehman who accompanied him and painted the Charleston skyline for Audubon's long-billed curlews, plantation backgrounds for his snowy egret and common snipe and lowcountry

(more page 7)

*John James*

*April 180K for it  
2500 for it*

april at a glance

- April 6 - Birding Cypress Gardens
- April 9 - CNHS Monthly Meeting
- April 13 - Francis Beidler Birdcount
- April 20 - Birding Middleton Plantation
- April 20 - Birding Cypress Gardens

Boldface denotes CNHS sponsorship



May 18  
CNHS  
Birdathon

In celebration of the 200th anniversary of the birth of John James Audubon, CNHS is putting forth a concerted Birdathon effort for 1985. Virginia Beach, the Birdathon coordinator has selected May 18 as our official Birdathon date (although those that wish can Birdathon on their own). As with last year, you are urged to plan ahead, secure sponsors and stake out good birding spots in preparation for this exciting event.

The proceeds from this year's Birdathon will be split evenly between the Southeast office and CNHS. This should prove to be much more profitable for the chapter as we had to split proceeds three ways last year.

Watch for your May Squawk and more information on Audubon's Birdathon '85.

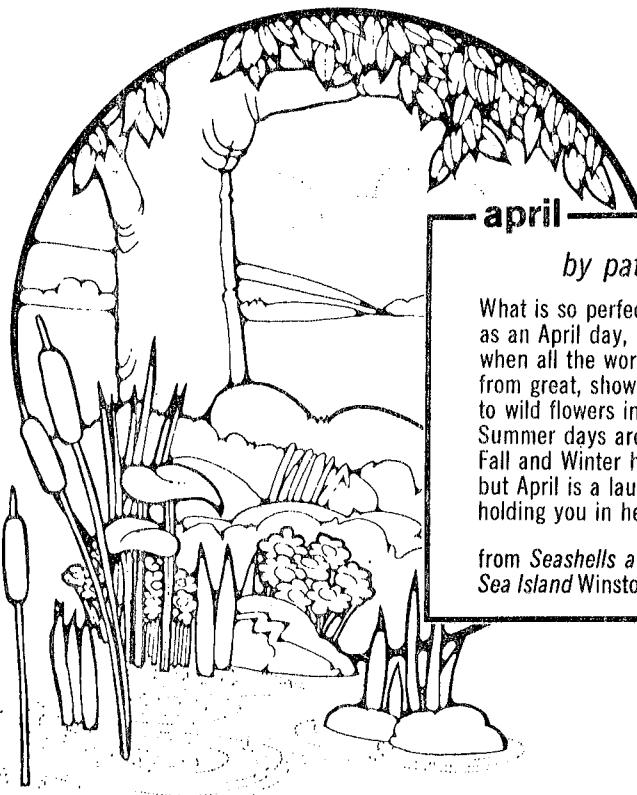
May 19  
Cypress Gardens  
Sunday Bird Walk  
8 a.m.

In addition to the species mentioned for the April 6 bird walk, there should be many summer residents, among them prothonotary warblers, orchard orioles and summer tanagers on nests. Again, registration is required. Call 553-0515.

## birding middleton

Guided nature walks will be conducted March 24, April 20, and May 11. Join Perry and Chris Nugent at 7 or 10 a.m. as they show you some birds and animals that live in the garden. A spotting scope will be used for viewing the more cooperative residents, however binoculars will help. On Sunday, March 24, we expect to see bald eagles, woodducks, herons, egrets, otters and alligators. Saturday, April 20 is mid migration. We should see newly arrived orchard orioles, indigo and painted buntings, kites, ospreys, vireos, warblers and tanagers. Saturday, May 11 is near the end of migration and we should be able to see the same colorful birds as on the previous trip.

For further information call Middleton Place, 556-6020.



april

by pat leonard

What is so perfect  
as an April day,  
when all the world's in bloom  
from great, show-offy azaleas  
to wild flowers in sand dunes?  
Summer days are fun days,  
Fall and Winter have their charms  
but April is a laughing girl  
holding you in her arms!

from *Seashells and Laughing Gulls - Songs of a Sea Island* Winston - Derek Publishers, Inc., 1984

## nominating committee

As it does this time every year, CNHS has formed a nominating committee to elect officers and board members for the coming year. Your comments and suggestions concerning this important selection are very valuable. If there is someone whom you would like to nominate for a particular position or, if you feel it's time you take a more active involvement in your Audubon chapter, please contact one of the committee persons: Julian Harrison (795-1694), Betty O'Connor (768-0547) or David Huff (886-6911).

## founder's festival special event

As a special to the Charlestowne Landing's Founders Day Festival, April 12, 13 and 14, Lin Dunbar will present a slide show. Lin's talk will focus on herbs, lore and wild plant uses.

If you enjoy Lin's Squawk column, join her at 2:00 p.m., Saturday, April 13 at Charlestowne Landing for this special slide illustrated program.

## highlands wildflower weekend

April 20-21 (Sat-Sun)  
Selected Piedmont Locations

Wildflower excursions to many of the state's significant upcountry natural areas become the highlight of the second half of our Tenth Annual Spring Wildflower Weekends. Join us on one or both days as professional botanists and naturalists lead trips to selected piedmont and mountain locations. Pre-registration required.

## spring hoedown

April 26-28 (Fri-Sun.)  
Oconee State Park  
(12 miles northwest of Walhalla on US #107)

An exciting weekend of mountain music, square dancing and clogging will begin with a square dance on Friday night. Clogging workshops will be held throughout the day on Saturday. The weekend will be climaxed with demonstrations by many of the finest clogging groups in the two Carolinas and Georgia on Saturday night.

## spring backpacking

April 27-28 (Sat-Sun.)  
Caesars Head State Park  
(On US #276 near the SC-NC border)

This easy to moderate trip will lead into lesser known regions of the park. Blooming wildflowers will be abundant and bird migration will begin reaching its peak. Pre-registration required.



## backyard birder

by bruce krucke

The invasion of the berry-snatchers! Cedar waxwings are everywhere stripping nandina, pyracantha and holly. The largest flock I saw was in the hollies at Charlestowne Square Mall. You will know they're around when you hear a whistle too high to mimic and see a flock of slim, light colored, shy birds. They are one of our prettiest garden birds.

Nearly everyone, according to my calls, is enjoying goldfinches now. We have about 30 every day with an occasional male purple finch. The goldfinches we have definitely prefer hulled sunflower seed to the niger. There has been a big increase in bird activity in the yard in the past few weeks. Maybe the natural food supply is finally getting down. (Around Summerville it's being cut down to put up buildings!) There is a mix of winter and spring activity. The finches are winter transients but I hear titmice calling their spring "Peter, Peter, Peter" and today I saw a male cardinal pass his lady friend a seed. Several people have reported cardinals attacking their reflections in windows. Putting something white behind the window will reduce the reflection and often stop the cardinal from bashing himself and annoying you. The doves are feeding young and the brown thrasher is scattering the pine straw. Robins are winter birds here, but with my small yard, there have been very few actually inside the fence. This year several came—some for water and some for the slightly rotten grapes I stuck in the thorns of my pyracantha bush. The mockingbird liked them too.

Jean Wattley has seen two albinos by the Presbyterian Home—one chickadee and one field sparrow. I've also noticed several lame red winged blackbirds. Bluebirds are investigating houses now. Hopefully yours were cleaned and debugged after last season and are ready for new residents. Kings Grant, where we live, is very ready. As a service project to complete his Eagle Scout badge, Chad Freeman, one of our young neighbors, built and erected 26 bluebird houses throughout the community. I'd be interested in hearing about any other bird helping activities your subdivisions have. The articles I write for our Kings Grant monthly newsletter are very well received. Have any of you started a community newsletter? The species list we have for Kings Grant is at 124 now.

Nada Carroll wrote such a nice letter about bird activity at her new home in Old Fort, N.C. She has what we'd all like—5 or 6 acres in the view of mountains with mixed meadows and wooded

areas, fruit trees and berry bushes, and a creek. All she lacks is tidal flats. She mentioned 25 species they've seen this winter, including hermit thrush, field sparrow, pine siskin, golden crowned kinglet, and a sharp shinned hawk. She particularly recommends wild persimmon and hackberry as plantings to attract birds. She described a feeder her father had designed which is like a little house with an exterior of open slats with space for small birds to enter on two sides and a seed box in the center which pulls out like a drawer for filling. He also put a wire suet holder on the other end. It sounds ideal mounted on a pole with a squirrel baffle. Nada sent a drawing so if anyone wants further details, just call me.

Bruce's "Bit of Knowledge for April: Birds which hatch in tree nests stay helpless quite awhile (altricial) but birds that hatch on the ground get up and around quite quickly (precocial). Wood ducks would be an exception to this rule.

Just because spring is here, you shouldn't stop putting seed out, because the new crop of natural food won't be ready till much later. Also as birds have young to feed, they look for more and easiest food. Really, the best reason to feed year round is to watch mama and papa bird raise their babies. Although Cheryl Phillips reports pine siskins since March 3 and I have seen them since March 9, no one has called with a grosbeak at their feeder. The prize is still outstanding. Keep looking last year we had grosbeaks till early May. Bruce Krucke, 871-2039, 101 Old Tavern, Summerville, SC 29483.



## expo SUCCESS

by peggy eppig

Thanks to everyone who contributed time, material, transportation, and hard work in making our booth at the 1985 Southeastern Wildlife Exposition a great success. In three days on a cool February weekend over 30,000 people admired and absorbed all the Expo had to offer and we were a part of it!

A special thanks to Hal Currey and Jeremy James for setting up and taking down the booth. Also Betty O'Connor, Virginia Beach, Bruce Krucke and Polly Holden who helped me to man the booth as the crowds poured through the Ports Authority Building.

Special recognition also goes to Grace Yeatman for hauling bags of birdseed (which are still available for sale!) and to Bruce Krucke who donated one of her watercolors for our raffle.

The lucky winner (out of over 160 participants) was Mr. Fuselor of Columbia, S.C.

Our booth was in a great location—across from the restaurant booths . . . yum! We had record sales, spread the word of Audubon, and introduced many to the natural wonders our own Lowcountry has to offer.

The various groups at the Expo included Ducks Unlimited, the Sierra Club, the Nature Conservancy, S.C. Wildlife Dept., and many others, but each representing many viewpoints all with one goal in mind: conservation! It was a message well sent and well received! Thanks again to everyone involved!

## take the boat to bulls

Regularly scheduled boat trips to Bulls Island in Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge have been re-established after an 8 year absence. No boat transportation has been available since 1976, leaving potential visitors to the popular island wildlife refuge to make their own transportation arrangements. This proved almost impossible for all but area residents.

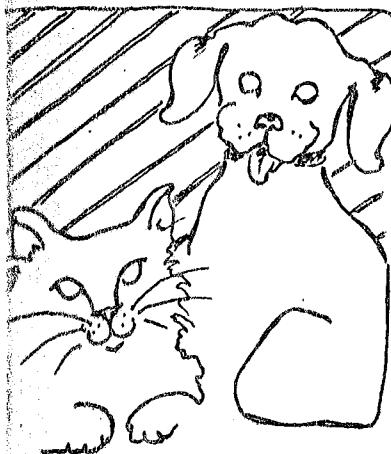
A 5 year concession contract was signed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with John Pryor of Mount Pleasant. Pryor, a former Wambaw District forester with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, has already begun transportation service.

Trips to Bulls Island will be made every Friday, Saturday and Sunday with departure from Moore's Landing scheduled for 8:00 a.m. The last trip back from the island will be made at 4:30 p.m.

Special arrangements for group trips and unscheduled trips can also be made, according to Pryor.

Fees for the round trip service will be \$10 for adults and \$5 for children under the age of 12.

Further information is available by calling Mr. Pryor (803/884-0448) or refuge headquarters (803/928-3368).



### What Is a Cat?

1:30-2:00: Discusses the place cats in civilization, good cat care, and cats as companion animals. Presented by Carol Linville of Pet Helpers. All ages. 14 minutes.

### The Phenomenon of the Companion Animal Bond

2:00-3:00: Explores the beneficial aspects of pet-facilitated therapy. Presented by Jim Ress, Physical Therapist with Low-country Riding for the Handi-

capped, Inc. Older children, health care workers. 26 minutes.

### Animal Control-Who Needs It?"

3:00-4:00: Accompanies an animal control officer on her daily round and shows how she handles the problems of stray animals. Presented by Marilyn McGrew, Charleston County Animal Control Supervisor. All ages. 23 minutes.

## Animal film festival

elation of Be Kind to Animals Week, a festival will be presented on Saturday, May 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Peninsula Center at the Seabrook Islands County Park. Each of the films is concerned with an aspect of attitudes toward animals. The goal is to urge people to develop a positive attitude towards animals so they will choose to behave more positively towards them.

Films will be presented by guest speakers and will conduct a short discussion period. The event has been planned by Lynn and is presented through the Charleston Park, Recreation and Tourist Docent

schedule:

11 a.m.-11:30: How to choose the right pet for your lifestyle. Presented by Ronald Rowland, president of the John Ancrum SPCA. Suitable for all ages. 13 minutes.

11:30-12:00: How a human society rescues stray animals and finds homes for them. Ronald Rowland. Grades 6 and up. 16 minutes.

12:00-1:00: Seeks to enhance the image of snakes by explaining their importance to the ecosystem. Presented by Ed Murray, Biologist, PRT Docent. All Ages. 22 Minutes.

1:00-1:30: Animals in a zoo are shown interacting with humans. Presented by Shirley McGreal, International Primate Protection League. All ages. 10 minutes.

## ... john james audubon

(from page 1)

woodland river and marsh terrain for the lesser yellowlegs and little blue heron. Miss Maria Martin, Reverend John Bachman's sister-in-law, was a native Charlestonian who helped Audubon with floral backgrounds and insect details. She drew the loblolly bay twig for Audubon's fork tailed flycatcher. Robert Havell, Jr., Audubon's engraver, was not unknown to complete several backgrounds for which Audubon only submitted cut out watercolors of birds.

Audubon's painting methods were a bit different in the early 1800's than they would be in today's modern world. Audubon studied birds in the field noting their movements, characteristics and behavior. Then, to afford a closer examination, he shot his subject, posed them (with wire) in natural positions and painted from the fresh kill. Although birds were things of undeniable beauty from which the artist-naturalist derived much pleasure, they were also the object of great sport, for Audubon boasted of many hunting expeditions.

In 1839, the fifth volume of *The Ornithological Biography* was sent to press. There were 79 European and 82 American subscribers. The work included 1,065 figures of birds representing 489 species. The project cost Audubon \$115,640. But, Audubon had achieved a goal that very few artists ever realize—he had found success within his lifetime. From the proceeds of his popular artistic endeavors, he was able to purchase 35 acres on the Hudson River, build homes for himself and both of his sons who, incidentally, had each married daughters of Reverend John Bachman. His later works include a smaller edition of *Birds of America* and *The Viviporous Quadrupeds of North America* on which he collaborated with his

friend, the Reverend Bachman.

John James Audubon died in his Hudson River home on January 27, 1851.

Audubon is not without criticism from naturalists and artists. He inaccurately identified several birds ("confusing fall warblers", no doubt). Besides, he had no Peterson field guide! And he often portrayed his subjects in awkward or exaggerated poses. Some were intended to show distinctive field marks that, otherwise, would not be visible to the viewer. The "artist" in Audubon also couldn't resist occasionally sacrificing naturalism for the harmonious composition of a drawing.

Many a hopeful birder, too, cringes to think how many of the lowcountry's little Bachmans warblers were "waisted" for the sake of art. Several were shot by Reverend Bachman before he and Audubon ascertained the species (as Bachman's swamp warbler) and found it, even in the 1800's to be quite illusive.

Lucy Bakewell Audubon survived her husband by many years. In her later years she taught small children in her home. One of her pupils, George Bird Grinnell, was deeply impressed with all that he had heard of John James Audubon and studied the various bird paintings that still hung in the Audubon's Hudson River home.

When, in 1886, Dr. George Bird Grinnell, the editor of *Forest and Stream*, formed an organization for the study and protection of birds, it was but natural that he should coin it for the person whose work and study embodied all that, to Grinnell, bird study meant. So it was that 35 years after John James Audubon's death, Dr. George Grinnell formed The Audubon Society.

## charleston natural history society

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 are returned to CNHS to help defray expenses. The Lesser Squawk is the newsletter of CNHS. The views expressed herein are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of the National Audubon Society or its Southeastern Regional Office. Meetings are normally held on the second Tuesday of each month, at 8 p.m. at the Charleston Museum except June, July, August and December. The Lesser Squawk is published ten times annually by the Charleston Natural History Society, Inc. Editor: Cheryl Phillips (899-7635). Circulation: 1,000. Advertising: Keith Krieger (762-0307). Membership: Donna Clark (795-3996). Publicity: Allan Crane (766-5459).

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Charleston Natural History Society officers are President Jeremy James, Vice-President: Julian Harrison, Corresponding Secretary: Lu Wilhite, Treasurer: Henry Dunbar, Executive Committee: Allan Crane, Jo Hutcheson, Perry Nugent, David Huff, Cheryl Phillips, Hal Currey, Donna Clark, Betty O'Connor.

The Charleston Natural History Society assumes no responsibility for injuries, personal or otherwise, you may incur while attending Society sponsored activities and will not be held liable for such accidents. You attend at your own risk. Be sure to bring lunch and binoculars on all field trips. No pets or collecting allowed.