



## CNHS FIELD TRIP CYPRESS GARDENS

April 4, 7:30 a.m.

Cypress Gardens invites all CNHS members to a free day of walks and boat rides. For those arriving at 7:30, there will be coffee and donuts served at the boat dock. At 8, Pete Laurie will lead a walk for early morning birders.

(From experience, it's been determined that 8 a.m. is prime time for seeing the most species.) For those who want to sleep in, there will also be a 10:00 walk led by Cheryl Phillips.

Spend the day in the Gardens, make use of the picnic facilities and enjoy a boat ride. For more information, call 553-0515.

## EDISTO CANOE TRIPS

April 5, May 17

Don Watts will lead monthly canoe trips to the Edisto. The \$15 fee includes equipment and guide. Don suggests you bring a lunch and change of clothes. To register or for further information, call him at 797-6783.

## BEIDLER FOREST BIRD COUNT

April 25, 7 a.m.

The annual bird count at Beidler Forest will be held on Saturday, April 25. Meet Charlie Walters at the gate at 7 a.m. There will be Earth Day activities at Beidler that day, and bird counters are encouraged to stay and participate.

## April Calendar and More

### EARTH WEEK PROGRAM

CNHS has joined the College of Charleston student group Alliance for Planet Earth and other local environmental organizations to co-sponsor the keynote address for Earth Week activities.

Mr. Kirkpatrick Sale is a highly regarded and widely-published commentator on a range of environmental issues. His topic, "Earth Day 1992: 500 Years of the Columbian Legacy", addresses a heritage of environmental destruction 500 years old and our present responsibility.

### CNHS FIELD TRIP SPRING WALK AT THE McALHANY

April 26, 8 a.m.

The Society's 250-acre McAlhany Nature Preserve is located on the Edisto River in upper Dorchester County.

It features hardwood and cypress stands, numerous wetland habitats, a high bluff, an oxbow lake, and 1-1/2 miles of frontage on the world's longest blackwater river.

Join Dr. Julian Harrison on a spring tour of the property that will highlight the past year's efforts by CNHS volunteers.

Meet at 8 a.m. at the Charleston Museum. If you have not been to the McAlhany lately, this is the perfect time.



### CNHS MEETING

MUSC Psych Auditorium  
President St.

April 14, 8 p.m.

### *The Galapagos Islands*

Dr. Mitchell Colgen, Professor of Geology at the College of Charleston, will lecture on the natural history of the Galapagos Islands. A disciple of Charles Darwin, Dr. Colgen will discuss the islands' flora, fauna and geology, presenting his research on the offshore reefs.

### NOTICE: MAY MEETING

The regular May CNHS general meeting is also the Annual Business Meeting, at which officers and Executive Committee members are elected.

### Pluff Mud

by Pat Leonard

I'd hate to be awash  
In pluff mud in the marsh--

I think I'd disappear.

But when it comes ashore,  
I like the way it feels  
On the bottom of my feet.

I'm bonded to the earth,  
Implanted like a tree  
For centuries.

And when I'm ready to be more,  
I return pluff mud to the sea.

Charleston Natural History Society  
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## Four Holes Swamp Naturalist

by Michael Dawson, Assistant Manager, Francis Beidler Forest

Remember, last time around, we began discussing Four Holes Swamp as a "Myth-buster", and dispelling those nasty notions about the swamp being buggy, snakey and gatory.

In this swampology lesson, we will continue in this vein by tackling the SMELLY, MUDDY, POLLUTED, EVIL, WICKED, NASTY and MONSTER-INFESTED package of swamp myths!

Let's take them one at a time...

### Smelly

To many, the term "swampy" brings to mind the image of rank vapors wafting offensively past plugged noses, or at least the memory of the rotten egg, sulfury smell of the coastal marshes. (Remember in lesson 1, a marsh is not a swamp!) In reality, the swamp acts as an air filter, or an oxygen factory.

The swamp forest is full of dense plant life pumping out necessary oxygen and absorbing the greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide. A walk through the Beidler Forest is literally a breath of fresh air.

### Muddy

When I tell people that I must frequently walk around in the swamp, they inevitably ask me about quicksand. I'm convinced that they are conjuring images of mysterious body-sucking pockets of neck-deep glorpy mud, ringed with skeletons of the hapless victims. To be honest, I'm not sure where genuine quicksand does exist--other than Tarzan movies.

In all of the mucking around I have done in the swamp over 12 years, the deepest mud I've experienced is little more than ankle-deep. In most places, there is an inch or two of mud on top of sand, and it is very easy to walk around in the swamp.

### Polluted

The term "stagnant" is often associated with swamps, implying standing, scummy, less than wholesome water. Remember what I said about Four Holes Swamp being a flowing system?

The water in an untouched swamp of this sort is extremely high quality, with the swamp actually capable of acting as a sort of water filter.

If you live in Summerville or Charleston, you are drinking water that has passed through Four Holes Swamp! Eyebrows down, please...

The swamp is a major tributary of the

Edisto River which is the area's water supply. Now granted, the water is treated before human consumption, but it must be high-quality water to begin with if it's to be used.

Perhaps we should begin bottling swamp water and sell it under the label of "Le Swampier".

### Spooky, Evil, Wicked, and Nasty

I think swamps have been the victim of a lot of bad PR over the years due, in most part, to B-grade monster movies as well as the exaggerated tall tales of hunters and fishermen! Some of the swamps around here may very well fit the bill for some of the aforementioned myths.

However, most of them were not that way originally, but because people have made them that way. Most of the swamps around here should be just as pleasant as Four Holes, but we have built roads across them, ditched, logged and drained them, and otherwise messed them up by altering their water flows, causing them to become buggy, smelly and muddy, with nasty water.

### Monster-Infested

This is one category of swamp myth that we have not been able to disprove! Can you?

However, it has been quite some time since we last saw the Swamp Thing, so I believe it is pretty much safe to visit. Back when there was a bounty on the Lee County Lizard Man, we considered offering him political asylum in the Beidler Forest. Sadly, he didn't take us up on it...

That should about do it.

I told you that Four Holes Swamp was a mythbuster. To date, we have not only learned what a swamp is, but what it isn't.

In weeks to come, I hope we will discover the answers to the question, "What good is a swamp?" until that time, if you have any questions, don't hesitate to write me. The Swamp Genius, at the address or phone number below or visit the Forest 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Sunday.

Michael Dawson  
c/o Francis Beidler Forest  
336 Santuary Road  
Harleyville SC 29448  
462-2150

# Backyard Birder

by Bruce Krucke

It's cold again as this is being written, but I can't think winter when I can hear a white-eyed vireo calling and see a blue-gray gnatcatcher picking around in the oaks. I'm going to hang up my hummingbird feeder next weekend since they've arrived on March 25 for the last two years.

Carolina wrens have already built a nest in a flower pot outside my studio, and bluebirds have built in one of the houses in front. In the bluebird house out back, I've been watching both chickadees and titmice go in and out. It'll be interesting to see who wins.

Both cardinals and brown thrashers now come to get whole peanuts at the feeder by our kitchen window, which is really on the second floor since our house is raised. The brown thrasher is quite fierce-looking that close. He eats peanut butter glop also. Violet Murray (Foxboro, Goose Creek) recommends that you don't use pine bark mulch if you have a resident brown thrasher. She has to go put the bark back inside the plastic bed that the thrasher has thrashed out every day.

Nelson Taylor has one pyracantha bush that still has berries after the invasions of the robins and cedar waxwings. It's being guarded by a mockingbird. Hugh King noticed how late the goldfinches arrived this year. And they didn't stay long, either. If you have niger (thistle) seed left, it will keep, preferably in the freezer, until next season. Often, the goldfinches return in May for a bit--usually in beautiful summer yellow plumage.

Lots of people have reported the return of purple martins in early March. Still none looking at our apartments. Last month, I mentioned a tape to attract martins. As it turns out, there is another tape to attract martins made and sold right here in Charleston. It's made by Phillip Dunn with some very high-tech equipment and got an excellent review from Nature Society News, which explains all the complicated processes that were used to get the fine-quality tape. Contact Phillip at Three Coast Emporium, Box 30482, Charleston SC 29417 for further details.

My apologies to Sea Island Veterinary Clinic for calling them James Island in last month's article. And my thanks to reader Carla Lowery for calling my attention to it.

It's been so many years that I've been writing this column that I know I say the same things a lot. I hope the new readers find some useful information and that those who have been with us all along don't get bored. I get just enough nice notes each month to make me continue to find the time.

Did you realize that bird's eyes don't move in their sockets like ours do? They have to actually move their heads to look right, left, up or down. To make this easier, they have extra vertebrae in their necks allowing them to rotate in any direction. They also have many more vision cells to send messages to the brain than do humans. Predators have over 1,000 million compared to our 130 million. Their eyes are like binoculars except that they get good resolution at over a mile. Birds with large eyes (such as owls) can see in very low light.

All of us have had a bird die from hitting a window, but I recently read some serious studies on this "window predation" that astounded me. Twenty-five percent of all North American species die from hitting glass. Birds can't discriminate between unobstructed space and space covered by a pane of glass or space reflected in a pane of glass.

Strikes occur wherever windows exist throughout every season with both residents and migrants. Most die of head injury rather than broken necks. The most common species are robin, junco, cedar waxwing, oven bird (!), Swainson's thrush, flicker, hermit thrush, yellow-rumped warbler, cardinal, evening grosbeak, pine siskin and gold finch.

To read the numbers makes one wonder why there are any birds left at all. To put it into perspective: oil spills kill about 3.8 million birds a year; cats (feral and domestic) 4 million; cars 57 million (a conservative estimate); and windows, 100 million (again, a conservative estimate of only one per house, commercial building and school complex in North America.)

Only 300 birds were confirmed killed by the Exxon Valdez spill. This is an ongoing study and reports would be appreciated giving the species (whether it's a resident or migrant), date, location, details of the window type and height, habitat and whether the bird was killed or survived the hit. Send a note or postcard to Daniel Klem, Jr., Biology, Muhlenberg College, 2400 Chew Street, Allentown PA 18104-5586. Dr. Klem recommends using frosted glass where light but not view is needed, putting objects all over the glass, putting feeders either very far from the window or within a foot so that the bird's momentum is not enough to cause injury, and in big glass office buildings, angling the glass so it reflects the ground rather than shrubs and sky.

I guess because the birds have not been as exciting as usual at the feeders this winter, facts like these are kind of scary. On our feeder side of the house and on the sunniest windows, we have had a reflective film installed that doesn't hurt the view at all, and it does seem to have resulted in fewer birds hitting those windows. Anyone who wants to check it out to see if they'd like to have it done, give me a call. Bruce W. Krucke, 7352 Toogoodoo Rd., Yonkers Island SC 29449. Phone: 889-6191

## Unusual Observations

by Pete Laurie

9 Feb	1 Solitary Vireo, Mt. Pleasant	J. Cox
15 Feb	1 Purple Martin, River Road	C. Acklin
20 Feb	1 Stilt Sandpiper, Bull's Island	J. Cox
26 Feb	1 Merlin, Bear Island WMA	P. Laurie
	1 Wood Stork, Green Pond	P. Laurie
1 Mar	2 Gannets, Folly Beach	J. & L. Duncan
	2 Greater Bl.-backed Gulls	
	Folly Beach	
9 Mar	2 Ground Doves, Ft. Johnson	N. Jenkins
10 Mar	1 Bald Eagle	E. Hughes
	Mark Clark/Ashley River	

Pete Laurie, 750 Copperhead Trail, Johns Island SC 29455  
Home: 559-2046 Office: 762-5076

## Conservation Corner

by Hayes Patterson  
Charleston Aquarium

Let me set the record straight: there will be no live dolphin or whale exhibits at the Charleston Aquarium ever! Last month, I cited a Post and Courier article without confirming the story with Rhet Wilson, aquarium coordinator for the City. Rhet has assured me that the article was in error and that the only dolphins will be those swimming by in the Cooper River. My apologies to Rhet and everyone involved with the aquarium. They have worked very hard to create what promises to be a world-class aquarium for Charleston.

The combination audio-visual and graphic art presentation that they plan to use for marine mammals has been cited by animal rights groups as a model for other aquariums. Plans are proceeding on schedule with construction set to begin this fall.

The 85,000 square-foot facility will feature functional re-creations of South Carolina aquatic habitats--everything from mountain streams to beaches complete with waves. When completed, this will be an educational facility that we can all be quite proud of.

## Washington Park Herons

The Yellow-Crowned Night Herons are back! They seem to appreciate the fake owls installed by the city and perhaps hope they will scare the tourists away from their nests. The City has indicated that they will take no further action to harass or discourage the birds at this time. Popular support appears to be on the herons' side now. Maybe having a heron nest in your yard will become a new status symbol downtown.

## Wetlands

A genuinely good wetlands protection bill has been introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives. HR 4255, introduced by Rep. Don Edwards (D-CA), titled the *Wetlands Reform Act of 1992*, actually strengthens wetlands protection while addressing the complaints of farmers, developers and "property rights" proponents. It improves the Clean Water Act Section 404 permitting by including draining, dredging, flooding and excavating as activities which require a permit. (Currently, only filling is regulated).

Permits for small projects, typical of small landowners, are given faster processing (60 days). Agricultural exemptions are clarified so that normal

farming activities are not regulated. Most importantly, it puts the administration's proposed Delineation Manual revision on hold and commissions a National Academy of Sciences study to put wetlands delineation on a sound scientific basis. National Audubon played a key role in drafting this legislation, and we need to let Congressman Ravenel know we would like him to co-sponsor and support this bill.

## Charleston City Council

Public outcry over S.C. Electric and Gas Company's proposal to run a large, high-voltage power line along a public walkway through some West Ashley residential neighborhoods motivated City Council and Mayor Riley to formally reject the plan. SCE&G even withdrew the plan

before the vote in response to the overwhelming opposition. They have gone back to the drawing board to consider other alternatives and appear to also be willing to change the way they handle public notices of such projects in the future. It's always encouraging to see government officials and large corporations respond to public sentiment.

## S.C. Coastal Council

At their March 19th meeting, the Management Committee is scheduled to review their previous approval of the Chambers Oakridge Landfill permit to fill wetlands and expand into Four Holes Swamp.

The Charleston Commissioners of Public Works have reconsidered their position and asked the Council to overturn the permit's approval. Council member Bruce Berlinsky, who represents Charleston and previously voted in favor of granting the permit, has also asked that the permit be reconsidered. It seems that our concerns finally got through to the right people.

The Management Committee does not normally review permits after they have been approved so it isn't clear how they will handle this. It is quite likely that this will be settled in the courts if the landfill challenges the Committee's authority to change an approved permit.

CNHS, the S.C. Coastal Conservation League, the League of Women Voters, the S.C. Wildlife Federation and the Residents Association of James Island, have all threatened to appeal the permit approval if the Committee does not reverse itself.

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